



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

May 21, 2019, to December 4, 2019  
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The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker







Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 21, 2019

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
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Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Merwan N. Saher, Clerk  
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Executive  
Director of House Services  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary  
Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
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*Alberta Hansard*

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Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 21, 2019

[The Mace was on a cushion below the table]

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

**The Clerk:** Good afternoon.

[The Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated April 30, 2019, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date]

**The Clerk:** Please be seated.

### Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor

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

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

Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

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

**Her Honour:** Please be seated.

**Mr. Schweitzer (Provincial Secretary):** Hon. members, I am commanded by Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to inform you that she does not see fit to declare the causes of her summoning of the present Legislature of this province until a Speaker of the Assembly shall have been chosen according to law. She is therefore pleased to retire from the Assembly, to return at a subsequent hour on the next sitting day to declare the causes of her calling of this Legislature.

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

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor and her party left the Chamber]

### Election of a Speaker

**The Clerk:** Hon. members, pursuant to the Lieutenant Governor's direction in section 16(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act nominations are invited for the Office of Speaker of this Assembly for the 30th Legislature. Pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) the Speaker shall be elected according to the procedure set out in schedule A of the standing orders. I therefore call for nominations.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you. I rise today to nominate the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for the position of Speaker of this Legislative Assembly of Alberta. I've had the absolute privilege of working with Mr. Cooper as his deputy House leader for two years in opposition. I very quickly learned that he is indeed an absolute parliamentary and political nerd and that there is no one more suitable for the title of Mr. Speaker than the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I was impressed with his knowledge of and respect for the parliamentary traditions based on the respected Westminster parliamentary system. I was impressed with his respect for our democratic institutions and the decorum required to maintain respectful, productive debate and with his knowledge of protocol, which will be necessary as he represents this House to

visiting dignitaries and while he's representing us in other jurisdictions.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is someone I am proud to call a friend and someone we can all be proud to call our Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cooper, do you wish to accept the nomination?

**Mr. Cooper:** I do.

**The Clerk:** Are there further nominations?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Belated congratulations on your new role, and thank you, hon. members. It's an honour to once again speak in this Chamber as the elected representative for Edmonton-Mill Woods, and I'd like to congratulate and welcome everyone. I see we have a lot of first-time representatives with us today. I can still remember the strange mix of excitement and pressure that each of you is likely feeling at this moment.

The learning curve for new members is a steep one, and that's why I would encourage all of us to set aside partisanship at this moment and, instead, trust the incredible value that comes from experience as we make this very important choice for Speaker. There is no substitute for experience in a role. Knowing how things ought to work and how they do work allows an individual to excel in a particular role. That is why it is my honour to nominate the only member in this Chamber who already has the experience of presiding over this Assembly as its chair to be our next Speaker. I am proud to nominate Heather Sweet, the Member for Edmonton-Manning, who has served ably in the 29th Legislature as the Deputy Chair of Committees, to now take on the role as our Speaker.

Now, I know that Heather would bring to the role of Speaker a wealth of experience and a true desire to serve this Assembly impartially and with the considerable grace and wisdom that she has to offer. Ms Sweet has already shown that she can lead this Chamber through the fiercest of debates while keeping members of all parties in order and protecting the privileges that make our work as members of the Assembly possible.

We should also consider representation of the people of this great province, with the goal to have the Speaker's office contain members that represent north, south, and certainly representation from our capital city.

I hope Heather will accept this nomination, and I hope you will join with me in valuing experience as we choose who will preside as our Speaker. Your ability to fulfill your duties as a member of this place depends on us making a wise choice for this role, and I know that Heather Sweet would allow each of us to represent our constituents to our fullest.

Thank you.

**The Clerk:** Ms Sweet, do you accept the nomination?

**Ms Sweet:** I do. Thank you.

**The Clerk:** Are there further nominations?

I declare the nominations closed.

The nominees for the position of Speaker are Mr. Nathan Cooper and Ms Heather Sweet. Voting will commence after the list of nominees is posted at each voting booth.

Thank you.

[The lists of candidates were posted]

**The Clerk:** Voting will now begin. Members will vote by printing the first and last names of their preferred candidate on the ballot

paper, then placing their completed ballot in the ballot box on the Sergeant-at-Arms' desk.

Thank you.

[Members voted from 1:50 p.m. to 1:57 p.m.]

**The Clerk:** Have all voted who wish to?

[Ballots were counted from 1:58 p.m. to 2:09 p.m.]

**The Clerk:** Number of ballots cast for the election of Speaker, 87; number of spoiled ballots, one; number of votes required to achieve the 50 per cent plus one majority, 44. The member having received the majority of votes cast is Mr. Nathan Cooper. [applause] Mr. Cooper is hereby declared the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the 30th Legislature.

[The Speaker, with apparent reluctance, was escorted to the chair by Mr. Kenney and Ms Notley]

**The Speaker:** Members, before I begin, let me just take a moment to honour – I see former Speaker Ken Kowalski in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon. It's a pleasure to have you here. So nice of you to join us on this fantastic day. Thank you for joining us.

As this is my first opportunity to do so, I wish to send my greatest and deepest thank yous to the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for placing their trust back in me. I also wish to congratulate all members of the Assembly, whether it was your first election or your re-election. Congratulations on being here today, and thank you – thank you so very much – from the very bottom of my heart for placing your trust in me to serve as Speaker of the 30th Legislative Assembly.

Whether it's your first time as an MLA or you have faithfully served this institution like the Leader of the Official Opposition for 4,097 days or, in the case of the Member for Calgary-Hays or Cypress-Medicine Hat, for 2,585 days, I'm sure that all of them will tell you that coming to the Chamber for the very first time after an election is a very, very, very special time. This is a special place, where the weight of history meets our own unbridled hopes as we race towards the future. My hope is that in your debates we will be vigorous, thoughtful, and amicable. To date in this Chamber only 954 people have ever been elected to serve and represent Albertans. As we honour their legacy and service, let us be mindful that we now set the standard for those who come after us. May we not take this duty or calling lightly. Together we have an incredible opportunity and responsibility.

With that in mind, may I indulge you just for a brief moment to recognize a special guest in the Assembly today for the very first time, Louise Cooper. She is a remarkable woman in every single way, and she also happens to be my grandmother. I can tell you all that I would not be here today if it was not for her. Her courage and bravery in lockstep with her loving generosity have played such a pivotal role in my life. I've learned many, many lessons from her words and her examples. Not the least of this: in our haste to do good, we must never forget to be good for our families, our communities, and for our province. It is her example that I will endeavour to live up to in this new role.

It is with a servant's heart that I seek to serve this Assembly to ensure the rules and conventions and standing orders are applied equally and that all members of the Assembly have access to the resources you need to effectively represent your constituents. I will seek to uphold the high standard of those who have come before us. I intend to serve you to the best of my ability. You set the tone and orders of the Assembly and I am a servant for you, for it is in my view that the primary role of the Speaker is to first serve the House. It is the Speaker's responsibility to ensure that all members can

exercise their rights and privileges in the Assembly. The Speaker's authority comes from you, its members, and that allows this parliament to function properly and fairly and in the manner expected by the people of Alberta who have sent us here today.

As Speaker Betty Boothroyd once famously said, "You've got to ensure that the holders of an opinion, however unpopular, are allowed to [get their points across]." It is with this in mind that I commit to you that as long as I have the privilege of serving as Speaker, your privileges and duties as elected members of this Assembly will be recognized and defended. I encourage and entrust all of you to remember that in our haste to do good for each other, we must never forget to be good for each other.

I have reviewed the calendar, and there are many busy days ahead, so let us proceed.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms placed the Mace on the table]

**The Speaker:** I'd invite you all to rise for the prayer.

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let us pray. Father, on this day of new beginnings we ask for Your guidance in the responsibility we have undertaken and Your help in fulfilling our duties. As Members of the Legislative Assembly may we faithfully serve all Albertans and, in serving them, serve You. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Election of a Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to section 17(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act and to Standing Order 58(1)(a) nominations are invited for the Office of Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of this Assembly for the 30th Legislature. I therefore call for nominations.

The Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, please.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It truly is a pleasure to rise in this House today and be the first to congratulate you on your new role as Speaker of this Assembly. I know that your extensive experience and your eagerness for the role will serve all members of this Assembly well.

Now moving on to the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees. The role of the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees is not just a figurehead position but, rather, a role that serves a vital function in this Assembly in keeping order, preserving tradition, and holding decorum. As with the Speaker of this House, the deputy position serves an essential purpose and is not to be taken lightly.

I believe the person who would be best suited to this role is one that is familiar with House proceedings, a member in good standing, and who I've witnessed first-hand to be fair to all. It is also important that they have a presence that can command the House. With that said, it is my honour to nominate the Member for Airdrie-East, Angela Pitt.

Following her role as deputy whip to our legacy caucus, Mrs. Pitt has served as our deputy House leader in the United Conservative caucus for almost two years. She has proven herself to be attentive to the role while being a leader to those around her. She is respected amongst all members of our caucus and has a deep admiration for our parliamentary process and the historic traditions of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I must reflect on my first opportunities in getting to know the Member for Airdrie-East. When we were first elected in this Legislature in 2015, Mrs. Pitt was my seatmate, just off to my right. One of the things that I got to know about Angela was her

passion and commitment to the proceedings of this House. In fact, she was the first person I had ever met who took the time to actually watch question period regularly in her home. Now, to a farmer from Westlock that seemed rather absurd. Imagine spending an hour of what could be a productive afternoon watching politicians banter back and forth. What it did tell me, though, was Mrs. Pitt's passion and commitment to the proceedings in this House.

Mrs. Pitt is extremely committed to public service and has always sought the best for not only her constituents but for all Albertans. It is my sincere belief that, if elected, Mrs. Pitt would bring her hard-working nature to this role and serve all members of the House with dedication and fairness as we collectively strive to serve Albertans.

It is my hope that all members of this House will support and vote for Mrs. Pitt. I'm truly confident that, given her experience and dedication, she would fulfill the role of Chair of Committees and Deputy Speaker with dignity, with confidence, and respect for all members of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Mrs. Pitt, do you wish to accept the nomination?

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be an honour to serve alongside you for all members of this Assembly. I graciously and humbly accept the nomination.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other nominations? The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as Speaker and setting a tone of service to this Assembly.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank former Speaker Bob Wanner, who is in your gallery today, Mr. Speaker. The guidance and service you provided to the 29th Legislature will never be forgotten. Your actions changed this place for the better, and we thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the tradition of a nonpartisan chair and a nonpartisan Office of the Speaker is of critical importance for the functioning of this Legislature. It helps to achieve improved civility and decorum, objectives that, I understand, the new government caucus holds dear. To achieve those ends, Canada's federal House of Commons has frequently used the practice of choosing a Deputy Speaker from the opposition caucus. Not only does this contribute to the good functioning of the House but also ensures nonpartisan functioning of the Speaker's office.

When our new Premier served in the federal government's Executive Council, he and his colleagues did so with multiparty representation in Parliament's Speaker's office. So I invite us to adopt that same tradition here in our Legislature. It's my honour to nominate Heather Sweet for Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of this House.

As I said in my earlier nomination, Heather Sweet would be a very capable Deputy Speaker of this Assembly, bringing a wealth of experience along with her demonstrated ability to work with all members. We have an important opportunity right now to set the tone for this 30th Legislature and to significantly improve decorum and civility in this House. So I ask all members to join me because together we can build a sweet House.

**The Speaker:** There are very few days in which you're allowed to use names in this Chamber. I appreciate what you've done there.

Ms Sweet, do you choose to accept the nomination?

**Ms Sweet:** I do, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other nominations for the position of Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees?

Seeing none, I declare the nominations closed. The nominees for the position of Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees are Angela Pitt and Heather Sweet. Voting will commence after the list of nominees is posted at each voting booth.

[The lists of candidates were posted]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we'll use the same voting process for the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees. Please file through the table officers to receive your ballot.

The voting will now begin.

[Members voted from 2:26 p.m. to 2:32 p.m.]

**The Speaker:** Members, have all voted that wished to do so?  
Sergeant.

[Ballots were counted from 2:32 p.m. to 2:42 p.m.]

**The Clerk:** Number of ballots cast for the position of Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees, 85; number of spoiled ballots, none; number of votes required to achieve the 50 per cent plus one majority, 43. The member having received the majority of the votes cast is Mrs. Angela Pitt. Mrs. Angela Pitt is hereby declared Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the 30th Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Congratulations.

Before we proceed, I would be remiss – and I thank the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for recognizing the immediate former Speaker, Mr. Bob Wanner. I know that you served diligently and dutifully, and as the Official Opposition House Leader I appreciated your candour at times. I wish you and the former Mrs. Speaker nothing but the best and an incredible amount of hugs from those grandbabies.

### Election of a Deputy Chair of Committees

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to section 17(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act and Standing Order 58(1)(b) nominations are invited for the office of Deputy Chair of Committees for the 30th Legislature. I therefore call for nominations.

The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations to our new Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees.

Mr. Speaker, in this nomination I would like to stress again the unique opportunity that members of this House have to make significant and genuine improvements to decorum and civility by ensuring that the Speaker's office has representation from the opposition caucus. This is the moment to set a new tone. This is the time to set a bold, new direction and begin an era of nonpartisan co-operation to ensure that the privileges of all members are protected. So it's my honour to nominate Heather Sweet for Deputy Chair of Committees.

We've now elected a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker, neither of whom has experience with the offices they are taking on. We would be remiss to leave that team with no link to the past, with no one who can offer how it was done before and to share the wisdom that comes from experience. Let us offer them Heather Sweet's guidance and tutelage, her experience as the only member of this Assembly to have presided over our proceedings. She has represented our province at Speakers' conferences on multiple occasions, she is familiar with the administrative functions of the

Speaker's office, and she is also a representative of the Edmonton area, which brings an availability to participate in all the demanding activities of the Speaker's role.

Finally, we have a shortage of women in leadership positions in this House and in Executive Council. By electing Heather Sweet, we will be sending an important message to all Albertans and recognizing the value of having strong, experienced, and talented women in all-important roles.

I encourage all members to support Heather Sweet in the role of Deputy Chair of Committees.

**The Speaker:** Ms Sweet, do you accept the nomination?

**Ms Sweet:** I do.

**The Speaker:** Are there further nominations? The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise before you today, with deep gratitude, of course, to the people of Calgary-Fish Creek for this great privilege, and to extend my sincere congratulations after your hard-earned and well-deserved ascendancy to the Speaker's chair. I would also like to congratulate Angela Pitt, the hon. Member for Airdrie-East, on her election as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees. We are very proud of you both and know that we shall all be well served by your shared commitment and that of your excellent staff to all members of the Legislature and indeed to all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honoured to have the privilege today of nominating Nicholas Milliken, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees. While the hon. member was only recently elected to his first term as an esteemed member of this Assembly, I've gotten to know him over the past year while witnessing his sense of duty in his roles, first as a nominee and more recently through the campaign period as a hard-working, dedicated, and passionate Albertan, ready, willing, and more than able in serving his constituents. Yet he is always willing to lend a hand to his new colleagues and emerging political family, which I am hopeful he will be given the honour of including all of us in as we consider him for this humble role.

Nick's background includes volunteering and fund raising for charities in his community, many of them, in fact, while he also has a professional background in finance, law, and entrepreneurship, those skills that he can bring to this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, he is

also a proud family man and honours and appreciates that balance in our lives also allows us to bring balance to this Chamber in the forms of compassion, honesty, fairness, generosity, humility, and kindness.

Mr. Speaker, my nomination of Nicholas Milliken on this auspicious day in the history of Alberta is without reservation. I encourage all members to support him in his quest to serve this great Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Mr. Milliken, do you accept the nomination?

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Needless to say, simply being part of this process is a humbling experience, and it is my honour to accept this nomination from the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**The Speaker:** Are there any further nominations?

I declare the nominations closed. The nominees for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees are Heather Sweet and Nicholas Milliken. Voting will commence after the list of nominees is posted in each voting booth.

[The lists of candidates were posted]

**The Speaker:** The voting will begin now.

[Members voted from 2:50 p.m. to 2:57 p.m.]

**The Speaker:** Members, have all voted who wished to do so? Has everybody voted that wanted to?

[Ballots were counted from 2:57 p.m. to 3:06 p.m.]

**The Clerk:** Number of ballots cast for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees, 84; number of spoiled ballots, none; number of votes required to achieve the 50 per cent plus one majority, 43. The member having received the majority of the votes cast is Mr. Nicholas Milliken. Mr. Nicholas Milliken is hereby the Deputy Chair of Committees of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the 30th Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk, and congratulations to Mr. Milliken.

Members, the House stands adjourned until Wednesday, May 22, at 3 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:06 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 22, 2019

Day 1

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
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Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
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Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

### Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Executive  
Director of House Services  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary  
Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
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*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

3 p.m.

Wednesday, May 22, 2019

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

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

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let us pray. Almighty God, author of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask your blessing on all here present. We ask your guidance in order that the truth and justice may prevail in all our judgments for the benefit of all Albertans. Amen.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite you to join Cara McLeod, accompanied by the Royal Canadian Artillery Band, leading us in the singing of our national anthem. Please join us in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members and Guests:

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

### Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor

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

[The Mace was draped]

**The Speaker:** Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. It's so nice to see all of you. Holy cannoli. Hon. members, the RCA Band will now play a brief musical interlude. The piece to be performed is entitled *Canzon Septimi Toni No. 2*. It is the sprightliest of Giovanni Gabrieli's larger works.

The RCA Band is Canada's oldest regular army band. It was formed in Quebec City in 1879. It was subsequently stationed in Montreal and Halifax and was reconstituted in Edmonton in 1997. It has been in service in both world wars and in Korea, and it has travelled across Canada and beyond our borders.

Please enjoy the performance by the Royal Canadian Artillery Band brass choir.

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

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

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

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

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

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

**The Speaker:** May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has elected me their Speaker, though I am but little able to fulfill the important duties thus assigned to me. If in the performance of those duties I should at any time fall into error, I pray that the fault may be imputed to me and not to the Assembly, whose servant I am and who through me, the better to enable them to discharge their duty to their Queen and province, humbly claim all their undoubted rights and privileges, especially that they may have freedom of speech in their debates, access to Your Honour's person at all seasonable times, and that their proceedings may receive from Your Honour the most favourable construction.

**Mr. Schweitzer (Provincial Secretary):** Mr. Speaker, I am commanded by Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to declare to you that she freely confides in the duty and attachment of this Assembly to Her Majesty's person and government, and not doubting that their proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temper, and prudence, she grants and upon all occasions will recognize and allow their constitutional privileges.

I am commanded also to assure you that the Assembly shall have ready access to Her Honour upon all seasonable occasions and that their proceedings as well as your words and actions will constantly receive from her the most favourable construction.

**Her Honour:** Please, all, be seated.

### Speech from the Throne

**Her Honour:** Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly, fellow Albertans:

I speak to you as the province of Alberta's vice-regal representative of Her Majesty Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada.

This province honours its enduring ties to the Royal Family and our democratic tradition of constitutional monarchy. One hundred and fifty years ago this year the Hudson's Bay Company sold Rupert's Land, including much of the territory that became the province of Alberta, to the Dominion of Canada, bringing all of these lands under the Canadian Crown. The same Crown enjoined us in treaties with First Nations to respect the rights, privileges, and traditions of indigenous communities, a duty which we are bound to honour. Last year we renewed our ties to the Crown when we were honoured by the visit of Anne, the Princess Royal. I had the privilege of joining with her to announce Edmonton's Commonwealth walkway.

As Her Majesty's representative it is my honour and duty to open the First Session of the 30th Legislature with the presentation of the legislative program of Her Majesty's government.

Spring is the season of renewal. For all the people blessed to call Alberta home, from the First Peoples who have built vital communities on these lands for millennia to recent newcomers from across Canada and around the world, spring arrives with an explosion of nature's irrepressible energy. Every spring we experience the breathtaking vitality of nature's rush to renewal and are invigorated by it. So it is with our democracy. Once again, this spring Albertans participated in the great democratic ritual of a free election bequeathed to us by the Westminster parliamentary tradition, and they voted decisively for democratic and economic renewal through a change in government.

Recognizing that our province is beset by severe external political and economic constraints and consequently saddled with serious internal fiscal challenges requiring urgent action, my government will bring in a legislative program focused on three main priorities. First, a relentless focus on policies designed to create jobs, growth, and economic diversification: Alberta must show the world that we are open for business to restore investor confidence while carefully restoring balance to our province's finances. Second, standing up for our province's right to control and develop our natural resources and compete freely and fairly in the national and international economies: this requires securing pipeline access for Alberta oil and gas to world markets. And third, making life better for all Albertans by ensuring the quality and effectiveness of our public services, especially in health care and education, and by supporting the most vulnerable in our society.

Bill 1, as promised, will be the Carbon Tax Repeal Act. In providing \$1.4 billion in tax relief, it will make everything more affordable for Albertans. If needed, my ministers will take legal action to protect Albertans from a federal carbon tax and to support other provinces doing the same.

Bill 2 will be the Open for Business Act. It will strengthen the rights of Alberta workers within unions, promote job creation for young Albertans, and retain recent advancements in compassionate leave. This will be followed in the autumn by further labour reforms to protect workers and help employers create more jobs.

This spring my government will also introduce Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut Act. It will lower the tax burden on employers by one-third, from 12 per cent to 8 per cent. This will give Alberta businesses the lowest tax rate in Canada and among the lowest rates in North America, renewing Alberta as a magnet for job-creating investment. Economists estimate that this reduction will generate 55,000 new full-time jobs and increase the size of our economy by \$12.7 billion.

My government will bring forward Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act. This will provide the means to lower the regulatory burden on Alberta's economy by one-third, reducing costs, speeding up approvals, and freeing job creators to get more Albertans back to work.

Estimates for the interim supply of public services will be presented in an Appropriation Act, to be followed by a full budget this fall. That budget will be informed by the report of the fiscal review panel chaired by former Saskatchewan Finance minister Janice MacKinnon, which will make recommendations on how to restore balance to our province's finances so that we stop encumbering future generations with debt. My government will also engage in widespread public consultations on how best to end deficit spending while protecting front-line public services.

My government will also present a Tax Statutes Amendment Act.

My government will propose amendments to the Municipal Government Act. These will enable municipalities to use property tax incentives to attract investment and create jobs.

My government will table a Royalties Guarantee Act. Part of a plan to restore the competitiveness of the Alberta energy sector and win back the confidence of investors, this legislation will provide certainty that the royalty structure in place when a well is drilled remains in place for the life of the well.

My government will introduce the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Trades Act. This legislation will renew and reinforce Alberta's historic role as a place of economic opportunity by making it easier and fairer for newcomers to be credentialed in their professions, work at their skill level, and contribute to our shared prosperity.

Her Majesty's government, on the very day it was sworn in, proclaimed the Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. It

will be used as necessary to ensure the value of Alberta's energy products is maximized.

Also, in the spring session my government will present amendments to the Education Act. These will include implementing the will of the Legislature as expressed in legislation passed in 2012 so that these well-considered reforms are in place for the start of the new school year in September of this year. They will also include a commitment to curriculum reform based on proven pedagogy that teaches essential knowledge needed to achieve foundational competences and to prepare young Albertans to succeed in the future.

My ministers will also undertake important nonlegislative actions this spring. These include standing up for Alberta's interests within the Canadian federation by seeking the Legislature's support for a motion calling for the complete rejection of federal Bill C-48, which seeks to block access for Alberta's bitumen resources to British Columbia's northwest coast. A motion will also be proposed rejecting in its current form federal Bill C-69, the proposed Impact Assessment Act, which threatens Alberta's exclusive jurisdiction over nonrenewable natural resources and is damaging investor confidence. In bringing forward these and other initiatives, we will seek unity amongst Alberta's political parties, wherever possible, to speak with one voice.

In a world where the demand for energy will continue to rise, Alberta can, should, and will be one of the largest suppliers. That is why my government will create an agency mandated to proactively tell the truth about how we produce energy with the highest environmental, labour, and human rights standards on earth. My government will also challenge those who have for too long misrepresented these facts. In part this will be done by launching a public inquiry into the foreign sources of funds responsible for the campaign to land-lock Alberta's energy.

This year Her Majesty's government will also create the indigenous opportunities corporation. Alberta's First Peoples have played a crucial role in the development of this province, symbolized by Siksika Chief Crowfoot, who as leader of the Blackfoot peoples 150 years ago led his people into peaceful co-operation with the Crown, including the signing of Treaty 7. But while Alberta's natural resource wealth has been greatly developed since then, indigenous peoples have not fully participated in that prosperity. The indigenous opportunities corporation will support First Nations' and other indigenous groups' financial participation in natural resource development and infrastructure projects here and in other parts of Canada. We have a moral obligation to empower First Nations to be full partners in the development of the resources that lie below the lands which their ancestors first inhabited and to become partners in prosperity.

In the fall session my government will bring forward several other important bills. These include the Farm Freedom and Safety Act, which will reduce the tax and regulatory burden on farmers, strengthen their property rights and competitiveness, and restore balance, fairness, and common sense to regulation of Alberta's agricultural sector.

My government will further improve Alberta's education system by presenting the Choice in Education Act. It will renew the Alberta advantage in education by restoring and expanding the choices available to parents and children.

My government will take action to address climate change by introducing legislation to replace the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation with a technology innovation and emissions reduction fund. This will be a balanced, environmentally responsible, and economically efficient approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Alberta through regulation at the

primary source, large industrial emitters. Further, it will ensure investment in new emissions-reducing technologies which can be exported around the world.

To help protect vulnerable Albertans, my government will introduce the Saving the Girl Next Door Act and table legislation to give effect to Clare's law. The former will introduce protections for victims of human trafficking, and the latter will expand protections for victims of domestic violence. My government will implement a strategy to combat the wave of crime that has victimized too many Albertans, in part by hiring more Crown prosecutors and providing additional resources to police to respond to such terrible crimes as the exploitation of children.

And in order to improve decorum in this Assembly and civility in our politics, my government will propose amendments to the standing orders.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, this summarizes my government's legislative program for the spring and fall sessions. Further legislation anticipated for 2020 will address matters related to democratic reform, economic growth and environmental protection, public infrastructure, charitable giving, municipal governance, the economic rights of artists, conservation and outdoor recreation, and family law.

Renewal is the animating theme of my government's immediate legislative priorities. It is the appropriate and necessary response to the fiscal and economic setbacks Albertans have experienced in recent years, and it is only fitting to look to our history, the magnificent endowment of our natural resources and environment, and above all the values and character of our people to inspire and achieve this renewal.

The scale and pace of social and economic progress in Alberta over the last 114 years exceeds that of virtually any other polity on earth. We should always be grateful for those who have gone before us, who have been stewards of a great tradition of ordered liberty. Albertans have consistently applied the principles of free enterprise, free markets, equality of opportunity, and prudent stewardship to optimize our God-given gifts. No economic hardship has ever ruined us. No political enmity has ever defeated us. No natural disaster has ever stopped us. Our success, our resiliency, and our yet-untapped potential is a powerful magnet that continues to attract ambitious and talented newcomers from across Canada and the world.

The political forces standing in the way of this inevitable destiny today are external and temporary. Her Majesty's government has a strong mandate to stand up for Alberta against those forces, powered by the unstoppable will, energy, and talent of Albertans. Few places on earth provide such freedom of opportunity to achieve so much upward social and economic mobility. This in turn fuels our economic growth and generates wealth that spills far beyond our borders and secures the prosperity and welfare of Confederation. It is our duty and our destiny to renew Alberta's role as an economic and political leader within Canada.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, if you would indulge my passion for Alberta history, I will leave you with the closing words of our province's very first Speech from the Throne, on March 15, 1906, delivered by His Honour Lieutenant Governor George Hedley Vicars Bulgea:

To the several matters herein referred to and to all others that may be brought before you, I invite your careful attention, with the fullest confidence that the result of your deliberations will be beneficial to the Province and to the Dominion as a whole.

May the blessings of Almighty God rest upon your counsels as you work to renew an Alberta that is, in the words of our province's official motto, strong and free.

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

**The Speaker:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite you to join Cara McLeod, accompanied by the Royal Canadian Artillery Band, leading us in the singing of *God Save the Queen*. Please remain standing at the conclusion.

**Hon. Members and Guests:**

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

**The Speaker:** Well, ladies and gentlemen, former Premiers, Members, family, friends, MPs, thank you all for joining us today so, so very much on this very exciting occasion for all of us here today and, in fact, all of us in this province. On April 16, 2019, over 1.894 million votes were cast in 87 constituencies throughout the province of Alberta. As a result, 46 new members have joined a very select group of individuals to serve in this storied Chamber. Since 1905 a grand total of only 954 members have been elected to serve in this venerable Chamber here at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

It's important that we let Albertans know just a little bit more about the 61 men and the 26 women who are serving here as MLAs. In addition to the 46 new members, 35 members are serving their second term in office, four members are serving their third term, and two members are serving their fourth term in office. I think they call that long suffering. Based on the information available to us, the average age at the time of the general election was approximately 46 years, which is unchanged from the 29th Legislature. As of April 16, 2019, there were four members in their 20s; 18 members in their 30s, a very esteemed group of individuals; 24 members in their 40s; 25 members in their 50s; and eight members – they happen to be my favourite – in their 60s.

Alberta is a dynamic province that welcomes people from other cultures and countries. The majority of members were born here in Alberta. However, there are members who were born in other Canadian provinces as well as Brazil, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Fiji, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan. In addition to English, members also communicate in the languages of French, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Cree, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Punjabi, Spanish, and, with apologies to the Filipinos, Tagalog.

Diversity is also reflected in members' previous work experience. The occupational backgrounds of members vary from musicians to economists, engineers to hairstylists, investment bankers to hydrologists. To be more specific, there are 35 entrepreneurs or businesspeople; 11 lawyers – that's probably enough – 11 teachers and postsecondary instructors; eight ranchers and farmers; and six social workers. One member was formerly a Member of Parliament. Seven members previously held positions in local government as councillors or school board trustees.

From an educational standpoint members collectively hold 66 bachelor's degrees, 25 master's, one doctorate, and 57 other diplomas or certificates and professional designations.

Members of the 30th Legislature notably have some interesting family ties. There are, for the first time in history, in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta two brothers serving at the same time, one of them slightly taller than the other. In fact, we're currently doing some research to determine whether or not we are the tallest Legislative Assembly of all time. There are two members whose fathers have previously served in this Assembly. One member's great-grandfather served in the 1930s. There are three members whose great-uncles or great-uncles-in-law served in our Assembly. Finally, we have three members who have cousins who have also served as MLAs.

To conclude, the members of the 30th Legislature are a diverse and capable group whose knowledge and experience will assist us in carrying out our responsibilities as parliamentarians and elected representatives in the service of this great province of Alberta.

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

### Tablings

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

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 1 An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations on your election. I request leave to introduce Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax.

Mr. Speaker, our government is taking action to deliver on the commitment that we made to Albertans to repeal this tax grab, which is all economic pain and no environmental gain. This measure, if adopted, will lift a burden of \$1.4 billion off the Alberta economy, will save families as much as \$1,150 per year, will save

small businesses on average \$4,500 per year, and will, according to economists, lead to the creation of at least 6,000 new full-time jobs.

Mr. Speaker, a recent study indicates that Albertans have been paying the second-highest carbon tax in Canada, far more than our fellow Canadians, and this has not secured for us so-called social licence or market access for our world-class energy. We therefore propose in this measure to provide important tax relief to Albertans. Albertans have been waiting for this relief, which is why consistently two-thirds of Albertans have expressed opposition to the tax that will be repealed by Bill 1. Promise made, promise kept.

This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 1.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

### Certificates of Election

**The Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, I have received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta pursuant to the Election Act a report containing the results of the general election conducted on the 16th day of April, 2019, which states that an election was conducted in the following electoral divisions, and the said report further shows that the following members were duly elected.

[The Clerk read the election returns]

### Motions

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the speech of Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration the week of May 27.

[Motion carried]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until Thursday, May 23, at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:46 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 23, 2019

Day 2

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
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Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Director of House Services  
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Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
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Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 23, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning, members. This morning we will open the House in the same way that the Mother of Parliaments has opened their House for the last number of hundreds of years.

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

### Orders of the Day

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) in order to proceed immediately to debate on Government Motion 8.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Motions

#### Federal Bills C-48 and C-69

8. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly call upon the Senate of Canada to reject Bill C-48, which unjustly discriminates against Alberta and prevents the export of its energy through the north coast of British Columbia, and to reject Bill C-69 as originally drafted unless it is comprehensively amended to ensure respect for Alberta's exclusive provincial jurisdiction over its nonrenewable natural resources and to ensure greater certainty for investors in major resource development projects.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that we will receive the support of all members of the Assembly.

**Mrs. Savage:** Good morning. This is my first opportunity to speak in the Legislative Assembly as the representative of Calgary-North West, and I couldn't be more pleased that this first opportunity to speak is on Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, two federal bills that would severely impact the oil and gas workers in not only Calgary-North West but across the entire province.

One of my first duties as minister was to join our Premier in addressing the Senate Standing Committee on Transport and Communications on Bill C-48. Two days later I had the privilege of joining the Premier again to address the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, which was tasked with reviewing Bill C-69.

The cumulative impact of these two bills is devastating on Alberta. These bills are so problematic that it is difficult to know where to even start. But let's start with Bill C-48. Antagonistic, discriminatory, divisive, illogical, contributing towards civil instability between provinces, threatening the fabric of the Confederation: this is how Bill C-48 has been described. Like Bill

C-69, the proposed legislation threatens our prosperity and, more alarmingly, our national unity.

Bill C-48 was first introduced by the federal government in 2017 with the purpose of imposing an indefinite ban on tankers and to fill an ill-conceived election campaign platform of the federal Liberals. It was introduced to impose an immediate ban on tankers from stopping, loading, and unloading off B.C.'s north coast. The bill would ban 14 substances, including crude oil, partially upgraded bitumen, diluted bitumen, marine diesel, bunker fuel, and synthetic crude, among others. At the same time, the bill excludes other products more typically from other provinces, including liquefied natural gas, gasoline, jet fuel, and propane. The Senate standing committee, thankfully, voted last week not to proceed with the bill. This defeat remains great news for Alberta and Canada and, as the Premier said, represented a victory for common sense and economic growth. But our fight does not end here. Our battle has not yet been won. We are asking the Senate to adopt the committee report and not proceed with the bill. Bill C-48 must be killed.

Taken as a whole, Bill C-48 adversely affects Alberta's future. When combined with other proposed federal legislation, including Bill C-69, Bill C-48 would severely impact Canada's global competitiveness. For years the U.S. has been Canada's number one oil customer but has become less dependent on us because it has unlocked massive resources of its own. This means that our biggest customer has also become our biggest competitor. The growth markets today are mostly in Asia, which is where our products would fetch their fair market value, but Bill C-48 shuts the door to Alberta's most viable path to those markets as we need access to ports in northwestern B.C. to reach Asia. There is no question that this bill is specifically aimed at land-locking Alberta resources. This becomes clear when considering that there are no similar bans along any other Canadian coastline with equally if not more sensitive marine ecological systems. In a stunning display of hypocrisy oil tankers on Canada's east coast are welcome through the St. Lawrence, the Laurentian Channel, and the environmentally and culturally sensitive Bay of Fundy. Bill C-48 won't apply to those places.

This bill is not an oil tanker ban; it is a ban on Alberta oil. At our appearance before the Senate committee the Premier and I raised a number of concerns with this bill. Chief among them is how this bill is the result of a foreign-funded campaign led by special-interest groups to land-lock Canadian energy. This campaign has brutalized Alberta's economy and harmed Albertans. We will not tolerate this anymore. We will target those campaigns and the groups that spread lies. We told the Senate committee that the bill must be defeated, and if it is not, the government of Alberta will challenge it as being unconstitutional.

Like Bill C-48, the proposed Bill C-69 threatens our prosperity and, more alarmingly, our national unity. It is so problematic that the Senate committee approved 187 amendments to the bill in an attempt to fix the most fundamental flaws. This bill will now be reported back to the Senate for review of the committee's amendments and for third reading before being sent back to the House of Commons. But there is no certainty that the Senate as a whole will accept those amendments, and there's no certainty whatsoever that the Liberal majority in the House of Commons would either.

In its original form Bill C-69 is an obvious and flagrant violation of our constitutional right to regulate and develop our natural resources. Bill C-69, the no more pipelines bill, will do lasting harm to Canada's reputation as a place to do business. The proposed legislation moves the current system of environmental assessment to impact assessment based on sustainability. This means a broadened scope of review to consider types of impact previously

not considered, including a project's contribution to the federal government's commitments on climate change. Changes in assessment requirements and processes will significantly impact Alberta, both as a proponent of large infrastructure projects and as a regulator of development happening in our province.

9:10

Along with the broadened scope, the proposed new process will have significantly longer timelines for approvals. While timelines will depend on the size and nature of a project, for the biggest types of projects, including interprovincial pipelines, we estimate project review timelines will be longer than five years. This is unacceptable as it puts Canada at a competitive disadvantage and well below the average approval times among competing jurisdictions.

Bill C-69 also expands the breadth of reviews to consider social and health impacts as well as gender-based analysis. It's a political process; it's not a quasi-judicial independent process.

But most egregiously Bill C-69 exceeds federal jurisdiction by granting federal powers to regulate provincial projects, including in situ oil sands developments that are entirely within provincial borders and are already subject to stringent provincial regulation. This overreach is also contrary to the Constitution Act and the 1992 Supreme Court of Canada ruling. Bill C-69 ignores exclusive provincial authority over the development of our natural resources under section 92A of the Constitution, a provision in the Constitution that was hard fought for by Premier Lougheed and was a condition of Alberta's signature on the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982.

The federal government has attempted to tie the exclusion of oil sands facilities to having a cap on emissions. No other type of project on the project list is tied to a climate change requirement or a cap. This is arbitrary, and it's a requirement that is absolutely discriminatory towards Alberta. While Alberta is clearly targeted and treated unfairly in this draft project list, some other jurisdictions are actually getting relief. For example, provinces with large mining sectors will now face fewer federal reviews of their projects as thresholds to capture these projects for federal review are significantly increased. This is completely unacceptable to Albertans.

It's obvious that this bill needs more than a couple of minor amendments to be fixed. It needs a massive overhaul. If not, it needs to be put completely out of its misery. To ensure that this message has been broadcast loud and clear, on May 2 the Premier and I presented to the Senate committee to reiterate the need for major changes to this bill, and our efforts are ongoing. If significant changes addressing Alberta's concerns are not reflected in the final version of Bill C-69, an immediate constitutional challenge will be undertaken.

In conclusion, passing this motion is an important step in telling Ottawa that Bill C-48 and Bill C-69 in its present form are not acceptable. We absolutely have to stand up for Alberta's energy sector, for Alberta's economy, but most of all for its people. That's what we are doing, and that's why we are urging unanimous adoption of this motion.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West is rising.

**Ms Phillips:** That's right. There's a country song that says: the west is the best if you know where to go. So now you'll remember, Mr. Speaker.

Okay. I'm going to leave comments on C-48 to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and focus my conversation on the Bill C-69 pieces because that is the file with which I am most intimately familiar.

Now, clearly, there is national jurisdiction over large projects, federal jurisdiction over large projects. As a little bit of a story around environmental assessment – I know that everyone is at the edge of their seats – environmental assessment is a shared jurisdiction in Canadian environmental law. There's clear national jurisdiction over large projects. This actually came out of the Oldman River case in the late 1980s. A bunch of people didn't like the provincial government's approach to damming the Oldman River even though it was a necessary project for the growth of irrigation districts in the region, and there was a lot of back-and-forth. It ended up at the Supreme Court in the early 1990s, and the court found that large projects were, in fact, subject to environmental assessment by the federal government, including the navigable waters test. That's in part how we got here.

And in part how we got here was that over time, environmental assessment captured more and more different kinds of projects, to the point where projects that found themselves on – the list of federal assessment was very long, hundreds of projects long, at any given time period. That was probably too much.

In 2012 the federal government brought in what has come to be known as CEAA 2012, Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012. They omnibused it in with the budget. In part, this was a good thing. It shortened the list of projects that were subject to environmental assessment, but it contributed to an overall sort of zeitgeist of the time, which was an overpoliticization of regulatory processes because the issues at the time didn't have anywhere else to go. So people, citizens used the regulatory process to jam in what didn't really belong there: questions of climate change, of regional sort of land-based effects, which are just very clearly under provincial jurisdictions, the latter anyway. And because there wasn't an overall federal climate plan and not a provincial climate plan, people went through those routes to have their questions answered.

That was unfortunate because it meant that a country that is built on large projects, that is a resource-based country where the responsibility of governments is to get big projects built, in a place where we understand that the rule of law has to mean something, it then came to be that investors couldn't count on that sort of certainty, and that was hugely problematic. So it came to be that many companies didn't like CEAA 2012 either and they did want to see change in the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. I do recall being in a meeting with the Conservative caucus of Senators, with the chair of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce at the time, who was also a representative of Suncor, and I remember her saying very clearly to them and to any other Senators who would listen: "No. We don't want this bill scrapped. It cannot pass in its current form – there's no question about that – but CEAA 2012 does require a number of significant improvements that must happen for the good of not just the Alberta oil and gas sector but across the country."

Over the course of time in the Bill C-69 debate it became very, very clear that, yes, while this was of crucial importance to Alberta's economic development, Alberta's ability to have market access to ensure that we are continuing to contribute to Canadian growth over all, which, of course, pipelines and other major projects that get built here are also, Mr. Speaker, involved hydro projects, offshore projects. So it wasn't just about Alberta. Just as the climate change conversation is not just about Alberta or not just about the oil sands, so too was Bill C-69. Certainly, resource-based provinces and even not so resource-based provinces such as the province of Quebec, with hydro projects, began to raise eyebrows about the implications of Bill C-69.

Of course, there needed to be changes to Canadian environmental assessment, but – as always in politics: but, but, but – certainly the

federal government did not get it right. Through a series of consultations and papers and so on – the former Minister of Energy and I expressed concerns about, participated in those processes – they did not get it right. The hon. member opposite the Minister of Energy has clearly laid out the concerns with respect to timelines, infringement on jurisdiction. There are a few others that certainly we took issue with, things like a standing test, those sorts of things. Again, going back to my previous point of how we got here, the words “standing test” raised the hackles of many participants in environmental assessment processes, most certainly among indigenous people but others as well.

9:20

Having said that, you cannot have a situation like we saw with Northern Gateway, with a sort of mob-the-mic approach. There needs to be a reasonable balance there. We weren't sure that C-69 at all achieved that balance, and that was just another one of the pieces that, certainly, we wanted to see an amendment to. We worked with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, CEPA, and others to achieve those amendments.

Now, social and economic impact analysis has always been part of environmental assessment. It is incumbent upon a proponent to prove that their project, because it will have significant environmental effect – there's no question that a dam, a hydroelectric project, a mine, these sorts of things, yes, do involve environmental disturbance. There's no question about that. The question for a regulator is around trade-offs and around national interest. There's always been a need for proponents to prepare a social and economic impact assessment of some kind demonstrating the number of jobs, the number of opportunities for local procurement, training. All of this sort of thing has always been involved, and many proponents will include some kind of gender impact analysis. Really, there's no huge issue with that other than engaging in a little bit of light Facebook wedge politics, red meat for the base.

But the issue of taking into account social and economic impact can allow way too much latitude to the minister for making decisions, in our view. That was one of the other issues that we brought to the Senate committee and to the federal government at the time.

On the issue of the in situ overreach, there's no question that in situ, the development of those resources is firmly within provincial jurisdiction, firmly within the AER's sort of purview of review. The issue with in situ is that it also emits greenhouse gas emissions; we also know that that's shared jurisdiction. Certainly, what we need is a recognition that in situ is governed by an appropriate climate plan in Alberta. This is not only sort of smart investment politics as setting that clear set of rules for companies wanting to responsibly develop our resources is key for them to go out into international markets to make sure that our barrels are competitive in a carbon-constrained future. It's not only smart on that side; it's also smart in terms of it keeps the feds out, which was always a goal of mine when I sat on the other side. It also ensures that the responsible development of it remains within provincial jurisdiction. We need recognition of that.

But we also need a climate plan to go along with that to ensure that producers have that answer to the question from investment banks, from funds and so on, institutional investors, who want to be able to answer those questions when they go back to New York or wherever. They need to be able to say: no; Alberta has got this covered. In a world that is taking action on climate change, where you're seeing financial disclosure, where you're seeing climate risk being taken into account by the central banks around the world, this is not a question that's going away, so we need an environmental assessment act that actually responds adequately to those questions.

And, yeah, what it does in the complicated world of environmental decision-making and shared jurisdiction is that it keeps the federal government out.

Now, off we went to make Alberta's case ... [An electronic device sounded] What is that? All right. We're good.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if I can just remind everyone to silence or not bring your phones into the Chamber. I sure would appreciate that. I know the hon. member is apologetic.

**Ms Phillips:** It's the first day, but at the same time – all right.

We made the case, we worked with industry, we worked with a number of folks to make sure that our amendments were thoughtful, that they were substantive, that they answered the basic questions that investors, that producers had here in Alberta. We made sure that they were reasonable and that they reflected the desires of not just Albertans but, more broadly, large industry across Canada.

I should say that there was an entire consensus among industry on Bill C-69, mostly. But the Canadian Mining Association sort of hedged a little bit, and they did want changes, more than, I think, other organizations, to Bill C-69. So we had to engage with them, too, and they engaged through the Canadian chamber as well. Certainly, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers was very proactive and helpful in helping us synthesize all of these various amendments because I'm sure, as everyone in this House can appreciate as I saw many eyes glazing over, talking about Canadian environmental assessment, it's not that exciting and it is extremely complicated. We needed to make sure that all of the amendments jibed with one another because they were coming from various different industry groups. So we did that.

When we went and spoke to the Independent Senators Group, something really interesting happened, which was that as soon as we brought up the question of jurisdiction and exclusive jurisdiction over natural resource development, because there is some language that certainly does walk that line within the original draft of C-69, which was what raised all of our red flags, the Quebec Senator stepped right up, which keys us into – you know, there's much more as Canadians that often brings us together than divides us. They were keenly interested in that.

Certainly, when the indigenous Senators had a number of questions, we were able to answer them. When Alberta takes substantive steps towards reconciliation, towards investment in indigenous communities via reinvestment of the climate leadership funds, via reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, via ensuring that we've got co-management of parks, just all of these basic things that are sometimes felt like baby steps in the steps to reconciliation, they actually did matter in terms of the answers given to the Independent Senators Group.

When we did that and when we went through sort of methodically which amendments we wanted to see, something quite extraordinary happened, which is that across sort of various party lines and reasons for being there – you know, in the Senate you've got everything from these, like, washed up old Conservative bagmen to other various political appointees who are just living out their political days, because these are not elected people, right? Some of them aren't really interested in public policy, and that's just the way it is. The Senate is not exactly a place where we've seen the most upstanding examples of service to the public at all. We've seen, in fact, many scandals. But even despite that, you've got some really good people and some people that have been in the news. They all agreed, and they agreed with Alberta's position because we took the position that we needed to do something on this bill. I don't make any apologies for talking about people who expense the taxpayer for all manner of stuff.

Anyway, that meeting went well, and what it allowed the thoughtful Senators who really wanted to dig into files to do was that it allowed them to make a country-building argument. It actually allowed them to exercise what the Senate should be and, I think, really allowed, in Canadian politics anyway, us to turn the page on some of that more unsavoury chapter of Senate history, because they actually did what they were supposed to do, which is to look through a bill, discuss it with the stakeholders, make reasonable amendments, actually, you know, read stuff and not just file expense claims. They did what they needed to do. They were the sober second thought in this case, and I think that's a real bright spot for democracy. I don't know if having independence mattered.

**The Speaker:** Members, questions and comments under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I would like to stand today and speak in favour of Government Motion 8, which seeks to

call upon the Senate of Canada to reject Bill C-48, which unjustly discriminates against Alberta and prevents the export of its energy through the north coast of British Columbia ...

And it also seeks to ask the Senate

... to reject Bill C-69 as originally drafted unless it is comprehensively amended to ensure respect for Alberta's exclusive provincial jurisdiction over its nonrenewable natural resources and to ensure greater certainty for investors in major resource [developments].

Mr. Speaker, I think that's something we need to remember. We need to have certainty in our markets here in Alberta if we expect to have the investment that we need to create jobs.

9:30

Now, recently the Senate committee voted to defeat Bill C-48, what we call the tanker ban, but, of course, this vote still has to go to the Senate. It's too bad that we weren't able to stop this in the House of Commons before it got to the Senate, but here we are at this point right now. This is despite the fact that we've had decades of safe shipping of oil in the B.C. waters.

What's also interesting is that they have exempted certain products to be shipped, like LNG tankers to be operating on that same coast, so this is definitely a discriminatory piece of legislation that discriminates against Alberta's oil. Of course, we know the importance of Alberta oil not only to Alberta and to jobs in Alberta but of course all of Canada. This is all about stopping the oil from Alberta, and it's about land-locking our oil. Of course, this land-locking operation is something that's supported by anti-oil activists. These activists are not our friends. They're not people that are here to support Albertans, to support Alberta, or to support Canada. They have an ideology that precludes them from wanting to see us have success in our own province here.

Even within Canada we seem to see a bit of a double standard here, where we have oil moving into Canada on our east coast, and there seems to be no problem with that. This oil is coming from other countries with nowhere near the environmental and safety regulations that we have here in Alberta, so it's unfortunate that we have this situation where we have a government of Canada wanting to restrict the flow of our oil out in an export market to other jurisdictions so that we can benefit here in Canada and here in Alberta, but we seem to be welcoming oil coming from other parts of the world to our east coast.

Now, of course, we also know that Alaska still ships oil along the west coast, still moving oil up and down the coast, but of course there's no problem with that. Nobody's protesting that. Nobody's trying to stop that. But here we have our own government here in

Canada wanting to restrict that flow of oil from leaving our country and benefiting us right here.

We know that there's a world oil demand. We know that that isn't going away soon, and the best thing that we can do is have our socially responsible oil that's produced right here in Alberta be taken around the world. We have the highest safety standards, the highest environmental standards, the highest human rights records here in Alberta and in Canada, so the best thing we can do for oil and for the world on all these issues is to produce as much oil as we can right here in Alberta and get it to those world markets and displace that oil that's produced in jurisdictions that are nowhere near as safe, environmentally friendly, or have the human rights records that we have.

Again, this isn't about protecting our environment. If it was about protecting our environment, we would be trying to get these projects done, but, of course, we have a government that seems to think that its job is to obstruct rather than facilitate this process, and that's where we have a huge problem. We seem to have a government that seems to want to cater to special-interest groups. Those interest groups don't have our interests in mind. They have their own ideology, their own plans, and whatever that is. Apparently, they want to land-lock our resources, and that's not in our best interests. It's not in the best interests of Albertans. We need to stand up and fight against these things like this – Bill C-48, Bill C-69 – that are here to obstruct our opportunities here in Alberta and of course all of Canada because when Alberta succeeds, so does all of Canada.

Now, we talk about Bill C-69 here. Some people say that it was maybe well intentioned, but if it was so well intentioned, I just don't know why there were so many mistakes with it. We're sitting here now. I think the Senate has about 70 amendments they want to put forward on this bill. Obviously, it's deeply flawed, and it needs a lot of work. Again, we're sitting at this point here, you know, where it seems like we're working from behind on this issue. But we've got to work with the Senate, and we need to be able to either get this massive number of amendments done or get this bill pulled. It's either one or the other because it's unacceptable the way it is.

Now, of course, it seeks to overhaul the National Energy Board and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and change how major projects are reviewed and approved in Canada. According to the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association they said that, quote, it is difficult to imagine that a new major pipeline could be built in Canada under the impact assessment act. This is what's being proposed here. Obviously, an organization like that, they have opinions on these things because this is what they do for a living. This is their industry, and they know what they need to do to operate, and, of course, this bill here was going to restrict those opportunities. I know we identified this, and the UCP identified this as a massive problem the day it came out, which was February 8, 2018. By contrast the NDP Alberta government at the time didn't speak out until after C-69 passed the House of Commons. That's why we're in this situation here where we're trying to get things stopped in the Senate, where we hopefully could've had something done while it was in the House of Commons. That's why we need to be fighting. We should've been united in Alberta fighting this right from the start, right from February 2018.

Now what this does, what Bill C-69 does, is that it makes a complicated system even more complicated. We've seen what happened with the Trans Mountain pipeline. Over five years of work, over a billion dollars, and now we had the federal government buy it out for – what? – four and a half billion dollars? And we're sitting here a year later, and we still have not one bit of progress on that pipeline. It's absolutely astounding to think that with the system we have now and the problems that we've had in trying to



get a pipeline built, now we want to have Bill C-69 come along and make that system even more complicated. It's obviously unacceptable. We can't have situations go on like this.

Obviously, if we want to attract investment to Alberta, if we want to attract investment to Canada, if we want to have projects like this continue – and let's be clear, these projects, these aren't government projects, these are private industries that want to come and spend their money to help create jobs here in Alberta and help develop our resources. This isn't government money, this isn't taxpayer money; these are private investors who want to come here, and they want to help us out. Of course, they want to make a return on their investment, and that's why we can't have them sitting for years and years and years with billions of dollars tied up with no chance and no sight on the horizon as far as an opportunity to get some sort of return on their investment.

Now, again I'll mention that the Senate has come up with about 70 amendments. Obviously, this bill is deeply flawed. I guess it would be humorous if it wasn't so serious, the situation, an acronym called a BANANA law, and that stands for build absolutely nothing anywhere near anything. That's the situation we have here, where we have a bill that wants to slow down and stop any kind of production here in Alberta and Canada. It definitely violates our Constitution. This is provincial jurisdiction. We have the right to regulate and develop our resources. There's some discussion back and forth on the size of projects and that sort of thing, but obviously this is something we need to stand up and we need to fight for. We need to stop these two bills. We need to put up a fight because it's important. It's not only important for Alberta and for Albertans and for jobs for Albertans, but it's also important for the Canadian economy.

Again, this creates uncertainty for industry. If we talk about wanting to refine our resources here and everything, and any time we have a company or people from outside the country that want to come in here and invest, if they wanted to do a big project here and they see what's happening here in this situation with something like Bill C-69 and what happened with Trans Mountain, they are so less likely to want to invest in Alberta because of these things. I think what we need to do – it's really simple. Government should be here to facilitate these things and not obstruct these things.

So with that, I just want to say I support this Government Motion 8. We need to pass this, and we need to keep the pressure on the federal government and on the Senate to do what's right with these two bills. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

9:40

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and let me begin, of course, by taking this opportunity, where this is my first opportunity to speak on the record, to congratulate you on your new position.

I rise today, of course, to speak to this motion regarding the federal bills C-69 and C-48. Like previous speakers, I want to begin by of course suggesting that I am in favour of passing that motion because, quite clearly, when it comes to these two federal bills, the people of this province have been very loud and clear, and they have been loud and clear for some time. Bill C-48, the so-called tanker ban, is a vague and discriminatory piece of legislation that, quite frankly, just needs to be done away with completely. It is beyond fixing, Mr. Speaker. Bill C-69, the so-called no more pipelines law: well, that too needs a very significant rewrite, and it is as simple as that.

Of course, I want to begin by saying that I'm pleased that the hon. Premier has moved from his position of simply suggesting we need to eliminate Bill C-69 to accepting the suite of amendments that we put in to the Senate when we were in government and essentially endorsing that path forward. I'll talk a little bit more about that in a moment.

These bills are significantly difficult bills. They're troubling to the people of Alberta, and they represent a significant risk to Alberta jobs and to the Alberta economy overall. More than that, they represent a significant risk to jobs across this country, and they represent a significant risk to the Canadian economy, so that was why when we were in government we did a tremendous amount of work to try to have these bills either rejected or significantly amended. My colleague, the Member for Lethbridge-West, from whom you just heard, in her time when she served as the minister of environment, and also the former Minister of Energy, our former MLA for the riding of Central Peace-Notley – I guess I can say her name now, Marg McCuaig-Boyd – did a tremendous amount of work over some time advocating to the federal government and then subsequently to the Senate about the problems with respect to these pieces of legislation, as did many people in our public service – I also want to offer my thanks to them for their support and their advocacy with respect to this issue – as of course did many, many other leaders in Alberta's civil society fight very hard against these bills and continue to, whether it be industry leaders, whether it be municipal leaders, whether it be leaders from indigenous communities. They all came together to outline the significant concerns with respect to these bills.

We assembled numerous position papers, Mr. Speaker. We made assertions for clarity, and we presented, as I said, a suite of comprehensive amendments to the Senate. In short, what we all did was that we came together to speak often and always in favour of the future of Alberta's energy industry, to protect it, in essence, from the consequences of these two horribly misguided and broken bills. I was pleased myself to be able to go to Ottawa to speak to the Senate on Bill C-69, and I was also pleased because initially, you may recall, when the Senate was going to consider Bill C-48, the original plan was that they would were not going to come to Alberta. I don't know if many of you remember that. The plan was that they were going to pop by B.C., interestingly, but they didn't think it would make that much sense to pop by Alberta. We quickly raised the alarm on that and outlined the fairly obvious reasons for why maybe they might want to pop by Alberta and talk to the people who were directly affected and impacted by the rather discriminatory nature of Bill C-48. So they did, and I think that that actually helped quite a bit.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I have heard from Senators who would not necessarily have considered the consequences of C-48 had they heard not only from people in Alberta's energy industry but other community leaders from Alberta who talked about why the people of Alberta were so offended by what C-48 represented. I was very pleased that that was able to happen, and as well, of course, like many in this Assembly, I was pleased when we saw that some of our advocacy has had at least an interim success as it relates to the results of the two committees that were considering those bills and their recommendations to the rest of the Senate.

We saw, of course, as you know, the Senate committee that was considering C-48 do an outright recommendation that it not go any further, essentially demonstrating what I would suggest is the soberest second thought we have seen out of the Senate for some time. As well, we saw the transportation committee review and

adopt a series of very comprehensive amendments to C-69, and they will be sending that back to the Senate.

I want to say that this is because we all came together with a very simple message, and it's basically this: if Alberta is going to continue to do what it does for the rest of Canada, if Alberta is going to continue to drive economic growth throughout this country, if we are going to continue to contribute to the schools and the hospitals and the roads, which actually you see throughout the country of Canada, if we are going to be able to continue to do that and to keep Canadians across this country employed in many ways, then we are going to have to have a federal government that works with us and that understands the import of the Alberta economy and we need a federal government that works for Alberta.

That has been, of course, the position that we have taken in this caucus, whether we were in government or in the role that we serve now, and it will continue to be that we basically need the federal government to work with us on pipelines, that we need the federal government to work with us on energy policy, and that we need the federal government to work with us on the environment because as Canadians, as I've said, we all share in the prosperity that these resources bring.

When I went and presented on Bill C-48, I actually had an opportunity to bring people with us to actually enhance that case, so I invited two workers, Angela and Roger, who came with me when I spoke to the Senate in Calgary. They talked a little bit about their history as people who worked within the energy industry. While they were both from Calgary, they both actually had come from other parts of the country, and they'd lived, in fact, all over the country, working in the energy sector, so they provided a tremendous picture to members of the Senate of what Canadians from coast to coast to coast who depend on our energy sector look like and what they think and what that bill meant to them.

I was pleased that we were able to make some of those points, and we were able to make as well the point that if we as Albertans are faced with a series of legislative actions, whether it be in other provinces or whether it be federal, that we will not just take it lying down, that we will come together in order to not only protect our interests as Albertans but to protect our interests as Canadians. So that's what we did.

We didn't approach it by ranting and raving, Madam Speaker. What we did instead was we rolled up our sleeves, and we went in, did our homework, we talked to industry, we talked to all these folks, we talked about what the most pragmatic and meaningful and evidence-based amendments would look like and what kind of work had to be done. We developed consensus, and we worked collaboratively because that's what you do when you work as a province which is part of a nation like ours. We looked for Alberta solutions, and that is what we presented because it's also our view that we cannot simply have Bill C-69 disappear and have it replaced with the broken system that we had in the past.

It is important, as we have seen with the wrangling over the last four years, that we have public trust from indigenous communities, from communities that are also rightly – rightly – concerned about environmental issues. We cannot, Madam Speaker, fall back 10 years to a time where we demonized people for the very act of raising legitimate concerns about the safety of our air and our land and our water.

9:50

What we have to do is understand that we are faced with two competing challenges. One challenge is to position our energy industry such that we can expand our markets, expand the demand for our product, be smarter about how we market our product, get it there faster and cheaper. That's one challenge. On the other hand,

we must also face the challenge which is presented to us by climate change, which is impacting people across the world as a result, and also the challenge that we face here in Alberta as a result of climate change and the consequences of climate change, and also other environmental issues that arise from the work that we do in our energy sector.

These are things that governments are elected to do. Governments aren't elected to do the easy thing. It's not black and white being in government. It's not like, "Oh, hey; we're going to turn this dial and make everyone rich" or "We're going to walk away and make everyone poor." Those are not the decisions that we make, Madam Speaker. We are elected to find a balance and to forge through difficult challenges. That's what the new members over there are going to have to work on. That's what we were working on, and that is the message that we've been taking to all Canadians for the last four years.

It's fundamentally important, then, that all of this be taken into consideration. Bill C-69 is the flawed product of an attempt to go too far the other way, but we cannot fall back into this search for easy solutions where we then flip back the other way. What we need to do is fix C-69, and that's why I'm pleased that so many of the amendments that were the product of much consultation, much research, much scientific study were the amendments that actually found their way to being approved by the Senate committee. Hopefully, we will see that move forward.

Let me just talk a little bit about what we were looking for with respect to Bill C-69. I won't go through all of them because it was rather lengthy, and I was trying to find a way to reduce my submissions to something that could be talked about in a relatively short time. In essence, we said that, first of all, what we need are clear exemptions for in situ, for interprovincial pipelines, for all generating units using natural gas, renewables, and petrochemicals. We said to the Senate and we have said to the federal government that we already have a system for oversight of these projects within our borders. We probably have the most developed system of oversight for these kinds of projects within our borders here in Alberta in relation to anywhere else in the rest of the country as well as very possibly anywhere else on the continent, so we don't need other people getting involved in that. We don't need a back-seat regulator, is what we said.

We also said, as many other people have already commented, that we have to get rid of all the vague language. We need certainty. That's very clear. We told Ottawa: listen, we've already spent over a decade in court over multiple efforts to build energy and major, major national infrastructure projects. We don't want to – you know, the only people that are going to make money off of C-69 the way it's currently written are lawyers because we could easily generate another 20 years of court cases trying to figure out what the heck half of the language that exists in the first version of C-69 means. We said: don't do that. I mean, I'm a fan of lawyers. As you know, I am one. But at the end of the day, I really think that we can find other ways to make our own living, and in the meantime we need to provide clarity and certainty to investors and definition for what their rights are, and that is what needed to be changed in C-69 so that we didn't enhance and exacerbate the problem that already existed.

The third thing that was pretty critical that we talked about was strict timelines. We needed to fix the issue of timelines so that there weren't a whole bunch of loopholes that could trigger and retrigger the process around project reviews. With the way C-69 works in its current form, there were way too many opportunities for game playing with respect to timeline loopholes.

Finally, we also said that the federal government and the Senate needed to recognize the work that we had done under Alberta's

climate leadership plan and that the work done under Alberta's climate leadership plan should be seen as sufficient for the federal government to keep its nose out of our environmental business because, in fact, we were already leading the country with respect to comprehensive work to address climate change issues as they are related to the work within our energy industry.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Contrary to what many members over there may believe, there was much more to our climate leadership plan than a price on carbon. We had a plan to phase out coal-fired production. We had a robust strategy for reducing methane, which, of course, is a far more problematic substance to the matter of climate change than even carbon. And we had, as you know, put on the 100-megatonne cap on oil sands emissions, therefore delinking the matter of climate change from the conversation around energy infrastructure, construction, and investment. So those also were the points that we made.

Now, although we know that the members opposite are very keen to get rid of the plan to price carbon, I certainly hope that they do not also remove these other elements of our plan – the methane reduction, the emissions cap, and the plan to roll back and phase out coal-fired pollution – because these are the kinds of things that, quite frankly, give comfort to Canadians from coast to coast to coast that, in fact, Alberta is a jurisdiction that they can count on to do what is necessary to find that fine balance, that relationship between a robust, sustainable energy industry and, on the other hand, the need to think beyond the six-month or the 12-month or even the four-year election cycle and instead think about the future of our climate and our air and our land and our water. So I would suggest that these are the ways that we were able to focus on Bill C-69 and make the kinds of changes that were necessary.

Now, with respect to Bill C-48 I've already heard some of the comments that folks opposite have made, and I think they've really touched on the critical elements of C-48 that were problematic. It is in effect a ban on Alberta energy products – no question about it – and it was irritating as heck to see something like that be put forward by the federal government with so little consideration for the consequences and implications for Canada's energy industry. It was a ban that overreached – far overreached – and there was not a scientific, research-, evidence-based linkage between the ban and the issues that the legislation was theoretically designed to address.

It was also and continues to be a bill that is, I would suggest, both hypocritical and inconsistent. You know, we can't have double-, triple-hull tankers that contain partially upgraded bitumen, but we can have LNG tankers, and we can also have whatever the U.S. decides to put in a boat in Alaska and ship right down through the same shipping corridor. That makes no sense.

What was even more offensive to me, quite honestly, which I have heard mentioned by other members here, was the east-coast versus west-coast dynamic. Here we are in Alberta unable to get our products to Ontario, to Quebec, to Atlantic Canada, and we see Quebec and Atlantic Canada importing petrochemical products from other jurisdictions, putting the very kinds of products into tankers that would potentially be banned on the west coast, but it's okely-dokely for them to sail up the east coast and down the St. Lawrence because they happen to need those energy products.

It is utterly hypocritical, and more than that, separate and apart from how frustrated that makes Albertans – it's not a small amount of frustration, we all know – it's just bad nation building. It's bad governance. You know, as much as we think of ourselves as being sort of the centre of the world sometimes, the reality is that Canada is a very small country in a very big world. As a nation we need to

act strategically when it comes to selling our products and exploiting the potential of our resources, and we are acting the opposite of strategically right now. We are buying products from other jurisdictions and saying no to our products and limiting our ability to expand to other markets. When you pull it all together, it really is – and this was a phrase that I used when I was speaking to the Senate committee – a stampede of stupid. It truly is, and it needs to not go forward.

10:00

I will say that we should therefore make sure that we do not move forward with Bill C-48, that we have to essentially keep our options open. You know, we have three pipelines right now that are in various stages of approval and, well, hopefully, someday construction. Two of them we have no agency over; we just have to rely on the good graces of the United States. The third one: we all know the story with that one. The idea that we would then close off any other opportunities, to me, is very short-sighted.

As well, the final thing I would say about C-48 is that I do believe it was profoundly disrespectful to Canada's indigenous people and that it simply didn't reflect the level of consultation that those indigenous communities who have an interest in our oil and gas resources deserve to have had before their ability to take advantage of that was shut off. That is what C-48 proposes to do, and that's why we also believe that that was another reason for it to be rejected.

In closing, let me just say that while we are cautiously optimistic about the progress with C-69 and the progress with C-48 and while we hope that C-69 will be amended in alignment with the proposals that we put forward and while we hope that C-48 is completely iced – those are all good things – let me say that for the members on this side of the House, we believe that Canadians are going to expect that we must also take seriously our responsibility to the environment. We will also have to take seriously our responsibility as it relates to doing actual things to fight climate change. I was quite distressed a couple of days ago to hear the new environment minister suggest that climate change is not really a crisis, it's not an emergency, and that we're just going to talk about it for a while. I would suggest that that's what we were doing 20 years ago. Now is not the time to go back to that.

I would also suggest that we are, in fact, part of a bigger country and that we need to be conscious of what people are thinking about these issues outside of our borders. If we are going to nation build as opposed to nation divide for the sake of politics, then what we must do is we have to hear Canadians on these issues as well. Those Canadians that we have to hear would include the thousands of young people that were marching just a couple of weeks ago, even in Alberta, to talk about how concerned they are about the matters of climate change.

Once again, I would urge the members opposite, even as we will be talking about their Bill 1 – if you want to go ahead and stop carbon pricing, well, have at 'er. I mean, there are numerous conservatives not only in Canada but around the world who actually believe that carbon pricing is the most effective way to combat climate change. Yeah, do your thing. But to stop all work on combating climate change is profoundly irresponsible, and it will be a legacy about which none of your grandchildren will be very proud. We, frankly, have an obligation to all Canadians to keep working on this world-wide problem. I would suggest that if we are going to have Canadians come with us on the matters of C-69 and C-48, which I think they should, then we must also hear them on these other issues. We must also hear our kids on these other issues, and we absolutely must not demonize or attack any Albertan or any Canadian who wants to raise their concerns on these other issues.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to end my comments and again offer my support for this motion. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, questions and comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a) are available.

Seeing none, the Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me again be one of the ones to congratulate you on your election as well as your two colleagues. It certainly was a remarkable day yesterday and certainly has been a remarkable past month, of course, with the election and the people of Alberta speaking very loud and clear as to what they would like going into the future. I'd also like to take a moment here to thank the new Minister of Energy for her words in speaking in regard to this motion that is being brought forward against Bill C-48 and Bill C-69. Certainly, her expertise in that particular role, I think, in my opinion, is second to none and something that will be valued in this Legislature and outside of this Chamber.

The motion, which talks about, of course, rejecting Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, I think is something that is very important not only to the people in this Chamber. It's nice to see the opposition supporting this motion, at least based upon many of the comments that I've heard. I think that is a good sign, we'll say, going forward.

I also want to touch a little bit on what the Minister of Energy talked about when she mentioned C-48 and talked about antagonistic, discriminatory, and, in fact, a bill that is considered illogical. I'm not going to talk from the perspective of somebody who's going to pretend to be an expert on the oil and gas industry. I'm not. I'm a citizen like everybody else in this room, a police officer by trade. Others in here are butchers and farmers and social workers. But I think we need to talk from a perspective of the people, the people whom we represent.

I think everybody here, at least everybody here on the government side, can talk about recent door-knocking, talking to people in the community, talking to constituents of mine in Calgary-West, talking to constituents outside of Calgary-West when I assisted others in door-knocking. The disappointments and – I think I'm very kind by saying that – I would almost argue the anger of people in Calgary against Bill C-48, against Bill C-69 is something that really can almost not be measured. This is really something that is about – and I know our Premier has talked about this before – national unity. We're a generous people, as the Premier has stated, but, you know, we're not going to continue to be kicked around like a football, and we're going to be in a position where we are going to let Ottawa know that these bills are unacceptable for our oil and gas industry.

Now, the Leader of the Opposition talked about ranting and raving. I haven't seen ranting and raving. What I have seen is people that want somebody to defend them, somebody they want to stand up and say that they're going to defend their oil and gas industry, and they're going to defend their jobs. That's not ranting and raving. That's just letting the people in Ottawa know that they're not going to be taken advantage of anymore, because that's what it sort of feels like.

**10:10**

We Albertans, you know, we're generous people. We supply the federal government with these transfer payments, and all we've ever asked for is fairness. Fairness. That's not too much to ask from Ottawa or anybody else in Canada. So when we feel like we're not being treated fairly, it's not about ranting and raving; it's about defending, defending our province, defending the people who we represent, and that – that – is not something that is unreasonable.

When we talk about those who are opposed to our oil and gas industry here in Alberta, my experience is that sometimes you just can't negotiate with people who refuse to negotiate. That's a challenge. That's a challenge that many people that are in forms of negotiation face.

Now, I come from a very unique position where myself, along with our Minister of Transportation and, in fact, our new minister, our Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, was also part of a previous government. I remember being in caucus when the Premier at the time, God rest his soul, Premier Jim Prentice walked in, and he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we're in trouble." Eyes light up. "What do you mean, sir?" "We have now become the largest supplier of oil and gas to the United States, and people are mad. People are very mad." Saudi Arabians were mad. Other oil suppliers were mad. We had just done what we always do in Alberta. We put our heads down. We work hard. We don't ask for handouts. All we do is go to work, and that work created an industry that, in my opinion and I think the opinion of everybody else for sure on the government side, was second to none. Technologies used everywhere around the world, experience, personnel: again, second to none.

So when the Premier at the time said that we were in trouble, that is what really got my attention as just a normal Albertan as to the concerted effort amongst those who oppose our oil and gas industry, on how they collaborated to really drive down the price of oil. Remember, we don't have control. We in Canada don't have control over OPEC. I mean, this is a group of individuals who really decide, you know, what the price of oil is going to be, and that's not something that we in Alberta have any control of. And we saw that. We saw the oil price purposely coming down. Why was that? Well, it's because for us in Alberta, it probably – I'm no expert on this, but I'm going to hazard a guess that it's probably in the realm of \$30, give or take, to extract a barrel of oil out of the ground. For other countries, not so much. For other countries, I've heard \$8, \$9 a barrel to extract the oil out of the ground. Well, that's a big difference.

How can we hurt the industry here in Alberta? Well, if we drive down the price of oil, it makes it challenging for these companies to operate. Then we saw what happened. We saw what happened. We saw our oil industry be devastated over the last four years, and then there was a doubling down of issues, a doubling down of regulations, bills such as these, C-48, C-69, coined as the antipipeline bill. It's not coined as the pro-industry bill. It's coined as the antipipeline bill. That should be telling everybody something right now as we sit here in this Chamber.

I, of course, support this motion, support the motion to reject C-48, to reject C-69. Let those in Ottawa, let those in that government know that we are not going to take this anymore. It's not about ranting and raving, but it is about defending the people whom we represent, and I cannot stress that enough. It was made perfectly clear during the last election that they, meaning the people of Alberta, wanted a government to represent them and defend them in Ottawa, not agree with everything that the Prime Minister says. Certainly, we will try to reason, we will try to do our best to talk, but it's very clear, when you see bills like this, C-48 and C-69, this is not something that requires some sort of amendment, as was previously tried by others. As our Premier has stated, this is something that requires if not the complete, absolute rejection of the bills then, at minimum, absolute reconstructive surgery of these bills. I cannot stress the importance of the national unity component, of making sure that we are together on this motion, that we let everyone in Ottawa know that we are unified in rejecting Bill C-48, rejecting Bill C-69.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to add one more thing if I do have any time left. I want to talk about the responsible oil that was developed here in Alberta to the highest standards – highest standards – in the world, technology that, I would say, is second to none. We have human rights standards which, I believe, are second to none. When you have companies like some of the major companies that have left Alberta to go to places like Qatar, Venezuela, other countries that have less human rights standards, less standards for employees, less standards when it comes to environmental records – we were not the embarrassing cousin. We were the leaders. We were the leaders in this industry, and we were a threat, and that is why there was a co-ordinated effort to go after Alberta. I'm proud to say that I am part of a group of individuals that are going to stand up on behalf of the people of Alberta, on behalf of the constituents that I've asked to elect me for a third time in this Legislature to say no to Bill C-48, to say no to Bill C-69, to say no to anything that is going to hinder our oil and gas industry from, really, becoming once again the leaders in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to close by saying thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this issue. Thank you to my colleagues for all being here today, for letting people in Canada know, for letting the world know that Bill C-48, Bill C-69 need to be rejected by those who are in positions of authority at the moment, which is in front of the Senate. We need to let Ottawa know, under the current government, that we are not going to take this anymore. We are not going to accept these types of bills in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this time.

10:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments.

Seeing none, the Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election.

It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion regarding federal bills C-48 and C-69. The content of these bills is critical to the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Albertans and, in fact, Canadians across this country. It is particularly important for those in Calgary, who were hit the hardest when commodity prices fell in 2015.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

There is no question where Calgarians or Albertans stand on these bills. We have a vested interest in having a strong economy that includes everyone, that offers opportunities for everyone, an economy where prosperity is shared fairly and more equitably, an economy that can support a cutting-edge school system for our youth, an economy that can support publicly funded and publicly delivered universal health care, and an economy that creates conditions for the full inclusion of those who are differently abled.

We also have a vested interest in protecting the environment for ourselves, for our children, and for our future generations. That is why, Madam Speaker, our leader has been very clear from day one that environment and economy can and must go hand in hand. She has been very clear that the respect for indigenous rights and the economy can and must go hand in hand.

We know that we have taken steps to address climate issues, we have taken steps to address indigenous rights issues, and we know that Albertans will not stand by while Ottawa tries to kneecap Alberta's energy industry. Albertans won't stand for it, and neither will we. In fact, when we were in government, we fought hard against this, against these bills. The Senate committee's rejection of Bill C-48, the tanker ban, is a direct result of the hard work of our

leader, the former Premier. This was an important step in the right direction, but we are not out of the woods yet. We still need the full Senate and the House of Commons to reject Bill C-48 and make substantial improvements to Bill C-69 as laid out by our leader and our former environment minister, the MLA for Lethbridge-West. When she was Premier, the hon. Leader of the Opposition fought diligently against the federal government's punishing tanker ban, a ban we all know is targeted at Alberta's resources.

On that note, I would also like to thank our newly elected government for joining us in the fight to get our resources to market and to stop the federal government's attempt to ban Alberta's oil. I think it's safe to say that we agree that the so-called tanker ban is not about marine traffic. It's not even about tankers. If it were, B.C. LNG tankers wouldn't be allowed to travel freely off the west coast. It's as clear as a prairie sky that this is about banning Alberta oil from reaching new markets. We have known for a long time now that we can no longer count on simply selling our resources to one market, the American market. They were our biggest customers; now they are our biggest competitors. But for some reason successive federal Conservative governments have failed to build a pipeline to move Alberta's resources. Our new Premier was a federal cabinet minister and failed, when he was in Ottawa, to get a pipeline to tidewater. In fact, in this House he said – and I paraphrase – that he was not responsible for the pipelines.

Our current federal government promised to fix their broken system and, instead, put forward these two bills designed to increase the land lock on Alberta resources. Now more than ever we need to access new markets to support good-paying jobs and investments in Alberta. That is why our government and our leader made the critical decision to get our oil moving by rail, 120,000 barrels' worth a day. Our rail deal would have helped keep folks working until Ottawa gets the pipeline mess sorted out, but it was never and should not be considered a long-term solution. There is only one solution, pipelines, but pipelines won't make a difference if we can't move them past the coast.

Albertans elected this government in the hopes that they would be able to finally get a pipeline and, with it, jobs. It is in everyone's interest that they succeed in this pursuit, and I truly hope they do. I hope that by repealing our climate leadership plan, they don't put the pipeline in jeopardy. I hope that by turning back the clock on environmental protections, on the emission cap, on the emission reductions, they don't lose the support of Canadians, that our government fought so hard to earn. Above all, this fight, the one we are all joined in here, is for the people of Alberta. There aren't many Albertans who were not affected by the historic economic downturn. The drop in the global price of oil took a big toll on working people and had ripple effects throughout our province and our country.

Here in Alberta we are blessed with an extremely valuable natural resource, a resource in demand across the world right now and for years to come, a resource that helped build this country and has improved the well-being of every Albertan and every Canadian. That resource is pulled from the ground by women and men who make good, family-supporting wages. Those wages support strong communities where working people can build good, secure lives, where all Albertans flourish. That resource funds strong public services like public health care, education, and services for vulnerable Albertans. These are things that connect us and give us hope for the future.

Over the last four years, that resource was pulled from the ground in conjunction with North America's most ambitious and comprehensive climate plan, a plan that made Alberta a world leader and one of the world's most responsible energy producers, a plan that secured the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline

expansion project and put Alberta in a strong position to protect our constitutional rights to regulate our own resources against attacks like Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, a plan that won over the hearts and minds of Canadians and increased national support for a new pipeline to tidewater, a plan that generated strong enough national support for a new pipeline that we were able to compel Ottawa to buy Trans Mountain when investors pulled out, a plan that gave our industry the competitive edge that it needed to sell our product in an increasingly lower carbon global economy. Our government proved that you can protect the environment, take leading action on climate change, and grow our economy at the same time.

We cannot afford to go backwards. There is too much at stake and too much to lose. We need to defend the things that make Alberta one of the best places on Earth to live, work, and raise a family and to fight for an Alberta and Canada that works for everyone.

With that, I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

10:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a), are there any comments or questions?

Seeing none, the hon. Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you so much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Let me begin by congratulating you on your election to the chair.

Let me also begin, as these are my first words in the 30th Legislature, with an expression of deep gratitude for my Calgary-Lougheed constituents for having given me the honour of representing them in this place for the second time. Let me congratulate all members from both sides of the House on their election, and let me reinforce my hope that we can work together, wherever possible finding common ground. I not only acknowledge but applaud the opposition for having to discharge its constitutional obligation to hold the government to account and to oppose, I hope more often constructively. But on this it is, I think, felicitous that we are beginning the history of this, the 30th Assembly, on a point of common accord, of shared defence of Alberta's vital economic interests.

As Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor said in the Speech from the Throne yesterday, our province has gone through a time of adversity, and it is essential for us to work together to reignite Alberta's economy and to defend our vital interests. That is why we have proposed this motion to begin this session of the Legislature.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly call upon the Senate of Canada to reject Bill C-48, which unjustly discriminates against Alberta and prevents the export of its energy through the north coast of British Columbia, and to reject Bill C-69 as originally drafted unless it is comprehensively amended to ensure respect for Alberta's exclusive provincial jurisdiction over its nonrenewable natural resources and to ensure greater certainty for investors in major resource development projects.

I understand that the Official Opposition intends to support this motion, for which I would like to thank them. More specifically, I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition and former Premier for having cosigned a letter from the leaders of Alberta's four main political parties on May 17, last week, which was sent to every member of the Canadian Senate. This was also cosigned by the leader of the Alberta Party and the Alberta Liberal Party, so four parties which collectively won the votes of some 98 per cent of Albertans in an election where there were more voters than any in our history. So, Madam Speaker, this is a powerful expression of consensus. We may have – I don't know – perhaps some small, nuanced differences on aspects of these bills, but fundamentally we

are united speaking for Albertans as Team Alberta, sending a clear message to Ottawa: stop these attacks on this province, on its economic future, on our vital economic interests, on jobs, on our way of life; stop undermining national unity; stop damaging the province that has done so much to create wealth and opportunity for people from coast to coast.

Madam Speaker, we Albertans should be enormously proud of what we have achieved. As Her Honour said in the throne speech, there are very few societies on the face of the Earth that have seen greater economic and social progress than has Alberta in the past century, and much of that progress was thanks to our ability to develop responsibly the endowment nature of our natural resources. We as Albertans are blessed beyond compare to have inherited the third-largest recoverable oil reserves on Earth, the fourth-largest recoverable natural gas reserves on Earth. We are the fourth-largest exporter of crude oil in the world. And if we were unleashed, if we could knock down the constraints and the barriers that have been erected around us, we could be perhaps the second-largest exporter of energy on the face of the Earth.

Madam Speaker, those resources represent an incalculable value. In fact, if one were to commodify our oil resources alone at current global prices, they would have a value of greater than \$16 trillion. Now, it's hard to conceptualize the meaning of \$16 trillion, but let me put it in these terms. If we could develop even a reasonable fraction of those resources at a time in world history where there is a growing global demand for oil and gas – according to the International Energy Agency there will be at least a 10 per cent increase in demand and consumption of oil and gas in the next 20 years, from now through 2040. If we were to commodify the value of that resource in that period, it means that we as Albertans and as Canadians would be able to manage the over \$1 trillion in combined public debts and liabilities that encumber Canadian governments. According to fiscal studies, if one adds up all of the tax-supported provincial and federal debt, other forms of liabilities, and the unfunded liabilities of public pension plans, we have a total public indebtedness in this country of over \$1 trillion.

Now, handling that debt, in the context of an aging population with a shrinking birth rate, is an enormous demographic challenge. If you want to understand how deep that challenge is, we need look no further than the countries of southern Europe – for example, Greece and Spain – that are 15 or 20 years ahead of the demographic curve of aging, governments that have been skirting insolvency in recent years. That is the fiscal implication of the demographic trends which we are beginning to experience here, with a shrinking tax base and an expanding population of people who require social support. And if we want to be able to provide that high-quality social support, that health care, those pensions, and a bright future for the next generation through high-quality public education and the infrastructure to support an increasingly diversified economy, if we want those things – and we do – then we must have a way of paying for them.

These resources constitute that way not just for Albertans, Madam Speaker, but for all Canadians. We have played a massive, oversized role as the key engine of Canadian economic prosperity and of generosity in the federation. In fact, according to research by University of Calgary professor emeritus Dr. Robert Mansell, Albertans have contributed a net \$611 billion to the rest of the federation since 1957. That's an average per person contribution of \$14,000 per year. That is to say that roads in Cape Breton and hospitals in Newfoundland and Labrador and public services in Quebec and all across the country are indirectly funded in part by the wealth generated by the enormous resources of this province.

So when we propose this bill, this does not constitute special pleading for the province of Alberta although clearly we are

defending our interests. This represents the national interest, and this is the message – we will have hon. members of the Senate joining us, I believe, in the gallery later this morning to observe the vote on this motion. I will be joining them. They have accepted my invitation to meet over lunch later today, as has the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I want them to carry back to Ottawa this message, that what we Albertans are conveying in our opposition to policies incorporated in bills C-48 and C-69, what we are doing is seeking to strengthen the federation, to strengthen and defend the Canadian national interest, not some parochial provincial interest.

Now, Madam Speaker, we Albertans have been enormously generous in contributing those resources, and, by the way, it's not just the net fiscal transfers. Think about how this province has been an elevator for social progress in this country. Think about how since the late 1980s our population has doubled, in large measure thanks to migration from other parts of Canada as well as growing levels of immigration from abroad. Those folks, who joined us from Newfoundland to British Columbia to become Albertans, arrived here to pursue opportunity, and so many of them left behind the despondency created by dependency, by unemployment, and sometimes by even poverty. People left behind their inability to care for their families themselves and their communities.

10:40

The great east coast folk artist Stan Rogers had a great song about this called *The Idiot*, about a working man from Newfoundland who said: maybe I'm an idiot, but I'm going to go out to the oil refineries in Alberta and work hard in a dirty job to take care of myself and my family. This has become part of who we are as Canadians. Alberta has been an accelerator of national unity because of this role that we have played in relieving economic anxiety amongst our fellow Canadians. In so many ways we have made this huge contribution, and we are proud to have done so.

I grant that there's always been a tiny minority of Albertans who resent any net contribution that we make to the rest of the federation. I say that they are wrong. I say that we are proud, through equalization and other transfers, through this role we have played in our economy, to have contributed to the rest of Canada, and we do not begrudge that, Madam Speaker.

In fact, tomorrow I will be in Toronto. I'll be delivering this message on Bay Street to the C.D. Howe Institute, to Canadian business leaders, and in a meeting with the mayor of Canada's largest city, who I know supports this province and the critical role that we play in the federation. My message to those people on Bay Street tomorrow and in Quebec in two weeks, when I'll be meeting with Premier Legault and speaking in Montreal, is the same message I carried to Ottawa with the hon. Minister of Energy two weeks ago, when we appeared before the Senate energy committee on Bill C-69, and here in Edmonton before the Senate transport committee on Bill C-48.

Here is the message. We as Albertans want to continue to be the source of that great generosity and wealth in the federation. We want to help to guarantee our fiscal future and that of our public services from coast to coast. But, Madam Speaker, we need the ability to develop those resources and to get a fair global price for them, and what we can no longer as Albertans tolerate are governments or interests in other parts of the federation seeking to benefit from our resources and the hard work and innovation of Albertans while seeking to block in and lock down this province. No longer will we tolerate that. We as Albertans are now together, united, standing up and demanding fairness in the Canadian federation, and that is why we begin this Legislature with this motion.

As I say, its basic sentiments were expressed in our May 17 letter from all four major party leaders, from which I will quote. This was to every member of the federal Senate.

As you know, the Senate Standing Committee on Transportation and Communications voted on Wednesday, May 15, to recommend against proceeding with Bill C-48, the so-called Tanker Ban Bill. Albertans are deeply concerned about this legislation, which we see as a direct and discriminatory attack on one of Alberta's principal natural resources, the bitumen produced in Alberta's oilsands. The ... Tanker Ban Bill would not prevent tankers from transiting British Columbia's coastal [waters] (and in fact could not under international [marine] law). Nor does it prevent tankers from loading other products, such as liquefied natural gas, from B.C. ports. It would only prevent a narrow category of products, almost exclusively produced in Alberta, from being loaded into tankers to be able to reach international markets. We urge you, and the entire Senate of Canada, to respect the decision of the Standing Committee on Transportation and Communications and not proceed with Bill C-48 and let this unjust and discriminatory legislation die on the Order Paper.

The letter continues:

Similarly, we understand that the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, meeting at clause-by-clause stage, has adopted substantial amendments to Bill C-69, the Impact Assessment Act, which are aligned with the recommended amendments of the Government of Alberta and significant stakeholder groups such as the Canadian Energy Pipelines Association and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. While we remain concerned about the overall spirit of Bill C-69, we believe that with the inclusion of all of these amendments, that the bill would be acceptable to the interests of Albertans. Therefore we call upon the entire Senate to likewise respect the deliberations of the Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources and vote in favour of the entirety of this amendment package. Otherwise, we would urge all Senators to reject this bill, which in its unamended form would seriously threaten Alberta's exclusive provincial jurisdiction over the regulation of the production of non-renewable natural resources and present insurmountable roadblocks for the proponents of major resource development projects, further jeopardizing jobs and investor confidence.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my colleague the Government House Leader will table this letter later today.

Let me, then, move to some of the details in these two bills that together constitute a full-frontal attack on both the economic prosperity and constitutional jurisdiction of Alberta. First of all, Bill C-48 can only be described as a ridiculous political sham. There is no scientific or economic or legal rationale for this bill, which, I believe, is a view that was expressed by the hon. Senators who voted to effectively delete the bill at the Senate transport committee last week. The rationale for this bill is only political, a partisan political ploy.

As my colleague the Minister of Energy can confirm, a member of the Trudeau cabinet a decade ago brought forward in the House of Commons a private member's bill to impose a so-called tanker moratorium but, effectively, a ban on exporting Alberta's largest export product. Why? Simply to respond to irrational political pressure of some voter groups for her political party in Vancouver. As others have pointed out, if this made any sense, then why would the federal government continue to allow Alaskan crude oil tankers to pass through Canadian waters, including the Salish Sea, en route to refineries in the state of Washington? Why would we allow tankers to export British Columbia based liquefied natural gas from the northern B.C. coast? Why would we allow oil tankers to enter

the Bay of Fundy, an ecologically sensitive UNESCO site on the east coast of Canada? Why would we allow oil tankers to enter and often bring OPEC dictator oil into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, a heavily populated area, which is also ecologically sensitive? Why would we allow those things?

This bill does nothing but prejudicially identify and seek to ban the export of one product that is produced effectively in one province, this province. I therefore submit, Madam Deputy Speaker, a *prima facie* violation of the Constitution in the economic union section in seeking prejudicially to ban one province from exporting a product that it alone produces. That is why, should the full Senate restore the original Bill C-48, prior to committee amendments, and should it then ultimately be proclaimed into law, I have advised the Senate and Prime Minister Trudeau that the government of Alberta would launch an immediate constitutional challenge of Bill C-48, seeking a court order to suspend the application of that bill.

Now, Madam Speaker, let me then address Bill C-69, what I have long called the no more pipelines act. This, the so-called new Impact Assessment Act, is a devastating blow to investor confidence. I don't need to review here the sad history of our seeming inability as a country to build pipelines to coastal markets. It's true that there has been progress in building pipelines within North America, including four pipelines in the past decade that were commissioned, doubling our take-away capacity by increasing it by 1.72 million barrels per day. But it's also true that we have suffered from a highly co-ordinated, foreign-funded campaign to defame our energy production and to land-lock Alberta oil.

**10:50**

By now I hope Albertans are familiar with this tar sands campaign, which began in a very co-ordinated fashion at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund office in New York City in 2008 at a meeting of a consortium of special-interest groups, which have collectively received tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars from primarily U.S. but, we think, other foreign sources to land-lock specifically Alberta crude oil. We must confess that these groups have been successful beyond probably their wildest expectations in so doing. Madam Deputy Speaker, one of their allies, Tom Steyer, a hedge fund billionaire in San Francisco whose fortune was generated in part by trading natural gas and coal – talk about hypocrisy. He spent over \$200 million U.S. on a political campaign to persuade President Obama to veto the Keystone XL pipeline.

It is not a coincidence, Madam Speaker, that 48 hours after our current Prime Minister took office, he received a call from Barack Obama, who'd been ragging the puck on this for six years, finally announcing a presidential veto. President Obama dared not do that, I submit, under the administration of Prime Minister Harper. He knew there would have been a diplomatic fight with Canada. But he also knew that the government of Canada and, at the time, the government of Alberta would effectively surrender in the face of the veto of Keystone XL. So we lost that. We lost several years on that project.

Then the same Prime Minister immediately announced an arbitrary veto of the Northern Gateway pipeline, that had been approved by the National Energy Board with conditions and by the federal cabinet after years of review. It's true that the court had ordered supplementary aboriginal consultations almost identical to the ones we've undertaken currently on Trans Mountain, but that was another political veto of another pipeline that had been opposed by both the Trudeau government and the previous Alberta government and had been the target of the foreign-funded campaign.

Then Energy East was killed when TransCanada PipeLines Limited – sadly, they dropped “Canada” from their name because

of the loss of investor confidence and the ability of this country to respect the rule of law. They gave up a \$1 billion investment and six years of work on that critical pipeline that represented the hope of energy independence for Canada. It represented the thousands of jobs and the opportunity to displace foreign dictator oil imports to eastern Canada. It was killed – and they said this explicitly – because of the uncertainty created by new federal mandates expressed by the National Energy Board, which created regulatory uncertainty, mandates which are now reflected in Bill C-69, and Bill C-48 is the legislative enshrinement of the cancellation of Northern Gateway. Both of those pipeline disasters, political and legal disasters: we now have the federal government seeking to enshrine those policies in these two bills. Madam Speaker, the energy industry and the financial industry have been clear that if Bill C-69 is passed in anything remotely like the form in which it was introduced in the Senate, it will represent a massive chill on investor confidence in this country.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker – and this is a point where I'm not sure the opposition agrees with us – Bill C-69 represents a gross *prima facie* violation of the exclusive constitutional jurisdiction of the people and province of Alberta. This is the point which I emphasized most strongly in my appearance before the Senate committee recently. Madam Speaker, the bill purports to give the national government the regulatory authority to assess and potentially veto projects related to the upstream production of oil and gas within this province, but that is in clear violation of section 92(a) of the Canadian Constitution, which was a critical historic victory by one of Alberta's great Premiers, the late Hon. Peter Lougheed. During the disaster of the first Trudeau government's national energy policy in the early 1980s we had the concurrent effort to patriate the Canadian Constitution. As we know, that led to two years of extensive negotiations. We can recall that the government of Quebec under René Lévesque's leadership refused to sign its consent to the patriation of the Charter and to this day remains, in that sense, outside of the Constitution Act.

Madam Speaker, Peter Lougheed made it patently clear that he would not sign that patriation on behalf of the people of Alberta unless it included a constitutional guarantee of this Assembly's exclusive authority – exclusive is the word in the Constitution – to govern and regulate the production of natural resources, and it includes explicitly oil and gas. This is not a section of the Constitution with any ambiguity in it. There is no court that could find that there is a shared jurisdiction over the regulation of upstream oil and gas. We find it peculiar that the previous government refused to object to C-69 on these grounds or indeed to the National Energy Board's presumption that it could force a consideration of carbon emissions related to upstream oil and gas production, which was effectively presaging the powers proposed in this bill.

So let me be absolutely clear to this Assembly, Madam Speaker, as I was to the Senate energy committee two weeks ago and to Prime Minister Trudeau. If Bill C-69 reverts to its original form, if it includes any purported authority of the federal government to regulate the production of upstream oil and gas, and if that is proclaimed into law, this government will launch an immediate constitutional challenge of the no more pipelines law. We will not let it stand. The message I conveyed to hon. Senators was this. After the enormous role that Alberta has played as an agent of national unity, as an accelerator of shared prosperity in this country, after all of that, we have seen the current government in Ottawa and certain provincial governments aligned effectively with the foreign-funded tar sands campaign through decision after decision: through the vetoing of Keystone XL, the vetoing of Northern Gateway, the killing of Energy East, the campaign of obstruction that has led to



endless delays on the Trans Mountain expansion. Through these and other decisions they have attacked the vital economic interests of this province and have helped to deepen and prolong years of economic stagnation and decline in this province, and we will not tolerate this any longer. These two bills seek to enshrine that attack on this province as a great champion of unity and prosperity, and that is why these two bills must not stand.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair]

A recent poll by the Angus Reid group estimated that 50 per cent of Albertans could foresee this province seceding from the federation. Madam Speaker, I am and will be every day of my life a proud and unqualified federalist and a champion of a united Canada. But these bills represent a threat to national unity, so I call on all members of the Canadian Senate to respect their moral obligation to be champions and defenders of national unity. Through this Assembly we ask them to support the recommendations of the Senators who spent thousands of hours studying these bills, to listen to the voices of the four political parties representing 98 per cent of Albertans, and to do the right thing and ensure that we kill bills C-48 and C-69 in the Senate of Canada before this federal election.

11:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments.

Seeing none, are there any others who wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on being elected as our Speaker.

It's my absolute pleasure to rise today for the first time as part of the 30th Legislature to speak to this very important motion. I am pleased to see this come forward as this is clearly a matter of urgent and acute importance for all Albertans and, in fact, all Canadians. This is a topic that Albertans at dinner tables in Edmonton-Castle Downs and across this province are talking about because it concerns our livelihoods, the livelihoods of our families, friends, and communities, and the heart of our province's industry.

It is a topic that our leader, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, focused on with great determination as Premier. For many years she has been a strong and uncompromising advocate for our province, workers, economic interests, and industries. She has been a champion who has travelled the country to fight for our province, lobbied federal leaders, and changed hearts and minds with her determination. She has been a fierce negotiator, one who never backs down from a fight. So before I continue, I want to start by recognizing her because without her work I don't think we would be having this conversation today.

Both bills C-48 and C-69 have attracted national attention, debate, and concern as these bills move through the House of Commons and now Senate, and for good reason. In the case of C-48, as our leader suggested earlier this year when she addressed the Senate, this is a bill that never should have seen the light of day. This bill attacks the core interests of Alberta and our right to get our resources to market. The bill's tanker ban sets a double standard, one in which big tankers full of LNG are fine but product from Alberta is not. This is a bill that mirrors no other restrictions in Canada, and if it is passed, there will be grave impacts for our community and our country, especially during a time of economic downturn and recession.

Right now many families are hurting, and it is the job of political leaders and governments to ensure that we can get these hard-working families back to work. Unfortunately, this bill will have

the opposite effect. It kills jobs and kills opportunities for our province. This bill is so entirely backwards that there are few fixes that can be made, and there is no way to improve something so broken. It is for that reason that we are pleased to see the Senate committee on transportation and communications vote this bill down and recommend this bill be scrapped in its entirety. As a government we stood against this bill without reservations, and we continue to stand against it today.

But we also must know that we are not yet out of the woods. This bill must return to the House of Commons, and when this does return to the House, we call on Members of Parliament to do the right thing for our economy, for our country, and for all Canadians. We call on all members to act in the interests of families across our country and put an end to the internal fighting.

We need to heed the long-standing advice of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and retire this bill for good. When she visited the Senate earlier this year, she was steadfast and strong in her message: Bill C-48 does not work for Alberta, and it won't work for Canada. We are pleased to see the members opposite in this House join with us in our message in opposition to this outrageous bill. We must be united in our belief that this bill is an attack on Alberta, on our livelihoods, and on our communities.

I am pleased that we stand together in our concerns about Bill C-69 as well. This bill cannot move forward in its current form. While the federal government has argued that this bill allows for greater certainty in the assessment process, in fact it does quite the opposite. It creates uncertainty and allows projects to flounder in the face of an unclear, difficult, and clunky assessment process. It is only through the 200-plus amendments through the Senate standing committee on energy that we have seen common-sense, practical improvements to this legislation.

One of the amendments, advocated for strongly by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, is set timelines to ensure project approvals do not bleed out over the course of many years, leaving projects vulnerable. We are pleased to see amendments limiting political interference in project approvals and ensuring that there are processes and standards in place before projects are subjected to federal reviews. We also welcome amendments to clarify processes around court challenges, the scope of the assessment, and public participation.

Through the steely determination and hard work of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona the federal government purchased the pipeline, provided certainty, and moved the project forward. We must make sure that this pipeline is built and that the processes we've made cannot be undone. We will continue advocating for the working people and families of this province, and I hope the members opposite support us in this commitment.

With that, I would like to conclude my comments on bills C-48 and C-69. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, if you would, I would like to move – and I suspect we may have unanimous consent on it given that benches are full – to one-minute bells. I'll leave it up to the House. But if you could seek that motion, I would appreciate it.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** Are there any other speakers who wish to speak to Motion 8?

The hon. Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I'm good.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 8 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:07 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Members, before the division is called, I just wanted to highlight for you. Returning members will certainly have noticed a significant change in the decibel level with the bells inside the Chamber, as in I'm not sure you heard them, but the system is currently being upgraded, and hopefully by next week we will have the bells at a reasonable level here in the Chamber for us to all hear so we can prepare for our division votes.

For the motion:

Aheer	Horner	Reid
Allard	Hunter	Renaud
Amery	Irwin	Rosin
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Issik	Rowswell
Barnes	Jones	Rutherford
Bilous	Kenney	Sabir
Carson	LaGrange	Savage
Ceci	Loewen	Schow
Copping	Long	Schulz
Dach	Lovely	Schweitzer
Dang	Loyola	Shandro
Deol	Luan	Shepherd
Dreeshen	Madu	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	McIver	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Milliken	Singh

Feehan	Nally	Smith
Fir	Neudorf	Stephan
Ganley	Nicolaides	Sweet
Getson	Nielsen	Toews
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Toor
Glubish	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Goehring	Orr	van Dijken
Goodridge	Pancholi	Walker
Gotfried	Panda	Wilson
Gray	Phillips	Yao
Hanson	Pitt	Yaseen
Hoffman	Pon	

Totals:	For – 80	Against – 0
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[Government Motion 8 carried unanimously]

**The Speaker:** Members, I wish to draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery. I noticed a couple of Senators have joined us for this morning's debate. I see Senator Scott Tannas and Senator Doug Black. On behalf of the Chamber thank you so much for your service to our province and to our nation. You are doing an incredible job representing the people of Alberta.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a great morning. I think we had lots of progress and a very conciliatory tone in the House today, a united front standing up for Albertans, which is great. As such, I suggest that we see the clock as 12 and will move to adjourn until 1:30 today.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:27 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 23, 2019

Day 2

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Merwan N. Saher, Clerk  
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Executive  
Director of House Services  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary  
Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 23, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly a former MLA and minister, a long-time friend visiting the Assembly today who is seated in your gallery, Wayne Drysdale. Most members here will know Wayne, who spent 10 years in this building as the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, from 2008 to 2019. He held the portfolios of Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation. Wayne has also spent 15 years as a councillor for the MD of Greenview. Following his career as an elected official he is now the new senior vice-president of Nauticol Energy in Grande Prairie. I would ask Wayne to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, please.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to members of the House the MP for Lakeland, MP Shannon Stubbs, and her husband, former MLA Shayne Saskiw. I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, please.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to introduce to you and through you to all the members the deputy mayor of Vegreville, the hard-working Tina Warawa. Tina is the front-line worker for politics. Thank you, Tina. Would you rise?

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister for Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members from the Sun Country Christian School. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Sterling Reimer. They also have some chaperones with them. We've got Dave, Wanda, Dave, Helena, John, Geoff, and Bethany. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House the students of Lacombe Christian School from the heartland of industry, innovation, and fertile agricultural land. The teachers with them are JennaRae Sauvé and David Allers, and a number of chaperones: Amy Keller; Adèle Brouwer, I think it says; Janis Butcher; Keith Vaandrager; and Jacki Talsma. I'd ask that they all please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you and to all members of this Assembly

Destiny Christian School. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Glenn Mullem. They have three chaperones here today: Brendon Gerber, Rosanne Fraser, and Emma Kunaka. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise here and introduce to you and through you the students of Calvin Christian School. The students are accompanied today by their teachers, Fred Neels and Alana Schipper, and also their chaperones: Wilma VanderVeen, Henk VanderVeen, Edith Beyer, Cora Maljaars, John Bill van Garderen, and Annemarie van Garderen. I'd like to ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly an energetic and bright young student currently enrolled at NAIT, Joseph Backewich. I ask you to please rise. I was proud to spend an afternoon with Mr. Backewich discussing leadership, volunteerism, the duty of elected officials to stand up for the rights of everyday Albertans, as part of a job-shadowing project. I ask that all members join me in extending the traditional warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly, whether that be by traditional desk thumping or the less-endearing practice of hand clapping recently imported from Ottawa.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, please.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House two very exceptional people that are working hard to ensure that our youth are receiving the best education. Education is the foundation of our prosperity, and it is my honour to introduce a couple of these people that are on the front lines, helping to shape Alberta's future. Will you please stand when I call your name. First, Cathy Hogg, the president of the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta, a trustee with the Prairie Rose school division, and also a rancher in Cypress Hills. Secondly, Brian Callaghan, executive director of the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta and past superintendent of schools for Canadian Rockies public schools located in Bow Valley and Northland school division in Peace River. Thank you both for your service to the people and kids of Alberta, and please accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other introductions? The Member for Edmonton-Glenora, please.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two. The first is Karen Becker, who's with the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta as well. She is the association's vice-president, a trustee for Wetaskiwin regional public schools, and she is also a champion dog breeder. I'd ask that she rise and we all give her the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

My second. It's a pleasure to introduce several former colleagues of mine, whom I will ask to stand as I say their names: Tonya Malo, Laura Ehrkamp, Courtney Morrison, Courtney Malo, and Dr. Andrea Hasenbank. These women worked tirelessly in this building on behalf of Albertans, and I look forward to them having that opportunity again one day. I ask that all members join me in extending the traditional warm welcome to these phenomenal women.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a true VIP in my life, my son, Justin Gotfried. Justin is a third-year international business student at Mount Royal University, has had the opportunity to do an internship in Ottawa with the Conservative Party of Canada, and continues to be active in political life. I'd like him to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we proceed to Members' Statements, I would like to outline the rotation that will apply for Oral Question Period and Members' Statements. As noted in the very fine procedural memo that my office sent out to all members yesterday, the Speaker's office received a document on May 16, 2019, signed by House leaders confirming their agreement on the rotation of Oral Question Period and Members' Statements.

With respect to Oral Question Period the agreement is based upon 18 questions each day and allows a four-day rotation. The Official Opposition is entitled to ask the first four main questions as well as the sixth, seventh, ninth, 10th, 12th, 13th, 16th, and 17th question each day. Private members of the government caucus are entitled to ask the fifth, eighth, 11th, 14th, 15th, and 18th question each day. Today will be day 1 of the four-day rotation.

I would like to remind members that questions and responses should be no longer than 35 seconds in length and that preambles to supplementary questions are only allowed for the first four rounds of questioning each day, as indicated in the House leaders' agreement.

1:40

With respect to Members' Statements the rotation is based upon a three-week schedule. According to Standing Order 7(4) each day up to six private members may make a statement of no more than two minutes in duration. Private members of the government caucus are entitled to four statements each day of the three-week schedule except for Tuesday, when they are entitled to three statements. The Official Opposition is entitled to two statements each day of the three-week schedule except for Tuesday, when they are entitled to three statements. This week is week 1.

I will also table a copy of the House leaders' agreement at an appropriate time in the daily Routine later today.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-North.

#### Ramadan

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, my congratulations and best wishes to you on your election as Speaker of this House.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honour as a member of the House and an MLA of Islamic faith to rise today to mark the holy month of Ramadan. As we fast from dawn to sunset during this holiest and most solemn month of the year, we deepen our faith and seek spiritual renewal and reflect on ourselves, our actions and our values. Let this be a time for all Albertans, regardless of their cultural or religious backgrounds, to join those marking Ramadan by remembering the less fortunate and celebrating acts of kindness and charity.

For everyone here in Alberta, across Canada, and around the world I wish a blessed and peaceful Ramadan. May you experience renewal during this time of sacrifice and prayer. [Remarks in Arabic]

**The Speaker:** The Member for St. Albert.

### Provincial Tax Revenue and Government Spending

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is impossible to blow a \$1.4 billion hole in our province's revenues, call it tax relief, and then expect to deliver services we need without cutting. Our new Premier wants Albertans to believe that a massive tax cut to corporations will result in the trickle-down of jobs, investment, infrastructure, and that's just a fairy tale.

Let's look at one ministry and see what's at stake: Community and Social Services. If this government freezes and/or cuts vital supports in any way, real people will be impacted immediately. They may call it finding efficiencies or transformation, but the result will be the same. There are approximately 60,000 Albertans that rely on AISH. It isn't possible to fund new people who require AISH and qualify for it by cutting. Will they cut the extras that people on AISH need such as funding for special diets, people who use G tubes, or the \$50 that's available every month to fund the maintenance costs of service dogs? How about PDD supports?

Will this government ask families and support organizations to continue to do more with less so they can dilute services to pay for the massive tax cuts? Will there be a cap on funding for sexual assault services, making it harder for people to leave dangerous situations? Will this government follow the Premier's close ally Ford here, too, pretend to address wait-lists for kids with autism by introducing cruel caps and means tests that do nothing to wait-lists but slash and burn existing services? Will this government halt the progress we've begun around addressing the overwhelming need for service dogs in Alberta?

It is impossible to address grinding poverty, unemployment, and homelessness by cutting. The Premier wants to take us backwards and call it progress. We're smarter than that. Albertans know we can create a prosperous future without cutting. Each one of us was elected to serve all Albertans – all of them – those without deep pockets, access, and influence. It's important to remember that.

Thank you.

### Brooks Bandits Junior A Hockey Championship

**Ms Glasgo:** The city of Brooks was proud to host the national junior A hockey championships at the Centennial Regional Arena from May 11 to 19. Brooks welcomed fans and teams from across Canada. Hotels were full, and the streets were lively. The energy was electric. For a city that has been through some tough times, this tournament was the excitement and positive energy that we all needed.

It was a true honour to host our Premier in Brooks and participate in the puck drop at the final game. The community welcomed the Premier and myself with open arms and thunderous applause. Never did I think that a group of hockey fans would be excited to see politicians at a game.

Our local heroes, the Brooks Bandits, went into the final game with a perfect record in the tournament and defeated the Prince George Spruce Kings 4 to 3 in the final, making them the national champs.

I would like to take this time to thank Hockey Canada for choosing Brooks, the many volunteers who dedicated their time and talent, the fans for making this tournament possible, and the city of

Brooks for creating an incredible atmosphere for this event. Congratulations to the Brooks Bandits players and coaches on an amazing season.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

#### **Energy Industries in Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland**

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your recent election.

It's an honour to rise today for the first time and thank the great people of Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland for electing me and letting me serve in this place. Like in so many other parts of our province many of our constituents in Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland work in the oil and gas sector, coal-fired generation plants, and agriculture, obviously. Too many of them have suffered for the past number of years as oil prices plummeted and jobs have disappeared. On top of that, many seniors and others on fixed incomes suffered under the carbon tax, trying to make ends meet.

However, Mr. Speaker, hope is on the horizon. In Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's throne speech yesterday our government outlined its plan to bring back jobs, investment, and hope to the people of Alberta. We will get our pipelines built, our natural resources to market, and we will get our fiscal house in order. In just these past two days we've repealed the carbon tax and sent a strong message to Ottawa on bills C-69 and C-48. We'll ensure that Albertans have the services they need and our education and health care systems are the envy of all those in the world. We will ensure that Alberta once again is the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

To the great people of Lac Ste. Anne and indeed all Albertans that are counting on us: I have every confidence that this new government is up to the task.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-McCall.

#### **Oil Transportation by Rail**

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We must move our resources to market. We need action, not political gains. There is no doubt that pipelines are the long-term answer, but we are still awaiting decisions on the Trans Mountain pipeline. Despite much bluster this new UCP government has also not offered us any positive news on the Keystone XL pipeline or on line 3 either. Meanwhile our oil stays in the ground, and Albertans suffer as a result.

Our leader saw this issue and took immediate action to address it. She signed a multiyear deal to move 120,000 barrels of oil per day by rail, starting this summer. These contracts were worth \$3.7 billion and were anticipated to generate about \$6 billion in economic return. This means multiple billions in profit for the people of Alberta.

The new Premier plans to be the champion of jobs, yet he's openly threatening to kill these contracts and the countless jobs they would create. He will hurt companies doing business in this province as well. CN Rail has warned that they have already made significant capital investments, and there will be costs to Albertans. Not only does moving oil by rail help clear backlog, reduce the differential, save jobs, and make a considerable profit; it sends the right signal to international investors.

The election is over, and it is time for the Premier to set aside his rhetoric and make the right decision for Albertans. If we are going to pay for the capacity, we should use that capacity. We need to get our oil to markets, whatever it takes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### **Provincial Election 2019**

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today as the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat. I want to thank my constituents for putting their trust in me. They have given me the opportunity to serve them three times: twice with the Wildrose Party and now, the third time, with the United Conservative Party.

I would not be standing here today if it wasn't for the hundreds of volunteers who donated their time, money, and ideas while knocking on thousands of doors over the course of the campaign. The efforts of future leaders like 17-year-old Ben Lloyd and 16-year-old Kieran Straub, who recruited countless volunteers, spent many hours working hard for Alberta and many hours working hard for our fiscally conservative movement. It was up to us to show the people of Cypress-Medicine Hat that they had an option, that they could vote for a positive vision under the United Conservatives at a time of economic hardship.

The last election, Mr. Speaker, was one of the most difficult for me. It was heart wrenching hearing the stories of women and men who were unemployed or underemployed; stories of workers and families moving to Oklahoma, Texas, North Dakota, Argentina, and even Iraq because they could not find a way to put food on the table; stories of seniors who could no longer afford their rent, utilities or even gas for their car. Many mentioned how expensive food had become.

**1:50**

This should not be happening in southeastern Alberta, a leader in the oil and gas sector and a leader in agriculture. This should not be happening in a community that has helped build both Alberta and Canada, a community that has contributed and continues to contribute greatly to our prosperity.

I stand here today because of the people of Cypress-Medicine Hat and because they have put their trust in the United Conservatives. It is time to bring back jobs, build pipelines, restore Alberta's tax competitiveness, and eliminate unnecessary and costly regulation.

#### **Oral Question Period**

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

#### **2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation**

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to take the opportunity through you to congratulate the Premier on his election victory. In fact, in the days before that election it was confirmed that the RCMP were investigating serious allegations of fraud related to the 2017 UCP leadership race. It is unprecedented that you have an active police investigation into something that touches on the interests of both the Premier and the Solicitor General, who were both candidates in that race. In the interests of protecting the integrity of our justice system in Alberta, why has the Premier refused to hire a special project . . .

#### **Speaker's Ruling Questions on Internal Party Matters**

**The Speaker:** I would caution members when asking questions that may be about party-related business and not the business of government, but I turn to . . . [interjections] Members, I would ask you not to interject when I've provided direction about a question. I did not say that the question was out of order. I offered a caution about asking questions related to party matters and not government

business. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to make this about government business, I'll be happy to continue to hear all sorts of questions on the matter.

The Premier.

### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation (continued)

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by congratulating you on your election and all members of this place on the privilege of serving Albertans, in particular the hon. Leader of the Opposition and to thank her for her service as Premier. I look forward to working together in this Chamber.

In response to her question, Mr. Speaker, obviously police services are completely independent in the decisions they make and the operations that they have. We fully respect that independence.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that even the Premier's own caucus is not convinced of RCMP or police independence. After his business was raided by the RCMP during the election, the member for Calgary-East suggested that our government had orchestrated the raid. Now, that's ridiculous. The fact is that the Premier and the Attorney General have authority over the Crown prosecutors and the police they employ. To preserve public trust in our justice system, the Premier must appoint a special prosecutor. Why won't he?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, the police and the Crown prosecutor service operate independent of any kind of political direction from government, be it this government or the former government, and we respect that independence. We will always preserve and protect it.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition on your third supplemental.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that there are clear policies in other provinces that dictate that a special prosecutor should be called in when the matter being investigated involves members of Executive Council. Indeed, in Alberta there has been a clear practice and a clear precedent. Again, why is the Premier ducking this important decision? What are you afraid of?

**Mr. Kenney:** Absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. Once again, police and the Crown prosecutor service are completely independent from any form of political direction or interference from government. We fully respect that convention, that legal principle, as have previous governments in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition on your second set of questions, please.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm not surprised that the Premier has been having some trouble dealing with this matter. In fact, when asked by media about the police raid on the Member for Calgary-East's business, the Premier said that the member had not been contacted by the police. But it turned out that the member's own lawyer then told the media that he had been contacted to execute a search warrant in furtherance of the investigation. To the Premier: were you misinformed at the time? And now that you are informed, why have you not taken action and ejected this member from your caucus?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's sad to see on the first day of this new session the leader smearing a member of this place, who was duly elected, who is not facing allegations against him, who's not under charge. Would the Leader of the Opposition like to identify which members of her caucus were under charges of serious sexual misconduct? I'm not asking that they be removed from the NDP caucus. In this country there's a presumption of innocence under our legal system and in this Chamber.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can say is that not one member of this caucus is now or has been under investigation by the RCMP, but the member opposite cannot say the same.

Now, it's possible that the Premier was misinformed about what was going on with the Member for Calgary-East, but let me ask him a simple question that I think he must know the answer to. Will the Premier please inform this House: has the Premier himself ever been contacted by the RCMP about this matter?

**Mr. Kenney:** No.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much. The fact is, Mr. Speaker – and I'm glad to hear that, but we still know there's an investigation under way – that we don't know what next thing is going to come up in the UCP leadership corruption investigation. Albertans are concerned, and frankly I'm concerned. I'm concerned, as I've said, about the integrity of our justice system and our democracy. Albertans deserve the truth. So this is my question: will the Premier commit to informing this House if and when he is ever contacted by the RCMP about this matter, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition very clearly again referred to a specific party matter, the leadership race. I encourage you to make your questions about government business or policy.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I see the member is now launching on a desperate fishing expedition. Instead of talking about jobs, the economy, or pipelines, it's a continuation of the fear-and-smear campaign we saw in the last election, that was so resoundingly repudiated by Albertans. Obviously, I and my office and, I would expect, any member of this Legislature would co-operate with the police on any matters, and I will continue to be fully transparent on this and all related issues.

**The Speaker:** On your third set of questions, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Budget 2019

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, everyone in this House will remember when the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul told his constituents last year that the United Conservative budget was going to hurt. End quote. But then the Premier said, before he was Premier, on February 20, before the election, and I quote: there will not be any cuts. To the Premier: who exactly was telling the truth before the election?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the recent election campaign I signed the United Conservative public health care guarantee that a UCP government will maintain or increase funding for a publicly insured and universally accessible health care system. The members of the families represented by all of these MLAs and

our constituents depend on that publicly insured, universally accessible system, and that is why we have guaranteed stable or growing funding for public health care.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much for that answer to a different question.

Nonetheless, during the campaign the Premier accused us of, quote, making stuff up when we warned of his plans to cut, but then the Premier said yesterday that there will be some tough decisions ahead. To the Premier: will you acknowledge that what you told Albertans before the election is very different than what you are telling them now?

**Mr. Kenney:** No, I won't, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, bringing fiscal discipline back to Alberta will not be without challenges. Unfortunately, our government has inherited a huge fiscal mess left behind by the NDP, which recklessly increased Alberta's public debt from \$13 billion to \$56 billion. They had us on track to a hundred billion dollars in debt. They underwent five credit downgrades. They drove our interest costs up to billions of dollars, and we will have to make some difficult decisions to bring balance back to our finances.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's going to hurt; Albertans will be affected; tough decisions a the truth of what the UCP is planning to inflict on Albertans is becoming clearer and clearer every day. Yesterday the Premier's defence was that, "Oh, the usual groups," he said disparagingly, "were going to complain about the budget plans." To the Premier: do these so-called usual groups, who you're already dismissing, include the students stuck trying to learn in overcrowded classrooms or perhaps the patients waiting longer in emergency, or was it both that you're planning to dismiss?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Neither, Mr. Speaker. I, of course, was referring to the NDP-affiliated government union bosses who campaigned for the NDP, and Albertans rejected the campaign of fear and smear from those NDP-affiliated special interests. The opposition leader talks about inflicting things. I'll tell you what. They inflicted a \$60 billion debt on Albertans, and it now falls to this government to clean up the huge fiscal mess left to us by the NDP.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition, for your final set of questions.

### Climate Change Strategy

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? Climate change is a serious issue. World-renowned climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe has said, "The longer [we] ignore climate change, the more difficult and expensive it's going to be to fix – and the more suffering there will be." But the Premier and his caucus just don't seem to grasp the scope of the issue. Asked about climate change this week, the minister of environment dismissed it as not being a crisis despite mounting evidence to the contrary. Why won't the Premier stop ignoring the problem, stop denying the science, and put forward a real plan to stop climate change?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I have never denied the science of climate change, and I have always acknowledged the important challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. That is why our government, as underscored in yesterday's throne speech, will

bring forward legislation to have a more intelligent approach to a levy on major industrial emissions, that will address over 60 per cent of the emissions in our economy, and to support technology through research and development to reduce carbon intensity. But what we will not do is punish Albertans for heating their homes and driving to work.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's not just scientists who are warning about climate change. The Bank of Canada says, "Climate change continues to pose risks to both the economy and the financial system." They go on to say that "economic activity and the environment are intertwined." By next year estimates show that the cost of climate change will be \$5 billion annually and will rise to more than \$20 billion in the years to come. So why won't the Premier concede that without a real plan, as opposed to what he's just referred to, to address climate change he is in fact putting our economic future at risk?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as I say, we will address the major industrial emissions, but what we will not do is take the NDP's approach of punishing people for living ordinary lives by heating their homes, filling up their gas tanks to drive to work. Not even the opposition leader could identify by how much her carbon tax cash grab was purportedly reducing emissions, when asked a few months ago, because the answer was negligible, no measurable effect on carbon emissions. It wasn't about the environment; it was just an NDP cash grab.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca . . . [interjections] It's my first day.

For your final supplemental.

**Ms Notley:** Yeah. Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, seven megatonnes, the equivalent of the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the whole province of Manitoba: that is what we have reduced emissions by since we brought in the climate leadership plan. And you, Mr. Premier, are going to undo that work, and you are going to let down future generations, and you're going to jeopardize our economy if you do not come up with a substantial plan to address this problem. Canadians need Alberta to lead. Stop pushing Alberta to the back of the line once again.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, if there was a reduction in emissions under the NDP, that was at least in large part because the economy shrank under the NDP. Fewer people were working. Fewer people were driving to work. Less industry was producing things. You know, you could have the NDP in government for much longer, and they'd continue to reduce emissions by killing jobs and economic growth in Alberta. What this plan is about is getting back to turning Alberta into an engine of job creation, and we're going to do that, yes, with Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act.

**The Speaker:** Take 2. The Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

### Highway 813 Athabasca River Bridge

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bridge crossing the Athabasca River on highway 813 at the town of Athabasca is an essential part of the transportation infrastructure within my constituency. This bridge is in desperate need of replacement not only for the efficient and safe movement of people but for the continued success of industries within this region of our province. The Alberta Transportation 2018 construction program lists this

bridge in the design stage. To the Minister of Transportation: has the design of the replacement bridge been completed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct in pointing out that our government is committed to ensuring the safe passage of people and goods on Alberta highways and to adequately maintaining and renewing Alberta's road infrastructure. Now, on the bridge on highway 813 that the member references, interestingly enough, the design at one point was complete, but it's no longer complete. There's been a recent slide in the area, which requires a little bit more design work. The design revisions are progressing and expected to be completed by the end of September.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the replacement of this bridge is crucial for individuals in the Athabasca region and given that this bridge is critical for the safe and reliable transportation of energy, agriculture, and forestry products coming out of the region north of Athabasca, to the minister: when can the people of Athabasca expect a new bridge to be completed?

**An Hon. Member:** Hooray.

**Mr. McIver:** I appreciate that.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member, I would love to give him an exact date, but alas I cannot today. As I pointed out in my first answer, the design work is not done, and of course you can't put a price on a bridge until after the design work for that bridge is done, and once you put a price on the design work, then of course you have to fit it into the budget. As much as I know it's an important question, I will tell the hon. member that we will get that answer as we progress with the design.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, rural Alberta transportation infrastructure is necessary for our wealth creation industries to succeed. Without the timely replacement of crucial transportation infrastructure these industries begin to lose hope that their needs are being heard. To the minister: can you confirm that the replacement of the Athabasca River Bridge will continue to be a priority for this government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bridge that the hon. member refers to obviously has to be a priority. My understanding is that with the absence of the bridge the alternate route is an additional 80-kilometre trip each way. Consequently it's a big issue, and there are areas north of the bridge which are hard to access without this particular piece of infrastructure. I would tell the hon. member it's a priority, and I will keep him informed as we move along.

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

### Minimum Wage

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 1, 2018, Alberta became the first province to ensure that all working people made at least \$15 an hour. Now this Premier and his UCP government are

beginning to cut away at that \$15 per hour minimum wage despite promising he wouldn't. His first victim? Youth workers. After that, he's going to launch a panel to study whether restaurant servers should earn less. Young people work hard, and so do those in the restaurant industry. Why does this Premier feel that their work isn't worth as much?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for the question. Our focus, and what we ran on, is getting Albertans back to work, all Albertans, youth and adults. We were elected with a mandate to bring investment back to Alberta, grow and diversify the economy, and we need jobs for the youth. Under the previous government youth unemployment increased, and we want to bring them back to work and provide them with the experience and the skills to actually get their jobs in the future.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this UCP government's plan to target hard-working people in the restaurant industry is an attack on women and given that the vast majority of restaurant servers are women and given that this move is hardly surprising coming from that party, I will ask this. To the Premier: why, when we're already combatting the second-largest wage gap between men and women in the country, do you want to make it worse?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we were elected with a mandate to get Albertans back to work. That is our focus, to get more jobs in the restaurant industry, in particular, so we can have people who can build skills and experience for the future.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in February this Premier went before a group of restaurant owners and, frankly, donors and said that his proposal to lower the minimum wage applied to only, and I quote directly, people with a modest level of human capital, will the Premier or perhaps the minister on his behalf apologize for this awful comment, or does he actually consider young Albertans and Alberta women to be worth less?

**Mr. Kenney:** I will not apologize for using a term that the NDP government used on its own websites to describe, for example, people who have never worked before, who had less chance to work because of job-killing NDP policies. But the member is correct. I did speak to restaurant owners, hard-working entrepreneurs who employ hundreds of thousands of Albertans, at a meeting that was boycotted by that member, who smeared restaurant owners. Mr. Speaker, many of them are women and men who work 18 hours a day, put their life savings on the line to create jobs for Alberta, and we want to help them do exactly that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs? Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** It's okay, Mr. Speaker. We look the same.

**The Speaker:** Fair point.

### United Conservative Party Fundraising

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans expect and Albertans deserve ethical government. The UCP has already shown that this isn't a priority for them with their kamikaze leadership scandal and an MLA who is currently under RCMP investigation, but the Premier's campaign to lower the bar continues. A fundraising letter was sent out and is signed by the Premier, using the Premier's title. To the Premier: do you think it's acceptable for the UCP to use the position of Premier to raise money for the UCP?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's very disappointing to see that the opposition has chosen to take this tack early in this Legislature. They're the same tactics they used that caused them, quite frankly, to now sit in opposition. To be clear on this issue, we're confident that we've done nothing wrong, that everything was within the rules. Having said that, the Premier and our cabinet and our caucus have indicated to the party that we would prefer in the future not to use our titles that we have in this place. We haven't done that because we think we've done anything wrong. We just think it's something that we should do going forward. Again, I encourage the members to try to raise the bar in this place.

**Ms Sweet:** Given that this isn't even the first time this month that the UCP has tried to use the Office of the Premier to raise money for their party – an e-mail sent under the name of the environment minister repeatedly invokes the title of Premier to cash in for the UCP – and also given that in 2012 the Ethics Commissioner investigated a former PC MLA for using a government title to raise money for his own campaign, to the minister of environment. As a former Wildrose member you took to PC-style corruption with ease. Are you surprised how fast that happened?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, you see it here: Team Angry from the NDP. This is their new approach. There's nothing but anger and fear and smear. It's shocking to see what has happened to the Official Opposition in this place. I often warned those on the other side, when they sat on this side of the House, that if they continued these tactics, they would sit on that side of the House. I hope they continue it because you know what's going to happen? They'll end up sitting on that side of the House for a very long time. Let me be clear. We did nothing wrong. We have no concerns with how we've acted on this. We're confident with that, but we think in the future we won't use our titles inside our party e-mails.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I would hope all members of this House can agree that ethics are important and that these Redford-style attempts to use government to line party coffers is wrong, to the Premier: will you commit right here and right now to return every single cent from this unethical fundraising campaign, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, on April 16 an enormous number of Albertans voted to reject these exact tactics. The opposition has not realized that their tactics of fear and smear and not focusing on Albertans are what's caused them to sit on that side of the House. You know what's going to happen going forward? This side of the House is going to focus on Albertans. We're going to focus on jobs, the economy, pipelines, and getting Alberta back to work, and if the opposition wants to focus on spending their time filibustering and

banging their desks and doing those things, they can have at it. We're focused on Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-South East.

### Provincial Debt

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday and Wednesday I was honoured and humbled to be here. Now I'm a little embarrassed. Alberta's fiscal trajectory is not just unsustainable; it is dangerous and puts at risk our ability to fund essential services in the future. Lack of long-term financial planning and politically motivated short-term spending have decimated our once debt-free province. A blue-ribbon panel was formed to find the best path forward in this regard. Can the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance please update this House as to their progress thus far?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question, Member for Calgary-South East. Cleaning up Alberta's debt problem starts with expert advice and a credible plan. Our independent, nonpartisan panel of leading experts has been tasked with recommending a path to a balanced budget and proposing a realistic plan to start paying down the debt situation the previous government has put our province in. The panel received their mandate on May 7 and are currently reviewing our finances to determine how we will restore the Alberta advantage.

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

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. During the election campaign we were working with financial information that I believed understated the severity of Alberta's financial crisis. With the additional information that you have available to you now, can the minister comment on whether or not Alberta's true financial situation is shaping up to be materially different or worse than what we were led to believe?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're now just looking into some of the big challenges left to us by the previous government and digging into some of the details of questionable spending. There are certainly also some headwinds facing us on the revenue side. GDP has slowed recently, and resource revenues remain volatile. We'll be taking these changing factors into account as we go forward in the development of our forthcoming budget plans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Given the information available at present, can the minister still see a path to balancing the budget by 2022-2023?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we are deeply dedicated to bringing Alberta's finances back to balance. This was a key piece in our platform, and I believe Albertans expect us to be responsible financial stewards of their hard-earned tax dollars. While we are seeing additional economic headwinds, we're committed to bringing this province's finances to balance. To download our current spending habits on future generations is irresponsible, and Albertans expect more from this government.

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

### Indigenous Treaty Rights

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I begin, I'd like to acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, home of the Cree, Nakota Sioux, Dene, Métis, and other indigenous peoples. Recently an article in the *Star* pointed out that the current government has been pointedly refusing to engage in treaty land acknowledgements. This has been noticed by indigenous people, who say that it displays an underlying lack of intent to honour our path to reconciliation. If the government refuses to make land acknowledgements, will they at least stand and assure the House that they recognize that Alberta is on treaty land largely covered by treaties 6, 7, and 8?

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

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government commits itself to the path of reconciliation and shared prosperity in the spirit of the treaties, and we will continue to honour the First People, who built these communities on this land. A key part of reconciliation is ensuring that the barriers to ownership of resource projects by indigenous Albertans are removed. That is why our government is proposing the indigenous opportunity corporation, which will provide indigenous communities access to capital and remove a barrier to their ownership of important resource projects.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully, I'll get an answer to this question. Does this government acknowledge the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the articles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous people, which outline the right of indigenous people to free, prior, and informed consent with matters regarding their treaty rights outlined in treaties 6, 7, and 8?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thanks. Like I said, our government is committed to empowering indigenous Albertans to take charge of their own destiny. That's an important issue, and I'm still looking into that. Thank you for the question. I'll get back to you.

2:20

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Federal Court of Appeal overturned the approval of the Northern Gateway pipeline as a result of the failure of the Harper government, of which our new member was a senior minister, to adequately address the free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous people, can the Premier and this minister commit that he does in fact acknowledge treaty rights and his duty to consult with indigenous people and that he will not put Alberta's economy and good jobs for working people at risk by repeating the Premier's past failures on existing energy projects like the Trans Mountain project?

**Mr. Kenney:** Of course, we respect the Crown's duty to consult, Mr. Speaker, but you know something? The NDP opposed the Northern Gateway pipeline and encouraged their ally Justin Trudeau to veto it, thereby betraying First Nations who want to be partners in prosperity in developing those resources. The NDP did nothing to support the Eagle Spirit consortium or the other First Nations who were opposed to the Trudeau veto of Northern Gateway. This government, however, is going to take the historic

measure of creating a Crown corporation to facilitate aboriginal co-ownership of major projects.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Glenora, please.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to congratulate the Minister of Education on her appointment as well as the arrival of her new grandchild.

Many Alberta families are having children. In fact, it's expected that 15,000 new students will be walking into Alberta schools this fall. School boards are worried that the UCP won't give a single dollar to these new students. The Education minister went before hundreds of teachers this past weekend and didn't offer any hope. Zip. Zilch. Nada. Will she tell this House, tell school boards, staff, parents, and students: will there be any new funding for the new students this fall?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I look forward to answering it in the supplemental. I was, however, saddened to learn of the traffic accident involving a school bus in Edmonton this morning, with 11 students and their bus driver having been taken to hospital with some minor injuries. We are hoping for their quick recovery. We send our hearts out to the students and to those families.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** I think I'm quoting the now Speaker when he used to say, "Well, it isn't called answer period," and that sure is true, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the Calgary board of education is painting a particularly grim picture, projecting a \$40 million deficit for the coming fall, and given that the deficit could lead to the firing of hundreds of teachers, can the minister explain to the more than 100,000 students in Calgary public schools and their parents why she intends to rob them of the skilled teachers needed to support their success?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Let me be clear. Our United Conservative government has committed to maintaining or increasing education funding, but we do respect the autonomy of local boards to make decisions on their spending. They're in the best position to address those questions and their budgets.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. The first two questions were: will the minister agree to fund growing enrolment? Given that the Edmonton public schools alone are anticipating more than 4,000 new students this fall and given that the Premier regularly says that government budgets need to run the same way as household budgets, does the minister think that it's responsible for parents to buy the same amount of food, clothes, and live in the same house if they have 4,000 more children in their house next year?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Education I am focused on strengthening our education system and



delivering on our campaign platform commitments. We will maintain or increase education funding. We will proclaim the Education Act. We are committed to preserving and protecting educational choice and supporting safe schools that protect students against discrimination and bullying. We have a clear mandate from over a million of our voters, and we will continue to work with that. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

### **Support for Business and Job Creation**

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last government created an environment that drove business out of the province. What is the government doing to bring business back to Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance, please.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for that question. Our government has a robust plan to, again, attract investment into this province, create jobs and opportunity for all Albertans. We've been clear in our platform that, of course, Bill 1 was the repeal of the carbon tax, which will create 6,000 additional jobs and more opportunity for businesses. We also will be rolling out a job-creation tax cut and other measures to reduce red tape and regulatory burden to attract investment and jobs into this province.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. What is the expected impact of the corporate tax rate?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we announced publicly last week, we will be reducing our corporate tax rate in this province from 12 per cent down to 8 per cent over approximately three and a half years. That will leave us with the most competitive business tax rate in the country and one of the most competitive rates within North America. We're confident that that move, amongst others, will, again, attract investment, create job opportunities and opportunities for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How many jobs will this bring to Alberta?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of the job-creation tax cut, we've had some of the best economists in this province inform us that when fully implemented, this job-creation tax cut will create \$13 billion of economic activity and create 55,000 new jobs for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a question.

### **Edmonton Medical Lab Hub Construction Stoppage**

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, this government was elected on a platform of jobs, pipeline, economy, yet one of its first actions was to throw hundreds of Edmonton construction workers out of work as the Premier halted construction on the long-needed new Edmonton laboratory clinical hub. Now, I've heard

directly from my constituents in Edmonton-City Centre how our investment in much-needed infrastructure kept them, their suppliers, and their contractors working during a tough economic time. To the Premier: why have you ended good, mortgage-paying jobs building a much-needed new health facility simply because of your own ideological agenda?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to reiterate a campaign commitment that our government had during the campaign, that commitment was to maintain or increase spending in health care, and that includes maintaining or increasing our investment in health care infrastructure, including infrastructure for laboratory services. I'd also like to point out – and thank you to the hon. member for his question – that those plans were actually to remove jobs from his riding, Edmonton-City Centre, to another location.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The facilities available in Edmonton-City Centre have been highly inadequate for some time. Land here is expensive. It made sense to move that site.

Now, given that this Premier seems to have a rather low opinion of the work done by lab service technicians, having said to reporters, when talking about privatizing health services in Alberta, that crucial tests that help doctors save lives through accurate diagnosis and targeted treatment don't actually touch patients or heal people, and given that this demonstrates an astounding ignorance of how essential lab service workers are to providing critical care, how many can expect to lose their jobs as a result?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we're talking about ideology, I mean, I'd just point out to all Albertans the decisions that were made by the previous government when it came to laboratory services and the decisions regarding infrastructure, including that lab hub. Our decisions as a government going forward are going to be focused on patients. It is going to be focused on listening to experts. It's not going to be taking a report from the Health Quality Council of Alberta from 2016 and ignoring it. It's not going to be taking Dr. Ballem's report from 2017 and ignoring it. It's not going to be taking pathologists out of hospitals and moving them into a location away from hospitals. Our government is going to listen to experts and listen to patients.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Health Quality Council of Alberta recommended this option, and indeed we recognize that 70 per cent of major health decisions are based on lab results. Given that a new, modernized central lab hub will give Albertans faster, more efficient access to the newest, most accurate testing while providing good, mortgage-paying jobs and indeed diversifying our economy by allowing for translational research, why are those jobs not going to lab technicians here in Alberta instead of in Ontario? Can this Premier just simply admit that he's got it wrong and allow this essential, life-saving, job-creating project to continue?

2:30

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to point out to Albertans that those two reports from the Health Quality Council of Alberta did not recommend this at all.

While we're taking lessons from the other side, I just would like to focus a little bit on their record for the last four years when it came to health care spending. Open-heart surgery wait times increased by nearly 50 per cent. Cataract surgery wait times increased 30 per cent. Hip replacement wait times increased 30 per cent. Knee replacement wait times increased 23 per cent. The percentage of the patients admitted through emergency within eight hours dropped from 46 per cent to 43 per cent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### High Level Wildfire

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the past days we have seen wildfires force evacuations in the town of High Level, surrounding areas, and the Dene Tha' First Nation communities of Bushe River and Meander River. Brave first responders and front-line staff have stepped up to fight the flames, and thankfully, sir, residents have been able to evacuate safely. Despite this, the fires continue to rage. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what is the current intensity of the flames, and how close to homes, property, and businesses are the fires at this moment?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for that particular question. I can confirm to you that one of the decisions that we took when this fire came up was to move quickly and make sure that we evacuate our citizens in High Level, and I can assure you that, as we speak, they are safe and being taken care of in Slave Lake, in Grande Prairie, and in Peace River and other centres within this particular province.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the intensity and location of the fires, I understand the evacuation order of 72 hours has been extended. Can the same minister please update the House on the supports that are being offered to displaced residents, and when can we expect they will be able to return safely to their homes?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, once again for that particular question. At this point in time we are reviewing all of our options to make sure that by the time citizens get back to High Level and Mackenzie county, they are going to be safe. I can also assure you that we have worked closely with all of our municipal partners to make sure that our evacuees are getting all of the help and support that they need.

**The Speaker:** The member for his second supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you. Given that communities in northern Alberta are eagerly welcoming evacuees from the High Level fire but are having to pay up front for costs and then getting reimbursed later by the province, will the government commit funding to communities hosting evacuees that they can access right away to pay for costs to support people fleeing from nearby natural disasters?

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you once again for that particular question. I can assure this particular House that our government is looking at all of our options. Our guarantee is to make sure that all of the support and the care that they need they will get from this government.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Congratulations to you on becoming Speaker of the House.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this month Albertans paused to remember the Fort McMurray wildfire, which ravaged northern Alberta and caused the evacuation of tens of thousands of Albertans. Now another massive wildfire in northern Alberta has led to the evacuation of approximately 5,000 people from the High Level area to communities like my home of Slave Lake. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: was this evacuation a success, and are all those affected safe?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for that particular question. In times like this Albertans have always answered the call. This evacuation has been successful thanks to communities like Slave Lake, Grande Prairie, Peace River, and others. More than 3,200 have been processed at our evacuation centres and are in safe conditions. Others have found lodging with friends or relatives. This would not have been possible without the tremendous efforts of our first responders, emergency staff, and municipal officials, who are working so hard to keep our communities safe.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Slave Lake we understand the power of these wildfires, and we'll be there for the evacuees until the very end, but given that over 1,000 evacuees are being hosted in Slave Lake and they're eager to return home and to their normal lives, does the minister know when this evacuation order might be lifted?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, once again, and thank you to the member for that particular question. Government has no greater duty than keeping our people and communities safe. Right now firefighters from Alberta and across Canada, emergency staff, nonprofit workers, and municipal officials are working hard to fight this fire and manage the evacuation. We are hopeful that residents will be able to return home soon, but for safety reasons the evacuation order will remain in place for at least a few more days.

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I have heard concerns about the financial pressures of being away from home for several days, particularly when it comes to day-to-day expenditures, can the minister say whether there will be financial assistance provided to evacuees, especially considering that many of these folks cannot work right now?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government will be there for all those affected. I will escalate our relief effort if the situation gets worse. We are currently working with our municipal partners to understand the needs of those affected. Last Tuesday I met with

the mayor and council of Slave Lake and had a very productive conversation about this. While we review our options for assistance, we are asking evacuees to check on their insurance coverage and to keep all of their receipts.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie.

### Rural Crime

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The House of Commons Public Safety and National Security Committee released a report about the growing concern rural Canadians have about rising crime rates in rural communities. In the last four years communities in rural Alberta have seen dramatic spikes in break-ins, thefts, assaults, violence against women, and long waits for the police to show up. The committee's report says that the provinces should assist with police resources. What measures will the government take to ensure that rural Albertans feel safe, secure, and protected in their communities?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and answer my first question here in question period.

Nothing is more important than providing safety to Albertans here and our law-abiding citizens. Under the NDP and the last government *Maclean's* reported that 7 out of 10 cities that have had the worst increases in crime in Canada were here in Alberta. Our government is going to make sure that we focus on providing a fairer, faster, and more responsive justice system. We're going to be investing in things like ALERT to provide \$50 million in funding to make sure that we respond to this crisis in our rural communities.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Increasing funding to policing is only part of the problem. We are facing a shortage in courthouses, judges, and Crown prosecutors. Our criminal justice system is underfunded across the board, and rural Albertans are bearing the brunt. Some rural communities have seen a rise of 250 per cent since 2011. Rural Albertans need a justice system that inspires public confidence. What is the government doing to give rural Albertans a justice system that inspires public confidence?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you. We are in a crisis right now, and we are going to be investing to hire 50 new prosecutors here in the province of Alberta to deal with the backlog of cases that we have so that cases aren't dumped, to make sure that we actually are prosecuting these cases. This government is going to be focusing on making sure that we provide services here for our prosecutors and our police to make sure that they can get their jobs done. We're not going to be prioritizing free light bulbs, Mr. Speaker. We're going to be prioritizing providing police and prosecutors with the tools that they need to get the job done.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Among all provinces Alberta has the third-highest rate of sexual assault. In rural Alberta we have a lack of specialized professionals to support victims, investigate assaults, and collect evidence. Will the government increase support for some of the most vulnerable Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The minister of status of women, amongst other things.

**Mrs. Aheer:** The longest title. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election, too, and to the Member for Grande Prairie for her very first question in the House.

We're very, very proud of the fact that we spoke about intimate partner domestic violence as part of the platform pieces that we're going to be bringing forward, also the \$5 million that we'll be bringing forward, especially with regard to rural domestic violence, to make sure that rape and sexual assault kits are available – it's very important at such a horrible time – and that we have access to these incredible nurses that are able to do the work to help people at a very vulnerable time.

2:40

### Students' Political Participation LGBTQ Student Supports

**Member Irwin:** Earlier this month thousands of young people took part in a student-led protest against this government's plan to roll back protection for LGBTQ students. I stood with students at Victoria school of the arts and heard from them how important these protections are. The Premier said that students should be in class instead of doing politics outside of school during school hours. Does the Premier or perhaps the Education minister stand by the Premier's assertion that students should not engage in political activity during school hours?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Education my most important job is to listen. I will have an open line of communication with everyone who has a role in our province's education system. I'm committed to ensuring that our schools are welcoming, caring, safe, and respectful and are respectful of diverse views, as we've heard from all students.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Given that two weeks later busloads of students escorted by school staff travelled long distances to protest a woman's right to choose during school hours and given that the Member for Peace River was in attendance taking selfies with students and given that the Education minister referred to this political activism as a social justice activity, will the Premier or the minister admit that students' rights to political participation and free speech depend on whether or not they agree with the UCP government's views?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As minister I remain committed to hearing from all students from across the province with diverse viewpoints and perspectives, and I do respect the autonomy of local boards to make those decisions.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Given that the Premier has a record of failing to apologize for past actions that have rightly upset the LGBTQ community, whether it be when multiple members' homophobic views were exposed or for not listening to them when it comes to legal protection from being outed, will the Premier take this opportunity, for once, to apologize to Alberta's LGBTQ students and their allies?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government has been very clear. We oppose mandatory parental notification of any student. Our United Conservative government supports safe schools that are free from bullying and prejudice, and we believe in the safety of all students as being paramount.

Thank you.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of the following two motions. Government Motion 9:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize the rights of members to vote freely on all matters of conscience.

Government Motion 10:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its opposition to the practice of members changing their caucus affiliations unless that member is to sit as an independent or has resigned and has been returned to the Assembly after a re-election in a by-election under the new affiliation.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) that at the appropriate time I will rise to discuss the breach of privilege that occurred with the announcing of the repeal of the carbon tax to take place before May 30, one week from today. I have the appropriate number of copies of the letter that was provided to your office this morning.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Premier to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter he referred to that was signed by himself, the Leader of the Opposition, as well as the other leaders of the political parties in the province in his speech this morning.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other tablings? The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of an excellent column by Keith Gerein, *As Alberta Burns, UCP Begins its Mandate with a Retreat on Climate Change*, in which he notes that if this "government doesn't get its act together on climate change soon, the only destiny awaiting us is to join Nero on the wrong side of history."

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of tablings with the requisite copies. The first is a copy of my letter to the Ethics Commissioner in regard to the fundraising letter.

The second copy that I have is actually an article from 2011 where our now-Premier apologizes for using government funds in fundraising letters when he was an MP.

I have another one of an article, *Mar in Red Ink and Hot Water; Fundraiser to Pay Off Leadership Campaign*, when Mr. Mar had to do that.

The fundraising letter from the minister of environment asking for money in regard to two event announcements in Grande Prairie.

Also, the fundraising letters from the now Premier to the United Conservative membership asking for funds.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings?

I have two tablings today. First, under the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, five copies of the report of late filing of nomination contestant returns, received in my office on April 23.

Second, I have five copies of the House leaders' agreement for the Oral Question Period rotation and Members' Statements rotation for the First Session of the 30th Legislature.

The Opposition House Leader on a point of privilege.

### Privilege

#### Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise pursuant to Standing Order 15 to raise a point of privilege due to the actions of the government. They have offended the dignity and authority of the Assembly and run roughshod over the democratic process by violating the ability of members to do their jobs. This is a very serious and grave matter.

By announcing that the carbon tax would be repealed by May 30, it presupposes when this House will finish its deliberations and pass Bill 1. Now, Mr. Speaker, as you know, Standing Order 15(1) indicates that a question of privilege is "a breach of the rights of the Assembly or of the parliamentary rights of any Member."

As well, to qualify for Standing Order 15, the issue has to be raised at the earliest opportunity. Now, the press conference where the Premier announced that there'd be no more carbon tax in Alberta effective May 30 occurred on May 13. The House was not in session at that time, and this is the first daily Routine since May 13. As such, I believe it's the first opportunity I've had to raise this point of privilege and, therefore, it is in order according to Standing Order 15(2). I provided your office, Mr. Speaker, with a letter this morning where I advised of my intent to raise this point of privilege under Standing Order 15.

Now, Mr. Speaker, during a press conference on May 13 the Premier stated that Bill 1, quote, will be passed with an effective elimination by the 30th of May; by May 30 there will no longer be an Alberta carbon tax. End quote. That comment is in breach of parliamentary privilege of all of the other 86 members of this House. It presupposes a decision not yet made by the Assembly. These comments demonstrate a complete and utter disregard for the rights and privileges of the members of this House.

Presupposing a decision of this Assembly has been ruled on in this place on a number of occasions. One of the reasons why previous Speakers have ruled that this type of behaviour from government is inappropriate and presupposes a decision of the Assembly is when such comments don't include any type of caveat with respect to the crucial role that this House plays in consideration and adoption of legislation. An example of that would be: subject to parliamentary approval. We wouldn't be here in this place at this time discussing this issue if the Premier had in any way acknowledged respect for the parliamentary process, an approval that has yet to take place. Albertans rely on members of this Assembly to be able to debate pieces of legislation free from the presumption of the government, a presumption, Mr. Speaker, that was communicated through the media to every Albertan.

2:50

Now, you can correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Speaker, but at the moment Bill 1 is in its second reading. There has not yet been an opportunity for amendments to be proposed, never mind an opportunity for deliberation and debate by members of this

Assembly. In fact, my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was only briefed on this legislation yesterday, and our caucus is currently considering the vast implications of this proposed legislation. Yet the Premier has been speaking with the media presupposing our deliberations would be concluded within a week.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, *Erskine May*, 24th edition, says about privilege on page 251:

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

In *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, on page 25 it has this to say about privilege. "It is generally accepted that any threat, or attempt to influence the vote of, or actions of a Member, is breach of privilege."

Mr. Speaker, in 2013 Speaker Zwodzesky ruled on a matter that parallels this issue: brochures paid for by government that presupposed a decision of this Assembly.

Speaker Wanner also had occasion to rule on a matter of privilege on this province's approach to climate leadership on June 6, 2016. In fact, I believe that our current Speaker introduced it in his capacity as the Official Opposition House Leader at the time.

Speaker Wanner also noted that the following passage from the Ontario ruling of January 22, 1997, whereat page 1420 of *Hansard* Speaker Stockwell stated the following when considering a ministerial pamphlet discussing the government of Ontario's program for reforming municipal government in metropolitan Toronto.

In my opinion, [the claims of the brochure] convey the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was not necessary or was a foregone conclusion, or that the assembly and the Legislature had a pro forma, tangential, even inferior role in the legislative and lawmaking process, and in doing so, they appear to diminish the respect that is due to this House. I would not have come to this view had these claims or proposals – and that is all they are – been qualified by a statement that they would only become law if and when the Legislature gave its stamp of approval to them . . . It is not enough for yet another Speaker to issue yet another warning or caution in circumstances where the wording and circulation of the pamphlet appear on their face to cross the line. I say in all candour that a reader of that document could be left with an incorrect impression about how parliamentary democracy works in Ontario, an impression that undermines respect for our parliamentary institutions.

In both cases, Mr. Speaker, a prima facie case of breach of privilege was found.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's comments mean that Albertans could be left with an incorrect impression about how parliamentary democracy works in this great province, an impression that undermines the respect for parliamentary institutions. Clearly, the Premier's remarks are an attempt to influence the vote or actions of a member, specifically to rush deliberations in order to meet an arbitrary and, if I may say, reckless deadline set by the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that his actions were an affront to the Westminster system, the centuries old traditions and decorum of this House. One of the foundational pillars of representative democracy is that all 87 members are elected to represent the over 4 million Albertans we all serve. No one member, including the Premier, has the authority or the ability to dictate the outcome of the proceedings of this House. If that's the case, then we are no longer living in a democratic province.

**The Speaker:** As the Opposition House Leader will know, there is a tradition of allowing the government to respond should they choose to respond today or providing some time for them to bring their arguments together.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** We'll respond today, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader is rising to respond.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm a little . . .

**The Speaker:** Pardon me, Government House Leader. To provide some clarity, this will be your only opportunity to respond.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Understood. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that clarity. It's good to be back, and also my first chance to congratulate you on your election to the chair.

I'm a little bit surprised at the Official Opposition House Leader that he would choose this issue to be his maiden point of privilege in this Legislature. Points of privilege ought to be a rare occurrence. They ought to be for genuine matters of contempt of privilege, as you know. I've heard you argue many times when you were an Opposition House Leader yourself. [interjection] Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. deputy Leader of the Opposition, there also is a tradition in this place of not heckling while we're dealing with points of order and points of privilege, so she could probably try to adjust that. I know she's having trouble adjusting to her new spot in the Chamber, but that's the appropriate behaviour.

This ought to be for genuine matters if you're going to move a point of privilege. After listening to the remarks by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, I fail to see how this is a point of privilege, and frankly, Mr. Speaker, I fail to see how I can even take it seriously. The facts as I am aware with regard to communication of information about Bill 1 are as follows. The Premier made the point several times in opposition, as you know, also on the campaign trail and in government that Bill 1 of a United Conservative government would be to repeal the carbon tax. Promise made, promise kept. No announcements made about Bill 1 infringe on the rights of members to be the first to see the final form of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as it's important that you know, no notice on the Order Paper is required for Bill 1. I think that you probably already do know that. I can assure you that no final copies of Bill 1 were distributed in advance of its introduction yesterday. In fact, I would like to share with you, Mr. Speaker, remarks made by one of your predecessors, Speaker Zwodzesky, on May 29, 2012, while ruling on a question of privilege that referred to

a press conference held by the Premier and the Government House Leader [of the day] . . . in which both the Speech from the Throne and Bill 1, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012, were discussed.

The speaker at the time stated:

In response the hon. Government House Leader [of the day] noted that during the press conference Bill 1 was discussed but only in general terms, and that no specific wording was provided to those in attendance. The Government House Leader acknowledged the importance of ensuring that members are the first to see proposed legislation in its final form before a bill is disclosed to outside parties.

We can accept the premise that no breach of privilege occurred from sharing information about the government's plan for Bill 1, not government legislation but the government's plan for Bill 1. That leaves the argument, as I understand it, from the hon. Opposition House Leader, that he and his colleagues were feeling undue pressure based on remarks by the Premier that the carbon tax

would be repealed as of May 30. First of all, I would note that the Premier was merely reflecting what the provision of Bill 1 states,

Coming into force and repeal

6(1) sections 2 to 5 come into force on May 30, 2019.

not when legislation is passed.

The exact quote from the Premier – and this is important, Mr. Speaker – is: well, first of all, Bill 1 in the new Legislature, which will be introduced on Tuesday of next week, will be the carbon tax repeal act, and it will be passed with an effective elimination by the 30th of May, so by the 30th there will no longer be an Alberta carbon tax.” I don’t interpret from what the Premier is saying that Bill 1 will be passed by May 30. That’s not what he said. In fact, the previous government loved – and the hon. Opposition House Leader knows it probably happened with several of the bills he brought to this place – to pass legislation with retroactive coming-into-force provisions. Bill 1, 2015, for example, was deemed to come into force on the same day it was introduced. Bill 2 that same session came into force on January 1, 2015, six months before it was introduced in this Chamber. So again I’m having difficulty seeing that this is a legitimate question of privilege.

Lets further walk down memory lane if we can, Mr. Speaker, and recall that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview was a member of a government who introduced Bill 32, An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta, on December 4, 2017. This bill, apart from being ridiculously titled, Mr. Speaker – in fact, I recall, I think, that you wanted to change the title – stated quite clearly on page 104, “144(1) Subject to subsection (2), this Act, except sections 1, 114 and this section, come into force on January 1, 2018.” There we have the previous government, which the hon. Opposition House Leader was a part of, introducing legislation and expecting it to come into force within less than a month.

3:00

Let’s also add to that, Mr. Speaker, that the sessional calendar for that year, 2017, also showed that we were expected to conclude the business for the year by December 7, 2017, three days after Bill 32 was introduced. If that wasn’t ruled as contempt of the Assembly, then I’m not sure how members of the Official Opposition can claim with a straight face that any remarks by the Premier are putting them under pressure to pass Bill 1 by May 30, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, this opposition’s line of thinking: you would take it to the absurd conclusion that any date given on a coming-into-force provision provides pressure on the Assembly to have a bill passed before any date listed in the bill. That is ridiculous. In fact, if the opposition is feeling pressured on the need to pass Bill 1, I’m entirely sympathetic. After all, I had to wait three years for the opportunity to vote to repeal the carbon tax. Albertans have had to wait long and painful months for a government that was willing to listen to their concerns about the harmful impacts the carbon tax had on their monthly budgets, and on April 16 over a million Albertans voted to repeal the carbon tax. If that doesn’t provide pressure on this Assembly to do what is right and vote in a timely manner to do what they ask us to do, I don’t know what will.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the Assembly’s attention and, in particular, the Official Opposition House Leader’s attention to page 88 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, which advises members that “they should not raise trivial matters as matters of privilege or contempt” and further advises that “the House should exercise its powers with regard to privilege and contempt sparingly.”

So I fail to see that this rises to the threshold of a prima facie breach of privilege, and I hope to see better from the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview in the future.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to both House leaders.

I’d just remind the Government House Leader that you’re bringing things to the Speaker’s attention and not the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview’s attention.

Both House leaders and all members of the Assembly will know that points of privilege are serious in nature, should not be entered into lightly. As such, a decision on a point of privilege should not be entered into lightly, so I will take my time, take a good opportunity to review the facts of the matter, and I look forward to reporting back to the House sometime next week with my findings with respect to this Standing Order 15(2).

## Orders of the Day

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, a point of clarification for myself. It’s my first day on this side of the House. When we go through all of these, do you read them out word for word?

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, it would be appropriate for you to read all names of all committees into the record for the purposes of *Hansard*, and I would prefer that you didn’t just refer to the Order Paper. Thank you, and good luck to you.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Madam Speaker, welcome. This going to be great.

## Government Motions

2. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that

A. Select standing committees for the present Legislature be appointed for the following purposes:

- (1) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing,
- (2) Public Accounts,
- (3) Private Bills,
- (4) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and
- (5) Legislative Offices

and, in addition thereto, there be appointed for the present Legislature a Special Standing Committee on Members’ Services;

B. Legislative policy committees for the present Legislature be appointed for the following purposes:

- (1) Standing Committee on Families and Communities,
- (2) Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future, and
- (3) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under Standing Order 18(1)(h) this motion is up for debate. Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** No.

[Government Motion 2 carried]

### Committee Membership Appointments

3. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the following members be appointed to the Assembly's five select standing committees, one special standing committee, and three legislative policy committees:

- (1) Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund: Mr. Gotfried, chair; Mr. Orr, deputy chair; Mrs. Allard; Mr. Eggen; Mr. Getson; Ms Glasgo; Member Irwin; Mr. Jones; and Mr. Nielsen.
- (2) Standing Committee on Legislative Offices: Mr. Ellis, chair; Mr. Schow, deputy chair; Ms Goodridge; Ms Gray; Ms Lovely; Mr. Jeremy Nixon; Mr. Rutherford; Mr. Schmidt; Mr. Shepherd; Mr. Sigurdson; and Ms Sweet.
- (3) Standing Committee on Private Bills: Mr. Ellis, chair; Mr. Schow, deputy chair; Mr. Gotfried; Mr. Horner; Member Irwin; Mr. Neudorf; Mr. Nielsen; Mr. Jeremy Nixon; Ms Pancholi; Ms Sigurdson; Mr. Sigurdson; vacant; vacant; and vacant.
- (4) Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing: Mr. Smith, chair; Mr. Schow, deputy chair; Mr. Carson; Mr. Deol; Ms Ganley; Mr. Horner; Ms Issik; Mr. Jones; Member Loyola; Mr. Neudorf; Mr. Rehn; Mr. Reid; Ms Renaud; Mr. Turton; and Mr. Yao.
- (5) Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Ms Phillips, chair; Mr. Gotfried, deputy chair; Mr. Amery; Mr. Barnes; Mr. Dach; Mr. Feehan; Mr. Guthrie; Ms Hoffman; Ms Renaud; Ms Rosin; Mr. Rowswell; Mr. Stephan; Mr. Toor; Mr. Turton; and Mr. Walker.
- (6) Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: Mr. Cooper, chair; Mr. Ellis, deputy chair; Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk; Mr. Dang; Mr. Deol; Ms Goehring; Ms Goodridge; Mr. Gotfried; Mr. Long; Ms Sweet; and Mr. Williams.
- (7) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future: Mr. van Dijken, chair; Ms Goehring, deputy chair; Mrs. Allard; Mr. Barnes; Mr. Bilous; Mr. Dach; Mr. Dang; Ms Gray; Mr. Horner; Ms Issik; Mr. Jones; Mr. Reid; Mr. Rowswell; Mr. Stephan; and Mr. Toor.
- (8) Standing Committee on Families and Communities: Ms Goodridge, chair; Ms Sigurdson, deputy chair; Mr. Amery; Mr. Carson; Ms Ganley; Ms Glasgo; Mr. Guthrie; Member Irwin; Mr. Long; Mr. Neudorf; Mr. Jeremy Nixon; Ms Pancholi; Mr. Rutherford; Mr. Walker; and Mr. Yao.
- (9) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship: Mr. Hanson, chair; Member Ceci, deputy chair; Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk; Mr. Feehan; Mr. Getson; Member Loyola; Mr. Rehn; Ms Rosin; Mr. Sabir; Mr. Schmidt; Mr. Sigurdson; Mr. Singh; Mr. Smith; Mr. Turton; and Mr. Yaseen.

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry, Government House Leader. Just a point of clarification for you. The Standing Committee on Families and Communities: I heard you call Mr. Nixon. Is that Mr. Nixon from Calgary-Klein or Mr. Nixon from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is in fact my little brother from Calgary-Klein. Yes.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for the clarification.

Government Motion 3 is a debatable motion. Are there any questions, comments, or debate on the motion?

Seeing none, the Government House Leader has moved – oh. Would he like to close debate?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I'm good.

[Government Motion 3 carried]

4. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of the Whole, when called, to consider certain bills on the Order Paper.

**The Speaker:** Any questions, comments, or debate?

[Government Motion 4 carried]

5. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

[Government Motion 5 carried]

3:10

### Evening Sitzings

7. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) commencing May 27, 2019, the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the First Session of the 30th Legislature 2019 spring sitting unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

**The Speaker:** Government Motion 7 is a nondebatable motion.

My apologies. We'll just double-check with the table. I may have called the wrong question. We are moving to Motion 7 now? We are moving to Motion 6. Do you want me to re-call the question on 6 as I called it 7? Or will we call it 6 when it was 7?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, I read Motion 7, Mr. Speaker. That's the problem. He introduced that.

**The Speaker:** Well, let that be a lesson to us all, Government House Leader.

Just a moment, Mr. Clerk. How would the table like to proceed?

Thank you, members. Apologies. We are going to – I called the wrong question on Motion 6; it was actually Motion 7 which the Government House Leader moved. For clarity's sake, this is the motion that deals with times of sitting and notice that may need to be given, so I'm going to re-call the question so that we are very clear on Motion 7.

All those in favour of Government Motion 7, please say aye.

**Mr. Bilous:** Question of clarity, Mr. Speaker. If we've jumped over Government Motion 6 and we've done Motion 7, they're now out of order. Do we not need to deal with 6 ahead of 7?

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the Official Opposition House Leader for your clarity. There's no requirement in numbers that we deal with them. We could be dealing with Motion 15 and then come back to Motion 3, so there's no requirement with respect to the number

of the actual government motions. The motions will remain in order, and we'll proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** Question of clarification, Mr. Speaker. Motion 6 is debatable. Should the Assembly choose to debate this motion until the end of today, then we would not have gotten to Motion 7 ahead of Monday, May 27. Would that have impacted the possible evening sitting on that day?

**The Speaker:** Motion 6 is debatable, which we're about to move to now. If Motion 6 affects Motion 7, which it doesn't or won't, not because that's a decision of the Assembly but because Motion 6 deals with the business of private members – this is only sitting times and when they're required to provide notice. So the motions will remain in order. The process for this afternoon was always and has been to debate Motion 7 before Motion 6, so we remain in order, and we will continue to do so. For further clarity, the table is one hundred per cent certain that we are in order, and they are well equipped to provide us the guidance that is necessary, so we'll proceed.

[Government Motion 7 carried]

6. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:  
Be it resolved that, notwithstanding Standing Order 8(1), the Assembly shall meet in the afternoon on Monday, May 27, 2019, for consideration of government business.

**The Speaker:** Government Motion 6 – and I appreciate your patience this afternoon – is a debatable motion. I see that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is rising on debate.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to take a moment this afternoon to speak to this motion being brought forward by this government on our first day here of session. Indeed, we are probably in many senses beginning to set the tone for how this session might proceed and for how we might move forward over the next few years as we have the opportunities to work here as private members and those who have that good fortune as members of cabinet and government.

Perhaps, that being in mind, I should also take my opportunity to congratulate you, sir, on ascending to the seat of the Speaker and taking on that role. You are someone that I know is going to handle that with great aplomb. You have great knowledge in that area, and I look forward to the opportunities that are going to come with that.

Now, in regard to this particular motion it should be clear that this motion is coming forward by decision of the government. They had the opportunity to put together an early Order Paper to properly address and ensure that private members' business would be able to proceed on the first Monday afternoon of this session. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I recognize that there is a good deal of work that has to be done, and I recognize that for members on that side there is a large majority who have not previously sat in government. There is a learning curve involved, and I can understand that it would take some time to learn things.

We were in a similar position when we came into government in 2015, but we managed in that first month, that first session that we had here in the Legislature, to put together that early Order Paper to allow private member business to proceed on Bill 201 the first Monday of that session. We had that respect for members of the opposition, indeed for private members in this Assembly. Of course, as you're aware, Mr. Speaker, and as I hope all are aware – I know there are many here who are new – we recognize that all members in this House who are not members of cabinet are private

members, so private members' business is for all members of the Assembly who are not part of cabinet.

Indeed, private members' business is something that I believe should approach the sacrosanct. It is something that should be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. To infringe on private members' business should be something of a last resort by the unanimous agreement of this Assembly, not something where the government decides that it wants to take over that space when it is already allotted the majority of legislative time in this House every week.

That said, Mr. Speaker, this sets a troubling tone from this government that the first place we would begin, this first opportunity for private members to exercise their voice, their privileges, their rights in this Assembly, that one of their first steps would be to take that opportunity away with no discussion. Well, I suppose we're having that discussion now. We're having that debate now, so perhaps I'll take that back.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, when you sat pretty close to this specific seat, you were one of the most eloquent in this House in speaking about the importance and the respect for private members, for members' privileges, for the proper functioning of the systems of this House. You, sir, were quick to decry when you felt that our government was infringing on those privileges and opportunities. You stood up strong in this House for the opportunity for all of your colleagues to be able to go forward with private members' business and do that work to represent their constituents, again, on the one afternoon that is given each week for private members to be able to proceed.

3:20

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has spoken often about how he wants to bring back a new level of decorum and respect in this House. He's spoken on that often. He's bringing in a few changes to see this operate more in the manner that he thinks it should. Fair enough. Indeed, I personally feel that there should be a certain level of decorum and respect. There is always going to be a certain amount of theatre that takes place in this Chamber, and I enjoy partaking in that theatre: the parry, the thrust, the back and forth. There are negotiations. There are games that will be played. That is part and parcel of the opportunity we have here in making use of the systems and the privileges and the other things that are afforded to us to do our work as members of this House.

Indeed, the Premier today, I noticed, spent a good deal of time, when he could have been answering questions – instead, he chose to take time out to decry what he called “fear-and-smear” tactics as members worked to hold government to account and asked questions about government policy and past statements. Even the Member for Calgary-South East today stood in this place and before he began his question, he bemoaned the quality of debates. He stated that he felt less proud to be here, I guess feeling not happy with the quality of debate, just before, I note, lobbing a puffball across the aisle so soft that I think it barely reached the minister.

That said, we recognize that we're all starting out here, and we're all getting used to how things work and the different opportunities we have. But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that if we want to have decorum, if we want to have quality of debate, then we have to have that respect between both sides of this House, and to begin this session with a motion taking away the opportunity for private members to exercise their privileges, to speak on behalf of their constituents, that limited time that is afforded to members to do so, that to me does not connote respect. That does not connote decorum. That connotes to me that though there may be a smile on their face, the government intends to use their power to throw their weight around at times if they feel it suits their agenda.



I would note again, Mr. Speaker, that when we had the opportunity to serve as government, every single session we managed to move forward private members' business. In 2015 it proceeded immediately on the Monday following the throne speech. In 2016 it proceeded immediately on the Monday following the throne speech. In 2017 we had an emergency debate that was brought forward by our former MLA for Calgary-Mountain View, Dr. David Swann. It was previously anticipated that we would have government business, but the Order Paper indicates that it was likely by unanimous consent that we moved forward and had that emergency debate that day instead and then the next Monday proceeded with private members' business. In 2018 we had a government motion on the Trans Mountain pipeline, which was, again, passed, likely by unanimous consent. We had the opportunity for that debate and proceeded the next week with private members' business. In 2019 at the beginning of the session it was not applicable as the writ for the election was dropped the day after the Speech from the Throne.

All we are asking today, Mr. Speaker, is that this government show the same respect that we did when we were in their position and allow us to have the opportunity to move forward with private members' business next Monday afternoon.

Now, indeed, I recognize that this Premier hasn't always been a fan of well-ordered democracy. He was part of a federal Conservative government that was known for being incredibly disrespectful at times toward private members and the ministers and many systems that were placed to support them in their work in the federal House of Commons, particularly on committees. I think back to 2007, when the press were able to get hold of a secret Tory handbook – and here I'm quoting from an article from CTV News – “a secret Tory handbook on obstructing and manipulating Commons committees.” It was a 200-page handbook, Mr. Speaker, that was distributed to the chairs of the committees under that Conservative government. It was a minority government at the time. I would note that the government at the time was so embarrassed by that leak that according to one source they ordered all of their committee chairs to return copies of that handbook because they wanted to try to find out who broke confidence and embarrass them so badly and revealed their lack of respect towards the systems of democracy that they were all participating in.

That handbook, Mr. Speaker, provided advice to those chairs on how to promote the government's agenda, how to select witnesses friendly to the Conservative Party, how to coax them to give favourable testimony when they appeared before the committee. It instructed them on how to filibuster and otherwise disrupt committee proceedings and, if all else fails, how to shut committees down entirely. Of course, I note with some irony that I am going on at length about this to make the point that all members need to be given the opportunities that should be there. And private members' business, again, is something that should be trifled with as a last resort.

I can appreciate that new members of this Assembly are excited for the opportunity to make their maiden speech. I remember that when I first sat in this Assembly, I looked forward to that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to be able to stand in this House and talk about the incredible constituency of Edmonton-Centre, as it was at that time, now Edmonton-City Centre, to be able to talk about the many priorities of my constituency, the work that I was looking forward to doing, the opportunities that I looked forward to having, and indeed the opportunities to exercise my privileges as a private member. But there will be ample opportunity for that debate.

Again, it is a sign of profound disrespect from this government that they feel that those maiden speeches, which can be made at any time – this government has the opportunity to negotiate the debate

of bills. They have the opportunity to work with our House leader, indeed, and find opportunities for that, and the opposition previously, when we were in government and you were in opposition, were so kind as to negotiate with them. I remember we had many excellent maiden speeches in response to Her Honour's Speech from the Throne. But at no time did our government feel the need to step over, to indeed step on, to cancel the opportunity for private members to exercise their business in this House simply to give room for our MLAs to speak at greater length.

You know, to the government MLAs who are here, to the private members who have the honour of sitting in the government in caucus, I would say to them: be aware of how we set out and how we begin in this place. I have personally endeavoured to take the opportunity to speak with as many of you as I can personally, to wish you well because I look forward to the opportunity to working with all of you. The privilege of sitting in government is a great one. You have many levers, systems at your disposal, and you can choose to use them if you wish to simply run roughshod over opposition.

Indeed, you yourselves are private members, and I believe it is a member of your caucus, Mr. Speaker, a member of their caucus – all of my remarks, of course, should be through yourself to members of the governing caucus. It is their members that have the first private members' business. It is their opportunity that is being squashed, that is being set aside unnecessarily because this government chose not to take the opportunity to prepare that early Order Paper.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, point of order.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader is rising on a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Under 23(h), (i), and (j). I'm enjoying the hon. member's remarks, but he's going to cause disorder in the House by saying that we could put something on the early Order Paper that you cannot put on the early Order Paper. That will cause disorder in the House, so he should stop saying that. You cannot put it on the early Order Paper.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Government House Leader. I appreciate your comments.

I'm convinced that there's no point of order. This is a matter of debate.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will note is that this is a choice of the government. This is not something that could not be avoided. This is not something that happened by accident. I dare say that I would highly doubt that this even happened by neglect. This sounds to me like intention. If that is indeed the case, again, it sets a poor tone for how we begin in this House.

3:30

I recognize that, as I said, some members in this House were not enamoured with some of the questions that were brought forward during question period today, the tone or the substance. I would encourage them to have a look at the record of question period on the first day that we sat in this Legislature in 2015, when there were attacks on the character of the Member for Lethbridge-West.

Indeed, even after the parties were merged and we had the United Conservative Party in this House, the kinds of questions that were brought forward about pictures of who she met with when she was in Vancouver and who she talked with and who were activists and that sort of thing, that is part of the tone that was brought forward in this House during previous question periods.

That all comes back again, Mr. Speaker, to the question that we have before us today, this government motion to indeed take away the opportunity, the privilege – well, privileges have a very specific definition, so I'll take that word back – but indeed the opportunities that are afforded to us as private members, the rights of private members to bring forward business, that limited time frame, that one afternoon a week when we have the chance to have that debate. It is all part and parcel of the tone and the approach and the attitude with which we are going to begin our work together in this House. It is my hope that perhaps the Government House Leader would reconsider this motion or that perhaps, you know, enough government members would recognize the imposition that this is and want to set an amiable and collegial tone with the beginning of this session by choosing to vote this motion down.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to hearing their maiden speeches. I look forward to hearing about the many wonderful constituencies across this province, of the experience and the background, the hopes, the aspirations of those colleagues in this House, both in our caucus and in the government caucus, and there will be ample time for that debate. But I am strongly against removing the opportunity for private members in this House to take advantage of the limited time afforded to them for their business in order for those maiden speeches to take place.

I think it's probably fair to say that I've explored every possible corner of that argument and had some fairly fulsome discussion, so with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll let my remarks rest. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

As a reminder to all members of the Assembly, if we make significant reference to certain documents or information in our remarks, it is customary that at the earliest opportunity you would then table those documents or items that have been referred to in your remarks. So I would expect that sometime in the first part of next week the hon. member will be happy to table the article he referred to.

Are there any others wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the members for this opportunity to rise and speak to this important matter. Having served one term prior but not as a private member, as a government member, I want to say how much I really treasured the opportunity to debate private members' business in this Chamber. Private members, each of us, were elected duly in our own ridings, and each of us owe it to our constituents to bring forward positive ideas for the Assembly to consider. However, there is a draw, and only a few select members usually get an opportunity to have their ideas debated as private members.

I know that when I was a staff member for the NDP caucus, we had one bill reach the Order Paper, but it didn't actually get debated, in the almost five years I worked there. So it is not a common practice for private members to regularly have opportunities to have their bills or motions debated, and the reason why is because there is only one-half day per week set aside. But there is a half day per week set aside for all of us, whether you be opposition members or whether you be not in the cabinet, to have your ideas, your proposals, and your recommendations brought forward.

I know that many members in this House are aware of the fact that in northern Alberta there is one cabinet minister, in southern Alberta there is one cabinet minister – south of Calgary and north of Edmonton, that is – so there isn't a lot of opportunity for good ideas from those members who are elected south of Calgary or north of Edmonton, who aren't in cabinet, other than those two individuals, to bring their ideas forward. I think that we owe it to one another to make sure that good ideas that are coming from those regions of the province are heard.

I also want to note that there are not a ton of women in cabinet. There are some but not a ton. When I looked at who Bill 201 belongs to, it's the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, north of Edmonton, a woman. These voices aren't super dominant around the cabinet table right now.

I have to say that I think the idea of postponing debate on what I imagine is a bill that's of importance to that member and that member's constituents is a difficult precedent for me to agree to because there is only half a day per week set aside for us as private members, all of us as private members, to have our voices, our opinions, and our positive ideas for how to build our province brought forward.

I know that we're all taking time to figure out our new roles and responsibilities. Even for those of us who were on the other side of the House, we have new roles and responsibilities, whether we were private members or cabinet ministers before. I do want to say that protecting the opportunity to have that half day per week – it's not a lot of time; it really isn't, but I think it's important time for regional voices, voices that are underrepresented around the cabinet table, to have their ideas, their opinions, and their bills brought forward – is something that I care deeply about.

It's troubling to me that with the first opportunity we have to hear from a private member of the government caucus, there is a motion from the Government House Leader to stop that. I think that's a difficult precedent for me to smile and agree to, and I hope that you are thinking about what precedent that sets for you as private members as well.

I think private members have an obligation to their constituents, and our Chamber has an obligation to all Albertans to hear those good ideas. The opportunities that are on the Order Paper are limited, so for us to begin our first day of regular business by taking away that opportunity I think is detrimental to the processes that we've set up in this place to ensure that all of our constituents have an opportunity to be heard. I think it's also important that we fulfill our duties to our constituents, as I've mentioned, by taking the time. It's not a lot of time.

I get it. I loved being able to deliver my maiden speech, and I did it at a time that worked with the calendar. But we definitely didn't trump private members' business because private members' business is something that's sacred and cherished.

So I think those are the main points that I wanted to raise. There are not a lot of voices north of Edmonton sitting around the cabinet table, setting the government agenda; there aren't a lot of voices south of Calgary sitting around the cabinet table, setting the agenda, but we do have a voice in this place. I ask that you consider how we honour that voice instead of continuing to ruin it and continuing to put more power in the hands of fewer members. All 87 of us are here because we owe it to our constituents to fight for them and the things they believe in, and one of the very special ways we can do that is as private members bringing forward motions or bills or resolutions.

Those are the main points I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all of my colleagues in this place. Thank you for hearing me during this time, and I look forward to having an

opportunity to make a decision about this matter of important precedence setting.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available to members for questions and comments. I see the Government House Leader is rising.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for an opportunity to rise on questions and comments on this important issue. I'd like to actually seek the member's comments on a couple of things. She appears to be misinformed on a couple of process issues. The very first thing is that you can't put private members' business on early Order Papers. You can't do it. So the reality is that this upcoming Monday we have two choices. We can either come back with government business and go to maiden speeches, which is what we have proposed to the opposition, to give members an opportunity for that three-hour space to be able to give maiden speeches. If not, what will have to happen is that the House will have to adjourn until after the supper hour and come back for the night sitting.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is this. The opposition is now attempting to filibuster in an attempt to not be able to come back and do some work for three hours in the afternoon. In our view, on this side of the House, that's a waste of important legislative time. That's their strategy. They're welcome to do that. But the reality is that there will be no private members' business on that afternoon, and we're attempting to fill that spot with some productive time for private members on all sides of the aisle as they work through their maiden speeches.

3:40

Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, I have – and I will table this. I heard your instructions on that loud and clear, and I will table this tomorrow. I have in my possession an e-mail that was sent during the last session. I think this is relevant because the Government House Leader and both members who've already spoken on the government – sorry; the opposition side. It's hard to get out of that habit, isn't it? They have referred to how things worked in the last Legislative Assembly.

Now, my predecessor as the Government House Leader, Mr. Brian Mason, who was the dean of this place and I would argue was a pretty decent and very good House Leader. I enjoyed working with him. At a time back then he had his staff, Blake Evans, send an e-mail to – interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, I was not the Opposition House Leader yet. You were at the time, so you were on this e-mail. I'm sure you'll be fascinated when you get an opportunity to be able to read it and take a look at what took place there. The then Government House Leader, the members' across the way from me right now House Leader while they were in government, proposed the exact same solution in this e-mail to the exact same problem. The exact same problem.

The choice that we have before the House right now is that you can pass this motion. We could get this motion to a vote, and then we would be able to use the three hours' time on Monday to do productive work on behalf of Albertans. What we have proposed is that we would work on private members' new introductions to the House, their very first response to the throne speech, their maiden speeches, which we all agree are good. That was one of my favourite parts of the start of the last, 29th, Legislature. I remember the former Minister of Health's maiden speech. It was a great speech. So that's an opportunity that we could use that three hours for. If not, we can't do anything in those three hours, and we'll have to return after the supper hour as planned for the evening sitting.

I'm not quite done, hon. member. I know you're excited to get up and respond to what I have to say. Sorry, Mr. Speaker; I'm out of the habit. We've been away for a little while for an election. I was referring directly to the hon. deputy Leader of the Opposition instead of through you to her.

The reality of this, though, is this: you're watching the opposition stand up in the House over and over and try to filibuster so they don't have to do work on Monday afternoon. That's what's taking place. That doesn't surprise me, Mr. Speaker, through you to all of the hon. members of this Chamber, when you know that their leader has already indicated to the media that their main focus in this upcoming legislative session will be to filibuster standing orders to maintain their right to be able to smack their desks. Clearly, the opposition's priorities are in the wrong spot. Private members' business is very important inside this Chamber. We will continue to work to strengthen it with private members to make sure that they can participate in the process. It's a valuable time. As you pointed out, it's our members who will be the first people up on the first bill, but the reality is that this is not stopping something from taking place on Monday because it can't take place on Monday because we can't put it on the early Order Paper.

In addition to that, besides all the drama, Mr. Speaker, this opposition, when they were in government, proposed and did the exact same thing. The only difference at that time was that it looks like you as the Opposition House Leader was a little bit more co-operative and wanted to be able to use that time to be able to benefit the private members of this Chamber.

When members spend their time – look, Mr. Speaker. I know. I used to sit over on that side of the aisle. I understand how hard it is to be an Opposition House Leader. Both you and I have been an Opposition House Leader. I get it. I understand how frustrating that can be. But you have an important job to do, which is not to filibuster so you can't come to work on Monday afternoon. That is not the role of the Official Opposition, to come to this Chamber and filibuster.

**The Speaker:** I see the Opposition House Leader is rising to debate.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise. I need to provide some clarity to the House. I mean, I find it interesting that the Government House Leader accused us of filibustering yet used the full five minutes of 29(2)(a) to do just that, to filibuster. That's the first point that I'll make.

The second point that I'll make is that, you know, it's interesting that both in 2015 and 2016 our government ensured that the first Monday was private members' business. We respect the important work that private members do, and as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre so eloquently pointed out, private members are also government members, noncabinet, so the majority of their members are actually private members. The reason that this House a long time ago set aside Mondays for private members' business is because it would be all too easy for a government to trample the rights of private members and to ensure that they have time to bring forward bills and motions, which are critical. They also have great ideas. Although, you know, we may think that cabinet has the best ideas, I can tell you that the best ideas come from everywhere.

What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the Government House Leader is pointing out the fact that, well, they couldn't put private members' business on the early Order Paper. I would argue that the government and the Premier intentionally put the Speech from the Throne on a Wednesday to ensure that on the first Monday there would not be time for private members. So to accuse us of not

wanting to work on Monday – I’m sorry, but the government chose the date for the Speech from the Throne. The government knew that that would ensure that on the Monday private members don’t have an opportunity to get going on their business. You know, to say that we’re choosing to try to not do work on Monday is laughable. I mean, it is offensive, on the one hand, but laughable that the Government House Leader would even think of that. We are trying to preserve the rights of all private members in this House and, in fact, ensure that on as many Mondays as possible private members have due time to bring forward their ideas and debate.

I can tell you that I remember being an opposition member back in 2012, when we had to fight to preserve those days. I can tell you that it is absolutely critical that the government does everything that it can to ensure that these days are protected. Again, you know, to speak directly to the Government House Leader, through you, Mr. Speaker, of course, it was, in fact, the government’s actions that have put the Assembly’s back into the corner. To say, “Either we’re going to do what we want to impose on this Assembly or we’re going to adjourn” I don’t think is the only solution. In fact, we could have had an opportunity on the Monday for private members to get going on their business.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I know that a number of my colleagues also want to speak on this. I can tell you with certainty that if the shoe was on the other foot, the Government House Leader would be the first person jumping up and down and calling it the government bullying the private members, pushing through their agenda, railroading democracy of private members. I think you get the picture.

So it is our job, and I am proud to stand up not only for the private members of this side of the House, but you know what, Mr. Speaker? I’ll stand up for the private members of the other side of the House if the government won’t. That is our job, to hold the government to account. I mean, again, that’s the job of the private members on the other side of the House as well. Otherwise, I’m not sure why they have questions in question period. It is our job to hold them to account and present ideas.

I think there was a very simple solution, to ensure that every Monday is protected for private members, and the government and the Premier chose not to do that. We’ll leave that up to Albertans. Or maybe one day we’ll find out in question period if that was done intentionally in order to hijack the first Monday, that should have been for private members’ business.

Regardless, Mr. Speaker, I will proudly do my job to hold this government to account, to speak on behalf of Albertans, especially those that are underrepresented, to ensure that they have a voice in this House.

Now, if I can just push pause on this and back up, what I didn’t do when I first stood up to talk about the point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, was, of course, congratulate you on your new appointment to this House. I also do want to give a sincere welcome to all new members, on both sides, in this House. It is an incredible honour that we all share in this House.

Thank you.

3:50

**The Speaker:** I appreciate your comments and congratulations. I would just advise the House that the Speaker is a little bit sensitive when people make an accusation that it is an appointment. Very clearly it was an election, and I would like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning for her efforts in that election.

I saw that the hon. Minister of Transportation was rising under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. McIver:** Not under 29(2)(a). For debate.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who would like to rise under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, please.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I want to reinforce the fact that you were duly elected to the position of Speaker, but I do want to remind all of the members of the House that even countries like North Korea have elections, and the outcomes of those are often determined before the votes are actually cast. I’m not saying that you bear any resemblance in character or appearance to the leader of the North Korean people, but I would suggest that there are some similarities to the elections that were conducted both there and here in this House for the position of Speaker.\*

I heard with great interest the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview clarify for the people here in this Assembly that the government did in fact choose to hold the throne speech on Wednesday, which made it impossible, then, for private members to conduct their business on the following Monday afternoon. If I may, Mr. Speaker, offer a few comments on that.

I have watched, of course, Conservative politics very closely. One can’t help but do so when living in Alberta for an entire lifetime, as I have. Certainly, one of the themes in Conservative politics, at least before they’re elected to government, is the willingness or the eagerness to give their private members a voice in the Legislature and a voice in the House of Commons. I remember Preston Manning, of course, when he was leader of the Reform Party, stating that, you know, those private members would be able to have free votes on all issues.

In fact, I think various iterations of various Conservative parties here in Alberta have campaigned on those very same issues in multiple elections here in this province, and of course every time that the election is over and the ballots are cast and those Conservatives actually wind up in government in the House of Commons or in the Legislature, those promises fly out the window, and that’s one of the first promises that flies out the window. It’s interesting, and I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview pointing out to us the fact that the members opposite have repeated a time-honoured Conservative tradition, Mr. Speaker, of promising to give their private members a voice in this Legislature and then shredding that promise – what is it now? – three days since the Legislature opened.

**An Hon. Member:** Grassroots guarantee.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yeah. It went the way of their party bosses’ grassroots guarantee, quickly into the shredder, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I urge all of the private members, who may have been under the idea that their party bosses and the members on the treasury benches actually believed in giving their private members a free voice and a free vote in the Legislature, to stand up and demand it now. You’ve only got one whip in the House, so I would encourage private members to take this opportunity to stand up to the members of the treasury benches and assert the rights that I’m sure that they believed in. I can’t imagine how disappointed they are now, only three days after the opening of this Legislature, to have those free votes and free voices taken away from them so quickly, Mr. Speaker.

You know, if there are any old Reform or Social Credit members in this new UCP caucus who still believe in what turns out to be a fairy tale of free votes and free voices for their private members, stand up and demand it here and show the people of Alberta that

\*See page 62, right column, paragraph 9

you actually believe in the principles that you ran on and were elected on.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the people of Alberta would expect nothing less from their elected representatives than to explain to them why they're okay now, three days after the Legislature has opened, for their voices to be taken away by the members of the treasury benches and why they are cowering in the face of their whips and not standing up for their constituents, not standing up to bring forward the ideas that they ran on and were elected on and probably thought that they would get the chance to debate and possibly see passed here in this Legislature.

**The Speaker:** I see the Minister of Transportation is rising on debate.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election to the position at the front of this room, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, for the 30th session: well earned, well deserved. I'm sure you'll do a great and unbiased job for all of us, on all sides of the House. Thank you.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was fascinated by some of the debate that I've heard from the other side of the House. I can assure the hon. member that just spoke that the disappointment in this House is on his side of the aisle. I'm sure of that. I would take his words, that we all just heard, as a cautionary tale for members on our side of the House on what not to do. They should probably study those words as a lesson on how not to succeed in this House.

I was also interested in several of the comments from my hon. colleagues across the way, which are even more amazing when they know that there's a document from the hon. Government House Leader that is going to be tabled where the NDP House leader from the last session essentially did the necessary procedural amendment that we're doing today through this Motion 6. Yet when that happened four short years ago, it seemed to be quite normal. I remember the opposition side accepted it as the reality of a schedule and didn't go to great pains to get three hours off work on the first Monday that they could get three hours off work but, rather, said, "Okay; let's do what we can do; let's do a throne speech, and let's get on with the business of the House," in direct contrast to what we hear from the Official Opposition today.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we heard speakers over there talking about the tone. Well, indeed, the tone works on both sides of the aisle. It seems to be starting out today to be the tone of the Official Opposition to be accusatory and say things that they know are not accurate in this way and to be inconsistent with what their behaviour was when they were in government not so long ago. It seems that their memory is short.

I'm not sure what the reason is that they're so much against the May long weekend, because, of course, that was one of the reasons why the House couldn't start on Monday. I don't know. For me, I think that celebrating Her Majesty's birthday is something that I would have thought we could all agree on in this House, Mr. Speaker, since we all swore allegiance to her ever so recently. I, for one, am in favour of celebrating Victoria Day every single year for as long as I'm blessed enough to be alive. It's something that I hope to continue doing. I hope the members across will agree with that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members across are even more inconsistent. I'll take them on a little walk down memory lane, which is pertinent to some of the debate that we heard in the House today. I agree with some of the things, in fairness, that members opposite said, that you can go through this House on a four-year

term and maybe get no members' statements or no private members' bills. In the last four years I had zero private members' bills. That was just the luck of the draw. Some people were more lucky than I, and some people were equally lucky, which is not lucky at all. Indeed, I did actually get a draw for one member's motion, and I'll remind the members opposite what they did with that when I brought a motion on choice in education, something that we believe in very strongly on this side of the House. I brought forward that motion, and the NDP government used their bully pulpit and their majority to actually amend that motion to say exactly the opposite of what I had intended.

4:00

Now, the tradition here, Mr. Speaker, is that private members can bring these things forward. There's no guarantee that they'll pass – and that's fair game – but the private members should get their day, their opportunity to express what they are saying on behalf of their constituents. Members on all sides can debate for it, debate against it, but the government actually chose – and I'm reminding you of this because they're actually trying to act like they've been completely supportive of private members' business when it comes up. They actually used their majority to put forward an amendment to make my motion mean exactly the opposite of what it did in order to take away the only motion that I would have had in the four years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for those that don't remember, it was quite a memorable day because there was a procedural problem where I ended up getting removed from the House. I will say to my NDP colleagues that I suppose in some way they helped me get into the history books that day. But what was even more remarkable was the fact that probably it was the first time in history that someone got to come back into the House without an apology. It wasn't me that made the procedural mistake and got caught red-handed; it was the members opposite, after which time they were so embarrassed at, first, being so disrespectful of private members' business, so embarrassed at being caught red-handed with a procedural – I'm trying to think of a parliamentary word – misbehaviour, procedural misbehaviour, that they ended up having to retract their amendment and vote unanimously for the motion despite the fact that they tried to not even let that piece of private members' business come to a vote, which is the most respectful thing you can do.

So it's very, very insincere, Mr. Speaker, to hear members opposite talking about these high ideals about supporting private members' business. The only thing I'll agree with them on: those are high ideals, letting private members bring their business forward. But these people across the aisle, save for the ones that were elected for the first time, actually did exactly the opposite in the last session of what they just said that they would do.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans shouldn't believe this opposition on this item. They've proven by their actions and words that they don't believe what they said. Indeed, in response to some of what was said earlier, that's the tone they're setting today. On this side of the House I'm sure we won't be perfect, but this to me is a cautionary tale that we need to do better than what we've heard from the other side this afternoon.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, for the benefit of all members, the Minister of Transportation has moved that we adjourn debate. We will not vote on the actual motion at this time. We are only voting on the hon. Minister of Transportation's desire to adjourn debate at this time on this particular motion.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**  
**Bill 1**  
**An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax**

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, on behalf of the hon. Premier.

When the Premier introduced this legislation on the first day of session, he followed through on our government's number one promise to Albertans to repeal the carbon tax. I'm very proud that An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax is our government's very first piece of legislation. Repealing the carbon tax will require a number of legislative changes to several pieces of legislation: the Climate Leadership Act, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act, and some other smaller pieces of legislation.

I'll briefly outline those changes. The first change will be to repeal the Climate Leadership Act. If passed, the Climate Leadership Act will be repealed effective 12:01 a.m. on May 30, 2019. That will bring an end to the provincial carbon tax once and for all. As part of the repeal we're proposing transitional provisions so fuel resellers are not paying out of pocket and people in businesses have clarity. Most notably, fuel sellers such as gas stations can apply for a refund of the carbon tax they paid on the inventory they hold at the time of repeal. That's because fuel resellers prepay the carbon tax when they buy their inventory from refineries and wholesalers.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Other transitional provisions will remove the existing spending restrictions on the remaining carbon levy revenue and ensure the levy is not charged on sales that occur following the repeal of the act. Finally, the amendments will shorten the timelines that individuals and businesses have to apply for carbon tax refunds and rebates. These timelines will be shortened from four to two years. This will encourage fuel users and resellers to avoid delays in applying for rebates and refunds. It will also give them more

certainty around carbon tax revenues and, finally, an end to the carbon tax regime.

If the bill is passed, the second significant change will be to amend the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act. The Alberta Personal Income Tax Act will be amended to end the Alberta climate leadership adjustment rebate. These consumer rebates are paid quarterly and are funded from carbon tax revenue. Given that this revenue stream will be ending, we'll need to cancel the rebate program to stop the next scheduled payment, due to be issued in July. I want to make it clear. Albertans who have received carbon tax rebates will not be asked to refund the portion of the rebate they received for May 30 through to June 29.

Finally, a number of small amendments will need to be made to other acts to remove references to the Climate Leadership Act. This includes the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act and the Fuel Tax Act.

Madam Speaker, I would like to close by repeating that repealing the carbon tax was our government's key campaign promise. This April Albertans resoundingly supported our plan to repeal. We're making good on this promise so our government can get started creating jobs and allowing more money to stay in the pockets of families, businesses, and nonprofits. I look forward to debate on Bill 1, and I hope all members of this House will lend this bill the support that Albertans have been so vocal about.

Thank you, and with that, I would like to move to adjourn debate on Bill 1.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Government House Leader, actually, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you here today in the seat.

I think it's been a great day. We had some unanimous motions passed today defending our province, which is very exciting, and I'm ecstatic – I don't know about the rest of the House – to see second reading on the floor on the carbon tax. But with that said, I recognize it's Thursday, and I would like to move that we see the clock as 4:30 and we adjourn the House to return Monday at – let me just look at the table officers to make sure I got this right – 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:09 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, May 23, 2019**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft., adjourned*)









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 27, 2019

Day 3

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Reid  
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Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
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Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Yao

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Nixon, Jeremy  
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Deol  
Goehring  
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Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

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Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 27, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please remain standing, as you are able. Hon. members, as is the custom, we pay tribute to members who have passed away since last we met. With our admiration and respect, there is gratitude to members of the families who share the burden of public office and public service. Today we'd like to welcome members of the Zwozdesky, Ratzlaff, Ludwig, Dowling, and Anderson families who are present in the gallery.

**Mr. Gene Zwozdesky**  
July 24, 1948, to January 6, 2019

**The Speaker:** Gene Zwozdesky was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta on June 15, 1993, as the Liberal Member for Edmonton-Avonmore. He was re-elected to the newly created constituency of Edmonton-Mill Creek in 1997. Over the summer of 1998 he became a Progressive Conservative member and was re-elected four additional times in the same constituency. During his tenure he served in many roles, including minister of community development, Minister of Education, minister of aboriginal relations, minister of health and wellness.

Originally a teacher by profession, he led a group of students to Nova Scotia to showcase Alberta multiculturalism in 1979, which turned out to be a turning point for him. He ended up developing teaching resources to promote Alberta's multicultural identity.

Mr. Zwozdesky's general love and respect for all people has been recognized by many organizations and associations, including but not limited to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the Lebanese cultural association, the Sikh Federation of Edmonton, the Council of India Societies, the Congress of Black Women of Canada, and the Pakistan Canada Association.

His long-term association with the Shumka dancers, first serving as a dancer and then becoming the musical director, combined his love of music and culture. He was a dedicated supporter of the recording industry as well as music of all types.

After being elected the 12th Speaker in Alberta's history in 2012, Mr. Zwozdesky hosted thousands of Albertans on the grounds of the Legislature celebrating its centennial, taking the opportunity to bring awareness to the democratic process of our province.

Mr. Zwozdesky passed away January 6, 2019, at the age of 70.

**Mr. Raymond S. Ratzlaff**  
April 10, 1931, to February 1, 2019

**The Speaker:** Raymond Samuel Ratzlaff served as the Social Credit Member for Three Hills from 1967 to 1971. Mr. Ratzlaff served on a number of legislative committees during his tenure. From '69 to '71 he served as the minister of industry and tourism. In 1972 he completed his master's of education degree in

educational administration at the University of Alberta, where he resumed his career in education.

Mr. Ratzlaff passed away on February 1 at the age of 87.

**Mr. Albert W. Ludwig**  
November 14, 1919, to February 16, 2019

**The Speaker:** A veteran of the Second World War, Albert William Ludwig first served as the Social Credit Member for Calgary-North East in 1959. He was subsequently elected three additional times for the constituencies of Calgary-East, twice, and Calgary-Mountain View, serving until 1975. Mr. Ludwig served as the minister of public works from 1969 to '71. He had a distinguished law career, which culminated with his service as a Provincial Court judge from 1980 until his retirement in 1989.

Mr. Ludwig passed away on February 16 at the age of 99.

**Mr. Robert Wagner Dowling**  
September 28, 1924, to March 4, 2019

**The Speaker:** Robert Wagner Dowling was first elected as a Progressive Conservative Member for Edson in a by-election in 1969. He was re-elected in 1971 and again in '75. He was appointed the minister without portfolio responsible for tourism in 1971 before he was appointed as Alberta's first minister of consumer affairs in 1973. From 1975 to 1979 he served as the minister of business development and tourism. Mr. Dowling was a veteran of the Second World War and a well-established pharmacist in Jasper. Subsequent to his retirement he was the commissioner of Alberta's 75th Anniversary Commission and Alberta's commissioner for Expo 86.

Mr. Dowling passed away on March 4 at the age of 94.

**Mr. Dennis Lester Anderson**  
August 16, 1949, to March 20, 2019

**The Speaker:** Dennis Lester Anderson served for four terms as the Progressive Conservative Member for Calgary-Currie, from '79 to '93. Mr. Anderson served as the minister of culture, minister of culture and multiculturalism, Minister of Municipal Affairs, and minister of consumer and corporate affairs. In addition, Mr. Anderson chaired the Select Special Committee on Upper House Reform in the 20th Legislature, that introduced the concept of triple-E Senate. After leaving office, Mr. Anderson became an advocate for mental health, receiving many honours for his work in that field, including the sovereign's medal for volunteers in 2017.

Mr. Anderson passed away on March 20 at the age of 69.

In a moment of silent prayer and reflection I ask you to remember Mr. Zwozdesky, Mr. Ratzlaff, Mr. Ludwig, Mr. Dowling, and Mr. Anderson, each as you may have all known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like you to now join in the singing of our national anthem by R.J. Chambers. I'd invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

I might just add, in the light of recent sporting events out there, that I think it could be said that we are the north.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with admiration and respect it is with gratitude to members of the families who share the burdens of public office service today that I'd like to welcome by name the Ratzlaff family, who are present in the gallery, as well as the Zwozdeskys and Andersons and Dowlings. From the Zwozdesky family: Christine Zwozdesky, the former Speaker's wife; Ariana Whitlow, daughter; son and daughter-in-law Myron and Krystal Zwozdesky; grandchildren Joshua, Natalie, and Charlie; sister Iris; brother-in-law Steve; and nephew and niece Michael and Brittany. From the Anderson family: Barb Anderson, Mr. Anderson's wife; brother Brent Anderson and his wife, Mary Jane Tallon; and close friends Melanie and Brian Jobson. From the Ratzlaff family: daughter Jennifer Hauck and family friend Dr. Marguerite Wieler.

I'd invite all members to extend the warm welcome of the Assembly to these visitors.

1:40

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the grade 6 class of Tomahawk elementary school and their teacher, Robin Beil, and chaperone Holly Chodak. Tomahawk was a newly added part to my constituency here after this election, but I know that in the past many of these students have come into Drayton Valley and that I've taught many of their parents. As a matter of fact, I'm going to be meeting with them a little later today, and it's going to be interesting to see if I have taught any of their parents and whether or not some of my former colleagues and even some of my former students who now teach in Tomahawk are still there. Could the grade 6 class of Tomahawk please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** I'm not sure if there's anyone in that constituency which you haven't taught, hon. member.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations, please.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the following staff members from the Indigenous Relations stewardship and policy integration branch. This team makes sure that indigenous perspectives are heard in Crown-led engagements and that consultations about land management, policy development, and regional planning are effective. Could you just stand as I say your names, please: Michael Lundquist, Leah Sheffield, Lance Wilson, Kristin Raworth, Sumita Sharma. From my own riding, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin: Glinis Buffalo, Kim Yarmuch, Alyssa Metro, Dawna Harden, Kimberly Beaudin, Kailey Imes, Alicia Bradsen, Leslie Treseder, Judy-Lynn Downey, and Peter Kugba-Nyande. I ask that we give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Members, there are a number of guests today as well as a ministerial statement prior to question period, so I'd like to keep our comments as brief and as pointed as possible. I know that that sometimes presents a challenge for politicians like you guys, not like me but like you.

The Minister of Finance, please.

**Mr. Toews:** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you guests joining us today from the Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce executive council. I'm pleased to welcome Mr. Dan Wong, chair of the board; and board members Mr. Larry Gibson, Mr. Tertius Genis, and Mrs. Cris Seppola-Podsada. Please join me in welcoming these guests to the Chamber.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased, to you and through you – in advance of the government using its majority to end a century-long practice of allowing Albertans to see their visit and their names recorded in *Hansard* through the words of their MLAs – to introduce Bridget Stirling, who is the vice-chair of the Edmonton public school board. She represents ward G, my area of the city. She believes in properly funded public schools. I ask her to rise so she can receive the warm welcome of all members of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some of my department staff who have joined us today: Kelley Beitel, Lindsay Singh, Sean Graham, Anna Klepaczek, Sara Hansen, and Sarah Pinto. The success of any government and their ability to implement their agenda is dependent on a close working relationship with Alberta's professional public service. Together with these highly skilled and hard-working individuals I'm confident that we will build a better future for all Albertans. I would now like to ask the honoured guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** As mentioned, I'd encourage members to keep their comments as brief and on topic as possible.

Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today for my first and perhaps my last introduction and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mimi Williams. Mimi is a mother, writer, researcher, and long-time community activist who works tirelessly to help make the lives of folks living in disadvantage in our communities, particularly women and children, just a little bit better. From playing a key role in securing the initial funding from Premier Klein back in the '90s to launch the Edmonton school lunch program to her work in the labour and women's movements, Mimi has spent decades trying to make the world a better place for her neighbours. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise, just noting the time, to request unanimous consent to complete the ministerial statement on the High Level fire prior to question period.

**The Speaker:** Members, the Government House Leader is requesting unanimous consent to go past 1:50 to complete introductions, followed by the ministerial statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand in this Chamber and introduce a guest of mine, a close friend of

mine, Mary Thygesen. Mary Thygesen and I have known each other for a number of years. She's a long-time community activist, and she's particularly happy with the record of the previous government. One of the things which was important to her was capping tuition because she has a daughter who's attending the University of Alberta, and she, like me, believes that higher education should be universally affordable and accessible to everybody in Alberta. I ask that Mary Thygesen please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members in this Chamber my constituent and husband, Neal Gray. The love and support that we get from our spouses and family are critical, and I'm really grateful to have the opportunity to stand here and say, through you, thank you to the most important person in my life. Later this summer we will be celebrating our 15th wedding anniversary, and I had intended to introduce him closer to that, but given that we may not have the chance, I'm so glad he could be here today. I'd like to ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Congratulations on your 15th anniversary. It's a pleasure to have you today.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is rising on a ministerial statement.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my first opportunity, I'd like to congratulate you on your election, and I would like to say that we missed you at our caucus meeting today.

### Northern Alberta Wildfire Update

**Mr. Dreeshen:** As Minister of Agriculture and Forestry I would like to inform the members of this House on the current wildfire situation in northern Alberta. Alberta's forest fire season typically is early in the spring. May is always an active fire month: spring melt followed by hot, dry conditions coupled with deciduous trees, like our aspens and poplars, that have not leafed out. Ground vegetation has also not greened up, and with the last few weeks of little to no precipitation the northern half of our beautiful province is like a tinderbox.

Since March 1 there have been 478 recorded forest fires. That compares to 530 over the five-year average. The total area that has burned is about 190,000 hectares. Most of these fires are extinguished within 48 hours by the brave men and women at Alberta Wildfire. Alberta Wildfire has been doing a great job, co-ordinating with officials from Municipal Affairs, local municipal officials as well as local fire departments.

1:50

While in High Level, it was amazing to see over 30 different municipal fire departments from across the province assisting the High Level fire department, three of which are from my riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake: from Red Deer county, Penhold, and Sylvan Lake. Two, actually, are from your riding, Mr. Speaker. I'd encourage all members to reach out directly and to thank their local fire departments that are helping out.

Mr. Speaker, as of today there are four designated out-of-control fires burning in Alberta. They are near Maria Lake, at 300 hectares

burned so far; Manning, over 22,000 hectares; Slave Lake, over 40,000 hectares; and High Level, over 127,000 hectares. The High Level fire, due to the proximity of the town, has made it our highest priority fire. The fire is holding at three kilometres southwest of High Level; however, it has resulted in the evacuation of over 5,000 residents.

Over the last two weeks the government Member for Peace River, the Premier, and I were on the ground in High Level to meet and offer support to the teams battling the fire. Yesterday the government members from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and West Yellowhead and I surveyed the High Level fire and engaged directly with Alberta wildland firefighters, local municipal leaders, and first responders from across Alberta.

I would also like to update this House on the incredible determination showed by the municipal leaders in High Level: Mayor Crystal McAteer, Reeve Josh Knelsen, and Dene Tha' Chief Ahnassay. Their leadership, calm, and decisive actions were right, and their co-ordination with the unified command team will serve as a model for best practices going forward.

I also want to offer my heartfelt thanks to B.J. Hinson. He's a farmer south of High Level who has offered his farmyard as a base of operations for the mobile incident command centre. B.J. and so many Albertans who volunteer and sacrifice for their neighbours and friends demonstrate the best in Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, regarding the High Level evacuation, evacuation centres are set up across the north, and approximately 4,284 Albertans have checked in. In High Level there are 573 wildland firefighters, 194 structural firefighters and staff, 46 pieces of heavy equipment, 29 helicopters, and three water bombers available. I'm humbled by the resilience, the courage, and determination from our Alberta wildland firefighters to protect Alberta families' homes, farms, and businesses in northern Alberta.

But, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Mother Nature is not on our side. The weather forecast for much of northern Alberta over the next few weeks is hot, dry, and windy. A number of northern communities are and will experience heavy smoke from these fires. Smoke will be an ongoing concern, and Albertans should keep informed of health advisories.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government announced last Friday financial support for evacuees. Evacuated residents will receive a one-time payment of \$1,250 per adult and \$500 per child. Online applications opened yesterday at noon. However, debit cards are now available at reception centres for those who would prefer their payments in person.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the wildland firefighters, first responders, and structural firefighters for their efforts on the ground and in the air, and I encourage all members of this House to use their offices to inform their constituents about fire bans, evacuation notices, and smoke advisories. Regular updates can be found at [alberta.ca/emergency](http://alberta.ca/emergency) and [wildfire.alberta.ca](http://wildfire.alberta.ca).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address this House on this important matter.

**The Speaker:** Members, for the benefit of all, typically speaking, when the government makes a ministerial statement, the opposition has three minutes to respond to that ministerial statement. For that, this afternoon I look to the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of our entire caucus in support of the residents of the town of High Level, Mackenzie county, Dene Tha' First Nation, and Paddle Prairie Métis settlement. I also want to recognize those impacted by the recent

Trout Lake evacuations. Our hearts go out to every resident and family that has been impacted by these terrible fires. We know this is a time of great stress, anxiety, and fear for many people. Over 5,000 residents have had to evacuate without knowing when they'll be able to return home. Thousands of people are stuck in evacuation centres. Many communities are under boil-water advisories and impacted by poor air quality. And as all of this happens, the fires continue to spread to over 100,000 hectares, with reports that wind, moisture, and temperature conditions will make the fires worse in the coming days.

As I said, this is a scary and stressful situation for many people in our province, and that is why we want all of those who are affected to know that our caucus is here for you and that we stand with you, as do all members of this House and all Albertans. You will remain in our thoughts and our prayers. We'll advocate to make sure you get the support and services you need for your family. We will work with the government and the Premier to monitor the situation and ensure that every needed assistance and resource is being invested to fight the flames and protect your homes, families, property, and businesses.

We are relieved that there has been a very orderly and calm evacuation of communities and that no homes or businesses have been damaged. We offer our sincere thanks and appreciation to the very brave and dedicated front-line emergency responders, firefighters, essential service providers, government staff, and volunteers who have helped to make this happen. I also want to recognize paramedics during National Paramedic Services Week for their service and support during this emergency. All of these amazing front-line and support staff, in collaboration with impacted residents, who have been so calm and strong throughout the evacuations, are deserving of our recognition and our thanks.

Now, just as we have seen during the devastating fires in Fort McMurray and Slave Lake, through this crisis we have seen the true spirit and character of Albertans demonstrated. We have seen Albertans watch out for each other and have each other's backs. We have seen great strength, generosity, and compassion, and I know this will continue in the hours, days, and weeks ahead because Albertans don't sit on the sidelines; we stand up to help each other out. We are passionate doers and givers, and now more than ever we need to stand together, put aside politics, and help our neighbours in this time of need.

Thank you again to all of the firefighters, emergency personnel, and Albertans who are battling the flames and helping to ensure that our friends and family in High Level, Mackenzie county, Dene Tha' First Nation, Paddle Prairie Métis settlement, and Trout Lake get the help they need. We are hopeful that the flames will subside shortly, allowing residents . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

### Oral Question Period

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

#### Education Funding

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week our Education critic asked the Education minister three times for a simple answer to the question of whether the additional students going to school in September would be funded. The minister refused to answer and at one point displayed a profound lack of knowledge on the subject, suggesting that funding decisions are up to school boards. To the Premier: will the roughly 15,000 additional Alberta kids attending school in September be funded?

**Mr. Kenney:** I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the question, the important question, Mr. Speaker. It allows me to reiterate the commitment of this government to high-quality public education, which is why in our platform we committed to maintaining or increasing funding for education in Alberta. Now, we haven't yet even been in office for three weeks, so both the Minister of Education and Minister of Finance are still being briefed on the interim supply measures and will be providing information to school boards and other funding partners in the nearest possible future.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, sometimes you've just got to deal with the hand you're dealt, and that means you have to make decisions sooner than you would otherwise like.

Generally school boards are expected to pass their budget and submit them to the province by the end of May, this week. Now, meanwhile what I'm seeing is that boards are bracing for the worst, making plans that will significantly undermine the quality of education received by Alberta's kids, all because the Premier and the minister aren't giving them an answer. To the Premier. As we speak, front-line education is being hurt. Will you or won't you fund enrolment?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Again I thank the hon. leader for an important question, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we can assure all school boards that, at the very least, current funding levels will continue. As to the specific amounts for transfers, that will be subject to advice that we receive. You know, part of the problem here is that the NDP left behind a huge fiscal mess. They were running the largest per capita deficit in the country. They were headed to \$100 billion in debt. So here's the challenge: we need to deal with that fiscal mess left behind by the NDP while still investing in education.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much. You know, there are 15,000 more students coming to our schools this fall. They will need teachers. They will need textbooks. They will need educational assistants for special-needs kids. If they don't get them, it means all students – all students – will be getting less. To the Premier: can you explain to the nearly 700,000 students learning in Alberta schools why they should be getting less while you hand over billions of dollars in tax breaks to wealthy corporations?

**Mr. Kenney:** I reject the premise of the question, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Albertans elected this government to create jobs and economic growth and, with that growth, to be able to afford the best-quality public services. One thing I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition is that this government will continue to be one of the biggest funders of public education in Canada on a per capita and a per-student basis.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, we heard this weekend that principals in Calgary are talking about cutting funding in K to 3 schools by over 5 per cent this year alone. The things these kids don't learn in the early years will cost our province in real dollars for decades to come. Once again, why is the Premier so committed to letting 5-year-olds, 6-year-olds, 7-year-olds be the collateral damage to his ideological, multibillion-dollar tax gift to Alberta's biggest corporations?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, it didn't take very long to turn back into the anger machine over there in the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is this. Albertans rejected the NDP's total economic and fiscal failure. Albertans elected a government to restore balance to our province's finances so that we can ensure the long-term future of important front-line services like health care and education. Albertans elected a government to demonstrate that Alberta is open for business and jobs again and to restore economic growth, hope, and opportunity. That's exactly what we're doing.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, they go into ideological talking points, and kids learn less. You know, the government is also planning to ram through the decade-old Education Act, rolling back the rights of students, and adding further budget pressures. CBE says that increasing the age of access to 21 could add 1,700 students in that board alone. This number will be replicated across the province. These students, like others, are going to need – wait for it – teachers, educational assistants, and resources. To the Premier: can you tell us whether you're planning to pay for that, for the new imposition of the old Education Act?

**Mr. Kenney:** I'm surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition is confused about the Education Act. It is actually a modernization of Alberta education law. It replaces a statute that's been in place for over 80 years with one that was adopted by this place just a few years ago. The Minister of Education will come forward with details on the implementation of that legislation in the very near future. I can assure the member that we're taking into consideration those concerns raised by school boards about additional funding costs implied by the Education Act.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition. Your second supplemental.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I suggest that maybe the Premier should learn a little bit more about the Education Act he wants to bring in. I realize that the Premier is a bit of a back to the future kind of guy, but given that the consultation of the new/old Education Act took place a decade ago, what, if any, consultation does the Premier plan to do with parents, with students, with trustees, and with – I know; it's hard for you – educators before ramming through this outdated Education Act?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP came to office four years ago with the intention of proclaiming into law the new Education Act, but they didn't do it. Why? I'll tell you why: because it placed too much emphasis on parental choice, on school choice, on diversity and pluralism in the system. This government is a champion of school choice, of diversity and pluralism in the education system. To answer the member's question, the hon. Minister of Education has been listening to school boards, to students, to teachers, and to her officials on this matter.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for your third set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Interestingly, the new choice parents are going to be offered is a classrooms of 40 students or 50 students, Mr. Speaker.

### Worker Overtime Pay

**Ms Notley:** The Premier has been on the record saying he plans to cut the overtime pay received by working Albertans. This plan will be most painfully felt by the same folks who've been hit the hardest by the downturn in oil prices: energy and construction workers. The

Premier ran on creating new jobs, not on picking the pockets of folks still working in existing jobs. Will he commit today that he will not go after the hard-earned banked overtime of Alberta's energy and construction workers?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is completely ridiculous. This was part of the NDP's fear and smear campaign in the recent election, and Albertans didn't buy it. They rejected the fear and smear. Albertans want to be able to negotiate with their employers to have more flexible shift time, and that is why we were elected with a commitment to restore the rules that existed for three years under the previous NDP government.

**Ms Notley:** We know that 27 per cent of oil and gas workers earn overtime every week. The Premier's proposed plan to gut banked overtime could cost the average oil and gas worker roughly \$2,700 over every 12-week period. At the same time he's taking billions of dollars from our education and health care to finance his lovely corporate tax cut. Why is his so-called plan to open Alberta for business being financed out of the back pockets of regular working people at the same time he's padding the bottom lines of business owners?

**Mr. Kenney:** Again, the premise of the question is completely false, Mr. Speaker. When workers are asked to do overtime by their employers, they will continue to be paid at time and a half, as they always have been, but they would only be able to go into a banked time agreement with an employer at their request and with their approval. This is about empowering workers.

**Ms Notley:** Yeah; that's not the way it's going to work. The employers are going to make it banked overtime, and they're not going to get the money. You know, there's not one province in the rest of the country that grabs the hard-earned overtime pay of working people from their pockets the way this government has proposed to go back to. Should the Premier render Alberta's working people the least protected in Canada, what's next? Will he be seeking advice from labour ministers in Alabama, maybe Wisconsin? Exactly how low is too low, or is there such a thing?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, what we'll be doing with the open for business act is actually restoring workplace democracy in this province, that was attacked by the NDP. We're going to give workers the ability to have a secret ballot vote on whether their workplace is certified. The NDP, of course, legislated a workaround which allows workers to be intimidated and bullied, which is what happened to some new Canadians in the construction industry in Calgary. Shameful that they were made so vulnerable by that NDP change. We're going to bring back workplace democracy.

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

### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, the Premier definitely needs a bit of a workshop on labour law, but let's move on instead to the justice system because I think he needs that there. He refuses to appoint a special prosecutor to oversee the investigations into his UCP leadership election and the Member for Calgary-East's. Now, he won't listen to me, but perhaps he'll listen to his Ottawa buddies. During the federal sponsorship scandal former Prime Minister Stephen Harper brought in an independent prosecutor to, quote, decide every aspect of that investigation and the laying of eventual charges, end quote. Stephen Harper acted to protect the integrity of

our justice system. Why does the Premier think the same rules don't apply to him?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as I said last week, obviously the police operate independent from government, as does the Crown prosecutor service. We certainly respect their independence, and I hope the opposition does as well.

**Ms Notley:** Okay. Well, Stephen Harper apparently doesn't work. How about the current federal Conservative leader, Andrew Scheer? Earlier this year that leader said it was unbelievable that the federal Liberals would be investigating themselves when it came to the SNC-Lavalin scandal. The hypocrisy between the Conservative position when it comes to Liberals and the Conservative position when it comes to Conservatives further underlines the need for independent oversight, Mr. Speaker. Why won't the Premier put the needs of Alberta's justice system ahead of his own political interests?

2:10

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as was the case with her questions on overtime, the Leader of the Opposition is playing rhetorical shell games here. The quote from the federal opposition leader dealt with a political inquiry led by Anne McLellan, nothing to do with police or prosecutors. We respect the independence of the Crown prosecutor service and our very professional police. I wish the opposition would demonstrate the same level of respect.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you. You know, in the last few days more fines have been imposed on the Premier's colleagues by the Election Commissioner. Some of those investigations are linked to the RCMP investigation, so it's clear that the issue is not going anywhere any time soon. Meanwhile, the Premier appears quite unaware of the relationship between Crown prosecutors and criminal investigations as well as the many precedents across the country for doing the right thing in situations just like this one. Given all of this, will the Premier commit to agreeing with our motion for an emergency debate on this matter in this House this afternoon?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, what we hear here is just a continuation of the NDP's failed campaign of fear and smear. Albertans rejected it. They instead gave the largest democratic mandate in Alberta electoral history to this government to focus on creating jobs, on growing the economy, on getting pipelines built, and on standing up for Alberta. We'll allow the police to do their work independently while we as a government will focus on getting the job done for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great honour to share with the Chamber a project called Days for Girls that my Camrose Daybreak Rotary Club co-ordinates regularly. Around the world girls and women resort to using rags, mattress stuffing, banana leaves, feathers, and even cow dung to manage their menstruation.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, are you asking a question or making a member's statement presently?

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

## Legislature Grounds

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It will be my honour to ask the first puffball question of the afternoon. As government and opposition members take the walk from our offices in the Edmonton Federal Building to the Legislative Assembly, we can't help but notice pink spray paint on the crumbling concrete. Members are also noticing that three fountains are not working as well. To the Minister of Infrastructure: we'd like to know what is going on with the Legislature Grounds.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, first, this is my first opportunity to thank my constituents who elected me here, and this is also my opportunity to congratulate every member of this House on their election. Also, I would like to thank all Albertans who elected this government to grow their economy, create jobs and fight for pipelines. Coming to this question about the grounds, I will check into that and get back to the Member for Calgary-West.

**The Speaker:** I think in light of the mix-up of questions today – and I'll keep in mind that it's everyone's third day on the job – we'll offer one supplemental to the Member for Calgary-West, and then we'll proceed to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the character of the Legislature Grounds is very, very important to the people of Alberta. Maintaining the structure of the Legislature Grounds, of course, is paramount to the people of Alberta. I'd like to ask the Infrastructure minister: are there any plans that are currently in place to ensure that the protection of our Legislature goes on into the future?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, yes. The answer is yes, and we'll conduct the necessary repairs not only to the grounds but also to this building, the temple of democracy. I will update you as well because we have to do some repairs to this building. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Buffalo, please.

## Municipal Funding

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government brought in an important piece of legislation, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act, which, among other things, gave certainty to Alberta's two largest cities about provincial revenue-sharing going forward. The intent always was that that work would shift to the rest of Alberta's municipalities to lock in similar agreements before the current MSI funding deal expires in 2021. My question is this. To the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance: what action has this government taken so far to reach funding deals with these municipalities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. To the hon. member. The other municipalities, directly and through their agencies, the AUMA and the RMA, have been told that the government will be working with them to put an equitable funding arrangement in place. That has not yet been completed. I think it's a good question the hon. member asks, but we haven't come to a conclusion on that question to date.

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

**Member Ceci:** Thank you again. To the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. The rural municipalities that I'm hearing from are

extremely concerned that they have not yet heard or seen any forward movement on this file. Will the minister commit today to reopening discussions on these funding agreements with municipalities immediately?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to working with municipalities to ensure that there's predictable funding going forward so they can serve their residents in a very focused and predictable way. My question to the members opposite would be: why did their government not get this done in four years?

**Member Ceci:** You know, focus and predictability is a great thing, but given that some of these municipalities are being told that they're going to have to wait until this Premier's blue-ribbon panel reports back before discussions will continue and given that municipalities can't do long-range planning without some sort of information from this government, will this minister admit today that he really has no plan to support our cities and towns and no timeline to lock in funding agreements with Alberta's municipalities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleague just pointed out, the previous government had four years to get this agreement done and didn't do so, so it's a little interesting that on the third day with the House sitting they are looking for all the answers that they were unable to accomplish in four years. I can assure the hon. member and all members from the different municipalities across Alberta that we know that this is important. We have to get through the financial mess left by the previous government, and as we do, we will certainly work hand in glove with them to let them know what their funding levels will be.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, puffball questions aren't supposed to be fumbled by ministers, but the Finance minister did exactly that last week when his colleague asked him if he would keep a key campaign promise to balance the budget by 2022. The minister bumbled and mumbled something about economic headwinds but did not commit to 2022. To the Finance minister: was your befuddled answer on Thursday actually a glimmer of clarity that you're actually going to break that key campaign promise?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we were clear with Albertans during the campaign period that bringing this province's finances to balance is a key priority, and we will be working to that end. We have inherited a fiscal mess from the previous government, yet we're committed to deliver high-quality services and get this province to balance in our first term.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has surely been briefed on the numbers by now and given that one can't balance a budget by blowing a 4 and a half billion dollar hole via tax gifts to the wealthy in said budget, can the minister share with Albertans if it's health care, education, child care, or seniors' care he is targeting for cuts first? Be specific.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been briefed on the mess that we're in today. Again, we're committed to going forward, respecting the hard-earned tax dollars of Albertans. We're committed to going forward to ensure that we're delivering high-quality services to Albertans and bringing this province to balance. We will be delivering a budget this fall to that end.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that the Finance minister campaigned on a balanced budget by 2022, not '23, without service cuts, will the Finance minister commit to his own constituents in Grande Prairie and my constituents in Lethbridge that he won't cut any health services, any education services, or any municipal funding for mid-sized cities as a result of a reckless tax gift of more than \$4 billion to the already wealthy?

2:20

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are absolutely committed to delivering on fiscal balance in this province, and we're also committed to maintaining education and health care spending. We are also committed to working with municipalities to ensure that they have predictable funding so that they can deliver to their constituents.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

### Addiction and Mental Health Services in St. Paul

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The St. Therese health centre in St. Paul is the designated psychiatric hub for the northeastern region. For the last four years I've been asking for assistance to improve patient care and safety for staff. Over that time we have only managed to have a couple more of the available beds reopened – that's what I've been told – but our ER is often still utilized as a holding area while waiting for a bed to open up. To the Minister of Health: will you commit to a thorough assessment of the unit to ensure that we are providing the best care possible?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for raising such an important question. One in 5 Canadians and 1 in 5 Albertans suffer from mental illness. This government has committed very strongly that we're going to put in a \$100 million comprehensive mental health and recovery strategy. We're going to focus on a continuum of care with wraparound services. In addition, we've committed another \$40 million for detox beds. We'll be looking forward to working with you to work on this important issue.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much for the answer, Minister. Given that many patients from other communities are brought into our facility, often by the RCMP, but upon discharge have no means of returning to their home community, sometimes without ID or money, and given that the previous minister's response to local mayors was that that is a municipality problem, Minister, will you work with the mayor and council from St. Paul to come up with a more realistic response to this issue?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is: absolutely right. I'm looking forward to working with the mayor and the council members because they know first-hand the issues in their community.

Thank you for that.

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of the patients brought in are suffering from addictions and substance abuse and after treatment are simply turned out onto the street with nowhere to turn and often re-enter the system – a facility like this: the patients and community would benefit greatly from some form of wraparound services so patients can get some extra help after being discharged rather than being readmitted within days, putting extra strain on our already stressed system. Are there any programs available that the community could access to help alleviate this situation in the short term?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member raises a very important question. Yes, it is complex when you look at the different choices for people seeking recovery and treatment, but our government has committed that we're going to look into a comprehensive wraparound strategy. We'll be putting extra dollars into this, and we will make our system accessible for Albertans. Every Albertan who suffers from addiction deserves an opportunity to get well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Conversion Therapy Use in Alberta

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Conversion therapy is a damaging, hurtful practice that has no place in Alberta. That's why I was proud that our government established a working group to figure out the best way to ban this practice altogether in a way that could withstand legal challenges. We had only just begun our important work when the election was called. Can the minister tell this House whether he and his government agree that the practice of conversion therapy causes real harm to members of the LGBTQ community? Yes or no?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to just point out to all Albertans that the focus for our government is that we as a government do not condone this practice in any form. No Albertan should be coerced in any way, especially vulnerable children. Vulnerable children deserve to grow up in a loving environment. But when it comes to this committee, I've actually been reached out to by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. I've agreed to sit down with her to be able to hear from her what any recommendations might have happened with this committee.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard from people who went through the horrible, horrible practice of conversion therapy and given that Alberta Health Services has received 250 complaints related to conversion therapy since October 2015, to the minister: will you admit that you were wrong

when you said that conversion therapy is not a problem in Alberta, will you commit to supporting the ongoing work of this expert committee, and will you commit to the House that you will implement their recommendations?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, just to quote the previous minister, for four years this government was asked this question, for four years this government was asked about conversion therapy, for four years this government was asked if they're going to do anything about it, for four years they said that conversion therapy does not happen in Alberta . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Shandro:** . . . for four years they said that there is no conversion therapy, and it wasn't until the eve of the election in February 2019 that this government set up this ad hoc committee to provide advice to the previous minister.

**The Speaker:** The point of order is noted at 2:26.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that your press secretary, Steve Buick, issued a statement saying that the working group was disbanded and given that you took to Twitter to discredit a reporter for reporting on that statement, can the members of this House and the people of Alberta trust anything that comes out of your office?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the question was whether the ad hoc group that was set up in February 2019 to provide advice to the previous minister was disbanded by us, our government, or by me. I corrected that and said that it was not disbanded by me, that it was not disbanded by our government. This is a group that was struck in February 2019. They met twice – they met twice – and their last meeting was scheduled to be in April. That was cancelled because of the election that was called by the previous government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

### Inclusion

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We use a lot of words in this Chamber, and it's easy for us to forget how important it is to speak plainly so that all Albertans can understand what we say so that they can properly evaluate what we're doing, and are we doing what we said we would do? Based on that premise, I would like to ask our new Premier a straightforward question so that we have a baseline. I and many Albertans would like to know what the Premier means when he uses the word "inclusion."

**Mr. Kenney:** Of course, Mr. Speaker, I mean an approach to accepting and celebrating the diversity of today's Alberta, including people of all backgrounds and walks of life.

**The Speaker:** The Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the Premier is clearly still working on that definition, I'd like to ask the Minister of Community and Social Services how she defines "inclusion."



**Mrs. Sawhney:** I would just like to reiterate what our Premier said, that inclusion embodies Albertans of all backgrounds, all faiths, and all different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. Since the Premier and the minister are still struggling with their respective definitions of inclusion as it relates to their portfolios and their work, I'd like to ask the Minister of Education what she means when she uses the word "inclusion."

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I agree with the Premier and with the hon. minister of social services. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright, please.

### Rural Crime

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the UCP legacy parties took the scourge of rural crime seriously by forming the Alberta crime task force back in March of 2017. The UCP followed this up with a detailed action plan, A Safer Alberta, in July of 2018. Further, our election platform contained a plethora of detailed initiatives to combat rising rural crime. My constituents have become increasingly concerned with the rising rates of rural crime in Alberta. Can the Minister of Justice tell us what the government's plan for combatting rural crime is?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I can inform this Assembly that our government is committed to a fairer, faster, and more responsive justice system. In certain rural communities between 2017 and 2018 crime was up over 100 per cent. Our government is going to be making sure we invest in front-line policing by providing \$50 million to ALERT and also hiring 50 new prosecutors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Lloydminster, a city in my constituency, sits on the border between Alberta and Saskatchewan, many of my constituents are worried about criminals moving from province to province. Can the Minister of Justice inform this Legislature what the government's plan for working with our provincial neighbours to combat the rise of rural crime is?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, early on, when I was sworn in as Minister of Justice, I reached out and talked with the applicable ministers in Saskatchewan. I've also talked to the senior leadership of the RCMP to make sure we reduce barriers, to make sure we, you know, combat this crisis of rural crime across Alberta.

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

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of the difficulties in addressing the crisis of rural crime arise from understaffing and poor response rates of police and first responders in rural areas of our province, what does our

government plan on doing to improve police response times and presence in rural communities?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we're going to be advocating for changes to the Criminal Code to make sure that they're more reflective of the realities of rural Alberta. In addition to that, we're going to make sure we update the Crown policy manual to make sure that it reflects the realities, again, of people in our rural communities so they feel safe in their homes. Again, as I mentioned earlier on, we're also going to be investing \$50 million in ALERT to make sure that we can respond on the ground, making sure we give people the resources that they need to combat crime.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and Leader of the Official Opposition.

### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

*(continued)*

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just now we are hearing of reports in the media that the RCMP have actually contacted and spoken with the Solicitor General as part of their investigation into the UCP leadership race and allegations that those working on behalf of the Premier may have engaged in fraud. To the Solicitor General: do you not believe that in order to preserve the system of justice or to preserve your job, you must appoint a special prosecutor?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, as this matter is currently before the RCMP for investigation, it would be inappropriate for me to comment at this time on their investigation. We respect the independence of the RCMP to conduct the investigations as they see fit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the adage that it is inappropriate for a member of Executive Council to speak about a matter which is before the courts or before the police arises from the very notion that they cannot be involved in something and exercise any influence over it. It is that very excuse you are relying on, which is why you must either appoint a special prosecutor or step aside.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind the Leader of the Official Opposition that after Question 4 the use of preambles would not be an acceptable practice here in the Legislative Assembly.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I can advise this Assembly that making sure we preserve the integrity and independence of our police and our prosecution is paramount to the justice system. I take that very, very seriously. Again, I would refer the member, if she is looking for a response, to the RCMP for commentary on their ongoing investigation.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that when I asked the Premier about this matter last week he, interestingly, failed to disclose to the House that his Solicitor General had been in conversations with the RCMP around this matter and given that every other jurisdiction and anyone with any knowledge about parliamentary procedure understands that independence must not only happen but it must be seen to happen, why will the Premier not appoint a special prosecutor?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I can advise this Assembly that I learned from the RCMP that they wanted to talk to me on Saturday and that I met with them on Sunday for a brief 30-minute

discussion, answered their questions fully, and they had no further, other questions for me.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, continuing on with the fact that we've just learned that the Minister of Justice has been speaking to the RCMP, just for a point of clarity, acknowledging your last statement around speaking to them on Saturday, can you please clarify for us, then, why you wouldn't then seek an independent prosecutor as you are now actually involved in the RCMP investigation?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Again, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier on in my commentary, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on an ongoing investigation by the RCMP. I'd refer the hon. member to the RCMP if they're looking for further questions about this matter.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Justice repeatedly keeps saying that it is inappropriate for him to comment on the matter of the RCMP investigation, can he please explain to this House why it is not inappropriate for him to not appoint an independent prosecutor?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the RCMP's investigation. It seems to me that the hon. member has lots of questions about this leadership race, a leadership race, I'd like to remind this Assembly, that our Premier won a resounding mandate in, a resounding mandate to get Albertans back to work. He then went on to win a resounding mandate from all Albertans, with 55 per cent of the vote. Over a million Albertans are looking for us to restore confidence again in jobs and our Alberta economy.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the comment again from the Minister of Justice, are you saying now that because you've won the election, you are actually above the law? Should we not be having emergency debate and an independent prosecutor?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, again, we respect the justice system. The police and prosecution are independent. We respect the independent process, and we will rely on them. I'd again refer the hon. member to the RCMP if you have further questions on this matter.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

### Chuckegg Creek Wildfire Evacuee Supports

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm honoured to rise for the first time in this House on a nonpartisan question. As you know, the communities of High Level, Meander, Bushe, Chateh, and Paddle Prairie and parts of Mackenzie county have been under mandatory evacuation because of the Chuckegg Creek wildfire. Will the Minister of Community and Social Services please update this House on what the government is doing for these evacuees?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Peace River for that question. I know part of this has

been covered by Minister Dreesen, but as we're all aware, evacuation centres have been established in Slave Lake, High Prairie, Peace River, La Crête, Grande Prairie, Fort Vermilion, and the K'atl'odeeche First Nation east of Hay River. I'd like to thank the local volunteers who have helped evacuees find food and other essentials at the evacuation centres, and further to this, my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced last Friday that our government would be providing emergency payments to evacuees to help cover the cost of . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. minister. For the benefit of all members of the Assembly it's inappropriate to refer to a member's name or a minister's name, as you did. I know that the minister of agriculture did a fine job in his statement today, but we might refer to him as such.

The Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the answer, hon. minister. As far as everyone knows, evacuating your home can be a very difficult and burdensome situation for individuals and for families. Can the minister please provide updates on how these evacuees can access these financial supports the government is providing?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, as of yesterday those forced to leave their homes due to the mandatory evacuation order can apply for a one-time payment of \$1,250 per adult and \$500 per child. These funds may be deposited by an e-transfer or by obtaining a prepaid debit card at an evacuation centre, and it's our hope that this financial assistance will provide some peace of mind for residents during this very stressful time.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister also provide the House with an update on how many residents have been evacuated and how many have received the different supports that we're offering from the government?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I can report that as of 7 a.m. today 4,386 people had registered with the evacuation centres. Additionally, as of last night 2,228 people have accessed the emergency payment systems through the e-transfer system. I'd also like to offer a heartfelt thank you to the CSS staff for all their hard work and long hours this past week.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Sherwood Park has a question.

### School Class Sizes

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. Under the previous New Democratic government class sizes in Alberta increased while math and reading scores declined. Parents in my riding of Sherwood Park are concerned about the impact that these increased class sizes are having on their children. Our government was elected on a mandate to address this issue. Can the minister please explain to the House what our government is doing to address increases to class sizes? [interjection]

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education has the floor.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. In our platform we committed to an audit of class sizes. My

department is already undertaking this important work. Our government is committed to strengthening education by working with our students, our parents, our teachers, our principals, trustees, and other education stakeholders, and as Minister of Education I am focused on strengthening our education system and delivering on our platform commitments.

Thank you for the question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the minister: given that in 2017-2018 the NDP invested \$293 million into the small class size initiative, a program designed to help reduce class sizes – however, as we all know, class sizes continue to increase – can the minister please tell us what steps the government is taking to ensure that funding used for class size reduction is having positive outcomes?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. The office of the Auditor General reviewed and reported on the administration of the class size initiative in 2018 and recommended monitoring and reporting processes be improved. As such, my department is auditing and will determine how previous funding was dedicated to class size reduction, and I will look forward to having more to say. As those results become available, I'll look forward to sharing them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for confirming that the government is looking into how this funding was used. It's very important.

Mr. Speaker, given that in our platform we committed to working with parents, teachers, principals, and trustees to improve educational outcomes for our students, can the minister please explain how she is engaging our education sector to advance this very important objective?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. Alberta is home to some of the brightest minds in the country, from educators to trustees and from students to their parents. It is important to me as Minister of Education to maintain an open line of communication with everyone who has a role in our province's system. Additionally, I've also met with the Minister's Youth Council, and I'm looking forward to hearing their perspective as I meet with them in the near future on this issue and on other issues.

Thank you for the question.

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

### Environmental Programs in Indigenous Communities

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many indigenous communities live at the forefront of climate change, and many are taking leadership in combatting it. Under the indigenous climate leadership initiatives of our government we funded nearly \$85 million in investment in things like renewable energies, energy efficiency, and climate leadership capacity building. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: can you reassure indigenous communities that these investments and these jobs will remain under your government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to empowering indigenous Albertans to take charge of their own destiny. As part of this commitment to Alberta our government will work towards partnering with indigenous communities to share in the economic prosperity of our resource wealth and to strengthen social conditions. That's why our government is proposing the indigenous opportunities corporation. It'll provide indigenous communities access to capital, thereby removing an important barrier to ownership of resource projects.

**Mr. Feehan:** It looks like they just lost \$85 million.

Anyways, given that remote indigenous communities like Fort Chipewyan are not connected to Alberta's electricity grid and rely on burning diesel fuel for heat and power and given that in an effort to reduce diesel use in the northern communities, the nations formed the Three Nations Energy committee with a \$3.3 million grant from the Alberta climate leadership plan so that the community itself could own and operate the largest off-grid solar and storage project in Canada, to the same minister: will you honour this investment and commit to maintaining these kinds of investments as well?

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, again, our government is committed to a path to reconciliation and shared prosperity with indigenous peoples by advancing economic opportunities and promoting environmental stewardships through a stronger economy. Indigenous communities should have the chance to benefit from the economic opportunities generated from resource projects, and project ownership creates wealth that in turn creates opportunities for indigenous people to reinvest in their communities.

**Mr. Feehan:** Oh, Fort Chip just got colder.

Given that these grants will help the communities reduce greenhouse gas emissions, make energy bills more affordable, and support local jobs and given that for this community alone the solar panels are expected to generate 73.4 megawatt hours yearly and prevent almost 980 tonnes of greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere – I'd love to have a climate leadership response to this one, by the way – can the minister please explain how his government plans to support indigenous communities who may lose these jobs and see the utility bills increase in the absence of the climate leadership plan?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is time to give a real voice to those First Nations who want to be partners in the environmental response resource development so they can move their people from poverty to prosperity. This government is committed to helping the indigenous peoples.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is rising with a question.

### Daycare and Children's Services

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government took action to protect children and support Alberta families. We introduced measures to improve the child intervention system. We introduced \$25-a-day daycare, a project that we intended to expand and make universal over time. In last week's throne speech there was not a single mention of the Children's Services ministry in that

speech. To the minister: what are you actually working on, and were you disappointed to be left out of the throne speech?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In April Albertans gave us a strong mandate: to get people back to work and to strengthen our economy. We know that jobs allow people to provide for their families, and a strong economy provides supports for those vulnerable Albertans who need it the most. We spent the last year listening to Albertans, and what we heard is that quality and accessibility in child care are important, but so too are choice and options for parents and families.

**The Speaker:** Members, we heard the question; we will hear the answer.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that when asked by the media about giving each minister a mandate letter the Premier said their mandate was set out in the UCP platform and given that there is not a single mention of children or the work of Children's Services in that platform, again to the minister: is it that you have no mandate, or is it that your work is just not important to the Premier?

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much for the question. As I said before, we are very much committed to supporting those most vulnerable and ensuring that children and youth get a good start in life, whichever that may be. Part of that is ensuring that families have the supports they need to raise their children and ensure that they get a good start.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that you don't seem to have a clear mandate but given that we continue to hear a great deal of support for the \$25-a-day daycare program as a way of ensuring that Alberta families have access to affordable and high-quality child care, to the minister: are you prepared to assure Alberta families, children, and child care centres that this \$25-a-day daycare program will continue and that you will commit to further expansion of this program in the fall provincial budget?

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

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a working parent I understand the challenges of finding the right fit for child care for working families. We were very clear during the campaign. We understand we're in the middle of a pilot project for early learning and child care centres, and we will continue that pilot through. However, what works for one family may not work for another. Over the last year we heard that Alberta families are looking for choice in child care as well.

**The Speaker:** In 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

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

### Alberta's Industrial Heartland

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When Alberta's energy industry thrives, so does the great province of Alberta. My constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has

benefited tremendously from Alberta's energy products, as does the rest of the world. I'm immensely proud to represent the hard-working Albertans that have built our Industrial Heartland into Canada's largest hydrocarbon processing region. I'm proud to live in a region that produces so much for our community, our province, and our country.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Tragically, there are people out there who do not see all the good that our energy industry does. Whether it be Hollywood celebrities flying their private jets to our province to boycott oil and gas or foreign-funded groups misrepresenting the great people of Alberta to the world, we are just not being treated fairly. Our province and our economy are under siege.

2:50

I'm proud of all the good my constituents do for Alberta, Canada, and the world. I'm proud of our Premier standing up for and stating the truth about our great province. He has been fighting back against the economic damage caused by our Prime Minister, the carbon tax, Bill C-69, Bill C-48, and the never-ending assaults on Alberta.

Thankfully, we have an ally on the federal level that has Alberta's back. She is my constituent and local Member of Parliament, Shannon Stubbs. She has been a stalwart advocate for the world-class resource development in my constituency and in our province, and I am honoured to be in such good company.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) that the daily Routine may continue beyond 3 o'clock p.m.

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

### Voting in the Legislative Assembly

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The UCP has proposed to allow MLAs to abstain from using their democratic responsibility when it comes to voting on legislation. Democracy is about participation. Our responsibility as citizens is to be engaged, to debate, and recognize, no matter the political affiliation, our role in the democratic process. We must always be engaged and vigilant to the issues that impact our neighbours, Albertans, and Canadians.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now is the time to acknowledge our Constitution and the right that allows all of us here in this Chamber and for all Albertans, for it grants all of us the freedom to be a successful and caring society. We cannot abstain from these debates to allow others to tell us the views that we should hold. To restrain ourselves from doing the right thing, for being the voice for the most vulnerable exploited in the name of the economy: this fails the people of this province and this country. We are the leaders of this province. We were elected to be the voice of the people no matter the lines of partisanship because it's our duty.

Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: the freedom of consciousness and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression – including the freedom of the press – the freedom of peaceful assembly; and, of course, the freedom of association. As we move forward into this 30th Legislature, let us remember the rights as we debate them. For although the majority will decide the outcome, our responsibility in this House is to protect the voice of the minority. All of us in this Chamber must hear them and ensure

their rights are protected because we are the lawmakers of Alberta. Let us own this responsibility and participate through respectful debate and vote with the voices our constituents elected us to use.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### Energy Industry in Spruce Grove-Stony Plain

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in this House for the first time on behalf of the people of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. The riding I have the privilege to represent is young and diverse with strong connections to our agricultural and natural resource sectors. A major job creator in my riding has always been the natural resources that provide thousands of jobs in our area. The organizations that run our nearby power plants are not just corporations that a handful of workers rely on to pay their bills; they are involved in helping build our community. As an example, we have the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre, which receives well over a million visitors a year.

However, as a result of the actions of the previous government these job creators are struggling, and as a result, the families in my riding are struggling to get by while policies like the accelerated coal phase-out and the carbon tax make it harder for families to pay their bills. But for those families the throne speech presented by the Lieutenant Governor represented hope on the horizon. While coal was not specifically mentioned, the Speech from the Throne made clear that this government's priority is fighting for our energy sector, creating jobs, and making life more affordable for families through the carbon tax repeal act. To the people of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, this government is fighting for you.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose, please.

### Days for Girls International

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You can tell by my eagerness that I'm very excited about giving my very first member's statement.

It gives me great honour to share with the Chamber a project called Days for Girls that my Camrose Daybreak Rotary Club coordinates regularly. Around the world girls and women resort to using rags, mattress stuffing, banana leaves, feathers, and even cow dung to manage their menstruation. Days for Girls provides a safe, beautiful, washable, and long-lasting alternative along with vital health education.

Days for Girls International is a grassroots not-for-profit creating a more dignified, humane, sustainable world for girls through advocacy, reproductive health awareness, education, and sustainable feminine hygiene because no girl should go without. Our vision is that every girl and woman in the world will have ready access to quality, sustainable hygiene by 2022. My local Rotary Club, working through a network of nearly 900 chapters and teams, has reached over 640,000 girls and women in over 100 countries.

In the past two months I personally have purchased over 1,000 pairs of briefs to assist with the project. Every washable feminine hygiene kit gives back six months of living in just three years of use, which equates to 180 days of education, health, safety, and dignity. Items we collect regularly are hotel-sized bars of soap, colourful washcloths, and large zip-lock freezer bags. The Camrose Daybreak Rotary Club has made 2,792 kits over the past four years. Please help me congratulate them on their worthy project.

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

### Indigenous Relations

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years under Conservative governments the First Nations people of Alberta were simultaneously mistreated and ignored. The consequence of 100 years of oppression has been the devastation of once healthy communities. Where once there were multigenerational families living together with positive societal structures that enhanced well-being, they were replaced with multigenerational trauma from the results of residential schools, the '60s scoop, and the Indian Act.

One pernicious tool in this destruction of healthy people was the institutionalized neglect of the Alberta government from the use of jurisdictional divide arguments. Rather than respect First Nations as Albertans, indigenous people were repeatedly told that they were, quote: not part of the problem for the Alberta government; go talk to the feds. End quote. When schools were inadequate: go talk to the feds. When houses were inadequate: go talk to the feds. When alcohol and drugs began to devastate the communities: go talk to the feds.

And here we are again in 2019. A fire rages in the territory of the Dene Tha' and the Beaver people, and this is the post of Chief Trevor Mercredi. Quote: "The First Nations are not a priority when it comes to the governments. Where is all the support for First Nations communities? We are carrying a lot of weight and receive no support. Where are the sprinklers, fire departments, water for protection? Where is the funding for heavy equipment when we need fire guards? Where is the support to help our displaced people that are caught up? Nobody is going to protect us. Red Cross should be here. Canada should be here. The province should be here."

It is time that Conservatives stop their systematic neglect of First Nations. It's time that Conservatives recognize First Nations people as Albertans and treat them as such.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Agricultural Education in Drumheller-Stettler

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I'd like to congratulate you on your recent election. I'm confident you will excel in the role. You've been very helpful to us rookie MLAs, and your respect and love of this House and its traditions are contagious, so thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as I rise to speak in this House for the first time, it would only be right to thank the wonderful people who sent me here. I'd like to thank the people of Drumheller-Stettler for putting their trust in me. I'd like to thank the many volunteers, donors, and friends, new and old, who made this election part of their life for a time. It was extremely humbling, and I'll be forever grateful.

Mr. Speaker, in a riding like Drumheller-Stettler, with a bigger footprint than Belgium, we have our fair share of issues and struggles, but I wanted my first statement in this House to highlight a positive local story. A small school in Altario, not far from the Saskatchewan border, is doing a great job of bringing agriculture into the classroom. The Altario school has actively embraced its agricultural roots, and over the past years has moved towards including an educational component in the school that focuses on agriculture. This year that included four days on ag education, a large community garden, and the raising of two beef cows.

This past week Altario school received their own barn as an agricultural learning centre. The vision for this centre is for students to work with the different farm animals so they understand what's on your plate. Further to this, the school is creating a residency for students throughout the Prairie Land regional school division and eventually the entire province to come to Altario for a period of

days to camp in the hills surrounding their town, to tour agricultural facilities, and to work in the ag learning centre with the different animals. As ‘advocates’, Altario school believes it has an awesome opportunity to grow an appreciation for agriculture and education throughout our province.

We need to do a better job educating the world about our agricultural sector, Mr. Speaker, and it starts with our own kids.

3:00

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Manning and the deputy House leader is rising on a notice of motion.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide notice that at the appropriate time I’ll be moving the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 30.

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss the critical need for a special prosecutor to oversee all aspects of all outstanding investigations into alleged voter fraud and irregular financial contributions in order to ensure investigations proceed with the utmost transparency, integrity, and free from the perception of bias.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

#### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

This bill introduces changes to workplace rules that will restore prosperity, get people back to work, and let the world know that Alberta is open for business again. We are reducing burdens on job creators by returning to the previous general holiday pay and banked overtime rules. We will restore democracy in the workplace by returning to mandatory secret ballots for union certification and providing support and assistance to employees seeking information on their rights as a union member. We are also strengthening rules that co-ordinate workplace complaints when these complaints involve multiple bodies such as the Human Rights Commission and the Labour Relations Board. With these proposed changes we will restore fairness and balance to the workplace, stimulate job creation, and get Albertans back to work.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-City Centre, please.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just in response to your request from my debate last Thursday on Government Motion 6 I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of two articles: first, Tories Blasted for Handbook on Paralyzing Parliament, from the Canadian Press; and the second being a similar article on their obstruction handbook that was published in the *Star*.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Hon. members, I have a tabling today. It is a letter from the office of the Ethics Commissioner dated May 24, 2019, to myself.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Pon, Minister of Seniors and Housing, pursuant to the Government Organization Act the office of the Alberta Seniors Advocate annual report 2017-18.

**The Speaker:** Points of order. The honourable – check that. The Official Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Bilous:** I see that you want to restore me to my old position, Mr. Speaker.

I’m rising to speak on the point of order at 2:26. Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 23(i) and (j). During question period the Minister of Health accused our party or, when we were in government, our government of saying that conversion therapy wasn’t being practised in Alberta and that it didn’t exist. There couldn’t be something further from the truth. The reason why I’m rising is because not only is that statement patently false; we in this Chamber need to ensure that something that was either misspoken or incorrect factually stands corrected immediately because we know that Albertans do pay attention to not only question period but to what is said in this place.

What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that what we have said about conversion therapy – and it was actually the former Minister of Health, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who said, and I quote: conversion therapy is a damaging, hateful practice that has no place in our province; Albertans deserve to trust that any measures to end this practice are as strong as possible, that they will withstand legal challenges and have the support of those who need them most. Now, I will table what I’ve just read from, which was a group that was struck to explore banning conversion therapy.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the current Minister of Health in his response in question period today tried to indicate that we have said in the past that it doesn’t exist or isn’t practised. That couldn’t be further from the truth. We know that to be untrue, so to resolve this point of order, we simply ask that the Minister of Health withdraw his comment and apologize.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you. While we’re talking about quotes on this point of order, I will refer you to a quote from the former Health minister, who the current Health minister was referring to in question period. I think that’s not in question. I quote: the colleges are not aware of any regulated members performing reparative therapy; these professional colleges have accountability mechanisms in place to discipline members if they were to learn otherwise. On September 29, 2017, in a letter from the then Minister of Health’s office she says to tell us that they were assured that these colleges are not aware of any of their regulated members performing conversion therapy and have accountability mechanisms in place to discipline members if they were to learn otherwise.

Further to that, in the Legislature, in *Hansard*, on December 13, 2017 – I was there when this conversation happened – the former Minister of Health said, “There is no billable service related to conversion therapy.” Further to that, in the Legislature, also present for this one, Mr. Speaker, as I’m sure you were, on December 13 the Minister of Health said, “Alberta Health in no way covers this practice.” Going on with that, now let’s just throw one more former

minister's quote in for the heck of it. The former Education minister said to the CBC on September 11, 2018, that they are not aware of any Alberta schools that prescribe conversion therapy. On and on and on, there are quotes.

But with that said, Mr. Speaker, that probably isn't that relevant. I just wanted to answer the quotes with quotes. What is relevant is this, that this is clearly a matter of debate and is not a point of order.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the Opposition House Leader for what I can only imagine would be very intriguing further interjections. However, I am prepared to rule on this point of order at present unless there's anyone else who has new information other than yourself.

To be clear, Member for Edmonton-Glenora, I'm not looking for your opinion on this particular issue. What I'm looking for is new information that would give an indication that the language used is likely to create disorder. We are not debating the issue of what you may have said or what he may have said but language he used likely to create disorder. Here's your big chance.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, I'm happy to speak in that regard. What the member said – and I don't have the Blues in front of me, but the member said “and I quote,” and then he went on to say a bunch of stuff that I absolutely did not say. The member was accurate in saying that I talked about health professionals being part of colleges that govern their practice and that there was no billable accountability. But when the hon. Minister of Health said “and I quote” and then said a bunch of things referring to it not being an issue when I had over 250 letters to my office, letters that are absolutely available through ARTS, that the hon. minister absolutely has every right to access as they're part of the institutional memory – I in no way ever said that. Saying “and I quote” and then going on to say a bunch of things that fly in the face of reality and fact is absolutely intended to enrage outrage in this House and cause disorder.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member for your interjections.

I think what is clear here is that this is a matter of debate. While we may not agree with the opinions stated by members from the opposite side or perhaps from time to time on our own side of the House, what we can agree on is that it's quite possible that there will be times in this Chamber when there are two sets of facts around the same issue. I would suggest to all members of the Assembly that that is exactly what we have here today. It is a disagreement on the facts. As such, there is no point of order.

3:10

Let us proceed . . . [interjections] Members, I think you'll find that I have ruled on the previous point of order. The interjections from Edmonton-McClung are not appreciated.

Let us proceed as I am prepared to rule on the point of privilege from last week. Following that ruling we will proceed to the SO 30. I see the Member for Calgary-Mountain View is very excited about providing her comments with respect to that.

## Privilege

### Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I've had the opportunity to consider the arguments made with respect to the question of privilege raised by the Official Opposition House Leader on Thursday, May 23, 2019. You may find these comments – and I'm sure you've all reviewed them – on page 34 to 36 of *Alberta Hansard* for that date. Since we're at the beginning of a new Legislature and a number of you have not had the opportunity to see questions of privilege raised

and argued in this Assembly, I would like to make a few initial comments in this respect. As I noted Thursday, questions of privilege are serious, serious matters, and therefore they should not be taken lightly.

Questions of privilege are dealt with under Standing Order 15. The Official Opposition House Leader met the procedural requirements of that standing order to provide notice of the question at least two hours prior to the commencement of the afternoon sitting by notifying my office at 11:11 on May 23, 2019. I can also confirm that May 23 was the first opportunity available to the Official Opposition House Leader to raise this matter before the Assembly as the press conference which he referred to in his arguments took place on May 13 and last Thursday was the first regular sitting day following the news conference.

In addition to reviewing the arguments of the House leaders, I have reviewed the video broadcast of the press conference and have conducted some additional research, and therefore I am prepared to rule on this matter. The facts of the matter are contained within the press conference held by the hon. Premier and the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance on May 13, 2019. At the news conference the Premier mentioned bills that would be forthcoming during the First Session of the 30th Legislature, including Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act. The Premier made specific reference to Bill 1 at approximately the 13-minute mark of the news conference, wherein he stated in response to a question, quote: first of all, Bill 1 of the new Legislature will be introduced on Tuesday next week and will be called the carbon tax repeal act, and it will be passed with an effective elimination by May 30th, so by May 30th there will be no longer an Alberta carbon tax. End quote.

The Government House Leader confirmed this statement in his remarks made to the Assembly on Thursday. Likewise, the Official Opposition House Leader paraphrased his remarks in his argument. Therefore, the basic facts of the matter are not in question with respect to the Premier's comments.

The Official Opposition House Leader contends that in speaking with the media about the ultimate disposition of Bill 1, the Premier presupposed a decision of the Assembly in that that decision would occur by May 30, 2019. The Official Opposition House Leader also made representations that the Premier's statements constitute an affront on the institute of parliament. He's essentially arguing that in presupposing a decision of the Assembly, the work of members debating Bill 1 has been prejudged and, therefore, impeded.

Hon. members, it should be pointed out that the matter before the Assembly is technically a purported contempt of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. I note for all members, as indicated on page 81 of *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, third edition:

There are . . . affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the [specified] defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege: tends to instruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House . . . In that sense, all breaches of privilege are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege.

This is not the first time in the recent past that this type of purported contempt has been raised in the Assembly. Most recently a question of contempt was ruled on on November 1, 2016. In addition, a question of contempt was dealt with in the 28th Legislature on December 2, 2013. The House leader of the Official Opposition argued that the matter before the Assembly now is similar to both of these matters in that in all three the government

of the day committed a prima facie case of contempt by presupposing a decision of the Legislative Assembly.

In November 2016 Speaker Wanner found a question of contempt when the government aired radio advertisements and published a website advertising the details of its climate action plan in spite of the fact that the enabling legislation had not yet been passed by the Assembly.

In 2013 Speaker Zwozdesky ruled that the government advertising brochures, The Building Alberta Plan, constituted a prima facie contempt because the advertising presupposed a decision of the Assembly.

I'm not convinced that the matter before the Assembly today is substantially similar to either of these prior matters. In both previous questions of contempt significant details of government programs were communicated to the public through advertising campaigns, leaving the impression that the proposed legislation enabling programs was already law. This, of course, was not the case. In the current matter, the Premier's statement on Bill 1 was contained within a response to a question put to him. It was the equivalent of two sentences within the overall context of a 35-minute news conference.

Moreover, at the outset of the press conference, at approximately the three-minute mark, the Premier stated, discussing Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act: the job-creation tax cut will be Bill 3 of the Legislature that will convene next week, subject to the approval of the Legislature; I'm pleased to announce today that on July 1 we will drop the general business tax rate from 12 to 11 per cent, and then it will go from 11 to 10 per cent on January 1 next year.

Through saying "subject to the approval of the Legislature," the Premier rightly acknowledges, albeit in the context of Bill 3, that it is the Legislature, not the Premier or Executive Council, that determines whether or not bills come into legislation.

I can understand that the new government is eager to commence its legislative program and to announce and work towards implementing programs and policies. It is right for the government to announce and inform the people that they serve on their policies. As former Speaker Gene Zwozdesky noted in the ruling of contempt on November 7, 2013:

We all know that governments across the greater Commonwealth will make announcements . . . policy statements . . . [and] funding announcements . . . and they are well within their right to do that. That's what governments are elected to do. They can do it any time they wish provided that some of our conventions, rules, and authorities are observed.

You can find these remarks on page 2845 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day.

While I recognize that one sentence referenced from the press conference might, when taken on its own, assume Bill 1's passage, it cannot be taken out of the overall context, it is evidence that the Premier was not attempting to presuppose a decision of the Assembly in answering the question at the press conference. I find, therefore, that there is no prima facie case with this question of privilege.

However, as we embark on a new Legislature with a new government and many new members, I do wish to impress upon the members of Executive Council and all members that we must take care to uphold the dignity and institution of parliament by respecting its traditions and its constitutional authorities. One of the key principles is the concept of responsible government, in which the executive branch is responsible to the legislative branch of government. As Speaker Kowalski remarked on May 1, 1997, on page 319 of *Alberta Hansard* for the day:

The principle of the executive being responsible to the Assembly is the cornerstone of responsible government in this country.

In his text *Constitutional Law of Canada*, third edition, by . . . Peter Hogg, Mr. Hogg goes so far as to say: "Responsible government is probably the most important non-federal characteristic of the Canadian Constitution."

In the matter before us, responsible government is realized by government introducing proposed legislation and the Assembly, not the government, deciding on the bill's ultimate fate.

Hon. members, let us all be mindful of these vital parliamentary principles and play our part in being guardians of them. The matter is now closed.

Now on to Standing Order 30.

3:20

## Request for Emergency Debate

### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As noted earlier, I rise to propose a motion under Standing Order 30. I should note before I begin that written notice was provided to the Speaker in accordance with Standing Order 30(1) and has met the conditions of 30(7). Pursuant to Standing Order 30 the motion reads as follows:

Be it resolved the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss the critical need for a special prosecutor to oversee all aspects of all outstanding investigations into alleged voter fraud and irregular financial contributions in order to ensure investigations proceed with the utmost transparency, integrity, and free from [any] perception of bias.

Mr. Speaker, this issue meets the conditions of Standing Order 30(7).

(7) A motion under this Standing Order is subject to the following conditions:

(a) the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration.

Mr. Speaker, just this week the Election Commissioner issued another \$22,000 in fines related to the UCP leadership scandal. It was also revealed today that the Solicitor General himself was questioned by the RCMP with respect to this matter. Ultimately, these \$22,000 in fines mean that a total of \$67,500 in fines has been levied since February of this year. Given that these latest penalties are the largest amount of fines ever issued in a single day by the commissioner, given that there are ongoing RCMP investigations into this matter, and given that the members of Executive Council have dual roles in this investigation as members of the public co-operating in an ongoing investigation as well as ministers of the Crown responsible for the administration of the law under schedule 9 of the Government Organization Act, time is of the essence when it comes to ensuring the independence of the oversight of this process. Every day that we further delay risks the integrity of the investigative process.

Mr. Speaker, I don't question for a moment that the RCMP is independent of government – I'm well aware of that – but in these complex investigations it's quite normal for the RCMP to regularly consult with Crown prosecutors for legal advice, particularly in cases where the individual officers may not have seen a case of this type before. The Premier and the Minister of Justice can request to be briefed on any information within the ministry, which includes the Crown prosecutors, on the status of the matter. No other witness or defendant in the province would have such an opportunity. The equality of all Albertans under the law must be preserved.

Continuing under section 30(7), Mr. Speaker, I believe the conditions in (b) through (e) are met. I will not list them now unless you would like me to. Okay. Subsection (f): the discussion under



the motion must not raise questions that, according to the standing orders, can only be debated on a notice of motion. As you know, this issue is not before the House in the form of any bill debate. *Beauchesne's*, on page 113, says as follows:

The Standing Order is clear that the question be specific and must require urgent consideration. It must deal with a matter within the administrative competence of the Government and there must be no other reasonable opportunity for debate.

I would call that a three-part-test. This matter is well within the administrative competence of government, the Attorney General obviously having the ability to appoint such a special prosecutor.

Mr. Speaker, as indicated, during any complex case, especially cases where similar ones have not come before the investigator before, officers are likely to engage in precharge consultation with the Crown prosecution service. Now, obviously, I'm aware that we're not a precharge screening jurisdiction, but still there's a considerable amount of consultation, and best practice in this case would dictate that the investigating officers should be in regular contact with the Crown. This is entirely appropriate and within the bounds of justice. It does, however, mean that even at this moment consultations may be occurring and may occur under the oversight of the Solicitor General.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make it clear that I'm not suggesting that there is no independence in the RCMP or the Crown prosecutors; quite the contrary. There are many ways, in situations similar to this, to preserve the independence of the Crown prosecution service, and an independent prosecutor is one of those ways. That's exactly what we're calling for.

I'll quote now *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, and this is referring to the fact that this has been ongoing for a while. It says:

In one exceptional circumstance, an application was approved for an emergency debate on "the sudden and unexpected revelation of events which [had] taken place in the past, in that they might precipitate a course of conduct which, if allowed to continue unchecked, would certainly classify itself as an emergency and a matter of urgent consideration.

Mr. Speaker, should these investigations unfold such that the Premier, the Minister of Justice, or indeed any member of Executive Council or their advisers had direct knowledge of breaches of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act – and, to be clear, I'm not implying that any member has such knowledge – should that ultimately be the finding of the investigation, it will be too late at that time to appoint an independent special prosecutor.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. This topic has come up in question period. However, I would suggest that a 35-second question and answer, especially given the complexities of the legal and ethical duties of the Solicitor General in this particular case, is not the best time to discuss such a matter, and I think that ultimately such an important matter as ensuring that all people regardless of their role in the system, especially the Minister of Justice, are viewed to be equal before the law is something that would certainly raise concerns amongst the public. Our leader and our caucus have been calling for a special prosecutor to be appointed since this government was sworn in. The fact that both the Premier and the Minister of Justice were participants in the leadership election from which the scandal which is alleged before the RCMP was perpetrated reinforces the need for a special prosecutor.

We know that this case has been referred to the RCMP for investigation by the commissioner, we know that several of the individuals involved in the scandal face potential jail time or even large fines for their involvement – just today we've learned that the Solicitor General himself has been questioned by the RCMP on this

matter – and we know that the UCP has terminated employees or fired candidates for their involvement. Albertans expect their justice system to be impartial, fair, and unbiased. This issue remains an emergent issue as demonstrated by the issuance of the additional \$22,000 in fines and the fact that the investigation is clearly ongoing since the Solicitor General himself admits that he was just questioned on Sunday.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, obviously, this is a complex matter. The role of the Attorney General is itself complex. I would just like to quote, maybe not at length but briefly, from the code of conduct for prosecutors. On page 4, for instance, it says:

Having independence and discretion does not mean that the Attorney General is not accountable. In fact, accountability might be considered a further fundamental concept.

As the "chief law enforcement officer," the Attorney General is accountable to the Legislature and society for the process through which justice is administered . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, as you know – and perhaps you're concluding your remarks now; I'm not a hundred per cent sure – under Standing Order 30 it is your role here to briefly identify why this is an emergency, not the substance of a significant debate. I think I've been fairly lenient. Are you close to wrapping your remarks up?

**Ms Ganley:** I am very close to wrapping my remarks up, Mr. Speaker.

I would just say, to end this point, that it isn't just the case that justice must be done; it must be seen to be done. And particularly in the case of the Solicitor General, it's critical that he be at arm's length to an investigation, particularly an investigation in which he made some of the allegations that are of substance.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would call on all members of the House to allow for an opportunity to debate the relative merits of a special prosecutor in this particular case. Thank you.

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

I see the Government House Leader rising on this same point, Standing Order 30.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. First of all, it's disappointing to see that the Official Opposition would rather continue with fear and smear than debate Motion 501 on making adoption more efficient, but that's where we're at.

Mr. Speaker, I will draw your attention to *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, on page 113, point 387, which says:

The Standing Order is clear that the question be specific and must require urgent consideration. It must deal with a matter within the administrative competence of the Government and there must be no other reasonable opportunity for debate.

I highlight the last portion for you, Mr. Speaker, because clearly the NDP has forgotten that the Leader of the Official Opposition had time to debate this today and, in fact, debated this very matter with the Premier on Thursday, May 23, where there were six questions about this very issue and several more today.

3:30

Also, for your reference again, Mr. Speaker, page 113 of *Beauchesne's* states:

390 "Urgency" within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but means "urgency of debate", when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

On page 26 of *Hansard* the Leader of the Official Opposition – sorry, Mr. Speaker; I should be clear that that was on Thursday – said:

To preserve public trust in our... system, the Premier must appoint a special prosecutor. Why won't he?

The Premier then, in turn, responded:

Mr. Speaker, obviously, the police and the Crown prosecutor service operate independent of any kind of political direction from government, be it this government or the former government, and we respect that independence. We will always preserve and protect it.

And indeed we will.

Now, perhaps the NDP doesn't see how those questions connect to the request for emergency debate. Well, let's read again from the letter provided to the Speaker's office by them. It says:

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss the critical need for a special prosecutor to oversee all aspects of all outstanding investigations into alleged voter fraud and irregular financial contributions.

That sounds like exactly what the Leader of the Official Opposition asked in question period on Thursday and again today. Clearly, this isn't a new or emergency issue, and the Official Opposition has had the opportunity to raise the matter. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised that the NDP already know full well that this does not fit with emergency debate and just want to grandstand and attempt to distract Albertans. I hope that's not the case, Mr. Speaker.

I will close with this. Page 695 in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states:

As one Speaker noted, an emergency debate should be on a topic "that is immediately relevant and of attention and concern throughout the nation."

It goes on to state:

Topics considered highly partisan in nature are not as readily approved.

In fact, considering that all this opposition is interested in is an internal party matter and not a matter of government policy, I would further fail to see how this topic is supposed to be considered in order with Standing Order 30.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, members. With respect to Standing Order 30, Standing Order 30(2) provides that

the Member may briefly,

with some leniency of the chair,

state the arguments in favour of the request for leave and the Speaker may allow such debate as he or she considers relevant to the question of urgency.

And it's the role of the chair to

rule on whether or not the request for leave is in order.

Hon. members, your chair is prepared to rule on whether the request for leave for the motion should proceed under Standing Order 30(2). The Member for Edmonton-Manning has met the requirement of providing at least two hours' notice to the Speaker's office by providing the required notice at 11:19 this morning. The motion reads as follows:

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss the critical need for a special prosecutor to oversee all aspects of all outstanding investigations into alleged voter fraud and irregular financial contributions in order to ensure investigations proceed with the utmost transparency, integrity, and free from the perception of bias.

As has been mentioned, the relevant parliamentary authorities on this subject are pages 695 to 704 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, and *Beauchesne's*, paragraphs 387 to 390.

Members, let me begin by pointing out that the question of urgency under Standing Order 30 deals with whether there is urgency of debate, not whether the issue itself is important or urgent. I, for one, have difficulty finding in this case that other business of the Assembly should be set aside, particularly as this issue is not particularly new or urgent. In fact, as some members have said, this issue was before the House last week. It was before the House again today. Although I disagree with the member's position that question period is not the place for it to be debated, the assertion that it is not available to be debated would not be correct, and as such there are many other avenues or ways in which this issue, albeit important to members of the Assembly, can be brought up before the Assembly.

I would also refer to page 699 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which states that the subject matter being proposed in this type of motion "should not involve the administration of a government department." In this case this particular issue is ongoing and will remain ongoing. As such, what is determined to be an emergency today may or may not be determined an emergency tomorrow. This issue will likely proceed over a number of days. Accordingly, the chair does not find the request for leave in order, and the question will not be put to the Assembly.

Before I conclude, and for the benefit of all new members, I would like to note the types of matters that have been considered urgent in the past, which have included: matters of imminent health risk and safety of the public as found in the ruling of Speaker Kowalski on October 25, 2010, which is available on page 918 of *Hansard* for that day; emergencies or matters that cannot be brought before the Assembly within a reasonable timeline such as the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal to overturn the National Energy Board's approval on Trans Mountain pipeline, a discussion of which you can find in *Hansard* on October 29, 2018, page 1622; and matters in which there is a general wish of the Assembly to have an emergency debate such as the ongoing oil price differential, which was ruled urgent by Speaker Wanner on November 21, 2018. While this list is certainly not exhaustive, I hope it provides all members some clarity with respect to how Standing Order 30 has traditionally been treated.

With that said, this concludes the matter.

## Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar rising on a statement.

## Member's Apology

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday I made some remarks, and I just want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that I apologize if you were offended. Of course, I want you to know that my position on the election of Speakers has evolved significantly since Thursday, so I unreservedly apologize to you and withdraw those remarks.\*

**The Speaker:** Accepted and withdrawn.

The Government House Leader is rising.

\*See page 42, right column, paragraph 3

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent in order to immediately proceed to private member's Motion 501.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

#### Adoption Processes

501. Mr. Turton moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take all necessary measures to make the process for all forms of adoption more efficient and timely for families.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, thank you for allowing me to rise and speak about the importance of increasing the efficiency and timeliness of the adoption process here in Alberta. It is my privilege today to rise and speak on this issue, one that I believe is immensely important and has a deeply personal connection to me and my family.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell this Chamber about the challenges that my family has had with the adoption process and the reasons why I believe this process must be improved. After our first child was born, our desire was to have another child and make our family complete. However, due to medical issues, we were unable to have another child of our own, so we turned to the adoption program so that we could complete our family and give another child a home.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, for years as my wife and I tried to navigate through the adoption process, we experienced what so many Albertans have gone through, with endless streams of red tape, paperwork, excessive costs, and constant delays. As the process dragged on and on, we had to deal with having to answer tough questions as parents to our six-year-old son every night as we tucked him in, when he would ask us why he couldn't have a brother or sister like everyone else he knew. After the initial application with the social worker, we then started a two-and-a-half-year waiting period. This is when our family had to meet with a social worker every six months for an update and fill out a long refresher form, at a cost of over \$1,000 each time for a 20-minute visit, to simply state that nothing had changed from the previous visit.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

One of those home inspection visits stands out in my mind, when our family was told that if we did not remove a bird bath from our backyard, we would no longer be eligible to adopt a child as this posed a clear and present danger as a drowning hazard for the prospective child. I would have had a hard time getting my hand wet in the bird bath as it was so small, but it showed that the goal of helping a child find a home was becoming secondary to justifying endless levels of paperwork and red tape. We had to wait for months to have our paperwork processed at the Children's Services offices. During this time I remember having their number on speed-dial as we kept calling almost weekly for updates to see when our paperwork would be looked at by the agency and could be processed so that we could be placed at another step in the queue.

However, Madam Speaker, after experiencing three years of waiting and starting to lose hope, my wife and I were finally told by the agency that a young birth mother had picked our family and

that a baby boy was available. Within days of that phone call we finally boarded a plane to meet with the newest addition to our family. I remember very clearly that when we were going to pick up our new son from the hospital, we woke our oldest son up in the hotel room and he jumped out of bed and said: "This is the best day of my life because I'm finally going to be a big brother. What's his name again?"

I am pleased to say, Madam Speaker, that my family is blessed with a positive ending to this story. We have an amazing little boy who will experience all the love in the world. However, as I have told this story over the years, I have met with many parents who continue to wait and wait and cannot afford to participate in a prohibitively expensive and time-consuming journey.

Madam Speaker, the reason I want to give my personal story is because all over this province, in every riding, there are families just like mine that simply want the ability to have a family. There are countless moms and dads that simply want the ability to provide a forever home for a child. I know that there are countless parents that I have talked to and shared my personal story with that know the pain of explaining to their kids why they don't have a sibling yet. That is why I'm putting my motion forward today.

The reality, fellow members, is that the demand for adoption services in Alberta is continuing to go up. It has been rising steadily since the early 2000s. Wait-lists full of parents seeking to adopt have nearly doubled, and the wait time for domestic adoption placements has risen significantly. In the last data we have, the wait time has gone from 18 months, on average, in 2008 to three years in 2016. International adoptions take even longer and provide a huge toll on parents wanting to explore this route.

Despite the steady growth of demand for adoption, the number of adoptions actually taking place in Alberta has fallen by 25 per cent over the last 11 years. This is harmful to all parties. It's harmful to the child, whose lack of a permanent support is damaging, despite the best efforts of social workers and foster homes. It's hard on the adoptive parents, who are brought through a cycle which is expensive, time consuming, and exhaustive. It's hard on foster parents, who sacrifice years of their lives doing everything they can to make a child feel at home while promoting them for adoption and are put through long processes with an inefficient adoption service in need of rework. Social workers need to be considered as well, who spend long hours working closely with children and families looking for a child and have to justify to prospective parents why they must continue to wait and wait and wait.

Madam Speaker, the system must become better. The fatigue of watching both children and families spending years going through a long and extremely complicated process, hoping that one small thing, one small administrative point or a bird bath, doesn't throw it off, would be too much for many people. I have personally met with countless prospective parents who simply tossed in the towel and deemed that the emotional toll from a process made endlessly complex was not worth it. It's important for everyone here to remember that every time this happens, a child is denied a home.

Over the years a lot has changed in adoption policy around the world. Where it used to be a very secret process, with some adopted children never hearing anything about their birth parents or even knowing that they were adopted, today the birth family is welcomed into the process. In most cases birth families even get a say in who gets the opportunity to adopt the child.

I've had the privilege of meeting both the biological mom and biological dad of our son. Twice a year we write a letter to them giving them updates about how our six-year-old son is doing here in Alberta, and we plan on doing this till he is an adult. To this day I'm thankful that our son's biological parents made the courageous

decision to find a forever home for their child. As we met with the biological mother, I will never forget her looking down at her one-week-old baby boy and letting him know that he was going to have a better life with his new adoptive family and that she would never forget him as she said goodbye for the very last time.

Madam Speaker, I'm sad to think that our inefficient processes deny children to have a better life with forever homes. It is time for the government to continue updating and modernizing the adoption process here in the province. While we place no blame at anyone's feet for the problems plaguing our system, I do believe that something as critical as adoption can and must do better for the families and children in the system.

Madam Speaker, we all recognize that the best possible result for children is for them to end up with a loving and caring family they can call their own, whether they were born into it or not. This motion calls on the government to do everything they can to see that adoption becomes a reality in the best and most efficient manner possible.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will recognize the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As this is my first time rising formally in the Assembly other than in question period, I'd like to say thank you to everybody for their warm welcome to all the new members. It's a great privilege to be here.

It's also a privilege to speak to this motion brought by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain. I'd like to thank him for bringing this motion forward as well as for sharing his very personal story. I'd like to congratulate your family on your child and on your growing family. I appreciate you sharing this personal story with us today.

I'd like to rise in favour of supporting this motion. I do believe it's very important that we do take all steps and measures we can, Madam Speaker, to improve the adoption processes, because we all know that this is really about the best interests of children. The children who are seeking adoption are, of course, children who are in need of a loving and permanent, stable home, and we should encourage all things possible to place those children in loving families who are opening their arms to do that. I have been very privileged to know many people in my personal life who have chosen and have taken the courageous and often arduous journey to adopt a child, whether it be through private adoption or international adoption. I know how gracious those parents are, how hard working they are, and how hard they work to create their family and to open their family. I think it's a really admirable thing that they've done, and I support that.

As we know, in Alberta there are three different ways of adopting children. There are three different processes to go through in this province. There is, of course, the adoption of children in care, and those are children who are in permanent government care. We need to be aware, of course, that those children often have many special needs. They come from a background that if they are in permanent government care, they are often in situations where there is drug abuse. There may be neglect. There may be special needs, either, you know, behavioural, physical, mental, developmental. So we need to be sure that those children are being placed in appropriate homes. We need to make sure that those adoptive families are prepared for the specific needs of the children that they're bringing in.

I appreciate that that process can be sometimes quite long, but it is important, of course, to make sure that both the family and the child are supported as much as possible. We know that that work to

place those children in government care in homes is often done by Children's Services staff – right? – front-line staff who are doing the assessments, that are doing the trainings, that are going through the application processes, that are conducting orientations with prospective adoptive families. For those workers, if we do want to speed up our processes, if we do want to ensure that more children are placed in loving homes as quickly as possible, we need to make sure that those employees are supported and that we continue to support front-line workers both in resources, in training and not to cut their funding so that they can actually process more applications, support more families, and encourage more placements of children in homes.

3:50

We also know, of course, that in Alberta we have private adoption. Those private adoption agencies are regulated by Children's Services or licensed adoption agencies. Of course, they have their own processes and costs that are associated with that. Sometimes we deal with private adoptions when it is family members that are taking in maybe a stepchild or adopting a stepchild or a family member's child into their family. Those are the private adoptions.

As well, we also know that there are international adoptions. Two of my dear friends have adopted internationally, and I know they waited upwards of three years to adopt, and that did cost them quite a bit of money. I believe, according to the Children's Services website, estimates for international adoption are somewhere between \$15,000 and \$40,000, and that is a lot to ask of these families. But, of course, there are challenges on the Alberta government's ability to govern or change international adoption processes. You're often dealing with some countries that have signed onto the Hague protocol, some that have not. They've got their own processes, their own screening times. There are immigration concerns to deal with with the federal government. International adoption is a lengthy process. There's no doubt about that. I do have a bit of a concern about how much the Alberta government can influence that because of the fact that so much is done with the federal government and with agencies outside of the country.

I think that when we're looking at this, we do need to be conscious that the overall objective is to place more children in loving homes. That is always the number one objective. That's the best interest of the child, and we need to make sure that that happens. I'm not surprised, but I'm disheartened to hear that there are loving adoptive homes who want to adopt a child who are discouraged and maybe do throw in the towel because it just takes too long. I imagine the emotional toll it takes on them is quite extensive. If there are families that are willing to open their homes to an adopted child and to take that child in as one of their own, we should be doing everything we can to encourage that.

So I do support this motion. I do believe it's important that we take all those measures, but I do think we need to be cautious because at the end of the day we're talking about children, and these are sometimes the most vulnerable children. We need to make sure that there are the appropriate safeguards in place, that we are making sure that they're going into homes that are both prepared and supported to provide these children with the supports that they need so that it can be a successful story for everybody all around.

Yes, let's speed up processes where we can, and I would encourage the member who has introduced this motion as well as the Minister of Children's Services that we can work together to find efficiencies and to find ways that we can cut unnecessary steps that discourage families while also making sure that we're taking appropriate steps to protect the safety of those children and to

support those families to make sure it is a successful match. Ultimately, I think this is a great motion. Thank you to the member for introducing it. I do think we all benefit when more children are in safe and loving homes.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour today to rise to express my support for Motion 501, which urges the government to "take all necessary measures to make the process for all forms of adoption more efficient and timely for families."

I would like to make it perfectly clear, Madam Speaker, that the United Conservatives do not blame our incredible front-line workers for the issues within our system. The incredible social workers who work day and night to unite families and children are not the problem, but there is a problem. We all know that adoption is by far the best situation for a child born into difficult circumstances to have a chance at success, yet the majority of children who grew up in foster care or group care will age out of the system with no permanent family or safety net. This affects children for the rest of their lives, placing them in economic insecurity and often preventing them from pursuing further education. We all see this as a problem and one that especially hurts young women.

Thousands of Alberta children have been saved from these issues by generous parents who are willing to open their homes to children and youth who do not enjoy the same privileges and stable family situation that many of us take for granted. When there are three couples, on average, seeking to adopt a child who is placed and 7.7 for each infant, there is no excuse for our adoption system taking north of three years for an adoption to take place, but unfortunately the story told by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is not an uncommon one.

There are families willing to open up their homes and merely waiting on a broken system. There are also families who have already opened up their homes to foster and for whom excessive regulation and red tape is preventing a child who is already a part of their family not reap the rewards of full adoption because of regulations put in place even about their siblings.

As the member presenting the motion has mentioned, the system has to be better for all parties. While the wait is excruciating for both children and families, the cost of watching the disappointment and frustration of both parties must weigh heavily on the workers tasked with this difficult work. We aren't just fighting for families and children with this motion but for every participant in the system.

More initiatives must be sought out in order to improve the access to adoption services in Alberta. This should be done in two main ways. The first is by benchmarking our system and then importing best practices from other jurisdictions. The second is by reducing the red tape burden on families and workers, who are merely doing their best to unite children and loving families.

Our United Conservative caucus has already worked to make the adoption system work better in the 21st century. The current Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women in 2017 as an opposition member in the 29th sitting of the Legislature passed a private member's bill that allowed families to post their profiles online. This gave mothers considering adoption easier access to view the prospective families in which your child might have a greater chance for a better future. We believe that legislation

like this, which opens up our adoption system, is incredibly important.

One of the main issues we run into when attempting to do work on this file is the complete lack of benchmarking in our system. The last time any statistics were put out about adoption in Alberta was a report from 2016-2017. Before that, there was a 10-year gap. It is critical that this system can be examined to see where we can implement best practices from around the globe. The motion urges the government to continue in this vein and further reduce the red tape and bureaucratic nightmares that too many Albertan families face when considering adoption. When a bird bath in a backyard can prevent a child from going to a loving family, the red tape has gone too far. The priority has slipped from helping children to protecting a bureaucratic regime.

Far too few children are adopted in Alberta. In fiscal year 2016 there were only 298 adoptions in Alberta while wait-lists have grown. In a province of over 4 million people the system is clearly broken. This is not an attack on adoption agencies, who do great work, or many fine social workers and civil servants who administer the system, but instead it's an admonishment of the antiquated legislation and red tape that hinder children from reaching loving adoptive families. With no comprehensive changes to Alberta's system of adoption since 1984, there is work to be done here.

The previous government was always intent on bringing up divisive issues relating to the private moral convictions of Albertans. Our caucus wants to address the very real and glaring social problems Albertans face and actually get government working to address issues within the child welfare system. It's disappointing that no government in decades has undertaken substantive reforms to ensure that Alberta's children are being taken care of. We have a chance as Albertans to adopt best practices from other provinces and from around the world. We have a chance to bring stability to thousands of children and joy to thousands of families who would like nothing more than to have a child. Child welfare is one of the most difficult areas tasked to us as provincial legislators. I believe it is also one of the most important.

I urge all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of Motion 501 and begin pushing for a plan to modernize our antiquated adoption system.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today for my first time as well, and I would like to congratulate you on your election as the Deputy Speaker as well as the Speaker and everyone else in the House.

I'm very excited and honoured to be able to join in on this conversation today. I would like to thank the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain for bringing Motion 501 forward. I appreciate his connection to the issue as well, and I appreciate that he brought his personal story to the House. I think it is an important issue considering that there were around 7,329 children in care in Alberta in 2018 according to the Alberta human services website.

4:00

Now, whether we're talking about adopting a child in government care or a private adoption, which has been brought up in the debate so far, it is incredibly important that we do work to make these programs as efficient as possible, but I think, more importantly, it's incredibly important that we do our best to create a transition that works in a positive manner for both the children and the families going through this experience.

I would also like to thank the current Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, who has already been thanked, but I would like to thank her in her role as a member in the 29th Legislature for her work on Bill 206. Of course, Bill 206 sought to amend adoption laws to allow families looking to adopt to post their profiles online, making it easier for the birth mothers to choose the family that would eventually care for their child. During the debate I think that overall our caucus supported that motion. I think we moved to put some preamble in it, just recognizing that we need to protect the privacy and safety of both sides. So we were able to work together to pass that bill unanimously.

I would like to reiterate now what was said back then. It is of incredibly high importance that the safety and privacy of both families come before finding efficiencies in the process. I do have grave concerns that finding efficiencies to this government means something quite different than what it means to me. I think that we can all agree that adoption is not something that should be rushed. It's an incredibly sensitive topic, and whether a family decides to adopt a child in care or go through a private adoption, we need to ensure that safeguards are in place to protect all parties and ensure that everyone is as satisfied as possible with the adoption process. Further to that, I think there is a larger discussion that needs to be had that goes beyond making the process go faster and more efficiently.

I want to bring up a news article that was done by the CBC in 2015, which I will of course table tomorrow, which describes an Alberta family who adopted two children in care. This may be a unique circumstance, or it may not be, but within two weeks of meeting the children, the couple moved in with them and became their foster parents. The couple noticed behavioural issues early on but thought that the children just maybe needed some time to settle in and that maybe once the situation was more permanent, things would work themselves out. About a year into the adoption of the children they found out through medical assessment that the children had FASD. From the beginning of the process the couple made it clear that they would not be able to care for a child with FASD. These children required 24/7 supports, which this family was unable to provide.

Of course, this is just one story, and they don't always go that same way. This family went on to put one of the children into a group home, I believe. That was after. Through the fostering process they tried to give the children back. Of course, that is not an easy decision either, but they from the very beginning said that they did not have the ability to support two children with FASD.

Once again, this is just one story, but it highlights the need to have strong communication from the very beginning between families and the caseworkers or adoption agencies through the entire process. Finding positive matches and families that are able to properly provide for these children on a case-by-case basis should be more important than finding efficiencies in the process.

When we talk about making a process like adoption more efficient, I have concerns that this means cutting corners. I have concerns that this means adding more files to our already overburdened front-line workers. If you want to make the process more efficient, cutting red tape, which we've already heard several times in this debate, isn't the answer. Adding more caseworkers is the answer. Taking the time to properly evaluate children and their potential adopters is the answer. I don't think that this motion necessarily addresses either of those issues. If we really want to help those parents, the adoptive parents, and the children through this process, we need to ensure that when cases like the one I described arise, we are saying, "Yes, we will support your family in raising these children; yes, there are supports for this child with FASD,"

that we're not closing the file and saying, "This is your problem now." That is essentially what happened. When the evaluation came through after the children had been adopted already, there were no supports for these children because they weren't originally diagnosed with this FASD.

Now, I do understand that it's much easier to say that you want to make the process more efficient without recognizing the fact that there needs to be a major overhaul, which was mentioned, and I would be happy to chat more about that. I think it's important that we find real, concrete solutions to this. Of course, you can only put so much in emotion, but finding efficiencies is very high level, and I think that we should dig deeper into this issue.

I think that we need to do some major overhauls in how we assess and support these children with disabilities and children in care. The fact is that there is a statistic that 30 per cent of children in care have FASD. How this motion is going to help them: I would love for somebody to address that question. Until we look at properly funding these children and until we find better tools to assess and support these children, really, to me, it's all lip service.

I understand that the member that brought this forward maybe was looking at a different instance than I am. I'm looking at children in care with complex disabilities, maybe not the same instances as he was talking about, but it is a question that I have.

Now, I think that if you want to make the adoption process more efficient for families and you want to reduce the number of children in care, which is a big concern for me, then it's important to properly fund these families. Programs like the Alberta child benefit, \$25-a-day child care, school nutrition programs, higher minimum wages even for parents who happen to be under 18 years old, and better supports for children with or without disabilities will support that vision.

To be clear, I do plan to support this motion, but I am very interested in hearing some concrete steps about ideas that the member or other members have in making this process more efficient. An instance was brought up where there is a bird bath in the home in the backyard, which sounds like a silly hurdle for a family looking to adopt, but I would like to know how that policy was implemented in the first place. Was there an instance or many instances where this actually became an issue, where a child was hurt because of a bird bath in the backyard?

Those are questions I have, and that's really my biggest concern with some of the conversations that are being brought forward by the members of the government when we talk about cutting red tape. Many of these policies got there for a reason, and until you can prove that they're redundant or they're not helping, then I'm not going to sit here and support saying that we need to find efficiencies in every department, saying that we need to cut red tape in every department. In many instances it's the regulations that move these processes forward quicker, maybe not specifically in this instance, but it becomes an even longer and bigger task when there aren't processes in place. We need to look at that.

Overall I support the idea of finding efficiencies in ministries, but like I said, I don't think it means the same thing to me as it means to the members on the other side of the House. With that being said, I do appreciate the member bringing Motion 501 forward. I do plan to support it. I would love to hear more about his or any member's ideas about how we can strengthen this process for adoption.

Thank you very much for the time to speak, and I appreciate everyone's ears today. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I also would like to congratulate you on your election, and the Speaker himself as

well despite being absent right now. I'm also very pleased to rise to speak on this point, the second time a nonpartisan point with co-operation. I'm sure the members opposite are hoping that there is wherewithal for this co-operation, just as I am, all the way to the end of this session.

I do appreciate the comments made by the members opposite on the need for regulation and process and also by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud about having appropriate safeguards in place. I think that in no way would this motion be in opposition to that. Really, what we're looking for is a true evaluation of where those safeguards are appropriate, where the regulations are truly needed. We have to remember today that we're talking about the livelihoods of children, children who, we all know, by almost every single metric we can evaluate are better off in homes with loving parents and a stable home. So the sooner we can move these children into those stable homes, the better it is for those children.

Those children have an interest, but so do we in this House. As the representatives in government, as the state we have an interest in healthy families, an interest in healthy children continuing to go on, so if there are burdens in the way when it comes to red tape, when it comes to problems with adoption, we have an obligation here to look very seriously at those and see where they're needed.

Before we get into the particulars that were mentioned by my hon. colleague moving the motion, I want to speak about a dinner that I had a few months ago with a couple in La Crête who went through the adoption process. They did not have a very good time with it. They tried to make an adoption process application here in Alberta; there are not opportunities to adopt easily between provinces within Canada. This is one of the first hurdles they ran into. Here in Alberta they were told that they were looking at seven years' wait time before they could be parents. Now, anybody who is an expecting parent, anybody who is a parent, a mother or father, for the first time is ecstatic and overjoyed about that situation. Instead, this opportunity brought them anxiety. Instead, they were wondering for year upon year: have we been chosen yet and were just not made aware after the child was born? The concern of not knowing puts a huge emotional weight on these families. Perhaps they were chosen, or maybe they were never going to be over these seven years and were waiting in vain.

**4:10**

The cost itself is burdensome. We're looking at tens of thousands of dollars, as the member before me already mentioned. These are not burdens that average families can maintain easily, and their desire, with this high cost of tens of thousands of dollars, is simply to love children, to bring children into this world with a safe home, one where they can continue to grow and be constructive citizens of our society after they leave that home. That is what they've chosen to pay this cost for.

If there are ways in which we can try and limit those burdens, we need to make sure we do that, first and foremost. As much as I recognize those concerns from the members opposite – and I want to work with those members, and I appreciate their constructive concern – we have to take very seriously any red tape or any burdens that are not needed that only make it more difficult.

Now, one thing I really want to focus on today is the problem that we're having particularly with domestic adoptions here. If we're looking at domestic options in Canada, they're far, far lower as a percentage rate than they are in the United States. In the United States we're looking at somewhere in the neighbourhood of 85 per cent of adoptions being domestic. Now, we're also looking here in Canada at domestic adoptions being around 54 per cent of adoptions.

It's also true that the first adoption laws were brought in in the United States in the 1850s. By comparison, the first laws in the books that I'm aware of – and I stand to be corrected – were in the early 1920s here in Canada. So it's fine for us to look to our neighbours to the south to see ways that they have found innovations within their jurisdictions to make sure that these children with that highly urgent need do get the homes that they desire and that I think we have an obligation to provide for them.

We're going to do our best here. I'm going to do my best to make the case that we need to look to other jurisdictions for innovations within our system, not just the United States but across the world where they have a high standard of regulation and supports, to make sure that those children have their needs met but also that are not burdensome to the point where a bird bath, perhaps, as the member before me stated, could potentially be a reason to not have these children in a loving home.

We can look at lots of the work done previously. If we look at what the United Conservative caucus did in 2017, listening to advocates when we pushed for Alberta to end our ban on posting adoption profiles online, the last of its kind in Canada. These are concrete steps that we can take, and that, for example, again, passed with multi-party support, unanimous support within this House. I am genuinely hoping sincerely that we can find co-operation on this point and others so we can continue to find efficiencies, yes, and co-operation where these children are more quickly and readily placed in that stable, loving home.

Where America has had the most success is necessarily on those domestic adoptions. It's not necessarily more than any other country. Many other countries have also made many advances as well when it comes to reducing the regulations around it.

We also have to look, as mentioned by the members opposite, at the foster to adopt your child to care program that we have here in Alberta. These are people who reach out and provide a stable home for these children. As the Member for Edmonton-West Henday mentioned, many of these children have fetal alcohol syndrome and other behavioural issues through no fault of their own that make adoption a lot more difficult. We have to make sure that there are supports there. Contrary to what folks might believe, it is still not in the best interests of those children with those particular challenges to end up remaining in those foster care homes until they, quote, age out. This is the worst-case scenario for many of these children. What we do need to do as best as we can is make sure we find ways to move those children into those loving, secure, and stable homes with the supports that they need.

I would encourage members to take a look at this motion seriously as a moral imperative that we have in this House to support it. Every time that we have a child aging out in foster care or we have a child that ends up going into foster care because they were not readily adopted initially or a couple who are looking to adopt and end up going international at a huge personal expense of their own, we are doing a disservice to those children, those who are most vulnerable in our society.

It's for this reason that I support the member's motion, Motion 501, and I implore everyone in this Assembly to do the same. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. government deputy whip.

**Mr. Schow:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise in this House for the first time in my early tenure as the MLA for Cardston-Siksika, and I'd like to take a moment to congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker.

Last month the United Conservative Party was elected with a strong mandate to protect families, and a large part of that is the children that are a part of those families. I think I speak for everyone in this House when I say that I believe every child deserves to grow up in a loving and caring home. There aren't many more daunting or important files tasked to us as provincial legislators than that of adoption. That is why it is such an honour to have an opportunity to address you in favour of this Motion 501.

I'd also like to thank the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain for sharing his personal experiences with adoption. It was certainly a heartfelt story and was not lost on this member.

I'd like to take a look for a moment at the costs associated with adopting a child. The process itself can take north of six months while a wait for a healthy infant in Alberta can take between two and seven years. While this is shorter for children with health issues or other children who may be up for adoption later in life as a result of family situations, typically involving the government in actually separating a child from their family, the process is, in any case, quite long. In addition to time, which includes filling out long applications, going through a long and invasive home study, and often hearings, the prospective family must pay thousands of dollars for the home study and even \$250 simply to file the documents, and often you have associated legal fees. By no means is this easy for any family. It is significant, it is difficult, and it's an emotional investment.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I believe it is so important that we look at what can be improved within this file. It is not serving people the way we would like it to or could hope for. This motion makes it very clear where the priorities should be. We need to promote our prospective families and make this an easier decision to step into. The daunting nature of the process is discouraging for many families, who are opening their homes to children and fulfilling this invaluable role in society.

We can do this by reducing the red tape burden on families who are seeking to adopt. At the end of the day, there should be very little that can prevent children from joining a loving family who genuinely wants what's best for them. After all, the impact of missing out on family is far worse than that of a child growing up in a family where the basic dangers of childhood would be.

Families who are opening up their homes to adopt should not be prevented from doing so by having items that surround their house that would not be given a second thought by biological parents. We do not ask families to remove bird baths, which has been referenced several times in this discussion, when a child is born to them, so why would that stop people who are looking to adopt?

Madam Speaker, there are children who are currently being kept from loving and supporting families because of excessive regulation. This is unacceptable. We know that sometimes government needs to just get out of the way, so I urge my fellow members of this Chamber to vote in favour of this motion for the sake of children and parents stuck in this system.

Much of my own life has been dedicated to service. Behind the crusty facade of a former athlete with bad knees, I spent a lot of time overseas, and part of that was spent living in the former Soviet Union, Russia, between the years 2004 and 2006. My time there was spent serving and helping people to quit addictions, teaching English classes, and helping people better their lives, but some of the most rewarding time that I spent was in the service working with children and trying to provide a better life for them, creating sports environments and addiction programs. But I also spent time in maternity wards cleaning up, where many babies were born every day, some of which would go directly into orphanages and others to loving parents. Those that were lucky enough to go to loving

parents would leave, and those that were not would go to orphanages, where sometimes conditions were substandard at best.

4:20

I encountered what I believe to be a product of this system one day when I was coming home from teaching an English class. After getting off the bus, going back to my apartment, I encountered a young boy. He couldn't have been any older than nine years of age. He was dirty, and he was asking for money. Madam Speaker, it broke my heart because this boy did not ask for this plight. He did not ask for this circumstance in life. I sat down with him, and rather than just give him money, I wanted to hear his story. I said, "Where's your mother?" He didn't know. I said, "Where's your father?" He didn't know. "Do you have any brothers or sisters?" "Yes, but I don't know where they are either." The best I could do was sit down and listen and offer him a can of Coke and a chocolate bar. He looked to me like a kid who hadn't had one in a while.

This, I believe, is where kids could end up if not put into a loving, caring, safe home. This is where children can end up if not given the opportunity that many others are, like we are fortunate enough to have ourselves, growing up in this wonderful country or places abroad with loving family. I would do anything to help, and I urge this House to help find ways to reduce regulation, the barriers to those looking to find a child.

I speak in favour of this Motion 501 because I have seen the other side. I have seen the conditions that some live in in orphanages overseas, and I hope that we can reduce the burden on their systems by adopting more children here in our country. There are many other stories like the one I just told you, and if we intervene and find ways to make adoption more feasible for families here in Alberta, I'm certain that we can benefit the lives of many children, and our own society will see the benefit of their contribution later in life.

I'd like to thank the member opposite, Edmonton-Whitemud, for mentioning overseas adoption and the need to improve that system as well.

As a father of two, with another child on the way, I love my role as a father. I love it. There's no greater calling than being a parent, and I would feel remiss if I stood in the way or if this House stood in the way of someone else who had that same desire but couldn't do that on their own. So I ask members of this Chamber to vote in favour of Motion 501.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

**Mr. Loewen:** Is there somebody else?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Nobody is standing right now. I will recognize the Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yeah, I would like to take a moment to talk about Motion 501, the motion to "urge the government to take all necessary measures to make the process for all forms of adoption more efficient and timely for families." It was interesting listening to the member that proposed this motion and to his personal experience with adoption and how we can make this process better and more efficient and, I guess, a better experience for all the people involved, including the children.

While I was sitting here, I just opened up the Alberta adoption web page, looking at the profiles of some of the children here that are available for adoption right now. I have to say that it's somewhat heartbreaking to think of these children that don't have a home right now and are looking for that opportunity to have loving



parents and to think that there are loving parents out there right now that are going through this process and are somewhat burdened by the process they have to go through to be able to adopt a child.

I think it's important to remember that the number one thing is the safety of the children. We need to make sure that this process provides these children with an opportunity to go to a safe home and a loving home and that they have that opportunity to live, I guess, a life similar to what other children have that have parents in their lives right now, to have that opportunity to live like that.

I think what happens a lot of times in government is that things progress over time and that regulations and rules and paperwork get developed, and there are probably situations that maybe lead to the increase of those documents and those forms and the things that are asked and the things that become rules and regulations. But, unfortunately, far too often we find in government that nobody actually reviews the process and the paperwork at some point and decides: "Okay. Is this still relevant? Are we accomplishing what we need to accomplish with this process?" I think that's what this motion does. It gives us an opportunity to reflect and review this process that's the adoption process here in Alberta, to have a chance to review it and make sure that it's fulfilling what it needs to do. I think we owe that to not only the children, but we owe that to the potential parents that want to take advantage of the adoption process.

Now, I know several family members and some good friends that have been through the adoption process, and a lot of times adoption, of course, is one of the most rewarding and beautiful experiences that a married couple or a couple can go through. That's great. That's perfect. That's what it's supposed to be. It's supposed to be a beautiful and rewarding experience for both the parents and the child, but it can also be upsetting and depressing. I know different parents that have been through the adoption process and who have sat on the waiting list and answered all these questions and really had to open up their hearts and their lives and everything to go through this process and then to be sitting and waiting and not knowing year after year, waiting for a child to be chosen for them.

I think that, as much as we can, we need to make sure that this process is more like the first instance, where it's this beautiful and rewarding experience. I think we need to aim towards that, and I think that by removing some of the barriers and some of these things that maybe just don't make sense today as much as when they were first implemented in the process as far as forms and regulations and that sort of thing – we need to make sure that we can look at these and have that opportunity to review.

When I think of parents that are willing to go through the adoption process, these parents are obviously people that are willing to open up their lives, open up their home, open up their hearts for children that they didn't conceive and bear themselves. You know, it takes a great amount of love and a great amount of openness to be able to make that decision and get into that place in their lives where they're doing this. We just owe it to these people to have this so that it's a streamlined process that protects the child but also makes the experience for the potential parents as positive as possible.

Again, you know, for anybody that has a chance, just jump on the government website and look at these children here that are looking for homes and are looking for placement. I mean, just look at the pictures, and look at these children. It's kind of heartbreaking to think that these children are in this situation in their lives where they really are looking for a home, and they really need to have that opportunity to be in a home with loving parents.

Again, I want to thank the member for proposing this motion. I think it's an important motion. I think it's something that we need

to support and pass in this Legislature and, like I say, make this process better for all involved.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I'll ask the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain to close debate.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been an honour and a privilege to listen to everyone here today and to take in the important viewpoints offered by many of the hon. members. Specifically, I'd like to reference the comments from the members for Edmonton-Whitemud and Edmonton-West Henday.

I truly believe that this is a nonpartisan issue. You know, adoption is a powerful force for incredible good, and I don't think anyone in this House would argue that it isn't important to make that as accessible as possible while protecting and ensuring the safety of the children.

4:30

As this debate draws to a close, I would like to urge all of my hon. colleagues to support this motion. Frankly, it's too important for us not to because at this end of this motion there are children waiting for a forever home. While I'm sure that there are still many matters of difference between us and even in how this ought to be carried out, I hope we can all come together in a firm affirmation that adoption should be as timely and as efficient as possible.

Thank you very much.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 carried]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(1) to allow us to move to Government Bills and Orders so that we may begin maiden speeches.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

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

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

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Sorry.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you can see, I'm very excited, and it's a tremendous honour to move the acceptance of the throne speech presented by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta. I would like to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for setting forth this vision for the Legislature. I would also like to thank the hon. Premier for the opportunity to move this Speech from the Throne.

The Speech from the Throne outlined our government's detailed and ambitious plan to get Albertans back to work. It outlined our

commitments to making life better for Albertans, to get Alberta's fiscal house in order, and to stand up to those who would have Alberta treated as a doormat for Ottawa rather than an equal and co-operative partner in Confederation. It also outlined our commitment to honour the dignity of this institution that we all fought to be able to sit in. As members we have an opportunity to participate in democracy and represent the voices of our constituents thoughtfully and with reverence. Overall, one could suggest that the Speech from the Throne demonstrated a marked shift towards optimism, a focus on the things that matter to Alberta families, the people who built this province, and the next generation that will carry our vision into the future.

I am humbled to stand here today as the newly elected Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat. I have the privilege of representing over 50,000 people from Hilda to Bassano, Scandia to Medicine Hat, from Redcliff to Brooks, just to name a few. On April 16 I was elected with 65 per cent of the vote and earned the trust of over 13,000 Albertans who are inspired by our government's positive vision for renewal and prosperity. I could not be more grateful to those who have supported me and continue to offer their kind words of encouragement and guidance. Whether you believed in me in the nomination, knocked on doors, made phone calls, delivered lunches, scrutineered, entered data, or offered your prayers, know that your support means everything to me, and this is just as much your seat as it is mine.

I come from a very tight-knit and supportive family who has taught me from a young age very important lessons that I will take with me into my career in public service. The first lesson is the importance of standing up for what you believe in. This was impressed upon me very early on in my life, and if you ask my mom, speaking up has always come perhaps a little too naturally to me. The second is to never book anything in November because that's rifle hunting season, and as a family that time is sacred, and we can't miss any opportunity to put meat in the freezer. But the third of these lessons, and perhaps the most important, is to always leave things better than when you found them. I truly believe that within the Speech from the Throne this message is expressly articulated.

Renewal is exactly what is needed for the constituents of Brooks-Medicine Hat. Over the past few years – and it was very obvious while I was door-knocking – people seemed to have lost that hope. Whether I was in Medicine Hat talking with young families about the erosion of choice in education or in Bassano talking with seniors about the need for predictable funding for health care, in Scandia talking with farmers about the need for protection of their property rights, or in Brooks speaking with some of the many oil and gas workers who are unemployed or underemployed, the takeaway was the same. The people of Brooks-Medicine Hat, by and large, felt as though our common-sense rural values had been betrayed by a coalition of governments who seemed more concerned with appeasing the ivory towers of so-called green, foreign-funded activists than meaningfully consulting everyday Albertans. They felt as though their governments were working against them, and they ultimately felt like their representatives had forgotten who put them there in the first place.

Brooks-Medicine Hat is a brand new constituency made up of the county of Newell, Cypress county, the city of Brooks, the city of Medicine Hat, the town of Bassano, and many charming places in between such as Hilda, Schuler, Duchess, Rosemary, Scandia, Millicent, Patricia, Rolling Hills, Tilley, CFB Suffield, Ralston, and Redcliff, just to name a few. Although the boundaries themselves are new, the history is as deep as the coulees and as humble as the First Peoples who were the original stewards of this land. The constituency has a rich history of agriculture, farming, and ranching

– the ultimate act of environmental stewardship – as well as many greenhouses that serve as job creators to our local economies. Further, Brooks-Medicine Hat has a robust tradition of being a leader in the oil and gas industry, with many companies, both large and small, having roots in the area.

I had the pleasure of growing up in southern Alberta. I was born in Medicine Hat and went down the road to university in Lethbridge. I decided to run in Brooks-Medicine Hat because I believe in the common-sense work ethic and generous nature of the people that call this place home alongside me. I firmly believe in the good of everyday Albertans, who know how best to care for their families, communities, farms, and businesses without the ever-encroaching hand of government. In southern Alberta we are the kind of people for whom, if you look someone in the eye and shake their hand, well, that might as well be a contract, and you treat that handshake like a bond. We do not expect much of government, but we do expect that governments and politicians will be accountable to the people that they represent and follow through on their election promises.

I am proud to be a member of this United Conservative government's caucus, that is already demonstrating to Albertans near and far that we are willing to do what is right and follow through on the election platform that received a resounding majority from Albertans just last month. It is a great privilege and responsibility that has been bestowed upon myself and all of my colleagues to sit in this Chamber. This privilege has been given to fewer than 1,000 people in our province's history, and I am proud to be the very first member of the Legislature for Brooks-Medicine Hat and grateful to have had the opportunity to move Her Honour's Speech from the Throne today.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is truly a privilege to rise in the House today for my first time to second the motion to accept the Speech from the Throne. It is also my absolute pleasure to offer my comments and consideration to the Speech from the Throne.

Perhaps I am biased, but I am of the belief that the riding of Banff-Kananaskis is without a doubt the most beautiful place in Alberta and possibly all of Canada. In the north we begin with Lake Louise, whose bright turquoise waters are a phenomenon known world-wide. In fact, a quick Google image search of "Canada" will bring up numerous photos of this stunning location, further proving the notion that Lake Louise is a destination known to those all across the world as the face of our country.

Travel 60 kilometres south to Banff national park and you will find yourself in yet another internationally recognized Canadian town. In the summer the town is abuzz with tourists scurrying on the sidewalks and hiking, biking, and climbing up or down the towering peaks above. In the winter the tourists put on their woolies and head to the slopes as the sun glistens off the snow and turns the mountains into beautiful, snow-swept marvels.

A short 20-minute drive away and you hit Canmore, a town so famously known for its smaller town feel and the Three Sisters, which might be the most famous set of mountains of all time.

Heading further south, you will drive through Dead Man's Flats, Lac des Arcs, Exshaw, and the stunning Kananaskis Country, created and protected for us by the late Peter Lougheed.

But our riding isn't all mountains. Just past Kananaskis Country is the place that feels most like home to the Saskatchewan-born girl in me. Our riding is blessed to not only encompass the mountains but also to encompass the bald, beautiful prairies, where the skies

come alive. We'll continue our riding tour through Springbank, the ideal place for those who want a downtown job but a country lifestyle full of dogs and big backyards, not to mention with Calaway Park in the backyard.

A few kilometres down and past the roundabout is Redwood Meadows, a tight-knit community situated on Tsuut'ina land, where the trees and their many tree worms are as hardy as the people who live there.

4:40

A little further up the road is Bragg Creek, known for their western culture and their trails and campsites. People, including, I'm sure, many who are listening right now, travel from all over Alberta to get a taste of camping in the wide open with the mountains in the distance.

Further up the road we have Millarville and Priddis, communities known for their fruitful farmers' markets and their thundering horse races in the summer.

Our riding also includes two First Nations communities. The first is the Stoney Nation, comprised of the Bearspaw, Wesley, and Chiniki bands, where the wild horses gallop freely along the TransCanada highway. The other is the Tsuut'ina Nation, who has long been a champion of economic prosperity and independent social services such as their women's empowerment centre, which they are currently in the process of building.

What this virtual tour is to say is that Banff-Kananaskis is a riding much more diverse than its name would imply. It is diverse in landscape but also in economy. Both halves of the riding have entirely different economic drivers than the other, each with their own advantages and challenges.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

One half is essentially solely reliant on tourism. In fact, tourism constitutes 93 per cent of Banff's GDP every year. Combined, the towns of Canmore and Banff welcome more tourists each day than they have permanent residents. This influx can at times make the local infrastructure burden difficult to bear on those who reside within. These areas are also situated in environmentally sensitive areas that are covered with dense coniferous forests, oftentimes prone to wildfire, and home to critters of all shapes and sizes. The tightrope between preserving natural beauty and ensuring our great outdoors can be enjoyed and support a thriving tourist industry is one that must be carefully walked to ensure the sustainability of the industry.

On the other side of the riding are nestled some of Alberta's most breathtaking cattle ranches. Situated on the flat prairie with the Rocky Mountains distant in the rear view, we live in what has recently become a scary time for those working in agriculture as forces from both government and private industry spread fear and misinformation to further the agenda of what they may consider newer, more hip industries. Ensuring that the positive stories and the factual truths behind our farmers, ranchers, and agriculture industry are heard is something that must not be taken lightly.

This side of the riding is also home to many hard-working Albertans whose livelihood has been provided for either by employment in or related to entrepreneurship in or innovation in our world-class energy industry. It is no hidden secret that this industry has suffered insurmountable blows over the last few years, from a lack of pipeline capacity, uncertain regulatory environments, increase in targeted taxes, and a global campaign to land-lock the oil. This industry, too, has sure seen its hardships.

Another industry that is quite unique to our riding is the film industry. Walt Disney, Pixar, Universal Studios, and Warner Bros. are all companies that frequent the lands of our riding. Productions

such as *Inception*, *The Revenant*, *Interstellar*, *War for the Planet of the Apes*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *The Bourne Legacy*, and *Superman* were all filmed right in the heart of Kananaskis Country. Notable TV shows include both *Heartland* and *Game of Thrones*.

But times have been tough lately. Many businesses in the mountains have seen their visitor numbers up but their sales dollars down as Albertans have lost consumer confidence in their province and have lost the ability to spend their money as lucratively as they once could. Many ranchers have seen their property rights threatened. Many an oil executive or experienced engineer in Springbank have found themselves suddenly without work and no prospect of future employment on the horizon, and many a film production has moved to other jurisdictions, where the incentives to produce far exceed those we have here in Alberta.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, I am pleased today to support the throne speech, which so eloquently and clearly outlined our government's priorities to get Alberta back on track and to help the people of Banff-Kananaskis. I am proud to support our plans to restore and grow our energy industry in an environmentally friendly way through a royalty guarantee, a commitment to investing in new innovations and technology, and a mandate for heavy industrial emitters to focus on emissions reduction. I am proud to support our plans to bring back investment and to diversify our economy through the job-creation tax cut, which will see our corporate business tax rate cut to the lowest in Canada and most of North America. I am proud to support our plans to ease the burdens on small-business owners and empower them to continue creating jobs for others by enacting our open for business act, which will in the coming days bring in labour reforms that will both protect our employees and also grow the accessible job market for them.

I'm proud to support our plans to help families and seniors living on fixed incomes to have more discretionary income at the end of each month, to save, shop locally with, or travel with by repealing the carbon tax, a move that will put \$1.4 billion back in the pockets of Albertans. I'm proud of our plan to double our tourism industry by 2030 while ensuring environmental protections stay in place, and I am proud to support our film industry by converting our quarterly accessible grant to a continuously accessible tax credit. I am proud to support and be a part of the mandate of this government.

My political roots began back in Saskatchewan. I grew up in the lovely city of Regina, a city named after Queen Victoria Regina. Ironically, the city was granted its name by Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, also more commonly known as Louise Caroline Alberta, who our great province was named after.

Still in Regina, my father was and is the hardest working small-business owner I've ever met. Throughout my life he instilled in me the importance of meticulousness, integrity, thankless hard work, and the value of personal relationships. By the time I was in grade 2, he'd already helped me create my own first set of business cards and helped to mentor my best friend and I in starting our own small café out of my own kitchen, with a completed foldable food menu, at which we sold creative but not so tasty food selections to my parents and family for 10 cents apiece. From a young age my dad believed that I could be whoever and whatever I wanted to be as long as I gave it my all.

My mother, on the other hand, exudes a love for life wherever she goes. She's a bouncy, goofy ray of sunshine who loves arts, crafts, laughter, and playing her tuba. She taught me that life is meant for loving and that if you don't take joy in the little things, you're missing out on the full experience.

My grandma, now 89, taught me that there is no problem in life which a good heart-to-heart, a healthy laugh, a detoxing dose of Dr.

Phil, or a delicious serving of meat loaf can't fix. And my grandpa, who stays atop the latest technological trends better than I do and who also began building his own airplane from scratch in his ripe mid-70s, taught me that it is always the right time to be curious and learn something new.

Collectively and most importantly, my entire family taught me that living a life of gratitude and faith in God above would help me navigate through life's hardest times. Ephesians 1:11, quote: for he works out all things to fit his plan and purpose. Despite being an unlikely candidate, now an MLA by the young age of 24, I have come to fully understand the gravity of these words.

Between all the things I learned from my family, I grew up with an unrelenting desire to better the world around me. I previously worked for Coca-Cola, a company which I've always thought does an incredible job of marketing the positivity and the goodness in life and inspiring all of us to think a little differently. It was a company that truly aligned with the purpose I wanted in life, yet as time passed, I could see that Alberta needed more help than just a feel-good message. No amount of brown sugar water and positivity could sugar-coat the fact that people around me were struggling to make ends meet, pulling their children out of sports to keep food on the table, closing the doors of the businesses they had dedicated their life's work to and, in some instances, even declaring bankruptcy. It was in this realization that I knew the run for politics was where I belonged.

To sit in this chair, walk on these carpets, and breathe in this legislative air is a privilege unexplainable by word. To be able to serve where so few have served before and to dedicate my life's work to helping better the lives of those around me is nothing short of a lifelong dream come true. Getting here was not easy, as I'm sure my colleagues and fellow members can attest, but the hard work is only beginning.

Just as April showers bring May flowers, so too has an April election brought May reflection. You can feel it all around you: Albertans looking back at the last four years of their lives and breathing a sigh of relief. There is a distinguishable feeling of refreshment and renewal that has swept across our province since the election. Albertans everywhere can finally feel comfortable knowing that the province they love and call home will soon be reinvigorated with the regular buzz of economic stimulation, consumer confidence, and good old Albertan patriotism.

The task ahead of us is huge. I sincerely hope that both sides of this House can find a way to put aside partisan politics and collaborate with each other to do what is best for Albertans. It is truly sad that we have come to a place across all parliamentary democracies where members speaking in the House cannot even be heard for being drowned out by accusations and insults from members across the aisle. We were elected to represent our constituents and be their voice, but partisanship has divided us in a place where we should be listening to the thoughts and ideas of others to better the world around us. I've always been of the belief that fostering dialogue, no matter how controversial the subject, is always better than turning backs and demonizing the other.

There are 4.2 million Albertans counting on us to cultivate an environment that allows them to thrive and be their best selves. We simply cannot afford to squander our precious time here in office pursuing any other mission than that. Based on a standard four-year election cycle, we have precisely 2,102,400 minutes to represent our constituents, and I encourage every member of this House to make the best of every single one.

In conclusion, it is my absolute honour to be granted the privilege to represent the constituents of Banff-Kananaskis for the next four years of government. Above the Chamber doors in the Saskatchewan Legislature, which is located in my hometown of

Regina, Brad Wall had engraved the words: did you leave things better than the way you found them? My only aspiration is that after my four years in this House I will confidently be able to say that myself and all of those sitting around me left Alberta better than the way we found it.

4:50

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you. I'd like to start by saying that it's truly an honour to be the elected representative for Highwood and have the opportunity to address this Chamber in my maiden speech. I'd like to start by congratulating you on your appointment. I've no doubt that you'll represent in the fair, impartial manner that is a tradition of the position.

I also respectfully acknowledge that we are situated on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of First Nations and Métis people.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a born-and-raised proud Albertan, son of a nurse and paramedic, Ann and Richard. My mother served for years in the health care industry at the Foothills hospital, committing her life to the care of others for decades. My father was a graduate of the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology's first-ever paramedicine class. He was one of the principle owners of STARS ambulance system, which was eventually sold to the city of Calgary in 1971 and became the Calgary city EMS service. He founded the Alberta paramedics professional association and worked for years to have paramedics legislated into the Health Disciplines Act of Alberta. Their examples showed me on a daily basis the dedication and honour of our province's health care workers and the importance of an effective health care system.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I was raised on a farm north of Cochrane, spending the early years of my life raising horses and cattle and farming. After high school I went to work on a conventional drilling rig in northern Alberta drilling exploratory wells in what is now the proven fields of Alberta's oil sands. I went back to school, to SAIT, to earn my red seal in a mechanical trade and worked through the ranks from journeyman to supervisor. The oil and gas industry gave me my start, and I know first-hand the value of the trades and the importance of the continued commitment to supporting young Albertans in apprenticeships and the skilled trades. I continued my education and eventually became a project manager, design consultant, then eventually became a shareholder and a business owner. I know what it means to build a company and the pride of being an employer. I also know the pain of having to lay people off.

I'm a proud father of three boys – Caden, Ty, and Trystan – and husband to my beautiful wife, Leanne. We chose Highwood to raise our children because of its strong sense of community, our family roots there, and the level of benevolence and charity that is ingrained in this community. Leanne and I are the custodians of the values our parents instilled in us, values we now strive daily to pass on to our children, small-town values such as respect, honour, and a strong work ethic. Together we are teaching them how these values build strong communities, and we hope to instill in them the morals that build character and lead to a fulfilled life.

As a parent I believe our focus should be on building a better future for our children. We need to provide for them a strong education, an education that will prepare them for the future. All Alberta children deserve a life of unlimited possibilities.

Madam Speaker, the constituency of Highwood, due to the recent boundary review, has greatly changed since the Assembly last sat. Highwood now stretches east to the county of Vulcan, west to Kananaskis, and from the south edge of the city of Calgary, with the Bow River and highway 22X as its northern border, to just south of Okotoks, following 434 Avenue.

Highwood is very diverse, which I believe is truly representative of the qualities that make this province such a special place to live. It is an extraordinary region, a collection of wonderful communities, a great mix of urban, suburban, acreage, and rural, warm and welcoming.

Within the constituency we have four municipalities, which include Foothills county; the town of Black Diamond, which derived its name from the rich coal mines that were abundant there in the early 1900s; Turner Valley, named after Rob and John Turner, who settled it in 1886; and Okotoks. Its name is derived from the Blackfoot word “okatok,” meaning rock. The Blackfoot referred to this area as okatok because of the big rock, which they used as a reference marker in their journeys. The importance of the area to the First Nations was that this area was a safe river crossing across the Sheep River, which dissects Okotoks. This big rock they referred to may be what Highwood is most known for. This famous glacial erratic, notably the largest in the world, was transported by a continental glacier during the last ice age from Mount Edith Cavell and now rests in a flat plains area right in between Okotoks and Black Diamond-Turner Valley.

Madam Speaker, the first door I knocked on in my campaign was that of a retired elderly lady in her 80s. Her husband had recently passed. She expressed to me how in the past her husband was the one that showed the most interest in discussing and debating politics, but she now felt that she could no longer sit idly by. She and her husband spent their entire lives shaping this province, with the knowledge that the prosperity they worked towards would be passed on to future generations, but she saw the future they had worked for so hard eroding away. It should always be the inherent responsibility of every generation to pass on something better to the next generation, a future unhindered by regular deficits and a growing, unmanageable debt. We need to re-establish our strong and free society so that our children have the same opportunities to thrive that we did when we were growing up. This responsibility now lies with us right here, right now.

As the campaign progressed, we knocked on thousands of doors and attended hundreds of events, and the needs of the residents of Highwood became even more clear, the need for jobs, accountability for taxpayers' dollars, and a fair deal for Alberta. Too many nights I returned home with a heavy heart, full of stories of families who had lost their jobs, with no hope of new employment, families that had exhausted their life savings and were wondering how they were going to make their next mortgage payment.

The residents of Highwood have entrusted me to bring their voice to this government, and I'm truly honoured to be elected the MLA for Highwood and share a list of names that includes the hon. George Groeneveld, Don Tannas, and George Wolstenholme.

In my mind, there can be no doubt that the most important feature of the constituency is its people. Highwood has a sense of charity and community that embodies the true nature of Alberta's spirit. I have been proud to play a small part in a few of these such as the fundraiser for Lukah, an infant diagnosed with a large tumour and in need of a blood transfusion. This is a community that bands together in times of difficulty.

Madam Speaker, I believe above all else that the most valuable resource we have here in Alberta is the hard-working, caring residents that have chosen to live here, and that is why I am pleased to support a throne speech that has a strong plan to restore jobs and renew our economy, a plan based on proven strategies and policies, a plan to restore low taxes to create jobs, growth, encourage economic activity, and increase revenues for the province, a plan that will once again make Alberta a safe place to start a business, invest, and raise a family, a throne speech that lays out a plan to end the punishing carbon tax so that life can once again be affordable for families, especially our seniors and those on fixed or low incomes.

It is a throne speech that advocates for a fair deal for our energy sector, which is vital to Alberta. This key industry had its beginning in the Highwood community. On May 14, 1914, near Turner Valley oil and gas first flowed from the Dingman No. 1 discovery well. The oil and gas industry for Alberta began on that day. This gas plant site is now an Alberta historic resource site, and though it's no longer active, the oil and gas sector continues to be important to Highwood as an employer of people and as a generator of wealth for this province. It is essential that we work to positively advocate for our ethically and environmentally produced oil. It's time we dispel the lies and tell the world the truth about our energy sector.

5:00

In addition to oil, Highwood is an economically diverse constituency, home to rich agriculture, cattle ranches, horses, farming, hobby farms, oil, gas, movie and filming sets, tourism, music, and art and culture. The natural beauty of Highwood has brought many filmmakers to the area to shoot their movies, starting with the film *Northwest Stamped* in 1947 to *Silver Streak*, *Superman II* and *Superman III*, and, most recently, the Netflix original *Hell on Wheels*. Our fertile lands produce top quality beef, chicken, pork, honey, and grain commodities. The area is a hub for horse breeders for racing, rodeo, jumping, polo, dressage, and day-to-day farming uses. It is not a surprise that our constituency is home to the Millarville racetrack and ag society, Hebson Arena, and Calgary Polo Club, among others.

However, Madam Speaker, even with all of our abundances Highwood faces some serious challenges. In addition to the need for a strong economy, job creation, support for our natural resources and agriculture, and improvements to our health care and education, Highwood faces a critical water shortage and continued high levels of rural crime. Highwood faces a similar crisis to that of all of Alberta, the need for a pipeline, in this case a water pipeline. Due to the substantial growth of our communities the access to additional water licences has now become crucial to the sustainability of our area, not just to allow for the future residential growth but to supply our commercial and business sector so that we can continue to expand our small-town economies. This is crucial to keeping the tax costs down for our residents.

Madam Speaker, I believe that one of the most important duties of every government is to provide safety for its residents. I'm proud of our strategy to address rural crime so that residents will once again feel safe in their homes. I look forward to working diligently to gain the confidence of my constituents to show that this government has a plan that will make life safer for all of our rural areas.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to be here, and I look forward to representing the people of Highwood.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any comments or questions?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak? The Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you. It is my honour to rise today for the first time and address this Assembly. Congratulations to you on your election as Deputy Speaker, and thank you as well, Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to begin by thanking and honouring the constituents of Lethbridge-East for entrusting me to represent them and be their voice here in the Legislature. Lethbridge has a population of just over 100,000 people and is often recognized as being Alberta's fourth-largest city but serves a much larger community as a central hub for a larger area all around southern Alberta, whose number then soars to approximately 350,000 people. We have strong roots in our land as people from the First Nations of the Kainai and Piikani as well as the Métis live all around us. Farmers for generations have given us a strong heritage in agriculture and food processing.

Lethbridge is diverse in the sense of welcoming significant numbers of new Canadians to our city and our province. Many cultures, including Sudanese, Bhutanese, and Nepalese families, have come to Lethbridge and made this their home over the past few years. This is not new for Lethbridge as we have families from all over the world. In a community of 100,000 these cultures make for a rich, varied, and, by necessity, inclusive environment. One of our most historical and treasured sites is the Nikka Yuko Japanese garden, which commemorates how beautiful things can sometimes grow and help in the healing after adversity and conflict.

We see diversity and inclusion again in our city by having both the Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge. I am proud to say that I am a red seal journeyman carpenter, having graduated from the Lethbridge College in 2000, and had the opportunity to use these skills on many occasions at both institutions. These schools draw approximately 15,000 students annually to Lethbridge as well as faculty and staff, creating a vibrant community of learning, research and having a strong impact on our economy.

The Speech from the Throne highlights how important it is for our government to focus on our students, who are our future, and seek the highest quality of education possible where the results of their learning prepares them for success, no matter which avenue they take. Whether matching our universities to the competitive global market or developing the recognition of our skilled trades as vital in our workforce and economy, Lethbridge can play a key role in achieving many of these goals as we have the marketplace with stable jobs to employ our graduates. We are fortunate to have one of the most stable economies in the province, one that balances public service and private enterprise, research and development, agriculture, food production, and construction and technology, to name but a few.

Another strength in our diversity is our seniors, a large and vibrant part of our community. We are a southern hub for retirement. We see many farmers pass on the lifeline of our agricultural commerce, the family farm, to the next generation and then move to the city. They and many others come to Lethbridge for the stable real estate market, access to medical and health facilities and services, municipal parks and pathways, public transportation, arts and culture, and numerous other amenities and benefits, which is why our government is so focused on jobs and the economy, to make sure that the people who work so very hard their entire lives raising families, paying taxes, building our province and our country have the opportunity, availability, and affordable access to the services they need and deserve.

In recognizing our diversity, I also want to recognize the often forgotten middle class in Lethbridge, the people who go to work every day as nurses and doctors, carpenters, electricians, teachers and counsellors, police officers, golf course maintenance workers, first responders, professionals, mechanics, secretaries, and countless other trades, professional volunteers, parents, and advocates who give of themselves to make our city a better place to live. I know these people. I have worked with them, been served by them, been treated by them, and admire them. Many will never hear a thank you for their service or be recognized by an award, so every single one of them who feels like they haven't been heard or seen or remembered, this is for them. Thank you. Thank you for all that you do.

I am very proud to have had the chance to host our current Premier on a number of occasions in our city. Most recently the Premier attended the men's world curling championships, and last summer he also walked in our Whoop-Up Days parade. Both of these events celebrate and highlight our civic pride and collaborative nature. Thank you to the Premier.

It is our responsibility and the high calling of this office to serve all of these individuals with excellence, for that is the standard they should expect. Nothing less will do. It is to be seen in our actions, heard in our words, and displayed in our very character to first hear them and then represent them. This high calling will always find itself at the intersection of today and tomorrow, caught between the demands of the now and the needs of the future. This is why it is so crucial to build our economy, develop our resources and markets, strengthen our trade relationships, and balance our spending. In doing this, we can once again take our place as a global leader in ethics, the economy, and the environment.

I'm very proud to represent Lethbridge in this Legislature. I am proud of the history, the heritage, and the diversity that it embodies. I believe it can be an example to all of Alberta in how it blends its fantastic mosaic of people, culture, and ethnicity into innovative solutions, collaborative partnerships, and economic stability. Lethbridge truly embodies the spirit of our beautiful province of Alberta, and I'm so incredibly proud to stand here today representing the constituency of Lethbridge-East. To all of my constituents: thank you from the bottom of my heart for the honour and privilege of standing here today. I pledge that together we can once again make Alberta strong and free.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), are there any comments or questions?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak?

**Ms Lovely:** Madam Speaker, I am deeply sensible of the great honour that has been bestowed upon me and the constituency called Camrose, which I proudly represent, by the hon. leader of the government upon this occasion.

First, I would like to congratulate you as our newly elected Deputy Speaker. Given your tenure in this House I have confidence you will provide beneficial guidance and keen insight into the ways of our Assembly. Also, I would like to thank the Lieutenant Governor for her reading of the Speech from the Throne. It is my privilege to deliver my maiden speech at the First Session of the 30th Legislature.

5:10

I'm honoured that the constituents of Camrose granted me one of the greatest privileges and chose me to be their representative to bring issues and problems they face to the Legislature. I would like to thank my constituents for their support in giving me this honour to serve them. During my nomination period and once the writ had

been dropped, it was an opportunity for me to visit every town in the entire constituency, going door to door introducing myself to the residents. I visited farmers and colonies. As I was intending to educate them about our party and why they should support me, as the case should be, I ended up learning more about them and what they required to be effectively supported. The needs are great in our area, and many have faced hardships in the loss of jobs and economic uncertainty. Many have worked in the oil industry, which has been extremely hard hit over the past several years. The residents are hopeful our government will have success in working with our federal government to get the pipelines built and help restore prosperity to our province.

Madam Speaker, the Camrose constituency is a newly formed boundary. Previously our boundary included Wetaskiwin; however, highway 21 between Camrose and Wetaskiwin now separates us. The boundary goes north, following the Beaver county boundary line, north of Tofield and Viking, then runs down to Hardisty, Alliance, and Bashaw.

In 1909 Mr. Smith from this Chamber mentioned: the past year was one of plenty and abounding prosperity for agriculture. The total yield of grain within the province at that time was expected to exceed 34 million bushels. Today farmers in our area are busy seeding, and we have experienced some good weather over the past many days. There is some uncertainty as to what should be planted as our agriculture industry is currently stumbling given inflictions by our federal government. I wish our farming community well and pray for some rain over the next couple of weeks once our seeding season has completed.

Madam Speaker, there have been so many kind people who have assisted me with my effort, given me good advice, and who are filled with pure wisdom. I would like to pay tribute to a few of those kind individuals by including them in my maiden speech. D'Arcy, one of our prominent farmers, had this to say: agriculture is a key part of our province's economy. Oil and gas are our number one revenue source, but agriculture has been number two. Therefore, a thriving agriculture sector is so important to the province and our rural communities. The Camrose constituency has a history of consistent grain, oil, seed, and pulse production. Tied with good access to transportation and infrastructure, it has led to numerous inland terminals, elevators, with more in construction. As well, the Cargill crush plant is an important part in value-added production in our region.

We are an exporting province and nation. We produce more than we can use domestically, so the ability to move our products to market is key. The struggles we've seen in the last few years emphasize the importance of trade agreements and good relationships with those markets. As farmers it's frustrating when you see exports diminish not due to market reasons but political ones: pulses into India, wheat into Italy, barley into Saudi Arabia, and now canola into China. As farmers we tend to be eternally optimistic, but we do need strong leadership locally, provincially, and federally to work better those relationships and, importantly, push for trade agreements that remove some of the unpredictability. The beef sector has also had similar access challenges.

During my time travelling through the constituency, I had the pleasure of meeting many people who live at our 10 Hutterite colonies. These colonies include Wavy Lake, Donalda, Viking, Alliance, Rosalind, Loughheed, Camrose, Holden, Bruce, and Tofield. These good-hearted people contribute to our agriculture industry but also furnish people with their garden vegetables and baking, which they sell at farmers' markets. Many people are not aware of the large contribution our colonies make to the local food bank, helping to provide aid to those residents in our community who require an extra bit of temporary assistance. Their kindness and

quality are appreciated, and I'm glad to acknowledge them in my maiden speech.

Madam Speaker, in Mr. Smith's maiden speech he talked about the mining industry, with coal production for 1909 at over 2 million tonnes, mentioning a dispute between operators and their employees during the early part of the year which had a negative effect on most of the large mines. Today it is our past government that has had the negative effect on our mining industry. The town of Forestburg in particular has been hit hardest by this recent change in philosophy. Many in this area face losing their lucrative careers, which they depended upon to provide for themselves and their families. If they must relocate, the question is: who will buy their house? Will they be able to sell it at all?

Greg, one of Forestburg's prominent businesspeople, had this to contribute to my maiden speech. He says: you would be hard pressed to find a better example of the pioneer spirit than the settlers from the Forestburg area that began an industry by digging gopher-hole coal mines in the banks of Battle a hundred years ago. The development of this valuable industry paved the way for coal-fired power generation that filled Alberta's energy needs for decades. These two industries set up Forestburg and area as a place a person could raise a family, get a decent job, and make a good living. That all ended when narrow-minded people decided to destroy what took generations to develop because they didn't want to work to improve what was already there. It seemed easier to them to just shut down the industry and displace the families. The Forestburg area still has the same spirit today that town founders had and works tirelessly to reinvent itself.

The government needs to look at rural Alberta as the unique area it is and apply rules that make sense for rural Alberta. The community is reeling, and the pain is great. I will work hard alongside our ministers to ensure that the town is able to continue and thrive. We may not be able to undo what has already been set in motion, but, rest assured, this government will do all that it can to preserve your way of life and ensure a future for you and your families.

Madam Speaker, I've mentioned Mr. Smith in my maiden speech, and there have been many MLAs who have represented our area. I am blessed to be part of this Legislature and proud to say that I am the first female MLA from the area. There have been many famous women who have acted in government. These halls have seen many great men and women who have preceded us. Among these people of note are Alexander Rutherford, Alberta's first Premier. Additionally, there are the Famous Five women who asked the bold question: "Does the word 'person' in Section 24 of the BNA Act include [women]?" Their efforts proved that women were indeed persons and did have the right to vote. When I look around, we have come a long way in this Chamber since the question was first asked.

My constituents can count on me to ask uncomfortable questions when they need to seek answers and to work diligently to improve our economy, ensuring a bright future for themselves and our next generation. I was born in Saskatchewan and moved to Alberta in 1989. During that time the expression was: last one out turns out the lights. I'm afraid that is what's happening in Alberta now. Many have left our province seeking job opportunities elsewhere. Our young people in particular are having difficulty seeking employment. This is the reason why I decided that I must run as a candidate. A great many people in our area share my concern.

Given that many of my family members still lived in Saskatchewan, I would drive with my family taking the route through Camrose back and forth for many, many years. I knew when my children were young that once they had grown up and moved out on their own, I would one day live in Camrose. My son

is an engineer, and my daughter is a nurse. Now that they have left, I have moved to Camrose where I have fallen deeply in love with the city and the residents who fill it. I count many friends who share all kinds of interests with me. I'm a proud member of the Camrose & District Chamber of Commerce, a Rotarian, and an active member in my church. It is my humble pleasure to serve our community and its residents in a number of capacities.

I asked one of our prominent Camrose businessmen, Phil, what he liked most about Camrose. Phil told me that it was the friendly people, the pretty layout of the ravines, the streams, Mirror Lake, the trumpeter swans, the community spirit, hockey, and well-respected, long-standing mayors. Business is tough in our community right now, and we talked about how each month there seems to be a new business shutting its doors. Our constituency along with the rest of rural Alberta faces the challenge of population decline. There are many, many businesses for sale in our area and a lack of buyers.

My hope is that with our newly formed government, investors will feel encouraged and seek opportunity in our rural towns, which are filled with kind, encouraging people anxious to meet and welcome investors. The people in my community are generous. They love to help others, and they like to spend time with one another.

Gail of the Camrose Swans and Roses Lions Club contributed that we have 150 Camrose Lions members with two clubs. There are clubs in Bawlf, Killam, Sedgewick, Loughheed, Viking, and Tofield. Gail shared that the Lions Club motto is We Serve. We are in communities to provide service. We raise funds through volunteer efforts to donate to local organizations and individuals in need. Several of our fundraisers include the concession at Lindstrand Auctions, the Christmas tree sales lot, the July 1 community pancake breakfast. Recent beneficiaries of our funds include Neighbourhood Aid, which is the Camrose food bank; the women's shelter; the Service Options for Seniors Society; the Special Olympics; Meals on Wheels; and the Family Violence Action Society. We organize, we serve, and we work for a brighter future for our community members. Thank you to Gail for her contribution.

5:20

Education is a pillar in my community. There has been an evolution, so to speak. Dean Allen Burger had this to contribute. The Augustana campus of the University of Alberta is located in Camrose. Part of the University of Alberta since 2004, Augustana now plays a unique role, defined as for the public good in the U of A strategic plan, as a living laboratory for teaching and learning innovation to the benefit of the entire university.

Augustana, which enrolls approximately 1,050 undergraduate students, including 6 per cent indigenous and 15 per cent international, offers bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, bachelor of music, and bachelor of management degrees. It is a provincial and national leader in community service learning, international study opportunities for students, and undergraduate research. Inspired by the university's strategic plan, Augustana has implemented a unique academic calendar and a first-year seminar program. Its faculty council recently approved new interdisciplinary concentrations in law, crime, and justice studies; ethics and global studies; and creativity and culture along with revisions to its core program that include a scaffolded approach to work-integrated learning.

As the only campus of the U of A outside of Edmonton Augustana is also home to the Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities and the Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life. Through a relationship with Alberta Parks

the campus also maintains a research station at Miquelon Lake provincial park and will soon be adding an astronomical observatory there, taking advantage of the park's status as a dark sky preserve.

Currently both the U of A Nursing and Rehabilitation Medicine faculties offer programs at Augustana, recognizing that health science students trained in and among rural communities are more likely to build their careers in such settings. More broadly, Augustana and several health science faculties have aspirations to develop the campus as a centre of excellence for rural health and wellness.

Hardisty is another major town, at the far end of our constituency, filled with kind, hard-working people. It is best known as a pivotal petroleum industry hub where western Canadian select blend crude oil is produced and traded. My personal goal is to arrange a trip where our ministers of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Energy and Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction could assist a committed group of business people to successfully develop their community to provide jobs and have a positive impact on our community. Blake, one of the community organizers, advises that the opportunity is waiting.

I look forward to serving the needs of my constituency and all Albertans in this House. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured to respond to the Speech from the Throne and to deliver my own maiden speech. The first time I entered this room, I was in grade 6 on a field trip to the Legislature. The second time I entered this room, I was the Member-elect for Calgary South-East, touring this Chamber during MLA orientation week. It took me 21 years to get from up there to down here, and I intend to use my time in this Chamber wisely.

Like many Albertans, I wasn't born here. I was born in Sparwood, B.C., home to what used to be the world's largest dump truck. My father worked in the coal industry and followed his career to Alberta, to the company's Calgary headquarters when I was about seven years old. Here he built a life for me and my five siblings, all of which still live in Alberta today. My father believed in three things: integrity, work, and education. He taught us to do what we said we were going to do and to treat others how we wanted to be treated. Pretty good advice for an MLA, I think.

On work, I'll never forget the day I turned 14, when he turned to me and said: it's time for you to get a job. I can't remember how I responded, but I think it was something along the lines of: I don't want to. But I'll never forget what he said. He said: you have to stop looking at work as if it's optional. It's an interesting statement if you think about it in the context of what has happened to Alberta. How many people have we all met with that don't just want to work, they need to work? It's not optional for most people to provide for their families, for their children, or for themselves. It's a necessity. And so at 14, in grade 8, I began working full-time in addition to going to school.

In addition to funding my future university education and providing me with financial independence at a young age, it also gave me work experience, an expanded social network, and it developed my interpersonal communication skills. These are the foundations on which my career was built and why, like our government, I am passionate about enabling our youth to work.

After I finished school in Calgary, I married my wife, Tarena, graduated from the University of Calgary, worked for nine years as



an investment banker, completed the chartered financial analyst program, and became the father of four children: Caleb, Kieran, Logan, and Isla. Each of these events was a step on my journey to becoming a member of this Assembly.

Throughout my career as an investment banker I had the pleasure of working directly with the entrepreneurs and businesses that drive Alberta's economy. I helped them to attract investment and execute transformative financial transactions. During the first five years of my career everybody I approached on behalf of these businesses wanted a piece of Alberta. It was amazing, and it actually made my job pretty easy. I would receive calls and e-mails daily from investors and businesses asking me if I had anything in Alberta, or northern Texas, as some would call it, for them to consider. When selling an Alberta-based business, it was not uncommon to have multiple international groups at the table in addition to suitors from other areas of Canada, but then something changed.

Over the next four years my phone stopped ringing, and the e-mails stopped coming. I went from sourcing growth capital and identifying acquisition targets for profitable Alberta-based businesses to seeking distress debt or identifying solutions to impending bankruptcy or trying to sell a company for which there was no interest. I witnessed record unemployment, record business closures, record vacancy in downtown Calgary, and friends and family members lose their jobs. I reached out to the companies and investors that used to contact me daily for Alberta-based opportunities, and this is what I was told: Alberta is a political and regulatory nightmare. This is not a commodity price issue – commodity prices are low everywhere – and we are in the oil and gas sector for the long term. But when prices are low, we must be careful with how we deploy our capital, and it's not going to be in high-tax jurisdictions with anti-energy governments and mounting uncertainty. It turns out that government matters.

My assessment at the time and the assessment of my family, friends, neighbours, and businesses that I worked with was that government had exacerbated a bad situation and that we needed more qualified, experienced, and educated people to step up and provide better management of Alberta, particularly in the areas of business and finance. Given my background in both, I decided to put my career on hold, and I started to door-knock. Over the next year I went to virtually every residence in the communities of Auburn Bay, Cranston, Mahogany, and Seton, that make up Calgary-South East. I got to know people who had lost or were losing their jobs, the people who could no longer pay their mortgages, families where a spouse lived in another province or country to make ends meet, entrepreneurs who had lost everything, couples deferring to have children, people who had lost hope. I also met people with severe health issues and parents frustrated with the lack of schools and overcrowded classrooms in my constituency. I was reminded daily how blessed I was to have a job and to have healthy children. Door-knocking was eye opening and humbling, and I became even more concerned about what state the province would be in for my own children 10 years from now.

On April 16 the people of Calgary-South East and the rest of Albertans had their chance to speak, and they delivered a clear mandate to our government. They want jobs, a strong economy, fiscal responsibility, pipelines, a government that will stand up for Alberta, and quality health care and education. And why should they settle for anything less in a province so abundant in talent and natural resources? Standing before you today, I believe we have the right people in this room to accomplish what we committed to do. And, like many of my constituents and Albertans across the province, I am now excited and optimistic about Alberta's future.

I would like to thank the constituents of Calgary-South East again for entrusting me to represent them in this Assembly and the over 150 people that volunteered to get me here. I would also like to thank the other members of this Assembly for their work and sacrifice to serve their own constituencies, and I look forward to working with you to make Alberta better.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to say what a pleasure it's been listening to so many of these incredible speeches. Having door-knocked as much as I had as well, it makes me feel incredibly honoured to hear your story and hear the stories of many of the members in this House, how you got here, and about the things that really, really were impressed upon you throughout the process of how you came through to be here in the first place.

You were mentioning at the beginning of your speech about working full-time when you were 14 to pursue your dreams. I also did that. The east side of Chestermere knew me very well. I babysat the entire east side of Chestermere and picked rocks out in the farming fields because it was one of the few jobs that I was very good at. Would you mind speaking a little bit more to the work that you did as a young person, what inspired you, and sort of the process that you went through? I think it's a very inspiring story to many of our youth, especially coming forward, now that so much of our mandate is about getting people back to work.

5:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East to respond.

**Mr. Jones:** Yeah. Thank you for the question. Well, I wasn't inspired to work. Remember that I was told to work. It was not an option.

When I turned 14, my father suggested strongly that I get a job, so I applied at a Dairy Queen. I was hired, and I worked there for two years. I became the youngest supervisor there, and I worked about six hours a day every day after school in grades 8 and 9 on weekdays and then as much as I could on weekends, which was upwards of 16-plus hours. As I mentioned, I believe this was the best thing that happened to me.

There's a Dairy Queen in my constituency, and I had the pleasure of running into the owner of the Dairy Queen. Of course, I said, "I used to work at one." We had this conversation. I said, "Do you still hire 14-year-olds?" She said: "No. Why would we hire 14-year-olds, who can't open and close the store, who can't deal with the money, who can't deal with complex customer complaints, when we can hire someone at the same rate who's in their mid-30s?" That is why the youth wage is an important piece of legislation that we're going to be bringing forward. That's a real-life example.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Speaker, I think we've made some good progress today. I've enjoyed listening to the new members' maiden speeches. As such, I would move that we see the clock as 6 o'clock and adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:32 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, May 27, 2019

Day 3

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, May 27, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 1 An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

[Adjourned debate May 23: Mr. Toews]

**The Speaker:** I see the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is rising on debate for Bill 1.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am quite pleased to rise to speak to Bill 1, which should properly be entitled the Implementation of the Trudeau Carbon Tax Act, because that is, in fact, what the government is proposing to do with this bill. I do have to tip my hat to the Member for Calgary-Lougheed as well as the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti for being able to, on their first act as government, disappoint every single Albertan in this province with one piece of legislation. There is nobody in this province who can realistically look at this piece of legislation and be happy with what the government is bringing forward, nor can they honestly say that this is what they expected when they voted for the members on the treasury benches.

First of all, there is a significant number of people in Alberta who are looking for meaningful action on climate change. At this time I want to offer my thoughts and prayers to the people of High Level and northern Alberta who are dealing with the wildfire emergency situation there, and I am so glad that we have excellent emergency management staff helping them out in their time of need. Mr. Speaker, thoughts and prayers are not a climate change plan. In fact, we know that the wildfires in northern Alberta, that continue to plague northern Alberta, are linked to climate change, and it's well beyond time that Alberta acts to prevent these kinds of things from happening. That's why our government took meaningful action on climate change, because we know that the risks to the people of Alberta are too great to be ignored.

Mr. Speaker, not only will we continue to have more fires, but we'll have larger fires that will put more and more people at risk every single year. We'll continue to have floods, floods like the 2013 Calgary flood, floods in other parts of the province where we usually wouldn't expect to see floods, and the flip side of that is that we will also have increased periods of drought. According to climate science modelling, the prairies will continue to dry out, and, in fact, the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton are both very concerned about the future of water security for those cities. The city of Calgary, of course, was in the news last week saying that beyond the year 2050 they don't expect to have sufficient water to be able to continue the sustained growth of that city.

There was a similar news article in the *Edmonton Journal*, I believe, that referred to concerns that the city of Edmonton and everyone in the North Saskatchewan watershed have about the continuing decline in the levels of the North Saskatchewan River, something that would not only be helped by meaningful action on climate change, but something that also would help, that is meaningful action on protecting the Bighorn, something that the Member for Rimbe- Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is resolute in his refusal to do.

Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that not only are our major cities at risk of running out of water in the very near future, but our major industries are also at risk of running out of water. Both agriculture and the oil and gas industry rely on significant amounts of water. They need a predictable supply of water in order to be able to undertake their economic activities. If we don't take meaningful action on climate change, farmers will no longer be able to irrigate their crops in southern Alberta, dryland farmers won't be able to continue those kinds of operations, we won't be able to water the livestock, and, of course, we won't be able to conduct the enhanced oil recovery, the natural gas fracking that's going on, or oil sands recovery, in fact. All of those activities rely on reliable, predictable sources of water, and all of those things are being placed at risk because the members on the treasury benches are refusing to act on climate change.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just the economic imperative that we need to protect water supplies; there's a significant quality-of-life aspect to protecting Alberta's water supplies. I expect that many of the members here in this House are avid hunters. They're probably bird hunters, and, of course, wetlands are precious fowl habitat that are highly sought after by hunters from all over the world, and those things are at risk as well.

As a young man, Mr. Speaker, I had the experience of working on a Ducks Unlimited wetland restoration project near Hanna. Ducks Unlimited, of course, is an excellent organization for wetland preservation and restoration, and they have a big job cut out for them because these 28 members here sitting across from me are sitting on their hands and refusing to do anything about climate change.

Recreational properties are also at risk, Mr. Speaker. I know that the levels of Buffalo Lake have receded significantly. Levels at lakes all across the province are receding significantly, Mr. Speaker. I certainly experienced those calls first-hand from recreational property owners when I worked at Alberta Environment, people very concerned about the levels of water in their lakes, and, of course, concerned about the value of their property and their ability to take a decent holiday with their family, that they worked so hard to earn. Those are also being put at risk.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the other risks that comes with climate change, of course, is warmer winters. Now I know that the member for, I believe, Calgary-Glenmore was on the record as saying, "Well, maybe warmer winters aren't necessarily such a bad thing," but, in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Most of the northern part of the province relies on cold winters for shipping in their supplies for the year on winter ice roads. Much of the industry that happens in the north relies on frozen ground to be able to access their work locations, and, in fact, fighting the mountain pine beetle and protecting our forestry industry relies on cold weather as well. All of those things will be gone if we don't take meaningful action on climate change.

Not to mention the significant health risks that climate change and continuing to use our current methods of generating electricity have. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's beyond a shadow of a doubt. The facts are quite clear that phasing out coal-fired power plants will have a significant improvement on the health of our children. Rates of asthma and other breathing disorders will go down significantly with the elimination of coal-fired power plants. That's why it was very deeply concerning to me when there were reports from the UCP convention on the night of the election that as they were listening to our leader give a speech, she mentioned that the lungs of the children of Alberta will be healthier because of the action that we took through the climate leadership plan – what did the members in attendance at the UCP party do? – they booed that very statement. I think that the members who did that should be ashamed of

themselves because there's nothing more important that we can do as members of this Legislature than to act to preserve the health of the future generations.

It's clear, Mr. Speaker, that all Albertans have a stake in tackling climate change. That's why, when we were in government, we consulted extensively with the people of Alberta to make sure that we had a made-in-Alberta climate leadership plan that worked for the people of Alberta. I need to remind everybody, I think, what came out of that consultation process. We developed energy efficiency programs that helped residential homeowners, commercial owners, and nonprofit members to significantly increase their energy efficiency. We developed programs to enhance renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives in municipalities.

We developed solar programs for schools. There's a school that is right down the street from where I live, Mr. Speaker, that took advantage of that program, and it reduced their overall annual energy bills significantly, which is very important given that we expect that the members opposite will be cutting the budgets for municipalities and school boards significantly this fall. They need all of the help that they can get to reduce their overall electricity and energy consumption costs. It's a shame that the first act that these people are taking is to cut the very program that will allow those municipalities and school boards to reduce their operational costs.

7:40

Not to mention that indigenous communities will be affected. My colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford has spoken at length in question period about those kinds of programs. Of course, the minister of indigenous affairs, the Member for Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin confirmed that those things would be on the chopping block just this afternoon in question period, which is going to be significantly disappointing to many indigenous nations all across this province.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar I believe that I have to speak out passionately in favour of the energy efficiency programs that we developed through Energy Efficiency Alberta. Of course, as you know, not only is Edmonton-Gold Bar the most humble constituency in all of Alberta, it's also a constituency that is in desperate need of these kinds of programs. Most of the housing that was built in my riding was built in the period between 1945 and the mid-1960s, at a time when energy efficiency wasn't top of mind in the construction of residential homes, so we have a significant number of people who are living in homes that are 50 to 80 years old, that are in desperate need of renovation. They need new windows, they need new doors, they need to insulate their basements. While they're at it, they can add insulation to the walls, insulation in the roofs, and they can also, up until last week at least, take advantage of renewable energy rebates to install solar panels.

Mr. Speaker, I don't need to tell you that those programs were incredibly popular in my riding because those are exactly the kinds of houses that we need to renovate in order to reduce our carbon footprint here in this province. I have many, many constituents who are angry that those programs are on the chopping block. Of course, they will have to fight with the increased power bills and the drafty homes that they thought they were going to be able to renovate under the program that we introduced.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also want to mention that there is a significant amount of work that these programs generated. In its most recent annual report, rolling up all of the efforts of the climate leadership plan, the government of Alberta estimated that there were approximately 5,000 jobs that have already been created through the investment that we made through these programs. Of

course, with increased investment with these programs, the number of jobs will go up from there.

Now, of course, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed continues to tell the people of Alberta that cutting the carbon tax will create 6,000 jobs. He provides no evidence for this, which is ironic because I was in this Legislature for the entire debate around the climate leadership plan, and I believe that every single member of those parties at the time got up to speak and demand that we release an economic impact assessment of the climate leadership plan and what that was going to do. But now that the shoe is on the other foot, I guess economic impact assessments don't really matter, and we can just make up numbers as we see fit and hope that nobody notices, Mr. Speaker. It won't be true. People will notice.

There are a number of people in my riding who will lose their jobs on Thursday when this tax cut is expected to end, and they can't wait for these fairy-tale jobs to appear in order to put them back to work. They have bills that are coming due at the end of the month, and they need to be able to pay those bills, so promises of some magical jobs at some point in the future just won't cut it, Mr. Speaker. I think it's incumbent upon the members opposite to think about those people that they're throwing out of work at a time when unemployment is very high and to come up with some kind of plan to transition them into other kinds of employment.

Of course, you know, the other piece that affects my constituency: right now the city of Edmonton is in the process of completing the southeast line of the LRT, funding that was provided in part through the climate leadership program, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the government has offered no plans to replace that funding, so we're not sure if the much-needed public transportation that the citizens of my constituency will rely on to get to work and get to all of their activities with their children will actually be in place. I hope that somebody from across the way will tell us so that I can go back to my constituents and tell them why they're losing their jobs on Thursday, why the much-needed and much-anticipated LRT expansion may not be going ahead or may be going ahead. We don't know. We don't have any answers from the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I've covered the significant number of Albertans who believe that climate change is real, believe that Alberta needs to do more to combat this increasingly urgent crisis, and the people who are relying on this kind of investment to make their lives better and pay their bills. But those aren't the only people who are going to be disappointed with this legislation. There's a second group of Albertans who are also going to be very disappointed once the Trudeau carbon tax is implemented, and I want to paint you a picture of the kind of person that I expect will be disappointed and that I expect voted for many of the members who are seated here this evening.

You've probably seen them driving down the highway. They have stickers across the backs of their windows. One probably has a picture of Calvin from Calvin and Hobbes peeing on the letters "NDP." Another one has a slogan that I can't repeat in this House because the language is inappropriate, but it suggests that the drivers of those vehicles would like to have conjugal relations with Prime Minister Trudeau. These are the kinds of people, like the Member for Edmonton-South West, who are avid fans of Rebel media and think that by voting for the UCP, they were getting rid of the carbon tax entirely.

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. We know that as soon as this carbon tax is repealed, the federal carbon tax will be put in its place almost immediately. Of course, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed goes on about how they're going to fight in the courts and they're going to fight them on the beaches and they'll fight them in the alleys. He's trying to do his best Churchill imitation, but we know that that plan is destined to

lose. Of course, Saskatchewan and Ontario lost their appeals to the Federal Court of Appeal. There's no hope, really, that an appeal to the Supreme Court will yield any different result. You know, I expect that when the Member for Calgary-Lougheed talks about 6,000 jobs, most of those jobs will be for high-priced lawyers to fight a losing battle in the Supreme Court, which is not what the people of Alberta elected us to do. I have not heard from a single constituent who wishes that the government would spend more money on high-priced lawyers fighting losing lawsuits in the courts.

You know, there are a number of coal workers who thought that by voting for the members opposite, they would bring their jobs back, not, of course, recognizing that it was, in fact, Stephen Harper and his crew who phased out coal-fired power plants in the first place and that it was our government who actually used carbon tax money to put a transition fund in place for those coal communities.

I hope that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler and the member for Wabamun can go to their communities and tell the coal workers there, who are going to lose their jobs regardless because the market for coal is not favourable for continued expansion of that work – I hope that those members are looking forward to going into their communities and saying: we're sorry, coal workers, but the money that the other guys had set aside to transition you into new careers and a hopeful future is gone, but please send me \$5 to help us continue the fight against the carbon tax in the courts. I look forward to those members reporting back to us what they hear from their constituents when they tell those coal workers that the money for that transition is out the window and their jobs aren't coming back anyway.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people who voted to scrap the carbon tax who expect the price of gasoline to go down. I noticed that today in my riding, at least, gas was \$1.19 a litre. If anybody is under the assumption that on May 30, if this carbon tax is repealed, the price of gas is going to go down to \$1.13 a litre, they have another think coming because – here's the thing – gas prices are significantly subject to the wills of the oil companies.

7:50

**The Speaker:** I'm not sure if the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is rising on the hope of having 29(2)(a), but 29(2)(a) is not available until subsequent speakers.

But perhaps you might like to add to the debate after a brief reminder to all members of the Assembly, particularly new or returning members, that when we are not in Committee of the Whole, it's important – of course, it's the will of the Assembly – that all members be in their seats. Should you like to have conversation with someone other than your seatmate, please feel free to use the government or opposition lounges to continue conversations. Having said that, for the benefit of new members, when we are in Committee of the Whole, of course you're more than welcome to move about the Chamber as you desire.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's a pleasure to have the opportunity to stand and speak tonight to Bill 1. I think back to 2015, when I was first elected as a member of this House, and I remember that first session we had the opportunity to attend there, at the end of June. I remember the excitement I felt. I remember the nerves that I had. I remember the first opportunity I had to stand and debate a piece of legislation. For me, it was Bill 2. That was when we brought a reasonable progressive tax rate back to the province of Alberta after years of an ideological flat tax.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

But I think back to what our Bill 1 was, and Bill 1 for our government was ending corporate and union donations to political parties in the province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I had great pride in being able to vote for that as our first piece of legislation, the first indication of who we as a government were going to be, about removing undue influence from our politics, about trying to return democracy a little bit closer to the people of Alberta, trying to rebalance the scales after years of undue influence from those who had more money, from corporate interests, from others. Indeed, we know that previous Conservative governments – there was much abuse of that opportunity. I was proud to vote for that piece of legislation, and I believe it showed who we were going to be as a government.

The bill we have in front of us today: I'm not sure this is a bill to be proud of. I suppose it depends on what perspective one has. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, in my view, this bill is not brought forward here today out of integrity. This bill is not brought forward today out of reason and rationality. This bill is being brought forward today because of political opportunism. This bill is being brought forward today after a sustained campaign of misinformation, of theatrics, drama, histrionics by conservatives in this province for the last few years. Indeed, it dates back quite a ways further.

This is not a new fight for the Premier. This started long ago, back when he was in Ottawa. He still gives a sense that's where he would very much long to be. When he was there, that was a favourite talking point at the time of Conservatives in Prime Minister Harper's government. The job-killing carbon tax, that was a favourite point of attack for them. They liked to talk a lot about their intentions. Indeed, they themselves talked about putting a price on pollution. They talked about introducing some form of a carbon levy. Now, of course, they weren't a fan, they said, of the carbon tax. They were going to bring in regulation. They were going to bring in restrictions. They were going to go after large emitters. They made all kinds of commitments repeatedly, over and over again, and followed through on next to none. But that talking point of the job-killing carbon tax was one that they loved to pull out and continue to beat their opponents over the head with. That's what we saw over the last few years.

When our government stepped forward and we fulfilled our campaign promise, much as this government is doing here today, to take real action on the very real and pressing issue of climate change, of global warming, after we struck the panel that sat down and went through and came up with the advice and the prescription that they brought to us in their report, the advice that we took and brought forward, a piece of that being to introduce a carbon levy which would apply to all burning of fuel within the province of Alberta, from the first day we brought that forward, we saw the disingenuous nature of the arguments coming from conservatives in this province. You know, we saw all kinds of, as I said, misinformation and indeed, I say, histrionics.

Let's recall some of the great moments in the arguments against the carbon levy, when the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, the members for Lacombe-Ponoka, Drayton Valley-Devon, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, and Cypress-Medicine Hat published a scintillating editorial comparing the carbon levy to the Ukrainian Holodomor. That was the kind of quality, reasoned debate we received from conservatives in this province, comparing a price on pollution to a famine caused by the Soviet government's policies in the Ukraine during the 1930s, that killed millions of people. This was the level of debate.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Frankly, I recognize that there probably are some members in this government – indeed, there were when they sat in opposition, either as members of the Wildrose Party of Alberta or the United Conservative Party of Alberta – that genuinely do not believe that climate change is a serious and pressing issue to be dealt with. Indeed, we recall the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo retweeting a link with the heading: Greenpeace cofounders warn of global climate change scam, global warming hoax. We recall the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon financing a climate change denying film, attending an event as a head table guest of the Friends of Science. With friends like that, Mr. Speaker, this province and indeed our environment need no enemies. Of course, he himself had signed on to that wonderful editorial I referenced earlier. We saw MLAs like the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek attacking academics on Twitter and accusing them of perhaps receiving some sort of surreptitious remuneration for supporting the climate leadership plan.

This was the kind of reaction that we had in trying to address a very real and pressing issue in this province, and that is why I say, Mr. Speaker, that we are not here tonight debating this piece of legislation because of some kind of honest disagreement in views. We are here because of political expediency, because of irrationality, because members of the conservative parties of this province saw this as their ticket to try and get themselves a seat in this place and indeed a seat in government.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, I had forgotten to mention even one of the best examples, which happened most recently, of course, the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, who was kind enough to tweet: “Unbelievable. Today at church we learned that the Carbon Tax is going to cost our church \$50,000 this year alone. That’s the cost of one less pastor for the sick and suffering & less help for those who need it most in our community.” Indeed, that proved to be unbelievable. It was 10 times the actual amount.

8:00

See, Mr. Speaker, even the members themselves, even these people who at that time were running as candidates, had inflated the hysteria, the irrationality around the discussion of climate change policy in this province to the point that they themselves were willing to believe figures that were inflated by 10 times. And that’s being charitable, assuming they genuinely believed that.

It’s unfortunate, Mr. Speaker – it’s unfortunate – that, as my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar noted, the Member for Edmonton-South West felt that this was such an important message that he was willing to stand alongside messaging from the undeniably racist and Islamophobic Rebel media, despite the fact that I know that member is neither of those things. That is the fever pitch to which Conservatives in this province were intent on pushing things in regard to a simple policy for their own political gain.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre it is incumbent on me to stand and speak against this bill. I recognize that I’ve heard from some that we should simply let this bill pass, that this was clearly part of the UCP platform, that a majority of the people of Alberta cast votes in support of that, and that we should therefore simply allow this legislation to pass. Well, to be clear, 66 per cent of my constituents who cast a vote did not vote for this bill.

The majority of my constituents with whom I have spoken have told me that they want to see real and concrete action to address the very real issue of climate change. They have told me that they want to see government investing in and supporting green energy, transitioning coal workers into new fields of work even as they were already facing the closure of the majority of those plants by the former government of Prime Minister Harper, of which the Premier

was a member. To the best of my knowledge he voted in favour of that moving forward while providing no support or assistance for those workers, indeed recognizing, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar noted tonight, that the coal industry, in and of itself, is dying.

Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent on me, if I am truly going to represent my constituents, to stand in this House and speak against the narrow-minded and short-sighted focus of this bill. One of the realities is that we need to find a way to reduce our emissions. That much is true. I would hope that there is nobody in this House that disagrees with that, that disagrees with the pressing reality of man-made climate change and global warming and recognizes that is something we must actually take action to deal with. I’m hoping there’s no member in this House that would disagree with that fact. So the question is: how do we move forward, then, in addressing those emissions?

The reality, Mr. Speaker, as I’ve previously said in this House when we had debate on a motion regarding rejecting the Paris accords, is that there is no addressing the reality of emissions, there is no reduction of emissions without cost. It is cheaper for us to pollute. For us to stop doing that, to begin to change our behaviour, to find a better way to do things, is going to require investment. It’s going to require some kind of cost to mitigate the very real costs that we are already paying.

The people who live in and around High Level are paying some of that cost this week. The folks in Fort McMurray paid some of that cost. The folks who went through the flooding in Calgary paid some of that cost. The people who are living with very real health effects are paying some of that cost. Insurance companies are beginning to write in and account for those costs. Our energy companies are beginning to factor in and figure out how they are going to account for those costs. Anybody who has any knowledge and is working to predict the way things are going to operate in the future is planning for how they’re going to adapt to that cost. So the question is: how do we address that cost?

The carbon levy that we brought forward was focused on addressing that cost wherever it occurred. Rather than putting it all on a single entity or a single industry, it spread it out so that everybody paid a small piece for what contribution they themselves made. Now, there’s good reason for this, Mr. Speaker. Think about it this way. If we say, as the government currently is of the opinion, that only large emitters, only the worst of the worst, only those who create the largest amount, should be the ones to bear that burden and pay that cost, if that is the argument here within the province of Alberta, what happens when we expand that out to Canada?

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is the largest creator of emissions within Canada. So if we apply that same logic, then we are saying that Alberta should bear the largest burden out of all provinces in Canada rather than each bearing its own share according to the emissions that it creates, recognizing that there is a sizable amount that is created by things other than simply oil and gas, those other things.

I recognize my time is coming up, but I know this will not be my last time speaking to this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think my hon. colleague from Edmonton-City Centre was raising some very interesting points, and it would really be my privilege and I think for all of the rest of the members in this House to continue to hear some of these important things that his constituents care about, I know my constituents care about, and I’m sure constituents all across this

province in many of the governing members' ridings would care about as well. So I'd give it back to the hon. member here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-South giving me the opportunity just to wrap up a few of my thoughts. Ultimately, as I said, I will have more to say about the overall mechanics and the overall ideas and the things that were all involved in this process, but what I will return to is where I began.

I suppose it is up to members of the government if, when this bill passes this Assembly and we move forward, they choose to feel pride in that moment. I know there are some in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, who fully recognize that this bill is about politics. They are well aware that they will be casting a vote for a bill that is not about making things better, that is not about truly addressing climate change, that is not, in fact, going to create all of the jobs and all of the savings that the Premier likes to claim it will, despite having been corrected multiple times by economists here in this province. They are well aware that this is a bill about political expedience.

I suppose it will be up to them to determine how they feel about that. But that, Mr. Speaker, will be the first bill they cast in this Assembly. That will be the first decision that they have the opportunity to put their names to. I'm pretty sure it will likely be a recorded vote, so it will be the first opportunity for them to have their names written in the book of *Hansard*, the record of this province, as to what they stood for.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I will be standing and voting against this bill because that is the direction I have received from my constituents here in Edmonton-City Centre and because that indeed is where my own value and ethics lie on this particular matter. I endeavour as much as possible in my work in this Assembly to speak honestly, truthfully. Indeed, as I think we all do in this House, I indulge at times in a bit of hyperbole. Shots are taken, and politics are sometimes about how we frame each other. But I can tell you the potential for the damage that moving forward with this path will cause for our province, indeed for our country, indeed on the global scale, though I recognize, again, that Alberta is not the leading source of emissions in the world, not by a long shot. But we certainly had the opportunity to show some leadership in how we were going to work to address it and work with others to try to get them to continue to work and do the same.

8:10

This is the first bill that the government has brought forward, and they have said that this is going to be their agenda. Perhaps they will demonstrate at some point that they have some sort of a plan that will actually have an impact. Maybe they will demonstrate to us that this is not simply a disingenuous sideshow, that this was not simply their political Wiffle bat to beat the opposition, to ascend to the seats of government. I guess a Wiffle bat doesn't hurt that much. I don't know why that came to mind, but it did. It's comical, at least. It's entertaining.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that this is a very specific decision on the part of this government to set the tone on which they are going to move forward, by which they are going to communicate with the people of Alberta. Indeed, I guess they demonstrated that well before this election, and we will see how the people of Alberta come to feel about that as their decisions begin to mount, as the impacts become clearer. I guess on this one they get a little bit of an advantage in that, you know, the real repercussions of some of the decisions that they are making when this piece of legislation passes probably many of them will never really have to live to see.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to the opportunity to continue in this debate. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others who would like to speak to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the first opportunity I have to speak in the 30th Legislature here in the province of Alberta, and it's great. It's great to be back. Congratulations on your victory as well and to all members for their campaigns, too, that got them to this place here this evening.

I'm very interested in speaking on a number of issues around Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax. You know, I think that it's important for Albertans to understand both the local context in which our carbon levy and climate action plan was built, some of the history around that both provincially and nationally and internationally as well.

We know that throughout the world climate change is becoming a more apparent problem, a more apparent threat to the economies of countries around the world, to the health of not just human beings but all living things and, indeed, is a point that can cause great disruption in those same things, in the economy, in human health, but I would say also the potential for social disorder as well. So taking action on climate change, I think, is the responsibility of all people and particularly of elected governments.

We saw just this last week that the Bank of Canada has made it a mitigation risk to the health of our economy nationally, that climate change can undermine the health of Canada's economy. We see insurance companies, again, looking for ways by which to look at reducing carbon dioxide emissions as a way to mitigate risk for underwriting insurance claims. We see countries around the world trying to face up to this head-on, and many businesses are doing the very same thing, right? I saw that Canadian Utilities, a subsidiary of ATCO, has just liquidated their fossil fuel assets, realizing that they need to move to other means of generating power and so forth.

We know as an energy leader here in the province of Alberta that we are and will continue to be an energy leader only if we stay on the edge of what's coming next and what our responsibilities are around being energy leaders. We know that we are very blessed to have a strong nonrenewable energy resource in oil and natural gas and so forth, and we will continue to utilize that as a backbone of our economy. But, Mr. Speaker, if we don't use that nonrenewable energy resource to start to invest in a more renewable, sustainable future, then we are compromising the best chance that we have to stay as an energy leader, to be a responsible steward of our tremendous energy resources, and to make investments for a more sustainable energy future.

Our climate action plan that our government put into place a number of years ago was a start in that direction. Was it the end of what we could do to help to mitigate this challenge? No. But it was an honest, sincere attempt to a very strong beginning. We see our climate leadership plan being studied and utilized in other jurisdictions around the world because it was a good balance of making investments in individuals, making investments in the energy industry, making savings, and helping to educate the population about how we are transitioning to a more sustainable energy future.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I find it a bit disturbing that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre – Edmonton-City Centre I guess it's called now – made a very good point about what a government chooses as their flagship Bill 1 to set the tone for what sort of governance and so forth we could expect in the future. If you look past a lot of the rhetoric and

hyperbole and so forth, if we look at the bare bones of what this bill actually is in terms of repeal, in terms of going backwards, in terms of simply applying a negative action, a reaction to a proactive attempt to help to transition and to build a more sustainable energy future, that's not the best way, Mr. Speaker, to set a tone for not just this bill but for governance in general and the direction of this government over the next number of years. It's a repeal. It's stepping back, and it fails to recognize fundamentally that it's incumbent and important for us to do something around this file. We can't just sit on our hands. We can't pretend that we're living in the past. We need to be proactive, and that's what responsible governments do.

I know that we've heard from this new government that they would talk about impacting large emitters, for example. Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, you don't get nothing for nothing – right? – in this world. If you choose to tax large emitters or put the onus and responsibility on them, then they're going to pass the cost down to consumers anyway. I mean, this is what happens, right? If you are controlling energy, as some of these large emitters do, then they're not just going to do it out of the goodness of their hearts; they're going to take increases on mitigation and taxation on their industries and pass that down to consumers.

So it's not as though you can just pass this along and presume that you're not going to pay. At least the climate action plan that we had in place and were continuing to build – and it was an evolutionary process – was making sure that we were passing on the benefits of making transition to individuals, to businesses, to public institutions, and so forth so that they could actually save money.

One file that I know quite well, for example, was how by helping schools and other public buildings to make investments in energy efficiency in windows, in insulation, in solar panels, and so forth, you could save money, literally hundreds of thousands of dollars, by making an investment in high efficiency heating, in LED lights, in solar panels on the roof and more modern windows. Simple as that. It's an investment. You save money on your utility bills, and you save money, in the case of a school, on the public purse as well, heating and lighting those schools.

8:20

You know, you make those investments, and it's not like a negative tax. It's not like you're taking something out of the economy. Quite the opposite. You are actually creating opportunities for a more diverse economy and jobs associated with that. We know that, for example, through our climate action plan here in the province of Alberta we've become a national leader in renewable energy. When we did those auctions for electricity, for solar and wind and so forth, we had tremendous success, unprecedented success, in helping to drive, I think, Alberta as a renewable energy leader in North America. We're putting all of those things in jeopardy by bills such as this, sending a message that we're going back, sending a message that we're not innovating, and we're sending a message that we're being irresponsible.

I know that this whole idea of putting a price on carbon is nothing new. We hear it from jurisdictions across Canada. We hear it from different political sources, from conservative politicians, from progressive politicians, and we know that putting a price on carbon can have a very positive organic effect not just on reducing carbon but a positive effect on an economy as well.

We know that, as I said before, you can create a more diverse economy, thus creating different kinds of jobs, right? We know that, for example, in regard to coal plants – I mean, it's a very unfortunate situation, but it's something that we see replicated in many jurisdictions around the world. As you transition from coal,

if you don't have a plan in place for those places, for those towns and for those workers, then you're leaving them high and dry. At least with having a carbon pricing system and having diversity in the generation of electricity, you do at least create an opportunity for jobs and for transitioning to other jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I know that this Bill 1 is a reflection, as we've heard other speakers say, of the election that we have just gone through. I know that elections can sometimes, you know, create some hyperbolic reactions – right? – where people are fighting and looking for that vote in the last moment. But now here we are on the other side, and we have an opportunity to be creative, to reach across, to look for ways by which we can salvage some of the tremendous progress that we've made in regard to the climate action plan. We have an opportunity, I believe, to take a long, second close look at where we can move forward together and not just use carbon and carbon pricing and this bill as a way to further polarize people and polarize the economy that we all depend on here and now. When I think about all of the things that we can do in this Legislature, perhaps the biggest and most important responsibility we have is to make sure that we are always being honest and sincere and being honest and sincere for now and for the future as well.

We know that climate change is real. We know that it is an increasing negative force on all of the things that I have just talked about, and we know that it is increasing in uncertainty and complexity in an exponential sort of way. It's like when you see the ice melting in the spring, you know? You think in January, February that the winter is never going to end, and then suddenly the snow and the ice all melts in a week, right? That's the kind of exponential sort of change that you can see with climate change here now at unprecedented carbon atmospheric levels right across the world. So things aren't going to just say: oh, well; we can just sweep it under the rug and wait till later. We can see exponential change happening very, very quickly right now. We have the examples here in Alberta, but we can see in other examples in other parts of the world as well.

Another one of the arguments that I hear that I find very disturbing – and it has sort of a cognitive dissonance built into it, like, in other words, it doesn't make any sense, right? It's saying: "Oh, well. Other people in the world aren't doing anything about this, so who cares if Alberta has an carbon action, climate action plan of some sort?" Well, you know, if people have that attitude around the world, we would never get anything done, right? We are leaders. We are an energy leader, and we set a tone.

We can be an example that helps export best practices around the world, and – you know what, Mr. Speaker? – you can make money off that. When we did our auction for renewables, we were amazed to see what revenue is there and what is possible. You know, as the world moves into dealing with climate change in a more categorical sort of way, there will be a lot of competition – right? – for producing renewables, help mitigation strategies and so forth, and it's incumbent upon us to make sure that we remain in the lead as an energy leader in the province of Alberta for not just ourselves but for the rest of the world as well.

So for those and many other reasons, Mr. Speaker, I would urge everyone to, you know, consider looking to not support Bill 1 as it's written. We will try to look for constructive ways by which we can perhaps help to come to some resolution. I look forward to both the debates and the conversations that we will have in the days and weeks ahead.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), are there any members who wish to make any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really my privilege always to hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West speak. The Member for Edmonton-North West is the reason, singlehandedly, I think, I got into politics. He picked me up off the steps of the Legislature here one summer afternoon.

He mentioned something in his speech today that gave me some pause. It was that though Alberta is not necessarily the single largest emitter in the world, though Alberta maybe does not have the impetus to suddenly reduce 20 per cent of the world's emissions, we still need to be a leader, and that means that we still can't just pollute because it's so small.

The thought that came to my mind was that when I'm driving down the street back to my riding, which for me feels like it takes hours and hours and hours because I want to be in my riding so badly – but when I'm driving back to my riding, I don't go ahead and throw my bag of McDonald's out the window. I don't throw the bag of chips out the window and just let it sit on the street. There's a really good reason for that, Mr. Speaker. The reason for that is that even though it's just one bag of chips, even though it's just one piece of garbage, that all adds up – that all adds up – and that's why we have large landfills and you can see mountains and mountains of landfills of garbage when you start to add that all up.

I think that's something we really have to drive home here. It's something that's really important because when we talk about the cumulative effects of climate change, when we talk about the things that my hon. colleague was talking about and how it suddenly reaches this exponential point of change and this exponential point of no return, we're talking about issues that add up over time. And, Mr. Speaker, just like that bag of chips that I wouldn't throw out my window, I think that Albertans and we in this Chamber are doing a disservice if we don't recognize that every single time we don't meaningfully act on climate change, we are doing the exact same thing as throwing a bag of chips out the window.

Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, that my colleague from Edmonton-North West was a teacher for many years, and he spent a lot of time educating young people about things they need to know for their futures. I think this is one thing that when we talk about our futures and we talk about the issues that matter to us in our futures, it's really important to remember that these are issues that are generational. They're issues that are generational because somebody who is my age, maybe not the same age as some people across the aisle but somebody who is my age, will be seeing the effects of climate change for years and years and years to come.

Some of the things that my hon. colleague talked about are how important it is that we invest today, how important it is that we invest today in things like the renewable programs that are bidding at some of the lowest prices in all of North America, Mr. Speaker. I think that's something we should be commending and we should encourage because it allows for things like more stable, reliable rates of electricity for consumers while also meaning meaningful transitions for employees right here in Alberta, for workers right here in Alberta. I think that that's something that all members of this Assembly should be able to get behind and something that we should all be able to encourage. I know that it's something that I think is really important to my constituents. I know that it's something that is really important to the Member for Edmonton-North West's constituents. I know that it's something that all members should be able to encourage, new jobs that are going to be replacing the types of jobs that we have no control over in this Chamber.

8:30

Honestly – and I think the Member for Edmonton-North West and myself both know this – us standing here and talking about jobs

all day in this Chamber isn't going to create new jobs. What's going to create new jobs is targeted investment and making sure that we create the opportunities to have things like the very, very low prices that were bid in for wind electricity in southern Alberta. I think those are things that all Albertans should be excited about and that especially members in the government should be excited about. Those are large infrastructure projects that are going to be built right in their ridings because of the investment we made in renewables. We should continue to do those investments because I think it's something that these members are going to want to continue to see: good, new jobs right in their towns, right in their counties, right across this entire province, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's something that we should be ashamed if we don't encourage, because it's something that we can see very clearly is the future for Alberta, a clean energy province, where we lead the world, not just Canada but the world, in developing renewable resources. We can lead in these things. We have the resources, we have the innovation, we have the knowledge, and we have the skills, Mr. Speaker. I'm so excited to be able to push for those types of initiatives but only if we are allowed to continue.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to this bill? The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been interesting to listen to the speeches from the opposition this evening, and I congratulate them. They seem to be settling into their new roles very, very well. I do think, though, that it's worth having a look at some of the mistakes that I've heard this evening, from my perspective. I think that the opposition members continue to miss the entire point of this bill.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I want to first of all thank my colleague the hon. Finance minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I think I speak for all of this side of the House and our friends that are with us on that side of the House on how excited we are to finally have this piece of legislation here. I know I can speak on behalf of my colleagues that were here in this place with me in opposition. We have been waiting a very, very long time for this piece of legislation to be on this floor, and I am ecstatic that it is here.

The reality is that we have talked about this issue, about carbon tax, in this place probably more than any other issue in the last four years. I see the opposition is agreeing with me on that, so we've found some agreement. We're already on a roll tonight: day 1 of night sittings, and we have agreement. We have talked about this a lot. Now, the opposition used to call it – Mr. Speaker, as you would recall, I remember that when we were benchmates, we would laugh about this a little bit – a levy; we would call it a tax. This was back when we still heckled in here. I know you guys one day may join us in not heckling. We would heckle back and forth: “levy” and “tax.”

At the end of the day, that's what this bill is about. It's about taking away the job-killing carbon tax, a tax, by the way – some of my new colleagues who were not around then may not know this – that this opposition party, when they were running to be government in this place in 2015, never bothered to mention or tell Albertans that they were going to bring in, that they hid from Albertans. They then came into this House and brought in the largest tax increase in the history of this province after not telling Albertans about it. That was the core of the argument in the beginning.

My friend the hon. Finance minister is now bringing forward a bill that will bring in the largest tax decrease in the history of this

province. I thank him very much for that. I see that members continue to not want to talk about that very important issue and the consequences of the decision that their policy, their tax policy, had on the people of Alberta; the consequences on food banks, which we heard from, who had to overcome significant issues; on homeless shelters; on our schools . . .

**Mr. McIver:** The seniors' home in Rocky Mountain House.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The seniors' home in Sundre, actually, hon. member, though the seniors' home in Rocky Mountain House was impacted as well. That's a great example.

What my friend from Calgary-Hays is referring to is a seniors' centre inside Sundre, my hometown, that the then Leader of the Opposition and now the Premier of Alberta and I visited together, that was in danger of being shut down because of the carbon tax, because of the NDP's carbon tax.

**An Hon. Member:** Table it.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** We tabled it many times. Happy to table it again.

They were in danger of being shut down because of the carbon tax. Now, this is not a seniors' home, as you'd recall. It's actually a seniors' centre in our community of Sundre. It's called the Sundre West Country Centre. Seniors in our community come there to recreate. It's a really cool place. Sometimes I drop by to have a visit. It is basically completely self-funded by the seniors in our community. They pay a minimal membership every year, they maintain the facility, and it provides a place to recreate inside the community of Sundre for our seniors.

They're in a position where they're about to have to shut their doors because of the NDP carbon tax, and when they'd bring it up – and we'd bring it up on their behalf as their representatives – do you know what the opposition members across the way from me who were then members of Her Majesty's Executive Council on this side of the House said to the people in my community about that carbon tax? They told them to go and have a fundraiser to pay for their carbon tax. They told seniors in my community to have a fundraiser to pay for their carbon tax.

The examples of that go on and on. There was a swimming pool in Sundre – now that we're on Sundre, we'll talk about Sundre for a little bit; I'm always happy to talk about Sundre, aren't I, hon. member? – that was in danger of shutting down because their carbon tax went up drastically. I don't have the number in front of me; it's been so long. But we were going to lose the swimming pool inside our community. That's what their carbon tax did. But why it was even made worse was – I see the hon. Opposition House Leader wants to pipe up. I'm sure he's probably ashamed that at the time he was part of a government that told seniors to fund raise for their carbon tax. I would be ashamed of that. He should be ashamed of that.

But the reality of it is that the now Leader of the Opposition, when she was Premier, did an interview and acknowledged that she did not even know how much emissions went down as a result of that tax increase. All pain, no gain: that's what the carbon tax did. It doesn't improve the environment. It hurt the social safety net of our communities. It hurt our municipalities. It cost our school boards more money to get kids to school. It cost significantly more money for each household as they had to pay their bills. It cost more money for our agriculture communities. They had to dry things like grain and participate in that. All of that because they said that we'd have an impact on the environment, and then they admitted that they had no positive impact on the environment.

Shockingly, they continue to still stand inside this House and try to defend that, try to defend the fact that they didn't tell Albertans about the largest tax increase in Alberta – they hid it from them

when they brought it forward – try to defend the fact that they continued down that path, forcing that carbon tax on Albertans even though it wasn't impacting the environment. They continue to want to defend that. Well, I will tell you, Mr. Speaker – and I know that your constituents in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, who I get to talk to quite a bit, think this as well – that we are excited about the opportunity to finally be able to get rid of the job-killing carbon tax and the consequences that have happened to Albertans as a result of that tax.

The opposition should recognize that they have found themselves on that side of the House, on the opposition benches, because of many other issues but largely because of the carbon tax. Albertans rejected it on April 16. The idea that you will continue to stand in this House and attempt to try to block this legislation from making it out is disappointing and shows, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition still has not learned their lesson. It's time for them to accept that their carbon tax did not work. It was all pain and no gain.

Now, if they don't want to do that, I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker. This side of the House, the government, is going to keep our commitment to Albertans – keep our commitment to Albertans – follow through on the promise that we made to them during the campaign and before that, and follow through on the instructions that they gave us April 16 with the largest vote count of any government in the history of this province. We're going to stand with the Minister of Finance, and when you finally stop trying to block a reasonable bill, we're going to get this bill through the House, and the carbon tax is finally going to be gone in this province.

**The Speaker:** Any members under 29(2)(a), questions and comments?

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, I see, is rising in debate.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't help myself. I wanted to give some of my colleagues or some of the newly elected government members the opportunity to speak. As for yourself, I already congratulated you on your election, not your appointment, as you so aptly pointed out.

You know, it's my duty to rise and speak to this bill. Now, I'm not going to contest the fact that when we introduced the carbon levy, it did place a financial burden on some Albertans. I will say some, because two-thirds did receive a rebate for the carbon levy, so it did not impact everyone equally. But I will speak to the various reasons why we introduced our climate leadership plan, a robust climate leadership plan, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, and about my concerns with the fact that this government wants to repeal it.

**8:40**

Now, they can talk about wanting to save Albertans some money, but what needs to be understood, Mr. Speaker, is that every single penny that was collected from the price on carbon was reinvested in the economy, whether that was through two-thirds of Albertans getting a rebate, whether that was through businesses, not-for-profits, seniors' centres having the opportunity to apply for rebates to install solar panels, higher energy efficiency windows, doors, furnaces. You know, what I think the opposition, or the government – it's going to take a little getting used to being over here, or being back over here – fails to grasp is that investments that you make, whether in solar or wind, in energy efficiency, give you savings every month for the lifetime of the asset. Yes, there may be an upfront cost to it, but that upfront cost is paid off over subsequent years, and then there is a significant saving to be achieved.



You know, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the government wanting to punish large industrial emitters by only making them pay is something that I'm sure industry will have something to say about in the coming weeks.

What I can tell you is that through our climate leadership plan we created a \$1.4 billion innovation fund. At some point I'm sure one of the government members is going to talk about their new idea to have some kind of fund to help with innovation. Well, you know, you're about four years too late. That fund existed. Actually, to be fair, it existed long before we were government. It existed long before several governments through entities like Alberta Innovates, that has funding available for industry to find innovative solutions to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, to reduce their environmental footprint, and, you know, from an industry point of view, maybe most importantly, also to reduce their costs, meaning that they are making better profits. So, really, this was a win-win. We sat down with industry to design this innovation fund, which has had a significant impact, quite frankly, on the province, Mr. Speaker.

There are a number of different projects that have been announced in the oil and gas sector in the past two years that are using innovative technologies, some that were codeveloped with Alberta Innovates. You know, it's quite exciting to see different projects in either the reduction of water usage or their use of cost savings through innovation.

Now, the other point I want to mention, Mr. Speaker, is that, really, my biggest frustration is that the Premier and this government are once again not only inviting Ottawa into Alberta; they are trying to ram Ottawa down Alberta's throat. When I say that, I mean that in a number of senses. One, we're about to have a debate tomorrow on standing orders. In this place there's been a history of desk thumping to show solidarity, to show appreciation, to support our members. In fact, those that have sat in this House for the past few years or longer know that both sides of the House will show their support for speakers when they're talking about challenging issues or impacts to them, their lives, their constituents. It's really a show of support. I think, on the one hand, the Premier has missed the boat on this. But the other is that by repealing Alberta's, you know, price on carbon and really gutting our climate leadership plan, this government is paving the way for the Prime Minister to ram a federally imposed carbon tax down the throat of every Albertan.

Now, the Premier can puff out his chest and talk about how he's going to fight this along with the other Premiers who are failing in their fight against Ottawa, spending millions of taxpayer dollars. The very same people that are arguing that they're saving money are actually spending money in a futile attempt to try to stop – quite frankly, you know, if the federal government decides to impose this on the provinces, the provinces will have to pay. We preferred a made-in-Alberta solution; the Premier prefers a made-in-Ottawa solution. I think it's interesting. I think his left foot is just itching to get back there, Mr. Speaker.

What I can tell you also is that the repeal of our price on carbon is going to have a significant impact on the investment that was coming to Alberta in renewables. Let's talk about numbers and investments, okay? We can talk about the one argument as far as Alberta doing its part and showing the world that we are seriously taking action. I get that a lot of members will say, "Well, let's look at China; let's look at some of these other countries and how much more they pollute" although I will challenge any member that says that or thinks that. Go do your homework. China is investing billions, tens of billions of dollars, in renewables, in innovation and technologies, and in reducing their footprint. If you think for a second, "Let's wait until China catches up to us," they are going to leave us standing in the dust because when that country decides to

move, the whole country moves, and they have the power behind them.

You know, I guess what I was happy to see was that Alberta was the number one destination for renewables investment in Canada. Thank you, Premier Ford, for ensuring that investment fled Ontario and came to Alberta. Now investment is scratching its head, not knowing where to go. It's interesting. The government may talk about stability, but actually when you go out and talk to investors, this creates instability. They liked the fact. They want something that's predictable, that's long term. It's similar down in the United States, where the U.S. President has said, you know, back to the Wild West with coal-fired electricity, with removing some of their federal initiatives on climate. Investors don't say yee-haw. They say: "Great. Now we have uncertainty for at least a period of two years, maybe another six years, but future governments will take this seriously and take meaningful action. Just show us stability."

For us, I mean, we saw the amount of investment that was coming into the province. We actually had a number of different req auctions for wind-powered electricity, which were lower than what we had thought they would commit at. In fact, I think they broke records as far as how cheap the energy was to create. Again, you know, this government is saying: "Okay. We're not going to phase out coal-fired electricity." I really wonder if the Premier struggles with himself every night when he tries to sleep because it was him under Prime Minister Harper that shut the doors and turned their backs on communities, on communities in Alberta, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. Twelve of 18 coal-fired electricity plants were closed down because of Prime Minister Harper's regulations, and the Premier was a senior cabinet minister. I'm sure you're dying to know: what supports did they have for these communities, for these workers, the very people that they claimed to protect? Guess what? Not a single support. Not a dollar of support for transition. No retraining. No bridge to retirement for those that did lose their jobs. There was nothing. It was silence. Crickets.

When we brought in regulations to phase out six of the 18 coal-fired plants, we – well, I – toured the province talking to communities and workers. We listened and asked them: what do you need to help you transition? So we introduced a coal community transition fund to help the municipalities and communities look at ways to diversify their economy. We brought in, I think, \$30 million or \$40 million for the worker transition fund. That included funds to help bridge retiring workers or those that are only a couple of years from retirement. A lot of them said to us: "You know, I'm 58. I'm 61. I'm only a couple of years from retirement. Who's going to hire me? I don't want to go back and retrain." Fair enough. The point is, Mr. Speaker, that we had supports for them; there was a plan. I can tell you that, again, there is no plan for these current communities under this current government.

We haven't spoken a lot at length about the indigenous communities around the province that are hungry to participate in the renewables market and came not only with ideas and dollars but were very interested in participating and had been and were excited at the fact that previous governments for decades talked the talk but didn't walk the walk when it came to true engagement. Now, of course, the government is going to talk about this corporation that they're creating, but what are they saying to the indigenous communities who were ready to move forward on these significant investments, that are now at a standstill, and who are completely at a loss for words?

8:50

Mr. Speaker, I think it's not only disrespectful but disingenuous to talk about a price on carbon as something that is killing jobs. I

think that, if anything, again, the government needs to take a look at the fact that we had a historic collapse in the price of oil in this province, from which the province is still reeling. But where we had a plan to work with industry, to work with the private sector to create jobs – I mean, we'll have ample opportunity to talk about I believe it's Bill 3 when it comes. But I can tell you from talking with a number of industry players – and we have examples especially just south of us, down in the United States – that simply reducing the corporate tax rate does not immediately lead to an increase in jobs nor investment.

You know, I've spoken with a number of companies already, and I asked them: "Hey, what are you going to do with the extra dollars that you're going to have when the corporate tax rate decreases? Are you going to reinvest it? Are you going to hire more people? Are you going to invest in training, buy new machinery and equipment?" They said: "No. We're going to do none of that. We're going to pocket it. It's extra profits." So it's not actually going to help do what, I believe, the government thinks it's going to do.

You know, Mr. Speaker, again recognizing that there were Albertans that weren't happy about paying this carbon levy, I think that part of the challenge, quite frankly, was that a lot of Albertans weren't aware of the number of programs that were available to make their homes, their businesses more energy efficient, that this really was showing the world that you can take meaningful action on climate and on the environment while at the same time supporting industry. I mean, I think that if we went back five years and we were to say, "You know what; the Premier of Alberta is going to stand on the stage with a number of some of the largest oil sands company CEOs, alongside indigenous leaders, beside environmental NGO leaders, and they're all going to say that this is the right thing to do," I don't think people would have believed it. But that's what happened. That was a historic day when we brought together different players to say that we can take meaningful action while at the same time supporting our economy.

I mean, maybe unbeknownst to some government members, ExxonMobil, you know, this really tiny company that dabbles in oil, has a fund that they are going around lobbying U.S. governments to keep a carbon tax. They want to keep a price on carbon. You know why, Mr. Speaker? Because they're investing hundreds of millions of dollars to reduce their GHGs, to reduce their environmental footprint. They're saying: "If you go around and remove this, do you know what you're doing? Do you know who you're rewarding? You're rewarding the biggest laggards, the biggest polluters in the world, and you're saying, 'don't do anything; don't bother upgrading your technologies, and don't bother trying to find innovative solutions.'" So they're of the mindset: we want to be a world leader. Go talk to Shell. Go talk to Exxon. Go talk to Husky, to a number of companies that are making significant investments. They will actually say: "You know what? With this government's plan, they've got it wrong; they've got it backwards." They'll say that we should be doing something about this, that we should be taking the money that's collected and reinvesting it.

You know, I'd love to ask – I'm trying to look around for a number of members that were former Wildrosers who were here talking about . . . [Mr. Bilous's speaking time expired]

**The Speaker:** I see the Member for Edmonton-Decore rising under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, it's a pleasure. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for sharing his thoughts. I was hoping I might have the opportunity to tap into his experience as the former minister of economic development and trade. He mentioned several times the investments within the

province through the carbon levy. I know that specifically in Edmonton-Decore, which is known as the shopping district, we had a major company, Simons, make an investment over at Londonderry Mall. For those that don't know about Simons: a very, very successful company throughout history. As a matter of fact, it has a history dating back I believe it's 180 years now. You don't hang around that long without making smart investment decisions. One of the decisions they made was around a solar array program through there. I was hoping that the member might be able to talk a little bit about how investments might be affected should the carbon levy be removed and how they may not make decisions about making investments in our communities.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the Member for Edmonton-Decore for his question. Where I was going with this – and I see that there are a number of members that were around a few years back. I know that over and over again the question and – I don't want to say accusation; that's quite a harsh word. There were claims that the carbon levy would be some kind of slush fund. Again, we answered and laid out exactly where every single dollar went. I find it very ironic that what the government is proposing is that funds that were being collected under the Climate Leadership Act are now just going to get funnelled into general revenues. You know, just put it over here; don't worry about reinvesting it back into creating jobs, back into supporting the economy, back into ensuring that Albertans who couldn't afford the increase in the cost of living would get a rebate. I mean, that's the other thing, Mr. Speaker: two-thirds of Albertans did not have to pay the carbon levy. They got a rebate. For me, I can only shake my head at the fact that what we were accused of is the very thing that the government is doing or proposing to do by creating this fund.

Now, to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore's question, undoubtedly, when supports for an industry that is getting up and going – we're seeing the costs come down every year, whether it's for the components for solar or for wind. When this government repeals the carbon levy and takes us backwards, it will have an effect on investors. In fact, it already has had on investors and investments in Canada. We're not being world leaders. We are not being Albertans, innovators and entrepreneurs. We are putting our head in the sand and in the ground and hoping that the rest of the world will come up with a solution. Well, you know what I say, Mr. Speaker? We're missing out on opportunities because Albertans are world leaders, but at times we need the government to introduce the right policies to help spur that along.

Quite frankly, what we are seeing is regression. This government can say that they are helping the province. For those that are paying it, that have had their margins squeezed a little bit through this price on carbon: yes, that will bring about a little bit of reprieve for them temporarily, until the federal government imposes the carbon tax on them and then decides what to do with that money that they collect. Again, Mr. Speaker, I think that it sends the wrong message to investors around this globe as far as Alberta taking meaningful action, being climate leaders, being leaders in this country, being leaders internationally. I know that my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-West can talk about the number of calls and invitations that she gets on a regular basis to talk about what was done here in Alberta and how excited legislators around the world were to hear what we did and how we did it. Again, the majority of Albertans did not pay that. They got a rebate, and the rest of it was reinvested.

**The Speaker:** Are there other members wishing to speak to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. “Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world now likely.” Such is the warning from a landmark new report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released in early May.

9:00

Here are some quotes from one of the lead authors from that report. From the chair: “The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide.” “‘Transformative changes’ [are] needed to restore and protect nature,” says the report. This is the “most comprehensive [natural world] assessment of its kind.” We have “1,000,000 species threatened with extinction” world-wide.

There were 145 expert authors from 50 countries over the past three years, with inputs from another 310 contributing scientific authors. The report assesses changes over the past five decades. That’s in biodiversity alone.

On climate change Canada’s climate is warming rapidly and faster than the global average. We are warming at twice the rate of the rest of the world. Northern Canada is warming even more quickly, nearly three times the global rate. Three of the past five years have been the warmest on record.

One of my friends is the president of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the political voice for Canada’s Inuit. His name is Natan Obed. Every time he goes home, he notices the changes to way of life, to food, to availability of berries, for hunting, gathering, and species. Everything is changing as the permafrost melts and as life changes in Canada’s north.

The 2019 Saskatchewan Court of Appeal decision: the Conservatives were really happy about the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal reference until the decision came down a couple of weeks ago, which upheld the constitutionality of the federal carbon pricing act in both its parts. Its economy-wide price and its output-based allocation system, both parts 1 and 2, were found wholly constitutional, Mr. Speaker.

That decision that Premiers Ford and Moe and our own Premier were very excited about before the decision came: here are some quotes from that decision. They quote from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is the global authority on climate change established by the United Nations environment program and the world meteorological association. Here are some quotes.

Climate change will amplify existing risks and create new risks for natural and human systems. Risks are unevenly distributed and are generally greater for disadvantaged people and communities in countries at all levels of development.

In other words, failure to act, Mr. Speaker: disproportionately, that burden is felt by disadvantaged people around the world and in this country among indigenous people, like I just described.

Without additional mitigation efforts beyond those in place today, wrote the IPCC,

and even with adaptation, warming by the end of the 21st century will lead to high to very high risk of severe, widespread and irreversible impacts globally.

They state this with “high confidence.”

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

It’s important to note that in section 16 of the Saskatchewan court’s decision they say, “None of these conclusions were challenged or put in issue by the participants in this Reference.” The

UCP participated in that reference, Mr. Speaker. None of these facts, including that the risks of climate change will be disproportionately felt by the disadvantaged among us, was put in question by the UCP’s own high-priced lawyers.

So we know that Canada must do its part. Canada is in fact a signatory to a number of international conventions on this matter, Mr. Speaker – the Kyoto protocol, then the Copenhagen accord, and then, of course, the Paris agreement – that commit us to varying levels of greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Well, what does this have to do with carbon pricing? Once again, Mr. Speaker, I commend to you page 42 of the Saskatchewan court reference, in which the court looks at the broad starting point concerns of whether this matter is something of national importance and the idea of minimum national standards of price stringency for GHG emissions and finds that “there is widespread international consensus that carbon pricing is[, in fact, that] necessary measure” that will bring minimum national standards of price stringency for GHG emissions. They are not a sufficient measure, writes the court, to achieve the global reductions in GHG emissions but “a well-designed carbon price is an indispensable part of a strategy for reducing emissions in an efficient way.” That, from the foreign-funded radicals at the High-Level Commission on Carbon Prices report prepared by the World Bank.

As the court writes, “There is a widespread trend in favour of carbon pricing . . . Overall, 67 jurisdictions . . . are putting a price on carbon.” And then, affirmed by Nicholas Rivers, who is an economist that the Wildrose used to quote before he told them to stop, “The existing literature is highly convergent in finding that carbon prices that have been implemented around the world have been successful in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.” It is also of note, Mr. Speaker, that none of these concerns were contested by the intervenors in the Saskatchewan court case, including the UCP’s own lawyer. If the UCP is going to spend all kinds of money on lawyers to agree with those facts, it defies logic why they would stand in this House right now and disagree with them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the world has questions, too, and I have spoken at length about this with reference to my previous role, both on the record in the media and in this House in terms of what oil companies and others were asking us to do to make Alberta resilient in a carbon-constrained future. As I just enumerated, we are on the verge of dramatic – dramatic – change in our climate, in climate change, climate variability, and severity of extreme weather events. That is for sure. Yes, it is real. Yes, it is happening, and it’s us. Yes, it is bad. But the good news is there is something we can do about it. That was the message that companies like Suncor and CN Rail and Cenovus brought to us in 2015, and we acted.

My former deputy minister recounts a story of having hotshot investors, as he calls them, come to meet with him a couple of years ago indicating that they were being swamped, quote: more than 10,000 e-mails, letters, and phone calls with demands from their own shareholders that the company stop investing in the Alberta oil sands. For their companies to continue investing, they needed answers. These hotshot investors’ questions, according to my deputy, were tough, detailed, and demanding. So our officials, competent as they are, went about the case of enumerating exactly what Alberta was doing in terms of its climate leadership plan: its approach to conservation, its approach to reinvestment, to energy efficiency, to clean technology, the \$1.4 billion that my hon. colleague spoke of earlier, and to meaningful action on renewables and diversification.

It is also true that companies are disclosing their climate action. Individually, many of them are already doing this. Suncor and others have been doing this for some years, Mr. Speaker. It is also true that the Bank of Canada has now joined a financial reporting

and climate transparency initiative, an initiative first pioneered by the Bank of England and former Governor Mark Carney, who have done a number of different reports and guidance documents to other central banks around the world around the disclosure of climate risk, transparency, reporting and so on.

It is distressing, to say the least, that our Premier has dismissed those actions on the part of the central banks around the world as the flavour of the month. This is deeply concerning to investor confidence in this province, that now we have a Premier that would thumb his nose at the international financial community, at the central banks, as if he knows better. I know that I would rather carefully review the advice coming from the governor of the Bank of England, from the Bloomberg group, and all of their work that they are doing on financial transparency and reporting and risk. I would rather look carefully at what the Bank of Canada is signalling with respect to its role in maintaining monetary and fiscal policy. Mr. Speaker, that is deeply concerning. It's deeply concerning to the future of this province, and that is one of the reasons why I do not support Bill 1.

9:10

Another one of the reasons I do not is because this bill takes away all of the fences around the use of the funds. Mr. Speaker, part 2 in the Climate Leadership Act – maybe it was part 3; I think it was part 3 – enumerates the permitted uses for the funds. The funds collected were either to go to tax cuts or rebates, which is why 65 per cent of Albertans got a cheque, which is why we cut the small-business rate by a third. After that, a permitted use was in climate change mitigation, in reducing greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, climate variability, and severe weather that are in fact imperilling the future of humanity. So we did that. The third piece is around climate adaptation. This was also a permitted use.

I notice that the Member for Livingstone-Macleod is in this Chamber. I have met with many of his constituents – ranchers, fourth- and fifth-generation Albertans in this province – who have made a spirited case for carbon offsets from soil carbon sequestration, for ensuring that we keep our native grasslands and our foothills intact, which not only sustains their way of life as ranchers, their historic way of life, but also sustains the environment and also allows us to sequester carbon and ensure that there is something to pass on to future generations.

The hon. member's constituents are very concerned about this, Mr. Speaker, and now there won't be any funds for those climate adaptation initiatives. Why? Because this government turned those funds into a slush fund. Because this government turned around and gave any hope and any possibility of those kinds of conservation initiatives, that are deeply Albertan, that are written into our DNA, saving the family farm and ranches – for what? – to turn around and try to paper over a hole in the deficit that you blew from a \$4 and a half billion tax cut. That is another reason why I do not support Bill 1.

Now, I also don't support Bill 1 because some of those programs that we invested in, with their winding down, are going to put insulators, electricians, boilermakers, power engineers, and others out of work. We invested significantly in industrial energy efficiency programs, Mr. Speaker. This was a key priority. It is not just about residences, and it is not just about large emitters. We have a lot of light manufacturing and light commercial activity that goes on in this province, and we made sure we had a good, solid suite of programs that were available to them for that. Those programs will all disappear, and every single one of those people is going to be thrown out of work.

Every postal code in this province had accessed energy efficiency programs in some way. Every First Nation in this province had

accessed those programs in some way. You know, I worry about the people of Fort Chipewyan, who have made their future plans in terms of making their community resilient, in terms of redirecting funds that they spent on diesel generation into being the largest off-grid solar project in Canada. That is what this climate leadership plan built: three First Nations co-owning it, technical expertise coming from ATCO. That project may collapse. I worry about those programs, Mr. Speaker, and I worry about others, too. I worry about indigenous people who wanted to move forward with the indigenous equity participation in future renewable energy rounds, and with some of the equity participation funds that are no longer available to them, they may not be able to do that.

Finally, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), are there any members who wish to have any questions or comments? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I just heard was fascinating. I just heard the hon. member the former environment minister stand up and talk as if she was the champion of investment right after her government chased \$80 billion out of Alberta that may never come back unless there's a better government with better policies that is more business friendly. Eighty billion dollars. Yet the hon. member would stand here in this House on the record and claim to be a champion of investment. That is the most incredible, amazing thing that I've ever heard. I guess I'm not speechless because I'm talking, but the fact is that I can't imagine a more ridiculous statement that was read into the record in this House than the one that just finished right before I spoke.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, there are people whose jobs, whose businesses were going to close, if the election went the other way, because of the policies of the previous government that were taking those businesses and the jobs out, not just the carbon tax but the combination of the carbon tax and the minimum wage, that was killing small businesses and restaurants and reducing jobs and reducing jobs for young people. We are at record levels of unemployment in Alberta for young people, yet the former minister would stand up like a champion of investment. I can't imagine anything more ridiculous than what we just heard.

Mr. Speaker, even on the other end we all should care about the environment, and I believe we all do. In that way, we should all care about what that does, but – you know what? – we learned during the last four years, through mechanisms and through experts, that through carbon leakage the carbon tax is probably a net environmental negative, not a positive but a negative.

Yes, indeed, the former government got some company from Ontario to come out and put in light bulbs. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they made two trips to each home to put in light bulbs, one to count them and then to come back and put the other ones in. To make sure they were environmentally friendly, they took out the light bulbs that were working and took them with them because you don't want to fully use the working light bulbs; you want to take them with you when you leave. Yet they couldn't find somebody from Alberta, a company from Alberta to make two trips to every home and change light bulbs.

This is really fascinating. Mr. Speaker, talk about stability, when we had – I don't know – a massive number of major energy companies leave Alberta in the last four years for, I guess, more stable investment environments like Nigeria and many other countries and Iran. The fact is that to hear this attempted revision of history is fascinating to me, and it's courageous. You know what?

If somebody, you know, got caught doing something and then came there the next day or the next minute and said, "I didn't do that," everybody would say, "Well, everybody saw you." "No, I didn't do it." That's what we just heard, an absolute denial of the track record of the previous government over the last four years, that leaves us with 183,000 or so Albertans out of work, that leaves us with record high unemployment for young people, that leaves us with a deficit of \$6 billion to \$8 billion to \$10 billion per year, heading for \$100 billion, not by our numbers but by the previous government's own numbers. That's what they would admit to. Who knows how bad it would be if they were given another four years to unleash these policies on Albertans and Alberta jobs and Alberta families. It is scary.

Fortunately, Albertans saw through that, Mr. Speaker. Fortunately, Albertans saw no social licence. Fortunately, Albertans saw the disconnect between people, like the former speaker, writing books against the oil sands or writing the forewords for books against the energy industry and then claiming to stand up the next day and be a champion. Albertans saw the hypocrisy. Albertans saw the inconsistency. Albertans made their choice, and they made their choice with their eyes wide open.

The number one thing in our platform that Albertans voted for in droves – and by "droves" I mean the biggest number of voters in the history of an Alberta election. They voted against the carbon tax, which is why I support this bill, that removes the carbon tax.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

9:20

**The Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak in debate on Bill 1? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just looking through a few articles, and there was one that caught my attention. It's an American article, I believe, from Vox, October 2018, and the title of the article is Why Conservatives Keep Gaslighting the Nation about Climate Change. The article begins, "In recent years, leaders of the Republican Party have become aware that denying the existence of global warming makes them look like idiots." Well, you know, we seem to follow suit with the United States. I'm hopeful, but I just listened to the member go on and on about light bulbs ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I just might provide some caution. I recognize that you're quoting from an article.

**Ms Renaud:** I was.

**The Speaker:** It's okay. I'm speaking. Thank you.

I recognize that you're quoting from an article. We need to be careful that we don't do indirectly what we can't do directly. I would just advise some caution, with respect, and I also expect that we'll see the article tabled tomorrow.

**Ms Renaud:** Absolutely. I will table the article.

I listened to the previous speaker talk about light bulbs. That's fine. We heard them talking about it for months and months and months and months because that's what they latched on to, that and their little slogan about axing the tax or whatever that was, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you'll remember.

But what it's about is our future and our children's future. When it comes right down to it, all of the things that we do and that we talk about in this House will be remembered not just because it's in *Hansard* but because we actually create laws and regulation and we set the tone, we set the stage for our future. What you're doing by scrapping this work that we brought in is that you're making a

statement that the science that we know to be true is not important enough for you to pay attention and to do the things that we need to do to ensure that our children and their children have the same future that we enjoy now, because they won't.

Ninety-seven per cent of the world's scientists – and you can laugh if you like; it's not funny. These are peer-reviewed scientists that are telling us that this is happening. They've been telling us for decades, but we have not been listening. But it is happening. We know that a million species are at risk of extinction. I can't even comprehend what that means for us. It's beyond even understanding what losing a million – what does that mean for us and our future, for our children? We've been told by scientist that we have 12 years to act until it's too late. That is not the world that I want for my children and their children, not at all.

My son is a scientist, and his fiancée is a scientist as well, and that's probably the closest I ever got to science because I am not a scientist by any stretch. We talk a lot, obviously, about climate change, and when I talk about some of the things that I hear in this place, do you know what their response is? They actually laugh. They laugh at the denial that goes on. They laugh at the fact that politicians, whatever your background, can sit in places like this and create laws, vote for laws, or speak against laws, legislation, bills that actually are based in science and fact. They give me examples that in meetings, their scientific meetings, whether it's their department or when they got to conferences, it's virtually impossible for that many of them to ever agree on anything, but what they do agree on is this science, that man-made climate change is going to cause problems that we will soon be unable to fix or mitigate. Yet we're sitting here, and we're discussing getting rid of a strategy in a larger plan that looked at taking us to a place where we could start to make a difference.

It's not just our scientists that study climate change that are telling us this. Here's an older article, that I also found, from the Canadian Medical Association.

Climate change is increasingly recognized as a significant threat facing society and has the potential to be one of the greatest threats to human health in the 21st Century.

I don't think they wrote this lightly.

Possible impacts could include ...

and I'm going to read some of them for you because they need to be on the record and you need to listen to this stuff. You need to think about this when you vote.

- Increased mortality, disease and injuries from heat waves and other extreme weather events ...

Add to this the people that are marginalized, that are even more impacted by these things, whether it's our seniors, whether it's people with disabilities, whether it's people that live in poverty. They don't have the ability to get out of the way of these massive events.

- Continued change in the range of some infectious disease vectors ...
- Effects on food yields – increased malnutrition;
- Increased flooding in some areas and increased droughts in others ...

as already mentioned,

- ... along with other impacts on freshwater supply;
- Increases in foodborne and waterborne illnesses;
- Warming and rising sea levels adding to displacement and also impacting water supply through salination;
- Impaired functioning of ecosystems;
- Negative effects on air quality associated with ground level ozone, including increases in cardio-respiratory morbidity and mortality, asthma, and allergens;

- Displacement of vulnerable populations . . .

We know this. Just look at what's happening around us. Any disaster that happens, whether it's a flood, whether it's a fire – certainly, our first responders are incredible and get people out of the way and to safety, but it's the people that are at risk that are most in harm's way.

You know, I think it was last week I heard one of the UCP – well, I don't want to call them talking heads – radio supporters, I suppose, making fun of the student movement. I don't know. I think that having over a million students in 125 countries all around the globe saying the same thing, that you need to pay attention – this is serious. This isn't about politics. This isn't about a bumper sticker. This isn't about you getting re-elected. This is about our future. This is about our children, and it's about their children. They're turning up every single Friday, and they're saying the same thing: politicians, decision-makers, pay attention, pay attention to the science, pay attention to what's happening to our planet. Is it really worth it, a little, tiny short-term gain, your platform promise so that people are saving \$100 a month, maybe, on the carbon tax, so you can say, "Yay, look what we did; we lived up to our promise"?

In the meantime, what is happening? We're being warned. We have 12 years to act until it's too late. A million species are at risk. It's happening. Look at the fires in northern Alberta. I'm not saying that we haven't had forest fires, but our scientists have been telling us again and again and again for decades that they will get worse, they will happen earlier, they'll be more intense. The same with flooding, the same with drought and all of the things that are impacted: you understand it when we lose a species. I'm sure you've all heard the science around our bees.

It's all interconnected, so by ignoring this, ignoring the warnings that our scientists have been giving us for decades, you are putting our planet at risk, our country, our province, our cities, but most importantly you're putting our children's future at risk, their future, their children's future. Is that something that you can be proud of? In a few years from now, when all certainty is gone and there is nothing else that you can possibly cling to and you hide your bumper stickers because you're embarrassed, can you say, "I did everything I could"?

I'd like to close debate, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I just might remind the member to address your comments through the chair, if you might, in the future. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate May 27: Mr. Jason Nixon]

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane is rising on debate of the throne speech.

9:30

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, as the proud MLA for Airdrie-Cochrane, the son of Winston and Barbara, the brother of Jeff and Glenda, the husband to Tracy, and the father of Mitchell and Camryn. This is a new electoral district northwest of Calgary encompassing the southwest of Airdrie, Bearspaw, a portion of Rocky View, and Cochrane. It's a unique region, on Treaty 7 land, that combines urban communities with that of acreage living and rural farmlands.

There's a long history of cattle ranching in the area, with family establishments like those of the Hansons west of Airdrie and the Harvie family, who in conjunction with the Alberta government in 2006 created Glenbow Ranch provincial park. I must admit that I look forward to the bull and cattle sales that take place at Soderglen ranch each year. In fact, every February Stan and Jane Grad, the owners of Soderglen, host a large bull sale that attracts buyers from across this province and beyond. I'm no longer in the cattle business, but I must say that the steak sandwich they provide is pretty, pretty okay and the conversation even better. Farmers and ranchers always have great stories to tell, and I'm always interested to hear about those.

Although not in our constituency but a positive influence, I'd like to mention the Stoney Nakoda Nation to our west and the Tsuut'ina Nation to the south as we share many of the same values, resources, and infrastructure. I look forward to learning more about the First Nations' traditions and developing a long-standing relationship with them.

In 1992 I obtained a chemical engineering degree from the University of Alberta. My first field of work comprised eight years in sales and marketing in the pulp and paper industry, travelling throughout Alberta, western Canada, the U.S., and abroad, including three memorable trips to India.

But sometimes life doesn't always go as planned. In 1998 my brother-in-law Arlen Dumaresq was 25 years old and was destined to take over the family ranch in Consort, Alberta. The Dumaresqs are known for their hard work and work ethic, and Arlen fit that definition perfectly. He was not a man of many words, but he had a wit about him that was very enjoyable. In May of that year he was involved in a tragic farming accident. This accident left him paralyzed, and in December of 1998 he passed away.

After the birth of our son, Mitchell, a few months later my wife, a school teacher, and I set aside our careers, and in the spring of 2000 we moved to Consort in order to help on the family's ranch. Now, for a townie this was an eye-opening and humbling experience, managing and working in a 3,000-head feedlot with 450 cows to boot. However, over time I gained invaluable life and business experiences, including some wonderful times calving in the spring, but also turbulent ones, having to deal with both drought and BSE. The two-year time horizon we gave ourselves turned into 10 and saw the birth of our daughter, Camryn.

Along our travels on family trips away from Consort, we made many stops for ice cream at MacKay's in Cochrane's historic downtown. We fell in love with the community, so when we purchased our small business in Calgary, we made Cochrane our home. I've been a Cochrane resident for 10 years, with eight of those as a small-business owner in Calgary. My wife, Tracy, and I owned and operated a successful franchise business. In 2015, with changes to the political landscape both provincially and federally resulting in taxation and policy changes that we felt were detrimental to small businesses and to the vast majority of Albertans, we decided to make a change in our lives, so in 2017 we sold our business and entered the political realm. I felt that I had a background that, although it did not include politics, was one that

was well representative of Alberta and especially the constituency of Airdrie-Cochrane.

Our electoral district has over 51,000 residents, and as Airdrie and Cochrane are two of the fastest growing communities in Canada, this area is bound to continue growing at a strong pace. This region is a corridor for transporting goods, and due to its picturesque views overlooking the Rocky Mountains, it is desirable for both tourism and for those wishing to escape life in the big city.

Naturally, this growth comes with its challenges, from health care and urgent care demands to senior living and palliative care concerns. Transportation infrastructure is at its limit. Cochrane, for instance, has no major interchange in a town approaching 30,000 people, so with the Bow River separating the town from north and south, with single-lane traffic on both highways 1A and 22, it creates high traffic congestion and is a safety risk for all travellers on these roadways. The small town western motif that residents take pride in can sometimes be lost waiting in long lines. A solution to these traffic woes is desperately needed.

It should be no surprise that when I first began my door-knocking campaign, I started with visits to the small-business community. I found some pretty interesting and unique establishments. For instance, from Cochrane we have Krang Spirits, a distillery serving up some pretty tasty vodka, I might say, and Half Hitch Brewing Company: great food and I'd recommend trying the Fire N' Fury. That's my favourite ale that they have on tap. From Airdrie we have Sorso lounge and espresso bar, very popular, serving up some great eats. I should also note that our constituency hosts two vibrant weekend farmers' markets every summer, with one in Cochrane on Saturdays and one in Bears paw on Sundays.

Our electoral district also has attracted business from the high-tech sector as a home base for Garmin, which has its Canadian headquarters in Cochrane, and 4iiii Innovations, supplying various technology-based products with a focus on athletics.

The largest private employer and contributor to our community is Spray Lake Sawmills. This upcoming year they will be celebrating 76 years of operations in Alberta. Chester Mjolsness founded this company in 1943, and it is still a family-run business, owned and operated now by his son Barry. The mill operates on a 200-year forest management plan and utilizes every part of the tree, including shavings and bark. In fact, they created a thriving business called Top Spray from this product once considered waste. Spray Lake understands that having a healthy forest is the centrepiece of maintaining a viable, prolific business. This is why they take great pride in conservation efforts for this renewable resource.

Over 40,000 Albertans make their living from forestry, approximately \$7 billion in annual economic activity for this province. Alberta is recognized as a world leader in forest stewardship, and by managing our forest sustainably, we can have a healthy industry and help control the effects of fires and pest infestations.

I hear a lot about diversifying the economy in this province, but it is impossible to have your core sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and energy suffer and think that other industries will want to invest here. Economic diversification does not occur because a government decides it should occur. Diversification happens off the strengths of your core industries, and the government has to put those conditions into place for both core industries and diversification to prevail.

Many of the companies I spoke with identified several issues as barriers to doing business in Alberta. Those included high taxation, a stifling regulatory regime as well as increasing costs of goods and labour. I believe that many of these hurdles have been addressed in the Speech from the Throne, including, first, the carbon tax repeal act, which will make life more affordable for all Albertans. Next, the job creation tax cut, which will provide Alberta companies with the lowest taxes in Canada. Next, the open for business act: this will play a key role in creating jobs and alleviating recent cost burdens placed on employers. And the Red Tape Reduction Act will allow business and government the ability to focus outside of a suffocating regulatory jurisdiction that has been created in this province. All of these initiatives are being done with the main goal of creating good-paying jobs for Albertans.

9:40

In order to do that, we must create an environment that is positive for investment. By increasing revenue and developing a strong economic base, we can as government look forward to reducing our deficits and putting us on a path to a balanced budget. The challenges that lie ahead over the next four years are great, but I believe we have a terrific team with a new philosophy that will rise to the occasion.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be here in Alberta's Legislature representing the new riding of Airdrie-Cochrane. I will do my utmost to serve its constituents, respect this House, and assist my colleagues in achieving our goals.

Thank you to the Assembly, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move to adjourn debate on the Speech from the Throne.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** The House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at . . .

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll help you with that. I will move to adjourn the House till tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:42 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, May 28, 2019

Day 4

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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Irwin  
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Reid  
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Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Yao

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Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

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

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Ganley  
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Issik  
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Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, May 28, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, everyone.

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

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 1

#### An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

[Adjourned debate May 27: Ms Renaud]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax. This bill deals with one of the most important and urgent issues of our time, our society, and our economy: environment and climate change. On this side of the House we believe that climate change is a problem. This issue has been settled quite conclusively, and we as a society, we as owners of these resources, land, and environment have an obligation to hand all this to our future generations in a developed state and without destroying it. We know that Albertans want a plan – a real plan – to address climate issues, and the choice we have as government, as society is that we can either ignore the signs of a changing climate and be dragged along or we can show leadership and make our own choices for the security of our kids, for our environment, for our economy, and for our future generations.

That is why when we were in government, we took action for the future of our province, making sure that we have a cleaner environment for our kids, that we have jobs in renewable energy, and that we were investing in clean technology, green infrastructure, and in innovation in our economy, in oil sands, and in our energy industry. We believe – and that was said many times by our leader – that the economy and our environment can and must go hand in hand. That was the reason we brought forward the climate leadership plan. Essentially, this bill is trying to do exactly the opposite of that, the opposite of taking any action on the environment, and proposes to repeal the changes, to repeal the progress that we made under that climate leadership plan.

Under the Climate Leadership Act we worked with stakeholders, we worked with our industry, and we established a carbon levy on transportation and heating fuels in Alberta. We provided exemptions where needed and necessary, we set out the requirements for exemption certificates and licences, and we set out to set carbon levy rates on different fuels. All this was done with a view to making sure that our economy is up to pace with today's

realities, our industry is competitive, and we are getting the value for our resources.

There is enough evidence that clearly demonstrates the urgency of climate issues, and it requires us to take action. Even the Nobel prize for economics in 2018 was given to two fellows for their research and leadership in this field back in the 1990s. Professors William D. Nordhaus and Paul M. Romer were awarded the Nobel prize for their work in this regard. I think that if we talk about economics, the basic premise of this subject is that it deals with the management of scarce resources, and what it does is that it deals with the constraints on economies that are dictated by nature. Our knowledge and our response deal with those constraints.

One of these professors talked about technological changes – Professor Romer, who demonstrated that that's how our knowledge can function as a driver for economic innovation and change – while Professor William Nordhaus talked about an integrated assessment model, which takes into account the constraint the environment puts on our economy. For both of them the fundamental argument is that while nature dictates the constraints on our economy, we cannot sit on the sidelines. We have to address that, and when we manage our resources, we have to account for those constraints. Both of them argue that climate change is one of the biggest constraints on our economy, and in their research, whether that's the integrated assessment model or endogenous growth theory, they both argue that we should use our research, we should use our knowledge to innovate in a way that helps us address the constraints put forth by the climate on our economy.

We also know that our industry is capital intensive and we get to compete in markets outside Alberta to get the capital to make investments in our market, and when we compete in global markets, markets outside Alberta, we also have to be mindful that the constraints put forth by the environment on economies around the globe are taken very seriously. More and more economies are moving towards addressing this issue, moving towards renewables, moving towards cleaner economies. Another thing is that when we compete to sell our product in global markets, there are also things like the carbon intensity of our oil barrel. That also is a measure that's looked at, and not having any plan to deal with the climate issues leaves the Alberta economy, Alberta industry at a huge disadvantage.

Despite all this evidence, what this UCP bill does is that it proposes to repeal the Climate Leadership Act, eliminating the carbon tax, and it also ends the rebates that two-thirds of Albertans were getting due to that plan. It also takes away the incentive that industry had to innovate, and it also takes the revenues that were collected by the carbon levy, that will no longer be used for the environmental-, climate-related projects or programs. To say the least, all these actions that are proposed in this piece of legislation run afoul of all the evidence available and are completely irresponsible.

A price on carbon exists in 40 different countries and 27 subnational jurisdictions, including California, New York, Washington state, and Mexico. When we brought this climate leadership plan in, we consulted widely with industry, we consulted widely with environmental groups, and there was a step in the right direction. Later on, when the pan-Canadian framework came, the federal government also brought forward legislation that will apply when provinces will not have their own plan to address climate change issues.

10:10

This piece of legislation will leave Alberta without a plan to deal with emissions, thus paving the way for the federal legislation to apply. Somehow, we were told, their bill will magically provide a

\$1.4 billion tax break to Albertans, notwithstanding the fact that it is taking away the rebate money, almost 600-plus million dollars, from two-thirds of Albertans. We were told that it will create 6,000 jobs across the province. However, under the climate leadership plan there were already 7,300 jobs, so it's taking more jobs away from Albertans than it's creating. By ignoring this problem, we are walking our economy into a dead end for our environment and for our future, and we're simply paving the way for Ottawa to come in and use their backstop legislation, the federal carbon tax, which will also risk the approval of our pipeline and our access to markets.

Instead of focusing on what a global trend requires us to do, instead of focusing on more renewable energy and natural gas, this government's plan is to just bring back the same old policies that were responsible for the issues that we are facing today in terms of market access. Instead of funding critical projects like the Calgary green line – being a Calgary MLA, it's an important project for Calgary – and instead of helping Albertans to renovate their homes with energy efficiency programs, we are wasting money on high-priced lawyers for the lawsuits that we know will not lead to the outcome that we were told to believe by this government.

In recent legal developments, Madam Speaker, there was a constitutional question brought forward by the government of Saskatchewan, which asked the court to opine on one question: whether the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, the federal act which was introduced in Parliament, was constitutional in whole or in part. That was the sole issue before the court in this constitutional reference. The Premier has said that they will also challenge the constitutionality of the same federal act, the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, and they will file a reference to the Court of Appeal.

In that constitutional challenge what we noticed is that Saskatchewan challenged the federal government's authority to enact such legislation based on section 53 of the Constitution, that it's not within the constitutional authority of the federal government to do so. But the Court of Appeal decided against Saskatchewan, and they also decided that under the constitutional powers, the federal government does have authority to implement such changes with respect to the environment. When they are dealing with any undertakings which are within their jurisdiction, anything they are fully entitled to, it's permissible for them under the Constitution to regulate all matters that fall within that undertaking, and they said that it was well within the scope of POGG authority under the Constitution. If this government was to ask all courts to decide on the same question, we are likely to get the same answer, meaning that what we were told before, that they will repeal this tax and bring a constitutional challenge, that's not open for us. Although a little late, more recently even the editorial board for the *Edmonton Journal* came up with an editorial saying that maybe leaving carbon climate leadership in place is a good idea because if we remove or repeal this, it will be replaced by the federal government's climate leadership act.

Madam Speaker, in closing, what this bill does is that it opts for a federal climate plan instead of a made-in-Alberta plan that was well considered, well thought out, and developed . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any comments or questions? The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was very intrigued by what my fellow colleague was having to say. I would like to ask him specifically about how members in his own constituency were reacting to the idea that the carbon levy would be repealed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think this bill is certainly a significant and important step but in a completely wrong direction and backwards. It will take away many worthy projects all across the province from my riding. Many of those projects will be in government members' ridings as well. If we look at some of those projects, for instance in Calgary, the green line was funded under revenues from this climate leadership plan. That's one of the most important infrastructure developments in Calgary.

Certainly, this action will put projects like those – and there was another Springbank project that was in Calgary. At a constituency level there were many constituents who have benefited from energy efficiency programs. Not only that, it was helping constituents, helping all Albertans to look after their environment, and this plan was on track to cut more than 50 megatonnes of emissions over the next 10 years. That amounts to taking almost 10.6 million cars off the road. All my constituents, like other Albertans, do have a vested interest in having a clean environment, in having clean water, in having an economy that is more diversified, that creates opportunities for them.

Certainly, this will also take jobs away from my constituents and other Albertans. There were 7,300 jobs that came with that plan, and there were further jobs that were coming along with this plan. We were told that 6,000 jobs were created, but we lost 7,300 jobs.

Our plan was also responsible for a one-third tax break for small business. That was also funded through revenues from this climate plan. We have major investments, as I said, in transit infrastructures.

Also, over two-thirds of Albertans were getting rebates. Certainly, my constituents were also benefiting from those rebates. Now that \$700 million that was given back to Albertans, that was given back to my constituents has been taken away by this Bill 1.

There were many things that came along with the climate leadership plan, and repealing that will take those benefits away from my constituents and away from Albertans, benefits such as upgrades for schools, universities, and hospitals.

**10:20**

Along with that, there were energy efficiency programs. It was the first time in the province's history that we developed those energy efficiency plans. Certainly, many Albertans were benefiting from those plans. In Calgary and the neighbourhoods of Calgary there are many indigenous communities. They were benefiting from our climate leadership plan. Across the province there were 65 indigenous communities who benefited from initiatives from the climate leadership plan.

In reality this bill just delivers a huge tax break for wealthy and high-income Albertans and eliminates the revenue stream that supports renewable energy and rebate programs, and it threatens the funding of infrastructure projects like the green line, Springbank, and projects in the cities of Calgary and Edmonton. Essentially, it leaves Alberta at a disadvantage by not having a plan to address the climate issue, that is the most serious existential issue of our time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, there's been a request to revert to introductions. I will ask one question. It requires unanimous consent. Do you consent to revert to introductions? All those against, say no.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Calvin Strauss, who hails from Camrose. He's a prominent businessman, and I'm honoured that he's able to take some time to be here among us. Calvin, please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Welcome.

Any members wishing to speak? Edmonton-Glenora.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 1

#### An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (continued)

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm adjusting to the new practice of not doing introductions. I thought I'd introduce my guests in the midst of my speech, which I'm fine with. Yeah, that's fine. Thank you very much for that.

I want to begin my remarks in response to Bill 1 by recognizing that we're on the traditional land of Treaty 6 First Nations as well as the Métis people of Alberta, who share a very deep connection with this land.

I had the honour prior to being an MLA of having served on the Edmonton public school board. In my time on the school board I grew accustomed to visiting students, particularly grade 6 classes. I am regularly invited to speak to grade 6 classes when they're engaging in democracy. I'm very grateful to have a grade 6 student here today. She's from Westglen elementary school in the riding of Edmonton-Glenora, and her name is Sadie Cor. I want to thank her for being here and for bringing her mom. Sadie is like the students I talk to regularly. When I meet with them, I say: "No matter what age you are, you are my boss. You live in Edmonton-Glenora, and it's my job to represent you and to fight for the things that matter to you and for all of your classmates and for all Albertans." I'm really grateful that Sadie contacted me shortly after the election and wrote: "I am worried about global warming. How can I help so I don't die young?" It's a pretty simple statement from a grade 6 student.

Like many young people they are aware of the impacts that this generation and prior generations have made on our planet, and they are stepping up to make sure that they are being responsible for this generation and future generations. I want to start with step 1, acknowledging that climate change is real. Scientific consensus has been reached on this matter, I would say, as definitive as scientific consensus can ever become. Climate change is real.

Two, it is man-made climate change. It is caused by human action and human activity. There's a recent Bill Maher video that went viral. I won't repeat it because the language isn't very parliamentary, but the thrust of his message is: "I've been talking about this my entire life. Enough is enough. I gave you guys patience and time. When you were kids, I said feel free to question the science – I get it – but we're past the point of being able to question the science." Climate change is real, it's man-made, and it's very damaging. It is leading to significant impacts around the world.

I know that we used to say global warming – and some people still do – but it's so much more complex than the temperature of the earth rising. It is about changing weather patterns. It is about uncontrollable forest fires. It's about rising water levels that are leading to mass flooding. It's about tsunamis. It's about significant climate change that is resulting in devastating impacts for people around the world. I need to say the fact that biodiversity reports that

the collapse of nature here specifically in Canada is warming at twice the global rate. Global warming or climate change is real. There's scientific consensus around it. It's caused by man, and it's really, really damaging, damaging particularly to folks who have lower incomes. But the good news is that there's something we can do about it, and there's something we must do about it while at the same time protecting our major industries.

Of course, when we developed the climate leadership plan back in 2015, it was very clear to us that industry wanted to do its part. Industry wanted to work with us to make sure that they had strong international reputations, that they were able to support good economic diversification and good jobs in their industry and in aligned industries, and that they were willing to do their part as long as other folks were doing their parts, too. That's one of the reasons why when we announced the climate leadership plan in 2015, we had support from industries as well as individuals that weren't typically seen to be standing up at NDP press conferences.

For example, the chair of CNRL:

The announcement is a significant step forward for Alberta. We appreciate the strong leadership demonstrated by Premier Notley and her government. The framework announced will allow ongoing innovation and technology investment in the oil and natural gas sector. In this way, we will do our part to address climate change while protecting jobs and industry competitiveness in Alberta.

Again, CNRL is not typically a validator at environmental announcements, but because this was clearly an announcement about the future of the industry, the future of our province while protecting the environment, CNRL was there in support of this initiative.

Another example. This one was specifically responding to the phase-out of coal, coal being one of the air contaminants, of course, but also a contributor to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, said by the then president of the Alberta Medical Association, I believe now national vice-president for the Canadian Medical Association, Dr. Carl Nohr:

Physicians know very well the negative health effects of air pollution, including from coal power generation. In the fall [of 2015], the AMA's governing body passed a motion calling on the association to advocate for a phase out of coal power in this province as soon as possible. We are very pleased to learn of the government's plan to expedite this process and seek other solutions that will be healthier for all Albertans.

These were just two of the voices in the very early days speaking to the importance of having a made-in-Alberta climate leadership plan that worked with industry to make sure we addressed the real and very damaging impacts of man-made climate change.

Let's fast forward a year or so because I know that not all members have had a chance to maybe meet with some of their local officials, but here's the mayor of the town of Canmore, Mr. Borrowman, in 2016:

I am pleased to add my support [to the then minister] and the Government of Alberta in implementing the Climate Leadership Plan, which recognizes that all Albertans must take responsibility for protecting our environment. The plan resonates well with the Town of Canmore in our goal of being municipal leaders through our Environmental Sustainability Action Plan, first approved in 2010."

Significant leadership in 2010 from the municipality of Canmore.

I am proud to see Alberta taking on this environmental ... role nationally and internationally.

Again, a local municipal leader expressing their support of this plan.

One more I want to mention, and then I'll get back to some of my thoughts around climate change, the president and CEO for AltaLink in 2016, Scott Thon:

As we move to a lower carbon future, Alberta's transmission grid is ready to enable Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan. Our transmission system in southern Alberta is already capable of accepting thousands of megawatts of . . . renewable energy.

What I want to say here in response to this quote is that the CEO and president for AltaLink talks about: as we move towards a lower carbon future. That is the reality. No matter what riding or what piece of the world we might happen to reside in, the truth is that the world needs to move to a lower carbon future.

10:30

The other reality is that in Alberta in the 1970s under the leadership of Premier Lougheed we saw the potential that was the oil sands, but we didn't have the innovation to get the oil out of the sand. Through thoughtful government leadership a plan was developed to invest in technology so that we could get the oil out of the sand. Colleagues, what I'm here to say is that through leadership we can get the carbon out of the barrel.

What industry said to us in 2015, 2016, 2017, and forward was: "We're willing to be partners in this work. It's not easy. It's not something that we woke up and all of a sudden decided that we were going to invest billions of dollars in, but we absolutely can do it. But we're not going to do it on our own. We're not going to do it without knowing that the government's got our backs and that the government is going to be pushing our partners in this industry to do the same work as well."

Why is it so important? Well, number one, because there is scientific consensus that global warming or climate change is real and it is very damaging and it is, I would argue, very near, if not past, the point of no return. It is paramount that we address this and that we do so seriously.

Number two is because we deserve to be known as energy leaders around the world. I think that we have had that reputation for a long time, and I want to continue to have that reputation. Again, as the CEO for AltaLink says, "As we move toward a lower carbon future" – and that's the reality. The world is moving toward a lower carbon future. They'll either do it with us, with Alberta, or they will do it without us, but that's the reality.

I'm not here to relitigate the outcome of the election. I want everyone to know that I accept that there was a very clear proposal to eliminate the climate leadership plan and that it received a majority endorsement from the people of Alberta. But I am here to say that climate change is real, that we need to combat it and we need to do so seriously. If the plan isn't a made-in-Alberta climate leadership plan, so be it, but please do not take four years to decide what the plan will be because it will be too late. Kids like Sadie deserve to grow up in a province that is taking action to ensure their future. All of our kids deserve to grow up in a province that is taking action on our future and making sure that we have clean air, water, and safe land for ourselves and for future generations.

I started by recognizing that we're on Treaty 6 land. It was an elder who once said to me: "You know, in western society a lot of people live their lives hoping to be remembered. We live our lives knowing that we will be forgotten." He also said: "We live our lives knowing that we're not just inheriting what we have from the past. We're borrowing it from the future." So, please, today I ask that all of us reflect on the fact that we're borrowing our time on this planet from the future, from the next generation, and that we owe it to them to make sure that when they say, "Why didn't you act on climate change?" we can say that we did.

Again, I understand that Bill 1 will move forward. It got a significant endorsement from the people of Alberta. I respect that. But stopping something is one part of the solution that I imagine you're proposing. The other part, though, is that we need to act on

climate change. We need to act in a responsible way. We already in the last four years have been able to reduce the megatonne emissions from Alberta by the equivalent to what Manitoba typically emits in a year. That is a significant step moving forward, but we still need to do more because we know that we are past the point of no return, that we can't continue to pretend that the science is still pending and that it hasn't been decided. It has. As my friend Bill Nye – my friend, I wish. As Bill Nye said: we are past the point of no return, and patience is wearing thin by the global community.

I understand that there will be an elimination of the price on carbon. So be it, but my call is: what are you going to do to make sure that we act to protect this planet, that we are borrowing from the next generation, so that it's there for the long term? We are really beyond the crossroads, I'd say. If it's not going to be a price on carbon, which many, many economists, especially conservative economists, say is the most transparent and results-driven way, then what are the other points of consideration going to be? We really can't pretend that this isn't a reality.

I guess those are the main things I want to say at this point. All of the doom and gloom that I said at the beginning is true, but so is the fact that there's something we can do about it. The important part is that I don't believe this bill does anything to address it. I don't think that anyone is pretending that it does. I think that in the press conference it was very clear that this is about repealing something. This isn't about replacing. This isn't about proposing a new way to do things in terms of addressing both the protection of our major industries as well as our planet. That, to me, would be the call to action, I guess, for all members in this Chamber.

Repealing something is step one. It must be replaced though. It must be replaced by something that actually looks forward and acts with confidence and that protects our reputation and protects our environment because, honestly, we all deserve to live on a planet that – we all deserve to live. Full stop. I think that Sadie's message around not wanting to die young hits the nail on the head. This is something that is very serious for young people. There have been many young people stepping up and playing leadership roles in this around the world, and I think it's important for us in this Chamber to hear their advice, act as though we are their employees, which we are, employees of the young and the old, and make sure that we reflect their values and the values that are necessary for the sustainability of life on this planet. Mother Nature always wins, right? Some people say that Mother Nature finds a way. Maybe, maybe not. But Mother Nature always wins. So we can pretend that this isn't happening, but at the end of the day the planet will find a way, with or without us, to continue to win.

I guess those are the thoughts I wanted to share at this point with regard to Bill 1. Thank you for indulging me with your time. I don't make a habit of crying in this House but certainly do when a message is as powerful as that.

Thank you for your presence, Sadie, and to your mom as well for being here. You are important to be heard. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It's wonderful to see our youth involved in such issues that are important to all of us. It's great to see you here today, Sadie, and your mom for probably taking you out of school, which is okay because I think you're learning lots here today and you have a great, passionate MLA to speak on your behalf. So please feel welcome here in this Assembly.

Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. I really appreciated your introduction of Sadie, the grade 6 student. As a former teacher, a social studies teacher, in fact, it sure makes me happy to see young people taking

action. You know, as someone who, as I said, taught social studies, you're not only sharing your thoughts, learning about climate change; you're also engaged in a very important part of the social studies curriculum, which is learning about government. So thank you for being here.

We're seeing a movement led by young people who are fearful about their future and are not willing to sit back and let the climate crisis worsen. The hon. member talked a lot about the importance of having so many stakeholders on board and the widespread support of our climate leadership plan not just from industry but from people of all ages and backgrounds. I know that she's heard from many people about just how important that is.

In my own riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood we do have some of the highest rates of poverty. I heard from so many people while out at the doors just how life-changing, in fact, the rebate is. And some of you might scoff at that, but those rebates made a big difference in people's lives. I heard from seniors, for instance, and I could share countless stories about how much just that small rebate made a difference.

I was just wondering if the member could talk a little bit more about some of the stories that she's heard and just why it is so important that we hear and heed those voices.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, and thank you to my colleague for the question. I definitely heard many stories while door-knocking, in particular, or meeting with groups around my riding. I'd say that some of the ones that resonated with me particularly were from families who said, you know, that they'd been hoping that we'd take some kind of action on addressing the climate and making sure that we acted in a way that kept that revenue in Alberta. That was one of the other pieces that I heard regularly.

So if we don't act on this, it will be imposed by another order of government. We may spend a significant amount of money fighting that all the way to the Supreme Court, I understand, but that money, again, will probably leave the province, and then at the end of the day, should we lose those challenges, not only have we lost the time of being climate leaders and innovators in our own province, investing in renewables and investing in other energies that show that we are continuing to be energy leaders, but that money would indeed leave the province.

10:40

I heard a lot of people say, you know: I feel like we send a lot of money to Ottawa and let Ottawa make decisions about how to spend that money, and we would much rather have that money stay in Alberta, come back to many families, about two-thirds of Alberta families, through rebate forms. Or if not rebates, I heard from one teacher who said that she engaged in Energy Efficiency Alberta, one of the last jurisdictions in Canada to bring in an energy efficiency program. I know that at the time that we brought it in, the now Premier – you know, I'm a massive *Seinfeld* fan – put out the video of Kramer with the shampoo not washing out of his hair because the water pressure was so bad from that shower head that was put into his washroom. I had a good chuckle, and then I remembered that that episode aired 20 years ago. Twenty years ago New York was taking action on energy efficiency. Twenty years ago we were laughing at low-flow shower heads, and it took us that long to catch up in Alberta.

I know that with many families there is concern that some of those initiatives will go away. I talked to somebody who was in the process of purchasing solar modules to put on their roof because

they were in a position where they'd saved for the last three years and they had a substantial portion. They didn't want to have to borrow everything up front. Now they're nervous about what the future is going to be of that program and if all the saving that they did to prepare and to not have to borrow so that they could have solar on their roof would be for naught. So they're looking at a few different options, but certainly those rebates were a significant piece, as were the opportunities for investing back in our own province and finding ways to take that money.

Let's remember that we exempted marked fuel for agricultural industry. I know that that was incredibly important, having grown up in northern rural Alberta, that those industries be protected. Of course, when we're talking about economic diversification, you need to protect your major industries in addition to oil and gas, which includes agriculture, forestry, and other sectors as well.

So I know that there are some questions about what will happen to these important initiatives that were funded through the climate leadership plan, like Energy Efficiency Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to rise today to speak to Bill 1 because it's a follow-up to my member's statement yesterday, where I talked about Conservative neglect of indigenous peoples. Here we are again. The very first thing that the Conservative government chooses to do upon entering this House is to take another slap at the indigenous community and hit them hard, neglect them through failure to consult with them, as would be normally expected under the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples clauses regarding free, prior, and informed consent, and they are now withdrawing a major program that has had a significantly positive effect in the indigenous community without any consultation, without any mandate from the indigenous community to do this.

I'm disappointed that I'm here talking about this, but I think it's very important that we spend a few minutes in this House addressing why the climate leadership program was particularly important to the indigenous community. The indigenous people, of course, in this province have a very particular and special relationship to the land. It sustained their communities in this province, or what we now call this province, for some 15,000 or 16,000 years. It has helped them to develop healthy, positive communities, societies that were well known for their generosity, for their trade all across North America over vast distances, for their respect for children, and their desire to pass on a positive world to the children that they brought in, whom they received as gifts from God.

If you do receive a gift from God, you have some responsibility in the indigenous community to make sure that you honour that gift. One of the things that you want to honour is you pass on a world that that child can live in in a sustainable and healthy way. For the Conservatives to come in now and to take a shot at that world and to say that it doesn't really matter if we destroy the world, doesn't really matter if we pollute the Earth, doesn't really matter if we create a climate in which forest fires begin to ravage the land and begin to destroy the forests and kill the animals – it was noted just yesterday by the minister of agriculture that the number of forest fires in Alberta this year is substantially, almost 50 per cent, higher than the number of forest fires that is expected normally in this period of time, but that doesn't seem to matter. It's just indigenous people: that seems to be the attitude.

I want to tell you a little bit about some of the things that the indigenous community has done with the dollars that were set aside for them. Over the last two years approximately \$85 million was set aside in the indigenous climate leadership program. That allowed somewhere in the neighbourhood of about 250 different projects to be implemented in indigenous communities in the province of Alberta.

I can tell you right now that there are 48 First Nations in this province, and I am proud to be the only minister ever to have visited all 48 of them. I can tell you that over 30 of those nations have put up solar panels in the last two years, or have begun the process of putting up solar panels. I can also tell you that all 48, every single First Nation in the ridings of the members sitting across from me now, have benefited from the climate leadership program in some way or another, whether that be through renewable energy projects, through energy efficiency projects, or climate leadership capacity building projects. Every single person who has a First Nations or a Métis settlement or a friendship centre in their community across the floor has just told those people that we are going to take those dollars away from you and we are going to go in and we are going to simply make a change without any consultation and without any care. Back to Conservative neglect again after so many years.

I just want to tell you a little bit about some of the projects that have been developed as a result of the climate leadership plan across this province because I want to tell you about the significance of those plans. Of course, we are concerned about the greenhouse gases. We know that the greenhouse gases have been dramatically reduced through the use of the solar panels and the energy efficiency programs that all of these indigenous communities have put together. But there are other benefits as well, and that's why I want to speak a little bit to some of the particular projects that have happened in this province.

One of the communities that was very much ahead of the game with regard to solar panels was the Montana band down in the Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin riding that is represented by the Minister of Indigenous Relations. They were one of the very first nations to put solar panels up on top of their community building. They told me at the time, when they put those solar panels up, that they saved approximately \$2,000 a month on electrical costs in their public building. This was their very first project. They have added more subsequently. That means that there's now about \$24,000 a year that they can now use not to pay off some utility bill but to actually develop things in their community.

I can tell you one of things that they did develop in their community. They developed a program called the Green Arrow energy program, where they trained individuals from the Montana band in working in the renewable energy sector. They had a very successful program. In fact, at one point they admitted 12 people to their program and graduated 14 because they slipped two in along the way and graduated more people than they originally had been paid for just because they were trying to be as efficient as possible with the dollars. What's happened now is that not only have they reduced their utility costs and therefore have more money for things like schooling and public housing and so on, but they've also generated income in the community through having green employment and creating a company that now moves around the province of Alberta providing green energy projects for the rest of the province. All of the support for those kind of initiatives are gone.

**10:50**

Just to mention the other three bands at Maskwacis. For example, Louis Bull was one of the very first to put up solar panels in their communities as well, putting them up on the daycare, putting them up on the public buildings, again reducing their utility costs.

Ermineskin did a solar array behind their mall that's free standing and has built one-third of what is possible in that area, with the plans that they were going to add the next two pieces coming along, but that was dependent on the climate leadership plan, so a knife just went in the back of the Ermineskin band.

Samson band has already received a contract for a one megawatt solar field, and have plans with Ermineskin to build a 50-megawatt solar field. All of these are the kinds of things that I think are very important for us to understand. These are community development projects that provide them with some financial security, reduce their utility bills, and help them to build their community in a positive way that's consistent with their value system with regard to the Earth and to their children.

I want to go on and tell you about a few other communities because I think there are a few other points that need to be made. Fort Chip has been mentioned in this House as having developed a brand new company that will seek to build a solar field that will allow them to move off diesel. This is very important. Fort Chip is a fly-in community except for in the winter when you can get there by ice road, but it's very precarious.

One of the problems that they have in Fort Chip is that all of that diesel fuel has to be transported in. It's an extreme waste of energy because you physically have to move all of that energy up there and then use some of the worst form of carbon pollution in diesel fuel to provide some basic heat and lights for the community. They know that that's an inappropriate way to take care of their community, so they have decided that they themselves are going to build a utility so that they can have some kind of energy independence, and that's what's being taken away from them. That's what you're taking when you take away the climate leadership plan.

The other thing that they did in Fort Chip. They have a serious problem with food security in the northern communities, and the cost of food in places like Fort Chip is exorbitant. For example, a four-litre jug of milk often costs \$25. How many of you would go into a store in the neighbourhood that you're in and buy a four-litre jug of milk and pay \$25 for it? I can tell you that most of you would turn around and walk right out of that store. It's a major problem. People need to eat. People need their food.

What they did is they made a decision to build their own grocery store and bring in food so that they could make sure that any profits that came out of the grocery store were returned to the community and that they weren't being overcharged for the food that came in. They then came to our climate leadership plan and said: in order to do this, we would really like to be able to buy the most efficient coolers so that when food is brought in, it can be sustained for a longer period of time and that we're not wasting energy on utilities. Our climate leadership plan was able to provide them with the dollars to build those coolers and to put solar panels on the roof of that grocery store.

We're now not only talking about the Earth and we're now not only talking about children; we're talking about food security. That's what you're taking away when you take away the climate leadership plan. You are punching in the food security in northern communities. You are forcing them to remain on diesel, which, by the way, is problematic in terms of our agreements with other provinces and the national government in this country, where we have agreed already as a province to help reduce diesel use in northern communities. As well as harming the indigenous communities, you're also slapping the face of other governments across this country who we have agreed to work with to reduce diesel.

I think it's really important that we pay attention not only to the fact that the climate leadership plan is consistent in the indigenous

community with their values and ethics but provides them with a stronger financial place from which they can build their communities. It provides them a place in which they can have food security for their families, and, very importantly, it provides them a place in which they can train their members and employ their members to ensure that they have good jobs to sustain their families for many years to come.

One of the other aspects of the climate leadership plan that I think is very important is that monies from that climate leadership plan were being used to help reduce our coal usage in this province. One of those coal plants, of course, that many of you would know about is in Wabamun, which is the location of Paul band. Paul band tells me that they had approximately 87 members who were employees of the coal-burning plant and the electricity generation and that they were dependent on that. So the fact that money was taken from the climate leadership plan to help them transition to a new economy and to retrain those people was extremely important. Paul band is a small band. Eighty-seven people losing their jobs because you're taking away the money from the climate leadership plan is absolutely devastating to that community, and they need those dollars to transition from working in the coal industry to working in other kinds of industries.

Now, we know that those coal plants were going anyways. We know that when the Premier was in Ottawa along with Prime Minister Harper, they were shutting down all those coal plants without any money being given to the communities. Zero dollars were assigned to those communities to help them transition. It was the typical Conservative, "Your business failed. Go find a new job. Too bad. It's not government's responsibility." We came along and said, "Look, we understand. We're doing this for the benefit of all people in this province, so we're going to help you make a transition." We stepped up when we knew that people were going to have a hard time losing those coal plants, and now you have stepped in and said to them, "You no longer will have dollars to help make that transition." It's not just happening in Wabamun; it's happening in Hanna. It's happening in other places in this province, and you have taken money away from all of them.

The story of Conservative neglect of what happens on the ground in the communities in which we live every day is one which I fear is going to be the story of this government. This government is going to spend the next four years simply getting on with its ideological implementation of 1950s policies and thoughts and is going to totally ignore what that means to the people who are living in that community right now.

Let me tell you a little bit more about some of the other communities that have benefited from the climate leadership plan. [Mr. Feehan's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and a huge thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for sharing with us the many stories from the communities about the projects that had impacted them based on our climate leadership plan. I know that he spent so much time working with the indigenous community and time across all 48 nations in this beautiful province, and I would like it if he could tell me a little bit more about some of the people and their stories and why this is important to them.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Feehan:** Rutherford, but that's okay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** My apologies. Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Great. Thank you. Thank you very much for the question. I think it's really important that we focus on the people who are going to be impacted by this kind of decision. We have a responsibility as government of course to direct policy, to make changes in this province that will help us to build this province up. We do have a responsibility to build it up economically, financially, but we also have a responsibility to ensure the well-being of people in this province, that we don't built a sports car engine and then put it into a VW bug. It doesn't work that way. It falls apart, and a lot of people get hurt when you do that.

So we need to ensure that when we make our policy decisions, if we are focused on finances and economic outcomes in this province – as we rightfully should be – that it benefits all people, that it's built to fit the vehicle in which all of us are travelling. As soon as we forget that, then we end up in this dangerous place, where the engine becomes the danger to the people in the car. That's exactly what's happening here under this conservative government. They're forgetting the people on the ground. They're forgetting the people who are most vulnerable.

11:00

I can tell you that given the history of oppression of indigenous people in this province, indigenous people are amongst the most vulnerable people in this province. I can tell you that when I go to these communities and I see them devoted to taking care of the Earth and ensuring that they can pass it on to their children, I can see that they are people who deserve and need our support in ensuring that their values and their respect for the Earth and for their children are preserved and that we actually incorporate those values in our way of ruling in this province.

I was up at Little Red River Cree not that long ago, where they put up solar panels all across their public buildings, on their chief and council chambers and on some of their administration buildings. I can tell you a little bit about Little Red River Cree. It has three different sites: John D'Or Prairie, where the council chambers are; Fox Lake, which requires that you drive, first of all, of course, the 75 kilometres on the gravel road to get to John D'Or Prairie, then you take a small road along the river, Peace River, that's basically just hacked through the bush – it's not a road at all; it's some ruts where the trees have been cleared – for maybe half an hour or so until you get to a small place, where a little two-car ferry will take you across the Peace River to the Fox Lake reserve, where many people live and many people live traditional lifestyles, a community that's still rooted in the earth, that still largely survives by hunting, fishing, and trapping. Yet that community decided to take the time to explore climate leadership and made the decision that their dollars were well spent on solar panels, and only through our help were they able to make that final decision to put those up. I go to a community like that, where I see the families gathering every summer at their festival, where they celebrate together and bring the children in and have games and fairs all day long, and everybody camps in these tents around the big field in Fox Lake. I know that on average the incomes in that community are probably less than \$20,000 a year, yet they understood that they need to take care of the Earth that they're going to pass on to their children, and they made the investment in solar panels in their communities.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Through you to all the members of the House, I just want to wish you all a very good morning and also take this opportunity to wish a very happy Ramadan Mubarak to each and every one of you.

I see that Sadie is on her way out. I just wanted to thank Sadie for coming here today because, like the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, whenever I have the opportunity to meet with children in my constituency, I always remind them that regardless of their age, they are equally as important as any other constituent and deserve to be represented. And I always encourage them to reach out to their elected representatives, whether that be at the municipal, provincial, or federal level, or their school board trustee, and to talk to them, to get engaged in the political process, and that if they have an idea on how to make their community a better place, they talk to their elected representative and make sure that their voice is heard.

I want to take a step back because I want to remind us all about the history that we've lived here in this province, reminding us that we had a Conservative government for 44 years prior to the last New Democratic Party government.

I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for reminding us of the incredible neglect when it came to indigenous peoples here in the province and how important it is that we continue to acknowledge that we are on treaty lands and that we live in this space, this area, this beautiful place, Mother Earth, and we share that with indigenous people.

At the end of the day, I think that a good majority of Albertans really care about the environment and where we're headed. I think it's undisputed that climate change is real. There are a few people that are just holding on to this climate change denial idea, but the vast majority of Albertans really do care about the environment and climate change. It's sad because we see other jurisdictions not only in North America but all across the world who are far ahead of us when it comes to actually addressing what is happening with climate change here on this Earth.

I just want to remind us. I remember when I was younger than I am now – I'm getting there. I'm getting there. You know, I'm 45, so getting up there. I remember being in my 20s when the city of Edmonton actually implemented the recycling program, the blue box recycling program. And I remember that there were a few people who were, like: "Oh, my goodness; now we're going to have to have this blue box, and we're going to have to put it at the curb along with our garbage. Oh, what a fiasco. This is horrible. Why do we have to do this?"

But the reality is that at that time the municipal government made a decision that was going to impact the lives of all Edmontonians with this policy, and not only did it do that, but it actually encouraged this brand new culture of caring more for our Earth through recycling – recycling – it started just with recycling. Now it's expanded to the four Rs – and I may need some help with this one – reduce, reuse, recycle . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Recover.

**Member Loyola:** . . . and recover. Thank you very much.

What I'm getting at with this – and people may be, like: well, what's he talking about? Don't worry; that often happens when I get up to speak. You know, the members across the way start thinking about: what's this guys talking about, to begin with? But the reason why I bring this up is because government policy helps drive us towards a new culture, a new way of behaviour that helps us to build the better world that we're seeking to build for everybody. That's why, like the blue box recycling program implemented by the city of Edmonton more than 20, 25 years ago now, that is what the climate leadership plan was designed to do as

well, to help us get further down the road with building a better world for all Albertans so that we can address this reality of climate change that we're all experiencing.

I wanted to take an opportunity to talk a little bit about the climate leadership plan and really stress one thing that's so important. This was a plan that was designed in Alberta for Albertans. By passing Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, essentially what we're doing is that we're taking this Alberta-made plan where, as has already been expressed by other colleagues on this side of the House, revenue would stay in this province to help us with so many different programs, and now we're going to end up giving it all to the federal government. You know, that to me just seems so odd because the members across the way – I mean, it's no secret – have no love for our Prime Minister, but here they are with their very first bill, taking an Alberta-made plan where revenue would have stayed here in the province of Alberta, and they're just handing it off to the federal government. Congratulations. How ironic. This made-in-Alberta plan was helping so many Albertans.

**11:10**

But before I go on with that, I want to just talk a little bit about the four main policies that the climate leadership plan had all to do with. It was implementing a new price on greenhouse gas emissions, also known as carbon pricing, and it was going to phase out pollution from coal-generated electricity by 2030 and generate 30 per cent of electricity from renewable resources by 2030.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I just want to take this opportunity to quote Noah Farber, who was the acting president and CEO at the time of the Asthma Society of Canada, where he stated: "There is a direct link between the burning of coal and asthma exacerbation, hospital admissions, and untimely deaths not associated with climate change. The Alberta government has responded to protect the health of all Albertans, particularly those who suffer from respiratory diseases such as asthma. We are extremely pleased with the unwavering commitment the province has made today to ensure that the air we breathe is clean." Is clean.

This is what's so maddening about this bill: we don't know what this United Conservative government is going to do over the next four years to actually address climate change. Instead of proposing, they're just taking away something that the previous government had put in place.

I'm just kind of overwhelmed with sadness, to be quite honest, sadness for children like Sadie, my own children – I have two of my own – and all the children of Alberta who actually care. In schools today, you go to any school – and I'm sure that the members across the way go to the schools in their community as well, and they see young people who actually care about what's happening with the environment. You go to any school, any classroom, and there's some kind of environmental program that those children in those classrooms are talking about. They're doing their piece to address climate change in the classroom, most important being actually taking that information home and sharing it with their parents and their siblings.

I remind the members of this House that government policy is designed to complement and to help us move forward as a people, as a culture, to help us change our behaviour.

The climate leadership plan also was to cap oil sands emissions at 100 megatonnes per year, reduce methane emissions from upstream oil and gas production by 45 per cent from 2014 levels by the year 2025. Alberta was on track to cut more than 50 megatonnes of emissions over the next 10 years. That's the same as taking over 10.6 million cars off the road or nearly half the passenger vehicles



in all of Canada, and this is like eliminating the emissions of the Vancouver metro area three times over.

We were doing our piece. Yeah, it may have been small, but we were doing our part to address climate change. So when you repeal the carbon levy and the climate leadership program, this is essentially what you are taking away. To all the members across the way: what are you going to replace it with? What do you propose?

Let me tell you something. When our government came in – and I want to remind the members across the way that for 44 years we had an antagonistic relationship with all the different types of stakeholders that existed within our society: the environmentalists, the corporations, indigenous people. Everybody was out kind of competing for their own interests, and there was an antagonistic relationship. We brought everybody to the table, and we sat everybody down and said: let's work this out. That's the way that we truly move forward. As long as an antagonistic relationship exists, we're never going to be able to move forward, because we're all going to be fighting with each other.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind us all that we need to bring everybody to the table and keep talking about real solutions to address climate change. Again I want to ask the members across the way: what do you propose so that we can continue to move forward with making our environment more clean, more safe, better so that along with our children we're leaving them a world to look forward to, where we're taking care of the environment?

I also want to address the issue of the climate leadership plan and how it was supporting more than 7,300 jobs in just the first two years and how it was designed to have thousands of jobs and projects come in. I want to remind the members across the way that through the climate leadership plan and the money that was being collected here, the revenue would have stayed here in the province of Alberta. That was not going to general revenue; it was actually going to specific programs to help us diversify the economy.

I want to say that, you know, it is so important – it's so important – that we continue to diversify the economy. I'm sure that the members across the way have ideas of their own on how we can continue to do that. It's very important.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), are there any members with questions or comments? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for his comments. I shared a lot of them.

I do want to confirm that I believe the fourth R is "recover": reduce, reuse, recycle, recover. I believe there's some thinking that it should be "reform" as well, and I think that probably those go hand in hand.

I, too, recall the days in the city of Edmonton when the blue box recycling program came out and everybody complained about how much extra work it would be to sort the recycling from the garbage. Now we just realize that it's part of what we do. It's just habit to us now, because we know it's important. We know we're getting greater use out of our materials by recycling, and we just get used to doing it, right? It's part of what we do. In fact, there are many municipalities across this country and even within Alberta who do a lot of other things such as compost collection and such. You know, there are ways that things that seem difficult at first can then become something we're used to, and we all become more conscious of how to use our resources more responsibly and appropriately.

Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. I'm wondering if you could share a little bit. I'm interested in knowing a little bit more about maybe some of the feedback you received when you were on the doors, not just on the doors during the campaign but in the last few years, when the climate leadership plan was introduced. If you could tell us a little about the comments you were hearing from your constituents and perhaps the impact of eliminating the climate leadership plan and the carbon levy and what sort of impact that could potentially have on your constituents.

11:20

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Resoundingly, when I was out on the doorsteps of Edmonton-Ellerslie, I can't tell you the number of people that were really excited about solar and the potential for introducing more solar. There were already constituents in my riding, even before we were government, that had solar panels upon their roofs. People were excited about the possibility of doing this on their own home as well.

I want to get back to diversifying the economy because a big part of that was solar. I mean, if this bill goes through, I don't know if we can count on that anymore. I just want to remind us all about that. Just since the climate leadership plan was initiated, the solar industry has grown by 500 per cent. Installed solar capacity has increased from six megawatts in 2015 to 35 megawatts in 2018, about 3,100 solar installations have been completed, and more than 300 certified companies have installed solar projects across the province. Alberta has conserved enough energy to power a city the size of Leduc.

I just wanted to quote from John Gorman, president and CEO of the Canadian Solar Industries Association. In 2015 he said that Premier Notley's made-in-Alberta – stress "made-in-Alberta" – climate plan opens the door for billions of dollars in renewable investment. For too long, discussions about climate change have focused on what we can't do, but Alberta has tremendous renewable energy resources, technology. Costs keep falling, and it's time to focus on what we can do. Solar energy is ready to be a big contributor to a strong and clean Alberta economy.

You know, I want to take this opportunity to also even mention that I remember a couple years ago I was visiting with members of the Palestinian community here in the city of Edmonton, and one of the members from the community had come to me and said: okay; well, we've started our own small business where our plan is to help Albertans actually make these solar installations and put them on their homes. Of course, there are a number of things that had to be worked out between municipalities and the province, and those were on their way. I hope that this government will continue to work towards that because there are business interests, small-business interests out there that are very much interested in moving this forward because everybody sees how important it is as their way of dealing with climate change.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak on this matter? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand and to speak on Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax. I have a few concerns and a few thoughts around this, especially when it comes to looking at the economic impact. I know this government has been very clear. When they campaigned, they campaigned on the economy, and they campaigned on jobs, and they campaigned on pipelines, which is all great when you want to just focus on the oil

and gas industry, but the reality of it is that we have to diversify in this province. Part of diversifying is looking at green energy, and it is looking at how in Alberta, with the plan that was created, we were able to start looking at the green energy diversification options. We were looking at wind and solar and hydro and other aspects of the energy industry outside of the oil and gas industry.

Yes, oil and gas is very, very important. I mean, it's one of my biggest drivers for my riding. I have the heartland, that I am partnered up to, so of course I recognize how important diversification even in that area is around, like, the petrochemical diversification projects, that we were also looking at when we were government.

But the key part of this, from an economic analysis, is the fact that we had a whole bunch of great start-ups that were happening in the province. We had a whole bunch of people that were working in the different trades that, due to the economy, were laid off or were not able to find the jobs in the oil and gas industry that they had normally had, so they were looking at diversifying, and they were looking at going back and getting education around how to look at green energy. A lot of that was paid through the Alberta carbon tax.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

So my question to this government would be: when you get rid of the Alberta carbon tax and you replace it with the federal carbon tax and you take revenue streams that are being created by Albertans to pay for resources within Alberta and that money goes federally, how does that help drive the economy in Alberta? What is the economic impact around all of those green energy jobs, around all the different diversification and the different options that we were looking at when we were government? Where do they go? What happens to those people? What happens to those jobs? Are those people just supposed to magically have a new job? Has this government looked at the other options around how you're going to transition the people you have now taken this resource from, and have you offered them or discussed with them or consulted with them around what kind of training they're going to need or what other options there are going to be?

You can't just decide that you're going to remove something and not have a plan to replace it. I haven't heard what that plan is. All I've heard is that this is going to be great for – it's a \$1.5 billion tax cut. It will remove the rebates for low-income families or middle-income families, which will also impact those families and those working people of Alberta. We've heard that the money that was being used from the Alberta carbon tax to pay for LRTs, to pay for retraining in green energy, for energy diversification projects will no longer be provided to those programs and will actually go into general revenue, which maybe makes your bottom line look really good, but it sure doesn't help the working people of this province. So I'm very concerned about the economic impact. I'm very concerned about how this is actually going to impact working Albertans.

Because of that, I would like to introduce a referral amendment and move that the motion for second reading of Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

I have the appropriate number of copies. I'll just wait until you have the original, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This will be referred to as amendment REF1.

Please proceed, hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, just to clarify for all the new members in the House, because this is a referral amendment, it will now, if passed, be referred to the committee for economic futures. The reason behind that is, again, that this new government has been very clear that they want to hear from Albertans, that they're open to listening, that they're open to consultation. Because of that, I think it's extremely important that this bill get referred to committee so that we can hear from our green energy sector, so that we can hear from our indigenous brothers and sisters around how this is going to impact them, so that we can hear from working Albertans, our low-income to middle-income Albertans who will no longer get the rebate, so that we can actually see from an economic analysis what the impact of getting rid of this carbon tax will actually be on the working people of Alberta.

11:30

The government has been great about talking about how it means that, you know, it will help Albertans not have to pay taxes, but the reality of it is that the federal tax is going to come in. I understand that this government has plans around that as well, but right now there are some very important infrastructure projects that are currently being paid by the Alberta carbon tax.

It is paying for critical transit. It's paying for infrastructure projects. That includes the Springbank project, which I believe is very important to people in Calgary. There's also a \$400 million promise to the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton for transit projects beginning in 2027. So my questions would be: are all of those projects going to be eliminated? Are you going to cancel construction? Are you going to put all of those people out of work? We've already seen projects and contracts that have been put on hold by this government, which has also contributed to significant economic impacts for many of the people living in Alberta, specifically the superlab.

I would encourage every single member in this Chamber to really consider that if you're going to be an open and transparent and listening government, you refer this to committee, similar to some of the information we've been hearing around standing orders with private members' bills. If you're so open to doing that in committee, why wouldn't you be open to having further dialogue here on this bill at Economic Future?

In saying that, I will sit down and allow other members to respond. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise and speak to the amendment because, of course, as I was expressing in my own response to the bill, I'm very concerned. I'm very, very, very concerned because, of course, we have not heard from this government what they propose to do in order to actually address climate change and the effects that it's having on Albertans. I mean, it's wonderful that they've come in and they want to do this, but without actually proposing what they're going to replace it with, this just seems maddening to me. I'm really hoping that we can pass this amendment because I think it's absolutely essential.

I can't tell you the number of times that I personally was in this House over the last four years – you know, I see the Minister of Transportation looking over here with a bright smile, like he always does, and even from his own lips he was saying how important it was that we refer this important matter to committee, that we get more feedback, and that we hear from Albertans. Now, that's not a direct quote, of course, but more or less.

Madam Speaker, through you to all the members of this House, this is just not ready to move forward. I understand the Premier is really excited about getting this bill here passed. I get it – I get it – but we're just not ready. Albertans aren't ready. Future Albertans aren't ready. Indigenous communities are not ready. It's imperative that this here government takes this opportunity to actually hear from all communities, not just the few stakeholders that they choose to represent.

Now, I see some faces on the other side, and I'm sure that they know people in their own constituencies that actually agree with the climate leadership plan. You can't deny me that – you can't deny me that – the same way I can't deny that people in my own constituency weren't very happy about the climate leadership plan. But it's fair that we hear from all Albertans, all of our constituents. More importantly, if you're going to repeal the climate leadership plan, then have something to replace it with. It's our duty, our responsibility to actually propose, to build a better future, not just repeal what the previous government has done.

Members of this House, I ask you to please support this amendment. Let's send it to committee. Let's keep working on what we're going to do to address climate change here in the province of Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for his comments and to the mover of this referral amendment for proposing it. You know, I hadn't actually thought about referring to committee, but upon reflection on this, I think it makes good sense. I think we – I'm going to guess about a hundred times, maybe more – heard arguments for referring to committee because members then in the opposition had great ideas on how we could engage and consult with Albertans on a variety of issues, and I imagine that this would be an excellent opportunity for them to be able to do that.

So my question to the hon. member or, actually, I guess, to other speakers on the other side after we're done with this exchange on 29(2)(a) would be: what other types of consultation might be possible through this engagement around coming with a replacement model? Given the feedback that we heard over the last several years, the hon. member and myself, with regard to referral to committee and the importance of community engagement, what does he expect that government and committee members could engage in should this referral motion be accepted? What would that potential engagement look like, hon. member? Through you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, you know, having had the experience of being on standing committees here for the last four years, this would be at the design of the committee, which I think is quite appropriate, democratically speaking. Rather than one group of people deciding on how we are going to do this, it would go to committee, where the committee would decide who they would like to engage, who they would like

to invite to actually speak to the committee, to take the opportunity to come and get more research and understanding, of course, and then if they so choose, they could then decide on what kind of consultation process they would like to engage in in order to actually hear from Albertans.

Maybe they would do visits to a number of communities throughout the province. I would suggest that they even visit with indigenous communities. As we heard from my colleague here from Edmonton-Rutherford, they are desperate for their voice to be heard by this government, you know. Then at that opportunity we would be able to actually hear from Albertans, really, not only on just, "Okay; well, we are going to change the climate leadership plan," but then, "What are we going to replace it with?" Then the government would have a better footing to actually come into this House and propose something new.

At the end of the day, as I remind the members and as I said in a previous statement, this is about working together. If this government is going to sit here in front of us and just return to the old ways of those 44 years of Progressive Conservative government here in this province, where people, stakeholders, and communities had antagonistic relationships, then we're in for a very poor future. I want to beg the members across the way: if anything, please, please, don't do that. Let us not return to those antagonistic relationships, where we're all just fighting with one another.

**11:40**

Bring people to the table, and there could be no better way to do that than by sending this bill to committee. You could then invite stakeholders from all across the province if you wanted to, people from all different kinds of communities, hear from them all. I can't tell you the number of times we heard this from members across the way. This is your opportunity now to do what you wanted so desperately to do with so many of the bills that we introduced.

So what's going to happen, Members? Are you going to follow through with the things that you used to say, or are you going to shut this down?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on this amendment. The opposition is unfortunately out of gas already, fairly early in this term. It's kind of sad to see. The words that we heard from across the aisle just now about bringing people to the table actually resonated with me. We just had an election where the largest number of Albertans in the history of our province came to the table, and they elected a government whose main promise was to get rid of the carbon tax. Albertans in every riding, in every municipality across this province heard that message and gave a huge mandate to this government to get rid of the carbon tax. Now, that was a pretty big consultation. That was two years. Almost no one was unaware of what we are going to do.

Let's just for comparison contrast that to what happened four years ago when the previous government told the biggest political lie in the history of Alberta by bringing in the carbon tax without mentioning a word about it before they did. So, yes, we are different than what they were doing. We actually told the truth. We put it in black and white. We put it out there for the whole world to see. We talked about it. I'm sure the folks across the aisle were tired of us talking about it. I'm pretty sure that I heard them say in this room how tired they were of us talking about getting rid of the carbon tax.

Albertans have rendered their decision. They disagree with the carbon tax. They want it gone. It was an overwhelming decision by the people of Alberta. Yes, we brought people to the table all right, and they came out in droves. Again, the largest turnout in the history

of Alberta for an election. What was the main promise that they came out for? To scrap the carbon tax.

It was exactly the opposite of what happened four years ago. You know what? That's probably the reason why the first one-and-done government in the history of Alberta just finished, because they brought in the biggest political lie in the history of Alberta and made it a centrepiece of their government. They called it the climate leadership plan, that does nothing for the climate.

There are 183,000 Albertans out of work right now, the highest unemployment amongst young people, an abysmal record of governing this province. The folks there talk about what happened before they arrived. Frankly, over the average of the 40-odd years, I'll tell you that what we had in Alberta was prosperity. I'll tell you that what we've had in the last four years is unemployment, people leaving the province instead of coming, businesses closing, \$80 billion worth of investment going out the door.

Madam Speaker, the folks there are trying to revise history, but the problem is that the history is so recent, everybody still remembers. People couldn't wait to get a new government in this time. In fact, I would dare say that they started shopping for a new government about two, three years ago because they could see the direction that the previous gang was taking us, and it wasn't a good direction. It was a direction where 183,000 people are now out of work.

Now, I don't know. Probably in some cases there's more than one in a family, but that's over a hundred thousand families without a paycheque and up to 180,000 families missing a paycheque. In some cases it was the only paycheque, in some cases it was one of two or three, but either way it hurt the family. It made it harder for them to support themselves. It made it harder for them to send their kids to university. It made it harder for them to buy the groceries, and if that didn't add insult to injury, the carbon tax made those groceries more expensive because the grocery store got taxed on keeping the cold things cold and the warm things warm. The grocery store paid more for the cold things and the warm things because most of them arrived on the back of a truck, which is more expensive because of the carbon tax.

And when the people weren't at the grocery store paying more for their goods because of the carbon tax, they were at home paying more to keep warm in the winter for the carbon tax. The carbon tax treated Albertans like staying warm in the winter was a luxury rather than a necessity. They treated Albertans like driving to work was a luxury rather than a necessity. I remember the leader of that party telling Albertans: walk or take the bus. I'm sure that went over really well in rural Alberta. I'll tell you what: it didn't go over very well in urban Alberta, where I live, and there are some buses there. But I can tell you that in rural Alberta there is no choice.

Yet the government treated Albertans with disdain, with the lead of that attitude being the carbon tax. They told Albertans that they were the embarrassing cousins in Canada, and that's why they had to be punished with a carbon tax. They told Albertans that they weren't as good as other energy-producing jurisdictions and ignored the fact that Alberta has the highest environmental standards, the highest human rights standards, the highest quality of living amongst energy-producing jurisdictions in the world. Yes, we did consult. We brought people to the table, and, Madam Speaker, they came to the table, and what they said is: we choose the political party that promises to get rid of the carbon tax.

Now they want to relitigate the last election, that they just got thumped in, frankly. They lost it with prejudice. They were, after one term in office, for the first time in Alberta, thrown out, and they think that they want to relitigate that election with this amendment. Madam Speaker, they should be ashamed. Now, I appreciate that they have to hold on to some shred of dignity, because they put all

their hopes and dreams for their political futures in a program that Albertans rejected severely. So I understand them voting against the repeal of the carbon tax, because they have to have some pride. They have to be able to go home and tell people: I believe some of what I said in the last four years. I get that. But to try to delay this after Albertans, in such a resounding way, have endorsed it with their vote at the ballot box? They should be ashamed. I mean, they've been doing this – they were in government for the last four years. They should be able to come up with something a little more creative than this.

I agree with the hon. member. There are times when you're in opposition when things should go to committee. You know what things should go to committee? Mostly here it's when the government doesn't tell Albertans about it before they do it. Greatest example: the carbon tax, that that government brought in without telling anyone about it. Here's another good example: Bill 6, that they dropped on Albertans without warning last time. Yeah, that stuff we talked about going to committee, and it sure should have gone to committee because Albertans weren't warned about it. They were frankly taken by surprise. They didn't like it. We had thousands of people in front of this building when they brought in Bill 6. Yeah, that would have been a great example to send to committee, but they didn't do it.

Madam Speaker, the comparisons that the good folks across the aisle just tried to make are in no way legitimate. This was the subject of the last election. There were many subjects, but this was a top-line message from the United Conservative Party in the last election. Albertans said: yes, please become government; please get rid of the carbon tax. That was a promise we made, and we're going to keep it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**11:50**

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much. I'd just like to thank the hon. Transportation minister for his comments. Certainly, I along with him and, I'm sure, all of my colleagues do not agree with this notice of amendment, sending it to committee. I think it was pretty perfectly clear in the last election that the people of Alberta, through consultation that we, of course, have had, rejected this carbon tax, rejected the penalties that were being imposed upon working families, rejected the extra cost to heat homes, to drive kids to hockey practice, the extra cost to live your lives in winter, that we do have here in Alberta.

You know, I think I'd like the hon. Transportation minister to maybe expand a little bit upon the challenges that many families have: having to pay extra to heat their homes, having to pay extra at the grocery store, having to pay extra for, really, the cost to live their lives. What we had found is that people that were on fixed incomes had less in their pocket. They had to make challenging choices because the carbon tax was affecting them in a way that was unprecedented. It was the largest tax grab in Alberta's history. If this group in the opposition cannot see that, then they're going to certainly be in that position for a long time to come. I'd like the hon. minister here to maybe touch a little bit on the struggles that families have been facing in his constituency, the stories that he has heard on the struggles about this carbon tax, and how it has affected those constituents.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. What the hon. member is asking about really points to the fact that this has made life more

difficult, more expensive for Albertans, not only directly through everything they buy being more expensive but through the government services they get. After imposing the carbon tax, the biggest tax increase in history, the government has actually run \$6 billion, \$8 billion, \$10 billion a year deficits. Frankly, the biggest threat to the ongoing delivery of public services to Albertans is the added burden of paying the interest on that debt besides the cost of providing those services.

The government, after putting in place the biggest tax grab in the history of Alberta, still spent all of that and another \$6 billion or \$8 billion or \$10 billion, depending upon the year, on top of that, which now burdens Albertans with in the neighbourhood of \$2 billion a year. Certainly, if they would have got re-elected, it would have become \$4 billion a year in interest payments, and that's without paying any of the principal. That's before you hire your first teacher, your first nurse, your first doctor, before you provide your first social service for Albertans, all services which they deserve and demand and need. This previous government has put all of that at risk with the reckless financial track record that they've had.

Yet now they want to delay getting rid of some of the damage that they've done by getting rid of the carbon tax. You know, they're asking us to delay what Albertans have asked for. They're asking for us to delay what Albertans have said quite clearly that they want. They had a clear choice. I will give the opposition credit for one thing. In the last election they gave Albertans a clear choice: work on the jobs, the environment, the economy, and have a responsible environmental plan, instead of one that doesn't do anything and makes everything more expensive, or let's get back to common sense, starting with scrapping the carbon tax.

Albertans asked for it. The folks across the aisle, in this clear, clear question in the last election, had their chance. Albertans chose differently. Now today, amazingly, they come in here, frankly disrespecting that choice that Albertans made. Again, if they want to vote against scrapping the carbon tax, well, then that would just confirm in most Albertans' minds that Albertans made the right decision at the ballot box, because it would be really disrespecting not a close decision but a very wide decision in the last election on a very clear question, and a key part of that clear question was to keep or get rid of the carbon tax. Albertans chose to get rid of it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any more members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise on this, and I'd like to pick up on some of the comments from some of my colleagues. I think they spoke very eloquently and very well to some of the issues that were raised here, particularly on this issue of going back to the committee. I'd like to actually echo the comments from my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who said that we are actually not here to relitigate the issue of the carbon tax. I agree that, you know, that was clearly an election issue. It was probably the most clear policy platform position that the members on the other side took. There was a lot of other stuff that was very unclear, but that one was very clear.

But I think the question that has not been put to Albertans yet is the question of: what is the plan to replace it? You know what? We can talk all we want about: oh, yes, the election decision was very clear, and Albertans want to revoke the carbon tax. You know what? I can't disagree that that was the outcome although I do want to highlight that that was not the outcome for the constituents in my riding or for the constituents in the ridings of my colleagues here. In fact, the constituents in my riding very much understood that we

have a responsibility to take some action. While nobody likes to have to pay more in a tax, they understood that we are part of a collective, we're part of a society. We have obligations to do things looking to our future.

My constituents actually did not vote against the carbon tax, so I do have a responsibility when I am standing in this Assembly to represent their interests as well. To say that just because the members on the other side's constituents voted to scrap the carbon tax – I have an obligation as the representative for the constituents of Edmonton-Whitemud to stand up and represent their views, which were actually to not scrap the carbon tax but to move forward with the climate leadership plan. So I am going to take my opportunity and my responsibility when I am in the Assembly very seriously, and I'm going to advocate for my constituents. I want to say that.

But I do want to talk about, again going back to the point that perhaps – we're probably going to be voted down on this. We're pretty sure. It's pretty clear that, you know, the carbon tax will be repealed if you ask the Premier. He seemed to already know that a couple of weeks ago. He even seemed to know when we were going to make that decision, which is quite remarkable. That's probably going to happen.

The question that lingers and, if the members on the other side had been listening to the eloquent comments from my colleagues, the question that keeps coming up and the one that I'm going to keep talking about is: what is the plan? If we are talking about repealing a carbon tax, that's one element – that's one element – of the climate leadership plan. That was a tax, absolutely. Albertans did have to pay for it, and a lot of low-income and middle-income Albertans received a rebate because of it. But it was part of a plan.

It was part of an investment in our future, in our future generations, and in our children. It was part of a decision to say: if we want to make renewable resources available, an option for Albertans to use, we're going to have to invest in them. Investing in them, as the members from the other side will know, takes money. How do you do that? Well, you have to invest in green energy, green resources, and green renewable sources, and we have to do that by spending some money. You know what? That has to come from a commitment by all Albertans as a whole, as a collective, that we are going to make a decision about planning for our future.

When we're talking about referring to a committee, I think it is very important to refer that question to the committee: "Okay. Let's hear from Albertans. If we're going to scrap the carbon tax, what are we replacing it with? What is our commitment to the future? What is our plan for the future with respect to climate change?"

I want to go back to the fundamentals. It seems to me sometimes a little bit disappointing that we still have to talk about the fundamentals of climate change. I actually don't subscribe to the theory that people who object to the carbon tax are climate change deniers. I don't think that's the case. But I think that there's an unwillingness, which we all tend to have, to not want to do the difficult things we have to do to invest in our future. Hey, I have a hard time getting up every day and committing to working out. I don't do it every day. It's not the most fun thing I have to do, but I know it's important for the future of my health. This is something that we have to do. It's a pain that we have to . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the House is now adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:59 a.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 28, 2019

Day 4

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 28, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a school group from Landing Trail intermediate school of Athabasca. They are accompanied by their teachers: Shauna Bredo, Heather Gulka, and Dallas Fuchs. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you and welcome. Had the chance of saying a brief hello. Mr. Fuchs' parents are constituents of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. It's a pleasure to have you.

The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a couple of constituents from my riding of Taber-Warner. I'd like to have them please rise as I say their names. I would like to introduce Melody Garner-Skiba, the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers; Caitlin Sparrow, with Kate Andrews high school; Janae Smyth with Kate Andrews high school as well; and Colleen Gensorek, with Kate Andrews high school as well. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Member. It's my hope that the sugar beet growers can make you just a little bit sweeter, sir.

Edmonton-Whitemud, please.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two guests in the gallery today. Kathy Rickett is the director of Edmonton northwest early learning and child centre, located in the fantastic riding of Edmonton-Glenora. Deborah Fehr is the pedagogical partner for the centre, who coaches the centre in implementing Flight, Alberta's early learning and child care framework, and, I understand, also a constituent of the wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. The centre is one of 100 across the province that is part of the \$25-per-day daycare pilot program implemented by the previous government. The centre offers exceptional quality and affordable child care to working families. I would like to ask Kathy and Deborah to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to stand before you and introduce my aunt and uncle Chuck and Cindy Harper. They've come all the way from Vernon, British Columbia; they used to live in Calgary, Alberta. Although they are not blood relatives to me, they essentially have been like a second mother and father to myself and the minister of environment and worked alongside my parents in helping to build the Mustard Seed down in Calgary and have dedicated their lives to the service of the poor in our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This being National Paramedic Services Week, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you Genevieve Marshall, an Edmonton metro EMS paramedic who worked for four years in rural Alberta before coming to serve here in Edmonton since 2008. She is the co-chair of the Edmonton metro section of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. This being perhaps my last opportunity to make an introduction in this House, it's an honour to recognize her service and that of all her colleagues during this week. I'd ask that all give her the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mark Jones, the CEO of the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre. Mark is not only the advocacy centre's CEO but also a long-time family friend. The work that he does, which is the sister organization to Sheldon Kennedy's organization in Calgary, supports the recovery of youth and the families associated with them who have suffered abuse, helping promise them the possibility of a healthy future. Mark, I ask that you rise and receive the traditional and warm welcome from this House.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

### High School Graduation 2019

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today and congratulate the graduating class of 2019. High school commencement ceremonies have been held over successive weekends in Grande Prairie at Peace Wapiti academy, Grande Prairie composite high school, Charles Spencer high school, l'école Nouvelle Frontière, and St. Joseph Catholic high school.

It was a tremendously proud moment for me and my husband, Serge, along with our family to celebrate this past weekend the commencement of our son Alexander from Charles Spencer high school. I would like to take this opportunity to thank his teachers for their investment in the children and their excellent instruction. I know our children have been challenged and supported to grow in their logic and reasoning skills as well as their extracurricular pursuits, including athletics and music. Thank you to each member of the faculty and staff for your personal investment in our youth. We are blessed to live in such a vibrant community and grateful to celebrate another graduation in our family personally.

I would like to commend all graduates from the city of Grande Prairie as well as across the province of Alberta on this achievement and wish them every success in their future endeavours. I wish to remind all graduates and their escorts to be safe and responsible in this season of celebration and to refrain from drinking and driving.

May is a very busy month in Grande Prairie. In addition to the high school commencement ceremonies, Grande Prairie is once again hosting Stompede. Yes, I said Stompede, not stampede. That was not an accident. Stompede is our annual rodeo from May 29 to June 2. Held at Evergreen Park, Stompede events include rodeo and chuckwagon events as well as a midway. Recent years have seen as many as 50,000 people attending over the five days of Stompede. This event was first held in Grande Prairie in 1977, and we celebrated our millionth visitor in 2014. The chuckwagon races at Stompede serve as the opening event of the World Professional

Chuckwagon Association's season. I'm excited to attend this weekend as the new Member for Grande Prairie, and I would like to wish everyone a successful run in their competitions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is rising.

### Affordable Child Care

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to have Kathy Rickett and Deborah Fehr of the Edmonton northwest early learning and child care centre in the Chamber today. Just recently I met with them about our government's \$25-per-day daycare program and heard incredible stories about the difference affordable child care has made for families across Alberta.

Because of our investments, 100 \$25-per-day child care centres like theirs have helped almost 6,000 children, and 1,200 more parents are able to enter the workforce. Albertans don't need to choose between diapers and paying their child care bills. Families don't have to make a second mortgage payment every month just for child care costs. Women, like myself, who want to return to work or have to return to work have the opportunity to do so.

But for far too long this hasn't been possible. Working parents in Alberta have been left behind by previous Conservative governments that believe investing in affordable and high-quality child care is a waste. The Premier himself has openly criticized affordable child care and has said that he prefers, quote, a parent at home. End quote. We all know what that means. It means the mother should stay home. While for some families having a parent stay at home is the right choice, the point is that there should be a choice. It should not be imposed on Alberta families or specifically women because of the lack of affordable and accessible child care.

There was no mention of child care in the throne speech or in the UCP platform. This government has clearly shown that they don't want to make life more affordable for families. They are more committed to tax cuts for corporations than they are to the care of our children. This government says that they care about jobs, but they're ignoring that one of the largest barriers to women participating fully in the workplace is affordable child care. It seems that only some workers are worthy of this government's attention, and it isn't women.

I will continue to advocate for accessible child care so that all Alberta families have the freedom to make the choice that is right for them.

### Provincial Election 2019

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, in the recent election I personally knocked on almost every door in Calgary-Klein, and I almost completed that feat twice. At the doors I talked with hundreds of people who were either facing unemployment or whose small businesses were struggling. If not personally impacted by the downturn, they knew someone who was going through tough times. I heard of students graduating university looking at moving out of the province because there was no employment for them here or parents forced into early retirement with insufficient savings.

1:40

My constituents elected me because of our plan to restore business confidence in Alberta and to get Alberta back to work. That's why I'm happy to say that our government has wasted no time in pulling the levers that will allow for prosperity and growth to return to Alberta. The acts proposed – Bill 1, repealing the carbon tax act; Bill 2, make Alberta open for business; Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut act; and Bill 4, red tape reduction act – are a solid

start to fulfilling our duties of restoring investor confidence and helping Alberta grow. Promise made, promise kept.

I made an additional promise at the doors. Contrary to the rhetoric that they were hearing from our opponents, my constituents did not have to choose between a strong economy and excellence in government services nor supports for the vulnerable. In fact, we cannot have one without the other. A strong economy allows the opportunity for us to help build up our community. That is why I'm so proud of what I have dubbed our compassion platform and the eagerness of this government to immediately start to invest in supports for mental health and addiction recovery. I look forward to fulfilling my promise to my community and always being a strong voice for the vulnerable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Affordable Housing

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since this is the first time that I've spoken in the 30th Legislature, I just want to congratulate all the members on their election; and secondly, my heartfelt thanks to the citizens of Edmonton-Riverview for supporting me for a second term.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have a lot to be proud of. We are a province of hard-working citizens. We support our families and serve our communities. However, at times, despite our best efforts, we may need assistance. I know this first-hand. As a young single mom returning to school, I was fortunate to live in subsidized housing while completing my social work education. Subsidized housing meant my children and I lived in secure and appropriate housing while I laid the groundwork for a better future for our family. I would say that that investment on my behalf was well worth it. It was worth it for my three sons and the clients I served as a social worker and the constituents I now serve as an MLA.

Our NDP government took bold action while in office, investing \$1.2 billion in affordable housing. We created our province's very first affordable housing strategy. As the Minister of Seniors and Housing at that time, I was extremely proud to oversee this work. We know that having a place to call home is fundamental to a bright future.

Sadly, too many Albertans do not have the access to affordable housing that I had many years ago. Successive Conservative governments did not make affordable housing a priority, significantly neglecting the sector. Recently I was very disappointed to hear that the current Conservative government is intent on leaving many Albertans behind. Rather, they are rushing to give huge tax giveaways to corporations.

I call on this government to not repeat the past but, rather, ensure that Albertans have the affordable housing they need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

### High Level Area Wildfire Response

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the fires in northern Alberta rage on, we have heard countless stories of generosity of Albertans who are helping friends, neighbours, and strangers as they leave their homes. Alberta's generous spirit continues to be shown during the hard times across Alberta, and I am pleased to rise and celebrate this great Alberta trait.

As I watch these people help others by finding them places to stay, donating to not-for-profit organizations that support the evacuees, and volunteering at centres to make people comfortable,

it is easy for me to think of the outpouring of support Albertans gave to my very own community of Fort McMurray just three short years ago. I am proud to share that several of my community members are now returning the favour, packing trailers with supplies and delivering them to evacuees across northern Alberta, including all the way up to Fort Vermilion.

To the towns who have taken in these evacuees and have made them feel safe and provided for, you are doing a great service by making them temporarily part of your community. I am confident that they are extremely grateful for all you are doing.

To the organizations, big and small, that work to ensure evacuees have access to daily necessities while away from home, we are so incredibly grateful. Organizations such as the Red Cross and the High Level food bank have been accepting donations from across the province to ensure that these displaced families have everything they need to support their families.

Thank you to our front-line staff, including the firefighters who have come from across our country to assist as we fight these fires. I know that you will experience the heartfelt gratitude of Albertans and their generous spirit. You are, without a doubt, heroes.

Thank you.

### Labour Legislation

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that every worker deserves basic workplace rights to ensure that they go home safely at the end of the day, including workers who put food on our tables. I was dismayed when I heard that this government planned to roll back farm workers' rights with their third bill of this legislative session. I am glad to see that they are now looking at fall legislation. I would ask that they would reconsider these rollbacks altogether.

I'm very concerned about the plan to repeal Bill 6 and replace it with the proposed farm freedom and safety act. Despite indicating that they would launch comprehensive consultations for this act, they've already predetermined two crucial pieces of the legislation that will impact farm workers: farmers would be able to choose not to join the WCB system and instead purchase private insurance; small farms would be exempt from most employment legislation. Mr. Speaker, I'm confused. How can you have meaningful and comprehensive consultations if you have already determined the outcome?

Small farms, as we know, are the backbone of Alberta's agricultural industry. Exempting small farms from employment legislation would deny many farm workers basic protections. Do the people who help put food on our table not deserve workplace rights to be protected by WCB? This plan puts both farmers and farm workers at risk. Private insurance is designed for profit, not for the worker. These companies will favour farms with low claim rates, creating a culture of not reporting injuries, transferring the burden on to the worker. In addition, employers or paid farm workers will not be protected as they are under WCB from the liability of lawsuits resulting from workplace injuries or fatalities. One lawsuit can kill a family farm.

These rollbacks ignore the advice of the AgCoalition and the 28 agricultural produce groups it represents. Mr. Speaker, the previous government undertook extensive consultation with the AgCoalition and Albertans to create rules that make sense and that balance the need for flexibility for farmers and ranchers regarding safety with the need for a safe workplace for workers. Farm workers in other provinces have had workplace safety laws for decades. Alberta farm workers deserve to keep the rights they've only just gained. They are not second-class Canadians.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I see the hon. Minister of Finance, President of Treasury Board rising on introduction of a bill.

#### Bill 3

#### Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act.

Alberta has seen investment in capital leave our province for the last few years. Our province can no longer boast of the most competitive business environment in the country. We intend to improve this situation by taking bold action to renew the Alberta advantage and help create jobs in our province. The proposed amendments are a central part of our plan to get Alberta working again. We are proposing to reduce Alberta's corporate tax rate by a third over the next four years. This measure will help to attract investment to Alberta and stimulate economic activity at a time when it is sorely needed. Reducing Alberta's corporate tax rate was one of our government's central commitments, and I am proud to bring this bill forward and take the next step in getting Albertans back to work.

I hereby move first reading of Bill 3, the job creation tax cut, and I look forward to providing more details shortly. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

#### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On October 26, 2017, the now Solicitor General warned of potential voter fraud in the UCP leadership race. On March 28, 2019, Albertans learned the RCMP is investigating allegations of voter fraud in the UCP leadership race. On May 26, 2019, the Solicitor General was interviewed about voter fraud in the UCP leadership race by the very police he directs, and today the Solicitor General likely attended a cabinet meeting with the Premier, his boss, who directs him. Is the Premier still claiming Albertans should not be worried about this conflict of interest?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing to continue to see the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition continue with the same tactic that failed for them during the election, fear and smear and Team Angry and that approach. Albertans aren't falling for them. Again, we respect the independence of the RCMP. The RCMP are doing their work. This government, Alberta's government, is focused on Albertans. I suggest the opposition start focusing on Albertans.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the member opposite does find it a bit embarrassing to have as many people in his caucus under RCMP investigation, but those are the facts, and he's just going to have to deal with them. Now, we did only find out that the Solicitor General was interviewed as a witness by the RCMP through the media yesterday. Will the Solicitor General please advise this House whether he has discussed the

substance of the interview between him and the RCMP, either directly or indirectly, with the Premier since the interview?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we respect the independence of the RCMP. The foundation of our justice system is to have that independent process. As I've advised this Assembly yesterday, and as I've said publicly, the RCMP reached out to me. I met with them in my personal capacity. I am not under investigation. I was happy to assist them with their investigation. I answered their questions fully.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, he didn't answer the question, but I'll wait for another time to ask it again.

Now, the SG was pleased to breach his "this is with the police, so it would be inappropriate for me to comment" rule yesterday when he told the media that he is not a suspect in the investigation, so can the Solicitor General now inform this House if either his boss, the Premier, or anyone working on the campaign of his boss, the Premier, are suspects in the RCMP investigation into campaign fraud during the UCP leadership race?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again we have the opposition focused on fear and smear, not focused on government policy, asking about internal party matters in this place. It's all that the opposition has, and it's why they ended up on that side of the House. It's disappointing. I encourage the opposition to get to work on behalf of Albertans. We respect the independence of the RCMP. We respect their role. We'll let them do their work. We're going to focus on our work, which is focusing on Albertans. I suggest they do the same.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for the second set of questions.

### Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This UCP government is planning to ram through a tax cut for wealthy corporations that will leave a gaping \$4.5 billion hole in the budget, a hole this government will expect Alberta's kids, seniors, families, and patients to fill almost immediately. To the Premier: will you at least agree to put on the record that your own platform acknowledges that no new revenue will be generated by this reckless action for at least two years?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we will not be lectured by this opposition, and we won't take, quite frankly, advice from them on this issue. They brought in the largest deficits in the history of this province. They completely messed up our finances. This government is focused on our platform. We made commitments to Albertans. We're going to be focused on getting our fiscal house in order, standing up for Alberta, getting them back to work. It's ridiculous for this opposition to even try to provide any advice given what a mess they've left our finances in.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To be fair to the Government House Leader, if my platform was as wrong-headed as his, I'd be tempted to fudge the answer just like he did, too.

But let's look at the dismal record of corporate tax cuts elsewhere. In the U.S. telecom giant AT&T promised President Trump that it would hire 7,000 new employees in exchange for a \$1 billion tax cut. Instead, they cut 23,000 jobs. So is that the kind of

business the Premier wants to be open for, and why should Albertans believe we won't be taken to the cleaners in exactly the same way?

**The Speaker:** I just might provide a cautionary note to the Leader of the Official Opposition. When making accusations like fudging, the language could move in the direction of unparliamentary.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, we won't be lectured by the opposition, who oversaw the largest job loss probably in the history of this province. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs under this government. This government, the new government, the Alberta government, has a plan with our tax cuts to bring in 55,000 jobs. We made a promise to Albertans that we will focus on getting them back to work. We will make things easier for job creators in this province. We're going to honour that promise. I understand that the opposition doesn't like that. It's too bad. We're not going in their direction, which is people out of work. We're going in our direction, which is getting people back to work. That's where we're focused.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have lots of examples right here in Canada of how these things that they're planning don't work. The Premier's Conservative pals in Ottawa cut corporate taxes by 7 per cent over four years. Did it create jobs? Nope. But what it did do is that it left a \$500 billion stockpile of corporate cash that former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney described as, quote, dead money. To the Premier: it didn't work for you in Ottawa, so why are you punishing Albertans with your outdated, ideological plans designed only to help your friends, your insiders, and your donors?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, when the NDP was in government, they raised tax rates, and – guess what? – revenue went down. Do you know why that is? They punished employers. They made job loss all across the province. Employers and investment fled Alberta, moved away from here under their policies. We're going to bring forward the policies that we promised Albertans. We're going to bring forward job-creating tax cuts, we're focused on the economy, and we're going to get my constituents, your constituents, and their constituents back to work because we're not going to focus on their ridiculous policies.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, speaking of platforms, the Premier ran for years on a premise to balance the budget a year earlier than our government had planned to, 2022 to be precise. Now, I always thought that that was a bad idea for many reasons, but the Premier told Albertans repeatedly that that's what he was going to do. And now it's not. To the Premier: will he now admit that his timeline to balance the budget is exactly the same as our government's was, that he likely knew that all along but he told Alberta voters something else in order to get elected?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've committed all along that we intend to bring this province back to balance by '22-23, which will be the last year of our first term. We have found the finances to be in difficult order as a result of the previous government's undoing of the finances of this province, but we will



be committed to deliver high-quality services and bring this province back to balance.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's the old "the previous government left the books in a mess" play. Never seen that before. You know what leaves the books in a mess? Going out and buying a \$4.5 billion tax cut for your friends, insiders, and donors. That's what leaves the books in a mess. To the Premier: if they've suddenly discovered that their big corporate tax gift is going to make it harder to balance the budget and they've already admitted it won't create jobs or revenue for at least two years, why won't the Premier delay a tax cut until they determine whether they can afford it?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, our tax cut will create 55,000 jobs. It'll bring investment back to Alberta. It's a promise that we made Albertans, and it's a promise that will be kept because the Alberta government is now focused on keeping promises for Albertans, unlike this opposition when they were in government, who ended up bringing in policies they never even campaigned on and then oversaw the largest devastation when it came to job loss inside this province. We're going in a totally different direction. That's where we're headed. I know that your constituents are happy about it, and I certainly know mine are as well.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you. You know, the Finance minister has said that we're facing economic headwinds, which is true, and he's admitting and has admitted that the election promise to balance by 2022 has changed a little bit, which is true. The Finance minister can't answer basic questions about funding education, funding municipalities, or public service negotiations, so why won't he admit that it is premature and irresponsible to move forward with a \$4.5 billion tax cut for his wealthy friends and PAC donors?

2:00

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we were very clear with Albertans during the campaign that our government would be about job creation, about attracting investment back into this province, providing opportunity for all Albertans. We're committed to going in that direction, and this job-creation tax cut is about attracting investment again, investment that fled under the previous government. It's about attracting investment, creating those jobs, and leading to long-term revenue stability for this province.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, your last leader's question.

### Worker Overtime Pay and Minimum Wage

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much. Yesterday I asked the Premier why he is cutting the overtime of energy and construction workers hurt the most during the oil price crash. After accusing me of mudslinging, he then claimed his changes only reduce banked overtime to straight time at the request of the employee. The Premier is dead wrong. Bill 2 clearly permits employers to force employees to accept banked overtime with no premium. Will the Premier apologize to this House for misleading us and commit to amending Bill 2 so that employers cannot force their employees to hand over their overtime premium?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The objective of this change is to provide flexibility for workers and employers. The old

policy led to many construction and seasonal employees having their overtime hours limited as a result of this policy. That meant they didn't earn the time at time and a half or have the ability to bank the time. By returning to a 1 to 1 banking ratio, this will provide greater flexibility for both the employer and the employees, and a written agreement is still required to take advantage of this provision.

Thank you.

**Ms Notley:** Well, yes, you're giving them more flexibility to get paid less. Way to go. Way to go.

Yesterday we heard from 16-year-old Karissa, a restaurant worker who will see her pay drop to \$13 per hour, a 13 per cent drop. Today the Premier is introducing legislation that will give that young girl's employer tax relief to the tune of a 33 per cent bump.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Notley:** To the Premier: isn't it enough that your tax gift to her boss is going to make Karissa's classroom more crowded and her university education more expensive? Do you need to cut her pay by 13 per cent, too? What do you have against young people?

**The Speaker:** I would just note that a point of order was called at 2:02.

The Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The student job-creation wage is about creating jobs for Alberta's youth. When the minimum wage increased, many employers were forced to lay off workers, and unfortunately it was most often the inexperienced workers, the younger workers, that were impacted. By reducing costs on employers, we can help students get their first job to develop the skills and gain the experience that they need for the future.

Thank you.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, what's more concerning is that if Karissa dropped out of school or lied to her boss about whether she was in school, she would still be entitled to the \$15-an-hour minimum wage. Now, Karissa works hard at school, and she told reporters yesterday that she wasn't comfortable lying. She shouldn't be. Why is this Premier pitching a bogus policy that encourages young people to give up on their education or lie to their bosses about whether they're in school?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and Immigration, please.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this policy is about creating jobs for students. Under the previous government we actually had a reduction in jobs for young people, and currently we have a 4 per cent higher unemployment rate. By putting in this new student job-creation wage, we can actually create wages for employment. I'd actually like to point out that this program that we've based the Alberta program on has been in place in Ontario for approximately 20 years, and employees and employers have been able to work that out amongst themselves.

Thank you.

### Provincial Fiscal Deficit

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, in the recent election our party and our now UCP MLAs made commitments to the people of Alberta to get our fiscal house in order. Specifically, we made the commitment to bring our provincial finances to balance by 2022. Can the Minister of Finance confirm that we are on track to deliver on this promise to Albertans?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the member for this important question. We are committed to our promise and will balance the budget by 2022-23. We formed the MacKinnon panel of experts to objectively assess our fiscal reality and will be making smart budgetary decisions based on their recommendations.

Our government has also taken swift action to introduce the carbon tax repeal act and will very soon take further actions with the job-creation tax cut – in fact, we’ve done that already – and the Red Tape Reduction Act. Albertans can be sure we will deliver.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that for the last four years under the NDP the principles of fiscal prudence and responsibility were not made a priority and given that this NDP mismanagement resulted in provincial debt approaching \$60 billion, can the Minister of Finance confirm that responsible fiscal management is and will remain a top priority for our government?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even though we are committed to balancing the budget this term, it’s true that balancing will not be easy with the NDP out-of-control spending that we’ve inherited. Under the NDP Alberta was spending \$1,200 per person higher than the Canadian provincial average. We spent \$2,700 more per person than our neighbours in B.C. We are bringing back discipline, structure, and rigour to Alberta’s budget.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that the government has appointed the MacKinnon panel to review our provincial finances and government spending and given that you have said that this work will be reflected in our next provincial budget, can you confirm that drawing up the path to balance without raising taxes is a key priority of the MacKinnon panel?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous government, who imposed the largest tax increase in Alberta’s history and still managed to drive us into crippling debt, we will not enforce a tax on our path to balancing the budget. We’re focused on renewing Alberta’s advantage and bringing business back to our province.

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

### Minimum Wage for Youth

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the campaign and including on election night this Premier told an emotional story about a 17-year-old young worker from Hardisty that he had met. This youth had told him that his father had lost his job and he was now working to help support the family. To the Premier: why are you proposing to cut the wages of hard-working young Albertans when you know from powerful, first-hand conversations that many youth, like this young man from Hardisty, are working to support their family?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, our Premier travelled all across this province for several years and has heard terrible stories like the hon. member is referring to. What he did learn during that time, I have no doubt, is how sad it is that under the NDP so many people have lost jobs, including young people at a disproportional rate. Our Premier brought forward a platform plan to help young people get back to work. We’ve campaigned on it, and a record number of

Albertans voted for it. That’s a promise made and a promise that will soon, hopefully, be kept by this Legislature.

**Ms Gray:** Given that the young woman we met yesterday named Karissa found herself in a very similar situation to that of the Hardisty youth as her father at one point was laid off from his job, can the Premier please explain directly to Karissa and other young workers who may need to help cover the family’s bills why he thinks it’s a good idea to cut their wages?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the student job-creation wage is about creating opportunities for Alberta’s youth. By reducing costs on employers, we can help students get their first job to develop the skills and gain the experience that they need for the future. That’s what this change is about, that’s what we committed to in our platform, and that’s what we’re going to do.

Thank you.

**Ms Gray:** Given that cutting youth wages will not create new jobs and given that cutting student wages creates unequal pay for equal work and given that the student wage rate could actually incentivize vulnerable young Albertans to drop out of high school to get a \$2-per-hour raise, will the minister commit to sitting down with me so I can walk him through how devastating this pick-your-pockets bill is going to be for working Albertans? If not, may I join the minimum wage panel?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, our focus is on creating opportunities for youth. Under the previous government there was actually a reduction. In the hospitality industry, for example, which largely employs the youth segment, there was a reduction of over 10,000 jobs. This change will create opportunities for youth. As to the member opposite, I would be happy to sit down with her and hear her concerns.

2:10

### Premier’s Travel to Ontario

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, it’s been more than a full week since 5,000 residents of High Level were forced from their homes due to a wildfire burning in close proximity to the town. Now, I want to give credit to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry for taking action to get these folks emergency funding on Friday. But I am concerned, frankly, that our Premier headed to Ontario again this past weekend while a major evacuation order remained in place. To the Premier: why did you not postpone the trip and stay here to monitor this emergency?

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you for that question. I can confirm to this particular House that the evacuation process has gone very well. It has actually been successful regardless of whether or not our Premier is here. [interjections] The government has experienced ministers like myself and the other member, and I can confirm to the House that this evacuation has gone extremely well. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Members, we heard the question; we’ll hear the answer.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, given that I can appreciate the Premier’s need to speak to the business community but given that the speech he gave was on Friday, I must ask the Premier why he decided to stay in Ontario until Sunday so that he could campaign for the

Conservative Party of Canada and why he feels that the people of Brampton are more important than the people of Beaver Lake?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of our ministers, our Premier, and the hard work that they're doing on this file. Again, we won't be lectured to by a party whose leader sat in this very spot right here the last time that there was a big fire going on and said to the then Leader of the Opposition, Brian Jean, that he was fearmongering while his house was burning down. I will take our government's approach any day. They should be ashamed for even raising this issue in this way. The Premier and the ministers are working very, very hard on this. It's a very important issue. The opposition should not be using it for partisan purposes.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, given that there is really no excuse for partisan campaigning on a taxpayer-funded trip to Ontario on the same day that nearly 500 residents of a second community, Paddle Prairie, were forced from their homes, will the Premier apologize to those Albertans who expect him to be here managing an emergency rather than campaigning for his federal buddies?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, I'm proud of our Premier, and I'm proud of our ministers who responded to this very, very quickly. We're very concerned about the people of northern Alberta. We are monitoring this very closely. We're standing with them and putting in a policy that will help them as they go through this process.

Again, Mr. Speaker, as you know – you sat here – this party while in power told the former Leader of the Opposition while his house was burning down that he was fearmongering by asking a question in this place about the fire. They should be ashamed for even raising this in this way inside this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### Driver's Licence Road Tests

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The online driver's test-booking program was radically altered by the NDP. Now the test-booking system is utterly dysfunctional. A registry manager said, and I quote: it is absolute garbage. It is not user friendly. Exam dates are not released into the system; it just says: no bookings available. People cannot get appointments for months in advance, if at all. Consequently, examinations are down 27 per cent over last year in Lacombe alone. Minister, what are you going to do to fix this NDP mess?

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** I would note the point of order at 2:14, please.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. He's right to point out that the previous government messed this file up on March 1 last year. Before March 1 there were 154 driver examiners on staff. After they made their changes, a few days later we were down to 73. That was in March, at the beginning of the busiest part of the year for drivers' examinations, that they had it cut in half. The hon. member is right. As a result, we are behind, but our government is working hard to catch up. We are about 90 per cent up to strength today.

**Mr. Orr:** Given that in Lacombe an examiner was sent to do an advanced test, and he admitted that he was not certified to do so, and the registry manager tried to advise the department and was told to mind her own business and given that last Tuesday an examiner showed up, but there were no appointments scheduled in the

booking system, so he sat all day and did nothing, and on another day three examiners showed up to do one exam, to the minister. The NDP have left drivers' examiners disorganized and some untrained. What is this minister's plan for the future of the instructor program?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. I will reiterate to the hon. member that we are committed to cleaning up this NDP mess. By the end of next month we will be up to 155 driver examiners. We are working through the booking system and the changes there to make it work better. We will stay in touch with the hon. member, and I would be happy to hear from him, the registry agent, the driver examiners, anybody, because frankly these changes were made without any planning. We are putting the pieces back together now that the previous government left messed up.

**Mr. Orr:** Given that a Lacombe entrepreneur over the years created and ran the driver test booking software and contributed to the economy and jobs in Alberta but the NDP unilaterally cancelled his contract, did not allow him to bid on the new system, and awarded the new, dysfunctional contract to an American company, exporting jobs, to the minister: in support of Alberta tech and jobs, will you review that contract and launch a proper contract bid process?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for doing research on this. For the record an open request for a proposal was administered by the government in 2016. The successful proponent was a software company actually based out of Medicine Hat, which has since been sold to a U.S. company. What it comes down to is that we will keep working with that company. Tech support is still provided out of Medicine Hat, and I thank the hon. member for his concern about jobs based in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a question.

#### Oil Transportation by Rail

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are still awaiting decisions on Trans Mountain, and there have been delays with construction of Keystone XL and the line 3 expansion. Now we are reading reports that the Premier intends to legislate away the oil-by-rail deals we signed earlier this year. Those deals are due to generate nearly \$6 billion in economic return for this province. Why is it that this Premier continues to put his ideology and election rhetoric over the economic well-being of Albertans?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, what a ridiculous question. This Premier has been more focused on this issue than this government ever has been. On his first day in office he got on a plane and flew to Ottawa and fought for us on this issue, which is where the fight is, whereas when this opposition was in power, they spent their time trying to shore up Justin Trudeau. This government will continue to be focused on getting this pipeline built. We're focused on getting people back to work. We're focused on jobs. We're focused on pipelines. It is ridiculous to hear this question inside this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Might I just remind the Government House Leader to pass your comments through the chair.

The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that thousands and thousands of jobs depend on this question, this contract, and it's not ridiculous at all.

Given that this Premier ran on a campaign of jobs, the economy, and pipelines and given that now he wants to cross his fingers and hope the private sector will ship our oil when they were not willing and able to do that in the past, can the Premier explain how his plan to rip up these contracts will help jobs, the economy, and our efforts to build pipelines?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, our government has been clear from the beginning: these contracts should not have been signed by the government of the day. They were rushed in by a desperate NDP government at the time on the eve of an election. There was no reason why private companies couldn't have stepped up to carry more oil by rail. Again, if these contracts cannot be transferred to the private sector on acceptable terms, our government will do what is necessary to protect Alberta taxpayers. As you know, that is the great difference between that party and this party. Our focus is on standing up for Albertans and Alberta taxpayers; their focus is on their ideological agenda.

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

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you. Given that the Premier is literally putting the brakes on moving oil by rail, can you tell this House just one thing that you will do to move our products to market while we wait for pipelines? Just one thing.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the biggest thing we've done to help our oil and gas industry and our energy industry and all industries, for that matter, in Alberta was to get the NDP government voted out of office and to replace them with an Alberta government that is focused on Albertans, that is focused on jobs, that is focused on the economy, that is focused on pipelines, fighting for our energy industry and for the hard-working Albertans of this province. Instead of a former government who was focused on ideology and standing up for their ally Justin Trudeau, this new government is focused on standing up for Albertans.

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

## 2:20 Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every day during the campaign we heard a different story from the UCP about flood mitigation. Some days they'd support the Springbank dam, some days they'd oppose it, and some days they'd do both in one day. Their flip-flop would be funny if it wasn't such a critical issue for Alberta's largest city and for the lives of so many Calgarians. To the Minister of Transportation. Enough is enough. Will you offer unqualified, one hundred per cent support for the Springbank dam?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is rich from a government that did nothing on this file for four years. However, this early in the process I can tell the hon. member that we are working hard to get the answers to the questions left unanswered by their government to the federal environmental authorities and the provincial environmental authorities. We expect to have them there. The fact is that nothing can be built till we get permission from the environmental authorities, and we've already hired an expert to help us with that. We're already taking actions on what they failed to do.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you. Given, Mr. Speaker, that multiple studies have shown that the Springbank is the best, fastest, and most cost-effective way to protect Calgary from another flood and given the large amount of work that the previous government put into this file and given that Calgarians still remember the cost, both financial and emotional, of the floods and given that Calgary deserves a commitment from this government, will the minister stop dithering and start acting?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, dithering is the definition of what the previous government did on this file for four years.

We were only sworn in for three days when we appointed an independent expert to look at where we are on this file to make sure it moves ahead after no action was going on by the previous government. Mr. Speaker, this is a high priority. We know, as they ought to know, that nothing can be done till we get those environmental approvals, and we are on the job.

**Ms Ganley:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the MLA for Banff-Kananaskis is actively lobbying against the Springbank dam and given that during the campaign she told Albertans that the UCP was the only party not committed to the Springbank dam and given that the minister of culture has refused to endorse the project and that the Premier himself has said, quote, I'm not committed to any one proposal, what do you have to say to Calgarians worried about the future of their city?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would say that there's going to be some action where there was none in the past; second of all, I would say that our Member for Banff-Kananaskis is representing what she believes the views of her constituents are; and third, our government is committed to getting the approval done at the earliest stage. We've already hired an expert. We will get the answers to the questions the NDP did not answer in to the environmental assessment agencies. We will work to get this approved with the minimum possible delay, and we are already busy doing just that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

## Transportation Infrastructure in Airdrie

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost 70,000 people live in my constituency and hometown of Airdrie. In fact, we're one of the fastest growing cities in all of Canada and have been for quite some time. The constituency of Airdrie-East is no longer the place you drive through to get to Calgary. Unfortunately, though, Airdrie and area have seen very little investment from the provincial government for years, and transportation infrastructure has not been able to keep up with growth. Minister, my constituents in Airdrie-East want to know where transportation projects fall on the priority list.

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is advocating for her constituency, as she ought to be. I can tell the hon. member that we are going through the budget approval process and the capital planning process, which is no easier with the \$60-billion-in-debt mess left behind by the previous government. But, that being said, I acknowledge that the transportation issues around Airdrie are important. We've been working with a number of

municipalities in the area to review the infrastructure needs for the area, and we will not delay in coming to a conclusion on this.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. That's the most attention that Airdrie has had for transportation needs in the past four years.

Given that Airdrie only has two exits and entrances in or out of the city and given that our large and growing population numbers are putting significant stress on these overpasses and given that the 40th Avenue and QE II overpass has been identified as number 2 on the Calgary and north region prioritized capital funding list, Minister, could you please let my constituents know if this project is as much a priority for our government as it is for those struggling to get around the city?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government understands that, unlike the previous government, announcements aren't where it needs to end. We need to actually do our homework and put a plan in place. We actually need to have a financial ... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I might just caution members, particularly in the third row of the Assembly, from having such boisterous remarks.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, he should know.

**The Speaker:** I might just caution members, particularly the one from Edmonton-Gold Bar. He might be cautioned with his remarks.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, despite the mess that we were in with no plan going forward, we will make a plan. I acknowledge that the hon. member is anxious to get this project done. I will let her know that the city is undertaking detailed design on the particular project, but it still needs to fit into the budget plan and the capital plan before anything else can happen.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The constituency of Airdrie-East contributes a significant amount of wealth to this province, and given that large employers like Amazon and Walmart rely upon the QE II 566 overpass and are just part of the large and growing commerce of the entire area – I would be remiss not to mention the many families that regularly visit the CrossIron Mills mall and the Century Downs race track – Minister, families and businesses that I represent want to know where the upgrading of this particular overpass falls on the priority list.

**The Speaker:** I might remind members of the cautionary tale of preambles.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, while I admire the hon. member's enthusiasm and I know that this is an important project, it's an important project in a sea of important projects. I want the hon. member to know that the mayor of Airdrie has been all over me as well about this project. It's important for us, the hon. member and I and our government, to continue working with municipal partners to identify their priorities by region, and the more information that we get from you and the mayor will be helpful. I can assure you that we will be considering this in our budget and planning process as we go forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

## Free Speech on Postsecondary Campuses

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been revealed that this UCP government is planning to introduce changes to Alberta's postsecondary. These changes would, and I quote: require Alberta postsecondary institutions to adopt controversial free speech policies based on U.S. principles that allow speakers, no matter how unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive, to say what they like on our campuses. To the Minister of Advanced Education I have a very simple question. How does your government differentiate between free speech and hate speech?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and let me say congratulations on your election given that it's my first time to rise and speak in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, free speech is at the heart of the academic experience. It's critical to the free flow and exchange of ideas and important to exist within all of our academic institutions, and we're going to make sure that that happens.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, given that our campuses already have free speech guaranteed by the human rights code and considering that postsecondary institutions are much more likely to be concerned about the likes of the Soldiers of Odin rather than, say, Bill Nye, the Science Guy making presentations on campus, to the same minister: why does your government seem compelled to roll out the red carpet to hate groups?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very important, of course, that hate speech is not permitted on campus, and it's good to know, of course, that there are already strong protections in the Criminal Code of Canada, the human rights acts of Canada and of Alberta, that protect against hate speech. We want to encourage the free flow of ideas and to debate ideas on campuses, which, again, is critical to the academic experience, and we're going to make sure that that happens.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister said that this move at Alberta universities would make them more competitive with the United States, for example, to the same minister: don't you think that providing adequate funding to our universities and colleges is a better way to strengthen them rather than attracting hate groups to speak out on our campuses?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, our government is focused on encouraging more individuals to enter the trades and helping to connect them with education that is going to see them land good, high-paying jobs. That's the priority of our government, helping to connect education to jobs, and we're going to continue to do that.

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

2:30

## Affordable Housing

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our NDP government invested an unprecedented \$1.2 billion in affordable housing, which previous Conservative governments neglected for decades. We

supported thousands of Albertans to live in dignity. Today the current Conservative government is blowing a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget by cutting corporate taxes and thus pandering to their elite friends while neglecting single moms and their children. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how much are you cutting from affordable housing?

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your questions, hon. member. Our government always is focused on a mixture. We have affordable housing and take care of our seniors, especially the low income. We will continue to research all of the seniors' housing and care and do consultations and make sure that we do contribute all the funding that they need and want and build the homes that they need.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll hold her to account that all the money will be given.

Given that in the past the government continues to take care of all their friends while forgetting about the rest of Albertans and given that, while the minister may not want to hear this, there is no way to deal with Alberta's affordable housing issues while at the same time giving a multibillion-dollar tax break to wealthy corporations, has the minister asked for an analysis of how many Albertans will fall into homelessness or live in unsafe or inappropriate dwellings due to your government's...

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the NDP did nothing to reduce the red tape that's slowing down new projects, placing a barrier on builders and increasing the regulatory cost of new housing, we will work to reduce the burden of red tape, and Albertans will benefit from new funding and program models from our new government.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I certainly would be very pleased if the hon. minister does actually do as much as we did on affordable housing. We significantly invested.

Given that an important measure of a province's greatness is how it treats its most vulnerable and given that access to affordable housing is foundational to the well-being of Albertans, how can this minister not support all people who need affordable housing?

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government's focus is on creating jobs, having jobs, and creating funding, getting affordable housing. We will build more affordable housing and serve our seniors' needs and wants, and that was an NDP government that failed to do that.

### Seniors' Housing in Rural Alberta

**Mr. Loewen:** A year ago the Berwyn Autumn Lodge was closed down by North Peace Housing. This left the small rural community reeling as the related jobs and economic benefit to the community were lost. The seniors were traumatized by this experience. Keeping facilities like this open helped keep small rural communities like Berwyn alive, not to mention that it allowed seniors to age as close to their friends and families as possible. The

building is shuttered now but still there. We know that there is a continued need for seniors' facilities. Minister, will you consider reopening Berwyn Autumn Lodge in some capacity or build another facility in Berwyn?

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, as I mentioned before, our government is a responsible government. We will create jobs, build the pipeline, grow the economy, get the funding and build all the affordable housing for the seniors that they are looking for, and serve Albertans as they need and they deserve.

**The Speaker:** I just might remind the Minister of Seniors and Housing to direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that the previous government approved up to \$24 million for 52 supportive living and 40 new renovated lodge spaces in Spirit River and given that a needs assessment by the five municipalities in the region concluded that more lodge spaces were required in the region and given that presently the Pleasant View Lodge, a 40-unit, 60-year-old facility in Spirit River, is the main facility in the region and that Grande Spirit Foundation, the local housing authority, deemed the building of this new supportive living project to be its highest priority, will the minister commit to continuing on with this project that will allow the seniors in Spirit River to age in their community?

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will be reaching out to those organizations like Grande Spirit Foundation, who received a letter, to discuss the project and to make sure that Alberta taxpayers are getting the most value out of their hard-earned money. This government will build more community care facilities for fewer dollars, saving Alberta of money in the long run. Our government's plan will grow Alberta's economy, create jobs, and also for all Albertans will strengthen the social programs that we all value.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given the importance of seniors aging in their own communities near their friends and families and given the importance of keeping small rural communities thriving, will the minister tell us what she is doing to keep seniors' facilities in small-town rural Alberta, and will she commit to doing everything in her power to ensure that seniors can age as close to their friends and families as possible?

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government will work closely with the stakeholders to make certain that seniors' concerns are heard and that they are supported in aging safely and independently in their own communities. This government will also support civil society organizations that provide services to seniors. Our government will work tirelessly to make sure our seniors, the foundation of our province, will be able to stay close to their friends and family.

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

### Opioid Use Prevention

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the 1990s doctor-approved prescriptions of opioid substances have greatly contributed to the rise of addiction. Given the steady increase in deaths due to opioid abuse in our province, to the Minister of Health:

what is being done to discourage doctors from overprescribing their patients?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To its credit the College of Physicians & Surgeons has acknowledged that overprescribing did contribute to the rise in opioid addiction. The college has led a concerted effort by the profession to do better, not to stop prescribing opioids but to prescribe them better. The key result is that the overall volume prescribed is down more than 20 per cent in the last two years, and that's real change. But I emphasize that the college has made it clear that the goal is appropriate prescribing; that is, whatever is in the best interest of the patient. The interest of the patient always comes first.

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the supply of illicit opioids and, in particular, fentanyl has increased exponentially over the past few years and given that these drugs are now being sold illegally on the street, to the minister once again: what initiatives are under way to combat the illegal sale of opioid substances to individuals?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to report to this Assembly that after years of underfunding this government is committed to making sure that drug treatment courts have the funding that they need to provide critical service to addicts across this province. It's an important part – for me, it's actually a passionate thing. I used to be on the board of the Calgary drug treatment court. This program changes lives. After years of underfunding we're going to make sure that they have the resources they need in a compassionate way to deal with addictions here in Alberta.

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in a report done in early 2018 by the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, it was shown that Canada is the second-highest prescriber of opioids in the world, with Alberta leading the way, and given that the most recent report states that as many as 746 people have died from apparent accidental opioid poisoning and given that despite the introduction of a provincial opioid commission, deaths continue to rise yearly, to the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: what is being done to address this crisis?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for raising this very important question. Our government is committed to the creation of a mental health and addiction and recovery strategy. We're focusing on getting people well. We have committed \$100 million for the creation of the mental health and addiction strategy. An additional \$40 million is aimed at additional detox beds. Our government will be examining ways to create a recovery-oriented system that removes gaps and helps people recover.

## 2:40      **Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first one is a series of letters from a constituent, exchanges with

driver exam standards, with difficulty in the fact that there are no bookings online within 100 kilometres of Lacombe, searching for hours and hours. I'll just table the letters.

The second one is from another constituent, basically the same thing: no exam site within 100 kilometres of Red Deer. That includes most of central Alberta. That's not acceptable.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I have a series of exchanges here with regard to the registry and the driver system, detailing a driver examiner who was uncertified for an advanced test but was sent and was expected to do an advanced test even though he was uncertified.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Members, I might just give 15 seconds or so for those who wish to move to the lounges to do so.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of three articles I referenced last night: the first one, from Vox, Why Conservatives Keep Gaslighting the Nation about Climate Change; the second, from the *Guardian*, We Have 12 years to Limit Climate Change Catastrophe, Warns UN; and the third one, from *National Geographic*, One Million Species at Risk of Extinction, UN Report Warns.

**The Speaker:** Does the Member for Edmonton-West Henday have a tabling?

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite five copies of a CBC article I referenced when speaking to Motion 501 yesterday, titled Alberta Couple Blindsided after Adopted Girls Turn Out to Have Fetal Alcohol Disorder, from June 2015.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader rising on a tabling?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of an article called The Inheritance of Shame: A Memoir, in which the Health minister is quoted as saying that conversion therapy is not taking place in our province, in regard to a point of order, that you asked me to table yesterday.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

**Ms Hoffman:** I noticed, but you're still wrong.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Glenora will hold her comments to herself while the Speaker is rising.

I have one tabling this afternoon. I have five copies of a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer. In accordance with section 146 of the Election Act – my office received the letter on the 21st of May – it is a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer confirming the results of the judicial recount for Calgary-Falconridge.

## **Tablings to the Clerk**

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations, pursuant to the Metis Settlements Act the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal annual report 2018.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, the Hospital Privileges Appeal Board 2017 annual report and 2018 annual report; pursuant to the Public Health Act the Public Health Appeal Board 2018 annual report; pursuant to the Health

Professions Act the Alberta College of Medical Diagnostic and Therapeutic Technologists 2018 annual report, the Alberta College of Paramedics 2018 annual report, the Alberta College of Social Workers annual report 2018, the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists annual report 2018, the College of Alberta Denturists 2017 annual report, the College of Naturopathic Doctors of Alberta annual report 2018.

**The Speaker:** Sounds like some intriguing reading for all members. I'm sure you've been waiting with bated breath.

The Government House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against a Member

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on Standing Order 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member." Around 2 p.m. today the Leader of the Opposition asked a question – and I must apologize; I do not have the benefit of the Blues. It was along the lines of: "I asked the Premier why he is cutting the overtime of energy and construction workers . . . will the Premier apologize . . . for misleading us" and amend Bill 2 so that employers cannot enforce employees on banked overtime.

There are many examples, Mr. Speaker, as you do know, of Speakers' rulings which state that it is unparliamentary for a member to accuse another member of misleading. I would draw your attention to a Speaker's ruling on March 4, 2014, when a Deputy Speaker asked a member to withdraw their use of the word "misleading." I also draw your attention to page 146 of *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, which lists "mislead" and "misleading the public" as examples of expressions ruled unparliamentary since 1958. The hon. member certainly knows that, and I think the Leader of the Opposition should withdraw her remark and apologize to the House and to the hon. Premier.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pertaining to this, first of all, I want to say that the Premier was in fact wrong and gave incorrect information. That's what the Leader of the Official Opposition was referring to, and, you know, what she was trying to get to, really, was to call out that if the Premier did misspeak, he did clarify or would clarify in this House because what he had said out to the media versus what the Government House Leader is saying today are two different points.

What I will say on this, Mr. Speaker, is that we will apologize for the use of the word "misleading" and withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Opposition House Leader, I consider this matter concluded.

The second point of order from the Government House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Language Creating Disorder

#### Gestures

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j) in regard again to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, who, I think, at this point probably has the record of every member of this Chamber for having to apologize in this place. I know he just had to do it again yesterday, I believe, for comments he made to you. During question period today he heckled and said something to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs basically along the lines of "use your mouth to speak," implying and making fun of the hon. member's accent, certainly from our perspective completely

inappropriate, and then went on to make a gesture that certainly looked inappropriate to us. I think you probably had a better angle. You may or may not have seen that. I'll leave that with you.

Again, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar should stop trying to go for the record of being the most vulgar person inside this place and instead act within parliamentary procedure in this place and treat people with respect, and he should rise and apologize and withdraw his comments in regard to the hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, the characterization that the Government House Leader just made of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is incorrect. He did not make fun of the way the Minister of Municipal Affairs was speaking. In fact, his comment was – he does heckle often. I will agree with that. But to rise and try to make allegations against another member claiming that he said something which he did not, something that is offensive and even – you know, first of all, this is not a point of order. Second of all, it's an offensive point of order to allege that a member made a comment that the Government House Leader interpreted as either offensive or making fun of the way the Minister of Municipal Affairs speaks. It's completely and patently false. It is incorrect. We will not apologize for something that was not said. I think also that this needs to be clarified, the mischaracterizing the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. members.

I see the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul is rising. I can only imagine that he's intending to provide new comments to this particular point of order, specifically with respect to language that might create disorder, as that's what we've heard from the Government House Leader. I hope not to dispute the facts, but I'm happy to hear new information.

2:50

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Having the ability to sit a little bit closer and actually hear what came out of the member's mouth this afternoon, I clearly heard him also refer to the minister's "stupid comment." You know what? I was going to call a point of order on him at that point, but seeing as the point of order had already been called, I'd just like to add to that. Indeed, the member has used language in this House previously and does hold the record for the most apologies in the last four years, and I think he should stand up and apologize to all members of the House for his behaviour.

**The Speaker:** I thank you for your interjections. I am prepared to rule on this point of order. I see that the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche is rising. I will ask her to take her seat.

With no disrespect to the member, what this isn't going to turn into is a significant debate about what the member did or did not say. I'm not convinced that it is conducive to the productive use of the Chamber for us to use these points of order to continue to create more disorder.

Having said that, during debate at approximately 2:14 I did receive a number of notes from members inside the House about what may or may not have been said. I, however, did not hear what was said, but I do have some concern. Also, at that time the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka was on his feet asking his question. At that time I did see the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar make some hand gesture that may have been inappropriate. I, unfortunately, did not see exactly what that would be.

What I would say is that we are embarking on a six-week marathon here inside this Chamber. I would encourage all members to behave in a manner that is becoming of the Chamber. I would also like to remind members of the procedural memo dated May 22,



which I am sure you have all read. As a reminder, there are additional microphones inside the Chamber other than the ones that are on each desk. As such, should the Speaker choose to, it is possible to be able to hear some of the banter that I may not be able to hear from the dais.

I think, given the fact that I did not hear the accusations of the words that have been used in the Chamber, I would encourage the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, if in fact he did use those words, to withdraw and apologize. I will take him at his word and the words of others that that wasn't the case, but certainly I would strongly caution the use of gestures across the aisles, which I did see, that may in fact create disorder.

With that said, I consider this matter concluded.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 1

#### An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

Ms Sweet moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment May 28: Ms Pancholi speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has the call.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to continue my remarks regarding Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax. I'd like to begin, actually, with a treaty acknowledgement and acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of Treaty 6 and the Métis, who have a deep connection to this land. We don't know how much longer this will be used regularly in government business. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Members, I might just encourage you to take any discussions that you might have to the lounges or the members' lounge behind us as we are respectful to the member who has the call.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To continue my comments, I just wanted to make that treaty acknowledgement while we still have the opportunity to do so. We will continue to do so on this side of the floor because we believe very much in acknowledging our indigenous peoples.

On that note, I would like to comment on my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who earlier this morning in his comments on Bill 1 gave an excellent overview of the potential impact and the very significant and real impact that repealing the carbon tax will have on the indigenous communities in this province. I want to thank him for his insight. He's probably the most knowledgeable person in this Chamber on these issues, and it comes from a place of deep passion and heartfelt commitment. I think we should heed his words wisely, particularly as we know that this province has not had a great history in terms of protecting, listening to, and respecting its indigenous people. A lot of great headway has

been made over the last four years, and I would hope that we don't lose any of that. So I'd like to thank my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford for those comments.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I'd like to begin as well by talking again about a comment I made earlier, which is that it's a little bit unfortunate that we still have to talk about climate change and reiterate what we already know, what we all already know, which is the very real crisis that climate change is and the potential impact that it will have on us, on our children, on our grandchildren and why we need to take it seriously now as we haven't for many, many years.

I want to actually make some comments and quote from the United Nations environment program of the World Meteorological Organization. These are comments from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It was actually quoted, Madam Speaker, in the decision of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, who recently ruled on the constitutionality of the federal carbon-pricing program, as you will know. We'll get back to this legal challenge in a moment. As you may know, the court upheld the federal carbon tax, but in its decision the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal quoted some information from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. I think it's really important to talk about this because they really pulled out some key quotes that are important to remember about climate change. Some of the information in that report included that "climate change will amplify existing risks and create new risks for natural and human systems. Risks are unevenly distributed and are generally greater for disadvantaged people and communities in countries at all levels of development."

The report also stated that we need to be wary of the impacts of climate change on our globe but also highlighted that climate change impacts affecting Canada and Canadians are widespread. Actually, the report indicates that "predictions show that Canada's temperature, particularly in the Arctic, will warm at a faster rate than that of the world as a whole." This is important to note because when we talk about climate change, we often hear the criticism of: why should we take the lead in Alberta when we know that there are other countries in the world that are contributors to climate change and perhaps don't do their part? We often hear references to countries such as China and India, but we need to stop thinking about climate change as something that we cannot control or impact. This is something that we have a very real ability to influence within Alberta, and we also have to know that there are very real impacts here in Canada.

We can't keep thinking of this as something that's going to happen in the future. It's happening now. We've seen a number of significant natural disasters in this province alone but also across the country over the last few years. We know that is a result of the shift in climate in this country.

It is a very real issue, as I mentioned in my earlier comments this morning. I don't really think that there is an issue about climate change. There shouldn't be an issue about climate change denial anymore. Anybody who is doing that is really just clinging to missed facts. They're clinging to denial. I don't really think that that's the problem. I think the issue really is that people don't want to make the changes that are necessary. There's a hesitation to do that, which may be difficult to do, but as we've talked about in this Chamber before, there are a lot of things that we do that are important to do because they have a long-term impact on our future even if they are a little bit difficult to do.

My colleague the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie earlier this morning gave an example of the recycling program, the blue box program, and how when that first rolled out in the city of Edmonton,

there was a huge resistance to it because it was going to cost money, it was going to be a hardship, and it was going to be difficult for people to sort through their garbage. But we now do it as a matter of practice and fact. We have to normalize and incorporate the steps that are necessary to take to protect from climate change, and we need to do that now.

I actually don't really want to harp for too long on the realities of climate change because, frankly, we should have moved past that. I remember as a 13-year-old, which was now almost 30 years ago, having a protest at my junior high school, caring a lot about the issues about environmental impacts, and talking about, as it was called then, global warming and greenhouse emissions. Here we are 30 years later, and we're still not making incredible progress like we should be to deal with those issues. If you had told my 13-year-old self that we would still be talking about the basics, I don't think I would have believed it. I always believed that adults and politicians knew better and were wiser and would make the right decisions. I guess that's why I'm here running for office and why I'm here in a political, elected role because I think, yeah, maybe now it is time for people like me to step forward and say: enough of talking; we need to start doing something. That's what this NDP government did over the last four years.

We've heard lots of talk from members on the other side about how maybe in 2015 they alleged that voters were not aware that there was a carbon tax that was going to be brought in, but actually what happened after the election of the NDP government in 2015 was that they did what governments should do, which is that they gave thoughtful and very careful consideration and researched consideration to the issues that it was responsible for and that it needed to take action on. That's how the climate leadership plan was developed.

3:00

I stand here before you as somebody who was not part of this government for the past four years. Although most of my colleagues here have a great deal of experience as ministers and have been here for four years or longer, I actually for the last four years was watching, like many other people in this province. I was an average Albertan who was just watching and seeing what my provincial government was doing. What I saw when they were doing the climate leadership plan was a very thoughtful and researched approach to governance, which was that there was a pressing issue that needed to be dealt with. This government decided to gather the experts in that area, which were environmental researchers but also oil and gas companies, to talk about: how do we develop a way forward for our province? That is how the climate leadership plan was developed. It actually had a very thoughtful approach.

As you know, the Climate Leadership Act didn't just deal with the carbon levy; it was about reducing emissions as well. But the Climate Leadership Act did this. It established a carbon levy on transportation and heating fuels in Alberta. It provided exemptions from application of the levy. It set out the requirements for rebates and exemption certificates, and it provided those consumer rebates and biomethane credits mostly to low-income Albertans. It set out the rules for remittance and recovery of the carbon levy, most importantly saying that the money that was gathered through the carbon levy would only be used for certain projects, that it was not to go into the general revenue fund. And it set what those carbon levy rates were at.

I actually was very impressed with the process that this government underwent, as an average Albertan watching what was happening, because they actually were the first government – I've lived here almost all my life, and I've worked, actually, within government. I worked under Progressive Conservative governments

for eight years, and I had not seen a government who was willing to take on a challenging but pressing issue like this in a way that, quite frankly, would mean that people would have to do some uncomfortable things. You know, it would be challenging to accept it, but it was important to do. That's what governance is about. You have to make decisions that are important for the future of the province, for the constituents of this province, and for our future, not just about the people who live here but about what kind of an economic future we want as well in this province.

It was a very thoughtful way of bringing together all of those people and talking about: "What should we be doing? What do we need to be doing?" Carbon pricing, as many of my colleagues have spoken about already, was very well thought out, researched, and supported, particularly by conservatives, as a way to deal with carbon emissions but also move forward to be able to invest in environmentally friendly and green energy sources.

I'm just going to take a moment to cite some of the support that the climate leadership plan had. I was very heartened to see that for several of the members across, their constituents actually were supporters of the climate leadership plan, in particular the Member for Banff-Kananaskis. The mayor of the town of Banff, Karen Sorensen, in 2016 was quoted as saying:

The Town of Banff is a national park community, and the protection of a healthy environment is of paramount importance to us. We applaud the direction toward climate leadership taken by the Province, which will help us sustain our tourism economy and provide a better future for all Albertans.

Similarly, another constituent of the Member for Banff-Kananaskis, from the town of Canmore, John Borrowman, the mayor, said:

I am pleased to add my support for Minister Phillips and the Government of Alberta in implementing the Climate Leadership Plan, which recognizes that all Albertans must take responsibility for protecting our environment. The plan resonates well with the Town of Canmore in our goal of being municipal leaders through our Environmental Sustainability Action Plan.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I was so riveted by the enlightening quotes that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was sharing with us, and I wondered if she had any more that she would like to share with the Chamber.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Yeah, as I was saying, there was a lot of great support for the climate leadership plan from rural and municipal leaders, from oil and gas leaders.

But what I really want to talk about is my constituents because – you know what? – when I was at the doors in Edmonton-Whitemud, I had a lot of great conversations with my constituents about the carbon tax. Of course, people don't like to have to pay a little bit more, and there was some resistance to that. But what I found was two things. One was that there seemed to be a great deal of misinformation out there about the carbon tax. Honestly, we saw that quite a bit during the campaign from members from the other side. They seemed to perpetuate statements that were misinforming intentionally, it seemed, at some points, their constituents about how the carbon tax worked and what it was actually being used for. For example, you know, it's really important to note that the carbon tax wasn't a general revenue fund. It was actually dedicated

specifically for green projects. When I talked to my constituents at the door, what they were really impressed with knowing is that there were direct impacts and benefits to them right in their riding from the carbon tax.

In particular, I would highlight that in Edmonton-Whitemud residents of that riding have been advocating for a long time for improvements to the Terwillegar expressway, to Terwillegar Drive. It's been a congested route for some time, and the city recently announced that they will be building a new Terwillegar expressway. A quarter of that budget is coming from the province, and it was actually because that Terwillegar expressway is going to increase public transit by allowing for more bus routes down that route. Because of that, it met the mandate of increasing green transportation options for residents of Edmonton-Whitemud, so it got support from the carbon tax levy fund. That's really important. I like to highlight to the residents of Edmonton-Whitemud that we saw benefits from that right there.

Most importantly, Madam Speaker and to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, what my constituents wanted to know is: if the carbon tax is going to be repealed, as we know the members from the other side intend to do, what is the plan going forward? What they appreciated was that there was a plan to move forward that the NDP government was making. That was part of looking to our future. Most importantly, it was about saying that we know that we take climate change seriously and we're going to take action on it and we're in this together. We are a province. We are a community. We all need to take steps forward.

Even if it does mean that there was a little bit of hurt, they understood that the bigger picture was that we were going to make green, sustainable energy sources. We were going to make that more of an option and more accessible to Albertans, and therefore we could move away and reduce our carbon emissions. They saw the bigger picture. That's why I believe that the residents of Edmonton-Whitemud chose to support me and to re-elect the NDP in their riding, because they believed in the bigger picture and the bigger benefits of that carbon tax.

That being said, with it being removed, again, what is the plan? I think that is what most Albertans are going to want to know. If the carbon tax is repealed, what is the plan going forward? To date we have heard nothing from the members on the other side about what they're going to do. They've talked about continuing to look into the issue. Well, that is what's been going on for decades in this province. It is time for us to move forward, so if the carbon tax is going to be repealed, my plea to the members on the other side is to take this issue seriously. What is your plan? This is not a partisan issue. This is an issue for all Albertans, for all of our children, and for our grandchildren. What are we going to do to move forward to ensure that we can offer a safe, clean environment for our children and for our grandchildren? That's what I want to hear from the other side.

Of course, we all knew this was sort of coming down the pipeline, so to speak, in terms of: this was going to be repealed. But I was hopeful that there'd be a little bit more thought put in than what we saw in the throne speech and what we saw in the UCP platform about what was coming next. What we got was nothing. What we got was a small, little bill that's just going to repeal what was there, with no vision for the future of this province, no vision for climate change, no vision to deal with the environment. That's my great disappointment, I have to say, and that will be the disappointment of many residents in my riding as well. They want to know: what is the plan for this government going forward? We can't just score cheap political points by repealing this act without talking about what's coming next.

My hope, Madam Speaker, is that the government will take the time. We should send this back to committee because we need the time to talk about what's next. This needs to go to committee so there can be a plan, not just repealing. What are they proposing? What is going forward? What are the measures that are going to be taken so that we can provide assurances to our residents, to all Albertans that we are going to be leaders on climate change, that we are going to take this seriously, and that we are looking to the future? I don't think any of us wants to just move back to the — as the Leader of the Official Opposition said, back to the future seems to be the theme of this government, but I encourage you to think beyond that. I think that not just repealing something . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm thrilled to rise and speak to this referral. I think that it's incredibly important that we send this bill to committee and have a conversation. Again, like my colleagues have said before me, I don't think we're in a position to relitigate the issue of the repeal of the act, but I think the outstanding question that continues to plague us is: what do we intend to do in its place? I think it's critical that we address this particular issue.

3:10

One of the big conversations that I had during the election campaign with a number of different people all over the place was, you know, that I think it's accepted now that climate change is real, that it's human caused, and that we ought to do something about it. I would like to believe that every member in this Chamber accepts those three basic premises. I think that if we don't accept those three basic premises and if we aren't willing to do those three things, it's our children that are ultimately going to have to pay those consequences at the end of the day. Many of us, I think, in this room, Madam Speaker, have children who are going to pay those consequences, and if we don't, I think we probably have friends or relations or others who have such children. I think we should all be concerned about what the future of this planet is going to hold.

There are some things, at the end of the day, that can be paid back and some things that cannot be paid back. This was another conversation that I had many times during the election. It is the case that if you borrow money, whether you're a government or whether you're an individual borrowing to, say, have a mortgage on your house, you can pay that back. On the other hand, if you refuse to invest in services and if you refuse to invest in infrastructure, those children who enter school who may need assistance learning to read and who don't get it: they'll never get that back. Those people who enter hospitals: they'll never get that chance at a better life back. It's the same thing with climate change. If we don't begin to make progress now, we can't go back. It's not something that can be paid back, and that's why it's an issue that's so urgent and that must be addressed immediately.

The question that's at issue and the reason that this ought to go to committee is: what do you plan to replace it with? I mean, it's pretty easy to criticize, right? It's pretty easy to look at something and say, "Well, that's imperfect," for whatever reason you feel that's imperfect. I think in this instance this was actually a very good and well-thought-out piece of policy. I won't reiterate the comments of my colleague who spoke before me, but I think it's well supported. It's well supported by a number of people from all different ends of the political spectrum. So you've criticized, you say that you want to deconstruct, but then what do you plan to do

in the alternative? Again I'll return to those three basic premises: climate change is real, it's human caused, and we ought to do something about it. If we accept all those basic premises, then what is it that we're going to do about it?

You know, there are a lot of cases in which individuals criticize something, but they don't know what they want to put in its place, and it usually leads to a big mess. I mean, we need only look to the United Kingdom, to England, to the Brexit situation. You know, folks resoundingly said that they wanted to leave, but they didn't say on what terms, and that has created an enormous amount of consternation for the government and for the entire country. I think what we're wanting to do here is to discuss: well, what replaces it? You know, that's fine. I think we don't need to relitigate the issue of whether we ought to move forward, but move forward to what?

I think that, you know, there are basically two options. One option is to replace it with a policy that will take in the same amount of funds. One of the things that has been discussed is essentially getting those funds from large emitters only, not from individuals, who are the end-users. Now, I don't think that that's the way to proceed forward, and the reason I don't think that's the way to proceed forward is because ultimately in a market system if you're not working on the demand side, you're never going to make any headway. Working only on the supply side isn't going to make any headway, and I actually believe that in economic terms it's more punishing to the economy here in Alberta than it is to act on the demand side.

I think the other thing is that, you know, we heard from members across the way over and over and over again: well, businesses are getting charged, and they're going to pass it on to their consumers. Well, if we charge only the large emitters, do we believe that they aren't going to pass it on to their consumers? Ultimately, if what we're doing is that we're having the same take, so we're taking in the same amount of money that we would have taken in under the Climate Leadership Act, by only extracting that money from the large emitters, the large emitters are just going to pass that on. So the tax continues to exist, it continues to be on the same things, but it's just that now it's hidden. People don't know they're paying it, so they don't have the opportunity to modify their behaviour in the same sort of way. In essence, everyone pays the same, but we don't have any of the beneficial effects.

The other alternative is that you intend to take in less money, and if that's the case, then I think that the people of Alberta are owed an explanation as to which projects are going to be cut. Now, there are a number of incredibly important projects, and a number of people have spoken at length about those. The projects, I think, that I'm going to speak about that are incredibly important are the green line because it's incredibly important to the citizens of Calgary. The Springbank dry dam I think is incredibly important, also part of the climate leadership. Finally, a project that's incredibly important to the folks in my riding is that we had committed to one of three upstream mitigation options on the Bow to ensure that we don't see a repeat of the devastating floods.

Again, what we're hoping to do is refer this to committee so that a longer conversation can occur about what's going to replace it and what that replacement is going to do. Is it option A, which is to say that we continue to take in the same amount of money – it's just hidden – or is it option B, which is to say that we aren't going to take in the same amount of money, which means that we're going to cut some of those projects that were going to be funded out of the carbon levy?

I think, you know, that the people of Alberta are owed an explanation. The stories that I still heard, even in the campaign occurring in 2019, about the floods: people's lives were impacted, their businesses were impacted, their homes were impacted. A lot

of them still have a lot of fear that they're carrying with them as a result of that. It's very challenging. You have to take your family and your pets and your kids and move out of the house on very short notice. You don't know what you're coming back to or what the situation is going to be. I think there's nothing more fundamental to us as individuals as having a safe place for our family to reside and to call home. The constituents in my riding and in many ridings throughout Calgary who are worried about exactly that I think are owed an explanation.

Another project that I think was incredibly important that was going to be funded out of the carbon levy was the green line. You know, I think the people of Calgary have waited a long time to see the sort of transit that is necessary to become a thriving metropolis.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The members across the way laugh at the idea that anyone might prefer to ride a bicycle or might prefer to take transit, but those people exist. Honestly, I fall into that category. Obviously, I spend a lot of time commuting between Calgary and Edmonton, but prior to the birth of my daughter, I did it primarily on the bus because that was my preference. I think that that's a legitimate preference and a preference that ought to be supported.

I think that for many people in Calgary, especially those who work in the downtown core – the rates of parking in the downtown core of Calgary are exorbitant. People have a really hard time being able to pay that cost, and many of those people would like to make a different choice. We're not saying that everyone has to make that choice. We're just saying that if you want to make the choice, if you'd like to make the choice to take transit, that option ought to be available to you and that your government ought to invest in that option. I think that's a very reasonable request on the part of those individuals: to ensure that those projects that are so important to them are continuing to move forward.

I think individuals would like to know. You know, for all of these projects individually at some point some commitment was made to say: oh, we will find another source of revenue. Well, that's fine, but what is that source of revenue given that it's the case that there's also been a commitment to blow a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget by giving away taxes to incredibly profitable corporations, keeping in mind that the corporations that we're talking about are posting profits in excess of half a million dollars a year in order to fall into this category? We're giving them a \$4.5 billion giveaway, and we're saying to people starting out their careers who are unable to afford a parking spot in downtown Calgary: well, maybe the funding for your green line won't be there, or we're going to find it somewhere else though we won't say where. We're blowing a huge hole in the budget and, you know, we may or may not have a climate plan that may or may not be able to pay for it. I think that that's a real problem, and I think that that's a problem that ought to be addressed. I think people continue to have real questions about that. You know, the economic benefits are clear. I think the benefits in terms of infrastructure are clear.

3:20

I think some of the questions that remain are action on climate change itself. You know, there was a report released very recently that talks about Canada, that talks about the fact that we're warming at twice the rate of most of the globe. I think that that should be a huge concern. It isn't just about warming; it's about changes in the frequency of adverse weather events. When we talk about ensuring that flood mitigation is in place in Calgary, we're not just talking about having the funds to invest in the infrastructure; we're talking about the fact that as climate change becomes more pronounced,

we're likely to see more frequent weather events, which is one of the reasons that we need to continue making progress on this issue.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

You know, at the end of the day, I think that this is an issue that may have an impact on not just the lives but the health of our children, and I think we should all care about that. I think we all do care about that, so I think it's reasonable to say: given that it's an issue that will have an impact on every one of us, given that it's an issue that will touch our children, given that it's an issue that's going to get worse as we go along, what is the action we plan to take?

I think that for each and every one of us who stands in this place, who acts as a leader for our communities, you know, history is going to call on us to be able to say: what did you do? When the time for action was clear, when it was clear that we had to take steps to move forward, what was it that you did? I think members in this House are asking that we be in a position to answer that question, and I think Albertans are asking that we be in a position to answer that question. You know, at the end of the day, history will judge us, and I hope that it judges us well. I hope that it judges us as proper stewards of the environment, of the economy, and of the lives of everyone in this province.

Of course, we're speaking to a referral amendment. To return to the substance of the issue, the substance of the issue is that we want to have a conversation about what's going to take its place. You know, this bill, in particular, certainly does the repeal. There are some transitional provisions, but it doesn't breathe a word of what's going to happen in the alternative. I think that what's going to happen in the alternative is the big, open question. I believe that when Albertans voted in this new government, they believed the promise that was given to them that we're going to get rid of the carbon tax but that we're going to bring in something else in the alternative. I think that they believed that, and therefore I think that they are owed that.

One other thing that I think is worth noting on this issue. You know, the world is moving on, whether we would like it to or not. It is. People in Alberta accept those three basic premises that climate change is real, that it's human caused, and that we ought to do something about it. So do people the world over. Despite the incredible work of our energy industry here, sometimes that message doesn't penetrate to the country. In the last four years we've made incredible progress on that. We went from the majority of Canadians being opposed to pipelines to the majority of Canadians being in favour of pipelines, and that happened because they trust that we're taking steps. They trust that we understand that balance.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for – come on; I study the whole time you guys are talking – Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View mentioned the fear that her constituents experienced. She shared some of the stories she heard as a result of the floods and, you know, other stories related to climate change and support for the climate leadership plan. Her riding is far different from mine in the socioeconomic sense. Many folks in my riding struggle and benefited greatly from the rebates from the carbon tax. Despite the differences, we both heard stories about the support in our ridings for the climate leadership plan of the previous government, and I would just like the member to talk a little bit more about some of the individual stories that she's heard and just why it's so important to listen to these voices and act upon them.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much. As you may well be aware and as the member may be aware, the riding of Calgary-Mountain View is on the north side of the Bow River, so the community of Sunnyside, in particular, was very much impacted by the flooding in 2013. We actually have, as you're probably aware, a commemoration of that. We call it Neighbour Day. It's occurring this year on June 15. Communities throughout the city sort of get together to celebrate the resiliency of Calgary and people coming together.

Despite the fact that all those people come together, I think there's still a lot of concern and a lot of fear. You know, people are worried. I've had many, many conversations about the Springbank dam and many, many conversations about upstream mitigation on the Bow as well. People are still concerned about those projects going forward. Every time that spring comes, when the rest of us celebrate, they're worried. They're worried about their homes. They're worried about their children. They're worried about their pets. They're worried about their jobs, their future. I think that that's a legitimate concern that those individuals are experiencing, and I think that we have to commit to moving forward.

You know, certainly, I had the opportunity to ask a question on this today. It's true that there's an enormous amount of regulation around building these sorts of projects. That's why we moved so quickly after we came into government: to ensure that we were advancing and to ensure that we were pushing things through the regulatory process. You know, we're most of the way down the field. We've started to make deals with most of those landowners. We're most of the way there. All we need in terms of Springbank is the commitment.

With respect to the Bow, obviously, it's a bit more complicated. There are three possible projects that are under consideration, and those studies are still under way. You know, certainly, we had committed to moving forward on one of those, and I think they're necessary. They're necessary in order to protect the people of Calgary and in order to give them that security. Madam Speaker, I don't know if you can imagine anything worse than spending the entire spring coming home every day worried about whether or not you're still going to be able to get into your house and whether or not there's going to be a flood in your basement. That's really, really hard for individuals, and it's still top of mind for them. So I hope that we're able to continue forward with these projects.

At the end of the day, you know, we can speak to our values all we like, but the truth is that our values are where we put money. Our values are signalled by how we use the funds entrusted to us by the taxpayers. If we truly do value this, we have to do more than just say it. We have to be willing to do it.

Those are some of the conversations that I've had the opportunity to have. I sincerely hope that this new government is willing to continue the good work that we've been doing for years to move this forward. I genuinely believe that this is not a partisan issue, but I do have concerns that arise from some of the statements that some of the members on the government side have made about those projects, and I do have concerns about where ultimately the funding is going to come from.

With that, I think I will thank you and close my remarks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any more speakers to the referral amendment? I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's really my pleasure today to get up and speak to this referral amendment because I think it's really important. This is something that I know members of the now government have spoken to many times in the past. It's really important that we get this bill right. I think it's something that's very important for all Albertans, that we understand the implications of the bill. It's important that all members of this Assembly should understand the implications of this bill. That's why we need to take the time to go out and recognize and study it in committee, where we can talk to Albertans and we can talk amongst ourselves about what the Trudeau carbon tax implementation act really means for this Assembly and really means for this province.

Madam Speaker, I want to tell the Assembly through you a little bit of a story. It's a story about a young man who's trying to decide what to do with his life. He knows that the roller coaster of our resource economy is not for him. He knows that he wants a job that is going to be stable, is going to be long term, and is going to be able to provide for his family for years and years to come. That's why he sees a great program at NAIT here in Edmonton. It's the solar install program, and you can learn to do this new, fascinating field of solar technology. So he goes out and does that.

3:30

Now, Madam Speaker, what this government has just done is put his job prospects at risk. That is what this government is doing with this bill. That's why we need to be able to take a look, really, and say: "Is this the right bill right now? Are we willing to put thousands of people who have been studying, transitioning into great, new, clean, renewable jobs out of work? Is that what we want to do today?"

Madam Speaker, I think it's something that we really need to think carefully about because these are the types of projects that are going on all across the province. These are the types of projects that people across the province have been studying for, have been training in, have been learning, and have been moving forward and investing significant amounts of time and money in, and I think that when we look at the Trudeau carbon tax implementation act, it is very clear to me that the government has not put the thought into what that means for so many Albertans.

I want to also talk about a few other things, Madam Speaker. I want to talk about some of the benefits that we have from what happened with the climate leadership plan. One of the very earliest memories I have as a child is being woken up in the middle of the night. My parents would wake me up I think it was every four hours in the middle of the night when I was maybe three or four years old. What we would do is that I would go over to this big, rumbling machine. They'd pull it out of the washroom, and they'd put some vapours in it, and I wasn't quite sure what was going on. They strapped this mask to my face, and I breathed in and out really heavily for, like, 20 minutes or something. I would go back to sleep, and we'd do it again in a few hours. What happened was that I was having asthma attacks, and that was something that we needed to do to help manage those attacks.

Now, Madam Speaker, you'll note that Edmonton, the city I grew up in and have lived in my whole life, is just downwind of a coal plant, and we know that one of the things that is the highest indicator for whether there will be a disproportionate number of people with asthma is being downwind of a coal plant. One of the things that the climate leadership plan did was that it meant that we would have better health for Albertans, maybe not like me – I've missed the boat on that one – but the ones who come after me.

We wanted to invest in a province that was going to have cleaner air for all, and that's why in 2015, when the climate leadership plan

was introduced, Noah Farber, the acting president and CEO at the time of the Asthma Society of Canada, said, and I quote: there is a direct link between the burning of coal and asthma exacerbations, hospital admissions, and untimely deaths, not to mention climate change; the then Alberta government has responded to protect the health of all Albertans, particularly those who suffer from respiratory diseases such as asthma; we are extremely pleased with the unwavering commitment the province has made today to ensure the air we breathe is clean. End quote.

Madam Speaker, the work that we have put in as this Assembly, as the government, the work that has been put in to make sure we have safe, clean air for all Albertans, is at risk because of this. This implementation plan, this Trudeau carbon tax implementation plan, puts what we have accomplished at risk, and I think that we should spend the time to make sure we get it right. We should go to committee, we should study it, we should review it, and we should talk about what is important for Albertans. What are the types of projects, what are the types of health risks that Albertans want to see us mitigate? I think that's something that all members of this Assembly will agree on. They'll agree that we should be able to talk about these issues in a fulsome debate in committee.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk a bit about some of the other things that the climate leadership plan funded. I know members opposite have spoken at length about how they want to protect jobs and the economy and small businesses. Well, as a matter of fact, when the NDP government was in power, they introduced a small-business tax cut, and they reduced small-business taxes by a full third. That was funded entirely through the climate leadership plan. Now, I guess the question for me here now is that that's hundreds of millions of dollars that was used directly from the climate leadership plan to help support small businesses. Are members of the government, of the Conservative government, willing to put that at risk? Are they willing to take that money away from small businesses right now? That's what we're talking about unless we find a meaningful transition solution, and I think that's really important for us to consider as well.

I think that members of the Conservative government here and Conservative backbenchers know that they don't want to punish small businesses. They know that they don't want to put that tax break at risk for them, but unless we go and talk about what the implications of the bill will be, unless we go into committee and actually discuss these impacts and look at what the climate leadership plan funded, look at what the climate leadership plan was intended to do, we won't be able to have that fulsome debate. We won't be able to have those types of discussions and determine where there may be unintended consequences of implementing Ottawa's carbon tax instead of an Alberta-made one.

When we implement what Ottawa wants – and I know that the Premier is very fond of Ottawa, Madam Speaker. I know that the Premier spent a lot of time in Ottawa. But I truly believe that if we have to pay for this, we should control what we do with the money. We shouldn't let the Prime Minister, we shouldn't let people in Ontario tell us what to do.

Madam Speaker, I know that the Premier often spends much time, as frequently as the day after he was elected, in Ottawa, but I think that's not the right move today. I think that today we should focus on Albertans. We should focus on what Albertans elected us to do, and that's to make sure that we have plans that work for Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I can talk at length about some of the projects as well. I know that my hon. colleague spoke about transit. Now, \$1.47 billion was earmarked for the valley line here in Edmonton as well as other LRT improvements, \$1.54 billion was earmarked for the green line in Calgary, and \$967 million was for GreenTRIP

for projects throughout the rest of the province. Those projects, I think, are essential, not just in the major cities through the LRT projects but GreenTRIP as well, to connect our hubs across the province.

When we talk about these projects, when we talk about these transit opportunities, they are projects that I don't think the people in Ottawa – and I know that the Premier knows the people in Ottawa better than I do, but I don't think the people in Ottawa understand the needs of Albertans as well as we do here in this Chamber, Madam Speaker. I think that we should take the time in a committee to talk about which of these transit projects the Premier is willing to cut, which of these transit projects the Premier doesn't want anymore, which bus isn't as important, which route doesn't matter as much. I think that's really important for Albertans, who elected us.

I think that we need control of the projects we decide to fund. I don't want to leave that up to the Prime Minister. I don't want to leave that up to people in Ottawa. I think that we have a duty here in this House to do that work. We have a duty here to go and say that we know there are really important projects in the climate leadership plan. We know that it funds really important projects in all of our constituencies, Madam Speaker, and that's why we want to debate the projects fully. I'd encourage us to look at this in committee and say that, well, we can really dig into the numbers. We can really dig into exactly how many GreenTRIP projects will be cancelled because we cancelled the climate leadership plan. We can dig into exactly how many LRT projects will have to be cancelled.

I mean, when we look at the impact that the climate leadership plan had on infrastructure here in Alberta, it really is unparalleled to any other program, Madam Speaker. It speaks to infrastructure projects across this province. It touches nearly every single community. I know that just a few weeks ago a number of media outlets, Postmedia, put out an article that had lists of which projects were in which ridings, and I encourage every single member to look at that, because overwhelmingly the climate leadership plan funded projects in rural ridings. In the majority of ridings it was projects that were important, things like making upgrades for community halls, things that would help the lives of individuals and individual Albertans like you and me in our communities.

That's why I really want to make sure we get this right. That's why I supported the bill the first time. I mean, I think we debated it for 16 hours or so last time. That's why I want to make sure that we get this right. We talk about those projects. In, let's say, Devon they applied for municipal funding for solar upgrades for their municipal buildings. When we talked about those solar programs, it was so important to be able to help them reduce their electricity costs and to have that funding through the climate leadership plan. We can look at the climate leadership plan and see not just in the two major cities, but we can see all across the province, in all municipalities, that they were able to apply for and in many cases receive significant amounts of funding for significant infrastructure that was really important for their community. It was projects that made a difference for their constituents.

**3:40**

Madam Speaker, the climate leadership plan was a plan that got our two pipelines approved. It was a plan that secured our energy future and allowed us to begin a transition to a new future with value-add for Albertans. It was something that we needed at the time to move forward. Now, today we are debating whether we should continue to study that before we throw it out the door, and I think the answer is really clear. Let's make sure we review this fulsomely. Let's make sure we actually do the work.

I know I was elected here by my constituents because they believed in a vision in which we committed to building important infrastructure in our communities. I know they understood that we needed to make sure that we had clean air. They understood that we needed to believe in the science of climate change. I know that when they ask us to do that, they say that they don't want us, like the Premier, to ignore the problem and walk away from all the progress that we've made.

Now, Madam Speaker, I'll be the first to admit that maybe it wasn't a perfect solution in every single aspect, but that's the reality of legislation sometimes. The reality is that we don't get it right a hundred per cent of the time, every time, but what you do is that you do the absolute best you can. I think that if we want to do the absolute best we can today in this Chamber as legislators, what we should do is that we should commit to studying the issue. We should commit to sending it to a committee so that we can look at it and review what worked and what didn't work.

Maybe there were projects that members opposite didn't like. Maybe we can review which projects work. Maybe the GreenTRIP projects need to stay on the table. Maybe connecting communities is something that's still important to them and their communities; maybe it's important to their constituents. Madam Speaker, I think that's something that every single member in this Chamber should think about and should say: "Would my constituents care if suddenly the GreenTRIP funding was cancelled? Would they care if suddenly the solar panels were pulled off my community hall by debt collectors next week? Would they care if we weren't able to put in the new insulation in the buildings as well?"

Madam Speaker, these are some really important things. I think there are important things all across the province. I talked about some of that infrastructure investment. Really, it was over \$40 million that was invested in schools, universities, hospitals, and colleges all across the province, and it helped those large institutions do things like cut emissions and save operating costs and reduce their load on some of our grids and whatnot. I think these were very important projects that we needed to fund, and we talked about all this.

For the members that are new here – they weren't maybe around when some of these programs were being implemented – the types of projects that were funded were community spaces. They were projects that were designed to help families. Madam Speaker, I don't know about some of the other members, but I know that when I talk to families in my communities, they want to see a government that cares about them. They want to see a government that is committed to investing in projects like community halls, like hospitals, like schools in their community. They want to make sure that the schools in their communities are able to operate as efficiently as possible. That's what the climate leadership plan was able to do.

Really, I hope that we'll be able to as an Assembly send this to committee so that we can review the issues in wholeness and say: are there benefits to some parts of the climate leadership plan? Really, Madam Speaker, I think there are. For some, if not the majority, the climate leadership plan is essential for us here in Alberta because of the types of things that it enabled us to do as a government and as Alberta, as Albertans. The types of projects that the climate leadership plan enabled us to do are really something that were at the forefront of our country. I don't want Ottawa and maybe the Premier's friends in Ottawa to tell us what to do with that instead of ourselves.

Thank you very much. I really encourage members to vote for this referral.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the hon. Member for Edmonton-South and, by extension, his colleagues. As you know, the majority of Albertans support the elimination of the carbon tax. You are also aware that the elimination of this tax will return or, rather, not take further hard-earned money from Albertans that desperately need it. I'm just wondering: are you opposing the repeal of the carbon tax because you have no regard for the will of the majority of Albertans or because you still think that Albertans can't be trusted with their own money?

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that's a really interesting talking point that the hon. member has brought up. What I think is that Albertans should trust Albertans with their money. I think that Albertans shouldn't trust the bigwigs in Ottawa with their money. I think that Albertans shouldn't trust the Prime Minister or the federal government to tell us how they should use our carbon money. We know that this is the Trudeau carbon tax implementation plan. This is the plan that brings in the Liberal's plan federally for carbon pricing because they have already said that they will implement it, and the Premier has no tools to fight it. We've seen the court case fail in Saskatchewan, and we know it's going to continue to fail elsewhere.

Madam Speaker, what this is is that member and members across the aisle in the government saying that they're okay with Ottawa controlling our money, and I think that's not okay. I think what we should be doing is that we should be committing to saying that Albertans deserve a plan that works for them. They deserve a made-in-Alberta plan. I think that's what, if we went to a committee, we'd be able to talk about, we'd be able to fight for, and we'd be able to work out the nuances of.

Now, unfortunately, it looks like members of the government are okay with Ottawa controlling our finances here in Alberta. It looks like members of the government are not only okay with it; they won't even speak to it, Madam Speaker. They'll refuse and deflect, and they won't even mention that, really, this brings in the Trudeau carbon tax. This is the Trudeau carbon tax implementation act, and members of the government ought to know that. If they had read the bill, they would very clearly have been able to see that this brings in a federal carbon tax. If they had read the news, they would be able to see that this brings in a federal carbon tax. Now, we can really clearly see that members of the government are okay with that. In fact, the Premier actually said that he was okay with a federal carbon tax himself.

Madam Speaker, I am actually quite concerned with that. My thought being, of course, that Albertans should be able to control their own futures, and Albertans should be able to control their own carbon monies and where we direct those projects. That's why I spoke at length about transit opportunities across this province. That's why I spoke at length about community projects and things like solar panels and investing in education for transition jobs right here in Alberta, because what that member opposite just said and what Conservatives across the aisle have been saying for the last few days here is that they're okay with Ottawa taking that money, putting it in their general revenue, and not sending a cent of it back here to Alberta. That's what they're okay with when they vote against this referral.

They are saying that they don't trust Alberta's own government to run the carbon levy. They trust Ottawa more, and I don't think that's the right way to go. Madam Speaker, I think very clearly that

the Premier trusts his friends in Ottawa, the Premier trusts the Trudeau carbon tax. We here in the opposition don't. We think very clearly that we want to invest in Alberta-made plans, and we want an Alberta-made plan that keeps jobs, keeps investment, and keeps a project right here in Alberta. We want to make sure we can commit to those projects right here in Alberta, and we know that we won't be able to do that if the Premier is allowed to implement Trudeau's carbon tax.

We know that these projects are essential to our communities, and I know that some of those projects are probably in the hon. member's community as well. When we look at those projects, we can see very clearly that I don't trust, and I don't think any of my hon. colleagues here should trust either, that the federal government would know the nuances of those as well as anybody in this Chamber because the members in this Chamber are elected from their communities. We hear from our community members every single day, so we know to come back here and ask and say: why is our carbon plan not being invested in our communities?

But when it goes to Ottawa, Madam Speaker, when the Premier and the Conservatives are allowed to implement Trudeau's carbon tax, we will have no say. We will have no say on where that money goes, and I'm not okay with that. I don't think Conservatives should be okay with that, but if they're not willing to stand up and speak to that, Madam Speaker, it's very simple, that they are okay with that. They are okay with the Trudeau carbon tax implementation plan. That's not what we here in the opposition believe is right for Alberta. That's not what I think Albertans believe is right for Alberta, and that's not what I believe voters believe is right for Alberta. I think we should make sure we have a plan that works and is made right here in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on this amendment to refer this bill to the Economic Future Committee that was so thoughtfully brought forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Manning.

First of all, I'd like to preface my statement by saying that, you know, it feels strange for me to be standing up and recommending that we send bills to committee when I spent most of the time in the 29th Legislature arguing why we shouldn't be sending bills to committee.

3:50

I think there's an important difference to be made in that when the members opposite continually referred all of our bills related to the climate leadership plan to committee, that was an obvious stalling tactic, and then they just made up the reasons for referring it to committee on the spot. In this case when I'm arguing to refer this to committee, it's because we actually need to go through the process of consulting with the people of Alberta about what the impacts of implementing the Trudeau carbon tax will be on the people of Alberta. Make no mistake, Bill 1 is the Trudeau carbon tax implementation act, because as soon as Alberta repeals our carbon tax, the very next day Ottawa will impose their carbon tax on us, Madam Speaker.

How much consultation did the federal government do with stakeholders in Alberta about their federal carbon tax? Zero, Madam Speaker. The federal government didn't do any consultations with the people of Alberta about their federal carbon tax because they thought it wasn't going to apply here. They



deemed that the carbon tax programs that we had implemented, the economy-wide price on carbon as well as the carbon competitiveness and investment regulation, were compliant with the intent of the federal carbon price and didn't need to be refined or consulted on in any way.

Now that this gang here across the way has decided to throw out the carbon tax plan and replace it with who knows what, we're going to be saddled with the Trudeau carbon tax, that will be imposed upon us without, actually, any consultation with the people of Alberta. I think, you know, the members opposite owe it to the people of Alberta to consult with them to make sure that everybody understands what the implications of imposing the Trudeau carbon tax on the people of Alberta will be, and the way to do that is to refer this bill to committee so that we can undertake that work, so that when the Member for Calgary-South East goes door-knocking the next time in his constituency, and his constituents ask him why he voted to implement the Trudeau carbon tax, he can tell them why, Madam Speaker, he voted to implement the Trudeau carbon tax. You know, I really hope that he records those conversations and posts them to social media because I'm looking forward to hearing what his constituents have to say to him when he goes to tell them that he voted to implement the Trudeau carbon tax without any consultation whatsoever.

Now, Madam Speaker, you know, I want to thank the members from Edmonton-Whitemud, Calgary-Mountain View, Edmonton-South for their thoughtful interjections on this matter, and I think they raised some important points that weren't considered when the members of the treasury benches rushed headlong to scrap the carbon tax without any thought for any of the implications.

There are three things here that I think we need to talk about, though, that haven't been mentioned. One of them is what the effect on the actual price of gas will be. Now, all of us remember those pictures of the former Member for Strathmore-Brooks, Derek Fildebrandt. He was grimly standing next to his truck, filling it up with gas on December 31, 2016, before the carbon tax was implemented. Lord knows where he was going. He probably just came from a hit and run and was on his way to poach something somewhere. Regardless of what he was doing at the time, he filled his truck up with gas, and then, you know, the joke was on him because actually the price of gas went down on January 1, 2017, even though the carbon tax had come into place.

We also remember the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford; the Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Andrew Scheer, all grimly filling up their vehicles with gas before the Trudeau carbon tax comes in. I'm very thankful, Madam Speaker, that Mr. Scheer and Mr. Ford weren't actually at the same gas station doing that at the same time because I'm afraid that they probably would have gotten into a fatal gas fight, much like the one that the people in *Zoolander* did if you recall that movie.

The point is that everybody is concerned. The members opposite have told the people of Alberta that once the carbon tax is scrapped, our gas prices will go down, and I'm here to tell everybody and the people of Alberta that nothing could be further from the truth. Madam Speaker, you may be thinking: how could he possibly come to this conclusion? If you reduce the tax on gas by 6.6 cents a litre, obviously the price of gas is going to go down.

Well, actually, Madam Speaker, we have an instructive case study. That case study happened in the city of Lloydminster. When we implemented the price on carbon here in the province of Alberta, we debated among us cabinet ministers at length about what to do with the gas stations in the city of Lloydminster because gas stations on the Alberta side would have to raise their taxes on gas by 4.4 cents a litre at the time, but the gas stations on the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster wouldn't have to do a similar tax increase. So

the question was: how can we compensate the gas station owners on the Alberta side, who will probably have to charge a higher price for their gas, that will make them uncompetitive with their neighbours on the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster? Now, we of course came up with a rebate program quite unnecessarily, because what actually happened was that the gas stations on the Saskatchewan side of the border took advantage of the higher price in Alberta to raise their own prices and put the difference in their own pockets.

That's exactly what is going to happen here in the province of Alberta the day after this carbon tax is scrapped. The people of Alberta are already used to paying \$1.13 a litre – this morning in my riding – so if we reduce the price of gas, if we reduce the taxes on gas by 6.6 cents, which is the carbon tax amount, what gas station owner is going to lower the price of gas by 6.6 cents when their customers are already used to paying \$1.13 a litre? Not one. There isn't a single business owner who would see the opportunity to charge 6.6 cents more in profit and not put it in their own pockets rather than giving it back to the consumers.

I am looking forward to the members opposite going out on June 1 or whenever this carbon tax is scrapped and explaining to the people of Alberta why their gas prices haven't actually gone down, Madam Speaker. I think that that's why it's important to refer this to committee. You know, we need to understand the impacts of shifting the difference in prices of gas and taxes on the actual price of consumer goods in this province, and I'm looking forward to the members opposite explaining to that committee why it is they favour lining the pockets of big oil companies by letting them inflate their gas prices rather than keeping the money for the people of Alberta to invest in the useful carbon reduction initiatives that our government brought in over the past two years.

Now, the second point that I'd like to make that hasn't yet been raised by my colleagues is one that actually should be near and dear to the hearts of Conservatives because they are nothing if not enamoured with finances and free markets. Every major financial institution and large industries are ringing the alarm bells, saying that we need to do something immediately to act on climate change because the economy is at risk. The Bank of Canada last week announced that they view climate change as a major risk. The Bank of England has said this for a number of years now, and, in fact, insurance companies have been raising the issue of the effects on the insurance companies.

I'd just like to bring up a quote from Kathy Bardswick, who was president and CEO of The Co-operators. She said in 2016, prior to the introduction of our carbon price, that

as an insurance company, we understand the risks associated with climate change and are supportive of carbon pricing as an important step in transitioning to a low-carbon economy. We have identified climate change as one of three focus areas for our impact investments, and hope to invest alongside the government of Alberta to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions as we work toward our ambitious impact investing target.

What is the impact on the insurance industry going to be in Alberta when we implement the Trudeau carbon tax? We don't know because nobody from the federal government has actually consulted with the Alberta insurance industry to determine what the impact is going to be. Like I said, Madam Speaker, the federal government assumed that our carbon tax system would stay in place and didn't do any work to understand the effects.

4:00

I also want to know. It's not just the impacts on the insurance industry, Madam Speaker. Not too many of my constituents are very fond of the insurance companies that they have to deal with,

but they understand that that's a reality of the system that we live in. But they don't want their insurance premiums on their houses to go up; that's for sure. Certainly, with the increased risks of flood and fire that we're subjecting Alberta to by not acting on climate change, what are the impacts going to be on the insurance premiums of the constituents in my riding who need to have home insurance? We don't know. We don't know because we're just rushing headlong into implementing the Trudeau carbon tax without any consultation, so we're leaving the homeowners in my constituency uncertain about what's going to happen with their insurance premiums on their homes, the largest investment that many of them will make in their lives.

I think we owe it to the people in my riding as well as in everybody's ridings here in this Chamber to fully understand what the impacts on insurance are going to be by implementing the Trudeau carbon tax or any other proposed measure that this government wants to take on climate change.

There are other significant risks to the economy that are potentially going to occur. Robert Walker, vice-president of ESG services and ethical funds, NEI Investments, said in 2016:

We believe that a robust and credible climate change policy will be critical to the success of Alberta-based companies, including the energy sector, by reducing investor uncertainty. And implementing a broad-based price on carbon is one of the most important near-term actions governments can take towards a credible policy. Investors are particularly interested in the opportunities that can spring from an effective carbon pricing regime and we believe Alberta is well-positioned to take advantage of the growing investor appetite for these low-carbon opportunities.

Many of the constituents in my riding rely on the energy sector for their well-being and their livelihood, and here we have a prominent investor saying that action on climate change is needed to improve investor certainty in the energy sector, Madam Speaker. So we need to refer this to committee so that I can go back to my constituents and tell them what impact the members opposite's failure to deal with climate change will have on the future of their jobs.

Now, my third point is one that hasn't yet been raised, and that's on the issue of migration, Madam Speaker. I've read a number of articles over the last few days as climate change has become more and more of a focal point around the world. There are a number of interesting studies that are under way, computer modelling done on the impact that climate change will have on world-wide migration. We already know, from the experience in Syria and the millions of migrants who have left that country for other countries around the world, how destabilizing politically mass migrations like that can be. With climate change we can expect multiple Syrias occurring all at the same time, and we need to know what economic impact that will have on the province of Alberta as people from around the world leave their homes because they've become unlivable due to inaction on climate change.

I know that many of the members opposite share a number of concerns around migration, shall we say. Of course, during the election it came to light that the UCP candidate, at the time, for Calgary-Mountain View was very afraid of whites being displaced from their homeland, and we know that the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat and the Member for Calgary-Acadia supported her in those views. You know, we have a number of concerning statements about migration of Muslim people here to the province of Alberta. The Member for Livingstone-Macleod, of course, is on the record as sharing those concerns. And, of course, we have a number of people who seem to believe that there's a conspiracy . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Wonderful. Thank you. I do appreciate the member's comments. I think they're important questions, especially when it comes to migration and how the people on the other side of this House respect those people who are being displaced by climate change.

But I want to move to a separate point. I know that over the last four years you had the honour of being the Minister of Advanced Education. I'm just hoping to find out if you had conversations with postsecondary institutions around the steps that they wanted to take towards addressing climate change and the work that you were able to do in conjunction with them and how repealing such an important piece of legislation will affect those decisions for those institutions.

Thank you.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you. I really appreciate the question from my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday. I'm pleased to speak about some of the actions that we took to deal with the issue of climate change in the postsecondary sector.

Now, in my time as Advanced Education minister we approved a number of loans to the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary, in particular, to undertake a number of initiatives to improve energy efficiency and to develop renewable energy capacity on those campuses. These are long-term programs, and the actions that both universities have taken have increased the sustainability of the activities of those institutions significantly as well as saved significant numbers of operational dollars, that can be better used for supporting students in classrooms and not being spent on things like electricity and heat. Saving that money on electricity and heat is particularly important given the fact that we've got members opposite who are keen to take a giant axe to the budgets of postsecondary education institutions, so they'll need every dollar that they can get to support students in classrooms. I'm very pleased that we've been able to support them in reducing their energy costs over the last three years.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, of course, the Member for Edmonton-West Henday would be interested in knowing that we supported the development of a number of renewable energy programs at institutions all across the province. I think of the alternative energy program at the institution of NAIT. I've toured that facility a number of times. Students there learn about solar power, wind power in particular and about other forms of renewable energy.

I was down at Lethbridge College a year or so ago, and I got to talk to students who were in the windmill technician program, Madam Speaker. It was interesting because a number of those students in the windmill technician program were people who had lost their jobs in the oil and gas sector and were looking to the wind sector for employment. Up until April 16 it looked like employment in the wind sector was going to be a burgeoning sector, a promising sector, but of course now the Member for Lethbridge-East has to go back to those students at Lethbridge College and tell them that he's intent on throwing them out of work. I certainly don't envy him the task although he was quite open about wanting to throw those people out of work. My thoughts are with those students who thought that they were going into an area that was going to provide them a good job that would be able to support them and their families. I'm sorry that the Member for Lethbridge-East is so intent on throwing them back on the unemployment line after our government had thrown them a line of help.

Madam Speaker, certainly there were others. I just went to Red Deer College a couple of weeks ago. We had lent Red Deer College millions of dollars to build their new student residence. The interesting thing about that student residence is that it's net zero ready. It's covered with thousands of solar panels that will provide a continuous supply of renewable energy. Red Deer College is probably the most advanced postsecondary institution in this province in terms of supporting renewable energy development on its campus. When I talked to the president of Red Deer College just a couple of weeks ago, he was saying that their investment in renewable energy will provide millions of dollars a year in savings. In fact, they were able to pay off their investments in renewable energy in just three years, which is a remarkable payoff time for renewable energy. It was very good that Red Deer College was able to . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any more speakers on the referral amendment? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to rise to be able to speak to why it is that this bill should be referred to committee in order for us to ensure that it is the subject of considerable levels of second thought. It is primarily because this bill does the wrong thing. It represents the wrong decision, and it is the crystallization of a path backwards for the people of Alberta.

4:10

I do appreciate that the path forward is not an easy one, that it's not paved with gold. It's not paved with asphalt. It is a path that is challenging, but sometimes that's what you get. Leadership is defined by whether you continue to forge forward or whether you just pack everything up and you put your hands over your ears and you close your eyes and you just sort of start stamping your feet and you say: "I don't want to go down any path anymore. I just want to go back the way I came." If you do that, Madam Speaker, that's not leadership. That is a profound failure of leadership. Unfortunately, that is exactly what this bill represents.

Now, as you know, it was a significant element of the record of our government that we committed time, effort, and, frankly, political capital, quite a good deal of political capital – arguably too much political capital, but what are you going to do? – to the matter of standing up for Alberta's future, standing up for Alberta's youth, standing up for the health of all Albertans, standing up for the ability of our economy to innovate and adjust to a new reality, standing up for our energy industry and supporting their work to be able to transition to a more sustainable production model that would ensure that markets for their product remained robust for decades to come. Sometimes that kind of work isn't easy. Sometimes just sort of fiddling and hoping that the status quo delivers what you need is not enough, and sometimes you have to dig in. That's exactly what our government did. Many speakers have spoken already about the fact that our climate leadership plan was the product of extensive research by experts and also extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders who came to the table with high levels of knowledge and competing interests in order to establish the best path forward.

Right from the very outset, Madam Speaker, I certainly took the position and I believe most other members of our then government took the position that if we continue to address this debate as though every effort taken to protect the environment is somehow an attack on another person's job or, conversely, if we approach it where we assume that every effort to create a job is somehow an attack on the

environment, then what we will do is continue to do the things that we have been doing in the past, which amount to failure, which amount to getting to that place in the road where we can't go forward with the same vehicles that brought us to this point in the road. We would fail on creating jobs. We would fail on protecting current jobs. We would fail on laying out a path for new jobs that would last decades and decades to come, and we would also fail on protecting our forests, protecting our air, protecting our water, and protecting, quite frankly, the future of our world.

So what we set about to do was to begin to lay out the first steps in a path to try to bring these two interests together, to say: we are going to stand up and protect the environment, and we are going to do so in a pragmatic way that allows us to also ensure that we continue to promote economic growth and that we continue to promote the kind of innovation and forward-thinking that actually lays a foundational path for generations to come so that our children and our children's children and our great-great-grandchildren could look back to what we were doing and say: "Right there – right there – was where the right decisions were made. We turned the corner, and we started on the right path, and we stopped being a bunch of climate-denying people who were making the problem worse."

So that's what we were trying to do, and I delivered that message across the country. I delivered that message to environmentalists. I delivered that message to members of my own political party. I delivered that message not just in, you know, rural Saskatchewan, but I also delivered that message on Bay Street. I delivered that message in Montreal. I delivered that message in Quebec City. I delivered that message in Vancouver. I delivered that message to everyone because the fact of the matter is that as a nation we need to be more strategic not only in terms of supporting our energy, our oil and gas resources in order to get the most value for these incredible resources that we have in our province and in our country but also to be strategic about how we reposition our economy to be ready for the inevitable pressures that are going to come to bear upon all of us if we fail to act to combat climate change. That is what underlines our efforts with respect to putting in place the climate leadership plan.

Now, we were not alone in the efforts that we put into this. We were joined by forward-looking energy executives and industry players. We were joined – heaven forbid – by scientists, multiple scientists who had done a lot of research on this. We were joined by First Nations people. We were joined by community members who were concerned about the future of their community. We were also joined, interestingly, by fairly forward-thinking members of the Conservative Party who also understood that pricing carbon in the long run was the path forward for any government to make significant progress on fighting climate change.

Now, members opposite like to say things like, "Oh, well, it never had any effect at all" and "The Premier didn't know what the impact was of her plan." In fact, that is not true. What we know, to roughly this point, is that just over the last two and a half years we've been able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the province of Alberta by about seven megatonnes, which is about the same as the overall emissions of the whole province of Manitoba. We've had at least a couple of studies which have talked about how our air quality has improved considerably in and around Edmonton and in other parts of the province because of the accelerated reduction in the burning of coal. So, in fact, in a very short time what we've actually seen is progress.

Let me just say, Madam Speaker, that on the matters of accelerating the coal phase-out, even though some of the members opposite, probably not a lot of them – they don't even necessarily

agree because it's really quite an interesting collection of disparate humans over there – will look to the federal Conservative efforts to reduce coal emissions, when they did that, they didn't give a second thought to the people whose jobs would be displaced as a result of that coal reduction. We, however, did, so one of the things that our climate leadership plan paid for was a just transition program for people employed in the coal industry to make sure that they had a just transition to other forms of work. That was not something that the federal Conservatives ever gave the slightest little second thought to.

One of the other things that we were also very proud to be able to do with the funds from the climate leadership program goes to the matter of jobs. Members opposite suggest that this bill will create 6,000 jobs. Well, that's just great. The climate leadership plan has already created over 7,000 and actually planned to create tens of thousands more than that, so that looks to me like a net loss. If you're keeping track on your old jobs-pipeline-economy chart there, you might want to just go: "Oops, I guess we're starting by going back a couple of thousand. But, hey, who's counting?" We are, just to be clear.

4:20

Nonetheless, our plan was creating jobs. One of the places we were creating jobs was in the renewable energy sector. Here we are in Alberta, one of the sunniest places in the world. Unfortunately, for the people around Lethbridge it's also one of the windiest places in the world. Yet for decades we were way behind the rest of the world, way behind the rest of the continent in terms of investing in renewable energy. It was just ridiculous. You know, renewable energy: this is a great sector. Why do people have to feel threatened? It's, like: oh, well, if we invest in renewable energy, then somehow our friends in oil and gas are going to not do as well. Well, no. Everybody does well if you diversify your energy economy. Certainly, our climate does well if you diversify your energy economy, particularly to bring along more renewables. Certainly, people who are breathing our air do well, and ultimately renewable energy will be less expensive in the long term.

But it won't be if you do nothing – if you do nothing – if you do everything you can to stop it from growing, which was the principle and the primary policy directive of the previous government. But we didn't do that. We put in place an innovative plan to incent renewable energy. So when we introduced the auctions for renewable energy, we found that in the province of Alberta we were able to buy renewable energy at absolutely the lowest price anywhere in Canada and in one case the lowest price anywhere in North America and in another case the second-lowest price anywhere in North America. It was an incredible success.

While we were doing this, do you know what else was happening, Madam Speaker? Here's the thing. We were creating jobs. We were creating jobs, and we were attracting investors in high tech, attracting investors in innovative renewable energy technologies right here to the province of Alberta. Most Albertans will tell you that they want to see job creation, but they also want to see economic diversification. They want to see forward-looking plans that will actually ensure that their kids are working 20 years from now as well, and that's what our plan did.

Our plan also, of course, invested in public transit, something that, again, the previous government was quite hostile or at the very least resistant to investing in, and it was a significant investment in public transit. That's all up in the air now. We don't know what's going to happen with that.

We also invested in rebates for two-thirds of Albertans. Two-thirds of Alberta households received rebates from the climate leadership plan. Low-income households received the most.

Indeed, low-income households probably received more than they paid, and that's not unreasonable because those are the folks who were struggling the most with the increased costs.

That was a good thing because the folks who actually burned the most emissions, not in terms of business or industry but in terms of regular folks, are folks with more money. You know, you buy that third truck to pull the camper, and then you've got the boat, and you've got the this and you've got the that, and you've got the 4,000-square-foot house. Yeah, you are paying more in carbon tax. So be it. If that's the choice you made, well, then, pay your carbon tax, and we'll use that money to reduce emissions elsewhere. If you don't want to pay the carbon tax, then reduce your footprint. For people who couldn't afford to make those kinds of adjustments, who couldn't afford to make those kinds of choices, we were providing a rebate so that they weren't actually losing. That's, of course, all gone as well. We're losing the ability to act to protect us from the consequences of climate change or to reduce climate change.

Before I finish, I want to talk a little bit about the consequences of climate change. Another big piece of what our climate leadership plan was dedicated to addressing was the matter of adaptation, something that is incredibly underconsidered in public policy in all provinces and also nationally. The costs of adaptation are growing every day. Of course, we can all look at what's happening in northern Alberta right now and know that this is a problem that's not going away any time soon.

Fire is not the only hazard. Flooding is also a hazard. Melting is a hazard. Rising sea levels are a hazard. Whatever pests and things which are attacking our forests are a hazard. All these things happen because of climate change. So if we fail to act to reduce our emissions, which, it is pretty clear, we're already on track to – if we do manage to reduce our emissions enough, we're not going to do it fast enough to completely mitigate the effects of climate change, so we're already in a position where we need to start planning for funding the cost of adaptation.

How are we going to do that? Are we just going to do like the Premier apparently did? I don't know – I stand to be corrected if I'm incorrect – but I had a person in the street tell me the other day that he made some comment about: well, if you're living up around High Level, it's on the frontier; you need to expect fires to some degree. Now, maybe that's not correct – and I apologize if it is not – but it was out there in the world of people talking to each other. Either way, the reality is that where there are forests, there are fires, and where there are communities that are surrounded by forests, there is risk, and where there is risk, there is cost. There is cost to the economy.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar: I walked in to hear him talking about insurance costs. We know that insurance costs are out of control. I'll tell you something, Mr. Speaker. That kills jobs. If the cost of insuring activity becomes prohibitive, so too does investment in things that create jobs. So that's another thing that we are no longer dealing with here in Alberta.

We were leading the country in terms of taking action. We were setting a framework for how we could preserve and protect jobs while beginning the good work of protecting Albertans from the impact of climate change and also combatting the forces that actually cause climate change. We were balancing that with our work to get access to tidewater and to build national support for access to tidewater. We have to understand that we are Canadians, and lots of Canadians care about climate change. We can stomp our feet and say, "Oh, you shouldn't care about climate change because

that's inconvenient for us," but – you know what? – we're not going to win that argument.

The way we're going to get a national consensus on the future of our energy industry and the need for national infrastructure is by listening to other Canadians and finding forward-looking solutions, and this bill represents the opposite of that. This bill represents pandering to folks over a series of costs which, quite frankly, will pale in comparison to the actual costs which are about to hit many Albertans through a whole range of plans that these guys have in their back pocket. That's a whole other thing.

Of course, one of the other things that we did with the climate leadership plan was that it allowed us to pay the cost of dropping the small-business tax by a third, further supporting their efforts as we move forward.

At the end of the day, we can go forward, or we can either try to balance or not balance. In fact, I reject this idea of balancing. What we have to do is align. We have to align environmental, responsible, thoughtful, evidence-based, pragmatic, well-consulted-on action to protect our environment with ongoing work to develop a sustainable, job-creating economy for the future, not only in the nonrenewable energy sector but in the renewable energy sector and in many, many, many other sectors. That is what this plan was designed to do. Now we are going back on the future, going back by a decade.

As members opposite have already heard, I'm sure, from folks in our caucus, what we are doing is that we are walking back a made-in-Alberta plan that was created through months and months and months of consultation, actually years, because many elements of it came into effect even after we introduced the climate leadership plan, and then we went off to work with different sectors who were impacted by it. So our plan was developed through at least three and a half years of consultation with Albertans to find a plan that was made in Alberta and that worked for Albertans, that worked with Alberta's trade-exposed industries, that worked with Albertan communities that were inappropriately or disproportionately negatively impacted by the plan. That's what it was, and it's now going to be replaced by a made-in-Ottawa plan.

4:30

You know, it's all great. As I've said before, the members opposite are all interested in creating new jobs for lawyers. As you've all heard, one particular new job that they ought to be creating is that for a special prosecutor and people to work with that special prosecutor to save the justice system from the imminent demise that it is facing under the current leadership. But separate and apart from that, I'm not really keen to create jobs for lawyers, which is all the whole, you know: I'm going to tilt at this judicial windmill, I'm going to tilt at that judicial windmill, and I'm going to rant and I'm going to rave and I'm going to rage about all that is unfair. That's what the plan is, but what we know is that the courts have said that by replacing a made-in-Alberta plan, it is very likely that Albertans will be faced with a made-in-Ottawa plan.

Now, maybe the Premier is super pumped and actually happy about that because I feel that he probably thinks he has a great deal of agency in Ottawa. It's kind of his home away from home or his home away from where he visits over here in Alberta. I don't know. But most Albertans are quite keen . . .

**Mr. Schmidt:** Does his mom have a basement in Ottawa, too?

**Ms Notley:** I don't know. There may be additional basements in Ottawa. Perhaps it feels very comfortable there.

The reality is that Albertans would like a plan that was developed in Alberta so that they had access to the decision-makers in order to

engage and to do the appropriate back and forth and responsive policy-making that happens when you have an engaged government that actually cares about the province and lives in the province and actually works with people in the province.

That's a better way to develop a climate leadership plan than to say to the federal government: here; you do it, and then that will give us a convenient political target for us to rage against because, at the end of the day, for us it's not really about good public policy, it's not really about protecting the province and the people of this province from the consequences of climate change, it's not really about diversifying and innovating our economy for now and for the future; it's just about politics and game playing and clickbait and all the things that happen these days in the new political world.

The problem is that we are then left with the collateral damage of that approach, and that collateral damage: we're seeing it in northern Alberta right now. We're seeing it in the thousands of Alberta students who expressed their concern about the jaw-dropping levels of frustration that they feel because people keep saying things that are disconnected from science and facts and real news and, you know, just come up with empty contradictory talking points to justify doing nothing to protect their future, doing nothing to protect our climate, and doing nothing to prepare our economy for the consequences of climate change. We have folks like that who are very, very concerned, and they're not hearing their voice represented at all by the members opposite.

I appreciate that, again, these folks aren't voters, and if your only job is to get re-elected or get elected here in Alberta so that you can fund your campaign to run for office in Ottawa and use taxpayers' dollars to do that, well, then, why worry about the facts? Why worry about the science? Why worry about the public policy consequences of this profoundly irresponsible decision that you're making?

At the end of the day, you know, we've talked about the 4 and a half billion dollar hole that's being built into the budget through the corporate tax cuts, but, in fact, this also is creating a hole in the provincial budget. Many of the important infrastructure projects which were funded through the climate leadership plan – the members opposite suggest that they may still fund some of them, probably not all of them but some of them.

But the funding of those projects: that's transfers to municipalities to get those projects funded, which means it's not even part of your capital budget, my friends; it's coming out of your operating budget each and every year. Now you've just shut off another revenue stream that would have been dedicated to supporting the cost of building the green line, the cost of building the Edmonton west LRT – all those kinds of things – the cost, actually, of the Springbank protection because, of course, that too was an adaptation measure. All those things now are going to be coming out of that budget, which apparently – anyway, math is a thing that, though hard, people should really dig into, and it's not working for you right now. Bill 1 is going to be another challenge to your math.

Ultimately, I believe that all Canadians do want to see us take the responsible path towards being a leading country, internationally, on combating climate change. This whole, "Oh, these other guys over there are burning more carbon than us, so why should I do anything?", honest to God, sounds like a conversation between three-year-olds on a playground. The fact of the matter is that the consequences of climate change are profound to humans all across this globe. We are public policy-makers. We are leaders. We are decision-makers, and the matter of environmental stewardship is squarely within our set of responsibilities.

So in making your first decision, a decision to take that responsibility, wrap it up in, you know, a garbage bag and hide it in

the bottom of grandma's closet somewhere and hope nobody ever remembers to ask you about it: that, my friends, is the opposite of leadership. It is the kind of act that you will actually have as part of your legacy. You will. I'm sure right now as you're sort of running your polling and you're thinking: "Oh, yay, look at us. We got 55 per cent in the election. Aren't we the smartest people in the world?" Let me just say that 20 years from now I hope each and every one of you will feel super good about talking to your grandkids about your legacy: a legacy of walking away from your responsibility to protect our environment, to reposition our energy industry, to invest in innovation, to improve and enhance renewable energy, to build public transit, and to protect our air and our land and our water. All of these things that you are doing now are not that.

Then on top of it all – I mean, I know Bill 1 doesn't speak to the emissions cap, but of course that is a critical part of our climate leadership plan. Should this government proceed with a plan to remove the emissions cap and pretty much start campaigning against our pipeline in jurisdictions where we really need to continue to build support, well, then I think that that, too, would be a betrayal to the very people you spoke to in the last election: the people of Alberta who need jobs, who need a strong energy industry, who are looking for leadership on getting market access secured. So I will say that if you don't keep that emissions cap, you are effectively beginning the campaign against the pipeline.

I will also say that this idea of a war room where you choose to rather than adopting the approach that I was talking about earlier of aligning environmental action with economic growth and instead demonizing anybody who speaks about the real science and the real concerns about climate change, that too will be seen as the kind of action that will polarize people in Canada and push them away from supporting our efforts to get our products to tidewater. That's what Canada is built on. Polarizing for political gain, again: lovely short-term wins for folks, but that also represents some profound long-term losses.

4:40

I look forward to having conversations with folks about how we can amend Bill 1 to minimize and mitigate the worst of what it contains. I certainly look forward to hearing from members opposite if they have any actual plans to combat climate change. I get that they talked about cancelling our plan to carbon price. I get that the people of Alberta voted for that. It is what it is. But I don't believe that the people of Alberta ever voted for the government to walk away from their responsibility, and so far I have heard absolutely nothing from this government other than a commitment to going back roughly 10 years and essentially walking away from their responsibilities. That, Mr. Speaker, is a very disappointing thing to many, many Albertans.

That is why of course I think that this referral should succeed. Time should be taken to think about how it is that the many, many elements of our climate leadership plan can be preserved, if not through carbon pricing then through other mechanisms, or whether we're simply throwing those away along with the carbon-pricing mechanism which we, as I've said before, know many, many people, Nobel prize winning economists – I know, they're just a bunch of eggheads, those guys. But you know what? They are Nobel prize winning economists – and then a bunch of folks who are actually Conservatives, too, who all see carbon pricing as something valuable in and of itself, as a means of reducing emissions separate and apart from the other initiatives that I've just spoken about that we in Alberta need support for because we are a province that has had tremendous wealth and tremendous prosperity as a result of our nonrenewable energy sector.

But if we are going to maintain that wealth and maintain that prosperity, we are going to have to pull together through the resources that one would have otherwise had through the climate leadership plan to support that transition to other, more innovative ways of doing things, including support of the nonrenewable sector itself to finding more innovative ways of doing things. In failing to do that, what we likely are doing is just setting up a whole bunch of different sectors' failures, and that is unfortunate for the people in this province.

So I hope that folks will vote in favour of this motion for referral. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar rising on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I certainly listened very intently to what the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona had to say. Of course, it should be no surprise that I hang on her every word. I only wish that we could amend the standing orders to allow her to speak for longer on all of these bills that come forward. Perhaps I will bring forward some kind of amendment to allow her to do just that when the government motions come up for debate.

**The Speaker:** Just to add as a point of clarification, the member did have an additional 60 minutes remaining in her time to speak.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, of course, she was asked to keep her remarks brief. In her defence, this is probably the least amount of time she has spoken in one go. So I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for keeping things as succinct as she did.

But, you know, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona ended her remarks with some comments that she made about Conservative thought leaders and their stance on climate change and carbon pricing. It's interesting to me. I wonder if the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has some comments to make as well because she has been a long-time observer of Conservative politics and politicians here in Alberta, and if she ever thought she would live to see the day where Conservative politicians in this province are out of line with people like Margaret Thatcher, who spoke at length in 1989 at the United Nations about the dangers that global warming posed to the world.

Of course, Margaret Thatcher was even better than Stephen Harper at throwing coal workers out of work although that was more of an ideological assault on unions than any concern for climate change at the time. In fact, the British Conservative Party has been very successful at transitioning Great Britain off coal-fired power. Just last week, Mr. Speaker, the country of Great Britain went for eight days without generating a single kilowatt hour of electricity from coal, which is remarkable given that the entire country of Great Britain is essentially one giant lump of coal floating in the North Sea.

The members opposite are out of step with their Conservative brethren in the U.K., both past and current. They're certainly out of step with their forefather Preston Manning, who of course has been a long-time proponent of carbon pricing here in Canada. They are certainly out of line even with Republican lawmakers like Arnold Schwarzenegger, who implemented very proactive renewable energy efficiency policies in the state of California, things that have been continued by his successors. Of course, Arnold Schwarzenegger has taken President Trump, the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake's favourite President, to task for his inaction on climate change.

I'd like the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona's thoughts on why this group of Conservatives is so far out of line with what

conservatives in the United States and world-wide have been saying on carbon pricing and the need to take action on climate change.

**Ms Notley:** Well, that was entertaining. You know, to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, I think it really comes down to this. It comes down to the degree to which one is going to abandon hard-evidence-based, good-for-folks public policy-making because that's what government does in order to pursue very short-term, crass, uninformed political objectives. There's no question that these folks here decided that running against the carbon tax was going to be the best way to get themselves back here so that they could then fund their leader's inevitable attempt to run a campaign in Ottawa, whether for himself or for his colleagues. What we do know is that it will probably be using taxpayers' dollars through the energy war room.

That being said, all I would say is that I would urge the members opposite to learn as much about . . . [Ms Notley's speaking time expired]

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Government House Leader rising.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to rise on this referral motion. First off, I enjoyed the comments – well, I don't know if "enjoyed" is the right word, but I listened with interest to the comments from the Leader of the Official Opposition. Just on her closing remarks in her question in regard to campaigning with our federal colleagues in Ottawa, let me be very clear to the House. This side of the House, this government, will not be like the NDP when they were in power, spending their time trying to shore up Justin Trudeau, who has spent his time actively attacking our province. Instead, we will stand with Albertans, and we will work very hard to get Andrew Scheer elected the next Prime Minister of this country. We will not be ashamed of that at any time.

Now, what was interesting to me as we listened to the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition's comments in this place – I respect the leader of that party. She shares an office that both you and I held at one time, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure she's excited that our pictures will hang together on the wall. I think that probably is maybe not something that excites her, but I think it's an interesting fact.

I'd like to recap some other facts maybe for the benefit of my little brother, the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, and some of our other colleagues who have joined us here that weren't here in the 29th Legislature and did not get to experience the long and sad story of the Alberta carbon tax that was brought in under the NDP and the history of what the NDP did with the carbon tax, which takes us to the decision that Albertans made on April 16, quite frankly, and what this government is now doing on their behalf as per their instructions. Your constituents and my constituents' instructions, without a doubt, Mr. Speaker, were to bring forward this bill and make sure that we defeat the carbon tax.

4:50

Now, what happened . . . [interjection] I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has lots of stuff to say. He likes to heckle in the House, Mr. Speaker, and that's where he goes.

What he doesn't like to talk about is the fact that he belonged to a government that campaigned in 2015 and never once mentioned the carbon tax and then came to this place and sat on this side of the House and then brought in the largest tax increase in the history of this province without even telling Albertans. This side of the House, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this bill that is before this House, without a doubt, was very clear with Albertans what our intention was, and they overwhelmingly voted in support of removing that

carbon tax. That's a big difference. That's just one fact. I've got a few more I want to talk about. But that's a big difference between us and the NDP. We said that we were going to bring it . . . [interjection] I know the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar loves to do this. You see him heckling away, Mr. Speaker, through you to him. He should probably start to re-examine the fact that his party was absolutely decimated as a result of some decisions that he was a part of, which include the carbon tax.

This side of the House made a commitment; we're going to follow through on that commitment.

You know, when you look at the carbon tax as a whole which was brought in by the NDP government and we listen to the Leader of the Opposition talk about all the things that she thinks will go wrong as a result of the carbon tax being repealed, it's disappointing for her to even make that argument when she herself as Premier of Alberta has said – and she said it on TV and said it elsewhere – that she has no evidence that the carbon tax was even working. That's what she said. She could not bring forward any facts. You can watch. It was a New Year's or a Christmas interview, either just before Christmas or for year-enders, in which she makes clear that she could not back up that the carbon tax had any positive impact.

Well, what I can tell you, though, is that the carbon tax had a significant negative impact, which that party across from us ignored when they sat on these benches. My colleagues and myself, when we sat in opposition, continued to raise those negative concerns that were happening to our constituents, and they ignored it. They ignored the fact that our homeless shelters were struggling under their carbon tax. They ignored the fact that our food banks were struggling. They ignored the fact that our K to 12 education system was struggling as a result of it. They ignored the fact that our municipalities were struggling, that our nonprofit sector, which is the social safety net of our communities, was struggling.

They hate it when I bring this up, Mr. Speaker, but it's so appalling what they did. They told seniors in Sundre to go have a fundraiser to pay for the carbon tax. That's what their focus is on. The opposition wants us to forget about that. Well, Albertans didn't forget about that on April 16. They didn't forget about that.

What's interesting to me is that when the hon. Leader of the Opposition rises on this referral amendment and goes on her version of the history of the carbon tax and how great it is for this province, she just glosses over the fact that Albertans were hurt by her decision to bring in this carbon tax. Albertans were hurt by that opposition's decision when they were in power to bring a carbon tax that caused significant trouble for your constituents, my constituents, and their constituents, and they passed judgment on April 16. My colleagues that were here in the 29th Legislature will recall that we often said that to the government. We warned the then government of the day that if they continued down this track with the carbon tax, when Albertans finally made the decision, when the boss finally made a decision, they were going to cast a judgment that was not going to be very good for the NDP because they ignored what the people of Alberta wanted.

Further to that, they made it worse for them at the very time, Mr. Speaker, that we were in a recession. We were bleeding jobs all over under the NDP at the very time that we would go home to our constituents and have to sit in our offices with people that were losing their homes, unable to pay their bills as a result of other economic decisions that the NDP were making. They would come to this place and sit in these very benches that we have the privilege of sitting in now and completely ignore that and sometimes even belittle it. They called Albertans Chicken Little for bringing up their concerns with the carbon tax and other names, including sewers rats, which is another story for a different day. That's the history that they just want to gloss over. They don't want to talk about the

history of what the carbon tax did to our constituents, and that's an important thing to talk about.

What's maybe even worse, though, is that the NDP decided that that was the direction that they wanted to go. No different from us: we've decided we want to go in a different direction as per the instructions we received from the majority of Albertans. But when they went for it – that was their plan – they told Albertans that they would gain social licence, that we would get our pipelines built, other provinces would stop blocking our energy products from getting to market, and we'd be able to overcome one of the biggest hurdles that we have in this province right now, getting our energy products to tidewater. They made a promise to Albertans that they would do that. They celebrated just outside these doors, promising that two pipelines would be built, that have not been built now.

My point is this. At the very least, if they were going to force this carbon tax on the people of Alberta and the consequences of that carbon tax on the people of Alberta, they should have been able to follow through on their commitment that we would have got the social licence, that we would have got pipelines built. I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that the fact that that did not happen shows the failure of this policy. For the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition to continue to stand up and say that the carbon tax is about the environment but, at the same time, can't show how it has even helped the environment, that's a ridiculous argument. The NDP carbon tax was all about taxing Albertans, causing trouble for fixed-income seniors, causing trouble for the less fortunate in our community, the most vulnerable people inside our province. That's all the carbon tax did. The Leader of the Opposition should recognize that.

She should also recognize that it's time for her party to apologize for their behaviour. It's time for their party to apologize for not campaigning on a carbon tax, keeping it hidden from the people of Alberta and then coming here and going through with a tax that was widely unpopular. It's time for them to apologize that they did not get those pipelines built and that they did not get us social licence as a result of that even though we paid the ridiculous carbon tax for years. They should apologize to the nonprofits and the fixed-income seniors and the swimming pools that struggled under that. They should apologize for that, but they won't. Instead they'll try to stand up and double down on a policy that was overwhelmingly rejected by the majority of Albertans.

What I can tell you, though, Mr. Speaker, is that that's the difference between them and us. We campaigned for several years on the promise that we would get rid of the job-killing carbon tax. We campaigned on the promise that that carbon tax would be gone if we were given the privilege of forming government in this House. We made it very, very clear. We made it very, very clear what we would do here. Unlike the last government, who hid it from Albertans, we told Albertans what we wanted to do, and we gave them a chance to cast judgment. They cast judgment on April 16, and this opposition now trying to bring referral amendments to block the will of the majority of Albertans is ridiculous.

The majority of Albertans weighed in on April 16. I know that your constituents, Mr. Speaker, voted in the same volume as the great constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I think it was about 60 votes behind the people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I don't know, but it was close. They made it very, very clear, just as the constituents of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre made it clear, that we were to come here and we were to follow through on our promise and repeal the carbon tax. That is what's going to happen here despite what the opposition wants to do. They can continue to try to filibuster and send things to committee and play procedural games to try to block this bill.

But the reality is that Alberta now has a government that will keep their promises, that will stand up for what they said they would do. I suspect that once they finally give up, we'll be able to finally repeal the NDP's carbon tax, and we'll be able to move this province forward. I, for one, can't wait to go back to Sundre and tell them that we did, and I suspect that you can't wait to go back to Olds and do the same.

**The Speaker:** Members, 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments. I see the Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I was really enjoying the comments from the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I just want him to maybe further comment, if he has a chance here, about how many bills the NDP government actually sent to committees in their four years on this side of the House as government. I think that would be an interesting number to calculate because you wouldn't need very many fingers to do that. I don't know if it ever happened on a government bill, that it actually went to committee. I think the irony is astounding, and I would say the hypocrisy is astounding that the opposition, in fact the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, would get up here and stand for a half-hour and talk about the importance of sending this bill to committee. When they had the chance to send bills to committee, they never did.

Now, of course, there's an importance to committee work and reviewing bills at times, but we have just had an election, an election that we on this side of the House campaigned on getting rid of the carbon tax. In this election we, of course, received 55 per cent of the votes, more votes than ever cast in Alberta's history, and clearly the number one thing on the ballot question was getting rid of the carbon tax. I would actually challenge the members opposite to try to find one piece of literature, one website, anything where it was not mentioned that we were committed to getting rid of the carbon tax. I'd challenge them to do that. If there's anything, there would be very little.

5:00

Now, it was also interesting to talk about the jobs. Of course, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona got talking about how many jobs the carbon tax created, and we talk about how many jobs were lost. Of course, this doesn't take into account the tens of billions of dollars of investment that left Alberta because of this government and their policies. We can't even calculate all those job losses that this government has caused. Now, the carbon tax was one of those things that led to that investment being lost, because when corporations have an opportunity to invest, they look at all the factors involved, and obviously taxes are one of those things that they look at.

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona also talked about the investments that are taking place because of the carbon tax. It's like there was no investment happening before the carbon tax came along, so up until four years ago there was never any investment happening, according to how they're talking now. That's absolutely untrue. Investment will continue in Alberta as far as the tax money being invested on behalf of Albertans here in Alberta. That will continue. To suggest that the sky is going to fall because we don't have the carbon tax and that no investment will happen on any projects is absolutely crazy.

Again I just want to point out the hypocrisy of this government talking now about having this go to committee. Now, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, when he spoke yesterday, said that everyone in Alberta is unhappy with this, and he said that no one



that voted for us expected us to do this. I mean, that's absolutely unbelievable, that those words could come out of his mouth.

Well, maybe it's not unbelievable knowing some of the other things he said, because he did say today, on the Ottawa carbon tax, that Ottawa did not consult with Albertans. Well, it just so happens that the NDP didn't consult with Albertans either, so to suggest that Ottawa is any different than the NDP is also bizarre. The previous government, the NDP opposition, did not campaign on the carbon tax. They did not tell Albertans what they were going to do until they rammed it down their throats. In fact, I think it was the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview that said: Ottawa will ram the carbon tax down their throats. Well, we've seen that happen. The previous NDP government rammed the carbon tax down Albertans' throats, so we have this situation . . .

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

I see the Member for Edmonton-West Henday rising to speak to the referral motion.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to the motion for referral of Bill 1. I have to say that I'm gravely concerned. That we're having this discussion in terms of talking about repealing the price on carbon or moving towards the Trudeau carbon tax implementation is really a big concern for us. You know, we say: we're going to fight them in the courts. I don't think that's the right decision, but of course we're on this side of the House and not on that side.

I do believe at this point that the best-case scenario for this piece of legislation and, frankly, the future of our province is to move this to committee. I think it would serve us all well to have further discussions on this bill. I, of course, understand that the government has been given a mandate by the people to get rid of the price on carbon, I suppose, but I don't think that by any means the people of Alberta have given you a mandate to stop caring about climate change altogether. I think that's really my biggest concern here, that you're throwing the baby away with the bathwater, for lack of a better saying.

Further to that, I think that another big concern for me is not only throwing away the climate policy that comes with the leadership plan but also the energy efficiency policy, that I have seen used extensively through my community. Though I haven't had somebody come out to my property, I know that many people in my community have, so I think that it's a program that we should continue with. Not only is it creating jobs within our community; I think there's even further opportunity for manufacturing of these products, whether it be solar panels or perhaps light bulbs, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to point out that I do have concerns with the lack of debate that is happening here. Of course, the government wants to push this through as fast as they can, and with that, we have the opposition members speaking to why this legislation or the climate leadership plan is important, and then in turn the government stands up and says: we won by this many votes; like, we had the greatest mandate of any government ever. It sounds quite like the fellow down south. I think it would do us all well if we could take a moment and actually discuss the legislation in front of us and not how big a mandate you have, because I'm not interested in comparing.

Of course, there's also a tradition in this House where government takes the opportunity to answer questions that the members of the opposition have, and I haven't really heard much rebuttal from the government on the questions that we do have. I think, once again, the most important question that I have is: if you're going to throw away all of this progress over the last four

years, progress from economists, scientists, industry leaders, CEOs of oil and gas companies and solar companies, and all renewable energy, what are you giving us in return to show that you actually care at all? I mean, this isn't just about the future of the renewable industry; this is about the future of the oil and gas industry as well. You know, just because you have an I Love Oil & Gas sticker wrapped around your vehicle doesn't mean you actually understand that the future of the oil and gas sector is dependent on the strength of renewables as well, and we have to work together to co-ordinate both of those industries for the future of the province.

Not only is this government signalling that they don't take climate change seriously – and I would be happy to hear any of you stand up and actually agree that climate change is real and that humans are accelerating it and that it is human caused. I would love to hear some of you do that. I have some doubts about some of the members and some of the comments that I've seen before, but please prove me wrong.

Of course, this industry, the renewable industry, under the climate leadership plan was poised to bring in tens of billions to our economy over the next 10 years, and we've already seen that money moving forward. The solar industry, for instance, has grown by 500 per cent in the last four years alone. But without strong public policy and without a government that is willing to incentivize these industries, much like we do with most of our other industries, the oil and gas industry included, investment in renewables will be stunted, and with that, thousands of good-paying jobs will move elsewhere.

We've seen it and have had the discussion already about the job loss in Ontario. I believe that close to 700 if not more projects were cancelled under the Doug Ford government. Of course, we know that our new Premier and he finish each other's sentences, so we can only imagine that that same thing is going to happen in our solar industry here. An even bigger concern is what it means for social policies and what it means for people with disabilities and people that are often falling through the cracks, seniors. I mean, we had questions answered today by a seniors minister that were just not acceptable at all in terms of where we're going to see that funding.

Of course, there was actually an article, which I will be happy to table tomorrow. I don't think it's been tabled yet. It was put forward by the *Edmonton Journal*. I'm sorry. Let me just pull it up. It's a long article, from March 7, 2019 – and I think it has been discussed in the House already – about where the funding for these projects has gone. I would like to point out – and it has been mentioned – that rural communities are getting a large portion of this funding, communities that need it most right now, like Hinton. Their pulp mill received \$3.7 million to continue or strengthen their bioenergy generation. The Mercer international pulp mill in Peace River received \$3.7 million also to continue with bioenergy programs. Whitecourt Power biomass facility: \$3.7 million. Boyle also had a bioenergy producer program. This is a tiny portion of that funding that went out.

So, members of this House who are almost entirely represented by the government, you're saying that you don't see an issue with that funding being taken away from your communities. It's very concerning to me. I mean, those are your constituents that you're going to have to go back to. Mine know where I stand. I support climate leadership. I understand the implications of climate change, and I understand that we need to do something about it.

**5:10**

Now, in my own community of Edmonton-West Henday the biggest concern when we talk about repealing the climate leadership plan is what it means for public transit, what it means for the LRT, which our government committed to. I believe that April

last year was the final announcement: \$1.03 billion was committed to the valley line LRT. Of course, the government of the day now is saying that they are going to keep that commitment to the city of Edmonton, but talk is cheap. If somebody wants to stand up and say where that money is going to come from now, because that \$1.03 billion was being funded entirely through the climate leadership plan, if somebody could tell me or, well, more importantly, tell the city of Edmonton or the city of Calgary, with their green line, where that money is going to come from now, that would be greatly appreciated because it's not an answer that we can afford to get even a month from now. The cities need to find out where their funding is coming from, and you need to tell them.

Just further on that point, it's been brought up that, first, you're going to blow a \$4 billion hole, I believe . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Four point five.

**Mr. Carson:** . . . a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget for a corporate tax handout. You're going to further cut your revenue stream with the repeal of the climate leadership plan. I mean, we're looking at, you know, \$5 billion to \$7 billion that you're going to pull out of government revenue and say: we'll figure it out. You'll figure it out on the backs of seniors, on the backs of people with disabilities, on the backs of people with mental health . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Minimum wage earners.

**Mr. Carson:** . . . minimum wage earners, which we'll even have a chance to get into much further later today, I think, so I look forward to that.

Once again, the problem is that when it comes to having these discussions with the municipalities, we went through this process. We had big-city charter deals move forward at the end of our term, and we made a commitment to the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary about where their funding was going to come from, so I wait with anticipation to see where your money is going to come from.

**Mr. Schmidt:** So do 2 million people in those cities.

**Mr. Carson:** That's right. Two million people are waiting for that answer.

Now, the quote has been used already, but Canada is warming up at twice the rate of the rest of the world, and the effects are irreversible, Mr. Speaker. Irreversible. I'm hoping that alarms someone in this House on the opposite side. We know that our side is alarmed by that; I don't know about the other side.

The fact is that the people that are voting today in this Legislature to dismantle Alberta's only viable plan to reduce emissions are the members that represent the communities that are going to be hit hardest by the changing climate. Floods and droughts, as has been mentioned, will continue to slam our farmers and only get worse and, in turn, will bring massive costs to the government and increased food costs for our own communities. Further, experts are telling us that there will soon come a time when insurance companies will not even be willing to insure our crops. They will not insure our property as drought continues for our farmers and ranchers, as floods continue in our municipalities and in the province as a whole. What are we going to tell the people of Alberta when we can no longer insure them, and what costs will that have on our communities? You want to sell that problem down the road for \$300 a year for people in our communities. The cost is going to probably be 10 times that if we do nothing.

Now, I do know that I'm standing in an Assembly full of people who have already made up their minds on this issue – that is quite

clear – but I want to take a moment to speak to the people outside of this Assembly who will inhabit our planet when all of us are gone, even me. I'm kind of young still, but even me. I just want to say that I'm sorry. I'm sorry that today your leaders did not have the will to work in your best interests, I'm sorry that tomorrow you will be left with the implications of doing nothing and with no tools to do more, and I'm sorry that campaign slogans do more to get politicians elected than real public policy.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I think that the least that we can do is send this bill to committee. I think that there's a much larger discussion that we need to have beyond what we've seen so far in this House, a one-sided conversation. I think that there are important conversations to have about the real emissions reductions that we've seen – I think that they've been brought up a few times here – and also the economic impact that these policies have had on our communities, whether good or bad. We need to sit down and talk about the real implications that these policies have had and what it is going to cost if your government decides to go back on the valley line LRT, not only in job losses but the cost of emissions increasing.

Once again, if somebody is willing to promise me today that you will find a way to fund the valley line LRT without this funding while also not touching the MSI funding or the agreement that has been made through the big-city charter deals, then please do.

I do want to once again highlight a couple of quotes, this one coming not from a social justice warrior, an extreme radical environmentalist, but from the CEO of Suncor, which may surprise you. "We think climate change is happening. We believe a broad-based carbon price is the right answer and we're pleased to see the Alberta government is taking steps to implement the climate leadership framework." I'd be interested to hear what the members of this House think of that quote, why they don't believe the CEOs of these major oil and gas companies when they're talking about the implications of climate change, when they're talking about the opportunities that we have working together hand in hand between the oil and gas industry, between the renewable energy industry, because often in many situations it is the oil and gas companies that are moving into renewables. Of course, not entirely. But they're working because they understand that the investment community is looking to green up their funds often.

I do have other questions about how repealing the price on carbon is going to affect other legislation: for instance, we brought forward a piece giving opportunities to homeowners to put solar panels on their rooftops and in some instances get incentives; also, just the policy about being able to defer that cost to your property tax. I know that the opposition at the time had concerns with it, about something in California not working with that legislation – I think it was mostly made up – that they heard on the street, like many of the things that they legislate on. But I would like to know how that policy is going to change. Is this just simply getting rid of the price on carbon? Are you going to start putting all of the expert work that's been studied over the last four years through the shredder? I think we saw that under the Stephen Harper government, shutting down scientists, shredding that information. That is of massive concern to me. If somebody could reassure us of that, that would be wonderful.

Mr. Speaker, I think that at this point that is all I have to say to the referral amendment, but I really do hope that the Assembly will consider this.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member, for your comments.

I know it's slightly unconventional, but I'd just like to briefly ask if the House wouldn't mind, prior to their departure, a very brief

return to introductions. I'll be asking for unanimous consent to return to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'd just like to bring to your attention, albeit very briefly as we're in the middle of a very important debate, the presence of a number of ladies who have joined us in the gallery today. I understand that they are a group of individuals who have joined us from British Columbia today. They are from the Vancouver Art Gallery, and they are here touring the Legislature, observing the wonderful pieces of art that hang around our building, including the ones here in the Chamber. I invite all members to welcome them here to our Chamber.

Just a brief reminder to the Member for Calgary-Klein that when the Speaker is on his feet, it would be reasonable for you to pause and wait for him to take his sedentary position. It's okay; you don't need to apologize.

### 5:20 Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 1

#### An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (continued)

**The Speaker:** I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore rising on Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very intrigued by the statements that the Member for Edmonton-West Henday had. I've heard a lot of discussion this afternoon around the economic implications of removing the carbon levy and about taking climate very, very seriously. I can certainly tell you that I do take climate change very, very seriously.

One of the things about Edmonton-Decore that I'm so very proud of, especially now with the boundaries that have been redrawn, is that I'm now up to 26 schools in my area, which creates quite a challenge to visit them on a regular basis. Three of the high schools, all of them in north Edmonton, reside now in Edmonton-Decore. The chance to interact with the students on a regular basis is something that I enjoy very, very much, and they do provide a lot of insight into things, including things like climate change.

When we talk about our students, our young emerging leaders, these are the individuals that are going to be taking over after we have all moved on to other things. I know that the Member for Edmonton-West Henday has attended several new school openings on top of maybe the schools that he's had at this time. As we start to consider moving this bill to committee and the referral that is before us, I think it's very, very incumbent upon us to ensure that those voices of those future emerging leaders are included in that conversation. I know the students that are at Queen Elizabeth high school put in a lot of work in terms of their own climate plan when our government first formed in 2015 such that they intended to show that in Paris. Unfortunately, due to circumstances there that trip was cancelled, and luckily our leader, then Premier, took that paper there on their behalf.

As our students move forward and should be included this, I'm wondering if the member might have any thoughts around some of the things that his students have around climate, around carbon pricing and if he might be willing to share some of those thoughts with the House because I think it's very, very important. It's

incumbent upon us to have all of the information so that we can make informed decisions as legislators. I don't want us to be, hopefully, dismissing that because, well, you know, it's just the youth. Hopefully, the Member for Edmonton-West Henday might provide some insight for us as legislators to be able to move forward on this referral motion.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much to the member for the question. I have indeed had the opportunity to go to several of my schools, and early on when I was elected in 2015, I also had the opportunity to go to a climate change presentation, I believe, for grade 6ers. That program is definitely going to be eliminated. That's social engineering to this government. I think it's very important to have discussions about climate change, about ways to mitigate the effects of climate change, whether it be through energy efficiency or a price on carbon. Any time that kids of any age are having that conversation, I think it's important. In that instance, it was as simple as having a conversation about the cost not only in physical dollars but to the environment of leaving a tap on when you brush your teeth. This is a conversation that has happened through the young years of my life as well, I believe, but now it's getting a bit more serious as we are able to better understand the impact of the price on carbon.

There are also opportunities, that have been discussed at length, from the previous Minister of Education in schools for children to learn about solar systems, solar arrays because at that time we were investing and putting those on certain new builds if they were interested in getting involved. There not only are you getting the opportunity to reduce energy consumption or reduce the cost of energy consumption but also to involve the students in learning about solar arrays, wind power, and such other things. So I think it's very important that we involve students of all ages in this conversation. It's going to be their planet that they have to take over from us, and frankly we haven't done a very good job.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? I see the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood rising to debate.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity. You know, I want to talk about the fact that Albertans are rightly proud of our world-class oil and gas industry. My own father actually worked in oil and gas for nearly 40 years, and even he, out in rural Alberta, acknowledges that climate change is a real crisis, and so do I. This is why Albertans and many leaders across the province told us that we needed to take action on climate change, and we did.

We've talked a lot about the fact that this plan that we brought in, the climate leadership plan, was supported by countless stakeholders, and we've talked as well about what we did with the revenue from the carbon levy. I want to focus on some of those things today and talk about some personal examples as well. We know revenues from the carbon levy helped our province invest in new infrastructure, diversify our economy, support everyday families who built this province. I was just so proud to see this introduced. As I said, I heard a lot of stories from constituents in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood about the impact that it made on their lives, the positive impact, and this is why I feel we need to move this to committee for further discussion.

Some of those investments that were paid by the carbon tax include the carbon rebates, equalling more than \$533 million per year. As I said, you know, my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has some of the highest rates of poverty in the province and, in fact, in Canada. I heard day in and day out – I knocked on every door in that riding – from folks that they were so happy to be

getting that rebate. It made a tangible impact on their lives: seniors, young people, people with disabilities.

Building new transit. Again, I've got in my riding a few of the LRT stops, Coliseum and Stadium. We know how important a strong public transit system is in our community, and it's so good to be able to invest the revenue there.

Energy efficiency. We had the Member for Edmonton-West Henday talk a little bit about this, and I want to talk about it as well. You know, again, growing up in rural Alberta, seeing folks that I grew up with looking at energy efficiency in their own homes: huge. In every corner of Alberta – right? – folks being able to sort of reap the benefits of that carbon levy and the climate leadership plan.

But what I want to talk about is solar in particular. We were able to diversify our economy so strongly under the climate leadership plan, create so many jobs in solar and wind. I had the opportunity actually to learn a lot about solar. I was invited to participate in a panel on solar energy during the election, and I got to talk to a lot of folks, a lot of stakeholders about just how sort of, you know, monumental the changes were that we were able to help bring in under the climate leadership plan.

The numbers tell the story. I mean, I want to talk a lot about personal stories, but we've also got numbers. We've got facts and figures to support just how much success we had in the area of solar. Alberta's solar capacity has increased from six megawatts in 2015 to 500 megawatts in 2018. As someone else said earlier, that's a 500 per cent increase. That's huge. That's huge. And 3,100 solar installations: again, in every corner of this province we see solar installations happening. Just the enormous reduction in greenhouse gases: new solar reducing more than 36,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas, which is the equivalent to removing 7,000 cars from our roads.

And the jobs. I mean, we've had people ask: what's going to happen, you know, to the 7,000 jobs that have been created and that are being created right now because of some of those investments? One fellow I spoke with in my riding has invested a lot of his own personal money in solar. He talked to me at the doors about just how happy he was that we've started to move in that direction – I heard that a lot – and I'm afraid I'm going to have to be meeting with him here soon and talking. But I don't know what the next steps are. I don't know what's going to be happening. He's fearful, right? He's raising a family. He's fearful for his own livelihood, and of course he's fearful about the future of this province.

5:30

The Leader of the Official Opposition spoke earlier about the price that we were able to secure, and this is something that is absolutely huge. We became the first province in Canada to buy 50 per cent of the government's own electricity from solar, the result of which was the lowest cost solar photovoltaic contract ever in Canada, 4.9 cents per kilowatt hour. When I talked to an expert as I was preparing, you know, for the solar forum that I attended earlier in the year, he just said that this was a game changer, that this was an absolute game changer in the area of solar energy, lower than the average price of electricity for the last 10 years, in fact.

You know, we committed in our platform that we would continue to meet the renewable energy act and ensure that 30 per cent of all electricity would continue to be coming from renewable sources, including solar. So I worry, right? I worry about the future, not just of the constituents that I spoke with who've invested so much in moving forward in the area of solar. Again, a number of members have talked about this already today. We're talking about the future not just of the province but of – we've seen other jurisdictions moving forward.

I want to talk a little bit about – the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford shared a number of indigenous examples, and I know,

as someone else said earlier today, he knows a lot about this. But I also talked with a number of indigenous folks who have benefited directly from some of those programs, and these are huge. So let me just share a few of those details.

As I said, we made it clear that indigenous communities must be a part of our plans for renewable energy. They must be partners – it can't be the government of the time dictating – working together. We know that the Maskwacis First Nations shared in the media earlier in the year that they're quite concerned about a possible UCP government and what would happen to their projects because those projects, again, have been life changing to those First Nations. Maskwacis Mall, for instance, has a solar power system, reducing emissions, saving money, saving \$8,000 a year – and those numbers are rising – in utility costs.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Louis Bull tribe, another nation on Maskwacis, directly west of Ermineskin, if you don't know where it is, have invested heavily in solar energy as well with the help of the grants that we've provided under the climate leadership plan. Almost every building of the Louis Bull tribe is retrofitted with solar panels. That's huge. Almost every building. This system is generating 188 kilowatt hours, which enables the First Nation to save up to \$18,000 a year on energy costs.

So I'd be curious – I know he's not here today – if the Member for Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin has heard about these programs and has heard those concerns because I know they were sharing their concerns in the media earlier. Again, it's changing. It's not just bringing jobs to the communities. It's bringing the communities together, and in a really exciting way, to move forward.

I know the Member for Edmonton-West Henday also talked about some of the rural examples, and I was really proud to hear about my hometown of Barrhead having a hundred thousand dollars in solar panels on their new aquatic centre. You know, I think that if the Conservative bastion of my hometown of Barrhead can get onboard and benefit from the carbon levy, we all can, for sure.

I mean, we know that by scrapping the carbon tax, by scrapping the climate leadership plan, the future of these monumental programs is certainly in jeopardy. Not only that, I mean, we heard the Member for Edmonton-Decore talk about the schools as well. You know, I shared this morning that I was a teacher, a social studies teacher, and I was so proud to see students banding together across this province to acknowledge that the climate crisis is real and that we need to take action.

This morning the Member for Edmonton-Glenora introduced a grade 6 student, and I have to say that the former teacher in me was so happy to see this young person up there. She had written the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, sharing her own concerns about climate change and about the lack of action taken on climate change. You know, as I said earlier, it's not only good to see her engaging in active citizenship; she's also a model for other students.

I also visited a school, Victoria school of the arts, and they asked about that as well in their grade 6 class. So it's on kids' minds, and it's not going away, whether we want to accept that or not. We're seeing a movement led by young people who are fearful about the future, and they're not willing to sit back and let the climate crisis worsen.

You know, we talked a lot about the importance of having so many stakeholders onboard, the widespread support that the previous government had for the climate leadership plan, not just from industry but also from folks of all ages and backgrounds. As I said, I've heard in my own riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood just how important it is that we not only address the

climate crisis but that we protect our most vulnerable citizens, and having rebates and having folks having a way to access funds so that they can adjust their lifestyle is just a really critical thing that we need to consider as we move forward.

I think these examples that I outlined show just how important it is that we move this to committee and that we do take another look at it and apply some, you know, critical thinking, as we'd say in my social studies classroom.

I know we heard the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar as well talk a lot about some of the economic risks, talk about the large number of, you know, Conservative politicians who know that carbon pricing is good economic policy, and the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona echoed some of that. So I think we need to think about this a little bit. If the moral imperative and the environmental impacts aren't enough for some folks across the aisle to give them pause, well, perhaps the economic ones will be.

I think that's about all I'll say today on this, but again I urge the members opposite to think about moving this to committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate some of the comments from the member opposite for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, but there were a couple of things I wanted to address from her remarks specifically. I appreciate that she had mentioned that she's been out knocking on doors. That's obviously our job during the campaign. She's consulting constituents, like everyone else in this House has done, hopefully.

She mentioned specifically about the youth getting rebates. Now, I take specific issue about this because getting rebates is effectively paying constituents with their own money or, worse, with someone else's money. Now, when I was in high school, I used to go visit my brother, who was in university. I'd earn some money, and I'd bring that up there. He would somehow convince me to order some pizza, and we'd hang out. He would make me feel grateful that I even got a couple of slices of the pizza that I bought. Now, we get along great, of course, and I'm much bigger than he is now, so that wouldn't happen. But this idea that we're supposed to feel grateful that the government is paying us with our own money is, frankly, absurd.

I talk to constituents in my constituency. I've knocked on thousands of doors, as, again, I hope many of you have over your political term, not just recently. I tell you that what I'm hearing from the parents, what I'm hearing from the students is that they're worried about getting jobs, they're worried about keeping their jobs, and they're worried about the financial stability of their own bank accounts. The carbon tax has hit everybody.

Now, I'm happy to say that I believe that climate change is real – I do – and I want to make sure that we leave a planet that is much better for our children than we have now. There's also no question there. But there are other ways to do it, and I tell you, the carbon tax is not the way.

Referring it to committee is a poor idea for one very simple reason: it's already been there. It's already been in committee, in a historic election that happened about a month ago. [interjection] The members opposite clearly have a short memory of this. I hope that their place in this House will remind them on a daily basis of the decision that electors made not that long ago. That is the only committee that we need. We campaigned very clearly on that principle of repealing the job-killing carbon tax. It's not a levy; it's a tax.

Madam Speaker, by repealing this carbon tax, the members opposite have also insinuated that we somehow support the Liberal carbon tax, which is also false. We don't support the carbon tax at

all because it appears to us to be simply paying constituents with their own money.

5:40

Now, I have had countless conversations with constituents, not just with the wonderful constituents in Cardston-Siksika but across this province. You know, when you're being a proactive candidate and MLA and you're asking the questions, people will tell you things that they would never tell you of their own volition. Oftentimes people will contact an MLA office when circumstances are dire, when it's more reactive. But when you'd go to the people and ask them the very basic questions, "How can I help you, and how can I support you as your representative?" in Cardston-Siksika the resounding answer was: "Please repeal the job-killing carbon tax. Please get our economy back on track. Please help us make sure that our kids have a stable future."

This government is planning to do just that, to balance the books and to get the province back to work, because that's what responsible governments do. They don't just think about themselves; they think about the province as whole, what's best for everyone. As Conservatives we believe in an equal playing field, equality of opportunity, not some contrived equality of outcome. Our job in this House isn't to pick winners or losers. It's to do what's best for the province. That's what we campaigned on: a robust policy document over 100 pages long, line by line, pieces of legislation that we plan on implementing for the benefit of the entire province.

I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, that I am proud to stand on this side of the House. I am proud to be here and support the hon. Premier.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I'll recognize the hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the referral amendment today. Before I get going, I just wanted to say a couple of things. Just to clarify, a committee is not the same as an election. They are two very different things, just so we're clear about that. I know it's your first week, but you'll find out soon enough. I'm sure you'll be assigned to a committee. They are two very different things.

So let's move on to carbon pricing. For those of you that might not know, I'm just going to give you some information.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, could you speak through the chair, please.

**Ms Renaud:** I will speak through the chair.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Renaud:** A price on carbon exists currently in 40 countries and 20 subnational jurisdictions, including California and New York, Washington State, and Mexico. Why? Because it works. I try to explain it to constituents that maybe have questions about it. Yes, they do call our office, Madam Speaker, as you would know because you've been doing the job for about four years, like a lot of us here. Sometimes they're not really clear on what it is, so I explain it to them. It is essentially a tax on pollution.

Being a parent, I understand that sometimes you have to establish some structures to teach our kids. This is how I explain it. I taught my kids, and they changed their behaviours based on consequences. So if you choose to do A, this will happen. If you choose to do B, this will happen. It's very simple. This is the premise of a price on carbon. It's a tax on pollution, that's how it's simply put.

Certainly, the opposition will argue that taxing large emitters is the way to go. You know what? I think the fellow who won a Nobel prize for this theory, this carbon pricing, has got something here – I really do – because it works.

I want to tell you a little bit about what has happened in St. Albert. Of course, my computer died, which I always knew would happen, so let me just go from memory here. Over the last few years we've seen quite a bit of investment in St. Albert, and I think the Member for Morinville-St. Albert probably knows about this. If not, I'm happy to share information about that. There's been quite a bit of investment, specifically in St. Albert.

For people watching – I'm sure there are people watching at home – there is a way for you to search what the investment has been on the climate leadership plan revenues, climate leadership plan spending based on your postal code. There is a place you can actually go to on Energy Efficiency Alberta, and it will tell you what the total spending has been in that particular postal code.

In St. Albert we actually were one of the top five areas for uptake of the Energy Efficiency Alberta programs in the province. Our postal code is T8N, and our total was over \$3 million since January 2017 alone. Those are huge investments. One of those was the Dez Liggett Transit Facility. It was a solar project, and it was valued at \$125,000. It was one of 20 projects in nine municipalities funded through the Alberta municipal solar program.

Now, I haven't heard the details of the plans from the opposition, but I'm sure we will soon, when we see their budget and what exactly they're going to slash and burn so they can give the corporate tax giveaways to whomever they see fit.

These are some of the things that might not seem like a lot of money and might not be on a line, but these are the things that change people's lives. These are the things that form the foundation of healthy communities. These are some of those things. I can tell you that the total GHG reduction is 206 tonnes per year. Sure, it's not a megatonne. It is not the kind of megatonne reduction that our leader talked about earlier today, but it is something, and it's about St. Albert, the community that I represent, doing their part.

Another project – and this was through GreenTRIP – predates the climate leadership plan, from 2008. In 2017-18 the climate leadership plan helped fund – hang on a second. Okay. Those were just some notes that I have about some of the vague language, the difference between GreenTRIP and climate leadership.

But we fast-forward a little bit. We have a project in St. Albert. It's called the Campbell Road park-and-ride project. It actually was a project worth \$20 million. The city of St. Albert estimated that the reduction as a result of this project would be 23,000 tonnes per year of greenhouse gases due to the increased transit ridership.

Basically, what it is is a new park-and-ride for the city of St. Albert. It moved it from the congested area where it was in the Tudor Glen area to a site on Campbell Road that sort of faces onto St. Albert Trail. I'm sure that if you've been through that area, you'll know where it is. This facility includes a transit transfer station and parking for 800 vehicles. We were hoping that it would be a future terminal for the Edmonton metro line, but again, as my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday said, we're not sure, because we had some agreements in place with the big cities. There were funding commitments announced and made about transit, but now we just don't know, so we're waiting to find out what will happen.

Actually, St. Albert was the first municipality in I think it was western Canada to operate electric buses year-round. We had three electric buses that operated year-round. I think we're in our second year now, and I'm happy to report that other municipalities have come out and had a look and will also look at expanding. Our fund contributed two-thirds of the cost of the purchase of those three

electric buses in 2016, for a total cost of \$2.1 million. In 2018 the province contributed one-third of the total \$3.75 million cost to purchase four more electric buses, for an estimated total contribution of just over \$3.35 million. The electric buses cost approximately \$0.09 per kilometre for fuel. Diesel buses cost approximately \$0.45 per kilometre. Why is that important? Because it's just one little piece. It's a reduction in carbon emissions in one place, and it's also a reduction of costs for the city of St. Albert, for the municipality. So you can see that all of these little pieces add up.

We hear this all the time from the government when we say something about doing our part, our part for responsible leadership in this area. We hear: "Yeah. Well, China. What are we going to do about China? I mean, they're way worse than us. They're building coal plants." Well, they're actually closing coal-fired electricity plants, and they're actually investing heavily – here's one example – in electric buses. I think I read somewhere that their fleet was over, like, 4,000 electric buses already, and I'm sure that will continue to grow.

5:50

All of these things are little pieces, but it's about doing your part.

We also have a smart fare system, which is worth about \$28 million. It was also through the GreenTRIP fund to implement the smart fare project. So the total GreenTRIP funding spent – I'm not going to get into that, but I am going to go back to another piece.

I think I'll never be able to speak to the importance of carbon pricing the way that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona did, because she has been working on this for a very, very long time. You know, in my opinion, she is the expert because she has walked this walk with people from all different walks of life. As she told you, she met with industry leaders, with indigenous leaders, with municipal leaders, with people from nonprofit organizations, people from rural communities, people from urban communities, and she listened because that's what she does. She found a path forward to do this, and it wasn't easy. If you think that it was easy sitting in this place and talking about this and doing this – it took a lot of courage to do what she did, just like it's taking a lot of courage for people all over this world to stand up and say that this is a crisis.

You can talk all you like. We can have people talking about: "Well, you know, we're not sure about the science" and "It's not really a crisis" and "Maybe we can find another way of doing it." But it is a crisis, and people all over the world understand this.

I don't know why there are members in this place that don't get it, unless they are scientists and unless they have researched this area and have proof and can demonstrate that this is not a crisis and that we don't have the timeline that we've been given by scientists all around the world that have told us that we have 12 years. You can disagree with me all you like. That's fine. You can disagree with me all you like, but you cannot disagree with leading scientists from around the world who have spent their adult lives studying this.

Again, I know that I embarrass the heck out of my son when I talk about him. My son is one of those scientists. He's a paleontologist, actually. You might not think that it has much to do with climate change in that particular science, but it does because he studies things that are millions and millions and millions of years old. I don't understand half of what he says when he talks about the science that he does, but he is an expert. Now, I think he's at – what? – 14 years of university. He's a fellow at the university right now, and he has spent his adult life dedicated to the very fine point of the science that he chose to pursue.

That's what these scientists have done. They have told us that our world is warming too quickly and that the results will continue to

be catastrophic. So you can sit there and you can shake your head and say, "Well, a job-killing carbon tax: we can't do that." But the reality is that it is a climate crisis, and this was a strategy to start moving us forward, to start addressing this crisis in a way that could actually fund a transition, an energy transition that could also support people that are low income that cannot afford the rising cost of energy. This was a way to start to move this forward.

We have now come to a screeching halt because of a platform, because of political opportunism. I don't know what the answer is. But when we have leaders from oil and gas, Madam Speaker, telling us that this is what they want, this is what they wanted. This was one of the things that they wanted, stability to understand what the cost was going forward. I don't really understand why people that don't have that background in science, that don't have that background even in leadership in that particular industry think they know better. Because they're politicians and they know how to win elections? I'm not entirely sure.

I want to go back to the place where I found it very sad. And I get it. You know, we're opposition, and it's our job to talk about this, to bring up all of the things that we need to think about, that we need the government to think about before they rush headlong into making decisions that will have huge implications for us, for our children, and for their children.

I want the members to stop and think about it. I get it. You're part of a caucus or a government that has essentially told you what you need to do: this is our goal; here is our plan; this is how we go forward. In fact, I think the minister for the environment had a little video about – I think it was related to floor crossing – that when you're elected, you kind of belong to this party. Well, no, you do not. The bottom line is that you were elected by the people in your constituency to represent them, all of them: the children, the adults, the seniors, the people with disabilities, the people that have no money, the people that have a lot of money. You represent all of them. You don't represent a political party.

I would hope that there are members there on the other side that perhaps have the courage, maybe not in this place but when you are in a debate or in a discussion with your caucus, to ask the hard questions. "Okay. I get it. You know, we campaigned on axing the tax or whatever the heck our bumper sticker said, but do we have a plan? What is our plan? Do we recognize that we have a climate change crisis? It is a crisis."

I think that when the United Nations are telling us that we have 12 years before we can – actually, we have 12 years to start to mitigate before it's too late. I look at my kids and their kids. Well, they don't have kids yet, but I imagine that one day they'll have kids, and I think about 12 years. That's not so long in the distant future.

It was really sad, actually. The Member for Edmonton-West Henday wanted to be on the record saying to the future generations that he's sorry that at this point today in this place, in this province, in this country we didn't recognize that this was a crisis, that we had a chance to make a difference, to change things, to introduce

public policy, not just for a bumper sticker or a re-election campaign but to make real change.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I was very intrigued by the statements by the Member for St. Albert. I know that she was probably trying to wrap up some thoughts. If we don't have those thoughts wrapped up, we as legislators are not going to be able to make an informed decision about why it is so important to move this bill into committee. I was hoping that the Member for St. Albert might finish off those thoughts so we can ensure that we have all the information at our fingertips.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to just say a few more things about the referral amendment. You know, I think I've heard it multiple times today, but it bears repeating, probably about a thousand more times, that Canada is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world. Twice. That's a crisis. That's alarming. That is a crisis. It's a grim picture for our future, and I wish that it wasn't. I wish that I could say: "This is all good. This is really just a bottom-line issue about money. It's about carbon tax versus tax on large emitters." But it's not. It's about our future. It's grim for Canada's future, and if we don't do something, we are part of the problem.

We can expect deadly heatwaves, heavy rainstorms. These will be common occurrences. You know what? When the day comes when we say or scientists say or other people say, "I told you so," that will be the worst day ever because we should have listened before it was too late. We should have taken action and developed public policy together to change this, because it is possible. That's what we were sent here to do, not to represent our leaders or our political parties or to get great bumper stickers or, you know, a little splice to put on Facebook. It was to be in this place to make good policy, to make good decisions for our children and their children.

Again, I hope that when you are sitting in committees, which are different from elections, and with your caucus, you take a sober second thought and think. Ask those hard questions that might not make you very popular. Ask those hard questions: "What are we doing? What are we doing to address the climate crisis? What are we doing? What are we really doing?" These are hard questions, and that's what people sent us here to do, to ask those hard questions and get those answers, move us forward, develop policy that is right for all Albertans, not just some, not just people on one side, not just people on this side.

I want to say one more thing. Global temperatures have increased 0.8 degrees Celsius since 1948.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but the House will stand adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, May 28, 2019

Day 4

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Official Opposition House Leader  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
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Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
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Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
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(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
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Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
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Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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Sigurdson, R.J.  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

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Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 28, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good evening. Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

This bill amends our labour legislation to restore prosperity, get people back to work, and let the world know that Alberta is open for business again. This bill will also help to restore balance in the relationship between employers and employees and further support worker rights. This legislation will amend the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code, and this proposed legislation is part of our bold plan to restore jobs and grow the economy.

These are hard times for job creators, workers, and families in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Businesses are struggling to keep their doors open and see Alberta as a high-cost, high-regulation place. Albertans are struggling to find jobs. We need to get them back to work, and the proposed changes in Bill 2 will restore fairness and balance to the workplace and help bring back the Alberta advantage.

I will begin with the proposed changes to general holiday pay under the Employment Standards Code. These changes will get Albertans back to work by reducing costs for job creators. Currently employees are eligible for general holiday pay as soon as they are hired by their employers and are paid regardless of whether they are scheduled to work on the holiday. Proposed amendments would return to an eligibility period where an employee must work 30 days in the 12 months before a general holiday to qualify for general holiday pay.

Another proposed change is to reinstate the regular and irregular workday distinction for general holiday pay. This change means that only employees who actually work or regularly work on the day of the general holiday will be entitled to receive general holiday pay. This would mean that if the general holiday is on a regular workday and the employee works, they earn their average daily wage plus 1.5 times the hourly rate of pay for all hours worked that day. If the holiday is on an irregular workday and the employee does not work, they would not be paid any general holiday pay.

Approving this proposed change will directly reduce labour costs for businesses as employers will no longer have to pay employees when the holiday falls on an irregular workday and the employee is not scheduled to work. For example, if the holiday were to fall on a Monday and the business is never open on a Monday, such as we find with many restaurants, no general holiday pay would be owing since no employees are scheduled to work that day.

If passed, these changes would take effect on September 1, 2019. I'd like to note that any general holiday pay employees earn before September 1, 2019, must be paid according to the current rules or according to the rules in an existing collective agreement. Beginning on September 1 employees will earn general holiday pay

according to the proposed rules if the legislation passes or according to the rules in an existing collective agreement.

Next I will discuss proposed changes to banked overtime. Changes to the Employment Standards Code in 2018 removed the option for employers and employees to develop straight time banked arrangements for overtime. Straight time banked arrangements reduce labour costs for businesses. They also allow employers to offer overtime hours more often and to develop more flexible schedules to accommodate employee requests. It's a win for both employees and employers. That's why we are proposing to reverse the change made in 2018 and once more allow for straight time banked arrangements for overtime.

When there is an overtime agreement, this change will provide time off with pay at straight time, or 1 to 1, instead of overtime pay. There is no change to the rate when overtime is paid out, and any paid overtime will continue to be paid at one and a half times the hourly rate. The proposed change does not affect overtime pay as the change is only for situations where there is an agreement in place to bank and use overtime in the future. Again, to be clear, this change will not result in a reduction of pay for workers.

Another aspect that will not change is that the overtime can continue to be banked for up to six months from the date it was earned when a written agreement between an employer and employee is in place. This allows for more flexibility for both employers and workers. As there is no change to the six-month time limit for banking overtime with an agreement, this is not included in Bill 2. If passed, the banked overtime changes would take effect September 1, 2019. Any overtime that employees earn up until September 1 must be banked or paid out according to the existing rules or according to the rules in an existing collective agreement. Overtime earned and banked once the new rules take effect on September 1 can be taken off with straight-time pay according to the new rules.

The proposed new rules for banking overtime mean that flexible averaging agreements will no longer be needed because employees will be able to develop straight time banked arrangements for overtime. Flexible averaging agreements were developed to allow employees and employers to agree to short-term straight overtime banking schedules. We are proposing to repeal the section on flexible averaging agreements from the employment standards regulation once the legislation is passed. This is a consequential amendment, and if passed, the changes to flexible averaging agreements would also take effect on September 1, 2019. Parties can agree to end their flexible averaging agreements as early as two weeks from the proclamation date. For a unionized employee the terms of their collective agreements will continue to apply.

Next I will discuss our proposed amendments to labour relations legislation. First, in a spirit of restoring democracy to the workplace, I am proposing changes to the Labour Relations Code that would return to a mandatory secret ballot for all union certification votes. This will allow employees to make a choice without fear of repercussion from either the union or the employer. Currently a union can be certified without a secret ballot vote if a union can demonstrate that more than 65 per cent of the employees support certification. Proposed changes would make sure employees always have the opportunity to vote on whether to join a union. With these proposed changes, a secret ballot vote will occur when 40 per cent of employees show support for union certification. A majority vote is then required for an employee group to be certified as a union. This is the same threshold of support for decertifying a union, creating fairness and consistency in the certification and decertification processes.

Other proposed changes to the Labour Relations Code would return to a time period of 90 days for unions to provide evidence of

employee support for union certification. Currently card certifications require 65 per cent support and need more time to provide evidence of that support. The proposed changes only require 40 per cent support so that less time is needed prior to proceeding with the secret ballot. The reversion to the balanced rules that were in place prior to 2017 is not only a return to the approach Albertans are most familiar with; it is also the most common approach to union certification in Canada. If passed, these changes will take effect when Bill 2 receives royal assent. Employee groups who had applied for automatic union certification before the first reading of Bill 2 will be able to continue with their applications. Any applications for union certification that were submitted after the first reading of this bill will need to have a secret ballot vote.

Bill 2 also includes proposed changes that will allow the establishment of a program that provides support and assistance to employees covered by the Labour Relations Code and other labour legislation. This support would give current union members and employees who could become union members the option of seeking information or supports to better understand and exercise their labour rights. This will be particularly beneficial to employees if appearing unrepresented before the Labour Relations Board. These supports will be available on October 1, 2019.

Other proposed changes would strengthen marshalling provisions currently available under the Labour Relations Code. Marshalling can help reduce duplication of employment-related matters in multiple forums. For example, a single workplace issue could involve the Labour Relations Board, Workers' Compensation Board, and the Alberta Human Rights Commission. Current marshalling provisions allow the Labour Relations Board to recommend these complaints be heard by a single forum. This allows complaints to be handled more efficiently and effectively than if multiple bodies carried out separate responses to the same claim. Proposed amendments will allow marshalling orders made by the Labour Relations Board to include any related investigations or inquiries. As well, a provision is being added so that newly established bodies can be included in marshalling efforts. The proposed effective date for the marshalling changes is upon royal assent.

Together, all of these proposed changes will bring balance back to our labour laws. If passed, they will reduce burdens on our job creators and restore democracy to the workplace. Bill 2 is an important part of our efforts to make Alberta the best place in North America to live, work, start a business, and raise a family. It demonstrates our government's commitment to make Alberta open for business.

Thank you.

7:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is rising on debate.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to this Chamber. I'm very pleased to rise to speak to second reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, an act that I would suggest does not make Alberta any more open for business than before it was introduced. I'm very pleased to start talking about the changes inside this bill.

Let me begin by talking a little bit about the history of employment standards and the Labour Relations Code here in this province. For nearly 30 years the Employment Standards Code in this province had not been updated. It had been left to wither. It had put us completely out of step with the rest of Canada and in a situation where many Albertans suffered dire consequences

because we didn't have up-to-date legislation. I think often about Amanda Jensen, a young mother, single mom. One of her three children received a cancer diagnosis. Because Alberta didn't have up-to-date leaves, she was actually fired when she went to take a compassionate care leave.

I do want to recognize that Bill 2 is making some very specific changes to our Employment Standards Code after a lot of work and a lot of consultation was put in through our government's Bill 17. That consultation, as we prepared to make the first changes in 30 years to employment standards, was very wide reaching. We spoke with academics, community service providers, employers, employees, groups of employees, groups of employers, disability groups, a number of people. Through that very in-depth consultation, which included everything from round-table discussions to myself going specifically to sit with groups of labour lawyers in their offices to talk about the potential changes, I learned a lot about what does and doesn't work in our province and some of the challenges that we have.

Let me get started by talking about the first piece, which is overtime pay. Mr. Speaker, when we started reviewing our work to update employment standards, overtime pay was just one of the many places where Alberta was completely out of step with the rest of the country. Alberta workers were the only workers in all of Canada that when they were doing overtime work, overtime work which we by nature recognize as more valuable because somebody has already worked their normal shift and is staying late – perhaps it's someone in oil and gas who is putting in that extra time during the busy season. Being able to bank that time and use it in the future is critically important to those workers, yet Alberta was the only place that was doing that banking at straight time.

Now, it's really important to note that employment standards are the minimum standards that Alberta workers have to protect them. Oftentimes in a unionized work environment you will find labour standards that are better than the minimum. Lots of employers – we have great employers in this province – provide better than that minimum standard. But where that minimum standard is is where those basic protections are, particularly for vulnerable workers. In Alberta for overtime, which is worked by 400,000 workers in a year, a lot of them – Mr. Speaker rightfully acknowledges that we are working overtime right now although I would note that our overtime provisions do not apply to MLAs. Please do not call employment standards. They will not help you other than to offer sympathy. The 400,000 Albertans who do work overtime in many of our various industries are doing so to earn money for their families and are taking time away from those families to do that.

Now this change to going back to straight time is picking their pockets, which is the alternative title that I have given to Bill 2, that our caucus has given to Bill 2, because it doesn't make Alberta open for business, but it does pick the pockets of working people. Making sure that workers are valued for their time and are not being shortchanged when they put in the extra work, roll up their sleeves, and get down to business is incredibly important to our province's workers. I heard that through the vast consultations that I took part in during our Bill 17 consultation process. I would suggest that that is something that this bill has lacked, which is a consultation process.

I realize that the government benches will say that they had an election. Yes, there absolutely was an election, and a lot of people made their choice clear in the government. But I can also tell you that when I talked to people about overtime, there was outrage. There was surprise. People said that that must be an NDP smear. Well, no, it's not. In this case the UCP government is coming for your banked overtime. You will get less money, you will get less time with your family if this change passes.

I've heard the Premier talk about how this is a voluntary agreement between employees and employers. Well, if you consulted with the people of Alberta, you would hear that a lot of employees felt pressured, were told they needed to sign these averaging agreements, and it put them in very difficult positions.

I would also note that when implementing Bill 17, we gave employers and employees the mechanism through which to have a straight-time agreement. Flexible averaging agreements, which the minister just referenced as a consequential amendment, were used for short-term straight overtime banking agreements. The mechanism was there. Making sure that Alberta workers are getting the overtime banking that they deserve is important, and I speak against Bill 2 because it does a disservice to our workers.

Let's talk about holiday pay. Again, employment standards is the minimum standard. A lot of employers provide much better. In fact, a lot of Albertans, probably many of the people in this Chamber, would have been very surprised to learn that Alberta was the only province to not pay all workers holiday pay, completely out of step. When we were implementing our changes to employment standards, looking at what the Canadian standard is was really important to us. Most people didn't even realize, but do you know who did know, Mr. Speaker? Vulnerable workers, people who are working in jobs where their employers are governed by the minimum standard. Every other province makes sure that people are able to enjoy the benefit of a stat holiday, whether that little bit of extra pay or that little bit of extra time with the family.

To take that away is mean spirited, Grinchlike, and I bring up the Grinch because specifically what will happen in a couple of years from now is that Christmas is going to fall on a Saturday and New Year's Day is going to fall on a Sunday. That is a Christmas holiday that for many families – they will go to work on the Friday, they will go back to work on the Monday, and they will go to work on the next Friday, back to work on the Monday. It's like the holiday didn't even happen. I know this, Mr. Speaker, because I've worked for employers who gave the bare minimum, and it didn't include holidays in Alberta if they fell on a nonregular working day. If a holiday falls on a Saturday, if Christmas falls on a Saturday, for employers who give the minimum, it's like Christmas didn't even happen. They don't have to pay any extra or give somebody another day off.

It happens in this province, and the people in this Chamber who may not have worked a job where they were a vulnerable worker maybe weren't even aware. But I think it's really important that you open your eyes and pay attention to the fact that these are workers who need the money. These are workers supporting families, and they deserve to have Christmas as well. Please explain to me why Alberta workers deserve less than every other worker in Canada. Please explain to me why statutory holidays are not as important in this province as in every other province in Canada.

Overtime pay and holiday pay changes are picking the pockets of workers, and the minister has said that this is about labour costs for employers. Well, Mr. Speaker, not paying holiday pay to your employees, not letting employees bank the overtime that they earned is mean spirited. It is un-Albertan, un-Canadian. We believe in statutory holidays. Bring forward a bill to cancel stat holidays, and see how well that goes over. That's what this is, but it's clothed in an irregular, nonregular way, where most Albertans are getting these holidays – they think they're important – and they don't realize that their fellow Albertans are not. Making sure that we continue to consult with Albertans, I think, is very important.

7:50

Around the next section of the Picking Your Pockets Bill, the Labour Relations Code changes that change the certification

process, Mr. Speaker, during the consultation on Bill 17 I worked with and met with both employer side's and labour side's lawyers, stakeholders. There are different ways to approach certification, and what this bill does is return us back to the previous way that Alberta was certified. I believe that card check certification is simpler. I know from my consultations and talking to people within this space that very often when employees try to exercise their constitutionally protected right to collectively bargain, employers will resist, sometimes actively oppose and sometimes oppose to the extent that it's actually considered an unfair labour practice. By allowing, for example, a workplace where 100 per cent of the workers have agreed that they would like to be able to collectively bargain – to allow that to happen through a card check process, I think, makes sense because we know that employer interference with certification drives has happened, can be damaging.

We also heard, through my consultations, criticisms of certification votes versus a card check process. But at this point we know that there are different ways for certifications to happen. The most important thing is to make sure that it's free from undue influence by any parties, whether it be unions or employers. We need to make sure that our legislation is protecting that constitutionally granted right to collectively bargain. It's an important part of our labour relations system, and making sure that that happens is very important.

The minister also spoke to a new program to provide support and assistance to workers. As you will know, having read all the bills, Mr. Speaker, at this point it just gives him the permission to do that. There isn't a lot of detail. But anything that provides more support to workers has the opportunity to be very positive, and I hope that the implementation of that piece is a positive addition to our labour relations system.

On the marshalling of proceedings, being able to make sure that there's clear marshalling does make sense. Through Committee of the Whole I will have some questions around the implementation as well as maybe – I don't think the right word is "jurisdiction" – just when it's touching and giving powers to the Labour Relations Board that might be in conflict with the human rights commissioner. I would love to have a little bit more discussion about that, but as we are only at second reading, I will keep my remarks very high level at this point.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, at the announcement for Bill 2 the minister, the Premier, a number of lobbyists also announced a change to a new youth wage, a \$13-per-hour discriminatory age-based wage. I believe very strongly in equal pay for equal work, no matter your gender, no matter your age. Creating a second class of employee by discriminating against young people in this province is wrong-headed. In this case, we may have unintended consequences – and those are words that I've heard in this Chamber more than once, Mr. Speaker: unintended consequences – in having students quit high school because they can get a \$2-per-hour wage bump or quitting university or trade school; \$2 per hour is a significant difference.

Now, the minister mentioned and has mentioned that this is modelled after Ontario. In Ontario the difference between a youth wage and a regular minimum wage is about 6 per cent. Here we're looking at a 15 per cent difference. So during our Committee of the Whole I'll be very curious to hear if there's been any economic impact assessment about the difference, with us having nearly double of what Ontario has done.

If we're going to point to Ontario as an example of how this has to work, let's talk about that, because there are also studies in other areas, other regions that have a youth minimum wage that show that what ends up happening is that youth are employed until they hit the age where a full wage needs to be paid, and then they are let go.

They have a name for it in Australia: learn and churn. So employers will deliberately hire and train young workers, and older workers are left unemployed for longer. Are we bringing a learn-and-churn system to Alberta under the guise of job creation? I'm worried about that. I'm worried about the exploitation of young workers.

We've also seen studies showing a lack of job creation with this. The idea that this is going to be a job-creation measure: I've seen evidence and research to say that it does not. I also note that in touting this measure, the new youth minimum wage, the minister, the Premier, the supporters have pointed to the high unemployment for youth in our province. That is a thing we all rightfully need to be concerned with. Our government took it very seriously by introducing programs like STEP, which was an old program brought back again, and targeting supports to youth. But I would suggest that the cause of high youth unemployment was never the increase in the minimum wage. Our economy has gone through very tough times, and one of those impacts has been the higher youth unemployment. If we look next door, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan's youth unemployment is actually higher than ours, and they haven't raised their minimum wage. Their minimum wage has been fairly stagnant, I believe, small cost-of-living changes.

Now, I have to suggest that the government also cherry-picked their data a little bit because they went out, in their news release, using the March 2019 unemployment numbers when the April 2019 unemployment numbers were already available. They're not quite as nice round numbers. The difference between March and April is that in March it shows a youth unemployment difference of 4 per cent; in April, 3. The minimum wage must have gone up or down to create that impact. It didn't. Instead, I think that the government went, looked at their labour force statistics, and picked a month where they preferred the numbers. If you look at Saskatchewan, their youth unemployment right now is 10.8 per cent. Both Saskatchewan and Alberta need to look at evidence-driven policy that will really reach those workers.

The other thing I would note is that all of this data is based on Stats Canada, which works in a range between 15- and 24-year-olds. Well, I can tell you that this policy impacts four years of that range and doesn't necessarily impact in a positive way six years of that range. Implementing this policy hoping to shift that Stats Canada number when it includes 15-year-olds through to 24-year-olds is not evidence-based policy-making.

Mr. Speaker, I just saw a story in the news about the Stampede. The Stampede is now trying to decide if they are going to cut \$2 per hour from the 500 workers they already have contracts with, direct evidence that it's not creating new jobs in that case. It just means those students aren't going to have as much money at their summer job to help pay for university, to help support their families.

We can't forget the story of that young kid from Hardisty that the Premier told over and over and over on the campaign trail, a 17-year-old helping to support his family. The lesson that the Premier took from that was that we should cut that person's wage by \$2. This does not help Alberta become open for business.

My leader and our caucus have been fighting for hard-working Albertans from the beginning. We made sure that Alberta had modern workplace laws that respected working people, set modern standards, looked across the country to make sure that Albertans were getting similar benefits to other workers in our country. After decades of inaction we finally were making good progress and advancement. Now Bill 2 wants to pick their pockets by taking overtime pay and holiday pay and is looking to make it more complicated to certify and collectively bargain and is implementing a new youth minimum wage that will have the unintended

consequences of giving young people less money and making it harder for older workers to get employed.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I do not support Bill 2, and I look forward to debating it further in Committee of the Whole.

8:00

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her comments. I can't help but think about the youth workers who are with us in this Chamber right now and the fact that some of them are over 18, some of them are under 18, but I think that I would argue that our caucus believes that equal work deserves equal pay.

I wonder, if we cut the pay of some legislative pages, if there would be a desire to hire more legislative pages. I doubt it. I imagine we have the number of pages that it requires to do the work in this Assembly. But I can't help but think about the fact that we are sitting in this place being well served by the kind of people we are exactly talking about – young workers, people over 18, people under 18 – and I can't help but think about the direct impacts on youth in this workplace but also in other workplaces.

During the little break I ran a few errands. I stopped at an establishment that had, I think, one person probably over the age of 18, about five under the age of 18, and I wonder, too, what kind of impacts these changes might have. Would that person over 18 get fewer hours because they cost more? Would the people under 18 get the same number of hours, or would they get more or fewer hours, or would the owner take the opportunity to consider putting an extra \$2 an hour in their own pockets? I've seen trickle-down economics. It seems like the people who get soaked are the people on the bottom and not in a good way.

I am wondering if the hon. member can elaborate a little bit on her thoughts about youth employment in places, just 29(2)(a) – no? No questions or comments?

**An Hon. Member:** You're responding?

**Ms Hoffman:** Sorry. I'm responding.

**The Speaker:** Sounds delightful.

**Ms Hoffman:** So my response is that it seems concerning to me that we would be here debating something as close to home, literally, as being in this House, in this Chamber, and being surrounded by equally talented people under the age of 18 and over the age of 18 and saying that one deserves to get paid more than the other. I find that deeply troubling.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Just for clarity's sake, perhaps I didn't provide enough instruction that 29(2)(a) isn't available until the third speaker, which you were, so 29(2)(a) would be available at this time.

**Ms Hoffman:** For me?

**The Speaker:** For you.

Having said that, given the fact that I didn't provide the instruction and you still had about nine minutes left to respond, this is your only opportunity to speak to the bill at second reading. If you choose to use those additional nine minutes, I would allow you to – correction: 12 minutes. If you choose to use those 12 minutes, I'm happy to provide you the call again. If not, I'm happy to take 29(2)(a).

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. Probably it's somewhere between nine and 12 minutes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I won't commit to the full 12 minutes, but I do want to say to you thank you very much for that clarity and to the speaker just prior to me: I'm giving you a chance to reflect on some of the implications specifically as they relate to youth workers. Certainly, I have to say that I have been tremendously impressed by the dedication and calibre of youth workers.

I remember when I got my first job. It was at the curling rink. I was a concession girl. I think I made \$4.90, and it certainly wasn't something that I could use to substantially save for my future. But I'll tell you that over the years that I worked and lived at home and saved for university, my parents were really excited when I hit \$11 an hour at one of my places of employment because it meant that they were going to have to pay less out of pocket when I did go away to university down the road.

Whether we're talking about youth using their income today to support their families or whether we're talking about youth helping to alleviate some of the burdens for themselves and their families down the road – I was very fortunate to have parents who were both teachers. They would have made sure that I had the additional supports. But growing up in the riding of Lesser Slave Lake, in the village of Kinuso, in a village of 300, the opportunity to stay at home and go to university wasn't a realistic option for our family, so not only did they have to worry about tuition, which was increasing every year, they also had to worry about the cost of living when their daughter was moving to the city.

Fortunately, I was very lucky. Not many of my classmates had a vehicle and were able to drive the 50 kilometres down the highway to Slave Lake. Not many of my classmates were fortunate enough to have the opportunity to have parents who drove them for years to go to the swimming pool and get trained to become a lifeguard. I was one of the lucky ones who had that tremendous social capital that my parents, because they were fortunate to be part of the school system and had some flexibility in the evenings, were able to invest in me. I was able to earn \$11 an hour to help save for my future and reduce some of the burden that my parents would have exercised in helping me to relocate. That was lucky.

Many of our kids, particularly in rural Alberta, aren't so lucky. Many of our kids will work minimum wage jobs long beyond the time they're kids. I know many people in Kinuso who proudly work minimum wage jobs for most of their lives. They, I think, deserve to have the opportunity to take home a reasonable paycheque, pay their bills, and put food on their tables. Same with the riding I represent of Edmonton-Glenora. I know there are many people who, for a variety of reasons, end up working minimum wage jobs for a very long time, sometimes their entire lives, and they deserve to not have the nervousness of: what's going to happen to my income if there are further changes down the road?

I think the fact that the proposed changes come into effect right before Labour Day, taking away Labour Day pay from workers, is embarrassing. I think that taking away that pay for a statutory holiday about labour, about front-line workers, and implementing it on the first day prior to that holiday is something that I hope was maybe an oversight, or I hope is maybe something that will be considered. The implementation date, maybe the timing around that, could have been better.

I also think that for somebody to expect to have holiday pay because it's Christmas isn't totally unreasonable. I think a lot of people receive holiday pay on Christmas. Whether you were scheduled to work on that day or not, I don't think it's something that is unreasonable. We definitely looked at interjurisdictional comparisons and found that lots of other jurisdictions ensure that

employers pay their employees for days like Christmas. I think that that is not unreasonable.

I think that there are a number of changes that we're considering in this legislation that don't reflect, probably, what most folks would say are their values when they sit down at night and talk about why they got into this work. I know that for many of you, and for sure for everyone in our caucus, when I say, "Why did you choose to take this time in your life to do this?" it's because they feel a sense of calling to service, calling to serve your community. Whether it was literally me harassing the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to run or you feeling encouraged by your friends or family, I think that call to service and seeing a time to respond to it – we feel called to service because we want to find ways to make life better for the people that we represent in our communities. I think workers are a big part of that, and I think the youth worker piece, as my hon. colleague has highlighted so eloquently, is also an important piece for consideration.

I guess the few takeaways I want to leave are: really, we're going to make these changes right before Labour Day to take Labour Day pay away from workers? That's sort of one. Really, we don't want people to get paid on Christmas? Point number two. And do we really believe that somebody who is just under 18 is worth 15 per cent less than somebody who's just over 18? That, to me, is not a great message to be sending. I think that this could be a very good time for labour lawyers. I think that there will probably be a lot of work – actually, maybe that's the job creation strategy – for labour lawyers, constitutional lawyers, human rights lawyers because I can certainly see a lot of challenges, based on what the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and I have talked about, employment-based discrimination. The highlights that the member mentioned about Australia, I think, are worth noting.

I also happen to be related to somebody who lives in Ireland who just this year for the first time, at the age of 21, actually makes the real minimum wage working in a service industry where there are no tips. That, to me, is shocking. He's been living on his own for years and doing his best to save up for university, too. Is that really something that we aspire to get to? I sure hope not. I hope that we aspire to live in a society where everyone who puts in a full day's work can receive full pay, full benefits, and an opportunity to succeed in this province. I think many people in this room would say that fairness is something that they aspire to, and I would argue that these changes, a number of them that I've highlighted already, are particularly unfair.

**8:10**

Those are probably the main comments that I wanted to leave with us tonight. Definitely I believe that Bill 2 is an act to pick your pocket. I think it's an act to come after the little guy. I think it's an act to squeeze everyday Albertans, particularly young Albertans, to put more weight on the other side of the equation. I am concerned about that. Those are the questions and concerns I wanted to leave at this point. Happy to engage.

How was I on timing? Nine minutes-ish? Okay. Thank you very much, hon. members, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** Under 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** . . . is rising on 29(2)(a), which is available because the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora was the third speaker after the introduction.

**Mr. Hanson:** That was very good. Thank you very much. I know you're new to the job, so we'll give you some latitude.

Anyway, it's fairly early yet. We've been in here less than an hour, and I've heard a number of buzzwords. I think we can probably expect to hear quite a few of these same words: unexpected consequences, economic impact studies, and the like. I would suggest that possibly the unexpected consequences of the 2015 election were an NDP government. That's funny.

**Ms Hoffman:** Zing.

**Mr. Hanson:** Zing.

**Ms Hoffman:** I got you.

**Mr. Hanson:** Awesome.

I'd also like to point out that the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods asked us if we had done an economic impact study when we talked about reducing the minimum wage from \$15 down to \$13 for students under 17. I would suggest that many times when we were debating her bills, we had asked if they had done an economic impact study to see what was going to happen by increasing the minimum wage to \$15. We got silence and crickets from the government on that, so I think it's a little rich that they're asking us now to do an economic impact study for this. That's something that we've campaigned on for the last year and a half.

Also under 29(2)(a) I've got a question for the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, not knowing the full context of this young 17-year-old that they like to keep marching out. Apparently, the young lady is working a job to help support her family because her father got laid off, presumably under the NDP government. My question is: wouldn't we rather get her father back to work and have parents working a good-paying job rather than relying on their students so that their students can focus more on their studies?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind the member to direct your comments through the chair.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the 17-year-old that got trotted out was by your then leader, now Premier, on election night and on the campaign trail. The 16-year-old who spoke yesterday – or was it the day before? – at an event that we had is somebody who absolutely wants her parents to have full employment. She also deserves to be fairly compensated for the work that she does.

I don't think it is A or B. I don't think that my working in high school to save for my future was something that I did because my parents took a 5 per cent pay cut. They did because teachers were under the axe at that time, for sure, but it was something that I did because I had a work ethic and because I wanted to save for my future. Not every kid is as lucky to have that opportunity, but I think that anyone who works deserves to be paid fairly. That's the message that that 16-year-old, who very bravely stood up and talked about her experiences, was trying to say. If she were two years older doing the same job – why would there be grounds for her to be discriminated against based on the age she was or the fact that she was going to school instead of the fact that if she would have, under the proposed legislation, dropped out and worked rather than going to school, she'd be worth automatically \$2 more an hour? This kind of discrimination based on situation or on age is discrimination.

You know, we certainly encourage anyone who wants to work to be able to have that choice and to be paid fairly for the work that they provide. Those are my values, and I'm happy to elaborate on

those further, but anyone who feels like magically this person might not work if the other family situations changed, I think, is making a lot of assumptions. Maybe that is the case, but I think the fact that government is making assumptions about whether or not she is worth the same rate as one of her colleagues who may drop out or one of her colleagues who may be two years early is ill conceived.

I think that you would struggle to find somebody who'd put their hand up to say: pay me less money. I think it would probably be pretty hard to find those kinds of validators or somebody who said: "Yeah. I'm fine with being discriminated against based on my circumstances in my life."

I want to say again that I'm speaking from a place of privilege, not just the place of privilege I have today but the privilege that I had when I was a 17-year-old. Because of the situation that my family was in, I definitely had a lot more opportunities than some of my classmates even growing up in the same community with the same perceived sets of opportunities. There probably weren't a lot of my classmates – I can't think of many – whose parents would have been able to drive them to the swimming pool almost every single day because of their work or because of their income.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I see the Member for Edmonton-Decore rising [interjections]. Oh, Edmonton-McClung. I care very deeply about the riding of Edmonton-McClung, so my apologies to you. You have the call.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nellie accepts that apology as well.

I rise today to speak to Bill 2. I believe I'm in order to do so, and I hope to make a few points that people remember on this day, when we get together in the evening to speak about legislation that the government wants to put through very quickly but that we would like to have some sober second thought about here this evening.

Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, that when you made one of your opening statements after becoming elected as Speaker, you noted to the House the various different age groups that were represented. In the decade of the 60s there were, I think, eight members in this House who were 60 years of age or older, and I will admit – I may not look like it – that I am one of those individuals who is just barely into their 60s.

As such, sir, I've seen a few things, maybe a few more things than some of the other younger members in this House may have seen. One of the things I've seen is successive Conservative governments. For most of my life, until we had a breath of fresh air and intellectual freedom for the four years while we were governing, there were many governments that I felt stifled by, and the labour legislation that we lived under, that I worked under for those many decades was stifling as well.

I'm old enough to have actually had a conversation, a telephone conversation, with former Social Credit Premier Ernest Manning, when I did a telephone interview after discovering he was still receiving calls in the 1980s asking him about the plebiscite and debate on rural electrification that I was doing a paper on in university. I managed to speak to him for about 45 minutes on the phone. I'm old enough to remember that type of situation.

I'm old enough to remember Mr. Yurko, who was then the environment minister. I did a radio debate with Mr. Yurko on the eastern slopes of the Rockies, the debate between industrial development versus recreational use and the then in its infancy science of land reclamation. So I've seen a few things in my day.

One of the things that we've seen in terms of legislation from successive Conservative governments has been really a nonchange in its view towards labour and working people. Successive

Conservative governments have shown that they don't care – they really don't care – about working people. That's not their agenda. They care about an economic system and the maintenance of that system and the people that are involved in that system. The working people in that system simply are an economic input to them.

They see no harm in cheating people out of their hard-earned income, and this is really what this bill is all about. It's cheating people – it's picking their pockets – out of their hard-earned income. I've been a victim of this over the years, and you can probably name if you've been a person in this province working for five or six decades, if you go through the successive jobs that you've had, how in many circumstances you've been cheated out of income that you have rightly earned.

**Mr. McIver:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

8:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Have a seat.

We'll hear the point of order from the hon. Minister of Transportation.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j) the hon. member is trying to avow a false motive to the government by saying that we want to cheat people out of money and furthermore is using language that is highly likely to cause disorder in the House.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the comments by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung are entirely appropriate. He's discussing a bill around the wages for workers and is looking at different scenarios that come from changes that Bill 2 brings forward. The idea of (h), (i), and (j) around disorder certainly does not impinge on an individual's right to engage in debate on the subject matter, of which the Member for Edmonton-McClung is right on the money.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your interjections. I just might add that the use of the word "cheating" is in fact unparliamentary, or certainly has been deemed unparliamentary in certain circumstances in the past. As you know, the list of unparliamentary language mildly ebbs and flows, and no more language is being added to that list here in the province of Alberta. I would certainly caution members inside the Chamber with respect to using words like "cheating," "cheater," "cheated" as we go forward. At this point in time I'll send it out to the member as a cautionary tale and encourage you to refrain from using the word "cheated" for the rest of the evening.

Perhaps I may make some further comments with respect to this exact word in the future.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will certainly take that advice and put it into use. I did feel that way. I felt exploited. If that's a word that might be accepted as parliamentary, let's use that word for now and say that I felt exploited by successive Conservative governments in their application of labour law that applied to me. For example, I worked at the old Marshall Wells warehouse, which

was situated on land where the old bus depot used to be, which is now part of the Ice District, so successive redevelopments took place there. At the time when I worked at the Marshall Wells warehouse, one of my first jobs – I think that was in the summer of grade 11 – I made \$2.25 an hour.

Now, that was a wage differential job. I was 16 years old at the time, and that was about 50 cents less than what workers over 18 years of age made at the time. I'll tell you what. I worked side by side with those individuals who were 18 years of age and older. Nobody who was under 16 worked any less than those people who were over 18. We felt exploited. I still feel that that was exploitative, but it had the sanction of the government.

Further on, later on, in my working life in another example of how I felt exploited by government legislation in this province, I worked as a DATS driver while going to university. The contract changed from one contractor to another, and overnight our wages went from 13 bucks an hour to nine bucks an hour. That was legal in this province. They got away with it.

I'll tell you what. I know how people felt just recently when they were told that their wages were going to go down from 15 bucks an hour to 13 bucks an hour because I've experienced that type of a rug being pulled out from underneath one's feet. That is not a good feeling. You feel exploited. You feel devalued. You feel dehumanized. You feel that the government cares nothing about you. That's how everybody in this province who is working at 15 bucks an hour, making minimum wage, is feeling about this government right now, and believe me, those people are going to be 18 years of age one of these days soon, and guess who they're going to vote for.

Mr. Speaker, other times I've felt exploited by government legislation. You know, jobs that I've had were in the oil field. I've spun my fair share of wrenches in the oil patch on service rigs. Back in the '80s jobs were plentiful in the oil patch, but the labour legislation surrounding those people who were working that patch really gave them no protection whatsoever. We were making seven bucks an hour straight time, working 17 hours a day on an oil rig right until almost dark and getting up and being on the rig again at 7 o'clock in the morning.

Seven bucks an hour straight time – I tried to explain to my co-workers – was exploitative. They were losing thousands of dollars, but they felt they had no choice. In fact, with no support from government legislation they didn't have any choice. If they wanted the job, they took the seven bucks an hour straight time without the benefit of the overtime that they were really, really rightfully entitled to. The government then, successive Conservative governments then, as now, were no ally to workers in this province of Alberta. As I said, Conservative governments do not care about people. They care about an economic system and maintaining that system.

In my view, Mr. Speaker, a \$15 minimum wage is a minimum wage is a minimum wage. That's the threshold. That's the basic wage that – it takes even more than that, actually, in Edmonton and Calgary to survive. It's not a living wage in Edmonton and Calgary. It's closer to 17, 18 bucks an hour. But 15 bucks an hour is what we set as a threshold in this province as a minimum wage, never mind what your age was.

If a person, if an employer – and I've been an employer. I've never paid anybody less than minimum wage. It's shameful to think that people would want to employ somebody at a minimum wage just because they can. I think if people want to pay somebody more experienced more, they certainly can go ahead and do so, but they should start everybody at any age at the minimum wage, and that's \$15 an hour, is what we set it at. That \$15 minimum wage is regardless of what a person's age is, is what the threshold entry

level should be, and if you want to go ahead and pay more, knock your socks off. Pay more. Pay more to an experienced worker, absolutely. But everybody is worth the minimum threshold wage.

Now, I don't pretend to try to give advice to this government, and far be it from me to tell them what to do. But I really don't think that Albertans are going to swallow for very long this unseen hand of Adam Smith and laissez-faire economics that they're attempting to regurgitate once again and spread over our province. That unseen hand just gave a smack across the face to every worker in this province who's under 18 years of age. It was a punch in the gut – a punch in the gut – by that unseen hand, that laissez-faire economic agenda that this government is so dogmatically married to, that's going to come up and slap them with the other fist four years from now. Mark my words.

I'm not telling you what to do. I'm saying, maybe: keep it up. Just keep it up. I'm sure that you'll keep talking about how you maybe had a million people vote for you. Well, guess what? We had over 600,000 people vote for us, and many more are going to do it over the next four years. So keep it up. I'd be happy to hear more of your laissez-faire Adam Smith dogma throughout the next four years because more and more people are going to realize that it doesn't hold water.

That's what I have to say for the moment. I could talk a bit more. I could maybe go ahead and talk about some of the things that – well, even back further. I mean, people wonder about the roots of people in this Legislature and will say: hey, you just elected a bunch of urbanites from Edmonton, and there's nobody to represent rural Alberta here. Well, tell you what. We've got roots in this province on this side of the House in rural Alberta in many ways. I'm one of those MLAs with rural roots as well.

My great-grandfather was a cattleman, a horseman, a farmer. He also was a school trustee and a county reeve. He passed those things on to my grandmother, and she ended up becoming the deputy mayor of her village in Thorhild. I know that she rode, in about 1916, her one-eyed pony in the Northlands – it wouldn't be Northlands at that point, but it would have been the Edmonton Exhibition. I'm not sure which. I've got a picture of that pony, actually. I've got a picture of her with a ribbon. She won a blue ribbon riding her one-eyed pony. That was 60 miles. It took them two days to get in from Thorhild to Edmonton on that one-eyed pony, and she won a second-place ribbon. She was really ticked that she didn't get first prize. But I've got pictures of her in her jodhpurs with a quirt in her hand. She loved that one-eyed pony. We heard that story many, many times over. You know, that talks to me about the roots that I've got.

8:30

I spent many, many summers in Thorhild – they were the postmasters there, my grandparents – and I've never missed a Thorhild Stampede from 1958 to 1978, for 20 years. Used to take the riggings off the animals after they were in the arena, take the bit shanks off and the saddles. That was my volunteer job. So I've done a few things in terms of my agricultural roots, and I know a little bit about working in small towns and how they operate and getting paid to work for other people or farmers who might need an afternoon's work done. I never felt exploited by them. I felt fairly paid. They looked at what an individual did, and they made sure that a person was properly compensated for it, whether it was for the county or whether it was for just a farmer on an afternoon job or for my grandfather, for that sake. They owned a few houses in town, and in his retirement he had me work for him in the summertime. We did lots of odd jobs for him. Tell you what: I never was paid a minimum wage or anything near a minimum wage by him.

It's not something that one would want to crow about, I think, if I were the government, paying somebody less or taking a shot at

somebody's income. Like, you do the calculation. I did the math in my head today. Like, you're talking 2 bucks an hour. In a 40-hour week, that's 80 bucks, 320 bucks a month. How much is that a month? It's going to be, like, times 12, about 3,600, 4,000 bucks a year. That's a lot of dough for somebody who is, you know, 17, 18 years old. That's a differential that just might cause you to quit school and try to keep that job or lie about the fact that you are a student so you'd get the \$15 an hour wage.

You take a deep, hard look at what those kinds of dollars mean to somebody of that age. It's not small potatoes. And this government just nonchalantly goes ahead and says: "You know what? We think that we're right in doing this. It's going to create jobs." I fail to catch that argument. I really, really don't understand and accept that argument in any way, shape, or form. To say that cutting somebody's wage by 2 bucks an hour is going to allow an employer the leeway to hire other people as a result, using those savings, is a false argument. It's not something that's borne out by the evidence, and the only people that I've had argue it in my office in my constituency are those that come and say that it's going to be harder for them to buy their fourth McDonald's franchise if the minimum wage goes up.

So it's disingenuous to argue that, and most people, I don't think, really get the drift that making a \$2 cut to the minimum wage is going to have this trickle-down effect, this trickle-down Reaganomic effect. It's been totally discredited, yet this government is relying time and time again on Reaganomics, on trickle-down economics, to explain the benefits of their so-called economic changeover to opening up Alberta for business. Well, I'll tell you what. They're closing it down for workers. It may be open for business. It's open season on workers is what it is. That's what I would call it: Open Season on Workers legislation. That's the act. That's another name we can call it. You know, the Pick Your Pockets Act is a pretty good one. I think Open Season on Workers is a pretty good one myself. I think we might coin that one.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the Member for Edmonton-North West rising on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, I just want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung for his breadth of analysis and coining an awesome new name for this bill. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Any other members?

Are there other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd actually just rise and request consent to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Motions

### Amendments to Standing Orders

11. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

A. Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective December 4, 2018, be amended as follows:

1. . . . Standing Order 3 is amended

- (a) in suborder (1) by striking out "Subject to suborder (1.1)" and substituting "Subject to suborder (1.1) and (1.2),";
- (b) by adding the following after suborder (1.1):  
(1.2) The Assembly shall not meet in the morning from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, or



- 9:00 a.m. to noon on Wednesday or Thursday, if the Government House Leader, or a member of the Executive Council acting on the Government House Leader's behalf, notifies the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting, notice having been given no later than the time of adjournment on the sitting day preceding the day on which the morning sitting will be cancelled.
- (c) by adding the following after suborder (5):
    - (5.1) In the period prior to, or following the commencement of, the first session of a Legislature, the Government House Leader may file a revised calendar with the Clerk, notwithstanding the deadline in suborder (5), following consultation with the Opposition House Leaders.
  - (d) in suborder (6) by adding "or (5.1)" after "unless varied by the calendar provided for under suborder (5)";
  - (e) by striking out suborder (7) and substituting the following:
    - (7) As soon as possible after January 15 each year, and following receipt of a calendar submitted under suborder (5.1), the Clerk shall publish the calendar provided for under suborder (5) or (5.1).
2. Standing Order 7 is amended
- (a) in suborder (1) by striking out "Introduction of Guests" and substituting "Introduction of School Groups";
  - (b) by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:
    - (3) When Introduction of School Groups is called, brief introductions may be made by the Speaker of groups of schoolchildren in the galleries.
  - (c) by adding the following after suborder (5):
    - (5.1) If any Member other than the mover rises to speak to a debatable motion to concur in a report of a committee on a Bill under Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees, debate on that motion shall be called under Orders of the Day
      - (a) when the Government thinks fit, in the case of a report on a Government Bill,
      - (b) on the next sitting day other than a Monday, in the case of a report on a private Bill, or
      - (c) on Monday afternoon under Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills other than Government Bills, in the case of a report on a public Bill other than a Government Bill.
3. Standing Order 8 is amended
- (a) by striking out suborder (1) and substituting the following:
    - 8(1) On Monday afternoon, after the daily routine, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:

Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills
- Written Questions  
 Motions for Return  
 Public Bills and Orders other than Government Bills and Orders  
 At 5 p.m.: Motions other than Government Motions
- (1.1) Notwithstanding suborder (1), if on a Monday afternoon prior to 5 p.m. no items of business other than Motions other than Government Motions remain on the Order Paper for consideration by the Assembly, Motions other than Government Motions shall be called and after the Assembly has decided all questions necessary to conclude debate on the motion, the Assembly shall proceed to consideration of any items of Government business provided for in suborder (2) unless unanimous consent is given to proceed to an additional Motion other than a Government Motion.
- (b) by adding the following after suborder (7)(a):
    - (a.1) Debate on a motion to concur in a report of a committee on a public Bill other than a Government Bill will conclude after 55 minutes of debate on the motion and 5 minutes for the mover to close debate, unless the motion is voted on sooner.
4. Standing Order 13 is amended by adding the following after suborder (5):
- (5.1) No Member shall disrupt the orderly conduct of the proceedings of the Assembly by loudly or repeatedly banging on a desk.
5. Standing Order 19(1) is amended
- (a) in clause (a) and (b) by striking out "at 5:15 p.m., the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings" and substituting "the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting", and
  - (b) in clause (c) by striking out "at 5:15 p.m., unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion" and substituting "unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting and immediately put every question necessary to dispose of the motion".
6. Standing Order 29(3) is amended by striking out "and motions for returns" and substituting "motions for returns and motions for concurrence in committee reports on public Bills other than Government Bills".
7. The following is added after Standing Order 31:
- Confidence of the Assembly in the Government**
- 31.1 The confidence of the Assembly in the Government may be raised by means of a vote on
- (a) a motion explicitly worded to declare that the Assembly has, or has not, confidence in the Government,
  - (b) a motion by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, "That the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the Government",

- (c) a motion for the passage of an Appropriation Bill as defined in Standing Order 64,
  - (d) a motion for an address in reply to the Lieutenant Governor's speech, or
  - (e) any other motion that the Government has expressly declared a question of confidence.
8. Standing Order 32 is struck out and the following is substituted:
 

**Division**

32(1) A division may be called for by 3 Members rising.

  - (2) When a division is called, the division bells shall be sounded at the beginning and for the last minute of a 15-minute interval.
  - (3) After the first division is called during any meeting of the Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply, the interval between division bells on all subsequent divisions during that meeting shall be reduced to one minute, except in the case of the first division called during an evening sitting that commences in Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Order 4(4).
  - (4) When Members have been called in for a division, there shall be no further debate.
  - (5) Members are not compelled to vote and those who wish to abstain should remain in their seats when asked to rise and record their vote.
  - (6) The Clerk shall record the ayes and the noes and announce to the Speaker the number of votes cast for and against the motion.
  - (7) The ayes and noes shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
  - (8) Abstentions shall not be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
9. Standing Order 37 is amended
  - (a) by striking out suborders (1) and (2) and substituting the following:
    - (1) Five copies, and any additional copies required by suborder (2), must be tabled of a document presented by a Member to the Assembly for
    - (a) placement of one copy in the records of the Assembly, and
    - (b) distribution of
      - (i) 2 copies to the Legislature Library,
      - (ii) one copy to *Hansard*,
      - (iii) one copy to the Government, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, the Official Opposition, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member, and
      - (iv) one copy to the Official Opposition, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, a Member of the Government caucus, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member.
  - (2) In addition to the copies required under suborder (1), one additional copy must be tabled of
    - (a) responses to written questions and returns ordered by the Assembly for distribution to the Member who asked the question or moved the motion for return, and
    - (b) any document presented by a Member who is neither a Member of the Government caucus nor the Official Opposition, to allow for distribution to both the Government and the Official Opposition under suborder (1).
  - (b) by striking out suborder (3).
10. The following is added after Standing Order 46:
 

**Debate interrupted by adjournment of the Assembly**

46.1 When a motion to adjourn the Assembly is carried or the Assembly is adjourned for want of quorum, the matter under consideration prior to the adjournment shall be deemed to be adjourned to a future sitting day.
11. Standing Order 52(1)(c) is struck out and the following is substituted:
  - (c) Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills, consisting of 11 Members,
12. Standing Order 52.01(1) is amended by striking out clauses (a), (b) and (c) and substituting the following:
  - (a) Standing Committee on Families and Communities – mandate related to the areas of Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Education, Health, Justice and Solicitor General, Seniors and Housing and Service Alberta;
  - (b) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future – mandate related to the areas of Advanced Education, Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Labour and Immigration and Infrastructure;
  - (c) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship – mandate related to the areas of Agriculture and Forestry, Energy, Environment and Parks, Indigenous Relations, Municipal Affairs, Transportation and Treasury Board and Finance.
13. The following is added after Standing Order 52.01:
 

**Subcommittees**

52.011(1) Unless otherwise ordered, a standing or special committee shall have the power to appoint one or more subcommittees, which shall report from time to time to the committee.

  - (2) Every subcommittee shall be appointed by motion of the committee specifying the terms of reference and the membership of the subcommittee.
  - (3) At its first meeting of a new Legislature, every Legislative Policy Committee and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall appoint a Subcommittee on Committee Business to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair and to report to the committee on the business of the committee.

14. Standing Order 52.04 is amended by renumbering Standing Order 52.04 as Standing Order 52.04(1) and by adding the following after suborder (1):
    - (2) Subject to Standing Order 59.01(11), suborder (1) does not prevent a Legislative Policy Committee from undertaking a hearing or inquiry during the same period of time that a matter stands referred to the committee by the Assembly if the hearing or inquiry does not interfere with the work of the committee on the matter referred to it.
  15. Standing Order 59.01 is amended by adding the following after suborder (11):
    - (12) Suborder (11) does not apply to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills.
  16. Standing Order 59.02(3) is struck out and the following is substituted:
    - (3) During consideration of interim, supplementary or main estimates, the following individuals may be seated at a committee or in the Assembly:
      - (a) officials of the Government, to assist the Minister whose estimates are under consideration;
      - (b) staff of the opposition, to assist Members who are participating in estimates consideration.
    - (4) During main estimates consideration, officials of the Government may respond to questions from a committee at the request of the Minister.
  17. Standing Order 64(1)(a) is amended by striking out subclause (ii).
  18. Standing Order 74.1 is amended
    - (a) by striking out the heading and substituting "Referral of Government Bill to a committee after first reading", and
    - (b) by striking out suborder (1)(b).
  19. The following is added after Standing Order 74.1:  
**Referral of public Bill other than Government Bill after first reading**  
 74.11(1) After a public Bill other than a Government Bill has been read a first time, the Bill stands referred to the Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee.  
 (2) The Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee shall report back to the Assembly within 8 sitting days of the day on which the Bill was referred to the Committee.
  20. Standing Order 74.2(2) is struck out and the following is substituted:
    - (2) Upon the concurrence of a committee report that a Bill be proceeded with, the Bill shall be placed on the Order Paper for second reading and, in the case of a public Bill other than a Government Bill, the Bill shall, subject to the precedence assigned to Bills standing on the Order Paper, be taken up on the next available Monday following the day on which the Assembly concurred in the report.
  21. Standing Order 89 is amended by striking out "Standing Order 3" and substituting "Standing Order 3(5)".
  22. The following Standing Orders are amended by striking out "Private Bills Committee" and substituting "Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee" wherever it occurs:
    - Standing Order 91(4)
    - Standing Order 96(2)
    - Standing Order 98(1) and (3)
    - Standing Order 100(1)
    - Standing Order 101
    - Standing Order 102
    - Standing Order 103
    - Standing Order 104
    - Standing Order 105(1)
    - Standing Order 106
  23. The headings preceding Standing Orders 98, 100 and 105 are amended by striking out "Private Bills Committee" and substituting "Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee".
- B. And be it further resolved that upon passage of this motion any public bills other than government bills that stand on the Order Paper for second reading are deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills in accordance with Standing Order 74.11(1) and notwithstanding Standing Order 74.11(2) the committee shall report back to the Assembly on these bills within 12 sitting days of the day this motion is passed.
- C. And be it further resolved that the amendments in this motion shall come into force on passage.
- The Speaker:** I will call the Government House Leader in just a brief moment. I would like to provide a little bit of context to the debate which I expect that we're about to have. For the benefit of all members Government Motion 11 is available for you in the Order Paper. That Order Paper has been circulated widely, and the entirety of Government Motion 11 is located on the Order Paper. In an effort to have a smooth debate this evening and to not require the Government House Leader to read the motion into the record, I will allow him this evening and this evening only to refer to the motion as printed in the Order Paper.
- The hon. Government House Leader.
- Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the kindness of not having to read what is a very long motion. I think that's just probably because you didn't want to listen to me read it. I don't know if that's because you attempted to be kind or that's where it was, but I will take it as an act of kindness.
- Mr. Speaker, we have before us right now the motion. If I'm not reading it, a point of clarification maybe for the table officers. Do I still need to say something to make it . . .
- The Speaker:** If I could make a recommendation that you move Government Motion 11 as printed in the Order Paper, I think that would suffice for the table.
- Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You've been extremely helpful today. As such, I will move Government Motion 11. Can I speak to it now? Thank you. Thank you very much. We move Government Motion 11. I do hope that all members of the Legislature will support it. It includes several standing order changes, which I know we're going to hear a lot about in the next little bit, but the biggest issues around that are to, one, restore some decorum. An increase of decorum inside the Legislature is something that we have attempted to do. This party now has the privilege of serving in government, but we attempted to do that while we were in opposition to try to raise the level of decorum in this place. We continue to call on the opposition to

match us with that and to be able to focus on civil debate and work from there.

But there's some other stuff in here, including making sure that we respect the rights of members to have free votes and their right to be able to vote on behalf of their constituents freely. We'll be able to establish what is and what is not a confidence motion.

Further than that, Mr. Speaker, one that I'm very excited about is to have a private members' bills committee be able to work on private members' business, something that, when we were in opposition, we asked for for a very long time, to be able to make sure that we could work on legislation as private members and in the Assembly private members could work on that legislation to be able to help us get more stuff passed during private members' days.

There's lots of content within these standing orders. All of them will make the process of what we have to do in this House easier. I certainly hope that we have the support of all members of the House and that we can get these passed as soon possible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising on debate.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just before I proceed with the debate, I would like unanimous consent of the House to proceed to one-minute bells in regard to this Government Motion 11.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a request has been asked to revert to one-minute bells for the duration of the evening. Or on Government Motion 11?

**Ms Sweet:** Government Motion 11.

**The Speaker:** On Government Motion 11.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Sorry. Point of clarification, Mr. Speaker. Are we moving to one-minute bells on one motion or . . .

**The Speaker:** Just a minute. I'm just clarifying the question.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** Then we will ensure that the appropriate question is asked.

For clarity's sake, hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, would you please describe for me what you're asking unanimous consent for?

**Ms Sweet:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I'm requesting unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the duration of debate on Government Motion 11.

8:40

**The Speaker:** To be clear, for clarification, you're asking for unanimous consent for one-minute bells, Government Motion 11, this evening only, and all divisions that may occur on Government Motion 11.

**Ms Sweet:** That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has the call.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all members of the House for granting unanimous consent.

I would like to now request that we divide the vote on part A, sections 2, 4, 8, and 10, and then vote on the remaining part of the

motion as we continue with debate this evening. Would you like me to give my rationale? I'm requesting division of the vote on part A, sections 2, 4, 8, and 10, specifically in part 2, in response to both your comments, Mr. Speaker, as well as the hon. Government House Leader and the fact that this is such a huge Government Motion 11, so big, in fact, that we didn't read it into the record because it would take so long. Because of that, I would like to be able to divide the sections up for a more clear and robust debate.

I am requesting that we look at dividing the different sections up also just because there are so many new members in this House as well. I think, in fairness to all the private members that are in this Chamber, that they should have a good understanding of what standing orders we're actually discussing, what those standing orders mean, how it will impact them as private members, and that this is an opportunity for us to break it down and to use it actually as a teaching moment for all of us in this House to be able to learn the different operating components of the standing orders. I would request that we please divide part A, sections 2, 4, 8, and 10.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member for your comments.

What I would like to do is provide some remarks with respect to whether or not this request is a reasonable request. For the record, for the benefit of all members, this isn't a decision of the Assembly; this is a decision that the Speaker would make. As well, this is not a debatable motion as the member is making a request of the chair.

Having said that, if the Government House Leader would like to provide a little bit of comments on this, I'm happy to hear them, but at the end of the day, this will be a ruling of the chair, and we will proceed from there. If you would like to provide comment, I'm happy to hear it. If not, I'm prepared to rule.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it is the decision of the chair, and I respect that. I would submit to you, though, Mr. Speaker, that this will delay the process. Lots of these standing orders are connected, and I do not see the need to separate them. They are a package deal that we brought towards the House, and we would like to talk about them all together if we could.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the Government House Leader for your interjections.

For clarity's sake, I'm happy to rule on this particular request. Let me be clear. No matter what my ruling is – and I'm prepared to make it – we will debate the government motion in its entirety, and each member will have the opportunity to speak to the motion. At that time members could speak to the motion in its entirety, not sections 2, 4, 8, and 10 individually, even though it's possible that we may in fact vote individually should we arrive at a vote this evening or any other time during debate.

It is past practice of the Assembly that members from time to time would make a request of the chair, particularly in the case of a motion that is complex or deals with a wide variety of issues in a particular motion. I would refer all members of the Assembly to a decision that Speaker Kowalski made on November 21, 2001, which can be found, as you know, on page 1193 of *Hansard* for that date. In that decision Speaker Kowalski reviewed the relevant parliamentary authorities and permitted requests to that vote on the lengthy government motion that also proposed amendments to a government motion that was proposed to the standing order. On that day it proceeded in three groups.

Accordingly, I will permit the vote on Government Motion 11 to be divided. For clarity for all members we will again continue to debate Government Motion 11 in its entirety together. There will be no additional opportunity to speak specifically and individually to the clauses 2, 4, 8, and 10, but I will allow a vote to take place on

each clause, as requested by the deputy House leader from the Official Opposition.

With that said, there are 17 minutes and 46 seconds remaining in debate for the deputy House leader's comments should she wish to continue on Government Motion 11.

Are there others who wish to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm getting faster at jumping up. I'm going to begin by moving an amendment, and I'd be happy to give the requisite number of copies to the pages and then read it while it's being circulated. Member Hoffman to move that Government Motion 11 be amended as follows. Part A is amended by striking out:

that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective December 4, 2018, be amended as follows:

and substituting:

that the following proposed amendments to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing for review and that the Committee submit its report to the Assembly...

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if you could just briefly perhaps take a pause as we distribute the copies. As well, I would love to see a copy of the amendment prior to you continuing debate, so if you just give us about 15 seconds. Grab your seat.

Thank you for your patience, hon. member. Edmonton-Glenora, you have the call.

**Ms Hoffman:** Did you want me to start reading the amendment from the beginning?

**The Speaker:** No, just proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** That's what I thought.

The last words are:

... on or before December 1, 2019

And then parts B and C are struck out.

The rationale here is that I think this is the exact purpose of this committee, that members were just named to last week, I believe, to all committees, including the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. The committee in its title itself is in charge of reviewing the standing orders. So rather than taking that responsibility away from the committee members, many of whom are government caucus members – of course, I'm confident that it's a majority – and referring it here to this Assembly tonight, I think it's totally fitting that the committee that has this as its actual job description actually have an opportunity to do this job.

I'm reasonable, I would say, in saying that the date I gave was December 1 or earlier if the committee finishes its work early. I'm not trying to stop the standing orders from ever being updated. I think that that would be unreasonable. It wouldn't behoove this House to have that be the outcome. It's important that the committee have an opportunity to do this work, that private members have an opportunity to engage with it, and that we all have an opportunity to consider its impact.

One example. I love getting to know members of this Chamber. I loved getting to know them when I was outside of this House as well. I think one of the best ways that we can get a little glimpse into who each of us are is at the beginning of the Routine, when we have the time, where we do introductions. I remember when the Government House Leader introduced his wife and twins. They sat right about where our guests are sitting tonight. I remember when other members have had opportunities. For example, this week

some of the people who have done introductions include the Member for Calgary-Klein, who earlier today introduced long-time family friends. The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat introduced school trustee Cathy Hogg, who's also the president of the Public School Boards' Association. It's nice to have an opportunity to bring in some folks and to be able to draw on that connection and help us get to know each other and some of the reasons why we're here doing this job.

8:50

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, last week I think it was, introduced a school group – or maybe it was Monday – something that will now be the responsibility of the Speaker rather than individual MLAs. And as you heard me say this morning, when I talk to students, I say: "You're my boss, my boss specifically. I work for you. I'm your employee." And having that opportunity to show the students who are here visiting from your ridings that you're working for them I think is something that is useful for private members and government members alike to be able to do.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I feel that I would like to hear an introduction – I mentioned the Government House Leader's twins. I understand that the Member for West Yellowhead has 16-week-old twins. I'd like to have the chance for his family to be presented in this House and for him to be able to introduce them on the record. I think that that would be something nice for us to enjoy and to help frame some of the debate, potentially, for that day. Or the Member for Grande Prairie this morning in her member's statement had the opportunity to talk about her child just graduating from high school. I think that it's not unreasonable. I think we can set realistic time limits on how long they should be.

When I was Minister of Health, I brought in health stakeholders regularly so I could have 20 seconds to talk about the work that they'd done in the community, whether it was a paramedic who rose to the scene to save a life or whether it was a researcher at the university who was engaged in academic research to help push a cure for a specific type of cancer forward. I think it's very reasonable that this committee have an opportunity to consider some of these changes and what some of the impacts might be, and I think it's fair. I think that the members for Sherwood Park, Red Deer-South, Camrose, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, Drumheller-Stettler, Lethbridge-East, Leduc-Beaumont, Brooks-Medicine Hat – and I could go on – should have an opportunity to introduce some of the people that are important to them in this House. I'd love to get to know the hon. member whose parents said, you know: leave the campsite better than the way you found it. My parents did that, too. I think it'd be nice for you to have an opportunity to be able to introduce your family in this place.

I don't think it's a big question to ask. I think having an opportunity to debate this at the committee whose mandate is to review the standing orders is reasonable. Again, by putting in the date on or before December 1, 2019: I think it's a reasonable timeline. It doesn't mean it needs to take the whole time before now and December 1, but I think it says to the committee: "This is part of your job. You have an opportunity to engage in this work and update the standing orders so that you reflect the desires of all members of this Assembly."

I feel that when some members have had an opportunity to practice the existing standing orders – and the majority, or quite close to the majority on the government side anyway, haven't had an opportunity to practice them. It's not totally a fair opportunity to engage with what rules work and what rules don't work when you haven't actually had

an opportunity to practice the existing rules but you're being asked to change them on day 4 of using that set rule book.

I think it's very reasonable to update the rules. I think it's very reasonable to do it through a transparent process in the Assembly, ideally in the committee. I think it would benefit all of us to have an opportunity to actually discuss it at the committee whose mandate it is to do that work, and I also think it would be beneficial for us to have a few more weeks to use the existing rules and see how best they meet or don't meet our needs of our Assembly. Again, this is our rule book that we are setting, and to have this decision imposed on many people just four days into the formal sitting of the Legislature I think doesn't set them up for success, necessarily.

Honestly, that little piece of having an opportunity to introduce people in this House is an Alberta tradition that we have had for over a hundred years. And I get that it's not a tradition in all Legislative Assemblies. I get that it's not a tradition in all parliamentary Chambers, but it is an Alberta tradition, and we've had it for over a hundred years. If it's the committee's will after having an opportunity to reflect on it to throw that tradition out, so be it.

But I think that asking members to make that decision today, asking members to make that decision when they've been using this rule book for less than a week, when many members are first-time MLAs: I don't think it gives them the time to make the decision that they feel is in the best interest for them and their constituents, specifically the school groups one. I have great respect for the Speaker and the role of the Speaker, but the local MLA is the employee of those students, and I think it's important for them to have an opportunity.

Make a rule. Say 20 seconds. Say 10 seconds. I don't care. I think it's important for the local MLA to stand up and introduce the local school groups. And I think every member of this House who's had an opportunity to engage in that has probably really enjoyed that opportunity and probably sees some of those students and their parents in the local community when they go home and they say: "You know what? You introduced my kid in the Leg. That was really nice." That won't be something that gets to be done anymore if we pass this.

If we make the decision that we want to pass it, so be it. But let's have the opportunity to sit down with all members who are on the committee – I had the committee membership a minute ago. Thank you so much, hon. colleague from Buffalo. I think it's important for the members of that committee.

Again, the membership is a majority of government members, and that's fine. The chair is – oh. It's all first names, so I can't say those anyway. The chair is the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon. I think it's very reasonable that we have an opportunity for the committee to do its work, and this is the exact mandate of the committee, to do this type of thing. So I think it's fair and reasonable. Again, I'm trying to be fair and reasonable by saying: on or before December 1. I get that we don't want to drag this out, but I don't think that we need to rush it either.

That's my argument for bringing forward this motion to refer – and I hope that all members will have an opportunity to give it due consideration – and to hear a little bit with those introductions, potentially, a little bit about what inspires them to serve and the people that they serve. That, to me, is something that is an important tradition. It's something that's been in place in Alberta for over a hundred years, and I'd hate for us to make a rush decision to throw it out without taking a little bit of time to give due consideration to: can we tweak it to make it more effective, can we tweak it to make it more efficient, or do we actually need to throw out the more than hundred years of tradition we have in this place?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** All right. Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, I've been informed by counsel, so are there any questions for the member under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for bringing forward the amendment. I'll talk briefly about her concerns in regard to Introduction of Guests in a moment. But specifically to this amendment, what this amendment would do is it would delay the process until December 1, 2019. It would push it off. The reality is that we have things within this standing order package that we have promised Albertans that we would bring to this Chamber if we were elected, the platform commitments. I know that they're standing orders, so it's not like it's legislation. I understand that there's a difference. But the reality is that we've made a commitment, and that's one thing about this government: we're going to honour this commitment. My colleagues, I hope, will agree with me. As such, I can't support this amendment.

Now specifically for the concerns that the hon. member raised in regard to Introduction of Guests, I would agree. I have enjoyed introducing guests in this place from time to time. But the reality is that the process was starting to be abused, I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, probably by both sides. The reality was that it was being dragged on, upwards of 20 minutes or longer a day, sometimes where we were having to extend the Routine of this place, a place whose time is valuable and expensive, quite frankly, to run our Legislature, to make sure that we're able to do that. The Premier did the math for me while I was listening to your speech, hon. member, and at 16 weeks of sitting on four days a week and 20 minutes of intros, that's 1,300 minutes, which is 2,100 hours.

**Mr. Kenney:** Twenty-one hours.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Twenty-one hours, yeah. Not 2,100 hours. That would be a lot of introductions.

That is 650 members' statements at two minutes. I think that all hon. members in this place could agree on how valuable a member's statement is for a private member of the Legislature to be able to give on behalf of their constituents. You would be able to still utilize members' statements to introduce a guest. So in the case, to use an example, of me introducing my wife and twins, who I was very happy to introduce inside this Chamber, you would still be able to do that with a member's statement. This will free up more members' statements. We'll be able to add members' statements to our time, and we'll be able to still introduce guests through the Speaker. [interjection] Yes, we will. That's what the standing order will do. The Speaker will handle the Introduction of Guests. We'll be able to add more members' statements and be able to have more private members' time. That's your specific concern that you used as your example, hon. member.

But, again, to your amendment, it's not satisfactory. It would delay this process until almost Christmas. The reality is that when we make a promise, we keep a promise. And that's just not acceptable for us. I see you shaking your head again. The Speaker will be allowed to introduce guests.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), go ahead, hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** I just want to reclarify. The amendment actually says: on or before December 1. So saying that this would delay this until at least December 1 is a completely inaccurate reading of what the actual amendment says. What I am proposing is that

it go no longer than December 1. This committee could potentially have an opportunity to debate and discuss the standing orders. Maybe it would take them a month. Maybe it would take them two months. Maybe they'd be done in three weeks. But asking members, the majority of whom are new members in government caucus, to make this decision on day 4 I don't think sets us up for success.

9:00

What it says is "on or before December 1." So if the committee itself decided that the committee wanted to refer this back to the Chamber with their recommendations before the end of this sitting, so be it. If they chose to do it on the first day of the fall sitting, so be it. If they chose to do it any time between the time they get the referral to please look at this and have their mandate to actually review this in committee, have the Member for Drayton Valley chair this, which has already been determined by this Assembly – this is part of their mandate. Give them that opportunity.

To say that this would delay it until at least December 1 isn't a reflection of what the actual referral says. Please, I just wanted to clarify that it is to say no longer than December 1. This is so that they have an opportunity to do their work that we're putting in a term limit of December 1. They could do it faster if they so chose. I think it's important that private members have an opportunity to engage with the standing orders as they stand to consider the amendments that are being proposed as a committee with more than four days, actually following the current rule book. Particularly for new members, whether they're private or government members – I don't think it matters – I think that this is the mandate of the committee and that they deserve to have some time to look at this.

I was trying to be considerate of what was being proposed. The few pieces that are in the amendment: certainly, the majority of these weren't proposed in the election platform, that's for sure, but there are some that were. I think it's fair that they have some time at this committee to review and make a decision, having actually lived with the standing orders as they are for a few days.

If the recommendation is "Let's keep introductions to 10 minutes, and let's make sure that no individual introduction is more than 30 seconds," that might be a reasonable way to find a good compromise so that people can actually have an opportunity to introduce their constituents, their stakeholders, and people who are important to this Assembly. We are borrowing this Assembly from the people we represent. They have an opportunity to be recognized in this Chamber and in *Hansard* in my opinion, and I'd like to have this committee consider that.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** In response under 29(2)(a) to the hon. member: I appreciate the question. I will actually acknowledge, after rereading it, that it is correct that a committee could send it back earlier.

I would still submit to the House that, again, the core big things within this standing order package are platform commitments. To send it to committee to in any way delay the process is not acceptable to us. We've made commitments, particularly around raising the decorum inside this Assembly as well as standing up for free votes for private members, and I'm looking forward to be able to get that through as soon as possible.

**The Acting Speaker:** Anybody else wishing to speak to amendment A1? I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** I was seeking to speak under 29(2)(a) if there is time remaining on the matter.

**The Acting Speaker:** There is time left. Okay. Under 29(2)(a). Sorry.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. I just wanted to seek clarification from the hon. Government House Leader. He indicated that by reducing the number of introductions of guests, the number of members' statements would be increased. However, I don't see in Motion 11 any provision to change Standing Order 7(4), which currently places a limit of up to six members' statements. So I'm looking to seek clarification as to whether or not the Government House Leader is actually proposing an amendment to Standing Order 7(4) to actually increase the number of members' statements.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I don't know how much time I actually have on the clock to respond to that. We have already reached out to your House leader for that conversation. If we are changing introductions, our intention is to do that, and we would do that in negotiation with your House leader on how many those should be. So our intention is to do that, but, no, it doesn't happen instantaneously.

**Ms Hoffman:** Do it today.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Or bring an amendment today if you like. We've already reached out.

**Ms Hoffman:** Or deal with it in the committee that I'm referring it to.

**The Acting Speaker:** Through the chair, please.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah.

**The Acting Speaker:** Anyone else under 29(2)(a)? There are 55 seconds left.

**Ms Hoffman:** Sure.

**The Acting Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Sorry. What I was saying without my microphone on, and maybe it was hard for *Hansard* to pick up, is that we certainly have the opportunity to pass the referral and consider that in the actual committee whose job it is to determine what the standing orders are. So that sounds like a win-win. Certainly, both parties are represented on the committee itself, and that would be a way for them to have their voices heard.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'll recognize the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has brought her first amendment to the House today in her second time in the Legislature, which is exciting. I would encourage her, if she's interested in amending these standing orders, to continue through the process we have. We have the greatest committee with everybody available to be able to vote on it right now. So feel free to bring forward an amendment. I've made that offer for weeks, and I look forward to seeing some reasonable amendments from the opposition. We will pass them if they're reasonable.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora for bringing up this amendment. I think it is eminently reasonable and for a number of reasons that I will just outline here now, the first of which being that it's an interesting argument I heard from the Government House Leader around a number of these standing orders being part of their platform commitment. But not all of them are, right? Some of them are but not all of them. I think it's incumbent, again, as a teaching moment for all of the members in the House – there are many changes in here that had no mention at all in the UCP election platform. I think as a long-serving member of this Chamber that these are standing orders that have both utility and usefulness and excellent outreach opportunities and educative opportunities not just for the members here in the House but for people in the general population of the province.

The introduction section was very well outlined by my colleague here today, but there are lots of other changes in here that just kind of appear like a gopher popping out in the spring on the prairie – right? – with no indication that they were going to be there any time before.

I've asked. I've talked to a number of MLAs, and they were surprised or not understanding or having knowledge about the breadth of these standing order changes. I am the first one to get up and say, you know, that we need to make sure that the standing orders are an organic document, that we don't just have them sitting static for all time. It's good to make changes, and I think that it's good to make efficiencies, utilizing the time that we have here to debate important business of the day.

You know, I always look to make sure that there's a sense of unity in any motions or bills that we bring forward and that one part makes sense and emphasizes and supports the other parts of any given motion or bill. In this case I notice in one section of this motion that there is a movement to take private bills and move them to committees in an expeditious sort of way. The hon. member's amendment that she's put forward here this evening does that, too. So in keeping with the idea that you move private members' bills to a committee and have substantive discussion using a committee with private members, apply that same logic to this amendment that we have right here now. By golly, it's the same thing. It really is. We already have a committee, we already have a chair of the committee, and I'm sure they're all raring to go to ensure that the structure of our standing orders is best serving the needs of the House.

I'm always suspicious, as you all should be sometimes, too, in a constructively critical way, when any government brings forward motions or bills that have lots of bits and pieces that go in every which direction, and that's exactly what I see in this motion, where it's trying to cover off all sorts of things that may or may not allow for the smooth functioning of this Chamber. They're all bulked together in a sort of way that makes it very difficult to disentangle them.

So I speak in favour of this amendment. I think it's a very, very good amendment, right? I found it quite inspirational. As I say, it stimulated my thoughts around ensuring the unity of logic and purpose for this Motion 11 to make sure that we are using common sense every step of the way.

So I will support this amendment, and I will encourage all members to do so as well.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

9:10

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciated the thoughts from the Member for Edmonton-North West as he was discussing the amendment that's in front of us. In particular, I appreciated what he noted, that the Government House Leader had made the claim several times that this should be done quickly, that we should move forward with this, that we should not delay this because this was part of the UCP platform. But as the Member for Edmonton-North West noted and as I am looking at that document now, I see only one portion of all of these multiple changes to the standing orders that was indeed included in that document, that being to "amend the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly to raise the bar of civility and decorum, banning 'desk thumping' in the Legislative Assembly." That is the sum and total that I can find within that document of the commitment of this party on taking government to make changes to the standing orders.

Now, I bring that up, Mr. Speaker, because that seems to be a point of great importance to members on that side of the House and indeed to the government leader and indeed to many members who were previously in this Legislature in opposition. They feel that to try to move something when you are government that you had not indicated to the people of Alberta you were going to do is to practise deceit, is to not tell the truth to Albertans, is to hide something from Albertans. Indeed, if this was their intent before the election, according to their own logic and indeed their own repeated insistence, this is something that they should have brought forward at that time. They should have been much clearer in their intent. If they did not do so and now intend to try to move these forward, they in fact have practised deceit with Albertans. They have not told them the truth. They have misrepresented their intentions in doing this.

Now, that said, I don't personally subscribe to that narrow a definition. I recognize that government members have entertained it many times and like to use it as a club to beat their opponents, but the fact is that I don't personally agree with that. That said, I think it's perfectly reasonable if they wish to make such extensive changes to the way that we operate in this House and indeed to the opportunities for private members to practise their work in this House. I think the Member for Edmonton-Glenora said it quite well in noting that members who are new in this place, with only four days of experience, most of them never having had the opportunity to make an introduction in this House themselves, many of them not even, I'm sure, understanding or being aware of the majority of what is contained in those standing orders, are being asked to simply vote for this package. Now, perhaps they've been given some sort of briefing as a caucus. I would hope that would be the case. I think that would be the least courtesy that a government would offer to its caucus members to ensure that they were well informed and fully understanding the decisions that they were being asked to make.

That said, given all of what I've mentioned, I think this is a reasonable amendment, and I appreciate the points that the Member for Edmonton-North West has brought forward in that regard. I'm looking forward, I think, to having the opportunity to maybe discuss a bit more fully some of these specific items that are within this as we move forward. But for the time being what I would say is that this sort of an omnibus motion, as the Member for Edmonton-North West also noted, is where we are pulling bits and pieces from all over the place, again, none of which had been previously mentioned by the government as changes that they wished to make but now are all of a sudden appearing and coming up at the last minute without the opportunity for the majority of members – of course, the majority of members in this place are new this session – to have had the chance to learn about and to understand and to know what's happening. To package all of them together in a way that is



somewhat unclear and indeed to not even have had really that fulsome a discussion of this in the press briefings or other things that the government has offered, focusing instead on just one or two things, talking a little bit about the desk thumping and the introductions but not going into the meat of a lot of these other details, it will have a significant impact on the opportunities members have in this House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

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

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and discuss this. I want to fully back this amendment presented by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Of course, it's really imperative in our democracy that we make informed decisions. I agree with the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I at least hope that this government has provided some kind of briefing to the private members on the government side. You know, I don't see any confirmation. I don't see any heads nodding over there. Okay. I see one. Okay. There was a briefing. Okay. Thank goodness. Thank goodness. Thank goodness.

I do want to stress, you know, that I've been in this House for four years so far, and I've got another four, and hopefully God will grant me another four after that. But I can tell you that up to this moment I don't know all the standing orders of this Legislative Assembly. I don't know them all yet. So asking members who've only been here for four days to make these large, sweeping changes to the standing orders in one swoop through this omnibus type of bill to me just seems completely out of step with any kind of genuine, authentic approach to our democracy. I'm really going to ask and beg the members on the other side, especially the private members on the other side, to really give this a second thought. Please consider this amendment. Give us the opportunity to take this to committee.

I happened to be named to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. It's a committee that I've sat on for four years, actually. I'm glad that I'm continuing on this committee. For those of you who may not know, this committee rarely meets, right? I'm glad that we're going to have an opportunity to actually meet and discuss something, something as important as the standing orders of this Legislature, because that's exactly what this committee is supposed to do.

Members, I think that it's imperative that we take this opportunity to really delve into this more deeply. Although the members on the other side, private members on the other side, may have received a briefing from their government, we have not received such a briefing. So I would really ask, especially the private members on the other side, to give us this opportunity. Let's keep working here on addressing some of these issues.

You know, this whole thing with the banning of floor crossing: I think that's something that needs to be delved into a little bit more deeply. As people grow, people change. People are allowed to change their mind. I mean, isn't that what our democracy should be all about?

**Ms Hoffman:** Don't get any ideas. He's not going anywhere.

**Member Loyola:** Yeah. I'm not going anywhere. I enjoy being a New Democratic Party member.

But it is important that people have freedom, and I use this word specifically because the members on the other side like to use this word "freedom" a lot: you can't take my freedom. From my own observation, I would say that, you know, we understand that the

United Conservative Party, the keyword being "united," is made up entirely of members who were under a different party banner at one time – right? – and I think it's a bit ironic that this specific standing order would be introduced.

9:20

It feels like the Premier may be worried about some of the members in his own party breaking ranks, but – but – shouldn't they have the freedom to do so if they so desire? Shouldn't they? It's the freedom of every individual to decide which party banner they want to represent, right? I mean, it's just a small observation and may have some truth to it; it may not. I don't know. I'm just throwing it out there, right?

I will say, though, like the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, that we've got 24 members on this side of the House who truly do stand united. Indeed, I am not going anywhere. But, with that, I think it's very important that members in this House, especially those that have only been here for four days – I know that you were MLAs-elect for a while. I don't assume that during your time as an MLA-elect you took the standing orders home and read them from cover to cover, because I know I didn't do that. We've only been here for a short time. I even consider the time I've been here, four years, a short time compared to some of the other members in this House.

I think we owe it to ourselves to send this to committee, send it specifically to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing because that is their purpose for being. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to stand and speak a little further to these proposals that have been brought forward here by the governing party. Now, the Premier, the leader of the United Conservative Party, has certainly over the years not been shy about his love of our colonial history. He knows it well. He demonstrates it on many occasions. He is a big fan of Canada's colonial history, colonial government, the monarchy. So it should be perhaps no surprise that on arriving back here in Alberta, his first step is to try, in his view, to civilize the natives, that he feels he needs to come in and bring in changes to how things have been done culturally – now, when I say that, I do refer, of course, to native people of many backgrounds who've experienced that in colonial history in many situations – that he feels the need to come in and immediately change the rules, to rearrange the furniture to suit his own liking.

Fair enough. To some extent, I suppose, that's his prerogative, at least to bring it forward, but it's our opportunity to take the chance to stand and debate this here in this place and talk about the sorts of changes he is proposing to make. Now, I can understand, you know, the Premier's discomfort or dislike of the practice of desk thumping. I think we'll have some robust discussion about the history of that and where it comes from and that sort of thing. Certainly, it is a practice that I personally find some enjoyment in. I prefer it over hand clapping. I'm all about the bass, about that bass, no treble. Hey, I recognize that that's a simple and small change: we clap; we desk thump. That really, ultimately, does not change much about my opportunity as a private member in this place to express myself, to exercise, to represent my constituents. Changes, however, like taking away introductions: that's a much more significant piece.

Now, as the Government House Leader noted earlier, absolutely there was some abuse of that practice, and to be clear, there was

abuse on both sides. There were opportunities. For those of you who were not present during the 29th Legislature, Mr. Speaker, to those individuals, through you, of course: the Official Opposition, some of whom, including yourself, of course, now sit on the government side, made extensive use of introductions, flooded the gallery with people to make a political point.

We as government at the time accepted that and recognized that that was one of the opportunities for private members in this House to make their voices heard, to represent their constituents, to bring those individuals in here to their Legislature, to be part of this process, to be recognized in this House, to have their names recorded on the eternal record of this province. I took the opportunity to introduce my own parents, to bring them here and introduce them in this place as a sign of my respect for them and appreciation for all that they'd given me that allowed me to be where I am today.

Again, I recognize that there was abuse at times, but, you know, Mr. Speaker, to just simply remove that privilege, that opportunity, not only from the members in this place but from all Albertans: that's a pretty significant step. To take that with no discussion, with no prior indication – this was not something that was put forward before the public before they cast a ballot – to make that sweeping change, I don't think it's unreasonable to think that it should go to a committee and have the opportunity to discuss that first.

As one of the members who rose before me pointed out, it would be a simple thing to place some restrictions: to allot a specific amount of time for introductions; perhaps limit the number of introductions per member, per caucus; limit the time of an introduction. Those are all possibilities here. But, instead, what we have is a sweeping, omnibus motion that just simply erases that practice altogether along with many others and other changes that have seen no discussion, no debate beyond what we're able to have at this point in time here and, again, were not in any way presented to Albertans before they cast a vote. Again, I remind government members that they are the ones who have insisted that that is of great importance, that before you introduce any such significant change in this House, you should have presented that directly to Albertans to get their opinion on that first, not simply given a broad indication of the general area you are going to work in and then make decisions based on information later.

Some of the other steps here, things like giving members the opportunity to abstain from a vote: Mr. Speaker, is that not something that government members feel they should have discussed with their constituents?

**An Hon. Member:** Not in the platform.

**Mr. Shepherd:** It certainly was not in the UCP platform. Does that mean that that platform lied to Albertans, that the United Conservative Party of Alberta lied to Albertans about their intent when they arrived in this place? I would note that I am not attributing that to any particular member in this Assembly.

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Point of order recognized.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah, Mr. Speaker. Under 23(h), (i), (j): "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." I mean, he indicated that the United Conservative Party may have lied. I think that is completely disrespectful. It is something that is completely false and, I think, unbecoming of this Legislature.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any response?

**Mr. Shepherd:** No problem. I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw that comment.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much. You have seven minutes remaining.

9:30

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

But it is not something that these members put before their constituents. They did not provide the full truth in what their intentions were in regard to making changes to what they say is decorum in this place. Now, I fail to see, Mr. Speaker, what being accountable to your constituents and actually taking a stand on each issue that you are voted and indeed paid to be in this place on behalf of your constituents to make that decision, where that comes in with decorum. To be clear, the definition of decorum is "behaviour in keeping with good taste and propriety."

Mr. Speaker, I think it is in good taste for each of us to do the job that we were sent here to do. I think it is in good taste for us to have the guts to stand up and cast our vote when we are asked by our constituents. And I think it would certainly be in good taste, if members in this place feel that they should not be required to do so, that they have that discussion with their constituents before they attempt to give themselves that out.

Now, I recognize that some members in this place perhaps felt uncomfortable and perhaps heard quite a bit from their constituents when they chose not to be present for some particular votes in this Legislature. I can understand that that embarrassment, that uncomfortableness may therefore lead them to wanting to provide themselves with an out, but, again, that's not a discussion that was had with Albertans.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I think such a significant change, at the very least, should have the opportunity to go before a committee so that Albertans would have the chance to consider this, perhaps reach out to their members, reach out to their MLAs, the folks that represent them, provide their thoughts and their opinions so that they could then go to the committee, and the committee could discuss if this was an appropriate measure.

The ban on floor crossing, Madam Speaker, indeed is another. You know, it being brought forward with the argument that – well, the actual amendment itself says that if a member should have a change of conscience and should they wish to leave the party under which they were elected, they should have to sit as an independent and go back and talk to their constituents and run again if they wish to join a different party. Yet there is no feeling that we should actually sit down and talk to our constituents to see how they feel before we make this change in the standing orders, to see if they feel that this is the restriction that they wish to have placed on their member, on their MLA, despite the fact that we are all elected not as party members; we are elected as individual private members of this Legislature.

We have a party affiliation, but I am not here to represent the Alberta NDP; I am here to represent the constituents of Edmonton-City Centre. Should I feel that I am unable to do so as a member of the Alberta NDP, then I think it is incumbent on me to take that step to address that, indeed in discussion with my constituents. But let me be clear. You know, 66 per cent of my constituents who cast a vote were very clear that they wished me to remain with this party on this side of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I'll just remind you that we're speaking to the amendment.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yes. Absolutely. These are my reasons, Madam Speaker, why I feel that it is important that this go to committee. Again, that is not something that was presented to Albertans in the UCP platform. That is not something that was indicated to anyone until we found ourselves here in this House, and then it was suddenly brought forward in this omnibus motion, which takes some time to sit down and sort through and decode and find out exactly what it is that members of government are proposing that we change. So I think it is reasonable that we would take this to committee.

Indeed, talking about banning floor crossing, that's something that members of government, when they were in opposition, twice brought forward in a private member's bill. Indeed, now one of the proposals within these changes to the standing orders is that private members' bills should all go to committee, yet this item, which was part of a private member's bill, is being brought forward in this motion. So it seems reasonable to me that something that was substantive enough to require a private member's bill should also receive discussion here when it's included amongst these motions and should be sent to committee.

I think it's only reasonable, Madam Speaker, that if these sorts of sweeping changes to the culture and the operation of this place, indeed if it is so necessary to change the rules of this game before the majority of players have even had the chance to see how they operate, I think it's reasonable that it should be taken and looked at by a committee. Then members of this House would have the opportunity to sit down and discuss this at a bit of greater length. Members would have the opportunity to consider the effects this will actually have on their opportunity to operate as private members, as independent members, in this House.

Indeed, one of the other changes to the standing orders is to give members more independence in their votes. Now, my best guess is that we're not going to see a lot of independence in government members' votes on these motions. So far I'm not seeing too many government members that are eager to rise and speak on these or bring forward their thoughts on this, in particular new members. Certainly, the Government House Leader has had quite a bit to say. But I suppose debate is still early, so there may be the opportunity yet where those members will be allowed the opportunity to speak and give their thoughts and bring forward how they feel on this, having been briefed and given the opportunity to understand the complexity and the enormity of these changes that are being made to the standing orders, to the rules of this Assembly, to the way in which we operate as a House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to the amendment? No?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All right.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:38 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Ceci

Feehan

Pancholi

Dach  
Deol  
Eggen

Goehring  
Hoffman  
Loyola

Shepherd  
Sweet

9:40

Against the motion:

Barnes  
Dreeshen  
Ellis  
Glasgo  
Hanson  
Horner  
Hunter  
Long  
Lovely  
Luan  
Madu

McIver  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jason  
Orr  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Rutherford  
Sawhney  
Schow

Schulz  
Schweitzer  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Stephan  
Turton  
Walker  
Williams  
Wilson

Totals:

For – 11

Against – 31

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any speakers to the motion? I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I recognize that this will be my last opportunity to speak to the motion in general. I think I laid out a good part of my considerations speaking to the amendment, but I would like to take a moment to put down a few more words on this. [laughter] It's interesting to me and apparently amusing to others. It's good that we have some levity in this House. It isn't all serious business.

But, you know, these motions are. Again, these are proposing some significant shifts and changes in the culture and operation of this Legislature, and as I noted earlier, our new Premier is a great believer in tradition. Indeed, we've already seen a shift in some of the tenor and the way that we approach things in this place since the new government has come in, and that's as it should be. It's the opportunity of every incoming government to add its own taste and flavour to how they approach things, and it's up to Albertans, I suppose, to interpret how they feel about what's being represented.

We have seen a marked shift in the type of opening meditation we have each day when we come to this Chamber, more traditional, perhaps, in some senses but, you know, perhaps less inclusive so far. I'm hoping that we may see that change, but that will be up to, I suppose, yourself and the Speaker and others to consider. We've seen how resistant many conservatives were to changing some of the words in *O Canada* from "all our sons" to "in all of us."

**Mr. McIver:** All thy sons.

**Mr. Shepherd:** All thy sons. Thank you.

**Mr. McIver:** You're welcome.

**Mr. Shepherd:** It's been a while since I sang it that way.

Obviously, there is a great respect for tradition when it is comfortable and when it is, I guess, in favour of the folks that have control. Yet what we see here now is suddenly wanting to change things in ways to make things more comfortable, perhaps, for those who exercise control but less opportunity, less privilege, less power in the hands of private members in this place, both government and opposition.

Indeed, as one of my colleagues observed, I have to wonder what the Premier fears from his caucus in needing to make some of these changes. Who is he afraid that they would introduce in this place?

What is he afraid is going to happen if they have the opportunity to choose according to their conscience how they will represent their constituents? What concerns does he have about what will be revealed about his members if they don't have the opportunity to abstain from representing their constituents in casting a vote? I can't say that it speaks very well of what he thinks about some of his own members that he feels the need to exercise that level of control.

I think about the floor-crossing bit, you know. With that logic, that we are elected to represent a party and we should not be allowed to change that party, then essentially what the Premier seems to me to be saying about his members is that none of them were elected on their own merits. Each of them owes their place in this Assembly to the fact that they ran with him and his party. They're not here because of anything they did. Their party could have run anybody on that ballot, apparently, and they would have won. Their own thoughts, their own efforts, their own values, their own consciences: they mean nothing because the people were voting for the party, not the person, not the individual, not for someone that they felt represented their values, only a figurehead, a stand-in, a human cut-out for the party banner. That, to me, Madam Speaker, is a very low opinion of the members of his caucus, but that is what this change to the standing orders says to me.

I think that what we need to have in this House is more opportunities for individuals like the former MLA Mr. Rick Fraser, whose constituency I don't recall specifically off the top of my head...

**An Hon. Member:** Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Calgary-South East.

... who felt that in representing his son who is a member of the LGBTQ community, he was unable to remain as a member of the United Conservative Party and chose therefore to sit as an independent and then chose to join the Alberta Party and continued to represent his constituents well. I respect a man of that conscience and that decision that he made. Then, indeed, when the election came, his voters had the opportunity to make their decision on that, and admittedly he did not return to this place. But needing to amend the standing orders to prevent an individual who is experiencing that kind of crisis of conscience from being able to express it in the way that they see fit, again, is a level of control that saddens me. Again, it makes me wonder what it is that the Premier is afraid of from the members of his caucus.

In considering these standing orders, I was reminded of a novel by one of my favourite writers, a man named John Steinbeck, a book called *The Moon is Down*. It's about an eastern European country during World War II that is under occupation. In that book it talks about the difficulties for individuals who are acting as soldiers, who are being asked to carry out duties that they themselves may find uncomfortable, and it also talks about how an occupied people will struggle and will push back. No matter how much control you try to exercise over them, an occupied people will always find a way to break free. You can try to take away the tools they have, you can try to take away the weapons, you can try to close them in and hem them in with a bunch of rules, but in the end a free man will always be free.

9:50

A quote from that book, one of the occupied people speaking to one of the soldiers:

You're not a man any more. You are a soldier. Your comfort is of no importance... your life isn't of much importance... Most of [your] orders will be unpleasant, but that's not your business... They should have trained you for this, and not for

flower-strewn streets. They should have built your soul with truth, not led along with...

and then there is a word which is the opposite of truth and which is considered unparliamentary in this Assembly.

Another good quote from that book:

Free men cannot start a war, but once it is started, they can fight on in defeat. Herd men, followers of a leader, cannot do that, and so it is always the herd men who win battles and the free men who win wars.

I think that's as much as I need to say on this, Madam Speaker.

With that, I would like to move an amendment. I believe it's proper for me to keep a copy and send the original to Madam Speaker. I'll wait for you to receive that before I read the motion into the record.

May I proceed, Madam Speaker?

**The Deputy Speaker:** This will be referred to as amendment A2.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that Government Motion 11 be amended in part A, in section 8, by striking out the proposed Standing Order 32(5) and (8), those being the portions referring to abstention from voting.

I believe I've said all I need to say on that particular point. I believe it's incumbent on us as members to stand in this place and cast our vote as expected by our constituents, to stand for the principles we believe in, the values that our constituents expect us to uphold. That has been the practice in this place. I see no need to change it; therefore, I bring forward this amendment, that we remove that section of these changes to the standing orders.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any speakers to the – speaking to the amendment?

**Member Ceci:** Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, when I was listening to – a number of the references in the readings you were making I have not read myself, but I appreciate hearing them in this Chamber because I think they are directly related to what we are talking about in terms of decision-making and following orders and those sorts of things.

I was very interested in what you were saying with regard to, I guess, almost some internal motivation that you are supposing the Premier might have for the actions that he is, through the House leader, bringing forward here today with regard to the motion before us. Getting inside of that motivation, I'd just like to get some more views from you with regard to why that person might see it necessary to do these things that are before us today. Words like "fear" and "concern" and "level of control" were all things you talked about, and I'd appreciate you having the opportunity to explain more of that because I think it was quite incisive, quite interesting, and talked to motivation that perhaps some of us may not be considering as actions for this tonight.

Thank you.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for those thoughts in that question. Now, of course, I do want to be careful here. There are some very strict rules about

imputing motives in this House, but I think there's much to think about in this in the general sense.

I will be honest with you, Madam Speaker. These are questions I have struggled with myself as a member in this Assembly. You know, people often ask me: "What is the job like? Is it hard to be an MLA?" One of the things I say to them is, "Well, you've got to wear a lot of hats," as I'm sure you can relate. I have my constituency office and my work that I do as the nonpartisan MLA for Edmonton-City Centre, but at the same time, representing my constituents in this House and debating legislation and representing their voices, I vote. I also sit here as a member of a caucus. I have been a member of a government caucus, and I now sit as a member of an opposition caucus.

Yes, Madam Speaker, at times I have struggled with which way I should go when I am being asked to make a particular decision by my caucus versus how I may feel about that issue myself personally versus how I may feel my constituents are wanting me to represent them. This isn't an easy job in that respect, and I recognize that within caucuses and within this structure there could be a lot of variations on how that happens.

Indeed, I can also recognize that when you are new in this place, as I was back in June of 2015, the feeling, the excitement of being elected as a government member carries a lot of weight. I was willing to give a lot of trust and faith to our leader, the then Premier, to the colleagues that I was sitting with. Thankfully, looking back and considering over the years with everything that I've learned and all the other decisions I've made and now having moved from one side of this House to the other, I can say that I do not regret the trust that I had placed at that time. I was not asked to make decisions that I would now feel compromised my own personal integrity or indeed the integrity of this place.

One of the challenges that I have always personally grappled with, Madam Speaker, is where to draw some of these lines in how I engage with folks on the other side from me – when I was in government, with yourself and the other members that were in opposition; and now that I sit in opposition, with members of government – because we recognize there are some . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other speakers to the amendment? I'll recognize a member from the government, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Yeah. To the amendment. Madam Speaker, I would just like to maybe lend some clarity to some of the understanding here with regard to this amendment, and I think some of the motivation for it is, maybe, clearly misunderstood. Some of the suggestions of why the Premier might want to suggest this, I think, need just a little bit of context and maybe some history. For those of us who came out of the Wildrose legacy party, many will remember that there was a real issue of what I'll call mass floor crossing, and I think it's only fair to say that the motivation for some of these amendments is really, more than anything else, about respecting voters and about not betraying voters. In our ridings after those floor crossings, voters . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you. We're on Government Motion 11. I believe you're referring to Government Motion 10 in regard to changing caucuses.

**Mr. Orr:** Well, I'm referring to the motivation for the amendment, but I'll take your . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I hesitate to interrupt, but I'd ask that you, under standing orders, explain that ruling. The government, or the opposition – sorry; old habits die hard, I'm sure, for you, too, Madam Speaker. They have spent the last two hours referring to motions such as the floor-crossing issue in their speeches.

10:00

The hon. member is specifically addressing the comments that were brought up in debate by the opposition in response to them in regard to their amendment that they have moved. That is a position that they presented to this Chamber in defence of their amendment asking for support, and the hon. member is responding to that. I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker – and, again, I will respect your ruling, of course – that it is the opposition's choice to make that as the parameters for their amendment, and he's responding to it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Government House Leader. To be very clear, I was not giving a ruling, just simply some advice, you know, to remember the topic of conversation that we're on, for all members of this House as we proceed with this debate.

Hon. member, I would encourage you to continue with your conversation. Just try and be on topic.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I will be brief. I cannot support the amendment, specifically because of what I'm saying here. The reality is that there is an urgent need to respect the choice and the vote of voters in our province. When voters are betrayed, people are deeply, deeply offended. This isn't about saying that members can't exercise their conscience. In fact, members can exercise their conscience by sitting independently and going back to the voters and asking for a mandate.

[The Speaker in the chair]

But when the voters have given a mandate in a vote and then a member completely ignores that, turns away from it, tramples upon it, and disrespects the voters, then I think there is a serious issue of democracy, and for that very reason I cannot support the amendment being put forward. It's about respect for the voters and honouring the vote that they have given to a member.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Under 29(2)(a), any other members?

Seeing none, are there other members wishing to speak to A2, the amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning rising.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** Having heard the motion by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning to adjourn debate on amendment A2, all those in favour of the motion, please say aye. [interjection] I stand corrected. It's my third day.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Good thing you've got a lawyer up there.

**The Speaker:** I bring him everywhere I go.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has moved adjournment of debate on Government Motion 11.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 1 An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

Ms Sweet moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment May 28]

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to get a chance to speak to the referral amendment for Bill 1. Yesterday I had an opportunity to speak to my concerns with regard to the First Nations communities losing the climate leadership plan because of the effect it would have on the environment, which they deeply depend upon, the world that they wish to pass on to their children. Of course, other concerns are about the loss of financial income in the communities, the ability to reduce utility bills, and the ability to provide safe and affordable food in their communities as well as provide jobs. So there are a variety of reasons why I've been very concerned about the introduction of Bill 1 on behalf of the indigenous communities in this province.

I'm very disappointed that the government side of the House has not found the concerns of the indigenous community to be worth taking into consideration, making the somewhat cynical comment that simply the fact that they had one election on this as part of their platform was good enough to then say: if you didn't vote for us, if you don't have the same concerns as us, then you don't really matter. It's something that I find very disturbing in a democracy.

As a result, this brings me to the referral amendment and the suggestion that rather than simply proceeding with this bill, we should actually take the time to have conversations with people who will be directly affected by this bill. In this particular case, although there are very many other people that will be affected by loss of the rebates, for example, the loss of opportunity to get support in doing renewables on their own homes such as furnaces and refrigerators and, of course, solar panels – all of those people will be affected by it.

I'm going to take this moment to speak particularly about the indigenous community. The reason why I would like to see a referral is the fact that the indigenous community has not been consulted on this. I'd like to take a moment to speak to members opposite in this House about the fact that there is a special and particular relationship with the indigenous people in this province, and that special relationship is often referred to as a nation-to-nation relationship.

It isn't about simply going out to the community and getting the vote of the majority. It's about honouring the system of discussion and relationship that is intrinsic to the indigenous community and telling the indigenous community that we honour them by honouring their way of decision-making and communication with those of us who are not part of the indigenous community. That's what we're asking for. In a nation-to-nation relationship it means that you don't simply go out and talk to a bunch of folks and get a sense of what's going on. You speak to the leadership that is duly authorized by the indigenous community, and you do that as the Crown, the lesser Crown in this case, directly to the leadership, the

elected, representative leadership in the indigenous community. Failing to do that will be recognized in the indigenous community as a failure in upholding the dignity of their electoral and relational system.

Now, under the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples it is very clear that the indigenous community expects to have free, prior, informed consent on major issues that affect their treaty rights. In this case there has clearly been no consultation whatsoever: zero, none, nil. I don't know how members opposite can say that in any way they respect the indigenous community when they actually defy the very articles of the United Nations declaration, which was written largely here in the province of Alberta by individuals such as Treaty 6 Grand Chief Willie Littlechild, who said that it is ultimately important that things not happen to members of the indigenous community without their ability to speak to those issues and to have their input reflected in the outcome of those decisions, neither of which has occurred in this case. There has been no conversation. There has been no consultation.

Secondly, the outcome does not in any way reflect the needs of the indigenous community to protect the environment, to protect their children, to create economic development, to provide food security, and to provide jobs for their members. As such, I think it is extremely important that we take the time to refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future so that a proper consultation can occur, so that we can together as a House sit with the members of the indigenous community and ask them: “How will this affect you? What kind of changes would make it better for you? How can we ensure that you are not more affected by this decision to withdraw goods and services from Albertans than other members of the province of Alberta?” These are the kinds of things that would demonstrate that we care what they are thinking, that we care what they have to say, and, more importantly, that we are willing to respond to the things that they tell us.

**10:10**

I'm very discouraged that the government is starting this term in office, first of all, by neglecting to acknowledge which treaty land they are on when they are making speeches and so on and, secondly, by neglecting the voice of indigenous people in making decisions which will obviously adversely affect them in extreme ways. Not a good way to start a relationship. It's two slaps. We've only been in the House for four days, and that's two slaps to the indigenous community already. I don't know how you enter into a relationship by pummeling the person you want to have a relationship with before you actually enter into that relationship. I'm very concerned. I'm inviting the members opposite to think seriously about what the outcome will be if they continue to proceed in this manner.

I would ask now that all the members opposite in the House seriously consider their duty, not only their duty as representatives of their constituencies but their duties to the First Peoples of this province, to make sure that they do not start the relationship off with them in this extremely negative and reprehensible manner. As a result, I'm asking that we refer this bill to the appropriate committee so that the conversations that need to happen, both in committee and between now and the time that the committee meets, can occur, and I would be happy to facilitate those kinds of conversations if that would help the government. As a result, we can have a better bill when it comes into the House again.

I think that we have seen already reaction from the indigenous community about the way they have been treated by this government, and we have only been in the House for four days. Just today in *Alberta Native News* there was an article from Grand Chief Willie Littlechild, the writer of the United Nations declaration on

the rights of indigenous peoples, indicating that the refusal to provide treaty land acknowledgments is an insult and is disrespectful to the indigenous community. Now I'll have to go back to him and say: Grand Chief, not only are they doing that, but they are going to take away from you the very program which your community has so deeply embraced over the last four years such that every single First Nation and every single Métis settlement has received benefit from that program, all of which will be lost.

Beyond the nations and the Métis settlements, the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Canadian friendship centre societies, that are scattered throughout this province, 21 of them now in the province of Alberta, have all been able to take advantage of this program and will not be able to do that. If you're the member for Hinton, for example, then you are acting against the friendship centre, which has taken the initiative to put solar panels up on their building. If you're from Athabasca, they also have put solar panels on their building. If you're from Slave Lake, they put solar panels on their building. If you're from Medicine Hat, they put solar panels on their building. All of the friendship centres in the urban areas, where more than 50 per cent of indigenous people live, have been able to take advantage of this program, and now it is gone.

So I must just summarize, with my discouragement, that this is the attitude that the government is taking toward the indigenous community, that their moves so far have been described by the indigenous community as disrespectful, and their intents are now in question in the indigenous community. I'm sorry that we've arrived at this point. Under the previous government we worked very hard to try to achieve a new relationship, a relationship of reconciliation, and I can no longer say that this government is in a place of reconciliation with the indigenous community, and it saddens me. I wish that the government would take seriously this referral motion at this time.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? I see that the hon. Minister of Transportation has risen.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on the unfortunate remarks of my colleague across the way. You would think that the member, before he went on a rant such as he just did, would take a couple of minutes for personal reflection, but clearly the few days since he and his government have been sent away is not long enough for him to have any personal reflection. I'm particularly astounded by the fact that he's indicating that a piece of our platform, that was out in the public realm, is somehow an insult to our indigenous brothers and sisters. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In the realm of personal reflection I would ask the hon. member to consider four years ago when they – and, of course, we're talking about us removing the carbon tax which we campaigned on for months. Our indigenous brothers and sisters are well aware that we were elected on that platform. Surely, it was a topic of discussion for months. But four years ago the government he was part of brought in that carbon tax on just about everything that indigenous people as well as all other Albertans buy, without any warning whatsoever. They did not disclose it, did not tell anybody. Yet they rolled in on almost the first day of the Legislature and imposed those extra costs on the clothing people buy, on the food people buy, the expenses.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that astounds me about what I just heard is that you would think, if you just believed everything the hon. member had said, that there is no disagreement amongst any of our indigenous brothers and sisters. Well, I can assure you that they are all freethinking and intelligent people. They don't always

agree with the government of Alberta. They don't always agree with each other. They don't necessarily all agree with their next-door neighbour, just like the rest of us. But you would think the hon. member was speaking for every single one of them if you actually heard what he just said. He's speaking about a large number of Albertans as if they only had one voice and he was the mouth of that voice.

That was about as disrespectful as anything that I have ever heard in my life. That was about as disrespectful as anything, to assume that every single indigenous person in Alberta speaks through the mouth of that hon. member. That's the way that he just addressed this Legislature. I can't think of anything less respectful towards our indigenous brothers and sisters. I can assure the hon. member that this government will be treating them with respect and with dignity and will be talking to them and finding out what's important to them.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that we never ever come to the point of arrogance where someone from this side of the House thinks that they can individually speak for every single indigenous person in Alberta. Imagine – imagine – the arrogance. Imagine the unbelievable amount of chutzpah to believe that he can speak for a whole group of indigenous nations and Métis people and First Nations and every other part of the indigenous community as if he knew every single one of their minds. That's the way he just addressed this Legislative Assembly.

10:20

I would hope that before this day ends, the hon. member would apologize to them. I'm sure that there are some people in the indigenous community that might even agree with what the hon. member said, but his absolute arrogance to say that he was speaking on behalf of every single one of them is unbelievable, shameful, sad. I would hope for better from any member of this House, particularly one that was a minister in that portfolio, that ought to know better. I'm sure that he got around to talk to many members of the community during his time, as will the current Minister of Indigenous Relations. Indeed, if he did, I'm sure that he didn't hear the same thing every day from every single member of the community because they are individual people with their own opinions, but you would have never known it if you had listened to the speech that that hon. member just delivered in this Legislature.

**The Speaker:** I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is rising on 29(2)(a), but unfortunately there is no time remaining.

Hon. members, with your indulgence, I would like to ask for unanimous consent of the House to revert very, very briefly to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** I'd like to thank the House for that because in the public gallery this evening there is a very close personal friend of the Speaker who has travelled from Australia to visit Alberta and our fair land. He is a long-standing family friend. When I was just a young lad of 17, 18 years old, I resided in the home of this individual's parents, before he was a twinkle in their eye. It is a great pleasure of mine to be able to introduce to the Assembly Nathan McMaster. You may notice that we bear one thing in similarity, and that is, of course, our first name. Obviously, I would never refer to my first name because the use of names in the Chamber would be wildly inappropriate. I invite you to rise and receive the welcome of the Alberta Legislature.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 1

### An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

(continued)

**The Speaker:** I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung is rising on the referral motion debate.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do in fact rise to speak again this evening, this time on the referral amendment, a notice of an amendment to An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, and we're looking to refer this bill for consideration to Alberta's Economic Future Committee.

In that committee consideration can be made and strong questions should be asked, I believe, by all members of that committee, one of whom is me, to determine what the thinking is behind the government's decision to go ahead and buck the trend of pricing carbon globally. There's a movement globally towards the pricing of carbon, and it's a movement that is basically unstoppable. Why in this province we are bucking that trend and deciding that we're going to oppose the global movement towards pricing carbon is something that I think should be clearly discussed, and we can do so in the forum of Alberta's Economic Future, which is very well equipped with its members to get to the bottom of the government's thinking on this position of bucking the trend towards pricing carbon and towards their whole thinking about global warming.

Now, I know that the federal government, in the absence of the climate change program that we brought in, in the absence of a plan to price carbon in Alberta, will impose a federal carbon tax, and we will lose, of course, control over the revenues that are generated and control over the whole program. Given my critic portfolio of Agriculture and Forestry, I can think of no portfolio that is going to be more affected than this one, than the one I am the critic for, by climate change.

So it's very, very important to me that we get to the bottom of why this government is looking to move away from what is globally seen to be a necessity – that is, moving towards a transition away from fossil fuel over time but doing so with a plan in hand – rather than what seems to be the case with this government, of them simply just axing what we had in place, to transition away from fossil fuel by putting a price on carbon, which is the way the movement globally is happening, the result of which is unknown because the lack of a plan will lead to potential chaos.

We don't know for sure what the government's intentions are with respect to transitioning away from fossil fuels. This is the direction, the way of the world, and I really see that the way to deal with it is to refer this amendment to Alberta's Economic Future Committee so it can be properly dealt with.

Agriculture and forestry are going to be very, very affected by climate change. We see it already. We see good portions of Alberta on fire at the moment, right now, and we're like a tinderbox, as was described by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry just a couple of days ago, saying that the whole province is ready to light up with the right conditions. That's not something that we faced regularly over the years. It's something we now are under a great threat of on an annual basis, and now we see an evacuation of 5,000 people that is still under way in this province.

Part of the reason for this increase in natural disasters such as forest fires, the cause that has been pointed to, is that it is caused by global warming. The average mean global temperature of the province has risen, and as a result we have weather patterns that have changed, which has caused forest fires to be more prevalent

because of the dryness of the bush. This ends up being a dire consequence for the forestry industry and for the people living in communities surrounded by forest. Agriculture as well has seen some significant sways in moisture patterns, which have caused some pretty bad drought conditions in many areas across the prairies, this province not excluded.

I'm thinking that the transition away from fossil fuels is something that Alberta should show leadership in. It's something that we were showing leadership in through the climate leadership plan, where we priced carbon and followed the global movement.

In fact, we led the global movement in a way that used the climate leadership plan and the fund that was created by the pricing of carbon to transition away from fossil fuels in a measured and balanced way that cushioned the blow for those who were reliant upon fossil fuels and made sure that people were aware that if they were going to join in the leadership role that we showed as a province to transition away from fossil fuels, that they were going to be compensated for any damages that they suffered and that there were also opportunities to be taken advantage of in terms of employment if they were to participate in taking advantage of the fund that we offered through the climate leadership plan to subsidize the transition to more green energy, to put solar panels on community buildings, to reinsulate your home, to be more efficient with energy, all of these things subsidized by the climate leadership plan fund that we created by pricing carbon.

The major question of this generation globally, I think, is: how are we going to deal with the transition away from fossil fuels and do so in an orderly fashion, in a way that doesn't simply leave it to fate to determine what happens? Governments have to show leadership, and we have to make sure that the plan that we put in place is something that recognizes the reality of the global mean average temperature rising and the consequences that we're increasingly facing annually, whether it be by flood, whether it be by forest fire, or infestation of our forests. This transition away from fossil fuels is something that no government can deny. We have to actually show leadership and put a program in place to put a price on carbon, and this debate should be taken seriously. You shouldn't arbitrarily allow any government to go ahead and just simply stop a program to put a price on carbon.

10:30

I think the Alberta Economic Future Committee will be a very effective medium within which to have a clear debate to completely try to understand the government's thinking as to why they decided to buck the trend and simply go it alone. We basically go back in time to a shoot, shovel, and shut-up philosophy with respect to climate change. I think I've said what I needed to say on that.

I think we need to put in place measures where we're able to adapt to climate change, whether we be in agriculture, in forestry, or other industries. We do that by being able to pay for it through putting a price on carbon, which in fact does change people's behaviour. You know, I really am confounded by the economic geniuses on the other side of this House who will constantly tell us that putting a price on something – economics 101 – causes people to use less of it. I mean, if something costs more, they'll use less of it.

You know, they try to say this about the minimum wage bill. Minimum wage will go up; you're going to hire fewer people. Something costs more; you're going to use less of it. Well, tell you what. Use the same principle for carbon. Put a price on carbon because it does modify behaviour. If you want to apply your economics 101, go ahead. Do that. But let's find out, really, what your thinking is. Why does the theory of economics not apply to the pricing on carbon? I really would like to hear that explanation made in the committee on Alberta's Economic Future should we pass this



amendment to refer the bill to that body, and I really encourage all members to do so.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Members, on Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any questions and comments? I see the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to 29(2)(a), I know that the former Minister of Indigenous Relations can't get up and address this thing, but I was really interested in all he had to say, and I thought it was quite unfair to hear some of the comments from the other side with regard to – and, you know, we don't take those to heart.

Mr. Speaker, I do have a few questions for the last person who was speaking with regard to 29(2)(a), and I was interested not only in your understanding of the issues around the economics around carbon pricing but, more particularly, you know, you had a breadth of understanding of all the different organizations . . .

**The Speaker:** If I might. Just for the benefit of *Hansard*, it makes it a little bit difficult for them if you're not speaking relatively close in the direction of the Speaker so that the microphones can pick up your voice and *Hansard* can do the very important work that they do.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you. I was reading *Hansard* earlier today, and they do great work and it is very clear. I want to facilitate that as well, Mr. Speaker.

What I would like the hon. member to talk about a little bit is – he was talking about all the different countries, the different media that is reporting that carbon pricing is the way to go. He was talking about recent media. I think in the *Globe and Mail* there was an editorial supporting carbon pricing and the *Edmonton Journal* supporting carbon pricing and saying that the actions of the government in not doing that, in essentially refusing to go with the flow of where this is going in the world is taking a step back. It will of course mean that we have less revenue coming in to the treasury for the very important programs that have been identified and are working, as the former Minister of Indigenous Relations talked about earlier, all across this province with regard to the – I can't remember the exact number of First Nations in Alberta.

**Mr. Feehan:** Forty-eight.

**Member Ceci:** Forty-eight. I know that Métis settlements are eight. Those groups, nations, and settlements have taken to carbon pricing using the proceeds of that pricing to ensure that they can do some long-awaited improvements to get off diesel and other kinds of things that cause great pollution.

I guess to the member back here who was talking: you know, can you just give me more of a sense of why you think the world is going in this direction and to not go in this direction, really, is taking Alberta back?

**Mr. Dach:** The Member for Edmonton-McClung back here who was just speaking has really listened to the global commentary. The word is out, and it's been a long time coming. If we don't take action on it, we're in big trouble, not just – I don't know – Alberta farmers or Alberta foresters, people in industries who create a huge number of jobs in this province, but the planet in general.

Now, it's the responsibility of government to show leadership where they are faced with emergent crises. I think it's fair to say that the global warming that we face as a people, as a society, as a species is something that we have to face and treat seriously. That means that we end up looking at what the cause of it is and agree

that the tipping point for the average rise in the mean global temperature is caused by human activity. Where we are able to, we must do what we can to mitigate our contribution to that, and we have to do it wherever we happen to be. In our own jurisdiction here in Alberta we have an obligation to every one of our citizens, our future citizens, and our planet, our little blue planet – it's the only one we've got – to make sure that the global climate change work is done here today.

**The Speaker:** Are there others who wish to comment on referral amendment REF1?

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Speaker:** Are there other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 1? I see the Member for Edmonton-McClung rising. I'm just confirming with the table that you have yet to speak to the bill.

Please proceed.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to speak to second reading of Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, something which seems to me to be a pretty regressive piece of legislation right on the face of it. This government takes specific glee in turning back the clock. They seem to think that we were on the wrong track, but I think that in the fullness of time, which will probably be quicker than they happen to think, they'll find that they're on the wrong side of history in making this act a reality, repealing the carbon tax, inviting the federal government to replace it, as they have indicated they would, with their own carbon tax, and then, as has been projected by the Premier, engaging in what will almost certainly be a failed application to the Supreme Court to oppose the federal right to place a federal carbon tax in Alberta once we have repealed the one that we put in place ourselves as a government, when we formed the government four years ago.

I know that it was a centerpiece of our government's program to put a price on carbon. This price on carbon, as I have mentioned in previous comments, is a necessity in order to enable the population to determine that they will change certain behaviours. I mean, economics 101, as I have mentioned earlier, tells us that if you raise a price on a commodity or raise a price on a service, it will end up being used less because of the fact that its demand will go down.

10:40

There are certain rules in economics that you'll note that the members on the government side will cherry-pick and suggest that it's up to the free market to determine how indeed the public should behave, yet when it comes to pricing carbon, somehow those economic realities are out the window. Economics doesn't apply to the pricing of carbon. Behaviour won't be changed when the price of carbon is actually implemented.

We know that there is a price already on carbon. The pollution that we put into the atmosphere is causing global warming, and the tipping point is something that we're seeing now more and more in the province, whether it's in terms of forest fires that are inundating our communities, floods in our major centres, infestations in our forests. The effects of global warming are twice as prevalent in Canada as elsewhere in the world, as evidenced by our northern climate. I'm not sure if any of you have actually been to northern Canada, to the territories. I happen to have been up to Yellowknife and also into Nunavut myself, where I was at Iqaluit, and I know that the effects of global warming are being felt in northern Canada much more severely than we do see here in more southern regions of the country.

To actually know that the Dempster highway, which I've driven all the way to Inuvik, actually, now extended to Tuktoyaktuk, to the Beaufort Sea, to the Arctic Ocean – that highway, the extension portion which has recently been completed is under threat. It's falling apart because the permafrost is deteriorating and they're having trouble maintaining the roadbed that they just built. Now, in 1945, when the Alaska highway was built, the permafrost wasn't at threat and they used a similar construction technique to insulate the roadbed from the permafrost, and the road has stood in good stead in these more southern portions of that Dempster highway and the Alaska highway. But in the northern extension that permafrost is melting, and the road: they're having real trouble maintaining that piece of infrastructure in northern Canada.

So the evidence is pretty clear that we have to take seriously what's happening with climate change in Canada. And to go back and repeal the carbon tax, to not put a price on carbon is to totally stick our heads in the sand and abrogate our responsibility as leaders to make sure that our citizens are protected from the ravages of climate change and that we make sure that the province of Alberta, one of the largest energy producers in the world, shows leadership and also maintains our edge and our ability to talk to the rest of the country and the rest of the world, to say that while there is an opportunity to sell fossil fuels to the rest of the world, we do so only by selling the most responsibly produced fossil fuels that can be found on the planet. And we do that by implementing measures like putting a price on carbon, by putting a cap on emissions, by creating a fund that lowers energy uses.

It absolutely flies in the face of human history and the need for preserving this planet over time and the need to transition away from fossil fuels in an orderly fashion even while developing the fossil fuels we have here at a pace and in a manner that is consistent with lowering the carbon footprint that any producer of fossil fuels has, having the lowest carbon footprint possible in the world. Doing that is not something that is an option. Any government of Alberta has a responsibility to put a price on carbon.

It's absolutely shocking, it's sad, it's pathetic, and I think it's, well, totally wrong that this government has chosen to buck the trend towards a fossil-free future, a future that justifiably is probably three or four decades away. But the depth of the problem is so big that that kind of planning has to take place starting now. We can't wait for another generation to suffer the consequences that we're feeling right now because they'll be catastrophic. It wasn't too long ago that New York was underwater. Florida was, too. Vanuatu is disappearing. There are lots of island nations in the world that are under threat of disappearing and are actually looking for compensation from the United Nations to help them move because their land is disappearing.

This is not a fantasy that was dreamt up last week by people who were out to get people and jurisdictions that produce fossil fuels; this is actually a reality. We have to adjust to this reality that we face in the country and throughout the world and know that the production of fossil fuels and the market are something that will be granted to those jurisdictions that respect the fact that it is a transitional period that we're in and that global warming is real.

There are also opportunities to be had in this transitional phase, opportunities to look into other forms of green energy and to reward those people who transition into green energy, that lowers our carbon footprint. Mr. Speaker, we do that by doing things which we

did do ourselves as a government over the last four years and which now the new government hopes to repeal simply for some short-term gain, by telling people that they'll have their taxes lowered. Well, the lowering of taxes is something that quite often will be a popular vote-getter, but the longer term future is what we need to have in mind when we're putting forward policy with respect to climate change.

This government has certainly shortened the time frame that they seem to be playing with when they're looking at carbon policy. The time frame they're looking at is probably less than four years. It's an election cycle. That is a dangerous way of thinking, Mr. Speaker, because the heat of this planet cares not for the election cycle.

We have a responsibility to make sure that we take action here that influences others, that influences our own citizens to behave in a way that lowers our carbon footprint and takes advantage of the transitional opportunities economically that are afforded to us by the fund that we create by putting a price on carbon. Over time we will see that the new technologies that we develop and incubate here by using the investments and the investment funds created by pricing carbon – those dollars will be rewarded with returns on those investments because the markets for the products that'll be created as a result are in high demand, and the demand is growing because the world is transitioning towards more green energy.

I really encourage members opposite to think twice about what they are getting into when they talk about starting Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, as their centrepiece. This will be your centrepiece. I tell you what, as I said before, far be it from me to stand and tell you: don't do this. I should rather say: keep it up. Just keep it up. Alberta is watching.

You know what? An election won on a promise of lowering taxes is a shallow victory. The greater victory is shown in leadership, which is a longer, longer vision. In fact, "vision" is not a word I attach to this government in any way, shape, or form. They have no concept of what, indeed, they wish to implement for the province's long-term future in terms of benefiting us as a society. They simply look at the machinery of the economy and see human beings as simply an input cost. That's reflected in their policies such as the repeal of the carbon tax. I expect to see more of it, but as I say: keep it up. Alberta is watching. We'll see who actually comes out on top four years from now.

Thank you.

**10:50**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to raise questions or comments?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question on second reading.

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a second time]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker. What a great day. How exciting it is to see the carbon tax repeal act out of second reading. As such, I think there's been lots of progress today. I thank all the hon. members of the House for their hard work today, and we'll move to adjourn the Assembly until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:51 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, May 29, 2019

Day 5

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
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Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
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Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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Sigurdson, R.J.  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

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Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, May 29, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, hon. members. It's a wonderful day outside, but we are going to be working hard for Albertans here indoors today.

As per the long-standing tradition of this House please let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keeping in mind the responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. May Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate May 27: Mr. Guthrie]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and congratulations on your recent election to the office. I know you'll do well and serve us well.

Madam Speaker, I once saw the government place a child with a cognitive disability into a homeless shelter. I witnessed a woman with mental illness bouncing from street to hospital to street, a homeless man battling grief and addiction make the decision to sobriety only to be turned away from the detox centre for lack of space. A good friend of mine died last year of a fentanyl overdose because he had relapsed and was unaware of what he was taking. Unfortunately, these are just a handful of the hundreds of stories I can tell you from my 15-year career working with the vulnerable people.

The issues we face as a province are real, and the policies that are decided here have a significant impact on the lives of Albertans. It is why I fought so hard to represent this community and to bring voice to these issues to the Legislature. I stand here deeply humbled and, I have to confess, with no little trepidation about the enormity about the task before us.

I wanted to use my first words in this House to acknowledge my parents because I believe it is in their example I chart my course forward. If you see any compassion, fiscal prudence, perseverance, or servant leadership in me, it is because it has been instilled in me by my mother and my father.

Most members here have heard the story of my father, Pat Nixon, a street kid making his way out of poverty, battling overwhelming obstacles to go on and build one of the most amazing community-driven organizations in Canada, the Mustard Seed. His example is a large part of what shaped me into who I am today and what drives me forward in imagining a future that is available for my children, my community, and this province.

His vision was a mobilization of community and church to serve their neighbours in need. His success was demonstrated not only in the thousands of people who were able to overcome addiction and poverty; it was also seen in the thousands of volunteers who discovered the impact of giving. What our family learned was that even though our beliefs may have been different, people with many different backgrounds and ideologies could work shoulder to shoulder because they shared the conviction and the hope that they could make a difference. When I was knocking on doors in Calgary-Klein, it was rare for me to make it past two houses without bumping into somebody who had been impacted by or who had given to the Mustard Seed.

It is, however, my mother, Lise Nixon, who I wanted to emphasize here today in regard to servant leadership. It is her example, her love, grace, quiet dedication to her children, her husband, and the ministry that they were building together that played a core part of shaping me and my brothers into the men you see today.

Vista Heights is the community I was born in – it's in Calgary-Klein – and as I was door-knocking in the election, a flood of memories came back of my mother's efforts to make our childhood amazing. We were not rich. A street pastor's salary did not provide a lot, but it was my mother's tight budgeting, strong fiscal stewardship that ensured that there was always food on the table, that the bills were paid, and then on some occasions there was something special for us boys. Mom was there alongside dad in his work. She volunteered her time, invested her heart, and always demonstrated empathy to those around her. It was often the small lessons she taught us day to day of how to care for our neighbours, through holding doors for elderly people or picking up garbage off the side of the street.

After dedicating over a decade to raising six boys, running several small businesses, and supporting a husband dedicated to ministry, my mother went on to graduate with a certified general accountant degree, achieving a 4.0 GPA. She did this with six teenage boys at home. She is now an auditor for the government of Canada and very good at what she does. She has demonstrated values that we should expect in our government and elected people: perseverance, strong fiscal stewardship, dedication to something bigger than ourselves, devotion to family and community, and, most importantly, compassion. I look forward to applying the principles that my parents taught me in this 30th Legislature and as a representative for the constituency of Calgary-Klein.

I ran for office because I wanted to bring a voice from the front line. I felt that there was a growing disconnect between elected people and the people serving in our communities. Since arriving in this building, I've quickly learned that the disconnect is not because the members in this House don't care. In fact, I've found my colleagues to be extremely concerned about issues of poverty, addiction, mental health, and helping vulnerable people. I'm excited to see the dedication of resources and the time immediately being directed to tackling these problems.

I'm also happy to see an acknowledgement that reaching out to the front lines needs to be a priority, that we are committed to creating a culture of openness that will lead to a bottom-up approach to problem solving. Compassion – compassion – is not a partisan issue. The challenges our communities face in regard to

addiction, mental health, children struggling in care, homelessness, and the shortage of affordable housing are not new to this government, the last government, or the government before that. In fact, most governments around the world are tested by these issues, and that is why we in this House need to move beyond partisan rhetoric, work towards creating a dialogue and breaking down the social stigmas within our communities in order to find solutions.

I've always believed the solutions to Alberta's problems are found at Alberta doors. One of the most common things that I heard during the last election was a plea from my constituents to move beyond petty mudslinging and partisan rhetoric. They want us, expect us, and need us to restore healthy debate and open discussion. I believe that the people in this room want similar outcomes for Alberta: excellence in health care, quality education, care for our seniors, balanced budgets, and to create prosperity for Albertans in a sustainable way, a way that will not leverage our children's future. If we can agree on that fact, we will have a much better time getting down to discussing how we get there.

I have the distinct privilege of representing the constituency of Calgary-Klein. This inner-city constituency is home to 16 communities represented by 11 community associations. Many of the communities in Calgary-Klein were actually annexed by the city of Calgary as early as 1910, with the newest communities being established in 1963. As a result, the people who lived in these communities played a rich role in shaping our city into what it is today. My constituents come from all walks of life, some who live in the same home they built 60 years ago, some who have moved into the homes in the communities that their parents raised them in, and many who have come from across this province, this country, and around the world to make a life for themselves and their families here.

What struck home with me was that people I talked to didn't expect nor want me to head to the Legislature with the goal of bringing back prosperity at all costs. I feel so proud to serve residents who are fiscally conservative but caring about social impact on their neighbours and their communities. I consider myself fortunate to be able to represent and partner with so many active community-minded volunteers and associations. These men and women are dedicated towards making their neighbourhoods a great place to live.

I had the distinct privilege of running against the only two other members that held the title for Member for Calgary-Klein, Kyle Fawcett and Craig Coolahan. Although I did not always agree with their policies, running in an election with them and witnessing them as representatives, I came to respect them, their effort to bring our community's voice forward, and their sacrifice in the name of democracy. The communities of Calgary-Klein have changed over the years, and different parts of our riding have had the privilege of being represented by many noteworthy members.

**9:10**

Speaking of moving beyond partisan rhetoric, Madam Speaker, I feel the need to mention Bob Hawkesworth, the ultimate community worker. First an alderman and then as a member of the Legislature he set the example of how to put aside partisan concerns and work with his constituents of all political stripes. Many of the communities in Calgary-Klein used to be in the riding of Gleichen – I imagine it looked a lot different back then – and were represented by two brothers: Ezra Riley, Liberal, in 1909, and the second, Harold Riley, Conservative, in 1911. They made history with the brothers' by-elections, and now I'm proud to be able to make history once again and stand alongside my brother in this House. It is in these members' footsteps that I hope to make my mark.

The Speech from the Throne highlighted several key focuses for our new government to get Alberta's economy back on the right track and for improving government services. Bill 2, the open for business act, will restore investor confidence so that corporations will want to do business here, ultimately growing our economy. On May 30 the carbon tax will be repealed so that families can keep their hard-earned money in their own pockets as they know what is best needed to support their families, not the government. With additional funds mental health and addiction facilities can grow their space to meet growing demands and overhaul our current programs.

In addition to once again becoming an attractive place to establish companies to create jobs, Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, will create new full-time jobs. A commitment to truthfulness and consultation with stakeholders, businesses, and citizens will be a common practice in this government. When given the opportunity, Albertans will take care of themselves, provide for their families, and find ways to contribute in their communities. Government's role is not to take over the job of meeting the needs of people but to create an economic and social environment to allow people, families, and communities to thrive.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the man whose name is engraved on my constituency, the man who grew up in the community where I have knocked on so many doors over the last several years, the hon. Premier Ralph Klein, or more affectionately known as King Ralph. Under his leadership he led Alberta through difficult times and moved us on a journey towards becoming a debt-free province. It was a noble vision and a heroic effort.

Member Murray Smith, MLA for Calgary-Varsity, which overlapped with the communities of Klein at the time, described the time in his 1993 maiden speech:

Alberta is similar to many governments in the western world today. Saddled with heavy debt, Alberta and other administrations recognize the high growth periods of the last 30 years. Now is the time to make that payment back to the people of Alberta. Alberta will be the province in Canada that takes the country's lead in attacking the deficit. Our economic situation requires innovative thinking and new approaches to developing our economy. This government is up to the challenge.

Sadly, we face similar circumstances. These are different times and they call for different solutions, but with perseverance, fiscal prudence, dedication, devotion, and compassion of Albertans and the members of this House I believe we will get there. I gave speeches at the United Way of Calgary to hundreds of offices in downtown Calgary full of people eagerly looking for an opportunity to contribute to making the lives of their neighbours in need better. Sadly, over the last four years I've seen many of those companies I spoke of disappear or struggle to the point where they could not give in the same way.

It brings me back to the disconnect I talked about earlier. Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper described one of Ralph's so-called radical ideas at a memorial celebrating Ralph's life: the best decisions are not made in government office towers; the governments and citizens should face problems head on. As King Ralph reminded us back then, Albertans are prepared to help, but they cannot do that if we do not create the space for them to succeed.

I am so honoured to be in this room with these hon. members and look forward to continuing this conversation. I have great faith in this team and the quality and calibre of the members assembled here.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Let me be the first to congratulate the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein on his maiden speech inside this House. I am proud to call the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein my brother but also proud to call him a friend, and I think the House saw why today. My mom did say that I had to be nice to him. She always said that, but it's my pleasure to be nice to him because he's a great man and a great brother. I shared a room with him for 16 years, interestingly enough. I can't tell you some of the stories of those days, the fun in growing up with five brothers.

I also served in front-line work with the homeless in this province and watched the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein's passion to be compassionate to the most vulnerable in our community. I was proud to do that with him. I'm proud to now be here in the 30th Legislature with him. He took the long road here, Madam Speaker, through three elections and finally was able to do it, but not from lack of hard work each time. I know that you know him well as well. He's one of the hardest working candidates I've ever worked with.

Interestingly enough, just for the House's interest, he was once endorsed by the hon. former Finance minister. I can't remember his riding at the moment. I suspect not this time around, but he once endorsed him in the past, which shows his ability probably to work across party lines.

I do have a question for him, though, on his maiden speech. I think he did a great job of talking about the need to be compassionate in our community. I know he believes the same as I do, that we will be judged as a society on how we treat the most vulnerable amongst us. He also expanded on that and why he is a Conservative, what he has seen in his career and in the work that he has done with the homeless and how that ends up with him being a Conservative politician, the reality of a Conservative with a heart, and the ability of parties like ours to be able to actually effect change in the communities that he and I care about.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Minister of the Environment for your question. You know, I'd like to echo what my brother just said about me. Knowing first-hand by working with him, starting up the Mountaineer Lodge program and seeing his compassion and dedication, and knowing his leadership role within this party and the many leaders in this party and their concern for the care of the poor and the vulnerable in our community, it warms my heart. I'm very excited about that.

You know, I'd mentioned it in my maiden speech: at the end of the day, if we don't have a strong economy, if Albertans aren't working and we're not creating that prosperity, we won't have the resources to be able to help people in our community. But more than that, I think it's an emphasis on helping people to rise up out of their situation. You know, the classic kind of handout versus hand-up phrase: maybe it's used too much, but it's truly what we want to accomplish here.

One of the things that my dad actually said about the addiction and mental health file is that it should be called recovery. We want to help people to be able to recover, rise up, and connect back into community and find meaningful ways to contribute and be involved in their communities. I think that's certainly the Conservative heart and something that I want to bring to the table here. I know that my colleagues do as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hon. members, I'm very grateful to have the privilege of rising today to address this honourable Assembly. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents and the many hard-working men and women of Calgary-Falconridge who have put their trust, hopes, and dreams in my hands and given me the great honour to be their voice inside this important Chamber. I'm deeply honoured by their confidence in me and humbled to take my seat in a place where so many great Albertans have been before. Most importantly, I would like to thank my family: my wife and my partner in life, Balmeet, and my two children, Abhi and Sahej, who have always stood beside me and supported me in all my political ambitions. They are truly the foundation of any success I have achieved.

When I rise today, I think of the journey that has brought me here. Many of us in this House have travelled long and winding roads. My journey may have begun further away than most. It started half a world away, where I was born and raised in northern India, the state of Punjab, at the foot of the mighty Himalayas.

9:20

My upbringing was not unusual for a boy in that area, walking to school up and down a mountainside every day and dreaming of a bright and successful future for myself and family. After graduating university in pharmacy in India, I began the long road that would bring me to the foothills of another majestic mountain range, the Rocky Mountains. Like many who have come to this land before me, I came to Alberta with a pioneering spirit and self-reliant attitude to build a new life in the land of boundless opportunity.

Many new Canadians have built successful communities and prospered through hard work, ingenuity, and unshakable determination. Like previous trailblazers, they had to brave immeasurable hardships but did not falter. They rose to the challenge and helped to create one of the best places in the world to live, work, and raise a family. Their story is like so many others. In my case, I was able to come to a new land and build a very successful business, and today I'm honoured and proud to say that our business employs my fellow Albertans across Alberta.

However, we are faced with many treks that must be conquered. We are fully engaged in the information age, which, in spite of its benefits, means Alberta must compete with the entire globe, from the protectionist forces of our friends to the south and in the Far East to new attacks on our personal liberty and privacy. We are indeed living in a brave new world. Domestically there are long-standing tensions creating regional misunderstandings and sometimes wilful ignorance of the many benefits and advantages that Albertans have provided to our provincial partners in Confederation. These are the difficulties that we must deal with in this Chamber.

Today our fellow Albertans are looking to us for leadership and a path through the wilderness of despair. My journey here is a testament, like so many other new Albertans, to our collective ability to find ways to defeat seemingly insurmountable obstacles and achieve success and prosperity. Under the leadership of our new Premier, his cabinet, and caucus I'm confident that we will harness the energy, spirit, and strength needed to help find the right path forward for all Albertans.

Our current problems are well known: the lack of accessible pipelines to tidewater, the constant attack on our natural resources from international self-interest groups, and the issue of rebalancing transfer payments to better reflect the new realities of our country. The lack of jobs and persistent lacklustre economic performance is

another critical issue. These problems will require ingenuity, persistence, and perseverance to overcome.

I expect that new ideas will be brought to the floor of this Assembly. I'm dedicated to supporting ideas that are rooted in principles of fiscal responsibility. I believe firmly in the analogy that teaching a person how to fish will help feed them for life, instead of giving them a fish, which only feeds them for a day. Together we can imagine an Alberta full of promise and opportunity. Through a reduction in government regulations we can unleash the power of entrepreneurs to build and create new businesses and generate jobs for Albertans. By demonstrating fiscal restraint, we can unburden future generations of debt. That will allow them the ability to deal with many new challenges our province will inevitably face. By providing strong educational building blocks, we can enable our youth to be better prepared to compete against the new global realities.

We know the world has become much more complicated. Computers and electronics dominate our lives, yet few of us understand or are capable of writing the simplest code needed to direct this technology. I believe the time has come for bold thinking, to establish in the curriculum a program where every child is required to take a mandatory coding class from kindergarten until they complete high school. Kids should learn the principles of algorithms and be capable of building new software applications for companies like Apple, Google, and other new companies that haven't even been founded yet. If we institute a mandatory coding class for all students in the Alberta curriculum, we would be the first jurisdiction in North America to do so.

Since 2016 the United Kingdom has instituted mandatory coding classes for all students from kindergarten to grade 12 in order to prepare their youth to successfully compete in the global economy of the future. We could follow this example and be the first jurisdiction in North America to arm our children with the tools they need for success. This would also encourage entrepreneurs and technology companies to consider immediately establishing operations in Alberta, where we have not only an abundance of natural resources but also a highly educated workforce to help power the innovation and technology of the future.

In another area of great complexity we must be courageous and harness new technology and management practices to maintain and enhance the quality of our health care system. I believe we must be open to new ideas to innovate and find new approaches to delivering the medical care and pharmaceuticals our citizens require, all within the limits of our fiscal capacity. My constituents are proud of our health care system, but they're concerned about its future. We must continue to find ways to improve its delivery while ensuring long-term sustainability and not sacrificing the quality of health care at any cost.

The throne speech set out our legislative agenda. It gives us a signpost that will guide our way to a more robust and affluent future. It highlights the challenges that lay before us, but it is also a call for renewed faith for risk takers, and now is the time to unleash the energy and imagination that can help bring back the Alberta advantage.

My personal journey has brought me to this place at this time to use all my knowledge, skills, and experience to help in the effort of lighting a path for today and for future generations, to work tirelessly to create a climate where jobs will flourish and rewards for risk taking will be encouraged. I know, Madam Speaker and hon. members, that you are ready to join with me in taking on this tremendous task.

I quote a well-known poem written by Canadian John McCrae.

To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

Each generation passes the torch to the next. Be ours to hold it high, be ours to safeguard our freedoms, our liberty, our rights, our principles, and most importantly, safeguard our fellow citizens. We have been passed a great trust from previous generations. In Alberta that is the tapestry of many cultures woven together by shared principles of free enterprise, personal responsibility, and mutual respect. We must continue the work of building a society of tolerance and understanding that is a beacon of opportunities across Canada and around the world.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

9:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

**Ms Issik:** I rise today to congratulate the Member for Calgary-Falconridge for an amazing maiden speech. I very much appreciated hearing how he was educated as a pharmacist and then came here to Alberta to build a whole new life, a successful business, and now here he is contributing to public life in Alberta. I appreciated his comments, Madam Speaker, about our position here in Alberta within the information age, and I would appreciate hearing more from the member regarding innovation here in Alberta.

**Mr. Toor:** I came from a different world. There's a lot of competition there. Kids have to fight to get into the schools and have to compete. They find the innovative ideas right from when they go to kindergarten. When I said that we should have innovative ideas, we need to have strong competition within the schools. Like, every government from last time we heard that they want to diversify the economy; they want to do different things. Basically, we need to be innovative. We need to be a little bit creative in how we compete in the world. Before we copy and follow the same idea, I think we need to innovate.

As I said, the coding, teaching codes to students right when they go to kindergarten might be helpful. I was sad when I heard that in the last few years our kids were failing math skills, normally required to compete in the world. We need to teach those kids. You know, if they are competitive in the future, a lot of companies will be looking for them, and they'll come to Alberta for those innovative ideas. They need to have that coding, they need to have good math skills, they need to have good grades in science and every perspective of life so that they can be challenged throughout their lives.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any more comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm so delighted to see some of these colleagues of mine: the Member for Calgary-Falconridge; the Member for Calgary-Klein, who I worked with for almost nine years in Calgary on the legacy Wildrose side. Some of us had to run multiple times to get here. The Member for Calgary-Klein actually helped my campaign as my co-campaign manager. I use the analogy – I mean, our dean is actually the Member for Central Peace-Notley. He and I ran four times. Probably we both had the record, except for the former Premier from Edmonton-Strathcona, I guess, who was there four times.

I'm so delighted to see some of these colleagues here, particularly the Member for Calgary-Falconridge, a new Canadian, a very successful businessman. Finally he got here in his pursuit to serve the public, being in this caucus of a diverse group of people from different faiths, different backgrounds. Finally he's here. Being a

small-business man, he mentioned how we can advance the agenda in this caucus with that background, so I just want to hear from him: what message is he giving to those ambitious young people who want to be businesspeople in the future, and if they want to serve the public, what advice does he have for them?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Actually, I'll start with my childhood. My parents always said that I'm going to be an all-rounder. Since I was born, I could play any sport. When I moved here, I used to play hockey, cricket, volleyball, anything. I learned to skate, and now I can play a little bit of ice hockey, too. So basically I'm kind of an all-rounder. When I was going to school, I thought I wanted to become an engineer. I didn't become an engineer; I became a pharmacist. It's not only me, just a new Canadian, but it's the story of every immigrant to this country: you're not going to find the profession where you belong. So when I moved here . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry, hon. member. We would certainly like to hear more of that, I'm sure, but we're out of time.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Congratulations on your election.

It is with great pride and excitement that I rise today in response to the Speech from the Throne by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor and give my maiden speech in this House. This is truly a humbling House for a newcomer. It feels as if the weight and expectation of Alberta looms over it. It's a strange feeling. It makes you feel incredibly small but part of something so very big.

I'd like to thank the constituents of Drumheller-Stettler for allowing me the privilege and honour to be their representative in Alberta's 30th Legislature. I'd like to thank them for taking a chance on an unlikely candidate, one without political experience. I love where I live, Madam Speaker, and I would not care to live anywhere else. It's big and open and can be harsh and unforgiving, but it's full of communities that act like families, that work and play together and rely on each other. I intend to repay the people of Drumheller-Stettler for their trust by working hard and working with them. We're all in this together.

I'd also like to thank my family and especially my wife, Jennifer, for allowing me this opportunity. It's a big ask when you have a young family and you're four hours from Edmonton. I promise to spend the rest of my days paying it back and to explain to our kids why I felt it was so important.

Madam Speaker, it's been mentioned many times what a rare opportunity this is, to be a representative in this Assembly. That fact is not lost on me. My area, going back to when the riding was simply called Chinook, has had only four representatives since 1975. In preparation for this speech, I read the maiden speeches of those who came before. Many or most of the struggles of today were the struggles of yesterday, too: isolation, declining or stagnant population, need for economic development, accessibility of health care, per-pupil education funding, centralization of services, and, of course, the need and desire for more water. My predecessors accomplished a great deal and did the best in their time. I hope to take up the torch and convey to you all how much untapped potential still exists in the Big Country, a potential that can benefit all of Alberta.

The riding of Drumheller-Stettler is big. If it were a country, it would rank 133 out of 196 in size. To give that some context, Madam Speaker, that's slightly smaller than the Netherlands or

Switzerland and a little bigger than Taiwan or Belgium. And unlike our large northern ridings, Drumheller-Stettler has roads, people, and communities in every corner, maybe not many in every corner, but you catch my drift. This riding is municipally composed of three counties, two municipal districts, and the special areas. All told, it is over 8.7 million acres and has over 16,000 kilometres of open, maintained roads. Once more for context, that's over twice the distance of the main route of the Trans-Canada highway. The riding has 25 urban municipalities, almost a tenth of Alberta's total, including seven towns, 16 villages, and two summer villages.

I'd like to say, Madam Speaker, that before I entered the nomination race roughly 15 months ago, I thought I knew a fair number of people from all over the riding. You know, you grow up in an area; you do business there. I felt I'd made a lot of good connections and relationships over the course of my life. It is an extremely sobering and awesome experience to get in the truck, drive three hours from home, and start introducing yourself, start telling your story, and begin to learn the complexities and struggles and strengths of different regions and their people. You soon realize how small your circle was. That has been the most rewarding part of this adventure so far. As with most things in life, it's been about the journey.

**9:40**

I was confident that I could do this job, that I could learn and grow into the role. I know these roles require hard work, depth, and dedication. You do not have to be a lawyer to be a great member of this Assembly. To steal a line from the MLA for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills: I believe we have 11 lawyers on this side; that ought to be enough. My point is that I believe much of this role can be learned through experiencing it. I'm reminded of the 4-H motto Learn to Do by Doing. So far I think that is the case. We're learning the procedures, the standing orders, the protocol, and for myself, even things as simple as dressing appropriately. I'm having a bit of a hard time with this one. When our whip spoke of the dress code, I could see the concern in his eyes. I think he was picturing me sitting beside him looking like Woody from *Toy Story*. For the hon. Member for Calgary-West, who, when he's here, is usually the best-dressed fella in here: I am trying.

Back to my point, Madam Speaker, the journey. What I know will help me succeed in this job, that I couldn't have learned here in Edmonton, even with all the support staff and assistance, is what the riding of Drumheller-Stettler needs, what is working well, what is critical, and what is long overdue, the relationships with the many councils and boards, and the late-night phone calls with the concerned folks we've met along the way. If you'll indulge me, I'd like to share a little of what I've learned.

We may as well start with the town of Drumheller. You don't find many towns like Drumheller. For one, it's roughly two kilometres wide by 28 kilometres long. The town itself includes the communities of Nacmine, Newcastle Mine, Rosedale, Wayne, and East Coulee. It was formerly a district of some kind, and years ago it all became the town of Drumheller. Drumheller itself is one of Alberta's major tourist destinations and the gateway to the badlands. Drumheller receives over half a million summer visitors in no small part due to the Tyrrell museum. The museum is world renowned and a cornerstone of Alberta's tourism infrastructure. It does pose some issues for the town and residents: slow falls and dead winters with absolutely full summers create some unique business and town infrastructure challenges; namely, the town needs oversized common areas, and the local taxpayers feel hard done by. The town's most real concern has always been about flood mitigation. The entire area is on a flood plain, and this is the most pressing concern to town leaders.

Starland county borders Drumheller. It's known for good farmland, has the villages of Delia, Morrin, and Munson, and the well-known hamlet of Rowley, a backdrop for many a movie. Starland's biggest concern currently is oil and gas companies closing their doors. Trident ceasing operations not long ago has hit the county with a 60 per cent shortfall to their industrial tax base. That, coupled with the loss of local jobs and a great many unpaid invoices to local mom-and-pop type service companies: this area has been hit hard. This county is responsible for 122 bridges, and with this hit they've begun to close roads because currently the cost of bridge maintenance or, heaven forbid, replacement is far out of reach.

North of Starland you'll find the county of Stettler. This area is known for great farmland, great cattle country, and oil and gas. The town of Stettler punches above its weight as an oil field manufacturing centre. It employs a lot of fabricators and sends products and packages all over North America and beyond. The Trident closure and others have hurt Stettler county as well. They are currently excited about a proposed grain loop terminal planned by G3 to be built south of Erskine.

East of here we run into the county of Paintearth, known for towns like Castor, Coronation, and the village of Halkirk. This is home to one of the two coal-fired power plants in the riding. The uncertainty of coal's future and the future of our electrical grid in general has caused a great deal of stress and hardship in this riding. Proposed wind projects have pitted neighbour against neighbour. Municipalities need the development, but the unregulated way that land agents acquire an area leaves the locals to fight with their councils in an effort to find a resolution.

East and north we enter the MD of Provost. I have to admit that this is the area I had the least amount of prior connection with, but it has been a great experience to get to know the people in this area. It's known for villages along highway 13, including Amisk, Hughenden, Czar, and the town of Provost itself. Provost is an oil town and is fiercely proud of being a complete town. They still deliver babies and have a funeral home. From start to finish, they have all the services one could require. They employ a great many from the Saskatchewan side, and could teach a lesson to other areas in not only acquiring doctors but retaining them. They go out of their way to make them part of their community. Drumheller and Stettler have been hit hard by rural crime, but no area in my riding has been hit worse than here; many businesses, multiple times. Some are giving up.

In the southeast corner is the MD of Acadia, known for its good soil. Farmers in this area are known to succeed without much rain. There are some big progressive farmers in this area that are moving up the chain, looking to find global partners for upgraded agrifood products. There's a proposed irrigation project in the assessment phase here that looks very promising and feasible. The irrigation potential on soil of this quality would be incredibly productive to the area and the province.

That leaves, in the middle, the special areas, all 5.1 million acres of it. Known for towns like Hanna and Oyen, villages like Consort, Empress, and Veteran, home of the Sheerness power plant, this area is known for hard grass and good cattle. It's notoriously dry. Its hybrid governance model dates back to 1938, when, for a train car to put your belongings in and a little food and travelling cash, settlers turned in their deeds to get the heck out. It's where I'm from. I'm biased, but it's full of great, hardy people. This area has always craved more water and has much more irrigation potential as well. I'm lucky to be an irrigator in this area and know what it can do to stabilize and better an operation and region.

Oil and gas has played a large role in building the area but is having a hard time currently, like most places. Companies are reclaiming entire fields, putting to bed many good wells with the

bad in response to low gas prices and a broken liability formula used by the regulator.

The future of the Sheerness power plant and Westmoreland coal mine causes much concern for Hanna and area. Interestingly, the plant actually just sold to an American company on Monday. The town has been impacted greatly: houses can't be sold, an empty main street, and hurting businesses. The facilitator for Communities Against Abuse mentioned the other day that the reports of sexual violence and abuse in this area have seen a sixfold increase in reported cases in the last two years. The human impact of these events on this area is staggering.

I know the demographics of Alberta have changed a lot and will continue to. I know that our cities will deal with the issues associated with rapid growth, and ridings like mine will deal with the issues associated with clinging to the services we have, the services we need. I know the cities have the votes, the representatives, the power, but, more voices or not, myself and my country colleagues will be here to remind this House that decisions made here ripple out into every corner of the province and have real consequence.

I come from kind of a political family, Madam Speaker. Mr. Diefenbaker made my great-grandfather a Senator, and there have been quite a few since who served federally and here in Alberta. I should have known enough to stay away, but there's obviously a strong hereditary defect. I like to think it's because we care about people.

I think this can be a noble role, Madam Speaker: help people, try hard, and leave it better than you found it. I threw my hat in the ring because I was worried about my kids' future, my region's future, and Alberta's future. The Speech from the Throne, much like this platform and this caucus I'm so proud to be a part of, is a breath of fresh air and has finally given regions like mine some optimism and hope. I'm proud to be here with you all in this House today and pledge to be a hard-working, loyal, thoughtful member. To my constituents I pledge to do what I said I would and tell your story the best I can.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Reid:** Madam Speaker, this is my first opportunity to rise in this House to send my congratulations to you on being elected Deputy Speaker. Congratulations to the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler and his victory in the election this year. I followed your campaign over the last number of months. You are a hard-working, well-travelled man, and I commend you for the time and commitment to the people of your great riding and the space you cover.

You touched on rural crime, which is something those of us from rural ridings have heard lots of over the course of the last number of months and years. If you could take some time and talk a little bit about how it impacts those of us in rural ridings when we're dealing with this scourge of rural crime.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question from the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod. Yes. I guess rural crime is a hot topic and rightly so. We've seen such an increase locally, and it's been felt across the province, some places far worse than others. I think it is a symptom of the disease, which is a terrible economy, a growing drug epidemic. We're seeing desperate people taking matters into their own hands and going where it's easier, perhaps.

9:50

I know for myself as a rural person who's an hour from anything, it's a sincerely real feeling when you're in your house and you have a wife and a small family and you get a call from the sergeant an hour away saying: "Just giving you a heads up. You know, there are some sketchy people in your area. We think they're armed." I've had that experience personally more than once. If I can convey that feeling of knowing that you're the only person there to protect your family: it's a real feeling and needs to be understood.

Currently, I know that I'm working with my local detachment. They're doing some great things. I don't know if this is a problem that can ever be completely fixed, but we're doing some great things with communication. Right now a constable in Hanna has developed an app, and we're working with multiple rural crime watch groups. We're trying to get everyone communicating, sharing information in real time. The app will be able to use pictures and convey messages very quickly, and hopefully that will help catch some of these perpetrators and find some closure.

I'm proud of our platform. We've discussed adding prosecutors. I know the repeat offender thing is very real. I think that once they are caught, if we can keep them off the streets for a while and find them some help or some closure, it's going to be necessary. I don't think that we can ever overcome the distances. It will be impossible, so we're going to need to focus on communication and prevention and do the best we can.

The hon. member also asked about distances, and I just would like to share something with the House. I don't know if anyone else is experiencing this, being a member for the first time and sitting and learning all this during grad season. In my riding there are 21 graduations. I was fortunate that Provost couldn't use me this year. They'd already had theirs. We're trying to hit 19 of them. I think I have 12 left. I'm 375 kilometres from Edmonton, but when I left on Thursday, I'd put 1,400 kilometres on my truck by the time I got back. We drive a lot. That's our burden, but it's great.

It's truly a great riding. It's got its disadvantages but so many advantages, so many great communities. I know for myself I was well aware of all of these issues when I asked for this job, and I'm happy to do my best to get around and convey their messages in this House.

Yeah. That's probably all I have to say about that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There are seven seconds remaining. The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry. That's it.

That is a significant number of graduations, Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

I just want to remind all members of the House that we need to be very careful when pointing out where members may or may not be in this Assembly and also to direct all comments and questions through the chair.

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

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As a new member in this House it is an honour to rise this morning and address the Assembly in response to the Speech from the Throne from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor that she so graciously delivered on May 22.

I'd like to start off by expressing gratitude, gratitude to all of those who supported me in this endeavour and make it possible for me to rise in this House today, the hundreds of volunteers who

worked tirelessly through thick and thin, in extreme temperatures, from those that resembled a pizza oven some days to bitter cold that would make a meat locker seem toasty, alongside me every step of the way, ensuring that every citizen heard the message of hope and renewal that our party would deliver; gratitude for my friends who encouraged me that this was indeed a journey worth pursuing because public policy affects real people in real ways every day; gratitude for my family, who not only encouraged me but whose lives have instructed me on the value of hard work, risk taking, and service to build a better community; and finally, gratitude to my colleagues and, in particular, the Premier for their dedication, passion, and commitment to public service.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

As I trudged through the winter on the streets of Calgary-Glenmore, leaving my footprints in the snow, I often thought of my great-grandmother and the footprints she left for me. I have a pair of her shoes that I display in my basement, a little pair of button-up boots. She raised eight boys, eight children, in large part as a single mom after my great-grandfather passed from scarlet fever. She provided for them with the wages of a ranch hand. Mr. Speaker, she was courageous, and she was tough, so when the going got tough, she got going. That is the essence of the Alberta spirit.

It was not so different for my husband, who arrived here in 1987 with a suitcase, \$3,000 in his pocket, and the promise of a job. He, too, exemplified the Alberta spirit as he built a business and raised a family.

And so I make footprints here in my role in this Legislature. I will always be mindful of the Alberta spirit as I move forward because, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta spirit is something that we all share. Whether we are indigenous to this land, came here generations ago, or are newly arrived, we all share that can-do attitude, a unique mixture of optimism mixed with a drop or two of straight-up stubbornness to succeed.

I would also like to take this time, this opportunity to congratulate all members of this Assembly on achieving the opportunity to represent their constituencies. I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election to your new role.

Since this is my first opportunity to formally address this Assembly, in the tradition of maiden speeches I'm pleased to not only respond to the Speech from the Throne but also to speak about my home constituency of Calgary-Glenmore and the impact the citizens past and present have had on me and how they have inspired me to serve. Mr. Speaker, Her Honour spoke of renewal and the breathtaking vitality of nature in our great province. In Calgary-Glenmore we are home to the Glenmore reservoir, its clear waters and the natural spaces along its banks, including the Weasel head, and as we look west, we have an unparalleled view of the foothills and the Rockies. There are scarcely any more beautiful sights in the springtime than these.

Also to our west are our great neighbours the Tsuut'ina Nation, a nation of rich culture, tradition, with a proud history of community leadership, successful commerce, and entrepreneurial spirit. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Tsuut'ina hosted the 2019 indigenous resource council energy summit. I look forward to building stronger relationships with the nation and all indigenous people as we move forward with the indigenous opportunities corporation. As Her Honour mentioned in her speech, the indigenous opportunities corporation will support First Nations' and other indigenous groups' financial participation in natural resource development and infrastructure projects here and in other parts of Canada. I am committed to meet the moral obligation that we have to empower First Nations to be full partners in the development of the resources

that lie below their lands, which their ancestors first inhabited, and to become full partners in prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, you will also find on the banks of the Calgary-Glenmore reservoir Heritage Park, Canada's largest living history museum. My neighbours and I regularly hear the whistle of the steam locomotive, and where else can you watch a sternwheeler paddle through the waters within the city limits of a modern city? We're so fortunate in Alberta to have cultural resources such as these that tell the story not only of who we were but, ultimately, who we are and who we will become.

Right next door to Heritage Park stands the Rockyview hospital, one of our outstanding health care facilities, home to institutes such as the Southern Alberta Institute of Urology, funded by Brett Wilson and Doc Seaman, and one of the sites of the Libin Cardiovascular Institute of Alberta, among others, showing how contributions from hard-working members of the private sector to our public health care system create leading-edge, world-class care.

**10:00**

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-Glenmore is also home to the incredible variety of excellent educational venues, including public, separate, private, and charter schools such as Henry Wise Wood high school, my alma mater; the Jewish Academy; Connect Charter School; the southwest science alternative program; and the South GATE program, among others. I will tell you that I am pleased with our government's commitment to choice in education.

But as blessed as we are with everything that I've spoken of, the greatest inspiration in Calgary-Glenmore is her people, Mr. Speaker, the wonderful people, young and old, past and present, those who have lived in the area for generations or who have come here recently from other parts of Canada and the world. I am grateful to have as my neighbours the architects and builders of our modern province, the community leaders, the professionals, the tradespeople, and the everyday heroes who exemplify the true Alberta spirit.

As Albertans, both now and in the past, we are proud of the province that we have built. We built a land of opportunity, where hard work and risk taking is rewarded, and I am proud of all that our government is proposing to ensure that Alberta will once again become just that: a land of opportunity, ensuring that our resources can get to market, creating the economic ecosystem that will attract the investment, the innovators, and the builders that will grow and diversify our economy. This is what the people of Calgary-Glenmore have asked for day in and day out. They simply want the opportunity to work hard, succeed, and prosper.

The people were very clear in April. The season of renewal is here, and it is now time to get down to work, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to have this opportunity to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address this Assembly and the people of Alberta.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much.

Under 29(2)(a) any members with questions or comments? The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore for the beautiful and eloquent speech. I was moved when you were speaking about Heritage Park in your constituency and the deep connection that that constituency has to our provincial patrimony and the heritage that brings with it. You spoke of how that informs us today and where we go in the future.

Can you speak a bit more about your own heritage and how that informs you as a representative of those constituents of the province

and how you hope that can help you in your goal of servant leadership as an MLA?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member for Peace River. I'm pleased to respond to that question. I'm a very proud Albertan. I was born in Calgary, as were many generations of my family. In fact, four generations of my family have lived within walking distance of the reservoir. We don't get around much. The fifth generation, the earliest generation, actually lived within what is now Calgary-Lougheed. My grandfather was actually baptized in the Red Deer Lake Presbyterian church, which is now the United Church. I live three blocks away, in fact, from where my grandfather's acreage once stood.

As a child, I was fortunate. We lived next door to the Tsuut'ina Nation, so like all neighbours do, you have your neighbours over. You visit your neighbours. It was not uncommon at my grandfather's home to visit with members of the Tsuut'ina Nation. It was just part of our background, our family. That informs me today because I think it created in me an understanding of how important it is to stay in constant touch with your neighbours. Too often we have spent in recent decades, I would say, not speaking with our neighbours necessarily. It's too easy to be on your phone, texting, watching television, jumping in your car and going somewhere. How often do we sit with our neighbours and just visit?

So we have certain traditions that are starting to come forward today like Neighbour Day in Calgary that is coming up soon. I would hope that all members in this Assembly will take the opportunity to really visit with your neighbours. I'm going to continue to visit with my neighbours on the Tsuut'ina Nation, and we're going to build better relationships because, like all neighbours, we've grown apart over the years and now it's time to grow together again.

I'm also informed by the history of my husband who came here in 1987. While I'm a multigenerational Calgarian, he's a new Canadian, so we have blended our traditions together to raise our family, and I know that we are not alone in that. That is a shared value amongst many families in this province and in this country. I think that informs all of us as we move forward to appreciate culture.

I was pleased last night to attend the iftar dinner, where we shared traditions. I think that's an important part of what we do, and that is to share culture, to share ideas, and through that create the understanding that will be necessary to really fight the intolerance that we are starting to see grow. It's only going to be defeated by growing understanding, and that's from sharing cultures and ideas.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your recent election. I've really enjoyed listening to the maiden speeches of some of my colleagues, and it's helped me gain a greater appreciation of both of them as individuals and the great areas in which they serve.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to share my maiden speech.

**The Acting Speaker:** To clarify, this is not going under 29(2)(a). This is a maiden speech.

**Mr. Stephan:** I'm grateful for the opportunity to share my maiden speech as a response to our throne speech. An overarching theme of our throne speech was a message of renewal and hope. With that



message in mind and as a response to our throne speech, I will share my hope for our province, for my constituency, Red Deer-South, and last of all for the hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly.

First, my hope for Alberta. Mr. Speaker, we are living in interesting times. Governments are failing us. The out-of-control spending ways of our governments have done a great disservice to our children. The old ways are not sustainable ways. The old ways are this: ineffective, inefficient governments with uncompetitive taxes and unsustainable billion dollar debts and deficits. What has been the result?

In the past four years leading up to our election, Alberta's debt has increased by over \$45 billion. Mr. Speaker, cumulative \$45 billion deficits are easy for irresponsible governments to incur. These gigantic debts are much, much harder for Albertans to pay for or even comprehend.

To put \$45 billion into perspective, the prior government's deficits are massive enough to buy every single home in Red Deer, Alberta's third-largest city, mortgage free, not once but twice. An undisciplined government did that in only four years. Mr. Speaker, these debts will be a burden for our children and the rising generation.

This truth cannot be ignored. Spending money you do not have is not the definition of successful government. Governments are supposed to be our allies in protecting our freedom and prosperity. They are not supposed to be impediments to freedom and prosperity. In these challenging times our governments need to be much, much better. Mr. Speaker, on April 16, Albertans took a big, positive step in the right direction to bring back Alberta's economic prosperity for ourselves and opportunities for our children by electing this new government.

#### 10:10

This government's legislative program, as articulated in the throne speech, includes the following two priorities: renewing Alberta's economic prosperity and placing the public interest at the heart of sustainable government. Mr. Speaker, there is an interrelationship between these two priorities. Without a strong economy, there are no taxes from private-sector businesses and those who work in them. When there are no taxes from the private sector, there is no money to pay for government. The facts speak for themselves.

Alberta is better off with governments who live within their means, know how to compete and attract investment in the real world, and support economic growth and individual choices. That is how Alberta has competed and excelled. As set out in the throne speech, this Legislature will renew and restore Alberta as the most competitive and attractive jurisdiction in Canada to start and grow a business, and that is a very good start.

However, there is more for government to do. There is a required culture change in government. Our Premier has expressed Alberta's culture as follows: Alberta is a meritocracy, open to the talents of all, a place where we assess people not on the basis of where they were born, how they pray, or who they love but on how hard they work and how well they treat others. That is the culture of Alberta in the real world. That is not always the culture of Alberta in the government world. Often a government culture is not a meritocracy; sometimes it is mediocrity.

Mr. Speaker, why is there a disconnect between Alberta's real-world culture of meritocracy and government's common culture of mediocrity? The difference is accountability. Without accountability there can be no meritocracy. Some in government shun accountability but in the real world we are all accountable to our families, to our friends, to clients and customers, and our own personal morality, and all of these stewardships motivate us to work

hard, to be honest and strive to do better. Striving to do better is our aim in the real world, and that is what we need in the government world. In these challenging times we can afford nothing less. We need a government culture which strives for excellence, sets a good example for our children, lives within its means, is accountable, and focuses on serving the public interest in an efficient and effective manner.

Mr. Speaker, government plays a vital role in our society, but there is a growing contempt and distrust of the rising generations in unsustainable, ineffective government institutions. A deep culture change to meritocracy and accountability in government is the antidote. Better days are ahead for Alberta.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my hope for Red Deer. Red Deer is a blessed place. It is a place of great potential. Red Deer is an attractive city. Its population is about a hundred thousand. It is not too big. It is not too small. It is centrally located between Calgary and Edmonton. We have a river. We have great parks and amenities and lakes and other recreational opportunities close by. We will have our own university. Red Deer is a home of great entrepreneurs, businesses, individuals, and families. Red Deer is the home of many great servant leaders who I have had the privilege to get to know better in this important capacity. I grew up here. I chose to start a business here, and my wife and I chose to raise our three children here.

Mr. Speaker, like all communities, Red Deer has unique strengths and needs. I have discussed some of its strengths, and I will now outline one of its needs. The Red Deer regional hospital serves Red Deer plus its surrounding rural communities, comprising up to hundreds of thousands of Albertans. The Red Deer regional hospital had development plans over the years and had been listed as a priority project prior to 2016, but in the fall of 2016 it was dropped off the infrastructure funding list by the prior government, with little or no explanation as to why.

This hospital has been undersupported by government, with a gross disparity in per capita funding over the past 10 years, which has left central Alberta with a deficit of up to 10 times the rest of the province for hospital infrastructure. As a specific example, Red Deer has no cardiac cath lab. This is a time-sensitive, life-or-death health service. As a result of no cath lab to treat heart attacks and related issues, central Albertans have a higher death and disability rate from these issues than people in other areas of the province.

Mr. Speaker, Red Deer does not need nor does it seek special treatment, though. Red Deer can succeed and prosper on its own merits, as it always has. However, similar to Alberta's requests from Canada, Red Deer only requests equitable treatment from a principled government. As set out in the throne speech, this new government will be principled. Better days are ahead for Red Deer.

Last of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to close by expressing my hope for this 30th Legislative Assembly. In these challenging times we need the best, most-qualified individuals possible in government, who are willing to sacrifice, serve, and do their best. To be successful, this government will need to make significant course corrections, and that is going to require individuals with the determination to do what is right.

Mr. Speaker, I was entrusted with the United Conservative Party nomination for Red Deer-South on March 16. Exactly one month later, on April 16, I was elected as MLA for Red Deer-South. It was very hard work, and it demanded personal sacrifice. However, the importance of this election deserved nothing less than our own very best efforts.

I am surrounded by colleagues who did nothing less, who worked hard and sacrificed and succeeded in the crucible of nomination events and elections with other excellent contestants and candidates. The overall calibre of this government caucus is likely

the strongest that Alberta has ever seen. I respect all of the members who are here with me, including those on the opposite side. Each of them has strengths, and it takes courage and grit to run and succeed.

Mr. Speaker, last week I attended my first question period. I was disappointed to observe a few members consistently yelling and interrupting as ministers stood to answer questions. That was rude. All of the members of this Assembly are capable and talented adults and are better than that. My hope is that we can choose to act with more civility, to set a better example for our children and counter the growing contempt in government institutions. Notwithstanding our individual differences, all of us share a common desire for freedom to seek happiness as we individually see fit. With that common interest in mind, we can choose to strive to act respectfully and with civility with one another.

10:20

In closing, at the end of the day, what we take with us in this life is our character and our relationships. As a member of this Assembly my desire is to serve to the best of my ability all Albertans and every resident in Red Deer-South. This can be our shared hope with the limited time given to each of us, to give our best and contribute what we can for the public interest and make Alberta better for our children and the rising generations, and then having done so, to step back and allow others the same opportunity.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a), any members wishing to make any questions or comments? I see the hon. deputy House whip standing.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Red Deer-South for his remarks. Though I'm new to this job and to this Chamber, I've had the opportunity to speak with a lot of the members since the election and hear the excitement that they are experiencing to be here. It is the culmination of years of work for many of us, years of work to get here and to have the honour to serve our constituents. So I was hoping that I could ask the Member for Red Deer-South if he could share specifically some of the things that excite him the most and things that he looks forward to doing in this House and to accomplishing.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Thanks for that great question. I'm, of course, excited about our platform. My background is in the private sector. Mr. Speaker, I am a lawyer, I'm a chartered accountant, and I have had a successful career practising law and working with many successful businesses and their owners. One thing that I have noticed in the real world as businesses seek to compete is that there is a culture of excellence that they strive to emulate in both their personal lives and in the lives of their businesses. What I am excited about – and, again, I am so excited about the wonderful colleagues that I have in this caucus – is working together to also be excellent in the way in which we carry out our stewardships, our sacred stewardships, of trust and opportunities to serve all Albertans. That really does excite me.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wishing to take advantage of the time remaining under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by saying how honoured I am to have been returned to the

Legislature. I have been in this place before, but I represent now the riding of Calgary-Mountain View. It has been an incredible campaign. I've spent a large part of the last year getting to know that riding, and I'm so honoured that the people in that riding have sent me back to this place to continue to represent their interests.

I think I would be remiss if I didn't mention my predecessor who retired before the last election, Dr. Swann. The former Member for Calgary-Mountain View has left an incredible legacy, a legacy that I hope that I can take up and continue to move forward. I can remember watching the former Member for Calgary-Mountain View in the Legislature, you know, a number of years ago, before I ever considered coming to this place, and he really did advance the interests of his constituents. He took an incredible interest in ensuring that he advanced the interests of those most vulnerable, those with housing challenges, with mental health challenges; ensuring that the health care system was properly funded, that the education system was properly funded, that even those in our prisons were taken care of.

I know that in my previous role I had an opportunity to have a number of conversations with him in that regard, and I hope that I can be the kind of advocate, for all people in Alberta from all walks of life, from all different backgrounds, that he was. In some ways the riding has changed its representation, but I hope that in other ways it has not. I hope that I am able to carry forward that legacy of speaking for those who may not have the ability to speak in a place like this for themselves.

I wanted to say a little bit again about why I got into politics. There are a number of things that drove me to take an interest in the first place and to continue on in this instance. Certainly, my background, as folks will know, is as a lawyer, but I think it's worth noting as well that I have degrees in psychology and philosophy. I think that in some ways one of the things that sent me into politics was a dislike of bad arguments or of ignoring the facts, if you will.

One of the things I think that drives me is the increase in income inequality that we see throughout not just our province but throughout the country and throughout North America. For me, that's a real concern, the idea now that, you know, at the same company one person may be making a salary and someone else at that same company is making 500 or a thousand times more, that someone at the head of a company can earn in the first six hours more than some of their average employees earn in the entire year. I don't think that that does positive things for society. Having those not just at the bottom but even in middle incomes struggling to be able to afford basics like food and shelter while at the same time we have some of the richest among us I think is a huge concern.

I also believe that trickle-down economics won't work. We have tried that in the past, and I don't actually think that there's any evidence to support its working at any time in history. There may have been covariances where economies happen to get better at the same moment that tax cuts were made, but there have also been covariances where economies have gotten better while taxes were increased. So I don't think that we can draw any conclusions from that, and I think that there has yet to be any consistent correlation or causation discovered between giving away more money to the richest and having everyone else have a better standard of living.

Public education I think is critical. You know, we talk about equality of opportunity, but absent that public education I don't think it can exist. I think that strong investments in ensuring that everyone has equal access to that education is critical.

Interestingly, one of the things – the members across the way may be surprised to hear this – that drove me was concern about government waste. Certainly, in the justice system we spend an enormous amount of money housing folks in prison who could have been housed for far less money in affordable housing. I think that

that is a waste. It's a waste of the human potential of those individuals, but it's also a waste of government resources in a number of ways. I think that investments in mental health and investments in affordable housing can do a lot to turn that around. I'll note later, I think, some steps we've taken on that, but I don't think, by any means, that in four years that problem has been solved. I think we've made progress, but there is much more to do.

Public health care is another thing that, obviously, I'm incredibly passionate about, ensuring that everyone has access to that, ensuring that we're making progress on the issue of climate change, which is something we've been discussing a lot in this House.

I'm incredibly honoured to have served for the last four years and to continue to serve for the next four. One other thing that is important to note is that I do believe it's important in this place to have representation from all different backgrounds. Certainly, there's a lot of talk about women representing us in this place, but more than just women. You know, before the last four years, before the 29th Legislature, we had never seen a single MLA who had given birth in office, and we had three. I think that that's incredibly important because women of child-bearing age are part of the population, and they, therefore, deserve representation in this place. Now, I won't say for a second that that is an easy thing to do, particularly when you're having to split your family up and move between Calgary and Edmonton. I don't think that that's easy. I don't imagine that it's easy for anyone. But I think that it's important.

10:30

I think in my case the only reason I was able to be successful in that is because of the support and dedication of my colleagues. You know, the member across the way talked about this sort of crucible bringing forward the strongest amongst us. With respect, I'm going to have to disagree. I don't think that is necessarily how we get the strongest amongst us. I don't think it is by fighting those next to us and elbowing and trying to climb over them that we create the strongest team going forward. I think it's by supporting each other. You know, in order to allow representation by all different backgrounds, I think that working together and working from our mutual strengths is incredibly important.

Another thing that I think drives me is system design, and I think in this place and in government in general we ought to concern ourselves with what it is we're trying to achieve and how it's best achieved. One of the things that I think is important, when we discuss that, is considering where the obligations lie. Certainly, one of the things mentioned in the Speech from the Throne was about red tape reduction. I'm interested to see what that means.

You know, we talk a lot about that sort of thing and about finding efficiencies, but at the end of the day corporations have a legal duty. They have a legal duty in the Business Corporations Act, and absent of the regulations that duty is to maximize short-term profits for their shareholders. That is the duty that they have. So if we remove all other regulations on them, then the duty that they have is to continue to do that.

When we talk about the reduction of regulation, I think the concern that creates for me is that it leaves these corporations, who may very well want to do the right thing – most of them have people who work for them who do have a sense of their neighbours and of their communities and of caring about that – but when the only duty they have is a duty to maximize their profits and there's no regulation around the environment, there's no regulation around ensuring that their workers are properly treated and that they have occupational health and safety, I think that that's a concern and it does not necessarily create a stronger society.

When we turn to, say, the health care system, we talk about public health care, about whether or not we have public or private delivery. People say that private delivery will create efficiencies. Well, you know, we're talking about health care here. Sure, everything should run as efficiently as possible. There've been, you know, increases in technology and scheduling and sort of predictive algorithms that can help us to do a number of things more efficiently, but I think we need to bear in mind that we're talking about health care. Technically, by most definitions of efficiency, if we spend \$1 million to save 92 sick people out of 100 rather than \$5 million to save 98 sick people out of 100, technically that's more efficient, but I don't think that's the outcome that we want. So I think we need to think very carefully about what it is that we're talking about, because for those six people it's a really big deal.

You know, in health care when we talk about private delivery, often what we see is fewer staff with less training doing more work, and I don't think that's necessarily better, especially when we're talking about the care of our elders, who have built this society in which we live, who have sacrificed to give us what we have today.

A little note. I think one of the things I mentioned was trickle-down economics, and in particular here we're talking about the corporate tax cuts. I think we know it doesn't work. We've seen an article just this morning where economists criticize that and whether or not it is, in fact, going to create a whole bunch of jobs.

I think that what does work is putting more money into the hands of individuals below the median income. I think that that has a much greater effect because those people have been demonstrated to spend that money in the local economy, not sending it overseas, not putting it in the bank somewhere but they spend it to meet their needs, to meet the needs of their children, to meet the needs of their families. It creates not only a stronger, more vibrant economy but a stronger and more vibrant community. I think that that is the best way to proceed forward.

You know, they say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Well, I think we've tried this, "Let's cut the corporate tax and the economy will diversify itself," and it hasn't worked. So I think the evidence is that it's not going to work, and we ought to look at strategic investments and look at ways we can do that a little bit better.

I think one of the main questions that drives me is: is government a force for good, or is it a force for evil? A lot of people talk about government, and they talk about how it is inefficient and it drags people down and it's not accountable. I don't think that that's true. I think that there are things that can be improved, as there are in any large system, but I think that at the end of the day government is a vessel for us to work together. I think that working together, we create a better health care system. Working together, we create a better society. Working together, we create a better education system.

Some things are best delivered by the private sector. I won't deny that for a minute. Many things, one might even say most things, are best delivered by the private sector. But when the question is life versus profit, when we're talking about something like health care, I'm not sure that the same argument can be made. I fear what exists to the south of us. It may be efficient – actually, you know, I don't think it is efficient. They spend like 800 per cent more on administrative things because they have to deal with all these different insurance companies, so actually I don't think it's efficient at all. It can be deadly in real ways.

I had the opportunity recently to watch *Knock Down the House*. It's an excellent documentary. I would recommend it to anyone. It deals with average women of more modest backgrounds trying to enter into politics in the States, where big money is a really big thing

in politics. One of those candidates talks in that documentary about her reason for running, and it was because her 22-year-old daughter died because she was denied health care because she didn't have insurance. I don't want to see that happen to anyone up here.

I think I'd be remiss if I didn't take a moment to speak about the justice system. This is actually one of the things – I think it's important to say when we disagree and also when we agree – that I was thrilled to see in the throne speech.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any members wishing to make any comments or questions? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for her thoughtful remarks in response to the Speech from the Throne. You know, it's been my pleasure to have worked with the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for the last four years in various capacities. I can tell everybody in this House and all the people of Alberta that there isn't a more thoughtful and engaged member of this Legislature than the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

As a cabinet colleague I got to see her shepherd all of our government's legislation through the legislative committee and the cabinet committee, and I know that she spent many, many hours reviewing the legislation that was brought forward to our government for consideration and worked very hard to make sure that the legislation that we brought forward met the intent of the policy decisions that we made and was well-crafted legislation. So I want to thank her for all of the work, and I want all of the people of Alberta to know how hard she works and how dedicated to the well-being of the people of this province she is. I think she's unmatched in those capacities, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for her dedication to the people of Alberta.

I also want to highlight some of the work that she did as Justice minister. It was my privilege to serve as acting Justice minister while the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was away having her baby. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that Justice minister is probably one of the least desirable jobs in the province of Alberta. In the three months that I was in that role, of course, we had hunger strikes in the remand centre, we had cases of people being released from remand and being murdered as soon as they walked out of the doors of that centre.

10:40

Not to mention, I had to take verbal assaults every day from the leader of the task force on rural crime, which drove me crazy in two ways. One, you know, when given the opportunity, the members opposite voted against the budget that was actually significantly successful in reducing rural crime, but also because the member who was asking me those questions turned out to be a rural criminal himself.

It's a challenging ministry, and I think she acquitted herself very well with honesty and integrity, that the current Justice minister I think would be wise to follow. In fact, when the Member for Calgary-Mountain View suggests that maybe we should appoint a special prosecutor to oversee the RCMP investigation into allegations of fraud in the UCP leadership race, the Justice minister, the Member for Calgary-Elbow, would be wise to follow her lead.

You know, we've heard a lot about compassion in this place this morning in various members' responses to the Speech from the Throne, and I want to just let everybody in Alberta know that when it comes to compassion, nobody has actually put that in action more than the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

One of her acts as Justice minister, which didn't go widely reported, Mr. Speaker, was to remove the jail sentences for people who couldn't pay fines. That means that if people were caught jaywalking or committing some other small infraction that they were fined for and for reasons that were beyond their control couldn't afford to pay the fine, in the past those people were sent to jail, and some of those people were killed in jail. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View put an end to that barbaric practice, so no longer in the province of Alberta can somebody be sent and possibly killed for crossing the street at the wrong location, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for that.

I also highlighted her work tackling rural crime. Of course, she invested a significant amount of money in hiring new prosecutors, developing courthouses in the city of Red Deer, investing in ALERT, of course a program that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed cut when he was a federal cabinet minister. You know, this was tremendously successful, so successful, in fact, that the current MP, Shannon Stubbs, actually congratulated the Justice minister on the excellent work that she did in tackling rural crime, so I want to thank her for doing that.

I also want to take the opportunity to extend to her thanks on the good work that she did in shepherding cannabis legalization through this House, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I think Alberta is a much better place because of the excellent work that she did on that file.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today and deliver my maiden speech, a response to the throne speech, but before I do, I'd like to congratulate Mr. Speaker on his election as Deputy Chair of Committees. I certainly watched with anticipation and excitement through your election, and I'm very grateful that you, sir, are here in this Chamber with us today.

I rise today in the spirit of gratitude to deliver this speech. I am grateful to the Hon. Lois Mitchell for her continued service to this province of Alberta as Her Majesty's representative, as Lieutenant Governor, and for the eloquent manner in which she delivered the throne speech.

I'm also very grateful to the people of Cardston-Siksika who, with an over 70 per cent mandate, trusted me with their vote to represent them in this Chamber and with that vote thrust upon me the yoke of public office and a mantle that I find myself unworthy to bear on my own but am willing and capable with the support of friends, family, and fellow members of caucus.

I'm grateful to the best campaign team a political candidate could ever ask for, always willing to rise to the occasion when called upon. My team, led by the amazing – I emphasize amazing – Stacey Atwood, demonstrated that love and commitment to community will always triumph over fear and division.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also grateful for the example set for me by those who honourably served my community within these very walls years before I ever stepped foot in this building. From Little Bow: David Schneider, Barry McFarland, and Ray Speaker. From further to the south: the hon. associate minister for red tape reduction and Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, Gary Bikman; Paul Hinman; Bryce Jacobs. And going further back, if you'll permit me: Jack Ady and John Thompson. Each individual laid their own bricks along the path I walk today. To them I say thank you.

Most importantly, I'd like to express love and gratitude to my family. To my wife, Nicole, for her unconditional support and patience as she elected to sit next to me in the front seat of this political roller coaster that we got on five years ago and who knows

when we'll ever get off: love you, Babe; to my kids, Olive and Atlas, for their hugs and kisses; to my mom and to my dad, who taught me how to work and how to play; to my brothers David, Jonathan, Daniel, and Benjamin and my lone sister – but don't feel bad for her – who from a young age taught me patience, teamwork, and unconditional love.

I'm also grateful for the get-it-done attitude that built this province, and the men and women across Alberta who personify it each and every day. In particular, I want to tell you about one of these people, to some just a man but to me and many others an absolute hero. His name was Leonard Jack Harker. Jack was born under humble circumstances in southern Alberta in September 1922. Like many other young boys his age, Jack got to work early on a farm, thinning sugar beets in the dry Alberta heat. It was back-breaking labour, make no mistake, but nothing he couldn't handle. Jack eventually started a trucking company with his father, where he worked until the age of 18, at which point he enlisted in Her Majesty's Royal Canadian Air Force to fight Hitler's Germany in World War II.

Not many people expected much from this small-town southern Alberta boy, but his natural intelligence and charisma landed him in the pilot's seat of a Halifax bomber commanded by the 415 Squadron, commanding a crew of six flying missions in defence of our freedom. I'm grateful to him and to his crew. After victory was declared and the war was won, Jack returned home to southern Alberta to resume his place within the family business, but something was obviously missing. The front seat of a sugar beet truck could not compare to the cockpit of an airplane, so Jack left a career of running the family business for a life high in the big blue sky, where he felt most at home.

Though he faced many setbacks along his career as a pilot, Jack's determination and get-it-done attitude eventually led him to the pinnacle of his craft and his career when he became the director of flight training for the government of Canada. A will to succeed can take you as far as you want, and for Jack it took him miles above the Earth. Not bad for a small-town kid from Magrath, Alberta; not bad for my grandfather, Leonard Jack Harker.

Mr. Speaker, this is the story of Alberta. It is not unique to Jack. He died in 2008, but his example touched the lives of my entire family and countless others around him in the same way that members in this Chamber, I'm certain, have been influenced by their own families, their friends, or mentors. Alberta is replete with similar success stories, and they all sound the same: a person has a dream, sets out to accomplish it, overcomes impossible odds and insurmountable obstacles along the way. It's what makes me so proud to be an Albertan. But lately Alberta's potential has laid dormant. Recently over 180,000 men and women remained at home each day, unemployed and failing to magnify their potential, through no fault of their own. Truly a heart-breaking state of affairs.

10:50

In the highly underrated 1993 mob film *A Bronx Tale* local boss Sonny gives the young protagonist Calogero, a.k.a. C, a profound piece of advice when he simply states: the saddest thing in life is wasted potential. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's time we embraced the get-it-done attitude that built this province and unleashed the full potential of Albertans.

What is a province or even a constituency without the people? I would venture to say that Cardston-Siksika is one of the most culturally and economically diverse blocks in Alberta. To the south small towns like Glenwood, Hill Spring, Mountain View, Cardston, and Magrath are populated by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and some others, predominantly members of that church, whose pioneer ancestors ventured north from Utah to southern Alberta generations ago in the face of

extreme conditions in search of economic prosperity and religious freedom. Heaven knows, they didn't come for the weather.

Further to the centre Picture Butte, Iron Springs, Diamond City, and Nobleford were the landing places for Dutch immigrants who began settling in Alberta following the Second World War, a trend that I'm told was a big result of the fond memories of Canadian soldiers who liberated Holland from the Nazis. Since then thousands of new immigrants have joined their families on Canadian soil, including Johannes Van Maanen in 1977.

Further to the north agriculture towns like Lomond, Vauxhall, Vulcan, and Arrowwood are populated by some of the hardest working and diligent Albertans I have ever had the privilege of meeting throughout the course of the campaign and look forward to serving through my tenure in office.

My constituency of Cardston-Siksika is also home to two of the largest reserves in Canada. The Kainai Nation, also known as the Blood Tribe, is bordered by the Oldman, St. Mary, and Belly rivers. The Blood Tribe is home to over 13,000 people, with over 5,000 who live on-reserve. The Siksika Nation encompasses the mighty Bow River, that runs through the reserve. It is home to 7,800 people, with over 4,000 on-reserve.

Both the Blood Tribe and the Siksika Nation are proud members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, and both have overcome the diversity and colonization and generalization trauma as a result of residential schools. They value oral histories and have kept their Blackfoot traditions alive for hundreds of years, traditions I am genuinely excited to learn more about. Many of the Blackfoot people in both the Blood Tribe and Siksika continue to teach the importance of their way of life. They're also still active in traditional societies and Sundance celebrations, and the Blackfoot people understand the value of hard work in creating a healthier and prosperous future for their people. Both reserves boast an increasing percentage of postsecondary graduates entering the workforce. Many have found employment in Alberta's industry and continue to support the Alberta economy. From visits I have made to the reserves, I understand that family committees are the foundation of their culture. As Siksika reels from the devastating floods of 2013 and the Blood Tribe fights a courageous battle against the opioid crisis, I hope to do my best to represent these two strong nations as their MLA.

And what of industry? Cardston-Siksika does over \$2 billion annually in farm gate sales, making it one of the largest agriculture-producing constituencies in the province. Each day men and women get up and produce food that feeds our province, feeds the country, and feeds the world. But it doesn't come easily. Farmers are looking to us to reduce the stress and the burden, and it starts with cutting the regulatory burden and working to improve trade negotiations that have left many producers, especially of canola, worried about the future of their operations.

Arthur C. Brooks wrote in his book *The Conservative Heart* that when Ronald Reagan made his case for the American people, he didn't spend a lot of time talking about what he was fighting against. He spent most of his speech talking about what he was fighting for. I am proud to be part of a government that's fighting for a better Alberta. I'm proud to be part of a government that takes the fiscal, social, and environmental future of this province seriously, with a measured approach to support our job creators and most vital sectors.

In the throne speech the Lieutenant Governor said:

No economic hardship has ever ruined us. No political enmity has ever defeated us. No natural disaster has ever stopped us. Our success, our resiliency, and our yet-untapped potential is a powerful magnet that continues to attract ambitious and talented newcomers from across Canada and [across] the world.

Mr. Speaker, Cardston-Siksika is a proud constituency and one that I am honoured to represent. I'm honoured to stand in this House among distinguished colleagues to take this province forward in what we believe to be the right direction.

Winston Churchill once said, "You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life." Certainly, over the course of my tenure in office I'm certain there will be those who will not like the things that we do, possibly the members across the aisle, but I understand that it's all of our duties to do what is best for Alberta.

On a clear day living in Cardston you can see off in the distance Old Chief Mountain. What was once a mountain often climbed by many is now difficult and precarious because of erosion. My grandfather, Paul Schow, spoke of it often and loved to climb it. Similar to Chief Mountain, for the past four years the economy in this province has begun to erode. The United Conservative government is committed to ensuring that we right the ship and get the province back to work so we can ensure that we have a province that is strong and free.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you for the comments, hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika and deputy government whip.

Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any members? I see the hon. Member for Peace River standing for questions and comments.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika for a wonderful speech. I was particularly interested in how geography has shaped so much of your constituency's past, whether it be the First Nations in the Blackfoot or the first settlers in the church of Latter-day Saints or the Dutch farmers that came. The landscape has formed and continues to shape so many of those people. Could you speak to the House a little bit about how the landscape and the geography continues to shape the way that you hope to represent your constituents?

**Mr. Schow:** I'd like to thank the hon. member for his question. The landscape is, without question, unique. I remember that in the month of March I put about 6,000 kilometres on my truck as I drove around visiting with constituents from the north and southern parts and everywhere else within Cardston-Siksika. In that time I learned something very important about Cardston-Siksika: it's united. It is indeed united, and it is unity that I believe brought us here today. Unity is what I committed to years ago when I joined in support of the now Premier his endeavour to unite the two legacy Conservative parties in this province.

My grandfather, Jack Harker, didn't talk a lot about the war, but he did say a couple of things. One was very intriguing. When he would go out on bomber missions, these weren't solo flights; they'd go out in large groups, huge, sometimes hundreds of planes. The idea was that you stayed close together to avoid enemy fire. Though the ride inside the pack was rough and difficult and sometimes very turbulent, it was much safer there than for those who decided to venture out to smoother skies, who were more vulnerable to enemy fire from fighter planes.

Life isn't always difficult. We're going to disagree on quite a bit, but I'm committed, as I believe this government is committed, to focusing on what unites us. There will be turbulent skies ahead in this province, of that I am certain, but it is worth it because nothing worth having ever came easy. That's what I believe, that's what my grandfather Jack believed in, and that's what the history of this province is built upon. We can do hard things. We've proven it. We've gotten this far, and moving forward, we will show again that the Alberta way of life is worth fighting for.

11:00

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I see the hon. Member for Sherwood Park who would like to speak.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations to my colleague and the Member for Cardston-Siksika on his wonderful maiden speech.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour as the Member for Sherwood Park to respond to the Speech from the Throne presented by the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta. I would like to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for laying out the agenda for the 30th Legislature.

I also want to thank my constituents for bestowing upon me the honour to represent them in the Legislature. Sherwood Park is a thriving community, as is our municipality of Strathcona county. I am forever grateful to the people of Sherwood Park for the great honour they have conferred upon me in electing me as their MLA.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited about the Premier's vision for Alberta and his commitment to get Alberta back on track with thoughtful, common-sense policies. Alberta has traditionally been a leader in Canadian Confederation, an exceptional people and province. I am heartened to know that we have a Premier who understands our history and shares these sentiments proudly. We are fortunate to have a leader like him with his experience and strong leadership, who is committed to once more making Alberta the best it can be, a leader nationally and internationally, ensuring that our province once more becomes the ultimate platform for wealth creation, opportunity generation, and individual self-realization. Alberta: the ultimate land of opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne sets forth our new government's legislative agenda. The priorities are, namely, getting Albertans back to work, making life better for Albertans, and standing up for Alberta. With the aim of achieving these priorities, our new government's top five commitments are, in no particular order: our job-creation plan; repealing the carbon tax; as well, we will focus like a laser on getting our fiscal house in order and balancing the budget over the next four years; also, we are committed to standing up for Alberta against the Trudeau Liberals in Ottawa and other groups that are trying to land-lock our interests and undermine our prosperity; finally, we are committed to protecting quality health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited about our new government's legislative agenda, centred on improving Albertans' quality of life and focused on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. I am humbled and overjoyed that we received a historic mandate to implement this ambitious and much-needed agenda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, moving on, I would also like to extend my congratulations to you on your recent election to your honourable office. I have watched you from afar for a long time with great admiration and respect and have had the pleasure to get to know you personally over the last little while or so, and it has been very rewarding. I have the utmost confidence that you will carry out your duties with fairness, wisdom, and the most sound judgment.

Next, I would also like to extend my congratulations to the new cabinet. I have full confidence that you will perform excellently and honourably for Albertans as you implement our new government's vision for getting our province back on track. I wish you all the best, and your colleagues who sit as private members are ready and willing to assist you.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to all members of this Assembly on your successful elections. I look forward to working with you all for the betterment of Alberta.

I would also like to recognize and thank my direct predecessor, the hon. Annie McKittrick, for her years of service to Sherwood Park from 2015 to 2019 and for her efforts to make our community a better place to live. I salute and thank all other Sherwood Park MLAs who came before me since the Sherwood Park riding was created in 1986.

With that, I would like to comment proudly more about my community, constituency, and municipality, which are all intrinsically linked, Mr. Speaker. The Sherwood Park constituency comprises roughly two-thirds of the hamlet of Sherwood Park. The said hamlet was established around 1955, with the first family, the Gordon Walker family, no relation, residentially moving in in December 1955, followed a month later by Cliff Otto and the Jean Dawdy families, respectively. Since 1996 Sherwood Park is part of and governed by the specialized municipality of Strathcona county, one of Alberta's largest municipalities by population. Strathcona county includes both urban and rural components. Out of roughly 98,000 residents 71,300 live in the urban area, with the remaining 27,000 living in the rural components.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, going back to the history of my riding and municipality of Strathcona county, I would go way back and point out that, legally speaking, the genesis point for Strathcona county was in 1893, when the area was established as fire and labour district No. 2 by the then government of the Northwest Territories. Over the next hundred years what would eventually become Strathcona county evolved in structure and name until 1996, when it was formally established.

The region that would become Strathcona county welcomed industrial development following the discovery of oil in our region after the Second World War. Sherwood Park was established as a community to provide living accommodations to refinery workers and their families. Since then Strathcona county has developed a strong economic base that has grown and diversified, with energy remaining the foundation of our dynamic local economy, which contributes greatly to Alberta's prosperity.

Madam Speaker, today the Sherwood Park constituency is home to two of three oil refineries in Strathcona county. Together the three refineries in the county produce 462,000 barrels per day of crude oil, or 62 per cent of all refining in western Canada. Furthermore, numerous other heavy industries and related manufacturing operations complement the county's peerless refining power. As well, through partnerships with other municipalities and industry the county has been able to attract investment domestically and internationally to grow its industrial base and expand its commercial operations.

Perhaps the best example of such co-operative partnerships is Alberta's Industrial Heartland, which is the largest industrial area in western Canada and is a development initiative between five municipalities in the region, including Strathcona county. Alberta's Industrial Heartland, established about 20 years ago, is Canada's energy engine, being our nation's largest hydrocarbon processing centre, producing 75 per cent of petrochemical refining in Canada, a driver of the local and provincial economies, prosperity, and quality of life. Over 30,000 Albertans are employed directly or indirectly in the Industrial Heartland, which is home to more than 40 petrochemical companies and \$40 billion of existing investment.

Madam Speaker, Strathcona county is also an entrepreneurial hub. We have over 11,000 businesses and require no business tax

or business licensure. Strathcona county is working, and due to our business-friendly climate we continue to attract investment, with more than \$10 billion of investment announced, under construction, or recently completed.

Besides our many economic successes, Madam Speaker, Sherwood Park and Strathcona county are widely considered one of the best places to live in Alberta and Canada, quite frankly. Key quality of life indicators from infrastructure to the environment all point to a high quality of life in Strathcona county. In terms of quality-of-life infrastructure – get ready, everyone – we have 12 major recreational facilities, including the renowned Millennium Place, which is a megarecreation centre, along with a fine theatre in Festival Place, a gorgeous library, our own hospital, four art galleries, 200 sports fields, 229 kilometres of trails, over 3,000 hectares of natural areas, 147 playgrounds, nine golf courses, 17 tennis courts, 27 outdoor rinks, and I could go on and on.

11:10

Madam Speaker, it is enjoyable to talk about and promote my riding of Sherwood Park and my municipality of Strathcona county. I could go on happily all day, but I would like to also mention a bit about myself. Before becoming the MLA for Sherwood Park, I was a civil servant with the government of Alberta working in foreign qualification recognition and immigration as an officer. I enjoyed my time working with the government agencies of the international qualifications assessment service as well as the Alberta immigrant nominee program, IQAS and AINP respectively. The clientele we served were primarily new Albertans. It was an honour to assist mainly new Albertans through having their foreign credentials recognized and helping them achieve permanent residency. Given my professional background and passion for international relations I will always be a champion for new Albertans, and that is a great honour for me.

My passion for international relations, Madam Speaker, developed as a boy. The world has always fascinated me, thus both my postsecondary degrees focused on international relations. As the MLA for Sherwood Park I take this lifelong passion with me and firmly believe Alberta's economic destiny is a global one. I see the Asia Pacific as a critical region for Alberta to expand its presence in, in particular. I believe Alberta must build strong relations with Japan, for example, the world's third-largest economy and one of the most technologically advanced nations on earth and a fellow democracy.

Madam Speaker, there exists great economic, strategic, and cultural complementarity between Japan and Alberta. I have had a long and intimate connection with Japan. A long time ago I taught ESL there and fell in love with that country and a local, who is now my wife. I speak very basic Japanese, too, though it's fairly rusty as I've been pretty busy with some other pursuits, including, of course, elected office and getting Alberta back on track.

Madam Speaker, this year marks the 90th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and Japan, and next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the government of Alberta's first international office, which was opened in Tokyo, Japan, in 1970. These are incredible milestone events that we should cherish, recognize, and build upon. Now is a great time to build strong relations with Japan, Alberta's third-largest trading partner, because the nation's politics have never been more stable, strong, and open to international partnerships. Under the national leadership of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan has become the most economically and politically stable democracy in the developed world. I will continue to be a strong advocate for Alberta-Japan relations as well as for Alberta to be deeply engaged in the world abroad for the benefit of Albertans here at home.

Madam Speaker, I got involved in politics because I am a patriotic Albertan who deeply loves my community and province. I fundamentally believe Alberta is an exceptional place not because of what is in the ground but fundamentally because of what is in the hearts and minds of the Alberta people, our free-enterprise culture and values passed down to us by our ancestors. It is that, our unique, freedom-loving culture, which has made us Canada's ultimate opportunity society. Thus, my love of province and passion to advocate for our traditional free-enterprise values led me to get involved in politics, and it's been an amazing journey, one which I'm deeply grateful for.

Penultimately, Madam Speaker, I want to state that I am especially proud to be part of a Conservative government committed to putting Albertans back to work, standing up for Alberta, and focusing on renewing the Alberta economy and defending our energy sector, which remains the foundation of our prosperity and will be so for decades, decades, and decades to come. Our new government has received a strong mandate from Albertans. They have put their faith in our government. It is a great honour to be conferred this responsibility by Albertans to manage their affairs. I pledge to my constituents and all Albertans my sacred honour and commit to do my very best in my capacity as MLA for Sherwood Park and a member of this new government.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I would again like to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for her thoughtful words, and I want to thank the Premier for his inspiring leadership and fierce commitment to Albertans.

Madam Speaker, it has been a great honour to rise today and speak. I will end my speech with the call to all members of this House and all Albertans to renew our sense of hope as we focus on the rejuvenation of Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, you might be interested to know – and you probably already know – that the people of Japan will now be eating our wonderful Alberta beef.

**Mr. Walker:** Yes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, or as I should say [Remarks in Japanese]. I was listening with interest. The hon. member is such a strong advocate for his community, but, Madam Speaker, I was wondering, through you to the hon. member, if I'd be able to ask the hon. member, with his experience in working in foreign credentials as an officer in immigration, with our campaign platform and commitments to welcoming newcomers, if he'd be able to tell us a little bit about his experience and how that might have informed those campaign commitments and his interest in seeing those commitments going forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Minister of Health for his great question and incredible Japanese. Sugoi. Amazing. Sugoi means great, for *Hansard*.

Yeah. My time as a foreign qualification recognition officer was a great honour, and I certainly learned a lot. It made me appreciate just how much Alberta is diversifying in terms of its population and how people, including new Albertans, continue to strive to come here because we remain the ultimate land of hope and opportunity.

You know, I'm very excited about our campaign platform. It is very dynamic, and we have a robust, ambitious, and much-needed foreign qualification recognition, fairness for new Albertans platform. I've thoroughly reviewed it. I one hundred per cent support it. I gave it two big thumbs up. As a professional and expert in that area I can tell you that stakeholders are so excited that this is getting so much attention because we have a unique situation where our Premier is actually a legitimate, real, top-level expert in foreign qualification recognition and immigration, and that shows in the platform. I'm just so excited. This FQR and immigration platform, Minister of Health, will strongly deliver for new Albertans, and I'll make sure that I'm at the table, too, to give my insights.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any more comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Sherwood Park for his comments. I listened with a great deal of interest, and I just wanted to provide a few comments in response to some of the things he mentioned. Of course, our ridings share a common boundary, and the people of Sherwood Park and Edmonton-Gold Bar travel back and forth to each other's constituencies. I have many residents of Sherwood Park who take advantage of the excellent schools in Edmonton-Gold Bar. Of course, Edmonton public is one of the best school boards in the entire province, and many people from Sherwood Park choose to bring their children into schools like Donnan, Vimy Ridge, the Suzuki School to make sure that their kids get an excellent education in small-sized classrooms.

I am deeply concerned, Madam Speaker, that the Member for Red Deer-North is going to take a giant axe to the public school budget, resulting in a number of closures of the schools that both my constituents and the Member for Sherwood Park's constituents currently enjoy. I was greatly concerned that on April 17, the day after the election was concluded, the Edmonton Catholic school board had already decided to close one of the schools. St. Gabriel school is set for closure. Of course, you know, they can see what's in the wind, and I think they're getting ahead of the curve and trying to make sure that the axe that's set to fall on them – they're dealing with it already.

I know that many students at St. Gabe's came from Sherwood Park, so I would plead with the Member for Sherwood Park to lean on his colleague the Member for Red Deer-North and his cabinet colleagues to not cut the budgets of our public schools because his residents will suffer as much as mine, if not more, Madam Speaker. I plead with the Member for Sherwood Park to actually act in the best interests of his constituents and mine and convince his cabinet colleagues to back off on their plans to devastate the budgets of the public school system here in Alberta.

I also plead with the Member for Sherwood Park because we have similar economic interests. He mentioned that the county of Sherwood Park is home to the Industrial Heartland. Many of the residents of Edmonton-Gold Bar rely on their jobs in the Industrial Heartland for their well-being.

11:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** I believe, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, that you were referring to the Minister of Education as opposed to the Member for Red Deer-North, correct?

**Mr. Schmidt:** They're both the same person.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.



**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and give my response to the Speech from the Throne. Of course, it was delivered on March 22 by the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, and I must say that I was most surprised by what the speech did not contain as opposed to what it did.

I guess the significant pieces that were missing for me were why I fundamentally became involved in politics, and it seemed like the Speech from the Throne was silent on many issues that I think are so important to the province of Alberta. Of course, I'm talking about fairness and justice. I'm talking about structural social services. Those matters were glanced at in the Speech from the Throne. It was disturbing to sit there and have those fundamental parts of a healthy society missing. I feel I want to take this time to address that and talk about the very fundamental importance of having structural social services in our province. Of course, I'm coming from the vantage point of 30 years as a social worker. I'm a trained social worker. I worked front-line social work for many, many years, so it is even more disturbing because of my educational background.

I think what's important, too, is just my experience as, you know, a human being in this province, growing up in this province. I grew up in a small town in the Peace Country, Valleyview. Really, my experience as a child motivated me to become a social worker and then, ultimately, a politician because social work had its limits. I couldn't do as much as I wanted to. I didn't have as much authority or power. I sort of unwillingly but eventually did decide to step forward and become a politician and a social worker. I'm still a registered social worker in this province and a very, very, very proud one.

I grew up in a very small town, 1,200 people when I lived there, and it was an oil town. I grew up in a town that, you know, had a lot of problems. It had high rates of addiction and violence. There still is and was at that time an Indian reserve right next to it, Sturgeon Lake band. There was a tremendous amount of violence on the reserve, lots of problems, lots of racism, anger between the two communities. I remember people saying, "Well, we have such a large RCMP detachment here because it's a great training place," because there was so much violence and so much difficulty.

There's also a whole bunch of sexism in my town. I remember sitting at my kitchen table with my mom and her friend. She worked for an oil company, and she was talking about how she got half the wages of a male doing exactly the same job. Granted – granted – you know, I'm almost 60 years old. This was a while ago, but that's where I grew up. That shaped my view as a young girl, shaped my view as a woman, and motivated me to do a lot of what I have done in my life.

Another thing that really motivated me, too, is that I remember in grade 6 – right now Sturgeon Lake does have their own school, and kids from the Sturgeon Lake band do go to school on-reserve. But when I was a kid, they came to town. They were bused in because there was no school on-reserve. I can remember that my best friend in grade 6 was Verline Gauthier. She was a great gal. We had lots of fun together. Then we were all going to grade 7 at Hillside high school, but, you know, Verline never came, and she wasn't alone. There were many indigenous children that never even made the transition to junior high.

Besides sexism, racism, violence, addiction issues rampant in the community that I grew up in – I just thought: "Oh, my goodness, there needs to be something better. Why isn't anybody fixing this?" I can remember as a young kid wondering: "What's going on? What's happening in this province?" This – I don't know – mythological Alberta advantage was never visited on me or my community, really. So when people talk about the Alberta

advantage, I think: wow; you live in a completely different world than I ever lived in.

I'm going just to throw in a few social work words that I think other professions use, too. Hopefully, I don't lose anybody in that. I'm sort of talking about the larger societal context right now, the macro, right? Besides sort of these challenges in the community that I grew up in, there were also microchallenges or microsystems that happened. Then you're looking at the individual, you're looking at the family system.

I grew up in an intact family system. There were three kids, mom, and dad. Both of my parents had mental health issues. Consequently, because of that, specifically my father would self-medicate. He would drink excessively. He had addiction issues. Of course, that caused a lot of issues for the family that I grew up in. My dad is 90. He's an amazing man and I love him deeply, but he had tremendous problems. Because of that, he had difficulty earning an income, supporting our family. We had challenges in our family system. My mom was a school teacher, and she had a stable income. She was part of a union, so her earnings were protected, she had holidays, and she had all sorts of support. Our family was definitely a middle-class family, but we had many, many challenges.

I just always remember as a kid thinking: "Why isn't someone helping us? What's going on here?" I'm just sort of giving you the macro, and this is the micro sort of view of the way I grew up and what sort of formed me and motivated me to do what I've done. I really saw social work as the pathway to actually creating a better society, and all these years later I'm so proud of my profession and believe that it really fundamentally makes a difference in people's lives.

There are lots of barriers to social workers making changes in our system, and maybe I'll talk a little bit about that. I taught social policy for years at university, and one of the best ways for me to help my students understand sort of the things that we need to do and the fairness and justice, how we need to do it, is just by telling a little bit of a story, so I'm going to tell a little story. Let's just use the North Saskatchewan because here we are in Edmonton.

I'm walking down the North Saskatchewan River. The river is flowing by me, and it's a beautiful, sunny day, probably a day just like today. Today is a magnificent day. We're walking along, and I'm just looking at the sun, and I'm looking at the birds and enjoying my walk. Then all of a sudden I hear someone yell: "Help! Help! Help! I'm drowning! Help!" And I'm, like, "What?" And I look over, and sure enough, someone is flailing in the water. So I run over, and I'm able to catch them and pull them out and save them, and they're so grateful. They're so grateful to me. They're just, like: "Oh, you saved my life. I'm so lucky you walked by. Thank you so much for saving me." I just say: "Are you all right? Is everything okay?" Blah, blah, blah. They're fine, so they just walk on their way. I think: "Wow. I'm so glad I was there to help them." Then I just think: "Oh, what should I do? I'll just keep walking on my walk."

**11:30**

I'm walking along on my walk, and then, not very much longer, again there's someone in the same situation. Someone is drowning. They're yelling: "Help, help! I'm drowning!" So I go over, and once again I pull them out of the water. I save them again, and I'm like: "Are you all right? What happened?" Oh, they're fine. You know, they're just grateful, of course, that I'm there to help them again. I'm like: "Whoa. What are the chances of that?" That's so bizarre, you know? But I'm glad I was there and that I could help them. What should I do? So I'm going to go for another walk. I'm

just going to keep going. Why not? It's a nice day, so I go again. And then again someone is yelling at me. They're saying: "Help, help! I'm drowning!" You know what I did this time? I don't go save them. I go run upstream and find out who's pushing them in.

That's the difference between doing a charity model of social programs, where you just give people things. You save them, or you actually change the fundamental roots of inequality and justice. Of course, that's not true. I happily will go save that person. Of course, if someone is hungry, absolutely you feed them. You do both. You don't do one or the other. In a healthy society, certainly Canada and Alberta with our tremendous riches, you absolutely change the fundamental structure to create equality. We know that societies that have equality, that don't have so much disparity in income are much, much healthier than societies with a big difference. That's why that's fundamental. Certainly, that really illustrates what, you know, we must do as politicians.

In my value system I believe people are equal, people deserve supports, like I talked about in my member's statement yesterday. When I was a young single mom, I had hardly any money, and I was going back to university to study. I had children. At that time – and this was, as I said, many, many years ago – there was support for me to be able to live in subsidized housing so I could better myself. You know, as I said then and I'll say again now, I mean, I've been a good investment. I've certainly paid taxes for many, many years. I've got a good income like the rest of you here, and I've been able to support my children also to grow into adults and be successful.

You know, the throne speech talks about charity. It doesn't talk about fundamental social justice. That really makes me concerned. Maybe I'll just talk a little bit more about the distinction between charity and justice. Charity provides direct services like food, clothing, shelter. Justice promotes social change in institutions or political structures. Charity is directed at the effects of injustice, its symptoms. Justice transforms systems by alleviating the root causes of injustice. As I said before when I was telling that story, we need both. We can't just leave people hungry or homeless. We need to do both. We need to do things to change our system.

I just want to quote a little bit from a paper I was reading that talks about the shortcomings of charity and why even though the throne speech talks about charity and sort of seems to suggest that that's the way to go, it's really not. It's not enough. It does provide some relief, but there needs to be so much more.

This article is by David Pfrimmer, and it's from Evidence Network: Charity is simply not enough. "Citizens for Public Justice [propose] an impressive six-point plan. [It] could nudge the government in several worthwhile directions, including indexing the child [tax] benefit." You know, that's something that when the NDP government was in, we created an Alberta child tax benefit. These are the core, root things that we need to do, provide more safe and affordable housing.

Well, as the former Minister of Seniors and Housing we invested \$1.2 billion. That was, like, unprecedented in this province. That was four times more than the previous Conservative government inputted. We made homes for thousands of people so that they could live in dignity.

He also talks about "establishing a national pharmacare program, providing improved access to skills training and funding for indigenous education" – certainly, these are actions that we took – "and a national child care program." Well, everybody . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. I appreciate very much the stories that you shared and your comments in particular about education and the importance of a strong public education system and your own experience growing up in Valleyview, where my mom went to school with you as well. I know you got to grow up together. As a former teacher and school administrator I get concerned when I hear some of this coded language around choice in education, and I worry what that means for supports and resources for our public schools. So I'd like to ask the Member for Edmonton-Riverview just to elaborate a little bit on her perspective regarding a strong public education system and what you've heard from your own constituents on that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Certainly, I am a strong proponent of the public education system, and certainly in my riding of Edmonton-Riverview I hear that from many constituents. We want to make sure that, you know, again, just going back to the understanding between what social justice, what a justice model would look like, regardless of people's income levels, socioeconomic backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities, they are all welcome at a public school and supported well in that.

I've got a few teachers in my family. My mom is a teacher; my brother is a teacher; I don't know, probably six or seven of my aunts are teachers; and my eldest son is a schoolteacher. Everybody thought that I was going to be a teacher, and I think that I kind of, you know, sort of tricked them by becoming a social worker. Then I did start teaching, but I was teaching at the university. So somehow that teaching bug was certainly in my family.

I know how important it is when we know, too – it's really the game changer when kids have a strong public education system regardless of their economic background. That really creates a pathway for them to have success. I know that throughout my, you know, going beyond just public education, like, from K to 12, my going back to school – I mean, I have a BA in political science from when I was 21, but I went back to school when I was a single mom when I was 30 and got my bachelor of social work and my master's of social work – I just know that that changed my life, going to school later on and having supports to do that. I had affordable housing.

I did also because I was seen – and, again, this is a very long time ago – as a population that the government at that time, and it was a Conservative government, wanted to support, disadvantaged populations like myself. Especially when I was doing my master's, I got some grants to support me and my family, which I've greatly appreciated.

Sadly, you know, it was in the early '90s when the government came in, and they slashed all those grants. It made a huge difference. I was in the middle of my master's program at that time. Of course, that was when public programs were cut by 50 per cent by the Conservative government. Really, since that time, it's just been a very lack of willingness to support public infrastructure. Certainly, as a front-line social worker, too, you know, it was – I mean, that's what really motivated me to get involved in politics. I was so disturbed by the limited resources we had to support extremely vulnerable people, who really had so much adversity. If they could have been given a bit of support, it could've made a big difference for themselves and their children. But the government was – I don't know – I just want to say cruel, not thinking about what a difference it makes and how much people are its best asset.

**11:40**

I just want to go back to how sad I was to see that the throne speech really missed a huge part of what I think is fundamental to

a healthy society and certainly the province I love and how I want very much to make sure that that province is for everyone. That mythical Alberta advantage isn't for everyone. You know, maybe there is a group of people who do benefit, but I know a heck of a lot of people who don't, so we need to stop that and make it an inclusive province, make sure that everyone is – and what can we do to create steps for people to overcome barriers that they might have.

One of the things that I was super proud of when we were government, Madam Speaker, was that we had gender parity in cabinet.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. chief deputy whip.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've enjoyed the debate this morning on the throne speech, but I move to adjourn debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry. You cannot move to adjourn debate because you have already spoken to this.

Is there anybody else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

[Adjourned debate May 28: Ms Sweet]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 2? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

I think the intent of this bill, like Bill 1, is pretty much the same in what this bill is trying to do. It's also trying to reverse the progress and take Alberta backwards in many aspects like taking your overtime, cutting your holiday pay, and lowering your wages, and all that is done to give a huge tax break of \$4 billion to the most wealthy in our province. It's simply an attack on the workers in this province, on their rights such as an eight-hour workday. If we talk about that, there's a long history of people across this country, across this continent who fought for this eight-hour workday and who fought for overtime pay. Those things are attacked by this piece of legislation, such as minimum wage. That was brought forward somewhere in 1918 in Canada, first in Manitoba and then in Saskatchewan and then British Columbia, to protect women and children, and essentially this legislation is attacking those rights as well.

We are told that our finances are not in good shape, that we are going through a rough time. We look at the history of the minimum wage, those changes like regulating overtime pay, for instance. In the United States those changes were done in 1938, during the recession times, with the Fair Labor Standards Act by President Roosevelt. Again, that brought in the minimum wage, ended child labour, and regulated overtime pay. And here we are. This legislation before the House is trying to reverse the progress that we made in the last four years under the leadership of our leader and the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

The changes we brought forward were done in a thoughtful manner, in consultation with all those who were concerned about it, and they were made to bring Alberta in line with the rest of Canada. At that point we knew that Alberta's labour laws had not been touched for two, three decades, and they were not in line with the rest of Canada. So the changes we brought forward were common-sense changes, were the rights that Canadians have enjoyed all across this country except for Alberta, because previous successive Conservative governments didn't pay attention to those things. For instance, these changes were in response to public fatality inquiries. One that comes to mind is the Wolski inquiry. Things recommended in that inquiry were also incorporated in the changes we made to the labour laws.

For instance, changes were made where it was mandated that workers have the right to know the risks related to their workplace, the right to be part of those safety procedures, those committees, and their right to refuse unsafe work. And there were instances where individual Albertans were fired for taking care of their kids who were sick, who were in hospitals. So those things were covered under the changes we made.

The changes we made were good for workers. They were good for women. They were good for children. We raised the minimum wage to \$15. We know from evidence that two-thirds of those who are earning the minimum wage are women. That was the change that was directed to make sure that those who are earning the minimum wage have enough to put food on the table and have shelter.

Madam Speaker, I have worked minimum wage jobs – convenience stores, pizza delivery, all those kinds of jobs – and I know, from 10-plus years' experience, what it means to work at minimum wage and what it means when you get a 50-cent increase, a dollar increase in your minimum wage. Before becoming a lawyer in 2012, I had done that for, like, a long time, throughout my student life. Not all those who are earning the minimum wage – let me put it this way. Those who are earning the minimum wage: most of the time they do have responsibilities for their families. They are supporting their families. Lowering the wage for youth workers is like shutting opportunities for them. It's making it difficult for them to get shelter, to meet their needs. This change is taking Alberta backwards. It's an attack on the workers across this province.

11:50

With respect to overtime pay it will affect almost a quarter of a million Albertans across this province in the oil and gas industry, in construction. Like Canadians in other provinces, they were given this choice to bank their overtime, like any other Canadian, and had enjoyed that right. Those changes were made. Now what we are seeing is that this piece of legislation is taking us backwards and taking that right away as well.

I have worked in a homeless shelter in Calgary, and I was working 24 hours every week and working at minimum wage and supporting myself, supporting my family, going to school. When I would take time to get an additional shift on holidays, that was a huge support. I think that people, when they work overtime, work with a view to making sure their needs are met and that for those they support and have obligations to, their needs are met. But what this legislation, again, is doing is taking away those rights which Canadians in other provinces do enjoy today.

The youth wage: they are cutting it by \$2. Again, we are asked to believe that somehow that will increase jobs, but the way we can create jobs is not by cutting their pay. The way we can create jobs is what we did in 2015. There used to be a program called the STEP program, the summer temporary employment program. By 2015 the previous government had discontinued it. When we became

government, we started that program. This is how you create jobs for the youth. You invest in youth. You create opportunities for them. You work with employers. You work with students so they can get the jobs, so they can get the experience. But, being a student of economics, I've never heard of this, that by cutting the wages of youth, you will somehow magically create job opportunities for youth across this province. That's not how jobs are created.

This government certainly came with a promise of jobs, the economy, pipelines, and so far everything they have done has taken us away from jobs, taken jobs away from Albertans. For instance, in their first piece of legislation they are getting rid of the carbon tax, and they are saying that it's creating 6,000 jobs while there were already 7,300 jobs under that climate leadership plan. They are taking those jobs away from Albertans.

In terms of the economy, I think the priority for Albertans was that they will get their pipelines built, they will get access to markets, and so far, from what we have heard, we are doing everything that is taking us away from getting a pipeline. For instance, we are getting rid of the carbon tax, which in that climate leadership plan was one of the key considerations for the federal government when they approved the Kinder Morgan pipeline, when they approved line 3. What we are seeing here now is that that's being repealed.

Then we signed contracts to ship our oil by rail so that we can address the capacity shortages. We can ship or transport our products to market, but we are seeing that now this government is threatening to cancel those contracts. With that, I guess, our economy is also suffering. The jobs that would have come with those contracts: we are losing those jobs as well with these steps.

I think I do recognize and respect that the government got a mandate. I hope that they respect that mandate, too, that once they become government, they are the government for all Albertans. They need to leave the campaign rhetoric aside and work in the best interests of all Albertans. Cutting Albertans' overtime pay, cutting their holiday pay, and cutting their wages is not in the best interests of Albertans. I don't think that's what Albertans meant by that mandate. Albertans needed jobs, Albertans needed an economy that looks out for everyone, that creates opportunities for everyone, but here we are seeing that we are creating a two-tier wage system. If you are under 18 and going to school, you will be paid differently. After a certain time you will be paid differently. The fundamental

thing here is that for an equal amount of work, for a similar kind of work, people should be paid equally and the same. Creating this kind of division in wages is not in the best interests of Albertans.

This bill also, from all those things – it's targeting overtime, it's targeting youth wages, and it's targeting the minimum wage – will have a disproportionate impact on Albertans with low incomes. It will have a disproportionate impact on women in this province, on youth in this province. At the same time, what we are seeing on the other hand is that they are also getting ready to give a \$4 billion break for the most wealthy: cutting the corporate tax, which was already the lowest in Canada, and somehow, again, selling it to us that it will magically create jobs across this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, please.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate you allowing me to get up under 29(2)(a), and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-McCall for his comments on Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. I find myself getting a little bit hung up on the title here for a second, so I'll shortly ask my colleague for his thoughts on this: an act to "make" Alberta. I can't help but think back to my younger days, when I was playing the game I love, basketball. It was a while ago. What I found was that throughout my career there were times when players would find themselves getting caught up in the moment, and they would want to do what was lovingly referred to as forcing the play. They would just be so consumed with: I am going to get this section of our play done no matter what happens.

What usually ended up happening, Madam Speaker, was that they would throw the ball away to the opposing team, which was detrimental for the team's overall goal. When I look at the bill, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, I'm wondering if perhaps we're trying to force a play here in order to possibly make something happen based on what we're trying to accomplish.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but it is lunchtime.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 29, 2019

Day 5

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

### Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
and Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 29, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Member's 10th Anniversary of Election

**The Speaker:** Before we do introductions of visitors and guests today, I would like to acknowledge that we have the 10th anniversary of an elected member in this Assembly, so if I might take this time to welcome the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West to the dais. I have a small presentation.

While he comes here, feel free to take your seats if you would like.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West: today marks his 10th anniversary of serving as a member. While he had a small break in service during his tenure and service to the public of Alberta, today marks very close to his 10th anniversary.

I also understand you may have some family here with you today. We'd just like to express our sincerest thanks and appreciation to you for all of the efforts and sacrifices that you and the rest of the extended family have made in order to be able to provide the hon. member an opportunity to serve his constituents and the rest of Alberta.

On behalf of all members of the Assembly thank you and congratulations.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has a guest.

**Mr. Yao:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Christina Gordon public school. These students are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Gavin Rutledge, Mrs. Erin Andrews, Mrs. Wendy Torranceville, and also chaperone Ms Kelly Anne Nash. I'd like them to rise now and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly students from the Landing Trail intermediate school. They are accompanied by their teachers, Jeff Semenchuk, Treana Michalski, and chaperone Shelly LaBoucane. If I could ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my wife, Somboon Eggen, and my eldest daughter, Genevieve Eggen. They're here of course to see me on the occasion of receiving my 10th anniversary pin. As you said before, I sort of had a gap in between, so really I first was elected in 2004. My family has put up with a lot for me to be doing this since 2004. I think when Gen was here the first time, she was 12 years old. Now she is a nurse at the neonatal intensive care unit at the University of Alberta. Somboon – I won't say how old she was when she was here first – works at the Royal Alex

hospital in one of the units there. On behalf of my family thank you for the opportunity to be here.

Again, I think I would like to stress the importance of having these introductions as a way by which we can reach out and learn about each other – right? – learn about our families, learn about the understanding that comes from that, and it helps us to be, I believe, better legislators. On behalf of my family if you could please give them the traditional warm welcome of the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to rise here today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two strong, Conservative women that I've come to know in this last little while, Mrs. Kara Barker and Ms Lily Le. They are both women that are dedicated to our province and certainly to their own communities. Would they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has an introduction.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you my mom, Anne Irwin, and her partner, Eugene Orr. They are both big supporters of mine.

I'd also like to introduce a proud constituent and friend in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, Jessica Aubé, who I'll be making a statement about shortly. They're seated in the public gallery, and I ask these three very important people in my life to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I introduce my guests, I just want to take moment to thank Dr. Glenn Feltham, who has resigned this morning as the president of NAIT here in Edmonton. He's been in that role since 2011, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through to all members of this Assembly Dr. Ian Brodie. Dr. Brodie is an associate professor in the department of political science at the University of Calgary. Dr. Brodie served as well as chief of staff to Prime Minister Stephen Harper. His recent book *At the Centre of Government: The Prime Minister and the Limits on Political Power* is an Amazon bestseller, and despite the fact that I've not yet had the opportunity to read it, I'm sure it won't disappoint. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Dr. Brodie is a constituent of Calgary-Bow. I do ask that he rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three guests seated in the public gallery today. I ask that they rise. There is Sinan Leylek, Rebecca Bock-Freeman, and Jean-Marc Prevost. They are awesome Albertans who care deeply about the public services that matter to all of us, and I'm really grateful to have them here today to see their Official Opposition fight for the things that matter to them. Thank you for being here.

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former member of the EMS Foundation I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you four paramedics who represent that very best values of emergency responders in our health care system. Every day across

this province emergency service providers are there for us. They have our back in some of life's most chaotic moments. Paramedics embody the trust that is the heart of our health care system. When you need it, they are there to help you.

Mr. Speaker, this week is National Paramedic Services Week, and across the province there are free events and demonstrations of their work, and I encourage all Albertans to attend one of these events to personally thank our paramedics. It's an honour and privilege to meet them today and welcome four of them here to the House. I will note as well that tomorrow there's a ceremony, a ceremony in which 33 members of the Edmonton zone will be awarded the exemplary service medal. It's a national medal, and two of our guests today will be receiving that medal tomorrow. Their names are Jeff Smith, Lisa Swanson, Carly Lehman, and Aaron Phillips. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Well, I couldn't agree with the minister's introduction any more, in fact. They provide a very critical service to our province and are very deserving of their medal.

I might encourage members to use other avenues to recognize members in the gallery. Perhaps you could have someone do a member's statement as opposed to using introductions at such length.

1:40

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you three members of the Moen family: Lynette, Kris, and Taryn Moen. Kris is an oil and gas accountant in downtown Calgary and Lynette is a customer service representative with a Calgary grocery store. Their daughter, Taryn, is a grade 3 student at Citadel Park elementary school. Having grown up in southwest Edmonton, Kris is proudly showing this building to Taryn, and he's eager to witness the live demonstrations of the Westminster parliamentary traditions. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Chamber Mr. Mike Yuzwenko, a classmate of mine from Queen Elizabeth composite high school, who was then known to us only as Zeke, very affectionately. After 32 years as a social studies and music teacher Mr. Yuzwenko recently retired, and that was all spent at Riverbend school. I now ask Mr. Yuzwenko to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

#### Jessica Aubé

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and offer my first member's statement. I want to talk today about my friend Jessica Aubé, who's up in the gallery. I met Jessica many months ago while I was out door-knocking in the McCauley neighbourhood of our Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood riding. She shouted at me from her car that I could put a sign on her lawn, and I knew right away that I liked her. I walked over to her and asked her what her name was. We talked a little while. We shot the breeze like old friends. I asked her then what she did for work and she said: early retirement. She then pulled off her hat and revealed her bald head, pointed to it, and said with a smile: terminal.

Jessica's not much older than me, but she's had an amazing life to date. A proud Métis woman, Jessica has worked all over Canada in indigenous relations. In her work she often observed workers being brought in from the south to do work in northern and remote communities. She wanted to change that, so Jessica set out to build relationships with indigenous communities in an effort to bring jobs and employment to these regions. But at age 31, in the midst of her work, Jessica was diagnosed with breast cancer.

When she returned to work after treatments, she wanted to make a difference. She was able to establish a joint venture with four indigenous land corporations in the Sahtu region. Together they successfully negotiated a sole-source contract for environmental work at Norman Wells. But now the cancer has returned, this time to her brain, bones, and lung. Jessica is hopeful she'll return to the north. She's made friends around the world. She just got back from volunteering at a camp in Hawaii for young people with cancer.

She reminds me of the things that motivated me to run: the importance of a strong public health care system, LGBTQ rights, our relationships with indigenous neighbours. Most importantly, she's reminded me what really matters: the time we spend with the people in our lives. Thank you for being here today, Jessica, and thank you for all you do and will continue to do.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Airdrie-East.

#### Tow Truck Operator Safety

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In early March an almost deadly car crash happened on highway 2 just outside of Carstairs. Farmer and volunteer firefighter Jason Dyck was nearly killed while on the scene responding to the crash. An oncoming SUV failed to slow down while approaching the accident scene, slamming into the back end of the fire truck. Five people were injured, and thankfully they only suffered minor injuries. Jason Dyck only had seconds to react, jumping out of the way while the vehicle hurtled towards him, yet he still managed to yell at his team to brace for impact.

While most emergency vehicles are equipped with white, blue, or red lights, the lights on tow trucks are amber, which is similar to a roadside construction crew. Now, studies have shown that blue as well as white lights are the most apparent in low-visibility conditions, which are often the poor conditions that roadside operators are responding in. If oncoming drivers can't see the amber lights of a tow truck, how can we expect them to slow down to the legal 60 kilometres per hour when passing a potentially dangerous scene?

Making a regulatory change in the Traffic Safety Act would allow tow truck drivers to be fitted with blue as well as amber lights. This slight change in regulation can be an important piece in saving the lives of roadside assistance crews across Alberta. During the election and continuing to follow after, I have received quite a bit of feedback on this matter, from tow truck operators to firefighters.

Prior to the election my former colleague and MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti Wayne Drysdale recognized this dangerous issue and put forth a private member's bill to prompt this change. Unfortunately, it died on the Order Paper, but I won't let this important matter fade away. It is my constituents' hope that Mr. Drysdale's work will be continued on this matter.

I know that all members in this Assembly would agree that we should do whatever we can to ensure that all workers return home safely to their families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a statement.

### Observance of Ramadan and Public Safety

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is on treaty lands largely covered by treaties 6, 7, and 8, and it's home to indigenous people, Métis people, and people of many different faiths and backgrounds. It is home to many Albertans of Muslim faith, who are observing and celebrating the holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan Mubarak.

Ramadan is a time for self-reflection and spiritual renewal through prayers and fasting. It is a time for strengthening bonds with the Creator, with family, and with the community through various activities such as daily iftar events. These events also offer an opportunity for all Albertans to learn more about the diversity of faith and traditions in our province and build understanding.

Now more than ever it is important that we build bridges with one another. We have seen a disturbing rise in hate crimes, racism, Islamophobia, and violence at prayer places. We have seen a proliferation of hate groups and white nationalist groups in our neighbourhoods, such as Soldiers of Odin, Edmonton Infidels, Rebel media, and the like. We must stand up against hate and intolerance because every Albertan deserves to feel welcome and safe in this province and in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, on June 4 and 5 Albertans of Muslim faith will be offering Eid prayers at many different places across this province. I have heard concerns respecting safety and security from many of my constituents and faith leaders, and this just isn't right in a modern, accepting, and inclusive Alberta. That is why I call on this government to take action during this very holy time and ensure the safety and security of all Albertans in places of prayer and worship, because no Albertan should ever have to fear for their safety while practising their faith.

With that, Ramadan Mubarak to all those celebrating and also Eid Mubarak in advance.

### Paramedics Water Supply in Highwood

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, in honour of Paramedic Services Week I would like to start by acknowledging the service, dedication, and compassionate care that our paramedics provide every day. There is no higher form of public service than the commitment of front-line workers in maintaining public safety. My father was a paramedic for decades, and as I grew up, I could see the pride and compassion that was required for this work. As well, I also saw the difficulties and dangers and challenges of this extremely critical service. I'd like to commend this government's commitment to a heroes fund of \$1.5 million dedicated to our front-line workers.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to address the most pressing issue Highwood currently faces. After meeting and talking to all of the four municipalities, it is obvious the primary concern of the area is water. I understand that this is a complex issue and that water is a resource that needs to be carefully protected. Having said that, Highwood has already championed many initiatives and is dedicated to the ongoing stewardship of this valuable resource.

Many initiatives, incentives, and innovative ideas have already been implemented. Residential dwellings are now built with hot water circulation pumps to reduce tap run times, most homes utilize rain barrels, and xeriscaping rebate programs have led Highwood to be one of the lowest in water consumption per capita in the country. Highwood has worked tirelessly to set a benchmark in water stewardship. The largest municipality in Highwood currently has a consumption rate that is 25 per cent lower than the national average, with 80 per cent of the water returning to the treatment

plant. But even with these innovations, we have communities that have had to cap growth as their entire water licence has been allocated.

The need for water is key for the area of Highwood, and I look forward to working towards a solution that will allow Highwood to be a sustainable constituency now and in the future.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been four weeks since I first called on this Premier and this Attorney General to appoint a special prosecutor to oversee the investigation into UCP voter fraud. Now, as the appearance of a conflict of interest grows, so too do the number of people genuinely wondering why the Premier just won't do the obvious thing and appoint a special prosecutor. As long-time columnist Don Braid noted, special prosecutors have been appointed in Alberta for far less conflicted circumstances in the past. What exactly is the Premier trying to hide from?

**Mr. Kenney:** From absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. As we've pointed out in the past, police investigations of this nature engage in consultations with expert prosecutors in the specialized prosecutions branch, which is entirely independent of government. They make decisions on whether to recommend to go outside the Crown prosecution service. We respect their independent authority and their judgment.

**Ms Notley:** Well, as the Premier continues to deflect from this very serious matter, I am compelled to keep fighting for the integrity of our justice system.

Now, yesterday the Attorney General refused to answer when I asked him if he communicated with the Premier about the substance of his Sunday interview with the RCMP. So today I will ask the Premier. Your Attorney General was interviewed as a witness by the RCMP on Sunday. Has he communicated the substance of that interview to you either directly, indirectly, or through officials since that time?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I think that since that interview became a matter of public record, the minister spoke to my staff to advise them about it in the same way he has to this House. Once again we underscore that all prosecution decisions and police investigations are undertaken independently by the Crown prosecutor service, sometimes in reference to the specialized prosecutions branch and always in a completely independent fashion, which should be the case in our system.

**Ms Notley:** Well, okay. So they're talking about it, but if anything, that actually makes the problem much worse.

The Attorney General has flip-flopped on discussing this investigation publicly, speaking out when it comes to defending himself and his status as a suspect. Clearly, he can't be counted on to act without regard to his self-interest. Yesterday he wasn't even allowed to take a question, though, about who else in the government might be suspects. So we are literally watching the Premier and the Attorney General break the justice system as we speak. Why won't they do the obvious thing and appoint an independent prosecutor?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is now making outlandish claims. Once again, we respect, of course, the independence of the Crown prosecutor service, recognizing that in investigations of this nature they often consult with specialized prosecutors in the specialized prosecutors branch. They decide whether or not there's a need to go outside of that service. We respect their authority, their decision, and I wish the Leader of the Opposition would do the same thing.

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

### Indigenous Treaty Rights

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First Nations leaders in Alberta are disheartened by this government's refusal to acknowledge treaties between First Nations and the Crown. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission makes it clear that all Canadians as treaty people share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships. Premier, are you committed to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and if so, why is your government refusing to acknowledge these treaties at public events?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I have to correct the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I, the ministers of this government, the government generally do acknowledge repeatedly the obligations of the Crown under the treaties. In fact, we did so at least twice in the throne speech that is now being debated in this Assembly. I'm pleased to announce that on June 10 we will hold, for the first time in nearly a decade, a daylong meeting between ministers of Executive Council and Alberta's elected treaty chiefs, something the NDP failed to do.

**Ms Notley:** Well, actually, that's not true.

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, it's not a matter of randomly doing it when it's convenient in the occasional document; it's about whether you do it consistently as a matter of practice at all government of Alberta public events. Alberta is located on Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 territory. Last year, when members of Treaty 8 spoke out against the Premier's commitment to sell public land in Mackenzie county, his response was: Crown land is not treaty land. Does the Premier still believe that Crown land is not treaty land, and is that why he doesn't feel the need to acknowledge treaties or consult with members of First Nation communities on . . .

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, almost every element of that question was incorrect. First of all, the public service will confirm that the NDP government discontinued the long-standing practice of having an annual meeting between cabinet and the elected treaty chiefs. We will restore that tradition, that had been created by previous Progressive Conservative governments. Secondly, of course, we recognize the Crown's duty to consult with First Nations on the disposition of their territorial lands, as we would do with respect to any potential auction of public lands, something that the minister of the environment in the previous government was not going to do.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's government's current approach is disrespectful according to Grand Chief Willie Littlechild. Now, he served on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and is an internationally recognized, global expert on indigenous issues, and he says that abandonment of treaty acknowledgements by your government is a serious mistake that sets back all the good-faith efforts to advance reconciliation. Premier, land acknowledgements are not a flavour of the month. They matter. Will you direct all members of your caucus to revert

to the previous practice of land acknowledgements at all public events?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we'll do so when appropriate. More importantly, we will give real, practical expression to the spirit of the treaties. Now, the NDP likes to talk a good game about this, but the most important thing for our First Nations people is that they are able to participate in prosperity. That is why this government will be launching the single most important initiative in Alberta history for the economic inclusion of First Nations people, the indigenous opportunities corporation, so that they can have an ownership stake in the development of the resources that lie below the lands that their ancestors first inhabited.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition for her third set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Call me crazy, Mr. Speaker, but I would suggest that it would be respectful to simply listen to what respected leaders in the indigenous communities are saying.

### Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

**Ms Notley:** Anyway, yesterday the Finance minister rolled out his government's huge tax break to big business. Now, what we do know is that this tax cut will create a gaping 4 and a half billion dollar hole in the provincial budget, and we do know that it is not going to generate a dollar of economic return for two years at least. Yesterday we learned that what the Minister of Finance doesn't know is the period over which this risky plan will create their alleged 50,000 jobs. Maybe the Premier knows. To the Premier: in what year exactly will you hit your target of . . .

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, according to one of the most eminent economists in Canada, Professor Jack Mintz, former president of the C.D. Howe Institute, founding president of the University of Calgary School of Public Policy, a man of the highest integrity . . . [interjections] He's being heckled by the opposition. He projected that the job-creation tax cut will create at least 55,000 new full-time private-sector jobs by the time of its full implementation in 2022. Professor Dahlby, incidentally, separately projected that it will result in the creation of \$12.7 billion of incremental GDP and increase Alberta's per capita GDP by over 6 per cent.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly, the member's Finance minister was not able to provide 2022.

Now, what I will say is that given that our government was able to create over 100,000 jobs in less time than that, does the member opposite think that maybe there might be a bit more work that they need to do to provide jobs for Albertans other than creating a hole in the deficit and telling them that it's their job to get less education, less health care, and less benefits from the government that they elected?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, you can tell they've been out of opposition for a while because that's called leading with your chin. The NDP left Alberta with a jobs crisis, with fewer people employed now than when they came to office, just over four years ago. In fact, our economy shrank by 4 per cent under NDP economic mismanagement. They left behind over 180,000 unemployed Albertans and tens of thousands who gave up looking for work and so many who left this province in despair. Albertans



elected us to undo the damage of the NDP and turn Alberta into a job-creation engine again.

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Oh, Mr. Speaker. You know, sometimes the facts are so inconvenient for the member opposite. In fact, there were more people working in Alberta in April of 2019 than before the beginning of the oil price crash in early 2015, so at least get your facts straight.

However, we learned today that the Conference Board of Canada is actually predicting that Alberta is slipping back into a recession. Many leading economists argue that the government's corporate tax giveaway will only play around the edges in terms of attracting business. Why is the government committed to giving a big tax giveaway to profitable corporations at the same time he's lecturing Albertans . . .

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

**Mr. Kenney:** On the first point, it's true that the Alberta population grew, but if employment had kept up with population growth, we would have to see the creation of at least 65,000 additional jobs in order to see the same percentage of employment as when the NDP came to office, according to University of Calgary professor Trevor Tombe. Mr. Speaker, the NDP's jobs record is clear. It was a total disaster. That is why this government won the largest democratic mandate in Alberta electoral history, to get jobs going in Alberta once again.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind the Leader of the Official Opposition that questions are 35 seconds and answers are 35 seconds.

The Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents of students attending William Reid school in Calgary are being surveyed on how best to cut 6 per cent from their school's budget because of anticipated cuts from the UCP. School staff are so concerned that they're literally asking parents how to make this impossible decision. It's because the UCP government refuses to fund classrooms properly. Why won't the Minister of Education do the right thing, give these children the tools they need to succeed, so that parents and school staff don't have to sacrifice their futures by choosing between music or class sizes?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. We have continually reiterated that our government is going to maintain or increase funding for education. We've been very, very clear. I'm not sure what is unclear about that.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Let me give that clarity. Fifteen thousand new kids are showing up to school next year, and when we have asked this minister and this Premier over and over again, "Will there be any new money for these new kids?" we have heard silence.

Schools are rightfully acting with caution. That means that a nearly 6 per cent cut to this school, William Reid school, is taking class sizes in grade 4 from 22 to 28 students or completely cutting the music program. It's simple. More kids, same resources, inadequate funding, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: what do you think these parents should do? Should they allow class sizes to skyrocket, or should they cut music?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** We are committed to maintaining or increasing education funding. We are going to build schools. We will continue to provide first-class education in Alberta, and we will fund it to the best of our ability.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** If you were a parent and you had 15,000 more kids you were responsible for, having no new resources would be irresponsible. As a government having 15,000 more students showing up to school and giving school boards and teachers no new resources is completely irresponsible. This letter goes on to say that because of the cuts to the classroom improvement fund and because of the failure to plan for increased enrolment, Mr. Speaker, they are going to have to make one of two very bad decisions. The minister was a former trustee. The minister knows the harm of these kinds of cuts. Why won't she do the right thing, stand up in this House and say that she will fund CIF and . . .

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I absolutely respect the autonomy of school boards. I have consistently said that we are maintaining or increasing education funding, and we will continue to provide that messaging until we can provide further details.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has a question.

### Skilled Trades Competitions and Programs

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week students from across Canada are participating in the Skills Canada national competition in Halifax, Nova Scotia, including some of our very own Alberta students. Youth are the future of our province, and we must ensure that they have numerous opportunities available to them both before and after they finish their education. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Can the minister please explain to this House the role that competitions like Skills Canada play in encouraging and empowering our youth to become involved in skilled trades, and does the minister intend on expanding support for these?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The Skills Canada national competition, which began yesterday and continues into today, is the only national multitrade and technology competition for students and apprentices in the country. It brings together more than 500 students from across Canada to compete in over 40 skilled trade and technology-based competitions. These students have an incredible opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities in front of industry experts and will ensure that they go on to have fulfilling and rewarding careers in the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this program is for students interested in the skilled trades and given that Alberta has seen a recent shortage of skilled trades workers, can the same minister please explain to this House exactly how he plans to

encourage organizations like Skills Canada to continue the great work that they do?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the follow-up question. He is indeed correct. Our government will be proactive, and we will take action in the coming years to address the retirement of skilled workers in Alberta. The department of labour estimates that from now until 2025 3,000 skilled workers will retire each and every year. To achieve this and to ensure that we'll be proactive, we will provide new scholarships for high school students who show promise in the trades. As well, we'll continue to work with organizations like Skills Canada and Careers: the Next Generation.

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the importance of skilled trades to the economic prosperity of Alberta and given that the government in its election platform stated that they would be expanding apprenticeship and vocational programs, can the minister please explain how this government plans to support our postsecondary institutions in enrolling more trades students in the coming years?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Expanding apprenticeship opportunities is critical for our government, and we believe that a trades certificate should have as much value, weight, and worth as an academic degree. To help our institutions do this, we're going to do two things. First and foremost, we will work with our postsecondary institutions to reduce unnecessary red tape and bureaucratic rules and onerous reporting so that they can innovate and compete as they need to. As well, secondly, we'll work with our institutions to expand the apprenticeship model of education to other avenues.

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

### Minimum Wage for Youth

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government's pick-your-pocket bill is unfairly targeting our youth, and there's no evidence to suggest that it's actually going to create jobs, quite the opposite, actually. The Calgary Stampede is now actively considering cutting the pay for about 500 youth workers before this year's exhibition begins, but the Stampede has given no indication that it intends to hire more workers as a result of this cut in pay. To the minister: can you please explain to me how retroactively cutting these workers' pay is supposed to help them?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for the question. The student job-creation wage is about creating jobs for Alberta's youth. When the minimum wage was increased by the previous government by over 50 per cent in a few short years in the face of one of Alberta's worst economic downturns, employers were forced to lay off workers, and unfortunately it often was at the cost of our youth. By reducing costs on employers, we can help students get their first job to develop skills and gain the experience that they need for the future.

Thank you.

**Ms Gray:** Given that one parent interviewed about this wage cut said that her daughter was saving her Stampede paycheques so that she wouldn't have to work while in school and given that this student and hundreds of others were hired on at \$15 per hour, not \$13 per hour, will the minister commit to not allowing organizations or corporations to retroactively cut wages that were already agreed upon between employers and employees?

2:10

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this policy change, the student job-creation wage, is about creating jobs for Alberta youth. Between 2014 and 2018 unemployment among 15- to 19-year-olds rose from 14 to 18 per cent, and this was as a direct result of the policy changes made by the previous government. Again, by reducing costs on employers, we can help students get their first job, create more jobs for a larger number of students so they can actually save for their future.

Thank you.

**Ms Gray:** Given that this minister intends to have his youth wage cut in place in less than a month's time but given that many organizations like the Stampede have made commitments to employees at the current minimum wage levels, will the minister commit to slowing down this attack on youth workers and engaging in further study of the consequences of this rash move?

**Mr. Copping:** Again, our focus is on creating jobs for students. We wanted to make this change this summer so that we can get more students working and they can actually gain the skills and experience that they need for the future.

Thank you.

### Renewable Energy Programs

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, global investment in solar energy in 2018 exceeded \$100 billion. In Alberta the solar industry grew by 500 per cent since our government took office in 2015, and it was about to attract \$10 billion of additional investment. Now the UCP plans to cut those programs and threaten all of this work. To the minister: how many of the money-making solar energy programs is he going to eliminate?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, our party was clear while campaigning that we will not be proceeding with the carbon tax that the NDP brought in when they were in power, where they focused on using hard-working taxpayer dollars to pay for things like shower heads and solar panels on houses that were not working. Instead, we're going to focus on technology, focus on working with our largest emitters, and actually tackle the problem.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that industry estimates suggest that there could be up to \$150 million worth of small-scale solar programs across the province that won't move forward under this government, can the minister please explain how cancelling these programs and rejecting billions of dollars in investment is good for the people of Alberta?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, this government has a focus of standing with Albertans. Albertans sent us here to get rid of the carbon tax. The NDP, when they were in power, focused on using taxpayer dollars on ridiculous subsidy programs, including solar in some cases. We will not be proceeding with those types of subsidy

programs. Instead, we will be investing in technology, working with our partnerships within industry, actually tackling the problem. What this government did when they were in power was all economic pain and no environmental gain. We won't be doing that to Albertans. We will focus on working on the environment while at the same time not taxing Albertans.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, I'm not sure how creating jobs and reducing emissions has no environmental gain or positive impact.

Given that KCP Energy estimates that up to 1,500 jobs in Calgary will be eliminated as a result of rejecting these programs and given that companies stand to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars in work this summer alone due to this government's refusal to support Alberta's booming renewables industry, to the minister: will you include a report on all jobs lost due to your government's cancellation of renewable energy projects?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I won't be lectured by the opposition when it comes to job loss. This opposition, when they were in government, oversaw the largest job loss in the history of this province and then brought in a carbon tax, a punishing tax, on Albertans at the very time that they needed their government to help them. We have a different approach when it comes to climate change. We will not be taxing Albertans. We will be working on climate change, but we'll be focused on technology, we'll be focused on our largest emitters and working together with them to be able to overcome this problem. That is a big contrast to how the NDP used to approach this. They taxed fixed-income seniors. They taxed our social safety net. It's a ridiculous approach. We'll go a different way.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South is rising with a question

### Red Deer Regional Hospital

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the prior government citizens of central Alberta only received a fraction in health care infrastructure funding compared to other areas of the province. That was not fair. To the Minister of Health: what will he do to ensure that the Red Deer regional hospital is a top priority, to now move towards more equitable health care funding for all Albertans?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I understand the frustration of the people in Red Deer, and I appreciate the member's question on their behalf. Our government is committed to expanding capacity at the Red Deer hospital to meet the growing needs of central Alberta. I understand that the hospital fell off the AHS priority list under the previous government and then was put back on. I can't answer for those past decisions, but what I can say is that our government will support planning for long-term capacity increases in Red Deer as part of our commitment to maintain and strengthen the publicly funded health care system for all Albertans.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta Health Services has recommended a cardiac cath lab for this hospital and given that every year central Albertans have heart attacks and related issues, the risks of which could have been mitigated by this lab and which the prior government failed to address, will the minister accept the Alberta Health Services recommendation and commit to expanding cardiac cath services for central Albertans as soon as possible?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government supports development of a cath lab in Red Deer as part of a long-term plan for Red Deer and for cardiac care in the province as well. The AHS needs assessment in 2018 sets out the priorities clearly. The top priority to save lives is prevention and to address the high rates of cardiac disease, especially in central Alberta. The next priority is to reach all Albertans in crisis within the recommended time with evidence-based care, either transport to a cath lab or clot-busting drugs. Our clinicians are leaders in Canada in this area. We'll plan to make decisions based on the advice of our clinicians.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the prior government's inequitable treatment of the Red Deer regional hospital was unfair to central Albertans, what will the minister do to ensure that, consistent with this government's platform, future health care funding decisions will focus on the public interest by putting patients at the heart of a sustainable health care system?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we campaigned on maintaining and strengthening our publicly funded health care system. That's my mandate as Minister of Health. We're going to make decisions for Red Deer and for all Albertans based on what's best for patients, not on ideology, not on politics. That's the purpose of our review of AHS, the first since it was created 10 years ago. The review will look at the evidence and consider advice from experts. In the area of cardiac care those experts include some of the leading authorities in Canada. They have one priority, to ensure every Albertan gets care based on the best evidence and current standards. That's my priority for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Emergency Medical Services

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As has been noted, this is Paramedic Services Week. For years Conservative governments left our emergency medical services underfunded, leaving paramedics in a tough spot as they were forced to stand idly for hours in emergency rooms waiting to transfer their patients instead of attending other emergency calls. Now, our government invested \$29 million for new first responders in a pilot program with 16 hospital emergency liaisons to help receive patients from paramedics. To the Minister of Health: will you commit to providing the funding needed to allow that program to continue?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that starting this month, we are going to be initiating a review of AHS. It's going to be a review of all of Alberta Health and all of AHS. We are waiting for the results of that by the end of the year, in which case we will be able to understand and be able to make decisions like that.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that government members like the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry have expressed concerns about emergency room wait times in the Red Deer hospital and given that the hospital emergency liaison program was slated to expand to that hospital to help relieve that stress, to the same minister: will you commit to making this investment to support paramedics and residents in Red Deer and central Alberta?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, it's the same answer. We're going to be initiating a review. As we campaigned on during the campaign, it's our commitment to Albertans to be able to do a review of AHS and to be able to wait for those results and be able to understand what commitments we can be making in specific areas.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that last week the Minister of Finance said – and I quote – that there will be difficult decisions, that there will be sacrifice and given that when that minister was asked about public service wages, he pointed to private-sector workers who had seen pay cuts, to the Minister of Health: along with the cuts in the resources that they need to do their life-saving work or your current lack of commitment to provide those, should paramedics also be bracing for cuts in the salaries they rightfully earn for their life-saving work?

2:20

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, our commitment to Albertans during the campaign was that we would maintain or increase spending in the health care system. While we're taking lessons from the previous government and while we're looking at emergency services, I would like to note for all Albertans that the percentage of patients treated and discharged from emergency within four hours under that previous government dropped from 79 per cent to 76 per cent. We are going to start making decisions on funding based on the needs of patients. That's what we're going to be doing as a government.

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

#### Water and Waste-water Infrastructure

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The need for municipal water and waste-water infrastructure projects is well documented here in the province. As government we put a priority on all of these projects, committing \$131 million to them. To the Minister of Transportation: can you guarantee that every single one of these projects that we funded will be followed through on?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation is rising.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question, but he asked it in an interesting way. He said: every one which was funded. I can assure the members of this House that the previous government announced a lot more projects than they funded.

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. McIver:** I know it's a surprise.

Mr. Speaker, we're sorting through that. We're dealing with the \$60 billion in debt. We are going through a capital approval process and a budgeting process, and we are well aware of the many projects that are important. I can assure the hon. member we will take those priorities seriously because they matter.

**Member Loyola:** Promising things and not following through with them was the UCP for 44 years.

Mr. Speaker, given that it is also well known that the investment in these projects would help sustain approximately 900 jobs throughout the province, can the minister guarantee Albertans that they can continue to rely on these jobs so that they can continue to put food on the tables for their families?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see the other side has started to care about jobs. This is a good change. It's very positive.

Mr. Speaker, these projects are important. Municipalities listening need to know that we will listen to them. We understand that all of the water and waste-water projects that they have requested are important. We are within our budgeting and capital planning process. We'll approve what we can, and we will communicate that to the municipalities. We are open to other input that those municipalities give to us.

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans have been patiently waiting for many of these projects in their rural communities for decades and with many of the residents citing that it is vital for their continued health and welfare, will the minister work with the municipal councils and counties to complete these projects as quickly as possible, or are they going to have to wade through sewage before he listens to Albertans and gets the jobs done?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member probably won't even be offended when I disagree with him on this part as they're not patient at all. The municipalities are in a hurry to get these projects done, and I think he would even agree with me on that disagreement with him. The fact is, to answer his direct question directly, yes, we will listen to municipalities. We will take their advice, we will gather the evidence that they give to us, and we will prioritize their projects the best we can because we know that every single one of those requests is important. We take them all seriously, and we will do them in the order that we think is most important, and they will know why.

#### Municipal Funding

**Mr. Neudorf:** Mr. Speaker, given that municipalities across Alberta received almost \$9.6 billion in support from the municipal sustainability initiative program, launched in 2007, and that this initiative is set to end in 2021 without a replacement, municipalities across Alberta are concerned about the reliability of investment to their communities. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: will the government continue to bolster our municipalities through the administration of the municipal sustainability initiative?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Lethbridge-East. For four years the NDP ignored many municipalities. Our government won't do that. Within the first week of holding office, I met with the Rural Municipalities association and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. I heard how the NDP created uncertainty by failing to come up with a long-term funding program and how important it is to address this. That is why our government is committed to maintaining dollars promised to municipalities and ensuring they have predictable funding, whether it's from MSI or something else.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Mr. Speaker, given that municipalities across Alberta utilize this funding to facilitate the rehabilitation of transit systems, water processing plants, public transit facilities, and other local priorities, the continued investment to municipalities through this program is of immediate importance to our municipal communities. To the same minister: when will the government announce their plan to continue to strengthen our municipalities?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to finding the right solutions for municipalities. We are also committed to doing something the NDP is not, and that is consulting. I am consulting with local leaders and groups like the Rural Municipalities association and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association to find out their needs and concerns. We have made no decisions about the future of the MSI program. However, we've only just begun this process. I can't say definitely when it would end, but it would be well in advance of the current deal expiring.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that municipalities face unique and differing challenges from community to community, consultation and collaboration with municipal representatives must be a key component in implementing further funding opportunities. Empowering local governments and strengthening their decision-making capacities must be a key part of the implementation process. To the same minister: how will the government ensure that funding for municipalities is disbursed in a way that allows for support that is meaningful and responsive to each eligible community?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, it's really disappointing. Had the NDP made municipalities outside of the two big cities a priority, they could have provided them with the predictable funding that they need. Our government is going to do better. We are consulting with the rural and mid-sized municipalities, and we will provide them with the most important thing they need for their budget, and that is predictability.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question.

#### Conversion Therapy Working Group

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. Two days ago the Minister of Health was unable to answer a simple question about whether or not he condemns the harmful and traumatizing practice of conversion therapy. The minister's press secretary said that the committee was cancelled. Then the minister tried to discredit the journalist that reported it. This morning the minister met with the co-chairs but failed to provide any clarity or support for their work, so I will ask again: does the minister commit to supporting this working group in implementing the recommendations so that we can put an end to this harmful practice in Alberta?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First, let me right off the bat say to all Albertans, especially to those who are in the gender and sexual diversity community in Alberta, for them to all understand, that we oppose conversion therapy. Thank you, through you, to the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for meeting with me this morning with Dr. Lieb. My door is always open for anyone who wants to discuss this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Hoffman:** My question was about supporting the committee in implementing their recommendations.

Given that the working group was established with the support of a secretariat within the Department of Health to provide a meeting space, administrative support, modest compensation for committee members who may have to travel or take time away from their jobs

in order to participate, will the minister commit to maintaining this government support for the working group through the Department of Health? If he refuses, will he just admit that he has in fact made a decision to disband the working group?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise again and get another opportunity to again just hammer home to every Albertan listening that we oppose conversion therapy. My door is always open. I had a fantastic conversation with Dr. Lieb and with the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. I thank them for taking the time to meet with me, to be able to speak with me. My door, as I said, is always open not just to them but to all Albertans who want to discuss this issue.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given the anxiety and fear that the minister has created in the LGBTQ-plus community and given that St. Albert is moving their own motion to ban this practice in their local community because they can't count on the government to do it and given the Trans Equality Society of Alberta, a group that was established when a former Conservative government decided to save money by cutting funding for gender confirmation surgery, there is a lot of concern in the community, Minister. Will you commit to supporting this working group in implementing their recommendations? It sounds like a no. Just say it if it is.

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, after not acting on this issue for four years, the NDP formed a time-limited ad hoc group in the weeks before the election. This was an ad hoc group put together by the previous minister to meet a few times over five months. It was a time-limited ad hoc group. Let me be clear again, now that I have the chance to rise here again in this Assembly, and say that we as a government oppose conversion therapy. My door is open to anyone who wants to discuss this issue with me.

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

2:30

#### Hospital Construction

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the NDP government announced the first hospital here in Edmonton since the Oilers won a Stanley Cup. Given that south Edmonton is one of the fastest growing areas in the province and given that Edmontonians need these essential public services, to the Minister of Infrastructure: will you commit to funding this life-saving facility as a public project on the original timeline?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure is rising.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-South for the question, Mr. Speaker. Our government was elected to efficiently deliver public transport that's required to get Albertans back to work, and we are committed to maintaining the former government's capital plan. Currently, as the Minister of Transportation said, we are going through the budgeting process and capital project planning, and when it is done, the member will know.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-South, please.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, very clearly they've already thrown out health projects, and they're looking to do it again.

To that same minister: given that our government followed through on approving and funding the long-needed Calgary cancer centre after years of Conservative neglect and given that the centre will add 100 patient exam rooms, 160 in-patient beds, 100

chemotherapy chairs, and much more, will the minister commit here and now that the Calgary cancer centre will still open on time in 2023?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report through you that I actually toured that hospital and discussed with the staff and the contractor and asked for their current plan. It is on schedule. I mean, at least the Ministry of Infrastructure will finish the construction on time and turn it over to Health.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, I'm wondering, then, given that your Premier is already waffling with his blue-ribbon panel and given that his chair of the panel approved blowing up hospitals all over Saskatchewan and given that our population continues to grow and our hospitals continue to age, to the same minister: will you commit to all of the hospital projects committed to by our government, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, as the minister said previously, the previous government announced more projects than what they funded, so our government is going through every project carefully on the capital list, and we are doing our due diligence. All those projects will be funded based on the needs but not by the ideology.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat would like to ask a question.

#### Greenhouse Industry Regulation and Support

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the constituency of Brooks-Medicine Hat agriculture is vitally important to our local economy. Greenhouses are a powerhouse for job creation and putting food in the mouths of Albertans and those around the world. Under the previous NDP government greenhouses were classified as industrial under employment standards codes, adding an abundance of costs for our greenhouse producers and local job creators. Can the minister of labour commit today that greenhouses will be classified as agricultural operations?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and Immigration has the call.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat for the question. My hon. colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry will be engaging with farmers, ranchers, agricultural workers, greenhouses, and others on how best to reduce red tape and costs for the agricultural industry and balance the unique economic pressures for farming with the need for a common-sense, flexible farm safety regime. The goal of this engagement is to develop recommendations for the introduction of the farm freedom and safety act, which will be passed into law in 2019. We expect that groups like greenhouses will be engaged through their industry association, the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister of labour: can you please provide a timeline for when this necessary change will take place?

**The Speaker:** The minister of labour.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government understands that agriculture is a part of the economic and cultural

fabric of our province. Ministry staff are meeting with the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association in early June to discuss their needs. The association has a special variance in place for greenhouse operators, for overtime hours, that expires in June 2020, and our ministry expects to work towards a more permanent solution prior to that date.

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister of labour: what support can these greenhouses expect from this UCP government after hard years under the last NDP government?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is taking a number of steps to help undo the hardship that Alberta's businesses have experienced due to the job-killing policies of the former government. Bills 1, 2, and 3 will help greenhouses by scrapping the carbon tax, bringing balance back to Alberta's labour laws, introducing a youth minimum wage, and cutting the corporate tax rate. We are willing to listen to the concerns of greenhouse owners and work with them to find common-sense solutions.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is rising.

#### Home Construction Consumer Protection

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A young firefighter started working in Fort McMurray and purchased an apartment condo in the Penhorwood complex. Not even two years later he, alongside 167 other units, would be evacuated shortly before midnight on a wintry night in 2011 due to the discovery of faulty construction. Questions surrounding the quality and the assurances of building and construction code inspections prevail to this day while people are still paying these empty mortgages off eight years later. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what assurances does this government have to ensure that this will not happen again?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. This is a tragic situation for those involved, including this young man. As a result of the situation in Fort McMurray my department has implemented several new requirements under the New Home Buyer Protection Act to protect homebuyers from major construction defects. The act now ensures that warranty coverage is mandatory and that buildings are built to codes and standards established in collaboration with national code bodies and industry. Despite this, we will continue working to improve the system for homebuyers.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, the litigation process was over six years long, and while the affected residents had to wait for any restitution, they watched the builder of Penhorwood continue to build in other communities in Alberta after he finished the Penhorwood complex. To the Minister of Justice: what is your ministry doing to ensure that these court cases which affect so many are more promptly addressed?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that this is a private matter that's being litigated between two parties. I'm unaware of the details of it. But I can advise this Assembly that we are working to make sure that we have a fairer, faster, and more

responsive justice system. We are working to fill vacancies on our courts, and we're going to make sure that our justice system has the tools it needs to provide the services needed by Albertans.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, this young man then purchased a home in Hillview Park condos in 2012. In 2016 that burned down. It's been three years, and this complex still is not yet rebuilt as the condominium board chose a builder that even the province recognized was an unwise choice due to its financial and litigious history. Additional cash calls for unforeseen expenses eventually led our young friend, with two empty mortgages and the need for another home, to file for bankruptcy at the age of 28, with his new wife and newborn child. To the Minister of Service Alberta: what is your ministry doing to ensure that these concerns are addressed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for both the important question and his tireless support and advocacy for Fort McMurray. I appreciated having a meeting with the member on this subject just two weeks ago. I am very sympathetic to those who have been impacted by these circumstances, and our government understands the difficult situation they are in. While there's no easy or quick solution here, I am committed to working with both of the members from Fort McMurray to understand what went wrong so we can ensure that this situation does not happen again.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows is rising.

### Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this is my first opportunity rising in this House, I would like to congratulate you on your election.

Alberta is a diverse and welcoming province, yet our province sometimes hosts ugly displays of racism. These incidents have no place here, and there's clearly more work to be done. To the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: could you please provide this House with an update on the progress of the important work you are leading to combat racism in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The minister of multiculturalism.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much for the question, through you, Mr. Speaker. We've had the absolute pleasure of meeting with some of the folks from the council, and we are looking very forward to having more conversations. Thank you for the question.

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

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the recent studies indicate a significant increase in reported hate crimes in Alberta and the growing concern from all Albertans about the impact of hate and extremism in Canada and given that the government must take immediate steps to show Albertans that our province will continue to stand against extremists and their hateful views, again to the minister: what steps are you taking to arrest the rise of hate crimes and extremism in Alberta? Please be specific.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very, very honoured to actually answer this question. In our platform we are very specific around ideas for making sure that we are providing security for people who are practising their faith. As we know, there have been many situations around the world where people are having to look over their shoulders to practise their faith. It is one of the fundamental freedoms of this country. Again, we're looking very forward to working with so many people, especially our faith-based communities, to make sure that they're protected.

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

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that earlier this year a group of community leaders representing every corner of this province formed Alberta's first Anti-racism Advisory Council, to the minister: are you going to continue to work with this council, and when is the next meeting to continue their important work?

**Mrs. Aheer:** As I had previously mentioned, we've had a meeting with a few of the folks. We're bringing over the original people, that were actually dedicated to Education, into the multicultural ministry. Again, as the days go forward, we're looking very forward to meeting with those people and having a deeper understanding. As you may know, there's also quite a bit of work that's actually already been done in Alberta. We have 122 different groups across Alberta that actually work on these exact things right across the province. We're very proud. Albertans are extremely inclusive people.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Members, in 30 seconds or less we will continue with Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

### Government Policies

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to thank the voters from the Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock constituency for entrusting me to be their voice in this Legislature. I will serve them to the best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on what Albertans elected us to do. Albertans spoke loud and clear in this spring election. The reckless ideological policies of the previous NDP government, costing Albertans billions and saddling the next generation with massive debt and taxation, were soundly rejected by voters. Albertans voted in favour of our government's platform, a platform designed to stimulate investment, create jobs, and stand up for Alberta.

Our plan will be to implement strategies that will send signals to the marketplace that Alberta is open for business once again. The NDP raised taxes and chased investment away. Instead of raising taxes on employers, we will lower taxes on these job creators, and instead of increasing red tape and regulatory burden, as the NDP have done, our government has appointed an Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the role we play in maintaining a globally competitive resource-based economy. Our legislation and policies will focus on enabling our agriculture, energy, forestry, and tourism industries to compete with all other jurisdictions. As well, our government will stand up for a fair deal

within Canada and challenge those who have misrepresented the truth about our energy industry.

Mr. Speaker, the spring of renewal has begun. There is reason for hope in Alberta, and I along with all of my United Conservative colleagues will work tirelessly to renew an Alberta that is strong and free.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Coal Phase-out in Hanna

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm standing here wondering if there's a second town named Hanna in this province. Yesterday the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford stated that this government will be taking money away from communities hardest hit by the NDP's poorly-thought-out carbon tax. While the previous government spins anecdotes of Conservative neglect, NDP stewardship has cost the people of Hanna their jobs, savings, and livelihood.

According to the mayor of Hanna, Chris Warwick, the only funding the town of Hanna received from the government of Alberta directly as a coal-affected community was \$455,000 for an initiative called the community action to create diversification, a program to assist local community action teams to move their projects and ideas forward. Two reasonable requests by local action teams to NDP ministers, \$179,000 for a regional social needs assessment and \$100,000 for a seniors' housing project, were both denied funding. This is yet another example of the previous government trying to throw money at a problem, with no regard for the outcome. The development of commissions to explore diversification potential, followed by denial of funding for their recommendations, accomplishes nothing in real terms aside from gathering stakeholders to share their grievances. Hanna is a community where roughly \$100 million in carbon tax revenue was generated from the Sheerness power plant per year, yet the NDP government could only scrape together a paltry half-million dollars of diversification funding.

We are accused of leaving these communities that are most affected by climate policy in a state of neglect. I would like to offer the people of these communities a message of hope. Our government will not forget you nor neglect your needs. We hear that you are struggling, and we empathize. We will do better than our predecessors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 4

#### Red Tape Reduction Act

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today to introduce Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act, on behalf of the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

This bill will enable government to achieve regulatory excellence through the development of strategies and initiatives to reduce red tape. We've heard from entrepreneurs, businesses, nonprofits, and the public sector that red tape is adding to the burden of doing business in Alberta. Unnecessary costs in the form of extra time, money, and resources are threatening jobs, and Albertans are paying the price. Through this bill we are taking action to reverse this trend and make life better for Albertans. While we won't change this landscape overnight, this bill will enable us to take deliberate steps to eliminate unnecessary regulations and processes

while protecting the environment, upholding fiscal accountability, and ensuring the health and safety of Albertans.

An efficient regulatory environment will speed up approvals and boost Alberta's competitiveness. It will spur economic growth and innovation. It will bring investment back, and it will reduce the burden on job creators, freeing them up to get more Albertans back to work. We're taking bold action on red tape reduction to make Alberta one of the freest and fastest moving economies in the world.

I now move, Mr. Speaker, first reading of Bill 4. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the requisite five copies of a document I referenced yesterday in the Bill 1 debate entitled *Cracking Open the Carbon Tax: A Look at Where the Money Has Been Spent*.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Do any other members have tablings today? I see the Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a letter that the mayor of the town of Hanna submitted to the former minister of economic development and trade, and I have the requisite number of copies.

2:50

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

#### Amendments to Standing Orders

11. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

A. Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective December 4, 2018, be amended as follows:

1. Standing Order 3 is amended

- (a) in suborder (1) by striking out "Subject to suborder (1.1)" and substituting "Subject to suborder (1.1) and (1.2).";
- (b) by adding the following after suborder (1.1):  
(1.2) The Assembly shall not meet in the morning from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, or 9:00 a.m. to noon on Wednesday or Thursday, if the Government House Leader, or a member of the Executive Council acting on the Government House Leader's behalf, notifies the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting, notice having been given no later than the time of adjournment on the sitting day preceding the day on which the morning sitting will be cancelled.
- (c) by adding the following after suborder (5):  
(5.1) In the period prior to, or following the commencement of, the first session of a Legislature, the Government House Leader may file a revised calendar with the Clerk, notwithstanding the deadline in suborder (5), following consultation with the Opposition House Leaders.
- (d) in suborder (6) by adding "or (5.1)" after "unless varied by the calendar provided for under suborder (5)";
- (e) by striking out suborder (7) and substituting the



- following:  
 (7) As soon as possible after January 15 each year, and following receipt of a calendar submitted under suborder (5.1), the Clerk shall publish the calendar provided for under suborder (5) or (5.1).
2. Standing Order 7 is amended
    - (a) in suborder (1) by striking out "Introduction of Guests" and substituting "Introduction of School Groups";
    - (b) by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:  
 (3) When Introduction of School Groups is called, brief introductions may be made by the Speaker of groups of schoolchildren in the galleries.
    - (c) by adding the following after suborder (5):  
 (5.1) If any Member other than the mover rises to speak to a debatable motion to concur in a report of a committee on a Bill under Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees, debate on that motion shall be called under Orders of the Day
      - (a) when the Government thinks fit, in the case of a report on a Government Bill,
      - (b) on the next sitting day other than a Monday, in the case of a report on a private Bill, or
      - (c) on Monday afternoon under Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills other than Government Bills, in the case of a report on a public Bill other than a Government Bill.
  3. Standing Order 8 is amended
    - (a) by striking out suborder (1) and substituting the following:  
 8(1) On Monday afternoon, after the daily routine, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:  
  
 Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills  
 Written Questions  
 Motions for Return  
 Public Bills and Orders other than Government Bills and Orders  
 At 5 p.m.: Motions other than Government Motions  
  
 (1.1) Notwithstanding suborder (1), if on a Monday afternoon prior to 5 p.m. no items of business other than Motions other than Government Motions remain on the Order Paper for consideration by the Assembly, Motions other than Government Motions shall be called and after the Assembly has decided all questions necessary to conclude debate on the motion, the Assembly shall proceed to consideration of any items of Government business provided for in suborder (2) unless unanimous consent is given to proceed to an additional Motion other than a Government Motion.
    - (b) by adding the following after suborder (7)(a):  
 (a.1) Debate on a motion to concur in a report of a committee on a public Bill other than a Government Bill will conclude after 55 minutes of debate on the motion and 5 minutes for the mover to close debate, unless the motion is voted on sooner.
  4. Standing Order 13 is amended by adding the following after suborder (5):  
 (5.1) No Member shall disrupt the orderly conduct of the proceedings of the Assembly by loudly or repeatedly banging on a desk.
  5. Standing Order 19(1) is amended
    - (a) in clause (a) and (b) by striking out "at 5:15 p.m., the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings" and substituting "the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting", and
    - (b) in clause (c) by striking out "at 5:15 p.m., unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion" and substituting "unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting and immediately put every question necessary to dispose of the motion".
  6. Standing Order 29(3) is amended by striking out "and motions for returns" and substituting ", motions for returns and motions for concurrence in committee reports on public Bills other than Government Bills".
  7. The following is added after Standing Order 31:  
**Confidence of the Assembly in the Government**  
 31.1 The confidence of the Assembly in the Government may be raised by means of a vote on
    - (a) a motion explicitly worded to declare that the Assembly has, or has not, confidence in the Government,
    - (b) a motion by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, "That the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the Government",
    - (c) a motion for the passage of an Appropriation Bill as defined in Standing Order 64,
    - (d) a motion for an address in reply to the Lieutenant Governor's speech, or
    - (e) any other motion that the Government has expressly declared a question of confidence.
  8. Standing Order 32 is struck out and the following is substituted:  
**Division**  
 32(1) A division may be called for by 3 Members rising.  
 (2) When a division is called, the division bells shall be sounded at the beginning and for the last minute of a 15-minute interval.  
 (3) After the first division is called during any meeting of the Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply, the interval between division bells on all subsequent divisions during that meeting shall be reduced to one minute, except in the case of the first division called during an evening sitting that

- commences in Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Order 4(4).
- (4) When Members have been called in for a division, there shall be no further debate.
- (5) Members are not compelled to vote and those who wish to abstain should remain in their seats when asked to rise and record their vote.
- (6) The Clerk shall record the ayes and the noes and announce to the Speaker the number of votes cast for and against the motion.
- (7) The ayes and noes shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
- (8) Abstentions shall not be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
9. Standing Order 37 is amended
- (a) by striking out suborders (1) and (2) and substituting the following:
- (1) Five copies, and any additional copies required by suborder (2), must be tabled of a document presented by a Member to the Assembly for
- (a) placement of one copy in the records of the Assembly, and
- (b) distribution of
- (i) 2 copies to the Legislature Library,
- (ii) one copy to *Hansard*,
- (iii) one copy to the Government, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, the Official Opposition, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member, and
- (iv) one copy to the Official Opposition, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, a Member of the Government caucus, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member.
- (2) In addition to the copies required under suborder (1), one additional copy must be tabled of
- (a) responses to written questions and returns ordered by the Assembly for distribution to the Member who asked the question or moved the motion for return, and
- (b) any document presented by a Member who is neither a Member of the Government caucus nor the Official Opposition, to allow for distribution to both the Government and the Official Opposition under suborder (1).
- (b) by striking out suborder (3).
10. The following is added after Standing Order 46:
- Debate interrupted by adjournment of the Assembly**
- 46.1 When a motion to adjourn the Assembly is carried or the Assembly is adjourned for want of quorum, the matter under consideration prior to the adjournment shall be deemed to be adjourned to a future sitting day.
11. Standing Order 52(1)(c) is struck out and the following is substituted:
- (c) Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills, consisting of 11 Members,
12. Standing Order 52.01(1) is amended by striking out clauses (a), (b) and (c) and substituting the following:
- (a) Standing Committee on Families and Communities – mandate related to the areas of Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Education, Health, Justice and Solicitor General, Seniors and Housing and Service Alberta;
- (b) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future – mandate related to the areas of Advanced Education, Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Labour and Immigration and Infrastructure;
- (c) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship – mandate related to the areas of Agriculture and Forestry, Energy, Environment and Parks, Indigenous Relations, Municipal Affairs, Transportation and Treasury Board and Finance.
13. The following is added after Standing Order 52.01:
- Subcommittees**
- 52.01(1) Unless otherwise ordered, a standing or special committee shall have the power to appoint one or more subcommittees, which shall report from time to time to the committee.
- (2) Every subcommittee shall be appointed by motion of the committee specifying the terms of reference and the membership of the subcommittee.
- (3) At its first meeting of a new Legislature, every Legislative Policy Committee and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall appoint a Subcommittee on Committee Business to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair and to report to the committee on the business of the committee.
14. Standing Order 52.04 is amended by renumbering Standing Order 52.04 as Standing Order 52.04(1) and by adding the following after suborder (1):
- (2) Subject to Standing Order 59.01(11), suborder (1) does not prevent a Legislative Policy Committee from undertaking a hearing or inquiry during the same period of time that a matter stands referred to the committee by the Assembly if the hearing or inquiry does not interfere with the work of the committee on the matter referred to it.
15. Standing Order 59.01 is amended by adding the following after suborder (11):
- (12) Suborder (11) does not apply to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills.
16. Standing Order 59.02(3) is struck out and the following is substituted:
- (3) During consideration of interim, supplementary or main estimates, the following individuals may be seated at a committee or in the Assembly:
- (a) officials of the Government, to assist the Minister whose estimates are under consideration;
- (b) staff of the opposition, to assist Members who are participating in estimates consideration.
- (4) During main estimates consideration, officials of the Government may respond to questions from a committee at the request of the Minister.
17. Standing Order 64(1)(a) is amended by striking out

- subclause (ii).
18. Standing Order 74.1 is amended
    - (a) by striking out the heading and substituting “Referral of Government Bill to a committee after first reading”, and
    - (b) by striking out suborder (1)(b).
  19. The following is added after Standing Order 74.1:
 

**Referral of public Bill other than Government Bill after first reading**

74.11(1) After a public Bill other than a Government Bill has been read a first time, the Bill stands referred to the Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee.

(2) The Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee shall report back to the Assembly within 8 sitting days of the day on which the Bill was referred to the Committee.
  20. Standing Order 74.2(2) is struck out and the following is substituted:
    - (2) Upon the concurrence of a committee report that a Bill be proceeded with, the Bill shall be placed on the Order Paper for second reading and, in the case of a public Bill other than a Government Bill, the Bill shall, subject to the precedence assigned to Bills standing on the Order Paper, be taken up on the next available Monday following the day on which the Assembly concurred in the report.
  21. Standing Order 89 is amended by striking out “Standing Order 3” and substituting “Standing Order 3(5)”.
  22. The following Standing Orders are amended by striking out “Private Bills Committee” and substituting “Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee” wherever it occurs:
    - Standing Order 91(4)
    - Standing Order 96(2)
    - Standing Order 98(1) and (3)
    - Standing Order 100(1)
    - Standing Order 101
    - Standing Order 102
    - Standing Order 103
    - Standing Order 104
    - Standing Order 105(1)
    - Standing Order 106
  23. The headings preceding Standing Orders 98, 100 and 105 are amended by striking out “Private Bills Committee” and substituting “Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee”.
- B. And be it further resolved that upon passage of this motion any public bills other than government bills that stand on the Order Paper for second reading are deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills in accordance with Standing Order 74.11(1) and notwithstanding Standing Order 74.11(2) the committee shall report back to the Assembly on these bills within 12 sitting days of the day this motion is passed.
- C. And be it further resolved that the amendments in this motion shall come into force on passage.
- A2. Mr. Shepherd moved that Government Motion 11 be amended in part A, in section 8, by striking out the proposed Standing Order 32(5) and (8).

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 28: Ms Sweet]

**The Speaker:** Are there members who would like to speak to Government Motion 11? I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to be able to rise to speak to this motion, which is not actually a pleasure to see in front of us. Unfortunately, it includes a number of elements which, I would suggest, significantly undermine the role of members in this House through a number of different strategies.

We just saw the Member for Edmonton-North West get his 10-year pin earlier today. I actually got mine about six or seven months ago; I think it was last fall. So I’ve been around for a while, and I’ve seen how these things work. I’ve seen the many ways in which, particularly under previous governments up to 2015, prior to our government, limited the opportunity for private members to participate in a meaningful way in this House.

If I recall, I can count on one hand the number of private members’ bills that were meaningful that actually passed. I can certainly count on one hand the number of private members’ bills that I as a member of the Official Opposition got to put forward, and I’ll tell you how many there were: zero. I know that there were a number of other strategies that were used that resulted in the voices of private members, outside of Executive Council, on both sides of the House being stymied quite significantly. There are a number of proposals within this motion which appear to seek to do just that.

I will say that when I first looked at them, my first thought was: wow, we’re really clamping down on the opposition’s ability to do their job there. Then when I looked at it a little bit more, I thought: “Hmm. No. You know, it’s actually not so much the opposition whose ability to do their job is getting clamped down on. It’s actually the free speech of the private members on the government side who did not get the nod to be in Executive Council.” In many ways what we’re seeing here are limits on those members who are not members of the Executive Council to speak and initiate issues in this House in any way, shape, or form. As members of the opposition we do have additional ways to do that, but certainly members of the government who are not members of the Executive Council have a much more restricted group of tools at their disposal, and thanks to this motion that group of tools will be even further restricted.

What it says to me is that, in fact, the folks putting forward this suite of amendments don’t have a whole lot of confidence in the caucus as a whole and are a little bit worried about people saying a few too many things that might be embarrassing. There be it. Nonetheless, notwithstanding their discomfort with their caucus as a whole, I would suggest that all members of the House should not be called upon to pay the price.

Let’s talk a little bit about some of the matters that concern me. Now, I think the Member for Edmonton-North West did in fact send a letter to all members of the House outlining in general the concerns that we had, but let me go through them in a bit more detail. He spoke today and in his letter about the issue of introductions. I can tell you that in the past the ability to introduce guests was an opportunity to raise very briefly an issue and, more importantly, to ensure that people who came to this Assembly who had concerns that were great enough to propel them to come to this Assembly and entertain themselves with the activities here – of course, I’m surprised that anybody could ever turn away from it because it is, in fact, so entertaining. That they would come here to listen to us speak, typically, was because they had deep feelings, deep concerns, a deep desire to express agency within their democracy in one form or another. So for them to come and then

not be recognized by the members on this floor is, as a starting point, very, very disrespectful to the people of this province.

When you come to this House, there's a whole range of reasons that you may come. Civil society does not begin and end on the floor of this House. The floor of this House is a wonderful, beautiful representation of civil society, but in no way, shape, or form should any of us be so arrogant as to believe that it begins and ends right here. The people of this province who engage in the activities of being part of civil society see this as one part of that, and when they connect with this body, their connection should be reflected on the record of this body, which is *Hansard*. Of course, that is not a thing that we are going to see happening anymore. So the first group of people who are deeply disrespected by this particular element in the standing orders are, in fact, Albertans. There's item 1.

Now, the second group of people, of course, who are disrespected by the banning of introductions are, in fact, the members in this House because many people very much want to be able to introduce their constituents. They want to be able to introduce their family members. They want to be able to introduce stakeholders who they have been working with on behalf of all Albertans. They want to introduce staff. You know, it's a long list of people who, through the work that they have done and their relationship with the member, as I say, should be introduced in this House and whose names should be reflected in *Hansard*. It is part of the work that we do as MLAs to make what we do in this House relevant to our constituents and the people of this province. We reach out to those people, and we bring them in here.

It is incredibly disrespectful to each and every member of this House to suggest that the people of this province who come to listen to us debate on issues and who care about issues or who want to watch their MLA in action and, let's say, hold them accountable – hold them accountable – for what they do and say in the House, that those people not be reflected on the record of the proceedings of this House, something that has happened for years and years and years. The first thing that this new UCP government does is that they say: "No. The people of Alberta are inconvenient; they take up too much time. They don't need to be reflected on our record. And MLAs don't need to have this sort of systemic process that encourages them to bring people to the House and have their people introduced to other members of the House." Sometimes for a good MLA, the best thing an MLA can do – back in the day, when I was sitting way over there, I often joked that they were about to move my seat right into that little cupboard back there because they kept pushing it so far back. I would have members of my constituency come.

**Mr. McIver:** That was right across from us.

**Ms Notley:** Yeah. It was a great place over there.

The point is that I would have members of my constituency come, and the best job that I could do as an MLA, even an opposition MLA sitting over there, who was constantly threatened to go sit outside with the commissionaires, who are lovely people – I mean, it was that close sometimes – is that I can introduce them to the decision-makers in this House, and I can make sure that the decision-makers in this House know who my constituent is and what their concern is and that they've come all the way here to have their concern heard. So rather than having that person play, you know, phone tag or e-mail tag or whatever it is, to try to get an appointment with a decision-maker, as their MLA what I can do is introduce them to other members of the House. In theory isn't that the way things are supposed to work? I mean, I do have the occasional example of where as an opposition MLA I was able to connect constituents and stakeholders of mine with ministers, and I

was able to accelerate a process where a good decision could be made and people could be helped. Isn't that really what we're all, in theory, here to do?

3:00

That's another element of the whole introductory process, but we've just arbitrarily decided that that work is not relevant and that the history of that work is not important and that the people of this province who will see their names wiped from the record of this Assembly from here on, going forward, are not important either. So I suppose it won't surprise you to hear me say, then, that we are very much opposed to this very sort of heavy-handed and, I would suggest, deeply arrogant, exclusive initiative on the part of this government that excludes both Albertans and members of this House.

The next things that trouble me are the series of proposals around what constitutes a vote of confidence and also the series of proposals around the ability to abstain from voting. Now, again, going back to what I was saying before, what is our job? What is our job here in this Assembly? It is to represent the people of this province, and it may well be that there will be times when, even though we've been elected as members of, say, the government, the actions of the government devolve to a point where members start to question whether they have confidence in that government any further.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Of course, you see examples of that in parliamentary democracies all over the world. Therefore, even members of the government caucus should be able to express where they are coming to a lack of confidence in their government. Yet what we have here is a set of proposals that will limit the matters on which members of this Assembly could articulate a lack of confidence in their government. So what are we doing? We are limiting the rights of members, yet another initiative on the part of this government to restrict the role and rights of members.

Again, having been here as long as I have and having sat through a transition from one, two, three, four Conservative Premiers in roughly six years, I know that things can get pretty crazy. I know that times will come where government members will very much question whether they have confidence in the government. What I see in this set of amendments is a plan to very much limit the ability of those government members to express that, should that belief reoccur, again not something that is respectful to members and their rights.

Now, the other thing, though, which I'm concerned about in this section is this whole idea of importing one of many Ottawa traditions to the Alberta Legislature. I've got to say, you know, just for a moment that this is some rich stuff here. For a party that ran in the last election primarily – I mean, if you were to sum up quite honestly the single most compelling element of their platform, it was: we hate Ottawa, and we know Albertans are suffering and upset because of the drop in the price of oil, so we are going to create a common enemy, and then we are going to campaign against Ottawa, and we are going to use this age-old strategy to get ourselves back into office. It appeared to be a reasonably successful strategy, but it is then deeply ironic that, first of all, of course, the Premier's first act is to rush back to Ottawa and to apparently weekend there – but anyway, that's a whole different issue – but to then try to inject into this House, which has been operating for over 100 years, parliamentary traditions that were developed in Ottawa at the expense of traditions which have worked just fine for the

people of Alberta and the elected representatives of Alberta for over 100 years. That's strange.

In any event, in this particular case this whole idea of abstentions goes back to this first issue that I raised, which is simply that I think a lot of the elements in this particular standing order changes package are really actually focused on the government caucus members because the last thing they want to deal with is having to manage all the accountability for many of the votes that members in their caucus would take which are politically inconvenient for the Executive Council of government. We all know the classic example when the Member for Calgary-Hays was at one of their conventions – I guess it was the UCP convention – and begged the members not to vote to reject GSAs and reject protection from outing for LGBTQ kids. You know, he stood at the mic, and he said: please don't do this; it's going to be another lake of fire moment. Indeed, although they successfully managed to get themselves re-elected on their anti-Ottawa thing, I think it is fair to say that there have been more than a few days where it's been very awkward for members of the Executive Council to explain away some of the more extreme views of many of the members of the government caucus. Of course, it makes perfect sense, then, that the plan would be to allow them to abstain so that no one needs to have any of these questions debated in public and we can suppress the inherent division and suppress the inherent extremism that members of the Executive Council understand would be very unpopular with the majority of Albertans.

The challenge with that, though, is that, I would argue, it undermines the accountability that each and every one of us has to the people of this province. I'll tell you something. I've gotten up, and I have voted. I've been at one or two votes – actually, I can't even count the number of times I have been one or two votes in this House against something that the previous Conservative government was going for. Sometimes I did that, and it wasn't very popular, but you know what? I knew where I stood. My constituents knew where I stood. Albertans knew where I stood. They knew they could trust me. They knew that what I said, I did and that that was what I had talked to them about and that they didn't have to worry about me splitting hairs and playing a whole bunch of sneaky little games to avoid accountability for the beliefs that I have. I find that – just a word of advice for some of the new MLAs there – it's a really good way to embark on politics. Do what you believe. Say what you believe. Act on what you believe. It becomes a lot less complicated. There's a lot less ducking and diving and running around scrums when you're actually quite proud of what you believe in and what you're running on and what you're doing. This abstention thing is part of a package of ducking and diving. It's not honest. It doesn't appear honest. Albertans won't see it as honest. They will see it as a trick, an Ottawa-imported trick. That's why we are not in favour of that.

Now, another thing is more, I guess, pragmatic and organizational, but, again, it does go, I think, to the heart, a little bit, of maybe the difference that we have between our caucuses. This is this issue of – it seems simple on the surface – giving the House leader the opportunity to change his mind about whether we're going to have morning sittings in the evening the night before. I've got to tell you that that's really a mess. That's a big disaster. The guys are wheeling and dealing at 11:30 at night. Maybe a couple of them have had a few drinks, and they're all trying to figure out, "Oh, you know, maybe we'll have this guy talk and this one talk," and "Oh, hey, I'll tell you what; if you promise to not have that long-winded human that looks a lot like, for instance, the Leader of the Official Opposition, talk, then in return you guys don't have to come back tomorrow morning, and we'll only be here for seven or eight hours; maybe we'll only go an extra hour tomorrow night." There's all this kind of wheeling and dealing.

3:10

The problem with that is that over here we believe very strongly that we need to have more women involved in politics and that those women should actually, preferably, be under 50 and that in many cases they should have kids because by doing that, it would be great to have that voice here. Not every woman can afford a nanny on a 24-hour cycle to deal with an unpredictable schedule. That is why our government moved to morning sittings in the last Assembly, when we were in power. It's why we tried as much as possible to create a predictable, regular schedule, so that the people in this Assembly who had other obligations outside of this House could manage those obligations, so that you didn't have to be someone that was almost at retirement age, and you didn't have to be, you know, someone who was blessed with a spouse who could afford to stay home and be the primary child care giver regardless of when you were working or how you were working or all those things. It was all part of a family-friendly suite of amendments that we made.

This one undoes that. What this does is that we get back into the: "Who knows? Maybe we're there; maybe we're not. You know, maybe we'll stay late now, and then we won't go in the morning." Meanwhile, an MLA has just committed to their child care centre or to their child care provider that they are working that morning, but it turns out: "Oh, no. I guess we're not working that morning, but, oh, in return for that, you're going to actually have to work at night." So now you're paying more money. Jeez, suddenly we find it really hard to recruit women, primarily, to run for office. Then we end up in this ridiculous situation that we have in this House, where we have a significant minority of women in this Legislature, which is an utter failure on the part collectively of the Assembly, and it's not good for Albertans at all. That particular amendment may not have been designed to have that outcome, but from experience I will tell you that that is exactly the outcome that it will have and that we are moving away from setting up a situation where people who have significant obligations outside of the House can actually manage them in a predictable fashion.

Another concern that I have here is the issue of what this government proposes to do with private members' bills. Now, again, in theory, it might not be a bad idea, depending on what our schedules were normally like, to have private members' bills go to committee, but here's the thing. We often don't sit that many weeks, and if you are lucky enough to have your private member's bill come up in the last three or four weeks before the House is set to rise, what it means is that your private member's bill is likely not going to get debated back in this House. That undermines the rights of private members.

Now, again, having been in opposition from 2008 to 2015, I can tell you that I never once had a private member's bill get debated, not once. It's pretty darn exciting when you actually get the draw and you find that you're in the top 10: oh, my gosh; it's actually possible that my bill might make it onto the floor of this House, and people might actually have to vote on it.

Interestingly, one of the few examples of an opposition private member's bill that did that was, of course, the well-known bill around gay-straight alliances, which, as we know, turned the previous Conservative government inside out with the acrobatics that they did to try to deal with that bill. It's rare that the opposition will get an opportunity to get a bill up, but it's also rare just as a member of the House for private members to get a bill up. So if what happens is that it comes up and then it automatically gets delayed for three weeks, then we just significantly reduce the number of bills that get debated. Now, I suppose that if we don't

have a throne speech every year, it might ultimately be a problem that gets fixed over two years or three years, but the start will be that private members' bills get debated less.

Moreover, it's not clear in here what happens if the committee is unable to meet and address the bill and come up with a plan within the three-week period. Will the committee get the opportunity to play around with it so that the bill never comes back and so that private members' bills, particularly the opposition private members' bills or embarrassing bills to the government by government members who are not part of Executive Council, get shifted off to committee? It's not clear to me what happens in the committee and what happens if the committee is unable to make a recommendation and fully debate that bill within the three-week time. I would suggest to you that it's unlikely that that will happen in many cases. It's a system that ultimately is going to once again take away the voice of private members on both sides of the House, basically everyone other than Executive Council. That's not a thing that we can agree to.

At this point, we would suggest that that piece get shipped away for more deliberation and not agreed to until we have a much stronger understanding of what happens in committee and what guarantees we have that that bill always comes back to the House for debate. In the absence of that, then you need to see this for exactly what it is, which is a plan to further take away the voice of private members on both sides of the House, who are not members of Executive Council.

The final thing that I will speak to is simply the issue that goes back to this whole matter of bringing Ottawa to Edmonton, because I know – I'm pretty sure – you guys have been talking about: "Oh, well, you know, Albertans voted for this, and they voted for that. Everything that we're doing is what Albertans voted for." I'm pretty sure there was no point in the election campaign where the now Premier got up and said: jeez, what we need is more Ottawa in Edmonton. I'm quite sure that was not a part of anybody's platform. Quite sure. In fact, I think there were a lot of memes to the opposite there. Yet what we're doing is bringing more Ottawa to Edmonton. I don't know if we're going to end up with finger bowls at some point on our desks as well. I don't know. I'm not a finger bowl girl personally, but I know some of the folks over there are quite comfortable using them.

Nonetheless, I don't know why it is that we would feel the need to bring Ottawa to Alberta. Clapping versus desk thumping has as much to do with the overall decorum in this House as whether the sun is out or whether it's raining. At the end of the day, there will be decorum if the debates are respectful, and there will not be decorum if things become more polarized. But desks versus clapping is simply a demonstration of control, and more to the point, it is in fact the imposition of Ottawa on over 100 years of Alberta tradition. So I don't see why. Now, at the end of the day, you know, it's not a hill to die on. It's just a sad departure from tradition that is disconnected from any kind of logical objective because, as I've said, it has absolutely nothing to do with decorum.

I would urge people to watch the House of Commons in the U.K., where they don't have desks to thump, they do clap, and I'll tell you that while far more entertaining than we are, decorum is not the first thing that comes to mind when you watch that. It's just a false argument. It's disingenuous, and that's not what it's about. Obviously, we're not in support of it, and I'm not entirely sure why folks over there are so committed to bringing more Ottawa to Edmonton, but so be it. I'm sure this won't be the first time.

3:20

Anyway, those are overall the reasons why we don't support this particular group of amendments. The overarching theme is this. We

think that there are strong traditions in this House, which have served to give the citizens of this province a voice and to include them in the proceedings. They are traditions that have been in place, in many cases, for a long time, and while there are many things that we could do to promote the rights of private members, none of them are included in this particular package.

What I will say, too, is that many of you may recall the scandal around the so-called no-meet committee. That committee actually historically did meet once every four years. What it did was that that committee sat down and, over the course of several weeks, worked on a multiparty basis to work through the elements of the standing orders, and then that committee made recommendations to the House, and the House then voted on the standing orders and on any changes to the standing orders. That committee, of course, was completely bypassed here. Just speaking there again to the rights of private members, this whole process is starting by spurning and thwarting the rights of private members, so it is hardly surprising that the substance of it is also designed to undermine the rights of private members.

I know there are a lot of folks here that are new and aren't aware of how little opportunity they have to participate here, but it will become increasingly clear. In the meantime I'm pretty sure it goes against what many Albertans thought that the members opposite were running to bring into place.

Nonetheless, that is why we will not be voting in favour of these amendments. It is why we will be very clear in our conversations with our constituents and anybody else who wishes to speak with us that the first package of things brought in by this government very clearly worked to undermine access and representation of the people of Alberta within this institution and on the record as well as to undermine the ability of individually elected private members in this House, separate and apart from the members of Executive Council, who were selected to be in that role over those other members there, particularly on the government side.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would now move that we adjourn debate on this matter.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate May 29: Ms Goodridge]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak?

Sorry. Would the hon. Government House Leader like to close debate?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** On the throne speech?

**The Deputy Speaker:** On the throne speech.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** No. I'm talking on it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You want to speak to the throne speech?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. You bet.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's great to have an opportunity today to rise to discuss the throne speech today. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it. I know that I'm looking forward to watching some other members give a maiden speech . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, I hesitate to interrupt you. Unfortunately, you've already spoken to that.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I thought that might happen, Madam Speaker, so I'm looking forward to hearing somebody else speak on the throne speech in the next few minutes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to the Speech from the Throne, that was last week at the beginning of the session. In general, this speech sets out the priorities for the government, their work for the coming session, and all those things that matter to Albertans, matter to our constituents. It's an important document.

However, I think the start of the speech rests on three things: first, the relentless focus on policies that are designed to create jobs; the province's right to control their natural resources; and third, making life better for Albertans by supporting health and education for the most vulnerable in our society. But when we look at these three things in a week, I think their relentless focus has remained on policies that do exactly the opposite of creating jobs. Their focus has been relentless on policies that do exactly the opposite of promoting growth. Their focus has been relentless on policies that do exactly the opposite of economic diversification. Their focus has been relentless to destroy investor confidence.

Why do I say that? We can look at their bills. The carbon tax repeal act: they said that this bill somehow creates 6,000 jobs. In the last session of the 29th Legislature they would always come up with numbers about how many Albertans are unemployed. Depending on the day, they will use any number, but the number they would use was 180,000 Albertans unemployed. With that plan, the climate leadership plan, there were 7,300 jobs that have been put at risk, so somewhere 187,000 Albertans now are out of a job.

In terms of economic diversification, just take our energy industry. We focused on making sure that we get value for our products and that we find new markets, and by repealing that climate leadership plan, we are risking the approval, we are risking progress on the Trans Mountain pipeline, which will give us access to the west coast and other markets. They said that they will focus on diversification, but their actions so far are just taking us away from diversification.

The second priority. They said that they will stand for the province's right to control and develop natural resources freely. This requires accessing, securing pipeline. As I said, for a long time even before our government, Conservatives were here in this province, for 44 years. They were in federal government before this government for 10 years, and they were not able to secure a pipeline. The reason for that can be seen in court decisions with respect to Energy East and many other cases. Two themes will emerge. One is that their efforts have fallen short with respect to the environment. They never took concrete action on the environment that will lead to securing Alberta a pipeline. They also walked roughshod on indigenous rights. Their consultation always fell short. These are the two major things that were always in the way of us securing the pipeline.

3:30

Now, again, finally, when we had a climate leadership plan that was getting the job done, that was putting a cap on emissions, that involved working with industry, and that came up with a plan that will help us secure the pipeline, now we are seeing that they are reversing all that progress, and that will certainly not help them achieve the priorities that they said that their government will focus on. Their focus so far in a week has been completely in the opposite direction.

With respect to getting our resources to market, we signed a deal which involved having more railcars so that we can ship somewhere close to 125,000 barrels a day to market. Those agreements were worth billions of dollars in terms of economic return for Albertans, somewhere around \$6 billion, and they're threatening to cancel those contracts. Again, by cancelling those contracts, what will happen? We will not have the takeaway capacity that our industry needs. We will not be able to access markets because in our pipeline system we do not have enough capacity.

Those were the things that were helping us get our resources freely and fairly to the national and international markets. They are taking all those steps that will keep us away from those markets. Again, it's disappointing that they said in the throne speech what they will do and that so far what they have done is completely the opposite of what has been stated there in the throne speech.

They said that they will make "life better for all Albertans by ensuring the quality and effectiveness of our public services, especially in health care and education, and by supporting the most vulnerable in our society." Let's unpack that one. One thing is for sure: whatever they have done so far, that's not making life better for all Albertans. Their legislation that's before the House that proposes to cut taxes from 12 per cent to 8 per cent, giving \$4 billion plus in corporate tax breaks: that is not for all Albertans; it's just going to a few wealthy corporations, profitable corporations, profitable Albertans. There's nothing in that tax break for 90-plus per cent of Albertans living in this province.

They said that they will maintain quality public services, especially in health and education. We have seen on at least three different occasions that the opposition has asked the Minister of Education whether they will fund the 15,000 new students who are walking through our doors, and every time the answer we hear is, "We will either maintain or increase," whatever that means. But maintaining funding is effectively a cut because 15,000 new students are coming through our school doors and we are saying that we will not provide more dollars for their educational resources. I'm not sure how that's making life better for all Albertans. In fact, by these actions, by not funding education, we are not at all making life better for those who are entering our school system. For those parents, we are actually making them concerned about the future of their kids, about the education of their children, and that's not, by any stretch, making life better for these Albertans.

With respect to health care we heard the same thing, that either they will maintain or they will increase, but they don't know. For all these decisions – Albertans gave them a mandate, elected them – they put together a panel, so the panel will look at all these things and make decisions for them.

When we were in charge of Treasury, the member who was our Minister of Finance then, the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo, before every session would himself consult with Albertans across this province, and he would ask all the members of Executive Council then to reach out to their respective stakeholders and ask about their priorities, ask about their concerns, ask about their issues, ask them what they want to see in the budget. That's how we were setting budgets.

But to just have somebody – they got help from someone in Saskatchewan who has a very firm track record of blowing up hospitals across that province. They're waiting for that report. At that point they will tell the school system, the board of trustees, and all those parents whether they will be able to fund education or not.

With these three priorities, three pillars, from what they have done so far, from what they have indicated so far, they are doing exactly the opposite of what they said in the throne speech that they will do.

Then they also identified that they will bring in certain bills. They brought forward Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, as indicated in the throne speech. What that bill did: it will, if passed, reverse the progress that was made under the previous government. Somehow it says that it's providing \$1.4 billion in tax relief and making everything more affordable for Albertans. But what it doesn't say here is that it will take away \$600 million to \$700 million, two-thirds of what everyday Albertans were getting in rebates, that was making their lives affordable. They are taking away those rebates from Albertans. It's taking away from many organizations who have invested in renewable energy projects. It's driving investment away that was coming to Alberta in renewables, that was coming to Alberta in green tech and all those projects. That bill: they promised it, they brought it, but this is the impact of that bill that Albertans have to live with.

Then it also says that it will take legal action to protect Albertans from the federal carbon tax. Madam Speaker, a week ago or so we heard from the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, the province of Saskatchewan, exactly that, that they wanted to challenge the authority of the federal government on whether they can bring in the carbon tax and impose that carbon tax on provinces as backstop legislation. The way the federal legislation works, if some provinces have their own climate leadership plan that is somewhat equivalent to what the federal government wants to do, that will stand. Otherwise, federal legislation applies as a backstop.

So Saskatchewan did the same thing. They brought a reference to their Court of Appeal, the highest court within the province, and the court ruled that, yes, the federal government can do that. And if we were to ask the same question, because it's the same analysis, whether the federal government has power or not . . .

3:40

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

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-McCall for his thoughtful comments in response to Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne, and I want to congratulate the Member for Calgary-McCall on his re-election. Certainly, it was a tough re-election for many in our caucus, but he was one of the few who increased the percentage of the vote in his riding. I think that's a testament to the good work that he's done in representing the people of Calgary-McCall, and he should be commended for that. I want the people of Alberta to know what an excellent representative the people of Calgary-McCall have in this member.

I want to take this time to thank the former Minister of Community and Social Services for the work that he did to legislate increases in AISH and seniors' benefits and learners' benefits. Madam Speaker, perhaps you had this same experience, but certainly if I had to list the top two reasons that people in Edmonton-Gold Bar contacted my constituency at the very beginning of my term, the first was complaints about the WCB, and the second was complaints about AISH.

I'm proud of the record that our government had in addressing both of those complaints. By significantly revising the WCB system, the number of complaints to my office dropped to virtually zero by the end of that term. Certainly, by this member, when he was minister, introducing legislation to increase payments to AISH recipients and other benefit recipients and link those to the consumer price index, he's done a significant service for the most vulnerable people in the province of Alberta. They will continue to rely on annual increases in their benefits so that they won't fall behind, like they were left to do under the Conservative government prior to our election in 2015.

Madam Speaker, I can't really overstate how critically important that this work is done has been to the members of my constituency who receive AISH payments. You know, people on AISH have a hard time making ends meet. Certainly, they get trapped in the cycle of poverty. They fall into circumstances where they're severely handicapped through no fault of their own and need to rely on the support of the province to be able to look after themselves and their families. With the benefits that they received prior to us linking those to consumer price index increases, all of those people were left behind. They couldn't afford to make the rent. They couldn't afford to eat. If they had children, they couldn't afford to send them to school and certainly couldn't afford to provide their kids with a lot of the extras that their neighbours expected from schools, things like field trips, pizza lunches, those kinds of things that enhance the student experience. Parents on AISH weren't able to provide those things to students.

I just want to take this opportunity, Madam Speaker, to thank the Member for Calgary-McCall for making life better for the AISH recipients in my constituency, and I know that that single piece of legislation will have an impact on a generation of people in Alberta and make their lives better. So thank you for that. I also want to recognize that he increased the Alberta seniors' benefit and linked that to consumer price index increases as well.

Madam Speaker, Edmonton-Gold Bar has more seniors than any other urban riding in the entire province of Alberta, and many of those seniors rely on the Alberta seniors' benefit to make ends meet as well. Being able to rely on annual consumer price index increases will mean that seniors in my constituency will be able to afford a few nice things, the odd trip to the store. They'll be able to buy their grandkids and their great-grandchildren extra gifts at Christmastime and for birthdays when maybe they weren't able to do that. Certainly, they'll be better able to look after themselves. We know that the cost of prescription medications is skyrocketing out of control for many seniors. The cost of a number of medical services that they rely on that aren't covered by Alberta health insurance becomes hard for them to afford, so a lot of seniors will be able to use those annual increases for their own good.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the Speech from the Throne? The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you for recognizing me, Madam Speaker. You know, as I rise to speak in this Chamber with regard to the throne speech, I just want to say that one of the reasons, the main reason that got me into politics back in 1995 was a desire to help improve the quality of life of the constituents in the east end of Calgary. I ran. I was a social worker in the east end of Calgary, and I saw that their condition was worsening, not everyone, of course, but those who were vulnerable, those who were without means, who were relying on government supports. I saw that their condition was worsening as a result of the government of the day



bringing in an austerity program, and that program cut somewhere between 5 and 10 per cent out of the provincial budget and affected many people who needed that support from the provincial government at that time in their lives.

That politicized me, Madam Speaker. I remember very well the first time that I took part in a protest, my first in my life, in 1993, '94, right out here on the steps of the Legislature, where I with about 5,000 people said: "That shouldn't happen. Our government should look to support people when they need those supports." When they do, of course, then they contribute back into the social fabric of this province with their tax dollars and their contributions in their social capacity.

But this throne speech: I preface my comments on the throne speech with that story because I found this throne speech to be small in stature and not broad enough to include all of the necessary, important actions government can make, should make to address the needs of their population, Albertans. I think there are things missing from this throne speech that weren't missing from the government that I was a part of in their throne speeches, particularly the needs of women, the needs of the vulnerable, the LGBTQ community, and indigenous persons.

I found that the single focus in this throne speech was around a job. While a job is terribly important, of course, for a person's mental and emotional and physical well-being, it's not the only thing in life. This throne speech seemed to reduce in a way, distill down: the only thing the government would be focused on is a person's employment. I can tell you that while employment is tremendous, it does not round out the whole of a person's existence.

What I want to take an opportunity to say is that, you know, I think this throne speech missed the opportunity to say what the government was going to do with respect to women in this province to support them, for instance, in this Chamber. The previous government that I was a part of had an equal number of women who were a part of the Executive Council with men in the Executive Council. I am tremendously proud in all of that. I think this throne speech misses entirely. As the former Premier was saying earlier, we don't have the breadth of policy development when we don't include younger women, when we don't include woman generally in that development, and this Chamber is devoid of enough women to make a difference in some respects.

I also know that when I was listening to the throne speech, I was wondering if it would really speak to Albertans beyond the information that's in here with regard to the economy. I think it fails in that regard as well.

3:50

I know that, you know, this has been a really difficult time in this province, since late 2014, when the economy took a nosedive in this province as a result of the precipitous drop of the world price of oil and the pain that that has caused Albertans and the corporations that keep Albertans employed. I know that as a government we were really focused on ensuring that Albertans had the supports, and we had their backs through that recession, that lasted far too long for any of us, I'm sure. We had Albertans' backs, and as a result of having their backs, the former Minister of Community and Social Services – it was called human services at one point, too, I think – came to me as the Minister of Finance in our Executive Council and said: look, I need a lot more resources because Albertans are coming off their EI and they're needing supports. We upped the budgets for Albertans in income support programs, AISH programs, and other programs a lot to address the need that was coming forward, that was being experienced by Albertans through that horrible recession.

You know, those kinds of things aren't talked about in this throne speech. Having Albertans' backs in that regard is not talked about in this throne speech. There are lots of things, of course, around repealing this and changing that and cutting corporate taxes, as was introduced the other day, but I just want the people in this Chamber to know that Alberta, at 12 per cent, had corporate taxes on par with most of the provinces in this country. We weren't out in front of provinces in this country. We had about a \$12 billion tax advantage on the closest other province in terms of taxation in this country, and that Alberta tax advantage stayed strong through the entire course of the previous government that I was proud to be a part of.

Also, we of course wanted to make sure that the focus was on young people in this province, so we did important things, like recently we were able to address the minimum wage and bring that up for all Albertans to \$15 an hour. Of course, the throne speech talks about repealing that as well, and I think that's in the wrong direction, Madam Speaker. I think, you know, I and others around here have said repeatedly that a minimum wage is a minimum wage is a minimum wage, and of course this throne speech undoes that as well. That advantage won't be for young people; it'll be for businesses.

The balance just seems to be wrong in this throne speech. Where the balance could have been pretty equal for citizens and others in this province, entities, corporations, it swings far too much, in my estimation and the estimation of many Albertans, away from the needs of citizens in this province. Be that as it may, we'll continue to raise that issue with Albertans whenever they ask and whenever I have the opportunity.

The other thing that I wanted to point out, Madam Speaker, is that, you know, it does talk about the indigenous opportunities corporation here, and we heard that again from the Premier today in terms of how he believes that that's groundbreaking. But I know that the former Indigenous Relations minister was also breaking ground in that regard in building, through his adherence to the truth and reconciliation principles, connections across this province with our First Nations communities and our Métis communities. I was just really impressed with the single-minded focus he had to reach out to First Nations, our indigenous citizens in this province. He told me once that at the end of his four-year term he had visited every First Nation community in this province – and there are 48 – and he had visited every Métis settlement in this province, and there are eight.

I was very impressed because, Madam Speaker, that kind of commitment to go directly, sit down with people in their communities, and listen to them around the issues they have and the needs that they wanted to bring forward to their minister – I don't think any Indigenous Relations minister in this province ever has outreached to the extent that the previous Indigenous Relations minister had. I want to commend him for his work in that regard.

I also started out with a little story about, you know, what brought me to politics. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that if there's an unwinding, as we're seeing on some of these bills that are identified in this throne speech, of the necessary supports Albertans are currently getting from their government, income supports and AISH, PDD supports, which I think would be very hard to do – but it's not impossible. Frankly, I'm concerned that the current government may see those monies as an unnecessary expenditure and reduce them. If that takes place, I think we'll be into the same sort of citizen protest that originally got me into politics back in 1993 and '94, when there was an austerity program of drastic cuts brought in by the PC government of the day. I think that's in the wrong direction.

Albertans can rightly be proud of the supports and services that are in this province today. They can be rightly proud of the

increases to AISH and income support programs that were championed by the former Minister of Community and Social Services. Going in the wrong direction to bring in austerity to needed programs and services would be un-Albertan. It would be small-minded and churlish. We can get back to balance, Madam Speaker, but we should not do it on the backs of the vulnerable.

I know some of my colleagues across the floor, and I don't think they want to do those things, but they do have a single-minded focus to get to balance, as we did. My fear is that they'll try and get to balance by cutting programs and services that Albertans can rightly be proud of today but won't be if they start to see them be pulled back under their feet.

The work of the previous government was – you know, I've got to add up the number of bills that were brought in in the four years that the previous government was in place that I was proud to be a part of. The number 60-plus is in my mind. I really have to find out the exact number of bills that were brought before this House because across the floor there have been some folks who have said, for instance, in the area of fiscal framework agreements with municipalities – well, there is one that exists with Calgary and Edmonton at this time. The other approximately 340 . . .

4:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the hon. member across the way for his discussion around this. I just wanted to bring up a few things. He mentioned a single-minded focus on what may or may not be happening on this side of the House. I will tell you that I do have a single-minded focus, and that's listening to Albertans.

One of the biggest privileges, especially in this last election cycle, was to have such a large mandate. That mandate was built on a very transparent piece of information that came across that was – actually, a good chunk of it came out prewrit, in fact, and had the opportunity to be put out at the doors day after day by thousands of volunteers and people who, I'm sure, like the opposition, spent countless hours at the doors talking to Albertans about their priorities.

I'm sorry. I'm sad in many aspects that my friend across the way would suggest that a single-minded notion of what is important to Albertans would be considered something that is not important to everybody in this province.

**Mr. McIver:** It's called focus.

**Mrs. Aheer:** It is. It is a direct, laser-minded focus on the priorities of Albertans.

The hon. member spoke about vulnerable Albertans. As a mother of a vulnerable Albertan I can honestly tell you that people came to this province for years. Coming originally from a party that joined eventually with the ruling party at that time, the PCs, one of the things that I have to say, in that time period having had a vulnerable child in this situation, is that Alberta was the gold star for any sort of services that were necessary for children, especially like my child, with a cognitive disability. We had people just flocking to this province for our services. The best people, the best services, the best ability to pull children out of autism – that's what we called it back in the day – looking at these cognitive disabilities and having the very, very best people in this province.

I find it – I'm searching for a word. It's very disappointing to me to hear a government that had the privilege of having this province for four years in any way speak disrespectfully of the people in

service, public servants, or anybody else relative to the growth of the work that was done in this province on behalf of our most vulnerable, because I have to say, having been a mother who was so blessed to have those services, that my son now drives a vehicle, has a job, is a beautiful, amazing, contributing member of society. That is definitely related to the amount of incredible help that he had along the way as he was pulled out of this by speech pathologists, OT, PT, people who spent countless hours and days in my house, every day helping me to understand and to find the strategies to help create this beautiful human being who is my youngest son.

It is imperative that we look at these situations. There are always ways that we can improve. Absolutely. Again, I am not willing to mortgage the future of my children and my grandchildren. You want to call that a laser focus? You got it. That's exactly why I'm here. That laser focus has so many pieces to it, but I can honestly tell you, Madam Speaker, that we spoke about it with honesty and transparency every day at the doors. Every day. We didn't hide from that. We didn't make up some sort of grand plan about something that's not possible. We actually talked to Albertans about what their priorities were. I'm sure you have them memorized. We said them a gazillion times: jobs, economy, pipelines. Why? All of those things contribute to the things that the member was just talking about.

If you want to take care of our most vulnerable people, we have to have a healthy economy. We have to have the ability to take care of these incredible people, to be able to build the programs and to have the services, all of the things that all of us hold so dear in this province where we are so blessed and incredibly prosperous. We've had two governments in the last four years that have actively attacked our economy, our energy industry, and the people in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in response to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's throne speech. Like many of us, I am new to this place and this role. For those of you I have not had the pleasure to meet yet, my name is Roger Reid. Today I am humbled, proud, and grateful to stand in this Legislature as the newly elected Member for Livingstone-Macleod. This is a tremendous honour, and I will strive to represent my constituents in a way that is respectful and that honours them for the next four years. This is the opportunity of a lifetime, to represent my friends, my family, and my neighbours from a constituency that truly represents the hard-working prairie spirit that Albertans are known for.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Livingstone-Macleod is home to a vast, amazingly diverse geography, people, and industries. It has a fantastic array of geography, stretching from the heights of the Rocky Mountains to the grasslands of the prairies. My constituency is nestled in the very southwest corner of the province, bordering both our provincial neighbour, British Columbia, to the west and our international neighbour, the United States, to the south. It encompasses part of Alberta's foothills and the Porcupine Hills and, of course, Alberta's native grasslands.

I would certainly be remiss to not honour our First Nations people, so I would like to give special mention to both the Piikani people from the south of my riding and the Stoney Nakoda people in the north end. The First Nations people who live in what is now known as Livingstone-Macleod, because of their great contributions

to the west, cannot be ignored because we have great sites like our UNESCO world heritage site, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, where the history, culture, and stories of our First Nations are shared with visitors from across Alberta and around the world. Just as these nations have been an important part of our past, I'm excited to be part of a government that will also work to include them to be an important part of our future as we share in the prosperity of this great province with our First Nations people.

With the recent riding redistribution Livingstone-Macleod has gained Waterton, a town and pristine national park along the northern end of the American border, and the town of High River and the communities around it. To the people of Waterton and High River I'd like to say: welcome to Livingstone-Macleod. I hope that I will be able to represent you as well as your previous representatives have in the past.

Livingstone-Macleod is home to people just as amazing as its geography. My constituents are incredibly hard working and embody the entrepreneurial spirit that we as a society praise so greatly. Farming and ranching are classic Alberta industries, and they play an important role in my constituency's economy, but they are not the only crucial industries. My constituents are involved in commerce, tourism, resource development, forestry, and film. They all play crucial roles, providing well-paying jobs for thousands of hard-working constituents so they can provide for themselves and their families.

Like many in Livingstone-Macleod, my family has been living in this fantastic area of our province that we call home for over 110 years. My family has been living in the area, and I am now the fifth generation to be raised there. Much like all of our neighbours in the riding, we grew up as stewards of the land, hard-working farmers and ranchers, constantly looking for ways to improve the ways we care for our land, that has brought prosperity to our families for generations. The hard-working people of Livingstone-Macleod, like my parents and grandparents, are always looking for ways to improve our homes, our businesses, and our livelihoods to provide for our families, and it's that very innovative spirit that brings me great joy to call myself a resident of Livingstone-Macleod.

Of course, I can't ignore my own hometown, the beautiful town of Claresholm. I am not the first MLA from Claresholm, nor will I be the last. Of course, like every single person in this Legislature, I will strive to represent my constituents the best that I can. This may be a difficult task, though, considering the prestige of some of my predecessors who have hailed from the communities of Livingstone-Macleod, including William Moffatt, who was the first resident and mayor of Claresholm, who served in the Third Legislature. In 1917 he was defeated by another Claresholm resident, the Hon. Louise McKinney, a member of Canada's own Famous Five and, more importantly, the first woman elected to a Legislature in the British empire. They would all be succeeded by William Aberhart from High River, who was this province's seventh Premier, and just as impressively, from Little Bow Mr. Ray Speaker, who served in this very Chamber and federally for 34 years and never was defeated in an election. As a side note, I opted to share his desk with him. I have some big shoes to fill, but I can safely say that I'm extremely excited to get to work to grow into these shoes.

4:10

In the coming weeks we all face late nights, long hours, and more than a few last-minute House duty trades as we work to fulfill our constituents' wishes in this Legislature. With that in mind, I'd like to tell the House what my constituents are hoping to see me accomplish over the next four years. First of all, we must create a well-thought-out plan for the stewardship of our land. As

Conservatives we are conservative by nature. The people of Livingstone-Macleod live where they live because of our backyard, which in this case is the beautiful countryside of our province. For us, this countryside acts as a source of recreation, sustenance, and prosperity. We need to ensure this access for future generations so that they can continue to explore and enjoy it the way previous generations have. We must become world leaders in this regard to preserve the landscape and access for all future generations.

However, we can't do that at the expense of the province's economy. As a small-business owner myself I know that we must ensure economic benefit and success for small businesses in the rural communities of my constituency for it to remain as prosperous as it has been. We must develop and grow the economy in order to provide opportunities for our youth, both today and tomorrow, so they can gain critical skills in that very important first job and so that they can later create more opportunities in the very communities where they've been raised.

Innovation and diversity in our agricultural industry and business are essential for this, and as we move further into the digital age, so is making sure that every rural community has access to high-speed Internet so that rural Albertans can continue to keep up with our urban neighbours.

Lastly, rural areas such as Livingstone-Macleod are wonderfully attractive for retiring Albertans. After all, who doesn't like the quiet, idyllic country life? In fact, it's been said that all the cars are in the city, but all the good parking is in the country. With this, though, we must also work to ensure that our seniors have access to the great health care that those in urban areas have access to, the same opportunities for long-term palliative and hospice care that our urban neighbours enjoy. The need to maintain and adapt our health care system is vital to ensuring that we can maintain our rural health care systems and adapt to changing times as it is crucial for helping our seniors as they enjoy their well-earned retirement.

Last but not least, the people of Livingstone-Macleod have some concerns related to some of our available infrastructure, and what we need is to upgrade and modernize in the coming years. Our schools must be modernized in order to equip rural students for the coming needs of the digital age and the hurdles they will face as they grow up in this new era. Just as importantly, we must follow through on the proposals to do things like twin highway 3 in order to improve both road safety and the economics in the area. I'm glad that the government is committed to working with all municipalities to create predictable and sustainable funding for these events to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time, just as I'd like to thank my constituents for their overwhelming support in this past election. Just as importantly, I would like to thank my wife, Darlene, and my children – Elisabeth, Allison, and Aaron – for their constant support and backing as I've taken on this difficult journey. I would not be here today without them, just as I would not be here without the trust and hard work of my neighbours in Livingstone-Macleod. There's no better place in this world than my constituency, and I will always be grateful to be from such a fantastic area of our beautiful province.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) I see the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, I was touched by the Member for Livingstone-Macleod's maiden speech. I think he did an amazing job. As a rancher I'm kind of jealous of his constituency. I think it's some of the most beautiful ranchland in the entire province, and I thought you painted the picture well. From

the Rockies to the grasslands to the prairies, that riding has a little bit of everything.

A real fond memory for me: we used to go to Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump as kids for many a year. I still have the arrowheads that we made there. We'd make and eat bannock and camp. It's a really wonderful site, one of the most special in Alberta. I think you did an amazing job painting that picture.

In response to the Speech from the Throne, I know we have a lot of great policies coming forward, and I was wondering if you, as a small-business owner, would just go a little deeper into some of the policies that you're most excited about.

**Mr. Reid:** I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler. We're both country boys, so we tend to be a little informal, so you'll have to bear with us. Being a small-business owner was a huge motivation for me to run in this election and seek to serve the people of Livingstone-Macleod in this House. As somebody who spent his life generally working for other people, I never totally understood how the decisions by government would affect me every day. As someone who became a small-business owner and was all of a sudden responsible not just for my paycheque and my family but responsible for the 65 people that we employ, I began to take a much closer interest in what government decisions did to affect the lives of those who work for me, who are really like family because we spend so much time together, to take time to address poorly-thought-out policies or poorly executed policies that I believe probably had great intentions but in terms of the end result were not necessarily beneficial for working Albertans.

I'm excited that this government is focused on getting Albertans back to work. We've seen our own businesses shrink in terms of the employees that we hire simply because it has gotten very expensive with the labour changes that have happened under the previous government. We had compassion for our employees – like I said, they're like family – so we never laid anybody off because we knew their livelihood was dependent on it, but we also made sure that we were very cautious when we rehired and when we filled positions when people moved on to other opportunities, because at the end of the day we still needed to make a profit to keep the doors open and keep those people employed.

I'm excited that we have a focus on reducing red tape that makes it simpler for entrepreneurs and businesses to get up and running quicker and to be able to provide and create those jobs for Albertans who want to work. We heard that again and again at the doors from those who had lost their jobs. Albertans were not looking for handouts; they're looking for opportunity. They're looking for those opportunities to get out and work hard, support their neighbourhoods, support their families, pay their mortgages, and contribute to their communities.

I think it's very important that we have the focus that we have because, at the end of the day, when our economy thrives, we're able to support those things that are important to my constituents in our rural communities, things like great, world-class, affordable, publicly funded health care, absolutely essential in rural Alberta; funding our schools so that we modernize them; that we hire and attract the best teachers and assistants to work in the schools so that our rural communities have every advantage that our urban students have. Those things cannot happen without a robust economy, without a way to attract new people, new businesses, new workers into our rural communities. That focus of this government, I think, is an important part about how that's going to happen in the next four years.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members who would like to take this opportunity to speak? I see the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont standing.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise today for the very first time as I address the Assembly. I am humbled by the support of the constituents of Leduc-Beaumont, and it's an honour to be here representing them today. It's not lost on me, the expectation of my constituents to see the economy grow, to see job opportunities increase, and to have more stability in every sector of our economy.

As I travelled across my constituency, I talked to many hard-working Albertans, and I was saddened to hear from so many who had lost their jobs, had sporadic employment, and had completely lost trust in the now previous government. These stories motivated me to work harder. It motivated me to ensure that a government was elected that would focus on the economy, oil and gas investment, jobs, and pipelines, a government that believed in creating opportunities and choice.

I will make sure that as a member of the governing caucus we remain focused on improving the lives of all Albertans, that we build an economy that works for all Albertans, and that we remain humble and stay true to the people we serve. With so many constituents tied directly or indirectly to the oil and gas industry, it is clear that the residents of Leduc-Beaumont were looking for a change. They were looking for an advocate for pipelines and prosperity. They were looking for a positive vision under the United Conservatives.

4:20

From my own background in policing I have seen first-hand the struggles that many Albertans are facing with tougher economic times and higher rates of criminal activity. When I joined the Edmonton Police Service, I had an image of what the job was and what a day would be like. I went out on ride-alongs. I talked to senior members. I believed I had a grasp of what a day in the life of an officer was like, and in the end I was only partially right.

We certainly fight crime, arrest bad guys, investigate criminal allegations, but the majority of the job was mediation, listening, understanding where people were coming from and what had brought us together. The number of calls involving domestic violence and family fights: it's staggering, Mr. Speaker. These calls for help come in all day, every day, so I'm proud to see a government that is acting on implementing Clare's law.

Mr. Speaker, Clare's law will provide additional protections for women in the form of information and allow those who choose to seek the information the ability to make a more informed decision on their relationships. This is an additional tool that can be used to help prevent and lower the incidents of domestic violence. The commitment to increased funding for electronic monitoring is a great step forward to help victims. Being comfortable in your own home and community should not be a luxury. This will also be a tool that will allow police to react faster to those who are breaching their release conditions. There are so many incidents where this technology would have prevented revictimization as so many victims of domestic violence are taunted by their abusers in an effort to further control them and end their bid for justice and a peaceful future.

Equally important will be the saving the girl next door act. That will provide additional protections for victims of human trafficking. Having investigated this type of crime, the stories of violence, abuse, manipulation, and fear are heart-wrenching. The extent that

some people will go to to profit off another human being is deplorable, and that it still happens in our province and our country is tragic.

I will also advocate for a more responsive court system that will end needless delays and adjournments and a system that puts victims first and realizes the bravery of those who come to testify and face those they have accused of a crime. The commitment from the government to hire additional prosecutors will certainly help alleviate court delays and reduce the workload on prosecutors, allowing them to give more attention to their cases as they represent not only the victims but all of society in a court of law.

Another aspect of policing is the amount of time spent dealing with and trying to help those with mental health conditions. The stigma of having a mental health condition can still lead many to not seek help, and deteriorating mental health is a significant issue for those experiencing addiction, homelessness, suicidal thoughts, or else are struggling to find a place in daily society. This government has made commitments to support those with mental health conditions, including appointing an Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and has laid out a mental health and addictions strategy. Reducing the stigma and increasing the support for those suffering from mental health conditions must be a priority. All of us in this Assembly will know someone with a mental health condition, and this must be a nonpartisan issue that we work on together.

Mr. Speaker, as I went door to door in Leduc-Beaumont, it was clear that not only was the economy a significant issue but that crime was also a concern, and I'm proud to be part of a governing caucus that will take these issues seriously and put forward legislation to help prevent people from becoming victims, a government that will put victims first and implement a rural crime strategy to help those who find themselves too often the only thing that stands between their family, their property, and a criminal.

Mr. Speaker, there is no public opinion poll that performs better than being in the community and going door to door asking residents what they're concerned about. The economy was the number one issue in the riding of Leduc-Beaumont. I heard calls for pipelines, support for the oil and gas sector, increased investment in the province, more job opportunities, and a need for a government that listened to people, a government that would listen to the concerns of the constituents of Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that one of the biggest questions Albertans asked themselves when they voted was which leader, which party, which candidate, and which vision could get the economy booming again. The constituents of Leduc-Beaumont believed in me and the United Conservatives' positive vision, and I will fight for them every day. As we move forward on legislation to reignite our economy, know that we are doing what we can to show the people of Alberta that we serve them, that we will fight to restore investor confidence, and that we'll bring back prosperity.

The riding of Leduc-Beaumont has a long and rich history in agriculture and oil and gas, and although this election the riding has changed to one that is nearly all urban, the connection that many residents have to the farming community runs deep through personal and family ties. One only needs to stop at the A&W in Leduc and you can speak to many current and former farmers, retirees, and those still working hard in the community. We call them the senators, and they know exactly what is top of mind for the riding that day, and conveniently they also know exactly what to do about it, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that these groups meet across the province every day.

The communities in the riding are strong. Both the cities of Leduc and Beaumont have a small-town feel to them, and a deep sense of commitment to the community is amazing to see. The number of

people who volunteer, fund raise for the community, and work to support one another is outstanding, and it inspires me. The constituency has achieved so much, yet there is potential for so much more. Collaboration and co-operation have increased in order to achieve common goals for mutual prosperity. I really do admire that the municipalities in and outside of the riding are partners, not adversaries, in attracting investment and meeting goals.

One example is the airport, which I was recently able to tour, that has achieved so much. The recent private-sector investment alone at the airport exceeds \$700 million, and the EIA generates over \$3 billion in economic activity every year from the movement of passengers, cargo, and local economic development. With a 24-hour airport, the QE II, rail lines, Nisku and Leduc industrial parks, and having a diversified and skilled workforce, this constituency is truly a part of the economic engine of Alberta, and when Leduc-Beaumont is doing well, Alberta is doing well.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I'll be proud to support Leduc, Beaumont, and Leduc county and be their representative in the Legislature to advocate for infrastructure projects, schools, investment, and to support legislation that will reignite our economy. I will unapologetically defend our resource development not only for the benefit of Leduc-Beaumont but for all Albertans.

In policing I have helped many people in a variety of ways, and I've never asked for thanks or acknowledgement of it. I just came in every day to work, I did my job, and I helped those who asked, many who called about a crime and many who called because they didn't know who else to turn to.

Ronald Reagan once said, "There is no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit." I'm not here for credit. I'm here to do a job to help the people of Alberta get to a more prosperous future by growing our economy, balancing the budget, growing job opportunities, supporting our oil and gas sector, and increasing the confidence of Albertans as a whole, Canadians, and those around the world who invest in our province. I'm here to serve the people of Alberta.

As I close, I'd like to thank the constituents of Leduc-Beaumont, for placing their trust in me, and the campaign volunteers, who worked so hard to make this a reality. I've always said that it may be my name on the ballot, but it'll be our win, and their support was amazing. Also, a big thanks to my entire family for their love and support throughout this whole process.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 1 An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It is my pleasure to rise and speak at Committee of the Whole to Bill 1, which we

should refer to as the Implementation of the Trudeau Carbon Tax Act on the People of Alberta.

Madam Chair, during debate on second reading of this bill I, of course, raised the fact that there is not a single Albertan in this province who will be happy with the bill as it stands. The people who voted in favour of maintaining the climate leadership plan and moving forward on action on climate change, of course, will be significantly disappointed with the nature of this bill. It marks a significant step backwards in tackling climate change, which is the most urgent crisis that humanity faces today.

4:30

But not only that, Madam Chair, not only are the people who are looking to the provincial government to provide leadership on tackling climate change going to be disappointed with this bill; the people who thought that the carbon tax was going to be repealed are also going to be disappointed. Of course, as you know, once we repeal our made-in-Alberta carbon tax, the very next day Justin Trudeau and his government will impose their made-in-Ottawa carbon tax on the people of Alberta.

Not only is the fact that we're scrapping a made-in-Alberta plan concerning to a lot of the constituents that I represent in Edmonton-Gold Bar; it's concerning to people all across the province. They don't really know what the impact of the federal carbon tax is going to be on the province of Alberta because the government has done no consultation on that.

You know, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed and the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre like to boast about the election victory as consultation. Certainly, it was a referendum on the carbon tax, and I will agree with the members for Calgary-Lougheed and Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre that the people of Alberta have rejected the idea of a carbon tax.

But what they haven't rejected, Madam Chair, is action on climate change. In fact, all of the programs that we funded with revenue from the carbon tax were incredibly popular. The energy efficiency programs – and I know that the members opposite like to mock the idea of free light bulbs and free shower heads and free thermostats. However, hundreds of thousands of people in Alberta signed up for the program, and we had to close it on virtually the very first day that we rolled it out because it was so popular.

The other programs that Energy Efficiency Alberta has implemented since that program came to a close include energy efficiency upgrades in homes, rebates for solar panels, a number of initiatives to help commercial enterprises and not-for-profit enterprises improve their energy efficiency. All of those were fully subscribed to, basically, on the day that they were rolled out. We're also funding a number of programs, like I said, that help municipalities to improve their renewable energy generation capacity and energy efficiency.

We're helping farmers improve their energy efficiency and helping them shift to renewable energy. We're helping school boards move to sources of renewable energy. Every single one of those programs that we introduced as a result of our climate leadership plan was oversubscribed on, basically, the day that they were announced.

You know, I think it's fair to say that the people of Alberta have rejected the idea of a carbon tax, but they haven't rejected the idea of taking action on climate change. When offered programs to help them take meaningful action on climate change in their own homes, Albertans will jump at the chance. Madam Chair, now that we are repealing the carbon tax and implementing the federal carbon tax in its place, all of the funding for those programs that have been incredibly popular is up in the air.

We know a little bit about what the federal program is going to be. It means that 90 per cent of the carbon tax revenue that's collected in the province of Alberta will be returned to the people of Alberta in the form of rebates, which, you know, we didn't think was a good idea. It's not fair for millionaires and billionaires to get rebates on the carbon taxes that they pay at the same rate that, you know, people making the now lower minimum wage get. That's grossly unfair. Also, 90 per cent of the money that was collected will go to the people of Alberta in the form of rebates, meaning that there's only 10 per cent left to fund all of these other programs, Madam Chair, that have been wildly popular with Albertans.

What's the plan, then? How are we going to take meaningful action on climate change if all of the money that's been collected to take action on climate change is being returned to the people of Alberta in the form of rebates? The members opposite like to state that when we were elected, we didn't mention a carbon tax. While technically true, of course, in our platform in 2015 we did say that we were going to take meaningful action to tackle climate change. In fact, that was one of the first actions that we took as a government: we appointed a panel on looking at climate change. That panel was headed by Andrew Leach, a popular whipping boy of the members opposite. I have to say that Mr. Leach is a constituent of mine, and I think the people here in this Chamber who like to attack him on Twitter and other means of social media should be ashamed of themselves for the way they treat somebody who so selflessly gives of his work and his time to create better public policy for all of the people of Canada. I really hope that Mr. Leach can expect to have better treatment from the members in this Chamber than he has had in the past. But that's an aside, Madam Chair.

I just want to refer to a part of the climate leadership panel's recommendation report to the minister on engagement. The members opposite like to say that we introduced the carbon tax without engaging with Albertans. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. I quote from the document itself. It's available online; the government hasn't yet taken down those websites. I'm sure they won't be up for much longer, but while it's still there, the document is available to all of the people of Alberta. It says under Public Engagement:

An online survey encouraged thousands of Albertans to participate in the climate change discussion. Over 25,000 responses were collected.

In addition:

The Panel also received 535 online submissions, including submissions from members of the public, industry, non-governmental organizations and academics.

They conducted technical engagement sessions.

The Panel held 10 sessions with approximately 350 stakeholders representing diverse perspectives across multiple sectors of Alberta's economy . . .

The Panel held meetings with Aboriginal peoples in Calgary, Edmonton and Fort McMurray.

In summary, we had an extensive program of consultation with every representative group in the province of Alberta, and that's what informed the recommendations that the climate leadership panel made to government in 2015. Now, contrast that with the consultation that the federal government has had with the people of Alberta on their carbon tax. They've conducted no consultation. So the federal government has no idea what kinds of energy efficiency initiatives the people of Alberta are looking for. They have no idea whether or not the rebate structure that they're offering is fair. They have no idea whether the plan to deal with heavy emitters is even compliant with the federal government's expectations. There are a whole host of things missing in repealing this carbon tax.

In the spirit of helping the members opposite do their job better – because we're not sent here by the people of Alberta to just oppose things blindly. We are here, Madam Chair, to help the government do a better job. In that spirit, I offer this amendment, which I would like to table at this time. I have an appropriate number of copies here.

4:40

**The Chair:** This will be referred to as amendment A1.

Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, please proceed.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is amendment A1. I move that Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, be amended by adding the following after section 1:

Consultation

- 1.1(1) On the coming into force of section 1, the Minister of Environment and Parks shall commence consultations with the public, industry and academic and scientific experts regarding the development of a comprehensive action plan for Alberta to address climate change.
- (2) Consultations under subsection (1) must be completed within nine months of the day on which they are commenced.

And then:

- (3) The minister shall make public a report summarizing the consultations conducted under this section within 120 days of the completion of consultations.

Madam Chair, I'd like to provide a little bit of reasoning as to why our caucus is putting forward this amendment. I alluded to it a little bit in my comments before I introduced the amendment. Essentially, the federal government has not consulted with the people of Alberta about their federal carbon tax, and I think it's fair to say that the government itself didn't really consult with the people of Alberta on whether or not they wanted the federal carbon tax. They promised them that they would repeal the carbon tax entirely. That's not what they're getting. What they're getting in its place is the federal carbon tax which is made for Alberta. I would appreciate it if any of the members here from the government caucus would actually, you know, have the courage and the convictions to actually admit that to the people of Alberta, that they're bringing in the federal carbon tax.

Regardless, the federal carbon tax as it's structured will have significant impacts on the health, the well-being, the lives, the economy, and the jobs of the people of Alberta, and I think we need to know what those impacts will be. We also need to know whether or not there is any flexibility within the federal program to adjust the structure of the federal carbon tax funds that will be returned to the province of Alberta. I think it's fair to say that, you know, given the popularity of the programs that I mentioned, we need to go back to the people of Alberta and determine whether or not they want to see these programs continue.

You know, it was very concerning to me in question period earlier this afternoon when I asked the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre about whether or not he would be continuing to fund solar energy programs for small-scale solar energy systems. I don't have the benefit of the Blues in front of me, but I think he said something along the lines of: solar energy is ridiculous. That is very concerning.

I received an e-mail just this afternoon, actually, from somebody named Ryan Peckover. Now, Ryan is a constituent of mine, and he says that he works

in the fast growing solar industry in Alberta.

Alberta is a great energy producing province so please don't stall the growth of this promising industry by ending the Alberta Solar Rebate program.

We risk losing a lot of jobs to Saskatchewan . . .

And Lord knows they need the jobs because their conservative government there is doing everything they can to put people out of work. But, of course, we don't need Albertans to lose jobs as well, Madam Chair, just to benefit the Premier's friends in Saskatchewan.

Jobs such as electricians, electrical engineers, sales and marketing, project management and administration job are at risk here.

You know, I recall the Member for Calgary-Bow, who was asked about what he would do to support the development of the trades in this province. It seems to me that throwing electricians out of work is really closing the door on the opportunities for apprentice electricians to get valuable work experience and become journeyman electricians and work in an area that's set to grow exponentially over the next few years. You know, it's really in line with the government's own professed mandate to provide jobs. They certainly campaigned on jobs. I would think that they would be interested in consulting with the people of Alberta about how they can continue to support the job growth in renewable energy in this province.

The timelines that we're proposing are incredibly generous, Madam Chair. We're proposing that the timelines for this consultation be concluded in nine months and that three months after the consultations are concluded, a report be made public summarizing the results of the consultations, which is far more time than our original climate leadership panel had. They were struck sometime in May 2015 and reported their findings on November 20, 2015, so that's six months. We're giving the members opposite an additional three months to conduct their work because this work needs to be done, and it needs to be done thoroughly in order to adequately reflect the wishes of the people of Alberta.

Madam Chair, we're offering the government here a chance to demonstrate to the people of Alberta that they are actually going to take action on climate change. We've certainly heard mixed messages from the members opposite as to whether or not they even believe that climate change is real, that it's human caused, and that we have a responsibility to act. However, the indications that we have gotten are that they do intend to take some form of action. Of course, it's not top of their priority list. You know, we do absolutely have to give wealthy corporations a big tax cut first, and we do absolutely have to cut the wages of 17-year-olds by \$2 an hour. Those are their top priorities. Then, after that, we have to get to desk thumping because that's been the scourge of the people of Alberta, holding them back from achieving economic prosperity, apparently. And then today, of course, we see that we're going to reduce red tape by creating a bunch of reports on how to reduce red tape.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we're on an amendment, not government motions.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes. I'm speaking to the amendment, of course, Madam Chair. I'm just highlighting the opportunity to improve Bill 1.

If the government says that it's a priority to tackle climate change, here's an amendment that makes their very first act as government setting the priority of tackling climate change. So no longer will I have to go to my constituents and ask them why the government isn't prioritizing climate change when, in fact, if the government adopts this amendment, they can say, honestly and truly, that they are prioritizing action on climate change ahead of all of the other things that I was mentioning in my comments.

Madam Chair, I truly hope that the members opposite give this amendment consideration, that they begin to roll up their sleeves and get to work on consulting with the people of Alberta about what

future action on climate change they expect their government to take, because the people of Alberta deserve that. They have expressed, of course, with their dollars and their actions over the past two or three years that they are eager to do everything they can to curb their own emissions, improve their own energy efficiency, improve their own capacity to generate renewable energy, and I think this government owes it to them to come up with a plan to continue to take those meaningful actions.

Madam Chair, I appreciate the debate that we are going to have on this incredibly well-thought-out amendment.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

4:50

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you so much. I'm certainly happy to stand in support of this amendment. It's fundamental to our province that we consult with our citizens, the stakeholders, those involved in this industry, and I just want to talk about the tremendous progress that we made during our NDP government's time in office. Significant changes were made.

You know, just in my own riding, just in one part of Alberta, I can just tell you resoundingly that Albertans want to have support to be able to do energy efficiency projects and that, of course, the climate leadership plan, that the current UCP government is wanting to repeal, paid for Energy Efficiency Alberta, which funded so many transformational programs for Albertans. As I said, I'm the representative for Edmonton-Riverview, and just here in my own riding there's I think pretty transformational, significant work that is being done by a very broad range of people and organizations; for example, Food4Good.

Food4Good is a community food centre that works to alleviate food insecurity in the west end of Edmonton. The neighbourhoods surrounding the food centre site experience higher than average levels of food insecurity and poverty. In this area household incomes are 2.5 times less than the city averages. Residents depend on food charity resources 3.5 times more than the city averages, and compared to other Edmonton neighbourhoods, this area has higher rates of chronic disease and mental health issues. The community food centre provides nutrition and food sustainability information and training for community members. Besides all of this, they are working to retrofit their current space. They're using technology that assures climate resistance such as solar panels, water recovery systems, and indoor garden units for regular food production when other systems fail.

Food4Good, this small nonprofit organization located in my riding, is taking advantage of this funding, and they endeavour to produce a facility that is actually energy neutral, that follows the standards required for LEED, leadership in energy and environmental design, certified buildings. Following these standards will mean that the building has minimal greenhouse gas outputs. That's just one example, one small nonprofit that's doing tremendous good in my community. What are we going to say to them now? That they can't go ahead with these initiatives? That the funding for that will no longer be provided by this government? It's disturbing to me because, you know, I'm really proud of the work of this particular group.

Here's another example, St. Paul's United church. They know that climate change is a critical issue that's becoming increasingly urgent, so the St. Paul's United church community got together. They're passionate about taking action to be more sustainable, in alignment with all levels of government. At the time when they were working on this initiative back in 2017, the federal government, the provincial government, and the municipal

government all were working collaboratively. We know climate change is real – there's no question about that – and these advocates want to make a difference in their community.

This project that they worked on has grid-connected solar panels, and it will provide 100 per cent of the church's electricity demand. That's so great: 100 per cent. The energy produced in excess of church demand will supply renewable power to the broader community. This will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel electricity generation in Alberta and provide renewable energy into the grid at a highly visible installation on a large rooftop located on a high-traffic avenue. It's on 76th Avenue, if anybody knows Edmonton very well, sort of in the university area. If you drive by St. Paul's United church, you'll see that their whole roof is covered by solar panels to take advantage of the power of the sun.

They're very proud that it's going to promote awareness of alternative/renewable energy initiatives and their viability and, hopefully, inspire others to investigate if not pursue renewable energy possibilities. This project will reduce emissions by up to 18 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. By installing on an existing steep-pitch, unobstructed, south-facing roof, this project will generate the maximum amount of energy, with no incremental land use and very minimal cost.

St. Paul's United church believes that the time is right to proceed with this project given the policy commitments of all levels of government. As I said, this was back in 2017, when all levels of government – federal, provincial, and municipal – knew that climate change was real and had initiatives to move forward on it. Now we're missing a very key player, the provincial government of Alberta. It's really shameful.

They said at that time that the time was right for their community because they had already undertaken many of the low-hanging fruit energy efficiency initiatives. This community really cares. They want to make a difference. They want to make sure that they're not using more energy than they need to. They had installed insulation and new windows. These projects have gone well, and they're ready to undertake a more significant and visible project that will have a larger impact and make a statement to our community and to environmental sustainability.

I'm just very grateful for these forward-thinking members of my constituency, St. Paul's United church. I've gone there many times. Really, they've sort of transformed the neighbourhood. Not only are they taking care of themselves, using very minimal energy, but they even have sometimes more that can go back to the grid, so they're supporting their community. Thank you so much, St. Paul's United church.

Also, I have 13 community leagues in my riding. Edmonton has a great community league system. For people outside of Edmonton, these are neighbourhoods that are sort of geographical areas where communities get together for soccer, social events, all sorts of different activities. One of them is Crestwood Community League, and they, too, of course, you know, are wanting to be responsible citizens and be leaders in their communities and make sure that they are responsible. Crestwood Community League is actually one of the oldest continuously operating community leagues in Edmonton, and they are focused very much on making sure that the community league is being responsible in terms of the environment.

They have sort of a two-part project. The first stage installs solar panels on the hall roof and provides half of the community league's electricity needs. The community league will generate half of its electrical energy from the sun, lessen the annual utility costs, reduce dependence on high-emission coal and gas fuels, and model a working solar system for Crestwood and the broader community.

The other major project objective is for the league to take a proactive leadership role in demonstrating to 1,000 homes within



Crestwood, where much infill housing is taking place – it's an older neighbourhood; my riding has many mature neighbourhoods, so there's a lot of infill taking place now; it's a great opportunity for energy-efficient homes to be built – that solar power is an affordable, effective source of energy which must be broadly adopted for the sake of future collective health and well-being.

This community league, the leadership in this area: they know, too, that climate change is real. We must do something. We must step up, and we must be responsible. As the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar said, you know, this is a crisis. This isn't something that we can forget about and not do anything about. We need to move on this. We know that Canada is warming two times faster than other countries, so it's a very serious issue. Again I just want to say that this is just in my own riding, so it's not an extensive look at all across this province, but it's so fundamental, just the leadership and things that people are doing across Alberta. I'm very proud of what is happening in my own community.

5:00

Many community members in Edmonton agree that immediate action is required to help curb global warming and reduce the human impact on the environment. However, for many citizens it seems like a daunting goal that should be left to professionals, scientists, and policy-makers.

Alberta GEN: that's at the University of Alberta, which is also in my riding. Many innovative projects are coming out of the university, of course, and this particular one, Alberta GEN, has developed Sun in a Box. It's a portable, off-grid solar power device integrated with a Raspberry Pi. These are some things that I don't even quite know what they mean, but it is an initiative that makes it easier for the average citizen to be able to be effective and do things to ensure that energy efficiency programs and using less energy are supported.

They have an education program that they take out to K to 12 schools. They educate kids, and of course we all know that the younger kids learn about things, the more they understand them, and then that generation can come and be responsible and know what's important to do. This Sun in a Box goes to K to 12 students and community members through educational engagement sessions across Edmonton in schools and community halls. The goal of this project is to bring the scale of the climate change challenge down to something that can really inspire, engage students and adults alike to see the magic of power generated by the sun. In addition, seeing the creation of presentations from university students helps exemplify the accessibility of solar and renewable power for all citizens.

It's just another important project that, you know, will likely be going away because this government is not taking climate change seriously. They're not stepping up, and in fact they're turning the clock back, and it's really too late for that. We need to move forward. You know, the United Nations says that we only have 12 more years if we don't do something now. Other levels of government know that it's very important for us to be moving on this, and the constituents of Edmonton-Riverview know that, too.

Another very important initiative – and that's why this consultation suggested in the amendment is so important – is Next Up, which is through the Parkland Institute, which is also at the University of Alberta. Next Up has climate programs that help to build a deeper and broader platform of support within Alberta for climate change action and policy so that Alberta can become an international leader in climate action. Specifically, this helps to build a stronger and more diverse network of climate leadership in the city of Edmonton and connect it to provincial climate action efforts. The Next Up leadership events include three-day climate

leadership intensive training courses for newcomers; a four-day climate leadership intensive training for mothers with children who are in grade 6 or below; one weekend, a retreat series; a climate connections event that will bring together participants from each of the proceeding events along with other groups and people in Edmonton who are already working on climate change efforts to discuss this project and collaboration possibilities which will enhance and increase climate action in Edmonton.

All of the programming described in these projects targets people who are not necessarily current climate leaders. It helps develop that and helps people be focused on climate change through developing climate literacy, leadership skills among these participants. Next Up will build a more diverse climate leadership network that will bring conversations about action on climate change into their communities and organizations. Visible climate leadership from outside the environmental sector is needed to shift the perception that climate change is solely an environmental issue and highlight the ways relevant action can be taken across the province in multiple sectors.

This is just another example in my riding of how important it is to be connected to our communities and know what is happening and what kind of leadership is already under way. Certainly, the support of the NDP government, while in office, was significant, and this created an opportunity for many of these groups to move forward with their projects.

I'll just share one more of these projects in my small, you know, community here in Edmonton, and again it's a community league. It's Windsor Park Community League. Windsor Park is a community right next to the University of Alberta. In 2018 the Windsor Park Community League Sustainability Committee – this is a community league that has a committee that's about sustainability because they see this as a key issue in our province, indeed in our country and in the world – launched a series of monthly education seminars on environmental stewardship and sustainability. Hoping to lead by example, they have now installed a solar system on the community league building, and they've also installed an electric vehicle charging station so that people with electric vehicles can come to the community league and actually charge them. That's also very innovative.

They are also working with Yellowhead Tribal Development Foundation, that had their community building serve as a training centre for the solar design course run for indigenous youth. Using a design developed by students in the course, this project allowed for further development of students' skills in solar installation. Students will receive further training and understanding of this important work.

These few examples just really, I think, illustrate how important it is that we make sure we know what is happening in our communities and how much innovative thinking is already going on. I'm sure that each one of you could find many projects in your communities that, you know, if you go ahead with repealing this bill, you will actually be cutting the funding for, because Energy Efficiency Alberta funds that, and of course that's through the climate leadership plan.

I'd like to talk a little bit more about just when I was the Seniors and Housing minister in the previous government. As is already clear, our government took climate change seriously. We know that when homes are older, they may not have well-fitting windows, they have poor insulation, they have roofs where they lose a lot of the heat through them. Sadly, much of the public housing that is managed through the housing management body system in Alberta is older buildings, so they need to be retrofitted. There's a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done. Of course, forward thinking, our government was committed to making sure

that the housing management bodies had the supports they needed to move forward with that. Energy Efficiency Alberta gave us the funding to do that through the climate leadership plan.

I just want to acknowledge that there are 103 – that number may change a little bit – housing management bodies across this province that do significant work to support vulnerable Albertans from every border of our province. I was so grateful to be the minister and work with them for the last four years and see the transformational work they did for families.

Of course, having facilities that are old, that are not energy efficient is costly. It costs a lot of money to heat them because, as I said earlier in my example of some of the issues, the heat is going out the roof, out the window, out the door.

5:10

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to the amendment before us, an amendment to change the nature of how we consider the repealing the carbon tax bill before us, an amendment which will force us to really think seriously about what the consequences are of the government's intention to repeal the carbon tax, because the cancelling of the carbon levy is simply not a solution without consequences.

The government seems to have rather simplistic solutions in mind when it comes to their approach to climate change, and in fact it doesn't appear as though they believe it's a serious problem. We believe it is, of course, on this side of the House and that it's an urgent issue for our society and the globe. With the government caucus, it seems as though the only thing they plan to replace the carbon tax with is a large-emitters levy. But what indeed that levy might generate in terms of revenue and what it might be used for is an open question that I think needs to be examined in great detail, and that will be allowed under the amendment proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, by referring it to proper consultations and allowing the government the opportunity to develop, as the amendment states, "a comprehensive action plan for Alberta to address climate change."

Now, the Minister of Environments and Parks is the one who is anticipated, under this notice of amendment, under the amendment proposed, to commence consultations with the public, and I think that's most appropriate. He's been given nine months to enter into these contemplated consultations and then report within 120 days.

I think it's really, really important that on a day, today, as we are sitting on – what? – the 29th of May, a 31- or 32-degree day outside in Edmonton, when a large community in northern Alberta is under threat of fire, has been evacuated and others have followed and the bush in Alberta has been described by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry as a tinderbox, on a day in springtime as dry and potentially dangerous as this, we take the whole concept of climate change much more seriously than this government appears to be taking it.

The two new pieces of art that we have in this Legislature, *Sunrise and Sunset*, created by our world-renowned artist and proud Albertan Mr. Alex Janvier, remind us of the importance that we give to every moment we have in this House when we consider the important debate that we're having on a daily basis on issues of any type of matter.

But right now we're talking about an issue that is of global importance, and it doesn't seem as though the government is taking it seriously. That's why this amendment is really, truly important, that the Minister of Environments and Parks be asked to

"commence consultations with the public, industry and academic and scientific experts regarding the development of a comprehensive action plan for Alberta to address climate change." The solutions put forward to replace the climate leadership plan simply are not adequate, they're very much open to question as to what efficacy they might have, and the details are really short, to say the least.

On this side of the House we know that the Climate Leadership Act was a comprehensive piece of legislation. It is something that this former NDP government was rightfully proud of. It established a carbon levy on transportation and heating fuels in Alberta. It provided exemptions from application of the levy. It set out the requirements for exemption certificates and licences. It provided for consumer rebates and biomethane credits. It set out the rules for remittance and recovery of the carbon levy and assessment of the levy and enforcement. It set out carbon levy rates for fuels. It was a very comprehensive piece of legislation with regulations that went along with it as well, yet what we're looking at with this government is a very simplistic approach to the replacement of our Climate Leadership Act with simply a large emitters levy and, bada bing bada boom, that seems to be it.

An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax proposes to repeal the Climate Leadership Act, eliminating the Alberta carbon tax, effective 12:01 a.m. on Thursday, May 30, 2019; end the Alberta climate leadership adjustment rebate, the carbon levy rebates by amending the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act; allow fuel resellers, for example gas stations and bulk fuel dealers, 30 days to apply for a refund on the carbon levy they paid on the fuel they hold in inventory at the time the levy is eliminated; amend the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act and the Fuel Tax Act to remove references to the Climate Leadership Act and carbon levy; shorten the time period for applying for rebates and refunds from four to two years; ensure that the government has administrative mechanisms to enforce transitional values. All revenues collected by the carbon levy will no longer be required to be used for environmental climate-related projects or programs, which begs the question: what does the government intend to use these funds for? Will they be aimed at the purposes that they were first collected for, and that is to address climate change issues and help people redirect their efforts at reducing their carbon footprint?

The UCP claim their bill will produce a \$1.4 billion tax cut for Albertans. They claim it'll cut taxes for 725,000 Alberta families. They claim it'll create 6,000 jobs across the province, and it'll save small businesses about \$4,500 annually. However, those claims in reality fall far short from what will actually happen. We know this bill will deliver a huge tax cut for wealthy and high-income Albertans; eliminate the revenue stream to support renewable energy efficiency and rebate programs; threaten funding for critical transition and infrastructure projects, including Springbank, and \$400 million which was promised to the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton for transit projects beginning in 2027; and also cancel construction and climate leadership plan jobs.

In short, Madam Chair, this proposal is something that we need to really drill down on to determine serious consequences that will result in simplistically going after the climate leadership plan, eliminating the carbon tax without knowing full well what in the heck we're going to replace it with. Will this large emitters levy that we hear proposed come anywhere near the amount of revenue that the climate leadership plan carbon levy had generated or anticipated it would have generated had it been maintained by this government, or is it simply going to be a large emitters levy that falls short of the revenue necessary to do the things contemplated under the climate leadership plan that would allow Alberta to become a leader in

global terms to reduce the carbon footprint of our industrial society and be an example to the rest of the world as to how to advance ourselves towards a lower carbon footprint and a lower emissions world and economy that is the way of the world right now?

The global tendency, the trend, the gallop, actually, is towards a lower carbon footprint in the world. The opposition is concerned that this new government is being blind to the fact that the world is moving away from carbon. The transition is something that any government who aspires to be serious leaders of the population they were elected by must take seriously. They must actually take action to deal with the climate changes, and that means reducing our carbon footprint. Every jurisdiction has that responsibility.

5:20

Now, the new government is difficult to understand when they talk about climate change because they really don't seem to believe it's happening. The UCP's plan seems to be similar to what the former Progressive Conservative plan was with respect to animal health in the Klein era. That was to shoot, shovel, and shut up; in other words, simply forget it, pretend it's not happening, ignore the problem, and walk Alberta into a dead end for our environment, our economy, and our future. They're paving the way for Ottawa to bring in a federal carbon tax, and it seems to be a bit of a trend. It seems to me that the current Premier is a little bit Ottawa-centric in terms of how he wants to change some of the standing order rules of the House and adopt many of the things that Ottawa does practise in their Parliament to satisfy some of his pet peeves that he developed after visiting our Legislature and realizing that he thought we'd be better off if we adopted Ottawa-centric rules and played that way in the Legislature here in Alberta.

Well, Madam Chair, I think that we do better in Alberta when we play by rules that we make for our own House and our own backyard. Paving the way for Ottawa to bring in a federal carbon tax while risking the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is simply bad politics. It's bad policy, and it's not something that Albertans in the long term will benefit by. I think that the UCP government is going to find that Albertans will soon start to question what their policies really will do in terms of advancing the ability of Alberta to become a world leader in energy production, which is looking towards lowering its carbon footprint.

Now, instead of focusing on our transition to more renewable energy and natural gas, their plan is to bring back coal pollution and hurt Alberta's health. Instead of providing low- and middle-income earners in Alberta with \$536 million in rebates annually, they're going to proceed with another UCP-endorsed plan where only the rich benefit. That's another reason, Madam Chair, why this amendment to An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax to have the Minister of Environment and Parks commence consultations with public, industry, and academic and scientific experts to develop a comprehensive action plan for Alberta to address climate change is so important. Instead of funding critical projects like the Calgary green line or projects or programs that help Albertans renovate their homes, they're wasting money on high-priced lawyers for frivolous lawsuits. The Premier should do the right thing and have a real plan to lower emissions. I'm certainly not convinced that the large emitters levy on its own as a simplistic solution will do the job.

Now, in November 2015 the former government of Alberta under the NDP government introduced the climate leadership plan as a made-in-Alberta strategy to reduce carbon emissions while diversifying our economy, creating jobs, and protecting our health and environment. A made-in-Alberta plan is something that the provincial government currently in power seems to want to abrogate to the federal government and allow the federal government to come in and implement their own carbon price

because we have gone ahead and eliminated our plan. The climate leadership plan involved four main policies: implementation of a new price on greenhouse gas emissions, also known as carbon pricing, which is the way of the world; phase out pollution from coal-generated electricity by 2030 and generate 30 per cent of electricity from renewable resources by 2030; cap oil sands emissions at 100 megatonnes per year, something that the current Premier realizes and has stated publicly would be a cap that wouldn't be reached for a long, long time into the future; reduce methane emissions from upstream oil and gas production by 45 per cent from 2014 levels by 2025.

Alberta was on track to cut more than 50 megatonnes of emissions over the next 10 years, the same as taking 10.6 million cars off the road or nearly half the passenger vehicles in all of Canada. It's like eliminating the emissions of the metro Vancouver area three times over.

Jobs. The climate leadership plan has supported more than 7,300 jobs in the first two years, and thousands of jobs were still to come with construction starting on CLP projects and innovation initiatives getting off the ground. These are the jobs that the UCP will put in danger. That was their whole political platform – jobs, jobs, jobs – yet the first act of this government with their repealing the carbon tax is an act that's going to axe thousands of jobs that would have happened as a result of it.

Small-business tax cut: \$220 million to finance a 33 per cent small-business tax cut. That reduction would have saved business owners more than half a billion dollars over three years.

Transit. We'd have invested \$3 billion over 10 years for light rail transit in Calgary and Edmonton from this climate leadership plan, including \$1.53 billion for Calgary's green line and \$1.47 billion to support Edmonton transit, including the west valley line. The budget also included \$967 million over GreenTRIP and other commonly used transit investments.

Rebates. More than \$700 million was rebated to a majority, two-thirds, of Albertans to make their lives more affordable and to offset carbon levy costs.

Infrastructure projects like the Springbank off-stream reservoir would have been funded out of the plan.

Upgrades at schools, universities, hospitals, and colleges: \$40 million had been invested in schools, universities, and colleges for projects that cut emissions and save operating costs such as the U of A district energy heating project, which allows the university to own and operate its own thermal energy, cutting 60,000 tonnes of emissions.

Energy Efficiency Alberta programs launched in 2017 have yielded \$510 million dollars in energy savings, Madam Chair; \$710 million in economic growth; 4.2 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emission reductions, which is about the same as taking about 722,000 vehicles off the road for a year; \$13.5 million in energy-efficient projects installed; 12 million cubic metres of water savings. For every \$1 invested into EEA programs, \$3.30 returned to Albertans' pockets. For the economic geniuses across the way, that's an ROI of 3.3, so that's a pretty good return on investment which will not be seen because of the repealing of the carbon tax.

I think we need to take a look at all of those things a little deeper by having the Minister of Environment and Parks commence consultations with the public and find expert opinions, academic opinions, get the experts of industry to come together and say: "Look, this is the consequence of your repeal. This is what's going to happen as a result of your act to repeal the carbon tax and not replace it with something that genuinely helps Alberta foster a strategy that gets us towards a lower carbon footprint over time and transitions to a lower carbon economy. That is the way of the world right now."

Indigenous climate leadership. Our former Minister of Indigenous Relations, now the critic for Indigenous Relations, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, went on at length to describe exactly how much the indigenous communities in Alberta will lose out, a total slap in the face, as a result of the repealing of the carbon tax, something that I think they would have a large interest in coming towards in consultation with the Minister of Environment and Parks to determine exactly what their compensation might be in the face of this government repeal. I'm sure they'll have a lot to say to the minister in consultation as a result of the loss of economic prosperity that they are going to feel because they've lost all the benefits of the climate leadership plan that this government has decided was not useful.

The indigenous climate leadership effort saw that more than 65 indigenous communities in Alberta benefited from 125 indigenous climate leadership initiative projects since 2017, a huge boost to their local economies and their way of life in keeping with their relationship with the land and their way of life and their ideologies and philosophies.

Solar power. There's a huge area of industrial growth in Alberta, thousands of jobs. This industry has grown by nearly 500 per cent. Installed solar capacity has increased from six megawatts in 2015 to 35 megawatts in 2018. About 3,100 solar installations have been completed. More than 300 certified companies have installed solar projects across the province. Albertans have conserved enough energy to power a city the size of Leduc.

Madam Chair, this government has talked all during the campaign about job creation . . .

5:30

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Gold Bar for bringing forward this very common-sense and practical amendment. What it's asking for is to consult with experts, academia, and all those who are concerned to address climate change. As was mentioned, we do recognize that the government was elected on this platform that they will repeal the carbon tax, but I don't think that with that Albertans provided carte blanche to walk roughshod over their environment. They still expect a solid plan to address climate change. I will be speaking in favour of this amendment, and I will provide reasons for that.

First and foremost, this amendment is asking ministers to consult with the public, with industry, with academia, and with experts. It's important that we all have a vested interest in protecting our environment, our water, our air for ourselves and for coming generations. It's important that all those who have the knowledge, who have the expertise, and who have a vested interest in having a comprehensive action plan to address climate change be consulted and that they be at the table. It will increase participation from the public and from industry in the process instead of just accepting the backstop legislation that Ottawa has prepared. I think this amendment will make sure that the work gets under way right away to bring forward a plan to address climate change that takes into account the realities of our province, the realities of our industry, and the realities of our people here.

The second thing is that I think repealing the carbon tax has many implications. The reason this amendment is important is that just repealing the carbon tax will have an impact on our access to markets, on our access to the west coast, and on our pipelines and the future of those pipelines. We know that when TMX or line 3 were approved, among other things, Alberta's climate leadership

plan was one of the key contributing factors. In the absence of that plan, I think it's important that the Minister of Environment and Parks commence consultation and come forward with a plan that can ensure access for our industry and can ensure that our pipeline will still go ahead.

We know that previously, even before us, certainly, there were 44 years of Conservative regime here and 10 years of federal Conservative governments, and we didn't get any pipelines to tidewater. If we look through the case law around Energy East, one of the key reasons is that we always fell short on the environment and plans to address climate change. These consultations will make sure that we are prepared for dealing with climate change and that we are paving our way to get our products to market and paving our way to get pipelines approved.

Then, third, this amendment is important for economic reasons as well because repealing this carbon tax has a huge impact on our economy in many different ways. There is a solid economic argument that we should do as suggested by my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar, that we should consult with the public and industry and all those who are concerned to come up with a climate plan. We know from literature, we know from scientific evidence, and there is enough economic evidence that climate change is one of the key factors that we need to consider for any sustainable economic growth. That work was recognized last year when the Nobel prize for economic sciences was given to William Nordhaus and Paul Romer. Essentially, both of these professors worked on the interplay of economy and climate and certainly proved that, among other things, climate change is one of the key natural constraints that our economy is facing.

If we pass this amendment and do the consultation as proposed, I think that will be an opportunity for us to identify and tackle those climate constraints on our economy and prepare Alberta's economy for the future, prepare an economy that is sustainable, that can sustain an education system for our youth, that can sustain our health care system, that can sustain social services that Albertans rely on and deserve. It's important from an economic standpoint as well that we pass this very practical amendment and get the work under way right away to address climate change in a way that we can account for climate constraints on our economy as well and prepare Alberta's economy for the 21st century.

Then, another thing, during this debate and during the campaign as well we heard from the Premier about how Ottawa needs to stay out of our business and how we need to take more control of our resources. I think that if we are merely repealing the carbon tax act, then Ottawa does come in and their legislation does apply. This amendment is important for that reason as well, Madam Chair. If we want to keep Ottawa out of our business and if we want to take more control of our resources, of our economy, I think it's imperative that we pass this amendment and, again, consult with the public, industry, academia, and all those who are concerned.

I think we were told before that this amendment is more relevant now because facts have changed since the election. A couple of important developments. One was the constitutional challenge that was brought forward by the Saskatchewan government. Their Court of Appeal decided against what the Saskatchewan government wanted and in favour of the constitutionality of that tax imposed by the federal government. The government of Saskatchewan was asking whether it's constitutional for the federal government to impose an economy-wide carbon price in those provinces where they don't have their own plan, and the answer was a resounding yes, so that avenue is almost closed for us as well. So if we want to take control of our resources, if we want to take control of our economy, I think it's absolutely necessary that we commence this

work, we commence this consultation, and we develop a plan that can address climate change.

5:40

Then, I think public opinion since the election has also shifted. There was an editorial in the *Edmonton Journal* which was essentially advising this government that maybe keeping the Alberta climate plan is not a bad idea. The reasoning for that was the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal decision, in that referenced case, upholding the government of Canada's right to impose a federal carbon tax. In light of those realities even the editorial board of the *Edmonton Journal* thinks that leaving this climate leadership plan is a good thing. While we are not asking in this amendment to do that, what this amendment is asking to do is that we need to replace it with something that works for Alberta. We need to replace it so that it addresses climate change, and we need to replace it with a plan that can help us promote our products, that can help us transport our products, that can help us get ready for an economy that is alive to the environmental constraints.

Then, lastly, I think that under the climate leadership plan there were many major projects. In Calgary there were infrastructure projects, transit projects, and then there were many small projects everywhere across this province, in First Nation communities. The impact of those projects is that, actually, there is data to show that we were able to reduce emissions, we were able to address climate change. In the plan that we brought forward, that was working. Again, we are not asking to keep that one here. All we are asking is that in order to take control of our economy, in order to take control of our resources, it's absolutely necessary that we all consider this amendment in all due seriousness because this amendment can set us on a path to developing a climate plan that will help us build a pipeline, that will help us build the economy.

Based on all of these reasons, I think it's important that all of us rise above and beyond party lines and consider this amendment in the best interests of the future of our province, in the best interests of our economy, in the best interests of our coming generations because one thing is for sure: we cannot ignore climate change. I think we can all agree that climate change is real. I don't think that the other side is denying it. But not doing anything about it, I think, does give rise to questions of whether they're serious about climate action or not.

The timelines set out in this amendment are also very reasonable timelines. This gives the minister almost one year to do that work. At least if this amendment is embedded in legislation, Albertans will have a clear signal. They will have a clear message that this government takes the environment seriously and that they do have a time frame that is set in the legislation and that soon after passing this bill there will be work under way, there will be consultations.

It will also send the right signal to industry as well, to the investors as well. We do know that in Alberta our industry is very capital intensive. We compete for dollars not just in Alberta but in capital markets across Canada and across North America. So they also need to hear that the government here in Alberta is serious about climate change and has a plan, at least some timelines, to address climate change.

Also, when we look at this amendment from the standpoint of industry, we do know that in an international market when we are competing for clients and competing to sell our products, among many other things, the thing that is considered is the carbon intensity of our barrel. Under our climate leadership plan there were a number of things that were put in place that helped us reduce emissions, that helped us reduce the carbon intensity of our barrel, and that put us in a position where we were able to compete in California and in North American markets.

Again, while it's unfortunate that they're repealing the climate leadership plan, at least this amendment is the right thing to do in that it will clarify their position. It will send a good, clear message. It will set out a clear timeline. I think it's important that we have that because climate change is real, and sooner or later we have to take action. I think the choice we have as a government, as a society is that we take action, show leadership, or we will just get dragged along and there will be, I guess, consequences that we can avoid by having a good, thoughtful plan through the consultations.

I urge all the members of this House, all my colleagues, to vote in favour of this very common-sense and practical amendment. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. I appreciate that. I won't speak for very long. I just wanted to take a few moments to take this opportunity to speak to this amendment and to urge my colleagues on the other side to seriously consider it.

I spoke to this bill a couple of days ago, and I really wanted to highlight that I agree that we have to accept the outcome that this issue of repealing the carbon tax was an election issue. The members on the opposite side had a clear mandate on that, to repeal the carbon tax. I want to reiterate that none of us will be surprised that that is what happens. That was an election campaign promise that you had made, and I believe Albertans generally, although not in every riding, did resoundingly make a decision on that.

However, I want to reiterate the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar in introducing this amendment, which I think is very thoughtful, which is that, yes, while Albertans did perhaps vote in favour of repealing the carbon tax, they did not vote in favour of doing nothing on climate change. I can tell you from personal experience during the campaign, as I was out speaking to the voters in my riding, that even those who had, you know, concerns and even were in favour of repealing the carbon tax repeatedly said: "We do need to take action. We want to see something on climate change. We need to see a plan."

Tied up with that very closely is the issue of diversification. What the voters in my riding were repeatedly saying is that it is important that we diversify the economy. The climate leadership plan was one way in which the NDP government was doing that.

I urge you on the other side to take that bold step forward and say – of course, keep your election promise. You had an election promise. You've got resounding support, generally, from Albertans on that issue, but that doesn't mean you have to take no action on climate change. There is an opportunity here. This is a very reasonable amendment. It is not a partisan amendment. It's meant to actually continue the conversation on climate change. I think this is a great opportunity for the members on the other side to keep their election promise but to also take action and take leadership on climate change and to show Albertans that we are moving forward and that you do have a vision for this province that includes addressing climate change and being a leader on climate change.

5:50

I just wanted to speak to that and say please. I know we are in a divided House. We're coming off of an election, and it's easy to fall back into our partisanship ways. But I'd really like to encourage you to strongly consider this. This is a way for the members on the opposite side to really show some bold leadership, not just sticking

to short-term goals but looking to a long-term vision for this province.

I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for bringing forward this amendment. I think it's very thoughtful, very reasonable. I think Albertans would very much appreciate that all members in this House deeply consider it and look at it as an opportunity to bridge some of the divide that happened over the election and to talk about keeping promises but also moving forward. So I really urge you to consider this amendment.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other members on amendment A1?

The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Seeing the time, I would like to move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

The hon. deputy government whip.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing as we are close to 6 p.m., I move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 7:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:54 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, May 29, 2019

Day 5

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 29, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Table Officer Janet Schwegel

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we begin with the regular business of this evening, I'd like to just take a moment to recognize Janet Schwegel, who is seated at the table for the very first time this evening. I ask that we would all extend a little bit of patience and grace to the table, not that we'll need it because Janet holds a master of linguistics from the University of Alberta. She is multilingual, a self-published author, an avid cyclist. Early in her career Janet owned and managed a graphic design business, and she also taught English and communications courses at a postsecondary level. Janet joined the Legislative Assembly Office in 2003 as an editor with *Hansard*. She became the managing editor of *Hansard* in 2013, and since 2016 she's also been the manager of venue services. Basically, she knows every word that has ever been said inside the Legislative Assembly, so consider yourself warned. Please join me in welcoming Janet to the table.

### Government Motions

#### Amendments to Standing Orders

11. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

A. Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective December 4, 2018, be amended as follows:

1. Standing Order 3 is amended

- (a) in suborder (1) by striking out "Subject to suborder (1.1)" and substituting "Subject to suborder (1.1) and (1.2).";
- (b) by adding the following after suborder (1.1):  
(1.2) The Assembly shall not meet in the morning from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, or 9:00 a.m. to noon on Wednesday or Thursday, if the Government House Leader, or a member of the Executive Council acting on the Government House Leader's behalf, notifies the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting, notice having been given no later than the time of adjournment on the sitting day preceding the day on which the morning sitting will be cancelled.
- (c) by adding the following after suborder (5):  
(5.1) In the period prior to, or following the commencement of, the first session of a Legislature, the Government House Leader may file a revised calendar with the Clerk, notwithstanding the deadline in suborder (5), following consultation with the Opposition House Leaders.
- (d) in suborder (6) by adding "or (5.1)" after "unless varied by the calendar provided for under suborder (5)";
- (e) by striking out suborder (7) and substituting the following:

(7) As soon as possible after January 15 each year, and following receipt of a calendar submitted under suborder (5.1), the Clerk shall publish the calendar provided for under suborder (5) or (5.1).

2. Standing Order 7 is amended

- (a) in suborder (1) by striking out "Introduction of Guests" and substituting "Introduction of School Groups";
- (b) by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:  
(3) When Introduction of School Groups is called, brief introductions may be made by the Speaker of groups of schoolchildren in the galleries.
- (c) by adding the following after suborder (5):  
(5.1) If any Member other than the mover rises to speak to a debatable motion to concur in a report of a committee on a Bill under Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees, debate on that motion shall be called under Orders of the Day
  - (a) when the Government thinks fit, in the case of a report on a Government Bill,
  - (b) on the next sitting day other than a Monday, in the case of a report on a private Bill, or
  - (c) on Monday afternoon under Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills other than Government Bills, in the case of a report on a public Bill other than a Government Bill.

3. Standing Order 8 is amended

- (a) by striking out suborder (1) and substituting the following:  
8(1) On Monday afternoon, after the daily routine, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:  
  
Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills other than Government Bills  
Written Questions  
Motions for Return  
Public Bills and Orders other than Government Bills and Orders  
At 5 p.m.: Motions other than Government Motions  
  
(1.1) Notwithstanding suborder (1), if on a Monday afternoon prior to 5 p.m. no items of business other than Motions other than Government Motions remain on the Order Paper for consideration by the Assembly, Motions other than Government Motions shall be called and after the Assembly has decided all questions necessary to conclude debate on the motion, the Assembly shall proceed to consideration of any items of Government business provided for in suborder (2) unless unanimous consent is given to proceed to an additional Motion other than a Government Motion.
- (b) by adding the following after suborder (7)(a):

- (a.1) Debate on a motion to concur in a report of a committee on a public Bill other than a Government Bill will conclude after 55 minutes of debate on the motion and 5 minutes for the mover to close debate, unless the motion is voted on sooner.
4. Standing Order 13 is amended by adding the following after suborder (5):
    - (5.1) No Member shall disrupt the orderly conduct of the proceedings of the Assembly by loudly or repeatedly banging on a desk.
  5. Standing Order 19(1) is amended
    - (a) in clause (a) and (b) by striking out “at 5:15 p.m., the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings” and substituting “the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting”, and
    - (b) in clause (c) by striking out “at 5:15 p.m., unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion” and substituting “unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting and immediately put every question necessary to dispose of the motion”.
  6. Standing Order 29(3) is amended by striking out “and motions for returns” and substituting “, motions for returns and motions for concurrence in committee reports on public Bills other than Government Bills”.
  7. The following is added after Standing Order 31:
 

**Confidence of the Assembly in the Government**

31.1 The confidence of the Assembly in the Government may be raised by means of a vote on

    - (a) a motion explicitly worded to declare that the Assembly has, or has not, confidence in the Government,
    - (b) a motion by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, “That the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the Government”,
    - (c) a motion for the passage of an Appropriation Bill as defined in Standing Order 64,
    - (d) a motion for an address in reply to the Lieutenant Governor’s speech, or
    - (e) any other motion that the Government has expressly declared a question of confidence.
  8. Standing Order 32 is struck out and the following is substituted:
 

**Division**

32(1) A division may be called for by 3 Members rising.

    - (2) When a division is called, the division bells shall be sounded at the beginning and for the last minute of a 15-minute interval.
    - (3) After the first division is called during any meeting of the Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply, the interval between division bells on all subsequent divisions during that meeting shall be reduced to one minute, except in the case of the first division called during an evening sitting that commences in Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Order 4(4).
  - (4) When Members have been called in for a division, there shall be no further debate.
  - (5) Members are not compelled to vote and those who wish to abstain should remain in their seats when asked to rise and record their vote.
  - (6) The Clerk shall record the ayes and the noes and announce to the Speaker the number of votes cast for and against the motion.
  - (7) The ayes and noes shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
  - (8) Abstentions shall not be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
9. Standing Order 37 is amended
    - (a) by striking out suborders (1) and (2) and substituting the following:
      - (1) Five copies, and any additional copies required by suborder (2), must be tabled of a document presented by a Member to the Assembly for
        - (a) placement of one copy in the records of the Assembly, and
        - (b) distribution of
          - (i) 2 copies to the Legislature Library,
          - (ii) one copy to *Hansard*,
          - (iii) one copy to the Government, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, the Official Opposition, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member, and
          - (iv) one copy to the Official Opposition, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, a Member of the Government caucus, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member.
      - (2) In addition to the copies required under suborder (1), one additional copy must be tabled of
        - (a) responses to written questions and returns ordered by the Assembly for distribution to the Member who asked the question or moved the motion for return, and
        - (b) any document presented by a Member who is neither a Member of the Government caucus nor the Official Opposition, to allow for distribution to both the Government and the Official Opposition under suborder (1).
    - (b) by striking out suborder (3).
  10. The following is added after Standing Order 46:
 

**Debate interrupted by adjournment of the Assembly**

46.1 When a motion to adjourn the Assembly is carried or the Assembly is adjourned for want of quorum, the matter under consideration prior to the adjournment shall be deemed to be adjourned to a future sitting day.
  11. Standing Order 52(1)(c) is struck out and the following is substituted:
    - (c) Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills, consisting of 11 Members,

12. Standing Order 52.01(1) is amended by striking out clauses (a), (b) and (c) and substituting the following:
  - (a) Standing Committee on Families and Communities – mandate related to the areas of Children’s Services, Community and Social Services, Education, Health, Justice and Solicitor General, Seniors and Housing and Service Alberta;
  - (b) Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future – mandate related to the areas of Advanced Education, Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Labour and Immigration and Infrastructure;
  - (c) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship – mandate related to the areas of Agriculture and Forestry, Energy, Environment and Parks, Indigenous Relations, Municipal Affairs, Transportation and Treasury Board and Finance.
13. The following is added after Standing Order 52.01:
 

**Subcommittees**

52.011(1) Unless otherwise ordered, a standing or special committee shall have the power to appoint one or more subcommittees, which shall report from time to time to the committee.

(2) Every subcommittee shall be appointed by motion of the committee specifying the terms of reference and the membership of the subcommittee.

(3) At its first meeting of a new Legislature, every Legislative Policy Committee and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall appoint a Subcommittee on Committee Business to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair and to report to the committee on the business of the committee.
14. Standing Order 52.04 is amended by renumbering Standing Order 52.04 as Standing Order 52.04(1) and by adding the following after suborder (1):
  - (2) Subject to Standing Order 59.01(11), suborder (1) does not prevent a Legislative Policy Committee from undertaking a hearing or inquiry during the same period of time that a matter stands referred to the committee by the Assembly if the hearing or inquiry does not interfere with the work of the committee on the matter referred to it.
15. Standing Order 59.01 is amended by adding the following after suborder (11):
  - (12) Suborder (11) does not apply to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills.
16. Standing Order 59.02(3) is struck out and the following is substituted:
  - (3) During consideration of interim, supplementary or main estimates, the following individuals may be seated at a committee or in the Assembly:
    - (a) officials of the Government, to assist the Minister whose estimates are under consideration;
    - (b) staff of the opposition, to assist Members who are participating in estimates consideration.
  - (4) During main estimates consideration, officials of the Government may respond to questions from a committee at the request of the Minister.
17. Standing Order 64(1)(a) is amended by striking out subclause (ii).
18. Standing Order 74.1 is amended
  - (a) by striking out the heading and substituting “Referral of Government Bill to a committee after first reading”, and
  - (b) by striking out suborder (1)(b).
19. The following is added after Standing Order 74.1:
 

**Referral of public Bill other than Government Bill after first reading**

74.11(1) After a public Bill other than a Government Bill has been read a first time, the Bill stands referred to the Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee.

(2) The Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee shall report back to the Assembly within 8 sitting days of the day on which the Bill was referred to the Committee.
20. Standing Order 74.2(2) is struck out and the following is substituted:
  - (2) Upon the concurrence of a committee report that a Bill be proceeded with, the Bill shall be placed on the Order Paper for second reading and, in the case of a public Bill other than a Government Bill, the Bill shall, subject to the precedence assigned to Bills standing on the Order Paper, be taken up on the next available Monday following the day on which the Assembly concurred in the report.
21. Standing Order 89 is amended by striking out “Standing Order 3” and substituting “Standing Order 3(5)”.
22. The following Standing Orders are amended by striking out “Private Bills Committee” and substituting “Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee” wherever it occurs:
  - Standing Order 91(4)
  - Standing Order 96(2)
  - Standing Order 98(1) and (3)
  - Standing Order 100(1)
  - Standing Order 101
  - Standing Order 102
  - Standing Order 103
  - Standing Order 104
  - Standing Order 105(1)
  - Standing Order 106
23. The headings preceding Standing Orders 98, 100 and 105 are amended by striking out “Private Bills Committee” and substituting “Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee”.
- B. And be it further resolved that upon passage of this motion any public bills other than government bills that stand on the Order Paper for second reading are deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills in accordance with Standing Order 74.11(1) and notwithstanding Standing Order 74.11(2) the committee shall report back to the Assembly on these bills within 12 sitting days of the day this motion is passed.
- C. And be it further resolved that the amendments in this motion shall come into force on passage.
- A2. Mr. Shepherd moved that Government Motion 11 be amended in part A, in section 8, by striking out the proposed Standing Order 32(5) and (8).

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 29: Ms Notley]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone wishing to speak to Government Motion 11, amendment A2?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:32 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dang	Goehring	Nielsen
Deol	Gray	Renaud
Eggen	Irwin	Shepherd
Feehan	Loyola	

Against the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Schweitzer
Copping	Long	Shandro
Ellis	Milliken	Toews
Getson	Nally	Toor
Glubish	Nicolaides	Turton
Goodridge	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Guthrie	Orr	Yao
Issik	Panda	Yaseen
Jones	Pon	

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 32
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Speaker:** Are there any others wishing to speak to Government Motion 11? I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka rising on debate.

7:50

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it. I rise to speak to Government Motion 11 with reference to the standing orders of the Legislature of Alberta for the next while here. It's definitely a long motion, and there's been considerable discussion with regard to the various points and where it will lead us.

In response to some of that discussion, I would like to propose an amendment. I move that Government Motion 11 be amended in part A in section 2, (a) by striking out clause (a), and (b) by striking out clause (b) and substituting the following:

- (b) by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:
  - (3) When Introduction of Guests is called, brief introductions may be made by the Speaker of groups of schoolchildren and, at the discretion of the Speaker, of other visitors in the galleries.

I have the original copy and enough copies for the House, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has 13 minutes and 52 seconds remaining if he would like to provide any additional comments. If not – he would.

**Mr. Orr:** Well, just to keep it very brief, I think in the interests of a positive atmosphere in the House, we all have contributed to the

discussion. I think it's a motion that I would encourage all members to support.

I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to speak to amendment A3?

**Hon. Members:** We haven't gotten it yet.

**The Speaker:** I'm happy to wait until you have one.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I appreciate the sentiment and, you know, the willingness to adjust this, you saw today that we had the Member for Edmonton-North West send out an e-mail just talking about the importance of being able to introduce guests as a member.

Obviously, I'm a brand new member, but I've had the opportunity now twice to introduce guests. Particularly today it was a very important thing for me. I got to introduce my mother and her husband and a good friend of mine who is battling cancer. You know, it's such a special thing, and I know the first time I was introduced years ago with a group – I think we forget how much of a privilege it is to be in this House, to sit in this House. I know I'm still star-struck and reminded of it every day, but I think that probably as you've sat in the House longer, you kind of forget that.

**Mr. Eggen:** You don't forget.

**Member Irwin:** You don't. There you go. So for people who get to come into this Legislature and have that opportunity of being introduced, it's a big deal. You know, I talked about the person I introduced today, Jessica. I talked to her afterwards, gave her a hug, got a photo, and she's just so honoured to have been introduced by me, her MLA, and now to have been entered into *Hansard* as part of this institution.

So I would urge my fellow members across the way to think about that. I also recognize that there are number of my fellow colleagues who have not yet had a chance to introduce someone, and I think you probably want to be able to introduce your parents, your family, whatever it may be. Please, please think about that personal element.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available if you have questions or comments.

Any others wishing to speak to amendment A3? The Member for Edmonton-North West is rising.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I don't want to belabour the point, but as I had mentioned this afternoon, when I was very honoured to have my oldest daughter and my wife here on the occasion of my 10th anniversary in the House, it gives you a chance to see some of the humanity that people bring into the Legislature. By seeing those things and meaningfully interacting with those things, I believe that while we may not be, you know, creating lifelong friends and so forth, but it creates that sense of humanity and camaraderie that can help to make debates better in the House.

It's amazing to be introduced, and I'm sure that there are ways by which we can tighten it up – I know that I've seen over the last 10 years that people will sometimes use introductions and make great big long introductions and turn them into members' statements – if we made some practical rules around that. But the Speaker can do that – right? – from the chair, and we can keep it



tight around what people say and keeping to a strict time limit. That's probably the best way to do it.

I really do appreciate this amendment, actually. I can say on a personal level that I can see some sign of movement, and I want to encourage that kind of thing because, of course, if we can create opportunities to have a discussion – I sent out word today for people to just think about this and other things. Lo and behold, people have been thinking about it, so I'm really quite pleased by that. But I just feel that this doesn't quite catch what the essence and the importance of an introduction is, so I still have my reservations about it.

Indeed, it does have sort of a veto power by the Speaker to not allow an introduction at all. If I'm reading this correctly – if I can just ask the member if he can just look at me and shake his head – it's the Speaker that's doing the introductions still, right? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, again, you bring people up from High Level or something, and they come all the way down here and their MLA introduces them and it's an important moment. I would like to stick to the spirit of that, the essence of that, and while I appreciate the government and the hon. member for moving on the introduction concept, I just feel like this doesn't quite cut it for me.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to speak to amendment A3? The Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For those of you that don't know, that are maybe new in this Chamber, one of the things that is actually quite special, particularly if you don't have a portfolio so you're in the backbench, is that you do get to speak and introduce people that are important to you or constituents, and you can actually get the introduction, the *Hansard* on a lovely scroll to send to people. It creates a memory for them to have been introduced by their MLA. It maybe doesn't sound like a big deal, but it actually is.

All due respect, Mr. Speaker, but I think that when I write something to introduce someone, whether it's a family member or a constituent, I'd like to use my own voice in this place to say the words that I write. I think it's important. I think that all too often in this place we don't get to say the things we want to say. We don't get to speak to the people that we want to speak to, and this is one small way for people that is fairly nonpartisan – I have seen some odd introductions, I'll be honest, some long ones – but I think that what it does is that it allows you as a representative of your community to stand up and to highlight, whether it's a group or a person or a family member, and it actually is special.

So I agree with my colleague that perhaps suggesting time limits would be good. I would certainly be okay with that. But I think it's important that we able to speak ourselves, to be heard ourselves, and to not have somebody speak the words that we write about people. I think it's incredibly personal to introduce someone and to talk a little bit about them, a little tiny bit about them. I think that is important. I think if this is about strengthening democracy, I would suggest that it's about having a voice and empowering people to have a voice in this place.

I would ask that you reconsider this. It is one small thing, but I think it's a fairly important thing. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for anyone that would like to ask questions or comments of the Member for St. Albert.

Seeing none, are there others that would like to speak to A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore is rising.

8:00

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't make this very long. I have to agree with everything that has been said here thus far. The chance to introduce an individual in this House is a very, very special moment. I know that of all my colleagues here, with the exception of three, from the last Legislature – you know, I had a bit of a reputation: it was odd when I didn't have a guest to introduce. There were probably even a few members opposite from the last that would remember that as well.

You know, getting the opportunity to introduce someone who is 103 years old and has never visited the Legislature before: for her and her family, that was a memory, I heard from the family, that they will never ever forget. While I appreciate the amendment, I believe that there are other avenues that we can pursue, probably around timing of introductions. We did that much in the last Legislature, when Speaker Wanner really tried to get us to maybe keep our introductions to about 30 seconds. I would certainly hope that members in the House will give this some very serious consideration. Unfortunately, I cannot find myself supporting this at this time.

**The Speaker:** Any members under 29(2)(a) that have questions or comments?

I see finally the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who has been trying to rise and bring his remarks to this important debate.

**Mr. Feehan:** Always just waiting my turn, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I just wanted to take a few moments to speak to this amendment. I feel like this is an attempt by the government to recover from an error, and it really is an inadequate attempt. The underlying error, of course, needs to be addressed in order for us to be able to speak about this amendment, so I'll begin by speaking a little bit about the underlying error.

The issue here is that it's been a long tradition here in the House for us to have an opportunity to represent our constituents by bringing them to the House and introducing them to all the members here, giving them an opportunity to see their government at work, giving them an opportunity to meet the people who they have elected in order to represent their views in the House. This is a personal relationship, as we all know. Many of us have arrived here in the House because we have built strong relationships in the community, and those community members feel a very intimate tie to us here in the House. That's why they would take the time out of their day to arrive here to spend time listening to people debate, sometimes on topics that are not exactly stimulating, although sometimes the debate can be interesting and stimulating, and I hope to make it so in a few minutes. I think it's very important that we honour that relationship with our constituents by actually speaking to them.

I notice that in the replies to the Speech from the Throne, that have been going on for the last little while, a number of members have taken the opportunity to thank their constituents for electing them and putting them in this place where they can speak to these particular issues. I notice that many people also speak to their families, as I did when I did my maiden speech, thanking perhaps our grandparents but almost assuredly our parents and our spouses and our children for the incredible support that they have given to us to be here. It would be absurd for us to say: "Well, why doesn't the Speaker just thank all the families? Why doesn't the Speaker just thank all the constituents that got us elected? Then we can save all that time that's being used up in the replies to the Speech from the Throne." Nobody would think to do that, because what is it about? It's about an individual speaking to their personal relationship with the people that brought them here.

Again, the government has decided that the people of Alberta do not matter as individuals, that they do not matter as people with whom we have unique and specific relationships, and that, as such, we can turn it into an administrative function. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that you would introduce them well. You're a clever Speaker, you're humorous, but it would not be the same as we ourselves making that introduction from a human relationship point of view.

So here I am, finding myself again expressing my disappointment at the government's attempt to separate us here in the House from the people that we need to represent by denying the nature of the relationship between us and the people that we represent.

I have to ask myself a little bit about why this amendment and the underlying motion itself would even be brought into this House, and I am fearful. I'm fearful – and perhaps one would call me cynical – because I think that the decision by government to bring this into the House was in and of itself a cynical move. I think the attempt to kind of meet us halfway in this particular change to the motion is, again, a cynical attempt to try to look like they're doing the right thing when they're not. The reason why I think it's cynical is because there is a very particular phenomenon here in this House, and that is that in the election the vast majority of the Edmonton people were elected to one party, and the government is only represented by one member here in this House.

We know that people who come to the Legislature are more likely to be people who live close by, who are in proximity, who find it easy to arrive here, and that cynical part of myself, which I'm sure you've experienced on more than one occasion, sees this as a relitigation of the election, as simply a decision: "How do we take the voice away from the opposition? How do we prevent the opposition from having an advantage in the House by being able to have more introductions by virtue of people living closer by?" As a result, it's actually an attack on our democratic ability to represent our constituents in this House merely because we might be perceived to have a slight advantage in this one particular case. Not that opposition has advantages very often in the House, but every once in a while some small thing creeps in, and that's what's happened in this case.

They did not take a look at the question that they say they took a look at; that is: does it change the decorum in the House? It doesn't. The decorum is uplifted by the presence of the very people who elect us. In fact, the issue is not about decorum at all. It's about suppressing the voice of the opposition and suppressing their opportunity to have a chance to introduce people and to help people feel connected to the Legislature. As a result, I feel this amendment is inadequate because it does not address the underlying problem here, the underlying problem being that this is not about decorum. This is about suppressing the voice of people who disagree with the government.

When we get a chance to talk about some of the other aspects of these standing order changes, I will address how this has been duplicated in a number of other areas. Right now I think we need to reject this amendment, and underneath that, we need to reject the whole approach of the government because it is intrinsically antidemocratic.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there questions and comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there others who wish to speak to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment A3 carried]

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to speak to Government Motion 11? I see the Member for Edmonton-North West rising.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of amendments and perhaps consensus, I too have a modest proposal here in the form of an amendment that I would like to distribute. If I could have some assistance with that, please.

8:10

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if you just give us about two minutes to get the table ready to roll, and then I'll ask you to proceed once we have that.

Hon. members, the amendment will now be referred to as A4.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has the call.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you can see, the amendment reads that I would move that Government Motion 11 be amended in part A, in section 10, by striking out the part that says: "or the Assembly is adjourned for want of quorum." The reason that I had cast a light on this section of the motion is that it's talking about the House having quorum and the government providing quorum. I think that on a categorical level it's very important to have that as an aspect of governance in a Westminster parliamentary democracy. The idea of quorum, of course, is a reflection of the representative government that this House does symbolize and the representation to the entire population of the province.

By setting and establishing quorum, it ensures that we are adhering to the idea that this is a representative Assembly, and that authority vested in us to make laws is symbolized by quorum. We use that not just in a Westminster system, but you use that for meetings and different structures and rules – let's say, Robert's rules for meetings and so forth – for a reason, right? You have to have a critical mass of representatives in order to make a decision that reflects the authority of that place.

Motion 11, the part that talks about quorum and then losing things off the Order Paper if a quorum is not represented in the House: I think that is a mistake. Again, you know, we talked about it. We've heard from a number of members here over the last couple of days that standing orders are a way to ensure and enshrine the authority vested in private members through the parliamentary democracy system. The Member for St. Albert is here to represent that city, and we need to make sure that all of those other places are represented, too, in a symbolic, representative form. If you change the value of quorum, you're changing the value of what it means to make decisions in this representative Assembly.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

My argument doesn't go very much past that, but I think it's a pretty darn strong argument. It really looks at you sitting in those chairs and that authority vested in you as a private member to represent those tens of thousands of people that you have. If quorum is not achieved, again, it's because if that person is not there or if some of the general people are not there, then you need to back off from that particular law or whatever you're debating and reassemble and start again, basically. It's as simple as that. I hope that everybody understands that argument clearly.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), are there any members with questions or comments?

Seeing none, other members wishing to speak on Government Motion 11, amendment A4? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure a lot of you have been on boards before, whether as a volunteer or as a designated board member. I certainly have. I've worked with a board. I've been on more boards than I can probably count. Having quorum was very important. If we didn't achieve that core number, we didn't proceed with certain work. There was a reason for that. It was about representation. I think that the job that we have here is about representation. It's about being here, and it's having a critical mass of the number of people here.

You know, I would actually support this amendment, and I thank the member for introducing it. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any members with questions or comments?

Any other members wishing to speak?

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak on Government Motion 11? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak a little bit more about Motion 11 on the standing orders. I want to spend a little bit more time talking about the underlying cynicism of all of these standing order changes because I think they're intrinsically antidemocratic. I know they'll pass – it's the nature of the House here – but I think it'll be important that we put on the record my concerns that the intentions here are not honourable in the way that I wish they were.

[The Speaker in the chair]

If we look at the number of motions that are here, I think the underlying theme between these motions is to suppress the voice of the House. Now, we were all elected here, into this Legislature, to represent people and to speak on their behalf in this House. When decisions are made in this Chamber, it is supposed to be a reflection of the House, not simply a reflection of decisions being made by a small group of government cabinet members, executive members, sitting alone and then implementing or executing their decisions. It is supposed to be an opportunity for all of the representatives, regardless of the party to which they were elected, to speak to the issues that are important to citizens in the province of Alberta.

As I look through some of the motions that are put forward, as I mentioned, for example the inability now to speak to and address the very citizens who have elected us to this House, I see nothing but a cynical attempt to suppress what might be perceived to be an advantage to an Edmonton-based party, who would have more people to address. That's very disconcerting.

8:20

I also find that same cynical attitude underlying a number of the other decisions that are being made in this list of standing order changes, and I'd like to spend a moment to address a few of them.

For example, if we look at the amendment of Standing Order 3, in which the government can merely make a decision the day before whether or not we are to sit the next morning, I see an attempt to provide a political advantage to the government side of the House over the opposition side of the House because, of course, the opposition can only wait and find out at the last minute that the House is cancelled the next day, therefore being completely unable to set appointments with constituency members, being unable to organize and prepare to do the business of this House, being unable to represent the very people that we want to in those functions that we engage in outside of this House. That is not something that needs

to happen on the government side. They can be well aware of when they are going to cancel morning sittings. They can set appointments, they can meet with constituents because they know that is coming. Here again we have an antidemocratic motion that is just attempting to take power and voice away from people who did not elect this government. It's a punishment for people who do not agree with this government. It's an attempt to tell them that if they do not vote for this government, their voice will be suppressed and be removed from the House at every possible turn. I think that that is very disconcerting.

As I go through some of the other motions, I think I can find other examples of when these things become cynical. I think, for example, of the motion that directs us to refrain from pounding the table, or, as it's indicated here in section 4, "No Member shall disrupt the orderly conduct of the proceedings of the Assembly by loudly or repeatedly banging on a desk." This is again an attempt to stop something that right now is only happening by the opposition members because we respect, of course, the traditions of this House, as we do, for example, respect the person sitting in the chair, the Speaker. Now those traditions are up for question. No longer do we have to respect the traditions of this House if the government decides they do not want to respect the traditions of this House. That's a very dangerous step to take.

There are reasons why these traditions have been developed over a hundred years or more in the Westminster parliamentary system. One of the things that pounding the desk allows us to do is that it allows us to express our voice. Typically, when one is pounding the desk, you're expressing your voice in a positive, in a relational manner. Again, here I'm finding the government wanting to suppress our voice and to deny the nature of the relationship we have, in this case, with other members of the House, where we cannot congratulate them on their speaking, we cannot congratulate people who have come to visit us, we cannot be supportive of each other because they happen to have a different habit on the other side.

What we've learned from this one is that if you're on the government side, your every whim is now going to become rule and law. Any time your voice is different, you have a different thought, a different way of approaching a problem on the opposition side, they will seek ways to legislatively restrict your ability to act in the way that you'd like to act, the government trying to control our voices, our bodies, and our way of being, something I find very discouraging but also fairly consistent through their philosophy.

If I go through a little bit more in some of the other motions that are here, I'm very concerned to see that they are suggesting that you cannot change sides of the floor. If you're elected for one party and you are making a decision that in order to represent your constituents, you want to cross the floor – now, I think that this is again a very dangerous precedent. It's breaking the tradition of the Westminster parliamentary system on the mere whim of a government who just does not want to hear any other voice except their own. I think that that's a problem, and I think it's particularly hypocritical from a government that would not even exist had that rule been in place in the last Legislature. Every single member of the UCP in the last Legislature left their party, whether it be the Wildrose Party or the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta, and crossed the floor to join the UCP.

So what we have is not only a government that is trying to suppress our voice but is trying to actually take advantage of a rule, do it for themselves and then deny that possibility to anybody else. I think that's an incredibly dangerous road to run down, this idea that: we can do things, but as soon as we have taken advantage of them for our own purposes to unite this party so that we can win the next election, we're going to deny that possibility for any future

opposition to be able to do that. That concerns me deeply, that this is the tone that the government is taking, that they are somehow above the rules because now they can take the ladder which they climbed up and haul it up so that nobody else can climb up behind them. I think that's completely unacceptable.

I want to remind the Speaker that some of the most noble members of parliamentary democracy have crossed the floor. Winston Churchill is quite famous not only for crossing the floor once, at which he was called a rat, but for crossing the floor back again later on. He quite rightly said that it is one thing to be a rat but another thing again to re-rat. When I think about that, I think about this motion here in the House. I can see that there is indeed a rat in these motions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Well, I just hesitate to interrupt, if only briefly, as you have another five minutes and 45 seconds. While I appreciate your comments and encourage you to make them, I might just remind you that we are presently speaking to Government Motion 11, and I believe it's Government Motion 10 that is more specific to the particular debate that you are referring to with respect to caucus affiliation. Having said that, if you can tie the two together, I'm more than happy for you to make this relevant to Government Motion 11.

**Mr. Feehan:** I stand corrected, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that.

I'm merely trying to point out that there is an underlying theme to the changes that are being made in the House today. I think the underlying theme is one of suppression, is one of creating privilege and opportunity for the government and ensuring that the opposition does not share in any of those privileges and opportunities. I think, as someone who came into this House as a true believer in democracy, I am very concerned when I see democracy undermined and ridiculed by members of the opposition, as I see some of them doing across the floor right now.

I think I'll leave my comments on Motion 11 there at this point now, but I just wanted to make sure that *Hansard* recorded my concerns so that the people in my constituency know that I care about the democracy that brought me here and that I am prepared to stand and defend it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I will take questions and comments under 29(2)(a) in just one brief moment.

I would just like to also confirm with the member that, you know, I encourage you to make comments, whichever comments you might like to make at another time as well on Motion 10 if that's what you choose to do. I wasn't interjecting to try to prevent any such comments, only interjecting to remind the member that we were in fact not on the motion that was dealing with that particular clause.

Having said that, questions and comments under 29(2)(a)? I see the Government House Leader is rising.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, you are correct. I look forward to providing some comments and context in reference to the comments provided by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I listened to his speech with great interest. I just want to acknowledge and address one comment in particular that the hon. member raised in regard to the 9 a.m. sitting concern. The fact is that the Opposition House Leader brought forward concerns to us when we asked about things that the opposition may want changed in standing orders as we proceed forward. This was one of the issues that was identified by the Opposition House

Leader. Now, what the Opposition House Leader wanted to have happen was that the 9 a.m. sittings be completely eliminated.

**8:30**

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do know that you had the privilege of being the Opposition House Leader, in fact, actually, when the 9 a.m. sittings were brought in. You and the then Government House Leader had some fireworks, and if I recall, it did not end that well for you. You may disagree. I don't know. But that's my remembering of that history. The reality is that Albertans did not like the idea of opposition MLAs attempting to fight not to go to work at 9 o'clock in the morning and then to keep this place not open and to be able to use all of the legislative time made sense, though. With that said, the Opposition House Leader made a passionate argument that there are certain times where it would make sense for the Assembly not to be called. It could be certain things that are happening within the province where we needed some flexibility for ceremonial purposes, something along those lines but also more commonly, Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, for standing committees.

If we were dealing with certain things at certain times of the year where we wanted a standing committee to be able to meet, it would make sense for the Legislature not to be sitting at 9 o'clock in the morning because hon. members are working elsewhere. That's particularly important for an opposition not the size of this. This is a pretty big opposition for the Alberta Legislature, though significantly smaller than the last one that sat on that side of the House, that I had the privilege of leading for a while, as did you. But it is a fairly big opposition for this House. In the history of this province often the opposition is small. I know the hon. former Education minister will agree with that because he sat in some smaller caucuses. When the Government House Leader had standing committees happening simultaneously, that could put them at a significant disadvantage, so we added this into Government Motion 10 or 11, whichever one we're on at the moment, Mr. Speaker – Motion 11; thank you very much – you know, directly to try to work with the opposition.

So if hon. members have concerns with the 9 a.m. portion of this, I suggest they take it up with their Opposition House Leader. I know that they would have rather we went further and just eliminated it altogether, but I'm sure the Speaker, who was the former House leader at the time, will articulate to you, when he's not in the chair, why that is probably not a very good idea for Albertans.

While I look forward to discussing the floor-crossing motion, which the hon. member referred to – and I take your advice seriously, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that it's not part of the motion that's before the House right now, so I won't spend too much time on it, but the hon. member did bring it up. I look forward to debating vigorously with him the merits of that motion and why we have brought that forward in this House. That's a promise that was made to Albertans. But what I will tell him is that we should make clear because he's brought it up in *Hansard* today – our motion makes clear that an hon. member has a responsibility to their constituents, if they've lost confidence in their party, to sit as an independent. It has not been designed in any such way that would not allow them to do that work on behalf of their constituents.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member. If he wishes to comment, there's a minute remaining in his time.

Having said that, are there any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just going back to my comments earlier, this is again for Government Motion 11. I think that this is supposed to strengthen democracy somehow. You know, that's kind of sad, actually. It seems like somebody is wanting to turn this particular place into something they're more familiar with, maybe something in Ottawa, but okay. Let's just move on.

Let's talk about some of the issues – and I'm standing up to speak to this. I know that this has been debated thoroughly and people have spoken at length about all these things, but I have not, and I would like to be on the record to demonstrate to my constituents that I stood up and I spoke to these things because I don't agree with them, and I have some serious concerns.

You know, it's kind of funny that I'm talking about traditions of this place. There are traditions of this place that maybe I'm not as comfortable with or I maybe disagree with. I find it funny that we're sort of picking and choosing which traditions we like and we're okay with and which ones we don't, and I'm referring to desk thumping. Now, I'll be honest. Probably like a lot of the new members, when I first got here and I heard the thumping, it was a little bit shocking because it was loud, not something that I was used to. I'd maybe seen it on television but I'd not been in the room, and I wasn't used to it. But I got used to it when we started sitting here. I saw what it was used for. It was actually to support the person speaking or to show your approval for something. It actually sort of grew on me. I get that there are some people that choose not to thump. You can choose to thump or not thump – that's up to you – but I think to say that you must use this hand and this hand and make them meet and those are the only things that are acceptable in this place, Mr. Speaker, is weird.

You know, one of the things that happened a few years ago that was really fantastic in this place is that we got together to agree that women have babies, and they can sometimes have those babies in this Chamber, and there were times that some of our new moms had their little ones in this Chamber. I think there was even a time that somebody was breastfeeding in this Chamber, and it was a beautiful thing because this is the people's House, and the babies are people. I think, Mr. Speaker, it would have been kind of tough for that mom to clap versus thump with one hand, so is there a process for that? Do we send a note to the Speaker and say: "I'm sorry. I have a baby. Can I thump today, or must I clap?"

I'm being facetious with this in a way. Why is it that the government feels the need to tell us what we can do with our appendages? Seriously. If you don't like thumping, don't thump; clap. But why is it that you need to control what we do? Is that how you strengthen democracy? I don't know. I see you're – I don't know if you're hot or something. Just don't thump. What I'm saying is that I think it's really important to recognize that this is less about thump or clap. Whatever. It doesn't really matter to me. I don't mind that you clap and choose not to thump. I thump. I don't clap. You know, I think it's a House. We have individual choice and freedom. Why is it that you want to control people's bodies? This is our body. I'm going to put that on the record that I'm not okay with this. I'm sort of drawing a line to say that I'm never okay with people telling me what I can do with my body, whether it's my arms, my hands, or other parts.

Maybe let's just call it preserving an old tradition, sort of like doing a traditional prayer at the beginning of session. I might not express my faith in the same way that you do or the same way that our Speaker does, but I respect the fact that it's a tradition, and that's what we're choosing to do here, so why not respect individual choice here? Why is it that you feel the need to control this? I really don't get it. I want to be on the record as saying this. It might sound silly to you, but I think it's important.

Another thing that I wanted to highlight for you – and for those of you at the back, perhaps, I've been there. I know what it feels like. You often don't feel like you have a voice, but you do have a voice. You have the ability, Mr. Speaker. The members at the back have an ability to have a voice and to have an opinion, so once again I encourage them to have that opinion.

Just going back to desk thumping for a quick second, the other thing is that this particular Chamber and actually this building, maybe, given the age of it, is not very accessible. It's National AccessAbility Week, by the way. This Chamber is not very wheelchair accessible, and I think that – I'm not blaming anybody. It's an old building, and we have some work to do. For example, someone in a wheelchair can't come up the front steps. They have to go around the back. So, you know, hopefully, at some point maybe we can address that. I think there's a lot of goodwill in this place that we can do something about that.

I'm looking forward to the day that we have multiple people with disabilities in this Chamber. That would be fantastic. I'm talking about visible disabilities. Perhaps they are wheelchair users or perhaps they are amputees or perhaps they have cerebral palsy. I'm not sure whatever the disability will be. But one day it will happen, that inclusion will happen, and we will have representatives that have visible disabilities, and it'll be fantastic. And you know what? You can laugh all you like, but I don't think it's funny. There are some people that are physically not able to go like that whereas banging something or kicking something or even elbowing something might be the only thing that they do, but you are deciding the way that people can express their pleasure or displeasure, and that's not fair. This is a place that is supposed to be as fair as possible, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you would agree that you have the ability to represent your people. I happen to represent a lot of people with disabilities, probably because I seek them out, maybe. That's my background. That's what I do.

**8:40**

I'm belabouring this point, Mr. Speaker, because it's an important one. The rules that the government is trying to set don't fit for everybody. They just don't. At some point we will have somebody here that will be unable to clap, but they should be allowed to express their pleasure about something. The reason I'm saying this is that this is not fair. You deciding how we use our bodies, how we express ourselves, is not fair. This isn't about strengthening democracy. This is about doing what your boss told you. Clearly, I am not supporting this. I am not in support of this whatsoever.

There are a number of other things that I have serious concerns about, but I'm going to focus on one more, and it's for the members that maybe aren't sitting towards the front, don't have a portfolio, perhaps don't get as many opportunities to speak. One of the great things in this place as a private member is that we get put into a lottery. There are 64 of us, and so sometimes we get lucky and we get a high number so we get to have a private member's bill. It doesn't happen very often. Some people are lucky enough to pull really low numbers, and it's fantastic. They get to consult their communities, and they get to develop a bill. They get to use a Monday to talk about it, to do first reading, to do second reading, and we get to push it through.

There have been some amazing bills, actually – I can't remember the member. I think it was inspired by his daughter. He had a private member's bill. It was fantastic. It was something about bullying online or inappropriate photographs online. I wish I could remember the details, Mr. Speaker. I apologize. But it was an amazing story. He listened to his daughter, who had talked to her school friends, and this was a problem. He got a high number, he

brought the bill, and we got it done because we all agreed it was a fantastic idea. We did it. We did it right here. It didn't have to go to committee.

But this "strengthening democracy" is not strengthening democracy. It's slowing it down, and it's putting a thumb on it so that a committee can slow it down. We all know how committees work. They slow things down. There's a reason, Mr. Speaker, that the government is choosing not to send government bills to committee. They do not want it slowed down. But they're applying this rule to a private member's bill, and it rarely happens that you get a private member's bill. Rarely. Rarely. But they want to send it to committee. Ask yourselves why. Is this about strengthening democracy, or is this about silencing people? I'd say this isn't about strengthening democracy.

I am on the record. I'm thankful for that. I will share this with my constituents that expect me to stand up and represent them, and I am doing that, Mr. Speaker. I could go into some of the other strengthening democracy pieces, but I'm not going to. Those were the two that I wanted to focus on.

Clearly, I will not be supporting this. I'm hugely disappointed, and I would encourage the private members who also don't agree to do the same. Have the courage and do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to speak to Government Motion 11?

For a point of clarification, there's no 29(2)(a) as the motion was to adjourn debate. A debate, as we all know in the Assembly, cannot be adjourned on 29(2)(a), but because the hon. member moved to adjourn debate prior to concluding her remarks, there is no further opportunity for 29(2)(a).

Are there others wishing to speak to Government Motion 11? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to rise to contribute to the debate on Government Motion 11. Although I've had the opportunity now to rise a couple of times on some quick questions and a quick comment on the last amendment, this is the first time I do get to rise in this Chamber on behalf of the residents of Edmonton-Decore and bring their voices here through debate.

As you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of concerns. I know it's surprising because I'm usually not an individual that gets concerned about things very often, but I have some here. As was probably mentioned a little bit earlier before, getting the chance to introduce people in this House is a very special moment. I won't belabour that, but I feel I should just add that quickly to my comments. Moving away from that, I think, will break a very long-standing tradition.

I think the Member for St. Albert was very clear on the desk thumping. I don't need to go any further into that.

One of the first things that concerns me about Motion 11 is the number of things that are contained within it all at once. I guess you could almost call it an omnibus motion. As one of the members who has served in the 29th Legislature – there are a few members here on the government side during that time. Maybe – I can't recall specifically – Mr. Speaker, you may have been one of those members at that time that were very, very concerned about the number of topics that showed up in a specific labour bill and wanted to split it up. It was interesting to watch that, yet here we are duplicating that. I've heard, of course, during the election and whatnot that a UCP government is going to do things differently.

But I hate to say it: with Government Motion 11 it seems a little bit like the second verse is the same as the first. I have a concern around that. I'm wondering: why that need to jumble all of this together?

I guess the second concern that I have is around the abstentions. Mr. Speaker, we are very clearly elected to this Chamber by our constituents to come here and do our job, and that job entails voting. I can remember a certain member that stayed in the House and very eloquently argued against a bill but also remained and voted, too, when, shall we say, some members decided to possibly conveniently take a bathroom break during that voting. Abstention, I believe, is an opportunity to do just that. It's just that now you've got somewhat a little bit of permission. Our constituents expect us to bring their views forward, and those views end up, at times, with a vote, either yes or no. We have to, to the best of our abilities, try to figure out if that is what we should be doing, voting yes or voting no. But simply to take our seat, cross our arms, and go, "Eh, I don't feel like getting up at this time and voting," I think, is unacceptable. We are here to do our jobs.

The other concern I have is around private members' bills automatically going to committee. I remember the Member for St. Albert drawing an example, and I would like to draw an example of a private member's bill. The Member for I believe it was Calgary-West in the 29th Legislature had a fantastic private member's bill around regulating pill presses. I even specifically remember personally reaching out to the member about some questions I had: could there be something different that we could do? I remember some of the government members from that time asking for permission to get through that private member's bill in one straight shot: first, second, committee, third, pass it. You know what, Mr. Speaker? It was important enough that we thought that we should do it. Had we had those rules in the last Legislature, that member's bill would have gone to committee, and we would not have gotten that important piece of legislation passed in a very timely manner.

**8:50**

It worries me that there could be private members, be it on the opposition side or, for sure, on the government side, that may have private members' business that we can all get behind – there is an urgent need to get it done – yet it is going to get kicked to committee and potentially slow that ability down, and we just don't know when that might happen. I mean, can you imagine the last few days where a private member's bill comes up and automatically goes to committee, and it's such a great bill, but maybe an election gets called, and we lose that private member's bill? I know the Government House Leader finds that very, very funny, but if you won't look out for your private members, then I will.

Mr. Speaker, I find myself unable to support Motion 11 based on these concerns. I would very highly recommend that the private members of the government side take this information and give it very serious consideration, especially around their ability to bring private members' motions forward, their ability to introduce their guests when they can make it. We can get all into the whole us versus them, but if they have a guest in this House and they introduce them, I will give them the traditional welcome that they so rightfully deserve.

With that, I will take my seat. I am sure there are probably some that are just itching to get up on 29(2)(a) and ask all kinds of questions, and I will allow them to fill their boots.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments under 29(2)(a)? I see the Government House Leader is on his feet.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the hon. Member for

Edmonton-Decore. I enjoyed listening to his comments. I don't agree with him, but I enjoyed it. I appreciate him taking the time to debate on this important motion that's before the House today. He brought forward a couple of things, though, I think, that are worth clarifying for *Hansard*.

The first is the comments in regard to a private member's bill going off to committee to somehow magically just die, the way that he described it. I know that the hon. member was part of a government just a few short weeks ago that used to do that. But for the benefit, again, of my little brother from Calgary-Klein and all the other new members that are in the Assembly, I will tell you how it used to work, and I'll then tell you how it will work after these standing orders, hopefully, pass in this Assembly.

What used to happen underneath the NDP government is that when they found a bill that they couldn't politically defeat inside this place, because there'd be some media trouble or some trouble with their base, but they didn't want to pass it, what they would do is that the Government House Leader would get up and send it off to the standing committee, which you guys now have the privilege of being members of. It would go off to that standing committee. They would say: ah, it went off to committee. Then – you know what would happen? – it would never come back, and what that meant was that the bill basically died. It would never get to the agenda in those standing committees, and then what would happen is that we would prorogue for a throne speech or something along those lines, and the bill would die on the Order Paper and never come back to this Assembly.

Now, what we have proposed and the hon. member doesn't want to talk about is that the rule would be that it goes, yes, automatically on first reading of a private member's bill, but it has to return to this place within eight sitting days, which is basically two weeks. It has to come back. That allows the good of committee to happen, which is a committee able to have a conversation to be able to deal with issues to actually be able to get legislation passed.

The hon. member talked about the hon. Member for Calgary-West's bill on pill presses, which happily got passed in this place, but I see he did not bother to talk about the hon. member's bill on Serenity, which was defeated inside this place and would never have been defeated if it was able to go to the private members' committee to overcome some of the obstacles that were facing that piece of legislation. It would come back to this Chamber within eight days, significantly different than the undemocratic practices that all those members across from me right now, through you, Mr. Speaker, to them, used to do just a few short weeks ago when they were in government. Instead, we made a promise, we spoke about it many times in this House, and we're going to make sure that private members get to be able to work hard on their legislation.

The only other thing I wanted to talk about while I was up here, Mr. Speaker – and I would appreciate some comments from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore – is his passionate fight to be able to keep desk thumping, which I find just outrageous, that he is spending so much time on that.

I'd like to go to a constituent of mine by the name of Cathy, who posted this on my Facebook when we announced these standing orders. She said:

I stopped planning my class legislature trip during session because of how immature the [NDP] MLAs acted. My students missed everything being talked about on the floor because of the immaturity of the [so-called] adults. They were appalled by the behaviour. I applaud the UCPs for this move.

I will go to another teacher, Jody Blackmore:

This is an issue that definitely needs to be dealt with. Our grade 6 students were able to observe about 30 minutes of Question Period yesterday and were shocked at how rude the NDP MLAs

were. They have learned that it is completely impolite and disrespectful to talk while others are speaking. They noticed and later asked why the NDP were banging on their desks and constantly [talking] while others were speaking but the UCP didn't do any of that. It'll be nice to bring classes in the future and have them see a good example of how to behave in public rather than the extreme example of terrible behaviour [by the NDP].

Mr. Speaker, we have promised to bring decorum back to this House. I'm proud of our Premier, who has led the way, pioneered it inside this Legislature, which these members across from me seem to be appalled by. But I'm proud of him. He brought it to this Chamber. This Chamber has calmed down. It's been focused on the business of Albertans rather than calling names and fighting to bang on your desks. These members in the opposition have it wrong. They're wrong on this. This side of the House is going to stand up for teachers like Jody and Cathy and stand up for their students and make sure that they can come to the people's House and watch appropriate behaviour by adults, not whatever you guys are doing.

**The Speaker:** There are questions and comments available under 29(2)(a). Any others?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia and Minister of Health is rising on debate.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise because I was alarmed by the comments of the Member for St. Albert, and I wanted . . . [A cellphone rang] The floor could almost dance to that.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Use of Electronic Devices in the Chamber**

**The Speaker:** I just would remind all members that it is appropriate to either turn your phone's ringer off or not bring them to the Chamber. I would just like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford because I've been hoping for this opportunity. I know we had this opportunity in the very early days of the legislative session, but I might just suggest that the next time inside the Chamber that this happens, there will be a Speaker's fine, you might say, a \$50 donation to a charity of your choice. Any additional offences, I think, will be a \$100 fine to a charity of the Speaker's choice. So let this be a fair warning: any additional offences, the fines will be appropriately distributed.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia has the floor.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, I wanted to rise because of the alarming comments that were mentioned by the Member for St. Albert, that alarmed me, that I wanted to make sure that my colleagues were aware of. She said that this motion is going to regulate what we do with our bodies, what she's going to be able to do with her body.

Then I cracked open the Standing Orders, and I learned that there's a prohibition on the hon. Member for St. Albert being able right now to just walk between us as I'm recognized by you. There's a prohibition on any of us in this room being able to walk, after we've adjourned, before you've left the Chamber. There's a prohibition on – well, actually, we're all bound to attend the service of the Assembly. There's a forcing of the hon. member to stand when the Speaker and the Mace enter. I'm just shocked. There are a number of portions of the standing orders which tell us what to do with our bodies on quite – well, I suppose I can't say that.

9:00

Anyways, Mr. Speaker, not quite sure where the hon. member was going with what we can do with our bodies and why the motion can't – all right. I'm going to stop right there, Mr. House Leader, and now I'm supposed to . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Adjourn debate.

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate. Do I move to adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** Yeah, you've done it.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 3

#### Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise tonight to move second reading of Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act.

Alberta's economic outlook has deteriorated, and this bill is a central part of our plan to get Alberta working again. Our government committed to reducing the tax burden on job creators, and these amendments will start that process.

This bill proposes three general sets of amendments: a cut to the corporate tax rate, consequential amendments to the small-business tax rate, and other technical amendments. First, the corporate tax rate. If passed, the first set of amendments to the Alberta Corporate Tax Act will reduce the corporate tax rate from 12 to 8 per cent over the next four years. We're proposing that the corporate tax rate be reduced as follows: on July 1, 2019, it would be reduced from its current rate of 12 per cent to 11 per cent; on January 1, 2020, the rate would decrease to 10 per cent; on January 1, 2021, the rate would be reduced to 9 per cent; finally, on January 1, 2022, Alberta's corporate income tax rate would decrease to 8 per cent.

We know that business decisions are not made spur of the moment, so to help encourage timely investment decisions, we're implementing the first two cuts within the next seven months. By reducing the corporate tax rate quickly, Alberta will become a more attractive place to do business. This will provide incentive to make new investments in Alberta. Our proposed amendments also include the final two rate reductions on January 1, 2021 and 2022, ensuring that the corporate tax rate is reduced to 8 per cent within four years. Legislating these rate changes in advance will allow businesses to make future investment decisions with confidence.

If passed, these amendments will make Alberta a much more attractive place to do business. In fact, after the first proposed decrease in July our province will again have the lowest corporate tax rate in Canada, and by 2022 Alberta will be one of the most tax competitive business jurisdictions in North America. The job creation tax cut will help reverse the flow of investment to once again see investment flow from south of the border back to Alberta. Mr. Speaker, we must take bold action to help support our job creators, and these amendments will go a long way in that regard.

The next set of amendments proposed in this bill concern the small-business tax rate. If passed, this bill will maintain the 2 per cent tax rate for small businesses. The calculation of this rate in the

act relies on the general corporate tax rate, where a deduction from the corporate rate determines the small-business rate. Currently a deduction of 10 per cent is used to reduce the current 12 per cent corporate tax rate to a 2 per cent small-business tax. We're proposing consequential amendments that will maintain the small-business rate at 2 per cent.

As the corporate rate is reduced, these consequential amendments will ensure that the deduction used in the calculation of the small-business rate gradually falls from 10 to 6 per cent, in sync with corporate tax rate reductions. These adjustments will also occur on July 1, 2019; January 1, 2020; January 1, 2021; and finally, on January 1, 2022, in tandem with the corporate tax rate reductions. Small businesses are extremely valuable job creators in our province, and maintaining the competitive 2 per cent rate is important to our government.

The final set of amendments we are proposing consist of technical changes to the act to ensure the new small-business deduction sections are properly referenced in the act. All of the proposed changes will ensure that the tax rate reductions are implemented properly.

Mr. Speaker, to recap, this bill will reduce the corporate tax burden on many Alberta businesses, and it will maintain Alberta's small-business tax rate at 2 per cent. It will also make technical changes that provide more clarity and ensure that all adjustments within the bill are implemented properly.

I'm pleased with the changes we've brought forward with the job creation tax cut, and we look forward to watching Alberta's economy bounce back as a result of this and other government initiatives. If passed, these amendments will make a meaningful difference for Alberta by getting our economy rolling again and fostering job creation.

I look forward to debate on this bill and call on all members of this House to support these amendments.

I now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

[Debate adjourned May 29]

**The Speaker:** Are there any hon. members wishing to rise and speak to Bill 2? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is rising.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to speak on Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has very astutely outlined, there are a number of serious issues around this bill that I think we all as members of this House should consider and consider the consequences over time. I can say on a personal level that the restructuring on overtime pay perhaps was one of the ones that jumped out, both at me and my constituents as well.

Of course, here in the province lots of people are accumulating overtime, and the idea is that there's an agreement that you are being paid appropriately for that deferred overtime. To make changes as are being proposed here in Bill 2 around that particular element of a worker's agreement really leaves a lot of people shortchanged. I know that we made some calculations and others have made calculations around overtime banked hours being paid out, and we see a differential. For example, an oil and gas worker earning \$43 an hour working 10 hours of overtime every week on a 12-week project would bank about 100 to 120 hours of overtime. With the changes in Bill 2 around banked overtime, the difference



in pay in that scenario – it's just one anecdotal scenario, but you could create any number of those – is \$2,600.

When you start to make those sorts of changes arbitrarily – I know that the hon. minister was saying that this is an agreement that could be worked through, but when you change the balance of fairness on an agreement to the discretion of the employer, then you see that workers are often left short and out in the cold. I think that it won't take long for us to see a correlation with the minimum wage changes that are being proposed concurrently with youth workers – right? – a change of 15 per cent reduction in pay. I mean, some employers will make choices to the benevolence and the benefit of their employees, but many won't. You know, when you create a law, you create a standard, and when you create a standard, it should be reflective of a sense of fairness, justice, equality, and continuity.

By changing banked overtime payout and moving the balance of power and discretion of that to the employer, you put the workers and the vast majority of Albertans that are in that position at a disadvantage. You know, that's one of the elements of this bill that definitely jumped out at me.

**9:10**

Another element that I found was around the Employment Standards Code – right? – you know, around leave: compassionate care leave, job protection extended to 27 weeks from eight to better align with federal government employment insurance benefits, long-term illness and injury leave, personal family and responsibility leave. All of these are basic things that people look to as an element of trust in their job when an employee is in one of those situations – right? – someone being ill in their family, long-term illness, injury, compassionate care, and so forth. By changing those expectations, you make it difficult for people to have peace of mind and to have the financial security and certainty that would allow them to move ahead.

I just found the breadth of this bill in looking for ways by which to repeal labour reform – you know, a lot of these reforms simply were to put Alberta in line with the rest of the country. It's not like we were bringing out the lead and blazing new territory. You know, we're the eighth or the 10th province to finally have some of these reforms put into place. You know, it's not radical. It's not out of keeping with the rest of the country or even international standards; it just brings Alberta up to a standard of expectation of normalcy and responsibility.

To repeal so many of these things – you know, this whole idea of starting a new government with the general feeling of pulling back or somehow moving backwards as an opening theme for a government to start their new term: I find that a very curious way to choose to characterize your own new government, and lots of people suffer as a result, right? The people that were looking for reasonable labour reform were enjoying the expectation of, you know, proper maternity leave law, of bereavement and personal loss law, of overtime banked hours expectations, and suddenly all that gets lost in the tide of the summer of repeal, as it's characterized here with the new government. I find that categorically troubling and then specifically with some of these elements with Bill 2 that I just put forward.

You know, certainly, we will work with this new government to try to help them with this problem that they've created for themselves in regard to Bill 2. I know that we have some reasoned amendments that we can use to perhaps clarify the importance of protection of banked overtime, of leave protection, and so forth, and we're happy to do so. You know, you don't try to set a theme of the government at the peril and at the compromise of fairness of compensation, fairness for safety, and employment standards that

Albertans expect and employment standards that are in keeping with the rest of Canada.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to more debate, and I look forward to working with the government to perhaps improve this bill.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. I'll just go on that one for a minute. I just wanted to thank the . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has the call.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your patience. I'm new. How long can I say that for?

**The Speaker:** It's over now.

**Member Irwin:** I want to thank the member for his comments, in particular, just the comments around OT, overtime pay. You know, particularly, we've heard from a lot of folks working in oil and gas that that's going to hit them hard. My own father worked in oil and gas for nearly 40 years in northern Alberta, Swan Hills. He worked a lot of overtime, and he sacrificed a whole heck of a lot. I know a lot of other folks did the same. A lot of people that I worked with out in rural Alberta were dependent on that overtime. I know a fellow I dated, back when I was dating fellows, worked at the power plant out in Forestburg, and he put in a lot of overtime as well. Again, I hardly got to see him. But it was a sacrifice that he needed to make to start to make some investments in his future.

I just wanted to ask the Member for Edmonton-North West to just elaborate a little bit more on that because I know you've heard from some of your constituents as well about the impacts of the decrease to overtime pay.

**The Speaker:** The whip for the Official Opposition has the floor.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you. I appreciate that. You know, what I saw and what I know from friends and family that work on project-based oil and gas is that you have a period of intensity where you're working on, let's say, a shutdown of a plant or building a project. It's project-based work. You have an intense period of earning lots of time and potentially the money that you will then defer over to the rest of the year when you don't have a job. That banked overtime is an essential part of the calculation for the basic budgeting for a family, right? It's not like you've just got great piles of money, and you get another pile. It's where you're working intensely and hard, often in remote locations, and then carefully building a budget around the hours that you worked but the banked overtime that you worked, too, to make sure you can make it through the rest of the year, when you don't necessarily have work, right? So to change that and to change that balance of decision-making to the employers I think is dangerous. We always have expectations for the best of intentions from human beings, but we always need to make regulation and backstop for when the best of intentions don't come forward.

Again, this is a direct correlation to the red tape reduction bill that I saw, that's coming forward here now, where you create this idea that regulation is bad. But, I mean, regulation protects people, too. You know, when you have a regulation that – so you're paying someone who's 17 and a half 15 per cent less than the person who's suddenly 18, right? Then you have to put in all these checks and balances to see if they're going to school or not or what their actual

age is or if they're raising – I mean, that sounds like a whole lot of red tape to me. You have to create a whole new department to check and see, you know, carding people in restaurants to see if they're actually working so many hours. If that red tape reduction department wants somewhere to start, they'll probably have to start with this minimum wage thing because they're creating this Byzantine sort of set of rules and regulations and different prices and payments.

I heard people talking about a liquor server differential as well. You know, that doesn't sound like reducing red tape. It sounds like a whole lot more of the very same thing.

I mean, when you're talking about labour and employment standards, you want to keep it fair, you want to keep it equal, and you want to keep it sustainable, right? Any deviation from those simple principles creates red tape, creates unfairness, inequality, and it makes it harder for families to make ends meet. I think that's one of the expectations we have as MLAs, to fight against those things. So I think we need to make a couple of changes to Bill 2 to make it meet those standards.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)?

I see no one.

On the bill, then. Any wishing to speak to the bill? I see the Member for St. Albert rising.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand up and speak to Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. I'm not going to comment on the title. I guess I'm going to focus on a couple of areas, one of which is actually the minimum wage and reducing the minimum wage for young people.

9:20

I guess when I first heard this, I mean, I wasn't hugely surprised, but I asked myself: why? Really, why would you do this? Then I thought back to: who are the people that have been lobbying for this? It's pretty clear. I think the Premier actually had a meeting or – I don't know – a rally of some kind before the election, if I'm not mistaken, with Restaurants Canada, and I'm pretty sure that this is something they were pushing for. But, you know, I'm sure all of the donation things will be sorted out in due course, and then we'll find out sort of how this came about, I suppose. I find it sort of interesting that the members opposite are telling us that this is about creating more jobs when there isn't a whole lot of proof to say that reducing young peoples' wages creates more work. It certainly creates more friends in certain industries, but I don't think it creates more work.

I was somewhat worried that other people with modest levels of human capital would get the axe or get a reduction. I'm hugely grateful that that is not the case. I know that when we were on that side, one of the things that we did was get rid of a regulation that had been put in place by the previous Conservative government, and that was to allow employers to apply for a minimum wage exemption for people with disabilities. That had been in place for quite some time, and that was possible for people to do.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Sadly, I do think that there were some companies or organizations that had somewhat taken advantage of that, where you would hear stories about people doing really rote, menial jobs, whether it was sort of assembly line things or, you know, getting donations and sorting them, and being paid, really, a pittance, like, just cents per hour to do the work. That was allowed because somewhere down the road somebody had viewed these folks as

having moderate levels of human capital, I suppose, and it was okay to pay them less.

But I am very sad to see that young people in our province will now be paid less for doing the same job. Actually, I'm sure somebody else has already touched on this, but our pages, who work so hard, who work really long hours here in this Chamber, the ones that are under 18 years of age will now lose \$2 an hour, and they'll likely work alongside people that are maybe a little bit older than them who will make more money simply because of their birthdate. I don't know. That doesn't seem fair to me.

I know that maybe some of you were in the same boat. I didn't come from a wealthy family at all. Actually, quite the opposite. One of the things that we had to do as kids, when we were, you know, young teenagers, is that we had to find jobs and we had to help. I'm not saying that we paid rent to our parents, but what we did do is we covered our own expenses. You know what that's like when you're a young person, whether that's paying for a field trip or buying clothes or a backpack or school supplies or just, you know, things that young people need.

As I got older as a teenager, one of the things that I started to do was to save for my education because I knew that my parents didn't have the ability. Well, they were struggling just to pay rent, you know, to make sure that we had food and all of the things that we needed to survive. But it was up to us if we wanted to go a little further. On a side note, my grandmother said that I could do anything, told me that I could be a bank teller one day. Anyway, a little story about that.

But we were told that that was what we had to do. So we worked. Every summer we worked, whether it was – you know, one year I remember going out and picking tomatoes while they were there, and then we got taken to a field to clear fields. I worked in an ice cream parlour. I worked at McDonald's. I worked in fast food. I've done all of those things that young people do to save money, and I worked just as hard as the person beside me who was older than me. I worked really hard all summer, and I saved that money so that I could afford the things that I needed, just like our young people now.

Yet you're saying that you're hanging up an open-for-business sign on the backs of young people by reducing their wage by \$2 per hour. This isn't about job creation; this is about profit for companies. This isn't about our young people; this is about profit for companies. This is about: who were the companies that got the ear of the people making the decisions, and what were those deals, what were the agreements that were made? I'm left questioning: how is it that we got to this place where it's okay to reduce the wages of young people? I don't think it's acceptable to say that you are creating jobs on the backs of young people. It's pretty sad, actually.

Those same young people that are going to work so hard in the summer, work hard during the year to save for their education, now they're either going to have to work harder, whether that's during the year, work more hours, or they're going to have to take out bigger student loans. At the end of the day, who is benefiting? Is it the lending institutions? Is it these large organizations that are going to hire younger people so they can pay them less? Really, who is winning here? It's not our youth. Our youth are the future. This is our most valued, treasured – this is everything that we stand for. Our youth are the future, and for us to set them up with this kind of start is just really sad to me.

Another thing I wanted to touch on quickly was about things like holiday pay. If I understand this correctly, if let's say Christmas falls on a day that you normally don't work, you don't qualify for that. Let me just paint a little picture for you in one particular sector. People that support folks with disabilities tend to work really odd hours.

They don't typically do, like, a 9 to 5, Monday to Friday. They will often do shift work. Often they will do 24-hour shifts. They'll do multiple days for a lot of different reasons. It provides continuity and support to people that need it most. It allows for a routine. It allows for people to feel safe. These are very skilled workers, by the way, and these are not people that are paid a lot of money, but they give a lot. They're away from their families for hours on end. Some people do sleep shifts, so they might be there all day and then spend the night and be there the next day. These are long shifts, they're away from their families, they sacrifice a lot, and suddenly we're introducing these rules that are going to take little perks and little benefits like, say, Christmas away from these workers.

I'm asking through you to the other members: are these things that you talked about? Have you had these discussions? Have you considered what the impact is on real people in this province that are not wealthy people and that work really hard? These little things like Christmas, a holiday maybe that wasn't really your normal workday anyway but you happened to get it off: it is a benefit, but it's a benefit for people that need it. My question really is: have you given this thought? Is this what you want to lay your hat on? To say that this is how we're open for business, this is how we're going to promote more jobs, by cutting the wages of youth and taking away these small benefits: who is this benefiting? Who's profiting from this? Who is making money from this? Really, who is profiting? It's not our young people.

Ask yourself: is this who you want to be? Is this the government that you want to be? Is this what you want to be known for, to reduce the wages of young people so that you can say – what, exactly, I'm not sure – that you supported large business so they could make more profit? It's not enough to give them a massive corporate tax break; now we're going to reduce wages of young people.

Again, I'm sure you've heard this all. It's difficult sometimes to sit there and listen to this stuff again and again and again, but it's important for me and for the people that I represent, the young people and their families and the workers who don't make a lot of money, people with modest levels of human capital, like they're defined by the Premier, I guess.

9:30

I want to be on the record to say that I'm opposed to this, absolutely, one hundred per cent. I would not support this. I do not support this. I firmly believe that our young people who work as hard as people who might be a month older than them based on their birthday are worth as much as the people that are older than them, and they should be paid equally for their work. People who do equal work deserve to be paid equally. It's actually fairly simple. It shouldn't be about profit; it should be about individual people.

With that being said, given the hour I am going to move that we adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** A point of clarification, Mr. Speaker. What's going on? We adjourned debate, correct?

**The Acting Speaker:** Debate is adjourned, yes.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I know it's new.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order. Ladies and gentlemen, please take into consideration the fact that this is my first time in the chair, so I am as much excited to learn about this process as, I'm sure, you all are who are new members.

#### Bill 1

#### An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments or questions to be offered with respect to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Excuse me. Thank you, Mr. Chair. You look great in there. If you could just say that one more time. You said that we have an amendment under consideration now?

**The Deputy Chair:** We are currently on amendment A1. It's an amendment from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Good. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this amendment in Committee of the Whole. Just to remind everybody what the amendment is:

- (1) On the coming into force of section 1, the Minister of Environment and Parks [will consult] with the public, industry and academic and scientific experts regarding the development of a comprehensive action plan . . . to address climate change.
- (2) Consultations under subsection (1) must be completed within 9 months . . .
- (3) The Minister [must] make public a report summarizing [these] consultations . . . within 120 days.

Certainly, I am in complete agreement with this amendment. Certainly, when you repeal something – you know, nature does not love a vacuum. By repealing the carbon levy and the climate action plan or parts of it, you need to make sure that you build something to give people the assurance that we are indeed moving forward in a positive way to address carbon emissions and to address all of the innovation and business opportunities that have already been created by the climate action plan that has been here in place for a number of years in Alberta.

During that time, Mr. Chair, we've created something of an industry phenomenon – right? – in terms of renewable energy. People are moving here from other jurisdictions because of the opportunities around wind and solar and geothermal energy, around creating energy efficiencies for existing structures, both public and private, and so forth. With just simply this act to repeal the carbon tax, you know, the job isn't done. You are making one action which, I would suggest, is not in the best interests of good governance, but you need to at least make sure you're compensating by having a plan and reassuring the public – industry and academic and scientific and the general public – that we're still moving ahead in a positive way, in keeping with the rest of the world, to reduce carbon emissions, to help to diversify the economy, and to help ensure that Alberta remains an energy leader throughout these times, because we are. We have technology, we have innovation, we have expertise, we have companies that are willing to make those innovations and to be nimble, and we need to provide reassurance from the very highest level, from this Chamber, that we are going to carry on and support those people every step of the way.

This amendment is reasonable, and I encourage all members to support it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

9:40

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. Again, I'll speak a little bit more to this amendment as well. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-North West for setting the tone there. The part that I want to touch on here is just the piece around consultation, particularly with the public and industry and academic and scientific experts. We know that there is a huge scientific and academic community here in Alberta that are certainly concerned about the repealing of the carbon tax, and we know the importance of consultation. I mean, our government took that very seriously. I think this is an important step to ensure that, you know, in the absence of evidence-based decision-making, we are able to at least try to move forward in a somewhat science-based approach.

I know that one of the conversations earlier today was just around the loss of solar jobs. I talked a fair bit on the record yesterday about solar energy and my own interest in renewables, and I think consulting with industry on this piece will be critical, because they are asking. They're starting to ask questions already. What's going to happen to all of our solar projects? Whether it be the solar projects in Maskwacis – I talked about how almost every building in the Louis Bull Tribe is being retrofitted with solar panels. We're talking not only about jobs. We're also talking about community development and bringing communities together.

I think I want to just really urge the members opposite to consider this amendment so that, again, we can move forward by saying that we're grounded in science and in evidence.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members who wish to speak?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I really appreciate the opportunity to continue to speak and look for constructive criticism of Bill 1 and to help make it better for Albertans. In that spirit, I do have an amendment that I would like to bring forward that I would ask if each of you would consider.

**The Deputy Chair:** We are going to take a quick pause while the amendment is being distributed.

Hon. members, this amendment will be referred to as amendment A2.

I invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West to speak if he has any comments.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. This amendment is fairly straightforward, as you can see. It talks about section 2(5)(b), and then it strikes out "does not apply" and substitutes "applies." This is in reference to the revenues that have been collected with the carbon levy in various forms. The original plan for the act, Bill 1, was to take outstanding revenues and put them back into general revenues. What this amendment does is that it compels the funds that were collected with the intention of applying them to, you know, climate leadership projects and to make sure that it stays that way.

I've heard the government talking about keeping Energy Efficiency Alberta at least in some form going, for example. But it won't go at all, Mr. Chair, if it doesn't have any oxygen – right? – if it is devoid of funds. Then again, same with a lot of these solar projects and so forth and energy efficiency projects that are happening with public buildings, schools and so forth. I think it's reasonable and logical and ethical to take the monies that were

collected, the remnants of the last bit of money that was collected through climate leadership and the carbon levy, and make sure that it's applied to these projects so that you have some symmetry from what the money was collected for and understanding and to make sure we are meeting the responsibilities that are outstanding around, let's say, Energy Efficiency Alberta or, you know, doing upgrades to make buildings more energy efficient and so forth.

Again, not to belabour this point, but I remember hearing unfair criticism of the carbon levy as somehow, you know, redirecting money inappropriately, right? But here we are looking at a government that's reducing taxes for the very wealthiest brackets of our society, reducing corporate taxes for even companies that are quite profitable – right? – which is a questionable economic choice. I've heard from so many quarters that by doing so you are making a distortion in the economy, and it has more negative effects than positive. Anyway, you are reducing those taxes on profitable corporations and high brackets of personal income tax, and at least some of that money – because money isn't money in the general revenues – would be coming from the carbon levy and the climate leadership program.

You know, one of the, I think, most compelling and fair parts of the climate leadership plan is the rebates that low-income people would receive from the carbon levy. So if they are paying in, they would be getting a cheque on the other side coming out. Well, again, that disappears through the exhaustion of funds, but you're taking the money that was intended for that and instead putting it in general revenues, and part of that money will go to pay for those tax cuts for the highest brackets of our society, right? I don't think that that is logical, I don't think it's fair, and it sort of smacks of a degree of hypocrisy as well.

I managed to fix it with this amendment, and, you know, everybody is going to like it. [interjection] Hopefully, I explained it in the clearest way possible, that the monies that were collected for the carbon levy – and I know that the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods got it a hundred per cent – will be taken to put back and to spend on the initiatives for which it was intended.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I really appreciate that. I'm really pleased to be able to rise to speak to the amendment that my colleague the Member for Edmonton-North West has brought forward to Bill 1. In fact, this is my first opportunity to speak to Bill 1 in this Chamber. So I'm really pleased to be able to speak up and share some of my thoughts about this particular piece of legislation because this piece of legislation is really important: important for this Chamber, important for our province, important for my constituents in Mill Woods.

9:50

Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, is something that is very worthy of a lot of discussion and debate, and this amendment that my hon. colleague has brought forward I think does something really important because – and many times in my time in this Chamber I have heard the members opposite, when they were in opposition, refer to the money raised through the climate leadership plan, through the carbon tax as being a slush fund, as being a tax grab purely for government gain, over and over, in fact. Right now what we are seeing through this amendment is a rectifying of something that I think is really important, because without this amendment the money raised by the carbon tax would become a slush fund and would actually go into general revenue rather than being able to use it for important programs and services that helped reduce carbon emissions in our province.

Now, one of the things that I found very interesting is that during this transition in the lead-up to Bill 1 there hasn't been a lot of clarity for consumers. I think in part that's understandable because of the transition – new government, new priorities, Bill 1 is being introduced – but it's left a lot of Albertans in the lurch. I know I saw one particular story of a family who had been told that their application for solar panels was in the queue to be processed. They heard from their contractor, the solar panel installers that they had worked with, that they've been through this many, many times and they were good to go. They did the installation, and now that approval has never come. That family is waiting at about the six-week mark because they submitted for approval before the election, but the timing – Energy Efficiency Alberta chose to and has not approved that family's rebate, essentially.

By not moving these monies into general revenue, perhaps we can make sure that Alberta families are not out of pocket for thousands of dollars for doing things like installing solar panels on their roofs to make a real change in the amount of energy generated through the solar panels for their own home, because these are, of course, investments, investments in our province, because of all the jobs that were created. Today in question period we heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar asking about all of the solar installation jobs, the new companies, the businesses that have started here in the province – we know there are a huge number of them – and there's a lot of uncertainty now because they're not sure what is going to happen, never mind in the long-term future but even just for work that's already been done.

This amendment gives us the opportunity of making sure that the monies collected under that carbon tax are used for the purposes that they were designed for, to continue to reduce emissions, because we were on track to cut more than 50 megatonnes of emissions over the next 10 years, the same as taking 10.6 million cars off the road, or nearly half the passenger vehicles in all of Canada. That's like eliminating the emissions of Metro Vancouver three times over.

We know that the jobs like those solar installers had are part of more than 7,300 jobs that were created in just the first two years. Making sure that we consider all the implications of Bill 1, as is appropriate in this place, is really important because climate change is an urgent issue for our society and our economy, and we know that Albertans want a very real plan to address it. Even with the change in government and changing priorities, being able to have a solution, being able to have a plan going forward is incredibly important.

I do think it's important to note that the implementation of a carbon tax was fundamentally a Conservative idea. Preston Manning has advocated for carbon taxes. It's widely known as the most efficient, most transparent, and most effective way to address changing climate. This was a market solution to a conquerable problem of climate change. Now we're just kicking that can down the road, without another solution ready to go. Once the impacts get stronger, it will require more government spending and intervention to be able to solve, so we're really stealing from our future at this point.

But I have spoken to the reasons why I think this amendment is important, making sure that the funds do not become a slush fund, which is what the members opposite spoke strongly against in the 29th Legislature, and that is why it has my support. I hope all members will support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak on amendment A2? I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is going to speak.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to the notice of amendment brought forward by the

Member for Edmonton-North West, to talk about what the revenue would be supporting. I'd just like to talk a little bit about some of the things that we had set up to support out of the carbon levy.

Transit. In Edmonton-Castle Downs constituents have a difficult time accessing public transit, so what we did is we invested \$3 billion over 10 years for light rail transit in both Calgary and Edmonton from the CLP, including \$1.53 billion for Calgary's green line and \$1.47 billion to support Edmonton Transit, including the west valley line. This budget also included \$967 million over GreenTRIP and other community transit investments.

We talked about the rebates: \$700 million rebated to a majority – that's two-thirds – of Albertans to make their lives more affordable and to offset the carbon levy costs. That would be gone.

We looked at upgrading things such as schools, universities, hospitals, and colleges, all very important. Forty million dollars has been invested in schools, universities, colleges, and hospitals for projects that cut emissions and save operating costs such as the University of Alberta district heating project, which allows the university to own and operate its own thermal energy, cutting 60,000 tonnes of emissions.

**10:00**

We talked about Energy Efficiency Alberta. Programs launched since 2017 have yielded \$510 million in energy savings, \$710 million in economic growth, 4.2 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions reductions – that's the same as taking about 722,000 vehicles off the road for a year – \$13.5 million in energy efficiency products installed, and 12 million cubic metres of water savings. For every dollar invested into the EEA programs, \$3.30 was returned to Albertans' pockets. That's a big deal, Mr. Chair.

I would ask that all members in this House support this amendment, and at this time I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Chair, I will move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, please.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the bill: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

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

I see the hon. Government House Leader is rising.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all members for their hard work this evening. Good ground has been made. As such, I will move that we adjourn the House until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:04 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 30, 2019

Day 6

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 30, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. O Lord and giver of good, we thank You for the opportunities that we have before us today. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 1

#### An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

**The Deputy Chair:** Currently we are dealing with amendment A2. Are there any comments or questions with regard to this? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to of course offer my comments on this amendment going forward, but first of all, I would like to invite all of my colleagues here in the Legislature, you know, if you're not paying attention to the debate here this morning, to take a walk out onto the balcony here outside the Chamber and breathe deeply. Tell me how pleasant that feels to inhale all of that smoke into your lungs, and then imagine that this becomes normal, every year, forever. Not only will it become the new normal for Alberta at this time of year, but we will have air quality like this from the end of February until the beginning of December if climate models are correct, and of course we know that they probably won't be correct because the history of climate models indicates that they always underestimate the impacts of climate change.

Of course, if some of you are a little bit tired this morning because it was really hot last night and you couldn't sleep in the heat, imagine that we are going to have at least two months every year here in Edmonton of days like that, more in Calgary and southern Alberta. So I hope that the members opposite really get used to, you know, sleeping at night at 31 degrees Celsius.

My heart goes out to the people of Wabasca and Bigstone, who had to evacuate their homes last night, and I wish them a speedy return. But like I've said many times in debate on this bill, Mr. Chair, it's not enough to just offer our thoughts and prayers to the people who are affected by climate change induced wildfires; it's incumbent upon us to actually take action to prevent these things from happening.

I hope, you know, the members who represent those areas – I'm thinking of the Member for Peace River, the Member for Lesser Slave Lake, the members from Fort McMurray – are willing to go back to their constituencies this weekend and look their constituents in the eye and say: "We had the opportunity to develop a meaningful plan of action to tackle climate change, to tackle the climate crisis, and we didn't take it. I'm sorry, people of those constituencies, but you'd better be on standing evacuation notice from now until forever because we refuse to take action on climate change."

Now, to get to the crux of this amendment, Mr. Chair, what this amendment proposes – and I'm sure that my colleague from Edmonton-North West got into this in great detail last night – is that the money that was already collected as part of the carbon levy should be spent on climate change initiatives.

Now, of course, we admit that the carbon tax is not an incredibly popular piece of policy. In fact, in my own constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar I heard some complaints as well about the carbon tax, but what they didn't complain about were the programs that the carbon tax revenue funded. Certainly, people were irritated at having to pay the carbon tax but were not irritated when Energy Efficiency Alberta showed up to replace their light bulbs and shower heads and thermostats. They certainly weren't irritated when they got generous rebates on energy-efficient appliances. They were quite happy when their homes were audited for energy efficiency and they were offered rebates to upgrade the insulations in their attics, walls, and basements. Mr. Chair, of course, in my constituency the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar are eagerly awaiting the completion of the construction of the southeast LRT line, money that comes from the carbon levy funds.

Of course, it's not just my constituency. I mean, Edmonton-Gold Bar is a pretty special place, but it's not unique in that all Albertans have been wildly in favour of all of these climate change initiatives. That's why they've been oversubscribed as soon as they've been rolled out.

We think that it's only fair that if the people of Alberta have been asked to pay the carbon tax, they actually get what they paid for and that we keep the money that was collected from the carbon tax to be used for the purposes it was intended. At least let those programs run their course. Of course, we know that the Member for Calgary-Acadia is a fan of letting things run out in due course. We think that the whole government should let the climate change programs that we initiated run their due course as well, with the remaining money that is left in the carbon tax fund.

Mr. Chair, I hope that all of my colleagues see fit to actually uphold the promise that they made to the people of Alberta that the carbon tax money would be spent on climate change initiatives and vote in favour of this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

It looks like I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View looking to speak to amendment A2.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I think it's worth while taking a moment to note this amendment. What the change is attempting to do is to keep in place the brackets around the way in which funds coming in can be used. Those were put in place originally to ensure that while we were working on the demand side with respect to pollution, we were also ensuring that we were assisting individuals, those individuals who were low income and were not able to afford the transition as easily, that we were providing programs, that we were providing adaptation programs for folks who might have a harder time adapting.

9:10

As I think has been mentioned in this House, many First Nations unfortunately still run on diesel fuel for power generation, which is a very carbon-intensive manner of generating power. Some folks, simply due to their circumstances, require a little bit more in order to adapt. There are some schools, some in my riding, that are quite old and might need additional help in order to adapt.

The reason for those rules around how the funds could be spent is to ensure that Albertans could have confidence, confidence that the plan was, in fact, about ensuring that as we moved forward, we

were adapting to a lower carbon future, not immediately but at some point in the future. You know, as we over here and, I'm sure, the members over there are rapidly discovering, large systems don't turn quickly or easily. Knowing what the future holds, I think it's incumbent upon us to begin to adapt as soon as we can. I think this amendment is designed to help to ensure that what funds are coming in – we know that as soon as Alberta's plan is repealed, we'll move to the plan from Ottawa. This would ensure that what money comes in still goes to those good works and goes to moving this province forward.

I think this is an excellent amendment. I'm certainly in favour of moving forward with it. I think, again, you know, as we stand in this place, future generations are watching us and will be looking to us to say: when you had the opportunity, what did you do? I think this is brought forward in a spirit of ensuring that even though we are going in the direction we're going, even though we're getting rid of the Alberta plan, even though we're moving to the federal plan, we're doing our best to ensure that we're still helping the people of Alberta as much as we can, and we're still doing our part to make progress.

With that, I will close.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday looking to speak.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't want to belabour this point too much. I just want to make sure that my name and voice are on the record in support of this amendment. I remember, not that long ago, when the members of the government were on this side, and they were saying: how are you going to promise us that this funding is going to go where it's supposed to go? Here we are today, and they're doing exactly what they argued that we shouldn't do. I think that they should consider supporting this amendment. I think that the money that has been funding these programs, money from our taxpayers, the people of this province, should go towards what they were promised it would go towards.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Like my fellow colleague from Edmonton-West Henday, I'd just like to also put my name and my voice on the record in support of this amendment, primarily because when I was speaking to the constituents in my riding of Edmonton-Whitemud, the issue that they cared about most when we were talking about the economy – we on this side also care very much about the economy – was diversification, because they wanted to see our province be able to move forward in a way that isn't completely reliant on one source, one industry, because we've become so vulnerable to its fluctuations.

Diversification was a big issue that we talked about, and they very much appreciated that at least one of the uses of the carbon levy, other than rebates, was to actually invest in new energy sources and new industries that would actually diversify our economy. Again I go back to the comments from my colleagues about how important it is that we use the money that was collected under the carbon tax to continue to invest in diversification and in new energy sources because we do need to look at the future and look at the long term for this province's economy and stop relying solely on one industry that's going to continue to be subject to international influences and things that are out of our control. We should take control of our destiny and our economic future, and that was part of the benefits of the climate leadership plan, the diversification of and the use of the carbon tax resources.

I stand in support of this amendment and encourage everybody to consider that we should continue to invest those in diversification of our economy, as intended. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview rising to speak.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. You know, I join my colleagues in support of this amendment. I mean, yesterday when I spoke, I talked extensively about many projects in my constituency that benefited from the energy efficiency monies. I think it'd be very tragic if these projects couldn't go ahead.

Actually, just yesterday I received a letter from one of my constituents in support of this, and I wanted to share that with the House. It says:

I support strong energy efficiency programs in Alberta. Your support to keep energy efficiency a priority in our province is an opportunity for Albertans to save money off every utility bill and find jobs in emerging sectors. All while reducing our province's emissions . . .

. . . Alberta has an energy efficiency program that has returned \$3 to Albertans for every \$1 invested. Continuing an energy efficiency program is an investment into our communities, businesses and province that makes sense.

More than 3,600 jobs have been created in the energy efficiency sector since 2017.

Of course, that was under our government's mandate, the NDP government.

Across the country, it is expected that this sector will continue to grow by 8.3%. Let's keep this momentum by supporting energy efficiency in Alberta.

Energy efficiency saves me money at home. And more significantly, retrofits can reduce energy bills upwards of 50% for Alberta's businesses and communities.

I want Alberta to have an innovative and strong energy efficiency program. Keep energy efficiency a priority for Alberta.

Sincerely,  
raine turner

I received that yesterday from Raine Turner. They're a constituent of mine. I just am, really, here to represent my constituents. I've heard loud and clearly from them that it's very important for this to go ahead. So, again, I stand in support of the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, rise on behalf of constituents who are complaining loud and clearly to me that the monies generated by the carbon levy are not going to be used to benefit them and programs that they wish to apply for to save money and reinsulate their homes or upgrade their windows or change their furnace. Many programs existed under this carbon levy fund to benefit constituents, like those who are complaining to me that now this shell game is going to be moving that money into general revenue and therefore their benefits will be lost. My constituents are complaining loud and clear to me that this money should be staying in the fund and be used for the purposes for which it was raised.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just rising briefly to urge the Assembly to accept this motion. I can tell you that at the lengthy

debates when we introduced our climate leadership plan, including the price on carbon, the opposition, the then Wildrose opposition and the PC opposition, were greatly concerned that revenues from the price on carbon would go into general revenues. In fact, the former Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat talked about a slush fund over and over again despite the fact that we clarified that every dollar was getting reinvested back into the economy.

Now what we're seeing in this bill is that leftovers from the price on carbon are actually going into general revenues. They are actually going into a slush fund that the government can decide to use for whatever it wants as opposed to retrofits or investing in renewables or programs to support renewables. So I find it, you know, pretty interesting that now the shoe is on the other foot: "Well, no, that's not a slush fund. That's okay." But three years ago it wasn't when they were sitting on this side. Funny how quickly things change when a party gets into government.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will take my seat and urge all members to vote in favour of this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members looking to speak to amendment A2?

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any members who wish to speak to Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar standing.

9:20

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, it's very interesting, as my colleague and friend from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview said, how quickly the members of the UCP caucus have gone from opposing a slush fund to voting in favour of it. Of course, my constituents will be very disappointed to learn that the carbon tax dollars that they begrudgingly paid are now going to fund corporate tax giveaways. So rather than getting solar panels, light bulbs, energy-efficient appliances, insulation, and an LRT, they're going to get CEO bonuses and stock buybacks and see absolutely no benefit from the carbon tax levy that they paid into.

That's fine. You know, Mr. Chair, I think what we've seen already in – what day is this? – day 6 of the Legislature is an incredible rush to disappoint the people of Alberta. Already, on day 6, the people of Alberta have been significantly let down by the members across the way. I can only expect that it will get worse from here.

However, saying that, I know that many of my colleagues here in this House believe in redemption, so I come forward with an amendment in the spirit of redemption, Mr. Chair, that the hon. members should feel free to take. I would like to table another amendment to this bill, and I have the appropriate number of copies.

**The Deputy Chair:** I'm just going to take a minute here to distribute the amendment. This amendment going forward will be A3.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, do you have comments with regard to your amendment A3?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Amendment A3? It's in order? All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move an amendment that Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, be amended as follows. Section 1 is amended by striking out "immediately at the beginning of the day on May 30, 2019" and substituting "immediately at the beginning of the day on which Alberta becomes a listed province as defined in section 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (Canada)." Section 2(3) is amended (a) by striking out "immediately at the beginning of the

day on May 30, 2019" and substituting "immediately at the beginning of the day on which Alberta becomes a listed province as defined in section 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (Canada)", and (b) by striking out "on or before June 29, 2019" and substituting "on or before the date prescribed by the Minister." Section 3(2) is struck out and the following is substituted:

(2) Section 35.2 is repealed and the following is substituted:

Application of Division

35.2(1) This Division applies to payments deemed under section 35.3(3) to have been paid in a specified month in 2017 and subsequent years up to and including the year in which Alberta becomes a listed province as defined in section 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (Canada).

(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations specifying months in which no payment shall be deemed under section 35.3(3) to have been paid, provided that those months occur following the month in which Alberta becomes a listed province as defined in section 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (Canada).

Section 6(1) is amended by striking out "on May 30, 2019" and substituting "on the day on which Alberta becomes a listed province as defined in section 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (Canada)."

Now, Mr. Chair, what this bill does is that it reduces the red tape that this government is subjecting everybody who has to pay the federal carbon tax to. It was with – how should I describe it? – perverse delight, I guess, that I read the contents of Bill 4, the so-called Red Tape Reduction Act, introduced yesterday, and of course if anybody took the time to read the contents of the act, all it did was generate more red tape for the government bureaucracy, which is interesting.

You know, we have a government that is using quite Orwellian language in its legislation and its press releases. It says that it's repealing the carbon tax; it's actually implementing the federal carbon tax. It says that it's opening Alberta for business; it's actually picking workers' pockets. It says that it's creating jobs by offering corporate tax cuts, and when asked, the minister can't actually say how many jobs it's going to create or when. Then we have a Red Tape Reduction Act that actually increases the amount of red tape that the government bureaucracy has to deal with. That's why I say that, you know, the people of Alberta are being vastly disappointed by the members opposite with the first four pieces of legislation that the members opposite have brought forward.

Now, Mr. Chair, what this amendment does is that it actually reduces red tape. We all know that the federal carbon tax is going to be imposed. That's the choice that the members opposite have made for the people of Alberta. We strongly disagree with that choice, but they seem intent on ramming the federal carbon tax down the throats of the people of Alberta. So all we're trying to do with this amendment is to make that transition easier, so rather than, you know, Albertans having to shift their systems twice, they only have to shift their systems once. I think it makes sense.

Everybody in this Chamber, at least, says that they want the economy to operate smoothly, that they want businesses to be able to conduct their work free from red tape and overregulation, so this just eases that transition that the government is choosing to force on our businesses here in this province, makes it easier, reduces the red tape. I challenge the members opposite: if they're genuinely interested, if they're genuinely committed to reducing red tape, then vote in favour of this amendment and actually take a significant measure to reduce the red tape that they say they want to lessen on the economy of Alberta.

I look forward to all of my colleagues voting in favour of this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members looking to speak to amendment A3?

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving back to Bill 1, are there any members who wish to speak to Bill 1?

Seeing no one, are you ready for the question on Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax?

[The clauses of Bill 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

9:30

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Chair, I move that we rise and report the bill.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed, say no. So ordered. Carried.

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 1 An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

[The Speaker in the chair]

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to colleagues for this opportunity to speak to third reading of An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax. Our party has been working since the day of its creation for this moment, this opportunity to remove this huge dead-weight cost that punishes hard-working people for living ordinary lives in this province.

But let me begin by tracing the history of this damaging tax imposed by the previous NDP government. First of all, Mr. Speaker, we can cast our minds back to the 2015 general election, in which the NDP published its platform, that did not utter a single word or even hint at a carbon tax or whatever euphemism they choose to use: a carbon price, a carbon levy. There was no allusion to it at all. In fact, in the annex of the NDP platform they delineated 12 tax policy changes, not a single one referring to the carbon tax. Without imputing any motive to members of the Assembly, of

course, this was a huge act of political deception foisted on Alberta voters by a party that knew perfectly well its intention to impose a carbon tax but hid that intention from voters. Yet within weeks of becoming government, they appointed a commission which ultimately gave the NDP the recommendation it was looking for to impose a carbon tax on Albertans without democratic consent.

It is no wonder that since that day four years ago over two-thirds of Albertans, in every single public opinion poll taken on the issue, have demonstrated consistent opposition to the tax on living their normal lives imposed by the NDP by the carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, at least what we are doing today is restoring a sense of respect for democracy in this province. Unlike the NDP, which foisted a carbon tax on Albertans without having been transparent with them in the last election, this was one of our central commitments. That is why it is Bill 1. This is not only part of our job-creation strategy to renew Alberta's economy; this is also, in part, a renewal of the spirit of democracy in Alberta politics here today.

Let me point out that the NDP callously imposed this tax on people for the crime of heating their homes and filling up their gas tanks to go to work in the midst of the worst economic downturn in this province since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Mr. Speaker, when people are losing their jobs, their businesses, their homes, when their incomes are declining, when in desperation many people left the province, how callous do you have to be to make that bad situation of economic adversity even worse?

You know, one of the things I find, frankly, so distasteful is the constant tendency of the NDP and their ideological fellow-travellers to refer to themselves as "progressives." Mr. Speaker, what is progressive about telling a widow on a fixed income that she has to pay more to heat her home? What is compassionate about the Leader of the Opposition, the then Premier, saying that if you don't like it, then perhaps you should take the bus or walk to work? What understanding is there in that comment of the challenges that ordinary people face? The NDP in its callousness is not understanding that for the vast majority of Albertans walking to work is not an option, that there is in many cases if not most really no bus to take.

What about the working people, that the NDP ridiculously claims historically to represent, the working people who need to take their pickup to work with their tools and their equipment? There's no bus that they can take. There's no change of life they can make in this real world to avoid paying a carbon tax. So all it does is punish those people for doing what they ought to do, which is to work hard and take care of their families, punishing moms and dads for driving their kids to hockey practice, punishing seniors for heating their homes. What this government said is that it would become more expensive to do what you've got to do simply to survive in this cold northern economy. Callous and regressive, not progressive, Mr. Speaker.

You know, let me, then, speak to the basic purported concept of so-called carbon pricing. Now, theoretically, for example, I'm sure that Professor Leach at the University of Alberta, who in part designed this carbon tax, which will be repealed today or very shortly, and others would say, and I'll try to be objective and fair in representing their general view, that a carbon tax is more efficient than regulation and that carbon taxes can be an efficient form of environmental policy to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions if they are revenue neutral – that is to say, if they displace other taxes, if other taxes are reduced proportionate to the carbon tax increase – secondly, if they displace other regulations so that it's a substitute for regulations in the theoretical carbon tax model; thirdly, if they are progressive with very generous rebates; and fourthly, if they are of general application globally or at least amongst competing economies.



9:40

Let me walk through each of those four principles. Mr. Speaker, none of them apply to the NDP carbon tax. I say to those who are theoretical supporters of some conceptual, perfect, utopian carbon tax that that is not what we are debating in this House today. That is not what the NDP imposed on us four years ago. To the contrary, it was 100 per cent new revenue. It was, frankly, nothing but a tax grab, a political tax grab. There was not one cent in offsetting tax reductions. To the contrary. In the midst of an historic recession, while tens of thousands of people were losing their jobs, what did the NDP do? They raised taxes on everything, not just on heating homes and filling up gas tanks but also on job creators and on incomes and on property, on the provincial portion of property taxes, and they conspired with their ally, Mr. Trudeau, to raise payroll taxes on Albertans, making it even more expensive for job creators to hire people.

The theory is that you're supposed to reduce taxes to offset the revenue gain from a carbon tax. This socialist crowd did exactly the opposite, Mr. Speaker. They raised taxes while imposing the carbon tax cumulatively, all of this increasing the tax burden on the productive sector of our economy in a way that deepened and prolonged the longest recession since the Great Depression. On principle 1 of the carbon tax, this was a complete failure.

Principle 2, replacing offsetting regulations. Well, Mr. Speaker, did the government reduce a single regulation to effectively replace, quote, costly regs with a carbon tax? No. To the contrary. They increased regs week after week, month after month, specifically regs ostensibly to deal with greenhouse gas emissions. They supported similar new regulatory burdens imposed by their allies in the federal Liberal government. All they did was to add to the regulatory dead-weight burden on the Alberta economy with a tax that is notionally supposed to replace the regulatory burden. So on principle 2 of an ideal carbon tax, what we are debating today, the NDP's tax, was a complete failure.

Thirdly, these taxes are supposed to be notionally progressive, and the NDP will talk ad nauseam about rebates, but, Mr. Speaker, only 40 per cent of the revenues generated from the carbon tax went back in rebates, and those rebates only went to a select number of individuals in about 60 per cent of Alberta households. Now, while we oppose the federal carbon tax, by contrast, 90 per cent of the revenues generated by the federal carbon tax go back in rebates to 100 per cent of households and, based on today's announcement, to small businesses as well. There was no rebate, by the way, for the small businesses impacted by the NDP carbon tax, who will as a result of this bill save an estimated \$4,500 per year on average. There was no rebate for the nonprofits and charities who had to struggle to pay the carbon tax bill, no rebates for the school boards that had to pay more simply to run their school buses.

Mr. Speaker, I'll give you a couple of concrete examples of that kind of regressivity. I visited the West Country seniors' centre in my friend the hon. Government House Leader's constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. It's a wonderful spot, Mr. Speaker. I recommend that members go and visit it to see, really, the volunteer spirit in Alberta generally, particularly rural Alberta. This is a wonderful little spot, run one hundred per cent by volunteer labour, where the community gathers to keep seniors active. They go and play cards and shuffleboard, and they have exercise activities. I think we were there for a darts tournament. It's just a wonderful spot.

Now, the West Country seniors' centre, Mr. Speaker – I met with the executive board. They operate that place – get this – on a budget of \$18,000 for the entire year. For the entire year. Now, they bring

in a few thousand dollars in offsetting revenues from hall rentals, but, you know, otherwise they're paying for it with a \$20 membership fee and the odd little donation here and there.

The NDP comes along, slaps on the carbon tax that they hid from voters in the last election, and suddenly heating costs went up, and then they went up again. They were having to pay I think it was upwards of \$2,000 in carbon tax to heat Sundre's seniors' centre. They called the Premier's office to say: "Is there any help for us to cover the burden which you've imposed? We may have to close the place down." I mean, my hon. colleague can verify that they looked at possibly having to close the seniors' centre down. They called the Premier's office, the now Leader of the Opposition, and the staff there said: we suggest you raise your membership fees. Seniors, Mr. Speaker, on fixed incomes being told that they had to pay more so that the NDP could scoop more revenue from them. Is that progressive? Is that compassionate?

What about the Calgary board of education? My colleague from Chestermere-Strathmore could correct me, but I believe that they were paying over a \$1 million a year to pay carbon tax to operate their fleet of school buses, and they had to cut routes and reduce access to school busing for students. If I'm not mistaken, a lot of that happened in my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services' constituency, and many parents are upset to this day as a result of the loss of bus service, and many of those are new Canadian families, and some of them are low-income new Canadian families, whose kids now struggle to get to alternative schools in part because of this carbon tax. How is that progressive, Mr. Speaker, to tell low-income new Canadian families, "Sorry; you can't get your kid to an alternative program so they can get a great start in life because we need to scoop that revenue because we believe in punishing people," for what is nothing more than empty virtue signalling? I'll get to that in a moment.

Oh, by the way, here's the whopper on progressivity. The NDP claimed that there would be these generous rebates, Mr. Speaker, but then in last year's budget the then Finance minister revealed, not transparently in the documents but only under questioning from the media – he was forced to tell the truth and to admit that as the carbon tax went up and up and up, there would be no increase in the so-called low-income rebates. Let me just paint the picture here. They started their carbon tax at 20 bucks a tonne, and then they raised it by 50 per cent the next year to \$30 a tonne, and then their plan – and their entire fiscal plan was predicated on this – was to raise that to the next increment, \$40 and then \$50 a tonne.

Of course, they weren't going to stop there because as the then environment minister and the Premier both admitted, they would continue to, quote, increase the stringency of the climate leadership levy in co-ordination with the federal government. Now, Mr. Speaker, one rule of thumb I have in politics is that if you have to use an entire string of euphemisms to disguise what you're actually doing, it's probably because it's not good for Albertans.

9:50

Increase the stringency of the climate leadership levy: let me translate that into plain English, Mr. Speaker. That meant increasing the tax on Albertans. That was their plan, to go from \$20 to \$30 – they got us there – then to go to \$50, and then to go higher and higher and higher. In fact, they wanted to tie themselves to their allies the Trudeau Liberals, whose environment ministry has admitted through documents obtained through access to information that they intend ultimately to raise the carbon tax to \$300 a tonne.

That really shouldn't be a surprise, Mr. Speaker, because all of the hard-core carbon tax advocates admit that for it to have a sufficient impact on people's behaviour – let me translate that. For

it to force people to turn the heat down enough in the winter and to give up driving to work, for it to force people to do that sufficiently, to significantly reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, it requires a price – and I'm now paraphrasing Professor Leach, the principal author of this tax – of at least \$200 a tonne. So that's where they're headed.

In fact, our colleagues opposite frequently cite the UN international panel on climate change, which published a paper last year, Mr. Speaker, which called for a carbon tax of between \$500 a tonne and \$5,000 a tonne. Five thousand dollars a tonne. As I've always said, this is all about the frog in the pot. It's always been an incremental tax grab. They benignly start at \$20, and for most people it probably wasn't a huge irritant. Then they'd raise to \$30. Then it was going to go to \$50. Then the federal government says to \$90, then eventually to \$300, and then according to the UN experts it should go up to \$5,000, making it effectively impossible to live normal lives in this northern, cold climate. That is where they were headed.

Mr. Speaker, here's the point. As the price was to go up from \$30 to \$50 and beyond \$50, no increase in the rebates. Progressivity: what did this mean? This means that the poorest Albertans – the people living on AISH with no earned income, for example, people living on social assistance, seniors living on GIS – would have zero relief from the government as they had to pay more for the crime of heating their homes and nothing for the embedded increase in the cost of buying groceries. You know what the carbon tax does? It makes the cost of transporting things more expensive. When you go to the grocery store, everything has been transported, a lot of it from great distances, so the price of everything goes up as a result.

Let's be clear. The NDP, who call themselves progressives, if they vote against this bill, Mr. Speaker, what they are telling low-income Albertans is that they want to return to the NDP plan of taking money out of the scarce budgets of people on the very lowest levels of income, and I think that is shameful and one of the reasons that we need to pass the carbon tax repeal act.

On the fourth principle, then, Mr. Speaker, of the conceptual idea of a carbon tax. It has to be effective. It must be of general application. What does that mean? Well, what it means is that the challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which I acknowledge is important, is a global challenge. It is not a challenge that is limited to the borders of Alberta. In fact, we could shut down Alberta's economy tomorrow – heaven knows the NDP certainly tried – and that would reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by about two-tenths of a per cent, by .2 per cent. So 99.8 per cent of global emissions would continue and in most countries continue to rise. In fact, the incremental growth in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the People's Republic of China alone next year would completely consume the elimination of the Alberta economy in terms of its impact on global emissions. Why do I paint this kind of absurd example? It's in order for us to understand that it doesn't matter how much pain we impose on Albertans. If the rest of the world is not doing its part, it will not matter one whit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have seen the flight of tens of billions of dollars of investment capital from Alberta, which is one of the reasons we've seen the loss of tens of thousands of jobs. Much of that capital has moved from Alberta's energy sector to the energy sector in other jurisdictions, very often to other jurisdictions with lower environmental standards, and in every instance that capital has moved from Alberta with the carbon tax to energy producers without a carbon tax. In fact, of the world's 10 largest oil and gas producers, Alberta is the only one to have imposed a carbon tax on itself.

The United States has doubled oil production in the past decade, much of it, I will add, under former President Obama's tenure, the same President who talked a lot about greenhouse gas emissions

and blocked the Keystone XL pipeline. That President oversaw a doubling of oil production. No carbon tax.

Russia, the world's largest current contemporary producer of oil, with radically lower environmental standards than Canada: no carbon tax. Venezuela, with the largest recoverable reserves on earth, run by a brutal socialist dictatorship: no carbon tax. I guess they didn't get the memo from Socialist International that they're supposed to impose a carbon tax. Saudi Arabia, Mr. Speaker, I think has the second-largest reserves on earth: no carbon tax. Qatar, the Islamic Republic of Iran, et al.: no carbon taxes. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the industrialized world is going in the opposite direction for reasons I will explain in a few moments. The industrialized world is moving away, not towards but away, from carbon taxes.

Well, let's look at Canada, for example. In Ontario they had a facsimile of a carbon tax, called the cap and trade system, which was repudiated by Ontario voters in their election last year and has been repealed as a result. In New Brunswick they elected a government on the commitment to oppose the carbon tax. In Saskatchewan the government was re-elected on the commitment to oppose a carbon tax. In Manitoba the provincial government there had intended to co-operate with the federal government until they learned that it was Ottawa's way or the highway, that there was going to be no compromise, that Ottawa insisted on a \$30 and then \$50 and then \$90 carbon tax. So Premier Pallister pulled out: no carbon tax.

Let's look down south, Washington State, which is arguably the most liberal, certainly one of the most liberal, states in the United States, has voted now not once but twice in the past three years in referenda to oppose the imposition of carbon taxes.

Our friends in Australia, which in many ways is perhaps the most similar liberal democracy to Canada: the sister party of the NDP there, the Labor Party of Australia – they are both members of Socialist International – seven years ago imposed a carbon tax. But then voters said, "This is ridiculous. This is hurting our livelihoods, our economy, and it's doing nothing for the environment," so voters elected a small "c" conservative, large "l" liberal government that immediately repealed the Aussie carbon tax. Now, here's a very interesting footnote. That Australian Conservative government was re-elected last week on its pledge to continue opposing job-killing policies of the Labor Party. In the same election the Labor Party, the sister party of the NDP in Australia, said it would never again impose a carbon tax on Australia. Even the sister parties in Socialist International are fleeing from the idea of carbon taxes because they know that it's all economic pain and no environmental gain, Mr. Speaker.

**10:00**

The only folks to not get the memo are in this House. They're the only ones, Mr. Speaker. In France they had intended to impose a carbon tax under a socialist government, another sister party in Socialist International. Guess what? The socialist government of former President François Hollande said at the last minute: no, we're not going to proceed with this.

The massive protests in the streets of France in the past several months threatening the stability of their government: do you know what the central issue motivating those protests is? It's the ridiculously high taxes on energy, that already exist in France, that are creating energy poverty for middle-class people. These are protests led, by and large, by middle-class, suburban people in France, who are saying: we can't afford to run our small businesses, to drive to work anymore. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the industrialized world is moving in the opposite direction.

Here's the point. If at least peer jurisdictions with whom we compete economically are not imposing a tax like this on themselves, then what's the point? All we end up doing is creating what economists call carbon leakage, which really means capital leakage or jobs leakage. It means that if we make it more expensive to produce and consume energy and our competing jurisdictions don't, then that energy consumption will, according to the basic laws of economics, simply move to other jurisdictions, and that's exactly what has happened.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Just simply take a flight down to Houston and go to the west Permian and you will see the biggest boom in energy production in American history and in North American history. Drive across the Saskatchewan border to North Dakota and see what's happening in the Bakken reserve, and you will see this huge explosion.

When you look out and you see those drilling rigs and those service rigs, Mr. Speaker, if you look closely, you'll see that a lot of them are from Canada. A lot of them are from Alberta. This has been a massive shift of labour, of money, of equipment, and of jobs. If you don't believe me, just take a drive 20 minutes south of here. Go to Ritchie Bros. in Leduc, the constituency of my friend from Leduc-Beaumont, and you will see at any given time thousands of pieces of equipment being auctioned off. They have had to auction off billions of dollars worth of equipment in the past four years, much of it, if not most of it, being purchased by American companies at fire-sale prices. You know what? Very often that equipment initially belonged, before it went into receivership or bankruptcy, to small Alberta enterprises, gals and guys who rolled their life savings into starting that small oil field service company, that small drilling company.

I see the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon. His community has been devastated by companies exactly like that, one after another after another, being bankrupted. I remember that I visited one in July of 2016. They had gone from 400 employees to 200 employees. I went back to visit them in July of 2018. The company didn't exist anymore. That's the story of Drayton Valley. That's the story of much of Alberta in the last four years.

Here's the point. All of that equipment that moved south, that's sitting at the Ritchie Bros. yard, it's moving to produce energy in jurisdictions that do not have a carbon tax. So what is the point? Mr. Speaker, if we really compel the NDP to be honest about this – oh, I guess I'll add a fifth obvious principle of a carbon tax. It's supposed to reduce emissions. It's supposed to reduce emissions. Well, Mr. Speaker, how's that working out? It's fascinating.

Last December CBC was doing a year-end interview with the then Premier, and they asked her: by how much are you reducing emissions with the carbon tax? And she said: I'm sorry; I'll have to get back to you; I wasn't briefed on that. I wasn't briefed on that? I wasn't briefed on that. On the centrepiece policy of the entire NDP government: didn't have an answer.

I'll tell you why she didn't have an answer. It's because the answer is that there is zero measurable reduction in Alberta greenhouse gas emissions as a result of the NDP's retail carbon tax.

In fact, a professor at Simon Fraser University, an economist – somebody can look this up for me. Mark Jaccard is his name. Professor Jaccard wrote an op-ed in the *Globe and Mail* last December. He is a strong advocate of carbon taxes, I think the pure and ideal form that I'm trying to describe. Professor Jaccard essentially said in this op-ed that at most – at most – the NDP carbon tax in Alberta would be responsible for 5 per cent of the total emissions reductions projected to happen in this province as a result of all the other measures like, primarily, shutting down coal plants.

Even their academic fans on carbon taxes have admitted that at most the carbon tax had a negligible effect, basically an immeasurable effect on greenhouse gas emissions. Yet these guys prance around claiming that this is going to save the global environment. It's going to save the world, Mr. Speaker, making widows pay more to heat their homes while the rest of the developed world is turning away from carbon pricing and the developing world is massively increasing emissions. It is a total charade.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me then turn my attention to the impact that this has had on Alberta. This is a quote from Professor Jaccard, December 14, 2018, *Globe and Mail*, headline: Divisive Carbon Taxes Are Much Ado about Nothing. He goes on to say:

Pollsters say Alberta Premier's... carbon tax contributes significantly to her dim re-election prospects.

Well, that turns out to have been prophetic.

Ironically, my research team finds the new tax [in Alberta] will cause only as much as 5 per cent of her climate plan's projected reductions. The heavy lifting is from... coal plant phaseout, methane regulations, a preexisting flex-reg on large industries and a cap on oil sands emissions. I'll bet she wishes an economist had told her she didn't need the tax, and that it does almost nothing anyway.

Now, just to be clear, this is not some supporter of my party. This is a fellow who is a carbon tax advocate, Mr. Speaker, who says – let me say that again – that the NDP carbon tax, which we are repealing today, “does almost nothing.” The NDP tax is increasingly regressive, not progressive, not revenue neutral but instead a tax grab, not a general application because the rest of the world is not doing it and, in fact, going in the opposite direction, and not reducing emissions. Again I ask: so what is the point? The best answer I can come up with is this. It makes them feel better about themselves. It makes them feel virtuous. It makes the NDP feel like they are somehow saving the planet by punishing people for living normal lives.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, but the charade ends in this place today as we speak with clarity on behalf of the vast majority of Albertans who have said from day one that they oppose this punishing tax. Today we will liberate Albertans from that tax with the adoption of this bill, our central election commitment. Promise made, promise kept. The carbon tax repealed.

10:10

With this bill, Mr. Speaker, a family that has two cars will save up to \$1,800 over the next four years alone, and that's not accounting for how high they would have raised it. Scrapping the carbon tax will reduce the tax burden on Albertans by \$1.4 billion. As best we can tell, this represents the single largest tax cut in Alberta fiscal history, right here today, and 70 per cent of Alberta's middle-income families will be saving up to \$1,150 as a result of repealing the carbon tax.

It is estimated by Stokes Economics, a highly regarded independent econometric firm, that the repeal of the carbon tax will result in the creation of at least 6,000 new, full-time, private-sector jobs. Let me give you some detail on that: 1,400 new jobs in manufacturing, 1,200 new jobs in the trades, nearly 1,000 new jobs in transportation and warehousing. Stokes Economics estimates that this repeal will increase our economy, our gross domestic product by \$1.3 billion, that it will save the average small business \$4,500, that it will help charities, some of whom estimate that they pay more than \$35,000 per year in carbon taxes under the NDP, charities like the Calgary Food Bank, who will be able to hire a new employee as a result of the savings from this carbon tax. This will allow the Sundre seniors centre to keep their doors open. This will hopefully allow the Calgary board of education to bring back the

bus services that it had to reduce. Mr. Speaker, I hope it'll allow my condo's strata board to decrease the condo fees they told me they raised in order to pay for the carbon tax. Maybe that's a conflict of interest.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me add that another alleged rationale for the NDP carbon tax was that it was going to acquire for us something called social licence. Do you remember that one? Social licence. Basically, through the magic of punishing people for heating their homes, what it was going to do is turn David Suzuki and Elizabeth May and the B.C. New Democrats and everybody else from pipeline opponents to pipeline proponents, that somehow by showing them just how virtuous the NDP in Alberta was, we were going to get social licence and public support, political approval for the construction of pipelines to get a fair price for our energy products.

Well, how did that turn out, Mr. Speaker? I've challenged the NDP in this House in the past. Now, I'll extend this challenge yet once more. Please identify for me a single political actor, political party, municipal government, provincial government, environmental organization, First Nation leader, academic, prominent commentator, media commentator; please identify a single one that moved from opposition to pipelines in general and the Trans Mountain pipeline in particular to support for those pipelines as a result of the NDP carbon tax. I've been asking that question for three years, and I haven't been able to get an answer from any of the carbon tax advocates – and I'll tell you why – because not one single person, entity, government, party, or interest group moved from no to yes on pipelines as a result of the NDP carbon tax. On that criteria alone it was a complete and catastrophic failure.

Mr. Speaker, you know what? I know the NDP – they sure did this in the campaign. They love calling people all kinds of derogatory names. They love the politics of fear and smear. So when we say that we think the carbon tax is hurting our economy and not helping our environment, they stand up and they use phrases like “deniers.” You know historically where that phrase comes from. Let's face it. It's rhetoric designed to impose, frankly, moral opprobrium on those targeted by it. Outrageous language. I don't and this government does not deny climate science, that there is change in the global climate, that there are anthropogenic as well as natural causes, that we need to reduce carbon emissions. It's a moral and environmental imperative.

That is why we will bring forward this autumn our tier fund, which will be a levy on major emitters, continuing the tradition where Alberta was the first jurisdiction in North America, one of the first in the developed world to address major industrial emissions through such a fund. This fund will produce revenues that will be directed to funding research and scientific developments to help reduce carbon output, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which technology and which innovations we can then share with the developing world, where they have this huge challenge.

Let me speak to that for a moment, Mr. Speaker. We Albertans, we Canadians sometimes become, I think, a bit complacent. We have a tendency, perhaps, sometimes to take for granted just how high our standard of living is, but there are billions of people around the world, roughly half the world's population, that still do not have access to reliable energy. Hundreds of millions of people who have to cook their dinner on a small propane stove or with wood fire. My friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs grew up in such a village in Nigeria, where people can't go and flick a switch and be sure that the power will be there, and knows what it means to live in energy poverty. My friend from Edmonton-South West understands the radical difference that abundant and affordable energy makes to realizing human potential and raising up the standards of living of people.

One of the great achievements of postwar history has been the massive increase in global living standards and the huge reductions in absolute levels of poverty. One of the primary reasons for that has been access to affordable energy, but there are still too many people around the world who do not have that which we take for granted. I understand why the governments of China and India and Nigeria and all through the developing world are seeking to offer affordable energy to their people: to help lift them out of poverty. Unfortunately, in many cases, that means energy production with high carbon intensity.

It is not morally correct for those of us in the northern countries, in the prosperous west to tell the developing world that they cannot offer energy to their people. To the contrary, it is incumbent upon us to help them find ways to produce that energy with a shrinking environmental and greenhouse gas emission footprint. That's in the real world, Mr. Speaker, not in some abstract utopian world. In the real world that is the challenge.

My friend the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions was born and raised in China, where they have been bringing on stream every year dozens of additional coal-fired power plants. They do it because of the massive growth in the population and the energy demands. They want to move away from coal production, and the single best way we could help them to do so, as Canadians, the single most practical thing we could do to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions would be, Mr. Speaker, to get our clean Alberta natural gas to China through LNG exports. That's what we need to focus on, not punishing widows for heating their homes when it's 30 below in Edmonton, but getting our liquefied natural gas to China, to India.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, the first time I met my friend the recently re-elected Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, was in 2008 in Ahmadabad, Gujarat, when he was the chief minister of that state. I'll never forget. Then Chief Minister Modi-ji said to me: “Minister, what can we in India do? In Gujarat what can we do to get access to your natural gas?” He said, “I'm spending billions on new LNG port facilities so we can off-load LNG from around the world.” Prime Minister Modi is a huge opponent of terrorism and extremism. He said to me: “Minister, I don't want to have to buy natural gas from the countries that are funding terrorism that is killing my citizens. I want to buy natural gas from the country that we admire most: Canada. Help us get that natural gas so we can move from coal to a radically lower emissions profile with liquefied natural gas.”

**10:20**

This was a plea to me from the now Prime Minister of India 11 years ago, Mr. Speaker, but we're not one inch closer to getting India or China that natural gas. These are the things on which – so yes, we do agree on one thing with the NDP: that there is an urgency. There is an imperative to take concrete action to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> and greenhouse gas emissions, but again, punishing people for driving their kids to soccer is not the way to do it.

Ultimately, the solutions for this huge challenge will be found through constant technological innovation, and that is why the centrepiece of our government's climate strategy, which will be released in the fall, is the tier levy on major emitters. It will affect about 60 per cent of the emissions from the Alberta economy, the emissions that come from heavy industry, that quite frankly is much better positioned to pay than ordinary Albertans.

Secondly, that revenue will go into funding pure and applied research that can help us to reduce emissions here and around the world. We estimate that that tier fund and that tier levy will reduce emissions by approximately 40 to 45 megatonnes. That's a significant contribution, Mr. Speaker. To the national target, to the

Paris climate targets: it doesn't get us all the way there. We acknowledge that other measures will have to be taken, but we can take practical measures that do not punish ordinary people.

Mr. Speaker, let me then turn my attention to the threat of the imposition of a federal carbon tax because one of the specious claims of the NDP is that the passage of this bill will simply invite the federal government to impose a tax on us. No, we do not invite the federal government to impose a carbon tax on Alberta. Should they seek to do so, we will oppose it at every measure, immediately filing an application for a judicial reference on the constitutionality of that federal intrusion into our jurisdiction at the Alberta Court of Appeal. Simultaneously, I've instructed the hon. Minister of Justice to assist the government of Saskatchewan by seeking intervenor status in supporting their appeal of the recent Saskatchewan appeal court reference on the federal carbon tax to the Supreme Court of Canada.

I'm further proud to say that because the NDP government of Alberta would not defend our taxpayers, my party, the United Conservative Party, stepped up to the plate and we defended Alberta taxpayers by seeking and obtaining intervenor status at the appeal courts of Saskatchewan and Ontario on their respective judicial references on the constitutionality of the federal carbon tax. We'll monitor the forthcoming decision in Ontario, and we will continue to support our friends in the government of Manitoba. I'm pleased to note that my friend Premier Higgs in New Brunswick is indicating the likelihood that he, too, will be launching a legal challenge of the federal carbon tax.

I am proud, Mr. Speaker, to have worked over the past two years on a growing national coalition of provincial governments, of provinces, that are standing up for and defending Canadian taxpayers. While the NDP sold us down the river to their ally in Ottawa, we stood up for and with this bill continue to stand up for the economic interests of Albertans. We make no apology for that.

Now, let me say that while we will vigorously oppose the federal carbon tax every step of the way for all of the reasons I've already articulated, I want to point out that as bad as it is, the federal carbon tax is not as bad as the one we in this Legislature will repeal today. Why do I say that? Well, first of all, the federal carbon tax this year is at a \$20 tax level whereas the NDP carbon tax that we're repealing is at a \$30 level, so right away people will pay less should the federal government impose on us. Secondly, as I already pointed out, the federal rebates are much, much more generous than the provincial rebates. Only 40 per cent of the NDP carbon tax went back into rebates, and that only to people in 60 per cent of households whereas 90 per cent of the federal carbon tax revenues go back in rebates to 100 per cent of households. From just a pure cash perspective people will be, frankly, better off than they were under the NDP carbon tax.

At least the federal government is recognizing the imputed cost on small businesses, but by not nearly as much as they should. On this I heartily agree with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's critique of the federal policy announced today on small business, but the NDP carbon tax had zero relief for small business or charities and nonprofits where the federal one does. Now, this is not an argument for the federal carbon tax, but I'm simply pointing out to my friends in the NDP that it is not really a replacement. It is less damaging. It's still damaging, but it's less damaging to Albertans' pocketbooks than the one imposed by the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, with all of that said, I want Albertans to know that we hope that – let me back up and say that whether this bill is adopted today or next week, I can assure Albertans that based on the announcement we have made, this bill will be effective tomorrow . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Today.

**Mr. Kenney:** . . . today, May 30. I should know that date. Today, May 30, 2019, is the end of the NDP carbon tax. In fact, I look forward this afternoon to visiting a gas station in southwest Edmonton to observe as they actually switch the price down, saving Edmontonians money when they fill up at the gas tank.

Mr. Speaker, we have barely been in office for a month, and we are already today delivering to Albertans the biggest tax break in our province's history. I say to my colleagues that they should be proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Albertans for their patience as we got to this day, and I can assure them that the fight for our economy, for jobs, and for common sense is not over; that this government will take serious action to address the real challenge of greenhouse gas emissions, working with our partners across Canada and, hopefully, with jurisdictions all around the world. But at the same time this government will not punish Albertans for living normal lives. For that reason, I urge all members to vote at third reading for Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act.

Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely pleased to rise today and move third reading of Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier. I would also ask that you as well table a copy of the article that you referenced in your speech, at the appropriate time.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. government House whip.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to of course rise and adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

10:30

## Government Motions

### Amendments to Standing Orders

11. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

A. Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective December 4, 2018, be amended as follows:

1. Standing Order 3 is amended

(a) in suborder (1) by striking out "Subject to suborder (1.1)" and substituting "Subject to suborder (1.1) and (1.2).";

(b) by adding the following after suborder (1.1):  
(1.2) The Assembly shall not meet in the morning from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, or 9:00 a.m. to noon on Wednesday or Thursday, if the Government House Leader, or a member of the Executive Council acting on the Government House Leader's behalf, notifies the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting, notice having been given no later than the time of adjournment on the sitting day preceding the day on which the morning sitting will be cancelled.

(c) by adding the following after suborder (5):  
(5.1) In the period prior to, or following the commencement of, the first session of a Legislature, the Government House Leader may file a revised calendar with the Clerk, notwithstanding the deadline in suborder (5), following consultation with the Opposition House Leaders.

- (d) in suborder (6) by adding “or (5.1)” after “unless varied by the calendar provided for under suborder (5)”;
  - (e) by striking out suborder (7) and substituting the following:  
(7) As soon as possible after January 15 each year, and following receipt of a calendar submitted under suborder (5.1), the Clerk shall publish the calendar provided for under suborder (5) or (5.1).
2. Standing Order 7 is amended
- (a) in suborder (1) by striking out “Introduction of Guests” and substituting “Introduction of School Groups”;
  - (b) by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:  
(3) When Introduction of School Groups is called, brief introductions may be made by the Speaker of groups of schoolchildren in the galleries.
  - (c) by adding the following after suborder (5):  
(5.1) If any Member other than the mover rises to speak to a debatable motion to concur in a report of a committee on a Bill under Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees, debate on that motion shall be called under Orders of the Day
    - (a) when the Government thinks fit, in the case of a report on a Government Bill,
    - (b) on the next sitting day other than a Monday, in the case of a report on a private Bill, or
    - (c) on Monday afternoon under Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills other than Government Bills, in the case of a report on a public Bill other than a Government Bill.
3. Standing Order 8 is amended
- (a) by striking out suborder (1) and substituting the following:  
8(1) On Monday afternoon, after the daily routine, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:  
  
Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills  
Written Questions  
Motions for Return  
Public Bills and Orders other than Government Bills and Orders  
At 5 p.m.: Motions other than Government Motions  
  
(1.1) Notwithstanding suborder (1), if on a Monday afternoon prior to 5 p.m. no items of business other than Motions other than Government Motions remain on the Order Paper for consideration by the Assembly, Motions other than Government Motions shall be called and after the Assembly has decided all questions necessary to conclude debate on the motion, the Assembly shall proceed to consideration of any items of Government business provided for in suborder (2) unless unanimous consent is given to proceed to an additional Motion other than a Government Motion.
- (b) by adding the following after suborder (7)(a):  
(a.1) Debate on a motion to concur in a report of a committee on a public Bill other than a Government Bill will conclude after 55 minutes of debate on the motion and 5 minutes for the mover to close debate, unless the motion is voted on sooner.
4. Standing Order 13 is amended by adding the following after suborder (5):  
(5.1) No Member shall disrupt the orderly conduct of the proceedings of the Assembly by loudly or repeatedly banging on a desk.
5. Standing Order 19(1) is amended
- (a) in clause (a) and (b) by striking out “at 5:15 p.m., the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings” and substituting “the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting”, and
  - (b) in clause (c) by striking out “at 5:15 p.m., unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion” and substituting “unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting and immediately put every question necessary to dispose of the motion”.
6. Standing Order 29(3) is amended by striking out “and motions for returns” and substituting “; motions for returns and motions for concurrence in committee reports on public Bills other than Government Bills”.
7. The following is added after Standing Order 31:  
**Confidence of the Assembly in the Government**  
31.1 The confidence of the Assembly in the Government may be raised by means of a vote on
- (a) a motion explicitly worded to declare that the Assembly has, or has not, confidence in the Government,
  - (b) a motion by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, “That the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the Government”,
  - (c) a motion for the passage of an Appropriation Bill as defined in Standing Order 64,
  - (d) a motion for an address in reply to the Lieutenant Governor’s speech, or
  - (e) any other motion that the Government has expressly declared a question of confidence.
8. Standing Order 32 is struck out and the following is substituted:  
**Division**  
32(1) A division may be called for by 3 Members rising.  
(2) When a division is called, the division bells shall be sounded at the beginning and for the last minute of a 15-minute interval.  
(3) After the first division is called during any meeting of the Committee of the Whole or Committee

- of Supply, the interval between division bells on all subsequent divisions during that meeting shall be reduced to one minute, except in the case of the first division called during an evening sitting that commences in Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Order 4(4).
- (4) When Members have been called in for a division, there shall be no further debate.
- (5) Members are not compelled to vote and those who wish to abstain should remain in their seats when asked to rise and record their vote.
- (6) The Clerk shall record the ayes and the noes and announce to the Speaker the number of votes cast for and against the motion.
- (7) The ayes and noes shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
- (8) Abstentions shall not be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
9. Standing Order 37 is amended
- (a) by striking out suborders (1) and (2) and substituting the following:
- (1) Five copies, and any additional copies required by suborder (2), must be tabled of a document presented by a Member to the Assembly for
- (a) placement of one copy in the records of the Assembly, and
- (b) distribution of
- (i) 2 copies to the Legislature Library,
- (ii) one copy to *Hansard*,
- (iii) one copy to the Government, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, the Official Opposition, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member, and
- (iv) one copy to the Official Opposition, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, a Member of the Government caucus, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member.
- (2) In addition to the copies required under suborder (1), one additional copy must be tabled of
- (a) responses to written questions and returns ordered by the Assembly for distribution to the Member who asked the question or moved the motion for return, and
- (b) any document presented by a Member who is neither a Member of the Government caucus nor the Official Opposition, to allow for distribution to both the Government and the Official Opposition under suborder (1).
- (b) by striking out suborder (3).
10. The following is added after Standing Order 46:
- Debate interrupted by adjournment of the Assembly**
- 46.1 When a motion to adjourn the Assembly is carried or the Assembly is adjourned for want of quorum, the matter under consideration prior to the adjournment shall be deemed to be adjourned to a future sitting day.
11. Standing Order 52(1)(c) is struck out and the following is substituted:
- (c) Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills, consisting of 11 Members,
12. Standing Order 52.01(1) is amended by striking out clauses (a), (b) and (c) and substituting the following:
- (a) Standing Committee on Families and Communities – mandate related to the areas of Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Education, Health, Justice and Solicitor General, Seniors and Housing and Service Alberta;
- (b) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future – mandate related to the areas of Advanced Education, Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Labour and Immigration and Infrastructure;
- (c) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship – mandate related to the areas of Agriculture and Forestry, Energy, Environment and Parks, Indigenous Relations, Municipal Affairs, Transportation and Treasury Board and Finance.
13. The following is added after Standing Order 52.01:
- Subcommittees**
- 52.01(1) Unless otherwise ordered, a standing or special committee shall have the power to appoint one or more subcommittees, which shall report from time to time to the committee.
- (2) Every subcommittee shall be appointed by motion of the committee specifying the terms of reference and the membership of the subcommittee.
- (3) At its first meeting of a new Legislature, every Legislative Policy Committee and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall appoint a Subcommittee on Committee Business to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair and to report to the committee on the business of the committee.
14. Standing Order 52.04 is amended by renumbering Standing Order 52.04 as Standing Order 52.04(1) and by adding the following after suborder (1):
- (2) Subject to Standing Order 59.01(11), suborder (1) does not prevent a Legislative Policy Committee from undertaking a hearing or inquiry during the same period of time that a matter stands referred to the committee by the Assembly if the hearing or inquiry does not interfere with the work of the committee on the matter referred to it.
15. Standing Order 59.01 is amended by adding the following after suborder (11):
- (12) Suborder (11) does not apply to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills.
16. Standing Order 59.02(3) is struck out and the following is substituted:
- (3) During consideration of interim, supplementary or main estimates, the following individuals may be seated at a committee or in the Assembly:
- (a) officials of the Government, to assist the Minister whose estimates are under consideration;

- (b) staff of the opposition, to assist Members who are participating in estimates consideration.
  - (4) During main estimates consideration, officials of the Government may respond to questions from a committee at the request of the Minister.
- 17. Standing Order 64(1)(a) is amended by striking out subclause (ii).
- 18. Standing Order 74.1 is amended
  - (a) by striking out the heading and substituting "Referral of Government Bill to a committee after first reading", and
  - (b) by striking out suborder (1)(b).
- 19. The following is added after Standing Order 74.1:  
**Referral of public Bill other than Government Bill after first reading**  
 74.11(1) After a public Bill other than a Government Bill has been read a first time, the Bill stands referred to the Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee.  
 (2) The Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee shall report back to the Assembly within 8 sitting days of the day on which the Bill was referred to the Committee.
- 20. Standing Order 74.2(2) is struck out and the following is substituted:  
 (2) Upon the concurrence of a committee report that a Bill be proceeded with, the Bill shall be placed on the Order Paper for second reading and, in the case of a public Bill other than a Government Bill, the Bill shall, subject to the precedence assigned to Bills standing on the Order Paper, be taken up on the next available Monday following the day on which the Assembly concurred in the report.
- 21. Standing Order 89 is amended by striking out "Standing Order 3" and substituting "Standing Order 3(5)".
- 22. The following Standing Orders are amended by striking out "Private Bills Committee" and substituting "Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee" wherever it occurs:  
 Standing Order 91(4)  
 Standing Order 96(2)  
 Standing Order 98(1) and (3)  
 Standing Order 100(1)  
 Standing Order 101  
 Standing Order 102  
 Standing Order 103  
 Standing Order 104  
 Standing Order 105(1)  
 Standing Order 106
- 23. The headings preceding Standing Orders 98, 100 and 105 are amended by striking out "Private Bills Committee" and substituting "Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee".
- B. And be it further resolved that upon passage of this motion any public bills other than government bills that stand on the Order Paper for second reading are deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills in accordance with Standing Order 74.11(1) and notwithstanding Standing Order 74.11(2) the committee shall report back to the Assembly on these bills within 12 sitting days of the day this motion is passed.

- C. And be it further resolved that the amendments in this motion shall come into force on passage.

[Adjourned debate May 29: Mr. Shandro]

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Edmonton-Whitemud.

**The Acting Speaker:** Edmonton-Whitemud. I stand corrected.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize I'm a little short, sometimes hard to see. I do wear heels.

Thank you very much. I'm honoured to be here today to speak to Motion 11 put forward by the member opposite. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this primarily because as a private member – we are all private members, but particularly as a private member of the opposition – I think many of my colleagues on the other side should also be very interested in this. This is an opportunity for me to speak to changes that would directly affect my ability to represent my constituents, my ability to have my voice heard in this House. So the opportunity to speak is very much appreciated, particularly because, if I'll be honest, it seems like the intent of this is to really stifle the ability of private members to speak, so the opportunity to do so right now I will take.

To begin with, I guess, I want to comment on the fact that I'm a little surprised. You know, I'm a new MLA. I'm new to the processes. I just, like so many other members, saw the list of committees that came out and saw the titles of the committees and reviewed the documents describing what each committee is responsible for. All of us as MLAs, whether opposition or government, got assigned to particular committees.

You know, my background is that I'm a lawyer. I'm a bit of a geek. I like things like committees. I like things like opportunities to break things down. I even put forward that I was interested in being on a private members' committee because I like legislation. I like to look at that stuff and go through it. So I was excited. It's an opportunity to do what I've been elected to do, which is the business of our Assembly.

Then to find out that we do have a standing committee that's specifically tasked with dealing with standing orders, to me, when we're talking about, you know, changes to standing orders, well, again, going back to my legal training and my background, that seems like right within the mandate of that standing committee. So I'm surprised that that committee actually seems to be being completely useless right now. Now, I'm not on that committee, but I know that there are a number of members on both sides, particularly on the government side, who have now had, I guess, some of their work taken away.

Frankly, let's be honest. We know that in a government this size ministers get a lot of work, a lot to do, but private members don't get a lot to do. So committees are something that's pretty important, and to basically have one of your pieces of work essentially stripped away, I would be disappointed. I mean, I frankly like being busy. That's clearly why I ran for election. You know, we've all got full lives outside of this, but clearly, I like being busy. I wanted to do the work of being an MLA, and I think that includes sitting on committees. So I was pretty surprised that this is not going to the standing committee on standing orders. I would think that it should do that.

Needless to say, here we are. I would like to speak first to the proposed changes to the introductions of guests. I'll tell a little story. I've actually had the honour of being introduced in this House twice prior to becoming an MLA. Once I was a constituency assistant for an MLA many years ago, and one of my first days on



the job she invited me to come as a new CA. I think I might have been 21 at the time. I was pretty excited. She introduced me as her new constituency assistant. I got some lovely notes from MLAs from all parties welcoming me. It was pretty amazing for me. I would say that that experience, certainly, was my first time, rather than school tours, of actually being in this House. It was pretty incredible to have my name spoken in this House, in this revered Assembly. To go back to *Hansard*, because part of my job as a constituency assistant was then going back to *Hansard* and clipping – back in that day, you know, you’d photocopy and you’d actually take a highlighter; there were no PDFs. To see my own name was pretty impressive.

The second opportunity I had to be introduced in the House was when I was part of a group of civil servants who worked very hard on some legislation that was brought forward by a previous Progressive Conservative government. We were very hard-working bureaucrats and public servants. We worked on that project for three years, in the development of legislation. The minister who finally was able to have that piece of legislation passed thanked us by name, the group of people who had worked on that project, introduced us in the House. Again, I can tell you that as a public servant, you don’t get a lot of opportunities to get recognized, and that was a pretty impressive recognition of our work. It was a small moment, but again to see my name listed with those of my colleagues, who had worked very hard for many years on a project that we thought was very important, to have us be recognized was pretty fantastic.

You know, these were small moments, but they were moments for me that engaged me with the work of this Assembly, and it engaged me in the political process. It got me excited about being here. We all know we just came through a campaign, all of us as private members. We all worked very hard to get where we are. We all had a lot of support from families, from friends, from supporters – there were a lot of interesting stakeholders we met – and we have small opportunities in this House to thank those people on the record for their work and to keep them engaged and to keep reminding them of the important work that we do in this Assembly.

I know that a lot of members on the other side and a lot of members on this side have families. We have kids. One of the moments that I was most looking forward to was introducing my children in the House. My kids are four and six years old. They were pretty involved in coming out on the campaign trail, well, in between naps. My son thought door-knocking was pretty fun because he got to ring doorbells, so he liked that. But, you know, during that process he didn’t really understand what my job was, what I was doing when I was saying that I was running to be an MLA.

They came for my swearing-in. It was, you know, a wonderful experience. There were a lot of people here. It was very crowded. There were a lot of people who were supporters and were happy to see our caucus get sworn in. But, you know, they kind of sat in the back row. They couldn’t really see very well. They’re short; they’re four and six. I was looking forward to the opportunity to have them in the front row, where they could stand up and they could wave to their mom, and their mom could thank them and have that moment.

I’m sure we all have family members and people who are important to us who we would like to introduce in this House. It’s a pretty special moment. There are not a lot of opportunities for those personalized special moments in this House, and I think it’s something we all value. You know, I think it’s a really important thing, and I appreciate the comments that came forward.

As I’ve mentioned, this is my first term. I know that there have probably been a lot of times where the introductions of guests have been used in different ways to perhaps stretch things out or spend

time, maybe partisan statements. I understand it happens on both sides, and I think there are ways to deal with that without eliminating the personal touch of introducing guests in this House. I think we could put time limits. I think we could put limitations on how many guests are introduced. There are ways to do that without eliminating this very personal moment that is part of the important work that we do here, that really brings it home for the families, who don’t get to see us because we’re working late hours, you know, up early, home late. Those are the moments that are really important, and we can still recognize those moments and still keep to a timely fashion. There are ways to do that.

Now, the hon. Government House Leader made some comments when he introduced this motion that somehow the number of members’ statements would be increased; however, I still fail to see any proposed amendment by the members from government or from the House leader himself to actually increase the number of members’ statements. It specifically sets out in Standing Order 7(4) that there will only be six members’ statements. If there is an opportunity to increase that number of members’ statements to make up for the lack of introductions, that’s something to be considered, but I don’t see that on the record. All I’m hearing right now is eliminating the ability of individual members to make those personal connections and make those introductions in the House. So, you know, I think that there are opportunities here to really improve the process and to preserve our small moments that we have with our families, friends, supporters, and stakeholders.

The other thing I want to mention – and the Leader of the Official Opposition yesterday in her comments on the standing order changes I think said this very well – is that, you know, there is a proposed change here which is small. It talks about, basically, removing the regular morning sittings and making it more of a matter of giving notice of that.

She made a very good comment, which really resonated with me. She said that the reason why the standing orders are the way they are, where there are regular morning sittings and night sittings are optional and notice must be given, is that the intent of those changes, that were brought in by the former government, by the NDP, was to make it a family-friendly environment for MLAs and that we want to take all the steps that we can to encourage more predictability in the day-to-day work of our Assembly so that those MLAs with young children have more of an opportunity to arrange child care, to move that forward. I think that’s important. I think we do need to have some predictability, not only for those members who might currently need that, but also we want to attract more people like that. So, you know, I do appreciate her comments on that.

**10:40**

The last thing I want to speak to, because I know there are other members of my caucus who want to speak a little bit, is I’d like to talk about abstentions and the ability to abstain while sitting in your seat. As I’ve mentioned before in this House and I will continue to mention, especially as an opposition member, I was elected, as we all were, to represent my constituents, and that might mean that we’re sometimes going to be at odds. That’s part of the tension that exists in our representative democracy. Sometimes we have party platforms, sometimes we have directions from our leader, sometimes we have personally-held beliefs, and sometimes we have the things that our constituents want us to do. It is our job as elected representatives to balance those and sometimes do things that are difficult but to actually represent.

I think allowing members to abstain from voting is actually a neglect of our responsibility. We were elected to come in here and to vote on matters, to actually put on the record, state our views,

and to vote. Sometimes that may mean we're going to vote in ways that either our constituents or maybe even our personal beliefs are at odds with, but that's our responsibility. I come back to, actually, again, my legal background a little bit. As a lawyer, you know, you're constantly balancing those challenges between clients' interests, preserving the rule of law, and having respect for the law. Sometimes that might be at odds with your personally-held beliefs, but again you have a responsibility to balance that. I take those responsibilities seriously, and I continue to take that seriously as an elected member of this Assembly.

I think we should all be held to account to vote and to do what we were elected to do. Sometimes that's going to be awkward and that's going to be difficult and we're going to receive push-back from constituents, the people in our lives who might hold the same views as us, from our party, from our leader. But nobody elected us because this job was easy. We all know that. We've worked pretty hard to get here. It's a tough job. We have an obligation to vote and to make our views heard. I don't think we were elected here to sit quietly and abstain.

Those are my thoughts on the changes. I'm all for, you know, efficiencies and for making the process smoother. I think there are ways to do that, however, without silencing our voices as private members. There are ways to do that to allow the personal touches of us being able to introduce guests that come to see us do our work in the House, and I think we should all fight very hard to protect the rights and privileges that we have under the standing orders. We're members of caucuses, we are members of political parties, but we are also individual MLAs.

We have obligations, and I believe we need to preserve those protections and those privileges and rights that we have. There are lots of opportunities where we will be swayed and held to – you know, we have whips for a reason. They will tell us which way to vote on things. We know that exists. But we have opportunities within our system where we as private members have the rights and authorities to speak our minds, to represent our constituents, and to have those personal moments with people in our lives and our stakeholders, and I don't want to see that taken away.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. I do think that there are significant issues with this motion, and I believe there are plenty of opportunities for changes.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Under 29(2)(a), we have an opportunity for members for questions and comments.

Seeing none, would anybody else like to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to take a few moments to address a couple of things that are in here. I know my colleagues have spoken at length about this, so I think I'm going to focus on a few of the pieces that are more important to me.

Certainly, one of the things that's in this set of standing order changes that I think is of concern to me is with respect to private members' bills going to a committee. The challenge, I think, is that it's not clear how much of a delay that's going to pose. As our leader said, if it really is the case that we're not going to do a throne speech with each iteration, that may solve some of those problems. But if it isn't the case, then a lot more of those private members' bills are not going to have a chance to get debated, and I think that's really sad.

I'm just going to refer to a couple of private members' bills that passed in the 29th Legislature that I think were really important.

The former Member for Calgary-Bow, for instance, brought forward a bill that helped women who were victims of domestic violence be able to break their leases. That was so they could leave their home so that the perpetrator wouldn't know where they were, or if they were in a financial situation where they were no longer able to pay that lease, they weren't locked into continuing to live with the perpetrator of domestic violence simply because of a lease. I think, you know, we've seen the benefit of that legislation already. It has had an impact on many lives. I think that private member's bill was very, very important.

A couple of other private members' bills went through. The Member for Calgary-West, actually, had a private member's bill in the 29th Legislature that went through, having to do with pill presses for fentanyl. I think that that was an important bill. You know, it was his opportunity to step forward and say: I care about this, and this is something I'm passionate about, and I'm going to do something about it. I think that that's very important.

The former Member for Calgary-North West also had a bill that came forward, a disabilities' advocate. That's a really important bill as well. That was a private member's bill also. That's three things already.

One of the ones that's really near and dear to my heart that came forward was actually from the former Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. He brought forward a bill. I remember because we had many discussions. He was at the time my critic, and we used to talk back and forth quite a lot, he and I. He had come forward with this bill. He brought it to me ahead of time to ask for support. The bill, he said, arose out of seeing his own children starting to use the Internet and starting to use social media and texting and that sort of thing, and he was really concerned. The thing that he was concerned about was essentially the use of intimate images, so he brought forward a bill to deal with that. I thought that that was a really important step for him to take. It was a really important way for him to show to his constituents and to the entire province, you know, what he was really made of. I think the 29th Legislature had the opportunity to support him in that.

Those are a few of the reasons that I think that allowing private members to be able to come forward with bills is important. Those bills can come from all different sides of the House, and they can do a lot of important things moving forward. That's why I think that's important.

With respect to the morning sittings I think it's been articulated at length, but I'll just deal with my particular circumstances. Obviously, I'm an MLA who represents Calgary. That means that when I come up here, my partner stays in Calgary. His job is there, so he works there. My daughter comes with me, which means that I need child care when I'm up here. My parents live in Calgary, my husband lives in Calgary, so it's just me and my daughter and our child care. That inability to predict schedules is very challenging for me because I have to give someone else notice of the hours that I'm going to be working. So I think it creates a difficulty for me, and it creates, in particular, a difficulty for women MLAs from other parts of the province, I guess.

The last thing I wanted to talk about was abstentions. This is probably the issue that I'm most passionate about because I think that we have a duty in this place as elected representatives, as people who've been sent here to have a view. I don't think that you get to be neutral as to other people's rights. When it comes to debating issues of women's reproductive rights, when it comes to debating issues of LGBTQ rights, I don't think you get to be neutral about that because being neutral is essentially to say – I mean, the point of rights is to protect a minority group, potentially, or a group that has historically had less power from a group that has more power, that is dominant, that is often the majority. To say, "Well,

I'm not going to have an opinion on that," when it is, in fact, your job, when you have been sent here to have an opinion on that – I really think that that just flies in the face of our duty as elected representatives.

**10:50**

You know, it's hard. It's hard to balance different competing interests. It's hard to weigh all the different factors. I mean, the members over there are certainly aware of it right now. We certainly were when we were in government. It's difficult. Sometimes the choices – the balance is hard to get perfect, but we have to do it. In fact, failing to act is almost always itself an action.

You know, that's the problem with these amendments. They suggest that a failure to act is not doing something, but actually it is doing something. When someone comes forward and says, "My rights have been violated," if the courts were to say, "Well, we're not going to act because we don't really want to have an opinion because it's a sticky social issue," well, that would be absurd. But I feel it's equally absurd for us in this place to say: well, I don't want to have an opinion because it's a sticky social issue. Well, no. That's someone's right. They're coming forward to you and saying that they do or they feel they ought to have a right, and they feel it has been violated. I think that we have to have an opinion on that, whether it's difficult or not, whether it requires soul-searching or not, whether it requires difficult intellectual work or not. That is the reason that I am troubled, very much so, by these changes.

I hope that all members will consider that and will consider it not only as we vote on these standing orders but will consider it going forward if they choose to in fact sit in their place and not have an opinion on an issue. That itself is an action, it is a decision, and it does have consequences for the people of Alberta.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a) any questions or comments?

Are there any other members wishing to speak on this matter?  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise on Government Motion 11 and share my thoughts on it. Of course, much like my other colleagues here on the opposition side, we have some major concerns with this legislation, the first being the inability, if this legislation is passed, to introduce school groups. Now, I've had the opportunity over the last four years to introduce many of the schools in my community. It really is one of the highlights of my time spent here in the Assembly.

Of course, it's always very important to represent your constituents and talk about whether we support or don't support a bill that's before us and why that is. But when we have a school group and have the opportunity to first take a picture with them as they move through their tour of the Legislature and then be able to introduce them in this House, it's something that's very important to me. I think it's very important to the other members who have had the opportunity to do it so far. Even for the people who have had the opportunity in the 30th Legislature to do it so far: I'm sure that they've enjoyed that as well.

It's very frustrating for me to hear that we would even consider changing the process of that. I mean, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, the students come here after having the opportunity to hear from me in their classroom. We're often invited as MLAs to talk about the democratic process, to talk about the provincial Legislature and what it is we do here. For them to come here and, instead of having the opportunity to hear their own MLA introduce

them, to have it done by the Speaker does not mean nearly as much as it does coming from the members themselves. I think that that's a really important piece of why I'm not planning to support this government motion.

I think this has a lot more to do than what is being told to us. Over the last four years in the 29th Legislature, introducing school groups really did not interrupt the proceedings of the House, you know, with very few times where we had to actually go past the usual scheduling to introduce guests, introduce school groups. It's very frustrating for me.

You know, on top of the school groups piece: the willingness of this government to take away our ability to introduce stakeholders and introduce constituents. Just as important – well, I'm not going to say, "more important" – as introducing school groups is our ability to introduce stakeholders. We as MLAs have the opportunity to meet with people in our community that have concerns, whether it be with legislation before the House or they want to propose legislation or just want to talk about something else that's on their mind. Our ability to introduce them in this Legislature is part of our ability to advocate on their behalf. I've brought in constituents that were suffering from rare diseases, talking about the importance of Rare Disease Day.

I think taking five, 10 seconds to highlight that in an introduction of a guest, if we don't have the opportunity that day to provide a member's statement for that person, is something that we should be able to do. We as opposition members now have more opportunities for members' statements, a lot more than the government members will find that they have, so they are losing more than we are, really. It's something that the government members should consider.

Over the last four years I've had the opportunity to invite many special guests to the Legislature and provide them with introductions. Then you can clip it and give it to them, and it's very important to them. To say, "No; the Speaker is going to say your name into the record and probably, maybe not even mention what organization you're with or the important work that you've done in your community that brought you to the Legislature in the first place," is quite frustrating. Really, for me the ability to introduce guests is incredibly important, and I think it should be very important to the government members as well.

Now, of course, another topic that's come up a lot is the banning of desk thumping. You know, this really is just showing that we have a politician coming from Ottawa trying to impose ideas from Ottawa on us. This has been in place for a very long time in Alberta's history. It's been a tradition, so to come and say that all of a sudden it's a really big issue, that it's holding up the House or wrecking decorum here in the House is just simply untrue. I mean, whether we're banging on our desks or, as we've seen, the government is now clapping their hands, it really doesn't make a difference. The clapping is just as loud if not potentially louder than banging on desks.

**Mr. Schmidt:** It hurts my ears.

**Mr. Carson:** Yeah. It hurts my ears as well.

I don't know why we've come to this decision. We are going to show our appreciation in one way or another. Desk thumping or clapping is not used as a way to intimidate people often. I mean, when we were in government, there were often times where our members would be speaking about something that's important to them, about a situation in their life, or even about a guest that they'd invited, and they needed a moment to collect themselves. We've often used desk thumping as a way to give them that moment to collect their thoughts and be able to continue on.

I don't think this is as big an issue as the government is trying to make it. I don't think that it's something, really, that we should be spending a lot of time talking about in the Legislature because I don't think it needs to be changed. I'm not sure why it was so important for the government to bring this forward, but really it just shows that, you know, the new Premier thinks that Ottawa does it better than Alberta, and he wants to impose that on us.

Of course, overall the changes that are being implemented or that the government hopes to implement are really just taking away the ability of the members in this Legislature to advocate on their constituents' behalf, whether it's getting rid of the introduction of school groups, getting rid of the introduction of special guests.

You know, just as important is the ability of members to bring private members' legislation forward to this House. We've heard many examples of private members bringing forward legislation. The previous Member for Calgary-Bow had a very important piece of legislation where survivors of domestic violence of some sort were able to break their lease, recognizing that it's important to help somebody get out of that situation and then deal with the financial piece after. We need to be able to help people. That wasn't something that needed to go to committee to be studied for months, possibly die on the Order Paper; it was something that had to be passed immediately. The members of the Legislature recognized that, and we were able to do so.

When we talk about cutting red tape – you want to send more bills to committee to be studied. You want to have to bring the bureaucracy of this Assembly together, all very professional and important people, but why do that if we don't have to? Why not discuss it, as is our duty in this Legislature, and then pass it when it's such an easy bill to support and pass?

**11:00**

Of course, I had my own piece of legislation, which came and was discussed in the Legislature, and it was not supported by all members, so we did send it to committee. That opportunity to do that is still there. If the discussion in the Legislature and the members see fit that that is what we should do, then we can still do that. It didn't take a long time. I think we spent an afternoon deciding on that, and we sent it to committee. It's not like it's taking up a whole lot of time for House proceedings.

[The Speaker in the chair]

For those reasons, I will most definitely not be supporting this Government Motion 11. I think overall it's taking away the rights of not only opposition members but, just as importantly, government members. I think that you as government members will see that you're losing more than we are losing in terms of your ability to advocate on your members' behalf. We're going to have a lot of time over here to talk. You will find out, especially you private members in the back row there, that you are going to be sitting and listening to us a lot. You're going to learn a lot from us over here in the opposition.

**Mr. Schmidt:** For free.

**Mr. Carson:** That's right. Most of the members over here have experienced – well, maybe not most of them. I have experienced what it's like to be a private member in the government, and it's a wonderful experience – don't get me wrong – but you're not going to have a lot of time to talk in this Legislature.

**Mr. Schmidt:** It's a quiet experience.

**Mr. Carson:** It's a quiet experience. Lots of time to learn, so I really hope you enjoy that experience. It's always a pleasure and,

of course, an honour to be in this Legislature, but don't sit here and give away your rights to represent your constituents, because you only have a set amount of time in here, and you are about to give up half, three-quarters of your ability to advocate on their behalf, so just don't do it. Do not support this motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'd like to thank the hon. member for his comments. I might just be a little bit curious. Noting that the private members will have an opportunity to learn from the opposition over this term, I just might wonder how much you may have learned from the former Opposition House Leader during your time in government.

On Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any questions or comments for the member?

Are there any others wishing to speak to Government Motion 11? I'm interested to hear what the Member for Calgary-McCall has for us this morning.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to the standing order changes, but with respect to your comment about learning from the opposition, I have certainly enjoyed your comments here and there when you were in opposition. I think there are opportunities that government private members on that side will be able to learn because this is the first time in the history of Alberta that this opposition has a former Premier, 10 ministers, experienced people. They certainly are in a position to bring a lot of experience to the table.

With respect to rules, I guess, they exist to maintain orderly proceedings in this House. Over the last little while I think we heard frequently that we will bring civility to this place, we will bring decorum to this place, which clearly assumes that somehow there is some kind of incivility there, there's something that's not in proper order.

When I was looking at these changes, I was thinking about it from that lens, that somehow these changes are making this place more civil, bringing some kind of revolutionary changes to decorum. But when we look at it, the changes: from now on instead of desk thumping, we will be clapping. I was not able to find any kind of rationale for this change, that clapping is more civil than desk thumping. As far as I can tell, many parliaments across this country, across the Commonwealth, across this world: they do use desk thumping. I didn't see before in the procedures whether somewhere it was mentioned what members should do, whether they should clap or desk thump.

We were hearing from this government that they will reduce red tape. I think the first thing they did – they even tried to regulate how members should express their feelings within this House. They are bringing in more regulations, even how we should use our hands, whether we should clap or whether we should desk thump: so much red tape.

I think there is no rationale whatsoever, and desk thumping has been a long tradition in parliamentary democracies and Legislatures. This is just a preference of one person or group of individuals, who just prefer clapping over desk thumping, and that has been imposed on the entire Legislature, put into regulation, put into standing orders, and has created more red tape. I'm so not pleased with that, and certainly I will be opposing that as well.

The second thing which is really concerning is the procedure with respect to private members' bills. As many of my colleagues mentioned, with true private members' bills we have been able to make very important and significant changes in this province, changes that impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of Albertans. One example that comes to mind and I believe was mentioned by my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View is the creation of the

office of the disability advocate, for such an advocate in this province. That idea came as a private member's bill from the then MLA for Calgary-North West. That office now has the ability to impact thousands and thousands of Albertans living with disabilities, their rights, their interests. They can be represented. They have a person. They have an office to go to if they have concerns with respect to any services they are getting from the government.

These private members' bills do play an important role, and the way it's now structured, they will go automatically to committee. That will certainly make it difficult for those bills to pass. We have seen even under the existing procedure, where one of my colleagues in the 29th Legislature, the MLA for Calgary-Currie, brought forward legislation essentially making discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts exempt for eligibility to the AISH program. That was an important bill that had the support of 3,500 Albertans, who signed a petition, and then he consulted with almost 500 Albertans here in Edmonton, in Calgary, in Lethbridge, and in many other places. Every MLA then heard from Albertans, but that bill died on the Order Paper, and later we adopted it as a government bill.

But the point I'm trying to make is that even under existing procedures it was difficult to get that private member's bill passed, and now it will pretty much make it close to impossible that any private member's bill will ever see the light of day or will ever pass through this Legislature. I think if we were to restore civility, I guess, we would create more opportunities for private members to bring forward good ideas, like creating a disability advocate, like exempting discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts, like creating safer spaces legislation that was created by a colleague in the last Legislature, the MLA for Calgary-Bow. But this is making it impossible to do. It's pretty much shutting doors on the private members, so I'm strongly opposed to these changes.

**11:10**

These changes, I think, will impact us on this side of the House, and they will also impact government private members because everybody sitting outside the executive are all private members. I can see many people who, when they were in opposition, were there in previous terms, like the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat, the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon, experienced private members. They may have ideas. Sure, they didn't make it to Executive Council, but they can still use this opportunity to bring forward ideas that they may have based on their experience and make changes that will positively impact Albertans across this province. This change, I think, should not be supported by any private member across both sides of the aisles, and I think that as private members we should stand up for our rights so that we are able to represent our constituents and we are able to contribute to this province positively.

We will be opposing this change. We are very much opposed to this change, and I urge all private members to consider that and how it impacts your ability to do your job, how it impacts your ability to represent your constituents, how it impacts your ability to make lasting changes, like other private members made in the previous 29th Legislature.

Then there were changes made which give the House leader the ability to provide notices and change morning sittings, change the sitting schedule. I think we can all agree that this job requires managing of our schedules, managing of our time very carefully, and these rules that were there exist to provide us with that certainty so that we can manage our schedules accordingly. Now, if this regulation, these changes, were to pass, that creates a lot of

uncertainty, that with a notice in the evening we will know whether we have the morning off or not. For all of us it's difficult to change a schedule on those short notices.

My colleagues have also mentioned how it impacts those MLAs who have young children and who have to arrange for babysitters and make all those arrangements, how it's impacting them. When we were in government, we had colleagues who have young kids, who gave birth as MLAs here. With a view to making our Legislature family friendly, with a view to making sure that all Albertans, women in particular, are able to participate in these processes, we brought in this morning sitting. We made changes with a view to making this Legislature, this workplace, a family-friendly workplace. Giving the Government House Leader that ability to change the schedules of all members like this, I think, is in no way a very civil thing to do, and I don't know how it restores decorum or brings civility to our Legislature. So we are very much opposed to this change as well.

Then, I think, a couple of other things. One was that these changes will also allow MLAs to abstain from voting. Many of my colleagues talked about this change and how important it is that when we come here, we be able to represent, we be able to weigh in on all issues that are brought before this House. We have seen this before, for instance, in the previous Legislature, when we brought in Bill 9. We saw the opposition walking out of the House nine times – 13 times, actually, just to correct the record. We believe that we live in a world where we represent constituencies where people have different views, varying views on different issues, but as their representative that's our job. That's what we signed up for. That's what we will do to the best of our abilities. We will represent you.

This one clearly just gives an option to MLAs such that if they don't want to weigh in on something, if they're not comfortable weighing in on something, instead of running out of the House, they can still sit here and exercise this rule, rely on this rule and not vote on issues that matter to Albertans. Certainly, it undermines the accountability of MLAs, the accountability of people representative to their electorate, that they can use this rule to say that they have this option. They have three options – yes, no, and abstain from voting – so they just exercise their, I guess, options available to them. As our leader said, this provides MLAs the opportunity to duck and dive on issues that they are not comfortable with. It removes accountability for MLAs, and this change should not be passed. Again I will ask all MLAs to consider that.

Lastly, I think I'll speak a little bit to introductions. I think introductions are important for many different reasons. This House, this Chamber, this Legislature belongs to Albertans, and on the face of it what this change says is that those who own this place, those who elect us and send us to this place, will not be allowed to be introduced or recognized who they are in this Chamber. It's absolutely disrespectful to Albertans, and it's ignoring those Albertans who sent us here. And especially the government, who talks about their mandate – I think it's disrespectful.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Government Motion 11. I know a lot of ground has been covered by my caucus colleagues on the motion already this morning; however, I wanted to add a few of my own remarks and speak in defence of traditions of this House that are being assailed by this Government Motion 11 and speak to what I believe is really the underlying motivation behind most if not all of these changes to

our standing orders. All these unnecessary proposals stem from a need by the Premier to solve what he believes are his pet peeves by imposing an Ottawa-centric view of how he believes all Canadian Legislatures should work.

We on this side of the House believe that we should let the Parliament of Canada operate in its own way. Whether it's the carbon levy or the legislative standing orders, the ND Official Opposition in Alberta firmly believes that we should operate under Alberta rules that are traditional to our own House rather than importing them from Ottawa.

These measures, for example, that are designed to prevent floor crossings really are measures designed to protect the government caucus from themselves. The current makeup of the House, Mr. Speaker, leads me to say that it's very safe to project that every opposition member currently sitting would rather jump into a lake of fire than cross the floor to join the UCP, but given the history of fractionalization of the conservative movement in Canada, I can only say that it's probably motivated by a fear that the schism that continually plagues that movement and that party will return.

11:20

The UCP is made up largely of members who ran under a different banner, so it's a bit ironic. It feels like the Premier is worried that some of his members will break ranks and form their own party. Certainly, on this side of the House we have 24 members that stand together and will be doing so for the next four years and into the next election cycle.

Now, as far as the abstention issue, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear what's going on there. The UCP is really trying to hide their own members. They know there are members with hateful views amongst their ranks. There are very controversial positions . . .

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Dach:** . . . on gay rights and women's rights and who knows what else.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, a point of order has been called. The government whip.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise, of course, under 23(h), (i), or (j). Pick one. I mean, obviously, what is being said by this particular member is completely insulting. It imputes false or unavowed motives to other members within this House. It is completely unparliamentary, and I ask that he withdraw those comments or, at the very minimum, apologize to this Chamber and to every member in this House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wishing to comment?

**Mr. Bilous:** Sure. Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. This is a mere difference of opinion. We know that in the past former members of half of the party that is now the UCP did make significant comments that were very, very offensive, and frankly that's part of the reason why back in 2012 the Wildrose Party did not form government. They had quite a few members with some pretty abhorrent views. In regard to the comments that the Member for Edmonton-McClung made, in my opinion, it's a difference of opinion. This isn't a point of order.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. While I would agree that the member is certainly sharing some very strong opinions

and I would caution him that his language certainly could create disorder, I will at this point in time take a broad swath as to whether or not the exact language was in fact a point of order. But I would just caution the member to do just that: use caution when making allegations that may create disorder or language that in fact may create disorder. Having said that, I ask the member to proceed but to do so in a respectful tone that is likely to create order.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll continue briefly. I appreciate your sound advice.

I know that members opposite are sensitive to some of the accusations that are being made around their reasons for supporting Government Motion 11 to bring changes to this House which will affect the many traditional operations of the rules of this place, but it is still within my purview as a member, as a private member, to speak on behalf of my constituents as well as other MLAs in this House to defend the rights of private members to speak freely and express ourselves and not to silently accept the desire of this Government Motion 11 to place restrictions on my ability to operate as an MLA in defence of my constituents' directions.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, just to provide some additional framework around my caution, it was not to say that you can't hold strong opinions. It was not to say that you can't defend your constituents. Having said that, when the Speaker provides some caution or, in fact, rules on a point of order, there are limits to what you are allowed to say. So I just want to be clear that you're not challenging the chair here in your remarks about what you are or are not allowed to do here in the Chamber. I'm an adamant defender of private members' ability to defend or speak on behalf of their constituents, but, to be clear, the Speaker can rule on language that is parliamentary or language that may create disorder, and that would fall under the purview of the Speaker.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Speaker. I simply wanted to say that I would encourage all members of this House to oppose Government Motion 11 and do so by voting against it, as I will and hope that all my other caucus colleagues and members of the Legislature do.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Are there others who wish to speak to Government Motion 11? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I'm very pleased to stand and speak against, really, an omnibus amendment to the standing orders that are presented here and that many of my colleagues have already spoken about. You know, certainly, our NDP caucus has a view on this, but other Albertans do also. A respected journalist for the *Edmonton Journal* actually called these standing order omnibus amendments: a solution for a problem that doesn't exist. There's no problem with this. This is fine the way it has run for many years. So I certainly concur with his views.

I guess I'd like to speak first on just the introduction of school groups. I'm going to go down memory lane a little bit. As a young grade 6 student in Harry Gray elementary in Valleyview, Alberta, my MLA for Smoky River was Marvin Moore. I don't know how many of you remember Marvin Moore, but he was my MLA for many, many mandates. Perhaps the MLA for Central Peace-Notley will know who he is. He introduced my class. We had a big class

trip to come and to meet with our MLA. He was the minister of various things, too. I don't recall exactly now, but, I mean, I know that it was a significant opportunity for me to understand what this thing called provincial government is. It certainly stimulated my interest in it, and I know that it has stimulated many other students across the province.

I mean no disrespect to you, Mr. Speaker, but having your local MLA, who you know because they've been to your classroom, you know, you see them in the community, introduce you and having that relationship with them is far different than someone that they don't know. Certainly, your own constituents would know you. As the MLA for Edmonton-Riverview now I've been to many schools. Of course, we know that in grade 6 the curriculum talks about the Alberta government and helps students learn about that, stimulates their interest in it. I've had the honour to go to many schools in my riding and know that there's a keen interest and that when they get to come to the Legislature, sit in that gallery, and be introduced by their MLA, it's a significant event.

You know, of course, one of the things that disturbs me in our society, I guess, is just sort of the lack of interest in aspects of democracy, certainly in voting. We have low voter turnout. So, really, starting at a very young age, starting in grade 6, even younger, stimulates a student's interest in politics. I mean, it's so important for a healthy democracy to have high voter turnout, and, sadly, in Alberta it's in the 60s or it has been in the 50s or even the 40s. Taking away this can only erode that, and I certainly don't support it.

Besides my experience as a student myself, as a young girl in a small town in northern Alberta, when I came to Edmonton at 18 and went to university, got my bachelor of arts in political science and then graduated, I worked for Ray Martin. Ray Martin was the MLA for Edmonton-Norwood, of course, and I was honoured to be his constituency assistant. I, again, was introduced by him in the Assembly, and that was very important to me, and it was a way for him to thank me publicly. I think that, you know, having the Speaker introduce me wouldn't have had the same impact. Again, I just want to really say that there's a vast difference.

11:30

Certainly, as a social worker for 30 years – each year we have Social Work Week, and as a leader in my profession I would come with my colleagues, and many of us would be introduced to the Legislature. That meant a lot to us. Certainly, working as a social worker in Children's Services was another opportunity. Although it wasn't my local MLA, it was the minister, not the Speaker, and the minister was responsible and someone, of course, we worked more closely with. Again, it was that kind of acknowledgement that really made it worth while. Again, I'm bringing these examples up to you, Mr. Speaker, because these changes will take away that opportunity.

I guess, just to talk about this a bit more, my own children, my three sons, went to school here in Edmonton. When they were in grade 6, each of their classes came here, and they were introduced by their MLAs, and that was a proud moment for them. For many years, even, they would have pictures of their MLA and their class, that they had taken in the rotunda, on their bureaus, and they would talk about the time that they got to go to the Assembly and meet with their MLA. I remember MLA Kevin Taft introduced my two younger sons.

Again, it seems like a time-honoured tradition that's just being disregarded by this UCP government. As Keith Gerein said – I'll just say it again: a solution for a problem that doesn't exist. Actually, it really takes away some very important, I think, traditions of our House here.

I guess the next point I'd like to move on to is just the banning of desk thumping. Certainly, you know, the UCP government and the Official Opposition NDP have a different value system, I would say, a pretty clearly significant difference in world view. Certainly, that was illustrated this morning when we talked about Bill 1. We see things much differently compared to the other side of the House. That sort of contrast in values means that at times we're listening, both sides of the House, to things that we don't agree with. We don't see them as values we hold dear. When we do hear people speaking from our world view, our value system, then we do want to celebrate that.

Again, another time-honoured tradition in this House is that we do desk thumping, and that is something that has gone on in the Alberta Legislature for years and years and years. To just take that away, again, I don't see the point in that. There's no problem. It's looking for a solution to a problem that doesn't exist. So I just really challenge us moving forward on that.

The next one I'd like to talk about – and this, I feel, is really a very serious and substantial issue – is that the UCP government just wants to wipe away and not really have their members be accountable or have anybody in this House be accountable. They're wanting to allow members to abstain while seated in the Chamber with no record of them doing so. I mean, there are many, many key issues that we speak about here in the Assembly that – you know, our constituents don't have time to watch us on TV, to read *Hansard*, to know all that, so they may need to look back sometimes if they do wonder where we stood on an important issue. Then they can search it and find out what kind of a decision their local MLA made on a particular issue of interest to them, that's important to them, that they care about. Here we're just: "Oh, yeah. You don't have to even identify how you stand on particular issues."

I mean, we ran as candidates to be elected to represent our constituents to make a stand on issues, so I really question this. This seems to make no sense to me at all. Certainly, there are controversial issues, but we need to step up and be sure that we are representing our constituents and speaking to issues that are real. You don't get a free pass. It's really important that MLAs do take a stand and stand up. Again, it just sort of boggles the mind why that would be taken out of sort of a regular practice for MLAs.

The next piece of this omnibus amendment of the standing orders is about private members' bills being automatically referred to committee. Of course, this slows the process down, and we already know this is an issue in government. There are emergent issues that need to be dealt with in a timely manner. These private members' bills coming forward can significantly address key issues that are emergent, that are happening right now. This is always going to say: okay, they have got to go to committee, so how long is it going to take in committee? We can't respond in a timely fashion. I'm sure each of you has had constituents say to you: "It just takes so long. I don't have the patience for this." You know, as a legislator myself I know that I get frustrated, too, with how long things take. So why would we take more time?

And then I guess I'm just confused, too, because here, you know, Bill 4 was just introduced, the reduction in red tape. What's this doing? This is just creating another layer, a whole other committee structure for a private member's bill. Those two factors are incongruent. If indeed the UCP government wants to reduce red tape, then this is an example of a way to do that. I mean, it's not even red tape yet because it doesn't exist currently. I just really question that. I guess I believe the hon. members, leaders are logical thinkers, and it just doesn't follow logic. I really question why this is part of this omnibus amendment to the standing orders.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that it's just a way to control some of the backbenchers in the UCP government because

they're concerned about some of the – I don't know – public ideas that have been showcased that may not be actually in line with what the party wants Albertans to know that they're about. But some of them have histories that are sharing something quite different, and that could be disturbing. I just question. Well, maybe it is kind of a darker reason for that. I mean, that's too bad because these are candidates that were vetted by the UCP party and should be representatives that they're proud to stand with, so I'm just questioning that. Is that the purpose that they're not being explicit about?

Anyway, certainly, using their own logic about the reduction in red tape, you know, it just absolutely doesn't make sense for them to be putting forward that private members' bills automatically – automatically – have to go to committee. I just want to reiterate that many issues are emergent and some things need to be dealt with in a very timely manner by private members. Again, as many of my colleagues have said, this does erode private members' any kind of sort of authority to have some leadership. Often when you're not in the Executive Council, it's harder to have your voice heard. This gives elected representatives some authority to do that, so it's very disturbing to me that this is being taken away.

These are some of the, you know, key issues that I have with this omnibus amendment to the standing orders, taking away some of the traditional parliamentary traditions that really add. I mean, I don't think anybody could question that having an opportunity to introduce stakeholders, family members, friends, supporters, student groups adds to our time here. It really has been a joy for me to be able to do that throughout my previous four years, and I just really see no point in that, additionally with the desk thumping. This is also a tradition that is time honoured. I think, as some people have said already, grade 6 students: when they see their MLAs thumping their desks, they enjoy that.

Thank you.

11:40

**The Speaker:** Questions or comments for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, anyone?

Seeing none, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Government Motion 11. I want to start off my comments by, actually, congratulating the government on bringing forward one section of this government motion that I do in fact support.

Of course, you know, Mr. Speaker, that I'm probably one of the most agreeable and least partisan members of this House, so you wouldn't be surprised to hear me congratulate the government when they've done something right, and of course I'm looking forward to any piece of legislation that they'll do right. So far we're four bills in and they haven't done anything, but at least they've gotten something right with Government Motion 11, and that's particularly section 16, which says that Standing Order 59.02(3) is struck out and the following is substituted:

- (3) During consideration of interim, supplementary or main estimates, the following individuals may be seated at a committee or in the Assembly:
  - (a) officials of the Government, to assist the Minister whose estimates are under consideration;
  - (b) staff of the opposition, to assist Members who are participating in estimates consideration.
- (4) During main estimates consideration, officials of the Government may respond to questions from a committee at the request of the Minister.

I want to thank the government for bringing forward that section of this motion because as members here who have been in various previous Legislatures and have gone through the processes of

interim and supplementary supply, we know that the ministers are presenting a very, I guess, high-level overviews of their budgets for their departments, especially in interim and supplementary supply, with few details. Having been in the position to defend the budget items that I was bringing forward in the interim and supplementary supply, I know that I was questioned by my critics and colleagues from the opposition as to what some of the details were. Even though I was very well prepared for those debates, I couldn't have all of the information at my fingertips, so it would have been useful in those situations to have government officials seated next to me here in the Chamber to talk about those things.

I think that by approving this part of the motion, we will substantially enhance the quality of debate around the finances of the province. So I'm looking forward to at least this portion of the motion being approved because, Mr. Speaker, everybody will be much more well informed as a result of the discussions that we're able to undertake with respect to interim, supplementary supply, and main estimates, both here in the Chamber as well as at committee.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it should come as no surprise to you that there's nothing else in this motion that I support, so even though the motion does contain that one section that I think is valuable and worth while, the rest of the motion should be rejected. In particular, I will, you know, underline the comments that my hon. friends here from this side have made about removing the introduction of guests from private members.

Certainly, I had the opportunity, of course, in the 29th Legislature to introduce a number of guests. One of the most memorable for me was the introduction of a very avid constituent, somebody that I consider a friend, somebody who writes to all of us here in this Legislature on a daily basis if not at a multiple times per day daily basis, and that was Brad Jones. Brad Jones, of course, takes the time out of his day to write to each and every one of us about the state of Alberta politics. He's not afraid to share his opinions on what the members of the Legislature should do on various matters that are confronting the province. It was a real privilege for me to be able to invite him as my constituent and introduce him to all of the members of the Legislature.

I got a chance to visit with Brad Jones during the election campaign. He came into my campaign office, and he wanted to thank me for being introduced to the Legislature. It was a very meaningful recognition of his interest and passion for Alberta politics. He shared that video of that introduction with all of his friends and family, as you can well imagine, and was very proud, as a person who's deeply engaged and deeply interested in the affairs of this province, that he was able to be introduced to all of the members of the Legislature.

I think it was valuable as well for all of the members of the Legislature to actually be able to meet face to face with somebody who has been so passionate and so vociferous about his opinions on the matters facing the province. To think that those opportunities are now going to be taken away from us is a real shame. It's a meaningful way to recognize people who have made significant contributions to the public life of this province who don't sit in this Chamber, and I think that taking away that opportunity to provide meaningful recognition to those people is a real loss to the public life of the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, what are we trying to save by reducing the time of introducing guests? We set aside a maximum of 20 minutes a day for Introduction of Guests. There have been a handful of days where we've gone over that time, and of course when we've gone over that time, we've unanimously agreed that we should extend the daily Routine so that we can introduce all of the guests that we've brought to the Legislature. It's surprising to me that members who



have so eagerly agreed to and supported the introduction of guests in the past have now turned around and decided that that's no longer a function that this House should serve. I feel that that's really a shame, you know, given the small amount of time and the otherwise lack of accessibility or perceived lack of accessibility that the common person has to the proceedings here at the Legislature. I think it's a real shame to construct those kinds of barriers to public engagement in the province of Alberta.

I understand that it's a practice that's being imported from Ottawa. You know, the party chairman, of course, seems to think that the way Ottawa does things is the way that things should be done everywhere. Everybody here knows that, of course, in Ottawa it's not practical to be able to allow members to introduce guests because they have 300 and some MPs from all across the country. It would be impractical to allow all of those members to introduce guests throughout the day, but we only have 87 member here, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that I could provide you with some education. It really is no time at all given the considerable length of time that we spend here in this Chamber to take 20 minutes or so out of our day and introduce guests and provide that meaningful recognition.

Now on to the matter of desk thumping. You know, the party chairman and the Government House Leader, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre like to talk about decorum, which I find is incredibly ironic, especially given the propensity for the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, as you can well remember, Mr. Speaker, to make up points of order about me in particular. He did that a number of times in the 29th Legislature. He did that again earlier this week, obviously intending to smear my reputation and create disorder in this House. For him to turn around and say, "Oh, I'm a proponent of decorum," is a pill that is too big to swallow. What the desk thumping section of this motion is really intended to do is to shut down dissent.

#### 11:50

Now, I know that the party chairman thinks that he's right and that he likes to run down people who disagree with him both here in the House as well as on social media and in the public. Of course, he also uses some rather clever tactics. He sends out his troll army on social media to smear people who disagree with him on his behalf. I think that there's nothing that has done more to lower the level of discourse in politics than for the party chairman currently here in Alberta to have come back from Ottawa and returned to the province of Alberta.

You know, for him to turn around and say that he is the champion of decorum is something that I don't believe and I don't think anybody in the province of Alberta believes either. It's really about shutting down dissent, shutting down the healthy functioning of democracy. We can't have a democracy if we're not allowed to show our dissent, express disagreement in a number of ways. In fact, sometimes the temperature in this House rises, Mr. Speaker, because some of the things that we're talking about are so disagreeable to some of the members that we can't help but show our vocal and passionate dissent on those issues. That's how a Westminster Parliament is designed to work, Mr. Speaker. You know this better than anyone. If this Assembly were designed to foster partisanship and create a unity of mind on issues, we wouldn't be sitting facing each other. We would all be sitting in rows and desks facing you, Mr. Speaker, which obviously I see is an exciting prospect for you, but it undermines the intent of the Westminster system.

This House is designed to create a clash of ideas and to foster discussion and debate. It only functions well when we can passionately disagree with one another and show that passionate

disagreement in a variety of ways. You know, for the party chairman and the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to bring forward these kinds of motions that really undermine the functioning of a proper Westminster Parliament like this one is really shameful. I think all of the private members who, like yourself, Mr. Speaker, are passionate about defending the operation of a Westminster parliamentary system should vote against these kinds of measures.

Mr. Speaker, with the time that I have remaining, I just want to also move on to the section about sending all private members' bills to committee. Now, as has been mentioned by all of my colleagues here who have spoken to this issue, as private members you have limited opportunity to have a direct influence on the legislation in the province of Alberta. Private members' bills are really your only way to have your voice heard and have some kind of expression on what kind of legislation you personally and your constituents want to see made here in this Chamber.

It's ironic, I guess. You know we're debating Motion 11. On the Order Paper, of course, I'd draw everybody's attention to Motion 9, which, to be clear, is not under debate, but it recognizes the right of members to vote freely on all matters of conscience. So it's proposed that all private members will be able to vote freely on matters of conscience, but when it actually comes to writing down those matters of conscience in the form of legislation in a private members' bill, tough luck. We're going to send those things to committee, where they're going to die. We're really going to silence the private members' ability to bring forward and create a meaningful expression of those matters of conscience that they were elected on and that their constituents want them to represent in the Legislature.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, it's not for me. You know, like my colleagues have said, we don't have much to lose. It's the private members of the government caucus who have the most to lose by implementing this motion. As the Member for Edmonton-West Henday said: life as a government backbencher can be incredibly quiet. You will not have a lot of say or influence over the legislation that will be brought forward, and there will be times – and I'm sure that we are already in those times – when you're incredibly disappointed with the legislation that the government has brought forward. You know, perhaps you were expecting to repeal the carbon tax, and now you're asked to vote in favour of the legislation that actually imposes a federal carbon tax on the people of Alberta. Perhaps you thought that you were going to bring jobs back to Alberta, and now you're asked to vote for corporate tax cuts that don't create jobs – the Minister of Finance has actually confirmed that – and only serve to enrich the wealthy elite, that everybody in this House seems so eager to rail against. Perhaps you thought that you were voting against red tape. Of course, now we have legislation that creates more red tape.

So, private members, stand up for your right to have your voices heard with private members' bills.

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

Seeing no one, are there others wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo in the time we have remaining.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will not be supporting what's before us in terms of changes to the Standing Orders. I want to focus on abstentions. I've been elected since 1995, 15 years with the city of Calgary. We voted on many things during the course of our deliberations over those 15 years, and none of those ballots had an abstention opportunity. It was either yes or no. Do you support it or not support it? Certainly, my constituents knew where I sat all the time. They knew what I said all the time because

they could look up my record, and there were people who were doing that on a regular basis.

I look across, and I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross sitting in the Legislature here. His father sat in the Legislature for more than 20 years. His father never once had the opportunity to abstain from voting. It was yes or no, yea or nay. Now I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross will be able to duck and dive and weave and essentially not be counted if he chooses to not be counted. That's not why we are elected, Mr. Speaker. Our constituents put us in this Chamber to make a difference each and every vote that comes before us. It's not parliamentary, in my view, to duck and dive and to be unclear with your constituents.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that this should be a family-friendly place. The last government put family-friendly policies in place, and now those are being changed. It will make it more unfriendly for people who have responsibilities for children, people who need to schedule those things. It will make it more difficult to

raise families. I can't think of anything we need less than to make things more difficult for women in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I know you're looking up at the clock, and I think it will probably gong pretty quickly.

I do think that these changes are not helpful. They should have gone to committee and let us as legislators decide what's in the best interests. This is heavy-handed. This is not needed. I'm disappointed at the government for bringing them forward. They shouldn't have . . .

**The Speaker:** Well, I hesitate to interrupt. The hon. member will have the additional time remaining, which is approximately 12 minutes, at a later time should he wish to use it.

According to Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 30, 2019

Day 6

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
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Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
and Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 30, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### 1939 Royal Visit to Alberta

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we get to the introduction of visitors or guests, I would just like to take a brief moment, to take pause. This week marks the 80th year since the visit of King George and Queen Elizabeth to Alberta. This visit to Alberta was part of the first-ever visit to Canada by a reigning monarch.

Entering the province on May 26, 1939, the royal couple visited Medicine Hat, Bassano, and Calgary. An unscheduled stop at an encampment of the Blood, Blackfoot, Stoney, Peigan, and Tsuut'ina nations was enjoyed by the royal couple. A two-day break in Banff – I think that's something we can all agree to – provided a wonderful time for relaxation. Following a brief visit to Lake Louise on May 28, the King and Queen left for British Columbia. Returning on their eastbound return trip across Canada, their Majesties stopped in Jasper, Edmonton, and Wainwright.

On June 2 the royal couple arrived at the Legislature Building, where addresses by representatives of the province and the city of Edmonton were made on the front steps. The royal couple then entered this Chamber, where Members of the Legislative Assembly and other dignitaries were presented to the King and Queen.

In preparation for the visit a temporary fountain had been constructed in the rotunda of the Legislature. This fountain is the fountain that remains in place today.

### Introduction of Guests

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you Fort Saskatchewan Christian school. These students are accompanied by their teachers, Natalie McIntyre and Carol Greeve, along with their chaperones: David Hiller, Pablo Papavero, Lisa Harris, and Jennifer Peters. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour today to rise in this House and introduce to you and through you students from Vauxhall elementary school, a school in my constituency. The students are accompanied by Principal Dale Cummings and a number of teachers, chaperones, and volunteers. I'd ask them now to rise where they are in the gallery and receive the warm welcome of this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** It won't be long now before one of those students has your job, good sir.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce students from Landing Trail intermediate school. This is the third day in a row that we've had students here from Landing Trail intermediate school. This group is part of the French immersion program there, and they are accompanied by their teacher, Jennifer Jones, and chaperones Janene Kargus and Heather

Boucher. I would like them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce a special guest seated in your gallery, a constituent of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and someone many in this House know, Bill Smart. Bill is seated with his son Sheldon, his daughter-in-law Kirsten, and his grandkids Gavin and Isla. Bill, who was a member of the Legislative Assembly security services, is hanging up his blazer after 22 years of service.

But that is not his only service as a member of the LASS staff. Bill also served in the Legislature from 1980 to 1982 as part of his duties when he was a member of the Edmonton Police Service. In those days a constable was seconded to the Legislature on a full-time basis. So Bill served a total of 24 years here at the Legislature.

Bill's public service covers a much longer time span than that, however. Bill joined the Edmonton Police Service in 1971 and served with the service for 26 years. As a member of the Edmonton Police Service, Bill worked in a variety of positions, including response division, beats, traffic section, detention unit, warrant detail, communications, and a stint as an undercover operator for gambling operations.

Bill was not only a dedicated LASS member but also a true professional at all times. Bill had the ability to remember the name of everyone he came in contact with. This included everyone working at the Legislature. MLAs, custodians, GOA staff, pages, you name it: Bill knows everyone on a first-name basis. Bill was always the go-to guy for LASS members if they required advice on protocol or procedures in relation to the Legislative Assembly. What is very important to note is that during Bill's long service at the Legislature he always remained nonpartisan.

Bill will be greatly missed by all who had the pleasure of seeing him on a regular basis. Please give the traditional warm welcome to Bill and his family.

Thank you so much, Bill. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Heartfelt congratulations. It's a pleasure to see you here today.

**Ms Fir:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and introduce to the Legislative Assembly on your behalf someone very near and dear to your heart. This person knows you extremely well. In fact, they have even changed your diapers. I wouldn't say that she's your favourite for fear that other people like your youngest brother might be watching, but we all know the truth. It is my great pleasure and honour to be able to introduce to the Assembly a constituent of mine and your eldest – significantly eldest – sister, Naomi Pulliam. I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly my guests sitting in the members' gallery. The next few days are important as Alberta marks Intergenerational Day on June 1, immediately followed by Seniors' Week, celebrated from June 2 to 8. I will have the opportunity to speak more about the importance of these two occasions in my ministerial statement. To help celebrate with us, I have invited representatives from civil society organizations into our Chamber today. The organizations here today are just a few examples of the key partners my ministry

is working with to make life better for Albertans because when it comes to caring for elders, we all are caretakers.

I invite my guests to please stand when I call your name: Sheila Hallett, executive director of the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council; Donna Durand, executive director of the Alberta Council on Aging; Liz Tondou, executive director of Edmonton Meals on Wheels. [A cellphone rang] Last but not least is Nuel Han, an animator for the age of wisdom initiative within the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op. I invite the Chamber to please join me in welcoming our guests with the traditional greeting of the Assembly.

### Speaker's Ruling

#### Use of Electronic Devices in the Chamber

**The Speaker:** Members, as I mentioned last night – perhaps not all members were in the Chamber at the time – I'd remind all members that it's important that we turn our phones off or not bring them to the Chamber. I mentioned last night to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford that on a go-forward basis if there was a similar sort of infraction, as we've just witnessed here – unfortunately, my eye did not catch the culprit – there will be a Speaker's fine that is implemented for the first offence, a \$50 fine to the charity of your choice. Any additional infractions will be a \$100 fine to a charity of the Speaker's choice. I encourage you to ensure that your mobile devices are off.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

1:40

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a very special guest – well, very special to me – my husband, Owen Young. He is a teacher, an assistant principal, a mentor of young leaders, an awe-inspiring parent, and the truest partner I could have ever imagined. I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce him personally as we know this privilege may soon be taken away from the members of this Assembly. I had hoped to introduce my two children in this Assembly one day this July when they weren't in school, but that opportunity may also be taken away from us. So I will take this chance now, so that their names get to appear in *Hansard* spoken by their mom, to say that Owen and I are parents to two compassionate, bright, and curious children, six-year-old Bodhi and four-year-old Leela. I'd like to ask my husband, Owen, to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my dear friend Dani Lagemaat, who is seated in the gallery up over here. Dani and I studied political science together at the University of Lethbridge, and it is largely because of her and her excellent proofreading skills that I got through that. Dani, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has an introduction.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sadly, this is likely my last introduction in this House because of the government's plan to use its majority to stifle members' ability to introduce guests, a century-long Albertan practice. Nonetheless, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a friend and former colleague, Maria Fitzpatrick. Maria fought hard for the constituents of Lethbridge-East and was a strong advocate for economic diversification and renewable energy projects. I thank her for her service, and I ask that

she rise to receive the warm welcome of the members of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Riverview, please.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the constituency manager for Edmonton-Riverview, Ioana Spiridonica. One of the best decisions I made as an MLA was hiring Ioana. Her broad range of abilities means my constituency office runs smoothly. Additionally, her initiatives to ensure that I have all the information I need are greatly appreciated. As this is likely my last opportunity to make an introduction in this Chamber, I must add how sad and, frankly, disturbed I am that the UCP is ending this time-honoured tradition. I would ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-North has an introduction.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House my nephew Tayyab Parvez. Tayyab is visiting Edmonton from Grande Prairie, where he works as a city engineer in the oil and gas sector with a company called Seven Generations. I am very thankful to Tayyab for his volunteer work during my campaign whenever he visited Calgary. Tayyab lives in the riding of Grande Prairie, where he also helped the hon. member Tracy Allard during the campaign. May I ask Tayyab to please rise for the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind all members that no matter what the circumstances might be, it would be inappropriate for us to use the name of another member as opposed to their riding name. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie would probably appreciate that as well.

## Ministerial Statements

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

### Intergenerational Day Seniors' Week

**Ms Pon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand to recognize two important milestones on our calendar. The first is national Intergenerational Day, which is celebrated June 1, and the second is Seniors' Week 2019, which runs from June 2 to 8.

Intergenerational Day is an opportunity to bridge the gap between generations. It is a day to celebrate intergenerational families. It is also a reminder that our communities are stronger when we learn from and work with one another.

In Alberta we set aside the first week of June to celebrate our most cherished citizens during Seniors' Week. Seniors have served their families, friends, and neighbours for a lifetime. They should always feel that they are valued members of their communities.

With the number of seniors on the rise, now more than 600,000 in Alberta, it is important that we take a moment to honour and highlight their contributions to our province. For instance, Alberta's seniors contribute 32 million volunteer hours in a single year. In economic terms, those volunteer hours are worth more than \$680 million.

Intergenerational Day and Seniors' Week are also opportunities to raise awareness about the issues some seniors face such as social isolation and elder abuse. Our government believes in respecting and supporting Alberta seniors, their families, and caregivers by

providing a variety of programs and services to help seniors continue living in their chosen communities. Today's seniors are actively engaged in their communities. They live longer, healthier lives while continuing to support their communities through volunteering.

Alberta seniors deserve our deep appreciation and thanks. They ignited our collective spirit of fearless optimism and innovation. Now we pick up the torch, while remembering and appreciating the pioneers who helped build Alberta into the great province it is today.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Albertans to join me and the government in celebrating June 1 as Intergenerational Day and June 2 to 8 as Seniors' Week in Alberta.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On June 1 we will be marking Intergenerational Day. Intergenerational Day is a wonderful opportunity to encourage sharing and mutual respect between generations. In addition, June 2 to 8 is Seniors' Week. This is an opportunity to honour and appreciate Alberta's seniors and to celebrate all the contributions seniors make to our province.

We all have seniors in our lives as parents and grandparents, mentors, friends, and colleagues. Seniors are important members of our families and communities. My parents have been blessed with longevity, and I'm so grateful. Dad is 90, and my mom is 82. According to recent statistics almost 20 per cent of Albertans over the age of 65 are active in the workforce, and nearly half of seniors age 65 to 74 volunteer in their communities. In fact, Alberta has the highest percentage of senior volunteers of any province in Canada.

Now, there are some who speak of the growing senior population in catastrophic terms like the grey tsunami. These are apocalyptic discourses, and they're wrong. Look around your community. Who are the leaders? Many seniors are in elected offices at all levels of government, serving their community with significant lived experience. Who is supporting the business community, nonprofits, and family members financially? Seniors. A personal example is my mom. She teaches English as a second language at 82 years of age. As a retired teacher herself she just can't stop. She loves it so much, and I'm so glad she gets to continue that. Yes, seniors are contributing to Albertans with their time, their creativity, and their funds.

All Albertans benefit when seniors are able to remain in their communities as they age. Research shows that more than 90 per cent of seniors live in their own homes. I'm proud of the work our NDP government did to support Albertans and to make sure that seniors age in dignity close to their loved ones. We passed legislation that protects seniors in the workplace by prohibiting discrimination based on age under the Alberta Human Rights Act. In Budget 2018 we protected the Alberta seniors' benefit so that thousands of seniors have support when they need it. Additionally, I'm so proud that we indexed the Alberta seniors' benefit so that those same benefits are not eroded by the cost of living. We also launched a home repair and adaptation program to help seniors age in their communities.

1:50

For more than 30 years Albertans have formally celebrated seniors. This week and every week I hope everyone takes a moment to spend time with a senior. Seniors built this province and continue to contribute to the vibrancy of our communities. Seniors' Week is an opportunity to recognize the seniors in our communities.

Thank you.

## Oral Question Period

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

### Education Funding

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we revealed that this UCP government has caused such distress in our schools that principals are surveying parents for advice on where to cut funding. At William Reid school it's either cut music or commit to massive class size increases, and when asked for some glimmer of hope, this Education minister said that she will continue to provide the same messaging that she has to date. Seriously. To the Premier. The parents at William Reid do not need messaging; they need clear funding commitments from your government. Why won't you provide that?

**Mr. Kenney:** I thank the hon. the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Education is a priority for all members of this place and all Albertans. That is why we were clear in the recent campaign that this government will maintain or increase funding levels for education. The government has been in place for barely four weeks. I know the Minister of Education has been working with the Treasury Board and the Department of Finance to determine the reference levels for transfers to school boards in the upcoming year, and we'll make that information available as soon as final decisions have been made.

**Ms Notley:** Well, that sounds to me like maybe in due course. I'm not sure.

The fact is that school boards are generally supposed to be completing their budgets on this very day, May 30. Instead, parents are being asked to weigh in on a range of uncertain scenarios, and they say the minister should just get down to doing her job. To the Premier: if your Education minister won't do her job and make these decisions, maybe you could ask another member of your cabinet to step in and get it done.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the opposition leader that the hon. the Minister of Education is doing her job, a highly qualified minister, former chair of her school board, former president of the Catholic School Trustees' Association of Alberta, who is passionate about education, which is why she decided to run for this place. I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the Minister of Education is a strong voice for education around the cabinet table. Information will be forthcoming soon enough. We all know we need to work together to ensure quality education while bringing balance back to the province's finances after the massive NDP debt left to this government.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, school boards need direction on the level of funding that they will receive next September today. It's a simple issue. The minister has committed to providing them only with messaging and current funding maybe and maybe increasing funding and maybe funding SFF but maybe not and maybe funding enrolment, but we're not totally sure. She's failing profoundly, and she's creating chaos and uncertainty for Alberta kids. To the Premier: is that her fault or your fault?

**Mr. Kenney:** I completely reject the premise of the Leader of the Opposition's question, Mr. Speaker. If a crisis has been created, it was left by the NDP, which left this province with a fiscal train wreck, which took a \$13 billion debt, turned it into a \$56 billion debt, had us headed to a \$100 billion debt, went through five credit downgrades, ran the largest per capita deficit in Canada, the worst

fiscal record of any modern Alberta government. Now it falls to us on behalf of the Alberta people to bring balance back to our finances so we can afford education and health care in the future.

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

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, when parents are told that their kids will have to compete with 30 others for their teacher's attention or that their music program is gone, they could not care less about stale election talking points like we just got. What they need is for this government to do its job: figure out whether they can afford to fund enrolment, whether they will fund enrolment, or whether they will make cuts. Do their job, give school boards certainty, stop the chaos: why won't they do that?

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the NDP does not understand the threat posed to education and other public services by uncontrolled government debt. As debt goes up, so does our obligation to pay interest to the bankers and the bondholders that the NDP locked us into. Every extra dollar going to bankers for interest payments is a dollar that cannot go to classrooms or to health care. So to ensure the long-term provision of those important public services, we need to work together with school boards to ensure fiscal discipline.

**Ms Notley:** Tax cut for wealthy corporations: right now. Certainty for our kids: in due course. That is what these guys care about, and just that.

You know what, let me maybe try the Education minister. Getting funding for our most vulnerable students, our special-needs students, is important. Now, I agree with that statement. But you know what? It's not my statement. It's the Minister of Education's statement in 2017. Yet her failure to make a decision right now is putting those very students at risk. Why won't she make a decision? Why will she not do her job and tell the school boards what funding they're going to get?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP increased spending by hundreds of millions of dollars in order, ostensibly, to reduce class sizes. But guess what happened? Class sizes went up under the NDP's watch. This is a party over there that apparently has learned nothing from their complete rejection by Alberta voters. Alberta voters want not just to focus on how much we're spending but on how much we're getting from that spending, which is why the Minister of Education will be launching an examination of where the money went and why it resulted in higher class sizes.

**Ms Notley:** Students need action now, not examination and political ploys two years down the road.

The current Education minister also had this to say in 2017, and I quote: it seems to be increasing – mental health, that is – and, unfortunately, the resources haven't kept pace, so that's something I feel strongly we need to advocate as a board for. But here's the thing. By failing to fund enrolment, student mental health programs will have to be cut. So has she changed her mind, or does she just not care anymore about protecting student mental health programs?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we reject the premise of the opposition leader's question. I'm pleased to announce to this House that the single largest additional spending commitment in our party's platform was for mental health. We've appointed an Associate Minister for Mental Health and Addictions, who will be working with all stakeholders, including those in the school system, to

ensure that necessary supports are in place for Albertans, including students, so that they can get the help that they need if they're facing mental health challenges.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for your third set of questions.

### Conversion Therapy Working Group

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, on Monday the media reported that the Health minister had cancelled the conversion therapy working group established by our government. The minister then took to Twitter to discredit the reporter who wrote the story, only to be proven wrong by a statement provided by his own office. It's now Thursday, and the minister still isn't able to tell Albertans whether the working group is still standing. To the Premier a simple question: does the conversion therapy working group still exist, and will it still be able to carry on with its important work?

**Mr. Kenney:** First of all, it's important to underscore that this government opposes abusive or coercive practices such as conversion therapy. We understand that the NDP, after four years of doing nothing on this issue, decided in the eleventh hour, before an election, to appoint an ad hoc group, including two NDP members, with no ministerial order, no order in council, and as far as I understand, no actual budget. Mr. Speaker, the minister encountered this ad hoc task force, has decided to meet with its members to take onboard their input, and I'm glad he's doing so.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much. Yesterday the minister met with two members of the working group, including the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. Later, when questioned about the meeting, the minister said that he would get back to members in, quote, due course. In fact, he rattled off the same one-sentence talking point at least nine times. The minister's behaviour was disrespectful to the victims of the psychological assault inherent in conversion therapy. So to the Premier: will you direct the minister to apologize to those victims and provide real answers on the future of the working group and the conversion therapy ban?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it is regrettable to see the NDP reduced to trying to turn this difficult and sensitive issue into a political football. The reality is that the leader of the NDP told the public that her government would be coming forward with legislation on this issue in the fall of 2018. No legislation was forthcoming, none after four years. No real, formal task force or inquiry or Legislature committee was tasked with this issue. An eleventh hour ad hoc group with a couple of NDP MLAs was not a serious response.

2:00

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much. In fact, the working group was specifically tasked by our government to develop the most effective means of executing an outright and effective ban on conversion therapy for implementation this year. That was what we were planning. Now they've been left in limbo, and they're going to the media to find out what their mandate is. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: will he commit to banning conversion therapy before the year is out even if it requires bringing in legislation this year?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, again, it's unfortunate that the opposition is trying to turn this into a point of partisan contention. The reality is that they were in office for four years, and the answer from them was no. The answer from the NDP was no to legislation. Four years and they did not bring forth such legislation. For the first three of those four years the former Health minister said that there was effectively no need for it because this was not a practice happening in Alberta. Now, perhaps the NDP could inform us as to why they decided not to bring forward such legislation.

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

#### **Motor Dealers' Association of Alberta**

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last September the now Premier met with Alberta's Motor Dealers' Association. The MDA then reported it had promised to raise \$1.1 million to assist the UCP third-party advertising campaign – think about that one for a moment – in exchange for the UCP pledging to roll back consumer and worker protections. Yesterday this government introduced legislation designed to roll back regulations. To the Premier: is his red tape reduction bill payback for a million dollars in PAC donations, or will he commit today that the consumer protection for Albertans purchasing vehicles will remain in place?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, our red tape reduction action plan and legislation is this government keeping our promise to Albertans to liberate our economy, to go from being the most overregulated economy in Canada to the freest and fastest moving. Why? So that we can liberate job creators to do what they do best, create employment, a critical part of our job-creation strategy. They left a jobs crisis behind. We're going to cut red tape in order to create good jobs in Alberta.

**Ms Notley:** So is he going to then be liberating Albertans from protection from car dealers who otherwise take advantage of them? Is that what we're liberating Albertans from?

Regardless, the president of the MDA wrote to potential funders that he had been promised he would get to meet with the UCP transition team to provide input. A month ago this same president registered as a lobbyist. To the Premier: have any members of your transition team or any staff in your office or you met with the president of the Motor Dealers' Association since the election?

**Mr. Kenney:** I shook Mr. Ducharme's hand with that of dozens of other people at the reception following the throne speech. Apart from that, I've not met with Mr. Ducharme, and I'm not aware of any members of my staff having done so.

Mr. Speaker, I respect the role that auto dealers and other businesses play in our communities to create jobs and opportunity. You know, all through rural Alberta the auto dealers are often the number one sponsors of local sports teams and charities, and the NDP runs them down, just like they run down the restaurant owners, just like they run down our oil companies, just like they run down business in general. We understand that we need to work with the private sector to create good jobs for Albertans.

**Ms Notley:** Well, last week we heard that job creation should be done on the back of workers, and apparently now we're going to do job creation on the back of Alberta's consumers.

You know what? The letters written by the MDA and the subsequent actions of the PAC they created have been referred to the Election Commissioner for investigation because they bragged openly about plans to use banned corporate donations from car

dealers to work directly with the UCP in their campaign. Will the Premier commit today that neither he nor his members of government will have any more meetings with these guys until the Election Commissioner's investigation into breaching the act is complete?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know that there is an investigation, and Albertans are free to speak to representatives in government, just like the NDP-affiliated union bosses spoke to them all the time, informing the NDP government's job-killing policies, the same union bosses who spent collectively millions of dollars in attack ads against this party. I'm pleased to say that the NDP union bosses failed. We ended up with the largest democratic mandate in Alberta history.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie.

#### **Support for Persons with Disabilities**

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Minister of Community and Social Services. This week is National AccessAbility Week, which is dedicated to promoting accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities. This is an important issue to all Albertans, and I know that within my constituency of Grande Prairie residents would appreciate hearing from this government. Can the minister please update this House on the government's commitments to improve accessibility across Alberta?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to start by saying to the Member for Grande Prairie that our thoughts and prayers are with her and all other communities across the province who have been impacted by the wildfires.

It is National AccessAbility Week, a time to celebrate the invaluable contributions that the roughly 400,000 Albertans with disabilities, both visible and invisible, make to their communities and our province as a whole. I wish everyone in this House and across the province a happy National AccessAbility Week.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the UCP campaigned on ensuring that every Albertan should have a life of dignity and equal opportunity and given that this government has committed to making life better for all Albertans, can the minister advise this House on what specific steps are being taken to benefit Albertans with disabilities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are taking meaningful action to improve the supports and services provided to persons with disabilities. These steps include improving the PDD program; restoring the wellness, resiliency, and partnerships program for those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. In addition to establishing four new family-governed resource centres to serve St. Paul, Grande Prairie, Edmonton, and Medicine Hat, we will also invest in assisting Albertans with accessing a registered disability savings program and grants to help in saving to care for a loved one with a disability.

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, to the same minister: given that our government is committed to getting Albertans back to work and given that the constituency of Grande Prairie, my constituency, has certainly experienced job losses in

recent years, can the minister please update the House on how the government will ensure that persons with disabilities are included in that plan?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, our government believes that all Albertans should have access to equal opportunities regardless of ability. In addition to our job creation plan, we will partner with community organizations and business leaders to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities like abilities at work and the Rotary employment partnerships, which we will support with \$5 million per year in additional funding. In addition, we are committed to making the government of Alberta a leader in hiring persons with disabilities.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

#### **Consumer Protection for Motor Vehicle Owners Ethics in Government**

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I was proud to play a role advocating for and delivering on changes to consumer protections during my time in the government caucus. Now that our leader has established that the Motor Dealers' Association donated large sums of money to this government's PAC in a shady deal to roll back consumer protections, to the Minister of Service Alberta: will you commit in this House today to keeping the consumer protections we introduced for vehicle purchasing and maintenance? Why, or why not?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta is rising.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to point out that third-party advertisers are strictly regulated by Alberta election law in their activities, fundraising efforts, and required disclosures. Furthermore, the member opposite knows full well that third-party advertisers in Alberta are independent from political parties.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Motor Dealers' Association appears to be lobbying directly for changes to vehicle standards and given that any changes to these rules would be highly suspect with a pending Election Commissioner's investigation into the relationship between the MDA and the government PACs, will the Minister of Transportation commit to making no changes being sought by the MDA until the commissioner's investigations have concluded?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking the government to not improve any rules. Please.

Of course, with the bill that he introduced in the last session of the Legislature, he should be embarrassed to be talking about this subject. His bill would have harmed the industry without protecting consumers. Perhaps he should go back and do his homework before the next time he picks up a microphone.

2:10

**Mr. Carson:** I don't get embarrassed by strengthening consumer protection, Mr. Speaker.

Given that this UCP government could use a crash course in democracy ethics and given that this UCP government has removed the position of minister responsible for democratic renewal, that was once held by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods under our government, to the minister of labour: can you advise this House on who is now responsible for democracy and ethics in your

government, and what is being done to teach ministers about what is and is not appropriate?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader is rising. [interjections]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see the opposition so happy to see me this afternoon. It must be Thursday in this place.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP continue with this ridiculous tactic of trying to make fear and smear. You know, Team Angry over there. [interjections] It's disappointing . . .

**The Speaker:** Members, we heard your question. We will hear the minister's answer.

**An Hon. Member:** In due course.

**The Speaker:** No. Right now.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Again, Mr. Speaker, you can see the behaviour of the NDP. It's ridiculous. This is a game. We're not going to engage in that. We're focused on defending Albertans. They can continue with their game. It's not helping the people that I got sent here to represent. My colleagues and I are going to represent Albertans. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Buffalo will keep his comments to himself while the Speaker is on his feet.

The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

#### **Corporate Taxation and Job Creation**

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, under the NDP government Albertans continued to pay the lowest taxes in Canada, with no PST, no health care premiums, and no payroll tax. Albertans pay \$11 billion less in taxes than the second-lowest tax jurisdiction. Moshe Lander, a senior lecturer in economics at Concordia University in Montreal, does not believe that the risky corporate tax cut proposed by this government will result in job creation. In fact, Lander said, quote: it's a mistake to say that it's a job-creating decision. End quote. To the Finance minister: will you admit that you are making a \$4.5 billion gamble with no guarantee that jobs will be created?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the previous NDP government raised taxes by 20 per cent. This and other job-killing initiatives caused tens of billions of dollars of investment to leave the province and, with it, jobs for Albertans. The corporate tax reduction is a key piece of our plan to return investment to Alberta and get Albertans back to work.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that your arguments are based on an ideology peddled by economists in a race to the bottom and given that this idea has been tried in Kansas and other U.S. states and has failed to result in increased economic activity or significant job creation but has resulted in fewer public services, increased debt, and additional fees for government services, to the same minister: how many failed experiments does the Finance minister need before he realizes that most corporations will pocket the tax savings instead of creating new jobs?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich for members opposite, who while in government presided over the largest loss of investment in recent history and, with it, massive job losses, to be lecturing us on economic policy. We are implementing the plan that

we put before Albertans, a plan to attract investment and create good jobs for Albertans.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, given that most businesses look past tax rates and often look for access to talent, affordability, strong health care, and high-quality education in making their decisions on where to invest, will the Finance minister come clean to Albertans and admit that their corporate tax giveaway will result in larger class sizes, longer wait times, and a lower quality of life being a disincentive for companies to locate in Alberta?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the previous government put us on a fiscal track that simply wasn't sustainable. We were headed to \$100 billion of provincial debt, and as we went in that direction, we simply could not sustain high-quality services that Albertans expect. This government is going to change the course. We're implementing very clear policy initiatives such as the corporate tax reduction policy, that will attract investment, return wealth to this province, and create jobs for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-East has a question.

### Support for Seniors

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of 2017 Canada's seniors population is now a larger population than that of children. Canada's seniors population is now over 14 per cent of the country's population, and in the next 10 years we'll exceed the number of facilities that are available for them. My constituents are eager to know what our government is doing to support our elders. Can the Minister of Seniors and Housing please inform this House what the government's plan is to support these crucial members of our communities?

**The Speaker:** The minister of seniors.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-East for your question. To set the stage for what our current status is and what the future looks like, our 605,000 seniors make up 13 per cent of Albertans. By 2035 it is estimated to double to more than 1 million and hold 19 per cent of Alberta's population. This government will work closely with the stakeholders to make sure that seniors' concerns are heard and also support aging safely independently.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many seniors' facilities are in desperate need of renovation, repairs, and upgrades in order to continue to serve one of our most vulnerable communities, many of my constituents are rightly concerned about the long-term care of their friends, families, and neighbours. Can the Minister of Seniors and Housing please inform this House what the government's plan is to help fund these necessary facilities?

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Affordable housing is a seniors' issue for Albertans. We are pursuing public-private partnership options to bring private-sector capital in to help build homes. The NDP government had four years to address this issue, yet there are more than 4,800 senior households on the wait-list to access the nearly 25,000 senior-focused housing units in Alberta. Our government is committed to do better.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. What is the government's timeline on providing these services?

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government's plan is to grow Alberta's economy, create prosperity, and strengthen the social programs that we all value. We are all working to make Alberta the best place in North America to live, work, start a business, and to retire. Work is already under way to evaluate and enhance the current supports in place for seniors. We will identify the key priorities for supporting seniors as they age and create an action plan as quickly as possible.

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

### Nurses' Contract Negotiations

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current contract between Alberta Health Services and United Nurses of Alberta says that wages for the upcoming year need to be bargained. One of the very first acts of this new government was to cancel the wage negotiations clearly laid out in that contract. Cancelling negotiations that were part of an agreed upon contract disrespects the rule of law. To the Premier: why were some of your very first actions of your government to potentially violate the rule of law?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the previous government has left us in a serious fiscal mess, quite frankly. We're committed as a government to deliver high-quality services to Albertans and also bring this province to balance. We have the MacKinnon panel that's right now studying a fiscal path forward to balance, and we have delayed our budget deliberations until this fall. We simply requested a delay in arbitration so we can fully understand the best pathway forward.

**Ms Gray:** Given suspending contractually agreed upon wage negotiations so that the new government can examine expenditures is roughly the same as a homeowner refusing to pay their bills because they haven't gotten around to writing the family budget and given that Albertans expect their government to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time, to the Premier: why is your government refusing to participate in wage negotiations that they are contractually obligated to be part of?

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we believe that it's in the best interest of Albertans that we move forward with a plan, with a competent plan. Right now we're consulting all stakeholders, including the unions, on just delaying arbitration so that we can ensure that we have the best plan forward for Albertans.

2:20

**Ms Gray:** Given that the labour minister was recently a member of Alberta's Labour Relations Board, he would know that the government's actions in this matter may very well qualify as bad faith negotiations and given that the Finance minister has confirmed repeatedly that the government directed Alberta Health Services to halt negotiations, will the Premier admit that his government has intentionally interfered with wage negotiations that they were contractually obligated to hold?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, we have simply requested a delay in arbitrations. We're consulting all parties and working with them

in good faith to delay the arbitration, again, so that we can build the best path forward for Albertans. Albertans have put their trust in this government. We take that trust seriously, and we will not spend irresponsibly while we ensure high-quality services to Albertans.

### Red Tape Reduction Strategy

**Mr. Nielsen:** This Premier says he's on a mission to cut red tape. He's planning to give his associate minister the ability to create regulations, amend regulations, and set up a series of panels to evaluate regulations. Sounds like the minister of red tape is creating a lot of red tape himself. Still, with very little detail in his red tape reduction plan, one really has to wonder where the Premier and his minister will start. Yesterday the Premier said a whopping 17 regulations had been cut. Can the associate minister list a couple of his favourites?

**Mr. Hunter:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate you on your election, and I know that with your rapier wit and your extensive knowledge of House proceedings you will serve this Chamber very well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member that our party ran on a commitment to get Albertans back to work and to reignite our province's economy. This is one of the four major planks in our strategy to reignite the economy and free up our job creators to do what they do best, create jobs. Albertans can expect us to be laser focused over the next four years to accomplish just this.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I guess there was a little red tape in the answer.

Given that this government has a goal of cutting regulations by one-third and given that it has yet to define what they view as red tape and given that there are important regulations requiring sterilization of surgical equipment and inspections of restaurants for cleanliness – dirty scalpels and spoons aren't good for anyone, Mr. Speaker – and given that this new legislation has very little in the way of accountability, to the associate minister: can we ensure Albertans' concern about health and safety will be protected from your big scissors?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of our made-in-Alberta red tape reduction action is to have a strategy to get Albertans back to work. Over the past four years Albertans have struggled under some of the worst unemployment numbers in recent history. We've been hired to do a job, and we're not going to let Albertans down.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government and its Premier have a history of cutting shady backroom deals and given that Albertans have a right to know where this government's red tape cutting mission will go, to the associate minister: will you commit to this House to publicly disclose the regulations that you are considering chopping before you cut them, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, on April 16 Albertans made a bold declaration that they want a government focused on jobs and the economy. Our mantra is that we are open for business. These aren't hollow words. We have a plan to get Albertans back to work, and the red tape reduction strategy will deliver great results by freeing up our innovators and job creators to do what they do best, create jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Highway 19 Safety

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 19 connecting the town of Devon with the QE II and highway 60 desperately needs to be twinned. On average in three out of every four years someone dies on this 12-kilometre stretch of road. The previous government dragged their heels on the twinning of highway 19, and my constituents are concerned that the highway will miss another construction season and remain dangerous for yet another year. Can the Minister of Transportation tell my constituents what appears to be the holdup? Is it land acquisition or some other issue?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the hon. member that highway 19 is on our radar. If he or anyone was to drive down the eastern portion between the QE II and range road 253, you would see that work is substantially complete, and we hope to wrap that part up this summer. Between range roads 253 and 261 planning and design work is under way, and from range road 261 to highway 60 land negotiation and the moving of utilities are under way.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that highway 19 has been a major issue in my constituency for many, many years and given that the previous NDP government apparently dragged their heels on land acquisition, causing further delay in the twinning of highway 19, can the Minister of Transportation tell my constituents how the government will improve road safety on highway 19 until twinning is completed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member, I want you to know that the department has recently completed major upgrades and widening on the QE II between 41st Avenue and highway 19, which should significantly improve safety. The part that is widened now should be safer. Outside of that, I'd just have to say that during construction we depend upon speed reductions, law enforcement, signs, and the good behaviour of drivers, and I would encourage all drivers to be cautious on that road.

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I talked to one constituent the other day that has had to go into therapy as a result of witnessing a horrific crash just in front of her on highway 19 this past year and given that the safety of my constituents is directly linked to the twinning of the highway and given that the town council of Devon has worked hard to try and bring this issue to a successful completion over many years, will the Minister of Transportation commit that he is willing to sit down with the town of Devon and hear first-hand the concerns of my constituents?

**Mr. McIver:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would be very happy to sit down with the town of Devon, and I would invite the hon. member to work with my office and schedule that meeting. Beyond that, collisions are serious, and I would encourage all members of this House to spread the word that Albertans need to drive safely. Despite the fact that the roads might be drier and bare during the summer, risks still exist, and I would encourage all Albertans to look after one another on the roads and look after our workers that are out there too, please.



**Northern Alberta Wildfire Update**

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday a public emergency order and a disaster order were declared as a result of wildfires burning in northern Alberta, 10 of which are considered out of control. I'd like to thank the folks at the Provincial Operations Centre and the staff at the Alberta Emergency Management Agency for their dedication and hard work. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry for their work. To the minister: can you provide this House with an update on the wildfire situation, which, as we know with the yellow skies outside, has been serious?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much for that very important question. I would like to echo what the member opposite said, to thank all the wildland firefighters, the evacuation experts that have been doing an excellent job. Regarding this fire, it is at 150,000 hectares already, and it had a major growth last night and yesterday. It is a very active fire, and it is something that officials are constantly working on.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, given four new wildfires in the last 24 hours and that many people in communities in northern Alberta, including the town of High Level and parts of Mackenzie county, Dene Tha' First Nation, the communities of Bushe River, Meander River, and Chateh, Paddle Prairie Métis settlement, Keg River, Carcajou, Wabasca, the Bigstone Cree Nation, and Chipewyan Lake, are all under emergency evacuation orders, to the minister: can you please update this House on what supports are available to folks who've been evacuated from these communities, and in particular can you comment and confirm that all of these supports are available equally to First Nations communities?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I can inform this House that our department together with all of our emergency responders as well as our emergency workers have been working around the clock to make sure that all of our evacuees in all of those communities are safe. I can further report that they are getting all of the help that they need at this point in time, and we are keeping a close eye on all that is going on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:30

**Mr. Dach:** We'll be monitoring the situation.

Mr. Speaker, given that there are 29 wildfires currently burning in Alberta, first responders and wildfire crews are working around the clock to keep our communities safe. However, some communities face imminent risk of burning. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: can you please update this House on which communities are right now at risk of being inundated by fire?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Again, thank you very much for the very important question. The town of High Level: there's been tremendous work, and it is actually protected very well by a berm. That happened a few days ago. The town of La Crête is probably the closest one to an active fire right now, and as was done in High Level, the town of La Crête is also having bulldozers going around the clock, making sure that that town and that area will remain safe.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question.

**Member for Calgary-East**

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It just broke that the Member for Calgary-East is under investigation for fraud, forgery, and bribery. It's clear that there is something seriously wrong with this. We've been calling on the Premier to remove this member from caucus for weeks now. Will the Premier do so today?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we respect the RCMP and independent investigation agencies. I understand that the member is asking questions about a situation that just broke. I have not actually had an opportunity to review what she is referring to. But the reality is – again, we stress it to the House – that we respect that. Again, we're focused on government policy here and doing the work that we've been sent here to do by Albertans, and we'll let the RCMP investigators do their job.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. The RCMP certainly have an important job to do. So does the Alberta Election Commissioner, who has launched an investigation into allegations of the United Conservative MLA being part of fraud, forgery, and bribery. Mr. Speaker, is this acceptable behaviour for this party? If not, why won't the Premier stand in this House and remove this member from caucus?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, all members will know that it is important that the questions that are asked during question period refer specifically to government business and not party business. I hear the member refer directly to party business.

Having said that, the Government House Leader, should he like to rise and answer the question.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we respect the independence of the RCMP and all investigative services inside our province. The hon. member, as you mentioned, is not asking about government policy right now and is rising on something I have not had a chance to review. But, as such, I just want to establish very clearly to the House that we respect that, and we'll continue in this House to focus on Albertans and let the RCMP focus on what they focus on.

**Ms Hoffman:** The RCMP, the Election Commissioner, and, I imagine, Albertans are deeply concerned about allegations and investigations related to fraud, forgery, and bribery. Why is the government not concerned? This is a government caucus member. Why is the government not concerned with fraud, forgery, and bribery? If this is acceptable by the government in their own caucus, what else is acceptable, Mr. Speaker? Fraud, forgery, and bribery should be clear lines that qualify somebody to be disqualified from the caucus. Why won't the Government House Leader or the Premier stand in this House today and remove this member from caucus until this is done?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member will know that the use of preambles after Question 4 is traditionally not used in the House.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is raising an issue that I have not seen; I've been in question period today. We respect the independence of the RCMP. To be very clear, we let them do their role, and we, again, will be focused on Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### School Construction Concerns

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the previous government Copperhaven school in Spruce Grove opened its doors in 2018 to accept its first batch of young and eager students. Unfortunately, as a result of poor planning and missed completion timelines by the previous government, this elementary school has operated a full year without a gymnasium, and now it looks more and more likely that this gymnasium will not even be completed in time for the next school year. To the Minister of Infrastructure: what is the status of this project, and when will it finally be completed?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, let me thank the member for his advocacy on behalf of his constituents. While Copperhaven school achieved occupancy in September last year, Infrastructure noted some unevenness and cracking to the gym floor. Over the past four months my department has been working with the contractor to rectify the situation. Work is expected to be completed over this summer, making the gym available for the next school year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what steps is this government taking to ensure that issues like this don't continue, moving forward, for future school projects here in Alberta?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I want Albertans to know that their government will continue to be vigilant and conduct regular site inspections to ensure that contractors deliver quality projects as per the specifications and timelines agreed to in the contracts.

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

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what steps has the government taken to create realistic timelines for parents whose children are attending new schools where construction may be unfinished?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I have asked my department and the staff to work with all school boards to ensure that school projects are built to a high-quality standard within the approved budgets and that the projects meet the completion schedules.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche has the call.

### Support for Wildfire-affected Students

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the onset of warm, dry conditions, many northern Albertans are once again forced to evacuate their homes and escape forest fires. This creates a major disruption to the everyday lives of Albertans, especially children who are attending school. Students are an important resource for our province, and their education is absolutely paramount to the continued success of Alberta. However, these evacuations have forced students to be removed from their school for their own safety. To the Minister of Education: can you inform this House how many schools . . .

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. I believe the question would be: what are we doing for our students that are impacted by the fire? Our first priority is to ensure that our students

and their families are safe and out of harm's way. Of course, we are accommodating high school students in the High Level area. My department has worked with the local school divisions to develop exemptions for students affected by the fire. My department has communicated to the grade 6 and grade 9 students that they can be excused from writing their provincial achievement tests and that they can write them at another time or in another school.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that the safety of our students is the utmost priority to all members of this Assembly and given that as a result of these evacuations, many schools have been closed and given that the need to evacuate your community and the possible threat of losing your home can be an incredibly stressful ordeal, as many of the constituents in my riding of Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche can attest to, and considering that these evacuation orders have come while students are still attending classes, is there a plan to provide students with the mental health care and supports they need?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. As my colleague would know from the fires in Fort McMurray, we take the mental health of evacuees and our students very, very seriously, and while the length of the evacuation remains unknown, I will be working with my colleague the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to ensure that the appropriate supports are in place for our students. We want to make sure that every single one of them has what they need to get through this very dangerous situation.

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that evacuations such as these do disrupt the academic calendar for many students and given that students in grades 6 and 9 are scheduled to write their provincial achievement exams shortly and given that the students in grade 12 are soon to write their diploma exams as well and given that these exams are such important tools for our students' academic records, to the Minister of Education: how is the government ensuring that students who have evacuated their homes are given an opportunity to complete this very important testing here in Alberta?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. Our government recognizes that diploma examinations are an important part of the students' educational journey. We have communicated that grade 12 students will be eligible for an exemption from their diploma exam. When a student is exempt from their diploma exam, their classroom mark will become their final mark. These students could also write their exams at another school or defer their examinations until August. Again, we want to do whatever will help the student in this situation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has a question.

2:40

### PDD Program Review

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2018 our NDP government appointed a diverse group of advocates to review key issues facing the PDD program, issues like IQ requirement, waitlists, and workers' wages. After consulting in communities all over Alberta, the panel has been working on the report and subsequent

recommendations. Many in the community are concerned that this report is purposely being buried and that the new government will not let it see the light of day. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: when will you publicly release the committee's full report to the community?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, our government wants to make life better for all Albertans. We are committed to supporting persons with developmental disabilities to ensure they live a life of dignity and have equal opportunities. This is why we have great respect for the work of the PDD panel. I'm currently reviewing the report and assessing the recommendations. It's important to be thoughtful and deliberative before moving forward on any decision.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We actually asked you to release it, not talk about it or evaluate it.

Given that we've seen shocking cuts to PDD under successive Conservative governments in this province, to the minister, through you, Mr. Speaker: can you commit to keeping our government's promise that no cuts will be made to people's services or the PDD program as a result of this review?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, the PDD review panel undertook extensive stakeholder engagement. We owe it to the panel, to their work, to the stakeholders, and to Albertans to ensure that we are thorough. I am reviewing this report, and I will provide an update very soon.

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A report is great, but we want the whole report. We want to see it. The community wants to see it.

To the same minister: given that many members of the community have been waiting decades for a review of the issues facing the PDD program – they are complex – and given that a key issue that needs to be addressed is the PDD IQ requirement, which we know is not a credible tool to assess whether someone needs support or not, will you commit to removing IQ as a requirement entirely?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, in our platform we committed to working with the disability community to improve the PDD program, and we will honour that commitment by continuing to engage with stakeholders and the PDD review panel. As I said before, our government is committed to helping Albertans with disabilities to live a full life with dignity and opportunity.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements. I ask that if you are leaving the House, you would do so in an expeditious manner.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

#### Calgary-South East Constituency Update

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Calgary-South East includes four great communities: Auburn Bay, Cranston, Mahogany, and Seton. This constituency is one of the fastest growing areas in Calgary and is populated by young families. Like most Albertans, they want to provide what's best for their children. In following

with that goal, my constituents communicated to me at the doors that there are three areas they would like our government to focus on for them: the economy, education, and public transportation.

On the economy, our government already has a robust and ambitious plan to renew our economy and to bring jobs to Alberta. Through initiatives like the job-creation tax cut, the open for business act, and the Red Tape Reduction Act, we are already working to ensure that Albertans have the jobs necessary to provide for their families.

In terms of education Calgary-South East is in need of additional schools. While we are grateful that the Calgary board of education's Cranston second elementary school and the Calgary Catholic school district's Auburn Bay elementary school are both due to open in the fall of 2020, more are needed. Currently the Mahogany elementary school is in the early stages of the design process while the funding received for the much-needed Auburn Bay middle school is for design only.

Lastly, at this time the first stage of the green line is expected to be completed by 2026 and is planned to extend 20 kilometres, from 16 Avenue N to 126 Avenue S.E. Unfortunately, this will not reach the 40,000 people in my constituency. As a riding on the southernmost part of Calgary, my constituents are hoping that funding and planning can be extended to include their communities as well.

I'm looking forward to exploring these important projects with the hon. ministers of Education, Infrastructure, and Transportation. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View would like to make a statement.

#### Rural Crime Strategy

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and deliver my first member's statement in this House. There has been a lot of talk in this House about civility and working together, and in that spirit I would like to commend the government. It isn't easy to admit that you were wrong and take a page from the opposition, but the UCP government has done exactly that, twice now. Today we just saw the appointment of a special prosecutor. I think this will be to the benefit of all Albertans.

In 2017 rural crime rates were rising significantly, and my colleagues and I were hearing very valid concerns. In response our NDP government moved quickly to consult with the RCMP, with rural communities, and with rural crime watch groups to ensure that we developed a proactive strategy to target those prolific offenders that we know are responsible for the majority of this crime.

At the time, Mr. Speaker, the UCP wanted me to waste time studying the issue and lobby the federal government. On multiple occasions they voted against 59 RCMP officers and 40 civilian staff. They called my colleagues and I every name in the book, saying that we were spending like fools and not considering the future of the province and that new judges, 55 court clerks, and over 70 prosecutors over the course of four years were administrative waste. They voted against them at every turn. The UCP Premier even went so far as to cut ALERT while he was in Ottawa.

But, as with all things, results are what counts. After the introduction of the strategy rural crime dropped by an average of 10 per cent. This meant 480 fewer homes broken into, 3,500 fewer thefts, and 1,200 fewer vehicles stolen. I'm proud of this work.

Our strategy is working, but there's much more to do, Mr. Speaker. That's why I'm so glad that the UCP is not only keeping the additional police and prosecutors that they previously voted

against but following our lead and adding more. They've even managed to convince the Premier of the value of ALERT.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, in this place we have a duty to get it right, and I'm so glad to see that the UCP government has decided to follow our lead.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Rowan House Society in High River

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election. Today I'm honoured to rise in this House to recognize the important work that the Rowan House Society, a charity based in High River, does for some of the most vulnerable residents of my riding of Livingstone-Macleod. Rowan House has been serving families affected by domestic violence for almost 20 years. It is a vital organization focused on school-based programs designed to prevent gender-based violence through education and to providing tangible and practical support and protection to women and children whose lives have been shaken by the horrors of domestic violence.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Historically Rowan House has focused on providing secure, temporary accommodations for the women and children in rural Alberta who are escaping domestic violence. I'm happy to tell all of my colleagues here today that starting this year Rowan House is expanding their services in an innovative way. While still seeking to guarantee safety and stability for women and children who have been harmed by domestic violence, they're launching their brand new stay at home program in Claresholm.

The goal of the project is to have the abusive partner in the relationship move to temporary housing for their treatment and their counselling with the goal of not taking away the stability provided to victims by living in their own homes. This serves not only to help break the cycle of violence that many families are caught in, but also to expand Rowan House's operations further into rural Alberta, with their main facility being located over an hour away from Claresholm.

Mr. Speaker, this is truly a fantastic program being launched in rural Alberta to help these families that are struggling to escape this systemic evil. Many rural families in southern Alberta do not have access to violence prevention services such as this, and I am forever grateful to Rowan House for providing such a service.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

2:50

### Tourism Week

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise in the House today to commemorate national Tourism Week. Alberta is blessed to encompass some of the most beautiful lands on Planet Earth. Many places support tourism industries, but there are few places where it comes so naturally. While most locations pride their tourism industry on infrastructure, skyscrapers, shopping malls, amusement parks, museums, or other man-made attractions, here in Alberta our tourism industry is founded upon the mere existence of our natural, God-given beauty.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Being the MLA for the riding of Banff-Kananaskis, I know this full well. Between Canmore, Banff, Lake Louise, and Kananaskis Country my riding welcomes millions of tourists every year. In fact, these towns welcome more tourists every day of the year than they have permanent residents living within. Individuals, families, and

dogs of every breed travel from near and far to witness first-hand the breathtaking scenery of the Rockies. Looking at the numbers, tourism injected \$8.5 billion in visitor expenditures to our economy in 2015 and contributed 127,000 jobs from over 19,000 local tourism businesses.

Tourism is an industry we should be proud of. During national Tourism Week I am proud to support our government's goal of doubling this industry by facilitating private-public funding of destination marketing, working with airport authorities to expand air transport agreements, and moving the industry into the ministry of economic development so that it can be treated as the true economic driver it is and not a niche industry.

So whether you celebrate from the mountaintops of Banff or the valleys of Waterton, upside down from the Calaway Park roller coaster or sitting right side up from a West Edmonton Mall waterslide, gazing up with the northern lights above in Fort McMurray or gazing down at the fish below in Lake Minnewanka, from inside the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller or outside in the Willmore wilderness park, I hope that all members of this Assembly can join me today in honouring Alberta's vibrant tourism industry and the thousands of workers, employers, small-business owners, and entrepreneurs who support it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Government Policy Implementation Time Frame

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Albertans have a lot of questions for their new government. After all, the Premier said that he was doing his homework in advance and he'd move quickly once in office and, in fact, wouldn't even have time to consult. So Albertans rightly have some questions about what it is this government is going to do, and it's interesting to see what they're willing to talk about and what they're not.

For example, when will profitable corporate friends of the Premier see their generous tax break? Right away. But when will hard-working nurses, teachers, and paramedics get the government back to the table to bargain in good faith? Well, in due course.

When will young people see a 23 per cent cut in the pay that they work hard to earn to help their families and save for university? Right now. But when will they find out if their tuition will remain affordable, if their campuses will be free of hateful speech? In due course.

When will this government adopt the years-old Education Act? Immediately. But when will they let school boards know if there will be a single new dollar to support 15,000 new students in our classrooms? Well, in due course.

When will this government, so devoted to ceremony and tradition, cease to consistently acknowledge treaty land? Already done. But when will they let indigenous Albertans know if they'll accept the principles of UNDRIP and the TRC? Well, in due course.

Now, when did this Premier scold LGBTQ students for doing politics on school hours? Well, that was after two weeks in office. But when will those students find out just how far he intends to roll back protections for their GSAs? In due course.

When did their Minister of Health decide that conversion therapy in Alberta isn't a thing? Apparently, just last week. But when will he let LGBTQ Albertans know if he's willing to admit he was wrong and has the courage to help end its destructive practice now? All together now.

**Some Hon. Members:** In due course.

**Mr. Shepherd:** In the meantime it's our job to keep asking the questions government doesn't want to answer and that of Albertans

to decide if they like what they hear. I'm sure they will make their voices heard in due course.

**The Speaker:** They say that teamwork does make the dream work. I'm not always sure that that's the case here in the Assembly during Members' Statements, but I digress.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### 30th Legislature Opening Reflections

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always an honour to rise in this House representing the people of Calgary-Fish Creek, which now includes the great communities of Midnapore and Sundance, where my family and I have lived for 27 years. I continue to be proud of being a born-and-raised Calgarian and Albertan. In addition to the privilege of public service, I have been honoured to serve the communities in which I've lived, worked, and played.

With deep involvement in Alberta's Asian community since the early '80s, I am blessed with many lifelong friends and am humbled to be considered honorary Chinese. I paddled hard and beat the drums as one of the cofounders of dragon boat racing in Alberta and have been deeply involved in celebrating cultural diversity through such organizations and events as the Chinatown Street Festival, Hong Kong-Canada Business Association, Hong Kong days, and GlobalFest.

I've also been privileged by deep engagement with community groups, educational institutions, and the nonprofit sector, including the Kids Cancer Care Foundation, Trico Centre, Trico Charitable Foundation, Bow Valley College and many more too numerous to mention. These opportunities continue to deeply influence who I am and the values I uphold and defend every day. I have a deep passion around the importance of housing affordability for all Albertans and was blessed to have driven innovative partnerships with Habitat for Humanity at all three levels of government.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that public, private, and nonprofit collaboration is key to better meeting societal challenges now and into the future. I am also steadfast in my commitment to the highest standards of integrity, principles, and values in public service and will continue to be fiercely outspoken in this regard.

Lastly, let's all remember what has and what will continue to build this province: our entrepreneurial spirit, our prairie work ethic, our shared commitment to building a welcoming, compassionate, and inclusive society. Mr. Speaker, it is these qualities that will drive us forward to a sustainable future while ensuring that each and every Albertan can and will reach their full potential as we work diligently across party lines to return to the Alberta advantage.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) the daily Routine may continue beyond 3 o'clock p.m.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 201

#### Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to rise and request leave to introduce Bill 201, the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act.

The bill proposes that all publicly funded school boards have policies and plans for students with life-threatening allergies in addition to it requiring every publicly funded school to have an EpiPen on school grounds.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a first time]

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

#### Bill 202

#### Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, wonderful. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, I promise I will be very brief. A few years back I made a promise to a young mother whose daughter was brutally abused and murdered while in kinship care. Her other children were also severely abused. Today is the day I fulfill this promise and I introduce the bill dubbed Serenity's Law, this time backed by a caring and compassionate government. This bill seeks to make it clear that everyone knows that if a child requires intervention, they can contact the director of Children's Services or a police officer.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to helping the children of Alberta. A promise made, and a promise kept.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a first time]

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 4

#### Red Tape Reduction Act

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Associate Minister for Red Tape Reduction rising.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act.

Bill 4 will enable us to take deliberate steps to eliminate dead-weight regulations and unnecessary processes, while at the same time protecting the environment, upholding fiscal accountability, and ensuring the health and safety of all Albertans. Albertans have been struggling because of the prolonged economic downturn, and the unnecessary costs of doing business in Alberta have not been helping. An efficient regulatory environment will speed up approvals, boost Alberta's competitiveness, and spur economic growth and innovation. This bill would set the stage for government to introduce tools to create an inventory of regulations that are currently in place and assess whether or not they are effective.

3:00

It would also direct government to adopt a regulatory approach that focuses on outcomes instead of processes. An outcome-based approach will set a standard of regulatory excellence in Alberta where all regulations are necessary, effective, efficient, and proportional to the outcome they are trying to achieve, providing value for all Albertans.

Simply put, this bill would enable us to eliminate and prevent unnecessary regulations. We've heard from entrepreneurs, businesses, nonprofits, and the public that red tape is adding to the burden of doing business here in Alberta. These extra costs include time, money, and other resources, and they're driving away jobs

and investment. With Alberta businesses and families struggling, we need to take action right away. To enable government to act quickly, the legislation will allow government to consolidate red tape reduction efforts in omnibus regulations. This made-in-Alberta, innovative approach will allow us to address red tape more quickly and efficiently than anywhere else in Canada. While we anticipate that most if not all of our red tape reduction efforts will be addressed through policy, this legislation will also allow government to create regulations to administer the Red Tape Reduction Act if necessary.

One of the immediate actions that would be enabled through this legislation is putting red tape under the leadership of one associate minister, myself, and also one division. This will help guarantee that all of the different areas and departments of government are working together and will ensure less confusion about who's directing the work. I'll have clear accountability to get the work done, and my dedicated team, albeit small, will have clear direction and clear expectations from the get-go.

To make sure that our actions and priorities are aligned with the needs of Albertans, I will also consult with Albertans by setting up a series of industry panels. These panels will be created in a phased-in approach and will represent Alberta's businesses and industry experts from key sectors, spanning from oil and gas, tourism and hospitality, and agriculture and forestry to manufacturing, construction, small businesses, and nonprofits. We know that Albertans have creative solutions to offer. They're the ones on the front lines dealing every day with unnecessary and burdensome red tape that serves no purpose other than to confuse and obstruct. We want to hear how we can do better, cut more, and get our economy back to being the freest, fastest moving economy in the country if not North America.

A key cornerstone of this legislation is a commitment to listening to Albertans, and that includes being accountable and transparent to them. That's why this legislation will require me to report on the government's red tape reduction strategies and initiatives. A copy of the report would be tabled in the Legislature and made available to the public beginning in 2020. I will have the flexibility to determine the content, timing, and frequency of the report based on the priorities that are identified and the actions that are put in place to address them. These actions, Mr. Speaker, are being introduced at a time when Alberta businesses and Alberta's economy need it most.

Mr. Speaker, we are introducing measures to reduce deadweight red tape by one-third over four years and prevent new red tape from creeping back. We are making Alberta more competitive. It will help our province to attract and retain investments, and it will reduce barriers for Alberta's job creators so that they can do what they do best, create jobs.

I now wish to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Motions

### Amendments to Standing Orders

11. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

A. Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective December 4, 2018, be amended as follows:

1. Standing Order 3 is amended

- (a) in suborder (1) by striking out "Subject to suborder (1.1)" and substituting "Subject to suborder (1.1) and (1.2),";
- (b) by adding the following after suborder (1.1):

(1.2) The Assembly shall not meet in the morning from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, or 9:00 a.m. to noon on Wednesday or Thursday, if the Government House Leader, or a member of the Executive Council acting on the Government House Leader's behalf, notifies the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting, notice having been given no later than the time of adjournment on the sitting day preceding the day on which the morning sitting will be cancelled.

(c) by adding the following after suborder (5):

(5.1) In the period prior to, or following the commencement of, the first session of a Legislature, the Government House Leader may file a revised calendar with the Clerk, notwithstanding the deadline in suborder (5), following consultation with the Opposition House Leaders.

(d) in suborder (6) by adding "or (5.1)" after "unless varied by the calendar provided for under suborder (5)";

(e) by striking out suborder (7) and substituting the following:

(7) As soon as possible after January 15 each year, and following receipt of a calendar submitted under suborder (5.1), the Clerk shall publish the calendar provided for under suborder (5) or (5.1).

2. Standing Order 7 is amended

(a) in suborder (1) by striking out "Introduction of Guests" and substituting "Introduction of School Groups";

(b) by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:

(3) When Introduction of School Groups is called, brief introductions may be made by the Speaker of groups of schoolchildren in the galleries.

(c) by adding the following after suborder (5):

(5.1) If any Member other than the mover rises to speak to a debatable motion to concur in a report of a committee on a Bill under Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees, debate on that motion shall be called under Orders of the Day

(a) when the Government thinks fit, in the case of a report on a Government Bill,

(b) on the next sitting day other than a Monday, in the case of a report on a private Bill, or

(c) on Monday afternoon under Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills other than Government Bills, in the case of a report on a public Bill other than a Government Bill.

3. Standing Order 8 is amended

(a) by striking out suborder (1) and substituting the following:

8(1) On Monday afternoon, after the daily routine, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:

Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills  
Written Questions  
Motions for Return  
Public Bills and Orders other than Government Bills and Orders  
At 5 p.m.: Motions other than Government Motions

(1.1) Notwithstanding suborder (1), if on a Monday afternoon prior to 5 p.m. no items of business other than Motions other than Government Motions remain on the Order Paper for consideration by the Assembly, Motions other than Government Motions shall be called and after the Assembly has decided all questions necessary to conclude debate on the motion, the Assembly shall proceed to consideration of any items of Government business provided for in suborder (2) unless unanimous consent is given to proceed to an additional Motion other than a Government Motion.

- (b) by adding the following after suborder (7)(a):
  - (a.1) Debate on a motion to concur in a report of a committee on a public Bill other than a Government Bill will conclude after 55 minutes of debate on the motion and 5 minutes for the mover to close debate, unless the motion is voted on sooner.
4. Standing Order 13 is amended by adding the following after suborder (5):
  - (5.1) No Member shall disrupt the orderly conduct of the proceedings of the Assembly by loudly or repeatedly banging on a desk.
5. Standing Order 19(1) is amended
  - (a) in clause (a) and (b) by striking out “at 5:15 p.m., the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings” and substituting “the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting”, and
  - (b) in clause (c) by striking out “at 5:15 p.m., unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion” and substituting “unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting and immediately put every question necessary to dispose of the motion”.
6. Standing Order 29(3) is amended by striking out “and motions for returns” and substituting “, motions for returns and motions for concurrence in committee reports on public Bills other than Government Bills”.
7. The following is added after Standing Order 31:
 

**Confidence in the Assembly in the Government**

31.1 The confidence of the Assembly in the Government may be raised by means of a vote on

  - (a) a motion explicitly worded to declare that the Assembly has, or has not, confidence in the Government,
  - (b) a motion by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, “That the Assembly approve in general the business

plans and fiscal policies of the Government”;

- (c) a motion for the passage of an Appropriation Bill as defined in Standing Order 64,
  - (d) a motion for an address in reply to the Lieutenant Governor’s speech, or
  - (e) any other motion that the Government has expressly declared a question of confidence.
8. Standing Order 32 is struck out and the following is substituted:
 

**Division**

32(1) A division may be called for by 3 Members rising.

    - (2) When a division is called, the division bells shall be sounded at the beginning and for the last minute of a 15-minute interval.
    - (3) After the first division is called during any meeting of the Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply, the interval between division bells on all subsequent divisions during that meeting shall be reduced to one minute, except in the case of the first division called during an evening sitting that commences in Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Order 4(4).
    - (4) When Members have been called in for a division, there shall be no further debate.
    - (5) Members are not compelled to vote and those who wish to abstain should remain in their seats when asked to rise and record their vote.
    - (6) The Clerk shall record the ayes and the noes and announce to the Speaker the number of votes cast for and against the motion.
    - (7) The ayes and noes shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
    - (8) Abstentions shall not be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
  9. Standing Order 37 is amended
    - (a) by striking out suborders (1) and (2) and substituting the following:
      - (1) Five copies, and any additional copies required by suborder (2), must be tabled of a document presented by a Member to the Assembly for
        - (a) placement of one copy in the records of the Assembly, and
        - (b) distribution of
          - (i) 2 copies to the Legislature Library,
          - (ii) one copy to *Hansard*,
          - (iii) one copy to the Government, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, the Official Opposition, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member, and
          - (iv) one copy to the Official Opposition, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, a Member of the Government caucus, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member.

- (2) In addition to the copies required under suborder (1), one additional copy must be tabled of
- (a) responses to written questions and returns ordered by the Assembly for distribution to the Member who asked the question or moved the motion for return, and
  - (b) any document presented by a Member who is neither a Member of the Government caucus nor the Official Opposition, to allow for distribution to both the Government and the Official Opposition under suborder (1).
- (b) by striking out suborder (3).
10. The following is added after Standing Order 46:  
**Debate interrupted by adjournment of the Assembly**  
46.1 When a motion to adjourn the Assembly is carried or the Assembly is adjourned for want of quorum, the matter under consideration prior to the adjournment shall be deemed to be adjourned to a future sitting day.
11. Standing Order 52(1)(c) is struck out and the following is substituted:  
(c) Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills, consisting of 11 Members,
12. Standing Order 52.01(1) is amended by striking out clauses (a), (b) and (c) and substituting the following:  
(a) Standing Committee on Families and Communities – mandate related to the areas of Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Education, Health, Justice and Solicitor General, Seniors and Housing and Service Alberta;  
(b) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future – mandate related to the areas of Advanced Education, Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Labour and Immigration and Infrastructure;  
(c) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship – mandate related to the areas of Agriculture and Forestry, Energy, Environment and Parks, Indigenous Relations, Municipal Affairs, Transportation and Treasury Board and Finance.
13. The following is added after Standing Order 52.01:  
**Subcommittees**  
52.011(1) Unless otherwise ordered, a standing or special committee shall have the power to appoint one or more subcommittees, which shall report from time to time to the committee.  
(2) Every subcommittee shall be appointed by motion of the committee specifying the terms of reference and the membership of the subcommittee.  
(3) At its first meeting of a new Legislature, every Legislative Policy Committee and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall appoint a Subcommittee on Committee Business to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair and to report to the committee on the business of the committee.
14. Standing Order 52.04 is amended by renumbering Standing Order 52.04 as Standing Order 52.04(1) and by adding the following after suborder (1):  
(2) Subject to Standing Order 59.01(11), suborder (1) does not prevent a Legislative Policy Committee from undertaking a hearing or inquiry during the same period of time that a matter stands referred to the committee by the Assembly if the hearing or inquiry does not interfere with the work of the committee on the matter referred to it.
15. Standing Order 59.01 is amended by adding the following after suborder (11):  
(12) Suborder (11) does not apply to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills.
16. Standing Order 59.02(3) is struck out and the following is substituted:  
(3) During consideration of interim, supplementary or main estimates, the following individuals may be seated at a committee or in the Assembly:  
(a) officials of the Government, to assist the Minister whose estimates are under consideration;  
(b) staff of the opposition, to assist Members who are participating in estimates consideration.  
(4) During main estimates consideration, officials of the Government may respond to questions from a committee at the request of the Minister.
17. Standing Order 64(1)(a) is amended by striking out subclause (ii).
18. Standing Order 74.1 is amended  
(a) by striking out the heading and substituting "Referral of Government Bill to a committee after first reading", and  
(b) by striking out suborder (1)(b).
19. The following is added after Standing Order 74.1:  
**Referral of public Bill other than Government Bill after first reading**  
74.11(1) After a public Bill other than a Government Bill has been read a first time, the Bill stands referred to the Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee.  
(2) The Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee shall report back to the Assembly within 8 sitting days of the day on which the Bill was referred to the Committee.
20. Standing Order 74.2(2) is struck out and the following is substituted:  
(2) Upon the concurrence of a committee report that a Bill be proceeded with, the Bill shall be placed on the Order Paper for second reading and, in the case of a public Bill other than a Government Bill, the Bill shall, subject to the precedence assigned to Bills standing on the Order Paper, be taken up on the next available Monday following the day on which the Assembly concurred in the report.
21. Standing Order 89 is amended by striking out "Standing Order 3" and substituting "Standing Order 3(5)".
22. The following Standing Orders are amended by striking out "Private Bills Committee" and substituting "Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee" wherever it occurs:  
Standing Order 91(4)  
Standing Order 96(2)  
Standing Order 98(1) and (3)  
Standing Order 100(1)



Standing Order 101  
 Standing Order 102  
 Standing Order 103  
 Standing Order 104  
 Standing Order 105(1)  
 Standing Order 106

23. The headings preceding Standing Orders 98, 100 and 105 are amended by striking out “Private Bills Committee” and substituting “Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee”.
- B. And be it further resolved that upon passage of this motion any public bills other than government bills that stand on the Order Paper for second reading are deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills in accordance with Standing Order 74.11(1) and notwithstanding Standing Order 74.11(2) the committee shall report back to the Assembly on these bills within 12 sitting days of the day this motion is passed.
- C. And be it further resolved that the amendments in this motion shall come into force on passage.

[Debate adjourned May 30: Member Ceci speaking]

**The Speaker:** I see the Member for Edmonton-South rising to debate.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, it’s really my pleasure today to rise and speak to Government Motion 11. I think it’s a really important motion here in the Assembly. It’s something that affects every single member here in the House, government and opposition alike. In fact, I think it perhaps affects government backbenchers the most out of anything we’ll do today, this change.

Really, I think, if we look at Government Motion 11, we can start from the top and look at some of the big, overarching changes that the front bench here is trying to introduce. What the government is trying to do is that they’re trying to take away a long-standing tradition in this Assembly. Not only is it a long-standing tradition in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker; it’s something that I know, as a member for the last four years and moving forward into the 30th Legislature, I was looking forward to doing and had enjoyed doing in the past. It’s something I already observed government members, not just government backbenchers but government front-benchers and cabinet ministers as well, doing in this House, and that’s the practice that we’ve had for over a century here of introducing guests.

Introducing guests is something where I’ve invited many important people in my life, whether that’s my family that I’ve invited here or my friends or, indeed, stakeholders and constituents who travelled quite a way and arranged to take time off their work because they came to see the work we do here on their behalf. They came to see what we do as legislators, as people who were sent here by our constituents for them. We’re members for constituencies, Mr. Speaker. They are the ones that want to see what we do for them. They came here, and one of the best things for them was to be introduced. I certainly remember that before I was elected, in fact, when I was quite a bit younger, I was sitting in the gallery, and my MLA introduced me in this House. That was a very high point for my year because being introduced means something for Albertans.

This is the people’s House. Mr. Speaker, you as the Speaker know very well that this is the people’s House. We let Albertans in our front doors. We let Albertans walk through this building and learn of our history and learn of what we do here in the Assembly. It is important that they have the ability to see this and to learn this

because our work here matters, and Albertans deserve to see that work. What the government is trying to do here is restrict that work.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I think, really clearly here we’ve seen government members, whether it’s in the front or backbenches, taking advantage of the opportunity to introduce guests already. Like many of the changes that are coming in Government Motion 11, like many of the things that are being introduced in Government Motion 11, it’s really clear that it’s to control private members. The government wants to control what private members can do. Maybe they’re concerned about who the backbench might bring as guests. Maybe they’re concerned that some of their members will bring guests that the front bench doesn’t agree with. Maybe they’re concerned that they’ll bring antiabortionists, maybe they’re concerned that they’ll bring pro-lifers, or maybe they’re concerned they’re going to bring gay rights activists.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand why that may be a concern for the government front bench here. I can understand why that may be a concern for some of the cabinet ministers, and I can understand why some of the cabinet ministers may actually enjoy having pro-lifers brought into this Chamber. Really, I think that very clearly Government Motion 11 is an attempt to restrict the rights of private members. It really doesn’t matter whether you would prefer to have or not have those people in this Chamber. They should have the opportunity to be introduced in our Assembly. They should have the opportunity to have their names read into *Hansard* by their MLA. We are the ones as private members that represent them in this House and represent their voice in this House. You introduced so many of your guests in the 29th Legislature and indeed some here in the 30th. You know very well how important it is that we can provide a voice for our constituents.

I think when we talk about trying to control private members and what the government front bench is doing, it plays really well into looking at one of the other changes they’re trying to bring in here. I mean, we can see pretty clearly that when they try to bring in changes around allowing abstentions in the Chamber – when there’s a division, you don’t have to leave the Chamber. Perhaps you no longer have to barge your way out of the Chamber and run and hide in your office so that you don’t have to vote. Well, now you can sit in your chair and do nothing.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, let’s be honest. If those votes won’t be recorded in the official votes and records of the Assembly, it makes no difference. It makes no difference. I know that members of the conservative party in the 29th Legislature were embarrassed that they were caught running away from their jobs. I know they were embarrassed that journalists and the public saw them not doing their job and refusing to work, and I know that can be embarrassing for many people. If you’re caught with your hand in the cookie jar and it turns out you weren’t working for your pay, I know for conservatives that can be a very difficult thing.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that if this is passed – sitting down during a division and not voting are exactly the same thing. You still won’t be recorded in the official Votes and Proceedings of the Assembly. It still will show that you refused to do your job, and it still will show that you weren’t representing your constituents, what we were elected here to do, what we were sent here by our constituents to do.

I think these two things were – it shows so clearly the front bench of this government trusts their backbench so little. It shows that they trust them so little not to bring in somebody embarrassing. It shows that it trusts them so little not to know whether to stand or sit or to sit in their office rather than in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I think very clearly we need to look at the suite of sweeping changes trying

to be brought in by the government here and say: it really is aimed at a specific thing. It's aimed at the people sitting in the backbenches. I think that's a real shame for democracy in this House. I think it's a shame for what we're trying to accomplish here as a collaborative government and in opposition. I think that as an opposition our job is to try to oppose and propose policy changes, and I think it's a shame that we see a government that doesn't even want that from their own caucus, let alone another caucus. I mean, that's something that disappoints me in looking at Government Motion 11 here.

I think another thing that disappoints me is looking at their ban on desk thumping here. It's going to erase a long-held legislative tradition. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know you yourself in the 29th Legislature enjoyed a good desk thump once in a while, and I know many members on the government side did as well. I mean, I know a lot of members here are new, perhaps here for the first time. But there are some members here who have taken a break and returned, and those members will remember, I'm sure, that desk thumping is something that has been practised for a very long time in this Assembly. It's something that's quite enjoyable. I think it's something that allows members to show support for members across the aisle.

You'll recall, Mr. Speaker, of course, that in the 29th Legislature there was a colleague of ours who discussed how they were sexually assaulted in their home, and one of the things that members across both sides of the aisle did is that they thumped their desks to show support. It's something that made sure that that member knew they weren't alone. I'm worried that if we get rid of this ability to support our members, it's going to cause disruptive behaviours. It's going to mean that we're not able to support our members and support each other in the same meaningful way.

It really is a shame that the government front bench here wants to control members so tightly. They can't loosen their grip even a little bit because they're concerned that if they let their backbench applaud how they like, well, then they're going to get other ideas. We really can't let them choose how they want to express their applause in this Assembly. If that's the direction the government wants to take, then, I mean, that is the government front bench's prerogative. Of course, I would hope the government backbenchers may see it differently and understand how they are perhaps being restricted or understand perhaps how they are having the ability to express themselves restricted.

Indeed, it seems like these government backbenchers, these people who were decidedly not appointed to cabinet, Mr. Speaker, are okay with that. They're okay with the front bench telling them what to do, and I think that's a real shame. I think if you run a government like that, it shows pretty clearly that you're not okay with any difference in opinions. I think having a difference in opinions makes us better legislators. It makes us legislators that allow better information to come to us at any given time. It makes us legislators that allow us to have better policy at any given time. I think that's really special. A collaborative government that is trying to improve Alberta is really important. It's really important for all governments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we can see that that simply isn't the case, and we can see with Government Motion 11 that they're signalling what they want to be doing for the next four years. For the next four years what the government is trying to signal is that if you weren't appointed to cabinet or you don't sit in the caucus and you're not appointed to cabinet, well, then, your voice doesn't matter. We're not going to let you introduce your guests. We're not going to let you thump your desk. We're not going to let you vote how we don't want you to vote. We're not going to let you go hide in your office

anymore. We're going to tell you exactly what to do every single time.

Mr. Speaker, if the members of the government backbench are okay with that, then I suppose that's what we'll see in a vote coming up here. But I think that we can see very clearly that these members are having their rights restricted, myself included as a private member. We are having our rights restricted. The government seems to want to push forward very rapidly with restricting rights in an omnibus manner. They want to do it all in one big motion.

We talk about how this ties the hands of the backbenchers. Really, it ties the hands of democracy, Mr. Speaker, because democracy depends on all of us here in the Assembly having that voice. It depends on all of us here being willing to stand up to our cabinet ministers and say: we believe there are better ways to do things. That's why we were elected here.

But if I can't even introduce the president of the school council at my school to let them know that I'm fighting for them when I'm making sure that they get their funding for enrolment, if I can't introduce the community league playground president because I'm trying to make sure they can secure some funding to build a spray park in their community, if they're trying to restrict us from doing all these things, Mr. Speaker, it becomes pretty clear that the government isn't interested in what these Albertans have to say. It becomes pretty clear that the government isn't interested in the community league presidents, the government isn't interested in the school council presidents. It becomes pretty clear that the government isn't interested in even the school groups that come here. I think that's a shame as well because those introductions that private members were allowed to make and those introductions that private members enjoyed making were a way for us to show Albertans that we were doing our jobs.

When the front bench tries to restrict their backbench and, perhaps as collateral damage, I guess, the opposition as well from doing their jobs, it really shows that the government is trying to keep everything close, and they really don't want their private members to be able to do anything at all. It's pretty clear. You can't introduce people. You can't vote, or if you do vote, you have to vote exactly how they want. They tell you when to sit in your chair and not say a word. You can't thump on your desks. You can't do any of the things that we've done here for decades, Mr. Speaker. This is my second term now, but I know many members here have had more terms than me. They will recall that in the past all these things that are now being banned were happening because they are long-held traditions here in this Assembly.

If the Premier really does feel so strongly that he can't trust his backbench to not bring in somebody embarrassing, I mean, that's the Premier's prerogative. If the Premier really does feel so strongly that he's scared of a little noise that a table makes, that's the Premier's prerogative, Mr. Speaker. If the Premier really feels so strongly that he has to sit in his chair to not work and he can't go not work from his office, that's the Premier's prerogative as well.

But I think it's really a shame that we've come to this. I think it's a shame that we've come to the situation where the government needs to use these really heavy-handed measures to control their members. I think it's a shame that the government has to use these heavy-handed members to reduce the transparency of this Legislature and reduce the democracy of this Legislature, because this Chamber, as the foundation of Alberta's democracy, as the core of where we work and where we show Alberta what we do for them – I think we should be proud to show them what we do. We should be proud to have our names on the votes and the Order Paper. We should be proud to be able to introduce them and show them the bills we are passing in here. We should be proud to be able to make some noise and tell them that we're fighting for them, Mr. Speaker.

But if government backbenchers are okay with hiding that away and perhaps closing the doors and sealing the Chamber off from the outside and if they're okay with not introducing their guests and if they're okay with not having their constituents know what they do here in Edmonton, then that's their prerogative. But really I think that we as MLAs and we as legislators should do better. Albertans deserve better, and I know that we will continue to fight for better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments.

I see none.

I see the Government House Leader rising.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually am rising to move a motion on behalf of, I hope, all private members of the Legislature. It is the following: to move to one-minute bells in Committee of the Whole. My understanding is that we have to move it now. Is that correct? Can I do it this way and just move one-minute bells for all stages for the rest of the afternoon?

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, I think that is the most acceptable way for the motion to proceed. We would need to be in committee for you to move a motion in committee, so if we do this now . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Understood, sir.

**The Speaker:** Now, having said that, we're not moving a motion. We're requesting unanimous consent.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Okay.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I was about to say that. Now that I understand where you would like to go with this, Mr. Speaker, or what your advice is, thank you very much.

I will move for unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the duration of the afternoon.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Are there other members who would like to speak to Government Motion 11? I see the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to discuss Government Motion 11 and to discuss some of the sweeping changes that are being suggested for the standing orders. I know as a private member that being able to stand up in this House is a privilege, and I know that being able to introduce guests is something that I've found to be very important to myself and to my constituents and, I'm sure, to all of the members in this House. Having that taken away is very, very upsetting.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

It comes to mind in speaking about the importance of organ donation and having my best friend and her family come to the Legislature, where I got to introduce her son Austin Post, who at eight years old received a heart transplant. I have a deep connection with this family. She's been my best friend since I was 15 years old, I was there when Austin was born, and I'm now his MLA. To be able to have the privilege to stand here in his House and talk about

his bravery and give him an introduction and then to be able to have that celebrated in *Hansard* is something that I just simply am so upset is being taken away. I know Austin pays attention to what's happening in this Legislature. I know he's watching today. He knows the importance of democracy and the ability for Albertans in this province to have a voice through the ability to make introductions. That's one of the ways that we can acknowledge some of our amazing Albertans and our amazingly brave young constituents like Austin Post.

Some other pieces of this sweeping motion are also concerning. When I think about banging on our desks and the tradition that stands to us in this House, I can recall several moments in this House when we've had members in this very place stand up and share heartbreaking stories like the one from Maria Fitzpatrick, the former MLA for Lethbridge-East, when she shared with us the devastating impact of domestic violence on her and her child and the trauma that she had received because of the domestic violence and then the bravery that she showed in not only leaving domestic violence but being able to share it in this House. A way that we were able to show her support – because we're not able to move freely in the Legislature. We couldn't just walk over and give her a hug when she so desperately needed one. We were able to bang on our desks to show her that we are here with her, we support her, and we have complete respect and utmost appreciation for her ability to be able to express herself in such a vulnerable way in this House.

Thumping on our desks was the least we could do in that moment to give her courage to continue to go on sharing her story. For me, that's important. I'm a social worker, Mr. Speaker, and being able to express support in a place of such intensity is so important. I'm very upset that this is something that's being considered to be taken away.

I know also as a private member in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, that we don't have a lot of opportunities to be able to get private members' bills. I was very fortunate to be able to have one of my private members' bills supported and passed in this Legislature. It was presented in the spring, and it was about PTSD Awareness Day – that's Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day – and the date that I had proposed was June 27. Now, if this matter had been referred to committee, it likely would not have seen its very first PTSD Awareness Day the same spring that it had been introduced in this House. We were able to get through first, second, third reading, Committee of the Whole with unanimous support in this Legislature. That's almost unheard of.

Because of the work of my office in consulting with Albertans to talk about this important issue and because of the importance that the other members of this Legislature knew it had, we were able to pass it without delay, without having to refer it to a committee to talk about some of the information that we already knew was important. We needed to raise awareness about PTSD in this province and to be able to continue to provide support and reduce stigma of this disorder. I'm pleased to say that this was very successful because we didn't have an unneeded delay of sending it to committee.

These are all things that as private members I think we should all embrace. It's tradition in this House to be able to express ourselves, to be able to introduce Albertans into their Legislature, to be able to go back and look at them in *Hansard* or watch Assembly Online and see their faces and hear their stories through the member that serves them. I mean, today we're joined in the gallery by members, and it's unfortunate that they might never get introduced in this Legislature by their member, that was elected for them. That, to me, is deeply upsetting, Mr. Speaker.

I would implore all members, private members throughout the House, to really consider not supporting this government motion, because it takes away our rights and it takes away the rights and experiences of Albertans in the province. I think that's all I have to say on this, Mr. Speaker, but I really implore everyone in the House to really consider that we not support this government motion.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), are there any members with questions or comments? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for just reminding us about the really important legislation around PTSD Awareness Day that she so expertly crafted and delivered here. We all together supported it in this place. That was a great day, actually, when it passed.

Also, the member was previously the government liaison for the military. I'm not entirely sure of the title, but I know that during her time in that role she did an incredible job of introducing people, bringing them here and recognizing their unique contributions to life in Alberta. I'm just wondering if the member could tell us maybe about some of those other introductions, that will cease to happen in our own words if we're not allowed to introduce the people and the stakeholders that mean so much to us that we write those introductions using our words, highlighting what we know to be true, and then have those words spoken by somebody else. I'd like the member to maybe expand on why those particular introductions were so important.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much to the hon. member for highlighting that. As the previous government of Alberta's liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces and as the current Official Opposition liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces it's been such an honour to be able to serve and acknowledge the amazing highlights and sacrifice and contributions that our members of the Canadian Armed Forces have provided not only to this province but to this country.

Over the four years when I was in the official role, I was able to bring so many members of the military, veterans, and their families to this very House to highlight and introduce them, to let Albertans know who is serving for our country. It was such a privilege to be able to show them their Legislature and to introduce them here myself in the Legislature, knowing that so many that had come to visit had never actually been in the Legislature itself. To be able to sit up in the Speaker's gallery and, for me, to be able to express my sincerest appreciation on behalf of all Albertans in that role was an incredible privilege and honour. Unfortunately, it's something that might not continue if this proceeds the way it is. There are so many things that we need to celebrate within our Canadian Armed Forces, and in being able to highlight them just with a simple introduction and a thank you, I think that as Albertans it's the least we can do. Just knowing that that's going to be taken away is just – it feels very undemocratic and just wrong.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

3:30

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Government Motion 11 and some of the sweeping

changes to the standing orders that have been proposed here. As I gathered my thoughts around all of these standing order changes, I really want to start off my comments by talking about private members' business. Through you to all members in this Assembly but particularly all the private members in this Assembly, I really want to make sure that, particularly, new private members understand how rare it is to get a private member's bill. I know that's been discussed by other respondents under this Government Motion 11.

In winning the draw, 1 out of 60-some, depending on how many people are in Executive Council, you have to be pretty lucky. I am number 45 right now, so very unlikely that I will get to introduce a private member's bill with that current draw, but I'll live with some hope there, Mr. Speaker. Maybe we'll be very effective and efficient. But even if you win the draw, even if you are number 1, like the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is, we know that private members' business is very time restricted, and there's absolutely no guarantee that those bills will pass. But they can achieve very significant policy objectives.

As the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs was just talking about, we have seen a handful of private members' bills pass in this Assembly, and each of them, the ones that make it through, is significant and has made a real difference in our province. From PTSD Awareness Day to the Long Term Care Information Act, helping to make sure that there's good information for families in long-term care facilities – the Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act is the one that really stands out for me – each of these private members' bills has made a significant difference in Alberta, but the fact that they were even passed is remarkable.

When people have looked at different Legislatures – and I do not have the data for our Legislature, Mr. Speaker – the percentage of private members' bills that typically pass in a Legislature is about 10 per cent. Even if you win the draw, even if you are number 1, even if you are number 2, the chance that your private member's bill will become law is very, very low, and it's because of that time restriction. Knowing that as a private member you have limited opportunities to make your voice heard, we need to make the most of each of them. When it comes to private members' bills, so many of them die on the Order Paper. Adding to an already difficult-to-succeed-at process and introducing a new two-week step of sending things to committee, it's actually going to mean fewer private members' bills succeed in this place. That's really unfortunate for the elected representatives who inhabit this Chamber but also for Albertans who are hoping through their MLA to have their views and desires expressed in this place.

Making sure that we have adequate private members' time is critical. Whenever there is a threat to private members' time, you will see great uproar and debate in this place, because it can only be done on Monday afternoons but also because we know that it's vital that we have these tools to be able to represent our constituents. In this case a lot of the changes in Government Motion 11 have been presented as preserving decorum, but I would suggest that this particular change is detrimental to our democracy. We're actually making it harder for private members' bills to be passed, and it's so disappointing.

I'm very pleased that the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and the Member for Calgary-West were able to introduce their private members' bills today. I hope that this means that even if Government Motion 11 is passed, these two bills will be able to come forward and be debated on Monday next week, when we all come back to work again. I'm not a hundred per cent certain that that's the case, but that's certainly my hope.

I think we need to talk about protecting students with life-threatening allergies and protecting Alberta's children. These are both very, very worthy subjects. And the idea that by not stopping at committee first, these are lesser pieces of legislation: I don't agree with that. It's not as if we're only going to get a single afternoon to talk about the new Bill 201. At most, the fastest this bill can pass without unanimous consent is maybe four weeks, all stages. Maybe. We know that the PTSD Awareness Day did pass very quickly with unanimous consent.

We know there's adequate time for private members' bills to be debated, and when there needs to be more time, more discussion happens. The process we have works. Even with the process we have working, so few private members' bills get through. So to add an extra barrier inhibits everything. I certainly hope that all the private members, particularly the new private members in this Chamber, are hearing what I am saying. Your private member's bill is less likely to happen even if you get drawn in the first 10 because of this change. It's unfortunate for you. It's unfortunate for your constituents.

But, of course, that is not the only change within this set of changes that have been put forward in Government Motion 11. I feel very, very strongly about MLAs being able to introduce guests. Earlier this week, Mr. Speaker, I believe you were here when I introduced my husband in this place. That was very meaningful for me because later in the summer, on July 16, it will be my 15th wedding anniversary. He's been such an amazing support/partner through this journey in politics. We both got involved in politics together, and, interestingly enough, when I was first starting to get interested in politics, I was introduced in this Assembly by Brian Mason, our former Government House Leader. That was in 2006. I can now search *Hansard* for my own name and find that introduction by that very honourable member, whom I miss, although I hope he's having a wonderful retirement.

Mr. Speaker, I was introduced in 2006. In 2007 I became a candidate for the first time. That introduction had a profound impact on me but was certainly not the only factor. Walking into this place for the first time to see debate and seeing the work that happens here on behalf of all Albertans was inspiring to me and was an important part of my political journey that brought me here to represent the great constituents of Edmonton-Mill Woods for the second term. That introduction mattered to me. The introductions I've been able to do for constituents have mattered to them.

One stands out for me, and it was a volunteer at one of my community leagues, a dedicated community member who is always there organizing events, is always there at the community league meetings, works to better what is happening in Mill Woods. I invited community league presidents and members to come and be introduced. This particular individual told me afterwards that he'd agreed and been kind of, like, "I'll get introduced; no big," didn't think too much of it, and then he got here into this Legislature. This is a building a lot of people don't make it into. It's not that accessible. It's not that often that people come through. I love the work that we do on Canada Day. I love the work that various Speakers have done to try to bring more and more people in. I think introductions are an important part of that, and I think that being introduced by your MLA is an important part of that.

3:40

After that gentleman came in and was introduced in this place, he said afterwards that it touched him in a way he really wasn't expecting. This was a simple acknowledgement of a dedicated community volunteer, and he said that that was a moment that will

last with him. That was a moment that touched my heart, too, knowing that it had had that impact. I really appreciated him telling me that afterwards.

I've had the opportunity to introduce some family but not all of them. I was happy to have my husband here. I would have preferred to have done my introduction closer to the anniversary – we were getting ahead of ourselves a little bit – but I wanted to make sure we got it done, and I appreciated him being able to make a change in his time.

I genuinely appreciated being introduced by the hon. Brian Mason. That's something that I now have a printed transcript of, that introduction. Then in 2007 Raj Pannu introduced me again, and I have that printed as well, with photos of those political leaders, people who inspired me to begin my life in politics. It really was meaningful.

I appreciate that the government introduced an amendment and that now, instead of no introductions, which was their first proposal, the Speaker will do introductions. But it is not the same thing. The relationship that I have with constituents, with family members, with those people who make a real difference can be expressed when you're doing that introduction. I think that putting on other limits would have been another fine way to address the concerns that sometimes introductions can go too long.

I really disagree and will be voting against these sweeping changes because although they did adjust it so that there will still be introductions done by the Speaker, it certainly didn't go far enough. I have to echo what my colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs said about the change that section 4 will undergo through these changes to ban desk thumping and for a few reasons: the tradition of it; for what my colleague from St. Albert talked about, the fact that there may be members in the future unable to clap – we need to be keeping these things in mind – and for the reason that it is a powerful tool for supporting colleagues.

I have now seen a number of my new colleagues in this place, in the government caucus, who have stood to give their first statement, to ask their first question, and who have done that, stood up into a silent room. "Okay. Go. Talk for the first time." I'm really grateful because the first time I stood up to talk, my entire caucus showed their support for me by banging on their desks. That strengthened me, gave me that extra boost to be able to do that.

In these first few days of this Legislature, being able to have that support of colleagues before asking questions is appreciated. In being able to show that support to my colleagues, like when my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre delivers another brilliantly delivered, witty, funny, clever but also pointed member's statement, it's almost a release to be able to say: "Yes. That was wonderful." And it's the tradition – I've got to go back to that – being able to support colleagues.

So I disagree with that change, and I feel a little bit of regret for the private members in this House who, in their very first member's statement or their very first question, have stood up to a room of silence. I think that's unfortunate, and I'm sorry that they didn't get the opportunity to feel that support from their caucus. I think that's wrong headed.

I've talked so far about private members' bills and how these changes are going to make it harder for private members' bills to succeed; about the importance of introducing our guests ourselves and the power of those introductions; about the difference it makes to the accessibility of this place, to people coming in and feeling welcome, like this is their House; as well as about the banning of desk thumping.

I also, of course, have to speak to the change that will allow members to not do their jobs: to abstain from votes. It's just so obvious to everyone who pays attention to this place where this

started from. It started from a party being embarrassed when they had to run out of the room repeatedly. Now that same party is in government and doesn't want to be embarrassed again. That is not an issue of decorum, Mr. Speaker; that is an issue of undermining our democracy. People elect us to this Chamber to participate in debate, to make tough choices, and to help lead this province, and particularly the government caucus should take those things seriously. Abstaining, not doing your job, and doing it in a way that is the least embarrassing is not a change to be proud of.

I know, having represented my constituents for four years, that they care deeply about where their representatives, where we, stand on an issue. I know because constituents will come to talk to me, to ask these things.

For these reasons, I will be supporting Motion 11.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising in the House to provide my input on the omnibus amendments to the standing orders. I've been in the House only for six days, and it's not only me; I see many members on the other side of the House. You know, we're just trying to adjust ourselves to the new rules given to us by our constituents last month, a while ago.

It's really saddening for me to see this motion. If this motion is passed, not only me but many members on the other side will lose the right or the privilege they have to introduce members of their ridings or members of their families. We call this House the Legislature of Alberta, not the House of one or the other party. This very place belongs to Albertans, and I think they deserve to be recognized for their work and recorded in *Hansard*. This is a great privilege for me to be here and for everyone, I will say. We are not here because of us; I'm here because of, you know, the help and the support I have from my family, from my wife. And I can let you know that a house of seven people – I have three aging parents and my special-needs son and a busy place. Those people still encouraged me to do this job, to step up and go forward for this job.

This place, like, this society, the province of Alberta, I will say, is a great place because not only a few of us but thousands and thousands and thousands of people who come out, work hard, go to work 9 to 5 – they volunteer their time in their communities so that we can have such a place, a great place, like Alberta. And not only this; then they work hard to send us to this House so that we can voice their concerns and we can voice their issues. It's very sad to see that we will not be able to recognize this community.

I'm privileged to live in this community for the past 26 years, and during those 26 years I was lucky to have worked with a number of organizations: media organizations, community organizations, and sports organizations, people working hard in the community, people not belonging to one or the other party. People belong to all political stripes. I'm saddened to see that we will not be able to recognize those people. It will totally be sending a very, very wrong signal to the community. I see this as kind of going in a very, very wrong direction.

3:50

Also, I was amazed or appalled or surprised to see this motion mentioning something like that, you know, desk thumping is something bad to be done in this House. This House, when I was looking at the information, has a long – like maybe a hundred years of tradition. If this didn't offend anyone else in all those years, then I don't know what the problem is right now. If this motion passes, this is also something that will send a very, very wrong signal and

a very, very wrong message to the community at large, to this society at large.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege to run my business for the last 18 years. I ran a very small insurance brokerage, where I had six to eight people working together. You know, if this was the kind of behaviour I had towards them, I don't know how I was going to be interpreted, discriminated. So I'm surprised in this House, when people really expect from us to be role models and set a higher standard – then people in society can follow it and, you know, contribute to this society to make this society better for all.

We are kind of discussing these kinds of issues. This is not being allowed going forward because one side of the House really doesn't feel comfortable with this. Rather, you know, than updating themselves or learning about this tradition, they want us to be mumming, suppressing our voices to do this thing this way and not the other way because they don't feel comfortable with this. It's not because of something related to the standing order. It's not because of something just related to the House. So think outside, like: how are the people going to interpret what signal this is sending to the general public, the people at large?

I felt quite, you know, obliged to stand up and rise and record my actual feelings and views on this. It's just very, very appalling, and I say that it's an attack on democracy.

I'm strongly opposed, so I appeal to the members to please not vote for this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) any questions or comments?

I believe that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods would like to speak.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you. Just very quickly to my colleague from Edmonton-Meadows, congratulations on your victory. I'm very pleased to be working with you in Edmonton's southeast. I just wanted to very quickly ask you: do you not think that it feels better when you stand up and your colleagues are all welcoming you to speak and supporting you as you begin?

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Yes. This is my privilege. I'm so humbled, actually honoured to be here with my colleagues, my members. My friends requested me to come up and, you know, give my feedback on this, and I think I could not do more on behalf of my constituents, the people in my riding. I could stand up and give my feedback and present their voices in the House.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members looking to continue under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has a comment.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to rise and speak to Government Motion 11, which is sweeping changes to the standing orders. I have a number of points that I need to make, but again, I think my colleagues have adequately or rightly pointed out the fact that these standing order changes affect and impact every single member in this House, more so private members than members of Executive Council but nonetheless every single member and their rights in this place. That's why it is such a big deal and why our caucus has spoken. These are significant changes that are permanent and that will forever change this Assembly and this Chamber.

You know, one of my colleagues had said that this was the will of the government being imposed on this Assembly. I dare say that it's the will of one person that is being imposed on this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. There is only one person who is a former MP, a person who, again, loves Ottawa so much, who wants to superimpose it or, quite frankly, ram it down the throats of Albertans. We've seen that on a number of things, but I can tell you that this place has a rich history and tradition, and for me what's extremely frustrating is one person who's able to hold an office in order to impose their will on an Assembly, upsetting the table on the history of this place. I mean, desk thumping is just one of them. The fact that we're making sweeping changes to how private members' bills are going to be debated in this House – again, following the House of Commons federally, where it goes from first reading into a committee.

Now, there are some practices in Ottawa that aren't necessarily bad, but I can tell you that, you know, from an Alberta point of view, I personally like the way we do it here in Alberta, and Ottawa can stay in Ottawa. In fact, if members are itching to bring Ottawa here, maybe they've come to the wrong place. Maybe they should have stayed in Ottawa.

I do want to point out the fact that these are historic, sweeping changes to the standing orders. I encourage all members to check the history of this place, but I believe that these changes are the most significant changes that have been made without being sent to a committee. Now, there's irony in this, Mr. Speaker, because the members opposite want to pass this all in this place and not send it to a committee, yet they're very eager to send other things to committee. In fact, when they were in opposition, many of their referrals, hoists, and reasoned amendments were trying to send our bills to committee. Now that the shoe's on the other foot, it's kind of an inconvenient thing to do, so let's just ram them through in this place.

What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that we actually have a committee, an all-party committee, on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. I think that after today's standing orders maybe the government wants to rename this committee because to have a committee that's supposed to review standing orders, which hasn't been used – we did bring forward a couple of amendments over the last 48 hours to break apart some of these standing orders and to send some of them to this very committee to be debated by all members of the Assembly. I'm sure that there are government private members that would love to be able to speak on these. You know, I didn't ask my colleagues on the other side if the Premier is planning to allow his caucus to free vote on these standing orders. That would be interesting. I mean, that's supposed to be one of his tenets, yet maybe only when it's convenient.

But, you know, in these sweeping standing order changes, Mr. Speaker, there are some – I'll be the first to admit that there's a handful we have no issues with, recognizing that some of these are housekeeping issues that need to be cleaned up for clarity for the table as well as clarity for members. I'll give you one example. It's the standing order – well, under Government Motion 11 it's 10 on the paper, and it's about "Debate interrupted by adjournment of the Assembly." Now, I can tell you that the table has been very, very helpful to all parties in this House when a House leader stands up and forgets to adjourn debate on a bill and just tries to adjourn the Assembly. If that should happen, whatever was being debated would die on the Order Paper. We have all benefited from advice from the table on that, so I appreciate that number 10 here aims to clarify that.

[The Speaker in the chair]

What I dislike is that the government is trying to slip in the fact that for want of quorum, so if the government fails to have an adequate number of members in this Chamber, whatever bill is being debated, if quorum is called and the bells go and there aren't enough members in this House, that bill would die on the Order Paper. Now, with these standing order changes it'll just get brought back. Now, that's a minor thing. I think, quite frankly, it's a great little consequence hanging over the fact that if the government doesn't have its act together or enough members in this Chamber when the Chamber is sitting, that could very well happen. That's more of a minor one, Mr. Speaker.

4:00

I know that a number of my colleagues have talked about Introduction of Guests. I've had the honour and privilege of being a member in this House since 2012 and can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it is an extremely special experience for constituents to be introduced by their own MLA. Now, as great a speaker and orator as you are, it does not fulfill the same purpose to have someone else speaking and reading the names of constituents that come in. You know, to the members, and especially the government caucus, many of whom are from outside the city, bringing their constituents all the way to Edmonton to sit in the Assembly to be introduced is one of those historical life experiences, to have your name read into *Hansard* by your MLA. Again, that's meant as no disrespect to you reading it in, Mr. Speaker, but it's not the same experience as a constituent that has a direct relationship with the member.

I do appreciate that the government did amend the standing orders so that all introductions are not omitted. It'll now be up to you, Mr. Speaker, to do those. I appreciate that they moved a little bit on this, but I can tell you that it's still not quite far enough.

I'm going to jump, just because I'm worried about my own time here, to a couple of the standing order changes that I think are the most problematic, to put it one way, Mr. Speaker. One of them is the fact that – you know, it's 8, again under Government Motion 11. I'll read it into *Hansard*: (5) "Members are not compelled to vote and those who wish to abstain should remain in their seats when asked to rise and record their vote."

If you ask me, that is a very cowardly change to the standing order, and I'm using my words very carefully. The reason that it's cowardly, Mr. Speaker, is that every single member in this House should have the courage to stand behind their convictions whether they are popular or unpopular. If you believe it, you should be willing to stand up on the record and vote for it. To have the option of sitting on your hands and sitting in this place not having to vote is cowardly. We've seen it. I appreciate they still had another option, which was running out of the Chamber, which we saw with very important yet controversial legislation we were bringing in around bubble-zone protection because we believe that a woman's choice is her choice and her body is her body.

The fact that you had the whole opposition file out of here – I think there was even a jam at the door, quite frankly. They couldn't get out fast enough when these votes happened. It was a way that members could flee from this place without voting. But I think allowing members to sit in the Chamber and abstain from voting does not enhance democracy. It does not enhance accountability that members have, because constituents should be able to ask members: how did you vote on X? Or, more efficiently, they should be able to pull up the Assembly Online and see how their MLA voted. I mean, I have constituents that talk to me all the time about how I voted. They pay attention. They look at it, and they may not agree all the time with my votes, but they appreciate that they can see which way I voted.

The other part of this that just makes a bad situation worse is that (8) says, "Abstentions shall not be entered in the Votes and Proceedings." So not only can a member hide from voting; it doesn't get recorded that you just hid from voting.

**Ms Renaud:** That's shameful.

**Mr. Bilous:** I agree. That is shameful.

That's one of the larger issues I have with these sweeping standing order changes, Mr. Speaker. As far as eliminating desk thumping, again, you know, there's a difference between Ottawa and Alberta. Ottawa has 338 MPs. We have 87, so part of the reason that they banned desk thumping in Ottawa was because of the sheer volume. I can tell you that clapping is pretty loud, although maybe that's next on the chopping block. Soon this place might be silent minus the person speaking. Maybe heckling will be the next thing on the chopping block. I don't know. I look at this as a creeping implication of freedom of expression.

The other thing is, quite frankly – you know, I mean this in all seriousness – desk thumping only requires one hand; clapping requires two hands. If your one hand has something in it or for members – and there have been members in this place in the history of Alberta who only have one hand, so now they can't participate. I'm not saying that to be funny. I'm being dead serious, Mr. Speaker. The option to bang on your desk: I think to change that is a shame. I think we're throwing out a hundred years of history in this place. It's unfortunate. That's another one that I think should have been sent to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

As well, Mr. Speaker – I'm trying to find some of my other issues. I guess I will soon wrap up my comments. But, again, for me the frustration in these changes is that these are significant changes. In fact, I think this is the broadest set of changes to standing orders that have happened in many, many years if not in the history of this place, and the fact that they were shoehorned through in this Chamber as opposed to using the very committees that the government chooses to send bills to when it's convenient. So in these very standing orders we are sending private members' bills to committees after first reading, yet we can't send the very standing orders to the committee that's responsible for standing orders. I hope the irony is not lost on anyone in here.

It's unfortunate, these changes. I think Alberta is very unique. I myself am very proud of the fact that Albertans are different and unique from the rest of Canada. We pride ourselves on that. Replicating what's done in Ottawa because that is the will of one member I think is a shame that all of us are going to have to live with. Again I would call on all members of the Assembly to vote according to their conscience and would implore the Premier and Executive Council to allow members to have a free vote on this very, very important matter. You know, they tend to talk about how important free votes are, but once again it seems to be when they're convenient. This would be a great test of whether private members feel that some of their rights are being significantly changed through these standing orders, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I think I made it fairly clear where I stand on these standing order changes. We are about to see, I'm sure, the majority of the Assembly determine the fate of all members of this Assembly.

On a last point, it is not only your responsibility, Mr. Speaker, but the responsibility of the Assembly to ensure that the rights of the minority are not stepped on by the majority. This would be one of those great times to see members vote freely.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will encourage all members to vote against these sweeping standing order changes. Let's send them to

the committee that was designed to review standing order changes, their implications. Let's study this issue. Let's study this issue from a point of view of what is done in other jurisdictions across the country. Let's not just adopt a practice in Ottawa because it is from the House of Commons. Let's look at what's done in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia, the Maritime provinces before making such sweeping and drastic changes to the very culture of this place.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

## Statement by the Speaker

### Conditions in the Chamber

**The Speaker:** I would just like to mention that we've closed the vents here in the Chamber. Over the last little while it has become significantly smokier outside. Unfortunately, there was a period of time this afternoon where we were providing fresh air into the Chamber here, which, as it turns out, is not very fresh at all. As such, you may have noticed that it is significantly smoky in here. Agreed. I would never want to dissuade anyone from speaking to any motion or bill, but I would encourage the House to consider the current conditions of the air quality inside the Chamber when deciding whether or not it is of necessity to speak to Government Motion 11.

### Debate Continued

**The Speaker:** Having said that, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments to the hon. member.

Seeing none, are there any others who wish to speak to Government Motion 11?

4:10

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, as per the request of May 28 and my subsequent statement on May 28 to the motion that has been before the House for a number of days, the vote this afternoon will be split into two groups as per the request of the Official Opposition. Section 2, section 4, section 8, section 10 will all be voted on first.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 11, part A, section 2 as amended, sections 4, 8, 10 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:12 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Reid
Ellis	Long	Schow
Fir	Lovely	Schweitzer
Getson	Luan	Stephan
Glubish	Milliken	Toews
Goodridge	Nally	Toor
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Turton
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Panda	Yao
Issik	Pon	Yaseen
LaGrange		



Against the motion:

Bilous	Eggen	Irwin
Dach	Feehan	Loyola
Dang	Goehring	Renaud
Deol	Gray	Shepherd
Totals:	For – 31	Against – 12

[Government Motion 11, part A, section 2 as amended, sections 4, 8, 10 carried]

[Government Motion 11, part A, sections 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, part B, and part C carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. government whip is rising.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, a lot of progress was made this week, outstanding work by everybody in this Chamber, but given, as you mentioned, the smoke outside, some of the health risks that are being faced possibly inside this Chamber, I move to adjourn.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Prior to the vote on the motion, I would just like to remind members of the memo from the Sergeant-at-Arms dated May 30, that you all received, that over this upcoming Saturday the Order of St. John will be in the Chamber for a ceremony. I remind all members to clear the tops and the bottoms of their desks. Your desks will be locked, so you don't need to remove all of your items, but anything that is below or above, if you could please remove that.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:18 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, May 30, 2019**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve, passed*), 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn., adjourned*)

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve., adjourned*)

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve., adjourned*)

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

### **Bill 201 — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)

### **Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 3, 2019

Day 7

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
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Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
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Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
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Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
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Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
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Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

### Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
and Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 3, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead our province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute to members who have passed since we last met. Today I'd like to welcome members of the Dickie families who are present in the Speaker's gallery.

**Mr. William D. Dickie**

August 13, 1925, to May 23, 2019

**The Speaker:** William Daniel Dickie served three terms as the Member for Calgary-Glenmore from 1963 to 1979. In 1969 Mr. Dickie moved from the Liberal caucus to the Progressive Conservative caucus. He served as minister of mines and minerals from 1971 to '75. Prior to being elected to the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Dickie served as an alderman for the city of Calgary. A lawyer by profession, he was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1969. On March 8, 1972, Mr. Dickie introduced the government motion to create and publish *Hansard*, the official verbatim record of the Legislative Assembly debates and proceedings. He also played a leading role in the formation of the Canadian Energy Resource Institute. Mr. Dickie passed away on May 23, 2019, at the age of 93.

In a moment of silent prayer, I ask you to remember Mr. Dickie as you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetually shine upon him. Amen.

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

### Hon. Members:

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Standing Order Amendments

**The Speaker:** Members, before we begin the Routine today, I'd like to point out to all members that copies of the amendments to standing orders that were approved by the Assembly last week have been printed on green paper and placed on members' desks for ease of reference. I'm sure you reviewed them all over the weekend.

As I outlined in my memo to members last Friday regarding the new procedure for introduction of guests, any member wishing to

have guests introduced in the Assembly must provide my office with the full name and phonetic pronunciation of each guest by 11 a.m. that sitting day so I can have a small period of time to practise.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with our admiration and respect to them, gratitude to members of their family, who share the burden of public office and public service, today I would like to welcome members of the Dickie family who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your name and remain standing until you've been introduced: Barb Dickie, daughter of former member Mr. Dickie; son Bill Dickie Jr.; and his wife, Joanne. Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Members, there are a number of school groups with us this afternoon.

From the constituency of Edmonton-City Centre please welcome to the Legislative Assembly a group of students from Grandin school.

From the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods please welcome the grade 6 class from . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Ekota.

**The Speaker:** . . . Ekota. That was exactly what I was going to say. Thank you so much.

Members, there are a number of guests from the constituency of Lethbridge-West. I ask each individual to rise as I call your name: Barb Phillips, Mike McCuaig, Pirate Jen Takahashi, and Hayden Takahashi. Welcome.

From the constituency of Calgary-Shaw, Dan McLean.

Finally, from the constituency of Edmonton-South West: Maria, Alex, Jonathan, and Julietta Pinchukov.

### Ministerial Statements

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

### Northern Alberta Wildfire Update

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide the Assembly with a current update on the very challenging situation in northern Alberta with respect to forest fires occurring in many locations. I had the opportunity yesterday with the hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry to visit some of the affected communities, both on the ground and to see the situation from the air.

Let me begin by offering on behalf of all members a word of profound gratitude to our remarkably professional firefighters, who have been joined and supplemented by crews from all across Canada, who have been doing, in many instances, heroic work to keep communities safe and, thankfully, to avoid any loss of life or, to this point, serious injury, Mr. Speaker.

I toured the area ravaged by the Chuckegg Creek fire around High Level yesterday and have been keeping in close contact with officials at the Provincial Operations Centre of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. Having spent much of Friday afternoon there, shortly after they moved the alert level from 3 to 4, I can report, Mr. Speaker, that all of our first responders, including hundreds of front-line firefighters, are working extremely hard to protect communities at risk. Their efforts are being expertly directed by experienced managers at regional incident locations as well as the Provincial Operations Centre, and local government officials are actively engaged in the effort to protect their communities.

1:40

I know I speak for all members in expressing our regrets to the members of the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement in the Blue Hills area who lost homes to the Chuckegg Creek fire. We believe about 15 structures were lost. Approximately nine were residential, two of which were not inhabited. While we mourn the difficulty faced by the members of that settlement, Mr. Speaker, we are grateful for the alertness of the community leadership and the provincial wildfire service, who through rapid action helped to save the vast majority of structures in that community.

The good news today, Mr. Speaker, is that the mandatory evacuation order for High Level, the surrounding areas in Mackenzie county, and the Dene Tha' First Nation communities of Bushe River, Meander River, and Chateh was lifted this morning at 10 o'clock. I want to thank and compliment Mayor Crystal McAteer, Reeve Josh Knelsen, and Chief James Ahnassay and the residents of their communities for their calm and remarkably competent handling of this extremely challenging situation.

However, several out-of-control fires continue to burn across a wide swath of northwest and north-central Alberta, from High Level to Slave Lake. Mandatory evacuation orders remain in place for several communities, and thousands of people in the towns of Slave Lake and Manning are currently on evacuation alert. Mr. Speaker, as of last night, of the 29 fires currently burning in the forest protection area, seven are rated as being under control, seven are being held, four have been turned over, and 11 remain out of control. The risk of wildfire remains high to extreme in many parts of the province. The three largest wildfires are Chuckegg Creek, south of High Level; the Battle Complex fire near Manning in the Peace River region; and the Macmillan Complex fire north of Slave Lake.

Mr. Speaker, provincial resources deployed on the ground currently include more than 2,300 wildfire and structural firefighters and staff; approximately 231 helicopters, most of which are engaged in tactical water drops; 28 air tankers, which are laying down either fire retardant or water; and 261 pieces of heavy equipment. Those forces have been strengthened with crews airlifted into northern Alberta from across Canada.

I'm pleased to announce that the federal government has accepted our request for assistance from the Canadian Armed Forces. In fact, I just came from a visit to the Canadian Army 3rd Division, which is certainly prepared to co-ordinate additional support as necessary. I can also report that I received a thoughtful call from the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister this weekend expressing his concern and that of the federal government and reassuring us that the federal government is prepared to provide whatever assistance is required by Alberta.

Although shifting winds have provided intermittent relief from the smoke in many areas, air quality, as we know, remains a serious concern over much of the province, and Albertans are urged to take precautions to limit their exposure, especially seniors and those who have pulmonary conditions. Evacuees in need of financial assistance may be eligible to apply for an emergency payment to help with accommodations, clothing, and other urgent needs. Of course, that was initially extended to High Level and area evacuees and, as of yesterday, to the residents of three First Nations, including the Bigstone Cree First Nation at Wabasca. Evacuees should check [alberta.ca/emergency](http://alberta.ca/emergency) for updates on evacuation payment eligibility.

Mr. Speaker, the total number of fires in northern Alberta is of great concern, and the firefighters are dealing with, in many instances, boreal forest that has not been affected by fire for up to nine decades. Very dry conditions exacerbate that circumstance. At

a time such as this, I want to thank the staff of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, particularly the wildfire service, the staff of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, all officials engaged, and particularly the volunteers in communities like Slave Lake and so many others who have provided tremendous hospitality to the some 10,000 evacuees. That number will hopefully be cut in half today as roughly 5,000 return home to High Level.

Mr. Speaker, in the last 48 hours there have been some hopeful developments, with additional precipitation in north-central and northwest Alberta which has helped to diminish some of the fires, but we're a long way from an end to the fire season. As members will recall, the Fort McMurray fire continued burning throughout the year even under snowcap in the wintertime. The government of Alberta and, I know, all members of this Legislature will continue to be there to support the communities affected, the evacuees, and, most especially, our firefighting personnel, who are doing heroic work on behalf of all Albertans. We thank them profoundly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to respond.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last number of days and weeks have been stressful and very frightening for thousands of Albertans in the communities of High Level, Peace River, Slave Lake, Mackenzie county, the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement, Blue Hills, and the Dene Tha' First Nation communities of Bushe River, Meander River, and Chateh.

Due to extreme fire conditions, over 10,000 Albertans have been forced to uproot their lives and flee their homes. Residents have had to pack their bags without knowing when they will be able to return and if they will see their homes, property, and businesses again. Many have had to find refuge in emergency centres, stay with neighbours, and watch as the fires continue to rage. Tragically, in the course of these fires families in the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement and the Blue Hills area have lost their homes, and we have heard many heartbreaking stories as communities have changed forever.

George Wanuch was one of those residents impacted. As the flames engulfed his property – and I heard him say this this morning on CBC Radio – it is said that he pulled out his guitar and sang some gospel songs. It was a moving and sad image. The strength of people like George and the many other families impacted is inspiring and heroic, but there is no question that this is a painful moment in our province's history. People are wondering if this is going to become the new normal. About 15 families have lost their home. Many others are in danger, with over 10,000 people evacuated. This is a situation that no family should have to go through, especially alone. And I want those impacted to know that you are not alone, that we are all here with you, on both sides of the House, and will be with you every step of the way as we rebuild.

Thousands of Albertans are helping across our province through their donations, by opening their homes, and I know many more will continue to support you in the face of this tragedy. There is a long journey ahead, but we will walk it with you every step of the way. We'll also continue to share our thoughts and prayers with those who remain evacuated in Slave Lake and Manning. We are pleased to see evacuation orders ending for High Level, Mackenzie county, and the Dene Tha' First Nation communities of Bushe River, Meander River, and Chateh. But we know that the journey is not over for those families either. The terror of having to flee your home amidst natural disaster can have a lasting impact even after you are able to return home. We must stand with all of those

impacted to ensure they have the support they need in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

I also want to speak to the brave first responders, firefighters, and emergency management staff who have and will continue to work around the clock. On behalf of the people of our province thank you for your continued efforts, dedication, and hard work. You have been absolutely heroic in the face of devastation and challenging conditions. Just as we have the backs of the many residents and families impacted by these fires, we will have yours. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you as you continue your fight against these fires and as we move forward to rebuild what has been lost.

Finally, thank you to the Premier, his colleagues, and all the incredible government staff, particularly those in Ag and Forestry and the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, for their hard work during these very, very dark days for our province.

## Members' Statements

### Energy Industry Jobs

**Mr. Yao:** Our first week back, last week, I couldn't help but notice that some of our friends on the opposition benches simply don't understand what has occurred in the last four years, Mr. Speaker. I wonder myself: are they so ideological that they're insulated from reality, or are they just legislatively challenged? So, sir, I am here to educate.

Our oil and gas sector was hit hard. A report funded by the government of Canada, released in April, forecasts that we will have lost a total of 13,000 as a net loss of direct jobs between 2016 and this year. You know why the Americans support this sector? The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis calculates that the oil and gas industry has a multiplier of 6.9 indirect jobs for every direct job. Eh, numbers.

Let's look at it from another side. Mr. Speaker, one of my best friends builds things, from well pads to 16-storey vessels. He builds big, expensive projects, and he got transferred this past January. You see, the company he works for has no use for that particular skill set here because there's nothing left for them to build. They have operations in the U.S., the U.K., Malaysia, China, Brazil, Russia, Qatar. And my good friend: he got a transfer to Iraq. "Iraq?" I asked. "How much are they investing there?" He said, "Well, about 1.5, give or take a hundred million or so." I said, "Well, what were they investing here?" He said, "Well, in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C. annually in capital spending we were spending about 1.2 to 1.4." That's billion.

1:50

It's not that I solely blame them for all this. After all, they had the help of their best friend, Justin Trudeau. Quel imbécile. Oh, pardonnez mon français, Président de la Chambre.\* But the previous government and their best friend in Ottawa – their best friend in Ottawa – not only killed thousands of jobs, but they chased away billions of dollars of investment, destroyed the confidence of an entire sector, and pushed away some of our best and brightest, including my best friend. So thanks for nothing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. You'll know that anyone speaking in a language other than English here in the Chamber will provide the translation for us.\*

## Oral Question Period

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

\*See page 342, right column, paragraph 12

\*See page 301, right column, paragraph 3

## Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, according to the RCMP, 1,200 indigenous women went missing or were murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012. Other accounts put the number at upwards of 4,000 over the last five decades. For years indigenous people and advocates had been asking for an inquiry into this disturbing trend, yet the former Harper government, of which our Premier was a senior cabinet minister, refused these calls. Does the Premier regret refusing multiple requests for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls?

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Leader of the Opposition: all Albertans are deeply concerned about the record of violence that has been suffered by far too many indigenous women, particularly those who have disappeared and whose whereabouts are still unknown. We look forward to taking the opportunity to review this 1,200-page report, that was just released hours ago, to appointing an interministerial task force to assist us in reviewing it and any implications it may have for provincial policy to ensure that all Albertans and, particularly, vulnerable women are kept safe.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you. I didn't entirely get an answer to that question.

In justifying his refusal to initiate an inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women, the former PM had this to say, quote: it's not really high on my radar. That was the position of him and, through him, the members of his cabinet, which included this Premier. Premier, in light of the final report submitted by the inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women, do you now acknowledge that the inquiry was indeed an important step in addressing this national tragedy?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we certainly acknowledge that one victim of crime is too many and that the high incidence of violent crime targeting indigenous women is particularly terrible given their often uniquely high levels of vulnerability. That is why we look forward to reviewing the some 1,200 pages of the commission report, that was issued just hours ago. I would invite the opposition to share its views about that in a nonpartisan way. This should not be a matter subject to partisan contention.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, it was a partisan decision to go ahead or not go ahead, so this is why it's important to ensure that things remain accountable.

I appreciate the current government's plan to strike what their release said was a crossgovernment committee to examine the recommendations, but in light of previous resistance to the inquiry by the Conservative federal government, of which this Premier was a part, indigenous women and girls need a timeline on which they can hold this government accountable and the right to participate in this review. To the Premier: will he today commit that his review committee or task force, as he just called it, which is already better, will consist of indigenous women and . . .

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Of course, Mr. Speaker, in all matters affecting First Nations people, indigenous people, the government of Alberta's

starting point will be consultations and listening. We need to listen to the voices of those who have lost family members and loved ones. We need to understand how we can do a better job of preventing the kind of criminal behaviour that has claimed far too many lives.

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

**Ms Notley:** Okay. Well, we'll hopefully get them on that task force and get the date, which we haven't heard yet.

### Supervised Drug Consumption Sites

**Ms Notley:** On Friday this UCP government put the brakes on funding three new safe consumption sites across Alberta and pledged to conduct a review of existing sites. These sites are literally saving lives every day. More sites will save more lives. A delay in sites will mean more lives lost. A closure of sites will mean even more lives lost. The expert medical studies proving the effectiveness of these sites are conclusive. To the Premier: why are you turning your back on these vulnerable Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** I reject the premise of the question, Mr. Speaker. This government was elected with an explicit commitment to Albertans to only endorse new supervised consumption sites if there have been extensive consultations with affected communities, including residents and business owners, and if there is a robust, evidence-based analysis of the socioeconomic impact of a potential drug consumption site, and that's exactly what we're going to do. That's our commitment to Albertans, and we will follow through on it.

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the need to accommodate the needs of communities and to step up policing around those sites, but that is very different from actually saying no to the sites or cutting the funding of ones that have previously been approved. These sites are estimated to have already prevented 2,400 overdoses across the province. Will the Premier commit today that while reviewing strategies to mitigate community disruption, the goal of expanding the number of people helped through safe consumption sites will be absolutely protected?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP just said that she was very concerned about accommodating local residents. Tell that to the local residents of the Beltline region of Calgary, where there has been a massive increase in crime and the harassment of people, who can no longer live safely in their own community. We committed to listen to those Albertans as well as those here in Edmonton's Chinatown, whose lives have been changed as a result. Looking at the socioeconomic evidence and consulting local communities was a commitment of this government, on which we will follow through.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as this government dithers on action proven to save the lives of vulnerable Albertans, more people will die from overdoses. Once again it appears this government is putting misinformed ideology over science. Indeed, the Premier himself has said that he thinks these sites exist only to allow people to inject poison into their bodies. Can the Premier at least assure this House that his misinformed opinion will not interfere with the best interests of vulnerable Albertans requiring these services?

**Mr. Kenney:** Again, Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous government, our commitment to Albertans is to engage in robust, evidence-based analysis of the socioeconomic impact of potential drug consumption sites. [interjections] In addition to that, as they heckle

and shout, having learned nothing from the last election, I can tell members of this Chamber that this government will make unprecedented investments in treatment and recovery to offer a way out of the downward spiral of addiction, that is claiming too many lives in this province, with an investment of over \$100 million in addiction recovery and treatment services.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition. Your third set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** They need to be alive to get into recovery services, Mr. Premier.

### Education Act

**Ms Notley:** Now, as we speak, school trustees in Red Deer are debating a motion to ask that this UCP government delay proclamation of the Education Act by a year. This government has said that one of the reasons it's bringing in the act is to increase school board autonomy, yet more than half the current trustees in the province have never even seen the legislation, let alone been consulted on it. To the Premier: if trustees vote to ask for the delay, will he delay it, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I would invite the hon. the Leader of the Opposition to wait for the introduction of amendments to the Education Act in the days to come which will address some of those concerns. I can't understand how anybody would not have seen legislation adopted by this Assembly a few years ago that was subject to massive public consultations, including on draft regulations, legislation that the NDP committed to proclaiming when they first came to office. We're simply following through on their broken promise.

**Ms Notley:** Fifty per cent of the trustees have been elected since that legislation was consulted on. The Premier should know that.

Now, the act creates massive cost pressures at a time when schools are managing huge uncertainty because the Premier and his minister won't tell them how much money they've got coming. To the Premier: why won't you admit that your plan to proclaim the act is more complicated than you first thought and put the needs of Alberta's students over your need to save face and delay it?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, once again I invite the hon. the Leader of the Opposition to await the introduction of a bill that is on the Order Paper, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. In fact, our government is moving very quickly to keep our electoral commitment to proclaim into law the Education Act adopted by this Assembly, which was subject to massive public input and indeed since we came into office additional public input with the key stakeholders in the field of education.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One would think that perhaps the vote of the school boards might be the kind of public consultation the Premier would commit to listening to, but that's not what we're getting.

In April 28 Alberta private schools had refused to introduce policies that would protect LGBTQ kids and their right to participate in GSAs without fear of being outed, yet this government seems intent on putting those kids at risk by removing that very protection as a result of their plans. They were to have lost their funding. To the Premier: have those schools submitted those policies, and if not, why should Albertans continue funding them?



**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as we've been clear, our government will maintain the strongest legal protections for gay-straight alliances of any province in Canada, and we will also maintain and strengthen our long-standing and successful tradition of school choice. Unlike the NDP, we believe in real diversity and real pluralism. We don't think the education system should be guided by one party's ideology, but it should be based on pluralism and diversity. That's what we will protect and promote.

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

#### Funding for Fourth Year of High School

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Education minister rams through her ideologically driven agenda and looks to increase the age that students can continue to attend high school, she isn't even providing support for the students who currently can attend high school. A letter from the Calgary Catholic school district that we've obtained outright rejects an 18-year-old student looking to attend a proper school for her fourth year of high school from doing so. Will the minister stop with the messaging, start doing her job, and fund education so students with special needs aren't left in the cold?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. While I'm not familiar with that particular case, I would encourage the family to reach out to my office so that I can learn more about their situation. However, it does seem to be a board procedural issue, and our government respects the autonomy of local school boards to make those local decisions on policies and procedures which are in line with provincial legislation.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, I've released the letters publicly and will be happy to table them in this House, Mr. Speaker.

The letter specifically says that the primary reason for not allowing the student to access the fourth year of ES II programming is that the district does not have the sufficient resources and facilities to accommodate her. That's on the minister, that's on this Premier, and that's on their government, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I find it completely inappropriate for the minister to deflect and to say that this is a district decision and that it's in line with the legislation because the legislation clearly says that this girl is entitled to education till she's 19. Enough excuses. Why won't the minister do the right thing?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. The hon. member, being a former trustee, would know that there are actually procedures in place for these situations, and in the event of parents or a student wishing to appeal the decision, they should be going to their school board and following the processes in place to be done.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** It's clearly about money, Mr. Speaker. The letter says so. And, yes, asking the parents to go to an appeal in June, at the end of the school year, and having a student walk across the stage and then spend thousands of dollars on lawyers to fight for her right to education is shameful. Why won't the government step up, do the right thing, and fund students with special needs and all students in this province so that parents aren't left in a lurch as students consider whether or not they have a future in education? Do the right thing. Fund this student and all students needing that fourth year.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. Again, I would draw to the attention of the hon. member that there are procedures

in place, and we do respect the local autonomy of school boards to make these decisions. They are in the best position to make the decision. They are on the ground. They deal with the situations on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, should this student or their parents wish to appeal the decision, they can absolutely do so. And I do welcome further information from those parents and students to my office.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has a question.

#### Flood Plain Mapping

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many Albertans the 2013 flood feels like just yesterday. I personally remember racing to the youth shelter I was managing to assist in the evacuation and the significant damage to the shelter afterwards. My constituents have been asking about the current status of flood mitigation. However, we know that we need the best possible information to plan for this. As we head into the June flood season, can the minister shed some light on flood mapping progress?

**The Speaker:** The second-tallest Member of the Legislative Assembly and the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to start off by reminding everybody that that hon. member has been following me around since 1982, when my mom brought him home, and now he's followed me all the way here to Edmonton, but I will answer his question.

**The Speaker:** I would just remind the member that comments should be directed through the Speaker.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** We understand that our communities want the best possible information on flood hazards to guide future development and to help inform municipal emergency response plans. We recognize that it's important to have the latest information and are working to update and expand flood mitigation coverage across Alberta. In the short term technical work has been done on five new flood studies that we are ready to release and be able to share with municipalities, including Calgary.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the hon. minister is just a little jealous because I was always the favourite.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind members that there are no preambles after question four.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Sorry.

Given that the risks of flooding create a lot of stress for Albertans and given that flooding can cause damage to property, hardship to people, and in extreme circumstances loss of life, given these facts what is the government doing to improve flood mapping procedures in this province?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Flood studies are critical tools that provide information that support emergency responses and safer communities across Alberta. Twenty-one new flood studies have been commissioned since 2015, including eight studies this upcoming spring. These new studies will create 1,500 kilometres of new flood mapping through more than 60 municipalities and First Nation communities across Alberta, with a total budget of \$15.4

million, which includes approximately \$5.2 million of federal funding.

And, Mr. Speaker, I assure you that I am my mother's favourite.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Minister, for the answer. Mr. Speaker, given that we have seen no status update on flood mapping from the previous government and given the significance of flood mapping for future planning, when the constituents of Calgary-Klein ask about timelines around flood mapping projects, what can I tell them?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, depending on the complexity and the length of the river system, it can take upwards of five years to complete the technical work of a flood study and another year to fully implement the recommendations made by the study. As I've previously stated, we've completed technical work on five new flood studies that we are in a position to share immediately with communities and our First Nation partners, including the hon. member's hometown of Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that in closing I should say on behalf of the hon. member's five brothers that it's always great to hear from the shortest Nixon.

**The Speaker:** I would just remind all members that the use of names, no matter what the context, would be wildly inappropriate in the Chamber.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

#### **Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement Wildfire Recovery**

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was relieved to hear that the evacuation order has been lifted for High Level and that people will soon be returning home. I also would like to recognize the incredible work of the wildfire fighting crews that have been battling this wildfire day in and day out. Members of the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement were also under mandatory evacuation, and tragically, this community has lost 15 homes in the fire. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs please tell this House where the people of Paddle Prairie are currently staying and what other supports are being provided to them?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The wildfire hit Paddle Prairie very quickly, and first responders did an amazing job protecting human life, which is the number one priority in these situations. When the fire hit, 30 brave firefighters immediately jumped into action and protected 90 per cent of the settlement. I commend these firefighters for their brave service in the face of danger, I commend the local officials who are working with our government to keep their people safe, and I commend the evacuees who are putting on a brave face in the face of these difficult times.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that as a result of the wildfires members of the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement lost valuable traplines and harvesting sites in addition to their homes and given that members of the community stayed back to assist in fighting the fires and given that the community has three vehicles available to help clear unburned areas and prevent further loss to forested areas surrounding the community, can the minister please tell this House and the members of Paddle Prairie Métis settlement if their offer to assist will be accepted, and if not, why not?

2:10

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I recently visited Paddle Prairie to see the situation on the ground for myself. Overall, the feedback I heard was extremely positive. That said, this is still a difficult situation, and an evacuation order remains in place for safety reasons. We will monitor the situation until the evacuees are back in their homes and communities.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that 15 homes in the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement were destroyed and given that many of the families that were forced to evacuate have small children and given that reception centres and temporary housing is adequate only in the short term, can the minister please provide an exact timeline for the people of Paddle Prairie as to when longer term housing will be available to families who lost their homes?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, the first responders on the ground and our government have been there for the Paddle Prairie wildfire evacuees. My office is in communication with local officials from that settlement, and I am happy with feedback that we are receiving. Our government is working to ensure the safety and security of all evacuees from the settlement and other parts of Alberta, and we won't be distracted by divisive tactics on this particular issue. Our first responsibility is the safety of the settlement folks.

#### **Wildfires and Climate Change**

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank all of the brave men and women who are fighting fires in northern Alberta, and I'm happy to learn that the residents of High Level are returning home today.

Now, I agree with the Premier that the cause of these wildfires is complex, but the evidence suggests that climate change is contributing to the severity of wildfires in our province. To the Premier: does he agree with the evidence that climate change is increasing the severity of wildfires in our province?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this government has been clear. We are concerned with climate change, and we're working towards addressing it. The difference between us and the previous government is that we're focused on actually working on technology and dealing with our largest emitters to actually make change. The former government's approach was to tax Albertans, which was all economic pain and no environmental gain. This side of the House has a different approach.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Their approach is to do nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Given that when he was questioned by reporters on Friday, the Premier said that carbon taxing didn't stop wildfires in British Columbia and given that studies from Environment Canada scientists "concluded that human influences on climate change leading to extreme forest fires is a trend that is likely to intensify in the future," to the Premier: who's right? His minister or climate science experts?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the argument that forest fires have just automatically started now is not realistic. It also ignores the fact that we're dealing with an old growth forest in northern Alberta. The point is this, though. We do agree that climate change is an issue that has to be addressed in this province. Our government will be focused on that through the TIER program, which we will have

more to say about in the coming months, focused on working on technology, ways to innovate our way through this problem, a completely different process than what the former government did, which was to tax Albertans with no successful work on emissions. That's all economic pain and no environmental gain. It's a different approach. I'm happy for it, and Albertans voted for it, clearly, on April 16.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, it's an approach that the previous PC government took that failed, and this approach they're proposing will fail again.

Given that the Premier has claimed that the number of wildfires in the province is average but what he has avoided saying is that the size of the area being burned is way larger than average, to the Premier: are you intentionally trying to mislead Albertans so that you can dodge questions about the impacts of climate change, or do you just not want to deal with it?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been clear that we are dealing with a big fire situation happening in northern Alberta, and yes, the size is very significant. This is an old forest that has not seen fires in close to a century or so. That is part of the situation that's happening up in northern Alberta. When it comes to climate change, this government takes it serious. That's why it's a major part of our platform. We're going to focus on technology. That's a contrast to what the NDP did. Under the NDP's watch they brought in a carbon tax, and they did nothing on emissions. They did nothing to protect the environment. All they did was tax Albertans, tax hockey moms and hockey dads. Our approach is different. We're actually going to try to tackle the problem.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### HALO Medical Rescue Helicopter Funding

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. HALO provides the only dedicated medevac helicopter service for southern Alberta. They have been dispatched to over 550 missions since their inception and serve an area of over 55,000 square kilometres. These hard-working men and women save the lives of our family members, and I would like to thank them. I was pleased to see that in March of this year the previous government of Alberta provided HALO with a one-time grant. This was much-needed funding whereas the organization relies almost completely on donations and fundraising. To the minister: will you support an annual funding commitment to HALO and all of southeastern Alberta?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I should clarify that STARS does cover southeastern Alberta, but HALO has done a great job in supplementing that coverage since its inception in 2007. First, helicopter services are funded primarily by operators through their fundraising. AHS provided a one-time grant of \$1 million last year to offset the cost of transitioning to a new twin-engine helicopter. The funding was not an annual operating grant. It paralleled one-time funding also provided to STARS to offset the cost of transitioning to a new helicopter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that STARS receives annual guaranteed funding from this provincial government, ultimately creating certainty for the organization and for Albertans, and given that HALO runs off donations as well as fundraising, which is impacted by the state of the economy, and given that HALO

performs an absolutely crucial service as well, what will the minister do to ensure long-term certainty for HALO and how will you ensure that these services will be available to all southeastern Albertans?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. HALO was created on the initiative of people in Medicine Hat. It has developed into a valued partner for AHS, and I expect that partnership will continue and grow in the future. AHS does provide some annual funding to HALO on a per-flight basis. The funding of HALO and STARS is different because they operate on a different scale with different mandates, different service levels, and different cost structures, so AHS is planning to review helicopter medical transport across the province to address the concerns the member is raising to ensure equity.

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

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. HALO has an annual operating budget of approximately \$2.6 million, which they've relied on donors for. Given that southern Albertans need the services that HALO provides and given that HALO could do more for the safety of southern Albertans if they were funded at the same per capita level as STARS and given that the people of southeastern Alberta contribute greatly to the prosperity of Alberta, will the minister commit to aligning the per capita support of HALO with STARS?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I share the member's commitment to HALO and other partnerships like it. The support it has attracted from people in southeast Alberta shows the best spirit of this province, including the support of the people from the city of Medicine Hat. Funding methodologies are complex, and per capita funding may or may not be the best approach for a given service or a given provider. HALO supplements the coverage already provided by STARS with its own specific level of service. AHS is committed to maintaining a strong role for HALO, and they'll look at funding options based on the distinct role of each of the providers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

#### Medical Laboratory Services

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, mere days after the recent election the incoming government halted construction on the long-needed Edmonton clinical lab hub. To be clear, at the time of this decision the Premier did not have a Health minister. There is no evidence he even bothered to consult with the Deputy Minister of Health, Alberta's public laboratories, or Alberta Health Services. To the Premier: who, in fact, advised you that you should cancel this fundamental project?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, this is a project that was committed to by the previous government. The decisions were not based on decisions that were patient focused. In fact, when you look at the two Health Quality Council of Alberta reports that were prepared in 2016, 2017, there's nothing in those reports – when the previous government wants to hang its hat on those reports and say that that report provided for that, those reports do not provide that guidance.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What those reports do show is that the current lab services that are available are

insufficient and need upgrading. Given that this Premier has inexplicably claimed that the lab hub for northern Alberta and Edmonton is sufficient and given that none of the research dating back a decade substantiates that claim – even the previous PC government knew a new lab was needed – and given that the Health Quality Council of Alberta published a report moving ahead on transformation of laboratory services in Alberta, did this Premier even bother to read this report and consider the ramifications of his short-sighted proposal?

2:20

**Mr. Shandro:** The answer is yes, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we did read those reports. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we did talk to Dr. Ballem. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we did talk to patients. We did speak to pathologists, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let's think about when those reports were first published, 2016, 2017, and dithering from that previous government – dithering while patients needed those infrastructure investments. Dithering.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, in that time we moved forward with the creation of Alberta public laboratories and consolidating lab services in the province as the council recommended.

Now, given that with a dated and insufficient lab for Edmonton and northern Alberta the only beneficiaries of this decision are the owners of DynaLife, who the Premier said that he would allow to continue to provide services without even considering alternative models or a public bid process, my question is this: did the owners, executives, or aligned beneficiaries from DynaLife medical labs donate to this Premier's leadership bid, the bid of his kamikaze puppet candidate, or any of the many PACs . . .

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, while the previous government wanted to make decisions on infrastructure, while they wanted to make decisions on laboratory infrastructure, laboratory services in this province, to nationalize laboratory services in this province, all those decisions were ideological. None of them were patient focused. None of them were going to help any patient in this province. Let's remember that every patient care decision is going to require either lab work or is going to require an X-ray. The simpler sends that require lab work – all of those decisions or the quality and the timeliness of those decisions for those patient care decisions were affected by their ideological decisions on laboratory services.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, happy Pride Month. Just over a year ago, at the UCP's founding AGM, the Minister of Transportation warned fellow delegates that a motion to require mandatory parental notification if a child joins a gay-straight alliance was, quote, about outing gay kids. The motion passed anyway, and now this Premier and the Minister of Education look poised to do just that and roll back the protections enshrined in Bill 24. To the Minister of Transportation: have you talked with the Premier or the Minister of Education and tried to convince them that outing gay kids is wrong and dangerous?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. The Education Act, when it will be proclaimed here shortly, will have the strongest legal protections in Canada for inclusion groups, including GSAs and QSAs. We've been very clear on that. We continue to be clear on that. Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Given that since taking office a month ago this Minister of Education has not offered any words of comfort to our LGBTQ youth who fear that this government will remove their right to confidentiality and given that she has a history of fighting against gay-straight alliances and aligning with known anti-LGBTQ organizations, will this minister commit here and now to further consultations with gender and sexually diverse youth, who weren't able to vote in the last election, before she goes ahead with a law that puts them in a very dangerous situation?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. In fact, I disagree wholeheartedly with what was just said. I have been meeting with my minister's youth council. I've heard from numerous LGBTQ youth who have actually put forward that they want to work with me in implementing the Education Act. As early as last Friday I spoke with a particular young lady who shared with me that she found Bill 24 to not support what she needs. She wanted to have more of a balance. Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Given that actions often speak louder than words and given that it is now Pride Month and given that in addition to taking meaningful steps to improve the lives of queer and trans Albertans our government has always made a point to celebrate Pride with the LGBTQ community, could the minister inform this House what she plans to do to celebrate and to support Pride and does she find it concerning that she'll be rolling back LGBTQ rights during this very important month?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. All Albertans deserve the freedom to be true to themselves regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. All Albertans means all Albertans. I really put that forward to you that we will be looking after all students and all Albertans. Thank you. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Members, I appreciate hearing the questions; I'd also like to hear the answers.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

### Fire Retardant Gels

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The impacts of the forest fires that hit Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, and now that are taking place up in High Level affect us all. It's common practice in other countries to make use of certain fire suppression polymer gels, using aerial application to contain fires, which can be applied to the forests as well as free-standing structures. These gels save homes and greatly reduce the risk of property loss, forest loss, and reduce the amount of smoke in the air. Is the minister aware of these gels, which are more cost-effective, require less support infrastructure, and offer better protection than conventional chemical retardants currently in use?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is rising.

**Mr. Dreesen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First, I would just like to say thanks to the Premier and the Member for Edmonton-McClung for their recognition of all the hard work that's being done by Alberta Wildfire and all the men and women that have been bravely fighting these forest fires for the last couple of weeks.

To the member's question: yes. Our department is aware of these gels, and we are constantly looking at new technologies to be at the forefront of fighting fires.

**Mr. Getson:** Given that my constituent brought this forward to his former MLA who was also the previous Agriculture and Forestry minister at the time and in my constituent's words he only received the runaround from his former MLA, is the minister aware that there was a contract that was issued for the use of combatting gels that was rescinded by the previous government essentially because of bureaucratic red tape?

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

**Mr. Dreesen:** Well, thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the previous government, I won't go too much into it, but there are always lessons learned from any major events like forest fires. We do have a red tape reduction commitment that we are looking at ways within the Department of Agriculture and Forestry to try to find new technologies and new ways of combatting fires.

**Mr. Getson:** Will the minister reinstate the previous contract or, at a minimum, allow this product and its applicators the chance to be put here and work in Alberta, just as it has in Australia, British Columbia, and the U.S.A. and give our brave forest-fighting folks better tools to perform their jobs?

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

**Mr. Dreesen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I can assure the member that we will do an assessment within the department to make sure that this type of technology would work with all the different types of methods that we use to fight fires because it is a very complicated procedure when you have water bombers and people on the ground to make sure that they coincide with each other. But, again, I'll trust the experts within our department that have been doing this for the last 34 years. It is an incredible procedure to watch. Thank you very much for the question.

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

### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General told reporters that he takes preserving the integrity of our justice system very, very seriously, yet the minister said that he informed the Premier's office when he was questioned by the RCMP. The current Premier was the victor in the very leadership contest under investigation. Since witnesses are normally cautioned not to speak to others involved, to the minister: what exactly did you tell the Premier about the investigation, and what steps did you take to ensure that it didn't interfere with an active investigation?

**The Speaker:** I might remind members, as I have done from time to time, that questions should be focused on government business, not necessarily party business. Having said that, I'm happy to hear a response from the hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, of course, I talked to the Premier's staff about this matter. There was an article in the news that morning regarding the fact that I met with the RCMP that weekend. I came and informed this Assembly at the earliest opportunity regarding that matter. Again, I'm not going to comment on an

ongoing investigation by the RCMP. One thing that I'd just like to identify for this Assembly, though, is that I've been interviewed by the media extensively on this matter going back to 2017. All relevant information I have regarding this matter has been a matter of public record going back to 2017. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think our concern is that the minister spoke to the Premier's office.

Given that the Premier has maintained that he has not had any contact from the RCMP and given that it should be the RCMP that chooses what information, if any, is provided to the Premier, to the same minister: did you obtain permission from the questioning officers or legal advice before discussing an active investigation with the Premier?

2:30

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I have not talked about this matter with the Premier, as I've already answered and provided this Assembly with transparency. This matter is before the RCMP. I'd refer their questions, if they have further matters that they want addressed, to the RCMP for their comment.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that now that a special prosecutor has been appointed after nearly a month of the Official Opposition calling for it and given that despite the minister and this government's desire to see this issue go away, it seems to continue to expand, will the government commit to informing this House and the public of any other individuals interviewed in relation to this active investigation and seek legal advice before discussing it amongst themselves?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, again I would refer this hon. member, if they have questions regarding the RCMP's independent investigation, to the RCMP. Again, as we've said many times in the Assembly regarding this matter, we respect the independence of the RCMP to conduct their investigations, and we respect the independence of the prosecution service to conduct their work in an independent way. The system worked. It worked how it was supposed to, free from elected officials being involved.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

### Overweight and Overdimensional Vehicle Permits

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Roadata, the permitting agent for two-thirds of Alberta's municipalities and counties, recently warned that the UCP platform proposed replacing the rural roads permitting program in favour of an annual provincial permit. Sounds harmless, maybe even a good idea, but local leaders point to many potential problems, including significant road degradation, downloaded costs, and overlooked local knowledge and planning. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. By all accounts the current rural roads permitting system is working. Why are you killing it?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I would actually thank the hon. member for a pertinent question. I'll start by educating the hon. member. Part of what he said is correct. The permitting system that we use – the acronym is TRAVIS – is an automated system where the municipalities maintain control of the

weights and measures of the vehicles that travel over their roads, and the hon. member will be glad to know that rather than killing it, we're actually expanding it.

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

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that overweight and overdimensional vehicle permitting is intended to provide municipalities with tools to ensure that the roads they manage are used by service rigs and others with minimal impact to roadway infrastructure and public safety, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: have you consulted with the representatives of local governments, or are you defending your government's roughshod treatment of these representatives with what we hear in here all the time, from the Premier on down, quote: it's in our platform, and we won the election? Is that what you call consultation?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would let the hon. member know that I've kept in touch with the Minister of Municipal Affairs on this, and we've been in direct touch with the leaders of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the rural municipalities association as well as the mayor's office in Edmonton. They are aware of what we're doing, and while I wouldn't say that there's a hundred per cent support, because that would be a stretch, there is broad and widespread support across Alberta's municipalities for what we're doing. It should keep them in control and actually save them some money.

**Member Ceci:** Roadata doesn't support it.

Given that classifying service rigs as off-road equipment, as is the case with farm machinery, will surely result in unintended consequences that will cost ratepayers, local governments, and the province precious capital dollars and that the Transportation minister is effectively downloading responsibility onto Municipal Affairs and the costs onto local taxpayers, will the Minister of Municipal Affairs do the right thing and halt any changes to the Roadata permitting process and first consult with local mayors and reeves?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'm going to ask the hon. member to take yes for an answer. Before we put the actual final regulations in place, we're actually doing just what the member said, as we've been taking our time, talking to the local municipalities, making sure that they know that they're just as in control of the weights and measures of the loads that go across their roads after what we do as they were before what we do. What we're doing, in fact, is automating the process, so they actually get to set the standards at which the answer is yes or no. The fees they get charged are no more or less. All we're doing is automating it and saving some . . .

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

#### **Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project Federal Bills C-48 and C-69**

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the Minister of Energy. This government campaigned on getting serious about the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion approval and that we need the right economic conditions for the energy sector. This pipeline is not only in the best interests of Alberta's economic prosperity but Canada's, too. On June 18 the federal government is making a decision on the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. In my constituency of

Drumheller-Stettler Albertans are asking me what you are doing to get this pipeline approved. To the minister. Good jobs with proud workers are at stake. Can you tell us what this government is doing to ensure that the federal government makes the right decision on the Trans Mountain expansion?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are a hundred per cent committed to standing up for Alberta, protecting the value of our natural resources, and getting pipelines built. That's why last week in Ottawa we launched the Yes to TMX campaign, a multimedia campaign focused on the need for the federal government to say yes to TMX. We need that positive decision on June 18, not a month later, not a week later, not a day later. We need it on June 18. This project has suffered endless delays already, and we need to get to a yes. We need the country to come . . .

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that any delays will jeopardize an entire construction season and that the government in British Columbia also needs to get onboard to get Trans Mountain expansion built – and most British Columbians agree that the Trans Mountain expansion should be built – what is this government going to do to ensure that Premier Horgan gets this message?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The day after we announced Yes to TMX in Ottawa, we announced Yes to TMX in Vancouver. It's a campaign directed at the Lower Mainland. It's a campaign to talk about the benefits of the Trans Mountain pipeline and a campaign to highlight that British Columbians are paying a buck 70 at the pump and to make the connection between that and the Trans Mountain pipeline. So British Columbians are saying yes to TMX, Canadians are, Albertans are. It's time for the Premier of B.C. to say yes.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that bills C-48 and C-69, also known as the no-more-pipelines bill and the tanker ban bill, will have a detrimental effect on Albertans and Canadians, can the minister tell us what she is also doing to ensure that these devastating pieces of federal government legislation will not hurt our economy or resource future here in Alberta?

**Mrs. Savage:** I was in Ottawa last week meeting with Senators. It seems like I was all over the country last week. Both of these bills, C-69 and C-48, are devastating, and I can tell you that the Senators are taking their role of reviewing legislation while respecting regional representation very seriously. We've asked the Senators to accept the recommendations of both committees to effectively kill Bill C-48 and to accept 187 amendments to C-69. We can tell you that if they don't accept those amendments, we will be launching an immediate constitutional challenge.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

#### **School Construction and Modernization**

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. Schools across this province are seeking clarity on

how the government decides which schools receive funding for modernization. For example, J.T. Foster in Nanton has been in desperate need of renovations for multiple years, and the Livingstone Range school division has made securing funds for this high school their number one priority. Can the minister please explain to this House how the Ministry of Education prioritizes funding for school modernization?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the hon. member for the question. As part of the annual budget process my department works alongside Infrastructure to prepare a list of projects that represent the highest priority needs as identified by school boards in their capital plan submissions. Priorities identified by school boards in their three-year capital plans are considered and prioritized based on factors such as health and safety of students and staff, enrolment projections, current utilization, facility conditions, and, of course, capacity for program delivery.

Thank you.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Minister, for explaining the process.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to modernizing schools which are in need of repairs and renovations, our government was elected on a mandate to build schools across the province, and given that there are many schools that are over capacity and given that many rural communities are lacking easy access to schools, can the minister explain how she intends to honour this platform commitment?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and the hon. member for that question. We were elected with a mandate to continue to build schools. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues, my colleague the Minister of Infrastructure, as we work to accomplish this commitment. More details will be coming when we table the budget in the fall. This is very much on my heart, that we are going to look after this, so thank you for the question.

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

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the minister. Given that J.T. Foster is only one example of a school in desperate need of renovations and there are school districts across the province seeking confirmation of their capital projects, that they've been approved, can the minister please elaborate on how the government decides which schools receive modernization funding or are approved for new builds?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Priorities identified by school boards in their three-year capital plans are considered and prioritized based on the factors I have already described. The projects represent the highest priority needs as identified by those school boards in their capital plan submissions. We will continue to look at the priorities of school jurisdictions and work with them to address current and future school infrastructure needs.

Thank you for the question.

## Statement by the Speaker

### Translation of Remarks in French

**The Speaker:** Members, I would just like to provide a clarification. Earlier during the daily Routine, I interjected when the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo spoke French.\* Of course, pursuant to section 5(1) of the Languages Act, French in the Assembly may in fact be spoken without translation. However, from time to time members may like to provide a translation as a courtesy to members who may not speak French. But all other languages do require the translation.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds or approximately there, we will proceed to Members' Statements.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

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

### Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The history of indigenous women and girls in Alberta has been one of historical and multigenerational oppression. The final report of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls commission, of which Alberta was a full participant, states, "As the evidence demonstrates, human rights and Indigenous rights abuses and violations committed and condoned by the Canadian state represent genocide against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people."

Genocide is a difficult word, as truth often is. The report arrived at this determination through an examination of facts that many Albertans might find difficult to comprehend: a history of oppression, of systematic violence, of residential schools, forced sterilization, the '60s scoop, and widespread racism; a history of systematic underfunding, denial of human and treaty rights, and neglect by the institutions which were built on revenues from stolen lands.

For many, the use of the word "genocide" is uncomfortable, too much, over the top. But for indigenous people in Alberta the word is appropriate. It names the experience and allows them to claim their truth. It reflects not only the experience of their mothers and fathers but the experience that their children live today. Literally today a group of conservative Senators in Ottawa are working to block the passage of Bill C-262, which requires the government to determine whether federal laws are consistent with the UNDRIP.

I know that some people have said that while much has gone wrong, there was no underlying intent to commit genocide. To that end, I would like to leave you with two quotations, the first from Reverend Kevin Annett, who published *Hidden from History: The Canadian Holocaust*, in 2001, "As early as November, 1907, the Canadian press was acknowledging that the death rate within Indian residential schools exceeded 50%," and a response to this issue from Duncan Scott, the department of Indian affairs superintendent in 1910 ...

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Cross.

### Ramadan and Eid

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise before you in this Assembly to speak about the valuable contributions of Muslim Albertans as the holy month of Ramadan draws to an end. Alberta is a province of rich and diverse religious beliefs and

\* See page 293, left column, paragraph 11

practices, and many individuals of the Islamic faith call Alberta and indeed the constituency of Calgary-Cross home. For Muslims this is an important and exciting time of the year, with the holy month of Ramadan drawing to an end and the celebration of Eid expected to begin tomorrow. As you may know, Muslims fast throughout the month of Ramadan, where they abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset, in part to experience the struggles of those less fortunate but also to reflect on their beliefs, offer charity, spend time with loved ones, and give back to their communities.

Muslims have made great contributions to this province. Many currently serve in law enforcement agencies, the Armed Forces, private enterprise, and, yes, as members of this historic Legislature. I am honoured to be part of a government that has been given a clear mandate to represent individuals of all faiths and backgrounds. As a proud Muslim myself, Mr. Speaker, during this month I have learned the value and importance of caring for our neighbours, tackling problems in our community, remaining humble, and lending a helping hand. Although these values are a key tenet for all Muslims, they undoubtedly reflect a bigger message of inclusivity, tolerance, and the cultural mosaic that makes up this great province.

As our government works to energize our economy, I invite the hon. members of this House to recognize the contributions made by Albertans of the Islamic faith by joining me and wishing all Muslims a Ramadan Mubarak and a joyous celebration of Eid in . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oscar Wilde once said that a man who pays his bills on time is soon forgotten. Because of the former NDP government's inability to pay this province's bills and unique ability to take on new debt at an alarming rate, they will most certainly not be forgotten. Our province's debt load sits at more than \$60 billion. That's \$60 billion imposed on the next generation of Albertans.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as a proud mom of two I have a real insight into what running this kind of debt really means. It means my kids are going to have to pick up the tab. This type of irresponsible debt is the real legacy of the now Official Opposition. They oversaw the largest deficits in Alberta's history and added record amounts of debt that future generations, including my children, will have to pay off. What's worse is that because it was clear that they had no plan to pay down their debt and deal with their spending addiction, they watched as it got even more expensive for Alberta to borrow, with six credit downgrades.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a member of the United Conservative Party, with a real plan to get Alberta's finances back on track. We will bring forward a responsible plan to deal with the mess left by the previous government, and with new, exciting policies like the job creation tax cut, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, and, one I'm really excited about, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, we will not only get Alberta back to balance, but we will return our province to the engine of job creation it once was.

Once again Alberta will be the best place in Canada to live, work, and raise a family. With our plan to spend responsibly, create jobs, and get Alberta back on track, we will deal with the mess left to us by the previous government, and we will ensure Alberta . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

### 2:50 Consumer Protection for Motor Vehicle Owners

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of the actions that our government took to protect consumers over the last four years, including common-sense policies and regulations that make sure Albertans can feel confident when buying or repairing a vehicle. After multiple concerns were raised about AMVIC's ability to independently advocate for consumers, we took the important step of making AMVIC a public body to ensure that it has the oversight and powers it needs to stand up for Albertans.

However, the UCP's refusal to commit to these protections should be worrying for all Albertans. Last week in question period I raised serious concerns about this government's connection with a lobbyist who promised to raise over a million dollars to help the UCP get elected in exchange for weakened consumer protections. I asked this question to get assurance that this government would follow our lead in defending these protections. Instead, what Albertans got was spin. Instead of standing up for consumers, the Minister of Service Alberta chose to defend the Premier's PAC, saying that it was "independent from political parties." Instead of pledging to operate in the way Albertans should expect from their government, the Minister of Transportation said that my advocacy for consumer protections was, quote, embarrassing.

Mr. Speaker, the UCP owes an explanation to the people of Alberta. Why don't they think that informing consumers about the prior history of a vehicle is a policy worth protecting? Why don't they think that Albertans deserve a comprehensive bill of sale when buying a vehicle? Why won't they commit to keeping AMVIC a public body, ensuring the independence of this critical organization? While the UCP waffles and spins, Albertans know that their rights and protections should not be for sale.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont would like to make a statement.

### Canadian Armed Forces Liaison

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in this Assembly to express my honour and gratitude at being designated the caucus military liaison for the government of Alberta. I look forward in my new role to developing, promoting, supporting, and sustaining the Alberta government's relationship with the Canadian Armed Forces. This is particularly meaningful for me as just yesterday we marked Canadian Armed Forces Day.

As Albertans know, the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces serve a vital role in the defence of peace and human rights around the globe. They protect our way of life here at home, and as we have seen many times, including the last few days, they play a life-saving role here in times of natural disaster. Albertans and their government are grateful to the men and women of our Canadian Forces and their contribution to our country. We are equally grateful to their families for their perseverance and sacrifice as their loved ones respond to the needs of a nation.

One of my first priorities as caucus military liaison will be assisting in the creation of a new postsecondary scholarship program to be named after Alex Decoteau, named for Canada's first indigenous police officer who served, as I was proud to, in the Edmonton Police Service. This scholarship will help veterans and their families integrate into Alberta's workforce following their term of military service. As caucus military liaison I will do my utmost to strengthen our province's relationship with these brave and selfless Canadians.

Thank you.



## Tabling Returns and Reports

**Ms Sweet:** I have three tablings with the appropriate copies. The first is entitled Supervised Injection Facilities in Canada: Past, Present, and Future.

Second, from 2019, What is Known About the Impacts of Supervised Injection Sites on Community Safety and Wellbeing: A Systematic Review.

Then, Decrease in Crime in Red Deer, Including Near Safe Consumption Site: RCMP.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Glenora is rising to table a document.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have three documents, that I will submit the requisite number of copies for as one package. The first is a letter to one family, residents of the Calgary Catholic school district, saying that their student won't be allowed to return because: "The primary reason for not allowing [your student] to access a fourth-year . . . is that the District does not have sufficient resources and facilities to accommodate her." Again, this is a student with severe special needs. Then, virtually the same sentence is in a letter to another family. Also, a letter from one of those families in pursuit of their appeal. All telling information about the damage that reduced education funding causes to parents, particularly for children with special needs.

Thank you.

## Orders of the Day

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

#### Relocation of Government Facilities

502. Mr. van Dijken moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to require a local economic impact assessment and take the results of that assessment into consideration when planning the centralization or relocation of provincially funded government service centres, offices, and branches.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the Legislature to move and to speak in favour of my private member's motion.

But, first, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my eldest daughter, Jessica, and three of her children: Will, Vera, and Lewis. If you would please rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I was first elected in 2015 and now again in 2019 partly on a promise of looking out for the best interests of my constituents and the communities within my constituency. The intent of Motion 502 is to protect the jobs, social well-being, and sustainability of communities not only in my constituency but communities throughout all of rural Alberta.

Early in my first term, in October 2016, the Trudeau government announced that they would be closing the federal immigration processing centre in Vegreville, Alberta, and moving 228 employee positions to Edmonton. The announcement blindsided the town. They were not notified or consulted with about the potential effects this decision would have on their community, and it appeared that the federal government had put no thought into how significant that impact would be on this small Alberta town of less than 6,000 people.

The people of Vegreville knew that the closure of the immigration processing centre, impacting 8 per cent of the town's workforce, would deliver a serious economic blow to their small town, so the town hired Torque Communications to help lobby the federal government to reconsider their decision. I remember the day I received a Respect Vegreville button and letter asking for my support of their campaign.

The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties passed a resolution, brought forward by the county of Minburn, urging the federal department to reconsider their decision to close the immigration case processing centre in Vegreville. The town also hired Nichols Applied Management Inc. to do a socioeconomic analysis of the expected consequences of the centre's closure. The Nichols report estimated that approximately 420 people could move out of the town, municipal revenues could decline by \$1.2 million, housing values could drop by 25 to 30 per cent, and enrolment in local schools could decrease by 130 students, and that service clubs such as Little Warriors, the Vegreville breakfast club, the Vegreville Food Bank, Vegreville KidSport, and the Vegreville Association for Living in Dignity, that received thousands of dollars in charity support from activities carried out by the employees of the immigration case processing centre, would have shortfalls in funding.

Mr. Speaker, these impacts would be devastating to any small town, but the fact that an indifferent federal government made this decision without any prior consultation or consideration of the people and the community affected is an insult and, I believe, should never happen again. That is why I am putting forth Motion 502.

I believe it is incumbent upon our government to ensure they take into consideration, before a decision is made, the results of a local economic impact assessment when planning the potential centralization or relocation of provincially funded government service centres, offices, and branches. No community should be blindsided the same way Vegreville was. Mr. Speaker, I think of some of the government-funded services in my constituency, whether it be the Athabasca University in Athabasca, the Alberta Distance Learning Centre located in Barrhead, the Alberta Health Services north zone offices in Westlock, or any of the other provincially funded service centres in my constituency. These offices and by extension these jobs have become an integral part of the local economy and the social well-being of the communities they are located in.

3:00

I also think of the potential devastation to these communities if an indifferent government decided to move any of these facilities. Mr. Speaker, whether it is agriculture, energy, or forestry, our resource industries, primarily located in rural Alberta, will have downturns. This creates challenges for the communities who are on the front lines of these industries. We have seen during this latest downturn in the energy industry how provincially funded service centres, offices, and branches provided steady employment and income, serving as a shock absorber for the local economy in these rural Alberta towns.

Families also benefit from this shock-absorber effect. Government-funded jobs are often held by spouses or family members of the workers employed by our resource sectors. Having a government job allows these families to manage through some of the challenges they are faced with during a downturn. When one member of the family is faced with reduced hours or even the loss of their resource sector job, at least their family is better able to manage through the downturn.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important for government, going forward, to recognize how important these stable government jobs are for the sustainability of these small towns and the health of the families within. I believe a fair process is required before any government decision is made to centralize or relocate government services, offices, or branches. I believe no community should be blindsided the way Vegreville was by an indifferent government that put no consideration into the effects on the town of the decision to move the immigration case processing centre.

Mr. Speaker, we can do better, and I must say that we must do better. Good decisions are well-informed decisions. The need for proper consultation before a decision is made is important and respects the communities and families that will be directly impacted by these types of decisions. That is why I am asking this Assembly to urge the government to require a local economic impact assessment and take the results of that assessment into consideration when planning the potential centralization or relocation of provincially funded government service centres, offices, and branches.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I urge all members to support private member's Motion 502.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks very much to the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock for bringing forward this I think timely and well-conceived motion. I think it's important for all of us to look at the importance of public services, not just for the services that they provide across the province and in rural areas and smaller centres but for the employment that they provide as well.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I know that the hon. member and I were together in Neerlandia a couple of years ago building and opening a new school. Again, it's self-evident that that school is not just a place of learning and a place of pride and a community centre but also a place where, you know, people are employed, quite frankly. When I look across the province, in the vast majority of municipal districts across the province, for example, the leading employer is the education system and all of the jobs associated, not just teachers but secretaries and custodians and bus drivers and so forth.

I couldn't have said it better. This acts as an economic shock absorber, especially during an economic downturn, you know, Madam Speaker, where we see otherwise that the price of energy had caused a lot of jobs to be lost. But we as the previous government chose not to exacerbate that situation by laying off teachers and nurses and other public service employees, who provide an essential public service and provide jobs in those communities.

I can think further to the hon. member's Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock riding, where you have, of course, not just schools providing education services but also other services. I know there's specialty work done in the clinic in Westlock around knee and hip replacements. You know, it's a good way to utilize those services that are built and to help to reduce wait times in the larger urban centres, again providing an essential service for Albertans but also providing employment in Westlock. Again, by having these places in smaller communities, you help to plant a seed for further economic growth and all of the ancillary services that the doctors and nurses at the knee and hip replacement place might need and so on and so forth.

Travelling a bit further down the road – the hon. member must know that I have a very good memory for driving down highways

and so forth – we find Barrhead and the Alberta distance learning facilities that are there, again providing online and correspondence services for students around the province. Having that centre at least partially situated in Barrhead has had, I think, some positive economic benefits for that town. Again, you know, once those services are entrenched – I believe the ADLC has probably been there for 30, 40 years at least, right? – you've created an economic, essential part of the Barrhead and area community with those things.

As we look across the province, there are other places, and quite frankly we should be innovative in looking for ways by which we can expand public services into smaller communities to help to share that diversity, right? Economic diversity is absolutely essential. If we learned anything from the last four years, it's that when you have too many eggs in one basket, the boom-and-bust cycle comes back to bite you. We saw it in spades here in the last number of years, where the economic downturn, energy prices globally falling through the bottom – you know, we were in a very vulnerable situation. I think it's incumbent upon us to learn from those things and help to diversify the economy in the broadest possible way and help to diversify each individual community as well, if we possibly can, through the spreading of public services to different places.

This motion, Madam Speaker, I think, serves a practical purpose, right? We all know what happened in Vegreville, and it was unconscionable. You could physically see things closing down as the announcement became reality in regard to the immigration services being lost in the town of Vegreville, and we certainly fought hard to counter that. I know that our member at that time tried to move heaven and earth to rally people to have the federal government reconsider that decision, and it was for naught, unfortunately. But we can learn from our mistakes or we can learn from bad situations so that they don't happen again. I would suggest that this motion is in keeping with learning from the past to make something better for the future.

But I would also suggest that the decisions around public services, not treating them like they're just red ink on the ledger paper but actually understanding that the essential services that schools and hospitals and other public services provide are helping kids – they're helping families, but they're also helping the economy, quite frankly. You know, to just suggest that the school budget or the health budget is just a liability that you must shed for the sake of a certain political agenda I think is short sighted and is a misrepresentation of the reality that we see in a place like Westlock or Barrhead or Neerlandia or Vegreville and hundreds of other places across the province.

You know, always, I think, cooler heads must prevail, right? We shouldn't make, Madam Speaker, sweeping statements suggesting that every single thing that ever happens that's bad in the province happened because of the previous government. I always endeavoured to not do that when I was a government member. I made a point of not dwelling on the past to suggest that the politics of the Conservatives were the fountain of all negative and evil things in the province. I would strongly suggest that this government should also endeavour to do so. I mean, politics being what they are, these things do happen, but don't let it dominate and overcome rational, sensible decision-making.

3:10

For me, to see the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock have his motion surface like a ship of rational, reasonable thoughts, perhaps, on the stormy seas of political rhetoric is refreshing, and I certainly support this motion in the broadest possible way.

I must say that your family must be proud of you. Somehow they came all the way here to watch you with this. I'm wondering if the kids go to Neerlandia. I bet you they do. No? Not quite? Okay. There you go. Anyway, it was good. I enjoyed my visit up there a couple of years ago, and I hope that the spring agricultural season shines and smiles on you.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I jump with honour to rise in support today of Motion 502. I think this is an extremely important motion which will provide not only stability but, I think, survivability to many of the communities of rural Alberta. It's a motion that urges our government to require a local economic impact assessment and actually take into account the results of that assessment in the consideration of planning either centralization or relocation of provincially funded services, offices, and branches. This is a motion that we really do need to encourage our government to engage in a transition of methodology and maybe even driving philosophy. It absolutely is not a partisan issue; it's something that has been in need of review for about 15 years or more. It definitely is a motion that I rise to support.

Of course, we all watched what happened in Vegreville, and that's been spoken to by both of the two members before me, so I will not rehash that or redo it except to say that the degree of impact that occurred from that was actually even greater, more devastating than people ever anticipated it would be. The population of the town shrunk by almost 10 per cent. Home values fell by 30 per cent. It didn't just mean that people had to find new jobs with that kind of an economic transition; it meant that every citizen in Vegreville, in one way or another, as the ripples of that impact spread out, was impacted. Local businesses lost. Everything was impacted. An economic impact study should have been conducted by the federal government prior to engaging on that change.

That's why, Madam Speaker, I believe that it is important that we do our best to make sure that that kind of thing does not happen again and particularly that it doesn't happen in the areas where we have provincial authority and control, because the impacts of government being centralized in our two large cities from all of our small rural towns can actually, literally cripple and even kill some of those small towns.

Our government's platform has been that we have put forward some bold ideas related to the revitalization of rural communities with the rural entrepreneur immigration plan, the rural renewal immigration plan. These programs really will help revitalize our rural communities. They have incredible potential upside for those seeking to live in rural Alberta, and I think we need to be aware of that.

I can't imagine the effects that some sort of centralization or removal of services would have on the local businesses and community life in the town of Lacombe, for instance. AFSC is one of the larger employers in my constituency. We do not need to have that removed from our community through some sort of centralization process. On top of that, they provide tremendous community work as well and support in the community. Everyone from working individuals to schoolchildren would feel the effects of some sort of centralization to the two big urban areas of that government service.

Worse would be the fate of Ponoka if centennial centre, the brain injury centre at our hospital, were to be removed. It's been there for – I'm not even sure – 80, 90 years. If that were suddenly to be centralized out of Ponoka, the hundreds of employees that would be impacted, the community would truly suffer from that. The issue,

Madam Speaker, is that none of us would choose to create a small business in an environment that can't promise stability. Too often the instability is created by a government policy or decision that removes the major employer from a region.

With more and more centralization of government offices, many of which are massive employers in our rural communities, more protection from government for entrepreneurs and citizens is worth considering and, as has already been said, quite frankly, more protection for the schools and the hospitals in those regions as well, who also then become less viable, who then are often considered for closing. The communities one step at a time literally die when these kinds of centralization efforts take place. It means we lose opportunities of every kind, economic, social, community, in every way. The reality is that this effect takes place not by some natural means; it takes place because of policies and decisions of government.

I find it extremely challenging that in a time where over the last 15 years, for the most part, except for the last couple of years, the population of Alberta has been overall growing significantly by immigration yet at the same time we have small rural communities that are declining. Why is that? Because of government policy and decisions that hamper them, that make it impossible for them to function. So, Madam Speaker, government needs to create the kind of situation which actually supports and reinforces our smaller communities and towns, which makes them enticing, viable places for business and for the communities to continue to survive.

What people fear is losing their jobs and the opportunities that are leaving these communities. That's the situation that we saw most poignantly in Vegreville, and we don't need to see it in any more communities in our province. In fact, I would suggest that we need to begin to pursue a policy that's somewhat the opposite of that if we want to revitalize rural Alberta at a time when the province isn't growing. Rather than depopulating rural Alberta, with the right policies we could see rural Alberta growing as well as the province overall.

This is an extremely important issue. As I said, I think centralization, I don't know 10, 15 years ago, sort of became the philosophical default of government. The argument was that through economies of scale everything would get better, but the reality is that in that experience we've had, the efficiency of service has significantly declined and the impact on rural communities has been seriously felt.

As an example, I would like to use central Alberta in a very specific case. Decentralization of services, particularly health care in central Alberta, has had a huge impact on central Alberta. It has left central Alberta really stripped of opportunity that should have been left there. I refer to a couple of FOIP documents, well, one FOIP document in particular, from Alberta Health Services on capital spending in the central region on health care. I cite this in relation to this motion because of the massive impact it has had on the capital expenditure in the central region with regard to health care and hospitals. It has cost us hundreds of millions of dollars. It has cost us many hundreds of jobs that should have been there that got centralized and relocated out of our area, and the impact on all of our central region communities has been huge.

Let me give you a few quick numbers from AHS documents, capital spending, 2014, and then I'll refer a little bit to 2016. Per capita spending: this is per capita, per individual. Capital project spending in Calgary, for instance, in 2014 was \$1,632. In Edmonton it was \$1,117. For northern Alberta it was over \$2,000. In southern Alberta it was \$1,500. In central Alberta it did not make \$1,000. No, it didn't even make half of that. No, it didn't even make a quarter of that. It's \$227, Madam Speaker. This is a massive drain on the economy and the vitality of central Alberta to the two urban

regions at the expense and the cost of everything that happens in central Alberta: jobs, businesses, housing, construction, all of these things.

3:20

In more recent numbers, 2016, the spending in Calgary was \$1,400 per person. In Edmonton the projected at that point in time was \$4,000. For central Alberta, the entire central region: \$286. Over a decade it averages out to \$104 per capita in central Alberta. This has been going on for years, this policy of centralization that bleeds away from the smaller areas, subsidizes the two major urban areas, and impacts our communities. The taxes are collected from our communities, but they're not spent in our communities. We subsidize other regions. This impacts the economy of central Alberta. The taxes collected from us are not represented in the services delivered. It's the reason why we have to have Motion 502.

In reality – let me just wrap it up, then – the government has . . .

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The good Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock brought together a very good proposal. This is a strong consideration that we have to do because government jobs are government investments. These are taxpayer investments and there for the communities, and it can be detrimental to a smaller community when these jobs get moved.

I mean, if we take Vegreville, for example: 236 jobs, and the total population of Vegreville was only 5,436 approximately in 2016. Those 236 jobs equals 420 residents, which is substantial when you think about the local schools and things that are impacted but also the indirect jobs. In my member's statement I talked about the indirect jobs in the oil and gas industry as measured by the Americans there. There are a lot of indirect jobs that also come from these. Again, it's not just the government jobs that are affected. It's the impacts of having the people that shop in those grocery stores and by things like the Canadian Tire and Home Hardware locally there investing in their community and participating in their community. That's enough kids to have filled a classroom at the very least.

Certainly, when governments are making these decisions, it does need to be well thought out. They do have to consider the economic implications of their decision-making, much like something that our previous government did not do when they were evaluating so many things, including in my community of Fort McMurray. Thousands of jobs were lost, and it was very detrimental to our community because it wasn't just oil sands jobs that were lost, Madam Speaker. We've had businesses, contractors that were providing these services to these oil companies lost out. We've had grocery stores slow down and lose a lot of business. Many of our retail outlets currently – oh, shoot; I forgot the name of the store. They sell camping gear, outdoor stuff, a big franchise in every community, and they just recently closed down. Again, these are the impacts of what happens when you remove a lot of people from a population, people with paying jobs that were able to contribute to the economy.

My good friend from Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock is coming out with a very sensible motion that I concur with. We should consider this at all levels of government.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for all of this fine work. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion from the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock and talk a little bit about the value of the public sector here in the province of Alberta.

Indeed, it's a quite refreshing to have the opportunity to have that discussion and acknowledge the value that public-sector workers in Alberta bring to their communities, and it's been wonderful to hear from so many members in this House today about the folks that work in the public sector, whether that's folks who are working in health care as nurses, as paramedics, as health care aides, or whether it's the local teacher, whether it's the folks that are working in other government services that are located around the province, the value that brings.

Indeed, I had the opportunity, you know, when I took on the role of health care critic for the Official Opposition, to have some really good conversations with the former Minister of Health, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, about the rural health care system here in the province of Alberta. She noted to me that one of our commitments had been to maintain investment in these rural hospitals and in our public health care system precisely for that reason, recognizing that in many cases individuals who had lost work in the resource industry due to that worldwide drop in the price of oil, the challenges that we face due to the court ruling against TMX, and the many other factors that were involved, many of them had partners who worked within the public health care system, who worked in continuing care, who worked in our rural hospitals. The fact that we maintained that funding, that support, that we did not look to make cuts, as has been the wont of previous Conservative governments when the price of oil would fall, helped to ensure that those families had at least one good income coming in.

Indeed, last weekend, when I had the opportunity to attend the Health Sciences Association of Alberta conference here in Edmonton, I had a chance to talk with many folks who work in different aspects and some who work in lab services in some different parts of the province. I had the chance to talk with some who work as rural paramedics. They shared with me the importance of them being able to be there in their communities and provide those services. As so many members have noted today, that then also comes with economic benefit to those communities that helps support other local businesses, that helps support other people to live in that community, and that helps keep our rural population going. I recognize that as the roots of our province. That is where we come from, and it's an important way of life that I agree we want to see preserved.

As I said, it's refreshing to be able to have this conversation because too often I hear, you know, Conservatives or conservative commentators who speak very negatively of the public sector and the money that we invest as government in the province of Alberta to support those workers and the work that they do here in the province of Alberta. Indeed, recently there was an editorial by Danielle Smith, a former member of this House and a great supporter of the current government. She was quite concerned about some actions that public-sector workers, through their duly elected and democratic unions, were taking on climate change. One of her complaints was that these were, and I quote, the biggest and most powerful public-sector unions in our province, those who never saw job losses during the most recent downturn in the economy, those who never faced a wage cut.

I find that sort of framing and that sort of demonization of folks who work in the public service, Madam Speaker, to be troubling, especially with the discussion that we're having here in this House today, where we recognize that investment in providing fair remuneration for those who work in the public service is something

that supports communities across this province. I recognize that at times there can be, much as there is the rivalry between Edmonton and Calgary or perhaps the west and the east, some of that rivalry that exists between urban and rural Alberta.

Certainly, it's challenging as government looks to find efficiencies and looks to find ways to offer services most effectively. Indeed, that is something this government has indicated they are very concerned about doing. I recognize it can be challenging in that, then, to find the right balance and ensuring that we support our important rural communities that provide so much in this province, whether it's in agriculture, whether it's the individuals that work in the resource industries and many of the folks are out fighting those fires right now. It is challenging trying to find the ways that we most effectively deliver our public services, but we recognize that the public service is an important employer and an important source of economic activity here in the province.

3:30

Indeed, I recognize that because I had many conversations over the last four years with individuals in the business community in and around Edmonton's downtown. We had some extensive conversations about what their experience was during the years under Premier Ralph Klein, when he made severe and drastic cuts to the public service here in Alberta, and about the effect it had on Edmonton's downtown core. More than once I heard the term "ghost town" used. It devastated businesses. It devastated the economy here, something from which it took some time for this community to begin to recover.

Now, I recognize that there is a difference between the downtown in the heart of a larger city and indeed an individual small town, though certainly the Minister of Health has taken the time to ask, I guess in regard to the clinical lab hub, which we had some more discussion about today, about why I was not concerned about jobs being moved out of my constituency for that. I recognize, again, that there are times when we have to weigh the decisions, we have to look at what's involved, and we have to make the right choice in terms of how we are going to provide the best services for Albertans.

Certainly, again, I think what the member has brought forward here is a reasonable proposal that, in doing so, government do, as our government in fact did, a weighing of the balance and the benefit that will be provided in making that decision versus the cost it will have to the local community. While our downtown is to some extent resilient and indeed on an upswing in many respects, which accommodates, I think, a shift like moving the clinical lab hub a little better, I recognize that for a small rural community the loss of a significant service hub, where we have, again, those public-sector workers who indeed – again, I'm glad we are talking about how much we value them and how much they contribute to the economy here today, how important that is, in a much grander sense, to small rural communities.

It is my hope that as we go forward – and indeed we will see a budget coming this fall after the blue-ribbon panel, which is looking for efficiencies and will only be able to find ways to reduce spending, so we recognize that we are going to be having these conversations in this House and that the public sector is indeed going to come up in terms of discussion, in terms of what they are paid and what they earn and what value they add – we will remember this conversation today, in which we all agreed on the value that the public sector brings to our province and recognize that if we launch attacks on the public sector, that will not just affect people here in my constituency of Edmonton-City Centre or just in Edmonton or in Calgary. It will affect workers across this province,

who provide great benefit and value to their communities and who indeed clearly voted for members from both parties in this House and are expecting all of us to give due consideration to the value they provide to this province. It is my hope that our conversation at that time will continue in this positive tone.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll just say thank you again to the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. I was just telling the member that it's in alphabetical order, so it should be easier to remember. I thank him for bringing this motion forward and giving us the opportunity for this discussion today. I look forward to voting in favour.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Why, thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to rise and speak in favour of Motion 502, put forward by my friend and colleague from Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. It's also great to see many members in this House rise today in what appears to be bipartisan support of this motion.

I think this motion speaks to unintended consequences. I think that's the point of this: unintended consequences and how we can go about avoiding them. We've heard a lot of comments today about the refugee and citizenship case processing centre out in the Vegreville area and the lack of consultation that was carried out on behalf of the federal government when that office was closed and the drastic effects it had on the community.

I support doing an economic impact study before government offices are closed because, like the member opposite from Edmonton-City Centre said, Alberta's public sector does tremendous work, and their interests must be considered. But so, too, must the interests of rural Alberta be considered. It is the place where I live. I have lived in and visited many places across this province, across this country, and in my completely unbiased opinion rural is where it's at. But I digress.

I want to tell you a little bit about some unintended consequences that I have seen in the past. In the small town of Magrath, a town of about 2,600 constituents in Cardston-Siksika, there was a hospital or, rather, what was once a hospital with an active emergency room, and about a decade or so ago it was closed down. As a result, it has taken a bit of a hit because of the attractiveness of living in a town with an active hospital. Not far to the northeast is Raymond. It has a hospital. The town where I live, Cardston, also has a hospital. The populations of both of those towns are larger, not necessarily directly as a result of the hospital. But, certainly, when the hospital was closed, I was told that there were about 20 nurses who were no longer working in town. As a result, they were not buying local products, and they weren't even using the local golf course.

Further to the south is the town of Del Bonita. Several decades ago there was a school in Del Bonita, and that school was closed. One member in Magrath said that when he graduated, there were about 43 students in his graduating class. Today there is no longer a school there. No one is graduating. They go to Magrath, and the town now has a population of about 651 people.

While I'm talking about education, I just wanted to take a moment to tell you how important it is and what it's done for my life and the importance of great teachers and the effect they've had on me. When I moved to Alberta in my teenage years, I had some of the greatest teachers that a young student could ever ask for: in my English class Mrs. Pilling, in my math class Mr. Noad. Both of those teachers were more than just instructors. Living in a small town, they were friends, they became mentors, and they encouraged me that I could do better in both of those subjects, and they helped

me along the path. I am certain that without their help I would not be where I am today, so to them I do want to say thank you.

Unintended consequences are what we are trying to avoid. This government ran on a platform with five major commitments. Repealing the carbon tax: we've gone ahead and we've made serious moves towards that. Hopefully, by the end of the day that is complete.

Standing up for Albertans, which means standing up for this province against what we believe to be a federal government that is not taking our concerns as seriously as we think they should, including getting our products to tidewater.

Getting our fiscal house in order, which means balancing the budget. I would be a terrible legislator if I left this House without making a concerted effort to leave this province better for my kids than I found it, and that means reducing the debt load of this province so that my children are not paying for the mistakes of my predecessors.

Protecting the quality of health care and education. I did address education and its importance in my life. We made a commitment to maintain or increase spending in both of those sectors.

And, of course, job creation. Some unintended consequences of the previous government we have seen are declining investment – 7 per cent in agriculture, 10 per cent in manufacturing, 27 per cent in finance, and 65 per cent in retail and trade – putting us cascading towards a debt of close to \$60 billion.

Now, I do not believe in my heart of hearts – and I mean this sincerely – that the members opposite intended to have these negative consequences on our province. I believe they are good-intending legislators and people who want to see what's best for the province. On this side of the House we simply see how to get there as drastically different. But those decisions made by the members across the aisle have put us where we are. Unintended consequences are things that we should be avoiding, which is why I speak in favour of this motion.

3:40

Another unintended consequence, if you'd allow me, Madam Speaker, is something that happened to me a couple of years ago. What was introduced was the SodaStream. Some people might know this. It carbonates water. I was giddy – I was absolutely giddy – about the SodaStream. I'll tell you why: because I am addicted to pop. I am. I'm happy to admit it. I'm trying to get off it, but what can I say? The SodaStream, to me, was a great opportunity to cut out the sugar and have the water.

One day I got a little bit gutsy and thought: what if you put juice into the SodaStream, not just water? The fact is that you have to put the syrup in after you've added the carbonation. I got a little gutsy and thought: we'll put some juice in there. My family wasn't around, and I thought that, well, I could get away with this in case the worst-case scenario happens, and the worst-case scenario did in fact happen. The SodaStream blew up, with juice all over myself, all over the floor, and I was left with a sticky mess to clean up, including trying to save the SodaStream.

Madam Speaker, all I wanted was some fizzy grape juice – that's all I wanted – but the reality is that the unintended consequences were a mess all over the floor. I relate that, in fact, to this province. If we do not consider all of the outcomes, all of the factors involved when we are making decisions, be they small, medium, or large, we could end up with a colossal mess. I do believe that we are heading towards that mess, and it is our job as this government to right the ship. But it starts with doing the proper consultation.

With consultation comes transparency. [interjections] I hear whispers across the aisle. They don't like the word "transparency."

**Ms Renaud:** It's laughter.

**Mr. Schow:** Well, okay. It was a funny story.

In any event, transparency is something that governments should also adopt and, in doing so, communicate with the local communities what they intend to do. This is something that I don't believe the federal government considered when closing the refugee and citizenship case processing centre, and it's something that is incumbent upon us to do if we're going to make decisions that will affect entire communities.

Now, with regard to Vegreville 280 jobs may not seem like a lot to some, but to the town of Vegreville it is a massive part of the population, jobs that we must protect. These employees who were let go were given an option to take a new position of employment within the city of Edmonton. However, that was an hour and a half away, and many, including single parents, were unable to make that transition in living and bringing their kids to the larger city. They wanted to stay in Vegreville, or they were unable to make that transition.

As we develop policy and as we make decisions that are going to affect both urban and rural parts of the province, we must consider all factors involved, and if we do not, we will find ourselves in a big, sticky mess and we will be deviating from the promise that this government made only months ago, through the campaign, to right the fiscal ship and to protect jobs and the economy in this province.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks by saying thank you for this opportunity to speak, and I hope that all members in this Legislature will vote in favour of Motion 502.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased this afternoon to rise and speak to Motion 502, brought forward by the MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. I do so partly in my role as the critic for Agriculture and Forestry and also partly as a result of my experience growing up, in part, in a small village myself.

I come from Thorhild. Thorhild I've brought up a few times in this House because it was a very formative experience for me living there and spending my summers there. Thorhild is a case in point to provide an example to this House as to what happens when a small rural Alberta population centre loses the threshold population that allows it to be viable. It demonstrates the risk at which many Alberta communities are at and the fear that many people who live in rural Alberta communities have over losing any possible government jobs that they might still be able to have in their community to centralization or for other reasons by decisions made by a provincial government that might in future decide to relocate those jobs and those departments' offices to another location.

Thorhild ended up becoming dissolved. It ended up now being administered by the county of Thorhild, and it lost its independence. It ceased to exist because that threshold population was lost. There were a number of different extenuating circumstances there, but that's what fate many rural municipalities wish to avoid by maintaining the provincial public services that they currently have in their communities.

Now, there's an intense rivalry for public investment in Alberta's small rural communities, and I've witnessed this very, very personally as a young person while my grandmother, Winnifred LaBelle, was a deputy mayor in Thorhild. I know there was an intense rivalry between two communities that were pretty close together, that being Thorhild and Redwater, just a few kilometres to the south. Ultimately, they battled to see who would get the lodge or the hospital. It turned out that Thorhild ended up getting the seniors' lodge and Redwater the hospital, but there was an intense fight between the two communities because they knew the value of having those public servants as employees bringing home stable

paycheques to their particular communities. Those two facilities still operate in both those centres right now and are still valued centres of employment in those two smaller communities.

The importance of the public service jobs that the province may provide by having services decentralized in a smaller rural Alberta community is just as important today as they were 50 years ago, when my grandmother was fighting to have the Thorhild lodge or the hospital located in their community.

Historically rural communities have struggled to survive as they end up depopulating and going to larger centres, and it's these public service jobs that allow many of them to hang on and survive and, hopefully, maybe even thrive while they try to attract other investments maybe from the private sector to grow their community and establish more people in that community. But if they don't have these public-sector jobs there to maintain that threshold as there's a transition from one economic activity to another, they may end up suffering the same fate as Thorhild has suffered and end up having to dissolve and become administered by the county.

These provincially funded service centres must have an economic impact assessment done prior to closure if indeed that's being contemplated by the province, so I support the private member's Motion 502, brought forward by the MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, wholeheartedly, in the knowledge that our rural communities fight every day to maintain services for their population, not only by having the public services that are there maintained but also to attract other professionals to the community such as doctors and other health care professionals.

I know, once again, in Thorhild – you're going to hear a lot about Thorhild from me – my grandparents were involved in making sure that a doctor actually stayed in the community because they had one, and the doctor left. Indeed, if they didn't have that doctor there, the community would be losing people because they would choose to move away. I remember going to Clyde just down the road, not too far from Westlock, perhaps even in the MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock's constituency, and there was an X-ray machine in Clyde that was available for sale. My grandparents felt that if indeed they could have an X-ray machine in Thorhild, they might be able to attract a doctor, so we actually went and picked it up from a veterinary clinic, an old X-ray machine, that we broke the dolly on getting it moved, and moved it into Thorhild. That actually did help attract a doctor.

3:50

People in these communities will do anything they can to maintain their communities and help them survive. One thing we can do to help as a provincial government is make sure the economic impact assessment is done before a decision is made to strip these communities of the public service jobs they so dearly rely on. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll try to keep my comments fairly concise. I know there are other members that wish to speak to this.

I am rising to speak in favour of this motion, as is what sounds like most of, or much of, the Assembly. I just want to point out a couple of different things, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate the member who put this forward as far as taking an economic assessment . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry, hon. member. I hesitate to interrupt after only allowing a short period of time, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of the

motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock to close debate on Motion 502.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to private member Motion 502. It has truly been an honour to bring this forward to this Legislative Assembly.

I think what is being recognized here is the importance of these government-funded facilities and the jobs that they provide in small communities and how important it is to recognize and respect – it really is truly all about respecting those communities in any decision-making process going forward. I believe that Motion 502 is about recognizing the need for a fair process before a decision is made. I can't stress that enough. In the case of the immigration processing centre in Vegreville, the community was completely caught off guard and blind-sided by the decision because they had never been notified or even consulted with before the decision was made, so their efforts to try and get the decision reversed were futile at the end of the day.

Having gone through that experience as an MLA and watching as that whole process went through, it spoke a lot to me about the importance of our role here to ensure that our communities are respected and that the proper consultation is done before any decisions to centralize or relocate government-funded service centres, offices, branches are made. We truly need to respect the communities that they're located in and let their voices be heard in a transparent manner.

I appreciate the input from all members, and I also encourage all members to vote in favour of Motion 502. Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 502 carried]

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate May 29: Mr. Rutherford]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright

**Mr. Rowswell:** Wainwright, yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have the privilege to be elected to this Assembly by the constituents of the newly configured riding of Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright, an amalgam of portions of the former Vermilion-Lloydminster and Battle River-Wainwright ridings. I rise to give my maiden speech, a tradition for a newly elected MLA.

I'm an advocate for tradition. "Tradition is," to quote G.K. Chesterton, "the democracy of the dead." Conservatives believe in the principle of prescription, that is, of things established by immemorial usage. Prescription is the legacy of the dead. Edmund Burke called the principle of prescription the wisdom of our ancestors. He further opined that prescriptive wisdom is something far greater than any man's petty, private rationality. We would do well to reflect on this over the next four years. To those in this Chamber or without who might balk at this sentiment, I would point

out that the Assembly is, for very good reason, a bastion of tradition. A consequence of the Assembly observing prescriptive wisdom is that our province is provided with a measure of stability and repose.

Tradition is not convention. It is convention that affords me this opportunity to introduce to the House commentary regarding the riding of Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright, its people, geography, challenges, and opportunities. Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright has a population in excess of 46,000 and covers an area of 10,090 square kilometres. Its three most populated areas are reflected in the riding's title.

The biprovincial city of Lloydminster has the riding's largest population, approximately 31,400. Of that number just over 20,000 live on the Alberta side. Lloydminster is, given the right economic conditions, a thriving city. It has forward-looking, energetic school boards and is home to the Lloydminster Oilfield Technical Society. They host the biannual Lloydminster Heavy Oil Show, the last volunteer-run oil and gas show of its kind in Canada. Its 20th show will take place in 2020. It also has an active Concerned Citizens for Seniors Care Society, which watches out for changes to levels of care for seniors in Lloydminster and de facto the province.

Vermilion and Wainwright have populations of 4,150 and 6,270 respectively. Wainwright is home to a large Canadian Forces training base. The base hosts many multinational military exercises, adding colour to an already vibrant town. The Wainwright stampede is an annual four-day event held in June each year, a tradition since 1953. Vermilion is home to Lakeland College. Lakeland started life as an agricultural college in 1913. A second campus opened in Lloydminster in 1990. The courses now on offer are dazzling and numerous. Lakeland is home to energy, crop, and environmental applied research. It also boasts an energy centre which trains students as power engineers. Demonstrating versatility, it offers courses in interior design and manual trades, plus nursing, early learning and child care, not to mention a firefighter training school. With over 2,000 students, graduation convocations require three separate events conducted over two days.

The remaining one-third of the riding's population live, love, and work predominantly in and around the small rural communities of Edgerton, Kitscoty, Islay, Irma, Dewberry, Clandonald, Marwayne, Paradise Valley, Chauvin, Tulliby Lake, and a small portion of the First Nation reserve at Onion Lake. Each of these have their share of colourful characters and interesting traditions.

As mentioned, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright was created from portions of two former ridings. Before moving on, I would like to acknowledge the sterling contributions of the two MLAs who represented those former ridings. Both Wes Taylor and Dr. Richard Starke were popular, effective, and energetic MLAs. I now face the unenviable task of trying to fill not just one but two big pairs of boots. These men battled hard to resolve issues for their constituents. Dr. Starke was frequently engaged in matters arising from the biprovincial jurisdiction operating in Lloydminster. In Vermilion the lack of SL 4 places, producing the unhappy situation where elderly married couples can find themselves being separated, was something Richard worked long and hard to resolve. To use a football phrase, he definitely moved the ball down the field. I hope to drive it into the end zone. Through my initial investigation, that may be many plays from now.

Wes Taylor assisted Irma school to obtain a significant new build, which included a gymnasium and kitchen facility. Together these can combine to provide a much-needed community hall facility for use by the school and the wider community. By contrast, his efforts to secure replacement of the existing Wainwright

hospital, like the SL 4 accommodation problem in Vermilion, continues with me.

Although earlier I described the challenges set by these two men as unenviable, I truly welcome it. I am grateful to those who have put me in this position I am in today.

4:00

Accordingly, I would like to thank everyone who voted in the recent election. I'm an MLA for all constituents, not just those that voted UCP. I welcome feedback from all constituents. I truly believe we make better policy by discussing issues widely.

Having dealt with convention, I would like to return to the theme of tradition. On April 16 25,161 Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright constituents exercised their vote. My party received 79 per cent of that vote. The turnout was 76.2 per cent. It was the second-highest percentage in the province. This number reflects the desire of a rural population for change, a population whose chief economic drivers are the agriculture and energy sectors and whose cultural bedrock is their family, their community, and often their place of worship. My party offered that change, and we are steadfast in our desire to deliver it, not only economically but politically and culturally.

However, "change" is not the term I would choose to use to describe what Albertans are seeking. In the throne speech the word used was "renewal." I cheerfully adopt renewal in support of my theme. My constituents yearn for renewal of traditional values. They are tired of shifting, zeitgeist-generated, relative values that Edmund Burke long ago recognized as "floating fancies or fashions." Having campaigned and consulted in the riding for two years, I am confident that the majority of constituents agree with me that conservative values are traditional values. Conservative values are simply common sense. They are derived from common experiences. They're longitudinally evidence based.

So what are the attitudes and behaviours I've encountered that reflect these values? Let's begin with the belief in the rule of law and the scourge of rural crime. For Nathan Saunders, owner of Saunders Repair Service in Marwayne, having your house entered illegally, your workshop broken into twice, four private trucks and five customer trucks stolen, plus untold vandalism, this scourge is a ghastly reality. Yet despite being let down by the system, Nathan continues to believe in the rule of law and operates his business to the best of his ability. He has confidence that once the economy improves and the forces of law and order are once again given the tools to do the job, order will be restored.

Talking of economy and free trade, let me tell you about Leonard Lage, who owns a gas station in Kitscoty. Kitscoty is 23 kilometres west of Lloydminster. As Saskatchewan did not impose a carbon tax, gas station owners in the biprovincial city of Lloydminster received an exemption from it to protect them. Mr. Lage, 10 minutes away, received no exemption. This unequal playing field has all but put him out of business. Is Mr. Lage defeated? No. He battles on for now, this dreadful experience only cementing his conservative belief in free trade. He currently keeps his business afloat using his savings, and he himself is buoyed by the moral and emotional support of his extended family. Luckily for Mr. Lage, he has a strong, united family.

We conservatives promote the functioning of strong families. Families come in many sizes and shapes. Some families have children with special needs and often find their children barred from the natural pathways of education and work. This exclusion can undermine a family unit. In Lloydminster the group Inclusion Alberta exists to achieve as natural a pathway as possible into education and employment for young people.



One successful example of this is that of Shauna Clennin and her daughters Courtney and Kelsey. I initially connected Shauna with Inclusion Alberta when Shauna told me that her girls were being taught outside the mainstream in modified classrooms. With the help of Inclusion staff and the co-operation of school staff, Shauna continues to ensure Courtney and Kelsey are included in the mainstream classes and afforded real employment opportunities. Both Courtney and Kelsey have blossomed under this approach. Courtney now has a driver's licence and part-time work, and Kelsey is applying for her licence and is also employed. This demonstrates that a positive approach helps potentially disadvantaged people become confident, accepted, and self-reliant.

Self-reliance and keeping the fruits of one's labour is another conservative value alive and well in this riding. In 2008 the county of Vermilion River won the Alberta emerald award for developing an environmentally friendly and profitable use for well methane gas emissions. Reeve Dale Swyripa explained to me that methane emissions released when oil is extracted are restricted. This causes reduced oil production. But by designing a method of capturing the emissions, not only is the oil production increased, but the captured methane is now available to supply county of Vermilion River homes, businesses, and maintenance vehicles. Conserving the environment, reducing taxpayer burden, and helping the energy industry is a trio of triumphs.

Finally, I turn to my own areas of interest and concern. I have a natural conservative antipathy toward statism and its stultifying offspring, red tape and bureaucracy. For the immediate I want to help constituents who find navigating existing systems difficult. My constituency door will always be open wide to assist you. Long term we need to reform Byzantine bureaucracy and, additionally, should actively seek to reduce it. I'm delighted that this aim is the *raison d'être* of the UCP's Bill 2, the open for business act.

Fiscal prudence is my watchword. As a retired financial adviser I'm imbued with the desire to get value from every investment made and to guard zealously my clients' and now my constituents' money. Further, I believe that all proposed state activity must undergo a cost-benefit analysis and be subject to a priority review.

Finally, with regard to what was couched as climate change leadership, I am pleased that the carbon tax has been scrapped. In addition, I very much appreciate that there is to be an energy war room aimed at countering Canadian environmental groups. These groups take money from overseas foundations, with a covert aim of economically sabotaging Alberta. I expect Galileo would have appreciated the aid of a heliocentric war room back in the 17th century, when the consensus was against him.

Although I have spoken at length about tradition and conservative values, let me be clear on one point. Conservatism is not a force for resistance to change. I heard a quote recently which aptly describes the modern conservative view: conservatives are progressives who drive the speed limit. For my constituents and, I dare say, the vast majority of Albertans, nonconservative progressives drive too fast. They often careen off the road and take down fences.

I began my address with a quote from G.K. Chesterton; I would like to end with another. Chesterton advised, "Don't ever take a fence down until you know the reason... it was put up." We sit here in the summer-of-repeal session, attempting to replace a number of taken-down fences. Overwhelmingly, that is what my constituents voted for me to do. In addition, they'd like to see many fences refurbished and all fences properly maintained. I am grateful to them for giving me the opportunity to restore fences and mend many others. I am grateful my party exists as fence makers and promoters of the wisdom of our ancestors.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright for his remarks in response to the throne speech. I'm hoping that the member would be able to comment a little bit on the responses he got from constituents at the doors during the campaign regarding some of the pledges that we made in our robust policy document. Further to that, if he could maybe comment on some of the responses he's getting now that we have begun to take action as a government and now that we are making promises and we are keeping promises. So if the member could elaborate a little more on what he heard at the doors during the campaign, and if he could tell us a little more about what he's hearing now that we are keeping our promises.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Yeah. The three main things that I ran on were working toward a balanced budget, deregulating as much as possible, and fighting back against the war on fossil fuels. The main thing that I heard was – Lloydminster is mostly an oil town, and a lot of the rural towns are impacted by carbon taxes. Carbon taxes were a big deal. People wanted to get rid of the carbon tax. I heard it everywhere I went.

Regulations were interesting. I mentioned the Lloydminster Heavy Oil Show. They had it during the nomination process. I went booth to booth at the trade show and asked them if they felt that they were overregulated. To my surprise, they said: not really. The ones that really liked it were the ones that sold safety equipment. They thought it was really good. I told the organizer that that's what I had heard, and he said: I'll find you lots of people that don't like the regulations that we have to deal with.

4:10

Then I went to the Oilfield Technical Society's meeting – they have one the first Monday of every month – and what I discovered was that it's not that they thought that they weren't overregulated; it's just that they were resigned. They felt there was no way that you can reduce regulation: "Once it's there, it'll never go away. It will just always be with us, so we've just got to learn to live with it." But then I asked: "Well, then, doesn't that cost you a lot of money? Doesn't that make you noncompetitive?" He said, "Yeah, and I have friends that have left and gone to Texas because of the carbon taxes, the regulation." They just found other jurisdictions that were easier to deal with, and they were waiting to see what happened in the election because that was going to be a decision that they were going to have to make.

After the election I've had comments. People in my constituency on average are very happy that the carbon tax is gone. They were happy for the open-for-business thing. I mentioned that I was out grocery shopping on Saturday, and the manager of the local Co-op store commented that he's really happy with the direction that we're going. You know, we ran on things, we got voted in, we're implementing them, and they're happy that we're doing it. That's what I've run into. So it's been a real positive experience, in my mind.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** A minute left under 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, the hon. member has a lot of great things to say. My understanding is

that he is in a new constituency, with new boundaries. Of course, with that comes new challenges. Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright certainly is a very large area within Alberta, and I was wondering if maybe he can touch on some of the challenges that he faces as an MLA, especially a new MLA, in ensuring that he is responsive to all his constituents and, in talking about the diversity within that constituency, ensuring that he is providing the adequate amount of service as an MLA for the people in that area.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, and thank you for the question. What I've been trying to do is identify the different industry groups. For example . . . [A timer sounded] Do I quit?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry, hon. member. You're out of time.

Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Let me continue the ongoing tradition, albeit a little later than some, of congratulating you on being elected to the position of Deputy Speaker. Let me also take this opportunity, through you, to congratulate all of the members of this honourable Assembly on their recent election success. I truly look forward to having many positive debates about the issues that Albertans face in the coming years with each and every member in this House.

Madam Speaker, today is the first opportunity for me to rise before this Assembly and second the Speech from the Throne. It is a real honour to stand before you this afternoon because I join a government that has the vision, the plan, and the clearest mandate in recent history to take Alberta to unprecedented levels in the coming years.

First and foremost, it is with the sincerest gratitude that I thank the residents of Calgary-Cross for placing their faith in this government and for electing me to my first term as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the 30th session. As I mentioned during my campaign many times, this seat belongs only to those residents, and I am committed and devoted to bringing their concerns to this government over the next four years. I'd like to take this opportunity as well to thank my extended family, my parents, my wife, my children, and the many supporters who worked tirelessly and who exhibited an incredible level of patience with me during this past campaign.

Madam Speaker, let me begin by telling you a little bit about the Calgary-Cross constituency. Calgary-Cross consists of the communities of Marlborough, Marlborough Park, Rundle, Pineridge, and Monterey Park, and it is located in the northeast quadrant of Calgary, that more than 50,000 people call home. It is, without a doubt in my mind, one of the most diverse constituencies in the province both religiously and ethnically and has one of the largest immigrant populations of any riding in the province.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

In fact, Mr. Speaker, more than half of the Calgary-Cross constituency identifies with a visible minority group. I am tremendously proud to be the elected representative of this constituency, and I would encourage every member to visit Calgary-Cross, where the food is as unique as it is phenomenal and the people are warm, hard working, and generous.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly hard to imagine what my parents envisioned when they immigrated to Canada from Lebanon, a very

small country in the Middle East, in the 1970s. Along with millions of other newcomers, my parents mustered up the courage to pick up and leave the only country that they ever knew, the only language they knew, the only political system they knew, the only society they knew to move to a country which seemed to be worlds away. They did it for one simple reason. They knew they wanted to seek a better life for themselves and for their children.

As clichéd as the story goes, Mr. Speaker, with almost no money and no idea of what to expect, they embarked upon a move to Canada and settled first in Edmonton, Alberta, where they worked hard. They ultimately moved to Calgary, where they raised five children in east Calgary, that we called home. It is no secret to most people in this Assembly as to where this story goes from here. Like all newcomers, through hard work and perseverance my parents made Alberta their home. As many of you know, I am very, very proud to tell you and the rest of the members of this Assembly, through you, that my father sat in this very Chamber for more than 22 years, where he was part of a team that helped Alberta become the economic envy of North America and, in fact, the entire world.

Calgary-Cross is by geographical accounts a small constituency, but it is a great constituency. We have had the honour and the privilege of being represented by many great MLAs. I am both honoured and privileged to be the MLA for the communities which were once served by my father, MLA Amery Sr., and the late Minister Bhullar, whose memory and legacy remains strong and whose tragic and untimely death was a terrible loss for our province. The late Minister Bhullar was a dear friend to me. We travelled together, we went to university together, and we worked on various political campaigns together. He is dearly missed by all of us. I have no doubt in my mind that I have tremendous shoes to fill, but I also have no doubt in my mind that I have the best political adviser in this province.

Mr. Speaker, because of the hard work of my parents and the advantages that this province gave to us, I was able to attend university, where after many years I graduated with a law degree in 2010, and I opened up a small law office in east Calgary. It is also because of my upbringing, my work in the community, and my involvement that I became motivated to run in the Calgary-Cross constituency.

In recent years, Mr. Speaker, I saw the economic prosperity of this province declining. Our small office started to see fewer real estate transactions, fewer new business start-ups, and fewer commercial transactions and, instead, more family issues, more foreclosures, more bankruptcies, and more disputes between neighbours. We began to see less of the work that signalled economic prosperity and more of the types of work that indicated a troubling decline in productivity. It is also because of these remarkable changes that I observed in my own work that I started to look for answers. I found those answers in the policies of this current government. During the election this government made a promise to Alberta to get them back to work, and I am proud to report that within a few weeks this government has introduced four bills which are designed to energize our economy and simply get Albertans back to work.

4:20

The first of those, the carbon tax repeal act, was a core promise during the campaign and the first bill introduced before this Assembly. If passed, it will remove a debilitating consumption tax which has targeted families and businesses alike indiscriminately without addressing the very environmental concerns that it was purported to do. It was, in my view, the single greatest concern for Albertans as I campaigned from door to door.

The next bill, the open for business act, Mr. Speaker, is one that I am truly proud to support and advocate for because this bill will alleviate some of the greatest challenges that the job creators of this province have been struggling with since changes were made by the previous government. I campaigned on the promise that our government would foster and support economic initiatives, and I am fully in support of this bill and the changes it will provide if it is enacted into law. The vast majority of Albertans either operate a business or work for one, and as a government it is simply incumbent upon us to do everything within our power to ensure their success.

Next, Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut. Again, Mr. Speaker, we campaigned on one simple philosophy, that our role as government would be to support and promote those who employed Albertans. Recently the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women said that Alberta was once the gold standard of economic development in this country, and I genuinely believe that with this bill it will once again make Alberta the gold standard for investment, both foreign and domestic.

Finally, the Red Tape Reduction Act, Bill 4, was our government's promise to encourage Albertans to invest in this province, to take risks, and to make choices for economic success without worrying about bureaucratic barriers, delays, and costs. With this bill we will send a message to all Albertans that this government is ready to embrace and encourage their ideas without burdening them with unnecessary challenges.

Many of the stories that you've heard from my colleagues in their own maiden speeches are not unique. Albertans across the province were universally concerned about the previous government's policies. It was obvious that Albertans were struggling. They were concerned about the reports of unprecedented job losses and the unemployment rates that we were all witnessing, they were concerned about uncontrollable spending and the ballooning provincial debt, they were concerned about the assault on our natural resource industry, and they were concerned about the former policies which were designed to create barriers, not support, for Albertans looking to raise a family or start a business.

And so I say to the business owner in Marlborough who told me at his door that he was struggling to keep his small trucking business afloat: help is on the way. And to the woman in Monterey Park, who took my wife and I in during the storm that we had during the campaign and told us how she had lost her job more than a year and a half ago in the oil industry: help is on the way. And to the thousands of Calgary-Cross residents and the millions of Albertans who have struggled to find work to pay their bills, to keep a roof over their heads, and to keep their businesses afloat: help is on the way.

On April 16, 2019, Mr. Speaker, Albertans spoke loud and clear. They gave us an unprecedented mandate for the next four years, and in less than one month in this Assembly we have introduced four bills that were designed to do exactly what we said we would do. Promises made, promises kept.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under section 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are a lot of firsts in this Assembly, and we've talked previously about having two brothers that are a part of this Assembly for the first time, I believe, in Alberta's history. One thing is very unique not only just for myself but for also the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, that both he and I sat in the same caucus as the previous member's father. I will say that I'm very honoured to have sat with the Member for Calgary-Cross's father. He is

correct that this is a man who has had 22 years of experience. He is very wise. I saw him only a few days ago, and he's still wheeling and dealing as if he's a current member of this Legislature. I can tell you that right now.

You know, it's really an honour to be in this Assembly, to be a part of, in his case, a family tradition, one that I'm sure we can only hope goes on for years and years to come. I know that every time I see his father, his father is very proud, beaming with smiles across his face with what his son has accomplished. In my short time of getting to know the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross, I have certainly been impressed with what he has done and what he hopes to do for the people of Calgary-Cross.

I myself, as many of you know, policed in the city of Calgary. Please, hon. Member for Calgary-Cross, I believe you have an area which is called 17th Avenue S.E. in your constituency or close by? Real close by, right? That 17th Avenue, which I know many people from Calgary-Cross would attend on a regular basis, is quite commonly known as International Avenue in Calgary. It speaks to the diversity of not only the area but the area within Calgary-Cross which the member has touched upon, just the cultural diversity, people that are new immigrants, people that are like his father, who came 20-, 30-plus years ago, second-, third-generation folks that are from the area, that live in the area.

I think it's important, and I'd like to ask this member if he could just continue to talk about the diversity within his riding and, in fact, within that whole area of Calgary, because I think it is not unique to Alberta in a sense that we are all very diverse. But that area in particular: they were hit very hard with the downturn in the economy, with some of the unexpected challenges that the people were facing in that area. Maybe he can expand upon the cultural diversity and the challenges that those people have experienced and talk a little bit about the hope that he being elected in the Legislature will bring.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-West for that summarization and the question. I think that the Calgary-Cross constituency does in fact represent one of the most diverse constituencies in the province. Certainly, the challenges that we face are not unlike those that are faced by other constituencies in Calgary. We have a primary concern with making sure that our economy improves. We have a primary concern with ensuring that people maintain their businesses. We have a concern that people keep their jobs. That's very, very important to all residents of Calgary-Cross.

I think that one of the strengths of our riding is that cultural diversity. Calgary-Cross presents an incredible mixture of different religions, different ethnicities, different languages, and certainly I am tremendously proud to be able to find, you know, every type of cuisine in the area, every type of cultural event. It's an incredibly diverse area, and I couldn't be prouder to represent that constituency. Certainly, that is not a weakness but our strength. Calgary-Cross has the unique . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:30

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Any other members looking to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie standing.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in this Assembly today as the Member for Grande Prairie. It was an

honour to attend the reading of the Speech from the Throne on May 22 by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

I would like to extend my congratulations to you, Deputy Chair of Committees, to the Speaker, and the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees on being elected by your peers to preside over this, the 30th Legislature of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, as a new MLA I have found these last few weeks to be both exciting and challenging, and I have greatly appreciated all of the Legislative Assembly Office staff for being so patient, professional, and helpful in my orientation to this new role.

I would also like to congratulate the new Clerk on her appointment as the ninth Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

It is a great honour for me to stand here today and represent the constituents of Grande Prairie, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them sincerely for trusting me with this role. In my many months of knocking on the doors of my constituents, I was privileged to hear their concerns. I heard over and over again the need for jobs, the concern over Alberta's future, about health care wait times, pipelines and the lack thereof, increasing costs of living, and the worry about our province's economic uncertainty.

I was humbled to hear stories from people at their doors and often surprised by the willingness of people to share from the heart in deeply personal ways. Stories of the recent death of a loved one, the challenges of an abusive relationship, concern about completing a trade certification, concern about having a job in the future, the suicide of a child just the night prior, the concern over rising housing costs, and the defeat experienced within the cycle of addiction, to name a few of the more emotional disclosures I witnessed. I was humbled to be entrusted with these deeply personal and often painful stories, and it shifted my perspective on the task of door-knocking from a campaign job to an honour and a privilege. I quickly realized that my role was to listen more and talk less, and I was happy to do so. I found that people were incredibly moved to know that I was doing just that.

There are two local issues that were voiced repeatedly in Grande Prairie. The first is the Grande Prairie regional hospital build, which has been fraught with delays and cost overruns for years. The second is the twinning of highway 40. Highway 40 is a major route of transportation and development for our energy sector. These two projects are important not only to my constituency but also to the province as they provide opportunity for economic development, expansion of service to Albertans, improved safety on our highways, restoration of confidence in Alberta's economy, and critical learning as we endeavour to reduce regulatory burden and red tape by at least one-third over the next four years.

We have a responsibility to Albertans to manage the finances prudently while continuing to make critical investment decisions to renew the Alberta advantage and to restore our province to economic stability once again. I am confident in this government to lead well, and I would like to congratulate the members of Executive Council on the critical work you have commenced in the last few weeks. I am excited to work in support of Premier Kenney and cabinet to truly make life better for all Albertans.

**Some Hon. Members:** Name.

**Mrs. Allard:** Oh. Sorry about that. The Premier.

As I stand here today, I want to thank my family, without whom this privilege of representing Grande Prairie would not have been gained. My husband, Serge, and our three children, Nicolas, Alexander, and Isabelle, have been behind my efforts from the beginning, and I'm so grateful to them for their patience, love, and support throughout this process.

I am tremendously blessed and humbled to have had so many wonderful people who worked tirelessly to assist me in becoming their voice in the Alberta Legislature, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to each one who helped me get here. I stand before you today as the first woman to represent Grande Prairie in the Legislative Assembly in our province's history, and I am humbled by this distinction.

Grande Prairie is known as the Swan City because of the beautiful trumpeter swans that migrate and nest there. It is a young and vibrant city with a diversified economy, which provides many opportunities for investment and employment. The city has established industry in forestry, oil and gas, agriculture, construction, and all of the service industry supports for these key pillars of our economy.

As a young entrepreneur and job creator I came to Grande Prairie in 1997, and I count myself fortunate to have made the city my home. I have never looked back. What I experienced was, I believe, representative of Alberta, a city at work with a can-do spirit and a welcoming environment that celebrated my family's investment and rewarded our hard work.

Until 2015 I had never aspired to hold public office, but I became deeply concerned about our province and the future opportunities for Albertans if we didn't address the slumping economy, ballooning debt, and regulatory burden that further hampered economic growth. My hope for our province is to renew Alberta as the economic engine for Canada and a land of opportunity for our future generations. I believe we have a responsibility to steward our province's resources and to leave this land in a better position than when we found it. I want the opportunities that I enjoyed as a young entrepreneur to be available for future generations of Albertans, including my own children.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in this Assembly today as a member of this government caucus with the confidence that this dedicated team, under the leadership of our Premier, will renew the Alberta advantage and work tirelessly on behalf of all Albertans to restore the province to a land of opportunity for our future. I am committed to working with my colleagues to further this vision and support Alberta's energy sector and the building of new pipelines. I believe that Albertans are some of the hardest working, most innovative and creative people in the world, and when we unleash our collective potential is when we will return to long-term prosperity.

The city of Grande Prairie was one of Canada's fastest growing cities between 2001 and 2006. The city population is currently projected to double over the next 20 years. When I moved there in 1997, there were approximately 25,000, and today we have almost 75,000, so the city continues to grow rapidly. This growth creates tremendous opportunity for the city. One exciting development at present is the transition of the Grande Prairie Regional College to become a university. I am very supportive of this change and support increased local postsecondary opportunities from university programs to trades and technical training to allow our city's students to pursue a variety of higher education options at home.

With rapid growth also comes challenge. Sadly, Grande Prairie was named Canada's most dangerous city in both 2015 and 2016. While I am grateful for the strides made since 2016, I am concerned about this phenomenon, and I'm committed to work to further improve and to hopefully make Grande Prairie one of Canada's safest cities in the future. To quote a hero of mine, Anne Frank, "how wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." It is because of my concern over this issue, shared by my constituents, and fuelled by the inspiration of Ms Frank that I have agreed to serve as vice-chair on a rural

committee under the leadership of the hon. Minister of Justice as the chair and in co-operation with the Member for Highwood as the co vice-chair.

Grande Prairie leads Alberta in entrepreneurial upstarts per capita and contributes a great deal to Alberta's overall wealth. I believe that entrepreneurs are the economic engine of our local economy, and I'm very proud of my city's leadership position in entrepreneurialism. The city is a tremendous community that offers a high quality of life and many opportunities for citizens to get involved.

One characteristic that has always stood out to me in Grande Prairie is the generosity of the people there. I have watched with a great sense of pride repeatedly as our community has rallied behind important causes such as Big Hearts for Big Kids. This initiative, under the vision and leadership of Grande Prairie's very own Tenille Townes, has raised over \$1.5 million over the last nine years in support of Sunrise House, which is the northernmost youth emergency shelter in the province. I am so proud to call Tenille a friend and to have supported her vision for the care and support of vulnerable youth in the city of Grande Prairie.

I would also like to congratulate this daughter of our city on her dedication and tireless work as a singer-songwriter and on her recent accomplishments internationally as an artist in being named on the verge by iHeartCountry and for being nominated by CMT for the breakthrough video of the year for her song *Somebody's Daughter*, which, true to Tenille's passion, illuminates the reality that everyone has a story, and even the person on the corner holding a cardboard sign is, in fact, somebody's daughter.

The city of Grande Prairie is fortunate also to be home to the largest all-boys choir in North America. Under the exceptional instruction of conductor Jeannie Vanwynsberghe Pernal the choir has been awarded first place multiple times provincially and twice nationally. Conductor and founder Ms Pernal has a vision to provide exceptional choral training for boys and young men while also teaching them to live with three core values: camaraderie, mentorship, and service. Grande Prairie has been incredibly fortunate over the last 18 years to watch the Grande Prairie Boys' Choir form, grow, and excel to the national and international level. I would like to thank Ms Pernal and her family for their dedication to our community and the significant contribution to the arts and the development of fine young citizens in the city of Grande Prairie.

4:40

At this time I would like to thank those who have gone before me from my area as representatives in this House. Even though my riding is new, my predecessors represented it well, most recently Mr. Wayne Drysdale, who served from 2008 to 2019, and the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley, who serves in this present caucus also. Their contributions and the contributions of those members before them have had a tremendous influence on the quality of life in the region, and I hope to continue building on their legacy.

I will take a moment now to mention a new friend and mentor, Mr. Marvin Moore from DeBolt, Alberta. DeBolt, Alberta, is just 45 minutes from my door. Mr. Moore was first elected under Premier Lougheed, and he served in this Assembly from 1971 to 1989. Mr. Moore then returned years later to support Ralph Klein in his bid for the party leadership and continued to serve as an adviser and campaign manager for four provincial campaigns for Premier Klein. Mr. Moore, along with his wife Fran, has served the people of Alberta faithfully, and I would like to recognize them in this Assembly for their tremendous contribution to our province and thank them for the time they have invested in the greater good of Alberta and in me personally as a newly elected member. I can't

express my gratitude adequately for the kindness and support they have shown me these last months.

I suspect I may be the member who has written the most drafts of my maiden speech, and I've certainly thought and overthought about what to include. I believe this task has deepened my sense of purpose and responsibility to serve as a member in this House and underscore the honour of being included in such a select and distinguished group of so few Albertans to join this Assembly.

When I first decided, with much contemplation and trepidation, to take the leap in to this unfamiliar world of politics, I really had no idea the extent to which my life would change, and my grit and determination would be challenged. My utopian ideals of democracy were challenged repeatedly, and I took great comfort in the words of Winston Churchill. "Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

I will close with this. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, from 1910:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes [up] short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least [he] fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

I want to congratulate all members of this House for daring greatly to step forward and put themselves in this arena. I wish each one success in their role and hope that the 30th Legislature will be historic in improving life for all Albertans. I understand the tradition of my predecessors was to be brief, and it seems I have continued in that tradition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley standing.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to listen to the Member for Grande Prairie give her maiden speech today as she's now representing part of the area that I previously represented. I'm actually quite honoured that she has the position she does, and I know that she's going to do such a fantastic job representing those constituents.

As I think about Grande Prairie now, of course, we had the economic slowdown, and fortunately Grande Prairie didn't have quite as bad a slowdown as other parts of Alberta. I just want to see if the member would maybe talk a little bit about some of the companies that have helped Grande Prairie through these hard times, like maybe G Seven Generations and some of those companies, maybe just take a few minutes to talk about that. I know there's presently a fair amount of construction going on in Grande Prairie, and I know some of the businesses there – I think, probably, that entrepreneurial spirit from the Peace Country is there, where people are willing to take risks and take chances even when things are a little bit slow.

I know there's a big Canadian Tire that's, I think, just finished and opened just recently there, and I think the largest Ford dealership in all of Canada has just been built there, too. So there are a lot of different things going on there. When things have been slow, I think the people of Grande Prairie have really come together and really done a great job as far as trying to keep the economy going there

and keep the people working and that sort of thing. I'm just wondering if the member would just maybe continue a little bit along those lines.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, it's my pleasure to talk about those things. The Ford dealership – I believe you're correct – is the largest in Canada, and the Canadian Tire is the largest single floor in Canada. There's a larger one in Edmonton, but it's on two floors.

I guess the broader question is really about the entrepreneurial spirit in our riding and in our city, and I would say that that's one of the things that not only drew us to Grande Prairie but has kept us there, the drive and the can-do attitude of the people. There's a visionary perspective that looks past today or the challenges and finds ways around it. I really appreciate that, both as a private citizen and as an investor in the community there as well. I've been very blessed to live there. The community has been very good to us, and I really appreciate companies like G Seven Generations, that was mentioned, that see past an economic downturn to the future of our province and the future economic activity that we will one day experience, hopefully one day very soon.

I'm also very proud to talk about other companies that are looking right now. I won't name names, but there's other significant investment coming to the region. It's my personal belief that Grande Prairie and area lead the province in economic upstarts, and as an engine for the province in terms of future investment and economic development, I think we'll be the place to watch.

Thank you so much for the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any others? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to take a moment to congratulate the Member for Grande Prairie. I can tell that she put a lot of heart and effort into that speech, and certainly it paid off. I'm very proud of what she has said and proud to get to know her over the last, you know, short period of time.

During her speech she touched on the fact, you know, of course, that she is from Grande Prairie. I was fortunate, not unlike a few colleagues of mine who were able to work with a former Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Mr. Wayne Drysdale – it's interesting that I'm able to say his name now in this Chamber as he's no longer a member of this Legislature. He was a wonderful representative of that region. He was somebody who many of us in our caucus, whether the UCP caucus or when I was part of the PC caucus along with my colleague from Calgary-Hays, certainly considered a friend. I learned a lot from him as to some of the challenges that Grande Prairie was facing over the last several years.

The member had indicated and only touched briefly on rural crime, and rural crime is a problem, not just in other parts of Alberta but especially in places like Grande Prairie. As somebody who sat in on that meeting, the initial inaugural meeting of this rural crime committee, which was started by my friend from Calgary-Elbow, the hon. Justice minister, I could tell how passionate she was, how excited she was to be a part of this, looking at actual actionable items that she can bring to the table in order to help solve this crisis which is facing people in Alberta.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Do I see any other members wishing to speak?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure today to rise in this House to speak and to deliver my maiden speech. I would like to start with a quote: dreams take time, patience, sustained effort, a willingness to fail if they are ever to be anything more than dreams. I found this quote on a tiny little card in a Hallmark shop many years ago, decades ago. It deeply resonated with me as I reflected on the qualities required to effect change and achieve important milestones. I kept this little card on my desk at work, right by my computer, even as I changed jobs over the years, and it was a daily reminder of the things that I wanted to accomplish. This quote was a confirmation that I'm indeed a dreamer, and to be a dreamer is not to be whimsical or fanciful; it's to chase after the outcomes that you believe in, the positive outcomes that create positive experiences for others.

4:50

Like many Albertans, I'm a daughter of immigrants. My parents came to Canada in the late '60s and ultimately settled in Calgary in the northeast community of Rundle. My father, Harpal Singh, is an educated man, a teacher. But with only \$8 in his pocket when he arrived in Canada with a young family, he was too overwhelmed trying to earn a living to think of upgrading, his dream of being a teacher lost to the harsh, practical realities of life. My mother, Harcharan Kaur, came equipped with the equivalent of a grade 10 education and a whole lot of attitude. This combination of parents created a household that was strong in expectations and aspirations. In order to provide for my brothers and I, my dad worked at CPR, and my mom worked in various low-paying jobs until she decided that enough was enough. She enrolled in a maintenance course, completed it with flying colours, and landed her dream job, a solid, good-paying job with benefits in public works with the government of Alberta.

Now, since I've been elected, a number of people have asked me if I've ever been to the McDougall Centre in Calgary, and I tell them: many, many, many times over the years. You see, the solid, good-paying job that my mom landed was as a worker in the housekeeping department at the McDougall Centre. She kept that place spic and span for 18 years, and I'm so very proud of her service. She worked the noon to 9 p.m. shift in the evening. It's a tough shift for a working mom with three kids. I was in university during some of that time, and occasionally on my way back from evening classes, taking the C-Train, I would drop by and go see her so that we could take the train home together.

During those times she would often introduce me to visiting dignitaries, staff, politicians, MLAs, ministers, and she would say with great pride that her daughter was a student at the university. Then she would ask them to keep me in mind for a job because I was graduating soon. She would say to me: if you're lucky and if you work hard, you can get a job at the land titles office. Well, Mom, I never did get that job at the land titles office, but how do you like my job now? Dreams can take you places you never thought that you would go.

My mother's story is compelling. I always tell my children that it's important to understand where you come from in order to understand where you want to go. The unknown path laid before you is always better navigated by reflecting on the travelled trails behind you because, ultimately, opportunities are hard earned by others before you, such as my opportunity to go to university, one that my mother never had. Opportunities that are squandered are a tragedy of immeasurable magnitude.

Mr. Speaker, I'm from the Sikh faith, and my parents and I often speak in Punjabi. Like so many Calgarians of all walks of life, I say with great pride that I'm a northeast Calgary girl. It's where I spent 40 years of my life, first in the constituency of Calgary-Cross and

then in Calgary-McCall. As a high school student I took the bus to James Fowler, a long bus ride that many students are still experiencing today. I made lifelong friendships on that bus ride. Some of those individuals were key strategists in my campaign because they know what these communities need.

I then went to the University of Calgary, met my wonderful husband, Gurpreet, and together we started our careers in the oil and gas industry. We bought our first home in the community of Whitehorn. As our family expanded over the years, all four of my children – Raman, Saiva, Nishan, and Avani – were born in the Peter Lougheed hospital. We immersed ourselves in family, work, and volunteerism. One of the highlights of our time living in Castleridge was when Gurpreet and I coached basketball. We are still very proud of our PSA bantam girls basketball team, who astounded their competitors with their tough play in winning cities and provincials in basketball over a decade ago.

I have the extraordinary privilege of representing the constituents from Calgary-North East, and my gratitude for their support knows no bounds. Being their MLA is an honour I take seriously every day.

Calgary-North East is a new electoral district. On the eastern end we have the communities of Cityscape, Redstone, Skyview, and Cornerstone, and to the north we have Livingston. These are all new communities that are experiencing rapid growth but still waiting for much-needed infrastructure to catch up. Now that the weather is getting warmer, you'll start seeing more and more seniors' groups meeting in the parks, outdoor festivals, and dancing get-togethers by women's groups in these communities. The busy boys will be planning their barbecue schedule while giving a helping hand to their neighbours. Dazzling, colourful, with the tempting smells of a variety of ethnic cuisines everywhere: it's a delightful experience to be in the community of Skyview, for example, when the outdoor festivals are under way. I would invite everyone in this Chamber to join me sometime this summer to attend one of these events.

But, alas, Mr. Speaker, it's not all festivals and fragrant foods; with the arrival of so many newcomers in the area also comes a real problem of underemployment. There are many, many highly qualified and educated individuals who are working in jobs that are not commensurate with their skills and potential, exactly the same situation that my father faced when he came to Canada many years ago. This is why I'm immeasurably proud of our Alberta advantage immigration strategy, particularly the fairness for newcomers program, which my colleague the Member for Calgary-North, the parliamentary secretary of immigration, is helping design. This program will help newcomers achieve their dreams of actually working in the fields that they studied and trained in.

On the west side of Calgary-North East we have Coventry Hills and Harvest Hills, the heart of the Northern Hills community, which is now divided amongst several electoral districts. While the heart of the Northern Hills community still resides within my riding, so does the steely spine of the community, as demonstrated by the passionate advocacy positions held by community members. These advocates have created strong and stirring dialogue on much-needed infrastructure in the area: the north Calgary high school, the green line, a health centre, and more. This is an area of strong community pride, beautifully exemplified by the creation of the Northern Hills mural, the longest outdoor mural in Canada, reflecting the values of community, for community.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

My job as an elected public servant is to speak for all of the constituents, to make their collective dreams for Calgary-North East come true, and the dreams are simple wishes indeed: schools

and school buses, access to public transportation, fairness to newcomers, and, most of all – most of all – a revitalized economy that provides employment opportunities now and for future generations.

As an oil and gas worker for over 23 years I would be remiss not to speak of the industry that I love and that has given me and my family and indeed our province and our nation so much. I have seen times of great prosperity in the sector and, in more recent times, the severe lows. I know what it's like to lay off staff. It's a terrible experience, and it stays with you for a long time because you never stop worrying about those families. I was by my daughter's side when she lost her job as a reservoir engineer due to the closure of her head office. I can tell you that it's another tragedy that we are not seeing enough young, bright faces of new graduates in downtown Calgary or Edmonton. We're just seeing a sea of vacant office spaces.

Let's talk about some facts. As a country we are blessed to have the extraordinary gift of plentiful natural resources, including hydrocarbons. We have the third-largest oil reserves in the world, and we are the world leaders in producing and exporting our products. The vast majority are from Alberta. What is not spoken of often enough is the diversity of our products. We have dry natural gas; light, medium, and heavy oil; oil sands; condensates; and more. I only mention this because diversity in product is going to become more important to meet changing demands as time goes by in our economy.

We also know that world oil demand is going to increase, some credible numbers suggest, by 30 per cent beyond 2040, and Alberta must be the leader in meeting this demand. Our government is committed to putting our province on a trajectory to make sure this happens, as am I.

5:00

I'd like to talk a bit about the people I've worked with over the years: engineers, accountants, geophysicists, geologists, petrophysicists, support staff, economists, HR specialists. These are people who care about economic prosperity and the environment. They are parents and grandparents who provide for their families and understand that these goals are not mutually exclusive but are, in fact, complementary.

Alberta also plays a prominent role in innovation and the creation of new technology designed to curb carbon and methane emissions. We need to create the conditions to further unleash this innovation so that our oil and gas sector can export these new technologies internationally to help curb global GHG emissions.

I've also had the opportunity to travel and see the operations of oil and gas fields in other international jurisdictions, including eastern Europe. In this province I've been to Taber, High Level, Steen River, and other areas, and I can tell you that Canada, Alberta are, head and shoulders, a leader in the ethical production of oil and gas. There really is no other comparison to any other jurisdiction in the world. I've seen it with my own eyes.

As we move forward to heal and advance Alberta's interests in our energy sector and economy, I'm also deeply cognizant of the vulnerable members in our province. As the new Minister of Community and Social Services the numbers of Albertans who rely on us to help improve their lives are significant. We have over 60,000 AISH recipients. These are not just unknown faces or unknown names. A few of them are family members with disabilities who go to work every day with smiles on their faces. We have thousands of families who rely on the PDD program and the FSCD program. We have unknown numbers of Albertans experiencing homelessness, domestic and/or sexual violence, and

we have folks dealing with tough times who just need a helping hand.

I want nothing more than to see prosperity return to this province so that as a government we can do more to provide vital social services to the most needy, the most vulnerable in our communities. There's a whole lot of work ahead of us, and this work is not going to be easy – it's going to be back-breaking at times – but we have a talented, experienced, and motivated team that is focused on the task at hand.

I know that I speak for all of my colleagues, Madam Speaker, when I repeat the words that I said at the outset. It will take time, patience, sustained effort, and a willingness to take risks to realize the dreams and goals for our province. As for myself, I know that I have a very specific job as a team member of this government to do my part and, as always, to go above and beyond to fulfill my duties. I will fulfill my duties by working with everyone in this Chamber, and I would like to offer a heartfelt and sincere thank you to each and every one in this House for their commitment and service to the province of Alberta.

My final statement is one of hope and optimism; as we say in the Sikh tradition, to be in a state of *chardi kala*. This term, *chardi kala*, embodies the notion that even in times of adversity and times that challenge us emotionally and physically we must always aspire to maintain our optimism and joy because that is what will determine a positive path forward for all of us to fulfill our dreams.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will recognize the Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, and thank you to the minister for those comments. It was an excellent speech. You know, I've been trying to make sure that all members in the House, of course, get their maiden speeches done. I think it's very, very important. I remember five years ago myself, when I did my first maiden speech, putting in the thought and recognizing my constituents, recognizing the people that came before me, recognizing family. Minister, I think you hit the nail on the head there. So very proud of that.

The minister touched a little bit about her constituency of Calgary-North East. I had an opportunity one time many, many years ago to be the incident commander, the sergeant, in charge of that particular area. It is an extremely ethnically diverse riding. She is of Sikh origin. And I can tell you that there are certain communities there – and when I say communities, I mean entire neighbourhoods – that are of one specific cultural group, which is great.

But, you know, from a policing perspective it also provides us challenges in the policing world.

I can tell you that, you know, this minister is the right person for that area. The way she's able to articulate, respond to the needs of the community members, especially in her position that she currently holds, ensuring that the needs of that community that she represents are also reflected in government and in this Chamber: for that, I am certainly proud to know her and proud to call her a friend.

You know, another thing with Calgary-North East. We touched on the diverse population there. But I'd like the minister to maybe expand a little bit, especially in her short time here not just as a minister but, I mean, as the MLA for Calgary-North East, on some of the we'll call it demands on your time – right? – to be a part of groups or to be a part of events that occur almost virtually every weekend, sometimes Friday, Saturday, Sunday, sometimes in the mornings and the evenings, and kind of finding that balance between representing the people in that neighbourhood as well as

making sure that you have time for your kids and your husband and the family that you're a part of. Maybe you can touch a little bit about the excitement and challenges and the way you're able to find that work-life balance.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you for the question. It sounds like this is a question about work-life balance, which is something that a lot of people struggle with on a daily basis. But, certainly, I feel very privileged that I'm in the position that I'm in now. There are a lot of demands on time, and the constituency of Calgary-North East, as was mentioned by the member, is very diverse. It's not only ethnically diverse, but it's also diverse in the sense that we have communities that are only a decade old on one side of a major highway, and then on the other side of the major highway we have communities that have been there for over 35 to 40 years. Sometimes you're looking at different kinds of community events that you have to be present at on either side of the highway.

I do have four children – I did mention that – and one of the ways that I balance my time is that with any event that I go to, any one of the four kids actually attends with me. Not only is it a great educational opportunity for my children, but it's also a way for me to be present for my constituents at some of these very important cultural events that are ongoing. Certainly, this upcoming weekend is filled with all kinds of events. There is going to be some celebration of Eid events, and there's also going to be some community association events. Luckily, my family is very flexible in this regard, and my children are happy to accompany me.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the speech. I remember actually that it's a little bit difficult sometimes to stand up and do it for the first time, so good job. I had a question for you. I certainly understand that it's important to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time, so to be able to work on creating employment...

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne, and I would also like to congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker. It is also my first speech in this esteemed Chamber. I stand here today thanks to the trust and hopes of the voters of Calgary-Peigan. They endorsed me and selected me to represent them here in this Chamber, and I am honoured to stand here on their behalf.

Before I begin, I would like to thank some people: my incredible family and friends. But for them, I would not be here today. Their tireless volunteering and hours that they donated in helping support me throughout my election campaign I will forever be grateful for.

5:10

As many of my other colleagues have mentioned, I too come from a hard-working immigrant home. My parents immigrated to Canada from what was then Yugoslavia and is now Slovenia, seeking a better life for themselves and their future children. They came here with the desire to work hard, and they did that from the very beginning. My father was a carpenter, and my mother initially worked many years as a waitress before working very hard in the meat department at a grocery store, which she still works at today.



The greatest character trait they taught my two sisters and I through example was that there is no substitute for hard work.

While I was born in Cranbrook, B.C., we moved to Calgary when my sisters and I were very young because there was not enough work for my father to be employed full-time as a carpenter. Rather than sit back and do nothing, they went to where the work was, and that was in Calgary. I'm so glad we did land in Calgary. I worked hard to earn my bachelor of commerce degree at the University of Calgary and proudly spent my career in the oil and gas industry, an industry that I'm so proud of for having the highest standards in the world for clean, safe, ethical operations, reclamation standards, and human rights standards. I'm so proud to work in that industry.

As the Premier said on the day our caucus was sworn in, we must not forget that it is a deep privilege to govern and serve on behalf of all Albertans.

My riding is a new riding in southeast Calgary called Calgary-Peigan, and it is made up of four other ridings. A large part of it was part of Calgary-Hays, Calgary-South East, Calgary-Acadia, and the former Calgary-Fort. I'm honoured to have, as I mentioned, a large part of my riding formerly be in the Calgary-Hays riding, which my fellow member and the Minister of Transportation was the MLA for. It encompasses the communities of McKenzie, Douglasdale, DouglasGlen, Quarry Park, Riverbend, Millican, Lynnwood, Ogdén, and Dover. I've gotten to know the amazing and diverse constituents of this riding through knocking on thousands of doors and listening to their issues and their concerns.

To stand in this Chamber is to stand in the legacy of those who have gone before us, to stand in the same room where Alexander Rutherford stood to establish the University of Alberta or where Arthur Sifton fought for control over our province's natural resources, a fight that continues to this day. This is the Chamber where Ernest Manning served as our province's Premier for 25 years and where Peter Lougheed formed a government that lasted longer than any other in Canadian history. It is a huge responsibility and a near-unique privilege.

Our government received the largest voter endorsement in our province's history. We received more votes than any successfully elected political party in the 114 years that Alberta has been part of Confederation. Albertans overwhelmingly voted for positive change from the previous government. With record voter turnout, 55 per cent of the vote, and the most votes cast for a single party in Alberta history, we have a historic mandate to get Alberta back on track. We will grow jobs, grow the economy, and stand up for a fair deal for Alberta.

We've already seen signs of hope in that regard. With the Senate transport committee rejecting Bill C-48 and the Senate making hundreds of amendments to federal Bill C-69, Albertans are once again being heard in Ottawa. This is a tremendous honour. It is also a tremendous responsibility as we face the adversity present in Alberta's economy and the task of undoing the damage to our fiscal and economic situation perpetrated by the previous government.

A story that often comes to mind for me is that when I was door-knocking – and I had been door-knocking for over a year and a half – I remember coming across a home in one of the communities and speaking to the homeowner, who was very emotional and wasn't sure how much longer he and his family would be able to hang on. He had been unemployed for a while, and he was hoping he could just hang on until the election and see the outcome. Well, months later, when I came across that home again to knock on the door, there was a for-sale sign on the front lawn and a lockbox on the front door. While that initially caused me to be very upset, it strengthened me and steeled me to continue door-knocking and continue to work hard so that we could eliminate others that were going to face that uncertain future.

With the election of our government, help is on the way, and hope is on the horizon. This throne speech marks a spring session of renewal. I am proud to be part of a team that will be obsessed with job creation, driving investment, and showing the world that Alberta is open for business. This is part of my mandate as Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. My mandate is to return our province to the proud tradition of a free-enterprise economy, with opportunity for all.

Our government will develop a smarter approach to innovation. Under our mandate Alberta will become a global hub for cutting-edge technology. We are creating the best business environment in Canada. Alberta is open for business, and we are working to ensure that businesses across Canada and around the world know that Alberta is the most attractive place in North America for creating jobs and investing. In doing so, we are sending a new message across Canada and around the world with our election that Alberta is open for business.

Our tourism sector is going to be a key part of that mandate. Our government knows that a strong tourism industry creates jobs and economic growth in Alberta. That's why we're going to build a 10-year tourism strategy to help grow the sector and bring in more investment. We'll be looking for innovative ways like private-sector partnerships to promote and market tourism, with the goal to double tourism investment in our province, to \$20 billion, by 2030. We're going to cut red tape and streamline the rules and regulations that impede tourism investment and development, and we're going to work hard to show that Alberta is open for business.

We will attract more flights to Alberta. These flights will bring more tourists and investors to our province and support Alberta businesses who want to explore new opportunities in key markets around the world. We will work every day to make Alberta the best place in North America to live, work, start a business, and raise a family.

We have a positive, common-sense plan to get our economy back on track and renew the Alberta advantage. We will be sending a clear message to our partners across Canada and around the world: invest here; innovate here; we are open for business. Over our four-year mandate we will cut red tape on job creators by one-third.

Our very first piece of legislation removes the disastrous carbon tax, the largest tax cut in Alberta's history, and this repeal will create at least 6,000 new jobs and put money back into the pockets of families and job creators.

Our second piece of legislation will restore the secret ballot and balance to Alberta's labour laws. Restoring workplace democracy and bringing balance to labour laws is just one of many initiatives to help workers and get job creators investing in Alberta again.

As our third piece of business we are lowering the tax on employers to the lowest in the country, creating at least 55,000 jobs and growing the economy by almost \$13 billion, a marked difference from the previous government, which raised taxes on job creators by 20 per cent on day one. This is a marked difference from the previous government. In the last few months of the former government's term nearly 200,000 Albertans were out of work, office vacancies in Calgary and Edmonton continued to climb, and Alberta was headed towards \$100 billion in debt.

Our GDP growth continues to lag behind many other provinces. Wage growth was lower than the national average under the previous government, and many forecasters expect Alberta's GDP to be among the slowest growing in 2019. Our efforts won't reverse the trends overnight, but we will take bold, decisive steps to improve Alberta's competitiveness and reduce the burden on our job creators. We are going to turn that around. We are going to renew Alberta's economy and restore our status as the economic

engine of Canada, we are going to get a fair deal for our resources, and we are going to get Albertans back to work.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments and questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

5:20

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for her speech. I think it's a message of hope and renewal and a message of looking towards the future. I can tell you that the hon. member worked very hard to get herself elected and put her heart and soul into this. I know that in several ways.

The hon. member came and talked to me early on in the process, even before her nomination. Thereafter we actually shared a campaign office along with the hon. Member for Calgary-South East. The three of us kind of coexisted in a campaign office, and to this day we're coexisting. She's in the midst now of evicting me from my constituency office, which will become her constituency office, but between now and the time that I'm fully evicted, she's been generous enough to let me camp out there while I'm looking for a new location.

Madam Speaker, in hearing the hon. member's speech, I know how proud she is of her parents and her family and how hard they have worked along the way for her. Also, this hon. member has experience in the energy sector. With all of that, how do you see, you know, your experience growing up in that immigrant family and your experience working in the energy sector? What are you going to take from that that's going to make the biggest difference not only as an MLA but also in your role as the minister of economic development and tourism? Where do you see the strengths that are going to help you the most, and if you want to comment, what do you need to learn?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development and tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, and thank you for the question. Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, the greatest thing I learned from my parents was that there is no substitute for hard work. They were able to provide a comfortable – not lavish or extravagant but comfortable – safe upbringing for myself and my two sisters just through their hard work. They were so grateful to be able to come to this country, and from the day they landed, their two goals were to immediately learn the language – proudly maintain their current cultural heritage but learn the new language – and immediately get to work at jobs where they could contribute and be self-sufficient for themselves until they could master the English language and then, in my father's case, go on to carpentry school and, in my mother's case, do progressively more challenging service-level jobs as she mastered English.

What they taught through their example was that through hard work, not necessarily through luck or gifts or help but through hard work, you could provide for yourself and your family. My sisters and I, from the day we were old enough to have jobs, whether it was babysitting or cutting lawns or gardening for neighbours, paid our own way throughout high school and university. It's that type of hard-work ethic that I hope to bring to the role of Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituents of Calgary-Peigan.

It is such an unbelievable honour to be able to sit in this Chamber and be a voice for my constituents and to have the incredible honour and privilege to be selected as Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, where I have the amazing opportunity and honour to be able to represent and sell Alberta to the world: to the rest of Alberta, to the rest of Canada, and globally to the world. I

am so proud of this province and the hard work that Albertans exemplify, the quiet confidence that Albertans have, the generosity that we have to our neighbours both within our cities, our towns, and across the country.

With respect to my career in the private sector, having spent my career as a human resources adviser in the private sector for almost 20 years, I hope to be able to bring the skills of collaboration and problem solving and working with others and respect and kindness for others but also be willing to make those fair, tough decisions when need be. I hope to be able to bring that to the role of MLA.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, all, for the opportunity and the privilege to stand in response to the Speech from the Throne. With gratitude I recognize the delivery of a plan for Alberta by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor, Lois Mitchell. I'm honoured to represent the people of both Spruce Grove and Stony Plain in this capacity under the leadership of the hon. Premier, Jason Kenney.

First, I wish to acknowledge the vibrant history and culture of indigenous nations here in Canada. I also wish to recognize that the land upon which my constituency resides is home to our closest neighbours, the Cree and the Nakota. This area of Treaty 6 territory is also home to the Métis nation and many other indigenous groups. I wish to acknowledge the unique story of this land by continuing to work towards strengthening relations with neighbouring indigenous communities, which include the Enoch First Nation to the east of my riding and the Paul band/First Nation to the west.

I would like to congratulate all the new and re-elected MLAs. It's clear that democracy in our province continues to prevail, and I'm confident that the people of Alberta will be served by our new government in a manner that is representative of the values of Albertans. I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the people of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, who elected me to this seat, entrusting me with their voice in this Chamber, and I hope that my words and actions here might represent them well.

The constituency I serve has seen shifts in its physical boundaries, but one thing that has remained constant since 1905, when we were first created, is our values of hard work, entrepreneurship, and dedication to family, and these traits have defined this riding since the two communities came into existence over a hundred years ago. The constituency of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is rich with history and tradition. While our constituency is only a couple of minutes west of Edmonton, we have a unique history derived from the strong agricultural roots of the families that settled this area well over a hundred years ago. This deep agricultural heritage continues to show itself with our vibrant agricultural societies in Spruce Grove, which hosts one of the few standing wooden grain elevators west of Edmonton, along with cultural destinations like the Pioneer Museum and the multicultural centre located in Stony Plain.

Stony Plain, one of the communities in my riding, prides itself on being a town with a painted past, and this is shown by the proliferation of murals gracing our downtown core, showcasing local artists and our strong historical connections. The rich, vibrant character that Stony Plain is based upon is a result of the hard-working original families that settled this area, many of which still reside in Stony Plain.

While Stony Plain has deep agricultural roots, it continues to look outwards as well by partnering with the town of Shikaoi, Japan, as one of the dozens of communities around Alberta participating in the community twinning program. This initiative provides the

residents of both Shikaoi and Stony Plain with the opportunity to experience and learn about different cultures, to the betterment of all of our residents. This has continued to grow and strengthen throughout the years, providing a unique and innovative way to build community. Our Shikaoi park in Stony Plain continues to be a community gathering place for residents throughout the area and truly is a gem to our town. It exhibits the belief in communal co-operation that the municipalities in my riding exemplify and showcase so well.

The city of Spruce Grove, which forms two-thirds of my riding, continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, with one of the youngest average ages in the province. This community prides itself as a vibrant commercial centre, and its excellent recreational facilities are the envy of many communities throughout the province. Facilities like the Border Paving Athletic Centre, the Fuhr Sports Park, and the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre continue to offer enhanced recreational opportunities that are not found in many other mid-sized communities.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, you'd find it interesting that, outside of Edmonton and Calgary, there's nowhere else in the province that has two separate communities of this size that are as interconnected as the communities of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. Our riding is a strong example of the municipal co-operation displayed throughout Alberta and continues to showcase our strong ties with our regional neighbour, Parkland county. The two communities of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain partner repeatedly with Parkland county on our joint initiatives such as the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre, which receives over a million visitors every year, and the Stony Plain heritage pavilion, which seats over 500 people and hosts numerous community events every single year. These two great initiatives are perfect examples of how our region understands that we are stronger when we work together, and I look forward to strengthening those bonds with our community groups for the betterment of everyone in Spruce Grove and Stony Plain.

5:30

Not only do we work to enhance our cultural and recreational options as a region, but the two communities continue to work together on new projects such as the new integrated RCMP facility, which will open soon, as well as enhanced transportation connections which bring our residents to the core of Edmonton. These projects enhance the quality of life for everyone in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, it's not only among our local municipalities that there have been strong levels of co-operation. One area where I see an opportunity for relationship building is with our First Nations neighbours, particularly the Enoch Cree nation to the east and Paul band nation to the west. We made positive strides in the past to build trust and strengthen this relationship, and I welcome the opportunity to continue dialogue about how all of our residents can prosper. I am pleased to say that every year Stony Plain holds an event called Aboriginal Day, which is a growing celebration showcasing First Nations culture, with visitors from all over northern Alberta attending.

The relationship between my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and the proud Enoch Cree nation will be strengthened with infrastructure projects such as an enhanced highway 628, which is a major need for the residents west of Edmonton. I look forward to continuing to promote projects like this moving forward, which will reap rewards for all of our residents. This government has made it a priority to enhance the opportunity for shared prosperity with our First Nations. Improvements to infrastructure, that will allow our neighbours in Enoch Cree nation and Paul band First Nation access

to jobs and markets, are a major step towards realizing their economic potential.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Spruce Grove and Stony Plain is an area that I know very, very well. My parents and family came to this area over 20 years ago, and I graduated from a local high school in Spruce Grove called St. Thomas Aquinas. Because it's such an amazing community, I've chosen to raise my own family in this incredible area that has given so much to me. Over the last eight years I've had the privilege of serving as a city councillor for the city of Spruce Grove, and I understand the challenges that face my riding.

You know, representing two young communities means that education is always top of mind with parents and families, and I'm proud to say that my riding is a showcase of educational choice. On top of our two local school boards we have a vibrant home-school program and two dynamic and growing private Christian schools to provide parents in my riding with ample opportunities to have their choice of school, which I am thankful our government will continue to support.

Our riding will have to deal with the after-effects of the previous government and their accelerated coal phase-out. There have been real, negative effects to hundreds of families in my riding who relied on work at the coal-fired power plants west of my riding, at Genesee, Keephills, and Sundance sites, to pay their bills and to pay their mortgages. As a dual-ticketed tradesman that worked at those individual sites for many, many years, I understand the negative impact that the accelerated coal phase-out by the previous government has had on families in my riding.

Diversity is a major factor, both culturally and economically, and it's vital we maintain this awareness when looking to the future. How we approach serving the needs of my constituents will be greatly impacted by this ever-increasing complexity and will require innovative, thoughtful decisions that will provide for long-lasting and sustainable solutions. We must allow ourselves the creativity and imagination to think beyond the next four years. This is how our community and all Albertans will flourish, no matter what challenges we face moving forward.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I am proud of the decision by NAIT to have one of its satellite campuses locate to Spruce Grove to provide enhanced educational opportunities for Albertans who want to learn blue-collar trades. I would also like to commend the councils of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain for looking at options such as enhanced library services and fibre-optic cable for high-speed Internet to ensure that the youth in my riding continue to have access to digital roadways to help them in the future.

Madam Speaker, our riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is a diverse riding that has a rich history of hard work, entrepreneurship, and working with our neighbours. It is a privilege to serve this incredible riding, and I would like to thank this Chamber for allowing me to tell a little bit about the area that I am proud to call home.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to commend the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain for a great maiden speech, response to the throne speech. It resonated with me when he was speaking to the effects of the accelerated coal phase-out – in my riding of Drumheller-Stettler we have two coal-fired power plants – and the issues and struggles associated with the

people working there, that continue to work there, attempting to become retrained and repositioned to maybe working in a different field. It puts a lot of pressure on the entire town and community. I'd appreciate hearing more about that and hearing about his experience working in those great plants. I know that when I toured those facilities, I was blown away by the pride and what a great career and workplace that can be, so I'd love to hear more about that.

I'd also like to hear a little more about the trades background. I know that within our platform we have a lot of direction and priority towards the trades. I think we lose 3,000 skilled tradespeople every year till 2025 that we can't replace. Maybe the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain could speak to that and that direction and priority from this new government.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler for asking the question. I know this may surprise many of the members here given my calm, shy attitude, but coming out of high school I wanted to be an actor. I remember discussing it with my parents at the time. I put forward on the table that I wanted to go to Montreal for acting school, and my parents put on the table that, you know, they wanted me to take up a trade and work the oil patch. We took a vote about it, and then I went and got a trade and worked in the oil patch because you got to listen to mom and dad or else you're going to pay rent.

I'm proud to say that I have a long history of working in the trades. I'm a dual-ticketed tradesman – a journeyman carpenter, a journeyman scaffolder – and I have worked at every industrial site as a member of the carpenters' union, from Shell Scotford in the Industrial Heartland all the way out to Genesee power plant. So I've a lot of experience working in the trades, Madam Speaker.

I'm also proud to say that in 1999 my very first industrial construction job was actually at the Genesee power plant. I remember going there as a second-year scaffolder, all excited to begin this new path in my working career, and stepping out on the 14th floor in the boiler house and looking down between the catwalks and all you see is space, 14 storeys of air, and being so scared, thinking that somehow I was going to, you know, fall through the grating that was holding up all this large equipment.

You know, the trades have provided for my family for so many years. When I would go through those plants at Genesee, Sundance, and Keephills, all I talked about with people from Edmonton was wanting to pay their mortgage for their family. At the 2007 expansion, K3, which was the purest example of the best technology that power plants had, there were over 30 or 40 busloads of workers from all over the Edmonton area going to work at that site. You know, it's had a major impact.

When I was door-knocking even this last election, I'd come across people in their homes, and they'd say: "You know what, Searle? We knew that the coal phase-out was going to happen. We knew that the federal government had put in place 2029, 2030. We knew the end of coal was going to happen. What we didn't expect was the accelerated coal phase-out to happen." That was the part that caught families in my riding off guard. They thought they had 12, 13, 14 years to be able to plan for this. It was a pragmatic phase-out from coal to natural gas. Private enterprise was going to pay for that investment. The workers knew this was going to happen. The larger companies, TransAlta and Capital Power, knew the long transition that was going to be happening. Everyone was on the same page. But when the previous government was first elected in 2015, what workers didn't know was that within 24 months they would have to deal with the reality that hundreds and hundreds of

layoffs were going to have to happen in those areas. It caught families off guard.

I remember, Madam Speaker, coming across one house, and there was a young mom. She said: you know what, Searle? I guess I just said my name. I don't know if that's allowed. Anyways, she said: you know, Searle, I'm a broken household. I guess I did it again.

**An Hon. Member:** Twice, hon. member.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes, I know. I'll pay the price afterwards. She said: I'm a broken home now because . . .

5:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** The clock has saved you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. minister from West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Getson:** Just member, but thank you for giving me a quick promotion on the spot.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pardon me. The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the chance to rise here and also for your help and guidance for myself and the other green hand MLAs that are here. I'd also like to thank our Premier for his vision and determination in merging these two strong-willed political parties and, might I add, pulling together some of the highest qualified and hardest working Albertans that this Assembly has seen in some time. I'd like to thank fellow MLAs for setting aside your personal lives, too, and serving all Albertans regardless of the political party that you belong to.

Most of all, I'd like to thank the folks in Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland for giving me that job interview, for telling me what matters to you, and hiring me to be your voice in this great place for the next four years. Thanks to all the volunteers that stepped forward out of the woodwork to prop up this farm kid from out west and get me to this place. My wife, Lara, and our four amazing kids – I better read their names right – Leif, Roen, Faith, and Cora: thanks for giving me your permission to step forward and help out our friends and family at this time.

As you can tell, I'm about as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. It's not normally because of speaking in front of people; it's just the reverence for this place, for what it kind of sets out, the importance that we have here and the impacts that we can make on everyone's lives.

I'd like to talk about my constituency, if I may, and tell you a little about the people there and what we have and why I'm honoured to represent them. We're located on the borders of everything with the redraws here. We're located on the border of Morinville, St. Albert, Edmonton. Highway 2 is our border to the east, and highway 16 is our border to the south, with the exception of Lake Wabamun, where we duck a little bit south, and we go as far as highway 22 out towards Entwistle and Evansburg, and we pick up all of Mayerthorpe and Green Court.

We're proud to call the three First Nations reservations there – the Paul, the Alexander, and the Alexis – fellow Albertans, friends, neighbours, and partners in building a better Alberta together.

We have two airports; one located in Villeneuve, which is home to the Edmonton Airshow – if anyone wants to partake in that and you're in my area, come on out and I'll buy you a beverage – and a smaller one located up in Mayerthorpe, a smaller strip there. In our constituency we have the honour of holding the most summer villages, 17 in total. Our constituency includes Lake Wabamun,

Lake Isle, Lake Nakamun, Lac Ste. Anne, which is sacred to the local folks and has been a national historic site for a number of years, along with the Sturgeon, Paddle, and Pembina rivers. We have two distinct, notable historic bridges. The Pembina train trestle crosses the Pembina River between Entwistle and highway 16, and up in Sangudo there's another large, free-standing structure that's quite notable.

We also have two Hutterite communities that call our area home, and that's the Rocfort colony as well as the Morinville colony. There are also a number of seniors' lodges in our area that provide really good homes. We're going to have to talk about the needs of our aging population because these folks are the glue that holds our families in a lot of our small towns together. We have a lot of long-standing families that can trace their heritage back to the founding fathers of these communities and, in fact, the province of Alberta itself.

There's a vast array of people that live out in Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. They've got lake-lot living, summer villages, small towns, villages, acreages, estates, modular home parks, rural retreats, farming. The topography – and I'm going to tell you, a little part of God's country out here – varies. You've got rolling topography, grassy hills, lakes, rivers. You've got access to larger major urban centres. There are fertile, flat lands in the east, which are used for grain production, seed, potatoes, hay production, especially crops. Of course, we talked about the agriculture as far as the cattle, and, I might add, some of the best families are producing some of the best breeding stock you can find right from that area.

I've seen first-hand the community spirit of folks stepping in to help out other communities or other members who are failing and have done everything to bring attention to try to raise funds to keep what they have. I can't tell you how many local community groups and ag societies do their part to keep these places and functions in service. They are the glue for their areas, great organizations such as the air cadets, the dance groups, lots of sports leagues, the 4-H clubs. They keep all the parents and the kids busy. There are rodeos, hockey tournaments, festivals, and other community events. There's a bit of a unique event as well. Every year the town of Evansburg nominates the town grouch. When you get a badge put on your chest for being the most cantankerous in the area, make no mistake, Madam Speaker, folks in my constituency are not afraid of speaking their mind.

The industries and the pillars in the economy in the great Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland are diverse. We have agriculture, manufacturing, construction, forestry, mining, coal power generation, a new frac sand wash plant for industry, technology, and even aerospace out of the Villeneuve airport, of course registries, insurance agents, medical services, grocers, and all the other service industries. I'd like to highlight the importance that the small restaurants still play. There are not a bunch of food chains out in our area. They're still the family owned-operated businesses. There are still the coffee shops where farmers and locals will gather together at 6 a.m. to hold senate in their own committees to share what matters to them, and this is where I met probably most of the people in the area, with genuine stories.

You know, I found it interesting that when I grew up, I was always told a bunch of things. You're always told to do things: work hard, be honest, treat others with respect, judge a person by his character, live and let live. Also, don't bother people at their homes, at their work. Don't bug them on the phone or in person. Never bug someone when they're trying to enjoy a meal, don't ask for money, don't brag, be self-reliant, and stand up for yourself, your family, and your friends. Most of this room realizes that when that goes into a campaign, it kind of contradicts most of those lessons that were

taught to you, so you're knocking on peoples' doors, you're phoning them, you're bothering them at work, you're bothering them when they're having a meal, and you're showing up to shake hands and take pictures and show yourself off.

I realize now that there was a wisdom in that process. I never would have been able to meet as many people as I did or connect with them in that personal way unless I broke down those boundaries, that comfort zone. I was even convinced to put a truck rack on my truck so I could be seen by everybody driving down the highways.

The everyday people of Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland have concerns, and here are some of them that I heard throughout the campaign. Too many people are out of work for some time or face a large reduction in hours. Owner-operators can't hit their margins. They're dealing with higher operating costs, input costs, and just trying to keep alive. Annual rent cost increases for the folks out in Parkland Village, \$50 a year, may not seem like much, but right now it means an awful lot. The premature phase-out of coal-fired power generation. This is a quote from one of the truck drivers I met early in the morning. People in my area: they don't want handouts, just for a government that lets me get to work and stops picking my pockets while simultaneously choking out the industries that I work for.

I met seniors on fixed incomes that turned their heat down as low as possible during the cold snap back in February. They were no longer able to buy what they called "good groceries" and decided how cold they could get the house down to. I saw kids crying and upset in school, wondering where mom and dad were going to be and if they had a job or a home to go back to.

I heard from small-business owners. Their returns were diminished. They were just trying to keep things alive and not taking an income for themselves for a couple years and managing to keep the two or three employees they have.

I heard that too many people were heading out of the province or out of the country, where our industries are respected and still wanted and our service is still required, as we've heard here earlier in the day.

I've heard lots about the education, the fact that we need high-speed Internet access, the fact that we need to get back to basics, and that transportation costs for moving our kids around the rural areas are pretty tough. Like many other members I've heard about rural crime: response times and severity of the incidents are increasing, the acreage-owners' rights, the farmers' rights, and what they can do to protect their friends and families and their neighbours when they're an hour or more away from the nearest police station.

You know, I reviewed several other members that came before me in their maiden speeches, and it was pretty interesting to hear that some of those folks, too, had that same reverence for this place and were also tongue-tied and nervous the first time they were saying it. There were some common themes that also rippled through here from our area. They still had concerns over the economy, the roads, the education, the agriculture sector. A lot of these things have improved since their time, so I know for sure that their voices were heard here and that our area was valued as part of the fabric that makes up Alberta.

We still need, however, more help. Not a handout; we need help to help drive the economic engine of our province. A large majority of the folks in my area are true patriots, captains of their industries. They are the types that hold so many of these communities together. These are the men and women that are contributors to this economy but also the social fabric and overall well-being of our province.

I'm proud to note that our region has also produced some notable figures here. Again, 13 ministers came from our areas, notable ones Peter Trynchy, Frederick Lindsay, George VanderBurg, and most

recently Oneil Carlier; two Deputy Premiers – they happen to be Horners, so there is a Horner in every corner – one Speaker of the House, Mr. Ken Kowalski; and three Deputy Speakers and chairs. I'd like to particularly mention Mr. Kowalski and Mr. Lindsay and also Mr. Purdy, who had offered me support and advice during the campaign.

5:50

I'm told by my constituents that they can relate to me because of the journey I've taken to get to this point in my life. I grew up on a farm, worked in the forestry sector, worked with a small road paving company, went to college, got a job with a larger contractor, worked across Canada, helped to build mines and fibre-optic networks. I worked on industrial projects in the energy sector, wind farms, tankage, transshipment facilities, and yes, pipelines from here all the way down to Chicago.

I've also started a small consulting firm and taken the knowledge that I learned from the construction side of things and worked for companies such as Encana, Cenovus, TransCanada, and at Enbridge. While I may have gone to NAIT and become a civil engineering technologist, I can tell you first-hand that I went to the university of Enbridge. That's where I got very involved in those projects and how to run and manage people. I'm also a private pilot, a farm kid at heart, and a family man who's immensely proud and protective of his wife and children. I will never forget where I came from or the value of a dollar.

When I was travelling the U.S. and explaining to folks where I was from, I'd tell them it was Alberta, and when they needed a point of reference, I'd tell them it was Texas north. Everyone knows you don't mess with Texas. I think we Albertans had that same persona, and we need to reclaim it again. Our provincial motto is strong and free for a reason. Our forefathers nailed it. That is who we are, and that's the blood that runs through our veins.

During my travels over the years I read many books, trying to get even more knowledge from history and those other great leaders and conflicts that have gone before us and how they resolved those and how they took care of it. One that jumped off the shelf in an airport in Minneapolis was *Engineers of Victory*, and it was written by a man by the name of Paul Kennedy. It was his analysis of how the Allies won power over the Axis, and he did this great synopsis at the end. If I may, Madam Speaker, this is something that I posted on the walls of my office over the years and would like to share with the hall.

In sum, the winning of great wars always requires superior organization, and that in turn requires people who can run those organizations, not in a blinkered way but most competently and in a fashion that will allow outsiders to feed in fresh ideas into the pursuit of victory. None of this can be done by the chiefs alone, however great their genius, however [great] their energy. There has to be a support system, a culture of encouragement, efficient feedback loops, a capacity to learn from setbacks, [and the] ability to get things done. All of this must be done in a fashion that is better than the enemy's. That is how wars are won.

The second item I'd like to share with you is a famous poem that probably a lot of you have heard. It was in those times of solace where you needed to get back to reality and not see the hurdles for what they are but step away from them and see them as the opportunities that they could present. God grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. During my campaign I had a simple slogan that seemed to really resonate with the folks in my community. It was simple: Let's Take Our Province Back. We must now get to work on the commitments that we made to our Albertans.

Both of my grandfathers served in World War II and my great-grandfather before them in World War I. My grandpa Ophus was from North Dakota originally, and he chose Alberta as a place to settle. He received a call from a recruiter in the U.S., and it kind of went something like this, if I may digress. He never talked about the war very much, but this one kind of stuck out. Essentially, the recruiter was asking him to serve for the U.S. He was being recruited. He tried to stop and say that he couldn't. Well, the recruiter went off on him, and the dialogue got more and more forceful and finally to the point where he was going to put him in jail, et cetera, et cetera. My grandfather said: well, I can't. Finally, when the recruiter ran out of steam, he said: I can't because I already signed up for the Canadian military, and I'm deploying to Europe in two weeks. That's my family. That's where I come from. That is an Alberta story that resonates in our area.

My grandfathers volunteered to take bullets to defend our freedoms, to keep their loved ones safe, and to make sure that our way of life would never be taken from us. They laid down the groundwork of the foundations of our province with their sacrifice and hard work. At this moment in our province's history I heard the call to serve, not in quite the same way as my grandfathers did; I didn't have to face down bullets. But if I have to face the occasional jibe or joust in this room, I think that's okay, and that's fair game.

This province, my family, and my neighbours desperately needed a change after the years that we've been going through in the last four years and allow this province to live up to its full potential. I'm very proud to serve this government in the UCP caucus with these noble Albertans that feel the same way about our province and who have committed to making a better future for their children and their families. I promise to do all I can for the people who believed in me and trusted me to represent them. I'll try to be their voice. The slow dance to socialism is over. I'll do my part to ensure that Alberta stays strong and free forever.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for those comments. I believe that, you know, from what I've seen, he's certainly been a great representative for the people in his community, and I think he will continue to be a great representative for the people in his community.

You know, having been able to get to know the member over the last several weeks, especially in my role, of course, as the chief whip, I've already seen the passion to try and make the community a better place. I've seen the passion, as we're facing these challenging forest fires in northern Alberta right now, of him trying to come up with solutions that are going to help people to try to prevent forest fires from happening in the future. I think he touched on that with one of his questions he asked earlier today in question period.

You know, with that passion, of course, I know that this member spent a lot of time door-knocking and talking to constituents, really getting a pulse for that community which he represents, and I'd like for him to maybe just touch a little bit on some of the stories. I know that with all of us who door-knock always have those stories that really stick in our minds with that one person or multiple people that really kind of set us straight, that let us know the challenges that they're facing, whether it be the economy or some adverse policies that may have affected their livelihood, as an example.

Could the member please just let this House know about some of those wonderful, challenging stories that he's experienced? Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the question and the chance to speak freely and with candour on this.

There were a number of stories that jumped off the page. There are three that I'll share with you right offhand. Literally at 6 a.m. at the Onoway UFA I'm filling up my truck and another gentleman was filling up his rig, and again with that darn bubble wrap. People wouldn't have known who I was, traditionally, in this community, being as big as it is, and with the projects that I worked on in Canada and the U.S., I was always one of those folks that was gone and away from home.

This young gentleman comes over and says, "You're running for the UCP." I said, "Yup." He said, "What are your chances?" I said: "That's up to you. I'm just here trying to do what I can. It's up to you, and every vote counts in this one. Make no question, there's an ideological difference between capitalism and socialism, so I'm looking at you." He says: "Well, my dad and I have four different tractor-trailer units. We're a small group, and he's built it up over a couple of years. I'm running it." And he says, "You know, with this damn carbon tax we're running a margin so low that we would have put that money into maintenance on our trucks." He says: "We're down so low keeping two trucks running because the jobs are drying up. We can only run so much. We can only charge so much because of our running rates." He's the gentleman that said that comment about someone choking him while they're picking his

pocket. Quote, unquote: I don't want a damn handout; I just want to do my job. Those are the types of things happening in our area.

A senior citizen on a fixed income out in Alberta Beach – a proud man, a strong man, worked his whole life – comes up and talks about the impacts of the economy on his fixed income, the fact that he had to pick how cold he could take his house down to, the fact that he was too proud to go ask for handouts, never would in his life and wouldn't start now. The running joke that he said was: they give seniors a \$3 increase while they take another couple hundred dollars out of my bank every month. Those are the impacts that some of these potentially well-intentioned ideas about transference of tax going save the environment that have caused real people in these areas.

The premature phase-out of these coal plants. A number of mine workers, highly skilled people, very proficient in what they do, considering the technology that they had in place that members like Mr. Lindsay had brought forward before, where you could actually run these plants and have less NOx and SOx than you would if you ran them full on gas: prematurely phased out. These are real people moving and leaving our area or trying to find something else. It really impacts us. We might have the best intentions, but unless we do some analysis and make a business decision and base it on efficiencies and practicality . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but seeing the time, this House stands adjourned until 7:30 tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, June 3, 2019

Day 7

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

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Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
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Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
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Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

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Eggen  
Getson  
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Irwin  
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Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
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Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

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Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

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Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
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Neudorf  
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Turton  
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Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, June 3, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 1 An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

[Adjourned debate May 30: Mr. Ellis]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, good evening. Are any wishing to speak to Bill 1?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Question.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar rising.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no doubt that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre doesn't want to spend any time here talking about this because I'm certain that he, as have a number of our colleagues, has gotten an earful from his constituents over the last three or four days about their decision to implement the federal carbon tax, the Trudeau carbon tax. But we know the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, when asked about environmental concerns, is actually more interested in doing a hackneyed Smothers Brothers routine with the Member for Calgary-Klein than in actually talking about serious environmental policy that affects the lives of millions of people in this province. If he had any measure of shame, he would feel it, but I don't think he has the capacity to do so.

**The Speaker:** I might just interject only briefly to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Making a statement like, "I'm not sure he has the capacity to do so," may in fact be considered to be a personal attack of which, of course, all members of the Assembly steer very clear of. You might just keep that in mind as we proceed through the rest of the evening.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and far be it for me to launch incendiary attacks, especially with the dry conditions that persist across the province. We don't need any more forest fires starting.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great shame, I guess, that I stand up and speak to this bill, a bill to implement the Trudeau carbon tax on the people of Alberta, because just this past weekend, yesterday, in fact, I went to celebrate the Cloverdale Community League's inauguration of their recently renovated community league hall. Cloverdale is one of the many picturesque communities in the riding of Edmonton-Gold Bar, probably one of the most picturesque communities in the entire province, but we don't like to say that much about it because, of course, in Edmonton-Gold Bar we are the most humble constituency in the entire province.

But, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to take a look at what the good citizens of Cloverdale Community League did with their community league hall. Over the last two years the citizens of Cloverdale have invested in a number of energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades. Specifically, they hired Carbon Busters to do an energy assessment and green-visioning project. This is an energy audit firm that looks at the energy usage of a particular building and recommends improvements that they could make.

They did some draft-proofing so that the windows and doors didn't leak so much. They replaced old light fixtures with modern LED light fixtures. They replaced their old exterior doors with new exterior doors. They insulated their hot water pipes. They replaced their old windows. They upgraded the insulation. They installed two new high-efficiency furnaces. They installed a new heat-recovery ventilator. They installed concessionary ventilation, which was previously not ventilated. They installed an electric hot water heater and recirculation system. They invested in an upgrade to their monitoring system. All these new energy efficiency upgrades that they installed, of course, require some monitoring, so they invested in the equipment to do that. They installed PV solar panels, forty-eight 400-watt panels, to generate 22,400 kilowatt hours of real electricity a year. I know the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre thinks that solar panels are ridiculous, but the good citizens of Cloverdale would beg to differ. They upgraded their air-conditioning system. They reroofed with metal-clad roofing, and they did a number of other minor upgrades as well. The total amount for all of those upgrades, Mr. Speaker, was \$371,970.

Now, where did that money come from, Mr. Speaker? Well, I was pleased to provide the Cloverdale Community League with a cheque from the community facility enhancement program in the order of \$125,000. They did get a grant from the city of Edmonton for \$43,280, and the rest of the money came from a variety of programs that were funded from the carbon tax, climate leadership initiative programs, the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre. In the order of \$200,000 or so came from programs that were funded by the carbon tax.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting to see. The Cloverdale Community League is very proud of their new hall. The members opposite are fond of stating erroneously that the carbon tax and the associated programs were all economic pain with no environmental gain. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. The combination of the energy efficiency upgrades and the renewable energy system that the Cloverdale Community League put on their new hall resulted in a net generation of 1,500 kilowatt hours of electricity in the month of April. That means that the Cloverdale Community League hall is generating 1,500 kilowatt hours more than it consumed in the month of April, and all of that electricity is sent back into the grid for you and I to use without having to rely on fossil fuels for generation of that. To put that into some equivalence, of course, that saved just in the month of April alone 4,300 kilograms of carbon dioxide emissions. It's the equivalent of planting 14 trees, or it's the equivalent of a car not driving 5,900 kilometres. That saved the Cloverdale Community League \$140 in electricity bills in the month of April alone.

You know, when the members opposite get up and speak about all economic pain and no environmental gain from the carbon tax and the associated programs that the carbon tax funded, of course nothing could be further from the truth. The information that the Cloverdale Community League provided quite clearly demonstrates the economic and environmental benefits that the people of Cloverdale now see coming from the Cloverdale community hall, that is the centre of their community.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that a \$371,000 bill is a steep bill for any community league to come up with. Cloverdale happens to be the home of some people who are pretty fortunate. They've worked hard, they've done well for themselves, and I would say that a lot of them earn above-average incomes. But the Cloverdale community itself is quite small. For the community to come together and raise \$371,000 from bake sales and lotteries and bingos and those kinds of traditional fundraising mechanisms would have taken the community league probably a decade. I know

that there are community leagues in my riding who have undertaken similar fundraising projects, similar in scope at least, and for a community league to raise \$371,000 just from donations and community volunteer efforts takes at least a decade. The good citizens of Cloverdale were able to raise this money from the carbon tax programs, the CFEP program, and the city of Edmonton in the matter of two years, so it's important to remember the speed with which these programs could be undertaken and implemented.

7:40

Now the Cloverdale Community League is in the position of being a leader in renewable energy and energy efficiency. It was part of the Eco-Solar Home Tour that was conducted this weekend across many sites in Edmonton, sites that had been featured because of their innovative use of technology and energy efficiency upgrades to reduce their economic and environmental footprint.

You know, I want to speak a little bit about the jobs that were created through this program. Of course, it wasn't volunteer efforts that allowed the citizens of Cloverdale to upgrade their community league hall and install the renewable energy system. They had to hire people who were experts in this field. They bought a significant amount of equipment. And all of that was done by local Edmonton contractors, Mr. Speaker, who were there at the open house, and I got a chance to talk to them. They're afraid for their jobs. Of course, with the members' opposite intent on taking away the funding for the programs that the carbon tax funded, they're not sure if they're going to have work to do in the next month or so. Not only is it important to understand that there are real economic benefits, real environmental benefits to these programs; it created real jobs in my community.

Everybody was quite upset that the government decided to scrap the carbon tax and scrap the associated programs that were funded by the carbon tax, all for the purposes of implementing a federal carbon tax for which they will see no benefit. It's important to remind everybody in this House that these programs that were funded by the carbon tax, the climate leadership programs, the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre, didn't come out of thin air, Mr. Speaker. Those were programs that were created when our government engaged in consultation with Albertans from all parts of the province to decide how best to achieve energy efficiency and renewable energy development in this province. The people of Alberta told us quite clearly that it was these kinds of programs that would benefit Albertans the most, so that's why we adopted them and that's why we funded them.

Apparently, the members opposite see fit – they think that Justin Trudeau can do a better job of spending carbon tax dollars in Alberta, so they've decided to scrap our made-in-Alberta carbon tax plan that was developed in consultation with the people of Alberta and implement something from Ottawa and turn over all of our dollars to Ottawa. You know, the people in my riding were quite upset. They don't understand why the members opposite rail against transfers to Ottawa, and in their first act as government create a giant transfer to Ottawa by implementing the federal carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I have to stand up and defend the interests of the good citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar whose jobs are on the line, whose community league's efficiency is on the line, and they're not alone. Of course, there are many Albertans who are in the same position, who wanted to engage in these kinds of activities to enhance the energy efficiency of their homes or other buildings that are significant to them and whose jobs were relied upon because of these programs that were funded by the carbon tax.

I think it's also important to recognize that the Cloverdale Community League is a public space. It's a building that's owned

by the community league and benefited significantly from the energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy installation that they made. So the money that they used to spend on heating and powering that building can now be turned over to providing additional programs to the citizens of Cloverdale. They can operate youth programs, yoga – I know the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti thinks that that's witchcraft, of course. Many citizens in my riding actually like yoga and see benefits from it and enjoy the fact that their community leagues can provide them with those kinds of activities.

The Cloverdale Community League is not alone, Mr. Speaker. There are thousands and thousands of public buildings that have no other option for upgrading their energy efficiency or installing renewable energy. I'm not just thinking of community leagues, I'm thinking of everything in the public sector: hospitals, schools, government buildings. All of those kinds of programs, they're not going to have the access to the dollars that private individuals can have to install these kinds of things in their homes and businesses. So we're taking away significant opportunity for the public sector and those community groups that are providing public goods to provide better services to the people of this province. Of course, that fits very well with the ideology of the members opposite. They don't believe in the public interest. They think that everything should be done privately. Of course, it makes sense that in their first act in the Legislature they would shred one of these significant programs that provides a significant public benefit. It should come as no surprise although we will continue to be disappointed, I think, by the members opposite if we tend to give them the benefit of the doubt.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence, and I look forward to continuing the debate on this important subject.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) for questions or comments to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is available.

Are there others that wish to speak to the main bill? I see the hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege for me to be able to get up and speak to this matter in third reading. Now, I understand that I get quite a long time to speak, somewhere close to 90 minutes, which is kind of scary. I am going to try to get through my comments in a less Castro-esque way than the Premier did when he spoke to this issue in third reading. In no way, shape, or form – people need to just stay chill over there – am I suggesting that, of course, he's like Castro other than in the length of his speeches periodically. Nonetheless, I will unfortunately have to take a little bit more time than I'd planned because the Premier's comments to the third reading of Bill 1 were filled with a number of inaccuracies, so I am compelled, unfortunately, to begin my comments by correcting the record on a number of fronts.

Now, I suppose this is not so much a correction of the record as it is an observation in profound irony. I believe the Premier began his comments saying that Bill 1 represented what he referred to as a renewal of the spirit of democracy. Now, I have to say, coming from a Premier who is the first of six successful leadership candidates for a political party in this province over the last six or seven years to not disclose the donors to his leadership campaign after committing to in the course of the democratic process, that he is so keen to renew, it is a little bit ironic. But it is much more ironic, of course, when you look to the most recent leadership race, where, of course, as we all know, there was a little bit of a problem with respect to several different investigations by the RCMP with respect to kamikaze candidates and all that kind of stuff and then fines

being levied by the Election Commissioner over inappropriate donations and investigations into political action committees, who overtly stated that their plan was to simply give money to Jason Kenney through the PAC and work closely with him to do what he could not otherwise do because of the corporate ban and all those kinds of things.

Mr. Speaker, really, seriously, this is the person to whom we shall look for a renewal of the spirit of democracy in Alberta? Methinks that we're in trouble if that's where we're going for that particular inspiration.

Nonetheless, let me move on more to the spirit of the bill and the debate of the bill as it relates, at the outset, to the inaccuracies that were contained in the Premier's comments at third reading on Bill 1. He began by talking about how a widow on a fixed income was having money taken from her and getting much less and was really being hurt by the carbon tax that our government brought in. I think that the Premier should know full well that that's absolutely not true.

7:50

In fact, a widow on a fixed income, unless it was a fixed trust fund income of, you know, hundreds of thousands of dollars – and I'm pretty sure that that wasn't what he was trying to describe; I'm sure he was describing somebody on maybe social security or the seniors' benefit or something like that – would in fact end up with more money in her pocket at the end of the day. Why? Because low-income people burn less carbon or use less carbon, yet they got the maximum amount of the rebate.

Economist after economist after economist and the number crunchers inside the government of Alberta confirmed over and over and over again that, in fact, low-income people actually walked away from our process with more money in their pockets. So as a result of cutting Bill 1, we are in fact taking money away from that widow on a fixed income. But if that widow happens to have some really well-to-do kids, who are making \$200,000 a year and have two or three vehicles and, you know, a vacation property and a 2,500-square-foot house and a couple of ATVs, well, that group is, for sure, getting more money. But mom or grandma is getting less money as a result of Bill 1 and its outcome. So that's the first thing. I think the Premier is wise enough to actually know that, so he shouldn't have been saying something that, I have to believe, he knew was untrue.

He also went on to say – and he said it several times through his remarks – that there was actually no offset that was ever offered to small business. Now, that's strange because I could swear that a 33 per cent cut in taxes is what many people would argue was an offset, and in fact that's exactly what happened as a result of the climate leadership plan. That was announced as part of the climate leadership plan as a means of offsetting some of the cost to small business.

Now, obviously, there were other mechanisms for offsetting the cost depending on the nature of the small business, whether or not they were trade exposed or whether they fell into a number of the categories that would have made them eligible for a variety of programs that either would have protected them from trade exposure or, conversely, supported them in finding technological ways in terms of research or practical ways in terms of changing the way they did business to burn less carbon. They would have actually gotten offset through that program as well, but in fact they did absolutely get a 33 per cent tax cut. So, again, I'm pretty sure the Premier should have known that. I kind of wonder if he did. I'm not quite sure why he kept saying that in his speech.

The next thing that he chose to talk about was something that is quite well debated on the record in this House around the

allegations of what someone in my office did or didn't say to someone who talked to someone who talked to somebody about how to respond to concerns in a particular seniors' community centre in a particular riding. I think it is fair to say, as you are fond of saying, Mr. Speaker, that you can have two entire sets of facts, and at the very best that's what this is here.

Certainly, the notion that I or anybody acting on my behalf or on behalf of anyone in our government ever said, "Oh, seniors should just raise their membership fees as a means of dealing with additional costs associated with the carbon tax" – let me just say that we've been very clear that the folks that were allegedly on the other end of the phone do not recall ever saying that. They do recall having it presented to them as an option by the person on the phone and saying: no, that's not the plan; the plan is that we have these other programs you can reach out for. But whatever. I think it's fair to say that there is disagreement, and I suspect that the Premier knows that that's actually already reflected on the record.

Now, more troubling, of course, is that the Premier also then went on to say that the Calgary board of education had to cancel school bus routes and that kids couldn't go to the schools they wanted anymore because the carbon tax cost them at least a million dollars a year in the Calgary board of education. Interestingly, the actual number that they put forward was \$300,000 a year. Yeah, that's maybe a bit more than the Calgary board of education could possibly accommodate. Did it involve hundreds of people suddenly not being able to go to schools they wanted to? No.

When you take into account, Mr. Speaker, the fact that under the leadership of our government the Calgary board of education actually received an incremental bump in funding from our government of \$100 million, I kind of think this idea that a \$300,000 board-wide carbon tax cost for buses suddenly shutting down busing capacity in a whole section of the city is a bit hard to buy. Again, I think the Premier should have been just a teeny bit more precise with the facts because, frankly, that's what people deserve from somebody in that position.

Now, interestingly, though, what did happen with the Calgary board of education more recently was that they voted to carry on with an effort to get solar panels on some of their schools, and they did so because they concluded that they would be able to save about \$127,000 a year in heating costs. If you actually balance that against your \$300,000, well, now we've gone from a million down to about \$163,000. But, you know, who's counting? Oh, wait. Me.

Anyway, interestingly, at the time that they said that, the other key thing that they said was: yeah, we stand to save \$127,000 a year on heating costs thanks to the solar programs, but we do also have this little problem with the \$40 million deficit we're going to have this year because the folks, the new government, won't tell us whether or not they're going to fund enrolment.

So, you know, it's just a little rich to have the Premier over there suggesting that as a result of a \$163,000 cost on busing as a result of the carbon tax, whole swaths of the city were not able to get kids from point A to point B in order to get to the alternative schools of their choice and that somehow that's what's causing that problem, but the \$40 million deficit that they are creating in this year alone is no problem at all. Again, folks: facts. Facts, context. Do your homework. If you want people to listen to the kinds of arguments that you're making, do better. That was not better.

Now, the other thing that he suggested was that we came out publicly and said that we had no intention of increasing the rebate to low- and middle-income Albertans if – if – the price of carbon went from \$30 to \$40 or \$50 a tonne. Again, that is not true, and the reason I know that is not true is because I was the Premier and I was at the table where we would have made that decision in the course of budgeting, and in fact we never made that decision. The

reason we never made that decision was because the whole \$40, \$50 thing was still hypothetical. Why? Because we said that we're not going to even consider what to do with that until we get the pipeline built. That was always a very clear position of our government, that we were not going to endorse or in any way partner or work with the federal government on the \$40 or the \$50 price until the pipeline was built.

So we did not ever consider whether or not the rebate to low- and middle-income families would increase along with the carbon price under the additional pricing possibilities that would have occurred had there been the approval and construction of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Again, that was not an accurate statement by the Premier. In fact, to the whole point, it was and continues to be a progressive tax that supports lower and middle-income families, very much in contrast to the assertions that the Premier offered.

In addition, there were some flaws in the Premier's argument. I wouldn't go so far as to say that they were absolutely misstatements of the facts that he should have known were not true and that it was irresponsible for him to say them, but I will say that the logic itself was a little rough. One that I thought was interesting was basically: "Canada is small. Other people are producing more emissions than us. We could eliminate all our emissions altogether, and it wouldn't matter, so we shouldn't do anything." That argument: wow. You know, if every single person thought that on so many different levels, wow.

8:00

How about this one? "You know what? There are over 4 million Albertans here. I'm just one of 4 million. Maybe they should all pay their taxes. If I don't pay my taxes, it won't matter. Schools won't close." Well, in the Premier's world probably, you know, 25 buses at the Calgary board of education will be cancelled. Notwithstanding that sort of twisted math, you know, the idea that, "No; it's okay; I'm just one of 4 million Albertans, so why should I pay my taxes; why should I do my bit?" I guess that's an interesting theory. I wonder how many other times the Premier will use that theory?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Corporate taxes.

**Ms Notley:** Well, yes. In fact, what's going on there – the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talks about corporate taxes, but that is actually the theory that they are apparently operating on. But that's a whole different issue.

Anyway, when you have a world-wide global problem that impacts everybody, it's not actually rocket science to suggest that everybody should do their part. So that reasoning is just troubling, and it is flawed, I would suggest, on a moral basis as well as on an economic and a logical basis, and I'll get into the issue of economics in a moment.

At another point the Premier tried to argue that because in one interview I couldn't remember the exact number of megatonnes reduced, somehow that meant that no megatonnes of emissions had been reduced under our plan. Again, multiple times that information was provided. Multiple times the Premier was corrected. He knows the answer now. Yet he insists on coming into this House and putting on the record things which he knows are not true. To be clear, since the time that we brought in the climate leadership plan we have reduced emissions in Alberta by about one-third of the total emissions of the whole province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. We have said that. We have repeated that over and over and over. The Premier knows it. Yet he came in here on Thursday and said something that was simply not correct, and he should have known better.

He then tried to argue that our plan would not actually contribute to any kind of reduction in emissions, and he referred to a fairly esteemed economist from B.C. by the last name of Jaccard. I think his first name is Mark; I can't remember it offhand. He suggested that this economist was arguing that, basically, the pricing system that we have right now of \$30 a tonne would only account for about 5 per cent of the proposed emission reductions that our plan had in place and that, therefore, the carbon levy was not relevant. What he failed to note, though, was that the same economist that the Premier was so keen on quoting did identify many other elements of our plan that were absolutely going to reduce emissions along the lines of what we had projected. The reduction of coal-fired plants, the reduction of methane emissions, the emissions cap: all these things are things that Professor Jaccard identified.

But here's the thing. Many of those achievements come into effect because of the programs that we can fund through the carbon tax. For instance, when we accelerated the end of coal-fired emissions, which has a huge impact on Alberta's greenhouse gas emissions, we used and committed some of the funds in the climate leadership plan. Actually, going forward, that's a whole other bill that you guys are going to have to pay to one of your big donors, but that's a whole other issue at some point down the road.

In addition, unlike Conservatives when they did their sort of much more modest attempt to reduce coal-fired plants burning, what we also funded was what we referred to as a just transition. We set aside about \$40 million or \$50 million for workers who were negatively impacted and who would see their jobs lost as a result of the accelerated shutdown of coal-fired plants, again something that was paid for through the revenue from the carbon tax. Of course, by doing that, we then reduced emissions. So there's that thing.

Now, the other thing, of course, that we put in place was the emissions cap from the oil sands. We didn't just sort of arbitrarily make up the emissions cap and say, "Oh, that's it," that we just kind of went to sleep one night and this was the magic number that appeared in our head. No. I mean, we came to that conclusion as a result of a great deal of consultation with industry but also as a result of looking at what could be achieved if the necessary investments were made in the technological innovation that would actually keep the carbon out of the barrel so that production could increase but emissions at the same time would level out and never get above the cap. That's a thing that happens as a result of the climate leadership plan because we're able to invest in these kinds of technological efforts and initiatives.

That is what we were funding through the climate leadership plan, all of those things taken together. Same thing with methane: working together with industry on a number of different mechanisms to reduce their methane reductions, all of that coming together through the programs that were put in place through the climate leadership plan. Of course, you've heard people talk about other ones, you know, incenting a revolutionary jump in renewable energy investment here in the province, that wouldn't have happened without the resources that were made available to the government through the climate leadership plan.

Investing in the green line, investing in the west LRT here in Edmonton: those will take thousands and thousands and thousands of cars off the road and will ultimately allow us to reduce emissions, yet still help people get from point A to point B with something like LRT in a way that's often much more enjoyable than sitting in traffic for hours and hours on end. Those were just some of the things.

Of course, there was the establishment of an energy efficiency agency. Here we were, a province in Canada, the only province in the country that didn't have any kind of an energy efficiency agency at all, no work to support Albertans in reducing their emissions, no

work to invest in other market mechanisms to reduce emissions on a residential or consumer basis. Shocking. I mean, here we are, a province that's allegedly an energy capital of the country, and we didn't ever have any thought or effort dedicated towards energy efficiency. Just pure negligence, Mr. Speaker.

All those things come together, and that's how we reduce emissions. So that's what the plan was doing. It was partially a result of the market signals sent by carbon pricing but also as a result of the long-overdue plans that were helping our province slowly bend the curve on emissions.

Now, one of the other things that the Premier tried to argue, of course, was this idea that because of the climate leadership plan all business was racing out of the province and all investment was happening south of the province, and it was all because of carbon pricing. You know, again, one would expect better from the Premier. We know that in the places that he described what we were actually dealing with is a completely different geography in terms of the oil and gas plays that are in the U.S. that are attracting investment right now – we know that that is true – and that in Alberta we are suffering from a long-standing, chronic bottleneck in terms of our ability to get our product to market.

Investors more and more were looking at the fact that we cannot get our product to market, and particularly small producers were, for instance in the fall, being forced to sell their product for, like, \$8 or \$9 a barrel, and we were all losing out. So many, many producers were just saying: “We need to go to a place where we can actually sell this to somebody for a reasonable price. We can't do it in Canada because we have a broken system and we can't move our product to market.”

**8:10**

I hate to remind the folks here, but I'm going to do it anyway because, you know, some folks who have been here have heard me say it before but maybe not all the new ones. You know what? We had 44 years of a Conservative government here in Alberta and 10 years of a Conservative government in Ottawa and 10 years of an essentially Conservative government in B.C., and let's count all the pipelines to tidewater we got then. Let's see. People, help me. Let's all join in. How many did we get?

**An Hon. Member:** Zero.

**Ms Notley:** Hmm. Yeah. Right there: zero.

The problem with that is that's why our energy industry is struggling right now, because why would you invest in a market where you're only getting \$8 a barrel, whereas down in the U.S. you can get close to the full price? So the Premier was confounding these issues intentionally, and I just don't think it was a terribly intellectually honest argument. I think that he could have done better.

Speaking of intellectually honest, though, one of the reasons that I wanted to take the opportunity today to get up and speak against this bill was because even though I have already outlined my overall sort of higher level positions that I have taken on this and that my colleagues have taken on it over some time, I wanted to take this time tonight to take the opportunity to speak in a little bit more detail about one particular person who contributed tremendously to what is one of the most innovative and ambitious efforts to reduce emissions in an energy producing jurisdiction like ours in the world. I wanted to be able to talk about him just a little bit because he is someone that provided tremendous service to this province and to the people of Alberta. As many people who may follow him on social media would know, he's now very, very ill, struggling with a very, very, very serious illness. I wanted him to be able to see this

and know that his contribution to the climate leadership plan is being recognized in this Legislature.

Eric Denhoff was a deputy minister for this government in charge of Alberta's climate change office. He came to us from B.C. after about 30 years of working in senior government positions under governments of both political stripes in B.C. He was someone that came to the job with a fierce intellect and also a fiercely determined personality to take issues and move them along to create real change with vision.

I will tell you that you don't run across people in any setting, private or public sector, very often who are that dedicated and that talented and that visionary, who are able to get as much done as Eric Denhoff did for the people of Alberta in the time that he was here. He was able to run from meeting to meeting to meeting and sit down and engage in highly complex policy discussions with CEOs in a broad, diverse range of industries and dig in and learn about their industries and learn about extremely complex matters and then find an evidence-based way to come up with a resolution that both met the objectives of the program but also accommodated as much as possible the legitimate issues that were raised by these CEOs of these various and sundry companies.

Of course, that's one of the reasons why we talk about the made-in-Alberta plan that we have, because we were very responsive to industry as they came to us and said, “Well, this is who we trade with; this is the process that we have to use in this jurisdiction in order to produce this product; that's why we have this particular GHG emission, and that is why we are, you know, at a disadvantage with this product but not with that product, or this product not that product, in this market but not that market,” and all those kinds of things, and then come up with a resolution that was pragmatic yet still achieved the objectives we were working on achieving. Of course, all that work is going to be thrown out when we replace Alberta's climate leadership plan with the made-in-Ottawa carbon tax that the Premier is so excited and enthusiastic about welcoming into Alberta, along with all the other elements of Ottawa that he's clearly a much bigger fan of than most people in the province realize.

Anyhow, all that being said, Eric did an amazing job. He also has been writing a little bit about the climate leadership plan and making some really compelling arguments about the plan and why it should be maintained. I won't get into all the details of it, but suffice to say that he talks about meeting with investors from New York who are there to find out about what's going on in Alberta's oil and gas sector. These investment groups are managing hundreds of billions of dollars of capital, and more and more of their clients are not interested in investing in Alberta's oil and gas industry because they perceive it as not having a very long life ahead of it. Under the previous government there had been such reluctance to work with them, to support them in incenting the reduction of carbon in the barrel.

He describes these meetings with them, and then he says, “Well, let me just walk you through what we're doing now,” and he talks about what's going on in the climate leadership plan. I've already talked about most of it already, but what he talked about in sort of a conceptual way was this idea of working with industry to create what was referred to as the best barrel, to basically incent technological change and to set a signal to the market as a whole in order to create a best barrel and to do that under the emissions cap and to do that while working on the methane reduction and improving energy efficiency and incenting renewable energy, to do all these things and to do so in a way that would last over a long period of time so as to provide predictability and certainty for investors. He talked about how in these rooms you saw the mood change and you saw the investors go: “Okay. This is good. I can go

back to my major, major funds and talk about how there's actually a long-term strategy for this industry in Alberta. They get this problem. They are moving at breakneck speeds to take the carbon out of the barrel." That is paired, of course, with it coming from a jurisdiction which is preferable on a number of other fronts – you know, socio, political, economic fronts – in order to therefore maintain the attractiveness of investing in Alberta.

Of course, he then, after describing this, goes on to talk about the uncertainty that he has heard about from some of these folks since the new government has come in and they have embarked upon this plan to rip up the climate leadership plan with no significant or serious or substantive plan to replace it in any kind of meaningful way. You know, many of these investors say: "Yeah. Well, you know what? We know where this is going, and one day we're going to have the Wild West of environmental consideration under the current government, and then presumably at some point the pendulum will swing back and another government will come in and try to do the right thing." Without holding to a thoughtful plan that investors and industry can work within but instead embarking upon this sort of very short-term approach that's being embraced by this government through Bill 1, what we are doing is creating uncertainty for investors who ultimately want to find a long-term destination for their investment funds that they believe can withstand what is coming in terms of the world expectations and demands around best-barrel economics.

8:20

I probably have not done justice to the argument that Eric Denhoff makes in my brief summary there, but I would urge members here to read all of the things that he has to say about the climate leadership plan because he probably knows it better than anybody. He served as a tremendous leader in this province, and he worked diligently and tirelessly to lead the country in thoughtful, creative, evidence-based, science-based efforts to tackle what is, without question, the biggest problem in our generation and facing our generation and probably generations to come.

You know, I speak on behalf of our whole caucus when I say – and I think on behalf of many, many Albertans, too – that we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Eric Denhoff.

Anyway, unfortunately, we are not always privileged to have people with that level of intellect and foresight and stature with us as long as we would like or as consistently as we would like when looking for leadership in our government. We are, as a result, dealing now with this bill, which, for the reasons that Eric Denhoff outlined as well as the reasons that I outlined in speaking to it at second reading, should be rejected. It is going to lead to the termination of many, many programs that were designed to finally get Alberta on the right track to reducing our emissions.

Was every program perfect? Absolutely not. Could they have been improved? Absolutely. Did we need to continue working with Albertans and with industry to make sure that we took this program and this plan and this initiative and got it better and better? Absolutely. Are we going backwards 25 years by cancelling this program? You betcha, Mr. Speaker, we sure are.

You know, I've been going to a lot of graduations the last little while, and I have to tell you that there are a lot of kids out there who are profoundly disappointed with the absolute absence of leadership in the majority of seats in this House. As I've said before, we do have an obligation to do what we can, even if we are a smaller country. I'm going to continue to pay my taxes. I think everybody here in this caucus is going to continue to pay theirs, and sooner or later folks over there are going to have to realize that they have an obligation to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments. Are there any?

Seeing none, anyone wishing to speak to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak to Bill 1, as my colleague refers to it: a bill to implement the Trudeau carbon tax. I will not be supporting Bill 1 because I believe that climate change is a very serious problem that we need to tackle as a province, as a country, as a globe and work towards making strong progress because this is such an urgent issue not only for our society but also our economy, to all facets of life. We keep hearing – at least I do – on the news, through discussions with colleagues the very real impacts that it's having, not even just locally but economically – insurance companies having to adjust how they provide insurance because of climate change – and its impact in so many facets of our lives.

I know, Mr. Speaker, from the work that I've done representing the people of Edmonton-Mill Woods, talking to the constituents in Edmonton-Mill Woods, that Albertans do want to tackle these tough problems. They do want to talk about solutions and ways to address it. That is what is missing in Bill 1. It does not introduce a plan to address climate change. What it does do is bring us a step closer to having the Trudeau carbon tax as opposed to the made-in-Alberta solution that was the climate leadership plan, that included everything from significant rebates to help support the majority, 60 per cent, of Albertans as well as investments in major projects that benefit our local communities.

For myself as the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods the valley line LRT will be taking citizens in Alberta from Edmonton-City Centre, my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre, to Mill Woods on a new LRT line, which anyone who is living and travelling in Mill Woods is well aware of because the commute has really been made a lot more unpleasant with all the construction at the moment, but once it is constructed, we are looking forward to that LRT line helping to potentially change how people commute to downtown, maybe fewer cars on the road. It's going to help our community by helping our friends and family members in the community who need that way to travel and get to work and give us all more options.

We know that government shouldn't be ignoring the signs of a changing climate, and our government chose to show leadership, to take strong action, and to do that by engaging, first, in a province-wide consultation with Albertans. We struck a panel that had industry and environmental representatives on it. We learned as we went out to consult with Albertans that a lot of these really important conversations were already happening, particularly between our major oil and gas players as well as environmental activists. Conversations had already been under way to start to tackle the issues of climate change. It was some very large oil and gas companies as well as environmental representatives that advocated for a carbon tax, considered to be one of the most efficient, most effective ways to address climate change, to put a price on carbon, and to do that in a way that makes sure that it's protecting those who aren't able to make those changes as easily. So lower income Albertan seniors on fixed income: getting that rebate was a really big part of that plan.

We listened to Albertans, to a number of stakeholders in putting together the climate leadership plan and the many components within that plan, taking action for the future of our province and making sure that we had cleaner air for our kids, new jobs in renewable energy, massive investment in clean energy technology, green infrastructure, and oil sands innovation.

Being able to be a part of that through being a member of the government caucus and working with Executive Council on some

of the implementation details, working with people like Eric Denhoff, that was just mentioned by the Leader of the Official Opposition, who – I have to echo all of her very, very positive comments because he was a brilliant person to work with, very, very capable, amazingly intelligent, and I know I always trusted him for the solid advice that he provided to me in my capacity in working on the climate leadership plan. Being able to take all of those pieces and take Alberta that step further forward through policies was incredibly important.

8:30

I talked about the valley line LRT in Mill Woods.

Something similar to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar: one of the community leagues in my neighbourhood, the Ridgewood community league, has installed solar panels and done a number of energy efficiency upgrades. I know from talking to the community league executive members how excited they were to be able to take advantage of programs – and I know they used some funding through the city; I believe they did use some climate leadership funding – to be able to help the local community group. This weekend they were having a community event, and I know they take every opportunity to talk about the solar panels and the energy efficiency upgrades that they did and to share that information with other community leagues in Mill Woods but also across the city and encourage other community leagues to take advantage of that.

Other positive things that I had the chance to learn about in my time talking to people in Alberta as the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods include some of the very cool projects that were funded through Emissions Reduction Alberta. Because, of course, we have some interesting projects and companies throughout our province, Emissions Reduction Alberta has funded 164 projects to date on all sorts of different portfolios of technology that do greenhouse gas emissions, everything from low-emitting electricity supply and demand to cleaner oil and gas, food, fibre, and bioindustries. When I was able to go and help announce some of these ERA-funded projects, one that caught my eye from my background in technology was one that was going to use software to make the heating and cooling of buildings more efficient, a very interesting project that would not only impact the greenhouse gas emissions for a particular building but was something that, if successful, could then be expanded and that technology used in other places.

Those types of investments were a big part of the overall climate leadership plan, the funding that helped to pay for those types of investments through ERA, other smaller types of investments through Energy Efficiency Alberta. I think it's really important to note that until Energy Efficiency Alberta was created as part of the climate leadership plan, Alberta was the only province or jurisdiction in all of North America – every single U.S. state and every Canadian province except us had an energy efficiency agency. We were definitely behind the eight ball.

Part of the reason that we saw such huge uptake for some of the programs, waiting lists of people was because there was really a demand for this. Albertans wanted to make those upgrades to help improve their energy efficiency, and the various projects and programs, for every dollar invested, returned \$3.30 to Albertans' pockets. I know that a lot of the work Energy Efficiency Alberta did as well as other programs helped to create that solar industry boom that we've been seeing in our province, with the solar industry growing by nearly 500 per cent and our installed solar capacity going from 6 megawatts in 2015 to 35 in 2018. Making sure that people had the opportunity to participate through programs like Energy Efficiency Alberta was a big part of the climate leadership plan and something that a lot of Albertans were really excited to be part of.

Now, as my colleague from St. Albert mentioned during one of her responses to Bill 1, there were different tools you could use to find out what kinds of investments had been made in your particular area of the province. When I looked at Edmonton-Mill Woods, I saw that over \$1.5 million had been reinvested in the communities. I can tell you that being in a neighbourhood that was built kind of between the late '70s, mostly in the '80s – and most homes completed construction in the '90s. A lot of those energy efficiency upgrades were appreciated. I know I talked to homeowners who had the opportunity, through the climate leadership plan, to make upgrades in their own homes that made a real difference.

But I also talked to a number of constituents in Mill Woods where the rebates made a significant difference in their lives and made their lives more affordable as well as offsetting the carbon levy costs. With Bill 1, the bill to implement the Trudeau carbon tax, those rebates will no longer be available for lower income Albertans and will leave them worse off, with no alternate support.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We also worked, through the climate leadership plan, to support not only individuals, not only major projects, but also small businesses, through the small-business tax cut, cutting small-business tax by a third, reinvesting \$220 million to help save business owners more than a half a billion dollars over three years. Those types of initiatives were ones that we were able to do through having that made-in-Alberta climate leadership plan versus the implementation of a federal carbon tax, where we won't have that same flexibility.

Making sure that we are treating climate change as a serious and critical issue is really important. Madam Speaker, one of the main reasons that I will not be supporting Bill 1, although I am very pleased to be able to rise to speak to it, is because it doesn't offer that alternative path forward. It removes the carbon levy without replacing it or coming up with kind of next steps or what we can do going forward to be leaders and to take action on what is a very serious problem. I mean, talk to any high school students graduating. I know that in the graduating classes I've had the chance to interact with, it's been brought up to me proactively a number of times. I think our youth are really attuned to the need to make sure that we continue to take action on this very important issue.

Right now this bill is going to eliminate an important revenue stream that has been supporting renewable, energy efficiency, rebate programs, ERA, and very interesting technology. It's going to threaten critical transit and infrastructure projects, and it's going to cancel a lot of construction and climate leadership plan related jobs as well as put our new solar industry at risk. Making sure that we are approaching this in a knowledgeable way, that we are thinking about all of the jobs that had been created as part of the climate leadership plan, over 7,000 of them in the first two years, with thousands more potentially to come, and having an alternative, having supports for those new industries, for those jobs is really important.

Of course, finally, I think it's really important to note that we were on track to cut more than 50 megatonnes of emissions over the next 10 years and doing that in a collaborative way with industry. The Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned Eric Denhoff, and one of the ways that I had the opportunity to work with Deputy Minister Denhoff, when he was in that role, was working on and refining the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation. That's work that doesn't get talked about a lot but was really important because it looked at the impacts on different industries and different operators in wildly different technology sectors. It had to be very,

very detailed work, with thousands of different pieces of information going into that, and working with . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, are there any other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Through you to all the members of the Assembly, I want to wish you all a very good evening. It's always a pleasure to get up and speak in the House. As you all know, I love to speak. I know that our Speaker, Mr. Cooper, always had a big smile on his face . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member.

8:40

**Member Loyola:** Oh, pardon me.

Our Speaker, when he was in the benches, used to love it when I got up to speak. He'd listen very intently – right? – with a big smile on his face, because, of course, he always knew I had something to say of interest.

With that being said, I stand to speak against Bill 1 this evening. Of course, one of the major reasons why I cannot possibly support this bill is that it has no alternative.

I want to take a step back because for 44 years we had a Conservative government in this province, and they had more than ample opportunity to not only address the issue – not only address the issue – but to actually bring people together, because governing should be about bringing all people together, not sowing seeds of division and placing one group's interests against another. But, of course, that's what we're seeing. We're seeing it again now that we have our good friends in the UCP caucus governing here.

I don't doubt that they represent a good number of Albertans, that they were able to convince Albertans that the carbon levy was a bad thing. One of the things that I learned really early on when I started learning about politics, leadership, and governance was that in politics it's really easy to misinform people and miseducate people. I believe that's what has happened here, Madam Speaker. I think that our leader of the Alberta NDP here and Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition highlighted very well some of the pieces of misinformation that were just being handed out to people in the community as if they were facts and truths. You know, it's sad. It's very sad because that is the way that you sow division amongst people. When you hijack the truth, when you purposefully misinform people for your own political gain, that to me is suspect.

But if you could honestly stand on the other side of this House and have your facts straight and you could convince me with numbers, with facts, with research and you're telling me that this is the truth, that this is what the statistics demonstrate, I would be one of the first ones to say: okay; let's take a look at this. If I can believe the statistics and the research that you're presenting to me and you can convince me that this would be better for all Albertans, heck, I'd even vote for it.

But, Madam Speaker, I cannot vote for Bill 1 because, you see, the whole premise upon which it lies, to me, is a mistruth. There was so much misinformation out there, and no matter how hard we tried as a government to actually get the facts out there in front of people, people unfortunately were buying the myth. They were buying the lies. Not only that, they were going out and repeating these lies, and it's sad for me, because . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I'd just caution you with some of the words involving "lies" and "lying." Those are most certainly words we don't use in this House. Please continue.

**Member Loyola:** We do believe that people do tell lies, though, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, it was so pleasant in here when I arrived, and I was so much looking forward to the words and the thoughts that you were going to share with all members in this House, as you have done with Mr. Speaker. I would maybe hope that you could entertain us in such a fashion as you would for Mr. Speaker.

**Member Loyola:** To me it doesn't matter who's sitting in the Speaker's chair, Madam Speaker. I would continue to use the same language that I always do. But at the pleasure of Madam Speaker I will not use that four-letter word for the remainder of my time here in the House at this moment.

Where was I?

**An Hon. Member:** Telling lies.

**Member Loyola:** Oh, yeah. Spreading misinformation. This is one of the biggest problems that we have in our political system right now, that for the sake of ideology we turn statistics and we manipulate or we use only certain numbers that will support our ideological arguments. But are we here to work towards a particular ideology, or are we here to make the best decisions for all Albertans?

I remember so many times when I used to sit on the other side of the House and the opposition at that time would accuse us of being ideological. The funny thing, though, was that the opposition didn't see that they were also being totally and completely entrenched in their own ideology when they were getting up to say their arguments. You know what, Madam Speaker? I'm not going to just say that it was the opposition at that time. We all need to do better. I'm sure that many people in this House know that I'm probably as ideological as they come. The reason why is because I don't stop being a dreamer, being an idealist, believing that we can create a better world for all people. I'm never going to stop being an idealist because at the end of the day what's driving me is wanting to make sure that we build a better society, a better place to live not only for my own children but for everybody's children.

You know, the good Member for Edmonton-Rutherford spoke previously on other readings of the bill about indigenous culture and indigenous cosmology and understanding. One of the things that I love that our government did was that we brought all people to the table to discuss how we were going to deal with climate change as the principle problem of our generation and those that follow. Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, that we have a lot to learn from indigenous people. We have so much to learn from indigenous people here in this province and in this country and across the world because, as I'm sure that you've heard and may even well know, a part of indigenous governance and indigenous decision-making is understanding very well how the decisions you're going to make today are going to affect the people seven generations down the road. I think that we need to do a lot more reflecting on exactly that.

8:50

If you're going to get up in this House and you're going to present a bill that's saying: "Look, we don't want this carbon tax. We know that. We don't want the carbon tax, but we are going to do nothing to address climate change right now, when it's the principal problem of our generation" – you don't want to deal with the problem? How can that be? This is serious, members. You're seriously going to sit on the other side of that House, present this in here, and then say: "We have no alternative to address climate



change here in the province of Alberta”? That’s one of the principal reasons why I cannot vote for this bill, Madam Speaker.

There is also the matter of the fact that the federal government was going to implement its own carbon levy or carbon tax, as the members from across the way love to call it, on us regardless. At least what we came up with in the climate leadership plan when we were in government was an Alberta-based solution. Yes, people had to pay their share, but it was a progressive tax that was going to help those who had lower incomes through the rebate, and we well know that 60 per cent of Albertans were getting that full rebate. Where did this fact fall off? How come that wasn’t something that people were talking about? Now Albertans are still going to have to pay their carbon tax, but now there’s no rebate for them. There’s no rebate for them.

These individuals that you say that you care so much about and that you’re trying to save them from the carbon tax, well – guess what? – they’re still going to have to pay the carbon tax, but now the middle- and lower income ones aren’t going to get the rebate that they were previously getting under the climate leadership plan that the Alberta NDP government had implemented back in November of 2015. Tell me how they are better off. I’m looking at the members across the way. Tell me how they’re better off now. I see nothing. I see blank faces. Oh, I got one face over here with a big smile.

Eliminating that revenue stream which not only was going as a rebate to actually help middle- and lower income Albertans, which now they’re not going to get whatsoever, was also going to support renewable energy and the energy efficiency and rebate programs. We were actually making inroads and taking steps to do it exactly the way our indigenous brothers and sisters and two-spirited people were actually engaging us to think about.

Not only that, Madam Speaker, because it’s really important that we were able to bring indigenous voices to the table – not only were we bringing indigenous voices to the table; we were also bringing environmentalists, activists, and organizations to the table as well. And then not only that; we were bringing in people from the petroleum sector. We had everybody sitting at the same table trying to determine what was the best way that we can move forward here in the province of Alberta so that at the end of the day we were going to be doing best for future generations of Albertans.

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

Any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is third reading – correct? – not 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yup.

**Mr. Bilous:** Excellent. Okay. Well, I’ll rise to make a few comments about this bill because I think there have been comments made by the government, by the Premier, by others that I think have omitted some of the facts around the price on carbon, whatever you want to call it. Whether you want to call it a carbon tax, a carbon levy, regardless, you know, one of the things that we committed to when we introduced the carbon pricing in addition to a broader climate leadership plan was the fact that every penny that was collected from it would be reinvested. So it’s interesting how members of the government will talk about these poor, low-income seniors that the carbon tax ended up making unable to pay their bills. Well, the reality, Madam Speaker, is that two-thirds of Albertans received a carbon rebate, and in fact they got the full

rebate, whether or not they only needed 10 per cent of it or 20 per cent of it. I mean, that was just one of the issues.

The other one that I find interesting is that the government seems to think it came up with some novel, new idea to create a fund to help some of the biggest emitters innovate. Well, we did that. We did that, and in fact I stood with the former Minister of Environment and Parks to announce a \$1.4 billion innovation fund. I would love to see the current government top that because we know that through innovation, companies, especially the largest emitters, are able to reduce their footprint, reduce their GHGs, become more competitive. Therefore, their balance sheet looks better at the same time as reducing their GHGs and doing their part globally to reduce our carbon footprint.

Really, it was a win-win solution, and in fact it was industry that had said: we agree to a price on carbon, but there needs to be an investment through what’s collected to help us drive innovation and invest in that because developing new processes is not a cheap thing to do. There needs to be an incentive. There needs to be a reward at the end. We saw that.

In fact, you know, I was singing the praises of Alberta Innovates, which has done a remarkable job in many different areas, from medical biosciences to energy, to environment, to health innovations, that they really have helped drive solutions. In fact, it’s Imperial Oil at Emerald Lake that is using a technology that was co-developed with Alberta Innovates many, many years ago that actually reduces their water consumption by 25 per cent. Now, Madam Speaker, that’s a significant amount of water consumption reduction for a brand new project. That’s an incredible step in the right direction. We want to encourage and incentivize more of that around the province to then be exported internationally.

I would argue that Alberta is a world leader, but it takes investment. It takes a government to act with courage to recognize that, you know, climate change is real and that meaningful action needs to take place, not promises of “one day we’ll bring in something,” not leaving the door open for Ottawa to impose its solution on Alberta. I mean, I know the Premier is a big fan of Ottawa. I think he’s itching to get back there, quite frankly, if I read between the lines, and wants to impose the practices of Ottawa on Alberta.

Well, I think Alberta has its own proud history of traditions. I’m proud of it. In fact, I can tell you that some of the sweeping changes that the government made to the standing orders I find quite frustrating to the spirit and the history of this place, considering, you know, that the hon. Premier has only been in this place for a short period of time compared with many other members.

There is a history of a hundred years in this place with a number of different traditions. Honestly, Madam Speaker, I haven’t been here that long. I’ve only been here since 2012, but I’ve come to appreciate the uniqueness that the Alberta Legislature has even in comparison with other provinces. There are things we do here that I wouldn’t want to change, that I wouldn’t want to bring in from Saskatchewan or any other province, quite frankly.

**9:00**

It’s a little disappointing that the government is eliminating this without a plan B. The plan B: we’ll have to wait for it. Again, what does that mean for our heavier emitters who have been investing hundreds of millions of dollars to be more energy efficient? Now suddenly it’s not just the Wild West; it’s pollute as much as you want because there’s no incentive otherwise. I think we have seen in the last couple of years a significant number of emissions reductions. We were on track over the course of the next 11 years to make significant strides.

You know, China, until they do things we shouldn't – I mean, I think what members miss is that China is investing hundreds of billions, with a "b," of dollars in innovation, in reducing their GHGs, reducing their footprint. They've cancelled hundreds of coal-fired electricity plants. The difference between China and Alberta is that, yes, right now, today, they are emitting and polluting much more than we are as a province. Obviously, population has something to do with it and land size as well. But I can tell you that when they decide to turn the corner and take meaningful action to address the issues and concerns of climate change, they will move very, very quickly. Quite frankly, they are about to blow by many, many countries who will say: "Wow. We didn't see that coming. Who was that that just passed us?" They're making historic investments in solar, wind, and in geothermal.

You know, for me, I think that part of this was an opportunity that we have. Part of it as well is helping to tell the Alberta story about our energy sector, giving them some additional tools when we talk about how responsible our producers are here and that we need markets to sell our products to. Part of it as well, Madam Speaker, was the number of jobs that were created by these investments, right? I mean, again, it's one thing to hear government members talk about how jobs are their number one priority. Well, here was an opportunity and a way that there were jobs, thousands of jobs, being created through the investment in renewables, our auctions, et cetera. Those are now going to be jobs lost. I can't wait for tomorrow for the government to take credit for all of the lost jobs that are now fleeing the province. Again, Alberta was the number one destination for renewables. We were the province to invest in. Now people are scratching their heads going: I don't know if there's anywhere in Canada that is really interested in aggressively pursuing these new jobs in green technology and in green opportunities.

For me, Madam Speaker, again, I recognize and appreciate that not everyone was a fan of the carbon tax. There were those that were frustrated by it. I completely understand. I recognize that there were additional costs put on small businesses by that. But I can tell you that where the Premier was wrong in his speech at, I believe, the opening of Bill 2 was in saying that there was nothing for businesses. Well, we actually reduced the small-business tax rate by 33 per cent – I think that that's quite significant to help offset some of those costs – in addition to having programs for businesses to make meaningful investments that would save them money over the course of the lifetime of their buildings and assets. I get that people may want to see the savings today – they want an immediate reward – but the reality of these types of energy savings and energy investments is that they do pay off over the lifetime of a facility, and a lot of people recognize that.

The other thing that's interesting is that, you know, you look at some of the global leaders as far as international energy players and the fact that they are seriously lobbying governments in North America to keep a price on carbon because of, again, the significant investments that they've made, investments that they recognize will not only give them a leg up when we look at other companies who are also looking to Alberta companies as far as how to emulate their processes.

Again, you look at the innovation that exists in Alberta, and sometimes there needs to be a bit of an incentive to innovate. I can tell you that when you look at SAGD technology, that was developed here in Alberta. That is used around the world. It was developed in Alberta because companies had to innovate and find less expensive ways to get our crude out of the ground. We know that we have the wherewithal to do it, but it takes leadership. It takes leadership by government. What we are seeing today is not leadership. We are seeing a government taking the province

backwards in an effort to – sure, it will save some Albertans some money in the short term, but it has long-term consequences, Madam Speaker.

You know, I think we would have liked to have seen a proposal from the government of: what do you plan to replace this with? Right now all we're getting is promises that one day there'll be some kind of new plan, hopefully before the Prime Minister rams his plan down our throats. But that is the reality. In the meantime we're probably going to waste millions of dollars in court challenges that will end up, well, losing us money, again, money that could be invested in meaningful things. But as we've seen even in Saskatchewan's appeal, I think they're in a losing battle. We would rather have seen: let's look at creative ways to address climate change. If our method wasn't accepted by this government, fair enough, but then propose something, counterpropose.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will not be supporting this bill in its current state and will urge all members to do the same.

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

Seeing none, any more speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much. Once again, it's an honour to have the ability to rise today, and I would thank the constituents of the community of Edmonton-West Henday for giving me this opportunity to do so. It's with great frustration that I have to stand before my constituents and tell them that once again the will of this Assembly was not to work in their best interests.

Now, the fact is that we've spent a week and a half, two weeks, roughly, discussing this piece of legislation. Well, the opposition has. The government has sat there doing God knows what. I would love to find out what that is because it's surely not working in the best interests of my constituents. When I go back to them, they're going to have several questions for me. How could a government get rid of a real plan and implement absolutely nothing in place of it? It's a question that we've brought up several times on the opposition side.

Now, if this government is so proud of the legislation that they have before us, then why, through the readings that we've been through and through Committee of the Whole, where we put forward reasoned amendments to move this to committee to have real discussions about the implications not only to the social fabric of our communities but also to the economic fabric – even then, I don't know. Maybe one person stood up and spewed some rhetoric about why we didn't have the time to move forward on discussing this in committee. But I would argue that we don't have the time to repeal this legislation and try and come up with something else, whenever that might be: in the fall, in a few years, maybe never.

Now, I want to share a quote with this House. It's from Helen Keller, and I find it quite relevant in this moment. The quote is: "Science may have found a cure for most evils; but it has found no remedy for the worst of them all – the apathy of human beings." I find that quite relevant because ahead of us we have the greatest threat to humankind, and we're going to sit in this Legislature and once again say: "We'll put it off. We'll give you back your \$200 a year, and we'll worry about this later."

It is completely shameful, and really I'm not surprised based on the legislation we've seen come forward before this House. We have the Minister of Labour and Immigration, that wants to attack the youth of our province, knowing full well, I suppose, that there are no repercussions to doing that, that as far as we can tell, the laws do not protect against age discrimination against those who are under the age of 18, something I'm sure he's quite proud of, finding that loophole.

9:10

We have a government that is not going to take action, so I thought it very important to one more time stand before this House and say that I tried. I tried, and the government did absolutely nothing. They said that they have a mandate to do nothing, which is not true. The people who voted for you expect more. They expect you to bring forward solutions. You can repeal the price on carbon, as detrimental to our communities as that will be, but you should have real solutions to put in place of it, of which you have absolutely none.

It's unbelievable that we have a minister of environment who's proud of this. He's proud to repeal environmental protections. You have more than enough people on your front bench to protect the will of businesses. We've seen it. We've seen it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, through the chair.

**Mr. Carson:** Excuse me, Madam Speaker.

We've seen, through your legislation that you've put forward so far, that you have no problem representing businesses, and it's, I suppose, a thing that government should do. You know, red tape reduction, creating regulations that allow businesses to thrive in our province: of course, that's important. But when we have a minister of environment who's actively working against the environment, it's completely disappointing.

I will not be supporting Bill 1. I am, frankly, ashamed that I have to sit in this Legislature and vote against what is and may be the most important piece of legislation in terms of environmental protections that we'll see for years to come. I doubt it, but I hope that this government has something to put in its place in the very near future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Great to have an opportunity to rise. What an exciting evening, an exciting evening for Albertans. Hopefully, they're going to be able to see the carbon tax repeal act finally pass third reading in this Legislature. A promise made, a promise kept, something that the largest number of Albertans in the history of this province came out and cast a vote for, that was clearly campaigned on. I was listening to the hon. member's comments previously, and I notice that he kind of glossed over that fact, that the vast majority of Albertans spoke loud and clear on April 16, when they sent the NDP to that side of the House, to opposition, because of many things but largely, for sure, because of the carbon tax.

Now, it's disappointing to also see the hon. member spend time articulating and saying that this side of the House does not care about the environment and that this side of the House has not presented any alternatives when it comes to climate change and to dealing with emissions inside our province. Nothing could be further from the truth, Madam Speaker. I won't raise it up because I'm sure you'd call it a prop, but the United Conservative Party ran on a clear platform. It made clear what we would do when it came to emissions. It made clear that we did have a plan that was a different approach than the hon. members'.

While I understand that the hon. members in the NDP continue to want to hang on, to desperately hang on to the carbon tax, the reality is that that was all economic pain, no environmental gain. They know that. That was troubling, hurting people in Alberta. They only want to talk tonight about the direct emission costs, the

direct costs on fuel and stuff to Albertans. That was bad enough. They keep glossing over the fact that it ended up being a tax on everything. It increased the costs of everything inside our society because everything here comes by train or truck – it needs fuel to be able to get it there – and it ended up increasing the costs of everything.

I was interested to listen to the Leader of the Opposition's comments earlier this evening as she spent a considerable amount of time attempting to attack the Premier on his speech at third reading of Bill 1 earlier. I guess it would be last week, Madam Speaker. I'm not going to be able to spend too much time rebutting everything that she said, but the one thing that she did spend a considerable amount of time on was attacking the Premier on a situation that took place in the constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, particularly in my hometown of Sundre, where the Premier spoke about the West Country seniors' centre. I want to be clear to the House that the Premier did in fact go to the West Country seniors' centre. I was there with him. Thank you for coming, through you, Madam Speaker, to him. Thank you for coming to Sundre and seeing what was taking place there. The Premier took exception to the fact that we would bring up how they treated seniors inside my community as an example of how seniors and fixed-income seniors were treated across this province when it came to the NDP's carbon tax. The reality is that the NDP put that seniors' centre – that's just one example. Those examples are throughout the entire province, but that's one example of the NDP putting that seniors' centre in a situation where they may have had to shut their doors, fixed-income seniors who are just trying to have a place to be able to recreate inside our communities. Madam Speaker, I know that you would have similar stories inside your constituency.

When those seniors came and said, "Look at what your carbon tax is doing to us; it's a regressive tax that's hurting us," this government responded, at least their staff did, by telling those seniors to have a fundraiser to pay for the carbon tax. It's just shameful. It's absolutely shameful. It's shameful that the Premier, who I asked many times to – or, sorry, the Leader of the Opposition. Muscle memory.

**Mr. Kenney:** The then Premier.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . the then Premier, who I asked many times to apologize inside this House for the way she treated my constituents, never would apologize for that. But tonight, Madam Speaker, I'm excited to say that at least they're finally going to have some justice when it comes to the carbon tax because the United Conservative Party is going to keep their promise. We're going to repeal the carbon tax and we're going to go on and we're going to focus on what Albertans have sent us to focus on, which is actually tackling climate change and emissions not taxing fixed-income seniors and punishing them, and I think that's great news.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)?  
Would the hon. Premier like to close debate?

**Mr. Kenney:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** My apologies, hon. Premier.

Is there anybody else who would like to speak?

Seeing none, now would the hon. Premier like to close debate?  
Be patient with the new Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Kenney:** Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I most assuredly would. After three years of working towards this day, a great day for Albertans, a promise made, a promise kept, I am honoured to

rise in debate on third reading, to close debate on Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax. I do so holding in my hands the most detailed electoral platform ever offered to Albertans in this most recent election, in which, at page 17, the party, which I have the honour of leading, committed to the following:

The NDP introduced the largest tax increase in Alberta history without campaigning on it. The job-killing carbon tax takes in \$1.4 billion each year, making it more expensive to hire employees, move goods around the province, and heat homes.

And the current carbon tax is just the start – the NDP plans to increase their cash grab by at least 67% to \$2.5 billion, in step with Prime Minister Trudeau.

[But] a United Conservative government will scrap the carbon tax, leaving that money in the pockets of families, businesses, and non-profits while creating [at least] 6,000 new jobs by 2024.

A United Conservative government will [therefore]:

- Introduce Bill 1, The Carbon Tax Repeal Act.

That was our commitment to Albertans, Madam Speaker, which tonight we make good on in this vote. While we do so, we say that we place the good, common-sense judgment of ordinary Albertans ahead of the central management and the meddling of nanny state politicians who want to dictate to ordinary people how they should live their lives.

This failed experiment, the NDP carbon tax, was all about punishing Albertans for living normal lives in this cold, northern, often challenging environment. This was the NDP telling widows that they had to turn the heat down at home when it was 25 below outside. This was about the NDP telling working men that they shouldn't drive their pickups with their tools and their equipment to work anymore. This was the NDP telling soccer moms and hockey dads that they should be punished for filling up the minivan to take the kids to practice. This was the NDP saying that they were going to squeeze Albertans in the midst of a job-killing recession to generate more government revenue in order to waste it on low-flow shower heads and, quotes, free light bulbs installed by a company hired from Ontario. At one level, Madam Speaker, this was an act of gross political arrogance from a socialist government informed by the failed philosophy of central planning and the politics of resentment seeking to punish people simply for living ordinary lives.

Madam Speaker, what I find so remarkable is that even after the massive, unprecedented electoral repudiation of the NDP, at the centre of which was a complete public rejection of their carbon tax, it appears that they will stand in this place tonight to defend the carbon tax that they hid from voters, which they imposed on Albertans, and for which they refuse to apologize.

9:20

But there are still minutes left, Madam Speaker. There are moments, precious moments left, during which I would appeal to my friends from the NDP opposite to reconsider. Now is a moment for the NDP to show Albertans something that has been wholly absent from that party since their massive repudiation on election day. Do you know what that something is? Humility. The ability to admit that you were wrong.

You know, one of the great Premiers that we had in this place was the late Ralph Klein. He wasn't perfect, Lord knows, but when he made big mistakes, he admitted to them. It wasn't too much for him to stand up and say when he was wrong. Well, Madam Speaker, now is the moment for the NDP to stand up and admit that they were wrong.

You know, Madam Speaker, in my speech at the beginning of this third reading debate I mentioned how the NDP's sister party through the international consortium of a group – the party is called

Socialist International. Their sister party in Australia, the Labor Party, imposed, much like the NDP here, a job-killing, intrusive, punitive carbon tax on Australians in one of our sister Commonwealth democracies. Guess what? Much like Albertans a few weeks ago, the Australian voters completely repudiated that seven years ago. Is it not instructive that the Australian Labor Party, the socialist sister party of the NDP, has since abandoned any pretense of imposing a carbon tax in the most recent election, that the French Socialist Party has done the same thing? You have sister parties of the NDP who have learned their lesson, who have listened to the voters, who have acted with humility, who have recognized that punishing people for heating their homes is not an environmental policy. The NDP is increasingly an outlier, an aberration, an exception to the rule. The Alberta NDP in its stubbornness refuses to acknowledge how wrong they were to mislead voters so profoundly in 2015 by failing to disclose to them their intention to impose the largest tax increase in Alberta history.

Madam Deputy Speaker, tonight is a night of reckoning. This is when democracy happens. This is when the hundreds of thousands of Albertans who signed petitions, who sent e-mails, who spoke to their MLAs, but who were so obviously ignored by the previous government, this is when they find their voice, the quiet Albertans, the hard-working Albertans who are not animated by the politics of resentment, who do not think that "profit" is a dirty word, who do not think that heating your home is a crime to be punished by the government, who do not think filling up your gas tank is something to be penalized by a punitive carbon tax. This is the moment for them, all of those Albertans, quiet Albertans who have waited so patiently for an opportunity to speak through this recent election. Tonight is the night when their collective democratic will will be reflected in a vote on the floor of this Assembly.

I say to all of those Albertans: we have kept faith. We as a government in our first commitment said that by May 30 there would be no carbon tax, and with the adoption of this bill, this act tonight, Madam Speaker – and I hope it gets proclamation into law by Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor tomorrow – this bill will be effective retroactive to May 30, 2019. With it we will deliver to Albertans the single largest tax cut in Alberta history. We will repeal the single largest act of political dishonesty and cynicism, I submit, in Alberta political history. We will say that Albertans will focus in concrete and practical ways on the environmental challenges that we face, but in ways that do not punish ordinary people struggling to live ordinary lives.

Madam Speaker, with this we move Alberta from the isolation in which the NDP put us where we were aligned with only one province, their socialist friends in Victoria. And now we join the growing number of provincial governments in Canada, who constitute now a majority of provincial governments, defending taxpayers, defending prosperity, defending our energy sector in opposing punitive carbon taxes. Tonight Alberta joins our friends in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, and other provinces that have also opposed the carbon tax as well as the Northwest Territories.

Madam Speaker, today we move from the marginalization of the NDP back into the Canadian mainstream. We move from a policy that imposed pain on people in a recession to one that relieves the tax burden on Albertans. We move to a policy that will relieve average families of up to \$1,200 a year from a tax grab just to pad government coffers. Tonight we move to relieving small businesses of a cost of on average \$4,500 a year. Tonight we move against the Trudeau government's efforts to, with the co-operation of socialist parties like the NDP, increase these punitive taxes again and again.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, tonight we move to make history. Tonight we move to stand up for democracy, for taxpayers, for jobs, for growth, for prosperity, for the integrity of a promise made and a promise kept.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:28 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Rowswell
Copping	Long	Schow
Ellis	Madu	Schulz
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Issik	Orr	Williams
Jones	Pitt	Yao
Kenney		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Deol	Gray
Carson	Feehan	Irwin
Ceci	Goehring	Schmidt
Dang		

Totals:	For – 34	Against – 10
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[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a third time]

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Government House Leader rising.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a great and historical night. I'm so happy to see the carbon tax repeal act pass in this place tonight. I think there's been a lot of progress made. I thank all members of the House for their co-operation. As such, I move to adjourn until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

**The Speaker:** Just seeking some clarification from the hon. Government House Leader. Is he confident in the adjournment time until tomorrow at 10 a.m.?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** It is Tuesday? [interjections] Yeah, I am confident that it's 10 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:46 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, June 4, 2019

Day 8

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

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Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
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Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
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Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
and Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

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Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
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Rowswell  
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Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibilities to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

You may be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 3

#### Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act

[Adjourned debate May 29: Mr. Toews]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any wishing to speak? I see the Member for Calgary-Mountain View rising.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 3. Interestingly, this sort of politics was one of the things that ultimately drove me into politics. I think probably my biggest problem with this bill is that it won't work. That alone doesn't necessarily mean that it's damaging, but I think there's an enormous amount of good evidence that it won't work. I think the thing that makes it damaging is the fact that it blows a gigantic hole in the budget at precisely a time when Alberta doesn't need – I mean, no one ever needs a gigantic hole blown in the budget, but I think it's precisely right now, when we're trying to recover from an unprecedented drop in oil prices, when we're trying to recover from an incredibly difficult time, that blowing a hole in the budget to achieve nothing is the worst possible plan we could have.

One of the other things about this bill is the title. It's one of these things that used to irritate me before I went into politics and actually continues to irritate me to this day. It's all flash and no substance. The title says that it will create jobs, but there's no evidence that it will. Even on the government's own numbers, which are rose-coloured glasses, as I think Mr. Jean put it, it's not going to have the impact they say that it's going to have. Basically, it's a political game. It plays on the fears that people are quite justifiably and reasonably experiencing, and rather than trying to have a difficult conversation and do a difficult thing and transition the economy and make us more resilient to these changes in the price of oil, the government has decided to introduce a bill that sort of waves its hands and pretends to do something but doesn't actually achieve anything.

Trickle-down economics: I mean, I think it's become pretty clear by this point that it doesn't work. I think most folks know it doesn't work. You know, it was an interesting theory. If you look back at textbooks where it was taught in the '70s, there are some interesting examples whereby philanthropists in certain countries who were running companies donated money to put a fountain in the town square. Well, that's fine, but it's not a working theory. It's a story.

It's a thing that happened once. So I think, Mr. Speaker, it's become increasingly clear that it hasn't worked and it won't work.

Interesting backstory on this. One of the first times I remember having a sort of genuinely political thought was actually in the 8th grade. We were doing projects on different countries in the world, and my project mates and I happened to have Brazil. We were working on a project about Brazil, and we were talking about, you know, a situation within South America and the sort of history of how things came to be the way they were. The impacts of the exporting of these sort of artificial, "Give all of the money to the rich and that will solve all of your problems," ideals that had come from the U.S. were pretty clear already at that time.

I think the fact that still today we're having these conversations and these debates and there's this idea that it might work is just wishful thinking, really. These sorts of problems are complex. The economy, especially on a world-wide scale now, is incredibly complex. People want to believe that there's a simple solution, that you just give all the money to the rich and magically that will solve all your problems, but it doesn't, and it hasn't, and I think there's no evidence that it ever will.

What there is a lot of evidence of is that people on the lower end of the income spectrum, people at the median income and below, are far more likely to spend their money in the local economy. People who make median or below, people who are spending the majority of their income in order to meet their basic needs, are going to spend it on groceries. They might buy a car a little bit earlier. They might rent a bigger apartment or even buy a house. Those individuals are going to spend their money in the local economy in a way that increases the local economy. You know, they get an extra \$5 or \$10 a day, and maybe they'll stop at a coffee shop on their way to work and buy a coffee.

That has a tendency to have a very beneficial impact on the economy, but this, of course, is quite the opposite. This is a move to ensure that we're putting that money not in the hands of middle-income earners, not in the hands of low-income earners, but in the hands of the highest income earners. This essentially allows corporations to give larger returns to their already fairly wealthy shareholders, who will likely not spend that money in the local economy. So it doesn't have a beneficial impact.

It also has, in my view, serious negative impacts on social mobility. If you look throughout the world, there's actually a study – I wish I could remember the name of it – that came out recently that talks about social mobility in different countries. One of the interesting things is that the U.S. has one of the lowest social mobilities in the world, and it's precisely because of policies like this, where we cut taxes on the wealthy and we cut taxes on corporations. We give away giveaways to people who have capital to input as opposed to labour to input, people who were born with money as opposed to people who are working hard. That has huge negative impacts.

Scandinavian countries, on the other hand, countries that have strong social programs, tend to have a much higher social mobility – that means that your destiny is much more determined by yourself and what you're willing to do than it is by the situation into which you were born – as opposed to the U.S. and, I guess, the place that we're trying to go to right now in Alberta.

I think the other thing is that, I mean, you can cite studies and statistics until you're blue in the face. People don't always listen to that. But I think what's interesting is that it's not particularly intuitive, this idea – the business exists to do a certain thing, say, to run a coffee shop, right? – that somehow they're managing with fewer employees than they need or that they have the right number of employees, but if they get more money, they're going to hire people to do nothing, apparently. You know, businesses will

expand based on conditions, and in that case, they may hire more individuals, but just ensuring that their taxes are lower I don't think is going to have that impact.

So those are a long litany of the reasons that I don't think it will work and I don't think it's good for the economy, but the reason that I think it's genuinely bad for our society and the negative impact I think it will have is the hole it creates in the provincial finances. I definitely don't think that this is a time where we can do with \$4.5 billion less.

Provincial revenues dropped significantly in 2015 as a result of the drop in the price of oil. Many of you may remember that when we had our election in 2015, everyone was very concerned because oil had dropped to \$60 a barrel. Well, we didn't know what we had coming. You know, it dropped all the way to \$26 a barrel. And that has – I'm sure the members on the government side are discovering this right now – a massive impact on the finances in Alberta. We had a choice at that time. We had a choice to make. Do we protect the citizens of this province, those who had paid into and rely on public health care and education and other social programs, or do we throw them under the bus? We chose to protect them, and I stand by that choice.

**10:10**

You know, I think we're just in a position where the economy is starting to recover. We're just in a position where we can start to head back to balance in terms of our provincial finances and do it without balancing the books on the backs of those who are most vulnerable. Instead, you've decided to create this huge hole. We already see coming from the government side the usual rhetoric that the right wing uses, "Oh, we've been misled; we were told a story; the finances are much worse than we were told they were," which, of course, isn't true.

There are accounting standards that require the government to publish budgets, and in fact Alberta has one of the most transparent budgeting processes in the entire country. The Auditor General was generally happy with our budgeting process. Across the country we're considered the gold standard in terms of the budgeting process. Now, in some cases I don't a hundred per cent agree with that because while it's very transparent to accountants, I'm not sure it's super transparent to everyone else. But that aside, I think there's no question that the budget was what it was, that there was no misleading, no wool pulling, nothing like that.

That isn't to say that the situation isn't incredibly challenging. It is incredibly challenging. I know it's challenging. I'm sure members on the government benches know it's challenging. They've certainly learned it now. When we were in government, we certainly knew it was challenging.

It requires a series of incredibly difficult decisions, balancing one thing off against another, determining what is most valuable and what must be protected, making choices like – there are 15,000 new students coming into school. What's easier to pay back? Is it easier to pay back some money that you had to pay to make sure that those students had teachers, or is it easier to recover from the fact that one of those or some of those students went in and they had challenges learning to read and they needed a teacher's aide? You know, if those children don't get that help at exactly that moment, there's nothing you can do to pay it back. They'll never necessarily recover from that. So I think it's clear, at least to me, that it's easier to pay back some money you borrowed to ensure that that student had a teacher than it is to deal with the fact that that student may have challenges reading for the rest of their lives.

I think it's the same in the health care system. I think that if you get the health care that you need, if you get the medicine or the

treatment or the surgery that you need, at the end of the day, that's something that can't wait. It's something that you can't deal with later whereas, again, paying back money: maybe you can deal with that later.

Infrastructure is another thing like this. You know, for decades we had a huge infrastructure deficit in this province. We were behind on schools, we were behind on hospitals, and we were behind on roads throughout the entire province, just about everything we needed. I'm very proud that we started to make progress on that, but there's certainly more to do.

I think it's incredibly sad that we're putting that at risk, that we're putting those very students coming into school, those very people who have spent their whole lives paying into a public health care system and deserve to have it there for them when they get sick at risk. We're putting the future of our infrastructure at risk for this, which is just an ideological piece of propaganda that won't have the beneficial impacts.

I mean, even on the most charitable reading, even if we're sort of straying almost into the land of the Fraser Institute and the ilk of how to lie with statistics, you know, it still doesn't have as beneficial an impact as it's claimed to have. Even on the best read, what we're putting at risk, at the end of the day, in terms of our children, in terms of our elderly, in terms of the most vulnerable in our society, and in terms of society as a whole – there are a lot of different projects that are funded through the government that can have long-term benefits. I think it's really sad.

So those are my comments, rather lengthy, I suppose, on Bill 3. But I think, at the end of the day, the thing to note about it is that it isn't going to have, even on the best reading, anywhere near the beneficial impact it needs to for the cost, and that cost will be in terms of teachers, nurses, people who are ill, children who want to learn. I think that's really sad.

I know there's been a lot of talk from the government about not cutting those programs, and I'd love for that to be the case, but I think, given the rhetoric we're seeing already, this sort of ramp-up rhetoric, like, "Oh, it's much worse than we thought" and "Oh, blah, blah, blah . . ."

**Ms Hoffman:** Tough decisions.

**Ms Ganley:** Yeah, tough decisions, and they will be tough decisions. They're always tough decisions, but I think we need to say "tough decisions" when we're talking about an actual difficulty balancing off different interests, not when we're talking about: well, we just want a justification for the damage that we're going to do to this province.

With that, I will say that I am quite clearly going to vote against this bill, and I would urge all members of the House to do the same.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments under 29(2)(a)? My apologies. We are just at the second speaker, and as such, 29(2)(a) isn't available. I thought we had proceeded further in the debate. However, we look forward to other questions and comments later this morning.

If I could indulge the House just for a brief moment, I would like to recognize a member in connection to comments made yesterday in the House. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### Member's Apology

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, in regard to comments I made in my member's statement yesterday, I may have used some unparliamentary language. I wish to withdraw such unparliamentary language.\*

Thank you.

\*See page 293, left column, paragraph 10

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Consider the matter dealt with and withdrawn.

Any others wishing to speak to the bill? I see the Member for Edmonton-Glenora rising.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the potential retraction of the comments. I wonder if that's the entire member's statement or any specific sections. Nonetheless, it's always good for people to stand up and say when they were wrong or, in some cases, when they may have been wrong.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Hoffman:** That being said, I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View for the comments that she just made with regard to this bill. Certainly, making a decision today to roll back corporate tax rates by a third is, indeed, a situation that people are exercising before they have thought through, I believe, the potential ramifications of such a decision.

For example, I really appreciated hearing so many members, mostly private members but other government caucus members within cabinet as well, talking to I believe it was a government motion yesterday about how much they appreciate their local infrastructure that provides important services in their local communities: local hospitals, local schools, local government programs that help make our communities from all parts of this province strong and vibrant.

When you make a decision in isolation, like the decision to cut the revenue we receive from corporate taxes by a third without having the full budget and without having all of the other potential implications, I worry that members who paid lovely homage to these local services in their community yesterday are potentially making a decision today to kneecap those services in their own communities and in all parts of our province, quite frankly.

When I visit school groups, I often say, as I've mentioned previously, "You're my boss," and the other thing I say is, "You pay for the services that we all enjoy, all of us." So whether it be through us having government bring forward a tax regime so that all of us have an opportunity to benefit from good public education and health care and a strong policing sector, I would argue – the hon. member previous is our critic for that – that those are choices that we make together.

I also say, "You own the resources of this province," so when we make a choice as a government to set royalty rates, that's all of us collectively paying for our education. One of the reasons I say that is because I fundamentally believe it. The other reason why I say it is because I know – not myself, of course, hon. members – that sometimes students have a hard time getting out to school in the morning and thinking, like, "I don't want to go." But when you think about the fact that you're paying – all of us are paying – and that you yourselves as students are making this choice financially through your contributions through corporate taxes, through royalties to deliver a quality education system, I think it changes the mindset slightly about whether or not you should be there when you think about how we're all investing in this together because we want to make sure that every student in the province, every patient in the province has an opportunity to benefit from the wealth that we share together.

10:20

Today we are making a decision in this reading to collectively cut our wealth in terms of corporate tax revenues by a third. That's a big decision. Some of the reasons that have been given by government caucus members are around us needing to be more

competitive. Well, Mr. Speaker, the B.C. corporate tax rate is 12 per cent, the same as Alberta; Saskatchewan, 12 per cent, same as Alberta; Manitoba, 12 per cent, same as Alberta; Ontario, the lowest in Canada right now, .5 per cent lower, not significant; Quebec, .4 per cent lower, again, statistically insignificant; New Brunswick, 2 per cent higher; Nova Scotia, 4 per cent higher; P.E.I., 4 per cent higher; Newfoundland, 3 per cent higher. So I would argue that when people say, "Well, we need to be more competitive," we are right in the thick of competitiveness right now. In fact, we're either tied with or lower than most jurisdictions. Only two are slightly lower than us, but it's less than 1 per cent.

So for us to be debating a bill that will roll it back by 4 per cent has us in a race to the bottom. What that means for me and for the people I represent and for the people that all of us represent is that we're making a choice to put ourselves in a frame where we can't afford the things that, when I talk to students, I say that they are making a choice to invest in. By making a choice to cut your corporate tax rate by a third, or 4 per cent, you are making a choice to have less resources available for these kids in the gallery and kids right across our province.

There are sometimes ideological reasons why people enter into that frame. Some people talk about trickle-down economics. Again, I would argue, to spill some tea on that, it's only the bottom that gets soaked. It's not the rest that get the opportunity to benefit from those reductions.

There was a really beautiful video made recently out of the U.K. where somebody is talking about tax rates and bringing in big tax cuts for the incredibly wealthy and for profitable corporations. Again, just to remind ourselves, these are only profits in excess of \$500,000 a year. They were talking about how when you make those choices to put that money – all of us have collectively as a province a certain fixed pot of money, so when we're making a choice to cut a third of that pot of money and give it to profitable corporations, we're making the choice to move it out of things that are those public services that we're providing. We're also making a choice that the educational assistants who won't have positions next year or the teachers who may have reduced FTEs next year or other implications will have less money in their own pockets to invest back in that local economy.

This video out of the U.K. has a really poignant story, where they show that if you have \$5 and you give it to every person in the local market, they're probably going to spend it in the local market. Or instead of giving \$5 to 20 people in the local market, you can give \$100 to somebody in their office, and they can choose to spend it abroad, save it, or potentially spend some of it in the local market, typically not so much.

You're making choices not just about what resources are available to those folks, but you're also making decisions about where that money goes down the road because it goes on to show that when you give it to the 20 people to spend in the local market, those local people in the local market have an extra \$5 in their pockets, those vendors, and they continue to spend it in the local market as well. So it's also making a decision about ongoing, cascading implications for where that fixed amount, originally that \$100, will be down the road.

I have to say that I'm concerned that we are making this decision in isolation from the budget because naturally, when you create a budget, you should be putting all of the money on the table and dividing it up. Some people put in the jar system for – I know members opposite often like to talk about a household budget. I think it's reasonable to set up your fixed costs and say, "Okay; for food to feed my family, I'm going to need X number of dollars, for transportation I'm going to need X number of dollars, and for this I'm going to need this, this, this, this" instead of starting by saying,

"Okay; I'm going to cut my revenue by a third, and then I'm going to figure out where to put the rest of it." I think it's important to start with what our needs are, then figure out if there is additional surplus revenue to be able to cut. I think that that would be a reasonable thing.

I also think that when we look at some of the philosophy that's driving this decision and we look at some of the decisions that have been made in other jurisdictions that follow it – President Trump campaigned on reducing the corporate tax rate from 35 per cent to 21 per cent. He said that there would be more jobs. But, as a result, what's happened so far: 84 per cent of businesses have not changed their investment plans at all, and the deficit is actually up 17 per cent to about \$779 billion in the United States.

Another example: AT&T promised that they would create 7,000 jobs if Trump brought in his tax cut. Instead, what they did was cut 23,000 jobs, so a big gap, a net difference there of 30,000 jobs. That's a lot of households and a lot of potential workers. The thing is that he did deliver on what he said he was going to do. He did absolutely cut those taxes. Again, I just want to reiterate, from 35 to 21 per cent, and what we're proposing here is 8 per cent. That's a big jump from where even the United States is with their proposals. Those are a few of the initial points that I wanted to raise.

The other one I wanted to touch on is that many, many moons ago I worked for and then volunteered for the Alberta Community Crime Prevention Association, and one of the things that was clear in working with police officers and others in the community that were interested in reducing crime rates is that when you have crime prevention through social development, not only is it good for those individuals that you're investing in socially, but it's good for the broader community, and it's also good for the fiscal purse. I believe that the projections at that time were that if you invest \$5 now, you save at least threefold down the road if you do it in ways that are proactive and that are focused on getting good outcomes in, particularly, the early years.

I know that when I've visited facilities, the remand centre for example, one of the biggest things, when I was talking to some of the staff there and to some of the folks who were serving time there, was that a lot of the folks who were there hadn't completed high school. What a difference it makes, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View said, to have the right supports there in the early years to help people get on a track where they feel that successful completion of high school creates more opportunities for open doors and for other ways to earn income as well. Again, you take people who are on a balance sheet, costing the province money – of course, it isn't free to put somebody in remand – and instead have them find ways to open their own doors, create opportunities for their own economic benefit, and, in turn, pay taxes back into the system that supports us all and creates good forward mechanisms.

I think the big point I wanted to say is that making this decision in isolation of the budget is irresponsible. I think that it is setting up government caucus and all members of this Assembly to be in a position where there will indeed be – and we've seen the foreshadowing – very, very tough decisions made, very, very tough decisions that will impact health care, education, and jobs in our own ridings. I think that that is not something that probably most of us campaigned on, wanting to close vital services in our own ridings. I don't think it's something that most members of this Assembly probably believe in, but putting yourself and all of us in this situation today, where we're making a decision to curtail our own resources, our own opportunity for investment by a third, I think is highly problematic.

The thing is that we don't need to do this. One of the things that I think of is the definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again, hoping for different outcomes. This has been done over and over again, and the outcomes are bad. Like, the outcomes

aren't the message box, the message box around job creation or whatever the title of this bill is. That is not what any of the case studies show to be the case.

For example, in Kansas, 2011, long-time Senator Brownback was elected governor of Kansas with a large majority in the House, and in 2012 he passed into law one of the largest tax cuts in state history. It was meant to, quote, create jobs and stimulate growth. Sounds familiar. I think that's actually the title of this bill, job creation. What it did, though, was that it was absolutely an experiment because the governor said that it would be a real live experiment, and through this tax cut, certainly, business income would go up significantly. What happened instead was the absolute opposite. The governor moved these tax cuts forward, and he said that there would be 23,000 new jobs, that it would ultimately be revenue neutral. Instead, what happened between 2013 and '16: the economy grew at a far smaller rate than those jurisdictions that didn't do this. So the economy in Kansas did grow 3.8 per cent. The national economy grew 7 per cent.

**10:30**

So, actually, through this race to the bottom by cutting corporate taxes, it actually hurt economic growth compared to other jurisdictions in the United States. Employment did grow 2.6 per cent. National rate: 6.5 per cent. Not only were they taking revenue out of those important services that could benefit all so that down the road they'd have more opportunities for all Kansas residents; they actually hindered their own growth rate.

One of the tiny examples I want to give is that when I was with Edmonton public, for example, I worked with executive search firms who were recruiting talent to this city. They said: "You know, when we hire one person, they don't come in isolation; they bring their family with them. And that family wants to know what kind of good schools we have in this city and what kind of opportunities they have. Oh, and PS, we're recruiting people from the United States who are used to paying private school tuition, and instead we can hire them and pay potentially the same or maybe even less because here they have public health care and public education that is second to none."

It actually helped recruit the best, the brightest, and the most talented to these corporations and to these other important sectors in our province because we were able to say: "We have all of these awesome opportunities here in Edmonton, or here in Alberta, for you and your family, and you'll be saving money because you won't be paying out of pocket for all of these other things that you have to in your current place of employment."

I worry that by making this decision today that we will not only hinder our ability to take that revenue and invest in all children but that we'll actually hinder our ability to attract the best and the brightest. Study after study shows that it is only a race to the bottom when you undercut your own wealth. When you undercut your own opportunities for economic stability and for investing in those important sectors. I think that's the main thrust of what I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Standing order 29(2)(a) is available now if anyone has questions or comments for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. The Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora for making a very tight and concise analysis of the problems and challenges associated with making adjustments to the tax structure as proposed by this UCP government. One area that I think you just sort of started to touch on, but I think bears further explanation, perhaps. I know from when



I was the Minister of Education that, as you said, attracting superintendents and senior management to the province: it was a good benefit that wasn't lost on potential candidates that our health care system and our education system are second to none and, really, helped to attract and entice talent to move to our province.

But, I mean, if you expand that out, Mr. Speaker, I'm just wondering if that same principle doesn't apply to choices around making investments or to move business and to help to diversify the economy of Alberta as well, in fact: corporations, tech businesses, renewable energy businesses, and so forth, attracting people to our postsecondary institutions to set up research and innovation. I'm wondering if that same principle of quality of life is a factor in attracting those businesses here to the province of Alberta.

I'm just wondering if perhaps the hon. member could, you know, extrapolate on that same idea. I know for a fact that it is a factor and something that we use to help to attract professionals here, but wouldn't that same system apply to quality of life for attracting business here as well?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member couldn't be more correct in his analysis. Absolutely, I would argue that's the case. When we're making decisions about things like this in isolation, we're making decisions about our investments in postsecondary. We're also making a decision about Alberta Innovates and whether or not we're going to have the money to invest in things that drive innovation, that work in partnership with business to be able to spur further developments, further technology.

There are often a lot of partnerships between the private sector, through the universities, through the investment of Alberta Innovates to push the envelope and to make sure that we're taking technology from here to the next step. That absolutely attracts people from around the world to look at Alberta as a place of opportunity. When I would tour hospitals, I would always be amazed by how successful we were in attracting and retaining folks from all across the country. We had many U of A graduates who were fantastic. We also had many graduates from other jurisdictions who came to do post-doc work or graduate work or to be faculty members because there was an important public investment in making sure we would drive research and innovation in our own province.

Again, I think that innovation is probably something that all of us think is a good thing. No matter what our political leanings are, we think it's important that we continue to drive to find new cures for cancer, that we find ways to make an organ transplant last longer, that we find ways to make sure that we're doing renewables in a more sustainable way or extraction of our own oil and gas. These are all things that Alberta Innovates invests in in our province, and these are all things that I assert will be hindered by reducing our own revenues so substantially.

Again, there is no need. When we look at other jurisdictions, we are in line with the majority. We are .4 and .5 per cent ahead of one other jurisdiction, and we're lower than many others as well.

So I think that this is something that has been set up as a false argument. While I appreciate the artistry of coming up with convincing titles for a bill, I couldn't disagree with the title of this bill more based on evidence, based on other case studies around the world, and based on the fact that they have been proven not to work. Obviously, I would love to be wrong, but I think that the most important thing for us to do when we're making decisions is look at evidence and research and how that will meet the outcomes that

we're aspiring for. If we're aspiring for job creation, I assert that cutting resources from health and education will not do that.

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

The Member for Lethbridge-West is rising to debate.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 3. One of the things that we may want to look at first as to whether Bill 3 will in fact be a successful economic experiment is to look to the experts. Canada's economic experts are forecasting central agencies – and associated think tanks and banks have in fact released their 2019 growth forecasts. For example, the ATB a couple of weeks ago revised their growth forecast downward for Alberta, cut their growth forecast in half after the election of this government. The Conference Board of Canada is now saying – I believe they reported last week – that we are close to another recession. The Bank of Canada is forecasting sluggish growth.

I know that the UCP used an Ontario forecasting firm for their election platform forecast, but since that time a number of private-sector forecasts have released their forecasts and are not seeing, whatever, the 55,000 jobs, et cetera and so on, that have been privately forecasted by the partisan forecasting exercise. In fact, the professionals who do this for a living such as the Bank of Canada and others are telling quite a different story. For example, the Bank of Canada reported in April 2019:

There have been several fiscal announcements since our last Report.

Here's what's interesting: this was before we moved forward with this Bill 3 exercise. The Bank of Canada said:

Initiatives taken at the federal level and in Quebec and [B.C.] will add to Canada's GDP growth. However . . .

the Bank of Canada writes,

. . . the lowering of projected government spending in Ontario is sufficient to more than offset all of these, so that fiscal policy now represents a net downward revision to our growth outlook for 2020.

This is what happens, Mr. Speaker, when you undertake massive cuts to the revenue side and then undertake a massive restructuring to the fiscal picture in a province such as Ontario. The central bank of the country then can trace a straight line to more sluggish economic growth as a result.

**10:40**

Now, one of the ways that we could judge the effectiveness of this policy, Mr. Speaker, is to look at its implementation in other jurisdictions. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora has touched on this in terms of an interjurisdictional analysis at the state level of Kansas. I don't know if people have been to Kansas, but their level of health care investment and infrastructure certainly does not keep pace with ours.

But we all have a massive example. About a year ago Mr. Trump signed a massive new package of tax cuts into law. Here is what's happened since. The results of a survey published in late October by the National Association for Business Economics showed that 81 per cent of American firms of the 116 companies surveyed say that they had not changed plans for investment or hiring because of that tax bill. Instead, what has happened is that there's been a bit of a stock buyback binge. Certainly, cheerleaders for this law have argued that companies would have incentives to invest more, hire more workers, and pay higher wages. This is the claim that was in the United States to support Mr. Trump's massive tax cuts. The evidence has shown – JPMorgan Chase estimates that in the first half of 2018 about \$270 billion in corporate profits previously held

overseas were repatriated and roughly about half of that, JPMorgan reports, was spent on \$124 billion in stock buybacks, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, we see corporations moving money around to their advantage, but we do not see any evidence for the claims that have underlined Mr. Trump's tax cuts or indeed the exact same claims that have been made by the governing party opposite. They are emulating him, Mr. Speaker, but the evidence does not show that the positive effects will in fact occur. Perhaps the positive economic effects aren't really the point. Perhaps the point is to undermine the case for public investment in things like health care and education instead. And perhaps the point is just simply to emulate Mr. Trump.

Now, supporters of the tax cuts do claim that the economic growth that is created by this loss in revenue will offset their decline in tax receipts. Senator Mitch McConnell, for example, from Kentucky has claimed – and I will not attempt the Kentucky accent, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you.

**Ms Phillips:** You're welcome.

Mitch McConnell says that he is totally convinced that this is a revenue-neutral bill, for example, when the bill first went to Senate in 2017. But not so much. I follow global trends in the United States in terms of a reasonable amount of strength, Mr. Speaker. The fiscal health of the United States balance sheet is, according to the *New York Times*, deteriorating fast. Revenues have declined sharply. The federal budget deficit rose to \$779 billion in the 2018 fiscal year, which ended September 30. That was a 17 per cent increase from the prior year.

Certainly, we know that the leader of the governing party, the Premier, does not mind too terribly running very large budget deficits, Mr. Speaker, given that during the Harper government some \$150 billion was added to the public debt, and in one year alone a \$50 billion budget deficit was run, roughly equivalent to the entire operating budget on the operating side for the estimates that are passed by this House. That's the staggering amount of budget deficit that the Premier of this province was happy to support during his time in government.

Certainly, we know that federal revenues now in the United States ran \$200 billion behind the Congressional Budget Office's forecast for 2018 even though economic growth did mirror economic growth in the rest of the world. The nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget also reports that nominal federal revenues are down by at least 3.6 per cent since the tax cuts took effect.

Now, one of the things, when large economies undertake these science experiments – and that's all this is, Mr. Speaker – is that they can have a destabilizing effect on the global economy. Indeed, we see that when Ontario had undertaken a policy of retrenchment and austerity, it had a downward effect on the growth performance of the entire Canadian economy. Two, do we see the United States – the evidence is showing us that Trump's tax reforms have in fact contributed to global instability according to the International Monetary Fund, especially given the boom in stock markets in the past year.

There are serious risks according to the head of the IMF, Christine Lagarde. She has indicated, quote, that it has an impact on the financial vulnerability, particularly given the high asset prices that we see around the world. The financial destabilization: the IMF has indicated, has said that they are worried about a bigger U.S. budget deficit. The extra borrowing by the U.S. Treasury will force up long-term American interest rates. That also makes the stock market vulnerable to a sudden downward lurch. The fiscal deficit also contributes to financial instability and inequality. That

was the main concern of the IMF last October, when they released a paper arguing that inequality was the thing that was undermining global economic growth and thus, quote, contrary to supply-side dogma, developed nations did not need to choose between progressive tax policies and growth-enhancing ones.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we refer to the global economic experts, the central agencies, the pillars of the Bretton Woods international financial institutions, the IMF, whose job is financial stability through currency stabilization, and others. The biggest issue that they are flagging for the global financial system is, in fact, inequality. What they have found is that the United States could raise taxes on its wealthiest and accelerate the growth of its GDP simultaneously. On the other hand, were advanced economies to cut taxes on the rich and consequently shift the burden of taxation to ordinary citizens or – here's the key – cut public investment, they would risk reducing global growth.

Mr. Speaker, in the context of Alberta, when we are talking about reducing revenues and therefore increasing inequality, we are talking about the retrenchment of public investment in things like reducing child poverty. We are talking about the nutrition program. We are talking about the classroom improvement fund that we know on the ground has a direct impact on more vulnerable children's lives. We know this. We know that it means an extra educational assistant in the classroom for a child who is at risk. We know that that nutrition program helps so many children and families on an annual basis. We know that investment in things like the child benefit program has halved child poverty in this province, and it did so during the context of a generation-defining recession due to a drop in the price of oil.

Mr. Speaker, we also see that the reduction in expenditure as a result of the reduction in revenue and the corresponding inequalities that result from that have very specific effects on vulnerable people's lives. I will give you an example, one that I think lives in the heart of many Calgarians. If we reduce our expenditures in the amount of four and a half billion, we will have less money on both the capital and the operating side for flood adaptation and mitigation. We know that the 2013 flood event affected so many people's lives, not just their livelihoods but their mental health, their family relationships, their future plans. It dislocated many people's lives, often irreparably.

**10:50**

When we do that, we need to be mindful of the disproportionate effects of more frequent and severe weather events on people's lives. It's not just through the provision of transitional funds. It is not just through the ability to help people in some cases relocate their homes, as this province had to do. It is not just in terms of fixing water infrastructure and moving intake valves and all of the things that happen through the Alberta community resilience program, which is through the operational budget, not capital investments of this province. It's not just those things. It's also about mental health supports in the long term. I know that those mental health supports are still ongoing for people who were displaced from the 2011 Slave Lake fire, they are still ongoing for people who were displaced from the 2013 southern Alberta floods, and they are certainly still ongoing from the 2016 Fort McMurray fire. Mr. Speaker, that was indeed the largest evacuation in Canadian history.

Now, Mr. Speaker, also when we reduce our revenues and therefore our expenditures, we are less able to respond and actually help communities that need the help the most. I am thinking here of people such as the good people of the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement, who just lost their homes and their stability and their place to go home to, their belongings, and their social connections

through the recent tragedy that happened to their community just a few short days ago.

It is those pieces of inequality that we put most at risk, and it should be what animates our public service, that reduction of inequality, Mr. Speaker. Government has a productive role to play in that, and you cannot pay for these things with magic. There is no magic in a budget. You must have revenue, and then you must have expenditures. We can disagree on where those appropriate expenditures may go, but I think we do all agree that it is the highest noble cause of the people in this Assembly that we seek to reduce inequality. When the global experts tell us that the path to a \$4.5 billion tax cut is paved by inequality, by individual families having less to be able to build their lives, that should give us pause as legislators.

It should make us ask: what is the evidence to back this reckless scheme to reduce corporate tax revenues by four and a half billion? Who are the beneficiaries of this massive giveaway? Are they already wealthy? Do they need more, or do we need to make sure that we stabilize our revenues in this province such that we can make sure that we are building the kind of province that we can all be proud of and where children have that good start in life? That good start in life starts with a good breakfast at 8 o'clock in the morning.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to Bill 3.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the Member for Edmonton-City Centre on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Shepherd:** Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise and speak this morning to the comments from my hon. colleague. I certainly appreciate the perspectives that she brings to this bill. I know her as someone who does a lot of research. Indeed, that's been something that she's been known for for many years, very thoughtful in how she approaches public policy and certainly is one that brings the receipts.

I know also that she is one that knows about bringing investment to the province of Alberta. In her time as the Minister of Environment and Parks she was responsible for, I think, one of the largest increases we've ever seen in terms of investment in green and renewable energy here in the province of Alberta and bringing the many jobs and that that have come with that and have brought benefit across the province and in the region of her own constituency in Lethbridge. Along those lines, I also know that she was part of the group that sort of worked to bring in one of the more significant agricultural investments we've seen in this province, that being the investment for the new food processing centre and other industry that came in with Cavendish Farms.

I was wondering if the member would be able to give us a bit of a thought and explain a little bit about what was it that attracted that significant investment by Cavendish Farms here in the province of Alberta. Was it about the tax rate, or were there other factors that were involved?

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my hon. colleague for the query. Certainly, through the renewable energy auctions, a competitive auction, we saw a number of international companies of some large size and consequence compete for those contracts, resulting in the first two rounds of a little over \$2 billion in private-sector investment into the province to avail themselves of the competitive, market-based structure that we brought in for renewable energy. That \$2 billion of new investment has already resulted in a number of different construction jobs, new training opportunities for local people, and,

in fact, an equity participation component for the Kainai First Nation.

On to the matter of Cavendish Farms, Mr. Speaker. Yes, that investment opportunity was circulating around Alberta for some time. However, the final investment decisions by the Irvings were made by balancing an offer, essentially, that was coming from South Dakota with an offer that was coming from Alberta, with South Dakota having far lower corporate tax rates. I don't even know if they have one. That might be a bit of an exaggeration, but certainly states like that, their revenue picture is reflected in the infrastructure that you see when you go to some of these states. That is to say, it is not the same kind of public infrastructure, whether we're talking about roads, highways, or water infrastructure that one sees prevailing in Canadian jurisdictions.

Certainly, some of the questions from the investors at that time were around the health care system, the schools, as my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora alluded to. They wanted to know about quality of life in terms of attracting a workforce. They noted that the health care costs for the company would be significantly reduced given that there was no need to have a provision of private health care insurance as part of the overall compensation package for employees. Certainly, that was something that they talked about, and the ability to attract and retain people in a place that is quite desirable to live due to the provision of public services, in particular health care, education, and child care, was key for them. In addition, the province did make some contributions through water and waste-water infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, in order to support our municipalities. Those were the special investments that the province brought forward, and that was the successful package of those different elements that actually attracted that investment.

Now, the Irvings did have a couple of questions at that time over the years about the specified gas emitters regulation and its application to this particular facility and then the transition to the carbon competitiveness investment regulation. Once that was explained to them, they understood what their output-based allocation for this particular facility might be, what their compliance flexibility options were with respect to the carbon offset system, and those matters were not of concern to them, resulting in a positive investment, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, any others wishing to join the debate this morning? I see the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on his feet.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise today to address our conversations around Bill 3, the bill to increase inequality in the province of Alberta.

**An Hon. Member:** Is that what it's called?

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm sure that's what was said.

I'm very happy to have had an opportunity to hear a number of the other speakers on this side of the House because it's always very interesting to hear the depth of facts that are being brought forward with regard to a bill of this nature and the evidence that has been accumulated through multiple countries that supply-side economics is, in fact, not an effective governmental tool for the intended outcomes that are often purported. I, of course, will take some of my time to repeat some of those arguments although the facts tend to fall on deaf ears, I know, because they have a hard time piercing through rigid ideological stances that are part of the nature of the conservative mindset and world view in which change in and of itself is not viewed as a positive thing to be pursued. In fact, I want for you to know that I do understand that the nature of conservatism

is indeed to conserve; that is, to maintain what we know. Therefore, there's an intrinsic resistance to change and, of course, information that may provoke or lead to that change because of the fact that it might cause some dissonance in the individual.

11:00

I thought I would at least pursue this conversation with a little bit of information that might be considered a reasonable source for members of the Conservative Party so that we can, you know, demonstrate that on this side of the House we don't come from an ideological place but, rather, a fact-based place. We'll use those facts to make decisions about progress, just as has happened in many years as we defeat conservative ideologies, going back for literally centuries in Westminster democracies.

We go back and look at the very nature of democracy itself, the idea that the leader was not a Sun King and didn't rule by divine right somehow and that somehow we could have everyday, average citizens actually vote on something in order to make a decision. I can tell you that the conservatives of that time – that is, the people that wished to conserve – were aghast and kind of declared that the notion was ridiculous and that only people who were ordained by God would have the right to rule. Yet we know how ridiculous that is now. We know that democracy is, in fact, the strongest, the best form of government although it has been defined as the worst form of government except for all the others. I think we can cut through all that and say that it is the best form of government.

We also know, for example, that progress has been made in areas such as public education. When it was first introduced in England through social reformers, many of whom the social workers that I work with view as the grandmothers and grandfathers of their profession, they came forward and said that we would actually be able to improve our society by having everyone educated across the board so that they could contribute to the best of their ability to the well-being of everyone. The conservatives of the time indicated that this was something that was ridiculous and that poor people couldn't be educated and that it was a waste of money to educate those poor people and that we should conserve the notion that education was a good for the elite and that the elite were somehow different than everyone else in society. Again, conservatives worked not to protect something but to prevent growth and movement forward, and we've seen that they were wrong in that case as well.

I can go on and talk a little bit about that, but I want to get more onto Bill 3. I think it's important that we understand that the evidence is there, that the progress that has been made in society has demonstrated consistently that having faith in the people and supporting individuals is of great benefit to society, and that taking money and pooling it to just a few people and expecting everyone to benefit is foolhardy, just the same as taking education and pooling it only to a reserved class was foolhardy, just as taking governance and confining it to an elite social class was foolhardy. In the same way, this bill is foolhardy because it makes an attempt to take money out of the hands of everyday people who primarily derive their dollars from and spend their dollars in the local area and pool it in the hands of people who are not confined to and are not in the habit of earning and spending in the same locality.

Now, just to make sure that my sources for my facts were ones that would be acceptable, I spent a little bit of time reading the report from the Congressional Budget Office in the United States, which did a comprehensive study which was published in April 2019, just a few short months ago. Essentially, to summarize briefly, although I do encourage people to go and actually look at this information because it's something that maybe will help you to reconsider the foolishness which you have brought to this House,

their conclusion was that across-the-board tax cuts like the Conservatives are now proposing are not as effective as other programs such as extending unemployment benefits. So government intervention had a higher record of creating more jobs than did tax cuts.

Further, they go on to state in their conclusion that the best mechanism for increasing the number of jobs in an economy is to increase consumer spending, which drives approximately 68 per cent of all economic growth. As the consumers spend, of course, businesses begin to ramp up production to meet that higher demand, therefore creating higher employment. In other words, it's not supply-side economics that actually drives an economy; it is demand-side economics that drives an economy. That means that consumers going out and spending in the local economy are what fundamentally makes an economy grow.

Now, I think it's really important to remember that when a business gets more money, they don't simply create jobs because, "Hey, I've got more money; let's hire a bunch more people" if, in fact, they don't think they can sell the product that they would produce with those more people. They only want to produce just enough product to meet the demand that's available. If the demand is not there, you'd be a foolish businessperson to actually create more product. You'd lose money. So why would you use money that became available to you in a tax break to create more jobs unless the demand was already pre-existing; that is, if you were a sensible businessman, businesswoman.

What the Congressional Budget Office is telling us, then, is that if indeed you do want businesses to grow and you do want them to create more jobs, you need to increase demand, you need to give money to people to spend, and they have indicated in their analysis that that indeed creates significantly more jobs, that – wait for it – government spending works better than tax breaks, given to you by the Congressional Budget Office of the United States of America.

Some specifics from their study that may be helpful in this time here suggest that the across-the-board cuts do have some effect in creating jobs. Of course, sometimes businesses are looking for money, and when they do have money, they are trying to reach more demand, but that effect comes out to approximately 4 jobs for every \$1 million lost in tax revenue. Essentially, in that case, the government is spending \$250,000 per job. I think most people in the province of Alberta would just love to get that money. I'd like to have a job for \$250,000, and I think most of the people here would. Instead, they are suggesting that providing money directly to lower and middle-income individuals tends to create more jobs, bumping that 4 up to 7 jobs per \$1 million.

Of course, they do go on to explain a little bit about why that would be, and that is essentially the notion of capital flight. Now, I want to speak about the notion of capital flight because it's one that's used inconsistently, of course, by the opposite side of the House. They stand here – and they did for the last four years – daily complaining that somehow there was capital flight out of the oil and gas business in this province and that it had gone somewhere else and that that was the fault of the government of the day. So they seem to have some sense of that notion even though they, of course, demonstrate their inability to understand the difference in causality and correlation, as usual. But I can see that underlying the chaotic argument that they present is this notion that they understand that capital is mobile in our modern world. Yet when they come into government, they immediately act as if capital is no longer mobile, that if you give money to these corporations, if you give money to the elite, if you give money to the wealthy, somehow they will create jobs here.

11:10

Yet the evidence is that they don't. Their own evidence, that they present in the House consistently, is that corporations do not do that. They tell us on a regular basis that corporations will go and spend their money somewhere else if they don't like what you're doing here, and then they go and give them money to do that. There seems to be some inherent chaos in that thinking. I'm very concerned that the whole nature of this bill betrays the fact that there's not very strong business acumen on the other side of the House.

The problem here is that they only understand the benefit to their particular political party if they provide services to a group in society who will return that money at the time of election. But we know that what happens when we actually do provide the money here is that the only people that benefit are the political parties that receive donations from those corporations. That does not happen in terms of the larger economy itself. As has been previously mentioned here in the House, when a person of moderate income receives money, the vast majority, up to 99 per cent, of that money is spent in the local economy. That means that not only are they getting the benefits of the money that they have, but they are increasing the benefits for everyone around them.

The nature of gross domestic product is not how much money you have but how that money changes hands within an economy. Therefore, the more often that it changes hands within the economy, the better the economy is and the more that the gross domestic product goes up. What you want to do, of course, is encourage people not to hang onto their money but to spread their money around.

We know, on the other hand, though, that corporations tend not to spread that money around the local economy. They tend to take it into other places. And when they do spend it locally, they often spend it not on jobs, not on creating the local economy but on – what does the American Congressional Budget Office say? – buying stock back. That's what they do. They spend money on accumulating wealth and increasing pots of money for themselves and their shareholders. I remember that the governor of the Bank of Canada used to call that dead money. In fact, that's what this whole bill is. It's increasing dead money.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Questions or comments for the member under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? I see the Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we see in the natural world's functioning ecosystem is that connections and diversity are what underlie a functioning ecosystem in any given natural space. Same goes, too, for economies. The hon. member talked a lot about money circulating within an economy. I think the point he was driving at was that when money circulates more often, then it can be used for productive purpose in terms of reducing inequality and giving economic opportunities to everyone in a society.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member has direct experience with this with respect to investments in indigenous climate leadership. I'm wondering if he could share with the House: when we aggressively and without sufficient evidence reduce our revenues, how can we incent private-sector growth and, more to the point, social development in indigenous communities in this province and elsewhere?

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about working with the indigenous community, as I have for the last number of years in my role previously as Minister of Indigenous Relations. As many people

would know, the community is very close to my heart. I had an opportunity to speak in this House before about many of the significant programs that were created by the indigenous climate leadership program, that was run in this House prior to the destruction of the carbon levy, and all of the benefits that flow out of that into the community.

One of the things, I think, that was very important about the comments that I made earlier was the fact that it had a very far-reaching effect around this province. We can say that all 48 First Nations in this province benefited from the carbon levy and that distributing those dollars around the province had the direct effect of increasing employment in indigenous communities in places where, very often, jobs are not easily available.

In fact, just yesterday members of the Conservative side of the House stood up and argued for a motion with the argument that we need to pay attention to local employment whenever we make decisions in the government, and they all supported, unanimously, I believe, on that side of the House, a motion that, in fact, economic evaluation should be done in a community before government makes a decision to remove jobs from the rural areas. So we know that they understand that government intervention and programs of that nature have a specific and direct effect on increasing employment in areas of the province where employment is hard to come by, and that includes, of course, First Nations and Métis communities.

On Monday they argue that fact, and then on Tuesday they bring in a bill that seeks to do exactly the opposite kind of thing, to take money out of the community and to pool it in the hands of a few who are no longer bound to spend that money in the local economy. I call tell you that studies that have been done around First Nations communities indicate that as a First Nations community rises economically and does well, the benefits to the local surrounding towns and villages also go up, and if we really want the small towns of Alberta, the rural areas of Alberta to do well, we should be supporting the indigenous communities from an economic point of view. How do you do that? You do that by ensuring that they have the resources in the local indigenous community to create jobs in that place, not jobs in Edmonton or Calgary or major centres but jobs where they live, and that will be money well spent for not only that community but all of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for St. Albert is rising.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. You know, oddly enough, the roots of the phrase "trickle-down economics" – as we know, President Reagan's economic policies were dubbed Reaganomics, and they included a large tax cut that we in turn call trickle-down economics. But the actual term "trickle-down" originated as a joke by humorist Will Rogers, and the joke about trickle-down is that it is a decision to favour the wealthy and privileged while being framed as good for the average citizens. So, yeah, it's a bit of a joke.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I would suggest that when we first get elected to represent the people that sent us here, it's a little bit overwhelming at first. I think the bills, legislation come at you fast and furious. You learn all about the message boxes. You learn about your roles on committees, speaking to bills, members' statements, all of those things. Sometimes it's tough to find the hours in the day to do the research that you're required to do in order to make informed decisions on the legislation before you. I would put to my colleagues on the other side and beside me over here – you know, I

would ask them: how much time did you spend researching this to understand what it is that you're voting on? By giving this massive tax cut to already very profitable corporations, what you are doing is blowing a hole in our revenues. It's pretty straightforward. It's pretty simple.

**11:20**

Sometimes I hear people sort of comparing our province's budget to a household budget, which doesn't make sense to me on a lot of levels, but let's just go with that. If your revenue is reduced somehow, you know that you have to make some changes on where you spend your money. Same thing here. When you're voting on this, I get that you're being told what you need to support and what you need to do, but I want you to think about what it means for the people in your constituencies. Mr. Speaker, some of the things that you really need to think about – and I think that we've heard from numerous members that it is going to hurt, that these are going to be tough decisions, and of course they are. You cannot blow this kind of hole in your revenues and not expect there to be repercussions.

Let's look at it on a very small scale, and let's look at what that means for individual people. I think we're starting to hear rumblings from different places in the province already. If you look at schools, for example, there's some uncertainty right now as to how this trickle-down is going to impact schools and the decisions that school boards are tasked with making. Let's say that it results in even a small reduction, and that reduction may simply be as a result of not funding the growth for that school district. Let's say that they have 1,000 new students coming in, and there are no additional dollars, right? Same old adage: well, you make due, you do more with less, tighten up your purse strings, pull up your bootstraps, whatever it is that you want to say. But the reality is that you're doing more with less, so you are diluting those services.

Now, of course, I've heard people say: "Well, you know, put a few more students into a classroom. We have highly trained, highly skilled teachers, educators. They can probably manage." Okay. I'll give you that, but what happens when you have students that have unique learning needs in those classrooms? Perhaps you have a student that has a diagnosis that puts him on the autism spectrum, or perhaps you have a student with a learning disability or a developmental disability or a behavioural concern that is really, really difficult in a classroom setting for just a teacher and maybe one EA to manage so that all the students can learn in the best way possible.

The cuts that you voted on and supported in order to give very wealthy, profitable corporations a massive tax cut – now, keep in mind that we were already very competitive, but your voting to give this massive tax cut will cause difficulties at a very local level, and you will hear about that. I'm sure you'd agree that, you know, your constituents will find you. They will get in touch with you, and they will let you know what this means for them, whether it's parents of students that are in crowded classrooms or that they used to have access to one educational assistant and now you've got three students relying on one educational assistant. That is a reality when you start to cut funding to education.

Persons with developmental disabilities is sort of a department within a larger ministry, Community and Social Services, and it supports people with developmental disabilities to create lives that allow them to live in their communities, work in their communities, establish lives in their communities. There are thousands and thousands of people that rely on these supports, and these supports pay for the staff to support those people. Now there's going to be a great big hole in the revenue, so efficiencies are going to come from somewhere. Typically these are the places they tend to come from.

We've seen it over and over again every time. Cutting supports for people with developmental disabilities in Alberta often doesn't look like your traditional cut. It looks like a finding of efficiencies story, or it looks like doing more with less, and very often what that means is a dilution.

Earlier this week I was able to ask a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services about releasing a report that was created by a group tasked with looking at this PDD system and recommending ways to make it more inclusive for Albertans. One of the questions obviously facing this group is looking at the eligibility criteria of this and deciding: is IQ an appropriate determining factor for people to receive this support? I think we can all agree that the answer will probably be: no, it's not appropriate, not appropriate at all. Really, it never has been, but – so be it – there it was.

By removing that, that will open the doors to so many Albertans that have been denied these supports: people with brain injuries that perhaps didn't quite score where they needed to on an IQ test or perhaps people on the autism spectrum that were difficult to test or, again, their scores were just questionable. You have all kinds of people, people with FASD – and there are thousands of them – that require supports, but they are not being supported right now because of old eligibility. If you make those changes and you open those gates to all of the people that really do need these supports, without new dollars you have created a scenario where there will be massive cuts. Massive.

A cut like that puts people's lives in danger. Not only does it impact their quality of life, their ability to be employed, to have friends, to live in their community, to have the lives that they dream that they could have, but it puts people in harm's way, in very real harm's way. I have no doubt that the people in this Chamber will see that in very short order if this is allowed to happen.

Another one of the things that I actually thought was one of the biggest jokes of all – and it's not a joke, and I don't actually think it's funny – is that we were on a different path before the election. I get it. I hear it every day, over and over again: you won the election, that was your mandate, no need to consult, you're good to go. I hear that loud and clear. However, what the big joke is to me is that we were on a different path. Our path to balance, of course, was about a year longer. But our vision was to go forward in a progressive way without cutting, without cutting essential services like education, like health care, like supports for people that need them, and growing our economy not on the backs of people that need these supports but by diversification, by reducing our reliance on one single sector, by making those investments in greener energy, in that energy transition that needs to happen. The world is changing, and we were ready to accept that and move forward, and we had a plan.

That came to a screeching halt, and now we're going backwards. We are now looking at a decision that will be made that will impact people now and well into the future. I've seen it far too many times to ignore it. You know, I get that members opposite likely don't like to hear this from us or whatever, but perhaps they'll listen to other experts or other groups like the International Monetary Fund. I don't know if that's in your list of acceptable sources, but what they've essentially told us is that this doesn't work. The member earlier referred to the Bank of Canada. They seem like quality experts to me; so does the IMF.

One of the things that they point to that's really quite telling – and what they say is that one of the biggest dangers or challenges facing us is the growing gap between the very wealthy and the poor. I can tell you that this move to once again give a massive tax cut to already wealthy, profitable corporations – I'm not talking about small businesses here; I'm talking about already profitable and

wealthy corporations. We are increasing that gap. We are squeezing and pushing out a middle class that has been squeezed and pushed out for years and years and years. This is what this will do.

I can't predict what this massive tax cut will do on the front lines of services. I can only share my experiences of what I've seen before. I've seen first-hand what it does. I've seen what the removal of a few hours of support for someone with a disability does, what it does to their lives, what it does to their families, what it does to their ability to work, what it does for their ability to support themselves, what it does for their future. I've seen what that looks like. I have a feeling that the members opposite will also start to hear what that looks like because your constituents will let you know. I believe that. They have seen another way.

**11:30**

We had four years after over four decades of one party. We had four years where we were well on our way to showing that there is a different way, and I think Albertans are very smart and will compare very quickly and see that we were on a different path. We had a different way of approaching things – that is, a realistic way to approach things – and not on the backs of people, small people, people without deep pockets, deep connections, and deep access, Albertans, because we believe that all Albertans should decide how this province goes forward, not just the wealthy and connected.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to end my comments. I am sure that the members have heard enough from me right now. I will thank you for the opportunity, and I look forward to any questions if there are any.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very interested to listen to what the Member for St. Albert was saying and all of my colleagues. There have been some very articulate statements on the impact that this is going to have not only in terms of its lack of impact on job creation but in terms of its impact on the budget.

The member was speaking about potential changes to the PDD program and supports for FASD, and, you know, that triggered me to think of some of the things. We talk about a \$4.5 billion tax giveaway – right? – the sort of huge giving away of money, and I think we don't always know, necessarily, what that means. I certainly know that decisions around budget when we were in government were some of the most difficult decisions I ever made. There were incredible programs that, if expanded, could have had fundamental impacts on the lives of individuals in the community. I think of the community court program, that we were starting up, the drug treatment court program, that I had hoped to expand across the province one day. There were an incredible number of these programs, and most of what was the underlying premise of most of these programs is that, actually – and the problem is that it takes years, right? You input sort of upstream money, and that changes the course of lives, and 15 or 20 years later you see a massive impact in terms of decreasing provincial budgets on things like jails.

What I was going to ask the member about is just if she could expand a little on – you know, I certainly know that individuals with FASD have a tendency to come into conflict with the justice system a lot, and they have a tendency to be underdiagnosed because of what the diagnostic criteria are. I just thought that maybe you could speak a little about what you thought those supports might do if we were to spend the money on those supports instead of a tax giveaway.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. I'm happy to answer that question.

First of all, I would like to thank the member for the incredible work that she did when she was the minister. Actually, she had quite a vision for where things were to go, and I'm grateful for her work.

Absolutely, we might not see the impacts of these changes right away, but we absolutely will see these impacts. A really good example of this is – sorry; I'm just going to go back to my notes.

Let me just say something first. I watch what's happening in Ontario, not because I'm particularly interested about what's happening in Ontario, but I do look to Ontario because of the similarities of things that are happening. It's a little bit, at first, maybe coincidental that the Premier of Ontario would say and do things that would then show up here, and the Premier here, before he was Premier, was saying and doing things very similar to Ontario. I have seen the moves that are being made in Ontario to groups that don't have access and influence.

Of course, we know that that government has decided to embark on another failed experiment about investing or giving massive tax cuts to wealthy and profitable corporations on the backs of people that need supports and services every single day. What we're seeing are sort of just cuts across the board, cuts to essential services.

Let me give you one example. You've probably heard in the news about cuts being made to supports for children with autism. Now, these were not presented as cuts. I think that initially it was called a way to reduce wait times or a wait-list. What it was was a very odd means test for families, and then it was a lump sum of money that was given, whether it was to the service provider or the families, to arrange for supports for the child, intervention or supports for the child with autism. Now, of course, the government was framing it as: "Look at this windfall. We are giving, for example, \$50,000 to this particular family to go out and find the best supports for their child." Okay. Now, when we look at all of the years that this child will require intensive supports to get through the school years, to get through those really formative years where they are learning how to navigate life, it was nothing.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members? I see the Member for Red Deer-South standing.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am really excited to stand and speak in favour of Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, to restore Alberta's place as the most attractive place to start and grow a business in Canada. I am a tax lawyer and a chartered professional accountant. I have lectured on tax matters to the Canadian Tax Foundation, the Legal Education Society of Alberta, and CPA Alberta, the organization governing chartered professional accountants. I work with private businesses, their owners, and professional advisers. These are Albertans that work in the real world.

I've listened to the members opposite speak in favour of mediocrity, comparing Alberta to Quebec, citing and recognizing that their corporate tax rates are lower than ours and that that is okay. That is not how Alberta has competed and excelled. I've also heard them compare us to the Trump federal tax changes. They are comparing a federal jurisdiction to a provincial jurisdiction. That is not comparing apples and apples. That is not precise thinking. Taxation requires precision.

My impression of the former NDP government was a government that did not focus on details that impact taxpayers. I remember when the carbon tax was first introduced by the former NDP government. They told Albertans that that tax was revenue neutral. Mr. Speaker,

the government of Alberta is a very complex, sophisticated organization. It is very disturbing to think that a new multibillion-dollar tax was introduced by a government which did not even have a basic understanding of what the term “revenue neutral” means and, further, did not do the proper due diligence to inform themselves prior to incorrectly telling Albertans initially that it was.

Mr. Speaker, when the NDP decided to cancel complex power contracts, they did not even bother reading the contract fine print and ended up having to pay damages in the hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to power suppliers for breaches of contract. This was a government that did not do its due diligence. In the real world failing to do so would result in one getting fired or sued.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the impacts of the 20 per cent increase to corporate tax rates. Alberta, as they should have known, competes with other jurisdictions for vital oil and gas investment dollars for our economic prosperity. What this 20 per cent corporate tax increase did, along with other NDP and Liberal actions, was to make Alberta a less competitive jurisdiction for investment.

**11:40**

So what has happened under this NDP government? Businesses and investors do not stage protests. They vote with their feet, and they leave for more competitive jurisdictions. I personally saw this. This old NDP government governed under capital flight of tens of billions of dollars. Are they proud of that? Mr. Speaker, the very constitution of the NDP states that its purpose was to “establish and maintain a democratic socialist government in Alberta.” Socialism does not work in the real world. During the election campaign I remember participating in a candidate forum at a high school in Red Deer with the former NDP Member for Red Deer-South, whom I replaced, and sharing with students how their parents and our city were experiencing first-hand how uncompetitive socialist governments operate in the real world and not just out of textbooks. I was able to share evidence, just like the members opposite are purportedly doing.

Let's look at some facts. I was able to share with them how Alberta's private-sector workforce actually shrank by about 25,000 individuals during the four years they were in power. That is abject failure. I was able to share how, because of a weak economy, with the NDP, a government that does not know how to compete in the real world, Alberta's debt increased by more than \$45 billion and how in only four years their debts and deficits would buy every single house in Red Deer, Alberta's third-largest city, more than two times over.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP likes to think they are the champion of government services; they are not. While the NDP wishes it wasn't true, government services only exist if there are taxes from private-sector businesses and those who work in them to pay for them. How – how? – can a government be a champion of anything that they have no idea how to pay for? Irresponsible, undisciplined, uncompetitive NDP governments will by and by lead to the collapse of unsustainable government services.

Mr. Speaker, I have sat and listened to the NDP criticize the job-creation tax cut as an attack on workers. The NDP views business success as a zero-sum game. In their heart they think that if businesses exceed and do well, then workers do not. Businesses and investors have sensed this underlying hostility from a socialist government and have acted accordingly. Corporations are not natural persons. Corporate profits are used to reinvest and grow businesses and hire workers.

The NDP conflates corporations to wealthy individuals. That is sloppy thinking. The facts speak for themselves. As a matter of historical fact, the NDP way lost tens of thousands of private-sector jobs in the four years of doing things their way. I cannot honestly

ever recall, not once, meeting either a business owner or professional adviser working in the real world who believed the NDP were good stewards of the economy. Not once. Mr. Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves. This NDP was a dismal failure, and Albertans knew it. That's why they were overwhelmingly fired on April 16.

The socialist NDP government has a philosophy that is in direct opposition to what is required for economic prosperity from a government. It does not understand or know how to compete in the real world. Unlike the NDP losing tens of thousands of private-sector jobs, the job creation tax cut will create tens of thousands of private-sector jobs. According to analysis by leading economist Dr. Jack Mintz, the job creation tax cut will lead to the creation of at least 55,000 full-time private-sector jobs. Contrast that against the NDP's failed record of losing tens of thousands of private-sector jobs.

University of Calgary political scientist Dr. Bev Dalby estimates that the job creation tax cut will generate a \$12.7 billion increase in nominal GDP, a 6 and a half per cent increase in per capita real GDP, and \$1.2 billion in additional government revenue by 2023-24. It is time to renew and restore Alberta as the most competitive and attractive jurisdiction in Canada to start and grow a business. Enacting the job creation tax cut is an important step on that path.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that, I move to adjourn debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), questions and comments? I see the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you. I was very interested to hear the comments by the hon. member about the constitution for the NDP. I have had the opportunity to read that riveting document a couple of times. At the end of the document it goes through a few of the principles and aims of the Alberta New Democratic Party, and I just wanted to read to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of the House here their version of how to jump-start economies. They say:

Socialism is essentially the application of democracy to the economy. Economic democracy, i.e. democratic socialism, assures production to supply the needs of all people.

It gets better.

Decisions about what shall be produced, when and where, and decisions about where we shall make our living and under what conditions, are now left largely in the hands of private interests. The market economy produces transnational corporations, who give private profit priority over public interest, social justice and workplace democracy. Through the efforts of many, we have achieved a degree of social and political democracy.

And here is the kicker.

Economic democracy demands a co-operative rather than a competitive system.

**11:50**

If you need to know anything about the intent of the NDP or any socialist party, for that matter, you just have to read that last sentence. They would like to take away free markets. They do not believe in free markets. They believe in a co-operative rather than a competitive system, and because of that belief system that they have, they continue to push away businesses that function in a free-market economy. This is the reason why over the last four years we had some of the highest unemployment rates in a generation. This is why we had some of the highest deficits on record that this province has ever seen.

You know, the member is an expert when it comes to tax law; he is an expert when it comes to accounting practices. I'd like to ask him: what is the outcome, in his opinion, of applying this kind of economic model?



**Mr. Stephan:** Well, one of the things that I had been very excited about doing as I met with both businesses and professional advisors who advise private-sector businesses throughout Alberta – prior to the NDP I really liked talking about how Alberta was, in fact, the most competitive jurisdiction to start and grow a business. I would see businesses in other areas of Canada seek to come and be subject to tax in Alberta. It's interesting from a corporate tax perspective that having the lowest corporate rate in Canada actually incents and grows the corporate tax base in our province.

It was interesting that, actually, when the NDP increased corporate tax rates by 20 per cent, which, by the way, is a gigantic tax rate increase, and took us away from being the most competitive jurisdiction in Canada to start and grow a business, government corporate tax revenues actually decreased. The interesting thing is that prior to that, corporations that were successful and profitable, because we were the most attractive jurisdiction, would seek to centralize and grow their businesses in Alberta, and that, actually, overall – and the facts again speak for themselves – supported the government surpluses that we enjoyed, that actually helped us fund all of the important government services that not only do the members opposite support but the members on this side and the government support in terms of providing those essential government services in a sustainable, economic manner. When the NDP increased – you know, using the common saying, they killed the goose that laid the golden eggs.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika standing.

**Ms Sweet:** A point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order.

**Ms Sweet:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I just need a point of clarification for the House. My understanding is that the hon. member moved to adjourn debate. We didn't vote on the adjournment. If we could just get a point of clarity from the table through you around whether or not we should have actually adjourned the debate before 29(2)(a).

**The Acting Speaker:** At the time that the hon. Member for Red Deer-South was concluding his remarks, there were individuals standing to be recognized under 29(2)(a), so it looked to be an opportunity for people to take advantage of 29(2)(a) at the time.

Going forward, I believe that I saw the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika standing to make a motion.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill 3.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### **Bill 4 Red Tape Reduction Act**

[Adjourned debate May 30: Mr. Hunter]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to debate on second reading of Bill 4? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, sir. As you can see, we're very close to 12 o'clock. I think we've made some remarkable progress, and I certainly move that we adjourn until we reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

Thank you.

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



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 4, 2019

Day 8

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Walker  
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Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Members, I would like to draw your attention to a small change to introduction of visitors or guests. It will be my intention to read the entirety of the list and save the applause till the end.

We have a number of guests joining us in the galleries this afternoon. Guests of the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, I encourage you to rise as I call your name: Glynnis Lieb, Gary Simpson, Christopher Pappas, Junaid Jahangir. I also see former Member for Calgary-Hawkwood Michael Connolly joining us. Please rise. And – I'm sorry. I had the chance to meet you earlier. I've totally forgotten, and it's not on my list. I'm sorry, but if you would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Connect Charter School in Calgary

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, this past week I had another opportunity to meet with a part of the school community in Calgary-Glenmore. It was a great pleasure to visit Connect Charter School at Clem Gardner in the district of Lakeview. What I saw as I visited this grade 4 to 9 setting was leading edge, inclusive in every way, and an incredible example of what can be achieved in the education of our young people.

Mr. Speaker, in this school the Alberta curriculum is taught in each grade with, at its base, direct instruction to scaffold their learning. In addition, each student is provided with a tablet or a laptop, which they use in every part of their daily classes.

I travelled from class to class, where I saw the video that the grade 4 class produced of their dino museum as part of the history of Alberta curriculum. I saw the grade 6 class producing multimedia presentations of the travels of a water molecule through the life cycle of water. I visited the art room, where students were creating prints, and they told me how they were moving on to silkscreening. And I saw the various projects that the students had produced as part of partners in place, an initiative undertaken by Connect Charter School and Tsuut'ina Education. Next I was shown the work that students have done with robotics and 3-D printing, robots that they have built and 3-D printing that they have designed and coded. That's right, Mr. Speaker. In this school students begin learning coding in grade 4.

These students are being taught the Alberta curriculum, the critical thinking, and the collaborative skills to prepare them for a future that we have not yet even imagined. With the meaningful integration of technology, the end goal at this school is developing extraordinary citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the student body at this school is one hundred per cent inclusive. All learners are admitted, diversity is celebrated, and inclusive practices are promoted and supported. Connect Charter School is an excellent example of the success of charter schooling in Alberta and one of the reasons that I support school choice.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

### Incitement to Hate

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. In 2017 online hate speech in Canada grew 600 per cent, and over that same period the number of police-reported hate crimes reached an all-time high. On May 28 the federal justice committee held hearings to investigate the topic of online hate. During the meeting the MP for St. Albert-Edmonton berated one of the witnesses, Faisal Khan Suri, for suggesting a link between conservative commentators and the rise of hate crimes. Shockingly, the MP for St. Albert-Edmonton chose to quote the manifesto drafted by the person accused of mass killings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. Both he and his Conservative leader still refuse to acknowledge that the witness was in fact correct.

There's a link between online conservative commentators and the incitement of hate. Rebel media stars have been praised by various vile racists and white supremacists like Richard Spencer and David Duke.

Our Premier has deep connections to online sites like Rebel. In 2018 we learned that one of the Premier's senior campaign staff was behind Fireforce Ventures, a business that sold white supremacist memorabilia. Just a few months ago our Premier refused to expel a UCP member who compared a rainbow pride flag to the Nazi swastika at a Rebel live event. This is the same UCP member that the Premier gushed over, comparing his advocacy work to black civil rights icon Rosa Parks.

The Premier vowed to purge extremist elements from the UCP, even promising he'd create a database to track UCP members with extreme views. Perhaps our Premier has trouble recognizing extreme views. Real leaders condemn hate whenever and wherever they see it, no matter the political cost. That takes courage. It is my sincere hope that our Premier will find that courage and do the right thing.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

#### Transportation Infrastructure in Airdrie-Cochrane

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The constituency of Airdrie-Cochrane has over 51,000 residents, and both Airdrie and Cochrane are two of the fastest growing communities in Canada. Transportation infrastructure is being pushed to its limits. Airdrie, located on a major trade route, has 70,000 people, with very little infrastructure investment in the last decade. The 40th Avenue overpass is a major priority, but it sat on the previous government's unfunded list.

Cochrane is in a similar position, having no major interchange in a town approaching 30,000 people. Cochrane is separated north and south by the Bow River, including a single-lane bridge and a train that runs through the centre of town 30 times a day. When one combines all of this with single-lane traffic on both highways 1A and 22, it creates traffic congestion that is a safety risk.

I will credit the previous government with recognizing the importance of this project and beginning work on a design. However, it was repeatedly claimed that this project was in the budget and on the capital plan, but of course we know that a budget was not released for this fiscal year, so it could not have been funded. And since projects in the design phase still require approval, this interchange could not have been listed as a line item on the capital plan.

This mismanagement of Alberta's infrastructure needs is a microcosm of the NDP's overall mismanagement of the province's finances. Alberta's debt now exceeds \$60 billion, and one of the

last long-term debt financings by their government in February was at a rate of 8 per cent.

Our government will manage this province responsibly, stimulate the economy, and clean up our balance sheet, placing us in a stronger fiscal position to fund our infrastructure needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Assembly, if I could just beg your indulgence, with apologies to Ms Stephanie Shostak, who is the guest that I had previously missed.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Eid al-Fitr

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Muslims all around Alberta, Canada, and the world are celebrating Eid al-Fitr, the first day of Shawwal in the Islamic calendar. It marks the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan and the start of a feast that lasts up to three days in some countries.

Eid al-Fitr is an important Islamic holiday for the Muslim community. This event involves many Muslims waking up early and praying either at an outdoor prayer ground or a mosque. People dress in their finest clothes and adorn their homes with lights and other decorations. Old wrongs are forgiven, and money is given to the poor. Special foods are prepared, and friends or relatives are invited to share in the feast. Gifts and greeting cards are exchanged, and children receive presents. Eid al-Fitr is a joyous occasion, but its underlying purpose is to pray and give thanks. [Remarks in Arabic]

1:40

Mr. Speaker, over 113,000 Muslims call Alberta their home, and of them, approximately 2,000 live in Edmonton-Ellerslie. Today, after a month of fasting and reflection, Eid is a time for Muslims to come together to feast, celebrate, and share their good fortune with others.

Muslim communities continue to make Canada stronger, more open, and more prosperous. Today let's celebrate their major contributions to our province. On behalf of the Alberta NDP caucus, to all my Muslim brothers and sisters I am proud to extend our warmest wishes to all those celebrating Eid al-Fitr. Eid Mubarak.

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

### Sikh Community in Alberta

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate Alberta Sikhs on the recent Vaisakhi parades held in Calgary and Edmonton. These annual religious celebrations highlight the birth of Khalsa and the spreading of the message of peace and harmony. I want to thank the Premier and also the hon. members of this House who participated in these important annual events.

The Alberta Sikh community was established over 100 years ago. We have grown to over 100,000 members, many of whom have made significant contributions to the Alberta economy, the richness of Alberta's culture, and the ongoing improvement in the lives of many of our fellow citizens. The first Sikh was elected to this Assembly over 25 years ago.

As most hon. members know, this is a very active community, contributing to many charitable causes. As well, the community's strong connections with its heritages in India foster tremendous potential for two-way trade and future business opportunities. I know that the community is justifiably proud of its addition to the great Alberta family.

Perhaps one of Canada's best-known Sikhs right now is Nav Bhatia, who has been cheering on the Toronto Raptors as they pursue their first-ever NBA championship.

I also want to draw to this Assembly's attention to some dark clouds that are forming over the community. The recent deadly events of four young Indo-Canadians in Calgary due to gang violence and drug wars have created real fear in the community. This House should be aware of the terrible spread of gang violence spilling over from B.C. to Alberta.

Just this weekend I attended a demonstration with hundreds of concerned children, seniors, and youth in northeast Calgary calling on the government to fight drugs and violence in schools. I urge the government to heed their call.

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's graduation season in Alberta, and thousands of 12th grade students are writing exams, attending graduation ceremonies, and making plans to attend postsecondary institutions. Attending postsecondary is expensive, but it's an investment that pays great dividends for the individual, for families, and for our society as a whole.

So when this provincial government interferes with the affordability, accessibility, and equality of postsecondary education, all Albertans should be concerned. Should this government get rid of some of the red tape by throwing out the guarantee that tuition increases must not exceed the increases in the consumer price index, for example, postsecondary education will simply become unaffordable for many students.

Alberta's New Democrats recognized the importance of making postsecondary education more affordable, and our reforms would save an Alberta student at least \$2,000 over the course of a four-year degree. Now, with this new UCP government these savings are in peril.

Also, the graduation gift that this UCP government is foisting on the class of 2019 is a big cut to the minimum wage for young people. As we speak, students are lining up for summer jobs to help pay for postsecondary education in the fall, and woe on the unlucky grade 12s who were born in September, October, November, and December and thus can be paid 15 per cent less than their classmates who were born earlier in the year. Over the course of the summer this will amount to hundreds of dollars less for these unfortunate students. Shame on this UCP government for being so unjust and mean spirited to the class of 2019. This is the last, bitter lesson delivered to the students by the UCP before they graduate, and I'm sure it's a lesson these thousands of students will never forget.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 7

#### Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct honour to rise today to seek leave to introduce Bill 7, the Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019.

This bill introduces changes to the Municipal Government Act that will enable municipalities across Alberta a wide latitude to establish property tax exemption programs to attract investment and get Albertans back to work. This is one part of our government's comprehensive plan to restore prosperity and let the world know

that Alberta is once again open for business. Other jurisdictions in North America have given local governments similar flexibility, but this bill goes a step further in the freedom it gives to municipalities. We know that municipalities are a vital partner in bringing long-term prosperity back to Alberta, and I am very pleased to introduce this bill, that will give them another tool to help Albertans back to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today with the required number of copies of a document entitled *Leitch Is Mostly Wrong – But Also Right – About Immigration*, which I referenced during Oral Question Period yesterday. Thank you.

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

St. Albert, please, is rising with a tabling.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of an article by Mr. Keith Gerein, *Scheer's Kid Glove Treatment of St. Albert MP Sends All the Wrong Messages*.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Madu, Minister of Municipal Affairs, pursuant to the Municipal Government Act the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board annual report 2018; pursuant to the Special Areas Act the special areas trust account financial statements, December 31, 2018.

### Oral Question Period

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

#### Oil Transportation

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker. A Minnesota court has thrown another potential wrench into the line 3 expansion, further delaying the point at which Alberta can expand its takeaway capacity to meet our growing production. The timing of pipelines coming online is a critical consideration in the matter of how long Alberta has to continue under curtailment. Can the Premier please advise this House of the exact information he is receiving from officials about what Albertans can expect to be the new operation date for line 3 as a result of this decision?

**Mr. Kenney:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

First, allow me to inform the House that, very happily, Mr. Speaker, approximately two hours ago Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor gave royal assent to Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the information I received from officials is the same that one sees through public commentary by experts in the energy industry, that due to the regrettable delays in the line 3 replacement project it likely will not be completed until some time in the next calendar year. I don't have a closer date than that, but obviously this is a very troublesome development for the Alberta energy industry.

1:50

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly hope that the Premier can get more detailed information than that. I do know that he should likely be receiving it.

Now, the reason for crude by rail was to provide more takeaway capacity to all players in the market during a period where our production overshot our ability to move our resources, driving down prices to below \$10 per barrel. Now, the crude-by-rail deal would have moved 120,000 barrels per day, costing roughly \$3.7 billion and earning \$5.9 billion in return. To the Premier: with further line 3 delays, why won't you reverse course and keep the oil-by-rail strategy on track?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader and I agree, as do, I believe, all members of the House, that we need to see an increase in crude-by-rail shipments, to increase egress right now and in the foreseeable future. Having said that, where we disagree is that we believe the burden to do that should lie with the private sector and not with taxpayers. We disagree fundamentally with the NDP government's decision to make the single largest expenditure of tax dollars in Alberta history do something that the private sector was perfectly capable and willing to do.

**Ms Notley:** In fact, Mr. Speaker, the private sector wasn't doing it, and what our numbers show is that this is a benefit to taxpayers, not a cost.

Now, in the reality where line 3 is delayed, crude by rail serves as the incremental release valve for a market that has been consistently plagued by bottlenecks. Now, that's not me talking, Mr. Speaker, but, rather, RBC capital markets analyst Michael Tran. He understood that our government was providing medium-term relief while pipelines were being built. The Premier now wants to shut off this valve permanently and replace it with nothing. To the Premier: are you so blinded by your ideology that you will risk further job losses by cancelling the crude by rail?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. This government has had a chance to review the terrible deal signed at the last minute, during the formal campaign period, in desperation by the NDP, where they committed taxpayers to paying billions of dollars for something the private sector was prepared to do, at much higher than the market costs, with nothing like normal commercial contractual provisions. They got taken, but this government will stand up for Alberta taxpayers. We will say to the private sector: please let market forces ensure additional shipment of oil by rail.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, I've got to say, Mr. Speaker, that if getting \$2.2 billion extra is being taken, I can't imagine what the member opposite would call a windfall.

#### Education Funding

**Ms Notley:** Anyway, on to a different topic. Yesterday we revealed that at least two students with disabilities are being denied their right to a fourth year of high school because of financial uncertainty created by this UCP government. The Minister of Education claimed that it was a board procedural issue. That is not true. The provincial government holds all the funding cards. When they don't show them, boards are forced into bad decisions, just like that one, and Albertans know this. Why will the Premier not tell his Education minister . . .

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the Minister of Education will provide information to school boards about transfers in the near future.

**An Hon. Member:** They don't want information; they want funding.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, they do have funding. In fact, they have the highest level of funding in Alberta history and the highest per-pupil and per capita funding in Canada, in fact, I suspect, in real terms the highest per-pupil funding of any provincial government in Canadian history. What we expect is for school boards to properly manage the resources that are made available to them. There will be more information forthcoming.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, last week parents were being surveyed on whether to cut the music program or increase class sizes. This week students with learning disabilities can't even enrol in school. All of this is just the beginning as this government negligently keeps boards guessing about funding levels for next September. To the Premier: how many more of these so-called board procedural issues can we expect as they try to balance the budget on the backs of Alberta students?

**Mr. Kenney:** As we committed to Albertans in the last campaign, this government will maintain or increase funding levels for education. Information will be forthcoming shortly to school boards about the next school year. Having said that, what the NDP did was to dig this province into a \$60 billion debt hole, headed to \$100 billion in debt. [interjections] Do you know what that meant, Mr. Speaker? That meant billions of dollars going to bankers and bondholders instead of schools and hospitals. [interjections] We will not allow fiscal irresponsibility to jeopardize the future of public education.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I might just add that a well-placed heckle makes the Chamber a great place to work; a whole bunch of loud heckles at the same time makes it very difficult to hear the answer.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday 82 per cent of Alberta school trustees voted to call on this minister to delay proclamation of the decade-old education bill. This act will create huge uncertainty in our schools while this government hasn't even figured out whether to support the students we already have. To the minister. You were a trustee until last October. Will you listen to your former peers and delay the legislation, or do you really trust that this Premier knows more about our schools than they do?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The Education Act isn't a decade old. It was passed seven years ago. The NDP said they would bring it into law. They didn't: promise broken. The School Act, which it replaces, is a century old. Unlike the NDP, we are going to modernize the Education Act, which was subject to massive consultations with school boards and all relevant stakeholders. The minister will be making an announcement on a bill that is on the Order Paper that flows from more recent consultations on the modernization of our education law.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for your third question.

**Ms Notley:** Consulting with John Carpay is not the same as listening to 82 per cent of Alberta school trustees, Mr. Premier.

### Ambulance Services in Calgary

**Ms Notley:** Now, the uncertainty created by UCP fiscal stonewalling is also affecting health services. Today it was revealed that officials in charge of ambulance services in Calgary are holding off hiring up to 60 new paramedics in anticipation of orders to roll back health spending. This means ambulances are being kept off the road in Calgary. To the Premier. It took you less than a month to start doling out big tax breaks to profitable corporations, but you can't even take the time to give interim certainty to health care workers so they can protect Albertans. Why not?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, AHS is operating on the budget and funding levels of the NDP. Now, officials have contacted AHS and reported back that there was no gap in service as a result of current vacancies. The vacancies discussed in the documents released by the NDP are normal turnover. They're budgeted positions that are in the process of being filled, and all of them should be filled within a few weeks.

I thank the member for the question.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not what the documents that we released today actually said.

Now, our government announced in December that Calgary would be getting 10 new ambulances and 30 additional EMS staff as part of a \$29 million commitment province-wide to boost emergency services. But now we're seeing a delay in hiring up to 60 EMS staff because of fear about UCP cuts. To the Premier: will you direct your Minister of Health to commit to the \$29 million investment, or are you content to literally keep ambulances off Calgary streets?

**The Speaker:** I see that the Minister of Health is rising to answer.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier said, this is just normal turnover. This is the NDP's budget that they're now complaining about. Quite frankly, we campaigned on fixing the system after four years of the NDP. Costs are up, and results are down. If the NDP are looking for someone to blame, they need to look at themselves.

**Ms Notley:** The documents released say that there is uncertainty due to UCP budget uncertainty.

It gets worse. We are also hearing directly from front-line staff that where managers would historically address staffing shortages by giving paramedics overtime, they're now worried about driving up costs because the UCP government is not going to fund them. We've been told that as many as five current ambulances are being kept off Alberta streets. To the Premier. You know enough about the budget to spend \$4.5 billion on tax cuts. Why don't you know enough to protect ambulances in Calgary?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, something that the NDP seems incapable of understanding is the urgency of re-creating economic growth and new jobs in Alberta, which is the most effective way of reducing the deficit and eventually balancing the budget. Through economic growth we generate additional revenues. What the NDP was doing was strangling our economy: four years of economic decline, four years of digging us deeper into a debt hole, four years of jeopardizing the future of public services. This government is going to get first things first by growing the economy. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Ambulance Services

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, as the Leader of the Opposition noted, the concerns being raised by front-line paramedics are real and very concerning. I've talked directly with these emergency responders. They're telling me that they simply can't keep up. In fact, the prevalence of code reds in Calgary is becoming almost a routine occurrence. A code red means that there's literally not a single ambulance available to respond to an emergency. To the Minister of Health: will you commit to taking action today to properly staff Calgary EMS, or is this just another matter you'll handle in due course?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I think what the member meant was actually a red alert. Or, no. Is it code red? But they're a part of the system. They come and go. They're for, thankfully, a short period of time. I'm not aware of any disproportionate number of red alerts, but I would expect to be briefed by AHS if there were. I look forward to working with AHS and making sure that the numbers do decrease.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government took action to address the rising need for emergency medical services in Calgary, an increase of \$29 million in the budget last year. This minister owes it to his city to see through the funding commitments that we made. Will the minister commit to ensuring that every position we funded for emergency response in Calgary is filled as soon as possible, and will he commit to a further review of the strain being placed on ambulances in that city?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to echo the comments of the Premier that when we asked AHS after the member's press conference, the vacancies discussed in the documents released by the NDP are normal turnover. They're budgeted positions that are in the process of being filled, and all of them should be filled within a couple of weeks.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the need for improved emergency services is not just something specific to Calgary. That's why our government also funded additional ambulance services in Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Sylvan Lake, Vilna, St. Paul, and right here in Edmonton. Will the minister also commit to seeing through those commitments in conducting further assessment of ambulance services province-wide, or is his only priority that of his Premier's tax cut for wealthy corporations?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, it's a little bit difficult to hear the NDP asking us questions about EMS when for four years the Government House Leader and his caucus asked questions of the previous minister about EMS and about paramedics and for four years they did nothing. That's why we were elected. Albertans got sick of that previous government not listening to Albertans to be able to make any changes and improve EMS services for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has a question.

### Natural Gas Industry

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is blessed to have an abundance of natural gas as the fourth-largest gas producer in the world. In fact, approximately two-thirds of Canada's production comes from Alberta, yet we still face challenges, including price volatility, market access, insolvencies, and new competitors. These challenges hurt Alberta's ability to capitalize on the potential of our natural gas industry. To the minister: My constituents want to know: what will you do to bring much-needed stability to this critical industry?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Natural Gas is rising.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon is absolutely correct. We have tremendous natural gas resources in this province. Unfortunately, we are forced to sell our natural gas at fire-sale prices because we can't get our product to market. My office is currently reviewing the Natural Gas Advisory Panel's recommendations to see what actions we can bring forward not just for the benefit of the natural gas community but for all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, please.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the United Conservative government has said that we will work with other governments, regulators, and industry in order to navigate many of the challenges Alberta's natural gas industry is facing and given that appointing Alberta's first-ever Associate Minister of Natural Gas was promised as a solution for the industry in the United Conservative platform and given that my constituents depend on the success of Alberta's natural gas industry, to the minister: what has been the reception thus far from market participants on your appointment?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After four years of apathy instead of action on the part of the previous administration, I can tell you that natural gas producers are absolutely thrilled that this government has delivered on one of our election promises, which was to appoint an Associate Minister of Natural Gas. I guess you could say that it's one more example of promise made, promise kept.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our United Conservative platform states that we will focus on revitalizing Alberta's natural gas sector through a robust energy strategy to unblock natural gas shipments and given that Albertans and especially my constituents who work in the energy industry understand the importance of getting this part of our economic puzzle right and given that our province has been experiencing incredibly volatile gas prices, to the minister: when can Alberta begin to see a fair price for its natural gas?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon I can say that I'm not in the business of predicting natural gas prices. I can say, however, that my office is diligently planning our work. We're going to work our plan, and

we're going to do that by engaging with stakeholders and coming up with meaningful actions that we can implement within this industry.

Thank you.

### Premier's Principal Secretary

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, the right mix is how the Premier described how he would staff his office. Some Premiers look for a mix of public and private experience or perhaps people with strong legal or business experience. The thing is that the right mix usually doesn't include people who oppose human rights protections. My question is to the Premier. Are you willing to enlighten everyone here on why the right mix needs to include a principal secretary, Howard Anglin, who has a long history of anti-LGBTQ positions and even defended a ban on same-sex relationships?

**The Speaker:** Members, I hope that this question is a direct question about government policy with respect to this issue. It certainly didn't sound like that to me, but I'll call upon the Premier to answer.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we can hear that the NDP's campaign of fear and smear and defamation of character continues unabated . . .

**Mr. Carson:** Stop hiring bigots.

**Mr. Kenney:** . . . by their trouncing at the polls.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I very clearly heard from the backbench, what I believe to be the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday, the phrase "Stop hiring idiots." I think that would be wildly inappropriate if that's what I did hear. I would caution members of the opposition when making statements about individuals who are not in the Assembly.

The hon. Premier has the call.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP's campaign of fear and smear and defamation and attacking people continues unabated after their trouncing in the campaign recently. I'm proud to have Mr. Anglin on my staff. Mr. Anglin is the former deputy chief of staff to the Prime Minister of Canada, a lawyer called to the bar in New York, has acted as a solicitor in England, and is a brilliant man who's run a think tank. I'm delighted to have him on our side.

**Member Irwin:** It's not fear and smear when you're talking about our community.

Given that last year the Supreme Court ruled that Trinity Western University's community covenant that banned any intimacy outside of heterosexual marriage is discriminatory and put LGBTQ students at risk of significant harm and given that the same day as this ruling the same principal secretary took to Twitter to describe the Supreme Court decision as "one of the worst . . . decisions in recent memory," my question is to the Premier. Do you agree with your top adviser's description, and would you allow universities in Alberta to discriminate against LGBTQ students?

2:10

**Mr. Kenney:** Now the NDP's penchant for character assassination extends to attacking lawyers who comment on judicial decisions, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the hon. member that the British Columbia Court of Appeal ruled differently than the Supreme Court on the same matter. Will that member now stand up and engage in defamation against the members of the British Columbia Court of

Appeal? I for one respect the decisions of our judges and respect the opinions that lawyers may have on judicial precedents.

**Member Irwin:** I'd like respect for members of our community.

Given his principal secretary's clear disregard for the rights of LGBTQ students, can the Premier tell the students just how much influence Howard Anglin has had over ideological moves like dismantling the conversion therapy working group and rolling back protections for queer and trans students so they can be outed?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, all of that is ridiculous, but the good news is that Albertans in their great common sense understand how to filter out the politics of fear and smear that emanate daily from the NDP. That is why that party was so convincingly repudiated by Albertans just a few weeks ago. This government and the United Conservative Party stand for the human dignity of all people regardless of . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** We will have order.

**Mr. Kenney:** You hear the anger machine. They just don't know how to stop, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to defend dignity for all Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, it gets worse with this Premier's principal secretary. When Conservative leadership candidate Kellie Leitch was criticized for campaigning on the radical, hate-driven idea to screen immigrants for, quote, anti-Canadian values, the Premier's principal secretary said not to criticize her and that the backlash was, quote, overblown. To the minister of immigration: will you condemn the comments from Mr. Anglin and promise this House that he will have no say over immigration policies adopted by your government?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, what the NDP has engaged in here is nothing less than character assassination against a distinguished Canadian lawyer, a former deputy chief of staff to the Prime Minister of Canada, who, I can assure you, was my chief of staff as minister of citizenship and immigration when I welcomed 1.3 million permanent residents to Canada, more than any immigration minister in Canadian history. I'm proud of that record and how Mr. Anglin helped us to welcome so many newcomers to this country.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, given that Howard Anglin also wrote that letting people's grandparents immigrate would "impose a higher burden on the Canadian healthcare and welfare systems," my question is again to the minister of immigration. Are you also against letting grandparents immigrate to Canada?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, apparently the NDP's approach to character assassination now comes to mischaracterizing and attacking political staff. The members of this Legislature, the members of this cabinet are the ones who are . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Members, we heard the question; we'll hear the answer. You may not agree with the answer, but I will hear it.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, apparently their humiliation in the last election did not cause the NDP to reflect for one moment on how their politics of fear and smear and personal destruction are so profoundly distasteful to Albertans. If the member wants to talk about federal immigration policy, I'm happy to do that with him any time. I'm proud of my record in that respect.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, given that it just keeps getting worse with Howard Anglin's record of perpetuating white nationalist sentiments, similar to the things that resulted in the resignation of candidates during the recent election, does the minister think these comments are acceptable, or will he request that the Premier fire his new top adviser?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, that question was absolutely vile. If the member were to repeat that outside, I believe it would constitute a prima facie case of defamation. Members cannot abuse the privilege of this place to drag into the mud the names of reputable people who are serving the Alberta public. I repeat, Mr. Anglin served as my chief . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Members, I think this will be my third or fourth interjection with respect to hearing the answer to a question.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Anglin worked as my chief of staff, and we welcomed over 1.3 million permanent residents to this country. Mr. Speaker, if what we are going to see from the NDP for the next four years is more of this kind of politics of character assassination, I'll tell you that their repudiation in the next election is even going to be more serious.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has a question.

**Ms Notley:** What you will see is us standing up for human rights, always.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Grande Prairie has the call.

#### Highway 40 Twinning

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Minister of Transportation. The twinning of highway 40 is critical in providing safe passage for workers to the many job sites south of the city. Job creation and economic development are key priorities of this government. Given that significant investment and subsequent job creation are proposed for the area south of Grande Prairie, further congesting this highway, will the minister confirm the commitment of this government to the project?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation is rising to answer.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for the question. I recognize that highway 40 is a valuable contributor to Alberta's economic success and that the area south of Grande Prairie is an important driver in the region and for the province. The proposed project is currently identified as unfunded on the capital list and is being considered alongside the rest of the transportation projects. While the capital plan hasn't been set, we can confirm that highway 40 is under careful consideration.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given the financial situation Alberta now faces as a result of the former government's mismanagement, which you just mentioned, and given the potential impact of those financial constraints on key projects throughout the province, affecting both the Infrastructure and Transportation budgets, can the minister confirm that the highway 40 twinning, including the bridge, is a priority and will go ahead this year, and can the minister assure the people of Grande Prairie that this project will not be further delayed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member, a second bridge over the Wapiti River is included in the proposed twinning project for highway 40 south of Grande Prairie. Engineering, design work started in 2017. The next steps are land acquisition, environmental approvals, and moving utilities. We expect construction, when the project does go ahead, to take three or four years because it's a fairly big project. It's being considered alongside the rest of our important transportation projects. The capital plan has not been set, but I will again assure the hon. member we will take this very seriously.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that proposed projects like those by Nauticol Energy and the tri-municipal development site, once initiated, will both increase the traffic and congestion currently experienced on highway 40 and given that the section approved for twinning is less than 20 kilometres in length, can the minister outline or expand on what other measures and improvements are being considered to improve the safety for workers, tourists, and all Albertans on this highway?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member's advocacy is to be commended. I can confirm to the member that work is under way to pave 56 kilometres of highway 40 right now south of Grande Prairie between the Kakwa River and the Canfor intersection. The work includes nine passing lanes, over 26 kilometres in length, two safety rest areas, seven intersection improvements. When completed in 2020, it will significantly improve safety for all highway users, including tourists and business operators. As far as that goes, we encourage all Albertans to drive safely and follow the signs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is rising.

#### Conversion Therapy Working Group

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been nearly a week since I met with the Minister of Health in hopes of getting answers on why he cancelled the Conversion Therapy Working Group. Now, I understand why the minister may not want to keep me on the working group, but his stonewalling of the other members makes no sense. All they have heard is that the minister will get back to them in due course. To the minister: plain and simple, what is the status of the working group?

2:20

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, usually when I repeat things, it gets reported by our friends in the gallery above. As a government we oppose conversion therapy, and I want all Albertans, especially those in the gender and sexual diversity community, to understand this, that if anybody has any information about this abusive practice occurring in our province, my office wants to be able to work with them to make sure that that is reported to the correct authorities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I am joined today in the House by members of the Conversion Therapy Working Group and given that these people have volunteered their time to work on a strategy to ban this harmful practice, is the minister really trying to suggest that their concerns are unwarranted and that they have wasted their time?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'm looking forward to working with anybody who has any information about this abusive practice occurring in our province and making sure that it's reported to the correct authorities, as I've said at the meeting with the hon. member as well as Dr. Lieb, and this extends to all members of that committee. For anyone who wants to meet with me and be able to discuss any conversations that have occurred, any recommendations people have about future legislation, anything related to conversion therapy, my door is always open. It continues to be open for those members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is rising.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister likes to dole out talking point after talking point while no real action is taking place and given that getting back to members of the Conversion Therapy Working Group in due course just won't cut it, will the minister agree to take another meeting this afternoon with the members of the working group that have joined us here today in the Legislature?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important for us to remember that for four years we had the NDP telling us that this was not an issue, that this practice does not occur in the province of Alberta, that for four years they did nothing on this issue until weeks before the campaign. Really, the group only met twice. Their third meeting was cancelled because they called the campaign, and that's why they weren't able to continue their work. I think Albertans see through what was happening with the calling of that working group, and they see that that previous government really didn't take this issue seriously.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

#### Postsecondary Tuition and Noninstructional Fees

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government worked very hard to reduce costs with the tuition freeze and then a legislated cap on increases at the rate of the consumer price index. This would save an Alberta student an average of \$2,000 over a four-year degree. Now, we know that the Conservatives have a history of making cuts to postsecondary institutions and then passing the bill on to students through tuition increases. I ask the Minister of Advanced Education: will you commit to keeping the tuition cap in place for the sake of Alberta students?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As it relates to tuition, as all members of this House will know, over the last four years there has been a tuition freeze in place. We're continuing to work with different stakeholder groups. In fact, later this afternoon I'm having a meeting with the executive of the Council of Alberta University Students to get a better understanding from their perspective to make sure that we can create a sustainable postsecondary education model for now and into the future.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, given that the word "tuition" was not even mentioned a single time in the UCP platform and given that the tuition policy we developed involved a substantial consultation with students, including an increase but just to the consumer price index, I ask the minister now: will you commit today that students will be fully informed about the plans to increase tuition fees and make programming cuts in the province of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our student groups, of course, will always be involved and informed in all aspects of decision-making as we look to move forward to renew postsecondary education in the province of Alberta. We've heard loud and clear from our students that one of the things that they need the most, one of the things that they are looking for is a good, high-paying job at the end of their degree, and we're going to work hard to make sure that that happens.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, given that we know that in the past institutions have circumvented tuition rules by increasing mandatory noninstructional fees and given that the legislation grants to students at this time meaningful input on fees, including a veto, to the same minister: will you maintain the student veto on noninstructional fees here in the province of Alberta?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as we look towards renewing postsecondary education, one of our top priorities is going to be to ensure that our graduates have incredibly high-paying jobs, the best quality jobs possible within the province of Alberta. We're going to work hard to make sure that that happens. We want to get a better understanding of the labour market impacts of degree programs, and we want to ensure that when a new degree program is created or offered, our institutions are giving due consideration to the labour market demands for those programs. We need to make sure that there are jobs now and well into the future for these programs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie is rising with a question.

#### Foreign Qualifications and Credentials

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a land of opportunity. People come here from all over the world to live, work, and raise a family. My constituency of Calgary-Currie is a diverse community, many of whom are new Albertans that came here seeking a better life. Many of these newcomers also came to Alberta highly qualified across different professional fields. Minister, can you please tell my constituents what our government's plan is to help these skilled workers get their credentials recognized and work in their rightful professional fields?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Currie for the question. This is a very important topic and one that I'm glad to address in this House. Recognizing foreign credentials in a speedy fashion will allow foreign-trained professionals to work at the levels they are capable of. That is why our government will introduce the fair access to regulated professions and trades act to help speed up certification and allow newcomers to fully contribute to the economy. With this



support we believe that more talented newcomers will have the opportunity to contribute fully to our province.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the process for getting foreign credentials is often arbitrary, where workers could be left waiting for years for a decision, and given that these new Albertans are often forced to find alternative employment or lower paying jobs to feed and clothe their families while regulatory bodies can take years to make a decision, Minister, my constituents want to know: what is the timeline for getting these foreign credentials recognized and getting newcomers back to work in their rightful professions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will be introducing the fair access to regulated professions and trades act very soon. This legislation will ensure fairness in the registration process of foreign-trained individuals who wish to work in a regulated profession or designated trade while maintaining Alberta's professional standards. This act will specify a quick timeline for getting an interim decision and indicate whether the applicant requires upgrading, bridging, additional examinations, or work-experience hours under supervision.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Speaker. Given that this province has wasted a tremendous amount of human capital while skilled new Alberta workers wait to have their credentials recognized and given that in the past these decisions have not always been fair and transparent, with some workers being denied without even knowing why, Minister, can you please tell my constituents how our government plans to work with different professional licensing groups to ensure that this process is fair and transparent?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, our plan is to work collaboratively with regulators to streamline, simplify, and accelerate their processes wherever possible. We need to make sure that there are efficient ways for new Albertans to earn the qualifications that they need so that they can work in their chosen field and that these processes are fair, objective, impartial, and transparent. To help achieve this, we will establish a fairness for newcomers office to lead this work. As I said at the outset, our first approach is to work collaboratively with the regulatory organizations to achieve our goal of full economic integration of newcomers.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Manning has a question.

### Supervised Drug Consumption Sites

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Kym Porter, a Medicine Hat mother who lost her son to an overdose three years ago, has launched a petition to stop the funding freeze on supervised consumption sites being pushed by this UCP government without any consultation. Ms Porter said that this Premier is making, quote, an ethical and morally wrong decision. To the Premier: will you rise in this House and attempt to explain to a family survivor of addictions how exactly it is that you know better than her?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government committed full support for continuum of care for Albertans that ranges from harm reduction to recovery. Let me make that point again. We not only continue to support that; we are committed for another \$100 million for a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy.

**Ms Sweet:** The strategy is safe consumption sites.

Given that I've seen countless survivors of addictions come out in favour of these supervised consumption sites, will the Premier and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions commit to sitting down with a group of these survivors immediately, given that their funding freeze has come without any credible input from these advocates? I'll be happy to arrange it for you.

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This hon. member I think is a social worker, too. I would draw to her attention that as a social worker you understand that people's needs differ, their readiness differs. When we want to help people, we want to create a continuum of care. That includes supervised consumption sites. If one is going to be so passionately talking only about one service, one intervention, that's not what we need to do.

**Ms Sweet:** You're right. I am a social worker, and I know that you have to meet people where they're at, which means that these people will die without these sites.

Given that the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has said that he expects the review he's ordered of supervised consumption sites to result in a review for him to read, given that all this sounds like another secretive health care decision from this UCP government that they will make in due course, will the associate minister commit that the survivors of addictions will have direct input to his report? Will he tell us who he's picked to be on this review and, frankly, tell us anything about this review?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the opposition had a chance to be government, they picked and chose what to do. But this government is committed to the full continuum of care for Albertans. We're going to provide a comprehensive strategy that will address the broader needs of people who need access to treatment and who need to get help for recovery.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition has a question.

### Conversion Therapy Working Group (continued)

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Health minister met with the chair of the former conversion therapy working group and created more questions than answers. When he was asked about them, he repeated standard talking points that were, quite frankly, embarrassing. Today he said that his door is always open, but he hasn't answered the question. They're all up there listening to this

conversation. Will you commit to meeting them today, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Shandro:** Yes, I actually just already sent a note to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. You know, if that works for their group, then after question period I look forward to being able to make that work, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Notley:** I'm very pleased to hear that, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Notley:** Now, given that this group has been working diligently on the very, very serious issue of conversion therapy and the fact that it creates many, many victims across this province and, quite frankly, across the country, will the Health minister stand up and commit to moving forward with the work of this conversion therapy group?

**The Speaker:** We'll note the point of order at 2:34.  
The Minister of Health, please.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Leader of the Opposition said that I was repeating talking points. Unfortunately, the most important things I said before and after what was clipped by our friends in the media were, first of all, that we oppose conversion therapy and, second of all, that my door is open. I want to work with people who do have concerns with conversion therapy happening in the province and with making sure that's reported to the correct authorities. They want to ignore that, though. They want to ignore everything that we are saying about that issue. As I said, I'm happy to meet with the remaining members of the committee that I haven't met with who are here today.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for your final supplemental.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, given that conversion therapy is such a hurtful, assaultive practice on those poor young people, primarily, who are subjected to it, will the minister commit to maintaining the status of this conversion therapy working group and implementing the recommendations that they make within the next six months? Yes or no?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, for four years the previous government did nothing on this issue. They kept on telling us that it doesn't occur in this province, and I think Albertans see through what the previous government did in the weeks before the previous campaign in starting a working group.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a group that was appointed by ministerial order. This is not a group that was appointed by order in council. This was a group that was informally, on an ad hoc basis, formed on a time-limited basis for five months. I think Albertans see through what the previous government did on this issue.

### **Wildfire Prevention and Mountain Pine Beetle Control**

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, right now there are forest fires across the province, some of which are in my constituency of West Yellowhead. It appears that this is a common occurrence in the month of May. My constituents are asking how our government plans to protect their communities going forward. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: will your department consider

establishing and maintaining a fire ban or restrictions until after the Victoria Day long weekend, when dry conditions in the province generally improve?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the Member for West Yellowhead for the question. Our firefighters are doing everything possible to fight the fires in your area and across Alberta. Right now there are 29 firefighters and two pieces of heavy equipment fighting the fires in Edson. When it comes to fire bans, they are re-evaluated weekly, sometimes on a daily basis. They are a very important tool to engage with people. We want Albertans to go out into these public areas, use our forests to go quadding, to go dirt biking. We need that engagement between them.

Thanks.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, given that the forestry industry is a significant employer in my constituency and given that there are mounting concerns regarding the pine beetle and its contribution to the forest fire issues and given that the previous government left much to be desired with the pine beetle strategy, can the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry tell me how our government will make changes and improvements to the existing pine beetle strategy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the mountain pine beetle is a very serious issue, as the member pointed out. Last year we did see a terrible increase near Calgary, Rocky Mountain House, Whitecourt, and Edson, but this government is committed to working to slow the spread of the mountain pine beetle. That's why in our platform we committed \$5 million extra, up to \$30 million, to help fight with this initiative.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, given that in my constituency of West Yellowhead we have Jasper national park, which has been decimated by the lack of a pine beetle strategy, and given that a lack of action in the park has left other parts of my constituency vulnerable and given that the pine beetle is a pan-Canadian issue, how will the provincial government work with its federal counterparts on minimizing the effects of the pine beetle infestation going forward?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for that very important question. Since 2006 the province of Alberta has spent nearly half a billion dollars combatting the mountain pine beetle. To date since 2006 the federal government has only invested \$18 million, and so far this year there has been zero funding from the federal government. This is not just an Alberta issue, as the member stated. This is a pan-Canadian issue, across the country, and we will work with the federal government to make sure that they can help, partner with us.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I understand that the points of order have been settled in the usual ways and means. As such, they've been withdrawn.

2:40

### **Orders of the Day**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in approximately 30 seconds I think we will begin debate on Bill 4.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 4 Red Tape Reduction Act

[Debate adjourned June 4]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe the Member for Edmonton-Decore is rising to debate.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in this Chamber and bring forward the voices of Edmonton-Decore and talk about the bill that's in front of us today, Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act, a bill that, quite frankly, contains no targets, contains no timelines, and doesn't even define what the government considers to be red tape.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

This bill does, however, give the associate minister the ability to create new regulations and amend existing ones. Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I think that that in itself is just red tape. I think it's probably a little bit important to look at some of the work that has gone on around red tape. We have seen British Columbia do some work on this. We've seen Manitoba do some work on this. We've also seen the Ontario government do some work around red tape. I'm sure everybody's always very open-minded in terms of reducing a burden. Certainly, when we have the chance to reduce those things in a way that's responsible, in a way that doesn't put people in jeopardy or in harm's way, and it certainly doesn't affect things like our environment, then absolutely we will need to look at those very closely. But I always have to bring about that little bit of caution.

When we look at 2011, Harper announced the launch of a Red Tape Reduction Commission. The commission called on the government to take action on reducing burden on business, making it easier to do business with regulators and improving service and predictability. In 2015 legislation was brought forward to establish a 20 per cent red tape cut and a one-for-one – meaning, of course, that every new regulation burden proposed must be matched with an equivalent burden somewhere else. Now, when we get a little bit into, “Well, we have to trade one for one,” again, that's where my concern starts to come in: why are we in such a rush? “Well, we have to bring this in. It's really important. You know, we were elected on this.” Do we start to put on blinders or maybe our vision gets a little tunneled just so we can say: “Boom. Yes, we've managed to reduce once.” We have to be very, very careful about what we're doing.

Some of the failures I would just like to highlight here. When Harper gutted the regulatory framework that protects lakes, rivers, and groundwater by allowing a loophole in the metal mining effluent regulations of the Fisheries Act, this allowed mining companies to dump toxic waste into lakes and reclassified healthy lakes as tailings impoundment areas, which means that they were no longer protected. Again, when I was talking about if we're going to be removing regulations that maybe puts the environment at risk, this would certainly be one of them. Sandy Pond in Newfoundland has been destroyed under this loophole, and Environment Canada has released the names of 29 natural bodies that mining companies have applied to use as toxic waste dumps.

One other piece that I would like to highlight is around food inspections. There was a cut of \$56 million to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency resulting in 100 fewer inspectors, a reverse staffing measure put into place as a response to deadly listeriosis outbreaks in 2008, in which Canadians died. Again, here's what I'm

talking about. The decisions we make, sort of this, “We've just got to get it done; we've brought something in, so we have to remove one,” ended up putting people at risk, Madam Speaker. We absolutely cannot do these kinds of things.

If we look to B.C., one of the failures around money laundering, reports indicate that \$7 billion in dirty money has flowed through the British Columbia economy, \$5 billion of which is in real estate, which inflated prices and hurt consumers. Again, here we are going to that thing, what was, you know, a noble effort, to begin with, around reducing red tape. Some of the members who were in the last Legislature used to love to absolutely just pound on the unintended consequences, Madam Speaker.

Here's a really good one on child labour. In 2003 the B.C. Liberal government lowered the working age to 12 and removed the permit system, effectively deregulating child labour in the province. This put the health and safety of children at risk. There was a dramatic increase in annual payments for accepted disability claims related to children ages 12 to 14 injured on the job, and since 2009 nine young people were designated long-term disabled, or LTD, as a result of work-related injuries sustained when they were under the age of 15. In total, WorkSafeBC has paid out over \$1.1 million in disability claims for 179 children injured on the job between 2003 and 2013.

We can talk about environmental deregulation. We can talk about out in Ontario where Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act sets targets of 25 per cent reduction in regulation over four years. One of the failures, just to quickly go through those, was to loosen the ratios for children in daycare. There were restrictions put in place after a number of tragic deaths of children. Now we're putting children at risk again.

So as we move forward on this quest, I guess we could almost say, to reduce red tape, we need to be very, very conscious about what it is we are removing and the effects that it may have past that point. I would feel a lot better if we maybe had some clarity around what the government might be looking at in terms of what red tape looks like, what kinds of timelines they are looking to do.

I would like to draw attention around the reporting of this. I think simply to report once a year on something that you've already done might not necessarily be a good idea. I think that by posting some of the things that you're looking at, Albertans can see in real time what the government is considering. One of the things that we've heard is that they want to hear from Albertans, they want to hear from businesses, they want to hear from industries. This gives them an opportunity to make their input known as to whether this really would be a good idea.

When we look at things in the bill around lowering the wage of persons under 18 years of age, I'm not too sure if somebody considered the red tape around tracking when they're in school, when their birthday is. If they turn 18, do they start getting \$15 an hour at that point in time? You know, are they tracking whether people are quitting school? This sounds like a big ball of red tape that's starting to build here.

I'm looking forward to maybe getting into Committee of the Whole on this bill, talking a little bit more about some of the things that we might be able to do in terms of amending this bill a little bit. I do remember members opposite sometimes talking about the size of bills in the last Legislature. Some, of course, were extremely large, and they thought it was very, very cumbersome. Of course, I also remember them making fun of some of the bills that were a lot smaller. When I look at this bill, it's two pages long, with one page simply being a preamble, so I'm a little bit worried that this is a little bit hasty in terms of legislation that's been brought forward. But I do look forward to the debate on this, how we might be able to strengthen it, how we might be able to add some timelines, maybe

increase some of the reporting a little bit, and around the disclosure that Albertans get to see as the regulations come forward.

At this point I'm happy to take my seat and listen to the debate a little more. Again, I look forward to Committee of the Whole on this.

2:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 4, what there is of it. I will be voting against and urging members to vote against this bill.

I think just for those watching, if there are any, it's probably worth just running through the bill really quickly. The bill begins with a definition section, as most bills do, defining minister. Section 2 forces the minister to generate a report every year. Section 3 says that the Lieutenant Governor in Council is able to amend regulations even if they're a ministerial order. Section 4 enables the minister to make regulations. So, in fact, this bill doesn't cut anything, and it doesn't say anything about what it intends to cut. In fact, I might call this bill itself red tape.

I think that one of the first things to note about the bill is that most bills, most legislation in this House tend to begin with a definition section in order to define what it is the bill is planning to do or what the Legislature wants to do with the bill. I think it's interesting that in the Red Tape Reduction Act one doesn't find a definition of red tape, so it remains, I think, unclear what exactly is meant by red tape.

Now, perhaps just for those less familiar with regulations – I've spent the last several years reading them extensively – we have regulations in Alberta on many different subjects. For instance, there are regulations dictating the safety standards that you must have for your elevator in your building. Some might define these as red tape, but I would say that ensuring that an elevator is properly functioning is actually a fairly important function of government. We have regulations certainly around environmental standards, for instance – you can't, for instance, dump mercury directly into a river – again I would say fairly important regulations.

We have health and safety regulations which govern not just different government facilities but things like restaurants at which we eat. Those regulations tell companies the standards to which they must keep their kitchens if they're going to feed members of the public. As someone who frequents food establishments I think that that's a fairly important regulation.

The depth and breadth of these things, the number of areas that they touch on is very, very extensive, so when we talk about red tape, it's not really clear what we're talking about. I had hoped that at a minimum a bill dealing with the reduction of red tape would take some step to define what it is we mean by that. You know, we want to reduce regulation by a third, so does that mean that if we get rid of all of the health and safety regulations, all of the other ones will be left untouched? It's just not really clear.

Really, in sum, I think all that this bill is intended to do is create the ability to make more regulations and a report, although we don't really know what exactly will be in the report or what the report will talk about or whether the report will at long last define what we mean by red tape. I think Albertans, who will be governed by this bill, deserve to know what it is that's occurring in this place, what it is that we're talking about, which third of the regulations they intend to cut.

You know, there's another thing. Like, I think if we're going to go forward, and particularly when we're talking in numbers, one of the most important things we can do in government – and you can

use examples from any ministry – in order to determine whether something has achieved its objective, is if it's something that can be counted and measured. Given that the promise was one-third, I assume that they think it can be counted and measured. One of the ways is: "Well, how are we going to count it? Let's all come together and get on the same page and talk about what it is that we're trying to achieve, how we're going to measure it, and put some definition in place around those measurements so that we're all having the same conversation."

Frequently there's a problem, I think, in this House where folks are talking past each other, and that results from the fact that people are often using the same words to talk about different things. This is, I think, common practice in a lot of academic work. I think that in most scientific work it's common practice to create an operational definition of the terms that you're talking about. Some sort of indication as to, you know, what we are talking about and how we plan to measure whether it's achieving its effect, I think, would be useful additions to this bill.

I find it interesting, certainly, that there's this talk of amending multiple regulations at the same time and that it gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council the ability to amend regulations notwithstanding that they're made by a minister. There are various sorts of regulations. Some of them are ministerial regulations, so those are orders made by the individual minister, and some of them are orders in council, which are made by cabinet in its entirety. Usually there's a difference in granularity, so when it's a more granular thing you're dealing with or when it's sort of more nitpicky, the legislation tends to be the broadest, and then cabinet regulations, and then a ministerial regulation.

Now, there are admittedly instances in which historically, from years and years and years back – I mean, we'll have regulations come forward that have been in place for a long time – a ministerial regulation and an order in council sort of speak to the same subject matter. That can be confusing, so perhaps in those instances it would be best to streamline that. But I think it's interesting at least to suggest that orders in council and orders made by different ministers in different departments potentially about different things can all be amended simultaneously. I think that when we're talking about these things, they have a huge impact on people out there living their lives, and my concern is that, you know, in this rush to go through and to change things, people will miss things, important details will get missed, and that will have impacts on the lives of people out there.

I guess my closing comment on this bill is that it feels like the absurdity one would expect from *Alice in Wonderland*. It is a bill which doesn't define red tape, which doesn't indicate how it's going to reduce red tape, which doesn't indicate how it will measure whether red tape has in fact been reduced or, again, what red tape is even. Presumably, it deals with regulations. But what it creates is the power to amend and create more regulations, and in fact it creates the impetus to create an additional report.

There's a British comedy called *Yes Minister*, and I feel like there was an episode of *Yes Minister* about exactly this. The main character in that case is, obviously, a government minister. He was trying to create an area to reduce bureaucracy, and what winds up happening is that actually they hire, you know, several thousand people to work in this ministry in order to determine what bureaucracy can be reduced. I feel like the Red Tape Reduction Act is pretty much that. We're going to hire a bunch of people to generate a report about we know not what in order to reduce the size of government.

So those are my comments. I would urge members to vote against this bill, mostly because I think it's a bit silly. Thank you.

3:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is now available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. Now that I'm figuring that out, I appreciate that, Madam Speaker.

I just wanted to comment on the comments from my colleague for Calgary-Mountain View. I wanted to thank her for her breakdown of what is essentially a very, very small and limited piece of legislation which, to me, somewhat begs the question: why do we even need legislation? Really, if we're talking about eliminating red tape and regulation, why do we need to introduce legislation to do that? Why not just do the reductions? Why not just do the reviews? Why create the authority to establish more regulations if the goal is actually to reduce them?

Be that as it may, I think that one of the things that is very interesting is how, obviously, this was brought forward as part of a plan, I think, part of the mandate, perhaps, of the governing party to reduce regulations, reduce red tape. Of course, that comes from this idea that smaller government is better. I think we can all agree, actually, on efficiency, and nobody would disagree with that. However, I find it a bit unusual for a party that did seem to put forward a mandate of having smaller government that they've actually created a larger government, a government of more ministries and associate ministers than the previous NDP government, which is ironic for a government that claims to be about small governance.

I'm wondering if the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has any comments about how increasing the size of government actually goes counter to their objective of reducing red tape and might be creating red tape.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, and thank you very much to my colleague for Edmonton-Whitemud for her comments. Yeah, I do think it's interesting, actually, that in addition to the bill, which creates a report, we've also created an entire ministry for the reduction of red tape, which does seem like creating larger government.

I think that when we talk about administration, we need to distinguish between different things. Often a lot of things get lumped together, and it's difficult to have a reasoned conversation, I think, if we don't know what it is we're talking about. For instance, when I used to volunteer at the Foothills hospital in Calgary, they had a unit clerk on every unit, ostensibly administration. However, that was administration that was absolutely integral to the running of the unit. The unit clerk did everything from worrying about patients who were supposed to arrive on transfers who maybe hadn't made it to making sure, you know, that if there was a conflict in terms of different appointments between, say, an occupational therapist and a physical therapist, that got sorted out. If people didn't get their meal tray because it hadn't followed them when they moved units – all of that work was done by this incredibly hard-working individual who was fairly consistently run off her feet. I think that that work was incredibly important work.

Now, that being said, I think that perhaps in this instance it's not the same kind of administration. We're literally creating work in the sense that we're generating a report and – well, hope springs eternal. Who knows? Maybe the report will be useful. I don't hold out a lot of hope for it, but maybe I'll be optimistic today and I'll say that perhaps the report will have some use. I think my concern

is that we're saying, "Oh, let's create a bunch of work in generating this report," but we don't know whether it will be useful. In fact, we don't even know how we're going to define "useful." We haven't decided what's red tape and what we're cutting. I think that that continues to be a huge concern.

I think that, in my view, this is a completely nonpartisan issue, right? The idea that if one is trying to achieve the good, however defined – and sometimes it's different on different sides of the House – one ought to define what the objective is. So here's the objective, and then one ought to determine: how am I going to measure whether I've reached the objective? In light of that, what are the steps I'm going to take in order to get to that objective? I think, again, that that is what's lacking in this bill. What's lacking is, you know, some thought as to what it is we're trying to achieve.

I've heard it said before and found it very much to be true in my life: when everything is a priority, nothing is a priority.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak against the so-called Red Tape Reduction Act. It's interesting. In my comments today I want to touch on the absurdity of this legislation that we are discussing today, the fact that it's unnecessary given some of the other processes that the government has to regularly review and reduce so-called red tape, and, third of all and most importantly, I think, to discuss how this is really a gift to the corporate donors of the members opposite.

Madam Speaker, of course, to start out with the absurdity of it all, here we have a minister with no ministry, and his first piece of legislation is to actually create the thing that his boss has told him to cut. It is astounding, and I want to underline the comments from my colleagues from Calgary-Mountain View and Edmonton-Decore. You know, if this were a comedy on television, people would say, "How can they make this stuff up? It's so absurd," but here we have in actual practice, like I said, a minister with no ministry and legislation provided to him to actually create the red tape that his boss has told him to cut.

It's especially ironic given the history of the members opposite, who, I recall, a few years ago derided the establishment of the economic development and trade ministry. That was Bill 1 in one of our sessions of the Legislature. Of course, for the remainder of that session of the Legislature the members opposite would deride the minister and say that it created only one job. Calgary-Hays is confirming that he actually made those accusations. Obviously, they didn't take them seriously enough to disestablish the ministry of economic development and trade. It turns out that it was a good idea. You're welcome, Calgary-Hays and other members opposite, for actually implementing something useful. It's ironic that they would make fun of the economic development and trade ministry, something that actually provided value to the people of Alberta and contributed significantly to economic diversification and job creation in this province, yet are deadly serious when it comes to this highly comedic act of appointing a minister without a ministry and giving him the job to actually create more red tape when, in fact, he is supposed to be reducing it.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, I think it's probably well known now to at least some members of Executive Council that there are already significant measures in place to examine and reduce the so-called red tape, the number of regulations, important protections that the Alberta government has in place. I was privileged in the last session of the Legislature and in my term on Executive Council to sit on the Legislative Review Committee, and I'm sure that the members opposite who are a part of that committee are thankful

every day that they get to go to work on that committee. The thing that I remember most about that committee is the number of regulation expiry dates that we had to deal with. It was the decision of a previous government – and I don't even know which government made this decision. They implemented expiry dates on every regulation that was created either by ministerial order or through order in council.

The bulk of the work that we engaged in on the Legislative Review Committee was actually going through each and every regulation whose expiry date was coming up for renewal. Now, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View can refresh my memory. I think she was much more engaged in the work, I suppose, than I was. But I can't recall a single time where we said: you know, this regulation isn't serving a purpose anymore and provides no useful purpose to the people of Alberta, so we should get rid of it entirely. One or two. But the bulk of the regulations that are in place provide valuable protections for the people of Alberta who need it, Madam Speaker, and when they are no longer needed, the expiry dates already exist.

3:10

So I don't understand why the members opposite are actually duplicating the work. They have the Legislative Review Committee in place to look at the regulations one by one as those expiry dates come up and make the decision as to whether or not they're still serving a purpose and decide whether to keep those regulations or not. And if they can't make that decision on the spot, Madam Speaker, they always have the option of at least extending the regulation expiry date so that they can conduct a thorough review of that particular regulation, to engage stakeholders, people who deal with the regulation on a regular basis to inform government about whether or not those things are valuable. I would suggest that that's probably a better way to approach looking at and reviewing the regulations that are on the books here in the province of Alberta rather than taking a scattershot approach and arbitrarily picking this number of one-third to eliminate red tape and just, you know, trying to give the member – I'm sorry; I forget his constituency – a position to keep him happy.

Madam Speaker, of course, I think the third and most important point that I want to make in opposing this bill is that it's another example of a giant corporate gift to the donors of the members opposite. We've seen it in Bill 1. That's a massive tax giveaway to the wealthiest Albertans. We've seen it in Bill 2, of course. We've decided to cut the pay of young people, the pay of people working overtime so that money goes instead into their employers' pockets. Of course, we see it nakedly laid out in Bill 3, which will cut corporate taxes and enrich the shareholder class in this province. And now we have Bill 4, which is designed to eliminate regulations that impede corporate profitability.

Of course, we know that the members opposite have been, shall we say, swayed by the financial donations of the people who are demanding these things. I want to refer to a letter submitted by the Motor Dealers' Association of Alberta documenting a meeting that they had with the United Conservative Party leader in September. In that particular letter, Madam Speaker, the Motor Dealers' Association promised to raise millions of dollars if, when elected, the UCP would scrap the carbon tax, reduce corporate and personal income taxes, reduce minimum wages. All of those things are promises that have already been delivered.

What else is on the chopping block? Of course, we've got the labour code, occupational health and safety, and WCB changes yet to come. We see some of those in Bill 2. Consumer Protection Act changes, Madam Speaker: we don't yet know what protections are on the chopping block, but we do know that the members opposite

have been influenced by significant dollars into PACs to look at those. Issues requiring government action, banning of imported right-hand drive Asian vehicles: I expect that that's probably another one of the so-called red tape reduction actions that the minister will take to make sure that his corporate donors are well looked after.

That's not the only example. The Motor Dealers' Association was probably the most overt example, but we know, of course, that Restaurants Canada lobbied heavily, spent significant dollars advertising to elect the members opposite in return for reducing the minimum wage for young people and taking away overtime banking for people who work hard in the restaurant industry, Madam Speaker.

You know, one of the things that I would like to see in the report that is required is actually outlining who has lobbied the minister and the members of Executive Council to reduce the regulations that are reported on and being recommended as being removed and correlating those things with meetings that they've had with paid lobbyists and the corporate donors that continue to fill the coffers of political action committees that are associated with the UCP, Madam Speaker. I think that that would be in the interest of all Albertans, to know who is paying the minister to actually do his job. It's not just the people of Alberta; it is, of course, the corporate shareholders who have a financial interest in making sure that regulations that protect the people of Alberta go by the wayside.

**Mr. Loewen:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The Member for Central Peace-Notley.

#### **Point of Order Allegations against Members**

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. Under 23(h), (i), and (j). The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar just accused us on this side of the House of taking in corporate donations, and he knows it's against the law for corporations to donate money to political parties, so I ask him to apologize and withdraw his comments.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, a response?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, if the Member for Central Peace-Notley had actually been paying attention to what I was saying, he would know that I was talking about corporate donations made to political action committees that are affiliated with the UCP and not actually referring to corporate donations made to that party. I know full well the law. In fact, I was part of the government that made those donations illegal. So we don't have a point of order here. We have a difference of opinion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I have been paying close attention to the words that have been spoken in this House, and I think, perhaps, this is a good time to remind members not to incite and use words to make accusations that would anger various sides of this House. I don't see a point of order.

Member, please carry on and just be cautious.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your ruling.

**Mr. Hunter:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

**Mr. Hunter:** Madam Speaker, I would like to cite 23(h), (i), and (j). Actually, the one I'd like to cite is, "Imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member," specifically . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, a point of order has already been called on that matter, and I have ruled on it.

**Mr. Hunter:** Madam Speaker, actually, what he did say, which we haven't actually ruled on, is: "Where is this minister receiving his income? Where is he receiving his income? Who is it from?" That is actually a point of order in terms of imputing false motives, and I would ask him to withdraw.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, we've already moved on from this matter.

Please proceed, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Madam Speaker, thank you very much for your very wise ruling on that point.

I would like to continue, of course, with a discussion of some of the important consumer protection regulations that we made, that if scrapped, would actually increase profits while decreasing protections for the people of Alberta.

One of the examples, of course, is payday lending. That was one of the first moves that we made in the First Session of the Legislature. We put an end to the 600 per cent interest rates on payday loans to help prevent people from becoming trapped in a cycle of debt. Today payday loan borrowers pay lower fees, have more time to pay off their loans, and are paying them off in smaller installments, Madam Speaker.

Of course, I can recall members of one of the predecessor parties of the current UCP speaking out against those very consumer protections from payday loans that we implemented. Madam Speaker, the payday lending industry is one that has a lot of lobbying dollars to throw around, so it would be very interesting to me if included in the report we saw a list of all of the lobbyists that the ministers met with over the course of the year and correlated those lobbyist meetings with PAC donations, so that we understand . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, we're getting into that territory that is not productive for proper debate in this House. Can you please be cautious?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Madam Speaker, I would remind all of the members that my constituents in Edmonton-Gold Bar definitely want to know whose side the government is on. Are they on the side of everyday Albertans who rely on these protections for their financial and social well-being, or are they on the side of the people who would have these protections removed so that they can exploit the very everyday Albertans that we want to protect?

3:20

Payday lending, I think, is a classic example of a consumer protection that we implemented that powerful interests have a significant financial stake in seeing removed. Another one, of course, is door-to-door sales. We were very successful in ending the practice of misleading, aggressive sales tactics by banning door-to-door sales of energy products and services. That ban, to remind everybody, included furnaces, hot water tanks, air conditioners, windows, energy audits, and electricity and natural gas contracts. Madam Speaker, you know, the utility companies made a lot of money off those aggressive door-to-door sales, spreading

misinformation, misrepresenting themselves, pressuring people who didn't know any better to sign contracts that weren't very good for them financially, and of course I am sure that the companies that profited mightily from that practice are just rubbing their hands, eager for, let's say, sympathetic ears to take their side on scrapping those protections. That's why I think it's very important that the members opposite be incredibly transparent with the people of Alberta when they're bringing forward recommendations on which regulations to cut.

Another protection that we brought in place was the new-home buyer protection. This introduced a builder licensing framework to protect consumers as well as the reputation . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a quick question. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was bringing up some more specific examples around some of my concerns about when we're pushing headlong to try to remove some things all in the quest for red tape removal. I was wondering if I might be able to tap into the member's, you know, former position, before he was elected, and the group that he was a part of and some of the professional standards that he was held to and maybe comment a little bit around some of the implications that inadvertently may be removing some of those things, which may look on the outside as reducing red tape and allowing things to move more efficiently but could put other things at risk. I was hoping the member might be able to comment a little bit on that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Decore for that question. You know, certainly, in my life prior to being elected I was a civil servant in the department of environment, and it was my job to oversee industrial facility applications to make sure that they complied with the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act as well as all of the regulations that were associated with that act. Of course, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act has some very well-thought-out protections for soil, for air quality, for groundwater quality, for protecting the environment that sustains us and future generations in this province.

I had many meetings with many industry stakeholders, who, you know, came to the department expecting special exemptions for their particular industry. The meetings all had a similar pattern: oh, well, we're not like everybody else; we don't create problems in the soil or the air or the water, so we deserve a special exemption. And then, of course, when we indicated that we can't exempt one particular person when we've applied these regulations to everybody else who's working in that industry, they would of course rail on about how government is crushing industry and preventing job creation. I guess if we were so intent on creating jobs at the expense of poisoning our skies and poisoning the very water we drink, that would have made those industry stakeholders happy, but it wasn't in the best interests of Albertans.

So I think it's important for people to understand the purpose that the regulations provide in protecting everyday Albertans from unscrupulous actions from bad actors in various industries and that they need to be preserved in order to protect the people who rely on the clean air that we breathe, the clean water that we drink, the clean soil that we farm and let our kids play on and so forth. You know, it's important for Albertans to understand that there are powerful forces who are lobbying for removing of these protections, and I think it's incumbent, then, for the members opposite to be

transparent with the people of Alberta about the discussions that they're having with industry stakeholders and how that's influencing the decisions about the regulations that they are recommending for removal.

Of course, in my past life I was also a professional geologist, and we were held to high standards of professional practice and ethical practice. Those things come at a cost, Madam Speaker, but we as professional engineers and geologists have a responsibility to conduct our work not just in the interest of our clients but in the interest of the public, and often that means creating additional expenses for the very clients that we represent. Most of the clients that I worked for when I was in the private sector were more than happy to pay for those additional costs because they shared our value of acting in the public interest and not just in their own interests. Unfortunately, that isn't the case with a hundred per cent of industry actors, and they would like nothing more than all of these so-called red tape regulations to be removed so that they can do their work.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to thank my colleagues the members for Calgary-Mountain View, Edmonton-Decore, and Edmonton-Gold Bar for their fine comments on the bill. I think perhaps the amount of time that we've spent discussing it and reading it may have been more time than was actually spent in drafting this bill, because there's very little content to it. So kudos to us for being able to speak about this for this long already, and I will continue the trend.

I think the hon. members for Edmonton-Decore, Edmonton-Gold Bar, and Calgary-Mountain View did an excellent job talking about what's in the act and what's not in the act. In particular, we've talked about the lack of definitions about what red tape is. Really, the primary bulk of the act seems to be focused on actually creating the ability for the establishment of more regulations, the irony of which is not lost on any of us here. However, I think that both the members for Edmonton-Decore and Edmonton-Gold Bar gave a great discussion about the kinds of regulations that are necessary for health and safety. They gave significant examples of various areas environmentally, you know, health. My background is actually in education, and I dealt very significantly with the legislation and regulations involved in the education world. So we know that those regulations can be very important – they exist for a reason – and I'd like to thank them for their comments on that.

What I'd like to talk about a little bit today is from my perspective again, going back to my experience. I think it's important to talk about what the role of regulation is because we know that regulation in and of itself carries a connotation of waste and at times mismanagement and that it just slows down things, and it maybe creates work for bureaucrats. But regulations do exist for a reason. There is a distinct difference between legislation in statute and legislation created by regulation, and there's a reason why there are certain things that are put in regulations.

In my background in education I can tell you about how it's very important to have legislation that covers the principles, the goals, the values, the objectives of the system and how you want it to work, but there are some details that don't necessarily fit properly within statutes and should be rightfully within regulations. The reason for that is, as we know in this House, with the exception of the bills that have been introduced in this session, that generally it takes a little while to pass legislation. It takes a little while to bring it forward. If done properly, it involves consulting with stakeholders. It involves working with legal teams, with drafters.

You go through several iterations of it, and then, of course, it has to come to the House, where it should get significant consideration and debate by the members of this Assembly.

So legislation doesn't change easily. It doesn't change quickly, and that's for good reason. It's the laws. There should be some predictability. When drafting laws, you should be looking forward as a government or a body passing legislation. You should be looking forward to making sure that what you're creating lasts and is worth while and provides clear direction to the systems which it's meant to direct. Legislation should be a thoughtful process, and it should be long lasting. We have some examples of legislation that has been around for a long time.

Of course, there should be a healthy review period for all legislation to make sure that it's still current and up to date, but you don't want to be trying to amend it every legislative session. There's a reason why certain things go into regulation.

3:30

In particular, in the education world – and I see the Minister of Education probably has some familiarity with this – in terms of what goes in regulation, there are certain details that are part of that regulatory structure which properly fall within regulation. An example of that, actually, from the education world is that for the longest time the School Act had a provision talking about how far the distance between a student and their school had to be before they'd be eligible for transportation. Because that was in education legislation and statute, that couldn't be changed, and even though that didn't seem to really reflect the reality of what we were doing anymore, we were stuck with it because it was too hard to change the legislation.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Things like that, details like that should be put in regulation because regulation, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar mentioned, is regularly reviewed. It has expiration dates. The job of the Legislative Review Committee is to look at those regulations. The job of bureaucrats is to regularly look at those regulations and to make sure that they are pertinent and applicable and should be kept. We properly need some details to be in regulation.

This is my sort of minidefence of regulation. It does exist for a reason. We wouldn't want to be bogged down by doing all of those things in statute, but we also wouldn't want to be leaving such important health and safety measures without any regulation. We would not want that to be held to the discretion purely of any bureaucrat who is administering it or to the system to sort out amongst itself. Regulation is there for a reason.

I also wanted to bring up that I actually have some experience. I worked in the provincial government, the government of Alberta. I was a civil servant for eight years prior to moving into private practice, and in that time I actually began my illustrious public service career working in the now defunct – but it seems to be revived – ministry that was fondly known as restructuring and government efficiency. Some of you may recall that. I can't remember which Premier brought that in. It was before Premier Stelmach.

Anyway, that was a ministry that was created for, quite honestly, a very similar purpose, which was to restructure and create government efficiency. Now, of course, many of you might remember that that ministry was fondly known by an acronym, RAGE, which was kind of appropriate for restructuring and government efficiency because I think all it ever did was create rage and not just for the people who actually were subject to it. I don't know that it actually did much of anything, but I think it probably created quite a bit of rage on behalf of the minister who was



responsible for that ministry because he really had a ministry that had no use, no function, and was actually created and bloated and became red tape ridden even though it was the very ministry tasked with government efficiency.

So I kind of smile, frankly, when I see this come up again because, to me, this is the difference between political campaigning and what happens when you actually try to govern. It's really simple and it's a very catchy thing to say to people: we need less red tape, we need less regulation, and we need things to be more efficient. Nobody would disagree with that. I think nobody wants to waste money for the sake of wasting money. We all pay taxes. We all care about that money being spent efficiently. We all want our systems to work properly, but properly doesn't always mean quickly. So, okay; it's a catchy election campaign promise to say: let's just get rid of red tape, the scary red tape that exists out there, and let's remove that. But then when you actually have to put that in practice, to create a ministry to do that: to me, the irony is quite astounding, really.

Again, we've heard the ministers in this House, when asked about what they're going to do about this and what they're going to do about that, repeatedly stand up and say: "We're reviewing it. We're reviewing it. Alberta Health Services is being reviewed. Whether or not there should be a conversion therapy working group is being reviewed. Everything is being reviewed." My question is: why would you create a ministry and a piece of legislation and the ability to create more regulations to review regulations? If this is really about efficiency and administrative streamlining, there is absolutely no reason to create a ministry and to pass and create legislation to do it.

Nothing, by the way, is stopping this government from reducing red tape right now. They could do that. They don't need a piece of empowering legislation to do that. You have the tools at your disposal. The reason why it's being established is because that's campaigning. That's the difference between campaigning and promise made, promise kept even though it's a waste of public dollars. I find the irony, coming from a government who has apparently campaigned and platformed on being the stewards of public funds and on no more wastage, is actually putting forward and establishing an associate minister and a ministry and a piece of legislation and more regulations which will waste public funds – we know that there will be staffing involved with that – yet they claim to be the stewards of public funds.

To me, I'd simply come across and say that I've seen this before. I'm not even that old. I'm 41 years old. I began my practice and working in government 13 years ago, and I've already seen this go through one cycle already. Quite honestly, by all means, if this, you know, is going to get your tip of the hat to the people you said that you would – I don't know how it's going to actually achieve it because I've seen this cycle go through before, where they will try to calculate how many regulations we have and which ones are good and which ones are bad, and it's an impossible process to quantify. It's impossible to evaluate. In the end, all we'll have is a lot of public dollars spent on doing an exercise that has already been done by previous Conservative governments and to no end other than to cause a lot of rage. By all means, I think this is pure politics and this is not good governance, but I think that this government is going to find out the distinction between those two very quickly if they haven't already.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available to any members wishing to have a question or comment. I see the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very excited listening to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's comments. One of the things that I noticed during the press conference announcing this bill – and I'll tap into the member's experience from her past with this question. One of the things that was said was: there were 17 regulations already eliminated, and we've only been in government for 21 days. Now, the problem was that those weren't posted anywhere when asked. With your experience in the education world and whatnot, are there any concerns around potential changes maybe to things within education? Should they not be posted? Is that a concern? Do you think that there are people that would like to know about these things coming forward so that they could ask their input?

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Decore. I appreciate that question. You know, one of the funny things that I find in my experience, not only having worked in government but also having been part of a legislative review reviewing a large piece of legislation and regularly being involved in regulation reviews, is that it's quite amusing how governments seem to pick and choose when they want something to be transparent and when they don't.

The experience that I certainly had is that regulatory review processes exist. It's probably changed since my time in government. It's been about six years since I've been in government. There was always a very healthy process, but we knew that when difficult decisions were sometimes being put forward to government, particularly on things related to education, at least in my experience, there was actually a feeling of: we don't want to have to deal with those difficult decisions in legislation and in statute, so let's just leave it to regulation because that's where nobody will be paying attention. I've seen previous Conservative governments use that as a tool, as a way to sort of hide the messy details of sometimes having to deal with some things by saying: well, we'll just deal with that in regulation.

Look, there has to be a healthy balance between statutes and regulations containing the guiding principles and the objects for the system it's governing. There are certain details that do need to be properly in regulation, but it shouldn't be used as a political tool. My experience is that that's how it has been used by previous Conservative governments, always as a tool. When it suited them to not be transparent about something, they would put it in a regulation. I think we're already off on the same foot with respect to that. Yeah, I'm interested in knowing, too, what those 17 regulations are. I think that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has been asked that question in the House, "Can you name one of those regulations?" and was unable to provide the name of one.

I don't know if once again regulations are being used as a tool to keep things hidden. I would be very interested in knowing. Certainly, that shouldn't be a secret, right? Regulations should be accessible to the public. They are accessible to the public, and most people should be able to pull them up with a quick search. If they're removed, I would certainly think and I would hope that the associate minister would put on their website which regulations were removed and why they were deemed to be no longer necessary. You know what? If that's true, I'm willing to say: hey, if those were unnecessary regulations, by all means remove them. We would like to have some efficiency as well.

But doing it in secret, doing it when people don't know why those regulations were removed and which ones they were speaks to me again about a secrecy and that statutes and regulations are being

used in different ways to hide different objectives. I would certainly welcome greater transparency on that. I think all Albertans have an obligation and have a right to know what regulations are in place and why they're being removed. We expect them to abide by them. Regulations have the force of law.

3:40

The other piece I want to mention, again going back to this idea of "Really, if there are inefficiencies in government, go ahead and fix them; you don't have to have an associate minister or legislation to do it," is that we know that regulations get the focus because they have the "r" name, the "r" word: regulations. That's what we're all afraid of, but really we know that there are a lot of things that actually slow down administrative processes, and it's not just regulations. We know that there are policies, there are handbooks, there are directives. The question really is: is this just about show, or is this to really make more efficiencies?

I look forward to the opportunity to see some efficiencies. I just think that we're off to a bad start if this government believes that in order to create efficiencies, they have to create more inefficient legislation and more regulations to do so. That speaks to me that the intent behind this is not actually about efficiencies; it's about political grandstanding.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other comments in the time remaining?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to Bill 4? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure today to rise and speak to Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act. Now, you'll know, Mr. Speaker, that I think perhaps the Red Tape Reduction Act could have had a bit more red tape in front of it. You'll see it's only two pages. It's quite the short document. It speaks to how hastily the Premier and his government put this bill together. It speaks to how hastily and without much forethought or foresight they gave to this bill – I mean, the bill contains basically nothing. It has no targets. It has no timelines. It does not define what the government considers red tape. It gives the associate minister blanket ability to create regulations and amend existing ones although the minister already had the ability to do this, so perhaps these two pages just make one extra layer of red tape and then do nothing else.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear, when we look at this legislation that the minister has put forward before us, that the government is deciding to shoot first and ask questions later. They've decided to do no consultation, to do no research, and to not do the work that is required of a government, to not do the work that is required and the research, to go into a bill to make sure that it's a bill that Albertans need and will help improve the lives of Albertans.

This vague shell of a bill: we really don't know what it's going to do. I mean, I think that we should have some concerns about the bill. When they speak about what the Red Tape Reduction Act will do, Mr. Speaker, when members of the government speak about this, they don't talk about what they are removing. Are they removing things like environmental protections? Are they removing things like labour laws or labour protections? Are they removing the requirement to wear PPE on job sites? I mean, that's technically red tape if we go with this nondefinition that the government has presented to us. If we look at this bill, we don't even know if they mean that food service workers shouldn't have to wash their hands after leaving the washrooms. Those are all the types of regulations that are covered under the blanket

nondefinition of this bill. That's what the government is proposing when they bring this forward.

It would be hilarious if it wasn't a real piece of legislation that we are debating today and will likely have to vote for in the very near future. It would be something that would be laughable if it wasn't something that put the protections and safety of Albertans in jeopardy because the government didn't do their homework. It's something that we saw time and time again when the Premier said that he wouldn't consult with Albertans because his legislation was so important it had to be done quickly. His legislation was so important that Albertans did not deserve and could not be trusted, in fact, to be consulted. I think that's a shame. I think it's a shame that we now see bills like this which are rushed through the House with no consultation, no development. Frankly I don't even know if they spent any time writing it at all, Mr. Speaker. I've seen notes on napkins that were longer than this legislation. I think that's really a shame here.

Really, I think the question for this House today has to be: what is the point of creating a piece of legislation, a binding piece of red tape that must be followed in perpetuity, that only creates more red tape? I can't imagine how many hours have been put into deciding how many staff members the minister should have, how much those staff members in the minister's office should be paid, whether the minister should have a blue placard on his desk or a green placard on his desk. Mr. Speaker, this is something that we really need to look at and say: is this the best use of Alberta taxpayers' money and time?

Now, when we talk about what is going on in this bill – the ability, the power that it grants the minister to strike regulations, create regulations, remove regulations, all the things that ministers are expected to do in the due diligence of their jobs – what this bill actually says is that the minister should do his job. Now, I think the minister should be expected to do his job without this House having to legislate him to do his job. I think the minister should be perhaps – I hope the minister is capable of doing his job without the House legislating that. Perhaps I am wrong; I hope I am not, Mr. Speaker. I hope the minister would be able to do his job without members of the opposition and government benches having to force the minister to do his job.

But I hope that when the minister does his job, he doesn't go after the types of protections that his Premier did under the Harper government in Ottawa. I hope he doesn't go after and consider red tape to be things like whether we should allow toxic waste to be dumped in our waterways. I hope the minister doesn't consider that red tape. Without the definition in this bill, Mr. Speaker, it is impossible for us to know. It's impossible for us to know whether the minister considers waterway protection and toxic waste dumps to be red tape. I mean, we can see really clearly that while the Premier was in Ottawa under the Harper government, in Newfoundland the Sandy Pond area was destroyed under some reductions in what we could consider red tape by having 29 natural water bodies being used as toxic waste dumps, basically. We see that in Ottawa the Harper government and the Conservatives and the government the Premier was a part of cut millions of dollars from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which resulted in fewer inspectors. In fact, we saw things like deadly outbreaks of diseases that actually killed Canadians.

When we're talking about red tape reduction without a clear definition, without actual research or any homework done in this bill, we simply see that we don't know what the minister will do. We don't know whether the minister will protect Albertans or go after the things that protect them. We don't know whether the minister will then decide that as a part of his job he needs to decide to support those corporations which donated so heavily to their

PACs, donated so heavily to making sure they were elected. We don't know who the minister will side with, ordinary Albertans or the wealthiest corporations.

Mr. Speaker, we simply don't know, and this legislation doesn't tell us. This legislation doesn't tell us much of anything. It doesn't tell us whether Albertans should be the ones that benefit from reductions in red tape or whether corporations should be the ones that benefit from reductions in red tape or, in fact, whether it's government members who are the ones that should benefit from reductions in red tape. If the legislation was maybe longer than a napkin, maybe we would be able to know that, and maybe then we could have a fulsome debate on the merits of the legislation. Unfortunately, it looks like, without the foresight and thought being put into this legislation, we won't be able to debate the benefits of reducing some regulations that may be burdensome to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, we know very clearly that we've seen failures in other jurisdictions, not just federally, that I've already mentioned, but in other jurisdictions like British Columbia. I mean, when Conservative governments and Premiers in British Columbia brought in action on reducing red tape, as they would say, we saw suddenly \$7 billion in dirty money being laundered through to British Columbia, which really inflated prices and hurt consumers. Really, we know that we don't want money laundering and illegal activity happening here in Alberta, but unless we can actually get some definitions and some ideas of what the minister is supposed to do with this legislation, we simply don't know. With his blanket empowerment in the legislation to do what he's already empowered to do and is indeed obligated to do, maybe the minister will decide that money laundering is one of those red tape things that we don't need to worry about. I think that is just something that the legislation doesn't make clear for us. That is something that I think members of the government should be concerned about.

3:50

I think members of the government should be concerned that the legislation is so short. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I know that you yourself as well as other members of the Conservative bench, when you were in opposition, spoke at length about how bills – and I believe it was our Bill 1 – were too short, that it should be a lengthier bill and that there should be research put into the bill. Now we see the government bench doing exactly what you spoke against and members of that exact government spoke against. In fact, I think the minister himself spoke against that. The minister himself spoke against bills that were too short, and now we see the minister bringing forward a bill that has nothing and empowers him to do nothing he's not already empowered to do.

I think there is something that is certainly to be said, Mr. Speaker, about how there is hypocrisy going on here in the government. Really, this hypocrisy is something that we can poke jest at here in the Assembly, but again it's something that Albertans will have to live with. It's something that our constituents, regardless of which political stripe you have, will have to live with. It's something that we will have to live with for the next four years.

I know, as my colleagues in the opposition have already mentioned, that the Red Tape Reduction Act, Mr. Speaker, is a very sexy, if you will, name. It's something that people are very excited about, that gets people excited during campaigns. But I will remind the government members that the campaign is over. The time to govern is now, and the time to move forward with making regulations and legislation that improve the lives of Albertans is now.

When we look at this bill, we can see very clearly that in its nondrafted form, the form that's being presented to the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, it does none of those things. It perhaps tells the

minister what he is supposed to do, which could have been done through a mandate letter, could have been done by perhaps just looking at the title of his ministry. Maybe the minister needs a bit more guidance than just the title of his ministry. I think that the legislation is definitely unnecessary.

But when we look at what is supposed to be brought to this Assembly, it's bills that make lives better. Perhaps the minister will be able to take this bill – well, he would have been able to do it anyways – and make the lives of the wealthiest 1 per cent better. Perhaps he'll take this bill and make the lives of corporate donors to groups that support the Conservatives better, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps that is the intention of what the minister wishes to do. I wouldn't know, and I wouldn't presume to speculate on that. But what I will say is that I think it's very clear that Albertans expect a government to bring legislation that improves their livelihood, and it's very clear that this bill does not do any of those things. It's very clear that if you don't spend the time that's needed to draft legislation and if you decide to not consult, to not research, to not do the work that is required to be a responsible government, a responsible and transparent government, then it's very clear that you end up with legislation that is too small to blow my nose on.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is something that is really a shame for us to see here in the Assembly. Something that is a shame for us to see is that members of the government, I believe, will likely vote this through without consulting at all around the issues, will likely vote this through and not have spent the time to actually maybe even read the two pages. I know that sometimes two pages can seem like a lot to read, but I can assure you that almost the entirety of page 1 of the bill is just preambles. You can probably skip that part. So, really, there are only four clauses in the whole bill. If members would spend the time to read the four clauses, they'll see that it's something that perhaps we don't need to spend all of this red tape on, creating legislation that directs the minister to do what he should already do.

Really, when we look at that, I think it's something where members of the government bench, self-proclaimed Conservatives and fiscal conservatives, self-proclaimed ones who are against red tape, can see pretty clearly that this bill does nothing. When they talk about how important it is to reduce the scope of government and reduce the size of government and reduce the burden of government, I think they can see pretty clearly that the four clauses put out in this bill, most of which fit on one page – I mean, the rest is just preambles, Mr. Speaker. We can see very clearly that either the Conservative members don't care that we're creating red tape or only care when it's not their own.

Mr. Speaker, when it's something that helps their wealthy friends and when it helps their wealthy allies, then perhaps that is okay, and maybe the government members are okay with that. If that's the case, then they have the prerogative to vote that way. I guess we will see very shortly when we do see that vote.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, that Albertans are watching when we pass legislation in this House. Albertans see the bills that we pass in this House, and they see who votes on those bills when we pass them in this House. They can see and they can read for themselves whether four lines that tell the minister to do his job is something that is worthy of this House. I think Albertans will make that decision for themselves.

Now, what we won't see, Mr. Speaker, though, is Conservative members making that decision for themselves, because we know that they really do think that creating more red tape through this bill will eliminate red tape, and maybe the minister does need that direction.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll leave it open for maybe someone to ask some questions or comments.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wishing to ask questions or make a comment under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any others that wish to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to have the opportunity this afternoon to participate in what has been a robust and, I'm sure, incredibly engaging discussion for all members of the Assembly today on what cannot really be called a robust piece of legislation but certainly one which has prompted some, I think, good discussion.

I think that, in all honesty, we recognize that what we have in front of us today is a piece of legislation that is more about show than it is about actual substance, and fair enough. I recognize that for a new government coming into office, it makes sense that you want to follow through on campaign promises, that you want to follow through on things you said, and that you want to do some of those. Some of those promises may not themselves have had a lot of substance to them. They may have been something that sounded good and certainly appeal to, I guess, the sentiments of certain aspects of the folks that you're reaching out to and where, once in government, then you need to do something to demonstrate that you are taking action on that even if there wasn't really significant action that needed to be taken. But fair enough. It is within the prerogative of government, within the prerogative of this minister to bring forward this legislation for this purpose and to bring it in for us to debate, so I will stand here in this House today and I will have a discussion about it.

Now, one of the things about this bill, Mr. Speaker, that many others have raised and which I also sort of share a concern about is that there is so little here and that indeed there is so little defining what actually falls within the parameters of what the government wishes to do. I don't think you would find any member of this House that would disagree with the idea that we want to reduce regulation, that we want to reduce red tape. By all means. I know, for myself, that when I stepped into this office and had the opportunity, I worked to try to set up robust systems within my constituency office, within how I interacted with my caucus, how I worked with government ministers at the time. I think that's a reasonable thing to do when you start out in any process. You try to set up good and proper systems to organize and make sure that you're not dropping balls or missing e-mails and making sure that everything is set up well.

I think we all recognize that over time, for any system that is set up by people, as it grows increasingly complex, as you add more layers and elements to it, as you add more stakeholders, as you add new duties, the system that you use, then, to organize and control things also gets more complex. It makes sense that over time you need to sit down every once in a while and take a look at that system and say: "Hey, is this still serving the purpose that I set it up to serve? Is this still accomplishing the goals that I, in fact, wanted to accomplish?" So I have no issue with the government saying that they want to make that a priority during their mandate, to sit down and thoughtfully and carefully look at systems. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, you will probably find few systems so complex as those that are used to run a province, and that's for good reason.

We recognize that when government began, it was of a smaller scope. It had fewer things that it had to manage. Indeed, human government, when it began – and I won't go into a full history lesson here, recognizing that, of course, we started out with very local government. That made it easier to manage because you're very close to ground. But as we progressed as a society, it got broader. We took on more responsibilities for larger numbers of people. It requires increasingly complex systems to handle that. It

makes sense, then, that, yeah, when we get to the level of a provincial government, we're going to have some pretty complicated stuff going on.

4:00

There are probably some places where we could do much better in how we approach things, but the other thing to keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, is that when we are dealing with these complex systems that have grown up over time, that are connected with so many different things, when we begin to make changes within those systems, they can have impacts that ripple out in ways that we may not have recognized. There's a phrase that comes to mind that perhaps you've heard in this House: unintended consequences. I'm sure it is something that has never before been uttered within these walls. But we recognize that when we are dealing with complex systems and we are wanting to make them simpler, we have to be very careful that the adjustments we make within those system don't have consequences that we didn't anticipate and don't cause further damage.

Again, I have no issue with the commitment of this government to make changes to systems. It's my hope that they will do so very thoughtfully and carefully and with careful consultation. The concern is, when they feel the need to put this into a piece of legislation, that they provide so little detail and very little for us to be able to understand precisely what it is that they intend to do and what they precisely consider to be red tape. The reason, Mr. Speaker, that is of concern to me is because of previous, I guess, rhetoric I have seen, sometimes from conservative politicians, sometimes from individuals in the community. We fall back to ideas and terms like common sense.

I think back, Mr. Speaker, to July 2017, when there was an article that came up on the Internet, came up on Twitter – it was being bandied about quite a bit – about a gentleman in Etobicoke, Ontario. There was a community garden, and going down to that community garden was a slope. That slope was difficult for some people to navigate, indeed, particularly for seniors in the community, so they had been petitioning the city council in Etobicoke to build a set of stairs. Now, I recognize that city council, a provincial government are not always the speediest to act, that there can be a lot of competing priorities and things that can slow things down. But at one point, apparently there were some estimates that were done that estimated that a flight of stairs for this short section of slope, which was leading down from a parking lot and had a few other factors involved, came to as much as \$65,000.

There was a huge hue and outcry about this ridiculous thing because one gentleman in the community went and just simply built his own set of stairs. He took the initiative himself. He spent \$550 on supplies and hiring a local homeless man to help him build those stairs, and there they were. They were available to the community. There was much discussion online about red tape, talking about: "See? How much easier could this have been? Government just had to complicate it, make it so expensive, make this problematic. Obviously it's better if we just do things the simple way."

The fact is that the city of Etobicoke later had to go back and remove those stairs. Now, the reason for that was because those stairs actually were unsafe. We have to recognize that there is a difference between what I choose to do in my home and what I choose to set up for myself and what I choose to set up for public use and the issues of liability and all the other pieces that come into that. In the end, those stairs had to be removed, and there were many who decried that and said that that's government red tape, government bureaucracy, that sort of thing. In the end, city hall was able to build another set of stairs. I understand the cost ended up being about \$10,000 to build a proper set of stairs that ensured that

the legal liabilities and health and safety standards and everything were met.

I certainly commend that individual for coming forward and, I guess, pressing city hall on that, but we recognize that there are reasons why some regulations and bureaucracy exist. My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that at times I hear people talking about red tape and bureaucracy without the recognition that it, in fact, does have a place. If we are not defining in this legislation what it is that we are talking about and how we are going to thoughtfully approach this and guarantee that, in fact, the minister will exercise due diligence, then we could be getting into areas where we begin to perhaps make mistakes.

I recognize that in many ways people look at red tape and bureaucracy, and they consider it simply to be a Gordian knot; the Gordian knot, of course, being a part of, I think, ancient Greek or Roman mythology, I forget which, but basically an extremely tangled knot, very hard. It was a task that they set for a hero, to try to untie it. I forget who the Greek hero was or the Roman hero, but – you know what? – the clever guy that solved the Gordian knot pulled out his sword, and he cut it in half.

**An Hon. Member:** Alexander.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Alexander. Thank you.

I recognize that maybe that was the solution there, but in some cases we're not simply dealing with a knot which is just hanging there and not really attached to anything important. Sometimes we're dealing with the very lifelines which are protecting our communities, which are protecting people's health, which are supporting very important processes within the province, and to simply come through and try to cleave them down the middle is to invite chaos, disorder, and possibly injury to the public.

It makes sense to me that in discussing these issues, we be perhaps a bit more thoughtful than the level of rhetoric, for lack of a better term – and "rhetoric" in itself is not a terrible word but is often used in that way – that we've heard from government on this. Again, I can understand that this is a flagship issue for them and one on which they want to feel good, but really I would prefer to see that government proceed in a more thoughtful way, perhaps with fewer slogans, more detail, and a better understanding.

One of the other reasons for that, Mr. Speaker, is that, you know, at times I have seen that there can be a bent amongst some conservatives to vilify red tape on things that they personally like or that they want to see happen but then turn and want to apply it on anything that they dislike. Perhaps that's why some folks who have more rightward leanings look at regulations so negatively, because they themselves only apply it to things which they are trying to eliminate.

I think back, Mr. Speaker, to when we were having federal discussions around supervised consumption sites, the original site, Insite in Vancouver, and we saw the federal government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper try to take every possible step it could to eliminate that site. I don't know why. For some reason they felt that that offended their morals, offended their ideology. I'm not sure. They took every possible step, and it took a court ruling to actually stop them in their tracks. They could not actually defund or stop that site from operating; instead, they tried to regulate it to death and indeed make it far more difficult for any other jurisdiction in this country to set up a similar life-saving medical service.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again, I am in agreement with reasonable regulation, and there are reasonable regulations in place. Thankfully, the federal government which we currently have, whether I agree with them on all things, which I don't – certainly, I

did agree with and appreciate the fact that they simplified, they reduced red tape around jurisdictions being able to set up supervised consumption sites. Now, to be clear, the rules, the regulations in place are still robust. Indeed, when the business association here in Edmonton, you know, took the providers of the current supervised consumption sites to court, the court took a look at it, and they dismissed that case. They said that, in fact, they had met all of those criteria and that it had been a robust process of regulation and consultation that put those sites in place.

But, again, we have seen from some individuals who identify themselves as conservatives that they view regulation as a weapon, as a way to eliminate things which they dislike. I think back, Mr. Speaker, to when we were having discussions in this House about regulations that were being brought into place to support the legalization of cannabis. Indeed, there were members who were at that time on this side of the House and now sit on the other side of the House who were very concerned that perhaps there was not enough regulation being put in place around when and where individuals could consume cannabis. I think those are, again, appropriate questions to discuss, and I think we're here for the very purpose of discussing regulation and how that went forward. But it became clear to me that for some members of this House it was not so much about the public good, it was not so much about reasonable regulation or smooth operation as it was about their personal discomfort with the use of cannabis.

**4:10**

Again, Mr. Speaker, that brings me back around to the legislation and the fact that what we have here is a fairly vague and ill-defined bill, very aspirational in its content but potentially significant in its impact. Given the enormous responsibility that is entrusted to us as legislators in this province to ensure the safety and the protection of the Alberta public, to make sure that the rules and the regulations that we are putting in place are there for the benefit of the public . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if there's anyone who has a question or comment for the member.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I was listening with rapt attention to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I regret deeply that he was cut off in the middle of his comment, and I'm wondering if he is able to complete his thought.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, if you'd like to continue.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe I've made my thoughts clear. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions or comments for the member?

Seeing none, are there any others who wish to speak to Bill 4? The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, hon. Speaker. I would request unanimous consent to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 2

### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

[Adjourned debate May 29: Ms Renaud]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Bill 2 is available for debate. Are there any wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is rising.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and speak to Bill 2, which is, in effect, an act to pick the pockets of the workers, of the people of Alberta. I want to touch on three provisions that I find particularly troublesome in the legislation and associated regulations.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

First of all, I of course want to express my deep, deep reservations about the government's move to create a youth minimum wage for students who are under the age of 18. I know that this is a move that will not be very popular with young people in the province of Alberta. In fact, the other day I had the opportunity to conduct an impromptu focus group with some youth here in the province of Alberta, specifically my children, who are the ages of 11 and 8, on the drive to school. We were talking about finding work and getting summer employment, and I told them that the members opposite had decided that students under the age of 18 should have their wages cut by \$2 an hour. Instantly they both cried out that that was not fair, that just because you were a student and under the age of 18 shouldn't mean that you make \$2 an hour less than somebody who is doing the same job but is over the age of 18.

It's curious to me, of course, that these young, engaged Albertans who I was driving to school would immediately see the unfairness in this proposal, yet the members opposite don't. The only thing I could use to explain it, Mr. Speaker, is that, you know, my children aren't really engaged in political matters in the province. In fact, they spend most of their time on the Internet looking at pictures of cats. So they come to this issue of minimum wage with fresh eyes, and they don't have their minds clouded with hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations to associated political action committees made by organizations like Restaurants Canada and the Motor Dealers' Association of Alberta, who are, of course, clouding the minds of the members and making it seem to them like it's a good idea to reduce the minimum wage.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when they asked me why they decided to reduce the minimum wage, I used the words that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed used to justify this when he spoke to I believe it was the Calgary Chamber of commerce. I can't remember. I told them that as students who were under the age of 18, they have less human capital than somebody who's not a student and is 18. Of course, as you can imagine, that wasn't a satisfactory answer to my children, and I don't think it's a satisfactory answer to any student who is under the age of 18. This argument that you are a person of lesser worth goes against the very dignity that is inherent in all work, and I think that anybody who proposes that line of thinking should maybe give some reconsideration and certainly not stand in this legislative Chamber and talk about how compassionate they are when they give their responses to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, you know, as troubled as I am by this move by the members opposite to cut youth wages, I do see some good coming from it in that at least nobody under the age of 18 now will ever, ever vote for the UCP. I'm looking forward to the massive influx of young people who are motivated to throw the members opposite out of office at the earliest opportunity so that they can get a fair wage back. I thank the members opposite for creating an entire generation of NDP supporters, that I think will benefit all of the people of Alberta in the next election and going forward from there.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, the other aspect that I wanted to touch on that troubled me about this bill was, of course, the move to pick workers' pockets by eliminating some specific general holiday pay. You know, under our government we made anybody who was hired at any time eligible for general holidays regardless of how many days that they worked. Even if those general holidays fell on a day upon which the employees wouldn't normally work, a Saturday or a Sunday, they would still be eligible for that holiday pay.

Now, Mr. Speaker, of course, you know, as many members of this Chamber know, that the people of Alberta haven't had a real wage increase in a number of years. In fact, if you look at the data, the average worker in Alberta has seen an overall decline in their earning power over the last decade or so because real wages haven't increased. The people of Alberta are upset by this because it's not pain that's equally shared. The data shows that people in the highest income brackets in this province continue to receive more and more of the wealth that's created in the province while the other 90 per cent of the province are left behind. They continually are losing faith that the system that we've created will work to their benefit.

You know, the members opposite were elected on this rising tide of anger at the system. The members opposite told them that they would get jobs and prosperity, but what they're really getting is another cut to their wages in the form of having holiday pay reduced. Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense, at a time when workers in Alberta haven't seen their real wages increase in a number of years, to actually be lowering them. To take away general holiday pay on a day on which it normally falls – normally I would use the word “Scrooge” to describe that, but at least Scrooge gave his employee an extra lump of coal on Christmas Day. In fact, this legislation takes away even that, so employees who are not normally employed on Christmas Day when Christmas falls on a Saturday or Sunday will get nothing. Under our government they were entitled to a day's worth of pay, and now the members opposite are taking that away from them.

4:20

I think that that's the opposite of compassion, Mr. Speaker. The people of Alberta work hard all year. They look forward to celebrating Christmas with their families, and to know that they're now getting a pay cut because they're taking that day off or, you know, the government has decided that it's too expensive to pay them a Christmas holiday will create a lot of unhappiness and anger amongst the people of Alberta, and rightly so.

The final point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is of course on taking away overtime banking. Now, this is an area that I have a lot of personal experience in. Prior to moving to the civil service, I was an environmental consultant for a couple of different consulting companies here in the city of Edmonton, and it was standard practice for professional engineers and geologists working for these firms to work overtime hours but only to bank those hours at a 1 to 1 rate. Now, the members opposite, when they rolled out this legislation, of course, trumpeted the so-called flexibility that it would give workers to negotiate more overtime with their employers, and nothing could be further from the truth. When I was employed in the private sector, it was never offered to me as an option to work overtime. It was an unstated expectation. Of course, that was not just me; everybody was expected to work overtime and expected to bank that overtime at a 1 to 1 rate.

Now, you know, the principle around paying people overtime comes from this really old-fashioned idea that the day should be evenly divided up into three separate segments: eight hours for work, eight hours for personal time, and eight hours for sleep. The reason that we pay people overtime when they work more than eight hours a day is because it's cutting into the valuable personal time

and rest time that people need to be able to live good lives. That's why we pay them more for overtime hours, Mr. Speaker. And if we are going to pay them overtime hours in cash, it seems only fair to me that we should also pay them in time in lieu at a 1 to 1.5 rate.

Mr. Speaker, you know, working as an environmental consultant, of course, you can see for yourself the exploitation, I guess, that employers put their employees through. Certainly, I know that I was charged out at approximately \$150 an hour when I was employed. I got less than a third of that. The rest, of course, went to my employer.

This was not easy work. The overtime hours that I put into the job were not overtime hours that I spent in the comfort of an office but were, in fact, overtime hours that I spent in the furthest corners of the province in incredibly challenging working conditions. I spent many months away from my family and my home, working in places like Zama City, Fort Chipewyan, places where it's either 40 below and freezing or 40 above and mosquitos so thick that you can't see the people standing next to you. To know that I was enriching my employer at the expense of myself and my family was difficult to swallow, so I was quite happy when our government brought forward legislation that at least compensated my former colleagues who continued to work in this field at a 1.5 overtime banking rate because at least they were able to get a little bit ahead working those expected overtime hours under incredibly trying conditions.

It seems to me to be grossly unfair to my colleagues who continue to work in that field to take that away from them and to say: "You know what? We think that your employers need a raise and that you need to cut your wages, so we're going to remove this banking scheme that was implemented only a couple of years ago."

I don't understand the necessity of any of these changes, Mr. Speaker. Nobody here will dispute the fact that Alberta is going through a period of higher than usual unemployment. Certainly, we in this Chamber all have a common desire to get Albertans back to work, but of course we differ significantly in our views on what would be successful measures to get Albertans back to work.

I think it's important to notice that none of the changes that are presented in this bill and the associated regulations are in place in any other jurisdiction in the country. If you go to B.C. or Saskatchewan or Ontario, you know, you will have the same sort of general holiday pay that the members opposite are taking away here, and you will have the same overtime banking arrangements that the members opposite are taking away here. It's funny that those kinds of arrangements have been in place in places like B.C., Saskatchewan, and Ontario, with no seeming effect on unemployment in those provinces. In fact, with those very same worker protections in place, the unemployment in those provinces is lower than it is in Alberta.

I wonder why it is that if those measures have no impact on unemployment levels in other provinces, it wouldn't work here. What is it that's magical about Alberta that means that we need to pay workers less, take away their hard-earned holiday and overtime, and give their employers a raise just so they can create jobs? I would like the members opposite to actually stand up and tell us why Alberta is exceptional in that fact and why Alberta workers don't deserve the same kinds of protections that their fellow Canadian workers in every other jurisdiction in the country deserve.

So, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to vote against this bill.

**The Speaker:** Members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening very, very intently to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar about his concerns with this bill. Of course, my history is very much rooted in labour. I can almost already hear the teeth-gnashing going on from members opposite when I say the word "union." I'm very thankful that I was part of a workplace that had a union because at least there was some degree of protections that were afforded.

One of the things that I used to always advise my members when I was a shop steward over at my workplace and, of course, when I was relieving through my union was to never build your life around overtime. I will concede that there's no mandate that an employer has to provide you with overtime, okay? Overtime is meant to help the company out when they find that they're short-staffed, be it in various forms. It could be that somebody is away, that somebody is sick, that somebody is on maternity leave, whatever the case may be. All right? It is a voluntary act by that person to step up and say: I'll work those hours to help you out. The exchange is, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar mentioned, to take time from away your family, your friends, your other commitments, your sleep, whatever the case may be. That was the reward for doing that.

So when I hear things about taking away people's overtime pay – I mean, at the end of the day, overtime is overtime. You don't define it in any other way, so if you're going to pay it out to them in overtime pay, you would pay it out to them in overtime hours as well.

4:30

What I was hoping that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar might be able to do is talk a little bit – he had also mentioned around the different wages. Maybe the member might talk a little bit around the proposed liquor service differential wage. I know very, very clearly that a lot of workers in that industry are women. My experience, again, through the labour movement was of women being exploited through a wage differential. In order to be able to make those tips, some businesses – and I even remember protesting one just close by here, by the Legislature, Mr. Speaker. They wanted them to wear revealing outfits so that it would help them to generate more tips because of the wage differential. I was hoping that maybe the member might be able to comment on that a little bit as well as on some of the other things that I've mentioned.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I made an offer to my constituents that I would also wear revealing clothing for their tips, but I have to say that citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar rejected that offer resoundingly. So I will look for other ways to supplement my income, I guess.

The Member for Edmonton-Decore is correct that tipping is not a stable form of income. In fact, it's not fair. There are a number of people who work in retail and the fast-food industry who don't get tips. I'm thinking of people who, you know, work at chain restaurants, fast-food restaurants, those kinds of places, who do work that's very similar to people who work in other restaurants, but they don't get tips, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we all know that tipping is not a fair way to compensate people for the work that they're doing.

Mr. Speaker, I lived for a number of years in Germany, where tipping is not part of the culture, and the reason it's not part of the culture is because Germans pay their food servers a fair wage. To tip a worker is actually insulting to them because it's implied that they are not getting paid enough or are not being recognized for the value of what they're doing. I think that we need to move to a similar system here in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any others wishing to add some additional comments to the debate? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View rising.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of comments to make on Bill 2, this, of course, having been an area in which I worked in my previous life. I will make those comments, but I would like to begin by moving an amendment. I'm moving it on behalf of the MLA for Edmonton-Manning, and I would like to seek your indulgence to have it amended at the table.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. If you can pass the documents through to the pages, we'll just review it at the table and distribute it as such, and then I'll let you know to proceed when necessary.

For the benefit of all members in the Chamber the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View will be moving this amendment on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. On the original document, that's kept at the table, we will make the amendment to the document to reflect that change. If you are so inclined and you'd like to make the change on your document for your records – I'm sure you're all keeping extensive personal records of amendments and otherwise – you would be welcome to do so. Having said that, obviously it's not required as the table will keep track of that.

Having said all those things, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning I move an amendment which says something similar to: that An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, I think that referring this bill to a committee for further consideration is certainly a worthwhile aim. Certainly, amendments that were brought forward to these bills, to labour and to employment bills in the previous session, were heavily considered and discussed. I feel that we shouldn't rush to be making these changes in this particular case. I think it's worth discussing some of the changes that the government has been making in terms of labour and employment act changes generally. Certainly, one of those changes has to do with amendments to the minimum wage, and another one has to do with changes to how overtime is paid. Obviously, the minimum wage tends to be a regulation under this act, but I think that all of these things move together.

I continue to be of the belief, as stated earlier today when we were discussing corporate tax cuts, that the best way to stimulate the economy is to put money into the hands of those who are middle and lower income earners because they do tend to return a larger portion of that money to the local economy, and that tends to create jobs for other individuals.

I think it's worth noting that in talking about how youth workers, workers under the age of 18, don't need the same minimum wage, well, I think it takes a very specific perspective. It takes a perspective that, admittedly, I myself grew up in, the perspective of middle-class or above children whose parents have already saved for their university education and who may be working jobs but not necessarily supporting themselves in the same way. But that isn't the case for everyone.

Certainly, I spent a number of years working at a chain restaurant, and I actually had the dubious honour of working in pretty much every position in that particular restaurant. One of the individuals I worked with, who worked washing dishes, was in fact in high school – so it wouldn't be the case that he had left high school and that the changes didn't apply to him. He was still studying, which was actually impressive in light of his circumstances. He was 16 years old. He lived with his 12-year-old brother. He paid the rent in order to support both of them because they were not safe at home. To suggest that somehow that individual wasn't worthy of the same income or didn't need the same income I think would be a little absurd. Even beyond that, whether a young person is saving for school or whatever they're doing with their money, I think, generally – I'm surprised that it's this side speaking in favour of market economies – it's not really the government's job to pass judgment on what you do with your money.

I think that certainly it's possible that people end up in these tragic situations, where they aren't safe with their parents, and they are still going through school, and they need income to support themselves and to support siblings or possibly even to support their own parents. These are definitely situations that exist, but it's also the case that many young people are saving for university. I think that's a laudable goal, but regardless of the goals, if we're going to say that you're old enough to work, you're old enough to earn your income, you're old enough to decide how you spend it, and the government shouldn't be peeking into your pocketbook and trying to determine whether or not you're worthy of the same wage as everyone else. I disagree strongly with that.

4:40

There are a number of other changes in labour and employment law that frustrate me. I think of one of them, you know, when we talk about: oh, well, employers and employees will sort of negotiate for whether or not people take lieu time or whether or not it's paid out. Well, they don't really negotiate. Certainly, I spent a number of years also working at a bank – it kind of sounds like I've had every job in the book here – but there was no negotiation. The employer required that you take your time as time in lieu. There was no getting paid out, and the reason was because they didn't want to pay extra. That's certainly a thing that occurs.

You know, in my case I was free to leave that job, but there were a number of people that were working in the same role that I was, that were working as bank tellers, that were single mothers, because it's a job that you can get fairly easily. It's a job you work during the daytime, when child care is open. A lot of those people needed that job, so they were in a position where they couldn't argue with their employer. I think that's the challenge when people sort of talk about this, "Oh, well, you'll just negotiate, or you'll just work it out," because it's a myth that there's equal power. It's a myth that somehow the employee has equal bargaining power.

Certainly, some employees do have equal bargaining power, maybe not equal but more bargaining power. For instance, obviously, my previous career was as a lawyer. I was exempted from the Employment Standards Code in that profession. You'll frequently hear from articling students that they've sort of worked 100-hour weeks, and if you worked out what they made, it's significantly below minimum wage, but there's a difference there, right? There's a difference in terms of their sort of access to information and to bargaining power, and there's a reason that those professions are sometimes exempted from the Employment Standards Code. Yeah, it's debatable. Let's just say that it's debatable. But this idea that employees, particularly employees in something like a restaurant, have equal bargaining power and that



the employer is going to negotiate with them: I just think it's wrong-headed.

I think another thing we ought to take the time to consider, which could be done at this committee, is the role of unions. You know, members in this House seem to, without having a really good understanding of the impact that unions have, talk at length about them in very negative ways, which I think is very unfair. In fact, if you look – and one of the areas I practised in was human rights – there's actually quite a lot of overlap between human rights law and labour and employment law. The reason for that is that most employees don't necessarily have the funds or ability to hire a private lawyer and pursue their rights in the context of a workplace.

The result of that is that in order for employees to be able to pursue those rights, they have to band together, they have to work together and pool their common resources, which are considerably lesser than the employers', in order to make that headway, and how they do that is unions. That's pretty much precisely what unions do. In fact, many of the major human rights cases that are cited actually have the name of the union on them because it was the union that pursued those cases, because they had the ability to do that.

In any democracy, I guess, there are going to be those who disagree with the will of the majority. That's always going to happen, and actually one of the beauties of democracy is that the majority rules but that some people will disagree. The idea is that, you know, we get a majority opinion from workers. They want to pool their combined resources, they want to be able to effect change in their workplace, they want to affect the safety of their fellow workers, they want to affect the income of their fellow workers, they want to affect the working conditions of their fellow workers, or maybe they just want to all band together and stand up and change a rule. Maybe they think that there should be greater parental leave, or maybe they think that greater accommodation should be made for employees who have disabilities, or maybe they think any number of things.

To say, "While the majority of workers have ruled in its favour, we can find one person who's unhappy, who for whatever reason doesn't particularly like the way the union is going, so that proves that workers' rights are being trampled" – well, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly find one person who is unhappy with this current government. I am such a person. It doesn't necessarily mean that the people's rights are being trampled. That may or may not be the case, but it isn't a necessary outcome of the fact that some people disagree with the will of the majority.

I think it's worth taking the time to consider the value of things like unions. You know, over the years they fought for a lot of the things that we enjoy today. They fought for worker safety. They fought for reasonable working hours. They fought for reasonable notice of things like shift changes. Some people say, I think wrongly, that they're not necessary anymore. I don't think that's true. I think, given how our understanding of workplace injury is evolving, that that's definitely not true. There are posttraumatic stress injuries that first responders suffer that we've only come to understand recently, and it's the job of their unions or their associations to fight to ensure that those new types of injuries, those new types of on-the-job injuries that we've only just recognized, are protected in the same way that previous things were.

Certainly, groups of employees come together in unions, and they've lobbied the past government for changes that were made with respect to the acknowledgement that certain types of cancer are caused by occupations. I think there are a lot of changes that still need to be made going forward. We always say that when we know better, we do better. I think that as the world evolves and as more and more people recognize new types of injuries or we have new types of employment, unions are still going to have a role to

play. I think that allowing the majority of workers to come together and form a union and decide on their common destiny and work together – I mean, I think there's nothing more innately human, innately community based than to say, you know: "All of us have a common interest. Let us work together in order to achieve that."

I think this amendment will allow us to take the time to consider these and other changes. There were a lot of changes that were made to the labour and employment codes. There were a lot of protected leaves that were brought in, and I think many of those had beneficial impacts. I remember at the time the now government, the then opposition members speaking at length about how these weren't real things that existed, that they weren't real problems. But they were real problems. They were real problems that I frequently got phone calls about every day from people in those actual situations, people calling to say: I had to take time off because my child was ill and ultimately passed away, and my employer is trying to terminate me. Those were real phone calls from real people.

I think that ensuring we have modern workplace legislation is critical. I actually think that it's beneficial for the employer as well. I think that healthy, well-taken-care-of employees who are happy help move their company forward.

With that, I will say thank you and sit down.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments.

Seeing none, are there any others who wish to speak to referral amendment 1? I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration standing.

4:50

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak to the amendment proposed by the hon. member, basically suggesting that we actually move Bill 2 to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. I recognize the concerns raised by the hon. member. She had concerns about the complications associated with the items in Bill 2. Quite frankly, none of this is complicated. Now, we were pretty clear in our platform about the changes that we actually wanted to make. The changes, the vast majority of the changes, are simply going back to what we had before. This is not new. This is not special. What this is doing is actually going back to the law that we had prior to the previous government making changes – right? – so that we can create jobs and restore workplace balance and workers' rights.

The member opposite also spoke at great length concerning the youth minimum wage, you know, stating that it's unfair to youth. But what's unfair to youth was the previous government increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, the highest in the country, and reducing the job opportunities for youth. Again, our change in terms of the youth minimum wage is to create jobs for Alberta's youth, to get them working so they can actually save up for school and assist their families or for whatever they want. Quite frankly, \$13 an hour is far better than zero dollars an hour if the youth don't have jobs. That said, I'd also like to point out that Bill 2 doesn't deal with the youth minimum wage.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we were very clear in our platform that these are the changes that we wanted to make, that are included in Bill 2. Albertans voted on it, and we want to deliver on our promises. This is not complicated.

With that, I do not support this amendment, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to adjourn debate on this issue.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

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

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

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

[Debate adjourned June 3]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Peace River standing.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. I rise today to give my speech in response to the Speech from the Throne, and I begin with a word of thank you. A great statesman once said that gratitude is not only the greatest of all virtues but also the parent of all others. Indeed, gratitude is the greatest of all virtues because it is the plainest. Anything a man has, be it food or clothing, knowledge or wealth, he must receive from another. I've received much, and therefore I've much to be grateful for. I'll begin with four thank yous: first, to the voters of the Peace River constituency; second, to my country, our Queen, her Lieutenant Governor, and this Chamber; third, to my family; and fourth, to my God.

To the constituents of Peace River: thank you. Thank you for electing me to represent you here in Alberta's Legislature. Alberta is, of course, God's own province, but I must inform this House that God does play favourites, and Peace River is God's own constituency in God's own province, the most beautiful corner of the province and, might I add, the largest corner at that.

The history of my riding begins with the First Nation peoples – the Dene Tha', the Tallcree, the Beaver, among other nations – our first inhabitants and the first entrepreneurs living on the bountiful land and travelling up and down the mighty Peace River. Among the first Europeans in my constituency was Alexander Mackenzie, from 1789 through to 1793, on his first voyages across North America, a decade before Lewis and Clark, I might remind our American brothers. After his first trip through the constituency of the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, he was so disappointed with his experience that he named the now Mackenzie River "Disappointment River." Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to inform the House that Mackenzie, being a man of refined taste and high intelligence, made no such comment after passing through my constituency only a few short years later.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, after crossing the continent, Sir Alexander Mackenzie entered into a career of politics, like many of us. In June 1804 he was elected to the House of Assembly of Lower Canada. During his tenure in the House, to the certain disappointment of his government whip, he attended only one session out of the four years, and he explained later that he was heartily tired of legislation. It was a different age.

I also wish to report to this House that in the far reaches of my constituency even today farmers are still breaking new farmland, not unlike our Dominion and its creation some many years ago. Canada's first nationalist, D'Arcy McGee, who might be familiar to some members of this House as he was quoted by our Premier at the swearing-in of many of us as MLAs, said in the early days of Canada:

Here, every man is the first settler of the land, or removed from the first settler one or two generations at the farthest – here, we

have no architectural monuments calling up old associations – here, we have none of those old popular legends and stories which in other countries have exercised a powerful share in the Government – here, every man is the son of his own works.

Likely he spoke of the Laurentian Hills or perhaps of the plains next to Lake Ontario, but it could easily be said again today of the frontier that is north Peace Country in my constituency. The pioneering spirit of the people and the get 'er done attitude, as we're all familiar with, would have made Mackenzie, David Thompson, and the rest feel quite at home in today's north Peace Country. Mr. Speaker, I know this House and all of my predecessors would agree that the north in Alberta truly is the new west.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'll be remiss if I do not also note for the benefit of my hon. colleagues the sheer enormity of my constituency. At over 109,222 square kilometres, that's 16.5 per cent of the land mass of Alberta. It is 1.5 times the size of New Brunswick, the same size as the island of Newfoundland, more than three times the size of Belgium, and it is over 227,272 times larger than the smallest state, Vatican City.

My home is closer, as the crow flies, to Yellowknife, the capital of the Northwest Territories, than to this capital building in this tropical city right now, and of course I try not to draw any parallels between my geography in the province and the geography of my current seat in relation to the front bench.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, to my constituents: I thank you. For your confidence and your commitment to both myself and to the conservative values I ran to represent, I thank you.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my country, Canada, Her Majesty the Queen, her representative the Lieutenant Governor, to whose speech I'm supposed to be responding, and, finally, this Assembly and its members, both past and present. These institutions of tradition in our society did not appear overnight. No, they arose, as the common law has, from time immemorial. Generations of statesmen have risen and fallen, washing over these institutions, refining them, defining them, dignifying them, just as waves wash over harsh rocks, making them into jewels. And that is our heritage here. It is a jewel that has been preserved and polished for us.

Tradition has lent this 30th Legislature her strong arm and has pulled us up to great heights. In our present age, which values progress above all else, the role of tradition can be easily forgotten, but we must remember, Mr. Speaker, as Chesterton wrote:

[Tradition] is the democracy of the dead. [It] means giving a vote to [the] most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. . . . Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about [today]. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of [their] birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of [their] death. Democracy tells us not to neglect a good man's opinion, even if he is our groom; tradition asks us not to neglect a good man's opinion, even if he is our father.

Our Legislature and cabinet are institutional manifestations of this tradition by making present the will of the people, the rule of law for all Albertans, and the Crown, our sovereign authority to govern in this Chamber. This Legislature is the continuity of the political patrimony of all of our western civilization. We members are the stewards of that and nearly a millennium of tradition and history that allows me to speak freely in this Chamber on behalf of my constituents today.

The seed that was planted nearly 1,000 years ago at Runnymede in 1215, when King John signed the Magna Carta, has blossomed into a tree, and that tree has borne good fruit for us. But trees must be tended; our institutions must be guarded, both within and without. Tradition is a living being. Like all living beings, it must be pruned and cultivated. Culture is the means whereby we cultivate

our traditions and guard our institutions. These traditions, however, are not playthings to be manipulated or corpses to mutilate.

When cultivating and pruning our traditions, we must always keep the words of William Wordsworth in our mind when he said that we must not murder to dissect. The tree, once felled, lies dead, and no fruit will be borne from her boughs. So it is true with our traditions. Any attempt at a clean break from tradition is akin to hewing off our own legs, and as soon as you cut them off, Mr. Speaker, we are not going anywhere anytime soon. Therefore, we owe all our predecessors and our ancestors gratitude, and I thank them now for all the service that they have done for future generations, our current generation.

5:00

Third, Mr. Speaker, I thank my family. Every one of us in this House has a family to whom we owe thanks. The family is the first and fundamental of all institutions that populate our society. It is in the family that our children first learn to speak, to know right from wrong, selfless service to siblings, and it is in the family that our children are taught fundamental truths and the most deeply held convictions that we hold. John Paul II believed that: “the history of mankind, the history of salvation, passes by way of the family.” It is true not only in the theological context quoted but also in a very earthy and practical sense. We are formed and informed by the love and support of our families. All of us pass by way of a family, and I am no different.

So, Mr. Speaker, allow me to share with the House just one short story from my own family history, recorded in a humble rural newspaper. My grandfather and great-uncle were immigrants from Poland to what at the turn of the 20th century was the edge of the wild, a quarter section just north of Barrhead. Here I’ll quote from the *Barrhead Leader*. Uncle Frank and my father bought 160 acres of homestead north of Barrhead, paying \$10, and then, after the government opened up more land for homesteading, bought additional land in Vega, this time for \$12. My Uncle Frank said that the land was nothing but bush, and it all had to be cleared by hand. I’m told that he later had a tractor to help him. He continued on, finishing by saying: time flies; I remember being on the boat from Poland like it was yesterday, and here’s 100 years creeping on me; I’ve had a good life and 92 years of happiness; what more could one ask for?

Uncle Frank finished his life with gratitude, as did my grandfather and all of my ancestors before me. I’m grateful to them today, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to indulge the House. I offer thanks to my mother, my father, my three brothers, my dear wife, who is here in the Legislature, and every family member that came before us. The weight of our generation, now carried on our shoulders, is made light and the water we carry is made easy when we pick up the yoke of our ancestors and draw from their wells.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my God, the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For how could I not thank my God? He has given me all: my constituency, my country, and my family. These are all gifts, and I would be greatly remiss if I were to be grateful for the gifts but not to the gifter. I would be such a fool if I were to be thankful for the creation but not to the creator.

For many current political commentators the role of religion and faith in society is often misunderstood and, for them, relegated to history books. I propose, however, that religion is a contemporary act in our society, as unfamiliar a manifestation as it may be to those authors of those history books. Religion is often conflated with culture or deeply held personal opinions. While religion certainly shapes culture and personal beliefs, it definitely transcends them.

Most importantly for my speech today, it is said that religion fully reveals man to himself. Religion fully reveals man to himself.

I believe humanity can be best understood in its mission and purpose through the exercise of religion. Therefore, free expression of religion via public faith is necessary for full and true participation in any free society. In antiquity civil and religious powers were one. Happily, that is no longer the case – a lesson in history from Ambrose and Thomas Becket and Thomas More is for another speech – but the separation of church and state is one of the jewels of our western civilization. However, this separation is often misunderstood.

The separation of church from state does not mean that religion is relegated exclusively to private life. From a religious perspective such a position is untenable. How can a citizen believe that God is the ultimate meaning to existence, believe that God reveals man to himself, but be expected to leave his religion at home when stepping into the public square? The separation of church and state means that religion and government both have legitimate spheres in which they operate. They are both free, not one greater than the other, no one able to dominate the other. In other words, the separation of church and state means that religion and government are respectful peers, neither bedfellows nor strangers, neither master nor servant.

Why do I say all of this? I say this to make the simple point that human dignity is contingent on the free exercise of religion. If we truly wish for a humane society, where humanity can truly flourish, we cannot cut off the river from the spring any more than we can separate humanity from God. The great link that ensures that humanity is not cut off from its source is liberty. Through liberty, then, humanity’s divine calling can come to fulfillment, in my belief. As such, conscience and freedom of religion is paramount for a free society. To strip a man of his public faith is to strip a man of his own self. I suggest that to want to make a public square with our religion checked at the cloakroom is just as desirable as a public square devoid of moral obligation or any earnest conviction.

We are a province built in part by public faith and its expression. Many of our great prairie heroes, from Lacombe to Manning, from Douglas to Blakey, have been motivated by religion and their great works informed by faith.

In closing, Mr. Speaker and hon. colleagues, these four thank yous stand as something of a road map for my hopes as a politician. I hope to serve my constituents as they deserve, and although legislating can be tiring, as Sir Alexander Mackenzie found, I will be tireless in promoting the common good. Second, I hope to uphold the dignity and grace of this Chamber that we inhabit, always trusting in the traditions of our province and our country, that are not things to be scorned but treasures and jewels to be cherished. I hope to promote the good of all families, always acknowledging that the state, though properly ordered for a good society, is a poor nanny and should never replace and substitute the family. Finally, I hope, as the highest law of the land, our Charter states, to acknowledge the supremacy of God, to uphold the dignity of conscience, and to fight for the freedom of religion.

These four points, these four hopes and thank yous – my constituency, my country, my family, and my God – are the things for which I am most grateful for today, and these are the things which I dedicate my life to in public service. So help me God.

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

Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), I believe, I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to thank the Member for Peace River for his wonderful remarks in response to the throne speech. I have known the Member for Peace River for a long time.

He's been a dear friend. He's a tremendous campaigner. I'm certain he's a wonderful husband and son and even a pain. But I can tell you that in this Chamber it will be hard to find a man of greater character.

I know he has worked diligently to get here, as we all have, and I'd like to know if he can maybe comment a little bit further about his road getting here, where it started, what really motivated him to be part of this great change that we are involved in, you know, the movement, as we call it, and maybe what he hopes to accomplish in this Chamber and in his tenure as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. So if I could ask the Member for Peace River to maybe respond to that.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you I'd like to thank my hon. friend and colleague the Member for Cardston-Siksika for his comments and questions. We have had a long friendship, the member and myself, and it's been fruitful, and I'm grateful for it, but it is not just that member alone. Many of the members on this side of the House have become dear friends of mine. The story of how I made my decision to enter into politics, to strive for the common good in public service, would be lacking without acknowledging every one of them along the way, particularly the Premier of Alberta, who has become a dear friend of mine and a mentor in many ways, along with many other members of the front bench today, men and women that I look up to, and I'm grateful for their friendship.

The decision itself was difficult. I'm very grateful that my wife is here today in the gallery to watch. It's been a longer road for her than me, perhaps. I believe that anyone who wants to thank me for any service must go and thank her first. The decision was not taken lightly, but I believe that she also is grateful that we have this opportunity together, husband and wife, as a family, to continue to advocate for what we believe is the truth and speak on behalf of the constituents in the beautiful constituency of Peace River.

I'll leave my comments there and thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all my hon. colleagues for putting up with me and my speech for the last 15 minutes.

5:10

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Under (29)(2)(a), are there any other members who wish to continue for the last couple of minutes?

Seeing none, are there any other members who wish to speak? The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a distinct honour to speak in this Assembly today as the representative for the Grande Prairie-Wapiti constituency. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your election by our peers to this position. Your attention to upholding the great traditions, privileges, and burdens of this House, which are foundational to our democracy, and your commitment to ensure an orderly and dignified process to our collective deliberations are of great service to Albertans.

I would also like to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for her delivery of the throne speech on May 22. The throne speech was a true message of hope to all Albertans and a notice to the rest of Canada that we are taking back our voice in this Confederation.

I would also like to acknowledge the strong elected leaders who have represented my region in the past and to whom I look for inspiration and example. Wayne Drysdale, our most recent MLA, serving our community and this Chamber for the past 11 years, has set a high bar in representing the constituents of Grande Prairie-Wapiti. His availability to constituents was exceptional and

nonpartisan and distinguished him as a true public servant. He has been, on a personal level, a generous mentor. Past cabinet ministers such as Walter Paszkowski, Everett McDonald, and Marvin Moore also hailed from my area, and I'm keenly aware of the legacy of the strong, principled leaders to whose names I now humbly add my own.

The newly drawn boundaries of the Grande Prairie-Wapiti riding extend west of Grande Prairie to the British Columbia border, south into the Kakwa-Willmore wilderness, and encompass the communities of Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wembley, La Glace, the Horse Lake First Nation, Bezanson, Clairmont, Sexsmith as well as an eastern portion of the city of Grande Prairie. The south part of the constituency runs deep into the Rocky Mountains. In its centre it includes rich agricultural land in the Sexsmith, Hythe, Wembley, and Beaverlodge areas and rolling grazing land in the Rio Grande and Teepee Creek regions. The region is rich in resources and includes part of both the Montney and Duvernay shale basins, the most prolific and accessible liquids-rich zones in western Canada. Accordingly, the region contributes significantly to the provincial economy with a sophisticated and competitive energy industry.

Agriculture continues to contribute in a major way to the economy, with the region home to many long-time farming and ranching families. To add to the economic diversity, our forestry industry includes local, national, and international firms that sustainably produce wood products for use by consumers in Canada and around the world. The great geographical and economic diversity of my constituency make it a microcosm not only of Alberta's industries and challenges but also of the beauty and opportunity that Albertans experience every day.

The stories of survival, challenge, and innovation have been part of the Grande Prairie-Wapiti region for many years. In the 18th century the predominant culture of the Peace Country was the Beaver First Nation. There was an abundance to the land, with bison, moose, caribou, and bear providing much of their food as well as the serviceberry or, as we now call it, the saskatoon berry. The Beaver and, later on, the Cree would travel long distances for berry gathering in the Grande Prairie, and after having secured and dried a sufficient quantity of fruit, scatter again in small bands into the more remote parts of the country for the autumn hunt.

While the land was generous, it could also be harsh, with long, cold winters bringing with them the threat of starvation. By 1793 bands of Beaver and Cree were making regular excursions to fur-trading posts to exchange furs for European items that would help them survive and continue to hunt and trap. The fur trade grew to include the Métis coming from the east, which led to a number of Métis settlements such as Lake Saskatoon and Flyingshot Lake.

Favourable reports by surveyors and fur traders began to create interest for European settlers by the early 1900s. A.M. Bezanson was particularly enthusiastic about the agriculture opportunities that he saw in the Grande Prairie-Wapiti region. His reports, among others, helped fuel the land rush of 1910. Getting up to this rich, new land was a challenge, not for the weak of mind or heart. Homesteaders came from the east, through the Peace River and Slave Lake route or up through the Edson Trail. The bull outfit that came up with six new teams of oxen made their way into the region in 1910 and settled in the Beaverlodge area, with names that are still part of our community to this day such as Gaudin, Sherk, and Lossing among them.

In another timeless struggle, getting our rich resources out of the Peace Country to ocean ports to the west was a topic of much discussion in the early 1900s. In 1936, concerned about the high freight costs for shipping grain, a Métis settler named Alex Monkman led an incredible effort to cut a road southwest of Beaverlodge through a mountain pass that he found while trapping

one winter, to connect to the road system near Prince George in the British Columbia interior. Initial volunteer progress on the trail led to a vigorous solicitation of funds for the cause, and as government funds were not available, residents raised funds from the community in a variety of ways and at great sacrifice. Local crews worked by hand with rudimentary equipment and made remarkable progress cutting a primitive road in the wilderness.

At one point in the effort, in an attempt to prove the viability of the route to governments, an adventurous few toiled ahead on a pack trail to get a Model T through the entire pass. While the car made it to the Pacific side of the Great Divide, the effort failed as winter set in early, leaving the group fighting for survival as they made their way out on foot. The project came to an end when in the fall of 1939 war broke out in Europe, and the young men of the Grande Prairie flocked to join the Canadian Forces, as they had done in World War I. With that, the dream of the Monkman pass died. The effort to build the road through the Rockies against all odds and without government support became a thing of legend in the area and is a testament to the vision, resourcefulness, and resiliency of early residents.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Peace Country became home to my parents in 1962, when they purchased 480 acres of land southwest of Beaverlodge, starting out in a two-room cabin with three small children and 50 head of cattle. They were able to provide for their growing family because of the strong and diverse economy, starting in agriculture, supplementing through the forest industry, and in later years expanding into the oil and gas sector.

Mr. Speaker, that is why Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act, has been so welcome in my constituency. All of our industries, from agriculture and forestry to tourism and resource development, as well as the countless other small businesses that spring up to support the community in turn need relief from that tax burden.

Bill 2, the open for business act, and Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut act, are also significant in my region, where the entrepreneurial spirit runs strong. The city of Grande Prairie has ranked among the top six entrepreneurial cities in Canada for the last 10 years, and in 2018 it was the only mid-sized city in Alberta to make the national list. In the long history of the Peace region we have not looked for handouts but simply an environment where hard work and a bit of risk is commensurate with the reward at the end of the day.

My parents' story of tenacity and hard work coupled with the willingness to take risks is a familiar story to many in the Peace Country. From the Beaver, Cree, and Métis people, that at times struggled to survive but were able to persevere through their resilience and connection with the land; to the first surveyors that remarked on the Grande Prairie, that was, in the words of surveyor George Dawson in 1879, quote, parklike with groves of poplar and exceedingly fertile, unquote; to the European settlers, that came to escape persecution and starvation in search of opportunity, the Peace Country has always required a strong spirit and outside-the-box thinking. In return it offers endless possibilities for prosperity, for family, for strong community, for natural beauty. Opportunity abounds.

I believe it is for that reason that the message of the United Conservative Party, Alberta Strong and Free, resonates so deeply with the people in the Grande Prairie-Wapiti riding. The level of engagement was high from the nomination process right through to election night, when, I am proud to report, our riding had the highest voter turnout in the province, at 80.2 per cent. We are strong, and we value the freedom to grow, create, work, innovate, prosper, and persevere.

5:20

Mr. Speaker, like most that serve in this Chamber, on both sides of the aisle, I am here today because of the unwavering support of the most important people in my life. This starts with the partnership of my wife, Kim; the blessing of our children and their families; and encouragement and support of my parents, extended family, close friends, and, of course, the voters in the Grande Prairie-Wapiti riding. Alberta has given its best to me, and I commit each day in office to give my best back to constituents and the people of this great province.

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

Are there any questions or comments for the member? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to congratulate the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti on his election. Of course, I know that he'll do a stellar job at representing the constituents there. His calling as the Minister of Finance is, obviously, a good position for him that I know he'll excel at, too.

Previously part of the area that he represents was the area that I represented with Grande Prairie-Smoky, which doesn't exist anymore. Two communities that kind of come to mind there – I guess there are three. There's Sexsmith, that's just had Chautauqua Day, a celebration where they open up the main street for families to enjoy the community and also have a nice parade. There are lots of old cars in that parade. It's a great time there. I had a chance this year to stop by just for a minute to take in Chautauqua Day because I couldn't resist, when I was driving by, to stop in and check out Sexsmith.

Also, the community of Teepee Creek, which, of course, has an enormous stampede, Teepee Creek Stampede, which is world renowned. It's a community of tens of people that turns into thousands of people for the Teepee Creek Stampede, 4 Days in the Wild, I think it's called.

Then, of course, there's the community of Bezanson. I think fondly of these small communities and the success that they've had. Now, Bezanson just built a big facility for their community hall. It was such a huge endeavour for such a small community, but they worked so hard in the community and gathered funds and really developed something that's actually pretty spectacular.

I just wanted the member to maybe comment on some of these communities that I used to represent and take a little time, and we'll talk about that. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Central Peace-Notley for that question. Let me say that it's an incredible honour to follow in the member's footsteps from Central Peace-Notley. In that half of the constituency, certainly, as I've reached out to constituents, they have spoken highly of the representation that he has provided.

Small communities in rural Alberta contribute in a very impressive way to the fabric of this great province. In fact, I sincerely believe that the spirit of those that reside in those small communities exemplifies, I think, in a lot of cases really what it's taken to move Alberta to where it is today and, in fact, embodies so much of what is good about this province. Very often in those small communities such as Sexsmith and Teepee Creek and Bezanson, as the member has alluded to, you will find individuals who, perhaps partly out of necessity and perhaps partly because of the values that were instilled in them by their parents and families, so often tend to

be particularly resilient in times of hardship. They tend to be willing to take risks when there is opportunity, and they tend to be accountable for their decisions. They also, I think, perhaps most importantly, tend to be very compassionate and help out their friends and neighbours in times of need.

Again, just to probably go back to a point in my maiden speech, I truly believe that residents, constituents in these small communities appreciate maybe in a disproportionate sense the platform, the plan, that this United Conservative Party government has. That is a plan to ensure that we as a province have the most competitive business environment possible so that residents can follow their dream, so that residents can take full advantage of opportunities in front of them, so that investment again can come back into this province and jobs can be created, opportunities can be created. Not only our small communities but every community and every people group in this great province can benefit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Are there others wishing to speak to the throne speech? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you. It is truly a privilege to be here. I am awed and humbled by this place, its storied history, the ability to positively impact the lives of so many Albertans, its conventions and traditions although I have to admit, Mr. Speaker, that even though I agree with it, I'm still trying to find the reference to the \$100 donation to your charity of choice for violating the cellphone rules in the standing orders.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that I echo the sentiments of many of my colleagues. It is such a gift to be able to serve but also a tremendous responsibility. I feel this each time I walk into this building. I am thankful that this place, with its marbled columns, stained glass windows, and ornate details – all of this serves as a constant reminder of how fortunate we are to be here and the responsibility we bear in the days to come.

With that in mind, I would like to thank the residents of Calgary-Varsity for having faith in me to represent them in this Chamber, and I would also like to thank the Premier for giving me the opportunity to serve all Albertans as a member of government. I recognize what an honour and responsibility this is, and I will serve to the best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, in my remarks this afternoon in responding to the Speech from the Throne, I would like to thank some of the people who brought me to this place, talk about the issues and dreams of the people who live in Calgary-Varsity, and share my excitement in working with my colleagues in this Chamber to improve the lives of Albertans.

First, I would like to thank my parents. I was born in Toronto. Wait. That said, I was saved at an early age. My family moved to Alberta when my twin sister and I were four years old. My parents, John and Penny, like so many, wanted to move to Alberta to see greater opportunities for themselves and their children. They sought out the vast prairie sky and the Rocky Mountains, the entrepreneurial spirit that lives here, and the freedom to live life on their own terms.

I was fortunate to grow up in Calgary and on a small ranch near Water Valley, Alberta. From my father, an industrial electrician, rancher, and entrepreneur, I learned about hard work, planning, and, above all, safety. I have been doing prework safety briefings since I was eight years old, even before they called them safety briefings. From my mother, a schoolteacher, guidance counsellor, and lifelong learner, I learned compassion, dedication, and the love of

ideas. It was they who sparked for me an interest in politics. Growing up, we would often have conversations around the kitchen table concerning issues of the day. My parents both played a huge part in how I view the world and the values I hold.

From my father, and I quote: you can't take more out of a pot than you put into it. As you can probably tell, he has a very strong aversion to deficit financing, and he is a tremendous fan of King Ralph. From my mother, and I am paraphrasing: politics is about people. As a society we have decided to pool our resources to ensure that all children can get a good education, anyone who is sick can see a doctor, and those who need help can find it. Government is our government. It is us. We need to take responsibility for it. Thank you to both of my parents for their love and guidance.

Second, I would like to thank the many mentors and colleagues who helped me on my journey throughout my education and career. This interest in politics instilled by my parents prompted me to do my first degree in political science. One might ask: what do you do with a poli-sci degree once you graduate? That's a very good question. Well, one answer is that you move to Ottawa and apply theory to practice, and one of my first jobs after graduating was working for the hon. Harvie André, Member of Parliament for Calgary-Centre and Government House Leader. For those that may have known him, Harvie was a tremendous leader and extraordinarily hard working. Although I learned a great deal concerning the political process, there were three main lessons that I took away from my time in Ottawa. First, you can make a difference. By working with others and working hard, you can make positive change in politics. Second, although sometimes difficult, it is possible to maintain your values. Always act with integrity, and remember that you are there to serve. Harvie demonstrated this over nearly 20 years in Ottawa. Finally, if you wish to represent your fellow citizens, you should understand what they are thinking and have experience, skills, and ideas to offer.

5:30

With these lessons in mind I left the world of politics. I completed a master's degree in industrial relations at Queen's and started a career in the business world in labour relations and human resources. I had the tremendous opportunity to work with one of Canada's great companies, Canadian Pacific Railway, for just under 20 years, and then I started my own business consulting. I also had the privilege to teach at two of our great schools in our province, the schools of business at the University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge.

Over this time I worked with and taught a number of truly remarkable people. There are too many to recognize, Mr. Speaker. Suffice to say that they included business colleagues and partners, union leaders, university professors, a number of my students, government officials, and community leaders. Although this group of individuals had very differing views, they shared common traits. They were dedicated to something greater than themselves, they were thoughtful, and they strived to make this world a better place. Working with each of them, they showed me that through hard work and dialogue you can find greater solutions, and I thank them all.

Third, I would like to thank my wife and children. While working with CP, I met my wife, Marian, who worked here at the Legislature for one of her first jobs following graduation from her first degree. A second-generation Ukrainian, I soon joined through marriage the vast Alberta-Ukrainian community. Where once holubtsi, pirohy, and nalysnyky were simply foreign words, they are now common household dishes and sometimes not common enough. We have been blessed with three girls: Katyanna, Genovia, and Natalia. As many in this Chamber know better than I, this role truly is a family

affair. We cannot do it alone, and I would like to thank my wife and children for their love and support.

Finally, I would like to thank the constituents of Calgary-Varsity and, in particular, two former Calgary-Varsity MLAs, Donna Kennedy-Glans and Murray Smith. Nearly 10 years ago my wife and I moved to Varsity, in our humble opinion and according to *Avenue Magazine* for over a decade, one of the top neighbourhoods in Calgary. Calgary-Varsity is a riding like no other. The beautiful trees that create vast canopies over the streets are as multigenerational as the people who like to walk down the sidewalks underneath them. It's rare and amazing to find a community where you can go for an evening stroll, as we often do, and be greeted by seniors, students, children, parents, and pets. It is truly an area that reflects the vast diversity of the province we live in.

Varsity, once considered an outlying suburb, is now inner city, a hub for ideas, community, and vibrancy. This is in no small part due to its namesake, the University of Calgary, this institution that has made its mark not only here in Alberta but nationally and internationally. It is a blessing to have access to such high-calibre education, that attracts the best and brightest right into the heart of our constituency. I would imagine that there are a few U of C Dinos in this very Chamber. In addition to the university, Calgary-Varsity is also home to the Alberta Children's hospital, Foothills campus, numerous primary schools, and strong and resilient community associations.

Whether you live in Varsity, Silver Springs, Brentwood, Banff Trail, University Heights, St. Andrews Heights, Parkdale, or Charleswood, you are part of a larger community that celebrates family, belonging, teamwork, and community. Whether it be picnicking by the river, playing Frisbee in Bowmont Park, or sharing ideas with old and new friends at the local coffee shops, a sense of belonging and friendship is reflected in our constituency.

Over the years Calgary-Varsity has been ably represented by praiseworthy MLAs who still live in the riding today. Murray Smith represented Calgary-Varsity between 1993 and 2004. Murray served as a cabinet minister in a number of portfolios, including labour, economic development and tourism, and energy. As part of the Klein government he helped to restore balance to our budget while at the same time rebuilding our economy and was re-elected in his final term with a significant majority.

Donna Kennedy-Glans represented Calgary-Varsity between 2012 and 2015. Donna chaired the all-party Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and was the associate minister of energy and electricity and renewable resources. I recall that one evening during her nomination Donna showed up at my door in Varsity. Her passion, dedication, and thoughtfulness reignited my love for politics, and not only did I become her supporter, but I became extremely active in local politics again.

Although both Murray and Donna are very different people, they share a number of common traits and views. They are both thoughtful and resourceful, willing to engage in conversation about ideas, and were focused on representing the interests of the constituents of Calgary-Varsity. I would like to thank them both for their dedication, service, and especially their advice.

Lastly, I would like to thank the residents of Calgary-Varsity. Over the last 10 months I was honoured to meet literally thousands of Calgary-Varsity residents that opened their doors for me – it was particularly helpful when it was minus 29 – and each shared what they loved about our neighbourhood, their concerns, hopes, and ideas for the future. Although I am not certain why, and perhaps it is the influence of the University of Calgary, the residents of Calgary-Varsity are incredibly engaged in politics and care deeply about the issues confronting them and their families. Many have

participated in policy conversations on the economy, health care, and education, and want to seek solutions. At the doors, in coffee shops, and in community halls Calgary-Varsity residents engaged in conversations and presented ideas facing our province today.

What did I hear? I heard a deep concern about jobs and the economy. I met unemployed and underemployed geologists who had lost their jobs in 2016 and had yet to find full-time work. I met university students on the cusp of graduating who are having difficulty finding jobs here in Alberta and were having to leave the province to find work or go back to school to do another degree. I met tradespeople who had lost their jobs in the oil patch. One individual in particular had started his own business after losing his job and, unable to make a go of it, was on the brink of bankruptcy. With tears in his eyes he shared with me that he did everything right. He went to school. He got his certificate. He worked hard and paid off his loan. When he lost his job in the patch, he started his own company, but there was not enough work. He was losing his business and his house, and he did not know what to do to support his family. His message was that we as government needed to fix the economy and bring jobs back to Alberta.

I heard concerns about growing debt and taxes. Young families and seniors alike commented on the increased cost of living caused by growing taxes and the burdens that we were shifting to future generations given that we were living beyond our means. I heard about our health care and education systems. As I already mentioned, Calgary-Varsity includes a number of great institutions, including the U of C, Alberta Children's hospital, Foothills medical centre, and a number of public and private schools. We have a large number of people who work in education and health care, and they care deeply about the services they provide and want to see them improved.

Although there is a recognition that we need to get spending under control, there is a desire that we do this in a way that maintains and even improves front-line services. We need innovative thinking and new approaches in solving this. How can we do this? One approach is that we engage front-line workers in finding ways to improve services, manage costs, and make these jobs good jobs so we can continue to attract good people to provide these services.

I heard about our need to protect the most vulnerable in our society. The role of government is to ensure that those who need assistance can find it. All Albertans, regardless of who they love, to whom they pray, or their ethnic origins, must be respected and included. What counts is the character of the person.

Finally, I heard a desire to move away from the politics of division and the politics of personal attacks. Instead, we as elected representatives and community leaders should focus on ideas and solutions and, above all, represent the views of all our constituents.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Calgary-Varsity are looking for a policy agenda that will create jobs and rebuild the economy, reduce taxes, improve our health care and education systems while at the same time managing our budget, protect the most vulnerable in our society, and do this in a way that is respectful and represents the views of all of our constituents. I believe our government is well on its way to addressing the issues put forth by my constituents. With bills 1, 2, 3, and 4 already introduced and Bill 1 already passed, we have shown that we are ready to create jobs and rebuild the economy. More legislation to create opportunity for Albertans is yet to come.

I will have the pleasure of introducing the fair access to regulated professions and trades act, making it easier and fairer for newcomers to be credentialed in their professions, work at their skill level, and contribute to our shared prosperity. To help those most vulnerable, we will introduce the saving the girl next door act

and table legislation to give effect to Claire's law, which will protect victims of human trafficking and domestic violence. Finally, we have already improved decorum and respect in this Chamber by making changes to the standing orders.

5:40

Lastly, we will focus tirelessly on balancing the budget over the course of the next four years. In doing this, we will protect front-line resources. In making this commitment, I must reiterate that this is not just about saving money. This is about ensuring that we as a province have the ability to fund those items that are important to us – health care, education, social services – over the long term and not spending millions or billions on debt-servicing costs.

These are just a few examples I will probably provide to my constituents when I am asked how we are responding to their concerns. There is much more to come.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to speak to the Chamber. I commit to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find the best solutions for Albertans. Although we may not always agree on the best path forward . . .

**The Speaker:** I'm sure someone will be happy to provide you with an opportunity to conclude your remarks.

While it's confession hour, I might just add that I didn't realize that the hon. member and I had so much in common. I, too, was born in that place you mentioned and came to Alberta when I was four and lived in Water Valley. So we're basically soulmates.

I see the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche rising to perhaps see if you might like to conclude your remarks.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Varsity and Minister of Labour and Immigration for his wonderful remarks, similar to the Speaker and lots in common. It was really interesting to hear your remarks. I, too, had safety briefings at the age of about two, and they continued on, including on our campaign's sign team, which had a daily safety briefing before installing any campaign signs, including lawn signs. I was just wondering if the hon. member could perhaps continue sharing some of these remarks with the Chamber.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much to the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche for the question. I'd be pleased to finish my remarks. Yes, safety briefing: as the Minister of Labour and Immigration I'm responsible for occupational health and safety. I can honestly say that it's in the blood, from my father.

As I was indicating previously, Mr. Speaker, I would just simply like to thank you again for the opportunity to speak to the Chamber. I will commit to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find the best solutions for Albertans. Although we may not always agree on the best path forward, through respectful dialogue we will at least understand each other's views and, hopefully, identify and address unintended consequences. I commit to working on behalf of all Albertans as a member of this government. Finally, I commit to working hard every day for the constituents of Calgary-Varsity and to keeping my eyes, ears, and heart open to them and be worthy of their trust.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there others wishing to add questions or comments to the hon. member? The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, please.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes. I really appreciate the comments in your maiden speech. Again, there's no question why you were chosen for your position. It's an honour to have you there, sir.

A couple of things. We share some fellow things as well: nalysnyky, pirohy, everything else. I learned it before I got married but have the same affliction.

I wonder if you could share some personal stories, though, about some of the constituents that you came across other than the one gentleman you spoke about, something that really struck another chord, some of the impacts and the reasons why you're stepping forward to help out your constituents.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. Again, out door-knocking, I spoke with thousands of constituents in Calgary-Varsity, and a large number of them were particularly concerned about their ability to find jobs. With this one particular individual that I actually spoke to, what actually struck me and the colleagues with whom I was door-knocking was that he had no idea where to turn to and didn't know what to do at that point in time. That truly struck home for me. You know, why I chose to run and represent our constituents is that we need to actually change our policy direction to create jobs for Albertans and because of how harmful it was for a number of Albertans who got left behind.

That was the most dramatic story that I talked to, but there were lots of others; you know, a geologist, as I pointed out. But often numbers of individuals who wanted to start up a new oil-servicing company or start up a new oil well company, because they had been laid off, but couldn't find the financial capital to do that and were simply unable – you know, even though they had saved up sufficient funds and they were living off their savings, they knew that if something didn't change soon, they would not be able to retire, and they'd have to go someplace else. And then stories of neighbours whose children had graduated from the University of Calgary in engineering and had found work, but the work was actually in Texas, and they couldn't have the opportunities here.

I'm sure, like many of the other members in this Chamber, we've heard lots of stories, and that's why I'm so excited about our government and our mandate to move forward and create jobs for Albertans, diversify and grow the economy, and help these individuals in my constituency and all of our constituencies.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** There are just a few seconds left for questions and comments.

I would not want to prevent anyone from speaking. Having said that, if there are none, I'd be happy to hear from the hon. Member for Morinville-St. Albert and Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured and humbled to be here in front of you. I would like to thank the wonderful people from Morinville-St. Albert, who saw to it to elect me to represent them in this Legislature.

I'd also like to give a shout out to some of the people that, of course, have been behind me, starting with my parents, who moulded me into the person that I am. If you don't like that, you can speak to them. I'd also like to mention my wife, Randa, who inspires me every day to want to be a better person. One of the things that she taught me was to always recognize those people that are the hardest working people.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a second just to recognize some of the hardest working people in this Legislature, and that's the pages. I am so incredibly impressed by them because on day one they knew 87 names and 87 ridings. I'm quite impressed by that. So my goal is that before the end of this session I'm going to try and learn all of their names, and I'm also going to challenge myself to try to learn at least one thing about them. I've got a couple now that I'm just going to quickly share with you. This is for anybody,



by the way, who wants to take up skiing. I would suggest you go and see Amber because she was a competitive alpine skier. You might want to chat with Lily, whose favourite colour is grey. Or you could talk to Maria, who absolutely loves Indian dancing. Now, I would suggest that if our Prime Minister could find Alberta on a map, I would ask him to come here, and perhaps Maria could teach him a move or two. The last one I'll sort of mention is Summer, who is not only a valedictorian this year, but she's also graduating. In grade 10 and grade 11 she got 100 per cent in math two years in a row, and she's now going for 100 per cent in grade 12 as well. That'll make it 3 for 3. So when you see Summer out in the lounge, please give her a high-five and tell her we want 3 for 3 of that 100 per cent in math.

I'd also like to give a shout out to my daughter, who is a successful business owner and who has taught me and constantly reminds me about the benefits of being a compassionate Conservative. My son Jadd, who's 15, is also, by the way, the best Minecraft player in the world. You don't get good at Minecraft and be the best in the world without playing a lot of Minecraft. I'd like to give a shout out to him because he taught me, if nothing else, that persistence overcomes resistance. And then, lastly, my youngest son, Shadi, who taught me to never take my eye off him because he's a bit of a troublemaker and reminds me quite a bit of myself. He's also a great hockey player as well and plays at quite a competitive level.

Those are certainly the people that have inspired me and motivate me to come in here and to be the best that I can be.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask all the hon. members through you, of course: put your smart phones down, close your Standing Orders, and get comfortable in your seats because we're going to take a ride. You might want to buckle up as well for this one. Now, we are going to start in the most southern portion of my riding, my hometown, St. Albert. St. Albert is the city of botanical arts. If your preference is wave petunias or purple flame grass, it doesn't matter because we've got a little bit of something for everyone in St. Albert. In fact, from June 8 to August 24 you can actually hop on the botanical bus. It starts at the Enjoy Centre, and then it takes you to our world-famous farmers' market, and from there it'll take you to our botanical centre, which, of course, is world-class and definitely worth the trip.

But that's not all that St. Albert is known for. Mr. Speaker, St. Albert has an affliction. I suffer from that same affliction. It's known as hockey. I can tell you that the people in St. Albert love hockey. They're either playing hockey, they're practising hockey, and when they're not doing that, they're thinking about when they can next play hockey. I'm going to give everyone a little tip here, for anyone who does any fantasy hockey leagues, and I know there are lots of you: you might want to write down the name of Matt Savoie. He's native to St. Albert. He lives a block from me. I never see him unless it's on the ice, because he's another one of these 14-year-olds that lives and breathes hockey. He was recently drafted number one overall to play in the WHL, and they are using his name in the same sentence as other child phenoms such as Sidney Crosby and Connor McDavid. So, like I said, remember Matt Savoie for your hockey drafts.

Now, on this journey we're going to drive northward, and we're going to go through Sturgeon county. As you're driving through Sturgeon county, you're going to notice the canola fields on your left, and you're going to notice the Sturgeon River on your right. Mr. Speaker, you would be forgiven for thinking that you were in God's country, because there is no doubt that this is one of the most beautiful ridings if not the most beautiful riding in the province if not the country.

Drive a little further north, Mr. Speaker, and of course you've got the Industrial Heartland, which is responsible for half the GDP in this province. If you haven't toured the Industrial Heartland, I would encourage you to do so because it's definitely worth the trip.

But on this trip we keep heading north, and we're going to hit Morinville. Now, Morinville was founded in 1907. The St. Jean Baptiste church was named a historical site in 1975, and Morinville just finished construction of a world-class recreational centre. It's a \$30 million leisure centre, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that people from Morinville, if they've proven anything, it's that they can punch above their weight class. I encourage you while you're on this journey: don't be afraid to check out the recreational centre in Morinville.

Now, on this trip we're going to keep going north, and we're going to go to Legal. Legal is a wonderful French community. For myself, I will always think of it as the smallest town with the biggest church, and if you want to know what I mean, just go check it out. It does have the largest church in town, but that's actually not what they're known for. They are known as the national capital for French murals. Most people don't know this, Mr. Speaker, but there are actually 28 murals in the town of Legal. On some Sunday afternoon when you're looking for something to do, I encourage you to drive to Legal and check out those 28 murals. It's quite impressive.

Now, on this drive, of course, we're going to now head into Bon Accord, which is the first community in Canada and the 11th in the world to be designated as an international dark-sky community. So if you're interested in astronomy and you want to take your telescope out one Sunday evening, Bon Accord is a great place to go just because they don't have a ton of visual pollution or light pollution in the sky.

Now, after you leave Bon Accord, you're going to head into Gibbons. Gibbons was originally two separate towns, Astleyville and Battenberg, but they merged together, and they named the town after the founding land settler, William R. Gibbons. For me Gibbons will always be known for something else. It will be known for their world-famous meat draw. Now, prior to this campaign, Mr. Speaker, I didn't know what a meat draw was. If you're looking at me wondering what it is, well, it's a great opportunity to raise money for the local town. I would encourage you to go to the Gibbons Hotel. You can order a cold beverage. I recommend the nachos; they're excellent. Then you can participate in the meat draw. It's actually a lot of fun, and it's a great way to bring the whole town together.

Now we're going to be going a little further north. We're going to be hitting Redwater. Redwater gets its name from the nearby river, which actually turns red from the spring runoff, and that's how the town got its name. Redwater has a 45-metre tall discovery well derrick, and it's one of their historic landmarks.

But there's something else kind of cool about Redwater, Mr. Speaker. There's a gentleman there by the name of Dave. He works on town council. He's a retired RCMP officer. He purchased the old RCMP detachment, and he renovated it into his home. It's actually quite impressive. He renovated the entire detachment except for the jail cell. He left the jail cell intact. So it's got the bars, it's got the stainless steel sink, and it's actually quite neat. If you go there, if you knock on his door, tell him Dale sent you. He'll be more than happy to give you a tour. It's quite a neat little project that he has going there.

I am very fortunate to represent this incredible riding, but I'd like to back up just a little further now and tell you how I got into politics. My interest in politics started in grade 5. That was when my grade 5 class, under the guidance of Mr. Penner, taught us about government. We actually had an election, and I ran to be Prime

Minister of the class. My slogan for that campaign was Nally's His Name, Improvement's His Game. Now, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that my political prowess has improved somewhat since then, so you won't be seeing that slogan on any of my buttons any time soon. It certainly got me interested in politics at an early age.

I never had the opportunity to get involved, though, because I was a single parent at a young age. I went to university full-time, I worked part-time, and I raised this little girl on my own. And you can imagine how difficult that was. I didn't have any family supports close by, so I was on my own. It was at this time that I developed my own ideology, what I call compassionate conservatism. I realized, Mr. Speaker, that the best way you can help someone out who needs a hand is by having a strong economy. I learned at this opportunity that if an industrious, hard-working person can apply themselves, they can get ahead and they can get a mortgage-paying job. That was what I learned at this crucial juncture in my life.

I also, shortly after that, found myself as a general manager of a Home Depot. This was during one of the largest labour shortages our province has ever seen. At that time if you went into any big box retailer, whether it was Home Depot or Walmart, they were all grossly understaffed. They just couldn't hire people. Well, Mr. Speaker, I had the only big box retail store that was fully staffed. The reason it was fully staffed is because I reached out to the Mennonite centre, and the Mennonite centre's job is to find jobs for newcomers. They did a great job of helping us get staffed up. In addition to that, I started looking for other partnerships, and I formed a partnership with a company called EmployAbilities, and their job is to find employment for people with disabilities. From there they introduced me to a few other organizations that found work for people with disabilities. The end result was that I had the

only fully staffed Home Depot in the hottest economy in North America. The best part was that our profit was so high, because we had such great staffing levels, that the president of Home Depot actually sent my wife and I to the Beijing Olympics as a thank you.

It was at that time when I learned about what I call the business reason for hiring people with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, everybody has value, and the challenge is to find that value that they can bring to the workforce and harness that for the company and also for themselves as well.

It was shortly after that time when I bumped into a gentleman who worked for the chamber of commerce. He found out about the work that I was doing with companies, promoting the hiring of people with disabilities, and he asked me to be the co-chair for diversity Edmonton. It was a consortium of businesses that worked with other businesses to promote the hiring of people with disabilities. It was at that time that I got to do more work on what I call the business case for hiring people with disabilities, but it was also an opportunity for me to learn about the importance of taking care of the most vulnerable in our society.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of the ideals that I hold dear to my heart. Four years ago when we saw the electoral map change, I had some concerns. Those concerns were realized when we got on track to be \$100 billion in debt, when we had 200,000 unemployed Albertans. We were in a job crisis. We had the third-highest unemployment in the country.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt; however, I see that the clock has struck the hour of 6 o'clock, and as such the House is adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, June 4, 2019

Day 8

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, good evening and welcome. Please be seated.

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

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

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

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

[Debate adjourned June 4: Mr. Nally speaking]

**The Speaker:** Do I see the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rising?

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a bit of a long day. Okay. Well, I'm pleased to rise in response to the Speech from the Throne. As I know there is a little leeway on these speeches, I hope you will all indulge me while I tell you a little bit about myself.

I am a child of immigrants to this country from Tanzania and India who came to Canada and Alberta because of the open arms of this country and the wide-open opportunities of this province. My father was a small-business owner. My mother was a former teacher and a provincial civil servant. I grew up in southwest Edmonton, lucky to enjoy the privilege of a great public education system and world-class universities. I'm the daughter of two parents who both had significant health issues in their 40s but who never had to question whether or not they would have access to high-quality and exceptional health care.

I am a lawyer who worked for 13 years in public service and in private practice and who understands the role and significance of strong and effective government on the lives of the people it serves. I'm the partner and wife of a public school teacher and assistant principal, who has been a mentor and an advocate for his students. I'm a mother of two young children, who look around and don't question seeing people of all races, religions, abilities, sexual orientations, and values as part of their community. They certainly don't see anything unusual about a strong, progressive woman as a politician or as their Premier.

I am a feminist, a social justice advocate, a volunteer, and a woman of colour who believes that government should reflect the people that it serves, and I now stand before this Assembly as the elected representative for the fantastic riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. I'm the first woman to hold this seat and the first person of colour, and I'm very proud.

Edmonton-Whitemud is a beautiful riding established in 1971. It draws its name from Whitemud Creek, a tributary of the North Saskatchewan River that runs through the riding. The name Whitemud comes from the white mud from the hill used by Hudson's Bay Company men as a whitewash on their posts.

Edmonton-Whitemud is a constituency made up of people from a multitude of ethnic, religious, language, and socio-economic backgrounds. From the grand homes on Whitemud Road to the

character homes in the closely knit community of Terwillegar Towne to the vibrant diversity of Brander Gardens, it is filled with young families working hard to provide the best life for their children now but also wanting a secure future for them, families that are growing and need sufficient school space and teachers to ensure that every child has every opportunity to succeed.

There is a thriving community of newcomers to Canada in the heart of the riding thanks to the great work of local community groups like Brander Gardens ROCKS, a local community group which provides ways for these families to connect and find support from each other.

There is a long and proud history of volunteerism in this riding. Community leagues such as Riverbend, Brookview, Oak Hills, the Ridge, Hodgson, Terwillegar, and Ogilvie Ridge are active and strong in Edmonton-Whitemud. These community leagues have come together under the Terwillegar Riverbend Advisory Council, or TRAC, one of the first of its kind in the city of Edmonton, which just hosted its 14th annual community run to support the great work that it does in the riding.

The riding is busy with events all year-round, from the Southwest Edmonton Farmers' Market to the SouthWest Edmonton Seniors Association's live active expo to community carnivals to the family and kid sporting activities at the Terwillegar rec centre.

It is a riding that also has a lot of natural beauty, including the well-loved and well-used Terwillegar off-leash park, that connects to the other natural areas in our river valley park system. It's no wonder that the Terwillegar off-leash park is so popular as Edmonton-Whitemud has the highest level of dog ownership in the city. This brought me no end of joy as I was door-knocking, since I am a very big dog lover, although it might have put off a few of my volunteers who had allergies since I insisted on giving every single dog that I met an ear rub or a pat on the head if they'd let me.

The political history of the riding is also fascinating. Three of Alberta's Premiers have represented this area: Alexander Rutherford, Don Getty, and Dave Hancock. Nellie McClung, part of Alberta's and Canada's Famous Five, who brought the Persons Case, represented part of the geographic area that is now in Edmonton-Whitemud.

Since the establishment of Edmonton-Whitemud as a riding in 1971 it has been held at times by three different political parties, for multiple terms each: the Progressive Conservatives, the Alberta Liberals, and, of course, the NDP. The former MLA, Dr. Bob Turner, paved the way for the NDP in the riding, and for that I am forever grateful. Mr. Speaker, this very political history means that the voters of Edmonton-Whitemud cannot and should not be taken for granted by any political party. These are electors who pay close attention to what candidates and politicians say that they're going to do, and they hold them accountable. They are reasonable and pragmatic voters who are not swayed by highly ideological or partisan positions.

The people of Edmonton-Whitemud care about supporting their own families but also care a great deal about how other families are treated. There are people who told me that they could not abide any political party that would make LGBTQ students, who are already vulnerable, more vulnerable or would accept or brush off intolerant or hateful views by anybody. They are voters who lived through the Klein years and 44 years of Conservative governments and watched them fail to diversify and invest during the boom of high oil prices and then slash and burn public services during the bust of oil prices.

The people of Edmonton-Whitemud told me that they were grateful to see a different approach from the NDP to the precipitous drop in oil prices that took place late in 2014. They appreciate that instead of hurting Albertans more, which is what Conservative governments always did and indeed will continue to do, the NDP

invested in Alberta workers by refusing to cut Alberta public-sector jobs and by creating jobs by putting Albertans to work on desperately needed infrastructure projects. They recognized the commitment and pragmatism of former Premier Notley on advocating for and moving Canadians in support of building pipelines so that we could get value for our resources. But they also saw, for the first time in decades, that the NDP government demonstrated a commitment to diversification, which was a commitment to a more stable and secure future for all Albertans.

Like all of us in this Assembly, I chose to run for many reasons. I ran because after working hard to encourage gender parity in politics as a board member of ParityYEG, I knew that when I was asked to run, it was time for me to walk the walk. I ran because I wanted my children to see how important it is to be an engaged citizen and to stand up for the values that you believe in. I ran because I watched the NDP government over the previous four years, and I saw a government and a leader that, for the first time in 40 years, actually planned ahead for our future by diversifying our economy, investing in people and services when times are difficult, and standing up for the vulnerable and the disenfranchised. I ran because I saw the alternative that was proposed and how regressive and backwards it was, and I knew that I was not going to sit idly by and let it happen without doing something about it. I needed to fight for a more just and secure world for my children.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a member of a strong Official Opposition. I'm not afraid of being a minority voice in this Assembly. I grew up in Alberta as a woman of colour. I've spent my life as a minority. I've immersed myself in the experiences of marginalized people. I've learned from the stories of those voices who are ignored. I do not feel powerless in the opposition. In fact, I feel empowered. I feel the awesome privilege and responsibility of speaking for those who may be in the minority, and I'm proud to do it. So while the members on the opposite side may gleefully drag this province backwards again, just know that I am not afraid to be a voice to challenge that, and I will challenge that because that is what my constituents elected me to do and that is what a strong opposition voice must do.

The people of Edmonton-Whitemud have put their trust in me and elected me to be their voice in the Legislature. I commit to ensuring that their voices, priorities, and needs are strongly represented in the House, and I look forward to working as a member of the NDP caucus to ensure a better life for all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has questions or comments with respect to the hon. member's speech. I see that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question or a comment.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. I just want to say how inspiring I found the speech that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud just gave. I got to know the hon. member because she was a mom at one of the nonprofit daycares that ended up being a \$25-a-day child care site. I thought maybe she would indulge us and talk a little bit about some of the policies that came into play over the last four years and what it is about them that she thinks should continue on. I would appreciate hearing that.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. You know, the reason I'm here is actually because of the Member for Edmonton-

Glenora. She was the one who took my passions, my interests, my values and helped me funnel them into political action. I believe strongly in women asking other women to run, and this was a perfect example of why it's important. I was very honoured to be approached by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who obviously saw something in me, and I appreciated her seeing that. She believed in me and supported me. That is a very important role of all members of the Assembly, to support each other. But I strongly believe particularly in women supporting other women to make their voices heard in political office. So thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

7:40

You know, the \$25-a-day child care program was one of the things where I realized this is the first time – I've grown up in this province. I've lived here for a long time. It was the first time I'd heard a government actually take active measures to support women's entrance and full participation in the workforce. It had been something that had been ignored for so long. I was so thrilled to see a government actually take action. If you look at any civilized and developed country in this world where they have really got full participation of women in the workforce, it's because they have affordable and accessible child care.

I'll actually never forget the night that the NDP government was elected in 2015. I was not a member. I was not a candidate. I was a mom who was eight months and three weeks pregnant, very emotional, watching on the couch. I'll never forget when I saw our former Premier stand up on election night and in her victory speech mention things that I never thought I'd hear an Alberta Premier talk about. She thanked women. She thanked First Nations. She thanked the public service. As somebody who has worked in government, in public service as a woman, worked with First Nations, I could not believe it. I had never heard an Alberta politician or Premier, in particular, stand up and say those things.

I could not believe it. I actually wrote it down. I couldn't believe that I'd ever heard a Premier not just talk about those things but then I watched for four years as this government walked that walk as well. There was a true commitment to reconciliation with our indigenous people, again something I had never seen before in this province. There was a true commitment to supporting women. The actions they took to support the LGBTQ children and community in this province was just inspirational to me.

But more than that, I'm also a practical person who wants to look forward to my children's future, and I want to know that there will be a future. I have watched and been on this roller coaster, just like we all have who've grown up in this province, and watched our services and the things that we depend on, like health and education, just roller coaster with the prices of oil. You know, the members on the other side might be comfortable in saying, "Oh, you know, it's the economic situation that the NDP government left this province in," but they're forgetting the 44 years of history behind that, which is that previous Conservative governments have let us ride a roller coaster for so long. This was the first government that actually committed to investing in people and investing in public service and investing in infrastructure at a time when times were tough because that's an investment in the future.

So when I saw the vision laid out by this party, by this leader, I knew I had to be part of it because it was actually a vision for a progressive future. When I was at the doors in Edmonton-Whitemud, that's what I talked about. We can talk about, "Oh, yeah, it's a tough time; it's a tough economic time," and we can get right back on that roller coaster, which is exactly where I think this government is going to take us. There is no plan to invest in our future, to diversify. There's no plan for climate change. We're just

going right back to what we did for 40 years. I'm happy to stand up here and say that I don't believe that, and I won't believe that. I'm going to continue to advocate for those voters in Edmonton-Whitemud who felt the same way that I did, which is that, no, we don't want to move backwards, we want to move forward.

We'll bide our time. I'm happy to talk. I'm happy to stand up and say the things that I believe in and that I know the voters in my constituency believe in, and we'll see what happens in four years.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others wishing to briefly bring comments or questions to the hon. member?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Red Deer-North and Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is both a great pleasure and a true honour to rise in this House today and express my deep appreciation to the people of Red Deer-North for the trust and faith they have placed in me to represent them during the 30th Legislature. Further, it is humbling to present my maiden speech today, which I have entitled as my model for life: *The Lord Leads Me Where He Needs Me*.

As articulated in the throne speech, what the good people of Red Deer-North and Alberta verified through their election choice was a strong mandate for our government to reignite the economy, to get people back to work, and to build pipelines to tidewater. Equally strong was their desire for a government who is concerned about the health and welfare of its people, especially the poor, the vulnerable, the disenfranchised, and the marginalized among us. As my dear friend Lorna stated, and I quote: we want a Conservative government with a social conscience. Unquote. Being an idealist, it is this element of social justice in politics that I was most drawn to when considering whether to run for provincial politics.

My desire to be a voice for the voiceless and the forgotten began when I was quite young. I am blessed to have been born into a very close-knit, faith-filled Italian family. My parents were both from the same poor farming community in northern Italy, not far from Venice. While I remember many stories of the joy of surviving World War II and then the struggles of the postwar time with the scarcity of food and money, I also recall how they said that their family and friends were able to depend on each other. They took care of each other and supported one another's needs with love and charity for all. They even found reasons to sing as they worked long hours in the fields.

Due to my paternal grandfather having a stroke, my father's family was hit especially hard, with my father, Luigi Dametto, age 11, having to drop out of the Italian version of grade 3 to go to work to help financially support his parents and siblings. I can't even imagine how difficult it must have been for an 11-year-old boy to be shouldering such a heavy burden. While my father never begrudged the childhood he missed, he did impress upon me the value of an education and the blessing of putting service above self. My father's resiliency and ingenuity served him well as he went on to become a respected finishing carpenter and construction worker who could figure out how to build just about anything, in fact, building our family home in Guelph from scratch. He did this after marrying my mother, Rina Perin, in Italy in the late '50s. Shortly thereafter they immigrated to Canada. They came in search of a better life.

Leaving most of their friends and family behind and with little actual money in hand, my parents took a huge risk moving to a foreign land so different than their beloved native land and culture. There were many obstacles to overcome, not least of which were the language barrier, the much colder climate, the diversity of

cultures blending as other nationalities were also immigrating in large numbers, and, yes, even racial prejudice.

As a young child who, I might add, was born in Canada, I never truly understood until much later in life that when someone would shout out a racial slur at me as I walked down the street, they only displayed their own ignorance through their lack of respect and intolerance. While these occurrences were uncomfortable, the way my younger brother Louis, born with Down syndrome, was sometimes treated in public hurt me much more deeply. While the majority of people were kind and could see beyond the disability label, others were quite cruel: jeering, making fun at his expense, ridiculing, and, yes, even physically abusive at times for no other reason than that he was born different.

As his older sister by two years I became one of his defenders. After all, if they only knew him, they'd know that Lou knew two languages, had a great sense of humour, worked a steady job, enjoyed bowling and the company of his girlfriend, a relationship that lasted over 25 years until his death at the age of 49 of Down syndrome Alzheimer's. It was gratifying to see at his funeral that while there are those who would have discounted his life as being less valuable and yet others who would have advocated that he should never have been born at all, our church was full to overflowing with approximately a thousand people in attendance. There was not a dry eye to be found as they paid their respect to a life well lived.

Inspired by my daily interactions with my brother while growing up, this contributed immensely to my decision to become a rehabilitative practitioner working with the developmentally and physically challenged and ultimately led to my move to my forever home in Red Deer in 1981. I've always found Red Deer to be a welcoming and caring place filled with generosity of spirit and a keen desire to help the less fortunate. Fast forward 38 years, and I am now married to the love of my life and soulmate, Darren. I have seven amazing children, Chantelle, Jason, Neil, Brandon, Aaron, Vanessa, and Yvette; four beautiful grandchildren, Ava, William, Charlotte, and Benjamin; a family farm; a trucking business; and an active personal and professional life. I have been truly blessed, and I have enjoyed every minute of this journey. It has been extremely rewarding.

7:50

I still very much appreciate the community of Red Deer and the willingness they show to honour and respect all, whether it is the immigrant, the mentally or physically challenged, the single mom, someone of a different faith or culture, the addicted, the homeless, and I could go on and on. Everyone, no matter who they are, can find a caring heart and an open hand of assistance in Red Deer. This is why I truly love the people in the city of Red Deer, and I am most humbled and honoured to be their provincial representative and also to be only the second female Minister of Education in 114 years of Alberta's history.

As MLA for Red Deer-North and Minister of Education I am committed to ensuring that every human being is valued and cared for. I was recently asked what my definition of inclusion is. My definition of true inclusion is when we as a human society can remove all labels and barriers, when we can look across the room at each other and no longer see the colour of skin, the gender, the sexual orientation, the religion, the disability, the nationality, immigrant or refugee, born or unborn, the very young to the very old, and so on. Rather, let us see that we are all brothers and sisters united in humanity and then treat each other with genuine love, care, and compassion.

In closing, I would like to quote one of my favourite Disney movie song lyrics from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*:

God help the outcasts  
Hungry from birth  
Show them the mercy  
They don't find on earth  
God help my people  
We look to You, still  
God help the outcasts  
Or nobody will . . .  
I ask for nothing  
I can get by  
But I know so many  
Less lucky than I  
Please help my people  
The poor and downtrod  
I thought we all were  
The children of God  
God help the outcasts  
[The] children of God

I truly believe that we are all outcasts in one way or another, and I look forward to serving the people of north Red Deer with honesty and integrity and especially with great care and compassion for all. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we head to 29(2)(a), I'd just like to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Darren LaGrange in the gallery this evening. I believe that he is the husband of the hon. minister. If you'll welcome him to the Legislative Assembly.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments if anyone would like to bring some. I see the Member for Cardston-Siksika rising.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Minister of Education for her moving remarks. Clearly, family has played a massive role in your life, and I listened with great interest as you discussed your brother. I was hoping that maybe you could elaborate on your experience with family and how you intend on helping families in your ministry and as an MLA moving forward and how your experience will influence you in your role.

**Member LaGrange:** Well, thank you for the question. I've always been very blessed to have wonderful family support, and I really feel in my new role as Minister of Education that I can extend that love and care to all children. I look at the 700,000-plus children that are in education from K to 12, and I just look at them as if they were my children. What can we do to support those families? There are so many disadvantaged young people out there that need our support, our love, our care, and our attention. Anything that we can do as a society and as an education system to give them the leg up that, as I said, my own father didn't have – my mother went to a grade 6 education. I was the first female in the family to have even gone into postsecondary, so I just want to see that for all children and to really remove those barriers of labels. If we can remove those labels and really help each child to develop to their full potential, then we will be doing a great service to our community and to our families.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other members with questions or comments with respect to 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there other members wishing to speak to the throne speech? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise this evening for my maiden speech. Before I begin, I'd like to acknowledge that we are here on Treaty 6 territory. This land acknowledgement is something that means a lot to me. My riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is home to a diverse First Nations and Métis population, in fact, the largest urban indigenous community in this province.

I want to thank my family, my friends, and my supporters for everything they did to help get me here.

I want to thank Brian Mason. Brian has had an absolutely incredible political career spanning 30 years. I always tell people that he's a legend, and, trust me, after years of knocking on doors in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I've lost count of how many people share their love of Brian. It never failed that when I was out knocking on doors, someone would say: "I love Brian. He was a bus driver, you know." He's left a lasting legacy and a very high bar to meet.

With Brian, I must also point out Pam Barrett and Ray Martin, two incredible representatives in the Highlands and Norwood neighbourhoods, who were principled, passionate leaders for our communities.

I'd also like to thank our leader, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. She's been a true fighter, and I'm so proud to be a part of her team, surrounded by incredible colleagues.

Most importantly, I want to thank the voters of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for electing me to serve them here in the Legislature. It's a great honour that they put their trust in me to represent them. I ran for office because I wanted to better serve my community, and I wanted to make life better for my neighbours and their families. Strong communities are exactly what makes Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood a great place to live. Our riding is home to so many amazing schools, strong neighbourhood community leagues, local businesses, service organizations, and cultural groups.

It's an area made up of vibrant neighbourhoods that I'm so privileged to represent. There's Highlands and Bellevue, both neighbourhoods that are committed to preserving their history and building a sense of belonging through community events. There's the central neighbourhoods of Boyle Street and McCauley, with some of the most committed local citizens and home to many service and community organizations. There's Newton and Montrose, a mix of long-time homeowners and new families, and a few neat hidden gems in the form of businesses tucked away. There's Alberta Avenue, formerly known as the Norwood neighbourhood, with its main area of 118 Avenue, where you'll find local businesses with a vibrant cultural food and art scene. It's a community that's been really focused on revitalization thanks to the efforts of community members, and they're seeing the rewards of their hard work.

There's Eastwood, Delton, and Elmwood Park, just south of the Yellowhead, communities with a growing sense of neighbourliness as they see new residents moving in. In the south of the riding you'll find Riverdale, a beautiful river valley neighbourhood located just east of downtown with a deep commitment to the environment, progressive values, and one of the strongest networks of local community and co-operation that you'll find in Edmonton. Not to be outdone for beautiful views, there's Virginia Park in Cromdale, the Viewpoint neighbourhood, just north along our river valley, historical neighbourhoods with strong community connections. There's my home community of Parkdale, where my friends and neighbours are committed to democracy and community involvement. When election time came around, they were the only neighbourhood that stepped up to host a community forum and to encourage civic participation.

Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is a diverse riding, one of the most diverse in our province. I'm proud to say that we're a welcoming constituency made up of many cultures and communities living together as friends and neighbours. It's comprised of young families and of many seniors as well. We're home to a vibrant indigenous population. We've got incredible organizations doing such important work here: Bent Arrow, Ambrose Place, the Métis seniors' lodge, Renaissance place, the Native Friendship Centre, Ben Calf Robe Society, and many more. I've met many community members who are committed to addressing systemic issues within the community, and I've joined marches and rallies with hundreds of others in support of addressing the issue of missing and murdered indigenous community members. I know that we've got a lot of work to do to address this issue, particularly with the 231 calls for justice that were just released, and to continue in our journey of reconciliation. It's going to take commitment, and it's going to take real action.

Over a quarter of the folks in our riding are new Canadians who were born outside of Canada, and I'm so proud to have met a lot of friends from Somalia, Eritrea, Portugal, Brazil, Vietnam, and the list goes on. I think of the many folks I've met in our neighbourhoods from various cultural communities, including the Muslim community, and I wish them Eid Mubarak as we mark the end of Ramadan. I've shared with community members that I'm committed to continuing to fight racism and Islamophobia because we cannot allow hatred and intolerance to grow in this province. The province that I know and I love is kind, is open, is accepting, and we must ensure it remains that way.

8:00

Many in the LGBTQ community live in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and I'm a proud community member. Twice during the campaign I received messages from folks that I'd met at the doors, who reached out to me after I knocked on their door to say how proud they are to support someone who's a member of the community. One young woman shared that she never thought she'd see someone like her in politics. That means a lot to me, and it shows that representation truly does matter. But this is a community which, sadly, this government continues to disrespect and ignore in its actions.

While my riding is a fantastic place to live and to work, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is also an area with its share of challenges. As I said, working to address these challenges is why I ran for office, challenges like tackling poverty. We are a riding with some of the highest child poverty rates in the country. I was so proud to see child poverty rates reduced by half under our government, but this government's throne speech does nothing to continue that important work of reducing child poverty.

During the campaign I met many families who shared with me just how life changing the \$25-a-day child care program has been for them and for their children. One woman shared with me that she's been able to go back to work, which has made a world of difference. Her story of how beneficial affordable child care has been to her family is a story of countless other families. We know that when families have access to affordable, quality child care, the statistics show that women are able to re-enter the workforce and that family incomes are boosted, and we also know that child poverty rates are reduced. Offering affordable child care to families is, of course, just one way to decrease child poverty, but it's a crucial one.

Many of my constituents rely on public transit, affordable housing, disability supports, and many other services and programs to make ends meet. I heard first-hand from constituents about their

struggles as I knocked on doors in the riding. I met one young mother who shared with me how important our government's minimum wage increase was to her. I knew that the evidence showed that a \$15 minimum wage is good for the economy, has a positive impact on women, single parents, people who are working more than two full-time jobs but struggling to put food on the table and pay their rent. This woman shared with me her story, and that really made it hit home. She makes minimum wage. She's raising a daughter. She shared that that minimum wage hike meant that she could afford a bus pass on a regular basis and that most of her prescription medications would be covered so that she wouldn't have to do without. She's of course just one person, but her story, again, is that of many. I'm committed to fighting for her and for all those who deserve a right to a fair wage that affords them the dignity they deserve. But I worry about my constituents like her because I see nothing in the throne speech that will improve her life or that of her neighbours.

We also see challenges like improving public health care and education. As a former teacher the education of our young people is obviously something that's really important to me. Growing up in the town of Barrhead, Alberta, I was lucky to have great teachers who inspired me to be a teacher myself. It's so critical that we invest in education and ensure that the funding goes to where it's needed most: mental health supports, proper resources for teachers and educational assistants. I know what it was like as a teacher to feel like there were never enough resources to meet my students' needs. We must prioritize our province's young people so that they get the best start in life, and we need to protect our students to ensure that no child feels unsafe in our schools.

My constituents enjoy fantastic local schools and health care services, yet again I see nothing in this throne speech to improve on those. All I see is the same Conservative rhetoric about efficiencies, cuts, red tape, and privatization, which history has shown will do nothing to support the public education and health care that my constituents need. With this reckless approach this government is not just putting our health care and education at risk but our environment as well. So many of my constituents, young and old, shared with me just how important protecting our environment is. They recognize that we have a climate crisis, and they know that it's on us to take action. If not us, who?

This government's throne speech and legislative agenda does very little or nothing to meet the needs of the many people and communities that make up Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. It does nothing to create good, clean jobs or help those who are struggling now. It does nothing to help them prepare for the future that lies ahead. It does nothing to preserve our Earth for future generations. My constituents deserve better than this. All Albertans deserve better than this.

My constituents elected me to represent Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood in this Assembly. They elected me to work to make life better for them, and I'm committed to doing just that, which is why I will continue to fight for this government to do better. That's why I can't in good conscience support this government's throne speech.

While I spoke about the challenges that I'm ready to take on in my riding, there's so much to be proud about. Each day, even when it's tough, I'll remind myself how lucky I am to be here in this building representing the incredible people of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Thank you, colleagues, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West rising with a question or comment under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's wonderful to hear from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. It was one of my first campaigns, too, in 2000, 19 years ago, when I worked on the by-election for Brian Mason. At that time I was also his STEP student. So that gives us an idea of how long I've been doing this. I say this not to share how old I am but to discuss the deep roots that the New Democrats, the social democratic movement, in particular the labour movement, has in the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood area.

People in that area have for a long time struggled for a better life for people, Mr. Speaker, and that is one of the reasons why, having been around that struggle for some time, I myself am so proud to see that tradition of representation continued through this member's service to her constituents in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I wonder if the member might want to talk a little bit about some of the folks that we know who have been around for a long time, for years and years, contributing to that community and to the progressive vibrancy that we see in that particular area of Edmonton and how some of those constituents inform her work and inspire her work.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Great question. Thank you for that. Honestly, you're putting me on the spot here. I'm afraid to name folks independently because I know I'll miss some. The member is right. I mean, as I said, I'm just so honoured and humbled to be able to represent an area where folks are fighters. Right? People have been around the party for a very long time and have been just around the movement, even if they're not affiliated with the NDP. There are so many people who are just fighting for a better life every day and so many people – this is where I hate to name names – who do it without credit. That's something I notice day in, day out – right? – without recognition.

I was just at my community league AGM, Parkdale-Cromdale. We recognized somebody who'd been volunteering, doing incredible work for 30 years. She was mad at us because she didn't want an award. Her name is Josefine.

**Ms Hoffman:** Now it's in *Hansard*.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. That's right, Josefine, if you're watching.

For every Josefine there are so many others throughout Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Like I said, it's just an absolute honour. I also feel – I mentioned Brian Mason – a burden, for sure, you know, having to try to carry on that legacy, but having the support of such incredible colleagues really helps me to know that I can hopefully do the community a service.

Thank you for the question.

**The Speaker:** Are there others who have questions or comments for the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. colleagues, it's truly an honour to stand here today at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as a representative of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I want to express my sincerest gratitude to my constituents for placing their trust in me as their government begins enacting a plan to reignite our economy and get Albertans back to work.

I would like to take a moment to express gratitude for those that represented the constituents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville before me: former Premier Ed Stelmach, a man whose leadership earned him respect and whose kindness and warmth were ever-

endearing qualities; former MLA Fenske, who worked hard to represent the riding; and former MLA Littlewood, who passed the baton on to me as our UCP government embarks on a new era of Conservative leadership in this province, an era which will also be etched into the proud history of our Legislature. Indeed, the corridors of this building, steeped in the history of our province, are an inspiring reminder of the leadership that shaped Alberta. It's deeply humbling, standing in the presence of such history, and it's an inspiring reminder of what a great honour and responsibility it is to be elected to this body.

**8:10**

The history that lives within these walls is inextricably bound to the lives and stories of all Albertans. The paths that brought people to this province and the stories accompanying them are all diverse, but the unifying thread that connects us all, whether we're new to the province or our roots stretch back to Alberta's earliest days, is the sense of community, hard work, and opportunity that forged and continues to shape our collective identity. Diversity truly is our strength, especially when we strive towards common goals, galvanized by a shared sense of values.

My own family traces our roots to the early Ukrainian settlers. In 1911 at the age of 17 my grandfather, Mike Huley, left Bukovina, a country predominantly populated by ethnic Ukrainians despite being ruled by Austria's autocratic Hapsburg monarchy. Like so many others, my grandfather sought freedom and opportunity in Canada, emigrating on the word of abundant land and hope for a better future. His timing was fortunate. Just a few years earlier Europe plunged into the dark misery of war. Invading Russian armies were driven out of Bukovina in 1917 as Russia itself was gripped by a revolution, but this turned out to be a temporary reprieve from Russian ambition. By the 1940s my grandfather's homeland was swept into the tyranny and bloodshed of the Stalinist rule. The options for his countrymen were profound and limited: join the Soviet army or languish in a Siberian gulag. Either way the outcome for many was death.

My grandfather settled in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and took a job with the railway. The arc of the story here in Alberta began with an invitation to a wedding in Chipman in 1915. He came, he saw, and he never left. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker, following a wedding invitation west to Alberta and deciding to never leave. Even then he saw that the Alberta advantage was a potent one. In 1929 my grandfather met my grandmother Anna, a descendant of Ivan Pylypiw, one of the first Ukrainian settlers in Canada. Ivan Pylypiw's early passage across the prairies formed the vanguard of Ukrainian settlement in Alberta. My grandparents had nine children, one of whom was my mother, who taught me that there is good in everyone and that everyone has something to contribute.

My paternal grandfather, Walter St. George Armstrong, was born in Milk River, and he settled in Westlock, where he was a postmaster and a justice. He and my grandmother Clara had four children, one of whom was my father, Jack. My dad left school in grade 8 and took a job to pay his sister's way through nursing school. When he came of age, he was inspired to join the RCMP but found out he was an inch too short. Fortunately, the height of a man's character is not measured in inches. He was always working hard and made sure we were brought up right. My father's mantra was the importance of self-reliance. Like the great American intellectual Ralph Waldo Emerson, my father believed that self-sufficiency gives one the freedom to discover one's true self and attain true independence. It was the example he set for me growing up and reinforced as parting advice when I left home to forge my own path.

I've lived in Vegreville since the 1970s. It's where I raised my family, built my business, which I've owned for over 30 years. Self-reliance got me there, but growth and continued success was possible because of the support of my siblings, family, friends, and community.

I'm grateful to my wonderful husband, Joe, my two amazing children, Joseph and Jacklyn. Their support through my journey here, throughout the campaign and now as a member of this House, has been an honour.

When I entered the political fray, the part I loved most was visiting small communities in my riding because time and time again I saw the examples of the familiar spirit of Albertans supporting one another, each fiercely proud of the communities they believed in. Over the past few years their optimism has been tested by the stress of one of the deepest recessions ever faced by this province. Communities like the village of Andrew, the town of Bruderheim have uncertain futures. As economic woes deepen, people are moving away, and as the resources deplete, many towns and villages are one infrastructure disaster away from insolvency. It's not just these communities at risk, Mr. Speaker; it's a way of rural life that is the core of our identities as Albertans, an identity we must fight to protect.

Central to rural life is a strong agricultural sector. With the rising cost of everything thanks to the carbon taxes designed in the halls of academia without common-sense input from folks on the family farm, our farmers are having an even harder time making ends meet. Add this to the challenges of looming trade wars and geopolitical disputes beyond the scope of provincial politics, and the situation is serious. I'm honoured, Mr. Speaker, to be the voice for these people, channelling their concerns into the Legislative Assembly, ensuring that they're heard and understood.

For years now it has been a common refrain, not just in my riding but across the province, that with the collapse of oil and gas, job losses have been legion. The future of building a pipeline coupled with unhelpful federal policy has only exacerbated the challenges we face. People are desperate, and they desperately need government focused on fighting for their interests. I committed long ago to never stop fighting for our oil and gas and agricultural industries and these people whose livelihoods depend on it, a commitment I reaffirm today as the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

My riding is also home to Alberta's Industrial Heartland, one of the most attractive locations for chemical, petrochemical, oil and gas investment and one of Canada's largest hydrocarbon processing regions. The companies invested in our Industrial Heartland operate on a global scale, providing fuels, fertilizers, power, petrochemicals, and more to consumers world-wide. The importance of the Industrial Heartland and its contribution to Canada's economic engine can't be overstated, and it is my great privilege to represent this industry and constituents whose wealth and prosperity rely on it.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to leave my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, with a few thoughts on the importance of our democratic traditions, which we are now tasked with upholding. Any given news source on any given day reminds us that democracy everywhere is at risk. The traditions and norms and the checks and balances designed to protect them are facing unprecedented challenges.

Much of the problem traces to the tone of our political discourse. Too often people view their political opponents as enemies and their perspectives as illegitimate. This approach cannot sustain healthy democracy for it undermines what Harvard historian James

Kloppenber identifies as three foundational pillars that make such democracy possible.

First, deliberation. Achieving a conclusion, even a provisional one, is the result of stating positions, arguing the nuance of agreed-upon facts, and reaching compromise as opposed to proclamations from on high. It must emerge through interaction by people with different points of view.

The second is pluralism. Unless we see diversity as strength instead of weakness, we are unlikely to value freedom or equality because a lack of pluralism drives us to exclude ones from the body politic who are not like us.

Finally, the ethic of reciprocity. This is the ability to see things from the point of view of the person who disagrees with you. To try on a way of looking at the world and to do it imaginatively, enter the ways of thinking and being embraced by those who oppose us on political, cultural, or social issues. The ethic of reciprocity allows us to understand our opposition, who we need not always agree with, but in understanding their thoughts and motivations, we can locate common ground. We should be confident to trust them to do the right thing, especially when it comes in the form of difficult compromise. The ethic of reciprocity is the very foundation of democracy, and without democracy it cannot exist.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I feel like you may have missed an opportunity to invite members to the world's largest sausage, the world's largest perogy, or the world's largest pysanka, but I'm sure you'll make up for that in the future.

Any members under Standing Order 29(2)(a) that would like to ask a question or comment of the member? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for your fantastic statement. It was wonderful to hear about some of your family's earlier times.

To elaborate on what the Speaker has previously said, could you share with this Assembly some of the other large items that the Speaker might have forgotten that exist within your riding?

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, hon. member. In my riding I'm very blessed to have the largest kubasa and the largest pysanka. The largest pysanka was actually built in 1974 in recognition of the visit of the Musical Ride to Vegreville. I'm also proud to have the largest mallard duck in my riding. That's in Andrew.

You've put me on the spot here.

8:20

**Ms Goodridge:** Mushrooms in Vilna.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** No. That's not in mine.

**An Hon. Member:** It's just around the corner.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** It's just around the corner from me.

In every particular town around my area there are many, many great travel areas. There are great places to go. For example, in Mundare, if you go to check out the sausage, they have a great grotto there. There are wonderful places in my riding, all the way from Bruderheim to Mannville.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments for the hon. member?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow and Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege for me to stand here today and deliver my maiden speech in this Assembly. I am truly honoured that the residents of Calgary-Bow put their trust in me and in our party. They did so with hope in their hearts. Fundamentally, they chose to reject the politics of fear. Rather, they decided to embrace the politics of hope.

Before I begin, I wanted to take a moment to recognize and thank those who made my journey to this place possible. First and foremost, I want to acknowledge and thank my incredible wife. I am forever grateful that God brought her into my life and filled my heart with love and happiness. Her unwavering love and constant encouragement drove me to keep fighting when times were tough, and I am forever grateful.

I also want to acknowledge my dedicated and hard-working campaign team, who gave their time and efforts in pursuit of a better Alberta. Thank you, all, for believing in me and for believing in a stronger province.

Lastly, I also want to thank the residents of Calgary-Bow who put their trust in me. I wanted to let them know, all residents of Calgary-Bow, whether you voted for me or not, that I will be a strong representative for all of you. Earning your support is truly an honour, and I commit to being a transparent and accountable representative to you all.

As I stand here, I also want to acknowledge two very important and specific individuals who've allowed me to be here. Those two individuals, of course, are my parents. My father, Mr. Speaker, is a carpenter by trade. He was born and raised in a small village on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. He grew up in a very small and cramped house with very few modern amenities. At a young age he travelled around the region finding whatever work he could. But he wanted more, and filled with courage and optimism, he made his way to a place of opportunity. That place was Canada.

While working here, my father met my mother. She was also born in Cyprus and was raised in a growing but small seaside town. In her household, Mr. Speaker, they didn't have very much, and singing Christmas carols in the bitter cold was how she got her spending money. After losing her mother at a young age, her father decided it was time for a change, and the entire family relocated here to Canada. To deal with this change, my mother was unable to complete her schooling, and she waited tables to bring in a few extra dollars for the family. It was during one of her evening shifts when she met my father.

After marrying, they moved to Calgary to start their new life together. Like many other Greek immigrants, they opened a restaurant and got straight to work. They did so by emptying the college savings fund and remortgaging their home. They put everything on the line and opened a small restaurant in Calgary on Elbow Drive and began their new future. They were guided, Mr. Speaker, by a belief that hard work and perseverance were enough to shatter any barrier to success, and they were right.

Forty-five years later they are still in the restaurant industry, and while a lot has changed, some things have not. They continue to open and close their restaurant, Mr. Speaker, every single day, but now they can reflect back on a lifetime of accomplishment. They built their dream home, they travelled the world, and most important to them they gave their three children educational opportunities that they did not have. My sister found success in the energy sector, my brother became a pilot, and I pursued public service. As you can see, their determination gave my siblings and I new opportunities. It allowed me to open new doors. Their foundational success has allowed me to stand in this Assembly today.

Mr. Speaker, this story is not unique. It's one that we've heard before. That's because it's the story of Alberta. The story of Alberta

has always been one of hope and opportunity, where anyone can find success and prosperity, just as Alberta's First Peoples did over 8,000 years ago when the ancestors of today's First Nations communities arrived in the area. As the first inhabitants they found a world rich in natural resources, which provided abundant food, clothing, and shelter. Pioneers and new immigrants persevered through harsh environments to build towns, cities, and the foundations of a vibrant national economy. The Fathers of Confederation established a new nation across this great land, which, in my opinion, is the greatest country on earth.

As I took my seat in this Assembly, my parents and wife watched from the gallery. So, too, did my two beautiful daughters. As I looked up, I was reminded of why I fought to come to this place. I did so, Mr. Speaker, because I wanted to ensure that my two girls and all future generations inherit a better province. I am a passionate Albertan and a proud Calgarian, and this place is worth fighting for.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the fortune of travelling around the world and visiting places like Cambodia, Japan, South Africa, London, Austria, Thailand, and more, and I can say, without reservation, that Alberta is the best place on earth. I consider myself a son of the Alberta advantage, and I was concerned that the province that rewarded hard work and entrepreneurship was being lost. I never planned on running for office. I was preoccupied with advancing my career, being a good dad and a loving husband. But like many Albertans, I began to see my neighbours lose their jobs, and I started to see friends and family struggling to pay their bills, and I started to see businesses closing down. I knew it was time to take action, and that's when I decided to run.

While on the campaign trail my resolve to improve my province strengthened as I heard more stories of Albertans who were suffering, like Denise in Coach Hill, who choked back tears because she was unsure if she was going to be able to make next month's mortgage payment; like Andy in Bowness, whose business was being crushed by the weight of the NDP's carbon tax; and like Theresa in Wildwood, who sold her car and her furniture just to keep a roof over her head. These stories are always on my mind, and as I was sworn in, I felt the weight of responsibility settle on my shoulders. Denise, Andy, Theresa, and hundreds of thousands of other Albertans are counting on us, Mr. Speaker, and we can't let them down.

What inspired me, though, is that none of the people I spoke to looked for a handout. They are proud Albertans, after all. All they want, Mr. Speaker, is the opportunity to work. That is why on April 16 we witnessed a historic election, where a record number of people voted. They sought a solution that would once again open the doors of opportunity. On April 16 they put their trust in our United Conservative Party, and I am incredibly humbled by the trust that has been given to my colleagues and I. They also chose a bold and ambitious man to open the doors of opportunity again, and that man is Jason Kenney. I am proud to stand with him in creating a better province.

A better province is one without a carbon tax. A single mom should not be punished for driving her kids to school, pensioners should not be forced to buy less groceries, and hard-working Alberta families should not pay more to heat their homes in the dead of winter.

**8:30**

A better province is one where a strong economy helps get Albertans back to work. Unemployment is not just a statistical figure; it's about human beings, their families, and their futures. That is why our government will be obsessed with job creation. We will fight to give Albertans the dignity of meaningful work, and



with that bring hope, prosperity, and happiness to the hundreds of thousands of unemployed Albertans.

A better province, Mr. Speaker, is one where a better health care system is possible. Too many Albertans are suffering in pain as their condition deteriorates while they wait for treatment, and that is simply unacceptable.

Colleagues, as we begin our work to create a better province, we must do so with humility. We must reject the politics of fear and embrace the politics of hope. As United Conservatives we don't care who you love or what god you worship; we care about how hard you will work and how you will help contribute to a stronger Alberta. Together we can renew Alberta as a place of hope and opportunity. We will build a better Alberta for the next generation, and together we will reignite the spirit of Alberta, a spirit that drew my parents here and gave them success and opportunity, where young, new Canadians with limited opportunities can open a restaurant and 47 years later their son can be elected to the Alberta Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve the opportunity to create a better future for themselves, and I will dedicate my efforts in this Assembly to ensure all Albertans have the same opportunities that my parents had. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** I'd just like to thank the hon. member for his comments. I would just like to remind him that no matter what the circumstances are, it would be wildly inappropriate to use the name of a Member of the Legislative Assembly. There are a number of ways that you could refer to the Premier or the Member for Calgary-Lougheed. I think you catch my drift.

I might just add, though, that I've had the pleasure of meeting your parents, and they do have a very firm grasp on enjoyable Greek food. So I hope that they will be happy to share with everyone.

I see the Member for Edmonton-Glenora is very, very keen to ask a question or make a comment.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. And I'll keep my question very short. I believe at the beginning of the statement there was a reference to indigenous people arriving here, and I was just wondering if the hon. member could elaborate on what exactly he's saying about the history of First Nations in this territory.

**The Speaker:** Would the hon. member like to comment?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Sure. My comment is recognizing that Alberta has always been a place of hope and opportunity and that recognizing all different peoples who have made Alberta home and have chosen Alberta as their place of residence and all those who have come before, including the first inhabitants and the first peoples of this land – that they were successful in finding hope and prosperity in a variety of different ways. My comment is just recognizing that going back 8,000 years and recognizing the long history of this province, all people have enjoyed opportunities for prosperity and success in one way or another.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member.

I believe the Member for Calgary-Currie has a question. No. My apologies.

The minister for status of women and multiculturalism.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through you, I just wanted to mention to the member how much the words that he spoke about the people that he met, about what was happening with our economy, the impacts on them – as having been elected to the Official Opposition in the past and having had the privilege of having an office and meeting with people consistently, the things

that we heard in our offices were heartbreaking. Many, many people walking into our offices telling of hardship and the difficulties of how it was that they were going to be able to continue to take care of their families, to choose sometimes between feeding their families and heat, to choose between whether to keep the family farm or to sell it off in order to be able to downsize because they're not able to keep things going because of policy decisions.

I was wondering if the member could elaborate on some of the discussions that he had with respect to the incredible Albertans he met out on the doorsteps and maybe just elaborate a little bit more on some of those stories because I think it impacts all of us very deeply here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow and Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were, you know, apart from the three individuals that I made specific reference to, countless stories of individuals who were struggling to pay their bills and struggling to make ends meet. As I mentioned, it gave me continued resolve because there's the strong realization that what we do here has significant impacts on people's lives. As I mentioned, the thing that really stood out the most for me was the fact that nobody was really asking for a handout. Nobody was looking for something to be provided to them. The only thing that they were looking for was an opportunity to put their skill set to work.

I didn't mention them in my statement, but my immediate neighbour has been out of work for about four years and is unsure what the future will hold for him. He put his house on the market as a last-ditch effort and, after 90 days, didn't get a single offer, had to take it off the market. He's really unsure of what the future is going to hold for him. My other neighbours had to move back to Nova Scotia and leave the province entirely. It's truly been a challenging time.

I, again, recognize and keep those thoughts and keep those stories at the forefront as much as possible. We have an opportunity to improve the situation for hundreds of thousands of Albertans, and we have to always remember that, and we have to always be guided that recollection, that the decisions that we make here can have a very meaningful impact on the future of people's lives.

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you to the hon. member.

I see the Member for Edmonton-Meadows is rising.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my deepest honour and privilege to rise and deliver my maiden speech in the 30th Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Before I start, I would like to congratulate all the elected members of this House, who were chosen to represent the people of their respective constituencies. I would also like to acknowledge that we are all here today on the traditional territory of Treaty 6, and I want to recognize the Métis people, who also share a deep connection with this land. Let me also offer my warmest wishes to all my Muslim brothers and sisters, who have been fasting for the holy one month of Ramadan and are celebrating Eid al-Fitr, and to the Filipino community, who are celebrating this June as Filipino Heritage Month. This month allows us to celebrate with and learn more about the Filipino community in Canada and recognize the valuable role they play in creating an open and diverse society.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start sharing a little bit about my family and my journey to this House. I was born in a village named Haripur in the beautiful state of Punjab in India. I inherited an

interest in political activism from my family. Our grandfather, a great pioneer, became one of the first priests at a Sikh temple in Stockholm, U.S.A. in 1908. I grew up watching my uncle who was vigorously active in politics as a key leader during the panchayat movement in 1959. My mother was elected as a member of the village's panchayat, a village council, and she became one of the first female members of the panchayat in our village in the '70s.

8:40

During my college years I was a part of numerous student associations and was actively involved in defending students' rights regarding affordable education and political activism. I also worked closely with youth organizations, which, after years of advocacy and struggle, helped change the voting age from 25 to 18 years in India, an important step forward for the rights of young people. Following this work as a young person I came to Canada in 1993. Postarrival I got the opportunity to join the NDP and got a chance to be a part of the election campaign as a young worker the very same year.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the honour to live with my wife, two sons, and three aging parents and run a small insurance business in this community for 26 years. During these past years I've had the privilege to work with a number of community organizations. I am proud to be a part of organizations to promote multiculturalism, literature, art, ethnic media platforms, volunteerism, leadership in our youth, theatre, sports games, and tournament activities. I was also able to serve on the board of the Edmonton Taxi Drivers Association. My core values are defending the rights of workers, better care for seniors, strong public health care, affordable child care, and affordable and quality education for all.

Prior to getting elected and during the last one and a half months, I have had the honour to meet many people from all walks of life. These people either work or live in Edmonton-Meadows. I am blessed to be able to live and be part of such a great and diverse community. My riding of Edmonton-Meadows was created in 2017, after the recommended renaming from Edmonton-Mill Creek. With a population of over 50,000 and nearly 30,000 electors in it, it is a vibrant and strong community. Edmonton-Meadows is one of the ridings in the south side of Edmonton where a large number of permanent residents and new immigrants are moving in to start their new lives, build their families and loved ones, and call Edmonton-Meadows their home. Edmonton-Meadows is a riding which is truly an example of multiculturalism in Canada as immigrants from different ethnicities around the globe, predominantly from south Asia, the Philippines, Somalia, Latin America, and many more, continue to build a strong sense of community. As the representative for this community I look forward to being a strong voice for them in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, parents have raised concerns about the need for a new high school in our community. There is a need for funding our education system so that we can hire new teachers for the increasing number of new students coming to schools this fall. Due to the shortage of funding, courses are already being transferred from our schools, and people are worried and angry.

People have also expressed concerns in regard to their future and, as a whole, Alberta's future. My constituents want to know if there will be enough resources for the children with special needs and affordable daycare for all the hard-working parents under the policies laid down by the new government.

Mr. Speaker, the Grey Nuns hospital was built more than three decades ago in southeast Edmonton. Since then the community has grown substantially. We still have only one hospital in southeast Edmonton to handle the growing pressure in the south side. We need a new hospital in the south side to release the pressure from

the Grey Nuns so that patients have better access to health services in south Edmonton.

My riding has a new recreation centre where people from all walks of life come by the thousands to take in its benefits. This facility is already falling short due to the growing population in the area.

Mr. Speaker, my community of Edmonton-Meadows needs sustainable funding for multiculturalism-related activities. It would help the major community organizations establish various multiculturalism activities that help build bridges between communities and be part of the larger Canadian mosaic.

Mr. Speaker, for me, this journey from playing in the dirt roads and streets of my village back in India as a young child to a member of the Alberta Legislature has been a great honour. On this very day I remember my uncle and aunts who were always proud of me for my social and political activism but are not with us today. I'm also grateful for our elders, seniors who are still with us today and those who have gone before us, that have laid out a great platform for us with their contributions to our society and gave us an identity, who we are and what we can do to make this place better for all. I remember my role model, my mentor, my cousin, who passed away at the age of 64 last year, who helped establish student organizations in colleges and universities, youth organizations, and teachers' unions and who defended workers' rights and inspired political involvement in me and many more.

I thank my parents, my wife, my sons, my brothers, my sisters-in-law, my nieces, nephews, cousins, who encouraged me to step up for the common cause and to choose public service. I want to thank my core team, my friends with whom I had a chance to work together. From them I have learned a lot in those 26 years in Edmonton, which has helped shaped me into the kind of man that I am today. I am thankful to my volunteers, my donors, and my community, who helped me build a strong team in this election. All the hard work put in by my team during my campaign kept me motivated. I want to thank Dr. Raj Pannu for his political mentorship and our leader, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, for her inspiring leadership, inspiring me and many more to stand up to protect our health care, strengthen our education system, and focus on making sure that those without a voice, those people that are left behind have real representation.

Finally, again I want to thank my constituents for putting their trust in me and giving me the new role and the great privilege to represent their voices in the Legislature. I am here to represent each and every constituent of Edmonton-Meadows, irrespective of their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or beliefs. It is an honour to represent the voice of the constituents of Edmonton-Meadows, and I look forward to being a strong voice in this Legislature to make life better for all Albertans. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a), are there any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his lovely remarks. I was hoping he could maybe elaborate a little bit on the mentor that he mentioned, who passed away last year, as well as Dr. Pannu, who, I think, was the first person to ever say to me: get involved in politics. I know he inspired many of us in our party to engage more democratically. I thought that maybe he could talk about those two influences on his journey. Of course, if he wants to talk about his mom some more, I have no issue with that either.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Yeah. My cousin back home: first off, I hate to say that my cousin lost his mom when he was just two years old. He was raised and grew without having a mom. During his college life, you know, he emerged as a young role model to the students and the youth of his time. He was elected as the provincial leader to the student organizations back there. His organization actually subscribed him a duty in the district, where he showed an example by winning 12 college elections out of 13 colleges in that region.

8:50

From there, like, from student activism, he aspired to transition, as he completed his degrees in science and M.Ed, to being a teacher. It was not actually very easy to find a job in those days in India, and he kind of, you know, developed the idea to organize all those people, educated people. The organization was called the unemployed teachers' association. He put together that association, launched a struggle, and in years of struggle that association was able to help find, I think, 21,000 people a job. From those kinds of activities he emerged, as a very young person, as a role model to youth back home.

My mom's road to getting elected as a panchayat back in the '70s: I would say that she was young at that time, especially for our feudal society and feudal culture. We were still emerging and growing. For women to come, to step up for public service still was a stigma. I think a lot, you know, of the kind of privilege and – how would I say? – the views of not only my father and my family, who encouraged her to step up to that job. I'm so honoured and humbled to see that my mother was able to get that job.

This is the kind of the environment I got to grow up in and that helped me actually become an engaged citizen as I was growing up and be more involved politically and think, you know, further than my individual problems and look, as a broad vision, like, at the society as a whole. You can't do much if your society doesn't move forward as individuals. This was the kind of thinking I was able to develop due to all the circumstances I got back home.

Dr. Raj Pannu: I think everybody loved him. So you're talking not only this; you know, this is on the record. The former Premier of our province Ralph Klein once said to me, mentioned: "I may not have always agreed with what Dr. Raj Pannu says, but every time he stands up to say something, I just listen. I want to listen. It's amazing to listen to him." After retiring from active politics, it was our privilege – we had discussion forums in our community, and a number of organizations involved in that – to get the advantage of Dr. Raj Pannu. On a monthly basis we would have discussions.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia and the Minister of Health stand.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to you on your election. While I have this opportunity, congratulations as well to the Member for Airdrie-East on her election and to the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for his election as Speaker.

I'm very pleased to be able to rise today as the Member for Calgary-Acadia in this maiden speech. First, let me take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to thank the previous Member for Calgary-Acadia for her service in the previous four years, Ms Brandy Payne. I should note as well that Calgary-Acadia is a name which has existed only since 2012, but the constituency itself has a history dating back to 1971 under a different name, Calgary-Egmont. Unfortunately, the close similarity to the Calgary community of Edgemont was too confusing, and the constituency was renamed, which means that the history of being named after Egmont house or Fred Perceval, the 11th Earl of Egmont, is lost.

Calgary-Egmont and Calgary-Acadia have been represented since 1971, starting with Merv Leitch, a former Attorney General and minister of energy, who many credit as being the architect of section 33 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the notwithstanding clause. It was also represented by a former occupant of your chair, Speaker David Carter, as well as the former Minister of Advanced Education Denis Herard and Jonathan Denis, another former Attorney General. I'm proud, Mr. Speaker, to be included in the same company as these former members.

Mr. Speaker, I first became involved in politics in 1992. I was 16, and I bought a membership in a political party because, although I was only 16, I could vote. I could vote in the leadership of a party and, as a result, was one of 46,000 Albertans to put an X beside the name of Ralph Klein. Now I get to sit in this Assembly and sit at a desk which in its drawer has the signature of Premier Klein. It is very humbling.

I note as well that I'm not the first member of this Assembly with my last name. There was another, the first Ukrainian-Canadian to serve as an MLA in Alberta, Geedo's oldest brother.

Alberta is fortunate to have some 350,000 Albertans who officially count ourselves as people of Ukrainian descent. We were given the toughest land. When Sir Clifford Sifton opened the prairies to homesteaders at the turn of the last century, he chose to focus on what he called the men in sheepskin cloaks, including my great-grandfather, who came from the steppes of what was then known as Bukovina. The first wave came by the tens of thousands to the tough parkland area north of Battle River, where they had to clear trees and plow tough soil over those first years. My baba told me stories of surviving those first winters and that it was only possible through immense perseverance. That's the frontier spirit, which we need to renew as a province if we are once again to see a renewal of the Alberta advantage.

Geedo, Mr. Speaker, lived a tough life. When his mother passed and his father remarried, Geedo was invited to leave the home. That is to say, he was kicked out of the home at eight years of age. He was homeless and never again able to continue with his education, but he toiled for the rest of his life, as did my baba, to provide for my dad and my two uncles. Geedo ran a grain elevator and drove a school bus while my baba ran a school cafeteria.

Their hard work meant that although my dad grew up with little, he was given opportunity. He ended up being the first of his family to go to university, where he went on to become an otolaryngologist, described by some who knew him when he practised as a legend. When they got married at a young age, my mom worked to support my dad during med school. She was a flight attendant for Wardair. It was only through the grace and the hard work of my mom and dad, Mr. Speaker, that I'm able to stand here today.

My mother's family homesteaded in the Carstairs area, originally from Pennsylvania. I've been to the Pennsylvania monument in Gettysburg, and I've seen my grandfather's family listed with those who fought for Lincoln's Union during the Battle of Gettysburg. My grandfather's family from Indiana county in Pennsylvania were a last stop in the Underground Railroad. Early settlement of Scottish Presbyterians with their own history of persecution laid the grounds for vibrant antislavery sentiment in Pennsylvania, Mr. Speaker, in the decades before the Civil War. It's not possible to overstate the influence of my grandma and my baba and my mom. I was blessed with having such strong, loving, and supportive women in my life.

When I was campaigning, I was asked why I'm a conservative. My answer is that conservatism is the politics of gratitude, a respect and an admiration for the generations that came before us. With every vote I make in this Assembly, I will remember my parents

and my grandparents. I'll remember and respect all their hard work, that gave me this unique opportunity.

I was also asked on the campaign trail why I'm running, and that answer, Mr. Speaker, is my children, Phineas and Archer. I met my wife at the age of 15, and when people hear that, they ask what it's like to marry a high school sweetheart, but I have to correct them very quickly. I met her when I was 15, but it took me 16 years to convince her to go on a date with me. I'm blessed to be the husband of the fiercest, strongest, most capable person I know, the most competitive air hockey player I've ever met, my sushi-making, dogsledding, axe-throwing, karaoke-singing, bathroom-renovating wife. To her and to my two boys: I thank them for letting me be able to serve here in this Assembly. Those two boys are the reason I decided to run, to make sure that they have the same opportunities which my wife, Andrea, and I had when we grew up in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I find myself in the position of being a minister of the Crown, and I enter upon those arduous duties assigned to me with the deepest sense of the responsibilities they involve. I've been on the job now for one month, and I'll admit to being overwhelmed when I get to meet all the amazing men and women in our health care system who want to serve their fellow Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity, and through you thank you to the fellow members here. I look forward to an opportunity, a productive four years over the next term in working with all these colleagues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

9:00

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), are there any members with questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw and the Minister of Children's Services standing.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in the House this evening and stand before you and my colleagues as a new member of this Assembly in this 30th Legislature of Alberta and to have the opportunity to respond to this government's plan as outlined by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, the last seven weeks since the election on April 16 have been nothing short of extraordinary. Stepping into this building and into this Chamber for the first time was absolutely incredible. Being sworn in alongside my colleagues, officially taking my seat in this Assembly on behalf of the people of Calgary-Shaw, and the next day hearing Her Honour deliver the Speech from the Throne: there was something about that moment where the promises we made during the campaign became more than a platform. It was our commitment being shared through the Queen's representative in our province that we as a government are here to do what we said we would do. Having been given the opportunity to come to work every day in this truly beautiful and storied building, experiencing the grandeur and the ceremony of the opening of a new Legislative Assembly: well, I am grateful for this privilege.

It's also surreal because while I had dreams and a passion for public service, I really didn't expect them to lead me here. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker – and I think you and all other members here today can relate – I am where I am today in part of because of where I've come from. Growing up in small-town Saskatchewan taught me many of the lessons that led me to this place: hard work, humility, honesty, good humour, and service, service to your neighbours and to your community, service to something larger

than yourself. These are the values I learned growing up, these are the values that led me to seek elected office, and they are the values that will continue to guide me for as long as I have the honour to sit as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Like any good prairie kid, I know that springtime is the most important season, when the snow finally melts and seeding and calving are under way, when hope and optimism abound and we can see the promise of renewal unfolding around us.

That was the theme of this throne speech, and in many ways it was the theme of our spring election: renewal. Albertans clearly wanted change. Albertans wanted a government that would stand up and advocate for the things that matter to them, for economic growth, for job creation, for real support for our energy sector, and they wanted a government that would take Alberta back to its rightful place as a leader in Confederation. Albertans made their choice very clear. They chose renewal. They chose a positive vision set out in a platform of thoughtful and fully costed policies, policies that will benefit families, that will maintain and enhance public services, policies that will jump-start our economy.

Mr. Speaker, after four years of punishing tax increases on families and job creators, reckless overspending, and deficit budgets from an NDP government that increased our provincial debt, Albertans chose a new government that will return to fiscal management, get our financial House in order, and ensure that Alberta will be an appealing place, the best place to invest, to start a business, to raise a family, to build a life. That is the Alberta advantage. It's a recognition that the incredible natural resources we are blessed with, coupled with the ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit of her people, make Alberta a truly special place, a place where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

It's the reason my husband and I chose to move here. Like so many people from across Canada and around the world, we made a conscious choice to become Calgarians and to become Albertans, to raise our family in a place with amazing opportunity and potential. But here's the unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker. There is a sad reality that those of us who grew up in Saskatchewan are all too familiar with, and it was a sad reality that Albertans experienced these past four years. Poor government policy has the ability to hamper opportunity and potential, dampen that entrepreneurial spirit, stunt economic growth, job loss, and people leaving this province. Then a vicious cycle sets in where governments, usually NDP governments, increase taxes, run deficits in order to maintain public services. Worst of all, Mr. Speaker, we began to lose hope and that optimism for the future.

But it doesn't have to be that way. My experience working for a pro-growth, pro-free enterprise government in another province showed me just that. Under a conservative government, Saskatchewan went from the place to be from to the place to be. When I saw that a new united, compassionate conservative movement in Alberta was coming together under strong and experienced leadership, I chose to get involved. Then, a little over a year ago, Mr. Speaker, when I saw that this United Conservative Party could present an alternative vision for our province, a vision for renewal, one that would get Alberta back on track, I chose to run to represent the people of Calgary-Shaw.

Every day since then has been a new adventure: not always easy, Mr. Speaker, but always rewarding. I am honoured to represent the people and the families of Calgary-Shaw in this Chamber, no matter how they voted. It is on their behalf that I will carry out my work in the months and years ahead. I want to mention that the boundaries have changed quite a bit since Calgary-Shaw was first created. Since this is my maiden speech in this Assembly, I do want to honour some of the members who came before me, those such as Jim Dinning and Cindy Ady, who advocated tirelessly for their

constituents and who certainly know the importance of fiscal responsibility and the difficult decisions needed to get there.

Calgary-Shaw includes Shawnessy, Somerset, Silverado, Chaparral, Walden, Legacy as well as the new developments of Yorkville and Belmont. I want to thank two very special constituents, Tasha Schindel and Karin Henderson, for leading a campaign that allowed me to meet with and hear from people in each of these south Calgary communities. It is a diverse riding with seniors, professionals, many young families, working families, families who rely on the energy industry to make their living, many from all over the world with different backgrounds, cultures, and faiths, and many of whom are Albertans by choice. Every single day I heard it over and over that we need to get the economy growing, we need jobs, we need to provide opportunities for people to provide for their families, and we need a government that will support our oil and gas sector and a government that will unequivocally and relentlessly fight to get pipelines built in this country.

But, Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Calgary-Shaw were not just concerned about the economy. They shared with me their concerns about the need for strong public services and infrastructure, that despite all the rhetoric many did not believe that the former government made things better for students or patients or front-line workers. Again and again I would hear concerns about the ideological approach to education, and I heard genuine concerns at the doors about why health care spending was increasing but that it was making no difference for patients. In fact, spending was going up and so too was the time it took to access important services. Those are challenging questions, and I know that the solutions are not simple. They require innovation, new perspectives, and frankly, in some cases, just some common sense. Hearing these questions and concerns every day drove home for me the gravity, the weight, and the responsibility of this role. It is a great honour to serve my constituents in this Assembly but also a solemn obligation and one that I do not take lightly.

As I said at the beginning, Mr. Speaker, I will draw on the lessons I learned growing up to guide me. I draw both strength and inspiration from my family. I was fortunate to have parents who encouraged my brother, sister, and I to be independent, to ask questions, to pursue knowledge in all of its forms, to do better, to be better, and to help those who need it most, to seek the truth wherever it might lead, and that taking responsibility for my actions matters. My grandparents on all sides believed in community involvement, but my grandma specifically would often remind me of how hard women fought to have a voice at the table and that we owe it to those who came before us to not just use that voice but use that voice for positive change and to make things better for those who will come after we're gone.

Mr. Speaker, in acknowledging those who have helped me get here today, I have to save my greatest thanks for my husband, Cole. I am so fortunate to have a partner in this life who shares a passion for politics, is one of the smartest people I know, and who is so incredibly supportive. Sometimes his support comes in a pretty straightforward manner. When I was wrestling with the decision about whether or not to pursue this path, I'd gone over it and over it and over it. Finally, he said that I either needed to run or just stop talking about it. I am very thankful for his encouragement, and in many ways his service and sacrifice is far greater than my own.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to my children, William and Lauren. My son has been telling people that since his mom won the collection, she now works at the castle in Edmonton. While they don't yet know the sacrifice they are making for this province, they are absolutely the reason that I am here today. People certainly have

asked: how will I do it? How will I be an MLA, a minister in cabinet, and have two young children? But here's the plain truth, Mr. Speaker. I'm a working mom. I've always been a working mom, and like hundreds of thousands of other working parents in Alberta, it requires a lot of effort, a lot of help, and is not always an easy balance. In that I thank my colleagues for their ongoing support and confidence in me.

9:10

Ultimately, I didn't decide to seek elected office in spite of having two young children; I did it for my children. I do this work for my children. I hope to instill in them the importance of serving others, that if you see an opportunity and a need and you have something to offer, you ought to contribute. I know that nothing worth while comes without hard work and sacrifice, and I know my colleagues on both sides of this House will agree that there is absolutely no more important work we will do here than we do in an effort to leave things better for our children and all future generations.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to briefly thank and recognize a few of the leaders who I've had the privilege to know and to work with and who are true examples of servant leadership; first and foremost, our current Premier. The leader of our party and the person whose unwavering vision for a United Conservative movement is a key reason I chose to run for office. His work ethic is well known and unmatched. His efforts to reach out to diverse communities, grow our party, and unite our province are unrivalled. He is someone who has offered me and all members of our team guidance and encouragement as we embark on this journey as a new government. He has shown true leadership in staying the course, listening to Albertans, offering a positive approach and hope for the future of our province. I know he has Alberta's best interests at heart. I admire his example, and I appreciate his candour, his humour, and his friendship.

I'm thankful for the encouragement of other strong Conservative leaders like Rona Ambrose, an outstanding Albertan and a truly inspiring woman. I think often of the words she spoke just over a year ago about the ways that we as women all too often tell ourselves we aren't experienced enough or educated enough or accomplished enough to seek office. She had much to offer in the political process. At the time I was the mom of a four-month-old, and those words resonated with me. I then knew I had a choice. I could sit back and be a spectator of the process, or I could put in the work to ensure that people like me, young women, young parents from everyday working families, were reflected in this Assembly and had a voice at this table.

Finally, I've made reference to my Saskatchewan roots. During my time in Saskatchewan I was proud to have the opportunity to work for a fiscally responsible government who encouraged investment and created jobs but also listened to people, made critical investments in public services and infrastructure, and supported those most vulnerable in our communities. I was fortunate enough to work for another Premier who went to bat every single day on the national and international stage to promote and advocate for his province, a regular person who chose to take the front steps up the front of the Legislature to remind him of the responsibility entrusted to those of us who serve.

But beyond the economic or political lessons I learned working for former Premier Brad Wall, the most important was what integrity looks like, that while politics can be a rough sport sometimes, if you stay close to the people you serve and remember where you came from, you can be successful in this work and you can do a lot of good in the process.

Mr. Speaker, to close, in tribute to my own rural roots, in deep gratitude to my family, in service to my constituents with the steadfast leadership and commitment of our Premier alongside an incredible team of MLAs, very cognizant of the challenges that lie ahead but also hopeful in the spirit of renewal that comes with springtime in Alberta, I offer these words from scripture from Galatians, chapter 6, verse 9: "Let us not become weary in doing good. For at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." I look forward to the work ahead.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), I believe I see the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, of course, through you, Mr. Speaker, for that moving speech. You know, I really was touched by the way that she was speaking about the strength of Conservative women and exactly what motivated her to run. For me, I know that part of the process that made me so happy to be involved was that our Premier was taking a merit-based approach to appointing women to cabinet positions, to higher up positions. That has been a goal of his to have more women involved in our movement on the basis of our own merit, not some lockstep identity category that the left claims to own. I was just wondering if the minister could give her thoughts on that and how she feels being a part of such a strong government.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, when I decided to put my name forward, it was really important to me that in all things I would be genuine and true to myself and honest with people who asked about the process of seeking elected office because I so much valued people who shared that very, maybe, candid feedback with me.

You know, I see also in this House the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. That very same weekend hearing Rona Ambrose speak about how we are sometimes our own worst critics and tend to second-guess, she was one of the first people who said: if you're thinking about running, you need to do this; we could use you at the table. But also nobody cleared the path, and I certainly wouldn't ask for that.

Our nominations were extremely, in many cases, hard-fought battles, and I think that when it comes to integrity, that's the key piece. You know, be yourself, show how you can work hard regardless of if you're female or male. I ran against three gentlemen in my nomination, one of whom was in the House yesterday and still incredibly supportive. I also want to note that members, certainly, across the province, again, female, male, are all incredibly supportive of the strong women that we have in our caucus, and I am incredibly proud to be part of this group.

**The Acting Speaker:** With a couple of minutes left, any other members under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I believe I see the hon. Member for West Yellowhead standing.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to have the opportunity today to stand before you to respond to the Speech from the Throne with my maiden speech.

For a fellow like myself who cares deeply about people, this past couple of years have proven difficult, travelling across my constituency, hearing stories of struggle, uncertainty, and hardship. With the Speech from the Throne, however, I'm excited, as are many Albertans, to hear of a path to recovery, certainty, and prosperity. Indeed, hope is on the horizon.

Mr. Speaker, I was born and raised in Nova Scotia to a mom who was a schoolteacher and a dad who was a handyman. My parents themselves were actually both born and raised on farms, so they instilled in my siblings and myself many things that I attribute to their upbringing. I would not be here today without the values that I learned from my parents, with two of the main values being to remain humble and work hard, very hard. Oddly enough, all these years later the message to stay humble, work hard, and earn every vote, that we heard repeatedly during the election campaign, incorporated two of those values. My parents also instilled in me the value of loving and respecting others, without which I also believe I would not be here today.

I will always remember a life lesson that I learned from my dad when I was seven years old. While I was helping my dad shovel the heavy, wet eastern snow from our driveway, he noticed that an elderly lady at the bottom of our street was out shovelling her own driveway. My dad told me to go and help her shovel her driveway but also told me to not accept any money for helping, so I listened. A few days later, after yet another snowfall, my dad told me to go shovel the same driveway and again told me not to accept any money, and again I obeyed.

Still another snowfall later I was given the same instructions, but unfortunately the lady's husband was home, and he told me that although he knew my dad told me not to accept money, he was going to pay me for shovelling their driveway. When he saw the hesitation on my young, innocent face, he said that he knew my dad taught me to respect my elders, so I would need to take the money in order to respect him. As a young boy placed in this impossible predicament, I accepted the money, and then, terrified, I went home to tell my dad. Thankfully, my dad let me know that it was okay for me to take the money that Mr. Wyer had given me. He then told me to never expect money and certainly never ask for it but to just do the job to help them out because it was the right thing to do.

**9:20**

This recent election has produced a number of people sitting here today, myself included, that are not here for a paycheck. We're here to do a job that needs to be done because it is the right thing to do.

The other person that I absolutely could not be here without is my beautiful wife. I must acknowledge her here today, as I do as often as possible, because she is simply amazing; so amazing, in fact, that she gave birth to a little boy and a little girl just 17 weeks ago in the middle of this election campaign, and still made sure that I went to work to ensure that the people of West Yellowhead had the right person representing them.

My wife, when I asked, was also kind enough to postpone her 40th birthday, which happened to fall a week before the election. She postponed that until after the campaign was over. Now, if *Hansard* could insert a facepalm emoji, I'm sure it would at this point. Needless to say, I am extremely fortunate to have support at home that understands the sacrifice it takes to serve others.

My wife, who happens to be a public high school teacher, is usually a very patient person when it comes to teaching me. Generally she is teaching me something to do with technology or how to include an attachment on an e-mail, but something she taught me a couple of years ago will stay with me for a long time. I came home one evening from a political meeting with the intention of having my wife sign up for a party membership to support me on the journey to become the candidate. My wife told me to show her that I am the best candidate, and that she would support me. My response was: "Of course I'm the best candidate. I'm your husband." Vanessa, leaning forward in the chair, looked me right in the eye and said: "You were the right candidate for that job. You

show me that you're the right candidate for this job, and I will support you."

Something that I've learned about my wife is that once she has her mind made up it is next to impossible to change. Some say stubborn; I prefer the much safer term "determined." Later on, after seeing the time and effort and dedication I was committing to move ahead on this path, my wife chose to come alongside on the journey. As members in this Assembly can attest, it is impossible to do this job without backing at home; however, it is empowering when we have that support. Mr. Speaker, it is an extreme honour and privilege for me to be the inaugural member serving the West Yellowhead constituency with its new expanded boundaries.

You know, Mr. Speaker, while many of my colleagues here today are representing very nice constituencies, I will be unabashed in stating that I get to represent not only the most beautiful constituency in Alberta but likely the most picturesque area in our country. Woodlands county, Yellowhead county, the municipality of Jasper, and the regional district of Greenview all make up the immense West Yellowhead constituency, which is comprised of vast forests, sprawling prairie landscape, and stunning rivers and lakes. Millions of people, including the people sitting in this very Chamber do not require invitation to be drawn to the picturesque mountain ranges in Jasper, and I will stand here today and share in the confines of this room of the breathtaking beauty of the hidden gems of Cadomin, Brûle, and Grande Cache, which I am fortunate enough to witness in my travels.

All of these aspects make my constituency the place of destination for those outdoorsy people who recognize the need to escape the business of the urban sprawl. They retreat to find themselves immersed in our rural version of yoga, which has activities like trail riding, quadding, fishing, trapping, hunting, skiing, hiking, and camping.

The communities of West Yellowhead have a history of drawing people in from all over Canada and around the world. As I mentioned, its sheer beauty attracts people, but many people opt to move to our communities for the same reason that I moved here, to work. When I left the east coast, I kind of got lost on the west coast for a few years until I found a place to call home in Alberta. For me, like so many others, I came here in the pursuit of a better life through the Alberta oil field. The ups and downs of the patch convinced me to move on to the Alberta forest industry, where I've spent the last nine years and have had the opportunity to become a power engineer.

Being at home these last few years instead of chasing rigs all over the province has afforded me the opportunity to do something that I'm very passionate about, volunteer. Whether serving on a board at a soup kitchen, volunteering with a youth group, or helping assess kids for minor hockey, there is seemingly nothing more fulfilling than helping others. I guess, Mr. Speaker, one could say, with the path that I have trod, that I am just an everyday guy who has worked everyday jobs and somehow has ended up here in the Legislature with the task of representing the everyday people who are fortunate enough to call West Yellowhead their home.

Mr. Speaker, as easy as it is to be drawn in and even distracted by the beauty of the West Yellowhead constituency, I am tasked with not getting distracted. You see, I believe it will be very easy to get focused on legislation, committee assignments, stakeholders, different causes, and everything under the umbrella of this political world. But what I am determined to do is what the people of West Yellowhead expect of me, which is to stay focused on what matters, the people. I hope something we can all remember is that this unique world that we have the opportunity to be a part of here in this Chamber is not actually about politics; it's about people. I will, before every decision I make, before every nay or yea, always

question: how does this decision affect the people of West Yellowhead?

Mr. Speaker, the people in the communities of West Yellowhead are great people. We are hard-working, generous, kind, and caring; the sort of people who don't ask for much, maybe a bit of respect and an occasional helping hand up, but certainly never a handout.

The communities that I am fortunate enough to represent are proudly involved in various industries which are essential to the survival of our communities. Things like agriculture, farming, forestry, mining, transportation, oil and gas, tourism, and electrical generation are prevalent in the communities of West Yellowhead. We have a history of contributing a great deal to the economic success of our province, yet people have been frustrated with a lack of progress in our resource sectors the last number of years and the uncertainty that that has provided for their families.

That, for me, is why the throne speech had myself and many of our constituents on the edge of our seats. The throne speech is one which is focused on making life better for Albertans. It focuses on using our abundance of resources as a way to provide for our families now but doing so responsibly so that we can provide for the future as well. Because I have spent so much of my life in industry, I have personally witnessed the pride that is taken to improve environmental performance in our province. I have seen the finances that companies invest to ensure that they are better tomorrow than they are today. So I am honoured to serve my constituents as part of a government which is committed to not only defend against the lies being spread about our province in order to land-lock our resources but will also boast of our world-leading innovation and technologies and our successes.

You know, I will always remember the time I spent walking through the halls of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and seeing the contributions wall of fame, seeing names like Repsol, Husky, Shell, Talisman, Millar Western, Weyerhaeuser, and the list goes on and on. I can only assume that other postsecondary institutions across Alberta are similar in the acknowledgement of industry's financial commitments, industry which has invested billions of dollars in our technology and innovation to improve our performance, especially our environmental performance, for our future and the future of our children. Knowing this creates a sense a pride across my constituency of West Yellowhead. It instills in us the determination for our industries to succeed for the benefit of our environmental contributions here and across our country and, indeed, around the world. We know that when Alberta succeeds and when Alberta creates, others benefit.

I've been fortunate during my campaigning to travel all around my constituency, and I cannot say enough about the resiliency that the people of West Yellowhead possess. Speaking of resiliency, I eagerly anticipate joining the people of Grande Cache to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their community this summer. This hamlet has had its ups and downs over the years but is full of amazing people who take pride in their community and are determined to see it succeed. I have had the pleasure of attending Peers Gold Dust Daze, the Wildwood fair and parade, Blue Ridge Logging Days, and numerous parades, trade shows, and events in other parts of West Yellowhead. I have personally knocked on thousands of doors all across my constituency, and I have met so many people, quality everyday people, who have eagerly anticipated the direction provided in the Speech from the Throne.

**9:30**

So, Mr. Speaker, I will spend the time I am given in this room and throughout my constituency focused on the people of West

Yellowhead in ensuring that their voices are heard, their concerns are raised, and their future is better. Thank you for allowing me to address this Chamber.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any members with questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Calgary-East standing.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election to Deputy Chair of Committees. My name is Peter Singh, and today I rise with great honour to speak to the Assembly as the representative for Calgary-East. I'm incredibly proud to have been entrusted with the opportunity to sit in the Assembly by the people of my constituency. I am humbled to have been entrusted with representing the people of such a diverse, hard-working, and unique population.

I'm honoured to follow in the footsteps of three great MLAs before me, who are as unique and diverse as my constituency. Calgary-East has retained three previous members to this Chamber, and their backgrounds are truly remarkable, from Mr. Ludwig in the 1960s, who was a lawyer and Second World War veteran; Mr. Amery, who served for many years, with his son now my colleague in this government; and Ms Luff, who was a teacher before entering public life.

My constituents are just as unique, with thousands of my constituents working in trades, manufacturing, sales and service, health care, agriculture, even the arts. Calgary-East paints a diverse portrait of the roles and responsibilities Albertans carry with them every day, and of that I'm proud. I hope that I will be able to live up to the expectations of my colleagues in the government caucus, every other member of this Assembly – past, present, and future – and, most importantly, the expectations set by my constituents.

My experience while door-knocking made me aware of the important issues the communities in the Calgary-East constituency are facing. Many of the concerns the community had voiced were around financial insecurity. During recent years Albertans in my community have been faced with a tremendous number of job losses that have greatly impacted their families. As the cost of food, gas, and housing are increasing, the job opportunities for Albertans are declining. As people become unemployed, crime rates and the use of illegal drugs have increased, where communities are frequently faced with issues of theft and break-ins.

Education was also an important topic brought forward among the community members, where questions were asked around the increased class sizes and programs.

Seniors of the community also raised issues regarding the lack of facilities and programs that can help support the lifestyle of the senior population in Calgary-East. As the number of seniors is increasing, and Alberta has the highest rate of early-onset dementia in Canada, more attention is needed on programs provided for seniors.

Calgary-East consists of small businesses that are facing difficulty due to the downturn in the economy, which makes it very tough for business owners to operate financially. The building of new pipelines will open many job opportunities for many Albertans. The elimination of the carbon tax will support the financial stability of Albertans. The reduction in corporate taxes will help job creators to reinvest in Alberta as the corporate tax will be the lowest in the country, lowering from 12 per cent to 8 per cent by 2022.

Of course, as with many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, my constituency has changed over the years, most recently with the past election. Having been in existence for 26 years now,

Calgary-East sits on the eastern edge of the city, stretching from the Bow River to the city limits at 116th Street. Running from north to south, Calgary-East runs from the Trans-Canada highway to the Peigan Trail.

Calgary-East is home to fantastic communities such as Southview, Erin Woods, Applewood Park, Abbeydale, Forest Heights, Fonda, Forest Lawn, east Dover, Penbrooke Meadows, and mobile homes. My constituency is home to businesses both large and small, residential areas and industrial areas, and newly constructed neighbourhoods. Calgary-East truly is a microcosm of all that makes Calgary great, and I am so proud to have the privilege to represent my neighbours, friends, and families in this Legislature.

Seventeenth Avenue S.E. underwent a transformation as the bus rapid transit, the BRT, project was completed and Calgary's new rapid transit system, called Max, launched in November 2018. The transit route known as Max Purple begins at the east side shopping centre and connects to downtown, allowing individuals to commute throughout the city with ease.

While I was not born in Calgary-East, I have come to call it home and have come to love it. Like many of my constituents I am extremely blessed to be a Canadian by choice, not by chance. Since moving to Calgary, I have become familiar with and interested in the culture and heart of my city, my province, and my country. Mr. Speaker, I immigrated to Canada from the Fiji islands in 1987 and settled in Ontario for a few years with my lovely wife, Reena, who I met while she was vacationing in Fiji. I got married that year in Ontario. I worked part-time and attended Centennial College and later graduated and worked proudly as a licensed automotive journeyman. My wife also did the same while working on her nursing program.

I was in Calgary in 1992 for a wedding with my wife and baby boy. There were so many opportunities at that time that we moved and settled here in 1993. It was the right direction, so we opened our small business in Calgary-East, worked hard to build our business, which also helped me to connect with the constituents of Calgary-East. I am very proud to have chosen to settle in Calgary. I am a proud father to my son, Kishen, and daughter, Komal. Like many other Canadians who own and operate their businesses, I as well as thousands of others across my constituency and our great province have become crushed by pointless regulations, increased taxes that have hampered my business.

I am deeply humbled and would like to acknowledge the community members and the hundreds of volunteers that took time out to take part in the election. I would like to give a warm thank you to my constituents in Calgary-East for entrusting me to represent you. Now I am here standing in this Chamber for my constituents. I have heard from them time and time again about the need to get our province back on track, and I along with my colleagues in the government caucus are ready to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a) are there any members with questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake standing.

**9:40**

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to rise and respond to the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne and to deliver my time-honoured maiden speech as the Member for Lesser Slave Lake. I want to start by congratulating all



the members of this House on their recent election victories. I would like to thank my sons, Noah and Landan, along with all my sisters and brothers and the rest of my family and friends for the love and support they have given me on this journey. This Legislature is truly facing an enormous challenge in getting Alberta's economy back on track, but Albertans need us to succeed and we will.

I've had the opportunity to do a lot of jobs over the years. I've been a lumber piler; handsaw tree faller; roughneck on the drilling rigs; trucker; high school teacher; a logger operating button tops, feller-bunchers, delimbers, and grapple skidders; a sawyer and sawmiller; a tree planter; a farmer; a crane operator and owner. I feel that my present job will undoubtedly be one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life.

My riding is one of the greatest places to live, work, and raise a family in the entire world, rich with history, industry, and natural beauty. In the west of the riding you'll find High Prairie, a gateway to the Peace Country, with some significant farmland. It's a beautiful town that attracts leisure seekers for its many wonderful offerings, including the golden walleye classic fishing competition and the High Prairie rodeo.

As you head east on the south side of the lake you'll pass Enilda, Joussard, Faust, and Kinuso, which has a great rodeo each year; Canyon Creek; and end up at the east end of the lake in my town of Slave Lake, which hosts Riverboat Daze and the Icebreaker hockey game yearly. Travelling to the east you come to Smith and Hondo, who hold a great fall fair and rodeo. Continue east and you'll end up in Calling Lake. Head north to Sandy Lake and then a place that is close to my heart, Wabasca, located west of the Wabasca oil fields. As you head back west, you would pass through Red Earth Creek and end up at Cadotte Lake.

As you may know, Slave Lake fell victim to a devastating wildfire in 2011. Since then we've rebuilt, and the people are now opening their hearts and their homes to wildfire victims from across the province. I would like to commend all the firefighters, police, and ambulance personnel who have to work so tirelessly in keeping all of my constituents safe and protected. I have the utmost respect for all of these first responders as well as all the fine women and men who serve in our army, navy, and air force, putting it all on the line for us.

Lesser Slave Lake is also home to 11 First Nation bands: Bigstone Cree Nation, Driftpile First Nation, Kapawe'no First Nation, Loon River First Nation, Lubicon Lake First Nation, Peerless Trout First Nation, Sawridge First Nation, Sucker Creek First Nation, Swan River First Nation, Whitefish Lake First Nation, and Woodland Cree First Nation.

The riding was proudly represented by Pearl Calahasen for more than a quarter century. Ms Calahasen was a trailblazer as the first Métis woman to hold public office in Alberta, and her contributions to our riding and province are tremendous.

There are three Métis settlements in my riding: Gift Lake, East Prairie, and the Peavine Métis settlement, whose chairman Ken Noskey has already had positive discussions with me. I look forward to using my time in office to build strong relationships with First Nations people in our riding, like Chief Silas Yellowknee of Bigstone and Grand Chief of Treaty 8 Arthur Noskey, who I'm proud to call friends.

The truth is, I owe a great deal to Lesser Slave Lake as my relationship with the riding goes back decades. My grandfather Lennart Rehn immigrated to this great province in 1910 and started sawmilling shortly thereafter. He homesteaded a quarter section about an hour west of Edmonton by Wildwood. He and his wife, Helenna, had 10 children, seven girls and three boys. My grandparents' three sons – Harold, Jim, and my father, Pat – all became sawmillers like their father. Three of my aunts – Helen,

Karin, and Winnie – started a band called the Rehn Sister Trio, and they played for years at many country dances all over northern Alberta. Mr. Speaker, at this point I think it's only fair to warn you that music and singing does run in my family, so you could have some serious competition at this year's yodelling/karaoke-singing extravaganza.

**Ms Hoffman:** Prove it.

**Mr. Rehn:** Later. Later.

My father and mother, Pat and Helen Rehn, raised seven children in Wildwood, Alberta. I should clarify that because we really had a gypsy type of lifestyle, being in the sawmill business back then. Alberta forest service would auction off stands of timber, sawmillers would bid on them, and if successful, they would move their sawmill close to that stand of timber and saw it and then move on to the next stand of timber. We moved our sawmill all over, sawing timber: Wildwood, Edson, Cynthia, Whitecourt, Grouard, Chickadee Creek, Simonette Road off highway 43, Fort Assiniboine, and many other places.

Right after I was born in Edmonton, my mom whisked me off with her to our sawmill bush camp up by Fox Creek, right by the Little Smoky River. And, yes, when I needed some water, they filled my baby bottle right from the Little Smoky River. I'm not sure that Alberta Health Services would approve of that today, but I was a bush baby, and I survived to tell the story.

After finishing high school, I received a volleyball scholarship and attended Red Deer College and then the University of Alberta. I achieved an education degree, specializing in business and physical education. I come from a very humble background. When I graduated, all that I had was a big student loan and a desire to work hard and to try my very best.

I taught at a Catholic high school for a couple of years. While I love teaching, eventually I decided to go back sawmilling and to the forest, where my heart yearned to be, so I put every penny I had together, and I purchased a timber quota in the Edson area. Twenty-one years ago I purchased a sawmill in Wabasca called Wabasca Lakes Sawmill. Shortly thereafter I purchased another sawmill and timber quota in the Grande Cache area, where I sawed for nearly 20 years.

Sixteen years ago I started purchasing quarter sections of timberland in the Lesser Slave Lake riding, close to High Prairie, Sunset House, Triangle, and Joussard. I still own some of this land today along with four timber quotas.

Eleven years ago I started my own crane company, which experienced amazing growth until the NDP came to power in Alberta in 2015. Many of my competitors tried to hang on, but the economic catastrophe was too great, and many companies went bankrupt or had to auction off everything, great companies like Adam Crane, who had been in business for over 40 years. I was faced with some very tough decisions, and I decided that I needed to expand to the United States in order to survive.

I did expand into the U.S.A. in 2017. Today I own one of the largest single-person-owned fleets of cranes in North America, with cranes in operation across Canada and the United States. I would like to thank our great neighbours, the United States of America, for allowing companies such as mine to compete in their great free-market system.

For the better part of my life I have been working to create jobs and make life better for others. I've employed hundreds of Albertans, helping them find meaningful work and start their own families and companies. Some people would call me an overachiever. I say that I'm a very blessed individual who has an incredible work ethic and was fortunate enough to be born in the

greatest province in the greatest country in the world. Honestly, where else but in Alberta would my amazing life have been possible? I know the Alberta advantage because I've lived it. Now I want to ensure that it's alive and well for generations to come. I want to ensure that if a young person wants to start a company, they can right in Lesser Slave Lake if they wish to do so, just like what was done by the Buchannans, Vanderwells, Augers, Badgers, Willisrofts, Lukans, and many, many others in our great constituency.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, I didn't pursue this job out of self-interest. I don't need a job. I don't want the cushy perks, and I'm not interested in any fancy parties. I pursued this job because I know what it's going to take to make life better for families and businesses in our riding, province, and country, and I'm ready to get to work.

The people of my riding are some of the kindest, friendliest, and most optimistic people you will ever meet, but the past four years have been very difficult for them. We saw the introduction of the NDP carbon tax, the largest tax increase in Alberta's history, in the middle of an economic recession. We saw mass layoffs, business closures, and investment flight. We saw four major pipelines get cancelled or delayed indefinitely.

9:50

I've sat in this Legislature and heard members of the opposition trying to legitimize their horrific deficit accumulation while in government, often blaming it on the oil price collapse for the entire four-year period that they were in power. Mr. Speaker, I have a news flash. The oil price recovered years ago; it's the price differential that is killing us. This price differential is caused by lack of pipelines, which was caused by terrible decisions by the NDP not standing up for Albertans and Canadians to get pipelines built.

The policies of the past four years haven't worked, and I stand here strongly aware that Albertans elected our government to deliver bold Conservative change. The UCP has a strong plan to get Albertans working again, and it's already been put into action. We've passed several policies that will make life better for families and businesses, including repealing the carbon tax, implementing job creation tax cuts, and cutting red tape to give entrepreneurs the freedom they need to invest, grow, and hire right here in Alberta. We will be bringing in the groundbreaking aboriginal opportunities corporation, which will facilitate First Nations' financial participation in major resource projects, including pipelines. We will stand up to Ottawa any time they try to pass legislation that hurts our province, like Bill C-48, the west coast tanker ban, and Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill. I'm fiercely proud and I'm glad to be part of the governing party of Alberta, and we will never apologize for that. We aren't anyone's embarrassing cousin.

Three years ago I listened as our Premier laid out a clear vision to get Alberta back on track, and I decided to get involved. I took time away from my crane company to help us campaign to unite Conservatives. Our Premier and our government represent a fresh start for Lesser Slave Lake and Alberta, and I couldn't be happier to be here with him today. We're going to deliver on our commitments and make Alberta once again a beacon of hope and opportunity for people from all over Canada and the world.

In summary I'd like to quote Dean Alfange.

I do not choose to be a common man. It is my right to be uncommon – if I can. I seek opportunity – not security. I do not wish to be a kept citizen, humbled and dulled by having the state look after me. I want to take the calculated risk; to dream and to build, to fail and to succeed. I refuse to barter incentive for a dole. I prefer the challenges of life to the guaranteed existence; the

thrill of fulfillment to the stale calm of utopia. I will not trade freedom for beneficence nor my dignity for a handout. I will never cower before any master nor bend to any threat. It is my [duty] to stand erect, proud and unafraid; to think and act for myself, enjoy the benefit of my creations, and to face the world boldly and say, this I have done.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the Member for Lesser Slave Lake for your remarks.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available to anyone who might like to ask a question or comment to the Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Seeing none, I will call upon the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park and Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and deliver my maiden speech in this House. Before I begin, I just want to say thank you to the voters of Strathcona-Sherwood Park for their support during the recent election. You have placed an enormous amount of trust in me and in this government, and I want you to know that I am here to fight for you, and our government is here to fight for all Albertans.

I also want to thank my family and friends who supported me on this journey to the Legislature. Thank you also to the many volunteers who worked so hard and sacrificed so much to help make this dream a reality. I won't let you down.

I would also like to say thank you to the previous representative of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, former member Estefania Cortes-Vargas. Thank you for your service over the past four years.

And thank you to all of the candidates who put their names forward in the last election: Albert Aris, Larry MacIse, Don Melanson, Dave Quest, Richard Scinta, and Moira Váně. I respect their courage to participate in the democratic process. Running for public office is challenging, demanding, and requires great sacrifice. I commend them for their dedication and for their well-run campaigns.

Speaking of congratulations, every member elected to this Legislature deserves strong congratulations. We will disagree at times, but I do look forward to our debates. At the end of the day, I think we can all agree that we are here because we want to create a better Alberta for all Albertans; we just have some different ideas on how to get there. Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I didn't offer you my congratulations on your election earlier in May.

Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that my journey to becoming an MLA almost didn't happen. You see, when I first approached my wife, Allison, back in the summer of 2015 to suggest that I was thinking of putting my name forward to run in this past election, I believe her first words were something to the effect of: that's a hard pass. I'm not even joking. My wife and I will celebrate our 11th anniversary this July, and we have been together for almost 13 years. In that time I have learned that you can't make any big life decisions without the full support and buy-in of your partner. As far as big decisions go, running for office in Alberta has to be near the top of the list.

Despite my wife's initial reservations, thankfully, over time she warmed to the idea and eventually gave me the green light. I would like to take this opportunity, through you, Mr. Speaker, to say thank you to my beautiful wife, Allison. She has been by my side through many ups and downs. I also know that she has my back and that she'll be there for me in good times and bad. She is by every measure my better half, which is why I'm also excited to share with you, Mr. Speaker, and with everyone in this Chamber, a little good news. My wife and I are expecting our first child this September, just a few short months away. [some applause] Thank you.

We are having a boy, and I can't wait to meet my son this fall. We have nicknamed him T.H., which is short for tiny human, but he's definitely big enough now that I can feel when he kicks, and that's really something special. You see, Mr. Speaker, I've wanted to be a dad for a very long time. My wife and I have been trying for quite some time to start a family, but sometimes life throws you a curveball along the way. Did you know that 1 in 4 pregnancies ends in a loss? I didn't until recently. I learned that statistic when my wife and I lost her first pregnancy a little over a year ago. We were the 1 in 4. I share that with you because I know that many Albertans have experienced this pain, and my message to them is: you are not alone.

Mr. Speaker, I can't talk about my family without also talking about my parents and my in-laws. I'd like to thank Allison's parents, Kevin and Gail Stone, for welcoming me into their lives. I'm so grateful for their support in this new role and for the support they provide to my wife when I'm working long hours in the Legislature. I also want to thank my parents, Brian and Terry Glubish, for their unconditional love and support. They have taught me so much and have set a great example that I can only hope to live up to with my son.

Mr. Speaker, talking about my parents reminds me of a story about my dad when I was studying at the University of Saskatchewan. As I was working through my third- and fourth-year finance courses, I often had to work long hours. My dad shared with me one of his favourite quotes. It was from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

The heights by great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night.

This quote was an inspiration to my dad for many years throughout his career, and it has been an inspiration to me ever since those university days, over 15 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and tell you about my grandparents on both sides of my family, but perhaps that will have to wait for another day. Suffice to say that I've learned from them and their examples the value of hard work, the joy of a generous spirit, and the importance of a strong family.

Mr. Speaker, I know I've spent quite some time talking about family today, and I wanted to do that for a few reasons. One, family reminds you of where you come from. Two, family keeps you grounded. Three, probably most importantly, family reminds you of what is most important in life. So I just wanted to say that my family is the most important part of my life, and I just really wanted to share that with my colleagues on both sides of this House and also with my constituents back home.

10:00

Speaking of family, I'd like to talk a little bit about my community in Strathcona county, which in my opinion is one of the best places in the world to live, to work, and especially to raise a family.

**Mr. Walker:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you to the Member for Sherwood Park for those remarks.

My wife and I moved to the Sherwood Park area nine years ago, and we can't imagine living anywhere else. This community has so much to offer, especially to young families. The recreation centres are outstanding. We have access to the best of both urban and rural community offerings. We have a vibrant collection of active community leagues that provide programming for residents of all

ages, from Sherwood Park to the far corners of rural Strathcona county.

In addition to the rich, family-oriented programming and services, Strathcona county offers proximity to an exciting economic engine called the Alberta Industrial Heartland, which a number of members, I believe, in the last couple of weeks have spoken to. The heartland comprises of land shared by Strathcona county, Fort Saskatchewan, Sturgeon county, Lamont county, and the city of Edmonton, and it represents Canada's largest hydrocarbon processing region with over 40 companies and covering over 533 square kilometres.

Some advantages enjoyed by the businesses in the region include a cost-effective, secure supply of oil and gas and petrochemical feedstocks; excellent road, rail, and air infrastructure; access to a skilled and motivated workforce; and access to the freshwater supply of the North Saskatchewan River. Mr. Speaker, the heartland represents over \$40 billion of investment to date, and there are tens of billions of dollars of future opportunities in the region. I'm very excited to be able to work with Strathcona county council and Strathcona county Mayor Rod Frank to create the conditions for long-term economic success.

Mr. Speaker, despite all of this opportunity Alberta does continue to feel some pain and hardship that has plagued our province over the last number of years. We do face an escalating debt that is at frightening levels. We see high unemployment rates, especially among our youth. We see increasing rates of bankruptcies. We see rising vacancies in the downtown cores of our major cities, and we see rural Alberta communities struggling to survive.

Mr. Speaker, I can relate to what the great Canadian singer-songwriter Bruce Cockburn says in his song *Lovers in a Dangerous Time*. He says:

But nothing worth having comes without some kind of fight  
Got to kick at the darkness 'til it bleeds daylight.

Those inspirational words push me to move forward in the face of adversity and maybe to paraphrase in my own words along the lines of Henry Longfellow's quote that I referenced earlier: "I know there's a price, so I will toil in the night. The cost is no concern. I need the world to see that my dream is not fantasy."

Mr. Speaker, I want the constituents of Strathcona-Sherwood Park to know that they can count on me to give this job my all because I dream of an Alberta with endless opportunity. I dream of an Alberta that leads the country in economic growth. I dream of an Alberta that is once again debt free. I dream of an Alberta that is strong and free. These dreams are not fantasy. They can be a reality because over the next four years our government will be laser focused on creating jobs, attracting investment to Alberta, and standing up for our energy industry.

I may not be a poet like Longfellow nor a songwriter like Cockburn, but I do dabble from time to time as a hobby musician, so let me close with a quote from a work in progress from my own repertoire.

I know the way to greatness is hard-fought and not for the  
faint of heart.  
Still I say: let's go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I move to close debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** No. Adjourn debate.

**Mr. Glubish:** Adjourn debate. Sorry.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** He definitely doesn't want to close debate.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and let me be the first to congratulate you on the arrival of your little T.H. I was doing some preliminary

mathematics, and I understand that you will have the 76th or 75th school-aged child, or from 18 under, of the United Conservative Party caucus. And I understand that as an Assembly we have nearly 100 under-18 or school-aged children amongst all members. So we are a very prolific group when it comes to the young people. Congratulations.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 3

### Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act

[Adjourned debate June 4: Mr. Schow]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any wishing to speak? The Official Opposition House Leader has the call.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. You know what? At the start of this I do want to give a shout-out to the Minister of Service Alberta for his maiden speech, his response to the Speech from the Throne. I wish congratulations to him and his family.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, again, I've only been in this House since 2012, but I really appreciate hearing members deliver their maiden speeches because you get to learn a lot about the other members of the Assembly, their families, their ridings, their priorities. So, you know, I do appreciate all members this evening sharing their maiden speeches, for many, their responses to the speech.

Now, moving on, Mr. Speaker, to Bill 3, the job creation tax cut. As is probably no surprise to anyone in this House, I have a number of comments that I want to make on this bill. I'll start off by saying that I personally don't necessarily oppose a corporate tax reduction; however, I believe there needs to be caveats placed around it to ensure that it actually delivers what it's intended to.

I can tell you that there are numerous examples, especially within North America, where the corporate tax rate has been cut, but it has actually not led to job growth, it has not led to a stimulus for the economy, increased GDP, et cetera, and the reason is quite simple, Mr. Speaker. If there aren't provisions within a tax cut for companies to invest or reinvest what they're saving in job creation or growth, investing back into the company or in new machinery and equipment, there are a large number of companies that will take that savings, or tax cut, and pocket it or distribute it as a profit to shareholders. You know, I'm not criticizing companies for doing that, but what I'm saying is that if that is the only play or throw the government has to help the economy recover, Lord help us.

What I can tell you is that I will be grilling the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism on a number of initiatives that our government brought forward that have resulted in job creation, have resulted in growth in GDP, and have helped Alberta's economy start the recovery process.

Mr. Speaker, you know, over the last few years our government introduced three different tax credit programs that, I will say, came from the private sector, so I'm sure that there are members of the government caucus who are thinking – well, I'm not sure what they're thinking, quite frankly, but who may be critical of the tax credit programs. But I can assure this House that myself and our caucus engaged entrepreneurs, whether they were sole proprietors, mid-sized companies or multinationals. We engaged with chambers of commerce, with economic development agencies throughout the

province on what some of the best tools are that a government can possibly use to help the economy get back on track.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that over and over again two different tax credits came up in every conversation. These are tax credits that are enjoyed by other provinces. In fact, the province of British Columbia has had an investor tax credit since 1985. That has helped the economy diversify.

10:10

Really, how it works, Mr. Speaker, is that it gives the people of the province – our tax credit here in Alberta gives Albertans the opportunity to invest in companies in their own backyard. They get a 30 per cent tax credit. It helps companies, obviously, to raise equity, to grow and expand much quicker through this access to capital. It derisks Albertans' investments, and it's a win-win. I can tell you that initially our government wanted to limit which sectors this would be applicable to, but we heard, loud and clear, from the private sector that this needs to be sector-wide, so we listened to their advice. That tax credit has leveraged over – well, a \$30 million tax credit leverages over \$100 million worth of investment. We've seen that a couple of times over.

The second one is the capital investment tax credit, which, Mr. Speaker, is a 10 per cent nonrefundable credit. This one is critical in the sense that we are trying to encourage companies to deploy capital now to help the economy get back on track and not leave that money off to the sidelines. That capital investment tax credit – under our tenure we conditionally approved about \$100 million, which has leveraged over \$2.2 billion of new investment, creating thousands of jobs. These are tangible outcomes to government policy that we can point to. No one in this House or anywhere else can dispute the numbers as far as the impact it has had on the Alberta economy.

Now, we recognize that there is no silver bullet, Mr. Speaker, but there is a role for government to play in creating the right conditions. I know that the government will advocate that simply a corporate tax rate reduction will create the right conditions.

I need to remind the members opposite that Alberta has been and continues to be the lowest – lowest – taxed jurisdiction in Canada, under our government and under previous governments. Despite what the members opposite will say – I think hyperbole is an understatement when they talk about the effects of the carbon tax for the majority of Albertans. I'm not saying that for some businesses that did not place an additional burden on them. But the whole "companies are going out of business because of the carbon tax" – I'm sorry; if paying a few thousand dollars extra a month means you went out of business, maybe you need to look at your business plan or at least the management of your company. [interjections] No, no. For the majority of companies a tiny increase in the carbon tax – because here's the thing, members. Albertans pay \$11 billion less in taxes than the second-lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada even with the carbon tax. Do the math on this. We have no PST. We have no payroll tax. We have no health care premiums. Albertans continue to pay the lowest taxes in the country.

I'm not arguing that some companies have been placed under a certain burden with a price on carbon, but the majority of Albertans received a rebate. There were programs for companies to help them through this. What we're left with now – and I appreciate that this bill has passed – is that we're open season for Ottawa, quite frankly.

My point is this, Mr. Speaker. Alberta already was the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada. So when members of the government say, "This is all we need to do to diversify our economy," well, guess what, folks? We had the lowest taxes in the country for decades, and it didn't help diversify the economy, which is why

Alberta suffered so greatly under the last drop in the price of oil. If that's all it takes, we'd have the most diversified economy in the country. But guess what? We don't. So going back to that, to say, "This is the silver bullet," quite frankly, naive is the first adjective that comes to mind. What we need are tools that will help ensure that companies are investing in this province. You know, again, within the corporate tax rate I'm not sure why the government didn't consider tying a decrease in the corporate tax rate to job creation.

For companies that are going to take the savings of the 1 per cent and then 2, all the way down to 8 per cent, or the 4 per cent savings, for companies that are investing in growth, in job creation, and reinvesting back into their companies, give them that corporate tax reduction. Don't just open it up to any company, because the majority of them – and surprise, surprise; believe me, I'll be the first one on my feet in this House when companies say: "Thank you. We're going to pocket that." I've spoken to companies already province-wide. I said: "Are you going to reinvest? Are you going to hire more? Are you going to upgrade your technology and your processes?" They said: "No. We're going to take the savings and issue it in profits to our shareholders." We've seen this in states like Kansas, where they did a massive corporate tax cut, and it did little to stimulate the economy, to stimulate growth, and to encourage job creation. You know, for me, my concern is that with the way the bill is currently, there is no guarantee that there will be significant job growth.

Now, I found it interesting when I looked at some of the economists who commented on this, who said: you know, frankly, if we've hit bottom through this recession, then the only place is up. So if there are some jobs created, the government will jump on their feet – I'm sure that especially the Government House Leader and the Premier will be on their feet – trumpeting how successful this was, but it doesn't necessarily correlate to the reduction in the corporate taxes. If you've hit rock bottom, the only place to go is up. So for the few jobs that may be created, they may say: "Look at us here. We'll pat ourselves on the back." However, it's not attributed necessarily to the corporate tax reduction.

What I'd like to see or what we'd like to see are concrete measures or tools to be used that will help stimulate the economy like the three tax credit programs that our government introduced.

We want to talk about trade, one of my favourite topics, Mr. Speaker. Something that I'm very, very proud of is the fact that in three years, from 2016 to 2019, the work that our government did with the private sector – I want to be really clear. I'm not taking credit for this stat that I'm about to give but very proud to be part of a province that increased its trade with China alone, one country. We increased trade over the last three years by 25 per cent. That is a massive amount. Trade increased by over a billion dollars because of, in part, the work that our government did, the number of trade missions that we did, the number of companies we brought to China. I was very proud to lead the largest trade delegation that the government of Alberta has ever led in the history of this province. Eighty-six different businesses and business associations accompanied me in November 2016 to China. This is significant. These are concrete actions that have helped increase trade, which has resulted in more jobs back here at home. It's helped our companies diversify the markets that they sell to.

I think one of the challenges that we all know that exist in Alberta and across this country is that the majority of businesses only do business within our own country, and of those that do go outside of Canada, the majority are in the U.S. Well, when we experience tariffs and, you know, challenges with trade deals within North America, it points to the fact that we need to do much more to open markets and help our businesses open markets internationally.

These are the types of initiatives that have a track record to create jobs and improve the economy, Mr. Speaker.

**10:20**

With that and with this corporate tax amendment, my concern, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is that what this government is doing is taking \$4.5 billion, betting it on number 16 on the roulette table, letting it ride, and hoping that this will result in job creation. Now, I'll be the first to say that some companies will in fact take this corporate tax reduction and invest it back into their companies, so, yes, there will be some job growth. I'm not about to say that this is not going to do anything for the economy. My concern is that without any type of collar or linkage between a corporate tax rate reduction and ensuring that companies are reinvesting it, it will actually not have the effect that the government thinks. I appreciate that there are economists who have forecasted 55,000 jobs. Great. I can name just as many economists who have said that it's going to do little to nothing to help stimulate the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I have concerns with the bill as it is and look forward to bringing forward amendments.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen under 29(2)(a). If he has a brief question or comment, I might encourage him to do so.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, great that we have an opportunity. I appreciate that we have Standing Order 29(2)(a). It was built exactly for this moment.

I was interested in listening to the hon. Opposition House Leader's comments. There's so much to be unpacked there and not enough time under 29(2)(a), as you know, Mr. Speaker, to even begin to be able to go through the enormous, ridiculous statements that have repeatedly been said by the Opposition House Leader in his speech before this place today.

I'd like to focus on one issue in particular, the fact that the Opposition House Leader, who, you know, I have the utmost respect for and get along with well, Mr. Speaker, as I know you do as well – I appreciate the hard role that he has. I had to be an Opposition House Leader before, as have you. But the reality is that he accidentally showed exactly what the NDP think when it comes to job creators and businesses inside our province. He accidentally went and showed exactly why the NDP now sit on the opposition benches inside this Assembly after being decimated by the largest wipeout, probably, in the history of this province as far as votes cast against them for another party, the only time in history to be a one-term government because of the attitude that our Opposition House Leader just showed that his party has: talking about job creators and businesses inside our province, job creators and businesses inside your hometown of Olds, just to the east of me in Sundre, talking about them and the fact that if the carbon tax was causing trouble for their businesses, then they should go and re-examine their business plan.

To then try and say that somehow the ridiculous tax that they put on these people and these organizations that created jobs inside our province was their fault, that it was business's fault: no wonder this party is the only one-term government in the history of this province, if that's how you're going to treat the job creators inside our province. One-term government. Why? Because they think that and they have the nerve to say that. This is because they don't have the decency to go to places like Drayton Valley, who have been decimated by the policies of this government.

**Mr. Bilous:** I have been.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, it turns out, I guess, that the Opposition House Leader has been to Drayton Valley. That's great. I certainly

hope that when he was there, he didn't tell them that they had problems with their business plans and that that's why they were in this spot.

You know why they were in this spot, Mr. Speaker? You know why? I know. I spend lots of time in your home constituency because I have to travel through there quite often to be able to get to my home. In fact, it's the closest Walmart, so if we want to go shopping at Walmart, we've got to go there. And if I'm in the Walmart in Olds, what would I hear over and over from your constituents on why they have found themselves inside this problem? You know what I would hear, because I know you hear the same thing. They have found themselves in this situation because of the ridiculous policies of this opposition when they were in government. You heard it here tonight.

They tell a job creator that if they're struggling as a result of the tax that the NDP brought in, it's because they had a bad job plan. No. What happened was that a bad government got elected, brought in ridiculous policies that continued to punish the people of this province. And this opposition party has the nerve to continue to come to this House, sit there and insult the people of this province, insult the job creators that have struggled to keep their businesses open.

I know business owners inside my constituency that have taken things at a loss for multiple years just to keep their employees being able to go to work. I know that you have some in your constituency as well. Now, the job creators inside my constituency and your constituency are not watching the Legislature at this time of night, but if they were and they saw this, they would be extremely disappointed.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't care about the reputation of the opposition members in this place – they've already destroyed their reputation; the results of April 16 show that – but I do care about the reputation of Her Majesty. This is Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition inside this Chamber, and she would be ashamed to hear a comment like that. They should treat this role that they have as the opposition, the Official Opposition in this Chamber, to defend Albertans, not to attack Albertans and tell them that this ridiculous tax that they brought in when they were in government that hurt these companies is now their fault, that they somehow had bad business plans.

Mr. Speaker, is this the NDP's new political strategy? They tried fear and smear and to make things up about people and attack people and do all that stuff that resulted in them being decimated. This strategy would be ridiculous.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind the Government House Leader, you know, that he would know that Standing Order 23(k) speaks very clearly to speaking "disrespectfully of Her Majesty or of any other member of the Royal Family." To impute what Her Majesty may or may not think may border on a point of order. I would just urge some caution to the Government House Leader.

Are there any others that would like to speak to the bill? I see the Member for Edmonton-North West rising.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some interest in speaking to Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. You know, this morning I was driving from the Islamic Academy on the occasion of Eid. It almost seems like another day. It seems like we have two days built into one sometimes when we have these night sittings. On the radio, when I was driving back, there was an interesting CBC broadcast that was featuring the Gates foundation and I think her name is Melinda Gates, the wife of Bill Gates and one of the people that runs the Gates foundation. She was going on quite at length about the

dysfunctional state of American taxation and how it was distorting the economies of individual states and the nation as well.

Of course, the Gates foundation and that family is one of the richest families in the world, and together with billionaires and multimillionaires they are joining forces to say that they need tax reform in the United States of America because there is a huge distortion that is taking place by massive tax cuts, both corporate and personal, in the United States of America. There is a tremendous distortion that is having a number of very serious negative effects on the economies of individual states and on the nation as well.

I listened with quite a lot of interest. You know, they brought up a number of examples, and the one that stuck in my mind is this notion of so much cash being moved as a result of massive tax cuts to corporations and so forth that this cash literally gets stranded and is taken out of the economy. Let's not forget, members of this Legislature, through the Speaker, that money is used and printed based on value, and if that value is somehow stranded – right? – by a distorted taxation system that allows so much cash to be accumulated in one place or another, it literally has a negative effect on an economy.

This is just one small aspect of what I was thinking and reflecting on when I would speak on Bill 3 here today. What this government is proposing is a very significant tax change, almost like a sea change, for the province of Alberta and a distortion of the tax policies that might function and feature across the country. I must say that amongst the many things we learned in government is that you have to be very careful, to be reminded that you are part of a country, Canada, here in the province of Alberta, and you must make sure that your policies are not so far out of step with the rest of the nation that you're literally impeding or causing some distortion that can have a negative effect not just on Alberta but on the entire country. These are just a couple of things that I was thinking about this morning when I was thinking of my comments on Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act).

**10:30**

Then, of course, the responsible thing to do as well is to look at expertise and analysis of such a thing both from economists looking at the potential effects on the economy of Alberta but also looking for some correlation to other jurisdictions across the country and/or in other countries that might have gone down this path. What were the effects, right? I mean, this is a responsible, scientific way by which you can approach these things. While you can always find different economists saying different things, certainly I think the consensus is that Bill 3, with such a massive tax cut to corporations, is risky, it is unproven, and it is certainly not necessarily the wisest choice.

It's bold, and I think that the new government was looking for ways by which to grab headlines and demonstrate, you know, boldness as much as they were at sound, sober economic analysis. You know, you can't make decisions like that, Mr. Speaker, for the sake of grabbing a headline or being the very lowest or the biggest thing of all time. I mean, this is sort of that showy, stacy politics that works okay for some times and some places but not when you're dealing with the entirety of the provincial economy. You can't just showboat off literally billions of dollars, in this case more than \$4.5 billion, that would be taken out of the economy and blow a massive hole in the capacity for this government to then make good on their promise to balance the budget, right? Those are all factors that we need to look at.

We have been working very hard to make sure that – we had a policy in the previous government to balance the budget as well by 2023-24. I think that's around the same time that this government wants to achieve that as well. How could they possibly do that by taking out this magnitude of money and revenue from the provincial budget?

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The provincial budget is responsible for health care; it's responsible for education, for social services, for infrastructure, for essential services that Albertans need to function. I believe Bill 3 is a signal that this government is not only not taking those responsibilities seriously but is projecting their plans for significant cuts to essential services that Albertans need and the economy needs to function and to survive here in the province. We know that Alberta's businesses are the best in the country and perhaps in the entire world, right? But this government wants at the same time to attack schools and hospitals to pay for such a risky experiment as what we're seeing here with Bill 3.

Certainly, you talk about the carbon tax and all of those things, but this corporate tax is exponentially riskier and potentially destabilizing. You know, in so many jurisdictions we see that borne out. People talk about the so-called Kansas experiment, which was an unmitigated disaster, but there are other jurisdictions that did exactly the same thing. We know that, you know, states like Louisiana, for example, went down a path similar to this, and as an oil-producing jurisdiction as well you end up with very poor education outcomes, privatized health care, lower life expectancies and so forth, and an extreme division between the haves and the have-nots of jurisdictions that have gone down the path of substantial tax cuts like what this government is suggesting.

I mean, I'm concerned, right? I think that that's why we do debate these things in the Legislature. I always take the opinion that this is a place, especially at 10:35 in the evening, where you don't just have to beat each other over the heads but rather expose each other to ideas and to amendments and perhaps sober second thought that would allow us to make sure we're making the right decision for Albertans, to make the right decision for businesses and for our public services in general.

We know that our population continues to grow. We have the youngest population in Canada, and this is borne out by a young, youthful population of school-aged children. I think the Speaker pointed out how prolific this House is in regard to school-aged children, and that is a microcosm of what we see across the province. Fifteen thousand new kids showing up in schools here in the fall: that's a conservative prediction or calculation. I can have full disclosure here now. We usually run those numbers a little bit down in the Ministry of Education, and then, lo and behold, there will probably be even more kids showing up in the fall, dollars to doughnuts.

That's a positive thing. I think it demonstrates hope and optimism. People are having children, like the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. That's a good investment to the future, feeling like there are some positive things happening in the potential for the economy and for just creating your family, but you need to make sure that you are paying for the services that those young families need, right?

You cannot suggest that you compromise the integrity of an entire new cohort of kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2 kids with a compromised education for those kids at that crucial time, when they're, say, seven years old, just learning language, just learning their basic math skills, just picking up those basic building blocks, those cognitive building blocks that they will carry with them for

the rest of their lives, and compromise that for the sake of making a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget, which would necessitate – I mean, everybody can figure it out. It means not hiring the teachers that you need, not hiring the nurses you need to provide the health care for that growing population, not building that infrastructure that everybody likes to salt their questions in during question period, asking about that school or that bridge or the twinning of that highway that your constituents need.

I mean, yeah, I think that's great to ask for those things. I think it's important to advocate for your constituents, but the cognitive dissonance – right? – the lack of logic that follows when you also vote so enthusiastically for a \$4.5 billion corporate tax cut that you know, if you think about it for a minute, ultimately will undermine the ability of your same government to twin that highway, to build that bridge, to make sure that school is populated by teachers and support staff, and that the nurses are there to provide the health care for your family when you need it.

So think about all of those things. You know, it's a modest proposal to put two and two together like that. I'm not suggesting that anyone is less than capable of making those connections. It's just really, I think, useful to point them out. Again, looking at ways by which we can learn from other jurisdictions: we know that other countries have gone down the path of zero or low or no taxes, and if you don't have something to offer a corporation besides, you know, just a race to the bottom in terms of tax rates; if you're not offering a place by which you can have the diversification of an economy built in and the services that a corporation might look for if they're to move into a jurisdiction, which include good schools, health care, a cultural community – right? – affordable places, a clean environment in which to live, then you're not looking at the whole picture, Mr. Speaker.

10:40

I would suggest that Bill 3 – I know that this government wants to go big, wants to go bold, but, you know, let's take a sober second look and see other ways by which we can stimulate the economy besides just having all of our eggs in one basket, dropping it with a big, corporate tax cut, which is what Bill 3 would suggest.

So with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I thank you and look forward to debate. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any members with questions and/or comments?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak against this bill. It's interesting. Of course, we've managed to sit through a number of members' responses to the Speech from the Throne, and there are a couple of themes that I'd like to comment on in relation to this bill that I find highly ironic.

The first is that, of course, one of the things that a number of the members have said is that nobody believes in a handout but rather a hand up. Yet here we are considering a bill that gives one of the biggest corporate handouts in the history of the country of Canada, Mr. Speaker. It's funny that the members opposite seem to think that, you know, individuals don't deserve a handout, don't need a handout, but when it comes to the most profitable corporations in the province, of course, absolutely they need a handout right away. That's the third order of business that we're going to undertake here in the Legislature.

Of course, the second comment I heard in a number of the speeches is the deep religious faith, the Christian faith, that a number of members ascribe to, and I certainly do as well, Mr. Speaker. But my version of the Bible must be different from the

ones that the members opposite read, because nowhere did I read in the New Testament that blessed are the shareholders. Yet that seems to be the mantra here of the members opposite. I don't know when Republican Jesus moved to Alberta, but it certainly wasn't taught in the churches that I've gone to in my life.

So here we are, of course, talking about enriching the shareholder class in this province; a failed strategy that we're going to try again because having seen it fail in the United States and various subnational jurisdictions in the United States as well as federally isn't good enough. We need to try it again here to see if it'll fail here. Of course the members opposite won't heed the warnings that we're providing them. But, you know, I guess they want to see it in action and actually inflict their plan on the people of Alberta just to convince themselves that it in fact won't work, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that I want to raise that hasn't been mentioned by my colleagues here on this side is the issue of what corporations are likely to do when they receive this massive, multibillion dollar handout that the members opposite are proposing. That, in fact, is the – there's no other way to describe it – evil practice of stock buybacks, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there are a number of articles that have appeared in the Canadian media over the past few months. I'm looking at one that ran by the CBC, dated November 25, 2018, that said that Canadian oil and gas companies are “driving a rise in share buybacks that's already reached a record high [in 2018]. Some 627 million shares had been repurchased in 2018 for cancellation by 209 issuer companies as of mid-October.” Of course, that's about 135 million more shares than in all of 2017 and well ahead of the previous record high of 557 million shares, in 2007, according to statistics going back to 1989.

Now, before Ronald Reagan became President, the technique of stock buybacks was actually illegal in the United States because that was stock market manipulation, Mr. Speaker, and it was an unfair way, in the view of many people, of manipulating share prices to enrich shareholders without providing any actual concrete value to the people who are affected by the activities of the corporations that are being undertaken.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, this primacy of the shareholder class is reinforced by the analysts on Wall Street and Bay Street. There's a recent example, American Airlines. They had a record profit a few quarters ago, and they announced, much to the delight of their employees, that they were finally going to give their employees a long overdue raise so that their pilots and their flight attendants were actually making salaries that were on par with American Airlines' competitors in that business. What did the analysts at Citibank do? They complained in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* that labour was getting too much and that shareholders had to be stuck with the leftovers. In fact, Morgan Stanley downgraded the value of the stock because of the company's plans to actually invest in its workers rather than giving money to the millionaires and billionaires who own the shares of that company. So we can expect nothing different if we go ahead with this reckless plan to cut corporate taxes.

Of course, I referenced a CBC article from November 25, 2018. There was a much more recent article that ran in the *Financial Post* that was dated May 15, 2019, saying that Canada's oil patch has the most cash in five years and nothing to spend it on, Mr. Speaker. In that article, of course, it outlined the oil patch's plan to buy back shares, and in fact it stated Canadian Natural Resources as one particular company that has allocated half of its cash profits to buying back its own shares.

The reason that this plan is detrimental to the welfare of the people of Alberta is because, you know, the Albertans who work hard and contribute to the prosperity of those companies, I think, deserve a share of those companies' profits, Mr. Speaker, and

certainly when a company purchases the shares, it only serves to enrich the shareholders, many of whom aren't Albertans. We have to remember that the shares of many of the companies that are operating in Canada, in Alberta are held by people who don't live in this province. Of course it enriches the CEOs of many of these companies because a significant portion of their pay packages is derived from stock options rather than cash. Of course, by manipulating stock prices through the practice of stock buybacks, the CEOs will see a significant bonus in their annual pay while workers receive nothing. Of course, that's not fair.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the evidence is quite clear that 90 per cent of working Albertans, 9 out of every 10, haven't seen a raise in their income for a significant number of years. In fact, even as the economy of Alberta has become more productive, it's only the top 10 per cent of income earners who are seeing any appreciable gains in their incomes. Everybody else is being left behind. So we have this situation where millionaires and billionaires are continuing to make more money, corporations have more money in their bank accounts than they've had for the past five years, and we're just going to give them more that they can use to enrich themselves again through this process of stock buybacks. I think that just shows where the priorities of the government are. They are clearly on the side of the millionaires and billionaires of this province, not interested in the welfare of working people even though they profess they are.

10:50

You know, the people of Alberta will be gravely disappointed when the jobs that the members opposite are promising won't appear and, in fact, the giant corporate tax cut that the members opposite are proposing is used to enrich the shareholders of the companies and the CEOs of the companies and Albertans are left with nothing. They won't see a raise in their wages, there won't be an increase in jobs, and of course the province of Alberta will struggle to pay its own bills because we'll be 4 and a half billion dollars short at the end of all of this, which will come directly out of the health care and the education services that keep people healthy and educated and actually able to go to work for the employers that the members opposite so strongly favour.

Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to see is, you know – and of course, we can't get into this at this stage – perhaps some conditions attached to this massive corporate handout, that it shouldn't be just given to corporations without consideration for what they intend to spend it on. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview quite rightly articulated that there need to be conditions attached to these massive corporate giveaways in order for the people of Alberta to see some kind of benefit from it. Of course, we have seen nothing yet from the members opposite to suggest that the money that they're so intent on giving to profitable corporations in this province will actually be invested in the things that create jobs and spur growth in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, for all of those reasons, I think that it's incumbent upon us to vote against this measure. I would highly suggest that the members opposite go back to the drawing board and come up with some different ways to spur economic growth and job creation in this province because we quite clearly know from past experience that massive corporate tax giveaways are not going to create jobs and prosperity for the middle-class Albertans that we're here to serve. It will only enrich shareholders and CEOs, people who, you know, are probably not at the top of our priority list when it comes to listing the people who need the help of the people here in this place.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I would encourage all of my colleagues here in the Legislature to vote against this bill, and of course I would



advise everyone to carefully consider some other ways to create economic prosperity and good jobs for the people of Alberta.

**The Acting Speaker:** I will take this opportunity to first remind the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to table a copy of the article or articles that you referred to during debate.

Under 29(2)(a), I believe, the hon. Opposition House Leader, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for his comments, and I do want to ask him to share – you know, I appreciate his comments as far as this bill and what it's proposing – or maybe hear some thoughts, from the member's comments or from the member, on other ways that we can support economic growth and job creation.

But before I get to that, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to clarify comments that I made earlier. Quite frankly, I think many businesses in Alberta know – but I want all businesses to know – that I stand with them. As minister of economic development and trade I fought very hard daily to advance the interests of businesses throughout the province and, quite frankly, around the world. Now, I do want to apologize for the way that I characterized my remarks. Quite frankly, there's no question that the carbon levy did add burdens to businesses, some more than others. I think, unfortunately, I probably chose a poor choice of words in how I framed it.

But I think that, you know, the opposition is simplifying the last four years, the challenges that businesses have faced predominantly because of the global drop in the price of oil. That is to say, Mr. Speaker, that there is a recognition that the carbon levy that we introduced was a cost to businesses. We did try to offset that cost by reducing the small-business tax rate by a third. Again, with that I by no way or means meant to try to blame or lay the burden on businesses for the fact that the carbon levy was for many a very real challenge and did increase costs. We tried to mitigate that.

I'm proud of Alberta businesses. We have led the country in economic growth, even in the downturn, the last couple of years. We know that Albertans are resilient entrepreneurs, and Alberta really is the economic engine of the country and the lifeblood of this country, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of the fact that within our province, Alberta businesses continue to pay the lowest taxes in the country. Again, you know, there is a significant tax advantage here because we have no PST or other forms of taxes.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think I wanted to take this opportunity to apologize for my remarks, to clarify them to all Alberta businesses, recognizing that the price on carbon has posed a challenge for some, has resulted unfortunately, for some businesses, in pushing them over the edge.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to offer some thoughts on other ways, other than just reducing the corporate tax rate, to potential supports for Alberta businesses.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. There's approximately a minute and 30 seconds left in 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Schmidt:** Oh, well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always appreciate your guidance in these matters. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for his question. I also want to congratulate him on his apology. As someone who is no stranger to making apologies, I have to say that he did – you know, I'd give him maybe a C-plus or a B-minus. I'm sure that with practice he'll get a little bit better.

Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, in his initial comments on this, highlighted some of the good ways that we could actually spur investment, the successful ways that we could spur investment in the Alberta economy. Of course, he mentioned the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. Those had demonstrable proof of spurring investment and creating jobs here in Alberta. I can't recall if the member also mentioned the interactive digital media tax credit which our government created, which, of course, is helping many businesses in the interactive digital media world locate and be successful here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

If I could just encourage everyone that getting good at apologies is not a wonderful thing to aim for, certainly from the Speaker's perspective.

Is there anyone else that would like to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really am pleased to be able to rise today and speak to Bill 3, the corporate tax giveaway act. I think it's something that, really, all members of this Assembly should be excited to debate, and we should be proud to be able to be here at this hour and speak about this important work.

11:00

I mean, it's something that is really interesting. We have a government that talked about making sure they take care of vulnerable Albertans, especially in their maiden speeches that they made earlier this evening. We had government members who talked at great length about how they wanted to make sure they were protecting families and communities. Then we see a bill, Mr. Speaker, that comes forward, and really all it does is that it gives a big giveaway to their wealthy friends and donors and leaves many, many Albertans behind.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Premier, when he comes up with these bills and ideas for bills, has a fondness for Ottawa. I know that the Premier comes from Ottawa and has been in Ottawa for decades, but he doesn't need to replicate everything in Ottawa. We can see that when the corporate tax cuts were implemented under the Harper government, that the Premier was a member of – I mean, over four years they decreased corporate tax rates from 22.1 per cent to 15 per cent, so very similar to what's being proposed here – they actually collected \$13 billion less than they would have if the Harper government hadn't made that change. I know that the Premier is very fond of what happened in Ottawa, what happens in Ottawa, and I know that the Premier may wish to return to Ottawa one day, but perhaps bringing losses in government revenue from Ottawa to Alberta isn't the move that we'd like to see here.

I mean, we can look at what happened. We can look at how businesses accumulated billions in cash reserves as a result of the cuts, but the Bank of Canada governor, Mark Carney at the time, said that it was mostly dead money and that there was no significant impact on investment. In fact, if we actually look at some other organizations like the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, they even suggested that not only did this result in no new investment in Canada but that it actually resulted in a reduced growth rate to the Canadian economy.

We've seen this happen right here in Canada at the national level. We've seen it happen, as members in the opposition have already spoken to tonight, at the subnational levels and national levels in other governments as well. I think it's pretty clear that when you do big, risky, ideological tax cuts like this, it doesn't result in the

investment that the government would like. It doesn't result in the investment that the government pretends it will.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's not a shame for anybody other than Albertans. When you give away 4 and a half billion dollars out of the provincial budget, nearly 10 per cent of the provincial budget, who suffers is Albertans. It means that you don't get to do the things like hire teachers and nurses, it means that you don't get to do the things like build support services and fund social services across the province, it means you don't get to invest in communities, and it means you don't get to build the services that Albertans rely on.

When we talk about these big, wealthy corporate tax giveaways and how they're so important for spurring investment, I think we really need to look at the evidence. The evidence, whether we look at the United States under the Bush administration and their large tax cuts or in Kansas under their large tax cuts as well, that both the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and the Member for Edmonton-North West spoke about quite a bit, at length, tonight – I think it becomes abundantly clear that these tax cuts hurt ordinary people. They help large corporations, they bolster the bank accounts of wealthy businesspeople, but, Mr. Speaker, ordinary Albertans like you and me get nothing. We get left out to dry. Really, what it means is that our families and our communities and our neighbours are the ones that have to suffer.

I mean, I think that's actually the real shame here. We can see time and time again that perhaps there were some wealthy donors and wealthy corporations that contributed quite heavily to the government's PACs, political action committees, and so forth, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps they do want these big tax breaks. Perhaps they do want 4 and a half billion dollars in handouts. But I think that 4 and a half billion dollars could go a lot further if we invested it in families, if we invested it in communities.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen through these cases at the national and subnational levels and right here in Canada that these massive giveaways to the wealthiest 1 per cent produce no new jobs, they produce no new investment, and they produce no new sources of income for families. I think that's something that when we look at these so-called responsible conservatives and fiscal conservatives, when we look at these so-called people who are convinced that they need to do everything they can to support the economy, the evidence shows that it shrinks in some cases or does nothing for economies.

I think that when we see these types of numbers, it becomes abundantly clear that the Conservatives in the government aren't necessarily trying to grow the economy, but they're wanting to make sure that their friends are taken care of. Now, I wouldn't presume that motive on anybody, but I would definitely say that legislation like this doesn't back up the evidence, Mr. Speaker. I think that that is something we should all be concerned about in this Chamber, especially if we're trying to make sure our communities get the services they so deeply need.

We've seen this government do this time and time again. We've seen the government go into employees' pockets with the pick-your-pockets bill just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, and we see, as they move forward with legislation like that, that now they're willing to take the money out of employees' pockets with one hand and give it back to corporations with the other. I think that's a shame. I think that is something that we really need to take a look at and say: "Is this fair to ordinary workers? Is this fair to people that depend on working every day to feed their families and to pay their mortgages?" I think that we need to take a serious look and say: "We understand there absolutely was a massive collapse in oil prices in the last four to five years. We understand that there are definitely fiscal targets and economic indicators that we need to meet targets on." This is something that's very important for us, but

we need to make sure that we can balance a budget without putting at risk our services.

The government has now been revising their projection to balance: 2022, 2023, maybe 2024. I don't know. The number seems to change any time it's asked. Despite that, what we do know is that if you take away 4 and a half billion dollars from the coffers with one hand, like this bill proposes, it certainly does not mean you would be able to protect the rest of the services and not have to have significant cuts. Mr. Speaker, 4 and a half billion dollars: that's a lot of dough. I mean, if you shook me upside down, 4 and a half billion dollars would not fall out. But 4 and a half billion dollars pays for a lot of schools, a lot of highways, a lot of hospitals – well, one hospital – and that's the type of money that would make a difference in the lives of Albertans. Instead, the government wants to make a difference in the lives of the wealthiest 1 per cent.

I think that's something that the members of the opposition will fight against every single day because we know that that 4 and a half billion dollars should be used to ensure that Albertans get the services they deserve. It should be used to ensure that they have health care when they need it. It should be used to ensure that they have teachers in every classroom and that classes will not have 40, 50, 60 students, that they will not have to be taking courses, like in Ontario, online.

I think that it becomes clear that this type of government giveaway – really, it's an expenditure, Mr. Speaker. It's really a reduction in revenues, an expenditure. In the balance books it will look the same. It will look like a 4 and a half billion dollar hole. And if they're going to create a 4 and a half billion dollar hole, why don't we invest it in families? Why would they prefer to give it to wealthy corporations? Why would the government prefer, in this case, to give it to people who really don't need it? As we saw when this was introduced in Ottawa – I know the Premier saw it happen in Ottawa and perhaps was involved and voted on it in Ottawa as well – why does the Premier want to pad the pockets of the wealthiest 1 per cent while letting families suffer?

That is something that I am very concerned about. It's something that I think we should not stand for in this Assembly, it's something that I think we should not vote for in this Assembly, and I really urge members here to really consider the implications of blowing a giant hole in the provincial budget. I understand that the Conservatives here were elected on making sure there was a meaningful path to balance. I really believe that that is something important as well. I believe that we do need to make sure that we have a handle on our books.

But, Mr. Speaker, it becomes very clear that if you took 10 per cent of the revenue in your household away – I assure you that that is not the way to balance your books. If you are spending money and you decide, "Well, I'm going to keep spending money because these services are essential to me, things like health care and education, but I'm also looking to take away 10 per cent of my revenues to give to my friend," that's not responsible bookkeeping, and I think the government should recognize that. If they don't, I think that's something we should be very concerned about as the opposition and as Albertans.

*11:10*

I mean, we saw this happen also in British Columbia, at the subnational level. In British Columbia they cut corporate taxes from 16.5 per cent to 10 per cent. Politicians in British Columbia, just like here in Alberta, just like the Premier here in Alberta, said that this would pay for itself because the province's economy would grow X per cent, Mr. Speaker. We can see that it grew a little bit, but actually in the same time period as that cut what happened was

that the province's debt load doubled. It actually doubled. We can see pretty clearly that when we talk about these types of tax cuts, they don't create those jobs. They don't improve the provincial government's books. In fact, in most cases it actually increased the debt load of the government, which should be fairly self-evident. If you decrease your income, your debt load will go up if you're spending. If the self-proclaimed fiscal conservatives don't understand the simple concept that if you take away a significant amount of your income and give it to the wealthiest 1 per cent, it's going to hurt the province's books and that if we do that, it's going to have to come from somewhere – we've already heard members of the Conservative Party here talk about how these cuts are going to hurt.

Mr. Speaker, I did not come here to this Assembly and I was not sent here by the electorate in Edmonton-South to hurt Albertans. I was sent here to make sure that we could support them in whatever way we can. I was sent here to make sure that we did good fiscal policy and invested in good services. When we look at what is being proposed today in this bill, I think it's something that members should take a very hard look at and consider whether it's what they were sent here to do, whether they were sent here to give a giant giveaway to the richest 1 per cent or whether they were sent here to represent their community and try to find opportunities to invest in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, we can look at the corporate tax cuts and say, "Absolutely, we believe we do need to find a way to create jobs and investment in Alberta; we absolutely do need to do that work," but the evidence shows that this doesn't work every single time. It is a risky, ideological approach that will not work, and it will end up hurting Albertans, and it will end up hurting the government. I think that's something that we as an opposition have an obligation, a duty, really, to oppose and to let the members of the government know that this will not work.

We presented the evidence. I know that a number of my colleagues will be tabling documents to that effect in the near future here. Really, we can look at it, and we can look at economists from a number of reputable institutions such as a survey conducted in 2012 by the University of Chicago; a leading economist from MIT; Harvard; Yale; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Chicago; Stanford; Princeton; and Northwestern. They found that not a single economy believed that cutting federal taxes would raise enough taxable income so that there would be a five-year return without the tax cut.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at these leading economists, people who fiscal conservatives proclaim they believe in – fiscal conservatives proclaim they understand the economics – and we look at this and see that they really haven't done anything at all around the research, that's very concerning to me. It's very concerning to me that the Premier is willing to go forward with these risky, ideological cuts that will hurt. Four and a half billion dollars and risky, ideological cuts that then come back and hit families right where they need it most: right in their health care, right in their education. That's something the opposition will never stand for. That's something that the opposition will always fight against. We will always fight to make sure that fiscal policy brought to this Chamber is responsible, is researched, and is something that works for Albertans, not something that works for the wealthiest 1 per cent.

I'm very proud to be able to stand up here and say that. I'm very proud to say that my colleagues here in the Official Opposition believe that as well. We want fiscal policy that actually makes sense, not ideologies, not dogma, not anything that the government

wants to ram down the throats of Albertans without consultation. Really, Mr. Speaker, I think it is our responsibility as legislators here today to say: we are not standing for ideology; we want responsible governance. So we should vote against this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

The ordinary Speaker recognizes the Minister of Service Alberta and Member for Strathmore-Brooks, Chestermere-Strathmore . . .

**Mrs. Aheer:** Something like that – thank you, Mr. Speaker – and Minister of Service Alberta, too. Woo-hoo. I'm all over the place tonight. Thank you so much, and thank you for the enthusiasm of the member across the way.

We had this wonderful thing called an election recently, and the most fabulous part about that was the immense consultation. I have to speak, based on the fact of having been in this incredible House for four years prior to actually being in government, to be able to discuss the importance of consultation, the importance of actually reaching out to people. We are here based on a mandate of consultation, in fact, a 28-day, very impactful consultation, where Albertans actually voted in favour of the very piece of legislation that the member is criticizing at this point in time. I have to believe that of the thousands of doors that all of us knocked on – the people that we spoke to, the understanding that they had about how it is that we bring back an advantage to this province, the importance of actually honouring business in this province, the thousands of jobs that are created by this sector in various places.

To be truthful, Mr. Speaker, the previous government and the impact that their policy had on big business and small business and our resource sector and the attacks on the resource sector and the attacks on our resource development, our responsible resource development, the inability to actually stand up and speak on behalf of this sector, especially when outside of this country, the inability to be able to stand up and say that we are the best in the world, that we bring people together – hundreds of thousands of people came to this province because of what this province offers. The information that we got at the doors every single day, day in and day out, was the need to have a government that understands business, that understands the mechanism of the fabric that built this province, whether that's small business or large business.

The fact that the opposition continues to attack business on a regular basis is absolutely astonishing to me, especially given the impact of how it was that Albertans voted in the last election. This isn't a surprise to anybody, especially not in this House, especially to the opposition. It was a platform commitment that we took out to the public, completely transparent, everything there in order for them to make a savvy decision based on information, nuanced information, I might add, that was given to them on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, the question that I have is: if Albertans, who knew what they were seeing, who understood the platform, who were absolutely able to make their own decisions based on what was given to them in a very strong platform, in a very, very strong mechanism, by 87 people, whichever side you were on, going out door to door, plus all of their volunteers who knew the background and knew the policy and were able to talk about it – in fact, I'm sure that the opposition can concur that these weren't small conversations at the door. These were long, 20-minute, in-depth conversations around fiscal policy and how to build the province. Where do you think this policy comes from? It comes from the very people of this province who know how to run business, who understand how it is that we make this province be the very best place it can be.

We have a former government here that aligned themselves with a federal government that attacked an industry that funds the entire country's prosperity. That actually attacks the very reason that we function in this province. You want to talk about schools? You want to talk about class size? You want to talk about all those things? Well, you know what? It was the previous government's policies that actually waylaid the opportunities to be able to do any of that because of their attacks on an industry that actually pays for all of those services in this province. Do you want to talk about bad policy? Why are we in a situation right now where we cannot figure out how it is that a previous government that said that they care so much about people were not able to reduce class sizes, were not able to do all of the things that they're saying that we can't do based on the inability to have any policy that actually came forward to build this province up?

Thank you.

11:20

**The Speaker:** We are on Bill 3. Are there any other members wishing to bring some debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to discuss Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, and to express my concern with this plan that the government has proposed.

We put a plan forward that was responsible to balance the budget. Our plan balanced the budget by 2023-24 while making life more affordable. We wanted to invest in schools and hospitals and strengthen our economy.

I was just recently at my daughter's grad on the weekend last week. She graduated grade 12, and, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the conversations that were happening with the students, with the staff, with parents was about concern over what was happening with our economy and what the government was proposing to do to it. They didn't see this as a solution. They're worried about what this means to our province and what it means to our children and what it means to everyday Albertans that want to be able to access hospitals that aren't in disrepair and want to be able to send their children to school to learn in environments that are productive for learning, environments where they aren't at 45-50 students in a classroom.

Just this week the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and I went to one of the schools in my riding to talk to the teachers and to talk to the support staff there about what their concerns were with education. They told us that they were going to be reducing their staffing by 1.6. What did that mean? That means that some of the students come to school without an aide. There was a teacher that requires an aide in her classroom for one of her students who has severe autism, and that might not happen next year with their budget.

They're worried, Mr. Speaker. They know that the kids that we have in our school systems need support. They need smaller classrooms. They need the reliability on funding. They need to know that when they send their children to school, there are proper supports in the classroom for them. Looking at what this is proposing, I don't see that. I see some major cuts that are going to happen to our schools and hospitals, and it's concerning. They are conversations that people are having at dinner tables all across the province. I know that they're having them in Edmonton-Castle Downs.

People reach out to me expressing grave concern for the future of our classrooms and our hospitals to pay for this massive tax cut for corporations. I know that our loved ones are going to suffer and that no one can see the benefit from this tax cut. I know that people are

talking about this plan from the UCP, and I've heard comments about it having an economic whiplash. It's very concerning. It's a plan that seems to be ill conceived, and frankly we heard this evening that this plan has failed in every jurisdiction that it has been tried. It's just concerning. We're opposed to any plan that guts classrooms and shuts hospitals in order to pay for a massive tax cut to corporations.

What's more is that the corporate tax reduction doesn't generate a dollar of economic return for two years, Mr. Speaker. Premier Kenney's own election platform made that clear.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Goehring:** Oh, I apologize.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you. It keeps happening, though, guys.

**Ms Goehring:** Names. I'm sorry. It's late.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. Fair enough. I accept the apology.

**Ms Goehring:** Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, we know that this plan that they've put forward is not the right plan for Alberta and for families because we know that they're going to suffer as a result of this. [interjections]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** House leaders, if you would like to continue your discussion, please feel free to do so in the peace lounge.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, would you like to proceed?

**Ms Goehring:** I'm good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any others wishing to add questions or comments on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, we are on the bill. Is there anyone who would like to add additional comments or debate? The President of Treasury Board is not here to close debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** He declines to close debate.

**The Speaker:** Wonderful.

Seeing none, I would like to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time]

## Bill 2

### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

Ms Ganley moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment June 4: Mr. Copping]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on 13(2). I hesitated to do it during the vote, but I would like you to explain why you referred to the Minister of Finance's absence.

**The Speaker:** I just would respectfully ask that the Government House Leader wait to be addressed by the Speaker. While he might like to call a point of order and, of course, that would always be the Government House Leader's prerogative, it is a requirement that

the House leader would be addressed by the Speaker. Having said that, I would be more than pleased to withdraw my comments with respect to whether or not the President of Treasury Board is, in fact, here or not here.

We are on Bill 2, the amendment REF1. Is there anyone wishing to speak to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Speaker:** We are now back on the bill. Any members wishing to speak to Bill 2?

**Member Irwin:** I move to adjourn debate on Bill 2.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start with this one. Pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) I wish to advise the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting, Wednesday, June 5. I think I don't have to vote on that if I recall.

I will move to adjourn the Assembly, then, until tomorrow, June 5, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:29 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 5, 2019

Day 9

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
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Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

### Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
and Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 5, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** The prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but lay aside all private interests and prejudice and keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in my gallery, the Speaker's gallery, this afternoon it's an absolute pleasure to introduce some of the family members of two of our hard-working pages. Kiki Reed's parents, Tracey and Kelly Neufeld; her sister and former page, Jordyn Reed; and her grandparents, Susan and Rudy Neufeld, are proudly looking on this afternoon. They will no doubt be watching her quick attentiveness to members' desires. I hope that you will put her through her tests this afternoon.

Also with us today to see their daughter in action is Rebecca Hicks' father, Scott Hicks. Please join me in welcoming the pages' families to our Assembly.

Hon. members, I have some additional guests that I will now introduce to the House. I'd just ask that you keep your applause all the way until the conclusion of the introductions. Guests of the hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: all the way from British Columbia, Giuseppe Ganci and Jared Nilsson. Guests of the hon. Minister of Education: Dr. Vivian Abboud, Lorrie Jess, John Jagersma, Simon Williams, Barry Litun, Bevan Daverne, Ryan Stierman, and Susan Lang.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Education and Health Care Funding

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, it's been just over a month since this UCP government was sworn in, and the impact of their actions is already being felt across the province. From Peace River to Taber, school boards are bracing for massive cuts. The silence of the Education minister on funding education has resulted in school boards forcing parents in Calgary to decide whether their children's class sizes will grow or if they'll have a music program. When asked, the UCP say that information is coming soon.

Now, because the Education minister seems only willing to provide messaging rather than the essential funding school boards need to serve students, schools in Calgary are forced to preemptively deny special-needs students their right to enrol in school. When asked, the UCP called it a board procedural issue.

School boards across this province are warning parents that the school nutrition program, that provided meals to 33,000 kids in 200 schools, might vanish. In Westlock school boards are warning parents that the school fees our government eliminated will be coming back because of the UCP.

Because of the Health minister's in-due-course attitude when it comes to funding our essential services, ambulances are being kept off the roads in Calgary because of staff vacancies. The Health minister also chose to put a healthy dose of ideology in front of Alberta's best interests when he and the UCP stopped construction on the critical Edmonton superlab.

My constituents are worried about the UCP's track record of imposing these cuts without a hint of consultation. They can see the impact of the UCP policies on health care, education, and the services that they desperately rely on. They are worried about what the UCP has planned for Edmonton.

It's only been a month, Mr. Speaker, but the UCP are living up to the promises made by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul. It is going to hurt.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake would like to make a statement.

#### Lesser Slave Lake Area Wildfires

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and speak to you today about the heroic efforts currently being undertaken to contain the wildfires spreading in and around Lesser Slave Lake and to aid those people affected. The vast boreal forests that cover my riding have provided our communities with so much, but they can also make us vulnerable to the whims of Mother Nature. Since the start of the wildfire season there have been 95 wildfires and more than 216,000 hectares destroyed in the Slave Lake forest area. The fires have forced thousands from their homes, some carrying little more than the clothes on their backs, while yet thousands more remain under evacuation alerts, uncertain of what the coming weeks will bring.

Amongst this chaos the one constant has been the brave and selfless individuals that step up in our communities in order to help their fellow Albertans in times of need. The heroism and bravery displayed by the first responders, municipal governments, and all those helping throughout the province are truly inspiring. A particular thanks goes to Tyler Warman, mayor of Slave Lake; the chief of the Bigstone Cree Nation, Silas Yellowknee; Marcel Auger, reeve of the MD of Opportunity; as well as Gladys Okemow, chief of the Peerless Trout First Nation, for their exceptional leadership in these trying times for their communities.

As of Sunday there were 24 helicopters, 60 pieces of equipment, 346 firefighters and support staff fighting these wildfires. People across Alberta have joined in to help us battle the fires and save our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thank you to all those helping to keep Lesser Slave Lake and the entire province safe, and I encourage everyone to do what they can to help support their efforts. These heroes embody the Alberta spirit and spread the message throughout the north that when tragedy strikes, you are not alone. You are courageous and resilient. You are Alberta.

#### Lethbridge Concerns

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, Lethbridge does not have a voice in this cabinet, so residents are relying on me to advocate for our city. Southern Alberta has one of the worst opioid crises in Canada, but the scale of the problem is something that we've known for some time. In 2015 downtown business, fire, EMS, city officials, health care providers and the police services asked our government to act. We responded to their request for a safe consumption site. We committed to new funds for an intoxic facility, new detox beds, and new supportive housing. The safe consumption site in Lethbridge

prevented 855 overdoses in one year alone. Those are lives saved. Those are people who lived to get help.

When downtown Lethbridge was struggling with crime and drug activity, the city and the province worked collaboratively with front-line health workers and law enforcement. We now have a well-run needle debris program and a new neighbourhood watch program. I know that this has made downtown more livable, walkable, and has renewed optimism among downtown business owners. I know this because my children and I walk, shop, and live in downtown Lethbridge.

I am not sure that the next steps that Lethbridge asked for and that we delivered will be continued by this Premier. Lethbridge's pleas for supportive housing and expansion of intox and detox are now being heard by a Premier who has twice travelled to Lethbridge and insulted our police chief over this issue. It is my role to advocate for my city to a Premier that didn't see the need for a voice from Lethbridge in his cabinet. I will fight to make sure Lethbridge has the supportive housing it needs. I will stand up to defend our public services, law enforcement, downtown small business, and represent all the women and men who work so hard in our local public health care system.

I hope this Premier eventually learns how important the city of Lethbridge is to our province and learns to treat us with respect.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

#### Irma School Expansion

**Mr. Rowsell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm privileged to rise and tell you and my colleagues the fantastic story of the upgrades and expansion of Irma school. Between its opening in 1950 and now, the only capital spending was for modernization in 1984. In the 2015-16 capital plan the Buffalo Trail public school board of trustees designated Irma school to be their primary capital project. In combination with support from the community of Irma, which at the time was seeking to build a new community hall, the board proposed to construct enhanced space to be used jointly for education and community usage.

**1:40**

In April 2017 the board approved a proposal to expand the school facility by 556 square metres. This expansion was estimated to cost nearly \$1.7 million. The village of Irma pledged \$350,000 for the expansion, and the MD of Wainwright pledged \$750,000. Unfortunately, this wasn't quite enough, so they turned towards fundraising. Both personal and corporate donations were accepted, ranging anywhere from \$100 to \$100,000, with two large community events serving to bolster the donations. The first event, held on April 1, 2018, raised over \$200,000 for the expansion. The second event, held on April 6, 2019, raised over \$240,000. To date the enhancement society has raised \$2 million, exceeding the original goal by \$300,000. Mr. Speaker, this is all from a town of around 400 people. The additional funds have been dedicated to other upgrades in the building.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fantastic and inspiring story of a community banding together in order to improve their local school, and I am incredibly proud of the people of Irma and the MD of Wainwright for accomplishing such a wonderful feat.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Sherwood Park is rising to make a statement.

#### Strathcona Christian Academy in Sherwood Park

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's children deserve a world-class education. In order to ensure that our new government's commitment to world-class education is realized, promoting and protecting school choice is critical and is a key component of our agenda. School choice ensures educational quality, diversity of programs, and that every individual child and their parents are able to find a school model that works best for them.

In that vein, Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to highlight a family of schools in Sherwood Park that are a great example of how school choice strengthens Alberta's education system. These schools are members of the Strathcona Christian Academy, or SCA, group, which has an elementary school and a secondary school. Founded in 1980 as private schools, SCA Elementary and Secondary follow the Alberta learning curriculum for kindergarten to grade 6 and grades 7 to 12, respectively, and deliver instruction with a Christian perspective. Mr. Francis Poole is the principal of SCA Elementary, and Mr. Jon Elzinga is the principal of SCA Secondary.

SCA joined the Elk Island public schools in 1998 and now operates as an alternative Christian program under its umbrella. Both schools serve over 575 students each year. The schools' teachers are government certified and are committed Christians who support the academy's mission. SCA students perform well academically and athletically, and both schools contribute greatly to the prosperity of Strathcona county.

Mr. Speaker, SCA Elementary and Secondary schools are excellent examples of how school choice ensures excellence in education. I am proud to be part of a new government that respects, is firmly committed to, and values school choice in our education system.

May God bless SCA. Go, Eagles, go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Support for Business

**Mr. Loewen:** Yesterday the NDP House leader rose in this place not to offer amendments or to represent his constituents; instead, he rose in this place to stay true to his party's left-wing, antibusiness ideology. He attacked Alberta's job creators, those very people who offer gainful employment to the folks looking for work, those job creators who put their lives and livelihoods on the line to create the prosperity that people come to Alberta to enjoy.

That former minister, whose government was soundly rejected by a record number of Alberta voters, said that if a business is facing hardships, if a business is struggling with thousands of dollars in additional costs foisted on them by the NDP carbon tax, if that business is facing the prospect of closing its doors, too bad, so sad. He said that they should have had a better business plan. While the now Official Opposition was imposing the carbon tax that they didn't even tell Albertans about in their election platform, a record number of Alberta businesses closed their doors for the last time. The suggestion that businesses should just somehow be able to absorb "paying a few thousand dollars extra a month" speaks to how totally out of touch that opposition party truly is.

The NDP oversaw billions in investment leaving Alberta, thousands upon thousands of job losses, more than 170,000 unemployed Albertans, and a record number of business closures, and their House leader has the audacity to say that those people should have just had a better business plan or found new management.

I am proud to say that Albertans heard that message loud and clear and put this province under new management. On this side of

the House we are proud to scrap the NDP carbon tax. We are proud to make this province the best place in the country to invest in, to create jobs, and to start a family. What's sad is that this opposition is still trying to attack the very people who make Alberta prosper.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education has a bill to introduce.

#### Bill 8

#### Education Amendment Act, 2019

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with great privilege to introduce for first reading Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019.

This legislation, through a series of amendments to the Education Act, will strengthen and modernize Alberta's education system. I believe that amending the previously passed Education Act, which was first introduced in this House in 2012 and continued to be consulted on until 2018, will allow it to serve as a blueprint for the education system for years to come. The amendments we are introducing today will bring stability and help the province's transition to the Education Act occur more smoothly.

I look forward to discussing and debating the important amendments included in this bill with the House in the very near future. I am both proud and honoured to move first reading of Bill 8.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night in my speech on Bill 3 I made comments that corporate tax cuts don't actually result in more jobs or increased wages for workers but, instead, enrich the shareholder class by allowing share buybacks. In that speech I referenced two articles. One was titled Oilpatch Share Buybacks Drive Record High Totals on Toronto Stock Exchange, from the Canadian Press, dated November 25, 2018. I have the appropriate number of copies of that document.

I also have another document here, dated May 14, 2019, entitled Cash-rich Canadian Oil Firms Favor Buybacks as Other Options Narrow.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings of returns or reports? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a backgrounder report entitled Hate Speech and Freedom of Expression: Legal Boundaries in Canada, that was produced by the Library of Parliament. The report highlights the robust legal mechanisms that Canada has in place to prevent the use of hate speech and discrimination towards individuals and other groups. As we move forward with our mandate to implement the Chicago principles on free speech on campus, I thought it prudent to inform this Assembly and all Albertans that implementing the Chicago principles will enhance, not erode, our commitment to the safety and well-being of all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** I'd just caution the hon. minister that Tabling Returns and Reports isn't an opportunity to make a statement that

you would not otherwise be able to make but often just a brief description of the document that you're actually tabling.

Are there other tablings today? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a copy of a letter that was provided to Calgary police by the members of the South Asian community over their concerns with rising gang violence and illegal drugs in our communities. I have the requisite number of copies of that.

Thank you.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

#### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Ms Notley:** It was like a slap to the face; it was like everybody in the world hates you: those are the words of Jane MacNeil describing efforts to set up a GSA at a Calgary Catholic school in 2016. The school tried to change the name, they sent Jane to counselling, and they never established the GSA. All of this occurred under Bill 10, exactly the law this Minister of Education wants to restore. To the minister: why are you putting your ideology over Jane's education, her feeling of safety, and her mental health?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Under the new Education Act we will have the most comprehensive GSA, QSA, inclusive legislation in Canada. I've been in contact with students recently from the LGBTQ-plus community, and they have told me that they are really looking towards the balanced approach that we are putting forward.

Thank you.

**Ms Notley:** The minister's characterization is absolutely untrue.

I have a very political battle to fight right now; I was hoping I wouldn't have to fight it, but it's a battle nonetheless: that, Mr. Speaker, was Calgary grade 12 student Sean Ruhland reacting to the election of this UCP government. He's involved in a GSA, and he vowed to stand up against this minister's plan to roll back protections for LGBTQ students in their schools. To the minister: shouldn't Sean be studying for his diplomas instead of having to fight to protect himself from you?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Proclaiming the Education Act will make Alberta schools the most diverse, excellent classrooms that all Albertans desire and deserve. It modernizes our education system by replacing a piece of legislation which originally was introduced in '88. We will have the most comprehensive GSA, QSA pieces of legislation in all of Canada.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Notley:** Once again the minister has repeated something that is not true.

This is saving lives; this is everything that my life and my friends' lives and so many strangers' lives depend on when they're at this age: this was Amelia Troughton, a student at Victoria school. Now, while that school here in Edmonton will probably continue to

protect LGBTQ students through strong policies, supported GSAs, and strict privacy rights, we know that at least half the schools in this province will abandon this job with the permission and tacit encouragement of this minister, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. GSAs save lives. Why are you going to literally put those lives in danger?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I categorically disagree with what has just been said. We will have the opportunity for students to form a GSA, a QSA, or any other inclusion group that so meets their needs. This will be the strongest legislation in all of Canada, and I'm very proud to put forward the Education Act that will support it.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Notley:** Allow me to explain to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Reversion to Bill 10 removes the obligation to have an LGBTQ-supportive policy, thereby allowing schools to discourage kids from asking for GSAs. It removes protection from being outed, thereby scaring kids away from GSAs. It removes government enforcement provisions, thereby allowing schools to block GSAs. Minister, be honest. You know that as many as half of boards will abandon GSAs, and you're okay with it because your values are more important than the safety of those kids. Why not just admit it?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I again disagree with what has just been said. Under section 35.1(1) of the Education Act it specifically guarantees student entitlement to create inclusion groups, including GSAs and QSA alliances. Students cannot disclose a student's membership in any inclusion group as a matter of routine as there are student privacy considerations that trump other legislation. What I heard from students that are in these organizations is that they want balance.

Thank you.

**Ms Notley:** Your vested interests want balance. Those are the only people that want balance.

It is clear from what we heard from the minister that she's not listening to these students, not at all, and she has a duty to protect them. Cathy Hogg, president of the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta, said: our association a hundred per cent supports the protection of this vulnerable population, and safe and caring schools are extremely important to us. To the minister. The PSBAA advocates for 24 schools boards and hundreds of thousands of students. Why won't you listen to them at least?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I will enlighten the other parties as to what happens when a student would like to participate in a GSA inclusion group. Under section 35.1(1) of the Education Act it identifies the steps for establishing a GSA. Those steps are very plain language. Students can ask to be part of it, the principal permits the GSA, the principal designates a staff liaison, and so on and so on. It is very well spelled out. There will be protections. There will be strong antibullying policies and a strong safe and caring schools policy.

Thank you.

**Ms Notley:** The bill won't work, it didn't work before, everyone over there knows it, and she's not being straightforward. Now, when the UCP's John Carpay, you know, the guy who equated the . . .

#### **Speaker's Ruling**

#### **Addressing Questions through the Chair**

**The Speaker:** Sorry. Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, I'm very apologetic. I've let it slide a number of times. You might just send your comments through the Speaker, not refer to the minister as "she" or otherwise. It would be appropriate for you to send your questions through the Speaker.

**Ms Notley:** So I should refer to the minister as "they," Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

#### **Gay-straight Alliances in Schools**

*(continued)*

**Ms Notley:** When the UCP's John Carpay, you know, the guy who equated the swastika to the rainbow flag, challenged GSA protections, the court said that GSAs in no way restrict the rights of parents or schools to continue to impart their religious and moral values to their children. To the minister: why are you so driven to roll back protections for LGBTQ students that you're ignoring them, elected school trustees, and the courts?

**The Speaker:** I just might note two points of order at approximately 1:56 and 1:57.

I see the Government House Leader rising to answer.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to answer this question. It's disappointing to continue to watch the opposition go forward with these tactics. The hon. Minister of Education has done a very good job this afternoon of answering the questions that have been asked, making it clear the protections for GSAs will remain in place even under this legislation. She went so far as to even read the legislation to confirm that. I will be clear. Bill 10, which was supported by all the legacy parties who represent this current party and the opposition party at the time, remains in place. GSAs will be protected, and it doesn't matter how much the opposition wants to yell and scream; those are the facts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Two days ago I asked this Education minister . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Member Irwin:** . . . why she hasn't done a thing to support LGBTQ youth. She keeps saying that she's looking for balance. As a former teacher and administrator let me paint a realistic picture for this minister. An LGBTQ student is walking down the hallway through a gauntlet of homophobic and transphobic insults. The student's school tells them that they can't have a support club because they find the words "gay" or "queer" uncomfortable. They quit school. Mr. Speaker, this actually happens. This is what Bill 10 allowed. Is that the minister's version of balance?

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



**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we have in our schools very strong safe and caring schools policies. We also have very strong antibullying policies.

As far as trying to get a GSA established in your school, that will absolutely still be able to happen. That is very clear in the Education Act, and it will continue.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2016 this Education minister told a right-wing online news site that it was not necessary to, quote: create additional policies for one group. She was referring to the work of our government to fix that mess that was Bill 10. In my last question I gave the minister a crash course on just how hard things were for LGBTQ youth without solid legal protections for GSAs. Does the minister understand now why one group, LGBTQ youth, needs additional protections, and if she doesn't, should she really be the minister?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, it's so disappointing to watch these tactics. This is a very important issue and a conversation that's certainly worthy of this Chamber. The Education minister has been taking her time answering those questions today, making it clear that GSAs will be protected, something that all sides of this House supported. In fact, all sides of this House supported Bill 10, to make that clear that GSAs need to be protected going forward and are an important process within our schools. It is shameful to watch this continued attack, personally, on the Education minister, who is doing an excellent job of answering those issues. I suggest the opposition takes some time and listens to what she has to say.

2:00

**Member Irwin:** What's shameful is putting our kids at risk.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This minister says that Alberta will have the strongest protections for GSAs in the country once she's through, but it's not true. We called our Bill 24 An Act to Support Gay-straight Alliances.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Member Irwin:** By reverting to Bill 10, we will be enshrining a toothless law that doesn't support students. To the minister. I guess we should call your bill An Act to Destroy Gay-Straight Alliances.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I would have to categorically disagree with the hon. member. We will have the strongest legislation on GSA, QSA, and inclusion groups. Oftentimes they forget the rest of it, the inclusion groups piece. What is in the privacy legislation that will govern this is FOIP and PIPA, and that actually supersedes, so there will be privacy legislation that will ensure that the private information of a student is safeguarded.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question.

### School Nutrition Programs

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School boards are bracing hard for the cuts this Education minister is planning. At Pembina Hills, trustees anticipate the school nutrition program will be cut, a program that feeds 33,000 students across our province. Research shows better academic performance when kids are fed. To the

Education minister: is feeding hungry students so they can learn a priority for your government?

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

**Ms Notley:** How hard a question is that?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's always great to hear from the Leader of the Official Opposition heckling away. This is the ridiculous behaviour that continues to come from the NDP, but I digress.

Instead, about the question. The Minister of Education and this government and the Premier have been clear about the importance of funding education. We'll be working through the budget process as we go through it and making sure that that is dealt with one hundred per cent. It's a priority of this government. We made that clear inside our platform as we campaigned to come to this place. Again, Mr. Speaker, through you to them . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . I encourage the hon. members to bring some decorum back to this place. I suspect that's why they sit on that side of the House, because they continue to act that way.

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

The point of order is noted.

**Ms Hoffman:** Let's try this for decorum. To the Government House Leader: will the 33,000 kids that go to school getting lunches be fed next year . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** . . . or will they be hungry, in need of school lunches, Mr. Speaker?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We've been very clear, I've been very clear that we are committed to funding education. We will be building schools. As to the specifics of this, boards are in the best position to decide where they're going with things, but as far as – you know, what I have to say is that instead of playing politics and speculating on education funding, which we've been very clear about, I encourage my colleagues to wait for further information.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Students throughout Alberta arrive at school hungry. That is a fact, and key messaging from the minister doesn't fill empty stomachs.

Given that 150 students at St. Gregory the Great school, one that the minister was a school board member for and screamed the praises of this program, will the minister let those 150 students go to school hungry next year, or will they and the other 33,000 students actually get a school lunch? Yes or no? Are you feeding hungry kids . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** . . . or are you going to let them starve in their classrooms?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. As a former trustee I totally understand the pressures that school boards are under to make these decisions, but we have said that we will be continuing to fund education. It is a priority for us. Students are

looked after every single day. We care about these kids, and we will do the right things for them.

Thank you.

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

### Calgary Construction Environmental Concerns

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary ring road borders several communities on the edge of my riding, Calgary-West. This significant transportation infrastructure project has raised some concerns for my constituents, especially when it comes to the power poles being placed by Enmax. In particular, they are concerned about the impact that these poles may have on their health and quality of life. Can the Minister of Transportation please share what our government is doing to address these concerns for my constituents?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member is right in having empathy for his constituents. Construction leads to temporary diminishment in quality of life just by the nature of the noise and the other disruptions. The location for the infrastructure is decided through a process that requires Enmax to file an application with the Alberta Utilities Commission for approval of the proposed transmission lines. I will commit to following up with the member. He has expressed interest in finding a time to meet with his constituents on this issue, and I will try to make that happen.

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that the ring road is subject to provincial jurisdiction – I understand that, once completed, it will fall within the provincial noise level average of about 65 decibels over a 24-hour period. However, there are several urban residential communities in my riding that directly parallel this new construction, and given the uniqueness of the situation, will the minister consider adhering to the city of Calgary's lower noise level guidelines of 60 decibels to ensure that residents are not negatively impacted by the noise?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most Albertans love roads, and most Albertans dislike the noise from them. It's a fact of life. Noise attenuation measures are planned for the community of Signal Hill together with construction on the ring road. Lots in Discovery Ridge bordering the ring road were within 20 to 30 metres, and the road was moved 30 metres away to try to accommodate that. I invite the hon. member to continue to work with my office on this issue and discuss the noise attenuation issues for Springbank Hill, Discovery Ridge, and Signal Hill.

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are serious concerns. Given, again, that the ring road will closely border several residential communities in my riding, which will include communities such as Discovery Ridge, Signal Hill, and Springbank Hill, will the minister commit to narrowing the lanes of traffic and implementing sound attenuation measures such as berms and walls to further minimize the impact that the noise is having on these communities?

Thank you.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll reiterate to the member that noise is a real issue. I understand that. Noise studies are carried out on an ongoing basis once the road is in operation. Noise attenuation measures are planned, and I will assure the hon. member that once the road is complete, more noise levels will be studied to see if additional measures are needed to be put in place. I will review with the member based on that factual information once the road is up and operating.

### Speaker's Ruling Addressing Questions through the Chair

**The Speaker:** If we can just pause the question period clock for a brief moment while I – obviously, all members will know that points of order are dealt with at the end of question period, but just to try to create a sense of a go-forward path here this afternoon, as I've heard a number of points of order, I'd like to provide some clarity around my comments with respect to the interjection that I made to the Leader of the Official Opposition. Questions and answers should be directed through the chair. Of course, everyone knows that that's page 610 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. Members may refer to members or ministers in the third person, as we saw earlier with reference to "she." However, earlier today we also heard members refer to people as "you," in the second person. This was the heart of the interjection.

I'm happy to provide more comment after question period once I have the benefit of the Blues, but I would encourage members to make sure that they are directing questions through the chair and defer "you" or direct lines of communication as we are a little bit excitable here this afternoon.

With that said, if the clock can resume, I'd like to hear from the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### 2:10 Education Funding

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, 30,000 kids get a nutritious meal every day from the school nutrition program, and in Lethbridge the school board tells us that they not only feed kids during the week, but for some of the lowest income parents, they actually send weekend food parcels home with kids. The public board is preparing for cuts to these programs. It's the kind of help lowest income children need, and it's what's at stake with this Minister of Finance's cruel and heartless dithering on education funding in September. Will the Finance minister confirm with this House that he will direct the necessary funds towards the school nutrition program to properly fund it in September?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I want to reiterate that our priority is to look after every single child under our care. We have over 700,000 students.

Before I go any further, I just wanted to share with the House that there was an accident this morning. A contracted bus carrying Grande Prairie Catholic grade 8 and grade 9 students from the Celtic Sports Academy to Bear Lake pulled out onto the highway and was struck by a semi. Twenty-five students were on the bus, but we hear that they've been assessed by first responders. It appears the students suffered only bumps and bruises. We're sending our thoughts with those families. I just wanted to make sure that we knew that.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, given that the minister did not campaign on cuts to inclusive education in the Peace-Wapiti region and given that the classroom improvement fund supported a number of

services for children with disabilities in his own constituency, what is the minister's understanding of the future of these programs if he does not fund them?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were clear during the campaign period, we were clear with Albertans that we will continue to maintain education funding and, at the same time, look for every opportunity to deliver a world-class education system in a more efficient and intentional manner. I've got great faith in our excellent Education minister to do just that.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, given that the classroom improvement fund supports speech-language assistance, literacy, and math interventions in Peace-Wapiti and given that one student in Peace-Wapiti reported that the programs gave them "the only adult in my life that cares about me," how will the Minister of Finance go home and explain to his constituents that he cruelly waved his wand and made those programs disappear?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has talked about some excellent educators and some good programs that are meeting the needs of Albertans. As I mentioned earlier, we're committed to maintain funding for education. We believe that we can be fiscally responsible with taxpayers' dollars and deliver world-class programs.

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

#### **Drug- and Gang-related Violence in Northeast Calgary**

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents in northeast Calgary are terrified over the rise in drug trafficking and gang violence. The Calgary police have confirmed that four members of the community have been killed in three different attacks since the beginning of the year. To the Solicitor General: are you aware of this situation, and what specific actions have you taken to address it so far?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'm aware of the matter, and we're reaching out to these parties and co-ordinating with my colleagues here to meet with them to talk about the concerns that they addressed. Obviously, we take matters of policing very seriously. Also, we want to make sure that all Albertans know that we want to make sure that all Albertans feel safe in their communities, and we'll make sure that we reach out to stakeholders to make sure that they are heard on this matter.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that hundreds gathered at Nelson Mandela high school and marched to Saddle Ridge police station over the weekend to raise their concerns and given that a representative with Progressive Cultural Association Calgary said, and I quote, "We can save our kids before they have to kill each other," again to the Solicitor General: what other supports is your ministry providing to protect our children and warn them about the dangers of associating with gangs?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, again, our party is committed to making sure that Albertans feel safe in their communities. As our campaign promised, throughout Alberta we want to make sure that our police and front-line services have the resources they deserve. We're going to be making sure that we fund programs like ALERT to deal with drugs and gangs and human trafficking, and make sure that our front-line services have the resources they need to do their

jobs. We've had increasing crime across Alberta. We're going to make sure that we address this head-on.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that my constituents and those in other northeast ridings need to see a police presence in their communities and given that we are already seeing evidence of cuts to sports for students in our schools, will the Solicitor General agree that funding our classrooms and social programs for our youth is more important than a risky corporate tax?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier on, I'm looking forward to meeting with the stakeholders referenced in the northeast of Calgary to talk further about their concerns regarding this matter. Our government is committed to making sure that our front-line police officers have the resources that they need to do their jobs and make sure that Albertans feel safe in their homes. That's a commitment our government has made. I want to make sure that all Albertans know that we take that seriously.

#### **Support for Business**

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP oversaw a record number of business closures as they imposed their job-killing carbon tax. Can the Minister of Finance please inform this place of what steps the United Conservative government is taking to undo the damage caused by the NDP?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this Chamber the former economic development minister said, "Companies are going out of business because of the carbon tax" – I'm sorry; if paying a few thousand dollars extra a month means you went out of business, maybe you need to take a look at your business plan." It should be obvious to everyone that the NDP have absolutely no idea of what it takes to run a business and create jobs, and that is what has led us into this economic mess that we now find ourselves in. We're extremely proud of having just lowered the cost of doing business through the elimination of the carbon tax.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, given that the NDP House leader rose yesterday to attack Alberta's job creators by suggesting that they should be able to absorb "paying a few thousand dollars extra a month" caused by their carbon tax and given that Albertans rejected the NDP in record numbers and given that the United Conservative Party has a clear mandate to implement a new plan to make it easier to invest in Alberta, can the minister please inform the House on progress being introduced to make Alberta the best place to invest in Canada and to create jobs?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, in addition to lowering the cost for business by limiting the carbon tax, we're introducing other pro-business – that's right; I said it: pro-business – measures. Our job creation tax cut will create 55,000 jobs, grow the economy by \$12.7 billion. Unlike the NDP, we do not hate businesses and understand that wealth is created not by taxing job creators to death but by allowing them to grow and thrive in our province.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, given that the NDP House leader's callous remarks in this place indicated that the opposition party does not understand that "paying a few thousand dollars extra a month" is a real hardship for Alberta job creators and given that the NDP oversaw record job losses, more than 170,000 unemployed Albertans, and record business closures, can the minister please inform this House on how businesses are reacting to the NDP war on job creators?

**The Speaker:** I just caution the hon. member. I sometimes struggle to grasp how it might be possible to use a quote without using a preamble. As such, I would just remind members that all questions after question 4 should be phrased without preambles.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, our office has received many calls from businesses who are excited and eager to bring jobs back to Alberta. The past month we've done more to renew that advantage than the NDP did in four years of government. By scrapping the carbon tax, reducing red tape, and making our corporate tax rate more competitive, we will bring back those jobs and families that fled our province.

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

## 2:20 Public-private Partnerships for Capital Projects

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know there are important infrastructure projects all across this province. From high schools to hospitals and dams to ring roads, we need public infrastructure that works for Albertans. Given that because of the Conservatives' risky ideological experiment in P3s in 2015, schools in Edmonton were left with bright orange fencing where fields were supposed to be and principals weren't even allowed to heat their schools based on contractual issues, will the Minister of Infrastructure commit to not repeating this failed ideological experiment?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, it's really rich coming from that member, who was part of the government for four years. They had four years to build public infrastructure efficiently. They failed. Albertans decided on April 16. They gave us a mandate to build public infrastructure that will build prosperity for Albertans, and we're going to do that.

**Mr. Dang:** Sounds like kids will just have to play in the mud, Mr. Speaker.

Now, given that the city of Edmonton tried this risky experiment in P3s for the valley line LRT and given that this risky experiment has now resulted in indefinite delay and given that the mayor of Edmonton has called on you to not force P3s down the throats of municipalities, will the minister commit to not forcing municipalities to pursue your ideological agenda?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, on April 16 Albertans elected this government, which campaigned on our platform. We clearly said that we will aggressively pursue P3s to build public infrastructure faster, within budget, and safely, and that's what we're going to do.

**Mr. Dang:** Sounds like we're just going to be hearing about more delays, Mr. Speaker.

Now, given that P3 projects are not only failing in Alberta but we can see that in Scott Moe's Saskatchewan, the North Battleford hospital, which has only been open for two months, already needs its entire roof replaced, will the minister commit to not repeating the mistakes that we're seeing elsewhere and not build our health care with this dangerous P3 model?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, the public-private partnership approach was adopted all over the world before this member was even born, okay? [interjections] There are merits in doing – our government will take a case-by-case approach, and if there is a business case for a P3, we'll likely pursue it, but there are different procurement methods. We apply those based on an individual project's business case.

**The Speaker:** I might just mention to the hon. minister that, as you saw, that type of language moves in the direction of a personal attack on the Member for Edmonton-South. I would encourage you to choose your words wisely.

## Transportation Projects

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, it's critical for public transportation that the city of Calgary get the long-overdue green line, and I'm proud that our government worked to ensure that this project would move forward to keep Calgarians moving. Will the Minister of Transportation commit that this NDP priority will continue as originally designed, with the original timelines as well, or will he just rely on the Premier, once again declaring that he was the first supporter of the green line but offering no real plan to build this important project?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, first of all, would like to thank the hon. member for reminding Albertans that the Premier in his time in Ottawa actually put forward one of the first large chunks of money – I think about a billion and a half dollars – towards the green line. Further – wait for this – I would thank the previous government for about matching that.

Yes. As we promised in our campaign, we will go ahead with the LRT projects in Calgary and Edmonton as we committed as part of our platform.

**Member Loyola:** Given that the UCP has said that nonpriority projects may be cancelled or delayed, will the minister tell us if the Fort Saskatchewan bridge, which is necessary to support proper flow of traffic in the Industrial Heartland, will continue on time, budget, and with the original scope?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the hon. member that the bridge in Fort Saskatchewan is a very important project, and as we go forward with our capital planning and budgeting process, it will be considered in a very serious way. We will make those announcements when the time comes. We understand just how important that project is, and we'll consider it with great seriousness.

**Member Loyola:** Given that the folks in Medicine Hat and Lethbridge deserve to be connected, will the minister commit to making the rural transportation pilot in this region permanent? Why or why not?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. The question is extra interesting. The fact that it's a pilot means that the previous government didn't see fit to make it permanent. We will evaluate the pilot as the pilot continues and make decisions based on how we best meet the needs of Albertans and how it fits in our capital and budget planning process.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-South East has a question.

## Provincial Fiscal Deficit and Credit Rating

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government's reckless accumulation of debt gets a lot of attention, and rightly so. Alberta's credit was also impacted, seeing six downgrades in only a few years. Credit downgrades increase our cost to borrow and result in higher interest payments on the debt we have, potentially

taking money away from essential services like health care and education. For the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance: can you comment on the difficult task ahead, not just in paying down Alberta's debt but in repairing Alberta's credit?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. Credit ratings do matter as they directly affect the cost of borrowing to the provincial treasury. Credit-rating agencies did not like the NDP government. In fact, in the four years that the NDP held office, Alberta's credit rating was downgraded six times. They managed to drive us so far into debt that the interest payments alone are now higher than the budgets of 17 out of 21 government departments. I can confidently say that we will be doing things differently.

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

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. While Alberta's credit was deteriorating, one of the primary rating agencies stated that they were hoping to see a more deliberate effort to address the deficit by the former NDP government. Can the minister comment on the deliberate efforts his ministry and our government are taking to address the deficit and repair our credit?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is absolutely correct. The state of the province's books is unacceptable. Under the NDP Alberta's debt-servicing costs tripled: \$1.9 billion dollars now go to bankers and bondholders, not to health care or education. That's socialist economics for you. What do socialists do when they hit the debt wall? They tax even more. The NDP raised taxes and fees 97 times. Once again I say: we're doing it differently. We've already repealed the carbon tax. We're bringing back 55,000 jobs to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that, like many Albertans living under the previous government, these rating agencies consider Alberta's fiscal outlook negative or unstable due to the previous government's financial decisions and given that we have made a commitment to Albertans to clean up our credit and our finances, does the minister see a path to improving the outlook of our credit rating, and can he comment on what the rating agencies will be looking for from us in that regard?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are reducing taxes and creating economic capacity in the province. There's a path forward here, and it begins with fiscal stability, responsibility, and predictability. The credit agencies will be looking for us to reduce our spending and get to a balanced budget, and, unlike the NDP, the credit-rating agencies will see that we are serious. Like I've said, our government's approach will be different. We're bringing back prudence and vigour to the budget process. Albertans expect us to balance the budget, and that's what we'll do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

#### Postsecondary Tuition Fees

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Advanced Education if he would keep the tuition and

instructional fee protections in place, and he did not provide anything that resembled a clear answer. Now I think I know why. Last November this minister posted the following on social media, and I quote, reducing tuition has no impact on increasing enrolment. To the minister: were you really claiming that keeping tuition rates affordable does not allow more people to actually access postsecondary education?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as I had addressed yesterday, the tuition freeze has been going on for about four years, and it's still in place for the 2019-2020 academic year. Subsequent to that, current legislation already exists tying tuition increases to the rate of inflation. I had an opportunity to meet with representatives from CAUS, that's, of course, the Council of Alberta University Students, and we were able to sit down and discuss some of their immediate priorities. I look forward to continuing to work with them and other student groups from across the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there's nothing that resembles answering a question with that first one. Let me try again.

Given that the minister also posted, and I quote, "Sadly, freezing tuition will not make Alberta postsecondary education more accessible," and given that the tuition cap introduced by our government has saved students, on average, over \$2,000 over the course of a degree, to the Minister of Advanced Education: given that you clearly oppose a tuition freeze, just how high will you raise the price of postsecondary education for students while your government doles out billions to . . .

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Accessibility is incredibly important, and that's why we have committed to providing various investments with organizations such as Careers: the Next Generation and Women Building Futures, so that we can help encourage more people to pursue entry into the skilled trades and other vocational opportunities. We want to expand the registered apprenticeship program as well, doubling the number of high schools that that organization works with. That's all tied to accessibility, so we have clear action there.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this minister's views on downloading costs to postsecondary students are on display for everyone to see on social media and given that his comments will certainly spur a great deal of anxiety amongst students, parents, and teachers, I'm going to ask the minister one more time: will you reject your past views on tuition controls and pledge to this House now to keeping the tuition freeze intact for the duration of the term?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I agree with the member opposite. Students have a lot of anxiety because they don't know if they're going to have jobs at the end of their degrees. Regrettably, the entire economic climate – because of their high tax and debt policies, the economy is on its knees. We're taking action to make sure we get our economy back on its feet so that our students and our graduates can have good jobs at the end of their programs.

### Environmental Programs

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear that when the members opposite speak about jobs, they're not talking about green jobs. Energy Efficiency Alberta delivers a host of programs that help Albertans save energy and money. Before our government established this agency, we were the only jurisdiction in North America that didn't have one. But in March the Premier told reporters that after they won the election, those programs would be gone. Is the Minister of Environment and Parks still planning to cancel those programs?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier and I have been very, very clear. We will not be going forward with the direction the NDP did, which was taking hard-working taxpayer dollars and investing them in buying light bulbs and shower heads for Albertans. It was fundamentally rejected on April 16 by the people of Alberta. We have a different approach. We're going to be focused on climate change working through our TIER program, working with our largest emitters, which is the bulk of the emissions that happen inside our province, bringing forward and working on innovation, and actually trying to tackle the problem. Again, it just comes down to a fundamental difference between the UCP and NDP. We're focused on actually accomplishing something; they were focused on taxing people.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, we are focused on tackling climate change, the single most important . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Preamble.

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**Mr. Schmidt:** . . . emergency facing humanity. Given that we are now hearing that the UCP is backpedalling on its promise to roll back these savings to Albertans and given that the UCP has also opted for Justin Trudeau's carbon tax, can the minister please explain how he will now fund EEA programs given that the only source of revenue that supports them is gone?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the hon. member brought up Justin Trudeau's carbon tax. The fact is that this opposition, when they were in government, spent their time trying to shore up and be an ally with Justin Trudeau. We have a different focus. We have been able to stop the NDP carbon tax now. Our next focus, as has been presented by our Premier and our party, will be to fight Justin Trudeau on his carbon tax. We fundamentally reject any carbon tax. We'll continue to support Saskatchewan and Ontario and other provinces that are fighting it. We'll continue to stand up for Albertans when it comes to the carbon tax. Again, just a different approach between these two parties.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, their approach involves hiring lawyers while firing people who are working in energy efficiency.

Given that Energy Efficiency Alberta created 4,000 jobs and given that these programs generated almost a billion dollars in economic activity and saved Albertans half a billion dollars a year and given that the UCP government is intent on giving \$4 billion to billionaires, can the same minister explain why helping homes and businesses to save on their energy costs and reduce pollution is less important than writing cheques to their donors?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that the single biggest thing that we could do to help Albertans with their energy bills was to terminate and kill the carbon tax once we got inside this place. I'm proud of that. As for the hon. member referring to

lawyers, this is the difference between Alberta's new government and Alberta's old government. Alberta's old government was focused on working with Justin Trudeau to cause pain for Albertans. That's what they were focused on. This government will be focused on defending them, and we will use every means possible, including legal challenges, to be able to defend Albertans. That's our approach; again, very, very different. The biggest approach we'll have is that we'll be working to get Andrew Scheer elected as the next Prime Minister of this country.

### Emerald Foundation Environmental Awards

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, for the minister of environment. I was pleased to see that a rural constituent of Lacombe-Ponoka, Mr. Lloyd Dahl, was the recipient of a lifetime achievement award at last evening's Emerald Foundation awards, that recognize environmental leadership in the province. Can the minister tell me a bit more about Mr. Dahl's background and how passionate many rural Albertans are about their environment?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Mr. Dahl was born in 1929 in central Alberta, where both the hon. member and I are from. His childhood was spent farming land, mainly by hand, and helping others in the area where they farmed. While working for the village of Alix, he developed many parks and playgrounds around the community. He also developed the Alix Lake campground and the Haunted Lakes campground north of Alix. Mr. Dahl is exactly the person that the United Conservative government wants to partner with when it comes to conservation. It was exciting to see him receive his lifetime award, and I congratulate him on that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Mr. Dahl is a truly fine example to all Albertans when it comes to quiet, self-motivated, and principled leadership on the environment – he just rolls up his sleeves, goes to work, and gets things done – can the minister tell me about some of the specific work around Alix Lake and Haunted Lakes that he was honoured for last night?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in 1997 Mr. Dahl retired and began to dedicate his volunteer life to Alix Lake and the Alix Nature Trail Society, formed in 1999. He helped to develop the beautiful nature trail around Alix Lake, including birdwatching facilities and points of interest signage. He's been an advocate for Alix Lake for more than 40 years, raising awareness for lake health issues and ways in which the community can get involved in caring for the lake resources. At 90 years young he still tries to walk a portion of the trail every day to check on its well-being. Again, those are who we want to work with on conservation in our province.

**Mr. Orr:** Given that the made-in-Alberta Emerald Foundation awards are in their 28th year and Alberta is the only province in Canada that honours environmental stewardship in this way, can the minister speak a bit more about the foundation itself and how Alberta has and will continue to lead the world in environmental stewardship?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the hon. member for the question. The foundation connects the province's environmental leaders and provides year-round programming that engages, informs, and emboldens environmental stewardship in our

province. The Emerald awards have recognized and celebrated the outstanding environmental achievements of large and small businesses, individuals, not-for-profit associations, community groups, youth, and government groups for nearly 30 years. And, again, they're exactly the kind of people that the United Conservative Party and Alberta's new government want to partner with to work on conservation.

## 2:40 Rural Crime Prevention and Law Enforcement

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, crime continues to be an ongoing issue for my constituents within Highwood as well as all over rural Alberta. After numerous town halls and conversations with residents, rural Albertans want the government to address skyrocketing crime rates in rural communities. There is mounting frustration all over Alberta but especially in rural communities that crimes are being committed by repeat offenders. To the Minister of Justice: what do you intend to do to stop the current revolving door of our justice system?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, this is the number one issue that I hear about from rural Albertans. I also want to thank the hon. member for his leadership on this matter and continued thoughtful advocacy on this. Over the last four years, we've seen crime rates skyrocket across so many of our rural communities. We are committed to ensuring that our law enforcement officials have the tools necessary to do their jobs. We're going to create police/Crown high-risk and repeat offender units in each judicial district to provide recommendations for early release for repeat and high-risk offenders. We're also going to be putting forward our public's right to know act.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the strain on policing is increasing as the scope of their duties continues to expand, including the requirements of policing cannabis, to the Minister of Justice: what are your plans to ensure adequate funding for rural police enforcement?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, unlike previous governments that wanted to hand out free light bulbs, we're going to be making sure that our police officers have the resources they need to do their jobs. We're going to be making sure that ALERT has funding of \$50 million to tackle drugs but also making sure that we tackle gang activities across Alberta. We're going to make sure that our police and prosecutors have the tools they need to do their jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood has the call.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As rural areas are geographically vast, there's a growing frustration about long response times to 911 calls to help rural Albertans protect themselves, their loved ones, and their property. To the Minister of Justice: what steps are you willing to take to deal with the long response times in rural areas so residents finally feel safe?

**The Speaker:** The Minister . . .

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yeah. It takes two years to investigate a leadership race.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar will see that the Speaker is on his feet, and as such he will keep his comments to himself.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that we'll be implementing the United Conservative Party's Alberta crime strategy. We're going to be expanding the use of electronic monitoring technology to ensure that law enforcement is able to respond more quickly. We're also going to be reviewing the Crown policy manual to ensure that we take into consideration the challenges faced in rural Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. I'm not sure if we would like 30 seconds to head to the lounges or if everyone would like to stay and observe the points of order. Perhaps I'll give those who would like to head out just a couple of brief seconds to do so. [interjections]

Hon. members, please take your conversations to the lobbies. I believe that the Government House Leader rose first.

## Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have several points of order today. Some of them we may be able to roll into one, but the first point of order that I rise on will not be able to be rolled into some of the other ones that happened afterwards.

I rise first today under 23(h), (i), and (j) in regard to the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in this place today. I believe that her actions create disorder when she does this, and I will describe what I'm talking about momentarily, Mr. Speaker, but I wanted to refer you to the standing order.

Unfortunately, we've seen the Leader of the Opposition do this outside of this Chamber to you. The reality is that you have been elected as the Speaker of this Chamber. When you rise and take control of the House, we must respect that even when I disagree with you and the same for the Leader of the Opposition. She again, in that moment that I called that point of order, challenged your authority. I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that that creates disorder in this place. I was shocked to see her do that on Twitter or in press releases in the past, but that's not relevant to this Chamber. I'll grant you that.

That behaviour needs to stop. It's unbecoming of a Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, it's inappropriate, and it is causing trouble inside this Chamber. I would ask that you correct members to make sure that they respect your authority, particularly when you're standing up.

There's a standing order to question your decisions. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is welcome to use that. I used it last night, 13(2), in case she's unaware of it. That is the appropriate process to deal with that.

We must respect the chair, or we will have the things that we've seen take place in this House today.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your interjections. I'm not sure that I need your assistance on this particular interjection, Opposition House Leader. I think the Speaker is very well equipped to decide when a point of order is indeed necessary with respect to challenging the chair. I think we've seen on a number of occasions the Speaker perhaps more than willing to do so with respect to interjecting when people have made comments that may or may not have been directed towards the chair. As such, this is not a point of order.

The Official Opposition House Leader.

## Point of Order Oral Question Period Practices Addressing Questions through the Chair

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's interesting. I rise on a point order under 23(h), (i), (j), and I think what we saw

today is the Government House Leader jumping up on countless points of order which weren't, in fact, points of order. I mean, it appears to me that the Government House Leader actually thinks he has your job, which is to ensure that there is decorum in the place. That is not the role of any other member, to be telling members or scolding them on what they do. Quite frankly, what the Government House Leader is doing is infringing on members' rights to express themselves in this place. If they do cross a line, then you will call them to order or such.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to be arguing a number of different things because the Government House Leader popped up about 15 times, and I think, quite frankly, many of those were because he didn't like the fact that the opposition is holding the government to account and asking tough questions. That is our job, as the Government House Leader knows very, very well, and I will argue in subsequent points of order that how our opposition is acting is no different than the Government House Leader's caucus when they were in opposition. Yet somehow now the shoe is on the other foot, and we shouldn't be asking pointed questions to the government. I think the Government House Leader needs to review the point of question period and how this place works.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Are you handling this, or do you want me to respond to it?

**The Speaker:** Yeah. I will organize how we do points of orders around here.

I might just add, you know, that I didn't require an intervention from the Official Opposition House Leader on the first point of order. I'm not convinced that I need an intervention from the Government House Leader on this particular point of order.

The Opposition House Leader will be very well aware that any member can call a point of order at any point in time should they feel as though one is warranted. In addition, the Speaker may also interject and call a member or the House to order whenever he or she sees fit as well. As such, there was no language that created disorder with respect to calling points of order. While you may disagree with the Government House Leader's tactics with respect to calling points of order, certainly that in itself is not a point of order.

What I will say, though, to what I believe were points of order 1 and 2 and some of the confusion that the chair may have created, as I referenced during question period – and, of course, by now you've all double-checked to see what page 610 in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* says – on a number of occasions, including in the first question, the Leader of the Official Opposition asked the question to the minister: "why are you putting your ideology . . ." Then, additionally, in the following question she said: "instead of having to fight to protect himself from you." Then, additionally, she said: "Why are you . . . literally [putting] lives in danger?"

2:50

It is not the practice to direct a question directly to a minister or member inside the Chamber, as I noted in my ruling in the middle of question period. If the Leader of the Official Opposition had chosen different words such as "Why is she," or otherwise, "putting individuals at risk," or perhaps the most appropriate path forward would be to say: why is the minister doing this? That was my interjection at the time. It did create confusion because I also used the word "she," which was inappropriate. I hope that this can rectify a number of the points of order that the Government House Leader did call, but I am happy to hear additional points of order.

I believe that that deals with points of order 1 and 2, and I'm happy to proceed to point of order 3.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I believe point of order 3 is mine, Mr. Speaker. Several of the points of order that were called today revolve around page 610 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which I think you've done a good job of addressing. I appreciate that. Again, I think it's a worthy caution that you've given the Official Opposition during question period today, and I would encourage them to adjust the way they're doing that. I could have called even more. In this place we need to work through the chair, otherwise we will continue to create discourse. As such, I will withdraw point of order 3 because I believe you have addressed it.

**The Speaker:** Point of order 4.

#### Point of Order Gestures

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** That's me as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise under 23(h), (i), and (j) for point of order 4, again in regard to the Leader of the Official Opposition. Despite what the Official Opposition House Leader may think or may be attempting to present, we on this side of the House do respect the role of the opposition. We had it not too long ago. I understand the responsibility that the opposition has inside this place, but they also have a responsibility to do that in line with the rules of this Assembly.

I'm sure she'll deny it – and that will be disappointing because I think the right way to do it is to apologize and withdraw – but the Leader of the Opposition, while again not talking through the chair, which you've just addressed, took to waving fists today at members. Now, I don't think that she was doing that in an attempt to threaten anybody or anything along those lines. I'll give her the benefit of the doubt on that. But the problem is, Mr. Speaker, again, when you go around working through you, the emotions get high, and that's what starts to happen here. It's inappropriate to do in this House, and I would ask that you ask members not to do that in the future.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, this is absurd and not a point of order. The Leader of the Official Opposition did not shake her fist. If the Government House Leader has his way, no member will open their eyes, move their hands, do anything with their hands, or anything outside of only talking when they're allowed to talk. It is ridiculous. This is not a point of order.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, like myself, talks with her hands and moves her hands around a lot. If hand waving is offensive to the hon. member, then I'm not sure how to satisfy him, other than maybe – I will refrain from what I was about to say. But Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. This is quite silly, quite frankly. The Leader of the Official Opposition was not waving her hands to cause disorder. Again, someone who talks with their hands: this is what they do. It's not a point of order. I don't know why the Government House Leader is so sensitive today to everything.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I, too, in this case agree that this isn't a point of order. I would say that – and I didn't see any gestures that were made – of course, gestures inside the Chamber can cause a point of order. Just as a cautionary tale, for example, if you were maybe making stabbing signals with your hands or something like that, that obviously would be a point of order and wildly inappropriate, but no member of the Chamber would ever do such a thing. As such, this is not a point of order.

I believe we are at point of order 5.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, point of order 5 would be the same as the page 610 issue that has just been dealt with, so we will withdraw it.



**The Speaker:** Thank you very much.

I believe points of order 5 and 6 were the same.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes. Point of order 6 would be the same.

**The Speaker:** We are at point of order 7.

#### Point of Order Preambles to Supplementary Questions

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I rise and for expediency of time will just refer you to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 510, Mr. Speaker. We could have been calling this point of order for a while – we have not, but it became particularly overboard today, so I feel obligated to call it – and that’s in regard to preambles.

Clearly, if you look at the Blues, you will see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I believe, was asking the question at that time, though it was taking place throughout today. I heard you caution a few of our members on that as well, and I would agree with that caution. Preambles are not to happen outside of the leader’s role.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader is rising, if he would like to.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, you know what? I just would like one point of clarification. I’m not sure. I missed when the Government House Leader said which standing order this is in reference to as far as how a preamble is a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think there have been examples. If the Leader of the Official Opposition failed to use the word “given,” then, you know, I’m sure that that was an oversight, similar to other members in this House on all sides who have done so in this place.

Now, we know that it is up to your discretion, Mr. Speaker, to remind members if they fail to use the word “given” in supplementals. I mean, you know, I’m happy to stand and argue on a daily basis that this is not a point of order because I have a feeling that the Government House Leader will want to talk about failures to use “given” on a daily basis. I do not think that this is a point of order, but I will remind all members of the House to use the word “given” in their supplementals.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your interjections. The Official Opposition House Leader is correct that there is no standing order on preambles. However, there are a wide, wide, wide range of Speaker’s rulings on preambles. I think, as we continue the cut and thrust of debate, your Speaker will review the previous rulings around preambles, and then, hopefully, arrive at a place where we agree.

What I might add – and perhaps the Government House Leader was referring to this – is that, you know, members of the Official Opposition did provide some level of editorial comments prior to getting to their “given,” and I think this may be a small case of the pot calling the kettle black, if I might, with respect to the Government House Leader rising on this point of order, as we’ve seen a fair amount of preambles all around the table.

So once again I would find that this is not a preamble, but I do caution all members with respect to editorial comments prior to getting to their “given.”

Number 8.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I’ve lost track. I don’t have a number 8. It was probably another page 610.

**The Speaker:** I’ll consider it withdrawn.

Are there any other points of order to be raised?

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Oh, thank goodness.

**Mr. Bilous:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I thought we got into the double digits there. I apologize for that.

#### Point of Order Restrictions on Oral Questions

**Mr. Bilous:** I rise on a point of order under 23(h), (i), (j). The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka’s questions were, first of all, a member’s statement turned into a set of questions, even admitted by the member himself to one of our members, which I found interesting. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, question period should be used to be asking questions about government policy, not speaking about a reverent old constituent in their riding.

The fact that this gentleman received an award – I congratulate him – has nothing to do with government policy, quite frankly. Really, the crux of it, Mr. Speaker, is that question period is a very important tool that private members have to ask Executive Council questions. It is coveted time, especially by the opposition. This is one of our only ways to derive information and hold the government to account. When members use questions frivolously and members’ statements are turned into a question that has nothing to do with holding the government to account, I think, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it is disrespectful to this place as it is wasting the time of our members.

Thank you.

3:00

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I fail to see where 23(h), (i), and (j) has any connection to what the Official Opposition House Leader just referred to. I think that was a bit of a stretch today. For somebody who spent a considerable amount of time, the last few minutes, accusing us of stretching, he almost became six foot eight like me. He just stretched so far with that one.

The reality is that if you look at the Blues, you’ll see that there are some clear answers referring to government policy and the intention of this government to work with people like Mr. Dahl. This government also supports many of the programs that were involved in that award ceremony. There are lots of connections to the government. I know that the hon. member may be disappointed that the other hon. member wanted to ask a question about his constituent related to government policy, but the reality is that this is not a point of order. Certainly, the references that the Opposition House Leader just referred to have absolutely nothing to do with what he talked about.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, House leadership. I would suggest that both House leaders in this case brought forward some relatively important points. I would just like to highlight that, you know, the Government House Leader is correct that perhaps this isn’t language that creates disorder given the jovial nature of the lovely gentleman in the constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka. Perhaps he would have liked to refer to *Beauchesne’s* 409(11), where it speaks specifically about government policy.

A question which seeks an opinion about government policy is probably out of order in that it asks for an opinion and not information. A question asking for a general statement of government policy may be out of order in that it requires a long answer.

It goes on to say:

Other questions inevitably deal with government policy and the general restrictions regarding such questions have [not yet] been applied.

There are some significant references with respect to government policy. I am sympathetic to the Official Opposition House Leader in this case as I would say that the connection to government policy was loose at best.

Having said that, private members will make a determination about what is important when it comes to holding the government to account. I would encourage all private members to do their best with respect to holding the government to account and ensuring that it is, in fact, about government policy.

Having said that, Orders of the Day.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 4 Red Tape Reduction Act

[Adjourned debate June 4: Ms Sweet]

**The Speaker:** Are there any wishing to speak to the bill? I see the Official Opposition House Leader rising in debate.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and speak to Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act. Now, the idea, I guess, behind reviewing regulations from a business lens to see if there are regs that are unnecessarily placing a barrier on business I think is important. I can tell you that our government did that with every single regulation. We didn't need to create a whole new ministry and then staff it, actually creating more red tape to review red tape, which is what I'm hearing from Albertans when they heard about the creation of this ministry but also of this bill.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I find it interesting that, you know, the government during the election said one thing, and this bill actually says something different. During the election they had promised to reduce regulations by a third. Now, I don't support a sweeping elimination of tens of thousands of regulations. Quite frankly, I think, Mr. Speaker, that the associate minister got a little bit better of an understanding when he became an associate minister of how many regulations there are in existence. Broadly eliminating a third could impact the health, the well-being, the safety of Albertans, whether it's food handling or usage or around equipment and safety within our health space, protecting our environment. You know, regulations aren't all bad. In this bill we now have a promise to create, I believe, a committee, but the questions that I have for the minister – the bill talks about red tape reduction yet doesn't define red tape.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, something I'm very proud to have done when I was the minister of economic development and trade, Madam Speaker, was to travel the province and speak with chambers of commerce, speak with economic developers and other business owners and business groups, small and large. One of my first questions for them when the term "red tape" would be brought up – I would say: "Great. You know what? I'm all ears. I'm happy to look at any regulation that you bring to my attention. What is being so burdensome and cumbersome to businesses? What is being cost prohibitive; what is slowing down the process?" And you know what? It was on a rare occasion that a stakeholder was able to articulate which regulation was causing such burden.

Now, I can tell you that when it was raised, I happily brought it back to the cabinet table, and we had a thorough discussion, just like we did with every regulation that came across the cabinet table. We viewed it as the role of the whole Executive Council to be reviewing every regulation to see if it's continuing to serve its purpose, if it's no longer relevant, what implications and impacts it's having be it on our job creators or Albertans, and: could it be either amended or discarded? We did that on an ongoing basis, Madam Speaker. You know, we didn't believe that we should just keep regulations because that's how we always used to do it.

What I found interesting, especially going in front of chambers of commerce, is that they would often reference red tape. I would ask them to present to me the specific regulations that we could work on. The challenge, Madam Speaker, is that to say that there's just a whole bunch of red tape, that doesn't identify the problem, so it makes it very difficult for one to address it or fix it. If a specific regulation is outlined, then working toward that would be useful.

I'll give you a great example, Madam Speaker, something that I was working on with the Canadian free trade agreement that was renegotiated under our government. I'm very proud to be the minister that renegotiated the new Canadian free trade agreement, which replaced the agreement on internal trade. A number of tables were struck, and one of them was regulatory harmonization. I can tell you that we worked on a number of different regulations, some that really made no sense. A great example is that across the country little dairy creamers come in different shapes and sizes. Different provinces have different regulations on what those shapes and sizes are. So imagine that you or your family owns a dairy farm. You produce this cream, and you want to sell it to customers across Canada. You have to have different packaging depending on which province you're selling to. If you're wondering why the heck that was, we asked the same question. It seems a little ridiculous. Now, that is a cost burden on the producer; it is unnecessary red tape, I would argue, and we worked with provinces across the country.

That's a specific example, but when it isn't defined, what might be red tape to one person might be an environmental protection or assurance that there are protections to another. In this bill there is no specificity, so we don't have targets, we don't have timelines, and we don't have procedures to ensure both transparency and accountability, which I think is really, really important.

The other thing that I would have loved to see is a process or a mechanism by which Albertans, including the opposition, can weigh in and evaluate which potential regulations the government is looking at either amending or omitting. I think it's important to have a sober second thought. That's one of the roles of the Official Opposition, Madam Speaker. That's something that I hope the associate minister will be able to respond to when we get into Committee of the Whole. What is the oversight on which regulations are being debated or are on the chopping block, and is there an opportunity for Albertans to weigh in or for different organizations to weigh in on that? These are some of the questions that I have.

3:10

So far from what I've seen, this bill and the talking points of the minister are, of course, something that's very popular and populist. I mean, businesses obviously want to cut costs where they can, and if there are unnecessary costs, they're happy to look at ways to eliminate them, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but I think it's incumbent upon the government to ensure that they're having a conversation with Albertans as far as what the specific regulations are, what their purpose is or was, and what the impact is of either changing or eliminating certain regulations not only to that sector but, even more broadly, to all Albertans, Madam Speaker.

I can tell you that one of the other things that I worked on with the former Minister of Energy was working with the Alberta Energy Regulator to look at how they can try to process applications in a much more expedient manner. I recognized and our government recognized that there were some projects that were waiting years for an answer. You know what? That's not right, and that bothered our government as well. We recognized that capital moves much quicker than governments do, and companies that are looking at making significant investments need answers and need answers quickly. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that this is exactly why I worked very closely with the Member for Lethbridge-West, the former Minister of Environment and Parks, and with the former Energy minister – I guess I can say her name now – Marg McCuaig-Boyd to work with municipalities in areas in the province that wanted to create industrial zones or industrial parks. It took a little time. It took maybe a little longer than what we had hoped.

I can tell you of a great example, Madam Speaker. In the Grande Prairie region you have the trimunicipal partnership between the county of Grande Prairie, the city of Grande Prairie, and the MD of Greenview. They worked diligently for a period of time and struck an agreement on cost sharing and revenue sharing, which was something that I was a big advocate of even four years ago when I was first Minister of Municipal Affairs: getting municipalities to collaborate with each other in order to compete on the international stage. The reality is that Alberta is trying to attract investment and companies, like every other jurisdiction around this globe.

We know that we have significant competitive advantages over many different jurisdictions, but something that I heard from companies often was that if there was a way to shorten the time for them to go from inquiring about making an investment to actually having that final investment decision and shovels in the ground, that would make a huge difference. So we worked with the trimunicipal partnership and were successful in initiating a model that, I can tell you, other municipal leaders in other regions of the province have asked for and wanted to emulate, getting as close as possible to a plug and play model.

Now, again, recognizing that there are certain regulations, certain processes that need to be met depending on what type of industry it is, that there are environmental approvals that need to be given, we discovered that there definitely is a way to do some streamlining and to improve efficiency and shorten the times of this, which will and did make Alberta more competitive as far as attracting investment. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that that is something that was concrete that we were very proud of, but I can tell you that we didn't need to create a whole new ministry in order to do it, nor did we need to bring in legislation to do it. We had the tools and means at our disposal. Those are the types of concrete actions that we took.

You know, I look forward to the associate minister responding to some specific examples, which I think all members of the House would be very interested to sink their teeth into as far as let's look at what stakeholders, what businesses and associations have been coming to the minister to say: these are some of our concerns; help us address them. Again, I think there is and always is room for improvement and ways to help our industry and our business community be even more competitive. Absolutely. What we're looking for here is more details, where this bill is very, very thin. I'm tempted to poke fun at myself in one of the bills that I brought forward early on in my term. Members that were in this place during that time will know what I'm talking to. But the importance is – it's important, Madam Speaker.

You know, I guess, some of the concern that my colleagues have, quite frankly, is what could be on the chopping block. We have some examples, Madam Speaker. You know what? The former

Prime Minister of Canada back in 2011 announced a red tape reduction commission. They called on the government to take action to reduce burdens on business, making it easier to do business with regulators, improving service and predictability.

Now, in 2015 legislation was brought forward to establish a 20 per cent red tape cut and a one-to-one rule, meaning every new reg that was proposed must be matched with an equivalent burden somewhere else. Now, what's sad, Madam Speaker, is that there were a number of areas where there were significant changes made which had a detrimental effect.

On food inspections, Madam Speaker, the former Harper government cut \$56 million from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Of course, CFIA is the federal body that inspects all food across this country to ensure that it's safe. They had to lay off a hundred inspectors. Now, this reverse staffing measure was put in place in response to the deadly listeriosis . . .

**Ms Phillips:** Listeria.

**Mr. Bilous:** . . . listeria outbreak in 2008 in which 22 Canadians died. There are examples, Madam Speaker, where when there are cutbacks made to the very agencies and bodies that are meant to oversee and protect Canadians, it backfires and there have been more causes of challenges.

You know, Madam Speaker, there are a number of examples of other governments across this country that have attempted such things. Here's an example. The Premier . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was interested in some of the other jurisdictions that the hon. member was discussing, and I'm wondering if he can provide the House with more information and more context so that we can all understand the potential outcomes, negative consequences, unintended consequences of this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'll thank the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West for that question. I mean, that's really what I think the crux of some of the concerns is: what are the potential unintended consequences? Again, the bill doesn't have a lot of detail, has some sweeping, vague outcomes but doesn't really share with Albertans and with this House how it's going to get there.

3:20

The example I wanted to use – there are a number of them, but I'll just use this one example. Premier Ford over in Ontario in December of last year – so this is very recent – introduced the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act.

It set a target of 25 per cent reduction in regs over four years and requires provincial approvals for job-creating projects to occur. Part of the challenge, Madam Speaker: the government of Ontario is loosening the ratios of children in daycare. These were restrictions put in place after a number of tragic deaths occurred. This is the staffing ratio of what is appropriate for the number of kids in a daycare to the staff, and they loosened that significantly because that was seen as a burden to daycares. I'll tell you this much. If my nephews and nieces are in a daycare with a growing number of other students and pupils with fewer staff, I have grave concerns over that. This is about the safety and well-being of children. Here's an

example of a bill that had great intentions, but this is one of the consequences or unintended consequences of a bill of this nature without detail to be debated in this place and in front of Albertans.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you that there are economists and advocates and researchers that have argued that deregulation under the guise of reducing red tape often has hurt workers and doesn't actually lead to job creation and improved wages. Now, again, I'll put a caveat on that comment because that is also a broad, sweeping comment. I think, really, the crux of my questions for the minister really are around, again, the targets, the timelines, when it will be implemented, the procedures, more clarity around what regulations. What is the process upon reviewing, publishing, and amending or omitting those regulations? How can Albertans, including members of the opposition and other private members, have an opportunity to be part of these conversations?

With that, Madam Speaker, I will take my seat but wanted to comment on not just the spirit and intention of this – I do appreciate where the minister is coming from – but my concerns with the bill in its current form. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any more comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to this bill and to offer some reflections around the regulatory role of government in respect to the environment, keeping people safe, keeping the environment safe. It would seem to me that this bill provides another layer of work for people in the public service. It provides another seat around the cabinet table, perhaps for reasons of geographic representation, provides another person with a fleet car to drive around Alberta in. It doesn't actually provide for a real assessment of regulatory reduction. This is, in fact, a shell of a bill that contains within it no targets, timelines. It doesn't even define what government considers to be red tape.

Madam Speaker, you know, it's kind of funny that it's actually duplicative. Calling upon the minister to prepare a report on an annual basis is something that can and is done within ministry annual reports and ministry business plans. Setting out performance metrics for individual departments that they must adhere to and must report publicly on is within ministry business plans. This is well known to the members of the current government and members of Executive Council given that they served in opposition and queried those very annual reports and business plans during the course of estimates debate and committee debate. Having to prepare yet another report: well, that sounds like excessive bureaucracy to me. What we have done is that we've laid out an empty shell of a bill so that we can provide another well-paid position to someone around the cabinet table with no specific job to do.

Now, certainly, there have been cases in the environment area where we had work to do around regulatory backlog. When we came into government in 2015, there was a tremendous backlog of Water Act approvals, Madam Speaker. They were considerable, and they were causing angst, certainly among municipalities who had concerns about lengthy timelines and the ability to get projects done. Sometimes Water Act approvals were taking just an excessively long time for people to do simple things like replace a culvert. That was absolutely true, so we got down to work and we rolled up our sleeves. We brought in some new technology to deal with some of these Water Act approvals, particularly those that were more routine in nature. We made sure that we had a Water Act approvals blitz during the seasons when municipalities would not miss their construction window while they were waiting for

approvals, typically in sort of the early year, early spring. We reduced that Water Act approval backlog, Madam Speaker. It took a couple of years.

But here's the thing. You didn't need an extra minister to do it. You didn't need an extra piece of legislation to do it. You didn't need an extra report to do it. You didn't need an extra team of bureaucrats to do it. What you needed was people to listen to stakeholders and then direct departments and for ministers to show up and do their job. It also helped, I think, Madam Speaker, that we didn't have a revolving door of environment ministers anymore given the palace intrigue that defined 44 years of PC rule, at least the tail end of it, in this province. What it required was people to be serious about the governance of this place. We cleared up that backlog. We'll see, if there are big layoffs to the civil service, whether that backlog will re-emerge because part of it was about that.

Now, there are a number of areas in which I have concerns that this bill and this minister in particular will take a run at public safety and environmental protection in this province, Madam Speaker. I worry about the Water Act, the Water Act that protects Water Act licence holders to the first-in-time, first-in-right system, that protects investments in irrigation, that protects farmers. I worry about any wholesale deregulation of the Water Act. The Water Act is a careful balance. It is not a creature of the previous NDP government. It wasn't even a creature of, necessarily, the previous PC government. It was actually a creature of the Klein government. Lorne Taylor brought in the Water Act. It was very difficult work, very difficult balancing work. Going at those regulations in a way that is not thoughtful, that doesn't understand the knock-on effects on the environment or the business climate can be very, very damaging to southern Alberta, and I will be the first person watching for that and holding this government to account.

I'll be watching for the role of watershed councils, who play an important role, Madam Speaker. They're enabled within the Water Act, but they also must be funded in order to be able to do their multistakeholder work. I'll be watching for that because they are an important check on how the Water Act is actually being administered and how public safety is actually moving along.

I'll be watching for air quality, Madam Speaker, both in the funding of the airshed councils, absolutely, but also on Alberta's performance relative to the Canadian ambient air quality standards. Why does this matter? Well, our government took action on Canadian ambient air quality standards to reduce pollution and ensure public health. We did this in consultation with industry via the airshed councils, but, again, this is very delicate work and cannot be achieved through a vague bill or a misunderstanding of environmental law.

I cast my mind back to estimates debates, where I was asked by members who now sit on the government caucus side what things like PM 2.5 were, particulate matter. On the record I told the member to google it in an estimates debate because the question was ridiculous and revealed a fundamental misunderstanding of the world around him, Madam Speaker. Those are the folks who are now going to be taking a pass at our air quality standards, so I worry about that.

I worry about public land transfers, Madam Speaker. We have already seen sweeping statements by the Premier about public land transfers, which deeply worried rural municipalities in southern Alberta who are home in their public land to some of our last tracts of native grasslands, and they want to protect those. I'm speaking here in particular of the MD of Taber, that has a public land transfer before the minister of environment right now. We want to make sure that those are done with the highest degree of environmental protection.

3:30

Madam Speaker, I worry about oil sands monitoring. One of the first acts – it was the first act – that I brought in as environment minister was to ensure that oil sands monitoring had integrity to it. The Chief Scientist had the role of reporting to the public, not to the minister. He has a role that protects his scientific independence, and I worry that this bill will be used as an excuse to undermine the good work that we have all done as industry and as government to rehabilitate Alberta's environmental monitoring reputation in the oil sands and restore scientific integrity and scientific independence. This is a difficult thing for a government to do that is home to a number of people who have questioned the science of climate change. Certainly, I'll be watching for that.

I'll be watching, Madam Speaker, for regulations that change overland flows, wetlands replacement – I'll be watching for those as well – for regulations governing drinking water because that is what keeps people safe. When we went through this in the province of Ontario – and we watched this all go down in the 1990s, everybody who went and embraced the concept of deregulation with such enthusiasm – we saw people die in the Walkerton tragedy. So I worry about that, especially seeing as I do recall having to answer a set of questions from people sitting now on the government side about AHS drinking water standards and facilities having to adhere to them and why they had to do that. That is of concern.

Finally, I will speak to the question of dam safety. After the Obed mine disaster, Madam Speaker – and I will just refresh the House's memory. After there was a dam spill, about 670 million litres of waste went into the Athabasca River in 2013. It was the second-biggest coal spill in Canada, seriously contaminated the Athabasca River, forced a number of major communities to stop drawing from it. In the wake of that, we found that there was no regularized dam safety regulation for inspections and enforcement, so we brought in new dam safety standards to ensure oversight and monitoring of tailings dams, public reporting on this information. We did this in consultation with industry. It took two years. What I worry about is that any wholesale and ill-advised and ill-informed run at regulations like these will not protect the public, will not protect the investments that companies have made, and will go backwards because Alberta is now a world leader in dam safety. We need to ensure that those kinds of standards remain in place.

Madam Speaker, I think I have sufficiently informed the House about potential unintended consequences of this bill. Of course, it's hard to say because the bill is such a shell. It doesn't actually lay out anything. It makes the minister write a report, so that means he has to hire some people to write a report. He has to make sure that there's a team of bureaucrats to come and brief him, people who could be briefing existing ministers. What we have here is a bit of a hood ornament of a bill, to quote Brian Mason, in terms of governments doing things that really have no practical use to them, but they are to satisfy some call for throwing red meat to the base and providing some window dressing. The issue here is that unintended consequences can and may happen given the ideological orientation and respect for science that prevails among some folks in this House.

I would urge the government to define what red tape actually is in their endeavours, and perhaps, Madam Speaker, we can query that and provide some more clarity for the people of Alberta around this loosely defined bill that appears to have no real practical effect or purpose for the people of Alberta, at least yet, in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate listening to my colleague the former Minister of Environment and Parks, who, of course, listed a couple of examples of very important regulations and how they are protecting not just Albertans, whether it's their health and safety, but also protecting our environment, our ecology, whether it's the wetlands, the mountains, and other important locations throughout the province. I wanted to ask the Member for Lethbridge-West: what are some other examples of critical regulations that could be on the chopping block because of this bill? We don't have any specificity in the bill or any specific examples for that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the issues that I do worry about is around the wetlands regulation, wetlands replacement. Now, world-wide we find that about 88 per cent, I believe, of wetlands have been lost. Wetlands are, of course, critical for biodiversity, and they are critical for, essentially, managing water on the landscape. They are the Earth's natural sponge, and they are critical for flood protection of communities as well.

In Alberta we find that about 90 per cent of our wetlands have been filled in in some way, shape, or form. That is why there was a wetland replacement regulation. It's a very complicated regulation, and it's just been changed. In and around 2013 it was changed, and there were a number of different processes that had to then follow that regulatory change that the previous, previous government made. Again, that was the product of a tremendous amount of consultation, in particular with municipalities but, of course, obviously, with property developers, proponents of various transportation projects, and others.

Of course, there is a wetlands replacement fund, Madam Speaker. That wetlands replacement fund is doled out in a specific manner within the regulation, and a number of different groups, in particular Ducks Unlimited, assist the government in our work in ensuring environmental integrity on the landscape.

Now, why is this so important? As we build out more, as our cities grow, one of the things that we find: as climate change changes, our weather patterns and water events become more frequent and severe – we saw this in 2013 in Calgary – and water moves faster. When we have more wetlands, we are holding it on the landscape rather than it flowing into your basement, Madam Speaker. That is one of the things that we regulate in this province, how we replace wetlands, how we make sure that the Earth can perform its functions as a natural sponge so that we can go around performing our functions of building the economy and building a good life for our families. Certainly, that is a regulatory environment that is the product of a lot of consultation with ENGOS like Ducks Unlimited, nonprofits, and others.

Now, another one is the proceeds of public land sales, Madam Speaker. Historically, those have gone to conservation organizations that are called land trusts, and they undertake certain initiatives to ensure that not public land but private land is appropriately conserved. The conservation notation is affixed to it, and that notation then follows the property. I am concerned that if there is a big kick at the Public Lands Act, land trusts will then be thrust into a more uncertain environment. Many of their undertakings are multiyear in process and sometimes involve multigenerations of ranchers and landowners.

I think that probably the biggest concern I have with this legislation is around the delicate balance, though, of the Water Act. I referenced this earlier. You know, the Water Act, really, in a time of water stress, which we now see – we now have closed basins, the South Saskatchewan, and we're seeing a number of . . .

3:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 4. While I was listening to my colleagues as well, the concern that came to mind is that the bill, I guess, follows a promise during their campaign that they will reduce red tape. Also, I think that at that time nobody knew what that was. I guess we were hoping that there would be some discussion, some definition of what, actually, red tape means. If you look at the definition, the history of red tape, it takes you back to 16th-century Spain; it takes you back to the Cold War era. All those kinds of definitions could mean anything and everything. I think, first and foremost, that it's just a skeleton of a bill that fulfills their campaign promise so they can get up and say that they made a promise and somehow this bill fulfills it.

This bill is even more vague than what they were saying during their campaign. At least at that point they were saying that they will reduce it, cut it by one-third. Now I think it has no targets, how much they will cut. It has no timelines, when they will cut. It doesn't tell us anything about what this red tape means.

And it's not only us – that's my take – who don't understand what that means, because in question period the associate minister responsible for this was given an opportunity to talk about red tape and essentially share just one example of what he will cut and what that will look like, and the minister failed to provide even one example of what that will look like. That's how unclear this piece of legislation is. Not only this side of the House but the minister who is responsible for it wasn't able to name one piece of regulation that he sees as red tape and that would be cut. That's really unfortunate.

Instead, I guess, of cutting, what this bill does: it creates one job. That was their platform promise, that they will create more jobs. It already created one job, and it also provided the minister with the authority to create more red tape, like, I guess, a huge authority there to create regulations, essentially adding more to the red tape. That's what, on the face of it, this bill is doing. During that campaign I think that they made those promises, I guess, without thinking too much, considering too much about it, and this legislation clearly shows that they didn't think about what that means at that time. They were just making vague and empty promises, and clearly this bill shows that they didn't consider it then, and they don't know now what it will look like.

For instance, if we talk about improving efficiency, improving processes, there's an agreement in place called the New West Partnership trade agreement. What that agreement allows: it allows businesses, business corporations to register in one province, one jurisdiction like Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan – now Manitoba is part of that agreement as well – and be able to, I guess, get your corporation registered in others, too, without essentially filling out all the forms again and again in all four jurisdictions.

I will say that that agreement certainly reduced red tape, cut down the process, and all those things. But here I think we have no indication whatsoever of how their red tape reduction will work although it acknowledges that "a consistent, transparent and efficient system of regulatory and administrative requirements is necessary to protect the public interest." If we are to protect the public interest, we acknowledge that there is need for a consistent

and transparent manner, and regulations certainly help achieve those goals.

But their piece on regulation: it has no definition, which should have been there for members of this House to understand what that entails. There should have been some target. They at least could have added some timelines. Just creating more regulations, creating a report after a year, starting by 2020: I don't see how that saves us time, how that saves us money, how that saves us resources, and how it's encouraging investment or boosting Alberta's competitiveness and all those things that they were also promising during their campaign.

I think what it's doing is exactly the opposite. By creating this ministry, they are putting more work on the public service, that will now be reviewing it and creating a report. It's in no way saving us time. By blowing resources in creating these reports, which I guess any minister could have looked into – and many of our colleagues, when they were in government, did look into the processes and how they improve those processes – it's not saving us any money or resources.

For instance, in Community and Social Services we looked into the process for AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped. At that time I think the AISH form was somewhere around 23 pages. The public service looked into that application. They figured out what information was duplicated, and they took that out. They figured out that we don't need to have a two-step process; all the forms can be handed to clients for their eligibility for their medical at one time. They can be explained through the creation of guidelines to fill out those forms, so we did that. Eventually we came up with a form which may still be a bit long – it's 16 pages – but it's an improvement on the existing form, that then contained 23 pages.

Similarly, there were complaints about how Alberta Supports offices and Alberta Works offices are handling incoming Albertans, what those timelines. Essentially, there were no specific set timelines. So very brief standards were created, essentially four standards: that when you come in, you will be seen that day, and they will have to report on it; if you have booked an appointment, you will be given an appointment within a certain time; if you are approved, within a certain time you will get your funds or supports that you need. That's an improvement on the process. We didn't need to create an additional ministry to look at those things because as ministers, as government, that's part of your job. You are given a job; you are given a mandate. You are asked to do that as best you can, and you always try to improve on those things, try to find efficiencies.

3:50

I don't think that a separate ministry created to find efficiencies will be in a better position than the minister who is in charge of the file. Like, that's counterintuitive. I can't find the rationale that if I was responsible for a department for four years, an associate minister from outside will have a better look into my ministry, into my regulations, into my processes. I don't buy that argument, and I can say that for any of my colleagues; for instance, the Minister of Environment and Parks. Even while sitting at the cabinet table, I wouldn't know her files as well as that minister would know them. The Minister of Advanced Education: same thing. And I'm sure that applies, or should apply in theory, to all the ministers on the other side, too. They don't need to source out that part of the job. They don't need somebody with a bureaucracy, with a department, with a budget and all those perks to come and tell them: hey, this regulation doesn't work, and let me cut it for you.

I think it's also somewhat, I guess, subsidizing the responsibility of that minister. He or she is not looking into those processes. He

or she is not doing his or her job properly if he doesn't know where to improve, what to cut, where they can bring in efficiencies, where they can find savings. From that standpoint, I think it's very strange to source out that job of the minister to another minister, who will certainly not have that kind of access into and that kind of information about some other minister's office and processes.

From that standpoint, it wastes money. It wastes resources. I think they use investment in everything, but I don't know how it encourages investment in Alberta without knowing what they are going to cut. Are they targeting certain ministries, where every minister is, I guess, responsible to report to that associate minister? Processes are not at all clear. What it does, I think, at best, is that it creates more red tape. Also, the bill uses certain terms that can be interpreted in many different ways. For instance, it is saying that we are moving from a process-based approach to an outcome-based approach.

My extended family are in small business: pizza shops, those things. For instance, when they build a store, there's a process. They will negotiate a lease in an area where you can have that kind of business, and once you construct that shop, there are certain processes that you will follow. You need to have a business licence. You need to have a health inspection. You need to have inspections from plumbers, all those things. Like, these are the things that guarantee that there are transparent procedures in place that are regulating things in a way that's taking into account the public interest, public health, and that all those things are accounted for and that there are some kinds of measures and safeguards in place that will ensure that. That's why we do it every year or every three years. Those kinds of processes are in place. But, again, this piece of legislation doesn't say if those things will be looked into.

With respect to approval of projects, those things that they talked about, not in this bill but in their campaign: again, I don't see any kind of targets, any kind of hint in this piece of legislation. Yes, it uses those buzzwords that they were using before, but I think that at this point we need to stop this rhetoric, these campaign-style things, and stop putting those things into all legislation. I think that at this point Albertans deserve better. Albertans deserve clarity. They need action. They need to see, if that was the promise that was made, how exactly they will cut red tape, what exactly they view as red tape, how long that will take, and tie them to some kind of outcomes for how it's helping us to attract investment, how it's helping us to encourage job creation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? I recognize the hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I heard some interesting comments from the last speaker. There are a few questions that come to mind. The hon. member was looking for examples of red tape. I suppose an example of red tape might be when you bring a company out from Ontario to change a light bulb and they've got to visit a house in Alberta twice to change one light bulb, and then they take the light bulb out that was already working, after they make two visits to take the one light bulb out. I would call that red tape. I would imagine the hon. member might even call that red tape though the hon. member supported it when they were government. In fact, not only did they support it, but they paid for it, and they made Albertans pay for it with the carbon tax. There's one example.

We heard commentary here. Actually, I found it interesting that the hon. member thought that keeping a promise that we made during the election was a bad thing. Madam Speaker, on this side of the House we're kind of of the opinion that keeping your promises is a good thing. It might have been out of fashion with the

previous government. We kind of feel differently. We feel like Albertans have a right to expect that we will do or try to do the things that we said, yet the hon. member was talking about it as if it was a bad thing to keep our promises. So I would make that comment on what I heard.

I also heard comments here today about the knock-on effects of regulations. I wonder sometimes what the hon. member would think about that, about the knock-on effects, for example, of the previous government's radical minimum wage increase from \$12 to \$15 in a very short period of time during a bad economy, which led us to record unemployment amongst young people, absolute record unemployment among young Alberta males between 15 and 25, higher than it's ever been in the history of Alberta. I would call that a knock-on effect of a bad policy, and perhaps others might refer to it as red tape.

Madam Speaker, you know, I think it's important that we do think about the knock-on effects. We heard comments about that today. I think we need to think about the knock-on effects, for example, of the carbon tax. The knock-on effects make buying groceries more expensive for every Albertan no matter how poor they are or no matter how rich they are. There is a knock-on effect of a bad regulation that our government has already moved on in our efforts to reduce red tape, the fact that the carbon tax makes every business less competitive and more expensive in Alberta compared to all the surrounding provinces. I guess there's no way to put an exact number on the thousands of jobs that that has cost Alberta families as a knock-on effect of bad regulation and red tape. I wonder what the hon. member thinks about that part of red tape.

It takes me down the road to where one might wonder what the knock-on effect was with Bill 6, when it made farm families feel insecure on their farms, not knowing whether they were going to be able to exist, when they already had insurance in many cases for their employees and they were forced to take a second insurance policy out without the government bothering to find out how good their first insurance was. I think there are probably farm families in Alberta that would have referred to that as red tape. Madam Speaker, I wonder what the hon. member thinks about these things.

I wonder about the red tape in the form of a court order to stop construction in the Weaselhead as part of the ring road, something that the previous government ignored. I guess they thought that was red tape, that court order protecting the environment. Apparently, they considered it red tape, though they haven't bothered mentioning it in this debate here today.

4:00

They don't seem to have a lot of enthusiasm for removing red tape, but I guess I would ask the hon. member how he feels about all of these things, particularly – I heard a comment about Alberta's reputation. Well, I would say that the knock-on effect of the previous Premier of this province calling Alberta the embarrassing cousin might be inconvenient, and that might cause less business to be had here in Alberta although they didn't consider that to be red tape.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to talk about the Red Tape Reduction Act. When this bill was introduced, I had constituents reach out to seek clarity around what this meant, and honestly I'm not able to provide clarity. The bill has no targets, no timelines, and what's worse is that it doesn't even offer a definition of what red tape is. What it does give is the associate minister the ability to create new regulations and amend existing

ones, which, to me, seems to be red tape in itself. It seems that a process of setting up more bureaucracy to reduce bureaucracy is what's happening here with this Red Tape Reduction Act.

I agree with what my neighbour here had mentioned about each ministry currently having the ability to look within their own ministry to determine what is working and what isn't working. We rely heavily on our stakeholders and our community members and Albertans to come to us to identify what's working and what's not working. An entire ministry shouldn't be needed to do that, and without clarity of what that is, it's a little bit concerning. It seems that anything at this point is open to be targeted, and it's a little bit unsettling, I can say.

I know I'm proud of some of the efficiencies that we introduced over the last four years, some of them about consumer protections specifically. We were able to really strengthen areas in consumer protection, making sure that this was a priority. We wanted to be able to ensure that people who just want to go to a concert are able to do so. We banned the ticket-buying bots and improved consumer access to refunds from resellers. I know that being able to buy concert tickets should be something that's fun and exciting and not be a challenge, looking at all of these bots that were purchasing them up and then reselling them at a higher price. I know that that was something that was important to many of the people in my community. They were grateful that that was now being protected.

We did the legislation around payday lending. We put an end to the 600 per cent interest rates on payday loans, to help prevent people from becoming trapped in a cycle of debt. We know that that happens. When people need to look for other sources of income, they often turn to some of these payday lending places, and we were able to ensure that they had better protections. We know that now, today, the payday loan borrowers pay lower fees, they have more time to pay off their loans, and they are paying them off in smaller instalments, which makes it a little bit easier when you need to take out a loan.

We talked a lot about the door-to-door sales in my community, and I had a lot of people expressing a lot of gratitude for that. It was something that people came to us and expressed concern about, so we listened, and the Minister of Service Alberta did something about it. A separate Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction wasn't needed because that was something that was in her ministry at the time to directly have an impact on.

What we did was that when we heard concerns and ideas for putting in just some sort of strategies in reductions to help reduce some of the barriers, we were able to do them within that ministry itself. It's just a little confusing why they would want to add an associate minister to look at this when each minister across the floor has the ability to do that within their own ministry, and I would suggest that they should be quite capable to be able to look at their own ministry and know it well enough to be able to identify what some of the concerns are and where some of the strengths would be to enhance the reduction of some of these barriers.

Another thing that we did that I know the people in Castle Downs were very happy about was condominium living. We were able to introduce condo regulations to improve buying and living in a condo. It was something that we heard from the community that was a concern, and we were able to help with that.

It doesn't make sense to me, Madam Speaker, why this complete bill and the associate minister are needed. If government would be able to provide some sort of definition about what it would actually be reducing, some sort of timelines, targets – I think it's quite unsettling to members on this side of the House and Albertans across the province to really have no idea what this bill speaks to, what their intention is, and what they're going to be coming after. I know that it's concerning for me and I know it's concerning to

constituents in Castle Downs to hear that this very vague bill is going forward without any real definition of what it is.

I think, with that, I'm going to end my comments, but I would just urge that clarity is definitely needed once again from this government. It's something that we haven't received a lot of. I'm afraid that this falls under "in due course," and that's a little bit concerning to me.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

**Mr. Hunter:** Madam Speaker, actually, there are a few points that were made by some of the members that I took copious notes on to make sure that I could understand their concerns. It's important that we try to get some buy-in from opposition members. I didn't feel when I was in opposition that we got that, so I think it's important.

Just to be clear, I'd like to tell the members opposite that I personally reached out to their critic of red tape reduction – I'm not sure what that makes them. Maybe that they want red tape? I personally reached out to them and asked to find out if they had any concerns, to be able to discuss the issues as clearly as we could get about this portfolio, and I did it twice. Not once did I hear any of the concerns until we got into second reading.

Now, what's interesting about that is that I question how genuine these concerns are or whether or not it is just grandstanding, whether or not it's just being able to stand up to say: we are in opposition to what you do no matter what you present. This is a concern that I have.

I remember very clearly. I introduced a private member's bill when we were in opposition to not just decrease the regulatory burden but actually just to stop it, be able to make it so that it doesn't keep on increasing. We heard many times from our job creators, our innovators, the people who actually do the heavy lifting in our society, the ones that they said that they were championing yet continued to add burden upon burden upon burden onto, these job creators and innovators. This is in large part the reason why they lost the last election, yet they still haven't learned this lesson. They still haven't learned that when you pile on to our job creators, they refuse to create jobs or they can't. They go out of business. We heard that a lot.

Now, it's interesting. We were very specific in the way we designed this bill. We wanted it to be a small bill so that we could walk the talk. We want to be able to get to the root of the problems. We've heard two arguments coming from, actually, the one member from Edmonton. I can't remember where he's from. He argued different points to this bill.

**4:10**

The one point is that it's not prescriptive enough and that we don't have enough information here, that we don't have enough regulations in here to be able to make a good decision. Then he said: "You know what? This associate minister is actually just creating red tape." You cannot say both of those arguments, yet he did. So I'm actually confused. I was really listening to try to find out what their concerns are, yet many of them have argued both of those concerns. You can't have both. You either have to have less red tape or more red tape, yet they've argued for both of those to happen.

If we're going to try to be able to help our job creators and our innovators to do what they do best, which is create jobs, then we have to have a plan to do that. Yet the plan that we heard from the old government in the past was: let's add a hundred pages to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. That'll do it. We can pile onto



our job creators, and hopefully they will get the message that we want them to create jobs – by piling a hundred pages onto the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Well, I can tell you that as soon as that came out – in fact, when that came out, it came about two weeks after I introduced Bill 207, my private member's bill to abate the increase in red tape – I remember speaking to the then economic development and trade minister and asking him whether or not they were going to support this. I thought it was a reasonable approach to getting our job creators back to work. He said: absolutely not.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to thank our minister, you know, rising up and trying to justify his job, but it still didn't really help. Just reading the name of the bill, the Red Tape Reduction Act, and flipping through the pages: it doesn't really help. Like, what is the real purpose of this bill? Again, as the hon. minister has said, the bill is just put on the table for the sake of the bill as they made an election promise, still missing the accountability – and I still can't find it – and the specific area and the specific regulation this bill is targeting and trying to address.

As my colleagues already have mentioned and, you know, said about it, it simply seems like for the sake of the bill it has actually been put on the table. When looking at this, what does the bill have to do with? Like, you know, there is a very vague introduction, I would say. So there is no introduction, really. To create more reports, panels, and regulations: looking at that is like creating more red tape for the sake of trying to eliminate the so-called red tape.

I have seen, Madam Speaker, you know, in my riding and on Edmonton's south side back in 2012 and 2013 the condominium construction and the construction of the buildings that lacked, actually, regulation due to the lack of the regulations. The consumers and the residents of the area were in big, huge trouble. They bought, they invested in those condominiums, and then they were not complying with the regulations. That led to huge chaos, with leaking windows, with I want to say the defective foundations of those buildings.

The consumers were fighting for years and years without getting any justice. It was very hard for the government to hold that builder accountable as I think at that time he was not traceable. He just decided not to, you know, face them.

I just wanted to share my recent experience. As I mentioned many times in this House, I had the privilege to run a small-scale business. I happened to apply for a business licence for the building where I had my business, and that process took almost a year, you know, for me to obtain the licence for that building. The reason was that the officials were saying that that particular building was built in the 1970s, and either there were not really legitimate regulations existing or the builder at the time did not really follow the rules. We went through a huge hurdle, again, hustling for almost a year because there were not proper regulations in place at that time.

As my colleagues, you know, already mentioned, I don't know what the need was of creating a specific ministry to address this issue without targeting specific areas that this wanted to address as the previous government had been in a position, the ministers had been in a position with the capacity to address the issues like payday loans and other related issues. There are a number of examples that have been tried in similar directions across Canada by our federal government. All it has done in the past was compromise consumer protections and the health and safety of the workers. Looking at this very, very vague bill without any specific definitions, right now it seems like it's threatening more of our consumer protections than

it's going to do to address any of the hurdles, as our members on the other side are calling them, that the businesses are facing or the burdens that businesses are having.

I just wanted to record my comments. I will just summarize my comments by saying that this bill has failed to target specific areas of the regulations they're trying to address, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Member, for your comments on this bill. I think, as the member has noted, that there is no clarity in it. It's just a skeleton bill. A lot of things need to be filled in later on, and we didn't get much clarity when the minister was trying to address it.

Other members, when they spoke, were talking about light bulbs and companies from Ontario. Sure, those kinds of things certainly can be improved. Next time around we can have an Alberta company. But at the heart of that project was that Alberta was the only province that didn't have an energy efficiency program, and that was because of 44 years of a Conservative regime that never brought forward an energy efficiency program. We brought in that program. I guess if they see that as red tape, then I don't know.

Then they were talking about the carbon tax, how that's red tape. I think in my riding they didn't get that mandate. People view the environment, people view climate change as the most serious existential threat to our planet, to humanity, and they want their government to take strong action. I don't see that as red tape.

4:20

With respect to minimum wage I believe that a measure of a fair society is how the most vulnerable in that society are treated among us, where we have a wealth of resources. We have oil and gas, we have other resources, and we have agiculture. We have many things to be proud of, but at the same time we do have people among us who work and still are not able to put food on the table, to have shelter. That promise was made in 2015, and that promise was kept.

What they are doing, I think, is that they are reducing red tape by reducing youth wages. Those students are not always working for fun. They have responsibilities; they have families. They have expenses to meet. If that's the kind of red tape they are trying to reduce, I don't think that was the mandate or that Albertans understood that kind of reduction to be red tape.

Cutting, for instance, school fees. They are saying they will maintain it, but over four years under our watch \$2 billion was added to the K to 12 school system. Now they are cutting it, and the Calgary board of education alone is predicting a \$40 billion deficit. Cutting those funds is red tape reduction? I don't think so. That's not what we understood red tape reduction to mean. Similarly, cutting from the Health budget I don't think in any way amounts to red tape reduction.

Reversing the protections that were given to LGBTQ and the most vulnerable in this province, reversing those protections: is that red tape reduction? I don't think so. I don't think that Albertans or any of us understood that to be red tape reduction.

Again, I guess, the next time the minister gets up, we hope that he will put some parameters around red tape, what exactly their government means by red tape, put some definition on it, put some understanding on it so that we have a common understanding in this House of what we mean by red tape. Otherwise, we will be just coming up with our own definition. Otherwise, we might see their cuts to the Education budget as some kind of red tape reduction. They also need to explain, I guess, just come up with some example.

I mentioned earlier that in question period the minister was given that opportunity. Just name one process, name a couple of regulations that we see as red tape so that we have a better understanding, a kind of common understanding on both sides of the House, and we will be able to participate more meaningfully in this debate. Otherwise, again we are left to . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and speak to Bill 4. I haven't had a chance to speak to it yet. I'm going to echo a little bit of what the member just shared. We came from a question period earlier today where we asked a lot of questions about protections for LGBTQ youth. You may say that it's a bit of a stretch to connect that to red tape, but as the member just pointed out, without clarity around what these red tape reductions are, we're left here to speculate. I'm concerned. I'm concerned about what it means to eliminate red tape when we're talking about vulnerable Albertans.

I talked yesterday in my maiden speech about the fact that I represent Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, which is a riding that has some of the highest rates of poverty, child poverty in particular. Many folks are struggling. Many folks rely on AISH. Many folks rely on other supports to survive, quite frankly. My concern here is what is going to happen to those vulnerable Albertans, with a lack of clarity around this bill. I just want to go on the record as saying that we said it here first. I want to chat a little bit as well about the educational impact. Again, I worry that without any definition of what red tape is, how will social services and how will education be affected?

One of the things that a few of the other members have talked about is some of the broad failings of this bill, Bill 4. Now, we know that they're creating – and the Member for Edmonton-Decore talked about this as well – a whole heck of a lot more red tape. New processes, new panels, new reports, new regulations, all in the name of red tape reduction. I mean, it's not only ironic; it's somewhat humorous, I must say. And there are no teeth. There are no timelines.

I come back to the issue of LGBTQ youth. We've just been told that when or, I guess, if – likely when – the Education Act comes into effect, there is now a lack of timelines and accountability. For instance, a principal can dilly-dally and can sort of take their sweet time in responding to a student's request for a GSA. I'm seeing a lot of parallels in the legislation that this government is putting forth when it comes to a lack of accountability, of targets, of timelines.

The fundamental protections that are being threatened under Bill 4 concern me a whole heck of a lot as well: consumer health and safety, environmental health and safety, which I'll talk a little bit more about in a minute, particularly the environmental piece. We know that the members opposite are getting a lot of their advice from the CFIB. One of their top validators even said that "in Alberta's case, new rules on health and safety have only made the burden on business owners worse." Again, I come back to vulnerable Albertans, vulnerable Albertans who are working at jobs that may be precarious, and what a lack of regulation is going to mean for those vulnerable Albertans.

Now, I said that I would chat a little bit about the environmental regulations in particular. I'm quite concerned given that this government, these members opposite, have just axed the carbon tax, effectively killing the climate leadership plan and the energy efficiency programs that some of the members talked about earlier.

I'm quite concerned about what red tape reduction is going to mean for our environment.

I'll come back to the fact that I spoke last evening in my maiden speech about what I heard at the doors. I heard from countless constituents that they're concerned about climate change. Actually, I just got an e-mail the other day about the extinction of species, the absolutely plummeting species diversity we're seeing around the world. I'm quite worried about what this means. We can look back – you might again say that I'm fearmongering – and history shows that when environmental regulations are gutted, there are tangible, scary impacts.

For instance, when former Prime Minister Harper gutted the regulatory framework that protected lakes and rivers and groundwater by allowing a loophole in one of the regulations of the Fisheries Act, mining companies were effectively able to dump toxic waste into lakes. It meant that they were no longer subject to any protections, and we know that there were countless water bodies that, in turn, were basically used as toxic waste dumps.

We saw something similar happen on the environment front in British Columbia. We know that former governments there reduced government oversight and basically relinquished any responsibility for environmental monitoring. What did that mean? Well, that meant that projects like dam construction, forestry management, hazardous waste disposal: they were all affected. In the mining industry in particular we saw one of the tailings dams that had absolutely huge, widespread environmental damage.

4:30

I get concerned that given so far – I mean, this government has only been in place for a couple of weeks here, and they've already shown that there's not a commitment to addressing climate change. There's not a commitment to strong environmental protections. I get concerned what this is going to mean for, you know, an already precarious environment here in Alberta.

Again, I come back to – and this is why I urge the members opposite to really heed our warnings – the lack of specificity in this bill. I urge them to really ask some of those questions around when it comes to environmental protection, when it comes to supports for vulnerable Albertans, "What red tape are we actually proposing to cut?" because it's not clear to me. I've read the proposed legislation. I know many of the members in this House have read it closely as well, and a lot of questions remain. A lot of questions remain. I caution about, you know, unintended consequences of red tape reduction. Again, if I didn't have a whole heck of a lot of evidence from jurisdictions not just here in Canada but internationally as well where they've cut red tape, I wouldn't be ringing the alarm bell quite as loudly as I am.

Now, one of the issues that's really top of mind right now, I know for at least the members on my side of the House here, again, is coming back to vulnerable Albertans. I'll talk a little bit about the impact on addicts, on mental health, and on drug addiction. Now, we know that in British Columbia some of the deregulation, some of the cutting of red tape, so to speak, that occurred was around the drug recovery houses. I know, again, in my own riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood we have a number of organizations that are really working to offer safe spaces, evidence-based harm reduction practices for vulnerable neighbours. We've got an incredible institution called Ambrose Place, where there's basically harm reduction in the form of helping folks who are Edmonton's most vulnerable, people without limbs, people who've been living rough, homeless for very long periods of time . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Decades.

**Member Irwin:** Absolutely, decades.

They take those folks, they bring them into Ambrose Place, and they offer them an opportunity to address their addictions. I've toured Ambrose Place, and I've talked to some of the clients there. It is incredible just hearing their stories, just seeing these incredibly vulnerable Albertans having an opportunity to combat their addictions.

We saw in British Columbia similar recovery houses – in this case they were drug recovery houses – that were subject to deregulation, and what happened? These spaces became fully overcrowded, they were unsupervised, they were dirty, they were unsafe, and there were no rules. There were no regulations. What did that mean? Well, in that case vulnerable British Columbians were left even more vulnerable. Again, I urge you to think about some of these examples when there's, you know, a direct correlation between introducing deregulation and the impact on vulnerable Albertans.

I really want to hammer home, because I know a lot of folks have talked about the consumer side of things, the consumer protection. That's important as well. For me, again, I come back to my own experience. You know, I can argue that I am able to represent the voices of my constituents in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood who are vulnerable because I've talked to them. I've entered the affordable housing, the subsidized housing spaces that we have in our riding. I've entered Ambrose Place. I've entered these places where our most vulnerable Albertans are living, and I'm listening.

Again, I want to close by just saying to the members opposite: please consider the most vulnerable Albertans as you review this bill and ask those questions to your colleagues about how vulnerable Albertans will be affected by deregulation and by cutting red tape.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any comments, questions? We have not heard yet from the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have sat here and listened to my colleagues on the opposite side talk about some of their quarrels with proposed legislation to cut red tape and question whether or not it was necessary to appoint an associate minister responsible for red tape reduction. My comment is: if this House recalls, this was one of the fundamental platform commitments that we made in the course of the just-concluded campaign. There is no better form for citizens to express their democratic will than through an election, and in dozens of events and speeches our Premier and many of my colleagues had the opportunity to speak about why it was necessary for a future Alberta government to ensure that they reduce the burden on the ability of the private sector to help us tackle, quite frankly, the economic disaster that the former NDP government have bestowed upon us.

We were losing jobs in the tens of thousands, and investment in Alberta was fleeing in the tens of billions of dollars. There was so much uncertainty within the investment community that they were not prepared to follow through to risk their hard-earned capital to invest in Alberta, this province that used to be the magnet for investment across this country, across the globe. It used to be the case, Madam Speaker, that investors around the world were looking forward to bringing their hard-earned capital to invest in Alberta, but under that NDP government that completely was no longer the case, so we are faced with this huge problem of a government that presided over the near decline of the wealthiest province on the face of this country.

We made a commitment to the people of Alberta that if we were fortunate to earn their mandate, we would pursue legislation that

was clearly laid out in our platform, a specific platform commitment, 375 of them. We made a commitment that we would appoint a minister responsible for that. On April 16 the people of this province had the opportunity to weigh in on that particular platform commitment, and overwhelmingly, by hundreds of thousands, they supported that platform commitment.

My question to my friends on the opposite side is whether or not they learned any lesson from the outcome of that particular election, specifically on this particular issue. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** I mean, it is true that Albertans had their say on April 16, but it's also true that myself and members on my side were elected as representatives for their ridings, and I was with a pretty good majority, I must add.

For me, I'm here to represent my riding, my constituents of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I'm not making it up when I say that all the time at the doors folks were concerned about their vulnerable neighbours. I'm not making it up when I say that I visited safe consumption sites, I visited drug addiction houses, and I visited, like I said, affordable, subsidized housing. I heard from those vulnerable Albertans first-hand, and they make up a large part of my constituency. So yes, while Albertans made their decision writ large, they also elected a whole lot of us to be their voices.

4:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** There's like 10 seconds.

**Mr. Bilous:** I wonder which regulations were the ones that drove businesses out. Which red tape specifically made businesses less competitive?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Members, for this opportunity to debate Bill 4. I will say that during the campaign period certainly the concept of reducing red tape was something that was discussed, and I think that a lot of people want efficiencies. I think a lot of people want efficiencies in all parts of their life. The creation of, specifically, an associate minister and bringing in a bill and a whole set of regulations that go with that: I don't think that that was something that I heard people say that they were voting for. I don't actually recall if an associate minister for red tape was one of the platform commitments; I know that reducing red tape was. I think that finding ways to increase efficiency is something that we all strive for and should strive for in government and also in our personal lives.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I also think that finding ways to be more efficient shouldn't be at the cost or opportunity for things like occupational health and safety or workers' compensation, things that keep us all safe in our daily lives. Having speed limits on highways, having rules around who can control what substances where: I think some of that some people might consider red tape. I think that we have a lot of these rules and regulations because we want to govern ourselves in a society in a way that's fair and reasonable.

I think the prior speaker, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, was referring to, you know: we were elected, and we said that we were going to appoint an associate minister. I will say, having spent time in this building, that creating more ministries is not efficient. Having ways for people to work together and work collaboratively

is probably more efficient if that's your goal, to find more ways to be streamlined and efficient. Definitely I would say: creating new opportunities for MDMs, minister-deputy minister meetings, often very cumbersome, often a lot of reports go into preparing for those meetings and the time that it takes to sit down and have them.

That's a little bit about what I want to say about specifically creating a minister and specifically finding ways to make things more efficient. It doesn't actually seem like a head nod that that would make things more efficient.

That being said, the ministry has been created and the minister has a role to play, and I respect that. I want to say that this bill is, I think some people have probably said, a shoot first, aim later kind of piece of legislation, where it's set up that we're going to have a press conference, we're going to talk about what we're going to do to cut red tape, we're going to have scissors and a ribbon, and we'll figure out exactly what we're going to do after we've done all that. But this is going to be a really good photo op. We're going to be able to say that we're doing something in line with what we campaigned on. What it actually does, in my reading of it, is that it creates committees to examine things to come back and report on things.

The other thing I want to say, especially to the members of cabinet, is that cabinet time is precious. Period. I know that when I was sitting around the cabinet table, I already had about 40 per cent of the budget; I knew I couldn't take 40 per cent of the time that cabinet had as well. I didn't think that that would be fair to all of my colleagues. There were certainly times where we had to, where things would come up and we would have to focus a significant portion of cabinet time on things like, certainly, the opioid crisis or when the federal government decided they were going to legalize cannabis or when we had to find out ways that we were going to modernize professions, how we regulated a number of professions, including paramedics. That was not a regulated profession before we came in.

All of that needs to come to the cabinet table. This bill needed to come to the cabinet table. The regulations that will flow from it need to come to the cabinet table. Every time you put something to the cabinet table, it means that something else isn't going to be there because there just literally isn't enough time. If the full cabinet spent all their time sitting around the cabinet table, there would still be things that government members and private members within the government caucus wanted to achieve that there just isn't enough time for.

So the question I have is: is this bill priority? It must be because it's Bill 4 of the first term. It was given, you know, a big press conference. But it's going to take a lot of time – creating this bill took a lot of time – actually the development of the regulations, bringing the regulations back, passing the regulations. I don't want to call it red tape. It's an important process of consideration. It works its way through the process, but it means that you're spending your time on this instead of spending your time on other things that are important to your private members within your caucus as well as members within cabinet who have other items they'd like to bring forward.

I can tell you that there are about three more health professions that I wanted to be able to bring forward to the cabinet table for due consideration but there physically just isn't enough time. If you keep putting things on the cabinet's table – and that's what we're doing here. When we pass bills, we say: "Hey, cabinet. You're going to develop regulations. You're going to figure out how to implement this. This is going to be a new law. You're going to spend a lot of time on this." By doing this, you're taking things like the accreditation of massage therapists off the table for cabinet or the accreditation of other professions or things around water in your

communities or things around other priorities where you'd like to make laws about other things.

I doubt a lot of people, when they were thinking about why they were going to run for government, thought: I want to run for government to make a bill that sets up a committee. I just don't think that's something that people – like, everyone in this room presumably spent a lot of time thinking about their decision, campaigning, talking to people in their communities to make sure that they can move forward on things that really matter to them and to one another.

That's my first question: why? Why are we doing this, and why is this the most important thing for cabinet? They actually have this area called the machinery of government. Is this the most important thing for the machinery of government to be focusing its efforts on for the next several weeks or months? Because it will. Once we pass legislation here, that becomes their mandate, and that's what these organizations within government have to focus their efforts on. That's number one.

Number two. We just saw a different bill tabled this afternoon that is looking at going back to a prior piece of legislation, a bill that was passed in 2012, an amendment act to that bill that will basically take out most of the things in the introduction of that bill, the Education Act, where it talked about age of access, when it talked about age of entry, all of these things that were the thrust of why that bill came in. There's a new amendment act coming in saying: "No, we're not going to do all those other things. What we will do is go back to the GSA rules we had before."

Again, by passing bills like this you're creating a whole new level of checks and balances and government need to develop regulations to implement something that I would argue is beyond unnecessary. I'd say that it's unnecessary, but the piece that it's specifically targeting, I would say, is an act to discourage or rather destroy GSAs in our province.

By passing this bill, we're saying on one hand that we think that things should be more efficient, maybe, by creating committees to report things back to us for us to consider at a later time, and on the other hand we're passing laws that are old and outdated, and the meat of those laws at the time in which they were passed is totally counter to what the actual bill is going to do now. Oh, PS: we're going to make sure that we take out the provision around immediate access to gay-straight alliances or around commitments to privacy and the fact that students won't be outed, which was in another set of laws that has another set of regulations that will, if that piece is passed, go out the window.

I do have to say that I find it a bit frustrating that we keep talking about: we need to find more efficiencies; we need to find ways to streamline things. We can't introduce our family members now. If a family member comes in, the Speaker will say their name, and at the end of everyone's name being said, we'll clap. It's too cumbersome on this House. It takes too much time. It costs too much money, but we will take time to pass legislation to say that we might make a committee that might report back on things.

It just smacks of, in my opinion, taking away the voice and the opportunity from private members. I think that private members play an important role in a government caucus and in our Assembly as a whole. I think that private members' voices are incredibly important to making sure that not just the folks who happen to be placed around that cabinet table but all members of both the government caucus and the entire Assembly have an opportunity to have their voices heard.

When I see things like this being brought forward, it says to me that other good ideas from around the caucus table – and especially having heard the maiden speeches from so many folks last night and in the days prior, I don't remember anyone running saying that they

wanted to pass Bill 4 to create a committee to report back on something. I heard a lot of people talk about other reasons why they ran. I would say that, to me, it's problematic that this is becoming a priority.

I think a lot of the things that private members said in their speeches – some of them were definitely intended to be knives, to twist and turn, and, you know, political messaging, but a lot of things that were said are things that I think all of us in this Assembly or at least the vast, vast majority of us would agree on. A lot of things were said about wanting to make sure that our kids had opportunities to grow up in a province where they'd all have opportunities to be successful. A lot of things were said about wanting to make sure that the services in their community were protected and strengthened, that families had good jobs and good opportunities for employment.

4:50

I'll say that this bill becoming our priority doesn't reflect what I heard in those maiden speeches. That's the main thing I wanted to say. I think that this is not going to achieve what some people hope it will achieve. It's actually going to take a lot of time away from other important things that members care about. It was a beautiful photo op, but I don't think that this actually has the teeth or the ability to influence more efficiency, which I think is something that is valid, that all of us should be seeking on an ongoing basis, ways that we can be more efficient, do our work more effectively on behalf of all Albertans. This, I think, is the exact opposite of that.

I'll leave that, colleagues, for your consideration.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) I believe I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much. I'd just like to rise on 29(2)(a) and point out a couple of things. You know, the opposition has asked us for reasons why this bill is so important. I'm going to give you a few examples that have come across my desk just in the last week. They're quite reasonable asks, and the people involved are very, very frustrated.

One of the cases involves an entrepreneurial family in my area that is in the gravel business. Now, they've been trying to get a disposition opened up on a gravel pit on Crown land for upwards of eight years. Eight years. Originally, they applied for it, and the application, for some reason, was rejected. They appealed and, over a two-year period, went through the process of the appeal, got to the point of a hearing. A hearing is very cumbersome. You know, it can take eight hours. It's very expensive for the government. It's very expensive for these people. They've spent over \$100,000 just on this one pit, trying to get it open. They got to that stage where they met with the board, and – guess what? – they won their appeal.

The director then rejected their application again. They reappealed. Again, over a two-year period they got to the stage of the regulatory process and got to a hearing stage again, and they won again in front of a new set of people. A new set of eyes looked at the whole situation and said: you know, there's no reason to reject this. They overturned the director's decision.

Guess what happened? The director rejected it again. After over eight years and hundreds of thousands of dollars in investment, this entrepreneurial family is pushed almost to the point of bankruptcy by bureaucracy.

Another example. A family in the Bonnyville area has a quarter section of land with a farm building and road access to it. They butt up against a piece of Crown land that they lease for grazing. When they went to sell their property, it was discovered that the house and the road were too close to the property boundary, so the only course

they had through the process was to purchase a section, about a six-metre-wide strip of land, off the Crown piece. That's been in the process for two years. It's been approved, paid for. They've paid all their fees. All the department has to do is send that request in to the land titles office. It's been over two years, and they've been told that it'll probably be another two years before they can get that process done. That's red tape.

Another case. A company that's working on the EPCOR waterline up in the area had to do a pipeline tie-in to the EPCOR waterline, that has water just like this, drinkable, potable water. When they went to do the tie-in, they had to dewater one section of the line. The government inspectors on the project said: well, you have to dechlorinate that water before you can dispose of it. Seriously. If it wasn't that funny – you could take the water out of the pipe and drink it, but you couldn't pour it on the ground to dispose of it or truck it away.

That's how ridiculous this is. That's what red tape is. That's why we need Bill 4. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. If there was anything in this bill that would actually fix those concerns that were raised by the hon. member, I would probably be enthusiastic, too, but this bill is simply, "The Minister shall make the report available to the public."

Is this the minister's mandate? I know that there were no mandate letters. I get it: there's a mandate of an election. But this seems like a bill to create three jobs – an associate minister, a chief of staff, and a press secretary: three jobs – and a lot of ARs and a lot of reports and a lot of committee meetings, but I don't think what's going to happen, hon. members, through you, Mr. Speaker, is actually addressing the issues that hon. members, I think, have every right to raise, saying: this is an issue I want to address in the community. Bring that up with the relevant minister, find a way to get that on the cabinet agenda rather than getting a report of a committee meeting on a cabinet agenda.

I think that this is a very lovely exercise. I'm sure that that press secretary was very proud cutting the ribbon. Hello. Shout-out to whoever the press secretary is in the associate minister's office. That was a beautiful, beautiful photo shoot, but I don't think it addresses the issues that the hon. member just raised.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Any other members? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung standing.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure this afternoon to rise to speak to Bill 4, the so-called Red Tape Reduction Act. I wanted to commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who recently brought up an issue that I thought was germane to the topic of discussion today. She did mention in her discussion a moment ago that there were no mandate letters made public by the current government when it came to power, yet it seemed to me that simply a memo or a mandate letter to ministries regarding their goal of reducing regulations and administrative burdens would have been a sufficient way of dealing with any concerns that the current Premier had about an overburden of regulation in the province. But to go ahead and create a whole associate ministry to perform this function: it seems to me to be a total oxymoron to call a ministry into being to contribute to removing red tape.

The whole question that really confounded me is that the whole topic is not even defined in the legislation. Now, how in the world can you go ahead and attack a problem when you don't, by definition, understand what it is? I think that if you do a man-on-

the-street interview and ask, "What the heck is red tape? What does it actually mean?" you would probably get a surprising number of different answers but perhaps a lot more dumbfounded looks, because they really couldn't come up with an answer as to exactly what one is talking about when you say "red tape." It's a term that's been bandied about for many years, yet an actual definition of it is something that is in question, and it's something that obviously should be embedded in an act proposing that they reduce red tape, and we're not even sure what it is.

Mr. Speaker, I've been a member of the Public Accounts Committee for four years. I was deputy chair, and I witnessed and participated in many debates on many different topics of reports of the Auditor General from almost all of the departments, and I can say that as a current member of the Public Accounts Committee, I look forward with relish to receiving a report through the Auditor General's office on the efficacy of this ministry somewhere down the road and having officials from this ministry appear before the Public Accounts Committee to answer questions about what they actually accomplished because, of course, Auditors General are interested in value for money and outcomes and consequences and performance measures. I don't know if any of those things are possibilities under this act.

5:00

I can think right now as to the contests that might be going on amongst auditors at the Auditor General's department to see who might get to take a crack at investigating this ministry, because it's going to be a fun one for them. I think there'd be probably a contest to see who the heck gets to do the audit on the Red Tape Reduction Act and this ministry that it's created.

I certainly look forward to those meetings as well because it'd be like a definition, to me, of what the Auditor General seeks to make an example of when he does a report on a government ministry. I can't think of a more fun meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to attend than the one that may be forthcoming should the Auditor General decide to do an audit on the performance of this particular ministry over time, starting with what I mentioned earlier, a total lack of a definition of what, actually, red tape is. How do you define an outcome or how do you manage to determine whether you actually reduce red tape when the bill itself doesn't even define what it is?

I'm really tickled to think about what type of an investigation and what type of an audit might be forthcoming from the Auditor General looking at performance measures and value for money and the worthwhileness of this whole ministry, that really could have been accomplished – the outcomes, I believe, could have been accomplished with a simple note, a memo from the Premier's office to each ministry saying: please do your best to make sure that we don't have any redundancies in our regulations and administrative orders, and keep tabs on it, and make a report to me as to what your success has been over the year. Certainly, it could have been a line item or a paragraph in that department's annual report but didn't require a whole ministry to accomplish that task.

I also want to caution the government as to what failures there can be when you go ahead and authorize a ministry to go in and make changes to regulations within a department that they may be totally unfamiliar with. When you get the red tape security police coming into your ministry to take a look at all your legislation and they take their hatchet to your regulations, you, I think, as a minister of a particular department and responsible for a ministry might be wanting to maybe protect your turf a little bit and have a pretty good argument to make when the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction comes in and starts hacking away at your particular regulations. You're saying: "You're really sort of coming in from

afar. These regulations have certain roles to play, and they're really being effective. You don't really quite understand why they're in place, yet you're coming down to a determination and you're saying that I can't have these regulations, that they've got to go."

I'm just wondering: who, in fact, will be in charge of the hatchet? Now, is it really going to be something that the Premier himself is in charge of from afar in saying, "Look, you go on a hunting mission, and go ahead, and these are the targeted regulations that I want you to go after and claim thereafter that they happened to be made because we thought they were efficiencies that we're generating," when, in fact, there was some other, ulterior motive that the government might have to go ahead and slash some regulation in a particular department that they couldn't otherwise accomplish, sort of a backdoor way of accomplishing change in social legislation, for example, when going in the front door would cause them a great deal of consternation and public outcry? My suspicion is that this ministry really is a hunting mission that has been invoked at the Premier's behest so that he can go ahead and attack certain departments and ministries in a way that using the front door wouldn't allow him to do.

Just on a plain, common-sense part of it, though, I think the ministries themselves are the most able to determine the redundancies in the regulation structures, not the red tape security service. The creation of this red tape security service seems to me to have an ulterior motive, and I think it happens to be a political motive right out of the Premier's office. I think time will tell if indeed I'm right or not, and I think the Auditor General's reports may actually come to this conclusion when we finally see him or her reporting on this ministry down the road. I'm looking forward to participating in those meetings as a member of the Public Accounts Committee in the not-too-distant future once we see some of the efforts of the current associate minister put into place.

I wanted to talk a little bit more about some of the risks that are inherent in a bill like this, where other jurisdictions have gone ahead and tried to clean up red tape, as they say, or clean up regulations that seemed to be unnecessary or burdensome or redundant. For example, the Harper government, with its clean water protections: they gutted the regulatory framework that protected our lakes, rivers, and groundwater by allowing a loophole in the metal mining effluent regulation of the Fisheries Act and allowed mining companies to dump toxic waste into lakes and reclassified healthy lakes as tailing impoundment areas, which means they were no longer protected. Sandy Pond in Newfoundland had been destroyed under this loophole, and Environment Canada released the names of 29 natural water bodies that mining companies have applied to use as toxic waste dumps.

As I say, ulterior motives, Mr. Speaker, seem to be inherent in this legislation, giving ministries the opportunity to do things through the back door they otherwise wouldn't be able to accomplish through the front door because of the public outcry that would ensue if indeed they were up front about what they actually wanted to do within a particular ministry by removing certain regulations.

This search and destroy mission that the current associate minister has embarked upon by way of this bill, if it is passed, is something that I think all Albertans should have their red alert lights on. This Red Tape Reduction Act has a red alert notice to me because it doesn't seem on the face of it to have any real purpose unto itself, yet if you dig a little deeper and you think a little bit longer about what, in fact, the government is empowered to do by using this tool, it's a pretty dangerous act and has far-reaching consequences in every ministry.

It doesn't matter whether it's social services, doesn't matter whether it's in the Education ministry, could be environment, any

ministry where the government feels it wants to adjust regulations quietly, more quietly than they might otherwise be affected had they gone headlong and changed directly a specific act that was embedded within a certain department. I think that they figure this tool is going to be a way of giving them a better political cover to do things more quietly than they otherwise would have had to do them without this piece of legislation. So I'm very, very fearful that we're going to see some pretty dire consequences, and it's going to be up to us as opposition members to make sure that the government doesn't quietly get away with things that they otherwise would have to loudly do in the face of the public. We intend to do that very, very diligently, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the next four years.

I also expect, Mr. Speaker, that the Auditor General will have his or her antennae up very high regarding this piece of legislation because there are a lot of smart people in the Auditor General's office, and they can see through a piece of legislation like this. They know that its intent is really something other than what it's purported to be. I think that their first report on this ministry is something that I anticipate quite highly, and I look forward to reading it and debating the findings of the Auditor General, who, as I said before, is probably drawing straws with all other auditors in the office to see who gets to tackle this particular topic. So I look forward to that report.

5:10

I know there are lots of other risks that are inherent in this piece of legislation. There are things that could be destroyed, simply by allowing regulations to be taken away without as much consultation as they otherwise might receive, by employing this act. As I said, it seems to me to be a special ministry for searching out and destroying regulations that have particularly political overtones.

I think the public should be very much warned and alarmed that this tool is going to be something that's going to be used by this government in a way that they have done other things: to limit, first of all, the role of the private members in this Legislature. Now also, I think, in furtherance of that same type of an attitude towards any type of resistance to this government, this government is looking at using this Red Tape Reduction Act to minimize the role of the public and the visibility that the public has of what this government is actually trying to accomplish in adjusting the way that the economy is run and also the way that we are able to monitor the environmental protections that we have come to expect in this province as well as the social protections and protections of the most vulnerable – as the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood mentioned in her remarks, the protection of the most vulnerable is also something that is really, I think, in the sights of this government as well – so that they can avoid public scrutiny.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), I saw the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley up.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've been sitting here listening to the comments from the opposition there, and one of the most common comments I hear is: what do we mean by red tape? What red tape? Well, I just opened up my phone and looked up in Wikipedia what the definition of red tape is

Red tape is an idiom that refers to excessive regulation or rigid conformity to formal rules that is considered redundant or bureaucratic and hinders or prevents action or decision-making. It is usually applied to governments, corporations, and other large organizations.

So there, the mystery is solved.

When we have a Red Tape Reduction Act, what we would like to reduce is excessive regulation or regulation that's considered

redundant or hinders or prevents action or decision-making. That's exactly what it says. Now, if the members from the opposition could read Red Tape Reduction Act, they would actually understand what the bill is about. Now, it's actually also in here where it says, "initiatives to eliminate and prevent unnecessary regulatory and administrative requirements." Mr. Speaker, I think it's very clear.

It's actually bizarre that we're sitting in this Legislature right now and the opposition is arguing against removing things that hinder and prevent action or decision-making, things that are redundant. We're sitting here having this argument, and each one of the members opposite has stood up and argued against this.

If we look in Wikipedia, too, in red tape reduction: "The 'cutting of red tape' generally refers to a reduction of bureaucratic obstacles to action." We're talking about cutting red tape, reducing obstacles to action. Now, I would wonder what we're doing here in this Legislature if we're not trying to perform some sort of action. We're trying to influence things, we're trying to make things happen here, but obviously the members opposite don't want things to happen. They don't want any action. They want to continue to obstruct everything.

Now, it goes on to say: "Business representatives often claim red tape is a barrier to business, particularly small business. In Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has done extensive research into the impact of red tape on small businesses." It goes on to talk about the European Commission and their plans to reduce red tape and even have, like, an award for the best idea for red tape reduction.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just amazed that we're sitting here talking about this. Now, I've had to sit here and listen to the Member for Edmonton-South talk about: well, maybe we're going to remove the requirement to have PPE, personal protective equipment. Are you serious? Are we serious that we're sitting here . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I will take this moment to re-remind everyone in the House to ensure that when referring to other members, do so in the third person.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay.

Is he serious? I can't believe that he would get up and suggest that we would be removing personal protection equipment in the workplace.

Now, if they took the time to read the bill, in the number one paragraph in the preamble, it says:

The Government of Alberta recognizes that a consistent, transparent and efficient system of regulatory and administrative requirements is necessary to protect the public interest, including health, safety, the environment and fiscal accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-South went on to say that maybe we'd be removing the requirement for handwashing in the workplace for restaurants and things like that. It's unbelievable, this discussion we're having here right now.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung just finished saying that there could be dire consequences. Is he serious that there could be dire consequences from removing redundant, bureaucratic, and hindering regulation? Dire? What could be dire about that? The absolute definition of red tape doesn't fit that description at all.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We're sitting here talking about this day after day after day, and the members are getting up there and they're talking about red tape, and they're actually supporting red tape. They are supporting excessive regulation. They are supporting regulation that hinders or prevents action or decision-making.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have to begin by speaking directly through you to the Member for Central Peace-Notley, who was just speaking, who was just emphatically making fun of possible dire consequences. He did that while quoting to us from the red tape Wikipedia page. Allow me to continue reading that page for him because it outlines that people died in the Grenfell Tower fire, and it has been tied directly to the red tape reduction efforts that were made because fire inspectors, instead of spending six hours, were only spending 45 minutes. That's from the page that he brought up. And then making fun of the dire consequences – people die.

I can see him smiling at me. He thinks it's funny. He thinks it's funny that sometimes when a government fails to do its job of protecting the health and safety of its citizens and those people die, that that can come from misguided government policy, to simply speak to some – let's use the words "red tape." Let's talk about that very unspecifically. The result, in a very real circumstance, referenced from the page he brought up in this debate, is the deaths of citizens who were not protected by their government. When we are talking about dire, perhaps this could be one good example, and I would thank the member for bringing it to my attention by bringing up that very important red tape Wikipedia page. It really shows that when you read something through to the end, you can find out about the positives and the negatives of something going forward.

Now, Madam Speaker, I've started on a very dramatic note. My reaction to this bill is one of concern. I know from my time as a minister working within a ministry that was responsible for health and safety protections for our citizens and enforcing minimum basic standards, like employment standards, or through our arm's-length agency, the Workers' Compensation Board, making sure that workers are protected when they are getting hurt and injured and that they get the fair compensation that they deserve, that all of these things touch on regulation, and to have regulation painted as a wholly bad thing that is red tape that needs to be removed leads to potential health risks.

5:20

There are a number of examples of this in jurisdictions that have adopted red tape reduction exercises. When I look at the very thin Bill 4, I am concerned that the bill doesn't have targets, doesn't have timelines, doesn't have definitions, and seems to be just wanting to have that great photo op that my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora rightfully complimented – beautiful – without doing the hard work.

The Member for Central Peace-Notley seems to imply that if a government isn't willing to sign on to a ridiculously titled production, that they aren't serious about making life better for Albertans or business. That couldn't be further from the truth because I know – and I will speak just to my very direct experience – that we were able to completely transform how long people were waiting for an Employment Standards Code complaint to be dealt with by going through a process called operational excellence.

This is one that has also been used widely throughout our Alberta Health Services, AHS, organizations. It involves talking directly to front-line workers and people who are interacting with government to find out where those pain points are and working to smooth them out. Sometimes that will become a regulation change up at that level, but oftentimes there are ways that we can improve the experience, improve the process, and remove that red tape, which isn't necessarily a regulation but perhaps it's a poorly designed

form. I'm aware that our colleagues in Community and Social Services were able to radically adapt and improve some of the forms for people applying for services within Community and Social Services. That type of user experience change can significantly improve the delivery of government services.

I am a strong advocate of trying to use empathy when improving these things, thinking about the perspective of the person who's coming to use the service and how we can make sure we streamline that. Whether that's the business owner who is applying for a new business permit, whether that is the vulnerable Albertan who is about to lose their home and needs to fill out government forms in order to get assistance, I think using empathy and thinking about the experience can be an incredibly productive thing. In my time as a government caucus member and minister there were a number of initiatives to reduce those challenges that businesses and Albertans experience.

To say that the NDP doesn't believe in red tape reduction or doesn't believe in facilitating the services government provides to its citizens: that is completely incorrect. We are maybe just not ready to get behind a big red ribbon with some scissors and call it a job done because there's so much more to fall behind it. There's so much more that needs to be done because it's critical that we protect the health and the safety of our environment, of our citizens, of our communities, and very often regulations are part of that. To call them all bad or to suggest that there's unnecessary duplication – I'm at a loss for words a little bit, Madam Speaker.

Let me approach this from another perspective. I know from first-hand meetings with CFIB and other stakeholders, who are strong proponents of these red tape reductions, how difficult it can be to get them to tell you an example of a regulation. Now, members in this Chamber have stood and told examples of people who are frustrated with interacting with government, whether there was a regulation that was the bottleneck or maybe it was a form that was incomprehensible or another piece. I don't believe that Bill 4 is going to get to most of the pain points that are involved. I can tell you that regulations are not made equal. There are regulations that are huge, giant – the occupational health and safety code as an example – and there are regulations that are very small, that do a very specific thing. I question the idea that one in, one out is the best way to quantify this. Do we count the OHS code as one? Do we count a one-page regulation as one? The measuring of success – and I think it's really important for a government to be able to measure success – is really critical, and in this case we have an undefined report from the minister.

The minister, as I understand it, at his news conference and again in question period, could not give an example of the 17 regulations they've removed so far. I appreciate that, I understand, he's committed to making sure that they are publicly available on the website in the future. I think that transparency is really important, especially for a government that is doing a victory lap and saying: 17 gone already. Citizens deserve to know which 17. How will this impact their lives? What does this look like? That type of transparency is really, really important, and we haven't seen that yet, so making sure that Albertans are aware of what is being discussed is really important.

Now, the process to get to this list and to remove these regulations. Bill 4 is going to create a new minibureaucracy, not only the minister and his team – as my colleague referred to it, three jobs created already – but the crossministry working groups, the teams of people that are going to be sitting down to build the regulations to go with Bill 4. I assume that those regulations will then necessitate the repeal of other unrelated regulations in order to be introduced.



Also, within each ministry the process that that will be going through there, within each specific area, and then, as my colleague for Edmonton-Glenora was talking about, the machinery of government and this report to cabinet: all of this work is going to take a lot of people doing things. I can tell you that our Alberta public service, filled with amazing, talented, upstanding workers, has a lot of other things to do, especially with this government's current continued hiring freeze, and a lot of work supporting a brand new government happening. So I'm making sure that we are just really painting that picture for Albertans about how much work is going to be going on behind the scenes to achieve the goals of the Red Tape Reduction Act, Bill 4.

Now, I did begin, off the top, with that Wikipedia page, which I'll maybe clarify with the table: if the member opposite tables that tomorrow, does that mean I do not need to? We'll deal with that separately. I think it's good to have it on the record, now that we've identified some of the potential dire consequences that the member opposite was laughing about.

Making sure that we do not have any failures here in Alberta is really important because there have been failures in other jurisdictions that have implemented red tape reduction strategies. In some cases those failures were minor, and in some cases they were the deaths of citizens. What protections will the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction be putting in place to make sure that that doesn't happen here, that the attempt to reduce red tape and free up time so that instead of a six-hour inspection, it can be done in 45 minutes so it's not such a hassle doesn't end up with an out-of-control building fire? We don't know what protections the minister might put in because, of course, this bill doesn't really tell us what they're looking at, what their criteria will be, how they will be doing this, how they will be prioritizing.

There's so little information in this that we can only be left to wonder and, as I often like to do when considering decisions, look to other jurisdictions. Can we learn good things, bad things from other jurisdictions? Red tape reduction strategies have been used in many, many other jurisdictions. I know that my colleagues have discussed a few examples where we've seen issues with red tape reduction strategies in other places. In British Columbia both Gordon Campbell and Christy Clark were working for red tape reduction strategies, reducing oversight and provincial responsibility for environmental monitoring. This sounds like it might touch on what my hon. colleague was talking about when he was talking about a gravel pit approval. Potentially, it might be similar. It impacted a number of different projects in B.C., including a dam that caused widespread environmental damage, where the B.C. Auditor General went in and found that "almost every one of our expectations for a robust compliance and enforcement program within the [Ministry of Energy and Mines] and the [Ministry of Environment] were not met."

5:30

Under an administration that was actively looking to reduce red tape, to reduce the regulatory burden, to make things easier for companies, we have an unmitigated environmental disaster. I think it's really important, and my question to the minister as we move into later stages of debate would be: what work has he and his team done to look at other jurisdictions, and is he prepared to have a conversation about lessons learned where things have gone poorly? And how do we make sure that that doesn't happen here in Alberta? Is he prepared to consider any amendments that the opposition may suggest that might help to protect citizens, environment, or to put a framework around it to make sure that red tape reduction is not taking place in an unmitigated way?

It could be policies and process, perhaps not even necessarily an amendment, but I would certainly like to hear from the minister around how we can make sure that that doesn't happen here in our jurisdiction. As you well know, Madam Speaker, environmental damage, once done, is very difficult to undo, and obviously harm to our citizens or death of citizens is inexcusable when we're looking at these.

I have found, in my experience with . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I've been greatly appreciating the comments from my colleague here, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, and particularly in light of, I think, her deep experience having served as the minister of labour in this province and, I think, having done a very admirable job in that position. I appreciated the reflections that she brought to the table in terms of the dire consequences that can result, indeed the importance of thinking things fully through, reading, for example, a Wikipedia page from top to bottom and fully understanding everything that it contains.

What I was wondering, a question that I would have for my colleague. From her own experience, I guess, having brought in significant improvements to labour protections and occupational health and safety, some of which had been neglected by governments in Alberta for a number of years, I know that she'd spoken about doing crossjurisdictional analysis, talked about other research. I was hoping that perhaps she could enlighten the House as to the amount of work that goes into creating a regulation and the consideration that goes into determining what will be brought into law and how that reflects on what due consideration might need to be given when looking at removing the same.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, and thank you to my colleague for the question. My experience as a member of Executive Council is that a great deal of work does go into the creation of any new regulations or protective pieces, but my experience also tells me, particularly when it comes to occupational health and safety, that there's often a bit of a misunderstanding around things like the OH and S code.

A lot of the idea that this is red tape that needs to be removed: oftentimes it just needs to be clarified. Not everybody needs to have an oil and gas level health and safety program. That's not the minimum standard defined in our regulations. I know that when I was working with different industries on their health and safety programs, they would often look to oil and gas, for example, and say: we have to do the same thing they do, and they have binders and binders of documentation everywhere. That's not what occupational health and safety actually requires in a lot of situations.

It talks about doing reasonably practical things to protect the health and safety of your workers, something that universally employers agree with. Do reasonably practical things to keep people safe? Yes. Employers do not argue against that. The mechanism to get to that – I would say that our oil and gas industry is a top performer. They've got very rigorous systems. But that is not what the OHS code prescribes to a small-business owner. The reasonably practical application and their understanding of that and being able to work with business owners to help them fulfill those minimum requirements to keep people safe are what's needed, not

exempting small-business owners from health and safety or repealing that regulation.

I would also just like to add, Madam Speaker, that the new youth wage differential is going to be additional red tape for employers. It's going to add enforcement and administration burden that is not there. It is going to add additional complications. We've seen in Ontario that a lot of employers don't fully understand the student wage. They apply it to nonstudents because they're under 18, or they continue to pay someone a student minimum wage after they turn 18 because it is additional red tape, more work on those business owners to try and manage.

I see that Bill 4 is about reducing red tape, yet Bill 2 is about adding red tape. The bill that was just introduced, the Education Act: adding more red tape. More bureaucracy is going to be inserted through that legislation. I would recommend to this minister on this particular bill that we need more clarity on exactly what's happening and how we're going to protect our citizens. And I would strongly recommend that he look into the work that our public servants are already doing to make things more efficient and more usable and accessible for our citizens through operational excellence, through different user experience practices because there's a lot of good work happening.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, would the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction like to close debate?

**Mr. Hunter:** I close debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:38 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	McIver	Rutherford
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Ellis	Milliken	Sawhney
Glasgo	Neudorf	Schow
Hanson	Nicolaides	Schulz
Horner	Orr	Sigurdson, R.J.
Hunter	Panda	Singh
Jones	Rehn	Stephan
Loewen	Reid	Walker
Long	Rosin	Williams
Lovely	Rowswell	Wilson
Madu		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Phillips
Dach	Gray	Sabir
Dang	Hoffman	Schmidt
Deol	Irwin	Shepherd
Ganley		

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 13
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[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a second time]

## Bill 2

### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

[Adjourned debate June 4: Member Irwin]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is up to speak if you would like. No? Okay.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Madam Speaker, obviously, we've had some great discussion over the last few hours. As I look at the clock, we are only just a few minutes away from our dinner break. I fully expect a robust conversation is about to take place from 7:30 p.m. onwards throughout the night, so in an effort to make sure that we're well nourished and ready to go for 7:30 p.m., I move that the House adjourn until 7:30.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, June 5, 2019

Day 9

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
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Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
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Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
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Deputy Government House Leader  
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Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
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Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

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Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
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Dang  
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Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Horner  
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Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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Turton  
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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 5, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening. Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

[Debate adjourned June 5]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak?  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm certainly pleased to rise this evening to speak about the government's Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. Of course, it's really not that at all, as we all know. It's more an act to pick the pockets of Alberta workers. It's actually quite concerning what the bill does propose. I'm just going to take a few minutes to go through that to let my colleagues know some of the perspectives on this.

With Bill 2 we know that youth minimum wage – the government says that by doing this bill, they're going to be “restoring fairness and balance to the workplace and getting ‘Help Wanted’ signs back in the windows of Alberta businesses.” The minister of labour himself asserts that these changes will reduce red tape and increase the employment of minors, saying:

We need to encourage employers to create opportunities for all workers. These changes [will] help Alberta's businesses to do just that. We're bringing back balance, cutting red tape and making it more affordable to hire teens for their first jobs.

That is certainly something that the minister of labour said.

Certainly, there are others in our community, most notably Dr. Barnetson, who is the professor of labour relations at Athabasca University, who actually has a different assessment of what this bill will do. He says:

An examination of Bill 2 suggests that it will, in fact, yield none of these claimed benefits [that the government suggests it will]. Instead, it will reduce workers' income, make payroll administration more complex, and impede workers seeking to join a union.

Despite the proclamations of the other side, the bill indeed is not going to be producing what they say it is.

I'll just go through it in a bit of detail to explain this argument. The youth minimum wage changes, I guess, are coming into effect June 26, 2019. Of course, reducing the youth minimum wage from \$15 to \$13 certainly will reduce wage costs for employers at the expense of young workers who are, you know, having their first jobs and doing equal work of other people. Of course, certainly, on this side of the House we believe that they should be paid equally with those 18 and over; thus, the \$15 minimum wage should be continued.

I know this government really wants to support very much the reduction of red tape. They even have a bill that is called the Red Tape Reduction Act. But this particular part of Bill 2 legislation actually increases the red tape, really onerous work for the employers, small businesses oftentimes who may not have a lot of resources themselves. It's actually going to put an additional burden on them with this differential because sometimes it's \$13, and then at other times it's \$15. So there's quite a bit to wade through in the

youth minimum wage because after so many hours of work in a week, then actually the employer needs to pay the higher wage, the \$15 minimum wage, as opposed to \$13.

How do they determine that? They have to know which employees are students – you know, some students may not be in school, and it's sort of determined on who is in school – know when each employee's school is in session or on a break because that also is something else that they have to take into account. They have to vary each employee's hourly wage depending on the hours worked, whether school is in session, and they have to change the worker's wages and payroll calculations when workers turn 18. So there are quite a few things.

I certainly hope that the employers will, you know, do their due diligence to make sure that they're paying the correct wage to these youth, but it might be just an overwhelming prospect for them. Certainly, if this is your first job and you see that there's a mistake on our pay stub, are you going to have the confidence as a young worker? I hope you do. I hope that they are supported by those around them and that they can question that. But I mean, also, you have some compassion for these small businesses. It's a lot of work to sort of understand this legislation and make sure that the students are paid the proper amount.

You know, even without this administrative red tape argument, moving to make it a lower youth rate is really just not fair. It's not fair to the workers, the youth, who work just as hard as someone who's 18 or older. We know it's actually been proven that it has stabilized employment oftentimes, which is a big benefit for employers.

For example, I know that when I was actually the minister of labour at the beginning of our mandate back in 2015, I met with employers, and there was one owner of a Dairy Queen who said that he already paid the minimum wage. He already paid \$15 an hour, and he was happy to do that because – you know what that meant for him? – that meant that he had stable staff. Staff wanted to work for him. They were getting a fair wage, so that increased morale and stability for him. He said that some of his staff had been there for two years, and these were youth. So that made a big difference for him, because just the cost to train workers can be quite expensive for employers. He was very supportive of our government's move to increase minimum wage.

Another example that I can give you is that, certainly, we know that in the mountain parks that's been an ongoing issue for many, many years, making sure that we have workers in those areas. Increasing the minimum wage has created increased stability, again, for businesses. The workers are being paid fairly at a good rate, in some cases a living wage. In some parts of Alberta the living wage actually is \$15. In the major centres like Edmonton and Calgary we're closer to \$17, so it's not quite a living wage here. In the parks it's probably not either, but in some areas when you have a \$15 minimum wage, that makes a big difference, and people can actually have a living wage, live with dignity.

We know that Alberta has the largest income gap of any province in Canada, and certainly in my 30 years as a social worker I worked with many vulnerable people and continue to support many folks. Lifting the floor – that's sort of what it's called. When you lift the minimum wage, you're lifting the floor, and you're supporting people who are quite vulnerable in our society so that they don't have to work a full-time job and then go to the food bank. You know, youth a lot of times live independently. They're supporting themselves. Certainly, we heard the story of the young woman from Fort Saskatchewan whose father had lost his job, and she was supporting her family, and there are other stories like this.

Paying this fair wage, you know, really is something that I think is so important. Certainly, we believe that people deserve equal pay

for equal work. Besides that, of course, as I've already articulated, you know, it's kind of a very cumbersome piece of legislation for employers to understand all the ins and outs of it. I can't imagine that it's going to be easy for small businesses to implement, and I know that that's something that your government is certainly very concerned about, so I really ask you to look at this. I know that that's not what you want, and certainly we don't want that either on this side of the House. Please take some consideration of that.

7:40 p.m.

Another aspect is the Employment Standards Code. This is again in Bill 2, the new changes to the legislation, the general holiday pay part. Right now, for example, to be eligible for holiday pay, you must work your regular scheduled shifts before and after that holiday as well as on the holiday if asked. If you don't work the holiday, you get your average daily rate regardless of when the holiday falls, and if you do work on the holiday, you get time and a half your hourly rate for the hours worked, so your regular rate plus another day off with pay. That's kind of how it works now.

But now this Bill 2 proposes some additional requirements. You must be employed by the employer for 30 days preceding the holiday. That's brand new. Of course, that means some people may not be eligible. If they've just been newly hired and there's a holiday, they won't get that; again, hence, pick your pockets. It's another way that we're taking money out of workers' pockets. Another requirement: if the holiday falls on a day that you do not normally work and you don't work that holiday, you are not entitled to general holiday pay. Certainly, the long and the short of this pick-your-pockets bill is that workers will have less take-home pay. Shift workers will be impacted much more significantly. For people who work shifts, I mean, that's another concern. They'll be more greatly impacted by these changes.

There's also a downside, and it's very similar to the downside for the reduction in youth minimum wage. For employers there is, again, increased administrative complexity in determining who is entitled to pay on a holiday and who isn't. Again, I'll just reiterate that even though your government has certainly made it very clear that they're a government that cares about red tape reduction, this is creating more administrative burden for small businesses, employers. I think this is something that's kind of strange, and I really encourage you to look at that. My understanding from what I'm hearing is that that's not something your government wants. I'm, you know, just wanting to support your congruence with your policies.

Another aspect of this Bill 2 is overtime premiums. Again, that's in the Employment Standards Code. Currently if you work more than 8 hours in a day or 44 hours in a week, you're entitled to time and a half of your normal rate for those overtime hours. An employee can bank this overtime and draw down that banked time. If an employee doesn't draw down this banked time, it is then paid at the overtime rate. That's kind of our current situation that we have in Alberta right now.

Of course, you know, we have a lot of seasonal workers here, say in the summer months. For the construction industry it's pretty miserable to work when it's minus 40, so a lot more building is done in the summer season, and people work longer hours. Of course, the sun doesn't set till super late at night, so it makes sense, and it's feasible for people. Maybe in those winter months when we're having minus 30, minus 40, snowy conditions, they can't work during that time. This allows them to work longer hours and bank them and then be able to have income when it's a slower season and it's not so busy for them. The employee can then draw down in the slower season.

Certainly, you know, myself, even though I'm a social worker and I don't work outside so much, maybe you think, "Oh; well, that doesn't sort of apply to my profession," but I was always in charge of the annual conference, when about a thousand social workers would come together. At those times we were working from dawn till dusk, let me tell you. We had to co-ordinate all the workshops and work hard. I oftentimes was working maybe 12 hours a day. I would just bank that time, and then after the conference or a little bit later on I was able to take that time off. So that was very helpful.

But the pick-your-pockets bill says that banked overtime has to be straight time. That's actually taking away – you know, time and a half – that half from workers; hence, the pick-your-pockets bill. It's counted as hour for hour instead of an hour and a half. This will put workers in a more vulnerable position. It will take away income that they currently would get.

If we look at an example of an average oil and gas worker and say that they're working overtime on a 12-week project – oftentimes there's project work that, you know, we have to do . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was very interested to hear what the member was about to talk about regarding oil and gas workers. As we know, they have been hard hit with the drop in the price of oil, what our economy has been through, and I just wonder what the changes in Bill 2 would mean to them if the member wouldn't mind elaborating.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker and, through you, to the member for letting me continue. I was just looking at sort of an average oil and gas worker. Say they're working, you know, longer hours, working overtime. They're on maybe a 12-week project. There's a deadline. They have to get it done by that time, so they may be working, let's say, approximately 10 hours of overtime a week. According to the bill – and there are some calculations, and certainly I'm happy to give details to the House after – it's over \$2,500 they just give up.

Hence, you know, we have named this the pick-your-pockets bill. Obviously, the worker is worse off, and despite the government's claims that this is such a positive move forward, it's really not. It's taking a step backwards. Those workers who are doing that kind of shift work, that intensive work and seasonal work are not going to be making as much money as they can currently. It's really rolling back their wages, almost, by just denying them that time and a half.

You know, our opposition certainly feels very strongly that workers need to be supported. We need to diminish that gap between low- and high-income earners and have more equality. We know that a society that has greater equality actually is a healthier society, a society where everyone is supported. Sadly, this bill is not doing that. It's not supporting them.

The bill goes on, under the Labour Relations Code, and talks about unionization and how to become part of a union. Currently 40 per cent of the employees must support a union's application for certification to the Alberta Labour Relations Board. Currently if more than 65 per cent already say that they are in support of that, there's no need for that vote. That's called a card check certification. But this bill, again, proposes to roll back some of those advances. It proposes mandatory certification votes in all applications. So even though you have obviously a clear majority, over 65 per cent of employees would like to have their organization

become a union, this bill proposes that there must be mandatory votes for all applications.

With no-vote-needed, card-check-certification legislation, employers can't interfere with the employees' choice. Sadly, that's what happens. Employers intervene with them. You know, they are threatened to lose their jobs, and of course then the opportunity for union certification goes down dramatically. Alberta already has the lowest unionization of any province in Canada. When we were government, of course, we modernized labour laws. That was shifting, and there was a growing trend, but here this bill will now take us back.

7:50 p.m.

Of course, we know that unionized workplaces have better working conditions for their employees. That's just a given fact. Not only do they support their employees specifically, but they have a lighthouse effect so that if other employees in other non-unionized settings work closely, you know, say, in the city of Edmonton – some are unionized; some aren't – the lighthouse effect means that employers have to consider the benefits, the salaries, and the support employees and unions get. It has a lighthouse effect, which means that employers who want to keep and retain employees must really match and make sure that they're giving them the benefits and the salaries of a unionized workplace. We know that . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to get up and have an opportunity to speak to this Assembly. It's not necessarily a pleasure to get up to speak to this bill because it is so terribly misguided and cruel and mean-spirited and generally not likely to achieve the objects that they are seeking or at least not the stated objects that it is seeking. As many people have already talked about, this bill is inappropriately named the open for business act or some silliness like that, and many people in our opposition have chosen instead to refer to it as the pick-your-pocket bill.

But before we get to exactly how it proceeds to pick the pocket of regular working Albertans all over the place, let me just talk a little bit about, you know, this idea of opening Alberta for business and how we might best approach this common problem that we all face, which is the fact that our economy is sluggish, many people have lost their jobs, and many people are still looking for work. This is absolutely the front-of-mind consideration for all Albertans, with a tremendous level of urgency felt by those who are actually looking for work or looking for more work or looking for better paying work in order to help support their families the way they were able to do before the drop in the international price of oil.

Just to give a bit of context here and a bit of history, Madam Speaker, as you all know, Alberta is sitting on tremendously valuable resources, oil and gas resources, that have allowed us to punch above our weight internationally, have allowed us to punch above our weight nationally, and indeed have allowed us to punch above our weight locally or provincially in terms of the quality of life that Albertans have enjoyed, the overall wage levels that Albertans have enjoyed, the employment levels that Albertans have enjoyed. Indeed, on some occasions, not always – it's very inconsistent; it's been tremendously poorly managed; it's been very unstable – but periodically, we've also been able to enjoy strong public services. I don't just speak about the time when we were in government. I also, you know, look back to some of the tremendously innovative and nation-leading initiatives that were

taken under the former Progressive Conservative government led by Peter Lougheed.

All these things were things that we were able to enjoy in Alberta because of these tremendous resources that we have in this province under the ground. I think I'm probably, with most of the people in this building, going to get consensus on the statement that nobody here actually put it there. No amount of tax cuts, no amount of investment in health care and, on the flip side, no amount of good education, no amount of cutting education had anything to do with whether those resources are there. They're there, and we have been able as a province to benefit from them. Now, obviously, there are other jurisdictions in the world that have benefited far more strategically, effectively, intelligently than we have in Alberta from similar levels of resources, but there's no question that we have benefited from them. That's lovely. As a result of that, we have had a strong economy, and business has come here, and we've had a lot of businesses.

Now, the one downside to that, though, just to give some context, is that we didn't do the work we needed to do to diversify our economy. We allowed ourselves to sit back and go: "Oh, that's a thing for the next day. We've got money coming in, and everyone has got jobs. In fact, we have too many jobs and not enough people, so what we have to do is now find a way to import cheap labour and all that kind of stuff." Things were coming up roses. It wasn't exactly the best plan. We weren't really thinking about down the road. We weren't thinking about the climate. We weren't doing the kinds of innovative things that could actually ensure protection of, you know, four or five generations to come like other jurisdictions have done with their investments. But things were good.

The only problem is that we didn't prepare for the inevitable, which, of course, is the drop in the price of oil, which is what began to happen, as many people here know, in late 2014 such that the predecessor to the UCP, the PC government, chose to call the election a year early because they got the kinds of briefings that the front bench here or some of the front bench here now get regularly, and they could tell that things were going to go from disturbing and concerning to really bad. They decided they wanted to try to slip that election under the nose of the people of Alberta before they realized how bad it was going to get. So we had an election a full year early. We broke the law to have the election early in the hopes of not having to face Albertans when the chickens came home to roost and the inevitable job losses and challenges that the Alberta economy is facing were presented to Albertans.

As it turned out, you know, it's interesting. At the time, when I saw them break the law and call the election early, I thought: oh, that's not going to work out too well for them. Certainly, at that particular time it didn't because – who knew? – history was made. A different government was elected, not one that people expected to see elected, but we were elected, and there you go.

I suppose, you know, through the lens of history one could say that maybe it wasn't that bad a move because suddenly what happened was, sure enough, the inevitable happened. We hadn't prepared. Forty-four years of the predecessor party to the current UCP government hadn't done the work to prepare our economy for a tremendous drop in the price of oil, one that I think everyone knows now is not going to recover in the next two months or three months like previously but that is going to really hurt us for some time. That happened, and then people lost their jobs. People became very frustrated and worried about their future and the future of their families. As a result, they started desperately looking for any answer – any answer – to change the situation because they weren't used to what was starting to look like chronic unemployment, and they were desperate to have somebody give them a magic solution.

Well, lucky them. In came the Premier, and he rustled up, pulled up, dusted off the cobwebs from some long-time historically discredited, hurtful, negative economic models, managed to get a couple of endorsers from the notoriously conservative public policy sector there at the U of C, and decided: no; the way to create jobs, our magic formula that we're going to sell to Albertans, is that we're going to give massive tax breaks to corporations without assuring or asking for or getting any kind of guarantee of anything in return.

8:00 p.m.

But no, no, no, that's not enough. In order to make things even more attractive in our magical world of job creation, we are going to queue up to probably – and we don't know this yet, so hopefully I'm wrong. Hopefully, I'm apologizing to the Finance minister a year from now, and none of this is actually true. I suspect that what we're actually going to do is that we're going to cut education, we're going to cut health care, we're going to cut school lunches, we're going to cut special-needs programs in the schools, we're going to make postsecondary education much, much more expensive, and we're going to roll back infrastructure spending. We are going to make life harder for Albertans who struggle the most.

This somehow will be part of a magical job-creation formula that is part of this witches' brew of Reaganomics and other kinds of plans that folks dusted off when they were looking for something to offer the legitimately worried and frustrated Albertans who were struggling with the new reality of oil at \$50 a barrel and no way to move it out of the province, which is also something that, to be clear, was a chronic problem that you could have seen coming 15 years ago but was not addressed by the Conservative government here in Alberta or the Conservative government in Ottawa. History is just a thing that apparently doesn't last past the most popular meme; nonetheless, it's kind of a thing that folks should think about every now and then.

The other, final element of this magical brew of pretend job-creation strategies that the current Premier offered up to a legitimately worried and frustrated province of people who needed to find some hope for job creation in the short term was this idea that the way to create jobs is on the backs of the most vulnerable people in the province and that you create jobs by keeping down workers, by suppressing their wages, by suppressing their rights, by figuratively putting your heel on the back of their neck and stepping down hard, that somehow the act of doing this will hang a neon sign to the world of investors out there, who will come and invest their money in Alberta because they, too, can do the things that will keep workers underpaid, undervalued, with fewer rights than they have in other parts of this fabulous country that we call Canada. It seems strange when I describe it, Madam Speaker. It really does. But that, in a nutshell, is the strange, magical formula of the – all the power to him – rather talented communications effort that the now Premier presented to Albertans in the last election. This is part of it.

I want to begin by saying that I fundamentally and completely disagree with this magical job-creation formula that is being put forward by the members opposite, in part, because I just think it's cruel and it's mean. I think the idea that you can create economic prosperity by growing inequality, by having a small group of exceptionally lucky and well-heeled haves at the expense of an ever-growing group of have-nots is fundamentally flawed.

This idea – the member opposite has actually talked about it. He said: oh, it's a meritocracy. It's a meritocracy. Of course, meritocracy is another word for saying: "Hey, I was born into a family where mom and dad both have lots and lots of money, so I got to be sent to a really well-heeled private school, and I got tutors

when I had trouble getting through my classes. I never had to go hungry because we actually had a housekeeper who cooked lovely meals for me, and I was never late for class because I got my own car when I was 16," and all these things. Somehow that is evidence of a meritocracy. It's not, by the way. It's evidence of the kind of structured entitlement that goes from generation to generation and slowly makes a society more and more unhealthy.

Nonetheless, I disagree with the idea that is being put here. I don't believe that economic progress is achieved by cutting school lunch programs. I do not believe that jobs are created by firing special-needs educators. I do not believe that more jobs are created by paying people half as much money. If we do create jobs that way, they're not jobs we should be creating, Madam Speaker. Obviously, you know, the logical extension of that argument is: "Hey, why pay them anything? Just think how many jobs we'd have if everybody worked for free. Oh, my goodness, there would be so many jobs." Interestingly, the GDP would probably go up. It would actually go up. The only problem is that we'd have a little problem with 99 per cent of the population.

That is the logical extension of the kinds of things these folks are talking about and the overall vision for economic growth that they have: pull back government, pull back investment in postsecondary education, ensure that the only people who have access to it are those who have lots of money, make sure that we do not maintain any cap on tuition, for instance. I remember at one point having a conversation about tuition and actually hearing a member from the predecessor to this party talk about how if tuition was inexpensive or, heaven forbid, free, well, then – you know what? – it would be too easy to get in, and people wouldn't value it. I couldn't believe my ears when I heard that. I think that postsecondary education is absolutely fundamental to all of our futures. It also happens to be a fundamental component to a healthy, growing, diversified, modern, innovative economy that actually isn't entirely tied or unhealthily tied to one commodity and one price over which we have almost no control.

Ah, yes, going back to my point: the economy. Don't cut school lunches, don't cut teachers, don't close hospitals, don't pick on young workers, don't pick the pockets of workers, and for heaven's sake stop demonizing unions. The idea that all those things make the economy stronger is profoundly misguided.

Let's talk about this one subset of that profoundly misguided job-creation plan that the folks over there have managed to convince themselves will actually create jobs in this province, the pick-your-pockets act. There are so many elements of it which are deeply offensive, and the members opposite really are not selling it in a way that connects adequately, in my mind, to the reality of what it is they are doing. You know, I don't think that shows the highest level of intellectual integrity by selling – I get talking points; I do. I get talking points. I get political communications, but there is a point in that process where you kind of lose the plot and it becomes rather Orwellian. It just is absolutely the opposite of what the bill is actually doing. I will say that the members opposite have certainly reached that in terms of many of the talking points around this particular piece of legislation, because it does not do the things that they claim it will do or that they claim it needs to do.

Let me start with the overtime pieces and the changes in this bill around overtime. Now, I imagine that at some point I will get a chance to ask the Premier about this specifically, but I will comment about it today. I was quite disappointed in what I can only assume is the Premier's lack of knowledge about this legislation and his lack of knowledge and misunderstanding about what it means. I can only assume that he just happened to be misinformed when he made the comments that he did about this legislation – I think it was last week or two weeks ago – talking about: "Don't you worry. This



reversion from time-and-a-half overtime to straight time will only happen if employees ask for it and if they agree to it." Now, that's simply not true, Madam Speaker. That's not true.

8:10 p.m.

Anybody who sits down and reads through this legislation with any care and attention – and I'm not suggesting that the Premier has time to sit down and read every bit of legislation that his cabinet passes, but presumably someone is advising him when he has his briefing book in front of him and his talking points. I get that he's got talking points, Madam Speaker, but presumably the people who write the talking points do the homework and check it against the facts so that the talking points don't end up actually contradicting the actual ink on the bill that's in front of us here in the Assembly, because that's awkward. Just, you know, from my own experience being Premier, I find it awkward when my speaking points are completely contradictory to what I'm putting forward to this Assembly and asking them to pass. I just think that as the Premier you should try to avoid those things.

The reality is that it is not something that is voluntary on the part of employees. The part of the act that has had overtime changed from one and a half times to straight time is the part that talks about banking overtime, and the part that talks about banking overtime outlines the circumstances under which you can have an agreement where you are banking overtime. The circumstances for that are where the employer and the employees agree, and then after that the agreement is in place.

Now, I know I'm not the only person to work in businesses that are, say, for instance, seasonal. The employer sits down with his three employees in January, who happen to be the only employees who are around at that time of the year, and they work out this agreement. Then they proceed to go hire the 100 employees who will be working with them through the remainder of the season. Those employees are told: hey, there's an agreement. They're not told, "Hey, you can opt out of the agreement," because – guess what? – they can't. They're told that there's an agreement. That's the way this legislation works.

How do we know it works that way? That's what we heard from people when we reviewed this legislation in the first place and made the changes to it that we did. We heard from people that this was being used as a means by employers in this province to get around paying overtime. We heard it from responsible business owners, who were worried about irresponsible business owners competing with them unfairly by using these rules to get around the obligation to pay overtime. We heard about it, of course, from workers themselves. We heard about it from unions. We heard about it from the staff within the ministry. We heard about it from academics who had written about the sorry, sorry state of Alberta's labour laws. We heard it from everyone, and it was true.

Then what we did was that we read the legislation, Madam Speaker. We looked at the legislation, and we went: "Hmm, yeah. If I was an employer who didn't want to pay overtime, this is exactly what I would do, and there is not a single, solitary thing in this piece of legislation that would stop me from doing it." So that's what people were doing.

What this means, then, is that in many, many cases, in many parts of the economy right now where people work overtime – I'm sure you're listening very carefully to everything that all of us over here say, so you will have heard it from other members of our caucus already. There are roughly 400,000 Albertans who earn overtime pay every year. In many of the sectors in which they work, it is seasonal, and there are, in many of these cases, these banked overtime agreements.

Now, it wasn't a problem with us because we just said: "Fine. Yeah. Bank your overtime. Have at 'er. Giddy up." I think it's great to bank your overtime because, you know – I'll be quite honest – lots of people would much prefer to bank their overtime, have the flexibility to take time off in lieu, all that kind of stuff. I mean, certainly, back in the day when I wasn't working here, the idea of being able to take time in lieu rather than getting paid out was something that I much preferred because when I was younger and was raising a family and my kids were younger and had greater demands, what I really wanted was time. The opportunity to choose time instead of money, once you're outside the parameters of having your regular, predictable rate of pay, that was an absolute privilege.

The ability to choose time and to choose to bank it is bold. But to have it imposed upon me at straight time rather than allowing me to take it at time and a half: well, no. That's an entirely different thing altogether. That's a very greedy hand reaching into my pocket and taking something out of it, and that is not a thing that is particularly advisable or appealing. "Appealing" really is the word. It's not appealing to workers to have someone reach into their pocket and pick their pocket, take their money.

This is a change that this act does. It is a lot of money for regular working folks. I think it's fair to say that in many, many cases people who work overtime in an unpredictable way and aren't on sort of a salary where, you know, overtime is not necessarily compensated are tending to be lower income folks. Now, not altogether, because of course you've probably also heard us say, which is true, that the sector that is most negatively impacted by this is, in fact, the construction and the oil and gas sector. Nonetheless, the rest of them tend to be wage-earning folks, and those folks don't tend to earn as much as salaried people.

Here what we are doing is finding a way to take a significant amount of money out of the pockets of people who probably are in the mid to lower end of the wage-earning scale in this province and doing so while not even being accurate about the fact that that's what you're doing by saying misinformed things like workers can choose this. You know, folks over there love to wax: "Wow. You know, they should just sit down, and they should negotiate it. That's what they should do. You betcha."

You know, I remember when I was working one summer picking strawberries at a market garden. I've got to tell you that I cannot tell you how much agency I felt I had to go and talk to the owner of that market garden, just march right up and say: "Sir, I just think we need to renegotiate this deal that you've got here between me and the other 30 or 40 employees and you. Let's just sit down because – you know what? – we're equal partners. We're equal partners, and I've decided that I'm going to renegotiate my wage."

Well, that's the most ridiculous thing on the planet, Madam Speaker, and anyone here who's ever worked, you know, a job like that, a hard-working, labouring, lower end of the wage scale job, knows that the idea that you just march up to your boss and sit down and have a nice little cup of coffee and tell him that you've decided to renegotiate your wage, that is fiction. It is fiction, and it's disrespectful. It is utterly disrespectful for members on the other side to talk about those pretend situations. It's disrespectful to the hard-working people who are finding that their wages are going down and who will find that under this bill they could lose up to \$2,700 every 12 weeks. It is disrespectful to talk to that worker and tell them that they should just march into their CEO's office and have a little talk about how their wage needs to change. What utter nonsense.

8:20 p.m.

Anyhow, I just hope that on this piece someone will take the time to go speak to whoever it is that is now working in the Premier's office writing up his talking points for his question period binder, take the time to pull that little piece out and have him acknowledge that he was incorrect when he said to this House that this is about providing flexibility for workers because they get to choose whether or not they are part of these banked overtime agreements. It was wrong, and he shouldn't have told us that. I would urge all of you to do him a favour and just help a Premier out and get his folks to fix his talking points so he stops making mistakes like this on the record. You know, again, it's awkward. It's just awkward.

What are some of the other parts of this bill that are in play? Well, one of the other ones, of course, is the decision to get rid of card check certification and go back to the two-step process that was previously in place. Now, this is another one of those decisions that is the product of many years of creative storytelling on the parts of folks who would prefer to see unions completely erased from the employment scenario or the employment environment here in this province and in every other jurisdiction around the world.

There's a long, proud history of employers union-busting, doing everything they can to fight against unions, I mean back in the really good old days, you know, if you go back to the coal mines in the northeast U.S. at that point. I'm sure history buffs here would be interested if you didn't already know the history of — Mackenzie King: was he first, second, third? I should know this — our Prime Minister and the relationship that he had with some of the union busters in the northeast U.S. over 100 years ago. There was violence associated with it. There was a lot of violence, a lot of injuries and deaths suffered by people who were struggling to set up unions and protect their rights and the safety of workers in the mines. At that time employers engaged in some hideous, hideous attacks on working people.

Now, obviously things have evolved tremendously since then, and we don't see that kind of thing anymore, but there is no question that there is a subset of employers — and I wouldn't say that it's a large group. I would say that, perhaps, the members opposite overrepresent that group a little bit right now. But there is definitely a subset of employers who think that unions are bad, no matter what.

Mackenzie King was the 10th Prime Minister. Thank you for that little piece of information there. That was very helpful. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Anyway, they just think that unions are awful, and they would do whatever they could to avoid them. In doing that, there are some really interesting narratives that have been created as part of the more sophisticated and far less violent efforts to avoid unions. That is this idea that individual workers, if they could just choose, would choose to never have a union and that the union is represented by this great big, six-foot-eight, 300-pound, unshaven thug. That's what the union is. It's a thug. In fact, they use the word "thug" after the word "union" a lot. It's really quite something. There's this narrative that that's the union.

So the six-foot-eight, 300-pound thug marches onto the shop floor and intimidates all these poor, independently minded workers, who are quite happily sitting down and individually negotiating their pay raises with their boss when they're having lattes, whenever they want to, that this big thug is intimidating workers. The union boss, the union thug, is intimidating these individual workers and marching around the workplace like he owns it. Oh, it's just awful. The employer and the workers are cowering. It's just a horrible situation, and we need to do everything we can to avoid that. That's the narrative.

Of course, fundamental to this narrative is this other fiction, which is this idea that, again, in your average workplace, your factory floor or wherever, Joe or Jill Average Worker has the ability to just call up the boss, march upstairs to the manager's office, sit down, just sort of barge in and say: "Hey, I'm just going to use your latte maker there. I'm going to make myself one. We're going to sit down and you and I are going to have a talk and you're going to give me a raise." That's how it works every day, and it works out so well. That same fiction, of course, infuses this conversation about whether unions are a good thing or a bad thing.

Now, in fact, what we know is that unions are fundamentally responsible for the fact that we have weekends now, that workers have the right to refuse unsafe work without being fired, that women have the right to raise complaints about being harassed in the workplace without being fired, that human rights as a whole must be respected in the workplace, and that workers as a whole have the right to come together and negotiate reasonable working conditions with their employers. Oh, pensions, that's a good one. That's another one that came from unions: pensions. I wouldn't know; I don't have a pension. The whole world thinks I have a pension. As everyone in here knows, pretty much nobody in this room has a pension except the Premier. Pensions are a good thing, and the Premier owes his pension probably, ultimately, to unions, if you go back far enough.

Nonetheless, these are all good things that came from unions. They came from workers coming together to negotiate collectively with their employer because they found that those one-on-one latte events weren't working out for them quite as well as they had hoped. Anyway, because some employers are not keen on unions, they certainly want to make sure that they have every opportunity to discourage unions.

So then we have another version of this fictional narrative out there about these independent, latte-sipping, independently negotiating factory-floor workers and the imposing union thug. That is that when they sign a membership card to say they want to join a union, obviously they didn't mean it. I mean, it's just a pen and a paper and their signature. Clearly, they were intimidated by the union thug I described previously. These poor workers cannot be expected to know their minds when they sign these cards. It's ridiculous. What we need to do is protect them from themselves and also from our big six-foot-eight, 300-pound union thug. So what we do is that after they go through this process of signing the cards and putting pen to paper and putting their signature on it — that is apparently not good enough to demonstrate their desire for a union. No. What we now have to do is that we have to give the employer I think it's 90 days, but someone could correct me if I'm wrong. We have to give the employers the opportunity to protect them from themselves. We must also give the employer the opportunity to protect them from that 300-pound union thug who's marching around the factory floor with impunity and complete access to every worker and the ability to intimidate them into signing the card.

God bless the people that come up with these stories and the degree to which they are actually successful at making people believe them. You know, they certainly have a talent, but every now and then it's helpful, again, to look at facts, to look at history, to look at research.

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We see, for instance, that when there was a two-stage approach to certification in B.C., 80 per cent of employers fought the certification, and when they went to a card check, the number of unions that were certified went up by something like 50 per cent. The number of times that workers or employers were able to sustain

a claim of there being intimidation by the union of either the employer or the worker was almost nonexistent, but the frequency of documented and adjudicated unfair labour practices by the employer against the workers was very high. I can't remember the number, but it was – I don't know – 100 to 1 or something. I mean, the point is that that's the way it worked. We have articles out there that look at the fact that there's really no evidence of any allegation – or maybe one or two over the course of 15 years – of a union intimidating or engaging in an unfair labour practice to push a worker into signing a card, but there were copious – copious – pieces of evidence of employers using their influence to intimidate workers out of voting *g* for a union.

Let me talk a little bit about that, this spectre of employers intimidating workers out of voting for a union. Let me just say at the outset – again, I want to make it very clear. What I'm talking about is a small subset of employers. There are lots of great employers out there who are perfectly happy to have their employees be unionized. I can think of – well, I won't get into that; I don't know what's confidential and what's not confidential – really excellent major corporate players in Alberta and in Calgary that are wonderful corporate citizens who have been extremely sophisticated and mature and accommodating when their employees have selected a union or chosen to become unionized. There are many, many employers out there that are absolutely fine with it. They understand the positive outcomes of unionization. Let me just say that. I'm not by any means wanting to paint all employers with this brush because that's not the real thing. It's a subset that believe that their path to prosperity must be paved by shortchanging their workers and breaching their rights.

Anyway, when we talk about the employer's ability – I've talked about the narrative around the union thug's ability to march into the workplace and intimidate workers into signing cards. Now, just to be clear, unions don't have access to workplaces, so that's actually not a true thing. Unions don't even have access to workers, so that's not a true thing. Typically, when unions organize workers, what happens is that workers will go to unions and say: we're interested. Then those workers will organize themselves and bring their colleagues to meet with the union organizer, who will then give them the cards. The union organizer has no access to the workplace, and they have no access to the list of employees. They don't have that. That's just not a thing.

What the employer has is not only access to the workplace but complete control over the workplace and, of course, complete access to the list of employees. They also have the ability to control and manage the workplace. They can say things like: "Hey, there's a union drive going on. Huh, coincidentally, vacations are cancelled for the next four weeks." Or: "Hey, there's a union drive going on. Coincidentally, we're going to have you all come in and work more overtime. Oh, on that overtime agreement, y'all signed up for straight time, and you're going to have to bank it." Or: "Hey, Franco over there, who happens, in my mind, to maybe be the one that first reached out to the union, but I will never say this, doesn't have a job anymore, but it has nothing to do with that. Oh no, no. It has to do with the fact that I've been planning to fire Franco for a long time."

These are not things I'm making up. I urge you to go to the Labour Relations Board decisions of any province or of the country and read the decisions around unfair labour practices. These are exactly the circumstances that you will see described there. That is what it looks like. That is the kind of thing that creates a lot of disruption and, of course, undermines the right of workers to choose a union, which is now a constitutionally recognized right by the Supreme Court of Canada. Only in the past five or six years have the right to organize and the right to be part of a union been elevated

and recognized as part of the freedom of association rights under the Charter. But it's really hard for workers to do that because they're in a scenario where, by virtue of agreeing to be an employee, they say to their boss: you are in control of me; that's what you're paying me for.

There are many, many mechanisms at the disposal of this particular subset of employers that wants to avoid unions if they can. That is why our government made the decision to move to the commonly used card check mechanism. But you know what? We also took a pretty pragmatic approach to it. We thought: yeah; you know, 51 per cent versus 49 per cent is pretty close, and to have a union come into a place automatically where only 51 per cent of people have expressed their desire to be part of a union, that's a bit much.

Quite frankly, I know myself, from friends and others whom I know who work in the labour movement, that good union organizers would not actually ever seek a certification with 51 per cent. I mean, I'm not saying that it doesn't happen. It does happen with not wise union organizers. But the good ones know that that's really not wise. If you actually certify a workplace with only 51 per cent support and then you sit down and try to negotiate an agreement, you know, the whole thing is going to fall apart because you're not going to have your union members onside with you to negotiate well. And if half your members are not in support of what needs to be done to negotiate a good deal, i.e. potentially threaten to strike, then you're never going to negotiate, and the whole thing is a wash anyway.

So why would you ever try to certify with 51 per cent? It's not wise anyway. To actually do that would create a lot of labour-employer strife, and it would create more fights than it was worth. So we just decided that it didn't make sense to do that. We're not here to create fights between working people and their employers around the province. So we said: no; we're going to pick a different number. We're not going to use 50 per cent plus one. We're going to use 65 per cent. If unions can get 65 per cent of people to take a pen and look at a card and read it and sign it on their own volition, then that's pretty good evidence that they made the decision that they want a union. That 65 per cent, you know, leaves a lot of room for movement. By doing that, you then are able to move quickly to the negotiating process.

Now, if it turns out that the union still doesn't have the support of people, well, then, the whole thing will end up being a wash ultimately anyway once they go to negotiate the agreement. But if you've got 65 per cent, that's not likely to be the case. You're not in this process where you are creating more divisiveness and lost productivity, quite honestly, in the workplace by having this two-step process, where suddenly we are compelling our workplaces to get into this kind of fighting scenario where the employer starts fighting against his or her own workers. That was why we did the 65 per cent card check, a very pragmatic decision.

But, no, these folks again have bought into that narrative. They've bought into the narrative of a 300-pound union thug intimidating these poor workers into signing these cards. They've bought into the fiction of the union having any capacity to actually campaign to workers or talk to workers in the workplace. They've bought into the fiction that employers don't somehow have a far accelerated ability to influence workers during the course of a union vote. They've bought into all of that, or maybe they wrote it themselves. I'm not even sure who's buying into a narrative or who's actually creating the narrative for their own interests or the interests of their donors. I'm not sure. In any event, they have completely bought into it.

8:40 p.m.

The result, then, is that the frequency of unionization will be limited and will be reduced, and the benefits of unionization, which can be an organized means of managing the workplace, a respectful way to hear and navigate through the concerns of workers, a mechanism of giving working people a voice in their workplace, all those things will be less frequent. Wages will go down, more overtime agreements at straight time will be imposed on working people, and – guess what? – working people will end up with less money, and employers will end up with more. Hence, we move back into the magical thinking of the current government around how the way to create jobs is actually to grow inequality and to make the gap larger as much as you possibly can and to take rights away from those who already have the fewest rights. Somehow that is the magical path to creating jobs.

It's wrong. It's not, at least not the kinds of jobs that I believe Albertans want. I don't think Albertans want Alberta to become Mexico north. I'm pretty sure they don't want that to be our competitive advantage, but really that's the natural consequence, the logical consequence of the path that this UCP government is embarking upon.

Now, there are a few other things in Bill 2 as well which are basically other ways to go after workers' salaries and money. Apparently, that is how we create jobs. We just pay people less, and somehow there are going to be magical new jobs created. I think it's totally untrue, and there's more and more evidence to that end every day, but whatever.

In any event, there's this whole issue around holiday pay. I don't even know why you would do that. Honestly, it's like: I'm going to march into office, and my second bill is going to be about taking money away from working people on Christmas Day. Like, for the love of God. I just don't understand. Why be so petty? I just don't get it. And Christmas Day, of all things.

Our province will be . . .

**Mr. Schmidt:** It's part of their war on Christmas.

**Ms Notley:** It's war on Christmas, indeed. Yeah, yeah. War on fun, war on Christmas, war on working people, war on kids. Oh, my goodness. Kids.

I don't know what kids have done. In fact, you know what? Like, we've already got this theme of these guys not liking kids, you know, whether it's cutting their education, attacking their rights in school to be safe, taking away their school lunches, making them pay more to go to school, taking away their wages. But I hadn't really thought about that. It's actually a war on Christmas. Kids like Christmas, too. It's just that whatever kids like, these guys don't, right? I can't wait to see what's next.

**Mr. Schmidt:** It's going to be in the bill to make Santa Claus illegal.

**Ms Notley:** Well, maybe. Santa Claus, ironically, probably does work on holidays and is going to get paid a lot less. So kids are going to be sitting on an angry Santa's lap because Santa's making no overtime thanks to these folks. Thank you for that advice, Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. That's actually what's happening here.

Every other part of the country, every other province has rules around holiday pay and premium pay for working on holidays that ensures that you get premium pay for holidays, but now Alberta will not do that. Now Alberta will pay less because of this bill. Every other province will pay more, and Alberta's employers will pay

less. So people who are forced to work on these days get less. That's how it works, right?

**Ms Gray:** People who don't work.

**Ms Notley:** People who don't work on these days get less. That's right. Okay. They don't get paid because it's a stat holiday . . .

**Ms Gray:** Or a Saturday.

**Ms Notley:** But you don't get paid for it. That's right. So this is a change.

Just to be clear, a stat holiday: the idea is that people get paid for stat holidays, you know. That's what it means, that you get paid for them. That's why so often employers are typically unhappy with the idea of creating new holidays, because they don't want to pay for new holidays. I mean, holidays are bad things according to some.

So just even in '20-21 . . .

**Ms Gray:** In '21-22.

**Ms Notley:** In 2021-2022 both Christmas and New Year's are going to fall on a weekend, so that means that people are not going to get paid for that. Now, they did get paid, but now they don't get paid, so that's more money out of their pockets. That's a new thing. That's brought to you by the UCP: no stat holiday pay for Christmas. Jeez, I wonder how that's going to impact the number of presents under the tree, especially when added to the \$2,500 every 12 weeks that someone else in the family is losing. It's going to be one heck of a Grinchy Christmas, I have to say.

I really don't have the slightest idea what possessed people over there to pick such a petty fight with the people of Alberta and to isolate Albertans from the rest of Canada by pulling back on these particular rights. It seems nitpicky, it seems petty, and it obviously is something that is directed, again, against working people, again, part of this overall idea that you create jobs by systematically attacking the rights of working people.

Then, of course, there are other things. We also know, of course, that these folks are very determined to discriminate against young people. You know, I have to say that I find it very interesting. There's this idea that somehow by dropping the youth wage by \$2 an hour, there'll be a plethora of new jobs for people under 18. Of course, there's not one thought given to the people who turn 18 and lose their jobs. If anything, this will be a wash, and there'll be a neutral outcome there.

But, you know, honestly, we know that kids who choose to work before they are 18 typically do so because they need to, and they are contributing to parts of what they want to do, to their education, that kind of thing. I was very pleased. My son started working in grade 10, and he paid for a trip to Quebec to learn French one summer. He did that himself. He contributed to his tuition, and he paid for some of the costs for some of the sports programs, things like that. That's great. Not every kid who is working before they're 18 is using their money that way. Some of them are buying groceries, and some of them are helping pay rent, and some of them are saving to be able to get into university because mom and dad simply do not have the disposable income to pay for their tuition. So these kids are now earning less.

8:50 p.m.

But, more important even, when some of these kids turn 18, what happens is their jobs will just disappear, and they will be replaced by someone who is younger than 18. Because any employer who is

going to actually engage in this discriminatory practice of paying young people \$2 an hour less based on the year they were born in and not based on the way they work or the quality of their work is likely going to be the same kind of person that fires this person when they turn 18 and then goes and finds somebody else, you know, cheaper labour.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Of all the people to impose the obligation to drag this province into economic prosperity upon, let me say that to choose working people under the age of 18 and make them carry the burden is unfair. It's unfair. It's thoughtless. It's very thoughtless. It's going to backfire. It won't work. It's just mean spirited, too. I mean, these are people who can't vote. They didn't vote. They can't vote for this government. They can't cast a ballot. You take powerless people, and you make them the victims of your poorly, poorly thought-out plan to create jobs on the backs of people who earn the least and also need health care and education and school lunches and postsecondary and infrastructure and, you know, firefighters and people to build their roads, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

That is really an obnoxious choice to make, I have to say, Mr. Speaker, in terms of who it is that is going to carry the water of dealing with the fact that for 44 years this government sat on one of the biggest reserves of economic potential and failed to save or to diversify and create an economic model that would carry us more than six months beyond the drop in the price of oil. So for 44 years a bunch of people, many of whom are rather older now, didn't do the job, and now we're going to make people who are 16 pay for their failure. It just really doesn't sit well with me.

Now, another group of people that will be paying for this, of course, is people who serve liquor in restaurants. That's, I think, something that is not in this bill necessarily, but it is the subject of future conversations that have been discussed as part of this overall model of going after working people. I think what we do know is that liquor servers are primarily women and that by cutting their right to a minimum wage, we are disproportionately attacking women and that the majority of people that actually earn this wage, or a large number of them, are actually single parents with children who are women. Again, in an effort to convince their donors that they're going to give them a free ride in some fashion, we are picking people who earn the least and who already earn about 35 cents per dollar less, on average, than men in the province. By all means, let's make it 38 cents or 40 cents. Like, why stop at 35 cents, Mr. Speaker?

If there's a way to have women earn less, let's go at it, and that appears to be what the whole raising of the liquor server differentiation wage is about. That is, again, another decision by this government to make people who have the least carry the water for those who have the most as we struggle with the consequences of 44 years of Conservative failure to diversify our economy and prepare us for the inevitable drop in the price of oil and/or the failure to get our product to market, something that they presided over for 10 years both in Ottawa and Edmonton at the same time.

What else can I say about these things? We've already talked about how we're already out of line with the rest of the country and that somehow people think that by picking on our working people more, somehow this is going to attract investors. I'm wondering. I'm curious, you know. I'd like to ask the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. Are those the investors we want to attract? Do we really want the investors who come to Alberta because they get to pay less and they have to respect fewer rights and they can manipulate their employees more in the workplace? Are those the investors we

want? Is that the model of economic growth that we want in this province? I'm just curious.

I had always thought that we could aim higher. It was certainly our view that that's exactly what we had the potential to do in Alberta. We have so many opportunities, so many resources, that we could aim higher, that we could have a vision for our economic future that included everybody doing well and that one of the goalposts to which we would hold ourselves accountable would be the idea that everybody does well, that every kid born into every family has the chance and the likelihood of going to university and has the chance and the likelihood of living a good life where they can spend time with their family and be safe in their workplaces and be innovative and thoughtful and enjoy the arts and culture and live a full life. That's what a good economy is, where everybody enjoys that, not one where we measure it by a profit made by a very small group of people on the backs of a much larger group of people who, quite frankly, struggle to pay the rent every month, who struggle to pay their grocery bills every month, who struggle to save for their kids' education in the future, if that's even a possible thing.

You know, I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that there's been a lot of hyperbole in this Chamber about the impact of the carbon tax on regular working people. There's been a tremendous amount of talk around how hard it was for families, low- and middle-income families, to deal with the consequences of the carbon tax even though we repeatedly provided evidence that the rebates we were offering meant that lower income families actually came out of it with more. For middle-income families, it was kind of a wash. But that was certainly part of the narrative. Oh my goodness. The chest-beating that we listened to over the \$200 a month that it might cost a low-income person as a result of the carbon tax. I think that's actually a gross exaggeration. It's more like \$200 over a longer period of time. In any event, that of course never took into account the rebates, which zeroed all that out.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It's fine to raise those concerns, but to raise those concerns and then to turn around and take up to \$2,700 every 12 weeks out of the pockets of those very same families that the members opposite claimed for the last four years to be so concerned about is the penultimate example of hypocrisy, Madam Speaker. If you were concerned about the well-being of those people, you wouldn't bring in Bill 2 and attack the well-being of those people. Really, I think the objection to the carbon tax wasn't about the people that these folks claim to be worried about. Well, I actually think it was about political tactics, if you must know. I really think it was about political tactics and not a lot more.

9:00 p.m.

**Ms Hoffman:** Successful.

**Ms Notley:** Yeah. Fair enough. It was successful political tactics, but it was actually still political tactics and not much more.

Nonetheless, this bill stands to have a much more significant financial effect on hard-working Albertans, the folks who are getting up in the morning in their older pickup truck and driving 45 minutes or an hour to a construction site and working for 13 hours and then coming home and repeating. These are the folks we heard about who were struggling because of the 6-cent-a-litre increase to the price of gas, but these are the folks who will now lose or could lose over \$2,500 every 12 weeks. I see people shaking their heads over there, but I look forward to rolling out our research that shows that that is exactly the amount of money that people stand to lose by stealing their time and a half and replacing it with straight-time overtime. I guess the issue just comes down to this question. What

exactly are you concerned about over there? You did a heck of a good job of convincing Albertans you were concerned about how hard that extra 6 cents a litre was for families, yet now you're doing this, and this is so much worse. I struggle to add it up, Madam Speaker, because it doesn't make sense. This is far more hurtful.

We've talked about overtime. We have talked about the Christmas holiday, that no longer gets paid to many people. We've talked about undermining unions because we believe the fiction that the average factory-floor employee has the capacity to talk to the owner of the business and individually negotiate their working conditions and how ridiculous that is.

I want to just talk a little bit about the fact that I am still concerned about where this is heading going forward. Originally in the platform of the UCP – and, of course, all of this is linked back to the platform – there was also talk about taking away the ability of unionized workers to participate in public discourse on matters that impacted their working conditions. I see that that's not in this bill, and that's good news. I do want to say that that's good news.

I also want to say, though, that if that is something that people are thinking about bringing back or reintroducing next fall, you know, I think you're going to have a heck of a fight on your hands. I've said quite openly in a speech not too long ago that this idea of cutting services, cutting education, cutting health care, cutting supports to people with disabilities, cutting people who support our seniors, cutting emergency services, cutting the amount of time that police can spend or the number of police, all those kinds of things that happen if you actually do the things that the math that has been presented thus far would suggest are going to be done – and maybe it won't be. Maybe they'll walk away from the math, Madam Speaker. Maybe they'll walk away from their balance date. Maybe they'll walk away from some of their commitments. But if you meet all the commitments that are currently being discussed, then what we will have are cuts to the tune of about 20 per cent over several years, and that will mean a significant attack on services that Albertans rely on.

Certainly, one of the ways we would know about the implications of those attacks is for the working people who provided those services to be able to stand up and tell Albertans what the funding cuts meant, but maybe folks over there think it'll be not as easy for them to tell Albertans about what the funding cuts mean if you take away their ability to speak publicly about these things, as was being mused about before this bill was introduced. I said that it was a bit akin to, you know, someone cutting the phone wires before you break into a house. That is a bit what that would be like if that particular action were taken by this government to limit the free speech rights of those who are parts of unions or members of unions.

I will say that since we don't see it now, I'm going to hope that enough lawyers came in to point out how many ways that would breach the Constitution, that maybe they actually got through to folks, and that particular piece of very ill-advised legislation or policy has been set aside. If it hasn't, then I think that there will be some difficult conversations not only in this Assembly but outside of it. That's all I will say on that at this point.

I think I'm getting close to wrapping up. I want to just finish with this idea that there are things that we agree on in this House, and I started with that. That is that we need to kick-start our economy, and we need to create jobs and we need to protect jobs. We need to protect the jobs that we still have, and we need to find ways to create more jobs. The way to do that in a long-term, sustainable way is to diversify our economy and to attract the kinds of investors who want and need an educated, articulate, enabled, young, innovative, entrepreneurial workforce. Those are the kinds of investors who

will diversify our economy and create the economy of tomorrow, and that will help Alberta capitalize on what are our current assets.

Let me just say for a moment that above and beyond the oil and gas resources that we have, one of the assets that we have in Alberta that we sometimes overlook is that compared even to the rest of the country, we really do have the youngest, best educated, hardest working – and I say that in terms of, like, the number of hours a week that Albertans work – and most diverse workforce in the country. When you sit down and you talk to your colleagues in other parts of the country and you look at what their economic challenges are and you see that their population is literally 10, 15, 20 years older than ours and that the work rate, the productivity rate within their population is very, very low and that large swaths of people aren't working at all and all that kind of stuff, you realize that what we have in Alberta, our biggest asset, really, is our population.

So what we want to do is attract investors who are looking for that. We don't want to attract investors who are looking for the North American version of a developing country, where they can exploit their workforce. That is a dead end to economic development. Slashing our education is a dead end to economic development. Creating massive deficits by giving huge corporate tax giveaways when we already have the lowest taxes in the country is a dead end. Celebrating, raising up, and supporting what is the best workforce in the country: that is part of the path to a long-term, sustainable economic future in this province.

**9:10 p.m.**

So I would ultimately, as part of this larger picture, urge members opposite to move away from wanting to be the cheapest place to do business in the world model of economic development, because it will fail, because in a race to the bottom we can't compete. What we can compete with is a race to the top because that's who Albertans are. We should have a government that respects that about them, and we should have laws that respect that about Albertans when it comes to our workplaces.

This bill actually reads like a bill that is the opposite of that. This bill reads like a bill that wants to invite investors who will push us to a race for the bottom instead of working with us to win the race to the top, which we have the capacity to do but not if we write off large swaths of our population, create inequality, shut down opportunity, and push people to the side, which is what Bill 2, ultimately, is part of a larger plan to achieve. That is why we are very, very much opposed to it.

With that, although I think I might have another 10 minutes, I think I will bring this . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Take nine and a half. Tell us more about union thugs.

**Ms Notley:** I feel that I've done a good job describing union thugs already, so I'm not going to do that anymore. To be clear, they're not actual, real union thugs.

Oh, I guess the last thing – this is the last thing I will say.

**Ms Hoffman:** There we go.

**Ms Notley:** There she goes. Okay.

The one thing I was going to say when I was talking about the hypothetical, fictional union thug, that was, you know, six foot eight and 300 pounds, is that, actually, I am the union thug because I worked for the union. I'm sure most people here will say that I'm not that intimidating, and it's very unlikely that I could march onto a factory floor and intimidate some fellow there into signing a union card that he didn't want to sign. Unions are actually working people, and they look like the working people who are their

members. They are not thugs, and they're not intimidating; they're simply working people coming together to support each other.

Anyway, that's sort of a digression because I thought that I was actually getting very close to wrapping up with a nice conclusion. Thanks to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, I have now broken that. Nonetheless, I guess I will just end with that little anecdote. My apologies for the lack of organization in the last hour of comments, but I do hope I've been able to reach and touch on most of the points that are relevant to why our caucus is absolutely and completely opposed to Bill 2. We think it represents a step towards the wrong future, the utterly wrong choice for how we grow this province. It is the opposite of what we should be doing, and it is something that in the long term will hurt the economy of the province, not help it, and in the short term it will hurt working people who are already struggling and don't need this government to pile on any more in the struggle that they have.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will take my seat and cede the floor to others who, I'm sure, have many things to say about Bill 2. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to congratulate the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for making it through 85 minutes of that diatribe. Unenlightening, at best. To be honest with you, I've heard a lot of things in my short time in this Legislature, but I have rarely heard the level of disrespect that I just heard over the last 85 minutes, particularly regarding the small-business owners who bust their hump every day to create wealth in this province and create jobs.

The members opposite have begun to show us their true colours. Last night the House leader said that if small businesses can't absorb a couple of thousand dollars, maybe they should revise their business model. Now, maybe there are a couple of companies, maybe there are lots of companies in this province that could absorb a couple of thousand dollars, but I can tell you that there are countless others for which that couple of thousand dollars makes a colossal difference between paying your employees, paying your debts, and maybe having a bit of money left over to pay yourself at the end of the month.

Then, all of a sudden we have the former Premier suggesting that success or relative success enjoyed by business leaders was luck – was luck. I cannot believe that came from that member's mouth. I'll tell you that luck does not get you up at 5 o'clock in the morning. Luck doesn't get you an excellent grade on your exam. Luck didn't help that member across graduate from law school. Luck doesn't pay off your line of credit, and it sure doesn't pay off your bank loan.

I implore the member opposite to take a trip down to my home constituency and walk the streets of Cardston and go from business to business to business and ask them how they got to where they are. Ask them where they are now, where they've been in the last four years, and what the projections were looking like if the members opposite were re-elected. I implore the member opposite to please go down to Cardston and visit those business owners and tell them to their faces that the success that they enjoy or what they may call success was luck.

**An Hon. Member:** We never said that.

**Mr. Schow:** Indeed, the member opposite did suggest that it was luck, by chance.

Well, I'll tell you what chance was. Chance is what happened four years ago on May 5, 2015. I'll tell you what. For the members

opposite 604,000 voters cast a ballot for them, but a combined between the PC and Wildrose legacy parties was 774,000 and change. The luck: accidental government that became a colossal mistake, frankly, for this province. We're grateful it is over. But I will tell you that luck is not what got Alberta to where it is today. Luck doesn't break the ground. Luck doesn't get our products to market. Luck doesn't get you up in the morning, and it sure as heck doesn't pay your bills.

This idea, as the member opposite suggested, that these business owners are getting to where they are by suppressing the workers, suppressing their wages, and, as the member opposite said, putting their heels on the necks of the workers is nothing short of absurd. It's a terrible figure.

Madam Speaker, I make a request to the member opposite to apologize to Albertans for the insinuation that it is luck that got us here today, luck that has created Alberta. It is not luck. It is hard work. It is dedication. It is commitment to family. It is commitment to success. That is not luck. Albertans at home, if they're watching this – I pray they're watching the basketball game, not this, because that 85 minutes was certainly less entertaining than, I'm certain, the basketball game was. But I will tell you, she needs . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. I'd like to begin by pointing out to the Member for Cardston-Siksika that the Leader of the Opposition did not say the things that you implied she said. You're not listening.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Member Ceci:** Yes. I'll talk to you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, if I just may. Just please have a seat.

I think this is a really great time for everyone on all sides of the House to remember that we do speak through the chair. I understand that there's a lot of passion entering this room, which is fine, but let's maybe direct your anger this way instead of across the aisle.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**9:20 p.m.**

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. The Leader of the Opposition, I know, did not say the things that the Member for Cardston-Siksika implied she said for five minutes. She didn't say them. He – that person; sorry . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** You can say "he."

**Member Ceci:** . . . heard something because he wanted to hear it. It wasn't said by this person.

I'll just begin by saying that I enjoyed the Leader of the Opposition's critique of the grand plan for job creation, which I believe, like this person, the leader, does, is wrong-headed and is bound to fail, not unlike the report today that talked about President Trump's \$1 trillion tax giveaway, that is not returning what he said would be returned to Americans; namely, jobs and growth in the economy. It is folly in that case – the Americans bought it – and it's the same thing with Alberta today.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about the magical thinking that if you grow inequality and make it more difficult for people to get ahead who are at the lower end of the wage scale, if you take their rights away – I hope the Member for Cardston-Siksika is listening because I'm not saying anything other than what is

happening in this province right now with this Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill – if you make it more difficult for them to unionize, if you make it more difficult for them to save money, then what you are really doing is creating an environment where the clock is being turned back in terms of rights of people, of employees in this province.

When Bill 17, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, was created, in 2017, it was created by this side, the NDP of Alberta. It was created after previous governments in 2007 and 2014 reviewed the code on two different occasions, seven years apart, and did nothing. And did nothing. I can remember those times because what would often happen with those governments was that they would review, and then they would send up trial balloons. They would essentially take the temperature of Albertans, and the loudest Albertans in those cases were the ones who didn't want to see change in this province. It wasn't workers who had the loudest voices, Madam Speaker.

Alberta had some of the oldest workplace legislation in Canada. Prior to our government's changes, both the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code had not been significantly changed in 30 years. I can remember, time and time again, where the minister of labour and democratic renewal would stand up, stand over there, and say: we are doing these changes because 30 years ago what was popular was the movie *Shaft*.

**Ms Gray:** *Die Hard*.

**Member Ceci:** *Die Hard*. Sorry. It was the movie *Die Hard*. That was popular 30 years ago.

The minister of labour and democratic renewal would use that as a bit of a prop. She wouldn't say anything against employers. She wouldn't talk about small business at all. She would say: look, things haven't changed in this province since *Die Hard* was in the movie theatres.

**Ms Gray:** A Christmas classic.

**Member Ceci:** A Christmas classic. That's right.

The previous governments, in 2007 and 2014, essentially would lead people on by looking at changes and then not doing anything. We took a focused review on changes to the code and brought in the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act. It focused the review on existing laws. Madam Speaker, over 7,300 submissions from businesses, industry, organized labour, academics, municipalities, nonprofits, and the general public were received. It was comprehensive, and there was a series of changes that were part of Bill 17.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk about one part of the current pick-your-pockets bill because one of the many things that we did was repeal the ability for employers to pay employees less than the minimum wage. We had a series of steps to get the minimum wage up to \$15. I think it was October 1, 2018, when it went to \$15. Also, there was an ability for employees to pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage in the previous code. We eliminated that. I think everybody would agree that it's not appropriate to pay people with disabilities any less than the minimum wage, but that was entrenched in the previous code by the previous government. We got rid of that, and we made all wages the same for all people. Equal pay for work of equal value.

I just want to talk about my first experience with equal pay for work of equal value. I grew up in southern Ontario, Madam Speaker, and in southern Ontario there are a number of family farms. Farming is really big in southern Ontario. The cash crop, the one that I worked in, was tobacco. My parents grew up on tobacco farms. My mother got married off the farm. Her whole life before

she got married and went to the city was as a worker on a farm. My father's family, similarly, had tobacco and other mixed crops. They went to the city before my mother's family, but, you know, we grew up as young kids in the family always going to the farm to work summers.

I can remember the time I went to be a primer. That's a tobacco picker in the fields. It's back-breaking work, Madam Speaker, from sun-up to sundown. Stompin' Tom Connors said, you know: my back hurts every time I hear the word Tillsonburg. He was an itinerant worker on tobacco farms as well for a portion of his time. He got out, and we all know what Stompin' Tom did for this country, but before he was famous, he worked tobacco.

Tobacco had one wage in the field, not one wage for young people and one wage for people over 18. When I was far younger than 18, I was in the fields, and we were paid \$50 a day. Every worker in the fields was paid \$50. It seemed like a tremendous amount of money, Madam Speaker, years ago, when I was 15, 16, 17, 18. I knew that the other workers were getting the same amount of money. There was no difference because we all did the same work.

The lesson I would have learned had I got less than the person right beside me, who was over 18, is: you can work as hard as them, but you're not going to get compensated. That would have been the wrong lesson to teach a young person, Madam Speaker, and that's what the pick-your-pockets bill does. Through no fault other than their age, they're going to get paid less. Like them, I back then used that money to save up for my future. Telling those young people today, with the pick-your-pockets bill, "You're worth less; you'll not have the ability to save as much as the person beside you who may be more than 18," it might influence their ability to want to work as hard as that person beside them. They're going to get paid less, but they're going to be asked to do the same work. It defies logic, Madam Speaker. If we have a minimum wage, that's what people should get paid minimally, not people with disabilities getting paid less though that was in the previous government's actions, not if you're less than 18, you should get paid less, because we all are working hard. Albertans work hard.

9:30 p.m.

The Leader of the Opposition talked at length about the workforce in this province. I agree wholeheartedly, and I think that side would agree as well. We're younger than the rest of the country, maybe not me but the rest of the workforce are younger on average. I think they're in the 40s, low 40s. The only people younger in this country are people in the territories. They're a younger group of people than Albertans, but their numbers are very small compared to the millions in this province that work.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We're more educated than the rest of the country, Mr. Speaker, and that's because of our quality education system. Right from primary all up to secondary school, postsecondary school, colleges, trade schools, we're more educated in this province. But, you know, with the bill . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Pick-your-pockets bill.

**Member Ceci:** Pick-your-pockets bill is Bill 2, but Bill 3 is the give money away to corporations bill, with a \$4.5 billion tax cut to corporations. Mr. Speaker, it won't be too long before our education system is going to suffer, and the people will suffer in this province. It won't be too long before we can't call ourselves one of the best educated workforces in the country.



The Leader of the Opposition talked about us being more entrepreneurial. Well, we know that to be true. The number of jobs in business start-ups in this province outweigh many, many, many other provinces. You know, we punch higher than our weight in that area as well. Hardest working. What we mean by that is the number of hours. Longer number of hours put in by Albertans than the rest of the country. More diverse. Our workforce is more diverse, Mr. Speaker. That's true, too, because we're getting more diverse. We're about 30, 40 per cent people of colour and diverse backgrounds in this province now, where we never were before. That's an advantage for employers in this province and who will be attracted here. We're more productive.

Those are the things that I know about Albertans. Those are the things that I think will suffer as a result of a pick-your-pockets bill like we're looking at today. Those are the things that won't encourage people to do more and to do better.

After coming out here, Mr. Speaker, I put about 20 years in as a social worker in a variety of places. I know there are some members of the Legislature here, both on this side and that side, who worked in that profession as well. This bill takes money out of the pockets of young people who are struggling to make their lives better. The east end of Calgary: I know the Member for Calgary-Cross comes from the east end. His father was the Member for Calgary-East for a long time. It's an area of the city that struggles, and the young people in that area of the city have to go to work at an earlier age to support families.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I feel like we may need a game of paper, rock, scissors here to determine who was on their feet first, but I will cede to the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise on 29(2)(a). Thank you to the hon. member for his comments. I'd like to focus on just one area of it because of the little time that we have to be able to speak on this important issue. I was interested in some of the comments where the hon. member, a former Finance minister not too long ago, spent his time focusing on the fact that, essentially, Albertans, over a million of them who voted for the United Conservative Party, who raised concerns during the mandate of his then government, were being loud and were yelling and were somehow not with the majority of Albertans. And just that the reason that they were able to articulate and ultimately influence – I guess his argument was that the United Conservative Party would go on to become government just because they were louder than everybody else.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that it's actually completely different. I think most of those people were the silent majority that were extremely frustrated with the behaviour of the NDP when they were in government, particularly with that Finance minister, who oversaw – was it six credit downgrades under his mandate? At least five. He completely ignored the people. I feel obligated on behalf of my constituents, who were very frustrated with the former Finance minister and his party, to speak tonight, to say that it wasn't because they were yelling and being obnoxious; it's because they were expressing their concerns often calmly and, you know, sometimes passionately, certainly, but very respectfully.

I mean, it started off, of course, when the NDP came into power, with thousands of farmers and ranchers piling onto the stairs and around the fountains outside to protest what was pretty much abuse of the legislative process without consulting them. I know that the former Premier mocks them still. They were right there, Mr. Speaker, right in this House. It's not appropriate.

Maybe he's referring to the people who – this past year, just after Christmas, I believe December 29, in Rocky Mountain House I had some young people call me, and they wanted to organize a rally to protest and to stand up against how they felt the NDP were treating them. I thought that to do that between Christmas and New Year's, they would not have much of a turnout, but I was willing to do it. Much to my surprise when I arrived on the 29th, the parking lots were full, and well over a thousand people came out between Christmas and New Year's in small town Rocky Mountain House to say that that town was not going to put up anymore with what this government had done. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I would say that Rocky Mountain House, which has been a town since 1799, one of the oldest communities in this country and certainly in western Canada, has every right to come out and say that they have a problem with how this former government was treating them.

But what you're seeing tonight, again, over and over, Mr. Speaker, is the NDP, particularly led by their leader, who can't accept the fact that Albertans cast judgment on her and her party's behaviour when they were on this side of the House. They continue to want to relive that election. Well, the election results are clear. The NDP's policies have been outright rejected by the people of Alberta. Their government was a failure, they failed Albertans, and all they can do now is sit inside this Assembly and spend time insulting job creators or insulting the people that spoke out against them, insulting farmers and ranchers who came and complained about legislation being forced on them without their consultation, insulting fixed-income seniors who complained that they were having trouble paying their heating bill when they brought in a carbon tax. That's all that they can do.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, they go as far as to basically question the results of our democracy that spoke loud and clear on April 16. When I sat in that same chair that the current Leader of the Official Opposition sits in, I warned them that this would happen. But they haven't learned their lesson. They have not learned their lesson. That's why we see – and I'm shocked. I thought that there would be a little bit of humbleness that would come from the NDP. I mean, being the only party that was able to form government in this province that would go on to lose after one term. One term: that's the legacy of the now Leader of the Official Opposition and her party. A one-term government because they didn't listen to the people of Alberta, because they sat on this side of the aisle and even insulted them, calling them names like sewer rats and Chicken Little and those types of things. It's a shame they have not learned their lesson.

**The Speaker:** There's approximately one second left in 29(2)(a). I see the Government House Leader has risen. Has he spoken to second reading?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Speaking on the bill, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** On the main bill.

**9:40 p.m.**

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity now to speak on the main bill. I think that we're pretty close to moving on to a different topic for the night, but I just will close my thoughts on 29(2)(a), which is ... [interjection] Right there you are seeing tonight, Mr. Speaker, inside the Legislature the NDP government continuing not to accept the results – the NDP opposition. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. That muscle memory gets you.

That NDP opposition is continuing to refuse to accept the results of the election, which is fine. They can do that. But they should stop standing inside this House and questioning what Albertans decided

on April 16. Albertans are the ones who decided that they should not be government anymore. Albertans are the ones who decided that their policies were not acceptable to them. Albertans fired them on April 16. That was the decision of this province. I certainly know, Mr. Speaker, that I was in a big hurry to come and vote to fire them as well. But, ultimately, that was a decision by Albertans.

With that said and with that thought on everybody's mind, I will now move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Members, I would like to call the committee to order.

#### **Bill 3 Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act**

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Obviously, I guess we're going to discuss corporate tax cuts and the reason why the members opposite keep saying that it's going to do things that legislation clearly hasn't done at times where other jurisdictions have attempted this. We've seen case study after case study. I've mentioned some of them in second reading. In jurisdictions, primarily in the United States, where individuals attempted to campaign on these big corporate tax cuts magically leading to better jobs or more jobs, certainly that wasn't the evidence that has been contributed from these experiments in reducing corporate taxes and bringing about further opportunities for shareholders – I wouldn't even say shareholders. I'd say for profitable corporations to maximize their profits – that's what I would say – at the expense of things that the public purse would use that money for, like health care and education and jobs and bridges and communities.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I think we heard our critic for Transportation speak earlier today about the bridge in Fort Saskatchewan, a long-needed capital project for that community, and we heard the Minister of Transportation say not much. We heard the Minister of Transportation maybe say: "Yeah. It's an important project. But there's lots of pressure. So who knows? Time will tell. We'll make up our mind later."

Well, I'll you, though, that the folks that I talked to in Fort Saskatchewan and I imagine the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has talked to, they can't wait. They think that this is an important project for their safety and their well-being, the economic security of the region. There are certainly a lot of folks who take that bridge every day to and from work. There's a lot of heavy equipment that take that bridge on a regular basis, I believe, as well. And they say: "Stay tuned. Wait. We don't have time to make a decision about whether or not we're going to keep this bridge as a high priority and it'll be funded or whether or not we will cancel it altogether. But we do have time to say that we will cut corporate taxes by \$4.5 billion. We'll blow a hole in the revenues of the province. That we will decide today."

We also asked questions earlier in the day during question period about school nutrition programs. Schools across this

province are of course planning for the upcoming fall. They usually have done all their staffing determinations by this point in the school year or most of them at least. They're trying to decide if they will be hiring lunch men and woman, people to help support those school nutrition programs. They have had no inkling from this government whether or not that project will continue. They're assuming that it won't. When you hear nothing, it probably means that. So they are making the decisions to cut back on staff, cut back on things to feed hungry children. I asked the question in question period today: is feeding hungry children a priority for this government? Again we heard nothing. What we are hearing is that a \$4.5 billion hole in the revenues of this province is a priority. It must move forward today because we don't have \$33 million to feed hungry kids.

Well, Mr. Chair, when things like this are brought forward by the government, it really does speak to what some of their priorities are. They are creating an environment where they will say to their caucus: "You know, we made the decision to cut corporate taxes. We did that together. We made this decision together. We all decided we were going to do this. We voted on it. We're going to have not just the lowest because we have almost the lowest right now. We are only .5 per cent higher than the next lowest jurisdiction in the country. It's not that we're wanting to be the lowest. We are wanting to be by far, far, far the lowest. The next lowest would be Ontario at 11.5 per cent. We want to be 8 per cent. That's going to be the thing that gets us over the finish line." Well, you know what? I would say that if they wanted to tinker with them, if they wanted to be tied for the lowest in the country, that certainly would blow a much smaller hole in the finances for this province, a much smaller hole that would enable things like the Fort Saskatchewan bridge or things like the transit project right now that's under way between Medicine Hat and Lethbridge to move forward.

I know that those voices aren't sitting around the cabinet table when bills like this are drafted. But those voices are around the caucus table, and the people who live in those regions matter. They deserve to have an opportunity to have their projects funded as well, to make sure that many seniors who travel between Medicine Hat and Lethbridge have the opportunity to do that without putting themselves at risk or their families at risk or without having to spend hundreds of dollars to be able to go see the cardiac specialist who's in Lethbridge if you live in Medicine Hat.

These are the kinds of initiatives that you're being asked today to make a decision on. Rather than laying all of the money out on the table and involving the whole caucus in setting what the priorities are, our Premier, Mr. Chair, is putting forward a suite of legislation that sets out conditions that will inevitably lead to significant cuts to services, particularly in regional communities. For example, this \$4.5 billion tax cut: another area where some folks who were in the opposition previously, who now sit among private members in the caucus, said regularly that they really wanted to see an investment – or not an investment. They wanted to make sure that the local laundry services that we have in rural communities become privatized and centralized into large urban centres.

**9:50 p.m.**

Well, these are the kinds of things that will inevitably happen when you blow this kind of a hole: "Of course, we can't afford to wash sheets. Of course, we can't afford to pay the local people who work in our community, in our hospital. We'll have to privatize that and send those jobs to Edmonton and Calgary. Well, most of our caucus represents those communities where those jobs will be moving to, so maybe we shouldn't be so outraged and upset."

But, Mr. Chair, many of us have ties to other parts of this province as well. When I think about the hard-working men and

women in hospitals in High Prairie, for example, or in Hinton, for example, who deserve to have those jobs in their communities be supported in the long term and keep those jobs, those services, and that laundry close by – some people may think: laundry, it's not such a big deal. Well, you know what? My grandma spent a reasonable amount of time in the hospital towards the end of her life, and on more than one occasion she lost her hearing aid. It was usually in the sheets. If those sheets weren't in the hospital that she was in, how would we ever get that hearing aid back? We probably wouldn't.

So it definitely has an impact on patient care and families. I can tell you that those times that she lost the hearing aid were very stressful for all of us, even if it was for just a very short period of time, because we had to find a way to get it back and to communicate with her. If we still lived in Kinuso and we had to drive the three hours to get to Edmonton to find where the laundry facility was and to try to get back the hearing aid, that would have had a significant detrimental effect on my grandmother and certainly on our family as well, our nuclear family.

I have to say that when we're asked to make decisions here – is it the second or the third week of this sitting? It's not long into the job to be making significant financial decisions that will have major impacts on the projects that many members of this House are advocating for. I've heard many private members' questions about important projects in their own ridings. I have to say: good on you for fighting for your riding. But by making this decision today, Mr. Chair, a number of conditions will be put in place where you simply can't continue to advocate for these kinds of projects because there simply won't be the money that's needed to make these investments in your local communities.

I really hope that constituents don't end up sitting on the highway for hours trying to chase the laundry down the highway to go get the things that are needed to keep their family members safe. I really hope that the laundry workers in Medicine Hat, who I met with last summer, have their jobs in six months. I really do because I think that is important work, and I think that having those jobs in local communities helps our province be vibrant.

I think it was Premier Lougheed who I believe talked about – I'm going to paraphrase. If I get it wrong, I'm sure somebody can help me under 29(2)(a). Part of why he built so many hospitals in rural communities is that he wanted to create an Alberta where it wasn't just the two big cities that held all the opportunities for people to work and engage in the public sector and the services that come with that. He wanted to have lots of communities like Hinton and Stettler and Medicine Hat. Small and mid-size cities I think he thought were the model for the future. I know many members in this House, many members particularly in the caucus rather than in the cabinet, represent those communities. I think it's important that they have an opportunity to benefit from our shared wealth as a province.

Mr. Chair, we're being asked as a Chamber to make a decision that, I would say, is going to have far-reaching impacts, and the rationale that's given is that it's going to create jobs, but all the research shows that it will not create jobs. All the research shows that it will actually – in other jurisdictions where employment went up far greater, jurisdictions that took this strategy saw either flat growth or very modest growth compared to their neighbouring jurisdictions that maintained tax rates.

Again, AT&T promised to create 7,000 new jobs under a Trump tax cut. What did they do? They cut 23,000. That's a significant difference between what was promised and what was delivered. Kansas, of course, passed into law one of the world's biggest, the state's biggest for sure and probably among the world's biggest,

single tax cuts. It was supposed to be a real live experiment. Well, it sure was an experiment, and it sure did fail, Mr. Chair.

It's important, I think, to think about what conditions are being set up through this bill. I've mentioned earlier in debate getting time on that cabinet agenda to bring something back because people will probably say: "Well, we're passing this today; it doesn't mean that it needs to be this forever. We can always bring it back." But I'll tell you that getting time on that cabinet agenda when all private members, all cabinet ministers have things they would like to get through – I'm sure that you've been lobbied by many members of your community to make sure that you push initiatives that are important to them. I wonder how many people, when they were door-knocking, had voters say to them: you know, it's really important to me that we cut \$4.5 billion from the corporate tax rate. I didn't hear that.

I did hear people say: it's really important to me that we have good jobs, that we diversify our economy, that we make sure that we support and continue to advocate in all ways possible to get access to tidewater. It's been far too long since we've gotten a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater. I think it's 60 years. Again, if I'm off by five or 10, somebody can correct me. I remember thinking that it was almost the length of time that our oldest caucus member had been alive since we got a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater. It definitely wasn't the length of time in excess that the former, former government was in. The PC government didn't get a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater. It certainly was in excess of 44 years plus four for us. That's what I'm trying to say.

I know that it's important for us to make sure that we continue to stimulate the economy, that we continue to support a diversified economy. I assert that the research shows that these kinds of short-sighted, ideological decisions that aren't grounded in evidence will do the opposite, and it will actually hurt everyone's ability to lobby for their individual communities and the projects that are important in their own ridings. I know that there are many communities that are nervous about the future of their local school or their local hospital. I have to say that decisions like this drive those kinds of nervous decisions down the road. I get it.

But the truth is that we don't need to make this decision today. We don't need to rush into making a decision to blow a \$4.5 billion hole in our province's revenues. It's up to us when and how we proceed with these things and what information we use to help make these decisions. Whether it's the bridge in Peace River or the bridge in Fort Saskatchewan or the transit path between Medicine Hat and Lethbridge or the dialysis that we are expanding in many communities, particularly in the north, that have incredibly high rates of diabetes and needs for increased dialysis services, these are all decisions that will be influenced by the conditions that we set out for ourselves at the beginning of our term here.

This is what we are engaging in at this very moment, making these decisions about what kind of conditions, what assumptions we want down the road. If you take a symbolic logic course – you know, if A, then B. So if A is that we cut out \$4.5 billion, then it limits some of our opportunities down the road because we've started making that initial decision about which path we want to go forward on. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe members opposite will tell me that they heard that this was the number one issue at every single door they knocked. If they did, I would love to know that. This definitely wasn't the number one issue that I heard at every single door. I had many people talk to me about supporting a diversified economy and good jobs and good schools and good health care, and I imagine that many of those messages are probably the same.

Certainly, our pipeline access was a big one. If we're going to make decisions to have big Canada-wide campaigns – and I definitely know that this project is in the Canadian interest. That's one of the reasons why I supported the Keep Canada Working campaign, and I know there's a new iteration of that now under the new Premier. But if the actual goal is to spend money on things like a national ad campaign and to cut \$4.5 billion from corporate taxes, that definitely blows a big hole in revenues that can be used in other ways to support projects that are important to all members and the constituents that we are charged to represent.

I think that this is something that we don't need to rush into. I think that the fact that we made the rushed decision to even change the order of debate tonight to get to this point and then tried to call the question before members had an opportunity to fully engage in this speaks to the fact that there are many people in the cabinet that probably want to get this done with. They want to pretend that this debate never happened. It was a quick and easy decision, and then the caucus can get on with doing the tough work about deciding which schools and hospitals in their own ridings will close. I don't think that's fair. I think it's important that all members of both caucuses have an opportunity to consider what the real ramifications are of things like blowing a \$4.5 billion hole in revenues and what implications that would have to their local communities.

*10:00 p.m.*

I also want to say that we are not alone in this opinion. In Canada there was a B.C. tax cut. They cut corporate taxes from 16.5 per cent in 2000 to 13.5 and then down to 10 per cent. The impact on the bottom line: while politicians said that the cut would pay for itself, between \$8 billion and \$10 billion, it certainly did no such thing. During the same period the province's debt doubled.

I do know that many people in this House care deeply about debt and deficit, and I do, too. I also care about making sure that we have a stable public service, particularly health care and education. If you care about those things, too, and you don't want to increase the debt, don't duplicate the decisions, Mr. Chair, that were made in B.C. that showed that it actually moved things backwards, not forwards, on that goal. B.C. politicians were claiming that the tax cuts would pay for themselves, but a decade of tax cuts has proven few savings for most families while out-of-pocket user fees for public services have risen significantly, fees for things like taking the ferries, the toll bridges in British Columbia – I know many of you have probably been on those toll bridges – or the toll highways.

These are things that I know the now Premier didn't rule out during the election campaign, but I hope that many of you have had a chance to think about how these things would impact the families that you represent and the workers and the employers, too. When I think about how busy that bridge in Fort Saskatchewan is, for example, with industrial traffic, if that was a toll bridge rather than a bridge built with part of this \$4.5 billion, I think it would have a negative impact on that part of the Industrial Heartland and the work that happens in that part of our province.

If we increased tolls in places like the provincial parks and park user fees, I know that would have a negative impact on families. I know that when then Premier Prentice brought in his budget, there were a number of user fees that went up in a number of things. There was a proposed health care levy, a health care levy that hit every single family. These are the kinds of things that we can avoid if we are a little bit more thoughtful and take our time to make a decision about how we want to divide up the resources that we have as a province. Making these massive tax bill decisions without seeing a budget is setting that budget up for certain failure.

In dollar terms, in the past decade lower income households received an average tax cut of a couple of hundred dollars per year, the middle benefited from a tax cut of \$1,200, and the top 10 per cent pocketed an average of \$9,000 per year. That, again, was B.C. households. How did that create income opportunities for all? I would argue that it didn't. I would argue that a government that thinks about our most vulnerable, that thinks about those seniors living in our long-term care facilities or, even worse, the ones who are waiting for long-term care facilities or about the families that have children living in poverty and develops a strategy to help get them out of poverty – it's something that would benefit all of us in this House, to have conversations about those in the context of the overall budget.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Minister of Transportation standing to speak.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Listen, I've listened to the debate that we just heard here, and I have to say that it left me with more notes than I actually have room for on my desk, almost. I heard comments about: don't duplicate the decisions of B.C. What we don't want to do is duplicate the decisions of the NDP government that just got removed from office after one term.

The honest answer won't be very nice for the opposition to hear. The number one issue I heard at the doors was: "Get rid of the NDP. I don't care what else you do. Make them go. My family is worse. All the people I know, lots of people I know haven't got a job, and they used to have a job. Our kids used to be planning on staying in Alberta; now they're planning on leaving. For goodness' sake, make these people go." That was the number one issue I heard at the doors. That's all they needed. That's all they told me. That was the number one thing. Mr. Chair, I don't think we're going to take a lot of economic advice from the folks across the aisle because, frankly, their policies failed miserably. They failed miserably.

Mr. Chair, actually, I've been waiting for a little while to talk about this. They always talk about the cuts for their rich corporate friends. Corporations: let's talk about corporations for a minute. I'll tell you who corporations are. Corporations are the place where you got your latte this morning. Corporations are the place where you got your ordinary coffee this morning. Corporations are flower shops, grocery stores, gas stations. They're the job creators. They're the people, in many cases, that make the least money of anybody. They've bought themselves, in many cases, a job, and they work that job for, in many cases, less than the minimum wage, whether it's \$13 or \$15 an hour, because they want to row their own boat. They want to be self-reliant.

Yes, they all have dreams of being multimillionaires. Of course they do. We all do. But the fact is that many of them slave away morning, noon, and night for very low wages, and while they're doing that, they probably, in many cases, put the only thing they own in the world that's worth anything, their home, at risk, where the bank has a line on their home if their business fails. These are the people that the NDP complains about with "giving tax breaks to the rich." These are the people that they're complaining about giving tax breaks to, the people that have put their house at risk to buy a coffee shop. These people across the aisle are complaining because we want them to succeed and create more jobs and to be able to retire decently.

That's what the NDP is complaining about when they complain about rich corporate friends. They're complaining about the person that served them coffee this morning. They are complaining about the person that took their money at the gas station. [interjections] They're talking about the person that answered the phone at the

flower shop on Mother's Day, who took their order. Those are the rich corporate fat cats that the NDP loves to complain about in this House. They're people, Albertans. They're the heart and soul of this province, the heart and soul of Canada, and they're the ones that the NDP loves to make fun of, Mr. Chair. [interjections] Those are the ones that we want to help to succeed with this bill. They're the ones that we want less money going – I love it. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo was talking, so thank you for that, hon. member.

You reminded me of something else I want to talk about. I heard him talking earlier tonight about working in the tobacco fields. It's something the hon. member and I have in common. He's proud of it; I'm proud of it. We don't agree on much, but I think we'd agree that that's honourable work and it's hard work. Where I disagree with the hon. member is that that is work that is based very much on performance. It's not minimum-wage work, Mr. Chair. I'll tell you what, when you fall behind in the tobacco fields, you're fired, because the machine goes at a pace. That's why Stompin' Tom Connors wrote that song. It wasn't a minimum wage job. It was a job where you get on a machine, it goes back by so many plants per hour, and if you don't get the leaves off those plants and put them in the basket between your legs, though your back hurts, then you're out of the chair and somebody else is in the chair. It's not a minimum wage job.

That's why we need a minimum wage job where they can actually train people. People typically don't start off at high speed, at top speed in that business and in a lot of businesses. We need a place for people to learn their trades, a place for people to actually get on the first rung of the economic ladder, which is the minimum wage, and work their way up. You know who they're working for in many cases? Corporations. When they're flipping burgers – it doesn't matter which burger chain you talk about or whether it's an independent – there's a very high probability that it's a corporation and a very high chance that the person that owns that corporation has a mortgage on their house or the bank has a line on their house to finance that corporation.

That's what the opposition, the NDP, calls greedy Albertans. That's what I call job creators. That's what our side of the House calls the heart and soul of Alberta. That's what our side of the House calls what is going to create the jobs and the opportunities and the future of this province, because people put themselves out there. [interjections] We don't talk them down; we talk them up because that's what Alberta is about. I know the Member for Calgary-Buffalo just can't stop chirping right now, because he's, or he should be, embarrassed by what he's hearing.

You know what? The corporate tax rates that you're complaining about: we saw Murphy Oil, Total, and a myriad of other oil companies leave this province, and what went with them? Eighty billion dollars of investment. What went with them? Tens and hundreds of thousands of jobs, families without a paycheque. That's what the NDP stands for. That's why when I knocked on the doors, people said, the number one reason: "I don't care. Just get rid of the NDP. I'd vote for anybody as long as I believe they can get rid of that government, that has hurt my family, that has hurt my neighbour's family, that has lowered the value on the biggest investment that I have, the home that you just knocked on the front door of. It's worth \$100,000 or \$200,000 less than it was on May 5, 2005, when Albertans elected the NDP government." That was the number one issue at the doors.

10:10 p.m.

**Member Ceci:** In 2005?

**Mr. McIver:** In 2005.

**Member Ceci:** In 2015.

**Mr. McIver:** In 2015. Thank you. See, I do agree on some things with the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. It doesn't happen often, but that was one right there, and I'll give him full credit for that.

Mr. Chair, when I was growing up, my dad was a welder at Massey-Ferguson in Brantford, Ontario, and he used to refer to himself as a working stiff. He used to say: "With seven kids we can't go anywhere, but the corporation can. We really need them to stay." His career ended when the corporation left. He used to say: "You know what? They just need to call their lawyer, call their accountant, push a button on their computer, and the corporation can go. But not me; I'm a working stiff." That's why we need to make businesses welcome here, because they provide jobs and opportunity and they pay taxes.

Now, what's really interesting about that, too, Mr. Chair, along the same lines, which is why this bill is so important – they want to talk about logic. I'll tell you what logic is. Logic is: the NDP raised corporate taxes by 20 per cent and collected less money. Think about that. They raised their prices by 20 per cent and collected less money. In other words, by logic, the obvious logical thing to correct the damage that the NDP did would be to lower those corporate taxes to collect more money and attract more businesses. Not only did they collect less corporate money; the corporations left. That's part of the reason why they left and they collected less money. They collected less money because the corporations were making less money.

You know what you tax? You tax profits. The NDP doesn't like profits. They love the money that comes from profits, but they hate the profits. How weird is that? Talk about – what's the word that the hon. member used? – symbolic logic. The logic follows that if you want profits from corporations, you actually need to let the corporations make money so you can tax the profits, yet they don't seem to connect those dots. Mr. Chair, on this side of the House we connect those dots.

In fact, Mr. Chair, part of the reason why they collected less money is because corporations have other abilities that working stiff don't have, and I say that with the most respect about calling them working stiff because that's what my dad called himself. Corporations can choose where they pay taxes. If you have a corporation with an office in every province in Canada, you have a choice where you pay taxes. Many of them used to choose to pay their taxes in Alberta. They were, like, at least economically, probably the best citizens we had because they didn't use any health care. The ones that just had a desk and a phone and paid their taxes: they didn't use any health care, they didn't use the justice system, they didn't use the education system, yet they chose to pay their taxes here. You know what? They're not paying their taxes here anymore because the NDP made this place uncompetitive, and they're all paying their taxes somewhere else now.

We need to actually attract some of them back. We need to attract the taxes back that they pay. We need to attract the jobs that they provide for Albertans, the mortgage-paying jobs, Mr. Chair, and this government is standing on their feet flailing and arguing against the economic prosperity and success of Alberta, and I'm sick of it.

Fortunately for me, Albertans are sick of it. Fortunately for me and for all of us, Albertans made a decision on April 16, and they said: enough. They went with the number one issue that I heard at the doors: just get rid of the NDP because it's making everybody's life worse. And they said: "We're just hoping that you're different than them. We're hoping that you're great, but you only have to be average to do better than what we've had in the last four years." We're going to try to be great, Mr. Chair, but if we're only average, it'll be an improvement, which is why I support this bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora would like to speak.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. If average was what the member was hoping for, he's about a third of the way below that, because I'll reiterate that the corporate tax rates – again, these are for corporations that make more than \$500,000 a year in net profits. This isn't about a small business that is paying out their own salary at a very small rate. This is about corporations that are making more than \$500,000 a year in net profits, right? This is about that tax rate.

With regard to the small-business tax rate our government made the choice to reduce small-business taxes by a third. We cut them from 3 to 2 per cent. So I just want to clarify that when the Minister of Transportation is saying that this is about the small corner shop, the small corner store, if they're making more than \$500,000 a year in net profits, then yes, this reduction will help them. If they are making less than that, this will do absolutely nothing for those small businesses and the corner stores. I just want everyone to have the same set of facts because I think facts are important when we're making decisions. I just wanted to lay that out there.

I'm not saying that large corporations shouldn't have an opportunity to be prosperous. I certainly want them all to be prosperous. I want them to be prosperous, and I want them to share that prosperity with the people of this province. That's why I think that if we had something that was average, say – actually, we'd probably have to go up to be average because right now we've got Newfoundland at 15; P.E.I., 16; Nova Scotia, 16; New Brunswick, 14; Quebec, 11.6; Ontario, 11.5; Manitoba, 12; Saskatchewan, 12; Alberta, 12; B.C., 12. We're actually already below average. That's one thing I wanted to say.

Another thing I want to say is that the Government House Leader often rises in this House and likes to bring up the fact that our government served for one term, and now there's a new government. I want to say that I understand that what the Minister of Transportation said was that he heard: get rid of the NDP; that's all I care about. But I will tell you that at many doors that I knocked on in 2015, I heard the same thing about the PCs. I heard about corruption and entitlement. [interjections] Certainly, it seems like those are starting to creep their way significantly back into, particularly, the front bench but, specifically, I'd say, the Government House Leader's attitudes and the way he's behaving in this place tonight. Certainly, I welcome him to correct the record when he has an opportunity to speak on this if he feels differently, Mr. Chair. I'm just going by some of the tones and some of the heckling that I'm hearing here tonight.

Feel free to heckle, hon. member. I certainly welcome that opportunity. I think it's part of the important culture of debate and has a long tradition in this place. I know that some people are keen on changing tradition swiftly, but I think that this is part of the context in which we work together to form laws to govern this place and not just this place, this whole province.

I want to reiterate that this is a significant departure from being average, as the member referenced the person saying, like: just be average. This is way, way, way below average. This is significantly below average.

Again, when you have a fixed pot of resources and you're making decisions about where to allocate those, making the choice to give \$4.5 billion to corporations or making the choice about how you can use that \$4.5 billion collectively all across this province to find ways to increase opportunities for economic diversification, for important public services – I know that the Government House Leader cares deeply about the hospital in Sundre. I think I toured it with him, and he had deep concerns not that long ago that some of

the services might be reduced. Fortunately, he was able to work with a government that sat down, looked at the pot of resources, and found ways to actually improve conditions there, invest in a lab on-site, I believe, and make sure that we supported seniors aging in the community. Again, making choices to blow a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget will make outcomes like that far less likely, I can only imagine, especially given the fact that there is this review happening right now and the former minister who's a big part of it has a history of closing a lot of rural hospitals.

Again, we don't need to rush into these decisions. We can take the time to engage in them in a way that enables research and evidence to be presented and good decisions to come forward. I feel like the way the Government House Leader unilaterally changed the order of debate for tonight and then tried to call a quick question: he simply doesn't want his caucus to have an opportunity to hear about the kinds of things that these decisions that I'm sure – well, I hope that the caucus got a presentation about what the bills were going to be and what their impacts were going to be, but I doubt that people talked about that when we have \$4.5 billion less, it may create more economic stimulus. Research shows that it won't, and at the end of the day, we only have a certain number of dollars because we pledged that we were going to balance in I think they said 2021, but now maybe it's 2022. You know, you've got to decide which promises are going to be broken on which days, I guess. That seems to be what we're getting from the government opposite. These are some of the decisions that lead to those outcomes.

Mr. Chair, I want to say with all respect again, just to recorrect the record, that the last member, I would say, inaccurately at best and in extremely unparliamentary language at worst, mischaracterized who specifically will benefit most from these decisions. Again, the decision to reduce small-business taxes was something that we did because we knew that we had revenue. At that time it was revenue that was coming in from things like the price on carbon, and that was the time we made the decision. Because we had new revenue coming in, we made new decisions about where to cut other revenue in other areas.

*10:20 p.m.*

Making a unilateral decision about where to cut revenue will lead to a unilateral decision about where to cut expenses or where to increase revenue in other areas. If you're going to reduce your pot of revenue, you're kind of squeezing that balloon, and it's going to pop, or you're going to have to find a way to release some of that pressure. Are you going to release that pressure by bringing in other types of taxes, bringing back the regressive health care premium, bringing in tolls, increasing fees in parks, parks that families use in the summer? Where is this revenue going to come from, Mr. Chair? Or is it that the expenses are going to go down? Or is it both? I would probably think that it might be both, that there might be increased user fees, increased taxes, increased levies, and reduced opportunities for investing in the projects that people have named in their own ridings.

If they haven't named them, I encourage them to look at the capital plan. We worked quite comprehensively and collaboratively to make sure that we were taking considerations from all across the province. For example, the city of Red Deer has certainly punched above its weight when it came to investing or providing services in the hospital. The city of Red Deer certainly has carried a lot, being the only regional hospital in central zone for people to go to. In south zone there are two, and in north zone there are two. In Edmonton and Calgary there are more, but in Red Deer and central Alberta there is one. These are some of the things that we had planned on investing in based on the revenues that were planning

on coming into this province, but today this is a \$4.5 billion hole that we are being asked to blow in the budget.

Those are the main things I wanted to offer in this regard, and I imagine there might be opportunities to offer more in the future. But I look forward to hearing thoughts from members opposite if this is indeed the comment they heard most on the doorsteps, that they needed to cut \$4.5 billion in large business taxes, or if they heard about other initiatives in their communities that were important as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others?

**Ms Issik:** We've heard the members opposite talk about tax rates. They quote them across the country when we talk about the competitiveness of Alberta versus other provinces in Canada, and that's awesome. I think everybody in this Chamber understands that capital is mobile and you need to compete to keep the capital where it is or where you want it. If you're not competitive, the capital will walk, and so, too, will the jobs. I think everybody in this Chamber understands that concept.

Well, we've heard about the tax rates in all the other provinces in Canada, and Alberta, you know, is only a half a per cent off. Well, let's look at some other tax rates: Idaho, 6.925 per cent; Iowa, 12 per cent; Kansas, 7 per cent. Has anybody ever heard of North Dakota, at 4.31 per cent, or Oklahoma at 6 per cent? I think I'm making a point here. We are competing in at least a North American market if not a global market to keep our capital here. When capital leaves, so too do our jobs. When capital leaves, so too does our corporate tax revenue. Revenue will go down when corporations leave the province of Alberta. It's that simple. We are not competitive with the states in the United States of America. It's pretty simple.

I did hear at the doors a lot that we needed to reduce our corporate tax rates. I got asked that at probably about every fourth door from people who were with large corporations and people who were with small corporations. I can tell you that lowering corporate taxes will create jobs, it will bring capital back to this province, and it will create the economic growth that we need to pay for all of the services that we value as Albertans.

**The Deputy Chair:** Looking across, I actually do believe that I saw the Member for Edmonton-Manning jumping up.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to be able to stand and speak to Bill 3 as I haven't had the opportunity to do so yet. Let me begin by saying the obvious. There are challenges in our economy, and many Albertans are hurting. We're not questioning that. Some of these challenges have been decades in the making, like our failure to effectively diversify the economy, particularly within the energy sector. Some of these challenges are more immediate; for example, the lack of takeaway capacity to get our product to market. While we are faced with these challenges, we know what Albertans want. They want good, mortgage-paying jobs, they want security for their families, they want good schools and high-quality health care, and, most of all, they want to see a future where they can work in a strong economy and provide for their loved ones.

Mr. Chair, this brings me to today's debate and the UCP government's solution, that they have labelled the job-creation tax cut. The key questions before this Assembly and before Albertans are incredibly straightforward. Is the old Conservative recipe of corporate tax cuts the solution to the challenges facing Alberta's economy? Is it worth cutting \$4.5 billion in health care and

education funding to finance these cuts? Well, let me address each of these in turn.

Mr. Chair, we have heard the same argument, the same recipe, the same Conservatives across the world for the past 40 years. Corporate tax cuts are free; they pay for themselves. Tax cuts fuel so much economic growth and create so many jobs that citizens need fewer government services. Most importantly, corporate tax cuts trickle down to the rest of us so that regular families will become wealthier, happier, and more economically secure. In fairness, there was perhaps a time some 30 or 40 years ago where elements of this core Conservative argument had some merit. There was a time when the tax structure didn't create the ideal conditions for capital investment and for job creation.

Clearly, we are not in those times. The economic challenge facing Alberta is not the corporate tax rate, and to suggest to Albertans that we can wave a magic wand, lower the corporate tax rate, and therefore create jobs and increase government revenue is a fairy tale. Let me say this in no uncertain terms: this bill is a solution in search of a problem. Alberta already has the most competitive tax regime in the country. We Albertans enjoy an \$11 billion advantage over our next-closest province. We provide many other corporate advantages over our southern neighbours when it comes to investment decisions; for example, public health care, which dramatically lowers employers' labour costs and facilitates labour mobility.

In conversations with corporate leaders and with those in the industry I've honestly never heard them say that their primary concern is actually the corporate tax rate. In fact, as we've discussed in this Legislature, for many years the three main challenges facing our economy were self-evident: a lack of takeaway capacity for energy industries and the need for pipelines; an uncertain regulatory regime, with Bill C-69 and the need to speed up the processing time; and new technology and energy industries that have made new recoverable barrels profitable, particularly in the Permian basin, which has disrupted global energy markets.

The previous government understood these three main economic challenges, and we took action. We fought for pipelines and market access, and we brought in a crude-by-rail deal as an interim solution until sufficient pipeline takeaway capacity could be realized. We fought to amend Bill C-69 to ensure that it worked for the energy sector. We partnered with industry to invest and bring in new technologies to make our industry more economically efficient. And we helped lower the cost per barrel and helped take the carbon out of the barrel. Now, to be fair, did we as a government provide a solution to all of the three main economic challenges facing our economy in four short years? Of course, we didn't, but we made progress, and most importantly we were squarely focused on the real challenges facing our economy. To be clear, the main economic challenge was not the corporate tax rate.

As I said, Bill 3 is a solution in search of a problem. More than that, it represents a deficit of ideas from the members opposite. All members know well the challenges facing our economy, but they are turning to the old playbook of corporate tax cuts as a magical solution for everything, and they're selling Albertans a bill of goods. The problem is that these tax cuts won't stimulate investment. They won't create jobs. As economists have told us for decades, when you already have a competitive corporate tax rate, cutting it further is the least effective way to stimulate jobs and the economy.

*10:30 p.m.*

Let me give you an example. Even the former Prime Minister from Calgary, the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, said as much. When he launched his economic strategy to get Canada back on track

following the financial crisis, he went on the record in 2009 with his budget, stating that corporate tax cuts were the least effective way to create jobs. Let me say that again. The former Prime Minister, himself an economist, argued that corporate tax rates were the least effective mechanism to grow the economy and create jobs.

**Ms Hoffman:** Say it one more time.

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Chair, in Budget 2009 Prime Minister Harper published his government's analysis of the effectiveness of tax expenditure options to drive economic growth. The Harper government, of which this Premier was a senior member, determined that for every dollar invested in infrastructure, the economy would grow by \$1.60. For every dollar of tax cuts or income support to lower income households, the economy would grow \$1.70. Unfortunately for this government, Prime Minister Harper determined that for every dollar expended in corporate tax cuts, the economy would only grow by 30 cents.

To be clear, what the Prime Minister was saying at the time was that cutting corporate taxes was a losing proposition. He was saying that a tax cut for low-income families would be five times more effective at creating jobs and growing the economy than cutting the corporate tax rate. Now, I presume the Prime Minister said this because he was facing reality and was acknowledging the challenges before him. The economic challenge was, as it is now, not the corporate tax rate.

That, of course, is the problem with Bill 3. Bill 3 is this government's principal offer to Albertans to grow the economy and create jobs, but it's not addressing the main challenges facing our economy. The main challenges to our economy – and I said it before – are structural: lack of pipeline infrastructure, uncertain regulatory regime, rapidly growing technology. So Bill 3, the solution to the jobs challenge offered by this government, is not a solution. As I said, it is a solution in search of a problem and detached from the challenges facing Albertans.

Mr. Chair, members opposite know that Bill 3 is highly unlikely to create jobs or stimulate investment in the near future. Their platform actually presented it to the voters as such. Their own projections stated clearly that they didn't expect any new jobs or investment as a result of this tax cut for at least two years, but in a fit of transparency their platform was clear that the tax cut would reduce government revenue. They were clear that the tax cut would not pay for itself. If the government was going to reduce revenue through this ineffective tax cut, then they were going to have to cut spending. We all know what that means: larger classrooms; longer wait times in health care; crumbling roads, bridges, maybe no bridge at all; and layoffs.

Now, there might be some disagreement in this Chamber on how much these tax cuts are going to cost. We've estimated it at \$4.5 billion, the UCP platform estimated it at \$2.36 billion, and others, well, are somewhere in between. All these features are estimates, but there is a consensus in these estimates that these corporate tax cuts are going to reduce revenue, and they won't create any jobs for two years. The real question before the Assembly is simple. Are we going to vote in favour of a corporate tax cut that won't create jobs or stimulate investment? Are we going to give billions in corporate tax cuts, at the same time gutting our health and education systems to pay for it?

Well, Mr. Chair, Bill 3 is a triumph of ideology over reality. Bill 3 is a textbook conservative solution to every economic problem. It appears to the government members opposite that no matter what the circumstance, corporate tax cuts are the solution. Changing technologies in global energy markets? The UCP government solution: cut corporate taxes. Lack of takeaway capacity? Don't worry. The solution is to cut corporate taxes. Regulatory

uncertainty? Don't worry. The solution is to cut corporate taxes. Mr. Chair, our economy faces real challenges, and we need real solutions. We don't need a Bill 3, a solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

But if the government is committed to following through with this bill, then Albertans deserve some answers. Given the billions of forgone revenue to the Crown, what is the government planning to cut? How many teachers will be laid off? Will the government cut payments to AISH or PDD? Will they consider closing rural hospitals? Will they wind down the government's previous initiative to bring water to reserves? Mr. Chair, Albertans deserve answers to these questions before this Chamber votes on this bill.

I call upon the government to come clean and be honest with Albertans on their proposed cuts. Let us hear from the ministers, honestly and transparently, about what they're going to cut. Then and only then can Albertans fairly judge for themselves whether Bill 3 is worthy of their support or whether it is simply a solution in search of a problem that doesn't exist.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm sure that your mom would be proud of you right now for having made good choices. I'll be sure to share that with her if I ever get the opportunity. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Manning for making some interesting comments and, of course, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who spoke at length.

I just want to also offer some of my thoughts on this giant corporate tax giveaway that we're going to vote on here shortly. I want to address some of the things that the Member for Calgary-Hays said. First of all, I sure hope that he lives up to his ambition to be average. I know, having seen him in action for the last four years, that that'll be a bit of a stretch, Mr. Chair, but hope springs eternal. I hope that over the term we do see him reaching his goal of being average. I'm looking forward to that.

The Member for Calgary-Hays in his speech mentioned that corporate citizens were the best kind of citizens, which was reminiscent of recent presidential election nominee Mitt Romney, who famously in 2011 told people: corporations are people, my friend. That was one of the lines that really stuck to him and was a major reason that he lost that election to President Obama, a good choice that I think the people of the United States made in that election. He's false when he says that corporate citizens don't use health care or education or any of the public goods that are provided by the government of Alberta because the last time I checked, Mr. Chair, corporations need healthy people to work for them. Of course, the public health care sector provides those healthy people, keeps people healthy enough to go to work every day and carry out their duties as assigned to them by their employers.

Corporate citizens need educated people to go and work for them. Certainly, you would be hard-pressed to find a job these days that doesn't require you to at least know how to read and write, so some basic level of education is required. More and more, even a postsecondary education is required. That was certainly something that we heard, when we were government and I was Minister of Advanced Education, when Amazon decided not to shortlist Calgary as one of its locations for its second headquarters. I believe that if you check the location that Amazon did select, it has a higher combined state and federal tax rate than what Calgary would have had even under the current tax rates, much less the tax rates that the UCP is proposing.

Anyway, my point is that when Amazon decided not to shortlist Calgary as its second headquarters location, one of the reasons that they stated was because they couldn't find people with the skills



and qualifications that they needed to go to work for that company. We undertook as government to invest significantly in the high-tech skills of the people of Alberta. We rolled out a \$50 million plan to increase the number of seats in universities and colleges across this province in tech-related areas so that people could learn to become software engineers, web developers, the kinds of things that Amazon was looking to hire and couldn't find in Alberta because they weren't being educated in numbers great enough to justify Amazon establishing their second headquarters in Calgary.

Certainly, in consultations that we held with other members of the high-tech sector, we heard the same issue. We talked to Benevity, who is still seriously considering moving their headquarters from Calgary to Victoria, Mr. Chair, which is weird because the corporate tax rate in Victoria is much higher than what the members opposite are proposing. Yeah. It's weird because, of course, everybody in the UCP knows that the NDP chases away investment unless it's the B.C. NDP, of course, which is actually attracting investment to Victoria, a jurisdiction that's had – shock, gasp – a carbon tax for more than 10 years.

*10:40 p.m.*

I need to remind everyone that it was a Premier of a rather conservative bent who implemented that policy, a Premier who was so unpopular in conservative circles for implementing the carbon tax that he was appointed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to be the high commissioner to the United Kingdom after his stint as Premier was over. Boy, he sure learned his lesson, hey? Don't implement a carbon tax; otherwise, the federal Conservatives are really going to come down hard on you. I'm sure it was difficult for him to serve that stint in London.

The point is, Mr. Chair, that when the Member for Calgary-Hays says that corporate citizens don't rely on services, he's dead wrong. As I said, they rely on health care to keep their workers healthy and able to go to work. They rely on education to provide the education and the skills that people need so that they can hire people here. You know, most corporations that I know take advantage of roads and the other public services that we provide. Certainly, a growing number of corporations are concerned about the quality-of-life issues that their employees would face. As the Member for Calgary-Glenmore said, capital is mobile, and you can set up shop anywhere you like, so why not set up shop in a place that's a nice place to live? I'm not saying that, you know, North Dakota is a bad place to live, but I've been to North Dakota, and I have to say that a low corporate tax rate is probably the only attractive thing about that state.

You know, Mr. Chair, it's a cartoon sketch that they like to present about corporations, that they present to the people to justify cutting corporate taxes. Like I said, corporate citizens benefit significantly from the investments that they make in the public goods that are provided by the government of Alberta, and I think it's only fair that they pay their fair share. Certainly, most Albertans would agree with us. If you look at any polling that's been conducted recently in any North American jurisdiction, a vast majority of people believe that corporations should be paying at least their current rate of taxes if not slightly more.

In fact, the Member for Calgary-Hays will probably remember quite clearly when, in the run-up to the 2015 election, the people of Alberta made that demand for corporations to pay their fair share in taxes quite clearly known, because in the run-up to that election, of course, they undertook a number of budget consultations, the kinds of consultations that, of course, they accused us of doing, where they presupposed the answer before they actually undertook the consultation. But I remember quite clearly, Mr. Chair, that one of the things that they asked the people of Alberta in that consultation

in the run-up to the 2015 budget was what we should do about revenue. One of the answers, though, that wasn't allowed to be given was whether or not we could raise corporate taxes. That wasn't an option even though thousands and thousands of Albertans continually wrote in to the online forums and phoned their MLAs and let people know that they wanted corporate taxes to be raised.

What did they choose to do instead, Mr. Chair? They left corporate taxes where they were, at 10 per cent, and they chose to implement a health care premium on the people of Alberta. That was an incredibly unpopular move.

In 2015, Mr. Chair, even though Alberta had gone through a period of extraordinary growth and prosperity, the average working stiff, like the Member for Calgary-Hays's dad, if he had been working at the time, was working more hours but not really seeing his real wages increase by any significant amount because the cost of living was rising much higher than wages were at that time. For the government to say, "You know what, working people of Alberta? We're not going to ask the corporations who are doing really well to pay their fair share, but we are going to ask people who are falling further and further behind to pay more for health care, that should be provided to them through the taxes that they already paid," seemed like a raw deal to the people of Alberta, and in fact they rejected it soundly.

You know, the Member for Calgary-Hays encourages us to learn the lessons from previous elections, so I would return the favour to him, Mr. Chair. I would encourage him to remember the lesson from the 2015 election and the budget consultations that they undertook in the run-up to that election. If you ask working people, the average Albertan, to pay for services and let corporations off the hook, the people will not stand for it. They understand what a fair deal is much better than the members opposite, and they won't have any part of it.

Mr. Chair, this is what all of our members here on this side of the House have been telling the members opposite all night. You know, we expect high-quality health care, we expect high-quality education, freely available to everyone in Alberta regardless of their financial circumstances, regardless of their geographic circumstances, regardless of their race, any kind of life circumstances that they happen to face. If they're asked to let wealthy corporations off the hook and pay more out of their pockets when they have less going into their pockets than they have in more than a decade, that's an unfair deal, and I don't think the people of Alberta will stand for it.

Certainly, we have a number of election histories. I know the members opposite are fond of talking about election histories. You know, this is modelled on the same Trump tax cuts that were implemented in the run-up to the 2018 mid-term election. The Republicans were annihilated in that mid-term election, Mr. Chair, largely because of the tax cut. That was the only significant legislative accomplishment that that President and that Republican-controlled Senate and House of Representatives was able to achieve in the two years in the run-up to that election. Based on that one, single legislative milestone, the people of the United States voted overwhelmingly in favour of Democrats, who were running on a platform of fair taxes for corporations and a better deal for the average American.

Certainly, at the state level where it's been tried, it's also been rejected soundly by voters. We've talked a lot about the Kansas experiment. You know, the Kansas experiment was such a colossal failure that after two terms of trying it, the citizens of Kansas elected a Democrat, which is the first time in – I don't know – modern history, I think, that the people of Kansas elected a Democrat.

You know, I am warning the members opposite to study the electoral history that they are so fond of reminding us of. When they implement these massive tax cuts on profitable corporations, it will be wildly unpopular with the people of Alberta, who are working more hours and seeing less take-home pay than they have for a decade, Mr. Chair. Not only that, they will be getting less services as a result of it. Nobody feels good about having their kids go to a class with 35 other kids and not being able to get the help they need if the Royal Bank is making windfall profits.

**10:50 p.m.**

It's remarkable to me, Mr. Chair, that, you know, the members opposite talk about the debt and how much money we pay in interest to bankers and bondholders every year as a result of the debt that we owe, and they chastise us for giving away so much money to bankers and bondholders, yet here in this bill they give even more money to the very bankers and bondholders that they want to deride and chastise us for paying interest payments to. That doesn't make sense, and I know that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in her comments earlier this evening was talking about why she can't figure it out. The only thing that I've come to is that you can't apply logic to the members opposite's thinking. It's right because they say it's right, and that's the only logic that they need.

If pressed, they'll say, "Well, we won the election, don't you know, so of course that it makes it right," which is interesting, Mr. Chair, because on the issue of running and winning elections on campaign platform pieces, I would remind the members opposite that we ran and won an election on implementing farm safety legislation. Of course, they never accepted that as an acceptable argument in favour of implementing farm safety legislation that finally gave farmers legislated protections that are enjoyed by farm labourers in every other jurisdiction in the country, but they want us to accept this argument that because they won the election, they have to do it, right?

Anyway, it's not hypocrisy because the members opposite don't understand it as hypocrisy. It's right simply because they say it's right, and they don't want to think about it anymore or expect anybody else to apply any further logic to it, Mr. Chair.

You know, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, of course, talked about some of the things in her constituency that are at risk if we go ahead with this 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway.

**Ms Hoffman:** In their constituencies.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yeah. Well, in their constituencies as well.

I think it's important for every member here in the House to understand what's at stake for my constituents. Right now we are in the middle of a giant construction project, extending the LRT from downtown through to Mill Woods, Mr. Chair, a project that's been incredibly disruptive, especially to the businesses and school kids who travel every day along 95th Avenue through the Strathearn neighbourhood. That has been shut down for an indeterminate length of time because of the construction of that LRT. So what happens if the money for that suddenly disappears? I'm not saying that the city won't be able to construct it, but, you know, I certainly wouldn't want my constituents to have gone through these years of significant inconvenience and disruption in their lives just to have the carpet pulled out from under them at the last minute so that we could give a 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway to the wealthiest corporations in the province. That seems grossly unfair.

Already we have schools that are closing in my constituency. The St. Gabriel school in the Capilano neighbourhood was decided to be closed one day after the UCP was elected because, of course, the

Catholic school board knew what was coming in the budget, possibly because, you know, they had had previous interactions with the Member for Red Deer-North when she was a Catholic school trustee. I don't know. But, of course, they saw what was coming and decided to close the school, which is creating significant hardships for not just people in my riding, Mr. Chair, but people from Sherwood Park and other parts of the city who travel through Edmonton-Gold Bar on their way to work and use St. Gabriel school as a convenient place to drop off their kids in order to go to school and pick them up, of course, on the way back home from work.

That's one school that's already closed, and they hadn't even gotten to the point of making the corporate tax cuts or these other kinds of terrible decisions about the budget. I'm just wondering what other schools are set to close in my riding, Mr. Chair. Is it going to be, you know, Austin O'Brien high school? Is it going to be Vimy Ridge high school? Is it going to be McNally high school? Is it going to be one of the many elementary schools? Are the people of Gold Bar going to keep their community school?

**The Deputy Chair:** I believe that the individual who stood up quite quickly there was the hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The personal attacks continue from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, but if this is the small price that we must pay to protect Albertans from gross mismanagement, so be it. The hon. members of the opposition keep talking about a temporary reduction in corporate tax revenues, which will result in increased investment, jobs, and greater long-term corporate tax revenues, something he and his colleagues describe as the \$4.5 billion hole. They say it over and over. Where was their protest when they were digging a \$60 billion chasm in Alberta's finances?

In some ways I feel bad for the new Minister of Finance as he has been tasked with managing the financial disaster left by the previous government. But then I remember that all he has to do is do the opposite of the previous Finance minister, and he might just go down as the greatest Finance minister in Alberta's history. Now, unlike the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and, certainly, his colleague the Opposition House Leader – I won't repeat his comments because I don't want to spread ignorance – we actually understand . . .

**Mr. Schmidt:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jones:** A few of us have actually worked . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to hear from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yeah. Mr. Chair, under 23(h), (i), and (j) the Member for Calgary-South East clearly referred to my comments as ignorant, and that's clearly designed to not only impute false motives but also to . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Create disorder.

**Mr. Schmidt:** . . . create disorder. Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Yeah. Anyway, you know, it's interesting that the Member for Calgary-South East started by complaining about personal attacks

and then claimed that my comments were ignorant, Mr. Chair. [interjection] Yes. That is my point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the interjection. It was an interesting interjection, but it's not a point of order. This is clearly a matter of debate. While the hon. member may feel that the comments were not ignorant, clearly the other member thought that the comments were ignorant. It's clearly a matter of debate, and I would like to hear the remainder of the speech.

**The Deputy Chair:** Having heard from both sides, I think that the most prudent way to go about this process would be to remind all members to, if they can, keep their language towards wording that would not tend to create disorder in the House in order for us to then, therefore, be able to continue to focus on Bill 3.

Please, the hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me discuss something that I personally would characterize as an uninformed view on small businesses and businesses across Alberta as I've actually worked with them for my entire career. As members may not be aware, it takes a lot to start and keep a business running. A large portion of businesses fail. The average small business in Canada basically makes no money. So for anyone to claim that a business could afford to not make a few thousand a month: I just think that it's ridiculous.

Continuing on, a few of us on this side have actually worked in business. We support businesses because we support Albertans – their entrepreneurial spirit, their ingenuity, their work ethic – because businesses create jobs for Albertans and businesses pay for the essential services that Albertans need. Right now they want both.

11:00 p.m.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. It's getting late. We're trying to keep the energy going here. I'm happy to participate in that.

You know, of course, I'm going to be taking the position that this bill is completely inappropriate. I would like to take some time to talk a little bit about the absence of logic behind the bill and talk a little bit about the direction that I think this government is trying to go in and spend a bit of time talking about the fact that other people who have looked at these kinds of issues in the past have all come to the same conclusion, and that is that this kind of bill is ineffective in achieving the outcomes.

The piece that I'm wanting to talk about is the connection between the intention and the outcome here in this bill, because that is where the major fault lies within the bill. If you ask us about the desire to have businesses in the province of Alberta, indeed in all of Canada do well, everyone on this side of the House would say: "We absolutely want to see businesses do well. We want them to be able to succeed. We want them to be able to have dollars so that they can create employment."

The problem is that that's just a theoretical model. We have this notion that if we provide resources to the businesses, they will create more jobs. We have to look beyond that general notion and go into the evidence where that notion has been applied and where there's actual, practical lived experience. I can tell you that the

lived experience in the jurisdictions that made the decision to provide corporate tax deductions has been that they did not create jobs.

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Manning went through and talked very clearly about the fact that Prime Minister Harper had assessed this very question here in Canada and clearly came out against this type of bill. He said that the evidence is that it does not provide the outcome that's there, that's expected. That's the point that we need to get across to the members of the government.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

We get your intent. We understand what you desire. What we're trying to tell you is that there is no correlation between what it is that you desire and what it is that you are doing to try to achieve that. It's faulty thinking. You can't engage in a behaviour over and over again, have it proved to be wrong and faulty, and then engage in it again and call it reasonable, intelligent, thoughtful behaviour. It isn't.

I want to talk a little bit about the fact that on the other side of the House they like to get up and make a number of statements about the previous government, of which I was a part, and the type of statements they make again demonstrate the lack of logic and the lack of ability to put a relationship between behaviour and outcome.

Now, fortunately for members of the other side of the House, before I got elected, I was a university professor, and I happened to teach courses on research. One of the things that we would spend a fair amount of time on, particularly in our first classes – people often refer to them as 101, economics 101 or research 101 – is the difference between correlation and causality. It's something that is continuously brought up in error in this House. For example, the Member for Calgary-Hays, the Minister of Transportation, said that we raised the taxes yet the government dollars that came in in subsequent years were less, not more, after we raised the taxes. Therefore, he says that our raising the taxes was the problem and resulted in the reduction of government income.

Now, we call that a first-year fallacy in a research class, and I'll show you why it's a fallacy by giving you another example: the vast majority of criminals in prisons in the province of Alberta have eaten cheese; therefore, eating cheese must cause criminality, because the two are very, very highly correlated; in fact, it's almost a hundred per cent. That's the kind of logic that is being used by the Transportation minister to explain why, when we raised the taxes, things go down.

Now, what you need to understand is that in a very small, theoretical model, where there are only two variables, then one might be able to make that prediction, but I want to inform the members of the government that running the province of Alberta is not as simplistic and black and white as you would like it to be, that there is a reality out there. There are multiple variables that will influence the things that happen.

So when you look at what's happened over the last number of years, you can say that we raised the taxes and that the amount of money that came in was less, but if you believe that there's a causal relationship between those two, it betrays a lack of logical understanding and a lack of ability to learn from lived experience. Now, we have a word for that, when one doesn't learn from their lived experience, but it's a little unparliamentary, so I'll just leave it to your imagination right now.

I think that what we have before us now is a bill that is essentially a race to the bottom, a bill that will exacerbate the very problem that economists around the world have been identifying since the 1970s, and that is the increase in inequality between

people in society. That is a return to an earlier century, where some people had significant amounts of money but where the vast majority of people did not. What we've seen since the 1970s is that that inequality has been regularly increasing year over year and increasing at a higher rate such that we are at the place now where seven individuals in this world have more money than 50 per cent of the countries combined in this world. That's a problem. That's a return to the Sun King idea. That's a return to predemocracy ideas.

Now, I've often complained that the members of the government seem to derive their policies from the 1950s. I've often said that I don't know what year the Premier was born in. I don't know if he was born in the '50s, but he certainly likes to live his life there. Now what I'm finding is that the ideas that are being brought forward are not ideas from the 1950s. Indeed, they're ideas from the 1600s, and I'm very concerned about that.

Now, previously in this House we've had an opportunity to look at some of the evidence, but apparently the evidence doesn't really matter. We've looked at the fact that the American Congressional Budget Office has done a particular study on the very question we're talking about today and has identified that giving tax breaks is a poor method of increasing the number of jobs. Ironically, it's partly because of the issue that was raised by the Member for Calgary-Glenmore earlier, when she stood up and indicated to all of us that we all agreed – and I'll go along with it – that capital is mobile. I agree.

She went on then to list a number of jurisdictions that had lower tax rates, but again we have that first-year, 101 fallacy, that because there are people with lower tax rates, that is the reason why people left. Yet she failed to provide the evidence of the new bitumen mine in Kansas. So it was a bit confusing for me.

*11:10 p.m.*

I can see, then, that we have a problem here in terms of trying to understand what it means when we say that capital is mobile. If you believe this to be true – apparently, it's been declared by the Member for Calgary-Glenmore that we all agree on that; she's already put that on the record, so I guess we all do – then giving them more money would seem to indicate that you yourselves have the belief that that money will leave Alberta, that it will go somewhere else, that it will go to Kansas, that it will go to other states.

**Ms Hoffman:** North Dakota.

**Mr. Feehan:** North Dakota. Of course. I've never been down there. I understand that there's an interesting mountain with things carved into it.

**Ms Hoffman:** That's South Dakota.

**Mr. Feehan:** Oh. That's South Dakota? Sorry.

**Mr. Schmidt:** North Dakota has nothing.

**Mr. Feehan:** It has nothing. Okay.

The point is that this type of bill has been tested in reality, and the people that have done the assessment on it, such as the Congressional Budget Office in the United States, say that that is precisely why it doesn't work, because capital is mobile, and that when they are given money, they do not create jobs. They instead – let me check my notes to make sure I get it right – buy shares back. That's what happens. And where does the money go when they buy shares back? To the very wealthy people that have the money to invest in those shares, who do not live in Alberta . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Or North Dakota.

**Mr. Feehan:** . . . or North Dakota. And when they get that extra money, they don't create more jobs in Alberta. They go on better vacations in Bahrain. They use marble for the floors instead of tile. All over the world they travel, and they visit their friends on their yachts. That's the kind of thing they do.

The Congressional Budget Office does have some suggestions for you, however. It says that, at best, when things go a hundred per cent well with deductions to corporations, you end up by maybe creating up to 4 jobs per million dollars. Pretty expensive jobs. They do go on to say that there are other ways to create jobs. Let me just find my page here for a moment because it's very interesting. The Congressional Budget Office has studied this and found – wait for it – that the thing that creates the most jobs is government spending, at 19 jobs for every million dollars. So we go from your choice of creating 4 jobs for every million dollars to 19 jobs for every million dollars if you instead engage in government spending, which I think is exactly what we should be doing here at this time.

You know, I find it very curious that we have members opposite who say that they understand business in a way that somehow I don't even though I ran my own business and I was a vice-president of Catholic Social Services, the largest multifunction public social service agency in the country. I had an opportunity to be engaged in lots of these kinds of things in the past. But they understand things. Yet they can't get to a very basic understanding of things that my first-year research students learned, and that is that you have to look at the evidence, and you have to look at it from the point of view of there being complex decisions to be made, not simple lines to be drawn, as was suggested by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, who says: we know how to draw the dotted line. That's the problem. You're drawing a dotted line. That's not what you're supposed to be doing. You're supposed to be reading the evidence and having the evidence suggest to you what it is that one should gather from that evidence. If you fill in the line, you fill it in with your value system, with your determination: this is what I want the outcome to be. That's not good research. That's not good government.

What we need to do instead is that we need to listen to people like Prime Minister Harper. [interjections] I've never said that before in my life, and I want it on record that I said it once. We need to listen to the congressional . . .

**An Hon. Member:** We need to stop the clock.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah; you're done.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm done? When I get to agreeing with Harper, I'm out of here. Okay. [interjection] It's just water; I swear.

I think it's really important. You keep saying that you understand business better, yet the things you bring forward tell me that you haven't done your research or that you didn't understand your research. If it comes down to it, we actually agree with what you want. We want more jobs. We want more people to be employed. We know that the evidence is there, plainly in front of all of us, that the way that you do that is that you create the new big deal. You create jobs. You build bridges. You build roads. You create climate leadership plans that employ people on every reserve around the province of Alberta, in every corner of this province. You give them an opportunity to work where they live and live where they work. That's the kind of thing that you do. You don't take the money and give it to somebody who doesn't care whether you happen to live in Wandering River or whether you happen to live at the Blood Tribe or whether you happen to live in Hinton or Hanna, because

they only want to make a profit. They can do that in a variety of other places, and they will take that money and go away.

We know that what really creates jobs is not the supply side. It's not by giving money to the corporations. They don't create jobs just because they have more money. They don't say: "I've got more money. Why don't I create some more jobs?" They fulfill a mandate for a demand. The people that create jobs are the everyday people of the province of Alberta, who spend their money in the province of Alberta. If you give that same amount of money to the people who live here, they will spend their money at the local store. They will spend their money at the local restaurant. That's what creates the jobs.

No business said: let's create jobs just to find out what happens. Real businesspeople say: there's a demand out there, and I am going to try to fill that demand. If the demand goes away, they stop producing it. If the number of chairs they're selling goes from a hundred a day to five a day, they don't produce a thousand chairs in hopes that somehow they'll sell more of them. They start producing five a day because that's what makes their budget balance work, and then they sell that. It's the demand that makes it go up and down, the demand that makes the jobs get created. It's a pretty basic concept, and it's one that I really wish you would apply, that you would look at: how do we influence the demand? That's what we've been doing on this side of the House. We've been looking not at where Alberta has been in the past but where Alberta needs to be and: how will we meet the demand of Albertans in the years to come?

Wayne Gretzky was famous for saying: I don't skate where the puck is; I skate to where the puck is going to be. That's what we want you to do in this House. We don't want you to go back to the same old jobs all the time because that's what you want, that you are hoping will happen. You can't create them to happen. Instead, you need to say: "What is needed in this province? What's going to happen in this province over the next 10 and 15 years?" We need you to start to have a vision of the future, to stop living your life in the 1950s, to stop living the dream of the 1970s, and to bring yourself into the 21st century, where you will know, from looking around the world, that we are moving to a carbonless economy, an economy that is built around new needs, new desires, and therefore new demands. Good businesspeople are looking for what those demands are going to be, and they're going to satisfy those demands. They're not going to just create jobs because they happen to have some extra dollars. That's not what they do with it.

So I'm very concerned. I'm very concerned that this whole idea of the difference between causality and correlation is lost on the government, that they draw simple dotted lines between their intent and the desired outcomes that are a betrayal of absence of fact, absence of logical reasoning. We need you to take a step back. What we're doing at this moment here is asking you to do that.

*11:20 p.m.*

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have enough evening here to respond to everything that's been said. There are some things that simply have to be stated. Listening to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford makes me understand why this province is in the fiscal condition it's in today. For the member to suggest that there is no correlation between a competitive business environment, of which your tax competitiveness is a major piece, is nonsensical. It's simply not factual. Business investments and, with that, jobs and opportunities attract and end up in jurisdictions where

there's a competitive business environment. Tax structure is a big piece of that business environment. That is why we are going to ensure that Alberta has by far the most competitive tax jurisdiction in Canada and one of the most competitive jurisdictions, in fact, in all of North America.

I want to talk a little bit about corporations because, of course, this tax relates to corporations specifically. We've heard, I think, a fair bit of disparaging about corporations tonight by various members. I've heard some things I can agree with. I've certainly heard from the Member for Edmonton-Manning, who talked about the importance of jobs, about the importance of feeding our families, about the importance of having opportunities for the next generation. I absolutely agree with that. She talked about the fact that there are many factors at play in the economy of Alberta, and I appreciate that and recognize that. That's why this government has a very robust plan not to tackle one issue but to tackle a multitude of economic issues that will improve our competitiveness and will do it simultaneously to ensure that businesses are going to invest in Alberta and create jobs and opportunities. Corporations, which are really a structure for businesses, provide an awful lot of benefit. Businesses provide an awful lot of benefit to every community, to every region in this province and this country. They are massive job creators, Madam Chair, in our region and in my constituency.

During the election as I went door to door, the one thing that I heard repeatedly was that we absolutely needed to create not only additional jobs but better-paying jobs. I met individual after individual that was either unemployed or severely underemployed. Madam Chair, that is a result of a lack of investment in this province at this point in time. Corporations create jobs. Corporations create opportunities, and yes, corporations reinvest capital where there is additional opportunity that capital will be reinvested. That is what we're about. We're about actually creating a competitive environment where profits will be reinvested back into Alberta, which will create jobs and opportunities. Corporations contribute to our communities in many ways. They contribute to our infrastructure in our communities. In my constituency corporations have assisted with school projects. In my constituency corporations line up and buy 4-H calves and support rural kids who are working hard to raise their project. Corporations respond to community groups, to sports groups. They assist at a variety of levels within our communities.

There was some discussion on at what level our corporate tax cut will apply. There was discussion around the small-business deduction tonight, and I listened with interest at that discussion. It's true that the corporate tax cut that we're proposing today will in fact take effect when corporations earn \$500,000. Madam Chair, there are many small corporations and medium-sized corporations as well as large corporations to whom this will apply. Let me characterize it this way. Successful corporations – and every business owner wants to be a successful businessperson regardless of what business they're in. Even small businesses that can become somewhat successful, small businesses that would be successful enough to, in fact, benefit from this tax reduction typically reinvest in their communities, and as the corporation size grows, they provide more opportunity not only in terms of job creation but in opportunities for other new business start-ups.

In my constituency there are a host of small businesses, businesses where it's often a couple or an individual that own the business. They work 14 hours a day. These are start-up businesses. Many of them don't make it, but the ones that do are made by blood, sweat, and tears. Typically those opportunities very often are provided by larger successful corporations that, again, provide opportunity in our communities for oil and gas service companies,

for retail shops, for professional services, for grocery stores, for gas stations. In Alberta we desperately need investment to provide not only jobs but to provide opportunities for our businesses, whether they be large corporations or small corporations.

I want to also talk a little bit about the corporate tax revenue and the effect that our tax cut will have on government revenues. I think we heard one of the members opposite basically cite from our platform. We were up front with Albertans during the election campaign. We were transparent with Albertans. We recognized that our plans to decrease corporate tax revenue, create a very competitive business environment, attract investment, and create jobs would in fact result initially in a diminished corporate revenue for the government of Alberta. We've been transparent about that.

We also know – and, in fact, economists have backed us up – that as investment arrives in this province, as jobs and opportunity are created, there will be an opposite effect. In other words, there will be a buffering effect, where that additional investment, the additional economic activity, will create more tax revenue for this province. In fact, University of Calgary Professor Dr. Bev Dahlby has concluded that by 2023-24 this corporate tax cut will generate more provincial government revenue than what it has cost Albertans, and at the same time it's going to create 55,000 additional jobs and \$12.7 billion of economic activity. Madam Chairman, this is exactly the initiative that this province needs.

We made a commitment to Albertans that we were going to create a business environment, that we were going to bring in policies that would again attract investment, create jobs and opportunities. Madam Chairman, that's what we're about, and that's what we're going to do on behalf of every Albertan and on behalf of every Alberta family.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to return to the House tonight and take part in this debate. This is a bill that I haven't had the chance to speak to yet. It's one that I think is eliciting a lot of emotion, certainly some humour here in the House tonight, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here and take part in it. I'm not sure I'll have anything quite as colourful as some of my colleagues to add to the record tonight, but I think that it's important for me to speak to this bill.

*11:30 p.m.*

You know, I've heard many members speak in this House on this bill and others that these bills need to move forward, that they are here to vote for these bills because they were sent here by their constituents and by the majority of votes that they received. To be completely honest, Madam Chair, I am here for the same reason, and I am standing to speak against this bill tonight for the same reason, because a significant majority of my constituents here in Edmonton-City Centre did not vote for this step. Indeed, when I went out and I knocked on doors – and I would put my record in speaking with my constituents up against any other member's in this House in terms of being present, visible, and listening to folks in my community – the majority of people that I spoke to were not in favour of this significant tax giveaway. Now, to be clear, I did speak with some members of my constituency, some residents here, who told me that they would not vote for me because they supported this policy, and I respect that view, but I am here tonight to speak to this bill because a majority of my constituents did not favour this bill and a number of other policies that were put forward by the now governing party.

I appreciate this opportunity to stand here tonight and represent the voice of my constituents. Now, I recognize that as we have this debate, as has been, I think, pretty amply demonstrated here in the House tonight, it's very unlikely that we are going to find any agreement on this bill between the two sides of the House. It's not going to happen. Indeed, I'm not under any illusion that there's anything that I can say here in this House tonight that is going to likely sway – I'll be completely honest; let's be humble here – probably a single member of the government caucus. But that's quite all right, Madam Chair. My intent tonight is to speak on behalf of my constituents.

You know, the reason that I truly believe, Madam Chair, that I am not going to sway any members of this government caucus is because their belief that this bill will bring jobs and investment back to Alberta, that it will add more revenue to the budget than it removes is for them essentially an article of faith. We've seen that pretty amply demonstrated here tonight. These members cannot show a single actual example where taking this step has had that result – we've talked about multiple jurisdictions that have taken this step and have not in fact seen more revenue come back than what they took out of their budget – or where it has led to a net creation of jobs or improvement for that local economy. In fact, in many cases we have seen the opposite.

You know, it was interesting, Madam Chair, that my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford used a term that I appreciated hearing because it was something that I wanted to talk about, that being theoretical models. I often think sometimes, when I hear some of these arguments, about the concept of physics. I'll be clear. I am no physicist. Physics in high school was not my strongest subject. I did very well in math, but physics involved a lot more formulas and a lot more exceptions and things you had to consider before you decided which formula you were going to apply. Math is very straightforward, generally, most of the time. Physics is more complex.

But one thing I do understand about physics is that there are different ways to look at it. In the world of theoretical models, you can assume that things are going to operate in a very particular way. If I push a ball along a flat surface, in a theoretical model I can posit that that is a frictionless surface and that, therefore, that ball will roll forever. But we know the reality is that friction does exist. Therefore, if I push that ball, it will roll for a certain distance, and then it will stop. We also know that outside of that model I could push that ball, and I could set it rolling, and then someone could come and put their hand in the way and block it from moving. The reality is, Madam Chair, that I cannot simply say that in every single instance where I take that ball and I give it a push, it will reach the other side of the room. There are many factors which could get involved and cause that not to be the case.

Now, what I am hearing, again, from many members in this House when they stand up and they argue in favour of this bill is that they are operating in a world of theoretical models. They are making assumptions based on a belief that there is, in fact, no friction involved or that if there is friction involved, there's nobody who could put a thumb on the scale. They are living in a world of ideals. Indeed, Madam Chair, in an ideal world, if we cut the corporate tax by 4 per cent, then that 4 per cent would go back to companies, and those companies would say: "Thank you. You're wonderful people. Therefore, I will take this money, and I will put it directly back into your economy."

Now, I am not saying that that isn't going to happen to some extent. I don't think anyone in this House is necessarily disagreeing about some of the realities. We acknowledge that there is a certain point at which, if you tax too much, you will begin to see a losing prospect or that there is a point at which, if you tax too low, you're

going to lower your revenues to the point where you're not able to function as a government. I think the bone of contention that we have today is: where is that balance? Where does that actually fall? What I would say, Madam Chair, is that what this government is proposing to do is to roll the dice and gamble with Albertans, with the public services that Albertans depend on, with the budget that is there to protect and support Albertans.

I'm not the only one that's said this. This is something that has come out in a few articles that have been published recently in the *Edmonton Journal*. Keith Gerein, a columnist whom I've quoted before in this House: I kind of like Keith. I've got respect for him. He doesn't always see things my way, I don't always see things his, but I feel like he's a fairly fair-minded guy. You know, he talks about the corporate tax cut that we're talking about here tonight. The headline for his article is UCP Gambles Alberta's Prosperity on Tax Cuts, but Is It a Smart Bet? He says that when we're talking about economic policy in a small jurisdiction like Alberta, it's "a bit like discussing strategies for winning at the casino." He says that you can calculate the odds as best you can. You can try to figure out what the trends are, which way things tend to go in the house, but whether you go home with more money than you came in with or whether you go home with significantly less is still going to be subject to a lot of factors that are simply outside your control.

We are not dealing here with the theoretical model; we are dealing here with an economy that is part of a larger global economy in which many factors that affect us have been shifted. Mr. Gerein suggested that this is a relevant analogy because he says that the Kenney government is "rolling the dice on [Alberta's] economic future."

**An Hon. Member:** Name.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Oh, pardon me. I apologize. I withdraw the name.

He refers to this particular government, that he says is "rolling the dice on the province's economic future . . . by going all-in on a massive tax cut." He refers to this as "aggressive and risky . . . a gamble on classic trickle-down economics." He goes on to note: "The risk of the plan backfiring is significant, but the government appears to have no timeline or threshold to pull the plug [on this risky idea] if [it] becomes clear the scheme isn't working." The government is not only gambling, Madam Chair; they are going all-in. They're putting all the chips on the table, and if the roll of the dice does not go their way, it is Albertans that are going to lose.

Now, we've heard members opposite quote two particular economists with whom they are somewhat friendly and whose opinion, therefore, they tend to prefer. But they are ignoring the fact that, as Mr. Gerein notes, there are skeptical economists who have also weighed in on this, and they've noted, again, that our economy is subject to a lot of complex and fluid things that are happening in the larger global economy, things that are going on across the world that affect us.

Indeed, as the Member for Calgary-Glenmore noted, if we take this step, if this is the be-all and end-all, if this is the ultimate step that needs to be taken to ignite Alberta's economy, what happens, then, when other provinces and states start to lower their own corporate taxes? Do we simply, then, continue to engage in that race to the bottom?

**11:40 p.m.**

Now, as has been noted, initially when they announced this policy as part of their platform, they said that the cut would pay for itself. No loss. But the fact is, as Mr. Gerein notes, Stokes

Economics suggested that "the tax cut would instead decrease provincial revenue by \$3.4 billion over four years while getting back only \$1 billion in revenue generated by new economic activity." One billion. Investing 3 to get 1 back: that's the analysis from Stokes Economics. As Mr. Gerein notes, "Alberta Finance projections suggest lost revenue from the tax cut could range anywhere from \$1.7 billion to \$4.7 billion over four years."

As was the habit of these members when they sat on this side of the House, we'll choose to go with the largest possible figure and talk about that \$4.7 billion hole that they want to blow in the Alberta budget. As my colleagues have so aptly pointed out, Madam Chair, this government has already said that they are going to be making cuts, because they have set up their blue-ribbon panel with no other choice. All they can do is find ways to reduce spending and expenditures, and on top of that they will remove an additional up to \$4.7 billion out of the budget and then turn to Albertans, download that onto the school boards, onto the municipalities, onto Alberta Health Services, and from there onto all of the front-line health care workers, and say: you figure it out. We've seen this before. That's been the approach of previous Conservative governments whenever the price of oil would drop.

As Mr. Gerein says, "In short, the UCP corporate tax cut is a big gamble that could jeopardize public services for little to no economic benefit." Also from the *Edmonton Journal*, an editorial. Now, I recognize that members of the government were very, very happy with the editorial page of the *Edmonton Journal* when it was corporate leaders of Postmedia in Ontario that provided an endorsement for their party. They may be less pleased to hear the thoughts of actual local individuals who serve on the editorial board, who live here in the province of Alberta, who contribute to the local economy and also depend on the local services. These people, journalists, Madam Chair, who I respect far more than some who simply choose to repeat and rewrite media releases from the government, in their editorial also note that these corporate tax cuts are a gamble.

Now, they give the Premier credit. They say that they give him credit for delivering on what he's pitched. Absolutely, it was in the campaign platform. They laid out what they were going to do. They've somewhat changed what they said about what the impacts of that would be, but let's give them credit. They told Albertans what they intended to do. But they go on to note that there is something that the Premier did not tell Albertans, that this plan is "a calculated gamble, with not insignificant risk."

They also go on to note that there are a number of complex and global factors that have impacted Alberta's economy. The realities of what we've experienced over the last four years, what we are facing now are not the simplistic narrative which the Premier and members of this government choose to continue to repeat. Again, Madam Chair, I recognize that for some of these members, they probably truly believe it. It is an article of faith. They honestly believe that it is what our government did that destroyed the economy and that by taking these steps, they are going to somehow restore it. As the editorial lays out:

Even if companies flock to Alberta, it's no sure bet that their outlays will offset billions in foregone tax income. If the gamble falls short, it's likely the money will be carved out of spending.

They conclude by stating:

Albertans desperate to revive the economy may be willing to try slashing corporate taxes but it's likely they don't want to subsidize business with drastic cuts to health care, education, infrastructure spending and other public services – of the kind Albertans saw during the time of Klein's "Alberta Advantage."

That is why, Madam Chair, I would like to bring forward an amendment. If we are going to take this risky gamble, if this

government wants to put Albertans' public services on the table and hope that they're going to hit it big, then at least let's be a bit more measured about how big of a pot we put out there. Let's maybe hold a little something back to protect the people of Alberta. I have an amendment I would like to introduce that will do just that. We have the original and the copies, and I'll wait for the original copy to reach you. I'll give you the opportunity to view it, and then I'll go into a bit more on the specifics of how we can perhaps protect Albertans a little bit.

**The Chair:** Hold on, Member. Just wait till we have the amendment, and then we'll let you speak about it.

This will be known as amendment A1. Please proceed.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you. I recognize that my time is growing short, so I'll quickly read this into the record. I move that Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, be amended as follows. Section 2(b) is amended by striking out the proposed section 21(t) and substituting the following:

- (t) beginning after December 31, 2019 is 10% of the amount taxable in Alberta for the year

and by striking out the proposed section 21(v) to (y).

Section 3 is amended in clause (b) in the proposed section 22(2.1297)(c) by striking out "and before January 1, 2021" and by striking out the proposed subsections (2.1298) and (2.1299); and in clause (c) by striking out " (2.1295), (2.1296), (2.1297), (2.1298) and (2.1299)" and substituting " (2.1295), (2.1296), and (2.1297)".

In other words, we would hold at the end of this year at 10 per cent. Let's not put all of Alberta's opportunity on the table. Let's be prudent gamblers. Let us put out half the pot and give this government the opportunity to demonstrate to us what a successful venture that is, to demonstrate to all Albertans indeed that they are putting forward an effective proposal. Indeed, perhaps we won't see the full 55,000 jobs they promise, but perhaps with a 2 per cent cut we will see half of that. They can at least then demonstrate to Albertans that the gamble they wish to take is a valid one that will deliver.

This government has nothing to be afraid of. They will have ample opportunity within the next three years, after they have demonstrated the success of this tax cut, to come back and lower it further. All we are asking is that they show their due diligence and take the opportunity to demonstrate to Albertans how successful this proposal will be, a simple test of that tenet of faith, Madam Chair. We have the opportunity to prove that this invisible hand of the market, in fact, exists and, if trained as well as they claim it is, will respond in kind and will not in fact bite the province that feeds it. As I said, this is a significant gamble for the people of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, and thank you for the opportunity to speak. I imagine we're speaking to the amendment right now. I couldn't quite hear you. Sorry, Madam Chair; are we on the amendment, then?

**The Chair:** Yeah.

11:50 p.m.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Okay. Thank you.

I just wanted to talk about a few things. My husband and my son just got home about 15 minutes ago from our small business that actually functions and is successful because of the multiple

corporations that have multiple jobs that contribute to the economy in the area where I live and contribute to the success of our small business. We wouldn't have a successful business if it wasn't for the corporations that have created the jobs in the area that I live in, in Chestermere-Strathmore.

A big shout-out to these folks who have multiple small businesses in these areas. They're super philanthropic and incredibly, incredibly savvy small-business people. In fact, the growth in that area – we're seeing, because of the momentum and excitement and changes in government, that people are really excited about investing, and small business has a direct impact. How it does, how it functions, how it works is directly related to the economic well-being and health of your corporations. All of those things work together. If you consider where we are with building roads in this province and building schools and the infrastructure that is needed in order to live the way that we do in this province, the lifestyle and the way that we all expect to live, nobody in this House should be condemning any sort of business at any time, ever.

We are built in this province out of so many different things, so many bits and pieces. It's a huge fabric. It's a tapestry of a lot of different things. A lot of farms would be deemed corporations because of the number of people that they employ, the types of businesses that they do. Many farms, actually, have multiple sides to their businesses and are under that umbrella of corporation. I would love to understand how those farms, farming communities, stockyards, all of those places, would feel right now knowing that members in this House have basically said that corporations are no good and are greedy. I would really love to understand how they would feel. I'm excited, actually, to reach out to the larger farms and stockyards. Strathmore is full of stockyards and large areas that would be considered corporations by the definition that was given by the member from Meadowlark.

These are families that I know and people who are humongous contributors to their local economies, the local people who own a car wash like I own. Those people come and wash all their large vehicles and trucks and everything in my little car wash, which would not exist if those large corporations didn't exist around me to make my business successful. So I am actually very grateful, extremely so.

We were talking about the variations in tax cuts and what it is and why we want to go to 8 per cent. Well, folks, we're still in a recession. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition was just saying two days ago during question period that we could be heading to another recession. Those were her words. Then, on top of that, when you look at the numbers, this is exactly when you'd want to do a corporate tax cut, when you are in a recession. When there is an issue with the health of the economy, that's actually exactly when you'd want to do something like that because this is about actually attracting new business to our province. Unfortunately, what the opposition keeps forgetting is that everything that they did made corporations flee to other provinces.

Oh, and I feel, actually, like I need to give a small shout-out to the folks of North Dakota and stand up for them a little bit. I actually don't have any family or friends in North Dakota, but suddenly they became the beating stick of the opposition tonight. It was very interesting. I'm not sure what North Dakota ever did to you, Member. Anyway, I hope that they come and invest here because we're going to be open for business. So yea for North Dakota: come and see us. [interjection] It might offend the opposition a little bit, and I'm not quite sure what their problem is.

I actually feel that this province has so much to offer if you think about all of the incredible things that are here. Take, for example, the film tax credit that we're looking at. That film tax credit is going



to employ a ton of people that actually are coming from larger corporations: construction workers, electricians, all sorts of people that are actually presently employed in large corporations that might be able to do a diversified type of job in a really, really interesting and growing business opportunity. But you can't attract those types of things here without having multiple styles of businesses. It is actually a really collaborative piece between large corporations, small business, and everything else that goes into this. It's a beautiful mix, actually.

What we're trying to do is stimulate the ability to bring more people into the province, and hopefully, with the ability of actually bringing those folks here, not only will we attract large corporations but all of those small businesses that want to open up, all those entrepreneurs, all of those little businesses that want to open up. In Chestermere every other house has a hair salon or a lawn mowing business or anything like that. These are all little businesses, but guess whose lawns they mow? They mow the lawns of people that have large corporations, that are hiring them to come and do their job. It's quite incredible. Honestly, with all my heart, this is about looking at where we're at right now and during this time when we have an economic downturn to stimulate folks coming back to this province to make sure that not just the large corporations but all these other little businesses can grow as well.

For those of us on this side of the House that sign the cheques all the time from our small, little businesses for the small number of people that we might employ every day, I am extremely grateful to the large corporations in this province that have brought all of the people into my area that support my small business, every one of those people that have been attracted to this province. When you look at oil and gas, for example, hundreds of thousands of people, Madam Chair, came from all over the country and all over the world, actually, diverse groups of people sitting across from each other having a meal together, learning about each other, growing the diversity of our province, becoming friends, bringing our incredible resources out of the ground.

Then we have a government that comes in and says: "No. You know, we don't like oil and gas. We don't care about the industry." They align themselves with the Trudeau government to actually attack the industry, and then when we try to do something to actually attract those folks back, suddenly that's a bad idea even though those were the businesses that brought all of these people here who started all of the small businesses that are the heartbeat of this province. These are all these secondary and tertiary businesses that exist as a result of the large corporations that employed hundreds of thousands of people in this province, things that we should be grateful for. Unbelievably blessed to be in this province. To feel again this attack on business when, really, all of us consulted for 28 days just before April 16, every one of us at the doors, constant consultation, transparent ideas, nuanced policy that didn't overblow the idea or overstate what we're trying to do or pretend that it's something that it's not – it's an actual document that says what the potential growth is. What a wonderful opportunity.

Quite often when you're trying to attract people, it's based on the notion of hope and based on the notion that you have people that understand that hope, who know how to facilitate that and bring people in. It's not a divisive mentality. It's the idea of something better and something greater because we have faith in the incredible people that actually want to come to this province and function here.

My dad came in 1963 from India. He's a chemical engineer. You know, he went through several businesses, up and down, some large corporations he worked for, some of his own small businesses that he worked for. He is in oil and gas still. Even at this age – he's a

severe diabetic; he can't see anything – he still works on some projects because he's just a brilliant man, and people really appreciate his advice on some of the projects that he does.

*12:00 a.m.*

It's amazing to me that when I talked to him about the various businesses that he's been through, whether it was a large corporation or whether it was a small business, the impact that all of those businesses had – in fact, the large corporations that he worked for in oil and gas were the reason that he went to a small, private business, a little one. He was inspired by what these large companies could do, but he knew he could take his knowledge and everything he had learned there and create something incredible in a smaller engineering firm. He went from a place that employed thousands of people to he himself employing maybe a hundred at most at any given time. He was able to do that because he started in a place where it was a mortgage-paying job, something that he could do to raise his family and take care of people. He is forever grateful to those large corporations that took a chance on a young foreigner who came here with big ideas, just like so many Canadians come to be able to put their stake in the ground and make a difference in this beautiful province.

Do you know how many of those large corporations hire new Canadians? Think about it. We all have them in every one of our ridings. They're the first people to scoop up this incredible talent and say: "Come and work with us, and bring your family. You know, we have benefits for you. We'll take care of you." We have great schools here because the large companies actually, probably, helped build a rec centre in your area. So the next time you decide to criticize those large corporations, go inside each one of your rec centres and see who were the major donors there. Go in there and find out who put the money in to your swimming pool or your race track or any of those wonderful facilities that are in our areas and you ask yourself if you maybe shouldn't be attacking those folks because they're the ones who contribute in such a beautiful way to all of our communities. Not only that; they stimulate all of these other people to start these small businesses because there is this desire for competition and this desire to do a better version and to maybe even make it to the grand part of being your own large corporation. We've seen that happen here with small, little companies that suddenly took off and became these huge corporations that employ thousands of people.

I have to say that, like, the rhetoric around the attack on Albertans just needs to stop. Policy is one thing. Have at 'er. We have the responsibility to look at each other's policy, for sure. It's a really fair comment, and it's fair to be able to look at that. But the personal attacks and saying things like that, being of average ability, is a stretch. That kind of nonsensical behaviour and talking: we are much better than that in here. We have a lot of people in here who are all here for what they believe to be the right reasons. That kind of language and behaviour is not acceptable. Albertans heard you. We heard you, and I'm repeating it. Please, consider that every single human being in here is here for the right reasons, whatever the reasons are, Madam Chair, but that kind of rhetoric does nothing to build capacity, jobs, to elevate people, to make people want to come here to make sure that their government understands who they are at the core, gets them, understands how to inspire and make sure that we are out of the way so that these businesses can flourish.

I would suggest that, potentially, we could consider the policy versus the personal attacks. I think that that might be a better way to go.

As for the Member for Calgary-Hays, I would suggest that you're far above average, sir, and more than that, your working-stiff dad

makes all of us proud. We all have those dads. Thank you for your dad – my dad thanks you – and every other person who has a hard-working parent in here who probably helped get them to where they are right now, working in a job that may have been a small business or corporation, because we live in the best province in the world. I would suggest that we say thank you instead of attacking each other. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It was, I guess, interesting to hear. A lot of economists also kind of lecture about how we need to focus on policy.

A couple of things. I want to preface my remarks by saying that I'm not against any corporation – past, present, or future – so let's get that out of the way. Nothing against profit or North Dakota. I didn't go and live there, so that's out of the way as well. Also, when the Member for Calgary-Hays was speaking, it's the same election rhetoric: we are better at managing the economy; they are not. I think we need to move past that as well. We will not go on personal attacks or anything. Otherwise, I can say that the Member for Calgary-Hays said – and I paraphrase – that supports for persons with disabilities is just a giveaway. He said that those supports are giveaways, and he fails to see a \$4.5 billion tax break, the biggest in the history of this province, as a giveaway. That's shameful.

But I will talk about policy. I will talk about economics. I will not go there. In the last couple of months, I think the only notable incident in our economy was that the UCP got elected. I respect their mandate. They got elected. Let's get that out of the way. I'm not relitigating the election whatsoever. But where our economy was before the election: it's pretty much at the same place. What we are facing in our economy is that we do have enough product. If we talk about the energy sector, we do have enough product. We do have enough corporations that can pump more resources from the ground and that can create more products. The real issue we are facing is that we do not have takeaway capacity in our pipelines, we do not have new markets, and that's the objective reality of our province.

On that side we only hear one theory, that for the most part is trickle-down economics. My background is in economics; my undergrad was economics and my master's was in economics, so I can tell you that I know what I'm talking about. In all those years I never heard or read any theory that says that cutting corporate taxes generates jobs. There is no such theory in economics. You can prove me wrong. You can prove otherwise. The second thing is that there is no theory in economics that is absolute. Every single theory in economics has assumptions, and it's subject to the ground realities, the objective realities of the economy where they are applied. I will challenge you on that, too. If anybody wants to prove me wrong on that, sure. I would love to hear their arguments.

The ground realities, the objective conditions in Alberta are that we are blessed with a lot of resources, the second-largest resources on the entire globe. Whatever policy we bring forward, I think we can all agree on both sides of the House that our aim is that our province should be prosperous. There should be good, mortgage-paying jobs for all Albertans. It should create opportunity for everyone. It should create revenues so that we can support education, we can support health care, and we can support social services. I don't think there is any disagreement on that among the members of this House. I think we disagree on how we do it.

**12:10 a.m.**

All we hear from that side, again in economic terms, is trickle-down economics and supply-side economics. Theories which have failed in practice universally, across the globe. Trickle-down economics has failed. Even the World Bank and IMF: like, they are revisiting those theories. Henry Kissinger, who it can be said is the father of this kind of trickle-down economics, Reaganomics, those kind of things: even he thinks that we need to revisit trickle-down economics or supply-side economics. What, essentially, supply-side economics does is it encourages you to increase goods and services and lower corporate taxes.

In no way, shape, or manner will this tax break encourage any increase in our goods, for instance energy products. As I said, we already have the capacity to produce more. We have that capacity in the system without any new investment coming in. We have that production capacity. The crisis we are facing has bled off our takeaway capacity. And I do not see any link between this tax break and a pipeline getting built. I do not see that link. That is the reason, when we were in government, that we curtailed supply, because there was too much supply and there was not enough takeaway capacity. We curtailed it so we could get the differential down and get a reasonable price for our products.

The other, biggest problem with supply-side economics, the one that that side, the government side, is proposing, is that it always, always results in long-term deficits for the future economy. There are many examples that I can share. Like, the biggest one is from the United States. The United States has somewhere close to \$799 billion in debts, and after a huge tax break from this administration, the Trump administration, they saw a rise in their deficit. If the tax break was to work, they wouldn't see an increase in their deficit.

Deficit can come in many different forms. We had a 44-year regime here from the previous Conservative government. We saw deficits. They will say: we balanced the books. But the books were balanced by leaving deficits in our communities. The Member for Calgary-Hays would know that between 2008 and 2013 there was not a single school built in Calgary. Not one school built in Calgary between 2008 and 2013: that's a fact. From 2015 to 2019 we invested in 244 new or modernized schools. Those were the deficits that were left during the previous Conservative government, and that's what supply-side economics does.

On the other hand, I think there is another theory, called demand-side economics, that encourages that we increase consumer demand. How you do it is that you increase the wealth of those who would purchase goods and services from the economy. One example is that we promised in 2015 that we would increase the minimum wage, and that certainly increases the wealth for people who can purchase goods and services from the economy. The reason that demand side works better is that nobody who is making \$15 will have an offshore account. Every single cent they get, they will spend into the economy. I can say that from a theoretical point of view, and I can also share that because I worked for minimum wage from 2004 till 2012, until I started practising law. Every time I got a 50-cent or a dollar increase – I never had an extra account somewhere else – that was going right back into the economy. Those kinds of investments from the demand side do encourage economic activity, do recycle that money into the economy, and that economic activity then generates, I guess, conditions for economic growth and development.

Sure, it has its own flaws. It may cause a little bit of inflation, but at the end of the day I think there is more economic evidence that demand-side economics in the long run is better for the society because it also encourages discretionary spending. It also

encourages spending into infrastructure and all those things, which we have been doing. Anybody who created wealth in this province: they didn't do it on their own. I'm getting this from a U.S. Senator who said something to the effect that those who made money here made money because public money was invested in schools, public money was invested in infrastructure, and public money was invested in hospitals, in all those roads, bridges that everybody enjoys, that corporate citizens, individuals other than corporations, all use. So nobody became rich on their own. It's, I guess, a shared kind of effort that helps generate wealth, that helps generate profit. Nobody creates profits on their own.

If we look at this tax break in perspective now, it's not helping us with the objectives. It's not helping us with job creation. It is not helping us in any way, shape, or manner with the objective realities our economy is facing. I represent a constituency which has the lowest average income in the entirety of Calgary. In the city of Calgary profiles that can be looked up as well. Certainly, people are looking for jobs. The jobs they are looking for: they need those jobs now. Here, just a half-hour ago, the Finance minister got up and said – and I'm paraphrasing – that this \$4.5 billion tax break will create jobs in '23-24.

I guess you talk about your mandate. People gave you a mandate because they thought we didn't create jobs and that you will create those jobs. Now, a month into your mandate, you're telling them that you will create jobs in 2023-24. So far, from other, I guess, proposals we have seen, bills we have seen, nothing is creating jobs. We didn't see it. Like, repealing the carbon tax: sure, that was the campaign promise. Albertans gave you that mandate. But, with that, there were 7,000-plus jobs. With that, there were many energy efficiency programs that were creating jobs across this province. What about those jobs? We have seen job loss, I think, because of these kinds of policies. Same thing with this corporate tax break. For any investment decision taxes are just one factor.

**12:20 a.m.**

There are many other factors that are at play. If somebody was to invest in Alberta at this point, in particular in oil and gas, I think that the first thing they will look at is: if they produce from Alberta, will they be able to sell it in Alberta? We are a small market. We will need other markets to sell those products. Do we have enough pipelines, enough means to get those products to markets? So far we are still waiting for TMX. We signed up a deal to transport 125,000 barrels a day while we are waiting for the TMX. What is the government doing? They cancelled that rail deal, that would have helped Alberta's economy by creating 125,000-barrel-per-day capacity.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

What did they do? They did exactly the opposite. They created, I guess, more issues by cancelling that because now we are even more short of takeaway capacity than we otherwise would be if we had that 125,000 barrels. That would have helped. That would have certainly attracted some investment. People would know that while we are waiting for a pipeline, we have some other means, that we can transport the products and sell them somewhere in other markets. These decisions are also not helping us find other markets because investors will only come and invest when they know that they can transport it somewhere, they can sell it somewhere. This decision is not helping us transport it anywhere or sell this oil product anywhere.

Another example. My colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar was talking about the Amazon bid, another business. One thing that was apparent from that bid was that we need to focus on tech

infrastructure that can support tech companies, tech giants like Amazon. No amount of tax breaks would have convinced them to locate in Alberta, the reason being that they didn't have that needed tech infrastructure. The solution to that was not to cut taxes; the solution to that was to invest in tech infrastructure. That's why we created those positions, those spots across all postsecondary institutions across this province. That would help us become competitive should any opportunities arise down the road. For some company who wants to relocate to Alberta, they will have that tech infrastructure. They will have that labour force that they need to support their operations.

Again, I think that no economist will agree that this tax break, subject to Alberta's specific economic conditions, will help Alberta in any way, shape, or manner. The Minister of Finance clearly understands it. He knows that it won't create any jobs till '23-24 or bring any investment. All those estimates that he presented were down the road three or four years. Albertans were looking for action right now. If we leave the campaign rhetoric, I think we would have been better off having those rail deals in place so that we have more takeaway capacity, and we need to focus on getting TMX built. This side of the House has put a lot of work into that, and we certainly hope that we will get a favourable decision. That certainly will help us.

But giving a tax break in the hope that that money will be invested back into the economy: I think government has no control on corporate profits. It's a free market, and you are champions of free market.

**The Deputy Chair:** I saw the hon. Minister of Transportation jump up.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise on this amendment. There's a lot said here today that needs to be sorted out. What was interesting is that the hon. member just talked more about economics than the previous Finance minister did in four years. We asked economic questions of the former Finance minister, and the best we got was the answer that beer is good. Perhaps there is a misalignment in the previous cabinet because the minister there certainly made a mess of the children-in-care file to the point where he had to get fired and a new minister was appointed. [interjections] Mr. Chair, I can hardly hear myself. But here's what's also interesting.

**The Deputy Chair:** I would just quickly interject and mention that in these proceedings every member has the opportunity to speak; therefore, if members have interest in speaking, then it might be more productive to ensure that those who are speaking are heard by the House.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I didn't agree with much of what the previous member said, but I listened to it. I would hope for the same courtesy.

Now, Mr. Chair, what's interesting about this is that the previous speaker – he actually talked a little bit about economics which is, again, kind of interesting and quite a departure from what the previous Finance minister ever did over four years – spent the entire time on his feet arguing against a corporate tax decrease when, at the same time, the amendment by his teammate on the floor is for, wait for it, a corporate tax decrease. The folks on the other side won't even listen to their own members, let alone us on this side. There have been quite a few examples of them not listening to what's going on tonight, and I'd like to correct a couple of those things.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar mischaracterized my remarks. I don't know whether he did it on purpose or not, but he

surely mischaracterized them. He took it upon himself to say that I claimed that corporations were the best citizens. No. I actually was quite clear I think, but I'll say it again in a little more detail to make sure, in case I wasn't clear enough the first time.

I was referring specifically to a small set of corporations that didn't operate in Alberta yet chose to pay their taxes here. Now they, of course, since they didn't have people working here, didn't depend upon the health care system or the education system and the social services. What's good about them, that makes them good economic citizens, is that they provide money for people who need those things. That was my point. Maybe I didn't say it well enough. I'll give the hon. member the benefit of the doubt. I thought I was clear. But my point was: corporations serve people when we let them pay taxes, we let them make profit and pay taxes and help pay for education and health care and social services and schools and roads and hospitals and things that matter to the people that we serve as Albertans. That's one point. That's, I would say, either a mischaracterization or a misstatement made by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar that I'm just happy to correct.

The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford chose to take out of context something else that I said. He said that – I have it written down here. Where is it here? Oh, I know what it was: that one of the reasons that we might want to try lowering the corporate tax is because the previous government actually collected less money after raising the corporate tax. I don't remember saying that that was the only thing they did. The previous government did lots of other things that hurt business and caused them to regret it. The carbon tax hurt business. The minimum wage increase hurt business. The red tape that they added hurt business.

There were lots of other things, but of course, Mr. Chair, the bill that we're on is specifically about the corporate tax, so I surely did emphasize that because that was on topic, because that is what the bill is, what we're talking about now, the open-for-business, job-creation tax cut bill. I surely did emphasize that because that is the name of the bill, but I never said that that was the only thing the previous government did to mess up the success of corporations. They did a lot more things to harm corporations than just the one thing. So I would correct that thing, that remark that was made by some of the previous speakers.

*12:30 a.m.*

Now, Mr. Chair, I also found it interesting that the previous speaker, the one with the economics degrees, was concerned about deficits, about creating deficits. He spoke as if deficits were bad, and I would say to that, "This just in," because for the previous four years the previous government didn't seem to be concerned about deficits. They seemed to be quite proud of spending as much as they could without paying down dollar one on the debt, yet today we hear a revelation from one of the members opposite that they're concerned about the deficit. We'll just be grateful that there is some learning going on. I think we could all take from that example and do some learning in this House because I would say that all of us can learn. All of us could learn yesterday, all of us could learn today, and all of us will surely be able to learn tomorrow. Tonight we saw a wonderful example of some learning that has taken place, with the concern about deficits.

Mr. Chair, speaking of learning, on the amendment that's here, the hon. member from the opposition that moved it is actually proposing taking the corporate tax rate from 12 per cent down to 10 per cent, which is what they thought was wrong four years ago, and they raised it up by 20 per cent, to 12 per cent. The fact that this amendment actually reverses the main piece of the government's platform in the previous four years perhaps is an indication that more learning is going on. Thank you, hon. members, although it

was probably painful admitting that your policy was incorrect. I say that, and the evidence that I use is what I'm holding in my hand, which I don't think counts as a prop by the standing orders because it is the actual amendment, that we're all supposed to have, that we're debating right now.

There's some evidence of some learning and some evidence that the opposition is starting to acknowledge that they've made a mess of the economics of this province in the previous four years because the amendment today actually would take the province of Alberta back to where it was before the NDP got their hands on the economy and gave it a heck of a shake and made a real mess out of it, leading us to approximately a \$60 billion debt, heading for \$100 billion, with almost \$2 billion in interest payments now due, just a real bad situation for Albertans, that we're trying to straighten out.

Now, Mr. Chair, the big difference between this amendment, as I understand it, and what is in the job-creation tax cut is that we want to take the corporate taxes down to 8 per cent. I think the hon. member making this amendment, while admitting that he and his previous government were wrong, wants to only go halfway. Well, here's the problem with that. There are 180,000 people out of work. Youth unemployment is at an all-time high. I guess the analogy I will give you is that if I give you four minutes, or four years in the case of the previous government, to tie knots in a shoelace, it will take me more than four minutes to untie those knots in the shoelace. I think that in general terms that is true. The previous government spent four years tying a knot in Alberta's economy, driving out jobs and investment and opportunity for young people and the bright future that young people used to look forward to.

I believe that with good policies it will take our government more than four years to undo the knots they put in Alberta's economy, which, I think, is why we need to go with where we're going with the job-creation tax cut, down to 8 per cent. This economy needs a big boost now to bring back some of the investments and jobs and opportunities that the previous government's policies ran out of here at such a horrendous rate in the last four years. I think we're going to have to try harder than just going back to what was a good policy. I think we're going to have to work real hard to bring that investment back.

That's the whole idea. The whole idea is to get Albertans back to work and provide them with jobs because that's what Albertans told us in the election that they wanted. They wanted to be self-reliant. They would prefer to make their own money and support their own family over being put out of work by the NDP government policies. They would actually prefer to pay their own way. To allow Albertans to do what they want to do, which is to work hard and pay their own way and make their own living, we're going to have to bring back some of those job opportunities. That starts with investment. That starts with corporations choosing to relocate to Alberta, and we have room for them, Mr. Chair.

The city of Calgary, I hope, will be happy. I haven't heard from them directly – I could even be wrong – but let me say this. I think they should be happy about this and probably the city of Edmonton, and the reason why is because 30 per cent of the offices in those towers downtown are empty. And who was in those 30 per cent of offices? Corporations driven out of Alberta by NDP policies in the last four years. Now the city of Calgary has got a big property tax problem because the property taxes paid by the 30 per cent of all of those office towers downtown are no longer being paid. The city is now looking at solutions, and I think they're finding out now that spreading that tax rate out on the other businesses is going to cause a knock-on effect that could cause potentially hundreds or thousands of other businesses not to be able to afford their taxes, and that could make the problem worse.

That's in direct contrast to what the Opposition House Leader said, that a few extra thousand dollars a month just means that maybe they need to manage their business better. I think that businesses in Calgary are finding out that it's a matter of survival. Frankly, that's kind of a crass way to look at it, to say that businesses could easily pay a few thousand extra dollars a month. It's easy, Mr. Chair, to talk about somebody else's few thousand dollars a month when you're not talking about your own few thousand dollars a month. I would suggest to the Opposition House Leader that if we were to cut any of our wages in here by a few thousand dollars a month or any Albertan's wages by a few thousand dollars a month, they would notice it. Many wouldn't be able to pay their rent or their mortgage and buy groceries for their families.

To take that kind of a crass attitude towards businesses, that they should just pay a few extra thousand dollars a month and they shouldn't notice it, is very negative indeed, which is why we need to create an atmosphere where businesses are welcome to come back, welcome to come back with investment, welcome to pay rent in those office towers in Calgary and Edmonton, welcome to bring back the oil rigs to put people in rural Alberta back to work servicing those rigs and then have people shop in the grocery stores and the flower shops and stay in the motels and keep the businesses going in rural and urban Alberta all across this province.

It's about bringing back the investment and the jobs. That's why we're doing this. That's our reason. That's what we told Albertans, and that's in our platform in black and white. I can understand that the NDP folks don't like it and want us to leave the knots in the shoelaces, through this amendment, longer than they should be there, but we actually have a mandate from Albertans to work faster than that, to get the economic knots out of Alberta's economic shoelaces faster than just going back to what was there. The previous government's policies did so much damage that we actually have to work harder to bring back those businesses, those corporations, those jobs, those opportunities, and that bright future for Alberta's young people, and that is what this is intended to do.

So, Mr. Chair, I don't think you will be surprised – I don't think anybody in this room will be surprised – that I will not be supporting this amendment. I will be very slow to take advice from the NDP on economics despite the fact that the previous speaker has degrees. I respect the fact that he has economic degrees, but the government he was part of botched the job on the economy, and they botched it badly.

But you know who we will take advice from? Experts, experts like Bev Dahlby, Jack Mintz, and others. When the other previous member from the other side, including the one that moved this amendment here, talked about, "There's no guarantee" – I appreciate that predicting the future is a tricky business. I've always said that if I could predict the future, I would be a lot more wealthy than I am today, and I think that might be true of all of us. So while we can't predict the future, what we can do is take good advice from people that have studied the matter and ought to be experts. That's what we have done, and we have been transparent enough to tell the public who those experts are that we took the advice from.

Mr. Chair, we did consult. We consulted with Albertans for a year or two before the election. We consulted by putting online and making public an approximately 117-page policy document, including the policy to bring in place the job-creation tax cut which is before us. It's our intention, our job, and, I would dare say, our responsibility to keep our promise to Albertans to pass the job-creation tax cut because that's what we promised Albertans in black and white. That's what we said we'd do. That's what they voted for, and, by golly, if we have anything to do with it, that's a promise

made, and I believe, when this thing ends, that will be a promise kept.

12:40 a.m.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, everyone else, for your comments. Being one of the newest members here, I'm actually really honoured to hear this debate go this long and this many points of view taking place and also some of the comments about our friends, neighbours, and largest trading partner across that 49th parallel. We're talking about corporations and business and how we got here and pontifications about the pros and cons and the approaches. If I may, since everyone seems to have digressed a little bit and given a bit of a journey or a story of how they got here and what the relevance is, maybe I can do the same.

I came from a small farm out west of Chip Lake. We didn't have much. We worked for it. The lessons of working on that farm, understanding what was in that area: we worked for it. Through small business and opportunity at the age of 16 I managed to come to the city of champions, worked for a small paving company due to a connection that I made on that family farm. That connection had a gravel truck that was working for small business, another one, that gave me a chance to be a labourer on a paving crew. I credit Mr. Rick Aubin and Mr. Al Brown for giving this farm kid, who didn't have any experience in his industry other than hard work: go do it. It wasn't long that I didn't work for minimum wage, that I actually gained experience. Those gentlemen invited me back every single year to come and work for them.

After that, I went on to college and ruined their plans because they wanted to make me a paving foreman. But I went to college, paid my way through that. Then – what do you know? – they gave me another advancement, another promotion, and again more experience. Then I went and worked for another corporation, another Alberta-owned company, called Ledcor Industrial. I ended up working for them on a diamond mine project in the middle of the territories, where more men and women took me under their wing, people like Brian Kienitz, Don Ellis, John Madsen, people that saw something in this farm kid who, again, wanted to work, learn more, get more experience.

In 2003 I ended up starting my own little company. I had an opportunity to work for companies such as EnCana. There are some names out there like Gwyn Morgan. Somebody may have heard of him. They had to take and move a lot of their business, being Cenovus, down to the States because – what do you know? – we didn't respect business enough. We poisoned the economy to where it was in that state, until a bunch of us had to step forward. I ended up moving from that company over to another small company in Edmonton called Enbridge. That company had a major footprint across North America.

And coming back to the comments to our good friends in Minot, North Dakota, some folks on this side, being to the left of me in the NDP group, asked what relevance North Dakota has. They have the Bakken oil field, which was a major play in that area. We had to build out a transshipment facility because their product was landlocked, which happened to be a major boom in the Bakken oil field play. We were transporting that oil across the line into Estevan, Saskatchewan, to get it to a pipeline system to move it down to Superior, Wisconsin. Because of this land lock situation we then had to go and build a transshipment facility down in Eddystone, Pennsylvania, to receive that oil.

When the members are talking about transshipment facilities, oil capacity, rail capacity, and everything else, I'm not sure that they're aware of the full scope and the full breadth of how this system

works. I'm not sure that they understand that we're actually integrated with those partners across the States, that it isn't just us sitting on an island here. I find it very interesting that they're criticizing what we're presenting, what we brought in our platform, which we've seen as one of the key elements to help foster this economy, to bring that type of investment back, when they've actually protested against the same pipelines they were talking about building. I have heard lots of people in this room talk about building pipelines, but I have never seen one of these people out on a right-of-way across the footprint that I worked on proudly with those men and women, both in Canada and the U.S.

I'm going to drop another couple of names because these people are the ones that are actually in that industry, that support us and bring us along as Albertans across North America, working with our industries and with our partners. Leo Golden: there's a gentleman who has an economics degree. Tom Raptis: there's another gentleman with an economics degree. They happen to work for these major corporations. Al Monoco: he's the lead of that company. I met him down in Pennsylvania a few times talking about the efficacy of this project and how we were doing. Pat Daniels: there was another gentleman, with a very green thumb. He's the one that built most of the windmills and the power generation along that facility, including solar farms down in Ontario.

These corporations – we're talking about these alternate technologies – are the early adopters, before we even started talking about it. Again, their biggest output or biggest cost to running that system was electricity. They're the ones that manage those integrated systems. They're the ones that built the Montana tie line and also the 350 windmills sitting outside of Lethbridge.

Perhaps these other folks might start thinking a little broader before we start casting barbs. I do want to thank the members for Edmonton-City Centre and Calgary-McCall because these so far are the best dialogues and conversations that I've heard, that have had the most knowledge of the industry, and I find that those people are actually ones that I could potentially work with to do the right thing for Albertans, to bring across the attention to where it should be rather than wasting everyone's tax dollars talking about the consequences to business while we keep the lights on all night long. This is on camera, and I hope people are paying attention to it. This is how your tax dollars are being spent right now. And I am looking at you, sir. I am looking at you. This is what we're actually spending our dollars on, talking about the reasons and rationale of why we're here.

We're here to get business working. We're here to get the jobs going. We shouldn't be arguing about who's the best one for serving that, the person that works for the company or the person who started the company, because – guaranteed, folks – the Alberta advantage and the way that we do our business is that you start at that end, you build your own, and that's the dream. That keeps the things going. We all want the same outcome; we all want the same effect. We're arguing over the minutiae and the details.

So I support the bill, obviously, and unfortunately I don't support the amendment that was offered by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre although I do respect his speech on it, and I do respect your speech, sir. This is the type of stuff we should be spending our dollars on, and this is what the Alberta people expect of us, and I'm not going to waste a shot clock because, again, the way I look at it, being that farm kid that came up through business, I'm on the hour, and I want to make sure the people are getting their value.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that was something really interesting here. Really, I have to say that it's my pleasure to be here with you and with all members tonight because we are here doing our jobs, that we were duly elected by Albertans for. If the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland feels that he doesn't need to do his job because he can just go home and enjoy the rest of his evening, then maybe he should. Maybe he should leave it to the rest of the legislators, who think it's important that we spend our time debating the bills and amendments that we've been asked to do and sent here to do by our constituents. Maybe he should leave that important work to us.

Mr. Chair, I think it's something that is really interesting to see, the amendment here tonight. The bill is something that I think is commendable in the sense that the intent of trying to create new jobs is very commendable. I do need to commend the government for that. I mean, it's something that, I think, when we were in government, we tried very hard to do. We tried to support our industry and tried to create new jobs.

But I think what the amendment here speaks to tonight is something equally important. It's making sure that we get it right, and it's making sure that we don't mess this up, because this is legislation. It's what is going to become the law of the land. We're taking a pretty big gamble, and we're taking a pretty big risk. I mean, honestly, we're taking a 4 and a half billion dollar risk. Mr. Chair, through you, a 4 and a half billion dollar risk is, honestly, going to pay for a lot of schools, hospitals, health care, roads, and services that are very important.

So I think that the amendment being brought forward here today is very reasonable. It's something that says: maybe we should hedge our bets. This Assembly meets twice a year for a few weeks every few months here, and, Mr. Chair, if we determine that the gamble pays off – and I do hope it does. I hope that the government accomplishes their goal of creating new jobs because that is what we were all sent here to do. We were all sent here to try and do our best for our constituents.

**12:50 a.m.**

That's why we're up debating this at this hour, because we want to make sure that we get this right the first time. So if they can show that it works by first implementing it in part and if in part we can see that this amendment slows down the process, we as legislators can always come back, Mr. Chair, and make that change again. We can always come back and have that vote and have that debate through the fullness of this House, through the fullness of this Assembly, and move forward and have that debate.

I think that is something that we should expect of MLAs. We should expect our MLAs to want to come here and debate whether the policies that we have implemented have worked or not. If the government thinks that maybe that's not so important and they're going to get it right the first time every single time, well, Mr. Chair – I'm sorry to say that I don't have that much experience; we were only here for four years before – let me tell you that you don't definitely get it right every single time. You definitely don't get it right the first time every time. That's something that I'm afraid the government is going to learn sooner rather than later.

I'm afraid we're just trying to offer some really important advice here, and it's to take baby steps. Just make sure you go and you get it right. Go out and do some consultation. Don't rush into it. Let's talk about the issues and make sure we look at where it has been done in other jurisdictions.

We saw this done. I mean, right now in the United States, Mr. Chair, we see President Trump cutting corporate taxes from 35 per cent to 21 per cent. The President had stated that AT&T would create 7,000 new jobs. That's something very similar to what we're

hearing from the government side. I mean, the cut that the government is proposing is quite a bit larger in taxes. Really, what we've seen, actually, is that AT&T didn't create those 7,000 new jobs after those cuts. What they did is that they cut 23,000 jobs. There were 23,000 jobs lost after the tax cut was implemented in the United States. That's very concerning to me, and that's one of the unintended consequences I think this bill may have.

That's why I think this amendment is really important. It's something that allows us to go forward and say: "Let's start and see if it works. If it does, then we'll keep moving with it, and if it doesn't, let's back off. Let's take our foot off the gas and decide how we want to change our minds and how we want to move differently." That's, I think, what legislators are sent here to do, to make sure we're making informed decisions and that when we do make those decisions, we move forward in responsible ways.

Mr. Chair, again, it's really my pleasure to be here at this hour because I think it's important that Albertans know that we are spending the time to get this right. It's important that they know that we are willing to be here, that we are willing to burn the midnight oil to ensure that we get this right. If members opposite think that it's not important to get it right and if they just want to vote this through in three days, well, I think that's actually a shame. I think it's something that is really disappointing because I thought that we were all sent here to do the same job, which is to make Alberta better.

I thought we were sent here to work hard and make sure we got good legislation through this House and that we were willing to come here and debate the legislation, hence us being parliamentarians, Mr. Chair. Being parliamentarians, I think it's very important that we do spend the time here in this Assembly. That's why the standing orders permit us to spend the time in this Assembly. That's why the standing orders permit us to go and have the fulsomeness of debate here in Committee of the Whole today and to bring forward amendments like this. I think that it's very important that amendments are brought forward and debated in this House. I think that if the government so chooses and decides that they want to do it at almost 1 o'clock in the morning because they don't want Albertans to be able to see it on their TVs, that's the government's prerogative, but it's very important that we are here. It's very important that we are debating this.

I know that members of the government, especially when they were in opposition, were definitely people who brought forward many amendments in Committee of the Whole. In Committee of the Whole this is the opportunity to make sure we get those nitty-gritty details right. Those nitty-gritty details today, Mr. Chair, are looking at whether we want to move so quickly and so recklessly with a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to friends and donors of the government bench. I think that's something we need to be very careful about, because if it works, that will be one of the best investments that this government has made in a generation. But if it doesn't work, if by chance we get it wrong, I have to see that the government bench will admit that there's a chance that we can get this wrong unless they have a crystal ball that they're hiding in the lounge that I haven't seen yet. I wish I'd had that crystal ball a few years ago. But if they do have that crystal ball, then I would suggest that they should table it so that all members could have the benefit of being able to have the foresight to make the best legislation possible.

Mr. Chair, what we really need to do today is slow down. We need to look at the legislation and say: what are the first steps we should take? The first step is an incremental implementation of their plan here. We should look at it and say: what parts are important, and what parts are going to work? Then we should come back and review if they have worked. We know that this

Assembly will meet again in the fall. We know that there has to be a budget in the fall. We know that the Assembly will again meet in the spring of next year. We know that the Assembly at all of those times will certainly have the opportunity to bring back legislation like this again.

If members of the government really believe in being responsible, if they really believe in getting legislation right, and if they really believe that Albertans deserve to have the best possible legislation, then they would certainly give due consideration and indeed perhaps vote for this amendment. It's something that I think is very important, that we don't move recklessly. That's something that I think members of the government bench spoke to at quite great length while they were in opposition here. Something they spoke quite extensively about was that if you move too quickly on things, it is reckless and dangerous and can damage the economy in unexpected ways. This is one of those things where, if we move too quickly, it is reckless and dangerous and can damage the economy in unexpected ways.

When we move on risky ideologies like this that are untested and when they are tested, like in the Kansas experiment, and we actually see growth slowing down in jurisdictions that implemented policies like this, that's very concerning, Mr. Chair. It's very concerning that when we do test these things, it doesn't work. When we play with these risky, ideological experiments here in Alberta – and the government has the prerogative to do that. The government has the prerogative to implement their risky agenda. They have the prerogative to implement their ideology. That's what they want to do tonight, and that's totally fair for them. But if they want to implement their risky, ideological change, then we should at least test it out. Any good scientist would tell you that.

**The Deputy Chair:** Happy birthday to the Member for Morinville-St. Albert.

I will also take this as a quick opportunity to just mention that in the House the idea, for the most part, is for people to take a seat. In this situation you don't have to take your own seat. I should mention that I've seen this on both sides. If there are individuals that are looking to ensure that this kind of thing is enforced, just understand that it seems to be something that has been kind of in a bipartisan fashion.

Please continue, hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the hon. Minister of Health for his interjection, because it becomes very clear that the hon. minister would rather make jokes than do his job here in the Assembly and focus on the legislation we are trying to move forward. It becomes clear that he really doesn't care about the implications of what we are trying to do here. It becomes clear that the minister really doesn't think the legislation or the amendment is important, and I think that's a shame. I think it's a shame that the minister would get up and try to make a mockery of the process of legislation here, a mockery of democracy. That's something that all members should be deeply concerned about, that a member of their front bench would take the legislative process as a joke.

Mr. Chair, when we look at this and we see these risky ideologies being implemented across the United States and in other jurisdictions, we see it not work. When we see that the evidence points to it not working anywhere else, then when we're going to try and implement this risky ideology here, well, let's take those baby steps. Let's do what any good scientist would do. I worked on a science degree at the University of Alberta here. In sciences they always teach you: make sure that when you do your tests and experiments, you don't take your beaker and just sniff the entire thing right away. Let me tell you that I've definitely watched some

undergrads pass out from that. What you do is that you waft very lightly. You waft very lightly, and that's what you need to do when you take risky ideological experiments like this. You need to waft lightly. You need to take the steps, baby steps, and move in a slow, controlled manner so that we know that we won't be moving too quickly, in a way that could damage or make the hon. members across the way pass out. I think that would be something that would be a real shame here in the Chamber.

*1:00 a.m.*

It's something that I think is very, very important that we get right the first time. It's important that we get it right the first time because it's the lives of so many Albertans that are going to be at stake. It's the jobs of so many Albertans that are going to be at stake. It is this Assembly that is empowered – indeed, we have a duty, Mr. Chair – to make sure we get it right.

When we see members of the government and indeed members of the government front bench making a mockery of this process, I think it's something that we should all be very concerned about. We should be taking the time to take those baby steps, do the scientific work, and make sure we get it right the first time. I mean, when this is implemented, by 2022 Alberta's combined federal and provincial business tax rate would be lower than that of 44 U.S. states, Mr. Chair. That is quite a significant amount. That is, by far, the vast majority of North America, and if we're going to be moving that radically and that quickly in this dangerous, unprecedented direction, this unprecedented, risky, ideological direction, we need to be very careful.

We need to make sure that we get it right the first time. We don't want to be coming back here in six months and deciding: "Wow. Shoot. We got it wrong. We've got to raise the tax rate again." I mean, the Finance minister, I'm sure, would be very embarrassed if he had to come back and discover that no new jobs were created as a result of his cut or if the economy did not grow as much as his cut was supposed to do.

We saw that happen in Kansas when Governor Brownback said that it would be a real, live experiment. They predicted all this big job creation, economic growth, higher revenues, all this exciting stuff that, honestly, I really hope we can bring here to Alberta, but what they got was the opposite. They got slower growth, revenue drops. They had to reduce school calendars, pull back on public services. I think that would be the shame, Mr. Chair. I don't want the Finance minister to be embarrassed, and I don't want the Finance minister to have to come back and admit that his tax cut, his giveaway to his friends and donors, wasn't going to work, isn't going to work.

I mean, we're trying to make sure that we can get this legislation right so that members of the government front bench – I know that perhaps they think that this is a joke and that legislation is a joke, but I want them to make sure they're not embarrassed. I want to make sure that they don't feel bad about this in a few months, Mr. Chair. It's something that I think is really important. Albertans are going to depend on us in this Chamber to get it right. They're going to depend on us in this Chamber to be debating this and to make sure we get it right.

That's why this amendment is so important. If we don't get it right, we can always take our foot off the gas. We can always take our foot off the gas and decide that we need to make changes in our direction. We will be back in this Assembly again, Mr. Chair, I assure you. Unless the members of the government have something they'd like to tell me that I don't know yet, I assure you that we will have more legislation in the fall. We will have more legislation next spring. If this works, then that would be the opportune time to come

back and start debating this again and show the numbers and table the numbers and show that this worked.

If the members of the government are so confident and so sure that this will work one hundred per cent, then they should be proud to do that. They should be proud to come back to this Assembly and debate this again in the fullness of this House and in the fullness of committee and in the readings, Mr. Chair, to make sure that they can show that the tax cut created the tens of thousands of jobs that they were talking about.

If they're not so confident that it will and if they're worried about bringing it back to the Assembly and having another debate around it, then perhaps that's exactly the reason we need to slow down a bit, that we need to take our foot off the gas, that we need to be careful. And if they're not willing to be careful, I think that's something that Albertans should be concerned about, Mr. Chair. It's something that we need to be very careful around. They need to know that government policy affects the lives of every single person in this province. We know that when you move rashly and too quickly with these things, it is dangerous. It is something that we see not working across jurisdictions and around the world, and that's something that's very concerning.

I mean, when you look at the American tax cuts again – I'll go back to their federal cuts, Mr. Chair – we can look at the limited impacts on wages and hiring. For example, a Just Capital survey of publicly traded companies found that 6 per cent of companies were increasing their wages and that only 18 per cent were going to create more jobs. I mean, half of those were only through one-time bonuses for those wage increases. That's not anywhere near the projected growth of the tax cut. So when we talk about giving away 4 and a half billion dollars of Albertans' money, that's something we need to be very careful about.

I know that the members of the government have friends and donors who – and I don't want to presume anything, Mr. Chair – they may or may not have promised these types of cuts and who they may or may not have received big support from for these types of cuts, but that is something that we need to take a closer look at, get it under the microscope and say, "Well, if it works, that's perfect," because I believe every single member of this Assembly would vote to reduce it if it worked.

But that's what we'll decide when we see the results in a year. When it comes back to the Assembly, if this amendment were passed, we'd be able to have the discussion and see how it was doing. That's something that the government should be excited to be able to do. They should be excited to be able to say: "Look, our bill worked. We created tens of thousands of new jobs. Let's go out there and show the world." They should be excited to do that and have this debate again in a year and every year after that, Mr. Chair, because this Assembly indeed will continue to meet, as far as I know, in perpetuity and perhaps, hopefully, longer than I will be in existence here in this province, because we know this province will be great for a long time.

Mr. Chair, what I want to see is that as we move forward, we get this right. When you give away 4 and a half billion dollars to the wealthiest 1 per cent and to your friends and donors, I want to make sure we're not putting at risk things like classrooms and hospitals. I want to make sure we're not going to have to gut our communities. I mean, if that is going to be the case, if it is going to increase revenues in some way after giving away 4 and a half billion dollars – I'll point out that the government's own platform actually did not project that they would have net positive revenues for many years – indeed, then, we'd be very happy to support something like this. But I'm concerned that a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway means thousands of teachers being cut, thousands of nurses being cut. It would mean that we would have simply not enough resources going



to the facilities that need it, going to the services that need it, right here for families in our communities.

I think it's very important that we move forward and have these discussions right now. I think it's very important that before we rush through this legislation, we have those discussions. I hope that members of the government benches and perhaps the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland would agree with me that it is very important that we do have these debates in the Assembly, that it is very important that we do get this right, and that it's very important, Mr. Chair, that we come here to do what we were elected to do. That's to debate legislation, and that's to make sure that the policy is right the first time.

Thank you very much. I encourage members to vote for this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members looking to speak on amendment A1 to Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act? I do believe that I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday rise, so he has the call.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It is an honour to rise this morning, bright and early. Happy to be here with all of you. You all look wonderful considering what time it is and how long we've all been here.

**Mr. Dang:** You always look wonderful.

**Mr. Carson:** Oh, thank you.

Yes. I'm very happy to rise on this reasoned amendment, of course once again finding the soft spot in the middle. It probably surprises no one that I disagree with the premise of the original bill, which is why, I suppose, I can agree with, once again, finding a middle space that, hopefully, we can all agree on. I think that we were all sent here to be able to reason with each other, to be able to work with each other, and I would love to be able to do that. Of course, I've been reminded several times, or it's been spoken of . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interject. I apologize. I just want to be clear that we are discussing an amendment to the clauses of the bill and not a reasoned amendment.

*1:10 a.m.*

**Mr. Carson:** Oh. Excuse me. To clarify: that amendment to the clauses of the bill. My apologies.

Let me go back one second here. We are reminded several times in this House every single day that your government has a large mandate, the biggest mandate in Alberta's history, but I don't think that should stop you from being able to find compromise where we can. Of course, when we were elected into government in 2015 under the leadership of Rachel Notley, we were elected on a platform that raised . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Excuse me. I apologize for interrupting the hon. member yet again.

**Mr. Carson:** Oh. Excuse me. I'm off to a great start here, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I believe that without even completing the sentence, you know that speaking about other members should probably be along the lines of "the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona." I believe that was who you were talking about.

**Mr. Carson:** Yes. That's correct. The Leader of the Official Opposition. My apologies.

Anyway, back to the point here. We were elected on raising corporate income taxes. It was a time when people were very concerned about, I suppose, the value that they were getting, and they felt that corporations should pay a little bit more to cover what we saw as a recession coming. Of course, that was one of the main reasons why an election was called a year early at that point, and citizens were rightly concerned that they wanted to have a government that was going to protect public services. I believe that that was, if not the main reason, one of the main reasons that we were elected into government in 2015.

Now, we come to a point where, of course, an election in 2019 had very different results. People were concerned, rightfully so. Over the last four years the price of oil has crashed, and it has hurt many families, families in my communities and families across the province. They wanted a change of government, and that is fair. That is the will of the people. Of course, not everyone voted in that direction, but many people did. Hence, we are here today.

I think it is fair, this amendment, finding a way to compromise once again. Now, the reason I support this amendment – and I think it's been laid out quite well by many of the members here today – is that we shouldn't move too fast. I have many concerns about what this means, the \$4.5 billion that we're going to take out of government coffers and hand over to corporations.

I think there are many other policies that I would prefer to see, one being the interactive digital media tax credit, that our government created over the last four years, another being the Alberta investor tax credit. All these credits give funds to corporations who, for one, can prove that they are creating jobs in Alberta, and I think that's a very important part. When we're talking about across-the-board cuts to corporate taxes, my main concern is: how are we going to prove that that money is staying here?

My other concern is: where is the money going to be spent? Is it going to be invested in the people, or is it going to be invested in things like automation and we'll actually see job losses in many instances? The discussion has been brought up several times this evening and over the course of the debate that stock buybacks were at an all-time high. The corporations in the United States: when President Trump decided to cut corporate taxes, many of those people did not invest those monies back into the people themselves but back into making more money for the stakeholders.

That's their right. I don't have a problem with businesses trying to make money. That is their role, just like the role of the government is, of course, to facilitate the ability for businesses to make money but also to facilitate regulations that protect people and also to make sure that businesses aren't taking advantage of people. I'm not assuming that that's happening in any instance. I have concerns when we talk about lowering the minimum wage, especially for youth, but when we talk about blowing a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget, as has been discussed several times over the course of this debate, no one has any real proof that this is going to work.

We've seen studies thrown back and forth from both sides of the House. We saw under the Stephen Harper government that these tax cuts made massive deficits, the largest deficits in Canada's history, I believe, and we really got nothing from it. I would prefer to see some accountability in how we're going to hand over taxpayer dollars. The people of Alberta have given our government the responsibility of investing their money, preferably into public services and not into massive tax cuts for the largest corporations in our province. But that is the will of this government.

Now, I would love to see, as I said, a review of this program to actually prove that the money is staying in our province, that the money is being invested in people and not in automation.

Automation is coming and, really, I hope that we have a discussion. I hope that the government has some plans around automation. That is going to be, besides climate change, one of the biggest market disruptors that we have to get a hold of over the next decade because we are going to see massive job losses. We thought the price of oil differential hurt us. Just wait for automation, because it is going to literally destroy certain industries and certain sectors, or at least the workers that work in those industries are going to see massive job losses. So I would love to see the government with some focus on that as well.

Now, just moving back to the amendment, once again, I think that we can agree that we're not going to agree, but I think that we can disagree without being disagreeable. I think that this amendment, once again, is a way to find some compromise. It doesn't sound like the government will be supporting it, but I hope that they do.

I imagine I will have more time to speak to the main bill and my concerns with giving away large amounts of money to corporations without any kind of understanding of getting something in return. Of course, we've heard unsubstantiated evidence, but we'll wait and see with that. I prefer to see tax credits that are proven to create jobs in our province, that there's an expectation that these corporations have to show their work at the end of the day.

Really, another program that a piece of this money could be invested in is the STEP program, once again, ensuring that students are getting employment, ensuring that the money is being spent where it should be. I hope that the government will support this amendment, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre for bringing it forward.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** I believe I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West standing to speak.

**Ms Phillips:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am very pleased to be at work at this hour, standing up for ordinary people. Indeed, urging some caution on a corporate tax cut of this magnitude, as this amendment proposes, is exactly the right kind of approach that might give some pause for a piece of public policy that comes with very little evidence and, in fact, evidence to the contrary that it would be effective. In fact, it's exactly that that was animating the hon. member moving this amendment forward. I believe he prefaced his comments that there is no way that, certainly, the governing side is going to agree with our position entirely, but what the hon. member was trying to do was ensure some level of deliberation and evidence-based decision-making, which is always a virtue in public policy.

I was curious. I've been following some of the conversation that has gone on in this Chamber at this hour around this amendment. One of the interesting things that I heard the Minister of Transportation talk about was sort of memory lane: let's go back down memory lane to the previous government. Okay. We can do that. Let's go down memory lane. It was that minister who was taking several runs at our economic record on this side. Sure, we can talk about how certain ministers, that is to say him, were the ministers responsible for the sky palace, that he sat around the cabinet table at a time when oil was \$100 a barrel, couldn't balance a budget, Mr. Chair, still ran deficits of some consequence, quite serious consequence. Oil was \$100 a barrel, and still no balanced budget, nothing coming from that side. That was the government that he served in. That's his economic record and, of course, the sky palace. That's certainly something to brag about.

**1:20 a.m.**

Mr. Chair, I've also heard a little bit of befuddled commentary about small business. Of course, the small business rate has been lowered by some 30 per cent. That happened in the 2016 budget. That was certainly something I heard from small business and I continue to hear from small business: that was a piece of public policy that did come with quite a bit of evidence that backed that policy, coming as it did as part of the reinvestment and revenue reinvestments of the price on carbon, which was, of course, a piece of public policy that is now prevailing in some 76 international jurisdictions.

The other thing I heard some commentary about was this idea that people on this side of the House are somehow insulting companies, and I found that very interesting as someone who sits in a caucus led by someone who stood on a stage with Canada's largest oil producers to announce a new phase to our approach to being competitive in a carbon-constrained future, in a future where climate change is real. Canada's largest oil producers stood with our government. Then something very strange happened, Mr. Chair. It happened when it was the Wildrose caucus and then it also happened with the new leader, and that is attacks on those very oil companies, those very job creators began to come from the Conservative side, from Conservative quarters, and in particular on Suncor, who employs some 12,500 Albertans – that doesn't include their associated contractors or their ownership stake in Syncrude – and some 10,000 employees at CNRL, who also stood on that stage that day. It was to the point where, you know, the media started to take notice of these attacks, at times quite sharp, quite pointed, at indeed some of Canada's largest employers, that were coming from the now Premier.

It was to the point that during the campaign there was an article by the CBC that indicated that "Alberta's UCP leader . . . says he won't take lessons from 'billionaire' oil CEOs" and that he then took runs at them, saying, "I know that from the comfort of the 40th floor C-suite of an executive office." It's easy to talk about these things, but – you know, these are just companies that are trying to make sure that they retain their competitiveness and are able to actually have a real and substantive conversation with international investors, and in particular institutional investors, who are asking about climate risk. This sort of arrogant "I will call [them] into the Premier's office," he said in this article in April by the CBC. "I'm not going to take lessons from [them]," he also said.

One of the experts that was called on for commentary in this article indicated, quote: having this direct attack against what are major employers, industry leaders, economic drivers strikes me as being inexplicable. The quote goes on: I'm a bit surprised that the leader apparently thinks he doesn't need them or doesn't need to respect them. That's an interesting contrast, Mr. Chair, to some of the professed rhetoric coming from the other side on who's on whose side. You know, I heard the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore talk about how she's grateful for the oil and gas sector, and so am I. This is how we put food on the table in this province, but clearly she diverges from her leader in that regard.

I also heard about better paying jobs as one of the rationales for corporate tax cuts and against taking a more precautionary and measured approach to this particular piece of public policy, and I thought that was interesting, Mr. Chair, because at the same time we are looking at driving down wages through scooping people's overtime or actually, literally taking \$2 an hour out of people's pockets.

Then I heard, certainly, people talk about economic growth. Certainly, again, just like my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford talked about, no one on this side disagrees with that in terms of

putting people to work and ensuring that we have a good investment climate in this province, that we are competitive, that we're diversified. Certainly, Alberta led the country in economic growth in 2017 and 2018, Mr. Chair. That's a sort of inconvenient fact, perhaps, for the folks on the other side.

But what's happening this year? Well, the Bank of Canada is forecasting pretty flat growth in Alberta and, in fact, is forecasting a drag on the entire Canadian economy due to the cuts to public services that are happening in the province of Ontario. The Conference Board of Canada isn't projecting a recession, contrary to one of the claims made earlier by the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore, the minister. That was incorrect. For the member's benefit and for the benefit of all members here, a recession is defined as two consecutive quarters of negative GDP growth. That's not where we're at yet. What the Conference Board of Canada actually reported on was that we are moving towards that negative growth because they had downgraded our growth forecast, as the Bank of Canada had.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The ATB, of course, cut our growth forecast in half recently, Madam Chair. That projection was also made at a time when some of the public policies that had been brought forward by the UCP could have been rolled into these forecasts. But they did not have the rosy view, certainly, of folks behind closed doors who generated the forecasts either for the platform or since. You know, the ATB flagged a number of risks, not the least of which is market access, which obviously is a key risk to the Alberta economy, which is why the line 3 delay again in Minnesota is so concerning.

ATB also put forward some fairly inconvenient facts, and I have to wonder if that was maybe too inconvenient for this government. I have to wonder about, perhaps, the fact that they have not projected robust economic growth in response to these tax cuts that have been proposed, that perhaps they'll take the Minister of Justice's advice, that he ran on, on privatizing 40 per cent of ATB, which I think would be quite a surprise to many members in this House's rural constituents, Madam Chair, and quite problematic for a number of rural communities where the ATB remains the only banking option or one of the only banking options and a very important one for rural development and growth.

So, you know, I hope that the government rejects the Minister of Justice's advice that we privatize ATB, just as the Minister of Justice rejected the now Premier's views on LGBT rights during the leadership race. They disagreed sharply.

Back to some of the evidence around these very Trump-style tax cuts that are being proposed. One of the reasons why the hon. member brought forward the amendment as he has, to urge some caution, is because the level of tax cuts is very similar to what we saw south of the border brought in by Mr. Trump. It certainly mirrors some of the sort of right-wing populist authoritarianism that is sweeping through western Europe and parts of the United States and, indeed, even parts of Asia at this point. We are seeing some of this sort of very radicalized, authoritarian politics take hold in the wake of Mr. Trump's victory, one that I know was celebrated by at least some of the members on the other side.

1:30 a.m.

You know, let's look at what happened after that very radical policy, brought forward by a very radical administration – this is an administration that certainly would make George W. Bush blush in terms of some of its extremely right-spectrum, authoritarian policies. The Congressional Research Service just put out a report very recently. This is one that we haven't talked about yet. Essentially, what they found was that annual growth was 2.9 per

cent in the year since the Trump tax cuts, which was the same as 2015, which was below the Congressional Budget Office forecast, that there have been \$1 trillion in stock buybacks. We've had this conversation about stock buybacks. Stock buybacks are a legitimate tool that many corporations, quite large ones, use. In this case, though, what it was used to do was to concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands.

Was there growth in wages? This was certainly the marketing technique at the time. This was how the policy was sold, and indeed it is how these economic growth forecasts and wage forecasts are the ways that the policy is being sold in this province, a very similar, Trump-like policy. Did that happen? Well, no. Wage growth was about 1.29 per cent, so essentially flat. The Congressional Research Service indicates that it is the same as it would have been otherwise.

Now, the policy itself generated 5 per cent or less, it is estimated, of the growth needed to offset the revenue loss. This is, again, one of the marketing techniques, one of the PR claims, one of the fact-free claims coming from the Trump administration, that has been peddled heavily by the government side as well. You know, it is up to them whether they want to copy the techniques and the use of truth and reason and facts and science that we see south of the border, if they want to replicate some of those attacks on our institutions, on our shared values, on what we know and what we know to be true. Certainly, they have not happened in the largest economy in the world, the claims around tax cuts that were made. What we have seen is a redistribution of wealth upwards, Madam Chair, and everyone else saw a pittance.

Now, I've heard as well a number of people cite the economist Bev Dahlby, which is interesting because Mr. Dahlby also authored a paper entitled 10 myths about carbon pricing, in support, a full-throated defence, if you will, Madam Chair, of carbon pricing, issued or authored by the same person who is now providing advice to the Minister of Finance and Executive Council and, I'm going to presume, all of government caucus on this matter of the overall fiscal picture. You know, some of the myths that Mr. Dahlby talks about are around jobs, wages, and that carbon pricing doesn't actually reduce emissions, all of these things I've heard from the other side. I think in this case perhaps they should listen to the expert that they are citing.

I've also heard them cite Jack Mintz. You know, I thought it was really interesting that Mr. Mintz was not on the blue-ribbon panel – I wonder if it has something to do with his full-throated endorsement of a PST – because Jack Mintz gets quoted all the time, but he didn't get to be on the blue-ribbon panel. I have to wonder if it's because he wanted to tie it up in a blue-ribbon PST, and that was a little bit too politically radioactive for the Premier's office.

Anyway, of course, Mr. Mintz is the source of the 55,000 jobs claim, which we don't see embedded in any other forecasts. Certainly, we don't see the evidence yet that any of that is happening. In fact, we've seen a number of indicators that things are getting worse, not better, since the election. We certainly don't see the levels of growth that we saw under our government in 2017 and 2018, when we led the country in economic growth, to review.

Now, it is true that the now Premier did campaign on a massive tax cut for the already wealthy. Absolutely. But where he wasn't as straight was on the consequences of that, and there was no quarter given to anyone who might suggest that health care, education, seniors' care, child care, any of these important services might be at risk. Oh, no, no, no. But we are already seeing that this is going to be the case, that there is no magic in a budget,

and when one cuts revenue, then one must take action on the expenditures side as well.

What this means for communities is that if they do need new schools, they will not get them. If there are new students entering grade 1, they will not have a new teacher. Communities like mine, that need to replace a 60-year-old bridge, may be out of luck. I don't know. For communities like mine, where there's a \$10 million new investment in a new assisted living facility over on the west side, the first one on the west side of Lethbridge, it may not happen. It may not. Increases to FCSS that are desperately needed by the city of Lethbridge may not happen. Any of the programs that support the arts: the arts is an incredibly important sector in Lethbridge. Lots of roots musicians, country musicians live there, even moved there in order to live there. Certainly, my riding is in need of new schools, Madam Chair.

That is why one might urge caution in order to find ways to pay . . .

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak on this amendment to Bill 3, as brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I was quite encouraged, really, to see this amendment, you know, in the spirit of looking for a practical compromise in order to do its best for Albertans. It's standard operating procedure to look for amendments to government bills. I think that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has captured the spirit of compromise quite effectively here with this amendment. I should be interested in considering to support it with some constructively critical analysis.

I think that what we do here in the Legislature is to look for ways by which we can help to backstop and support the economy and to provide regulation and stimulation for economic growth. Certainly, the tax rate is an important mechanism by which we can help to achieve that, but it's a very powerful, Madam Chair, mechanism as well, so you have to be very careful in how you use it. Certainly, adjustments, small adjustments up or down, in taxation rates are a normal course of action. What is not a normal course of action is to swing it around wildly, with massive changes either up or down in the tax rate, that can have serious consequences for planning and for the money supply, quite frankly, in an economy.

*1:40 a.m.*

When we've seen other jurisdictions around the world make substantial and swift reductions to corporate income tax, it creates a very volatile situation, where quite literally, as in the United States, for example, you have billions of dollars that end up getting stranded or, you know, sort of taken out of the economy, quite frankly, because a corporation is not a person. A corporation is a system designed to maximize profits for shareholders. I mean, we don't fault that unto itself, but you have to make sure that you are providing reasonable limitations on that, especially when corporations are very large.

The proposal by the government in terms of Bill 3 and the very large tax reduction that they are suggesting, I would suggest, is irresponsible. It's getting a very mixed reaction from economists and, I dare say, not a particularly enthusiastic endorsement even from our largest corporations that function here in the province of Alberta. Of course, the backbone of our economy is the energy industry and energy corporations that are functioning here. You know, I must say that over the last four years, working closely with the largest corporations, they have demonstrated a high degree of responsibility and forward thinking, with an eye to responsible development of our hydrocarbon industry and looking

for ways by which we can diversify that economy, too. When you're on the edge of the cusp of the need for diversification, it's very important to consult and interact with energy corporations – they're interested in diversifying as well, right? – but simply just dropping something like this Bill 3 onto the table demonstrates a singular lack of analysis and thought that I think Alberta needs at this point in time.

What we saw over the last number of years was that through careful incentives for diversifying, let's say, the renewable energy industry, we jumped ahead to become North American leaders in renewable energy. I mean, this wasn't done with a massive tax cut: drop it on the table, walk away, and say: here you go. It was done with careful consultation and interaction to nurture renewable energy. You know, it's almost like an action, sort of a direct opposite, when you look at the attempt to encourage economic stimulation with this bill compared to the way by which we managed to nurture and encourage renewable energy, right? The two things could not be further apart.

As well, I think that when we talk about job creation, we have to ensure that, you know, we are playing for the long game. It has to be sustainable over time. I can see or foresee in the way that this bill is written, without amendment, that it's very easy for the government to move backwards on the promises to make these massive cuts from year to year, such that the analysts in a given corporation will know, probably reading between the lines, that this bill is more for show than it is for substance. If the intention of the very substantial tax cuts for corporations here is to attract businesses from other jurisdictions to move here, then, I mean, again, Bill 3 does not provide the assurance that this is a long-term, substantial thing that can be counted on for a business to move here and stay here.

Madam Chair, I think that this amendment at least sort of tempers the magnitude of the tax cut, and I'm very interested to see how that might go. I'm interested to see how other members in the House might be responsive to it, thinking about it. We certainly have lots of time to think about it; we're not going anywhere. I guess what I would suggest is that we take a look at the full breadth of our economy, and part of that economy is the services for which the provincial government is responsible. You know, let's remind ourselves that, let's say, health care is not just an essential service. It is not just something that we count on for us and our families, that it's there when we need it; it is also a mechanism by which we can provide economic stimulus.

Education: same thing. In the vast majority of municipal districts outside of urban areas the education system is the number one employer. So it educates kids, provides an essential public service, provides surety and certainty and all of the other things that education does – order and so forth, a place for kids to go and learn – and it also is a big economic driver. In a place, let's say, like Parkland county, for sure the school system is the number one employer and was a very important backstop for families that might have had job losses due to the economic downturn and the downturn in the price of oil. So if you had someone that might have worked in the oil patch losing their job or getting reduced hours but another family member having a job in the school system, maybe a teacher or bus driver or custodian, then that provided the security for that family to see them through the tough times.

Why am I saying this, Madam Chair? Because if you take 4 and a half billion dollars out of this provincial budget, you have absolutely no recourse but to cut those essential public services. If anyone suggests otherwise, they are simply being dishonest or delusional or thinking in a muddled sort of way. There's no way on earth that you can take 4 and a half billion dollars out of the global budget for the province of Alberta and not expect to see substantial

cuts to education, health care, social services, infrastructure; all of the things that this government is responsible for. Bill 3 talks about corporate tax cuts, but written between each and every line is this idea that we take from one place and give to another. We give to corporations 4 and a half billion dollars essentially, and we take that from the public interest.

I've heard some members this evening talking about: well, you know, corporations have shareholders and we're all shareholders and the money gets stimulated back into the economy. Well, it doesn't quite work that way, Madam Chair, because corporations are very fluid. One of the designs of a large corporation is that they have interests and shareholders all over the world. Often the participants in a corporation, the shareholders and so forth, you know, may not even reside in the province of Alberta. So you take, essentially, public money or the responsibility for that public money, which would have otherwise been spent on public services that benefit the province of Alberta and the people of Alberta – you take it and liquefy it and put it into a big tax cut for corporations, and off she goes to the four winds, right? You lose control over that asset.

You know, I think that when you boil down the essence of who we are as Members of the Legislative Assembly – right? – that is an abdication of the basic responsibility that we have to the people who elected us to these places, taking that public interest, taking the essence of our responsibility and giving it away and just hoping for the best; hoping for the best but, I would suggest, expecting something less than that.

**1:50 a.m.**

You know, as I said before, I believe that Bill 3 is more of a way by which to demonstrate, I guess, bold action – right? – as part of the campaign. But the campaign is over, Madam Chair. The campaign is over, and now we get down to the business of governing. When we get down to that business of governing, you toss away hyperbole, and you toss away, you know, perhaps the heat of the moment in an election that happens over a 28-day period. You know, it's moving fast and furious and so forth. Then the dust settles, and you start making responsible decisions, right?

I would suggest that one place to start is to take a long, hard look at Bill 3 in a realistic way and realize that it's too far, too much. It has built-in irresponsible elements to it, and like I say, it is like an abdication of the responsibility which we have assigned ourselves through running and serving and representing the people of Alberta.

Thanks to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre for putting in a reasonable amendment – right? – a modest proposal that I am feeling good about. I suggest that other members might join me in endorsing this amendment, perhaps speaking on it. Maybe we will get a few more, you know, sets of eyes and discussion about it, but I, for one, would suggest that I could support this amendment as brought forward.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amendment to Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. I must say to the House that I've been watching with much interest the debate as it's progressed throughout the day today. I have to say that I've been encouraged by the fact that we're actually having this debate here in this Legislature. What we're having is something that I've hoped to hear in this province for most of my life. I've lived through various forms of conservative governments for practically 60 years, and

I've heard various incantations or forms of supply-side economics being invoked by different governments, of course, by successive Social Credit governments and then in '71 by the Progressive Conservatives when they took over.

Basically we've had conservative governments for all of my life in this province except for the four years when we had that breath of fresh air with us and our NDP government, now the Official Opposition, but we're still fighting the good fight and bringing to bear this really interesting clash of ideas that I think will characterize this 30th Legislature for some time to come. It's a healthy clash of ideas, and I don't think we should suggest for a moment that this clash of ideas is something that we won't benefit from as a province and as a society because the healthy debate and real consideration of each other's views is something that can generate, hopefully, a better informed electorate and one that makes really good decisions. I don't know if, in fact, over the last 60 years of my life in this province, the electorate has had the benefit of the best information to make the decisions that they had to make when faced with each successive election.

I know that we've had successive conservative governments suggest that supply-side, or Austrian, economics, or Reaganomics, or trickle-down theory, or unregulated economics in one form or another were the antidote to anything that ailed us economically over the years regardless of what the circumstances might have been. In fact, they've all been discredited and continue to be discredited now as many speakers before me have so eloquently talked to in great detail.

I won't rehash that, but I will suggest that it reminds me a little bit of the advice that was given to my father – his name was Walter – who was a construction superintendent. He worked really hard, but he smoked like a chimney. He smoked three packs a day. He did finally have a heart attack at about age 62. It took him for a bit of a loop, but he hadn't quit smoking yet. When talking to his doctor – he wasn't a man who saw a doctor all that often, but after his heart attack he did. The thing that got him to quit smoking after he'd been convinced for so long that it wasn't an unhealthy thing to do was that the doctor said: Walter, giving you a pack of cigarettes at this point in your life would be like throwing a brick to a drowning man. That formal statement given to him by his cardiologist is what got him to quit smoking.

The reason I bring up that story is because it seems as though the continual resort to supply-side economics, or Reaganomics, trickle-down theories that successive conservative governments in Alberta continually come to as an answer to our economic ills, is tantamount to throwing a brick to a drowning man because, really, they are doing nothing to help the situation. The demand-side economic theories, which we espouse, characterized by a number of speakers on this side of the House, is something that is a different kettle of fish. I look forward to the debate over the next three, four years and the detail that we can get into in informing our public, the ones that we serve, as to the various, as we see them, benefits of either side of that economic coin.

So I don't disparage the debate we're having here today. I'm glad that we're doing it. It's something that this province should have had for many, many years in great detail, and we're going to be able to afford ourselves an opportunity to really involve a lot more people, particularly young people, I hope, as well as current economists who seem to be holding sway, to challenge each other's ideas and come up with something that Albertans can agree upon as a set of facts that show the way forward. I believe that demand-side economics, or Keynesian, if you would have it, is the way to go, where you do countercyclical spending, where you don't see taking

on some debt in a downturn as a necessarily evil thing. Everything within reason.

We were very pragmatic in our application of demand-side economics over the four-year term that we had. We didn't accomplish all we wanted in that period of time, but I think that Albertans, many of them, felt we were on the right track. We're going to continue to let people know what our goals were and also let people know how we feel this government is on the wrong path by following the supply-side, or Austrian, economic theory.

What we're ending up with as a result of this austerity is a \$4.5 billion hole in our budget, and it's going to be paid for by cuts to public services and public spending. I think there's a generation of people here in the province who really don't quite get it. I mean, if you lived through the Klein era, Madam Chair, and understood what the effects of this type of budget austerity really were, you might think twice about entering into phase 2 of the Klein era. I'm quite worried about what effects we're going to see.

In my own constituency I'm wondering about some of the expenditures that people were hoping to see. I know that the Misericordia emergency ward is slated to be rebuilt, renewed, a new one built. That was in the hopper, and people were anticipating the design and planning as well down the road. However, now people are wondering: is that going to happen? Is this government going to pull the rug out from underneath those constituents who are really going to be suffering if they don't have that upgrade to the emergency ward in a hospital that has even further need beyond the renewing of the emergency ward? So I'm certainly going to be monitoring that, and I can tell you for sure that the constituents of Edmonton-McClung are going to be up and seriously angry if that emergency ward is delayed or taken off the books.

**2:00 a.m.**

The same thing with the widening of the southwest leg of the Anthony Henday: there's a huge backlog of traffic every morning and every evening, both rush hours, on the Henday because there's congestion. The congestion is caused by a lack of capacity, and the extra lanes that have to be added in order to deal with that problem are something that I wonder if the Minister of Transportation is considering cutting from his budget to meet his 4 and a half billion dollar required offset.

Another thing: schools in my constituency, whether or not we may see a school built to serve the francophone school board le Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest. Il voudrait construire une école là pour servir la communauté francophone, qui voudrait étendre la capacité pour enseigner les étudiants francophones dans l'ouest d'Edmonton. I'm hoping that that school gets built in west Edmonton so that those students may actually continue to grade 12 and beyond in their French education without having to face the prospect of dropping out, losing all the education that they've had in French up to that grade 9 level because they can't conveniently go to a school that is in west Edmonton and follows the transportation routes that allow them to conveniently get to that school.

A lot of infrastructure spending, a lot of upgrades that are on the table right now that are in the planning stage are at risk, and it's an open question. It creates a lot of uncertainty in the minds of constituents who thought they had things finally coming that they've been hoping for a long time, that were needed for a long time, such as the Misericordia emergency department renewal, such as the widening of the Edmonton southwest Henday, such as the school for le Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest, which operates 19 francophone schools in Alberta. All these things in my constituency alone are compounded when you look at constituencies throughout the province who anticipated, under our government, finally seeing

an unlocking of their wish list and having things actually constructed that they have been demanding and asking for for decades. That perhaps will go up in smoke.

Unlike the life of my father after he got warned by the doctor that throwing him a pack of cigarettes would be tantamount to throwing a brick to a drowning man, we should be doing more than throwing bricks in the boat of the Alberta economy and asking that they actually be given a real life preserver to ensure that the services and public infrastructure that are needed, that they've been starved of for so many decades, actually get built and serve the public in the way that they deserve to be served by a government who cares about them as people and cares, certainly, about the economic system but that doesn't see the economic system as the priority, that sees the outcome and how that system serves people as the real priority.

At this hour, I think that I will probably let that suffice for my remarks and let others who wish to continue say what they have to say because I know that it's all important for us to contribute to this debate. As I said, it's something that's going to be revisited, quite happily so, over the next four years. We look forward to contributing continuously to inform the Alberta public as to the very, very distinct arguments that we have on both sides of the House. The nice thing about this Legislature is that we have such a distinct duality here, where there's a real clash of ideas. We look to flesh that out very, very deeply over the next four years so that when the next election comes along, there's certainly going to be a much higher, detailed level of rhetoric and, I think, a really sound understanding.

Let's hope that we capture the interest of the younger people in the province, those who are first studying, in grade 6, the government and civics courses, who visit here and get their pictures taken with us in the Legislature, who used to be introduced by us in the Legislature, who used to have the opportunity to connect with their MLA . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** You're exactly right.

**Mr. Dach:** Yeah. Exactly.

You know, those kinds of things are being lost. I mean, those students and the ones who later on in high school start talking about, in their social studies classes, the more political and policy-oriented subjects: hopefully, those students' imaginations are captured by a real debate going on and we talk about the theories that we're actually delving into rather than basically throwing ideological time bombs at each other. Let's have an intelligent debate about the pros and cons of either side of this coin. I believe that we have the better argument. Over time we'll prove that, and certainly you'll make every effort to prove your side.

I certainly hope we don't delve into the mudslinging and talking about one person's — well, there were some names that were called this afternoon that were unfortunate, and that's the kind of thing that we don't need to get into. I mean, I've been around long enough to have heard all kinds of conservative arguments, for almost 60 years. It's a breath of fresh air, to me, to have the opportunity to stand in this House, after first running four times to be elected and then the fifth time finally serving as government, now in opposition, espousing these arguments that I've been screaming in my own brain against Conservative governments for successive decades and now they get to hear and see the light of day, and hopefully influence a generation of young people to really think about who they vote for.

I know that there are a lot of people, especially those, say, for example, who are 15 to 18 years of age, who are looking at having the diploma exams count as 50 per cent of their mark in grade 12.

Believe me, that's a touchstone issue. They are ticked. They think it's absolutely, totally unfair, and those people are going to be the type of people that I want to touch with arguments here today because they're thinking out loud. They're thinking to make sure that this government knows how they feel. I'll tell you what: they're not feeling too warm and fuzzy about you right now, not if you're in grade 12 and thinking about having your 50 per cent diploma exam cause you all kinds of stress rather than having it at 30 per cent, the way it was before. So there's that issue, and there are other issues – climate change, the environment – that they're very, very sensitive about.

**The Chair:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Believe me, we're looking to cultivate that . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** . . . Madam Chair, to engage those young people . . .

**The Chair:** Can you please speak to the amendment and not all of the other things that happened during the election?

**Mr. Dach:** The amendment, that's what you're talking about? The amendment serves no purpose, Madam Chair . . .

**The Chair:** It's your amendment.

**Mr. Dach:** . . . insofar as how younger people will react to this government.

But, certainly for today's debate this amendment is not something that I can support. I'll tell you what, as a final tribute I would suggest that this brick should be thrown to no drowning man.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is always a pleasure to be with you at this hour and to be able to see you here in this Chamber so that we may move forward and do the important business of governance and debate here. I mean, I think this is a really important amendment from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I've already spoken a little bit about it today or perhaps yesterday; it's a little bit hard to keep track at this hour. I think we need to accept the amendment so we can pump the brakes just a little bit on this bill.

I mean, the Member for Edmonton-McClung spoke a little bit about some of the projects that are going on across the province. One of the things that I'm very interested in, Madam Chair, is looking at the impact of what fully implementing this bill without really thinking about the consequences, without really looking at the full impact would do, because it's a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to their friends and donors. I mean, that's something that's very concerning because we saw, as I mentioned already tonight, that in other jurisdictions it hasn't created the jobs that were promised, and it hasn't done those things.

**2:10 a.m.**

When we look at the type of giveaway the government is talking about, when we look at 4 and a half billion dollars just being given as a gift to their friends and donors, Madam Chair, I think that's something that's very concerning because 4 and a half billion dollars, indeed, would actually pay for an entire new hospital, perhaps a new hospital in south Edmonton that already has been funded for design. I think that's something that Albertans and Edmontonians would be very interested in and may

be a better use of funds than giving away frivolous gifts. I mean, if it does bring the jobs that the government proposes it will and has said that it shall, then I'd be very excited to see that money reinvested in building important infrastructure like hospitals and schools.

Unfortunately, we've seen, through things like the Kansas experiment, through things like how the United States currently is doing big corporate tax cuts, that when you give away billions and billions of dollars to your friends and donors, it doesn't result in more jobs. In fact, it can result and often results in a decrease in jobs, job cuts. We saw AT&T in the United States cut 23,000 jobs. That's something that we should be very concerned about because if 23,000 jobs were cut because of that here in Alberta, it would be something that I'd be very worried about and I know you would be very worried about, Madam Chair.

I mean, really, when we look at this tax cut, it's something that we need to be careful about. We need to pump the brakes and say: we should bring this back, we should do it incrementally, and we should be proud to be able to have the opportunity to debate it here in the Chamber, over and over again, every single year because taxes and bills and legislation are something that we were sent here to debate, that we as MLAs were sent here to have the opportunity to talk about. We are also privileged to be able to be here and have that opportunity to speak about how important this legislation is for all Albertans and how important it is that we get it right the very first time because if we get it wrong right now, this will have an impact for years to come, Madam Chair.

When you give away 4 and a half billion dollars, it has impacts that you couldn't even imagine. We can see what happened in British Columbia when, in 2011, they decreased corporate taxes by 6 and a half per cent. I mean, politicians, the conservatives over there, said that it would pay for itself, but in the end it ended up costing almost \$8 billion to \$10 billion. Madam Chair, I know you don't like to throw away money, and \$8 billion to \$10 billion is quite a bit.

During that same time frame, when they reduced those corporate taxes 6 and a half per cent, the province's debt load doubled. It actually doubled the debt of the province. I know that members of the Conservative government here, the front bench and the backbench, indeed have spoken at quite a bit of length about how important it is that we tackle the debt. So when we're seeing other jurisdictions, indeed our neighbours just to the west, trying the same risky ideological experiment, actually failing, and not just failing a little bit but failing quite substantially, I'm really concerned about why we'd move forward so quickly on this ideology, why we'd move forward so quickly on this risky ideology. It's something that I think members of the Conservatives should be very concerned about. They should be concerned about increasing the debt load through this risky experiment.

I mean, we saw that in British Columbia, when the same type of tax cut was introduced, it actually resulted in out-of-pocket user fees for public services rising substantially. It meant that residential care fees for seniors went up. It meant that fees for people with disabilities went up. It meant that university and college tuition went up. Park use permits went up. Madam Chair, those are all things that affect families in our communities, that affect our constituents. Our constituents shouldn't have to pay for a wealthy corporate giveaway to the government's friends and donors.

I think it's something that we should be very concerned about here in this Assembly. It's something that we should pump the brakes on and take a look and say: let's re-evaluate and see if it works, because if we just start with a little bit and we don't jump headfirst, we'll be able to decide if it's working in a year or so. That

would allow us to say, “Oh, it’s created X number of jobs” or “Oh, it hasn’t created X number of jobs.” Either of those are realistic scenarios based on what we’ve seen in other jurisdictions, based on what we’ve seen across this country and in other countries.

Madam Chair, it’s become very clear that this risky ideological experiment the Conservatives are committed to moving forward with, this risky ideology that they want to push forward without any consultation, is something that could very well have unexpected economic impacts. It could have economic impacts that could very well damage our communities and could damage the lives of our families right here in Alberta, and I think that’s something that members should be very concerned about tonight. It is something where members should admit: “Let’s take this one step at a time. It doesn’t need to be all in one omnibus bill. It doesn’t need to be all at once. We can take this one step at a time, and we can come back and discuss how well it worked or how well it didn’t work.” That’s something that I think we should take the opportunity to do.

Again, Madam Chair, we are so privileged to be able to be in this Assembly, to have been sent here by our constituents. We should relish the opportunity to defend our values and defend our legislation at every single opportunity. But it looks like the government would rather rush it through all at once and not have that opportunity to re-evaluate their legislation. They don’t want to have that opportunity to go on and say: did it work? They just want to force it down the throats of Albertans, and I think that’s very concerning.

I think it’s very concerning that we’re not able to just take a look objectively and say: will this work for us? I mean, we can see and do the research and say: it hasn’t worked federally under the Harper government. I know the Premier is very fond of implementing things that didn’t work under the Harper government, Madam Chair, but that’s okay. We can see that it hasn’t worked under the Trump presidency. We can see that it didn’t work in the Kansas experiment. We can see that it didn’t work in so many of the scenarios.

If we’re going to move forward with this risky ideology right here at home, I want to make sure that we get it right, Madam Chair. I want to make sure that the members have the opportunity to re-evaluate this experiment, because you never jump headfirst without first testing the waters. It’s something that we want to make sure we get right. It’s something where we want to make sure that we don’t create situations where there’s dead money. I mean, it’s something that we need to understand before we move forward, before we push ahead and without any consultation, without any reviews, without any thought. Before we give this big 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to friends and donors, we need to make sure that we get it right. We need to make sure that it’s working and having the impact that it’s supposed to have.

It’s something that I think is very important. When we talk about impacts, the job impacts that the government keeps saying that it’s going to have, the proposed jobs that it’ll create, I want to make sure that we get that. If we don’t have the opportunity to slow down a little bit, if we don’t have the opportunity to re-evaluate this, it’s going to mean that we don’t have the ability to make changes as we need to. When we’re playing with people’s lives – and, Madam Chair, that’s what the government is trying to do; they’re trying to play games with people’s lives here – it’s something that’s very concerning, that we’re not taking the time to get it right, that we’re not taking the time to re-evaluate things as they happen.

We know, Madam Chair, again, that this side of the House spent four years on that side. You need to be very dynamic when you’re in government. You need to be able to make changes. You need to

be able to make updates to your ideas. That’s something that’s very important, because as you move forward, things don’t always work out the way you expected. I’ll be the first to admit that that happened many times while our caucus here was in government, that things didn’t quite work out the way we expected them to. But that’s okay because that’s a part of governing.

I mean, the election is over, Madam Chair. What we are trying to do now is that we are trying to make sure we have strong, good governance for all Albertans, and to do that, we just need to slow this bill down. We have to look at making sure that it works first and then move forward and say: “All right. So it’s worked. Do we want to keep pushing? Do we think we’ve pushed as hard as we can or as far as we can? Do we need to go further or not so much?” Those are all really important questions. Those are all really important questions that we should debate here in this Assembly after we’ve seen some preliminary results, after we’ve seen whether this big 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to friends and donors of the Conservatives is going to work or not. I mean, it’s something where, if it does work, I will applaud the government.

But, Madam Chair, I’m very concerned that they want to give out this giveaway, that they want to give out this corporate subsidy, that they want to give out this corporate welfare without first evaluating the impacts. I think the amendment proposed by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-City Centre really does try to address this. It really does try to address how important it is that we slow down, that we look at the impact. Then, of course, it’s the government’s prerogative to bring a second bill again next year, once we’ve seen what happens, to be able to come back and say, “Oh, we can continue to make changes” or “We want to stop changes or reverse changes.” That would be the government’s prerogative. I think it’s very important that the government has that opportunity to bring it back to this House, because we were all sent here by our constituents to make sure we get the legislation right. We were all sent here to make sure that we do our jobs and debate our bills, and it’s something that I’m very concerned about.

2:20 a.m.

I mean, again I want to go back to the Kansas experiment. The state budget office’s analysis suggested that that tax cut led to a budget shortfall of almost 2 and a half billion dollars. Madam Chair, I don’t know about you, but 2 and a half billion dollars sounds to me like a lot of schools, a lot of playgrounds, a lot of nurses and teachers. That’s what I’m worried about. I’m worried that if we move too quickly, we’re going to put essential public services at risk. We’re going to implement this risky ideology, this risky experiment, that has been shown in other jurisdictions to not work, without having some stops to make sure that we’re not going too far. When we go out and do these risky ideological experiments, when we go out and push forward with our ideology, we need to be prepared to understand that consequences are real, that there are going to be changes that we can’t control. That’s something that I’m very concerned about. I think we need to be very careful and make sure that that risky ideology does not hurt ordinary Albertans like you and me. We need to make sure that that risky ideology does not go out and harm families in our communities.

I know that I was sent here by those families to make sure we stood up for them, and that’s why we want to see the effects before we give a parade for this bill. It’s something that’s very important that we get right the first time. That’s why you have to be dynamic, that’s why you have to be willing to make changes, and that’s why we need to slow this down so that we implement it incrementally. We have one step now, and then we bring it back to the House. We debate that change again. It’s very important that we move forward and that we have that plan in place.



Of course, Madam Chair, you know as well as I do – and perhaps you know better than I do – that we'll be back here again in the fall. We'll be back here again, hopefully, next spring as well. Every single time we come back here, the government has the opportunity to bring legislation, and that legislation could very well move forward with these tax decreases that have been struck out by the amendment. If they did, it would be able to be considered after we saw the initial impacts of this tax decrease, the initial impact of this big 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway to the wealthiest corporations.

The initial impact: it's very, very important that we study it closely. When we look at the impacts in other jurisdictions, whether they're in Canada, whether they're in the United States, whether they're across the world, Madam Chair, we've seen that time and time again the risky Conservative ideology, the risky, ideological experiment has not worked. It doesn't get the results.

But it might here, Madam Chair, and of course the government has the prerogative to attempt that here, to play games with Alberta's economy and families' lives. They have the right as the government to implement their risky, ideological agenda on our families. That's the government's prerogative. If they wish to do that, I mean, of course they can, but we would like to say that we want to slow down and that we want to make sure we're evaluating what you're doing to families. We want to evaluate what the government is implementing. We want to evaluate how the government is performing.

I think that we as legislators, we as MLAs, sent here by our constituents, should be excited to be able to be evaluated by our communities. We should be excited to be able to take our legislation back and look at it and say: did it work? Now, the government, it seems, isn't going to be willing to do that. The government is not willing to have their legislation put under the microscope, and I think that's something that's very disappointing. I think it's something that's not conducive to the productive work of this House. It's not conducive to our democracy here in this House, Madam Chair, and that's too bad. I mean, it's something that I think we need to re-evaluate. We need to stop and say: is it fair that our Assembly won't have the opportunity to review the legislation again and again as we move forward with this risky, ideological experiment? If the government chooses not to, then, again, that's the government's prerogative.

But once again, Madam Chair, I want to make it very clear for every single member in this House: this risky, ideological experiment has failed time and time again. It has not succeeded, and I'm concerned that it won't succeed here in Alberta. If it does, I'd be happy to applaud the government on that, but we should have the opportunity to make sure that when risky ideologies are playing games with Albertans' families' lives, we have the opportunity to review that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to say to the Member for Edmonton-South: wow, you totally convinced me; I'm going to vote for this amendment now. Halfway through I was thinking I was going to change my mind, right?

Madam Chair, if you will indulge me, I'm going to do something that's a little bit unconventional, perhaps, for this House, not normally done. So I want to ask you to please bear with me for my time. I do promise you that I will bring it back to the amendment. I will bring it back to the amendment. I'm just asking you for a little bit of indulgence as I share something with the people of the House.

I just want to preamble this by saying that the way that we share with one another in the House is, of course, by talking about our values – talking about our values – sharing what we believe to be the way that we look at the world. Based on that, we support a particular ideology, and we support a particular way of helping people, working with people, doing things so that we decide on the policies that we want to move forward.

Some of you in this House may know that in my previous life I used to be a hip hop artist. Some puzzled looks looking my way. They're, like: "Oh, my goodness. Okay." One of the pieces that I wrote that really exemplifies the values that I hold as a human being was a piece that I wrote to my son when he was born, and I want to share that with all of you tonight. So please indulge me, Madam Chair.

This piece is called *Daddy Loves You*.

It seems like just yesterday your mama told me that you were on your way.

My eyes welled up, tongue-tied with nothing to say.

But mama knows that I was waiting for you every day.

I couldn't wait to be a father and bring you up in the

culture of our people,

teaching you about treating everyone as equals no matter what their orientation.

I thought about passing on my foundation that my father taught me,

growing up in a foreign place as a refugee.

All these things began to cross my mind as I worked every day,

slave to the grind, and I finally felt like I had hope.

The days passed, and I began to cope, looking forward to the future.

I didn't care if I was running upslope because now I had your mother and you

to keep my heart from falling apart on the days that it was too hard.

The days passed, and soon you were on your way.

I kept praying to God that everything would be okay.

And it was the happiest day of my life to see you born 9:05 on April 20,

and I knew that it was the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

I imagine you as a young boy now,

brushing the sweat from your brow on a warm summer's day,

coming home from school on a Monday,

telling me everything that you learned from the library books

that you returned because you know that education doesn't stop in the class

and that every day you must surpass the level that you reached in the past

no matter what the subject,

including respect and how to protect your mother, your baby cousins, and your brothers.

Because by this time you know that life isn't fair and that there are people that don't share when it comes to knowledge or wealth

and that health isn't just about the body, but it's about the mind, too,

and that you can control what you do, that you could do anything that you want to because we all have the power to respond positively or negatively to the things that we see and keep us from reaching our dreams no matter how far out they seem.

I may not make it to the day that you reach 20, so here

are some words, contemplate them plenty like the words of Tommy Douglas or Daniel Viglietti.

Son, you and I are part of a history, and your people have worked strategically to make it to the place in time where we are.

Your life is more than just about you. It's about our culture and what's true, like that every single person needs to be free, live life in complete liberty, and that's the reason I struggle, we struggle. Put the pieces together like a puzzle, because we're almost there, and never despair, and keep educating your mind and be aware.

But, most importantly, raise a family because we need people to become soldiers for the army of life. It's just because a group of people who live without thought believe that freedom comes from the things that they bought.

It's not that they're evil; they just don't know no better. But it's up to you to save this world, because if not you, then who?

That's the message that was passed on to me, and now I pass it on to you

so that you can see that every single living thing in this world is connected and needs to be respected.

Don't ask me what's to be expected because I'm still fighting the struggle, and I don't know how to win, but I know that it starts from within

and that if we do this, you and I will be known men to the people in our lives that love us dearly.

And this is my letter to you.

Sincerely, your father.

**2:30 a.m.**

Thank you for indulging me, Madam Chair. The reason why I shared that is because it shares all the values that I believe in, the principles, the ideas. I'll be the first one to tell you that I continue to be an idealist. I mean, you've got to be an idealist when you support the kind of ideology that I do, but you see in the underlying part of that ideology – I think that this is where we all agree, and I'll tell you this. One thing I want to share with you guys, especially you guys from rural areas, because I imagine that some of you like listening to country music . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Heavy metal, bro.

**Member Loyola:** Heavy metal? Okay. We've got a heavy metal guy over there.

I know that some of you rural guys like your country music. The reason I bring that up is because about five years ago I started listening to country music. I never used to listen to country music before, but then I started listening to country music. There were a couple of songs that just really touched my heart.

I truly believe that at the end of the day members of this House all want what's best for the people that we love in our lives. We all want what's best. We have different ways of getting there, right? I want to appeal to you. Just know that we may not be wanting to get to the same place in the same way, but do know that as we're in this House, what our constituents have asked us to do in being here is to represent them.

Now, I completely acknowledge that the United Conservative Party got its majority. You guys are government. You all are government. You're doing your best. You're doing what you think

is the right thing to do. But also know that we were elected by representatives to be in this House and be their voice. I know that it may seem like a joke that it's – what? – 2:33 in the morning right now. You know, people's eyes are starting to close, and we're debating and debating and debating, and we're talking and talking and talking. But we were elected to be here and represent those people. The good constituents of Edmonton-Ellerslie decided to put their faith and their trust in me, so it's my duty to get up in this House and talk and share with everybody what has been passed on to me by constituents.

The reality is that my constituents – I'll be the first one to tell you. You knock on the doors of Edmonton-Ellerslie, and you see young families. A lot of those young families care about affordable child care here in the province of Alberta. Let me tell you that I had so many families tell me: "Rod" – oh, sorry – "Member." They don't call me "Member"; they call me by my name, but I'm just going to, like, parentheses that. "Member, it costs me \$1,200 to put one child in daycare." Twelve hundred dollars. I want you to imagine a family that has two children or even three children, right? Affordable child care is a top priority for the people of Edmonton-Ellerslie. I find it strange that nowhere in the throne speech was that even mentioned, affordable child care. I can bet – and I'm willing to put my life on it – that there are more ridings across this great province of Alberta where more families care about affordable child care. I'm willing to bet on it, bet my life on it.

Although I incredibly respect where the United Conservative Party is coming from – they're representing what they believe to be the right thing to do – let's agree that not only people that believe in the priorities and the ideology of the United Conservative Party live in this province. Our job – our job – is to govern together in this House, to make sure that all those people are represented, to take a balanced, measured approach towards moving this province forward. The amendment put forward by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is attempting to do just that.

Madam Chair, thanks for indulging me. I'm now on the amendment fully. You liked that, didn't you? I knew you were going to like it. Nowhere else are you going to hear a spoken-word piece at this time of the night. Nowhere, nowhere, nowhere. Honestly, that was my gift to all of you. That was my gift to all of you, or else we're going to ask the Member for Edmonton-South to get up and speak again.

Members, I say it in jest, but humbly – humbly – in all honesty, this amendment is about trying to put forward a more measured, balanced approach. Now, I remember being on the government side. I remember being a private member on the government side. I can probably guess that the majority of you are going to end up voting this thing down. It's a guess. It's probably a good guess. But I'm trying to appeal to your good nature. I know that each and every one of you has the ability to listen to reason. My good friends and members of this House, this really is about trying to put forward a measured approach, as was shared repeatedly by the Member for Edmonton-South. I'm just bugging; I'm just bugging. Why couldn't we attempt to – let's go to 10 per cent, and then let's re-evaluate what happens from there. Let's re-evaluate what happens from there, right?

The amendment being put forward by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is proposing to do exactly that. I remember that the Member for Calgary-Hays was saying: oh, well, it sounds like the opposition is listening. What we're trying to do is meet you halfway, to be measured, to humbly accept that, yes, we understand where you as a government, where you, ideologically speaking, as the United Conservative Party want to go. We respect that. We understand that. We understand. And we understand what your objectives are. By all means, I get it. We understand what your objectives are in terms of trying to create jobs in this province,

trying to do, from your perspective, what you believe to be the right thing to do. I'm not questioning that.

**2:40 a.m.**

At the same time, it's imperative – it's imperative – that you look at research and you look at data and you see what's been happening in other jurisdictions where they put in a corporate tax cut of this nature. I just want to share with you an article by Hugh Mackenzie called *Analysis Shows UCP Plan Will Not Create Jobs – I repeat: will not create jobs – or Increase GDP or Revenue*. In this article Mr. Mackenzie states:

In general, corporate tax cuts are among the weakest forms of fiscal stimulus. That's because there's no direct impact – the tax savings don't go directly into the economy, they go into corporate income statements – and the indirect effects are widely dispersed throughout the Canadian economy and beyond.

He goes on to state:

In the context of a balanced budget, the UCP's \$1.75 billion corporate tax cut would have a significant negative effect on Alberta's GDP and jobs. Because the cuts would inevitably be concentrated on public sector employment and transfers to people, there is essentially a 1:1 direct impact on GDP . . .

So the estimated net effect on the economy of the UCP's proposed tax cut in the context of its balanced budget commitment is a decline in GDP of \$2.7 billion and a loss of nearly 12,000 jobs.

Now, granted, you may say: well, you know, we have our economists on our side that are saying that that's not true, that that's not how it's going to happen. All the more reason for us to accept this amendment. Let's accept this amendment. We're meeting you halfway. Let's go to 10 per cent, and then we can re-evaluate from there if the desired corporate tax cut that you're wanting to put forward will actually do what you think it will do. Once we go through a year, then we can re-evaluate it and see if it's actually accomplishing your desired outcome.

Members of the House, I want to thank you for indulging me. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with you a little bit about what my values are through that spoken-word piece. I'll finish off by saying: let's continue to respect each other. We don't necessarily believe in the same political ideology, but that doesn't mean that we can't show each other respect. What's most important is that we always stand up for the dignity of the human person, right? That's what true good governance is all about. So I ask us all, on both sides of the House: let's respect the fact that Albertans voted. Just because one party won government, it does not mean that all those others that did not vote for that party do not deserve to have their voice heard inside this House. That's the job that my colleagues and I on this side of the House, the members representing the Alberta New Democratic Party, are doing here. So let's respect each other, let's hear each other out, and let's keep doing our best to make sure that all Albertans are represented.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie referenced an article. Just make sure you table it at your earliest convenience.

**Member Loyola:** Will do. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning. Good evening. I'm not even sure what time it is or what day it is anymore. That is a tough act to follow from my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie, which I can tell you that I was listening to, thinking: oh, I'm so excited to go next and talk at 2:45 in the morning after that.

But I have to say that this is actually one of the joys, and there are lots of joys in the job that we have here. One of the joys is actually being here in the House at 2:45 in the morning because I think we can all say that we're doing our jobs very well.

But I actually have to say, and this is going to be related to what we're all here to talk about today, that I echo a lot of what my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie said. One of the joys I have found in being in this House tonight, especially in committee, where we know that the rules are a little bit looser and people have the opportunity to move around and to talk – and it's been quite remarkable to see members from both sides of the House sitting down with each other, chatting – and we've been bumping into each other as we're trying to find our next caffeine mix that will keep us awake but not keep us from sleeping in case we ever do get to sleep, and we talk about our children, and we talk about things. There's obviously an enjoyment on some of the very spirited debate we've heard here. We've heard some fantastic orators, some excellent points of view from both sides, and I think what's most important about that is exactly what the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was alluding to, which is that we are all human beings. We all do have a lot in common. It's a real pleasure to get to see that side of each other.

Particularly, we are fresh out of a campaign, and we know how that can be so divisive. In particular, it tends to do what we see happen a lot in politics, which is the us versus them. One of the messages I tried to convey when I was out at the doors speaking in Edmonton-Whitemud to what I hoped to be my constituents – and luckily they are – is that we are not as far apart as our politics or our hyper partisanship or our media might make us think we are. In fact, that was one of my key messages. I had an opportunity to meet the other candidates in my riding from all the parties, and that was the note that I ended on. We had a forum; we discussed various issues, and what we found was really that there is a lot more that we have in common than we have different. I think the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie said it just beautifully, which is that we might have different ideas of how to get there, but we all have the same objective.

To that point, you know, I understand this is politics. I'm new at it. I'm learning. But we do tend to take very positional positions. We take very hard positions on things, and I think in our heart of hearts we know that those aren't true. We know it's not true, the way the media might characterize the differences in our parties and our platforms. Nobody on this side of the House is anticorporation. We understand that corporations are an important part of our economy, of our political system, of our fabric of our society. Nobody here would suggest that we could function without corporations, and nobody would suggest that we should do away with them.

Just like sometimes I think the members on the opposite side get characterized in a way that I think is not true. I certainly know that everybody there on the other side has families, have people they care about, so to say that they're not in support of health care or education is also not true. It just can't be true. We are Albertans. We function in this system. We all have our interests where we want to move forward and do the best for our families, and we know that all of those pieces that we're talking about – education, health care, corporations – they're not diametrically opposed. They just really aren't.

But we might disagree on the way to get there, so I would also like to stand up in support of the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, an amendment to Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. I really believe that this is precisely that. It is a reasonable and measured approach.

We understand that we might disagree on the facts behind corporate tax cuts as ways to stimulate economic growth. I think my colleagues have done an excellent job of going through the various studies. I'm not an economist, so I'm not going to stand

here and try to quote with some measure of certainty or authority about economics, but what I do know is that I'm a person who trusts those people who are experts in their fields. I don't think it's our responsibility to be the experts in all areas. That's just simply not possible.

2:50 a.m.

I do rely on the experts when they make their statements, and I see, just as the members opposite have a number of economists that will speak to the belief that corporate tax cuts will result in economic growth and the creation of jobs, there are also going to be economists who suggest otherwise. The Member for Edmonton-City Centre and many of my other colleagues pointed out a number of economists who have expressed differing views on the value of that. I hope that we can agree to disagree a little bit. There are mixed views on this. It's not a science. It is not necessarily a true statement to say that corporate tax cuts will automatically create jobs, will stimulate the economy the way we want, because as much as the members from the opposite side might have economists who believe that, we've pointed out several economists and situations where that has not occurred.

Is one true and one not? No. Just like in everything else, there are theories. I went to school. I was a political scientist. I went into political science to get my degree, and that's what we sat there and talked about. We talked about centuries of beliefs, of differing views about society, about economic growth, different value systems, and one is not right, and one is not wrong. The truth is that at certain times one might be more appropriate than others, and we all bring our own values. I always talk about the fact that, really, where we are historically in the moment shapes which value system might take more precedence. That doesn't mean that it's wrong.

We know the pendulum swings from one way to the other. We've seen that. We just have to look at our own political history but also look at the political history of many other countries to know that. So one is not right, one is not wrong. I think what we can agree on is that there is a value choice being made here. Again, I echo the statements from my colleagues, that we appreciate that the governing party, the UCP, did certainly win more seats in the House, but the last time I checked, they didn't win 87. We still have 24 opposition members here who represent constituencies who perhaps valued a different approach. I can tell you that that was very much my experience in my riding as I mentioned in my maiden speech, a term I'm not terribly fond of, my first speech in the House, which was also not my first speech.

Anyways, my constituents don't subscribe strongly to one political ideology or the other. They're not diehard Conservatives. They're not diehard progressives or New Democrats. They've been everything because my constituents want to see a reasonable and measured approach. They look at what's going on in the political environment at the time, and they say: what is the most appropriate approach and which value system, which ideology – or not even ideology – which values do they think will serve their families and the province best? I actually really appreciated that because, when I'm going door to door and when I was talking to constituents, I'm a reasonable, sort of measured person myself.

I don't have a long history of being strongly attached to one ideology versus the other. I'm a person who looked at the values of the party that I chose to run for and thought – you know what? – that matches my values. One of the reasons why I was drawn to run for this party was because I thought they demonstrated a great deal of pragmatism over the last four years. They demonstrated that they understood what was needed for this province and its economy to move it forward and move from positions of ideology, from positions of strong partisanship, to say what is actually required for

governance. That's why I was attracted to run for this party, and when I went door to door, that's what I talked about, and my constituents agreed with me. They said: yeah, we like this, we don't like this; these are some things we think worked well, but we also don't think this worked well in the past.

They are careful watchers of political history. They lived through the Klein years, and they thought that, you know, in times when the oil prices drop, austerity measures did not serve us well. In Edmonton it took decades, and we're still recovering from that infrastructure deficit, that deficit to our public services. They care about that. They are actually quite centrist voters because they're also small-business owners. I have a significant number of small-business owners in my riding, people who said: yeah, things have been tough, but we appreciated that this government – the previous government, the NDP government – provided a 33 per cent tax cut to small businesses.

They appreciated, too, that there was an investment in new economies and new opportunities for growth because I think of main concern to them was that we need to get off the one-resource train that we've been on for too long in this province. They really valued the discussions that we had about diversification and the measures that were being taken to do that. That's what they were voting on. They were voting on: we wanted to have a path forward; we wanted to see a vision for this province that moves us forward and makes us less dependent.

One of the things that I struggle with when I'm in this Assembly – and I know we've all got our talking points on both sides, and we have our catchy phrases, and I will say that I know the government has done a very good job with catchy phrases and they really resonated with people – is the idea that the economic “mess”, and I'm using air quotes that won't show up in *Hansard*, that was created over the last four years was somehow created solely as a result of the actions by this NDP government. It just strikes me as completely surprising that those who might be knowledgeable of the political history and the economic history of this province would ignore the significant and repeated impact that the drop in international oil prices has on our economy. We've seen it hit Conservative governments. We saw it hit just before the NDP government took over. To say that somehow this mess was created by the NDP, to me, is just partisanship and ideology because we know that the reason why we are in the situation we are in is because there is too little that is in our control in our province. We've become an economy that is dependent on something that is too far out of our control.

To me, I think it's unreasonable and it's not measured to talk about one party's approach being the right way and one party's approach being the wrong way, particularly when we have tied ourselves to a system that is out of our control. What the voters in my riding wanted to see was Albertans take control of their economic destiny. That's what they wanted to see. That's what they saw the beginnings of, the investments of, under the NDP government. They saw that there was a true approach and a true investment in diversification, in new industry, and that's what they valued. I had a number of voters say to me at the doors, untriggered by me: we realize that this economic situation that we are in is because of measures outside of our control.

Now, what we can control as a government is how we respond to that. What I would say is, again prefacing this, I'm not an economist. This is just my sense of things, reading what I have read and talking to the people that I talked to at the doors. If we are going to tie ourselves to an industry that is so much out of our control, how can we then take what we do have control of, the revenue source that we do have control of, and decide to take such a huge gamble on it? Until we create some stability and security in our revenue sources of income in this province – and we are seeing that. We are seeing that

we have a great natural resource in this province, but we are having incredible difficulties getting it to market.

Again, all of the reasons that we're having difficulties getting it to market are things that are outside of our control. We have been so frustrated as a province, rightly so, about that. We can't get pipelines built. I will repeat the statistic that has been said over and over: previous Conservative governments have failed to get a pipeline built. I think it's 60, almost 70 years since a pipeline has been built to tidewater. We can't get our resource to market because of other provinces, because of the federal government, and for a lot of other reasons.

We can't continue to just simply rely on something that we have very little control over. We really need to take control of our economic destiny. I don't see it being a wise decision for the first step to slash corporate taxes by so much. I'm not an expert on whether or not that's going to attract investment. I see the studies that say that it won't create the jobs that are promised. I know that the members on the other side will say that there are studies that will show that it will create the jobs. That may be true. I go back to the comments from my colleagues that – okay – you clearly had a mandate to lower corporate taxes. You didn't have a 100 per cent mandate from Albertans, but you had a strong mandate, so do that.

But this amendment is a very reasonable approach. It is a very big gamble on our revenue source, when we have already lost control over so much of our revenue control in this province.

3:00 a.m.

To me, I think it's a very reasonable approach to say: "Let's see. Let's see if it does produce the jobs and the investment that we need – that we desperately need – in this province." This amendment is a way to say: "Let's try that. Let's do that – fine – but let's not tie ourselves to a very extreme and large gamble so early on. Let's take the opportunity to see how it works, and let's be forthcoming about it." Again, we get into politics, we get into partisanship, and we take strong views and positions on everything when, really, what we need to do, our responsibility here, is to govern and to govern in the best interests of all Albertans. If we're going to gamble their revenue sources, we need to be as measured as possible so that we can at least be clear about whether or not it works.

Again, the things that we care about, the things that all of you care about are health care and education. You have children who go to school. You need access to health care. I heard the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie speak about how affordable child care is so important in his riding. I'm very heartened to hear that as that's so important in my riding and to me as well. Those are things that, as we know, cost money.

The other thing that's important is that it's not just about providing those services, those health care and education services. The members from the other side talk a lot about jobs. Those are public-sector jobs. When we talk about, you know, perhaps doing away with \$4.5 billion of our revenue source, we can't even keep up the facade that that's not going to result in cuts. We know it's going to. We're not just talking about cuts in services, but those are Albertans who hold those jobs as well.

One of the things that really resonated in my riding is that for a lot of families who had two income earners in the family, one might have been affected by the drop in oil prices, worked in oil and gas and been affected, but often the other income earner was a public-sector worker: a teacher, a nurse, an EA. I think the decision by the previous government to not slash those services and those jobs was a way to also protect Alberta jobs. Of course, private-sector jobs are so important – I know they're important to the voters in my riding – but so are the jobs of public-sector employees, and so are the jobs of teachers and nurses and EAs and all of our medical service

providers. Those are Albertans as well, so we're gambling their jobs as well.

I would like to speak in favour of this amendment because I think it's the right balance to take. Again, I enjoy the ability at this time of night to have some free and open discussion and to find that common ground, and I suppose I'm standing here and hoping that there will be some agreement, that we can find some common ground. We're not trying with this amendment to argue to do away with the proposed bill. We're not arguing that there's no support for it. Clearly, there is. Clearly, there was from the election results. To me, there are a few examples of legislation that have come forward by this government in this session which are clearly part of the mandate of the government – some, quite frankly, are not; that's another story – and this one is.

I mean, everybody knew – it was front and centre – that that was the intention of this government, so I'm not here to try to say, "Don't do a corporate tax cut," because I know that that's a ridiculous statement. You have a commitment that you made to Albertans and to your voters that you need to keep. But we can certainly take a measured approach to it and make sure that before we make such a dramatic cut to the corporate tax rate, to our revenue income, we have given thought to whether or not it's working, that we do the proper evaluation to see whether or not it is working, and that the government be forthcoming and truthful with its voters as to whether or not to continue to go forward with cutting the corporate tax rate or whether to hold steady.

I look at this as an opportunity for co-operation, and I actually look at it as an opportunity for those on the other side who might be interested in perhaps trying to take back my riding in four years. As I said, my constituency is one that looks for a practical, reasonable, measured policy approach. I can tell you that if you want to win back the voters in Edmonton-Whitemud, show that you're reasonable, show that you're measured, show that you want to do what's best for Albertans, not just what's based on partisanship and ideology, and I think you've got a better shot in 2023 at my seat, not that I'm giving it away. I'll be fighting hard for it because I'm going to be the one standing up and saying: look what I convinced the government to do.

I'm just saying: look, that's what people want. That's what people want. They want a measured approach. They want their government – in campaigns they might want partisanship. I don't know if they wanted that or if that's just what they got. You know, when they see their government, they want to see somebody who's actually looking out for what's best for them.

So I encourage you to look at the idea of meeting us halfway, as the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie said so eloquently. Actually, he said a lot of things very eloquently.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Yes. Now, bear with me.

**Mr. Carson:** Spoken word?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Spoken word.

Pack it up, pack it in  
Let me begin.

[interjections] No, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to do that.

Thank you, Madam Chair. The opposition claims that we are talking about a theoretical policy with the job-creation tax cut. I think the empirical proof lies in the last four years. The NDP government rewarded Alberta with a \$5.5 billion increase in taxes that resulted in a decline in revenue of 8 and a half billion dollars. That's a difference of \$3 billion. Additionally, over the course of the four years the province of Alberta had a 3 percentage point

reduction in GDP, making us the only province in Canada with negative growth over that period. Let's look at B.C. They had approximately 10 per cent GDP growth in that same time period. Saskatchewan: they were under similar conditions to Alberta, yet they had a 3 per cent increase in GDP, for a difference of about 6 per cent between the two provinces.

So let's make it clear. This is not a thesis. This is not theoretical. The tax increases implemented by this previous government absolutely had a direct and negative impact on Alberta's economy. As a former small-business owner I can say that the job-creation tax cut alone will not do it. It won't because for companies that are losing money, well, they're not paying any income tax. They're just going broke. This is about an entire suite of policies that come together to create a positive environment for investment. It's the carbon tax repeal act, the open for business act, and the Red Tape Reduction Act in conjunction with the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment ) Act that will make this a success. I can say this. It is economics 101. The marketplace can only bear tax increases to a point before it has diminishing returns. The former NDP proved this point beautifully.

Madam Chair, as Forrest Gump might say: I may not be a smart man, but I know what tax is, Jenny. I'm trying to add a little bit of levity here, but it's no joke to the business owners that I talk to. I spoke to a rancher friend of mine. We talked about overall tax changes. He told me that the carbon tax cost him about \$4,000 a year. That's \$4,000 to heat his barns, his shops, to heat the water for the cattle in the winter, and he has no way to pass that cost on to the buyer. He's selling a commodity, so he suffers the loss. Is that fair? I don't think so.

I have another friend in oil and gas, spinning his wheels and his money. He was so frustrated with doing business in Alberta that before the election he wanted to leave the country. It was so difficult for him to do business. Here we are. We have an entrepreneur – he was born and raised in this province – who wanted to leave, someone with skills, capital, a strong work ethic. These are the very people that we want to retain.

This is what the NDP government did for this province. When I was in business, we took hits from the carbon tax, local property taxes in Calgary, income taxes, increases to the minimum wage, regulatory changes. The cost of business continued to go up while the economy went down; hence, our revenues declined. The NDP government continued to push forward with their agenda, and, Madam Chair, it was that agenda that led me to this place today.

I wholeheartedly support the original proposal and will vote against the amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

3:10 a.m.

**The Chair:** Members, I think that 3 o'clock in the morning is our finest hour.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment that my hon. colleague put forward. I'm happy to address it and pleased that members of the government caucus are rising to engage in debate. I do appreciate an exchange of points of view. I will disagree with a number of comments by the previous speaker.

I think, you know, first and foremost, obviously, that there's a recognition that the last four years have been very challenging – in fact, it's the last four and a half, five years, when the international price of oil was starting to slide, which all members should recall. That's why the former Premier, Mr. Prentice, called the election a year early. It was called after three years because he saw what all economists were saying, which was that the economy and the price

of oil was going to continue to slide, and he didn't want to call an election in the spring of 2016, when we would be at the depths of the recession. Again, he thought, I think, that things would have turned out a little differently. But that obviously had a significant impact on every single person in this province.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

If you look at the number of businesses, Mr. Chair, that only do business within the province of Alberta, it's a vast majority of them. When you look at how many do business across Canada, it's not a large percentage, and when we look at within North America and then internationally, it drops down significantly. I think the number of Alberta companies that are actually global market players is less than 2 per cent. When you have so many businesses reliant on and only doing business within the province, when the driving industry of energy takes a big hit, absolutely every industry is affected. We've seen the impact that that's had on families absolutely everywhere.

Now, as far as, you know, the proposal to drop the corporate tax rate: my caucus mates and I are putting forward arguments that it won't necessarily translate into job creation. In fact, this has been tried in a number of jurisdictions around North America that have dropped the corporate tax rate significantly, and it hasn't led to significant job growth. Sure, there will be some job growth. I don't think anyone is going to stand up and say: there won't be a single job created. That would be silly.

But my concern is that the projections are being overly optimistic in the sense, Mr. Chair, that from a number of businesses that I've spoken to around the province about the corporate tax reduction, although some may be excited for that, when pressed on what they are going to do with the savings – are they going to reinvest it back into their company, are they going to hire more people, or are they going to invest in new machinery and equipment? – I've yet to find a company that has said yes to those questions. Every single company that I've spoken with has said: no; I'm going to pocket the savings. Now, again, not laying blame on them. Understandable. The last few years have been very, very challenging, so they want to make up for some of their losses. I understand that. But that is where what the bill proposes to do won't necessarily get us to that outcome.

Now, again, I appreciate that the members opposite are looking at a number of their bills and not just this one as the silver bullet. I think, quite frankly, there isn't necessarily a silver bullet. I think, you know, it's a combination of creating the right conditions. But I also think that when we're looking at trying to attract companies, which we have over the last four years, in fact, some significant global players from Amazon to Google DeepMind to RocketSpace and others, I can tell you that on the tech side the number one thing that companies are looking for is talent and a talent pipeline to ensure that they can fill the positions that they need and that students have the right skills and the workers that they need to hire have the right skills. This is where it's investing in our postsecondary, it's investing in our education system to ensure that we are graduating the right talent to be creating companies and, obviously, start-ups and entrepreneurs, for which we did a significant amount of funding, working with organizations to provide mentorship.

You know, the two things I heard most clearly when I travelled the province, Mr. Chair, was that companies were looking for access to capital and looking for mentorship to avoid the pitfalls and mistakes that many new entrepreneurs face because they don't know. So we tried to address both of those issues, increasing access to capital through ATB, increasing access to capital by working with the Business Development Bank of Canada, but then also working with existing organizations and those that have the expertise – again, ATB was a great partner; so was Business Link

– to provide more mentorship and training opportunities for entrepreneurs. We do want them to be successful. I think it's a series of different ways to provide support.

We introduced three different tax credit programs that other provinces have enjoyed for decades, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, and were asking previous governments to introduce here in the province of Alberta. We've seen tremendous success from those programs. In fact, you know, in the coming weeks I will be asking the ministers if they intend to keep those programs. We've conditionally approved about \$200 million in tax credits, which has leveraged \$2.2 billion of investment. That's real investment being deployed right now, when it's needed, putting men and women back to work but also helping our companies expand.

We pushed the federal government on an accelerated capital investment – or accelerated capital cost allowance. Man, I can tell it's 3 in the morning; my brain is slowing down. I can tell you that we weren't completely pleased with the federal government because in the energy sector they didn't give a full hundred per cent of that whereas other sectors do enjoy that. I still think that there is a discrimination against our energy sector that continues to this day. I think, quite frankly, there's a misunderstanding in Ottawa about the Canadian and Alberta energy sector, how it's not just a driving force for our province but that, really, it's the economic engine of the country. So we will continue to try to educate our friends in Ottawa on the importance of this sector.

I mean, there are a number of other things that we did in the energy space for modernizing the royalty programs. Companies at first were a little hesitant when we said that we wanted to modernize the royalties. Their last recollection of this was under former Premier Stelmach in 2008 when they had started to move on modernizing royalties, to which industry panicked, and then the government backed down. But we wanted to award innovation and reward companies that are being innovative, recognizing that wells, depending on their lifeline, are going to have different production rates, and not penalize companies for not shutting in a well when that production level starts to drop. So we modernized it, and the energy sector was quite pleased. In hindsight we wish they would have made a little more noise and said, you know, "Way to go, government," that we got it right. We got it right because we engaged with energy leaders to say, you know: what do we need to do, and how do we get this right to ensure that they will continue to be profitable?

As well, you know, we lobbied the government on securing funds for orphan wells for reclamation. There still are a remarkable number of wells that need to be cleaned up in the province, recognizing that we need to get going on some of those. Again, at a time when we had a lot of men and women with significant training looking for work, it was a great solution to get them back to work.

You know, I think, Mr. Chair, the crux of the challenge that we have in supporting this bill is that, again, there is no guarantee that there will be significant job creation through cutting the corporate tax rate. I know that my colleagues have cited examples such as Kansas, where they significantly cut their corporate tax rate for a period of years, which had little impact on the economy but ended up tanking their government revenues, and they had to reverse course.

**3:20 a.m.**

I think, you know, the amendment slows down the reduction in corporate taxes – instead of 12 percent to 8 over a period of years, it's from 12 to 10 – basically providing the government with an opportunity to hit the pause button, to look at the program: okay; over the course of a couple of years let's see how many new jobs were created. Now, I appreciate, you know, that this isn't in

isolation, so the job numbers won't directly correlate to this one program, but I think it does give government the opportunity to look at: is this the best tool?

I mean, the trade-off, quite frankly, Mr. Chair – and I think we used the government's numbers. We've estimated that it'll cost about 4 and a half billion dollars to do this. I don't know if anyone can stand in this House and say that this is the best tool to get us the results that we want. I appreciate that some economists will say yes, this is. I can show you a number of economists that will say no, actually, it's not.

This is part of the reason, quite frankly, that when we first introduced our investor tax credit and capital investment tax credit, they were introduced only for a period of a couple of years, and we did an ongoing assessment of the program to see: is it actually delivering the outcomes that we want? I'll even back up before then, Mr. Chair. We initially were going to introduce, some members may recall, the job-creation incentive program, or JCIP, which originally was going to reward employers with I think it was about \$5,000 per new employee hired. You know, it may sound like a great idea in theory, but when we went out and talked to companies, they said: this is not going to get you the results that you're looking for.

That program was designed in conjunction with industry but obviously had some wrinkles. When we took it to the broader public, they said: this isn't going to get you what you want. I'm proud of the fact that we said: "Okay. Well, we're not just going to charge forward with it." This is, I think, sometimes for me the challenge in this place, when parties say, "It was in our platform; we're full steam ahead plowing through it." Well, you know, maybe some ideas in a platform weren't fully either costed out or thought through. You know, I think it's commendable for a government to say: let's double-check this, and let's do an ongoing evaluation of it to see if it's delivering the outcomes that we want; if it's not, then let's look at making some changes.

On that example of the job-creation incentive program, we pulled it. We pulled it before we implemented it, went back out, and did more consulting. That's where chambers of commerce, economic development associations, businesses from sole proprietors and entrepreneurs up to multinationals – well, multinationals wouldn't qualify for the investor tax credit, but for the capital investment tax credit they would – said that these are two much better tools that will help you get the results that you're looking for, which is job creation and economic stimulation. So we introduced those, and after a period of two years we decided to recapitalize those two programs because of how successful they were.

In listening to a number of our colleagues during their maiden speeches, one or two of the members talked about Seven Generations, which is a company that I have a great deal of respect for that operates facilities near Grande Prairie. I was very proud of the fact that they applied and qualified for the capital investment tax credit on their expansion of their facility. You know, there are a number of companies that have said that that program was the difference between pulling the trigger on investing dollars now versus those dollars sitting on the sidelines.

I think, Mr. Chair, that it would be prudent for this House to accept this amendment, which, again, taps the brakes on this program and allows the government to do an assessment of whether or not, you know, dropping the corporate tax rate is going to give the results that they're looking for or if these new-found tax savings are just going to go into the pockets of the folks that are receiving them and will not be reinvested back into the economy through job creation, through investment in machinery and equipment.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

With that, Madam Chair, I will recommend and urge all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of this amendment.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:25 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, just a friendly reminder to all in this House: you must be in your own seat for the vote to take place.

For the motion:

Bilous	Deol	Pancholi
Carson	Eggen	Renaud
Dach	Irwin	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd

Against the motion:

Aheer	LaGrange	Reid
Allard	Loewen	Rowswell
Amery	Long	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Milliken	Schow
Copping	Nally	Schulz
Getson	Neudorf	Shandro
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Sigurdson, R.J.
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Issik	Panda	Williams
Jones		

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 31
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 3. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? The motion is carried.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

[Debate adjourned June 5]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise, not necessarily shine at this point in the morning but certainly to rise, and speak to Bill 2. Now, my colleagues have had the opportunity, I think, to lay out several of the concerns that our caucus has with this particular bill, the steps it takes to roll back, I think, the important things that we had moved forward for workers in this province.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I remember when we first came into this House to begin to look at changes to the labour code in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. As has been noted by my colleagues, those were changes that were long, long overdue. Previous Conservative governments had, as they had on so many things, studied things and then stepped back and decided not to act and then studied them again and then decided not to act. We saw that with farm workers' safety: over a decade of consultation in this province, of talking with farmers, ranchers, individuals, and numerous reports that were all simply shelved and put away.

Now, we have talked a good deal in this House, Mr. Speaker, about balance. We heard today about the essential need to roll back protections that are in place for LGBTQ students and their right to form a GSA today because we needed to have balance. The minister has not been able to define what she means by balance, but in general the concept is that you have competing interests, that you have two different sides that you need to consider. So when we are talking about labour legislation, we are talking about balance. It's unfortunate, but for many, many, many years Conservative governments in this province were not concerned about balance; they were concerned about the next electoral cycle. They were concerned about their donations that would be coming in because that was, of course, before we brought in legislation, as our first act of government, ending corporate and union donations to political parties.

That was the first step, Mr. Speaker, towards trying to bring a bit more balance into how we approach labour legislation in this place. And I remember over the years the attacks that were made by government on labour in this province. As other colleagues have noted, we've heard the kind of language that gets used when we're talking about the labour movement in this province, talk about union thugs, other loaded terms. Certainly, if we go back to the annals of *Hansard* during the last four years and at some times like this, indeed, when we were here in the early hours of the morning, I can tell you that there is some colourful, colourful language from now members of the government, who were in opposition at the time, giving their thoughts on unions and the labour movement in this province.

We may not agree on all fronts with everything that unions would ask for or necessarily how they would go about asking for them. But, ultimately, we have to acknowledge that unions have served an important role in our labour movement in providing for workers' rights, and indeed we have to recognize that if they had not stepped forward, there would be many rights that workers enjoy today that they would not have because, to be frank, businesses were not just about to hand those over to them just out of the kindness of their hearts.

Now, that is not to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am antibusiness, as was suggested earlier this evening as we were debating Bill 3 by the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore. I certainly recognize that she took exception to some of the comments that some other members of this House had made. She interpreted them a particular way. I can tell you that, for my own part, Mr. Speaker, I have made no such comments.



3:50 a.m.

Indeed, I support business, and I appreciate the many businesses that contribute to the vibrant constituency of Edmonton-City Centre. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we have seen incredible growth in the downtown core here in Edmonton over the last few years, and a lot of that has been because we've seen increased business investment but also because we have taken the time to work to build livable communities, to think about the people that live here as well as the businesses that operate here, and made investments in things like, yes, that Conservative bugaboo bike lanes, in creating more walkable neighbourhoods, and other things which contribute to the vitality and make it easier for people to access businesses and better opportunities to get around, because these things are all of a piece. Again, it's about balance.

Now, I think there is clearly some disagreement between our side of the House and the government side of the House as to where the proper balance should lie on a few particular pieces, which is why we have this bill in front of us here, where the government feels that we have put too much of a burden on businesses in order to give employees the same rights and opportunities that they have in every other province in Canada, so on things like holiday pay, which, again, is something that was a relic here in the province of Alberta, that previous governments simply chose not to address for years.

I can't tell you the number of times, Mr. Speaker, over the last four years that I had conversations with people, and they said, "Why is something this way?" and I said, "Well, you know, Alberta is the only province in Canada that..." — and generally these were not positive things. Our government worked hard over the last four years to try to help us catch up. We heard members of the government this evening defending the fact that they feel that we have to have the lowest corporate tax in Canada. It's not good enough to be equal to other provinces or a little bit below. It has to be well below. It has to be the best.

Yet for our workers, Mr. Speaker, the same government is saying that they should make do with second best. That, to me, is not balance. Workers in Alberta have every right to be able to enjoy a Christmas holiday, just like they would if they worked in Manitoba, if they worked in Saskatchewan or any other province in Canada. There is no reason to deny them that. The fact that previous governments failed to provide that and that they set a standard that was substandard is no excuse to now decide that we need to all of a sudden roll that back.

Workers in Alberta deserve to have it. I hate to think where we would be if we had had another Conservative government over the last four years. Would workers have actually gotten the bereavement leave that is now available to them on a level with other provinces? Would workers still be left in the position where, if they took sick leave to care for their family, they could be fired from their job? Conservative governments just let that one lie. That was not balance, Mr. Speaker.

To insist that the only way for business to succeed is for us to roll back opportunities and protections for workers, that the only way for businesses to succeed is for young people to be paid \$2 less an hour — let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that here in my constituency I have organizations like Boyle Street Education Centre. They work to support youth who've been struggling, marginalized youth, high-risk youth. They provide a flexible schooling system. It is a charter school, an excellent use of the charter school model, to provide flexible education that allows those students to be able to access school in an environment where they feel comfortable. Do you know how many of those students also have to work to make a living, are struggling, and may not have the support of family? And

this government wants to reduce the wage that they are able to earn to support themselves by \$2 an hour.

That is a significant chunk of money for a young person who is struggling to get by, Mr. Speaker. That is a slap in the face. I think of the kids in the hall bistro over at city hall, again, a business that employs young people who have been struggling. It gives them the opportunity to get job experience. It gives them the opportunity to get on their feet. That has changed lives. Now those youth are being told that they are worth \$2 less an hour. The support that they should be able to get from that to help their families, to help themselves, to raise themselves out of poverty: that is being taken away from them by this government.

I'm proud of the businesses here in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, who support their workers and are proud to do it. I think of Kunitz Shoes on Jasper Avenue. It's been around since the '80s. They're proud to pay their employees a living wage. Indeed, you know, we were talking earlier about the tax bill. There's a corporation that is contributing to the community who is not asking for a corporate tax break. In fact, they told me that they don't want it. They are proud to support and to give back to the community as part of that. I have many businesses like that here in my constituency, some younger entrepreneurs who are working to find new models of how they operate their business so that they can properly support and pay their employees.

It's not always easy, Mr. Speaker. I'll be honest about that. I've talked with them, and, yeah, they talk about the challenges they face and some of the increases that have happened, whether that's with CPP or other things that have made it a little bit tighter. But they have not been asking me to come into this House and vote a lower minimum wage for any of their employees.

### Point of Order Quorum

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you confirm a quorum?

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to page 402 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the bells must be rung immediately, as per Standing Order 5(2) as well.

**The Acting Speaker:** A question of quorum has been raised. In order to confirm quorum, we will ring the bells for one minute.

[Pursuant to Standing Order 5 the division bell was rung at 3:59 a.m. and the Acting Speaker confirmed that a quorum was present]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good morning, hon. members. It's a pleasure to see you this morning.

4:00 a.m.

I thank the hon. member for the request for confirmation of quorum. As you all know, in Standing Order 5

the presence of at least 20 Members of the Legislative Assembly is necessary to constitute a meeting of the Legislative Assembly for the exercise of its powers, and in counting the number of those present, the Speaker, if present, shall be included.

As we can all see, there are at least 20 members inside the Chamber. As such, there is a quorum that is present.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that we can certainly count on all our members. Humour pales at 4 a.m.

As I was saying, the question we have before us is one of balance. Are we striking the appropriate balance in respecting workers' rights, in treating Albertan workers as well as workers in any other

province in Canada, in treating youth who do the same work as an adult in a balanced way when it comes to their wage? We seem to have a marked difference in opinion between one side of the House and the other on this, so that is why I'm bringing forward this amendment. I'll give the original the opportunity to reach you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. If you'll just give me a moment here, hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, we'll have it circulated to the table, and then I'll ask you to proceed.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, I see that you'd like to move the amendment to Bill 2. Now, as the amendment was presented in the name of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview – obviously, it would be inappropriate of me to refer to whether or not that member was present and/or not present – and given the current circumstances that are before us, it would be challenging for you to be able to move the amendment in the name of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. However, if the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, if he was or was not present, wanted to rectify the situation, then it could be moved on behalf of the member, in which case that could happen.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to take a moment to reflect on your words and consider what you've just said. It's something I want to make sure I give careful thought to before I proceed, with rendering a decision on that front. I think that at this point . . .

**The Speaker:** If I might just confirm, then. What I understand is that you are moving the amendment on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Perfect. Please proceed.

**Mr. Shepherd:** My apologies for having been less than clear on that point originally. There has been an interesting mixture of bells and rising and standing and many things, which confused the matter for a moment, but I'm glad that we've been able to achieve some clarity on this amendment, which I move on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, which reads . . . [Mr. Shepherd's speaking time expired]

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your comments.

I'm sure that all members of the Assembly now have a copy of the amendment. I'm sure that somebody will be more than happy to read it into the record although we all have a copy of it.

Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has questions or comments for the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may I say what a pleasure it is to see your bright and shiny face. I'd like to ask the Member for Edmonton-City Centre if he could be so kind as to actually read the amendment into the record for us.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for a very pertinent and reasoned question. I move on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time . . .

How often I have heard that, Mr. Speaker; my first time to utter it.

. . . because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, as I read those words, it is your voice that rings in my head.

It is my pleasure to move this amendment, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, I think we have many questions we need to consider regarding the appropriate balance for this bill. Of course, I recognize that the intent of this bill, as has been noted by members in earlier debate this evening, is to be part of a suite of actions that this government wishes to take that they believe will increase investment in the province of Alberta. They have yet to identify how many jobs, precisely, they feel might have been saved over the last four years if these actions had been in place or an amount of investment that they feel, in any precise dollars, would have stayed within the province of Alberta if we had ensured that things had been tilted a little less towards the workers. Perhaps they'll have the opportunity to illuminate us with some of those estimates and those figures during debate.

4:10 a.m.

For the time being, we have the opportunity to bring this forward and choose to suggest that this bill not be read a second time because, frankly, it is our view that this bill is not going to accomplish what members of the government wish to accomplish but will instead simply pick the pockets of Alberta workers, restore an imbalance between workers and employers, and set us back from where we should be aiming to go in terms of the way we treat our workers and the way we approach the workplace here in the province of Alberta.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, and I look forward to debate on the amendment.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, if you desire, as the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has already spoken under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you at this hour. I'm not sure how much time is left under 29(2)(a), but at the same time I was hoping to speak to the amendment as well. I think it's an important amendment in that this act makes significant changes, almost reverses all the progress that was made in changes to the Employment Standards Code, the Labour Relations Code. It's impacting workers' rights, their job-protected leaves, maternity leaves, compassionate care leaves, the minimum wage, holiday pay, overtime pay, all those things. It has consequences for labour relations for many Albertans, so I think it's important that we look into these issues in more detail.

Also, as noted in the amendment, we are of the view that this bill will not draw any investments or stimulate the economy, so I think that not reading it at . . .

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

I see the minister of multiculturalism and status of women is rising to speak to the amendment.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, House. The only thing I wanted to suggest – and I think you're calling it the pick-the-pockets bill – is that this side of the House just put the carbon tax back into the pockets of every single Albertan in Alberta. It is an incredible feeling to be able to give that back to the people of Alberta. I would just like to state that, as they try to say that we're picking pockets, we're actually giving it back and putting those dollars back into their pockets.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) if anyone has questions or comments to the hon. minister.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is rising in debate.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The year was 1974, February 28, actually. February 28 was the day that I was born in 1974.

**An Hon. Member:** A leap year.

**Member Loyola:** Actually, no. You know, I hear this all the time. People are, like: oh, you're so lucky you weren't born on the 29th. But 1974 was not a leap year, so if I would have been born the next day, it simply would have been March 1. Right? It wasn't a leap year. I was off by two years and a day.

The reason why I bring this up is because, of course, I've heard repeatedly in this House from members of the UCP that somehow members on this side of the House don't know what it's like to work hard. You know, I get it. It's rhetoric. I get it. Like, working on a farm, I'm sure, is really tough. It's really tough. I've never had the experience myself. I mean, I've visited a farm, right? I get to see the kind of work that's done, but I've never had to actually work on a farm or a ranch. You know, I've never had the experience of doing that. Now, I'm not saying that all the members in the UCP work on farms and ranches and things like that, but, you know, repeatedly some of the members get up and talk about their experience and how hard they worked in running their own business as if members on this side of the House haven't had that experience either.

So I thought I'd go a little bit through my curriculum vitae just to share with you a little bit about the kind of stuff that I've had the pleasure and honour of doing. Now, those members who were in the 29th Legislature know that my family came to Canada. We came fleeing the violence that was occurring in Chile, that occurred on September 11, 1973, the military coup that happened there. As a result of that military coup, it was instrumental for my family to get out of Chile, and we ended up coming here.

Actually, my father came first. He actually came in March of '74. He would often joke because – and Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that you may appreciate this – actually, when he came to Canada, he really wanted to go to Quebec because my father knew how to speak French, and he was really wanting to go to Quebec. But, of course, when you come fleeing violence and you come on refugee status – of course, my family was a community-sponsored refugee, not a government-sponsored refugee, and there is a difference. There are government-sponsored refugees, there are community-sponsored refugees, family-sponsored refugees. They're all a little bit different in how they're treated and the options that they get when they get here.

My father came sponsored by a community. It was actually a religious community. They were actually a group of farmers that would get together, Christians, and they saw it fit to support my father. I'm very thankful that we had that community here in Alberta, that took it upon themselves to say: "You know what? We want to help one of these families that are fleeing the violence in Chile." Because of that, my father was able to come. He came in March, and my mother, my older brother, and I ended up following soon after.

My dad actually worked it out so that we got here the early morning of July 1, of course, Canada Day. My father worked it out just so, because he wanted us to be here for Canada Day and take in the festivities because he was really proud of the fact that we're now living in Canada. We have certain privileges, rights, and freedoms here as well as duties and responsibilities. He wanted us

to really make sure that Canada started to feel like home for us, at least if it was going to be temporary.

Of course, as I always like to remind people, coming to a country as a refugee is very different than coming as an immigrant because the immigrant packs up everything that they have, either sells it all off or whatever they have to do or they give it away, but their intention is very much leave to the country so that you can start another life somewhere else, whereas the refugee has to leave immediately, as soon as possible, fleeing the danger and the violence that they're experiencing, and it's usually an overnight thing. If you ever have the opportunity to talk to someone that had a refugee experience, no matter from which part of the world, you'll know that it's like that. There were many Chileans that fled Chile, ended up actually going to Argentina – and they were in refugee camps in Argentina before they actually came to Canada – or ended up going to Australia or Sweden or even other places here in Canada. That was very much their experience. They had to flee overnight because their lives were actually in danger. They were in danger of being killed.

4:20 a.m.

The reason why I bring this up is because, of course, the experience is different. I just want to make sure that people in this House know that, that it's not the same.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Relevance**

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I just might add that I appreciate the importance of the information that you're sharing. In no way, shape, or form is my interjection a reflection of the importance of that. Having said that, I would imagine that you're just mere moments away from making this important discussion perhaps a bit more relevant to the topic at hand, which, of course, is the amendment that's before the Assembly.

I might just encourage – and I recognize that we've been here for some extended period of time – members to keep their comments relevant, as we know, to the issue at hand.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Member Loyola:** Indeed, Mr. Speaker, indeed. What I'm doing is simply setting the context for the material that I'm about to go into.

As I was saying, coming as a refugee is very distinct. The reality is that refugees, when they come, for example, don't have all their credentials. They don't have documents demonstrating that they have the knowledge that they have or the experience that they've had and often will end up working jobs where they are not just simply underemployed but severely underemployed.

Luckily, my father managed to wade through all of that chaos and actually ended up working a really great job here in Canada through a chemical plant that some of you may recall. It's no longer open, but it was called Celanese Canada. He ended up becoming a project engineer through Celanese Canada.

The reason why I bring this up is because even though my father had managed to wade through all of that, my mother did not have the same experience. My mother was just one semester shy of finishing her political science degree when the military coup happened and unfortunately could not finish the degree because at the time that the military coup happened, the military regime decided that, well, you either study or you work, but you can't do both. By this time, as you may have guessed, my older brother and I were already born, so my mom was not only doing her political science degree, but she was also working full-time. When the

regime decided to do this, she had to choose. Of course, I think that any mother would choose to provide for her family rather than to continue studying.

The reason why I bring this up is because, of course, my parents then had to make ends meet here in Canada. For 17 years my parents had their day jobs – they worked a 9 to 5, which was more like a 7:30 to 4:30 – and then on top of that they would do janitorial service work. They'd come home from their 9 to 5, which, like I said, was more like a 7:30 to 4:30. They'd come home, they'd prepare food for us – by this time, you know, like, the family had started to grow, so it was my older brother, myself, and I have two younger brothers – and then at 5:30 were right back out the door working on their janitorial service contracts. They would not come home until 11:00, 11:30 at night. Could you imagine working from 7:30 in the morning to 11:30 at night, just to get up the next day and do the same thing over again and again and again and again? So when I hear members from the other side talk about how, "Oh, well, you guys don't know what a good, hard day's work is," it's not true.

When I finally became of age, when I was about 11 years old, I told my parents: "I feel so bad that you have to go out and do this work. Please let me go with you, even if I could just do simple things." I started off by just cleaning washrooms, scrubbing the toilets, and passing the vacuum, just so I could help my parents out so that they could finish those contracts just a little bit earlier and make it home just a little bit earlier. My older brother did the same. We helped our parents out as much as we possibly could.

By the time I was 12 years old I started delivering flyers in my neighbourhood. At 13, believe it or not, I was the Dickie Dee ice cream boy. I used to get up early every day. I had to be at the Dickie Dee storage thing, ice cream warehouse by 7:30 in the morning. I didn't have a bicycle. I remember that it would take me at least half an hour to walk there. So I'd get up early in the morning, I'd walk out to the warehouse, I'd get my cart, bells and all – ding, ding, ding, ding – and I'd go sell ice cream for the entire day.

When I got enough experience doing that, a friend of mine told me: "Well, Rod, you know what? Why don't you go and get a job at McDonald's?" I did that. I worked at the McDonald's on 91st Street and 34th Avenue, just outside of Mill Woods. I remember that when I first started, I got paid \$4.25 an hour. I believe at that time I was making just a bit under because I wasn't 14 yet. I was still 13. For some reason – I can't remember specifically what the scenario was – if you weren't 14 yet, you couldn't get the full minimum wage. I think that's what the case was. They gave me some excuse for why I wasn't making \$4.50 and I was only making \$4.25, right?

Anyway, you can probably imagine where this is going. [laughter] Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness. At least I'm making the members laugh. You know, it's all about trying to be as jovial as possible, right?

Of course, the main reason why I'm bringing this up is because of the wage differential for youth in the province.

**An Hon. Member:** There's the connection.

**Member Loyola:** There we go. There's the connection. There's the connection.

Why discriminate on the basis of age? I don't know. I really don't know why this government wants to roll back the minimum wage for young people. I remember being that young person, being 13 years old and working at McDonald's next to another person that was making more than me simply because they were one year older than I was. But now let me tell you something. I worked just as hard or maybe even harder than that person because I knew what it was to put . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**4:30 a.m.**

**Member Irwin:** Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for his contribution. You made me laugh, and I'm still smiling a little bit, but I do also appreciate your sharing of your family's stories. I think the stories of your family are the stories of many families that I heard from in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood as well, particularly the struggles you talked about, not just in your family's home country but when they settled in Edmonton as well.

I wanted to ask the hon. member to just talk a little bit more about why Bill 2 in particular resonates so much with folks in his constituency and to bring it back to the modern day here a little bit because, again, I heard a lot, as I shared in my maiden speech the other day, about just how impactful this province's \$15-an-hour minimum wage has been for a lot of my constituents, a constituency where there are some of the highest levels of child poverty, a constituency where a lot of folks struggle to find affordable, safe housing. Just having that minimum wage has been life changing.

The rhetoric from some folks around the youth wage is saying that, oh, these are young people just living in their parents' basements and that they're just using that for accessories, that sort of thing. But the reality is that, no – again, I know this from speaking to my constituents in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood – there are a lot of folks, especially new Canadians, young folks, who work to support their families. That small difference in minimum wage has a huge impact on their families. I worry about my constituents.

To the hon. member: if you could just elaborate a little more about what you heard from constituents, particularly when it comes to families trying to make ends meet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to respond.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for that question. I think it's very pertinent because it is the reality of many new Canadians that are here, that went through a very similar experience to what my parents went through, that the young members of those families are working jobs and are contributing to the household income, that those dollars that they earn are making sure that with that family budget, they can make it to the end of the month.

For those constituents that are younger, I really don't understand this age discrimination. They work hard. They're contributing to their families. Yet this government wants to reduce the minimum wage for these individuals, that are working hard, contributing to their families, by \$2. I think that it's really important that we re-evaluate, and that's why it's very important for me that we support this amendment.

Now, I understand that members on the other side are probably not going to vote for this amendment – I get it – but I think it's pertinent that I represent those people, especially refugees and new Canadians that have gone through a similar experience to what my family has gone through, where we were contributing to the household income through our work. Many of you have heard me talk or say in this House: the dignity of the human person. Why should an individual be discriminated against based on their age? Where's the dignity in that? I ask the members in this House . . .

**Member Irwin:** I rise on a point of quorum.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, just have a seat. You might wait to be called on before you interrupt the member. You may call a point of order. Just in terms of process, if you just wait a moment, I'll just have a brief look at who was in the House prior to the Government House Leader rising.

There are very close to 20 members in the Chamber this morning. There certainly were, in fact, 20, so I would ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to proceed.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, why should we discriminate against these individuals that are contributing to the household income and making sure that their families can actually make it to the end of the month? Why are they being discriminated against?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, any further debate on the amendment that is before us? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising in debate.

**Mr. Dang:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure to see you this fine morning and to be able to debate this amendment with all members of the Assembly and to have the opportunity to do the important work of this Assembly so that we can move forward and have open discussion on how we can improve legislation that comes before this House. I really want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for the amendment here. Pretty clearly, we've seen that Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, really isn't something that supports Albertans. It's really something that doesn't support workers, and by extension we know that it's not something that's going to draw investment or stimulate our economy.

I mean, we can see that what's done with this bill is that it cuts overtime pay for employees, it cuts holiday pay for employees, and it moves forward to roll back protections that were really in line with the rest of Canada, Mr. Speaker. I think that's something that's very concerning. When you want to succeed in business and when you want to move forward and have a strong economy, what you need to have is strong workers that can go out and do the jobs that we need done. I'm very concerned that this bill doesn't accomplish that.

I'm very concerned that this bill will have some very damaging effects for our economy. I mean, we look at some of the things being done here. When we look at the difference between pay at time and a half versus straight time, for some employees that's going to be over \$2,500. I mean, that's money that is being spent back in the local economy, that's being spent in local businesses, and that's money that's going to become dead money. If it becomes dead money, Mr. Speaker, I think that's something that should be concerning to all members of this Assembly because we don't need the money sitting in the pockets of bankers. We need the money being spent in Alberta businesses. We need the money being spent right here in our communities. That's something that I think all members of this Assembly should be happy to stand for, should be happy to fight for, and it's something that all members should be very excited about.

I think it's a change that we're seeing, that the government wants to make a change that really has no match in Canada. There is no other Canadian jurisdiction with similar rules. And they did no consultation. The government moved forward on this quickly, with no consultation, and I think that's something that can be very concerning. If they had stopped and done the work – this is a recurring theme, Mr. Speaker – and if they had stopped and simply done consultation and actually talked to Albertans, maybe they

would see that there could be adverse effects from what happened here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. The election is over. Our job here today is to make sure we have the best possible legislation for all Albertans. It's to make sure that we move forward and have legislation that improves the lives of all of our constituents. Very clearly, Bill 2 doesn't do that. It won't draw investment to Alberta. It won't stimulate our economy. In fact, what it will do is that it will pick the pockets of vulnerable workers and the average working Albertan, and that is something that I think is actually shameful. I think it's something that we shouldn't stand for in this House and that we should all be proud to stand against.

We're talking about a bill that does things like having different compensation depending on what your human capital is, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's something that is very shameful. I think that we should consider every single Albertan to be equal. We should consider that every single Albertan deserves the same protections and the same pay for the same work, and I think that's something that Albertans will agree with. It's something where Albertans will say: we definitely believe that if we do the same job as you, then we should be paid the same. I think that's something that is common sense. It's fair, and it's common sense.

**4:40 a.m.**

It really is something that is not unusual from the government, to be moving forward with no consultation at all, and we heard that from the Premier when he said that he wants to move quickly, because his agenda is so important that he can't consult with Albertans, right? Mr. Speaker, that's something that I think is actually really bad for democracy here in this House. It's bad for our Assembly. It's bad for members, private members especially, of course, because we know that the government front bench can move as many bills as they'd like, but private members are subject to the draw and the lottery system. We know that when the government brings forward bills, we expect them to be well researched, we expect them to be well consulted, and the reality is that that didn't happen in this case.

Perhaps the Premier took a page from what they do often in Ottawa and consulted with the big donors and the big friends over there, Mr. Speaker, but I think, certainly, that that's not what Albertans expect of this government. That's not what Albertans want our government to be doing when we invest in our economy and we try to bring forward workplace protections. I mean, we're talking about workplace protections that the NDP government brought in that made workplaces more family friendly. This government, without any consultation, is trying to move in and just throw out the baby with the bathwater. I think that that's something that we should really spend a lot of time considering, whether there were good things in the legislation that we need to talk about.

Trying to ram through this legislation in the middle of the night is something that I'm concerned we'll see the government do again. I'm concerned that the government will continue to try to use the cover of darkness to try and move legislation through the House. I'm concerned that the government will try to move things, that perhaps have not been consulted on properly and perhaps have not been shared with Albertans properly, using the cover of darkness, Mr. Speaker. That is something that I think all Albertans should be very concerned about. It's something that I think Albertans need to keep an eye on. That's why we as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition will be here making sure we hold this government to account. We hold them to account in making sure bills like this do what they're intended.

Pretty clearly, we can see that they've called it An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. But that isn't true. It won't draw

investment. It won't stimulate the economy. Really, I believe further public input is necessary because when the government wants to go in and pick the pockets of everyday Albertans, working-class Albertans like you and me, Mr. Speaker, when the government wants to go in and remove protections and remove banked overtime pay, I think that's something that Albertans will be concerned about and will want to be consulted about. I think that Albertans will want to have the opportunity to tell their government why this is concerning for them.

When we talk about things like wage differentials and whatnot, Mr. Speaker, these are things that Albertans deserve to have a say on, not just the wealthy donors and friends of the government front-benchers. I think, certainly, that all Albertans deserve to have a say in the legislation, and that's why we're sent here. We're sent here to make sure those protections exist for all Albertans. We're sent here to make sure that it's not just the wealthy donors that get a say in legislation.

I'm concerned that because this legislation was drafted so rapidly and without consultation, we're going to miss a lot of the really important things that we need to talk about. We're going to put Alberta out of step with the majority of provinces when we talk about a lot of these workplace protections. We're going to be behind, basically, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that I think is really concerning to me. I mean, really, there are going to be over 400,000 Alberta workers – indeed, it's actually oil and gas workers that are going to be hit the hardest by these changes. It's going to be workers that depend on their jobs to pay their mortgages.

Really, instead of creating jobs – I know the Premier has spoken at length about how he's obsessed with creating jobs, Mr. Speaker – what he's actually doing is that he's cutting overtime pay for working people, and I think that's something that Albertans should be very concerned about. This is something that Albertans will need to take a look at, and it's something that we need to be able to bring in front of them and actually consult on. I think that this amendment makes a lot of sense when we talk about how there isn't enough public input. When we talk about how this government wants to, through the cover of darkness in the middle of the night or perhaps middle of the morning now, move forward with a bill that has really not seen the light of day, I think that's very concerning. I mean, the value of your work should depend on the effort and skill you put into it.

Really, what the government is doing is trying to set different standards for different people, and I really don't think that the segregation of labour is the way to go about this. Actually, what we should be doing is encouraging people to work their hardest no matter what their demographic is, and I think that's something that's very important. I think that when we talk about some of the changes that are really concerning, of course, youth minimum wage differentials are very concerning, several differentials are very concerning because these people are doing the same work as anybody else.

Certainly, I think that if you're doing the same work, then you should be paid the same. Perhaps members opposite think that a government backbencher should be paid differently than an opposition member, whatever it is. That's their prerogative. But I think that, certainly, Albertans expect that for the same work, you get the same pay. I mean, at the end of the day everybody has to put the same number of hours in, the same amount of effort in, and if they're capable of doing the job, Mr. Speaker, they have to do the job. I think that, pretty clearly, when you look at that, it actually is unfair to segregate workers based on demographics. It actually becomes something that I think Albertans will be very concerned about. I think it's something that the Premier will have to answer. Why does he think certain Albertans are worth less? What is it about

their modest human capital that makes them worth less? What is it about people that they deserve over 13 per cent less pay? Thirteen per cent is not an insignificant amount. I mean, if we took 13 per cent out of the provincial budget, I can assure you that would be something quite concerning to all members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at how drastic these changes are and without any consultation, I think that all members should be significantly concerned. I mean, it's something that we really need to look at and see how shocking some of these changes are. In fact, an economist with the national branch of CUPE called the UCP proposal shocking and said that it hurts tradespeople. Another political scientist from Saskatchewan said that the move would give employers a way to defer a wage cost. I think those are all very concerning things. I think those are all things that Albertans don't want to see. But, of course, we won't know that because the government chose to not consult. The government chose to ram this legislation through hastily without consultation. Really, this amendment speaks to how more public input is necessary. We really do need to go and have more discussions about this because this pick-your-pockets bill takes overtime, steals holiday pay, and it gives a big tax gift to corporations. That's something I'm very concerned about. That's something I think members should be very concerned about. I think that members should take a hard look and say: will working people in our ridings benefit from this?

Really, I think, pretty clearly, working people are going to lose out. I mean, some workers, like I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, are going to lose over \$2,500, and that's a huge difference. If in a month your income is reduced by \$2,500, for a lot of people that is more than their mortgage payment, perhaps more than their mortgage and child care payment. That is something that I think is very concerning. That is something that I think this government has not thought through. It's something that I think the government needs to spend more time on consulting with the public, and, really, if the government is willing to do that, we'd be happy to move forward and discuss ways to make the legislation better.

Mr. Speaker, we only have one chance to make this right. This legislation will affect the lives of over 400,000 Albertans, 400,000 workers predominantly in oil and gas, and it's something that I'm very concerned about because all workers deserve to have the same protections as they would in any other province, as they would in any other part of Canada. That is something that I think is very important, that Albertans will look at and say: is this what they wanted with a Conservative government? Did they expect a Conservative government to go into their pockets and take their hard-earned money away? That is something that I'm very concerned about, I think that my constituents and many Albertans are concerned about.

I know that the members of the opposition over here, we would love to see that the government would try to consult and perhaps try to engage with average Albertans and with their constituents, but instead we can see that, just like during the campaign, government members decided to flee the public spotlight. They didn't go to any forums, Mr. Speaker. They tried to avoid talking to anybody about their platform. In fact, they wouldn't return phone calls. We tried to reach the Conservative candidate that I ran against on election day. We called the front line at his office, and it was actually disconnected. There was no phone for me to call at all.

*4:50 a.m.*

That was actually something that I think is indicative of what the government has done today and why the amendment is so necessary. It's that we do need further public input. You cannot run away from the spotlight when you are trying to govern effectively, Mr. Speaker. Governance is about engaging with all Albertans, engaging with all

the people that we were sent here to represent, and ensuring that we have legislation that works for all Albertans. We don't see that here in Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill. We don't see that the government has done a good job. We don't see that they've actually given consideration to how it's going to hurt the economy, how pulling \$2,500 out of workers' pockets is going to hurt the economy, how those workers are no longer going to be able to spend the money in their local economies and in small businesses around their homes. That is something that is very concerning. I mean, when you take money out of the pockets of Albertans and you take it away from their families – sending a worker to the food bank is not how you incite more economic activity.

I really urge all members to vote for this amendment. I think it's very important.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Infrastructure is rising with a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Panda:** Very brief, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. Welcome back.

I really commend the Member for Edmonton-South for bringing in that energy, but if that energy is actually channelled in a positive manner, that would be helpful for the people that elected him in Edmonton-South. I followed him carefully when he talked about Bill 3 a few hours ago, probably three, four hours ago, and now about Bill 2. When he talked about Bill 3, he used the words “risky ideology” probably 30 times. Now when he talked about Bill 2, he talked about consultation, and I want to focus on that, Mr. Speaker. He also mentioned that the election is over, which is good. We are not campaigning anymore. We've finished that. But when the member is talking about consultation, for some of the incumbent members like you and me, just going back into the timeline . . .

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

### Point of Order

#### Question-and-comment Period

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a):

Subject to clause (b), following each speech on the items in debate referred to in suborder (1), a period not exceeding 5 minutes shall be made available, if required, to Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses to each Member's questions and comments.

Very clearly, he's referring to my comments that I made during Bill 3. He said so himself. I believe that we're currently debating Bill 2, and the member should hold his comments to that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for the interjection. I will acknowledge that he referenced your comments that you'd made with respect to Bill 3. He also is currently in the middle of talking about your comments with respect to Bill 2. He's only made brief comments, and I think that he's well within his right to do so.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to set the record straight here. When the member is talking about risky ideology and he's talking about picking pockets,

there's nothing further from the truth than these members opposite characterizing as picking pockets. So if putting more money into the pockets of Albertans is “risky ideology,” so be it, Mr. Speaker.

When they talk about consultations, this Bill 2 was on our campaign platform. It was our campaign commitment, and we told Albertans that that's what we'll do, unlike what the NDP did when they were in government. Remember when they brought in Bill 6, the so-called consultation – that should remind them. In our case we actually put it on our campaign platform. We said that that's what we will do. It's a promise made to Albertans, and we are trying to keep our promise, to pass this bill on time. When they talk about equality – the equality we're trying to do here is prosperity for all. It's equality in prosperity, not an equality in misery. That's what they want.

This amendment is moved by an Opposition House Leader who actually is saying that this won't draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy. That is not true, Mr. Speaker. The same member actually yesterday attacked the job creators. Yesterday he attacked the job creators, and he apologized. Now he is moving this amendment, which is actually mischaracterizing. Then these members opposite kept talking about picking pockets. The Member for Chestermere-Strathmore tried to correct that, but they keep repeating this, so they are doing a disservice to Albertans and the people that elected them.

Also, Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Calgary-Varsity is an expert on these matters. He has consulted enough, and we are debating here. There are certain aspects of this bill that we actually are going to bring back to the Legislature in the fall after more consultations. We only included here the ones that we had enough consultations on, but there are other aspects of this bill which belong to Bill 2. We're going to bring them to this House after further consultations in the fall.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to support this amendment because the person who moved this amendment, the Opposition House Leader, has no credibility on this.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the Minister of Infrastructure.

Over a long period of time the questions and comments in the application of 29(2)(a) have taken a very broad approach. I know that members of the opposition also enjoy the same luxury with respect to how broad the rulings have been on the use of Standing Order 29(2)(a).

With that said, anyone wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Merci, M. le Président. Bonjour, et j'espère que vous avez bien dormi un petit peu ce matin. Juste avant le lever du soleil, à cinq heures huit, je suis très heureux de participer dans ce débat au sujet de l'amendement du projet de loi no 2, un projet de loi que je préfère appeler la saison verte contre les travailleurs Albertains et Albertaines.

[Mr. Loewen in the chair]

For those who don't speak even the poor French that I try to, I of course welcomed Mr. Speaker to the morning as the sun rises at 5:08 officially, so it's just before sunrise. I hoped that he had a little bit of sleep, and I was very happy to rise and speak to this debate on the subject of the amendment to Bill 2, a bill that I prefer to call open season against workers in Alberta.

I also wanted to make a point that in this House we are able to speak in French at any time. We are not in any way required to provide a translation or an advance script of what we may wish to speak about in French. That example has been made numerous times by other members in this House, including the current

Premier. So I think it's incumbent upon this House, as they do in *Hansard*, to continue translating after the fact and providing our constitutional rights to speak in French in this Legislature with the substance they deserve.

5:00 a.m.

With that said and speaking to the amendment at hand, I think it's very important that we support this amendment because, in fact, as it says very clearly, the bill will not actually draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and further public input is necessary. Though I think we've shown ample evidence in our remarks although members of the government have suggested to the contrary – I think these efforts have been made time and time again to show that the measures of this bill will certainly not in any way, shape, or form draw investment to Alberta and, in fact, might do the opposite.

I think that any amendment or any bill that demonstrably doesn't accomplish what it purports to accomplish should receive a second dose of sober second thought, and that's what we're asking that the House choose to do by supporting the amendment to Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, when it really, in fact, is an act that declares an open season on Alberta workers, or, as we otherwise call it, the pick-your-pockets act.

I know I've spoken to many young people who are very, very dissatisfied with the fact that they're going to be suffering the cut in the minimum wage simply because of their age. I have mentioned in this House already my experience with a similar type of a situation, where I was working at a job, in fact, as a DATS bus driver, under contract. The contractor paid us a wage that had been negotiated, and then the contractor changed from one to another. The new contractor felt no obligation to continue paying that wage, and overnight all the workers, all those bus drivers, had a \$4-an-hour pay cut, from about \$13 to nine bucks an hour.

So I know exactly what our young people in this province are feeling right now. They're feeling very bitter. They're feeling demoralized. They're feeling pretty angry, and they're feeling that the government is really treating them unfairly, and I think that will be reflected in the way they tend to vote when they become eligible to vote.

Also, they are also not alone in this. They have parents. They've got younger siblings and co-workers and friends. On the face of it and when you can hear business owners talk about their efforts to rationalize this cut in pay, saying that it will be, you know, an economic impact that will allow them to hire other workers, it rings pretty hollow on the individual workers who are suffering this loss as well as people who know them, the people who are close to them. It's inherent injustice is pretty blatant, and it's not lost on Albertans what this government is willing to do in the name of saving businesses what they believe is money that they would invest in other workers.

In my view, it's pretty pathetic to hear government members and even some of their validators of this bill and this measure say: "You know, it's good for you. Cutting your wages is good for you. It'll be better." It's more than paternalistic. I'm really shocked that that type of an argument could be made. I certainly didn't feel that way when I had my wages cut by four bucks an hour overnight. I felt terribly exploited, and I really have never forgotten it. I know that I took what actions I could take back then by calling in a reporter and having that reporter write a story. That story hit the newspaper, and the next morning, of course, I was hauled on the carpet in the office of the manager with that article on the desk of that manager and red circles all around the quotes that I made because – and this is a direct quote – I called it a screw job. That was quoted in the paper,

and they didn't like it all that much. That's exactly the way I felt, though.

The next morning they concocted a plan and hired a stooge to go ahead and follow me. They did. They followed me all day long. I knew right off the bat, right out of the garage that somebody was following me to concoct a story about whether I'd, you know, put my signal light on or put the brake lights on or come to a full stop. After the shift they concocted a story about how I'd had infractions of driving rules, and they fired me, just like that. Boom. That's what Alberta labour laws have been like, and that's the type of thing I've experienced in my work experience. It was over somebody unjustifiably, in my view, cutting my wages by four bucks an hour, by 25 per cent, overnight.

We're doing the same thing to our young students, our working students, and it's a wholly heartless approach to labour law, just totally disrespectful of the human beings that we have working in our workforce, who are entering our workforce. The message that that sends to people who are working now and have been working at \$15 an hour and are chopped to \$13 is that they have no value, they're not worth while, and they're dispensable. That's how they actually feel.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I felt like that, and you can get a sense of the bitterness I still have and that I hold for the manager and the company that took that action and saw fit to go ahead and just simply cut my wage because they could, because the labour laws allowed them to get away with it. That was, like, 30 years ago, and here we're looking at a government and government members who are arguing that this is what we should go back to and that this is acceptable in 2019 in Alberta, labour legislation that allows a total disrespect of the human beings that are in the workforce by cutting their wages overnight simply to satisfy what they think is a way to stimulate further employment but in a way that's been totally discredited.

What they're doing is damaging young people as they enter the workforce and damaging their view of the whole economic system the government hopes they'll actually embrace. It doesn't make any sense at all to adopt a system that really diminishes the value that people have in themselves. It tells the world that we don't value our young people, yet this government seems intent on rationalizing it away so that businesses will support them, so that business owners will support them. There are business owners who don't support this, who have come clean and said: look, we're going to continue paying the current \$15 an hour because we feel ashamed to follow along with this purported government change to reduce the minimum wage.

That's one of the elements of this legislation that I think will not help draw investment back to Alberta or allow or encourage companies to reinvest these so-called savings into Alberta or stimulate the economy because it does more damage to the working force, that they're supposedly helping out by creating more jobs, because it demoralizes working people at a young age. It also, if you do the math, takes about \$4,000 a year out of their pockets. That's \$4,000 for somebody who's 16 to 18 years of age, and these people are either saving for university or perhaps they're helping their family out.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that I left home after high school, when I was 17 years of age. Believe me, I worked just as hard as anybody else when I was working jobs at 17 years of age out of high school, and I was not happy to suffer another indignity that this government still wants to continue in Alberta, and that's paying a wage differential to younger people. I suffered being paid a lower wage because of my age, as I mentioned before, at the old Marshall Wells warehouse here in Edmonton, that stood on the land that the bus depot used to stand on, and now it's actually part of the Ice District



redevelopment. When I was hired there – I think it was somewhere around \$2 and a quarter an hour when I was 16 – the people who were 18 were making a differential that brought them somewhere closer to \$2.75, \$2.65, something like that. I was working shoulder to shoulder with those same workers.

5:10 a.m.

It was not something that I thought anybody should be proud of. I didn't understand it. I mean, that was the way it was. You couldn't do anything about it because that was the law in Alberta, and this is the law that this government wants to turn back to, to turn back the clock. It's something that is a theme of this whole government.

Of course, we know that is something that the current Premier is wont to do because of the article that I've actually tabled once already in this House, where in an *Edmonton Sun* Sunday edition people are asked 20 questions and interviewed about various things, including their likes in the cinema or what they might have for breakfast on a Sunday. One of the questions, of course, asked of our current Premier when he was interviewed for such a Sunday showcase article was: if you could have your own superpower, your favourite superpower, what in the world would your superpower choice be? Our current Premier said that he would choose "to be able to go back in time." Well, let me say, Mr. Speaker, that he's got his wish. He's moving backwards in time, and he's trying to take the rest of us with him.

I for one am going to resist it every step of the way. This is not what Albertans are looking to do. We're a very forward-looking province. We've got a vision for this province that goes well beyond 1955. In fact, I'd like to say that the 21st century is on the minds of most people who are of working age in this province. We intend to make this government know that the vision extends well beyond labour legislation and looks towards the future with eagerness and excitement and knowledge that we have a capacity in this province to know that beyond our borders are markets that are yet to be sought and yet to be grown, that we have the ingenuity in this province and the brainpower to grow our young minds so that those opportunities can be found and developed and not to accept, as we've been told during the time frame that I grew up and went to university in, that we have limitations on ourselves because we were a landlocked province and we couldn't get another pipeline to tidewater, that we didn't have the intelligentsia to determine the technology that would get the new products developed or value-added products in this province processed.

Whether it be in agriculture or whether it be in industry of other kinds, we have visions on this side of the House that the government lacks.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much, Member.

Anyone want to speak under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung's comments. In particular, I appreciated – j'apprecie que tu parles français aussi – what you spoke about in regard to the youth wages. I think the Member for Edmonton-South said this very well as well, just the fact that we know, you know, on our side of the House anyways, that all Albertans, young or old, deserve equal pay for equal work.

[The Speaker in the chair]

One of the things I'm quite concerned about as a former teacher myself is the fact that with this wage differential vulnerable teenagers could most definitely be encouraged to drop out to earn a higher wage. That's quite concerning. We still have one of the

highest drop-out rates, actually, across Canada, and it's not a rate that has decreased at all in the last number of years. We've made a little bit of progress under your leadership, Member for Edmonton-North West, for sure, but I worry greatly that steps like this are going to roll back any progress that we've made.

So I would ask the hon. member to just speak a little bit more about perhaps his own experience and even that of what he's heard from his constituents around concerns about a differential and the fact that, again, we stand so much for the value that a worker is a worker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has the call.

**Mr. Dach:** Merci encore, M. le Président. Je peux continuer en anglais, mais je suis très heureux de pratiquer mon français et d'avoir l'occasion de temps en temps participer dans le discours dans cette Chambre en français. J'espère que les autres dans la Chambre qui parlent pas le français et même qui voudrait essayer ou pratiquer leur français, qui ont appris dans une école secondaire ou peut être dans un cours d'immersion français – je vous invite de participer avec moi, en parlant français dans cette Chambre. C'est quelque chose que j'aime très bien. Je sais bien que mon grandpère, M. Joseph Edouard Napoleon LaBelle, qui est mort depuis quelques ans maintenant, serait très, très heureux d'entendre nous parlons en français dans cette Chambre. A great pleasure to speak French in this Chamber, and my late grandfather, M. LaBelle, would be very proud to know that we are able to do that in this Legislature.

With respect to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood's question, though, the dropout rate – and this is something I'm going to have to learn to say in French; I couldn't look it up quick enough – is something that does simply concern everyone, I think, with justification, because a wage cut may cause somebody to decide that they're going to just drop out of school or claim or lie, saying that they are not a student. I think the depth of that problem has really not been fully analyzed yet. Certainly, the risk of it is there, and it's something that we should be aware of and really consider strongly when we're thinking about what the consequences of this minimum wage cut might be in terms of how many people might decide that they just won't continue their education.

And what's the cost of that? If an individual decides to not pursue their education, somehow is out of school for two or three years, and the next thing you know, they're 22, 23 years of age and they don't have a high school diploma. Their employment opportunities are diminished; their earning power is diminished. It changes their life and that of their families, that they may have already started. It's simply a direct result of a process that this government will have started, and it's unfortunate that this government hasn't really thought that through.

I'm happy to see that members opposite are, bright and early, counting numbers, and we're happy to have that happen.

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

Are there others wishing to speak to RA1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure – it's my very first time – to rise and speak in favour of this amendment as it clearly lays out that this bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary. I think this is a very reasonable amendment, and this should be accepted.

Looking at this bill, you know, and listening to the members in this House, there's no way this bill actually shows that this is going

to do any good with our economy. All it seems is that this is another attempt to fund the largest corporations on the backs of the most vulnerable people, the young people of this province. We should have actually encouraged them to get out, to find jobs, and shown them how valuable they are to us and to this society, instead of this. I see this as another part of the systematic attacks on the backs of the ordinary workers. In this case it's on the workers under the age of 18, the most vulnerable people, that did not even vote for this government. They did not even have their input, and they will pay for this decision if this bill gets passed. Mr. Speaker, to me it seems like this is, basically, even a violation of fundamental rights, human rights. It's discrimination based on somebody's age.

5:20 a.m.

I just wanted to go back and share a story with the House. In 2015, when we were going into the provincial election, I was part of the team that was able to arrange a small discussion forum for all the candidates running in south Edmonton. I hope that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie would remember this incident. There was a question raised during the forum of why you wanted to run and why you think the people should vote for you. One of the candidates from the forum said something about one of the hon. members, our former Speaker and the MLA from my riding, my predecessor the late Gene Zwozdesky. The member said: "You know, I think the member has had the privilege to represent this riding for 22 years. He's over the age of 60 now, and he should not run." You know what happened? Mr. Zwozdesky reacted immediately. What happened after that intimidation: that member was not even able to participate, after that kind of remark, in that whole forum.

And guess what? What are we going to do here? Those innocent young people who are under the age of 18 will do the same amount of work, will have the same skills, will get up the same as us, maybe earlier, 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock, and will go work in gas stations or McDonald's, but they are not entitled to get the same wage because of their age. Those people: we should be encouraging them. When they step up and try to be independent and try to support their families, try to fill their needs – they might need to buy a computer; they might to save some money for their education – they keep this economy moving by participating in this economy. They are the ones that make a little money, and they go to the restaurants, they go to the stores, and they invest their money right there. They help the economy keep moving.

I don't know what benefit this government really sees by rolling back their wages. It's making it so difficult even for the employers. I know what would happen if the young worker is just about to turn 18. He will not find a job because the employer will think twice: given time, after a month or two, he will be entitled that we pay him \$15 an hour, so let's not hire him. What would happen if somebody turns 18 just a month before Christmas? What would you do? Let him go? Find another worker?

It's not really helping anyone that I see, not only this bill but the other bills. My friends on the other side, the opposite side of the House, are so confused, and I think that by passing this amendment, it will give them some opportunity to dig deep into this, you know, really look at it and think twice. Maybe that will help them somehow modify the bill. I've seen that in a past bill when it was something to do with giving away a tax cut to the largest corporations. The members on the other side kept referencing the small businesses when, in fact, that bill had nothing to do with the small businesses; it was to fund the largest corporations in the province.

A \$15 minimum wage. I just want to repeat that this is a minimum wage, not even a livable wage, that we want to attack. I remember that my colleague, a single parent, you know, earning about \$20,

was not even able to afford the ordinary living standard we have, the minimum living standard, given the rents, increasing rent – she has to pay about \$1,500 – and the daycare expense and the groceries. The \$20 will bring probably close to \$2,500 home, but it's not really enough for her. And here we're trying to attack a minimum \$15 wage, and we are dividing people to attack based on their age.

I think we should actually consider this amendment. I strongly encourage my friends in this House to vote for the amendment. That will really help them actually give us more time and help us address the real issue, the real challenge we are facing ahead in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration was the first to rise.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address some of the comments made by the hon. member on the other side. I guess the first comment is in regard to the amendment. I'd like to point out that the hon. member spoke a great deal – and I want to address some of his comments – about the youth job-creation wage. In fact, that does not form part of Bill 2, so actually using that as an argument to support the amendment that we need more time to discuss this – I don't understand the logic behind it because, in fact, we wouldn't be discussing it as part of that.

That said, I would like to address and clarify the purpose because the hon. member mentioned that, you know: why are you doing this? Really, the purpose of the youth job-creation wage is just that, to create employment for youth. The previous government, in their rush to move to a minimum wage of \$15, almost a 50 per cent increase, in the face of one of the worst economic downturns in the province, left a lot of people behind. By moving the wages up by that amount, thousands of people, thousands of Albertans lost their jobs, and those who were hit the hardest were the youth, the young people in Alberta.

What we are trying to do with this act and what we will do with this act is get our young people back to work. By instituting a youth job-creation wage at \$13 an hour, we will provide incentives for employers to actually train young people and get them on the job ladder. It's really important, Mr. Speaker, to point this out. The sooner you get on the job ladder, the more experience that you can get, and once you get more experience, then you can actually increase your wages and go from job to job.

Mr. Speaker, this minimum is exactly that, a minimum. Certain employers will actually decide to pay higher than that, particularly once someone actually gets on that job ladder and gets some experience. There will be employers out there – you know, some concern was raised by the hon. member, saying that there may be a reduction in their pay for people who are currently working, right? But this is a minimum, just that, a minimum.

5:30 a.m.

Employers, once they have trained someone and invested time, energy, and effort in that, they want to hold on to these people. To say that this is automatically going to result in a job cut: quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, this is not true, not true at all. In fact, the Calgary Stampede: we confirmed with them that they had hired a number of students working the summer at \$15 an hour, and they confirmed they're going to continue to pay them at \$15 an hour. It's a choice. It's a minimum, right? The important thing is the thousands of youth that we have right now who are not making any money, who can't save for school, who can't save for their

new car or a trip to Europe or to help out with their family, because what do they earn? They earn nothing right now. By actually establishing a minimum wage at \$13 an hour, it provides them an opportunity to get into the workforce, get experience, earn some money, and then get on that job ladder so they can actually increase their wages.

Now, turning to the amendment, the amendment reads that the Alberta open for business act not be read a second time “because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy.” That, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is not true. This bill is designed in its totality to actually, you know, reduce burdens on employers through the general holiday changes that we’re actually suggesting, which particularly hit the restaurant industry extremely hard, and to reduce losses of hours and jobs for Albertans, so to get them back to work and also to restore balance.

So I urge all members of the Chamber to not vote for this amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows, if you would like?

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is still available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s always my pleasure to rise under 29(2)(a) and speak to some of the comments that were made here. I mean, I’m really concerned with some of the comments the minister made here. Of course, the Member for Edmonton-Meadows really spoke to some of the importance of why the opposition is trying to move this amendment. I’m concerned when the minister speaks about how the youth wage is supposed to help youth, but really clearly we’ve seen youth across this entire province speaking out. In fact, if you look on social media – I hope you’ll rule that this is a phrase that could be in order, Mr. Speaker – the minister has been ratioed twice yesterday alone.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on the amendment. I see the Member for Calgary-McCall rising to debate.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this amendment that this bill not be read a second time because we’re of the view that it “will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.” I guess I can start by saying that the government got the mandate. They may have mentioned some of these things in passing in their campaign, but in no way, shape, or manner was it a comprehensive consultation on the detailed amendments that are brought forward in this legislation.

I will briefly talk about the context that when we became government in 2015, I think there was a consensus around Albertans, labour folks that the Employment Standards Code, the Labour Relations Code, these pieces of legislation, had not been reviewed for decades and that essentially Albertans didn’t have the same rights that Canadians in other provinces were enjoying, hence the changes that were made to holiday pay, to compassionate care, those breaks and many other changes that were made essentially to give Albertans the same rights that in other provinces Canadians were enjoying.

Also, there was a promise made that we would increase the wage to \$15, and hence we increased the minimum wage, but we heard from the minister in particular that they are cutting \$2 from youth wages to create employment. Again, being a student of economics, I fail to see the logic that we will cut someone’s wage and somehow business will hire some more people. I think businesses will hire

people only when they need it, and when they need it, they will hire them whatever that minimum wage is.

The U.S. brought in a minimum wage for the first time in 1938, and up until 2014-15 they raised the minimum wage 21 times. There are longitudinal studies about that increase in the minimum wage. Every time the argument that we heard from the other side was the same, that it will kill the economy, that it will kill businesses, that it’s not the right time, and all those arguments. However, the evidence is that the increase in the minimum wage didn’t result in unemployment, and in most cases employment grew, their GDP grew, and economic activity grew.

Essentially, if you want to create youth job opportunities, I think one example will be that in 2015 they discontinued the program called STEP, student temporary employment program. We invested back into that program, restored that program, added somewhere around \$10 million to that program, essentially working with the employers to make sure that they are hiring youth on a priority basis and getting them the experience they need. That’s how you create opportunities. That’s how you create youth employment. I don’t think that cutting their wages magically creates employment by, I guess, any stretch.

Here I think they are saying that, again, they are helping businesses, but at the same time they are taking away the rights from Albertans that they fought for. There is a long history of how they got those rights in the first place. Secondly, they are attacking those rights that Canadians enjoy in other provinces.

If we talk about, for instance, overtime pay, there is a huge history of how we came to the eight-hour workday and how overtime was agreed to when you work more than eight hours of the day. Overtime means that you are working after those eight hours of the day, and before you were able to bank that at time and a half. Now they will not have that protection if that bill was to pass.

**5:40 a.m.**

The same thing with, like, their holiday pay: that’s getting cut. When we say that it’s pick-your-pocket legislation, then they say that, no, somehow that’s not appropriate. But if we look at the Albertans who earn overtime, I think, those who are working in the oil and gas industry, they may have shifts where they’re working in a certain period, like, on projects that are three weeks straight or sometimes more than that, and the legislation that was in place was giving them the opportunity to then bank that overtime at time and a half. There were workers in the construction industry who were able to do that. There were workers in skilled trades.

Essentially, all those workers will not have these protections because of this piece of legislation. That’s why it is important that we not now read this bill for the second time but take some time to get public input, look into these matters in a fulsome manner. It’s just the First Session and, I guess, the ninth day. Why rush it so much? We still have time, and we should take the time that’s needed and necessary to get these things right. I don’t think that mentioning it once or twice in a campaign amounts to fulsome consultation on such important protections, on such important rights that have consequences for the livelihoods of thousands and thousands of Albertans. In some cases, like, it’s \$2,000 to \$3,000 per 12 weeks, or two, three months. That’s a huge difference, especially for working people.

Similarly, I think I talked about youth jobs and those differentials. I think it’s a matter of fairness as well that people who do similar work, the same kind of work, be treated in the same manner and fairly and just, I guess. Having an arbitrary age limit put in there just to discriminate, just to find an excuse to pay somebody less: I think that’s not fair. If somebody is doing similar

work and putting in time, putting in effort, they should be paid the same.

There are many other things. Like, if we talk about our minimum wage, even though there was an expressed campaign promise that would raise it to \$15, we worked with industry, we worked with businesses, and we agreed that we will bring in that minimum wage in a phased manner. Then we brought it in in four different instalments and gave businesses opportunities to adjust. Similarly, I think that in this case, since these are sweeping changes, there is value to getting input from the public. That's why, again, this amendment is very important.

Then I talked a little bit about general holiday pay and that distinction, how that has been changed and how the eligibility has changed. I think those changes do put Alberta out of step with other provinces such as British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. The rest of Canada is doing something differently, and now this piece of legislation will put Alberta out of step. Again, that also necessitates that Albertans should have similar rights and that this government take the time necessary to consult with the public, consult with those who will be impacted by this legislation, consult with those whose livelihood will be impacted by this legislation.

With respect to banked overtime changes I think no other Canadian jurisdiction, as far as I can tell, has similar rules. Again, there were no consultations that were undertaken, and these changes are rushed through. This amendment creates that opportunity for the government to take the time that is needed and to consult with those who will be directly impacted by these changes.

At the same time, I think we also heard, as the name An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business at least tries to suggest, that somehow these changes will help businesses, that these changes will help stimulate the economy. I think that attacking workers, their rights, in no way, shape, or manner will ever help the economy or will ever help draw investment or stimulate the economy. I think there is evidence, actually, to the contrary. If you pay your workers well, you will see that you have a better retention rate. You will have better productivity. By attacking workers' wages, I think you're doing exactly the opposite of what you're trying to do if you're making it open for business, encouraging businesses to hire more, stimulating the economy, or attracting investments. These kinds of changes will not attract investment if workers are attacked like that. That's not helping the government achieve that as well.

These changes, coupled with other changes such as those huge tax breaks like the \$4.5 billion in tax breaks, coupled with this bill and that kind of attack on workers' rights I think will not help us in any way, shape, or manner. Rather, on one hand, their rights are getting impacted, and on the other hand we do know that in the absence of new revenue sources, if other bills are passed, they will have an impact on their services, too.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is rising with a brief question or comment.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for his comments. I particularly appreciated his comments in regard to fairness. This fairness, or perhaps lack thereof, seems to be a theme. We were talking about fairness earlier today when we were discussing the \$4.5 billion tax giveaway. This is a government that is choosing to give the wealthiest Albertans, corporations a large tax giveaway yet arguing about a fair wage for young people and denying them the opportunity to earn a fair wage. [interjection] Exactly.

I just wanted the member to maybe speak a little bit more about fairness in the context of this bill and this amendment in particular and to just perhaps share as well – I know we talked a little bit earlier about some of the individual stories; the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie talked about that a little bit as well, just the individual impact, and I know the member has a pretty, you know, important story of his own – about just what an impact a fair wage would have on your family as well.

Thank you.

**5:50 a.m.**

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

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I think that when we talk about the minimum wage in the context of fairness, we do know that there are almost 350,000 to 400,000 Albertans who get impacted by the minimum wage.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

If we further break that down, we do know that two-thirds of that number are women, oftentimes with responsibilities for family, child-bearing, child-rearing. I think the saying goes that the criteria for a just society is that you look at how they treat their most vulnerable. These students, those people who are working on minimum wage, struggling day in and day out to meet their basic needs, to put food on the table, to provide for shelter: they are struggling. For a government to pick winners and losers: that's not the government's job. The government's job is to treat everyone fairly, to be the government for everyone, and in making decisions, I think they have to balance competing interests.

Certainly, we want to see a thriving economy. We want our businesses to thrive. We want our businesses to create jobs, create opportunities, but at the same time we need to be mindful of what impact these changes will have on our society, what impact these changes will have on our youth, what impact these changes will have on women, who make up two-thirds of those who are earning the minimum wage. Those things also need to be considered.

In the way this legislation is drafted, I think it takes a lot away from workers in Alberta. It takes a lot away, and at the same time we do not see and we are of the view that it doesn't get the intended results of drawing investments or stimulating the economy. Rather, it's just picking winners and losers, and I think that in this case those who are working Albertans, those who are on the minimum wage, those who are young are at the losing end of the spectrum. I don't think that's fair in a modern society like ours. I think we can certainly do better, and there are many other ways that we can attract investment. There are many other ways that we can stimulate the economy. For instance, when we were in government, to attract investment, we came up with tax credits.

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. How nice to see you in that chair. You look great there.

Good morning again, everyone. To those of you who may have been – I'm not speaking to the hon. members; I'm speaking to those maybe watching online the riveting discussions that we're having in this Legislative Assembly. I'm sure there were many of them who went to bed last night watching this feed online, and now they've probably woken up and, of course, turned it on again, and they're probably wondering: what is wrong with those members in that Assembly that they're still wearing the same outfits they were wearing last night? It's not a walk of shame; it's just that we are

here working hard, all of us, for Albertans. So just a shout-out about our outfits, that have lasted quite some time.

I am pleased to rise today and speak to this amendment to Bill 2, named, of course, by the members on the opposite side as the open for business act, but as you may know, we have another name for it over on this side, and that would be the pick-your-pockets bill. You know, I spoke earlier this evening, morning – I’ve lost track of what it is – on the issue of how we have a lot more in common than we have different amongst our parties.

One of the things, I think, that leads to this perception that, you know, one party believes in one thing and one believes in another is that we hear a lot of the members opposite speaking a lot about jobs. Of course – I made the point earlier – we care about jobs over here on this side as well. One of the reasons why it’s sometimes hard to believe that the members opposite are committed to something beyond jobs is that they don’t seem to actually care so much about the people who are performing those jobs. They talk a lot about jobs and don’t seem to give as much or even decent consideration to the people who are actually performing that work.

I spoke earlier about how, you know, we care about private-sector jobs – and those have certainly been hurt in the last few years with the downturn in the oil prices – but we don’t talk about public-sector jobs. Those are jobs as well. The members opposite talk a lot about wanting to increase jobs – and we agree with that – but those jobs come with people attached to them. Those people are Albertans who are performing the work. I’m confused sometimes as to why there is so much interest in the job but not in the person behind it. That’s why it feels like there is an intent on the other side to perhaps only focus on who, I guess, creates the job, as the term is used over there, and not so much on who performs it. It seems like they’re picking the pockets of Alberta employees.

I watched the NDP government bring in the changes to the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code. I’m an employment and labour lawyer. That’s my practice. I did that for some time. What I knew was that the existing Employment Standards Code, prior to the NDP government, was incredibly outdated. I studied law in Ontario. I have a lot of friends that I went to law school with who still practise in Ontario. We would sometimes talk about questions and issues that came up, and they were constantly shocked about how far behind the Employment Standards Code was. We’d be talking about an issue, and they’re, like, “Well, of course, you have to do this because, you know, that’s the law.” I’d be, like: “No, no. That’s the law in Ontario. That’s not the law in Alberta.” We didn’t provide a lot of the same standard benefits that were provided across this country to workers.

It goes without saying that the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code were long overdue for a review and for an overhaul. I think it’s telling that the provisions that were brought forward in Bill 2 – actually, there were a lot of things that were kept in there that were brought in by the NDP government. I think that speaks to the fact that even the members opposite recognize that there was a need to bring our employment and labour standards up to code and up to a standard that at least met the minimums nationally.

What’s interesting, though, is that while they kept a lot of the great things about the changes to the Employment Standards Code such as the leave provisions, compassionate leave, you know, medical leave, providing the ability for workers to take unpaid leave when difficult circumstances struck them – they protected those – the things that they have decided that they want to roll back seem to be very targeted. These were not the issues that were a matter of public consultation.

You know, I’ve also stood up in this House and talked about understanding that there was a mandate that was brought forward, because the UCP laid it out very clearly in their platform. Arguably,

there were a couple of issues that were, for sure, election issues, and we got a clear message from the voters on how they believed in that. As much as the members in my constituency might have felt differently, there were some issues which, I am willing to grant, were election issues. But I don’t agree that rolling back the minimum wage for young workers and that carving out and scaling back and clawing back the overtime from Albertans was part of their mandate. They may have laid it out – we talk a lot about how thick that UCP platform was – but I can tell you that even people that I spoke to at the doors in my riding who told me they were going to be voting for the UCP would mention that they don’t agree with scaling back overtime, that they don’t agree with a lower minimum wage for young workers. So I don’t actually believe that the members on the opposite side can stand up and say that they have a clear mandate to roll back wages for young workers, to claw back overtime pay in particular.

6:00 a.m.

That really strikes me because – I’ve already talked about this – the members on the other side seem to really place a higher benefit on private-sector jobs versus public-sector jobs. I don’t think that’s a secret. I don’t think that’s a surprise. But who is going to get hurt most by clawing back the overtime? A lot of private-sector employees, particularly private-sector employees in oil and gas. You know, we know the statistics. I’m sure my colleagues have already spoken to it numerous times. The average oil and gas worker who might be putting in 10 overtime hours in a week on a 12-week project: that’s 120 hours in paid time off that they would have earned. By clawing it back so that they only get that time at straight time, not at overtime pay, that’s a loss of \$2,500. These are workers, these are jobs that the members on the other side claim to highly value, yet they’re looking to pick the pockets of those employees and those jobs. As I mentioned, I don’t believe that there’s a mandate to do that.

I want to speak specifically on the issue of lowering the minimum wage, which, again, I don’t believe was a matter of proper consultation. Certainly, that’s why I speak in support of this amendment, because I think there was a false premise behind the idea that youth workers somehow should be valued less. I heard talk – and I heard it even from some of the supporters and donors to the members on the other side who talk about the young workers – that somehow they’re privileged kids living in their basements who are, you know, just buying fancy iPhones with their wages and that therefore these kids don’t really need their money and that therefore it’s okay to pay them less.

A couple of comments on that point. First, I will say that I find it a very unusual argument from the members on the other side, that for some reason how you spend your money and whether or not you need it should determine how much you get paid, because that sounds very much like a socialist argument: each to earn what they need. And I don’t think that anybody, any of the donors on the other side, would suggest that very wealthy individuals in this province don’t need all that money, don’t need their luxury vehicles or whatever it is, and that therefore we shouldn’t pay them as much. I’m pretty sure there wouldn’t be support for that argument on the other side.

First of all, I really think that that’s a false argument, the idea that young workers don’t need their money as much, because I can tell you for a fact that there are many – and I know my colleagues from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and Edmonton-Ellerslie spoke a lot about their experiences and the people in their ridings, and I can echo that – young workers who are working because they need the money, because they’re supporting their families with their money. They are working the same jobs as people who are – there’s no difference between a worker who is 17 years and 364 days old and

an 18-year-old. How can we argue that that person is worth less just because they're one day younger?

[The Speaker in the chair]

My husband is actually an assistant principal at a north Edmonton high school. A significant number of students at his high school are newcomers to Canada. They are recent immigrants; they are refugees. We know first-hand that a lot of those kids work part-time jobs and not because they're using that money for fancy gadgets although if they wanted to, by all means, it's their right to do so. But these kids are actually contributing directly to their family incomes.

In fact, my husband and I took in and welcomed into our family one of these young students, who just graduated – I shouldn't say "graduated." He finished high school. He was a recent refugee from Somalia. He was the eldest of a family of six kids. Because he was focusing on trying to finish his schooling – he was working, and he was getting some pressure from his family to actually focus more on working, so that he could contribute to the family income, rather than complete school. He became a member of our family. We welcomed him in, and he lived with us for some time. We really encouraged him to finish school, but he got a significant amount of pressure. It was not uncommon in that community, in that group for families to expect the children to work, to contribute to the family income. He was the eldest of six kids, and, yeah, he was expected to act like a contributing adult to the family. Certainly, his income was not going to frivolous luxury items. His income was going directly to support his younger siblings and his parents.

You know, we can talk about young workers as if they're somehow privileged kids, but I can tell you that that is a privileged position, to be able to think about young workers in that way, because, really, there are many, many, many young people who are working hard.

Of course, let's think about those young people who do not have families that they're living with and who are actually supporting themselves. Interestingly enough, not to diverge too much, we know that this government recently introduced an amended Education Act, which will lower the age of compulsory education, which makes it easier for children to drop out of school at age 16. So there could be a lot of kids who are 16 years of age who are no longer in school – this government seems to be encouraging some of them to do that – and a lot of them are supporting themselves. To suggest that they don't need that money as much because they're young is simply a false premise. I think it's very clear that they do require that income.

It goes back to the basic principle that I think the members on this side have repeatedly stated, which is: equal pay for equal work. I really sort of object to that idea that young people should be worth less. Frankly, let's get back to what we should be making and how we should be making our policy and government decisions, which is based on evidence. I don't know that there is – I have not seen any, and I've read a lot of the materials that have been put out by the members on the other side – clear evidence that actually shows that lowering the minimum wage for young workers will actually increase jobs. It seems to be maybe a bit of a tipoff to perhaps some very vocal groups that support it and third-party supporters of the UCP. That would be, like, Restaurants Canada. I'm sure they have an interest in making sure that younger people get paid less. We know they do, as a matter of fact.

I want to go back a little bit to the concept of minimum wage. Again, I actually heard the minister of labour speak out earlier and mention – I heard him referencing the minimum wage and saying, "You know, it's a minimum wage, and employers could always choose to pay their employees more," which is interesting because the idea of a minimum means that there should be nothing lower than it. Yet here we have something lower than a minimum wage for some workers. It seems to be blowing the concept of a minimum

out of the water, really. It doesn't seem to exist anymore because now we have a minimum and a minimum-minimum. That just doesn't even seem to make sense.

Again, the arguments that they have made about how hurtful raising the minimum wage was for the economy: if it was so bad to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, I question why it wasn't part of their primary platform and why they're not rolling out a pick-your-pockets bill to lower the minimum wage. I'll tell you why they're not doing that. They're not doing that because they know that that's going to hurt Albertans. What they're doing is picking on vulnerable Albertans. They're picking on Albertans that – they're counting on it – will not be voting, that will not speak out. That would be young Albertans. Those will be young workers.

**Mr. Eggen:** They will vote.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, in a couple of years they will.

In fact, I've been speaking with some. I actually got some feedback from young constituents in my riding who said that they can't wait until they can vote. I can't wait until they can vote as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member for your comments.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West rising under 29(2)(a). You'd like to make a brief question or comment?

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciated the analysis that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was bringing forward. I was particularly interested in your labour background – right? – and speaking with your friends or colleagues in other provinces and talking about protections or the lack thereof between jurisdictions. I know we've been talking about the minimum wage quite a lot, but I'm very interested in this banked overtime issue because there's been some conflicting information put out and, I think, some disinformation, you know, but without the government actually backing away from the essence of picking the pockets of workers on banked overtime.

**6:10 a.m.**

You know, it's very interesting. I was door-knocking, as we all were, last month. I have pretty good knowledge of my constituents, dating back more than a dozen years sometimes. I've known the same people from running at different times. One place that I went to – and I was so surprised because I know that they were dyed-in-the-wool PCers, right? They always had a PC sign. I can see it in my mind's eye right now. We respectfully disagreed. There wasn't, like, animosity or anything. But when I went to knock on the door there, just in sort of early April, the gentleman invited me in and proceeded to just be absolutely livid around this banked overtime thing because this gentleman works on projects in Fort McMurray and so has very intense sort of working periods for a number of months and then comes back to spend time with his family. He has built a budget for his family and himself over a long period of time based on the regular hours that he works but all of this banked overtime, too. It's not like he's bringing in untold riches and it's just gravy; rather, it's the sum total of his budget, which is actually fairly modest. It's a middle-class area. The people aren't super wealthy, and neither is this family.

So I'm curious to know – and perhaps you can help me with this and help everybody, really, maybe understand banked overtime – have you had any observations of it in other jurisdictions? Perhaps you could help me with that.

The other issue that I was curious to ask you about was in regard to the minimum wage. One observation that I'm making: we, coincidentally, have the bill to reduce red tape on the floor here now. How would you sort of see, with your legal background, the

idiosyncrasies and the complications that are associated with having different minimum wages for different people, right? I've been a student of how things evolve over time in this Legislature. Once you get your foot in the door or there's a crack in something, then the wedge gets bigger. You start by discriminating against young people that are under the age of 18. You recall that a couple of days ago I did a member's statement talking about, you know, the gift that the UCP is giving to these grade 12 graduates. If they happen to be born in January, February, March, April, May, or June, or the other way around, I guess – if you were born at a certain time and in a certain month, then you're out of luck, SOL, getting paid 13 per cent less than the others. My point is: how would you see it in a legal or legislative framework of actually having increased red tape quite exponentially by trying to govern over a differential minimum wage for kids?

Then I would suggest that if this manages to sneak through, the next target will be restaurant workers who are waiters. We've heard all of this before. You know, it's a slippery slope. It's unfair, it's unjust, it's unequal and quite offensive, but it also reeks of great swaths of red tape in trying to regulate something like this. Perhaps you could help me with that a little bit, too.

**The Speaker:** Or perhaps not.

Hon. members, we are back on the amendment. Are there any wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this morning on the amendment to Bill 2. Of course, once more, the amendment says that Bill 2

be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.

I guess I would just start my comments with some concern about the premise of this Bill 2, this legislation, being considered something that would bring investment to this province. I can see it now, a commercial done by the Alberta government saying, "Come and invest your money in Alberta because we can pay our workers less," not necessarily something that I would be so proud of shouting from the mountaintops.

I do want to begin with the fact that this legislation is proposing that we allow employers to pay workers less when it comes to banked overtime. Of course, currently the legislation in this province says that we can pay time and a half. I believe that was a change that our government made, something that I support greatly, and it's something that many other provinces enjoy within their legislation as well. Of course, the Premier did make comments recently that said that this legislation would not affect or diminish overtime pay. Now, I do take great concern with that. I think it's been brought up several times that changing this legislation will affect, for one, 400,000 Albertans who work overtime on a regular basis, and it is going to take upwards of \$2,500 away from them in a 12-week project.

Now, I think back to the work that I was doing before I was in this Chamber, a couple of jobs back, as an electrician working for a company that maintained and serviced and built dorm sleeping quarters for the Fort McMurray oil sands primarily. This company is bankrupt now, thankfully, judging by the way that they treated their employees. Of course, this is, hopefully, a unique situation, but it is a situation that happened in the province while I was working as an electrician. We would get into a situation where it was crunch time and we had to get these buildings, these dormitories out to Fort McMurray. My employer at the time would say: "Well, these need to be out tonight by 1 a.m. So, you know,

you started at 6 a.m. this morning; you're going to work till 1 a.m., past the 40, 44 hours in a week." I'm now working into overtime, but am I going to get time and a half for my banked time? No. Am I going to complain about it? Well, if I complain, they say, "Do you like this job that you have?" Hard to argue with that, hard for me to come back to my employer and say, "You need to do something about this."

Of course, there are labour boards and bodies that we can go to as employees, and those are important parts of our system that should be utilized as much as possible. But I was younger then, and I did want to keep my job. Of course, there are concerns about new Canadians that sometimes don't understand the legislation and don't understand their rights as well as somebody else.

Now, I do want to discuss the fact that not within this bill, which is also a concern, is the fact that we're talking about paying youth under 18 years old less than everyone else in the province. The fact is that these changes didn't come before the Assembly. I have great concerns with that because really it shows that the government didn't feel that it was necessary to have this conversation in the Legislature. Thankfully, I appreciate that the Speaker is allowing us to have this conversation though it is not within Bill 2, but it was a policy announcement at the same time as this legislation, so I do appreciate that.

Now, of course, when we were elected – in 2015 the NDP was elected to government – we followed through on our platform commitment to gradually phase in a \$15 minimum wage. Of course, before the rise in minimum wage, Alberta had the lowest minimum wage across Canada. That is a fact I imagine some Conservative politicians were quite proud of, and I'm sure that before the implementation of their order in council there were many conversations behind closed doors about whether or not they should return to being the lowest again because somehow that might be an advantage.

I have to wonder if the government members see the hypocrisy in their willingness to exploit youth for their labour, a group within our society that has very little ability to hold the members of this Assembly accountable. Thankfully, they will be able to do so in a few years from now, and I'm sure they will take great pleasure in voting whichever way they do. Maybe there are youth out there that support having their wages slashed. I find that hard to believe, but maybe.

**6:20 a.m.**

Now, I've been watching the debate around this bill that has transpired even on social media, and many people have asked how this move to lower minimum wage for youth workers is even legal – and it's come up a few times in this House now – considering that age discrimination is prohibited under the Alberta Human Rights Act, but I'm sure the government members have spent some time making sure that it's, you know, totally legal to pay people less money. That's great. Of course, within the current human rights legislation in our province age discrimination itself for people under 18 years old, well, apparently it's not a problem. Now, Speaker, just because it's not illegal to discriminate against people that are under 18 doesn't make it right, and just because it might create a few extra jobs, which in itself I don't think I've heard any real evidence through this debate that that's the case, it doesn't mean that we should be proud of lowering the minimum wage for the next generation of workers in our province.

The role of government is to protect the interests of Albertans, but with the pieces of legislation that we've seen so far, I tend to wonder why we need this Assembly at all. The members opposite seem to think the only people they need to represent are large corporations. Now, there's no doubt that we need to consider the

implications of legislative changes to all parties, but the government is doing a really poor job of showing that they have the workers' best interests at heart. We heard from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud that we aren't hearing a lot of conversation about workers. We hear a lot about making sure that we protect the rights of employers and making sure that we protect their bottom lines, but we don't hear very much on confidence for the workers who support these businesses, big and small.

Of course, this is not a new phenomenon. The privilege that we as members have is something that very few have the opportunity to experience. Of course, the opportunity is even less likely if you are a woman or a person of colour, a person with a disability, a member of the LGBTQ community, or low income, and in the instance that you are a combination of any of these groups, your chances of being elected to this Legislature are even lower. It concerns me that we are coming into this Legislature with the privilege that we do have – and I can respect that there are members on both sides of this House that are in these categories of people who are less likely to be elected, and I do appreciate hearing their voices as much as we can because it's important to have them here. But for us with the privilege that we do have to be making decisions about vulnerable populations and to say that these people don't deserve as much money as these people, I have great concerns with that. Of course, it's not lost on me, Speaker, that I'm a white, straight, cisgender male, but in this instance it is not me ignoring the intersectionality of the issue of minimum wages for workers.

It is clear, though, that historically and to this day the lack of diversity and the lack of inclusion within this Assembly has led to a system that often works against a large segment of our population, a population that has been left voiceless for far too long.

Moving on to the labour side of things, when we look at the provisions within this legislation regarding removing the card check certification, it's important to recognize that this is an attack on all workers of this province. Workers who are looking to unionize are often doing so because they don't feel that they're being respected by their employer, and they feel that they need better representation, and it's their democratic right to form a union if they have the right amount of people willing to do so within their organization.

Now, it's probably no secret. I've brought it up a few times in this House that I support unions, and I'm a member of a union myself, IBEW 424. I mentioned that I'm an electrician. Really, anyone who enjoys weekends or paid leaves, among other important things, should support the right to organized labour and the right to form a union. When we talk about representing and protecting the rights of workers, especially those who are often left without a voice, I am proud of the work of unions in our province and across the world through history. I'm disappointed that through this government's first few bills, well, this bill specifically, they've chosen to attack those very workers who have worked so hard to get us the instances that I spoke of.

Now, to take it one step further, this government felt it necessary, above their attack on unions, above their corporate tax giveaways that we discussed earlier, I guess yesterday, to attack those workers who work hard enough to earn overtime. Now, you are telling workers that they don't deserve to be fairly compensated even though they are going above and beyond to support their employer, and it's simply not fair. I mentioned that all of the employees were more than happy to push past a 12-hour day, past a 14-hour day. We just wanted to be fairly compensated, and what you're telling employers is that they have the opportunity to not do so.

### Speaker's Ruling Decorum Relevance

**The Speaker:** If I might interrupt the hon. member, I just may remind members that when entering or exiting the Chamber, they might do so in a sleuthy-type manner.

I'd also just like to provide a little bit of a cautionary tale to those who are having sidebar conversations. The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday does have the call, and if you need to have additional conversations, perhaps those could take place in the lobbies.

While I'm on my feet providing cautionary tales, I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday was just going to tie his remarks into the fact that we're on the amendment and not on the main bill and provide perhaps a little bit more relevance as to why his arguments are in fact directed towards the amendment and not the main bill. I wasn't going to interrupt just for that, but since I was on my feet, I thought that perhaps I would just provide a little reminder to all members to keep their comments relevant to the topic at hand, and in this case we are on the amendment.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Really, the points that I've brought forward so far are once again just to clarify the fact that creating a system where we're profiting off taking away the ability, for one, or weakening the ability of employees to organize a union or taking away the ability of a youth, or somebody under 18, to get a fair wage based on the work that they're doing relates well back to this amendment.

Once again, I haven't heard any arguments from the government members that show that this will actually draw investment, that this is incentivizing more investment into the province. I think the case could be made for the corporate tax cut, which I have also argued against, of course. I don't see the connection so much with Bill 2.

Now, I do want to bring up the fact, just moving back to the youth wage, that my mother – and I've mentioned it once in this House before – was 14 years old when I was born. So, really, it's quite offensive to me, through the conversations that have happened in this House, to hear people saying – and I know it's been brought up a few times. One of the members opposite said that people under 18 years old, you know, don't have anything important to pay for. They're paying for candy. They're paying for video games and iPhones and things like that. My mother had me when she was 14 years old and raised me as a single mother. She continued to go to school. This current government is actually trying to stop people, it seems like, from going to school to get their full wages, \$15 an hour. But she continued to go to school, and she had very little support, if any support, from other members of the family.

I just wonder how much thought you've put into the impact of your minimum wage changes on someone like her, who chooses against all odds to support a child by herself at such a young age. Now, the fact is that by the time she was 15, she had more responsibility and had more life experience than many people who are reaching the age of 18 or are in their early 20s, and you don't seem to account for that in your minimum wage changes.

Now, think of the family units that you are harming through these changes. Not every 16-year-old is looking for some spare change, as I mentioned, and even if that was true, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud made the point, it's their money to spend on whatever they want. Over the last four years I have met with a pay equity committee over at AUPE, and I think it's an important point that needs to be



made: equal pay for equal work. It doesn't matter how old you are. If we decided to change it from not youth getting paid less but another segment of the population, say seniors, which would be horrible, just like these changes are horrible, I think that there would be an uprising and people would be very, very upset. But somehow since it's people under the age of 18, it's okay to do that.

The fact is that these changes are going to push more youth into poverty. What you're telling the LGBTQ youth that have been kicked out of their house, because we've weakened GSAs, and they've now been outed in their schools is that they're being forced to work full-time, and if they happen to make it into overtime, well, for one, they can't bank their overtime at one and a half, but also that if they choose to continue going to school, they're going to get paid less. They're trying to take care of themselves, but now we're making them even more vulnerable.

6:30 a.m.

You are telling the young single mothers in our province that their child care costs, their education costs, and simply their ability to stay out of poverty matters very little to you, and I have concerns with that. To make it worse, you're holding a carrot over their heads and saying: if you break 28 hours, we will give you \$15 an hour.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's always a pleasure to hear from my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday. If I was not convinced before to vote for this amendment, I certainly am now because in looking at it and hearing what the member had said, clearly the pick-your-pockets bill is not what Alberta needs right now. Clearly, the pick-your-pockets bill certainly needs more consultation. I mean, hearing the stories of what some of the member's background was and hearing about what went on in his life and in his family's life I think is something that all members should take a very hard listen to. If they missed it, perhaps they should catch it in the Blues or in *Hansard* because that is the reality that so many Albertans face every single day.

I think it's shameful that government members want to pick the pockets of ordinary working Albertans, Albertans that are trying to make ends meet, Albertans that are trying to have a successful life and pay their bills. But the government is only interested in picking their pockets. I think that's something that they absolutely should reconsider and, really, is something that they absolutely need to take back to the public and see if there is more consultation that could be done on a bill that is rammed through, I would say, in the cover of darkness, Mr. Speaker. But it appears the sun is beginning to shine, and perhaps Albertans can start to see what is really going on behind this bill. Perhaps they'll really see the attack on workers that is going on in this bill. Perhaps the 400,000 Albertans that will lose their banked overtime will begin to see what the government is trying to do here.

I think that is something that is really concerning to all Albertans. I think it's something that all Albertans should look at and say: do they want to give up as much as over \$2,500? That's what the government is trying to do. They're trying to pick the pockets of ordinary Albertans. They're trying to reach in and take away what Albertans and ordinary workers deserve and have earned, Mr. Speaker. I think that's something that's very concerning to me.

I know the hon. member also spoke quite a bit about the wage differential and the minimum wage. I think that's also very concerning because, again, we've heard time and time again about vulnerable teenagers: the government is actually asking them, in fact, to drop out of school. That is the opposite of what any member

in this Assembly should do. We should be encouraging them to try to pursue their educations while also being able to earn a living wage, but if the government members in the front and backbenches simply don't care, then that is what Albertans will see as we move forward with this bill, Mr. Speaker. I think it's something that certainly young people in this province will see, and I believe other Albertans as well will continue to watch and see what the government is trying to do here. I think it's something that we can see, that this continued, sustained attack on workers and young people in this province is something that the government is doing.

I really want to thank my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday for speaking so eloquently about some of these attacks on workers and, in particular, how much workers in the labour movement have done for Albertans and the world in general, Mr. Speaker, because if you're a fan, like my colleague said, of things like the eight-hour workday, then perhaps you should be thanking the labour movement.

I think it becomes really clear that without the consultation, this bill does not do what it sets out to do. It will not focus on jobs. In fact, it will take jobs. It will hurt the people that already have jobs, and in fact it is something that will not stimulate our economy. People will not be able to spend in their local communities, Mr. Speaker, and I think that is something that is, frankly, quite shameful. It's something that the government needs to reconsider. It's something that the government members need to take a deep look at and see if they're okay with picking the pockets of ordinary workers, if they're okay with reaching into families and taking their money away, in some cases over \$2,500 per employee. That is something the government members really need to take a look at and say: yes; I don't think that the people working in my community deserve a fair wage, and I certainly don't think the people working in my community, if it's equal work, should get equal pay. That's what the government is saying when they move forward with stuff like this.

Mr. Speaker, it's really clear that they either don't know what they're voting on or they don't care. Both of those options are not something that I want to see legislators moving forward with. I wish the government would perhaps open their eyes, as again the sun is rising today. Perhaps they would be able to read the page a little bit better and finally see what it is they're voting on and finally see why this legislation is so damaging to individual workers, so damaging to families, and so damaging to communities. It's something that is really going to be harmful for people in their constituencies and in our constituencies.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

I see the Member for St. Albert is rising to speak to the amendment.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure, actually, to be here today at almost 7 o'clock. I think breakfast might be served downstairs. It's probably like a stampede to get the tater tots. I smelled the waffles earlier.

It's my pleasure to be here, actually, to speak to the amendment, as I said, because I know that I was elected – we like to talk about elections a lot in this place, apparently, in the last couple of weeks – and sent here to represent the people that elected me and also to represent the people that did not vote for me. So it's my job to be here to represent all of them, actually. I do plan to do that, and that's why I don't have a problem with the hours, because I think it's our job as opposition, just like the members opposite who were here when they were in opposition, to propose amendments and alternate solutions, to critique the information, not to rush it through, and to

think about it, actually. So I'm happy to help with that, and that's why I do support this amendment.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

But, you know, in just listening, a lot of hours of listening tonight and last week, this week, it's pretty rich, actually, Mr. Speaker, that all of us in here are debating removing \$2 an hour from youth when all of us that are elected make at least \$150,000 a year. It's kind of rich that we're talking about \$2 an hour for people who are under 18 years of age. Now, our pages aren't here right now because they've gone home and they're probably not back to work yet, but those are some of the people that we're talking about. So we could have one page sitting on this side who's 17 and making \$2 less an hour than their colleague on the other side who is 18, making \$2 more an hour.

We're sitting here in this beautiful place, representing the people that sent us here, and we make about \$150,000 a year, some of us more. Ministers do make more. I believe the hon. Premier and the opposition leader likely do make more, and I do believe our Premier has a fairly healthy pension that he earned while he was in Ottawa. So it's pretty rich that we're sitting here continuing to debate \$2 an hour, why it's a good thing to provide more profit to business owners – and I'm not saying that profit is a bad thing. It's a great thing for businesses. But what are we debating? We're debating putting an open-for-business sign on the door on the backs of youth who make minimum wage.

I just did a quick calculation because it's actually been a long time since I earned minimum wage, and really, when I earned minimum wage, it was a heck of a lot lower. But, you know, if you're a young person, if you are a youth and you are working I don't know where – McDonald's, Tim Hortons, wherever you're working, likely in a fast-food place because a lot of people start there – they get some experience, they move on, and they do other things. But if they're working, say, two eight-hour shifts a week and earning \$15, that's about \$240 a week, or \$12,480 a year. That's a year. If they're working two shifts at \$13, the proposed lower rate, they're making \$208 a week, for a total of over \$10,000, almost \$11,000 a year. The difference between that \$2 an hour is \$1,664. So think about that. We're talking about almost \$1,700 a year to reduce that wage.

6:40 a.m.

Now, for a business owner it's something. Sure. It's money. Every dollar counts. But to a young person that's everything. So what do young people do with their wages? I don't imagine young people enjoy going to work at, say, McDonald's or KFC. No offence to these restaurants; my son has worked there, and I worked there as a young person. But I'm sure they would rather be hanging out with their friends or practising for whatever sport they participate in or going to a bake sale for their GSA. I'm pretty sure they would rather be doing something else than going to work.

But often youth are going to work because there is a need. Sometimes it's just for the extras, like we've heard from across the way. Sometimes it is maybe to upgrade your phone or to save for a school trip overseas somewhere. I don't know. That was not the story of my life. I worked because I had to. But there are more people that are working because they have to. That is the reality. We live in a society where we're polarized. We have very, very wealthy people, and we have very, very poor people. That middle class is getting more and more scarce. I think that, you know, although I am not speaking to that bill, introducing a massive tax break for corporations will only further exacerbate that spread. We know this because people have studied this and it's been done before. Sadly, we haven't learned those lessons, so we're going to have to learn them again, apparently.

Anyway, I'm going to go back to this amendment and talk about this. As I've been sort of watching the different things people are saying – and I always learn quite a bit when I watch videos or press conferences of ministers or other officials talking about the bills that they plan to bring forward. Anyway, there was a video posted. I think it was yesterday. I'm not a hundred per cent sure. It was the Minister of Labour and Immigration, and he was talking about the benefits of this move, of lowering youth wages, and one of the things he said was that over 30,000 young people are looking for work, and this bill will open it up for business. Okay. There's a correction here. It's easy for all of us to make errors because, you know, we're researching, we're going on the fly sometimes, trying to get information, so I get that it's possible to make errors. But I don't know; if I'm the minister of labour, I'm going to know these numbers, and if I'm going to take away \$2 an hour from somebody, I'm going to know these numbers. But, apparently, he did not. He said that 30,000 young people are looking for work. Here's the correction; 31,400 young people are looking for work, but they're not all youth. That's what he didn't mention. That number that he quoted are people that are 15 to 24, not 15 to 17. So instantly we see that this is an incorrect picture that he's painting.

The other piece that I was surprised to even hear him say, because that's just kind of a weird Internet meme waiting to happen, was about red tape, Mr. Speaker. One of the things this minister said was that this open-for-business bill will actually reduce red tape. You know, we were sort of lectured earlier. I guess it was earlier today or last night; I can't remember. We were told that we don't know anything about business: "What do you know?" and "Just a bunch of socialists." At least, we've moved up. We used to get called communists, so this is better. [interjections] They talked about red tape reduction. I'm glad you find this entertaining at this hour because it is kind of funny. I get it.

They talked about reducing red tape with these changes. Well, the last job I had before this job: I managed a nonprofit organization. It's a business that aims to use their profits in other ways. That's it. There are the same requirements, a lot of requirements that go along with the nonprofit. I'm sure a lot of the members across the way and beside me will know that. They have some experience with it. But I can tell you that overseeing the payroll of 200 employees – 200 employees – shift workers, full-time, part-time, casual, at different rates, in different places, with different qualifications for things: it is not easy, although, you know, larger organizations certainly send their payroll to a professional payroll company, somebody like, say, Ceridian. But it's still a lot of data entry, and more than that, it's a lot of people power at the front end to decide who gets coded where and where the differences are, and it's a huge job. I mean, the amount of red tape is astronomical. To have the minister stand up and tell us that this is going to reduce red tape – okay. I don't know where he got that from, but I guess we'll wait to see. I'm really hopeful that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction keeps an eye on that because that would be something to look at.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The other thing that I found kind of weird in his video – or maybe it was just a post – was that he was saying: "Yay. Alberta has the fourth-highest youth minimum wage." I'm sorry. That's just not good enough. We went from first to fourth. How is that okay? I mean, is that something to be proud of, that we've done this to youth? I don't know. I don't get it.

You know, the other thing, too, another reason why I think that this bill just needs to stop: you need to take your time and think about this and talk to actual people, not just the people you call up to come sit

in a room and advise you of exactly what you want to do, but you need to talk to real people, real youth, because this will impact people, not just someone saving for an extra iPhone. This is about maybe saving for school. This is about helping your parents. This is about supporting yourself. This is like the Member for Edmonton-West Henday telling us that his mother gave birth to him when she was 14. She made a choice. She chose to keep that baby. She chose to have that baby, she chose to raise that baby, and she raised a fine young man. But she also had to work and support herself. These are the people. These aren't anomalies or, like, a weird example that we just pull out. This is what happens. This is what it looks like.

For young people today the cost of education is high. It's very high. Sadly, I have two adult children who are still in university. I don't know how many more years that's going to go on, but one never knows. It is high, and a lot of young people do not have the luxury of having parents or extended family that can pay for these things, particularly if they don't live near a university that they can attend. Students are working from a young age, putting money away so that they can get an education because they know that that's what they need in order to do well in this world. That's what you're cutting. You're making them work more hours.

Sadly, I think that – sure, I think I'm a bit cynical. I always understood that there were lobbyists and people that got the ear of government, whether it was because of their access or money, but I've never seen such a clear, quick, abrupt example of that as I did before the election when I saw the Premier at an event, I think, with Restaurants Canada, and very clearly he was endorsing their policies or their vision for Alberta, and that was to reduce minimum wage. Actually, they went a little further, Mr. Speaker. They wanted to also reduce minimum wage for people with disabilities. Thankfully – I will give the Premier that – he did not force that. I think there was enough push-back on that right out of the gates that he stopped, so good on him for that. But he endorsed the moves that Restaurants Canada was suggesting. This is how you pay to play. It's not really about, you know: "These are my values. This is what's best for Alberta. This is what's best for the future. This is what's best for our youth." This is about: who do I owe? This is about concentrating power in the hands of a few. Not good.

6:50 a.m.

I've talked a lot about a lot of things, actually. One of the other things that I want to just get off my chest a little bit, that happened also at this Restaurants Canada event, was the phrase "modest levels of human capital." It's been explained to me, oh, a lot of ways. People like to explain things: "No. You don't understand. It's a term economists use." Okay. The way that this term was used that day: we all know what that meant. Now, the Premier did go on to explain what modest levels of human capital means – you know, less education, less work experience, all of these things – but that applies to a lot more people than people who are under 18. I'm going to take this back to people with disabilities because this is a group that is chronically unemployed. Chronically. High schools that have true inclusive programs work really hard with their students to teach them the skills that they will need once they graduate to get out there and find work. This is a group that is learning now, is going to learn very quickly that you are worth less, and this is a group that regularly gets labelled as being people with modest levels of human capital, as defined by our Premier.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member, for your comments.

Just to provide a little bit of clarity, in light of comments from the Member for St. Albert – and in no way, shape, or form would the Speaker like to engage in any form of political debate. But for the benefit of all members our spectacular page team here in the

Assembly will all remain at their current wage and all be paid at their current wage. So just for clarity's sake.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South is rising.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really encouraging to see that you don't think the pages have a modest level of human capital.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the Member for St. Albert for her comments this morning. I think they were very important because she talked about people who are going to be affected by these changes that are, frankly, designed to hurt Albertans. They're designed to attack working people. They're designed to be negative overall for families. I think that is something that all members of this Assembly should aim to avoid. I mean, I think it's pretty clear, when you look at the legislation, as the Member for St. Albert has done quite thoroughly, that the legislation being proposed here needs more review and needs more public input. When you look at it, it goes after banked overtime. When you look at it, it goes after young people. When you look at it, it goes after people of modest human capital. It becomes pretty clear . . .

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika is rising on a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order, section 23(h), (i), and (j); specifically (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." I appreciate what the member opposite is trying to get at, but he's making comments to suggest that members on this side of the House are trying to attack families, that we're trying to attack them and their livelihoods. That couldn't be further from the truth. You know, our job in this Chamber is to debate policy, debate good policy. It's not to attack each others' motives but, rather, to maybe disagree or debate the policy and not to suggest that we have, you know, poor motives for the people of Alberta. So I ask the member to retract his comments and, frankly, to apologize to Albertans because that is certainly not our motive. I would hope that he'd recognize that through discussing the reasoned motion which we are on today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising on the point of order.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think, given the fact that we've been here for a very long time, that this really is just a dispute of the facts. Both sides may not necessarily always agree on how we discuss these topics, but there is no intention behind it in that context. It's just a dispute of how we are continuing this conversation going forward. At this time I don't think there's a point of order, but I will wait for your ruling.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members, for your interjections.

I see the Member for Calgary-West is rising to provide new and additional information on the point of order.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I would like to counter the argument of my friend opposite. The time period that we have been here has no relevance on the comments that were made by the member.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-North West is rising on what seemingly is a very complex point of order.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's important that we use the English language as it is defined in the dictionary and as it's defined through intent. I certainly think that using the word "attack" – right? – is to lay some sort of imposition on another individual. You know, there are different ways by which a person may be attacked. One of them is through their pocketbook, quite frankly. So the hon. member, I think, has used the English language very well in this case.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your very thoughtful interjection.

While I concur with the Member for Calgary-West that no matter how long we have debated a particular issue, we all need to be cautious around the words that we choose to use or don't use; however, in this case, I believe that what we have is a matter of debate. While we may not always agree with the opinions of those who sit on the opposite side of the Chamber to us, certainly they have the ability to share that opinion. While I did not hear any direct personal attack, the member opposite did use some strong language. Given the fact that we have been here for quite some time, I would caution all members, but this, in particular, was a matter of debate and not a point of order.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, I really do apologize if the members opposite don't realize what they're voting on and that what they're voting on is going to be picking the pockets of ordinary Albertans. I mean, that's something that – perhaps they should spend a bit more time reading the legislation they're voting on.

Very clearly here, as I was saying before, this legislation is bad for ordinary workers. It's legislation that attacks the people that my colleagues have been speaking about all night long. It's legislation that attacks ordinary Albertans and doesn't help spur the local economies because it takes money out of people's pocketbooks, Mr. Speaker, up to \$2,500 in some cases. But in many cases, for people who the government has deemed to have less human capital, it could take quite a bit more out of their pocketbooks, and I think that's something that's shameful. I think that's something that nobody in this House should support. I think it's something that we should all vote against here in this Assembly.

That's why I'm so proud to support this amendment. I'm so proud to support my colleague here from St. Albert. I'm so proud to be able to stand next to her and say that her concerns are ones that this Assembly needs to hear, Mr. Speaker, because those are the types of people who will be affected by this bill; 400,000 Albertans will be affected by this bill. The government needs to understand how this will impact people's families and people's lives. It's something that we certainly need to have a longer conversation about, it's something that certainly needs further input from the public, and it's something that we certainly need to look at this amendment and say: this is a reasonable amendment. This is something that makes sense because it allows us to have that longer discussion. It allows us to look at whether we're going to be forcing families to go to food banks instead of letting them bank their overtime, as they deserve, whether we'll be forcing young people to go to food banks while they're trying to save up for their education.

Really, when the government proposes legislation that actively encourages students to drop out of school, I don't know how that isn't an attack on young people, Mr. Speaker. It's something that clearly is offensive to young people, and that's why young people have been speaking out so strongly against this. It's something that's clearly an attack on families, and that's why people are so taken aback by this bill, and it's why we've been so proud to be able

to stand as the opposition and speak to this bill over and over again and talk about why it's important for Albertans.

The government clearly either has not read the bill, or they don't care what the bill says. Mr. Speaker, I think that's a shame. I think it's something that they need to review. [An electronic device sounded] Is that somebody else's alarm? Mr. Speaker, I thought there was a fine for something like that. My apologies.

Of course, certainly, I think it's something that we need to talk about, how after decades of inaction the NDP government finally brought in legislation that brought Alberta's labour laws up to par with the rest of Canada. If you were somebody who the Conservative government considered to have modest human capital anywhere else in Canada, you were able to have a good life as long as you didn't live here in Alberta. That's why it was fixed, and the labour laws were brought up to date.

7:00 a.m.

Now, without any public input, in the cover of darkness the government tried to ram it down Alberta's throat, that they needed to roll back all these protections, that they needed to roll back families' wages, that they needed to roll back overtime, and that they needed to attack families. That's something that I think members should be ashamed to be voting on. I think it's something that members should be ashamed was even brought to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, because we should strive to do better. We should strive to have legislation that helps families and doesn't pick their pockets, and we should strive to have legislation that improves the lives of all Albertans and not something that was asked for by our wealthy donors and sponsors.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member.

With respect to fines and cellphones I think that a little grace may be able to be displayed. I would only imagine that it was someone's alarm to be encouraged to come to the Chamber on this wonderful day.

### Speaker's Ruling Referring to Employees of the Legislature

**The Speaker:** I'd just like to provide a very brief comment further to my earlier interjection. Again, the Speaker has no desire to engage in political debate, and I would just encourage all members of the Assembly to perhaps not utilize employees that may be in the Chamber or not in the Chamber and bring them into political debate as well. I think that if we could use some caution and discretion there, that would be advisable.

### Debate Continued

**The Speaker:** Any other members wishing to debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this amendment. Certainly, I believe that we have this tool in place, the substitution "not now read a second time," at this stage of debate for a very good reason, and I believe it applies very well to Bill 2, as described on the notice that we put forward suggesting that this bill "will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary." I mean, I think that describes where this bill should be and where it should go quite accurately.

I believe that it should not be read a second time for other reasons as well. We know that this bill is to cut overtime for working people. As I had described earlier during this evening's session, this

idea of rolling back or taking banked overtime and making it less valuable to workers is going against an agreed-upon arrangement between employees and employers, and when people have those arrangements for their wages, to have it legislated to be rolled back is a very, very poor use of this Legislature's time and power.

As I described before, people count on getting banked overtime not just as some sort of special bonus that you win for working but as part of the essential wage for people when they build their budgets for their families. For people that work on project-based work sites such as in Fort McMurray or thereabouts or are working, let's say, on a shutdown – right? – of a plant in Fort Saskatchewan and so forth, you are working for a very concentrated period of time, and then you're done. You know, people build their family budgets and so forth based on banked overtime, and to change that formula, I think, is not fair. I think it achieves quite the opposite effect of what this bill was purported to be named by this government, an act to be open for business, right? It sounds more like it's an act to call it open season on workers, as the Member for Edmonton-McClung very cleverly coined.

There are a number of issues, I guess, that we haven't heard about, again a reason to suggest that this is not a bill that we should be reading for a second time.

I would go back to the changes that have been proposed around holidays and holiday pay as well. We made these changes to put Alberta in line with other jurisdictions around the country. So often when we're making reforms in many areas, Alberta would be the ninth or 10th province to have reforms around leave eligibility: maternity and parental leave, rest periods, overtime, critical sickness of a child, death or disappearance of a child, long-term illness or injury leave, personal and family responsibility leave, bereavement, family violence leave, domestic violence leave, citizenship ceremony leave, vacation and vacation pay, you know, Christmas. All of these things are reasonable ways by which to ensure a certain level of protection and security for workers and to ensure that we're being fair – right? – every step of the way.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that that's part of the way that you can actually make something open for business and encourage business and prosperity and so forth, to make the rules around labour fair and reasonable, right? Making cuts to things such as leaves for the critical illness of a child or eligibility for vacation pay for Christmas and so forth: I mean, when I actually articulate these things here in this House now, it sounds very much like something out of a Charles Dickens novel – right? – moving, rolling back. I'm thinking of *A Christmas Carol*, where Scrooge is giving his workers, like, a couple of hours off for Christmas and then rolling back and Tiny Tim and all that kind of thing, critical illness of a child. These are all the sorts of things that you see from a Victorian period. Here we are slipping back, in 2019, rolling back to the 19th century, you know. That's not the way to open for business. I think that's a way to show mean-spiritedness and to show regression, to move backwards rather than forwards, to move from a more modern outlook, where we can demonstrate reasonable labour law, to something that is less so.

To not read this a second time is an eminently reasonable approach, and I think that we have exercised to the fullest this Legislature's capacity to shine a light on Bill 2.

I think that a lot of people are not happy about this at all. I mean, I know that when I was out door-knocking during this last campaign, I had quite a number of people that were really kind of almost disbelieving at first that this was an element of the UCP platform. Then they very quickly looked because banked overtime was an integral part of their family budget, and they said: "Oh, no. Well, that's not something that I would support because they're literally taking money from my family." They're picking the pockets of middle-class people who work in the trades, especially, and putting them in a compromised position.

Always you have to judge a person on their actions, and you have to judge a government on their intentions and actions, too. For this to be the second bill of this new government, I think, is a bit concerning. You know, I'm always one to give out free advice to those who will listen, and I would strongly suggest that you want to put a positive front on your new government. You want to make sure that people see who you are. You're sort of defining your intentions. You're defining the future of the term of the government, and my suggestion is that you perhaps lead with something that's positive and not so negative – right? – this idea of rolling back labour reform, taking money for banked overtime.

This whole minimum wage thing: I think we've exhausted that, quite clearly. Having different minimum wages for different people of different ages, I mean, is Byzantine and confusing, and it's going to take quite a lot of red tape to sort that one out, I can tell you that, because here you have – I think there was a provision in this Bill 2 that talks about having some exemption if some kids are not going to school or something like that, where you can have, like, officers going out to check this out. You'll have to have a whole division of, you know, red tape artists to follow people around to see if they're going to school or if they used to go to school or whatever, just because there's some rule in Bill 2 that a regulation, red tape, puts them in that position.

7:10 a.m.

I mean, working as a teacher for 20 years, I know that lots of kids are working. They're not doing it, you know, for good times and frivolity. They're doing it to help to put money into the family budget. This idea that you might be born in this month or you're born in that month and that that will determine whether you receive a 13 per cent reduction in your salary is entirely unfair. It almost seems funny if it wasn't real. Here it is written in this bill. I really think that that doesn't need to see the light of day. Young people work at the same rate. They produce, side by side in a given situation, just the same as the person who is over the age of 18, right? There's no difference at all, and the expectations in a workplace, certainly, would suggest that the person that is maybe 17 must be working at the same level and the same rate and the same quality of work as the person that happens to be over the age of 18.

You know, as I said before, it's nonsensical. This whole argument that I heard from across the way that there are thousands of young people under the age of 18 that lost their jobs because of the minimum wage: I mean, that is patently absurd, right? It's untrue, and it's not defensible with either statistics or with logic as well. If one tries to move this forward in any way, the more ridiculous it actually becomes.

Honestly, it's one thing, people that are working under the age of 18 taking a 13 per cent cut – that's a practical problem – but again it signals direction, and it signals a bad intention. It sends a message to young people that is negative as well, that you're not as valuable somehow, your work in the same place, working side by side with others: sorry; you get paid less because of your age. It's discriminatory in that way, and it sends a message that somehow people are not equal – right? – for the things that they do and the way that they work and so forth.

Again, you know, when you get that message sent to you through law, it's something you carry with you in a broader way. You say, "Is the government here to protect me, or is it here to discriminate against me?" If it's the latter, then that is sending a message that we don't want our citizens to carry with them in their hearts for the rest of their lives. We teach in schools around the value of someone. We teach in schools about the value of caring and looking after each other and the value of a sense of justice, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that young people have a very strong and acute sense of

what is fair and what is not fair, and when that line is crossed in any given circumstance, they will carry that emotion around with them, quite rightfully, for a long time.

You know, we can avoid all of these things. We can avoid the embarrassment of taking away people's overtime pay for Christmas – right? – thus avoiding that obvious comparison to Charles Dickens and Scrooge and all of that. We can make sure that we are looking after people with their maternity leave so that they do know that they have those protections in place, because we want to support people that are having children and make sure that they are not being compromised with their paycheque for the sake of having a child. We want to make sure that people have the security to know that they have bereavement leave and compassionate care leave, that it's appropriate and fair, and that they have some vacation pay that is codified and not subject to the discriminations or the choices of an employer. Often we see this amendment being used in second reading of bills, and I've seen the varying value of using this referral amendment, but this time it really does stand out as being a useful tool. It's not necessarily meaning that we walk away from this issue but that we can talk to the public and see what the public thinks. Anecdotally, like I said, I mean, I didn't run a big survey with, you know, proper consultation on this, but neither did the government, quite frankly. I think that that's not an unreasonable thing to do.

I think it would be interesting and illuminating to hear stories of individuals, let's say, a young person who is working at \$2 less an hour because of their age, that they're not just doing it to buy a bicycle or concert tickets, but they're doing it because they're one of the main wage earners in their family. It's more common than you think, right? I know that when I taught high school, kids would often be struggling in school, and part of the reason was because they were working a lot of hours. There's an added sort of even more bizarre twist to this Bill 2. They said that if you're not in school and you're under 18 and you're working, then the law doesn't apply to you, right?

Again, you know, follow that thread, pull that thread, and where do you go? You end up setting up vulnerable kids that maybe are working and are in a vulnerable situation, and they will choose to drop out of school.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member, for your comments.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising under Standing Order 29(2)(a) for a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to keep it brief, as you know I do. Now, I really want to thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for his comments. I think it was very enlightening to hear about some of the implications of this bill and some of the really, frankly, shameful things that are in this bill. I mean, it becomes very clear that this bill is designed not to help the families. It's designed to attack those young people that the member was speaking about.

Mr. Speaker, the discrimination that's happening in this bill: it's something that I think is really important that we talk about in this Assembly, because that goes to the core of why we are here, and it's to protect Albertans and protect their interests. Now, I think it's actually a real shame, after hearing such eloquent speeches from so many of my colleagues here tonight and over the last many hours, that very few, if any, of the government members have gotten up to protect and defend the discriminatory bill. I think it's something that's actually very telling. It's telling that the government is not interested in defending the bill that attacks working people, takes up to \$2,500 away during Christmastime – it's very Scrooge-like, like my hon. colleague said – does so much, in fact, that it can actually encourage kids to drop out of school. Maybe the Education

minister would like to speak to why she's encouraging kids to drop out of school. Maybe some of the backbenchers would like to speak to that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it becomes very clear that when a government presents legislation like this, it is damaging to families, it is damaging to young people, and it's damaging to ordinary workers. Attacking overtime pay, attacking the minimum wage, attacking the youth differential: these are things that the government ought to be able to defend. We've heard quite at length, with quite a number of stories tonight, why this will be so damaging and so bad for families, up to 400,000 workers across Alberta. That's many more families than just workers.

Mr. Speaker, the government isn't even interested in getting up to say why that's important, why it's important that they are going to hurt 400,000 workers. They're not even interested in defending their own bill, and that is very telling because Albertans will be able to see in the Assembly records that the government doesn't even think Bill 2 is a good bill. They won't even get up to speak to it. They won't even do their work, their job, to get up and speak today in the Assembly. It is their duty to defend government bills, and it's private members in the government caucus's duty to defend the bills that their front bench brings forward. But, clearly, those private members don't think the bill is good, or else they would be speaking to it.

*7:20 a.m.*

Clearly, the front bench doesn't think it's a good bill or else they would be speaking to it, Mr. Speaker. I think that's very concerning. I wouldn't mean to suppose what any members would wish to speak to in the future. Perhaps if they did get up and speak, then I would be corrected. But it is something that I find very concerning, that members aren't willing to stand up and defend this legislation. We have identified a number of very key and very significant flaws in the bill, and we've identified these flaws all night long. I'm sure the members by now will have the benefit of many of the Blues over many of the hours to be able to look in and see how they can find those fixes.

I know sometimes the members opposite – perhaps their staff weren't awake when they were or when we were in the Assembly, trying to do our jobs, but now I'm sure many of their staff are waking up and can do that research for them and help them perhaps figure out why they should be defending a bill that attacks workers. Maybe they can help them figure out why they would like to defend a bill that harms 400,000 families or attacks young people, encourages kids to drop out of schools. Perhaps the government would like to speak to that. Perhaps their private members would like to tell their constituents why they think students should be dropping out of school so they can get that \$2 raise, an over 13 per cent difference, Mr. Speaker. For some households that will be very significant. I mean, I really hope we'll be able to hear from some private members on why they think it's okay to attack individuals and families and working Albertans.

I really hope we'll be able to hear from some of the government front bench as well about why it's okay to attack working Albertans and attack their families and take away their overtime at Christmastime, Mr. Speaker. I really hope to perhaps hear from Mr. Scrooge himself. I think that would be something that would be very exciting for me. I think we'd be able to finally understand what it is the government thinks is so valuable about picking the pockets of everyday working Albertans, picking the pockets of families right here in this province. I think it's something that all members of the opposition would look forward to hearing.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your brief comments, Member for Edmonton-South. I'm not entirely sure. You made some reference to hearing from Mr. Scrooge himself. Certainly, you weren't referring to any member inside the Chamber because if you had been, that would have been wildly inappropriate and certainly a point of order.

During the next speech I would imagine that we will move through the 12th hour of the sitting today. I would just like members to perhaps extend their appreciation to our LASS staff and table officers. I would also remind all members, particularly those who have been with us through the last number of hours, to please ensure safe travels should you leave the Chamber today to return to either your residence or your temporary capital residence. Please make sure that you are governing yourselves accordingly.

Having said those things, we are back on the amendment. I see the Member for Edmonton-Manning rising to debate.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise 12 hours later, from the beginning of this debate, to speak specifically to the amendment on Bill 2, which reads that

... An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I'm going to build a little bit on some of my comments that I was making earlier around Bill 3, around how we seem to have a habit or the Conservatives seem to have a habit of recycling ideas and using them over and over and over again, with little success and/or looking for a different outcome. Now, the reason why I say that is that we've seen this recently in Canada, this bill. It was referred to as something different, obviously: Bill 47 to be specific, which is the changes to the Ontario labour and employment legislation. That legislation was actually passed in November 2018. I'll just read a little bit of an overview of sort of what that bill spoke to. Bill 47 does the following. It cancels the legislated hike of the general minimum wage from \$14 an hour to \$15 effective January 1, 2019.

Instead of freezing the minimum wage at \$14, on October 1, 2020, it will be adjusted annually. It removes the entitlement to personal emergency leave. It cancels a range of scheduling protections, eliminates the right to equal pay for part-time, contract, temporary, and temporary help agency workers vis-à-vis full-time workers. It repeals new public holiday pay, a cancellation introduced by Bill 148, scraps a provision introduced in Bill 148 that puts the burden on an employer to prove that a worker is an independent contractor rather than an employee. It maintains existing vacation entitlement, includes three weeks of vacation for employees with five or more years, and maintains domestic and sexual violence leave. That's good. It delays the planned repeal of the provision excluding from the scope of the ESA persons performing work in a job or work environment. And many, many, many other things.

Now, the intent, as we know from this bill in Ontario, was basically – I believe it actually has the exact same title as this current bill, except instead of An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business it was an act to make Ontario open for business. So we've seen this. We saw this in November 2018. We've seen the arguments. The arguments in Ontario were, "We're going to do this to help stimulate investment in Ontario, to bring new business into our province, to do all of these things," which is what Ontario said.

I've heard a lot over the last 12 hours about how this is about helping different sectors be successful, specifically looking at our hospitality industry. Well, let me tell you what's happened in Ontario over the last year since this Bill 47 came in. The hospitality

industry has actually had a decrease of minus 3.7 per cent in economic growth. And I can table this later today in regard to this.

I think the struggle that I have when it comes to these pieces of legislation is that there is evidence across this country that these policies don't work. Although they may be great political tools, we are seeing in Ontario that the argument that the Conservatives are currently using in this province about developing the hospitality industry is actually not happening in Ontario, yet it's the same bill with a different name, a provincial name I guess.

I mean, we've heard the Premier even make jokes about the fact that the Premier from Ontario and him are such great friends, and in fact he thought he came up with "make Alberta open for business" first, yet the Premier in Ontario adopted it and used it. When we look at what is happening in Ontario and we're looking at the direction that these worker policies are moving towards, I think that there's validity to the questions and the concerns about what's going to be happening in our province in the future.

We've been here before. You know, some of the new members have been asking me, as we're trying to get to know each other over the last little bit, about: "Why did you run, Heather? Like, you're a social worker."

**An Hon. Member:** Name.

**Ms Sweet:** Oh, sorry. It's been a long day. Thank you, hon. member. You're right. I withdraw my name.

I mean, people have asked, like: why did you run? Well, I was a social worker, which we established, I think, this week as well. Part of that was that I represented a whole bunch of workers in the city that were government of Alberta workers, that worked in child protection, AISH, PDD, a variety of different areas. We, at the time that I had decided to run, were under the hon. Premier Redford. Some of our members have heard this before, that, you know, we didn't have a great go when it came to labour relations under Premier Redford.

Again I will speak to the amendment and the fact that this is about the fact that this not be read a second time, because the whole argument here is that this is going to stimulate growth in the economy and that it's going to bring investment into the province.

7:30 a.m.

I will be clear that I think that's a great political tool and great language to use politically to actually start eroding the progress that was made around labour relations in this province in the last four years. The reason I say that is because what we're seeing in Ontario is that it's not effective and that it's not working. When it comes to the areas that these members in this House have specifically spoken to on the Conservative side, the job numbers don't match the argument. The bills are almost identical. So there's that component.

But the other piece is that prior to 2015 we had a huge fight on our hands when it came to labour relations, and we were starting to move backwards. The hon. members in this House remember those committee meetings that were around. They remember the rallies. They remember the conversations ...

**Mr. McIver:** Bill 6.

**Ms Sweet:** The Bill 6 back then, not the Bill 6 in 2015. But we could talk about Bill 46 or Bill 9 or Bill 10, hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

I've got lots of bills that I remember from labour relations as well around what happened in 2013 and 2014. At that time Bill 46 was the Public Service Salary Restraint Act, and that was going to impose a two-year salary freeze, renegotiate collective bargaining processes, remove binding arbitration. There was also Bill 45, the Public Sector

Services Continuation Act. This act significantly increased the penalties for illegal strikes by workers, to the point where they were going after individuals. They were going to go after individuals.

This all happened around when the Edmonton Remand Centre had their wildcat strike. At that time they legislated the workers back, and the government proposed to introduce harsh fines, up to \$100,000 per day, because they said that it was illegal. Those bills never made royal assent, and the reason that they never made royal assent was because, as the Conservative government very, very quickly learned, working people matter in this province. Working people have a voice in this province, and they are smarter than political language when it comes to trying to say that Bill 2 is all about economic growth and all about recruiting business in this province.

It isn't working in Ontario. The labour changes have been made. You are redoing the exact same thing that is happening in Ontario and trying to rebrand it as a new, fresh idea, which is very similar to what Bill 3 is. I was very clear about how, you know, even your Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, didn't agree with a corporate tax cut as being a way to stimulate the economy. I'll table that later this afternoon as well.

So, for me, I'm not sure I completely understand what the purpose of Bill 2 is when it's not actually achieving the outcome that the Conservative, the UCP, government is saying that it will. There's evidence to prove otherwise. What I see is that it's not about the economy in the context of investment into the province unless you want to acknowledge that it's at the expense of workers in this province, because that's what it's about. It's about eroding the labour codes. It's about changing what workers should be entitled to, which is a decent wage, compensation for their time, work-life balance with their family members.

It shouldn't be that workers are exploited for the benefit of an employer's dollar. It's just not the reality of how it is anymore. It shouldn't be that way. Workers should not have to – like, we had these fights way back in the day. During the Industrial Revolution people were put in cages and sent down into the mines, and they were exploited, and, you know, children were being used as child labour. We've seen all of this, and we are a much more sophisticated society than back then.

We have a responsibility to take care of each other in this province. One of our biggest arguments and one of our strongest strengths that we bring to this province is the fact that we are hard-working people who take care of our neighbours. If you're a hard-working person and you take care of your neighbour, then your employer should take care of you. It's just the way it should be.

Bill 2 just doesn't speak to that. Bill 2 is about taking advantage of people that maybe have disabilities and therefore can get paid less. Bill 2 is about the fact that if you're younger than 18, there is a loophole here where we can find a way to be able to take advantage of that. It is a bill that says that if you don't work so many days in a row, you don't get compensated at your pay. Bill 2 is about the fact that workers don't matter.

I mean, we have 400,000 Albertans who work overtime in this province. We all know our neighbours and our family members who deliberately take jobs because of overtime, because that's how people make their money. I have tons of my friends that love working on a Saturday and Sunday and working those 12-hour shifts because they get paid overtime for it, and they will ask for those shifts: in manufacturing, in our trades. Why shouldn't they be compensated for that? It doesn't make sense.

Why should an employer be able to say that their profit margin is more important, and where is the evidence to say that these changes are going to drive the economy? Where is the evidence? The evidence that I have says that in Ontario it's actually not doing what you're saying it's going to do, right? We talked about the hospitality

industry. This was something that they specifically asked for. There was a major reason for this. The hospitality industry has had a negative 3 per cent decrease from 2018 to 2019 in their yearly review, quarter after quarter, and this bill was acclaimed on November 30, 2018, in Ontario. So the evidence doesn't exist.

I would love for the members opposite to stand up and show me where the evidence is that makes the rationale for this bill make sense, but we haven't heard it. We've heard lots of talking points, we've heard lots of political points about why this makes sense and that people have asked for it. Of course employers have asked for it. I mean, if you can find a way to undercut your expenses and make more money, of course you're going to try to do that. Like, that's just basic business sense. You find a way to work through your taxes. You find all those different things so that you bring more money home for yourself and your business. That's how businesses are successful, right? But should that be at the expense of workers? Definitely not.

Again, when we talk about this amendment, I would like to see the evidence. You want us to vote on behalf of Albertans in support of Bill 2, and you want to be able to say: well, Bill 2 is all about drawing investment to Alberta and to stimulate the economy. So show me the evidence. Show me where you have your . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

Comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to hear from my colleague from Edmonton-Manning. This is such an important bill. It's such an important bill, and that's why so many members of the opposition have gotten up today and yesterday to speak to this bill. It's something that we are so proud to be able to fight, because we know that it's picking the pockets of everyday Albertans, just as the member pointed out very clearly. And just as the member pointed out very clearly, this is a bill that attacks workers, attacks the 400,000 workers that do overtime work.

It's a bill that will go after young people, go after labour, go after tradespeople. Mr. Speaker, it becomes very clear that this government either does not understand what they are passing, or they don't care. If they did, they would get up in this House and defend this bill. The front bench would get up and defend the bill that they brought forward, or the backbench would get up and defend their minister, but they have not done that. They refuse to do that because, I believe, they think it's as bad as we say it is. And if they don't, they could get up and clarify that for us, but they refuse to because it becomes very clear that they know this will hurt ordinary Albertans. This will hurt families, and this will hurt the people who work the hardest here in our province. This will hurt our constituents.

**7:40 a.m.**

The government knows very well that they did not consult on this, or else they would have gotten up to speak on it. They know very well that Albertans will not support this if sunshine is brought to this bill, Mr. Speaker, or else they would get up to speak to it. They would get up and defend the legislation that they tried to hide under the cloak of darkness last night. But here we are, the sun is shining, and we are able to debate this legislation here in this House.

We know in the opposition that this is designed to pick the pockets of ordinary working Albertans. It's designed to hurt families, to take away their hard-earned pay, their hard-earned overtime, designed to make it so that students have to choose between whether they should go to school or get a 13 per cent raise. The Education minister should get up and explain why she's going



to defend a bill that encourages students to drop out of school, Mr. Speaker.

This is a bill that is, frankly, shameful. If the front bench cared or if the backbench of the government cared, Mr. Speaker, then they would get up and defend this bill, but they refuse to. They know it is a bad bill, and that's why they won't speak. It's because they know that they have not put forward a bill that helps Albertans. They've put a bill forward that helps their wealthy donors, and that's what they're fighting for here when they don't speak. When they refuse to get up and talk, they know they're defending their wealthy donors and their sponsors. And that's fine. If that's the message the government wants to send to Albertans, that is absolutely fine, because we know the opposition will continue to stand up for the rights of working people. The opposition will continue to stand up to defend Albertans and defend their rights in this Assembly. When the government tries to pick their pockets, we will be here to tell them: no. We will be here to fight against that.

The government clearly has no defence or refuses to give one, and either of those is a condemnation of their position on this, Mr. Speaker. This bill is very clearly a bill that hurts families, and if the government disagreed with me, they would get up and say so themselves. But, very clearly, they are not interested in that. They're not interested in getting up. In fact, you'll hear on the cameras that they are actually laughing at the seriousness of this bill. They are laughing at how important this is for families. They know, because they are appeasing their wealthy donors, that this bill doesn't matter for Albertans because they don't care about Albertans. If that's the position they're wanting to take by not standing up in this Assembly, then that is the message Albertans will hear today. That is the message Albertans will hear because we know they're watching. We know that they are standing up with us and hearing what we are saying and pointing out these really important issues in this bill. That's why it needs to go back for public input. That's why it needs to go back for more consultation.

Really, clearly, what is happening here is that the Conservatives are trying to pick the pockets of Albertans, and if they aren't, then why won't they get up and speak to it? Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives are not trying to attack families, then why won't they get up and defend it? This really, clearly shows that they either are intentionally trying to pick the pockets of Albertans or they don't know what they're voting on. I don't know which is worse, whether they are intentionally being harmful for families or they're actually being negligent about it. Either of those sounds terrible to me. I think that certainly Albertans expect better from their government. They expect better from their private members on the government side as well, and that's why our opposition here will continue to fight against this bill. We will continue to make sure that the important issues and the stories of everyday Albertans, the stories of our constituents, are told in this place, because those are the people that matter.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you once again for your brief comments, Member.

Anybody else wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Go ahead, Member.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm afraid I will likely not have the same energy as my colleague from Edmonton-South, but I will try. I think this is the first time I've been up for 24 hours straight in a long time, so here we go. Maybe the last time was when I was a teenager, and that's a good segue because I'd like to talk a little bit about the youth wage in particular and about the importance of this amendment, of not reading this bill a second time.

I've talked to this House a little bit before about the fact that I was a high school social studies teacher in rural Alberta, and I've had the opportunity to speak with young people, with students in my constituency about just how discriminatory this decision to cut youth wages from \$15 to \$13 an hour will be.

Now, some of my colleagues in this House have shared some really personal stories as well. They've talked about the fact that, you know, this is about equality and this is about fairness. I want to quote a few folks here. I'm a big fan of bringing in evidence and bringing in research.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear.

**Member Irwin:** Yes. It's something that's important to me. So I'm going to share from a few sources here, and I'll table any of the ones that haven't been tabled yet.

The first one I want to speak to is a quote from the executive director of Public Interest Alberta. What he said was:

These changes will create a perverse incentive for employers to maximize profits by hiring youth instead of other workers because they can be paid less for doing the same work . . . This is clear discrimination against a demographic of workers who are not even able to express their opinion at the ballot box.

There are a few things to unpack in that quote there, but on this perverse incentive: again, we know that there will be employers who will choose to exploit younger workers. As one of my colleagues said earlier: what's the difference between someone who is 17 and 364 days old and someone who is 18 years old?

Why I also wanted to touch on this quote is the second piece there: "clear discrimination against a demographic of workers who are not even able to express their opinion at the ballot box." Well, these are young people who are working, who are in some cases supporting their families. My colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud talked about the fact that, again, we know – we've heard her own family's experience of a lot of young people who are supporting their families. What might be a small difference in wage means a huge amount to those families.

These young people aren't able to vote yet. They're going to be able to vote in a couple of years. I know I've got a few colleagues in here who are teachers as well, a high school social studies teacher, in fact. You know, if you've ever taught a group of teenagers, the power of an engaged group of teenagers is something to be seen. So I do wonder how this decision will carry out in a couple of years, once those teenagers are of voting age. I'd be curious to see the power of them at the ballot box.

The other thing that I wanted to point out – this is Joel French from Public Interest Alberta; I'll give him a shout-out – is the final quote. He says:

We can easily predict that this will cause a drop in employment for vulnerable groups of adult low wage earners, who tend to be young adults, women, and people of colour . . . These groups are already struggling in our economy, and the last thing they need is an attack on their employment.

My colleague from Edmonton-West Henday spoke about the fact that unfairly, probably inequitably affected by these changes are folks who are, you know, people of colour, from the POC community, young adults, women. I appreciated your comments around sort of an intersectional approach to this because we do have to recognize our own privilege in this House. It's sometimes hard to think about the experience of some other people who will be unfairly affected by these policies. I urge my colleagues across the floor to consider intersectionality in their approach, to consider the perspectives of others who may not have had the same lived experience as them.

The next thing I wanted to speak to – I’m going to continue on this youth train because, again, it’s something that’s important to me. My social studies teacher colleague there will know that we talk a lot about engaged citizenship, active, engaged citizenship. I’m going to be the voice for some young people. I know I’m not a superyoung person myself anymore, but they’re not here in this House right now. I’m going to quote from some young people in a moment.

7:50 a.m.

Before I do that, I want to give you a few more facts. The Alberta Federation of Labour estimates that there are approximately 35,609 workers in Alberta aged 15 to 17 who will be negatively affected. Thirty-five thousand: that’s a significant number. This is going to make life harder for a lot of young workers who are either saving for school, as I said earlier, or contributing to their household’s income. Now, the government has told us – I am still quoting the Alberta Federation of Labour here – that they are taking these steps to try to address the higher unemployment rates, the lower labour force participation that they point to in that age cohort of 15 to 24. But, again, this is a clearly discriminatory policy that tells young Albertans that the work that they do is worth less, is devalued, than that of other Albertans.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the – the Alberta Federation of Labour, actually, did some really good interjurisdictional comparisons to bring in, again, an evidence-based approach to this. I’m not saying that the members across the floor didn’t look at research and evidence, but I do question in some cases, especially when it comes to the youth wage here because the evidence is pretty clear. Now, there have been youth differentials proposed in a number of other jurisdictions as well, as I noted. One interesting one is actually in Denmark. One empirical study analyzed the impact of Denmark’s youth wage differential and found that the employment rate craters for young people once they graduate to the universal wage by about 33 per cent.

What happened in Denmark is basically that a youth minimum wage led to a lot poorer outcomes for workers aged 18 to 24. As those workers are entering adulthood, as they are, you know, in some cases potentially hoping to enter school or may be taking on family responsibilities, there is significant evidence from this study that shows that unemployment and job loss at this time in a worker’s life, that time of instability, create a scarring effect – that is what they say – which basically sets them up for failure for the rest of their lives, dramatically worsens their future employment prospects and their lifetime earnings. We’ve heard this argument that this is just a small amount of money, but again, looking at some of the research from around the world, it shows that it’s not a small change. The choices we’re making now in this House could be impacting a whole cohort of young earners in this province.

One of the things I said that I would do is give some research from both locally and around the world. But I think what’s more important here, because we don’t have anyone speaking out right now that is in this age cohort, is to hear from some youth. We have the value here in Edmonton of having the City of Edmonton Youth Council. If anyone has followed the City of Edmonton Youth Council’s work – I know my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre is nodding his head because he and I both know that they do incredible, incredible work. They’re a cohort of young folks who work closely with city council, who actually take on a lot of initiatives on their own, by their own devices. I’m actually going to be speaking to them on a panel this weekend. I look forward to hearing more from them about how they view this differentiated wage.

What I want to do is quote from an article they wrote in the *Edmonton Journal* – as I said, I will table this if it hasn’t been tabled yet – and then I’m going to add a little bit of my own flavour to it

as well because, as I’ve said, I’ve heard from youth as well, and I want to share some of those stories. This one young person notes in this article that

to devalue youth wages compared to the rest of Alberta’s population is to unfairly discriminate against young people in the workplace on a set of unfounded assumptions about their work ethic and qualifications purely correlated to their age.

Again, I think this age discrimination piece is a huge one. I’m actually still, believe it or not, a millennial. I’m what they call an elder millennial. [interjection] I know. I look a lot older. This short time in the Leg. has aged me. But one of the things that frustrates me to no end is when I hear these stereotypes about millennials being lazy and not working hard and not contributing to the economy and whatnot. I get very much the discrimination that these young people are feeling when they’re hearing that, “Oh, you don’t need that difference in the wage; you’re just going to waste it on frivolities,” whatever it might be.

Now, these young people go on to say that

youth who do the same work as any other worker in the same position should not be placed under discriminatory payment as a result of their age. This policy in its current form does not consider the merits of individual workers or their living situations, and although it may have the potential to create increased employment opportunities, the jobs created would be less beneficial for the youth who need those opportunities the most.

That’s the one piece that I’m quite concerned about, our vulnerable youth. One of the members talked earlier this evening about vulnerable youth, whether it be, you know, youth from refugee immigrant families, whether it be LGBTQ youth. A lot of these youth don’t have the financial or social supports necessary to provide for themselves. As we said, a lot of these same youth are wanting to save up for education, whatever that might be, whether it’s a trades route, whether it’s university, so they’re having to balance a whole heck of a lot.

I was talking to somebody else who relayed the story of a young person who is also caring for their siblings. Basically, that child was a parent to two other children at a very young age. Again, you’re having to manage school. You’re having to manage planning for your future education. You’re having to manage family responsibilities. In some cases you’re having to, really, be one of the primary providers for your family’s household income, which is so much of a burden to bear, for sure.

Now, I’m just going to talk a little bit more about what the City of Edmonton Youth Council has to say on this. I talked a little bit earlier about the fact that, again, these are folks who are impacted by this policy that are not able to vote yet, and they point out: how is it fair that the perspectives of us under the age of 18 are not able to be heard during the election, during the voting process, yet the Premier didn’t reach out to us? Again, this is why I would urge the House to consider this amendment. Why not go back and consult more heavily with a lot of the youth across the province? Get a wide cross-section. Hear their lived experiences. Ask them questions. Talk to your constituents. Maybe you have. As the Member for Edmonton-South said, we just haven’t heard a lot of these stories from the members opposite. The lived experience of youth is valuable, and it can tell a lot of insights about the impact of this policy. Again, it’s beyond just the economic benefits. These are humans we’re talking about. These are Albertans although they may not be voters.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now, as I said, the other thing that I’m concerned about – and we were chatting about this earlier as well – is the fact that some of

these young people may be encouraged to drop out of school. We still have some very high dropout rates here in Alberta. We talked about that we've done some work to try to address those, but they're unfortunately not decreasing as rapidly as we would like. I do worry in particular – I've got some stats – that the dropout rates are actually highest in rural areas and small towns. Now . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I'm sure that someone will be happy to provide you some additional moments to provide comments if you would like because, as we all know, we have Standing Order 29(2)(a) available.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is rising.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this morning in the House as the sun has risen and as have many other members of this House and made their way here to continue to support this debate. Indeed, to be here in the Chamber this morning – of course, we've had both *Sunrise and Sunset* for a few days here from our artist Mr. Alex Janvier, and now we got to experience them both in person here as well.

I've been appreciating the words from my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. She's had some good thoughts. She's been speaking a lot about youth. That makes sense, she, of course, having been involved in the education sector for some time. I think she's had many good conversations with youth. It's of great interest to me. I certainly have many young people that live and work within my constituency. I was thinking about the students.

8:00 a.m.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The hon. member, I believe – and it has been a long evening, so I could stand to be corrected – moved the motion that we are debating and has spoken already on this motion.

**The Speaker:** I will confirm with the table.

Having said that, he was standing on 29(2)(a). As such . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I think that he should be allowed to continue, then.

**The Speaker:** . . . I concur with your position that he should be allowed to continue.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that the hon. Government House Leader has had a long evening himself. You know, it's understandable. At this point a few things are going to slide.

But as I was saying, you know, I do have a number of students. I spoke earlier about the kids in the hall bistro. I spoke about the Boyle Street Education Centre. I am also very fortunate to have Centre High located here in my constituency at the Boardwalk Market. Many young people are completing their high school education there and are themselves participating in the workforce, in fact participating in some excellent work training programs. Again, Mr. Speaker, I see no reason why those students should be paid a lower wage for doing the same work as others are doing at a higher wage.

Given that, my interest in that subject, I would love to hear more from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on that topic.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has approximately three minutes if she would like to provide some additional comments.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. Our ridings are neighbouring, so we share a lot of similar issues, and I've really appreciated getting to work with him and talk about some of our shared issues and shared opportunities.

I was just starting to say there that the school dropout rates are actually the highest in rural areas, in small towns. Having taught and been a vice-principal out in rural Alberta in small communities – Bawlf, Alberta, was where I spent most of my career – I know that a lot of those students would likely have not had to be too convinced to drop out of school if there was a higher wage. We did a lot of work to keep kids in school. We had the fortune of having a lot of really good work experience programs, RAP, registered apprenticeship programs, that really kept a lot of our students engaged in school. For some of them poverty was an issue, and I would worry very much about the lure of being able to drop out of school because of that higher wage. So I think it's a real issue. I will have to chat with some of my former colleagues out in rural Alberta, just to hear what they're hearing – right? – some of those teachers and counsellors who were working so hard to keep kids in school. Yeah. I think I've shared a lot on the youth piece.

The only other thing I wanted to mention was just on the OT, on the overtime, because I'd like to get that on the record, too. I mean, I grew up in Barrhead, Alberta, and my dad worked in oil and gas for about 40 years near a place called Swan Hills, Alberta. He worked a lot of overtime, and, you know, he sacrificed a lot of time away from the family. I would worry about the rollback because we know that oil and gas workers will be affected the most by this.

I can give other examples as well. I gave the example of a fellow I used to date in Forestburg back when I was dating fellows. He worked at the power plant, the coal-fired power plant out there, and same thing. Trying to get ahead, he put in a lot of overtime hours. I can't imagine the impact that that would have. He is now married with a few kids. Happy for him. Again, I can point to countless stories: my dad, him, and a lot of folks particularly out in rural Alberta, but not just in rural Alberta because I heard it at the doors in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, which is certainly not rural Alberta.

As I said, I just wanted to put that on the record as well. I've spoken a lot about youth and my concerns there. But on the overtime concerns I think that others of my colleagues have spoken a lot. I know that my colleague in Edmonton-West Henday spoke to his own history as a union worker with IBEW. So I will finish there.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

We are back on the amendment. Is anyone wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View rising to debate.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. It is my pleasure to rise today and speak with respect to this bill and this amendment. You know, I think certainly the members on this side of the House and I think on all sides of the House are probably fairly familiar with this issue. I think there are probably a number of things that can be said about, as my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was talking about, the sort of use of differential minimum wages was, of course, a regulation related to this piece of legislation. I think a lot of these changes are problematic in the sense that they hurt maybe not the most vulnerable in our society but those that are close.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I think back over a number of years, and I had the opportunity in my last opportunity to speak to discuss some of the various and sundry jobs I worked over the course of my life, and certainly working for a number of years at a chain restaurant and working for a number of years at a bank, I'm familiar with what it's like to work for minimum wage, at or near. You know, it's really challenging. I think people sometimes forget the challenge. They talk about youth minimum wage, and I can remember someone saying at one point: oh, well, maybe at the minimum wage you can't achieve all your dreams. Well, the dreams that you're trying to achieve, generally, when you're working minimum wage are both shelter and food, which I think ought to be fairly achievable dreams.

There's a lot of stress and challenge that comes with that. Certainly, when you're young, you're maybe capable of more things than you are – at some point I can remember working a job and being in university and studying all night and being remarkably coherent the next day in a way that maybe isn't always the case anymore. But I still think that even at that age you deserve to be able to seek whatever it is you're seeking. I think it's not really the government's place to judge and to interfere and to consider what it is you are or aren't doing with your money.

I think that if we're saying equal pay for equal work, which is what we're saying here – honestly, if we go into the history of this, if we look back, very similar arguments to this were advanced at one point for why women ought to have a differential minimum wage, because it was only a secondary income and they could rely on their husbands, who were working real jobs. They didn't really need; they were just contributing to extra things in the household. They weren't having to pay for things. But that, of course, wasn't the case for all women then, as it isn't the case for all youth now. I think that when we look back at this decision from the perspective of history, we're going to have a similar reaction, much like we look back now and we say: "My goodness. How could they have thought that? Who could possibly have believed that a woman's work should be worth less, should have a lower minimum wage than a man? Who would have believed that that kind of discrimination was appropriate?"

I think, you know, in 10 or 20 years, or some of us right now, we're going to look back at this decision, and we're going to think exactly the same thing. At the end of the day, while youth may not vote, they are still persons, too, if you will. They still have needs and desires. They still have things that they want to achieve. I think that when we delve down into whether or not they're using their money appropriately, it's just overly paternalistic, and I don't think it's reasonable. I think they have just as much agency and just as much right to decide what it is that they want to pursue.

In a lot of cases it probably is education, and even if it isn't, even when it comes to education – I went to postsecondary for rather a long time. After graduating with a psychology degree, I went back and took a philosophy degree, and a lot of people may have suggested that that was not the best use of my funds. Ultimately it led me to law school and on this journey, and I don't regret any moment of it. I think that a youth, regardless of what they're choosing to do with their money, regardless of whether you think the philosophy degree they're taking is a worthwhile degree, deserves to make those decisions for themselves. They deserve to be treated as equal participants in society because they are doing the same work as everyone else.

**8:10 a.m.**

In fact, to suggest that someone a month before their 18th birthday isn't capable of performing a task as well or as adequately as someone a month after their 18th birthday I think is just a little bit absurd. I think the line is arbitrary, to say the least. Given my

reliance on some of my younger colleagues with respect to technology, I suspect that there are a lot of people who are 16 or 17 years of age who are probably better able to do certain tasks than, say, someone of my age and experience. Those are a few of my thoughts on that.

I also think that at the end of the day, ensuring not just the minimum wage but a lot of protections in this bill gives people the ability to have some power in their working situation, the ability to hold their heads up high, the ability to make their way in the world. We talk, I think, a lot about ensuring social mobility and ensuring that people are able to do the best for themselves and are able to put themselves in the best situation. I actually think the best way to ensure that is to ensure that they have appropriate protections at work.

I certainly remember working for a number of years at a bank, that shall remain nameless. Ultimately this turned into a court case elsewhere, not here. There was a tendency to skirt those protections, to say: oh, well, you're not required to stay with a customer who stays late and only get paid until 4:30, but if you're not balanced, you're in trouble. There was usually half an hour to 40 minutes of work that needed to occur in order for that to happen, so if someone was still there after the doors closed and you had to help them until 20 after, you were staying until 5 and that's just the way it was, even though you only got paid until 4:30. People like me were able to push back against that, but not everyone was. There were some younger people who maybe didn't have parents in the same position that my parents were in, who would have been able to help them out if they had lost their job. There was one woman that I worked with who had two kids and she was a single mother. She needed that job. She lived paycheck to paycheck, and she wasn't able to stand up for her rights in that context.

That's why we have bodies like this, right? People say, "Oh, well, it's fine. Workers can just stand up for their rights," but the history of that has been that there has had to be legislative intervention. There was a long time where there were no occupational health and safety rules at all in this country and in others. As is often the case with things, when we know better, we do better, and we move forward. We provide more power to those who are the least empowered. I think, for a number of years, we moved in a very positive direction with that. We moved in a direction where those who had nothing and were trying to make their way in the world had enough rights that they were able to sort of make that transition, and they were able to move where they wanted with sufficient hard work.

But I think, I would say, arguably since the mid-80s we've kind of been sliding in the other direction. The wages of those who earn the least have been slipping relative to the wages of those who earn the most, significantly. I personally, philosophically, tend to pin it to this "greed is good" thing that happened in the 80s, which I think has been very destructive to society.

Legislatures the world over have stepped back for fear of interfering, but either way, when you're amending a law, it's a law. We have laws in place, bankruptcy laws to a certain degree – less so now in Canada, although still, I think, in places in the States – that tend to privilege corporations, that tend to privilege those who are able to contribute capital as opposed to those who are able to contribute their labour. In any event, the system doesn't run unregulated. I mean, that hasn't been the case for probably centuries. To say that one form of interference is good and beneficial and one isn't: I mean, yes, that's the case, but you suggest that there are classes of places in which we should interfere and in which we shouldn't. Basically, usually those classes are suggested to be interference which help those that are wealthiest, who have inherited their capital and have that capital to contribute, that they

are beneficial and that those interferences that help those who don't have capital, who don't have inherited wealth, who only have their hard work and their dedication and their smarts to contribute – those regulations tend to be classed as that. I think that's really sad. I really do, because I think that working hard and your character and who you are moving forward is so much more important than what you've inherited, and that's why I think that some of these moves are so incredibly important.

I think that another thing that's worth talking about, again, is the importance of unions, what they do and how they impact. You know, certainly, I've mentioned this before, but I remember that when we studied various human rights cases in law school, it was interesting to discover that the names on those cases were not usually the names of the individuals. They were usually unions because it arose out of what's called a grievance, which is where the employee and the union go to arbitration, and then it usually goes to a judicial review and so on and so forth. But many of those cases arose, again, because those individuals said, "My rights are being violated, but I don't have the strength to stand up to my employer; I need this job because I need to feed my kids" or whatever else. So those employees were able to pool their collective resources. They were able to come together and say: none of us want our rights violated, and whatsoever you do to one of us, you do to all of us.

I don't know. To me, the best, in some ways, in human society is everyone coming together and saying: "If you violate the rights of one of us, you violate the rights of all of us. We're all going to stand up, we're all going to pool our resources together, and we're all going to fight that collectively." That is, by and large, a huge portion of the work that unions do, to enable those workers to come together and to collectively fight for those rights.

You know, we talk a lot about interest arbitration, and that usually has to do with pay and working conditions and various other things that are set up in the contract. But what I'm talking about here is grievance arbitration. That's essentially when an employee comes forward and says, "The thing that you did to me isn't fair" for whatever reason. Sometimes it's the employer, too, but often it's the employee.

We've seen huge advances. The B.C. firefighters' case is one of my favourites, and it talks about setting a standard which is unrelated to the work being done, so a standard which is unnecessary in order to complete the work but which unfairly discriminates against women. Essentially, women were excluded not because they couldn't do the work but because someone had set up a standard in order to get the job, but the standard was something that wasn't required in order to perform the job. Folks recognize overt discrimination in a way that they maybe don't recognize that kind of systemic discrimination.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I think that by ensuring that workers have the ability to come together and to vote democratically, not to have it imposed on them but to vote by majority, just like we vote by majority in this House – like, the members opposite are so fond of reminding us what the will of the majority was – saying that workers should be able to vote by majority and bring themselves together collectively, in order to achieve those ends, you know, it's really critical to ensure that individuals have that, because what it does, in my view, is that it raises the standard of living of us all.

Actually, what keeps springing to mind is: whatsoever you do to the least among us, you do unto me. I actually think that is a religious quote. You know, I feel like that's the way we should behave in society, and that is why I am in favour of this amendment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

8:20 a.m.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview rising.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise, and in a moment here I will direct my question to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View about her remarks on Bill 2. Now, her remarks: I appreciate the fact that they were very detailed. One of the areas that I was hoping the member could expand upon is what this bill is proposing to do for banked overtime pay and how that will impact workers in her riding but, as well, around the province. I know that this elimination of overtime pay for hours banked will have a significant impact on families. There are many families, especially in the energy sector, who rely on their overtime pay to make ends meet monthly. So I was hoping to hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View her thoughts on this proposed change, what it would mean to her constituents and Albertans at large.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for reminding me of that one as well. I had gone so poetic with respect to the rights of youth workers that I had almost forgotten this little piece. I think this is something that's going to make a huge difference in the lives of individuals. A lot of individuals will take overtime because they want to save towards goals, right? If you're working a lower wage job and you're trying to pay your rent and ensure there's food for your kids, it can be quite challenging. That can be a really tight situation.

I know that members of this House, especially on the other side, want to go on about the fact: you know, you worked hard, so you got ahead. As someone who's worked a low-wage job and also as someone who's gone to law school, I'm not denying that law school was difficult, but it's nothing compared to the continual stress of thinking: okay; I have enough to cover all of my bills, and I can put away \$200 a month. You put away and put away and put away, and then your car breaks down, and you're just back to square one again. They're challenging circumstances – they're challenging circumstances – in which to live. I think a lot of people are in those circumstances, and overtime is what makes the difference to them.

You know, certainly, I've heard members on the other side say: well, this isn't that much money. Well, for someone who's living paycheque to paycheque, for someone who's trying to save up so that they can go back to school while still providing for their children, actually it's a lot of money. It's an enormous amount of money. Certainly, when I was back in school, one of my friends had gone back to school a little bit later, too. That's probably why we were friends. Gosh, I think he had his fifth child, actually, while we were in school, so he had a lot of people to provide for. He had a decent job but a job that was a manual labour job, and he often relied on overtime to be able to buy his textbooks. I don't think that that's unreasonable.

This notion of, "Oh, well, you can just choose which to do": it just isn't the case. I've certainly worked for employers who had policies that said that you absolutely must bank your overtime. You were not permitted to have it paid out, specifically to take advantage of a law like this. The employer would essentially force you to work overtime, and then they wouldn't give you the choice as to whether you wanted to take time off. In that particular job, because there were a limited number of us, every time someone

had to take a day off because of this banked overtime, it was actually just harder on everyone else. I mean, really, you didn't get ahead at all.

I think this makes a huge difference for a lot of people, and I think that we in this House need to consider the circumstances of different people, different people across the province who may be from different backgrounds, who may have different circumstances than we do, and we need to consider the fact that this overtime money may mean an enormous amount to them.

I certainly know, for myself and a number of people that I've known over the course of my life, that this is the kind of money that would make an enormous difference. It's the kind of money that you can start to put towards something or just to deal with the fact that your car broke down unexpectedly. I mean, that happens, usually at the worst possible time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your comments, hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Good morning to some fresh faces here this morning. It's a pleasure to see you.

We are on debate of RA1. Is there anyone wishing to provide additional debate? I see the hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Why, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It is just a joy for me to be here this morning to speak about this issue. I think there is, you know, a lovely sort of – I won't call it irony. There's a different word. I'm kind of having that word-finding problem that exists with people over a certain age. But we're talking about the matter of overtime as we now go into whatever hour that we are now in debating the matter of overtime, so, you know, sweet irony, whatever it is. I'm glad to be here to be able to continue to talk about this issue.

You know, we talked a lot about this issue during the election campaign, but I will say that I think I have to take a certain amount of responsibility that we weren't as successful as I would have liked at really getting folks to understand what these changes would mean to the rights of many working Albertans to earn overtime. As a result of that, perhaps it was not an issue that was sufficiently debated, which, of course, is why we're spending so much time talking about it now, to make sure that everybody truly has the opportunity to think about and to internalize what the consequences of this particular set of changes would be to people's ability to earn overtime. That's, of course, why I'm rising to speak in favour of this amendment, which would in fact serve to delay passage of this bill until such time as we really could unpack what this particular set of amendments would do to people's ability to earn overtime in this province.

We've talked a lot over the last many hours about the nature of Alberta's workforce in terms of people who are, you know, lower wage workers, waged workers, those who are salaried workers, those who are small-business owners, those who are senior managers in larger corporate entities, whether they be private sector or public sector, and then, of course, those who are owners of much, much larger businesses. So we've talked a good deal about the nature of who is doing work in Alberta, and I think it's fair to say that in most cases we all share a very common characteristic, and that is that we all work very, very hard in Alberta. I think that's absolutely true.

I remember moving back here from British Columbia when I was about – let's see. My kids were about, maybe, one and a half and three, Mr. Speaker. I had been working as a lawyer in British Columbia for almost a decade before that and had managed to sort of orchestrate quite a nice little arrangement for myself there, where

I was able to maintain a good professional position with a very good career path, with lots of really interesting working opportunities, while at the same time actually only working part-time so that I could spend time with my children, who were at that time one and three.

**8:30 a.m.**

It really mattered to me to be able to have these kinds of flexible working arrangements that allowed me to, you know, maintain a foot in the door of my career so that I didn't do the thing that so many women often do, which is that you drop out of the workforce. Then you're struggling to get back into the workforce about 10 years later, and you find that your male colleagues have leapfrogged well past you in terms of your career path, and you're constantly scrambling to catch up. That's, quite frankly, the story that I think many, many experience when they drop completely out of the workforce or, conversely, take jobs with much lower levels of responsibility while caring for young kids. They find that they're starting from behind when they do get back into the workforce once their kids are a bit older.

I was very, very privileged, Mr. Speaker, when I was living in B.C., to have a job that allowed me to do the kinds of interesting things that I could while still working part-time. Indeed, one of the interesting things that I was privileged to be able to do, actually, was to advise the government of B.C. at the time on a range of changes to the health and safety legislation that they had that, interestingly, actually impacted on hours of work and all those kinds of things. It was amazing to be able to have that much agency while still working part-time and raising very young children.

Anyway, the reason I talk about that, as it relates to Alberta, is that when we moved to Alberta, I then set about to find the same kind of work here. You know, the upside was that I was repeatedly offered work by a range of very interesting and exciting employers where I could do the same kinds of fun things, but when I would say, "Great; I want to work part-time, and I still want to have benefits, and I want to have all these things," they looked at me like I was from Mars. They were just: "Well, no. If you're going to do this kind of exciting work, you're going to work 65 hours a week at least, and if you're not, then who are you, and why do you think you get to use your brain and do this job?" It was a bit of a shock to me.

It was an interesting process. It took me about a year to basically – interestingly, I was making fun last night of how it's very hard for individual employees to negotiate their own terms of employment. I suppose I was an exception to that rule because over the course of about a year I managed to negotiate a whole new contract for myself, within a collective agreement setting, to allow not only me but ultimately my future colleagues to work part-time and still do interesting work. But it took some time.

The reason I raise it is that there was an interesting culture that I discovered across all sectors of the Alberta economy because I was, you know, doing a lot of contract work here and there. That's what you want to do. The irony: you want to work part-time, so you take a bunch of part-time contracts and try to build full-time work or enough work, and ultimately you end up working about 1.5 jobs or two jobs while you're juggling all your different contracts. So I worked for a bunch of different people until we managed to finally find that lovely sort of part-time thing that allowed me to go back and spend quality time with my children, which, as you can imagine, was really my number one priority.

Through that process, you know, it became very clear to me: the different culture from B.C. to Alberta; how hard people here work, everybody. You know, the workers worked hard. The paid salaried staff, that I was seeking to be, worked hard. Managers worked hard.

Business owners worked hard. Everybody put in long hours, and the economy was highly productive. In fact, we often found and many people found that there was a shortage of people to fill jobs, in fact, because things were moving so fast at that time. The price of oil was quite high, and the province was also doing well, I think, because of unprecedented land sales and things really doing quite well in the natural gas sector at that point.

Anyway, that's our culture, and that's who we are as Albertans, and I think we should be proud of it. We should. I think it's a good thing. And if people choose to work overtime, then they should absolutely be paid more for it. If we choose to run our businesses and run our organizations and serve our public, if we happen to be in a nonprofit or public-sector setting, with that kind of energy and innovation and devotion, then that's what we should do. But the key is that we should be paid for it. I suspect – and I will admit that I haven't actually looked at it. I haven't had a chance to do a crossjurisdictional comparison because we're still sort of in the process of getting our resources set up over here at the offices of the old off op, so I haven't done as much crossjurisdictional comparison as I would like.

Anyway, we're working through that, but I suspect that it is the case that Albertans probably work more overtime than almost any other province because of that sort of cultural element to our workforce. Again, that's not a bad thing. That creates productivity. That's good. The key is that everyone should enjoy and share the benefits of that culture. Everyone should get the outcome that we are all seeking when we engage in our work life that way, and it shouldn't be a thing where just, you know, a certain group of people get the benefit of it and everybody else carries the burden of it.

Overtime is a concept where there is a premium paid at a certain point for hours that are worked beyond a certain number because it is understood that there are sacrifices that are made by people when they work beyond a certain number of hours in a given day or in a given week or in a given work cycle, however it's defined. There are sacrifices inherent in that choice which go beyond the normal sacrifice that is made when you work under that amount. It has to do with a number of things. It has to do with your health and safety. It has to do with your ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to ensure that you're getting the sleep that you need, that you're getting the right food that you need. [interjections] Exactly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you're probably not being your best self – right? – in this 24-hour period. You've probably missed out on all your healthy food, not to mention your morning yoga class, and probably – I don't know. I'm assuming that the Speaker runs a solid 20 K every morning. These things don't happen when, you know, suddenly your work schedule is completely turned on its head and you discover that, no, you have to be in to work much earlier than you'd planned and you need to be at work for 16 hours rather than eight.

In a way, I kind of like that we're having this conversation in this setting because I think there's not a soul in this room that doesn't have some understanding of what it's like to have your schedule and your life disrupted by having to put in a lot more hours of work than you had planned. It's not just the Speaker's yoga class. I think there are many people here that missed out on their morning yoga class. Okay. Maybe not yoga. I'm going to say that this is probably not the profile of most yoga classes, the people in this room. [interjections] Oh, no, no. I stand corrected. Apparently, there is a whole yoga caucus in the UCP government. Namaste.

**An Hon. Member:** Namaste.

**Ms Notley:** You know of what I speak, then. It's hard to go through a day without that yoga.

But, seriously, even today we have staff who have worked for more than 14 hours. I'm not sure about our commissionaires and our sheriffs, what's happened with the hours that they've been putting in. I'm not sure whether they would be earning time and a half right now. I hope so. Certainly, I know that the salaried members here are not, but, you know, for some ridiculous reason not only did we sign up for this, but we campaigned and asked lots of people for this, so that's on us. I think that the people that work in and around the vicinity of these buildings: certainly, we need to make sure that they are compensated for the extra hours that they put in.

**8:40 a.m.**

With all of this, though, the point that I'm trying to make, in a very long-winded and not very articulate way, is that when you say to the person who is paying you, "In return for you paying me, I will give you an hour of my time and effort and attention and capacity and all those things," that bargain changes at a certain point when the length of time that you are delivering to that person reaches past a certain point. We're all human, and it's not actually in people's best interest to consistently work 12, 14 hours a day. The impact on your life outside of work: it's not a linear progression. The impact of that 12th hour away from home is much bigger than the impact of the fifth hour away from home. There. I think I finally found a way to make that case or clarify what it is I'm trying to say.

I say this, going back to my own experience when I was working so hard, as a mom of two small kids, to be able to spend time with them every day. I think there are many people in this room that understand what it's like if your work is such that you go home and you don't actually get to say good night to your kids and you go a whole 24-hour period and you don't see them at all because you've been at work for too long. You can only sustain that so many times before it creates a much bigger, negative impact on your life and on the life of your family. Above and beyond the issue of health and safety, which I think should speak for itself, there's also just the exponential impact on quality of life that arises from working beyond a certain number of hours. As a result of that, there should be a premium paid.

This is not, you know, groundbreaking stuff that I'm saying here. The concept of a premium for overtime work is not quite as old as the hills, but it's been around for some time. In a place like Alberta, where people work hard, play hard, as folks like to say, the concept of a premium for your overtime has been around for a very, very long time, and there are great swaths of our population who have made a tremendous success of their lives that way, whether by way of operating their own businesses and working very, very hard in order to get ahead that way or by way of working as an employee in certain sectors of our population and working very hard that way in order to gain that extra money and also the extra opportunity that can come with it.

Now, I remember at one point hearing someone – I can't remember who it was – try to justify this change to the overtime as somehow providing rights to workers and suggest that the poor waitress was really being held down by the obligation of her employer to pay overtime because she was compelled to be ejected from the workplace at a certain point, right when customers who were getting ready to pay great tips were walking through the door.

Well, I have to say that, I mean, I can only speak from my own experience and from the experience of – oh, I don't know – the 200 or so random waiters and waitresses that have come and talked to me over the course of the last couple of years when I've been out on the road and eating out. In many cases they would come and talk

to me, and they'd sort of whisper, and they'd sort of look around, and they'd say: "You know, thank you so much for everything that you're doing. You're actually making my life so much better. I don't care what my boss says. This is exactly what I need." You know, it's not like I go out begging for people to come and say that to me. Quite the opposite. Typically when my day would end around 9 or 10 o'clock and we would actually go out some place to get a bit of food, we would kind of focus on just sort of winding down at the end of the day, but nonetheless people would often come and volunteer to me their gratitude for this. Even in restaurants that had subsequently gone on the record to rabidly oppose our changes to workplace laws, I would invariably run into the majority of their staff and have them say: yeah, well, the boss may say this, but the other 80 per cent of humans in this business are very grateful for what you've done.

And I will say, you know, that this is not just a theoretical thing. I mean, I've had a long and varied working life, I think it's fair to say. I joke around about how I've done practically every job in this building, but there are a few positions I haven't had yet. Mr. Speaker, just don't feel threatened or anything, also those at the table and the Sergeant-at-Arms. That's always struck me, that the uniforms are really cool. Lots of options.

I've had a fairly wide-ranging group of jobs over my time working since I first started working at the age of 15. In fact, my first job that actually lasted more than a few days was as a waitress when I was 15. In fact, that is the work that I did until I was about 21, 22. I worked at a number of different types of restaurants during that time, and I will say without question that I think that some of the hardest work that anyone will ever do in their life is work in the service industry, in the food services industry. I think it's incredibly hard work. I'll acknowledge that I was not the best waitress on the planet. Looking back, I marvel that I actually managed to maintain my job given the number of times I would flip a tray accidentally onto the laps of poor customers. This was not my forte. Nonetheless, I somehow managed to stay employed through that whole process. Maybe that's partially why I wasn't as successful with the tips as some, but nonetheless I did that all through high school.

Interestingly, you know, I started at the very beginning of grade 10, when I was 15, before I had a car or before I could drive. We lived about 25 clicks out of town, so my mom had to drive me into town for my shift and then come and pick me up when I was finished. Often I'd be working until about midnight, and I'd be working 10, 11, 12 hours on weekends and would definitely be working till 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning on weeknights when I was going to school. Once I got my driver's licence, that made things a little bit easier.

Certainly, the fact that I was 15 or 16 had no impact on the type of work that I was doing. I was, you know, working at exactly the same kind of job as the other waitresses, serving people food and all that kind of thing. Until I was 18, I couldn't serve liquor, but that had absolutely no impact on the number of customers that I would serve, the number of orders I would put through, the amount of dishes I would wash, the amount of salads that I would make, all that kind of stuff. I was fully a part of the team at all of the restaurants where I worked, beginning at the age of 15.

Certainly, you know, that tradition continues in my family. My son is washing dishes while working on his science degree at the U of A, and he'll also come home at about 2 o'clock in the morning and then go off to school the next day. Interestingly for him, standing and washing dishes, you know, if he actually has to work two shifts in a row, back to back, and if his shifts go more than about eight hours, his feet get so bad from standing that he's

literally limping when he gets home. He limps up the stairs, and he limps for the next day.

**8:50 a.m.**

He's trying now to make sure that his shifts aren't scheduled back to back. He can't control when he ends up having to work a really, really long shift because customers come in at the very last minute, right before the restaurant is going to close, so he has to stick around. Then if he has to stand on his feet for 11 or 12 hours, he literally cannot walk, and he limps around. If you question this, ask anyone in our neighbourhood who watches him the next morning limping around while walking our dog. I have to explain what's going on with his feet to the neighbours.

**Ms Hoffman:** But with enough overtime maybe he can get orthotics.

**Ms Notley:** Well, if he gets paid the premium, yeah, he can get some orthotics, which is a whole other issue.

Anyway, this is real. What I will say is that in that experience it was never the case that, you know, you were wishing: jeez, I just wish I could get paid straight time so that I could stay that 12th hour at the workplace and get all those extra tips. The idea that that's what's happening in the world of people who are working in restaurants is nonsense, Mr. Speaker. It's just nonsense.

You know, I also had the experience a little bit later, when I was about – what was I? – I guess 19, of working at a restaurant that was isolated. It was on the north shore of Great Bear Lake. You had to fly in and fly out. We had very wealthy tourists from the U.S. fly in. They would stay for a week, and they would go fishing on Great Bear Lake in search of the biggest lake trout ever. At the time the lodge that I worked for actually held the record for the biggest lake trout ever caught. It was about 65 pounds. It was quite impressive. But that was not the job I had. I didn't get to be the guide that took the guests out fishing on the lake. I was one of the four waitresses that served them breakfast and supper.

It was very interesting. I still remember flying into the camp about a week before the guests were to arrive, and our job was to get the camp ready for the first guests. We flew in. We had to do two flights. We probably landed around 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening. We all got to work, and we just kept working and working and working. At a certain point I thought: "Gosh, you know, I'm really hungry. Why am I so hungry? It's, like, only 10 o'clock. I'm not usually hungry." Lo and behold, it was 5 o'clock in the morning, and the sun hadn't gone down because it was, you know, the last week of June or whatever it was. They just had us working until 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning, until we basically dropped off our feet from working so hard to get the camp ready.

Of course, we lived there. We couldn't leave. If we chose to leave before the camp was scheduled to close after two and a half months, we would have had to pay about two weeks' salary for the cost of the plane to get out, so we were sort of captured. We lived in this little, harshly plumbed cabin outside the lodge, and we generally worked about 12 hours a day, six and a half days a week. Interestingly, this was a long time ago – you know, I'm not that young – and the laws were different, so they could do that. In hindsight, I mean, we were genuinely sort of captured employees.

When I think back to the hours that we worked, it is quite something to me that we didn't get overtime. I will however say that if I'd been offered it, I would have taken it, and I will also say that under no circumstances was I given the opportunity to negotiate the terms and conditions of that employment. It was a great experience, but it was probably in violation of just a plethora of rules. I'm not saying that they were in violation then. I'm just



saying that the rules that we have in place now would have required a very different set of working conditions than what we had, and I think that that is a good thing because when I think back to the situations we were put into, I don't think that they were particularly great for us at the time.

It's these kinds of things that we need to guard against as Albertans as we continue to do the thing that we do, where we all work very, very, very hard and we produce more and we have higher levels of productivity in the province of Alberta than any other part of the country. Even in the midst of this downturn we still have the highest earnings in the country, we still have the highest number of people working, the highest percentage of labour force participation in the country, and people earning the most. I think that that is because, in part, of this culture that we all have of working hard and working long.

I do not believe that we are going to encourage that or reward that fairly if we say: well, the folks that are employing these people that are working hard and working long will enjoy the benefit of their work and enjoy the benefit of those profits and that productivity, and what we're going to do is reach in and grab some of the benefits that should be going to all of us, and we're going to steal them out of their pockets and put them in someone else's pockets, and we're going to do this on the backs of those who have the least agency and the least ability to defend themselves.

It just really does go against the grain with respect to, you know, when you have to make changes, when you come up against challenges, when you have to shift the way you're doing things. I think that there's an element of that, for sure, in this province because we know that as much as everybody likes to make the sort of simplistic arguments – and I believe that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford did a beautiful job last night of revealing their shortcomings – as much as people like to say, “You got elected; the price of oil dropped; therefore, all the things that happened as a result of the price of oil dropping are now your fault,” I think most people understand that that is not true.

I think, more to the point, people understand that our energy industry is going through a major, major restructuring, a major shift and that even when – and I say “when” with great optimism and hope – we get the matter of our ability to get our products to market resolved and we establish greater takeaway capacity in the longer term through pipelines and, hopefully, in the medium term through the wise reversal of this government's plan to cancel crude by rail, even when we get our takeaway capacity issues resolved, the nature and the structure of the energy industry are changing in a way that our economy also is going to have to change. What people do to earn money is also in the state of probably unprecedented change and evolution right now.

The key as we go through that is that we go through it together and that we make sure that everybody is doing their fair share to get through what is an economic shift and that we don't use the economic shift as an opportunity to suddenly rip away the framework that ensures that all Albertans can share in either prosperity or challenge together, the way we should. We should not build our economic future on the back of a principle of exploitation. Our economic future should be built on the foundation of people coming together to share both the upside and the downside, to share the upside and to share the risk, not putting the risk on the backs of those who can least afford it and shovelling the upside to a group of people who already, in many cases, are doing very, very well, blindly hoping that by moving all the upside to them, they will choose to invest more here.

**9:00 a.m.**

Honestly, as we heard when we had some of the conversation that we've been having around Bill 3, there's mounting evidence that that's just not the way it works. I do look forward as well to getting back to that conversation around Bill 3 because every time I turn around, more people are finding more really thoughtful, thoughtful studies, evidence, historical analysis, case study after case study after case study showing the likely failure and the missteps of this government as it relates to the corporate tax strategy as a means of creating long-term economic prosperity and sustainability in the province of Alberta. Anyway, that's Bill 3.

This is another piece to that. As I've said before, it's all about finding ways to maximize gifts to certain players within our economy with no guaranteed benefit in return but a clear guaranteed loss to other people in the economy. Workers will get less. That's just what it means. When you pay people at straight time for overtime instead of time and a half for overtime, it's very clear. It's black and white: workers will get less.

**Ms Hoffman:** How does that stimulate the economy?

**Ms Notley:** The Member for Edmonton-Glenora asks, “How does that stimulate the economy?” We've talked before. It's not helpful. You know, when you talk about small business – and members opposite are very passionate about talking about small business, and that's great. Small business is the backbone of our economy. I'm going to be doing an event later this morning with a number of wonderful small-business owners who contribute to the economy, who contribute to our community, who are dear friends. It is absolutely true that small business is the backbone of our economy. No question about that.

Now, I think I've lost my train. I started talking about small business. Where was I going there?

**Ms Hoffman:** Cutting straight time. Cutting overtime. Less money in the local economy.

**Ms Notley:** Oh, that's it. Yes, small business. Thank you. Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Just guessing.

**Ms Notley:** One of the things about small business, though, that sometimes gets lost when the other side is talking about small business, is that small business actually, for the most part, requires money to be spent in their small business in Alberta by people who are here in Alberta. The reason small business is the backbone of our economy is that they're part of an internal and localized economic model that requires there to be money flowing within the local economic model. If you take money out of the local economic model, then there is less money to flow within it, and then small business doesn't do as well.

Basically, if you run a small business, you need the folks in your community that you rely on to use your small business to have the money to spend on your small business. If the folks in your community, if your neighbours find that they have \$2,500 a month less in their family budget every 12 weeks, then guess what? They are not going to maybe feel that they can buy a new vehicle. They're not going to go to get their hair done. They're not going to go to one of these restaurants where all these theoretical happy waiters and waitresses are so pleased to be able to work long hours with no overtime so that you can get the tip that apparently they're not going to get now because everybody has less money. Anyway, they're not going to go there. They're not going to avail themselves of the small-business services as much as they would otherwise because

they have less money. That's the thing about an economy that is built on the hard work of small-business owners: they are more susceptible to the loss of money in the economy.

We know, for sure, that many small businesses have also suffered as a result of the drop in the price of oil. You know, as drilling has gone down, as production has gone down, as employment within the oil and gas sector has gone down, a series of these rippling effects goes through the economy in many, many, many ways. We know that that is true. Many of these small businesses suffer. There's no question. I wish that there were ways to protect them more effectively, but that has already happened. But what we also know is that to then, you know, fire a bunch of public-sector workers, to roll back wages, to stop paying people overtime, and to take money out of people's pockets – in fact, the negative impact on small businesses will ripple even further, and the ripple will be stronger, and it will go farther. Austerity is rarely a path to economic growth. [interjections] Right. Oh, that's a good one. We certainly, certainly do not want to starve or strangle economic growth.

You know, when our government was first elected, we actually went off and sought advice. It's a thing that we did. We were very committed to sort of evidence-based decision-making. We sought advice from former governor of the Bank of Canada David Dodge. He talked to us about how to stimulate economic growth in the midst of the downturn that we were faced with. He talked, of course, about injecting quite a significant bump in investment into infrastructure to keep people employed and to keep that money circulating in the economy and all that kind of stuff. So we did that.

Just to be clear, I don't think there's a person in the room that would ever characterize David Dodge as some socialist lefty. I'm pretty sure David Dodge would not characterize David Dodge as a socialist lefty. He's just a guy who happens to believe in, you know, Keynesian economics. It's a long-time economic theory, and it's one that appears to have stood the test of time. For instance, where Keynesian economics are used, you tend to see economic growth. Where you see Reaganomics introduced, you tend to see economic . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Contraction.

**Ms Notley:** . . . contraction. That's what history delivers to us, a picture of how these things work over time.

In any event, the rationale there for Mr. Dodge's recommendations was this idea that we need to keep money in the economy. This goes right back to this idea of making sure that folks can stay working and that their money can stay in the economy and continue to keep the economy working, and that is why things like telling people that they don't get to earn overtime anymore stymies the very plan and objectives that someone like David Dodge was talking to our government about pursuing.

You know, another reason why overtime is something that should be paid at a premium is because there are additional costs to working extra hours above and beyond. I've talked about the health and safety issues. I've talked about the consequences to lifestyle, but I forgot to talk about some of the costs. And it just occurred to me because, of course, I believe there are a few members of our caucus who just in the last 24 hours have incurred additional costs as a result of us staying later. Of course, it's a rare occurrence for us. We're fine. We all signed up for this. But for regular working people it's a much, much more difficult thing to manage. When you end up having to work overtime, what do you do? You have to pay for child care. When you're paying for child care that is unpredictable – so that person has to be on call to come in or to stay

late to provide additional child care – that is outside of the regular hours that a person would normally work, guess what? That child care costs more. That child care comes at a premium, so presumably you should also be earning a premium in order to pay for that child care, which is now at a premium.

**9:10 a.m.**

Now, members opposite may or may not know that with the child care pilots that we introduced over the course of the last four years, one of the pilots, not one individual one but one of the things that we were piloting, was the cost and the ability for agencies to develop shift-based child care so that we could actually have high-quality, affordable, accessible child care centres with well-educated child care providers and properly designed early education programs on a shift basis so that kids were not disrupted so much when parents had to work shifts and because we have large sectors of our economy where women, in particular, will do shift work, yet they can't find child care that accommodates that. So we were looking at trying to, you know, find public-sector placements for these kinds of child care arrangements.

I was thinking in particular, of course, about, for instance, in health care. We know that many, many nurses work on 12-hour schedules, and they're expected to work overtime. Now, because they have a collective agreement, of course, they get a premium for working overtime. That's, again, the good thing about a union, which this bill is trying to discourage. Thankfully, the nurses do have a union, so they do have written into their contract that they get a premium when they have to work overtime. What they don't have is particularly high levels of predictability around when they work overtime. In theory, they have schedules, and in theory they're supposed to get two weeks' notice of their schedule, or maybe it's three weeks. I can't remember the contract offhand now. But in emergent or difficult circumstances the employer, that being the people of Alberta indirectly, can break those schedules and break those plans, and all they have to do is pay an additional premium if they do it.

I can tell you from my own personal work experience that at that point, really, the premium is not even what folks are looking for. All they really want is control over their life, and they're deeply frustrated when they are suddenly told that they don't have that. Nonetheless, it was through this experience of working with this particular workforce and understanding how difficult it is when you are employed in a job where you have a 24-hour work cycle and you only have limited control over when you work and when you don't work and overtime is a matter of course – how do we construct child care that supports those working people so that the kids can still receive good, high-quality child care while mom or dad is working shift work and working these long hours? What I think we've heard from the preliminary pilot reports, although members opposite probably have better access to that information than I do right now, is that it costs more to provide that kind of child care. It would then flow that that is why when you work overtime, you should also be paid a premium because it costs more to work overtime and to do your job.

Just that issue of child care is a perfect example of why this sort of arbitrary decision embedded in this bill to pick the pockets of these workers and pull back their overtime is so hard nosed and unfair, just simply unfair.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it really does just come down to this issue of fairness, and I think all of us were raised very early on with this idea of fairness, but we have different views of what fairness is. Obviously, our view of what fairness is is driven by our own experience. There's no question. I know there are lots of folks who run businesses who will say: "I worked so, so hard. I worked 70

hours. Things didn't go our way, and my business is struggling. It is not fair that it should struggle more because I have to pay my employees this wage which they believe is fair. But it's not fair anymore because I'm not earning as much money as I would've liked." I appreciate that's an absolutely legitimate perspective. Our vision of what is fair is driven by our own experience. There's no question.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

But I think that overall, if you're going to define what is fair, what you need to do is look at who has decision-making authority and who generally does better and who generally has less decision-making, less agency, and who generally earns less. Fairness should be about providing some balance, not growing the imbalance between those two different groups of people, and this bill at its heart is about finding different ways to grow the imbalance between people in our workforces and in our economy.

That is why, again, this idea of stripping overtime from working people strikes me as just fundamentally unfair. As it is, we're stripping overtime from people to the tune of \$2,500 every 12 weeks if you're one of the 400,000 people who work overtime, just to give you a bit of a sense of it. We're not making this number up. It's not a Rebel media site over here, okay? We actually did some research here, and we just went to the government of Alberta statistics and looked at: what is the average number of overtime hours worked by people who work overtime, and what is their average rate of pay? Then we looked at: what do they lose, then, if they go from time and a half to straight time? That is basically how we came up with this number of roughly \$2,500 every 12 weeks. It's not rocket science.

Now, I will grant you, the numbers are a little bit – you know, it's a bit rough because what we do know is that those statistics around the number of people who work overtime and their average rate of pay includes unionized workers. We do know that this attack on overtime in Bill 2 won't apply to unionized workers. I mean, it will apply to some unionized workers because in some cases the union will have not bothered to negotiate this issue because they have perceived that it was already protected in employment standards, so not every unionized worker will be protected from the negative consequences of this pick-your-pockets bill, but some of them will be. When you look at the tools we used to come up with this number of \$2,500 every 12 weeks, we do need to allow for the fact that those estimates are skewed a little bit by those folks who have union jobs, who will actually be protected from this pick-your-pocket legislation by virtue of their union contract. So I will acknowledge that.

That's the one place where our numbers are a little bit rough because we can't find the information about how to factor out those particular employees from the 400,000. But because we know that, generally speaking, union density in Alberta is quite low – it's only around about 20 per cent – and because we know that not every union worker will be protected from this pick-your-pockets bill because of the fact that, again, those people negotiating their contract were relying on the existence of generalized employment standards legislation and didn't want to burn negotiating capital by bargaining things that were already protected in basic legislation.

9:20 a.m.

Just so you know, when people go: "Oh, I don't know what you're talking about. What are they talking about with this \$2,500?" That's how we did it. It's a pretty simple calculation, folks. You can get your own staff to do it. Obviously, it's an up to, because it's an average number of hours. Some people will actually lose more than \$2,500, and some people will lose less. Not every employer will

convert all overtime to this banked overtime at straight time model. Some employers will just say: well, this is garbage. Many employers, I hope, actually, will say: "This is garbage. Why would I exploit or double-cross my employees? I already have a perfectly fine arrangement with them. My business model works on it. I understand the principle of overtime. I used to be a working person getting paid overtime at time and a half. I think it's the right thing to do, and I'm not going to take advantage of this loophole that this UCP government is inviting me to use." Obviously, not every employer will take advantage of this loophole. Not every employer will take advantage fully of this loophole. They might only take advantage of it partly. Again, that has to be factored into it.

But know this: there are over 400,000 Albertans who get overtime. This piece of legislation would facilitate up to an average of \$2,500 every 12 weeks being taken from the pockets of working Albertans. That is what you are allowing or permitting to have happen to hard-working Albertans through the passage of this bill. You are inviting employers to take \$2,500 every 12 weeks out of the pockets of working Albertans. That's pretty big. That's pretty big.

I know, as I've said before, there are many, many, many employers who will not do this. They will have entered into collective agreements that, frankly, pay better than time and a half. They will have respect for the relationships that they have with the hard-working people who are part of their business, and they will not take advantage of this. They will understand that the success of their business – small business, medium-sized business, large business – depends on the strong working partnership that they have with their employees. I know that there are many, many, many Alberta employers who will say just that.

But I also know that this government obviously was lobbied by some employers to give them this loophole so that they can drive through this loophole and take that \$2,500 on average from each of their employees every 12 weeks. I don't know exactly who those employers are. I anticipate getting the report soon about who donated to what PACs and all that kind of stuff. That information is going to start coming out pretty soon, and it's going to be good fun to go through it and figure out who got what as a result of the PAC donation sweepstakes. Right now we don't know who that is, but what we do know is that there is a very strong – well, as I say, it's permissive, but it really reads like an invitation. We call it the act to pick your pockets. It's clearly an invitation to pick the pockets of working people to the tune of \$2,500 every 12 weeks.

Yeah. It's a lot of money. It's a lot – a lot – of money. Back when I was talking about my time working as a waitress on the north shore of Great Bear Lake, I will tell you that \$2,500 is pretty much how much I made the whole two months of working 12 hours a day, six and a half days a week. So it seems like a lot of money to me. Now, I realize I'm not as young as everybody here, but it does still seem like – I think that's a lot of money even in today's dollars, that \$2,500 in 12 weeks, in three months. I think it will matter a lot.

I think it will impact people's ability to get child care. I think it will impact people's ability to buy local in terms of the kinds of things that people like to do with disposable income, you know, travelling around the province and supporting Alberta businesses in the summer through tourism, enjoying the benefits of small businesses in their communities, whether it's by way of, as I've said before, going to restaurants, those kinds of things, or going to their local hardware store and buying things that allow them to do home improvement. I know a lot of people do home improvement on a recreational basis. I wish one of those people were in my family, but they're not. I know that people do recreationally home improve, and that is a thing that actually drives the economy quite significantly.

In my case back in the day, when I had time, I would recreationally home improve, but I did it so badly that I spent three times as much as I should have because I would decide to do a project, do it wrong, and then have to go back and buy stuff to try it again. Typically by the third time I had managed to cobble together the most MacGyvered of not very successful home improvement projects, but in so doing, I was generating a lot of economic activity and GDP growth for folks in the home improvement sector.

Anyway, that's just me. I think other people are more efficient about that particular expenditure, but nonetheless that's the kind of thing that will go by the wayside when people find \$2,500 less in their pocket every three months. And that's the kind of thing that will hurt local economies. Perhaps the multiplier effect won't be quite as large as it is when it's me spending that money, but it will still be, you know, relatively noticeable for folks.

Yeah. Those are our reasons why, of course, this bill, again, does not actually open Alberta for business. What it does is it threatens to close Alberta businesses while picking the pockets of hard-working Albertans who I think deserve to be rewarded at a premium for being part of a province that has and does work historically very, very hard and produces great amounts of things for the economy and that leads the country in terms of economic activity. Let's see. How are we doing? What time did I start talking? It must be getting close there. Anyhoo.

I think that for all these reasons, I would urge members of this House to give sober second thought to moving forward immediately on this pick-your-pocket labour bill. I think that, as I've said a few times, we all share the desire to grow our economy and to create jobs. I don't think it's just folks over here who are a little bit taken aback by the logic that we create jobs by paying people less. I honestly think that there must be some folks on that side of the House who are giving their head a little bit of a shake to this idea that job creation is a thing that happens when you roll back the wages of people and pay them less and that that as an economic strategy is, in fact, a fundamentally flawed economic strategy.

If you look at the successful economies around the world that emulate or include the characteristics that we in the province of Alberta, I assume, will always want to preserve, which are the characteristics of human rights recognition and respect, free speech, democratic rights, you know, the right to health care when you need it, the right to publicly funded and accessible education, the right to a certain quality of life, the right to safety in your community, all these things, we believe, are fundamental tenets of the communities within which we live, not only here in Alberta but across the country.

**9:30 a.m.**

When that's your starting point, then, of course, that should disqualify a number of economies in the world from us pursuing them or wanting to emulate them. I think our starting point should always be those characteristics, those qualities, and if you start with those criteria, what we are looking at, then, is trying to emulate economies that are sophisticated, innovative, diversified, leading-edge, high-tech, premised on high education, premised on equitable workforce participation, premised on strong social supports that allow all people to participate to their maximum ability within the workforce, those kinds of economies. That is the kind of economy we should be seeking to build in the province of Alberta, not an economy that is trying to compete with another economy that rejects some of those basic characteristics that I began by outlining, those characteristics of respect for human rights, those characteristics of access to health care when you need it, those

characteristics of equal access to high-quality education on a public basis.

Those characteristics: if that's your starting point, then the economies that folks here seem to think we are competing with are not the economies that we're competing with. Or if we are, we're not going to be successful because, you know, they'll always be able to breach more rights than even the members in this House are prepared to breach. So it will not be a successful race to the bottom. They will always go lower faster than us. Why we would embark upon that race I don't know. I said last night that what we should be doing is mapping out a race to the top, not a race to the bottom. Bill 2 is about mapping out a race to the bottom.

You know, I notice we've had some students come in to watch the debate, and I just want to give them a bit of a wave there. Oh, they're all waving. That's really good. They look like they're around – I can't tell.

**Ms Hoffman:** Grade 6.

**Ms Notley:** Oh. Grade 6.

**Ms Hoffman:** That's my guess.

**Ms Notley:** I'd say maybe grade 6. That makes sense.

They're a couple of years away from getting that first job, but, boy, oh boy, I bet you – I mean, I'm certain we can't do audience participation because I know that's not appropriate for the House. But I'd love to do a poll of those students up there and ask them about when they start their first job and start working for eight or nine hours a day, potentially two years from now. As I said, I was 15 when I started working up to 12-hour shifts waiting on tables. I'm wondering if they think that they should be paid the same as the other people that they would be working with or whether they should be paid less because of how old they are. I want you to know that I think you should be paid the same amount for the work that you do, and it's unfortunate that some people don't agree with that, because I think that's unfair.

Anyway, it is hard to say because they cannot engage in this, so we will just all make guesses about where they all are. Maybe when you leave, you guys can have a conversation about this in your class, about what you think about fair wages for people who are under 18, not to in any way disrupt the current lesson plan. If there was something else planned, I apologize to those who had a different lesson plan. I can see my teacher friends starting to text me, telling me to stop doing that kind of stuff. Anyway, welcome to the Assembly, all of those kids up there.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Anyway, for all these reasons, as I've said before, we urge members opposite to delay on this bill, to reconsider it, to not read it a second time, to go back to the drawing board, to learn what the legislation itself says, to better inform themselves on the impact of the legislation so that they can understand fully that, in fact, this is a very aggressive grab at overtime for working people, that there is no voluntary nature to it, that there is no ability of working people to say yea or nay to whether or not they have their premium for overtime taken away from them, that any interpretation of the legislation that suggests that somehow people have a say in this in any meaningful way is an incorrect interpretation.

Both legal opinion and experience prove that to be the case. That is why we changed it in the first place, and that, of course, is why so many friends and insiders have lobbied for it to be changed back, and that is why it is being changed back. At the very least, I would urge members opposite that if they do proceed to move ahead with

this bill, they be very strong and clear and acknowledge that what they are doing is passing a bill that will invite up to 400,000 employees in Alberta to receive overtime at straight time rather than at time and a half and that this is an intentional decision that folks here have made and to then at least be willing to be accountable for that decision to working people and their families and their employers and everybody else in this province that that is what is happening.

I think that when we embark upon these sorts of risky, race-to-the-bottom, back-to-the-future, 1980s Reaganomics-style economic plans, it is, of course, divisive because it's about growing inequality, not reducing it. It is polarizing. At the very least, I would hope that those who advocate for this kind of divisive, polarizing, equity-reducing strategy will in fact stand up and be accountable for it and acknowledge the consequences of the legislation and the consequences of the amendments that are being proposed here today; that is, that this is a full-frontal attack on the overtime of working people.

With that, I believe that I am going to end my comments because I have some other things that I have to do today. As much as I love talking here endlessly, there probably are other things people would like to see me do as well.

With that, I urge people to support our amendment, and I thank you for the opportunity to address the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments if anyone would like to raise one. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar rising under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I enjoyed every word, every minute of our leader's speech to this amendment. You know, one of the things that I wish she had the time to do is to go back and repeat the comments that she made before the class came in, because I think that, unfortunately, the class in the gallery missed what was probably the best part of the speech. Unfortunately, 29(2)(a) doesn't give us enough time to allow her to make those comments again, but I would encourage the class members here in the gallery to go back to *Hansard*, when it becomes available, and read it thoroughly because it will be the most valuable education that they'll get on the topic of labour and employment standards for a while.

9:40 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, it was with great interest that I listened to the member's experiences working at Great Bear Lake. She referenced a number of times in her speech the fact that she is not the youngest member in this House. It must have been fascinating to have worked in the Northwest Territories so shortly after the glaciers had receded from that part of Canada. I mean, I am pleased, really, that she managed to survive all of the mammoth attacks and the sabre-toothed tiger patrols that I'm sure she saw in those early times in the Northwest Territories, which just speaks to her tenacity, I guess, and unwillingness to bend in the face of significant, intimidating physical force. It's just really remarkable to think that so much has changed.

Of course, you know, we can expect that the area of the Northwest Territories is going to change even more significantly and at a much faster rate because the members opposite are so keen to not do anything on climate change. At least, we have one member with living history here who can tell us how much the north of Canada has changed because of the effects of human-induced climate change. Perhaps she can take a holiday at some point – I imagine we won't be legislating forever, Mr. Speaker, although I

couldn't imagine what other things we could possibly do that would be better with our time – and perhaps she could go back to the shores of Great Bear Lake in the near future and tell us how much it has changed in the time since she was there. It's important, I think, to collect those personal stories about climate change and the impact on Canada's north. It's important oral history that we wouldn't get otherwise.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I can't recall if she touched on it before the class entered or not, but I think she mentioned in her speech something about the unfairness of paying students a wage that is \$2 an hour less than people who are 18 years old. What the members opposite are doing is encouraging these young students to drop out of school early to make more money, which I'm sure is not what their parents want them to do, certainly not what their teachers want them to do. It's probably what the Minister of Education wants them to do; it'll save them money down the road. It's probably what the Finance minister wants them to do so that they can, you know, continue to shovel giant cheques into the backyards of the wealthiest in the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think the children there in the gallery wouldn't agree that these are the proper incentives that we need to provide our young people for education in this province. Certainly, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in her speech did talk about the value of education and promoting education, and I would encourage anyone listening to this debate who is thinking about postsecondary education or going back to high school to upgrade to do so because that is really the path to a prosperous future. You know, unfortunately, all that we have to do is to do those kinds of public encouragements for people to create incentives for education, because this government has taken away a financial incentive for public education.

With that, I will close my remarks.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member.

I would obviously caution anyone that may be making remarks that might be perceived as a personal attack. You might govern yourself accordingly in the future.

Are there any others? We are on amendment RA1. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to talk on the amendment to Bill 2, moved by the member, that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House that further input is absolutely necessary from the public. We on this side have been standing up for hard-working Albertans. We made sure that Albertans had modern workplace laws that respected working people, set modern standards, and ensured that Albertans were treated fairly.

Mr. Speaker, after decades of inaction hard-working Albertans finally had the same rights and benefits as every other Canadian. We followed through on our promise to phase in a \$15 minimum wage so that people didn't have to go from their jobs to the food bank. We made workplaces more family friendly. We introduced job-protecting leaves, improved maternity leave and compassionate care standards.

Mr. Speaker, we put a lot of time and effort into studying the impacts of the minimum wage. Unfortunately, Bill 2 at this point

doesn't seem to have a lot of that studying and information to move forward. We know the work that we did on this side of the House put more dollars in the pockets of hard-working Albertans who live, work, and spend their money here. We pored over studies finding positive effects of raising minimum wage, like increased consumer spending, lower wage inequality, better health outcomes, with little negative impact on overall employment levels.

The government in the information that they've provided, I'm hoping that they had looked at the impact of this legislation on women, on consumer spending, on health, on poverty and so much more. I think that more information is needed to determine this before we move forward with Bill 2 because we know that most of the people, unfortunately, that are impacted by poverty and lower incomes and lack of correctly paid out overtime are women and women that are raising children. We know that families in this situation have higher rates of illness, limited housing availability, limited affordable child care abilities, Mr. Speaker, and the list just goes on.

I'd like to take a little bit of time here to talk about this youth, student wage differential. On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we believe that Albertans, young or old, deserve equal pay for equal work. Rolling back the minimum wage for young people demonstrates a lack of compassion and a lack of respect for young workers. The value of your work should depend on the effort and the skill that you put into it, not what year you were born.

If you would just indulge me a little bit, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just talk a little bit about young parents and share a story if I will. A 14-year-old girl is living at home. It's, unfortunately, not a great place to be for her. In order for her to be successful in her education, she moves in with a friend and their family, but unfortunately, financially this young person had to continue with their education as well as get their first job. For many, a first job is an exciting time, as it was for this 14 year old, being able to purchase things that perhaps parents would have done but weren't able to because she was now living on her own. So 14 years old, working on her own, working minimum wage, going to school. This young person worked over the summer. They were able to save up a little money while contributing to the family that they stayed with and were able to purchase, you know, back-to-school clothes so that on their first day of grade 10 they could fit in with their new peer group.

School goes on. The job kind of stops. They're in a more stable living situation, and the second home that this child is living in is not stable either. Unfortunately, there's domestic violence. There are addictions. This child is struggling at school, and this child decides that perhaps a job would allow a little bit of an escape if you will, Mr. Speaker, from some of the things that are going on at home and also to provide some stable income to this child so that they can continue to have some school supplies, the basics, really, in order to further their education.

So this student now going into grade 12 finds that they have an unplanned pregnancy. This student is 16 years old, not living in the best of situations, now is facing an unplanned pregnancy. That part-time work now becomes: what do I do with my future, and where do I put that money? Going to school, struggling at home, unplanned pregnancy, and working part-time. The situation at this young girl's home didn't improve, so she moved out again but this time on her own, so that part-time employment meant paying for bills, transportation, food, and preparing for a new baby that was coming. Still in school . . .

**9:50 a.m.**

**Ms Hoffman:** Still 16.

**Ms Goehring:** . . . still 16, struggling with all of the things that come with being a young parent, this 16-year-old decides that they

need more supports, so they start talking to the school counsellors. They're dealing with school, they're dealing with education, and they're dealing with growing a tiny human and how to just really get ahead in life at 16 years old, Mr. Speaker. This isn't an uncommon story. This is happening all across the world, and we're in a province right now that's looking at rolling back minimum wage for young people if they're still in school. Had this 16-year-old been dealing with this legislation, I would suggest that perhaps this young 16-year-old would maybe have dropped out of school, which would be absolutely detrimental for their future and their child's future.

Back to the 16-year-old: this young woman was in a school that also had about four or five other young parents that were also dealing with an unplanned pregnancy, Mr. Speaker. What this young woman did was that she went to her school counsellor and was able to create some sort of support group within the school because she knew that she needed support to be able to stay in school and work, and she wanted to offer that support to her peers who were also dealing with an unplanned pregnancy at 16 years old in high school.

This group came together, and they strategized about ways that they could support each other while working and going to school. In the time that they had at the school, they were able to bring in some nurses to talk about pregnancy and just being healthy as a mom. They were able to talk about the future and what that meant and how they could get through school and be successful in that, Mr. Speaker. So we move into the second semester of grade 12, and this young person is still working. She's still going to school, but unfortunately, because the baby was due in mid-spring, she dropped out of school, was now living in financial hardship, raising baby, trying to make sure that baby was taken care of, and then her home life was also not very stable. She was living in a home situation that wasn't healthy, that wasn't a best-case scenario. Again, this young person, working, tried to figure out the best way that she could move forward.

There's an organization called Terra, and it's in Edmonton, and it's an organization that works to support young parenting and pregnant teens. This young person reached out to this organization and said: "You know what? I want to stay in school. I want to be able to complete my grade 12 and create a future for my child." They were struggling, Mr. Speaker. This organization, Terra, was able to bring them back into school, into grade 12, and find extra supports for them to be able to continue with their education, to graduate high school. Now, this program, I have to say, is absolutely incredible. It supports young people, moms and dads, who are struggling with pregnancy, trying to make decisions on how to proceed with that pregnancy, and supporting young people where they're at to try and make them successful.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, youth that are dealing with an unplanned pregnancy have a higher rate of school dropout. They often don't continue with their education. They are in a situation where they need to take care of their family, their baby, and they end up working. So this is situation that we're making it that much more difficult for young people to stay in school and to continue working if we're looking at not having a fair wage for these young people.

This student, with supports, was able to graduate high school and to go on and work in Alberta and was able to get accepted into college, but part of that was the need to continue to work. Mr. Speaker, when a young person is going to school and trying to raise a family as well as get a postsecondary education, the employment options are limited. So this young person went into the service industry and was working as a waitress as well as a bartender, working as much as possible to try and make sure that ends were met for their young child, to afford daycare, tuition, all of those things that are so important in order to get ahead. This young person worked all through college bartending, waitressing, doing whatever

they could to make sure that they were able to provide a better future for not just themselves as a young person but for their young child, who was also depending on them.

As a single mom this was really difficult, and there were times that, I'm sure, the server went home with not a lot of tips. It could have been a slow night. It was a university-type establishment, and the people that were coming into the establishment were students and really didn't have a lot of money. Tips weren't always that reliable. You know, it may have meant buying a pack of diapers and some baby food and maybe more than tuna that night for the mom to eat. Parents make sacrifices all the time when it comes to raising children. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this mom made sure that her child was always a priority. Struggling with tip money, education, long nights: it was difficult. Just being committed to working and getting through to the end of that postsecondary was essential.

When we look at the proposed legislation here and the recommendations that they're making with that service wage differential, it's not okay, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is the same type of demographic that is mostly women, perhaps young moms, perhaps moms with several children, trying to do their best to get by.

Now, if you look at a server that might work a morning shift, Mr. Speaker, they're up super early. They're serving breakfast. We know that breakfast is probably one of the least expensive meals to have when you're out.

**Ms Hoffman:** And one of the toughest to serve.

**Ms Goehring:** One of the toughest to serve. Absolutely. It's tough and unfortunately probably not a big expense when it comes to their bill, so probably not a high tip. You're working hard, you're working early in the morning, you're struggling, and you're probably not making a lot of tips. Now, if you look at a server who perhaps is working at a nightclub in Calgary or Edmonton, their take-home for tips might be absolutely extraordinary. They might make a really good living on a weekend. But let's say that you're working somewhere in rural Alberta. Not a lot of people coming through your restaurant, and your tips aren't as reliable. It's not fair to say that everybody who's in the service industry is making a fair wage, an equal wage, in their tips. It's just something that you can't rely on, Mr. Speaker.

It's really disappointing that this is something that is moving forward. I would imagine that people in Alberta would like to have a say about that, and they would like to be able to express concern with how this bill is moving forward.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if we go back to that young 14-year-old who found themselves working, first time, just to escape some not great situations in the home, found themselves pregnant at 16 years old, struggled through school, worked part-time to raise a baby, and ended up successfully in postsecondary. This young person continued to fight for their education and to make sure that their child was taken care of. I can tell you that the story does have a happy ending. This young person was able to enter into the field of social work and was successful in being able to work at the school that they had graduated from at 18 years old. They were able to stay an extra year in high school, which is essential.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member for her comments. Of course, 29(2)(a) will be available; however, I am going to step away from the chair for a brief rest.

## Speaker's Ruling Relevance

**The Speaker:** I just wanted to remind individuals – I hesitate, perhaps, because the conclusion of the story, which we may hear about under 29(2)(a), may in fact be people that we all know quite well here in the Chamber.

10:00 a.m.

But I just want to remind members as we proceed, with respect to relevance we all know that on page 628 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* it says, "Consequently every member, who addresses the house, should endeavour to confine [him- or herself] as closely as possible to the question under consideration." While it was a very compelling story and I'm glad that you shared it, and I'm certain that you were going to tie it to the amendment that's before the Assembly because we aren't on the main bill, we are just talking – and not "just"; it's very important – about an amendment that is before the House. I encourage all members as we continue the important and robust debate that we remain predominantly focused on the question before the House.

## Debate Continued

**The Speaker:** Having said that, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising with what I hope is a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This one will be brief. I was so compelled by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs' comments that I really wanted to make sure that we could hear the rest of that story. If she could please finish that, I'm sure all members of this Assembly would be riveted to continue.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Member, and thank you, Mr. Speaker, Madam Speaker, for some direction.

I would argue that this story is speaking to this. It talks about the human side of what this legislation will impact. I do believe strongly that there are many more Albertans that would like to have a say in this moving forward, and I don't believe that their voices are represented or that they were consulted with in this.

So, Madam Speaker, to conclude my story, I think the previous Speaker had alluded to who this person might be. In fact, it was me. That was my story. Because of the support that I got and being able to work part-time and go to school, I was able to become successful in social work and continued to work.

As a social worker I've seen the impacts that the minimum wage has on families who are struggling and trying to get by, and I've seen the workers that work so hard, and they're working 18 hours a day, trying to make sure that ends meet for their family. They're not working, for the most part, because they love what they do. A lot of people are out there working overtime because they need to make sure that they're putting food on their table, that their families are taken care of. Just the basic minimum to provide for themselves and for their families is often what these hard-working Albertans are doing. To take that away, Madam Speaker, I think is detrimental to Albertans and to families. I think that what we're asking in this amendment is something that all members of this Legislature should seriously consider; the impacts of this on average working Albertans, and that absolutely more input is needed. I just struggle to believe that enough input was done from the public to hear their stories. So me sharing my story today is to put the human side to what is happening and the impacts of this legislation.

I would hate to see young people dropping out of school so that they can make a fair wage. I think that that is devastating to our future and to our young people. There are young people out there that need to work. They need to go to school, and they need to work. When they're faced with the option of making a minimum wage as opposed to staying in school, sometimes out of necessity for life, Madam Speaker, they need to work, so they're going to take the option of dropping out of school, perhaps with the intention to return. I know I hear that story over and over: you know, I'll go back; I'll be able to upgrade; I'll get my education at one point. Unfortunately, the success of that isn't very high. We know that once you enter the workforce on a full-time basis, it's very unlikely that you're going to go back and get your education because you are in a place of just survival. That's a story that's told over and over.

I just don't believe that young people have been consulted with on this, and I don't know that average working Albertans have had an opportunity to have their say on the impact of what this bill is proposing. So I think it's very, very important that all members in this Assembly support this amendment to delay this bill so that we allow more public consultation and we can hear from people that perhaps weren't consulted when this bill was brought forward in its current form.

I know that members of the government are hoping to just get this through, but I think it's to the detriment of Albertans and working people and families that so heavily rely on overtime and just fair workers' rights, Madam Speaker. It's something that our government took very seriously when we looked at legislation that hadn't been looked at in over 30 years. It was very sad to see that it had just been neglected so long. I'm proud of the work that we did and the progress that we made.

I think that this legislation is going backwards, Madam Speaker, and Albertans – we want to be leading the country in what we're doing to support our people, and we want to be taking steps forward to ensure that everything that we're doing is really in the best interests of moving our province forward, of building our economy. Unfortunately, I don't think that this bill, where it's at, is doing what it claims to do. I don't believe that it's going to be drawing investment to Alberta or stimulating the economy, as it's claiming. I think it's going to . . . [Ms Goehring's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I begin my comments on Bill 2, I just want to commemorate the fact that 75 years ago today our brave Allied soldiers stormed the beaches of Normandy, freeing Europe from the tyranny of Nazism. I want to give thanks to all the brave men and women who served to liberate Europe from Fascism, certainly give thanks to those people and give thanks to all of the people who agreed, after World War II and the harsh economic and social conditions that preceded it in the Great Depression, that that should never happen again and engaged in a postwar, world-wide nation building effort, where people could rely on strong protections from government, you know, strong health care, strong public education, solid workers' rights, pension rights. It was the greatest advance for equality that the western world has seen in its history, and I'm so grateful for all of the people who engaged in that work to lift everybody up, to make sure that we live in peace. [applause]

I'm concerned, Madam Speaker, on that note, of course, that we see a very troubling rise in authoritarian politics in many places around the world, a troubling return to those very conditions that led to World War II. We've certainly been engaged in a number of

jurisdictions in a sustained attack on that postwar consensus view of government and the economy, one that continues in some form here in this bill that's before the Assembly today certainly, rolling back workers' protections, something that has long been held in many jurisdictions to be fundamental to human rights and equality all around the developed world.

That's why I urge everybody who is thinking about what those brave men and women sacrificed on the beaches of Normandy and other places – you know, they gave their lives not just to rid the world of Nazi tyranny but to build a better life for the generations that came after them. They were able to do that, and I think we owe it to them to remember what they built and not take it away from the generations that come after us. That's why I'm speaking in favour of this amendment this morning, because this bill, as my colleagues here in the Official Opposition have mentioned time and again, rolls back important protections that workers in Alberta have enjoyed.

I want to take a few minutes and share my own personal experience. We mentioned earlier today the youth minimum wage that has been implemented by the members opposite, you know, the creation of a dropout bonus for young people, which I think is a perverse incentive to encourage people to drop out of high school early in order to get a 15 per cent raise. In a province like Alberta, where we have very low rates of high school completion, very low rates of people transitioning from high school on to postsecondary education of any kind, we need to create incentives to actually encourage people to stay in school, to finish their high school diplomas, and to go on to complete a postsecondary education of some sort so that they can get a good education that will allow them to be engaged citizens who can participate in the public life of this province and not only that but get the skills and training that they need to get good jobs, Madam Speaker.

*10:10 a.m.*

It's shocking to me that the youth minimum wage creates a disincentive to high school completion and removes an important financial support for many young people that they rely upon to be able to pay for postsecondary education when they get that opportunity. You know, that will have a negative effect on the economy and the development of jobs in the province in the long term. I think there's no less disputed fact than that investment in people and their education is the best thing that any government can do to develop an economy, diversify an economy, and provide prosperity for future generations. I think the government should rethink this matter and certainly create incentives for people to complete high school and go on to postsecondary education.

On the matter of the youth employment wage the minister, the Member for Calgary-Varsity, says that it has been modelled on the youth employment wage that's set up in Ontario, so I quickly researched what Ontario has set up, and it's interesting, Madam Speaker. There are some very important differences, I think, between what the people of Ontario have chosen to do and what the members opposite have chosen to do with the youth minimum wage. The first is that the discrepancy between the student employment rate and the general minimum wage is something like 65 cents. A student will earn \$13.35 – I can't remember the exact number, Madam Speaker, but the general minimum wage earner will earn \$14. So it's a very narrow gap. What have we created here in Alberta? We've created a \$2 gap. So I think it's particularly unfair. If you say that you're going to model a youth employment wage on what's been done in Ontario, I think it would only be fair to then have a narrow gap between those two minimum wages, like the one Ontario has.

The other thing, Madam Speaker, about the minimum wage in Ontario is that it's legislatively tied to inflation, so the Ford government has implemented a freeze. It will freeze the minimum



wage at \$14 an hour for the calendar year of 2019, but then on January 1, 2020, minimum wage earners in all classes in Ontario will get a cost-of-living increase, which is not something that the members opposite have proposed. Not only are they reducing the student wage by \$2 an hour, but they're going to keep it there for a long time. I think that that's unfair as well because not only are we setting our students at a disadvantage now; we're setting them up for being further disadvantaged further into the future as the cost of living continues to rise, and minimum wage won't keep track with the cost of living. We're just setting our young people further and further behind, and I really don't think that that's fair.

Madam Speaker, we've had some very interesting stories about people's experiences earning minimum wage, and certainly I would like to share some of them. You know, it relates to the issue of overtime and why we don't think that this bill will generate investment in Alberta or stimulate the economy, which is why I think we should support this amendment. As a young person myself in the mid-90s I worked in a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant at minimum wage. I worked alongside people who were in many cases 10 or 20 years older than me, but we were doing the exact same work. My duties were the same as everybody else's in that restaurant. It didn't matter how old I was. We all were expected to carry our weight and carry out the same functions.

To think that I would have been paid \$2 less an hour than my co-workers simply because I was under the age of 18 strikes me as really unfair, especially when you consider how poorly treated a lot of fast-food workers are, not by their employers but by customers. I had a number of significant negative experiences working in fast food, which I know, Madam Speaker, comes as a surprise to you because I'm nothing if not a charming and likeable individual. You know, when people walk into a fast-food restaurant – and this is certainly not the case for the vast majority of Albertans. The vast majority of Albertans treat each other with dignity and respect, but there is a small but significant enough number of people to have a negative impact on one's work experience, who think that because they're ordering in a fast-food restaurant from a person who's getting paid to serve them, they can treat them as if they're lesser people.

It was very discouraging for me and my co-workers to have to put up with abuse that was not warranted given the work that we were expected to do. You know, fast-food workers have to work under very trying conditions. They work in hot and greasy kitchens, trying to deliver the food as fast as they can. People get very upset if things go even slightly wrong and don't have a lot of understanding, Madam Speaker, for the people who are working behind the till and behind the counter. It's definitely my experience that some people feel that because they're engaged in purchasing that food, they have the right to take out their frustrations in inappropriate ways on the staff. That's not fair.

That's why I think it's only fair that we pay people a decent wage at minimum wage, because the working conditions that they endure are often difficult and often much less pleasant than a lot of other jobs, that I've certainly had, where people treat you better. Madam Speaker, I get better treatment in my role as a politician than I did working in a fast-food restaurant, which should tell you something about how people treat workers in fast-food restaurants. So I would encourage all Albertans to remind themselves that the people who are serving them in fast-food restaurants are trying their best, that they're getting paid very low wages, and, you know, a little bit of kindness and empathy would go a long way to making their work lives better. That's the issue of the youth employment wage, and I would certainly urge people to consider that, urge the members opposite to reconsider their thinking on this.

It was interesting. In the fast-food world I was forced to work unpaid overtime. It was never written down, but it was always

expected. I had a list of duties that I had to complete before the end of my shift, and I was told how many hours I was going to get paid for that shift. If I didn't complete the duties within that time, I was still expected to complete those duties, but my pay ran out before I was able to complete them, Madam Speaker. Oddly enough – oddly enough – no one on the staff was able to complete their list of assigned duties before the pay ran out, which is weird, because either all of us must have been really lazy or our employers were not treating us fairly.

As a 16- and 17-year-old person, Madam Speaker – and this was in the pre-Internet age – I didn't have easy access to employment standards information. I didn't know that that was probably illegal, and in fact I don't even know if that was illegal at the time because I can't easily find out whether or not the employment standards that exist now existed at that time. To subject youth to these kinds of working conditions and expose them to unscrupulous employers and then pay them less and not compensate them fairly for their overtime, I think, is really unfair. When those workers are eligible for overtime, I think it's only fair that they get paid time and a half. Certainly, that's the case in every other jurisdiction in Canada.

**10:20 a.m.**

As the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and all of my other colleagues have mentioned today, you know, the issue of time and a half is based on a very old work-life balance premise, that there are eight hours in a day for work, there are eight hours in a day for personal time, and there are eight hours in a day for sleep. I would do almost anything for eight hours of sleep at this point, but thankfully we have some caffeine here to keep us going.

**The Deputy Speaker:** But, hon. member, is the caffeine really enough?

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. member can continue to talk about the value of overtime given that this is such an important piece of what's under consideration in Bill 2 and such a fundamental reason why this amendment has been proposed and, in fact, is very likely one of the reasons why the hon. member is in such dire need of caffeine, as are we all, because it is so important that overtime be paid to workers, particularly workers in the oil and gas sector. I wonder if the hon. member would like to continue his thoughts on overtime, his experience with overtime, and perhaps some of his experience on the doorstep in the previous election when this came up as well, and what happened when he talked to working people about the threat, the looming notion, that their overtime may be significantly altered or changed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Lethbridge-West for the question. Certainly, prior to 2008 I was engaged in work in the private sector. I was a consultant in the oil and gas business. It was expected by my employer to regularly work overtime, and I was not allowed to get that paid out. The employer told me that I had to bank that overtime at 1 to 1 rates. I know that that's a common myth that the members opposite continue to spin, that employers and employees can voluntarily agree. You know, I was agreeing to either keep my job, or I was welcome to find something else. Oddly enough, everyone in that same industry had the same practice, so you couldn't find a place that was paying people time and a half or allowing them to bank it at time and a half, because that was the industry standard practice, to expect employees to bank their overtime at a 1 to 1 rate.

Madam Speaker, I think it took an incredible personal toll on me and my family. I spent many, many months away from home, living and working in camps in various places around Alberta, and, you know, I spent a lot of time away from my daughter, who was very young at the time. She was going to music lessons and ballet lessons and gymnastics and all of the things that we parents put our young kids through to develop them.

To think that somebody would now be able to at least be compensated fairly for that time away from their families and their children and given more money in their pockets to put towards things like hockey registration, soccer camps, those kinds of things, to take that away – I know the members opposite like to talk about the hockey dads and soccer moms who were, you know, punished under the carbon tax, but they don't think twice about punishing those same people with working overtime and not being paid fairly for it. I think it's grossly unfair to expect people who are working long hours far away from home, far away from their families, trying their best to get ahead and make a good life for their children and save enough for retirement – now that's going to be taken away, and that money is going to go directly into their employers' pockets.

It's not going to create jobs. It's not like my employer ever thought: well, because I don't have to pay this guy time and a half, I can hire more people. No, Madam Speaker. Of course, the hiring decisions were made independently of what the overtime rate was.

When I was working, there was a skills shortage. They couldn't hire enough people. You know, in those kinds of situations there should have been – free-market economics would tell you that because of a labour shortage, wages would go up, but they didn't in my case or in the cases of my fellow consultants. We were still beholden to the employer's interests and the industry standard practice of not paying people overtime and forcing them to bank it at a 1 to 1 rate. So I was very pleased that we made that change, that my colleagues in that field could actually see some light at the end of the tunnel.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [interjection] Yeah. Thanks for that, Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*. It's my honour to rise and speak to the amendment as proposed by my hon. colleague. I want to begin by saying how much I've appreciated hearing the thoughtful, people-focused discussion throughout the night and this morning.

I have to say to the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs that her story – and I appreciate the way that she told it, too. We don't always, in these moments of 15 minutes, have an opportunity to really get to know the personal history and what drives each of us as servants of the public and what the lived experience is that drives us to see the world in which we do and to fight for the things, the values that we all share. I want to say to her, for her tremendous story about love and determination and perseverance, that thankfully she found herself in a situation where she was surrounded by people with those same things. She is here today fighting for other people who might be living those experiences or other parallel experiences. I found that really inspiring.

Another story I want to tell. In my visits to grade 6 classes the students ask often really astonishing questions. Usually I prepare for a media interview. I can usually anticipate most of the questions I'm going to get asked. I almost never anticipate the questions I'm going to get asked in grade 6 classes. One that I almost always get asked and many new members who will probably be visiting them is: did you always know that you wanted to have this job? And then

I get to talk about other jobs that I've had and other jobs I thought I might have. That's a really fun one.

But one that I remember as well was: what's one thing your government did that made you extra proud? And I just stopped and thought about it for a few seconds, and then I talked about the work we did to close the gap and to reduce child poverty in the province, reducing child poverty by half. Still much done, much more needs to be done to make sure that no child ever goes to school hungry, no child ever worries about how their parents are going to pay the rent, no child ever feels that they are pushed out of the safety that should be childhood at a time before they themselves are ready.

One of the things that I listed as a thing that helped, in my opinion and in much of the analysis I've seen written, is the tremendous determination that our Premier, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the Leader of the Official Opposition, showed in fighting to raise the minimum wage significantly. Many in this House probably worked at a time when minimum wage was \$5 an hour. When we came into government, it was about \$10, and today it's \$15 for everyone, something that I think is a trend that many jurisdictions in the world are aspiring to and are well on track to, but Alberta got there first. Alberta: I think many of us are known and proud of the fact that we're known as being enthusiastic and entrepreneurial and leaders in this province.

I think that that should apply for all folks in this province. I think that that should apply for the low-income earners as well, that they have an opportunity to receive fair compensation and to achieve great things doing the hard work that many do.

*10:30 a.m.*

I appreciate that the Member for Calgary-McCall last night talked about – oh, here's one thing. I sometimes tell this story, you know. An economist, a social worker, and a lawyer walk into the peace lounge. They're all the Member for Calgary-McCall – right? – with his tremendous lived experience.

**An Hon. Member:** And a refugee.

**Ms Hoffman:** And a refugee and a minimum-wage worker. As the hon. member put himself through all of those degrees, he worked minimum wage. He worked minimum wage because it was available and because it was important work and because people would hire him into those positions. I think that it is something that should be recognized and honoured for what it was.

What I wanted to say about that is that when I was in a school, I was talking about closing the gap on child poverty in the class that we did there, and I mentioned the minimum wage. Bless grade 6 students. They think "minimum," and they know that in the curricular outcomes "minimum" and "maximum" are tied together, so we started talking about maximums in the world. One kid said to me, "Is there a maximum number of jobs?" I immediately challenged my minister of economic development. I said: "We want all the jobs we can possibly get in this province. We're going to fight until we have full employment. We're going to fight to make sure that we've got opportunities for everyone in this province to be fully employed." And he said: "No. I mean, is there a maximum number of jobs my mom can have? She already works three."

He wanted to know if his mom at some point would have an opportunity to be home, to come on a field trip with him, maybe visit this very place with him, and it broke my heart a little bit. So we talked a little bit about why his mom was doing what she was doing, to create a better world for him. If any of those jobs were in the service industry, what we're being asked to consider is rolling back his mom's pay, possibly causing her to work yet a fourth job. Out of the mouths of babes, right? Minimum and maximum. So when you cut

the minimum, you put more pressure on the people who are currently working within that minimum to do more and for less.

Like many members, probably, in this House, I and, I know, many of our caucus members spent a period of time working in the service industry. When I was working in the service industry, some days I made good money, some days I made not good money, but almost every day I was asked to work extra because there was extra to be done. Again, as was mentioned by my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar, I did it. I did it, and I didn't ask about whether or not I should. I did it because the work needed to get done. I needed to get a paycheque.

I think that it's important that people who do that little bit extra get a little bit extra in their compensation. I think that's a fair practice. As our leader said when she was referencing working parents, I think about the idea of this young boy who asked me about the maximum number of jobs. His mom already had three. With the idea that if she was working late – and I'm sure she does many days – she would have to choose to either leave him unattended or pay for child care, I imagine that's a very difficult choice for many people. I think it would be more likely that he would be left unattended if that mom wasn't making a premium, if she wasn't making time and a half. If the money was that much tighter, he would probably be on his own. I don't think that's fair. I don't think that's fair to the kids of our province.

With regard to this bill and, in turn, the amendment that we're debating, another thing that I think is unfair and that I certainly don't think will do anything to support the economy – in fact, I think it'll be counter – is the provisions around general holiday pay. In fact, they actually seem quite mean and quite vengeful. I don't know who exactly the revenge is being sought out against, but I think they're mean, and I think they would be punishing. For example, general holiday pay is in many neighbouring jurisdictions, including Saskatchewan. I know that many members of this House feel a direct connection to Saskatchewan. It's also something that's in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador, the territories. All of these other jurisdictions acknowledge that if you're working on a holiday, you should get general holiday pay. It seems reasonable.

In this bill that we're considering, or that we're considering passing an amendment to which would mean that we don't consider it at this time, we are being asked to make Albertans work at a lesser standard of pay than everyone in these other jurisdictions: Saskatchewan, B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador, and the territories. To the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright: I can't help but wonder how fair it may or not be – I would say: may not be – to employees on one side of the border, because it probably is which jurisdiction you're working in and not which jurisdiction you're actually a resident of, to not get their general holiday pay.

The fact that this change comes in on September 1, right before Labour Day, is, again, particularly mean, right before the day where we're supposed to celebrate the rights and the progress that the labour movement has been taking and making and the fact that we all have an opportunity to benefit. For that holiday, that is indeed intended to celebrate the people who are working that day, they're going to lose their general holiday pay.

I think that another change that's mean in this is the change around requiring somebody to work for 30 days to qualify for general holiday pay even if they're working on that holiday. Again, this is something that isn't the case in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, or Quebec. This is something that we're going to forge new territory on. If you're hired as a seasonal employee, which I imagine many, many Albertans are – I know a lot of the places that are especially busy this time of year have short-term employment. I'm picturing garden centres. I'm

picturing a number of different retailers during the month of December as people are preparing for Christmas. If you haven't worked 30 days, no general holiday pay even if you're working on Christmas. If you're a seasonal employee who's hired to work on Christmas but you haven't worked 30 days, your employer doesn't need to pay you. It does feel a little Scroogelike.

The other example that was mentioned is, you know, that Santa works in the mall on short-term contracts. If Santa ends up working in the mall on Christmas, no general holiday pay for Santa if Santa hasn't been there for 30 days, probably. Again, that is not exactly something that I would say is built on wanting to help people up. I'd say that it's built on hurting people who are serving us all by working on those general holidays or working in those time periods.

Another piece I want to mention is that I do believe wholeheartedly that this is going to be very good for stimulating the economy in one area, and that, I would say, is human rights and labour lawyers. I think they are going to be very busy fighting against what seems to be a human rights violation and, in my understanding, to be a violation of labour rights based on age discrimination. I think about some of the things that we've already seen go all the way to the highest levels of courts around discrimination based on age. Rather, I think the argument there was family status, but again the same argument applies if you're a family with somebody who is a minor. There was a ruling not that long ago, just in the last few years, that even condo boards or landlords can't discriminate based on age or family status. If we can apply it to living conditions, it seems like a not far correlation to draw it to working conditions.

I don't think many of us ran for this office because we wanted to create discriminatory conditions. I don't think many of us ran for office because we wanted to take money away from hard-working families on their general holidays. I don't think any of us ran because we really wanted to cut wages for that single mom who found herself in a very difficult situation. I imagine that probably, if she was told she could make \$2 more – you can get a can of tuna plus a salad – if you drop out of school, that would have been a very, very difficult decision for that teen mom to have made.

For these reasons, I really want to express my gratitude to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for bringing forward this amendment. I think that saying clearly that it not be read “because the Assembly is of the view [it] will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy” and that further input is required from the public is fair and reasonable.

**10:40 a.m.**

Again, I know that many members opposite will talk about: well, we got elected, so we can do what we want. Jobs, the economy, and pipelines were, I think, a lot of the taglines I remember seeing. I observed and seem to have processed some of the messaging that came. None of those talked about jobs where we further discrimination or jobs where we are going to make sure that some of our most marginalized have fewer opportunities.

To that young man who asked me about the maximum number of jobs: I think that that's a totally fair question. I think that the right for children to have an opportunity to spend some time with the people who love them is a fair request from that young man. One of the best ways we can do that is by making sure that there is a fair and reasonable minimum wage, work conditions, and compensation conditions for things like general holiday pay.

One other piece I'll mention, and it is one of the stories that helped inspire the suite of changes that we brought in to bring Alberta's workplace legislation to be fair and in line with most other jurisdictions in our country. It was the story that we heard about Amanda Jensen, who, when she found out her child had cancer and

needed some time off, in turn lost her job. Some people will say: shame on that employer; shame on that employer for firing somebody. But the truth is: shame on all of us for setting the conditions where that could have been possible.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is always an honour to hear from my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora. The words that she brought to us and to this debate were so important because, as she said, we have heard so much in the last 15 or so hours around lived experience and stories from members' constituents and colleagues and associates. It becomes very, very clear that Bill 2 really is the pick-your-pockets bill. It's really the bill that goes in and hurts families. It goes in to pick the pockets of hard-working Albertans.

We've heard many stories tonight. I encourage members – I know they were listening very closely the entire evening, Madam Speaker – to also look back at *Hansard* and the Blues, as they become available, because those stories are just a small number of the 400,000 employees who will be affected negatively by this bill, of the large number of workers who will be affected negatively by this bill.

We know it's going to be negative because this is a bill that attacks young people. It attacks labour. It attacks workers, and it takes away their vacation pay and banked overtime, and that's something that, Madam Speaker, is really just not what you do when Christmas rolls around. That's something that I think is really shameful. I think the members of the opposition have spent a great deal of time explaining over and over again why this will be so bad for families and why it will be so bad for workers.

But, Madam Speaker, we haven't heard a single thing from the government. Let me tell you that the silence is deafening. If the front bench cared about this bill and they thought it was a good bill, they would get up in this Assembly and defend it. They have chosen not to. If the backbench of the government thought that this was a good bill, they would get up in this Assembly and would defend their minister, defend this bill, but they decided not to.

What they have shown very clearly is that they either know that this is a bad bill or they haven't read the bill. Madam Speaker, I don't want either of those in my government front bench or in my government backbench, frankly. I think we should be held to a higher standard. We should know what we are voting on, and we should be willing to stand up and defend it, or we should be willing to stand up and oppose it. The government is not willing to do any of that, so they either know it's a terrible bill or they really just don't care. Both of those are bad for Albertans.

It's going to hurt our families, it's going to hurt our constituents, Madam Speaker, and it's something that, really, the opposition is dedicated to fighting against. We're here to make sure that the sunlight will shine on this bill and that people will know how this will hurt their families. They will know how the government is trying to appease their wealthy donors and friends and pick the pockets of families all across Alberta. If this government really cared about these workers, if this government really cared about these families, they would get up and speak to why their bill was strong and why their bill was going to encourage investment and economic growth and for families to succeed, but they won't.

I'm concerned that that's because they have no explanation. They actually don't have any reasons that this is a good bill. That would be something that's very concerning. It would be something that would mean that the members of the government either think that what they write is made of gold, or perhaps they really just don't

understand the legislative process. This is democracy in action. Democracy demands that we talk about the issues we care about as legislators. We were sent here by our constituents to talk about the issues we care about.

Let me tell you, this is an issue that affects over 400,000 Albertans. It affects people in every single constituency that we were sent here to represent. It is going to affect families across the board; 400,000 workers means many, many more families. What that means is that this government needs to explain to those families why they are bringing in a bill that picks their pockets, why they are bringing in a bill that attacks workers, why they are bringing in a bill that hurts families around the general holiday seasons, Madam Speaker.

This government should have the moral fortitude to stand up and speak to it. But, really, we can see that the silence, again, is deafening. They refuse to stand up. They refuse to defend their own bill. This is something that is really unprecedented, that they've introduced a bill and decided: "Well, maybe it's not so good, so we just won't talk about it. We'll hope it'll go away, and we'll vote on it, and maybe that will work." But, Madam Speaker, let me tell you, the opposition will not let that happen. The opposition will continue to talk about why this bill picks the pockets of families, why this bill is bad for Albertans, and we will continue to fight against this affront to democracy that the government, front bench and backbench, appears to be complacent in.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I was very moved by the spirited representations from the hon. Member for Edmonton-South, my hon. colleague, especially given the fact that, you know, here's a guy who really is working overtime at this point.

It's important to draw attention to the fact that we are here to discuss this important amendment which, indeed, proposes that this bill is not read a second time on the grounds, Madam Speaker, that it will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that we do require some further input from the public. Speaking to this amendment gives the public an opportunity to engage in these conversations, to perhaps tune in to the Legislative Assembly and see their representatives hard at work doing what the people elected us to do, which is that when a bill proposes to affect people's daily lives, that bill ought to be appropriately scrutinized by legislators on all sides of the House.

No matter what party we were elected to, Madam Speaker, you know, the Westminster parliamentary system demands that we are here as individuals, that we represent our individual constituency, our individual communities. We've heard many people describe the vibrant neighbourhoods that make up their constituencies, the reasons why they came into public life. Now we are in a position where we are actually bringing that representation to life through our interventions, through proposing thoughtful amendments to legislation such as this amendment that I rise in favour of this morning.

You know, I think it's important that this amendment indicates that further public input is necessary. The reason for that, Madam Speaker, is that during the election campaign it was alleged that overtime was not going to be changed. The claim was made at the time that this would mean no changes whatsoever to people's banked overtime arrangements.

10:50 a.m.

People took great umbrage, as I recall, when the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the leader of the New Democratic Party, made an intervention about halfway through the campaign, saying, "Well, look, this will have a profound effect on people's bottom lines, on the ability to afford that new vehicle, perhaps the ability to afford many of the unexpected expenses that come up in daily life for homeowners, for others, for family members, and certainly in the oil and gas sector for people who had been through the historic downturn in the price of oil, people who had already been through potentially a number of very disruptive situations in terms of their family budget." Certainly, the proposal to make drastic changes to banked overtime such that thousands of dollars over a three- or four-month period might vaporize out of people's bank accounts was quite alarming to people. But at the time the answer, the rejoinder to that particular concern from the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was: "No, no, no. Not to worry. Nothing to see here." So the public was told at that time that there would be no changes to their overtime arrangements. And now we see that further input from the public is in fact necessary because that claim was not then reflected in the reality of the actions that government undertook: not quite as Bill 1, but as soon as they could get to it, in Bill 2, Madam Speaker.

I remember being on the doorstep during that sort of 48-hour period when there was some back-and-forth on what would happen to people's overtime. I remember standing on a doorstep on the north side of Lethbridge, talking to a guy. It was a windy Saturday afternoon. He could barely keep his screen door open, the poor guy. It was gusting in at 100 kilometres an hour. It was one of those times where, after about an hour, you choose to go and knock on some doors in some apartments, not because it's minus 40 but because the wind is giving 'er that day. So I'm talking to this guy, and he actually comes out of his house because we were probably going to lose his screen door if he didn't. We were standing there, and my hair is flying up like Donald Trump's on a good day. Here was a fellow who had been in and out of service rig jobs and that kind of stuff. He had a pretty new pickup truck in his yard, and I said: "Oh, that's a new truck. Is that yours?" Yeah. Okay. And I said to him, "Have you heard about this overtime stuff?" And he said: "Yeah. And I tell you what: I will not be able to afford my truck payments if those guys do that, and that's why you can put a sign on this lawn."

That's the kind of working-class person that sent me here to stand here. It's certainly the kind of folks that I come from in terms of my own background. My dad was a guy, not unlike that fellow, who worked as an electrician on oil rigs. One of the things that my dad always said was: "When you go to work, you have to be straight with your co-workers because if not, somebody will get electrocuted. It's a big old rig, and that's a lot of electricity." At that time it reminded me, as I was standing on this guy's doorstep, talking to him about his overtime, because he said to me: "You know, the leader of the Conservatives says that they're not going to do it. They're not going to do it on overtime." And I said: "I don't know, man. Look at what they actually said." And, sure enough, here we are. I remember where that guy lives. I might go drop off a little letter to him when I get home on the weekend, if I ever get home and leave this place, Madam Speaker.

Those are the kinds of folks that this bill will affect. A lot of those folks did vote Conservative, Madam Speaker. They're going to look at this, and they're going to go: "Oh, okay. Maybe I parked it with the NDP in 2015, and I parked it because of jobs and the economy for the same reason in 2019." There are going to be some real, material effects for those working-class folks, folks in particular in

the oil and gas industry. Our numbers show that oil and gas workers are some of the most often to avail themselves of banked overtime arrangements. That's exactly the kind of people who are not going to get thousands of dollars a year to which they are entitled and they worked darn hard for. They worked darn hard for that money. That's one of the reasons why further input from the public is necessary, and that is why I will be supporting this amendment.

Another reason, Madam Speaker, is that another family that I talked to – they live over on the west side in one of the more established neighbourhoods in kind of a duplex. I had canvassed quite a bit in that area over the last seven years, so I knew most of the families, but for whatever reason I hadn't ever connected with these folks. They came to the door, and they knew me, and, you know, the woman who came to the door, she kind of came out and gave me a hug. That was fun. I noticed they had two sort of older teenagers, early millennials, if you will, kids in the house. They were kind of circulating behind her. Then her husband came to the door as well. He was not looking well. So I said: how's it been going? He very clearly had just come from the hospital or something. He still had, like, his band on. He said: well, first of all, we need a cardiac catheterization lab in Lethbridge. I said: yeah; nothing could be closer to the truth on that piece.

You know, drastically cutting the heart out of health care services because you're going to give 4 and a half billion dollars away in a corporate tax cut: that's not helpful, certainly not to these folks. These are not the kinds of people who are going to pay to get to the front of the line in health care, certainly not these people. He started telling me how he had to take some time out of the workforce due to some heart complications, some other health care challenges, and I believe his wife worked at some kind of health care service provision job. So she was also concerned about health care.

I said: "Oh, so the kids are still at home. I see one of them here. Okay. She lives here, and the other one? Okay. Yeah. She's still here, too." And they said: "Yeah. Our 17-year-old has gone and gotten a job now because things are pretty tight around here." And I said: "Oh, well, so those changes to minimum wage probably really helped your family, right?" And they said: "Yeah. You know, I think we would probably prefer that she didn't have to contribute to the family budget, but here we are due to health care complications and everything else."

You know, these are the kinds of people who sent me here. So now that young woman, who was working at a service industry job to help her own family budget, basically when she walks to work in the morning, she's going to have a trail of Conservatives pulling toonies out of her pocket for every hour she works, Madam Speaker. While that image may be somewhat amusing, the impact on the bottom line is not funny at all.

That is the other reason, Madam Speaker, why further input from the public is necessary, and maybe a little remedial door-knocking for some of the members over on the government benches might be in order here. You know, maybe going out and actually – I can make the leaflets, and we can all go out and talk to people in working-class neighbourhoods about pulling toonies out of their pocket for every hour they work and going in and scooping all those truck payments and everything else that will come from banked overtime for oil and gas workers. I don't mind doing that. We could even maybe have some kind of a buddy system for MLAs, and we can all go together in a great spirit of postpartisanship, go and talk to working people about the . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Nonpartisan issue.

**Ms Phillips:** Yes. The nonpartisan issue of how much oil and gas workers should be compensated for their overtime hours.

That's a proposal that is certainly not reflected in this amendment, Madam Speaker, but it is in the spirit of what this amendment proposes, which is, of course, that further public input is necessary.

One of the things that I think is really, really key about this bill in terms of the \$15 to \$17 differential minimum wage – you know, like, there are further proposals that may propose a liquor servers' differential wage for people in the service industry at some point. There are a couple of things there that are highly problematic. One is that people who earn low wages spend them at small businesses. Again, if anyone would like to undertake a collegial exercise in doing a little tour of downtown businesses in Lethbridge, we can go talk to some of our friends at the Owl Acoustic Lounge or Kapow comics and cards or Plum Restaurant or a number of different clothing shops and so on owned by people who feel very strongly about paying an appropriate minimum wage. In fact, at the time when we were elected, in 2015, many of them spoke out locally in favour of such a policy.

**11:00 a.m.**

I remember my friend Wallie, who runs a comics and cards business right downtown, saying straight up: well, who do you think buys comics and cards? It's low-wage workers, and when they make more, I make more. That, I think, is an important insight in terms of the circulation of money among the lowest paid people, in fact the people who are working very hard to keep our downtowns vibrant, to keep our small-business scene vibrant.

It's one of the reasons why people like coming to Lethbridge, because we have so many cool little businesses. That's because we want to empower young people to participate fully in the economy. We want to empower young people to build their lives, their hobbies, to have that access to a good, solid middle-class life, that we've sort of seen evaporate in many ways as inequality has worsened over the last 40 years, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I wanted to first of all just say to all of the people who have been working all night how much we honour your contributions. I know there are folks from *Hansard*, there are folks who are sheriffs and sergeants and commissionaires, and the list goes on. I don't think anyone asked them, "Hey, would you be interested in staying an extra 12 hours today?" but we are tremendously grateful, and we want to say thank you for everything you do to keep us safe and keep this place accountable. I also want to say: I think you deserve time and a half. There's that.

To the hon. member, I want to know if . . .

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Ms Hoffman:** Oh. Great.

**The Deputy Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The hon. whip.

#### Point of Order

#### Referring to Employees of the Legislature

**Mr. Ellis:** Madam Speaker, I'm just going to refer to 23(b), "speaks to matters other than . . . the question under discussion." We, of course, those who were here all night, also thank those who stayed and certainly one hundred per cent appreciate the time and effort put in.

However, I would like to refer to the ruling by the hon. Speaker, who asked the Assembly not to refer to those who work in this Assembly and to specifically their wages, what they may or may not be getting. That was the ruling earlier of the Speaker throughout the night. We certainly, of course, respect and appreciate all the hard work that these people are doing, but this is not the place to refer to these people and what they may or may not make.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, I think a number of us have been in here for a while, and I think we're all aware that at times, particularly when we've been going on with an issue for a while, people do tend to diverge a little bit, and for that I will apologize. I think the idea here – and I think it's quite common; I mean, certainly, we saw it from the members across the way on a number of different bills when we were in government – is to try to really discuss the impact that this is having on the lives of people out there in the real world. This is, after all, a reasoned amendment that we're speaking to currently, and the reason in this case is to take the time to reflect on what exactly the impact of this is going to be. I think the stories of individuals who are out there working who are affected by this policy are highly relevant, incredibly relevant, at least as relevant, I would argue, as the individuals who the members across the way discussed, you know, on things like the Climate Leadership Act.

I think the point of this reasoned amendment is to slow it down and to reflect on exactly that sort of thing. I don't believe that this is a point of order. We are happy to steer the discussion back a little bit more towards the bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Additional comments? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. I was here last night when the Speaker made the ruling, and he clearly said that it doesn't matter what time it is. He clearly said that we were supposed to leave the people in this building out of this discussion. It was very clearly said. So I think this is a point of order.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It's not really an additional comment, Member.

I do not have the ruling of the Speaker from earlier this evening. However, I very much believe that members in this House are very much aware of what has been said earlier, and perhaps this is an opportunity to be reminded to be a little bit more careful as we move through this debate.

I'd just like to add an additional reminder that we be very careful to stay on topic for this amendment and what it's saying. This has been a very long night and a long morning. I'm not sure anybody is out of air yet, so let's stay focused and not incite others to stand up and call points of order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I can definitely do my part in the debate, but I certainly can't control all individual members of this House. So thank you very much for your caution on that.

My point, Madam Speaker, is that we're not talking about theoretical people. We are talking about real people, real people who live and work around us, real people who live and work in our constituencies, our bosses. We're talking about them and the money that we're picking out of their pockets. So I appreciate that feedback.

I also appreciate the narrative that the member was painting. I think we actually have a Red Lobster caucus. I was wondering if the hon. member would talk about – when I was working a really long shift and the staff that had just got let off at the Xwrecks or at the Hilltop pub would come into where I worked, the Ottewell neighbourhood pub, I'd be, like: hey, solidarity. Man, if they had a good tip night, I was going to get a good tip night. They'd make it really obvious to all my regulars that they were overtipping me and put that pressure on everyone else to overtip me. It definitely created a lot more money in the local economy because I immediately the next day would go to the Hilltop pub or to Xwrecks and I'd pay the gift back.

I wondered if the hon. member could talk a little bit about what she did and the camaraderie she saw and how that extra money in the local economy is stimulated through people like the service workers that we're considering picking the pockets of today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, it's an interesting inquiry. I worked in the service industry for a very long time. I was probably, when you add it all up, a waitress for about 10 years. When people ask me, you know, "What are the skills you need to be in politics?" I say: well, if you've been a server, you probably have it covered. You can talk to almost anybody. You can solve problems. You do it with a smile on your face. You end up interacting with the full rainbow of humanity, and sometimes you see the good and the bad. To the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar's prior comments: it makes you a lot better customer, just a better human out there in the world.

You know, whenever I come across young people in the service industry now, I know how hard they're working. Things are even tougher now, I think, for young people to get ahead. That's why it's so distressing when we're doing things that will pick the pockets of young people, that will take money out of their pockets. Differential wages as well for service workers are also, you know, deeply problematic. It was really distressing to me when I heard the then leader of the UCP talking about millennials thinking that the government is an ATM, sort of, like, harshing on millennials. From my experience, they're working just as hard as anyone else, maybe harder because life is different now in terms of home ownership affordability and all of these other things that have changed a lot even since I was in that world in the early 1990s.

**11:10 a.m.**

I know that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and I share many years of working at a Red Lobster, she in Calgary and me in Edmonton. The one that I worked at in the west end actually just unionized, I found out, which was interesting. But even at that point, it was a great place to work. I mean, we got benefits and a few other things, right? It was different from many of my other colleagues in pubs and restaurants throughout Edmonton, on the west side of Edmonton in particular because that's where I grew up. Yeah, we used to probably go and spend too many of our tips after our shift, necessitating picking up extra shifts. That was kind of my business motto for a long time.

Certainly, that money does circulate within the economy, but the other place it circulates is into your tuition fees, Madam Speaker.

Certainly, that is the case for many young people now, and through freezing tuition, we have, you know, saved people thousands of dollars.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any more speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and good morning to you. Thank you for acknowledging me and allowing me to participate in this discussion this morning, which has been diligently and continuously going on since early last night. We find ourselves this morning discussing an amendment to Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. I really like that word "make" Alberta.

I know that in earlier discussions I had started to make some comments. Unfortunately – you were even in the chair – I'd run out of time and didn't get a chance to finish my story. I guess this might pose an opportunity for me to discuss this, why it is so important that we tap on the brake, take some sober second thought, and consult with some of the people that this may affect.

As I'd mentioned the last time, in my much younger youth I had the opportunity to play a very long career in basketball, starting as early as junior high, and I even had the chance to play at the college level as well. One of the things that I learned over those years from all the coaching that I received, you know, is that players are asked to stick to their plays. That's what helps them to score baskets. But sometimes as players we can get really, really focused on having to make that play, especially when part of that play maybe involves a really tricky pass that just looks really good, and your teammate gets to go in and dunk the ball. It's fantastic. The crowd goes nuts, and it really fires you up. You get excited about that moment, making what we lovingly call the pretty play.

When I look at this bill, I'm starting to possibly see some similarities. As we know, members from the government side have gone on at length about the election and winning that election. There's that excitement around winning. "We won the election. We have the majority. We have been given the mandate to move forward on what we said we would." I think that possibly, Madam Speaker, some people are getting a little caught up in the excitement of that, even just right in the title of the bill, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

See, what we found, Madam Speaker, is that when you are, as it's known in the game, forcing the play, looking to make that pretty pass so your teammate can just drive the crowd nuts, more times than not you end up throwing the ball away to the opposition, which usually means they end up scoring against you. Now you're even further behind. So I'm wondering if we might be forcing the play here just a little bit because we're going to make Alberta open for business. I think there's a little assumption here that it was never open to begin with, which I would kind of tend to disagree with. I know that during the election I struggled a little bit trying to find a campaign office, and the same thing back in the 2015 election. The great news was that business was booming in Edmonton-Decore, and there just wasn't any room to find a campaign office.

The bad news, from my end of things, was that business was booming, and there was no room to find a campaign office. But you know what? I was really okay with that because business was booming. So when I hear this "make Alberta open for business," I'm a little confused because I thought it was open for business. That's what I saw all around in my constituency, thriving businesses that I love to go spend my money in. There are some amazing places in Edmonton-Decore known as the shopping

district: three major malls, all kinds of restaurants. I welcome anybody to come. There's terrific food there, lots of variety.

We need to take a bit of a sober second thought, just tap on the brake and put a little bit of pause on here because not only do I find some concern in just the title, Madam Speaker, but there are other concerns that I have around the bill. As everybody knows, we've maybe not so lovingly adopted a little bit of a nickname by calling it the pick-your-pockets bill.

I have a couple of friends that, shall we say, don't necessarily share my political views. That's okay. It doesn't preclude us from being friends. We just simply don't talk about politics. I was taken aback, quite surprisingly so, when they called me after the introduction of this bill and said to me, "Is this bill for real?" I said: "Well, what do you mean?" "Well, I've heard that I'm going to lose, potentially, my overtime pay." "Well, unfortunately, yeah, that's probably the case." "I also have another question: my child is going to be paid less than somebody doing the exact same job?" "Well, yeah, that's what the bill is proposing." Unfortunately, I could not repeat what came after that. I fear you would most likely deem it to be unparliamentary language, but the gist of it was that they were not happy.

As I'd mentioned earlier about these friends, we just don't share the same political views. Right there, that also now starts to tell me that we need to tap on the brake. We need to slow this down just a bit and go talk to some of the people that this is affecting, like our oil and gas workers. I have friends that work in the industry – electricians, pipefitters – and they tend to work a lot of overtime. They enjoy it: hey, fill your boots, 20 or 30 hours of overtime, absolutely. If that's what helps you to attain the goals that you're after, I'm all for it. But they were not happy at potentially losing that money because that is, in a sense, their reward for taking their time away from their family, from their friends, or just simply their plain old free time. Time and a half is the reward, and whether you bank it or you're paid out, it's still overtime.

I think that with what we have in this bill, we might as well just change the name "overtime" and just get rid of it because there's really no use for it. We'll just call everything regular time. You're just going to get paid regular time. That in itself, Madam Speaker, I think brings some pause.

I look at the youth wage. Now, I'm very, very excited by the fact that with the new boundary redraws after this election, I went from 21 to 26 schools in Edmonton-Decore. I'm very, very excited. I've got all the high schools in north Edmonton, and I try to spend as much time as I can visiting those schools. Usually that's at least twice a year for all of them, for some a little bit more, and I get the opportunity to talk to students all the time. I'm going to maybe take a shot in the dark here with some of my colleagues over here on this side, and I'm going to bet there's a bit of a consensus around the fact that we should be listening to our young emerging leaders.

**11:20 a.m.**

You know, I think things have changed a little bit since I was that age. Maybe back then I was a little bit more worried about things like when the next basketball game was or what time dinner was. I'm clearly finding that the youth in my schools are very, very engaged, and surprisingly so. I've quite honestly made quite the commitment to listen to my students because more often than not they have some very incredible ideas to share. I actually joked quite consistently with the Member for Lethbridge-West when she was environment minister. I have some students over at Queen E that put together a climate paper. At one point I literally had to pull the member over, and I said: "Okay, Are you feeding them information?" And I even posed it to them, too. I said: "Okay.

Who's your contact in the ministry? How is it that your paper almost perfectly mirrors the climate leadership plan?"

Engaging with our young emerging leaders – coincidentally, it's funny how these youth that we're looking at giving a \$2-an-hour pay cut to weren't able to vote in the election. I'm wondering what would have happened had they had the opportunity. Of course, I'm very grateful because of the student vote. The students in Edmonton-Decore very graciously re-elected me out of their vote. That's why I feel it's almost a duty, quite honestly, that I hear them, that I consider their words, and I don't think that has happened here in Bill 2.

We've certainly heard from members opposite about: well, \$13 an hour is better than zero dollars an hour. I guess that in its plain form, sure, it would be better, but did we consider the young emerging leaders that are already currently working? We've heard from many members over here that some of our youth 17 years of age, who have made personal decisions to strike out on their own for whatever various reasons there are, have bills to pay. Yet they still want to go to school. We are about to make their lives much more difficult by passing this legislation as it is right now. What we're telling our young emerging leaders: "You know what? It's all in the name of the economy, and I'm sorry that you've got to pay the price." It's those kinds of things where I see – the title that we seem to have adopted around picking your pockets: well, we are quite literally picking their pockets.

I also want to touch a little bit on the liquor server differential wage. I remember from back in my times – I suppose I should probably prepare the House, Madam Speaker, because I'm sure the teeth gnashing is going to start and that bodies are going to tense up – my experience in the union world. There's that word, "union." I very specifically remember going to support a demonstration around a restaurant very, very close by here. Employees there were mad. They were trying to form a union, and I'll get to that part of it in the beginning. But part of the reason why they were trying to form this was that the requests of the owners were quite demeaning to women. They were saying: "We're not necessarily making enough money. Tips: one day they're up; the next day they're down. It's uncertain. We need to try to make a little bit more money." The owner's solution to that was: "Well, we'll change the uniform. We'll make that skirt a little bit higher. We'll make that top drop a little bit lower. That will entice customers to give you a tip." I'll be honest with you: that disgusts me; that point of view really has no place.

What we're saying is that for the majority of our liquor servers, who are women, by bringing this back, we are opening up the door again, potentially, to that kind of behaviour by bad actors. I'm going to say right here, right now, because they're right in my very own riding, that I have some fantastic businesses. They value their employees very much. I'm very grateful for that. Those are the individuals that, you know, we don't have to worry about.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It was great to hear the hon. member talk about his experience and why further public input is necessary into this bill and why he supports this amendment. Certainly, hearing stories of working people and his own experience and why the public should have more input into this bill was, I think, helpful to the overall debate and our consideration of this amendment.

It did put in my mind, Madam Speaker, that we have a lot of people on this side of the House who have done a lot of work with ordinary, working-class people. It actually reminded me of



something that Jay-Z talks about. Yes, Jay-Z. In his last album with Beyoncé he said:

Over here we measure success by how many people [are]  
successful next to you  
Here we say you broke if everybody [else] is broke except for  
you.

That's exactly the kind of input and the kind of experience and the kind of ethic that defines this NDP caucus and certainly the working background of many of the people on this side. If the member could talk a little bit more about what kind of public input might be necessary and, you know, about our life experience in terms of measuring success by lifting everyone else up, just as Jay-Z and Beyoncé suggest that we might – you know, that song is called *Boss*. Certainly, on this side of the House that is a pretty boss kind of ethic in terms of representing working-class people, and I want to hear more about how the hon. member has done so.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess that here's where maybe – I don't know – my age might be showing a little bit. Of course, the Member for Lethbridge-West is probably much younger than I am. Jay-T. I thought: who is that?

**An Hon. Member:** Jay-Z, not Jay-T. Jay-Z.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Point taken. Apparently, I need to update my library a little bit, and perhaps, maybe, the Member for Lethbridge-West can help me with that endeavour at a later time.

Around her questions around the kinds of people that we need to be engaging with: I mentioned earlier that we need to be engaging with our youth, the ones that are 17 years of age or younger, because they're the ones currently working that will receive that pay cut, our liquor servers, and how they feel about going back to, potentially, quite honestly, a precarious wage, tips going up and down day to day. I've heard some stories, in a fun way, about getting a chance to go back to some of those establishments and pay it forward. Certainly, I'm not going to say that after one wobbly pop my tip is probably here, maybe after two or three my tip tends to climb, but mostly it's because I get fantastic service, it seems, everywhere I go in Edmonton-Decore. Again I invite members: come to Edmonton-Decore. We have some fantastic businesses there, and the level of service is absolutely amazing.

**11:30 a.m.**

Back to the consultation, we need to be reaching out to, quite frankly, all workers in Alberta. I know that sounds like a daunting task, but anywhere where somebody has the potential to work overtime – and I'm saying "potential" because this rule around overtime will affect them. I don't know if there are any workers in the province that get any kind of holidays off; we might want to talk to them as well.

Maybe around some of the administrative burden: of course, as the critic for red tape I do find it a little bit ironic that we are creating some potential work for our amazing businesses around trying to keep track of how old somebody is, if they are in school or not. I certainly hope that any of our students that are in Edmonton-Decore watching today do not make that consideration: maybe I should leave school just so I can get a \$2-an-hour raise. I think we shouldn't put them in that type of position and make sure that they are getting paid duly for what they do, with everybody else.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll speak to the notice of the amendment that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview put in last night, moving that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, which, really, is a pick-your-pockets bill, be amended by deleting everything after "that" so that we can look at Bill 2 further. It's this part here of the amendment, that

the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary.

Madam Speaker, before I begin on that, I'd like to, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar did, recognize that 75 years ago today our proud men and women of the Canadian Forces were part of an invasion of Europe to free Europe from Naziism. My own father was not part of that invasion as he was just 17 years old at that time, but he joined the Canadian Forces two years later and was shipped over and spent three years in Europe and was demobbed after the end of the war and came home. I bring that up because as all of us in this room here grew up, we were influenced by our parents and immediate family and loved ones.

The whole issue of fairness was something that we all learned. I can appreciate that there are different understandings or views of fairness. From my father's perspective, it was very much the kind of thing that gets set out here. You know, your word is your bond. I'm from eastern Canada, the Ontario area, and his view of fairness was that you make a deal and you stick to it. I never saw a contract – and maybe it was because I was too young – but he worked in back-breaking work all his life, in contracting the building of homes and working as a general contractor and a block- and brickwork and concrete specialist. I never saw a contract the entire time I can remember him going to work. He and his partners agreed on a job, they set a price, and they did the job.

I think that's what we want for this notice of amendment, to have an opportunity for the public to weigh in on the whole issue of the contract that was set around labour standards and wages with Albertans over two years ago. That contract was around, for instance, minimum wages. Those minimum wages are set at \$15 an hour. As you know, this bill, that we hope to see amendments to, purports to make it better for youth to be paid \$2 less an hour if you're a young person between 13 and 18.

I think Albertans, particularly that age group, would have a distinct concern with that. The contract has been out there since October. It is something that everybody is used to, and it will change going forward, and colleagues here spoke eloquently about why it's necessary to keep that contract, because of the important need for money that young people have growing up.

I want to say, too, that I don't believe that this bill and Bill 3, which is the largest corporate tax giveaway in Alberta's history, will stimulate the economy to the degree that the opposite benches believe they will. I don't believe they'll draw investment to this province. You know, during the election campaign that we've closed out, I can remember repeatedly jobs, the economy, and pipelines being talked about, and the premise was that the economy would grow at 3 per cent per year. I remember distinctly hearing the Premier say 3 per cent per year, that if we do that, the suite of changes that we're bringing in will stimulate the economy to that amount. The GDP will grow 3 per cent a year. Not one year, not two years in a row, not three years in a row, but it will continue at that rather moderately high running rate for an economy going forward, you know, seemingly in perpetuity.

That hasn't happened in Alberta. There have been, obviously, booms and busts in this province. In 2017, I think, there was a significant bounce back in the economy at 4.5 per cent, but that has levelled off, Madam Speaker. I remember the Premier making a pledge. Then he was not the Premier, of course. The pledge that was generally talked about by him and others is that we'll balance in

2022, we'll grow the economy at 3 per cent per year, we'll maintain the level of spending at the amount it is now, and no services will be reduced or cut. Those are the general pledges I remember. It may have a difference in emphasis somewhere, but that's what I remember being said repeatedly.

Growing the economy at 3 per cent per year, as I said, is a moderately high running rate for this province, and it's based, people on the other side said, on economists' reports. But I want to point out that there are other economists who don't agree with that, Madam Speaker. Many other economists don't agree with that. I would submit that the circumstances between the election and now are vastly different, and they're vastly different in terms of our economy because since the election the prolonged constraints on the takeaway of oil from this province are weighing heavily on this province. The cancellation of the crude-by-rail agreement is going to weigh even heavier on this province. There's significant chop in the world economy, caused by many things. One of those things is the U.S. tariffs that are being levied around the world and the response by countries to the U.S. tariffs in return.

11:40 a.m.

Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill: I think that from the time it was written, the time of the election, to now our circumstances in this province are vastly different, and we need further input, we need further deliberation, and we need further sober second thought. The member previous to me was talking about tapping the brakes and taking a second look at all of this. There's nothing wrong with doing that, Madam Speaker. In fact, I think Albertans would appreciate the opportunity to not only weigh in but to know that we're taking the opportunity to look at the different circumstances.

The impression I get from people on the other side is that we must go fast, follow through with the commitments we made. You know, I don't know when the platform was written. I know there are several versions of the platform that they brought forward, and it seemed to be updated regularly. So I don't know when it was written or rewritten. I know the circumstances are different, and I know that Albertans would appreciate a second look at all of this.

You know, the view that we might hear is that Albertans aren't happy about changes to their banked overtime. The Leader of the Opposition was eloquent this morning around what that impact would be, for instance, on an oil field worker making a significant amount of money per hour, but they would not get that hourly rate if that overtime was banked and they were paid out in straight time. They wouldn't get their time and a half.

The holiday pay changes. You know, another member on the opposite bench has talked about working stiff, and I think he properly implied that it's a person who goes to work every day and just puts their nose down and their tail up and they're working hard. If more people knew about the changes to holiday pay that are proposed in Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, they would not be pleased, Madam Speaker. They would not be: I signed up for that.

The certification vote changes. Again, Madam Speaker, that's a contract that was made as a result of labour code changes recently, a labour code that hadn't been looked at for 30 years. I don't think there would be a great deal of support in the ranks of the working stiff for those changes.

Rolling back wages for youth, Madam Speaker: that's, you know, in a way, going after those with the least ability to help themselves or have their voices heard. Not that everyone in this place does not believe that young people need to be encouraged and supported and valued and nurtured and mentored. We need to do those things regularly for young people, and I know that I'm not alone in everyone here believing that that's how you help the next

generation, the younger generation, to come up and to take over as leaders.

In total, Madam Speaker, there are a number of things that we need to have a second look at. The amount of investment that is purported to come into this province as a result of a suite of bills that are before us is highly suspect, is highly questionable, especially when there are many people on the other side who question it. For instance, a 3 per cent GDP growth per year as a moderately high running rate going forward: I'm not sure why we can believe that at this point. We saw information – it could have been the Conference Board – come out last week that did not show Alberta being anywhere close to that. That's regrettable. There are reasons for it. The previous government was working on solutions to that, Madam Speaker – crude by rail is a solution to that – the efforts to make sure that the federal government approved pipelines. And they bought a pipeline at \$4.5 billion. That is something that doesn't get talked about a lot here.

You know, they didn't just decide that it was good on their own to do that. They needed to be convinced. We had the Premier and the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment and Parks and the entire cabinet, the Executive Council, focused on that, and it happened. It was groundbreaking for that investment to take place and not only that investment but a commitment to expand the pipeline to tidewater, something that hasn't happened in this province.

That's part of the chop in the economy, that's part of the headwinds we're facing, and that's part of the reason that crude by rail and the curtailment and easing off as the supplies of oil dwindle down in this province are so important. But that doesn't get talked about here, Madam Speaker. What gets talked about is an act to pick your pockets. What gets talked about is the largest giveaway of corporate taxes probably of any province in this country.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise under 29(2)(a) in response to the member opposite's speech for a number of reasons – a number of things he said I'd like to respond to – but primarily I rise mostly because I can. There were a lot of things said in that speech and also some things that were said earlier, and I kind of want to go over those.

You know, we on this side of the House don't believe that we are forcing the issue, forcing the play, like one of the members had said earlier. We believe that this bill is a response to a significant problem in Alberta, which is youth unemployment. That's a big problem. It's one of the things that we would like to see a resolution to, not exacerbate the problem by creating more layers of red tape and more burdens on employers in Alberta.

We'd like to attract more investment here, and to do that, we will make Alberta an enticing place to be, reduce taxes on corporations, and help people get into the workforce, climb the ladder of employment. You know, one of the problems we're trying to respond to is youth unemployment, which was at 11.6 per cent. There's this idea, for anyone who's applied for a job, of trying to grasp that first rung of the ladder, that you can't get a job without experience but that you can't get experience without a job. That's a real problem. We believe that this is a way that people entering the workforce can find those opportunities to get that work experience. We made this pledge during the campaign.

The Member for Lethbridge-West was making a point of quoting some hip hop lyrics, and I can appreciate that. Mind you, she quoted some more contemporary Jay-Z. I try to go back to the classics like *Reasonable Doubt* and *22 Two's*. It's a classic and should have gone

triple. You know, we walk it like we talk it on this side of the House. That is a commitment that we made, and we will do just that.

We will also try to ensure that we are attracting people back to Alberta to work. We want people to come here and start a business, do something great with their resources, do something great with their ideas, and tell the province, tell the country, and tell the world that Alberta is open for business, is a great place to be. I know, from knocking on doors across my constituency of Cardston-Siksika, that we have some of the hardest working people that I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. I referenced some in my maiden speech, and I'm honoured to represent them. But every day, every time I go and talk with them, they're asking us: please, help us; please help us find ways to be more successful.

**11:50 a.m.**

It's not our job here to create jobs for people. It's our job to help others come to Alberta, start a business, and create jobs for others to get into the workforce. I believe that Bill 2 does just that. So we have created this bill.

I speak against this motion, the reasoned amendment, because I don't believe that we need to go down that route. I believe that this is a good piece of legislation, and we should move forward with it.

With that, I will simply say this. On this side of the House and, in fact, in this province we may have 99 problems, but Bill 2 ain't one.

**The Deputy Speaker:** With 55 seconds left, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** I disagree with everything said. This bill will cause more people to be unemployed. It'll cause investment not to come here because 3 per cent GDP growth is not reasonable at this point in time. That's what this is predicated on. They need to fix that first, Madam Speaker, and they're not doing anything to do that. They're giving money away. We're going to have less money to be able to afford the many services and programs that Albertans rely on, and they're going to then take a look at cutting those programs. That's the contract they're making with Albertans, the one they're not talking about, the one they will issue as we get closer to having less and less money in the treasury as a result of their giveaway to corporations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** What time is it?

**The Deputy Speaker:** You're done.

Fun fact, hon. members: it's almost lunchtime. But that's not relevant to any of us here because it is still yesterday.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to also add my voice to the debate today on this amendment to the pick-your-pockets bill, and I certainly am standing in support of it. Certainly, what is indicated in this is that it is our view that this bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary. It really is an attack on workers.

I think that we've heard a lot of stories of our own journeys into the workforce. I certainly would like to share mine. I have a long story because I've been around for a few years. As a citizen of this province I have my perspective, you know, and as a woman I have my perspective, that's perhaps different than some of the other members here, and as a woman with my particular experiences, it

may be different from others, but I know that I'm not alone in this experience. So I stand very strongly against this pick-your-pockets bill because it is, again, an attack on workers. It's so important to hear the voices of citizens.

You know, I had my share of jobs that weren't great, as many people have. I grew up in a small town in northern Alberta, in the Peace River country, in Valleyview, and I didn't work in any kind of cool places like Red Lobster; I worked in the Esso truck stop. I actually started working as a waitress at the age of 12. Honestly, I was 12 years old, and I was waiting tables. But before that, I babysat for, like, half of what the minimum wage was, and the minimum wage at that time was \$1.35. And do you think I got tips? No, no, no. I was lucky if I got a buck. That was extraordinary: wow, I got a buck in tips. This predates the birth of many people in this Chamber, for sure, but it is my journey, the significance of what's developed me as a person and what's made me a strong advocate for workers' rights in this province.

Of course, this amendment calls on the government to take another look at this bill because it is not supporting workers; it's hurting them. I mean, this is sort of the fundamental reason that I got involved in politics, the extreme inequality we have in our province. We have the highest income gap of any province in Canada. We have, you know, the very elite, who have the most, and then a significant portion of the rest of us have much less. Of course, this again just follows along that path, keeping Alberta a place for elites and then the rest of us. It's a deep concern of mine.

As I said, I waitressed throughout my whole junior high and high school in this very small town. You know, there was no doubt that I experienced lots of harassment, sexism in that role as a waitress in a truck stop. Eventually I got tired of it, so I thought: I want to do one of the boys' jobs. So I pumped gas, and I liked that way better, and it seemed to be that just because of the different role I was in, I got more respect. I still made a low wage, but I appreciated having more respect as I fulfilled my job.

In '79 I graduated, and I moved to Edmonton. I went to university because I knew that I didn't want to stay in that small town even though that's what most of the girls in my class did. They got married early on, and they stayed in that town. But I had sort of bigger dreams, so I came to Edmonton, and I got my BA in political science at that time. I needed to support myself in Edmonton because, you know, I had to pay for my rent and tuition and all of that. My family didn't support me in that way. I paid for my own schooling.

I got a job at the ALCB. Does anyone remember what the ALCB was? The Alberta Liquor Control Board. I was excited because this was a union job, so I got a bit of a higher wage. That made a big difference. I had more rights. I had more benefits. I had more support. Actually, if you worked so many hours, after that you could take a product knowledge test, which I thought was cool. I studied and studied, and then my salary went up. That was very good. I was excited to be able to improve myself, be a better employee because I had more knowledge. This was a union shop. Of course, you know, we had more support.

Just before Christmas there was this new manager that came in, and he was known as the Axe Man. Unbeknownst to us – we were a bunch of struggling university students working part-time, trying to get our studies done – he called about 20 of us into his office. Of course, we were all the ones who got paid more. We were all the ones who'd taken that product knowledge test. He fired us for some kind of trumped-up thing. We had worked there for a long time in good standing. There were no issues, and then it was, like: oh, well, you did this one day; you did this. It was, like, horrific. I was just stunned that someone could get away with this. As a worker I was vulnerable even though I was in a much

better working arrangement than I had had as a waitress back in my small town. You know, here I was again, a vulnerable worker. I was going to school. How was I going to pay my rent? I was gone. I had to figure something out.

But I did eventually graduate with my BA in political science. I graduated in '82. Of course, '82 was sort of a bust time in Alberta, so there weren't any jobs. It was another really tough time for me. Again, I was super vulnerable, and now I had huge debt. I had a huge student loan hanging over my head. I worked in the nonprofit sector for a while, and although I liked the work, I got paid very poorly. You know, again, it paid very poorly, and it was shift work. This Bill 2 does talk about how some of the changes to the holiday pay, the general holiday pay, will impact shift workers even more so. I was a vulnerable worker, as workers working shift work are. We know that it's super stressful to do that kind of work. This is just another way to sort of pick the pockets of these vulnerable workers, and I certainly can relate to that, being one of those workers myself.

For about a decade I worked in the nonprofit sector, and I experienced poor wages, poor working conditions. You know, my work had meaning, and I liked it, but I just was frustrated because I was living in poverty. So when I was 30, I decided to go back to school because I felt like I just couldn't get a job that paid me decent and I needed to get a profession. Of course, I'd worked in the social services sector for this past decade, so I decided to become a social worker. I set my sights on doing that.

*12:00 p.m.*

But by this time I was a young mom, and soon I was a single mom. I lived in poverty with my young son, and as I said before, when I did my response to the Speech from the Throne, I did live in subsidized housing. That was, you know, a godsend for me. That meant so much to me and my son because it made a difference and it helped me to be able to go back to university, get my bachelor and my master of social work. Really, education was my pathway out of poverty.

Again, when I graduated, it was the early '90s, and that's, of course, when the Premier cut public programs in half. So a lot of people, myself included – not only was I looking for a job, but when I was in university, I used to get a grant. I got support because I was seen as someone who needed support because I was a single mom and, you know, it was difficult for me. I did get a grant, but as soon as the government of the '90s came in, that grant was gone. Again, I had to take out bigger student loans, and I had tremendous, tremendous debt. Of course, I graduated in a bust cycle. As I said, the programs were cut. There weren't many jobs, but eventually I did get a job, and I got a job in child welfare in the government. I was a front-line caseworker, and I worked to support vulnerable families, and I was a vulnerable family myself.

One of the things that happened early on was that, you know, we were all in training sessions or whatever and getting to know our colleagues who were starting at the same time as us. They had done a big recruitment from Ontario at that time because they couldn't get enough Albertans. So I met all these people from Ontario, and I met this one fellow. I think, over drinks, we were talking, and he told me what his starting salary was, and I told him what my starting salary was. He had an MSW, just like me. He had just the same amount of experience as me, and he was making 10 K more than me, 10 grand more than me, when I was hired. And I was, like: "What? How can that be?" So I complained. Of course, HR looked into all of this. They saw it, and they said: "Yes, this is a mistake, but there's nothing to be done. Nothing can be done." I wonder why that was. Why would he get 10 K more than me? I wonder about that.

Again, these are just vulnerabilities for workers, and we don't have equality. That's why legislation is so important, so that workers are protected, because even when they are, still there are advantages that are given to some but not others. That also informed my view as a young woman, not understanding why this fellow was getting so much more than me.

I guess one of the things that I just wanted to mention. You know, the hon. Member from Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland spoke yesterday just about his journey in his career. He talked about being a farm boy and growing up in rural Alberta, and then through his connections on the farm he was able to get a job in the city, and it just seemed like he met person after person that promoted him along. It sounds like he's had a very successful time of it. But I wonder: what is the difference between him and me? I wonder. I think it must have something to do with gender, that I'm a woman. I'm a female, and I didn't have access to the old boys' network. He had access to the old boys' network. I'm not a privileged white male. I'm a woman, and I've had to make my own luck.

I put up with tremendous sexism along the journey, some I've just talked about specifically right now, and I know I'm not alone. I know my story is not unique. I know that this is a phenomenon that many women experience. So I just really want to expand the thinking of the members in the Assembly. Even though they may have had a clear trajectory to success in their lives, some people experience challenges. Of course, you know, gender is often a barrier to success; ethnicity may be. Certainly, we know that if people are of indigenous background, they have many, many barriers to their success in our society. Legislation that supports all workers, makes sure that they are supported, that's strong so that they can be treated with respect – you know what? Sometimes people aren't respectful. I certainly experienced that first-hand.

That's why I became a social worker, because I wanted to support people to overcome those barriers, to know their worth, to know how important they were. It doesn't matter where you come from, who you are; you have an important role on this planet. I am so grateful to my younger self, who saw that, and I've been able to live out my career supporting people. Now in this, you know, lofty position, being a Member of the Legislative Assembly, a representative for Edmonton-Riverview, I'm so honoured to again support the people of my community, to support Albertans, to support workers, which this bill absolutely does not, to have access to opportunities that oftentimes the doors are closed to.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

**Ms Glasgo:** I'm very grateful, Madam Speaker, to be rising on 29(2)(a) to address some of the points brought up by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview. You know, I greatly appreciate her sharing her stories of her struggles as a woman in the workforce. Of course, as a young woman in this Chamber I do have to take some issue with some of what she shared, mostly because I do not believe my gender to be an inhibitor to my success. I also know that as a young woman in this arena, as a young woman in this Chamber, some of the best respect and some of the best opportunities I have been given are because of my male colleagues or my other colleagues of any gender. I'm actually suggesting that I had the ability and tenacity to do the work. I know that I have that because I earned the support of 65 per cent of people in Brooks-Medicine Hat in this last election.

So for the member opposite, Madam Speaker, of course, through you, to suggest that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland is benefiting because he is male: I take issue with that because we all had to work exceptionally hard to be in this Chamber. I know from my own personal experience when I was door-knocking that there

were a couple of people who said to me: hey, little girl. I was called “little girl” quite a bit. I mean, I’m not exactly the tallest person in this Chamber, and, yeah, I’m visibly younger as well, so it’s just one of those things that happens to the best of us. But when I was at the door, I never let that stop me. It became a motivator for me, that somebody saw me and that maybe I couldn’t do it. It became a motivator for me to work harder and to get ahead. That’s exactly what I did. I kept knocking on doors.

I know that the Member for Banff-Kananaskis had some of the same issues. I’m not going to speak on her behalf because that’s her story to tell. But I know that as different members of this Chamber in different areas of the province we all had issues and all had things that we had to overcome. But the biggest thing here and I think the biggest point of contention between our United Conservative caucus and the women in our caucus and the members opposite is that we don’t see gender as an inhibitor to our success but as a different perspective that we share. I know that our Premier has worked exceptionally hard bringing people from a variety of backgrounds, including women, to this table and has actually made an overt effort.

I don’t have, obviously, the copies with me because I didn’t expect to be rising on this today, but in the *National Post* there was an article – and I’d be happy to table the copies later if that is necessary – where myself and a few other of my colleagues commented on the success of our movement in recruiting strong, talented, diverse women. I think you, Madam Speaker, sitting in your chair today, are a testament to that as well because it shows that our movement and this province really value and respect the opinions of strong, diverse women.

12:10 p.m.

Once again, I do take particular issue with the member opposite going after or implying, rather – sorry; I’ll use better language – that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland had somehow benefited disproportionately or unfairly because he happens to be a male. He worked very hard. I worked very hard. The Member for Banff-Kananaskis worked very hard. I’m looking at other members in the Chamber. We all worked hard. But me being a woman has absolutely nothing to do with that. I wanted to earn the support of the people around me, I wanted to earn their respect, and that’s exactly what I did, Madam Speaker.

How can we make sure that we continue this going forward? Well, I think that by creating jobs in this economy – to the point of the bill, when I was at the doors, it didn’t matter if I was talking to a man or a woman. Actually, I talked to one girl – and I say “girl” because she was 17 – and she was turning 18 I think it was, like, April 14 or something. It was awesome. She was going to be 18 on election day. We talked for a while, and, you know, she had some issues, and she was actually quite engaged. We were talking, and she said, “When did you get involved?” and I said, “Early on in my life.” We were talking about what our party brings to the table, and we were talking about getting out of university and how important it is to have a job.

I know that, for me, having a job really fulfilled me. When I was 14, I actually worked at the local hockey rink in Medicine Hat called the Kinplex. At the Kinplex, you know, I was slinging poutine. It wasn’t the most glamorous job in the entire universe, but I did it because it put gas in my moped – yes, my moped – to drive to lacrosse practice or to drive to wherever I needed to go because my parents knew that that would give me meaning. Actually, they were discouraging me from having a job at one point because they wanted me to focus.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there members to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. Thank you very much. I am a bit at a loss for words, just hearing the previous speaker talk about the fact that because she’s had success, therefore there is no such thing as structural barriers in the world. I think there are women all around North America . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you. However, we’re on the amendment, not comments of the previous speaker.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah, of course. I just . . .

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** A point of order has been called. Edmonton-South.

### Point of Order

#### Explanation of Speaker’s Ruling

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on Standing Order 13(2). I believe the hon. member was about to get into why her comments, that were towards the bill, and comments that opposition members had made towards the bill – you had allowed those comments, showing that they were relevant to the bill and the amendment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was about to move forward and discuss how those comments tied back to the amendment and so forth. I would ask you to explain why it was appropriate for the Member for Edmonton-Riverview and the member across in the government there to speak on these matters, but it is not such for the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, there’s been a lot of latitude that has been given throughout the course of this debate on all matters in this House. I will remind all members that there’s been an exceptional amount of latitude when it comes to comments and questions, which is very different than actually speaking on the amendment. So I’m just offering some caution again as we are all very tired and still operating on yesterday.

Will the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford please continue?

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I take your caution. I just needed to express my emotional reaction in the moment because it was quite a fascinating moment.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Feehan:** I do want to talk a little bit about where I was this morning before I came in today because it is quite relevant to the discussion of this amendment that has been brought forward. I had the pleasure and the opportunity to be at one of the high schools in my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford and was able to join the students of Louis St. Laurent high school and Cartier McGee junior high. As many of you may know, they are together and often do events together in the same physical building. They had invited me to their year-end event and their liturgy and their assembly – a Catholic school, so the liturgy was there – which was quite enjoyable. They had a theme attached to the year-end event, which was typified by the final hymn from the liturgy, which was *Go Make a Difference*. That was the name of the hymn. The message from the presiding priest, Reverend Glenn, and, of course, the message of the whole liturgy and the year-end event for all of these

young people, almost a hundred per cent of whom I think would be under the age of 18, was that it is incumbent upon all of us to be responsible for the world in which we live and that we need to go out there and truly make a difference even though there are struggles, things, barriers that will stop us and sometimes pain or suffering that we will have to endure as a result of making the decision that we need to make.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

As I got up to speak, right at the end of the liturgy, I addressed the fact that we, in fact, had been here talking in this House all day yesterday, throughout the night, and right into the morning. I said that as we speak right now, there are people over at the Legislature that are talking about bills because they have that dedication. And I would say all of us. I didn't say that it was just the opposition side of the House, by the way, when I was speaking to the students. I tried to be a little nonpartisan. I said that members are here because they truly want to make a difference. I think that's probably why. Most people, I think, in this House would agree that that had at least something to do with their motivation to run for election. So here we are, trying to make a difference.

But then I said that I wanted to let them know a little bit about why we're staying in the House, that it's unusual for us to stay all night long and endure the sufferings, the pains of listening to each other endlessly for hours and hours at a time. So I said to them that one of the things that's very important and part of the reason for the filibuster that's going on right now is the fact that this present government is passing a bill, as we were talking to this group of perhaps 500 grade 7 to grade 12 students at one of the great Catholic schools here in the city of Edmonton, that right now there are people in the Legislature who are making the decision to take the minimum wage that you are presently allowed to earn of \$15 an hour and to reduce that minimum wage down to \$13 an hour.

I wish you were there – I wish you were there – to see the reaction of those 500 students who heard that phrase from me and the immediate response of boos and jeering that went on in that room, so much so that I literally had to interrupt it repeatedly to get them to calm down a bit and bring it back to the message of the day.

I didn't want to litigate this bill in that kind of a speech but, rather, to talk about the fact that things do matter, that the choices that are made by other people in this world will sometimes affect you negatively, that sometimes people engage in behaviours which are an assault on you or an assault on other people in the world, and that you have a responsibility to step up and, as the hymn says, to go out and make a difference. When these challenges come forward, it is very important that you take on that responsibility not only for yourself, I reminded them, but for all of those brothers and sisters around the world who will benefit from your having stood up when it was time to stand up.

So that brings me to this amendment. The whole point of this amendment is exactly that, that it is time, literally, for people on this side of the House to stand up, as you do when you speak. We stand up repeatedly, over and over again, to actually make a difference, to actually improve the lives of people who are more vulnerable than ourselves. This legislation isn't about anybody in this House. This legislation is about people who cannot be here to speak for themselves. It's about giving a voice to the voiceless, a challenge which I think is extremely important.

**12:20 p.m.**

I know that just before we went into the liturgy, I had a few moments to speak with Father Glenn and talk a little bit about, you know, what we were doing here and so on. He asked me a little bit about why I decided to go into politics. I just reflected to him about

a recent tragedy for the world, I would say, that a man by the name of Jean Vanier, a great Canadian who started the L'Arche communities, first in France and then subsequently here in North America, had recently died. I reflected on the fact that when I was 17, when I was just a young man at the University of Alberta, I went to listen to this incredible man speak about the need for all of us to care for others, to believe that the work that we do is most important when it is done for those who are vulnerable. He talked, I felt, to me personally about how important it was that we actually are proactive and have a preferential option for the poor, as was often said in the faith community. That's exactly what we're talking about today, a preferential option for the vulnerable and the poor.

I've got to tell you that I've stood in this House and talked about the fact that I sometimes find the internal workings of the conservative mind to be a bit chaotic and confused, and I point out when I see that chaos and confusion. Here I am looking at the bill that's being presented today and looking at the very first part of the bill, which is a reduction of the monies that are available to students who are trying to, first, establish themselves in the world, who are trying to do all the good that we all want to do to achieve for themselves a better life through self-improvement and moving forward.

As I look at this, I see a somewhat bizarre series of red tape measures included in this bill, that you will get paid \$13 an hour for the first 28 hours when school is in session but then \$15 thereafter. It's an interesting, Byzantine kind of concept there that somehow an event that is taking place outside of the work environment, has nothing to do with the job you're doing – that is, whether school is in or not – influences the amount you get paid for the work.

Now, I want to address again the notion, you know, about logical understanding of bills and why things are put into those bills. Why would you say that we're going to take something that has nothing to do with the labour that you put in, nothing to do with the circumstances of your contractual employment with the employer, and we're going to make that circumstance influence the actual remuneration that you get? How does that make any sense?

They used to do that in all kinds of other ways. If you happened to be a black individual in certain parts of the world in a certain era, you would get paid less than someone else. Again, an externality. It has nothing to do with the labour that you're performing, yet you would get paid less. If you happened to be a woman: we know that over the centuries frequently that externality, the fact that you are a woman, would lead to you getting paid less. But as a society we've come to the place where we have made the determination that those externalities are not logically attached to the work that is being done and therefore should not be used in the calculation of the remuneration for that work. That's just a basic issue of social justice, exactly what Jean Vanier was calling out to me to do, to pursue a social justice with a preferential option for the poor, and here we are going exactly in the opposite direction. We are actually introducing this Byzantine system of red tape where externalities are being used to calculate your value as a human being.

It was interesting. One of the things that Jean Vanier said when he first set up the L'Arche community – and I still remember this. I was 17 at the time. I'm a little older than that now, a few years, but I still remember. He said that people would call him up at the L'Arche community and say: "I understand you're setting up this group home for people with disabilities. I have a broken TV. Would you like it?" And he paused and said: "It's a fascinating thing that people would do that. They would call you and they would say: it is broken; it is not good enough for me, but because you are broken, it may be good enough for you. Giving broken things to broken people."

I think that's a profound statement. It's stuck with me all of these years. I can do the calculation. I'm 59 now, and that happened when I was about 17. Here we are again, taking people who are broken people, people who do not have a voice – they cannot vote in this situation – people who are vulnerable, and we're giving them broken things. That is something I just can't condone.

The set of rules around here is a little bit like a choose-your-own-adventure novel. You get paid one wage if you're in school for a period of time, then you get paid a different wage after a certain number of hours, but then, when school is out again, again an externality, you suddenly get less wages again. So you literally can have students who start a job in September, work for 28 hours at \$13 an hour, get moved to \$15 an hour, and then, when they graduate at the end of the year, get moved back down to \$13 an hour. If that isn't a series of red tape, I don't know what is, which is fairly ironic because one of the other bills that's in this House right now – in fact, there's a whole ministry dedicated to the reduction of red tape. Then the very second bill they put into the House is essentially quintessential, absurd red tape that would make John Cleese happy to read about.

I guess I'm very concerned here that this government really has lost faith with the youth. The reaction at Louis St. Laurent school this morning to hearing that just because of an externality, their age, they would be paid less was significant. The youth know that there have been a series of attacks. I would love to have at some point the Minister of Education stand up in this House and defend that and to speak about the fact that she is voting for a bill in which she is saying to all the people for whom she has responsibility that we have looked at you and we have valued you at 13 per cent less than we value other human beings. I'd love to hear that speech. I'd love to be in that audience to hear her make that statement to the people that she is responsible for.

I want to go on and talk a little bit more about who is going to actually benefit from having these wages go down. Who is it for? We know it's not for the youth. We know that taking money away from people is not going to make their lives better, especially the vulnerable people. There are only a couple of people that may benefit from this kind of decrease in wages to young people. One of them is perhaps businesses where the profit margin is so thin and so tight that being able to reduce the wages of their workers may . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to hear from my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and I think he's mentioned very important points today that all members of this Assembly should take note of. It's important that we consider the stories that we continue to hear from members of the opposition on why this bill needs to not now be read a second time, and we need to consider having the opportunity to have more public consultation.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to use a quote here. It's actually from *Hansard*. It's page 1060, and it was said on December 9, 2015. It's actually from the now hon. Minister of Transportation. He said:

For the government members, if they're tired of warming their hands, because that's what happens when you sit on them, to get up and talk and defend your bill.

Tell the . . . truth, not half the truth.

That's the whole quote. It's something that I think is very fitting here because we haven't heard from the government at all. In fact, I think one of the scariest things about us not having heard from the government on this bill is that this bill is a direct attack on workers' rights, whether that worker is young, whether that worker is old,

whether that worker works in Edmonton or Medicine Hat or Calgary. Wherever it is in this province, over 400,000 workers are being attacked right now by this bill.

12:30 p.m.

One of the biggest questions I will have and continue to have is: why does the government front bench and the backbench not support this bill? Why will they not get up and defend this bill? What do they think is wrong with it that they don't feel comfortable getting up and speaking to it? Perhaps the hon. Minister of Education could get up and tell us why as the Education minister she is okay with students having to drop out of school to make a living wage. I think that supporting a bill that encourages students to leave the school system is not what the Education minister should be supporting. Perhaps the Education minister is thinking that it'll save her a couple of dollars in the long run.

Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't mean to presume anything, but unless the minister is willing to get up and defend her position on this, I think that is going to be a significant problem as we move forward. It's a significant problem that there is an Education minister in this province who is not willing to have public consultation on whether students should have to drop out of school before they're able to have a living wage, whether students will have to actually leave their classes and no longer get high school credentials before they are allowed to make the minimum wage, especially for vulnerable young people, who may in fact have to end up going to a food bank or who may be in even more precarious situations than that and not feel comfortable going to a food bank.

It is very concerning to me that there is an Education minister in this House that is likely going to vote for this legislation and against this amendment, move forward with no consultation, and really talk about how young people are supposed to be the focus of her file, and then we see her supporting a bill like this and not supporting this amendment. That is something that is very, very concerning. It's an attack on youth, and when the Education minister in Alberta attacks youth, that is something that we need to really look at and say: is this the right minister at the right time? When we look at this, we've seen the Premier defend that, we've seen the front bench defend that, but we haven't seen them talk about why it's okay that this bill directly targets these young people, that this bill directly takes away those young people's rights, that it discriminates against young people.

It is absolutely the wrong thing to do. We've seen young people across the province speak out against it. We saw the minister of labour, who introduced the bill. He's made, I think, about 30 tweets in, apparently, his whole life, Mr. Speaker, but in two of them he's already been ratioed harder than I've seen a sitting MLA in the last four years. That's something that's very concerning. We have the Minister of Education then going forward and defending this and saying, "Oh, but young people don't need to be in school if they want to make a living wage," and she's supposed to run the education system. She's supposed to be the one encouraging students to graduate. Instead, she's going to support legislation that says: "Well, if you want to graduate, we think that you're worth a little bit less. If you want to go to school, we think you're worth about 13.3 per cent less."

Mr. Speaker, that's something that all Albertans need to be concerned about, not just young people. I think all members need to be concerned about it. It's something that is certainly a bad precedent to be setting here. Perhaps the minister wants to continue to sit on her hands and not defend herself, and perhaps the minister wants to just leave this be and not speak to the importance of this legislation and the importance of why she wants to take away these rights for young people. That's the minister's prerogative, but I

think it's a shame that we have a minister that refuses to get up and defend legislation they're going to vote for. It means that either the minister does not understand the bill that they are trying to vote for or they are wilfully negligent of that bill, and both of those are not something we want to see from anyone on the front bench but certainly not from somebody who has an obligation to our young people here in the province.

Here in Alberta we want to make sure we have world-class education with world-class graduates, and if the minister refuses to defend this, then we must assume she ...

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other hon. members looking to speak on this amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods standing.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to be able to stand in this Chamber today with my colleagues and contribute to this really important debate. The amendment that we have before us, that states that "the Assembly is of the view that the bill will not draw investment to Alberta or stimulate the economy and that further input from the public is necessary," has my full support. It has my full support because I have been talking to working people from all corners of this province about the impacts that Bill 2 will have on them and their families.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, I really want to maybe draw a little heat out of this debate and talk about some of the real facts, the truth of what's happening here. I think it's really important that we focus back down onto that. In the papers the Premier is quoted as saying that this debate is necessary because of the NDP's radical changes to Alberta labour law. If radical changes were what we were debating here, that would be a different story, but we are not. We have a Premier who is trying to characterize this as radical changes when he's talking about taking away overtime banking at time and a half, which Alberta just got because we were behind the rest of the country. No other jurisdiction in Canada had a minimum standard – a minimum standard – that is there to protect vulnerable workers and those who rely on the minimum standards, where overtime banking could be done at straight time. It was not a radical change to move from straight time to time and a half. In fact, that puts us now catching up to every other jurisdiction.

Who does that impact, Mr. Speaker? Well, we know that 400,000 Albertans use overtime, primarily in the oil and gas and the construction fields but in many different industries. We know that when somebody does overtime, they deserve that premium because that is additional time and effort that they are spending away from their friends and family. This bill would take that away and move it from time and a half, changing that minimum standard. Again, let's remember that employment standards are there as the minimum to protect the most vulnerable.

So when we're thinking about who this change impacts, it's certainly not our overtime, Mr. Speaker, because we are not getting overtime although we are still in Wednesday and having a very robust discussion about this. This is protecting that minimum that is there for workers who probably don't feel empowered to go and have that conversation with their employer to talk about how, you know, in Saskatchewan and British Columbia and Ontario and Quebec and in every other Canadian jurisdiction workers are allowed to bank their overtime at time and a half, recognizing the premium when somebody works more than eight hours in the day or 44 hours in the week. This was not a radical change to Alberta labour law, which is the Premier's quote. That was just bringing Alberta into the mainstream.

I know, from talking to many, many Albertans and consulting widely on our original changes to the Employment Standards Code

and the Labour Relations Code, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of Albertans didn't realize they were out of step. That's what happens when legislation that is so fundamental to our working people, to our society doesn't get changed or updated on any regular basis, as was the case when we finally updated employment standards for the first time in 30 years.

**An Hon. Member:** How many?

**Ms Gray:** Thirty years, Mr. Speaker.

Just as a throwback to my friends who were here in the 29th Legislature, the last time the Employment Standards Code was updated, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* was in theatres, Mr. Speaker. *Beetlejuice* was in theatres. The movie *Rain Man* was in theatres. There were some really good movies. *Coming to America*: who remembers that one? The movie *Big*, with Tom Hanks, was in theatres, and of course I could never forget the Christmas classic *Die Hard*. When we were debating the changes to employment standards originally, I used references to a lot of those movies to really characterize the fact that it had been so long since these rules had changed and to really highlight how out of step Alberta had become.

We made changes like moving overtime banking to time and a half so that that minimum standard for most vulnerable Albertans was in line with every jurisdiction across Canada, and that is being characterized as radical changes to Alberta labour law. It is not radical, Mr. Speaker. It is fairness. It is fairness for working people, and it is making sure that when somebody is putting in the extra time – perhaps they work in a seasonal environment – they get the compensation.

**12:40 p.m.**

The change to take this away is going to cost working people. It will cost someone who is doing significant overtime during a busy period perhaps up to \$2,500 across 12 weeks. When we average these overtime amounts, it looks like for some Albertans it's going to cost 150 bucks a week. Mr. Speaker, 150 bucks a week is not insignificant when you add it up. It was not because of a radical change to labour law that we had this; this was Canadian mainstream. This is what every other Canadian gets.

Now, another example of what every other Canadian gets: every other Canadian – but not Albertans, potentially, after this change – gets Christmas as a statutory holiday. Alberta had been the only place where a worker could get no benefit for a statutory holiday because of some very complicated and convoluted calculations around holiday pay that were unique to Alberta. I can tell you again, Mr. Speaker. What are employment standards? They are the minimum standard. That means that the workers who rely on those minimum standards are our most vulnerable workers. Those are workers starting out, or perhaps they are workers who do not have depth and years of experience. What ends up happening when you reintroduce some very complicated and convoluted holiday rules that include distinctions between regular and nonregular working days and add in periods of eligibility and convoluted rules?

If in at least 5 of the 9 weeks preceding the work week in which the general holiday occurs the employee worked on the same day of the week as the day on which the general holiday falls, the general holiday is to be considered a day that would normally have been a work day for the employee.

Now, why do I read section 27(2)? Because this is exactly the kind of red tape and overly complicated calculations that employers asked us to remove, and we did in moving our employment standards to the same minimum standard as the rest of Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you may or may not be aware that there are a lot of companies that under the old rules had actually invested in



HR management systems, in scheduling systems specifically designed to avoid paying their employees statutory holiday pay. In taking advantage of the rules that existed in Alberta before and that this government wants to bring in now, you could work at, let's say, a call centre – a call centre – and the scheduling software will set it up so that you did not in at least five of the nine weeks preceding the work week in which the general holiday occurs work on that day. The fact that we have had employers with scheduling software designed to take advantage of this loophole to give those workers less is shameful because every worker deserves a statutory holiday.

Let's bring this back down to the fundamentals. What is a stat holiday, why do we have them, and should Canadian workers get compensation for statutory holidays? Yes, they should. Stat holidays are common across the country. We all get them. Some provinces have as many as 10 stat holidays. Alberta has nine, which is right in the middle of the pack. But we will become the only place where someone may not get a benefit for that stat holiday.

In 2022 Christmas will fall on a weekend, and New Year's Day will fall on a weekend. I know that the members of the government like to talk about the impact when stat holidays fall on a Monday. But what happens when Christmas is on a weekend and New Year's Day is on a weekend? Workers get no Christmas benefit for that stat holiday, no money to buy Lego for their kids, no additional time off. I know, because it has happened to me, that employers who are providing the absolute minimum will give their workers no extra time off. In a year where Christmas and New Year's fell on weekends, I had the experience as a young worker of working that full week all the way until 4:30 on Friday – we got off a half-hour early because the employer was feeling generous – and then coming in again on the Monday.

Now, most employers in our province give generous Christmas time off. Our public servants get a week off, but let's remember what we're talking about. We're talking about the minimum standards for workers. That is what employment standards are.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interject, but I believe that with regard to the amendment we are focused more with regard to drawing investment to Alberta and stimulating the economy, so I would just ask the hon. member to ensure that she stays within the realm of RA1.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Really, what I'm talking about: bringing this back to the fundamentals really comes back to needing more public consultation. We had significant public consultation when we brought Alberta standards into the Canadian mainstream, and there has not been significant consultation about sending Alberta backwards, about sending it back. Now, the members opposite will talk about the election and 375 points within a platform, all of which had been studiously read by all members of Alberta's citizenry and thought about before they voted. As we look at each piece of legislation, it is our job to consider if this is the right move and if it will have the intended benefit. If the response to the problem is making sure that Albertans don't get time and a half for overtime and don't get any benefit for Christmas, I think we need more input from the public into that.

The public is watching what we say and do in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. Our citizens are tuning in right now, and I hope everyone watching understands that Alberta will become the only place where you get no benefit for your holiday pay, the only place where Christmas could come with nothing additional, no time off. That is the minimum standard we are going back to. I hope everyone watching understands that we will be the only jurisdiction that goes from time and a half overtime banking to straight time at a cost of \$150 a week to those who use overtime banking; \$2,700 in a 12-

week period is not uncommon in the oil and gas and construction industries. I think it's really incumbent on us that we talk about – further input from the public is necessary. That is why the opposition is up here talking about this.

Now, I had mentioned wanting to make sure that we had kind of the facts out. In fact, there's a quote from the Member for Calgary-Hays that he used when we were debating bills in the 29th Legislature. He said to us – we were the government at the time – tell the truth, the whole truth, not the half-truth. Well, Mr. Speaker, I find that the government has been telling half-truths about the impacts of what is happening within Bill 2.

I'd like to speak for a moment about the need for more public input when it comes to the change in youth student minimum wage, and I would like to talk about the facts. In my first response to second reading I did mention that the government in their news release chose to use numbers from March 2019 when April 2019 numbers had been out for two weeks. They used old numbers, Mr. Speaker – old numbers – because they liked them better, they told a slightly better story. That was, I would say, something that caught my eye, that I talked about here in the Chamber but I didn't think a lot about. Well, just recently the minister has put out a video talking about how there are 30,000 young people looking for work. He's misusing Statistics Canada data, because the number he's using talks about people who are 15 to 24. The policy he's talking about only impacts the people who are 15, 16, and 17. What we actually know, in April . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, under 29(2)(a) there is an opportunity for questions and comments, and I believe it was the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs who caught my eye.

*12:50 p.m.*

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide some commentary on some of the things that I have heard this morning, especially from the member opposite, the former minister of employment. With all due respect to my colleagues, perhaps there isn't anyone in this Chamber that has the first-hand experience of employment standards of myself. In my years of employment in this province one of the jobs that I had the greatest privilege of doing for the people of our province was actually as an employment standards officer. I went on to be one of those who set up the temporary foreign worker program for our province, and then I went on to be responsible for the review of minimum wage, employment standards regulations in our province as a public servant. So I have got tremendous insight into all of the issues that we are debating today. I have had years of experience interacting first-hand in the field, across this province: employees young and old, from Smoky Lake to Grande Prairie to Edmonton to Wabasca. I have had the privilege of doing all of that work.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that the changes that we are putting forward are actually meant to – and it is not true. It is not true that we are removing the requirement for overtime. In the context of an overtime agreement it is not true. We must make a distinction between philosophical argument and intellectual argument on the substance. The members opposite have been digging deep into their philosophical understanding of how a society ought to be structured versus the substantive argument on the benefit of some of these changes we are to make for the sake of employment for our young people and our economy overall. Two different things. Two different things. It's okay for them. They can seize the floor and go on and on and dig deep into their philosophical underpinnings as the NDP. I get that. But what we must never allow them to do is to package that as a substantive intellectual justification for attacking this amendment.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in the context only of an overtime agreement with respect to time and a half, what the bill we've put forward says is that if you work more than eight hours a day or 44 hours a week with that overtime agreement, nothing – nothing – impacts that. Section 3 of the Employment Standards Code makes it clear that employees and employers can enter into an agreement on whatever basis they want. So if they agree by employment contract that they are to earn more, that will be the case.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:55 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Goehring	Pancholi
Ceci	Gray	Phillips
Dang	Hoffman	Renaud
Eggen	Loyola	Sabir
Feehan	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley	Notley	Sweet

Against the motion:

Aheer	Long	Sawhney
Allard	Lovely	Schow
Amery	Madu	Schulz
Barnes	Milliken	Schweitzer
Copping	Nally	Shandro
Dreeschen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nicolaides	Singh
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	Stephan
Guthrie	Orr	Toews
Hanson	Panda	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Turton
Hunter	Rehn	van Dijken
Issik	Reid	Walker
LaGrange	Rosin	Wilson
Loewen	Savage	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 18	Against – 48

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

**The Speaker:** We are back on the main bill. Anyone wishing to debate this afternoon? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West rising to debate.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and a happy Wednesday to you. We are back in the time warp again and happy to be so, loving this opportunity to stand up for my constituents, for working-class people across this province, to shine a light on this attempt to pick the pockets of ordinary working people, in particular oil and gas workers that already saw, lived through, worked through the economic downturn and were just starting to get out of that recession that was caused by the downturn globally in the price of oil.

And lo and behold, another challenge to ordinary working people, but this time one that didn't happen across the Atlantic, over in the Middle East, or, you know, from a bunch of people that we

have no control over setting the price of oil. No. This time it is this government that is going after the very people who very likely, potentially, voted for them, ordinary working people looking for jobs, looking for improvement in the economy. Not in their ordinary household economy, Mr. Speaker – nope – that's not going to happen with this group of folks as they reach in and grab thousands of dollars out of the family budget for work that they did, for banked overtime that they earned doing work to build this province.

They will have less for their truck payments, they will have less for their Christmas presents, and they will have fewer resources to put towards any of their family priorities, all for an entirely avoidable public policy choice that is actually quite confusing, especially given what was said during the election campaign. During the election campaign we were all assured that there would be no picking of the pockets of ordinary working people.

**Ms Hoffman:** Say it again.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**Ms Phillips:** We were assured that that would never happen and could not possibly.

When we brought it up during the campaign, they said: "Oh, no, no, no. No. That is quite wrong, hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. You don't know what you're talking about. You're utterly out to lunch." It turns out: nope; fully at lunch. Here we are at Bill 2. Now, it wasn't the first priority of this government, Mr. Speaker. That was a different bill, that I had nothing to do with, but it was the second priority. The second priority was to go straight into people's bank accounts and take away their hard-earned overtime.

Now, the second aspect of this bill and the reason why we've been here since Wednesday – and technically it's still Wednesday – is this just mean-spirited, complicated, irrational decision to take toonies out of the pockets of 16-year-olds, Mr. Speaker. To follow a 17-year-old home from work at a grocery store or at a café and rummage around in their pockets looking for toonies: that's exactly what this bill does.

Here's the other thing that is so confusing about this rationale. The rationale for this bill was that, oh, we have a youth joblessness rate. When they made the announcement on this, they could have used April 2019 data to justify this exercise in basically breaking into people's piggy banks and taking out every toonie they could find. They could have used April 2019 data given that the announcement was made after the Labour Force Survey data from Statistics Canada came out. They could have done that. No. No, they didn't. They used March 2019 data, which was more unflattering and painted a more incorrect picture of what is actually happening with youth employment rates out there. One of the other reasons they probably did that is because Saskatchewan's rate was far worse than Alberta's in April as opposed to March. That was a convenient sleight of hand that we saw on the part of the labour minister in justifying this bill, Mr. Speaker.

The other sleight of hand that we saw was that we saw the labour minister justify this piggy bank raid based on him saying that 30,000 young people are looking for work, but that is actually incorrect. Let me provide the House the service of a fact check this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. In actual fact, we're talking about fewer than 10,000 people that this might affect, people between the ages of 15 and 17. The numbers were utterly incorrect. The exercise of a simple Google search: I am happy to provide that to the minister in order that he might justify this particular public policy arrangement on actual, factual grounds. Certainly, I wouldn't want the minister

to continue to labour under incorrect notions. Let us, then, disabuse him of things that are demonstrably false so that we may all play from the same set of facts.

Now, one of the things that I think really is of concern to us around overtime is the amount of money that is going to be taken away from ordinary working people. We're talking about thousands of dollars, Mr. Speaker – thousands of dollars – not just in overtime but also in these changes to general holiday pay, which then put us offside other jurisdictions and do things like take away people's holiday pay for working on Christmas.

**1:20 p.m.**

You know, one of the things I do often on Christmas Day is that I take little gift bags, packages to people working on Christmas Day in Lethbridge. I have met with, talked with, sat with many of the people who are working on Christmas Day. It's one of the things I do to recognize that people in my community are going above and beyond, both in the public and private sectors. At a time when many of us are otherwise with our families, there are lots of folks out there who are just simply not. The idea that those folks wouldn't be eligible for holiday pay on Christmas Day, Mr. Speaker – I mean, this is Bill 2. An Act to Restore the Role of the Grinch in the Alberta Economy: that is how it should be renamed.

Speaking of families, I do want to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the fact that my mother is up in the gallery with her husband, Mike.

**An Hon. Member:** Oh, my goodness. Did you just introduce your mother?

**Ms Phillips:** I did. I did do that.

You know, my mom was a small-business owner. My mom is an advocate for equality and therefore takes an active interest in Bill 2, as should all Albertans and as all Albertans are beginning to do, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this bill is now garnering a lot more attention because the opposition has done what we were elected to do, which is come to this House to provide thoughtful amendments to bills that we think are not quite fully considered, to query the public policy rationale for certain decisions such as to raid the piggy banks of children ages 15 to 17, for example, to scoop overtime from ordinary working people, taking away holiday pay from the folks who work as Santas in the malls, because that's absolutely what will happen, and all other seasonal workers, for that matter.

You know, I think what we have seen is a very motivated opposition to come here and represent our working class constituents, Mr. Speaker, and in a way that we are shining a light on legislation that may otherwise – or at least it was the hope, I think, of the government caucus that it would just slide through and that we would just let this one go. It's not the case. The people elected us to come here and do a job, and we will do it for as long as it takes.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a number of people were just out on the steps of this Legislature taking time off from their busy workdays, busy workdays that may be affected by this legislation, to protest other rollbacks of rights that are coming as a matter of priority, it seems, for this government. We've barely been in this Chamber a month, and we've already got protestors out on the steps of the Legislature. We've already got people talking about legislation and talking about the very severe impacts it's going to have on the economy, all because these seem to be the priorities of this government. Having hundreds of people committed to equality of all kinds standing on the steps of this Legislature was very, very inspirational to me this morning. I did see that the Raging Grannies

were out there. My mother sang with them, and that is as terrifying as it sounds.

Other people were also there, certainly people from Lethbridge who have driven all the way here, disrupted their working lives to come here and join us, to watch the debate on Bill 2 but also to ask very legitimate questions about this government's attack on equality rights either through the conversion therapy issue or the upcoming prohibitions and discrimination against LGBTQ youth, that is forthcoming in a subsequent bill. One of the people who has joined us is Dillon Hargreaves, who is up there, from Lethbridge, who's been an advocate – sorry, Devon Hargreaves. Dillon is Devon's sibling, and sometimes I mix them up even though they look nothing alike. Again, Devon has joined us all the way from Lethbridge. He's been a tireless advocate on conversion therapy, for equality of all kinds in southern Alberta. This is oftentimes very difficult work, Mr. Speaker, and there are a number of great Albertans who have spent hours working on a more just and fair Alberta, whether it's with respect to our labour rights and some of the issues that we see brought up here in Bill 2 or on other issues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about this youth minimum wage issue and return to that. You know, we have here – I think it was just this morning or maybe last night. I don't know. It's all bleeding into one. The C.D. Howe Institute released a report on the topic of the youth minimum wage and the possible impacts to both the labour market and how business owners respond to this particular policy initiative. You know, I will be happy to table this document at the appropriate time, but let me just enlighten the House.

You know, with the C.D. Howe Institute, committed as they are to free-market economics and a very business-minded approach, I certainly have benefited from their analysis on other topics such as their analysis on Bill C-69, for example, or the federal approach on output-based allocations to the renewable energy sector. Those are two very recent analyses that the C.D. Howe Institute issued that were relevant to Alberta.

But here's another one, Mr. Speaker. You know, given that we are also discussing the so-called Red Tape Reduction Act, which is mostly just an act to create a committee and have some chit-chat time, here's what the C.D. Howe Institute says. It says, "The complexity of the compensation scheme can be a factor that discourages employers to substitute students for their current non-student workers." In other words, there's too much red tape in this suggestion for it to work and for employers to respond in the way that this government would in fact wish for them to respond. You can't make public policy based on wishful thinking.

Let's talk about some other wishful thinking around this youth wage. They allege, they assert that the idea here is that the youth minimum wage is going to be modelled on the Ontario system. In fact, there are a number of differences. There's quite a bit of daylight between the Ontario system and what is proposed in this bill. Leaving that aside for a moment, Mr. Speaker, the Ontario youth unemployment rate is higher than the national average. That's the thing that we're trying to emulate, I suppose? That doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about other Ontario policies that are also being proposed by this government; for example, massive cuts to the public sector in Ontario. The Bank of Canada in their latest forecast, that came out a couple of weeks ago: all of Canada's growth forecast is flat. Why? The Bank of Canada, those well-known radicals in the Bank of Canada, attributes Canada's softening growth rate to Ontario's fiscal policies of retrenchment and austerity, and the growth that the Bank of Canada identifies coming out of Quebec and British Columbia was not outweighed

by the dampening effect on growth that Ontario's austerity policies had.

Again, you know, trying to emulate policies, whether it's picking the pockets of youth . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I would like to, prior to 29(2)(a), just take a quick moment to remind all hon. members of this House that guest introductions should be done at the appropriate time during the daily Routine.

Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank my hon. colleague for her comments, which I found very, very helpful in the course of this debate. She touched on a number of topics, but one that really struck home for me was when she was talking about red tape and the impact of Bill 2 to increase red tape on employers.

Now, she was talking about the challenge and complication introduced by having a separate youth minimum wage, the red tape that that adds for employers to now track birth dates for their employees, to track the school enrolment status for their employees, to be able to adjust on the 29th hour the amount of money that that employee is being paid, and all of the related complication. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we know from the news release issued in 1998 under Ralph Klein's leadership that reducing red tape was one of the reasons why the youth differential was originally removed, because employers were finding it burdensome to try and track this.

1:30 p.m.

We also know that in Ontario they find it administratively difficult and hard to enforce, and the Ontario employment standards teams have had many issues with employers paying too little when someone has already turned 18, when somebody is not a student. This is red tape being introduced.

Similarly, the new holiday rules, where you now have to track if somebody has worked five of the last nine of this particular day of the week in order to determine if they may or may not deserve holiday pay – I can make it easy for you, Mr. Speaker. Everyone deserves holidays. That's the way it should be.

And now this government is moving us to where Alberta will be the only place in Canada – the only place in Canada – where someone may get no benefit from a statutory holiday, putting us out of line with the Canadian mainstream, very similar to how we will be out of the Canadian mainstream when it comes to overtime banking, because nowhere else in Canada can someone use overtime banking at straight time versus time and a half without taking advantage of something like a flexible averaging agreement, which Alberta has. Alberta has the mechanisms to allow that flexibility that employees want without putting them in a position, which we know happened, which was why it was changed, where employers were forcing employees to use banking to avoid paying that premium for their overtime.

The red tape that my colleague was talking about I think is a really important aspect of this debate, and I think we can learn a lot from Ontario, we can learn a lot from important experts like those who are at the C.D. Howe Institute, and we can learn a lot from our own history. Take it from Premier Ralph Klein: having a separate youth minimum wage is a bad idea. It is overly complicated. Youth deserve a fair wage.

**An Hon. Member:** Who said that?

**Ms Gray:** Premier Ralph Klein in 1998, when they removed the youth differential, felt that the Leader of the Official Opposition had the right idea.

A single minimum wage was the way forward, and that was after extensive consultation. We had extensive consultation in 1998, specifically talking about that youth minimum wage. We also had extensive consultation just a couple of years ago as we brought employment standards into the mainstream. What we have not had is extensive consultation about taking people's overtime, picking their pockets, taking toonies away from 16-year-olds, and not giving all Albertans statutory holidays, in a way that is completely out of step with the mainstream.

I really want to say thank you to my hon. colleague and ask if she has any further thoughts when it comes to the fact that Bill 2 introduces red tape and that Bill 4, the act to reduce red tape, also introduces red tape. It seems a little odd, Mr. Speaker, and I'd love to know my colleague's thoughts.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my hon. colleague for sharing with the House some of the expertise that came from public consultation, because she undertook that for a long time. Now, the general holiday pay and overtime pieces are actually quite complicated. Employees must work 30 days of the last 12 months before a general holiday. Only employees who regularly work on a general holiday will be entitled to the pay. If the holiday falls on a day that is not normally a workday for the employee and they work that holiday, they're entitled to 1.5. If they do not work the holiday, they're not, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. If in at least five of the nine weeks preceding the work week in which the general holiday occurs . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? I believe that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is standing.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Always a pleasure. I did get a chance to go home and get some shut-eye, but it feels like I never left. [interjections] Thank you. I appreciate that. One of the things that I hear often in this House from members across the way is: oh, you NDPers have no idea what it's like to run a business. But guess what? I actually ran my own business. So I'd like to tell you a little bit about the business that I used to run, and I'll put it in context.

When I graduated from the University of Alberta back in 1999 – you know, we talk a lot about our past when we're in the House, of course. Earlier, in the wee hours of the morning, I was talking about how I was actually born in 1974. For those of you who missed it – oh, I'm so sorry – it was such a riveting story, right?

**Ms Hoffman:** Is it in *Hansard*?

**Member Loyola:** It is in *Hansard*. You can read all about it. Read all about it.

I graduated from the University of Alberta in 1999. I did a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology, history, and Spanish. For those of you who don't know – sometimes, you know, I tell people, "Oh, yeah; I studied anthropology," and their reaction: it's, well, either Indiana Jones or that I dig up dinosaur bones. Indiana Jones is a little bit closer, but I definitely didn't do the dinosaur bones. That's more geology, or paleontology, I should say, but connected to geology. Anthropology is the study of human behaviour. Specifically, a lot of the classes that I took were on economic anthropology.

That being said, though, I remember a lot of friends during that time being, like: “Oh, what are you going to do with a bachelor of arts degree? You’re never going to be able to find a job.” You know what? It was difficult. When I ended up graduating from the University of Alberta, it was very difficult at that time. We were in a recession. I remember applying for hundreds and hundreds of jobs, and I just couldn’t seem to land even an interview.

Now, I don’t want to take us off topic too much, but one of the things that I did want to say is that when I was applying for jobs, I was using my full Spanish name, Rodrigo Loyola. Then one day a friend of mine was, like: “Well, you know what? You know what you should try? There are a lot of English speakers that simply just use Rod. Why don’t you just use Rod?” Lo and behold, I started submitting resumés with the name “Rod Loyola,” and – wow – I started landing interviews. Quite interesting. I don’t want to take us too much off topic, but I just wanted to share that with people in the House.

Regardless, it was a tough time, and I’ll never forget, because my wife at the time – we were recently married. We had just moved out of an apartment, and we moved into a house close to NAIT, and we didn’t have a lawn mower. I remember that I had to cut the grass, and I remember thinking to myself: well, I’ve got to cut the grass, so I’m going to go and get a lawn mower. I started going around to garage sales in the area, and I ended up finding a lawn mower for \$50. I think it was probably close to the last \$50 that I had in my bank account. I remember going home with the lawn mower, mowing my lawn, and then sitting on the stoop at the front of my house with my head in my hands, thinking, “What am I going to do; I can’t seem to find a job,” incredibly perplexed.

But at that moment I remembered that my father always taught me that there’s no shame in working with your hands. I went up and down the block asking people if I could mow their lawn for \$20. With the money that I made that day, I designed my own flyer, went to Staples, photocopied it, cut them up, and then I started delivering flyers all over the neighbourhood, to as many places as I could. I delivered them myself. Lo and behold, I started getting phone calls, and the business was born. I started mowing lawns because there’s no shame in working with your hands.

**1:40 p.m.**

I say that because I come from a working-class background. My father, my mother were working-class people, salt of the earth people, people dedicated to building a good society. They don’t want to have any more privileges than anybody else. They taught me that we should all be seeking to have the same opportunities, that we should live in a society where opportunities – no matter who you are or where you come from, no matter what your ethnicity, your orientation, everybody should have equal access to those opportunities.

Of course, the reality is not that way. I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve heard from people’s mouths that it’s not just what you know; it’s who you know. And I get it. We live in a society where people vouch for each other, and that’s the way you kind of get a job. But we should be hired based on merit, for what we know and what our experiences are and what we can contribute.

I remember that when I ended up getting enough houses that I could mow the lawn at, I couldn’t do it by myself. Remember that this was back in 1999, 2000, 2001. I hired three other people to work with me, and at that time – and I stress that I hired them to work with me, not for me, because I was out there mowing lawns with them just the same – I remember that they would come to my place, because I used to run the business out of my garage, of course, like many other businesspeople do. They’ll run it out of their own home. I used to run the business out of the garage. All the

lawn mowers were stored in my garage. They’d show up at my place, and we’d all roll out together in my Chev Cheyenne. It was a one-ton. I used to put a trailer on there. We used to put all the lawn mowers on the trailer, and we used to head out, and we’d have a wonderful day. Most days were full of sunshine. I’ll never forget that I got quite the tan those summers. Yeah, beautiful.

We used to get out there, and I used to pay the people that worked with me back at that time \$15 an hour. The same minimum wage that we’re seeking for people to get paid now, I was paying back then. So when business owners come to me and say, “Oh, my goodness, you know, I can’t afford to pay \$15 an hour,” I say to them: “Okay. Well, show me the books. Show me.” At that time I was running my own business, paying people \$15 an hour for their time. For their time. I want to stress this because we would get up in my truck, and we’d go from one contract to the other, and just because we were sitting in my truck didn’t mean that they weren’t getting paid for their time. They were sitting in my truck, and we were on our way to the next contract. They were still getting paid for that time. It wasn’t, like: “Oh, I’m going to stop the clock, guys, because you’re not actually mowing lawns at this time. No. You’re working. We’re on our way to the next contract. You’re working.”

The reason why I mention this is because, being from a working-class background, I was taught that workers’ rights matter. It’s about fairness. I want you to think a moment about all of the rights that workers had to fight so hard for, not only here in this province or in this country but internationally. I mean, I’m not suggesting that any members on the other side believe this, but know that there were times when it was like a no-holds-barred playing field. Workers didn’t have an eight-hour day or a 12-hour shift.

**An Hon. Member:** Child labour.

**Member Loyola:** Exactly. It was child labour.

Workers had to organize and systematically work towards making sure that their rights were respected. It was about fairness. I say this because I want to remind us all that an economy serves people – it’s not the other way around, people serving an economy – and it’s our duty and our responsibility in this House when we govern to keep that in mind.

After running my business for a long time – I did that for three years, and it didn’t stop at lawn maintenance. Then people started asking me to do little contracts. “Hey, can you build me a fence? Can you build me a deck?” I was very lucky because my father and my grandfather before him were carpenters, and they taught me how to do a lot of these projects, working with my hands. For me, it was no problem to build a fence. I remember working with people who, you know, had never built a fence before in their lives, but they were working with me, so we’d get the job done. I would always make sure to pay them fairly for their time regardless of their experience.

Eventually I ended up selling the business because I wanted to get back into working in a related field, and I ended up going to work at the University of Alberta for University of Alberta International. Eventually, with time, I ended up getting more involved with the union at the University of Alberta and eventually got involved with working on the bylaws committee of the union, the Non-Academic Staff Association. Members from the union were, like: “Rod, we think you’re a great guy. Why don’t you run for vice-president?” I said: “Okay. Sure. I’ll run for vice-president.” I did my two years as vice-president, and people were really happy. They were, like: “Rod, why don’t you run for president?”

**An Hon. Member:** Names.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you.

They were, like, "Friend, brother, why don't you run for president?" So I did. I was very proud to serve the members of the Non-Academic Staff Association as their president and to continue to work on making sure that their rights as workers were being respected by the University of Alberta through their collective agreement.

I want us to remember – I'll never forget being on the other side of the House and names being lobbed over to that side of the House. People used to call us – I remember hearing "union thug" one time if I'm not mistaken.

**Ms Hoffman:** Union hug.

**Member Loyola:** Union hug.

I distinctly remember hearing "union thug," "union boss," "crony" being lobbed at us. Let me tell you: in serving the members of the Non-Academic Staff Association as their president, I was there democratically elected by those members to represent them. Unions are an exceptional example of democracy.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, a five-minute question-and-comment period. I believe I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

*1:50 p.m.*

**Ms Phillips:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, these questions of labour relations and orderly labour relations that are within the Labour Relations Code: actually, there are some changes to these contained within Bill 2. I think the hon. member was moving towards discussing how those changes actually have practical effect for ordinary people. I wonder if he might continue sharing that view and that experience with the House in terms of some of the changes that are contemplated in this bill and how that may be problematic for ordinary working people going forward.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much to the Member for Lethbridge-West. That's exactly where I was going to go. That's what I was getting to. You know, you guys know me by now. I've always got a point. I've always got a point.

Whereas some people do have unions that actually fight for their collective agreements to make sure that their rights are respected, not all workers in our province have that privilege. Of course, Bill 2: what it wants to do is to actually take us back in time. Our government, the New Democratic government – and this is kind of a crazy thing – was only trying to put us on par with other jurisdictions across this great land of ours called Canada. It was only trying to put us on par, not anything more than any other place in Canada. It was just trying to get us to that basic and, I would say, very balanced, measured, pragmatic approach of getting us to where we could be where other jurisdictions in Canada are.

Now, here we see this UCP government wanting to roll us back, to roll us back in time: let's go back in time. And don't forget: that's the power that our Premier would love to have. He'd like to be a time traveller. He's quoted as saying that. He wants to take us back to – I don't know – the 1950s, the 1970s, to take us back in time when it comes to workers' rights.

I want to remind you all that unions are a great example of how democracy can function in the workplace, where you actually elect the representatives. They're not union thugs. They're not union bosses. These are people who are duly elected by the workers that they represent in their workplace. I'm proud to have served as a union president, and I worked very hard for the people that I was representing at that time, more than 5,500 workers at the University of Alberta. I'd like to think that I did it with integrity, with dignity,

treating everybody with dignity and respect, making sure to listen to each and every one of the members that had issues and concerns and making sure that if there were changes that I could make, I worked hard to get them done. It was about workers' rights.

So when this government decides that they want to take us back in time, they're actually taking rights away from working people here in the province of Alberta, and this is why I cannot support Bill 2. I want the members on the other side to actually think about this. I want you all to think about this. Is it really fair? Is it really fair that profits should trump workers' rights? Is that the kind of Alberta that we want to build and leave for future generations? Do you really want to take us back in time to where in the interests of profits . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford standing.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to have an opportunity to rise and speak to the main motion on Bill 2 and speak a little bit about my objections to Bill 2 and the concerns that I have in addition to some of the ones I've already previously addressed in speaking to the amendments. I'd like to be able to add, with my time I have available, about some of the underlying problems that I see with the bill. In fact, I would like to begin by tying that into a larger theme that I am increasingly becoming concerned about with this government.

In the short period of time that they've been government, they appear to have really lost faith with youth in our society and appear to continually be making decisions which are specifically and directly assaultive toward youth, those vulnerable people who we all as a society have a responsibility to protect and to nurture and to mentor. Instead, what I see from this government is a government that is hell-bent for leather, as they say, to take away protections and rights of young people. We see that when we see the new education bill, which is undermining the safety of children in GSAs and protections against bullying within the school system, putting them in a place where they have to fight and challenge authority figures within their system in order to be able to have the right to meet and to talk about their concerns.

We see that when we look at the reduction of the minimum wage, affecting people directly and not based on the work that they do but simply on the reality of their age. It is an assault that we would not accept in any way on people described with any other personal characteristic. If we made the same decision that people who are left-handed would be paid less, then you would look at them and say that that's absurd. If we made that decision about people of another skin colour, another religion, another social group, any other defining personal characteristic as a reason for reduced wages, we would say that this is not only ridiculous but a violation of the human rights which we have worked over the last number of centuries in democratic societies to build up and to protect for all people. Yet when it comes to children who are most vulnerable, we jump right in and do it without any kind of concern at all.

I was struck as well a little bit by the presentation, the speech made by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview, who talked about the challenges that she met as she grew up, working in a small northern community, Valleyview, in the Peace River country of Alberta and subsequently going to school, becoming a mother, finding herself to be unexpectedly a single mother, trying to go through school on minimum wage jobs, where she didn't receive a lot of protections, didn't have those things that make it safe for a woman on the work site and provide the kind of income that is necessary for her to be able to appropriately raise her child and

subsequently other children she's had. She talked a little bit about the type of workplaces that she worked in and the type of work that she did, and it struck me that there's another piece to this legislation that I think is very concerning.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I've already spoken to the fact that I believe we have a responsibility as a government to have a preferential option for the poor, but I think that underlying that is a notion that people who have all of the advantages in society will do well. They don't need government to step in on their behalf. They'll find a way. They'll take advantage of the things that they have been given that other people have not been given, the extra bit of Monopoly money they got at the beginning of the game that makes it possible for them to win the game because they started in a different place than the other people who are playing the game. Because those people have those advantages, they don't need the same kind of protections. The people that do need the protections are the people who are vulnerable.

2:00 p.m.

I just was remarking on the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Riverview when she talked about the types of places that you find these minimum wage jobs. Let's just talk a little bit about some of the places that I worked as I was growing up and the types of places that do have minimum wage jobs. Some of the places that I worked, for example, were at Camp He Ho Ha, a camp for people with disabilities just west of Edmonton, where we were paid, well, in fact, much less than minimum wage because we essentially were on duty 24 hours a day and paying minimum wage would have been impossible. Subsequently that led to me working in places like McQueen Road group home, for people with disabilities here in the city of Edmonton, to put enough money together to put myself through university or when I worked just after that in Edmonton children's receiving and detention centre, again, another minimum wage job. I started to realize that the people who were being hurt by these kinds of actions that are being taken in Bill 2 are people who are working with people.

Now, I know that if you leave high school at the end of grade 12 and you head off to Fort McMurray and you get a job driving a truck, you can earn a very substantial wage, much greater than minimum wage, so it's not those people we need to worry about in this kind of situation. Not only are you receiving a much greater than minimum wage salary, but you're also immediately invested into a union, which is protecting your safety, which is protecting your right to benefits, which is protecting your right to reasonable treatment on the job site. Those people are doing fine.

Who is it that's not doing fine? All of those people who are working with other vulnerable people: people who work in daycares, people who work in group homes, people that work in settings that are often nonprofit kinds of settings, where unionization is almost completely absent. Not only are they receiving less money, but they're also receiving fewer protections and supports from unions. Why is it that they're receiving that? They themselves in some ways are vulnerable because of their youth but also because of the people they are working with. At a daycare you're working with children. In a group home you're often working with people with disabilities or people who have been in the child welfare system.

It seems to me that this bill is an attack not only on the workers but on the people who are served by those workers. It's an attack on people who are already vulnerable. We don't have to worry about the folks that head off to drive that truck in Fort McMurray; they're well taken care of. But somehow if you decide that you want

to devote your life to working with people with disabilities, not only are you being attacked, but the very people who you are devoting your life to are being attacked because they're being told that their concerns are not worth while enough that the person who is working with them should be protected.

I'm very concerned about not only the reduction in minimum wage, which is often attacking people who are starting those kind of jobs – when I worked at Camp He Ho Ha, for example, many of us were young people who were entering into the workforce and getting those kinds of jobs – but also I noticed that the provisions in this bill regarding the formation of unions, very specifically, are going to have the effect of reducing the likelihood of somebody having a union. We know from the example from British Columbia that when they moved away from card certification, the number of actual unions that got formed was reduced significantly and then increased again by about approximately 19 per cent when they returned to having card certifications. We can see that the intent of this section of the bill is actually to decrease the likelihood of unions.

It's a suppression of unions. That's the underlying intent. It's not about democracy. Democracy is still there. People have the right to sign the card or not sign the card. This about a government trying to put in structural barriers to prevent people who work with vulnerable others such as people in nonprofits, in daycares, in summer camps, in group homes, and so on from actually achieving unionization. It's saying: you don't have power; therefore, we are going to put in a barrier to prevent you from achieving any power because we like to keep you in that powerless place.

I can tell you that that very much concerns me. It concerns me that a whole bill would be created to disenfranchise segments of society, largely segments of society that are already disenfranchised by other structural barriers in their lives. Structural barriers like family violence and family dysfunction that cause a high school student to say: my parents cannot support me in the way that I would like to be supported, perhaps not even to the point of being able to feed me properly, so I'm going to find a job in order to be able to take care of myself and perhaps even contribute to the family. That person is now the focus of a concerted attempt to create a structural barrier for them to overcome the problems that they already experience in their life and family circumstances.

We have a young person who is leaving a traumatic home life, heading out on their own because they simply can't live at home. Perhaps they are a victim of child sexual abuse, an area I worked in for many, many years, as the Speaker might know. Perhaps they are a child who came out as gay and was rejected by their family, and now they're heading out onto the street because their family is no longer willing to support them. For those people who've already experienced those kinds of structural barriers that prevent them from doing well in society, we want a society to come in and to move in and to help them to overcome those barriers, not to impose new barriers on them.

We should have a society that looks at those vulnerable people and says to them: "You already have suffered enough. We are going to find ways for you to be successful." Instead, what we do is we actually create a bill where we say to them: "Drop out of school. You'll get a couple extra bucks. You'll be able to feed yourself. You'll be able to leave that abusive family situation and take care of yourself." That seems like a crazy person to pick the pocket of. That seems like a terrible time to demand a loonie or a toonie.

We should be going to those people and we should be saying to them: we are going to provide ways for you to be successful, not

encouraging you to drop out of school. The research is really clear. If you continue in school, over your lifetime you will have substantially more resources available to you, primarily wages. It goes up specifically with every piece of school achievement that you have. We know that if you graduate from grade 12, you are likely to have a significantly higher wage than somebody who does not graduate from grade 12. We know that if you go on to some postsecondary, if you go to a trade, if you go to a university, if you go to a college, then your income will go up.

What we've done now is that we've created a structural invitation for defeat. We've invited these people who already have the barriers of abusive homes that they're trying to leave to struggle against not only the negatives that they grew up with in the first 16 years of their life but to add onto that the invitation to not engage in those kinds of activities which will help them to overcome.

Society in part is judged by the ability of people to move from one socioeconomic bracket to another socioeconomic bracket. It's one of the measures of successful, modern democracies. When people can be born into humble circumstances and through their efforts move themselves up to another socioeconomic level, we can say that society has provided them an opportunity to make the best of who they are. That is something that I think is quite noble, yet we are now creating a bill which actually puts in structural barriers for them to do that, which prevents them from earning the wage they might earn, which prevents them from joining a union.

2:10 p.m.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe I saw the Member for Edmonton-Decore rising first.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've always enjoyed the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. The thought that he brings to debate: it's not some kind of random musings, you know, the world according to somebody. He does his research. He comes with the facts and his lived experience and very eloquently gives us information that we, in my opinion, with this bill right now, must very seriously consider.

We're faced with, I think, two decisions with this information. We can listen to it and we can take it very, very seriously when we're talking about whether we should move this bill forward or not or, potentially, we can lie to ourselves and pretend he didn't just tell us this. I think that second option poses a lot of problems for us.

I was hoping, because I know that probably the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was closing in on his finishing thoughts, that he would share those with us so that we're able to make an informed decision.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your brief question or comment. It's noted.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for the opportunity to address a little bit more of what it is that I'm trying to bring to the attention of this House.

In summary, the thing that I think is most concerning here is that this bill appears to be an attempt to take away whatever voice is left for people who already, in many ways, are voiceless. It takes power and privilege away from people who are under the age of 18 by taking away resources that are their due right for the work that they have contributed to, whatever their employment is. It takes away their right to join in a union, which has at its very core the purpose of giving a voice to workers and allowing workers in the workplace to be there not just as cogs in a larger machine but as people who

have value in their own right, people whose lives matter on an individual basis.

The purpose of unions is to allow workers to be able to be represented in a work setting not simply as serfs or tools to be used by a corporation or a business but, rather, to be people who can express their own needs and satisfy their own needs because they themselves have value intrinsically. The union allows them to bring their voice to their employment situation. Without unions we would be back in a pre-industrial British time where some people were successful and other people were not and where those who were successful could use the less successful for their own benefits and not provide anything in return. That brings us back to a time of Charles Dickens, of *Oliver Twist*, when people's health and well-being were not cared for, where their desire to create for themselves a good life was not a concern.

It's only because of the creation of unions and the work of those unions to stop the kind of abuses that were occurring to front-line workers that we have been able to create a society in which there is nobility in work that before was seen as the work of a serf or of a chattel. At a time now when you have a trade – you're a carpenter, an electrician, a stonemason – that work in and of itself has value, and you can have pride in being in that profession. Other people will know that your work is important and will acknowledge it by allowing you to have a voice in your work setting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are back on the main bill. I see the Member for Edmonton-Decore rising to debate.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to you. It's a pleasure to be here to continue what has been a very lengthy discussion today on Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. I touched on this a little bit earlier, about making things happen, just forcing it on through, which, as I'm sure I explained a little earlier, isn't necessarily the best approach because sometimes in that blind quest to move ahead, you miss a lot of other things going on, and it generally tends to create a lot more problems than you first anticipated. I think we have some significant problems with this.

I had a chance to rise a little bit earlier today, speaking about an amendment to tap on the brakes a little bit here: "Let's think about this. We need to talk to some of the people that this affects. It could help us make better informed decisions." Certainly, I'm very grateful for the fact that Kieran Quirke is here in the gallery – he's a very staunch advocate for workers' rights – listening very intently because I'm sure that there's probably some information that we could have gleaned from him in terms of this bill and how we could have made it probably a little bit more fair for workers.

When we talk about fairness, I can't imagine how picking their pockets can be fair when we say to our young emerging leaders in this province, the ones that will be inheriting the things that we do today: "I'm sorry. We really do appreciate your work, but it's worth \$2 an hour less simply because of your birthday." I find that very, very disappointing. Again, I think I spoke a little bit at length about how we should have been talking to these people. I know that in the last election they were 17 and they weren't voters, so it didn't kind of really seem like their opinion mattered. I very highly disagree. I know, Mr. Speaker, that with the number of schools I've gained, from 21 to 26 now, I interact with my students on a very, very regular basis because I found that the input that they give me actually is able to help me make some very good decisions moving forward as their MLA.

I touched a little bit around the liquor server differential wage and how that has the ability to very disproportionately affect what is



predominantly women in that industry. I really, really take exception to that, because I had mentioned a scenario that I had witnessed in terms of how they were treated, what they were being told to solve the issue. As you can imagine, I very adamantly disagreed with that approach. It's amazing how fast time flies, and I didn't get a chance to talk a little bit back then during that amendment to tap on the brakes, to take that pause, to slow down here for just a second.

General holiday pay: oh, my goodness. I was thinking to myself: can you imagine if Christmas landed on a Saturday? I don't know if Santa Claus is going to have to stay home now or something because he's not going to get paid overtime to deliver those presents. You know, when I was looking around – it's always helpful to do a little bit of research; the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was very, very clear on that – I noticed that it seems like there's no other jurisdiction that does this.

2:20 p.m.

I'm really not sure what the point that's trying to be achieved is by setting those conditions up. For our workers, again, when they choose to work a holiday or choose to work overtime, this is a personal sacrifice away from their family, away from their friends, and, like I said, just their plain old free time. It's these extra premiums, this extra pay that in a sense compensates them fairly in order for them to come to work, put in the hard work, and make sure that the employer, their business, is successful moving forward.

You know, I also, I guess, question a little bit why we would want to take this money out of their pockets. There was some discussion earlier from members in caucus around Red Lobster and whatnot. Mr. Speaker, I'm feeling a little left out because, unfortunately, I was never working at Red Lobster. I did work at Dairy Queen. I'm hoping that maybe there are some other caucus members here that may have done that in their former lives, and maybe we can connect and talk about that a little bit.

You know, getting paid that money, be it general holiday pay or overtime, I'm going to be pretty bold here and say that those folks are probably not taking that money and squirrelling it away in a Cayman Islands account. I just don't see that happening. My gut feeling is that they take that money and not only do they spend it on the things that they need, which could be food, clothing, and shelter, but they also spend it on the things that they want. The last time I looked, it's things like the stuff we need but also the stuff that we want that moves our economy. It creates those businesses. Somebody is willing to take the time to step up to offer that good or that service. Those people are willing to freely take money out of their pocket and give it to them, but if they don't have that money, Mr. Speaker, they're going to have a hard time supporting that business.

I know I'm very grateful for all the different businesses that are in my riding of Edmonton-Decore, nicknamed the shopping district. We have three major malls, a lot of restaurants. I would highly encourage you, during your time when you're here in Edmonton, to come to Edmonton-Decore. We've got some great restaurants. The food is fantastic, and I guarantee you'll love the service, Mr. Speaker. It's because of those workers that are there that are the face of those businesses, and they're working so hard for those customers so that that business is successful.

You know, from time to time we do have maybe the odd bad actor. As I was mentioning a little bit earlier around the liquor differential, when you have conditions in a workplace that maybe aren't so favourable, those individuals will sometimes seek out – and here's where I always prepare everybody because I'm going to say that word again, “union” – a union because they know that

collectively they are able to stand up and change those conditions for the betterment of all, not only the employees but the business, too. When you have a happy employee, when they're paid well, treated with dignity and respect, given a good paycheque, they will promote all by themselves for free the business that they work at, a great, great exchange.

You know, we've had some of our members touch on this a little bit, and I want to clear up a little bit of a misconception that I've heard over and over again when legislation was brought in around the card check. As soon as that was brought in, everybody lost their mind, Mr. Speaker: “You've taken away the secret ballot.” Let's see if I can be very clear about this: “No, that didn't happen.” What happened was that there was an extra component added, where if you have signed up 65 per cent of the workplace – I should be very, very clear here. I have participated in organizing drives. It's not an easy task to get to that level. So when you can't, that 40 per cent threshold is still the secret ballot. It's always been there. It's never gone anywhere. I just wanted to take a quick moment to clear that up, hopefully, and maybe people can put some of that rhetoric aside.

I think we have some very serious concerns here around this bill in terms of what everybody else is doing, things like taking away holiday pay. Nobody else is doing that, Mr. Speaker. Again I mention that, unfortunately, the odd time we do have bad actors in the employment sector, and they are going to take advantage of people. But you know what? Thank God there are unions around. Hopefully, they'll be able to stifle that kind of behaviour a little bit.

But asking our current youth to take a \$2 pay cut when potentially they could be out on their own, supporting the things that they're doing – I remember entertaining discussions back when I was at my former employer. At the time, you know, the market wasn't the greatest. Business had dropped a little bit, and the company did come to us and say: “You know what? Something has to be done, and we're asking you to take a big wage rollback.” One thing I do remember about that was the promise: “When things get better, don't worry. We'll make it up.”

**Mr. Carson:** We've heard that before.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Yeah. I did hear that.

Very clearly, then, I continued to hear it for several years after that. I believe it was something like 12 to 15 years later before we finally sort of caught up through negotiations to where we had left off back when we took that rollback to save the company, which back then was the only profitable division of the entire company, which was a little bit odd. The point was that people were looking at that wage rollback with a lot of concern.

What is the difference between, you know, myself back then, a young man with a growing family and children, being asked to take – well, back then it was over a \$2-an-hour wage cut. I don't see what the difference is between my concerns and the concerns of a 17-year-old. I think they are just as valid when it comes to that kind of drastic, drastic change in a wage scale.

I'm very, very disappointed with this bill. I remember very clearly in the last Legislature how we were constantly pointed at, our government, for apparently not consulting. Over and over again: “You guys didn't consult. You didn't talk to people.” Yet here I am seeing legislation from what I thought would be the government who was going to prove how to do it properly, Mr. Speaker. They, you know, rightfully or not, pointed out all the mistakes that were done, and I thought: “Well, okay. They're going to step in. They're going to show us how to do it right, how to treat everybody fairly, how to bring forward legislation that balances

everything out.” Then we see Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, again, unfortunately, just very, very disappointing.

When we look at the amount of money that hard-working women and men, be it in the oil and gas industry, in the construction industry – like I said, I had two friends give me a call as soon as this bill was released, and I find it odd because, as I had mentioned earlier, our political views don’t necessarily line up. Some of the conversation, like I said, Mr. Speaker, I’m not going to repeat because I’m almost absolutely certain that you would rule it unparliamentary language, but they were not happy. They were asking me if this really, truly was coming forward. I, unfortunately, had to tell them that, yes, this was being proposed, that your overtime – you know, this one friend, who’s an electrician, does a lot of overtime while he’s up in Fort McMurray. Not happy about losing that money.

2:30 p.m.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. I would just note that I’d welcome an invite to Edmonton-Decore, and any time you want to take me for dinner, I’d be more than happy to visit some of your establishments.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has risen.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just in listening for many hours now, I would like to remind the members that one of the reasons why we were so specific in this last election with what we were looking for as a mandate from Albertans – we put together a 117-page platform commitment, where we were able to showcase 375 what we felt were good ideas for Alberta, good ideas to be able to bring back jobs, jump-start the economy, and to be able to right the ship in Alberta. We did this for a specific reason. We did this so that Albertans would know what they were going to be voting for, not voting for an NDP government, like in 2015, that said one thing and then went and offered the largest tax grab, through the carbon tax, that Albertans have ever experienced.

Now, this is interesting because we were very clear with Albertans what our plan was. We were very clear, again, by design, to make sure that Albertans knew . . .

**Mr. Dang:** That kids are worth 13 per cent less.

**Mr. Hunter:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South, who continues to heckle, needs to remember that we have listened very patiently to that member’s pontification in this House, so I would hope that he would be willing to provide me with the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, what we’ve seen over the last many hours is the NDP rejection of democracy, the NDP rejection of the majority of Albertans making the decision about the direction that Alberta should take. So they can talk about their view of Alberta and the way that it should be all they want, but the truth is that Albertans made a decision on April 16 and told us the way that they would like us to go. All that we are hearing since yesterday, very early, is their iteration of the way that they would like to see Alberta go. It’s unfortunate that they reject so wholly a democratic process that is centuries old in this province and in this country, in fact in the world.

We are in a situation now where we continue to allow them to work through the process of being able to give us new evidence of why Bill 2 is not the right way to go, but in reality . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I might just encourage you to allow the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction to have the floor briefly.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that the opposition members have an opportunity to be able to show to Albertans that they respect the democratic process in this province, yet they are fully rejecting it. I do believe that Albertans, all eight of them that watched through the night, will take note and make sure that the NDP stay where they are and where they deserve to be, in opposition, perpetually because of the anger machine that they are. This is something that we have continued to see, and Albertans rejected this in the past.

I have had the opportunity of being able to listen intently, and I’ve heard the arguments over and over and over again, the same arguments, and the redundancy in their arguments shows the depth of their conviction. The arguments are completely redundant, continually, over and over again repeating the same thing only to be able to filibuster and to be able to stop the progress of this government.

Now, they know full well – they were on this side of the House not too long ago – that they had the opportunity to be able to bring forward their agenda, which they received from Albertans on May 5, 2015. Now, they were fully willing to accept that they received that agenda and that mandate yet are willing to reject the mandate that we received in this House. The hypocrisy of that, Mr. Speaker, is unbelievable.

**The Speaker:** We are back on the main bill. Are there others wishing to debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about Bill 2. My dear friend Christine was watching our debate late into the evening, and now she and her two youngest children, Meleah and Austin, are watching again. I want to mention that her husband, Ian, is retired air force. Her two older children are currently members of the Canadian Armed Forces. As we stand here in this House and freely debate, I can’t help but reflect on the importance of citizen engagement and the ability that we have as opposition to freely express our opposition to the government.

As Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces I’d like to take a moment in this House and commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day and acknowledge those that fought for our ability to engage in the very democracy that we are speaking to today. That historical 24 hours involved 14,000 Canadian soldiers who landed on Juno Beach or parachuted into Normandy. Our soldiers broke through the beach’s defences in less than two hours, and by nightfall they had reached as far as 10 kilometres inland, the highest of any division that landed on June 6, 1944. Many soldiers lost their lives that day and many more in the battles that would follow in Normandy. The invasion is now recognized as the greatest military operation ever executed.

To honour those who fought and died in Normandy, Canadian veterans created a museum called Juno Beach Centre, located on Juno Beach, in 2003. The world can now learn of the incredible Canadian sacrifice made on Juno Beach in Normandy, where many Canadians landed 75 years ago.

The Victoria Cross is the highest military honour one can receive in Canada and the Commonwealth. Only one was awarded within Canada for the invasion of Normandy. Mr. David Vivian Currie of the South Alberta Regiment, now known as the South Alberta Light Horse Regiment, received this honour. It is because of the resiliency, determination, and, for so many, the sacrifice made by our soldiers that we are able to be here today and participate in this Legislature. To those that are no longer with us, to the veterans across this nation, to the current members who perpetuate the work of soldiers before them, and to the many, many families, thank you.

I would just like to thank my members for the standing ovation that was given to our soldiers who have come before us and who have provided the freedoms that we are so able to enjoy today in this House. To be able to debate freely is such an honour and an appreciation by our members. It's an incredible privilege.

Back to Bill 2, Mr. Speaker, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. More appropriately, we've been calling it, on this side of the House, the pick-your-pockets bill. We're standing up for Albertans over here, and that's why we are opposed to the legislation that's being proposed the way it is.

**2:40 p.m.**

When we were government, we made sure that Albertans had modern workplace laws that respected working people, that set modern standards and ensured that Albertans were treated fairly. After decades of inaction, hard-working Albertans finally had the same rights and benefits as every other Canadian. We followed through on our promise to phase in a \$15 minimum wage so people didn't have to go from their jobs to the food bank. We made workplaces more family friendly. We introduced job-protecting leaves and improved maternity leave and compassionate care. We put a lot of time and effort into studying the impacts of the minimum wage.

Earlier this morning we heard concerns about the bill progressing, and we've introduced an amendment that was asking the government to stop. We felt that enough consultation hadn't occurred with Albertans. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that was voted down, so we're back speaking to the main bill. We just want to continue to advocate because we know about the impacts of consultation. We took that information, and we were able to ensure that we were putting more dollars into the pockets of hard-working Albertans who live here, who work here, who spend their money here. We looked at studies finding positive effects of raising the minimum wage. I hope that our opposition has consulted and has looked at impacts on women, on consumer spending, on health, on poverty, and more.

You heard me, Mr. Speaker, talk about my story this morning. You heard me talk about the experiences that I've had as a social worker, seeing first-hand and living first-hand the impacts that poverty has on all aspects of people's lives. This bill, unfortunately, is taking money out of Albertans' pockets. Taking away their ability to have their overtime at time and a half is shameful. Unfortunately, we know that most of the people that are impacted, in poverty as well as working in minimum wage jobs, are young people, women, and children. We know that poverty has a huge impact and that there's a higher rate of illness, lower education, limited housing availability. That list just goes on.

On this side of the house we believe that Albertans, young or old, deserve equal pay for equal work and that rolling back the minimum wage for young people demonstrates an absolute lack of compassion and a lack of respect for young workers. The value of your work should depend on the effort and the skill that you put into it, not the year that you were born. The UCP is also proposing to implement a \$2 – oh, sorry. I talked about that, the \$2-an-hour wage cut to students between the ages of 13 and 17.

However, it would only apply if they were in school. If they work more than 28 hours in a week, they must be paid the general minimum wage for every hour beyond the first 28. During breaks and summer holidays the youth rate would apply to all hours worked. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this would lead vulnerable youth to choose to drop out of school in order to make a higher wage, which is very concerning. Again, you heard me talk about some of those vulnerable youth and, specifically, young parents. Like I mentioned earlier, as a single young mother myself – having

worked with young parents for several years, I spoke to the negative impacts that this legislation would have on these young people and their families. Looking at all families, our government knows that we need to be able to support families, and proposing legislation that has a direct impact on their pocketbook is harmful, and it's shameful.

The other piece I talked about this morning was, again, the impact on those that are in the service industry and the UCP proposal regarding a liquor server differential wage. We believe that the minimum wage needs to be guaranteed for all hard-working Albertans, regardless of where they work, and that the government shouldn't be creating different tiers for workers. I talked about knowing that tips can't be considered a stable income. Their tips may vary, night by night, shift by shift, with the location of where they are in the province. It simply just doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker. You can't rely on an unstable source of income. When the UCP says that all servers make up the difference in tips, I'm curious how they can guarantee that.

We talked a little bit this morning about overtime. We know that the pick-your-pockets bill will take your overtime, steal your holiday pay, cut your holiday pay to pay for their big tax gift to corporations. The Premier's pick-your-pocket bill will impact roughly 400,000 Albertans working overtime to care for themselves and their families. Albertans in oil and gas, construction, and the skilled trades will be hit hard.

Mr. Speaker, I can speak to this first-hand. My oldest son is a fourth-generation journeyman insulator and has worked in the oil field for several years now. We know the impact that this is going to have on our family, on so many families across this province. There are Albertans that are working to a project deadline who often put in the extra hours to get the job done and then take the paid time off later. If you're an oil and gas worker making average pay, putting in 10 overtime hours every week on a 12-week project, that's 120 hours in paid time off. The difference between banking that pay at time and a half pay versus straight time is over \$2,500. That's quite significant. It's a huge difference for working people. We're talking hundreds to thousands of dollars for people going above and beyond in the workplace day in and day out.

What happens when the workers accumulated overtime with the understanding that they were going to receive 1.5 for each overtime hour? It's not taught to students or non-unionized workers to negotiate their rights as an employee. Who is to sit with workers and explain that they have the right to request their overtime to be paid out, Mr. Speaker? How will employees respond to that negotiating process? Even if they allow that discussion to take place to begin with, there's a power dynamic at play in these discussions no matter how you frame this. Employers' bottom line profits are affected if they pay out overtime. Will they be open to doing so when they know that by paying out overtime, it will be at 1.5 hours for each hour worked versus time in lieu, which is 1 hour for 1 hour?

The workers' time is not valued as it was in our legislation. Workers are at the mercy of employers' discretion to honour their important work that generates those profits for the employer. How can the members sit across there, vote this through, look Albertans in the eyes, and say: your work is not valued? Many of my constituents work in the trades. Their overtime is what has helped them and their families in Edmonton-Castle Downs get through the economic downturns. When I was at the doors, I heard loud and clear from all constituents that overtime was the most important issue that crossed all demographics. I heard many times that the previous election reflected Alberta's wishes for the future of Alberta. Well, Edmonton-Castle Downs voted overwhelmingly against losing their overtime hours, losing their value.

I now have constituents coming to my office with fears now that this has been introduced. "What will this mean for me? What will this mean for my family?" One constituent came in so upset that there is an exception on workers to know how to negotiate to have their overtime paid out at time and a half instead of lieu time at hour for hour. He's never had to do this before, Mr. Speaker. His concerns are that if he opposes the employer, he is at risk of losing his job. Therein lies the rub: the power dynamic at play, that we worked to eliminate for workers' rights. He is speaking with co-workers about how to have these discussions.

A working Albertan does not pit workers against employers; that is what this bill does, with both having a large stake in the outcome. Workers need their hours to be honoured for what they have earned versus businesses' bottom line. Workers take on overtime to help pay for a roof over their head. Workers take on overtime to help pay for braces. Workers take on overtime to help pay for their children's tuition costs. Workers miss out on major life moments by taking on overtime for the benefit of finishing the job and for earning additional pay for their family to be able to succeed here in our province.

Businesses' bottom lines do not hug your child at night and tuck them in. Businesses' bottom lines do not pay for formula and diapers. Businesses' bottom lines cannot pay for missing a first step or a first word or a first "I love you." How will this play out for the economy if Albertans don't have that additional \$2,500 in their pockets? Mr. Speaker, this is concerning.

2:50 p.m.

To hear the UCP repeat over and over that the thousands of dollars of the carbon tax deserves to be in the hands of Albertans, what is the difference when they are taking over \$2,500 from Albertans? This is a prime example that they weren't concerned with the amount of money in the hands of Albertans but where the money from Albertans was going. Instead of having that money back in circulation in Alberta, they would rather it be back in the hands of employers like large corporations, whose profits aren't reflected in the Alberta economy. For a party that shouts from the rooftops that they are about jobs and the economy of Alberta, this does not sound like they are concerned at all about Alberta's economy. The voters in Alberta voted for more jobs and an improved economy. They did not vote for losing money out of the Alberta economy, and this bill does just that. I'm just overwhelmed with the lack of insight.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member, and thank you for your lovely statement on the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

We have Standing Order 29(2)(a), and I saw the Minister of Labour and Immigration on his feet. I'm not sure if he'd like to provide some brief comments or questions to the member.

**Mr. Copping:** I would. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to respond to the comments made by the hon. member and a number of the members opposite and set the record straight. You know, I'd like to talk about three primary issues: the job creation, youth minimum wage, and general holidays as well as banked overtime.

First, talking about the youth minimum wage and the changes to the general holiday pay, Mr. Speaker, this is about creating job opportunities, particularly for youth. Members opposite fail to recognize that their policy changes, including increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and changes to the general holiday rules, created a youth job crisis in our province. At the time many

economists indicated that a 50 per cent increase in the minimum wage in the face of one of Alberta's worst economic downturns would result in job loss. Nonetheless, the previous government went forward and made changes not only to the minimum wage but to a number of work rules and increased taxes.

Canadian empirical research has generally found that a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage rate reduces employment among teens by 3 to 6 per cent. For example, the Bank of Canada did a study that suggested that a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage is estimated to decrease participation rates by nearly 3 per cent for 15- to 19-year-olds. What did the previous government do? They didn't increase it by 10 per cent. They increased it by nearly 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, these studies are actually borne out in fact. The Calgary Chamber of commerce reported that 55 per cent of businesses in Calgary that hired minimum wage staff reported layoffs due to the minimum wage increase. A similar CFIB survey reported that 55 per cent of businesses had reduced or eliminated plans to hire new workers. Furthermore, Restaurants Canada reported that their industry lost 10,000 jobs between 2015 and 2018, and this industry largely employs youth.

Mr. Speaker, we have a youth job crisis, and when we put forward policies to address these issues, the members opposite suggest that that's unfair. What isn't fair is that thousands of Albertans and, quite frankly, thousands of youths do not have jobs. These changes will get Albertans working, particularly young Albertans, get them on the job ladder, and give them the experience and skills they need to progress in their career and start earning more than the minimum wage.

I'd like to talk briefly as well concerning banked overtime, Mr. Speaker. This change is about providing greater flexibility for Alberta workers. Now, the hon. members on the other side have suggested that this will impact overtime pay. Let me be clear. Changes to the banked overtime rules do not impact paid overtime. What this does, however, is increase flexibility for workers and employers and provide greater opportunity for those workers to actually bank overtime.

One of the unintended consequences of the changes that the NDP made is that they imposed greater costs on employers for banking overtime, moving it from one to one and a half times. What this resulted in was an employer saying no to agreeing to banked overtime – right? – and that reduces opportunities for employees to bank their time and average out the time worked for a particular employer, particularly in those professions where you work for a period of time and then you have long periods of time off such as the construction industry. Now, by making this change back to 1 to 1, it will provide greater opportunities for employees to bank their overtime. And if they do not take banked overtime, they will be paid out at a minimum of 1.5 times their rate. It has been suggested by the members opposite that this provision will force employees to bank overtime whether they want to or not. The legislation is clear, Mr. Speaker. The only item in the current act that Bill 2 changes is the rate at which overtime is banked.

Let me point out items in the rest of this provision that we are not changing in the Employment Standards Code and that actually were endorsed by the previous government. I'll paraphrase here in the interests of time. First, section 23(1)(b) – again, we're not changing this, Mr. Speaker – there must be a written agreement. Section 23(2)(b): if banked overtime is not taken as time, then it will be paid out at at least 1.5 times. Section 23(2)(d): no amendment or termination is to be effective without at least one month's written notice given by one party or another. That goes both ways. Finally, section 23(3): an employer must provide a copy of the agreement to the employees affected. These items we are not changing.

Clearly, it is a written agreement between the employer and employees. There is choice involved in this written agreement. They can pull out of this written agreement. In fact, these provisions are currently in the act, and these are the provisions that were passed by the previous government.

So, Mr. Speaker, the provisions in the act are about creating more job opportunities for Albertans and for youth, and they are also about restoring worker rights. This was clearly laid out in our platform.

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

The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday is rising in debate.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure, an honour, and a privilege to join you this afternoon to speak to Bill 2. Of course, I had the opportunity to provide some comments on the amendment that was before us, but now we're back on the main bill.

I first want to have a conversation about the comments that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction brought forward, saying that we simply should not oppose this legislation because they have the mandate of, he made it sound, every Albertan, but that's just simply not the case. The fact is that there is a large portion of this Assembly, elected members of this Assembly, that are not members of the government caucus, and we have a responsibility to our constituents and to people across the province who did vote for us, whether their constituency elected an NDP member or not.

They have a responsibility to listen to us about the concerns that we have and about the concerns that our constituents have. So to stand in this House and say, "Oh, you know, it took up a quarter of a page in our platform or a line in our platform; therefore, we have a full mandate to implement it" is simply ridiculous. I would go further to say that this legislation goes against his mandate as the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. If you think about what is being put forward here, to say that if a student is in school, they get paid less, and if they work over 28 hours, then everything after that is \$15 an hour: this is an administrative nightmare. So for him to sit here and say, "All is good here; red tape reduced" – no, it simply is not. You are causing HR nightmares for employers across this province.

Now, I also have concerns with what the minister of labour said because the fact is that this legislation is weakening the ability of employees to bank their overtime at time and a half. Our government saw that there were concerns from employees with their ability to get paid for the work that they are doing. So we modernized the legislation, put us in line with almost every other jurisdiction if not every other jurisdiction across Canada, saying that if you work overtime, you will get paid, recognizing that you are helping an employer and you should be rightfully compensated for that. So for him to stand up and say, "Oh, we are not weakening it; we're increasing flexibility" – these were the exact words that he said. Well, in the conversation that I had about the amendment that was before us earlier, I shared an example of how employers in some circumstances use the legislation or lack of legislation to take advantage of workers. Like I said, it might be a unique circumstance, but the point of us legislating these changes and being elected to this House is to protect workers. So the fact that you want to take us back to a time when there wasn't legislation protecting us is simply irresponsible. I will not support that, and I have every right to stand in this Assembly and speak against that.

**3:00 p.m.**

Now, I want to point out a comment that our Premier made when the open for business act was tabled in the Legislature. He said, and I quote: look, \$13 an hour is a heck of a lot more than zero bucks an hour.

**An Hon. Member:** True.

**Mr. Carson:** It is true, but it's simply a false equivalency to say that you either get paid less or you've got no job. It's simply ridiculous, and I have concerns that that is his best comment to make to this legislation. I think that he should have a conversation with his press secretaries and his chief of staff, because for them to think that that was the best conversation to bring forward in the introduction of this legislation is, well, concerning, for sure.

Now, the biggest issue that I have and the biggest underlying disagreement that I have with the legislation that is before us, of course, has been brought up several times: it is a direct attack on young workers in our province. Now, this legislation is not simply one attack and, you know, nothing else changes. This is going to be done in conjunction with, I imagine, cuts to \$25-a-day child care. It will be done at the same time as cutting school nutrition programs, which we've already heard coming up in the news, where school boards are talking about cutting the nutrition programs because they aren't getting clarity on the funding moving forward. We haven't heard a commitment, as far as I have seen, to continuing the Alberta child benefit program. I think that the government probably sees the benefit of this program, and I really hope that they don't move forward on cutting that.

Even the price on carbon and the carbon levy rebate were helping young families. Believe it or not, I went to a few doors, and they said: who's the party that brought in the carbon levy rebate? That might surprise you, but there were people out there that said that, and many of them were young families that were seeing the benefit of getting that rebate because they were actually receiving more money back than it was costing them.

When we look at the bills that have been brought forward to this Legislature so far, we're seeing – excuse me; it's been a very long couple of days here – an attack on workers but an attack on young Albertans specifically. With the act to destroy GSAs, we're seeing an attack on young Albertans.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Who can't even vote.

**Mr. Carson:** Who can't even vote. Exactly.

With this legislation we're seeing it, and it's concerning because, as has been stated several times in the Assembly, these are people who did not have a voice in the last election. They did not give you a mandate. You talk about having such a big mandate. They did not give you this mandate to cut their wages. You should take the time to consult with young Albertans. For the members across the way to stand – and they have stood in this Legislature – and say, "I've talked to young Albertans who think this is great legislation," well, maybe you could introduce them in the House or, I mean, just share exactly why they think it's going to help them, because it doesn't seem reasonable to me.

I shared with the Legislature the story of my upbringing and the fact that my mother was 14 years old when she had me and that that was a decision she had to make. Now you're telling somebody like my mother, who's 14 years old and has a child, that she doesn't deserve to be able to help her child. You're saying: unless you drop out of school, we're going to pay you \$13 an hour. I think it's unreasonable.

**Mr. Nielsen:** It's disturbing.

**Mr. Carson:** It is disturbing.

I think it's unreasonable to tell any person, no matter how old they are, that they should get paid less and that they should have to go to a food bank afterwards because they're 17 years old. She had responsibilities that many 20-year-olds don't have in having a child that young, and she made the decision to continue going to school. This legislation will penalize somebody like my mother for doing that. Once again, it's been brought up several times that with this legislation, at a time when there are major concerns about high school completion rates, you are incentivizing people to drop out of school before they complete their diplomas, which is gravely concerning.

Now, something that hasn't been addressed by the government, at least not reasonably, is the effects that lowering the minimum wage is going to have on people with disabilities. Now we are going to get into a system where an employer has to make a decision between hiring somebody that's under 18, that they can pay less, and somebody with a disability. Now, I hope they make the right decision in ensuring that they are an inclusive employer, that they're supporting all people in our society, in our communities, but you are making it harder for that employer to choose the person with a disability, which is incredibly unfortunate.

Our government, through legislation in the 29th Legislature, brought up the wage for people with disabilities. We made it an even playing field because we recognize that we shouldn't make it harder for employers to choose to support people with disabilities.

Now, once again, we are also pitting students that are in school against students who are out of school. In the circumstance where for whatever reason a student is not attending school and they're under 18 years old, they are going to be less likely to get hired compared to somebody that's in school. Now you're hurting somebody that is not attending school for whatever reason, because it's actually harder for them to compete against somebody that can be paid less.

Another concern is what lowering the minimum wage for youth is going to do to seniors that are trying to get a job. You know, we're talking about a 17-year-old who may have work experience and that you can pay \$13 an hour compared to a senior, who you're going to have to pay more. You're actually hurting seniors through this legislation.

It's been brought up several times, the concerns around what lowering the minimum wage for youth does for people turning 18 years old. I'm concerned about the turnover, seeing somebody turning 18. An employer may no longer want to keep them on because they have to pay them more.

Now, of course, it's been shared in this Legislature several times that the NDP caucus has major concerns about what this means for banked overtime. I shared a story earlier, on the amendment, about an instance that happened to me where an employer took advantage of me in terms of crunch time, making sure that we were able to get the product out, which is reasonable and happens in a lot of industries. But then the employer came back to me and said: you can either choose to take a couple of days off, take a day off at regular time, or you can find yourself another job. Whether the minister thinks that happens or not, it happens. It happens, and you're really encouraging it to happen more. We need to protect these people.

Now, I am very proud that when we were elected in 2015, we raised the minimum wage to \$15. We recognized that if you're working 40 hours a week, you should not have to go to the food bank afterwards. Once again, it goes back to my values in being raised by a young mother. Now, we've heard several times from

the government caucus that, you know, all of them have signed the front of so many cheques and that we don't have any experience with that. Well, I have experience being a worker, and I don't think that you should hold it against me that I haven't run a business.

You know, running a business is not for everyone. Not everyone is going to have the opportunity to do that, just like not everyone is going to have the opportunity to go to postsecondary education, especially as we talk about increasing postsecondary tuition costs and lowering the minimum wage for students, who are no longer going to be able to afford postsecondary education. It's very frustrating for me to start pitting people against each other. You say you have so much more knowledge because you've signed the front of a cheque. Well, I have received many cheques, and I have helped those employers be able to sign the front of cheques, so I think that we should maybe move off that conversation. Imagine if one of us stood up and said: well, you don't have the same education as me, so you probably just shouldn't talk. The fact is that we were elected here by the members of our community for a reason, whether you agree with those reasons or not.

**3:10 p.m.**

Now, once again, I do want to just raise the fact that this government thinks it's okay to discriminate against people under the age of 18. As far as we can tell, it's legal. As shameful as it is, it's legal. The Alberta Human Rights Act does not protect people under the age of 18 from age discrimination. It protects them under reasons of discrimination but not for age. I'm sure that this is a conversation that the front bench of the government had with each other, and I imagine they might be – well, hopefully not – quite proud that they were able to get away with paying young Albertans less than everyone else.

Now, I started working from a very young age. I was also 14 though I didn't have the responsibility of raising a child, like my mother did. But I had important things to pay for. I had to start saving for postsecondary education. Of course, my mother, being as young as she was when she had me, had a lot of responsibilities to pay for other things, and I thought it was important to pay for my own education. Now, thankfully, I went to NAIT for radio and television broadcasting, not a full degree program, just a two-year diploma, and it was exceptionally less expensive than a four-year program. So I'm very thankful for that.

I just think about the Albertans who are looking at taking on, you know, \$20,000 to in some instances \$100,000 of debt to go get a postsecondary education, and this government is telling them that they don't deserve to be able to get paid enough to actually pay their way through that. Not everyone has the privilege of having a family unit that can help them pay their way through that. I think that it's reasonable to be concerned about how this legislation is going to affect them.

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I believe that I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore rising first.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your recognizing me. I was listening very intently to the Member for Edmonton-West Henday. During his remarks some thoughts came to me around what he was speaking about around the youth rate, about some of his lived experiences, with remarks about his mother as she was faced with certain challenges. I know it kind of coincides a little bit with some of the remarks that I was speaking to earlier around making sure to consult our young emerging leaders. These are individuals that did not get to vote in this recent election, yet

here we are potentially making decisions that will adversely affect them. I find it a little bit ironic that here we are saying, “Democracy: we need to protect it,” yet these young emerging leaders aren’t a part of it.

I think that as we were talking earlier about tapping on the brake there a little bit, maybe having a chance to discuss with them, get their points of view, I was hoping that possibly the Member for Edmonton-West Henday could comment on his slightly younger days, when he was going to school, on just some of the conditions around that time. I’m wondering: were there any kinds of decisions maybe being made by the government of the day, how they might have affected him, be it working relationships or how he was earning income or just simply decisions that impeded his ability to create a better lifestyle for himself? I’m hoping that maybe the member might comment on that a little bit and share that for the House so that we have the ability to make informed decisions here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has approximately two and a half minutes remaining this time.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for the question. I guess that to that question I would say that the decisions that governments were making at the time, if anything, discouraged me from going to postsecondary institutions or going to get a four-year degree. At the time we had a Conservative government that was not willing to recognize that the cost of postsecondary education was hurting students’ abilities to go. When you come from a family of lower middle income, postsecondary education is simply, for the most part, out of the question. I mean, you can take on student loans, of course. I wasn’t necessarily willing to make that call, but that is exactly why I was so proud, when we were elected into government in 2015, to freeze tuition for four years, moving on five years now. It sounds like this government is committed – well, because they haven’t presented their own budget, the freeze will go into the next year, which I am very happy to see.

My concern is: what happens after that? We saw from the previous government, going into the election, that they were proposing market modifiers which were going to see the cost of tuition explode by thousands and thousands of dollars. If that’s what their plan is, well, you are going to see postsecondary completion rates or entry rates drop. I can only imagine. Once again, that is why I was proud to stand with our government in 2015 to raise the minimum wage, giving students the opportunity to go to school and get better educated. Of course, that’s important in our society.

Now, I will say that this all started, the idea of income equality started – I’m not going to have enough time to tell the story, I don’t think. No. I’ll just stop there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll save it for another time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there are approximately 30 seconds left under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Carson:** That was enough time to tell the story.

**The Speaker:** Well, I’m never really aware. Brevity may not be your number one quality. It’s sometimes tough to know how long the story would or wouldn’t take.

Seeing no other questions or comments under 29(2)(a), I see that the hon. the Member for Edmonton-South would like to debate.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s really my pleasure today to rise and speak to you because I’m going to be moving an amendment that I think may be one of your personal favourite amendments. I would move that the motion for second reading of

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I would just ask that you would pass the amendment to the pages, and I will give you the “proceed” in due course. Thank you, hon. member.

This will be referred to as amendment HA, if you are following along at home or if you’d like to add it to the top left of your amendment that you are receiving. It will be referred to as amendment HA.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-South has the call.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It really is my pleasure to speak to amendment HA, as you have so eloquently named it. This is an amendment that I’ve looked forward to moving because I think it allows us to take a hard look at this bill and say that we do need that extra six months to review what we’re getting ourselves into. We do need that extra six months to review what the pick-your-pockets bill is going to do to Albertans, how it’s going to adversely affect families, how it’s going to adversely affect workers, and how it’s going to affect so many different people across this province.

I mean, I guess there are certain things that I am very concerned about because we’ve heard so little from the government benches. Of course, a few of the members have gotten up under 29(2)(a) to speak about this, but really there has been no co-ordinated effort for them to defend the bill at all. In fact, of course, there are many ministers here who I think should be very concerned about this bill. I know that the Minister of Children’s Services must be, then, okay with the children under her care, Mr. Speaker, if they want to get an education while also working, that they would actually be making \$2 less, 13.3 per cent less, than any other person working.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

3:20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Children’s Services is okay with this happening to children under her care, then I am deeply concerned what the direction of this government will be for other forms of legislation. The minister ought to know that the children under her care are working hard not only to go to school and try to accomplish what they need in their education but will often also need to work to support themselves and try to save for many things in the future or perhaps just to deal with their day-to-day expenses.

The minister, of course, has not spoken. The minister has actually remained silent on these issues. If the minister would wish to stand up and clarify and perhaps talk to why she believes that it is okay to take money out of the hands of the children under her care, then I would welcome that opportunity. Of course, it looks like the minister either doesn’t care or doesn’t know what this bill is going to do to the people that she is obligated to protect. I think that’s a real shame. That’s something that the government should be very concerned about – I think all private members and all members of the opposition here are certainly concerned – that the minister does not know what effect this bill will have on her portfolio. The minister does not know what effect this bill will have on the people that she is charged to ensure have a safe home.

These children, who only want to make sure they have a strong education while also trying to work to support themselves, Mr. Speaker: this is going to be going into their pockets and picking those toonies right out. It’s going to be picking their pockets and

taking that money away from them every single day they go to work. If the minister is okay with that, I want to hear why. I want to know why the minister thinks that those . . .

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Okay. The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j): “imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member.” Obviously, the Minister of Children’s Services works hard every day to ensure that children in this province are taken care of. For the member to insinuate in any way that she doesn’t care about children, to insinuate in any way that there is harm to be done to children I think is absolutely outrageous and something that that member needs to apologize for, withdraw his comments. This is not a matter of debate. This is a situation where he is directly imputing false motives to this member within this House.

I would also, through you, Mr. Speaker, encourage this member to follow the rules within this book to ensure that when he is directing his comments, it is to you at the chair. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West standing.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly am happy to rise on this particular point of order. You know, what we are discussing here is a question of a two-tiered minimum wage that leaves young people, children, on the short end of that second tier. For the hon. member or any of us as individuals, I think we’ve made it abundantly clear that this puts young people, underage, minors – otherwise, children – at a distinct disadvantage. The implication of that, as we’ve described, I think, with a number of arguments, is that these young people are working side by side for equal work expectations in a given job situation yet under this proposal are being given a 13 per cent cut to their pay. A lot of mischaracterization that we’ve seen from the opposite side of kids working to buy an iPad . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, I’m just looking for: with regard to this point of order is there new information that you would be providing on this?

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. You bet. The new information is – it’s not new information. I think it’s fairly well established that this has . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but you just admitted that you weren’t providing new information on this issue.

**Mr. Eggen:** Sure. Absolutely. You betcha. Having this money taken away from the people – and young people are working to perhaps go to school, as I described. You have this whole contingent of grade 12s that, if they happen to have been born in one half of the calendar, end up getting a 13 per cent cut. This hon. member is pointing this out. It’s a matter of opinion that he is describing, thus under standing orders, with which I’m very familiar, and precedents and experience in this matter, there is nothing here to withdraw.

**The Acting Speaker:** I will make the confession that at the time that the comments in question were made, I did not hear clearly what the hon. Member for Edmonton-South said. That said, there is

the opportunity to review what is stated at a later time. What I will do is that I will simply give the opportunity to the hon. Member for Edmonton-South, as he knows what he said – I will find out later. Knowing what you said, do you feel at this time – in order to move this process ahead very quickly, are you willing to, then, just apologize for the comments and move on to the rest of your discussion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** This is clearly a matter of debate. I encourage you to make a ruling toward that direction.

**The Acting Speaker:** I will make a ruling in due course.  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, as I was already saying, it is very clear what this bill does. This bill goes into the pockets of vulnerable children, particularly children that are under the care of this minister. They will go in and they will not be able to receive the pay that they deserve under equal work, equal pay. They will not have that money. They will have their pockets picked, they will have their toonies taken away, and what will result is that this minister will be complacent in accepting that the children under her care should be paid less if they wish to go to school.

That is simply a matter of the facts, Mr. Speaker. If the minister wishes to defend that or dispute that, then the minister absolutely has the opportunity to stand up in this House and do so. But we’ve seen that the front bench and indeed the backbench of the government have been hesitant to speak to this bill at all. Perhaps it’s because they know what the facts of this bill are. They know that this bill is designed to hurt people, to hurt families and ordinary working Albertans.

I really am concerned that this is the direction the minister wants to take with moving forward with the file, Mr. Speaker, taking advantage and picking the pockets of the children that she is charged to care. We really need to put the brakes on this bill. We really need to stop and say in six months: is this still the right move to make? I think it’s very clear that when we talk about these issues in this House, every single member, especially members of the front bench, who are charged to protect Albertans, who have that obligation and indeed that duty, should get up and defend themselves. When we move forward legislation that affects over 400,000 Albertans, when it affects so many people in such a broad, sweeping way, in such a negative manner, the members of the front bench should and indeed need to get up and defend why they think it’s okay to pick the pockets of ordinary Albertans.

Of course, the minister absolutely is supposed to be protecting these people, but what this bill does is that it goes in and damages her ability to do that. So why would the minister be okay with that? And if she is not, would she stand up and explain that to the House, Mr. Speaker? I certainly think that if I were the minister, I would be concerned that the children under the care of the ministry need to be able to both have an education and work to support themselves. That is something that is foundational to being a free citizen here in Alberta, that equal work should result in equal pay, that somebody who is working hard to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, as our friends across the aisle would like to say, absolutely should have the opportunity to both go and study in school so they can get their high school credentials and also work hard so they can support their family, so that they don’t have to stop at a food bank after getting off the bus on the way home.



I think that is something that is very clear and should be very clear to all members of the Assembly but that particularly the minister should be concerned about. The Minister of Children's Services should be getting up and talking about why she is either okay with this or why she does not support this bill. Mr. Speaker, I think that is something that all members would be excited to hear because we know that the minister definitely has the obligation to protect these children. We want to know how she will be doing that with the limitations brought forward by Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, because this bill will absolutely hurt those children. This bill will absolutely hurt the people in care. Those are the facts of the matter. When we look at the simple facts, this minister needs to explain and clarify to the House why she is okay or not okay with this happening.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've gone on at quite some length about the children in care that will need the support of the minister and how I hope we will hear some advantages being brought forward from her, but I think there are other ministers who also should have some very grave concerns about this bill. In particular, I'm very concerned with what the Minister of Education would have to say about this bill because the Minister of Education has yet to speak to this bill. I mean, there have been two amendments, a referral and a reasoned amendment, and of course we've spoken at quite some length to the main bill as well, and the minister has refused to get up and say anything.

3:30 p.m.

The question, of course, then becomes: why is the minister supporting a bill that encourages students to drop out of school? Mr. Speaker, the Education minister's real duty here should be to ensure that as many students as possible graduate from high school and receive their credentials. But the minister has refused to speak to this. The minister has refused to get up and defend the bill or oppose the bill. I would hope that the minister would oppose this portion of the bill, at least, because this portion of the bill directly affects the people that she is charged to educate. If the minister thinks that that is okay – it attacks the people she is charged to educate; it encourages them to drop out of school – then I want to know why the minister would think that. If she doesn't think that, then I want to see and I want to hear why she would vote against this portion of the bill.

I think it's something that is very clearly an issue that the members of this Assembly and certainly the opposition would want to know, and we want to know immediately because it is something that will affect Albertans for generations to come. There are 400,000 workers here that will be affected, Mr. Speaker, and we know that you can't have a prosperous Alberta if the Education minister is actually trying to get kids to drop out of school. We know that you can't have an Alberta that works for all if you have an Education minister that doesn't want kids to graduate. I, of course, hope that the Education minister is trying to get as many students through the credentialing process as possible, and I would be very pleased to hear her get up here in this House and say that. Unfortunately, we have yet to hear that, and I'm concerned that she may not.

If she doesn't, I'm concerned with whether she understands the ramifications of the bill that's being presented today. I'm concerned with whether she understands the ramifications of the pick-your-pockets bill and how that's going to affect students because those students will have to make a decision. They will have to choose whether they want to take a 13.3 per cent cut, a massive pay cut, or whether they want to drop out of school. That is something that is deeply concerning because the minister's obligation should be to ensure that these students have the best possible learning

environment and don't have to choose between food banks or studying. They shouldn't have to choose between whether to pay for a bus pass or stop at the food bank. The pick-your-pockets bill: taking the toonies away one at a time, it absolutely forces students to make that choice. It absolutely puts students and the most vulnerable students, Mr. Speaker, into very tough situations that are going to have adverse consequences.

That's why I think we need to just put the brakes on this bill a little bit here. We need to stop, we need to take a deep breath and think: in six months, is this still a good idea? After we've had some time to consult with Albertans, after we've had some time to look at the ramifications of this bill, after we've had some time to consult with the people who are actually getting the cuts, Mr. Speaker, the 400,000 workers who are having their pockets picked by every single member of this government, then we will know whether this bill is something that we want to move forward with.

I mean, I'm concerned that the Minister of Education – I mean, we've seen quite a bit in this Assembly over the last few weeks – hasn't been able to answer the questions that have been posed to her with a very satisfactory answer. That's concerning because I think the minister should have a single-minded goal. It should be a safe, inclusive learning environment for all students. But when you create a system where there are two tiers of young people, when you create a system where suddenly one person is worth more than another by a very significant margin, Mr. Speaker, 13.3 per cent, when you create these adverse situations for children, it creates a scenario where you cannot expect young people to have an easy decision. You cannot expect young people to be forced to make the decision between dropping out of school or going to work to support their family.

That is the reality of what the minister is going to be asking students to do if she refuses to get up and admonish this part of the bill. Again, I really encourage the minister to get up and speak to this. I think it's something that all members would be excited to hear about, and we want to know: does the minister support this bill, and if so, why does the minister support picking the pockets of the students she is entrusted to care for? If she doesn't support this bill, then will the minister be voting against it, and what amendments will the minister be bringing forward? I think those are important questions that Albertans deserve to know. They're important questions.

We need to make sure that we have the utmost respect and the best interests of students right here in this Assembly. When we don't have the minister getting up, when we have the minister remaining silent on the issue, it leads us to question: what is the intention here, and what will happen? The front bench, again, Mr. Speaker, either has not read the bill or does not understand what is going to happen. They either do not understand what the adverse consequences for so many people across this province are going to be or they simply don't care. I think either of those situations is really unacceptable for Albertans because it creates a situation where Albertans have this two-tiered system, and suddenly you're telling people that they are worth less because of the day they were born.

Mr. Speaker, we've gone down this path in the past, and it's been very clear that it doesn't work for working families. It doesn't work for families that rely on that extra income from maybe that one child. If you're asking that student, if you're asking that child whether they want to stay in school and study for that diploma exam or they want to stop at the food bank every day, then I think it becomes very clear that we are putting students in an impossible scenario. We are putting them in a situation that will hurt families and will hurt these vulnerable Albertans. The minister needs to stand up and explain why the minister is okay with that. The

Education minister needs to stand up and explain why she will be okay with students having to choose between food banks or dropping out of high school. That's something I think all members in this Assembly should be extremely concerned about.

I think members in the government caucus in particular should be extremely concerned about it because their front bench brought this bill forward, and they've brought this bill forward without much forethought, it seems, because as the opposition has brought up many times, time and time again today, Mr. Speaker, there are very core flaws with this bill. There are core flaws that directly influence very important figures in this province, very important ministers in this province, and ministries that have very large roles to play in shaping our future. When we talk about these concerns, it is very clear that the ministers either do not understand this bill and how bad it is for families or they simply do not care.

If it's either of those, I'm very concerned with the direction that we're going to be seeing in the next four years here. I'm very concerned that the Minister of Education will not understand how bad this is for her students. I'm very concerned that the Minister of Education thinks it's okay to encourage students to drop out of school.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) I believe that I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition rising to speak.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-South for his very thoughtful comments on Bill 2 and, in particular, on this amendment. I do want to begin by saying that I appreciate the instinct he shows and the fact that he is challenging some of the other members of the front bench to actually do the work of the ministry that they are responsible for leading and to actually lean into what ought to be their mandate and asking them to answer for how they plan to navigate around the negative consequences of Bill 2 as it relates to their own mandate. I want to thank the member for that because that was an important thing.

I mean, we've been talking a lot about the UCP as a whole, we've been talking about the minister of labour, we've been talking about the Premier, but really the member is absolutely correct that there are front-bench members here who are tasked with the best interests of either school-age children, in the context of being in school, or children in care, in the context of being very vulnerable. In both cases, this bill undermines the best interests of those very people that these ministers have been asked by the Crown, quite frankly, through the authority of the Lieutenant Governor, to care for. They actually have an obligation, Mr. Speaker, to stand up and defend how it is they can actually fulfill their mandate while at the same time allowing this particular bill to go through and why they would not suggest amendments in order to protect their sphere of responsibility from being undermined by this bill.

You know, while I respect very much the Member for Edmonton-South for really focusing in on the rights of those workers who are under the age of 18, I'd like to talk for just a moment about the rights of workers who are part of that group which is characterized as being underemployed and suffering from high unemployment rates, which is, in fact, not just those 14 to 18 but 18 to 24.

3:40 p.m.

In fact, I'm sure many members on the other side know – if you don't, you should – that the Member for Edmonton-South was first elected when he was squarely within that demographic group. He was elected at the age of 20. Now, the members opposite suggest that the reason we need to undercut the salary and the wage of people who are under 18 is because that's the only way they'll get

training to do their job. Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? Here's a different way of looking at it. I would suggest that over the course of the last 24 hours the Member for Edmonton-South ought instead to be earning a premium because he's been training the members on the other side about how they should do their job. In fact, it had nothing to do with his age. It had simply to do with his energy and his focus and his commitment.

That's how you earn your wage, by showing up to work and being passionate and trying hard and speaking faster than anybody else in this room, and by doing that, you succeed at being very good at your job and earning your wage. The key is that what we should not be doing is undermining the contribution of the Member for Edmonton-South because of the fact that when he was first elected, he was the youngest person to ever be elected to this Legislature, and we should assume that when young people step up to take a job, they too will approach that job in just the way the Member for Edmonton-South has.

So I'm just wondering if the Member for Edmonton-South would like to offer advice to some of the members of this House who are maybe 15, 20, 30, 40, 45 years older than the Member for Edmonton-South about how best to approach the job of representing the people of this province in the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South, with 23 seconds left.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll keep it brief. Certainly, I think that one of the most important things that I, of course, learned from the Leader of the Official Opposition is that members and, especially, ministers should get up and defend the things they believe in. Again, I can see many ministers here today who have not taken the opportunity to do that, and I would wish that they will talk about why these issues are important to them.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members looking to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I will endeavour to be brief as many of us have been awake a long time, and it's been certainly a long, long session. We're certainly proud to stand in this House – and I think I can probably speak for both sides – for the hard work that we're doing on behalf of all the people whom we represent. You know, this is, of course, in regard to this amendment that has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-South. As I read this, of course, he moves “that the motion for second reading of Bill 2 . . . be amended by deleting all of the words after ‘that’ and substituting the following” – and I paraphrase, of course – that it now be read six months hence. I'm going to have to respectfully disagree with the paper before us right now.

You know, I think that our party, our government has been very clear in our platform, which, of course, was put forward and supported by the majority of the people of Alberta on April 16. We were very clear in regard to An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. Many people, sadly, through the previous government's policies and, of course, various reasons – there's been unemployment. There have been people, certainly, within my constituency that have been hit hard by the economic downturn as well as policies. Of course, that is something that we have been very clear on, that we are trying to make Alberta open for business, to bring back what was formerly known as the Alberta advantage to this province, a province that many of us, you know, came to after generations of family members that chose to live here because it is a place that has the highest quality of life, the highest standard of living, and a place which, I would argue, every single person in this

Chamber loves although we may have disagreements as to certain policies.

Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. As I indicated, we cannot support this amendment put forward by the hon. member, and I certainly encourage all members of this Chamber to not support this amendment.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, my whip counterpart can certainly put together a compelling argument and sentences that agree between subject and verb, but I respectfully disagree. I wonder, just having some questions for him: why, first of all, would a new government choose to have a bill like this? Taking money from people's banked overtime, taking away holidays, compromising Christmas as a holiday for people next year, maternity benefits, compassionate leave, minimum wage for young people: why would you put something like this up at the front end of your first session as a new government?

You want to set the tone for what Albertans are expecting from this government because it's a long haul, four years. It's just starting; we're only nine days in, I think. I just really wonder if the hon. member can help me with some of the logic as to why they would choose to have a bill like this, an open season on workers, you know, a pick-your-pocket kind of tone to send out to the people of Alberta, right? Here we are, a brand new government. Here we go. Watch out; we're coming after your banked overtime: that just is not a coherent presentation of what I think Albertans would expect.

I know that the hon. members like to say: oh, well, it was all in our platform, and people voted for that, so sit down and shut up because that's the way it is. Well, I mean, this is the way it is, hon. Speaker, where we do debate these things. In a democracy it's a pluralistic thing. People vote and represent all kinds of different opinions and so forth, and we have a strong opposition here that obviously was backed by hundreds of thousands of Albertans that voted that way, too. So you have to make sure that you give the fullness of time and consideration to debate around these important issues. Again, I think, in my humble opinion, that this amendment brought forth by the Edmonton-South representative is reasonable and very modest in its scope. It doesn't necessarily even mean that this bill disappears; rather, it is given the consideration of time, right? Time is the healer of all wounds, and time is a way by which we learn to become wiser as we get older. This bill: I really don't think that it's going to age well with time. I really don't see that happening. You know, you could certainly make a case for that in the interim.

I believe that Albertans are expecting and hoping for the best, and I believe that the character of Albertans is that they hope and expect the best for themselves and their families but for others, too. That's kind of the way we roll in my family and, I think, in the vast majority of families, too. We look past our noses to others in other places, in other socioeconomic circumstances, and in other life circumstances, too.

I've learned a lot about banked overtime that I didn't know about before. I'm really impressed by how people pushed back on this particular issue because it actually means a hole, sometimes of several thousand dollars, in an individual's or a family's budget, and I don't think that that's fair. I think people are starting to wake up to that injustice as well. You know, there are the actual words that are printed on the page of a bill, and then there are the tone and the intent and the emotive response that people will bring from laws

and regulations that we provide here in the Alberta Legislature. You've got to think of both of those things, Mr. Speaker, when you're building legislation here because people will judge you on the logic of your decisions, but they'll also judge you on the tone that you set for governance. As I said before, I'd just be curious for the hon. government whip to . . .

3:50 p.m.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there other members looking to speak to amendment HA? I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise to speak to this amendment. This will be the third time I've been able to speak on this matter in second reading, and each time I do, I have a fair amount of time to speak but not necessarily so much time to prepare. This time I will attempt to be a little bit more organized in my thoughts as we speak to why we think this particular motion should be passed so that this bill does not proceed through second reading at this point.

I think what we need to begin with is that, you know, there's been quite a bit of conversation around this issue of electoral mandate. There have been a lot of folks saying: well, you know, we won the election, so you should just let us do what we want; and how disrespectful you are for actually taking a bit of time to talk about this issue, to challenge the concerns that people might have; and how dare you, actually, you know, speak in the House for as long as you have about this issue. Various people have argued that that was the mandate, that Albertans gave this government the mandate to pass Bill 2.

First of all, obviously, just at the outset, they also gave us the mandate to be the Official Opposition, so I will not now or ever apologize for that. In fact, it is my duty and my obligation to work as many hours as necessary to ensure that we exhaust all of the resources that we can to be a strong opposition for the people of this province. That is the mandate, ultimately, that we were given, and people understood very clearly, without any equivocation, without any kind of slippery language or anything like that that we believe strongly in the rights of working people to be treated fairly. So it should come as no surprise that we would do everything we can to ensure that working people will be treated fairly.

Now, that being said, though, I think there is also another matter that we need to consider around this issue of mandate. The members opposite argue that their mandate is included in their however-many-pages platform. They love to talk about their platform.

**Member Ceci:** A hundred and one.

**Ms Notley:** Is it 101 pages?

**Member Ceci:** Pretty much.

**Ms Notley:** Something like that.

Now, of course, one of the interesting things about that platform, which I must ensure history remembers, is that it was a living document, and it changed with the wind. When it did change, there was no press release that went out to say: "Oh, we just rewrote this section," or, "Oops, we added a new section." It just kind of happened in a very sort of fluid kind of way. It was precedent setting, actually. I will congratulate the members opposite for completely changing the sort of democratic process that typically surrounds the practice of a political party introducing a platform, presenting it to voters, saying, "Here's what we believe; vote for us or don't vote for us on the basis of it; hold us to account; move on." In fact, instead, what we had was an ever-changing, ever-evolving, ever-amending document.

Really, you have to sort of get immediately into this process of saying: well, I just screenshot UCP platform 4.9 and compared it to my screenshot of UCP platform 9.8, and I think that if we average the two together, what they mean to say is this. Like, you really, literally, Mr. Speaker, would have had to have a team of researchers on it to really understand exactly how to nail it down. It actually sort of makes real the figurative description of nailing Jell-O to a wall. That's kind of what tracking the UCP platform was like over the course of the election. But, congratulations, you know. I mean the media did report very briefly on the nailing Jell-O to the wall nature of the UCP platform, and people still went ahead and voted for the UCP. Fair enough. But to be clear, what they voted for was Jell-O that was nailed to a wall. So when you try to back up your position on the basis of said Jell-O, know that that rationale is going to be about as solid as the Jell-O.

That being said, when the UCP platform 1.9, or whichever one it was, was released, we grabbed a couple or three or four different versions of it and went through it. Over the course of more than one version the position of the UCP around changes to worker protections actually remained consistent between at least a couple of versions. As a result, when we went through it to see what was there and what it meant, we found the provisions that talked about these changes to banked overtime. We quickly raised the alarm. We said: "Oh, sheesh. This isn't very good. This looks like they are going to go after workers' rights to overtime pay through the banked overtime scheme." But when we said that, the members of the government and, in particular, the now Premier hastened to assure us: no, no, no; that's not what it meant. What he said was, and I quote from an April 2, 2019, *Edmonton Journal* article: "This does not affect overtime pay. I repeat – it does not affect or diminish overtime pay." That is what the Premier – not at the time; then the Leader of the Official Opposition, the leader of the UCP and now Premier – said to voters in response to the concern that we raised about what appeared in the UCP version of the platform that was released on the day preceding that quote. Fair enough.

Now, I don't know exactly – I can't remember – if they actually at that time included the specific wording that they were proposing to move forward with but, nonetheless, they did say in general that this is what they were going to do. The Premier hastened to assure Albertans: "No, we're not going to touch overtime. It will not affect overtime. It will not diminish it in any way."

Interestingly, experts in the field immediately responded by saying: "Ah, well, we're not entirely sure that the Premier knows what he's talking about here because, in fact, it will diminish overtime. It will affect overtime. It will hurt overtime." They explained as much as they could. My question, then, to members opposite who make the argument: "Listen, this was in our mandate. This is something we told Albertans before the election, and they voted for us, and we got more votes than you did, nyah-nyah, nyah-nyah, nyah-nyah. Therefore, why are you still here talking?" – when they say that, when they say, "That was our mandate," do they refer to the mandate as what was in Jell-O doc 4.0? Do they refer to the mandate as the Premier's statement that it will not affect or diminish overtime, or do they refer to the mandate as the experts' assessment that said: "Oh, no, no. This will affect and diminish overtime"?

So we had people saying: "Oh, no, no. The Premier is incorrect. Basically, what we can see here is that this is going to affect and diminish overtime." Then we had the Premier saying: "No, no. It will not affect or diminish overtime." So I'm just curious as to whether the mandate was that which came out of the mouth of the Premier or that which came out of the mouth of the experts who looked at what the Premier was proposing and actually analyzed the consequences of what the Premier meant. I'm just curious. Which part of that conversation actually constitutes the mandate that they

claim they have to bring in this pick-your-pockets legislation? So that's a question, and maybe at some point we'll get the answer to that.

4:00 p.m.

Now, on the matter of a mandate, though, the degree to which one can argue mandate really comes down to the similarity between what one promised and what one delivers. I would argue, based on widely publicized statements of the Premier that their plan with respect to workers' rights would not diminish or affect overtime, that the mandate, therefore, was for them to bring in changes to the legislation that would not diminish or affect overtime. As a result, their mandate is that they should amend the legislation and stop any changes that they are currently proposing to overtime because that is actually the mandate that the Premier himself said to the people of Alberta during the election.

If now they've decided that they've reconsidered or they've talked to their donors or whatever the process is and that they do now want to do what is in this bill, which is to affect and diminish overtime, then they should come clean on the fact that they are now already, two and a half weeks into whatever we are, diverging from the mandate that they secured from the people of this province. I would argue that that's exactly what they've done because I have the quote from the Premier. Yet I have the black and white words in front of me in the bill, and I can tell you with absolute certainty that what they are proposing to do is affect and diminish overtime, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the other thing the Premier said during this sort of mandate acquisition period, otherwise known as an election, in response to the concerns that were raised about this bill: "There were no complaints about abusive practices by employers. There weren't in the past; I'm sure there won't be in the future." Now, I don't know where exactly it was that the Premier secured that particular piece of information from. He stated it like it was a fact. But I can tell you that the public record shows that that is not correct. The public record is easily accessed because when the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods led the consultation around the changes to the labour code and the Employment Standards Code, we had significant public engagement, and we had submissions from a number of different Albertans, and in fact it was very clear that there were complaints and concerns about abuse by employers of the banked overtime scheme that existed prior to our change to the legislation.

So, again, this mandate that the members opposite speak about so passionately was premised on information that was categorically untrue, Mr. Speaker, because in fact there were complaints. Now, I'm sure that there are some people that the members opposite spoke to like the restaurant association, like Merit Contractors – you may recall Merit Contractors. They had big billboards up and down the highway for about a year and a half before the election that said: vote UCP. You know, that objective, neutral, nonengaged organization: that group, I am sure, told the Premier that they had no complaints with the previous overtime regime, prior to us changing it. I will not hesitate, though, to suggest that there were other people who did actually have complaints about the previous overtime regime. Therefore, the Premier's statement that was reported in the news on April 2, 2019, that there were no complaints, was, in fact, also factually incorrect. I would suggest that when you have a mandate that is premised on information which is not correct, the quality of your mandate begins to fritter away at the sides. Now, you know, we shall see how far we go and how long it takes, but I'm going to say that the mandate is somewhat tattered as it relates to this particular issue.

I do believe that mandates are important. I do. But I fundamentally disagree that the members opposite received a mandate on this issue because, at the heart of it, their leader did not correctly discuss what their platform was in relation to the actual facts. He, in essence, to put it another way, said one thing before the election and is delivering a very different thing after the election, and that, my friends, does not a mandate make.

Now, let's just talk a little bit about this issue. I would like to just dive into it a little bit. The labour minister took the time to talk a little bit about this legislation, and I appreciate that. The only unfortunate part of it was that in so doing, with the greatest of respect, it revealed the fragility of the evidence and the analysis which underlies the decisions to amend the overtime provisions in the way that they have, and it is unfortunate for the working people of Alberta who are going to pay the price for the labour minister's misunderstanding of the issue.

First of all, he was quick to talk to us about research as it relates to the impact of certain things. I guess that was actually more about the youth wage, so I'll hold off on that. Let's just talk a little bit about the overtime. You know, it's excellent that the minister took the time to walk us through the sections of the act. Rest assured, we have also reviewed those sections of the act. We reviewed those sections of the act when we made the first set of changes, and we reviewed the sections of the act that are being amended now as a result of Bill 2.

What the minister needs to understand is that with the practice that is happening and did happen prior to our amendment of the overtime premium under the banked overtime scheme to provide 1.5 pay as opposed to 1.0 pay, there was an incentive for the employer to get people into the banked overtime scheme prior to our changes because overtime then was paid at straight time. What we saw happening was that employers would construct an agreement with the majority of their employees. Many employers who benefit from this kind of regime hire people on a seasonal or project basis. They would construct the agreement with a very small group of employees, put the agreement in place, and then new employees would come in and they would be bound by that agreement. That's exactly what the legislation that the minister of labour quoted specifically enables. That is exactly the way it worked before.

Individual employees, as outlined in the legislation, when they came on, were bound by that agreement, and individual employees do not have the authority to individually pull themselves from that agreement. Therefore, employers who need these kinds of work arrangements in place established these banked overtime agreements prior to hiring the majority of their employees. Then there is no opportunity for it to be changed, especially in non-union workplaces. It was abused, and we knew this. We knew this because, when we did our consultations, that is what we heard from workers who had been the victims of these kinds of problems.

Now, it is true that the incident of abuse of this kind of regime disappeared in the last two years, so the labour minister would not see much evidence of that over the last two years. But you know why? There was no longer an incentive for it to happen because banked overtime agreements ensured that overtime was provided, whether by way of time off or otherwise, at one and a half times. The incentive to do it had disappeared. Therefore, the abuse of the system had disappeared, too.

**4:10 p.m.**

However, we're actually in a position now that's worse with this act than it was when we changed it in the first place because at least in the past, before we changed it from 1.0 time to 1.5 time, the employer had to give that time off within a three-month period.

When we changed it from 1.0 to 1.5, we said, "Hey, let's enhance flexibility; let's give people more time to take the time off rather than have it paid out," because, as I was saying earlier today, some people really just do want time. You know, they want it at the overtime rate, but they prefer time than extra money on their cheque. We said: "Sure. Let's expand it from three months to six months. Because it's at the 1.5 rate, we do increase flexibility, but at the same time there's no incentive for the employer to push workers into an unfair situation."

Now we're in a situation where we have the worst scenario because we have the incentive, if this bill passes, for abuse of these overtime arrangements to reappear just as it was happening before we got rid of the incentive in 2017. Now it can be abused even more because instead of having three months within which to do it, they can do it within six months. We actually end up further behind than we were when we fixed this provision which, to be clear, was the worst provision of its kind in the country. This is what we are talking about.

I know I sound a little bit legalistic right now, but it frustrates me to hear people say things that are not accurate and do not reflect an understanding of the legislation and the way it has been applied and enforced and utilized over many, many years. I think that the people of this province deserve to know what this government is doing to their overtime, and that is why I'm taking the time to explain it, Mr. Speaker. That is why what we are dealing with, then, in fact, is a substantial plan by this government to affect and to diminish the overtime received by working Albertans in this province, in contrast to what they promised during the election.

Now, there are other things that are happening just in the overall collection of changes that this government is doing, and I want to talk a little bit about those as well. We have talked a bit about youth and the youth wage. Now, the argument that is put before us is that what we need to do is cut the wages of youth so that they can get a job. Now, as I've said before, somewhat facetiously but not entirely, is that the logical conclusion of this argument is: hey, let's just cut all their wages. Why pay them anything? Why not get them to pay for their own job? Just think of the jobs we could create if young people paid for the right to have a job. Oh, my goodness, it'd be crazy. I don't know why these guys haven't thought about it yet. I'm a little worried about the next session of the Legislature. We might even see it. Anyway, I think we all know that that is kind of nonsensical, and so, too, is the argument that by cutting wages, we increase jobs.

Let's not just get into a rhetorical fight between us about this. Let's look at the evidence. The minister of labour briefly said: "You know what? We have lots of research that the minimum wage is resulting in a loss of jobs for young people." Then he pointed to discussion papers provided to him by lobby groups for employers. Oh, my, my, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's really important, when you make significant policy changes that do things like drop the wage rate of young Albertans by 13 per cent, that you do your homework a little bit more than simply taking, lock, stock, and barrel, the lobby documents from your lobby groups and trying to call that research. I am sorry, but the restaurant association – God bless them – are there to lobby for owners of restaurants, and that is lovely. But the fact that some of their members anecdotally describe that they're feeling like they might not hire as many people, while interesting and worthy of consideration and definitely a submission that needs to be considered, is not independent, third-party, validated research.

I think it's helpful to look at things like Stats Canada and third-party, independent groups that are perceived to be separated somewhat from the lobby groups that are putting forward a certain position. I would suggest, then, that we do something simple like look at StatsCan. The theory goes that in Alberta we introduced the

minimum wage and youth unemployment rose. Well, as the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford did a lovely job of demonstrating at some point earlier today, which is Wednesday still, there is a difference between an associative relationship and a causative relationship.

Of course, what the members opposite are arguing is that youth unemployment is up and that therefore it must be because of the minimum wage. They are not in any way, shape, or form considering that if youth unemployment is up, maybe it's because the price of oil dropped 70 per cent, sending the province into a recession and that, in fact, unemployment is up everywhere and that, historically speaking, youth are always the most hard hit on these things. In any setting, in any jurisdiction it is sort of a last-in, first-out kind of scenario for them, and that's exactly what happened. One could also make that argument. But, no, these folks have decided that the existence of a recession is irrelevant and that the high youth unemployment is entirely related to the minimum wage.

Well, what we could do, then, is look at another jurisdiction that is going through similar economic circumstances as the province of Alberta that did not change its minimum wage and look to see what happened there, as measured by StatsCan, which is an independent sort of evidence-based agency. What we know from that, then, is that next door, where our good friends in Saskatchewan are, they are not suffering to the same degree that we are from – I mean, they're actually suffering more. Their economy has slowed much more than ours has, and I would argue that that's because of their austerity as opposed to the approach to economic support that our government took, but that's a completely different conversation. Nonetheless, they too did suffer a slowdown because of the drop in the price of oil. It wasn't as big a part of their economy as it was in Alberta, but it was certainly significant, and they did suffer.

In April 2019 their youth unemployment rate was 10.8 per cent, and our youth unemployment rate was 9.7 per cent. Rather than getting lost in the fact that ours is actually lower than theirs – certainly, these folks, I'm sure, if the shoe was on the other foot, would absolutely argue that it's because of the minimum wage, but let's not get lost in that – what we know is that in both provinces there is a gap between the unemployment rate average and the unemployment rate for young people, and the unemployment rate for young people is higher in both provinces. It is more than double in Saskatchewan. It is higher in Alberta but not double.

But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. There's clearly a problem with youth unemployment in Saskatchewan. It's actually, arguably, a bigger problem than it is here in Alberta. They did not bring in a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. So one would argue, if one were engaging in a more sort of balanced analysis, that the minimum wage is actually not the cause of the unemployment rate in Alberta amongst young people, and I think that there would be some evidence to support that based on Stats Canada labour analysis.

**4:20 p.m.**

I think it's really important that, once again, we are straightforward and honest with Albertans about why we are doing this, because this is not about creating jobs amongst Alberta's young people. This is about giving a 13 per cent pay cut to a group of very vulnerable employees, I assume in order to give at least the semblance of giving yet another break to another group of Albertans. I'm not sure exactly why it's being done, quite honestly. That being said, it is very important that we are clear here that this does not reduce youth unemployment. What it does do, though, is that it creates the incentive for higher levels of youth unemployment for kids who are 18 and above.

I can speak quite honestly about the situation. I'll just talk about my family for a moment. I have one child, my son, who started

working when he was 16, and that's great. He's been quite lucky. He got the benefit of minimum wage increases. He's now 20. He's been working for four years. He's got a solid resumé. I mean, it's not like he's, you know, doing nuclear physics or anything – he may someday, which is a whole different issue – but he's certainly got a good, strong resumé of being that person that shows up to work and shows up regularly. His supervisors like him, and he does the job he's asked, and he's got that stuff on his resumé, and that's really going to help him as he goes forward looking for more work. I'm so glad that he's had the opportunity to do that regardless of the nature of the work he's been doing. It's the kind of thing that helps kids get started as they make their way in the world and start looking for work.

Now, on the flip side, my other child, my daughter, has been involved in extracurricular activities, above and beyond her school, to the tune of about 20 hours a week throughout high school. What that's meant is that apart from very, very little, sporadic contract jobs here and there, she really hasn't had too much work experience because she's been so focused on her extracurricular activities. Well, that's great, but here's the deal now. Here's the rub. She's just about to graduate. She's 18. She's about to go out and start looking for full-time employment, probably in the service industry, probably the restaurant services industry, just like her brother. But she's 18, so now she is likely going to find a much, much more difficult time to get that job because folks can hire a whole different group of people for 13 per cent less than they'd pay her. So look at what we've just done here. We've actually made it harder for her to find a job now and for every other 18-year-old who has worked like the dickens to get the kinds of marks they need to be accepted into the programs they need to get into, to do that work.

I mean, folks over there love engineers. They're big, big fans of engineers. I'm a big fan of engineers, too. They're incredibly important parts of our economy. You know very well that it is very, very hard to get into an engineering program at a place like the U of A. A lot of kids in grade 10, when they decide that that's what they want to do and they, unlike my children, listen to the pleas of their parents and say, "Yes; okay; I will go into engineering; stop whining; I'll do it," when they do that, they then have to work. They don't just go to high school. Many of these kids go to high school, and then they go to high school all over again for the remaining eight hours of the day, working to keep their marks up because it is that hard to get into engineering now at university. It didn't used to be, but now the marks that kids are expected to earn in order to get into engineering are through the roof. These kids are working really hard, and some of them, as a result, will not necessarily be getting part-time jobs when they're 15, 16, or 17.

Then when they graduate from high school, maybe if they're lucky enough, they get accepted into engineering. But then they come across the tuition, and they go: "Oh, for the love of God, I'm going to have to get some work. I can't afford this tuition and all these costs without also having a part-time job." And there they are. They're off trying to get that part-time job to help them stay in university, that they worked so hard to get into, a very difficult program, and they're competing with people that get paid 13 per cent less than them now thanks to this bill. So this does not – this does not – reduce unemployment amongst young Albertans, those people between 15 and 24. It shifts the burden, and it actually makes it harder for kids who are 18 or 19 who haven't for a variety of very good reasons broken into the workforce. It makes it harder for them now to get in.

What about those kids that do get into the workforce before they turn 18? Well, you know, I want to talk just a little bit about that, because the Member for Edmonton-South, I think, did raise a very, very good point. I don't know if the Minister of Children's Services

has had an opportunity to be briefed on this yet, but once she is, she will learn that children in care, many of them, by the time they reach the age of 16 will not necessarily be living in a stable family situation. There are more than a few occasions where those children are supported by social workers to live independently or quasi-independently. While they're doing that, of course, they are struggling to cobble together enough money to live on. Now what we've done is that we've said to those kids who are in care but often are not living in secure family situations – they're living in group homes. They're going from foster home to foster home in some cases. They are literally being set up to live independently on their own. Those kids are working to help make their way and stay off the street and finish school and live their lives, and that's the group of kids, under this government's care, that we are now going to force to take a 13 per cent pay cut. It is a travesty.

Quite frankly, if I were the Minister of Children's Services, I would lose my mind on my cabinet colleagues if this is what happens to the kids that I am statutorily responsible for the care of, that the second bill in this House goes after the income of the kids that are under your care to the tune of 13 per cent. Shameful. Shameful.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Then, of course, the Member for Edmonton-South also did a very good job of asking the Education minister to come clean, because, of course, the particularly unique proposed structure of this idiotic plan to roll back the wages of working people under the age of 18 suggests that they will be paid the reduced rate if they're in school. If they can prove that they're 16 or 17 and not in school, well, then they get to keep the minimum wage. What exactly does this do to the objective – I am going to for the moment give the benefit of the doubt to the government, and I'm going to assume that this is still actually their objective – that they want more Albertans to graduate from grade 12 and not fewer? What does it do to that objective?

You have written a bill that statutorily incents kids who are struggling in high school to drop out. You could call this the drop-out-premium bill, in fact. What kind of Minister of Education would sit by while the minister of labour wrote a bill that could otherwise be named the dropout premium . . . [interjection] Sorry. I appreciate that it's a regulation.

Why would you stand by and let that happen? It's a tremendous abandonment of your responsibility. Of course, we don't have a mandate letter. We just have to nail the Jell-O to the wall platform document of the UCP. But I think it was silent on the issue of trying to have more people graduate, so again I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt and assume that the mandate does not include a plan to reduce the number of people graduating from high school.

However, your second legislative action, combined with the regulations coming out of what's probably your third or fourth cabinet meeting, does exactly that. They create a statutory incentive for kids to drop out of school. Just shameful. Just shameful.

4:30 p.m.

Now, we also have the minister in charge of Community and Social Services. Again, that minister is responsible for providing services to, among others, Albertans with disabilities. I assume that by now that minister will have had the opportunity to meet with the stakeholders for that ministry, including self-advocates, people with disabilities as well as people who work on behalf of those people with disabilities. They will tell them that it is not always easy to have people with disabilities find employment. That, of course, not only helps them earn money and improve their living conditions, but it also is fundamentally important to their sense of self and their ability to engage in the community and to live their very best life.

Once again, what we have done with those adults is that we have made it more difficult for them to find that work because we've created an incentive for people to hire people under the age of 18 rather than considering enhancing the inclusivity of their workplace and getting the benefit of an employee who might have particular special needs but at the same time a capacity to do particular jobs as well or better than many others and in a way that would give meaning and direction and substance and joy to their life. But now, unfortunately, that job that they could do with tremendous dedication and loyalty is being given to somebody who can be paid 13 per cent less. Again, the minister in charge of Community and Social Services, who is responsible for these people, I would hope at some point will speak out against this statutory plan to disincentivize the employment possibilities of folks with special needs and disabilities.

Now, this whole issue of the youth wage is, of course, not new to Alberta, and other people have mentioned this, but it bears repeating again. It used to be the case that we had a discriminatory and lower youth wage in the province of Alberta, and then in the '90s the matter was reviewed by the government of Ralph Klein, who many of the members opposite are great fans of. At that time, after the review, the government concluded that the youth wage was unfair, that it hurt employment opportunities of people over a certain age, and that it was a bureaucratic nightmare. Essentially, it created red tape. That's what they concluded. So they wisely, with common sense, decided to jettison that plan.

Now these folks, allegedly the fighters against red tape, not only have created a whole new ministry with staff and people who walk around – and I'm sure we're going to have red tape month sometime soon. We'll all have little, extra-special red tape pins that the government gets printed, and all the extra staff will run around and do red tape photo ops. Oh, it's just a plethora, a red tape jobs extravaganza, a whole new ministry. Meanwhile what we're doing is that we are creating additional red tape for people over there in the ministry of labour.

What we've got is this ridiculous situation. Here's what employers now have to do. Well, of course, they really have to dig in on the age of their workers. That's the first thing. They have to then investigate whether that worker is or is not in school. Well, that's not a big pain in the butt. Good luck trying to figure out that information and ascertain it one way or the other. Then what they have to do is that they have to adjust their payroll system so that that person either doesn't work more than 28 hours, or if they do, their payroll system automatically has some kind of program in it to click and pay them more after 28 hours, which is also complicated. Then, of course, they have to further adjust their payroll system so that when that person turns 18, their pay changes. So it's not just a simple process, Madam Speaker. I would argue that that process, actually, itself kind of sounds a bit like red tape, sounds like a bit of an administrative burden that we are putting on folks.

Now, granted, there is a payoff for it. There's a 13 per cent reduction in payroll costs. But then, at the end of the day, probably you've got to pull back, and maybe it's only now a 9 per cent reduction in payroll costs because the other 4 per cent just went to the administrative burden of that. So I guess we've created red tape jobs for those people who are now administering when and where the employer can actually pay the reduced, discriminatory, pick-your-pockets wage. That is a thing that has been done, and it really makes no sense.

Another thing, of course, that is included in this bill is the plan to scoop out of people's pockets statutory pay holidays. There are a whole bunch of new rules around when people can claim their statutory pay. In essence, when you look at those rules – again, you know, I've got to say that I'm pretty sure these guys have an

unstated antagonism for people who are young. I don't know exactly why that is. This will disproportionately affect, I suspect, young people and definitely disproportionately affect lower income people.

What it does: it particularly means that when people are hired for seasonal work, they are disqualified from getting stat pay. That's in essence what it does. Of course, there are particular times of the year when people hire up, staff up. For instance, if you're in retail, you staff up in November and December in order to deal with the incoming Christmas holidays. But heaven forbid that you are one of those new employees who's been hired as part of that staffing-up exercise. You are not going to get an extra cent when you're forced to work on Christmas Day. What is the profile of the person that takes the job when retailers are staffing up in anticipation of Christmas? Well, I'll tell you. They're young. They're mostly women. They're often students. So, you know, young female students: that's whose pockets will be picked by this particular element of Bill 2.

**Member Ceci:** Same with garden centres.

**Ms Notley:** Garden centres are another group. That's another seasonal place. Those folks will have their pockets picked.

Again, what are we looking at? Lower income people and new Canadians who get pulled into these short, seasonal jobs. And thanks to the plans of this government in Bill 2, they will get less, and they will have their pockets picked by this piece of legislation. Again, it's one of these things where we are choosing to create jobs by taking money away from the people who need it the most, Madam Speaker, with absolutely no indication that the jobs will actually be created. That's what they do there.

*4:40 p.m.*

One other thing that I want to talk about, of course, is the whole issue around the effort of the folks here to take their marching orders probably from Merit Contractors, who, I said, did a lovely job of running billboards all over the province on behalf of the Premier and the UCP for many, many months before the election, I think probably over a year. You know, I'll give them credit. It took them a while because originally their billboards . . .

**Member Ceci:** You couldn't read them.

**Ms Notley:** You couldn't read them. You didn't know what they were talking about. I think that at a certain point Merit Contractors might have gone off and found themselves a better agency. I don't know.

But at a certain point there was no question – big signs all over the place: vote UCP; vote UCP – that Merit Contractors had a clear position, a very clear position on the issue of card check and automatic certification. So they got their gift. They got their quid pro quo. You know, they put up a whole bunch of signs saying, "Vote UCP," and in return they got card check rolled back because they don't like unions. Merit Contractors on its surface is an anti-union organization that exists primarily in the construction sector to undermine the wages of people who work in construction. So they got their gift.

You know, it's interesting. Previously I was talking just on the basic math that we used to come up with the calculation and how the average Albertan who works overtime would lose up to \$2,500 every 12 weeks. I had to allow for the fact that it's not an exact calculation, of course, because we're using a global number of people who work overtime and a global number of overtime hours, and then we're using the average rate of pay that those folks earn. We may be overshooting the amount a little bit because we can't

factor out those people who are on union contracts. It's likely the case that those people on union contracts do make a higher wage, so they push up that average of the wage that we're using to make these calculations, and at the same time they are protected from this pick-your-pockets bill being brought in by this government because of their union contract. The majority, I suspect, of union contracts have particular stipulations with respect to how overtime is paid. That's a benefit of being a member of a union.

But it's interesting. On the off chance that we overestimated the cost to Albertans of the pick-your-pockets bill, by making sure that we reduce the number of unions and we reduce union density by making it harder for unions to organize and we give more opportunity for employers to use their inherent control over the workplace as a means of dissuading their employees from voting for a union, then, of course, that estimate of how much Bill 2 and the overtime pick-your-pockets piece will cost actually goes up. So just in case we overestimated the cost to average working people of the pick-your-pockets bill as it relates to the overtime efforts, people can be assured that the consequence of removing the card check provision will ensure that unions will become less frequent, and therefore the benefits to employers and the loss to workers with the overtime changes will grow. Just in case anyone wants to accuse me of overestimating, we'll get there thanks to this other little gift that the minister of labour is putting into the legislation.

We know that, frankly, if you can get 65 per cent of a workplace to sign a card, that is a strong bit of evidence that you have more than a majority, easily a strong majority of people in the workplace who want to join a union. I won't get into it with as much colour as I did the last time I talked about it with respect to the fiction around the notion that the big, evil union thug is somehow intimidating the poor worker into signing the card given that, in fact, they have very little access to workers and it's the employer that has control of the workplace.

Nonetheless, what I will say is that 65 per cent was a very pragmatic choice on the part of our then minister, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, and ought to have allowed for people to just move on and, in fact, made good labour relations sense on many fronts because it discouraged the polarization and the fighting that tends to occur in workplaces when you have the two-stage process where you compel – even where you have 70 per cent of people signing cards, you still are in a situation where the employer gets another kick at the can to dissuade people from their original indication of wanting a union, and that in and of itself creates discord within the workplaces and enhances labour relations discord throughout the province.

You know what? Folks over there will probably not buy this, but most experts in the field of labour relations will actually say that under NDP governments, labour relations discord, whether in the public or the private sector, tends to go down and productivity goes up. Time lost, strikes, and things that undermine productivity go down because we respect, at the heart, the ability of working people to come together to negotiate their best deal, and we deal with them in a thoughtful, collaborative, evidence-based way, obviously still doing everything you can to get the best deal you can either for the employer in the private sector or the employer in the public sector.

That is why, for instance, we had almost no days lost to strikes even though under the term of our government, strikes in the public sector became legal in Alberta, which they hadn't been for decades. As a result of decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada, they became legal. We didn't have strikes. We did zero per cent increases. We had responsible, adult conversations with them, and I actually think that we did a pretty good job of bargaining. We actually modernized the government of Alberta's bargaining tools and the department and the people that did bargaining. We brought



in experts. We did it on a sophisticated basis, and we actually secured some pretty reasonable deals, and we did it without massive work stoppages and the services to Albertans being undermined. This is actually what, you know, experts in the field will look at, governments over the last four years. Many will argue that, in fact, in most cases it's NDP governments that are most successful at maintaining pragmatic and functional and productive workplace arrangements that recognize the rights of people while at the same time getting the work done.

Anyway, that is a bit of a digression, but I will say that it is unfortunate that the members opposite have a very outdated, unsophisticated, hostile view of the role of labour unions and the degree to which they not only represent their members, that they not only ensure that they have more rights, that they not only protect them, but they also provide a thoughtful avenue for managing workplaces in a way that gets more done and more achieved.

4:50 p.m.

Anyway, the final thing that I wanted to sort of say is that Bill 2, not section by section but generally, certainly reflects in large part exactly the kinds of initiatives that were taken by the BFF there of the Premier, Ontario Premier Ford. They, too, introduced, you know, an open for business or selling off our workers act, whatever the heck they called it – I'm not sure which – something like that. I believe it was about a year ago. I guess that now I'll be a bit hypocritical because I'm going to take a page from the government's strategy of just making associative leaps around causation since that's what we've heard from those folks since we've been in this House, in fact before the last election. So why not? What's good for the goose, as they say.

So they brought in – what do they call it, again? – the open for business, selling off workers bill in Ontario, and what has been the outcome? Well, the GDP is down, economic growth has been revised downwards, consumer spending is down, and jobs are not up. The so-called magic formula of Reaganomics was introduced about a year ago in Ontario: a lot of unrest, a lot of discord, a lot of polarization, a tremendous drop in popularity as well for Mr. We Finish Each Other's Sentences. Nonetheless, not exactly a success story for the economy of Ontario.

Now, folks over there might argue: "Oh, that's just ridiculous. You know, the reason Ontario is struggling is because of all these other reasons." But they happened at the same time, so one thing must have caused the other, because I've just spent the last nine days learning at the feet of the experts when it comes to causative and associative conclusions. Having learned that, what I think I can say is that we certainly have seen no evidence of jobs increasing, of people doing better, of higher levels of consumer spending, of higher reports of better quality of life, any of those kinds of things. There's no flourishing new sector in Ontario where they're all saying: "Oh, my goodness, we have all this cheap labour now. It's great. We're so glad to have relocated here from Alabama, and we are going to completely remake the province of Ontario's economic plan." We are not hearing any of that there.

I would suggest, then, that we don't have the evidence to suggest that what this will do is actually grow businesses or increase jobs. What it does do, instead, is that it answers the demands of a small set of folks who happen to also donate a great deal of money to a variety of PACs that supported this government's bid to become government. In so doing, we are unfortunately going after the people who can least afford it, from vulnerable waged workers; from hard-working construction and oil and gas workers, who have been struggling with the consequences and the drop in the international price of oil for some time now; from young people over the age of 18, who are going to actually find it harder to find

work because they have to compete with people that earn less than them; and from those people who earn less than them, who frankly are now going to be encouraged to drop out of school or who are going to find it even more difficult to make their lives better while struggling in the position of being under the care of this government and, through this government, the people of Alberta.

All in all, this is an incredibly misplaced bill, and it hurts people. It picks people's pockets. For the reasons that I've outlined, this government does not have a mandate to do this, and they should therefore not do it. There are many things that they can do and are doing to try and create jobs, but doing this and hurting people when they really did not have a thorough and upfront conversation with Albertans about this before or during the election is unwise, and the people of Alberta deserve better leadership. I believe the members opposite have the opportunity to demonstrate that by withdrawing this bill and going back to the drawing board.

Certainly, what we also know is true is that there were no consultations. There were no extensive conversations with the young people who are being so negatively affected. There certainly were not conversations with labour groups or construction workers or oil and gas workers about how they were looking forward to losing their overtime. You know, the members opposite used to go on endlessly, maybe not quite as long as we have over the last 24, 26, 27 hours – I'll grant you that this is a bit longer than often. But they did go on endlessly about the need for our government to consult more on changes that were being made. Yet this is being brought in with virtually no consultation. It was buried in their Jell-O platform, and then the consequences of it were denied by the leader. There have been no government-led conversations or consultations with people since that time.

I could actually, probably, burn out, I don't know, 60 hours of the clock in one way or another using whatever tool – and there are many – just reading back all the *Hansard* requests for the government to consult with affected people that the folks on the opposite side of the aisle made over the course of the last four years. I mean, that would be fun. Maybe now they should go back to that thing that they thought was so important. I won't do that this time. Maybe later. Certainly, for now we will not do that.

But I think that those members of the House here on the government side who were here before the last election will recall that this was a common theme in the debate that you led, which was about respecting the people of this province and consulting with them in a more significant way about these kinds of changes that would have such a significant impact on them. I would suggest that a 13 per cent drop in pay to young people is a big one. I would suggest that a barrier for 18- to 24-year-olds to now get employment, because they have to compete with people who are paid \$2 an hour less than them, is a big one. I would suggest that \$2,500 over 12 weeks is a big issue. I would suggest that the loss of pay from denying statutory holiday pay to primarily seasonal workers is a big impact. I would suggest that those people have not been thoroughly consulted in any way, shape, or form by this government.

I will argue, then, that that is part of why we are making such an effort to ensure Albertans are aware of exactly how their rights are being breached through this government's proposed Bill 2. That is why I would urge all members to vote for this amendment. This bill should be withdrawn, there should be consultation, and the member opposite should do more research on what the actual practical impact is of the changes around overtime if he genuinely doesn't understand it yet. Again, we should be reconsidering the issues around union certification and also the issues around why we would attack holiday pay of vulnerable workers.

With that, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take my seat and answer any questions or hear any comments anyone may have. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. While it was a riveting or an interesting idea that the hon. Leader of the Opposition proposed – and I'm sure we would have been very interested in listening to her read all of our comments in *Hansard* over the last four years – I'm going to propose a different direction now and move for unanimous consent that despite what I believe would be Standing Order 7(1), we go back to Ministerial Statements. If the table tells me that I've got the standing order wrong, that would be okay, but that's my motion.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### 5:00 Ministerial Statements

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

#### 75th Anniversary of D-Day

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day, the Allied landing on the beaches of Normandy that led to the defeat of the Nazi empire, to the end of that terrible tyranny, and to the beginning of the liberation of Europe in the Second World War.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Words can scarcely capture the enormous scale of Operation Overlord, the largest seaborde invasion in world history, as 150,000 troops, including 14,000 Canadians, stormed the heavily fortified German defences along a 100-kilometre stretch of France's northern coastline, supported by 110 warships of the Royal Canadian Navy, five squadrons of Royal Canadian Air Force fighter planes and bombers, and a battalion of Canadian paratroopers in addition to 14,000 soldiers of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and the 2nd Armoured Brigade, together landing at Juno Beach and seizing it from the enemy in a single day, at a cost of more than a thousand Canadian casualties, including 359 killed.

Among the many Albertans who participated in that battle 75 years ago today was Gunner George Lynch-Staunton of Pincher Creek. He narrowly survived and returned home to become a Provincial Court judge and later honorary aide to the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. Lynch-Staunton was in the first wave to hit the beach and was almost immediately wounded by a shell explosion that blinded him in one eye. His harrowing account of his captain dying in his arms that day is a moving portrait of the courage and the sacrifice of the Canadian citizen soldiers, the brave men who have fought and died to protect our freedom throughout our history, on that day, and in so many other places.

Ronald Sole of Barrhead was a tank driver with the Fort Garry Horse. In an interview decades later he described in vivid detail the chaos and carnage of the assault, which only he and two other members of his squad survived. After the war Sole initially worked in Edmonton and Camrose as a mechanic, then served as a fish and wildlife officer in various parts of Alberta, and eventually wound up farming until his retirement near Barrhead.

Many Albertans fell at Normandy on this day and many more in the hard fighting that followed before Europe was finally

liberated from the Nazi nightmare, but many more survived, came home, and built the modern Alberta that we know and that we celebrate today.

Mr. Speaker, few of the heroes of Juno Beach are still with us, but I invite all members to join with me in paying homage to them and to all veterans of all of our wars – the Afghan War, the Korean War, the First World War – and other conflicts where Albertans and Canadians have worn the uniform of Her Majesty's Canadian Forces. The decision to serve one's country, to take on the risk and sacrifice that that entails, reveals a lot about the women and men who choose to do so. It demonstrates courage, patriotism, love of community and country, and devotion to the principles of freedom and democracy. Thus, it is no accident that so many of those who make that decision go on after military service to make outsized contributions to our society in civilian life, as did citizen soldiers like George Lynch-Staunton and Ronald Sole.

Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the June 6, 1944, D-Day invasion of Nazi Fortress Europe I urge all members of this House and indeed all Albertans to honour these heroes amongst us then and now. The single most precious thing that we have, our freedom, we owe entirely to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is rising to respond.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Premier for his remarks and for the honour to respond and join him and all members and to add to my earlier remarks. As Her Majesty's Official Opposition liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces it's an honour to rise and pay respect on behalf of all of my colleagues to a very important anniversary that should be acknowledged and honoured in this House and is indeed being honoured today by all Canadians: June 6, 1944, known in the hearts and minds of Albertans as D-Day.

It's important to remember an invasion which marked the beginning of the end of the world war in Europe fought by thousands of brave men and women, more than 4,400 of whom made the ultimate sacrifice and laid down their lives so that the Allies could claim victory, including 359 Canadians. It's important to remember that so many of these women and men left the relative peace and security of their homes in Canada, many barely old enough to vote, to answer the call to defend Canada – our ideals, our democracy, and our freedom – from tyranny, from oppression, and from injustice.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I read about one of these men. Frank Krepps was in France at the height of the war. He had packed his bags and left from Saskatchewan. He was just 17. He had never seen Paris. Today he lives in Red Deer, and he's one of the 36 veterans in the Canadian delegation to return to France today for the formal ceremony. He said, and I quote: in my heart, all of our boys that didn't come home, that's D-Day for me; I'm going over there to say my goodbye.

Mr. Speaker, if we were to walk outside this Chamber, we would only have to go down the steps and into the rotunda of this very building to see the memorials, the flags and their colours, the plaques and the tributes and, above all, the names of those brave Albertans who didn't come home, the names forever memorialized of those who selflessly gave everything that they had, including their lives, so that our generation and all future generations could live in peace, harmony, and freedom. We will remember them.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I'd like to thank the Premier as well as the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for both of your tributes and moving words and all members for allowing the Assembly to step out of where we were to do this important remembrance.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 2 An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (continued)

[Debate adjourned June 5]

**The Speaker:** Prior to reverting to Ministerial Statements, the Leader of the Official Opposition had just concluded her remarks on amendment HA. As such, I believe that Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments. Are there any members wishing to do so?

Seeing none, we are on amendment HA. Are there any wishing to speak in debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I would just like to thank the hon. Premier and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for their words this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the reasoned amendment on Bill 2. I'd like to use my time today to put Bill 2 into context and to reflect on the recent changes that happened in Ontario with Bill 47, on which this bill was modelled. Since, as we know, both the Alberta Premier and the Ontario Premier finish each other's sentences, I thought it would be interesting to do a comparison between the two bills.

As many members of the Chamber will know well, Ontario finally updated their labour laws in 2017 and brought in the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, known as Bill 148. This act was a significant achievement for working people in Ontario. It was decades in the making. Working people in Ontario celebrated the changes as they were finally being given a fair shake in the economy. But in 2018 Premier Ford and the Ontario Conservatives were elected. The reasons for their electoral success were multiple, but Premier Ford promised the people of Ontario more jobs. The details were scarce, but the people voted for jobs, jobs, jobs.

5:10 p.m.

Shortly after getting elected, Premier Ford's new government took some pretty drastic actions. In 2018 the Ontario Legislature decided to reverse the gains won by hard-working Ontarians with Bill 148. Now, Premier Doug Ford made some pretty bold claims. He told Ontarians, and I will quote: we're getting rid of Bill 148; we're going to make sure that we're competitive around the world. Sounds familiar. He promised more jobs; sounds familiar. Higher standards of living; sounds familiar. A better quality of life; also sounds familiar. He was making Ontario open for business, and working people were going to benefit. It was a great exercise in political communications, to be sure, but the reality of his actions are now being felt by the working people in Ontario.

As I said last night, one of the major things that we've been hearing consistently around Bill 2 here in the Chamber is how important the changes in Bill 2 will be for the hospitality and service industry, but as we know, in Ontario currently the GDP in the area of service and hospitality is actually negative 3 per cent, and the Ford promise is not being delivered as advertised.

Mr. Speaker, what was Premier Ford's promise, and what was in his bill? As I said, he promised jobs, jobs, and jobs. He introduced

Bill 47, Making Ontario Open for Business Act. Sounds familiar? I think Alberta's Premier may have borrowed the idea. Some may say that it was vice versa, but I'll leave that matter up for debate. In fact, the bill we are debating today, for the last 24 hours or so, is based on the work done by the Ford government. So what did Ford's Bill 47 do? Well, according to labour activists in Ontario it turns out to be – and I will quote – a sweet deal for big employers, and families got screwed.

Let's look at the details of this Ontario bill and some of the similarities here in Alberta with Bill 2. First of all, the minimum wage was rolled back. In Ontario the legislated minimum wage was rolled back from \$15 an hour to \$14 an hour. Right now in Alberta this UCP government is rolling back from \$15 an hour to \$13 an hour for youth. In Ontario provisions for workers regarding paid sick days were rolled back, as were the rights to use bereavement days for kids' emergencies. In Alberta provisions for workers regarding paid stat holidays were also rolled back. In Ontario the Ford government rolled back the rights of workers to determine whether they should join a union. In Alberta with Bill 2 we are seeing the same initiative to roll back workers' rights when it comes to their choice to decide whether they want to operate in a unionized environment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Ontario's Bill 47, Making Ontario Open for Business Act, is not identical to Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. There are some differences, but these differences are on the margins. The general policy thrust of both bills is the same, and more interestingly the political communications have been the same. The message is the same, and the message to voters is simple: more jobs, jobs, jobs, and jobs. But let's peel back the onion; the reality is a little more complex. It goes something like this: let's hurt working people, let's roll back wages, and let's take away your banked overtime; then and only then will working people be better off.

[Mr. Jones in the chair]

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all know the Ford government, after winning a large majority, isn't quite so popular anymore, and I think that for the UCP that's worth considering. Beyond the sensational headlines and the day-to-day scandals, I think the reason for their decline in popularity is actually pretty straightforward. The Doug Ford promise didn't work. The evidence is out there.

What is the evidence? Well, let's look. If we're going to follow the path of Premier Ford, then let's look at whether or not he's been successful. In Ontario, following the changes introduced by Bill 47, the open for business act, economic growth slowed. Projections have been revised downwards. Ontario is now projected to grow at the slowest rate since 2013 according to Stats Canada. Again according to Stats Canada the unemployment rate in Ontario actually went up as the open for business act gained traction. Is this surprising, Mr. Speaker? I don't think so. It's not a surprise that the economy might suffer when wages for real working people get cut and therefore families struggle to make ends meet.

Now, Mr. Speaker, recall the political promise of the Ford government: jobs, jobs, and jobs. How was this to be achieved? Well, according to the rhetoric it was to be by empowering business. Sound familiar? Quietly, by empowering business, what the Ford government meant was that they were going to punish workers. Sounds familiar. They hoped that the trickle-up strategy to business would eventually trickle back down to workers.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Again, let's look at the evidence in Ontario. Are reductions in wages for working people in Ontario actually trickling up to

businesses and then trickling back down? Let's look at the most recent TD Bank provincial forecast for Ontario. What's changed? Well, Mr. Speaker, they are experiencing a real, pronounced, and significant slowdown in consumer spending. What logical conclusion can we draw? Workers now have less money by virtue of legislation, and therefore those workers, who by definition are consumers, are spending less money, and that's hurting their economy but also the broader business environment.

What else has happened in Ontario? Well, according to the TD Bank business investment has slowed significantly. It isn't a pretty story. And it's not just the TD Bank. Scotiabank has also reported a similar trend. Following the adoption of Bill 47, Ontario's economic growth slowed. Let me repeat that again: according to Scotiabank Ontario's economic growth slowed. Again, not a pretty story.

To my hon. colleagues in this Chamber, I urge you to take a step back and hit the pause button. No, we're not in Ontario – you're right; we're here in Alberta – but you're adopting the same legislation. Let's seriously consider what happened in Ontario when they adopted their piece of legislation. It isn't pretty. It's not going to be pretty.

We can't grow the economy here in Alberta by hurting working people. Hurting young people by picking their pockets isn't the solution. The idea that cutting wages for young people, letting the dollars trickle up and then maybe trickle back down will somehow create a better life for young people and other workers is actually a fantasy. Even Premier Ralph Klein, yes, the king, knew it was wrong and changed the practice. I honestly can't believe I'm saying this, but I think all of you need to listen to Premier Ralph Klein.

**Ms Hoffman:** So Harper this morning and Klein this afternoon.

**Ms Sweet:** I know. Harper this morning and Klein this afternoon. I am NDP, I promise.

Mr. Speaker, the idea that we can rob workers of their overtime pay and that somehow this will make these workers better off is also a fantasy. We've seen the evidence. The strategy has been tried before, and the report card is out. The strategy got an F, a failing grade.

Let's not repeat the mistakes of Ontario. Let's not pass Bill 2. Let us continue to stand up for working people, and let's drop the political rhetoric around Bill 2. It's not a saviour piece of legislation that's going to create jobs, jobs, and jobs. It's a piece of legislation that will hurt working people.

I thought we'd moved past this point in Alberta, where we were trying to punish workers just based on an economic strategy, but perhaps we haven't. I guess it remains to be seen. We still have time. We can change our direction. So I urge all the members in this House to use your conscience and protect all workers in this province and vote against Bill 2.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any wishing to make questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any others wishing to debate? The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to have the opportunity to be back in the Legislature today to continue on in this important discussion about Bill 2, the somewhat Orwellianly named An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

We've had the opportunity to talk about a lot of different aspects of this bill. I think my colleagues have highlighted a number of different areas, but the one that comes to mind for me, again, is the

impact this could potentially have on youth. You know, just earlier today, Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of attending the mayor's lunch for Reach Edmonton, Reach Edmonton being a fantastic organization here in the city that works on a number of fronts to create safe and sustainable communities. That involves a lot of different work. They act as sort of an umbrella organization with a number of local nonprofits here in Edmonton. They do specific community work. They've done some fantastic outreach with the Central McDougall Community League here within Edmonton-City Centre, and they've always been a fantastic partner, have always attended when I've had community barbecues.

5:20 p.m.

I really appreciate, in particular, the work they do with youth. Mr. Speaker, Reach Edmonton, as I mentioned, generally work as a partner organization with others. For example, they work with the Africa Centre and the Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area to provide a youth mentoring program, the name of which, unfortunately, is escaping me – perhaps it's my lack of sleep, but at this point I can't recall the exact name of the program – but I know that it is one that has a significant impact.

Particularly, I know, from my work in talking with folks at the Africa Centre, the difference this made in the lives of many young people from the African communities who have been struggling with various issues, whether that's academic, whether that's been family life, whether that's been involvement with gangs and other unsavoury groups, or whether it's been, you know, delving into substance use. Through this program those young people have been able to get ahead, get a good foot up and a leg up. A lot of that, Mr. Speaker, then, will often involve those young people getting the opportunity to begin to get a job and get good work.

In many cases, Mr. Speaker, as many of my colleagues have talked about and as we've discussed here, these youth are coming from new Canadian families, so oftentimes their parents have limited English, limited understanding of the culture. These young people, from a very young age, have been required to be support for their family. They have been translators for their parents. They have sat and provided that bridge for the parent-teacher conferences. In some ways that's where the challenge comes in for some of these youth sometimes in that their parents are struggling, often working multiple jobs at minimum wage or for fairly low remuneration, so these young people are left to take up a lot of slack.

Oftentimes, then, they themselves, you know, once they have worked through some of these issues with the support of an organization like Reach Edmonton, are looking for work and looking for that opportunity to make a living. Mr. Speaker, after all that work they do, after all that time they put in to pull their lives back together, after everything that's invested in them so they can go back and support their family and try to get themselves ahead, a bill like this steps forward and says: and let's pay them \$2 less an hour.

Now, through the Africa Centre, Mr. Speaker, they also have an excellent program, that receives some funding through, I believe, a Canada jobs grant, which works with young people from those communities to help prepare them for better work. They offer them training in writing a resumé, they offer them training in interviewing skills, and they offer them training in computer skills and other things to prepare them for many different opportunities within the workforce.

They also offer mental health first aid training, emotional support resiliency, to prepare these young people to be able to go out and get a job and move ahead. These youth face discrimination sometimes in finding work because they may look a little bit different, because they speak a bit different, because they may

present themselves in a slightly different way because of the culture that they grew up in. Indeed, from the day-to-day pressures of what we recognize, of what we know exists in terms of systemic racism, which can target folks who are new to Canada, it can often be a challenge for them in terms of building up their self-esteem and believing that they are worth having that opportunity and that they deserve to have that chance.

This program, again, Mr. Speaker, invests in them, prepares them, helps them to build these skills so that they can go out and get a good job, and it provides a subsidy to employers to hire those youth and give them the opportunity, and we want to, with this bill, turn to them and say: but your work is worth \$2 less an hour. Somehow the work that these youth would do, what they would bring to the table, is considered more frivolous than if they were a year or two older.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from my colleagues. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Manning just laid out very clearly that initiatives like this are not seeing success. They are not improving the economies in places like Ontario. We heard from the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition today that the issue with youth unemployment in Alberta is clearly not derived from the minimum wage. As we recognize, in neighbouring Saskatchewan they have had a higher youth unemployment rate, and they have a lower minimum wage than we do here in Alberta. While some members, in defending this bill, have shown a penchant for confusing causation and correlation, we recognize that there has not been any evidence so far brought to this House that what they are purporting this bill is going to do is in fact going to occur.

That is one of the main concerns that I have with this bill, Mr. Speaker, and why I have been happy to be part of this opportunity for us to have a very thorough discussion. Indeed, I'm very pleased to see that the broader public has been paying close attention to this debate. Indeed, the Premier himself took the opportunity to recognize that this debate was going on. He suggested that my colleagues and I were here because we were angry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, certainly, I would say that there has been a good deal of passion expended on this bill and, I think, reasonably so. As we've outlined, some of the tenets in this bill I think could be potentially very damaging. But I think we've been relatively measured in our discussions. Certainly, I don't feel that I've personally expressed any anger on this bill. I recognize that I can be a bit emphatic at times, I've been told. My childhood dream of being a preacher one day, of being a youth pastor, is something that may come through a little bit sometimes in my public speaking. I can't say that I could aspire to, say, the level of the great Dr. Martin Luther King or some of the other great black gospel preachers, but it provides perhaps a useful template at times. But even then, you know, those individuals at times were characterized as being angry. It was generally characterized as being angry when people wanted to shut out and turn off and not have to listen to what they had to say.

Now, that's, I think, a common rhetorical practice that we've seen from this particular Premier and this particular government, and fair enough. I recognize that this particular Premier is a gifted rhetorician, and I have the greatest of respect for that. He has the greatest skill in putting forward a narrative, whether one views that narrative as being particularly factual or not, and putting it forward quite emphatically and repeatedly, without wavering, and I can certainly recognize the skill and the ability that's involved in that. But on this particular bill I have to emphatically disagree with this Premier's narrative.

Youth in this province are not facing difficulty in finding employment because of the minimum wage. I emphatically disagree with this Premier's and this government's belief that youth

in this province are facing difficulty in finding work solely because of our government or even with the more moderate version of that that he likes to put forward, that we aren't responsible for everything but that we made a bad situation much, much worse. I fundamentally disagree with that take on things, Mr. Speaker.

As I outlined yesterday in, you know, the discussions on Bill 3, talking about the 4 and a half billion dollar hole that this government wants to punch into our budget to give money away to profitable corporations, we are dealing with a complex number of factors that are interplaying. Certainly, we are dealing with some decisions of previous governments in how they have gone about, I guess, incentivizing, whether by direct action or by indirect action, the types of opportunities available in our economy, the types of opportunities that they provided for young people, recognizing that our energy and resource industry is certainly a fantastic opportunity and avenue for employment, the trades and everything that's associated with that, but recognizing that at the same time it is volatile. In many respects I think we did not properly prepare many, in particular, young men in this province for the realities of that shift, so they were hit quite hard by the world-wide drop in the price of oil.

*5:30 p.m.*

We see that the youth unemployment rate, which, of course, we recognize, Mr. Speaker, spans up to the age of 24. That includes a number of younger people who wouldn't necessarily be in this category for the question of the minimum wage.

Also on this bill, Mr. Speaker, talking about troubling characterizations or particular narratives, as I mentioned in previous debate, the kind of conversation we've heard from government members when they sat in opposition and indeed at times now about unions and labour in this province, suggesting that in a situation where you have folks who are discussing unionization, generally the situation is that we always have one hundred per cent saintly employers and absolutely evil union thugs – we recognize that neither of those extremes is true.

As I was quite clear yesterday, I certainly respect employers in this province. I respect the people that start businesses and provide jobs for their workers, and I believe that the majority of those individuals are doing so with the right motives and wish to treat their workers well. But I also recognize, Mr. Speaker, that we have all of history to demonstrate that there are and always will be bad actors, and we need to have reasonable protections and balances within the system to ensure that workers have the opportunity to, when necessary, come together and organize, to be able to advocate for their rights, and to look out for their own self-interest.

Indeed, as this Premier knows because he is an incredibly successful organizer – that is another thing I greatly respect about him. He is well known for his ability to organize multiple communities, whether that be folks from various faith communities, whether that be folks from various immigrant communities, and he's very good at working with them to help them come together, generally to advocate for issues that he wishes to move forward, but also very good at bringing them onboard and believing that those are their issues, too. Really, ultimately, that is what it is about with the organizing of a union.

Now, I recognize that we have a difference of opinion between our side of the House and theirs as to, I guess, the validity of card check as a part of that. This government wishes to roll that back and go back to simply having the voting method that existed previously. You know, in the conversations that I've had with both workers in unions and others that have been involved in various situations, I've personally found or what I've heard is that a card check system with a threshold like 65 per cent is one that is reasonable and effective

and gives a little bit more opportunity for workers to be able to organize without fear of intimidation. I've seen and I've had folks reach out to me, Mr. Speaker, who have shown me examples of when they've had employers that have tried to intervene in the process. Again, I don't see this as being a majority, but I recognize that there are some. For that reason, I do not support rolling that back as part of this bill.

My initial thoughts, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Why, thank you to the hon. member.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Longest Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly

**The Speaker:** In just one brief moment I'll be happy to call Standing Order 29(2)(a). However, if I can indulge the attention of members just ever so briefly, I would just like to perhaps note, as many of you are adamant observers of legislative history, that just a few minutes ago we passed a certain threshold together.

You may be interested to know about the top five longest sittings we've had here in the history of the Legislative Assembly. I stand to be corrected by the library over the weekend, but here's what I believe to be the longest sessions that we've had. The fifth longest occurred May 9, 2007, when the Assembly convened at 8 a.m. on May 9 and sat till 10:45 a.m. on the 10th. The fourth longest occurred November 9, 1993, when an evening sitting began at 8 p.m. on November 9, and the House rose at 4:11 on the afternoon of November 10. The third-longest sitting occurred on May 28, 2001, when the evening sitting began at 8 p.m., and the House then rose at 5:20 on May 29. The second longest, December 4, 2007: the session started on the 4th at 8 o'clock, and it rose on the 5th at 5:53.

At approximately 5:24 the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre brought us all through a threshold that now makes this the longest Wednesday that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has ever seen. While I offer no comment about whether that is good, bad, or indifferent, I merely observe and am but a humble servant of the Assembly, so only you will decide how much that record is exceeded by.

With that said, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West rising on a brief question or comment.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre a couple of questions. I must say briefly, as a comment before, that I am a veteran of the two longest sittings. I was there in 2007 as well and, of course, here today, so maybe we can make a commemorative T-shirt or something like that. If you can give me your sizes, I will see to that.

You know, it's interesting that when you go through this process, it's cathartic in a way, but it also helps, I think, to sharpen one's senses, ironically, though you might feel tired. What it does do as well, I think, is that it hones the skills of people to be able to think of all angles around a specific issue.

Specifically, on Bill 2 I just wanted to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre to elaborate a bit in regard to the effects of taking the overtime and how he saw that kind of unfold during the course of the election. I found it to be a very interesting experience, to see how people built their budgets for their families or individuals working on projects up north and so forth. I guarantee that you probably ran across the same sort of thing, where people, you know, are counting on banked overtime to do other things and to get time

with their families because, of course, you work in an isolated area and so forth. It's a question of time as well, and it's sometimes a question of being able to work another job even – right? – if you are trying to make ends meet. So all of those things came together. I mean, we have banked overtime for a reason. It just didn't appear out of the air, right? Rather, it was a deliberate and considered way by which to fairly compensate employees. I'm just hoping that the hon. member might give us some further insight in that regard.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It looks like I have a couple of minutes, so I'll just begin by observing, just tagging onto your observations earlier, that it seems to me that in your role, both in observation and in your neutrality, you are somewhat akin in the Legislature to the Watchers of the Marvel Comics universe. Just a thought that occurred to me, probably due to lack of sleep.

That said, on the overtime pay, you know, I appreciate that my hon. colleague brought that up. That's certainly something that I considered and thought about. I was speaking earlier about Reach Edmonton. One of the programs they have is called all-in for youth, in which they provide youth mentors who work in local high schools as part of a program where they provide social service supports not only to the students but also to their parents and families, a very successful pilot program that I'm hoping will see continued investment.

**5:40 p.m.**

I had a young man who worked in that program who reached out to me to talk about the challenge he faced around the question of overtime because he used banked overtime in order to be able to serve youth. He was set on an eight-hour day, but then often youth that are in need don't follow the clock. So he'd have them come to him at the final hour of the day, and he would need to spend a couple of hours sometimes with those youth. He would do overtime. Therefore, he would bank that overtime, and then he would take that as time off. He came to see me because he was facing a challenge with some of the changes, and he wanted to find a better way forward. What we did was that we sat down with him and we talked about the opportunities for averaging agreements. I helped connect him with officials in Labour, and he was able to get support to have that discussion and look to find a way forward.

But what we did not need to do, Mr. Speaker, is remove a protection that's there, as my hon. colleague said, to protect workers who need that overtime, who count on that pay. We did not have to put people in a position where they could potentially be exploited by an employer, as was laid out quite thoroughly by the Leader of the Official Opposition today. There were options, and there were ways to work around that to adjust those circumstances for what we recognize was a unique situation. That strikes me as being the more reasonable way to proceed on this than simply to tell all Albertans that for some reason an hour of overtime when they've worked it is worth an hour and a half in pay but . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your comments, Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung is rising to debate.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise on this historic day in this House and, first of all, to acknowledge and thank you for bringing to our attention the sitting record, which we've just set, as the longest sitting in this Legislature. I know I had a chance meeting outside in the hallway earlier this afternoon with the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, and he was asking me, just in passing, how long I thought

we might be sitting today. He was on a later evening shift, apparently. I responded in my role as critic for Agriculture and Forestry as best as I could, saying that it depended upon when the cows came home. We'll find out, I imagine. However, it could be that this sitting goes down in the annals of legislative history as a question in a new version of Alberta Trivial Pursuit or perhaps even a *Jeopardy!* question that Alex Trebek might one day pose to a contestant.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

However, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of the historic nature of today's debate, not only the length of time we're debating here but on the auspicious day that we hold this debate, je voudrais faire une dédication de mes remarques à deux soldats canadiens que j'aimais beaucoup, avec tout mon cœur. Both these Canadian soldiers, who I love with all my heart, suffered greatly in their earlier lives, before serving overseas, in horrendous working conditions.

I'll start first by speaking of my grandfather, who I mentioned earlier, Joseph Edouard Napoléon LaBelle, who went overseas to Dieppe in 1945 and landed not too long after D-Day. Before his service overseas, as I mentioned, he endured horrendous working conditions in Canada, as did countless other Canadians of his generation. He was born in Verdun, Quebec, in 1904 and came with his family to Alberta in 1911, speaking French only until he was about 12 years old. Later on, in 1929 he faced difficulties on his homestead north of Edmonton, in Thorhild, and found that he had to leave for work. He went to the Quebec forest and the bush in Quebec, to lumber camps in the dead of winter in 1929. He got there, Mr. Speaker, not on the Trans-Canada highway, because it didn't exist, of course. The only way to cross the country efficiently then was by rail and steam locomotive. Of course, going to seek your fortune in Quebec to find a job so you could survive and perhaps keep your homestead alive here in those days was something that you did by riding the rails, as they said, meaning you jumped on a moving train and hoped to heck you didn't get kicked off of it till you got to your destination.

He did arrive in Quebec and he worked in the bush in Quebec with poor clothing, bad food, horrendous bosses, and near starvation conditions. I've heard numerous stories from him about that. He survived it, but ended up getting news by way of a letter from my future grandmother and his future wife who clandestinely wrote to him to let him know that during November of 1929 there had been a horrific ground fire in Thorhild that got whipped up by big winds, and the whole town actually went up in flames, the grain elevators, every house, surrounding farms, including the homesteads of both sides of my family. The whole village was gone. Train cars full of paint and other things blew up, and the whole town went down in flames.

My grandfather came back, after enduring those horrific working conditions in Quebec, to nothing. He even had a cache of lumber that he had hoped to build a small house with on his homestead. That burnt up as well. In fact, the only thing my grandparents were able to save from their homestead were the two buffalo robes they buried in the ground as they escaped the flames.

**Ms Hoffman:** What about the one-eyed pony?

**Mr. Dach:** The one-eyed pony came much later in history.

I do want to get back and circle back. The reason I bring up my grandfather's hardship is because he endured all that, and generations later we're doing the same thing here in Alberta where we're struggling to improve working conditions for people, and we're facing a government who is wanting to dial back working conditions for workers here in this province. I find it very

disappointing that after all of his struggles and those of my father, the other Canadian soldier I wish to speak about, just two generations later we're suffering the same fate, where this pick-your-pockets bill is making it more difficult for young workers with a wage differential and where people have to bank their overtime at a lower rate, where the minimum wage is being reduced arbitrarily.

On this 75th anniversary of D-Day I think it is a very sad comment that we find ourselves in this Legislature debating a bill that takes us backwards to a time when labour legislation really was much less than it is right now, but going backwards is not the direction that we should be going in. I don't think it's the direction my grandfather or my father had hoped we'd be travelling in 2019.

Now, my grandfather ended up coming to Canada, and he started that homestead. In 1933 he married my grandmother, Winnifred, and in 1935 my mother was born. But a few years later, when she was five years old, they came back from a one-time trip in the mountains in a borrowed car, and the next morning they woke up to an absolute killing frost. Like, their crop was dead. It was nothing. It wasn't salvageable. They didn't know how in the world they were going to survive, and my grandfather blurted out that if he had five bucks, he'd join the army. My grandmother, thinking they'd never take a man who was about 37 years old with about a half-section of land and two farms that he was helping to farm and a wife and child, never thought they'd take him, had saved five dollars for the rolley man who they expected in their absence and who never came. She handed him the five dollar bill and said: "Hey, go ahead. Knock yourself out."

He ended up applying, he was accepted by the military, and he was gone for 62 months. That was in service here, training, first of all, then in England, and then finally landing in Dieppe shortly after D-Day in 1945. That man suffered some horrendous working conditions throughout his life, worked extremely hard, joined in service of his country, and eventually became a successful farmer and, in his later career, the postmaster for the village of Thorhild, which was the final job that he had, a proud member of the postal workers' union.

5:50 p.m.

To the next generation: my father, who did actually join and served in what was then overseas, as described, because Newfoundland was not yet a part of Canada in 1947. He got as far as Newfoundland, and that was deemed to be overseas service during wartime, which qualified him as a veteran. He also served at a time when conditions were difficult and worked before that service in some pretty horrendous working conditions as well. Both of those gentlemen have now passed away, but I remember both of them on this day with fondness and love as I reflect on the bill that we're debating today and the fact that we're going backwards in labour legislation in this province, something that they would be very, very sad to know about. I hope that my contribution to the debate today might make people pause in this province and raise their awareness and give them the voice and allow me to be a vehicle for them to counter the movement of this government towards diminishing the rights and conditions of working people in this province.

Hopefully, the people that are watching this – and I know that the longer this debate has gone on, there's a greater level of public attention that's been garnered. People are starting to pay attention in this province, especially over the last few days. It's really raised and galvanized a lot of people. When they know that it's their kids and it's their grandkids who are being targeted by this legislation, whether it's minimum wage or whether it's the wage differential, they're looking across the street at their neighbour's kids or their own children or grandchildren and saying: hey, this government

wants to take \$4,000 out of the pocket of the young man across the street or my grandkid.

It's the pick-your-pockets bill for sure, and it's a bill that's definitely targeting workers. It's a bill that is basically what I call an open season on the working people and on labour legislation in this province. I'm very sad to say that we've come to this day. On a day when we reflect on the service to Canada that thousands and thousands of women and men dedicated themselves to in a horrific Second World War effort against Nazi Germany, I'm sad to say that we're looking with less than full pride at a piece of legislation that would take us in a regressive way towards a labour law, an environment that they, my grandfather and my father, strove to counter in their generation and hoped that their efforts would have contributed to a more progressive and enduring march towards worker's rights and benefits than we're witnessing here in Alberta today.

Our Ontario cousins are being heralded by our current Premier as being forward looking. In fact, when you do add up all of the measures that are being undertaken by this bill and those that we find in Ontario, the net effect is negative and it does hurt working people. It hurts young people and it diminishes their ability to save for university, to assist their families. It's something that is being used to pay for large tax cuts that the government tries to tell us are going to incent investment in this country when, in fact, the opposite has been shown to be true. It's with very mixed emotions, Mr. Speaker, that I stand before you today and talk about this bill before us, knowing that the generations of Canadians who fought so hard to protect this country and establish the rights that we have see themselves rolling backwards in time.

I for one intend to do everything I can to follow the direction of my constituents in Edmonton-McClung who have told me to stand firm and make sure that their rights, the rights of their children and grandchildren in terms of labour law, are protected in this province and that we end up looking forward to always improving the rights of workers, the rights to associate, the rights to form a union, the rights to engage in union activities, and the rights to make sure that their working conditions and wages are improved, something that we never forget is a foundational value in this country.

I think that anybody who doesn't recognize the ability to associate and to form a labour union without impediments is somebody who doesn't recognize how important and foundational the union movement is to democracy. It's a pillar of our democracy. It's the foundational right of association that many, I think, across the aisle in the UCP government fail to value, and I think that's something that we as the NDP opposition will continue to counter. Hopefully, we'll be reaching those that are most affected by this legislation and garnering an unstoppable force so that in the next four years the sides have changed, Mr. Speaker, and we'll once again be sitting to your right and, in terms of labour legislation, turning the clock forward.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments. Seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for his comments. I feel like I'm getting to know his family much better through some of the narratives that he's sharing about hardship and perseverance and determination and, certainly, about connections to homesteading in Alberta. I was wondering if the member might wish to comment more about the importance of having fair compensation for fair work with regard to his rural connections.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been fortunate enough to capture many of the stories and many of the historical moments of my grandparents in particular on a tape, which I quoted a couple of times. I think it probably might be within the rules of the House to expect me to table five copies of those tapes once I can get them transferred onto an electronic device that I think the library could potentially house, and if indeed that's Mr. Speaker's expectation, I would see fit to undertake to get that done. I do have a copy of the tape that, I think, would be copiable, and I have already spoken with the library of the Edmonton public school board and McKay Avenue school to seek assistance in making copies of that tape so that it could be housed in the library there as well as here if required as a tabling.

The working conditions over generations, of course, have improved in this province, but that's a direction that we should continue to go, and going backwards is not something that Albertans elected this or any other government to do in terms of labour legislation. When we come to think about a wage cut – and we have different arguments on both sides of the House in terms of what the relative benefit or harm might be – I believe that our arguments carry the day when it comes to knowing that particularly the young people, who suffer a \$2-an-hour wage cut as a minimum wage earner, almost \$4000 a year, are probably sitting in disbelief and wondering why in the world their government would see fit to do this to them.

I think those young people who are under 18 years of age right now who are feeling victimized by this government's move to reduce their minimum wage, those single moms struggling to keep their families afloat who were suffering the same indignity, those individuals who are trying to go to university by saving up enough money in a minimum wage job who see the legs cut out from underneath them by this draconian cut to their minimum wage earnings: all of these people are really, really feeling disappointed, Mr. Speaker, in today's legislation that we are so strongly opposed to.

6:00 p.m.

I think the population of this province will recognize that we are absolutely committed to having their back and ensuring that somebody stands up for working people in this province. It certainly isn't the government because this legislation is an attack on working people. It's a threat to labour peace in this province as well. I know that everybody is watching what Alberta is going to be doing. We know on this side of the House that we're doing everything we possibly can to raise awareness of the damage that it's going to do to the pocketbooks of people who are affected but, not only that, also to the rights that we enjoy under our Canadian Bill of Rights and labour legislation. They're being chipped away at, chipped away at by this government, who doesn't see fit to recognize the value of individual working people. They see fit, certainly, in ensuring that corporations get 4 and a half billion dollars in tax cuts, but they're going to pay for it by having our kids and grandkids take a wage cut, by having our kids and grandkids suffer a wage differential even though they're doing the same work at the same place of employment, by having our working people have overtime . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak on the amendment? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this House to support the amendment to Bill 2. I think this is a very reasonable amendment proposed by my colleague. I don't find there's any



reason not to support the amendment on this particular bill that takes very important changes in hand.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to remind that we all celebrate Labour Day in Canada to commemorate and to pay tribute to all the sacrifices, struggles behind all the achievements the labour movement has had. Eight-hour working days, regulating that all workers can get paid overtime, and how they're entitled to get stat holidays: these achievements were not made in one single day or one month. There is a history behind them. People advocated, people struggled for centuries and centuries for this, and it took the precious lives of great, I would say, leaders, workers to achieve these achievements so that the ordinary people, the ordinary workers of any province, any country, any state can have a respectful working environment and can find a decent job to live a respectful life.

The changes proposed by this bill I would see as not really backed by evidence, and that's why it's lacking even a guarantee that it will bring the kind of proposal this bill is showing, a guarantee that it will contribute, attract investment, or that it will stimulate any kind of employment or create jobs.

Looking at all the proposals in the bill and the kinds of changes in hand, I think that this amendment is a very, very reasonable amendment to the bill. By not accepting this amendment, it will give just a very, very wrong impression that we are not really serious, that we are just kind of trying to push something that is driven by their ideological or their philosophical belief. My colleague the Member for Edmonton-Manning already highlighted, you know, that the Ford government, in the direction they have taken in Ontario, is very similar. We have seen the changes, not exactly but in the same directions, and that did not really contribute anything that was proposed, that they will create more jobs. Instead, they are contributing more loss of jobs, and that's why even the Ford government, which just came into power not very long ago, are losing their popularity very, very fast.

This bill proposed, you know, wage cuts to youth workers, union rights on collective bargaining. As I already mentioned, that is a hard-fought right that workers have. That's the only right that guarantees to them they can stand up for their rights and that they have a right to negotiate their salaries and their benefits. Not giving enough time and just trying to, it seems like, push this bill through the sitting, it's probably not driven by very – I don't know – reasonable or good faith. We are not trying to achieve anything by passing this bill in a rush. We should give enough time to see. We have already passed a bill. We are already discussing so much that Bill 2 already proposed. Bill 3 proposed the largest, you know, tax giveaway to corporations and that it will create jobs. We have a number of changes going through this House, and we have a reason to see those things, how they move forward, and we have plenty of time to work on these things. Not giving emphasis to this amendment will somehow show that this is kind of a systematic attack on workers' rights, workers' achievements that they have fought very hard for for years and years, for, I will say, centuries.

I will say that it was my privilege, my pleasure, and my honour to rise in the House and speak in support of this amendment. I will encourage and request all my colleagues, on both sides of the House, to please support this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration standing to speak.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a few moments to set the record straight concerning comments made by the members opposite. I would like to discuss two items: first, the

youth job-creation wage and, second, to touch on comments that have been made concerning red tape.

Now, the hon. member suggests that the minimum wage has no impact on employment. I'd like to make a couple of comments about that. First, the hon. members are avoiding the findings of independent third-party research. I noted in my earlier remarks, Mr. Speaker, that Canadian empirical research has generally found that a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage reduces employment among teens by 3 per cent to 6 per cent. This is not research conducted by advocacy groups. Rather, this includes studies by the Bank of Canada and academic studies such as one published in the *Journal of Labor Economics*.

Now, I recognize, Mr. Speaker, that there is some debate among economists on this issue. Certain studies have suggested that a modest – and I repeat: modest – increase in the minimum wage may have limited negative impacts on the number of jobs. However, let's be clear. What was done by the previous government was not a moderate increase; rather, this was a significant increase by nearly 50 per cent in a few short years in the face of a tremendous economic downturn. This theory was borne out by studies conducted by the Calgary Chamber. Calgary businesses did in fact lay off or reduce job opportunities for Albertans as a result of the minimum wage, and youth in particular were hit hard. The fact is that this increase in the minimum wage and other changes, such as changes to the general holiday pay, negatively impacted jobs in Alberta. Youth were those the most impacted.

6:10 p.m.

Now, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has suggested that we reduce the minimum wage to zero dollars an hour to create more jobs. Mr. Speaker, let's be reasonable. We are suggesting \$13 an hour, and this remains one of the highest minimum wages in the country. But let's apply that thinking in reverse. Let's say that the NDP increased the minimum wage to \$20 an hour, \$30 an hour or, let's say, even to \$50 an hour or that the minimum wage was a hundred thousand dollars for every employee in Alberta. Would jobs stay? Would employers actually pay these wages and still remain open for business? That's certainly not the case, and Albertans have more common sense than that. The minimum wage has an impact on jobs. The theory supports this, our experience in Alberta supports this, and sadly the opposition cannot see this. Again, our focus is about creating opportunities for the thousands of Albertans, particularly youth, who do not have a job, giving them the experience and the skills they need to prepare for the future.

One other topic I would like to just touch on and briefly talk about is red tape. It has been suggested by the hon. members opposite that these changes we are suggesting in Bill 2 will create a tremendous amount of red tape. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, this is not the case. Regarding the youth job-creation wage, we spoke to a number of employers in Ontario. Their HR systems manage this seamlessly. Payroll systems are available and designed to handle these types of policies and can be modified to do this and, once modified, handle them automatically.

Regarding general holiday changes we're suggesting, we are simply reverting to the rules that were in place for years, and actually these rules were in place only a couple of years ago. Payroll systems were in place to manage these systems then. They can be put back in place now. The same applies for systems to manage changes to banked overtime. Once again, this was in place a couple of years ago and was in place for quite some time prior to that. The argument that these changes will create a significant amount of red tape, again, is not the case.

Our focus, Mr. Speaker, is about creating jobs for Albertans and, in particular, our youth. It is also about creating greater flexibility

for workers and employers and supporting workers' rights. This was a commitment made in our platform. The hon. member suggests through this amendment that we should wait six months. I submit to you that our youth can't afford to wait. We need to get Albertans working and get our youth working again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to continue in the last 30 seconds under 29(2)(a)?

Other members looking to speak to HA? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has the floor.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking forward to going back to my constituency this weekend and telling my constituents that I just heard 60 people applaud cutting wages for 17-year-olds by 15 per cent. That certainly will not go over very well with the people of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I think that it won't go over very well with most of the people in Alberta once they find out what the members opposite have done.

Before I make my comments, I want to just respond to some of the things that the Member for Calgary-Varsity raised in his response to the comments made by my colleague from Edmonton-Meadows. You know, he talks about the minimum wage and the fact that all reasonable people agree that raising the minimum wage has a negative impact on jobs.

I want to say a couple of things. First of all, you know, as I've mentioned in my comments before, Ontario has actually looked at this issue of whether or not the student minimum wage has had a positive impact on youth employment. There was a report generated by the Ontario government. I believe the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has shared that with members of our caucus. In fact, they can find no discernible effect on youth employment by providing a student minimum wage. The people who have reviewed the impacts of the student minimum wage have actually recommended that it be removed and that students be paid the same minimum wage as every other worker who is paid the minimum wage. I think it would be interesting for the Member for Calgary-Varsity to obtain a copy of that report and perhaps read it over the weekend and rethink this issue of the minimum wage, because if he thinks that reducing the wages for 17-year-olds by \$2 an hour is going to have a positive impact on youth employment, he's dead wrong, and there are solid facts to support that.

You know, on the other issue around red tape and changing systems, that these were systems that were in place a couple of years ago so it's not a very big deal to go back to them, obviously he's never had to change the payroll system of any organization in his career. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I got an earful from my mother when we made the changes to the general holiday pay. My mother is a payroll clerk for the St. Albert public school board, and she had to spend a significant amount of time updating the payroll systems for the St. Albert public school board to change the banked overtime and the general holiday pay rules, and now she's going to have to spend a significant amount of time reverting to the rules that were in place.

When I say "significant," this is not a couple of hours or a couple of days. This is many weeks of work that she had to expend making these changes, which is especially frustrating because we know that the Minister of Education is going to be taking an axe to the budgets of the school boards in this province. So now people, like my mother, who are in charge of payroll in school boards will have to go back and do the work that needs to be done, spending precious resources that could be better directed to supporting students in classrooms. I don't think that's what anybody in this House wants, so that's why I think it's important to support this amendment, Mr.

Speaker, because those are some of the unintended consequences of this bill that I think need to be examined before members pass it.

You know, the main focus of the comments that I wanted to make with respect to this amendment and why I think that it wouldn't be prudent to read this bill for a second time now but to wait six months and examine the impacts of this bill are the rules around overtime. I had the opportunity to listen to some discussions undertaken by a man named Nick Hanauer. Some people in this Chamber may know him. He's a venture capitalist from Seattle and also an advocate for better wages and working conditions for people in the United States of America. He said that one of the things that occupies his time as a manager of a successful multibillion-dollar business is managing overtime, that in fact when companies have to pay their employees a premium, they manage their overtime very carefully because it affects the bottom line quite significantly.

But when the rules are changed and overtime costs the same as regular time, well, then that creates an incentive for employers to just run their employees ragged and not carefully manage their overtime. And, perversely, it doesn't actually make it easier for them to hire people and create more jobs, Mr. Speaker, because if you've got two people who you can work for 60 hours a week, that's a lot easier, for a number of reasons, to manage than three people who are working 40 hours a week.

So that's the system that this bill is going to set up. We had a temporary reprieve from it for a couple of years, where people, you know, could bank their overtime hours at a 1.5 to 1 ratio and people were getting compensated fairly for their work. But there is no evidence to suggest that reverting to a 1 to 1 overtime banking ratio will create more jobs. In fact, it will actually just increase the incentives for employers to run their employees ragged and take advantage of them.

6:20 p.m.

It actually creates financial incentives to hire fewer people and make them work longer hours, which is exactly the opposite of what the members on the Treasury benches say they want to do. They want to create jobs, but here they are passing overtime banking legislation that will create a financial incentive for employers to not create jobs.

You know, I understand that people elected the members opposite to create jobs – that was their big promise – but here we have in this bill a financial incentive for employers to do the exact opposite of what the members on the Treasury benches say they want to do. I think people will be very upset to find out that they're trading in lower wages and not seeing their friends and neighbours going back to work as a payoff for that, that a lot of people will be made worse off and that nobody will be made better off as a result of this.

That's why I think it's important to not read this bill a second time but to take six months, actually engage in consultation with employers, see how they manage their overtime, talk to them and get a sense of whether or not limiting overtime banking to a 1 to 1 ratio will have a positive impact, do an analysis of the employment impacts where this has been in place, and do a crossjurisdictional analysis to see whether or not different overtime banking regimes have a positive effect.

It's interesting to me that, you know, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed's bromantic partner, Doug Ford, created an open for business act that didn't actually affect the overtime pay for people in Ontario. People in Ontario can still bank their overtime at a 1 to 1.5 ratio, and in fact unemployment in Ontario is much lower right now than it is here in Alberta. What is it that's magical about overtime banking in Alberta that's preventing employers from hiring more people and that's not preventing those same employers from hiring more people in Ontario? I would like, you know, to

engage in some consultations and understand completely what it is that may make the Alberta labour market unique to justify this move to banking overtime rates at a 1 to 1.5 ratio.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I also want to revert to some comments about the minimum wage in relation to Ontario. The Member for Calgary-Varsity says that they modelled the minimum wage on the Ontario program. As I mentioned earlier in my comments, when I looked at the minimum wage structure in Ontario, I see that Ontario froze their minimum wage to \$14 an hour for the calendar year of 2019, but they're committed to raising all minimum wage earners' wages by inflation from 2020 on. It's legislatively tied to inflation.

The Member for Calgary-Varsity should know and everybody here knows that our minimum wage is not linked to inflation. So what is the plan of the members opposite for making sure that people who – and I really do hope that these measures create jobs. Like I said, I'm very skeptical, but if they do, what's, then, the plan of the members opposite for making sure that those minimum wage earners don't fall further behind? You know, the cost of living is going to continue to increase, as it always has, here in Alberta, and especially if the economy picks up again, the cost of living will go up quickly.

What is the Member for Calgary-Varsity's plan to make sure that minimum wage earners don't fall further behind? If he actually structured the minimum wage program to closely model the Ontario plan, he would have linked it to inflation so that at least people who were getting into the minimum-wage work at \$13 an hour, instead of the \$15 an hour that they were originally promised, would have some light at the end of the tunnel. They would know that they're taking a temporary pay cut, that over time their wages would increase with inflation, and that at least they wouldn't be falling further behind than the 15 per cent cut that they're putting them at. But they're not doing that, Madam Speaker.

I really question whether or not they're sincere in their attempt to use the minimum wage cut as a way to increase employment. I wonder if it's actually caving in to the corporate lobbyists that have advocated vociferously on their behalf, like Restaurants Canada, who have long advocated for minimum wage decreases and certainly are major opponents to minimum wage increases. That would be interesting to know, Madam Speaker.

I have to say, you know, that the restaurant industry is not unified on this issue, on the issues around minimum wage and overtime pay. The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona had a very well-attended press conference earlier today with a lot of restaurant owners, in fact, here in Alberta who support a \$15-an-hour minimum wage for all. I'm glad that we have restaurant owners who understand that paying their employees a fair wage is better for their own business and better for the communities that they serve.

I'm privileged in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar to have a restaurant called Cartago. The owner of that restaurant ran an op-ed in the Postmedia outlets during the election campaign speaking out against Restaurants Canada's move to reduce the minimum wage, and she wrote at length about the benefits that her restaurant has seen by paying their employees a fair wage. They have a lot less turnover. You know, it takes a significant amount of time to hire and train somebody to do the work well in a restaurant, and once you've put that effort in, Madam Speaker, it's beneficial to her as a restaurant owner to be able to keep those people on staff.

By paying them a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, she's seen a lot of retention in her employees, so she doesn't have to waste a lot of time and energy continually retraining new people to do the same

tasks. She also knows that her people are happier when they're coming to work and able to support themselves and their families on the wages that they're earning at her restaurant. They have less stress in other areas of their lives, so they're better employees. They work better with their colleagues, and they provide better service to their customers because they're much happier people. That improves the restaurant.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, please remember to table the documents that you referenced in your speech.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for your analysis. You know, some edification around real-life examples: I think that helps to have any given bill sort of jump off the page and become real either through stories or concrete examples of how people might be benefiting from the protections that the current labour reforms do allow and/or how individuals might be exposed in the absence of those protections. I was interested to hear about your example of a restaurant that you have in your constituency. I just fail to remember the name of it. I just was intrigued to know about the quality of life that paying a fair living wage does afford restaurant workers and how that will benefit or translate into a successful, more stable business environment, especially for the restaurant industry.

I think many of us at some point in our lives have experienced working in restaurants, and you know that, for example, if you're not being paid very much, you rely on gratuities. The gratuities and tips come and go, and it can be a feast or a famine, quite frankly. When we look for ways by which to make life better for Albertans, I mean, these sorts of regulations and standards for protections are significant. If you just perhaps could edify us a little bit more on that area of discussion that you were just engaged in, I would be grateful.

6:30 p.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for his thoughtful questions. You know, certainly, one of the things that we heard when we embarked on this project to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour was that tips were going to dry up, that because restaurant workers were going to be so highly paid, nobody would be able to afford to leave tips for restaurant workers anymore. The Member for Edmonton-North West touched on tips and how unreliable a source of income that can be for people who work in the restaurant industry.

Certainly, it was interesting to me that, you know, this restaurant that I mentioned opened up in my constituency a couple of years ago. They knew full well that the minimum wage was at \$12 an hour, I think, at that time and going to \$15. That didn't impact their business plan, and in fact it's probably one of the most successful restaurants in my constituency. I drive past it regularly, Madam Speaker, and morning, noon, and night that place is hopping.

I'm glad to see that businesses can be successful while paying their workers a fair wage. That's something that we've always talked about – we've talked about this in Bill 2; we've talked about it in Bill 3, the tax giveaway bill that's proposed – that businesses can be successful while their employees are successful, too. Everyone benefits when that's the case, and that's why we wanted to raise the minimum wage and create an economy that works for everybody and doesn't just select the wealthiest top percentages of the population, that actually lifts people up out of poverty and

creates those opportunities that would be denied them in other circumstances because they didn't have the finances to take advantage of them.

You know, certainly, the facts bear out what we've seen with this particular restaurant in my constituency, Madam Speaker. Even though Alberta has gone through a very difficult recession, restaurant receipts are up to record levels. They've been doing very well in tough economic times and at a time when wages for their workers have been going up. I think that that's a tremendous success story that needs to be more widely shared and not taken down.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any more speakers to the hoist amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to colleagues who've participated in this debate thus far on Bill 2 and, specifically, the hoist amendment, which reads: "Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business" – a.k.a. the pick-your-pockets bill; it doesn't actually say that in the amendment, but that's the vernacular – "be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

I want to say that it's been quite an exciting week. Oh, first I want to say that I just noticed that it must be a date night for the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods because I see her husband is looking adoringly from the gallery. I imagine other people's spouses might be watching on their phones or other ways. Anyway, it must be date night. That's what I wanted to say.

Now I want to get back to what an enlightening week I think it has been. I want to start by saying that on Monday the Speaker introduced the family of William Daniel Dickie, the former Member for Calgary-Glenmore, and we had an opportunity to hear about some of his legacy. Of course, one of the pieces of his legacy was bringing forward a motion to create and publish *Hansard*. I can't actually read the debate from the debate about creating *Hansard* because, of course, it wasn't created yet, but I imagine that some of the discourse was probably around: "You know, it'd be a nice idea. It'd be really interesting. It's probably going to cost way, way, way too much money because, of course, we'd have to pay people to create *Hansard*." But I think that there is value in doing things that cost money. I think there is value in paying people for their work.

I want to say that one of the other things I found enlightening just a few minutes or hours ago – it's hard to tell the difference some days. The Speaker referenced that this has been the longest consecutive sitting of the Legislature in Alberta history. He referred to the sitting in December 2007 in which the Member for Edmonton-North West, then the Member for Edmonton-Calder, was an active participant. Because we have *Hansard*, because of Mr. Dickie, I was able to go back and look at some of the history of that night's debate.

For the recollection of all members here, I think it's important that we consider the historical context we are in today, which is a great sense of concern being raised by the opposition, as there was in 2007. In 2007 the bill that was being considered was the Alberta Utilities Commission Act. It was introduced, actually, on June 14. Here we are in June as well. Because there was so much concern initially on June 14, the government chose to wait until November to bring it back for second reading. It was in second reading for two days in November, a third day in December, and then, depending on how you read the days, December 3, 4, and so on. When I had a chance to do a little scanning of the *Hansard*, bills that had this much concern or at least the last one that had the House go almost as many hours as this House is going – I looked a little bit at some

of the back and forth and what happened during that debate that night and then the days that led up to it.

One of the things that I found very interesting is that – again, I haven't read quite all of the *Hansard* yet, but I imagine there will be more time in this place to read more of the *Hansard* – as I read, it appears that there were at least 24 government amendments brought forward to that bill, the bill that initially had concerns raised, concerns brought forward. The government tabled it, took some time to think about what to do, and then came back with a number of amendments because the government had some concerns. Eventually it did pass – it absolutely did – after that very, very late night sitting, which the Member for Edmonton-North West, I'm sure, recalls with great precision, all of the details of that night's debate. Eventually it did pass. But there were, it appears, at least 24 government amendments brought forward to that bill because there was so much concern about it.

What I want to say is that just because a bill has been presented and because it's already made its way through cabinet for recommendation to this House, it doesn't mean that we need to pass it in its current form. I know that there are many members here who probably feel pressure to do so, but I want to say: feel free to look at the *Hansard*. Feel free to see all of the additions that government members brought forward to try to take a bill that had a great deal of concern to the people of this province – some were probably in the government members' own ridings at the time. Think about ways that you might be able to help make people at home feel excited about this bill. I'm sure that the members who were part of the debate back in 2007 were initially excited or at least thought they should be excited, but when they had a chance to see just how much concern and outrage there was in their communities and across Alberta and how many issues had been raised, they certainly paused, took some due consideration, and they themselves created a number of amendments to bring it back, to try to make it better.

I am saying that I recommend this hoist for the reasons that my colleagues have already mentioned. Also, I think it would behoove us – it gives us an opportunity, rather than having to work through the messy amendment process, which, of course, we will do if that's what happens, for government to take the opportunity, through this hoist, to actually develop a bill that they can be excited about and that I think they can sell with confidence rather than saying, as the Member for Lethbridge-West mentioned earlier – I know we've talked about pick your pockets or take your toonies. All those young people who are living in our ridings who weren't old enough to vote in this last election but will certainly be old enough to vote in the next election: they will absolutely be old enough to vote in the next election, and they will have opinions about the way that they have been treated by their government. I think that it would be of benefit for us to take the opportunity to reflect on the lessons learned, number one, because of Mr. William Daniel Dickie's motion to create *Hansard* and, number two, because of our ability to actually learn from history and not repeat the errors of the past.

6:40 p.m.

A few of the areas that I think require a significant re-examination and reflection. I would hope that individuals, either through government amendments or through passing this hoist amendment, then take the opportunity to bring back something. Specifically creating a class for discrimination based on age: I think that's a big old red flag. I think you've heard that from many of us, and I imagine you're probably hearing it from some people in your own constituencies as well. That would be one area that I would imagine would be some room for consideration.

When I'm thinking about the progress that we've made on human rights – and I know other people have talked about this. I can't help

but think about how – it depends on how long you imagine history being, but not that long in world history has it been since we said: it's wrong for kids to work in unsafe work conditions; it's wrong for kids to work in coal mines. And I imagine that if there was *Hansard* for the day, there would have been extensive debate saying: you know, of course, we don't want to treat kids this way, but it's just not the right time. So to say to kids, "Of course, we don't want to make you a lesser class of citizen, but it's just not a right time to treat you equally in terms of your pay for your work," I think, is problematic. I think we have an opportunity to pass this hoist and then take the opportunity to rewrite this in a way that doesn't create that case for discrimination based on age.

I think our leader, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, did a really lovely job of describing the two different scenarios – two children, very similar and very different in many ways, one who started working at a young age, one who was going to start working this summer at not quite as young an age – that difference between being under 18 and being over 18, and how not only will discrimination based on age for income, by lowering the minimum wage for youth workers, create a disadvantage for those youth because they're taking less money home, but it also has the potential to create a disadvantage for people over 18 because they could be seen as: you know, is it really worth that extra \$2 to pay somebody because they're a little bit older? So it can work for grounds for discrimination on the other side of that toonie as well, both sides of the toonie working against regular workers here in this piece. That's one of the major areas.

Of course, the other one is around overtime pay. I know that I have already touched on some of my concerns around the seasonal worker piece, but I do need to reiterate that that requirement for 30 days of employment before a statutory holiday, qualifying for statutory holiday pay, I think, is mean, and I don't think it, again, respects young people. I think a lot of young people and, actually, probably a lot of older people as well like to work seasonal work. I know of a number of retired folks who don't mind spending a few months in the garden centres, right? They're kind of keen to spend some time in the garden centres, pick up some extra cash, pick up these fun, seasonal opportunities for employment, and it certainly could create an uneven playing field both for them as well as for the youth worker.

Then, of course, the general overtime pay provisions: moving from time and a half to straight time, I think, is again a direct attack and something that creates a very uneven financial situation for the people of Alberta compared to virtually every other Canadian jurisdiction. I think that we shouldn't be striving for the lowest standard; I think we should be striving for – I think the Minister of Transportation said, "Just achieve average," when he was debating last night. That was one of the things his constituent said: just be average. Well, I will tell you that this proposal is far below average. Going from time and a half, which is essentially the Canadian standard, to straight time is undercutting the value of the workers that all of us represent in our ridings and across the province.

Then the last piece, of course, is some of the attacks on the rights of workers to organize. I have a colleague and friend who is a labour lawyer, and when I said, "Why did you go into labour law? Were your parents union members, or did you grow up with parents who were working as labour lawyers?", that friend said: "No, actually, not at all. I was really interested in human rights law, and I saw that it's the union that actually drives a lot of human rights cases." Ordinary folks can't afford to get a human rights lawyer on their own individual salaries, but if we pool our resources together, we have the ability to fight for one another and to create a stronger world. Inspired by some of the French I heard earlier: nous sommes plus forts ensemble. We are stronger when we are together.

I think that it is an affront to the rights of people to organize to say that we're going to move back and take away your rights to be able to organize in a timely fashion. I think the 90-days piece is a concern. I think getting rid of the card check is of concern to me and I know to many people who want to have the right, if they're being discriminated against, to exercise their human rights to organize and to fight for fairness. That's, to me, what a lot of the union workers I've met over the years have done.

Some of my first exposure to union workers. Of course, my parents were both teachers, and both of them were members of the union. There were times when they had to turn to their association, to their union and get some support, and rightfully it was there for them and it had their backs. The same when I was with the Edmonton public school board. I spent a considerable amount of time with the ATA but also with the three different CUPE locals that were represented there. CUPE 3550: these are the educational assistants and the admin staff in schools. They're not exactly people that would typically, walking down the street, make you think: oh, there's a union thug. This is the lady who greets you and your family when you drop your kids off at school. This is the person who helps a child with a disability be toileted during recess. This is the person who makes sure that somebody with a disability has an opportunity to learn how to read. These are a lot of – often women, but not always – the kinds of unionized folks that I spent time with.

When I asked about their history with becoming organized as a group, they said: well, members of the board didn't respect us, they didn't respect our wages, they were rolling them back, and it was important to us that we stand together. Somebody actually, one of the board members, maybe even the chair at the time, said: well, this is just to give I think it was pin money to moms who don't want to have to ask for extra allowance from their spouses. Well, I'll tell you, that mobilized those women and the men who also worked with them. They were deeply offended by that, and they knew it was important that they have a united voice and the ability to fight for fairness for them because, honestly, the working conditions of our educational assistants in our schools are the learning conditions of those kids they are tasked to work with. Attacking the right to organize, I think, is an affront to fairness in our society.

All of this being said, the last time in Alberta history when we went on this long for debate, it resulted in the government having some reflection and coming back with 24 amendments to their own legislation. We can either pass this hoist tonight – you can go home, and you can think about this and talk about it with each other about ways that you can amend this bill to come up something that you're more proud of – or you can vote to pass it through all stages as quickly as you physically can. But at the end of the day, I know that I talked to my loved ones, and I know how important it is for me to be able to say that I did what I thought was right.

There will be times where you will be left with the decision to say, "I did what I was told" or "I did what I thought was right." I think it is very important that all of us be able to go home to our communities and to our loved ones and be able to say: I did what I thought was right. This is an opportunity to do this, hon. members. I think you've seen the commitment that we in this House and I know many others across this province have to make sure that we have fairness and that we have, I would say, as the Minister for Transportation said, an average playing field. That was what his constituent aspired for him to achieve. I think what we have is very fair and reasonable and many would say average, and I think what this bill proposes is to bring us back and to reduce that threshold.

I think that's what I wanted to say.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Perfect timing. Standing Order 29(2)(a), comments and questions. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for her remarks. I'm hoping to tap into her experience being a school board trustee and, of course, the chair of the public school board. With 26 schools in my riding I'm very proud, very excited about the students that go to these schools. One of the things that we talked about during this entire debate is, of course, about creating the jobs, but I still fail to see any discussion around the students 17 years of age that already have jobs and why they should maybe be consulted around this legislation. With your experience in the school board you obviously have had multiple, multiple chances to be around students, to talk with students, to find out how they view things. I was wondering if you might be able to share some of those experiences about how important it is to tap into our young emerging leaders and how we can form legislation.

6:50 p.m.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Maybe I'll tell one quick story about during the campaign period, not that long ago. We know spring break fell in the middle of that campaign period, but the first Monday after spring break, in Edmonton anyway, I happened to be at Westmount mall. Busy place, especially during the lunch hour, when the students from Ross Shep high school across the street have their lunch break. That food court is packed, and it is a hopping place. A few of the students recognized me because I've been around the community for years. I was over chatting with them, and I said a couple of things that I thought that they should be thinking about as they head into the election. One, I said, "There's a proposal to roll back your wages." They said, "That's not fair." I said that, two, there were considerations around GSAs that were, in my opinion, going to be threatening, and now we've seen through the introduction of Bill 8 that certainly they are very threatening. I heard somebody actually already refer to it as Bill Hate, so that's interesting. Then the third one I mentioned was provincial achievement tests and how diploma exams are going to go back to 50 per cent.

I have to say that the response and reaction from those youth were amazing. We had a really interesting debate. One said: "Well, but why would they want to do that? What would be the benefit?" I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to talk about diploma exams another day. I said, "Well, they say that if you get paid less, there will be more jobs." They said: "Are you kidding me? Like, we have four people that work our shift at the restaurant. How are there going to be more jobs? We don't need five people. If we have five people, I'm going to have less work. You staff the people that you need at your business to support the supply and demand situation that you have there." So I thought it was pretty interesting.

Anyway, it evolved to a number of them saying: "Where's your office? I want to come and volunteer." That was a lovely surprise and a pleasant treat, and I really enjoyed working with them. I'm grateful that they helped me get back here. Those are the kinds of people that I'm fighting for every day, and that's why we've been here for the longest Wednesday in Alberta history. It's going to be an interesting one, folks.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** About a minute and a half under 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, any speakers to the hoist amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to the amendment, this hoist amendment, and to the broader bill. I'll try to keep my comments fairly concise, but I just want to start, actually, with the title of this bill, An Act to Make Alberta Open for

Business. Now, I've read through this a couple of times and, quite frankly, still fail to see how this is making Alberta more open for business. There's nothing in here about, you know, what work the government could be doing to attract new investment here in the province, how it's supporting new businesses, whether start-ups or companies that are looking to scale up, or how it is making it easier or better for businesses to do business in Alberta.

Now, Madam Speaker, I'm very proud to live in the best province in the country to start a business, to live, work, and play and recognize that although we are the best, there's always room for improvement and ways to make things better. Now, for me one of the challenges of this bill – and I'll just jump right to it – is the full-frontal attack on working people. During the election campaign I do not recall the Premier nor this UCP party, now government, then party, telling Albertans that they were going to roll back or give employers the option to pay out banked overtime at straight time.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that every Albertan that I've spoken to relies on their overtime pay to pay their bills. That's part of the reason they take certain jobs that they do. This applies heavily to our energy sector, which, of course, is our largest sector in Alberta and really the driver of our economy and the driver of the Canadian economy, as well as our construction sector. Conversations that I've had with workers in this government's attempt to pick their pockets, hence why we dubbed this bill, really, the pick-your-pockets bill – I think that would be a more accurate title for it, quite frankly. Workers that work overtime do that knowing that they're going to get it, whether it's time and a half or double time. To put this under the guise of: it's an agreement between a worker and an employer. I can tell you that, you know, obviously, there are some incredible employers throughout this province, incredible companies with incredible reputations, who treat their workers very, very well. Unfortunately, like in all sectors, there are some bad apples. There are some companies that will take advantage of this provision and either tell a future potential employee, "Sign this contract with straight time, or we'll find someone else who will," or negotiate – and I'll use that in loose brackets; really, it's more people being volun-told – how they're paid or how their banked overtime is going to be paid back to them.

This is a significant issue. I know that some of my colleagues have pointed out numbers around \$2,500 a month, and the Leader of the Official Opposition went in depth, did a breakdown of where we came up with the number on average of \$2,500. It's not precise but more of a ballpark. The point is that this legislation will allow employers to not have to pay out banked overtime at time and a half. I view that as an attack on working people.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, from the doors that I've knocked on and the constituents that I've talked to and Albertans around the province that this is something that this government is trying to bring in, is something that, they said, they sure as heck didn't advertise that during the campaign. For a government that says in one breath, "Oh, yes, we're doing everything we said that we were going to and we told Albertans" yet tried to accuse us during elections of not being forthright or forthcoming with Albertans, well here's a prime example of a piece of legislation in week two of this brand new 30th Legislature. This government is going right after the very people who built this province and who keep this province moving and the economy running. So I have serious issues with their proposals when it comes to overtime.

The other thing that's interesting. I know the minister recently got up to speak about trying to clarify the holiday pay. I mean, this is another attack on working people. I know that some of my colleagues have given many examples of folks working at Christmas or other holidays that now have to go back to a

qualification period. What's interesting about this is that Alberta is the only province in the country that once again will not have this holiday pay. You know, it's interesting for the minister to say: well, this was the way it was a couple of years ago, so why can't we go back to it? Well, I guess that once upon a time minimum wage was, you know, \$2. Why can't we go back to that? The fact is that, again, recognizing – and I do recognize that this is an additional cost to, especially, small businesses. I recognize that a hundred per cent, but again, workers that are working on holidays deserve to get that pay and shouldn't have to qualify to get it.

For me, really, one of the things we tried to do when we were in government is that we would always do crossjurisdictional scans, looking at: what is the common practice in other provinces across this country? I mean, we have a very diverse country. We have great examples across the country. If I recall, especially around the cabinet table we would look at at least three or four other provinces. We'd look at Ontario usually all the time, one of the largest provinces. We'd also compare to B.C. and Saskatchewan, being our close neighbours, and then either Manitoba, Quebec, or the Maritimes to look at what the rest of the country is doing as a benchmark. Are we ahead of the pack, are we trailblazers, or are we laggards?

[The Speaker in the chair]

Quite frankly, you know, Mr. Speaker, there are some areas where we are leading the pack and trailblazers and very proud of it and then other areas where we are laggards. I can tell you that one of the reasons that our government raised the minimum wage is because Alberta was a laggard in minimum wage even though we had some of the higher costs of living and higher rates of inflation than other provinces. Because of us being so reliant on commodities and being an energy province, we are more susceptible to the booms and busts, more so than many other provinces. That also gets into why we focused on working with job creators to help diversify the economy, providing them with the right tools to be able to grow and expand.

7:00 p.m.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think, for us, looking across the country: that once again Alberta will be the only province that doesn't compensate for holiday pay or provides the caveats around qualifying for it – it's not automatic for workers – is not something that we should be proud of. We were proud when we fixed this and amended it in our term, and quite frankly it's shameful that the government is proud to bring the province back into the dark ages when it comes to this.

A couple of other issues, briefly, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to card check and union certification, I know that this government has a disdain for labour, organized labour, and I can say this because in many debates in this House there were members who are current members today who were members of the former party, Wildrose, who spoke at length demonizing unions and attacking their very purpose – right? – which is to bargain and be one voice, collectively supporting workers. Anyway, we don't need to go into what they are. Maybe we do, actually.

But the issue of card check: I mean, essentially, in Alberta it was a two-step process if a work site wanted to unionize. We know of examples where there have been, when work sites wanted to unionize, employers trying to break that, where there have been intimidation and threats. I can tell you that I've been on the front line with workers at different job sites trying to unionize.

Again, this isn't all companies. There are some that are incredible, that have incredible relationships with their workers, employer and employees. We applaud those companies. I think of, actually, the casinos that have a brilliant relationship with their

employees. The one casino, the brand new one in West Edmonton Mall: I'm trying to think of the name of the company. Regardless, I applaud them. They have an incredible relationship with their workers, value them, pay them a very good wage, and they are very, very loyal and very hard working.

Anyway, the card check. I mean, it's not like it was a 50 per cent plus 1 and suddenly everyone would be unionized. The bar, the threshold, was set fairly high, at 65 per cent. So what this did is just ensured that employers couldn't interfere in this process if that was the will of the majority of workers.

**Ms Hoffman:** Significant majority.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yeah. Sixty-five per cent is a significant majority, I mean, especially when you think of – even in this place, when members receive 65 per cent of the popular vote, that is a significant portion. We set the bar fairly high because we wanted this to be able to hold up to scrutiny.

But, again, you know, it's an unfortunate provision in this pick-your-pockets bill, which we've been discussing now for, I think, well over 22 hours. Yeah. Time flies when you're having fun, Mr. Speaker.

It's not part of this bill, but we know it's coming, and I just want to touch on it briefly: my frustration with having a two-tiered minimum wage. I strongly believe that equal work deserves equal pay. I don't care how old you are, the colour of your skin, who you pray to, who you love. You should get equal pay for equal work, and to say that we're going to try to help youth by paying them less is demeaning to young people. It's saying: you're not as valuable as others. You know, this isn't an internship, although I know the minister loves to compare them: it's going to give them some experience. Well, you know what? If that young person is doing the same thing that a 40-year-old or a 60-year-old or an 80-year-old is doing, it is ageism. It is discriminating against a person for their age, justifying it by paying them less, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it's shameful. We will be talking about that.

I love to talk about, again, the fact that for a while in this province we had a two-tiered wage for people in the liquor industry. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in my 20s I worked in restaurants and bars. That helped put me through university. You know what? For people to say, "Oh, they get so much in tips; they don't need it": frankly, when I hear comments like that, they're usually from people that are quite ignorant, who have never worked in the industry, in the sense that if they had, in every restaurant or establishment I've worked in, the employee has to, at the end of their shift, pay out a percentage to the house, to the cooks, to the managers, to a number of people. If a person gets stiffed – that lingo means, you know, that they have customers that come in, they pay for their meal, but they don't tip or they tip a very, very low amount. What can happen – and it's happened to me, and it's happened to colleagues of mine: they end up having to pay out of their pocket to work that shift because they owe the restaurant money. This practice happens.

I know that people may jump up and say: yeah; well, you could take them to the labour board or whatever. You know what? First of all, good luck in that, and if you try, you will be out of job. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I worked in a couple of different bars where the employers refused to pay a wage after 2 a.m. Now, do you think that the staff went home at 2:01? We went home around 5:01 in the morning after cleaning for hours and hours, yet the employer refused to pay. Is that illegal? Yes, it is. The second that a person would take them in front of the labour board or file a complaint, they were out of job. Again, that is not all practices. I've worked for some incredible owners that have done an amazing job taking care of their workers, treating them very, very well.

Again, this is to talk about: what we need to try to do is provide and ensure that there are provisions to protect workers so that – it may be few – bad apples don't have the ability to take advantage of working people. That's why I encourage all members to vote in favour of this hoist.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on 29(2)(a) are there any wishing to ask a brief question or comment of the member?

Seeing none, on the hoist amendment, are there any wishing to debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the hoist amendment to Bill 2, the bill that we have given the name the picking-your-pockets bill. Our hoist amendment reads: that the bill "be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence." The reason that I support this hoist amendment is because I think that we very seriously need to spend more time discussing the contents of this bill and consulting with Albertans about this piece, making sure that Albertans have a chance to fully understand what the government is proposing and to register their thoughts and opinions.

Let me start by saying thank you to all of the members who've contributed to this debate, either in full on comments on the bill or on amendments or in questions and comments under 29(2)(a). We've had a lot of really good discussion throughout the day, the night, and then the day again, and I really appreciate it. We're now at this point where it is Wednesday within this Chamber but Leg. Friday outside of the Chamber, as Thursday is often referred to. I'm very pleased that we were able to have such good discussion throughout, and I know that when this piece of legislation moves into Committee of the Whole, we will have the opportunity to continue the dialogue and at length discuss the pros and cons of this piece of legislation.

7:10 p.m.

As I discuss this hoist, my intention, Mr. Speaker, is to talk once more about the concerns and the reasons why I think we need to go back and consult with Albertans about this piece as well as to address some of the issues that have been raised by my hon. colleagues in this Chamber throughout the debate and to touch on that.

To begin with, Mr. Speaker, I really just want to get back to the key impacts of this legislation on both employers and employees, because the workers of this province drive our economy and are critically important. Without the workers, nothing gets done. Without employers, no one has jobs. It's a really important relationship, that needs to be protected. I do want to make sure that everyone is really thinking about both sides of that coin because the employers will often have very active and powerful lobbying groups, and sometimes the workers do not have that same level of visibility. Making sure we are thinking about the people who rely on minimum standards, which are in our employment standards legislation, which is what we are talking about here, is critically important; also, making sure that we're listening to the stakeholders when they are giving us feedback.

First off, when we're talking about some of the changes in Bill 2 and related to Bill 2, one of the things I've heard the members opposite say is that this bill does not introduce any new red tape. I would like to dispute that fact because we know through consultations at a number of points that employers have said that holiday pay calculations in Alberta historically have been overly burdensome and complicated. That was one of the reasons why we simplified them.

We have also heard that having wage differentials has been overly complicating. We heard that in 1998, under the leadership of Premier Ralph Klein. When they removed the student minimum wage in their changes in 1998, when they were debating increasing the minimum wage at that time, if I recall correctly, the minimum wage had not been increased in roughly five years. Interestingly, at that point the business lobby argued against raising the minimum wage – the minimum wage at that time was roughly \$5 – because of the negative impacts that it would have.

When employers are telling us that there is red tape, that having two different wages and the associated administrative overhead to track that can be difficult, when we know from looking at our neighbours in Ontario that this is, in fact, the case with their system – and the report that my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar referenced and, I know, others have talked about: when Ontario did a very thorough review of employment standards, the recommendation out of that changing workplaces review was the elimination of multiple minimum wages. That report recognized that devaluing youth not only introduced unintended consequences and behaviours similar to what we've seen in Australia, the learn and churn effect – it's interesting because this government is looking to target and improve a very specific number, the youth unemployment percentage, and that number is measured.

The most specifically we can get to it is through some of the Stats Canada data, but it's grouped either, depending on which type of report you're looking at, as 15- through 24-year-olds or 15- to 19-year-olds. In both of those cases, the number you're trying to target – everyone may be impacted by this policy, but not everyone will be impacted positively by this policy because we know, from Australia and Ontario, that those 15-, 16-, and 17-year-olds: perhaps if they find themselves finding more employment under this policy, the 18-, 19-, 20-, 21-, 22-, 23-year-olds, and 24-year-olds may not, because that is what we've seen in other jurisdictions that have a wage differential. Employers may preferentially hire students where they can pay that lower wage.

Again I would like to highlight that the Alberta differential will be 15 per cent, which is more than twice the differential in Ontario, which is only 85 cents. Here it will be \$2. That is not insignificant when we think about unintended consequences and how it might impact behaviour. We now have a policy where, if it positively impacts those that this policy targets, it very likely negatively impacts those just slightly older. I think that's a really important factor that we need to consider.

Within this bill, from listening to employers, we also know that employers said that the holiday pay calculations previously were overly complicated. The hon. minister just a little while ago said that payroll systems can be put back in. I think we need to acknowledge that the holiday pay calculation system was overly complicated and that not every employer has a full payroll system. There are a lot of smaller businesses that may not be able to afford the full-package HR system that calculates it, the HR system that – I will remind you that I talked about it earlier – can be set up to make sure that workers get the least possible amount of holiday pay. I know people who worked at call centres where their payroll systems were set up to make sure that their workers were never scheduled on five of the last nine weeks preceding the work week in which the general holiday occurs.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the employers who do not have the very in-depth HR systems that automatically calculate these things find themselves having to do a lot of paperwork to figure out if Jane worked five of the last nine weeks preceding the work week when you have scheduled employees. If somebody is Monday to Friday, it's a little bit easier. That's not always the case in our workplaces. The idea that this is not red tape is ignoring what



employers told us in '98, told us through the review that our government did just two years ago, and what we see in Ontario. I think that's very important to remember.

I do want to speak, very briefly, again, as a reminder that these employment standards protect our most vulnerable workers. The minimum standard is the one that workers who do not have collective bargaining, workers who are potentially starting out in their careers – a lot of professional jobs and a lot of employers provide far beyond the minimum standard. I would say that above the minimum standard is the norm in Alberta. We are a prosperous province with wonderful businesses throughout, but when the minimum standard is what an employee is forced to rely upon, that's where employment standards come in.

Now workers may not get compensation for statutory holidays. We know that happens because it used to happen under the previous system, and this brings me to what my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has already touched on, the idea that because we had it before, it must have been a good thing and no big deal to bring it back. I think that's a fallacy. Because Alberta was the lowest in the country for our standards doesn't mean we should go back. We now have mainstream employment standards that put us on par – not above, not better but on par – and getting there, on par, was a big change in Alberta. I can tell you that. To start reverting to some of those standards is a disservice to the workers of this province, the workers who spend the money that they earn here in our province.

We know that when you pay the lowest paid workers a little bit more, that money does not go to Tahiti. It does not go into stocks. That gets spent in the local economy. That gets spent on buying Christmas presents and holidays. That gets spent on buying food for school lunches. Oftentimes when we're talking about employment standards and those who rely on those minimum standards, we are talking about some of our lowest paid workers, and money going to those lowest paid workers in the form of stat holiday pay gets spent in our local economies. We can see that through Stats Canada, and I'm very sad that I don't have that chart with me. But the return on investment of giving more money to the lowest paid workers is so much better than giving money to the highest paid workers. That is something we know, and I don't think anyone disputes that.

7:20 p.m.

Now, the hon. minister also spoke about the impact of the minimum wage on our economy. He accuses us of suggesting that the minimum wage has no impact. We have never said that. What I would suggest to everyone: if you are interested in seeing some of the impacts on our economy, there are ways you can look at what has actually happened in Alberta. We can look at the Labour Force Survey, we can look at the stats, and then we can compare to the next-closest jurisdiction and see what the differences may be. That can help pinpoint: when we changed the minimum wage and Saskatchewan did not, how did that potentially impact it?

Now, economies are complicated. Economists do not always agree with each other. Ask two economists for their opinions, and you will get three opinions: that has been said before. That being said, we can look at Alberta and we can start trying to interpret the numbers. The minimum wage here has gone up, and our youth unemployment has been going down since its peak in roughly July 2016. We're seeing those improvements. We're also seeing that our youth unemployment trends very closely matched what was happening with Saskatchewan around the same time, leading me to posit that it was more to do with the global collapse in the price of oil and the overall recession than any specific impacts from a minimum wage increase given the fact that Saskatchewan even now

has higher youth unemployment than Alberta does but did not make changes to their minimum wage.

This policy of having a youth job-creating wage: I have not heard the members opposite provide any proof of how this will create new jobs or any studies showing that it has created new jobs in other jurisdictions. In fact, Ontario, where we are modelling this after, although not completely, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar pointed out, has youth unemployment higher than the national average. This solution has not solved the problem in Ontario, yet we are bringing it to Alberta, where it will introduce other problems, other problems like I've talked about. Let's touch on a few more: the fact that many youth are working to support themselves and their families. We know that the Premier has told the story many times of the youth he met at a gas station in Hardisty who was working to support his family. That youth would get \$2 less an hour under this government's policies, and I fail to see how that will help that youth and his family.

With all this being said, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 2 and share my thoughts with the Assembly. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question or comment. I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration rising.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also, I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for her comments. I would like to just make a couple of comments in regard to talking about, first of all, the youth minimum wage and the red tape associated with it. I agree with the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods that if you asked an economist for a point of view, you can get three, all from the same economist. There is some debate in terms of the impact.

However, as we look at the general trend and most of the economists who are looking at this type of issue in terms of the impact of the minimum wage, it often has to do with the scope and size of the change and what the conditions are around it. I agree that these items are complex. As has been indicated before, the change in the minimum wage made by the previous government was significant, nearly 50 per cent, and in the context of one of the worst recessions we've had in the Alberta economy.

Quite frankly, there is an impact. We've seen from studies and we're told that there was an actual impact on the minimum wage associated with that. The member opposite also indicated the \$2 differential. I also heard some concerns raised earlier by other members saying that this change in the minimum wage will actually result in a \$2 decrease for people currently working. I just want to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that the minimum is just that, a minimum. Employers can choose to pay workers more. In fact, many do. In fact, a number of employers have indicated that they will continue to pay \$15 an hour, and this makes sense. When you actually hire an employee and you train them and they become more productive, you want to hold on to them. It costs money to hire. It costs money to train.

That's why we are focused on getting our youth to work – right? – by reducing the minimum wage so that we can get them on this job ladder. The job ladder: once they get into the workforce, they can actually gain some experience in the marketplace. Then they perhaps either stay with that employer, or they have the option to move elsewhere, and they can actually, with that experience, continue to increase their earnings. This is not about a cut to those individuals who are helping their families. This is not about a cut for those currently working. This is about creating more opportunities for youth who don't have opportunities, and we have

a very large number, thousands and thousands of Albertan youth who need to get their jobs back.

The last comment I would like to make, Mr. Speaker, is in regard to red tape. The hon. member, you know, indicated that she held consultations with employers and that with holiday pay some of the calculations were burdensome. I understand that. Some changes were made to address that from the eligibility standpoint. Also, my understanding is that some changes were made in terms of how the payment was actually done. We're not suggesting any changes to the pay, but what we are suggesting is going back to the previous general holiday.

Again, a minimum is just that, a minimum. If an employer finds it too complicated with their systems to do that, then they don't have to do that. But, in fact, what we heard from a number of employers, particularly in the restaurant industry, is that the general holiday pay on a nonstandard workday where the restaurant was closed resulted in thousands of dollars in additional costs. What did they do about this? They told us what they did. They laid off staff, or they reduced hours, and the people who were most negatively affected were our youth. That's why we're making this change to the general holiday. But, again, a minimum is just that, a minimum. Employers aren't required to do that.

The last comment I'd like to make in terms of talking about red tape: the hon. member mentioned that in 1998 under Ralph Klein they actually eliminated the youth employment wage and that part of the reason was the complication. Well, I would suggest to the hon. member that HR systems have become far more sophisticated since that point in time and far easier. Again, quite frankly, I would reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that when we actually talked to employers in Ontario, they have systems in place. Their HR systems can manage this and manage this fairly seamlessly without significant cost. We have the ability to do the same.

We're talking about red tape, and we're talking about these changes, and what this is really about is getting Albertans back to work and getting our youth back to work. This is why we're focused on making these changes, because we firmly believe – and this is why Bill 2, our open for business act, and these particular areas we're focused on are getting Albertans back to work. Even if it creates just a little bit of red tape, we think our Alberta youth are worth it.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, I would never ever, ever want to presuppose a decision of the Assembly, but my Speaker senses are at peak Speaker senses, and I have the sense that we might be getting closer to the end of what I think we can all agree has been the longest day of our lives given that, technically speaking, it's still yesterday. I hope that hon. members would just join me in thanking the table officers as well as our pages and, in particular, the LASS security staff and the hardest working man in politics at the *Hansard* controls today, Roger. Thank you so much to everyone for all your help.

I see the hon. Government House Leader is rising to move a motion.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually going to rise on two unanimous consent motions. Like you, I sense something though I don't know what Speaker senses are. Maybe you have to be elected Speaker before you get those. But I do sense that the opposition is near to wanting to test the House to see if their 24 hours now of hard work has changed anybody's mind. For one, my mind has not been changed. In fact, my resolve to support Bill 2 is even stronger now after 24 hours. But I don't want to prejudice

the rest of the Chamber nor delay the opposition in that opportunity to be able to see the results of their hard work here shortly.

First, I will move for unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells for the amendment that is before the House and for second reading of Bill 2.

**The Speaker:** Having heard the motion, it is a request for unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the hoist motion, and then, immediately following, the question on second reading will be put to the Assembly, depending on the results of the first motion.

[Unanimous consent granted]

7:30 p.m.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One other motion. As members of this House are no doubt aware, most members of Executive Council have a meeting on Monday, June 10, with First Nation chiefs, which presents a conflict with Oral Question Period at 1:50 p.m. on that day. Therefore, to give the opportunity for private members of this Assembly to decide whether they want better access to the Premier and cabinet for question period or not, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Orders 3(1), 7(1), 7(1.1) to allow the Assembly to meet on Monday, June 10, from 11 a.m. to noon in addition to normal sitting hours and, furthermore, to commence the ordinary daily Routine business at 11 a.m. on that Monday morning with Oral Question Period to commence at 11 a.m. and to suspend Standing Order 7(1.1) in order to begin Monday's sitting at 11 a.m. with a 50-minute Oral Question Period.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, for clarity's sake, this is not a motion; this is a request for unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** We are on the hoist motion. That is HA. Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion? Seeing none.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:32 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Loyola
Dach	Gray	Nielsen
Deol	Hoffman	Schmidt
Eggen	Irwin	Shepherd
Feehan		

Against the motion:

Aheer	LaGrange	Rowswell
Allard	Loewen	Savage
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Long	Sawhney
Copping	Lovely	Schow
Dreeshen	Luan	Schulz
Ellis	Madu	Schweitzer
Glasgo	Milliken	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glubish	Nally	Singh
Goodridge	Neudorf	Smith
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Stephan
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Horner	Orr	Turton
Issik	Pitt	van Dijken

Jones	Reid	Wilson
Kenney	Rosin	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 13	Against – 48

[Motion on amendment HA lost]

**The Speaker:** Being a hoist motion, the question for second reading must immediately be put.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading of Bill 2 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:38 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Rowswell
Allard	Long	Savage
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Sawhney
Copping	Luan	Schow
Dreeshen	Madu	Schulz
Ellis	Milliken	Schweitzer
Glasgo	Nally	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glubish	Neudorf	Singh
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Smith
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Stephan
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Toews
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Turton
Issik	Rehn	van Dijken

Jones	Reid	Wilson
Kenney	Rosin	Yaseen
LaGrange		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Loyola
Dach	Gray	Nielsen
Deol	Hoffman	Schmidt
Eggen	Irwin	Shepherd
Feehan		

Totals:	For – 49	Against – 13
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[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Government House Leader rising.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-four hours after that conversation started, we got progress. I'm always happy to see progress. It doesn't matter how we get it as long as we get it.

First of all, I'd just like to thank all the House for their hard work over the last 24 hours and, as you said, Mr. Speaker, through you to all of the LAO staff who have been along with us for the last 24 hours. I wish all members a great weekend.

As such, I will move to adjourn the House until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

**The Speaker:** Prior to the motion, as I speculate we will have a positive result, please, Members, I implore you to travel home safely. I would recommend that you stay the night. Your family wants you to arrive, so please govern yourselves accordingly.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 7:43 p.m. on Thursday]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 10, 2019

Day 10

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
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Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
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Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

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Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
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Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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Jones  
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### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Yao

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Lovely  
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Sweet

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Williams

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
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Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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Deol  
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Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Turton  
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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 10, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind the responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

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

### Hon. Members:

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Hon. members, I might just congratulate you on the stirring rendition of *O Canada*. I'm not sure if it was for the Canadian women's soccer game versus Cameroon, started just half an hour ago, or perhaps game 5 of the Raptors' series tonight. Either way, I'm sure all of the teams would have been impressed with your singing efforts.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** In the Speaker's gallery this afternoon I'm very pleased to welcome a familiar face back to the Legislative Assembly, the former MLA for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley and former Minister of Energy Ms Marg McCuaig-Boyd. I'd invite you to rise. [some applause]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I ask that you keep your applause till the end. Visiting us today all the way from the constituency of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, please join me in welcoming a School at the Legislature group, Stony Plain Central school. Also joining us are Taleesha Thorogood – I'm not sure if these guests have made it yet or not – and Andrew House. Also in the galleries this afternoon as guests of the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul: Brenda Rosychuk, Jennifer Muirhead, Johanna Green, and Julie Kelndorfer.

Thank you very much for joining us.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

## National Public Service Week

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 1992 National Public Service Week was created following the passage of the serving Canadians better act. Its objective was to recognize the value of the services performed by public service employees and to recognize their contribution. Today marks the start of National Public Service Week, an opportunity to recognize all public servants across Canada for their contributions to the well-being of all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate to have a high-quality public service that is professional, nonpartisan, and trustworthy. Every day our public servants take great pride in delivering a variety of services that support the work of our government and meet the needs of Albertans in their day-to-day lives. Their objective is to do this efficiently and effectively while committing to core public service of Canada values, which are integrity, dedication, and excellence.

Here in Alberta the public service is committed to continuous improvement to better serve our province and fellow citizens. They make a difference in the lives of Albertans every day. From keeping us safe to improving health care and inventing new life-changing products and technologies, our public servants truly serve the public.

National Public Service Week was designed to promote pride in and recognition of the public service of Canada by providing internal recognition and by raising Canadians' awareness of the excellence of the public service. Our new government shares their commitment and their passion for helping the people of this province, for doing everything we can to provide Albertans with optimal economic opportunities and public services.

In 2019 National Public Service Week will take place from June 9 to 15. During this time I encourage all Albertans to join me in extending our appreciation and thanks to all public servants for their important contributions to our country. I look forward to what we will accomplish as we work together to get Alberta back to work, to stand up for our province's right to control our economic destiny, and to make life better for all Albertans.

Thank you.

## Legislative and Social Change

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Infrastructure said that P3 projects had been adopted all over the world before I was even born. Not only was this deeply offensive to me, but this was deeply offensive to young Albertans across this province.

But let's talk about things that happened before I was born, on April 7, 1995. Mr. Speaker, before I was born, people with disabilities weren't even allowed to vote. Before I was even born, women weren't allowed to vote. Before I was even born, there was no free trade deal between Canada and the United States. Before I was even born, Alberta used to sterilize people the government deemed disabled. Before I was even born, gays weren't allowed to marry in Canada. Before I was even born, Chinese people wishing to immigrate to Canada had to pay a head tax. Before I was even born, owning another person as property was legal in British North America. Before I was even born, it was normal to round up First Nations people and place them in residential schools. Before I was even born, teachers had to quit their jobs if they got pregnant.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, a lot has changed since I was born. A lot has changed for the better because of dedicated people in buildings like this fighting to make their communities better. The minister should be ashamed of what he said in this House last week. Young people like myself will continue to fight for a better future for ourselves. A lot has changed since I was born; a lot has changed for

the better. While the government chooses to sling insults and throw mud, our NDP opposition will continue to stand up for all Albertans. I will always fight against this government turning back the clock on progress.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'll try my best to follow that one, Mr. Speaker.

### MS Society Lakeland Regional Office

**Mr. Hanson:** Canada has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world. Here in Alberta we have among the highest rates in the country. On average, 11 Canadians are diagnosed with MS every day. MS is a chronic disease of the central nervous system affecting vision, memory, balance, and mobility, and women are three times more likely to be diagnosed than men. Sixty per cent of adults diagnosed are between the ages of 20 and 49 years.

Alberta is recognized as an international leader in MS research. Since 1948 the MS Society has funded over \$175 million in MS research as they work toward new treatments, a better quality of life, and, ultimately, a cure. The MS Society offers programs and services for affected people and their families and advocates to improve life for Albertans affected.

1:40

I'd like to highlight the work of the society's Lakeland regional office. Based out of St. Paul, supported by their local staffperson Brenda Rosychuk and committed volunteers and led by the council chair, Jennifer Muirhead, both of whom are here today in the gallery, they support a vast area comprised of 65 towns and promote the importance of a healthy lifestyle and help to connect people to community wellness programs.

The St. Paul MS Walk, the community's signature event, began in 2008 with under 300 participants; 10 years later it had nearly 600. Since 2008 the event has raised over \$1.75 million, with a significant portion coming from a team out of Bonnyville called MS Ain't Purdy. Originally captained by James Purdy, a young man with MS, the torch has since been taken up by his young son Griffin and daughter Stella. In four years as captain 11-year-old Griffin raised over \$60,000, adding to their total of half a million dollars. MS Ain't Purdy was the number one MS Walk team in Canada in 2014. The sheer magnitude of the St. Paul walk is incredible. On a per capita basis the St. Paul event far exceeds its much larger urban counterparts.

The MS Society's Lakeland regional office has been exemplary, and it's my honour and pleasure to salute their efforts today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### Pride Month

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This month we acknowledge those brave Albertans who fought hard for their LGBTQ2S-plus rights. All Albertans deserve the freedom to be true to themselves regardless of race, religion, or sexual orientation. While we have so much to celebrate, we also have a great distance to go before everyone in this country is treated equally.

Pride month is an opportunity to celebrate our shared belief in unity and diversity. It's also a good occasion to show gratitude for the many successes and contributions of Albertans who identify from our LGBTQ2S-plus community. All human beings are equal

in value and dignity and deserve respect. Individuals of different perspectives must respect each other and value one another as fellow human beings. No one should deny the dignity or freedom of those Canadians that seek to make our country a better place to live.

I personally look forward to attending both the crosswalk painting planned for June 22 in Stony Plain and the Pride at the Centre celebration, to be held in the Multicultural Heritage Centre on June 15. Both of these events are opportunities for the communities of both Spruce Grove and Stony Plain to celebrate our diversity and rally together as a community.

With kindness and understanding, I wish all people in this province a pride month full of support, love, and respect.

Thank you.

### Mobile-home Owner Consumer Protection

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, there is a crisis threatening the over 30,000 Albertans who live in mobile-home communities across our province. For years homeowners have come to me with stories of sky-high lot rents and unaccountable management bodies. People are being priced out of their own homes because they can't afford to pay lot fees, which climb to upwards of \$1,000 a month. In many cases these lot rents have become higher than the mortgage payments for the homes themselves.

With rising fees, homeowners are looking to hold management companies accountable to manage the basic infrastructure of their community, which is only fair. Unfortunately, this is not happening. I've heard from seniors trapped in their homes because snow and ice aren't being cleared, and those who try to make that trip: many of them are injured from falls. Simply put, mobile-home owners are looking for the same protections that are provided to others under the Residential Tenancies Act, and they want this government to take action.

Unfortunately, for years the needs of mobile-home owners have been ignored, and for decades Conservatives have let everyday people fall behind while big corporations and the wealthy got ahead at their expense. Now they want to double down on that legacy, with big cuts to the services we depend on. Albertans deserve better from their government.

Our caucus will continue to push for changes to the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act that would provide additional powers to residents and new remedial measures for tenants. We call on this government to do the right thing and take action for the many people who are falling through the cracks in these communities.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

### Pride Shabbat Dinner in Edmonton

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to share with the members of this Assembly an event that I and a few of my colleagues attended on Friday, the annual Edmonton Pride Shabbat. This special event, hosted by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee, and the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, served as a kickoff to pride month and provided an opportunity to come together with both the Jewish and LGBTQ2S-plus communities. Pride Shabbat lets us celebrate both our diversity and our individuality. The organizers of this event believe it is important to demonstrate respect and inclusion for members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community, and I am proud to stand with them. I would also

mention that this was my first Shabbat dinner, and it did not disappoint.

I believe that everyone in this Assembly will agree that discrimination is wrong in whatever form it may take. Previous members of this Assembly believed that as well and passed the Alberta Human Rights Act as a way to combat discrimination. We as legislators need to build on that legacy and ensure that we make Alberta a more fair and inclusive province. Discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, race, marital status, gender identity or expression, creed, age, colour, disability, political or religious beliefs is never acceptable. Unfortunately, there are still far too many situations where these human rights are being infringed upon. Our province and our society are still hurt by instances of anti-Semitism, homophobia, and transphobia. We must do better.

Events like the Edmonton Pride Shabbat that I attended offer an opportunity to celebrate the progress that's been made and demonstrate our commitment to the work that's needed to eliminate discrimination. Our United Conservative government stands together condemning discrimination. We welcome all Albertans regardless of whom they love or how they pray. It was an honour to be invited to attend this Shabbat dinner, and I encourage all members to join me in attending pride events throughout the month of June.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a tabling.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the expenditures and tax multipliers from Prime Minister Stephen Harper's 2009 budget. The formal analysis presented by the economist and former Prime Minister clearly demonstrates that corporate income tax cuts are the least effective means to drive economic growth.

I also have a tabling, with the requisite number of copies, of Public Health and Public Order Outcomes Associated with Supervised Drug Consumption [Sites]: A Systematic Review.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert is rising to table a document.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've the requisite number of copies of an article by St. Albert Today, powered by the St. Albert *Gazette*: Minimum Wage Rollback Worries Youth Committee.

Thank you.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Insurance Act the Automobile Insurance Rate Board 2018 annual report; pursuant to the Alberta Capital Finance Authority Act the Alberta Capital Finance Authority annual report 2018.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, 1,800 additional students, 220 fewer teachers: that's the math confronting the Calgary board

of education because this government won't fund classrooms properly. I met with the head of the ATA local 38 this weekend, and he warned that class sizes will increase and that students will certainly suffer. To the Minister of Education: is it that you're ineffective at your job, or is it that you just don't care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance is rising to answer.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government's commitment to education funding has been clear, and I'm pleased to confirm today that proposed enrolment growth will be fully funded for this upcoming year. Alberta's families and students depend on this government to ensure that a high quality of education is delivered, and that's what we're going to do.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the first answer to the question that I've asked about 10 times. It's nice to hear that the growth for the more than 1,800 new students for the Calgary board of education will actually be funded. I think I heard that for the first time in this House. Thank you very much to the government for actually saying that for the first time.

What about feeding the hungry kids, what about the classroom improvement fund – will CIF and will the school nutrition program be funded, or are kids going to go to school hungry? – and will classrooms continue to be overcrowded, Mr. Speaker?

1:50

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, our government is fully committed and will ensure that students' needs are taken care of. We're committed to a high quality of education in this province. We have committed to maintain school funding and, in fact, to fully fund increased enrolment. We will ensure that Alberta students have a world-class education.

**Ms Hoffman:** Fully funding increased enrolment: kudos for saying that for the first time. We asked that over and over and over again in the election; there was silence. We asked it at least 10 times in the House; there was silence. We are glad to see that you've listened to us and to the advocacy that parents and teachers have been doing over the last several months. Kudos on that.

What about the hungry kids that are showing up to school, Mr. Speaker? The I think it was over 4,400 kids that are being fed a nutritious school lunch because this government, the NDP government, invested in them: is the government opposite going to let kids go to school hungry, or will you continue with that program and grow it so that hungry kids across our province have the opportunity to be nourished and focused on their educational needs, or will that be cut?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, we are fully committed to ensuring that this government delivers a world-class education system to Albertan families and to Albertan students. We're committed to ensuring that Alberta students' needs are met.

I just want to point out that we're, maybe more importantly, implementing economic policies in this province that will ensure that we have a sustainable education system in the future, something that the members opposite could not and did not do during their term in office.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is rising with a question.

### LGBTQ2S-plus Rights

**Member Irwin:** Yesterday students in Calgary organized a rally to protest this government's plans to take away LGBTQ rights. Last week people gathered in Edmonton to protest this government's unwillingness to take the harmful practice of conversion therapy seriously. Protesters even attended the government's raising of the pride flag on Friday. For the record, simply raising a flag does not make you an ally. To the Premier: can you explain why you or any of your ministers are claiming to be allies when we know the changes that you are bringing in will traumatize the LGBTQ2S-plus population?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, many of our members attended the raising of the pride flag here on our Legislature Grounds. It was an honour for them to do that. One of our particular ministers talked about his daughter and her wife and talked about their child and how important it is for us here in Alberta to make sure that we have an inclusive Alberta here for all Albertans. I personally am looking forward to going to pride events across Alberta, like I have historically.

**Member Irwin:** Protestors at the flag raising Friday carried signs that said: LGBTQ rights are human rights, and you cannot attack our rights and raise a flag. The culture minister told media that the flag represents a commitment from government to support all Albertans. She added: love is love. I agree. I'm going to give any minister here today a chance to break ranks with this Premier, who is rapidly rolling back the rights of youth to establish gay-straight alliances. To those ministers: will you stand in support of keeping the current GSA laws in place?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to making sure that Alberta has the strongest gay-straight alliance provisions in all of Canada. We've been clear on that from day one. We've been clear on that in the campaign. We're not here to divide Albertans; we're here to make sure that all Albertans are free to live their lives as they choose. That is a commitment from us, to make sure that all Albertans can live with freedom.

**Member Irwin:** Then why change the legislation? Two months ago on the campaign trail the Premier told reporters, quote: we just don't get distracted by issues that voters aren't talking about. He said this when asked specifically about gay-straight alliances. Yet now, in its first legislative session, this government has introduced a bill, Bill 8, that does nothing to modernize schools but does everything to destroy gay-straight alliances. To the Premier: if you don't get distracted by GSAs, then why is it such a high priority for you to destroy them?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, as I already noted, we support making sure that we have the strongest protections for gay-straight alliances in all of Canada. All of Canada. We should be celebrating the fact that both parties represented in this Chamber support the fact that we should have the strongest protections for gay-straight alliances in all of Canada. It's a day to be celebrated, not dividing Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Budget 2019 Revenue Forecasts

**Ms Phillips:** Last week the Premier attempted to sell his favourite stenographer at the *Calgary Sun* a tall tale about the budget. Now, I'm not surprised that there's a hole in the budget. The Premier

himself put it there. A tax giveaway to his wealthy friends? That'll cost us \$4.5 billion. Cancelling oil-by-rail contracts? Kiss another \$2 billion in revenue goodbye. To the Premier: won't you admit that instead of a path to balance, you're on a path to baloney?

**The Speaker:** I'm not entirely sure about the use of the word "baloney," but perhaps I'll get back to the member and determine whether that was parliamentary or not.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, it's been clear as we have looked into the province's books and as we're starting to move forward with our budget plan, that we'll be introducing this fall, that in fact we are inheriting a fiscal mess from the members opposite when they were in government. In fact, the revenues that were overstated during their time have meant that we're having to grapple with increased challenges here in this province. One thing I will say is that we are absolutely committed to delivering high-quality . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Provincial budgets are audited, and they're developed by public service officials based on private-sector revenue forecasts. When the Premier peddles poppycock to his favourite propagandists, he insults the officials who work tirelessly on the budget, yet he continues to keep those officials among his key advisers. Ray Gilmour, the Premier's Deputy Minister of Executive Council, would have had a hand in the budget, for example. Is this government accusing Mr. Gilmour and hundreds of other Treasury and Finance officials of not telling the truth? Sure sounds like it.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the senior staff in our departments are of the highest quality and highest calibre. I will remind the members opposite again that we have inherited a fiscal mess brought on by irresponsible decisions by the previous government. We're committed to deliver high-quality services to Albertans and to be fiscally responsible, which is what Albertans expect from this government. They expect that we won't spend their children's inheritance.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, this is a cynical ploy to buy cover to stop feeding kids and bring in credit card medicine. Six and a half billion dollars and counting cut from the revenues: no wonder the forecasts don't add up. And who pays the price? Kids, the elderly, the sick, and even the truth. To the Premier: will you admit that while we aren't cooking any meals for low-income children, you sure are cooking the books?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, when they were in government, had this province on a trajectory for a hundred billion dollars of accumulated debt. On that trajectory we could not provide a world-class education system or a world-class health care system. We are committed to creating a business environment that will attract investment, create jobs and opportunities, and sustain government revenue used for the people of this province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I might just hope that we could hear some answers. Whether or not you like the answer is neither here nor there, but I think it's reasonable that the Speaker should be able to hear it.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### Job Creation

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, this UCP government ran on a promise to create jobs, but new figures released by StatsCan on Friday show that we lost more than 21,000 full-time jobs in May, the first month



of this government's mandate. Now we see the Premier attempting to misdirect Albertans about the provincial budget. He's looking for scapegoats because he hasn't done a thing to support job growth. To the Minister of Finance: when will we actually see jobs gained, or is your so-called spring of renewal actually a spring of rhetoric?

2:00

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, as all Albertans know, the election took place on April 16. Job numbers in May really, quite frankly, are an inheritance from the previous government's economic realities, the mess that they left us from their term in government. Again, we're committed to implementing policies that will attract investment, create opportunities for all Albertans, create great job opportunities for every Albertan.

**Mr. Bilous:** Blame us if they're bad; take credit yourself if they're good. I get it.

Not only is this government not creating jobs, but they're literally picking the pockets of workers. We know that their so-called open-for-business bill stands to take thousands out of people's pockets, and it will hit our oil and gas and construction sectors particularly hard. Those very same sectors were among the ones that saw job losses in May. Can the same minister explain to Albertans how either losing their jobs or taking a pay cut is part of their plan to open Alberta for business?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration is rising to answer.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our focus, as mentioned by the Minister of Finance, is the creation of jobs. Bill 2 is actually to get Albertans back to work, and we have a series of measures to do that, including changes to banked overtime, general holidays, and youth minimum wage, to get Albertans back to work. That's what we were elected to do, and that's what we will do. You will see a change over time as our policies take effect.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. You'll see less pay for the same work. Good strategy, minister.

This UCP government has put all of their support behind a risky corporate tax cut, that has literally bankrupted other jurisdictions. We know that corporate tax cuts won't generate a dime of economic activity for at least two years. That's not me talking, Mr. Speaker. That's, rather, the UCP's own election platform. To the minister: how many more jobs will we stand to lose while we wait years for your apparent plan to get in gear?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we were very proud to implement the job creation corporate tax cut, which will bring our corporate tax rates from 12 to 8 per cent within three years. It will make Alberta one of the most competitive jurisdictions in North America and, by far, the most competitive jurisdiction in Canada. It will attract investment. In fact, senior economists, reputable economists have suggested that it will create over \$12 billion of economic activity and 55,000 additional jobs for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration. Canada's Labour Force Survey of May 2019, released Friday, shows that the unemployment rate in Alberta remains stable at 6.7 per cent while the national rate has dropped to 5.4 per cent. This shows that while Alberta's economy has become stagnant, elsewhere in Canada the

economy is humming. It is evident to me that other jurisdictions in Canada have adapted their regulations more effectively than our former government was able to do. What does the minister plan to do to help Albertans get back into the workforce?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler for the question. The unemployment rate is far too high, and business investment continues to be down. We're working to change that by reducing red tape and tax burdens on job creators. We have introduced Bill 3, the job creation tax cut act, to reduce the corporate tax rate by a third over the next four years to attract investment and create thousands of new jobs. We've also introduced Bill 2, the open for business act, to reduce burdens on job creators by returning to the previous general holiday pay and banked overtime rules.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. minister. To the same minister. Given that Alberta has always been known as the land of opportunity, with the phrase "Alberta advantage" coming from a reputation of a strong industry which provided diverse career options with high-wage growth for all Albertans and attracted job seekers from across Canada, and given that job prospects have become significantly more scarce in recent years, what is the minister doing to ensure that Alberta remains the land of opportunity?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We are introducing a host of acts. We talked about some of them, Bill 2 and Bill 3. In particular, we're also taking action to help youth get jobs here in Alberta. We're addressing the youth unemployment crisis with a new job-creation wage of \$13 an hour. The \$15 per hour minimum wage resulted in young Albertans not being able to find work. This \$15 minimum wage was introduced by the previous government. The new youth minimum wage will encourage job creators to hire Albertans and get them back to work.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. minister. Given that properly preparing our young people for the job market is a fundamental piece of a strong future economy and given that the youth unemployment rate is nearly twice that of the adult unemployment rate, leaving thousands of young people without essential, on-the-job training at the most important time for them to be shaping their careers, how does the minister plan to address this issue?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I've already spoken to, we are introducing a youth job creation wage. In addition to the open for business act and the youth minimum wage, our government has passed legislation that scrapped the carbon tax and introduced legislation that reduces corporate tax and red tape. These changes will restore investor confidence, encourage entrepreneurs, and bring back the Alberta advantage. We also plan to introduce legislation to ensure fair access to regulated professions and trades

for newcomers, and this legislation will ensure that registration certification processes are transparent, objective, and fair.

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

### **Election Commissioner Investigation of UCP 2017 Financial Contributions**

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, \$77,250: that's the total of the fines now levied in the United Conservative Party kamikaze scandal. The Election Commissioner has been hard at work investigating the irregular financial contributions that emerged from the kamikaze campaign orchestrated by the Premier's staff. To the government: can anyone stand up and tell me that the Election Commissioner can count on you to provide the necessary resources and support to his office to complete his investigation?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure that we reference in this House that I'd gladly talk about government business here. Time and time again we're getting politics brought into this Chamber, and to quote the second-tallest member of this Chamber, we get fear and smear brought into this Chamber all the time. There's a reason why they're on that side of the Chamber getting comfortable. We're going to be focusing on jobs, the economy, and pipelines.

**Ms Ganley:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that repeating someone's own words is not fear and smear and given that this UCP government has refused for over a month to appoint a special prosecutor and given that they have now admitted that a conflict of interest does in fact exist and a special prosecutor has been announced, can the Minister of Justice affirm to Albertans that no one in his government will interfere with the work of the Election Commissioner or change the election finance and contribution laws while he continues to investigate the kamikaze scandal?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of the question. There is an independent process in Alberta for doing special prosecutors, an independent process with an independent RCMP investigation. We've been over this time and time again in this Chamber. We're going to be making sure on this side of the House that we're focused on jobs, the economy, and pipelines and on doing the job that 55 per cent of Albertans elected us to do.

Thank you.

**Ms Ganley:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that I think that the public expects us to be ethical, whether we're focused on jobs or not, and given that the Premier himself has tried to write off this scandal as idle Twitter gossip and given that for all we know, these fines are the tip of the iceberg, will the government commit to respecting the independence of the Election Commissioner and allowing him to do his work and to accepting the ruling of this independent office?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I take issue with the hon. member referencing ethics. I'm not sure if they're questioning my ethics. I wasn't sure that the frame of reference around that was appropriate.

We're going to make sure that we continue to focus on funding the priorities of Albertans. They want us focusing on getting Albertans back to work. They don't want us relitigating stuff from the past. We're going to be making sure that we focus on getting Albertans back to work. [interjections]

### **Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I think it would not be appropriate to imply or to say, as I may or may not have heard: that's because you don't have ethics. It would be wildly unparliamentary, so I can't imagine that it actually happened from that side of the House.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising with a question.

### **2:10 Supervised Drug Consumption Sites**

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, last week I was joined by families and survivors of addiction at the constituency office of the Minister of Health. These brave individuals went public with their concerns about this UCP government's plan to freeze funding for new supervised consumption sites. These sites have saved at least 2,400 lives. Kym Porter, a Medicine Hat mother who lost her son to an overdose in 2016, said that this Premier's decision is, and I will quote, akin to wilful murder. Can this government explain why you're refusing to listen to Kym and countless other survivors?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, as promised in our election platform, we'll be reviewing the proposals for any new sites before funding them. We also have made a commitment to spending a hundred million dollars for mental health and addictions here in the province of Alberta. We recognize that this should be something that should be dealt with by Health. It's a serious issue. We're going to make sure that we deal with it in a thoughtful way.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this Premier is for 2.0 and the sites have been cancelled in Ontario, we would like to see our government put more funding into ensuring the safety of people living in Alberta and around these supervised consumption sites, and given that the Minister of Health agreed to meet with some of these survivors that protested at his office on Friday but given that even after that meeting the survivors felt no more optimism and a family physician, Bonnie Larson, said the minister needs to get out of the way, to the Minister of Health: can you explain to Bonnie why you're still standing in her way?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise here today on behalf of the Minister of Health to speak to this matter. As that minister has mentioned many times, his door is always open. He's always open to listening to the concerns of Albertans and making sure that they bring it forward in a thoughtful manner. We're here, again, making sure that we deal with the root cause. We want to deal with addictions in a compassionate and thoughtful way. We've maintained our commitment to making sure that there's adequate funding and looking at the future potential sites in a way that we can look at it holistically.

Thank you.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that part of the spectrum of addictions is actually safe consumption sites and we know that they save lives and given that the review was launched by the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions with no details and given that we have no idea who's going to be involved in the review and what the scope is and how long it will take and given that all this makes these survivors wonder if this is purely a partisan smokescreen to again justify shutting down these supervised consumption sites, like in Ontario, to the minister: can you tell this House exactly who is conducting the review, and will you commit,

again, that both Kym Porter and Bonnie Larson will be allowed on this panel?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I can speak from my own personal experience in this. I was on the board of the Calgary Drug Treatment Court for over five years dealing with addictions, making sure that we provided services in a way that deals with it head-on. I would invite the minister – I'm not allowed to comment, apparently, about who is or is not in this Chamber, and I respect the practices of this House – and if there's a thoughtful way to deal with this, I know that he'd welcome that meeting.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore is rising with a question.

### Energy Company Municipal Tax Payment

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to the downturn in the energy sector and a series of NDP policies that piled onto Alberta's oil and gas industry, municipalities are finding it increasingly difficult to collect taxes from oil and gas properties in rural Alberta. After four years of NDP government many of these companies are in difficult financial situations and just aren't able to pay what they owe. To the Municipal Affairs minister: what is your advice to the rural municipalities who are needing to collect these taxes?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Government understands that this is a pressing issue for our rural municipalities and our oil and gas companies. Upon taking office, I immediately prioritized getting all of the stakeholders to the table, including the Rural Municipalities of Alberta and representatives from all oil and gas industries. Right now we are working on finding solutions that strike the right balance between the financial needs of our municipalities and the viability of the oil and gas sector.

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

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that rural municipalities are counting on these taxes to support their local budgets and given that I've heard from some of my hon. colleagues that many municipalities are asking residential taxpayers to cover the shortfall and given that many municipal leaders are wondering how this situation got to where it is, can the minister illuminate on why some oil and gas companies who operate in rural Alberta are finding it difficult to meet their tax obligations?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member again for the question. It is no secret that many of these companies are facing insolvency or receivership. If these companies go under like Trident Exploration did, municipalities would get no taxes, landowners would get no lease payments, and the orphan well fund would be that much more strained. We aren't going to let that happen, which is why we have made this issue a priority and have committed to finding balanced solutions that benefit all parties involved.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Glenmore has her last question.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs for the answers. Given that municipalities provide vital services to Albertans like street

cleaning, snow removal, and waste-water and waste management and given the urgency and severity of the situation, what steps is the government taking to ease the short-term burden on affected municipalities while they wait for the long-term solutions to materialize?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We understand the urgency of this issue, which is why we immediately made it a priority. We are working with groups like the Rural Municipalities of Alberta and the Urban Municipalities Association to find the right solutions for all the parties involved. We are making life better for the energy industry and for the municipalities by eliminating red tape, cutting taxes, and creating jobs in every community, all things that the NDP failed to do in the last four years. We want to see our oil and gas sector succeed, and we want to see our rural municipalities succeed as well.

### Oil Sands Emissions Provincial Control of Natural Resources

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we managed to convince the government to fund for enrolment; hopefully, we can get some action on climate change, too. Our government's climate change plan legislated a 100-megatonne cap on oil sands emissions, but now the Premier and party officials aren't sending clear signals about whether or not that emissions cap will remain in place. Can anyone on the front bench tell us whether or not they intend to keep the emissions cap in place?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, thank you, through you, to the member opposite for that question. We're committed to ensure that this government takes concrete steps to reduce carbon emissions in this province. We do have and we will be implementing a program that will target our heavy emitters, basically targeting 60 per cent of the emissions in this province. We're working at rolling that plan out, and we're confident that Albertans will support it.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it sounds like uncertainty is still the watchword when it comes to the 100-megatonne cap on emissions.

Given that our government consulted extensively with industry, can anybody on the front bench tell us whether or not they're going to consult with industry about the existence of this emissions cap, and if so, who will they be consulting with?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we don't need a lecture from this NDP opposition on consultation. In the last election campaign, back in 2015, the carbon tax was not in their platform, yet they brought in the largest tax in Alberta history. I'm proud to know that Bill 1 has received royal assent and that gas prices at pumps across Alberta have dropped. We're receiving resounding feedback on our plan here. We're going to be focusing on jobs. We have a really credible environmental plan, as the Minister of Finance mentioned. We're going to keep working hard on Alberta's priorities.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to give the member a lecture on climate change being real, human caused, and needing urgent action any time he likes.

Given that the oil and gas industry is mostly in situ and given that if Alberta removes the 100-megatonne cap on our oil sands industry, the federal government through Bill C-69 will then take

control of our natural resources, can anybody on the front bench tell us how they intend to protect the constitutional right for Alberta to govern its own natural resources?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that if Bill C-48 and Bill C-69 go forward in their current form, we will be launching constitutional challenges to defend this province. We're going to defend Alberta. We're going to defend our constitutional rights to develop our natural resources. That's one of the reasons why Albertans elected us with 55 per cent of the vote, over a million votes. This is a historic mandate that we have, the most detailed platform in Alberta history. That's what we were elected on. That's what we're going to keep our focus on.

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

2:20

### Minimum Wage for Youth

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Unfair: that's how many young workers are describing this Premier's plan to gut their wages. But if this government won't listen to them, perhaps it will take some advice from the late Premier Ralph Klein. In 1998 Klein's government eliminated the student youth wage because it was unfair to young people and, quote: a fair day's work deserves a fair day's wage. To the minister: can you tell us which Premier was right? Yours or Ralph Klein?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration is rising to answer.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The student job-creation wage is just that; it's about creating jobs for Alberta's youth. When other provinces have abolished or decreased the differential of their youth minimum wages, it has been shown that this may have lowered employment rates 5 to 10 per cent for 15- to 16-year-olds. The previous government created a crisis, a youth job crisis, and our youth minimum wage is focused on fixing that. It is fair to get Alberta's youth back to work.

**Ms Gray:** Given that this Premier campaigned frequently alongside well-funded lobbyists and given that it was Restaurants Canada Vice-president Mark von Schellwitz himself that argued in 1998 to Klein that the youth student wage should be even lower than it was at the time – credit to Premier Klein, who ignored those calls and actually increased wages for youth – again to the minister: will you wisely ignore the lobbyists, like the late Premier Klein did, and reverse your plan to gut wages for youth?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, again, this plan and Bill 2 are about getting all Albertans, including our youth, back to work. When the previous government increased the minimum wage and made changes to the general holidays, they significantly impacted job opportunities in a number of industries, including the restaurant industry. I heard from restaurateurs, even as early as today, who indicated that with the changes that are coming, not only will it reduce their costs, but they will be able to hire more youth.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods on her second supplemental.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the dire predictions made by Restaurants Canada VP Mark von Schellwitz in 1998 proved to be incorrect and given that we've already seen this government move against workers to appease restaurant lobbyists,

to the minister: why won't you show the same leadership Premier Klein showed instead of bowing to your lobbyist friends?

**The Speaker:** The minister of labour.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we have discussed in this House over the last week, the increase in the minimum wage actually drove thousands of Albertan youth out of the job market. This was not only demonstrated in theory but actually in practice. When businesses in Alberta were surveyed, they indicated they actually laid off youth, they actually laid off workers, and they reduced job opportunities. We are focused, through Bill 2 and the youth minimum wage, to create jobs for Albertans and get our youth back working.

Thank you.

### Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

**Mr. Rowswell:** Mr. Speaker, in 2015 the previous government passed Bill 6. This poorly crafted piece of legislation has forced farmers into a Workers' Compensation Board regime and a series of workplace safety rules that do little to protect farm workers and add pointless red tape that further complicates an already difficult job. In our election platform our government swore to launch consultations with farmers and ranchers to replace Bill 6 with better legislation. Can the minister of labour tell us if he has started these consultations?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and Immigration is rising.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright for the question. As indicated, we made a commitment in our platform that we would replace Bill 6 with the farm freedom and safety act. In our platform we also promised to consult with farmers and ranchers before we did that. Their input will help us develop new rules that work for farms and ranches alike. The new laws will balance the unique needs of farmers and ranchers with the need for a common-sense, flexible farm regime. We will commence that this summer.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the Minister of Labour and Immigration. Given that under the current law farmers are forced to pay for Workers' Compensation Board coverage even if they already provided private insurance that offered better coverage and given that this is one of the largest complaints that I've heard about Bill 6, can the minister confirm or deny if our replacement to Bill 6 will allow farmers to choose to provide private insurance instead of that forced upon them by the previous government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister for Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. WCB coverage is only mandatory on farms and ranches that have waged, nonfamily workers. Family members are exempt. A producer may voluntarily have WCB coverage for family members, but it's not mandatory. As we promised in our platform, we will replace Bill 6 with the farm freedom and safety act. One part of that is giving farmers the choice of WCB insurance or getting workplace insurance from the private sector. I can tell the hon. member that my ministry is in discussion with both the WCB and private insurance companies about options for farmers and ranchers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowsell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister of labour. Given that in 2015 the previous government did not consult with farmers before tabling Bill 6 and only began consultations after objections from both Albertans and the previous opposition and given that the secondary phase of Bill 6 did undergo consultations with Albertans before it was enacted, can the minister tell the House whether the government will hold new consultations for sections of the bill that the previous government actually held the necessary consultations with Albertans over?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As previously indicated, in our platform we made a commitment that we would actually undertake consultation. We are undertaking that consultation this summer, and our expectation is that we will be in a position this fall to introduce the farm freedom and safety act.

Thank you very much.

#### Automobile Insurance Rates

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, our NDP government took action to protect Albertans from car insurance rate increases of 10, 15 per cent, or even more. We put a 5 per cent cap in place in late 2017, and then extended it until this August. Any increase beyond 5 per cent would be devastating to Albertans who rely on their vehicles to go to work or pick up their kids. To the Minister of Finance: will you commit today to continuing to protect Albertans by leaving the 5 per cent cap in place?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we are aware and have heard concerns about the cost of insurance. We've certainly heard concerns about the sustainability of our auto insurance sector right now. Our department is looking into options going forward. But one thing we're committed to is ensuring that we have a sustainable automobile insurance system going forward to ensure that Albertans can find cost-effective insurance for their vehicles.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Insurance Bureau of Canada has said that it is, quote, "extremely well positioned with this new government," and given that the IBC has been calling for a lift on the cap, again, will this minister reject the calls of these companies, stand up for everyday Albertans, and maintain the 5 per cent cap?

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, this government is aware of the challenges facing the automobile insurance industry. We've been in discussion with officials. We are working with the industry on a claims-and-costs study to fully understand the issues at play and possible solutions going forward. We're listening to Albertans, and we're committed to finding the best solution going forward.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, in due course is just not good enough.

As I stated, the 5 per cent cap is due at the end of August and given that the Alberta economy is still recovering and many are still struggling to make ends meet, will the minister commit today to protect those Albertans and keep the 5 per cent cap in place?

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the challenges in the automobile insurance sector, and no decisions have been made at this point in time. But one thing we will commit to is consulting with Albertans, unlike the members opposite when they rammed through a carbon tax that they never consulted on during the election campaign, unlike the members opposite who rammed through Bill 6 without consulting farmers and ranchers. We're committed to responsible decisions, decisions that are best for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

#### 2:30 Public-private Partnerships and Seniors' Housing

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has promised that his government will aggressively pursue public-private partnerships, or P3s, for infrastructure projects, including seniors' homes and lodges. But the previous Conservative government's P3 model was considered a mess by an independent review because of cost overruns, lengthy delays, and insufficient oversight and project management. To the Minister of Infrastructure. Seniors in Alberta need reliable housing. Why are you planning to create another harmful mess for them?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for asking that question. There are always pros and cons of every policy, but in this case it shouldn't be any surprise because we campaigned on that platform. It's our campaign commitment that we will pursue these P3s, but Albertans need not worry about P3s because we are going to review each project and whether that model suits that project or not and then make those decisions.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, certainly there are more cons, Mr. Speaker.

Given that in that same independent report companies said that the increasingly price competitive nature of the P3 model has resulted in diminishing returns that simply do not provide enough incentives for proponents to bid and given that those companies said that there would be more interest if the province shelved the P3 model and switched back to the government's traditional model, which our NDP government did, again to the minister: can you explain how this government will ensure seniors have the affordable housing they need?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Panda:** Thanks again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that question. What the NDP government did is not a benchmark for me. Having said that . . .

**Ms Philips:** Is building housing for seniors? Building schools?

**Mr. Panda:** Absolutely. Building schools, building seniors' care facilities are a priority for this government.

We actually said that we will honour the capital project list, the list they proposed for the next four years. We said that we'll support those projects which are sustainable, which are going to get Albertans back to work, and we're going to honour that. That's what we'll do.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that P3s often result in higher than expected costs and given that companies often look to user fees to recover those costs and given that seniors often live on modest, fixed incomes, to the Minister of Seniors and

Housing: will you commit to not increasing fees for seniors regarding the cost overruns, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, we take this matter very seriously. We understand that the affordability of housing is critical and is an issue for many Albertans. We thank the member opposite for the opportunity to talk about some of our platform commitments that we made during the campaign to ensure that there's access to affordable housing. One of the reasons why affordable housing is an issue is because there have been increasing cost burdens on home builders due to unnecessary red tape, and that is why our red tape reduction strategy is so critical and will help us to deliver . . .

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

#### **Minimum Wage for Youth** (continued)

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week this government passed a bill which effectively reduced minimum wage for students between the ages of 13 to 17 from a previous \$15 to \$13 per hour. Many students in this province have entered into contractual agreements with employers for which they expect to be paid \$15 an hour, but now students will earn significantly less. This is an issue for students in my constituency and, undoubtedly, everywhere else in the province, where these students work very hard to save money for school and put food on their tables. To the Minister of Labour and Immigration: what do you say to these young Albertans? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** You are an excitable group.

The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Cross for the question. If employees have existing contracts or are part of a union's collective agreement, those wage rates are fixed and the youth job-creation wage would not have any impact in those cases. But I want to reinforce that the youth job-creation wage is a minimum. It's a minimum wage, and some employers may choose to pay more than that. What the youth job creation does is give employers more of an incentive to hire more youth so we can get our youth back to work.

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that thorough response. Given that these new policy changes will now take effect and given that this was previously brought up in Chamber by other members on both sides of this House, to the same minister: what will you say to the 500 youth workers who have entered into contracts with the Calgary Stampede, who are budgeting for the upcoming year on a \$15 minimum wage, and now are at risk of earning less than anticipated?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the hon. member for the question. We actually had a chance to talk to Warren Connell of the Calgary Stampede about this, and this actually proves the point. He confirmed that any contracts entered into at \$15 an hour were being maintained at that rate, and many employers are stating that they will continue to pay their youth \$15 an hour. [interjections] As I mentioned previously, this is a minimum wage, and employers can choose to pay their employees

more. What this is about is creating opportunities for thousands of youth who have no opportunities and cannot earn anything.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** You would think the opposition, being so excited to hear the question, would also be excited to hear the answer.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that these policies will now reduce the minimum wage for students and given that this impact will be felt by students throughout this province and especially in lower income areas where students rely on these jobs to pay their bills, to the same minister: how can you say that the youth job-creation wage will help if youth are now going to earn much less than before and struggle to cover their basic necessities? How can they be expected to live on \$13 an hour, sir?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to Statistics Canada the majority of youth are working part-time and attending school. If the youth are not in school and working full-time, they will receive the general minimum wage. We are committed to get Albertans of all ages back to work. The youth job-creation wage will encourage job creators to hire students for their first job and give youth the opportunity to gain experience and skills, get their foot in the door, and start working up the job ladder. Again, this is about creating opportunities for youth.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

#### **Northern Alberta Wildfire Evacuations**

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs. As you know, there are many people out of their homes throughout my riding and northern Alberta. While many wildfire evacuees have returned home, many others remain under mandatory evacuation order and continue to face challenges brought on from being evacuated from their homes and communities. These unlucky Albertans continue to be plagued by fear and uncertainty as wildfires continue to pose a threat to their communities. Can the minister update the House as to the status of the evacuations?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Lesser Slave Lake. Our government is working hard to ensure that every Albertan under mandatory evacuation order is taken care of. We are happy to know that more than 6,000 residents evacuated during the wildfire have returned home. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the first responders and emergency management staff who have protected human life throughout this ordeal. Wet, cooler weather has created favourable conditions for firefighters, and we are hopeful that more evacuees will begin to return home soon.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the minister, thank you for that useful update. It's great news to know that more than 6,000 evacuees have returned home. Given that unfortunately there are still thousands of Albertans that remain away from their communities and livelihoods due to these evacuations and given that the number one question I hear from constituents is "When can I go home?," to the minister: can you please provide us with an update as to when these Albertans, like

those from Wabasca and Bigstone Cree Nation, in my riding can expect to return home?

2:40

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to do our part in Slave Lake to make this situation right for the evacuees, but given the hardship these mandatory evacuations can cause an individual and family – the wildfire situation in this province remains serious. Those under mandatory evacuation order must remain in safe conditions and in safe locations. We urge all Albertans to stay up to date on wildfire and emergency evacuation . . .

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

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, through you to the minister, thank you for that important update. I would like to take a quick moment to also thank all of the first responders and emergency management staff who have served to protect the lives and safety of my constituents.

Given that these evacuations are put in place to protect the safety of residents and given that being away from your home and livelihood can be a large burden both financially and on one's mental health, to the minister: what is the government doing to assist the wildfire evacuees through these difficult times?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The government understands the toll this has taken on the evacuees. We are doing everything in our power to make the situation much better. We are supporting evacuees who have met the right criteria with financial support, which will assist them with their day-to-day needs until they can go home. We are also helping with temporary food and shelter. We said that we would be there to support the evacuees through this difficult time, and that's exactly what our government is going to do.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will move to Orders of the Day. I encourage members that have other commitments to exit the Chamber in an expeditious manner.

## Orders of the Day

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is rising to move Motion 503 on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### Crude-by-rail Contracts

503. Mr. Schmidt moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to honour the crude-by-rail contracts in order to move Alberta's oil to world markets, protect jobs, and support companies in the province's energy sector.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and speak in favour of this motion. I rise to move Motion 503.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, if it so pleases the Speaker, I will continue in my debate on this motion and encourage members to not only support this motion but also to engage in a dialogue. Madam Speaker, the reason that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is proposing this, quite

frankly, is that we know that the Premier and Executive Council have had time to look at the numbers. In fact, earlier today my colleague referenced Ray Gilmour, the new deputy minister of Executive Council, who was a senior official under our government and very familiar with the contract. In fact, he had a hand in it.

Really, this contract does a couple of different things. We know that it's been very frustrating with the delays to the Trans Mountain pipeline. We know that we continue to experience other delays. In fact, line 3 was on track. I think it was a couple of weeks ago that we learned that that project going through the state of Minnesota is now delayed. These projects are absolutely critical to Alberta getting a fair price for our oil, Madam Speaker. When I say "Alberta," it's really Canada because Alberta is Canada's economic engine, and when we get such a discount for having a lack of market access, it hurts all Canadians, quite frankly. That's why we're proposing this motion.

The crude-by-rail contracts: I appreciate the fact that the members opposite during the election had said, "This sounds like a bad deal. We don't think we should continue on it," but now that Executive Council has had a chance to look at the details of the contracts, I hope that they see a couple of different things. One, what this does is that it's a release valve that will come into play very quickly here. I mean, back then it was a medium-term solution. Now it's an immediate-term solution, Madam Speaker, because the railcars would be coming onboard in July. We're talking about moving up to 130,000 barrels per day. That will reduce the differential, which will therefore help every energy producer in Alberta, in fact in western Canada, get a better price per barrel.

Is that the long-term solution? No, Madam Speaker. We said that from the get go. The long-term solution is pipelines. Pipelines are the safest mode of transport hands down, but what this government is doing and what this Premier is doing is telling the world that they will do nothing until a pipeline is built. Even if the federal government tomorrow came forward and said, "We approve the Trans Mountain pipeline," would oil flow tomorrow or the day after? No. It'll be years, so this was a solution that would ensure that our producers get a better price.

At the same time, Madam Speaker, the line of reasoning that the Premier uses, that this would happen on its own: well, the Premier is being a little naive, or he's not being forthright. If it would have already happened, then it would have happened a year ago, six months ago, two years ago. The fact of the matter is that there is capacity, and I know this because I was one of the people that sat down with the rail companies. There is capacity to put on more crude by rail, but they did not want to pay for it. They didn't want to take on the burden. For the government to take on these railcars – we did the numbers – actually, it would mean an increase to general revenue by \$2.2 billion. I mean, I'm sure the opposite side would love to construe this as, "Of course, this is the NDP government being socialist," which is far from the truth. What this is ensuring that our producers get a fair price immediately. It reduces the differential. It moves up to 120,000 barrels per day, but it also means an increase in revenue. This is a profit-generating tool.

My frustration and the reason why I support this motion from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is that here is a solution that is under the nose of the current government. They just need to honour these contracts. It is not going to be a loss for the government or the people of Alberta; it's actually going to be a revenue generator. More importantly, it gets our product to market now. It doesn't mean waiting for the TMX to get built. As we've seen, there are always delays and unforeseen delays. Again, look at line 3 going through Minnesota.

This was a mid-term solution that this government has available at its disposal. I think it's a shame if they cancel these contracts.

Again, you know, saying that the private sector should just do it on their own: well, they're not. It's the same argument that is flawed as far as the programs to upgrade and refine more of our petrochemicals here in Alberta.

My question to the government is: if a flat tax is all that it took, then why are we building the first-ever propane-to-polypropylene facility in Canada? It doesn't exist. Nowhere do we upgrade propane. Why? That's a great question, Madam Speaker. The companies had said to us: you need to level the playing field, and investment will come to Alberta. There is a role for government. This is something that I can't seem to get through to the members on the opposite side.

In this case, those future royalty credits meant over \$9 billion of investment today, thousands of jobs for men and women today. The crude by rail will mean jobs for Albertans today. It means a better price for our producers. We're standing up for the energy sector. We're standing with Albertan and Canadian energy companies, and I urge the members opposite to do the same.

2:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on behalf of this government to speak against this motion. I've been a business owner for about 12 years, and you're going to have to, you know, bear with me a bit. There are a lot of reasons I'm speaking out against this motion. There are a lot of red flags. Just bear with me.

Number one, being a business owner for so long, I think it's important to be clear that our government, pretty much any government, should never be in the business of competing with our private sector. This government through the election, you know, even previous to the election, and postelection has been very clear that we are not going to continue with this crude-by-rail contract, and there are several reasons why.

You know, over the past 12 years I personally have negotiated millions of dollars in private contracts, and when I look at this contract specifically, \$3.7 billion, this was a contract that was negotiated very hastily just over a couple of months. I think it was negotiated because there was so much inaction that hadn't been done for four years. They left it to the very end. This is a contract that when it's compressed that short, I think it put them in a position where they're overpaying for these railcars, and it just doesn't seem like a very good deal for the Alberta taxpayers.

I mean, we heard from the Member for Lethbridge-West. She stated that this is roughly \$2 billion in revenue for the province of Alberta. Even if we consider that it is \$2 billion worth of revenue, I'm looking at a signed contract for \$3.7 billion, the largest expenditure in Alberta history, and I'm still looking at it. You know, the business sense in me goes: that's still a \$1.5 million or more loss. That's just based on the estimates that we have right now, which leads me to the other part of myself in the business of risk.

Being in business – you know, the reason government shouldn't be in business is that the private sector really has the ability to adjust and deal with market values a lot quicker, faster. This is why government shouldn't be in that business. We can't react that well. There are a lot of highs and lows. We know that in the oil sector. This is a historical fact. We've gone through it many times in Alberta. The private sector is almost specifically structured to be able to take these risks, manage them better than government, and mitigate any losses that may come from that. Like I said, we're accountable to the taxpayers as government. That's our primary business, being accountable to every taxpayer that lives here. If

we're looking at \$2 billion in revenue and \$3.7 billion in costs, to me that's just a net loss. It doesn't make sense.

You know, when we're talking about the fact that the private sector isn't capable of taking care of this, I don't believe that either. I mean, that would be under the assumption that the private sector is at a hundred per cent capacity, that they have no ability to go beyond what they're shipping right now, but looking at a National Energy Board report – we're looking at 2018 numbers – they were going from around 145,000 barrels per day in January, and then they fluctuated. They increased to 330,000 barrels per day in October. This leads me to believe that the private sector can increase. If the market is there, this shows that the private sector is more than happy to increase and continue to increase crude by rail.

Now, I think those things are very important to bring up. These are, you know, really the main reasons that we shouldn't be getting into messing with the private sector. We're looking at risk. We're looking at risk. We're look at, as a government, increasing our risk. We're looking at getting involved in the private sector. I just think both of these are going to have a negative effect, and it's not going to benefit the taxpayers in the manner that the opposition is saying that it's going to.

You know, they're saying right now this year alone – we're seeing industry experts at Genscape right now estimating that we could go anywhere from 300,000 barrels per day this summer up to 400,000 and 500,000 by the end of the year, this all done by the private sector. So a \$3.7 billion contract, which is being proposed as being the complete answer to fixing our differential in our price, the export for Alberta: to me, every part of the business sense in me tells me that it's not. This is \$3.7 billion of taxpayers' money being spent. When they've even stated, like I said, by the Member for Lethbridge-West, \$2 billion in revenue – I don't know – to me this doesn't make sense.

We have numbers here that prove that the private sector has the ability to do this, and we're looking at a contract that was negotiated in the late parts of their four-year term. Inaction. They had inaction. They had no action, no credible action, for four years, forcing them into this terrible contract and even having to negotiate this contract in a very short period of time. This government was quite clear February 1 that we were not going to honour sweetheart deals or bailout deals. To me this appeared to be just their way of trying to convince the voters in this province leading up to the election that they had the answer for the oil problems. In reality they just hadn't done anything for four years. This was just a grasp at trying to bail themselves out after not getting anything in measurable effect for the oil and gas sector in four years, and the fact being that in the short period of time they negotiated this, I don't know how they could've negotiated a strong deal for this province or the taxpayers here.

I know that personally in business when I was negotiating contracts, if I was in a position where I had to do something, the only thing that I had on my side was time. If I had time to be able to negotiate, I still had something to work with. Now, you take time away, like was taken away from the opposition leading into the election – everybody knew they were forced. They had to have this done in a certain period of time. Everything here shows they're overpaying for these railcars, for the contracts related to it, and I just don't feel that in any way I can support this.

It seems like we can negotiate with the private sector. We can talk to them about, you know, what's going to work best to be able to continue to export our oil by rail, crude by rail as we work through dealing with the differential pricing.



3:00

We're moving into a time right now where it seems like the differential on the market looks good for them to be able to increase crude by rail. It makes more sense for them to be doing crude by rail. We have a market assessment here that says that due to where it's at right now, we're going to see that moving through this year. So I just don't see . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address the House on this particular subject and, of course, point out the error in the ways of thinking across the floor that we just heard and overall in terms of this bill. As I mentioned before, sometimes the chaotic thinking on the Conservative side of the floor is something that I'd find amusing if it weren't so dangerous to the population of the province of Alberta.

I just want to spend a few moments talking about some of the things we were just hearing from the member opposite about this bill just to demonstrate that the arguments that they're making, in fact, are often about things that were never said or are not properly descriptive of what has happened in the past and therefore – I mean, internally it must seem like the arguments make sense, but because they're not based on reality in the first place, they don't hold much water. I think it's interesting that the previous speech started with a comment that somehow the fact that this contract for oil by rail was done in the latter part of the term of our four-year government was in and of itself problematic. There are a couple of points I want to make on that.

One is that I do realize that there is an expectation on the other side of the House that we should have in four years done more than previous Conservative governments did in 44 years. I agree with him that we are indeed 11 times better than them at things that we do, but we simply didn't have time to do everything at once. Of course, you can't put all of your activities in the first six months of your time in government. You keep working. You have a job. You do a piece of work and you bring up the next piece of work and the next piece of work, and we did that. We worked right until the very end of our term, and of course that means that something – something – that we were doing had to happen at the end. So it's a silly argument to say that doing it at the end was in and of itself problematic because of the timing.

The second thing that was said about that is that it was done too fast and therefore that was problematic. That was said about a minute and a half before the comment was made that things should be left to private industry because they're more flexible and more agile and government can't move quickly to do things. I just wanted to point out the fact that that there was probably less than three minutes of time between the complaint that we did things quickly and their belief that government can't do things quickly were said. Again, you know, confusion in the Conservative mind that I think we need to, you know, point out because the decision to eliminate the crude-by-rail contracts is another piece of confusion.

We know from the assessments being done by the good members of the public service in the government of Alberta that the investment being made in crude by rail will net an approximately \$2.2 billion profit for the province of Alberta. Now we have the Conservative Party telling us that they are against profit. I think that's, again, another example of the confusion that they have. They don't like it because they only want profits to accrue to a small, select group of individuals in society, people who are their friends and who will contribute to their coffers in the next election. When those profits instead are accrued and then shared by all people in

society so that services can be created such as health care and education and the public services that we provide here in this province, they suddenly don't like profits.

Again, you know, the arguments they're making are at best confusing and at worst a little bit nasty toward the people of the province of Alberta who would be benefiting from this extra \$2.2 billion. We know, of course, that the CEOs of the rail companies have indicated that if these contracts are cancelled, there are going to be penalties to be paid. So not only is it a loss of \$2.2 billion in benefits to the people of the province of Alberta, but it's also going to be more than that when the penalties have to be paid out.

Let me just go on a little bit further and talk about some of the other faults in the previous statement that was just made, and that is concern that somehow this was supposed to be the solution, the only solution, and the complete response to the problems in the oil economy that the province of Alberta has been experiencing. Again, you set up a straw dog, you set it on fire, and then you pretend that somehow you have, you know, made a good point, but it's not true. If we just simply look at what the government of Alberta did under the NDP, we can see a very complex, sophisticated plan to deal with a problem that did not originate here in the province of Alberta but, actually, occurred across the board in oil economies in North America and, therefore, was largely out of our hands.

I just want to point out that the same kinds of problems that we've experienced here in the province of Alberta, such as the loss of jobs and so on, also occurred in Conservative Saskatchewan. It happened over there, too. They had the same kinds of issues in terms of loss of government revenue and loss of jobs as we did. They don't bother to point that out, though, because they like to pretend that because something happened while we were in government, therefore we are responsible for it happening. Again, as I've mentioned previously in this House, they really cannot understand the basic difference between correlation and causality – so everything that has a correlation that happens at the same time therefore must be causal and it must be because the government did it – when, in fact, we know that the evidence indicates that that's not true. It happened to the Conservative government in Saskatchewan as well as it happened to the NDP government in the province of Alberta.

I'd just like to remind the House a little bit about some of the complexity of the plan that we had put forward in terms of dealing with this issue, the fact that we did a number of things in order to ensure that over the long term we would have some benefits. In the short term, of course, we did put some reductions on the amount of production of crude so that the differential would be reduced, and indeed when we did that, the differential was reduced. At one point the differential was actually more than the actual profits from the barrel. By the time that we had implemented that phase of our plan, the differential was reduced to less than \$10 per barrel. In fact, it was a very effective immediate step, but we understood that that was not a long-term plan for this province, that we needed to do something different, but we were handling the crisis in the moment.

The medium term was crude by rail because if we sell our product, which apparently the Conservatives don't want to do – they don't want to sell our product – then we can take the benefits of that. We can provide services to the members of the province of Alberta, and we can make sure that the province is growing and the number of jobs is growing. So it's an interim step.

Now, we all know that shipping crude by rail is not the first and best thing to happen. We get that. Nobody chose it above all other alternatives. What we said was that given the reality, given what's actually happening out there, not the made-up, straw-dog falsities that are often, you know, argued about in this House on the other side, the reality is that we do not have an oil pipeline in this province

that can satisfactorily transport the crude oil that we would like to be able to transport in order to make the profits that we need to make as a province.

Now, that largely falls on the backs of the Harper Conservative government in Ottawa, of which the Premier was a senior cabinet minister, who failed to do anything to resolve this problem in over 10 years while they had a Conservative government in Alberta and a Conservative government in Ottawa. They failed. They failed continuously to address the problem and to deal with it.

**3:10**

As a result, when we got elected, we got stuck with a complete disaster that had been handed to us by a federal government that did nothing to resolve the problem in the first place and a provincial government who had saved no money, who had taken oil profits at a time when oil was at a hundred dollars a barrel or more and still had done nothing to resolve the problem at all. So we began the process of resolving the problem and pushing things forward. We know that ultimately we were moving toward a pipeline.

But it wasn't stopped by us. The pipeline wasn't stopped by the provincial government of Alberta. It wasn't stopped by the federal government.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise this afternoon to speak against this motion. Let me be clear. This government is not in the business of competing with the private sector, and the government, in my opinion, should not be in the business of competing with the private sector. We have repeatedly stated before, during, and now since the election that we will not be continuing with a government-owned crude-by-rail program, and there are several reasons why.

First, shipping crude by rail is something that the private sector is fully capable of doing, and before the former government's program was announced, the private sector was fully prepared to do so. Let me share a few examples with the House. According to the National Energy Board, Canadian crude-by-rail volumes increased throughout 2018 from 145,000 barrels per day in January to over 330,000 barrels per day in October. Volumes peaked in December at over 350,000 barrels per day. With narrower differentials on the oil price between Alberta and U.S. markets in early 2019, the level dropped to around 130,000 barrels per day. However, as opportunities are developing from U.S. demand with wider than expected differentials, industry is stepping up again.

Madam Speaker, at the beginning of 2019 analysts at TPH Energy Research estimated that March volumes would be in the range of 160,000 to 175,000 barrels per day. Subsequent data released by the National Energy Board shows that they were right on the nose. Crude-by-rail exports rose 29 per cent, to about 168,000 barrels of oil per day, from February. This includes Imperial Oil shipping 15,000 barrels per day during that time, ending the month at around 28,000 barrels per day.

Looking ahead, Cenovus has talked about ramping up to 100,000 barrels per day or more by year's end. Both CN and CP expect to continue shipping more crude this year. Industry experts like Genscape are forecasting highs of 300,000 barrels per day this summer, while IHS Markit is going even higher when they estimate that railway movements will hit record highs of between 400,000 and 500,000 barrels per day by the end of this year or early next year.

Madam Speaker, all of this movement has been occurring before the NDP's irresponsible and ill-conceived crude-by-rail program even comes into effect. Speaking of irresponsible, let's talk about

the fact that this program was rushed. It was last minute, and it was concocted by a desperate government on the eve of an election that they knew they were about to lose. We are talking about one of the largest single expenditures in Alberta's history, a \$3.7 billion contract coming together in a matter of months, just months. It is challenging to try and do all of the appropriate due diligence and negotiate the best possible terms when you do not have time on your side. It's no wonder the former government pulled such a hasty deal together in such a short time frame and on the public stage, no less.

Madam Speaker, it was simply reckless of the previous government to borrow such an enormous sum of money to create crude-by-rail capacity without the proper oversight to go with it. These were contracts completed under less than ideal negotiating conditions in a clear attempt to secure an election. Again, the private sector was already expanding oil-by-rail capacity significantly over the course of 2018, without government intervention or its requirement. Curtailment was put in place and rail was expected to adapt as the differential started to bounce back, as it has been doing. The former government only had to step back and let the private market work itself out.

That brings me to my third reason. This deal is just too risky for a government to undertake. We all know what the oil industry is like. There are highs and lows, booms and busts. This is a historical fact. While these ebbs and flows are challenging for the private sector, it's something they are in a much better position to manage because they expect it. The private sector is specifically structured to be able to take risks, with investors who make the decisions to take higher risks for higher potential returns.

But as a government, Madam Speaker, we are accountable to the taxpayer. We are stewards of the province's energy resources, and we should not be taking unnecessary risk with the public's money or their economic future. The public needs certainty from their government, and they need us to be able to provide the public services they require to go about their daily lives. These contracts are not in the best interests of Albertans. Now, thanks to the members opposite, we are locked in, with few options to salvage the taxpayers' money.

Madam Speaker, we know the private sector will ship crude by rail if the economics are favourable. I'll say that again: if the economics are favourable. They can and they will take on all risks associated with this transaction. This, without question, should not fall on the province of Alberta, at least not on our watch.

Madam Speaker, before I conclude, I want to assure all hon. members that the crude-by-rail industry will continue, as it always has, to provide well-paying jobs to all Albertans even without a government-run crude-by-rail program. Based on industry forecasts, I predict it will be a very busy year for crude-by-rail activity, and we welcome that. Crude by rail is something that the private sector is in the best position to be running on its own.

This government will do what is best for Albertans, and we will do what's necessary to protect Alberta taxpayers. I will therefore not be supporting this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to Motion 503, brought forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I'd first like to start by disputing a couple of the points that have been brought up by members opposite who have spoken already to this motion.

Firstly, the Member for Highwood spoke in this Chamber a few moments ago about his expertise in the business community and how he thought that negotiations that were done over a certain pace

of time were of less quality than negotiations that were done over a protracted time. I might remind that hon. member, notwithstanding his tremendous experience in negotiating contracts, that there are others in this Chamber who have also had a similar amount of experience.

I, for one, can say that I've been involved in over 800 contract negotiations in the real estate industry during my career, and believe me, Madam Speaker, the pace of those negotiations was different for each one of them. The circumstances of the clients involved, the nature of the transaction involved dictated the pace of that negotiation, and it didn't mean that the contract which resulted was any worse or better because of the pace at which that contract was negotiated.

The contract that results is what was negotiated within the framework of the needs of the time frame that was required. For example, in the negotiation that we undertook in the crude-by-rail investment project, that negotiation was certainly done in a period of crisis that necessitated quick action on the part of government to protect Alberta jobs, Alberta workers, and the bottom line for the government.

Now, the Highwood member suggested that in his calculations – and he mentioned that the cost of increasing rail capacity was about \$3.7 billion; that was in the government announcement of the day – there would be a \$2.2 billion profit that would be generated. Then he went on to say that in his calculation that would leave a \$1.5 billion shortfall. I'm not quite getting where that all adds up. He's forgotten about the fact that the province anticipated generating \$5.9 billion over the three-year period following that announcement in increased revenues and royalties. If you subtract the \$3.7 billion cost from that, that's where you are left with the \$2.2 billion profit that would emanate to the province. So there's a bit of faulty arithmetic going on there, and I would ask the Member for Highwood to correct that at his next opportunity.

3:20

So on a couple of fronts I do take exception to the Member for Highwood's characterization of the numbers as well as the type of condemnation he's made towards the province of Alberta's government negotiations during our NDP government's period, when he suggests that we were in a rushed, hurried negotiation that was flawed as a result of that. Nothing could be farther from the truth, Madam Speaker. The negotiation took place in a time frame which necessitated quick action, nimble action by a government which was able to respond in a way that ended up with a transaction that would result in a \$2.2 billion profit for the taxpayers, to be reinvested in services and in the very industry that this government today looks to harm by \$2.2 billion by eliminating the crude-by-rail contract. So I'm not quite understanding why some of the members opposite are opposed to the continuation of the crude-by-rail investments.

The fact is that over the course of the mandate of the previous government we suffered the fate of having to look at: why indeed are we in the place that we are in right now? In fact, if you actually look at the long-term situation, the crisis that we ended up in, the problem is that we don't have enough capacity to export our product to tidewater. That isn't something we created in the four-year term of our government, Madam Speaker. That's something that was a conscious decision made by the economic geniuses over on the other side over 44 years of Conservative government. They thought it wise and they accepted a policy world where we only had one pipeline to tidewater and did nothing to rectify that situation. Of course, it came to a head where we ended up with the situation where we couldn't get our product to tidewater.

We were producing a product that had no place to go, and as a result the price was dropping through the floor. We were practically giving away our resources. You're darn right that we negotiated an oil-by-rail contract to get some of that excess capacity out to the international markets and receive a reasonable price for it, the best we could possibly do under the circumstances, as an intermediate measure to keep the industry afloat, keep Albertans working, and keep the economic revenue flowing until such time that we can get an approval for a pipeline and get the pipeline capacity flowing to the coast, hopefully more than one coast, and continue on the road to developing our natural resources in a way that should have been done over the past 44 years by successive Conservative governments, who failed to increase our pipeline capacity and allow our products to get to world markets in a volume that would enable us to receive the proper return for our Alberta products.

Now, I know that the Member for Grande Prairie recently spoke to this Motion 503, and the quote that that member made is something I will deliciously remember for a long, long time, and I hope to hear it repeated many times over in this House. The solution that that member suggests that we should adopt is that we should simply "step back and let the . . . market work itself out." I think that's a pretty close quote. Well, in fact, that's what's been happening in this province for about 40 years of Conservative government, previous to our government, basically stepping back and letting the market work itself out. In the meantime they're letting Alberta workers and businesses become the collateral damage of 44 years of stepping back and letting the market work itself out.

I, for one, believe that there is a role for government to play when indeed faced with crises that are costing Albertans jobs and revenue and that need direct and immediate action. We took that action as a government, Madam Speaker, and we think that this current government should continue the oil-by-rail contracts because they were the right thing to do and they still are the right thing to do. They end up profiting this province to the tune of \$2.2 billion over the life of those contracts. The argument that the private sector certainly should have been left, that we should have stepped back and let the market work itself out: we didn't have that type of time. The marketplace wasn't stepping in. Typically they will step aside when they think their risk is too high, so governments have a role to play to soften that risk, indeed, when that faces them, and that's what we did as a government.

We got into this crude-by-rail contract, and it's a profitable contract that will end up doing what it set out to do, and that is to, in an intermediate way, get our product to tidewater at a world price – or it won't get it to tidewater necessarily but get it into the marketplace at a higher price in a way that will allow our production to be maintained while we, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, get approvals for pipelines to tidewater and get our product to global markets and at a world price.

You know, the whole idea behind the oil-by-rail contract was to secure market access for our resources, create good jobs, and continue to diversify Alberta's energy economy. We laid out short-term, medium-term, long-term plans to get top dollar for our resources. Ultimately, of course, as I mentioned before, the crude-by-rail investment was a medium-term solution which we put in place to tide us over while we fought to get more pipeline capacity in the long run. It was projected to be a win-win for the energy sector and taxpayers. We would have signed commitments with suppliers that would have seen an estimated 4,400 railcars move up to 120,000 barrels of oil per day. We'd purchase crude oil from producers, load it onto railcars at loading facilities across the province, and ship it to market. That was intended to help industry,

including smaller producers who may have not had the ability to take action on their own.

Albertans could have looked forward to seeing railcars roll as early as July of this year, and, Madam Speaker, they still could if this government saw fit to continue with the wisdom of the contract that was produced in a crisis period of time and also in a way that effectively . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, thanks for having the chance to talk to Motion 503 here. It's been interesting hearing some of the dialogue back and forth from the folks and different perspectives, and I'd like to offer mine, if I can, from a gentleman who worked in that industry, who was actually part of the rail group at Enbridge that built transshipment facilities and oil by rail, so understanding some of that as well as the models for pipelines, et cetera.

What I do find very interesting, in my recent position here as a politician, is hearing politicians that I only saw on television or in news ads that protested against line 3, against Gateway, against Energy East, against, let's say, Trans Mountain, and against Keystone XL. Such proponents now have become for pipeline capacity and understanding it. It seems that they don't understand that when we build upstream facilities, it's based on the auspices of having those pipelines in place and the approvals, which should almost be a slam dunk based on the fact that our industry is so well poised and positioned for it as well as that we're so cognizant of the environment protection, et cetera, et cetera, the great lengths that we go to. I'm very happy to understand now that they realize that that part of the industry is so vital and that we are key people within that industry.

Little words of wisdom here: putting on a Superman cape does not give you the ability to fly or have superpowers. Buying a bunch of train cars does not make you an oilman. That's something that folks have to understand as well as the way the industry works. When you purchase product at a given spot value, you then take care, custody, and control of that product at a given spot value. When you do not control where or when that shipment will reach the other end, you are speculating. They are speculating with taxpayers' dollars.

The folks that actually are the oilmen and -women that are in that industry understand and know that there are different commodity types, and those commodity types are traded in situ and in transit and while they're moving at a given timeline and sometimes will hit terminal tankage, those types of things. Paper trades are played, and that's a whole industry. I have not heard once of how the former government was going to become a trading stock exchange to manage the shortfalls in those industries. It's a little-known fact – or obviously they would know because they crunched the numbers, as they've said, Madam Speaker – that typically moving oil by rail is three times the cost of moving it by pipe.

I also find it very interesting, given that they're, you know, on the record against pipeline projects with their partners in Ottawa, that they were the ones that ran around and caused the delays and the protest and all the churn that took place in these projects. Ergo, they are the ones that ran out and cut us, being the Alberta people and the folks in that industry, and now they're running around selling the Band-Aids to us to fix the wound that they caused, to help stop the bleeding. That's what I do agree with them on: this is an interim measure.

They failed repeatedly on their budgets. They failed repeatedly on everything that they've touched, including this sector, and we're

supposed to now inherit the mess that they made. We campaigned on fixing the messes. We understand that this is more of a diverse issue. Industry are the ones that are able to take the risk.

3:30

Here's a little – I don't know – tidbit. When industry is worried about the risk, you might pay attention to it. The member over there had just mentioned that industry was too scared of the chance to take the risk in this, so we boldly jump in where, you know, angels fear to tread. Again, coming back to the Superman comment, Madam Speaker, putting on the little Superman suit does not give him superpowers, does not let him fly. Buying these train cars is not making them oilmen. I'm sorry. I get a little heated on this one. The boys out in the patch have heard me talk about this a number of times.

So they came in, with much of their power of having this industry that was hating the oil industry. They engaged in protest projects. They opposed and managed just about everything that we were dealing with on pipeline projects. Forming the government, they engaged in a royalty review that did nothing but scare away investors. They promptly rolled over on the Trudeau Liberals. It happened with the Northern Gateway project, and it happened with also the purchasing of that thing, that was supposed to buy us the Trans Mountain facility, all of this social licence. We're supposed to trust that this short-term, Band-Aid measure that they're suggesting is still salient and sound in the industry.

Colleagues have also mentioned about the market capacity and the fact that we can move this oil, that the industry is willing to take that risk. Again, understanding the industry that they are part of, they're the ones that play in that. For us to take the risk and pretend we're oilmen on the Alberta taxpayers' dollar: absolutely – absolutely – the wrong thing to do.

So I don't think it should come as any surprise to anyone at this point that I'm absolutely against this motion that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has put forward.

Unlike the NDP, which has shown their underlying opposition to development of the incredible natural resources that we have, the Conservative government here, the United Conservative government, are going to stand up for those 151,000 energy workers. We've got a clear plan on getting our product to market. We've got a clear plan on standing up against the friends in Ottawa that – well, their friends; they weren't ours. We're hoping Andrew Scheer helps things along when we get in there. The NDP failed repeatedly and came up with this plan to buy railcars. We're not going to repeat these mistakes.

We got voted in on a different mandate, to do things responsibly, to take into consideration all those other items we mentioned, and, again, by having people from those industries, not the accidental tourists that are strapping on Superman capes.

I don't know where the shot clock is at, ma'am. I could go on for hours on this. It just irks me. Again, we had such a strong mandate that we ran on. The Alberta people have spoken. They want us to make the right decisions. This was a half-hatched, haphazard-type idea. If the member has understood, having the 800 or 900 or a billion contracts that he's had, given the timeline that they're all different and all changing in those negotiations taking place, the one that should have jumped out at him came out of his own mouth: nobody else wanted this; it was too risky, so we decided to jump in. Wow. I would love to sit across the negotiating table from that gentleman on any other contract. Again, if anyone can remember that show *Dallas*, J.R. didn't lose too often, and that's exactly who this gentleman was thinking that he was negotiating on behalf of, to put it in that type of colourful argument.

Here's the track record. We tied in with Trudeau. We gave in to Obama. We actually pulled our negotiators off the Keystone XL project, helped to scrap Northern Gateway. We walked away from that. We gave Quebec and New Brunswick a veto. These are the same folks now that are trying to sell the Alberta people that this is such a great thing and that they're really concerned about the industry and that they know it better than the folks that are in it and the folks that were elected.

That's about all I've got to say about that. I'm against it, and I strongly suggest that everyone else vote against it, too. We're meddling with things we shouldn't be involved in.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, I just want to try and focus on the issue of crude by rail as opposed to trying to belittle the previous government and the actions they took. The actions that were taken were because the differential was blowing out. With the differential blowing out, there were small and medium-sized businesses, workers across this province working for nonintegrated companies, meaning that they were producing but weren't able to refine because they didn't own refineries – the people who were making lots and lots of money with the blown-out differential were the integrated producers, those who had production facilities. They could transport it to the refineries. They were making money on every barrel.

And who was suffering, Madam Speaker? Well, the treasury was suffering, of course, because the WCS was so low or so small. The action was taken because at small and medium-sized producers, those companies in Alberta with their staff across this province, in rural areas and urban areas, all of those workers were at risk of being let go.

The other side talks about: well, the private market would sort this out. The private market would have sorted it out, Madam Speaker, with the failure of small and medium-sized companies and thousands and thousands of workers being put out of work across this province. Those were the boys, maybe, in the oil patch that this individual from Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland talks about. Those boys would have been out of work because if they worked for an unintegrated company, they would have gone under. They would have gone under because the WCS was so small and the differential was so large.

For months and months and months the previous government looked at, "Okay; what are the solutions?" and they were identified very well by my colleague in the back row over there. They were talked about very well. We looked at short-term solutions, we looked at medium-term solutions, and of course pipelines are the ultimate solution. We took that action. I think my friend in the back row, of course, Edmonton-McClung, was very correct when he said that the speaker from across the way – I think it was the Member for Highwood – was wrong when he was talking about what the government of Alberta would have realized as a result of that crude-by-rail solution that we had proposed, that we had worked on.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides up to five minutes for the mover of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I'd like to invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close debate on Motion 503.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and close debate. It's been interesting to hear the comments that have been made by all of my colleagues, and I want to thank

all of my friends here in the NDP caucus for their thoughtful interventions.

It's certainly an interesting contrast with the points made by the Member for Highwood, who doesn't understand the difference between \$2 billion in revenue and \$2 billion in profit; the Member for Grande Prairie, who read notes that were clearly written by a staffer and that she'd seen for the first time entering this Chamber; and, of course, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, who doesn't understand that we have the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, that is the agent of the government, that buys and sells oil on behalf of the government of Alberta and has done so for 45 years and has done a reasonably good job. But, of course, Madam Speaker, I mean, we can't trust somebody who thinks that we've signed over immigration responsibility to the United Nations to bring anything resembling a fact to bear on debates here in this Chamber.

Madam Speaker, it's important to emphasize the need for moving this crude oil by rail because, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview noted in his opening comments, the uncertainty around the increases in pipeline takeaway capacity are greater now than ever before. Last week, just last Monday, the Minnesota Court of Appeals announced that they revoked the permit for Enbridge's line 3, so we don't know when Enbridge's line 3 will be constructed. Just the other day Keystone XL had a court injunction lifted, but of course as soon as that injunction was lifted, other organizations filed suit against the Keystone XL project, putting that project in further delays. And the Trans Mountain pipeline, of course, is now at risk. Our government worked hard to put in place a climate change action plan that managed to convince the federal government to grudgingly approve and purchase that pipeline, but now that the members opposite are intent on scrapping the climate change plan and won't even commit today to keeping the 100-megatonne emissions cap on our oil sands production, we are further away from getting the federal government to say yes to Trans Mountain than ever before.

3:40

All three of these major pipelines are what our oil sands producers are relying on to get our resources to market, and all three have a considerable amount of uncertainty. The earliest that any of those things would come online is three years from now. It's more critical now than ever to use oil sands by rail to get our oil to market.

The members opposite seem to think that the private sector was able to do this on its own. In fact, they pointed to the fact that oil sands by rail increased significantly throughout the year 2018. They neglected the fact that the differential dropped to significant lows, that we were practically giving our oil away. As the Member for Calgary-Buffalo noted, we had to enact a two-step plan to shore up the price of oil. The first was to curtail oil production by approximately 300,000 barrels a day. The second step of that plan, Madam Speaker, was to increase oil-by-rail capacity so that the oil curtailment limits didn't have to stay in place forever. We haven't heard the members opposite say what they plan to do with the oil curtailment limits. We know that the private sector can't move quickly enough to move all of this oil by rail. We need government intervention to do this.

You know, the Member for Grande Prairie pointed to companies like Imperial and Cenovus, who are moving their crude oil by rail, and that's true, Madam Speaker. Those companies have the negotiating capacity to deal with CN and CP, to negotiate contracts that make it affordable for them to move their product by rail, but the junior oil sands companies do not. What the members opposite neglect when they talk about the free market is that we don't have a free market when it comes to rail capacity. We have two

companies that we deal with, CN and CP, and they have a significant amount of market power. They won't deal with the junior oil sands companies on their own because they don't have the volume and they can't commit to a three-year contract, that CN and CP are looking for. In order to act in the best interests of the junior oil sands companies, our government took action and secured these oil-by-rail contracts to keep junior oil sands companies at work and keep those people employed.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 503 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:43 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Pancholi
Carson	Ganley	Sabir
Ceci	Goehring	Schmidt
Dach	Hoffman	Sigurdson, L.
Deol	Irwin	

Against the motion:

Allard	Jones	Rowswell
Amery	Loewen	Schow
Barnes	Lovely	Schweitzer
Ellis	Madu	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Milliken	Singh
Glubish	Neudorf	Smith
Goodridge	Nixon, Jeremy	Stephan
Guthrie	Panda	Toews
Hanson	Rehn	Walker
Horner	Reid	Yao
Hunter	Rosin	Yaseen
Issik		

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 34
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 503 lost]

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate June 4: Mr. Glubish]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne and talk about my journey to this Legislature.

First, I'd like to thank the constituents of Central Peace-Notley who chose me to be their representative. I also want to thank the many volunteers who gave freely of their time, energy, and money to support me and the United Conservative Party. The support is

humbling, and I promise to represent them to the best of my abilities.

4:00

Also, I'd like to thank my parents. From their humble beginnings as homesteaders in the Valleyview area they taught their boys the value of hard work. Paul, my dad, worked hard as a heavy-duty mechanic with oil field contracting. I've seen him work 24 hours straight as a mechanic and then come home and put in a full day on the farm. My mom worked as a secretary for oil field companies and government, putting in a full day's work and then coming home to cook and help on the farm. Not only did they teach me by example how to work, but they also taught honesty and compassion when dealing with others.

They also taught their three boys to follow their dreams. My oldest brother, George, has made his living as a professional musician and music teacher, a very talented musician on many instruments. My next-oldest brother, Kelly, is an engineer in the racing industry. He's worked for over 30 years across North America in the racing industry as a mechanic, engineer, and team leader for the likes of Alex Tagliani and Kyle Busch and companies like Players and Toyota. I understand he's still winning with his new team right now. Myself, I've made my living most of my life as an outfitter in the tourism industry, guiding hunters from all over the world, and now, of course, being elected to this great Assembly for a second time to represent the good people in the Peace Country. I say this partly because I'm proud of my family but mostly to show the diversity of three brothers coming from the same humble household. Yes, you can follow your dreams.

My wife, Teena, and I grew up in the Valleyview area, and we couldn't think of a better place to raise our five children: Travis, Ty, Taylor, Tianna, and Tenea. Now, you might notice a tacky trend there. Also, our three grandsons – Silas, Ezra, and Leo – are all being raised there. We love the Peace Country and the life and opportunity it provides.

I was first elected in 2015 to the constituency of Grande Prairie-Smoky. That was the basic area that included Fox Creek, Valleyview, DeBolt, Bezanson, Teepee Creek, Sexsmith, and the north half of the city of Grande Prairie. In the most recent election, on April 16, 2019, I received the honour of being elected to the new constituency of Central Peace-Notley. Now, one of the most striking things about this constituency is its size, not just the amount of square miles but the number of communities and municipalities. Basically it includes the towns and areas around the towns of Fox Creek, Valleyview, DeBolt, McLennan, Falher, Spirit River to Bonanza, Berwyn to Fairview, and then west to Hines Creek, Worsley, Cleardale, and all the way to the B.C. border, where we find Cherry Point, Bay Tree, and the community of Gundy. Gundy can only be accessed by travelling 100 kilometres through another constituency or by going through British Columbia.

Here are some interesting numbers. The constituency of Central Peace-Notley contains eight MDs and counties, 11 towns and villages that have elected councils, 12 Hutterite colonies, and at least 80 other rural communities. It takes about five hours to drive between the communities of Fox Creek and Cherry Point. It also contains the Treaty 8 reserves of Sturgeon Lake Cree First Nation and Duncan's First Nation and lands of Horse Lake First Nation in the Clear Hills area. It also contains lands of Treaty 6 reserve of Alexander First Nation. I've had the opportunity to attend round dances and powwows at Sturgeon Lake Cree First Nation, and I've thoroughly enjoyed my time there.

I do want to give a bit of a rundown on a few of the communities. Though there's not enough time to cover all, here are a few. Fox Creek is known for oil and gas as it has access to both the Duvernay

and Montney formations. Valleyview is considered a portal to the Peace where highways 43 and 49 split; of course, highway 43 goes on to Grande Prairie and then on to mile zero of the Alaska highway and Dawson Creek. Highway 49 goes up to Peace River, and it's the main access to Mackenzie highway, that goes all the way to Yellowknife.

Falher is the honey capital of Canada. It's also known for its agriculture, beautiful, flat farmland there, and it's also a francophone community. When it comes to the francophone community, I have family there, and one of my favourite parts, enjoying the customs there, is to have a good feeding of tourtière. Tourtière is a meat pie, and I like to eat it the way my wife's pépère would eat it, and that's with maple syrup.

We go on to the community of Wanham. Now, Wanham this year is having it's 49th annual Plowing Match. I've had a chance to be there a couple of times for the plowing match, and they've got me on the walking plow. I have to say I think I got third prize once, maybe fourth prize another time though I'm not sure how many competitors there were in the beginner category. But I did enjoy walking behind a horse and operating the hand plow.

Spirit River: a trading post is how it originated. It has a history of ranching that goes back to the 1840s and a history in agriculture that goes back to the 1880s.

Now, Dunvegan is one of the most beautiful areas in Alberta. It's located on the Peace River, a beautiful valley there. It's very historic. It was started in, I think, 1821 with the Hudson's Bay Company, but actually, of course, the indigenous communities used that area for thousands of years, in particular the Beaver people.

Fairview is known for Fairview College, which is an extension of the Grande Prairie Regional College. They have a trades college there and train people from all over Canada. It's actually the only authorized training centre in Canada for Harley-Davidson, so anybody in Canada that wants to take on the Harley-Davidson training has to come to Fairview. Also, just a bit of a note here, they actually have competitions for motorcycle mechanics. A fellow by the name of Brett Hart, who studied at Fairview College – not the Bret Hart that you may be thinking of, the wrestler – actually won the world championship in Japan for motorcycle mechanics. He was a product of Fairview College.

I'd like to take some time to talk about all the communities in the constituency, but of course there's just not enough time to do that. What I do want to talk about is doughnuts. Now, in this huge constituency – it's hard to imagine – there's only one Tim Hortons, and that's in Valleyview. Of course, we all know about Tim Hortons doughnuts and Timbits. I guess I've got a bit of a sweet tooth. Maybe that's why I want to cover doughnuts.

Just about 60 kilometres west of Valleyview is Crooked Creek. Crooked Creek doughnuts I think are known probably Canada-wide and sometimes world-wide because they have such a great homemade doughnut there. I think the store sells, like, over a hundred dozen a day. This is a little store along the highway there. As I was representing this constituency and campaigning, I actually found out about the Bear Country Inn in Wanham, and they make homemade doughnuts there, too. We had an event in Eaglesham nearby, and we actually ordered 10 dozen of these doughnuts for that event. Of course, I had an opportunity to taste-test them also, and they are excellent, too. As far as doughnuts go, we can't forget about the Tractor Pit Convenience Store in Girouxville, who makes doughnuts, too. They are fantastic also. Of course, other doughnuts: we have Freson, IGAs, and Co-op stores, too, that sell doughnuts. I actually think I might have to have an event some time called doughnut wars, where we can blindfold taste-test doughnuts. I think that would be a great opportunity to really test these doughnuts out in my constituency.

Now, I do want to mention one other thing here about Crooked Creek. In Crooked Creek – we'll call it downtown Crooked Creek. Basically there's the Crooked Creek store, and then there's Scotty's Burger Shack. Now, Scotty and his wife, Robyn, have the Burger Shack, and \$1 from every burger that's sold goes to Ronald McDonald House and Kids with Cancer. Scotty started what they call a fight for hope. Scotty has raised – I don't even want to put a figure on it, but I know, like, with the fight for hope, one of the fights that he had was the biggest single fundraiser I think in Canada for the Ronald McDonald House. I know that he's got a little counter, and every time somebody buys a burger, it goes up a dollar. I know he's over \$30,000 on that counter. That's Scotty's Burger Shack in Crooked Creek. I know he just opened another little store in Shaw's Point Resort. That's just northeast of High Prairie. I just wanted to mention that. Scotty and Robyn: I don't want to tell their story here because I wouldn't do it justice, but they have a child that's been battling cancer, so that's their inspiration for doing this.

I do want to recognize some of the previous MLAs. One thing I found out in doing a little research – most of the MLAs I was going to cover were more recent MLAs, but I thought it was interesting that in 1905 James Cornwall was the one that was declared elected, you know, in the Peace River district. But the election results were actually overturned because there were some irregularities, so that left the seat vacant. They had another election on February 15, 1906, and at that time Thomas Brick decided he was going to run, too. Thomas Brick and James Cornwall were the only two people running in that election in 1906, and they actually ran for the same party. Of course, only one was declared a winner, so Thomas Brick became the elected MLA at that time.

#### 4:10

Now, maybe a little more recently, from 1971 through 1989 Marv Moore was the MLA. I guess I'll just back up for a second here. Because there are a couple of different constituencies involved here, I've got kind of two lists of MLAs. We'll start with Marv Moore, and this was the area that was considered Grande Prairie-Smoky. He was elected first in 1971 and represented the area till 1989. He was Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister of Transportation, and Minister of Health. I guess he's politically a bit of a legend in the area. He's been very helpful along the way and has given a lot of good advice. But maybe even more special than Marv is his wife, Fran. Now, Fran is a fantastic woman. She's a history buff. She volunteers extensively in the community, and she really does keep a lot of the history of that area, the DeBolt-Crooked Creek area. I do want to mention Fran and what a wonderful woman she is.

Next elected was Walter Paszkowski, 1989 to 2001. He was Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Transportation, Minister of Municipal Affairs. Following his term was Mel Knight, 2001 to 2012, who was the Energy minister. Then following him was Everett McDonald, 2012 to 2015, who was previously reeve for the county of Grande Prairie.

Now, at the other end of the constituency – like I said, these two have kind of joined a bit. From 1971 to 1984, the namesake of the constituency of Central Peace-Notley, Grant Notley, who to this day is still held in high regard in the area. As I was campaigning in the area, I often heard his name mentioned.

Following him was Jim Gurnett. Then following him: Glen Clegg from 1986 to 2001; Hector Goudreau from 2001 to 2015, Minister of Tourism; and then, of course, Marg McCuaig-Boyd, 2015 to 2019, Energy minister.

I want to get back to the Speech from the Throne. I know that when we ran the campaign in 2019, it was a pretty ambitious campaign platform, probably the most detailed campaign platform

ever in Alberta's history. One of the main things that we campaigned on was, of course, getting rid of the carbon tax. It was the number one issue at the door. We mentioned that in the Speech from the Throne. Number two was the open for business act to relieve the challenges that employers face when it comes to employing people and getting the job done. We talked a lot about the job creation tax cut, trying to get investment back into Alberta that we've lost over the last four years, and then the Red Tape Reduction Act. I think that everywhere we look in our world, we run into things that hinder our progress in trying to get things done.

Now, it seems that some people are maybe a little surprised that we're keeping our promises. It shouldn't be that way. I think that as politicians when we campaign on something, we should follow through on it, and we should be able to tell people what we're doing before we do it. There's kind of a theme that's been coming out, I think, since this last election as we've hit the Legislature and everything, and that theme is: promise made, promise kept.

Once more, I'd just like to thank the good people from Central Peace-Notley, and I commit to representing them to the best of my ability. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any comments or questions?

Seeing none, are there any more speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to be with you in the traditional territory of Treaty 6. I also acknowledge the Métis people, who share a deep and historic connection to these lands. I want to thank the constituents of Calgary-North and all the volunteers during the previous election for giving me the honour and privilege to be their MLA. I would also like to congratulate all my colleagues in this Legislature on their election results. No matter which side we're on in this Legislature, we can all agree that there are no bad seats here in this Chamber, although I must say, Madam Speaker, that your seat seems most comfortable. Again, congratulations on your election as Deputy Speaker of the House.

Madam Speaker, my family moved from a small farm town in Pakistan to Canada. Like many others, we moved in pursuit of better economic opportunities. I am the second-youngest amongst seven siblings. I was 17 when I came to Canada. As a newcomer to Canada I had to face many basic challenges such as cultural norms, social cues, and language.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

My first day in English class at Crescent Heights high school I was told to finish reading the Shakespearean play *Hamlet* so we could discuss it in the class on Monday next week. At this point I could barely understand Canadian English, let alone Shakespearean English. Let's just say that my Old English to Canadian English dictionary and my Canadian English to Urdu dictionary were working on overdrive that weekend. It wasn't until years later that I realized that no one really understood Shakespearean English anyways.

I graduated from grade 12 and received my diploma and later received my diploma in petroleum technology from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. Mr. Speaker, the year was 1979. Peter Lougheed was the Premier of Alberta then, a leader who fought a hard political fight for the people of this province.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

After graduating, I started my career as a field technologist at the Gilby field office near my favourite Alberta town, Rimbey. There I worked for two years, became familiar with the rich culture of rural

Alberta, developed life-long friendships, and also learned the game of curling. Being young and eager to try games that I had not seen before, I also tried cross-country skiing. As most of my time trying cross-country skiing was spent on my back, I decided that it was better for me to focus on my career.

Because of this, Madam Speaker, I was able to save money and put that together towards furthering my education. I was lucky to be granted an educational leave of absence by my employer. I joined the University of Wyoming and completed my bachelor of science degree in petroleum engineering in 1983. I then returned to work with the same employer. Those were the good times when Alberta used to have lots of economic opportunities not only for Albertans but for people across Canada. This phenomenon later became known as the Alberta advantage.

Now living in the city of Calgary, where I had earlier experienced social, language, and cultural issues as a newcomer, I decided to get involved in the community so I could help those facing the same challenges I did. This, Madam Speaker, became such a fulfilling and rewarding and enjoyable experience for me. This is when I realized the importance of giving back, the importance of helping others when they need it.

The 10th Premier of Alberta, the Hon. Peter Lougheed, is quoted as saying: I am a community person; I think in terms of community before individuals, and that is the essence of Albertans, and, to a large extent, that is the essence of Canadians as well. Unquote. This quote has inspired me to do as best as I could for the community around me in Calgary and now here at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

I served as the president of the Pakistan Canada Association for many years while also volunteering intermittently with organizations such the United Way, Junior Achievement, the Canadian Red Cross, the Food Bank, Mosaic Volunteers, and others. During this time, while I was raising my two sons with my wife, Parveen, I began to take evening classes, completing my master of engineering and MBA.

4:20

Madam Speaker, I strongly feel that whatever I have been able to accomplish has been linked with my employment and, in particular, Alberta's oil and gas sectors. This is why it is so sad to see that the same oil and gas sector, which used to be an economic engine of Canada, is suffering from the adverse economic impacts over the last few years. This is the feeling that is shared with many of the constituents in the riding that I am honoured to represent, Calgary-North.

Madam Speaker, my riding is amazing. I have lived in this riding or in the northern part of Calgary for 35 years, and in this riding, specifically this riding, since 2003. I have made Panorama Hills my home for the past 16 years because I truly believe Alberta is the place to live, work, and raise a family. For that reason my family and I are eternally grateful for all that Alberta has given us. The riding is beautiful with its schools and small businesses, beautiful paths and walkways, parks, a golf course, and spectacular views of the city. There are a number of languages spoken in the riding, including English, Tagalog, Punjabi, Cantonese, Mandarin, German, Spanish, Urdu, and a few more. Forty-three per cent of the population in Calgary-North identify themselves as immigrants. I do plan to work closely with this population and other Albertans as applicable in my portfolio as parliamentary secretary of immigration.

This spring I met so many amazing constituents who gave freely of their time and effort as we worked together to bring back the Alberta advantage. The comments, discussions, and advice at the door have been of immeasurable value to myself and our



government. I want to thank everyone who gave me their trust to be their voice in the Alberta Legislature. I am so proud to serve the communities of Evanston, Creekside, Hidden Creek, Panorama Hills, and Carrington, with Panorama Hills being the largest community in Calgary, with a population of 26,000 people.

One doesn't have to go that far in these communities to find a network of extensive green spaces and parks, bike paths, and winding creeks for families to enjoy. Just outside my riding is a first-class recreational athletic centre called Vivo. Even though it is outside my riding, it is still vital to Calgary-North. This rec centre is widely used by residents of Calgary-North, including my own family. Vivo is committed to promoting a healthier lifestyle by offering several programs and services for all ages. This facility partners with academics to offer a living lab whose research is to explore how to live healthier. Since its inception the facility has been the recipient of provincial grants, allowing the centre to expand its facility and programs, particularly to the many students who live in the riding.

I think we can all agree that one of the most important investments we can make is educating our children. Alberta is committed to providing students with a safe learning environment. This is why our UCP government has pledged to maintain or increase educational funding. My constituency has four elementary and one junior high school. It is, however, in dire need of a public high school and a middle school. I pledge to be a strong advocate for the schooling needs in Calgary-North.

The most devastating thing I would hear at the door was that of layoffs and high unemployment rates in the province. Engineers, accountants, and IT professionals were a small example of professionals who were struggling. We need to get our resources to market. We need to get Alberta's oil to market. People are struggling. People are leaving our great province. Madam Speaker, time is of the essence. That's why I am so proud to be part of a team that is 110 per cent committed to supporting the economy. We will stand up for Alberta pipelines. We will stand up for Alberta oil. We will stand up for Alberta, period.

As promised during our election campaign, we will lower taxes so we can create more jobs. We will reduce regulatory burdens so we can create more jobs. We will foster a positive economic environment in the private sector so we can create more jobs. By creating more jobs, Madam Speaker, we will balance the budget so our children don't have to. I am, therefore, very pleased that this government is focused on getting Albertans back to work and restoring the Alberta advantage. The people of Calgary-North sent me here for a reason. We in this House have a special obligation not only to our own people in our own riding but to Albertans across Alberta. We are here to make a difference. Together we can and we will.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that he's the former president of the Pakistan Canada Association. He's been a treasured member of the cultural community from Pakistan in Calgary. Perhaps he can elaborate on the contributions of cultural communities in Calgary.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. Calgary is full of cultural associations and communities. They offer wonderful programs. They have cultural

facilities, and for that matter, the Alberta Pakistan Canada Association has its own cultural centre in the northeast, which I was very much involved in creating way back in the late '90s, early 2000s. I think it was officially inaugurated by the hon. Gene Zwozdesky, who was the Speaker later on but at that time was the minister of community and social development. He came to Calgary to inaugurate that centre. I think that was in October 2002.

The contribution of the cultural associations and programs that we have: they offer programs where the mainstream has an opportunity to come and see what's happening in various cultural associations, whether it's Polish or Pakistani or Indian or whatever. They have lots of opportunities to learn and share the values from different parts of the world.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is the rare privilege of a lifetime to rise as the Member for Edmonton-South West and respond to the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne. I think that it is in order for me to offer my congratulations to you on your election as the Deputy Speaker of this House.

4:30

I want to start my maiden speech by extending my sincere congratulations to the esteemed members of the House on both sides of the aisle on their successful election campaigns. In the words of one of my heroes, John Paul II, "The future starts today, not tomorrow." Albertans sent us here for a reason. Now we must get to work to deliver the future they deserve. I want to thank all of my constituents who voted for me, and I want all of those who did not to know that I am here to represent them equally. I want to thank my fantastic volunteers, who gave me so much of their precious time and energy. Volunteers are the unsung heroes of our democratic process, and without them none of us would be here. I want to thank my family. I owe everything and more to my beautiful wife, Emem, and our three beloved children: Adanaya, 13 years old; Chisom, 11; and Ugonna, four. My family has sacrificed so much to support my political journey, and for this I am forever grateful.

Madam Speaker, my constituency is beautiful, and it is diverse. It is home to seniors, young families, new Canadians, public servants, professionals, business owners, and entrepreneurs. The new Edmonton-South West riding was first created in 2000 to accommodate the significant business and residential growth that occurred in southwest Edmonton. In my community you will find children playing outside and neighbours who feel a sense of community toward one another. We are home to some of Edmonton's most beautiful communities, including Wedgewood, Hodgson, Lessard, Jamieson Place, the Hamptons, Glastonbury, Grandview Heights, Edgemont, Woodbend Estates, Cameron Heights, Keswick, Glenriding, Ambleside, Windermere, Langdale, and more.

We were first represented in this Chamber by Matt Jeneroux, who is now serving successfully as the Member of Parliament for Edmonton Riverbend. Part of Edmonton-South West was once Edmonton-McClung. Another part was Edmonton-Whitemud, which has been represented by two former Premiers, the Hon. Don Getty and the hon. Dave Hancock. The people of my riding have high expectations for their leadership, and I look forward to serving them well.

Edmonton-South West is home to hundreds of acres of natural beauty along the North Saskatchewan River valley, which our

government has sworn to protect through the creation of the Big Island provincial park.

Over the past year I've had the privilege of speaking to tens of thousands of Edmonton-South West residents. I heard their greatest hopes and their dreams for the future. Where I met this relentless optimism, Madam Speaker, I also heard the very suffering of people who had fallen victim to the actions of the previous NDP government over the past four years. I heard from young professionals who hadn't worked in months and sometimes even years, I heard from small-business owners who had to forego salaries in order to make payroll, I heard from young families who were struggling with an ever-increasing tax burden, and I heard from parents who were worried that their children would not be afforded the same opportunities they had.

Madam Speaker, my constituents were extremely worried about the direction of the former government, and they voted in large numbers for change. They were worried about the ideological NDP carbon tax. They couldn't understand why they were being punished for heating their homes, buying nutritious groceries, taking their kids to hockey practice, and living their normal lives. They were worried about the skyrocketing debt. They knew the NDP had us on course for more than \$100 billion of debt and that their children and their children's children would be the ones left holding the bag. They were worried about the six credit downgrades that caused investment flight and shook investor confidence in our province, and they were worried about the NDP's habit of resorting to divisive identity politics whenever questions about their economic record came up.

The NDP's ideological policies weren't just fodder for debate in this Chamber; they had real consequences for real people's lives. Under their watch the unemployment rate skyrocketed, and nearly 200,000 of our fellow Albertans found themselves out of work. Others moved out of the province or quit looking altogether, having completely lost faith in our economy, and countless businesses shuttered their doors for good. The NDP presided over the decline of Canada's wealthiest and most prosperous province, the heartbeat of Canada's free-enterprise economy and the place that has created unprecedented opportunity and prosperity for people from all over the world.

Albertans don't want a handout; they want a hand up. Throughout our history, whenever we have been challenged, we have ever answered that call. Let's create the conditions Albertans need to succeed, and then get out of the way.

In the words of another of my heroes, President Ronald Reagan: "There are no great limits to growth because there are no limits of human intelligence, imagination, and wonder." Albertans are down but not out. Along with my colleagues I vow to restore the Alberta advantage for my constituents and for all Albertans, but I will need the help of this Assembly to get that job done. We as legislators are embarking on one of the greatest projects in our province's history: fixing the economy of this province, an economy that once made dreams come true but an economy right now in crisis.

Madam Speaker, I myself have been blessed to have lived the Alberta dream, a dream I would not have thought possible at the beginning of my life. My journey to this historic building did not begin last month or even last year but many years ago on a remote family farm in southeast Nigeria, called the Igbo of Nigeria. I was born just a few years after the devastating Nigerian civil war, otherwise known as the Biafran War. More than 2 million people died in that war, most of them were Igbos, and the precursor to this war was the persecution and slaughter of countless Igbo people. The Igbos are known across Africa as the wandering Jews of the continent due to the remarkable similarities in culture, early religion, enterprise, and world view. The oral history that has been

passed down for thousands of years traces the origin of the Igbos to modern day Israel.

While I was born into this rich history, I was also born into extreme poverty. Madam Speaker, I cannot overemphasize that phrase "extreme poverty." I am the seventh of 11 children. Two of my siblings, Thaddeus and Chinedu, have passed away. May their souls continue to rest in perfect peace. Growing up, my brothers and sisters and I lacked access to proper nutrition, medicine, and education. The life expectancy in Nigeria at that time was around 40 years, the lowest of all West African countries.

My parents were rural farmers. It was not mechanized farming, Madam Speaker, so my brothers and sisters and I worked the farm with mostly our bare hands. We grew yams, cassava, palm oil, maize, plantain, and groundnuts, among others. We cultivated, planted, weeded, and harvested the fields with less than ideal equipment such as hoes, knives, and shovels. Our farm saw our blood, sweat, and tears, but despite our hard work, we could not afford two square meals a day. For most of my teenage years my mother wore the same wrapper day after day, week after week.

Neither my mother nor my father had ever been to school, but they knew education was the key to unlocking a better future for their children. They worked so hard to ensure we attended primary and secondary school even though they knew this would likely take us away from the farm. While in primary school I made myself a promise based on a conversation I had with my dad's oldest sister when I was nine years old. My aunt told me that she had seen that I was going to become a lawyer in our native Igbo language. I had no idea what that meant at the time, but she described it to me, Madam Speaker. That conversation stuck with me.

After secondary school poverty threatened my dream of going to the university. I decided to take a risk and moved to Lagos. It was in Lagos where I started what I call petty trading, buying clothes and shoes and selling them to white-collar workers on the commercial streets in Lagos. I used the money I earned from this to become the first in my family to attend the university in Nigeria, the University of Lagos. I continued petty trading throughout university and law school, using the money to pay for my education and eventually that of my younger siblings.

Madam Speaker, it was on the first day of university that I met the love of my life, Emem. Little did I know then that this chance encounter, given to me by the grace of God, would change the trajectory of the rest of my life. Emem and I came from two separate backgrounds, however. Emem's parents were very educated, unlike mine. Her dad was an engineer and her mom was a lawyer in the registrar at a different university. Despite our differences, Emem saw in me someone I had yet to see in myself. She believed God had great things planned for me and for us. Despite my poor beginnings she drove me to never rest on my laurels but to continue dreaming bigger.

4:40

After practising law for a couple of years in Nigeria and after just a week-old marriage, Emem travelled to Canada to pursue her master's degree in law at the University of Alberta. I soon joined Emem in Edmonton. Prior to Emem's admission we had decided we wanted to live, work, and raise our family in the best place on Earth, a place we heard was teeming with hope and opportunity. I took a position with the patient food services at the University of Alberta hospital, making meals and washing dishes for our most vulnerable citizens. This work forever changed my life, awakening in me a desire to help others. While many looked at this as a step backward, I was very grateful for this opportunity as it allowed me to support my young family while my wife furthered her studies.

Following this I went on to work for Legal Aid Alberta and the public service. After writing my exams for my Canadian law degree equivalency, I was called to the bar, becoming a lawyer in Canada. I continued to give back in any way I could, volunteering for the Edmonton Community Legal Centre, the lawyer referral service, my local church, and community organizations.

As the MLA for Edmonton-South West I now find myself in the best position to help others that I have ever been in, and that's exactly what I intend to do. The next four years, Madam Speaker, will not be about settling scores or imposing any sort of political ideology. The next four years will be about bringing investment back to Alberta, growing the economy, implementing common-sense policies, and getting Albertans back to work.

In Nigeria there's a proverb that says that a single tree cannot make a forest. I always remind myself of this proverb because it reminds me that no matter what I accomplish in life, I accomplish it with the help of others. Standing before you, Madam Speaker, I think about this proverb and everything everybody did for me: my parents; my brothers and sisters; my teachers; my wife; my three amazing children; my MLA colleagues; my friends and volunteers, who worked tirelessly for me during the election; and, of course, the residents of Edmonton-South West. I am here not for myself but for them, and for them I will work tirelessly to create the future Alberta deserves. This is what the Alberta dream is all about, using one's success to facilitate the success of others and always conducting oneself with a sense of kindness, passion, and community. These are lessons I am now trying to teach my three children. While they may be growing up in a different world than I did, these ideas are universal for the prescription of a good life.

I am so thankful I followed my parents' wisdom all those years ago, and I thank God every day that they are still alive to see what their wisdom has become and how it is still helping others. I believe that public service is an honourable calling, and I'm eager to get to work alongside my new colleagues and our new Premier, who is one of the greatest leaders our country has ever known. In just a few weeks he has shown Albertans how committed he is to improving their lives. As soon as he was sworn in as the Premier, he travelled to Ottawa to fight against Justin Trudeau's Bill C-48, the west coast tanker ban, and Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill. Under the Premier's leadership we have already tabled several pieces of flagship legislation, including the carbon tax repeal act, which is now law; the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act; the open for business act; and the Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019.

I fully endorse our government's Alberta advantage immigration strategy, geared towards attracting new entrepreneurs to our province. Our Premier is truly one of the hardest working people I have ever known, and I look forward to working with him as well as my other talented government colleagues to pass these bills and get Albertans working again.

I want to end on a quote from another one of my heroes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I thoroughly enjoyed listening to your maiden speech, and I was just wondering if you could perhaps give us your favourite quote. I'd really appreciate hearing that.

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wanted to end this speech with one of my other heroes, Abraham Lincoln. "We can

succeed only by concert. It is not 'can any of us imagine better?' but 'can we all do better?'"

This is reflective of how I view the world, and I look forward, you know, to reaching across the aisle and finding common ground, where possible, with the opposition. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any additional comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General and keeper of the great seal.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** It is an honour to rise, Madam Speaker, to speak in response to the Speech from the Throne and provide my maiden speech. I also want to thank my constituents of Calgary-Elbow and the team of people that helped, you know, get me here. So many times over the last year – this campaign that we launched was over a year ago – we were out door-knocking in minus 30-degree temperatures with large teams of people, and every time our team wondered whether or not our volunteers would continue to come out, people kept coming because this campaign that we ran mattered to them and it mattered to the people of our community.

It is absolutely humbling to be the representative for Calgary-Elbow. I'll get into it and tell you a little bit of detail about my constituency here, but it truly is a unique constituency in the city of Calgary. It's known by the name Elbow. People sometimes think of it just as one part of the constituency, but it truly is a diverse, inner-city constituency in Calgary. We have some of the highest density areas for rental properties. We also have Mount Royal University. We have Chinook mall. We have areas as well that were impacted by flooding in 2013. So it's a very diverse constituency with lots of different needs and also, you know, requests of their elected officials. It's a true honour to represent the community and be here to be able to give this speech today.

The constituency also has a deep and storied history of elected representatives. Some of them are very colourful. One of them is the former Premier Ralph Klein, known by many affectionately as King Ralph. When you door-knock and talk to constituents that remember King Ralph, they remind you on a regular basis that he held up a sign saying Paid in Full. It is often a reminder of how important this job is and how important it is to get Albertans back to work.

Also, not a day went by in that campaign where we didn't talk to somebody that was struggling, somebody that was wondering whether or not they were going to be able to make their mortgage payment or whether or not their kids were going to have a future in this province. So for them: I've received your messages loud and clear. I will hopefully represent you throughout this term with dignity and respect and make sure that I continue to listen to you.

I look forward as well to getting back to the doors here in the fall. Our team: I know that we're probably up there for some of the most door-knocking in Alberta, but we made it through our entire constituency five times – and that truly was a grounding experience as well – to make sure that we heard people, that we understood what their concerns were. Again, a huge thank you to my team and everybody there on the ground.

Also, it's an honour to serve as the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, also, as you mentioned, keeper of the great seal, which is one of my favourite titles. It's just such a foundation of our democracy, to preserve our justice and make sure that Albertans know that they can live in a strong and free society. I don't take that lightly.

I also want to thank my family. I'll get into some remarks about my beautiful wife, Jen, but I also want to say just a few things to my two amazing daughters, Heidi and Stella. The one thing that

really got them excited over the last year was when I got the call to be asked to be in cabinet. Their response was: yes, waterslides. To them, the West Edmonton Mall water park was the highlight of dad's political career. It puts things in context sometimes as to what it was. I must say that I was disappointed that the loop-the-loop waterslide, kind of that pinky-purple one, was not in operation that day, so my children are determined to take dad back to the West Edmonton Mall waterslide so we can take on that challenge as well.

Also, my parents, Ed and Karen, had the opportunity to come and see me be sworn in as an MLA. My mom was a schoolteacher. My dad was an entrepreneur. My dad was also an Edmonton police officer. When he was a young boy, at that point in time there was no high school in his community here in Alberta, and he actually came to Edmonton to go to Concordia. He went to Concordia, and after that he went on, in his late teens, to the Edmonton police force, where he served for a number of years. His claim to fame, he told me, was that one time when he was in a high-pursuit chase, he rolled his police car and got himself onto the front page of the *Edmonton Journal*. Luckily, it was not his photo but that of his car upside down. That was his claim to fame here in Edmonton when he was a young man.

#### 4:50

Also, I just want to talk a little bit about my family history as well in this province. My grandparents on my dad's side experienced a war-torn Europe in World War I. My grandma remembers what it was like having Russian troops live in their home. They didn't know each other yet, but as young teenagers they both set out for a country of hope, where they knew that they could have prosperity and the ability to farm and, hopefully, live in peace. Both of them chose to come here to Alberta and set up near Goodfare, which is in the Peace Country, close to Grande Prairie. They raised eight children; my dad was one of them. I'm just immensely proud to see how many of my family members have gone on to stay here in this province and make this home.

On my mom's side of the family as well there is a long history in Alberta. My great-grandfather Richard Longhurst was a member of the 89th Battalion, which was recruited across Alberta and mobilized in Calgary. He went on and was wounded at Vimy Ridge. When he came home, he never actually spoke about the war or his experiences that he had when he was there, but one of the things that I've seen and my mom preserves is the notes that he actually would send back to my grandfather Master Eric. He would actually send them. Also, the photo that he had with the Winnie the Pooh – the Winnie the Pooh – is one of the most precious items that he sent to my grandfather. My grandfather also went on to serve in World War II, where he served and volunteered. He actually wasn't there for the birth of my mother. He didn't get to see her until she was about a year old, I believe, when she was a young girl.

I just want to say that it's humbling just to kind of see the history of your own family. I'm actually very, very moved by my colleague Minister Madu and his story about his family and how far his own life story has come. We all stand on our families' histories, and for me it's just grounding. I'm thankful for everything that everyone has ever done to get me to this point in my life, and it's just with deep honour that I say thank you to them and everyone in my family at this point.

I want to turn now to why I decided to get into politics. As many people in this room know, I'm a restructuring lawyer by trade. Many people don't know what a restructuring lawyer is, but we help companies and people in financial difficulty. Over the last number of years here in the province of Alberta too many Albertans have been facing financial challenges that other jurisdictions facing similar issues policywise were not facing. Time after time I would

meet people. I'd meet a husband and wife who had built a small business here in this province, and they were having a tough time. They couldn't make payroll. There were, you know, economic challenges. They could accept that there were economic challenges, but they couldn't accept the policy framework here in Alberta that they felt was working against them.

Time after time we'd go out to the market. We'd try and see if we could come up with a solution so they could keep their employees, so they could keep the people that they cared about working here in this great province of Alberta, and time and time again we simply could not find them the resources that they needed to keep the lights on, to keep it going. Too many times I'd see these people go away, tears in their eyes, knowing that they'd actually have to go to their employees and face them, people that are family to them, and tell them that they'd have to turn the lights out. All the equipment would go to the auction yard. Ritchie Bros. auction yard was full here at unprecedented levels, Madam Speaker. It's unacceptable that Albertans have had to live through that in a way for the last four years. Seeing so many people go through this, I felt compelled to get up and run.

It hits me at a personal level because my own family in the early 1980s went through a very similar circumstance. My mother had taken time away from being a teacher to raise us as kids, and my parents had started a small business. At that point in the early 1980s we faced national energy programs, we had 20 per cent interest rates, and we had failed policies that economically devastated the west. My parents had their small business. They lost their small business. We lost our home. I remember an extended period of time in my youth with a great uncertainty as to what the future would hold. I remember what it was like to have an empty fridge. I remember overhearing my parents talking about whether or not they're going to be able to pay their rent. I do remember the great charity of our church and community, time and time again people in our community stepping up to help our family go through some great difficulties.

My parents are my ultimate heroes in life. I was asked one time in the media: who do you truly respect? It's my parents. The reason why I respect my parents so, so much is that they never quit. They never gave up. They always wanted to be an example for me and my siblings. So to them I say thank you for everything that they did for us to get us to where we are. My parents did recover, but it took them an immense amount of time. We really didn't have stability financially in our lives until I was about 11 or 12 years old as a kid. My siblings were older than me. I was the youngest one. They remember it more vividly than I do. But my parents did recover. They're now comfortably retired. My dad decided to retire at the age of 82. He kept working throughout his life, had that work ethic. My brother went on to become an accountant. My sister went on to become a well-published professor at York University.

I decided to pursue the really, you know, conservative profession, when I was younger – or at least I tried to make it a profession – of becoming a baseball player. I decided that I wanted to pursue that, so I had the great fortune of going on and playing college athletics in the United States. The one thing about being a pitcher, though – and I got opportunity after opportunity because in baseball I was strong. I could throw hard. I could stand at home plate and throw a ball out of the baseball stadium, but for some reason when you're a pitcher, to be able to take that to that next level, you have to be able to throw strikes, and that was one thing that was lost on me. I would walk a guy, hit a guy, strike a guy out, and after years of catchers groaning about having to catch for me, I decided that maybe some other path was in the future for me.

I came back to Canada at that point in time, looked at my somewhat jumbled transcript, I would have to say, after attending

many different undergraduate institutions pursuing my dream of baseball, and realized that it would take me just as long to finish my undergrad as it would for me to go to law school and just finish that, so I decided at that point in time to write the LSAT. It didn't occur to me at that point in time in my life that people actually prepared for the LSAT.

Again, I decided to write the LSAT. It wasn't available where I was, so I drove up to Kamloops at that point in time, wrote the LSAT that morning. One of the things that I learned from writing that LSAT exam, as I compared that to my law school exam experience, was that I needed to wake up a little bit earlier than just showing up at the exam right when the bell went off, but I did well enough to get into the University of Manitoba. I had never been to Winnipeg before, but I heard it was a nice city, and I decided to go to law school at the University of Manitoba.

I am very fortunate that that happened in my life because that's where I met my wife, Jen. My wife, Jen, was a first-year law student like myself. She met me and quickly turned around and decided to run away. She thought I was an American because I still had a little bit of an American accent, apparently, at that time in my life. But luckily her last name and mine were both towards the end of the alphabet, so we were in many classes together, and shortly around Christmastime of that year we started dating, and by the time we graduated, we decided to get married.

Now, my wife is one of the most determined, smart, savvy individuals that I've ever met in my life, and she is truly the greatest partner. For me, personally, she saw definitely – I don't even think I was a diamond in the rough. I was probably a lump of coal at that time in my life from a refinement standpoint, and she stood with me throughout that. To speak to her patience: when we were set to graduate law school, I was involved in a few different things at that point in time, and her patience is to the point where we graduated law school on a Friday – I was involved in a political campaign; it might shock people to hear that I was involved in a political campaign – I won a leadership campaign on the Saturday, and then we got married on Monday. So in one weekend, we graduated, I won a campaign, and we got married. I helped with the flowers a little bit on the Monday, but other than that – Madam Speaker, my wife is truly an amazing woman.

I also want to turn to the first year of our marriage, getting back again to the patience of my wife. She got an articling job right away. She got an articling job in Manitoba. She was born and raised a Manitoba girl. She got a job in Manitoba, her dream job, doing criminal defence work. She got a job there. I, on the other hand, did not get a job in Manitoba. I went through the interview process, and they looked at me and said: "I don't know how exactly you're going to build a business here in Manitoba. You're not from here." And they took a pass at that point in time in my illustrious law student days. But at that point in time I had a chat with my then fiancée and said: "Okay. Well, what are we going to do? Obviously, I need to work. Let's take a look at: where in Canada do I want to be? Where in Canada do we want to be going forward?"

5:00

So we took a look at an amazing city called Calgary. I remember to this day the difference in experience that it was like actually going to that interview. At that point in time I was interviewing with a law firm called Bennett Jones. The experience that I had with those folks: they told me literally in the meeting: "We don't care who your parents are. We don't care where you come from. We want to know you have a good head on your shoulders because here in Alberta you can make it."

I was sold at that point in time. I told my wife: "This is where we need to be. This is what the future holds for us and our family.

We've got to make this work." We spent the first year of our marriage apart in different cities, and now we're here.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. government whip.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah. Thank you very much. You know, having known this member for quite some time, I'm sure I'd like to hear a little bit more as to what he had to say and to probably finish the remaining part of his speech.

Thank you.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Building on that, Alberta was where we wanted to be. We had to be here. Just seeing how confident this city that we were in, Calgary, and the rest of the province was, it was setting the national agenda at that point in time. It was the magnet for talent, the magnet for young, talented people to come to to build their lives. For me, when I saw that, that's where I needed to be, and I want my daughters and I want all Albertans to experience that once again.

One of the most painful things that I experienced in the last few years in politics and campaigning was having young university students come up to me and say, "Your generation had it easier than mine." I'm 40 years old. They said: "Your generation had it easier than mine. We want the same opportunities. We're tired of our friends having to leave this province to go find opportunities. This is our home. We want to be here. We want a government that's going to reflect that and fight for jobs and our future here in this province."

For me, Madam Speaker, I was driven to run to do that. I'm actually amazed at the professionalism, the collegiality of the government members, and as I've gotten to know so many of you over the last few weeks and months here, I'm looking forward to working on our agenda here, focused on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. I'm looking forward as well to working with members of the opposition, where it sees fit. My door is open. If there are areas that they have issues with, we're here to work with everyone, to be here for all Albertans.

With that, I say thank you. I look forward to working with everyone here, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. government whip.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you. I believe I have spoken to this.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 7

### Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise and move second reading of Bill 7, Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019.

This legislation would empower municipalities to attract investment, create jobs, and realize their full economic potential. Municipalities desire the freedom and opportunity to make choices that fit them best. As it stands, municipalities have the ability to

cancel, defer, or refund property taxes for a specific year. That helps provide relief to property owners in times of hardship, but it does little to support economic investment since businesses are looking for longer term certainty.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The legislation that we are proposing is concise. We are proposing to expand the powers of municipal councils to create property tax incentive programs. Municipalities know what is best for their residents. We are simply getting out of their way and letting them do it. If passed, Bill 7 would allow municipalities to provide property tax incentives for up to 15 years, down from the year-to-year incentive program that we allowed previously. This would give Alberta a competitive advantage over jurisdictions across Canada and the United States. Other jurisdictions have programs like this in place: Saskatchewan, British Columbia as well as Texas and Louisiana. If passed, we will be helping municipalities provide one of the longest tax incentive timelines in North America.

Another proposed amendment would require any tax incentives a municipality chooses to put in place to be included on the municipality's tax assessment and tax roll. This would allow public access to information about the properties that have received tax incentives. This transparency is already in place for other types of property tax exemptions. Our proposed legislation would mirror this requirement.

Another proposed change to the act would require that decisions come in written form. This explanation would outline the extent of any property tax incentives a municipality would put in place. This would ensure continued transparency for any business that applied for property tax relief. Our proposed legislation would allow an appeal process for any decisions that are made on the property tax incentives. This proposed legislation would allow municipalities the choice to permit municipal staff to make decisions on incentive applications. It would also allow these decisions to be appealed to municipal council. These decisions can be reviewed by the courts, who have taken the steps in this proposed legislation to reduce the review time to 60 days, down from the default timeline of six months. This would allow swift resolution of any dispute that may come up.

If passed, this legislation would allow the incentives to continue even when part of one municipality is annexed by another. This would allow more certainty for businesses, all guaranteeing the property tax incentives for the duration of their term as long as they continue to meet the conditions set by the specific municipality. In fact, this proposed amendment would give municipalities the ability to include conditions or criteria in their incentive programs, giving them the tools to hold businesses accountable and, in the worst-case scenario, cancel the incentive if the business does not live up to its commitment.

Some individuals and groups may disagree with the proposed legislation, thinking that it may lead to increased competition between municipalities. Increased competition is exactly what we are looking for. We want to help grow our economy, not just manage it. If passed, I believe that this legislation will bolster investment and economic development across our great province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister. Just to confirm, as I was switching over into the chair, this was moving second reading of Bill 7?

**Mr. Madu:** Yes. That was exactly what I said, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much.

Are there any other members wishing to speak at second reading? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo standing.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. member for bringing this forward and for saying some of the things he said about municipalities, especially things like: they know what's best. They do know what's best, and that's why the lack of consultation with municipalities around this legislation is astounding. It's stunning why this minister didn't reach out and talk to mayors and reeves around this province, talk to the organizations that they all belong to, with regard to: "Do you need this? Would this help you? Would this attract more business and development and investment and create jobs?"

I think, Mr. Speaker, that had the hon. minister done that research, he would have found out that, you know, this is not the top – this is not the top – of the list for municipalities of things they want to see. In fact, what they want to see is that they want this province, they want this government to get back to the table, sooner than later, with regard to a funding framework, a fiscal framework for municipalities that they need to have in place by 2021, when the MSI agreement runs out.

It's stunning that the government would bring this forward and say that this will fix things for municipalities. What this will actually do is potentially create some disagreements between municipalities. A cynical person could say that much will go on between municipalities but not in a positive way as a result of the bill, the legislation, brought forward here today.

**5:10**

Some problems that I have with this bill I can tell you are what was mentioned by the hon. minister just a second ago. He said that if a decision gets put in place by one municipality with regard to tax exemptions for a business potentially up to 15 years and then potentially to get renewed after that and if it's adjacent to another municipality, a municipality that wants to look at annexing in a planned way so that urban services can go out in a planned way, if there are all of these tax-exempt companies and properties on their border, then that municipality that wants to annex in a planned way will be stymied because they won't get any of those property taxes from those nonresidential or businesses far into the future, Mr. Speaker. They have to assume the exemptions or the deferrals that were given to that company by another municipality, and that's not a good thing.

You know, this is not an improvement on what we have. We already, in the MGA under specific sections, have the ability to, as the minister says, grant deferrals or exemptions to property, and many, many municipalities have done that for their businesses in their areas over time. In fact, when we were government, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the city of Lethbridge approached the government of Alberta around one of the biggest private investments they wanted to land in that city, Cavendish Farms. Cavendish Farms approached Lethbridge, approached the province of Alberta, and got their support that they needed to make that final investment decision with regard to the location of their plant in Lethbridge, and all of that took place under the existing legislation.

Numerous media reports have been in the paper, with different people speaking out positively and negatively about this, Mr. Speaker. Some of the positives that we can see are that some mayors talk about the increased flexibility they will have to use this tool, but I would contend that there are already tools in place that they can use and have used successfully to attract investment and jobs and businesses.

Some of the negative things they've said, Mr. Speaker, are far more numerous than the positives. They have talked about the

potential of this being a race to the bottom or a competition. As the hon. minister says, we want there to be competition amongst municipalities for the betterment, I guess, of all of Alberta, but I can tell you that many are concerned that the competition will lead to a race to the bottom amongst municipalities, and therefore they will not have the ability to collect proper taxes that are needed to support operational budgets and maintain programs and services and things like roads and sewers and all those other things. So the race to the bottom, the competition, will actually be a bad thing for municipalities.

The Edmonton metro board talks about a number of municipalities in and around the city of Edmonton that like to work together, Mr. Speaker, that believe that if they work together, they can go much farther as a group than they would as any individual municipality. They talked about that as hunting like a pack. They believe that they sell the best of their region to those who want to invest. What this might do, this very legislation brought up by this hon. minister, is that this might strain and crack the ability of the Edmonton metro board to hunt like a pack. I hope it doesn't happen, but it could happen where one municipality breaks away from the rest and figures that they've got more to achieve on their own than their pack would have as a group. That's not a really great thing either.

They've tried to put together reasonable intermunicipal co-operation agreements with each other, and frankly, Mr. Speaker, isn't that what we want municipalities to do, to co-operate together so that they can build a stronger, more united region or Alberta together? That's, I think, what's missed by this legislation. What this minister likes to tout as, you know, a new advantage, where there will be competition amongst municipalities, could potentially lead to those same municipalities eating each other's lunch and having more conflict arise.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that's missing, notably, from this legislation is no hint at all of the province of Alberta participating in this scheme besides putting the legislation together. If they're so confident, if the government is so confident that this will work for municipalities, why is no government money on the table; namely, the education portion of the nonresidential property tax? That's not mentioned at all here in my read of this legislation, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the hon. minister can confirm or deny that the government of Alberta will still be collecting its educational property tax if a municipality decides that they want to not collect or defer the municipal portion of that property tax. The government of Alberta will still be able to collect theirs because there's no mention that that would not come to the province of Alberta, as it does now. The government's confidence in this seems to be lacking because they're not putting any money at all behind this initiative.

Municipal leaders have been popping up around the province saying: you know, this legislation popped up on our radar; we didn't know about it. I'm sure the hon. minister and his colleagues in this debate will say: well, you need to look at our policy platform for the election because it was in there. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in the 101 pages of policy platform in the municipal governance section this was one line – one line – in 101 pages. It's been brought forward in terms of legislation here today.

You know, it's talked about as being what municipalities need. What they really need is certainty of income. They need businesses to locate, and they need the ability to plan for their futures. I think this is going to strain all of that. It's going to put a lot of tension intermunicipally, in between municipalities, and it's going to be a problem. The issue, in addition to some of those that have been talked about by myself, is that we don't know how one municipality will use this as a tool and other municipalities may not use it as a

tool. Really, will those other municipalities be left behind? Probably, Mr. Speaker.

Will this attract any more business to this province, or will it cause municipality A to race to the bottom to try and get under municipality B? The argument that it's going to attract business from other places, nationally and internationally, I don't think really holds water. What we'll see is that business will go shopping amongst municipalities and have those quiet conversations with mayors. They'll say: "Mr. Mayor, I was just down the road at this municipality, and they've said that they'll do this for five years. What are you willing to do, Mr. Mayor? Will you kind of undercut them and go for seven or go for 15 years?" You know, I just don't think that's the kind of conversation we need to be having at the municipal level and that mayors need to be having at the municipal level, because, Mr. Speaker, it's a race to the bottom. It's not intermunicipally building relationships; it's more a dog-eat-dog kind of approach.

I'm really disappointed that the government would bring this forward, it being only one line in their platform and not a line that, you know, municipal mayors and reeves and councillors believed was first on the agenda. First on their agenda is always, always, always: do we have a long-term funding arrangement with the province, and what is that arrangement like? Now, we did that. We put that in place for Edmonton and Calgary, and we were working with the other two associations to put the same thing in place with them. Mr. Speaker, had we been sitting on that side right now, we'd be working on that and making that happen instead of further delaying them, as has been the case with this current government.

5:20

Mr. Speaker, I'm of the view that the kinds of things that are in this legislation are just going to lead to challenges amongst all of the municipalities and that we have current rules in place in the MGA where these same sorts of things can take place and have taken place across Alberta and, no doubt, will continue to take place across Alberta.

What we, of course, I think, need is that we need this government to step back, actually go and talk to the local partners, whom they value so highly but didn't talk to in advance of bringing this forward, and talk to them about the different provisions in here. I think one of the things they'll hear is: "If you believe so strongly in this, why isn't there any provincial money on the table? Like, you're expecting us to give deferrals and exemptions. Why isn't there any provincial money on the table?" If the minister can answer that question, that would be really helpful for me to understand. The minister could also maybe take an opportunity to answer the question: why this? Was it being clamoured for by municipalities across the province? I certainly wasn't aware of any large, significant clamour by individuals saying that they needed to exempt more property from nonresidential property taxes.

Mr. Speaker, it used to be good enough that we had an excellent education system in this province, one that was talked about by the government side just a little while ago. We have excellent services and programs, rule of law, safety in our communities, like I said, an excellent workforce, a young workforce. Those were seen as attractors to Alberta, and from all my time in city council, 15 years, I can tell you that those are significant benefits to any corporation that wants to locate in Alberta.

Now, those are the kinds of things that I can remember mayors of the day that I served with would say when they would go down to Montreal and, say, meet with CP Rail. CP Rail, as you remember, in the mid-90s moved to Calgary and created a head office in Calgary after having one in Montreal for 100 years or so. It wasn't because they were being offered a deferral of taxes. It was because

of those other five things that I talked about: a good workforce, a good culture, excellent academics in our province, postsecondary education, great health care. All those things were the attractor, not the fact that they wouldn't have to pay property tax for a period of years. They came because of those other things.

I submit that, you know, if we really want to help municipalities out, we would start working on long-term funding agreements with those municipalities, not give them more opportunities to not collect nonresidential property tax and not put any provincial money up at the same time. Mr. Speaker, these are tweaks we don't need. It's not at the top of the municipal agenda, and we should just go back to talking to them before we bring anything forward. If I were that minister, I would take the opportunity to step back, talk to municipalities – “Let's do this together” – as opposed to springing something in this Legislature that they haven't asked for nor need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

As the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo was the second speaker on this, there is no 29(2)(a) available.

However, is there another member who would like to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Ganley:** Calgary-Mountain View.

**The Acting Speaker:** Calgary-Mountain View. Yes, of course.

**An Hon. Member:** Close.

**Ms Ganley:** Close-ish. Fair enough.

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly, I think that with respect to this bill I probably have more questions than comments. As many members of this House will be aware, in the last four years we underwent a significant rewrite of the Municipal Government Act. This is something with which I am intimately familiar. I'm sure many members of the government bench are aware of the Legislative Review Committee and the joy that it can be to chair that committee. I personally actually really, really liked it although as it turns out, many of my colleagues were not as enthused as I was.

Of course, that committee had to review extensive changes to the Municipal Government Act, which is why I remember doing extensive changes to the Municipal Government Act. Those were quite extensively consulted on. They came in in a series of different phases, which is an interesting logic conundrum, I guess, when you're dealing with amending portions of an amending act which itself isn't yet proclaimed. Those changes tended to be brought in, and then they would be consulted on in between legislative sessions and then passed in future legislative sessions.

After we went through the process with the legislation, the next process was with respect to the regulations. There are sort of special provisions under the Municipal Government Act with respect to those regulations that require them to be posted for 60 days so that municipal politicians and the public generally have the opportunity to see them and to form opinions on them or consider them and then to get back to government before those regulations are actually brought in by order in council. In that rather extensive process I don't actually recall anyone saying that the powers that they have currently with respect to this issue were inadequate.

For the sake of the record I will read in that section 347(1) of the Municipal Government Act presently states:

If a council considers it equitable to do so, it may, generally or with respect to a particular taxable property or business or a class

of taxable property or business, do one or more of the following [things], with or without conditions:

- (a) cancel or reduce tax arrears;
- (b) cancel or refund all or part of a tax;
- (c) defer the collection of [taxes].

- (2) A council may phase in a tax increase or decrease resulting from the preparation of any new assessment.

To me, in substance, that appears to do already what it is that we're attempting to amend the act to do.

I'm, I guess, a little confused, in a rather packed legislative session that is already scheduled to run into the summer, why it is that this was such an urgent priority. It wasn't featured prominently in the election. It wasn't featured prominently in the platform. I don't recall, again, in the rather extensive consultation done on previous amendments to this same act, anyone cropping up and asking for this, and it appears that it doesn't do anything that the act didn't already permit or enable. So, yes, I guess I'm curious as to why it is that we're here having this conversation.

In fact, municipalities have created tax incentive programs under the current provisions. Lethbridge, for instance, has done some. In 2015 they established a targeted redevelopment incentive policy to promote new construction and major renovations. Chestermere also created a policy in 2019 to enable tax cancellation for nonresidential commercial developments, industrial developments, seniors' housing, multifamily housing in the form of three- or four-storey apartment buildings. In May 2019 Calgary council provided a one-time cancellation of \$94,000 in property taxes for the Royal Canadian Legion in Kensington. Those are a couple of the places that it appears already to have been used.

I'd be interested to see the reasons for this. I wouldn't necessarily state that I'm against it. I'm just sort of concerned as to what the reason for this is. It seems to be less an issue of needing power and less an issue of needing legislation and more an issue of needing talking points. We all know, certainly, in Calgary that businesses are having a real struggle. It's because of a series of circumstances that I'm sure most members of this House are familiar with and that I don't need to go into in extensive detail. There's less tax base to draw from in the core, and that's potentially pushing costs out onto other businesses in Calgary. It's become rather a hot issue in recent days. It is a concern. I think it has been a concern in the past. I'm a little concerned that this is less granting municipalities more power – I think that they already have those powers – and more the government being able to say: well, municipalities, we did for you, and if you didn't cut taxes and cut your budget and do all sorts of things, then that's on you.

5:30

I'm a little concerned it's going to turn into this rhetoric, this rhetoric that we hear all the time that I think is destructive to the importance of our public services, about how everything is a waste and everyone who works for government is a bureaucrat and they deserve to have their salaries cut and their jobs cut and various other things. I don't believe that most of that is true in many cases.

Certainly, as additional technologies come on stream, as new ways of doing things exist, it's totally possible to find efficiencies. We found a huge number of efficiencies in court systems over the last four years. There were a number of different policies and processes that were changed because of the addition of technology, because of sort of new systems that came online. There's a lot of that that, admittedly, can be found. One of my favourites is still the bill that makes it the case that if you don't pay your C-Train ticket, a warrant is no longer issued for your arrest. I think that that was a huge efficiency in terms of typing those warrants and checking



those warrants and having to enter them in the police system and the court system and everything else.

I'm not saying that efficiencies don't exist; I'm just a little concerned that this bill is an exercise in communications to try to sort of point the finger at municipalities and say, "Well, we gave you all the tools you need; if you can't find the money, then too bad, so sad," but really they haven't given them any additional tools. So the problem that existed continues to exist, and it continues to exist in pretty much exactly the same form that it existed previously. Yeah. I think that's a concern to me.

Now, perhaps I'm incorrect. I obviously don't have the benefit of the in-depth briefing that members across the way have with respect to this, but I would be interested to hear what ways this creates additional or new or different powers and who it was that was asking for those additional new or different powers because, yeah, I mean, it seems to do something that could already be done.

With that, I will close my comments. Thank you for much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anyone have any questions or comments.

Seeing none, are there any members looking to speak to the matter? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall standing.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the bill, the Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019, which, on the face of it, creates incentives and programs that somehow will – again, the same talking points for every bill – attract investment, create jobs in Calgary. I think this election and this party's platform was about jobs, the economy, the pipeline, and that's exactly what Albertans needed. They needed more jobs, and they wanted to see their economy improved, but so far what we have seen from this government is – the way, I guess, they were describing it is that hope is on the horizon and all those things. So far in whatever they have put forward, I think, we didn't see that hope. I guess, today there were new numbers for job numbers. Alberta lost 21,000 full-time jobs just in May. So there is still something missing that businesses failed to see. Albertans failed to see that hope. That is one, that kind of bill, which doesn't give any hope, doesn't attract any investment, doesn't create any jobs. It can be a good political stunt, but insofar as jobs, economy, pipelines, all those things are concerned, that doesn't do anything. That doesn't create those jobs, doesn't give a boost to the economy.

In an effort to support and attract businesses, small businesses, for instance, when we were in government, we worked with businesses, and we were able to offer incentives such as that we were able to cut taxes by one-third. That was something businesses were looking for. We were able to work with ATB, who were able to work with Business Development Bank of Canada, and come up with almost \$2.5 billion to increase the borrowing limit, to make it easier for businesses to access loans and expand their businesses and create jobs. We were able to create tax incentives that were providing the funds to hundreds of small businesses, new businesses, and attracted investment in green technology. Similarly, we worked with Alberta Innovates and came up with programs where businesses were provided supports to help them market their products and increase their investment, create more opportunities. Similarly, small-business incubators were added so that businesses can grow faster. We created a partnership with Business Link here to provide resources and support to the newcomers to Canada to get ahead and get into businesses.

All those things were practical steps that were adding opportunities for new businesses, were attracting investments in new areas, diversifying the economy, and creating jobs. But this piece of legislation, as my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View

just mentioned, is expanding on something or clarifying something that already exists in our existing Municipal Government Act, section 347, that gives powers to municipalities to do the kinds of things that they are clarifying in this legislation. In fact, there is a huge concern in Calgary, because Calgary was really hit hard during the downturn, at how nonresidential businesses are burdened by the business taxes. There was a protest this morning at 7:30 at city hall. After that, during the council meeting they approved a bailout package where they will provide almost \$130 million to reduce the burden from nonresidential property tax by 10 per cent. This was happening as this bill is before this Legislature, and they were able to do that to provide relief to the businesses. That happened this morning.

One other thing. When we were working on the Municipal Government Act – there are 300-plus municipalities around the province – our minister then travelled all across Alberta to gather input. Here we are with this bill. If I just quote a couple of municipalities, just Calgary and Edmonton, the Calgary mayor, I think, said that it's great to have flexibility but clearly warned about unintended consequences. If there was some fulsome discussion, some fulsome consultation with Calgary, for instance, they wouldn't be saying those things. Similarly, the mayor in Edmonton also raised concerns about those unintended consequences and even elaborated on that, how it may create issues like equity issues, that if it's just a race to the bottom, surrounding municipalities may offer all kinds of incentives. It will pit municipalities against each other.

**5:40**

If they were consulted, I think those concerns could have been addressed, or they wouldn't have raised these concerns. I think government needs to get to the table, needs to talk to municipalities, who they claim this bill is about. They're not sure what it's about, and that's what their comments clearly reflect. They need to talk to them about what they really need in terms of attracting investment, in terms of creating jobs. As was mentioned by the MLA for Calgary-*Buffalo*, what we have been hearing for a while and even during the election campaign was that they were concerned about what will happen when MSI comes to an end in 2021.

What they would want to hear would be some predictability of whether they will be getting funds and what formula will be used, how much funds they will be getting so they can factor that into their long-term planning. But so far I think they have never heard anything about that. I think that's coming in due course like every other investment, like education funding, health care funding, and all those things.

Those are the things that municipalities are looking for, and I think this bill, when looked at in conjunction with other bills, for instance – there is another bill before the House that will give \$4.5 billion to businesses. They are worried about how they will sustain their finances. For instance, the carbon levy will be repealed. If we talk about Calgary, there was a lot of investment that was going to the Calgary green line, many other projects across Alberta and in business communities. The province and municipalities, local leadership are worried about the impact of those bills. Now, I think, here is another bill that doesn't give anything concrete to municipalities about how they can continue attracting investment or creating jobs, not hearing what they actually need to hear; that is, about their MSI funding and those things.

With respect to section 347 of the Municipal Government Act, I think Calgary was facing that issue, and this morning there's the evidence that there is that flexibility. There is that power built into that act that they can offer those incentives. They can offer those breaks. They can reduce tax barriers. They can cancel them. They can refund it. Those things are already there. But if there is anything

else, since municipalities were not consulted, if there is some other consultation going on with some business group who wanted to see these changes, I think, again, it would be nice if the minister would share those details. If there is somebody other than municipalities, if some businesses are looking for these clarifications, we would, I guess, love to hear those details as well if there were any consultations.

These powers, these kinds of programs, have existed under the Municipal Government Act and been used in Calgary. They were being used in Lethbridge. They were used in Chestermere, and the program that was used in Chestermere was to create a policy where a municipality could cancel the nonresidential commercial development, could put a brake on those kinds of developments. That program is still in place, and it will expire at the end of 2020, meaning that even right now, as it stands now, municipalities can come up with multiyear plans as well. It's not that that flexibility is not there. That flexibility is still there for municipalities to come up with plans that are longer than one year. It's not just that one-time kind of thing that they want to resolve. I think municipalities have the ability to come up with those kinds of incentives that are longer than one-year terms.

Again, these new clarifications, these new powers: we cannot see how they are helping municipalities to attract investment. Certainly, one thing that was indicated that maybe was an unintended consequence was that it may start a competition between municipalities on how they can offer more incentives and try to attract the same businesses, try to move the same businesses out of a municipality's boundaries with more incentives and all those kinds of things. It's not the kind of competition that will help us create jobs, except in moving those businesses. That will not help us attract any kind of investment.

As I said with respect to consultation, there has been literally no evidence of consultation, that this government went out and consulted with all the municipalities. It's the kind of change that is affecting municipalities across the board. What we heard from Calgary and Edmonton clearly shows that they were taken by surprise to see this. Sure, they welcomed the flexibility, but both the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary have clearly warned about the unintended consequences. They are still trying to figure out how it can be used.

In the meantime, I think, as I said, it's good that we had that section in the Municipal Government Act that Calgary council was able to use this morning and provide relief to businesses in Calgary. I would say that if we see that bill, in the grand scheme of things it's not what this government promised to Albertans, to create jobs, to create opportunities for investment. So far, the total legislative package that's before the House, I think, is not helping us to move in that direction.

We do know that jobs in Calgary were lost in the downturn, primarily due to the issues that our energy sector is facing. With the issues that our energy sector is facing, I think that what the government has done so far is not helping that sector. For instance, they are cancelling . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was listening, and I understand that the Member for Calgary-McCall was just about to talk about the energy sector and what things would better help that sector in the future. I would really appreciate knowing what that was.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you very much. What I was getting at was that in order to create jobs, I think we need to come up with policies that will help us with the energy sector. I think at this point we do know that line 3 was delayed. We are still awaiting the decision on Kinder Morgan and TMX. Seeing all those things when we were in government, we entered into an agreement to ship our oil by rail. It was an investment in our energy sector which would have created 125,000 barrels a day of capacity for our market. That would have certainly helped us attract investment, knowing that there was some way of transporting and shipping that oil out of Alberta while we wait for the pipelines.

5:50

Now they are threatening to cancel those projects. Without those projects, I think we will be losing more jobs, and we are also shutting down investment because nobody will invest in our energy sector if they don't know if they will be able to transport and ship that product to the markets. We are still waiting to get TMX. We don't have new markets, but with the existing market we do know that there is still a shortfall. We have production, but we don't have the takeaway capacity to match that production, so the steps they are taking are not attracting investment.

Those are the kinds of things, I guess, that Calgarians would want to see and that Albertans would want to see that would attract investment, that would create more jobs, that would help us with the economy. While they are cancelling those contracts and they're making us believe that somehow these clarifications will attract investment and create jobs, I don't think that we are buying it or that Albertans are buying it. I think it's still time for the government to get serious and focus on the energy sector and take the steps that are needed to create more takeaway capacity, take steps that are necessary to help that sector so that we can see jobs, we can see our economy once again booming. These, I guess, political stances and these talking points that these kinds of changes will be creating jobs and attracting investment won't cut it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** With another about 90 seconds under 29(2)(a), are there any other members wishing to take advantage of questions and comments?

I'm seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford standing to speak.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. I'm surprised that I've been given 15 minutes to speak to it. It's obviously longer than the government took to actually write the bill given that there is only one point to the bill, and that point is to allow municipalities to do something that's already allowed under section 347 of the Municipal Government Act. I know that's deep into the bill, so perhaps in the short time that they've been in government, they haven't had a chance to read quite that far into the Municipal Government Act to discover that that which they are seeking is already present.

As the Member for Calgary-McCall has indicated, even this morning the municipality of the city of Calgary has used this section of the act in order to allow some changes in taxes to occur. So we arrive at the point where both the evidence from the bill and the evidence from the behaviour of the municipalities on this very day indicate that the bill itself is pointless. I mean, I guess one has to wonder, then, what it is that the government is doing when they bring forward a bill that is as pointless as this. You know, they told us during the election that they were all ready to govern and they had already started to prepare bills, and it appears that they've

arrived here not ready to govern at all and looking for filler to put in to give the impression of doing something when they're not.

I guess I'm pretty concerned about this. As the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has indicated, if they had been serious about this as a way to create more jobs, they would have also included in this bill a mechanism for the provincial government to do a similar thing or to support the municipal governments in doing this. They didn't do that, so they're clearly just trying to download onto municipalities some responsibility that they don't want to take responsibility for themselves.

I think we have to then look at what the underlying intention is here since we know that the bill is pointless and that the government themselves haven't invested their own time and energy into this bill. So what's it all about? The only answer can be that it's essentially a dog whistle to their financial masters. The people who will be giving them donations in the next election are being told: we're going to try to find more ways to take money away from the people of the province of Alberta and shovel it to a small few of you who have the financial wherewithal to buy tickets to our fundraisers and donate to private PACs that will argue on your behalf in the next election.

That's the only reasonable purpose, because it doesn't provide any new jobs in the cities in which it's going to be employed. At best we may see some jobs shuffle around the province as municipalities fight with each other to try to create the circumstances that are most desirable for people who will take advantage of this kind of an act in order to create money and then take that money and go somewhere else. Nothing about this says that when a company comes into that municipality, they will somehow benefit or create anything in that municipality. They will just simply receive a smaller tax bill. There's no indication that they will actually spend those tax dollars in that municipality.

I'm very concerned. I think this is an assault on rural municipalities particularly, because they need industry to come in to provide a tax base. If they don't have that tax base, they cannot provide services. Now, big cities have lots of different industries that they can attract, and they can also attract people into the cities because they provide a variety of other services. If we start having companies leaving the big cities to go to the smaller municipalities because they don't have to pay taxes, then we're essentially just putting ourselves into a place where municipalities get all of the

burden of providing the services to those industries without any of the tax base in order to then provide services to the rest of their population.

I'm very concerned that this is an assault on small rural communities, shuffling money from people who will take the money from those small rural communities and spend it not only in other cities, typically larger cities, in the province of Alberta but probably around the world. So, again, here we are, shoveling money out of Alberta into the pockets of people who will spend that money to take advantage of, you know, opportunities and pleasures in other parts of the world.

If this really was about job creation, then I have to ask: why would this government at the same time take away a carbon levy that was providing thousands of jobs in the province of Alberta? Specifically, for example, the Alberta municipal solar program was about creating jobs in the very cities that this bill was supposed to do something for, allowing the cities an opportunity to create a brand new industry, an industry that clearly is about the future, by visionaries like Tesla, who are telling us that solar is going to be more important in some number of years than oil in terms of running our services.

Now this government is saying: we don't want to be a part of the future; we don't want to be a part of what can be; we instead are going to grasp a narrative, a belief system from an earlier era because it makes us feel good. Something happened in the '50s that this government can simply not let go of. They are so attached to it that they will deny the reality that the world is moving on, that businesses naturally do that, that economies naturally do that, that people naturally do that: seek new output, seek new adventures, and create new opportunities by having visions of the future, not by maintaining a rigid past.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. Two quick things. One, just for clarity, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was speaking to second reading of Bill 7. Standing Order 29(2)(a) had visually been passed over; however, now we have it on *Hansard* that that is the case.

Secondly, seeing that it is 6, the Assembly is adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, June 10, 2019

Day 10

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, June 10, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening, members. Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Members, I'd like to call this committee to order.

#### Bill 4 Red Tape Reduction Act

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate you recognizing me this evening to talk about Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act, which on the surface looks a little bit light on some details. I suppose that maybe some of the details that could have possibly made it into this bill were reduced through some red tape. I'm not really sure.

I guess that to start with, I'd like to talk a little bit about what we see here in Bill 4 or maybe, more appropriately, what we don't see. We don't see things around, say, for instance, a definition of what kind of red tape the government is going to be looking at. Are they looking to reduce, you know, things that might put people at risk? Are they looking to possibly reduce regulations that might protect our environment? We don't have any details around that. I guess, as I was quoted a while back, it kind of seems like this is a bill that will create a big ball of red tape. The bill allows the minister to create regulations, it allows the minister to amend regulations, but we're a little light on the details past that.

I know that, you know, there have been some interesting statements going forward. When this bill was first introduced, the Premier made some comments about how over the first 21 days of this government they'd already reduced 17 regulations. The problem is that we don't know what those were, where they were posted. The ability for people to look at what it is that may have been reduced and how it might have affected them: again, we're still waiting a little bit on details around this.

When we talk about reducing red tape, you know, some of my friends across the way use this a lot around the unintended consequences of what might be removed. The government is creating a new process here in Alberta, which, in essence, kind of creates some red tape of its own through the ministry. I'm a little worried that this bill has no teeth, which means that if we are doing some things, we don't have any kind of accountability around there. I believe there is a bit of a threat to some of the fundamental protections: consumer, environmental, health and safety.

One of the things that kind of concerned me a little bit is around one of the validators of this bill. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which is one of the Premier's key validators, has said, "In Alberta's case, new rules on health and safety have only made the burden on business owners worse." I'm a little concerned about that phrase. When we're talking about people's health and safety, I think that as they go to work, they have every reason to believe that they can work safely and come home to their families safely. To say that health and safety is a bit of a burden, I

kind of tend to disagree. From my experience sitting on my own workplace health and safety committee as a co-chair, as part of the joint management-workers committee, and having sat on my union's provincial health and safety committee, one of the things, you know, that I can't help but brag a little bit about is my former employer.

When I first left to become an MLA in this House, we had quite the record, I guess, to brag about. When I left, Lucerne ice cream had over 1,650 days accident free, and that was because our workplace decided to take health and safety very, very seriously. Yes, I suppose that maybe in the very beginning there were a few people that thought things were a little bit burdensome, but in the long run what it was was that nobody was sitting at home hurt. They were being very productive at work because they were healthy, and it actually lessened the cost on the employer. Their WCB premiums that they were paying shot down dramatically over that course. Again, when I hear things that health and safety might be getting in the way a little bit, maybe as another way to look at it, that sends a bit of a signal to me that I'm a little bit concerned about.

I also noticed, you know, that through the consultations with Albertans from 2019, the Red Tape Reduction Act will be amended by the end of the year to include legislated timelines for regulatory approval for various departments, agencies, including the Alberta Energy Regulator, the goal of which will be to achieve the fastest approval process in North America. Well, the problem is that when I look through the bill in terms of this, to say that we're going to amend the timelines, unfortunately, is a little bit of a stretch, Madam Chair, because there are no timelines in the bill right now for anything.

Well, maybe I'm not completely fair there. There is one timeline saying that "beginning in 2020" – it doesn't say whether it's January 2020 or anywhere between then and December 2020 – the minister will report one time through a report that will be brought here to the House. But, of course, that's always after the fact. I think there's maybe some ability that the government could look at for reporting a little bit more in real time in terms of what they're looking at, how they're looking at it, and what they're considering to potentially reduce.

When we were talking about this a little bit earlier, I did mention the fact that I was a little bit concerned. We don't want to get onto this tunnel-vision quest in order to get rid of regulations. I mean, my gosh, I heard the labour minister in the last debate talking about: well, you know, maybe it's okay if we create a little bit of red tape. Okay. Well, that's all right. But then are you going to be racing to get rid of some other ones because they just committed to creating a little bit more red tape? I don't want this blind effort moving forward: well, we've already brought in a few of these; we've got to quickly get rid of something. There was a commitment on a one-to-one basis, that for every regulatory burden that comes in, they want to get rid of another regulatory burden. Every new regulatory burden proposed must be matched with a cut of an equivalent burden somewhere else.

Now, I can't help but wonder, Madam Chair: how are we balancing that? What are the criteria around saying, "We've taken this regulation and put it in; this is something that's of equal value"? Well, just because it's of equal value doesn't necessarily make it a good idea to get rid of it. I wonder how that mechanism is going to work going forward. How do we measure what's equivalent? How do we balance that out? It'd be nice to maybe see a process around that.

When we look around in terms of what kind of efforts have been done around red tape reduction, there are several instances that we can look at. Of course, Mr. Harper in 2011 announced the launch of the Red Tape Reduction Commission, which called on the

government to take action to reduce burden on business, making it easier to do business with regulators and improving service and predictability. They had made a goal to establish a 20 per cent red tape cut and a one-to-one rule. Again, as I was just talking about earlier, how do we balance that out? Hopefully, maybe there are some things that we might be able to learn from.

7:40

A couple of failures that I would like to highlight are around clean water protections. In the regulatory framework that protected lakes, rivers, and groundwater there was a loophole in the metal mining effluent regulation of the Fisheries Act. This allowed mining companies to dump toxic waste into lakes and reclassified healthy lakes as tailing impoundment areas. Now, I don't know about a lot of people out here, but I know I certainly like to go out camping, and I don't know if I'd be very excited if I was, say, water skiing in one lake that I like to go to, just to find out that it's being used as a tailings pond.

Sandy Pond in Newfoundland had been destroyed under this loophole, and Environment Canada released the names of 29 natural bodies that mining companies had applied to use as toxic waste dumps. Maybe a little bit of a failure there that we might want to be considering as we move forward looking at this bill.

Talking about food inspections, there were cuts of \$56 million to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, resulting in 100 fewer inspectors. Now, as somebody who worked in the food industry – albeit it was only ice cream – there were still some very, very strict regulations about how we conducted the work that we did in there, being careful in terms of sanitation, cross-contamination. I mean, my gosh, we even got to the point where we weren't allowed to stage certain products within a certain distance from others because of cross-contamination issues.

These 100 fewer inspectors resulted from reverse staffing measures put in place in response to the deadly listeriosis outbreak in 2008, in which 22 Canadians died. That concerns me. Again, I don't want to see us getting this tunnel vision: well, you know, we brought in some slightly necessary red tape burdens on business, but then we've got to quickly get rid of some other ones.

If we look at British Columbia, they promised to reduce regulation by one-third in three years, which is about, roughly, what is being suggested here in Alberta. They eliminated 157,000 regulations for citizens and small businesses and reduced regulation by 47 per cent. That is a fantastic number. They also introduced a net zero increase commitment in 2004: for every regulation that's introduced, one was required to be removed, again sort of what's being suggested here. Again, Madam Chair, we probably want to look at the failures that occurred so that, hopefully, when we are looking at those things and we're reducing regulations here, we don't fall into those same traps.

One of the big things I noted there was around money laundering. Reports indicated that \$7 billion in dirty money has flowed through the British Columbia economy, \$5 billion of which is in real estate, which inflated prices and hurt consumers. I think there was a bit of a failure to take action and properly regulate the industry to protect its citizens.

We had some struggles there around child labour, where government lowered the working age to 12 and removed the permit system, effectively deregulating child labour in the province. Madam Chair, I don't think any of us in this House want to be responsible for something like that because this puts the health and safety of children at risk. There was a dramatic increase in the annual payments for accepted disability claims related to children ages 12 to 14 injured on the job. Since 2004 nine were designated long-term disability. I can't imagine being at the age of 12 to 14 and

you're permanently almost disabled from working for the rest of your life. I think those people have to have something a little bit better to look forward to.

In total, WorkSafeBC has paid out over \$1.1 million in disability claims for 179 children injured on the job between 2003 and 2013. When I look at those numbers, it sounds to me like there was a bit of tunnel vision, where we were saying, "One in, so one has got to come out; we've got to hit that number because that's what we promised," a famous slogan there that we've already heard in this House over and over and over again: promise made, promise kept. Well, let's be careful about some of the promises that we are keeping because it can hurt people.

Environmental deregulation. The government oversight had relinquished the province's responsibility for environmental monitoring. This impacted projects like dam construction, forestry management, and hazardous waste disposal, which was likely the key factor in the failure of a 40-metre high tailings dam at the Mount Polley copper mine in B.C.'s interior, which caused widespread environmental damage, illuminated other problems with professional reliance, and in 2016 in the report on regulation of the province's mining sector following the disaster, the B.C. Auditor General found that "almost every one of our expectations for a robust compliance and enforcement program within [the ministries] were not met." Again, another example of us kind of plowing forward because we had committed to reducing this red tape – we brought one in; we're going to take one out – and you don't necessarily look at the consequences that some of those decisions might have.

I know some of those examples were a little bit further in the past, so maybe we can look quickly at something a little bit more recent. In December of 2018 Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, which sets a target of 25 per cent reduction in regulations over four years, requires the provincial approvals for job-creating projects to occur within a year. On paper I think that sounds fantastic. It gets people working, sounds great. Again, what are the unintended consequences of our decisions in possibly going at this blindly to reduce something because we committed to it? Again, we want to keep saying that tag line over and over again: well, promise made; promise kept.

Some of the failures that we've already seen: loosening ratios for children in daycare. These restrictions were put in place after a number of tragic deaths of children, which, of course, means we're putting them at risk.

Economists, advocates, and researchers have argued that deregulation under the guise of reducing red tape hurts workers and doesn't lead to job creation and improved wages, which I think is something that this government has very clearly said they are moving forward to try to improve. I think, again, we're looking at the unintended consequences in this blind move forward. Well, we're going to reduce red tape, but let's make sure that we're consulting thoroughly on this.

As we move forward on this, I think there are possibly some changes that can be made along the way. I certainly want to hear the rest of the debate surrounding this. Maybe the associate minister might be willing to get up and talk a little bit about some of the things that they're thinking about. I know that the Premier had mentioned, you know, in the opening day of introduction that they'd be open to amendments around maybe a definition of what kind of red tape it is we're looking for but, more specifically, maybe a little bit around what kind of definitions aren't red tape. I think that'll allow Albertans to be able to take a look at this, assuming that maybe we could look at some way to inform them in real time about some of the things that they're looking at getting rid of, which will allow Albertans and businesses and organizations to come back

with their feedback and talk about what may or may not be the problems around some of the regulations that could be proposed for cutting.

Of course, we always want to see some responsibility in terms of timelines. I think we can create a few timelines here, be a little bit more diligent in terms of how we move forward rather than, quite honestly, just a little bit of a sort of emptiness here when we're looking at Bill 4.

At this point I think I can take my seat. I do look forward to debate going forward here in Committee of the Whole, and I certainly hope that some of the members on the government side have some interesting things to add to the discussion.

Thank you.

7:50

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity this evening to rise and speak to Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act, and pass along some of my comments and add to those that I've already made in this House on the bill. I join others on this side of the House who really question what this and some of the other pieces of legislation that the government has brought forward this session are really all about, what the purpose and what the point actually is. Some of the pieces of legislation we've discussed, including this one, seem like one large communications exercise that really does nothing that isn't already enabled in other legislation. It's all designed to make it sound like they're doing something while they tread water and hope for the economy to improve all by itself or, as one member for the government said earlier today, the Member for Grande Prairie, "let the . . . market work itself out." The collateral damage while that happens is Albertans who suffer from this government's lack of action and meaningful legislation.

Many members have discussed or asked about the definition of red tape, which is the substance of this bill. It's the only substance that there is. It's the title. The title itself has not been defined or the term itself has not been defined in the legislation, and that's something that is a serious flaw. Most pieces of legislation will have a substantive list of definitions which provide a whole raft of meaning to the bill or piece of legislation that they're part of. In this particular case something as simple as a definition for red tape in the Red Tape Reduction Act is completely missing. To actually deal with the issue, if indeed there is an issue that needs to be dealt with, one is left to drift by this bill because the main focus of the bill, the title of it, the red tape of it, is left undefined.

In fact, it's a piece of enabling legislation, in my humble opinion, Madam Chair, enabling legislation to do things that the government wants to do through the back door that otherwise they wouldn't be able to accomplish through the front door, that the public might object to. For example, I believe it's actually enabling legislation to declare an underlying motivation such as we found in other bills. There's underlying motivation in Bill 2, which you can see is an open season on workers; an underlying motivation on Bill 8, an open season on municipalities; Bill 4, likewise, one might call an open season on consumers or an open season on an environmental protection act. I think we should look a little bit more closely at that and why I say it can clearly be called an open season on consumers and an open season on environmental protection.

We look at the supports that we have put in place for consumers while we were in government over the four years. Some of the consumer protection laws that we put in place strengthen protection in areas consumers said were the highest priorities, including

banning the use of ticket-buying bots and approving consumer access to refunds from resellers. We know that there's a lot of these consumer protections which are probably going to be at risk under the guise of reducing red tape, Madam Chair. That's the back door that I believe this government is going to use this piece of legislation for. Under the guise of – quote, unquote – removing or reducing red tape, they're going to go ahead and try to eliminate a number of the consumer protections which we brought in during our term in government, calling them bureaucratic red tape unnecessary.

Other examples. Introducing industry-wide standards for vehicle sales and repairs to improve accountability in the sector and better protect consumers from unexpected or unauthorized charges, something we brought in as a matter of consumer protection: once again, something at risk, I think, Madam Chair, as a result of this so-called Red Tape Reduction Act, which will be used by stealth to accomplish many, many things which, in fact, have nothing to do with red tape but everything to do with quietly trying to strip away consumer protections which we brought in during our last term; for example, introducing a licensing framework for high-cost lenders to ensure responsible operations and help consumers better understand the nature of high-cost credit products. A whole raft of consumer protections that we brought in I think are at risk by this government using this new Red Tape Reduction Act as a tool to carve out many of the pieces of consumer protection legislation that we put in place.

Payday lending is another example. It put an end to 600 per cent interest rates on payday loans to help prevent people from becoming trapped in a cycle of debt. Today payday loan borrowers pay lower fees, have more time to pay off their loans, and are paying them off in smaller installments. Once again, consumer protections are under attack with respect to this enabling legislation, which will allow the government to do things by the backdoor quietly, out of sight, by claiming it's red tape or a bureaucratic reduction.

Door-to-door sales is another example. We put an end to misleading and aggressive sales tactics by banning door-to-door sales of energy products and services. The ban includes furnaces, hot water tanks, air conditioners, windows, energy audits, and electricity and natural gas contracts. Now, I've got personal experience with many of my former real estate clients and also my own mother, who has suffered under these door-to-door sales tactics that were very, very difficult to put off at the door and ended up having people I know sign more than one natural gas contract which cost them hundreds of dollars to get out of. This government is looking to reduce consumer protections such as this that we put in place by using, once again, this piece of legislation, the so-called Red Tape Reduction Act, as a stealthy method to go ahead and carve out consumer protections, and they hope that the public is not going to notice.

Condominium living. We introduced condominium regulations, another good example, to improve buying and living in a condo. It was something that had been a long, long time coming, and the condo market real estate agents throughout this province were very, very pleased to enjoy those new protections under the regulations that were put in place. Once again, we wonder whether these regulations are going to be at risk as a result of the legislation, the Red Tape Reduction Act, brought in by the associate minister to place limitations or completely eliminate these regulations that were brought in to protect consumers.

Another example as well, Madam Chair, is the Utilities Consumer Advocate. We expanded the advocate's free mediation services to water bills and improved the advocate's ability to report on the performance of gas and electricity companies to help consumers make well-informed choices. Once again, there's risk

involved to the consumer because these things are possibly going to be disappearing as a result of the government taking advantage of the enabling mechanism of the Red Tape Reduction Act and going after consumer protections which allow consumers to feel that they have some measure of control in their life while the government looks to remove those safety measures and open season on consumers.

Another side of the coin, another element of protection that this government is putting at risk potentially by the use of this enabling legislation, the Red Tape Reduction Act, is in the field of environmental protection, Madam Chair; for example, dam safety. In 2013 the Obed mountain mine site dam spill occurred, spilling about 670 million litres of waste into the Athabasca River. It was the second-biggest coal spill in Canada and seriously contaminated the Athabasca River and forced a number of major communities to stop drawing water from it. Our government developed new dam safety standards to ensure oversight and monitoring of tailings dams and public reporting of this information, which makes Alberta a world leader in dam safety. We need to ensure that standards like these, Madam Chair, are protected to keep Albertans safe. However, these standards, these protections are potentially at risk because this government may end up using the backdoor of the Red Tape Reduction Act to claim that what they're doing is a reduction of bureaucratic largesse and red tape and eliminating regulations which protect the health and safety of Albertans, not to mention the workers' safety on these mines, and the environment as well.

Air quality is part of the environment that we are all reliant upon, the air that we breathe. Alberta's first Canadian ambient air quality standards assessment report was released in September 2015, a few short months after we took office last term. It indicated that the Red Deer region exceeded national standards for fine particulate matter. The lower Athabasca, upper Athabasca, North Saskatchewan and South Saskatchewan areas were found to be approaching the limits for particulate matter, which includes nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide, so-called NOx and SOx. Now, in collaboration with CASA our government updated the Alberta ambient air quality objectives, put in place stricter standards for industrial emitters, and saw reductions of pollutants, improving air quality and the health of Albertans, Madam Chair.

8:00

The Premier wants to turn back the clock on this and a whole raft of other things by removing these protections and putting Albertans at risk and, indeed, very well may be using the enabling legislation that we're debating here today, Madam Chair, the Red Tape Reduction Act, as a backdoor mechanism to achieve those ends. Once again, another attack, this time an attack on environmental protection under the guise of reducing red tape and bureaucratic largesse.

Labour legislation: same thing. This is a wide-sweeping tool which I think the government will be using to mask much of the damage that would be caused by getting rid of many of the protections that we put in place last term. Some of those are found in health and safety protections. For example, our government introduced new protections to ensure that workers are informed of hazards and that health and safety information is provided by employers. We created requirements for joint work-site health and safety committees for employers at work sites with 20 or more workers. We created the independent Fair Practices Office, compensation and meaningful rehabilitation for injured workers, and strengthened appeal commission review and appeal processes.

The Premier has not been straightforward with Albertans about which of these protections is on the chopping block. Madam Chair, may I suggest that the chopping block is going to be named the Red

Tape Reduction Act, the mechanism by which the government intends, in my belief, to circumvent the widely more public method of directly attacking these protections and going through the back door, claiming that they're red tape, bureaucratic largesse, and getting rid of them more quietly by using this enabling legislation that we're debating here tonight. So I'm really, really concerned about this legislation.

I think that the government is quietly bringing it forward and saying: "Hey, this Red Tape Reduction Act is what we said under our mandate. We're going to reduce red tape." They don't even really define it. They don't even make the effort to go ahead and say what it is because they know, in fact, that the whole purpose of this legislation has nothing to do with reducing so-called red tape or reducing bureaucratic replication. It has everything to do with using it as a weapon to attack consumer protections, to attack environmental regulations. Anything that they think of in our past platform that they want to quietly get rid of: they're going to use this Red Tape Reduction Act to do it under the guise of bureaucratic largesse reduction.

Madam Chair, I'm forewarned. I hope the rest of the members of this House are. I know that we on this side of the House have definitely got our antennae up about what the real purpose of this legislation is. I'm not fooled by it, and I don't think Albertans will be fooled by it either once they start seeing how, if passed, this piece of legislation actually gets used. It's something, I think, that I as one MLA on this side of the House will take a particular interest in, watching and seeing the methodology behind the implementation of this act.

The associate minister may hope that we're not going to be following up and reviewing exactly how this legislation is used, but I really doubt that we're going to see it used in a way that it's purported that it will be used, because the enabling capacity already exists within any government department. The Premier simply could have given a mandate letter or simply a memo to each of the ministers of the Crown telling them that their duty was to make sure that they reviewed all their existing legislation under their departments and got rid of anything that was redundant or repetitive or unnecessary. He wouldn't have needed to create another new ministry to do that. It would have been done as a matter of course. In fact, Madam Chair, it's something that, realistically, every minister of the Crown has as a sort of standing argument from their Premier, to make sure it gets done.

It's not something that necessarily every minister has during their mandate, the time to turn full attention to, but I argue, Madam Chair, that that's not going to happen under the mandate of this government either. Red tape reduction is not the focus of this piece of legislation. This legislation is designed to enable ministers to do things other than what they would be able to do under the full glare of the public, and that is to rid themselves of consumer protection which they see as antithetical to their dogmatic, ideological viewpoint.

You know, it's one thing that we certainly can see clearly here in this session of the 30th Legislature, Madam Chair. I hope Albertans become aware and join the debate and realize that there's more than one way to approach an argument or a decision in Alberta. We're looking clearly at two different approaches in this Legislature. Increasingly over the next four years we're going to see Albertans, with the assistance of this opposition, digging more deeply and questioning this place, this province, and this government's activities and making decisions for themselves after debating and talking about what exactly this government is up to and learning to challenge everything that's being said. Some things are not as they seem, and that's what's going on with this piece of legislation. This Red Tape Reduction Act is a weapon to enable the government to



attack issues that they want to do with stealth. It's not something that will be forgotten about by Albertans once they start using it for the true intent that they have in the first place in putting together this piece of legislation.

We'll see if it passes. If it does, we'll certainly be watching the performance of the government in its implementation, and we'll be calling them out on every measure that they bring forward that matches what I say it's going to do, and that is to be used as a weapon against the protections, many of which we brought in, to protect consumers, protect the environment, protect workers, protect everyday people in this province.

I think that in many of the pieces of legislation that this session will see, including some that have already been brought forward, including this one that we're debating right now, you'll find that the government is bringing things forward basically as a bit of a smokescreen, one large communication exercise that really does nothing that isn't already in place. It's all designed to do what other pieces of legislation already enable them to do. It doesn't define exactly what red tape is. It doesn't bother to do that because it doesn't really care about reducing red tape; it only cares about the other mechanism that I've described as the underlying true mechanism in this Legislature, and that is to accomplish by stealth what they couldn't do so openly and directly.

Madam Chair, I think I've made myself clear. I encourage members to vote against this bill. I see it as a clandestine attempt to remove consumer, environmental, and labour protections that Albertans deserve to have in place and that finally did get put in place during our government's term of office. Once they see what this government's effort in dismantling our legislation is really going to mean in terms of consequences for the environment, in terms of consequences for workers' protection, in terms of consequences for working people in this province, we will be able to coalesce a very significant opposition to this type of legislation, the condescending and manipulative type of legislation that this government has been patterning over the beginning of this session. I expect to see a continuation of it.

Madam Chair, with that, I'll finish my comments and open the floor to other members who wish to join the discussion. I once again want to make it very clear that members on this side of the House will be monitoring extremely closely what this government does with this legislation, how it uses it to actually accomplish things by stealth that it couldn't otherwise do. We'll see if I'm wrong or right on the issue.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other comments, questions, or amendments to the bill? The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you. A weapon, stealth, sneaky – this is the best one – a clandestine approach. A two-page bill. Now, what's interesting is that we have listened for three hours in second reading to everything from, "This is just a smokescreen; there's no value to it at all," to "This is a weapon, stealth, sneaky, a clandestine approach." You cannot have both. Either it's not going to do anything, or it's going to do all of those things. I'm trying to understand, through you, Madam Chair, what the members on the opposite side really want me to answer. Do they want me to answer their question about whether it has any teeth to it, or do they actually want me to answer: it has so many teeth; the poor Albertans?

8:10

In second reading of this bill, Madam Chair, the Member for Edmonton-Decore stood up and said: we are very interested in knowing. Then he named a couple of things: we're looking forward

to being able to get into Committee of the Whole. And then for three hours after that they continued to say the same – well, actually not the same thing. Two separate points. One is that this is terrible legislation and it's going to destroy Alberta. The other one is that this has no teeth, there's nothing to it, and why would the UCP bring this forward? There is some confusion on the other side, so is it grandstanding, or are there actually questions that they would like me to answer so that we can be able to move forward and bring this bill to fruition?

One of the things that I was thinking about as I've been listening intently to the, I would say, arguments from the other side: the other day, when I heard I think it was the ex-economic development and trade minister, he was talking about how there was no need for this, so he was on the no-need side. He needed to talk to his other colleagues. There was no need for this, and the reason that he gave is that he said that there is a Legislative Review Committee, that brings forward any bills that could expire, and then they review them at that point.

What's interesting about the way that the NDP speak is that they forget to finish the sentence. What's unfortunate is what he forgot to say, that every bill that would come forward – there were no amendments made. So how is it possible that this government, after looking through all of those legislative bills that came forward to be reviewed, couldn't find one redundancy, one obsolete regulation, or one conflicting regulation? In all that time, supposedly this was the approach to being able to deal with the red tape. This was their strategy, yet in the four years that they were privileged to be able to be in government, they found not one. So the question that I have is: was their approach really working?

In the last election I had the opportunity to be able to door-knock on a lot of doors, and I heard this a lot from people saying: "You know what? The regulations are killing us. The regulations, adding layer upon layer upon layer, are really hurting our businesses and our ability to actually do what we do best: create jobs, innovate, make Alberta a better place, provide for our families." This government has been very clear. We were clear in the 117-page promises that we made to Albertans, our campaign promises, that we were going to really make effective changes in this government, effective changes in Alberta. One of the major components to that was actually doing something about red tape, actually effectively working out the problems that our Alberta job creators are facing.

What we did is that we looked at – over the last three and a half years I've had the opportunity to be able to look at many jurisdictions throughout the world. Lo and behold, just to our west in B.C. they had one of the best approaches to red tape reduction. What's interesting is that they've been doing this actually now for 16 years. In fact, under the current NDP government they actually have not gotten rid of their red tape reduction strategy. I think that the opposition needs to take a look at their brethren over to the west of us and ask why it is that the NDP have not gotten rid of their strategy to be able to reduce red tape or to at least stop it from increasing. I think the reason that they would hear from their NDP buddies in B.C. is that they have found in 16 years – yes, they've made mistakes – a good strategy to being able to help free up their job creators, free up their innovators so that those innovators and job creators can help grow the economy.

If the NDP in government over the past four years were truly interested in addressing this issue, they had an opportunity. I brought forward a private member's bill. Madam Chair, I know you were there in the House at the time, so I know you remember that bill. Bill 207 was a private member's bill. This wasn't actually to reduce red tape. It was actually just to stop it from growing anymore, so it was a one-in, one-out rule. I thought: "You know what? There's no way they're going to actually want to reduce it,

but at least we could go for something like a one-in, one-out rule, at least put a stay to what's happening with the red tape." I went and talked to the then minister of economic development and trade and said: "Would your government be willing to support this? I think it's a good measure. It would show to at least the CFIB, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, that the F that we keep on getting in Alberta is not the right thing for Alberta." What I was told was: absolutely, we will not be supporting that bill. You know, there wasn't even a discussion about it. It was almost like: I don't see any problem.

Well, fast-forward a few weeks and they introduced a bill that added 100 pages to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 100 pages of legislation. It was a book. Madam Chair, you remember the time fondly, I'm sure, as you read through that riveting read. What we found is that this government was so focused on micromanaging Albertans' lives that they lost sight of what we do here. We innovate. We look for opportunities of being able to find things that other people couldn't do, and we make it happen right here in Alberta. When you add layer upon layer of the federal and the provincial and the municipal governments in Alberta onto our job creators, what we find is that these guys just say: "You know what? We're not doing it anymore. We're going to go somewhere else where that regulatory burden is not so onerous."

We have seen over the last four years – just so you know, my riding is on the border. I have the only 24/7 border crossing, in Coutts. It's a shame when I watched those companies leave, the rigs go down to the States, where they can actually go with a lower regulatory burden, lower taxation, and the ability to make some money. Businesses actually won't stay in business if they can't make money, and if you're looking for a business that will do that, that's called a charity. We need charities, but businesses actually need to be able to make a profit to be able to stay in business. This is something that, hopefully, this legislation will address.

I want to talk to you about the disproportionate effect that red tape has on our small businesses. Small businesses are disproportionately affected because they don't have the economies of scale like the large businesses do to be able to hire an extra compliance officer. These small businesses, these ma-and-pa organizations, have to wear those hats themselves.

I talked to an interesting fellow in my riding who was in the oil patch. He got out because he said that when he first got in 20 years ago, he'd spend one day a month actually just filling out all the regulatory forms and regulation requirements and jumping through the hoops that governments asked him to do. At the point when he actually got out, he was spending half of his time – half of his time – doing that. He said: "It just wasn't worth while for me to be able to stay in. I couldn't actually go and do what I needed to do, which was actually create wealth and hire more people and grow my business. Instead, I was doing what the government asked me to do and filling out forms."

8:20

Now, I will be very clear. This bill is not about reducing regulations ad hoc. This is about being able to do it smarter, being able to take a look at the regulations that we have and looking for those redundancies, looking for those issues that are obsolete, those regulations that are obsolete, looking for conflicting regulations that make it difficult for businesses to be able to move forward because the only way they can move forward if one regulation is conflicting with another is to actually contact the ministry, and then they have another pinch point that they have to deal with. Then that minister has to be able to go through the bureaucratic levels in government to be able to get an answer. Now we slowed down the process of

them actually being able to do what these businesses are supposed to be doing, which is creating jobs.

It's not a shock to me that this NDP government during their last four years saw some of the worst unemployment in this province that we've seen in a generation. It's not a shock to me because when you continue to pile this regulatory burden onto our job creators, they stop creating jobs. Actually, the NDP didn't see that, and for that reason they lost the election, Madam Chair. For that reason they were sent to time out. It's going to be a long time out if they never learn that rule, which is that you cannot continue to stop our job creators from creating jobs and think that they're going to do it just out of the goodness of their hearts. They're going to do it if the regulatory burden is lower, if the marginal tax rate compared to other jurisdictions where they can make money is lower, and where they have a sustainable government. That's what we used to call the Alberta advantage in this province. We have to get back to that winning Alberta advantage.

You know, during that time, Madam Chair, there was a 10-year period. It's interesting that the NDP have been quoting Ralph Klein, so I'll quote him. Not quote him, but I'll talk about his time. For a 10-year period we had almost 100,000 people moving into this province each year, the size of Red Deer or Lethbridge. During that time we had 150 corporate head offices move here. These weren't just oil and gas corporate head offices. These were other corporate head offices. They saw that the Alberta advantage would actually help them. During that time we saw more foreign investment come into Alberta than Quebec and Ontario combined. That was the Alberta advantage. That was what the lower marginal tax rate, the lower regulatory burden than other jurisdictions, and the sustainable government did.

We've been listening for a little over a couple of weeks now to the NDP talk about how we're getting it wrong, and yet I'm pretty sure – I know that quite a few of the members opposite moved here for the very reason that we are championing to this day, the Alberta advantage. They moved here because there were jobs here, because we did something different than other jurisdictions. We actually created jobs. It wasn't the government that did it. The government just created the playing field so that Albertans, job creators, and innovators could do the job.

We've heard again today and in the last few weeks how this opposition has said that they believe, for some strange reason, that when the government invests a million dollars, it will create more jobs than when the actual private sector invests a million dollars. I'll try to be good about this, but every time the government invests a dollar, they took it from someone else first. That's called tax. So their argument that a million dollars from the government is actually better for the economy is completely backwards, Madam Chair. It doesn't make sense. Before they could invest that dollar, they had to take it from a taxpayer first. When they start taking too much from the taxpayer and from those job creators, those job creators say: "Enough is enough. I'm not pulling the cart anymore. I'm gone." This is what we saw. I watched that down in my riding many, many years, for the last four years.

I've talked about some of the issues, 30,000 feet up issues. I am very interested in discussing this bill, but I need to hear from the members opposite concrete questions. I can answer those questions if they have those issues, and I'm very interested in hearing from them.

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. They changed the name of my constituency, and sometimes I'm confused as well when I hear

Edmonton-North West. I look to the left and to the right, and then I realize it's me. Here I am.

I'm here to ask some specific questions of the hon. Member for Taber-Warner, I guess. They've changed your name, too, and given you a title, the associate minister for the reduction of red tape. When I first came back to the Legislature, the new 30th Legislature, I saw that very name taped to the door, not using red tape but another colour, but taped on there nonetheless. You know, I thought to myself: well, what is this, the red tape reduction office? So I have a number of questions.

I guess being a former minister, I'm just curious to know how you would approach, then, let's say, a particular ministry and make suggestions about which regulations to cut. For example, I know that I did a lot of work in the Ministry of Education to try to streamline because I'm a very keen hunter of redundancy, right? I look for things always to streamline, you know, from my own personal life to family and to my professional life, looking for ways to make things work better. The way that I always find is that you defer to expertise and to, certainly, have a, let's say, theme of streamlining regulation in each ministry. But does it necessitate the creation of a separate office, and what authority does that office have? I'd like to ask through the chair: what authority does this associate minister have, the power to supersede both the minister and the Premier's office, to say: "No. This regulation must go," right? "If you want to put one in, you've got to take two out," kind of thing.

That would seem like sweeping power, Madam Chair, for such a fine office as the reduction of red tape. I'm just curious to know how the associate minister might sort of envision the enforcement of that thing.

Another question I have specifically is: how much does the ministry or department – I'm not sure what it is – cost? Like, what is the budget that is afforded to this new creation, and how does the associate minister expect to spend it? Where would the priorities be physically? As I say, reaching in to the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education and/or Transportation and deputizing perhaps some of those department workers and, you know, giving them a new direction, which is in the pursuit of reducing red tape and regulation, or does that happen through that office that has just been created?

My third question is – you should write these down – what regulations or what specific red tape targets have you had so far? Like, what are the, let's say, top 20, 15 – you can send those back to me in writing – that you're targeting now to reduce, right? Is it regulation around education or health care or environment or just what? I mean, I would like to know some examples. I think Albertans would like to see some examples of what exactly we're aiming for here because, you know, in order for me to cast my vote, I need to know what it is, right? I don't see any. As you said before, very astutely, this is a very thin piece of legislation. It's only a couple of pages.

8:30

You know, like, what are the targets? What are the priorities? What are the parameters of this whole reducing red tape sort of plan, right? We can't just sort of move in helter-skelter and say: okay, every regulation we make here – we seem to be proposing quite a number of regulations with the bills that I've been debating here so far with this new 30th Legislature. There are quite a lot of regulations associated, for example, with reducing youth minimum wage. I mean, you'd have to have a legion of people to enforce through regulation whether a kid's going to high school or not and all of this sort of thing. I mean, I need more specific information around that, too.

So if I can, in summary, just, you know, review the questions that I just asked. How much is the budget for this new ministry? Number two, could you give me a list of, let's say, 15 or so pieces of regulation that you'd (a) consider red tape and (b) how you will reduce and (c) how is this pursued, right? Does the new Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction have the power to supersede decisions and procedure in each of the individual ministries, or is he deputizing individuals within those ministries to execute the reduction in the said regulations that he chooses to prioritize?

So, yeah, those are pretty specific questions, and I know he's up to the task because I can see he's ready to spring forth and edify us all with an answer. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for specific questions. They're good questions, and I will answer those. The first question is: how do you determine what gets cut? One of the things you said, Member, is that, you know, it was always better for you guys to consult with the professionals and the gurus in these different areas.

**Mr. Eggen:** I didn't say that.

**Mr. Hunter:** No, you didn't, actually, but I'll put words in your mouth. You guys do that all the time.

I agree a hundred per cent. Our approach is going to be very simple. We're going to allow those people who are in the trenches, that are dealing with these regulations on a regular basis to be able to come forward and present to us what's stopping them from being able to do what we want them to do, which is create jobs and innovate. As they come forward, there'll be certain things that we can do, and there will be certain things that we can't do. That will be, then, the departments, whether it be in Health or in Education or in Infrastructure, Transportation: they will then have the ability to make those decisions.

Now, we are taking a look at this strategy from the lens of believing people and not being so cynical. One of the things that we've heard from people is that, you know, we need to stop this strategy of when 1 per cent does the bad things, that we punish the 99 per cent. This is something that is completely backwards. Good legislation should punish the 1 per cent bad actors and reward the 99 per cent good actors. This is pretty normal in society. You're going to have the 1 per cent that are going to try to bend the rules to do things that they shouldn't do. Those people should be punished.

What B.C. did over the last 16 years, their strategy was, I think, fairly effective. Again, it was not without error, but we've at least had the opportunity to be able to take a look at what they did, look for best practices, and try to be able to learn from them in what we apply here. But what our strategy is going to be is to be able to free up the hands of our job creators, the good actors, the people who actually are willing to be able to make sure that we are healthy and safe and make sure that our environment is properly taken care of, free up their hands to be able to do what you guys could not do, which is create jobs. You could not do that in your strategy, so we are going to take a different approach, an approach that has actually worked in another jurisdiction. In fact, many jurisdictions, not only in Canada but throughout the world, are tackling red tape. This is a strategy that is being applied in many different places. We've looked for those best practices. This is what we're going to do.

Now, you asked what my ministry has in terms of authority. Can it supersede? This is, again, that cynical approach that we've seen far too often by the NDP when they were in government. This cynical approach is that it's us against them. In reality what's going

to happen here is that we're going to work collaboratively together as ministries to make sure that we tackle this. What they did in B.C. is that they made sure that each of the ministries created a culture, a culture of reduction of red tape so that, again, those job creators could actually create jobs.

The question was also asked: what's the cost? I heard everything, you know, when they talked in second reading about how it was going to be so expensive or create more red tape. This is actually going to cost Albertans nothing because it's actually being funded through Finance. This is an associate ministry, and we did this specifically so that we could reallocate our resources to be able to tackle a job that needs to be done. This is what we're going to be doing. We're using the resources through Finance in order to be able to fund the efforts that this ministry will be doing.

The other question that you asked was: what are the regs going to target? We've been very clear on this, and we've said this many times, actually. In fact, it's the first paragraph of the preamble.

Whereas the Government of Alberta recognizes that a consistent, transparent and efficient system of regulatory and administrative requirements is necessary to protect the public interest, including health, safety, the environment and fiscal accountability.

This is going to be the litmus test that we will use for being able to bring forward good legislation and getting rid of the ones that are redundant, getting rid of the ones that are obsolete, and getting rid of the ones that are in conflict with each other.

Those are the answers to some of the questions. You've talked about targets, priorities, parameters. You know, what's interesting about this is the fact that they never counted. How can you know how deep the rabbit hole goes, Madam Chair, if you don't count? So we're going to count. We're going to actually find out how many of these pinch points, these regulatory hoops, our job creators have to jump through, and we're going to do a very exhaustive count.

When B.C. and Ontario did their counts, they found about 380,000 of these regulations. What's interesting about it is that when Manitoba did their count, they actually counted agencies, boards, and commissions as well, and they found an extra 60 per cent more pinch points, a 60 per cent regulatory burden added on to our job creators and to their job creators. They found almost a million of these pinch points. We're going to make sure that we count agencies, boards, and commissions and all departments. This is how we're going to be able to find out the problems and how deep it goes.

In terms of targets, priorities, parameters, I think what the NDP are trying to say is that they want this to be prescriptive. We've chosen not to make it a prescriptive approach because this needs to be enabling. This actually needs to allow us the ability, Madam Chair, to be able to move on bad regulations. What the NDP would like to do – and this is code for what they've been doing for a while now – is say: "We want to slow you down because we're really upset that you guys won that election. You guys need to stop. You can't move so quickly." With this, a lot of businesses, a lot of job creators, and a lot of workers are saying: "You know what? We need to do something about it. We need to do it now."

It's been 40 years since we've actually even taken any stab at this, and we're going to – actually, maybe I should just say this: I've got my scissors out, Madam Chair, and we're going to make sure we get rid of that red tape.

**The Chair:** Are there any more comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. That was very interesting. I especially like the question from the Member for Edmonton-North West around what the finances look like for this

associate minister. It sounds like some creative financing possibly going on there. But, you know, we'll see how that rolls out, and hopefully Albertans will like the results of it.

You know, I heard some things around micromanaging, new strategy, and choosing not to be prescriptive around this, yet I still remember the Premier at the press conference saying: but, hey, we're open to amendments around that. I guess it sounds like we're not open to amendments but – you know what? – we're going to give it a try, Madam Chair. We'll see what we can do here.

I have an amendment here that I'd like to move on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I will let those get to you and await your instructions.

**8:40**

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. This will be known as amendment A1.

Member, please proceed.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's nice to be able to move this on behalf of Member Bilous, that Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act, be amended by striking out section 2(1) and adding the following:

Report

2(1) Beginning in 2020, the Minister shall, subject to the regulations, prepare a report recommending strategies and initiatives for the Government to eliminate and prevent unnecessary regulatory and administrative requirements, including the reasons for those recommendations.

What we're asking here is just simply to let Albertans know why it is that they're recommending that these be eliminated. You know, when I look at things like the incident in Walkerton, and we all know what happened there, when seven people died and over 2,300 became ill after a deadly strain of E.coli polluted the drinking water in the town of Walkerton, Ontario. The investigation into the causes identified that the government failed to put proper safeguards in place after privatizing the water supply, and the ministry of environment, weakened by deregulation, failed to detect the problem.

I think if what we could do is that we're looking to, you know, as the minister said, get out those big scissors and start chopping away there, maybe we can just quickly post some of the things: here's what we're going to be doing and the reasons why. It will allow, you know, not only Alberta job creators but also the public in general, because usually it's the public in general that work for those job creators. I've always said that there's nothing like a front-line worker that knows how to do their job best because every day they want to be able to come back to that job, do that, make sure that the employer is successful because as long as they're successful, they keep getting a paycheck, too.

I'm hoping that we can look at some of those reasons for the recommendations. Certainly, I would say that should those reasons be, you know, completely legitimate and understandable for why we're getting rid of them, Albertans will be more than happy to say: "Yeah. Let's do that because it might make my job easier, which will make my employer, you know, a lot better in the environment, and we can all be prosperous together."

I'm hoping that folks will take a good hard look at this amendment and will be willing to support it. I certainly look forward to, hopefully, maybe some comments on it from the associate minister.

**The Chair:** Any comments or questions on the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in support of the amendment. One of the things that

the amendment does identify is really the lack of clarity of what has been put forward as the Red Tape Reduction Act. Certainly, I know that the now government very often spoke publicly about how they had about six months out of being successful and becoming government, had developed a transition team so that they could plan ahead, and they knew what was going to happen because they were certain a victory. Indeed, here they are. They are the government. They had a significant period of time to plan. But when you look at this document that is Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act, it lacks much detail.

This amendment absolutely does ask for more detail, which I feel is fair. I would say, Madam Speaker, that if we presented this bill when we were government, many of the members who are currently in the government would have laughed us out of the House. It's just so minimal, giving hardly any detail and direction. It's really very disturbing. It has very little in specifics.

I know that it's all part of the larger plan, that this government is open for business and they're wanting to support the job creators. Another thing that I just was sort of struck by when I was reading some of this – it make me think about something that happened previously, when we were the government. It was when we created the new ministry, the ministry of economic development and trade. The joke was: oh, well, you've created one job, the minister's job. Well, I would venture to say that that's what you've done here. That's about all you've done. And, you know, it's not anything to be proud of with this whole vagueness.

When I look at something, I sort of ask a couple questions always, just generally: what is this, and how is it going to be implemented? When you look at the "what" – I am looking at this two-page document of the bill and it says:

Whereas some regulatory and administrative requirements result in unnecessary costs for Albertans in terms of time, money or other resources, putting burdens on businesses and non-profit and public-sector organizations and threatening jobs . . .

That sounds good. Certainly, we on this side of the House don't have any quibble with that. But I just would like some congruence from the government because already in their Bill 2 they have created much more administrative complexity and administrative burden, totally acting in contrast to what is written here, so creating more red tape for employers.

Bill 2, the pick-the-pockets bill, talks about how youth minimum wage will be reduced to \$13 when they're in school, when they're not in school, when they've worked so many hours. Oh, well, these things change. Employers have to figure that all out and look back to when the holidays were. Was school in that week, or were they off on spring break? I mean, there's a whole myriad of confusing factors. I'm thinking: well, if indeed this government does want to get rid of red tape, why would they create that? It just flies in the face of another bill that they have presented. Of course, that bill, the pick-your-pockets bill, goes on to talk more about when we're just giving straight time, no overtime. Again, you have to sort of look at: okay, did you regularly normally work on this holiday? Do you get paid for that or not? Again, it is an administrative burden on employers. I guess I'm just asking the government to be congruent. If you care about this, then how come you're not doing it in another bill? That is something that I'm wondering about.

Because the bill was so minimal, I was thinking, you know: what did they mean by this? So I did go back to the throne speech to see what they said in the throne speech, and they do have about a paragraph in the throne speech about it. They talk about "This will provide the means to lower the regulatory burden on Alberta's economy by one-third." Oh, so they say something a little bit in addition to what the bill actually says. They do say that they want

to reduce it by a third. But, like, how do they measure that third? How do we know? I mean, I don't know.

8:50

If you want to achieve a goal, usually you have to know what your goal is, how to measure your goal so that you know that you've achieved it. Or do you just arbitrarily say that we achieved it or not? It just makes sense. Of course, in a huge organization like the government of Alberta, I mean, that's just basics. Certainly, there are all sorts of measures that we use in government to see: are we serving the people the best way?

But this bill: it doesn't even bother to tell us when this is what success looks like. That's another question that I have about this bill. I did go back also to the platform because that's also referred to many times by the government: "Oh, well, it's in the platform. We're very proud of our platform. You know, it had a lot of pages to it," unlike this bill, but it had much detail in it. I see there is a page, an entire page, on this one. Some of it is just sort of a bit of a table and stuff, so it's not full of words. But it does give a few more details again. It reiterates the one-third reduction target that we're not quite sure reduction of what exactly, fees or just maybe a policy or something like that. I'm not sure. It does talk about appointment of a minister, which, obviously, there's an associate minister who was appointed, so that we can see is – that's part of the success, I guess, of this bill.

But it does, again, say, "Implement a 'One-In/One-Out' rule requiring ministries to identify at least one offsetting regulation for every new regulation created." Okay. There are some specifics. Well, that's helpful. How come that's not actually in the bill? Why isn't that in the document? It's in here. That's a measure. I'm just confused because some of their documents have it, but of course the bill is the legislation. It's very important that the legislation has that measure in. And because this is a new ministry – this wasn't a ministry that was created previously – I'm wondering if this one-in, one-out rule works for that. You've created this whole ministry. Does that mean that another ministry needs to be deleted? What ministry is going to be deleted? What one are you going to take care of? I'm just sort of extrapolating from your one-in, one-out rule. Just curious about a few of these things.

I also wanted to talk a little bit more about looking at the strategies and the initiatives. This is what it does say. It says in the bill that in 2020, in the beginning of 2020 – not quite specific but sometime in the beginning, so perhaps January – the associate minister is going to give us a report. Okay. It's going to be a report about strategies and initiatives to eliminate and prevent unnecessary regulatory administrative requirements. This amendment that my hon. colleague just presented is asking to add to that so that we know the rationale, really, for why certain things are in and out. Many of my colleagues on this side of the House have spoken about the importance of regulations. You know, regulations protect us continually. We know there are consumer protections, environmental protections, worker protections, and we know all the stories of regulatory disasters.

But I want to talk about a certain regulation that I think is very important, that sort of I haven't really seen any talk of at all. I'm wondering if this is one of the regulations they're going to get rid of because if they do, I think that there is some concern. You know, there are professional bodies in our province.

A bit of a history lesson: when Lyle Oberg was the Minister of Children's Services – now, this was some time ago – I was on the board of the Alberta College of Social Workers at that time and we had been working for 30 years with the provincial government to have the profession of social work regulated, made it mandatory registration, and the government had never agreed. We had spoken

to them many times because if anybody just calls themselves a social worker, they have to be accountable to our code of ethics, standards of practice. We have to have important, clear boundaries with our clients. We work with people who are very vulnerable, and if we exploit them, you know, if we have an inappropriate relationship with them, this is all disastrous. It's very unhealthy for our whole society. But there was no regulation for our profession. It was just a voluntary process. Indeed, anybody could call themselves a social worker. They didn't have to have an education background in social work. They could just, you know, put up a shingle and say: I'm a social worker. And people did that.

Something shifted in the late '90s, early 2000s, when Minister Oberg was in office. Somebody in his town did run into a regulatory issue regarding an inappropriate relationship with a client and someone who called themselves a social worker, so he got it. He also was a medical doctor, so he understood regulation because he knew how important it was in the health professions, like nursing and being a physician.

So after 30 years we did have some success, and we were able to have mandatory registration in this province, and that meant that social workers had a standard of practice, they had to follow a code of ethics, and each year they must do professional development. All this is regulation, all of it. But it's so important to the well-being of our society. It's so important to vulnerable Albertans. I don't know. It's not mentioned anywhere that this is something that they're looking at. You know, I'm just talking about my own personal understanding of the importance of regulation. I mean, there are many other things that people can bring up.

I think we have to be very careful, and the vagueness of this bill, really, is not being responsible. It's not. I mean, the minister perhaps talks about that he doesn't want to be – how did he put it? I can't remember his words exactly. Sort of unfettered. They can just sort of make decisions. That's why this amendment is so important, because it does give us specifics and rationales so we can understand. What are the principles that this government will follow when they're cutting so that we can at least understand that? It only makes sense.

I stand in support of this amendment, and I encourage all of the members in the House to support it. I think it would be a great addition and do no harm to what exists already.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any more comments or questions on the amendment? The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you. I have to say that there is lots of stuff to unpack there, but let's just get back to the existing amendment that you've brought forward. The only thing that I can see changed here is "including the reasons for those recommendations." Addressing that issue is maybe what I'd like to do right now.

I guess the problem that I have with this is that they're, again, adding more red tape. They're saying: let's just add more to this legislation. We have created the legislation to be small and precise and concise for a very important reason, that is to make sure that we walk the talk. We're not just going to talk about red tape reduction; we're actually going to do it.

I haven't heard any compelling reasons to be able to support this. It actually doesn't talk about principles, as the Member for Edmonton-Riverview said. This would not change anything about that. It just says "including the reasons for those recommendations." I don't see any reasons why. That seems redundant to actually say that. In our report we will be able to show what we've done, and in that report it will show who we've consulted and what we've done to be able to get to that point.

I would recommend that all members do not support this amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other comments or questions in response to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there any other comments or questions or amendments to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

9:00

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, gosh, I'm a little disappointed in that. You know, I remember the associate minister, back when he was on this side of the House, talking about, at great length sometimes, how the government was never clear about what it was doing and why. So here we are. I thought that maybe the associate minister was going to live up to all the things he criticized us for and show us how to do it better. Maybe not today but, hopefully, maybe going forward, we might see a little bit more movement on that.

You know, I've heard some comments again that it feels like creating red tape. It's almost like when you walk onto that used-car lot and you get this guy that comes running out to you after 30 seconds and says: I've got a great deal for you today; trust me. Well, we're being asked to trust you, Minister, around what you feel is necessary to reduce.

Again, we talked a lot about the job creators, but we didn't talk about how Albertans are the ones that are potentially going to feel the effects of what gets cut. I can't help but maybe bring another example again just to create that little bit of caution about how we're cutting things. Can you imagine, Minister, if we'd have known ahead of time that by choosing to, you know, delay water-testing rules for growers – at the time it would save them \$12 million per year – in 2008 there would be a listeriosis outbreak at Maple Leaf, resulting in 22 deaths because of weak regulations? They were cited as factors in recurring E coli outbreaks from lettuce, and between 2006 and 2018 there have been 20 E coli outbreaks related to lettuce production, the most recent just in 2018, where 43 people in 12 states and 22 people in Canada got sick because of it. Wouldn't it be great if we could know ahead of time whether some of these things could create some problems?

Anyway, I'm not dissuaded, Madam Chair. I do have another amendment here that I would like to try out. Hopefully, the government will be a little bit more open minded to this one. I shall pass these forward and await your instructions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

This will be known as amendment A2.

Member, please proceed.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I've made a couple of references to some things that put public safety at risk, and it certainly would have been nice maybe knowing ahead of time that those regulations were either being cut or affected in some way. With this amendment, hopefully, we are putting the public mind at ease.

I move that Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act, be amended by adding the following after section 2(1):

(1.1) In preparing the report . . . under subsection (1), the Minister shall take into account administrative or regulatory requirements with a purpose of protecting public health and safety, consumers, the environment or workers as part of any strategies or initiatives developed by the Government to eliminate and prevent unnecessary regulatory and administrative requirements.

Again, we're talking about being very, very clear with Albertans around their safety. Again, I'd like to say that a successful company always has very healthy and safely working employees. They are the ones that know their jobs best, as they should. Certainly, when I was working at Lucerne, I would not expect my plant manager to be able to just step into my position at a moment's notice and be able to do it as effectively and quickly as I could or as safely. I really wouldn't expect that unless they go through a whole bunch of training exercises, that I would have been happy to do, around forklift operation and power jack operation and loading a trailer safely and all that stuff.

I'm hoping that the minister will very seriously consider this, just, again, being open to Albertans, making sure that they have peace of mind about the regulations that he's looking to take those big scissors to, that he was talking about a little bit earlier, and allowing Albertans to sleep at night knowing that their health and safety is top of mind for this government. At the end of the day, when workers are injured or people get sick or even die, I believe that creates a whole lot of red tape for this government that I'm pretty sure they don't want to have.

I look forward to the comments of others, and I'm hoping that all members will support this amendment.

**The Chair:** Any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As always, it's a pleasure to get up in the House and speak to the bills that are before us. As always, I like to share little stories to help and entertain our members on the other side of the House so that I can see some smiles instead of just some sad faces because we're getting up to amend their proposed legislation here.

One of the things that I want to share with you is that I regularly am invited to go to speak to classrooms. You know, sometimes I go to a grade 3 class or a grade 4 class, a grade 5 class. I'm sure that many members of the House go and do the same. Whenever I get the opportunity to go and speak to a class, inevitably I start talking to them about: well, what exactly is it that we do here? They, of course, want to know. They know the whole thing about how a bill becomes a law, especially the grade 6 students because they're the ones that are studying that at the moment. Some of them have already visited the Legislature, so they've gone through the tour. They've gone through all of the educational opportunities that exist here at the Legislature for exactly that purpose.

But then, when I get into a little bit more of the details, I start talking about how our responsibility in making the law a lot of times has to do with safety and making sure that they are protected as citizens of this great province. We go through the whole process. I give them the example of – and I know this is a municipal issue, but this is the example that I like to give them because it's one that they can relate to. It's very easy to relate to. It's, "I want you to imagine what it would be like if there were just no safety regulations from the moment that you left your house, you walk down your sidewalk, and you make it to the public sidewalk." We talk about how it's the responsibility of individuals to make sure that the sidewalk is clean during the wintertime so that there's no snow or ice buildup and things like that. Why do we have that particular bylaw at the municipal level? Well, for people's safety.

Then I say to them: "Okay. Imagine now that you have to walk across the road. You have to walk across the road, and where do you cross?" They say, "Well, you've got to cross at a crosswalk, and hopefully there's a light at that crosswalk." Of course, I tell them... [interjection] Yeah, you don't want to be jaywalking,

right? You don't want to be doing that. But they inevitably say, "You cross at the crosswalk for safety."

Long story short...

9:10

**Ms Hoffman:** Not that long.

**Member Loyola:** You want longer? You want me to keep going?

**Mr. Nielsen:** Crosswalks are red tape.

**Member Loyola:** Well, see, this is exactly the thing. Are crosswalks red tape? They're designed for safety.

You know, inevitably, whenever I have that conversation with students, we initially go through those municipal-level regulations, bylaws and things like that, so that they can get a better understanding.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Inevitably, I always tell them: "Okay. Now, I want you to imagine that you go to a restaurant. Imagine if there were no rules at the restaurant and that the people could just serve anything any which way that they wanted to because, of course, that would just be better for their business. It would be easier if there were no government regulations on food preparation, right?" But then I tell them: "Imagine what happens if you get sick. You go to a restaurant with your family. Let's say that it's your mother's birthday. You go there and you're having a wonderful time. You're celebrating a loved one's birthday. But some government regulation in food preparation was cut, avoided, not followed, and inevitably someone gets sick, and even, a worst-case scenario, someone could actually die."

So when the government gets up to talk about red tape reduction, you could only imagine that we're going to have concerns. We're going to have concerns. Just as a way of kind of highlighting this, I want to go over some past failures.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

There's one especially dedicated to food inspection. There was actually \$56 million cut from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which resulted in 100 fewer inspectors, and this reverse staffing measure was put in place in response to the deadly listeriosis outbreak in 2008, which actually killed 22 Canadians. Twenty-two Canadians died as a result of cutting \$56 million from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Now, Minister, I don't know what it is that you're planning on cutting when it comes to red tape, but when I look at things like this, that have happened right here in Canada, not somewhere else but right here in Canada, as a way of cutting red tape in other jurisdictions, at the federal level, you have to imagine that I'm going to be concerned. For us it's really important that we get a better understanding of exactly what it is that you are trying to get at.

For that reason, I'm really happy to support this amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, and I hope that we can only get some support from the other side as well. Hopefully, we'll hear from other members in the House on why they would like to support this amendment.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any comments or questions with respect to the amendment? The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just really quickly, I appreciate the hon. member for bringing forward the amendment. You know, it's worded well, but it's also in the preamble, so it's redundant. I think that putting this into the body of the bill serves no purpose in that it's already in the preamble.

I'll just read to you what it says, again, in the preamble.

Whereas the Government of Alberta recognizes that a consistent, transparent and efficient system of regulatory and administrative requirements is necessary to protect the public interest, including health, safety, the environment and fiscal accountability.

It's the exact same information that we have in this amendment, so I'm not sure if that is the definition of red tape because of the redundancies of it. So I would be hoping that the members would vote this down.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other comments or questions with respect to the amendment?

Shall I call the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report the bill.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Getson:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration and reports certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 4. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 4 Red Tape Reduction Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise to move third reading of Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act.

Our government's mandate includes making life easier for Albertans. This means creating more jobs. This means bringing back investment. This means speeding up approval times. This means getting Albertans back to work. All of this can be accomplished by getting rid of the burdensome red tape that blankets government today. As we've discussed in the House, Bill 4 will enable government to develop strategies to reduce red tape in Alberta and keep Albertans updated on what we are doing, all while protecting the environment, upholding fiscal accountability, and ensuring the health and safety of Albertans.

The cost of doing business, the lack of efficiency, the barriers to investment, and difficulty navigating the system have all encumbered our job creators. This all needs to change, and Bill 4 will accomplish this. Ultimately, we're going to take Alberta from being the most overregulated to the freest and fastest moving economy in Canada. Bill 4 allows government to create an inventory of the regulations that are currently in place, evaluate them, and determine if they have had their intended effect. We all know the state of the deep red tape hole that we're currently in, yet the former NDP government refused to do anything about it. This government is taking action. We promised Albertans. We're going to deliver.

**9:20**

This bill would also direct government to adopt a regulatory approach that focuses on outcomes instead of processes. An outcome-based approach will set a standard of regulatory excellence in Alberta, where all regulations are necessary, effective, efficient, and proportional to the outcomes they are trying to achieve. Essentially, Bill 4 enables us to get rid of ineffective and burdensome regulations and prevent the introduction of unnecessary regulations and requirements in the future. In line with this, the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, myself, falling under the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance, has a lean and efficient team.

As mentioned, red tape is putting a stranglehold on doing business in Alberta. The NDP failed job creators for four years. We will not. We must act quickly to rectify this, and Bill 4 allows government to combine red tape reduction efforts into omnibus initiatives. This made-in-Alberta approach will allow us to address red tape more quickly and efficiently than anywhere in Canada.

While we anticipate that most if not all of our red tape reduction efforts will be addressed through policy, this legislation will also allow government to create regulations to administer the Red Tape Reduction Act if necessary. Centralizing red tape reduction under the leadership of one associate minister and one division within Treasury Board and Finance will promote efficiency, guarantee crossgovernment co-ordination, and promote accountability as we slash red tape for all Albertans.

We will also consult with Albertans by standing up a series of industry panels across major economic, nonprofit, and public-sector groups. These panels will represent business and industry experts from key sectors, including oil and gas, tourism and hospitality, agriculture and agri-food, bioindustrial, forestry, manufacturing, construction, and small business.

We've already heard from some of these industries, and they're excited about the potential that this bill will provide. They want a streamlined and efficient regulatory process, they want to help attract new business and investment, and they want Alberta to be open for business and be competitive once again. In fact, when we introduced this legislation, Janet Riopel, the president and CEO of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, said that cutting red tape gives Alberta employers more time to create jobs and grow the



economy instead of being burdened by cumbersome and costly regulations.

We also want to hear from everyday Albertans. We will be launching a website where everyone can share their experiences with red tape and their ideas for making government more efficient. Taken together, these industry panels and online feedback will provide a holistic approach to identifying, eliminating, and improving regulations in Alberta.

Accountability of reducing red tape doesn't stop at consultations. Reporting our activities and progress is a key aspect of this legislation. We will do this in a transparent way, with a copy of the red tape report tabled in the Legislature and made available to the public beginning in 2020, and we'll continue to report back to Albertans through the website.

I'd like to thank all members for the debate and feedback on Bill 4. First, we must clarify the need for the bill. We need the legislative authority to begin this work, to begin identifying what the more egregious examples of red tape are within government before we start getting rid of it. I think that everyone in this House understands what we mean by red tape, and the desire to have a formal definition of it is a stalling tactic. Anyone who has waited for hours on hold, had to fill out the exact same form over and over and over again, or felt unnecessary stalls from inefficient government knows what red tape is.

Second, we're not taking the process of cutting regulations lightly. We understand that regulations exist for a number of reasons and that many of them do serve important purposes, including environmental protections and promoting the health and safety of all Albertans. Our goal is to not get rid of these regulations wholesale but to ensure that they are implemented in a way that achieves their intended goal without creating onerous red tape.

Lastly, we have stated our timeline on this process clearly. We aim to cut red tape in Alberta by at least one-third by the end of our mandate. We are developing a schedule for reporting our efforts publicly, but have initially committed to a report in 2020.

Bill 4 is an acknowledgement that Alberta's economy needs help right now, that our businesses need help right now, and that families need help right now. This legislation is the help that is so desperately needed by Albertans. By working to reduce red tape by one-third over four years and preventing new red tape from being implemented, we'll make it easier to do business in Alberta, easier to invest, and easier to navigate government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is not available.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been an interesting debate on Bill 4, the Red Tape Reduction Act. On first blush, of course, we're creating somewhat of a new ministry for red tape reduction, which in itself is red tape. We've heard a lot of really great buzzwords: moving our economy along, being the freest, and reducing costly burdens on our job creators. We've seen many examples where, supposedly, costly burdens ended up coming back to bite hard-working Canadians, hard-working Albertans where it shouldn't have.

I have to say that this bill is vague. It contains no targets, no timelines, no procedures to ensure transparency and accountability, something, again, that I noted the associate minister, when he was in opposition, very regularly chastised our government for apparently not doing. Yet when given a chance to do things differently, it was a little bit like I mentioned before, that the second verse sounds much the same as the first verse.

I had talked in earlier debate about how there seems to be a little bit of tunnel vision that's starting to occur here. You know, we are saying: well, we need to do it right now; it has to happen right now. Sometimes you get into that frame of mind – and I made a little bit of a reference back to my younger days playing basketball – of forcing that play. Again, sometimes it's really exciting to hear the crowd cheer when you do make that impossible pass, but more times than not, you end up throwing the ball away, and that just puts you further and further behind.

I'm concerned about the fact that this doesn't define red tape. It's been said: well, we want to keep ourselves open and flexible. I think that creates doubt in Albertans' minds because they have no idea what regulations will be on the chopping block, how it could affect consumer protections, health, labour, social services, things like that, again, all in the name of trying to do something right here right now because it's got to happen very, very quickly. I think we're going to find ourselves coming back here later and having to amend things that we weren't expecting to happen.

There's a commitment, of course, to report to Albertans eventually here, beginning in 2020, which, unfortunately, again, is vague – is that the beginning of 2020, is that the middle of 2020, or is that the end of 2020? – as long as it begins in 2020 sometime. By that time the damage could be done. You know, looking back in hindsight, we see many examples of that. I wish there had been disclosure around some of the things that we've mentioned in this House that put public safety at risk. I'm sure at some point in time somebody said to those people: well, we're going to save the job creators \$12 million. Unfortunately, we made thousands sick because we reduced regulations probably haphazardly. I think Albertans deserved to know what was going to happen before it actually happened. To claim that that's just a burden, I think, is a little bit overinflated.

I'm also concerned around the one in, one out. It's been mentioned, and I think the wording was that every new regulatory burden proposed must be matched with a cut of an equivalent burden somewhere else. How is that determined? How do we weigh that this regulation that we're going to get rid of weighs the same as this one that we're bringing in? I've certainly seen that the minister of labour has said: well, you know, it's all right if we create just a little bit of red tape. But in that contradictory form to the associate minister's mandate around red tape, is there going to be a rush to get something out? It sounded like they were going to communicate, but then it sounded like they weren't going to communicate.

9:30

I hope that members across the way give a little bit of second thought to this. I think we could have done a little bit better. Certainly, I think there's agreement where we can find those efficiencies, something that is actually outdated. I mean, if we've got regulations that are, you know, back from before we even had the Internet, then certainly maybe we need to look at that. I've seen some crazy municipal regulations in other jurisdictions, for instance, where it said that if you were caught practising magic, you would be burned at the stake. That's probably something that we could get rid of. When we start looking at potentially deregulating things all in the name of trying to save a few dollars, it usually comes back to us as a lot more expensive to deal with. Hopefully, members will give this a second thought.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to support this going forward at this time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is still not available.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, would the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction close debate?

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been a lively debate this evening, and I've appreciated the questions that were asked by the opposition members. I would like to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a third time]

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate June 10: Mr. Ellis]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to share some stories about me. I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are sitting on the traditional ground of the First Nations and Métis people referred to as Treaty 6 territory. I would like to also acknowledge all the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit footsteps which have marked this land for generations.

I'm very proud and humble to be the first MLA to represent the wonderful constituents of the new electoral district of Calgary-Beddington. Located in the north area of Calgary, the constituency is made up of the friendly communities of Beddington Heights, Country Hills, Hidden Valley, Huntington Hills, MacEwan, and Sandstone Valley. In addition to being Calgary-Beddington's MLA, I also have the privilege and honour to serve as the provincial Minister of Seniors and Housing. Both roles and titles I will not take lightly. I am committed to working hard every single day for the trust of my constituents and which the Premier has placed in me.

Our government is bringing a few priorities, one of which is crucial to my Seniors and Housing responsibilities. We will make life better for all Albertans by ensuring the quality and effectiveness of our public service and by supporting the most vulnerable in our society. With our senior population of more than 600,000, growing to 1 million by 2035, the challenges of an aging population cannot be overlooked. My role as the Minister of Seniors and Housing, representing all Albertans, will be at the forefront of my mind every day. I will work with my dedicated and trusted ministry staff to ensure that all seniors, who have spent their lives building this great province and the many generations to come, are not forgotten and have accessibility to the resources and care they need and deserve.

I will help seniors' live in the communities they choose to live in, help seniors increase their independence, and ensure that health and life expenses are met. As a part of my mandate, I will work closely with various housing providers, both in the nonprofit and private sectors, to ensure that there is flexible, affordable, and quality housing for all Albertans with low incomes.

As a representative of our government I'm committed to begin as a faithful steward of our province. I will work tirelessly to make Alberta the best place in North America to live, work, start a business, and retire.

As a teenager I emigrated with my family from Hong Kong. We appreciate how the community welcomed us with open arms in supporting my family as we began our new life. As my family prospered and grew, so too did Alberta's economy. Over the many years ahead this prosperity confirmed to my family that we made the right decision to relocate to Alberta. This hope of growth that I had when I moved is something that I would like for many future generations of Albertans.

But this goes beyond our future generations. I want to ensure the possibilities of growth back to the residents of Alberta. I believe our government has the power to rise as they relentlessly focus on policies that are designed to create jobs, growth, and economic diversification. I want to be part of an economy that is strong, where there are jobs for Albertans who can feel proud and raise a family in the same place that gave my family hope, in a place we proudly call home. With hope comes hard work, difficult choices, and sacrifice for the long-term well-being of family and community. I ask all Albertans to work together for common goals to bring in a brighter future.

I'm thankful for the community members that helped integrate myself and my family when we were new to the community. To reciprocate what we received, I have always enjoyed volunteering in the community and served on various boards to assist those who need it the most. As I pursued a long-term career in banking, with exposure to personal, commercial, and international banking, as a Canada Mortgage and Housing, CMHC, employee in mortgage insurance, affordable housing, and international trade and also as the vice-president of a medium-sized business, I know how hard people work every single day to support their families and ensure there's food on the kitchen table and to save their hard-earned money to buy a house for the family that they can call a home of their own.

I would like to share with you a story about how work can truly pay off. I was in a Tim Hortons ordering a coffee one afternoon. A young man behind the counter recognized me from a financial seminar I had given years ago. His English at that time was poor; still learning, he found it very difficult to find a job and integrate into the community. As we were chatting, he let me know that the seminar encouraged him to keep learning and to not give up. Soon after the seminar he obtained an entry-level job at Tim Hortons, and shortly after that he was training to become a management trainee. This can-do attitude we must bring back to our province, and let our great nation and beyond our borders know that we are back in business.

While we grow, we cannot forget those who are vulnerable: our seniors, the disabled, and those facing mental health issues or other challenges in their lives. All Albertans deserve the support they need in their healthy lives.

**9:40**

After volunteering in the community for many years and serving on various nonprofit and for-profit boards, I felt that the time was right to become involved in politics as a way of being able to improve our lives and to ensure that the many opportunities my family and I received are paid forward. We are here in the Alberta Legislature because we want to do our part to make positive changes for all Albertans. With the support of taxpayers, the residents of Alberta, and my government colleagues I'm confident that we will build a strong, vibrant economy for all Albertans for many generations to come. I'm very proud to be an Albertan, the first Chinese woman to sit as a minister with the Alberta government, and honoured to represent the constituency of Calgary-Beddington.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a): any comments or questions?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. [Remarks in Cree] [Translation] Welcome. How are you? [As submitted]

It is with great respect and awe that I rise today to reply to the Speech from the Throne and offer my maiden speech as a first-time elected Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the constituency of Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin. I want to first acknowledge the lands we're on as Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of the First Nations and the Métis people. They've been marked for centuries by the footprints of the First Peoples that call this area home.

I extend my congratulations to all the members of the Assembly on their elections. It is truly a team effort to get here, requiring the backing and support of our family and friends. No matter what political affiliations we represent, I think it's safe to say that we all have two common goals: one being to represent the best interests of our constituency and, two, to move this great province forward. Finally, I'd like to thank my constituents for allowing me the privilege to represent them in this esteemed House. I am truly humbled and blessed by their act of faith. It is a heavy responsibility and one that I take very seriously.

My constituency is Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin: maskwa, meaning "bear," and cîs, meaning "hills." Wetaskiwin is Spatinow. That means "the hills where peace was made."

Approximately half the population of my electoral division is indigenous. I grew up in the middle of the four bands. We called it Ma-Me-O Sâkâhikan, otherwise known as Pigeon Lake. Racism, sadly, was still an issue. When I went to school – I can remember my first day. I came home from school, my shirt was torn, I had a bloody nose, and my mom said, "My goodness, what happened to you?" I said, "Well, they were beating up on my friend Larry." My mother said, "Why?" I said, "Because they said he was an Indian." She said, "Well, he is. Why did you get beat up?" "Well, they said I wasn't an Indian." She said, "You're not." It broke my heart.

Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin used to be a big resource-producing area, but the past few years have seen a steady drop in resource, manufacturing, and oil and gas activity. This hurts the region as there are several manufacturers in my riding supplying electrical components, agricultural equipment, and oil field components. In fact, just last week I was at the Leduc-Wetaskiwin chamber of commerce, and it was there that I learned that the county of Wetaskiwin lost \$1.6 million in tax revenue in the past three years. This has meant that they've had to dip into reserves to cover the shortfall. But my residents are hardy people, willing to dig in, tighten their belts, and get to work when times are tough.

Recently the riding has begun to revert to its agricultural roots, helped by some of the best topsoil seen in western Canada. We also have a large tourism base, which is really beginning to pick up, fuelled by the many lakes in my riding as well some of the best golf courses in the province, all in close proximity to the city of Edmonton. I would be remiss if I did not mention the Reynolds-Alberta Museum, a crown jewel to be found in Wetaskiwin, and I'm happy to report that the museum will be getting an expansion to the Aviation Hall of Fame this year.

Also, some good news on the economic front at home: a new grain-handling facility is being constructed along the tracks just south of Wetaskiwin. It's the G3 facility, and it'll be a state-of-the-art grain-handling facility which will feature a 42,600-tonne storage facility, with a 17,000-tonne main house and three 8,300-tonne steel bins, surrounded by a 134 car loop track on a property south of Wetaskiwin. This construction has meant new jobs and new money flowing into the riding and Alberta's economy. The unique JEDI

partnership, the Joint Economic Development Initiative, between the county of Wetaskiwin and the town of Millet, was key to bringing this project to fruition.

I will now move to discuss how the four bands of Maskwacis are dealing with the tumultuous Alberta economy. We have the Montana, Louis Bull, Ermineskin, and Samson. They've been hit hard as well. Local leadership tells me that the loss of oil and gas activity has been a struggle. As we all know, the loss of economic prosperity often means an effect on socioeconomic well-being, and these communities are dealing with that fallout. The good news is that local leadership has been acquiring and opening new businesses and farmland to offset the resource development loss.

I'm excited to invite them to participate in the indigenous opportunities corporation once it is established. We had discussions about that today during our summit with the Alberta chiefs, a meeting not held in almost four and a half years.

I'm also proud to report that the four bands have amalgamated their schools into one district. They are doing an amazing job graduating students from their schools and their own college. They have their own health system, and I was there just two weeks ago and got a tour of that facility, which offers all under one roof dental, optical, community pharmacy, and a diabetics' clinic, with plans one day of opening up their own hospital. Eventually they would also like to add dialysis, IV therapy, and seniors' care as well.

The city of Wetaskiwin also has a great hospital and seniors' care facilities. I was honoured to be the chair of the hospital board and later chair of the region. One of the biggest accomplishments I was most proud of was to get a dialysis unit for the area's residents – and my own father is now also using that dialysis unit – so residents don't have to drive to Edmonton or farther to receive saving care. As we all know, it's incredibly exhausting for family members to drive long distances for this type of care, so it's critical that we get this type of support and medical service in the rural areas and indigenous communities.

There are so many little hamlets and towns in my riding I cannot mention due to time, but a quick shout-out to some like Millet, Pigeon Lake, Hay Lakes, Ferintosh, Falun, Rolly View, and Mulhurst.

A big concern in my constituency is addictions and mental health. I'm so proud our government has appointed an Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. I will be meeting with the minister to discuss this important issue and look for solutions. Sadly, residents, especially the younger people – taking their own lives is a big concern in Maskwacis. They have made tremendous strides to slow down these terrible incidents, but as we can all attest, even one life gone too early is one too many.

I'd like to now discuss a little bit about myself so that my colleagues and Albertans have a better understanding of who I am and what drove me to accept running in this election. Was it the 15-hour days of endless meetings or having to memorize thick binders of public policy? It was the thought I could give back to my friends and family, my fellow citizens of Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin, no matter how small my contribution might be.

My family has a long history of public service. I'll start with my grandpa serving in World War I. You probably have seen the movie *Passchendaele*. A lot of that's based on my family's history. If you look up "love in a dangerous time" in the *Edmonton Journal*, you'll see a picture of my grandma and grandpa in there. My grandpa was one of 17 survivors of that battle of a thousand men. That's how many died from the Princess Pats from Edmonton here. He was pronounced dead on the battlefield, but somehow he was only mostly dead and came back. He was a medic so he dressed his own wounds and made it back to the clinic and six weeks later awoke in England to a little Welsh lady, who

nursed him back to health. He married her, and that became my grandma and grandpa.

My dad was in the militia in the Korean War, and my dad's cousin is the late Lieutenant Governor Grant MacEwan. My dad was also on village council, and my oldest daughter was a councillor for the city of Wetaskiwin and is now a municipal administrator. Another daughter was a page here in this very Chamber. My father had a big influence on me, amazing me with his many talents. I can always remember him helping out in the community for anyone and anywhere he could. I remember when natural gas was being installed in the area. My dad became an expert in converting furnaces, and as a result, was gone every night helping where it was needed. One time I said that I was going along, and my dad thought, "Wow, my son is taking up the family trade," until he realized the house we were going to had five girls, one of which became my wife.

My mother's family came from Odessa, Russia, which is now the Ukraine. My mom was raised in a log cabin with a dirt floor but thought she was the richest person in the world as there was always so much love in the family, a lesson passed down to me. My mom always told me that you'll be remembered for what you give back to the community, not what you take out.

My wife's mother was widowed and had 10 kids all at home, and she raised them all by herself, including a pair of two-year twins, with no help on the farm, which my wife and I ended up buying. We just recently turned over that 120-year-old family farm to our son, who's now running it.

9:50

I'm blessed to have such an amazing partner as my wife. I call her my trophy wife after 41 years. She's patient and loving and has always supported me in my business ventures. In my political life I would not be where I am without her.

We have four amazing grown children, three girls and one boy, and seven grandchildren, and I love them all dearly. My youngest daughter and her wife and my grandson know that I love them so much, and I am incredibly proud of all of their accomplishments. I also have two Métis grandchildren. I look forward to talking to them as they grow up and telling them that their omosômimâw was Minister of Indigenous Relations.

I've always had various business ventures on the go to support my farming life. I've been lucky enough to be involved in a lot of development in my riding. I was also proud to open and support businesses in the Maskwacis area when a lot of people weren't willing to do so.

I want to conclude by thanking the Premier for his appointment. What an honour and humbling experience it has been in my short time so far. I'll always remember fondly being sworn in as Minister of Indigenous Relations.

I also want to take time to thank all the members of the House for your kindness and your support.

I also need to thank the many people who got me here. Some have closed up shop, spent weeks with doors closed, and volunteered on my team seven days a week.

I thank my family and my wife, who have seen my time with them diminish greatly. When we take this job, we also take our families with us. We owe them a debt we can never repay. I stand before you tonight and will continue to work hard, stay humble, and keep our commitments to Alberta.

[Remarks in Cree] [Translation] Thank you, your friend and partner. [As submitted]

And with that, Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to rise and move second reading of Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019.

Madam Speaker, with this important piece of legislation we are taking a significant step forward for education in Alberta. The Education Act with these proposed amendments will provide a better foundation for unlocking the potential of our students today and in the future.

Let me first explain how we got to this point. Work began in the mid-2000s to replace an outdated School Act, which had been in place since 1988. The world was changing and so, too, were the expectations of parents, school officials, and students for their education system. Years of widespread consultation went into the Education Act, which this House passed in 2012. It reflected the priority of Albertans, that the student is at the centre of all decisions we make around education and learning. The Education Act never came into force, though, as work continued on its regulations.

After the 2015 election the newly elected government decided to take a different approach. They ignored the Education Act, and the act languished as they decided to bolt their changes to the 1988 School Act. That brings us to where we are today, and that's why our government promised to go back to the Education Act. It was the result of so much work and input and reflected what Albertans had said that they wanted. Once in place the Education Act will modernize our education system and bring to life the vision shared by thousands of Albertans.

Madam Speaker, the Education Act recognizes parents as a child's first and most important teacher. It strengthens local decision-making and puts school boards in the best position to determine the needs of their students and the learning opportunities necessary to meet these needs. It highlights the importance of choice and confirms our ongoing support for all types of education choices, including public, separate, francophone, charter, private, and home-schooling. It confirms that the school system should support every child of every background and every ability.

This act focuses on putting our kids first and making schools safe, welcoming places, where diversity is celebrated and bullying is not tolerated. As the members can see, the Education Act is based on values our government believes are fundamental to supporting our students.

Looking specifically at Bill 8, members can also see that our government is being pragmatic. We know that the next school year is only a couple of months away, and we know that certain aspects of the Education Act would add additional costs to the system. So to be mindful of the bottom line and to provide certainty for families and educators, we are proposing some amendments to the Education Act.

Madam Speaker, let me first start with those amendments related to access. We are proposing to keep the current rules for age of access, age of compulsory attendance, and residency rules. Some may be disappointed that we are making these changes to the original Education Act, and we recognize that one aspect of the act was about increasing access to education. However, the act was drafted under different circumstances. In 2012 the province was booming and more students were dropping out of high school early to go to work. We are not seeing this today. Maintaining the status

quo will save taxpayers money while providing stability to school authorities. We are also being responsive to school board concerns. Some school authorities are currently facing space and capacity issues, and if we did not amend the act, they would struggle to find room for even more students.

School jurisdictions also expressed concerns over additional costs associated with these changes. We also proposed to keep the current timeline of 2020 for when changes to the common kindergarten age of entry come into effect. The Education Act would have this happen right away, which would mean the change in age would happen for the 2019-2020 school year. We estimate that 4,500 children would be caught in this change. Therefore, we know schools and parents have already made their plans for the next year, so we want to make sure that they have the stability within the system that they require. It simply makes sense to keep the timeline as is.

We also want to provide certainty and consistency for parents and school boards when it comes to student transportation, so we're proposing to maintain the current eligibility rules for busing. The coming school year's transportation schedules have already been determined and communicated to parents, so we know parents will support this amendment. They will understandably prefer stability for this upcoming school year to a disruption in the plans they have already made. This is particularly important for rural families. It is also important to maintain certainty in this area to ensure that families across the province have equal access to transportation and to ensure boards can contain their costs of providing transportation.

Also, to help contain costs this time for parents, it is to limit the school fees they pay. It is important that parents do not pay additional school fees for instructional supplies and materials required in a classroom such as textbooks and paper. Amendments will prohibit school boards from charging fees on these types of materials. School boards will be free to charge fees for other items such as for optional courses and extracurricular activities, but they would be accountable to parents for whichever fees they may choose to set.

Also related to minimizing cost drivers is superintendent compensation. I think all members of this House can agree that superintendent compensation should remain in line with executive pay in other Alberta agencies, boards, commissions, and postsecondary institutions. Therefore, we propose to amend the Education Act so the current superintendent compensation rules are carried over into the legislation.

We are also proposing amendments so that we can implement leadership certification and teaching-quality standards as currently planned. As many people know, school board leadership certification has broad support from all stakeholders, and a significant amount of work has gone into preparing for it to be in place for September 1.

Madam Speaker, we are also introducing additional amendments that relate to system governance or are administrative in nature. This is primarily to align the Education Act with other pieces of legislation or current practices. This includes updating language around establishing separate school districts and aligning dates for bylaws related to ward boundaries or trustee representation within the Local Authorities Election Act.

Taken altogether, these proposed amendments will allow for the smooth transition between existing legislation and the Education Act, which, if passed, will come into force on September 1, 2019, as promised.

10:00

In conclusion, from stakeholders to students, from policy-makers to parents Albertans have told us that they want an education system focused on student success. I'm confident that all members of this

House would also agree with this statement. For this to happen, we need a modern piece of legislation that creates a strong foundation for our education system today and into the future.

We do not need to look further than the Education Act to find this. It is a foundation built on years of input from students, parents, teachers, principals, school support staff, trustees, employers, and many, many other Albertans. It goes beyond learning and speaks to the system as a whole, including teaching, leadership, collaborative and community engagement, all within a more flexible system that provides for local autonomy and is accountable to parents and taxpayers. The original Education Act together with the proposed amendments will deliver a provincial framework focused on educational excellence in Alberta, one that Albertans expect and deserve.

Madam Speaker, I'm asking all members of this House for their support of Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. Thank you.

I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech (continued)

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate June 10: Mr. Wilson]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie and Deputy Chair of Committees.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. At the risk of sounding a little self-serving given my election as the Deputy Chair of Committees, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker of the House.

Now, having given this opportunity to speak some thought, I think it is best for me to start right at home, with my family. I would like to start by thanking my wife. She gave me the go-ahead to start door-knocking more than a year ago in order to win the nomination for the United Conservative Party. I don't think either of us at the time knew what we were getting ourselves into. So thank you, Christine. Your sacrifices mirror my own. To my son, Eric: you don't understand all of daddy's words yet. For those of you who don't know, he's only two years old. I hope that one day you will understand that everything I do – the late nights, all the travel away from home, the time that I spend away from you – I do for you to ensure that you have the opportunities in the future that I had when I was growing up in Alberta.

To my mother and father, Jane and Don, or Dr. and Dr. Milliken: your love and support throughout the years did not go unnoticed. In a weird way I actually owe my life to politics. It was actually an unsuccessful attempt at an election in 1979, one that didn't quite work out, that then allowed my parents to decide to have another child, and that child was actually me. To my brothers and my sister: I am still the kid who looks up to all of you. To the volunteers who helped me win and are the reason why I am here: I am forever in your debt.

By way of some background on me, I took economics and business at the University of Alberta, and then ultimately I became a lawyer. After several years of practising, I ended up starting my own business, so with all due respect to Parliamentary Counsel and the many lawyers in this House, I do often refer to myself as a reformed lawyer.

On the business front I've told many people throughout my door-knocking that it's great to say that I managed to build up this business to do business across Canada, but really it's actually a darker story in the sense that in 2015 and 2016 the economy of Alberta was turned in a way that I didn't agree with. Ultimately, it was out of necessity that I had to start looking for clients in other provinces and other countries in order to diversify my company away from Alberta. It meant long days of work, long business trips, time away from my family given the economic mismanagement of our province over the last four years. As such, I am honoured to be part of the United Conservative Party and the United Conservative government, one that is actively supporting job creators, entrepreneurs, and risk takers. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy.

I will be the first to admit that I was not asked by anyone to run for this office. A year and a half ago I was working hard, minding my own business, both figuratively and literally. I guess there's a pun in there. I was working, obviously, to help provide for my family. I was also fed up with how the province was being run. We need a government that supports the economy and responsible growth of our energy sector, which in turn helps support prosperity not only in Alberta but across all of Canada. Long story short, a year and a half ago I disagreed with the direction of Alberta, so I decided to change it.

I ran in Calgary-Currie because I live in Calgary-Currie. I'm raising a family in Calgary-Currie. I even started my company in a small extra bedroom that we had in a home in Calgary-Currie. Years ago, before I decided to run, I actually found fulfillment through volunteering and fundraising within my community. Once my company was sort of up and running, I had a little bit more extra time on my hands, and I filled that time within the community. Remember: getting to this point was not an easy task. It took many weeks of 100-hour-plus workweeks, trying to build my company out of nothing, with absolutely no guarantee of a paycheck. I can't say enough about the risks taken by small-business owners, and they need our support.

At the time, though, I was volunteering for my community association and providing a little extra hand here and there, labour wherever I could, moving guitars and helping store donated keyboards, things of that nature, flipping burgers at different events. I even helped fund raise for a 10-seater bus to help drive local new immigrant children to various sporting programs and after school programs. If I can say one thing with the platform that I have here, it's that if you have an extra hour, even just one hour, if you decide to dedicate that time to a local charity in your area, the marginal benefit of that one hour can be immeasurable. Take care of your community, and your community will take care of you.

Calgary-Currie is an amazing riding, Madam Speaker. To borrow some words from Mr. Speaker, who often talks about his riding being fantastic, I would arguably say that my riding of Calgary-Currie could be considered the best riding. I've heard many stories from the MLAs here. Well, some people have said that their riding is as big as Belgium. Well, my riding is a little different. On a good day if I don't hit a red light, I can probably drive across it in less than 10 minutes. Twenty-four per cent of Calgary-Currie's population are visible minorities, and that includes my wife and my son. It's a young riding, with about 40 per cent of the population being between 25 and 44. At 39, I'm in that category. It's an urban

riding with bike lanes, senior living centres, great restaurants, and even a golf course. But it has problems, too.

Along with some of the highest rated schools, it actually has some of the lowest rated schools. Along with some of Alberta's most expensive homes, it also has several community housing projects. We have certain pockets of community members that have been in the area for generations, and we have pockets of new Canadians, new immigrants and refugees from various war-torn countries. The challenges facing Calgary-Currie are real. All you need to do is go to the Westbrook Mall C-Train station early in the morning, and you will see mass homelessness. You will get a glimpse into the opioid crisis. Door-knock the community's housing projects, and you will find many people struggling to feed and clothe their children without computers or TVs or phones. Then you can door-knock in some of the more affluent areas, and you will find what you think are people who, on the surface, are enjoying great successes, but if you dig a little deeper, you will find that some of these individuals have been out of work for upwards of three years. They are hanging on for dear life just to keep their homes. And then, if you go around, others are just gone; forced to sell and move recently to other provinces or countries in search of work.

Just as one example, I was door-knocking in Rutland Park, which is a relatively new area within my community. I ran into a lady by the name of Sarah, and she had two young kids about the same age as Eric. Immediately we started talking about kids, and the ice was broken. Then she quickly mentioned that her husband was in Houston. At the time, my wife was actually in Houston attending an energy conference, so I just assumed that the conversation was going to go down that path. I started to talk along the lines of Houston and conventions, and she said: "Whoa. No. That's not it, Nick." In this case her husband had lost his job 10 months before and was not able to find work in Canada and, ultimately, had to move to Houston. Now, the big problem with this, essentially, is that the family was forced to split and live in completely different countries. Once they were financially back on their feet, she had the full expectation that she was then going to move the whole family to Houston. This is just one of the stories of hardship that I heard over the last four years of a government that failed to support our workers and failed to support the economy.

#### 10:10

The saddest part of this is that once these people leave, they almost never come back. We have experienced a province-wide brain drain over the last four years, but it has to stop now. We will support the free market, support our energy industry, bring back jobs to Alberta, and help create the prosperity which, in turn, allows us to care for marginalized portions of our population and protect the individual regardless of faith, lifestyle, or background.

I grew up in Alberta knowing that the opportunities would be there for me regardless of what I did with my life. I could be a drummer – Lord knows I tried – an artist, a plumber, an accountant. In my case I became a lawyer and then an entrepreneur, and I guess that now you could probably call me a politician. This is my chance to help restore those opportunities so my son can have opportunities for success right here in our great province.

Okay. So this is now also the time of the speech that we can all just sit back, stop for a second, take a deep breath, and take all of this in. All of us here today who are elected, on both sides, are now part of Alberta's history, and that statement is almost overwhelming to me. The responsibility and weight on all of us is enormous, and we have some big shoes to fill.

For me, I remember Christmas in Red Deer. I remember family trips to Gull Lake, and I remember hearing stories about my great-grandfather, William R. Howson, who was an MLA here from 1930

to 1936. He was the Opposition leader against Premier Aberhart. He was also the leader of the Alberta Liberal Party, but I don't hold that against him. At the time, though, as a child I could only imagine what it was like to sit in this Chamber. I remember thinking: man, my great-grandpa must have been really old.

But now here I am, and it's my turn. It's our turn. I walk around these marble halls, sit in the Chamber, sometimes even on the Speaker's throne, and I realize that we are all blessed to be here with the opportunity to help restore Alberta as the engine and Canada's economic leader and a leader in the world. No matter your political stripes we are here to support Alberta, support Albertans, support our families, and in many ways support each other. Together we can make Alberta the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

Thank you.

With that, if it pleases Madam Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. What a great day. Lots of progress. Bill 4, the red tape bill, is through the House. As such, I think that we should be very happy with the progress today. I thank all members for all their hard work, and I will move that we adjourn the House till tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:14 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, June 11, 2019

Day 11

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
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Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, June 11, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of power and responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

You may be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 7

#### Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

[Debate adjourned June 10: Mr. Feehan speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has seven minutes remaining should he desire.

Are there others wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Yamahama.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is rising to debate.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you so much Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all members for the opportunity to engage in this important dialogue. I definitely don't plan on using all 15 minutes because I think that the main message I want to leave all members with is that this bill – I love *Seinfeld*. Some of you may have heard me talk about it already once in this House. I'll probably talk about it many more times. I think that this bill actually doesn't do anything. Some people said that *Seinfeld* was a show about nothing. I think it was a show about a lot of things that were entertaining. I think that some of the things in this bill are entertaining but that what is in place already through the work that was done in the review of the MGA has already achieved the likely desired outcomes as proposed in this bill.

With that being said, I think the time in this House is precious. I think the time around the cabinet table is precious. I know that many individual members, in speaking to Bill 4 around a bill to create a press conference, talked about specific things that they wanted to see in terms of reductions to redundancy within the public service. I think that those are the kinds of things that government should be spending their time considering around the cabinet table, not a bill that indeed actually is redundant and creates more redundancy. That's the main message I want to leave people with. I think that going into details about what's good or not good in the bill is actually not useful because the main message I have is: this bill is redundant.

I understand that there is a desire to be able to have an extensive list of legislation and say that there are many things being done. I

think this is a repackaging of what's already been done. Certainly, I welcome the government to talk about all the great things that the past government did, whether it's what our immediate past government or successive past governments have done, but what is in this bill has already been done. So I think that it is not beneficial for us as members of this Assembly to spend our time debating something that is completely redundant. That's my position, having read this in some detail.

The other piece I want to say is that I do believe that consultation with municipalities is absolutely important, and I think that if there had been consultation with municipalities in the lead-up to this bill, the main message that would have been heard is: we need certainty around what our revenues are; we need certainty around what our risk-share component is going to be when it comes to the price of natural resources in this province; we understand that provincial revenues ebb and flow; we understand that it seems reasonable to have some of that shared with the municipalities. But rather than actually developing that formula or making it a priority to act on the things that municipalities said in consultation, it seems like the government has repackaged a bill, rebranded a bill, and reinforced things that we've already enabled municipalities to do.

That being said, I think that this bill doesn't warrant much additional discussion. I imagine that there will be some amendments, and maybe one of them is to consider not reading it another time because these things are already in place. I'll be happy to offer commentary on it when it hits that point in discussion.

Definitely, my main message to all members of the Assembly is that this bill is a bill that is essentially about nothing or a bill to repeat things that have already been done in the past. Therefore, I'm urging members not to pass this new piece of legislation given that, in my understanding and through conversations that our critic for Municipal Affairs has had with municipalities, it sure seems like this is a bill to create more talking points perhaps, to create another press conference perhaps, but not actually a bill that will enable municipalities to do things that they don't already have the ability to do.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will cede my time and urge colleagues not to support this bill but, rather, to work with their cabinet to move forward items that will actually create new opportunities for employment, new opportunities for partnerships with the municipalities all of us work with and represent, and opportunities to actually create new jobs rather than trying to repackage the opportunity for jobs that was already created under an NDP government and give it a new headline. Those are my key messages for my colleagues this morning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has questions or comments for the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Seeing none, are there others wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is rising for debate.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to second reading of Bill 7. As pointed out by my colleague for Edmonton-Glenora, the proposed powers that this grants already exist in the MGA. I do look forward to the minister clarifying for us because I can tell you that as the former Minister of Municipal Affairs myself and my former staff went through this and determined that this was an authority or an ability that municipalities currently have.

Now, having said that, if this government is trying to shine a light on tools that municipalities already have, the questions that we've

heard in engaging with stakeholders are: well, what is the province bringing to the table? Once again, they're saying to municipalities: here, use this ability you have to forgo your property taxes, which, let's be clear, is one of the only tools that municipalities have to pay for much of these service that they deliver.

I was very proud of the work that our government did working with municipalities. We had a revenue-sharing agreement with the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton. Our former Minister of Municipal Affairs was busily negotiating with RMA and AUMA for a similar type of deal where we said to municipalities: we understand that you need sustainable, predictable funding, but if you want that, then you also need to share in some of the risk that the province bears. Much of our revenue comes from royalties and other sources that, again, fluctuate. Those aren't guaranteed revenues for the province of Alberta. We had said to municipalities: we understand the position that you're in, and we're happy to look at some revenue sharing, but that also means, then, that when times are good, yes, there will be more money flowing to municipal coffers, but when times are challenging or in a recession, that means that you're going to get less, similar to the state of the province.

With this, though, like I said, Mr. Speaker, municipalities are looking for funding supports. Right now they're busy scratching their heads now that there isn't a carbon tax, which was funding major projects in some of our larger urban centres like the green line in Calgary and the LRT line here in Edmonton. These municipalities are wondering how they're going to keep these projects moving forward or if they're about to get scrapped or shelved. Again, the province is conveniently saying: no, no, we have no money to give you, but we'll provide you or shine a light on a tool that you currently have.

Now, I can tell you that one of the things that our government prided itself on was encouraging municipalities to be much more collaborative. I don't just mean encouragement through words. There were tools that we introduced, including municipalities having to have an intermunicipal agreement with all that share their boundaries. We also really encouraged municipalities to work much more collaboratively together.

I can tell you that there were a number of municipalities that came with me on international trade missions, and the most successful ones were those that went as a region or as a hub. Alberta has, unless it's changed, I believe it's 342 different municipalities in the province. When all 342 are competing with each other for investment, they are losing the big picture because – guess what? – when you're travelling internationally, how many companies know where a tiny little community is in Alberta? None. How many know where Alberta is? Well, we have to explain where Alberta is and how important it is and the opportunities that exist here, which is why trade missions are so critical. I can tell you that municipalities or regions that have been the most successful in attracting investment are those that collaborate.

#### 10:10

Here's a great example, Mr. Speaker: the Industrial Heartland. The Industrial Heartland is made up of a number of municipalities that work together that have a revenue- and cost-sharing agreement. When they go out to the world, to investors and to companies, to say, "Come invest with us; these are all the amenities and services that we have to offer," they have a very powerful message. I'm proud of the work that our government did with the Industrial Heartland. In fact, they participated on every single one of my missions. We have seen the amount of investment, billions of dollars, coming to the Industrial Heartland, and that's in part because of the collaborative approach that we took working with

them, working with our municipal partners to show a Team Alberta approach, something that I would encourage this government to do.

I know that there's at least one minister that's busy on a trade mission. I will be finding out if there are municipalities that participated, businesses that participated. If you ask me, Mr. Speaker, government plays a critical role in opening the doors for companies for government-to-government agreements, but businesses need to be present in order to take advantage of these.

I was very proud, Mr. Speaker, back in November of 2016 to lead the largest trade mission the province of Alberta has ever led. There were 86 different businesses and business associations that accompanied me and our team to Asia. There were over 150 Alberta participants, and believe me, it left a significant impression. There were hundreds of millions of dollars worth of trade and investment that came from that trade mission alone. So it's very, very important.

My point, back to this bill, Mr. Speaker, is that if we want our municipalities and our regions to compete on the international stage, they need to collaborate. Shining a light on this and focusing municipalities to use this tool doesn't do that. It's a disincentive for them to work collaboratively.

As we already see, Mr. Speaker, municipalities do compete with each other. Now, not all. Again I want to applaud the many regions and municipalities that work together. A great example: the city of Grande Prairie, the county of Grande Prairie, and the MD of Greenview. Those three have created an industrial park with the help of our government. It took a while. But I'm proud of the fact that what we were trying to get to was really a plug-and-play model, that other parts of the province are very interested in. When we talk about expediting regulatory approval, well, this is one of the ways that we did it. We didn't just talk about it. We actually did it, and we're starting to see the fruits of our labour. I know that the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and myself, the former Minister of Environment and Parks, and the former Minister of Energy travelled the province and encouraged regions to look at how they can position themselves as a region.

Now, Mr. Speaker, like I said, part of the concern here is shining a light on the fact that this really is encouraging municipalities to try to undercut each other to get to the bottom. We have seen in some jurisdictions that you have one municipality that has higher property taxes, probably because they offer more services than an adjacent one, which can drop their taxes a little bit lower. You know, that's a factor in where companies are going to set up shop, so they'll go to the far corner of the lower taxed municipality. The workers and much of their products all come from the centre adjacent, but they don't benefit from any of the property taxes. Again, that's where our government tried to encourage this collaboration whereas this is something that is highlighting the opposite of that.

Now, it is interesting. You know, my colleague the Municipal Affairs critic did reach out and speak with Edmonton and Calgary and AUMA and RMA. At least AUMA and Calgary and Edmonton had no idea that this was coming. For a government that tries to say that they're collaborative and they're going to consult and lectured us ad nauseam in the past four years – again, I have some interesting adjectives I'd like to use to describe a government that claims one thing yet, as soon as they come into power, does the complete opposite. I'll leave it to our listeners' imagination, Mr. Speaker. Now I'm losing my train of thought here. The fact is that they weren't adequately consulted on this.

I think what I want to just touch on in my last few minutes is the fact of what this bill really is. It's not a bill enabling anything that municipalities don't already have the authority to do. What this is is an opportunity for this government to hold up a meaningless

piece of paper to say: “Look at us. We’re helping to create jobs.” Once again, this tool isn’t introducing new powers for municipalities, but because there was, I think, one line in their platform during the election, they want to move forward with a bill that does very little, which I think Albertans should recognize. All that this is is a PR campaign of, “Look at us, and look at what we’re doing,” even though we’re not actually affecting much in the way of helping municipalities to have new powers, to be able to develop, and to attract investment.

I mean, what would be better spent on, quite frankly, are continuing programs that we introduced. The capital investment tax credit program has attracted over \$2.2 billion of investment in Alberta. This is investment that has been deployed. What does it cost? I’m sure you’re curious to know, Mr. Speaker. About \$200 million has been conditionally approved to attract \$2.2 billion. Myself, I think that ratio is pretty solid, and that is a tool that we went to the international community with to say: this is another reason why you need to come invest in Alberta.

The other thing is, again, making sure that we’re leveraging the incredible international office network that Alberta has. I’m very proud of the fact that we added two new jurisdictions, both San Francisco and the United Arab Emirates, to that in order to have a presence in these two very, very important markets.

Mr. Speaker, I think that if the government wants to actually take meaningful action and meaningful steps toward helping to attract investment – I agree with that as a goal; I agree with creating jobs and supporting our private sector to create jobs – this, in fact, is not the right tool. In fact, this isn’t really a tool. It already exists, so this is a duplicate tool. This is like having two hammers in your toolbox. One does the trick; you don’t need both.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone wishing to ask a question or to comment under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung was on his feet first. I don’t know if teamwork makes the dream work here or what.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll take the opportunity to speak under 29(2)(a) and ask the minister a couple of queries that I had noted while he was speaking, that had to do primarily with the theme of collaboration. That seems to be a theme that the current government is opposed to. They prefer to find ways to weaken any bodies that might oppose them, whether that be municipalities or school organizations. They seem to be intent on making sure, under the guise of freedom of choice or school freedom or a municipal government’s local autonomy, that they will pit them against each other. It’s a divide-and-conquer theory that this government seems to be incorporating into many of their pieces of legislation in an attempt to weaken any bodies that might form some type of collaborative opposition to them.

Within the context of this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, I think it’s evident in the policy whereby municipalities are given the opportunity – or at least the awareness level is raised of their opportunity – to lower taxes to attract business if indeed that is a factor that is one that does attract business. I wanted the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to perhaps develop this theme a little bit more and to ask him if he believes that the collaborative theme that we used during our time in office is something that he sees as a real significant loss, what progress he made not only in economic terms but also in some jurisdictions, for example, where schools were looked at as an economic anchor of communities. These schools decided in different jurisdictions, for example, to have certain grades operate in one community, and then a neighbouring community would operate other grades so that the

schools in each community would be sustainable as a collaborative effort.

10:20

I think we’re looking at a significant loss, in my view, to this whole theme of collaboration that we tried to establish and really put forward in our term in office. It’s something that really changed the channel on how different jurisdictions operated. I know that historically in this province it has been a very competitive atmosphere, that was generated by successive Conservative governments, and it damaged local communities and didn’t really serve the economic purpose that they were hoping for in terms of creating efficiencies.

I’ve cited before in this House, Mr. Speaker, the example of the community and the county that I originally came from, that of Thorhild, where one community got the hospital – that would be Redwater – and the neighbouring community of Thorhild got the seniors’ lodge. There was a horrendous competition for both of those pieces of public infrastructure. It was a lasting, negative, adversarial relationship that persists to this day in those communities as a result of those fights over a competitive desire to win out over the other for infrastructure or economic incentive dollars.

I was wondering if the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview might want to expand a little bit on that theme of collaboration, which I think is being attacked by this government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has approximately one minute remaining.

**Mr. Bilous:** Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will endeavour to speak quickly. I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-McClung asking that question. Really, what pops to mind is a program that we introduced called the community and regional economic support program, or CARES, which was extremely successful throughout the province, I would add, especially in rural Alberta and smaller communities, where, really, we wanted to give them the tools to be able to pursue economic diversification and attract investment but, again, recognizing that at the local level they have the expertise. They know what strengths they have, their resources, they know their talent pool, so they should be the ones deciding how to diversify their economy, not someone sitting in the Legislature, not a bureaucrat sitting somewhere. It should really come from the local representatives.

We introduced the CARES program, which has given millions of dollars throughout the province and helped them diversify their economy and collaborate in order to compete internationally.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to provide some debate this morning? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise today to speak in second reading of Bill 7, the Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019. I think my colleagues this morning have already given a great overview.

You know, we’re pretty skilled over here on this side of the House at talking for quite some time about things that the government is introducing. I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but we are struggling a little bit to actually fill our time here. The reason is because there’s pretty much nothing here in this bill that’s worth talking about. You know, look, I’ve mentioned it numerous times and I guess I’ll keep bringing it up: I am a lawyer. I’ve seen the Municipal Government Act. Many of you have probably seen it. It is a sizable tome of legislation. It’s quite large. I’m assuming that

the government is counting on the fact that most Albertans have not read the Municipal Government Act. Frankly, why would you? It's quite large.

You know, I think that perhaps they're counting on the fact that nobody has realized that what they're doing here is already allowed for in the legislation, so I think what we're seeing here is a little bit of smoke and mirrors. We know that this government has a very clear agenda about – what was it? – jobs, economy, pipeline, so far, in fact, that they're actually creating fiction. They're going to take responsibility for things that actually already existed and then hope that it looks like they're open for business and that they're doing things to encourage business and investment when, really, those tools were already there.

For those of you who haven't read the Municipal Government Act, allow me to read section 347. Everybody's favourite thing: to hear a lawyer stand up and read a section from legislation. [interjection] Thank you. It's very popular.

Okay. Section 347(1) of the Municipal Government Act states:

If a council considers it equitable to do so, it may, generally or with respect to a particular taxable property or business or a class of taxable property or business, do one or more of the following, with or without conditions:

- (a) cancel or reduce tax arrears;
- (b) cancel or refund all or part of a tax;
- (c) defer the collection of a tax.

And subsection (2) says:

A council may phase in a tax increase or decrease resulting from the preparation of any new assessment.

I think that's exactly what Bill 7 is supposed to be doing. The UCP will claim that municipalities currently can only provide tax breaks in times of hardship. Well, actually, section 347 of the act says nothing about the requirement of a hardship. The UCP will claim over there that there's no ability to defer taxes under section 347. But, actually, as I just read, section 347(1)(c) specifically says that the municipality may "defer the collection of a tax."

Really, what we have here is a piece of legislation that's meant to look like the government is doing something, but that already existed. I think that fits a theme that we're seeing throughout this government's positions in the session in the last few weeks, which is that they're going to create smoke and mirrors to present as if they're doing something to change the economic situation in this province, but really they're either gambling on it or doing it based on poor research, or they're actually doing nothing and are just going to claim responsibility if something happens. That seems to be their plan.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We saw that with Bill 3, with the corporate tax reduction. It's a gamble; we talked about that. My colleagues in this House presented very reasonable amendments to that bill, saying: "Look, you've got some research that says that corporate tax cuts will increase investment in jobs. Fine. There's also a lot of other research on it that suggests otherwise. Since it's a bit of a gamble, since you're gambling with Alberta's future and Alberta's resources, why don't we phase this in slowly and see how it goes?" But, no, the government has a very strong commitment to gambling with all of our resources, to putting all their cards on the table and, as we've seen previous Conservatives do for decades in this province, to putting all their eggs in one basket and "let's cross our fingers and hope."

This is part of a theme. Sometimes reading bills and Order Papers can be quite dry, but I actually feel like there's a really interesting story that's being told here by all the bills that this government has been introducing. It's about repealing, it's about gambling, it's

about not planning for the future, it's about show, and it's about smoke and mirrors. That's what we're seeing here again today.

One of the questions I have. You know, this is a pretty jam-packed legislative session. We're seeing a lot of bills coming forward. I think a lot of us on this side are putting in a lot of work and a lot of time preparing and advocating for our constituents. What I was struggling with trying to understand is that given that this bill actually does not do anything to significantly change the powers of municipalities and given that the power to do what the government is claiming to do already exists in the legislation, why bring it forward now? Why bring it forward now, in a session where we're already incredibly busy? There's a lot of work going on. I thought: why is this a top priority of this government? I think that we've only been here – what? – less than three weeks in the House now really debating.

**Ms Hoffman:** It just feels like yesterday.

**Ms Pancholi:** It does feel like yesterday. It does feel like we just started. Yet it also feels like we've been here for years.

Anyways, I was wondering: why would they put this at the top of their agenda? Why are they bringing this in here? I think we've come up with so many other issues that seem to be very pressing for Albertans right now, yet they're nowhere on the government's radar. They're nowhere on the government's agenda.

Let's talk about, for example, the Conversion Therapy Working Group. When are we going to hear about that? Well, in due course. What did we get back from the minister after getting some pressure from members on this side, from members of the working group? "Well, sorry. We're just not going to really deal with it right now. But, sure, send me your letters. My office is always open," unless, of course, it is to receive bouquets of balloons from children who are attending the Conversion Therapy Working Group protest outside. Then the minister's office is not open. No. No time to deal with that. They'll deal with that in due course.

Climate change: that's just a small little thing – right? – no big deal. Oh, the response from the government: "We'll consult. We'll think about it. We're not going to take any action. In fact, we'll dismantle any action that has been taken to date on it." Okay. So that's not a priority. Climate change is not a priority. We've heard that message loud and clear from this government.

Education funding. Well, after stringing along school boards and stressing out parents and administrators for months, actually, because we were talking about this back in the election, and having to be asked multiple times by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora about what the status of education funding was, finally, after, by the way, school boards had to submit their budgets – certainly, no assurances were provided before that, so it wasn't a priority to provide their stakeholders or school boards who are delivering education in this province. No. It's not a priority to give any answers to them. Nope. They waited until yesterday to finally announce that, oh, yeah, they are going to be funding student enrolment.

Thank you. You know, Albertans thank you for funding the students in this province. But, more importantly, we're going to be asking and watching and paying close attention to see if funding student enrolment means maintaining the same per-student funding. We will be watching that.

The school nutrition programs: no; sorry; that's not a priority for you either.

**10:30**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I would just stress and caution about staying on topic, which is Bill 7.

**Ms Pancholi:** Oh, I am.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I know you were getting there.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to highlight what's a priority and what's not a priority for this government. Education funding: not a priority. Alberta health care: also not a priority. They're doing a review – we know that – and we'll see how long that takes. Providing a budget for Albertans: also not a priority. Of course, they need to make sure that they do their blue-ribbon panel review first, although we already know that they've got their marching orders, so we know what they're going to be coming back with in terms of a response from that. Albertans, wait till the fall to get your budget. And \$25-a-day child care: well, you know, we'll honour the contracts for right now, but all of those families who are counting on affordable child care beyond next year, sorry; you're going to have to wait and see about that.

You know what is a priority? Let's talk about what is a priority. A priority is creating legislative fiction. It's creating something that does not need to exist. But let's do that so that we can give ourselves a pat on the back and say, "Hey, look what we did for you, municipalities," regardless of the fact that no municipality was asking for this. Half of them, more than half of them, it sounds like from my hon. colleague here from Calgary-Buffalo, didn't even know – didn't even know – that this was coming forward. Yes, I anticipate we will hear the same responses as we've always heard, which is that it was in the 100-page platform. There were a lot of gems in that platform that I'm sure a lot of people did not know they were voting for. We'll see how long Albertans can tolerate being told: "We told you so. We said that in our 100-page document. You should have read everything. You agreed, by voting for us, to everything."

Maybe that's what the problem is. The government thinks that elections are consultations. Consultation actually requires feedback. Consultation requires taking the information from the people you're speaking to and incorporating them in. "But they voted," so there you go. You know what? That's okay. They're a new government. They'll figure it out. They'll figure out what the difference is between an election and consultation. Consultation actually means talking to stakeholders, hearing their feedback. You know, I was at a committee meeting this morning where I could already see what the government's priorities are around consultation. They don't exist. Let's just ram things forward.

Clearly, this government does not put forward any of those other issues, issues that everyday Albertans care about: their pay, their child care, their health care, their education, climate change. Those are not priorities. You know what is a priority? Let's just create new legislation that says the same as existing legislation. That to me sounds an awful lot like red tape.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Wow. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did not expect the heat to be brought on Bill 7 of all bills. Thank you for that. The hon. member laid out a lot of really important points. Just as she and the Member for Edmonton-Glenora as well noted, there does appear to be a whole lot of nothing. I appreciated the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview's summary of some of the incredible work that he and his previous government did to really approach issues in a collaborative manner, to really work with municipalities. As he mentioned, I mean, there are countless

examples of being able to work together collaboratively and the rewards they were starting to reap.

Although there appears to be not a lot here, I do worry about the unintended consequences, and I worry about a degradation of a collaborative approach. We know that Mayor Nenshi from the city of Calgary spoke about some of his concerns. He noted, "We want to make sure that this does not lead to a race for the bottom with different jurisdictions who are competing for businesses, to start giving them tax breaks and tax breaks and tax breaks," the concern there being that this really transforms into more of a competitive model at a time when we really do need to be collaborating.

Mayor Iveson said something similar in the sense that, you know: "I think we've got to have a conversation because selective use by one of us to undermine the others could be a risk here," again, sort of pointing to the possibility of an undermining of relationships and an inability to move forward. I mean, this is a time economically where we should be collaborating, and our government should be promoting that model and should be the first ones to sort of lead the way on that.

I wanted to just ask the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud – I mean, both of us were not involved, obviously, in the previous government and some of the incredible work they did to advance relationships with municipalities. But I just wanted her to speak a little bit about, you know, from her legal perspective, some of the concerns she has around not moving forward in a collaborative manner and what this could mean, what some of the further consequences could be to such an approach.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for her question. You know, I think one of the important things when developing legislation is to do that consultation because that's important. You know, it's easy to talk to individual municipalities, perhaps, but when you talk to them collectively, that's when you get some feedback about how collaboration could be undermined by such measures as this. I think when we see a government quite quickly put together a piece of legislation that has not been consulted on, that has not actually been asked for, that is not actually serving to fix a problem or address a need, that's when we run into the very big risk of unintended consequences.

Especially, I actually think that from a very technical legal perspective one of the challenges, when you amend legislation to add provisions that essentially do what already can be done, is that you create confusion in the system. I think that's one of the challenges as well because if we don't have clarity around what the authorities are for municipalities and you've got provisions that are overlapping, have concurrent issues, it creates confusion in message and, again, red tape. It causes more administrative nightmare.

Again, I think that if the government felt confident that this was addressing a need, I'd welcome it. We still have not heard that, that it's been brought forward for municipalities, that this is what they've asked for or that this is what they need. In fact, I understand from the comments from my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, who used to be a city councillor for many years, that really what municipalities are asking for is stability in funding. They're looking for: what's their future? They're not asking for provisions that allow them to do what they could already do.

Again, I go back to that I don't think the true intent of this provision is about providing something that didn't already exist. I don't believe that it was actually about providing incentives. I think it's about smoke and mirrors. I think it's about looking like you're

taking action on a problem that nobody has identified with a solution that already exists. That to me is just grandstanding, to take credit for something or to look like you're taking action when the action was already taken. I think that had the government consulted and spoken with stakeholders – we learn a lot from stakeholders. We shouldn't be looking at consultation with stakeholders as some kind of way that slows down processes. It actually informs good decision-making.

I've been on the side as a nonpolitician, as a lawyer with policy development, and there are a lot of important considerations that need to go into play. Now I'm on this side, and I'm frustrated that stakeholders and engagement in consultation seems to be presented as some kind of barrier. It's easy for us to stand up in this House sometimes and talk about passing laws without talking to the people they're actually going to affect, the organizations that... [Ms Pancholi's speaking time expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 7, Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019. As some of my colleagues have noted, the Minister of Municipal Affairs has announced legislation that he says expands the powers of municipalities to create tax incentives for nonresidential properties for up to 15 years. Here's what's key. He claims that this will empower municipalities to attract investment, create jobs, and realize their full economic potential. Well, I agree with my colleagues. I do think this is a political stunt.

I think that when you look at this, the first thing that becomes very, very clear is that there was no consultation. I know that I met with the mayor of St. Albert late last week, and the simple question was, "Have you heard anything about this; did anyone contact you; have you been involved in any kind of consultation?" and the answer was no. You should know that St. Albert is the 10th largest city in Alberta, so it's a little bit disturbing.

**An Hon. Member:** I didn't know that.

10:40

**Ms Renaud:** You didn't know that? It is.

It is a little bit disturbing that the minister could not be bothered to consult some of the smaller communities, that aren't the large ones of Edmonton and Calgary.

I want to go back to the line about empowering municipalities to attract investment. I think it's important to think about this a little broader than just the dollar signs of investment because, ultimately, those decisions are made by people and, ultimately, it is the people that create the activity, that generate the revenue, that generate the growth in any kind of city, municipality, county. What is it that makes municipalities attractive for that kind of investment? It's not just about tax incentive. It's about quality of life. People are looking at: "Where am I going to lay down roots? Where am I going to invest? What's available to the employees that will come when I make this investment?" It's important to talk about that, and I think my colleague talked about that a little bit earlier. There are more things than tax incentive that sort of inspire companies and organizations to want to invest. Some of those things we invested in, and I think in four short years we started to see the benefits and the growth of that.

Some of the things that are often overlooked, particularly when faced with a recession like we were, are things like affordable child care. It is about people. When companies and organizations decide to invest, they look at: "What's available to our families? What's

available to our employees?" Things like affordable child care are important. We began the pilot project of \$25-a-day child care, and I think immediately saw relief for families. I think I read that economist Trevor Tombe was even referring to it. Now, certainly there were a lot of job losses as a result of the recession, but in 2018 we started to see a really steep growth in the participation of women in the workforce. We started to see income rates of women start to go up. There's a reason for that. We made some very strategic investments, some of those being affordable child care.

We also reduced the small-business tax, which was certainly helpful, but the other piece of this that's really important for communities is schools. Organizations are looking, scanning the province or scanning the jurisdiction: "Where do I want to invest? What is it that's going to keep my families and my workers engaged and part of that community?" Schools are certainly important. I know in St. Albert we spent years, actually the last four years, investing heavily, whether it was modernization or replacement of schools or building new schools. Where we had had empty lots with lovely signs before, we actually invested because when we came in in 2015, the advice that we were given was that now was the time to make those investments. So we did. We have new schools.

There's a brand new community in St. Albert called Jensen Lakes. It's actually still really muddy in some areas that you can't even get into, but there are two brand new schools there. There is one Catholic and one public. What that investment does is that it draws community. You'll see businesses popping up all over the place, very large ones, and I have no doubt that that will continue. What it is is that we've placed the infrastructure there in these communities, particularly in these newer areas, to be able to attract that. I would say once again to the minister: it's not just about tax incentives.

In fact, this legislation, although I understand the need to have distractions, really doesn't empower municipalities to do anything more than they could've done before. I'm not entirely sure, other than for distraction reasons, why they're doing this.

The lack of consultation, as I mentioned earlier, with municipalities on this legislation was astounding. I did sit in this place for four years, and I heard members of the Wildrose and Progressive Conservatives, then the UCP, just talk about the lack of consultation every single time that we introduced legislation. I mean, I don't know if it was in everybody's message box, but it was something that was said every single time. Then so quickly, just a few weeks after things have changed, they've forgotten that. They've forgotten that something that was so important to them previously doesn't seem to be all that important right now, which is concerning because you would think that with important legislation like this or legislation that related to municipalities, people would take the time to speak to organizations like the AUMA.

Going back to this, while the UCP claims that this bill will allow municipalities to defer taxes for up to 15 years, attract new investment and development as a result, it appears that the majority of the powers the UCP claim it's giving municipalities already exist under section 347 of the Municipal Government Act. I'm going to quote a member, actually the critic for Municipal Affairs, and this is a great quote: "I don't understand what the government thinks it's going to achieve with this act. The facts are that this is an empty bill that does very little but reinforce powers that municipalities already have." If you haven't consulted, if you haven't spoken to your municipal leaders, perhaps you should do so because I think you will hear that from them.

He also noted that the current government completely stalled on talks of new funding agreements for Alberta municipalities, causing further difficulties for local leaders hoping to plan for their communities' futures. Absolutely, that is essential. I think we all

realize how important it is to know what you're dealing with in terms of revenue. What will municipalities be getting, what can they plan on, and what can they do going forward?

The very same stressors that we heard from school boards we're hearing from municipalities. Things are changing very quickly, funding is changing very quickly, and they don't have any reassurance that, number one, they'll be consulted, because already in their short track record this government has demonstrated that consultation isn't a priority. I think we hear again and again and again: "Who needs consultation? We won the election. Woo-hoo." I think it's really, really important that this government learn this lesson early, that you need to talk to folks, you need to talk to leaders from the municipalities, you need to talk to the umbrella groups that they belong to, and you need to find out from them: what is it that they need?

Going on, I'm going to give you a couple of examples. The UCP is claiming with this legislation that currently municipalities can only provide tax breaks in times of hardship or for brownfield redevelopments. This is patently not true. Section 347 of the Municipal Government Act sets no requirement for hardship and indicates that a tax break can be provided in circumstances where "council considers it equitable to do so." Also, the UCP claims that new authorities will be created to allow municipalities to establish tax incentive programs for businesses, job creators, and investors through bylaw. It is already possible for a municipality to create a tax incentive program through bylaw, and this is not prohibited under section 347 of the MGA.

I could go on because there are a number of areas or a number of things that the government is claiming this legislation does that it doesn't in fact do. I'm going to give you one more: allows for proactive cancellation of taxes, not just retroactive tax breaks. Again, this is not true. Under section 347 a council can cancel, reduce, refund, or defer the collection proactively.

In short, while this bill may clarify existing authorities and prescribe how municipalities can create tax incentive programs, it does not fundamentally shift the authorities that exist under the act. These are minor tweaks and not major shifts. Again, it begs the question: why on earth would this government introduce this bill, that was not consulted, that is really not necessary, that doesn't really do much except, you know, cause us all to debate this in this Chamber? Why are they doing this? Is this simply a distraction, or are they looking for time to get something else done?

What I can tell you, Madam Speaker, is that municipalities want to be consulted. Organizations like AUMA want to be consulted. I would encourage this government to take the advice of the previous opposition and not do anything without consulting, because that's certainly the message I heard from them. Again, to be clear, an election is not a consultation.

Based on that – and I could certainly go on for a while about why this is, you know, a bill about not much – I am going to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for her comments with regard to the importance of ensuring that larger organizations that represent municipalities are considered as well as consultation with local municipalities. I appreciate the fact that we have members in this House that represent many mid-sized cities. Given that St. Albert, which is the 10th-largest municipality in the province, failed to be consulted, I

wonder how many other municipalities failed to be consulted. For example, I wonder if the municipality of Airdrie was consulted about this change and if this was the number one pressing issue.

10:50

This is the first bill from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, presumably the most important thing for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to be addressing given that it's the first item of business. Certainly, this wasn't the most pressing issue I heard from municipalities at RMA or AUMA. The last RMA, I think, was literally the first day of the election period. I think the election was called maybe two hours before the RMA bear pit, and I was there. Not one person asked about this. Not one. They did ask about rural EMS. They did ask about sustainable funding. They did ask about matching funding from the province of Alberta to ensure that the money that's on the table for federal funding that requires provincial investment not be ignored. They did ask about making sure that they have opportunities to engage thoroughly and thoughtfully in consultation.

Through you, Madam Speaker, to the member, I guess my main question is: what number one issues have you heard from your municipality or other municipalities that they think government should be addressing rather than bringing forward a bill to duplicate what we've already done?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. There are a number of pressing issues. Obviously, what I heard first of all from the mayor of St. Albert was the lack of consultation. I think, number one, that without even realizing it, this government has set a tone that they're going to go ahead and do what they want to do without real consultation, without really speaking to the people that are impacted by the bill, which is disturbing, to say the least.

I know that the municipality that I'm very fortunate to represent is dealing with a number of pressing issues, just like most municipalities. Some of those things this government doesn't seem to like to talk about, but these are the things that they want to see legislation on, they want to see movement on. Those are things like climate change although, you know, I might see people roll their eyes: oh, climate change. What it is is that it has the ability to impact every single facet of our lives. To compare the need to address this crisis that we have – I think it was just yesterday or the day before that we're hearing from scientists that there is no question that the horrific fires in the north, the older fires and even currently, were certainly impacted and exacerbated by climate change, which is a very real focus that we need to be having in this House. I could tell you that I remember that day where it was smoky and awful in this place, the day that the smoke sort of enveloped the city, and it was really a jolt for me to think about.

You know, I'd heard the saying quite some time ago that it's hard to count your money when you can't breathe, so I think it's very important that we recognize that municipalities are struggling with very real issues, issues related to recycling, trying to manage the waste that municipalities generate, trying to plan for the future, needing to know: will our schools be built? Will the schools that we need be built? I know that in St. Albert we are desperately in need of another high school. Will that high school get built? Will our schools be staffed?

Will our people have clean air to breathe? Luckily, we have an air monitoring station in St. Albert, so we're able to keep pretty close tabs, but I'll tell you that when the smoke was really bad – I

think it was last week – St. Albert was even worse than the city of Edmonton. I don't know if it was just the way the air was shifting that day, but it was sort of a picture that this could be our future. We could see these impacts more frequently, as scientists have been telling us for decades, yet we choose to ignore them. I'm not entirely sure why. But those are some of the pressing issues.

Some of the other things that we hear from municipalities is that they would like investment to continue to focus on small business. Now, keep in mind that the corporate tax cut that the government likes to talk about . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have listened carefully . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** My apologies, Minister. You've already spoken at this stage of the bill.

Is there anybody else wishing to speak?

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** To close debate?

**Mr. Ellis:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Well, we're not – okay. As a learning opportunity for all members in the House, if the minister were to speak again on the bill, it would be to close debate, which is not where we're at at this point.

I will recognize the hon. government whip.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the great debate that's gone on in this House so far. I think we'd like to continue on, so at this time I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### **Bill 3 Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act**

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise to provide some comments on Bill 3 at this committee stage. It's great that we've gotten to this stage for this bill on this day. There are a few things that I'd like to remind hon. members about as we're in this stage of more of a conversation around the bill, as we do during committee, as members are charged with doing, a real opportunity for us all to consider trade-offs that are contained in each and every piece of legislation that we pass through this House.

Now, we have discussed, certainly, massive corporate tax cuts to large corporations. It bears repeating at this stage, Madam Chair, that small businesses are not in fact affected by this bill at all. The small-business rate, having been lowered by a third by the previous government, is not affected, not touched by this legislation, and it

is only folks, companies with profits, that is to say, over \$500,000 that this bill affects.

We know that many of the large players in the economy, where reductions of the corporate income tax rate affect companies outside of that small-business threshold, have engaged in other jurisdictions in a massive undertaking of shareholder buybacks. We have that occurring in the United States on the order of billions now, and certainly the economic evidence coming from the Congressional Budget Office and elsewhere in the United States is showing that those corporate tax cuts, again, for already profitable, very large corporations are in fact not delivering the kinds of jobs and economic growth as were promised during the public relations exercise undertaken by the Trump administration a little over a year ago to justify this policy change south of the border.

We also see some of the destabilizing effects of this policy. They have been now noted by organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and others, Madam Chair. Certainly, there are destabilizing effects. When we have so much shareholder buyback activity going on, when we have concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands in large economies such as the United States', then we exacerbate inequality, we reduce government's ability to provide basic services. We're not even talking about, in the United States context here, what's nice to have such as reasonable health care or education services across the country. We're talking here about the ability to provide basic infrastructure such as water infrastructure, roads, and bridges to justify large investments from the private sector. That is something that, certainly, American governments struggle to provide, at least in some states. It bears some repeating because there is ongoing evidence being published on almost a daily basis on what has happened as a result of the massive corporate tax cuts south of the border.

**11:00**

In any event, I have to wonder and I have to put to this House and put to the members assembled here: just what kinds of trade-offs are they willing to tolerate? Certainly, when we give away 4 and a half billion dollars, then we necessarily show that we have lower revenue forecasts in our budget and therefore less fiscal room to make good on policy or programmatic commitments that we either made in the course of an election campaign, in the course of development of an election platform, or on emerging responsibilities in response to emergencies. Not everything is planned for within an election platform, and I think the hon. members assembled will find, as they move along in their work as legislators, that they are less and less able to meet the questions and legitimate needs of their constituents when they choose to undertake trade-offs such as this one. When we reduce our revenues, we are then less able to deliver on the services and the investments that, in fact, we need in order to grow our local communities and the Alberta-wide economy.

Now, revenue forecasts. It bears going back into this a little bit because this corporate tax cut is being used as a cover for other softness in revenue forecasts, Madam Chair. We have, obviously, a lower WTI forecast now than, for example, private-sector forecasters were projecting in 2018. We've seen some change in global markets. Obviously, Alberta has no control over that.

Around western Canada select, which is actually a more important indicator for budget forecasting in Alberta and, to a great extent, Saskatchewan, that differential between world price and WCS, we do see that the government has had to, out of necessity, pull some of the levers in order to ensure that that price and those revenues remain stable so that we can turn around and pay for important things like health care, education, bridges, roads, and hospitals.



Now, with WCS, obviously we're continuing to experience bottlenecks due to takeaway capacity, but there were some things the government could do. One, we undertook the not insignificant decision around curtailment. This is not something that anyone wanted to do, and we certainly agreed on both sides of the House at the time, earlier this year, that we had to take that decision, that it was in the best interests of Albertans. But in the longer term, while we await the outcome of the Federal Court decision around Trans Mountain, there was also a crude-by-rail decision undertaken by the previous government and contracts executed with private-sector entities, and when government executes contracts, it is best not to rip them up. We end up in a situation where it would create investor uncertainty when we do that.

But that was designed, again, to shore up some of those revenue forecasts and not blow a hole in them and to do whatever we could to ensure that we could continue to pay for things like health care and education as well as keep people at work. Certainly, we know that our lack of takeaway capacity is affecting jobs and could have affected jobs in a much worse fashion than it actually did in early 2019. So we have that piece around the revenue forecast.

But as we know from various studies around volatility and budget-making – certainly, the C.D. Howe Institute has had a number of things to say about this over the years – volatility is offset, particularly in resource economies like Alberta and Saskatchewan, by provincial personal income tax and corporate income tax, and those are the more stable sources of revenue. So when we go in and we introduce elements of instability, relatively unnecessary elements of instability, as has been mentioned by my hon. colleague for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Alberta does have targeted capital and venture capital investment tax credits that are designed specifically to stimulate the economy and diversify the economy without blowing a hole worth several billion dollars in the budget for no specific end and with no way for legislators to then assess the utility or the efficiency or the wisdom of those revenue giveaways.

Certainly, we did introduce those. They have successfully begun to diversify the economy. Indeed, in 2017 and 2018 Alberta led the country in economic growth, and we saw growth in manufacturing, retail sales, other aspects. But we also, even through some of the softening in the economy due to the differential and some of the other actions that our government took really concrete steps to address, still saw, according to RBC, TD, and others, some strength in chemicals manufacturing and definitely some new investments in capital maintenance and new capital in the petrochemical sector.

Again, this was a targeted way of forgoing revenue in the out-years around royalty revenue in order to incent new capital investments in a value-added kind of way such that we are not shipping the jobs to Louisiana, that we're not shipping the jobs to the American Midwest, but we're keeping them right here and using our tremendous gifts of natural resources in order to create jobs right here in Alberta, good, mortgage-paying jobs that people can rely on, where they can invest in their communities, that have a number of associated service companies that can rely on them as well.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

There are certainly ways to forgo revenue in a way that is much more thoughtful than what Bill 3 proposes, and with them come some other trade-offs that are actually worth it in the end. If you have a targeted capital investment tax credit, if you have a targeted petrochemical diversification program, what you end up with is a more thoughtful approach to diversification. You end up with a much stronger revenue base for municipalities, for example. You

end up with a more diversified revenue base to even out some of that volatility that we talked about, that certainly has been studied by a number of different think tanks, economists, and others, Mr. Chair. So that was the approach that our government took.

But with this across-the-board reduction in corporate income tax revenue, we do not end up with any of those public policy outcomes. In fact, the evidence shows that we end up with hardly any public policy outcomes other than the concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands and tying at least one hand behind government's back in terms of ability to meet demands coming from communities, emerging issues coming from communities, whether those are the sorts that we can foresee such as a growing population, such as deteriorating infrastructure or need for new infrastructure, or indeed now the demands that we can foresee with respect to climate change. Climate change adaptation and ensuring that our infrastructure is able to withstand more frequent and severe weather events is something that we can now foresee that ought now to be planned for. Anyone who is not planning for it is a bit of a Clydesdale in blinders at this point, Mr. Chair.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

When we talk about trade-offs in legislation, certainly we brought in the petrochemical diversification program, and for anyone who is examining the books, there are trade-offs in terms of forgone revenue. One ought to be thoughtful about that because it does inhibit our ability to meet the needs of our constituents. But with this massive giveaway, our constituents – many of the folks are not in Executive Council in this House – are not going to be able to deliver at all. All of us have schools in our constituencies that avail themselves of the classroom improvement fund. All of us. All of us have new educational assistants or speech-language therapists or counsellors or other supports in the classrooms, in particular for students with disabilities. Every single one of us has those in our constituencies.

11:10

Due to the fact that we are blowing such an unthoughtful and inadvisable hole in the budget, we will not be able – or at least the government will tell us we will not be able – to afford that classroom improvement fund, which is a specific, targeted fund of money that was to go towards a specific and targeted public policy outcome, which was to meet the increasingly complex classroom needs in the 21st century and give teachers the resources to be able to do that and give parents the resources to be able to do that.

Certainly, parents of children with disabilities: I heard from them over and over again in 2015, when we were facing the first rounds of massive cuts to the Education budget. Parents had real concerns about those increasingly complex classrooms, whether their child was one of the children who required some of those extra supports or not. Having a classroom overflowing with 30 children, four of whom or eight of whom are requiring some special assistance: that certainly is one of the trade-offs when you cannot pay for that, or at least when you allege that you can no longer pay for that, and you have built a budget that is structurally unable to pay for those investments.

As we look at both sides of the ledger – and this bill proposes to reduce revenues by a significant amount – these are not boutique tax credits. These are significant, across-the-board reductions in revenues, with no specific public policy outcome attached to them. That will mean that members in this House cannot look their constituents in the eye and say, "Well, yes, I know you need a new school, and you're going to get it," because that will be an element of fantasy, Madam Chair. Those funds will not be available.

Similarly, funds will not be available, I suspect, for things like rural hospitals, Madam Chair. Certainly, the blue-ribbon panel that is examining the province's finances is now tasked with looking at only the expenditure side. I can tell you that that blue-ribbon panel is being chaired by someone who gleefully closed rural hospitals. You know, if members here think that they can look at their constituents in Milk River or in Beaverlodge and say, "Yeah, for sure, we're going to keep your hospital open," I rather suspect that the Premier's blue-ribbon panel has another thing coming.

Now, as for the promise of some mythical jobs that came out of some economist's model to justify this reduction in revenues, I would just commend to the hon. members the private-sector forecasters who are projecting no such uplift in the economy and no such job growth, at least at this time, Madam Chair.

The other folks that I would commend to the hon. members assembled, in terms of their feedback on what happens when you blow a revenue hole in the budget, is, in particular, small and medium-sized municipalities, Madam Chair. We were very close to an agreement on our side of the House with small and medium-sized municipalities, modelled upon the agreement that we reached with the large cities in the city charters discussion, obviously commitments that this government has already gone back on with Bill 1. It is unfortunate indeed that the legislated commitment that this government made to large cities has already been broken. Certainly, this government would have to break it because they are in fact blowing a hole in the revenue source that might sustain our two largest cities over the course of time.

But small and medium-sized cities are home to some of the youngest, fastest growing populations. For example, the city of Grande Prairie has probably the fastest growing school-age population, followed closely by Lethbridge and Airdrie, and I think there are a couple of others in there as well. We have a tremendous number of young people who are moving to these small and medium-sized cities. They do so because of quality of life, because of job opportunities. I know that when I was knocking on doors over the last three or so years in Lethbridge, people would say to me: "Oh, I'm new here. I came here because of work, because the economy was growing quite well in Lethbridge." But those municipalities are going to be looking to the province's revenue picture with great concern because they're not going to see a corresponding investment in their cities. The province will simply not have the ability to do so.

Going back to what I indicated earlier, Madam Chair, about the concept of volatility, we are chipping away at our second-most stable source of revenue in a provincial budget, the first being provincial income tax, the second being corporate income tax. We're relying ever more on commodity prices in order to pay the bills. Now, that had a predictable outcome – and municipalities remember it well – in 2015. But the fact is that their MSI remained stable while our provincial finances dropped, which was a good lesson for all members in this House around relying on one product, one market, at one price. Certainly, we are united in terms of being able to break that deadlock of one market and one price on the question of market access and our energy infrastructure. But where we're not united is around the value and the virtue of petrochemical upgrading.

**The Chair:** Any comments, questions, or amendments?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Madam Chair, I'm just going to briefly make a couple of comments here. What we just heard: everybody should record it and play it back, because that is nonsense.

The comments about revenue giveaways are quite interesting. What the NDP considers revenue giveaways is actually allowing

Albertans to keep more tax dollars in their pockets. In fact, they also heard along the way the comments that this doesn't help any small corporations. Well, Madam Chair, if you just imagine, for easy examples, the place where the hon. members across filled their car up with gas, it was probably some label of a gas station and probably a small business. But I would remind them that that small business is attached to a larger corporation, with the same label on it probably, that refines that product that the hon. members put in their gas tanks. Those businesses are connected. If the partner business is unhealthy, it doesn't help the small business.

The same thing could be held true for where the hon. members bought their coffee this morning, regardless of whether it was Starbucks or Tim Hortons. There's probably a pretty good chance that the local Starbucks and Tim Hortons are corporations, but there's also a hundred per cent chance that the local Starbucks or Tim Hortons is attached to the head office of Starbucks and Tim Hortons, which are corporations where the tax cut will help their health. Since they're partners, it does affect small businesses as much as large.

As much as the opposition would like to put their head in the sand and deny that there is a connection there, I'm just standing right now to help them connect those dots because they continually say things like this that just are flat not true.

I was also somewhat entertained by the comments: a budget structurally unable to pay. Well, I'll remind the hon. members that Albertans rejected the NDP budget that had Alberta going in deficit \$6 billion, \$8 billion, or \$10 billion per year, a budget that now has Alberta paying almost \$2 billion a year in interest on that debt. Madam Chair, I would remind the hon. members across that that's \$2 billion unavailable now to pay for schools, \$2 billion that's unavailable every year now to pay for hospitals, and \$2 billion every year now unavailable to pay for social services. Their government, if re-elected, was going to increase that to \$100 billion in debt, with \$4 billion in interest payments per year.

Now, if you actually want to talk about a structural budget problem, there's a reason that Albertans rejected the past government's budgeting habits. That was a severe structural budget problem when you are looking at them adding \$4 billion a year in interest payments not available to provide – listen, it's not going to be easy now because of the mess they made. But the biggest threat to providing public services that Albertans desperately need is an out-of-control government with an out-of-control budget and out-of-control debt and with an actual goal to go up to \$4 billion a year in interest payments without even touching the principal.

**11:20**

Madam Chair, I just am amazed by the nonsense that came out of the hon. member just now, and I also love the expression the hon. member used: mythical jobs from some economist. The members across, their government, oversaw the biggest number of unemployed that Alberta has seen perhaps ever but definitely in decades. I would also say: very well-respected economists. Their plan didn't work. Albertans rejected it. We're going to try something different, and we are trying something different with the advice of well-respected economists.

I would advise them to actually support this because that's what Albertans want. It was in our platform. This is what Albertans asked for on April 16, a big majority of them. I would advise the members opposite to perhaps respect the decision that Albertans made on April 16.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other comments, questions, or amendments to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to take the opportunity to speak a little bit more about Bill 3. You know, it's very disconcerting that here we have before us a bill in the House that absolutely betrays the evidence that the bill is not an effective way to proceed. Here we are again with a government that simply chooses not to look at evidence, simply chooses not to act on that evidence whenever it's not convenient in their relationship with the funders of their party, who will be contributing to them in future elections and, of course, contributing to their friends in the federal election coming up later this year, which is really the underlying intent behind this whole bill, simply to funnel money away from the collective common good and the average person in society to a small, select group of people, who will be using that money to fund a particular party. So the real intent behind this bill is essentially robbing the poor to feed the rich.

I think that Monty Python had a sketch about that. Dennis Miller – I can't repeat the whole song to you because it uses unparliamentary language, but I'd suggest the government look up Dennis Miller, because that's the direction that they're going.

I want to go back and speak for a few moments about the evidence that has been presented numerous times in this House, because I just want it on the record again. I know it's been presented, and it's been presented well. I know that the government is not going to pay any attention to this at all because they essentially deny evidence whenever they get a chance, you know, like climate change and other kinds of issues like that, so I anticipate that they'll all just deny the evidence here. You know, in order to be fair to the government, we've actually taken the opportunity to ensure that many of our sources of evidence are people that are well known not to be left-wing commentary on society but, rather, right-wing commentary on society and therefore should be reasonable and acceptable to members of the government, but of course it's not, because they don't even listen to their own evidence-based people when it's inconvenient for them.

You know, I had an opportunity in this House to mention the U.S. Congressional Budget Office and the fact that they published a study in April 2019, so a very recent study. This is not ancient news. This is the most modern information that we have available by one of the most dependable offices in the western democracy, looking at the very question of tax reduction. The conclusions of that study are very clear. I know it's a big report, so skip the whole report. Just read the conclusions. I'm sure you have the time, while you're sitting in the House, to flip open your computer and have a quick look.

You will see that the U.S. Congressional Budget Office is explicitly saying that across-the-board tax cuts are a bad way to create jobs. Now, there may be some other benefits from it, but if you're saying that it's about creating jobs, then you're not in fact acting on the evidence available. In fact, they suggest that, at best, the number of jobs that might get created per million dollars is somewhere around 4 jobs per million dollars if everything goes well, and in fact much of the evidence indicates that jobs don't particularly go up at all. If it does work, if it happens to be the right economic time and it goes in the right direction, you might create four.

The same report indicates that in many ways this is almost accidental, that it's a side effect. It's not a direct effect of tax reductions. It's something that just happens by accident. I think that's exactly what we have here with this government. They don't really care about the jobs. They're hoping that a few get created by accident on the side. What they really want to do is make sure that money is shovelled to people who will benefit them as a

government, directly in their political life, and that's very disconcerting to me.

The U.S. Congressional Budget Office did indicate that there are much better ways to create jobs, that if you wanted to do a tax reduction, you could even improve the number of jobs created by shifting that tax reduction away from corporations and, rather, to middle-class and low-income earners. If you provide low-income earners with a lower tax rate, then the results indicate that you'll create somewhere in the neighbourhood of 7 jobs per million dollars, so at least a little bit better than what is being suggested by the government here at the present time.

However, they go on to indicate that that in and of itself is again problematic, first of all, because it's not really the most effective way to create jobs, and secondly, it has the same problem as the first one – that is, the corporate tax decrease – which results in less revenue for the government to provide public goods. It actually reduces the well-being of the lives of people in a society when it comes to all the other services that they depend on in order to make their lives whole and worth while. Services such as schools, such as health care, such as public roads: all of those are put in jeopardy by these kinds of tax reductions.

Now, thankfully, the report by the U.S. Congressional Budget Office goes on to talk about the fact that there are other mechanisms which have been demonstrated over time, over the last few hundred years, to actually create a greater number of jobs. The major thing that creates dollar for dollar a greater number of jobs is government spending on infrastructure and redistribution of dollars to people who are earning incomes and spending those incomes in the local economy.

Now, there are two pieces to talk about there. The first thing they say is that if you actually increase government spending by working on infrastructure, for example, then the average number of jobs that come out of that is 19 jobs per million dollars spent. We simply have a choice in front of us here in this House. We can create a policy which is good for a few and creates 4 jobs per million dollars, or we can create a policy that is good for the many and creates 19 jobs per million dollars.

**11:30**

Now, any objective person would start right away by saying that the measurable outcome that you are seeking would indicate that you need to spend more money as a government on infrastructure in order to create jobs. That's what the evidence shows us, yet this government is not doing it. We know they're not using evidence in terms of their bills that they're creating, but it also seems that they don't seem to care about the outcome that they say that they are intending to create – that is, they actually don't care about jobs – that the people who sit on the government side of this House, when it comes down to it, are fully prepared to deny that extra 15 people per million dollars spent, the jobs that would be available were they to increase money spent on infrastructure.

That's very concerning for me, what that might be about, and I think we need to explore a little bit about what these kinds of things may be about. We know that the reason why the cuts to corporate taxes do not work is because you don't have control over what corporations do with that money. You don't in fact have control over what the average citizen does with money either if you provide them with jobs through infrastructure development, as is suggested by all of the reasonable evidence.

What you do know is that there's a difference in what they tend to do with that money if we look backwards on the evidence of what's happened in the past. For example, in the United States last year they did a corporate tax cut, and a corporation, AT&T, for example, suggested that with that corporate tax cut they were going

to create 7,000 jobs. Within the same year that they got that corporate tax cut, they did not create 7,000 jobs; they actually cut 23,000 jobs. So the evidence is there that they don't use the money for the thing that they say they're going to. There's a 30,000 job lie inherent in that tax cut.

In Canada, for example, under Prime Minister Harper's government, of which our Premier was a minister, there was, over a period of about 10 years, an intention to reduce taxes. In fact, they did reduce taxes over that 10-year period about 10 per cent. But the evidence that came out at the end of that period of time was that it had absolutely no real effect in terms of business investment back into the community. In 2009 business investment was almost exactly as it was in the year 2000, before these tax deductions came into place. Both were about 12.4 per cent of GDP. Again, we have our own evidence here in Canada that businesses did not reinvest.

What did businesses do? Businesses tended to buy back stock, and they started to hoard dollars. We know, for example, that in Canada those cuts, at the time of the assessment of the report, the latest report that was available to me, led to about a \$500 billion stockpile in corporate cash, which subsequently, I understand from newspaper commentary, has actually risen closer to \$700 billion, a stockpile of cash which is not being invested back into the Canadian economy. This is money that a former governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, indicated is dead money. We know that Mark Carney is a very brilliant man because he went to the same elementary and junior highs as I did, had the same high level of education received in public education here in the city of Edmonton. St. Rose and FX: a shout-out to you both. The point of the matter is that anybody who calls Mark Carney a leftist really doesn't understand much about politics.

What we're saying is that the very people who ascribe to your world view are telling you that your decision is wrong, that you are not indeed going to create the outcome that you are telling the people of the province of Alberta you're going to create. Now, if you know that ahead of time – we have a word for that. I can't use it here in the House, but it rhymes with pants on fire. On the other hand, if you don't know that, then I would suggest that it is time for you to take this bill and return it, to do some work on it, to look at the evidence, to create for yourself some knowledge.

I want to speak a little bit about some of the problems inherent in the shovelling of money away from the everyday, average Albertan, who we are here to represent, to a very few people in society. We know, for example, that over the last number of years, ever since this trickle-down, supply-side economics was introduced by Ronald Reagan, we have had a significant problem get created in our western democracies, and that is that the gap of inequality between the wealthiest and the poorest in society has absolutely increased dramatically. We know, for example, that over the period of time of the last 30 years the wealth of the richest 1 per cent in society has increased somewhere around, depending on which report you read, 165 times over what they previously had whereas at the same time, for the rest of us, for the common good, the common people, our wealth has almost increased not at all. If you were actually to take not the 1 per cent but the .1 per cent, that increases to over 360 times.

What's happening, clearly, with the use of this supply-side theory is that we are taking money and we are returning to a 14th-century notion of the Sun King and godly wealth all in a single individual and the rest of the people not benefiting. Now, I know that to Conservatives that's not a problem. It's okay if one person is wealthy and lives in the castle and everybody else has to, as my ancestors did, be peat bog farmers out on the west coast of Ireland while the kings were living rich in Dublin. Now, I know that you're quite comfortable with that. It doesn't bother you to look out your

windows, as did King Wenceslaus, and find other people poor. Instead, you actually celebrate the fact that some people are wealthy to an extreme.

So I want to talk a little bit about why that kind of shift to inequality is severely problematic. First of all, we know, through the evidence again, which I know you don't have time to read, so I'll present it for you, that as inequality increases in society, a number of other undesirable things increase in society, and those are that the health of the average population decreases, that the rates of stress-related addictions and problems with criminality increase. We know that as the separation of inequality increases more and more, those few individuals with the wealth begin to have increased control over the lives of people without wealth. They begin increasingly to make decisions about what they can and cannot do in terms of their employment, where they can live, and what kinds of schools they can go to because the decisions are all being made by people with dollars in their pocket.

A great book written by Ortega y Gasset on the dictatorship of the majority talks about the fact that at a certain point you have people with power who begin to exercise that power over others simply because they can, because there's nothing stopping them from exercising that power. That means everybody who is not part of that elite power group suddenly becomes vulnerable to the whims of the power group.

**11:40**

That's what we're going toward, which is a complete betrayal of the last 300 years of democratic progress in western society. The very things we've been working against you are working to put back into our world. You keep going backwards in time. You haven't learned any of the lessons from the reform that we have seen, starting in Britain with the reform of public education, the reform of public health care, and how much that has benefited our society.

We know, for example, that the average life expectancy of people in society was more greatly increased by the implementation of public utilities such as public water than by all the invention of expensive medical procedures such as heart surgery. But, of course, you're not interested in everybody doing better. You're only interested in those people with money doing better. That's what happens when you make that kind of inequality possible, that money gets funnelled to those people who can afford particular surgeries that will only benefit a very small number of people but are very expensive.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my privilege again to stand and speak in favour of Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut act, which will restore Alberta as the most competitive and attractive place in Canada to start and grow a business. I honestly don't understand why the members opposite are speaking in opposition to restoring that status for Alberta.

**Mr. Feehan:** Because the evidence doesn't prove it.

**Mr. Stephan:** Well, we'll talk about that a little bit.

As indicated during second reading of this bill, I am a tax lawyer and a chartered professional accountant, and I work with private businesses, their owners, and their professional advisers. When the members opposite selectively cite some current successes to justify the status quo, I would suggest that Albertans are generally an industrious and innovative people, and in some instances they are able to succeed in spite of dysfunctional government policy and not because of it. Alberta does not have the lowest general corporate

rate in Canada. Ontario and Quebec, for example, have a lower general corporate rate than Alberta. Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut act, is focused on the general corporate income tax rate.

The question I have for the members opposite is: what do they have against being the most competitive tax jurisdiction in Canada? Why is that embarrassing? You know, why are they content with mediocrity? [interjections]

**The Chair:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Stephan:** What we're doing here with the job-creation tax cut is not new. Having the lowest corporate tax rate has served Alberta very well historically. I know that the truth may hurt. It has served Alberta very well historically. We have actually had billion-dollar surpluses while at the same time having the lowest corporate tax rates. So we have evidence based on historical fact.

You know, my impression, Madam Chair, is that the former NDP government was, again, a government that really did not focus on real-world details. For example, the prior government does not understand the concept of corporate integration and the complexities of our tax system. When they increased the general corporate tax rate by 20 per cent, they did not decrease the corresponding eligible dividend tax rate, which impacts overall corporate integration.

For example, generally speaking, when governments in the past have altered corporate tax rates, they have adjusted the dividend tax rates to preserve the concept of corporate integration. The NDP government did not do this. So what's the outcome of that? Well, consider a small corporation that owns just a couple of rental properties. It may not earn much income, but because of the nature of its type of business, it actually doesn't qualify for the small-business rate and, as a result, is actually subject to the higher rate and, with the increase, the higher general corporate tax rate that the prior government brought in, and there became an underintegration in corporate income, with a five per cent increase in a disadvantage between earning that rental income in a corporation as opposed to earning it directly. Corporations that had these rental properties inside the corporation found them trapped under this NDP government when it increased costs.

You know, you increased tax rates by 20 per cent, and you shrank Alberta's private-sector workforce by tens of thousands of individuals during the time you were in power. While you may not wish it was true, you know, government services only exist – they only exist – if there is an economic strength from the private-sector businesses and those who work in them to pay for them. You essentially declared war on those individuals and businesses that actually fund the government services that all of us appreciate and value.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, a reminder to speak through the chair.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The members opposite like to think they are the champions of government services, but the truth is that they are not. You know, if we continue with irresponsible, undisciplined, uncompetitive, NDP-type policies and governments, by and by it will lead to the collapse of unsustainable government services. The NDP views business success as a zero-sum game. You know, in their heart they think that if businesses do well, then workers do not, and that is a fundamental flaw in thinking. They are not win-win in their thinking. They view success as someone else's failure.

This old government had a philosophy, you know, a socialist philosophy that was in direct opposition to what is required for economic prosperity. This was a government that did not

understand how to compete and excel in the real world, and their record speaks for itself. It is a record of failure.

Let's talk about the culture in Alberta. You know, our Premier has correctly stated that Alberta is a meritocracy. That is how Alberta has competed and excelled in the past. That is how we have been the place of economic opportunity for the rest of the country, by being the most competitive jurisdiction to start and grow a business, and that has created the ability to create a record number of jobs.

Madam Chair, Bill 3, you know, represents a huge positive step amongst the other government initiatives to renew and restore Alberta as the most competitive and attractive jurisdiction in our country. But here's the litmus test, and I hope the members opposite are listening. In four years let's compare the record of the NDP losing tens of thousands of private-sector jobs, because that's your record. Let's compare it to the record in four years under the job-creation tax cut if it doesn't create tens of thousands of private-sector jobs. That will be the true test, and the record: again, the facts will speak for themselves.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

**11:50**

**The Chair:** Any other comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the member for that lecture on how taxes work. I appreciate that he's an accountant. I will start off by saying – and the hon. member knows this. If he doesn't, well, then I can only feel sorry for some of his clients. Alberta is the lowest tax jurisdiction in Canada. You can look exclusively at the corporate tax rate, but you're being either naïve or you're not looking at the full picture. Albertans don't pay a PST. We don't pay a payroll tax. We don't have health care premiums. That all is part of the taxes that Albertans don't pay. Because of that, even with the carbon tax Albertans paid \$11 billion less than the second-lowest tax jurisdiction in Canada, which is their best friend Saskatchewan. Why? Because Saskatchewan has a PST, they have a payroll tax, and they pay significantly higher. Now, at 12 per cent Alberta was still in the top third as far as the lowest corporate tax rates in the country. Ontario, I believe, is 11.5 per cent, as is one of the other provinces. So it's not that Alberta was far over, but the difference is that Albertans don't pay a PST.

The logic of, "just have a low corporate tax rate, and that's all it takes to attract business" is my favourite logic to discuss because if that was the case, then for the decades that Alberta had a 10 per cent flat rate for corporate taxes – that was the lowest in Canada as a corporate tax rate – according to that logic every business should only be in Alberta if that's the only driver, your corporate tax rate. How is it that Ontario with a PST and a corporate tax rate – they're well north of 15 per cent in taxes – has businesses that somehow remain competitive? How are they attracting investment from other countries?

I can tell you, Madam Chair, that part of the reason, which I wish members would at least acknowledge when we talk about the Alberta advantage, is the fact that we're sitting on the third-largest oil reserves in the world. Now, that wasn't Ralph Klein out there with a shovel putting oil in the ground, despite the fact that the members would, you know, give him accolades like he was actually putting oil in the ground. We are very, very blessed as Albertans to have an abundance of natural resources. Now, we also have incredible innovators and entrepreneurs that discovered ways to extract and refine, especially when you look at our oil sands and bitumen and the viscosity of it and the challenges that come around it. I'm very proud of the fact that it was Alberta entrepreneurs and

our oil and gas sector that designed SAGD technology that is used world-wide. That was developed here in Alberta.

**Mr. McIver:** You're welcome.

**Mr. Bilous:** I find it kind of funny that the Member for Calgary-Hays is saying "you're welcome" because I don't think you developed SAGD technology, sir. I will give credit to the entrepreneurs that did develop this technology.

My point is this, Madam Chair. I'm not arguing against the fact that, you know, we've been through a very, very painful recession over the last couple of years, that has had a significant impact on every single Albertan. I recognize that, and I recognize that the job rate is attributed to a number of different factors. I can tell you that when you look at companies in the digital or technology space, in which Alberta has significant competitive advantages, when sitting down with companies like Apple and Microsoft and others, their number one issue is not: what is the corporate tax rate? In fact, they couldn't give two hoots about what the tax rate is. What they want is talent. They want to see that there is a talent pipeline so that they can set up shop in a jurisdiction, which is what our government has been focused on, attracting and developing that talent.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you. According to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 3.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? Carried.  
The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Based on the fact that it's 4 minutes to 12, we've made some good progress this morning, and heard some good debate from all sides of the House, I would move that we call it 12 o'clock and adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

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

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 11, 2019

Day 11

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 11, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, joining us today in the Speaker's gallery is a long-serving Member of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly and former Speaker of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Dan D'Autremont. I invite you to welcome him to the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Also joining us, basically, is everyone else, which is amazing. Joining us from the constituency of Red Deer-South is Eastview middle school. I invite you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

#### Health Care Services for Wildfire Evacuees

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give thanks to the many men and women of Alberta Health Services who have been absolutely essential in evacuating patients, continuing care for residents, and caring for essential services in evacuated areas. Front-line paramedics and emergency medical services have worked with hospital staff and physicians to provide seamless care in stressful, chaotic, and daunting circumstances. Through it all they've done their best to show every patient and family the respect and compassion we expect from our health care professionals every day.

While mandatory evacuation orders in High Level, the surrounding areas of Mackenzie county, areas within the county of Northern Lights, and the Dene Tha' First Nation communities of Bushe, Meander, and Chateh were lifted, several fires continue to burn out of control in northern Alberta while Paddle Prairie is still evacuated. Yet, Mr. Speaker, our health care providers remain determined as more Albertans require assistance and evacuation service and treatment every day.

In addition to evacuating health facilities, AHS is adding supports for people dealing with the stress of returning home, including a new, seven-days-a-week mental health service in High Level. I know, Mr. Speaker, that I speak for all members of this Chamber when I say thanks to our physicians and AHS staff caring for patients affected by these fires. They have our deepest respect and gratitude. They continue to uphold the values of our health care system every day as these forest fires continue to rage on.

Mr. Speaker, the AHS paramedics, nurses, physicians, and others alongside these brave firefighters are the real heroes of Alberta today. Their work saves lives as they continue to work as long as needed to protect us and property. As residents return home to High Level, I am reminded of why I'm so thankful to be an Albertan. The most essential Alberta advantage that we have is the dedication of the people, including our firefighters and health care professionals, serving us today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo is rising to make a statement.

#### Provincial Fiscal Position

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They were dishonest with Albertans, and they fudged the numbers: these are the Premier's words on Alberta's finances. The disturbing and baseless allegation the Premier is making is not only the type of cynical mudslinging he pretends to despise; it is also simply not true. The budgets, financial records, and reports released under our government were prepared by professional and competent public servants. The numbers were audited by the former Auditor General of Alberta, a public servant this government chose to fire without cause.

Mr. Speaker, these are numbers based in fact and evidence, not numbers invented by politicians, but of course facts and evidence are not what this Premier trades in. The Premier has chosen to ignore the truth and alleges that public servants misled Albertans about our finances. This is a cheap, offensive attack on the integrity and professionalism of the same officials that work in the Premier's own government. As a former Minister of Finance I am disturbed and disappointed to hear these comments, but of course the Premier has not done this by mistake. This carefully crafted spin is to prepare Albertans for what is to come.

What is next according to the Premier? What he calls a shared sacrifice. Of course, Albertans can read between the lines. This means cruel cuts and austerity policies that everyday Albertans will be hurt by. The Premier has said that Alberta's finances are worse than he thought to convince Albertans that the only solution is massive cuts to our health care, education, and the services Albertans depend on. He is telling Albertans that good schools for our children, health care for our seniors, and supports for our families are all a luxury, one that he will not protect. He is preparing Albertans for his austerity panel's recommendations, which are a foregone conclusion: cut, cut, cut.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve the truth, not cynical spin that will be used against them to gut their services, communities, and province.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### Energy Industries in Drayton Valley-Devon

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Drayton Valley-Devon have for too long been burdened by ill-advised government policy, ill-advised policies which have caused local companies to go from 100 employees to 50 to bankrupt, all in the span of a few short years, all because of the devastating NDP policies which drove investment away from Drayton Valley-Devon and into the United States although, as the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo previously pointed out, some investment has been driven from Alberta to Iraq and other jurisdictions which don't believe in environmental stewardship and do not care about even the bare minimum in human rights standards.

It wasn't just new investment we lost. Our equipment, our people, and much of our prosperity were shipped to other jurisdictions to produce energy there. These other jurisdictions are using our equipment to increase the production of oil and gas in their countries. With this new production, derived from our equipment, come new greenhouse emissions, and with our equipment, we exported our greenhouse gas emissions.

All of that exporting, not of our oil but of our quality of life, drove unemployment in my riding to 10.6 per cent in 2016, and of the constituents who hadn't lost their jobs, most of them took a pay cut

or a cut in hours in some cases. Others gave up looking for work altogether. And it wasn't just oil and gas workers who suffered; it was youth and service workers and their families. Everyone suffered.

We cannot repeal the suffering. We have and will continue to repeal, though, the NDP policies, like the job-killing carbon tax. The spring of renewal has started, and it's to lead to a summer of promises kept. If we must, we will sit through the night to keep our promises because my constituents in Drayton Valley-Devon sent me here to keep our electoral promises.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is rising to make a statement.

### Postsecondary Convocation 2019

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, the month of June is a very special time for Alberta postsecondary students and their families as we celebrate convocation. Watching students cross the stage to accept their degrees and diplomas is a wonderful opportunity to stop and reflect on the incredible future for our province. These students are future business leaders, community activists, and some of them may even sit here in this House one day, elected to serve Albertans.

Unfortunately, these students are graduating at a moment of great uncertainty. Where are the jobs for new nurses and teachers? Will this government's commitment to the failed fiscal experiment of huge corporate tax giveaways mean that students will have to head out of the province, perhaps, to find their own economic prosperity? About a generation ago Albertans had to ask themselves these same questions when the government of the day made cuts that took a whole generation for this province to recover from. I, for one, am concerned that we are seeing the clock being turned back.

I hope these students will bring into the world the values that will make this province great. I hope that they lead the charge to keep on building an economy, a diverse economy, on a strong foundation of environmental stewardship, that they will help those in need, and that they will work hard to build a prosperous Alberta, where each and every Albertan is included.

On behalf of our caucus I would like to offer our congratulations to Alberta's class of 2019.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-East.

### 1:40 Canadians' Rights and the Role of Government

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was elected to represent Lethbridge-East based, at least in part, on my experience. I am a first-generation Canadian. I spoke German at home until I went to school, and I worked summers on the farm to pay for my schooling. My wife and I have five children, four daughters and one son.

My life experience makes me a passionate defender of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for my children's future, particularly 6(2), that

every citizen of Canada and every person who has the status of a permanent resident of Canada has the right . . .

(b) to pursue the gaining of a livelihood in any province, and section 7, that

everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person.

This pursuit is deeply ingrained in Canadians, and they strive to achieve these goals through a free-market economy, which is one of voluntary exchange under the laws of supply and demand, that provide the sole basis for our economic system without government intervention.

This limited government is an important component of economic freedom, and higher levels of economic freedom are associated

with higher annual incomes, better health, longer life expectancies, and greater political and civil liberties. Milton Friedman said:

Government has three primary functions. It should provide for military defense of the nation. It should enforce contracts between individuals. It should protect citizens from crimes against themselves or their property. When government – in pursuit of good intentions tries to rearrange the economy, legislate morality, or help special interests, the cost come in inefficiency, lack of motivation, and loss of freedom.

Government should be a referee, not an active player.

Private industry in a free economy, governed by a limited Legislature with clear, unencumbering laws, is the best and only true path for all citizens to find success through hard work and a level playing field. Then with the fair and responsible collection of taxes from private individuals and corporations, handled as stewards of other people's money, it can judiciously be spent to maintain the public services we desire and need. The very best scenario for a strong public sector is a free and vibrant private economy.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind all hon. members that there's a long-standing tradition inside the Legislature here in Alberta that members' statements are free from interruption or heckling.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is rising.

### Climate Change

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is on record as saying that he doesn't believe the world is in a climate crisis. However, a report released recently by the National Centre for Climate Restoration in Australia not only states clearly that we are in a crisis but outlines in horrifying detail the consequences of not taking action now to deal with it.

By 2050, if we continue to do nothing, global sea levels will rise by half a metre, wiping out the agriculturally important river deltas such as the Mekong, Ganges, and Nile. Some of the world's most populous cities, including Chennai, Mumbai, Jakarta, Guangzhou, Tianjin, Hong Kong, Ho Chi Minh City, Shanghai, Lagos, Bangkok, and Manila, will be abandoned. Some small islands will become uninhabitable. Ten per cent of Bangladesh will be destroyed, displacing 15 million people alone.

More than 30 per cent of the world's land surface will be turned to desert, with the most severely affected areas being southern Africa, the southern Mediterranean, west Asia, the Middle East, inland Australia, and the southwestern United States.

Agriculture production will decline sharply, food prices will rise sharply, and more than a billion people will have to leave their homes because they've become uninhabitable. In the words of the report, "The scale of destruction is beyond our capacity to model, with a high likelihood of human civilisation coming to an end."

But all is not lost. We still have time to act, but we must move quickly. The report calls for

a massive global mobilisation of resources . . . in the coming decade to build a zero-emissions industrial system and set in train the restoration of a safe climate. This would be akin in scale to the World War II emergency mobilisation.

Mr. Speaker, the UCP needs to get off its hands and enact a real plan to tackle the climate crisis now. Albertans' lives and those all over the world depend on it.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a tabling or four.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for indulging me. I have a number of tablings on the issue of climate change. I have a couple of e-mails from constituents that I received. One was from Kelly Granigan. She agrees that we need “large-scale, systematic change” to accomplish meaningful action on climate change.

Another one is from Caitlin Richards. She’s a parent of a one-year-old daughter and is increasingly concerned about the climate crisis. She says, “We are running out of time and cannot afford to lose what progress we have already made on developing new strategies, in addition to tree-planting programs and the Alberta carbon levy.”

Also on the topic of climate change, Mr. Speaker, I have an excerpt from Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical, specifically section 26. It says: “There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced.”

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we appreciate the member’s statement that you just made. I hope that you will table your documents in a much more expedient fashion.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I’m sure the Pope would like to know that you’ve cut him off. “Investments have also been made in . . . production and transportation which consume less energy.”

Finally, Mr. Speaker, of course, I have a number of tweets from online personality and radio commentator Charles Adler in response to a video that he saw on YouTube wherein the Member for Calgary-Lougheed brags about denying AIDS patients the right to see their dying spouses, and specifically . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. [interjection] Thank you, hon. member. You are finished your tabling, sir. You are finished your tabling, sir. Have a seat.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** No. Have a seat. When the Speaker is on his feet, you are not on your feet. Am I making myself clear, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Crystal.

**The Speaker:** Excellent work.

Are there any other tablings? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. I have the five copies required. This is from the Canadian Press. ‘Can’t Be Any More Clear’: Scientist Says Fires in Alberta Linked to Climate Change.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

I have a tabling. I have six copies of the Child and Youth Advocate report titled Mandatory Reviews into Child Deaths for the period of April 1, 2018, to September 30, 2018, received in my office yesterday, June 10, 2019.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Schweitzer, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, pursuant to the Statutes Repeal Act an undated report entitled Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Statutes Repeal Act, 2019 List.

## Oral Question Period

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

### Labour and Social Legislation

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government’s election promises are not worth the paper they’re written on. Take this government’s attack on banked overtime. On April 2, 2019, the now Premier stated to the *Edmonton Journal*: “This does not affect overtime pay. I repeat – it does not affect or diminish overtime pay.” But we know that the average oil and gas worker stands to lose up to \$320 a week. To the Premier. Promise made, promise broken: why?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader is rising to answer.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition continues to mischaracterize the situation around overtime. To be very, very clear, as we have been many times in the past, workers have options to enter into overtime agreements that have been in place for a long time inside this province. It was only changed just about a year or a year and a half ago or so under the NDP government. Workers would have that option. Nothing would be forced on workers. It would be a partnership between workers and their employers, something that we heard from many employees that they would like to see. I heard from several constituents on that issue, and the opposition should stop with that fear and smear.

**Ms Notley:** The new rules allow employers to impose those arrangements on the workers, and the members opposite know it.

Now, two weeks ago the Premier stood in this House and also made the same claim, but the information was not correct. We have been very, very careful to lay out exactly why the information is not correct. Still, the Premier said it here in the House, information which is not correct, just like the House leader, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier and the House leader: will you stop saying not correct things in this House, and admit that the Premier broke the promise that he made to Albertans on April 2 of this year with respect to overtime?

1:50

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, let’s be very, very clear. I know that the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to continue to say incorrect things in this Assembly. It is optional. It’s up to workers. They would have to enter into agreements with their employers. It’s taken place inside this province for decades. Nothing has changed from how it was a couple of years ago. Again, it would be up to employees.

What is shocking to me, though, Mr. Speaker, is to watch in this House, both in question period and during bill debate, the opposition, over and over and over, attack employers and job creators in this province, basically implying that they would force something on their employees and treat their employees in terrible ways. That’s ridiculous. They should stop attacking the people that create employment in our province.

**Ms Notley:** You know, the thing about legislation, Mr. Speaker, is that it’s in black and white, and even the UCP can’t run away from that.

Now, there’s more, Mr. Speaker. Albertans were shocked last November when audio emerged of the Premier praising those fighting against the rights of gay couples to adopt children. The

Premier stated repeatedly that he would not legislate on social issues, except fast-forward to no less than three weeks into his first session, and he's introduced a bill to – wait for it – legislate on social issues by rolling back guaranteed protections for LGBTQ kids. To the Premier. Promise made, promise broken. How many more promises do you plan to break?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and her caucus can't help themselves. They focus on fear and smear. You'd think they would learn. On April 16 they were fired by the people of Alberta exactly because of those tactics.

Let me also be very clear, as we have been in this House many times, that Alberta will still be the province with the best GSA protection in the entire country. That's important to our caucus. That's important to our government and to our party. That's what we will be focused on. This party across from me, the opposition, should stop with the fear and smear. They should stop making things up and stick with the facts. Alberta will continue to have strong GSA protection in place.

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

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Ms Notley:** Last week the Education minister held a press conference that can only be described charitably as a train wreck. She told the media that her Education Act restores balance to how different groups are treated in their schools. To the minister: can she please inform the House how an act that guaranteed timely and fulsome protection of vulnerable LGBTQ kids at schools in any way detracted from the experience of other kids who were not involved in GSAs?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, to be very clear, the opposition continues to make things up, continues with their fear and their smear. Alberta will have the best protection for GSAs, something that was voted in with Bill 10, that was supported by the legacy parties that make up the United Conservative Party and was supported by the NDP Party at the same time. That's what the facts are. So the opposition should stop playing with that.

Now, what will change is the attack that continued from the former government on all sorts of groups within our education system. We'll be focused on working with parents, focused on working with teachers to educate our kids in the best possible way.

**Ms Notley:** The Education minister's comments got even more out of touch. She said, quote: I care about every single student regardless of the label that they have; I care about every single student, whether they are – whatever. The word is not "whatever," Mr. Speaker. It's "gay." We know that private schools have been fighting against even using the word "gay." To the minister, not the House leader, will she say the word "gay," and will she make it clear that school board policies on GSAs should include the word "gay" if that is what students want?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, the approach that continues to happen inside this House, which borders on bullying of the Education minister, is similar to the bullying that took place over the weekend by the deputy Leader of the NDP Party against a singer who was trying to participate in the raising of the pride flag here on the Legislature Grounds. I can tell you – it's interesting – when I was home this weekend, Albertans said to me very loud and clear that they are so sick and tired of the bullying tactics of the NDP. It is ridiculous. It's inappropriate. I call on them to stop it in this House and, certainly, to stop it outside of this House.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, when the minister is allowed to speak, her ill-informed talking points are just disrespectful to all who care about GSAs. There's no timeline for principals to act. There's no policy barring schools from discouraging kids from requesting a GSA. There's no longer an enforcement mechanism. Private schools can discriminate should they choose. And, of course, there's no guaranteed protection from being outed. Why won't the minister at least come clean to the kids she is bound to serve? Why won't she just, frankly, be better at her job?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Education minister is great at her job. I'm proud of our Education minister. I'm proud to stand with her inside this House. I'm proud of the work that she's doing inside our education system.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again, we do not support mandatory notification. We do not support outing gay kids. It is completely ridiculous for the opposition to continue to say that. We have fought, and we will make sure that Bill 10 and the protection for GSAs will remain in our system. The NDP should stop saying false facts.

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

**Ms Notley:** We support gay-straight alliances; we wouldn't out our kids: now, those were the words of the current Minister of Justice during his bid to lead the UCP. Now he willingly stands by as the Premier plots to destroy to GSAs and, of course, out those who wish to start them. To the minister: if you can abandon your promises on matters that are this fundamental to basic values this quickly, what other promises can Albertans look forward to you abandoning?

### Speaker's Ruling

#### Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility

**The Speaker:** I might just intervene that I'm not entirely sure that the hon. Minister of Justice – I'm not sure what government policy you might be referring to him abandoning, but . . .

**Ms Notley:** Outing gay kids, breach of the Charter: that's the one.

**The Speaker:** I think that the Speaker is the one who has the call at this point in time. I rarely intervene . . . [interjection] I would prefer you to fill me in when you have the call, not when I have the call.

The Government House Leader.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

(continued)

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Justice minister has maintained his commitments, as has Alberta's new government, which is to keep Bill 10, to keep the best protection for GSAs and for kids who want to participate in GSAs. That's a promise made, a promise kept. That is what this government is going to do. Despite the fact that the opposition wants to keep making things up, we do not believe in mandatory notification. We do not believe in outing gay kids. We stand with Bill 10. We stand with having the best GSA protection in the entire country of any province. That's a fact. I thank the hon. Justice minister for supporting that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has a wonderful opportunity now.

**Ms Notley:** Speaking of making things up, Mr. Speaker, the hon. House leader is breaking new records today.



Anyway, according to the Attorney General, quote: as the United Conservative Party goes forward, we have a lot of work to do to build trust with LGBTQ people. To the Attorney General: do you actually believe that the best way to build trust with people is to tell them what you think they want to hear when you're running for something and then break your promise once elected?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich for that member to talk about telling people when they run for something and then breaking their promise when they're elected when she didn't bother to mention the largest tax increase in the history of the province and then brought it in place when she came into this Assembly. Again, it's misinformation that's being presented by the Leader of the Official Opposition. The Justice minister and all of us inside the new Alberta government stand for the strongest protection of GSAs, stand for making sure kids are not bullied inside schools. We will continue to support Bill 10. That is the position that was taken by the legacy caucus of this party, and it's not going to change.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted at 1:59.

The Leader of the Official Opposition on your second supplemental.

**Ms Notley:** Yesterday the AG claimed that Bill 8, or, as I like to call it, Bill Hate, will usher in the strongest protections for LGBTQ kids in Canada. That is not true. Now, while it appears very possible that the Education minister doesn't actually understand her own act, the House leader clearly doesn't understand it, as an AG and as a member of the Law Society you are expected to read legislation and to explain it to the public in good faith. Will the minister commit to reading the legislation from Ontario and the policies from Nova Scotia and correct the record in this House tomorrow?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the minister and all of the United Conservative Party and the Alberta government support the strongest protection for GSAs in the entire country. The minister, when he says that, is correct. When I say that, I'm correct. The hon. Leader of the Opposition does not want to refer to that, but that's the fact. That's an important issue. It's important to this government. It's important to Albertans. We will still have the strongest protections for GSAs of any province in the country. Those are the facts. I'm disappointed that the hon. Leader of the Opposition keeps presenting facts that are not exactly truthful.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted by the Member for . . . [interjection] A point of order is noted by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

The rules around here are pretty simple. I stand up; everybody else doesn't speak. I sit back down; everybody else speaks. I hope that you'll follow the rules.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

## 2:00 Municipal Government Act Amendments

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's changes to the MGA aren't changes at all. In fact, the entirety of Bill 7 is basically just restating powers that municipalities already have to defer or eliminate the collection of taxes. Earlier this year the city of Lethbridge provided a seven-year cancellation of taxes for a \$4 million health development. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: won't you admit that this bill is nothing but a trumped-up communications plan to give the illusion that your government is open for business?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. The amendment that was put forward is geared towards giving flexibility to our municipalities to make sure that they attract investment and economic opportunities to all of our communities.

I want to correct the record. The section the members opposite are referring to is section 347, and in that particular section it clearly says: where "a council considers it equitable to do so." There is nothing in the MGA that is geared towards economic investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Ceci:** They don't need flexibility; they need predictability and certainty, Mr. Speaker.

The nonlegislation brought forward by this minister has done one thing, and that's stir up confusion for municipalities. The mayor of St. Albert told her local newspaper: "I think the first phone call they should have [made] was to [call] both RMA . . . and AUMA . . . We could have given [them] feedback and helped develop the bill." My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why didn't you consult with municipalities on the legislation? Perhaps they could have told you it was a nothing bill.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you again for the question. Mr. Speaker, when I took office as the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the first thing that I did in my very first week was to reach out to mayors and reeves across this province to give them a heads-up on the priorities of our ministry. And on April 16 the people of this province voted in large numbers. We clearly laid out in our platform that we would specifically pursue this amendment. It was a promise made; it is a promise kept.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo on your second supplemental.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad he reached out. Did municipalities ask for this bill? No. The one thing this bill could do is draw more attention to the ability of municipalities to defer or lower taxes, but that added exposure has also caused worry with the mayor of St. Albert. She fears that overuse of these tools could spur a "race to the bottom" as municipalities attempt to outdo each other on the incentives for developers and corporations. To the minister: you introduced a nothing bill, you didn't talk to anyone before you did it, and now you're creating fear amongst your stakeholders.

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, you see, when we put forward this particular bill, I had the mayor of Strathcona county, I had business leaders, and they were all part of that particular announcement. The one thing that the member opposite doesn't understand is that they have no understanding of what it takes to create an environment for businesses to do well. They presided over the near-decline of our economy. Our government would not let that happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage the members opposite to set a better example for our youth.

## Red Deer College Transition to University Status Postsecondary Graduates' Employment

**Mr. Stephan:** Red Deer College will become Red Deer university upon an order in council under the Post-secondary Learning Act, which authorizes the establishment of undergraduate universities.

The college is working with the ministry for the minister to initiate the order in council. To the Minister of Advanced Education: will he confirm that his ministry will support the college in its work to become a university to provide improved educational choices for Albertan families?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, we are working very carefully and closely with Red Deer College to help it transition to university status. The transition process takes several years and includes a number of steps to ensure that the degrees that are offered are meaningful and are necessary within the broader community and within the province as well. Moreover, Red Deer is one of our fastest growing communities, so this transition will help to give the residents of Red Deer more educational opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I think I'm out of time. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government's platform states that it will focus on increased institutional and individual choices for universities and given that this government's platform also states that it will reduce provincial red tape and mandates on universities and colleges, freeing them to innovate and compete more and comply with bureaucratic mandates less, to the minister: what will this government do to apply these platform principles to support the college in its work to become a university?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Indeed, getting out of the way and reducing unnecessary bureaucratic rules and red tape is critical to helping our institutions move forward. There are onerous reporting requirements that are preventing our institutions from innovating and competing, and as we look to strengthen our postsecondary system here in Alberta, we need to make sure that they have the capacity to innovate, to conduct necessary research, to help ensure that they are fulfilling the labour market needs not just of today but also of the future.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that under the NDP's watch net private-sector jobs shrank by tens of thousands and given that there will be thousands of new university and college graduates looking for jobs, to the minister: what will you do to help improve the employment outlook of thousands of Alberta's postsecondary graduates?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, it's a top priority, making sure that our graduates have opportunities available to them once they finish their programs. In particular, we're going to be doing two very particular things. First and foremost, we'll be working and supporting a range of different organizations, including Careers: the Next Generation and Skills Canada, and expanding the registered apprenticeship program to help encourage more high school students to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. As well, we'll also be evaluating the labour market impacts of degree programs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

## Public Service Contract Negotiations

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is just weeks old, but already they're making bold threats to public-sector workers that would make even the former PC government blush. A letter that we've obtained from the Finance minister's office threatens that if public-sector unions, including postsecondary instructors, don't agree to delay talks on wages, the government will consider "all available options up to and including legislation." To the Finance minister: is issuing an over-the-top threat to public-sector workers really the best approach to bargaining in good faith?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this point in time we have requested a delay in arbitration hearings. We believe that that's in Albertans' best interests as we determine a pathway forward out of the fiscal mess that the previous government left us in. We're waiting for the MacKinnon panel to report. We believe that we deserve to give a thoughtful response on a path forward for Albertans.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, as an English teacher, Mr. Speaker, I have to point out that there's a difference between a request and a threat.

Given that our public-sector workers include nurses who care for the sick, teachers who prepare our students for their futures, and guards who protect our Legislature, to the minister: will you apologize in this House today for this sham consultation that you claim to be running on wage talks and bullying tactics that you have turned to?

**The Speaker:** I know that the hon. member has spent 10 years inside this Assembly and knows that after question 4 preambles are no longer used.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we value the contribution our public service makes to delivering high-quality services to Albertans. We're committed to ensuring that we have a path forward, to continuing to deliver high-quality services to Albertans, and to being fiscally responsible. Albertans expect nothing less of this government. Therefore, we've requested a delay in arbitration so we can understand the best path forward on behalf of all parties.

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the head of this government's own blue-ribbon panel has already called for public-sector wage rollbacks and given that the minister is hanging this hammer over the heads of public-sector workers with a threat of legislation, will the minister commit today to retracting his letter, sitting down with public-sector unions, and to start bargaining in good faith?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're committed to working in good faith with all stakeholders, including our public service stakeholders and partners. We believe that a request to delay arbitration is reasonable, is responsible, and is in the best interests of Albertans so that we can deal with the fiscal mess that Albertans have been handed by the previous government, which is the members opposite.

### Provincial Budget Revenue Forecasts

**Ms Phillips:** Recently it was revealed that Alberta's Minister of Finance devoted many hours to a private school that outlawed witchcraft, the occult, and casting spells, but the minister seems to believe he can wave a wand, balance a budget while blowing a 4 and a half billion dollar hole in it, and not touch education or health care. The minister is no Dumbledore, but for those who need health care and education, he may just be Voldemort. Will the minister confirm with this House that revenue forecasts aren't magic but are prepared by professionals and private-sector forecasting firms?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, our government is committed to being responsible with hard-working Albertans' tax dollars, and we will follow through on that. We're committed to delivering high-quality services to Albertans, and we're committed to balance in our first term. As a result of that, again, we will be working judiciously to bring forward a budget in the fall and believe that we can accomplish both ends.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that this Finance minister appears to believe that private-sector forecasters and dedicated public servants use a Ouija board to prepare revenue forecasts, why did this minister continue his attack on the integrity of officials in Treasury Board and Finance in question period yesterday?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely believe in and have witnessed first-hand the very skilled capabilities of senior department officials. Again, we are working judiciously to clean up the mess that the previous government has left us. The previous government left us on a trajectory for \$100 billion of accumulated provincial debt. That kind of debt would prevent future governments from delivering high-quality services to Albertans. Our policies will reverse that trend.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that this minister thinks he can justify eliminating the classroom improvement fund in his upcoming minibudget, does this minister think that supports for students with disabilities or help for teachers in managing increasingly complex classrooms will come by magic this fall, or does he have some other way to replace those funds up his sleeve? Is there another freelance government announcement coming in today's question period?

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to delivering high-quality services to Albertans. We made a commitment to Albertans that we would maintain education funding in spite of the fiscal challenges that we're facing. We're also implementing a series of policies that will return investment to this province and, with it, jobs and opportunities and will over time increase government revenues. We have the responsibility to clean up the mess the previous government has left us in.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge is rising with a question.

### Violent Crime in Northeast Calgary

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sadly, there has been a rash of violence within the Indo-Canadian community in northeast Calgary. In April and May there were four murders of Indo-Canadians, which police suggest could be connected and linked to organized crime. We also know that sometimes new Canadians have a tougher time accessing police services. Can the Minister of

Justice inform this House about what steps are being taken to combat this rise in organized crime in northeast Calgary?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. member for the advocacy on this issue. It's been thoughtful and timely. I'm looking forward to meeting later this week with some key community groups regarding this matter to make sure we can start hearing their concerns and addressing this. We're also going to be making sure that we continue to provide our law enforcement officials with the resources they need, including additional funding for ALERT to disrupt gang activity. We're going to make sure that our law enforcement officials have the resources they need to do their jobs.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau has gutted much of the tough-on-crime legislation introduced under the previous Conservative government and given that the violence we are seeing on Calgary streets is looking like the all-too-real violence in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, what steps will our government take to combat that rise in crime in our community?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our platform outlined a detailed plan for us to combat crime here in this province, including funding for ALERT, and part of that funding for ALERT is going to go towards combatting gang activity. We're also going to be making sure that we provide funding to drug treatment courts to deal with addictions and many of the root causes of crime here in our province. I also want to flag as well that the ALERT team had a big drug bust this last week in Grande Prairie. There were seven arrests. They seized cocaine, fentanyl, drugs, and body armour.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that children are worried about their safety in schools, hundreds of people rallied in northeast Calgary just the other weekend to protest the dangers of drugs making their way onto streets and into schools and given that our United Conservative platform promised to address issues related to organized crime and illegal drugs, can the minister tell this House what our government is doing to make the streets safer?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, unlike previous governments, we're going to be making sure that our law enforcement officials have the resources that they need to get the job done. We're going to be making sure that we hire 50 new prosecutors across Alberta to make sure that we can deal with the backlogs that often happen in our courts. We're going to be making sure that ALERT has the funding it needs to deal with these gangs. I do look forward this week, again, to meeting with the community organizations and start talking to them about a path forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and a special thank you to the Finance minister, who yesterday pledged to fully funding enrolment growth for Alberta students. It took weeks of questioning by this opposition and, of course, terrible stories

coming into the public about the lack of funding that the government had brought forward. Again, thank you for your announcement yesterday, Finance minister.

I want to give the Finance minister a chance to do good again today. Will he pledge to feeding the 33,000 students who rely on a school nutrition program and make sure that it's a priority in his upcoming budget? To the Minister of Finance.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We understand, value, and very much appreciate this program. As we saw with enrolment growth funding, the NDP is using speculation and scare tactics to create undue stress in our education system.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pretty sure it was the fact that the government failed to actually commit to funding.

Given that it was the fact that the government failed to commit to funding that led to 220 fewer teachers in the Calgary board of education, not this Official Opposition asking the government if they'd fund it, I think that that is completely off the mark, so to the Education minister: will you ensure that you personally talk to every single school board to see that any damage done by the minister's inaction and any job losses will be reversed; make sure that those teachers get hired back, who were let go because of the government's inaction for weeks to give . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I appreciate your efforts to make adjustments, but I think we could all agree that a preamble was used.

The hon. Minister of Education.

2:20

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I've always been available. My office doors are open. I'm speaking to all the stakeholder groups and will be continuing to do so. We've been very clear from the beginning that we are committed to funding education. It is a priority. We will continue to build schools. School boards are in the best position to make their own budgets, so they have that responsibility.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. Given that just last week the Education minister at the eleventh hour cancelled a meeting with the Edmonton public school board, the second-largest school board in this province, and when they asked to reschedule that meeting, they were given a date far into the future, Mr. Speaker, will the minister demonstrate her open door policy, call the board today, and make sure that they book that meeting as soon as possible so that more teachers don't get laid off while this government dithers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I would have to turn that back over to the opposition. I had to cancel because of the filibustering that took place, and I had to reschedule. My next available time I did give to them. They are a large school division. I value their input. Unfortunately, I didn't have a block of time sufficient to give to them except further down the road. So it's on you. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Members of the Official Opposition, I think I'm fairly lenient with when and how we heckle. I just might prefer you to do so when I am not on my feet.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Minimum Wage for Youth

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government's own caucus is doing its job to point out to the minister of labour just how damaging the attack on youth wages really is. Yesterday the Member for Calgary-Cross rightfully pointed out that youth will earn "significantly less." He went on to say that students work hard for their money, that students are saving for school or to put food on the table. I agree. To the minister of labour: if you won't listen to me, will you listen to your own caucus and stop the attack on youth wages?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. As stated before, the student job-creation wage is about creating jobs for Alberta's youth. We made this as a commitment in our platform, and I know that our entire caucus supports this to get Alberta youth back to work. We are not afraid of the tough questions on this issue from any members in this House so that we can actually point out the concerns and misinformation that are out there and issues that are raised by constituents. This is about creating jobs for youth, and that is what we'll do.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Member for Calgary-Cross also said that the impact of the attack on youth wages would be felt especially hard in "lower income areas" and given that this government has moved to cut people's pay before offering anything new in the way of social supports or housing supports, to the same minister: how can you be sure that paying Alberta's young workers less than the minimum wage won't leave some of them unable to afford the basics?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is about creating opportunities for our youth. The previous government raised the minimum wage to \$15, nearly 50 per cent, in the face of one of the worst economic downturns in Alberta history, and this left thousands of youth without the opportunity for any work. We need to fix this. We are in a youth job crisis. This needed to be addressed so that youth can get on the job-creation wage, start earning, and contribute, whether it be to their families or for their education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister revealed yesterday that the Calgary Stampede has chosen not to utilize the UCP's age-based wage discrimination and given that the minister said that government reached out to the Stampede after media reported that they may be retroactively cutting youth wages, to the minister: do you intend to call every business considering to cut youth pay? Will you counsel each of them to keep it at \$15 per hour? Minister, do you not see that it is mind-boggling that you're celebrating that the Stampede is refusing to pay your new discriminatory wage?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you. As the member opposite knows, the minimum wage is just that, a minimum. Employers may choose to pay higher than that, and in fact the Calgary Stampede chose to do that. The reason why I raised that point yesterday is to be able to demonstrate that a minimum is just a minimum. This is about addressing the issue created by the previous government, which eliminated tremendous amounts of opportunity for our youth in Alberta. This is about creating an environment where businesses can create jobs for Alberta youth. Mr. Speaker, \$13 an hour is better than zero dollars per hour.

### Rocky View School Division Concerns

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that Airdrie is booming. It has been one of the fastest growing cities for quite some time. Last week CBC news reported that classrooms across the Rocky View school division, which covers my constituency of Airdrie-East, are amongst the most crowded in all of Alberta. Minister, can you please tell my constituents where the Rocky View school division lies on your ministry's priority list?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. I do realize the pressures that that area is under. Just for your awareness, for schools to be considered for modernization funding, school districts must submit a proposal to the government outlining their request. Once received, my department analyzes the request and prioritizes applications as a result of a series of metrics. More details on specific funding allocations will be released when we table the budget this fall.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that, again, that's the most attention that the Airdrie school district has seen in the last four years while the class sizes are bursting at the seams and given that the United Conservative Party's campaign promise was to build new schools, Minister, can you please tell the parents and students in my constituency how this government will address the class size, overcrowding problem in Airdrie?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our platform committed to an audit of the class sizes. My department is already undertaking that good work. Our government is committed to strengthening education by working with our students, our parents, our teachers, our principals, our trustees, and other education stakeholders. As Minister of Education I am focused on strengthening our education system and delivering on our platform commitments, which schools are a part of.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Airdrie-East for the second supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for those responses. Given that 76 per cent of the schools in the Rocky View school division have already surpassed a provincially set target for a desired class size and given that the school board is constantly shuffling grades around various schools trying to do their best to address our growth issues, Minister, my constituents want to

know when new schools will be built in the Rocky View school division.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question, and to the hon. member, thank you. We were elected with a mandate to continue to build schools. I am looking forward to receiving updates on capital project proposals and working with my colleague the Minister of Infrastructure – in fact, we actually met earlier today – to ensure that we can modernize and build new schools across this province.

Thank you so much.

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

### Support for Agriculture in Wildfire-affected Areas

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last month has been a stressful one for residents of northern Alberta, particularly those who have had to leave their homes and those who have lost their homes. Farmers in northern Alberta produce 21 per cent of our crops as well as 10 per cent of our provincial livestock and are vital to our provincial well-being. Wildfires affect their growing season and threaten their livelihoods. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how many farms have been evacuated as a result of wildfires this year, and what supports, particularly, are available to them?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for that very important question. This government is committed to helping the farmers that are affected in that area, that have been evacuated, and where the crop damage has occurred. As with the evacuees, that is something that this government is going to take very seriously.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope to hear more details on that in subsequent answers by the minister.

Mr. Speaker, our government understood the need to take action on climate change to support and protect all Albertans given that scientific evidence indicates wildfires are made more likely and extreme due to climate change and given that so far this year an area almost five times larger than the average five-year burn has burned, contrary to the Premier's assertion that the current situation is, quote, unquote, average, and given that we know that smoke in the air decreases the growing season, as occurred in 2018, to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry once again: do you have any plans to provide actual support for farmers?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to go into more details on the BRM programs, business risk management programs, crop insurance that farmers have. That assessment has to be done at the end of the growing season, and it is something that we will work with the farmers on through this difficult growing season in northern Alberta.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you. I look forward to hearing those details.

Mr. Speaker, given that bees are vital to all areas of agriculture and given that northern Alberta produces some of the best honey in

the world and given that honey is a vital component of food production in Alberta, including honey wineries and meateries – there was a lot of buzz around that in the province – and given that smokey skies cause bees to forage less, reducing production volumes, and given that we are being told that poor air quality due to wildfires and climate change could be the new normal, to the same minister: what plans does your ministry and government have to protect and support beekeepers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreesen:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again, for bee producers, any type of farmer here in Alberta we have a great BRM suite of programs that they can apply for, whether it's crop insurance, whether it's livestock insurance, whether it's beekeepers' insurance. We work with all farmers to make sure that they can be as sustainable as possible and also compete on the global stage.

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

### 2017 UCP Leadership Campaign Investigations

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday when I asked the Minister of Justice if his government would support the Election Commissioner's ongoing investigation into irregular financial contributions that emerged as a result of the UCP's kamikaze scandal, the minister accused me of "relitigating" the past. But there were new finds in this matter as recently as Friday, with the possibility of more. I'll give the minister a second chance. Were you really suggesting that because you won the election, any transgression by the Premier or his inner circle no longer matters?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of this question. I would gladly answer questions about government business. We're not here to relitigate the campaign in the past. If we want to go through the campaign in the past – jobs, economy, pipelines – 55 per cent of Albertans, a million voters, voted for the agenda that this party put forward in the most detailed platform in Alberta history. We're not going to get distracted by allegations. We're going to be focused on jobs of the future.

**Ms Ganley:** That sounds dangerously close to being above the law. Given that yesterday I asked if the government would commit to not interfere with an ongoing investigation – practically, Mr. Speaker, a puffball – and given that the minister called the question "fear and smear" and not important to the people of Alberta and given that the Conservatives in 2008 got rid of the very same Election Commissioner for standing up for democracy, Minister, will you clear up the confusion you caused yesterday and vouch for the independence of the commissioner and confirm that you won't stand in his way?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, the Election Commissioner is free to investigate as he sees fit. Again, we're not going to be distracted by issues of past campaigns. We're focused on jobs of the future. We're focused on making sure that we do what Albertans sent us here to do, which is to implement the most detailed platform in Alberta history. We have the most detailed platform, over 300 commitments that we made. We're in the process right now of implementing that platform. Promises made; promises kept.

**Ms Ganley:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that Friday was almost two months after the election campaign and given that this government's own throne speech referenced democratic reform

legislation in 2020 and given that it would be highly inappropriate to change any election financing law during an active investigation into contributions in the leadership race that the Premier was a part of and since that same campaign is also the subject of an RCMP investigation into voter fraud, can the minister commit that this government will not attempt to change the very legislation these investigations are relying on or replace those involved until the investigation . . .

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I rise again just to mention the fact that the Election Commissioner is free to investigate as he sees fit.

We're here, again, focused on the priorities of Albertans, Mr. Speaker. We're going to make sure that we focus on jobs, the economy, pipelines, and getting Albertans back to work. We have a jobs crisis right now in Alberta. That's our focus. Also, the opposition was not funding law enforcement priorities. We're going to make sure that our front-line law enforcement officials have the resources that they need. We're not focused on light bulbs and shower heads; we're focused on jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

### Choice in Education

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's legacy of school choice has long been seen as a model. Other governments have come to Alberta in order to study our system and learn how to apply it in other jurisdictions. Under the previous government, school choice came under attack. Whether it was the suppression of charter, private, independent, or even home-school programs, the previous NDP government took actions that harmed children in these programs and made life more difficult for teachers and loving parents. Will the Minister of Education commit to supporting school choice in Alberta today?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. Alberta has a long and proud, successful tradition of supporting school choice, and our government is committed to preserving and protecting educational choice. Our government is committed to introducing the choice in education act – I'm looking forward to bringing it forward in the fall – which will affirm that parents have primary responsibility for education of their children.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that charter schools increase options and opportunities for specialization and given that both Alberta's cap on charter schools and its enrolment cap have reduced these opportunities, will the Minister of Education commit to supporting Alberta's charter schools through expanding the rights of such schools and removing the cap on the number of charter schools it allows in the province of Alberta?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Charter schools play an important role in Alberta's educational system by offering more choice to students and their parents. Once it is brought into force, the Education Act will lift the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in this province. Under our government, charter schools will continue to play a key role in our education system.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the United Nations has stated that “parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” and given that independent schools in Alberta save the public education system \$168 million annually and given that Newell Christian School in my riding of Brooks-Medicine Hat adds immense value by preparing students spiritually, academically, socially, and physically, will this government commit to protecting both the status and the funding of independent schools in Alberta?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the hon. member for the question. Our platform was very clear. We will protect the status and funding of independent schools. More information on funding will be available in the near future.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in approximately 30 seconds we will move to points of order. Please, if you are leaving the Chamber for other commitments, do so in an expedient manner.

Hon. members, the Official Opposition House Leader is rising on a point of order that was called at 1:59 and I believe again at 2:01.

#### Point of Order Factual Accuracy

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If it pleases you and the House, I’m happy to combine the two points of order because they deal with the same subject. Shall I continue?

**The Speaker:** I would love that.

**Mr. Bilous:** Although I’m happy to speak twice as long, twice as often.

I’m rising on 23(h), (i), (j), Mr. Speaker. This is in regard to comments that the Government House Leader made regarding their legislation bringing in the strongest protections for kids regarding GSAs. If you’ll indulge me, I want to point to a couple of different examples of legislation that exists in other provinces that prove that the House leader’s comments are false, that there are stronger protections in other jurisdictions.

2:40

Really, the crux of my point in getting up with this point of order, Mr. Speaker, is that this isn’t a matter of opinion. It’s here in black and white. Their government has, through Bill 8, their policy on GSAs, and we’re comparing it to other parts of the country because the Government House Leader stood up and said: no, that’s false; ours is the strongest. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I think that if members are allowed to speak inaccurately in this House when facts are in front of us in black and white, in printing, then it detracts from the very purpose of this place. Quite frankly, you know, then at any point anyone can say anything and it doesn’t matter; facts are completely irrelevant in this place.

I will point out a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. First of all, New Brunswick’s policy regarding GSAs: their policy E-9 is antihomophobia and antiheterosexism policy.

School District 10 is an inclusive anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism organization.

In order that all members of the school committee learn and work together in an atmosphere of respect and safety, free from homophobia, transphobia, anti-gay harassment and/or heterosexism, District 10 recognizes its obligation to adopt

appropriate administrative procedures and strategies, which shall ensure respect for human rights, support diversity, address discrimination, and create a learning environment . . .

District 10 recognizes that LGBTQ students, staff, and same-gender-parented families have the right to:

- self-identification and freedom of expression;
- be treated fairly, equitably and with dignity;
- inclusion, representation and affirmation;
- freedom from harassment, discrimination and violence; and,
- avenues of recourse . . . when they are victims of harassment.

Now, procedure 1, Mr. Speaker:

All employees of School District 10:

- have a responsibility to eliminate homophobia and heterosexism in the working and learning environment.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I recognize the point that you are making. It does come in the form of what sounds to me to be debate about dispute of the facts. You did ask for me to indulge you, so I will be happy to do that for a little bit longer, but if we’re going to go through every jurisdiction, I’m not sure that is the primary point of points of order. So please feel free to proceed but know that that is the direction that we’re heading.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, the point of this is that it is in black and white. This isn’t a matter of debate or a difference of opinion. Bill 8 is in black and white, of what the government is proposing, which is not the strongest legislation protecting the LGBTQ community or GSAs.

There is a very simple difference even between Ontario and Alberta in that in Ontario there is a section that prohibits boards and principals from refusing to use the name of gay-straight alliance or a similar name for certain organizations.

In the current legislation, Mr. Speaker, there is no timeline, which means that principals can defer a decision forever. That doesn’t make their legislation stronger. For me, the concern here is that we have it in black and white: the current legislation brought in by the previous government versus what this government is proposing. Members opposite cannot continue to stand up in this House to say, “ours is the strongest” when it is factually incorrect. That is the crux of this point of order, that it’s not a difference of opinion. It’s that facts are not debated. It’s not opinion; it is fact printed in legislation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your interjections.

The hon. Government House Leader is rising to provide some comments.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly the hon. Opposition House Leader is attempting to debate legislation. There will be an opportunity to debate Bill 8, which I think is the bill that’s before the House, that he is referring to, later today in fact. I would be interested in hearing his comments then.

There was also an opportunity to debate Bill 10, which was the bill that I primarily referred to during question period. I don’t think it’s appropriate to use points of order to try to redebate bills that have already passed this Chamber or to debate bills that are coming up at a later point. I will be very quick, Mr. Speaker, because the Opposition House Leader basically attempted to make several members’ statements during his point of order.

To be very, very clear, our point is this: we continue to support Bill 10, which was passed by both the legacy parties that make up the United Conservative Party and the now government of Alberta. It was supported by the NDP members opposite at the time. We will continue to do that: to protect kids, to make sure that bullying is not

taking place inside our schools, and to recognize the importance of gay-straight alliances. That will remain. We believe that we have the strongest protection in the country and amongst other provinces. If we have some debate later on this legislation, we could have that conversation.

But, clearly, Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of debate, and the Opposition House Leader should not be using his points of order to try to bring forward debate on outstanding legislation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Well, I might just suggest that this is very clearly a case in which this is a dispute of the facts. If the Speaker was put in a position where he had to rule or she had to rule every time one particular set of people inside the Chamber believed one set of facts and another group inside the Chamber believed another set of facts and the Speaker was put in a position to determine what set of facts is, in fact, correct, we would be perpetually asking the Speaker to determine who is saying what is right, is correct, and/or not.

I might just point to a tabling that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning tabled yesterday that I would suggest could create robust debate around the facts that she had used for evidence to strengthen a point of debate. This is exactly what we have, which is a point of debate. I might remind all members of the Assembly to refer to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 639, when it reminds members to not “engage in debate . . . under the guise of a point of order.”

I see the Official Opposition House Leader is rising on a point of order.

#### Point of Clarification

**Mr. Bilous:** Standing Order 13(2). I endeavour to ask if, then, the standing orders are just a matter of discussion as opposed to guidelines for this place, sir.

**The Speaker:** I would suggest there is a very wide range of facts that members will bring to the Assembly, one that I just pointed out to the hon. members. I would suggest that members of the Official Opposition believe one thing to be true, say, about a railcars contract, and the members of the government believe another thing to be true. This is very clearly a dispute of the facts, and while the Leader of the Official Opposition might not agree with my ruling, it is the ruling that's been made. We are carrying on. This concludes this point of order.

### Orders of the Day

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate June 10: Mr. Milliken]

**The Speaker:** Are there those wishing to speak? The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great opportunity for me to rise and to respond on behalf of Alberta's NDP Official Opposition to the throne speech and take this opportunity as well to address some of the matters that we've just, in fact, been speaking about here, the whole issue of sort of truth in the post-truth world and all that kind of stuff, but we'll get to that. I'm very proud to rise.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I want to first recognize, Mr. Speaker, that we are gathered here today on the traditional territory of Treaty 6, and I want to acknowledge the Métis people of Alberta, who share a very deep connection with this land. Land acknowledgements are an act of reconciliation. The act of making a statement to recognize the traditional territory of the indigenous people who called this land home long before the arrival of settlers is an important first step in the path to reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been very clear about this. So when we learned that this new government no longer sees land acknowledgements as a necessary component of public addresses by government representatives, I was surprised and disappointed, and I wasn't alone in that reaction. Indeed, First Nations leaders like Treaty 6 Grand Chief Dr. Wilton Littlechild are disheartened by this government's refusal to acknowledge treaties between First Nations and the Crown at public events and functions.

2:50

The process of reconciliation must be taken seriously by all levels of government, not just when it's convenient, and before we can even begin to have conversations about reconciliation, we need to at the very least acknowledge the histories of our two people and the treaties that define those relationships. This decision is unnecessary, this decision by the government, and it takes the good-faith steps that we've been making towards renewing our relationship with First Nations and Métis people in Alberta backwards. In light of the recently released final report of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, an inquiry that the now Premier was not in support of having occur, the fact is that the need to take positive steps on the path to reconciliation is especially crucial. Now is not the time to lose ground on reconciliation. We must continue to move forward. Now, I feel very strongly about this, Mr. Speaker.

Also, let me be clear that I believe that the government's current response to people who raise this issue is also very disrespectful. They argue that their plan to create an indigenous opportunities corporation is all that needs to be done to show reconciliation. This is desperately wrong. While we do not take any issue with the idea of the new corporation – indeed, it is a new take on a series of initiatives that we were already considering and putting into play – it is not in and of itself the answer to reconciliation.

This corporation will facilitate money lending to indigenous groups who are participating in economic endeavours of which this government approves, and there is nothing wrong with that, but it denies the fact that a nation-to-nation relationship obviously allows that some First Nations may want to pursue different avenues for community and economic and social development. That is their right. But to suggest their primary mechanism of pursuing a productive nation-to-nation relationship or meaningful recognition of the need to pursue reconciliation or to enact the principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples is just one more example of disrespect. Mr. Speaker, we must do better than just that. It is not simply a matter of saying: we're lending a few groups that agree with us money; therefore, our obligation to pursue reconciliation has now been fulfilled. It has



not, and I hope that this government will reconsider this issue because they are in the wrong place right now on this matter.

Now, before I go further, I would be remiss if I didn't, as one typically does in these throne speech responses, offer another round of thanks to the constituents of Edmonton-Strathcona. You've put your faith in me for the last 11 years and have asked me to serve for another four. This is not an honour I take for granted, and I thank you. It is my great privilege, though, today to not only offer this response as the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona but also in my new role as Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

The members opposite have already taken to suggesting that the fact that we were not returned to that side of the House is somehow an indication that I and my opposition colleagues are somehow at odds with Albertans should we offer up a critical analysis of the government's agenda or ultimate record or do anything to hold them accountable. Now, acceptance of this argument would include, of course, acceptance of the notion that our parliamentary system, the role of the opposition, and the very act of rigorous debate had been rejected by Albertans in the last election. This, of course, is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. I would counsel members of the government to govern with humility and to remember that their mandate remains intact by respecting this Legislature, the democratic system upon which it rests, and, ultimately, the right of Albertans to be heard and accommodated through the next term of this Assembly.

It's with this mandate in mind that I rise to identify the common ground we share with members of this government while at the same time noting the areas where we believe that mistakes are being made and that the best interests of Albertans are being jeopardized.

Allow me to begin with the areas of agreement between our opposition caucus and the government caucus. There's absolutely no doubt that job creation and the economy were top of mind for Albertans in the last election and continue to be top of mind going forward. I think there is a great deal of agreement between our caucus and the government caucus on the urgent need to ensure that Albertans have more jobs, not fewer jobs. We all understand the stress and the anxiety that people experience when out of work, worrying about how to pay the bills, plan for the future, and support their family.

We all understand that with a historic drop in the price of oil confounded more recently by the inability of our oil and gas producers to get their product to market, Alberta's economy has been hit hard, and if it wasn't obvious before, the linkage between investment in the oil and gas sector and investment into many other sectors of the economy came into stark relief as jobs throughout the economy were negatively impacted. So it is true that we are all very seized with the need to create jobs. Now, let me go a bit further and say that we on this side of the House are also seized with the need to preserve jobs. Layoffs, say in the public sector, are not a means to creating jobs in the private sector.

I will admit that while we on this side of the House put a great deal of thought and planning into our strategy to create jobs, we were not as successful as we could have been in sharing either our record of job creation or a plan going forward with Albertans. As leader the responsibility for that shortcoming, of course, lies with me, but I do not believe that that should be allowed to undermine the merit of our plans going forward. Indeed, I believe they should be seriously considered by this House.

We had proposed more jobs, actually, than the current government has with their massive \$4.5 billion tax cut for wealthy corporations. Our plan centred around putting some more support behind petrochemical diversification. This was a tried-and-true strategy. Indeed, our initial \$1 billion investment earlier in the term had drawn in \$13 billion in private capital investment and already

created 10,000 new jobs. This is to be contrasted with the plan of the current government, which involves a \$4.5 billion tax cut in return for a \$12 billion bump in economic activity, this according to their own numbers.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Frankly, this is a starkly unimpressive performance rate, and it should be contrasted with our plan moving forward: \$7 billion in energy value-added investments that was estimated to attract roughly \$70 billion – \$70 billion – in incremental private-sector investment over 10 years along with 70,000 jobs. Now, these estimates did not even take into account the additional economic activity that would arise from secondary investment coming from the production of new feedstock materials in the petrochemical sector. Now, we don't really know where this government stands on that program or any other efforts to diversify and get us off the boom-and-bust roller coaster. Not yet. We do know that they're moving backwards on carbon pricing and, in so doing, jeopardizing thousands of current jobs and walking away from the technological innovation and diversification work that was paired with that pricing. We know their corporate tax cut will blow a big hole in our fiscal foundation, and it's very risky.

For one, this government's own platform projects it won't generate a single dollar of economic return for at least two years. Frankly, other experts suggest that even that projection is overly optimistic. But let's go with that one: at least two years, Madam Speaker. With the loss of 19,000 full-time jobs in May alone, I would argue that Albertans want and need action now, and what we have is a plan to theoretically, under a best-case scenario, assuming the one economist out of the 10 economists is correct, create jobs beginning in 2021. I say "theoretically" because, as I've said before, it hasn't worked elsewhere.

Let's first look at the state of Kansas, where this experiment was supposed to deliver a shot of adrenaline into the heart of the Kansas economy. When it was all said and done, the *Washington Post* instead described it as "a shot of poison." Now, the Governor of Kansas had promised that eliminating corporate taxes for nearly 200,000 businesses would create 23,000 jobs, and he put his plan into action in 2013. The total hit to the state treasury was actually much less than the \$4.5 billion that we have projected getting lost by Alberta's treasury. Nonetheless, it was a big cut. More importantly, it didn't work. Now the so-called Kansas experiment is ridiculed, and it sends shivers down the spines of job creators throughout the U.S. Job growth during the time of zero corporate taxes was slower than the national average, and the state debt load doubled. The greatest damage was felt – guess what? – in schools. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

It got so bad that the Kansas Supreme Court ruled that one-quarter of students in the state were receiving such a poor education as a result of the budget cuts that it violated the state constitution. That's right. Students were being taught in illegal conditions to finance a corporate tax cut which did not create jobs or economic growth. Now, I'm not saying that we're in quite those circumstances yet, but this Premier's own Alberta experiment has only just begun.

Now, after weeks of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora grilling them and pointing out countless examples of how not funding enrolment would harm our schools, this government caved. Credit to them for doing that, I suppose. There are 15,000 new students coming this fall, and they deserve an incremental bump in teachers and classroom space for their learning.

3:00

But that's just the start, Madam Speaker. We know that more support is needed, especially for areas where students may be

struggling, like reading and writing and numeracy. That was the intent behind our introduction of the classroom improvement fund, that and supporting special-needs students. The fund was due to add another 400 teachers to our schools this fall on top of the 600 we would see added to address enrolment.

There's more. We know that students can't learn on an empty stomach. That should be an obvious thing, but given how long it took for us to get this program in place, apparently it wasn't quite as obvious as we thought. Nonetheless, we knew it. That's why we introduced a school nutrition pilot program. Our intent was to rapidly expand it. We were getting such good results. Our \$15.5 million investment each year was feeding 33,000 students every single school day. As the Member for Lethbridge-West has told me, some schools had actually taken it upon themselves to send food home with students on the weekend, too.

Prior to the election call we were close to finalizing a report on just how positive of an impact this program had. I would implore the government to release that report very soon, before coming to any conclusions as a result of their blue-ribbon panel. The initial feedback that we heard was very positive, Madam Speaker. Students participating in the pilot were better focused in class, their attitudes were better, and their academic results were trending in a positive direction. This was a relatively small investment when you consider the extent of the positive benefits. Schools were also teaching kids about food preparation, sanitization, how to share. A lot of good came from something so very simple.

So far we've heard nothing from this government on whether they will fund the classroom improvement fund that I just described or the nutrition pilot project. Let us be clear that enrolment funding is not the Holy Grail. It is simply the very beginning of the starting line. Even with funding enrolment, which I truly believe this government had no intention of doing prior to pressure from both this opposition and parents and school boards, I now worry where else this government will look to deepen the cuts they plan.

I fear, for example, that those who are sick or in need of care will also suffer or perhaps suffer more. We've already seen warnings from front-line paramedics that as many as five ambulances are being kept off Calgary streets at any given time. This leads to code reds, Madam Speaker, which means there's not a single available ambulance to respond to an emergency. This is dangerous and disturbing. This government hasn't even introduced a budget yet. That leads me to think that this is just the tip of the iceberg at best.

Again, we have seen this elsewhere. Now, in Kansas after four years of failure both the Kansas state House and the state Senate voted to end these ridiculous cuts. The experiment came to an end, but boy had a lot of damage been done over the time it took for them to learn their lesson. We have a chance to stop this experiment basically before it starts, before the damage is done in our schools and our hospitals.

Now, I'm sure the government will say that it's not apples to apples and that I'm simply cherry-picking the worst examples of where these types of tax cuts have failed. But, frankly, U.S. President Donald Trump has attempted similar changes since the Kansas experiment and hasn't really had much better in the way of results. Telecom giant AT&T promised his administration that it would hire 7,000 new employees if its corporate taxes were cut by \$1 billion. The Trump government obliged. What did they get in return? AT&T cut 23,000 jobs.

I could go on and on about where these cuts have failed south of the border, but here in Canada tax giveaways to wealthy corporations haven't actually fared much better. The Premier's own cabinet buddies tried something similar. He has seen first-hand what happens. The Harper government pledged to cut corporate

taxes by 7 per cent over four years to create jobs and spur economic renewal. It didn't work. Instead, corporations stockpiled the savings they had realized. Former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney came to call these funds "dead money," dead as in not generating any economic activity, Madam Speaker. They totalled more than \$500 billion at one point.

I guess time will tell what happens here in Alberta, Madam Speaker, but past precedent tells us that this Premier is pulling our economic future and the academic future of our children in a very risky spot. I've yet to see him stand in this House with evidence to prove that any of this will work other than the report of one single economist. This government has resisted calls by members of our opposition to slow down the corporate tax reduction. I believe the member for Edmonton-City Centre proposed dropping the rate at least to 10 per cent first, rather than going straight to 8. He argued: let's give it time to assess the impact and determine whether it's really creating jobs. But the members opposite voted against that very prudent suggestion.

I guess that's really it. The experiment is a go, and the budget hole it generates is larger than any we've seen in any other jurisdiction. We are talking about blowing a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget over four years.

What's more is that this government also served notice yesterday that it really is continuing on its plan to cancel the oil-by-rail contracts. Now, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar brought a motion forward yesterday looking for support for the contracts from both sides of the aisle. It was voted down by the government caucus. These contracts stand to generate \$2 billion in net profit for the Alberta Treasury. And just let me be clear. By net I mean that it will cost \$3.7 billion and would generate roughly \$5.7 billion. Now this should seem obvious, but judging from comments made by members opposite during the motion and the debate of that motion yesterday, it appears that the need to explain "net" cannot actually be overstated, Madam Speaker. Hopefully, people get that now.

Regardless, we are now hearing that the Premier will legislate his way out of these contracts if he has to, and he's doing this as we learn that line 3 is facing further delays, and the Premier said last week that he's likely to extend curtailment into 2020. Now, I'm not saying that our government would necessarily have been able to end curtailment given the current line 3 situation, but what we do know is that a way to reduce the intensity and the volume of curtailment is to move our product by rail. With no pipeline to tidewater, delays to line 3 and KXL, and a backlog of demands on rail cars, we were in a difficult position, and that's why we signed the contracts. We did what was necessary.

Meanwhile, members opposite are so focused on running on an ideological platform that they repeat their platitudes and their talking points endlessly. The private sector will do it; the private sector will do it. A significant portion of the private sector that was moving oil by rail leading up to last fall was that portion of the private sector that enjoyed the benefit of buying the oil for \$8 a barrel and selling it down to their sister companies in the southern U.S. at \$40 or \$50. Yes, those folks were using rail, and in the process Albertans were getting taken to the cleaners. The rest of the private sector was not using rail to the degree that they needed, and small producers were being pushed right out of the market. As a result, we were getting a situation where distressed barrels were being sold for \$8 or less a barrel, thereby increasing the profit of certain groups and undermining overall the return to Albertans by unestimatable amounts of money. That's how it worked when we left it to the private sector. Albertans lost and most oil and gas companies lost. That's what the members opposite seem committed to returning to, and that was the situation that we were trying to avoid.

What's more is that while this Premier ran on a platform of jobs, economy, and pipelines, he seems to be ignoring the first two, jobs and the economy, and waiting on the third, with no end in sight. We'll see. Now he's looking for people to blame. As our Finance critic said yesterday, his path to balance is really "a path to baloney." Relying on who our Finance critic quite rightly referred to as the Premier's "favourite stenographer," the Premier is actually out there saying things which are not correct, in particular suggesting that there's some sort of conspiracy between our government and the public service to cook the Alberta Treasury books. This is insulting, Madam Speaker. It's insulting to the integrity of the officials who worked on the budget, many of whom now advise the Premier. It's insulting to the budgeting process, which is heavily scrutinized and audited. Indeed, the Conference Board of Canada, you know, that left-leaning ideological apologist organization for New Democrats, gave our government top marks in the country for the transparency and the accountability of our financial reporting, and this was due in large part to the public officials this Premier is now preparing to discredit as he begins yet another campaign of truthiness to the people of Alberta.

It's so clearly obvious that what this Premier is actually trying to do is find a scapegoat for the \$6.5 billion hole he plans to blow into the Alberta budget. He won't balance the budget one year earlier than us, in 2022. In fact, with what he's currently trial ballooning, he may not even balance it in this term. Promise made; promise broken. But I guess we're not supposed to worry about all this because we have a new \$30 million war room, Madam Speaker.

3:10

Now, to be clear, in some ways this is simply a continuation of the work that our government had already done and was already doing. We'd established a Market Access Task Force that consisted of key leaders from within the energy sector. We had set aside significant funds to advertise across the country to build nationwide public support for the need to build a pipeline to tidewater. These are things that we were doing, and our work had been paying off. The level of support for the pipeline had grown from about 4 in 10 to 6 in 10 across the country, and this was important. We did this by arguing the economics, by talking about how this created jobs not just in Alberta but across the country. We talked to Canadians about how much this meant for their economic security.

We also spoke to those who worried about the environment. We talked to them about how our climate leadership plan delinked pipeline construction from the issue of greenhouse gas emissions coming from the oil sands. What we didn't do was spend that money picking fights with Canadians, polarizing people on the issue, and dialing up the intensity of opposition to Alberta's and Canada's dire need for a pipeline to tidewater. That is to be contrasted with the Premier's current plan for his so-called war room. As a start, this appears to be the Premier's way of pitting the economy and the environment against one another once again.

Now, I will say that I don't agree with some of these folks that the Premier will be targeting either. I really don't. I'm not convinced, however, that suing Tzepporah Berman does a thing to help Albertans. Instead, it does do a lot to make lawyers richer, much richer, even though there's no evidence that we will be remotely successful in these costly court cases. What we will do, however, is backstop the Premier's desire to play divisive politics on the national stage, politics that are more focused on his partisan federal aspirations than the economic goals of Albertans. Ultimately, we should be focused on generating jobs for Albertans, full stop. The way to do that is to embrace both our energy sector and our environmental responsibilities, get pipelines built while also delivering on a real plan to combat climate change.

This Premier doesn't do that. He merely states that other countries pump more emissions into the air in some misguided way to offload our responsibility to those across the world. That's not leadership, Madam Speaker. Leadership is building consensus across every province and demonstrating that Alberta really is a responsible energy producer that is doing its part to combat climate change. As I said, when we were doing this work, we had grown support in Canada for the Trans Mountain pipeline significantly. We pushed the federal government for the first approval of Trans Mountain. We successfully demonstrated the limited ability of the B.C. government to interfere. We pushed the federal government to buy the pipeline when investor uncertainty threatened the future of the project.

If the Trans Mountain pipeline is approved by the federal government later this month, it will not be because of a war room that aims to strike down as some type of enemy to the state every single person who raises environmental concerns. On the contrary, if that pipeline is approved, it will be because of the work our government, many public service officials, and some allies in the energy sector did to build consensus across this country. Our strategy and the resulting success will prove that while the Premier currently is good at grabbing a microphone and yelling from the back of a truck, he may actually not know what's best for Alberta.

But I do fear, Mr. Speaker, that this Premier is so blinded by his ideology and his desire to make political hay that he's willing to openly ignore evidence that counters the positions he's taken, which takes me to Bill 1, the government's heavily touted plan to end the carbon tax. Now, obviously I have to acknowledge the success with which the Premier and his friends have created high levels of opposition to carbon pricing in Alberta and in some other parts of the country. As someone who respects the democratic system in which we operate, as much as I hope the people of Alberta will one day reconsider this issue, one cannot deny that carbon pricing was an issue in the election on which Albertans delivered to the Premier a mandate. That is true. However, I still do not believe that they gave the government a mandate to do nothing on climate change.

Now, I've spoken at length recently in this House about this government's unwillingness to tackle climate change. I've spoken about how it is bad for the environment and, therefore, the safety and quality of life of all Albertans to ignore this problem. I've also spoken about how ultimately it's going to be bad for the economy. Basically, this government's ongoing insistence on reverting to a place where the environment is pitted against the economy is absolutely and without question a recipe for failure.

I've just laid out their plan to go after those who would make tackling climate change a priority. We just talked about how that's also not a helpful way to go. We don't need McCarthyite investigations into people solely because they stand up to speak about the environment. We don't need an inquiry to look into who went to that group of 17-year-old high school students and suggested that they actually begin a demonstration and come to have their voices heard at a rally in front of the Legislature. Heaven forbid that this plan actually turns into that kind of thing. It will be a very, very dark day.

What I will say to the members opposite is this. I believe that somewhere down the road it will be proven that right now you are absolutely and completely on the wrong side of history and that your inaction on perhaps the single biggest threat facing our generation is deafening. That is all I will say at this point, probably more over the next four years, though.

Now, moving on, Madam Speaker, let's talk about the so-called open for business act, or what we call the pick-your-pockets legislation. It definitely shouldn't be called the open for business

act because it doesn't open a single business or make it easier to open a business. All it does is cut wages. It's the cheap labour act. Actually, as I'd said before, it's the pick-your-pockets bill. It's the pick-your-pockets bill because when it comes to regular people, it is an act to take away your overtime and steal your holiday pay. Oh, and as a bonus, anyone under the age of 18 gets a nice \$2-an-hour pay cut.

Now, Madam Speaker, Albertans work hard to put food on their tables and to take care of their families. They elected this Premier to create jobs. I hear him say it all the time. But, you know, they didn't elect this Premier to roll back banked overtime from time and a half to just straight time. During the election campaign this government told Albertans that they were going to change the banked overtime rules, but then they intentionally misled Albertans about the actual impact that this would have on their wallets. But the fact is this: no matter how they try to slice it, it's a cut. They, frankly, don't want to admit that it's a cut, but it's a cut.

The Premier backed away and said that there would be no negative impact on what people receive for overtime as a result of what was in their platform, and that was absolutely and completely and utterly false. It was untrue. It was untrue. He said it then, and people voted on the understanding that he would not in any way negatively impact their overtime, and then he introduced a bill to negatively impact their overtime. Then he came into the House and said: "Oh, no. I introduce this bill, but it doesn't negatively impact overtime." Then, of course, we had a conversation: "Well, let's just read the bill and see how it negatively impacts overtime." And then even after we did, he still said, "Oh, the bill doesn't say what it says." Apparently, it is now okay in this House to actually have a document in front of the House and say that it doesn't say what it says. That's a whole new standard for the post-truth world, Madam Speaker, I've got to say. But I'll talk about that in a moment.

Now, at the end of the day, it means less money in working people's bank accounts. In fact, roughly 400,000 Albertans who work overtime to care for themselves and their families – Albertans in oil and gas, construction, and the skilled trades – will be hit the hardest. These are Albertans working to a project deadline who often put in the extra hours to get the job done and then take the paid time off later. In fact, we did the math, and if you're an oil and gas worker making average pay, putting in 10 overtime hours every week on a 12-week project, that is 120 hours in paid time off. The difference between banking that pay at time and a half versus straight time is over \$2,500 in monetary terms. That's a huge difference for working people. We're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars for people going above and beyond in the workplace day in and day out. No one in Canada would pass legislation that does this. In fact, none of them have a rule like this, just here in Alberta.

3:20

That's why we changed it in the first place, because people were losing money. They were getting forced into overtime agreements because the legislation, the way it was written, before we changed it, actually created an incentive for employers to use the tools of the act to force workers into these banked overtime agreements. The act allows them to force workers into these overtime agreements. And the Government House Leader is categorically, completely wrong and saying things which are not true when he says that workers can choose whether they want to be in these agreements. Anybody who is capable of reading legislation will very quickly understand that that is not the way the legislation is intended to be used, nor was it the way the legislation was being used before we changed the legislation so that there was no longer an incentive for employers to force workers into these arrangements.

And why? Why were they pushed so hard to change it by their big friends in Merit Contractors, who spent so much money putting up election signs for them for two years before the election? Because it means more money for the contractors and less money for workers. So they did it. It's that simple.

Anyway, the Premier says that he wants to go back to the way it was before, when people were not getting the overtime they deserved. That's not what he said during the election campaign, but that is exactly what he is doing. That was a time when Albertans earned less in overtime than workers in B.C. and Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I guess he'll have to explain to Albertans why he thinks they shouldn't be treated fairly, just like every other Canadian.

But, hey, why treat people fairly? Let's pay young people less than the minimum wage. Not since 1998, Madam Speaker, has any government thought to go back to such an unfair policy, not our government and not the PC governments before us. In fact, the government of the late Ralph Klein got rid of it in 1998. Ralph's team knew it was unfair. They knew that rolling back the minimum wage for people demonstrates a lack of compassion and a lack of respect for young workers. They knew that the value of your work should depend on the effort and the skill that you put into it, not on what year you were born or whether or not you have class the next day. What a silly set of criteria. What a ridiculous set of criteria.

The real criteria are: how can we give our friends more money and take money away from the people who need it the most and earn the least? They came up with this: what year were you born, and are you going to school tomorrow? It's ridiculous. Our policy put more dollars into the pockets of hard-working Albertans, who live, work, and spend their money here.

The last big change in the pick-your-pockets bill, of course, is what we refer to as being pure Grinch. It was the changes to holiday pay. This change means that when Christmas falls on a Saturday, hard-working parents here won't get the extra pay to cover off presents for the kids, but in Saskatchewan they will. This puts Alberta out of step with every other province in Canada by making an unfair distinction about regular versus nonregular workdays. In every other province holiday pay is owed to workers regardless of whether it falls on a worker's regularly scheduled day off. That includes B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. But under this government, no, no. Albertans will not get holiday pay or time in lieu when the holiday falls on a weekend, but workers just across the border will.

Then we're told, "Well, that's a way to create jobs," and, "You know, a minimum wage is just a minimum." Of course, the logical conclusion of that silly statement is: "Well, why have a minimum wage at all? We can trust everyone just to pay what's fair. Why have a minimum wage at all?" Oh – I don't know – because of 150 years of clear evidence that if you don't have a minimum wage, people are exploited. I think that, actually, Madam Speaker, that's why you have a minimum wage. It is quite an atrocious argument to have the labour minister say that it's just a minimum. It's as if the minister doesn't understand the legislation that he has been tasked to oversee.

Taken together, this pick-your-pockets bill does just that. At the same time that we're giving multibillion-dollar tax breaks to wealthy corporations, we are also taking even more money out of the pockets of working people and handing that over to these corporations as well. Exactly when is enough enough, Madam Speaker? Suffice to say that if the government wants to pass this bill, they too will have to work some more overtime. We debated this bill for more than 24 hours, the longest Wednesday on record, and we will keep doing that and keep fighting it because Albertans were promised more jobs, not smaller pay stubs, and right now we are on a path to: promise made, promise broken.

The list of misleading legislation goes on and on. The government's act to reduce red tape creates a new associate minister position, who conceivably is relying on public service officials, one would hope. Otherwise, he's getting paid the premium for nothing. What it does do is that it adds regulation-making power to the minister, and it requires him to generate reports on the red tape he's cut. What does all this amount to? Well, frankly, it amounts to more red tape. Very interesting that when he was first introduced by the Premier, the original title was the minister of red tape.

Nonetheless, notwithstanding all the elimination of the red tape that we are frankly doing, there's no transparency. The Premier said, when this bill was introduced, that 17 regulations had already been cut, but his associate minister couldn't name a single one. What's more, there's no plan for consultation or stakeholder meetings before we cut all this red tape. This bill does nothing except lead members' minds to wonder about just which pieces of red tape will face the dull scissors of the associate minister, unsharpened probably because, you know, we wouldn't want to have too many staffpeople in the ministry creating less red tape. Will he be going after regulations requiring routine food inspections? What about those requiring proper safety protocols on work sites? Or how about the regulations requiring surgical equipment to be sterilized before surgery? You really do have to wonder, Madam Speaker.

Then there's Bill 7, another piece of the Premier's apparent plan to create jobs. This piece of legislation, the municipal government amendment act, actually amounts to a public service announcement, one that reinforces powers that municipalities already have. The act is supposed to allow municipalities to defer or eliminate the collection of taxes to entice businesses to set up in their little part of Alberta relative to other parts of Alberta. But many municipalities have already taken advantage of section 347 of the current Municipal Government Act to do just these things. The city of Lethbridge established the targeted redevelopment incentive policy, called TRIP, and in May they approved a seven-year cancellation of taxes for a \$4 million development by Six08 Health Incorporated. In Chestermere the town council reported to local media that they had waived taxes for three years for a \$10 million building development.

As far as we can tell, Bill 7 accomplishes nothing except cause confusion because all of this authority was already there. Meanwhile, though, confusion is the thing. We're hearing from municipalities that they are frustrated, that they weren't consulted on this legislation, and there is a real fear that this legislation could spur a race to the bottom, with municipalities undercutting each other to compete for the attention of new business or developers, all part of this plan to shrink government and let individual residents shoulder the burden. Really, that is the long-term objective of these kinds of plans.

That's the Premier's plan for the economy. It's risky. It has bankrupted other jurisdictions. It refuses to consider or plan for future challenges, it's financed on the backs of workers, and it consists of at least a couple of pieces of legislation that are mostly communications tools that do nothing.

Let's turn away from the economy to perhaps the most disturbing piece of this government's agenda as outlined – well, it's not as overtly outlined in the throne speech, but it has been clearly demonstrated once we've seen the details of what was referenced in the throne speech. Now, before the throne speech, this Premier promised that he would not legislate on divisive social issues. That was his mantra. When asked about support for gay-straight alliances during the campaign, he told reporters he didn't get distracted by issues that weren't on the minds of voters. Yet here we are in his very first legislative session, and he's legislating

against LGBTQ youth. He is rolling back their rights, replacing four years of hard work our former Education minister did trying to improve the flimsy and weak Bill 10.

Let me just digress a little bit here. Now, I know that the other side love to – and in fact the Government House Leader already did today – rush to point out that our party and that I myself supported Bill 10. I will grant you that we did because Bill 10 was a second attempt to fix an outrageous bill that was brought in by the former PCs in the fall before Bill 10 was introduced. It was scandalous. They had to withdraw it. It was like Jim Crow legislation. They said that gay kids can meet away from the school, and in that way the scariness of them assembling together won't hurt the feelings of the other students who might see them all coming together and meeting. So they had to meet off-site.

3:30

**Ms Hoffman:** But they did say the word “gay.”

**Ms Notley:** They did say the word “gay” in that first round, but that was because, I think, they hoped no one would ever have to see the word or hear the word. Of course, they were going to be allowed to be pushed to locations outside of the school property. Anyway, it was offensive, and the members of the UCP's predecessor party, the PCs, had to back down from it because it was one of the most obnoxious pieces of legislation that we'd ever seen come into this House.

So then they brought in Bill 10 as an effort to stop the legislation that had previously been introduced as a private member's bill by an opposition member, the former Member for Edmonton-Centre. They brought in Bill 10, and on the face of it it seemed reasonable. It certainly didn't look as heinous as the thing that they had actually put their minds to creating a mere three or four months earlier.

Here's the thing. Then we got elected, and we discovered that there wasn't a whole bunch of new GSAs happening around the province. So we dug into it, and we discovered that, in fact, members of the UCP's predecessor party had quite intentionally constructed a piece of legislation that was not ever meant to be enforced and that was not ever meant to protect GSAs and to protect the vulnerable LGBTQ kids who need those GSAs. As soon as we dug in, we realized that they'd very thoughtfully written in a bunch of loopholes. What are those loopholes? Pretty simple. First of all, if in a public school a principal is asked to set up a GSA, the principal has no timeline within which to respond, so the principal can literally rag the puck for 18 months, and there's nothing to stop him from doing that.

The second thing that went on under the old Bill 10, which is what we are now returning to, is that there was nothing in the policy that prevented that same principal from otherwise systematically discouraging kids from asking for that GSA. Literally, that kid could be walking down a hall that was plastered with posters saying that marriage is between a man and a woman only – they could literally have that up in the hall – and then you'd be surprised that the LGBTQ kid in the school didn't ask for a GSA. Well, of course they're not going to ask for a GSA. The school as a whole is actively telling them that they are not valuable, that they are less than. These are things we heard about, Madam Speaker.

The third thing, of course, is that if a child actually goes to the principal after all these things are put in their way and insists upon asking for a GSA, then the principal can call up their parents and say: “Hey, did you know that your child here is looking to be part of the old GSA? You might want to know about that.” There goes privacy; there goes safety.

The final heinous part of Bill 10 is that it doesn't apply to private schools, many of which – I will say “some of which” – not the

majority of which, but some of which have discriminatory, hateful policies in place right now as we speak, some of which, actually, are going to court and using the Premier's best friend John Carpay, Mr. The Pride Flag is the Same as the Swastika, as their lawyer and relying on his rationale for challenging this legislation. Thankfully for Mr. The Pride Flag is the Same as the Swastika Carpay, the Premier has come to his rescue, and if this act goes forward, he will not need to continue on with that legal challenge. Boy, oh boy. People have really got to think about their friends and what that says about who they are because who your friends are says a lot about you.

That is what is in Bill 10. That is why when members opposite get up and say, "our education act will provide the strongest protections for LGBTQ kids in the country," we will continue to call points of order. The reason is this: because this is actually about a piece of legislation in this House. It is black and it is white, and if we cannot expect members of this House to engage truthfully in what it is they are doing when they bring this legislation into this House, this Assembly that belongs to the whole province of Alberta, to all the people of Alberta, if members opposite will not speak the truth about the ink that is on the paper that they are bringing into this House for us all to look at and read and debate and vote on, then this whole House is being fundamentally compromised in a way that is historic in nature. All of you should be ashamed of yourselves. The House leader should be ashamed of himself. The Education minister should be ashamed of herself.

As I said earlier, I actually believe the Attorney General needs to give some very serious consideration to whether or not he should be conferring with the Law Society or getting legal advice on whether the Law Society might be conferring with him because it is disingenuous at the highest level to come in here and suggest that Bill Hate, that piece of legislation, is the highest level of protection to LGBTQ people in the country. The reason I get passionate about this is because it is a life-and-death issue for kids in our schools. It is about their safety, it is about their future, and if we come in here and we can't even get simple questions like that right, then what in God's name are we doing in here? It is ridiculous.

You know, I will talk for a moment about a real story that we heard about from people who describe what attempts to have a GSA were like under this bill. But I need to say that just yesterday – just yesterday – I was at a car dealership in Edmonton, and a fellow came up, walked up to me, a fairly burly fellow. He came up, and he said, "Are you who you are?" I said: here we go; we're going to have a good old conversation about overtime and maybe we're going to have a good old conversation about, you know, Bill C-69 or the pipeline. He says, "Yeah, I moved here from the east coast." He said: "You know what? Thank you so much for everything you're doing." "Well, we're trying. We're trying to get jobs. We're doing everything we can. We're all working on it." He said: "No, not that. I was married with kids before I finally came out, and if my parents had discovered that I was gay when I was living at home in the Maritimes, I would've been beaten by my father, and I am so glad that I can be who I am now here, and I'm so glad that you guys are fighting to make sure nobody else goes through what I did." That's what this means.

Anyway, that was just yesterday. So this is not a random thing. This is what we all hear each and every day, and it's why I'm so offended by people across the aisle clinging to talking points which are not true, because they should do better. They should take ownership of the pain that they are intentionally inflicting on vulnerable children in this province, at least take ownership of it. Don't cling to empty talking points that are not true.

Jane MacNeil was a young woman who met with our former Minister of Education, the Member for Edmonton-North West. She met with him after she attempted to start a GSA in Calgary under

the bill that was previously in place. Jane's request was met with all forms of opposition. School officials attempted to change the name of the GSA, and then they pressured students within the GSA to vote against her and have the name of the GSA changed. Then she was sent to counselling, and she was told she was negatively impacting her school and creating a great deal of angst amongst students and staff. That is the kind of thing that happens when you don't have a policy in place to protect kids, and the policy, to be clear, is what is being eliminated by reverting to the old Bill 10 through Bill Hate. That's exactly what happened.

3:40

She said the whole experience was a like a slap in the face. She said that it was like everybody in the world hates you. Can you imagine that experience? So I hope that as this government attempts to ram through Bill Hate in this House, they think of Jane and what she went through and they understand that that's exactly what they are creating again and they think about that fellow that I met at the gas station and they understand that that's exactly what they are creating again. Now, Jane, thankfully, had the courage and the backing of some loving parents, and she was able to go public with her story. As we know, though, most students who need these organizations need them because they don't get that support from their parents, and they don't feel like they belong, and they feel vulnerable and scared.

It undermines them for much of the rest of their life even if they do finally find love and acceptance and welcoming because you shouldn't be going through this when you are that age. All kids need to feel that their sexual orientation, who they are, is okay. Basically, it comes down to this. It's okay, Madam Speaker, to be gay, and I'd love to see the Minister of Education actually say that in the House. I'd like see her use the word, and I'd like to see her actually tell school boards that they need to call these gay-straight alliances "gay-straight alliances" if that is what students want to call them, or "queer." Queer. Gay.

"Inclusion groups" is a way to whitewash it, and it is disrespectful to the people who are involved. At the end of the day, it is reflective and symbolic of the whole regime of discrimination that stands behind it and that stands behind the need for GSAs in the first place. Anyone that doesn't understand that – frankly, I think you understand it and you pretend that that's not what's going on. I think that's all that is really going on here. Folks here are not that obtuse; they understand it. They just believe that GSAs are bad, and they don't think that it's okay to be gay.

I want this government to know that we are going to fight Bill Hate with every tool that we have at our disposal, and we're going to keep fighting for all Albertans. We won't rest in this House until we have exhausted every tool to stop this government's plan to pick people's pockets. We won't rest until we have convinced them to start backing off their attack on youth wages, and we will keep fighting to protect properly funded schools and hospitals. We will keep standing up for Jane and the countless others who will be collateral damage as this government rams through its agenda.

Jobs, economy, pipelines: Madam Speaker, it's all well and good to have a catchy campaign phrase, but it's not what I see. I see no jobs. We lost 19,000 full-time positions in May. I see no economic success, only a risky experiment that has failed massively in other jurisdictions and caused illegal levels of underfunding to education in certain jurisdictions. I see no pipelines. Even if we get a pipeline, I don't believe it will be the doing of this government or its highly politicized, funding-the-political-aspirations-of-the-current-Premier war room. Lastly, what I don't see in that catchphrase is cutting people's pay, rolling back people's rights, and gutting the services that they rely on, yet that's what's happening.

We will fight this government at every avenue and hold them accountable for the decisions that they make because, to go back to my original points, Madam Speaker, we will not apologize for debating in this House. We will continue to insist at every possible turn that the members opposite tell the truth when talking about documents which are tabled in this House that are written in black and white. I appreciate that the member opposite would literally like to lift up a bill that says Bill 1 and insist that it says Bob 2, and he will do that indefinitely because he has that level of commitment to the facts, i.e. none. But we will continue to hold him to account, that when there is something in black and white on paper in writing that has theoretically earned the stamp of integrity that ought to be associated with this Assembly, we will make darn sure that the members opposite are held to account for actually not telling lies about what it means. That is the thing that we will continue to do.

In the meantime we will do that because we have been elected to be the Official Opposition in this province. I am quite sure that no matter how broadly the members opposite would like to describe or define their mandate, not a single, solitary Albertan suggested that their mandate extended to eliminating this Legislature, eliminating debate in this Legislature, eliminating the centuries-old parliamentary system of democracy within this Assembly. So I would again urge the members opposite to remember that as well.

Again, finally, I will say that on the matter of job creation, where I do know in my heart that we share a common cause, I wish them the best of luck, and I can let them know that we will not stop doing everything that we can to provide support and advice on the best means to job creation and doing so in a way where jobs are defined as a relationship where you get paid and that that pay itself is administered fairly and justly.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's been a pleasure to address the throne speech this afternoon. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none . . .

**Mr. McIver:** You were supposed to adjourn debate.

**Ms Notley:** Was I?

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah, you were.  
Can you do it on 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** No. A member who has not spoken needs to stand up and adjourn debate.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 3 Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak on Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. As some members of this Chamber will remember, I rose last week to speak to this bill, and in those remarks I highlighted what many Albertans have been telling me, that this bill is a solution in search of a problem. This bill seeks to reduce the corporate tax rate by a third, from 12 per cent to 8 per cent. In doing so, it will reduce government revenue by \$4.5 billion over the course of the next four years, and it will gift that \$4.5 billion to large, profitable corporations.

Now, in the last election the UCP told Albertans that gifting \$4.5 billion to large corporations will create jobs, not just a few jobs but a lot of jobs. The key message was, of course, jobs, jobs, jobs. In fact, the UCP promised Albertans that this measure alone would create some 55,000 net new jobs. That is a lot of jobs. To the credit of the UCP and the now Premier, they were very effective in that political communication, and they were very effective in their message discipline. When reasonable and knowledgeable people raised questions, they brushed them aside. When economists questioned the utility of the corporate tax cut at the time, they ignored it. When the deficit hawks raised red flags, they said that the tax cuts would pay for themselves, and when teachers and nurses expressed concerns about cuts, they said: don't worry. To put it another way, whenever someone questioned this government over their quest to reduce corporate taxes, they ultimately responded with the same message: jobs, jobs, jobs.

3:50

Now, Madam Chair, as I said, their political strategy proved effective. Albertans want good paying jobs, and they want security for their families, but let's not forget the promise the UCP made to Albertans. The promise was not a large corporate tax cut. The promise was jobs. The corporate tax cut was a mechanism, a mechanism to create those jobs, or so they promised. According to the UCP if we could cut the corporate tax rate, investments would flood into the province, the boom times would return, and everyone would have a job, not just any job but a good-paying job, those mortgage-paying jobs that all Albertans depend on.

Now, as all the members of this House know well, elections are about promises, but governing is about delivery, and when you govern, the rubber hits the road. With the election in the rearview mirror it is incumbent on this government to actually answer some questions and come clean with Albertans. We all agree that more jobs are a good outcome. We all want more jobs for hard-working Albertans. What we disagree with is the mechanism. On this side of the House we disagree that the main issue facing our economy is the corporate tax rate, and we firmly disagree with the idea that cutting the corporate tax will create 55,000 new jobs. There's good reason to believe that the facts are on our side, that the evidence is on our side, and that Bill 3 won't deliver on the promise. We know it, economists know it, industry knows it, yet here we are debating Bill 3, a quintessential example of a solution in search of a problem and a solution that won't deliver on that promise.

Now, before I get into the evidence, I'd like to say a few words about the UCP's solution to the job challenges facing Alberta. It's not an original solution; in fact, it's the same solution you've heard from Conservatives for the last 40 years to every economic problem. No matter the problem, the solution is to cut the corporate tax rate. What do you do in tough economic times? The Conservative's solution: cut the corporate tax rate. What do you do to keep a strong economy growing? You cut the corporate tax rate. What do you do to spur innovation in the economy? You cut the corporate tax rate. What do you do to improve labour productivity? You cut the corporate tax rate. How do we encourage investment in

machinery, equipment, and human capital? You cut the corporate tax rate. I think you see the problem. No matter the problem, no matter how complex the issue, no matter the evidence, the solution is the same: cut the corporate tax rate. Corporate tax rates are a Conservative hammer, and in their view every economic problem has a nail.

Let's step back and look at the evidence. Let's actually consider what is going on in Alberta right now. If we look at what's going on in Alberta, it's quite evident that tax cuts aren't the solution to Alberta's economic challenge. As I've said previously in this House, Alberta is facing some real and substantial structural challenges in our economy, and most of these challenges are in our energy industry, the dominant driver of the economy.

What are the structural challenges facing our energy industry? First and foremost, it's takeaway capacity. We lack takeaway capacity. We need more pipelines, we need more market access, we need to get our product to market, and we need to get top dollar for our product. Right now in Alberta we are challenged. We've had to curtail the production in order to ease the differential. Storage utilization is still at record levels, and we've recently seen yet another delay in line 3 and more legal manoeuvring in the United States with Keystone XL. My point, Madam Chair, is that in this context cutting the corporate tax rate won't help drive investment in the energy sector. Companies won't make major new investments until the issue of takeaway capacity is resolved. Let's be clear. This is a problem that has been decades in the making.

On that note, Madam Chair, let me take a moment to acknowledge and thank the former Premier, the current Leader of the Official Opposition, for her steadfast commitment to addressing this specific problem. We know her tireless efforts were appreciated by Albertans, and we know that there was more work to do. But the former Premier picked up yards and brought the ball down the field. I know that her sophisticated approach helped put this issue squarely on the national radar. So while we've made progress, we still face real challenges when it comes to market access.

When I talk to folks in the energy industry, they tell me that lowering the corporate tax rate won't help stimulate investment. They say this because the corporate tax rate isn't the barrier to their investment. The main barrier, or the main hurdle, is being able to get their product to market. We have Bill 3, or what the UCP has labelled the job creation tax cut.

**An Hon. Member:** You can't even say it without laughing.

**Ms Sweet:** No.

But in our main industry, in the industry where we need to create the most jobs, industry is saying that the corporate tax cut won't lead to more investment and more jobs.

As I've said, we've got a solution here in Bill 3 that is in search of a problem. Let's be honest. Corporate leaders aren't asking for this tax cut. It's good for their shareholders. Their corporate leaders have been clear about what their short- and medium-term priorities are: increasing the dividends for shareholders, more stock buybacks, and deleveraging their balance sheets. Now, there's nothing wrong with these priorities. Our corporate leaders in the energy sector are responding to the market force. If Bill 3 becomes law, they will continue with their short- and medium-term priorities. They will continue with or perhaps accelerate their dividend increases and their share buyback programs, but Bill 3 won't lead to more investments. It won't lead to more jobs. It won't do these things because it won't address the number one structural issue facing our economy.

So what are the other structural issues facing our economy, in particular the energy sector? Let's spend a few minutes talking

about the regulatory regime. It's more complex, more time-consuming, and more capital intensive than ever before. We've got a new legal structure coming with Bill C-69 along with new standards. When new regulatory standards come in, it creates uncertainty. What is also clear is that when you get new standards that companies have to adhere to, the regulatory bar isn't always clear. The bar is often clarified through trial and error and through courts. This creates uncertainty for companies that are considering new investment. It creates reluctance among companies to be the first to test the new standards. Quite simply, there is no first mover advantage here.

Madam Chair, my comments here on the regulatory challenges facing our economy are not particularly insightful. This challenge has been a point of discussion and serious contemplation in Alberta for much of the past five years. My point is that this is one of the real issues facing our economy, again, not corporate tax rates. To listen to some of the rhetoric coming from the UCP during the election, the solution to this problem and to all problems facing the Alberta economy is to cut the corporate tax rate. Indeed that's the silver bullet according to the UCP. We were told that it's the solution to all of our problems, but I don't see it. Again, nobody in our energy industry is telling me that that's the main challenge in our economy. Nobody is saying that the corporate tax rate is the main reason why investment is down from the boom times. Instead we're talking about market access, we're talking about regulatory regime, and they're talking to me about rapidly changing technology along with changing demand from global capital markets.

Now, I haven't said much yet about the changing technology in the energy sector, nor have I said much about changing demands from the capital markets. Let's take a few minutes to discuss these factors. We have all witnessed a monumental shift in global energy markets. These changes have been driven by new technology and new demands from investors. Ten years ago we all thought we were approaching a world of energy scarcity. There just wasn't enough oil coming online. We saw what this meant for Alberta: tens of thousands of dollars in new investment in the oil sands, lots of new jobs, lots of prosperity, long-cycle projects, particularly in oil and gas, an energy price approach that surpassed \$100 a barrel, and investment flowed. We boomed. What was interesting in this era of energy scarcity was the behaviour of the capital market. They were concerned primarily about production. It was about volumes; it was about output. Companies would raise capital relatively easily for these projects, even in our cost structure in Alberta, which was competitively high. We had accessible reserves. Markets were willing to invest. Profitability was at that point a secondary concern, so companies could raise capital mostly exclusively based on their ability to bring product online.

Then the market changed. New technology came online. Global prices declined. Short-cycle plays became the flavour of decades. Production in these short-cycle plays, particularly south of the border, grew dramatically. Today we no longer find ourselves in a world of energy scarcity. In fact, today we are in an era of energy abundance. How did the capital market react? We read about it every day in the newspaper. We talk about it with our neighbours. For Alberta, production is no longer the primary objective. The goal is to lower the cost per barrel to increase free cash flow and to become profitable in the new lower priced environment. The capital markets aren't demanding more big, new investments that lead to local jobs and more activity in the patch. The capital markets are looking for increased dividends, more share buybacks, and better balance sheets.

So what does this mean for Alberta? Well, this means that our energy sector is facing challenges. On this side of the House we



appreciated that this monumental shift in the global energy sector is real. We appreciate that it has had a profound effect on our economy.

4:00

Now we're here to debate Bill 3 and not the policy response of the previous government that I was honoured to be a part of. But I will take a moment and say that our policy response had some real merit. As members we will recall that our approach was to invest and diversify within the energy sector. To be more specific, through royalty credits we aimed to position Alberta as a global leader in the petrochemical sector, and we were on our way. Thousands of jobs were created, for example with the Inter Pipeline project in the Industrial Heartland, which I am proud to represent. When fully rolled out, we projected the creation of 70,000 direct jobs through our petrochemical diversification strategy.

Now, obviously, our strategy and the one proposed by the UCP government were different. The UCP plan for jobs was Bill 3. It's nothing more and nothing less than a corporate tax cut: cut taxes, and let the chips fall where they will. There's no strategy here, just a single hammer to deal with every economic nail. The problem, of course, is that Bill 3 doesn't respond to any of the main economic challenges facing Alberta. It does not address our market access challenge, that I've discussed. It does not address the regulatory uncertainty our energy sector faces. It does nothing to position Alberta's energy sector for success in this new era of global energy abundance and rapidly changing technology. In fact, the UCP plan for jobs seems totally detached from the reality of what's going on in Alberta's economy.

I guess it's a solution to a problem somewhere in the world, but it's not our solution. As I've said, this bill is the definition of a solution in search of a problem. Now, let me say that Conservatives don't always offer corporate tax cuts as a solution. Back in 2008, when the global credit markets froze and the global recession cast its long shadow, our Prime Minister came up with a response. His response was Canada's economic action plan, and the Prime Minister was Stephen Harper.

Now, the Prime Minister, an economist, was faced with real challenges, but he didn't let Conservative dogma get in the way. He responded to the specific challenges facing the economy. He bailed out the auto industry, he invested in infrastructure, and he was honest with the public. His policy response to the financial crisis in Budget 2009 laid out some key truths. He laid out how ineffective corporate tax cuts could be to stimulate the economy and create jobs. According to Prime Minister Harper every dollar expended on corporate tax cuts would only grow the economy by 30 cents, but \$1 invested in infrastructure would grow the economy by \$1.60. So he invested in infrastructure, and he said no to corporate tax cuts.

My point, Madam Chair, is that smart leaders roll out policy that responds to and addresses real challenges. The solution to every economic issue is not to reduce the corporate tax rate. Putting it another way, context matters, or, to borrow an old cliché, context is king.

As I wrap up my remarks, I want to return to an earlier theme. The UCP promise to Alberta was jobs, good jobs. The UCP promise to Albertans was not a corporate tax cut. The corporate tax cut was the mechanism. What the people were voting for was jobs. Bill 3, the corporate tax plan, won't create jobs. It's not going to work. It won't work because it doesn't address the actual issue to job creation in this province. I've said this more than once. This bill is a solution in search of a problem.

What this bill will do is create a \$4.5 billion hole in our budget. That means cuts: cuts to classrooms, cuts to health care, and cuts for people who are out there working, who still won't have a job

because this bill won't deliver. It seems this government is determined – determined – to offer a solution to a problem that doesn't exist. Fair enough; they won the election. But if they're going to engage in this triumph of ideology over common sense, then they need to tell Albertans what's going to come next. What are they going to cut? Are they going to fire teachers? How about teachers' aides? Will school fees rise? How much will they cut from highway projects? What's the forecast increase in the number of potholes?

Let's get some answers to the question of cuts on the record. If the UCP is willing to go down the Bill 3 path notwithstanding all of the evidence that I've provided that we know it won't work, then Albertans deserve to know what they're going to cut; \$4.5 billion is a lot of money. That's a lot of teachers. That's a lot of school lunches. That's a lot of important capital projects like the bridge in Fort Saskatchewan.

So to the members opposite and to the ministers of the Crown, who have been honoured to serve Albertans with specific ministerial portfolios: what are you going to cut? How are you going to pay for this corporate tax cut? I think Albertans deserve to know, and I know I do.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise and partake in the debate on Bill 3 this week. I think this may be my first opportunity to engage in debate here in the Legislature this week. I've missed it a bit. It's good to be back.

We've had a fair amount of discussion around this bill. I certainly thank my colleague from Edmonton-Manning for the careful thought that she's given to this, I think, in bringing a variety of very strong sources to bear, including our former Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his own acknowledgement and recognition that indeed taking this kind of a radical step yields the lowest benefit of all the many ways that we could be looking at stimulating our economy. Indeed, as many of my colleagues have said, that is not a goal that we disagree with. Indeed, I think that's a goal that we're all in agreement with here in this Chamber. What we disagree with is the idea that the best way to create jobs in this province or to move us forward in the situation where we currently find ourselves is to pull 4 and a half billion dollars out of the budget for something that has been recognized to be the lowest yield for investment and for something which will show, according to the government themselves, absolutely no benefit to the province for at least two years.

As I talked about when I last had the opportunity to rise on this bill, Madam Chair, this bill is a gamble. This is the government rolling the dice with 4 and a half billion dollars on the table and hoping that they're going to hit it big. There is no evidence to show this has ever worked in any other jurisdiction in which it's been tried. There's nothing to demonstrate – in fact, this government has brought forward two individuals who support this, one of whom is currently sitting on their blue-ribbon panel. There has been some mild support in general from some other economists, including some that I respect, the gentleman Trevor Tombe, but even he has said that it is unlikely to yield the kind of result that the government has claimed it will yield.

Given the constant refrain we are hearing, given that this same Finance minister is now going and essentially lowering the boom on public-sector workers and telling them that they'd best back off in their requests for their duly contracted negotiations because we

are in such dire financial straits as a province that he feels the need to abrogate their rights, it seems to me that this is a poor time to be looking at taking even more dollars out of our budget to gamble on maybe seeing a benefit for the people of Alberta.

That's why, Madam Chair, I would like to bring forward an amendment. I'll have the originals and copies here delivered to you. I'll give you the opportunity to take a look at that before I continue.

**The Chair:** It will be known as amendment A2.

Please proceed, Member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm moving this amendment on behalf of my colleague the MLA for St. Albert. It reads that she moves that Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, be amended by adding the following after section 3:

Review by committee of the Legislative Assembly

4 Within 2 years after the coming into force of this Act, a committee of the Legislative Assembly must begin a comprehensive review of the amendments made by this Act, including any resulting economic impacts, and must submit to the Assembly, within 6 months after beginning the review, a report that includes any recommendations or observations of the committee.

4:10

This language may be familiar to you, Madam Chair. I believe you and your colleagues moved very similar amendments in your time on this side of the House. In fact, you yourself may have made one or two. In this particular case, I think this is a very appropriate and prudent amendment and follows very much on the amendment which I introduced earlier, on which we had some robust debate and which was, unfortunately, defeated in this House. In that particular amendment, as the Leader of the Official Opposition noted earlier today, I proposed that we stop at 10 per cent instead of proceeding down to 8 per cent so that we would have the moment, some time to take and reflect and, indeed, for the government to demonstrate the value of this significant gamble that they wish to make with Albertans' tax dollars and with our tax system.

Well, that amendment was defeated, but I'm happy to have the chance to bring forward another amendment along the same lines, Madam Chair, because, indeed, as many have noted, this government is making a gamble. They are rolling the dice with 4 and a half billion dollars of government revenue. If they fail in this significant gamble, that cannot help but impact our public services. That cannot help but impact everyday Albertans. However, as I also discussed earlier in my remarks, this does seem to be for members of the government an article of faith given that they have no concrete evidence, given that there has never been a jurisdiction which has demonstrated that this is an effective strategy to grow the economy or create jobs. Therefore, for members of the government this is an article of faith, something that without proof, without evidence they nonetheless believe is indeed going to be true.

So here is their opportunity, Madam Chair, to demonstrate their commitment in that faith. Here is a chance to put that faith into practice, as it were. If this committee is struck in two years after this act, when we will indeed have the corporate tax cut of 8 per cent in place, at that point this government should be excited to have the opportunity to have a committee sit down and study the effects of this cut, of this risky gamble on behalf of Albertans and demonstrate, in fact, that I am incorrect in my assessment. They would have the opportunity to sit down and have a committee look at this and come back to Albertans and say: "Here. We have the evidence. We have the proof of our promise made, promise kept and the actual result that we predicted."

Madam Chair, this is the opportunity for this government to be truly transparent with Albertans. To use the colloquial: to put their money where their mouth is. It is one thing to stand in this House and make claims about the numbers of jobs that this will create, to make claims about the fact that this will eventually, at some future point which they have yet to fully identify, pay for itself, to indeed generate more income than is currently collected.

It is one thing to stand in this House and make that claim without evidence, without any other proof that they can point to that this has ever worked. It is another to be willing to step up and say: yes, in two years we will sit down and we will do the work and we will release a report which proves that this gamble we are taking, that this 4 and a half billion dollars that we are pulling out of the budget has been well spent, that it is indeed beginning – because, again, this government has themselves identified that we will not see any real benefit from this for at least two years. But at that point they should at least be able to demonstrate that we are seeing the beginning of a trend, that there is some specific indication that this particular direct action itself has incented some number of jobs or increased some amount of investment.

Indeed, Madam Chair, as we've discussed and as my colleagues have said and as I will continue to say in this House, there is no evidence that this has ever taken place as a result of such an action. Indeed, I myself and the folks that I speak with in the business community and the folks that are starting and maintaining businesses here in my constituency and, in particular, amongst many of the young businesspeople, who are doing very well in areas that others have struggled with, for example the restaurant and cafe business, for whom some claim that we must slash the wages of young people who work in those industries – we must indeed sit down and do what this amendment proposes, have a committee to study whether or not those who serve liquor should in fact be paid less for their work.

I can tell you, Madam Chair, that I know a number of young, progressive businesspeople who are running successful restaurants, bars, pubs, and other businesses in the hospitality industry who did not need to take those steps and do not intend to take those steps in order to run a viable business. Indeed, they are telling me that they do not need this corporate tax cut to continue to employ people. They will create jobs as demand increases. They create jobs because they have innovative and creative business ideas that attract people and cause them to want to patronize their business, and they are seeing success.

Now, I recognize, Madam Chair, that there is a difference, say, between the folks that are starting, you know, new pubs or breweries or other sorts of businesses within my constituency and the oil and gas industry, certainly. We recognize that there is a difference there. Certainly, there are differences of scale, and when we're talking about investment in the province, at times we are talking about investments of billions of dollars as opposed to local individuals and entrepreneurs. However, I would note that this government tends to try to frame these sorts of decisions around small-business people, so it's fair to discuss how it affects them.

But even on that larger scale, as we have discussed, Madam Chair, we have not seen that even larger corporations are investing more because we give them a corporate tax break. Indeed, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has noted, he has spoken with many CEOs who have told him that if they are given this tax cut, they will simply say: thank you. They will not reinvest that back into the economy. They have other places that that may go. In fact, that money may leave Alberta.

Indeed, we recognize that when the federal government did take steps to reduce the federal corporate tax rate, that did not end in a flurry of investment either in terms of capital or creating new jobs.

That ended with corporations sitting on large savings in their bank accounts, trapped capital that went nowhere. What drives jobs, Madam Chair, is demand. When people want more of a particular product or service, then existing companies will invest to expand what they're offering to meet that desired need, or others will spring up to fill it.

So I think it's reasonable that we take the opportunity in two years to sit down and have a look at this article of faith, this signature piece of legislation, on which this government campaigned and indeed is now loudly proclaiming is going to be redeeming the Alberta economy, that it be given a thorough examination and that this government be given the opportunity to prove their work and demonstrate to the people of Alberta the great value they have brought.

In two years, Madam Chair, I can guarantee that Albertans will already be aware of the effects that taking 4 and a half billion dollars out of the budget has had on them personally. They will be well aware of the size of the class that their children are in. They will be well aware that they have not seen progress in wait times at their emergency room. They, unfortunately, may be well aware that members of their family are still struggling to get access to mental health supports or indeed to accessible ground-level services if they are struggling with substance use. They will be well aware of the lack of opportunities for their parents to move into an appropriately staffed and quality seniors' facility.

4:20

Albertans will know, and they will be personally experiencing the results of many decisions of this government in two years, so I don't see how it could help but benefit this government to be able to also demonstrate in two years, then, that they have brought some value in taking away 4 and a half billion dollars that could go to address all of those issues on behalf of Albertans. Even this government themselves recognize that we do not simply have 4 and a half billion dollars just sitting around waiting to share, to just pull out and not invest in Albertans.

It makes sense to me that we would want to take the opportunity to bring together a committee of this Legislature, government members and opposition members, to have a chance perhaps to sit down and talk with some of these CEOs who are going to make these grand investments with the money they save, perhaps to call in some witnesses who can tell us how many extra jobs they created with the dollars that were handed back to them by government. We can have the opportunity to talk with the folks from the city of Calgary, and they can tell us how much of their downtown office real estate has been reactivated as a result of pulling 4 and a half billion dollars out of our budget. We would have the opportunity to sit down and do a proper economic impact assessment, which was a great favourite to be demanded by members of this government when they sat on this side of the aisle.

It's my hope that the government members would agree with this. I mean, there have been some troubling developments, from what I've heard, with some of the private members' legislation. They seem to be leaning in the direction of not wanting to take the time to conduct a review or to hear from folks who might be affected. I hope that's not going to be a general trend. It's my hope that we would instead see a level of thoughtfulness from this government. Indeed, I recognize, again, that they campaigned on this promise and that they want to keep that promise and they want to push it through. They have the numbers in this House to ensure that that happens. All we are asking and all we are wishing to do, Madam Chair, is, again, as yourself and many members that now sit opposite on the government side used to say, make a bad bill a little

better. Take the opportunity to provide the chance for you to prove us wrong.

In two years' time, for members of government to be able to take part in that committee, to be able to call in their witnesses and demonstrate to us – and I promise you, Madam Chair, that if this amendment is adopted and you give us that opportunity and that proof is shown, I will personally eat my words. I will recant everything I have said in this House, and I will praise this government for their success in bringing investment back to Alberta by blowing this 4 and a half billion dollar hole in the budget. This is an opportunity we are presenting to government members to, as I said, put their faith into action, to demonstrate to Albertans that they truly believe in what they are about to do and the challenges that Albertans over the next few years may face as a result, that they are truly doing this out of a belief that they are doing this for the benefit of Albertans. This is providing them the opportunity to produce an actual report which will lay that out and provide Albertans with the kind of transparency which, again, so many members of this government, when on this side of the aisle, demanded.

I'm happy to move this amendment, Madam Chair. It's available on the floor, and I look forward to hearing some robust debate.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak – and you won't be surprised – in favour of the amendment. I think this is a very good amendment. Obviously, I think this is a poor policy. I think it's headed in the wrong direction, but if, as my hon. colleague said, the members opposite are insistent on taking this on faith, I think we should test that faith. I'm a fan of science myself, so I think that bringing forward this amendment and allowing us to stop and reconsider this after two years to see if it actually has generated the things that they say it will generate is an incredible improvement to the bill. I would urge all members to vote in favour of it.

You know, I think that at the end of the day we don't all agree on much in this House, but I think we can agree on one thing, and that is that actions speak louder than words. The members across the way may say a lot of things about how they're in favour of the weakest among us, that they're in favour of creating greater social mobility, and that they're in favour of a whole bunch of things, but those things aren't borne out by their actions.

You know, what this bill does is that it creates a situation where essentially, especially when taken in combination with other bills that are before this House currently, it creates a transfer of wealth to the more wealthy. This bill cuts the corporate tax rate. What does that mean? It means greater profits to corporate shareholders. Now, many people out there are corporate shareholders, and that's fine. But I think the point here is that in a country like Canada, where we're meant to see greater social mobility, where we're meant to see individuals who can work hard and climb into an easier life for their children than maybe they had themselves, which I think is, at the end of the day, the dream that every one of us or our parents or their parents or whatever that came to this country had upon coming here – what this does is that it prevents that from happening.

What it does is that it says that those who have only their work to contribute, those who weren't born with money, who have nothing, who turned 18 and have not a dime to their name, who have nothing to give but their hard work: those people won't be paid for their overtime. They won't be paid for their holiday work. We'll let income inequality grow and grow and grow. Meanwhile those

individuals who already have, who may turn 18 and have a bunch of investment come down to them from their parents, will make greater returns. The people who are just working hard, the people who have nothing when they turn 18: they're going to be so stretched and so strained and so unable to get ahead by way of something like working extra hours that they're never going to get to that position. They're never going to be able to climb to that higher position and become one who is sharing in this great wealth giveaway that we're presently engaged in.

I think that's incredibly sad. I think the job of government should be to create an equal playing field. It should be able to create the same opportunities for everyone to be able to participate, to be able to become full members, to achieve their dreams, to buy houses and put their children in school if they so desire, and live the life of meaningful contribution that we all so desperately desire. I'll borrow a famous quote and say, you know: don't tell me what you value; show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value. In this case, this sends a really clear signal about what's valued and, more specifically, who's valued. That is to say, those who come in with money: those are the people that are being valued. Those who come in with their hard work and with their desire to advance themselves and their children: they're not being valued. I think that that's incredibly sad. I think it's one of the saddest things about this bill.

I would definitely be in favour of this amendment because I think that I'm absolutely willing to put my beliefs to the test. I'm absolutely willing to sit down in two years and look at this and say: what has happened? I don't believe that if you look back, historically, there is any correlation between corporate tax cuts and economic growth or the creation of jobs. I do believe that there is a link between policies like this, corporate tax cuts, and increased income inequality. I believe that that is the link that we're going to see. I believe that what we're going to see is that those who started without are having a more and more difficult climb climbing into a position where they're more comfortable whereas those who started with are having an easier and easier time continuing to be comfortable without perhaps working anywhere near as hard.

4:30

The problem with this, aside from its total failure to work – I'll just take some time to cite some statistics on that. Most recently I think it's worth looking south of us because this was identical rhetoric. It's basically Trump's rhetoric. The Premier basically borrowed Trump's playbook in the last election. Sorry. President Trump. We saw the U.S. cut their corporate tax rate from 35 per cent to 21 per cent, promising jobs, and 84 per cent of businesses have not changed their investment plan. I mean, that's pretty clear evidence that it's not working. Meanwhile the deficit in the U.S. is up by 17 per cent. I mean, there are an endless number of different situations I could cite, even sort of varying tax rates in the past here, but I think it's clear that this isn't going to have that impact.

It's interesting. When last I spoke to this bill, we were talking about this rhetoric that we see. We're seeing it here, as we do in many right-wing places: "Oh, no, the wool has been pulled over our eyes. It's all been a big magic show of smoke and mirrors. The budget isn't what we believed it to be." Never mind that the budget is prepared by professional public servants or that it's audited multiple times or that it pretty much is exactly what it appears to be, you know, we get this rhetoric. It's common rhetoric. I mean, it was almost expected, so much so that it almost wasn't a surprise when this government came forward with it.

I had assumed it was a signal for cuts, to be honest. That's usually what it is. Most right-wing governments who use this sort of "we've been lied to" propaganda: normally that's what they're about to say,

that we're going to cut this and we're going to cut that and we're going to cut the next thing. Then they sort of tell the population: oh, well, you have to take it because this is what we have to do in order to get our house in order. Never mind that those who are wealthy, that those who hold shares in those corporations that are generating large profits aren't being asked to give up. They're in fact getting more, significantly more. I think that's sad.

I'm not against people who come from an easier situation. I mean, certainly, my parents did a lot for me. They had money saved for me to take my first degree. They provided a house and food and stability and everything that most parents, I think, hope that they can provide for their children. I'm not suggesting that there's anything wrong with that sort of privilege. What I'm suggesting is that there are people who don't come from that sort of privilege, that there are people who don't come with that sort of thing, that there are people who hit the ground running at 18 with no college fund and with no property to their name, that those people deserve the same chance to succeed, and that we ought to give it to them.

I mean, I had expected cuts. I'm hopeful that that's not what we're going to see. I'm hopeful that we're going to see continued investments in education. I'm a little surprised that under enormous pressure from teachers, from students, from school boards, from parents, and from the opposition the government stood up over and over and over again and refused to commit to funding enrolment growth, and then one day they woke up and changed their mind. I mean, this is fantastic. If this is sober second thought, I'm all for it. I'm a little curious as to why the Education minister didn't know on Thursday and the Finance minister did know on Monday, but I'll let you work that out internally.

Where are we headed, then? You know, I think one of the promises that this new government made to Albertans, one of the things that they claimed they were running on was this idea that they would get the books back in balance one year faster. Instead of 2022-23 it was '21-22. I mean, to me, the idea of cutting hospitals and education for one year faster: like, obviously, I'm not in favour. But, obviously, a lot of people were in favour, so I wonder now, given that we're not going to see those cuts, whether this new signal is that, in fact, we're going to wind up balancing in exactly the same time frame.

I think that this amendment, that we'll review this in two years, is an incredibly good one because I don't think that we should take it on faith. I'm not suggesting there's anything wrong with faith; I'm just suggesting that faith has a place. In the world of social policy, in the world of creating economic policy in particular, in a world where we can measure and count, why would we take it on faith? Why would we take this "we give money away to the rich, and that will benefit everyone" rhetoric, which we've seen fail over and over again? We can come back, and we can do a review of it. I think I know what it'll show.

I think it's worth saying some of the reasons I feel this way. You know, one of the reasons I don't have faith in this failed economic policy of cutting taxes on the rich and assuming it'll trickle down is because it just doesn't jibe with most people's understanding of how business works. As my hon. colleague mentioned before me and I will mention now, businesses work on a supply-and-demand model. Giving a business additional revenue is not going to cause them to expand if there's no demand there. If there was demand there and it's a profitable business – and it was a profitable business because, again, we're talking only about businesses that are posting profits in excess of half a million dollars – then they would scale up to meet the demand because they're profitable. So scaling up would result in more profit. I think this idea that this is going to create jobs just doesn't sort of jibe with common sense in the right kind of way.

I think one of the things that's worth commenting on, because I think it's been a gross misrepresentation coming from the other side, is the idea that over here we hate business or that we hate people who are wealthy. That's absolutely not true. It absolutely isn't. When you say, "Hey, we should extend the same benefits to everyone; everyone should have an equal opportunity in society," it's not because you hate those who already have the benefit. It's because you think that everyone deserves the same opportunity. Yeah. I think that to try and flip it around and say, "Oh, well, if you feel like wealthy shareholders shouldn't be getting their profits, then you must hate them": no, I don't hate them. I just feel that maybe those who are working hard to try and provide for their family, those who weren't born with that wealth in their family: they too deserve an opportunity; they too deserve a chance to climb into a life that's little less challenging.

I always find it very interesting. As I went through law school – I went when I was a bit older, and I had had some lower paying jobs before I went to law school – you know, there were a lot of students in my class who had come from relative privilege, who had come from situations where their parents were also lawyers. That's fairly common. They had had the occasional summer job, usually working for their parents' friends' corporate something, so it was relatively well paid. It didn't require evening work. It usually was gotten through someone knowing someone else. This, again, isn't always the case. There were many incredibly hard-working students. But there was this certain class of people that was in this position. Really, the first job they would get for themselves would be their articling job. They would leave school, their parents having paid their way through, and make \$80,000 a year at their very first job. Many of these individuals that I talked to believed, like the members across the way believe, that their hard work entitled them to what they had.

4:40

I'm not saying that it wasn't hard work – I mean, I went there, too; it does require that you study long hours and invest a certain amount of yourself – but what I will tell you is this. I don't think it was particularly harder work than working 10 consecutive hours on my feet with no break, waiting tables. I don't think that it was particularly more stressful than working a low-wage job that put me in a position where every time I managed to put a little bit away, something would happen: the car would break down or there'd be some sort of extra additional costs. I'm not saying that that it isn't hard or that it isn't stressful. What I'm saying is that other people experience things that are hard and stressful and that they, too, should be permitted the opportunity to flourish.

You know, I remember when we were doing consultations, which we did excessively on a number of different bills, that there were often people who were very angry who had in the past been consulted by the government. They were still being consulted, but they were angry that in addition to just them, the government was listening to more people. The consultation circle was broader. More voices were permitted to come forward with their opinion, and as a result of this, these few who had previously been consulted were incredibly angry that it wasn't just their voice. What they were angry about was that they had a say, but other people who disagreed with them also had a say, and the government balanced those things.

I think it was very interesting to see, and I think that that's sort of what we're talking about here, a situation where – I'm not suggesting by any means that we should take from anyone. What I'm suggesting is that we should open up the circle and allow everyone to flourish. What I'm suggesting is that when we're creating economic policy, what we're talking about is: who's going to profit at whose expense? It's not a zero-sum game, obviously,

but ultimately these have real-world impacts on real-world people, and what I'm suggesting is that everyone should be able to benefit, not just a few. I guess maybe that was the idea that ultimately drove me into politics, that everybody should be able to benefit, not just a few.

That's what troubles me about this bill, and that's why I think we should go back and take a look at it. I think we should take a look at the economic impacts, and I think we should take a look at the impacts on sort of income inequality as well because I think it's sad when it becomes harder for those who are born without to be able to achieve the same as those who are born with. Again, there's nothing wrong with corporations. They are our job creators. They are contributors to our economy, to our life, to our world, to our communities. All I'm suggesting is that when we're doling out the money, we should consider whether we want to give all of it to those who already have and none of it to those who don't or maybe whether we should find some balance.

I think those are my comments with respect to this bill. Those are the reasons that I think we ought to consider sending this to committee, because I do think it's the wrong policy, but I think that if we insist on moving forward with a wrong-headed policy, which it appears that we're going to, that we ought to have a mechanism to review that and to see what the actual impacts are. At the end of the day, every person may be entitled to their own opinion, but they aren't entitled to their own set of facts. All we're suggesting here is that we ought to operate in the land of facts and we ought to come back and consider the facts.

With that, I will support the amendment and suggest that others do the same.

**The Chair:** Are there other speakers, comments, questions? The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to speak against the amendment and make a few broader comments, I think, around our job-creation tax cut.

I will assert that lowering corporate taxes will improve the competitiveness of our business environment. There's not an economist in the world, I believe, that won't argue that case. We may find that there will be differing degrees, but a competitive business environment, of which the existing tax regime plays a big part, does affect investment. I appreciated the Member for Edmonton-Manning pointing out that there are a number of challenges in Alberta, and we recognize that. We recognize that we have great market access challenges here in Alberta, particularly with our energy products and, I might also add, with canola and other agriculture products at this point in time. We have a regulatory environment that needs modernization. I certainly acknowledge and agree with that.

These factors and others such as implementing a carbon tax and increasing corporate taxes by 20 per cent did contribute, I believe, significantly to our declining economy and reduced competitiveness for business investment and reduced competitiveness of our business environment in the last four years. That's why, Madam Chair, our plan is bold, and our plan is multifaceted. It includes repealing the carbon tax, which, again, affected every Albertan and certainly every business in this province. It includes passing the open for business act, which is going to reduce burdens on job creators in this province and provide more opportunities, particularly for young workers in this province. It includes initiating a dedicated effort to modernize and improve the competitiveness of our regulatory environment. I think all members of this House agree that that's an essential and important initiative. Of course, it also includes a major effort to increase

market access, particularly for our energy products. I know that, again, every member in this House agrees that that's important. Our approach is multifaceted. Lowering corporate taxes is one important, critical piece of this initiative.

We know, Madam Chair, that capital is mobile, and we've seen that in this province. We've witnessed that at an incredible rate in the last four years. Capital is mobile, and businesses can pick up very quickly in this modern day and age, probably quicker now than they could 10 years ago and much quicker than they could 20 or 30 years ago. We compete for global capital, so a competitive business environment is absolutely critical moving forward. In fact, there are a number of studies from eminent economists who have demonstrated the correlation between a competitive business environment, including a competitive tax regime, and economic investment and economic growth.

Tax regimes have a significant impact on our business environment and economic development. Another advantage – and we've not spoken of this one – of a low corporate tax rate is that it encourages economic diversification at its purest form. Economic diversification is a goal, I think, again, of every member of this House. There are a variety of ways to seek to achieve that, and I would assert that creating the most competitive business environment is, at a baseline, the best way to encourage sustainable economic diversification.

The challenge with creating targeted tax credits to industries or maybe particular businesses and providing taxpayer subsidies, again, to particular industries or businesses to create diversification is not only that you end up picking winners and losers but so often that diversification that may result in the short term isn't sustainable in the long term. It's simply predicated on a very short-term incentive to a particular business or industry. Creating a broad-based, competitive business environment, in my opinion, is the best way to begin to diversify our economy. Again, it's the most sustainable way to do that.

4:50

We're confident that our job-creation tax cut will deliver economic growth, but it will also encourage businesses and industries of all stripes to come to Alberta, whether it's oil and gas and energy – of course, we depend on that significantly – manufacturing, retail, or the tech industry, which we believe has a great future here in this province with our educated, young, forward-looking, creative, innovative workforce and citizens of this province. We believe that the tech industry has a great future here. Again, we can create a competitive business environment, of which a competitive tax regime is a key part.

You know, our job-creation tax cut does not promote any one company or industry. It encourages agriculture and agriculture manufacturing as much as it does the energy industry. It encourages tech as much as it does the retail sector. It encourages every sector and, again, allows this province to play to its natural, competitive advantages, which, in the long term, prove to be the sustainable way of creating diversification.

Madam Chair, I'd like to thank the opposition for tabling a government of Canada budget report, I believe, the 2009 budget document, where they have quoted our previous Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. I would suggest that this document actually supports our assertion that lowering the corporate tax rate will in fact accomplish what we want it to. I quote:

Corporate income tax measures have limited impact on aggregate demand over the periods displayed in the table . . .

And I'll say that they're a short period of time.

. . . but have among the highest multiplier effects in the long run.

This is because they increase the incentive to invest and

accumulate capital, which leads to a higher permanent capacity to create goods and services.

Madam Chair, we are after a permanent, a long-term capacity increase in this province, not only for today but for future generations that depend on this government to get it right. We've never said that our actions are about short term. We are in this for the long haul, and we're working towards permanent, long-term economic growth that Albertans today and future generations can benefit from.

While we're looking at studies, Madam Chair, we have a 2012 study by Dahlby and Ferede that shows that lowering corporate income tax rates has significant positive impacts on investment and GDP. There's also a vast amount of research out there that demonstrates that increasing corporate tax rates can have disastrous impacts. Quite frankly, we've seen that in this province. When they governed, the members opposite increased corporate tax rates, among other measures. We witnessed this economy tank.

A recent paper from the OECD indicates that corporate tax increases are the most harmful type of tax measure for economic growth. Other literature such as a 2017 paper from the Calgary School of Public Policy shows that corporate tax increases implemented in Alberta – and I've just mentioned this – by the previous government would negatively impact labour productivity and result in overall decreased wages for Albertans, and we observed that.

Madam Chair, again, we're not implementing short-term solutions. We're working to repair the long-term damage that we've recently witnessed. The job-creation tax cut is a long-term plan that will create sustainable economic growth and employment, again, not just for the next couple of years but, even more importantly, for the long term and even for the decades to come. Future generations will benefit from these changes, just like Albertans will in the next two to three to four years.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members with comments, questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad to see that the Finance minister has stood up and responded to some of my comments. I appreciate that he read my tabling, which was nice because most people don't read our tablings. So thank you for that.

I just have a couple of questions, and I'm wondering if the minister will be willing to respond, and if not, that's fine. Part of the conversation that we've been having in the House recently around the projected budget and where the budget will be is the discussion around the blue-ribbon panel. Now, I recognize that when the Premier introduced the blue-ribbon panel, he said that they're not allowed to talk about revenue; they're only allowed to talk about expenditures. Here's my question, and here's where my concern is. If we're looking at what cost efficiencies we can find within the government yet we're acknowledging that a corporate tax cut is going to put a \$4.5 billion deficit in the revenue, how can you as a government honestly be able to say that the budget overall makes sense? How can you not look at revenue and only look at expenditures and say that that's a fair budget? It doesn't make sense. There's always money coming in and money going out.

When we talk about this bill, Bill 3, I guess, to me, it feels a little premature, and it feels premature because although I recognize that you're saying that, well, this was a promise made and a promise kept and all the political rhetoric around that, the reality of it is that you're looking at deficits and you're looking at cost expenditures, and you're trying to say that we are going to introduce a budget without looking at revenue. How do you introduce a budget without

looking at revenue? Corporate taxation in this province is going to put a huge hole in your budget, and the only way you're going to be able to balance that budget is by cutting in other areas. I really struggle with that component of it.

I recognize that when you talk about the corporate tax system, making sure it doesn't create winners and losers around your industries – I guess my question would be this. You have a royalty review projection, that your Premier has spoken about potentially coming forward, to discuss royalty revenue and whether or not you're going to look at a royalty review and whether or not you're going to have some legislation around royalty reviews. If you're going to do that, then you're actually looking at how you're incentivizing different industries.

We did this with the petrochemical industry. The reason we did it was because we need to encourage them to come from the United States to Canada and start looking at the production rate. We've seen it generate jobs by doing that. We've invested in the tech industry through different options and incentives that have actually brought Google to Alberta, have looked at Amazon coming to Alberta. There are different ways that you could incentivize the industry without putting a \$4.5 billion deficit hole in your budget.

If you're going to do it – and we know you will; you're going to pass Bill 3 at some point because you're the government – how do you create a budget on it? How can you rationalize to Albertans that your blue-ribbon panel is going to give you the tools that you need to look at your costs and what you're investing in and what you're going to cut and not acknowledge that you have to look at this \$4.5 billion deficit and also acknowledge the fact that you're already saying that it's not going to do anything for two years? You're right. The table that I tabled said that over projections – it was a long-term projection, but so is this plan. This plan says the exact same thing: over two years you're not going to get the return on the corporate tax cut. It won't happen.

What you're doing is looking at how you're going to cut a whole bunch of different things without looking at your revenue. You have to replace the revenue. That's just the reality of it. The only way you replace revenue is by having investments coming back into the province. How are you going to fill a \$4.5 billion hole with revenue? What does it look like? If you acknowledge that the corporate tax rate will not bring investment into the province over two years and create the jobs that you're saying that it's going to – your personal taxation rate is not going to go up; you're not going to get a return on your corporate taxes because you're not going to have the industry investing right away – you are going to have a hole for two years. I mean, it's \$4.5 billion over four. I get that.

I'm pretty sure that the chair of your blue-ribbon panel would challenge that you have to look at the revenue. She did in Saskatchewan. I mean, over a period of time maybe their corporate tax went down, but over a period of time their corporate taxes went back up. She cut a lot of different things, and, specifically for many of you in this House, a lot of rural supports were cut under that budget. Although the blue-ribbon panel can be your argument for many, many, many things, if you're not looking at your revenue, you have a fundamental problem, and the only way you're going to be able to solve it is by cutting. Unless you can tell this House how you're going to create revenue over the two-year gap when you don't have investment coming into the province, I struggle with the whole argument and why it is you just can't wait until you see what the blue-ribbon panel comes back with and says: look, this is what the problem is; this is what we can cut. Because, ultimately, your blue-ribbon panel is not going to be able to find the gap in that \$4.5 billion to balance your budget. It's just not going to happen, unless you know something that I don't know.

5:00

**The Chair:** Just a reminder, members, that we are on amendment A2. There's been a bit of latitude all around the House on this one, but I just thought I'd mention that.

I believe that the hon. Minister of Finance is rising to speak.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to respond to a couple of the thoughtful questions that the Member for Edmonton-Manning raised. I think that relative to the blue-ribbon panel we were clear in the terms of reference that we asked them to do a deep dive into Alberta's finances and focus on the expenditure side. I think that it's no secret that Alberta's per capita spending is very, very high relative to other provincial per capita spending, so we really believed we needed to focus there.

Again, as we take a look at long-term sustainability, managing this province's finances, I think we absolutely have to be responsible on the spend side, and that can help avoid the challenges we see in budgets as revenues fluctuate significantly in this province. Of course, we did campaign; we made a promise to Albertans that there wouldn't be tax increases, and we take that promise seriously. We intend to honour that. We've heard a lot about the hole that will be blown in the revenue, \$4.5 billion, over the last several days. Again, we were clear with Albertans in our detailed platform in terms of the effect that this job-creation tax cut would have on corporate revenues. We were clear in the platform.

There will be benefit before the two-, three-, and four-year marks, however. I believe that in the way we're implementing this job-creation tax cut, by announcing it with certainty ahead of time, it will change investment decisions immediately. While that may not mean a significant surplus in corporate income tax revenue immediately, we believe that it will affect job creation quite quickly, and we know how important that is to all members of this House and, certainly, how important job creation is to Albertans. Dr. Bev Dahlby has also concluded that by 2023-24, I believe, without looking at the exact dates, in his opinion, this corporate tax cut will actually result in increased overall government revenues. Again, we're not playing the really short game here; we're playing the intermediate and longer game in terms of government revenues.

Again, this is a measure that is really focused on attracting investment, getting Albertans back to work, creating opportunities for small businesses, for those corner-store businesses out there, that benefit from a very competitive tax rate in this province already at 2 per cent but desperately need additional opportunity. This job-creation tax cut, moving our corporate tax rate from 12 to 8 per cent, I believe will provide significant increased opportunity for the smallest of our businesses, hard-working entrepreneurs in this province, and it will also return much-needed jobs to the province of Alberta.

**The Chair:** Who was first? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Don't worry. We'll all get a chance to speak here, Member.

Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise today and speak to this amendment, which I do plan to support. Just quickly I want to touch on some of the conversation that has happened so far today. I have some concerns. The Finance minister said – and maybe this is more of a personal issue – that taking action to reduce corporate taxes is a bold measure, and I would argue that it's one of the least bold measures that you could actually do as a government. You know, taking taxpayers' dollars, taking the money of the people of this province without any kind of question about how it's going to be spent, if the money will stay in the province of Alberta, if it will

support the workers that you're trying to support – without any questions you're going to hand taxpayers' dollars to large corporations.

Now, another comment that was brought up – I apologize; I don't have the Blues in front of me – was along the lines that we need to stop subsidizing industry and offering them incentives that aren't sustainable. This was in regard to the tax credits. It sounds like the minister won't be supporting the tax credits that we had implemented over the last four years, which is of great concern to me. The minister must realize that while he's attacking the tax credits that we brought in, saying that we shouldn't be subsidizing industry if they're not sustainable, you are doing the exact same thing by cutting corporate taxes.

I'm supporting this amendment, once again, reviewing this legislation within two years, a comprehensive review, and making sure that the Assembly has the opportunity to review that report within six months of it being brought to the Assembly. I'm supporting that. I mean, right now I have many concerns that have not been addressed, concerns around: why is there no question around eligibility? How much of a corporation's workforce is in the province? What are they going to do with that money, for instance? These are questions that are addressed through programs like the Alberta investor tax credit. They're addressed through some of the other programs that we brought in, like the capital investment tax credit. There are strict criteria about how the money is spent and which corporations are able to get the money.

I do understand the concern about giving this money to specific industries, which is arguable, most definitely. There was a program or two where we did specify industries. Like, the interactive digital media tax credit was for a few industries. I suppose I understand the concern there. We were working to diversify the economy, of course, but also strengthening an industry that we have here in the province and that we have the opportunity to become leaders in the province. I think that there's room to support these tax credits.

When we talk about reviewing the results of cutting corporate taxes, as is proposed in Bill 3, I want to know, when we compare it to a tax credit program, if it's actually better. I think that's something that we should be able to discuss right now, and hopefully the government members will be able to provide some evidence that that is the case because I'm still not convinced.

I want to go back to a comment that the critic for economic development and trade, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, made. In 2015, when we ran in the election, we had a job-creation plan. When we were elected, we took it to businesses, and we took it to industry, and they said, "Look, this is not going to solve the issues that you think it will, so you should go back to the drawing board." And we did. We worked with those businesses and those chambers of commerce, and we came up with these plans for a tax credit. So I want to know, as I've stated, if you're going to keep these tax credits in place, and if not, why not? I mean, we worked with the chambers of commerce, and we worked with local businesses, and they recognized that there was a need for capital. Cutting corporate tax rates is not addressing the concerns that there is a need for capital in the province. We talk a lot about the importance of small businesses. Frankly, this isn't going to overall address the need for small businesses to get capital, address the need for small businesses to keep more of their money and employ more people.

One of the other questions that I have now, but I suppose we can get addressed if we pass this amendment to have this reviewed in two years, is: would it have been better for industry in the province and specifically small and medium-sized businesses if instead of doing a straight cut across the top corporate taxes for medium and large businesses, we'd actually reduced the small-business tax to

zero? Maybe that's something that you have planned for us in the future. I suppose we'll wait and see and decide from there. But that's an important question that I think needs to be addressed. Why did you decide to only take care of large corporations and not lower small-business tax rates further or, instead, you know, balancing the two? Those are a few of the questions that I have.

Of course, some larger questions. The minister mentioned the blue-ribbon panel doing a "deep dive." If you're only going to address one side of the budget, I would argue that that's not a very deep dive, maybe a medium dive, maybe even a shallow dive.

5:10

**Eggen:** Wading pool.

**Mr. Carson:** Wading pool. Yeah.

I think that there's a conversation that the people of Alberta deserve to have from their government and deserve to have from their policymakers, and your blue-ribbon panel is definitely not going to address those concerns.

Of course, it's the easy thing to do, to put together a panel. They'll come back and say: you know, we need to give more money to corporations, but definitely don't want to touch the tax structure of anything. Well, yeah, once again, that's not very bold, Mr. Chair. I don't think you needed a panel, that you paid however much money for, to tell you that. I think that any one of your members probably could have said that in this House without pay.

I suppose I will stop there. I imagine I have more comments to make to the main bill, Bill 3. I am, of course, once again, going to be supporting this amendment that's before us. I think it's reasonable. I think that any legislation that we're passing should be reviewed at a certain time, two years. Maybe we should even review it before then, but the amendment before us says two years, and I do support that move.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others looking to speak to this matter? I believe I see the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I recognize that we're debating an amendment here, so I'll reassert my position that I'm in opposition to this amendment, but I would just like to respond to a couple of questions that the member opposite has raised. You know, he raised the issue of small-business taxes. Why were they not considered? In fact, they were considered. Fortunately, at this point in time we do have a very competitive small-business corporate tax rate, a tax rate of 2 per cent, and we believe that's sufficiently competitive to not discourage investment, productivity, growth, and success, and even profitability with small businesses here in this province. So it was considered. Again, I'm a true believer in the fact that as we create a more competitive business environment, reduce our corporate tax rate from 12 to 8 per cent, in fact, the investment that will flow into this province will add significant opportunity for those small businesses and that they will be a large benefactor of this greater corporate tax reduction.

Again, the member opposite asserted that profits would be immediately, you know, withdrawn and perhaps kept in shareholders' pockets, that our tax reduction would create additional profitability within corporations and may be gone or lost to Albertans. Let me suggest this. As we get it right in terms of creating the most competitive business environment in this province, those profits will be reinvested in this province, and that is our goal. That's the goal that we're looking to achieve. The bold moves are not in simply appointing the blue-ribbon panel; the bold moves are basically ensuring that we have the most competitive



corporate tax rate and business environment in this country and one of the most in North America. Bold moves include repealing the carbon tax, which was the largest tax repeal, I believe, in the history of this province. The bold moves are taking a concerted effort at modernizing and improving our regulatory environment, ensuring we have a world-class regulatory environment so Alberta businesses can compete on the global scale.

Lastly, I just want to respond to the point about credits and incentives to encourage diversification. I will say this. There can be a place and a time for specific incentivization, but I believe that a much more comprehensive, a much more sustainable approach, an approach we should use every time is to create a broad-based competitive business environment so that governments aren't picking winners and losers, so that governments aren't trying to presuppose what the next big thing is. Quite frankly, Mr. Chair, governments so often don't get it right. We need to create a competitive business environment where creative, innovative, educated, forward-thinking Albertans can invest in this province with the next big thing, and I don't believe governments will have that next big thing figured out.

With that, I'll say again that I'm opposed to the amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are any others looking to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South standing.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's really always my pleasure to get up and speak in this House and to speak to such important issues here. I do want to commend the Minister of Finance for getting up and speaking at such length to this amendment and to some of the questions that were posed to him. I mean, I think it's really interesting, though, some of the words he chose to use. Maybe I'll speak to what the minister said in regard to why I would support this amendment in such strong terms.

The minister spoke at length about how there will be benefits in the very short term. I just wish, Mr. Chair, that the Conservative platform had actually shown that. Very clearly, the platform itself actually didn't have those numbers. I know that the platform had to be revised, perhaps multiple times, under the cover of darkness. That's okay. I mean, sometimes you don't get the numbers right the first time. But really clearly, by itself this corporate tax cut does not introduce the revenues that the minister is speaking about in the short term or even necessarily in the long term.

The minister also spoke at quite a bit of length about the assertions that he was making, Mr. Chair, and how he asserted that corporate tax cuts would have these long-term benefits and whatnot. Then he spoke at length and asserted that this would create innovation, especially in industries like technology and other things like that.

As somebody who actually was educated in computing science and technology and mathematics, let me be very clear. The term "assertion" has a very specific definition. What an assertion is is something that is a base truth of your entire principle and philosophy and methodology and program and algorithm. The first thing we actually do in computing science and math and algorithms, Mr. Chair, is that when you do an assertion, you test that base truth. You test to ensure that your entire program will not fall apart, that it will not fail. If your assertion fails, then the entire system that you have built will also fail. It is a base truth that must be correct in every single case.

Of course, I know that the Minister of Finance is not educated in computing and in algorithms, and that's why I'm trying to enlighten him in this House as to how some of that works, how this actually works when you're dealing with the complex mathematics of it, Mr.

Chair. When we talk about that, it's really important that we understand that you must test that central, core truth.

Mr. Chair, this amendment does that. It takes us back to our basics and says that when we accept that we have an assertion, when we accept that we believe that this is true, when we have faith in what we say, we must then go on and test it and say: does this actually hold up? Does the thing that we stated will create all of these benefits actually hold up, that single thing? The members of the government and the members of the backbench can speak at length about how this will create all these great benefits. If they are correct, that is going to be wonderful. But what is most important is that we understand whether that base truth actually holds.

Otherwise, if that base truth is false, then the entire house of cards comes falling down, the entire benefits that the government has spoken about, the entirety of all the things they have spoken about: innovation, savings, revenues. Everything that they have based basically their platform on, Mr. Chair, the entire platform, the entire house of cards will actually fall apart if that base assertion that the minister was so nice to state many times is not true.

I think that's something that members of this House should be very interested in because members of the government very clearly believe that the assertion is true, and members of the opposition perhaps have a little bit more critical view and want to make sure it is. But if it's something that they truly do believe is true, they should have no fear at all, Mr. Chair. There should be no fear in testing that truth. There should be no fear in making sure that what they have stated is actually going to work.

5:20

This amendment does that. It strikes a committee that then goes on and reviews those economic impacts. It goes on and says: will what the minister said actually hold up? I think that's something that we can all aspire to because that's what we as legislators want to be doing in this Assembly. We want to be making sure that the legislation we create works. We want to make sure that the things we base our assumptions on, our assertions on work, Mr. Chair. We want to make sure our legislation does what it's intended to do, because if it doesn't, then we have to come back here and fix it. We have to come back here and change it.

Mr. Chair, I'm concerned that members of the government don't understand that. I'm concerned that they don't understand what happens when your base assumptions don't hold up. I won't say the whole saying here, but you know what happens when we assume. Really, that's what's happening here with the government. They're making assumptions that they are not willing to test. I don't know whether that's because they're ashamed or because they don't believe it actually will work. But, very clearly, one of the two must be true because they will not even begin to entertain the idea that we need to actually test what they say. They will not even begin to entertain the idea that a review of this bill might be a good idea.

Mr. Chair, to be very clear, I think the bill in its entirety is a bad bill, but I do think that we can make a bad bill better. I think that what we can do is say: okay; the government thinks it's a good bill; I think it's a bad bill. What we can do is that we can definitely say that in two years we will know. We will know because we will be able to test whether it's a good or a bad bill. If the government isn't willing to do that, maybe they're scared. Maybe in their heart of hearts they know that there is a little bit to be concerned about with a review here. Maybe they know that a review could show flaws in their bill.

That would be something that I would hope they would be willing to put up, because leaps of faith are not what this Assembly is paid to do, Mr. Chair. What this Assembly is paid to do is to make legislation that will work for Albertans and will help get Albertans

the best province that we could possibly live in. Really, if the government doesn't understand the importance of that, if the government doesn't understand the importance of making sure we have legislation that is continually reviewed, continually tested and they don't understand how important it is that we check that the assumptions we're using actually hold up, then that's something that all Albertans should be concerned about.

That's something that all Albertans should be concerned about because the government needs to understand how logic works, basically, Mr. Chair, because it is fundamental to logical reasoning and deduction and philosophy. It is fundamental to these ideas that when you start with base truths, they must actually hold up. They must actually work. If the government doesn't understand that fundamental piece, I know that there are many people in the departments and bureaucracy who definitely do, and perhaps they can reach out to some of their colleagues and ask for a more in-depth explanation of how logic works. But if the government refuses to understand or perhaps is wilfully ignorant of how logic works and wilfully ignorant of how these things that the minister wishes to assert operate, then I think it's something that we need to be concerned about.

That's why this amendment would be so important, why it is so important, Mr. Chair. It's an amendment that ensures that we actually go out and do the job that Albertans elected us to do. It ensures that we don't go too rashly on legislation. I wish we had accepted other amendments that perhaps would have slowed this down a bit, but I think this is actually something that all members could agree about. We don't need to slow it down, but what we do need to do is ensure that the legislation works.

I think that members of the government should be glad to have a review because if their base assumption holds and if their assertion holds, then what will happen is that they will be able to go into a committee and do a full economic impact assessment and review and say to Albertans: look at how great we are; we the Conservative government were able to create this much economic activity. Mr. Chair, if it's absolutely true, then the government should be excited for this amendment. They should actually be jumping up and down on division and trying to get this amendment passed.

If they won't and if they don't think it's a good idea, then Albertans are left wondering: why? Albertans are left wondering: why is the government afraid to test their own legislation? Why is the government afraid to review their own legislation? What is it about their legislation that has them sitting on their hands? What is it about their legislation that they're so worried about?

Mr. Chair, I think that, for me, I'm concerned about the impact this will have. I'm concerned that it will blow a 4 and a half billion dollar hole in corporate giveaways while doing nothing to help actual workers here in this province. That's something that is very concerning to me. Unless the government is willing to speak about why they think that they never need to review any of their legislation and, in fact, that their legislation is always perfect the first time, then I think that we do need to pass this amendment. I think it's something that we do need to consider to be very important.

Mr. Chair, it becomes very clear that the government isn't willing to do that work. They aren't willing to do the work of understanding how good legislation is made. They aren't willing to do the good work of understanding how good legislation is maintained. They aren't willing to do any of that work, and I think that's something that's very concerning.

I think it's something that members of the government backbench should be very concerned about because they were sent here to also review government legislation, just as we in the opposition were. I think it's something that members on the front bench should be

concerned about. If their own ministers that they've sent up to put legislation forward aren't willing to take criticism on their bill, that's something perhaps they need to discuss among themselves. It's something where I think Albertans expect better. Albertans expect a government which is willing to take a good look in the mirror and say, "Does this legislation work, and do the things that we assume about our legislation hold true?" or, as the minister would say, assert.

Mr. Chair, that is something that I think is very important because when we talk about the types of things this legislation will do, when we talk about how drastic and risky and ideological this bill is, it is something that is very important we get right. It's something that's very important we monitor. It's something that's very important we review periodically because when you blow a 4 and a half billion dollar hole in your budget in corporate tax giveaways, it really does make a difference.

It means that you're going to push back that balance date. It's means you're not going to be investing in your schools. It means you're not going to be investing in your hospitals. Because those are the things we need to keep an eye on, this amendment is important. We need to be reviewing whether this 4 and a half billion dollar hole, whether this giant giveaway to corporate friends and donors, Mr. Chair, will end up hurting our fiscal targets, will end up hurting our public services, will end up hurting our hospitals, no matter where they are in the province.

Mr. Chair, those are all very important things. It's very important that we get this right. It's very important that members on the front bench and, in fact, the backbench understand the logical fallacy they're trying to present here. They don't want to test their own bill, they don't want to test their assertions, and that's something that is very concerning.

I understand that the government thinks that they have it all figured out. But, Mr. Chair, we were in government over here for four years, and let me tell you that you never have it all figured out on the first try. I'm sure members of the government will agree with us. What happened was that you went back and reviewed things, you went back and you changed things. In fact, some bills came back to this Chamber two, three, or more times. That's the reality of governance, and the reality is that we need to make sure we get this right.

The campaign is over, Mr. Chair. What we are doing today is making sure that this legislation is good, and this amendment is a good amendment. I think there must be members of the backbench and, hopefully, the front bench that recognize how reviewing what you're doing periodically is a good thing.

Again, in computing science, Mr. Chair, one of the methodologies that is now very common is what we call being agile. Being agile is one of those things that you want to do because as a project moves forward, you want to be able to make changes. You want to be able to say, "Well, the requirements have changed" or "The expected results have not been working the way we thought," so you make changes to your project, you be agile and you make those changes on the go. That's what a review like this would allow us to do.

The government clearly doesn't want to be agile. The government wants to be set in their ways, and I think that's something that's very concerning. They want to be very slow, and perhaps that's something that the government is used to over there. But I think Albertans expect us to be nimble. Albertans expect us to make legislation that works, and if it doesn't work, they expect us to fix it, Mr. Chair.

Unless we can do a review and see what the economic impact is and see how this bill is affecting Albertans and affecting workers and job creators, Mr. Chair, we won't know. There will be no way

to do that work that Albertans expect us to do. In fact, we will probably be letting Albertans down. I think that is something that we should all be concerned about, especially members of the government. I think they should be concerned that they aren't willing to put in that work.

I don't know whether they don't want to bother having committees – they think that committees are unimportant – or perhaps they think that the committee will take too much time out of their day, Mr. Chair. Maybe they just don't want to come up to Edmonton to do those reviews.

5:30

Mr. Chair, I am proud to stand here and fight for those Albertans that expect us to do our jobs. I'm proud to stand here and fight for those people that expect us to go and review legislation and critique legislation. I'm proud to do all of those things. If the government backbenchers think that that job is unimportant, then that's their prerogative, but I think it's very clear that Albertans will be expecting us to do that job. Albertans will be expecting us to go forward and to do that work and to guarantee that the government continues to update the legislation and continues to have legislation that is nimble.

Now, Mr. Chair, I think it's pretty clear that I believe this amendment is important. I believe this amendment is important, and I think it's pretty clear that members of the government, based on how little they've spoken to the amendment – I know they've spoken at this amendment regarding other things – think that it's something that may be a waste of their time. Perhaps backbenchers here who are texting away or listening with earphones in think that this is a waste of their time as well.

But, Mr. Chair, it is very important that Albertans get the best legislation, it is very important that we review legislation to the best of our ability, and it is very important that we don't rush through this process. It's very important that we don't go too briskly and blow a 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway to wealthy corporations and then leave Albertans by the wayside. That is something that would be very bad. That is something that I think Albertans would not like. That's something that I think my constituents would not like.

I think it's very important that we get this right. I think it's very important that we continue to challenge the narrative, and I think it's very important that we continue to challenge our assumptions because that is something that we understand as people who understand science and believe in science. I know that all of the members of this Assembly believe in science and understand science. We as people who believe this always challenge our base assumptions. We always challenge what we're doing because if you don't, it makes you a bad thinker, Mr. Chair. It makes you somebody who then suddenly becomes surrounded by sycophants, and that's certainly not what any member of this Assembly wants, I hope. It's something that I would be very concerned about, if members wanted it in this Chamber.

Instead, we need to make sure we continue to push forward and challenge what we believe to be true and review what we believe to be true because things change, as we know, and this is one of the best opportunities to do this review because this is actually allowing us to see if we are having the impact in Albertans' lives that we wanted, if we are having the impact in workers' lives that we wanted, and if we're creating the jobs and the economic impact that we wanted.

This amendment, Mr. Chair, is the best way for the government members to go out and speak at length in a couple of years' time of how great they've done if it does work. Of course, I've mentioned already that I don't believe it's going to have those impacts. I

personally don't believe that it's going to work to the extent the minister and the government believe, but this would be their opportunity to prove me wrong. This is the government's opportunity to make me eat my own words, as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has already mentioned. This is the opportunity for the government to go out and put me in my place. I'm sure there are many members of the government who would long for an opportunity to do that.

Mr. Chair, if they don't want to go forward with this amendment for whatever reason – and I'm not sure if it's shame or embarrassment or perhaps just a worry in the back of their minds that they may actually be wrong and they don't want to admit it. That's something that I think is very concerning because we as legislators should be happy to admit that sometimes we are wrong. We don't get it right every single time, but what we want to do is that we want to move forward and we want to push forward to make Alberta better. The way to do that is to go and look at what we've done in the past and see what succeeds and what doesn't succeed and see where we've made mistakes and see where we haven't.

Mr. Chair, by reviewing all of those things, we come out as better legislators, we come out with better legislation, and we come out with a better Alberta for all of our constituents. That's something that I think every single member of this House aspires to. Every single member of this House wants to have a better Alberta, and we do that by making sure our legislation holds up to the standards that we set for it. That's something that I want to encourage all members to support. I want all members to strongly and proudly support the legislation they put forward and they vote for.

But if they're not willing even to look at their legislation and say, "Did it work?" then what can we expect of our government? What can we expect if they're not even willing to look and ask the simple question: is what we're doing working? That is a very simple question, Mr. Chair. It's something that all Albertans will be asking, and they will continue to ask every single election: did the government's policies work? That's something I think this House should continue to ask every single time legislation is brought forward here.

Mr. Chair, I strongly support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak on amendment A2? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much to all my hon. colleagues who have been part of the debate on Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, and specifically the amendment that we're currently discussing, introduced by my hon. colleague our MLA for Edmonton-City Centre.

I think it's really important that we reflect on what this amendment says because it is not binding the government to action. It is not hindering them in any way from moving forward with their platform-stated goals. In fact, it allows the government to continue to move forward with the knowledge that within two years they will begin a review of the amendments made by this act, taking a look at economic impacts, which I know for a fact are highly important to all members in this Assembly, particularly the government caucus members who were in this Chamber in the 29th Legislature, because measuring economic impacts was a topic of frequent discussion during that 29th Legislature in each and every session, and submitting said report to the Assembly within six months.

Because we are dealing with something that is incredibly important and valuable, our Alberta economy, the services we are able to fund and provide to our citizens, and we are looking at

making some changes that – as we have heard from the Minister of Finance, from members opposite, there are many different opinions about the impact and the results once these changes go into effect. We've actually heard that there are different economists who measure these impacts differently. I appreciate that the government is putting their best foot forward and is stating as fact that 55,000 jobs will be created, is stating as fact what this will do to our competitiveness, what this will do to attracting investment, but the government does not know these things as fact and has admitted as much and has acknowledged that there are differing models and differing opinions as we move forward.

This amendment, very reasonably proposed by my colleague, simply says:

Within 2 years ... begin a comprehensive review ...

We're not even giving a deadline for when it must be submitted, just started, please.

... including any resulting economic impacts ...

and then submit it to the Assembly

... within 6 months after beginning the review.

I guess there is a bit of a deadline on the other end, but it gives a great window of time for that review to take place.

Likely, a review and an impact assessment such as this can be done using a lot of the data that the government already uses to measure the performance of our Alberta economy, but we could add into that some very specific flavour as to what this bill is attempting to achieve and then measure if we are moving along in that direction. How many new businesses have been incentivized to move to Alberta as a result of this? The members in this Chamber have referred to some of the work done by our chambers of commerce, which often involves surveys. Perhaps survey data can be incorporated into this to give us a better sense of the impact of Bill 3 once it is put in place.

Mr. Chair, I support this amendment solely because we know there's such differing opinion, and we've heard in this Chamber a number of examples where the intended effect of decreasing corporate tax rates has not produced new jobs, has not produced new investment but instead has created large-scale deficits and cuts to public services. That's a pretty big risk. Being able to just keep an eye on what is happening and make sure that there's some sort of assessment or report back to the Assembly at large is not, in my mind, a very onerous requirement on this government. It allows them to continue and proceed down the path that not only did they put forward in front of Albertans during the election but they stand in defence of today and gives us that opportunity to review as an Assembly at that two-year mark.

Earlier we had an amendment, amendment A1, that would have essentially paused at that 10 per cent corporate income tax rate.

5:40

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

#### **Point of Order Items Previously Decided**

**Mr. McIver:** The hon. member has decided to reflect upon an earlier decision of the Assembly, which is specifically not allowed in the standing orders. We're happy to hear all of her debate on this amendment. I don't think we need to relive the earlier amendment.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. If I may continue.

**The Deputy Chair:** Yeah. With regard to this situation I actually agree with the hon. Minister of Transportation on this point. Going forward, I'm happy to listen to the rest of your debate, clearing away from those issues.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With amendment A2, making sure that the Assembly is reviewing, through the form of a report, after the implementation of Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut act, has already begun, I think is incredibly important.

As I was saying, members within this Chamber have already talked about other jurisdictions where financial measures such as this have been attempted and have been – I would characterize them as failures. We've heard a number of times about what has happened specifically in Kansas, a state in the United States that has quite a few parallels between it and Alberta as far as how their economy is structured, oil and gas investment and whatnot. We know that the Kansas experiment, as it's been termed, predicted job creation, predicted economic growth, predicted higher revenues, painted a very rosy picture for all of the things that would come as effects from a corporate tax decrease, but what they actually received was slower growth, a revenue drop that led to a shortage of funding for public services. Education became underfunded. Making sure that there was aid to help the poor wasn't sufficiently funded. In the end, the economy was damaged.

There's a reason why this story as well as several other crossjurisdictional reviews have been raised in this Chamber. It's because we are concerned about this happening in Alberta. By accepting this amendment, we know that within two years after coming into force, being able to review the impacts and what is actually being seen – of course, this is being called a job-creation tax cut, but we know that when it comes to job creation, cutting corporate taxes as a measure is considered one of the weakest options. We know that from a number of different reviews of previous examples of corporate tax cuts as well as the analysis therein.

In fact, many believe that spending on infrastructure has one of the biggest impacts when it comes to job creation. In fact, that was something that our government undertook to do, historic infrastructure spending: building schools, roads, hospitals, much needed across the province. That helped to support many, many Albertans and kept them working during a downturn in the economy.

Finance data also shows that spending on income supports for the unemployed and low-income Canadians: also a very good return on the dollars invested. Mr. Chair, I'm a really big proponent of building an economy from the bottom up because we know that when you give a little bit more money to the lowest earning, they spend that, and they spend that almost exclusively in the local economy whereas more money to the richest, to the top 1 per cent or even 10 per cent, often that money is invested or spent in other jurisdictions, in vacations, in a number of different ways.

If you raise minimum wage, for example, the people earning the least will take that additional money to buy healthier food, to get school supplies for their families, to go out to the movies in the local community, which helps boost the local economy. Every time someone spends a dollar in Alberta, that's going to Alberta businesses, which hire other Albertans who then spend their money, a really nice trickle-down effect. In that case trickle-up perhaps, where you're boosting the economy from the bottom up.

Here we have a plan which is predicated on the idea that if we give very profitable corporations a large tax cut, they will automatically turn around and invest that into Alberta, and when challenged on that, the Minister of Finance has not been able to say that that will for sure happen, other than that they're trying to set the conditions for that to happen. I understand that. But given that you cannot guarantee that that will happen and given, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview said in one of his

responses to this bill, the importance of tying conditions to these types of incentive programs – as the Member for Edmonton-Manning talked about, the petrochemical diversification program, as an example, or some of the tax credit systems that have been implemented more recently to facilitate tech job creation – these types of measures can be more directly tied to the outcomes that we are looking for when it comes to job creation.

So I do support the amendment and making sure that this gets reviewed after several years.

The other jurisdiction that has been referenced a number of times in this Chamber is the one still happening under American President Trump, when they cut their corporate tax rates from 35 per cent down to 21 per cent. One of the interesting things there is that we already have several years of data showing that although the argument under which this tax cut was introduced, very similar to the one here in Alberta, sounded compelling, the analysis throws cold water on the idea.

What companies are actually doing with the additional funds are things like stock buybacks, things that allow them to amass more capital without necessarily creating new jobs. And this is not theoretical. Payroll data has been used to analyze the corporate tax cuts that were supposed to create jobs in the United States. The payroll data for publicly held U.S. corporations and an analysis of that shows that, generally speaking, this isn't what's happening, job creation. What's happening is that the rich are getting richer. That doesn't help to grow the U.S. economy, and something similar happening in Alberta wouldn't help us here as well.

Making sure that through this amendment we have a procedure in place, that we have a plan to review the economic impacts to make sure that there aren't any other surprises – because, of course, in the midst of doing this, other economic factors impact our province on a constant basis. Everything from access to tidewater with our pipelines to what's happening internationally with the global price of oil, all of these things are changing, shifting, so being able to come in and have checks and balances and to check in at the two-year mark to me seems eminently reasonable, particularly given the number of concerns that we've heard here in this Chamber as we've gone through the debate on Bill 3.

For these reasons, I will be supporting the amendment and would look forward to hearing more from the government members as to why even the act of writing a report and reviewing the economic impacts is something that is not supported. This is a reasonable amendment. I thank my colleague for bringing it in. I think significant concerns have been raised around Bill 3 and its impact on our economy, significant examples of where similar changes have been done, and they have not successfully brought in the prosperity that we are being promised exist here. This amendment gives us a reasonable step forward.

I want to say thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to speak on my support to this amendment.

5:50

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

I believe I saw the hon. Minister of Transportation standing.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm grateful for this opportunity to rise on amendment A2. I've been listening to some of the debate from my esteemed hon. colleagues, and I have a few comments, I suppose, to make. Now, I think what we just heard here is a request from the opposition to have guaranteed results. I did; I heard that. I say that there's no proof this is going to happen. You can't be sure. They're looking for guaranteed results, and I would suggest, I hope gently, that such guarantees don't exist in this world. Predicting the future is a mug's game, as they say. I've said it here

before, and I'll repeat it now. If I could predict the future, I would be a lot wealthier than I am today, and I think that truth could be said by all of us if we knew what was going to happen before it happened.

But here's what I do know. As a comparison or as a foil, I suppose, to what Bill 3 is – and I heard some talk about assertions. Well, there were some assertions made about four years ago that if we added the largest tax increase in the history of Alberta in the form of a carbon tax and if we raised the minimum wage by an unprecedented 30 to 40 per cent in a short period of time and if we added regulations and if we paid no attention to how much revenue was coming in and just spend on everything that we thought was a good idea to the point where we ran up a deficit of \$6 billion or \$8 billion or \$10 billion a year, literally, not figuratively but literally, and if we changed the way that we do things, from a reasonable level of debt with a plan to pay it back to the point where we got up to \$60 billion in debt for Albertans in one term of office and projected getting up to \$100 billion in debt in the second term of office, and, of course, with interest payments of about \$2 billion after one term of office and projected interest payments on the debt of \$4 billion after the second term of office, that everything would be great. Those were some past assertions.

Of course, Mr. Chair, it didn't work. There's now about in the neighbourhood of 180,000 Albertans out of work. There's record unemployment among young people. Investment has fled, and the rich corporations that the NDP like to complain about – they like to call them rich corporations, when, in fact, many corporations are rich and many corporations are not rich. I'll tell you what corporations did en masse. The large ones left. Corporations like Total Energy and Murphy Oil and a whole cadre of other oil and gas companies left. You know what they took with them? Their jobs, mortgage-paying jobs, that Albertans used to have and hold and could support themselves and their families with.

The hospitality industry, that paid a big part of the incredibly fast increase in the minimum wage, weren't able to employ as many people, and now instead of making \$15 an hour, a lot of those people, whether they're young people or seniors or other people, are making zero dollars an hour because the jobs that they used to have at \$12 or \$13 an hour no longer exist.

I guess I would agree with the hon. member that making incorrect assertions is a risk. We've seen an example of a whole suite of incorrect assertions by the last government that didn't work. Mr. Chair, we are actually making some different assertions that we think will bring different results. If the hon. member is looking for a guarantee, I don't suppose that a guarantee could be offered to the hon. member, but I think it's not a bad strategy to do the opposite of what failed in order to attempt to succeed. I think that's an assertion that we're making here, and Bill 3 is a part of that assertion.

Now, Mr. Chair, I notice it's 5 to 6, so I am going to, with your permission, make a suggestion that we rise and report progress at this point, and I would like to test the will of the House on that motion.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** I believe I see the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock standing to report.

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

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Those opposed, say no. Agreed.  
The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since it's 3 minutes to 6 and we had some very good debate today and I genuinely don't feel like

we can get any more meaningful debate done before 6 o'clock, I move that we consider it 6 o'clock and recess the House until 7:30 this evening.

**The Acting Speaker:** Just to confirm, your intention is to adjourn the Assembly until 7:30?

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you for correcting me. I move that we adjourn the House till 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:58 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, June 11, 2019

Day 11

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 11, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Transmittal of Estimates

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

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I have received certain messages from Her Honour the Administrator, which I now transmit to you.

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

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Administrator transmits supplementary supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

For interim supply the Administrator transmits interim supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province of Alberta and certain sums required from the lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, and recommends the same to the Assembly.

Please be seated.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now wish to table the 2018-2019 supplementary estimates. When supplementary estimates are tabled, section 4(5) of the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act requires that an update to the consolidated fiscal plan be tabled. Accordingly, I wish to table the 2018-2019 third-quarter fiscal update, which serves as the updated fiscal plan. The quarterly fiscal update provides the framework for additional spending authority for the Legislative Assembly and for the government.

Mr. Speaker, these supplementary supply estimates will provide additional spending to the Legislative Assembly and 15 government departments. When passed, the estimates will authorize an approximate increase of \$8.9 million to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$449 million in expense funding, \$53 million in capital investment funding, and \$362 million in financial transactions funding. Some of these commitments relate to important activities, including wildfire management and emergency assistance; however, one of the largest expenses was to lease railcars. It is required by the traditions of parliamentary democracy that we must request funding for this ill-advised initiative.

In addition, I now wish to table the 2019-20 interim supply estimates. These interim supply estimates will provide spending authority to the Legislative Assembly and the government for the period of April 1, 2019, to November 30, 2019. This interim funding authority will ensure continuity in the business of the province while our government assesses the province's finances before introducing a budget in the fall of 2019. When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$107 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$27.8 billion in expense funding, \$2.4 billion in capital investment funding, \$786 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$943 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## Government Motions

12. Mr. Toews moved:

Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2018-19 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, according to Standing Order 18(1)(i) this is a debatable motion. Is there anyone wishing to speak to Government Motion 12?

Seeing none, is the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board wishing to close debate on Government Motion 12?

**Mr. Toews:** I'll waive this.

[Government Motion 12 carried]

13. Mr. Toews moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2018-19 supplementary supply estimates for six hours on Wednesday, June 12, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Motion 13 is not debatable.

[Government Motion 13 carried]

14. Mr. Toews moved:

Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2019-20 interim supply estimates, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion based upon Standing Order 18(1)(b). Is there anyone wishing to speak?

Seeing none, would the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board wish to close debate?

[Government Motion 14 carried]

15. Mr. Toews moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2019-20 interim supply estimates for three hours on Wednesday, June 12, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Members, this motion is not debatable.

[Government Motion 15 carried]

7:40

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 7

#### Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

[Adjourned June 11: Mr. Ellis]

**The Speaker:** Would the hon. Member for Calgary-West like to continue with the time remaining?

**Mr. Ellis:** No. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Why, thank you.

Is there anyone else wishing to debate on Bill 7? The hon. the Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak on the matter of Bill 7 that is before this House, that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has put before us for our consideration. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has put forward what he says is legislation that expands the powers of municipalities to create a tax incentive program for nonresidential properties for up to 15 years. That might be, in fact, a good idea, which is why it existed beforehand.

In 2015, Mr. Speaker, the city of Lethbridge established a targeted redevelopment incentive policy to promote new construction or major renovation of medium- to large-scale commercial, retail, and mixed-use building projects that generate significant and ongoing expansion to the assessment base in the downtown core.

In May 2019, under this policy, council approved a \$680,000 tax cancellation over seven years for the redevelopment of Six08 Health Inc., which is a fabulous building in the downtown, about three blocks from where I live and where my dental hygienist has her practice. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this redevelopment of the downtown has led to renewed optimism among the business revitalization zone in Lethbridge, that we have, through this policy, and in particular the mixed-use building projects, been able to redevelop the downtown. A decade and a half ago, when I moved to Lethbridge, the downtown was just at the beginning of these conversations at the level of council and in the business community of how to make the downtown an attractive place to be. Like in many prairie cities, it had a number of challenges related to poverty, crime, drug use, and so on. I can tell you that this new targeted redevelopment incentive policy, that has been in place now for some time and is an 11-year policy that has been enacted by the city of Lethbridge, has been successful.

Clearly, they didn't need this bill to do that. Clearly, they didn't even need the refreshed Municipal Government Act, which twice our government brought before this Legislature and brought in a number of modernizations to the MGA. It's a big piece of legislation. It's one of the biggest. That's why almost every year governments find themselves in the position where they are doing a tremendous amount of consultation around the contents of the MGA. It's also because there are so many municipalities in Alberta, and we have a very vibrant level of democracy at the municipal level. And that's why I think municipalities were quite taken aback by this bill. They're not used to that. They're not used to people just kind of doing things without talking to them first. They take a relatively dim view of that, which is why we've seen municipalities speaking out on this matter since the bill's introduction.

There are, of course, other places where these kinds of tax incentives have been used, these kinds of tax tools. You know, despite the fact that we have these examples, we have heard claims from the government side that municipalities can only provide some tax deferral in times of hardship or for brownfield redevelopments, which was also a change that we made, in addition to some of the brownfield reclamation regulations in Environment and Parks, which was also something the municipalities asked for and have been asking for since about 2013. In fact, the government previous to us consulted on that, but that didn't feel like it was even good enough for us. We went back and consulted again because that's how municipalities like to have their relationship with the government of Alberta.

In fact, section 347, despite the government's claims, sets no requirement for hardship and indicates that a tax break could be provided in circumstances where council "considers it equitable to do so." You know, in fact, what we have here is that those municipalities who have been largely supportive are largely supportive because it is a thing that they already can do, are doing,

or may do in the future under their existing powers as they understand them and as had been consulted with the GOA regardless if it was the government previous to ours, our government, or even future changes that may happen. That is fine. You know, a government can take time to put something in the window to dress it up, if you will, but at the end of the day it's really not what municipalities are asking for.

Right after I was elected, I went about doing some community consultation in anticipation of this session, so I met with a number of different folks, including the business revitalization zone, the city of Lethbridge, various people in the arts community, people who work in the persons with developmental disabilities sector, both school boards, and others that will come to me as I talk. I had a number of meetings. You know, I think it's fair to say that many roads in many of those conversations led back to the question of stable, predictable funding for municipalities and a good deal for small to medium-sized cities fashioned along the lines of the deal that was put in place through the city charters conversation, which, again, was not something that happened overnight. It happened with a large amount of consultation, again, because that's how municipalities, in my experience at least – and I will give the minister this advice free of charge – like to be engaged with.

Really, what I heard from my mayor and council, and I'm sure many of you will hear as well – and I believe there's a small and medium-sized cities caucus meeting, a sort of impromptu group; I believe that the city of Lethbridge is hosting said meeting – is that what they're interested in is a long-term deal around MSI, what they've always been interested in, and some stable, predictable investments in the things that they care about that make their city more vibrant and more livable.

I spoke earlier about the tax plan, that this bill claims to enable, that has been happening in Lethbridge for some time. Layered on top of that, the city of Lethbridge has really taken its social responsibilities seriously, and we're a really good example of collaboration. I believe that you can do that sometimes better in medium-sized cities than you can in larger places just because everybody knows each other. It's hard not to collaborate when you see each other in the grocery store on the weekend. They obviously undertake Team Lethbridge as well, that whole effort of bringing a whole bunch of people, public and private sector, to the Legislature for a couple of days, typically in November, to make the case, you know, "Hello; we're here; there is a world outside of Edmonton and Calgary," which I think governments of all stripes probably need to be reminded of periodically.

Lethbridge has done these things, but it's also taken a really comprehensive approach to its downtown. Certainly, they've done this business around the tax deferral, and it has actually been quite successful. One need only take a tour of downtown Lethbridge to see all the vibrant small businesses and all the activity going on there. They also have very serious concerns about their safe consumption site; the housing investments that are supposed to be coming, that were in fact committed to; and the new intox facility, that was in fact committed to. We have some new detox beds, but we need more, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the issues around housing are significant, and our government made a commitment to supportive housing, new units, approximately 40 units of supportive housing. Really, city council and the business revitalization zone in my discussions with them were really pinning their hopes for further development, for further growth, for a vibrant and inclusive community on those aspects, not on a bill that, quite frankly, enables them to do something they're already doing. That's in the past, and my city council, at least, is looking to the future.

The other piece that they take really seriously and that I think this government should, too, is around the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission. The city of Lethbridge was the first city, as I understand it, in Canada to adopt the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They do a land acknowledgement at almost every city event that I've ever been to. I cannot recall one where that was not done. In Lethbridge, Mr. Speaker, we say we're a Blackfoot territory. It's not even a treaty acknowledgement due to how the local First Nations wish to be referred to. That's as a result of history, and that history is important. It's important for the provincial Crown, the little Crown as I always call it, to recognize that just as much as the big Crown. I will leave that as a piece of advice for all government members because it's embarrassing that we're even having this conversation. Those are the kinds of priorities that Bill 7 does not speak to. Those are the kinds of priorities that, if anyone had taken the time for a 45-minute meeting with just a smattering of municipalities, they would have identified prior to introducing this legislation, which, as I said, does something that people are already doing.

7:50

One of the other really key pieces that municipalities are in fact worried about and that has already been on this government's legislative agenda, to our great chagrin, is of course the cancellation of further funding commitments from the climate plan to the large cities and instead taking whatever residual funds that were left over from the price on pollution and just putting those into general revenue, essentially removing the ring fencing around the revenues, the commitments in good faith, the legislative commitments that came before this House. It's rescinding that and just leaving the large cities with absolute uncertainty in the same manner as happened to the mid-sized city, the one with which I have had the most interaction, and that's, of course, the city of Lethbridge. Of course, that piece was also not consulted on, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think that that really shows that there's potentially a learning curve there for the new government in terms of how they engage other elected levels of government. I certainly look forward through the Education Amendment Act to some of that consultation happening with school boards. I certainly haven't seen that yet. Just as Bill 7 is not what municipalities are asking for, neither is Bill 8 what boards are interested in.

There have been years of consultation, both on the MGA and on the municipal sustainability initiative. Now, MSI was never designed to be permanent, despite what some municipalities will tell you. It wasn't. It was always scheduled to sunset in some way, shape, or form, but the trick for government was to negotiate a deal through consultation that was good for Albertans and had municipalities share in our fortunes and was good for municipalities.

It serves no one for me to have to take my car in for repair every three or four weeks because I hit another giant pothole. That serves no one. It serves no one to have a downtown that has social disorder and disarray and inequality and my municipality not being able to address those problems. It serves no one for our friends who own small businesses in small cities to not be able to work with their business revitalization zone and others to be able to make a living. That certainly serves no one. It certainly serves no one to have an arts community who is waiting on commitments around MSI for things like a performing arts centre. I was describing to one of our colleagues just this afternoon that the city of Lethbridge is waiting on some certainty around MSI for a new performing arts centre. The federal contribution has been made, and the city contribution will be through MSI if MSI stays as it is. Certainly, not just our arts community but also Tourism Lethbridge and our small business community are very much waiting for the commitment around that

performing arts centre. That will really help us, again, in addition to the tax tools that are proposed in this nothing-burger bill.

Those are the kinds of things. If the province was really interested in legislating around municipal issues, then might I suggest a city charter that is not immediately in tatters? Might I suggest an MSI formula that somehow is fair for all involved? That doesn't mean that everyone gets everything they want, neither municipalities nor province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments. I see the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood rising.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Lethbridge-West as well. I really appreciated her perspective and, obviously, being here in Edmonton, hearing the Lethbridge experience is an important one, particularly when it comes to this bill. As the member noted and others have noted in this Chamber, we really see that this bill is a whole lot of nothing given that much of the provisions are already happening across this province.

The Member for Lethbridge-West and a number of other members spoke about the collaborative approach that they took, particularly as ministers. I know the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview outlined the importance of working collaboratively. They were really able to see the fruits of their labour in their previous roles, particularly in rural areas, in the heartland, and a few other examples that were outlined earlier.

Now, I know the Member for Lethbridge-West mentioned that she met with, you know, business revitalization zones, business owners, and community members over the last number of years, which again highlights just that, the collaborative, co-operative approach, Team Lethbridge, as she called it. I worry about the perhaps unintended consequences of this government's approach because we saw that both mayors Iveson and Nenshi sort of raised their concerns about more of a competitive model, not the same collaborative approach that our government took. I know the mayor of St. Albert also raised some of her concerns. You know, I guess I would just like to pose to the member: should we be concerned about the approach that this government is taking with Bill 7? Perhaps we're issuing a bit of a warning here that, you know, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, in answer to the hon. member's query, the challenges for a large capital region or a large metropolitan region such as Calgary, where you have a number of bedroom communities and others who may be availing themselves of city services but living somewhere else and paying taxes somewhere else: those challenges are a little bit different in southern Alberta and certainly even distinct from a place like Grande Prairie, where we do see this phenomenon happening as well, where the city of Grande Prairie sometimes has a hard time keeping up with all the service provisions for people who live outside of it.

That may be less of an issue in Lethbridge, but something that is more of an issue, I would argue, is the vibrant arts community and the instability that this government has introduced through not actually meeting the concerns of municipalities. Because we have a vibrant arts community, they contribute mightily to the regional economy. We are home to a number of recording artists that we as representatives of this province might want to go out and brag about. They are some of the leading lights in terms of the alternative

country, Americana, Canadian roots music scene in Canada, and they live in Lethbridge.

What the arts community, when I meet them, are very worried about is CFEP, CIP, and FCSS in particular; FCSS because a lot of the arts community, musicians, artists, and others also work with people with disabilities through a number of different programs. That's oftentimes what people's day jobs are. That's not just about quality of life for musicians having jobs. It's also about quality of life for people of all kinds of different backgrounds and differently abled people. Certainly, the arts community is concerned, as I mentioned, about the future of the performing arts centre and our ability to attract talent and, therefore, economic activity to the downtown and elsewhere.

The CFEP and CIP programs, too, are of deep concern to the arts community, and they have come up in other conversations in terms of city councillors who are more connected to the arts community. Those are smaller grants that sometimes make it easier for a nonprofit to do things like invest in equipment. The taiko society: I remember giving them a cheque for some new drums. Of course, we have a large Japanese-Canadian population in Lethbridge from the fairly sad legacy of World War II. We have a whole bunch of different taiko groups in Lethbridge. Certainly, the arts community is concerned about those things given that we are a regional hub for arts activity, Mr. Speaker, and Bill 7 does nothing to address any of those actual concerns of actual Albertans who live in southern Alberta.

8:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 7 at second reading? The hon. the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Nellie would be proud of that long-drawn McClung and appreciate that emphasis.

I'd like to start my comments, Mr. Speaker, by letting the House know that I recognize the theme or pattern that the government has adopted here. The UCP government seems to be adopting a pattern that is not unlike that of the former Progressive Conservative government, the last one that we defeated when we came to power in 2015. That former PC government made announcements of phantom projects repeatedly, school projects in particular. They just kept reannouncing and reannouncing and reannouncing school projects beside signs that were in vacant fields, and these projects just never got built. Well, this Bill 7 reminds me of that theme and that process.

This enabling legislation just re-emphasizes powers that municipalities already have. It's like the young son who brushes his teeth for the second time in front of his mom, so she'll see what he's done, and says: what a good boy am I. Well, just repeating your steps, just reannouncing projects, or just revisiting or raising awareness of the powers that municipalities already have doesn't accomplish anything.

It appears as though in the process as well that the current government is looking to nail as many nails into the coffin of the collaborative approach to municipal and regional governments as possible. I'm just wondering if they couldn't see the collaborative approach more as something that would be described in the past as a barn-raising bee, where the community got together to help one another build their projects. That is considered perhaps by members of the opposition to be an enterprise, something where they got together, but not a collaboration. Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, collaboration is the modern barn-raising bee if that's a way of having the members of the government accept the process.

It's a community effort. It's an effort where people get together to look at their strengths, to solve problems that they jointly have,

and, for example, as I mentioned earlier today in the House, to perhaps have the economic anchor of a school be maintained in a community, where one community will decide to do grades 3 to 4 and the other community will decide to do grades 1 to 2 and thus keep the schools in both communities viable and, in so doing, allow the community to survive and maintain a threshold population. Those types of community projects, the collaboration, that effort, are something that this Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019, actually goes a long way to decimating.

It's a means of getting communities to pit oneself against another, and it ends up making communities the worse off for it. You know, competition is one thing if you're talking about the survival of the fittest in nature, where wolves or coyotes or other predators will compete against each other. We're talking about human beings and communities in Alberta, where collaboration is a more productive way of acting together in unison to accomplish goals that have a common objective.

Mr. Speaker, I really hope that the members opposite in the government can take another look at how they would describe the collaborative efforts that we attempted to enshrine in legislation and in the associations that we hoped to engender between communities and regional municipalities and maybe see it in the framework that helps them to grasp the concept. I suggest, perhaps, that it's the modern form of a barn-raising bee, and maybe that's something that they can attach themselves to.

I'd like to also suggest that the legislation is something that really is already in place. The measures in it already exist, so it's a totally unnecessary piece of legislation. I'll give you a couple of examples, Mr. Speaker, to detail that. For example, showing that this measure and ability already exists in current legislation, the community of Chestermere created a policy in 2019 to enable tax cancellations for nonresidential commercial developments, industrial developments, seniors' housing, and multifamily housing in the form of three- to four-story apartment buildings. The city provided an example of a \$10 million building that qualified for a discount. Therefore, the developer would see municipal taxes waived for three years and could receive a total refund of approximately \$235,000. That policy would expire at the end of 2020, and council said in the release that it hoped the incentive would fill some vacant lots. Mr. Speaker, that policy already exists and has been taken advantage of by communities in Alberta recently.

Calgary is another example. In May 2019 the council in Calgary provided a one-time cancellation of \$94,000 in property taxes for the Royal Canadian Legion in Kensington. No secret. It's already in place. Unnecessary legislation. This Bill 7 accomplishes nothing that does not already exist and, in fact, is simply just a means for the government to reintroduce something and say, "What a good boy am I. Aren't we doing something for you?" when, in fact, there's no benefit that isn't already conferred upon municipalities in this legislation, so it's really unnecessary, do-nothing-new legislation.

I could go on with other examples and suggest that there would be current municipalities that do provide tax breaks in times of hardship or brownfield developments. The members opposite would suggest that that's the only time that they could perhaps provide these tax breaks currently, but that's not the case, as I've just cited that Chestermere and Calgary certainly do it already.

The mayor of Edmonton is largely supportive of the whole project, but he said that any additional flexibility is generally a good thing; however, we want to learn more. He's concerned. He said that I think we've got to have a conversation in our region to see how these tools will grow the regional economy because selective use by one of us to undermine the others could be the one risk here.



Mr. Speaker, pitting against one another municipalities who right now are more akin to look towards a collaborative approach is the exact wrong direction that we need to go in this province.

The regional government model that we're looking at in and around Edmonton and the surrounding areas of Calgary, even, dare I say, Red Deer, as well, where people are looking to see what they bring to the table and how they can benefit the larger group in terms of transportation and infrastructure projects and utilities and economic development: there's no end to the projects that they find a better way forward than collaboration. Collaboration is not a buzzword; it's a reality that's been discovered by government after government after government that works and doesn't pit communities against each other. In the end you end up having much more efficient use of resources and an excellent rapport between the regional municipalities and an integrated infrastructure that actually works for the long term and is more cost-effective.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really unhappy that this government has seen fit to bring forward a piece of legislation just simply to reintroduce something that already exists, claiming credit for doing something to assist municipalities when, in fact, they've already got the opportunity to do what the bill purports that they're bringing on new. I really do expect that the public will take notice of this although the government is probably hoping that they won't, and they'll realize that this government has got an empty piece of legislation here. I certainly am one who encourages all members of this House to make sure that they express their disapproval of it.

When we were government, Mr. Speaker – and I know that the current government doesn't like to hear us talk about it because they say, "Well, we were slammed in defeat. We got 55 per cent of the vote." True. Guess what? 45 per cent of the population didn't vote for you, so there's a significant dichotomy in this province, and there's room for plenty of debate, and that's what's going to happen. It's a healthy thing in this province. Good on you. You won the election, but I'll tell you what. You won a percentage of the vote, but those people that didn't vote for you also deserve a fair hearing and representation and to be respected as well.

8:10

There's a great debate going on in this Legislature, and I think it's a healthy one. It's basically a tug-of-war between two economic schools of thought. We're looking at demand-side economics, which, on this side of the House in opposition, we in the NDP caucus will purport as the best way to go. The other side of the House, the current government, is a supporter of supply-side economics. That's a long-time economic debate that's been taking place over a few generations already and will probably go on long beyond our generation and this Legislature. However, the current demands of the province, economically and socially, demand that we take the debate seriously and rather than trying to run roughshod over each other personally, seriously take a look at what applies best given the current economic frustrations that we face in this province.

Here on this side of the House we believe that demand-side, stimulating spenders, where we recognize 70 per cent of the economy in the aggregate is consumer spending – if you put more money in the hands of consumers, you're going to increase demand and therefore stimulate jobs and job creation. The opposite view is well expressed by the current government. We, of course, are at loggerheads on that, and I welcome a real, solid intellectual debate on that so that people in the province can really understand the choices that are before them. Maybe somewhere there are some ways to compromise, there are some bits and pieces that the two economic schools of thought can be in a collaborative way implemented. I think it's important that we take a look at the whole

issue very intellectually and be honest about the fact that it's a healthy thing to debate amongst ourselves as parliamentarians and to present clearly the choices to Albertans.

There are a lot of people who are on both sides of the fence as far as support for the governing party and the opposition party regardless of the seat disposition in the House. You know, 55 per cent of the vote is 55 per cent of the vote, but 45 per cent of the population, Mr. Speaker, did not vote for the government. I think the government does itself damage if it forgets that. Certainly, boast about getting your 55 per cent. Fine and dandy. You won the election, you got a majority, and you rule the roost at the moment. But the 45 per cent of the people who did not vote also deserve the respect that currently doesn't seem to be forthcoming. I for one will stand up for those people, as I was elected to do, with pride, dignity, and an insistence that they receive the same from the other side of the House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments. I see the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford rising to make a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just interested in the comments made by the previous speaker about the nature of co-operation and the fact that the government side of this House has sort of sold the farm and lost the plot and forgotten their roots with regard to the type of co-operation that helped to build this province, the idea that people working together can achieve so much more than people going after each other, attacking each other in order to get personal derived benefits.

I'm very interested in some of the experiences from his hometown of Thorhild, I believe. I know that there have been a number of organizations such as the farm-fair society and other groups that have demonstrated the benefits of co-operation and the notion that we as citizens in a democracy, particularly in Alberta and, of course, within the country of Canada, have been able to achieve great things because we have not allowed that terrible inequality of some people succeeding while others do not. We have not allowed that to get as extreme as in some countries in the world, where very few people derive all the benefits of the natural resources and the power within the society. Instead, we try to share those natural benefits.

I know that whenever I spend time speaking with the indigenous community, they highlight this very point, that a society really only does well when people are co-operatively working together to try to achieve the benefits for all. It's not simply a form of governance, but it's also a spiritual value within the indigenous community, that when one makes a decision, you don't simply make a decision for your own welfare and your own benefit but you actually think about the larger community and have the decisions that you make benefit the larger community. Of course, they're not just speaking about the community in the sense of, you know, the immediate relations that happen to live in the same home that they live in but, of course, all of the other people around them who live in homes next door and around the valley and down the stream and, in fact, across the country.

I know that they talk not only as a widely geographically – of course, you know, Cree people living in Alberta see their families extending not just in Alberta but across Saskatchewan and Manitoba and Ontario and Quebec. I know that the Blackfoot people, for example, still recognize a Blackfoot Confederacy that spans not just southern Alberta but, of course, through Saskatchewan, through the northern United States into the Dakotas. What they talk about is the fact that we work together to create an

environment where everybody can have their needs met in a reasonable way. They talk not only about that geographical spread but also talk about a historical spread, and that is that decisions that are made should be made not only for this immediate generation but for future generations. I'm sure many people have heard the expression that a decision that is made should be made with forethought about the next seven generations down the road.

I do know that the speaker was speaking quite eloquently about the fact that that kind of belief system, that kind of philosophy is very important in terms of creating a society that is in and of itself a good society, that allows each person to achieve their greatest good in terms of their own skill set and their own ability to contribute but also to derive from that society a reasonable and fair share of the benefits of that society.

You know, in the indigenous community that was demonstrated largely when, for example, someone would have the opportunity to go out hunting and would shoot a moose and would return back to the community. They didn't put it back in their own home and stock up their own shelves and ignore the rest of the community. They brought it to the community setting, and they shared the benefits of that successful hunt with everyone around them. That's the kind of co-operation that built this province long before this province was a province, long before the settlers came and settled in this community. The value of a shared community is very important, and I'm sorry that we're losing it now.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others wishing to speak to Bill 7? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill 7, the Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019. We know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs recently announced legislation claiming that it's going to expand power to municipalities to create tax incentive programs for nonresidential properties for up to 15 years. Unfortunately, it doesn't do that. There's no real change that we see because municipalities already have the ability to provide tax breaks for nonresidential properties under the MGA. We've heard about a few examples already as we've been debating this, some from Calgary, Lethbridge, Chestermere.

We've also heard that there's been a significant lack of consultation around this. Our municipal leaders across the province haven't really had a lot of consultation or input into this legislation. Perhaps if consultation had occurred, something more than what already exists would have been presented in this bill. We know that municipalities are worried about the reckless cuts, \$4.5 billion in corporate tax giveaways, and how this is going to impact their ability to serve their residents.

8:20

There are claims from the government that this bill will allow municipalities to defer taxes for up to 15 years, like I had mentioned, that it will attract new investment and developments as a result. Unfortunately, it appears that the majority of the powers that the UCP claims it's giving municipalities already exists under section 347 of the Municipal Government Act, the MGA, that I had referenced earlier. Where in the MGA does this exist? It's under section 347, Mr. Speaker. Let me read to you what it already does. Section 347 states:

(1) If a council considers it equitable to do so, it may, generally or with respect to a particular taxable property or business or a class of taxable property or business, do one or more of the following, with or without conditions:

- (a) cancel or reduce tax arrears;
- (b) cancel or refund all or part of a tax;

(c) defer the collection of a tax.

(2) A council may phase in a tax increase or decrease resulting from the preparation of any new assessment.

That is already currently written in the Municipal Government Act.

Municipalities that have created tax incentive programs or provided tax breaks for nonresidential properties include – we heard the Member for Edmonton-McClung talk about some of the stuff that was happening in Chestermere.

In Lethbridge in 2015 they established TRIP, the targeted redevelopment incentive policy, to promote new construction or a major renovation of medium- to large-scale commercial, retail, and mixed-use building projects that generate significant and ongoing expansion to the assessment base in the downtown core. Policy states that it will establish an 11-year municipal tax cancellation policy to provide incentive for the construction or major renovation of commercial, office, retail, and mixed-use projects. In May 2019, under this policy, council approved a \$680,000 tax cancellation over seven years for a \$4.85 million development by Six08 Health Inc., something that already happened under the legislation, that this government is saying they're going to implement in this legislation. It's already there, Mr. Speaker.

In Calgary one that I'm particularly proud of is happening. In May 2019 council provided a one-time cancellation of \$94,000 in property taxes for the Royal Canadian Legion in Kensington.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the examples of how this current bill isn't needed. The municipalities are already doing these things. They can already provide tax breaks in times of hardship or brownfield redevelopments. Sorry, I lost my place. New authorities will be created to allow municipalities to establish tax incentive programs for businesses, job creators, and investors through bylaw. That's already possible, for a municipality to create a tax incentive program through bylaw. This is not prohibited under section 347 of the MGA.

They say: new authorities enable multiyear tax incentives to be created. Again, Mr. Speaker – I'm sure you're not surprised to hear this – this can already happen, as evidenced by Lethbridge, which established an 11-year tax incentive policy, and Chestermere, which we heard earlier has a policy in place until the end of 2020. They're saying that it allows for proactive cancellation of taxes, not just retroactive tax breaks. This again is not true. Under section 347 a council can cancel, reduce, refund, or defer the collection proactively.

In short, Mr. Speaker, while this bill may clarify existing authorities and prescribe how municipalities can create tax incentive programs, it does not fundamentally shift the authorities that exist already under the act. These are minor tweaks, not major shifts.

Mr. Speaker, if the government wants to attract investment, they need to take practical steps, like some of the things that we did. So I'd like to highlight some of the things that our government did to support business. We cut the small-business tax by a third. We made thousands of loans more readily available by a \$1.5 billion increase to ATB Financial's borrowing limits. We worked with the Business Development Bank of Canada to establish a \$1 billion fund for new business loans along with mentoring supports. The new Alberta investor tax credit has provided refunds to hundreds of small businesses on green technology investments. We doubled funding for a technology development program with Alberta Innovates, helping hundreds of small businesses go from testing to marketing. Small-business incubators were added to help businesses grow faster, and mentoring supports were expanded so entrepreneurs could launch more start-ups, innovate, and expand. Through a partnership with Business Link, one-on-one supports and resources for immigrant clients helped newcomers get ahead.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation that's been introduced under the Municipal Affairs minister doesn't do anything. It speaks to a whole bunch of things. It perhaps provides some clarity to municipalities. Municipalities were not consulted on this. I'm sure, had they been, like I mentioned, they would have come up with something that would have helped. This is just simply not a bill that does anything. I think – it was a reference to *Seinfeld* – it's an entire bill about not much.

**Ms Hoffman:** One press conference.

**Ms Goehring:** One press conference.

Again I would encourage members of the House to not support this bill because really there's nothing in here that allows municipalities to do anything that they aren't already allowed to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has questions and comments. The hon. the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was quite enchanted with the speaker who comes to us from Edmonton-Castle Downs, who just spoke. I wanted to actually hear if she had any historical background from her family or her family's rural roots that would perhaps shed some light on the theme of collaboration, which seems to be under threat from this piece of legislation.

I know from my background that – you know, you were speaking about societies – well, ag societies are very much an important element of co-operation and collaboration in this province. They have a history that goes back to 1947. Currently there are 293 agricultural societies which operate and are relatively important to significant communities in Alberta, including Edmonton. Of course, Northlands is one. However, in my home village of Thorhild – I'm going to become an honorary citizen of that community, I think, if I have anything to do about it – the ag society there is still operating.

Of course, it was something that my grandparents belonged to in their roles as community leaders. It created the Thorhild stampede association, which still holds the Thorhild Stampede. It used to be July 1 and 2, but I believe it's just a one-day event. That brings people from far and wide. It brings the whole community together in a collaborative effort. When they first started the Thorhild Stampede, my grandparents and great-grandparents would bring their own stock to the stampede. Each of the community's townspeople would ride each other's most rank bulls and horses. Usually a little wager was on between them. It could have involved money, could have been corn liquor. I'm not sure. But there was certainly something on the line for whoever got to ride the longest or the hardest.

Now, other forms of co-operation also existed. There were community development projects. I know that my great-grandfather Walter Horne was involved in the community. There was a need for a school in the village, that was trying to attract a teacher into a teacherage. A building was required. So they got together with a few others and on a stoneboat, otherwise known as an old gate, hooked up to a team of horses, hauled a granary off my great-grandfather's farm to the village of Thorhild. That was the first school in town. These community development projects are collaboration amongst people to help each other out and get things done. In the same way, we're asking that this government consider maintaining that collaborative spirit in the province of Alberta by not pitting communities against each other.

I was going to ask the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs if she wished to talk about some of the experiences of her family in

the past or maybe even locally in Castle Downs where she's witnessed collaborative efforts to help keep community efforts going, whether it be a project or a community league, the construction of a hall or what have you, to ensure that communities survive. There are lots of ways that communities can express themselves, Mr. Speaker, to show how they can support each other and serve a need that's more regional in nature than themselves alone and thereby serve the wider community and people within it.

8:30

It's not only schools. It can be business. It can be a means of having local businesses decide that they're going to be, for example, serving one particular element of the farm implement business, and you will decide as an implement dealer, which, of course, my grandfather Horne was also one – he was a John Deere dealer. He was one who had a familiarity with tractors, and he was more the horsepower guy rather than the pulled implements. People would come to him quite often for their first tractor after being involved in farming using real horsepower, like two horsepower or four horsepower. They'd come in to get their John Deere from him, and that would be the first tractor that they actually ever owned after giving up their horses. So I know that at a community level and a regional level collaboration works. [A timer sounded]

**The Speaker:** We were so close to hearing from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs with respect to her rural roots. It's disappointing for the entire House not to have that opportunity.

Is there anyone else wishing to debate Bill 7?

Seeing none, would the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs like to close debate? You don't have to. [interjections] Perfect. Thank you for that very decisive decision.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a second time]

## Bill 8

### Education Amendment Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate June 10: Member LaGrange]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before us we have Bill 8 at second reading. Is there anyone wishing to join the debate? I see the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Surprise, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much, colleagues, for the opportunity to debate. Actually, I wish I didn't have to say thank you. I wish we weren't actually debating this bill. But we're here, so I will engage in my opportunity to say why I think this bill is so damaging and why I think we shouldn't be here debating this.

Let me start by referring to Bill Hate, an act to destroy GSAs, which, clearly, is just that. This bill has been a strategy to attack LGBTQ youth, queer youth, who said to us when the old Bill 10 was passed, after much pressure from the public particularly – the backstory to that was, as the former Premier, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, outlined earlier this afternoon, about how there was pressure because a member of an opposition caucus brought forward an independent bill, a private member's bill. Again, private members' bills are really important, I think, because not everyone has the opportunity to sit around the cabinet table and drive an agenda.

A private member from an opposition caucus brought forward a bill saying that they wanted to create GSAs, flowing from work that had been done in other jurisdictions, including Manitoba mostly at that time. The government was put in such an awkward position, where there were certainly a number of people in the party that

didn't want them to move on this. Then there were also many people in society who knew how important it was.

The reason why they knew how important it was is because they had exposed themselves to the research, research that showed that students who were LGBTQ, gay students, are far more likely to be successful in completing high school, successful in maintaining a home address, not being homeless, and successful in terms of finishing an average life expectancy – not dying, Mr. Speaker, to be very frank – when they had opportunities to be part of gay-straight alliances, specifically, gay-straight alliances or queer-straight alliances, not general inclusion clubs, not diversity clubs, not everybody-is-in clubs, but specifically clubs where gay or queer was named in the title, where kids felt that they could be included.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

One other thing, to go back even further, actually. The very first GSA originally started with a different title – it was called students and teachers opposing prejudice – and it started in Red Deer. Red Deer is the home of GSAs in North America. It was the first beacon of hope and of stopping prejudice and stopping discrimination. So that's an interesting point. It started at Lindsay Thurber high school, and those students definitely deserve a shout-out for the work that they did back then.

Back to the government being pressured through a private member's bill to bring forward something. They didn't have to bring in anything. They could have just voted on the private member's motion. But the government of the day was particularly hostile towards opposition caucuses and didn't seem to want to acknowledge that anything good could come from anywhere other than the cabinet bench, to be honest, it seemed to me. I'm sure the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat can recall his experiences. I believe he was here during that time. The governing cabinet at that time didn't have much latitude given to their caucus members, didn't have much time for other caucuses outside of – well, really, for anyone outside of cabinet. That really seemed to be the way it was.

Lo and behold, the government decided: "Hey, we're going to fix this. We're going to come in with our own bill – our own bill – and then you can have two bills on the Order Paper that address the same topic, so the private member's bill will get bumped. Our bill will take precedence, and that will be just grand. We'll all get to debate our bill. Oh, and we also won't do all the things that are going to actually protect kids or include the word 'gay' or include measures that have proven to be necessary in other jurisdictions, including Manitoba."

That backfired. There ended up being, I think it was at the light-up at the Leg., hundreds of people coming out to protest. Rather than enjoying the light-up that December season, there were hundreds of people out there protesting, demanding an opportunity to have their voices heard.

Very quickly, the cabinet scurried. They drafted some amendments, and they came back and said: "Oh, never mind the horrible stuff that we said we were going to do. Remember when we said that we were going to make you kids go to Tim Hortons to have your support group? Clearly, that would be a safe place for you to discuss this. We can't force the school to make you have these conversations. It's just too controversial, so you'll have to go off campus. You'll have to go across the street, maybe. If you don't feel comfortable in Tim Hortons because somebody might overhear you, well, then, maybe you can just hang out in the back parking lot. That would be a nice solution, right?"

All of these things continued to shame and suppress rather than protect and demonstrate pride. My hon. colleagues, through you,

Mr. Speaker, this is why pride is so important. Because pride is the response to suppression. Pride is the response to oppression. Pride is the response to shame. For an eternity, people who were gender-identity or sexual-orientation minorities were shamed. So this is why pride is so important.

Here we jump to today – oh, no. There was some more stuff. Sorry. A trip down memory lane. So that bill came in: public shame. They amended it. They said: "Sure, kids can have GSAs on campus. Never mind, we just misspoke. Don't worry. That was a communications error. Sure, kids can have GSAs on campus."

Then we had an election, and that was one of the issues that certainly motivated many people. In the election before that, there was the lake of fire, but it seemed to definitely spill over into that election, some of the concerns around the way that the then PC Party had handled, or mishandled, queer youth so significantly, the way that they had absolutely bullied these youth and tried to push shame and stigma in terms of: go to Tim Hortons or go to the parking lot to have your GSA meeting.

So we had a change of government. We're sitting around the cabinet table, and the Education minister makes it very clear that the youth in this province haven't started creating GSAs or QSAs at increased rates. When we asked him why, he said: "Well, because the bill says you need to do all these things, but it doesn't say when. It doesn't say that you actually need to do them timely." "All right, then. That's something that we can address. You must do it immediately."

8:40

One of the reasons, again, why we acted on it immediately is because we used the evidence around information that showed that where there are students who are minorities in this way, who feel that they're at the point where they're asking for a club, often they're at the point where they really need somebody to turn to, and they really need somebody to give them that emotional or psychological support.

So saying, "Instead of us actually helping to create this support group for you, why don't you go for counselling; why don't you give it a little bit more thought; why don't you create a more inclusive group because you don't want it to just be the LGBTQ kids" – one more part of this trip down memory lane, of course, includes when I was at Edmonton public schools. We brought forward a policy to ensure that all LGBTQ youth have safe, respectful learning environments and that it be the same for staff, students, and families. We were very proud of the work that we did, and I think it's guided a lot of the policies around this province, and I'm very grateful for that.

We brought forward a resolution to the Alberta School Boards Association around that same time, and one of the trustees in debate said: "Well, you know, they wouldn't need these groups if they weren't acting so gay, right? If you didn't act so gay, you could blend in at school, and you wouldn't get harassed or bullied." It was outrageous, and it was something that I think a lot of Albertans were deeply concerned about. After he said that, CBC was, like: hey, do you want to come on the radio and explain your position? He basically doubled down on what he'd already said. So it was clear that there was a need for people who were entrusted to provide policies and take care of youth to have education themselves around how to actually take care of kids and provide safe, supportive environments.

So this has been a long and winding road, but the kids were very clear with us. The kids said: enough delay; we need it to be immediately. Fortunately, we had a fantastic Education minister, who acted immediately and brought in an amendment to Bill 10 to

say “immediately.” Well, in this new Education Act that’s completely removed.

Then the kids also said: we really appreciate the immediate piece. There was another piece, turning to my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood: “immediate” and maybe it was “naming”? I’ll get back to that one when that second brainwave comes. It’s a little bit later. I’ve been speaking since my friends and I were in Public Accounts this morning, it feels like. Sometimes my brain is a little slower than my mouth.

This is how we sort of got to this point where kids said that they needed it to be much more quickly, and that they needed to make sure that there were staff on campus that would act immediately to support them. Making these changes to this act the covert way, of course, is intending to do this and just say, like: oh, we’re just going to go back to the way it was four years ago. Well, the way it was four years ago, kids were still in high – oh, of course. The guarantee that you not be outed, the guarantee that there not be parental notification: that was the second piece. Sorry. My brain caught up. So that was the second amendment that was made. Again, that piece hasn’t made its way into this act.

The reason why we did that – the minister will tell all of us, will say: well, PIPA and FOIP provide the protections. School administrators, school teachers told us: “We don’t know if we have an obligation in loco parentis to tell parents that their kids have joined these clubs or not. We need clarity from you, government. We need clarity. Should we tell them? Must we tell them? Or shall we not?” That’s it, three very basic things that they said. We didn’t just listen. We stood up and said: fair point; we will make sure that we give that clarity.

So those are the two main amendments that give youth the ability to join these clubs and do so in a way that enables that it’s done quickly and that it’s done confidentially so that they get the support that they need.

I also want to say that some people who’ve never been to a GSA meeting – and I’m sure they’re happening, probably, in most of our ridings. If they aren’t happening in your riding and you want to come see one in one of our ridings, we can probably invite you to one of them if you have questions or concerns about what GSA meetings look like. I know that, for example, in my own riding the Edmonton Catholic school teachers have a GSA, a GSA for the teaching staff, because not that long ago there were many teachers who felt that if they put up a picture of their family in their locker, in the staff room, or even in their classroom, they could get fired for putting up that picture. So the teachers themselves got together and formed a GSA.

I spoke to one teacher who, when his partner of many, many years – I’m going to guess probably 20 years – passed away, didn’t feel that he could actually call in to the school and take the time off because of the fact that he was grieving for the loss of his lifelong love. He had to say that he had a family emergency and get a doctor’s note. It’s very sad and very wrong that teachers not that long ago – we talk a lot about kids, but this is also about that whole school environment, which is why we said: staff, students, and families – did not feel that they could confide in their employer, confide in their colleagues to say: this is why I need time off, because I am experiencing this grief and this trauma in my life.

These amendments were done in a way to protect kids based on what the kids told us and based on what the people who work with the kids told us. That is why this bill, in my opinion and in the opinion of the youth that I spent time with in Calgary, at the protest that youth organized – and when youth organize something, kids are really good at organizing, you know. Like, let’s meet up on our phones. Remember when PokeStops were all the rage a couple of years ago? They’re really good at arranging that kind of stuff: well,

let’s arrange a protest down at city hall, where we have to call, we have to book the site, we have to make sure the police know where we’ll be marching. Like, that is a lot of amazing co-ordination from students, mostly high school students, that went into organizing that protest.

The students told us – one person came up to the stage who had graduated a few years earlier and talked about how when she was outed by other people in the community to her parents, she was evicted from her home. Living homeless in rural southern Alberta, trying to find somebody to go from couch to couch, to get that little extra safety from, put her in a very precarious position. Now, her parents a few years later had another child come out. When that child came out, that child had an opportunity to make that decision on how to address it with their family themselves, had talked it through with some of the supportive staff at the school and come up with a plan, and when they came out, the parents responded very differently and, actually, welcomed that older daughter back into the home.

This is the power that support groups, specifically gay-straight alliances and queer-straight alliances, can have. They cannot just change and save lives; they can also support families. So by taking this tool away from school staff and from families, I think that we are not just putting kids at risk, which is – I am confident that there will be many times where members of the front bench will stand up and say: one child dying is one child too many; we need to act to make sure that this never happens. What we’re doing through consideration of this bill is creating conditions for that to happen.

I think that it was a parent who was talking about supervised consumption and about putting the blinders on being akin to being complicit to homicide. I would argue that by us putting these kids in this position of precarity, where these kids have told us that it causes unsafe encounters – and I want you to all know that I believe that the vast majority of parents are loving and kind and supportive. I really do. But if there is one who is willing to send their child onto the street and that child dies, I think we have an obligation to respond in a way that ensures that doesn’t happen.

The research is clear that there have been many ones. So if one child dying is one too many, we have an opportunity to prevent that from happening through our strong and vocal opposition to this bill. I know that for members of the caucus you probably haven’t had a ton of time to engage on this. You probably haven’t had an opportunity to really voice your concerns with your leader, with the Premier, and with the minister responsible for this bill. But I call on you to do so because one child dying is one child too many, and I don’t want any of us in this room to have that on our consciences.

I also want to mention that at that Alberta School Boards Association meeting that I was referring to, there was discussion and debate about: oh, well, if it’s gay kids now, what’s next; fat kids? I have to say that the person who came up to the mic next was a bigger gentleman, and he definitely – I was never sure what he was going to say when he came up to the mic. But what he did say was that he was a teacher in a school before he was a trustee and that there were kids in that school that were absolutely bullied, bullied for being gay or appearing gay, acting too gay, just like that other trustee had earlier said, and that the biggest regret he had in his life was that he allowed it to happen and in some cases he actually contributed to that harassment and that bullying.

As a 60-some-year-old gentleman he said: “I don’t want another teacher to ever have the guilt and the remorse that I feel today. I think that we owe it to teachers to make sure that they know what they need to do to keep kids safe and protected and loved. It’s pretty simple.” That was from Terry Riley, the trustee for Medicine Hat for many, many years.

8:50

It's not the same. It's not the same as being called out for the colour of your hair or your weight. I'm sure the trolls are having lots of fun with me talking about people being overweight. It's not the same, though. It really isn't.

That's the main thrust I want to address on this. I do call on all of the caucus members who are here who are not in the cabinet and haven't had an opportunity to really voice these concerns to, please, on behalf of the children who are telling you that they feel at risk because these changes have made a difference in their lives, don't let this get pushed through. Don't let your Premier and your Minister of Education tell you that this is the strongest law in the province or that it will still be the strongest law in the country because it's simply not factual. I think that we presented those facts earlier today. I know that there was an interesting ruling.

The facts are that other jurisdictions have taken it a step further from where Alberta was five years ago because other jurisdictions knew that their laws needed to be strengthened, their policies, their laws, their types of intervention to keep kids safe.

That is the bulk of what I want to say with regard to GSAs and, specifically, the act to destroy them.

There is another piece I want to touch on tonight, and I imagine I'll have opportunities to voice other concerns at other stages of bill consideration. The other piece I want to touch on is the piece where it's mentioned that trustees can be removed from the board if they breach the code of conduct and if the majority of the trustees vote them off the board.

None of us in this position can get evicted from our positions, can get kicked out from being an MLA because the other MLAs in this Assembly don't like us being MLAs, but that's what we're proposing in this bill, that trustees who have some kind of breach and other trustees deem to expel them have the ability to do that. It's only the people who hire you that have the ability to fire you in this place, right? You have the ability from your leader to get kicked out of your caucus, but then you get to sit in this lovely corner. You don't have the ability to get kicked out of this Assembly unless your constituents choose to expel you. Why is it that we think it's okay for trustees to be able to fire another trustee when the electorate are the ones that elect them? It just doesn't seem fair or just in any way to me.

I leave you with that. I think if you want to have a discussion about recall – and I know there have been discussions about that – sure, consider that through an amendment to this. But nobody should be able to fire an elected official other than people that hire that elected official.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(b) there is not an opportunity for questions and comments, but after the next speaker there will be through 29(2)(a). So are there any other hon. members looking to speak to this matter? It looks like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** That's right. Thank you. Thank you very much. Just as the previous member stated, I want to say that it's an honour to get up to speak to this, but it's not. For me this is a personal issue, as I think everyone in this House is aware, being a member of the LGBTQ community and also having a background in education.

I was a teacher in rural Alberta. I taught primarily senior high social studies in the metropolis of Bawlf, Alberta. Yes. Following that, I was a vice-principal in Forestburg, Alberta. I moved back to the city after being in Forestburg. As I said, you know, in previous conversations, I wasn't able to really thrive out there. I wanted a change. You know, people kept trying to set me up with their farmer

brothers and whatnot, and it just wasn't right for me. But it was an incredible experience being out in rural . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Appreciate the company.

**Member Irwin:** That's right. It was an incredible experience being a teacher and administrator in rural Alberta. I learned a great deal out there and a lot of lessons, and some of those lessons I will share tonight.

I came back to Edmonton about nine years ago or so, and I started working with Alberta Education, primarily in curriculum for the last number of years. Again, education is something that is quite dear to me.

Just as the previous member noted, there's a lot in Bill 8 that we can speak to, a whole lot of components that will require unpacking. But I would like to focus on GSAs as well, gay-straight alliances. As I said, I am a queer person and I'm proud of it. I'm what this Education minister would call a "whatever." I cannot joke about this. You know, it's not funny that this government refuses to acknowledge my community directly, refuses to use the language of queer, trans, bi, gay, lesbian, two-spirited. GSAs save lives. Students deserve safe, welcoming, caring schools. This is Bill Hate. This is an act to destroy GSAs. It's toothless legislation that simply won't do what it needs to do.

As was noted, we know that it's pride month. We know that this government made an attempt to raise a flag, but they were met by protest. They were met by protest from folks saying things like: "You know what? LGBTQ rights are human rights. You can't attack our rights and raise a flag. Simply raising a flag doesn't make you an ally. Your actions, including your actions in this Chamber, make you an ally." The culture minister told media at that flag raising that by doing so, it's a commitment from government to support all Albertans, and she added that love is love. Well, unless you're the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, then it's not. Gay love is not love. His quote, not mine. I agree that love is love. But, again, by being willing to roll back, to repeal those supports for LGBTQ students, you're saying that our love is not real love.

In addition to flag-raising protest, as the Member for Edmonton-Glenora spoke about, we just saw a whole group of students on their own organize in response to this proposed legislation. She nailed it. I mean, again, I've talked before about being a social studies teacher and the role that we have as social studies teachers in encouraging active, engaged citizenship. What an example of citizenship in action, those kids taking it upon themselves to say: hey, if we as students aren't going to respond to this, then who will? But they're also looking to us in the Legislature, which is why it was so great that the members for Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-North West and, I believe, others as well were there in solidarity. They want us now to be standing up against this legislation right here, and that's what we're doing.

We saw folks in Edmonton as well gathering on conversion therapy, trying to bring attention to again another move by this government to show that they're not supporting LGBTQ rights. So we asked. We asked just the other day: how is this government claiming to be allies to the community when we're seeing that the changes that they're bringing in will traumatize, will harm the LGBTQ community?

And we're not talking about ancient history when we pull up some of the facts that I want to share with you. We know that the Premier stated on the campaign trail just two months ago that, you know, he doesn't want to get distracted by issues that voters aren't talking about. He was saying that in relation to GSAs. I'll tell you, I mean, I'm getting so much feedback on this. I do get the odd troll that says, "No one cares," that calls me a man, calls me ugly. But

I'm not going to stop fighting because, as the Member for Edmonton-Glenora said, we know that this is about saving lives. So we're going to continue to move forward, and we are going to allow this to be a distraction for us because it's not a distraction. Saving lives is not a distraction.

Now, one of the things we shared was that the Member for Edmonton-North West did an incredible job as the Education minister, working tirelessly to ensure that Bill 24 was legislation with teeth, that truly protected LGBTQ students. We know as well that there were 28 schools that were unwilling – 28 schools out of a whole lot of schools – so I should say that our government was quite effective in getting schools to work with them, to follow the legislation. But there were 28 schools who were not willing to follow that legislation, and those schools were set to lose funding at the end of May under our plan.

9:00

I worry about the kids in those schools. I think about the kids in those schools right now who have teachers and administrators that aren't supporting them, who don't have a safe home environment. As the Member for Edmonton-Glenora noted, we know that a lot of parents are supportive and a lot of parents welcome their children and, you know, are open to them being members of the LGBTQ community; however, we know that there are some that are not. So I think about those students in those schools, and I worry.

Now, we know the statistics show that LGBTQ youth are particularly vulnerable to mental health challenges. The rates of suicide are higher, and the rates of homelessness are higher. Bill 8 is going to make these students even more vulnerable.

We know that Bill 8 removes the immediacy clause. What that means is that if I'm a student and I go to my principal, my vice-principal, my school administrator and say, "Look, you know, I really think it's important that we start a gay-straight alliance," that principal can take their sweet time in responding. I know. Again, as I said, I was a vice-principal. I know that, especially in a rural school, where we were, you do wield a lot of power. I worry that any delay at the school level – again, its not hyperbolic – could mean life or death for those students. I'm trying to not get emotional here. If you're struggling with your sexuality and you're being told to just wait, to just hold on: "We'll figure this out; let's talk about it," or "Let's not call it a gay-straight alliance; let's not call it queer because those terms offend," I can't imagine what those kids are going through.

This minister also claimed that Bill 8 is modern, that it's going to be some of the most modern – those are her words – legislation. I don't know what's modern about this. I don't know what's modern about turning back the clock when we can point to – again, I like to point to evidence. I told you that I worked in the Ministry of Education for many years. We always liked to do jurisdictional scans. We always liked to before making any decision. Particularly, I was working on curriculum, and before making any decisions, we'd say: okay; how do other jurisdictions approach climate change in curriculum? That is something we actually did review. I sure hope it stays. It's really important that you take that jurisdictional approach, that you look at what other provinces, territories have done. We know that other jurisdictions have ensured very strong protections for LGBTQ youth. Bill 8 puts us back, puts us near the bottom of the pack when it comes to these protections, despite what the members opposite will say.

The minister talks about balance. She's talked about that a lot. Balance between what? Balance about what? She said that LGBTQ students have told her that they want balance. I don't know who those kids are; I don't know who she consulted. I wish she were here so . . .

**An Hon. Member:** She might be.

**Member Irwin:** She may be. Perhaps she's listening.

I don't know what youth were consulted. I'm not saying that she didn't consult youth; I'm certain she did. But I'm hearing from countless youth, and they're certainly not saying the same. They're concerned. These were young people who weren't of voting age, right? You know, think about the countless kids who over the last number of months have responded.

We talked about the most recent protests, but go back to the walkouts weeks ago. Myself and a number of other members attended the walkout at Victoria school, and again we heard from kids first-hand just how important GSAs are. Of course, the Premier's response was that those students should be in class instead of doing politics outside of school during school hours. I was so proud to see those kids out there, again, organizing themselves.

I guess I ask: if the minister isn't listening to kids – again, I'm certain she's listened to a few – who else is she listening to? Well, this is the same Education minister who, we know, in the very recent past was aligned with Parents for Choice in Education, who, again, you can simply google to see that they've promoted anti-LGBTQ rhetoric in the past. She's the same minister who in 2016 said to a right-wing news site that it wasn't necessary to, quote, create additional policies for one group. That was in response to our government trying to fix the loopholes in Bill 10.

It's absolutely important to have protections for one group. Again, I mean, I'm a member of the community. I have some, I guess . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Lived experience.

**Member Irwin:** . . . lived experience. That's exactly what I was looking for. Thank you for that.

We've also heard the real experiences from young people, and many of the members, at least on this side, have received letters, e-mail, Facebook messages, and so on. I talked the other day about an example of an LGBTQ student walking down the hallway having to experience an onslaught of homophobic, transphobic insults and then being told that they couldn't have a support club, that they couldn't call it a gay-straight alliance, and that kid dropping out. That's a real story. That's what Bill 10 allowed, and that's what Bill 8 will allow.

As a teacher I saw kids who could have used GSAs. Just as the Member for Edmonton-Glenora noted, you know, one of the things I regret is hearing homophobic insults and not doing enough. Years ago we didn't have gay-straight alliances at the schools that I taught at. We didn't. I think back to some of the experiences, some of the kids that I know were struggling. We just didn't talk about it. And it's something that weighs on me today. I should have stepped up, and I didn't. I regret that, but I also wasn't safe. I wasn't an out teacher. I myself was struggling with my own identity. So GSAs help teachers as well. They don't just help students; they help teachers as well. They help the entire school community. They bring about acceptance. They start a conversation.

I've noted that I've received a whole heck of a lot of correspondence on this matter. I know, actually, that some of the other members across have as well. I've got an example here from one young person who shared this letter with the Member for Grande Prairie, and he also shared it with me. I asked him today if I could share a part of what he said in the Legislature. So I would like to do that.

His name is Ethan Wohlgemuth, and he's writing to express his concern with the recent legislation.

Notably, I am disturbed by the move to remove protection of members of GSAs from being outed. I would like to provide you with a personal anecdote so that you can understand where members of the LGBTQ+ community are coming from when we are demanding protection of GSAs. When I was closeted ...

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) I believe I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to encourage the member to finish that quote, please.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you.

When I was closeted, my fear of being outed dominated my entire life. It shaped everything I did. I actively modified my actions, my speech. Everything that I presented to the world was shaped by a fear of people finding out that I was gay, and continues to now, even though I am a proud openly gay man. I did not have access to a GSA when I was in high school, and the consequences of this lack of a safe space, where I could openly be myself, are still present today. Coming out is an extremely difficult and personal decision, especially when openly homophobic people are in government. It is completely unacceptable that your government believe that it is okay to take this decision away from people. Coming-out is our personal decision that we take when we are ready and when we feel safe. What your government is doing under Bill 8 would remove GSAs' legitimacy as actual safe spaces. If students are afraid that they would be outed for joining a GSA they will not have access to a safe space. They will not have access to a space where they can discuss LGBTQ+ issues. They will not have access to a vital resource for LGBTQ+ students. I have a close, personal LGBTQ+ friend who in her last year of high school wanted to join a GSA so that she could have access to a safe space. However, as the GSA was scheduled after school she could not attend as she would have to explain to her parents why she wanted to stay later after school. We, members of the ... community, are acutely aware of consequences of being outed. Among other things, we know that many children are kicked out of their homes for being members of the ... community. Teachers will not always be aware of the degree of or presence of homophobia of parents. Legislation should not assume that most teachers and most parents are not homophobic, and that they understand the complexities of the issues faced by members of the LGBTQ+ community. In addition to protection of GSAs, I believe that comprehensive ongoing teacher education training and parent support groups, developed in consultation with and vetted by the ... community, is essential. Legislation should be built for the worst case scenario, not an optimistic ideal.

And the letter goes on.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Thank you, Ethan, for sharing that with us. Ethan's story is a powerful one, and it's truly one of many. So I urge the members opposite to think about those individual stories because I would bet that nearly everybody across the Chamber from me knows somebody who is a member of the LGBTQ community. Perhaps that person is in your family. Perhaps that person is a friend. But I'm quite certain that you do. So think about this. This is not for political gain. It's for ensuring that no student has to come to school and be afraid of who they are.

Thank you.

9:10

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there are a couple of minutes remaining under 29(2)(a) if anyone has any additional questions or comments for the hon. member.

Seeing none, are there any others that wish to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. I want to say at the beginning of my speech that on April 16 the UCP won the election. They got a mandate, and I respect that. However, just two or three weeks into that mandate that was given to this government based on jobs, the economy, pipelines – during that election I think they made it clear that these are the priorities of Albertans, and certainly Albertans agreed. They would not talk about social issues. They would not legislate social issues. They were not high on their priorities. In their assessment that was not high on Albertans' agenda. All those things. So they got the mandate.

However, in the last couple of weeks we saw that Albertans, in particular young Albertans, young students across this province challenged that mandate here in Edmonton last week and last Sunday in Calgary. Essentially, they were challenging that mandate, that they didn't give a mandate to this government to put their safety at risk or whatever they were doing through Bill 8. That's not the mandate that they understood, and they openly and publicly challenged that mandate.

In their legislation they did a communication exercise. They even included in their preamble that they want to make the education system inclusive. However, that group of students didn't feel that they were included through this bill. Rather, they maintained and they voiced their concern that that change that's coming, brought forward through Bill 8, is not inclusive of them. Rather, they raised the concern that it will put their safety at risk.

They stated in their preamble that they are trying to provide "high quality and socially engaging learning opportunities ... to meet diverse student needs." That diverse group of students didn't feel like that. Otherwise, they wouldn't have come out in those large numbers here in Edmonton, in Calgary to voice their concerns. Clearly, they are feeling that they are excluded through this bill. They are feeling that it's not a socially engaging learning experience for them if this bill gets passed. It doesn't meet their needs. Not only that; it puts their safety, their security, their learning at risk. I think that if they don't want to listen to the opposition, they should pay attention to these students who organized those walkouts, and those rallies were huge, bigger than any UCP election rally. So I think they carry a bigger mandate, and they must be heard.

In my riding of Calgary-McCall I think education is really important. It was important in 2015 as well, when I ran the first time. At that point my own niece and nephews used to travel in a different quadrant of the city to get to school, and just in the last four years alone in Calgary-McCall we were able to open six new schools, fully fund enrolment growth in all those schools. We were able to support teachers, student aides, the staff that was necessary to support those students.

Not just that; I think province-wide we were able to build or renovate 244 new schools just in those four years, and on the operational side of things we were able to add almost \$2 billion to fund enrolment growth, to fund classroom improvements, all those things. That's in contrast to what I think I already have once shared – but I think I should share it again because that was the previous PC government's record – that from 2008 to 2013 not a single



school was built in Calgary, not one school. That's how much they cared about, I guess, education in Calgary.

When I was running this time around, again education was an important issue, and it still remains an important issue. After getting elected, I met a few stakeholders, even my trustee, who were concerned about education, and if government was responding to their concerns, that's not what they were looking for. None of them, whom I met, raised that there needs to be something different than what's already in Bill 24 about LGBTQ students. None of them mentioned that. None of them mentioned that in the education system, in the way changes were brought by the previous government, there was something that was completely broken.

Rather, the things they mentioned were enrolment growth, which we have to push for pretty much every question period since the session started, every single question period, and every time the answer we get: ah, we might maintain; we might increase; we're not sure. Yesterday there was some indication that there will be funds for enrolment growth, but today they were back to the main message: we will maintain an increase. Not sure where it's going still, and we are still waiting for a panel to come up with suggestions for how to cut and gut public service, public education.

All those who are in that system, public trustees, everyone is worried whether there will be enrolment growth funding. Like, CBE alone was predicting a \$40 million shortfall, a deficit, and they were already planning to lay off teachers and other staff because they're left with uncertainty. They are not getting the answers.

9:20

They are not seeing this government focused on the priorities, focused on the concerns that the boards are facing; instead, we are seeing this piece of legislation, which nobody asked for, which nobody was looking for, and I think in just three weeks. Like many other pieces of legislation, there is no evidence before us that the government consulted with the school boards, that government consulted with trustees, that government consulted with parents, students, and all those who are concerned about education. I guess, looking at this bill, it clearly shows they didn't, because in our brief conversations, like, the first thing that comes up is funding predictability, and this is not what it's about.

The other thing I think I would suggest is that when you try to fix something, you clearly identify what the issue is, what is broken, and if something is not broken, you don't fix it. When this piece of legislation was introduced, I think there was no clear indication of what exactly they think is broken that they're trying to fix.

The argument we heard is that this piece of legislation will create the strongest protections across Canada. That was presented to us as a factual assertion. Today when they were challenged on it, and later on there was a point of order as well, the Government House Leader defended that, the government side defended that: no, no, there can't be a point of order because it's a matter of debate. On the one hand they want us to believe that this piece of legislation is bringing changes that will create the strongest protections for LGBTQ students, but on the other hand, when they're challenged on that, they will defend it, that: no, no, it's a matter of debate.

Clearly, it doesn't tell us what is broken; clearly, it doesn't provide the strongest protection across this country. If you don't want to listen to us, I think the students who gathered outside this Legislature, the students who gathered outside city hall in Calgary last week – had anybody gone there, they would have known that they don't agree with the government that this bill is bringing the strongest protection.

There are many other things that are concerning in this piece of legislation. If this legislation was to support students, if this legislation was to support education, literacy, and all those things,

I think they could have kept things that were better in the previous 2012 act like the age of access, but they knew, the government knew, that that will cost money, and they wanted to avoid that, so they changed the age of access back to where it was under the previous legislation.

Then they said that the transportation provisions would no longer apply to charter schools. In my riding, from that experience, transportation to school was a big issue because transportation was cut by CBE in 2014 and then in 2016. There are many students of many different backgrounds, like faith backgrounds, cultural backgrounds. In the absence of schools in our riding, students were travelling to other TLC schools, and those schools are also funded by public money. Those students are also Alberta students, and it should not be the criteria that if you choose to go, or if you don't have any other options and you choose a charter school or traditional learning centres, TLC schools, that you will not be provided transportation.

It's just downloading the responsibility onto the parents. The first thing that we did when we became government was that we brought forward the legislation that helped to reduce transportation costs and helped to reduce school fees and all those things to make sure that parents don't have to choose between their kids' education and their food. But here we are seeing a trend that they are off-loading the cost onto the parents.

Similarly, they said that it's about an inclusive education system. If we go through the bill, it even removes references to specialized support and all those things. If we were to make this education system inclusive and stronger, we would have seen more and stronger protections for those who need additional supports, who need specialized supports. Again, this bill is weakening those supports as well.

It also removes the duty-to-report requirement for charter schools re teachers and superintendents who resign, retire, or are terminated. I think all those schools, when they are getting public funding, should follow the same code. The public has a right to know the reasons why if somebody is removed or terminated.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments.

The Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member was in the middle of a thought on this matter of Bill 8, which is so important to so many of our constituents. I wonder if he might continue those thoughts.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** That indeed was a brief question or comment from the Member for Lethbridge-West.

The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Lethbridge-West for the question. What I was talking about was that this piece of legislation, Bill 8, removes the duty-to-report requirement for charter schools if a teacher or superintendent is terminated based on some questionable conduct. The reason it's concerning is that for those who attend charter schools, those who attend even private schools, there is some form of funding that comes from government. Regardless of what schools these students attend, they are all students, they are all kids, they are Alberta students. If something is not acceptable in a public school system; for instance, the Holocaust. If somebody is targeting one particular community, denying that, that may not be acceptable in public school systems and may create grounds for dismissal and all that. The same grounds should be valid for a charter school as well, that

those kids should not be exposed to those kinds of discriminatory views.

This piece of legislation is in fact weakening our education system by removing those protections that kids should not be exposed to these kinds of hateful or discriminatory views. I'm just giving that example but, again, nothing was mentioned about why it was necessary to remove that protection. Again, if something is not broken, you don't fix it. But here I think it's a deliberate attempt to weaken our school systems and our education systems.

Another thing I want to talk about is that it also lifts the cap on charter schools and creates a process for that. I'm all about choice in education. I'm all about inclusive education. I'm all about that parents should be able to educate their kids in the way they see fit. However, that should not be done at the expense of our public school system, where all students can go. There is no indication of what kind of consultations were done with parents, with school boards and why it's needed, why those changes were needed at this time.

9:30

One last thing. With respect to safety in schools, safety of LGBTQ students in schools, I think that during the campaign and afterwards there was rhetoric that somehow we want to bypass parents and all those things. But we do have a child intervention system, which is based on similar principles, that when kids' safety is at risk, that takes priority. That's paramount over anything else. So our personal views should not be allowed to trump student safety.

With that, I would say that this Education Act doesn't do what it's saying it will do. It's not creating an inclusive education, a socially engaging experience for diverse student needs. Clearly, there are many students – there are students all across this province – who are protesting against this bill, these changes, and they are challenging the mandate you got on April 16. If that was in your mandate, I think those students would not be calling your mandate into question. I think it's important that this government should put the brakes on it and get back to the drawing board, reach out to these students who are protesting that, reach out to school boards.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to provide debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this important bill. While I have a number of important things I will address over the iterations of this bill coming forward in this House, I have a particular one I would like to focus on tonight. Before I do that, I'd like to just take a moment to thank the MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for what I thought was an incredibly important, profound discussion of the importance and value of GSAs in schools. I'd like to thank her very much for that. In my other opportunities to rise on this particular bill, I will follow suit and speak to some of those profound issues on a human level.

But right now I would like to take an opportunity to talk about an aspect of the bill that has not yet been widely spoken about, and in order to facilitate my point, I'm going to indulge in a little hyperbole, quite contrary to my natural inclination. I think it's important that we do that in order to show the problem inherent in the bill. As I talk about this, I want to identify at the beginning that I'll actually be talking about three aspects of the bill that, all together, provide a significant problem which is not necessarily identified by talking about the aspects individually. Tonight I would like to take the time to weave those together and demonstrate how the compounded effect of those three aspects of the bill are concerning, in fact I would say even potentially dangerous.

I'll start by just identifying the aspects of the bill that I will be discussing this evening and then go back and speak to them a little individually and weave them together so you can follow. Three things, I think, are really important that we must understand are happening in this bill: first of all, the diminishment of the protections and rights of children, who need the protection of GSAs in order to be able to exercise the full extent of their human rights; that is, the right to be protected in their status as a gay student, which is recognized by the Human Rights Commission in not only Alberta but, of course, all across Canada.

This bill tends to diminish what is, in fact, a human right in its practice. It doesn't say that they don't have that right, but it indeed interferes with that. We know that the Supreme Court of Canada, on other occasions and in other situations, has made the ruling that even if you don't specifically defy a law, if you prevent people from being able to enact the benefits of that law such as human rights, then you are indeed breaking the law. In this case, I am very concerned that that's the situation that we're in, that while people are being told that, yes, you can be gay and that you have the human rights that are associated with your free expression of your gayness, you can't actually enact it in a way that you choose to do so by having that protected GSA in the school. So I'm very concerned about that just on its own merits. I think the Supreme Court has actually indicated in other situations that they are concerned about that kind of undermining of human rights in a surreptitious way.

The second thing that I think is potentially concerning and that I will talk about here is the fact that there is clearly an intention to increase and make available the number of charter schools in this province. Now, I introduce that hesitantly because, in fact, I am in favour of having charter schools. I think that there's a positive benefit to having choice. I see that people have different needs and so on, but how that is done is very important in terms of the outcome that is experienced by the population. For example, in the city of Edmonton, under the Edmonton public school board and the Edmonton Catholic school district, a number of charter schools have been created but working within the present school board so that it becomes part of the public system, available to everyone, and, most importantly, following all of the rules of the public system.

In those cases, in a large city, where you have some choices available to you, you can choose to go to a school like Vimy Ridge, that's focused on military history and training, if you choose to do that. You can go to St. Francis Xavier high school and learn how to be a great hockey player. You can go to a number of schools and have a chance to focus on something particular. In that case, I'm quite happy to have those kinds of choices made available to people in a big city. However, I do have some concerns, which I will get to in a moment, about what happens in a place that isn't a big city, where the number of schools is much smaller and the segmentation of the school system in a small community, where there are just enough students to satisfy the needs of one school to remain open, may be affected by having people make the decision to separate out and not be part of the larger public school system. I'll get to all of that in just a moment.

But the third thing that I want to speak to is the fact that they are allowing trustees to make the decision to fire other trustees; that is, the power is being put into the hands of a majority to condemn and to disenfranchise a minority with whom they do not agree. Now, fundamentally, in our system we are very concerned when that happens. For the last few hundred years, in these parliamentary democracies that we have created in places like Canada, Britain, New Zealand, and Australia, and other places in the world, we have strived to ensure that while the majority does rule in a situation, that rule does not turn into tyranny of the majority over a minority, that

prevents a minority from being able to enact their rights in a legitimate way.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I've identified three areas where this bill already is problematic on individual bases. That tells me that this bill is not ready for prime time, that this bill needs to be taken off the papers and brought back for reconsideration. Now I want to engage in a small bit of hyperbole by tying those three together and having you begin to imagine what happens when we have a situation where all three of those things occur at the same time.

9:40

Take, for example, a small rural community somewhere in Alberta that has a group of people arrive on their doorstep with an insular sociopolitical view of the world that has the intention of creating in this small rural area a sociophilosophical community that in some way wishes to undermine the human rights of others and that then comes into that community, breeds, draws in more members, and creates a large enough community that they then are able to say that there is a demand or a need for a charter school. They are given a charter school, and in that charter school they include their sociopolitical world view and defy the human rights that the rest of us in this province enjoy.

In doing so, they become essentially a dictator to everyone in the small community, who have no choice because the community cannot support two schools. The only one that becomes available is the one that this majority group has put together and called a charter school. So you have individuals from the minority, what has become the minority in this community, in a charter school. Should they wish to defy this, should they wish to challenge this, they may elect a trustee to represent their point of view, but now, because we have the ability for trustees to fire others, the trustees supported by this particular sociopolitical and -economic group will look for a reason and an excuse to fire the trustees that do not share their point of view.

Now, this is where the hyperbole comes in. I'm very concerned about the nature of a Waco, Texas, happening here. I'm very concerned about a Bountiful, B.C., happening here, where a group comes in, defies human rights, creates a situation, and now has been given control over not only their own school but the school for all the kids in the community.

I can tell you why this is concerning, why this is terrifying: because it's not hyperbole; it's happened. I can tell you that in the indigenous community they called them residential schools. A community came in with their own world view, created an education system that said: only our point of view is allowed, and all others will be not only denied the right to express their values but will be severely treated should they choose to challenge those values. I'm not talking hyperbole anymore, am I? I'm talking about the fact that in the history of this province we have allowed the combination of these kinds of thoughts to lead to the ultimate oppression and destruction of other people, of people who have lived on this land for thousands of years. I can tell you that that is why I'm worried about this.

I can tell you that they already tell me in the indigenous community that if you live on-reserve, you're not even allowed to vote for trustees. They have no voice in the school as it is right now. What happens if that school becomes a charter school and becomes the only school that your children can go to? What happens if that school decides that they do not like some of the human rights that are freely expressed in the rest of the province and begins to deny that?

Here's the hyperbole, the little, tiny piece of hyperbole I wanted to introduce there. Take, for example, a community that somehow decided that the disfigurement of children was part of their value system, that they took their children and decided to scarify them, that they decided to cut off parts of their body or to wound them in some way as part of some kind of a tradition within this community. It would be a defilement of human rights, but we've just said: if you don't like human rights, just form a charter school, and then you don't have to follow up.

Now, if I put it in those terms, if I say, "What you're asking for is the defilement of the bodies of your children," you'd all look at me and say: "That's ridiculous, Richard. That's hyperbole." And I'd agree with you. But then I'd want to remind you that nothing I have said has not in fact actually happened, not only in the province of Alberta but in other places in the world. Nothing I have said is science fiction. Nothing I have said is fantasy. It is, in fact, part of the history and tradition of humanity, and if we do not guard against those kinds of excesses, then we will find ourselves in a very negative place in society.

So I think it's very important that when we create a school system, we make sure that that school system reflects the values that we have created in the rest of our society, the human rights that say: if you are a gay person, not only do you have all the rights of everybody who is not gay, but you have the right to express that gayness in the way that makes most sense to you as long as it does not hurt another person. That's what GSAs are all about. GSAs are about being able to express who you are without any harm to anyone else. That's all we're asking. We're just asking for the children that we have in our society to be brought up with the same values that have created the great abundance and wealth of opportunity that exist for the rest of us here in the province of Alberta.

That's what we're challenging now, that's what we're threatening now, and that's unacceptable. It's unacceptable for duly elected members of a parliamentary democracy to undermine . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member was in the middle of a thought, speaking to the effects of Bill 8, and I wonder if he might continue his thoughts on our duty in a parliamentary democracy to uphold basic human rights, our section 15 Charter rights, and the dignity of all people regardless of background, orientation, or other ascribed characteristics.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to just summarize my remarks. I introduced my comments earlier as understanding that I would be describing my concerns with some hyperbole, that I understood that were I to simply say to this House, "You are supporting the scarification of our children," you would immediately have dismissed what I had to say.

But I think that if you'd listened to what I had to say, you would hear the danger in us not being aware that there are others out there who are more than fully prepared to engage in that kind of behaviour today in Canada, that people come from all parts of the world and that there are practices in some parts of the world where people's bodies are harmed, where people's human rights to the integrity of the body and to the self are violated on a regular basis. If I tell you that you are supporting a system which is going to make it possible for those people to create an enclave in which they will be able to continue that kind of practice, I think you will recognize

that the hyperbole is small and that the underlying concern and fear are legitimate.

When it's a practice that you find horrific, of course you as an elected member are going to say: that's terrible; I would never allow that to happen. But suddenly, when it's a practice that you don't find horrific, when it's accepted in your world view that people who are gay are not acceptable or somehow do not have human rights, are not allowed to practise and express those human rights in the way that they so desire, somehow it changes your response, and that's a concern, isn't it?

9:50

That's something that we have learned as a society to not allow ourselves to do. We have learned to say: it can't just be the things that I think are right or wrong, because then I simply become a dictator. It may be a dictatorship of the majority, it may be most of the people, but I can tell you that in the indigenous community, when that happened with residential schools, it was devastating. It was terrible and led to generations of trauma that continue to harm and undermine the health and well-being of our indigenous communities in the province of Alberta.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I guess I want to finish up by just cautioning the people in this House that if they continue to act on this bill without actually having concern for the combination of the things they're putting together, not simply the individual facts but the way they can be woven together by people with malevolent intent, then they are going to be unleashing on our society an undesirable characteristic which we have been working for many generations to expunge. I do not want to be part of a government that opens the door to that backward kind of thinking, that kind of belief system that results in a dictatorship by a majority, a tyranny of people who believe themselves to be right and who do not understand and therefore do not support or validate the truthfulness that lies in the world view of others.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. There are five seconds left under 29(2)(a), so if you're as brief as the Member for Lethbridge-West, you may have been able to ask a question.

Unfortunately, time has expired, but I do see the hon. Member for St. Albert rising to add some comments to the debate.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure, I suppose, to rise and speak to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. Every time I rise to speak to something like this, I always think: jobs, pipeline, economy; what happened? You know, it's like bait and switch. It's like: no, no; we're going to focus on the economy, but, no, we're going to address this Education Act. Honestly, nobody is fooled. I think we saw this coming. A lot of Albertans saw this coming, and I imagine this is just the beginning of transforming Alberta and this particular Chamber according to somebody's world view.

Anyway, I'm going to focus on part of this amendment act, I guess a triage of sorts, and focus on the GSA bit. The reason I'm going to do that is that on May 3 I had 60 handwritten letters delivered to my constituency office from junior high students in St. Albert. I'm just going to read some of them to you because I think it's important that you hear their voices. You hear us speak all the time. Well, you probably don't listen, but we're here speaking all the time. I think that if you have the opportunity as a legislator, as an elected official here, it's your duty to listen to the children, to listen to our children, who are the future. They're trying to speak to

you. They're trying to say something. This isn't propaganda or politics. I didn't know they were writing them. They just wrote them, and they delivered them. They're pretty amazing young people, so I think you should listen to them.

To whom it may concern:

I personally think that parents do not need to be informed if [the] child is LGBTQ because not all children's parents think that being LGBTQ is okay and could try to make the child change. Another reason that teachers should not have to inform parents is that it's not fair that the kids don't get to open up to their parents. If a child is not comfortable with their parents knowing, don't tell them. The child will open up when they're more comfortable with their parents knowing. The reason I feel strongly about standing up for LGBTQ is [that] I'm bisexual and I feel [that] if my mom found out that I am bisexual, [she] wouldn't respect me, and she would want me to change. I feel that kids deserve the freedom to keep it to themselves that they're LGBTQ.

Then it says to flip the page, which I thought was awesome.

I would also like to point out that if an adult is LGBTQ and their parents don't know then why don't you tell their parents? People need to stop [bleeping] bossing kids around. We're people too. Thank you for your time. I hope that you take into consideration my note and make things right. I am bisexual so this means a lot to me and so many others so please open your . . . eyes and make the right choice!

And:

To whom it may concern:

I'm a member of the LGBTQ+ community. I have one question for you. Do you think that it is okay for us to take 20 steps backwards? We fought for our [own] voices to be heard. We want to be safe. Now you, our government, want us to stop being who we are. It is also a danger for us to be outed to our parents. Most people will respond badly . . . [some] people are homophobic. GSAs are a safe space and it is where we are heard and welcomed with opened arms. Just because you don't like what I'm saying doesn't mean I'll stop talking. I'll only talk louder until my voice is heard.

Sincerely, me.

Hello,

I am writing to you because I strongly disagree with your decision. School is supposed to be a safe and accepting place where kids can freely express themselves. As an asexual . . . female that participates in drag, I definitely do not feel safe at school as it is. Coming out to my friends was as hard as it is, and if teachers told my parents, I would be thought of differently, [and] I likely would be sent to live somewhere else.

I know kids my age get entirely disowned for coming out as queer, and most queer kids are horrified of what their parents might do to them. I know I am. My whole family is incredibly Catholic and follow their old ways. A young person came out as a transgender male in my class last month. Everyone was so supportive and it was beautiful to see how far society has come in these short years.

Let's imagine you get a call from your child's school. They have done something you strongly disagree with. This may be the reality of some youth.

I also think children should be educated in sexuality, gender identity, or romantic preference. I get teased and made fun of all the time just because of my sexuality. People accept gay and trans freely, but we aren't quite to the point where everyone is [as] accepted. I switched schools in fear of people finding out about my sexuality or romantic preference or gender identity. I'm still worried, but I'm glad I'm finally in a progressive school.

I just hope this isn't ruined for us.

Sincerely, [that] kid.

To whoever gets this letter:

Hello, I am a nonbinary, queer 13-year-old. I'm not a person to have strong opinions, but this is something I think a lot about.

Why are members of the LGBTQ-plus community allowed to be made fun of for something they have no choice about? Why do we have to come out? Why is that considered normal and accepted? I know you probably can't answer these questions, but they still have to be asked. It should be someone's own opinion on when it's time to come out, if they ever do. They shouldn't be forced to. They shouldn't be outed by a teacher to their unaccepting parents because they joined a club. It is who they are. I know it would be easier if everyone was accepting, but that isn't how it works, so just let kids choose for themselves. Let them decide when it's time.

From an angry 13-year-old.

I'm going to skip this one because the writing is really tiny.

To Mr. [Premier],

I believe that the students have a right to privacy and if they are part of the LGBTQ community . . . they should [still] have their own time that they [should] choose to "come out" to their parents and not find out through the government [or teachers]. Why would you want the parents to know if the child themselves hasn't told them? They don't feel safe letting their parents know yet, and you want to throw away that and make them know even when the kid doesn't want [their parents to know]. That's a violation of our privacy.

And:

Dear [Mr. Premier],

I believe that people who feel a certain way about the same gender should have their own time to come out to their parents, and not by a call home to the kid's parents. I think a lot of others can agree with me [in] that what you are doing is . . . bad. You shouldn't invade [someone's] feelings and tell their parents. I thought you would be a better Premier. Please rethink your ideas. I believe you can change [and] be good . . . [Please] change your plans.

10:00

Dear Mr. [Premier],

I'm a student at . . . [a] school in St. Albert. I'm not LGBTQ+, but there are people in my class who are, and I can comfortably say that it is not your place to out kids like that. That's their right, and I'm doing what I can to peacefully protest this change. You say you stand for your citizens, and the children and the LGBTQ+ youth are just as much your people as everybody else. I cannot support this change as I consider it a complete regression in how far we've come as an accepting community. I hope that you can see our side and what we stand for, and then make the decision to stand for all Albertans, not just some of them. People have the right to be who they want to be. The strongest thing I have [are] my words, consider myself and all the people this would affect don't have a vote [yet]. Young people are standing for young people, and I hope that's enough to change your mind.

Dear Government of Alberta,

We are 2 students from . . . [a] junior high . . . in St. Albert . . . We believe everybody should have a choice in who they are and what they believe in. This is why we are protesting the policy involving LGBTQ+ rights. We believe everybody should have the right to keep their identity confidential if they wish as it could lead to unsafe conditions for youth otherwise. This protest process is necessary to get our point across and to represent those who may not be able to do so themselves. If you were to not apply this policy, you would not only be respecting members of [the] LGBTQ+ [community] but everybody protesting the bill in Alberta.

Sincerely, a student.

To whom it may concern:

I feel there are many dangers in teachers telling parents if their children are in the LGBTQ+ community. Many parents are against the community and telling the parents could result in major consequences against the child such as being kicked out of

their home, being shunned by their parents or guardians. These effects on students are life changing and shouldn't be ignored.

Those are just a few of the 60 letters that I received, and each one of them is really different. They are a little bit upset about some other things, about test weighting, but primarily they were focused on GSAs. There were some that were really quite emotional, that shared some stories. I will table these tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

I guess why I wanted to read some of them – I'd actually like to read all of them, but I won't. I don't have time to do that. But what these children are telling you is that we've been out of school for a really long time. We've not needed a club like this, if any of us were involved with a club like this, for a very long time, and these students are telling us what life is like for them in junior high school. They just want a safe place. They want to know that their privacy will be respected and they're not going to be at risk for just seeking out other children, other kids and adults that are going to be nonjudgmental and are going to support them in whatever decisions they make, whatever they choose to share.

I think, you know, we've talked at length of the dangers of outing kids before they're ready. We've talked about how we know that far too many of these children – and they are children – end up on the street, end up homeless, end up dead by suicide, end up in really abusive situations. I think that if you could do something in this place to prevent one death, it would be worth it, just even one child, preventing one death. You can say all you like that this legislation brings in the strongest protection in Canada. It does not. It absolutely does not. I don't know what more proof you need. It just doesn't. I would ask you to think about it. Look in your community. If you could save one child, if you could prevent the injury or death of one child, wouldn't you do that? Wouldn't you do everything in your power to do that?

These are kids unprompted; there was no politics involved. They were unprompted. They took the time to write these letters and share personal stories about what their lives were like, what their friends' lives were like, and they don't get a voice in this place. They don't get to talk to us and to tell us what's important to them and what changes they want to see, so I was happy to read some of their letters, Mr. Speaker, because I think their voices need to be heard. I think that we saw a lot of students leave school peacefully for, I think, about 20 minutes not that long ago because they want to support themselves and their friends, and I think that this will continue because our children are our future, and they know that. They know that that's their power.

I think that we're seeing children all over the world that are leading the way and telling us, like: "Wake up. We have a problem with climate change. It is a climate crisis." You are seeing millions of children all over the world saying: "Pay attention. This is our future." We'll be gone. It'll be their future. I think that that's what these kids are saying. These kids in our communities are telling us: "Stop what you're doing. It's dangerous. Basically, you know, butt out. Let us have our clubs. Let us be safe. Let us know that whatever we do here, talking to our friends or a supportive adult or teacher, we don't run the risk of having information going back to our parent or guardians, information that we know can cause harm to us and our future."

I don't know. I mean, what else is there to say about this? We keep hearing the same things from the government side, that this is the strongest protection for this community. It is not. We brought in additional protection because we knew that there were problems and that people were dragging their feet. People were afraid to use words like "gay." I don't know what's wrong with saying the word "gay." It's just a word. It's just a word. Gay, gay, gay, gay, gay. I mean, really, it's a word.

Think about it. When you vote, when it comes down to it and you vote on this legislation, know that in the future when something

happens – because we know it will. You know what the risk is for these kids. It will happen. You know what? You're going to have to own up to your part in this, that you had the information in front of you, you knew what was going on, you knew what the kids were saying, you knew what educators were saying, and you chose to turn the other way and look away. That'll be on you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall rising to ask a brief question or make a comment.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for your remarks and for sharing the stories of young people from your riding.

Certainly, young people are trying their best to get heard. They're doing so in many different ways – writing letters, protesting out here, outside the Legislature, protesting outside city hall – and they are trying their best to protect their education system and protect the safeguards that were in place in the Education Act.

I do know that the Member for St. Albert has spent her life advocating for those who are marginalized, those who depend on government services, and those who need supports from government to be successful and be included in society, so I would want the member to elaborate a bit further on how this piece of legislation is taking us away from inclusion and how it's effectively excluding certain groups. It also takes out reference to specialized support, so what impact will it have on those vulnerable youth who may have been differently abled, who may have disabilities? If the member would like to expand on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I can imagine, I think, that a number of school-aged children also are part of the LGBTQ-plus community and may also have a disability. It's a struggle enough to be included in school, not just physically included but included in everyday activities and education. Add to that another component where they are struggling, perhaps, with their own identity as it relates here. It's not unheard of, and it's not unusual.

10:10

But, you know, the Member for Calgary-McCall brought up something that just sort of reminded me of a question I asked the Premier, I think it was a week or two ago, about how he defined inclusion, and then the people that I asked after that sort of repeated his answer. How he defined inclusion was: celebrating diversity. I suppose if you're at a ceremony to celebrate diversity, you could call it that, but I think what is key, what he missed and what his ministers also missed, is that inclusion requires action every single day. It requires a plan. It requires resources. It requires an understanding. It requires people to work on it together not just somebody saying: well, this is inclusion; this is the way we're going to go, and this is how we're going to evaluate it.

Real inclusion brings everyone to the table, and they ask. You figure out together what that looks like, and then you work at it because it's never over. It's a process that requires constant effort and constant investment in energy and resources. That's what inclusion for people with disabilities requires, and that's what inclusion for this particular group requires. I would suggest that the first step to inclusion here is listening to the children.

You know, it's just like the other night when we were talking. I mean, it was so bizarre to me that we were spending the whole night talking about a bill to reduce the minimum the wage of youth. It

was a bunch of people that make \$150,000 a year talking about the value of reducing the minimum wage by \$2 for youth. Here we are talking about a bill that has the potential to harm people, and we have young people saying: "Don't do it. It's the wrong thing to do. This is not what you should do. Listen to us. We're scared. This will happen. This is our life." Yet, still the government wants to say: "No. We're bringing in strong protection. We're bringing in the strongest protection in Canada." You're not. You're just not. You can look down all you like and look away, but you're not. You are putting children at risk, not to mention the other changes brought in under this legislation. I'm simply focusing on one piece of it that is hugely problematic and frightening for children.

On that, I will sit down. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, those wishing to speak to Bill 8. The Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Normally I would say that it's my pleasure to rise to speak to a bill. Under normal circumstance, if these were routine amendments to the Education Act or perhaps in some way, shape, or form modernized our approach to the education system, I would be pleased to speak to this bill. But I am not. I am profoundly annoyed to have to stand and speak to this bill because it is shocking that after all of the progress that we have made around Bill 24 and around protecting kids in this province, we are now going to take a step back. If we're going to take a step backwards, then let's zoom out a little bit and talk about how social struggle manifests itself in the education system and then a little bit about basic human rights.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, we see that some of the main questions of our time swirl around education policy. We see this not only in this country, but we see it in other countries. We see the policy of trying to "take the Indian out of the child," which was the saying at the time manifesting itself through the residential system. Canada's shameful history of colonialism expressed itself through a school system. We see that over the course of time it used to be that women didn't have an education past about grade 8, grade 10, or so because the expectation was: what was the point? They needed to learn how to do basic sums to run the household budget, and then they were just going to get married and have kids, so what was the point?

In fact, my own mom tells a story about – she was really good at math, probably still is – wanting to go and study to be a veterinarian. Her own dad was a big proponent of education. He was, in fact, the chair of the school board, as I understand it, and brought the high school to that area. I remember my mom always telling me the story that he said: "No. Women are teachers or nurses." So my mom never got to be a veterinarian. She was a teacher instead. She taught physics, which was a pretty unfeminine thing to do, but that's where the math skills went, the math and science skills.

The education system has reflected some of our better tendencies and some of our worse tendencies. The basic value here that we are talking about is our section 15 Charter rights, our basic rights to be free from discrimination on certain characteristics. It was indeed the 1997 Vriend decision, again, a decision that came out of a teacher in an education system, in this case the postsecondary system, that read sexual orientation into section 15 of the Charter, it then being a prohibited ground. I will note just as a sidebar, Mr. Speaker, our guarantee to be free from discrimination based on sexual orientation: on that Vriend decision, the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon as recently as a couple of years ago argued that teachers should be allowed to be fired for sexual orientation. Thankfully, the 1997 Vriend decision, that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed called a virus, has been made and it's been upheld in various forms in the intervening two decades.

The basic human rights proposition remains the same. This is not something that is in our ancient history. Although I often tell the story – when I spoke to Bill 24, I told the story of growing up in a small town west of Edmonton that isn't so small anymore. I described my high school as being aggressively homophobic, and it was. The first person who ever came out to me – I was 17. We were in grade 12. I have his permission to tell this story. I won't use his name. I remember him saying to me and my three girlfriends at the time: "Do not tell anyone. They will kill me. They will kill me." There was a pretty serious look on his face, and I had no reason not to believe him because I had also had my ears open from my time in high school.

We didn't have at that time any kind of GSA. It was not even heard of. This is ancient history. I'm very old. There was a lot of different kinds of bullying and intimidation that went on, and there was no place for students to be able to access any kind of support for that. What we also know about GSAs is that it's not – there's a "straight" in there, Mr. Speaker. We know that these kinds of clubs and these kinds of meeting spaces reduce bullying, intimidation, and discrimination of all forms and for all kids, and they make the entire school atmosphere safer. They're not just about LGBT kids although they are about gay kids. And you can say "gay." There's nothing wrong with that, and I don't know why the Minister of Education can't even bring herself to say the word. It's only three little letters.

We have these provisions because of our section 15 Charter rights. This is not an old-time problem to be solved. It is a problem right now in communities across this province everywhere that people are discriminated against based on their sexual orientation. When sexual orientation first begins to present itself in the teenage and older years, that is when people need the most support, and that is when some of that peer support can be the most meaningful in people's lives. The evidence shows that peer to peer, with adult support, is the most effective way of saving people's lives, of making the whole school safe so that people can go to school to do what actually the education system is for, which is to reach our full potential as individuals and exercise our individual liberty.

#### 10:20

It never ceases to amaze me that Conservatives can't get their heads around a basic fundamental piece of conservatism, which is individual liberty, individual liberty to be free from discrimination and free to express oneself however they want. I know – I know – that there are people across the way who share my views, who are scratching their heads as to why, after being elected on a jobs, economy, and pipeline platform, all of a sudden we are making a beeline for young people's rights. I know that there are members across the way who are having a little bit of reckoning time to deal with this. But I also know that there are members across the way who feel very strongly that we should take away the immediacy and the confidentiality of children's rights, of young people's rights to avail themselves of a peer support group in a school atmosphere.

I would encourage those who have problems with this to speak out, both at caucus and in cabinet. We know that some folks have a profound discomfort with this. We know it because they've done things like put it in writing and put it on the record. For example, the Member for Calgary-Elbow and Minister of Justice has written to his supporters. In the past few weeks members of the LGBTQ community have publicly invited the Member for Calgary-Lougheed to meet with them on multiple occasions. Even former PC Education minister Gordon Dirks spoke out that similar meetings he took were helpful to him to better understand the importance of GSAs in protecting vulnerable youth. That was a missive sent by the now Minister of Justice to his supporters. He

put it in writing that there were problems with his own leader's approach to gay-straight alliances.

How about this one, Mr. Speaker? We have the now Minister of Transportation urging people just over a year ago to reject this very GSA policy, this very policy on suspending the immediacy of people's ability to join or form a GSA and the confidentiality associated with it that our government brought in, rejecting this very policy that is under consideration by this House right now because this policy is – this is the Minister of Transportation's quote, not mine – outing gay kids and results in the UCP becoming, quote, a lake of fire party; don't be called a lake of fire party, I am begging you.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have people begging for Bill 8 not to present itself in the Legislature, yet here we are. Clearly there's a very strong appetite amongst the Premier and his inner circle to railroad any hon. members who may have questions about this bill and push through this highly objectionable approach to people's basic human rights. I can appreciate that not all members may have had a chance to provide that feedback yet to Executive Council and to the Premier's office staff, who seem full steam ahead on this. I can appreciate that maybe they haven't had time yet given that it has happened so quickly. I would beg those private members to continue to communicate with the Premier's office, because constituents do care about this issue, and I know that many hon. members across the way do want to uphold the honour of representing their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on a little bit and talk about the comments that I got after speaking to Bill 24, a bill that I was happy to speak to. I am less happy today. I got a large card from a neighbour who had a community QSA that had formed through the Boys & Girls Club during the time of uncertainty.

In southern Alberta sometimes that uncertainty is not just a mild discomfort, but it actually puts kids at risk. When I go and tour places like Wood's homes in Lethbridge, there are pride flags and trans flags kind of everywhere. When I toured it a couple of years back, I asked why that was, and the staff there said: oh, well, a good majority of the kids who find themselves homeless and then find themselves at our door, availing themselves of our services, are LGBT, and they've been kicked out. That's the reality for many people in my community.

I got a big card after speaking to Bill 24 because as part of their QSA they watched some of the speeches. You know, people do watch, Mr. Speaker, and constituents do care. It's a big card. It's about this big, and it's still in my office. It certainly brought me to tears because the individual comments from at that time 16- and 17-year-olds – those folks are now voters, my friends – were at once heartbreaking and inspiring. They said things like: I never thought that I would have anyone elected who spoke for me and who represented me; I never thought I would have an elected representative who understood what it meant to be an LGBT youth.

I don't, but it is my job to speak here on behalf of those struggles because I understand that there are struggles, and my allyship is not an entitlement, as some folks have sort of alleged across the way, that just by virtue of the office people should be nice to them. No. No. Allyship is not an entitlement. One is not entitled to be adjacent to pride, to be part of pride, any of that. Pride is a struggle, it is political, and only through voicing values that are shared with that community do you earn the right to be anywhere near it, to wrap yourself in anyone's flag.

What that card said to me was that, one, folks are watching. Folks are watching. Some of the comments in that card specifically referenced the previous debates that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora talked about when she walked us through some of the political history. In other words, when those kids were, like,

10, 12 years old, they were paying attention. They're watching us. We need to be accountable to them.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** It will be, guaranteed, five minutes or less, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you so much to the Member for Lethbridge-West for walking us through some of that history. One of the things she said early on in her remarks reminded me to do some googling. Vriend versus Alberta: we often talk about Vriend and the successful case, but it started with Vriend versus Alberta, right? Like, it was the province, the government, the people of this province represented by the government, attacking the rights of a minority individual who was fired from his job.

Vriend versus Alberta: what it made me think about is the fact that Doug Stollery was chief counsel on Vriend versus Alberta. Doug Stollery is now the chancellor at the U of A. Doug Stollery took it all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada and won this landmark case, I'd say, for equal rights here in this country. He also happens to be a member serving on the conversion therapy working group, certainly somebody who has a legal background, a very distinguished career there, somebody who's very respected for his contributions to the community at large. Certainly, the Stollery family has given so much to all Alberta families, I would argue, and to many from other provinces who come here for the amazing support they receive through the Stollery children's hospital here in Edmonton.

I wonder if the member might be willing to talk a little bit about the Vriend decision and the conversion therapy working group and intersections that she might see there in the attack on sexual orientation and gender identity, minority rights, gay rights. Thank you.

10:30

**The Speaker:** Well, a brief question or comment, indeed.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West is rising to answer.

**Ms Phillips:** Yeah. I mean, the Vriend decision was one of the first Charter decisions that ever caught my eye. I was, I think, in second-year university, and I remember the day that the decision came out. My friend, who was a lesbian, was walking down the street holding hands with her girlfriend, and because the issue had been in the news, I think people's tempers were a little flared. She got spat on that day, and that was on Whyte Avenue. That was in 1997. Again, this is not old-timey history. This is now.

Discrimination happens, and that's why we need things like section 15, and that's why we need sexual orientation to be read into section 15, and that is why the court found it to be so. The court then also found, for example, the right to marry in the 2005 reference, again, that was vehemently opposed by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed and others, I'm sure, in this Chamber.

The fact of the matter is that our Charter rights have been upheld, our rights to security of the person, to individual liberty. That goes for conversion therapy, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is a question of: does the individual have sovereignty over how they take decisions, over how they approach matters of faith, how they approach their intimate relationships, how they approach how they are going to navigate the oftentimes complex questions of gender identity? The individual before the law is sacrosanct, and this has been upheld time and again.

It has also been upheld through our section 7 rights on the security of the person. For the women in this room, that particular decision in 1988 may interest them because that is the decision that

guarantees our reproductive freedoms. Again, the liberty of the individual to take decisions in their own best interests is supposed to be that question of liberty, supposed to be a cornerstone of conservative thought but, like so many things, is subject to a great deal of both hypocrisy and convenient thinking, especially these days, in this moment of the life of conservatism in this country and elsewhere.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've talked about our legal rights. I have talked about examples where I know that GSAs would have helped. I've talked about examples of kids who are in GSAs or QSAs right now and what they see us doing and how they see us speaking for them or not. The only thing I will say is that they will continue to do that and they're not going to be protesting at my constituency office. I can guarantee you that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to debate?

I might just remind members that if they would like to have conversations outside of the debate, perhaps they might like to use any one of the lounges that are available to you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung is rising.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased once again to rise to speak to Bill 8 in this Chamber. I want to pay particular thanks to the Member for St. Albert, who really brought home the crux of this debate by reading into the record a number of letters written by young people who self-identified in their letters as members of the LGBTQ community, who would be directly affected and in the line of fire of Bill 8 and the proposals therein.

Now, it's instructive to know that at the Youth Empowerment & Support Services, otherwise known by its acronym, YESS, at any given time more than 30 per cent of the youth residents there who've sought shelter have been students who were kicked out of their own homes because their own families didn't accept their sexuality. The result, of course, is that these children, young people, are homeless. They're seeking shelter, but they're homeless. They're out of their own home. They're despondent. Ultimately, many are on the street. They're vulnerable to pimps, drugs, prostitution, suicide, and other forms of violent death, which is what these people face if they're not able to come out in a way that's safe to their own families when they know that their own families have a real difficult time comprehending the human rights necessity to accept the sexuality of their children.

It's very astounding to me and maybe to other members across the floor that this is happening right here in our cities in this province, but it is on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker, and that's right at the heart of the matter. The letters that were brought forward on the record by the Member for St. Albert I think showed and demonstrated, more clearly than anything any member in this House can say, the fears that these young people feel for their lives in not having a safe, protected place, within their school, where they won't be outed, to come out and learn how to find a way to discuss their sexuality with their parents and ultimately find the acceptance they desire, to maintain that family bond rather than facing the ostracism that they know exists at the moment.

Organizations like YESS are really to be commended for giving shelter to those individuals who are at risk, as I mentioned, of being on the streets and vulnerable to pimps, drugs, prostitution, suicide, and other forms of violent death. We know that these GSAs have saved lives. Undermining them will do the opposite. It will result in young people dying. I know the Member for St. Albert is intent, along with the members on this side of the House and, I hope, all members of this House, on protecting the lives of young people who are critically vulnerable in facing the decision as to how to come out to their own family in a way that allows that family to remain



intact, to find the language and the tools and the support to help them bridge the gap that exists between them and their family members.

Mr. Speaker, not all families have the acceptance levels necessary to allow a young person who is a member of the LGBTQ2S-plus community to feel comfortable coming forward. It's not a matter of giving choice to parents. It's a matter of providing a safe spot for these young people to come out so that when they do decide to make that commitment and reveal their sexuality to their parents, it is done in a way that will hopefully keep that family unit intact and allow a real communication and a dignified communication between those parents who don't fully comprehend what's going on with their child and the young adult or the young child who needs the assistance of peers as well as professionals in terms of a teacher who can help guide that individual to a place where they feel they are equipped and prepared to come out to their parents.

Undermining these GSAs, as has been said so eloquently by the Member for St. Albert and many others in this Chamber, especially on this side of the House, is a very, very wrong-headed move. It's a move that will not only be unhealthy. We've said in no uncertain terms – and I think the facts are incontrovertible – that we will be putting young peoples' lives at risk, and some people who otherwise might have lived a fruitful, healthy life after properly communicating their sexual orientation to their families will end up dead. That's the long and the short of it.

I'd like to thank the Member for St. Albert for those very, very heartfelt letters that she read into the record. I couldn't think of a stronger and more potent testimony to the value of the GSAs that we brought into force. To go backwards in time, to not recognize the value of these young people and the importance of providing them with a bridging mechanism to come out to their family is a shameful indictment of the government on this issue. I hope that the public outrage will be enough to cause them to backtrack and realize that this is a mistaken policy and that they decide that they will amend their legislation to get rid of at least this piece of Bill 8, which is a tragedy.

Thank you.

**10:40**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments if anyone has any of the member. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is rising to ask a brief question or comment.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to our Member for Edmonton-McClung for speaking to this very important issue and sharing his thoughts on Bill 8 this evening. My question to him was just if he'd heard from constituents or had conversations with members of the LGBTQ2S community in his time as a legislator, given the debates that have been had in the past on Bill 24 and seeing some of these issues return to the Legislature again now.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for the question. I must say that as a member of the NDP caucus, now in opposition and then formerly, of course, in government, it would have been impossible not to have had conversations with members of the LGBTQ community because they knew they had an ally in this caucus, whether in government or in opposition.

That was evidenced in the attendance at any event that we held to honour and respect and show the dignity to the LGBTQ2S-plus

community that they deserved, whether it be a flag raising of the pride flag – we had people from the community in droves. We certainly had, I would say, hundreds. I don't know if there was a member of the LGBTQ2S-plus community who didn't come door-knocking with us during the last election campaign because, you know, they understood that lives depended on it. It was super important to that community. That's why we're here now advocating on their behalf once again, because we know directly, first-hand, how important it was to the community.

Of course, we have our one lone MLA gay, ML-gay, who is in the Legislature proudly advocating as well. We hope to see those numbers increase in subsequent elections, but for now we'll be proudly standing next to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and making sure that that voice is as strong as possible and multiplied by ours at every opportunity because this is not something, Mr. Speaker, that can go by the wayside. This is an important issue. I think all Albertans are watching not only how we perform; I think they expect us to follow through on our commitment to the LGBTQ-plus community. We well established our credibility on that file. It's something that we could never even dream of going backwards on.

We're doing our very best to gather public approval for our resistance to Bill Hate, as we refer to it. It's a bill that reflects an underlying misunderstanding and a very frightening lack of respect for the need of the LGBTQ2S-plus community to be protected, to be protected from those who would otherwise out them as students in school, who would suggest that they don't have the right as young people to come out at a time of their choosing.

That condescending attitude, to say it lightly, is something that will become and is already becoming reflected in street behaviour in this city, where you'll find people walking down Edmonton streets, three abreast, wearing colours of white supremacist groups, pushing people out of the way, expecting their way to be cleared. And you'll find it in other jurisdictions in the western world, where two lesbian women, for example, on a bus in London, I believe it was, were repeatedly smashed in the face because they refused to kiss at the demands of some absolutely abhorrent young people who were thugging their way into their lives. That is unbelievable evidence of the type of thing that is creeping into public discourse. We're not going to be immune to that type of tragic discourse, Mr. Speaker, and that's one of the things we need to combat.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to rise and debate today? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo rising.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, believe that Bill Hate is disappointing on so many levels. I believe it deliberately waters down the previous Bill 24, that was working for the majority. Youth, in particular GSA and QSA youth, were supported by Bill 24.

This Bill Hate, the Education Act amendment, will not be this Legislature's finest hour, Mr. Speaker. The 30th Legislature will be known, I believe, in the future, when people look back at it, as a socially conservative, activist Legislature, and I don't think the majority of Albertans are like that anymore. The 29th Legislature, I would think – and I don't think I'm just giving it, you know, a good spin – will be known as an environmental Legislature that updated labour laws, the MGA, and other big pieces of legislation that had been left untouched for a great long time. The work of this Legislature, even in its early days, I think, is moving things backwards.

I just want to touch a little bit on, you know, my own growing up, Mr. Speaker. I was in junior high school and high school in the

late '60s and early '70s to the mid-70s. I grew up with many kids who I found out many years later were gay, but they were closeted the whole time they were in school, the schools that I went to. It was obviously not a safe place for them to be out. In later years some individuals that I kept in touch with would often tell me that they didn't have support in school, and those young people, obviously, weren't able to live their lives with the support of caring adults who created environments in their schools to make them feel comfortable. In fact, there was a great deal of discomfort shown to anyone who was not straight and a jock. The fact that people had to hide themselves from others was not that era's finest hour.

The retrenchment of the work that Bill 24 has put in place to address the needs of – I'm not sure whose needs are being addressed in this way, Mr. Speaker. Like, who is being listened to with regard to Bill Hate coming forward? It certainly can't be young people in schools. It's got to be other people. I would put it to the group over there: who's talking to you about needing to roll back protections for kids in schools? It's not kids. It can't be kids. They wouldn't be that cruel.

10:50

My own approach to life and living, Mr. Speaker: live your own life, don't impinge on other people's lives, live and let live, and accept people where they're at. This Bill Hate does not do that. It says that you have to be certain ways, and if you're not those certain ways, then you're not going to get comfort and support in the education system, the kinds of securities that are put in place already.

My question opposite – I guess I would just place it again – is: who have they been listening to who is pushing for the retrenchment of the safe places for youth who are questioning their sexual identity in schools, which is taking place today? Who is being listened to? It certainly isn't young people, and if it's not young people themselves, I'd submit that the people who are being heard most probably shouldn't have the loudest voices in this regard. We should be listening to the young people.

Mr. Speaker, I also read over Bill Hate again, and just looking at page 7, to move on to some exceptions from section 33, it says:

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by order, exempt an accredited private school or a class of accredited private schools from the operation of all or part of section 33.

Then when you go to the existing act and see what 33(1) is all about, it says:

A board, as a partner in education, has a responsibility to . . .

- (e) provide a continuum of specialized supports and services to students that is consistent with the principles of inclusive education.

What this bill is actually doing is saying that the principles of inclusive education: private schools and a class of accredited schools can be exempted from those.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it seems like it's a step back, certainly for young people who need the supports of inclusive education. I think what that means is – in my own family my young nephew has Down syndrome, and he has been going to schools along with other kids in his neighbourhood, and he's been supported in those schools with specialized supports. It looks to me like the principles of inclusive education are being removed from accredited private schools or a class of accredited private schools. I don't think it's a step forward.

Then there's another part here that talks about striking out "specialized," and it's at the bottom of page 7. When you go over to the part in the bill that it talks to, it says:

ensure that the student is provided with specialized supports and services in accordance with section 33(1)(e).

This act is actually striking out "specialized" and watering that down so it would read: provide with supports and services in

accordance with section 33(1)(e). Who does that benefit, Mr. Speaker? It's not the young person in the school.

Additionally, there's a removal of striking out "a director" and substituting "a child intervention worker." The current act, the way it reads is:

On hearing a matter referred to it, the Attendance Board may, subject to any terms or conditions that the Attendance Board considers proper in the circumstances, make an order doing one or more of the following [things] . . .

- (d) reporting the matter to a director under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.

This is watering that down and saying that the director can be replaced by a child intervention worker.

Now, I've worked in social service agencies, worked with child welfare. I know that a director is higher than a child intervention worker, and I know that a director has a lot more stroke than one of their employees, so I wonder again: who is benefiting from this removal and watering down of the current act? It's not the child, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing I'd like to say with regard to the watering down of QSAs and GSAs is – I've read the whole bill, and it removes or waters down QSAs and GSAs by stealth, Mr. Speaker, because there's not one mention of what this government is doing with respect to that. It's probably buried under, you know: a section is amended by striking out the whole section in the current act. That seems very, very untransparent, and I think that the members opposite would agree that this Education Act amendment is not transparent in that regard.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the section where trustees can be banished from their own boards by other trustees is frankly shocking. I've been on five city councils and now in two Legislatures, and I have never, never seen that level of – I don't know what the word is. It's like reaching in and throwing a potential grenade into a council or a board of trustees or the Legislature.

There are ways to work these things out that council members have long used. The kind of thing they do, Mr. Speaker, is that if there's a council member who has gone off the rails and is acting in ways that are abhorrent to other council members – and I've been on some of those councils – you just stop working with that person. You freeze them out. You say, you know, "Your actions need to change, or we'll stop participating with Notices of Motions with you, with work on committees with you," and they quickly get the message that if they want anything to occur, if they want eight votes of council – I was on a council of 15 – they have to come around.

If they don't come around, Mr. Speaker, then you simply vote no when they bring things forward. That's how you deal with a council member or a trustee who is trying to do things that aren't in the best interests of the young people that they're there to serve or the constituents of the ward you represent. I've seen that action before, and it shapes people up pretty quickly. I've never been on that receiving end, but I do know that you have to watch yourself. If you want to get things done, you have to work together, and that's how you deal with people who won't do the things that they need to do to represent their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I think that there are lots of good reasons for this bill to be brought back and changed so that we actually have something going forward that meets the needs of Albertans and kids in school in particular. I just don't see where the work has been done to make that happen. In fact, I think this is a reaction bill to promises made on the campaign trail, not in the best interests of young people. I don't know, as I've said, who was being listened to, but certainly in the case of QSAs/GSAs it wasn't the youth who were in those GSAs. It wasn't the teachers and others in schools who were supporting the young people in those QSAs and GSAs.

11:00

I've been to several schools in my riding, Mr. Speaker, not specifically to attend a QSA or a GSA, but the young people in those schools – and I'm thinking mostly of high schools – have a lot more comfort with the whole area of sexuality than, I can tell you, I and my cohort had when we were in the late '60s and early '70s and I was in high school and junior high school. With that, you know, I have a lot more trust that they're on the right path. They are being supported to be on that right path, and I think the adults in this room, frankly, have a lot to learn from those young people.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments to the member if anyone has one.

Seeing none, are there any others wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against the introduced Bill Hate, an act to destroy gay-straight alliances, that has come before us in debate this evening. One of my key concerns – and in my remarks at second reading I think I will speak to some of the overarching themes. There is a lot in the changes to the Education Act and the larger package, but at this point I think I'll stick to two main pieces of this legislation, specifically the impact to LGBTQ students. Because of my time as a member of the government caucus during the debate of Bill 24, I have had the opportunity to talk to constituents and stakeholders who've had direct experience with GSAs and QSAs, so I'd like to speak to that. Then, secondly, the other big change I'd like to speak to tonight is the ability for duly elected trustees to be removed. There are certainly a lot more changes to this bill, and in further debate I look forward to the opportunity to talk more about some of the other changes that are being brought in.

This Bill Hate can be called that act to destroy gay-straight alliances specifically because the government has chosen to make changes to how GSAs can be formed and the protections that students who wish to participate in GSAs are afforded by going back to an old piece of legislation, proclaiming and amending that, rather than trying to have a very upfront and honest conversation about the change that they're trying to afford. I also find that the government has been making very factually untrue statements regarding the strength of the protections that will be afforded to our LGBTQ students. This came up directly during our question period today, but with the introduction of Bill Hate, Alberta students will not have the strongest protections in Canada when it comes to making sure that they will not be outed, making sure that they have the right to form these gay-straight alliances in their schools and get the support that they need.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

Keep in mind: what are we talking about? I'd like to go back to the fundamentals. We are talking about peer-support networks run by students, supported by school staff, and grounded in promoting equity for gender and sexual minority students; safe, caring and inclusive spaces for all students; healthy, respectful environments and relationships to prevent or eliminate bullying and discrimination; peer support being the key word because these are students helping other students in what can be very difficult times in their lives.

As someone who was not a gender minority student or a sexual minority student, high school was still tough for me. Adding those things on top is a lot to put on a young person. Making sure that somebody who is in the LGBTQ community is choosing when they choose to come out, how they choose to come out, and that they are supported is incredibly important. We know that because members of the LGBTQ2S community disproportionately suffer homelessness and other issues.

For this I'd like to go to our LGBTQ2S Youth Housing and Shelter Guidelines, that the government of Alberta has put out, because I think and I know that in conversations that I had with parents concerned when I was door-knocking, there are a lot of people who don't realize that we are talking about a vulnerable population because LGBTQ2S youth

experience higher incidents of homelessness, mental health issues and suicide rates than their non-LGBTQ2S counterparts.

Research [shows]:

- Nearly one in three homeless youth in Canada identify as LGBTQ2S.
- LGBTQ2S youth identify the primary reason for homelessness as family rejection due to gender identity or sexual orientation.
- LGBTQ2S homeless youth face higher rates of discrimination, violence and abuse in the shelter system than their non-LGBTQ2S counterparts.
- LGBTQ2S youth are at a higher risk of mental health concerns and self-harm and exhibit higher rates of suicidality than the general population.
- Lack of acknowledgement or awareness of LGBTQ2S youth has led to inappropriate responses by front-line workers, adding to the marginalization of this group.

That last line is more about why there is a specific guide for LGBTQ2S youth, because they tend to need the social supports and the support network that government can provide more often.

When we're talking about GSA policies, I really want us to think about the youth who need these protections most, not the majority but the few who are trying to get by, who need that peer-support network to talk to someone. The rejection from a disapproving principal or school administrator or even other classmates can have devastating impacts. Because throughout a lot of the discussion that we've had in this Chamber so far in our 30th Legislature, I worry that we are losing sight of who we are talking about. We are talking about a minority who is vulnerable. If we don't listen to what they have to say through letters, like have been read out this evening, or through e-mails that get sent to our offices or through one-on-one conversations at the many pride events that are going on around our province, then we are at risk of doing a huge disservice – not a disservice. Honestly, we're at risk of harm or death because of those higher rates of suicide. That makes that really, really important.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The parallel between thinking about who we're talking about: we're also talking a lot in this Legislature about youth minimum wage. The minister has taken to standing up and talking about how this is only the minimum and that lots of people will pay higher than this. But we're losing sight of who we're talking about. We need to talk about who this policy is going to directly impact. When we come to a youth minimum wage, we're talking about the youth who is going to be forced to have to take \$13 an hour.

When we're talking about Bill Hate, we're talking about the youth that is desperately looking for support through a peer-support group. Now Bill Hate may make that harder for them not in some theoretical way but in a way that we know actually has happened in this province and will continue to happen if there are not strong protections that protect the immediacy and make sure that there is no chance that a student will be outed. Because without the immediacy, students can be stonewalled, can be stalled. They can find the process very, very frustrating. Perhaps they are told that they can't have a student-led peer-support, teacher-supported club that has the name "gay" in it. A number of difficulties can come about. If they don't have the protections from being outed, then students necessarily won't even try to start a club. If there's any risk to themselves, they won't do that, and we've seen that.

11:10

Now, the culture around gay-straight alliances and how they've been used to support students I think is really important. I haven't had a chance to go through everything, but I hope to be able to revisit this in future debate. There are a number of scholarly articles and research being done on gay-straight alliances and, specifically, from my initial survey, research showing the incredibly positive impact they have not only on students who come from the LGBTQ2S community but also straight allies who participate in these clubs. I know I heard my colleagues talking about the importance of gay-straight alliances not only for the students but for the entire school community and the positive impact it can have on teachers as well. I think these are important considerations that we should be taking into account.

As we continue to discuss this bill and the risks that it poses to our community members in the province, the risks that it poses to vulnerable young people, it's very important that we always bring that back to who this actually impacts and thinking about those most vulnerable students and the protections that they deserve.

Now, during Bill 24 debate in the 29th Legislature I had the opportunity to talk to a number of members of the LGBTQ2S community as well as receiving their correspondence at my office. I hope to be able to bring some of that to read because I think that was incredibly powerful when my colleague from St. Albert was able to read into the record some of those items. Making sure that those voices are heard here in this Chamber is incredibly important.

I've had the opportunity to attend a number of events where members of the community have come to speak to me, including during the election when a teacher who is helping to run a GSA in our city came out to volunteer and spoke very passionately about how upset the students were that some of the protections could be repealed and that it was causing a lot of stress and harm just that the debate might come up. Of course, we were talking in the election. We didn't know what was going to happen. Of course, the UCP was running on their platform of jobs, economy, pipeline, yet here we are discussing Bill Hate. So obviously those students' fears had some grounding in reality. But it was incredibly touching to hear this teacher talk about the concern that was being raised from these students and the fear. The idea that students might not seek out a peer-support group because they're afraid is deeply upsetting to me, knowing the positive impact that GSAs, QSAs can have in the lives of these students. That is my primary concern at this point with Bill Hate.

I am also concerned about the idea that duly elected public officials in the form of school trustees could be removed from their positions by a majority who are not supportive of that individual member. As we get into further bill debate, I certainly hope to hear from the minister and other members of the government caucus why this is considered important in this bill and in what scenarios they envision it being used. Have they thought through the potential negative impacts to various communities if a dissenting voice is removed in that trustee position?

I think that's a really important failing in this bill. We need to be able to fully understand not only, "Okay, why did the government think this needs to be put in?" but I really, strongly disagree with putting in that language at all. I think it leads us down a very dangerous path when it comes to making sure that the voices that citizens elect are there and able to do their jobs even if the things they say are not always well received by everybody listening. I think that's really, really important.

My main concerns on Bill Hate, Mr. Speaker, are the fact that we are turning back the clock on protections, we are weakening protections students already have, something we know that students are concerned about, something I personally have had many

conversations with students about. I'm very pleased that I was in the Chamber this evening so that I could hear so many powerful statements by my colleagues, including our ML-gay, whose perspective I appreciate very much having in this caucus, and the others who were part of the Bill 24 debate and discussions, that were very important and held during the 29th Legislature.

As we move forward, I hope that we can continue to have these important debates without devolving into misinformation, which is something we saw happening around Bill 24, making sure that we can be honest about what this bill does and doesn't do and who it impacts. Again, I will bring us right back around to: we need to be thinking about the most vulnerable students. When you're thinking about, "Who does this potentially negatively impact, these changes?" I want you to think about someone who could be removed from their family home if they were outed, someone who may need supports for mental health issues, or someone who might be at risk of committing suicide. That's who we're here to fight for, and I appreciate that opportunity tonight, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone wishing to make a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise and speak to Bill 8. Similar to my caucus members, I have a number of concerns with this bill, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, which has been characterized by my caucus colleagues as Bill Hate because, you know, quite frankly, it's undoing protections that our government brought in for the LGBTQ2S-plus community in addition to other things.

I know that the government and the Minister of Education characterize this as bringing in the act that wasn't proclaimed back in 2012. Really, this is a completely gutted version of that, minus the fact that it's an attack on the rights of our youth and of our students, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to talk a little bit from my point of view as a teacher. You know, there are a lot of new members in this House, and I don't know if they knew that I was a high school teacher for a number of years before I got into politics. Again, I was very fortunate to teach at a school that was very inclusive and accepting. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that providing students with the opportunity to have a safe space – I never understood, and I was in this House back when a former MLA, Kent Hehr, first brought in I believe it was a motion, which was back in 2014, calling on the government to protect GSAs. It was voted down by the two parties, the PCs and the Wildrose, and then in November of that year a former MLA, Laurie Blakeman, tabled private member's Bill 202.

Now, that was interesting. I remember that the government intentionally introduced another bill because you can't have two bills with the same concept or theme or amendments to legislation at the same time. So it torpedoed Laurie Blakeman's bill, and that was intentional. I know that there are some members in here, actually, that served in the PC caucus at that time, and quite frankly I'd love to hear them stand up and try to say in this House or outside of this House that that wasn't the case, that it wasn't meant to torpedo her bill.

Then I remember when Bill 10 was tabled. That was one of the later nights that we were in this House debating, Mr. Speaker. I remember that some of the government was starting to get swayed. There were cracks they didn't understand because of the push-back. The former Premier at the time was out of the province, and I remember that there was a crackdown.

11:20

Well, I'll never forget. The reason I remember this is that I stood up and I was speaking, and I said: wow, daddy has got a really long arm to swat down from outside of the province any type of resistance. He had heard that members were starting to grow concerned. In fact, the former Minister of Infrastructure, Sandra Jansen, was one of those that really disagreed with the government's approach and knew that it wasn't going to protect students the way that the government claimed. I mean, it was really a shell of, "It's going to protect students," but it actually didn't.

Mr. Speaker, we made history a couple of years ago when we passed protections and put them into law that students who want to start GSAs can't be blocked or sidelined or delayed or dragged out or, again, that teachers and principals can't out kids. If you ask me, that's their decision when they want to come out and express their identity, whether it's to their parents, to their friends, or to their family. No one has the right to force someone out. Personally, I think that's an attack on a person's human rights.

The other thing about this repeal. You know, the members opposite can talk about how this is the strongest protection in the country. I mean, that is the biggest load of baloney when you look at comparisons across the country, to what other jurisdictions do as far as protections. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I think it's disingenuous and frustrating when one looks at the protections in place in other provinces. It's very easy to see that it falls far short. In fact, we currently are the strongest, under the legislation that the New Democrat government passed, and we're about to take about 20 steps backwards.

Now, the issues that I have around this are the students, first and foremost, and removing protections for them. We've heard over and over again that GSAs save lives, and we know that. That is a fact that no member can dispute. There, sadly, have been lots of young people who have taken their lives, whether it's because of bullying or pressure or stress. I mean, I can't even imagine some of the situations that young people have been put in because of who they are, which just seems ridiculous. We should truly, if we are an accepting and open society, do just that for every person regardless of the colour of their skin, their sexual orientation, who they love, what faith they practise. But we have a far way to go, Mr. Speaker. The protections we brought in were just that, to ensure that we are protecting our students and our young people.

I remember – and I know the Member for Edmonton-Glenora talked about this – that one of the amendments that the previous government under the PCs brought in was that they said, "Okay. You can have a GSA, just not on the school property; you can run over to Tim Hortons, you can go to 7-Eleven, or you can go somewhere else and have a club," which I thought was absolutely ridiculous.

The other piece of it, Mr. Speaker, is I think it's important to listen to the people of this province, especially the young people of this province, who said: "I don't understand why the government is so opposed to this. This is an after school club." I would love to know how many schools phoned parents to say: "Oh, my God. Johnny is taking chess. Did you know that Johnny has joined the chess club?" That seems absurd, absolutely absurd.

I mean, when I went to school, to my knowledge, teachers never called my parents to say what clubs or sports teams I joined.

**Ms Phillips:** They called them for other reasons.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, that may be true. I might not have been the best model student back in high school, but that story is for maybe later

on in the Bill 8 debate – who knows? – when the hour gets really late.

The other thing I just wanted to touch on briefly, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the bill as it sits also is going to put teachers and principals in a very, very awkward position. As a teacher I can tell you that I would not be comfortable phoning a parent and outing a student, yet I would be in contravention of this bill and could potentially lose my job. The conundrum or quagmire or position that this bill will put teachers and support staff in is completely unfair to them, wanting to ensure that students are protected and safe, yet they will be blatantly breaking the law.

The other thing that I want to mention, Mr. Speaker, my issue with this, is the complete and utter attack on a democratically elected trustee through this bill. It is offensive that a group of other trustees can essentially remove a trustee from their position. That is a complete attack on democracy. Trustees are duly elected, just like every single member in this House, and I think that members would have an issue if that was proposed for this place. Could you imagine? I mean, very quickly you would become an autocratic, one-party state. We don't want to encourage groupthink. We want to encourage trustees to be able to come up with innovative ideas, to propose and have healthy debates. What this is going to do is stifle that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how much time I have, but in the essence of time, for those reasons, I would like to move an amendment, that I will read into the record.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if you would just pass the amendment through to us. I can assure you that you have approximately five minutes left. If you can get that to us, get it to the table here, then we will proceed as such. If you can just hang on.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you don't mind, I'll read this into *Hansard* right now while the table is receiving it.

**The Speaker:** Just one second. Hang on.

Excellent. Thank you, hon. member. This will be referred to as RA1.

**Mr. Bilous:** Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm moving this amendment on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Riverview that the motion for second reading of Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that further time is necessary to enable school boards to adjust their policies to comply with the proposed legislation and regulations.

Mr. Speaker, this is, I think, the most gentle way of giving time for this bill, that is completely flawed, to be reviewed and amended at the appropriate place and time, to which, I can tell you, I will have much more to say. As we all know in this House, I am not a member who's known for his brevity.

With that, Mr. Speaker, for the time being I will move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we've had a great evening, lots of progress, and as such, I would move to adjourn the House until tomorrow at 9 o'clock a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:29 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, June 12, 2019

Day 12

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, June 12, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, members.

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

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

#### Supplementary Supply Estimates 2018-19 General Revenue Fund

**The Chair:** Hon. members, before we commence consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak . . .
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the first rotation is completed, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 13, approved by the Assembly yesterday, the time allotted for consideration is six hours.

The Committee of Supply has under consideration the 2018-19 supplementary supply estimates. I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move the 2018-2019 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue

fund. I stand before you in this Assembly to present supplementary supply.

I would like to begin by introducing the Treasury Board and Finance officials sitting with me here today. To my right is Athana Mentzelopoulos, deputy minister, and to her right is Mary Persson, assistant deputy minister, budget development and reporting. I would like to take a moment to thank them and the staff at Treasury Board and Finance for their professionalism, their hard work, and their long hours. They've been a tremendous support to me and to our government as we navigate the challenging waters of Alberta's financial situation.

Madam Chair, our government respects the traditions of parliamentary democracy, and as a part of that, it is essential that we receive legislative approval of these estimates. This is to ensure there's the appropriate oversight of government spending by the elected representatives. The supplementary estimates are essentially the overspending of the members opposite. Prior to the election the previous government made several contractual commitments, and now the responsibility falls on our government to formally ask this Legislature for funding so we can pay for these items.

I recognize that some of these commitments are, in fact, related to important activities, some of which include wildfire disaster recovery and emergency assistance, support for persons with developmental disabilities, and the repair and rebuilding of flood-damaged homes at the Siksika Nation.

Our government also recognizes that events and natural disasters happen. In fact, we are seeing that right now as fires burn in northern Alberta. Thousands of Albertans have been evacuated from their homes and/or remain on evacuation alert. All Albertans need and can be confident that our government will be there for them in their time of need.

We also recognize that disasters and the magnitude of any disaster are not something any government can predict. However, these estimates tabled before you today go far beyond disaster funding. These estimates demonstrate a lack of discipline and respect for all Albertans. Madam Chair, not only do these estimates represent poor fiscal planning of the previous government, but they clearly demonstrate how our friends opposite played politics with Albertans' money.

What I'm referring to, Madam Chair, is the more than \$310 million that the previous government used to fund an ill-advised initiative to lease railcars. My friends opposite have treated taxpayers' money like a credit card, and now we've received the bill. If they felt they needed it, they bought it. There was little consideration around who was actually going to pay for it.

Madam Chair, on April 16 Albertans elected this government with the most significant mandate in the province's history. They took a careful look at our platform. They saw that we were committed to bringing the budget back to balance and to making the effort that will be required to turn back the momentum of growing debt. They asked us to bring sustainability back to government so that hard-working Albertans can be confident that their children will enjoy the same government services that have sustained them, and we're going to do that, but first we must finish old business and put the recklessness of the previous government behind us.

So now, as a matter of law, our government must pass legislation including that money for prepayments to lease railcars despite our own misgivings of this rushed job. When passed, these supplementary estimates will authorize an approximate increase of \$8.9 million to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$449 million in voted expense funding, \$53 million in voted capital

investments, and \$362 million in voted financial transactions for the government.

The estimates of these overages are consistent with the fiscal plan presented in the previous government's 2018-2019 third-quarter fiscal update and will authorize increases to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer and the following 15 departments: Advanced Education, Agriculture and Forestry, Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Culture and Tourism, Economic Development and Trade, Education, Energy, Indigenous Relations, Justice and Solicitor General, Municipal Affairs, Seniors and Housing, Service Alberta, Status of Women, and Treasury Board and Finance.

Madam Chair, as we debate these supplementary estimates, I suspect that our members opposite will argue that this money was for the good of Albertans, but let me be clear. Rushing contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars for political gain is not responsible spending, and it's certainly not good for Albertans. As President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance I've been given a great privilege. I've been tasked with making sure that Albertans' money is spent responsibly, and I'm taking on that challenge as a privilege and with the utmost respect for the people of this great province.

Albertans want to know that their hard-earned money is treated with the utmost respect. They also want to be sure that government has the money to help them when they need it most, and they want to make sure that there is money for the future.

Madam Chair, my role, my fellow ministers' roles, and the role of our government is to be responsible stewards of Alberta taxpayers' dollars. We know there will be challenges ahead, but we will bring this province back to balance and find better ways than pushing contracts through for political gain to do things differently.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning, Madam Chair. Now my colleagues and I will be pleased to answer any questions from the members of this Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. members from the Official Opposition. Hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, would you like to combine your time with the minister for the first 20-minute block?

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yes, if the minister is open to that.

**The Chair:** Hon. Minister of Finance, do you agree to combine the 20 minutes and go back and forth?

**Mr. Toews:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay. Edmonton-City Centre, please proceed.

9:10

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister. I appreciated his opening comments and certainly look forward to the fall budget, when this government will have the opportunity to demonstrate whether they can indeed pull the rabbit out of the hat, that they seem to indicate that they feel they will.

I'd like to begin by asking a few questions, then, on the matter of Health. Speaking to the minister, he was indicating, I guess, some concerns with our government's plan on spending, but I do note that for Health there seem to be no supplementary amounts to be voted on, which I can only assume means that Health is proceeding on budget for the fiscal year in Budget 2019 and that our former minister, now the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, had things in good stead. To the minister: can you just confirm, then, that indeed, as there are no supplementary amounts, the budget that was

proposed and put forward for Health has been successful and moved forward appropriately?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Chair, I can confirm that there are no supplementary amounts related to the Ministry of Health.

**Mr. Shepherd:** All right. Thank you. Well, I can see, then, that the minister intends not to be only thrifty with spending but also with his answers.

To the minister. Can you tell us, then, based on that budget and given that you are agreeing with those numbers and that you're moving forward on the budget that we put forward: are you able to indicate how many full-time employees were allocated to mental health and addictions in Budget 2018 and what the increase in full-time employees for this fiscal year might be?

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

**Ms Sweet:** Madam Chair, point of order.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Just as a point of clarity, Madam Chair, can you please clarify for the House that we can actually ask any minister and that it doesn't specifically have to be to the Minister of Finance? Just for the information of all members of the House.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, this certainly is not a point of order, but with that said, I am interested in that point of clarification as well.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, for clarification purposes, the government can decide who responds to the questions.

The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Chair, in response to the question, for 2018-2019 there were 933 FTEs related to mental health, and for Alberta Health Services and the Health Quality Council of Alberta there were 80,605 FTEs. I think that in response to the member's question around 2019-2020, which is the upcoming budget year, as the members opposite know, at this point in time we have not delivered a budget. We are working and deliberating with ministries as they develop their plans going forward, and of course a budget will be forthcoming this fall.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Given that, as has been noted, the government seems to largely agree with the budget that we had put forward and recognizes that it was well put together and that they do not feel anything additional to add to it, I believe that would end the questions that I would have on the matter of Health.

At this time I would hand things over to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll seek your guidance on whether I need to ask to combine with the minister again or whether we'll just continue to proceed in that exchange.

**The Chair:** We're still in the first 20 minutes, so please proceed.

**Ms Ganley:** Fantastic. Thank you.

I'd like to begin by noting, if it's possible, something that actually isn't in here. In 2015, when we went through this exercise, also with

numbers that weren't really our own, there was a large amount of overspending in corrections, and that was difficult to get under control. Over a number of years it required software and incredible hard work on the part of many individuals in the department. This year it's gotten to the point where the hiring and the staffing – and we made a bunch of moves around, ensuring that we don't have, you know, people who were in jail for a day and a half nearly as much. That is an incredible achievement on behalf of those staff, to make it the case that that isn't going into an overage. I'm not sure if you're aware of that, Minister, but I think it's worth noting.

My first question, I will direct, is on page 55, obviously having to do with estimates for Justice and Solicitor General, line 5.8. I'll direct this to the Minister of Justice, but I guess anyone can answer. I'm incredibly proud to sit here with my colleagues. I think we made a lot of changes that were beneficial to the people of Alberta. One of the ones that I'm proudest of is the change that you're seeing the last piece of in item 5.8. That's \$14.8 million in additional funding for legal aid. Over four years it's part of a more than \$70 million boost in funding to legal aid. It's almost 76 per cent over the course of our term. I'm incredibly pleased to see that this number is here. I hope that it continues to be here as we go forward into the future.

What I will ask is: does the minister agree, especially in light of the comments of the Minister of Finance about waste and overspending, that this investment to ensure that our system functions adequately and to ensure that those most vulnerable are able to access it is a good investment?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, again, we're here to talk about the NDP's spending. We have a \$14.8 million increase in legal aid spending. We have clear campaign commitments that we've made. Again, we're going to be going through a thorough budget process, and in that process we will refine our campaign commitments and our commitments to Albertans to make sure that we have an effective justice system. We're going to be making sure that we focus on the priorities of Albertans and our legal system to make sure it has the tools required to do the services that Albertans are expecting.

**The Chair:** Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect, I'm aware that this is a commitment that the previous government made. I remember making it. I see that it's been included in here, and what I'm asking is whether you think this was a good use of funds.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you to the hon. member for the question. I think that what she's attempting to refer to in a roundabout way is that the Finance minister's comments about concerns about the fact that we have to bring some supplementary supply components of this process here really have to do with NDP boondoggles and misspending. Asking if specific points of this still have value and are important and if that was a blanket statement by the hon. the Finance minister: Madam Chair, I think, through you to the hon. member, I can assure you that that's not what the Finance minister is referring to. The Finance minister, in fact, said in his opening comments that there are important parts of supplementary supply to be able to continue with the continuity of government, which is what we're doing here right now.

In fact, Madam Chair, through you to the hon. members of the opposition, I will quote their then Finance minister on March 13, 2018, sitting in the Finance chair in this place during supplementary and interim supply. He refers specifically to supplementary supply.

This interim funding authority will ensure continuity in the business of the province while the Legislature takes the time

necessary to discuss, debate, and enact the full funding required for government business for the 2018-19 fiscal year.

That was on March 13, 2018, in this House. The fact is that there are important things within supplementary supply to be able to deal with the continuity of government. That's why this government is bringing supplementary supply to this House, to go through the process.

But as the Finance minister said, Madam Chair, the fact is that also within supplementary supply is a requirement, unfortunately, for this government to have to be able to follow through on some boondoggles and some, you know, misspending by the government, and that's what the Finance minister is referring to. In fact, I think a great example of that – and I think it's relevant to the hon. member's question because it was asked in such a broad way – would be crude by rail, which was an abuse, almost, of taxpayer dollars, that was brought forward in the dying days of the former administration during an election period, that utilized taxpayer dollars and put us in a tough situation. I hope we'll have more of an opportunity to be able to talk about that once some questions are asked about energy.

To close, Madam Chair, because I'm sure the hon. member would like some more time back, the answer is: yes, there are things that are important to supplementary supply. Unfortunately, there is also some misspending by the NDP that we have to handle. That's the reality of what we've been left with by the bad financial management of the former government.

9:20

**The Chair:** Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's probably worth pointing out that the question was specifically about line item 5.8. It wasn't asked in a broad way. It was a question specifically about exactly \$14.8 million for legal aid and whether or not that's important. I think it's pretty clear that if each of the things individually is important, they can't collectively add up to misspending on things that are unimportant.

The question I was asking, to which I am clearly not going to receive an answer, was whether or not that specific spending on legal aid, which spending came at the time that it came because we were in negotiations over the course of several years for a governance agreement that will make legal aid sustainable for years into the future – anyway, I will move on to my next question.

Again, very specifically, page 55, lines 4.3 and 6.5, which refer specifically to additional funding that went into our rural crime strategy. Six million dollars came in-year. This is the \$4 million that came at the end of the year. Obviously, we were moving quite quickly when we were doing this. We thought we got it right. We continued talking to folks, and we ultimately landed on this.

At the time, of course, the members opposite singled out this particular rural crime strategy to vote against it, calling it overspending, and we know, I think, beyond a doubt at this time that that much-needed investment has already started to pay dividends. In fact, I've seen the hon. minister begin to reference sort of continued use of exactly that same strategy into the future. I'm incredibly pleased that we went through with that strategy. I think it's been incredibly effective. Again, in general, the comments of the Minister of Finance, having admittedly singled out some specific things that were important like disasters and other things, certainly not this particular strategy – but I don't think that this represents a lack of discipline. I think that this was a good idea. I think that it was something that was needed by the people of Alberta at the time. I don't think it was irresponsible at all. In fact, I think that not doing it would have been irresponsible.

So I'd like to ask the current minister to share his perception of this investment, whether or not he thinks that it was worth while to invest in RCMP officers and Crown prosecutors.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I'll take this question on behalf of the government just because I think it's important for my colleagues who are new to the Legislature to have a little bit of the other side of the history lesson that was just presented by the hon. member when it comes to rural crime inside this Assembly. The fact is that the then Official Opposition, which I was proud actually at the time to be the leader of inside this Assembly, had to fill these galleries full of people from all over rural Alberta and beg for help for rural crime – beg for help for rural crime – to be able to make sure that that was addressed while that member, who was the Minister of Justice, refused over and over and over to help people. In fact, at the time, their leader said that there was really no rural crime problem and disregarded . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Mischaracterization.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** In fact, every member of that party that is an incumbent . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** What a mischaracterization.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora wants to get in and heckle away. She can rise and speak at any time. She has her block here.

**Ms Hoffman:** Right now. Yeah. Let's do it.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** But the reality is this . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, please.

**Ms Hoffman:** Sorry.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The reality, Madam Chair, is that when it comes to rural crime, rural crime is an extraordinarily important issue. I know you know that. It's an important issue to your constituents; it's an important issue to my constituents. But this wanting to rewrite history by the hon. member so that all of a sudden the NDP has become the great champion of rural crime and standing up for rural Albertans is absolutely ridiculous when you know the history and the facts of the process that it took the Official Opposition at that time to get the then government to actually take action for people.

Now, the hon. member also is implying that the former opposition, by voting against the former government's budget, was automatically against every issue, including the funding of police officers, something that we called for in this Assembly for a very, very long time. It means that we would be against specific components of the budget. That's not true, Madam Chair. What we were against was a fiscally irresponsible budget that had already at that point become about five credit downgrades if I've got it correct – I have to look . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Six.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . maybe even six by that point and had us on track for \$100 billion. If the hon. members want to spend their time in supplementary supply trying to campaign and talk about how good they were at budgeting or managing the province's finances, I certainly welcome that because I think that they were likely the worst government in the history of this province when it came to managing our finances. They had us on track for \$100 billion in

debt, and some of the issues that we have to come to this place today to be able to pass are basically fixing up many of the components of their mismanagement when it came to the finances of our province.

With that said, Madam Chair, through you to the hon. member, of course, funding police officers and standing up for victims of rural crime is a huge priority for this government. It was a huge priority for the United Conservative Party when we were in opposition. The real question is what took them so long to do it and why they hadn't gone all the way when they were in government. But the Minister of Justice, I know, will go all the way, and this government will always stand up for rural Albertans, and we'll always stand up against rural crime.

**Ms Ganley:** Through you, Madam Chair, thank you for the incredible lecture on that one. I feel like "mansplaining" was in fact ruled parliamentary, and it's probably worth using in this instance.

Returning, then, Madam Chair, to the issue of lines 4.3 and 6.5, I think it's just worth noting that in the instance of – and we're going to have this procedure again today, so you'll no doubt be incredibly familiar with it. When you're voting on something like a supplementary or an interim supply, you have the option to block vote all on one, or you have the option to single out certain items to specifically vote for or against them. In the instance when we introduced the rural crime strategy, the members opposite specifically singled it out so that they could vote against just that without voting against everything else. So let's be clear that it had nothing to do with voting against other portions of the budget that were not justice related.

**Ms Hoffman:** Facts.

**Ms Ganley:** Right.

With respect to this strategy, obviously, it includes a couple of different elements, some portion of which flows through to the RCMP and some portion of which goes to Crown prosecutors, most of those prosecutors now being in place, I think, and doing their job. I think at this point we have seen rather significantly the outcome of that strategy. I'm incredibly glad that at the time I chose to act immediately, while the members opposite yelled at me to take my time and study the issue and even went so far as to introduce a private member's bill to study the issue at length and to send it to a committee and to do a whole bunch of things.

I think this has been incredibly effective, and I'd love to hear, you know, from the minister. I've asked about specifically two things. I've asked about the rural crime strategy, which, again, just so it's clear that I'm being specific, is 6.5 and 4.3, those lines. I've asked also about line 5.8, which is specifically support for legal aid. I think those are all very important things. What I'm asking is whether the minister or the government more generally feels the same.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, addressing rural crime was one of the cornerstones of our platform that we put forward in the most recent election campaign. It goes through in a detailed way and outlines a lot of the hard work that was done by the legacy members of both of our historic parties in putting forward our rural crime strategy. In that, we have our rural crime strategy, and when we get into our budget process and as we get going here, throughout this process we're going to be making sure we bring through in detail those policies.

**9:30**

We're going to be making sure that we fully fund things like ALERT to make sure that they have the resources to combat gang activity, also make sure that resources are there for our rural



communities. Our priorities as well are to put in place 50 new prosecutors, Madam Chair, to make sure that we have the resources to deal with these backlogs that we have in our court system to give people across Alberta the confidence in our justice system, and make sure that they know that the policing is there.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we are now entering our second 20-minute block.

Members of the Official Opposition, who would like to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Ms Ganley:** Sorry. If it's all right . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, would you like to continue going back and forth?

**Ms Ganley:** Yes, please, if that's amenable.

**The Chair:** Government, agreed?

Please proceed.

**Ms Ganley:** Perfect. I'm actually pretty much finished, so my hon. colleague can get up right away. All I wanted to do was just say thank you to the minister. I appreciate that acknowledgement. I'm glad to hear that we're on the same page with respect to that. I'm incredibly glad that you've managed to convince our now Premier, who cut ALERT when he was in Ottawa, of its value. Thank you so much for that.

**The Chair:** The Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, first and foremost, I categorically reject the statements that were made there. We're talking right now here in supplementary supply about the spending that was done by the NDP. Right now in Alberta we have clear priorities on justice to make sure that we provide the services Albertans are looking for. We have priorities. We're not prioritizing light bulbs. We're not prioritizing shower heads. We're prioritizing to make sure that our front-line law enforcement officials have the resources they need to get their job done.

Not a day goes by when I walk through here in these halls, Madam Chair, that I don't run into one of our MLAs representing a rural constituency who comes to me and says: "Look, I need you to come to my constituency. We have a crisis happening in our constituency." That's why I'm working with many of our colleagues in this Chamber to make sure we get to every community possible to talk to them about their concerns, to talk to them about our plan to combat rural crime. We're going to be going all the way up to Fort McMurray. We're going to be going to Grande Prairie. We're going to be going to Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer. We're going to be talking to people about our plan to help make sure we address this crisis that's going on across our rural communities. So many people on farms just do not feel safe. We need to make sure that they feel safe in their communities.

It was the failure of the past government to listen to Albertans in a timely way. You heard the hon. House leader. His comments were about how many times he had to fill the galleries here with people to make sure that the previous government actually took steps to get the job done. Right now in Alberta we have to make sure we do more. We have committed the most detailed platform in Alberta's history – Alberta history. This is a platform with over 300 commitments. We're going to make sure that we have promises made, promises kept on this. Albertans are relying on us. They're relying on us to make sure we keep them safe in their communities.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today and speak to supplementary estimates. I did have some specific questions related to the Agriculture and Forestry ministry, but I wanted to first note that the Minister of Finance in his opening remarks did specifically, basically, exclude Agriculture and Forestry from those ministries that might be spearheaded in their attack as overspending of members opposite because, of course, as is fairly typical on an annual ongoing basis, Agriculture and Forestry will be one of those ministries that does have a significant amount of monies that are called for in supplementary estimates.

For example, this year we see about \$193 million for wildfire disaster emergency assistance provided for wildfire management costs. Some of my inquiries will relate to that number but not in a way that would be looking to condemn the practice because I know that when, in fact, we were in government, we were called out for perhaps budgeting only a small amount initially for this contingency. However, subsequently there was a much larger amount that was necessary to be spent during the course of the wildfire emergency on an annual basis. Therefore, supplementary estimates requests were made and the same is true for the past budget year.

I'm wondering if the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and/or representatives on that minister's behalf could comment a little bit about the unpredictable nature of the financial requirements for this ministry with respect to fighting wildfires and natural disasters, particularly wildfires given that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has the responsibility for fighting forest fires, and also the inherent cost of disaster relief resulting from evacuations that are coming as a result of wildfires that are approaching more and more rapidly towards centres of population and which, increasingly, on an annual basis seem to be costing us more and creating a greater sense of fear and risk in northern communities in particular, who face threats of wildfire that may actually impinge right up to their community. I know that this year, of course, in High Level we were very concerned about that wildfire almost getting into the community. We lost homes in Paddle Prairie as a result of an unpredictable wildfire that took off and actually caused some 15, 16 homes to be destroyed.

One of the things that was undertaken, Madam Chair, during the High Level firefighting effort – and it was widely publicized – was an effort, during a period of time when the winds shifted and gave a bit of an opportunity for those heroic firefighters to do their work, to create significant firebreaks around the community of High Level at great cost and expense and using much heavy equipment and bulldozers in an effort to protect against the wildfire actually encroaching into the town of High Level. This type of expenditure on an ongoing basis during an emergency period when firefighting is actually taking place, when there's an active fire taking place: I'm wondering, going forward, if we can perhaps look at having some of this work done on a more ongoing basis as a measure of public safety and protection rather than on an emergency basis, making it part of ongoing fire protection and perhaps incorporating it into our FireSmart community protection efforts. We are seeing a higher level of risk on a regular basis to many of our northern communities, which are surrounded by forests.

I know that there's been a significant uptake in interest, and it's taken seriously by our northern communities, to engage with their fire departments through community planning and to make efforts to satisfy those plans. Because of the large amount that we see in supplementary estimates required on an ongoing basis, some of which are costs for work that's done during an emergent situation but possibly could be done on an ongoing basis on the community

FireSmart program, I'm wondering if that might kind of sort out or balance the expenditures that are made as a result of fighting wildfires that do occur: doing work that might be preventative in nature rather than doing these fireguards, in particular, in an emergency situation.

I wonder if the minister could perhaps comment on that and also, really, basically look at the predictability of supplementary estimate expenditures, the large ones that are being required on an ongoing basis. Of course, we're not going to be eliminating the sizable estimates, the supplementary estimates, the supplementary dollars that are asked for because of the unpredictability. But is there a way that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry foresees altering their budgetary planning process to perhaps balance out some of the expenditures so that they're not such a large amount called for during supplementary estimates? Is there a way of doing that? Is there any thought being given to that process?

9:40

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member opposite for the question and for the thoughtful comments. In response to the member's question I can confidently say that this government is basically looking at our emergency response budget line. As we take a look historically and, I think, by virtue of the fact that we are having to deal with a large budget item expenditure right now in supplementary, this would point to an inadequate amount of emergency planning funding in previous budgets. Because of that this government is taking a look to ensure that we have adequate amounts built into emergency planning response for upcoming years.

Again, I would point out that we're here today dealing retroactively with expenditures that have been committed to by the previous government that were not budgeted, and I think it's important that all members in this House recognize the discomfort that we have in doing that. We all agreed that to be transparent with Albertans means that we should be coming forward with our spending plans in a budget, and to that end, we are looking at required budget levels based on historical facts and historical costs to deal with emergencies in this province.

I will say that the emergency response that we've observed this summer to the fires in the north has been exemplary. There's been a tremendous response by our emergency management personnel and officials. I think there's been a very efficient, co-ordinated response by all levels of government, and I commend all those that have been on the front line of those decisions. I recognize the hardship that many residents have experienced, the residents that have lived in and around those areas of the fires, residents who have experienced real loss as a result of those fires.

I appreciate the member opposite's comments on considering a proactive response around municipalities in terms of creating fireguards. I do know that our minister of agriculture and his team are looking into those possibilities. Our Minister of Municipal Affairs, I believe, is also very interested in what this government can do in fact prevent emergencies going forward.

A couple of things I would like to point out in the agriculture section of this supplementary ask. I don't believe that adequate budget consideration was given to the emergency response requirements that this province has typically had, so we're now here retroactively having to pay for this emergency response, which was needed, which was required, but which was not adequately predicted or budgeted.

Another concern. When we look at the expenditures by the ministry of agriculture, I think we want to take a look at the amount

of \$7.6 million that was paid out as a grant in response to, really, what I would call an ever-changing and ill-advised beer markup program or programs that were implemented and reimplemented and never quite struck an adequate tone to ensure that our manufacturing sector was properly looked after. When I say properly looked after, I know that for the business community predictability is critically important, and we had an ever-changing markup plan here over the last few years. We take a look again at a \$7.6 million ask, again after the fact, and I would suggest that dealing with these kinds of expenditures after the fact is not acceptable in the eyes of Albertans.

Again, Madam Chair, I'll close my comments with this. The fact that some departments are not included in the supplementary ask, in other words, the fact that some departments, including the department of Health, does not have expenditures that we're now having to retroactively approve, I don't think should be confused with the fact that this government believes that all the spending in those departments was performed in as an efficient manner as possible or that all of the programs were delivered in the most efficient manner. The fact that we're having to retroactively approve expenditures in some departments, I think, demonstrates an irresponsible approach to budgeting in some cases and in other cases demonstrates simply a very irresponsible approach to spending. But, again, the fact that some departments haven't required supplementary expenditure approval does not mean that those departments acted in a fiduciary responsible way in every case.

We know that there's been much government mismanagement in the past by the previous government, and we know that there are opportunities in every ministry to find efficiencies and to deliver programs more efficiently, more cost-effectively, and with less government waste. Madam Chair, this government is committed to finding those efficiencies and to delivering high-quality services that Albertans expect but to do it in a very responsible, efficient, cost-effective manner.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to continue our conversation with the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. In his comments the minister just mentioned a couple of things I wanted to touch upon, particularly with respect to comments regarding a suggestion that the emergency response was inadequate or not adequately predicted. I think that this is something that has been an ongoing historical criticism of any Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, but it's something that's not necessarily warranted or prudent because it is a difficult department to predict because of the nature of the emergency responses that are required with respect to wildfires on an annual basis.

Now, certainly, there's always room for improvement on an annual basis to try to more accurately predict what expenditures might be required, but I think it's been noted as a very common and accepted practice in this ministry to have a contingency initially allotted and then a supplemental amount asked for in supplemental estimates, as we're doing now, because of the unpredictable nature of wildfires and the efforts to support firefighters and those individuals caught up in disasters who need disaster relief. I'm not sure if it's really a fair comment to say that it wasn't adequately predicted because this is not something that governments over the past number of decades in this province or right across the country, for example, have seen fit to try to pinpoint. It's been, I think, a proper practice to allot a smaller amount and then see what contingencies are required as the fire season progresses.

However, I concur that there are some things that can be improved upon on an ongoing basis. I think this is one of the things that had been done in the past as a result of practices that were looked upon by our government when we were in power with respect to the aircraft contracts. I believe that may be one thing that, you know, on an ongoing basis any government would look at attempting to control. Whether it's the procurement of aircraft on a standby basis or whether it's creating fireguards around communities that will perhaps prevent encroachment of fire into communities during an emergent disaster, those are things that, going forward, might lessen the amount of supplemental estimates that are required.

9:50

I wouldn't get into damning any particular Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, whether the past ones in our government or the current one, for relying on what seems to be a proper procedure by going ahead and asking for a responsible, small amount to begin with and then seeing how the fire season plays out to ask for supplemental dollars later on.

Just as a matter of principle, Madam Chair, the parliamentary practice of supplemental estimates and interim supply requirements is something that offers balance.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we now enter our third 20-minute block.

Members of the Official Opposition, would you like to start? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Would you like to combine your time with the government?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm happy to do that. We'll see how it goes, if that's the desire.

**The Chair:** The government agrees?

**Ms Hoffman:** Yes? Okay.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. I first of all want to start by saying how grateful I am to the public service for all the work that went into, of course, the last four years but also into preparing for today. I know that preparing interim and sup supply can be very onerous, so to the public servants as well as to the government for the work in preparing for today's discussion: thank you.

I have a question to which I imagine there probably isn't an answer today, but it stemmed from some of the discussion earlier and if it's possible to get a written response later, I'd appreciate it. Maybe we can do the last 10 years or another timeline if the government proposes. How many years did we not require supplementary supply in Health? That would be something that I would appreciate knowing. I can probably get the library to look it up, but if it's possible for the folks who have that information available to provide that written response if it's not available today, that would be appreciated.

The other thing I just want to mention before I get going through Education, because I do want to spend the majority of my time on pages 43 and 44 of the sup supply document, is that I appreciate the comments around wanting to be able to anticipate natural disasters and emergencies to a better degree. I think that that's an important thing to aspire to. I also think that if we could anticipate the natural disasters and emergencies in a better way, we'd prevent them rather than just budget for them. I do want to say that.

With regard to page 43 I would love to discuss line 4. There are not a lot of lines, but line 4, school facilities. I'm hoping that the

minister could please provide some detail on what the increased capital requirements are for the school building program, please.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We're looking at line 4 on page 43. The supplementary amount of \$500,000 is requested today to provide fund increase capital planning requirements for the school building program. Today, right now, I don't have further details to provide this House. However, we could certainly provide those for that \$500,000 expenditure.

I would like to just respond perhaps as well to maybe some comments by the member opposite in terms of emergency response planning. I absolutely want to acknowledge that any government cannot accurately predict what type of emergencies the people of Alberta might find themselves in from year to year. Again, I appreciate the suggestions of every consideration to be as proactive as possible and to ensure that communities are least impacted when we encounter an emergency. We all know that those emergencies can take place in the form of fire, floods, and other emergencies as well.

My concern is not that there was an inadequate response or that the response was not justified when we're taking a look at approving this supplementary supply but, in fact, that Albertans, I believe, expect their government to ensure that there is an adequate budget line to deal with emergencies that do occur. Even though we can't predict necessarily what they will be, when they will occur, I think Albertans expect that governments have an adequate line built into the budget to deal with those emergencies as much as possible, again, on a proactive measure.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. I look forward to the written response with regard to the question around line item 4. That would suffice. I think that's what I heard the minister say. Certainly, my desire, of course, would be that everyone anticipate every possible cost we could possibly need, and I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to discuss that more in interim supply for disaster recovery. I know that it can be challenging, that not everyone can predict how bad the flu season is going to be, for example. That's not even a natural disaster. That's the Health minister's amazing analytics team doing their best to anticipate how effective the flu vaccine is going to be and how many people are going to get it, but sometimes things get in the way of good predictions. I certainly wish you all the best with that, Minister. And to the entire government, I think that that is a worthy aspiration, but I think that natural disasters and other emergencies are very, very difficult to anticipate.

My second question – and perhaps this is again for follow-up in writing – is around line 4 on page 43. Several school projects across the province are funded for planning, but schools and communities are anxiously awaiting information about if and when they will find out if funding is in place for the project to proceed after that initial planning investment. Is there any funding being moved between fiscal years to keep those projects moving forward with regard to that line item? If so, that's great. Can you tell us which ones and why? If not, the same question: why are we not moving fiscal years, making sure that we have that money there to move those projects forward? Again, that's page 43, line 4.

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Chair, just to respond to the question, I think, as everybody in this House knows, we are moving forward with the budget process. We will be tabling a budget this fall, and I know that ministries are active right now looking at their programs that

Albertans expect this government to deliver. They are considering the best ways to deliver those programs, the most cost-effective and efficient ways to deliver those programs. You know, I would say in response to that question that, again, we will be rolling those details out in our budget deliberations. As we present the budget, obviously those details will become very transparent.

**Ms Hoffman:** My last attempt to clarify that. There is five hundred – oh. I guess it's only a thousand dollars identified there. So does that mean that none of those projects have been included in this sup supply document? If that's the case, I'd be fine with receiving that response as a written response.

My next question is about line item 4.1, again, same page. Could the minister address what a related party is and if there are any increased costs associated with operations and maintenance associated with them? That would be helpful. I think there was information provided around that there could be related parties that would be impacted by this line item, so I'd like to know in more detail what that means.

**The Chair:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We will respond to the member opposite with the details around the \$6,667,000 of funds needed to address increased capital payments to related parties to provide funding for operations. Again, we will respond with the details. Of course, it is the members opposite that in fact incurred those expenditures, and if memory fails them, we will certainly provide the details for them again.

10:00

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. Next, I would like to continue on again with line item 4.1, and I just want to give a little context.

I imagine that many of us, probably, in this room helped fund raise for playgrounds at new schools when they were being built. I know that I went to a few birthday parties where instead of asking for presents, children said: "Hey, we need a playground at our school. Can you give us a donation to help pay for that?" because their new school was built, and it was built without a playground. So when we were in government, we made the decision to work with parents and to provide a funding envelope for a basic playground when a new school would open, something that I think many of us would want. Of course, if school councils want to make it a priority to fund raise additional funds to supplement that, so be it.

But I'm looking for some clarification about whether that line item, school facilities infrastructure, does indeed, through the supplementary supply estimates that we're considering, still include the addition of playgrounds to new school builds, if that's something that did continue on during this period between when the election was called and today, when we consider sup supply estimates?

**Member LaGrange:** Yes, it does include all of commitments that were made by the previous government.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks. I guess my supplementary to that would be: did the entire amount that was budgeted for school playgrounds get spent in this last year through this sup supply, and if so, do we know how many playgrounds were built and how many are under construction now with the remainder of the funds?

**The Chair:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. We will have to get back to you with those fine details.

**Ms Hoffman:** Since we're on a roll for fine details, will the interim supply amount for ensuring these projects are completed also – that'll be a question I'll ask in interim supply, so you can start working on that now, I guess, because it makes sense if we ask in sup and carry over to there. Will there be an additional need in interim supply to offset any shortfalls in supplementary supply? That would be that question that flows from there. There's my heads-up for that next chunk of time, that we have to consider that.

My next question is on page 43, and it's about not just what's here but also what's missing. Of course, there are a few line items. I think it was the same when we came in and brought in sup supply, so I'm not criticizing that. Perhaps there were slightly more details, but I don't expect that there were significantly more details. In terms of reviewing last year's sup supply, I noticed that the Assembly was to consider an additional \$18 million for enrolment growth, and I noted that that isn't here in this year's sup supply. Could the minister comment on what that means about her enrolment growth commitment that was made earlier this week, on Monday, and whether or not that will be funded in a different way since I don't see it funded through this sup supply line item?

**The Chair:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I question the relevancy of that question. Right now we're looking back at, really, expenditures and commitments that the previous government made that really don't impact future enrolment. In fact, these were spends for the previous year. So again I question the relevancy of that question to this House.

**Ms Hoffman:** Perhaps it's a question to raise with officials. I'd be happy to have the response. It's just that last year I know that in the same document, which was looking retroactively, there was a line item for \$18 million that was identified for enrolment growth, and I know that it's not here. I'm just trying to be able to do apples to apples, so if there was a change in the way it was accounted for or the way that it was reported, I'd be happy to receive that information. I just want to confirm that the announcement earlier this week is being funded somewhere through one of these pieces of paper that we're being asked to consider and approved.

I also see that enrolment growth in the province is going to be maintained or increased. I think that the number that was mentioned through media yesterday was \$150 million, so I guess I'm looking, again, to see – and the \$18 million was only a very small subset of the hundred and whatever million dollars that were required last year to fund growth, but I thought that there would be something given that it was in last year's document. If either minister would like to elaborate further, I'd appreciate that.

**The Chair:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I think that in terms of discussing future enrolment growth and expenditures, it's irrelevant to this conversation, to this deliberation today. If, in fact, there was an \$18 million ask in the previous year's supplementary supply bill, that, again, I can't comment on today. There was not that requirement in this supplementary ask.

I would suggest that, then, in the previous year – again, the supplementary supply requests, in fact, really, in my opinion, indicate an overspend, over and above what was budgeted. In fact,

if there was enrolment for the previous year that was not anticipated, that's unfortunate because then Albertans were not made aware through the budget process of the financial commitment that they had to fund education. We're fortunate that this year, in fact, there is not that request, but I can't comment on that particular year.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks. Again, one of the things that I think makes this much more complicated than doing a household budget is that sometimes conditions happen that are out of our control. There might be things like an influx of student population coming from Ontario after significant cuts to special needs education in Ontario and those types of things that do result in some of these pressures, and I know that everyone does their best to anticipate what's going to happen and what the trends are going to be, but it's not just the 4-year-olds from Alberta that end up becoming 5-year-olds in Alberta when they enrol in school. Sometimes we get new kids from other provinces or other parts of the world.

I just want to clarify. When I asked my question about related parties, I said that it was page 43, but it's actually page 44, line item 4, capital payments to related parties. I'm hoping for some clarity on who related parties are and what that entailed given that it was a supplementary estimate that we're considering here today. Who are related parties, and what are the services that we are making these capital payments to them for?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Chair, the related parties were, in fact, school boards and the expenditure related to school board projects that were in play.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. I don't expect a list to be here, but if we could get a list – it is over \$6 million. I'd appreciate a list of which projects those are and which boards received that funding, at the convenience, of course, of the public service. It's something that I think would help us all understand this document better, ideally before we are asked to vote on it because I think it's an important financial amount. But I appreciate the clarity that it was to school boards. That is certainly helpful.

I think I'll cede the rest of my time to my colleagues. Thank you very much, and I appreciated the succinct responses to what I tried to make succinct questions.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to rise and talk a little bit about the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, which, of course, I had the honour to be the minister of in the last government. We know that that ministry does serve thousands of seniors in our province to live in dignity. They are parents or grandparents, community leaders, mentors, and our friends, and certainly we want to make sure that we have the support they need to live. They built our province, and of course we want to make sure that seniors are taken care of.

Unfortunately, there are some myths about seniors. Sometimes there's talk of the grey tsunami or the burden of the aging population, but we want to make sure – certainly, I did when I was minister – that these apocalyptic discourses are not heeded. It's very important to know what seniors contribute, actually, to our province. They contribute in so many ways. They contribute financially. Many seniors are business owners, investors. You

know, asking mom and dad for a loan is often a thing that we do. It seems like older people have money, they have a lot of expertise, and they have a lot of love. We certainly count on the seniors in our communities.

When I'm looking at the supplementary supply estimates here, I see that there is an increase in this ministry of \$16 million, a little over 16 and a half million. I'd like to talk with the minister, and if I could go back and forth, if that's amenable to the minister, I'd appreciate that. Is that okay?

**10:10**

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

**Ms Sigurdson:** The first question I have is actually on page 64, and it's number 1. Certainly, despite what the Finance minister said in his opening remarks that, you know, we planned poor fiscally, we were reckless, I see that there are some savings. There was actually \$672,000 that wasn't spent. There's just sort of a general explanation that this was "lower than budgeted expense in . . . programs." I would like to ask the minister what that means.

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

**Ms Pon:** Hello, Madam Speaker . . .

**The Chair:** My apologies. Sorry, hon. minister. That marks the end of the last 20-minute block for members of the opposition.

We will now go to the proceeding 20-minute block for private members of the government caucus. The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, Madam Chair, thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to speak. I hadn't originally planned on speaking, but listening to the debate from earlier here, I couldn't help but notice the opposition bring up the rural crime issue, which is something that immensely affects people all throughout Alberta. This is why under the UCP opposition we put together what was called the rural crime report. I would of course refer to page 55 of our supplementary supply book that we have here as it relates to the expenses that relate to crime in general.

Now, the opposition spoke at length on the crime issue as it relates, of course, to the supplementary supply. I'd love to talk about how the previous government refused to accept that rural crime was even a problem, let alone a crisis. I remember seeing the galleries filled with people. I remember talking to all of my colleagues. I can remember the expressions on the faces of the government members who were representing rural constituents, that crime was an issue in those communities. I remember how nobody on the government side went to the town halls. I remember the outright denial that rural crime was even an issue. I remember going to town halls myself, watching the pain in people's faces. I remember watching people cry because of the crisis that was going on. It was something that could not be ignored any longer, and it was to the point, Madam Chair, that they finally – finally – had to do something about it. It was almost like the fentanyl crisis where they denied that was a crisis until, finally, they had to do something about it.

Then they come up with this. Let's talk about it. Let's talk about the \$10 million and phantom 39 officers, which I tried to articulate was something that was – when the RCMP are at any given time 20 to 30 per cent short in the number of human beings that they have in their service, it was impossible for them to fill those 39 positions, so it was like a shell game that was being played.

Let's talk about the Crown prosecutors now. They set aside \$10 million, which I can see as it relates to Alberta Crown prosecutor

services. They have criminal and youth prosecutors. Well, I consulted with the Justice minister. They still haven't filled those positions. So money doesn't solve all of life's problems.

It had to do with management, and whether you like it or not, the previous government had bad management. That was shown in the last election. I look at the rural contingent of MLAs in this room, and whether you like it or not, I see them all on the UCP side. I think that really shows that their plan to combat rural crime was a complete and utter failure. That's why we have a Justice minister who is going to take a look at the rural crime report, who's going to analyze the supplementary numbers, and he's going to make sure that the money that is being put into rural crime and, in fact, justice as a whole is going to be the most effective use of that money for what is best for the people of Alberta.

Now, I want to talk a little bit, too, about the denial that the NDP had when it came to rural crime. We'll even relate it to, again, the prosecution at that time of Mr. Eddie Maurice down in Okotoks, right? Again, we had a gentleman who was just trying to protect his home, protect his family. He discharges a weapon under sections 34 and 35 of the Criminal Code. What do we get from the NDP? Silence. The only consistent pattern that I ever saw from the NDP when they were in government is that when there were protests that reached an absolute crisis point, that was the only time that they ever reacted. That had to do with rural crime, that had to do with the fentanyl crisis, and that to do with poor Eddie Maurice and his situation, who, to let you know, had never, ever to that point even received as much as a parking ticket.

Why did he do what he did? Because the police were not showing up to his home. He had called the police weeks prior to that, and the police didn't show up. So he did what any normal human being, especially in the middle of rural Alberta, would do. Because he had a lack of faith and trust in law enforcement at that given time under the leadership of that government, he defended himself, and he defended his child, who was sleeping in the middle of the night. He gets arrested. That's wrong. The NDP were silent. They were silent. They did not do anything. To sit there and dole out some money to some Crown prosecutors who were never hired – I confirmed that with the Justice minister – is not a solution to a problem.

Now, I tried in a nonpartisan factor to talk with that former Justice minister, but they didn't want to hear what I had to say. That's fine. I put it all in that rural crime report, I put it all on that platform, and I fully expect the Justice minister to execute it. I've known him a long time, and I have faith in him that he will do a good job.

I want to ask this government and somebody who was here, the Government House Leader: what was his version and what did he see under the leadership of the previous government? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, and I appreciate the hon. chief government whip's comments. In regard to supplementary supply the question I heard in there, Madam Chair, was in regard to the hon. Member for – I think the riding has changed; it's a little bit confusing now – Calgary-Mountain View, if I am correct, earlier in Committee of Supply speaking to and asking some questions to the Justice minister and to the government in regard to supplementary supply, specifically some money that is in there for officers and Crown prosecutors, as it relates to the announcements that were made during the now famous rural crime debates inside the Legislature. Whether or not that's important was the first question that, I think, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View asked at that time that the hon. Member for Calgary-West is referring to but,

second, how that relates to the priorities of our government going forward.

**10:20**

I think, first of all, it's important to point out that, Madam Chair, as the hon. Finance minister has already said in this Assembly, we are working on supplementary supply. That is different than interim supply and certainly different than the budget process. When we go through the budget process, we will be able to talk a lot more about our priorities as a government and where we will fund things going forward, our vision for the province and the promises that we have made, whereas with supplementary supply it's more about, basically, this unique spot because of the transition that happened in government, really about this House having to do an administrative chore to be able to put through commitments that were made by the former government.

To answer the hon. Member for Calgary-West's question and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View's question, the rural crime portion of this, the announcement for prosecutors and police officers, is important. Nobody has said inside or outside this Assembly, on the government side certainly, that rural crime is not. Our concerns with the former government's spending are not on every topic. The reality is that we have to fund important things like prosecutors and police officers, but we don't need to do boondoggles like we saw by the government with oil by rail in the dying days of their government.

It's rich – and I think that's the point of the Member for Calgary-West when we're speaking about supplementary supply and asking about those specific numbers – to try to imply that the government, who was then the opposition, does not care about the rural crime issue. I know that you, Madam Chair, care about it, and I know your constituents care about it. I certainly know that the hon. Justice minister cares about it and cares about the investment that we would make in that. In fact, I suspect he will find, as he looks through the rural crime report, an important job that I know he is already undertaking, and he hears from constituents like mine in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, that we have not fixed that problem. It is a very real problem that impacts people. For the now opposition to act like they were champions of that issue when they were in government and then ask about it in interim supply specifically is quite shocking. I think that's the Member for Calgary-West's point.

I will tell you that on November 27, 2017, I have the wording of a motion that I moved in this Assembly. I know you were there for it, Madam Chair. It goes on to say: "Mr." – and I can't say my name, obviously, inside the Chamber – but then it goes on to say that Mr. hon. Leader of the Official Opposition requests leave to move:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30... [to adjourn] the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly... to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the growing incidence of property-related crime and an accompanying escalation of violent crime in rural communities and the resulting fear for safety that is felt by the residents of such areas, which now constitute a state of emergency.

I moved that as Leader of the Official Opposition. It refers directly to the response that the hon. member brought up inside this supplementary supply, which she's indicated was a response to that motion. The reality is, though, that the now opposition, when in government, voted against that opposition with the galleries full. To say that they are the champions of rural crime and imply that somehow, when this side of the House points out with supplementary supply that the NDP, when they were in power, made some terrible financial mistakes then leads to the conclusion that all of a sudden the United Conservative Party and now

government does not care about rural crime is a ridiculous argument. That, Madam Chair, is the argument that was made by the hon. members during supplementary supply, not an argument that was introduced to this Assembly this morning by me. It was an argument that was introduced to this Assembly by the now NDP Official Opposition.

The reality is that the NDP showed over and over in this Assembly that they do not care about rural crime. We certainly do care about rural crime. I have all the utmost confidence in my friend the hon. the Justice minister to be able to tackle that on behalf of my constituents and other rural members of this Assembly's constituencies. That's one of the reasons why we have to continue the continuity of some of these programs. It's one of the reasons why we brought supplementary supply to this Assembly even though we disagree with some of the financial decisions that were made by the hon. members when they were in government. The reality is that if Albertans are looking for confidence, we will support these components of supplementary supply to help with hiring prosecutors and hiring police officers. I think that the results of the last election in rural Alberta show clearly – I don't even think that any of the hon. members of the opposition can make that argument with a straight face, that the results inside rural Alberta show that they have confidence in the NDP to be able to accomplish anything, quite frankly, for rural Alberta, let alone tackle one of the biggest issues that faces the communities that I represent and other members represent in this Assembly.

To the hon. Member for Calgary-West, to answer his question: I assure you that this government will continue to take rural crime seriously, as we did while we were in opposition. We recognize that it's a priority. To the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View and the opposition: I also assure her that we will continue to take this issue serious sly. We'll continue to hear from Albertans who are struggling with rural crime. We'll continue to work through our rural crime report to be able to implement real solutions to try to help our communities.

You will never see us stand in this House like the Official Opposition did when they were in government, with galleries full of hard-working rural people who were being victimized, and stand up like the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, heckling away about this issue. I can assure you that, Madam Chair, unlike that, this government will continue to always stand for rural Alberta. We'll stand for the portions of supplementary supply that matter on that issue. They can be assured of that. The best part is that there's no longer an NDP government to continue to sit on this side of the House and work against hard-working rural Albertans who are being victimized by rural crime.

**The Chair:** Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's interesting listening to the comments here talking about rural crime. I just want to take a few minutes and chat about the, you know, supplementary estimates 2018-2019. Obviously, this represents a lot of the promises and commitments the NDP made before they became unelected, I guess, would be the term. What we're doing here is that we're finishing up some the old business that they have brought forward.

Of course, it seemed like to start the day, we were listening to a lot of the NDP previous cabinet ministers get up. I guess they wanted pats on the back for their fiscal discipline and management over the last four years, but I'm afraid that Albertans don't feel the same way as they feel about how they managed the province's resources and finances the last four years.

Now, it came up already this morning about the crude-by-rail program that the previous government signed up for. I think that when we look at this crude-by-rail program and the cost to taxpayers and the cost that's being borne even though the previous government announced this in an election period – during the election period the previous government announces that they're going to do a \$3.7 billion lease of railcars, burdening the taxpayers with that sort of expense, which may be one of the largest single expenses ever in Alberta's history.

One thing, Madam Chair, we have to make clear is that we've stated our opinion on those contracts right from the beginning. In fact, I think the day after it was announced, we were already trying to get a hold of these railway companies to notify them that it would not be our intention to go ahead with those contracts.

I think it's also important to remember that this \$3.7 billion, almost \$4 billion, deal was to be done with borrowed money. It isn't like there was extra money sitting around that the government could spend; this was money that we were going to be paying interest on on top of this huge expenditure.

Now, what's interesting to see, too, is that I think it was the head of Canadian Pacific Railway who immediately after the announcement voiced his displeasure at the whole deal. He said that he didn't like it at all because the government had stepped in to work out this plan, and he didn't think that this was healthy. But he did say that this deal was just as good if not better than other deals. Of course, when he suggested that it might be even better than other deals, that doesn't represent a good deal for Alberta taxpayers.

We know that this government rushed into these deals in a desperation attempt to save themselves in the upcoming election. I could go on a little longer on that, but maybe I'll just turn a little bit of time over to the Finance minister or one of the other ministers to discuss that issue.

Thanks.

**10:30**

**The Chair:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe there's only one minute in this block, so we may talk about this again in a brief moment.

I think the hon. member is correct. An interesting part of supplementary supply are the components of, I guess, \$317 million within supplementary supply that have directly to do with, you know, the NDP boondoggle, the largest expenditure probably in provincial history, their crude-by-rail strategy, that they brought in in the dying days of their administration as they headed into an election that they likely knew they were going to lose, which would be the only reason why they would attempt to rush that, in a desperate attempt, as the hon. member said, to try to save their government. We know that the results on April 16 spoke loud and clear that Albertans agreed that they disagreed with this former government's approach when they gave the United Conservative Party and the hon. Premier a historical mandate, a significant mandate to come and fix these scenarios. I think, Madam Chair, that this is a great example of what the Finance minister was talking about when he opened up supplementary supply, that there are components within supplementary supply that, quite frankly, the government has to hold their nose to be able to deal with.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we will now move to the five-minute speaking portion of estimates. The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much. We were just discussing here, of course, the crude-by-rail plan and the cost that that's incurring to

Albertans in supplementary supply estimates. Again, we've been clear from the start on our opinion of this deal, and I think Albertans were clear, too, during the election, when they had an opportunity to either endorse the government's plans that they had or to not endorse. I think there was a pretty clear message that was sent on election day that they did not endorse these plans that the government had.

Now, one thing we need to make clear is that our government is not in the business of competing with the private sector. Obviously, any time the government decides that they want to do that, that messes with the natural marketplace that is there. We know that a deal like this is a very risky deal for Alberta taxpayers' dollars.

Again, I just want to reiterate that this crude-by-rail deal that this government signed onto, that's costing hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, is just not acceptable. Of course, that's one of the reasons we're here today discussing these issues that we're talking about right now.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I move – and I suspect that the Assembly will agree – to rise and report from Committee of Supply.

**The Chair:** To report progress, hon. minister?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I apologize, Madam Chair. Yes, I move to rise and report progress from Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration the supplementary supply estimates for the fiscal year 2018-2019, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

### **Bill 3 Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act**

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A2. Are there any comments, questions to be offered with respect to this amendment?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** On Bill 3 are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am pleased to have at least one opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 3 here in committee because I think it's important to get our views on

the record with respect to the strategy which is incorporated within this bill. The reason for that is because this bill, I guess, for all intents and purposes represents the primary foundation to the new government's so-called job-creation strategy. It is a gift that, unfortunately, will undoubtedly hamper and, in fact, dog the course of Alberta's fiscal health over the course of the next four years, at least, as well as serve to significantly undermine quality of life, significantly undermine the quality of important services received by Albertans, and generally grow inequality quite profoundly over the course of the next four years.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

While it is a bill that they certainly ran on and was within their mandate, it is a bill that we think is profoundly ill advised and one that is going to create a huge number of difficulties for the people of Alberta. It's important to walk through those to some degree as we are in the midst of debating it. I suspect that the misadventure associated with this bill and the negative consequences that flow from this bill will be discussed repeatedly over the course of the next four years, but let it not be said that we didn't warn the members opposite – I know they find these things very inconvenient – about the facts and the history and the reality around this misguided, reheated version of 1980s economics.

In short, what's going on here, of course, is that the government has bought into this notion that if we hand over big tax cuts to new investors, somehow we will see manna from heaven fall to the ground, and jobs and economic activity will flow accordingly. I think the argument here is twofold: one, we'll attract new business or new investment here, and two, those companies which already exist in the province of Alberta will take all that new money that they get from this \$4.5 billion tax gift and reinvest it in jobs.

**10:40**

Now, to be clear, I think one of the first things that we need to lay out here is that when we use the \$4.5 billion tax gift, we are just talking about four years. We're talking about what it will cost Albertans over the next four years. Clearly, in terms of lost revenue that number will continue indefinitely. As long as this ridiculous tax giveaway, this big handout to UCP friends and insiders, is in place, it will cost Albertans. For instance, when you compare it to our made-in-Alberta economic diversification and job-creation plan, where we were looking at and talking about investing \$7 billion, we were looking at doing that over an 11- or 12-year period. Over that same period of time this piece of misguided public policy will cost almost twice what our plan would have cost, and it will create not even close to the number of jobs or economic growth that our plan was predicted to generate. Anyway, we'll get into that in a moment.

Let's just sort of talk generally about this idea that if you cut corporate taxes, suddenly everybody does well. Now, the members opposite like to speak of the fact that Jack Mintz, from their favourite, rather right-leaning public policy group, at the University of Calgary, thinks that this is a good idea. Now, I'll also note that Jack Mintz advocates pretty much daily for a sales tax, so I'm not sure if there's another shoe that's going to drop at some point from these guys. Certainly, people need to understand that I don't think Jack Mintz's economic advice is intended to be cherry-picked. I think it's intended to go hand in hand. If you give a \$4.5 billion tax break to Alberta's large, profitable corporations, then of course I think he intends that the other shoe is that you get to a sales tax. But I'll leave it to the folks across the aisle to have conversations with their platform adviser, Mr. Mintz, at other times.

Nonetheless, although Mr. Mintz is a respected member of the academic community, from the University of Calgary, I am quite



prepared, first of all, to say in this House that it is a fact that for every two economists that you get into a room, you are likely to get four opinions. So the fact that they're able to track down one economist saying that this is a good idea proves nothing. Even with that, I will say: I will see you your Jack Mintz and I will raise you a Nobel prize winning economist from the U.S. who, just in the last few months, published significant commentary on the fruitlessness of these short-term plans to generate economic growth through corporate tax cuts. There I'm referring to Joseph Stiglitz, but I'll get into that in a moment.

Let's just talk for a moment about some other examples of where these kinds of strategies have been used in the past. Of course, it's no surprise that we can go back to iconic right-wing politicians and find that they have typically tried this. Let's talk for a moment about the U.S., where in 2003 former President Bush decided that it would be a great idea to engage in a series of very aggressive corporate tax cuts. Now, did it work? The answer is no. Where do I find that answer? Do I find it on some dark website run by a bunch of communists? No. I find that in the public commentary offered up by the economic advisers who sat on former President Bush's Council of Economic Advisers.

The first one is Andrew Samwick, who was the chief economist on President Bush's Council of Economic Advisers. He said that if you look at the growth between 2001 and 2007, the period over which the corporate tax cuts were put in place, the growth rate was mediocre. "There is . . . no first-order evidence in the aggregate data that these tax cuts generated growth" at all. That's the first thing that we need to know. What we did determine, though, was that the top 1 per cent of U.S. income earners enjoyed an average tax cut of \$50,000 a year or \$570,000 over an eight-year period. That was the top 1 per cent of Americans who enjoyed the benefit of that, but it did not actually generate any kind of growth.

Meanwhile what we did get during that period of time was an increase in the debt of the United States to the tune of \$5.6 trillion. Economists identified that there was a \$5.6 trillion bump in the debt of the United States entirely attributable to the tax cuts brought in by President George Bush, so mediocre growth entirely limited to the top 1 per cent of the population and paid for by a \$5.6 trillion bump in debt. Ultimately, President Bush went on to say: "Oh, don't worry about it. Don't worry. This tax cut will ultimately pay for itself." That's what he said. Well, interestingly, Bruce Bartlett, who was a domestic policy adviser under President Bush, said, "to claim, as Bush . . . did, that his [tax cuts] . . . paid for themselves is the grossest of exaggerations." So that's how it went there.

Now, more recently we have the evidence that we saw from Kansas in – I believe it began in about 2012-2013. Nope; 2011. Sorry. We'll get it one more time. In 2012 they passed the largest tax cut in state history, meant to create jobs and stimulate growth. What ultimately happened, however, was that the Kansas economic growth rate fell way behind the overall growth rate of the rest of the U.S. as well as neighbouring states, so in fact economic growth did not arise as a result of this corporate tax cut. What it did do, however, was blow up their deficit and debt to a very large extent such that they ultimately saw repeated credit downgrades because they lost revenue.

They had credit downgrades, the cost of borrowing grew, the economy stagnated, and – oh, yes – because of the fiscal crisis that they created for themselves, they then had to cut funding from public services, did so in the education sector, and, as I mentioned yesterday, ultimately the courts in Kansas concluded that the Kansas government had breached the constitution of the state because the quality of education that they were providing was so low as to have breached the constitutional rights of the citizens of Kansas to receive an education. Therefore, they were in breach of

their own constitution as a result of the forced cuts brought on by the misguided effort to engage in this experiment of eliminating corporate taxes in order to generate economic activity. It was a profound failure. The jury is now back in on that from all sides – all sides – and it failed. That's what happened there.

**10:50**

Then, again, we also have the whole example of what happened in Canada. We talked about that a little bit already. We have seen that when the government of Canada made a series of tax cuts beginning in 2011-2012, somewhere around there, they decided to forgo about \$13 billion in the course of one year. What ultimately happened was that we saw that businesses accumulated the money, corporations accumulated the money, and they essentially rendered it dead money. That was a phrase that was used by former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney. He said that basically it negatively impacted growth. It just sat in corporate coffers, and it did not generate growth. In fact, it took massive amounts of money out of the economy. Corporate bottom lines got much rosier, but the level of investment did not go up, and it served to act as a damper on economic growth. That's what we saw here as a result of the Harper government's attempt to generate economic growth through these corporate tax cuts.

Interestingly, we also see the whole matter of corporate tax cuts being gamed out in the U.S., and we look at what has happened as a result of President Trump's massive corporate tax cuts. Well, Warren Buffett, one of the wealthiest entrepreneurs and investors in the world, basically sums it up this way. He says, "the tsunami of wealth didn't trickle down. It surged upward," upwards to the people who need it the least. What we saw from that tax cut, from 35 per cent to 21 per cent, was that 84 per cent of businesses have not changed their investment plans one bit, while the U.S. deficit is already up almost a trillion dollars per year. We also have the example of where AT&T specifically promised the President that if they got their great big corporate tax cut, they would create 7,000 new jobs. Instead, what they did was cut 23,000 jobs. That's what we saw there.

Now, interestingly, there has been some analysis of what has happened in other jurisdictions where we have seen these kinds of corporate tax cuts. It's interesting. What we saw: a survey by Just Capital, which tracked 1,000 firms, found that 57 per cent of the benefits of the tax cuts were reserved to be given back to shareholders; 27 per cent went towards investment. That 27 per cent: that's what you guys are banking on at this point – 27 per cent – less than a third of this \$4.5 billion tax cut. It's that 27 per cent that you're hoping will go towards investing in new businesses, new economic activity, creating growth, and creating jobs: less than a third of that \$4.5 billion tax cut. Experience and evidence and research – I know that research is an irritating thing for you folks, but nonetheless – show past examples of where, basically, these kinds of huge tax cuts result in less than a third of the cost of that tax cut going towards that much-sought-after goal of new investment and job creation.

Typically, economists look at actions of government and the impact on jobs and they talk about a multiplier effect. So, if you spend a dollar in tax cuts, theoretically you'll get a multiplier of, you know, 1.2 or 1.3 or whatever. If you spend a dollar in child care, interestingly, you'll get a multiplier of about 7. There are multipliers all the way through. This particular study suggests that what you've actually got here with these particular tax cuts is a divider. It's not actually a multiplier. It's a divider. You give \$10 billion in tax cuts, and you generate \$2.7 billion of economic activity. That's not actually a multiplier effect. You're now

dividing. You are reducing the value of your money, and you are giving 57 per cent of it, almost 60 per cent, to shareholders.

Well, that's great. Maybe those shareholders will take their money and invest in the Alberta economy, but then again why would they? Because the vast majority of those shareholders do not live in Alberta. So we're not actually ensuring that the benefit, the primary benefit, of this tax cut goes to Albertans. Nope. We are making sure that the primary benefit of this tax cut goes to shareholders, which typically in most multinational companies have nothing to do with the province of Alberta. They couldn't give a hoot about how many jobs are created in the province of Alberta.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to – I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora rising to speak.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. I know that we're in committee, so members can speak multiple times. I just wanted to make sure that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona had an opportunity to conclude her remarks because I think that they are telling of where our party stands on this and where, I imagine, many Albertans do. I wanted to make sure she had an opportunity to continue, Mr. Speaker – Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the intervening Speaker aspect of that as well.

Please, the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much. I hope to not take too much more time, but I do want to finish walking through some of the evidence on what we're dealing with here. Fifty-seven per cent of the benefits of tax cuts went to shareholders, in our case the vast majority of which do not reside in the province of Alberta. Twenty-seven per cent went towards investment, and 6 per cent went to higher wages. The whole idea that if we give massive tax cuts to corporations, somehow Albertans will generate or enjoy the benefit of higher wages is utterly ridiculous, Mr. Chair. Again, it's that annoying little habit we have of doing the research and getting evidence-based policy-making and attempting to inject evidence-based policy-making into what we do here in this building. Anyways, what we see, then, is that it didn't actually work.

In all, then, we have examples in Canada. We have multiple examples, three separate examples, from the U.S.: one under President George Bush in the early 2000s; another in the state of Kansas, where they really eliminated all of the confounding factors and decided that this would be the great experiment to prove once and for all that wealth does trickle down and giving big handouts to right-wing friends and insiders is in fact the way to go. Unfortunately, the problem was that it demonstrated absolutely, unequivocally that that is in error and that is not the way to build an economy. Then we have the most recent examples from the U.S. where, again, we saw a short-term bump that immediately disappeared, and we now have evidence that shows that the vast majority of that tax cut does not get reinvested into the economy. It gets given away to shareholders, many of whom are not attached or have no loyalty to the jurisdiction in question. At the same time it blows massive – massive – holes in the fiscal situation of the jurisdiction in question.

I will say that, I mean, it really is quite ridiculous when I hear the members opposite do the so predictable and, quite frankly, tired talking points of: "Oh, my goodness. We inherited such a mess. Yada, yada, yada." I'll tell you something. Forty-four years of government, and the minute that the price of oil dropped, we had a deficit of \$9 billion. That's what we inherited. We had to make a choice, and that is what we did. In fact, we had met or exceeded our deficit reduction targets from our second year onward, and we had

done that while investing in jobs, while supporting communities, while not letting the problem get worse and not piling on. That is why, for instance, our economy continued to grow and we had inward migration while the opposite was going on in Saskatchewan.

11:00

We made a choice to support Albertans because it wasn't Albertans that made the decision to fail to plan for the inevitable challenges with our oil and gas sector for 44 years. It is a really tired talking point to have the members opposite try and argue these kinds of things. Again, I know that facts are things that they're very comfortable to blow right by. You know, I guess I'm a traditionalist that way. I think that truth and facts and reality is an environment within which we should all continue to try to operate in the best interests of the people we've been elected to serve.

The concern that we have, then, is that – and what we've seen from other economists all along is that, you know, government can do a number of different things to try to generate economic activity. As I said yesterday in my response to the Speech from the Throne, I think we all agree that we are all seized with this desire to grow the economy and to create jobs. There's nobody in this room that doesn't believe that needs to be done. That's what I think, anyway. I think the majority of folks on the other side do believe that what they're doing is the right thing. I think some actually know that it's not but don't care because they have friends who just told them that it'd be really nice for them if they could pay less in corporate taxes, and they decided: hey, let's go; let's have at 'er. But I do suspect that many folks over there just haven't had the time to do the research to understand that this experiment has been tried repeatedly and doesn't work. So I'll give you the benefit of the doubt.

The plan that we had in place to build off the work that the first PC Premier had commenced in the '70s and very early '80s to diversify the economic activity that we can extract out of the raw resources that we, that all Albertans, own: that was our plan. We had been very, very strategic about it and had taken some time to get moving because we needed to do our homework and we needed to make sure that it would work. But it did pay off. The major investments that we made are paying off, are creating jobs, are generating more economic activity. I know the members opposite understand that because at one point I saw a whole schwaack of them out there doing photo ops with the recipient of phase 1 of our PDP program as though somehow they had anything to do with it.

Anyway, our made-in-Alberta plan involves moving forward on that basis and doing more of that kind of work to very strategically support the kinds of major developments that need to occur in our oil and gas sector as far as initiating new economic activity within that sector. Rather than just sort of, you know, pulling it out of the ground and shipping it to somebody else as fast as we can, how can we be more strategic with it? How can we get more value from that product here in the province of Alberta? That plan was designed to ultimately cost Alberta taxpayers in the range of about \$7 billion between now and 2030, and at the end of that time it would have generated \$70 billion in incremental economic activity.

And those were conservative estimates because they didn't take into account the spinoffs that would happen. For instance, if you have a critical mass of a certain type of plastic being produced here in Alberta, you could ultimately attract manufacturing, because that plastic feedstock is so inexpensive here because we have so much of it being created here. Of course, you know, the PDP program: we essentially created the first or second place in Canada where that plastic feedstock was being manufactured and, in fact, I think, only the third or fourth on the continent, so we were well placed to actually attract additional business that would engage in

manufacturing as a result of that feedstock that we were producing here in Alberta. When I talk about that \$70 billion in incremental economic investment and activity, it didn't include the potential additional investment that would come from providing some of the basic components of additional manufacturing that might draw people to invest in Alberta rather than somewhere else.

But it's that kind of strategic investment that the people of Alberta need, not this blind, you know, "we're just going to throw money off the back of a truck at big corporations," most of which have no allegiance or roots in the province of Alberta, who are not being held to account for one cent of that money that they are receiving. They can do whatever they want with it. That's great, and we're going to cross our fingers and hope that it goes into new investment. Yet we have the example that we have in the U.S., where, in fact, we're seeing less than a third of it being used for those purposes, about 27 per cent. Really, a very, very sorry economic strategy, I would say for sure, and a poor, poor replacement for what we had queued up and ready to go.

In terms of economic activity, though, the last thing that I will say on this matter is that I must say: you know, this was our made-in-Alberta diversification plan.

I will say that one other made-in-Alberta plan that we had, contrary to all the rhetoric that we saw coming from the other side, was a made-in-Alberta pipeline, and it was our crude-by-rail deal, designed to move more product so that we could reduce curtailment as fast as possible and allow for more economic activity to begin again as we pulled back on curtailment. Every day that we fail to grow our takeaway capacity now past July 1 is an extra day and an extra barrel or an extra 10,000 or an extra 50,000, whatever, barrels of curtailment. That curtailment is slowing down economic growth in the oil and gas sector.

I sure hope that folks over there have a plan to be moving oil and gas by July 1 because every day past that is an extra day of curtailment thanks to the UCP government and ideological reasons, where they sort of shot and then decided to aim. That kind of approach to policy-making is very damaging to the people of Alberta, and it will be damaging to job creation, and it is something that they will wear. Best of luck to you, because I, too, care very much about people who are waiting for the jobs to be recreated once we can pull back on curtailment.

But I also believe that this government is fully engaged in the act of extending curtailment right now. Yes, curtailment is also being driven by the line 3 delays, but that is why fast, efficient, open, accessible takeaway capacity in our short-term, made-in-Alberta pipeline is so, so important. Every day that it gets delayed by the dithering, driven by ideological . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Fantasy.

**11:10**

**Ms Notley:** . . . fantasy and misinformation, is a day that Albertans are hurt. You can use all the language you want to describe it, but that's what it is.

Anyway, that is most of what we have to say right now on the matter of the tax cut. We are very, very concerned.

The last thing I was going to say: 27 per cent of the tax cut in the U.S. went to investment and new jobs; 6 per cent went to higher wages for workers. Meanwhile working people, regular people, who can't afford to buy their own health care, who can't afford to buy their private education in this new world of educational choice, who can't afford to hire a nanny to take care of their kids, who can't afford to hire a private caregiver to take care of their parents and their grandparents and their uncles and their aunts as they age, will pay for this tax giveaway to wealthy corporations in the form of less

education funding, less health care funding, less support for our seniors, less support for our kids. That is the cost. It's not just that working people are only getting 6 per cent of this ridiculous \$4.5 billion gift to profitable corporations; it's that they have to pay for it as well, and they will pay for it through the things that matter most to them, that they need and rely on.

This is why this is a profoundly misinformed, bad plan, with no substantial evidence of success anywhere. I know members here have repeatedly asked the minister, over and over, whether he can provide evidence of any place where this ridiculousness has worked. Thus far he has been unable to do so. Anyway, we certainly have provided evidence where it hasn't worked, and we will work hard to stand up for the rights of all Albertans as these folks try to get them to pay for their big tax gift for their wealthy friends and insiders.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board standing to speak.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just do need to respond to a few comments that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has made. Firstly – I've made this point before, and I'll make it again – every economist and, I think, more importantly, every business owner, whether it's a large corporation or a small-business owner, will agree that as the business environment is improved, as the competitiveness of a business environment is improved, that environment attracts investment, that environment becomes more attractive for investment. The tax regime, the tax component of the business environment, is a key part of the overall environment. So to suggest that there's no correlation or an extremely weak correlation between corporate tax policy and investment, I believe, is nonsensical.

I find it, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, just a little rich to be lectured repeatedly on this topic by a government who presided over the largest flight of capital out of this province in recent history. We recognize that there are a number of factors at play, and I'll reiterate the fact that during a time of difficult economic circumstances, admittedly difficult economic circumstances, with the decline in global energy prices particularly, the previous government implemented the largest tax increase in this province's history, without consulting Albertans, by implementing the carbon tax. They then went on to increase corporate taxes by 20 per cent, at the same time adding regulatory burden on Albertan businesses. Those effects, policy effects, on top of difficult energy prices, again, precipitated the largest exodus of capital and, with that, massive job loss in this province. In fact, we've inherited a province with the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada. For a province with this kind of wealth and resources we find that unacceptable.

So we do have a bold plan. A bold plan is required in order to attract investment, create jobs, and ensure that future governments and future citizens have enough wealth to continue to receive a high-quality education, to receive high-quality health care and other services that Albertans expect. Our plan is bold. It's multifaceted. It does include a corporate tax reduction, which will bring this province to the lowest corporate tax rate in the nation and to one of the most competitive jurisdictions within North America. It also includes the repeal of the carbon tax.

It also includes modernizing our regulatory system so that our businesses don't have to compete experiencing the extra regulatory burden that is upon them day by day by day, that incremental burden that makes doing business so problematic and so costly in this province. For that, of course, we are implementing a very

specific effort through the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, an effort that will involve seeking industry's advice, seeking the advice of everyday Albertans, and working with government departments to, again, reform our regulatory system and modernize it to ensure that it's the most competitive.

We recognize that there are ongoing challenges with market access for our energy products. I certainly agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that that needs to be a fulsome effort and that that's a critical effort for this government. We have a Premier who's on that job every day, seeking to do all that he can to ensure that Alberta and, in fact, the nation can develop the market access that we need to maintain the standard of living in this province and in this country.

I want to talk a wee bit about diversification again. The hon. Leader of the Opposition alluded to their diversification efforts when they were in government. Creating the most competitive, broad-based business environment, in my opinion, is the best way to encourage economic diversification within this province and, in fact, within any jurisdiction. That broad-based, competitive business environment doesn't pick winners and losers.

It, in fact, then creates a very competitive location to create, to innovate, to consider business opportunities that governments never could, and to engage the thoughtful foresight of our young entrepreneurs in this province. We have an extremely young, very educated, I think, forward-looking group of citizens in this province, and I have every confidence that as we create the most competitive business environment, those individuals will rise up with fresh ideas, that we could never contemplate ahead of time or predict, and will work to diversify this economy in ways that are sustainable. I think that's incredibly important not only to this generation but to future generations, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to again make reference to the document that an opposition member tabled a couple of days ago, and that relates to the 2009 federal budget that was brought down by previous Prime Minister Harper. This document states, and I'll read it again:

Corporate income tax measures have limited impact on aggregate demand over the periods displayed in the table . . .

And that was a very short period displayed in the table.

. . . but have among the highest multiplier effects in the long run.

Mr. Chair, we're interested in the long run for this province. We have a great responsibility to ensure that this province's economy, job creation, and long-term government revenues are sustainable in the long run.

And I continue to quote:

This is because they increase the incentive to invest and accumulate capital, which leads to a higher permanent capacity to produce goods and services.

That is ultimately our goal as we implement this job-creation tax cut as part of a broader strategy to create the most competitive business environment not only within Canada but one of the most competitive business environments within all of North America.

Job creation is the number one priority for this government, and this job-creation corporate tax cut is a key piece within that strategy.

11:20

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to respond again quickly to the Minister of Finance and his comment about the tabling that I did table a few days ago in regard to the corporate tax cut from 2009 under the Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Harper. I recognize that he does keep using it and indicating that, you know, in the long term the table indicates that corporate taxation does support the stimulation of growth.

I guess my question around that is that it also indicates that when you invest in infrastructure and when you invest in low-income families, the return on investment is also higher. So in the first few years of that budget – and what we are talking about today is the fact that for infrastructure it was \$1.60 for every dollar invested and for low-income families it was \$1.70 for every dollar invested. Again, this goes back to the conversation that we're having around the interim financial gains that we need to be looking at.

In the platform that the UCP has put forward, they do acknowledge that it's two years out before this tax cut does generate any type of economic growth for the province. If the UCP is saying that, you know, it's going to be two years before we see any type of return for economic investment due to corporate taxation, then in those two years why would you not invest in infrastructure and see that for every dollar you invest, you get \$1.60 back? Why would you not, then, also invest in low-income families, where for every dollar that you invest, you get \$1.70 back? You still have the potential to do that over the next two years.

What I'm seeing us discuss is not looking at those two options. We're not looking at that in the next two years, even though your corporate tax will put a \$4.5 billion hole in your revenue, any type of investment in infrastructure or in low-income families will give you the return and the economic growth that you're discussing. I mean, we can look at that tabling that I provided in two different ways. I know that the UCP is using it as, well, long-term gain, that corporate taxation cuts over the long term could potentially stimulate growth. However, the arguments and the economists will say that that's not necessarily the case, depending on which economists you discuss, which ones you're looking at.

Again, I think that's a dispute of the facts in the sense that the UCP have their economists that say one thing, and there are other economists that say another thing. There's evidence, specifically in Ontario, that has demonstrated that with the same bill, they actually haven't seen the economic growth. In fact, Ontario's economy has slowed, and their return on investment is actually not there. So if we're going to look at the tabling, and we're going to say, "Well, on one side, in the long term corporate taxation will do that," then over the next two years will the Finance minister agree that for every dollar in his budget that he invests in low-income families and infrastructure, he can get \$1.60 to \$1.70 in return on that dollar? There's two sides to every coin.

I would encourage, I guess, then, that the Finance minister consider while we're having this discussion that over the next two years when you acknowledge and your platform acknowledges that there will be no economic benefit to this taxation cut, you also acknowledge that you need to, then, invest in families and social programming to get that return. As well, you also need to be investing in infrastructure to be able to get a return on the investment. You can still drive the economy over the next two years by investing in infrastructure and low-income families, with \$1.60 to \$1.70 for every dollar, while you acknowledge that your corporate tax will not generate any type of financial gain.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung standing.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I stand today to speak to Bill 3, and I'm happy to do so. I know that some commentators have called this piece of legislation a centerpiece of the government's economic platform. They've called it the big bet. They've said in commentary that they expect the government is hoping that this bet will pay off.

Well, I'll tell you what, Mr. Chair and members of the House. I've been to the races a few times. I know my grandparents loved going to Northlands, particularly on Thursday afternoons. They had

Thursday afternoons off. They were the postmasters in Thorhild, and that was the afternoon they took off. They would come into Edmonton and quite often grab a couple of grandkids, myself included, and back then we could actually be the runners. I made plenty of \$2 bets on behalf of my grandparents at the window of the old Northlands, which had the wooden seats. The outside was exposed to the elements, and if it rained, it rained.

I know that my grandmother was a bit of a sucker for the horse with the least chance of winning. She would look at the odds and look at the horses as they paraded by. Quite often she'd bet on the underdog, my grandmother – she had a heart of gold – and maybe that's because of the one-eyed pony that she rode into Northlands and got a second prize for years earlier, that's why her heart led her to bet on the underdog.

But you know what? The underdog is not necessarily the horse that you should be betting on. I know there are a number of songs that relate to horse betting, but I'll tell you what. There's one song – I won't sing it because I've sung in caucus before, and it really didn't get a lot of accolades – and the lyrics go: I bet my money on a bobtail nag; somebody bet on the gray; I went down there with my hat caved in; I came home with a pocket full of tin; doo-dah, doo-dah; oh da-doo-dah-day.

Well, I'll tell you what. Betting on a nag is what this government is doing. It's a big bet that they're making on behalf of Albertans, and the treasury is betting on a nag, a nag of a government policy. They really are doing a disservice to Albertans in making this bet. It's not a throwaway \$2 bet on a Sunday afternoon, a day at the races. This is an all-in bet, bet the farm, ideological jump off a cliff which will throw 4 and a half billion dollars into a corporate black hole.

Mr. Chair, I fail to understand why this government continues to hang its hat and bet all-in on this nag of a government policy when they know that the odds are against them. Historically, this policy has been discredited. This nag is called supply side, and that's the horse that they intend to bet on. They repeatedly saddle her up, knowing that she's going to come in last, and it's going to be Albertans who suffer. They're the ones whose capital is going to be invested into a corporate tax giveaway, which has been shown repeatedly not to have the results that the government hopes to have.

I know that our Leader of the Official Opposition went into great detail to demonstrate the faulty logic and the lack of wisdom in saddling up this pony once again and riding supply-side economics to dead last in the race. Mr. Chair, this nag is a horse that the government is intent on riding until the last race is run. It's a bet that they're sure to lose no matter how many times they decide to run the race.

So, Mr. Chair, I won't go into great detail about it. I know that our members on this side of the House have talked quite a bit about jurisdictional failures of this supply-side economic policy, something that also is called Reaganomics. We believe, simply, as I've stated in this House before, that it's a faulty decision on the part of the government to rely on failed supply-side economics, which don't do anything to help the population they're purported to serve and don't create the jobs that governments who ride that horse, who adopt that policy, purport that it will.

**11:30**

We oppose any plan that will call for massive tax cuts for corporations that will result in much higher deficits than we already face, that are systemic to this type of supply-side economics. It's really, as I mentioned before, all about an ideological jump off a cliff with no real expectation of a different result than supply-side economics have produced in years past.

I know that the Republicans after four years of failure in 2017 in the United States in a dominated state House of Representatives and state's Senate reversed the cuts. The government vetoed the bill, and a two-thirds majority in both Chambers overruled the veto, and their experiment came to an end. So supply-side economics has been discredited repeatedly.

If you really want to stimulate an economy, if you want to create jobs, putting money in the hands of people who spend it in that local economy is historically something that is a very proven, tried and tested, result-oriented policy, and that's what we did in our role as government previously, yet this government seems to think that the mandate they've been given will somehow reinvigorate supply-side economics to give them a different result than has been achieved by other jurisdictions, where it's failed so miserably in the past.

We do have a great debate going on here. It's actually unfortunate that we have to be sort of rehashing this old debate here in 2019 in the Alberta Legislature, when we know that it's an unnecessary debate to be having. We know that the real results that will improve the employment situation in Alberta and stimulate the economy will be as a result of demand-side policies, which put the money in the pockets of people who spend it, whether that be through helping those who are least able to afford it, whether it's through increased social programs, like making sure that AISH recipients have closer to a living wage or living amounts that they have as they were granted when we were government, increasing their monthly amount and tying it to the cost-of-living index. Those are things that will encourage people to spend the money here locally. You know, 70 per cent of your economy is actually consumer spending. You put money in the hands of consumers; they spend it here locally, and that drives the economic escalators to a point where you actually create employment locally.

I hearken back to the days at Northlands when I was running \$2 bets for my beloved grandmother, who consistently bet on the nag. She didn't win a lot. She seemed to enjoy herself at the races. The only thing I remember her ever winning was a toaster, and that baby is all you get from betting on the nag. The bobtail nag usually comes in last.

This, unfortunately, is going to be the result, once again, with this government riding the supply-side horse. We'll end up, as I mentioned, dropping off a 4 and a half billion dollar economic cliff. It's an all-in bet, bet the farm, ideological jump off a cliff that will throw 4 and a half billion dollars into a corporate black hole, totally avoidable, unnecessary consequence that Albertans don't need to suffer, but this government is hell bent and determined to flog the supply-side horse until it's, in their view, truly dead.

We believe that nag is dead already and that they should leave that horse in the barn and try something that really works, and that is to put money in the pockets of people who spend it and truly stimulate the economy at the local level rather than parking it into corporate cash bins that simply allow them to pay out regular dividends. As Mark Carney, former Bank of Canada governor said, it becomes dead money and useless to the economy.

I guess, you know, since the government did win the election, we're going to see the big bet made, and the collateral damage will be the Alberta working force and the province's treasury in general. I hate to be the one later on who says, "I told you so," because there's going to be a terrific amount of damage to follow through on this experiment that, once again, the Conservative government is leading us into. The big bet on the bobtail nag, Mr. Chair, is going to hurt us all. I'm afraid to say that over the next two to four years we're going to see it, and we'll be counting on Albertans to

recognize this and react accordingly come the next election, when they realize that this failed experiment has cost them dearly.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have to respond to the member opposite's comments. I think, on behalf of employers, on behalf of businesspeople across this province, I take offence to really being referred to as the nags in the race. Quite frankly, this province has a rich history of entrepreneurs stepping up, investing in this province, creating jobs and opportunity, and they are anything but nags. To be lectured by the previous government on suggesting that we continue down the path that we were on, that the previous government put us on, I would suggest is a downward spiral that Albertans simply cannot tolerate. In fact, I think if we take a look at the results of the last election, one can conclude that it was clear that Albertans did not tolerate the path that the previous government put us on.

I have every confidence that employers, that businesses, that corporations will respond to the most competitive business environment that we could provide and invest in this province, create opportunities, create jobs for all of Albertans.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

I'd also like to respond to the Member for Edmonton-Manning with the questions around infrastructure projects. I will say this: this government recognizes the importance of infrastructure projects, and we place particularly high importance on those projects that will, again, improve our competitiveness, projects that will lead to more economic development and growth. We will be considering those projects very carefully, recognizing that it is a responsibility of government to ensure that we have capacity in this province, and we recognize some of the economic benefit in the short term as well in building those kinds of projects, but most importantly, the economic benefit in the long term is that we create capacity for future investment and job creation.

We will continue to support the most vulnerable around us, the most vulnerable in this province. We commit to that as a government. We did during the election period. We continue to do that as the government.

I'll say this: to simply spend money we don't have to create the mirage of true economic activity using hard-earned taxpayers' dollars is a downward spiral that we cannot continue on here. As a government, we have to live within our means, and we have to, again, ensure that we create the most competitive business environment and let the private sector invest in this province, create opportunities for hard-working Albertans and create jobs for Albertans in the future.

You know, there's a lot of talk, again, negative talk around profitability that I hear from members opposite. I believe that's very inaccurate. They talk about profits in an inaccurate way. As we create the most competitive business environment in this province, we will see corporations reinvest profits back into this province to create future and additional economic activity. That's the way it works. That's the way folks that are in business think. They look to reinvest profits where it will create and generate a fair return, and I'm confident that entrepreneurs within this province, that corporations and businesspeople within this province will reinvest profits to expand and enlarge this economy.

11:40

In fact, if we look at the history of this province, we have a great history of being the economic engine of the country. We have a great history and responsibility, in my opinion, of being the economic engine in this country, and we did that by creating a competitive business environment that attracted investment, that attracted creative thinkers, that attracted risk takers to invest, to create jobs, to create opportunity, to create wealth not only for the people of this province but for the people of this nation, and we must continue to ensure that we provide that environment for Albertans.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm enjoying this back and forth that we have going on right now. I just want to chat a little bit about, again, some of the comments that the Minister of Finance is making.

We look at consumer spending and we look at the fact that we know that when there's a recession and things are slowing down, so does consumer spending. People are not spending money. They're not purchasing. There's no purchasing power that stimulates and helps drive the economy. Part of that is that people go into saving mode. They want to make sure that they have the money to pay for their basic needs, their mortgages, their child care, all of those things that we know good-paying jobs pay for. Now, because of that, when you're not investing in people and you're not investing in the infrastructure that employs those people to build the infrastructure, it also slows down the economy.

We can talk about business – and hiring people and driving the economy is important – but when we recognize, again, that the proposal of a corporate tax cut is not going to benefit the economy for two years, we still need people working in areas like infrastructure. We still need to be looking at investments in low- to middle-income families so that they have the money to have the purchasing power that we need to continue to be able to drive the economy. It's pretty basic. If people aren't spending money, the economy slows down. When people start spending money, the economy thrives. People need to be able to be employed such as investing in infrastructure. I mean, it's a basic economic fact: when you build things like schools and hospitals and roads and bridges and highways, people work, and when they're working, they spend. When they're not working, they don't spend.

When you are putting your eggs in one basket around corporate tax cuts, saying, "Well, at some point these corporations are going to start spending again, and they're going to start expanding their business, and they're going to start hiring," but we know that that's not going to be for, like, two to three years down the road, who is driving your economy in the interim? The people are, and the only way that the people are is if you're employing them through the building of infrastructure, which is why, when we were government, we built so much, because people got to work. People were building hospitals. People were building bridges. People were building schools. All of those tradespeople that were getting laid off because the price of oil crashed and the economy slowed down, all those tradespeople got to transfer their trade and build other things. Because they were building and because they were working, they were spending, which kept the economy going forward.

You can talk about corporate taxes in the global sense that the UCP does, but you have a two-year lag in your economic plan, so until you address the two-year lag, you're going to have a hole in your budget. You're going to have to cut spending, which means

you're going to cut services. That's just the basic economics around it.

Again, I really encourage all the members of this House to consider what they plan to do over the next two years and how you're going to explain to Albertans why it is that their services are being cut because you put all of your eggs in one basket.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 3 again. I appreciate the conversations that have happened so far today. I do just want to speak to a conversation that came up yesterday in discussion with the Minister of Finance in this House. I had asked the question: why did you choose to spend \$4.5 billion in reducing corporate income taxes for large corporations when you could have maybe found some balance – I know the government likes to throw that word around – in how you are investing this money? I brought up the small-business tax. Whether I support it or not is maybe not necessarily the point. Why didn't this government choose to lower the small-business tax to 1 per cent or to zero per cent compared to putting all their eggs in one basket with this large corporate tax cut?

The minister said: well, because the small-business tax is already lower than every other jurisdiction. Okay. Well, you have a bill before us that is proposing to do the exact same thing, to cut it much further than any other province. So the argument that was made by the Finance minister actually answers the question of: is this bill even worth it? And that's no.

In the grand scheme of things, I mean, I've spoken about it over the last week here as we discussed Bill 3. Really, the more I look into the consequences of this bill and the more that I have discussions with business leaders and economists – I'm not sure which economists the front bench here actually had discussions with because the people that I've been talking to are saying: no, cutting corporate income tax is not the best bang for your buck to get people working again. These tax credits that our government put forward over the last four years, as far as the discussions that I have had, are much, much better for getting people back to work, for bringing new investment to the province.

When we look at the corporate income tax, we're not only talking about money that's being invested now. We're actually going to start subsidizing old money, money that's already been invested in the province, so we're going to start handing these corporations money without any guarantee of new investments. As has been brought up, often these are shareholders that live outside of the province and often live outside of Canada, so that money is not even staying here.

When we're in a situation where our economy is in recession or just coming out of recession, we need to consider the implications of economic inequality. The corporate tax rate cut is not going to solve that issue at all. It is not going to put more money back into the workers' pockets. When we talk about tax credits, well, as I brought up in the House earlier this week, that money has to be proved that it is, to some extent, 50 per cent of wages for employees – excuse me; let me try that again. To some extent, the employees, of course, have to live in the province, and that has to be proven. The shareholders have to live in the province. Those are things that we can look at when we're talking about tax credits.

Now, the Finance minister also brought up the fact that he wasn't happy with the tax credits because they focus on certain industries.

Well, open it up, then. If you're concerned that we were focused on certain industries that you don't think we should subsidize or you don't necessarily support, then open it up. You can expand the tax credit programs, and still more often than not I believe it's going to be more effective than reducing corporate taxes. I just wanted to make sure I had that on the record.

You know, I had moved to Alberta during the Ralph Klein years, and I was actually here about six months before – I had just made the cut-off for getting my \$400 cheque in the mail. Though I enjoyed buying a pair of roller skates with that money, I don't know how much that helped the economy. But I didn't think that I was going to come to a time where I disliked a policy more than that one. When I compare giving money back to Albertans, putting it in their pockets, or doing a massive handout to large corporations when we don't necessarily know if the money is even going to stay here, well, I think this one takes the cake. I might change my mind once I further research that, getting that money back. We'll wait and see, I suppose.

Once again, I absolutely do not support this bill. I really think that it's the most lazy way that you could have tried to incentivize new employers to come to the province. I think that the government should have done a better job of researching and actually having conversations with people. I think this was something that they just put in their platform because it was, you know, an easy slogan. I mean, lower taxes: sounds great. Yeah. Well, I think there were better options to create new employment here in the province and bring new investments to the province.

Thank you.

11:50

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Shall I call the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

We will now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 3.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance and keeper of the Great Seal.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Speaker, we've made some excellent progress here today. I would propose at this stage, given the fact that we're very close to the lunch hour, that we rise until 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:52 a.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 12, 2019

Day 12

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 12, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, joining us today from the constituency of Camrose we have the Forestburg school in our gallery, and from the constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park is Strathcona Christian academy. I invite you to all please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of guests for all of us this afternoon. I'm very pleased to introduce, from the constituency of Peace River, Bob and Dana Blayone. On behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs: Dr. Chinyere Nwafor-Okoli, Kene Ilochonwu, and Juliet Boghean-Ogbu.

Members, all of you will be very excited to know that it's Philippine Independence Day today, so we have a number of guests from the Filipino community joining us. Mabuhay to all. From the constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview: Jeni and Symona Claire Tabile, and Belinda Orte. From Edmonton-McClung: Teresa and Jairus Banganan, Theodora Alingcotan, Charmaine Ria Celis, Joan Sacramento, Michelle Santiago, Joan Montemayor, Rossel Sagun, Allenita Dawne Alipio. From the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora – please feel free to rise if you recognize your name – Cynthia Luna-Pasagui, Jerwin Pagdonsolan, Clarizze Truscott, Fely Agader, Lucenia Ortiz, Nimfa Zoleta, Merla Tumacder, Gigi Suelo, Teodora Valles, Fely Della, Alan Sison, Nancy Naval, Marilyn MacDonald, Jeffrey Jose, Marietta Santos, Telesfora Balanag, Ricarta Abenojar, Eladia Garcia, Renz Zoleta, Teresa Uson, Katherine Yason, and Geoffrey Cimat.

Members, mabuhay the Philippines. I, for one, thought I was amazing.

### Members' Statements

#### Philippine Heritage Month and Independence Day

**Ms Hoffman:** [Remarks in Tagalog] Mr. Speaker, a special mabuhay to all of our Filipino guests in the gallery today. I want to wish all Albertans a happy Philippine Heritage Month, and today I also want to wish everyone a happy Philippine Independence Day as well. Philippine independence has been celebrated since 1898, when the Philippine islands fought for and achieved independence from Spanish colonial rule.

Philippine Heritage Month has been celebrated in this province since 2018, when our NDP government worked with Filipinos across Alberta and declared June as Philippine Heritage Month forevermore in the province of Alberta. Some people asked me: why do that? My answer is that Alberta is home to more than 175,000 Filipinos. The Filipino community in Alberta is diverse in its generations, languages, economic and professional backgrounds, but what is consistent throughout the community are the values of compassion, hard work, hospitality, and fun. Filipino culture enriches our workplaces, our neighbourhoods, our faith, our civic and our cultural communities.

I want to come back to that value of compassion. Compassion is why our party invested in expanding home care to keep families together. Compassion is why we increased the minimum wage. Compassion is why we provided health care to Alberta children,

whether their parents were living here permanently or not. We also supported more families in unifying rather than calling lolos and lolas a burden on the Canadian health care system, as members of the former federal Conservative government did.

[Remarks in Tagalog] Mr. Speaker, let us unite. To all Filipino Albertans: we won't stop fighting for you. We won't stop standing up for you and your families.

[Remarks in Tagalog] Thank you. Happy Philippine Heritage Month and happy Philippine Independence Day.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

#### Filipino Heritage Month in Canada

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Philippine Independence Day. I rise in this House to honour a vibrant and dynamic Filipino Albertan community that is proud of its culture and heritage. We take time today to recognize the richness of their languages, the depth of their culture, and to ensure that future generations never lose sight of just how important it is for us to reflect upon one's roots: the stories, struggles, and successes of previous generations.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is the proud home to the second-largest Filipino population in the country. The community continues to grow in my own riding of Sherwood Park. I have the privilege of knowing many Filipino families, including Esmeralda Agbulos and the Abad family. One of Alberta's greatest strengths is our diversity, which is why it is so important for us to celebrate our diverse histories and culture. We educate and we learn together hand in hand.

Mr. Speaker, last year the federal government unanimously passed Motion 155. It states that the government should recognize the contribution that Filipino Canadians have made to Canadian society, the richness of the Filipino language, culture, and the importance of reflecting upon Filipino heritage for future generations by declaring June of every year Filipino Heritage Month. So now every June we officially celebrate the contributions of Filipino Canadians to Canada. This is long overdue, a recognition for a community that has given so much to Canada and Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will join me in wishing all Filipinos in Alberta and around the world a very happy independence day and for the first time celebrate June as Filipino Heritage Month. [Remarks in Tagalog]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Incitement to Hate

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month the MP for St. Albert-Edmonton, Michael Cooper, disrespected antiracism advocate and Muslim witness Faisal Khan Suri during a parliamentary committee meeting on online hate. Mr. Suri provided factual testimony on extremists who commit racially driven mass murders and stated that they consumed content from "anti-immigrant, alt-right and conservative commentators." Cooper told Mr. Suri that he "should be ashamed," and then went on to name the perpetrator and quote directly from the manifesto of the man charged with the mass murder in Christchurch, New Zealand. Cooper's actions came the same day that Conservative leader Andrew Scheer gave a speech where he said: bigots are not welcome in the Conservative Party. Of course, despite his promises Scheer has refused to remove Cooper from his Conservative caucus.

We have seen similar behaviour here in Alberta. During the last election the UCP stood by candidates and party faithful who were revealed to support white supremacy and anti-Semitism, and since then they have been absolutely silent and unwilling to denounce their friends like Michael Cooper.

Mr. Speaker, this is inexcusable. As politicians and leaders in this province we must stand up against ethnic division and intolerance. I know first-hand what a difference it makes to have public figures stand up for the rights of the many, not just the few. I stand with my NDP caucus colleagues in ensuring that those who continue to face these threats will always find an advocate in our party.

Thank you.

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

1:40

### Unemployment in Calgary

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am saddened to discuss the struggles of many of my constituents to find stable employment. During the election the biggest issue that I heard from my constituents was of the high unemployment in Calgary and of the job losses that Calgary has seen over recent years. As of this March unemployment in Calgary is 7.6 per cent. This is with three-quarters of the city participating in the job market, which is 10 percentage points higher than the national average.

This past weekend I've heard from hundreds of my constituents who were angered by the NDP's filibuster last week on Bill 2. My constituents voted for our government because they fiercely rejected the last government's nonstop attacks on job creators. Of course, their record tells all. Under their government Alberta's unemployment was above the national average, and while Canada is enjoying the benefits of record low unemployment, thousands of Albertans are still unemployed following four years of NDP policies.

Further, Calgary's city council is hurting the city's economy even more by raising property taxes on businesses and mismanaging the city's finances, which is only harming Calgary taxpayers and businesses more. Mr. Speaker, I don't know about you, but that sounds like a certain previous government's fiscal record after four years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that this government won't be all doom and gloom. I'm proud of this government for standing up for Albertans. Despite the opposition's best attempts, Bill 2 proceeded past second reading last week, and Bill 3 will move forward soon. But most importantly, the NDP's job-killing carbon tax was repealed, much to the joy of all Albertans. I'm proud of our government for focusing on creating jobs for all Albertans, fixing our finances, and renewing the Alberta advantage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

### Agriculture

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my unbiased and completely objective opinion Cardston-Siksika is the greatest constituency in the province, the world, and, dare I say, this solar system. It boasts some of the hardest working Albertans I have ever had the pleasure to meet, and I'm willing to debate anyone on that point until I'm Conservative blue in the face. Among those workers are the men and women who toil each day to feed this province. That's right. I'm talking about our agriculture sector.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers and ranchers in Cardston-Siksika have contributed significantly to Alberta. A farmer will tell you that there are never enough hours in a day, and they give up most of their

hours to help feed us and help put food on our tables. I am grateful for the work they do. In Cardston-Siksika alone our ag sector is raising over 1 million cattle and calves and nearly half a million pigs. They are out from dusk till dawn working nearly 3.5 million acres of cropland spread across 3,000-plus farms. They are growing barley, canola, wheat, oats, potatoes, corn, sugar beets, and the list goes on and on.

Our Blackfoot members of the Kainai Nation have also established themselves as competitors in the ag market. Speaking with Chief Roy Fox recently, I learned that the Blood Tribe agriculture project is Canada's largest irrigation project. They're striving to become western Canada's premier processor and supplier of quality forage products to international markets and are currently exporting to countries such as Japan, the United Kingdom, and Korea.

These hard-working people are exporting our amazing products across the world, they are driving innovation within the agriculture industry, and I could not be more proud to stand here and advocate for them. But we need to do more than just advocate; we need to make sure that our farmers and ranchers are taken care of. This government is committed to doing just that.

To the farmers and ranchers in Cardston-Siksika and across the province: we have heard you, we hear you now, and we are here for you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-West is rising to make a statement.

### Carbon Tax Repeal Act

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today and address this Chamber. It has now been a week since our United Conservative government repealed the carbon tax. This was a proud moment for our government and for me in particular as the Member for Calgary-West: a promise made, and a promise kept. Now, Calgary-West constituents who I have spoken with are appreciative that we have delivered on this key campaign promise, and we will continue to deliver on the rest of our promises.

The carbon tax was a tax on everything, Mr. Speaker. It didn't just affect the prices we paid at the pump. It also increased the cost of heating our homes and hiked up the prices of our groceries. Worse than that is how this tax impacted our most vulnerable. People like our seniors and people receiving AISH were hit the hardest because of this tax. These are precisely the people that we had in mind when we repealed this tax. We want to help instead of hurt those who are struggling to get by. By repealing the carbon tax, our government has introduced the single biggest tax relief measure in our province's history. We believe that Albertans should not be punished for heating their homes or taking their kids to hockey practice, and I am proud to say that under our government they won't be.

Thank you.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader is rising with notices of motions.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide oral notice of two bills, actually, for the Order Paper, those being Bill 9, the public-sector wage arbitration deferral act, sponsored by my friend the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance; and second, Bill 10, the Alberta personal income tax amendment act, 2019, also sponsored by my friend the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a tabling or three, I believe.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite five copies pursuant to my speech on Bill Hate last night: first, the LGBTQ2S Youth Housing and Shelter Guidelines, from which I quoted statistics; secondly, I have a document, 1 in 5 Queer Young Adults Attempted Suicide in the Past Year, Study Shows: “mental health issues aren’t widespread in the LGBTQ community because of identity or orientation – it’s because of discrimination”; finally, five copies of a document titled UCP’s Education Bill Plays Games with Students’ Lives.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who have a tabling today? The hon. Member for Strathcona, please.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton-Strathcona, I believe it is.

I rise today to table policies and legislation from Ontario, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia that show higher support for LGBTQ youth in those jurisdictions. If this government passes Bill Hate, they claim their protections will still be the strongest in the country. These documents are on the record to prove that that is not the case.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have copies of the 61 letters that our constituency office received on May 3, some of which I quoted last night, and I will table those.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any others wishing to table a document? Seeing none, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

## Oral Question Period

### Nurses’ Contract Negotiations

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, they think they’re above the law and that laws that they don’t happen to like they just get to ignore: that’s the United Nurses of Alberta responding to the Minister of Finance’s threats – apparently not threats – to legislate his way out of his legal obligation to bargain in good faith with Alberta’s nurses. This letter and any potential move to legislate is a gross abuse of power and is profoundly disrespectful to the tens of thousands of hard-working people who care for our loved ones when they need it the most. To the minister: why do you believe that you’re above the law?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the contributions that our public sector makes on behalf of the government and on behalf of all Albertans. We are seeking to delay wage arbitrations. We believe that it’s the responsible thing to do at this point in time as it gives us time to consider our path forward: a way forward to deliver high-quality services to Albertans and a path forward to balance for this province.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the responsible path forward would be to delay a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget, not to breach the Constitution, to break the law, to break the contracts and grab money out of the pockets of hard-working nurses. Why are you going after nurses when you couldn’t wait two weeks to give a gift to your friends in corporate Alberta?

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

1:50

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our job-creation tax cut is a very, very important initiative in order to attract investment, create job opportunities for all Albertans, and, in fact, in the long term create additional government revenues so that we can continue to have a world-class health care system and a world-class education system. The previous government put us on a trajectory to \$100 billion in accumulated debt. That would mean the next generation would not have a world-class health care system or education system.

**Ms Notley:** “A common misconception is that governments can only reduce public sector salaries of unionized employees if the unions agree.” Those are the words of the chair of the Premier’s blue-ribbon panel. I would advise the minister to find more informed legal advice on labour negotiations and the law and what the Supreme Court of Canada says. Why does this minister believe that it is fair and reasonable to give a \$4.5 billion tax gift to profitable corporations while at the same time breaching the Canadian Constitution and reaching into the pockets of nurses to grab their money?

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we are seeking to delay wage arbitration to ensure that we have a responsible path forward to balance in this province. Albertans expect us to be responsible with their hard-earned tax dollars. We’re also committed to working together in good faith with the public sector as we work to ensure that we can deliver high-quality services to Albertans.

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

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, how in heaven’s name can the Minister of Finance get up with any sense of integrity and use the words “good faith” when he is about to breach the Constitution of this country to take money out of the pockets of hard-working nurses while at the same time justifying a \$4.5 billion tax gift to wealthy, profitable corporations? Does he really believe Albertans are going to agree with this?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll tell you what Albertans will agree with. They’re going to agree with a government that puts Albertans first. They’re going to agree with a government that creates a business environment that attracts investment and jobs for all of Albertans. That’s what Albertans are going to agree with.

**Ms Notley:** Apparently the members opposite don’t believe that nurses are Albertans because clearly they’re not coming first; they’re coming last. Foreign corporations and their shareholders: that’s who’s coming first under this government. This government didn’t say a word about breaching the Constitution to break the law in order to steal money from nurses in the last election. Why didn’t they come clean about that plan in the campaign?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, we absolutely appreciate the contribution the public sector makes to this government and certainly to Albertans in general. We, again, are simply seeking to delay arbitration until we have enough time to adequately build a path forward that will both be responsible economically and also ensure that we can deliver high-quality services to Albertans. It’s seeking simply a delay in the arbitration time.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it’s not a simple delay in arbitration. It is the breach of a legal contract with the nurses and other public-

sector workers. It is a breach of a contract that the Supreme Court of Canada has said must be protected and is protected by the Constitution of this country, and the only way you can do it is by bringing in the notwithstanding clause. Why did you not tell Albertans that you were going to break the law to steal money from nurses?

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Albertans expect this government to be fiscally responsible with their hard-earned tax dollars. We are seeking this delay to ensure that we have a path forward that includes both returning to balance in this province and delivering high-quality services to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, we know that this delay is the responsible path forward, and we believe Albertans will support it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member . . .

**Ms Notley:** I've got one more. This is my third one?

**The Speaker:** Yeah. It's up to you guys. That's not what I have, but I'm happy to call you. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, to be clear, the responsible way forward, Mr. Speaker, is not to break the law.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Ms Notley:** But let's move on to a new topic. Yesterday the Government House Leader repeatedly made claims in this House that were not true. I am a stickler for people telling the truth, so I just can't let this go, Mr. Speaker. Bill Hate removes guarantees that students can use the word "gay" in describing gay-straight alliances. Ontario's legislation says that neither the board nor the principal shall refuse to allow a pupil to use the name "gay-straight alliance." Black and white. This is stronger. Will the House leader acknowledge it, or have we officially entered the posttruth era in this Legislative Assembly?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. Our government will have the most comprehensive statutory protection for LGBTQ students in the country. That's important to us. It's a priority of this government. It's something we campaigned on. It was a priority of our parties when they were in opposition as well. It's disappointing to see the Leader of the Official Opposition still misrepresenting facts inside this place. To be clear, students will continue to be protected. Section 35.1 of the Education Act specifically guarantees students' entitlements to create inclusion groups, including GSAs and QSAs. Those are the facts.

**Ms Notley:** The House leader just can't stop saying things that are untrue. He just can't help himself.

On June 3 the Premier told this House . . .

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order.

**Ms Notley:** . . . "Our government will maintain the strongest legal protections for gay-straight alliances of any province in Canada." Now, Nova Scotia's policy, which I just tabled, requires all schools to provide GSAs, including private schools, clearly stronger protection than Bill Hate's private school loophole.

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**Ms Notley:** Will the House leader apologize on behalf of the Premier for providing members of this Assembly with information that is not true, or has the Premier also embraced the posttruth era in this Legislature?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would just like to note both points of order at 1:57 and 1:58.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we won't be lectured on not telling Albertans about things from that member, who lied about the biggest tax increase in the history of this province. Again, let's be very clear.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** We will continue to have the strongest statutory requirements when it comes to GSAs. That's a priority of our government. The Official Opposition should stop misrepresenting the facts. We want LGBTQ students to know that we stand with them. This is an important issue to this government. It's an important issue to the Education minister. It certainly is an important issue to the Premier, and we will continue to make sure that we have the strongest statutory requirements in the country. Those are the facts. That's how it will be.

**Ms Notley:** Well, let's try again. On June 10 the Minister of Justice said that the UCP will make sure "that Alberta has the strongest gay-straight alliance provisions in all of Canada." In British Columbia ministerial orders compel private schools to have a policy that protects kids from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. I've tabled it. Bill Hate removes . . .

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

**Ms Notley:** . . . those requirements from private schools. Will the Solicitor General be allowed to rise and apologize for providing this House with incorrect statements and, in so doing, attempt to salvage his legal reputation?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the only person who should rise in this House and apologize is the Leader of the Official Opposition for continuing to misrepresent facts and act the way that she and her party have inside this place. It is disappointing. LGBTQ students are important to us. GSAs must be protected and maintained. It's important to the Justice minister, as it is to every member of this cabinet and every member of this government caucus, to make sure that we follow through on our campaign commitments, make sure that we have the strongest statutory protections for GSAs. We stand with LGBTQ students inside our school system. We trust teachers; they don't. That's really what this comes down to.

**The Speaker:** The point of order at 2 o'clock is also noted.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two-spirit, intersex, pansexual, asexual, nonbinary. Words matter. Yesterday our leader asked the Education minister to correct her horrendous comments in which she identified LGBTQ youth as "whatever." Our leader asked her to simply say the word "gay." She couldn't do it, and she won't answer media questions today. I'm going to give her another chance right now. To the minister: again, will you state that you unequivocally support the use of the words "gay" and "queer" in your government's GSA policies?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I find it very disappointing. I find it personally hurtful to our government and to myself that the opposition continues to imply that we do not support our LGBTQ students. [interjections] Our

government will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited students, period.

**The Speaker:** I was happy to hear the question. I'm also happy to hear the answer. If we could keep the volume level similar, that would be helpful.

The hon. member.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, respectfully, it's not about your feelings. It's about the feelings of LGBTQ youth.

When our leader asked the question yesterday, it was the Government House Leader who rose and accused our side of the House of bullying the minister. Let's talk about bullying. We're talking about kids who experience the worst forms of bullying because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We're talking about these kids' lives. Outing kids is dangerous, destroying GSAs is dangerous, Bill Hate is dangerous. To the House leader: can you seriously stand in this House and play the victim while you put these students in harm's way?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I was not referring to myself or the Education minister. What I was referring to in those comments was the outrageous behaviour by the MLA for Edmonton-Glenora over the weekend when she went out of her way to bully a musician playing at a flag-raising event here at the Legislature and, in fact, on Twitter called for more people to join in that behaviour. These are the tactics that continue to come from the opposition. I reject those tactics. I think it's ridiculous that they continue down this path. What's interesting enough is that Albertans have rejected them in record numbers. The fear and the hate from this side of the House won't be accepted by Alberta anymore.

**Member Irwin:** This government is rolling back the rights of LGBTQ youth, and their minister stays silent. I'm curious if this is an issue for her alone or if it's rampant throughout this government cabinet. We know the minister of culture raised the pride flag last week and ignored protestors who were behind her. That minister and the Justice minister claim to be allies, so will they commit in this House that they will advocate in cabinet so that students won't be prevented from using the words "gay" and "queer" when they establish a GSA or QSA?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the Education minister and the Justice minister, the Premier, and others have been clear on this issue. We continue to have support for the best statutory requirements in all of the country on GSAs. We will stand beside LGBTQ kids to make sure that GSAs will be called GSAs and that kids can participate in GSAs. That's an important issue to our government. It was an important issue to us when we were in opposition. We made it clear in our platform. We've made it clear over and over in this Assembly. We will continue to have the best statutory requirements when it comes to GSAs in the entire country. That's a fact.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

#### Wildlife-human Coexistence

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Rocky Mountains are beautiful, and tourists come from all over to witness them themselves, but there are more than just mountains to see out there

in the wilderness. A number of areas in Banff-Kananaskis have seen bear warnings and area closures due to bear activity over the last month. In fact, just two weeks ago a poor black bear was put down by RCMP after he innocently wandered into Canmore one too many times. My constituents love the wildlife. The animals are integral to the beauty of the Rockies, and we don't want to see them in harm's way. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: what steps are our government taking to minimize the occurrence of bear-human interactions in the area?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Wildlife rehabilitation is a key component of our long-term strategy to minimize negative interactions between humans and bears. Bears that spend less time in rehabilitation facilities are less likely to engage in behaviours that put them in conflicts with humans, thus increasing their chances to survive and thrive in the long term. The Department of Environment and Parks is currently planning to launch a new community practice form for wildlife rehabilitation so that experts are able to share information and best practices. We are also continuing to partner with a number of experts on population and DNA studies to keep tabs on the real-time locations of our province's bears.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that proper education is critical when it comes to keeping our wild animals wild and minimizing dangerous interactions with people and given that over recent years we've seen tourists get a little too comfortable with the wildlife, some even approaching them for selfies, it is only a matter of time before one person gets too close and the animal gets spooked, causing injury or death to an unsuspecting tourist. What is the ministry doing to ensure that visitors are properly educated on the dangers and best practices of wildlife encounters?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as part of our BearSmart campaign we're working to reduce human and wildlife conflicts. Albertans can do their part to avoid human and bear conflicts by carrying bear spray and air horns, keeping dogs on a leash, and travelling in groups. People are asked to adhere to the warnings and closures due to bear activity. Campers are also encouraged to keep food, beverages, scented material, and garbage in airtight, bearproof containers or inside a vehicle and store anything that may have a smell of food or garbage away from humans and out of the reach of bears. Campers are encouraged to pack up their garbage when they leave their campsites.

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

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Well, given that human-wildlife interactions aren't the only dangerous interactions as vehicle-wildlife instances are increasing as well and given that, in early May, 15 elk were killed on the Trans-Canada highway during one single snowstorm, luckily with no human fatalities this time, and given that just last week a black bear was struck and killed on that same highway, one proposed solution is to install simple wildlife fencing from the gates of Banff national park out to Dead Man's Flats, guiding the animals to cross in the underpass. Is this a priority for our government, and if not, what is our government going to do to ensure the continued safety of both humans and wildlife?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Alberta has allocated \$25 million over five years in the budget to identify animal-vehicle collision-prone areas to assess the best ways to redirect wildlife and to design and install mitigation measures such as fencing and underpasses or overpasses. The commitment will be reviewed as we develop the 2019 capital plan along with all the other important projects. The department has already retained an engineering consultant to determine the best location of a wildlife crossing and to design a wildlife overpass and fencing on the Trans-Canada between Lac des Arcs . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

*(continued)*

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents and I are appalled that this UCP government is laser-focused on denying GSAs and destroying GSAs. Even before Bill Hate was introduced, my constituency office received . . .

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

**Ms Renaud:** . . . 60 letters from students addressed to the Premier. Here's one. I quote: "I am a member of the LGBTQ+ community. I have one question for you. Do you think that it is okay for us to take 20 steps backwards? . . . GSA's are a safe space and it is where we are heard and welcomed with open arms." To the Minister of Education: will you acknowledge and answer this concerned student? Answering "whatever" won't cut it.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I reiterate that we will have GSAs available to students. Under 35.1:

If one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall

- (a) permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at a school, and
- (b) designate a staff member to serve . . .

And it goes on and on.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that the students I'm hearing from don't believe that Bill Hate is balanced . . .

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

**Ms Renaud:** . . . and given the fact that 60 students wrote to the Premier, I'd like to read another one.

I feel the need to tell you that it is hard to come out. I should know. You're sending a message to the people around you that they can't be themselves without you exposing them. You're telling kids that they don't have a choice, that they can't be heard.

Everyone knows this is wrong [and] you should . . . too.

To the minister: do you know that this is wrong, to out kids without their consent?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Schools cannot disclose a student's membership in any inclusion group as there are student privacy considerations that trump all other legislation. We trust professional educators to navigate these difficult situations and do what is in the best interests of kids. FOIP and PIPA are the law.

Thank you.

**Ms Renaud:** Given the fact that I, like the students who wrote to me, don't believe what this government is saying – and you can use all kinds of words – I have one more question to the Premier. I quote: taking away the ability to reach out and tell someone in your school or join a club to feel safe is, quite honestly, disgusting. There is absolutely no reason for which a student's right should be taken away. What if the only reason a child hasn't come out to their parents is because it isn't a safe environment? You are putting members of our community in danger. They could be kicked out, beaten, or sent to be turned straight.

2:10

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member's students and constituents, I want to assure them that, again, under this, students will continue to be protected under section 35.1 of the Education Act, which specifically guarantees students entitlement to GSAs and QSAs. In addition to that, schools cannot disclose a student's membership in any group, as there are student privacy considerations that trump all other legislation. We trust our professional educators to navigate these difficult situations and to do what is best for the kids. Those are the facts. Despite the opposition continuing to want to misrepresent them, those are the facts.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Glenora is rising.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday this government caved to pressure from this opposition and parents and confirmed that it would fund enrolment. Good on the Finance minister, but Calgary public and Catholic school boards wrote a letter to the Education minister on Tuesday stating that they have no clue about this government's plan, and they warn that they've already started cutting in anticipation of a terrible provincial budget. To the Minister of Education: why leave school boards in the dark? Is your announcement to fund enrolment just a smokescreen to find other places to cut?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the questions. Albertans can be very confident that our government is making thoughtful, prudent decisions to ensure that there is funding for the high-quality education they expect for their children. The NDP need to stop with their scare tactics. They have to stop playing politics with our children, and we will give the information to the school boards as soon as we can.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the chaos in our schools has been created by this government and given that it's harming student learning and given that the chaos has already resulted in job losses and that I've learned specifically from a family counsellor who was laid off in the Palliser school district on Monday, the same day this

government claimed to be funding enrolment, that he lost his job, will the minister guarantee that any of the staff that lost their jobs as the mismanagement, as the bungling, as the waiting until due course will be rehired? Yes or no?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We have continuously been here in the Legislature stating that we are funding education. We are maintaining funding. The boards have to make the decisions that they feel they need to make, but we have continuously said that we are funding education. It's a priority, and we will continue to build schools. Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that words don't cash cheques and given that there are more challenges confronting our schools and the government looks to rush through a decade-old piece of legislation, the Education Act, or Bill Hate – cue point of order – and given that the province's second-largest school board, Edmonton public, held an emergency debate on the Education Act yesterday and given that the trustees in the meeting said that they can't see any reason to rush implementation of the act, as did the members of ASBA, will the minister agree to delay the act?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I feel that the opposition has been the one to delay the act. It should have been passed. It was passed in 2012, amended in 2015, and we've been waiting for it to come forward, so we're quite ready for it. I have quotes from Lorrie Jess, president of the Alberta School Boards Association.

We are pleased with the amendments to ensure that residency and age of access are remaining the same as in the School Act. We look forward to working on successful implementation of the amended Education Act in support of public, separate and francophone school boards.

I have similar . . .

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

### Highway 15 Twinning Projects

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 2009 the traffic on highway 15 and the adjoining bridge into Fort Saskatchewan has increased by 50 per cent. Daily more than 23,000 vehicles travel across the bridge. The bridge is narrow and single-lane each way. Collisions on the bridge are all too common, and when they occur, the bridge is often shut down for hours at a time. Starting the twinning of the highway and the bridge construction have been repeatedly promised. Can the Minister of Transportation explain to the House why this project has not been started, and when it will start?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The project described by the hon. member is in two parts. Part A is east of highway 28 to highway 37. It started on May 15 and will be completed by October 15 of this year. Part B is east of highway 37 and west of highway 21 within the city of Fort Saskatchewan. The twinning project also includes construction of a new bridge over the North Saskatchewan River, and construction is expected to begin in August of this year.

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the previous government constantly promised money for the project and announced that it was going ahead multiple times, dating back to March 23, 2017, and given that construction has not started more than two years after that and given that this is a key project to help commerce flow back and forth, particularly from the Industrial Heartland, can the minister please tell the House when the project, in actuality, will have money allocated?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the enthusiasm in listening to her constituents. The funding has been allocated for the twinning of highway 15, which includes the construction of the new bridge over the North Saskatchewan River. While the first part of the project has begun, the plan is to begin the second part, which includes the bridge, in August of this year. That's the schedule, and we intend to keep it.

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the Minister of Transportation has been talking about the twinning of the highway and of the bridge and promising such since 2017 – and it hasn't started – and given that the capital region is growing and showing little sign of slowing down, to make the problem worse, and given that highway 15 is a major corridor into the Industrial Heartland that is required for economic growth, can the Minister of Transportation please tell the House again when the bridge construction and twinning will start?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's persistence on this matter is impressive. I will remind the hon. member again that it's a major corridor. We understand that it's vital to the economic growth of the Industrial Heartland, which matters to all of Alberta. Again, construction between highway 28A and 37 is under way. It has been for about a month now. Again, the bridge and the other piece of the infrastructure, including the bridge in Fort Saskatchewan: it's budgeted. It's intended to start in August of this year. We plan to keep that schedule.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-McCall is rising to ask a question.

### Oil Transportation by Rail

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is not about Bill Hate. Our government did what was necessary to move our product while waiting for pipelines to be built. We signed oil-by-rail contracts that would have generated \$2 billion in revenues for Alberta's economy. Oil was due to begin moving by rail as a result of these contracts in three weeks' time. The Premier is now saying that he wants to move these contracts to the private sector. To the Minister of Energy. A simple question: will these private companies be able to move our products in three weeks, or will we be waiting for another year or so?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, our government is working on every avenue to be able to get our products to market. It's one of the most important issues facing our province and something, quite frankly, that the former government completely failed on. When it

comes to crude by rail and the conversation about that, I think it's important that we, actually, quickly talk about the boondoggle that the NDP brought in in the dying days of their administration, bringing in one of the largest expenditures in the history of the province, maybe even the largest expenditure in the history of the province, at a time when they knew that they were going to lose the election, in an election period, in a last-ditch, desperate attempt to be able to maintain government. It was ridiculous.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are further delays coming for the line 3 pipeline expansion and given that the Premier is now saying that he will have to extend curtailment into next year and given that moving oil by rail would help to ease the impact of curtailment, to the minister: will you commit to continuing on with the contracts we signed if you cannot find all the takeaway capacity we secured in the private sector?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, what I will commit to is that we will continue to work to find every avenue that we can to be able to get our product to market. What I can also commit to is what the Premier promised back in February, before the last election, that we will examine every contract that was made by the NDP government in the dying days of their administration, during that election period, to make sure that it is appropriate for taxpayers. Our job is to protect taxpayers' interests. We will look at all of these contracts with that lens. That's the lens that we will use. Now, the problem, again, is that the opposition does not want to talk about their boondoggle that they put in at the last minute to try to save their government.

2:20

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that now the Premier has spoken out against the oil-by-rail contract without knowing any of the details and given that he jumped to conclusions that the private sector could actually handle the needed takeaway capacity despite not having any evidence to suggest that and given that the Premier and the minister have now been briefed on the contracts we signed, to the minister: will you admit that you are putting ideology and campaign rhetoric over protecting people's jobs and our industry?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this government will not be lectured by the NDP opposition when it comes to jobs. When they were in power just a short while ago, they oversaw the largest job loss in the history of this province and then brought in a tax increase that devastated families across Alberta even more.

When it comes to the oil-by-rail contract, that they brought in during an election period in a desperate attempt to be able to hang onto government . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** It wasn't during the election.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes, it was during the election period, Mr. Speaker.

Again, from day one the Premier was very, very clear that there were concerns with this. Nothing that we have seen since then has changed that. We will continue to look at it in the best interests of taxpayers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is rising.

## Corporate Taxation, Tax Credits, and Job Creation

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, corporate tax reductions are risky and unlikely to create jobs or ensure companies are supporting economic growth. Several economists are skeptical at best that this UCP government's risky 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway will do little other than boost the bottom line. Will this minister admit that there is no single silver bullet and that to promote job creation, he must listen to the chambers of commerce and other business groups, who know best?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is in a difficult way today in terms of job availability and job opportunity for all Albertans. We've witnessed – in fact, the members opposite presided over a government that witnessed – the largest flight of capital out of this province in recent history. Bill 3 is one measure of many that will again create a very competitive business environment, attract investment to this province, and create jobs and opportunities for all Albertans.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, given that chambers of commerce have been asking successive governments to level the playing field with other jurisdictions and introduce an investor tax credit and given that every \$30 million in tax credits generates a hundred million dollars' worth of investment in Alberta companies through our program, the Alberta investor tax credit, is the minister refusing to commit funding to this job-creating program because he knows better than the job creators in chambers of commerce, or will he commit to funding the Alberta investor tax credit?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard from many chambers of commerce. We've heard from countless businesspeople in Alberta. We've heard from many, many investors. What we've heard is that we need to make a 180-degree turn from what the previous government did during their time in office. We have a comprehensive plan, including a large corporate tax cut that will attract investment, jobs, and opportunities into Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the minister for his non answer.

Given that this government doesn't want to give Albertans the opportunity to invest in companies in their own backyard and given that the capital investment tax credit has been incredibly successful, where \$200 million in conditional tax credits has leveraged \$2.2 billion worth of investment – that's an ROI of more than 10 times, Minister – if the minister will not commit to this program, will he apologize to Albertans for driving away investment and jobs and admit that he believes he knows better than the business community?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this government is committed to a comprehensive plan to create a very competitive business environment. That includes reducing our corporate tax rate from 12 to 8 per cent. That includes a full-on commitment to modernize our regulatory environment to ensure that Alberta businesses have the most competitive regulatory environment to compete not only nationally but globally. That includes repealing



the carbon tax, which was the largest tax repeal in the history of this province. I'm confident our measures will create jobs and opportunities for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Apprenticeship Training and Skilled Tradespeople

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are more than 50,000 registered apprentices in Alberta, training in over 50 designated trades and occupations, with over 800 high school students enrolled in the registered apprenticeship program. Many of these students attend Lethbridge College, utilizing their new trades building for their education. These apprentices are part of the backbone and future of our province. Will the hon. Minister of Advanced Education ensure that trades and apprenticeship training in this province continues to thrive?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, encouraging more people to enter the trades and pursue vocational training opportunities is a top priority for me and for the government. We will be spearheading a number of initiatives that will encourage more people to pursue skilled trades, including expanding the registered apprenticeship training program and providing more scholarships for high school students who show promise in the skilled trades. Let me just say unequivocally that our government believes that apprenticeship education and skilled trades have every bit as much value, weight, merit, and worth as a university.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** To the same minister: given that apprentices who complete an apprenticeship program have seen increasing starting wages since 2005 and that these graduates of apprenticeship programs bolster the provincial economy and strengthen our middle class here in Alberta, what will the minister do to ensure that new graduates of trades and apprenticeship programs have access to the kinds of jobs they have spent years training for?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It is imperative that young Albertans have access to good jobs after graduation. We're working to strengthen the ability of our postsecondary institutions to fill labour market needs in a proactive manner. We recognize that from now until 2025, 3,000 skilled tradespeople will retire each and every year. This so-called grey wave will create opportunities for Albertans, and by supporting the skilled trades, we will ensure more Albertans have access to good jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his answer. Given how critical tradespeople are to our province's success and how tradespeople sacrifice time away from their families to work across our province while enduring long and demanding work hours on projects where they may not receive a thank you for their efforts, what is this government doing to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Alberta's tradespeople, like myself?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government completely respects and honours the tradespeople who quite literally helped build this province and who will be on the front lines of our economic recovery. These highly skilled men and women power our economy and have created a lasting legacy for all Albertans. That's why we are committed to honouring these tradespeople, who have left their mark, in a manner worthy of their contributions to our province. In fact, tomorrow I'll also be having a meeting with several private members to continue to explore opportunities to recognize the great work being done.

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

### Child Intervention Panel Recommendations

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government established an all-party panel to review the child intervention system in 2017. For over a year members from both sides of the House engaged with indigenous leaders, academics, front-line workers, nonprofit organizations, and families and youth receiving services. The panel delivered 26 consensus-based recommendations. The UCP then played politics and voted against legislation to put an action plan in place to implement those recommendations. To the Minister of Children's Services: will you tell me where you stand on the recommendations your colleagues endorsed and then abandoned?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services is rising.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The all-party panel undertook consultations for more than a year, speaking with people across the province, including indigenous leaders, people with lived experience as well as members on both sides of the House, so that we could learn and make improvements to the child intervention system. I've spoken with my colleagues who participated in that important work as well as with other panel members to better understand the feedback that went into that report, and we will continue to consult with our stakeholders as we move forward on the longer term plans.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that some of the panel members that were on this side of the House would also be interested in engaging with the minister on that.

Given that in the most recent Child and Youth Advocate report he notes that our action plan works to improve services for young people and, more specifically, to improve disability services and support for permanency services and given that leading experts in the field see the value of the full implementation of the action plan, will the Minister of Children's Services confirm her commitment to full implementation of the action plan by 2022, as our government committed to, or will we get another non answer?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just so that the member opposite is aware, one of the people that I did reach out to was the former Minister of Children's Services to get her thoughts and feedback on how the panel worked, what some of the background was on what went into that work. I haven't yet received confirmation as to whether or not she would be willing to meet, but I would more than welcome a meeting with anybody on the opposite side of the House who wants to discuss that further. We do

need to make sure that we have the best interests of these vulnerable children top of mind when making decisions.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, unfortunately, I didn't hear from the minister any comment about full implementation of the action plan.

Given that the minister's answers are lacking the clarity that Albertans deserve, I will try something more straightforward. Can the minister at the very least confirm that indigenous children and families in Alberta will receive the same level of services and funding regardless of where they live and that she will not cut that funding to pay for a tax giveaway for wealthy corporations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the members of this House may be aware, there were short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations within the work that the panel undertook. A lot of the short-term recommendations have already been put in place or work has begun or they've been completed. A number of the recommendations are to take place within this year, and then a number are longer term. Many of those do require ongoing discussions – and that's very clear in the report – with our stakeholders, including indigenous communities, and I'm happy to say that we had a number of those discussions this week.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is rising to ask a question.

#### Public Service Contract Negotiations

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The right to collectively bargain is recognized through international human rights conventions and has been protected by our Supreme Court of Canada in very clear decisions. To the minister of labour: could you please explain to this House the importance of good faith bargaining and its relationship with the government legislating contractually obligated negotiations to stop?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this government is just seeking to delay arbitration, and we believe it's in the best interests of Albertans. We're seeking to delay arbitration to build a path forward that will ensure that we can deliver high-quality services to Albertans and will ensure that we can get on a path to balance. We're waiting for the MacKinnon panel to deliver their report. That's our simple request, just a delay in arbitration.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Finance used the term "bargaining in good faith" yesterday when he was speaking to the collective bargaining process with public-sector unions and given that we're now learning that he's going to break the law and delay contractually mandated talks on wage reopeners, to the minister: can you please clarify for the House what you mean when you say "good faith bargaining"?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate the public sector and all that they provide to both this government and to Albertans as they deliver high-quality services. Again, we are just seeking to delay arbitration. We're working in good faith with all

stakeholders, quite frankly, to ensure that we can have a responsible plan going forward in the best interests of all Albertans.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister does not appear to understand bargaining in good faith and given that the minister invited unions to a consultation on wage reopeners and given that he attempted to brush off questions yesterday about why he would legislate himself out of these contracts, to the minister: will you admit that you had no plan to bargain legally and that you are going to use your majority in this House to break the law?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Albertans expect this government to make thoughtful, prudent decisions and not be rushed into hasty decisions that will not be in the best interests of Albertans. Therefore, we are simply seeking a delay in the wage arbitration so that we can build a responsible plan going forward, a plan that ensures that the best interests of Albertans are top of mind.

#### Highway 63 Maintenance

**Mr. Yao:** One issue that I hear about is highway maintenance, Mr. Speaker. What my constituents in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo are concerned about is the current contract because the maintenance of highway 63 is abysmal. It is poorly maintained. In the winter the plowing and clearing happen infrequently. People rely on the buses and larger trucks to literally carve through the snow that has piled alongside the lanes on the bridge. What assurances does this government have that Albertans are getting the services that they are paying for? Have standards been lowered over the years in regard to these highway maintenance contracts?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Snow clearing standards, to my knowledge, haven't been lowered, and I assure the member that highway 63 remains a priority. Our maintenance contractors are required to respond to winter conditions in a timely manner and to monitor highways three times a day. Department staff are able to monitor the contractors' performance through both visual inspections and by GPS monitoring, which is required on the service vehicles.

**Mr. Yao:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the highway still has not been swept, leaving our busiest road uncleared – the sheer amount of gravel and sand on the provincial road can cause motorcycles to slip, injuring riders; rocks get spit up by vehicles into the windshields; it's dangerous, inconvenient, and expensive – and given that the contractor's reply was that the delay is due to equipment breakdown, my constituents wonder: why wasn't this company ready as they had all winter to prepare? Do they have more than one sweeper? To the Minister of Transportation: what contractual mechanisms are in place to ensure that Albertans receive the services that they are paying for?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, I thank the hon. member. As a motorcycle rider myself who rode up this week, this is a matter that I'm familiar with. The contractor did indeed bring in a subcontractor to begin sweeping operations following some equipment difficulties that that contractor was facing. I can tell the member that the sweeping operations are under way, probably as we speak but certainly this week, and will be completed as soon as possible. I will follow up based on the hon. member's comments.

**Mr. Yao:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that all winter my constituents noted the abundance of highway street lamps that were burned out and now they question whether they will be repaired in time for next winter and given that the delivery on this contract is a reflection of what Albertans think about all government contracts, what assurances do Albertans have that the highest standards and measures are in place, and will this contractor be held accountable to repair these lights, clean this highway, repair the highway, and clear the snow?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the litany of complaints and drawing them to my attention. We review the performance of our contractors on a regular basis. If deficiencies are identified, they are addressed directly with the contractor. Contracts contain specific standards and obligations, and there are financial penalties for not meeting those obligations.

In the case of the lighting the majority of the lights have now been replaced or repaired, I understand.

I thank the hon. member for bringing this important situation to my attention, and we will follow up.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in approximately 30 seconds or less we will move to points of order. I'd ask all members who are leaving the Chamber for other commitments to do so in an expeditious manner.

The hon. Government House Leader is rising.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you for the opportunity to rise. I believe we have a few points of order. I could probably speed it up, if the Opposition House Leader and the Speaker are so inclined, to three points of order: one at 1:55; then one at about 1:57, roughly, would be the time; and then the remainder of the points of order called by the Member for Calgary-Hays could probably be looped into one point of order. If that's okay with you, Mr. Speaker, I would start with the one at 1:55. I assume we're on the same page?

2:40

**The Speaker:** Agreed.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on that particular point under 23(h), (i), and (j). The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition at the time made comments a few times that I thought were bordering on imputing false motives on members of the House as well as language that could create disorder, particularly around – and I will quote what we heard; you have the Blues, so you have a bit of an advantage over me at the moment – what basically was: steal money from Albertans. You know, there is no intention by any member of this House to steal from anybody. I would not say that about the opposition nor about the government. I think there are lots of rulings in the past that make that clear. I won't spend too much time on it because I'm more interested in discussing the other points of order, but I think it would be appropriate for the opposition to withdraw and apologize for that remark.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we have here are two sets of facts. Quite frankly, we have the fact that the government seems to think they're above the law while we believe that violating the constitutional rights of Albertans is profoundly inappropriate and abusive of their office. So the reference the hon. member was making was in regard to taking money from nurses.

That's what would be the case if they do in fact legislate versus negotiating. These are two different sets of facts.

I would argue, Mr. Speaker, you know, under *Beauchesne's* section 75 that what the members are trying to do is curtail our ability and freedom of speech in this Assembly. According to *Beauchesne's*:

The privilege of freedom of speech is both the least questioned and the most fundamental right of the Member of Parliament on the floor of the House and in committee. It is primarily guaranteed in the British Bill of Rights which declared "that the freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place outside of Parliament."

Mr. Speaker, this is a difference in sets of facts, as you yourself even on Monday, May 27, had said when dealing with a different point of order. You said, "What we can agree on is that it's quite possible that there will be times in this Chamber when there are two sets of facts around the same issue." I would argue that this is one of them.

**The Speaker:** I would say, with respect to the point of order around the Official Opposition making accusations about what the government may or may not have done, that this, in fact, is a disagreement on the facts. As such, this point of order is not well taken. We can proceed with the fact that this was merely amongst debate.

The House leader, please.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you. I'm rising on what would be the second point of order, at 1:57-ish, I believe. Just making sure that we're on the same page. Am I roughly there with you, Mr. Speaker?

I again rise under 23(h), (i), and (j) in regard to parliamentary language. I will refer you, Mr. Speaker, to a Speaker's ruling on November 28, 2012. Interestingly enough, it involved the hon. Opposition House Leader back when he was in opposition the first time. He got himself into a little bit of hot water using words like "intentionally misled" to describe the government projection on a budget. Not only was it unparliamentary, but it was directed at an individual member, and those words did cause disorder. It was ruled on at the time by the then Speaker, who cautioned the hon. member at that time on that. I just think that's important to point out because, again, it was back in 2012, so clearly the Opposition House Leader is aware of these circumstances.

At the time, Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member said was:

Mr. Speaker, given that this Conservative government intentionally misled Albertans by using a budget based on overly optimistically projections – in other words, rainbows and unicorns – and given that the price of oil is still lower than this government's projected price, to the President of the Treasury Board: will he admit that the way to rectify this situation and ensure that Albertans get the public services they need is to increase royalties to an amount competitive with every other jurisdiction in the world?

I don't think that question includes the "misled" quote, so that's where I'm confused, Mr. Speaker. I do apologize to the House. I'm on the wrong one.

Where I'll go with this is this: the member on that day, November 28, 2012, intentionally misled the House. The Government House Leader at the time said, "I will leave aside all the other points of order but one, and that is when the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview rose to ask a question" and went on to talk about

misleading the House. I'm not going to read all of it, Mr. Speaker, because it's longer than I thought. The point is that the opposition over the last few days has continued to skirt around the issue of our parliamentary rules on calling people liars, saying that they've misled. Context matters – I agree with that – but it's pretty clear, if you read the Blues, that the opposition continues to imply that members of the government are lying or telling mistruths to this Assembly. In fact, that is, one, not true, but, second, it is certainly unparliamentary, and I think that you should caution the members not to do that anymore in the future.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader is rising.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'm confused because I don't know if the Government House Leader actually identified what was said. Again, I think it's very important that specific words are dealt with. That's why there are words that are listed in the unparliamentary language and others that are not.

Now, to my knowledge – and you have the Blues, Mr. Speaker – there was nothing in today's QP, from this side of the House, that either said “lied” or “misled.” On my point of order, that I will be arguing shortly, it was the Government House Leader that actually said “that member, who lied about” the carbon tax. He used the word “lied” in his own point of order, so it's a little bit contradictory to be arguing now that it's a point of order if we use language like that.

I am very careful and try to encourage this side of the House to be careful in the language that they use so as not to cause disorder with words. We do have a list, all members of the House, as far as words that are ruled unparliamentary. This point of order is no point of order. At no point did – I don't know if that was against our leader – the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona use a word to incite disorder in this House. In fact, as you ruled just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, on two different sets of facts, two different sets of opinions, we believe that our facts, as the leader tabled today, are in black and white and are the truth. The government believes there is a second variation on that truth, but you did rule that each of us may have our own version. Therefore, this is not a point of order.

**The Speaker:** I thank you for your interjections. Based upon my ruling, maybe we will be able to deal with your point of order in our discussion at present.

Here is what I would say. I do happen to have the benefit of the Blues. At approximately 1:56 the Leader of the Official Opposition and the hon. Government House Leader were engaged in excitable debate when the Leader of the Official Opposition said the words “The House leader just can't stop saying things that are untrue. He just can't help himself,” at which point a point of order was called. The Leader of the Official Opposition also went on to say, “Will the House leader apologize on behalf of the Premier for providing members of this Assembly with information that is not true, or has the Premier also embraced the posttruth era.” I think we were all there for that.

What I would say with respect to this half of the point of order – over the past two days both sides of the House have been doing their very best to get as close to doing things which you are unable to do intentionally and doing them through other means – is that many rulings have taken place in the House in the past and that when members might be trying to do this, they would be speaking to “all members” or “the government,” making broad strokes. What we saw today was the Leader of the Official Opposition very clearly imply that the Government House Leader was saying untrue things, which, in fact, is unparliamentary. In the second half of my ruling I will give the Leader of the Official Opposition, or the Opposition

House Leader on her behalf, the opportunity to apologize and withdraw.

2:50

Having said that, the Government House Leader also behaved in a manner that is not becoming of a member when he very specifically used the word that we all know is unparliamentary and wasn't just skirting the rules but, in fact, broke the rules when he said, “That member, who lied about the biggest tax increase” in Alberta's history.

What I might say is that in a few moments I will give the Government House Leader the opportunity to withdraw and apologize. The challenge that is before the House is that both sides of the Assembly are trying to do, through whatever means possible, what we are not allowed to do, and that is to imply that a member of the House has lied. In this case, the Leader of the Official Opposition or the Opposition House Leader will apologize and withdraw because she implied that, specifically, the Government House Leader said something that was untrue, and the Government House Leader will also apologize for using the unparliamentary language saying that the opposition lied.

The hon. Government House Leader is rising.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do I get my opportunity to apologize and withdraw now, or would you like me to do it later?

**The Speaker:** Oh. Right this second, and then you can sit down.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I did use the word “lied” today, and I do apologize for it and withdraw my remarks.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona I apologize and withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** Excellent. Thank you. Good work.

The Government House Leader is rising on the point of order. At your pleasure.

## Point of Order Epithets

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll rise again under Standing Order 23(j), “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.” I'd also refer you to a citation in *Beauchesne's* which refers to the concept that one should not provoke debate. I raise it in the same manner that I raised it on previous occasions on this issue. I'm going to just refer you to a Speaker's ruling on March 22, 2000, on the issue. What I'm referring to is the opposition continuing to rename Bill 8, which is the Education Amendment Act, and at the time this issue was raised before in the House, the Speaker ruled this way. He said:

Thank you both . . . hon. gentlemen.

To the Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader he says:

The reality is that a bill does have a name. A bill does have a title. One can use . . . an adjective to describe it, and all that ever does is lead to provocations and a whole series of other things. In other words, it leads to a debate in the question period. Of course, the purpose of question period is not to have a debate. The purpose of question period is to raise a question.

I do believe there is some merit to the point [of order] raised by the hon. Government House Leader with respect to this and

would like to advise all members of the House that I really wonder what this question period is going to be like as of April 4, when second reading is given to Bill 11. If one looks at the traditions in anticipation of what's on the Order Paper for that particular day, perhaps the environment here will be quite different. So we can think about that and how we're going to deal with all that and read the rules.

He goes on to say:

This is not a lecture. This is . . . a suggestion or advice. Bill 11 does have a name, as all hon. members have names, and all hon. members are referred to [in] that way. We do not denigrate the names of their constituencies or other individuals or anybody else. It's kind of an honourable thing.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you the same thing as the Government House Leader did on that day. Like they did on Bill 11, we have Bill 8, which does have a name. Question period is not a time for debate. Question period is a time for asking questions. I ask that you caution the hon. members to stop using the term "Bill Hate," particularly in question period.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm about to cite a number of examples where the now government, when in opposition, misnamed or intentionally renamed my own Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, a number of our bills. In fact, the Government House Leader on December 12, 2016, referred to our bill that was being debated at the time, the fair trade act – I will get the name in a second. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre had said in *Hansard*:

It should be probably named the unfair elections act, or how about the kneecapping the opposition act, or the incumbent election act, or the NDP election act, or the act to stack the deck? But I would not want to do the same as the NDP and use political purposes in names.

That's rich, considering that the previous six examples were just that.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to draw attention to the fact that the opposition continually refers to our carbon tax as the job-killing carbon tax. I want to also draw your attention to the fact that the opposition, or the government when in opposition and even today, actually used the adjective "kill" in many different examples, which, in my opinion, is a much more aggressive term: killing coal communities, killing the economy, killing jobs, job-killing carbon tax, which, Mr. Speaker, neither you nor the previous Speaker have ruled as out of order.

I will go back to *Beauchesne's* section 75, which is all about the freedom of speech for members. What the Government House Leader is trying to do is stifle members' ability to be able to speak freely. Nowhere in today's question period was any particular bill named, Mr. Speaker. What members were referring to is Bill Hate, as what some Albertans have referred to in communications with us.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. I feel that we should not apologize, considering that the shoe now is on the other foot for the government, who used this over and over again in this House for the past few years, and it has never been ruled out of order.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

I was just about to recognize the Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I'm always grateful when you are kind enough to recognize me in this House.

**The Speaker:** For clarity's sake, you are providing new information, not rehashing debate, correct?

**Mr. McIver:** I am. My hon. colleague did make some good arguments, but what he did not do and the reason why this is new information is that under 23(h), (i), and (j) the phrase "Bill Hate" is really, truly abusive. Mr. Speaker, it's your ruling, but I'm not sure how anyone could think it's not abusive and insulting language. It imputes false and unavowed motives to another member simply because it suggests that someone in this House hates Albertans or a subset of Albertans, and I can't think of anything more abusive or insulting than that. By so doing, also under 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member," it's abusive and insulting language that could create disorder in the House. The fact that we're on our feet right now I think is proof enough that that's the case.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to provide new or relevant content who have not yet spoken? The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. Respectfully, I would argue again, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview said, that using inflammatory rhetoric like "job-killing carbon tax" to refer to other bills, legislation would be just as inflammatory. I would point out *Beauchesne's* 69.

The Speaker has reminded the House, "It is very important . . . to indicate that something can be inflammatory, can be disagreeable, can even be offensive, but it may not be a question of privilege unless the comment actually impinges upon the ability of Members of Parliament to do their job properly."

And I would argue that this does not.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I appreciate the additional interjections. I think part of the question will be not on whether it infringes on someone's privilege but on: is the comment likely to create disorder? The question that is before us, though, I don't believe is clear cut, be it a point of order or not. I think that all of the members have taken reasonable positions with respect to the importance of free speech, with respect to times in which the name that you're using for the bill, Bill Hate, may or may not be used.

I think that it is prudent in this case, as I spent some time this morning thinking about whether or not this particular issue would arise in question period today, and given the new information that's been provided, I will report back to the House, likely tomorrow, with respect to my decision on the ongoing use of Bill Hate. I would provide some context.

With respect to phrases that have been considered parliamentary one day, they may in fact be unparliamentary on other occasions. I think Speaker Zwozdesky spoke to this on a number of occasions when a statement that was not initially deemed to be unparliamentary certainly became unparliamentary because it continued to create disorder in the House.

3:00

My reservation is that I believe that is the path that we're currently heading down, but I will reserve my right to rule until tomorrow.

Are there other points of order that I have missed?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I have four or five other ones on the same matter, about the same words. I think it would be appropriate to let you rule on what we just talked about, not relive the last 10 minutes, and wait for your ruling tomorrow. As such, I would withdraw them because we've had that discussion just now.

**Orders of the Day**  
**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Third Reading**

**Bill 3**  
**Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act**

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act.

I would like to thank all members of this Assembly for their input and debate with regard to this bill. This is a subject where our viewpoints differ, but I know that fundamentally we all share a desire to get Albertans back to work, and our government is confident that this bill will assist us in accomplishing that.

To recap, this common-sense legislation proposes to cut the corporate tax rate by a third within the next three years while maintaining the small-business tax rate at 2 per cent. This bill will also make minor technical amendments to ensure that the rate cuts are implemented properly.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Over the past few years we've seen investment and capital leave our province as a result of poor economic policy. We need bold action to renew the Alberta advantage, create jobs, and get Alberta working again. The previous government increased corporate tax rates, and revenues fell as the province became a less desirable place to do business. Our plan will help attract the investment needed to stimulate the economy, which will grow the overall size of the tax base and eventually lead to additional revenue.

Leading economists such as Dr. Jack Mintz and Dr. Bev Dahlby have estimated that this tax reduction will create more than 55,000 new jobs over the next four years and generate nearly \$13 billion in economic activity. Dr. Mintz and Dr. Dahlby are both highly respected economic experts across the nation, and both are based here in Alberta at the University of Calgary. They have a keen understanding of Alberta's unique economy, and I value their opinions.

I also value the opinions of the chambers of commerce across this province who stood with me after I tabled this bill to show their support. I was also graciously joined by members of the Alberta Enterprise Group and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. Their support for this action was clear.

Franco Terrazzano, the Alberta director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, said that "by lowering business taxes, this government is giving Albertans a chance to get back on their feet and get ahead." I agree with him. Businesses are the backbone of our communities, and by supporting businesses, we're supporting all Albertans. Without successful businesses there are very few jobs and there is far less government revenue. Businesses invest significant amounts in our communities and provide Albertans with the opportunities they need to feed their children and house their families. Overall, more workers and a healthy business community mean that we can better meet our commitment to protect government's vital programs and services.

Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the opposition that when they were in government, they told the Legislature on more than one occasion that their industry-specific corporate tax breaks would stimulate thousands of jobs and millions in investment. I find it very interesting that they are now saying that these broad tax reductions,

that will benefit all sectors, will not create jobs or stimulate new investment.

We are working to correct the course of our province, and we are confident that these tax reductions will help create jobs and reignite our economy. This is what we were elected to do. Alberta's businesses have been punished for far too long with carbon taxes, red tape, and increased corporate taxes. Business efforts to expand and support our communities have been hampered, and I'm proud to be part of correcting this situation.

When the Premier and I spoke about this bill at Lafarge Canada's Edmonton infrastructure building, many workers and management were happy to stand with us in support of this action. Their western Canadian CEO, Brad Kohl, spoke of Lafarge's large investment plans and how they are looking forward to quick returns on those investments. He spoke of their desire to work in a province that is open for business and their intent to hire more people, which is welcome news.

Beyond supporting local businesses, these tax reductions will attract new companies to Alberta and encourage the development of new businesses by creating an enticing tax regime for expansion and job creation. Madam Speaker, by July 2 of this year Alberta will have the lowest corporate tax rate in Canada, and within a few years our province will once again be one of the most attractive business destinations in North America. We are proud to support job creators and help regain investor confidence. By laying out the dates of each rate reduction now, we are giving investors the certainty they need to rely on to make sound business decisions with confidence.

Madam Speaker, I know that Alberta's businesses want to grow and that they want to grow here in our province. Easing the tax burden on job creators was a core promise we made, and I'm proud that our government is keeping that promise. I would again like to thank the members of the House who are supporting this bill as well as those who offered considerate debate.

With that, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to move third reading of Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is not available.

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

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll just start by saying that of course our viewpoints differ on this matter. We are not confident on this side that the bill will generate the investment that the hon. Finance minister talked about. He talked about his economists, the economists on his side, those expert economists who know Alberta well, saying that this will generate investment, that this will generate jobs, et cetera, et cetera. He did not say that there are other economists who don't agree with his economists, and there are. We have quoted those people, those reports, extensively in our earlier debates on this topic. I don't need to quote them right now, but I'm sure my colleagues here will do the same thing.

The fact is that the province struggled mightily after the crash in the world oil prices in late 2014. It caused our economy, because of its overreliance on revenues coming from the energy streams in this province, to struggle mightily and go into recession over a couple of quarters and longer than that. We soon got news that it would go into recession in early 2015.

We chose to work to mitigate that, Madam Speaker, and we did that in a far different way than this government is taking to mitigate the difficulty in our economy. We brought in former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge, who said: to mitigate the steep

decline in your economy and the loss of jobs, the retrenchment of investment and capital, you should look at investing in your province to keep people working, to keep businesses afloat.

We did that through our capital plan, as everyone remembers, by targeting a 15 per cent increase on top of the approximately \$5 billion to 5 and a half billion dollars that was in the capital plan at that point, when we took over government in May 2015. We contributed more than that \$5 billion to 5 and a half billion dollars, and we got that capital plan up over \$7 billion, Madam Speaker. That, as I said, was a way to stop the economy from nosediving and kind of smooth it out somewhat.

3:10

That helped people all over the province who were involved in construction of all kinds to stay on the job. As you know, Madam Speaker, the track record of this side, when we were government, was pretty remarkable in the area of school modernization and construction, something the previous PC government was unable to really deliver on. We chose to invest. And, yes, there was a cost to that investment. That cost was to run deficits while the economy was in free fall, and that had the support of economists. When I would meet with those economists in my role as Finance minister, they would come here and say: look, your government is doing the best it can with the hand that it's been dealt.

Madam Speaker, I was pleased to be able to stand up in this House and talk about how we were keeping Albertans employed, how we were mitigating the steep decline in the GDP in this province. For that reason, I don't understand why the government believes that we're on the best track to reduce the corporate tax by \$4.5 billion over four years, not to see a gain in corporate taxes as a result of that for two years.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Finance minister mentioned that – you know, that side seems to be against something that we did in a very targeted and selected way, and that is, Mr. Speaker, that we worked and we put royalty credits out there for companies in the world, really, who wanted to use our really affordable gas stream products and value-add to those. Inter Pipeline and another company took advantage of those royalty credits in a very targeted, specific way, and it paid off big time in terms of investment to this province.

We didn't do a scattergun approach, as this Finance minister and government is doing. We did a targeted approach, where we knew that there was cheap feedstock for the kinds of things like polypropylene or plastics that could be manufactured easily in this province, but companies weren't doing it. They weren't doing it because there were some particular challenges around the financial environment for those kinds of companies in this province. So we made it specific to those kinds of industries. They took it up, going great guns, Mr. Speaker, and we're seeing a return not only on the construction side but on the long-term use of cheap feedstock in this province that will create an industry that wasn't here.

Now, I don't know what industries the Finance minister is talking about that are magically going to happen as a result of a reduction in corporate taxes. What we've heard from many people on this side, Mr. Speaker, is that that reduction, as former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney has said, will create dead money, meaning that the \$4.5 billion reduction over four years that this government is giving away to corporations will sit on their balance sheet, or it will sit in their shareholders' pockets. It won't get reinvested because of the uncertainty of so many things, including the tariff environment that's being upset all over the place as a result of the United States going to war, not literally, on regulations and trade regulations with other countries in the world.

The upshot is that the kind of activity that this government is taking is really a Hail Mary. They're hoping, hoping against hope, that it's going to return more in the long run than their investment up front will cost. Mr. Speaker, that's a bit of a wish, and for that wish, for that opportunity, for corporations to put the monies in their pockets and potentially give it back by way of investment and jobs, as being indicated from the other side, we all get to have a lot less revenue in this province to address the needs of Albertans today, tomorrow, next year, and the year after that and after that and after that.

What that means, Mr. Speaker, what that likely means, almost one hundred per cent means, is that the government is going to be finding efficiencies across all of the programs and services that get delivered to Albertans, and those efficiencies is a kind way of saying that they're going to start cutting back on the quality and quantity of services for Albertans. If the wish of investment does not realize itself, as I doubt it will, then they're going to be saying: well, we've got to find a way to cut back because we don't have the revenues.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know now that Alberta is growing in terms of population. We know that our population is getting older as we speak and that the needs of an older population are more expensive than a younger population. Relative to the rest of Canada we're younger, of course, but that won't stay forever. The needs of our older citizens are going to be increasing as we go forward in terms of the cost. So it's not a responsible thing to do, to look at the reductions to the extent that the Minister of Finance is talking about.

You know, I want to point out that we're at the low end of the scale already in terms of taxes in this country if you're looking at corporate taxes. We know we're the least taxed jurisdiction when you add up the fact that we don't have a PST, we don't have a health care premium, we don't have a payroll tax. Those things are present in many other provinces, and an apples-to-apples comparison of this province to other provinces would show that we're doing well already. So I don't understand why the Minister of Finance believes he can operate with even less money going forward on the hope that, I guess, lots of investment will occur with the scattershot approach that he's taking and that his government is taking to address the needs of corporations and forgetting about the needs of citizens in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the targeted approach we took with the investments on what is the sweet spot in Alberta, you know, the energy stream that we are blessed with having in this province: we targeted investments there, and it paid off big time. Now, I'm not sure where – there is no target for what the Finance minister and the government is proposing. They're just saying: you'll all pay less. The message I want to continue to deliver is: if you're not a corporation, everyone else is going to pay more, essentially.

I think the best interest of Albertans is to stay with the current tax regime we have, to stay with the targeted investments that have paid off mightily that we have, and to continue to follow the route of pushing for pipelines, pushing for a medium-term solution to get crude by rail happening so that we can get better value for every barrel of oil, Mr. Speaker. That would have been the bill that should have come forward as the continue-to-work-on-pipelines bill, the continue-to-get-value-added-from-energy-products-in-this-province bill, instead of the Hail Mary that is here before us.

I just want to assure people that there are speakers on the other side, leading economists, this one economist who talks about a 2012 study survey conducted at the University of Chicago, that trickle-down economics, the kinds of things that are being talked about here, don't work. A person no less in stature than Warren Buffett talked about how trickle-down economics really just surges upwards towards the shareholders and corporations.

Mr. Speaker, I, for one, won't be supporting this bill, and neither will folks on this side. Thank you.

3:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to third reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to third reading of this bill, that would bring a huge tax break, which nobody is asking for and nobody has explained how it will help create jobs, bring investments. I think it's a very famous definition put forward by Albert Einstein, that insanity is to keep doing the same thing over and over and over and expecting different results. What we see with this bill is exactly that. As the Member for Calgary-Buffalo mentioned, Alberta has a tax advantage of \$11.5 billion to the next jurisdiction. We are already competitive, and we have an advantage when it comes to taxation because we don't have health premiums, we don't have a payroll tax, and that gives us an edge of \$11.5 billion.

What we know, if we look at the history of tax breaks, is that these experiments, the tax break experiments, have been tried in the developed world many times. Under President Reagan, under Prime Minister Thatcher there were massive, massive tax cuts. There was a tax on trade unions; there was deregulation; there was privatization; there was outsourcing: all in the name of competition. But what we saw was that growth was low, and because of these policies, inequality rules, we created a society of have and have-nots, and assets of the state were put in a fire sale. And every time those policies were put forward to respond to a crisis. In other words, crises were used as an opportunity to impose these policies, these failed policies, these trickle-down economic policies.

Exactly what we are seeing here is that this government is fixated on their rhetoric and ideological agenda, and they're bringing in the policies that have failed across the globe. They failed in the U.K., they failed in the States, and they even failed in Canada as well. If tax cuts were to create jobs – I think the U.S. saw the biggest tax cut just a year ago, a couple of years ago from 35 per cent to 21 per cent, almost a 14 per cent break, and the analysis of that is that 84 per cent of the businesses who are benefiting from that break haven't changed their investment plans. That's 84 per cent of the businesses. And as is common with these policies, like supply-side economics or trickle-down economics, they always create deficits. The U.S., clearly, has seen the deficit go up 17 per cent, to \$779 billion.

In fact, the evidence is that it didn't create jobs. AT&T promised somewhere around 7,000 jobs under this tax cut, but they actually reduced their job numbers by 23,000 people. That's exactly what we are seeing here in Alberta, too. Just on June 6 the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, CNOOC, announced that they will be laying off a hundred staff from their operations. I think if a tax cut was to work, if the carbon tax was an issue, they have clear indication of both, that this government is willing to cut tax and that this government has gotten rid of the carbon tax. But that didn't stop them from laying off workers. That's a clear example. That's clear evidence that the path you're heading on is not working. It has not worked in the past, and it will not work this time around.

In recent federal tax breaks that were awarded by Prime Minister Stephen Harper – I think when you look at those breaks, those breaks also didn't have any significant impact on investment. That break, yes, gave some flexibility and more money to businesses, but that money was accumulated in accounts and didn't create jobs, didn't go to investing in new businesses. I think it was called dead money by Mark Carney, former governor, Bank of Canada. I think the evidence is there, even from our own Conservative experience.

The evidence is there that when the federal Conservative government cut it from 22 per cent to 15 per cent over four years, that didn't create jobs, and that left the federal government with revenue shortfalls and in fact deficit. What we are seeing in Alberta is that we have a tax advantage of \$11.5 billion, and we are seeing deficits. How can we improve that? I don't think that's the recipe for that. This has failed everywhere, and there's still time for the government to reconsider this experiment.

Look at evidence from other jurisdictions. Like, look at evidence from Conservative governments across the world. Look at evidence from the Thatcher cuts in the '80s. Look at evidence from Ronald Reagan's cuts in the '80s, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's cuts in the '80s. Like, all those cuts have not created the results that people were made to believe, that somehow they will create jobs and create investments. It just takes revenue away from that, and those revenue shortages then, I guess, result in cuts to education, cuts to services, cuts to health care. And here we are, I guess, heading down that path already with massive cuts.

We are seeing legislation coming in to attack workers' constitutionally protected rights under the contracts to negotiate and to have a pay raise after three years or so. Those were frozen. We are seeing the same pattern, that attacks are coming on trade unions. We are seeing deregulation. I think there was some news out there on driver examinations, that after a report was taken in-house, government is looking into deregulating that again, outsourcing those things.

3:30

I think what we need at this point is policy that is more common-sense and that is more tailored to Alberta's economy and what the Alberta economy is facing today. We are facing many issues. If I talk about just the energy sector, we have enough production. We have investment in oil sands, and we can produce. The issue we have is that we don't have takeaway capacity. When it comes to that, instead of helping industry with the steps we were taking, they are insisting that they will reverse those things, for instance oil by rail. That contract alone would have provided 125,000-barrel-a-day takeaway capacity for our energy sector, and 125,000 barrels a day means new jobs, new investment, and new revenues for the government. What we are seeing here is this four-plus billion dollar tax break. At the same time, what the economy really needs, that takeaway capacity, we are turning a blind eye to. I don't think that's what Alberta's economy needs.

I think every time we have heard from Albertans, we have heard from different political parties that we are aligned on one industry and one customer in terms of our energy industry. What we need here is investment and diversification of the economy. When we were facing these crises, we responded differently. We responded differently. We didn't make the situation worse, which this corporate tax break and the policies that government is pursuing will. We responded by helping the energy industry to create that takeaway capacity. We invested in schools. We invested in child care. We invested in green infrastructure. We invested in the green line in Calgary. The result was that in 2017 Alberta was leading the growth across Canada by 4.9 per cent.

Here, I think, in second reading the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board commented on it, that this cut will see job creation by '22-23 of 50,000 and some billions made up – I don't know, \$12 or 13 billion – in investment in '23. But Albertans are hurting now. They are looking for jobs now. That was the platform: jobs, the economy, and pipelines. This government needs to focus on the things that matter to Albertans. They need to pursue policies that create jobs. There is no evidence that tax breaks automatically create some kind of jobs. What we are seeing in our



industry is that investment is not coming in because we don't have takeaway capacity. Government policies, government efforts need to be focused on creating that capacity so that we can get our economy going, we can attract investment, and we can create new jobs. This bill, coupled with their other policies like the Municipal Government Act, will also somehow attract investment, although there is nothing in that piece of legislation, and then there is red tape reduction that will create investment: all those things may be good photo opportunities, but they are not the policies, economic policies, the kinds of initiatives that Albertans elected this government to pursue. They will not create jobs.

Instead, this cut will create a revenue hole in our budget, and Albertans: those in school will suffer; those who require health care will suffer; those Albertans who rely on critical government supports like income support, AISH, PDD will suffer. That's an irresponsible thing. I think government should not pursue this giveaway, so I will urge all colleagues in this House to reject this policy and to reject this break for the benefit of all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Taber-Warner rising.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I rise just to address some of the things that we've heard on a regular basis from the members opposite, stating that there is no evidence that this can create jobs. The absolute truth to this issue is that a majority of the members opposite are the evidence. The members opposite, a majority of them, have moved to this province because we did something different here than they did in other jurisdictions. We made sure that we had some of the lowest marginal tax rates in Canada and sometimes in North America. We made sure that we had a sustainable government. We made sure that we had a lower regulatory burden.

During that time, Mr. Speaker, what we saw was over a hundred thousand people move into this province each month. In fact, many of the people on that side moved here for that very reason. They moved here because we had this thing called the Alberta advantage. That was the winning formula that allowed us to be able to get to some of the best jobs in North America, some of the highest paying jobs in North America. Yet the members opposite continue to say that there is no evidence. They are living evidence that it worked because they moved from other parts of the country or other parts of the world. People from all over the world moved to this province because we did something different here, because we had the – now, the interesting thing about the members opposite is that they can continue to say how bad it was over the last 44 years, yet they continue to quote Ralph Klein. The hypocrisy of this. They will argue out of one side of their mouth that . . . [interjections] We had a great opportunity to be able to listen to them. It'd be fantastic if they could listen now as well.

The arguments that they are making . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Hunter:** . . . about there being no evidence: the truth is that we had 100,000 people move to this province during a 10-year period. We had over 150 corporate head offices move to this province because of this concept of having a lower marginal tax rate. We had some of the best growth in terms of GDP growth. We competed against juggernaut states like Texas in terms of GDP growth. Now, they could say that it's all about the oil, the price of oil, but we did that when the price of oil was \$20 a barrel.

There's a very good book Mark Milke wrote, and I think that it would be great if the members would read that because their

revisionist history lessons that they try to say don't fly with Albertans. In fact, it's interesting. I had an interesting conversation with one of their colleagues, that actually didn't get elected again in Calgary because he followed the NDP strategy to the T. I was asking him: where have your socialist strategies worked? I kid you not, Mr. Speaker. He quoted *Star Trek*, Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek*. Now, what's interesting about this is that I think, as I listen to the arguments of these members, that they are still living in this fantasy world. There are economic principles that work and that have worked in the past, and we're getting back to that formula that has worked. It's important for the members opposite to be able to leave that fantasy realm and come back down to Earth and realize that there are economic principles that have worked in the past, and they'll work again if we implement them properly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, if you'd like to respond.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the comments that the member made were somewhat confusing, offensive as well. If you are not indigenous, you moved from somewhere, from some part of the world. The only difference is when you got here, whether by boat, whether by ship, all those things.

The evidence I was suggesting there was academic evidence based on economics, based on experiences in the States, in the United Kingdom, in Canada. The right-wing governments that followed the supply-side, trickle-down economics that this government is now following – that policy has failed across the globe. That policy is rejected by all economists across the globe.

Thank you.

3:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to the third reading of Bill 3, which drastically reduces Alberta's corporate tax revenues from large and already wealthy corporations. The reasons why I am pleased to rise and provide my comments at third reading are, well, a couple of different things.

I think the first thing I want to talk about is what this bill says about the priorities of this government and what it sets up for the future framing of how this government is going to interact with Albertans, particularly either Albertans with whom they disagree, Albertans who are of lower income, Albertans who potentially work in the public sector, and Albertans who are working on an hourly basis just to get by. Let's talk about the priorities that this bill revealed and the values that are so different from Conservatives and the folks on this side, who were elected to bring a certain perspective to this House.

We elect governments in a parliamentary democracy, not dictatorships, so while, yes, in a two-party system one party wins more votes – that is how elections work – the fact of the matter is that the opposition has a duty to speak to why their constituents sent them there and what kinds of values sent us here. Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to do so because they are starkly contrasted within the contents of this bill and what it says about a government that has started its record of governing this province with essentially three themes.

That is, they tend to make decisions with horse blinders on with respect to evidence. We see this in climate change. We see it with respect to the international evidence around large tax giveaways to the already wealthy. This is not about small business, Mr. Speaker. We see that it is a government that makes promises based on political games. It is a government that, when they do that, is then

left with the consequences. When you blow a very large, multibillion-dollar hole in the budget, one cannot then meet the needs of health care, education, roads, hospitals, bridges, child intervention, child protection, seniors' care, child care, and the like. It then reveals this priority of giving away four and a half billion dollars to the already wealthiest among us. It shows that that is the priority, that that wealthy class of shareholders is the priority over working-class people.

Furthermore, it shows that they are willing, Mr. Speaker, to give away that security of health care, education, other services, and other supports to the least privileged among us because there is a streak of uncaring, lack of empathy that runs through certainly the record of . . .

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

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The hon. Minister of Transportation.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, under 23(h), (i), and (j) it talks about attributing motives to other members of the House. The hon. member just said that other members of the House were uncaring and lacked empathy. The only thing missing in 23(h), (i), and (j) is an example like accusing other people of being uncaring and having a lack of empathy. I would be happy to listen to the hon. member's debate on policy. She ought to stick within the rules that we actually as a Legislature have all put in place for ourselves through the standing orders.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, this is not a point of order. Second of all, I appreciate the fact that the Member for Lethbridge-West gets under the skin of the Member for Calgary-Hays. Saying that some members may be uncaring about certain issues is not unparliamentary. Quite frankly, I mean, my Lord, had we when we were in government jumped up on points of order every time the opposition talked about – again, as we talked about earlier today, using the word “killing”: killing communities, killing this, killing that.

You know, referencing that, in her opinion, this move or decision by the government to reduce the corporate tax rate is a decision in their priorities, meaning that other things, then, will be either not funded or adjusted, is a difference of opinion that the Member for Lethbridge-West feels demonstrates that that, then, is an action that shows the government doesn't care about X or Y, Mr. Speaker. This is not a point of order.

However, while I am standing talking to this point of order, I should have jumped up on a point of order to an earlier comment that was made.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Minister of Transportation. However, I am the one that determines how points of order work around here.

**Mr. Bilous:** As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the fact that there were comments questioning members about how Albertan they are, depending on how long they are in this province . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member. As you'll know, a point of order needs to be called at the time of the challenge.

Having said that, the question before us is on whether or not the Member for Lethbridge-West used unparliamentary language when referring to hon. members. I think that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview will recall that there's a significant difference between saying that the government is doing something and that there are members that are something. Unfortunately, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but to my recollection the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West said that the members are uncaring. It does present a challenge when you attribute, although you didn't say, “The Member for Camrose,” a motive to members. Feel free to imply or state your strongly held opinion – and I encourage you to do so – that the government may or may not be responsible for something, but I would encourage some significant caution with respect to attributing it to members as being one thing or another.

Without the benefit of the Blues, I would consider this not to be a point of order because I'm not a hundred per cent sure of what was said, but if you feel it appropriate to apologize and withdraw and attribute those strongly felt opinions to the government, I would encourage you to do so.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To my recollection, I indeed did say: the members of the government. However, I can appreciate that my third point, which is about the priorities of this government – given that what is going to happen here is a massive giveaway to the already wealthy, to folks who least need help after we are pulling ourselves out of a recession caused by the drop in the price of oil, we demonstrate that when we give away billions of dollars with pretty scant evidence that it will lead to policies that will demonstrate the priority of this government, it is my values that when you put the already wealthy before those that need a little bit more in society, that is, in fact, a fairly disconnected, entitled, and uncaring approach to public policy that this government has taken.

3:50

Now, I can appreciate that there are some members opposite who do not like being called out on entitlement or being out of touch or not understanding the priorities of Albertans given that some of those members, in fact, have a great deal of experience with policies that led to those kinds of conclusions being drawn by Albertans. It's very important that Alberta politicians keep ordinary people first and foremost in their minds so that when they're making public policy decisions like when we saw them, for example, signing off on the sky palace, those kinds of decisions, Albertans will conclude that the government does not have its priorities straight.

What we have here is a massive giveaway that has been sold as a job-creating initiative. We have demonstrated on this side of the House, using evidence from a former governor of the Bank of Canada, from other economists, and from others and certainly evidence from south of the border – I can appreciate that the members opposite don't like hearing about that given that the record in terms of the highest level of public policy initiatives hasn't exactly emanated from the White House, south of the border. But, certainly, members opposite have a high tolerance for those kinds of shenanigans, as I understand it.

Certainly, what we see here is that we have priorities, which are that the already wealthy get billions, that nurses will get a pay cut, that toonies will be taken from teenagers, that thousands of dollars will be taken out of the pockets of, in particular, oil and gas workers – private-sector, non-union oil and gas workers who are working overtime – and that LGBT kids will not enjoy the same human rights as they did under a previous piece of legislation. Otherwise,

there wouldn't be the changes made. Those are the priorities that we are revealing with the government's first moves.

Bill 3 sets up the fiscal framework for those themes of this government, which are that they make decisions based on politics, based on putting things in the window, based on making unsubstantiated claims, based on a fact-free analysis, based on a lack of information and evidence. They make policies that lead to a society that is more unequal, a society where we care less about what happens to our neighbours, where we are less able to meet the needs of an increasingly unequal society. They make decisions, Mr. Speaker, that reveal that they are out of touch with ordinary Albertans, ordinary working people, because they put wealthy people first, and the working class among us get their toonies taken away and their overtime scooped. That is what we see coming out of Bill 3.

I can appreciate that some members don't want to hear that and that some members in this House want to go back to the one-party state. I can appreciate that some of these comments fall on ears that are used to those 44 years where nobody ever stood up and the opposition was significantly weaker. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I'm here to tell those hon. members who don't want to hear those kinds of comments about a massive giveaway to the already wealthy at the expense of ordinary working class folks that, you know, those days of the one-party state are over. I hope folks enjoyed it while it lasted. I hope the sky palace was fun and the airplane rides and all the rest of it. I hope everyone had a good time because this opposition will speak out.

We will not be silenced. I won't be silenced. Nobody sent me here to sit on my hands or to not say what I mean. Nobody sent me here to not come to work or to whine about doing my job. I've heard all of those things from the folks across the way because they just can't understand that their role here is actually part of a vigorous democracy and a vigorous legislative process, which means that sometimes you've got to go to work and sometimes you've got to work overtime, Mr. Speaker. There's no crying in this business and no whining and complaining either. Take your snivelling elsewhere.

Now, going back to some of the issues around Bill 3, what we've seen around budget projections is that, of course, budget projections have softened for this year, and that is obvious when one takes a good, solid run at one's revenue. If you quit your job, you're going to have less money coming in. Certainly, what's happened here is that a number of economic indicators have, in fact, softened, both the economic performance forecasts coming out of private-sector forecasters and, it is no surprise to anyone, the revenue forecast. This isn't anything that is any different from the situation that we faced, Mr. Speaker, in 2015 or indeed the Prentice government, prior to us. They saw increasingly worsening economic conditions brought on by the global collapse in the price of oil – that's why the election came early – but it's also why they brought in a budget early, because they knew the forecasts were just going to get worse.

Of course, your budget projections are going to be worse, one, because the global price of WTI has softened over the last three, four months and, two, because the differential remains, outside of the curtailment policies, a significant risk to Alberta's balance sheet, and the price of WCS right now is dependent on those curtailment policies. The whole idea was to phase out curtailment and phase in some crude by rail as a bridging mechanism before TMX and line 3, Mr. Speaker, but folks across the way are choosing not to go with that particular piece of evidence-based decision-making either.

But the biggest thing is that projections do change, Mr. Speaker, over time. That's because the private-sector forecasters and the professional civil service provide different advice to government

over time, particularly in such a volatile budget situation as we find ourselves in here in Alberta. Much of that is structural right now, and we understand that. But to blame that, the fact that forecasts change, on the professional civil service when it's very obvious that we've got both global economic conditions and the fact that a massive hole has been blown in the budget: that is really beyond the pale. A lot of the rationale for Bill 3 is around getting Alberta's economy back on track. In that respect I couldn't agree more with the hon. Minister of Finance, and I suspect that over a beer we would probably have more agreements than disagreements although I don't share his views on magic.

The fact remains that this is one way to allege to stimulate an economy. We have made the case on this side, using facts and evidence, that it is very unlikely to actually work. In fact, what it will do is concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands and make Alberta an even more unequal society. Now, over the last four years we took great pains to reduce that inequality, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, after 44 years of governing with the wealthy in mind, with folks just focusing on their own entitlement, building sky palaces and various other monuments to their own greatness or of the PC Party dynasty, we saw lots of that. Some folks certainly paid an electoral price for that; some didn't. Over the course of those 44 years Alberta became one of the most unequal provinces in Canada.

Through that balance of ensuring that we had appropriate revenues coming in from the small-business tax, which we, I believe, appropriately cut by a third; through various other tax incentives that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview introduced, targeted tax incentive programs; through the petroleum diversification program, which, we know, has created thousands of jobs and ushered in \$13 billion worth of private-sector investment, in particular into the Fort Saskatchewan Industrial Heartland area; through diversifying the economy and ushering in, at a minimum, \$2 billion in new renewables investments, much of which is into rural ridings that surround Lethbridge and Medicine Hat: Mr. Speaker, all of that is new investment.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Through those policies that targeted the private sector and through a variety of public-sector, again, targeted investments – I'm speaking here of the child benefit and associated child care policies, which lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty and, in fact, reduced Alberta's child poverty rate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

4:00

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm grateful for this opportunity to respond to the fact-free information that I think we just listened to.

**An Hon. Member:** Careful.

**Mr. McIver:** A word to live by for all of us, sir: careful.

Madam Speaker, I'm actually amazed at what passes for thoughtful discourse here. What we need to do when we think about these things is try to connect the dots on cause and effect, I think. The hon. opposition party loves to talk about the wealthy corporations. To be clear, some corporations are wealthy, and some are not. That's a fact, but the dots that they fail to connect is that their disdain for corporate Alberta, their disdain for corporations that support charities and arts and so many other things that make Alberta great, was partially responsible for 80 billion plus dollars' worth of those corporations leaving Alberta in the last four years.

Now, I suppose the opposition probably doesn't care about that. I don't know. But the place where I'd prefer they connected the dots is that when they left, a lot of jobs, tens of thousands of jobs, left with them, leading to the abysmal track record that the government that the previous speaker was close to the centre of left Albertans with, the highest unemployment rate in decades, for sure, perhaps forever. It has left us with the highest unemployment rate of young people forever.

That's why their disdain for corporate Alberta – one thing that is consistent, I suppose, is why they wouldn't like the job-creation tax cut, because that is actually designed to undo some of the very, exact damage that the opposition did when they were in government, the very, exact damage that had Albertans saying: "We just want them gone. Make them stop. Make it go away. We'll vote for you if you'll win because we have to stop the damage that this NDP government is doing." That's what we heard consistently from Albertans. It's so bad that, you know, family members, friends are losing their jobs, and that's where it actually affects working people, Madam Speaker.

On this side we certainly appreciate that. I myself worked as a meat cutter, a butcher, if you will, for a number of years. We have a police officer on this side, I think a number of farmers, an EMS person, lots of people that have done lots of work, and lots of people that have family members, friends, and other people that we love and care about who are working people. You know what? Those working people that I met when I was door-knocking and still when I walk around today: they say, "Thank goodness you're here, and thank goodness the NDP are gone because they were making it impossible to make a living so that I could look after myself and my family and pay my taxes and be as productive a citizen as I want to be."

Those are the dots that the opposition fails to connect, Madam Speaker. They talk about taking toonies from teenagers, which is a wonderful catchphrase. They're actually good at catchphrases. I'm going to give them credit for that. They're good at catchphrases. But what they fail to again connect the dots on is that while everyone in this room and probably everyone in Alberta would rather make \$15 than \$13, the dot that they fail to connect is that everybody would also rather make \$13 than zero dollars. There are thousands and thousands and thousands of Albertans making zero dollars instead of \$13 an hour, and that's what our party, our government is trying to correct, not so that people can live on \$13 but, rather, so they can have a job so that they can get on the first rung of the economic ladder so that they can then move to the second rung and the third and the fourth and work their way up to a good, mortgage-paying job to support themselves and their families and increase their quality of life if that's what they choose to do.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege yet again to stand and speak in favour of Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, to restore Alberta's place as the most attractive place to start and grow a business in Canada. As indicated, I am a tax lawyer and a chartered professional accountant, and I work with private businesses, their owners, and professional advisers. These job creators know how to compete and succeed in the real world much better than government. I admire and respect these individuals, and I care deeply about their ability to create and support other Albertans to succeed, to be self-reliant and provide for their families without government intrusion into freedom. For many years it has been an honour and a privilege to speak on taxation matters to various professional groups and promote Alberta as the most competitive

place to start and grow a business. Alberta was the land of opportunity.

Let's consider the facts. The former government increased corporate tax rates by 20 per cent and brought in other additional uncompetitive changes to hamstringing Alberta businesses. The result was that corporate revenue actually fell, and their multibillion-dollar deficits resulted. This is the truth. It would be a mistake to perpetuate the failure of the prior government. That would not be in the public interest. Our government is making a course correction to do the opposite of the NDP.

What has served Alberta very well in the past? Madam Speaker, Alberta is a meritocracy. That is how Alberta has competed and excelled in the real world. A socialist mindset is content with mediocrity. Most Albertans do not share their world view. Alberta does not have the lowest general corporate income tax rate in Canada. Ontario and Quebec, the largest provinces, have a lower general corporate income tax rate than Alberta. That was not the case prior to the NDP. Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut, is focused on the general corporate tax rate.

Madam Speaker, I do not understand why the NDP is against having the most competitive tax jurisdiction in Canada. Why is this embarrassing? Why are they against us being the very best that we can be? Why are they content with mediocrity? This corporate tax cut is all the more expedient given that we are not only competing in Canada, but especially in Alberta's circumstances, we compete for capital from a global perspective.

What we are doing, Madam Speaker, is not new. Having the lowest corporate tax rate has served Alberta very well historically. We have actually had billion-dollar surpluses with the lowest corporate tax rates, so we have evidence based on historical fact.

Madam Speaker, my impression of the former NDP government, with a constitution that states as its purpose to establish and maintain a democratic socialist government, is that it does not understand the private sector or how to compete in the real world. The NDP increased corporate tax rates by 20 per cent and shrank Alberta's private-sector workforce by tens of thousands during the four years they were in power. That is failure and an embarrassment.

**4:10**

This NDP government likes to think they are the champion of government services. The truth is that they are not. While the NDP wishes it wasn't true, government services only exist if there are taxes from private-sector businesses and those who work in them to pay for them. The NDP shrank the economy and, by so doing, crippled the sustainability of government services, necessitating billions upon billions of increased government deficits and debt. That is their record. How can a government be a champion of anything they have no idea how to pay for? Irresponsible, undisciplined, uncompetitive: NDP governments would by and by lead to the collapse of unsustainable government services. Doing it their way failed miserably.

I have sat and listened to the NDP criticize the job-creation tax cut as an attack on workers. We have reputable economists that have said the following. According to Jack Mintz the job-creation tax cut will lead to the creation of at least 55,000 full-time, private-sector jobs. Contrast that with the historical fact of failure by the NDP, losing tens of thousands of private-sector jobs, a very uncomfortable truth, Madam Speaker. Furthermore, University of Calgary political scientist Dr. Bev Dahlby estimates that this tax cut will generate a \$12.7 billion increase in nominal GDP, a 6.5 per cent increase in per capita real GDP, and \$1.2 billion in additional government revenues by 2023-24. Again, contrast that with the

NDP record that when they actually increased corporate tax rates, corporate tax revenue dropped.

Madam Speaker, the NDP views business success as a zero-sum game. In their heart they view that if businesses do well, then workers do not. That is a fundamental flaw in thinking. They are not win-win in their thinking. The old NDP government had a philosophy that is in direct opposition to what is required for economic prosperity from a government that does not understand how to compete and excel in the real world, and the results speak for themselves.

It's time to renew and restore Alberta as the most competitive and attractive jurisdiction in Canada to start and grow a business. Enacting Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut, is an important step on that path. Again, here is the litmus test. In four years let's compare the NDP record of losing tens of thousands of private-sector jobs with the job-creation tax cut and the other important measures we are taking to support Alberta businesses, to support the important government services that all of us in this House value and rely on. I know what the answer to this question will be. My prediction is that the members opposite will be uncomfortable when they are confronted with our factual success and confronted with their factual failure.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member that just spoke for bringing some reality and sense to this debate and for bringing his genuine expertise in what he does for a living. I'd like the hon. member, if he wants, to comment on what we heard as the disdain that the NDP has for what they call wealthy corporations and the politics of jealousy that actually holds people that are in corporations that are successful in disdain, how that affects the livelihoods and the quality of life for Albertans in the future and what the policy decisions are and how that affects the future. I think he'll have some wise words to say about that if he chooses to do so.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Well, Madam Speaker, I've had the opportunity to work with private businesses and their advisers. These individuals care deeply about the success of and ability to provide for their employees. Successful businesses actually work as a team. Valued employees: they strive to treat them as best and as generously as possible. The members opposite seem to have the perspective that business owners are actually in opposition to their workers when the fact is that successful businesses actually value and appreciate their employees.

The socialist ideals that kind of underpin the NDP, as per their very constitution, which they cannot escape, are in opposition to the economic prosperity that has served Alberta very well in the past. Their socialist mindset informs their world view that business owners are somehow inherently evil, and by so doing, trying to legislate and box them in has basically sent the message that Alberta is not welcoming of innovation and business growth. You know, unfortunately, because of that, a lot of businesses have either left – and I've certainly witnessed that in my own personal practice, seen businesses see that Alberta has become less competitive and, unfortunately, make decisions to invest elsewhere. It's unfortunate that the NDP doesn't appreciate the important intrinsic connection between the ability to pay for sustainable government services with a strong economy.

You know, Alberta has done very well in the past as we've supported businesses and helped them succeed. Those businesses return the favour in kind by paying a lot of taxes, by employing those individuals and families in Alberta to work in their businesses. It's also very interesting that when you are the most competitive jurisdiction, businesses will actually seek to centralize and move their income into the most attractive jurisdiction. That has served, again, Alberta in the past very well. The NDP seems to miss that connection with being competitive and with the normal, rational behaviour in the real world of seeking to have your business carried on and grown where it makes the most economic sense to do so, Madam Speaker. Throughout many of the policies that the NDP have brought forth, they seem to miss the connection that Alberta businesses and the workers who work in those businesses are friends, that they want to work together, that they want to succeed together.

The Alberta corporate tax cut does not benefit the wealthy. As corporations may distribute those profits out to individuals, those individuals will pay the personal tax rates on those distributions.

4:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me and allowing me to stand up here in the third reading of Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, which kind of sounds more like a giant gift card to billionaires act. As you can imagine, I was absolutely riveted by some of the speakers in the last few minutes talking about working people. I seem to, you know, remember some of the members from the last Legislature in this House right now belittling some of the different working people that were within our caucus at the time. So it's interesting that all of a sudden that's a really great thing. But I am glad to see some diversity there.

I want to get back to one of the comments, though, around the Member for Red Deer-South, talking about the real world. Let's talk about the real world for a second, Madam Speaker. I'd like to quote something: this huge tax cut will be rocket fuel for our economy; the biggest winners from this transformation will be everyday families from all backgrounds, from all walks of life, and our great companies, which will produce jobs; they are going to produce jobs like you have never seen before. That kind of sounds a little bit like what I've been hearing over the last little while around this job-creation tax cut. That was said on October 11, 2017, so it's pretty close to real world, I guess, depending on how you like to work your calendar there, and that was said by President Donald Trump.

Now, the problem we have here is when they reduce their corporate tax rate, Madam Speaker, from 35 to 21 per cent, all promising more jobs, and so far 84 per cent of businesses have not changed their investment plans. That was "not," by the way. They did not change their plans, and the deficit is up 17 per cent to \$779 billion. As a matter of fact, a big company – you know, there might be only one or two people in this House that recognize the name – AT&T, promised to create 7,000 jobs. That sounds fantastic because we got a tax break, right up until they cut 23,000 jobs. That, sir, is real world.

Let's talk about some other real world. I'd hate to get some headlines like this: The Great Kansas Tax Cut Experiment Crashes and Burns. For five years Kansas's Republican Governor Sam Brownback conducted the nation's most radical exercise in trickle-down economics. Those measures were supposed to deliver a shot of adrenaline into the heart of the Kansas economy and ended up being a shot of poison.

So when we talk about the real world, I always say, you know, that when somebody says, “Look, if we just do this, there’s the light at the end of the tunnel,” sometimes I have to tell them that it’s actually a train coming.

When we talk about factual success, it sounds like you’re pretty confident in your position. So I’m kind of curious, Madam Speaker. A while back, when we had a chance to prove your factual success of a two-year review, you should have just jumped on that because that would have been the time to shut me up and make me eat humble pie.

More facts. You know that great Kansas experiment? Oh, my goodness. What they got was slower growth, a revenue drop that forced officials to shorten school calendars. Wow. That kind of makes me a little nervous, Madam Speaker.

I also noticed that you had touched a little bit on the deficit that was left. I’m interested, Madam Speaker, because I never seem to hear anybody talk about their leader’s debt when he was in Ottawa. It’s funny how that kind of gets left out of the sentence. So we had the chance to potentially course correct, like I said. You could have proven your factual success. You voted it down. I kind of wonder if you really are that confident in your position.

I do know that there are others that would like to speak on this bill. As you can imagine, I’m not very overly excited about giving companies like the Walton family a great, big corporate gift card all in the name of creating jobs, because when I’ve spoken with students – I have 26 schools in my riding, Madam Speaker; great to talk to students there – even they were able to figure out that if my boss only needs five people on shift, just because you pay me \$13 an hour isn’t going to mean that he’s going to need six to do the job.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any comments or questions?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, it’s not a surprise, actually, that I will not be supporting Bill 3 for a number of reasons, but, you know, the members opposite wanted to tell us some hard truths, so let me fire some back at them a little bit.

Every single oil-reliant province lost jobs when the price of oil fell: fact, right? We know this. Prices were falling before 2015, and they continued to fall, and then we entered into a recession, the worst in a generation: fact. The government would like us to believe that it’s all because the NDP formed government, but that was not the case, and we know that.

Let’s talk about the previous Conservative government. When oil was \$100 a barrel, there were failures on all kinds of levels. One of the things that particularly bothers me quite a bit when these guys talk about paving roads and building schools and hospitals is that when oil was \$100 a barrel, they continued to allow the infrastructure deficit to grow and to grow and to grow . . .

**An Hon. Member:** And didn’t balance the budget.

**Ms Renaud:** . . . and could not balance a budget.

You know, I think it sums it up. One of the Premier’s sock accounts on Twitter – I’m sure he’s got an army of them now with his war room – mentioned something about how there could not be compassion in Alberta without prosperity. I guess that kind of sums it up – doesn’t it? – what their world view is.

You want to talk about world view? Let’s talk about some world view. The government of today would like us to believe that there’s really only one way out of this. There’s really one way, as they see it, and that is to continue to do things that we know don’t work. We’ve seen them not work in other jurisdictions, and we have

certainly seen them not work here. But there actually is another way, and we were on track with that other way.

I’m going to focus a little bit on that. Of course, the Premier, before he swooped in here, would like us to believe that he is the saviour. Only through him will we get to a prosperous place, and then when we get there, we can be compassionate. But, you know, like he says when we ask questions, Madam Speaker, I reject that completely. We were focusing on some other things. We were focusing on things that had been neglected for years, like infrastructure, like focusing on our assets and strengths in our communities, focusing on local ownership, and then focusing on something that this government fails to focus on but will be the one thing that will derail their plans, and that is climate change and the climate change crisis.

One of the things that we expended a lot of resources and energy on and, honestly, political capital was creating a plan that would get us to a place where we could continue to be a leader to address climate change, because it will impact our revenues. It will impact our jobs. We were creating a plan that was a well-thought-out energy transition, recognizing that we needed to continue to work to get the best price for our resource while we needed it. We can’t stop using fossil fuels. That is our resource, and we owe it to Albertans to get the best price for it. We were working on that, but we were doing it at the same time as addressing some other things because we can walk and chew gum at the same time. [interjection] I’m glad the members find that funny. It’s a bit of an old saying, but okay.

**An Hon. Member:** It’s super old.

**Ms Renaud:** Yeah, super old.

We continued to address infrastructure deficits. Let me give you an example of what that means. In my community of St. Albert, the community that I represent, we had a lot of infrastructure deficits. We had a lot of fields with signs on them and no schools. We also had a hospital that had a boiler that was 25 years old that needed to be replaced and, of course, had been deferred, deferred: “No, we can’t afford it,” “The price of oil,” yada, yada, the same stories. Finally, when we got to a place where we could make those decisions, we addressed that and we replaced that boiler, but we took it a step further because we were investing in people. We added an operating room. We added a NICU. We added capacity at that hospital that is not only serving the city of St. Albert but is serving that area, so that includes Morinville, Redwater, Legal, Gibbons. We were looking at the people that lived there that needed health care and access to health care in their community. We also invested in some other things because we realized that investment, diversifying your investment and investing in people, pays off.

4:30

It’s odd to me that the members opposite are willing to take a risk, a massive \$4.5 billion risk, to give wealth to already very profitable corporations and then hope that it trickles down when, in fact, they have seen it again and again fail in other jurisdictions. What we did was invest in people. We invested in people, in minimum wage. That is an investment in people because we know that – I don’t know how many of you have had to work minimum wage while perhaps carrying a child, caring for a child, raising a child, going to school – when you have additional funds, when you’re earning a little bit more, you are investing it right back into your community, whether that’s child care, whether that’s the local grocery store, or buying clothing. Whatever it is, it goes back into your community. That’s not wishful thinking or wishful trickle-down; that’s actually fact.

We also invested in indexing AISH. We did that in a time where we were slowly recovering from the worst recession in a generation. We invested in indexing AISH, and what that meant for people with disabilities – I don't speak for them, but what I've heard is that it removed the need for them to continuously have to lobby government to say: "Hey, over here. We're living in grinding abject poverty. Not only do we face an astounding unemployment rate, but we can't possibly live on what we're earning." So we invested in tying it to inflation. We gave them a small bump. I wish we could have done more, Madam Speaker, but the reality was that things were tough. But we indexed it. That took courage. That took political courage, and that's an investment that will pay off.

We invested in diversification, not just using the word and the phrase, but we invested in a plan. It's an energy transition recognizing that the world is indeed changing. You can laugh. You can ignore it all you like.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I suspect you're going to tie this back to the bill, right?

**Ms Renaud:** I will absolutely tie it back.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Renaud:** What I'm saying is that this is the other way. The government would like us to feel like this is the only way; they have the only answer. The only answer is to do something that has been done again and again and again and failed – and failed. But they want us to believe that this is the only way. We were on another path because we believed that there is another way. We had four years. After four decades of one government, it was a little tough to do everything in four years.

Madam Speaker, with that, I am going to end my comments, and I'm going to sit down and allow my colleague to say a few words. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any comments or questions?

Seeing none, any more speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll make my comments fairly brief. I appreciate that we're in third reading. I just want to address a number of things. The issue that I have with this bill is that there is no guarantee that reducing the corporate tax rate will result in massive job creation. There isn't. Will there be some jobs created? I'm sure of it. I'm not about to stand up and say that not a single job will be created.

**Ms Phillips:** One job.

**Mr. Bilous:** No, I created one job. More than that, actually.

The truth, Madam Speaker, is that there isn't a guarantee. What I had talked about I think in second reading was what I would have liked and what we would have liked to have seen. If you're going to introduce a corporate tax reduction, tie it to or ensure that companies are using that to reinvest in their company, invest in machinery and equipment and job growth. The number of companies that will take that tax savings and pocket it and say, "Thank you very much. We need to make up for the recession and the tough years that we just lived through," I think, is going to be the majority of companies that are going to do that. Again, I have a small sample size, but the number of businesses that I've spoken with have said: "That's exactly what we're doing. We're not going

to use it to expand and hire. We're going to take it as additional profits for the difficult few years that we had."

For me, the challenge is that with this tool, the government is trying to use it as a silver bullet. I appreciate they have other pieces of legislation. We know and we've spoken to the legislation on the MGA, which does nothing new. That gives municipalities the powers that they already have, so that's a smoke-and-mirrors bill.

Really, we have introduced tools over the last few years like the different tax credit programs that were asked for by the business community, by the chambers of commerce that said: "Help us compete. Help us encourage Albertans to invest in the province to keep our dollars here, to help our companies grow in scale." We've seen successes that way, Madam Speaker. Our government focused heavily on trade and attracting investment into the province. You know, we've seen companies relocate to Alberta, and that's even with the 12 per cent corporate tax rate of companies that have come. Again, I think this is where my frustration is. This UCP government thinks that the only tool to attract companies is reducing the corporate tax rate. The reality is this. Even with the 12 per cent corporate tax rate and the carbon tax Albertans still paid billions of dollars less than any other jurisdiction across Canada. When members stand up and talk about how uncompetitive Alberta is because we're 12 per cent, Ontario and Quebec are 11 and a half per cent, but they have massive PSTs. We have none. That is significant.

The other thing is, you know, that when we look at the billions of dollars being invested northeast of Edmonton in our petrochemical sector, so adding value to our resources, they weren't here when we had a 10 per cent corporate flat tax. Alberta had that for decades. Why is it that Inter Pipeline is building the first propane-to-plastics facility in Canada? If the corporate tax rate being at 10 per cent flat is all it took, they would have been here decades ago, but they're not. You know why, Madam Speaker? I've spoken to this company numerous times. They said that that simply does not level the playing field because in jurisdictions like the Gulf coast in Louisiana they receive significant incentives and subsidies to set up shop there.

Our government introduced a program that levelled the playing field, that saw that kind of investment. We're seeing investment in Grande Prairie through Nauticol. We're seeing investment through Seven Gen. We're seeing investments all over the province. Cavendish in Lethbridge: the largest investment that they're making or that they've made in Canada is in southern Alberta, and they did it with the corporate tax rate being 12 per cent, Madam Speaker. For me, it's not a matter of saying that this isn't going to work. It's a matter of saying that there is no guarantee. What the government is doing is blowing a 4 and a half billion dollar hole in the budget that will come at the cost of presumably – and the government has already hinted at this – teachers, nurses. We now are anticipating a piece of legislation that's going to legislate contracts for public-sector workers, which is unbelievable, quite frankly.

The one thing that I also wanted to mention. You know, the member – forgive me; I don't remember where he's from – who got up and spoke about that we'll compare the numbers under their term versus our numbers: well, first of all, you're comparing apples and oranges. In the last four years Alberta has been in the middle of a massive recession because of the global collapse in the price of oil, something that this government still thinks – now, I appreciate how powerful the former Premier is, but she's not that powerful that she sets the global price of oil. I know the members opposite would paint our government that way. Interestingly, she does not. Alberta does not.

You know, talking about the job numbers, yes, we recognize Alberta has been through a very, very tough recession, where many Albertans have lost their job because Alberta's economy, first of all, was not adequately diversified. We were overreliant on a single commodity, selling to a single buyer for a single price, which we didn't sell.

This is part of the reason our government focused on pipelines, on diversifying the economy, on market access, on attracting investment back here into the province, on supporting Alberta businesses with accessing new markets through programs like the Alberta export expansion program. Programs that we have seen have supported businesses to grow despite the fact that we were in the middle of a massive recession. I will continue to ask this government if they will continue to fund these programs that are seeing job creation and helping the economy to recover.

4:40

The other thing I just want to comment briefly and quickly on is that, you know, the one member stood up and tried to characterize the NDP position on business, which couldn't be further from the truth. We support Alberta businesses. We support the job creators in this province. That's why we reduced the small-business tax rate to 2 per cent. It's the second lowest in the country. That was done under the NDP government. News flash for members across the way: the only province that has a zero per cent small-business tax rate is Manitoba. Was that under a Conservative government? No. It was a New Democrat government that took that small-business tax rate to zero.

We have worked with the private sector, and I'm proud of the relationships and work that I've done with the private sector to introduce programs like these tax credits that they asked for to help them grow and diversify. So I take offence when members opposite get up – first of all, that doesn't do anyone a service. I mean, the arrogance that has come out of some of the mouths of the members in this place is quite, I think, offensive to Albertans. That doesn't reflect how Albertans feel. What I can tell you is that we know that there is more work to do, that the economy has been tough, that businesses have been struggling. The former Premier and our government admitted that over and over again, that there's more work that needs to be done.

With this bill I appreciate the spirit of it and where the Minister of Finance wants to go. I'm not convinced it's going to deliver the results that this government is betting on. Again, the cost is a 4 and a half billion dollar hole. That has to come from somewhere. Even the minister has said that in the first two years there won't be the recovery of what we are giving up, so something has got to give. I'd appreciate if the minister would talk about what services or programs are on the chopping block in order to fund this 4 and a half billion dollar corporate tax break and how the government will keep their campaign promise of a balanced budget by 2022. I think now we're going into the realm of unicorns and rainbows.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any comments or questions?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to close debate. I rise feeling very privileged to close debate on Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. During the election campaign we made a commitment to Albertans to bring in a series of policies, a series of legislated commitments to improve the business environment in this province and to create jobs and opportunities for Albertans, and

Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut, is a major piece in that commitment to Albertans.

I've made many comments around Bill 3, so I will keep this short. I do want to note, though, that I've heard concerns from members opposite that this job-creation tax cut will simply result in profitability for shareholders and that money will be gone. Well, I want to suggest this, Madam Speaker. Profits don't sit idle. Profits land somewhere, and they will be reinvested. Profits will be reinvested at some point. We're looking to create a business environment that will attract that investment, where profits will be reinvested in this province. I think we have a long history of, in fact, profits being reinvested by successful businesses in Alberta, and our goal is that we will create that type of business environment through a series of measures, with the job-creation tax cut being one of those.

I think the other point that I would like to just again make on closing is that this very broad-based tax cut will encourage diversity. It will encourage every sector in this province. It will encourage, certainly, the energy sector. It will encourage agriculture, it will encourage the tech industry, and it will encourage those sectors that we haven't even thought about in this House. We know that forward-thinking Albertans will bring forward creative ideas. They'll bring forward opportunities that all Albertans can benefit from as they invest in this province.

Again, this corporate tax reduction is a key piece of a multifaceted approach to improve the competitiveness of the Alberta economy. We're confident that this will attract investment. We're confident that this will create jobs and opportunities for all Albertans, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a third time]

## Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call Committee of Supply to order.

## Supplementary Supply Estimates 2018-19 General Revenue Fund

**The Chair:** Hon. members, before we commence this afternoon's consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to remind members where the committee left off in rotation. There are four hours and 30 minutes remaining for consideration of supplementary supply pursuant to Government Motion 13, agreed to yesterday. We will begin with the members of the Official Opposition. The rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6), which was outlined this morning, is deemed to apply for the time remaining to the extent possible. The rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply, with the speaking times set at five minutes at one time, as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c). The rotation will then repeat for any time remaining.

Speaking times are now limited to five minutes. However, provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined 10-minute period.

Finally, at the conclusion of six hours of consideration, including the one hour and 30 minutes taken this morning, or earlier if no members are wishing to speak, the Committee of Supply shall vote on the supplementary supply estimates. Understood?

The Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.



**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just to clarify, I'll have five minutes for my first question, or are we blocked total time 10 minutes, and then it can rotate through the opposition?

**The Chair:** Total time 10 minutes combined for all speakers from here on out if you go back and forth, but five minutes max in that time period for any one speaker.

**Mr. Bilous:** I prefer to go back and forth with the government.

**The Chair:** Okay. Do you agree?  
Okay. Please proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** Excellent. My first questions are under Culture and Tourism, page 34, for the government. There is \$7.8 million for capital grants for the federally funded investing in Canada infrastructure program. I was hoping that the government can give some detail as to the specific programs that this funding will go towards.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The government of Canada has approved two investments in Canada infrastructure projects for Culture and Tourism. These projects, though funded by the federal government, are the YWCA Calgary hub facility project for \$6 million and the Jerry Forbes centre for community spirit renovation project for \$1.8 million.

4:50

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you. Thanks, Minister, for that answer. I'm curious to know the funding percentage. Is it 50-50? How much is Alberta putting in compared to what we're getting from the feds?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Chair, we will have to get back to the hon. member on that question.

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay. Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that. If it's possible to get that in written correspondence, that'd be greatly appreciated.

I'm going to jump to the ministry of economic development and trade. That's page 38. It's a sup of about \$500,000 to enhance funding for industry associations. I know that the Small Brewers – or at least my understanding is that the Small Brewers were one of the associations getting a grant. I'm wondering if the minister has the other associations readily available of who will get the increase in funding.

**The Chair:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The industry associations include the Alberta Estate Winery and Meadery Association, the Alberta Small Brewers Association, and the Alberta Craft Distillers Association.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you very much, Minister. That's what I had thought, but I appreciate the clarification.

I'd like to jump now to Energy. That's page 46. I appreciate the minister jumping around with me on these. These are questions related to crude by rail. I can see here that there's a sup amount of \$6.7 million together with the \$300,000 that was made available from other budgets that came in lower, so \$7 million for costs associated with the crude-by-rail initiative. Now, I'm curious if the

minister can give details as to where the \$7 million will go. What is the breakdown of cars? I see an additional amount. I believe it's an additional amount of \$310 million for payment to secure the needed rail cars. If I can get a bit of a breakdown on how this applies to the crude by rail, that'd be greatly appreciated.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$310 million was for payments needed to secure rail cars from CN and CP. Of course, that is an expenditure that this House will need to approve today, but I do want to note that this is an expenditure, again, that we really believe was an irresponsible decision by the opposition just prior to the election, when they were in government. The \$7 million was for estimated or set-up costs, and I believe that related to infrastructure related to the load-out terminal. If it is anything different than that, we will advise the member opposite.

I would also like to respond to a couple of questions that we committed to responding to this morning, the questions around some education capital planning, if I may, Madam Chair. There was \$500,000 for capital grants, and they were to support school boards in preparing their capital plan submissions. There was a question as to where these funds went. They went to Northland school division, \$116,000; Pembina Hills regional division, \$12,100; Northern Lights, \$78,500; Lakeland Roman Catholic, \$155,500; Foothills school division, \$16,000; and \$123,000 was used for value scoping sessions led by the department.

Value scoping is a structured problem-solving process. Value scoping aims to identify solutions that provide the highest value for money while maximizing the utilization and functionality of school infrastructure to optimize the learning environment and educational program delivery for Alberta students, just in case you didn't know what value scoping was.

There was \$6,667,000 for capital payments to related parties for operations and maintenance for school facilities and for school playgrounds. I know there was a question on the details of that spend. One million dollars of this was provided to three school boards for four new playgrounds: Edmonton Catholic, Father Michael Mireau Catholic school, \$250,000; Edmonton Catholic, Christ the King Catholic school, \$250,000; Red Deer public, Don Campbell elementary school, \$250,000; Calgary Roman Catholic, St. Marguerite school, \$250,000.

And \$1.3 million of this was provided to the Alberta schools alternative procurement contractors responsible for providing operations and maintenance services to the 38 schools over the life of the contract. These were ASAP schools, Alberta schools alternative procurement. The amount relates to indexing of the original payment stream to the contractor, and this indexing recalculation is a provision within the contract that the contractor exercised.

The list of 40 school projects covered under the three ASAP school project bundles are as follows, and bear with me as I read these out. These are: Bridlewood; Cranston, Evergreen; Royal Oak; Saddle Ridge, West Springs; Cranston, Christ the King; Evergreen, Our Lady of the Evergreens; Saddle Ridge, Light of Christ; Rutherford East, Monsignor Fee Otterson; Terwillegar Heights Monsignor William Irwin; The Hamptons, Sister Annata Brockman; Belle Rive, Florence Hallock; Carlton, Elizabeth Finch; Hollick-Kenyon, Dr. Donald Massey; Rutherford West, Johnny Bright; Tamarack, A. Blair McPherson; Terwillegar Towne, Esther Starkman.

Schools that were also included were: Sarah Thompson school, Ted Harrison school, Captain Nichola Goddard school, the Twelve Mile Coulee school, Nose Creek school, Westmount school, St.

Isabella Catholic school, Major General Griesbach school, Bessie Nichols school, Michael Strembitsky school.

**An Hon. Member:** It's a lot of schools.

**Mr. Toews:** A lot of schools.

There was also the Beaumont school; Penhold; Uplands elementary school; Red Deer, École La Prairie; Cochrane, École Notre-Dame; Medicine Hat, Dr. Roy Wilson.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, it is now time for private government members to ask some questions. Same rules: 10-minute block; you may take no more than five minutes per person. Are there any government members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, we will go to the Official Opposition. Hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, would you like to combine your time?

**Ms Phillips:** Yes, I would like to share my time if I could.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Phillips:** I'd like to go back and forth with the hon. minister.

Thank you for this opportunity. I have a series of questions that are mostly in the yes or no, sort of confirm kind of column of seeking information from the government estimates. I'm wondering if, first, on page 8, the minister can just provide a little bit of information on which projects are contained in the \$3.3 million in transfers from expense of E and P for emergent climate projects to I believe the Department of Indigenous Relations. If the minister could provide some detail on which projects Indigenous Relations will be funding through that \$3.3 million transfer.

5:00

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We will have to get back to the member opposite with the answer.

**Ms Phillips:** Yeah. That is fine and perfectly reasonable. If the minister would like to – if a follow-up is undertaken, that would be great.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I have a further question on – we're going to move around a little bit. Sorry, Minister, but we're going to go over to culture and tourism now, on page 34. Can the minister just confirm with me two things: one, is the \$2 million for the antiracism community grant program part of the commitment around security for mosques, and if yes, when can the officials undertake to communicate some of the details around disbursement and how the geographic disbursement will be determined?

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to again point out that these were funds that were already spent in the previous year that this House has been asked to approve in order to conduct the business of the province.

**Ms Phillips:** Yeah. The province.

**Mr. Toews:** Okay. Sure. Very good. I will say that antiracism is a high priority for this government, and I know that there will be very comprehensive details coming from all the ministries on all of our priorities as we present a budget this fall.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Yes. Thank you. Thank you for that answer, Minister.

I want to now bump over to page 46 in the Energy supp, \$1.2 million and change for payments to mineral land right owners as a result of the conservation of land areas. I suspect that this is the biodiversity stewardship area that was part of the four-party agreement between Teck, the government of Alberta, the government of Canada, and the Mikisew Cree. I was just wondering if officials can either undertake later or confirm now that that's what this supplementary supply is going towards.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader is standing.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Chair, we think so. We will confirm with the department as well and table something to that effect and provide it to the hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Minister.

On page 50 now, moving over to the Indigenous Relations sup estimates, we have enumerated here – and forgive me; I don't think this question has been already asked – \$6.6 million for consultation and land claims in addition to the \$18.5 million for the Lubicon land claim settlement. Thank you, first of all, for ensuring that those funds are there. That is an important land claim, the Lubicon one, and one I think that we can agree on all sides of the House needs to be funded. Around the additional \$6.6 million, I'm wondering if there is any detail there on the specific consultation and land claims. Is this, in fact, the regularization of the Big Horn reserve or the highway 1A regularization that is contained within this? Those were close, and I'm wondering if the minister can confirm with me what is contained in that \$6.6 million.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would remind the member opposite that, in fact, this was their spending. I will say this. We are happy to get back to the member opposite with this level of detail. Our officials just don't have it with them at this point in time.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Minister. I'd now like to turn our attention to page 74, the Treasury Board and Finance supplementary supply estimates requested in the amount of \$25 million to provide \$30 million for market access advocacy in communications and public engagement. I just want to confirm with the minister that that \$30 million has been and will continue to be accounted for in the same way with respect to third-party contracts, done in the usual way with RFPs, the usual way of contracts being disclosed in the blue book subsequently. I'll start with those two questions.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Chair, could we just ask the member to repeat that question, just so we're clear?

**Ms Phillips:** Sure. Here we have \$30 million for market access advocacy in CPE, for which, I think, on all sides of the House, while we may not agree on the content of those communications, we agree on the virtue of talking about market access, and indeed we undertook some of those activities as well. So I'm asking if the minister can confirm that that \$30 million that is providing for market access advocacy – in the CPE branch, that is now within Treasury Board and Finance, after some changes that were made a couple of years ago – will be accounted for in the same ways as it has been previously; that is to say that any third-party vendors will go through the normal RFP process, that things will be disclosed in the usual way, that they are within the blue book, and that contracts for any additional employees will be posted, as is usual practice.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. The \$30 million here that this House is ultimately being asked to approve, as by virtue of approving the total supplementary supply, of course, are funds that have already been spent. Those funds are gone. They were spent by the previous government. Of course, this government has a significant advocacy effort planned, and that advocacy effort is certainly beginning even right now as we work to advocate with a very sharp and focused campaign advocating for approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Our advocacy efforts, of course, are going to be much broader than that. We laid out our plans to Albertans prior to the election, and they wholeheartedly endorsed our efforts to be advocates and defenders of our energy industry. The \$30 million that we're looking at right now, again, relates to a spend made by the previous government. Perhaps I'll leave it at that.

**Ms Phillips:** Sure. Looking at the Children's Services estimates, then, can the member provide some insight into what is being funded around the early learning and child care centres and whether \$8 million fully covers the recommendations of the child intervention panel?

**The Deputy Chair:** That is the conclusion of that 10-minute block. This now is an opportunity for members from the government side, private members, to speak.

Seeing none, moving back towards the opposition side, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Is it safe to assume that you'll be sharing the 10-minute block with the minister?

**Ms Pancholi:** Yes.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. Go ahead, please.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just going to pick up on, actually, the comments from my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-West. On the Children's Services numbers, just going to those – and I believe that's on page 26 – I just wanted, actually, to pick up on those comments to ask if there could be some clarification as to whether or not the \$8.3 million in child intervention and early intervention services for children and youth in support of the implementation of the public action plan for the ministerial child intervention – I believe it means the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention. Could the minister update this House on the progress of that plan and whether or not that commitment is going to ensure that that work is continuing without interruption and that it's the full implementation of the action plan from the panel?

5:10

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you. As we chatted about a little bit earlier today, there are three different phases that were outlined in the action plan in terms of steps that need to be taken moving forward.

In 2018-2019 Children's Services did request funding, \$8.3 million for costs associated with implementation, mostly around the first phase of actions within the action plan. Some examples of where that funding went were to establish a funding model for the seven child advocacy centres, which provide vital front-line support to survivors of abuse and their families; assessing a made-in-Alberta kinship care program to better support caregivers and children across Alberta – that was something that not only came forward in the report but also in the conversations I had with the people who are on the panel, something that certainly needed to be

improved – and to strengthen services and placement options for children with extremely complex needs.

This includes reorganizing how services are delivered across the province and improving how we support our young people with disabilities and making important changes and updates to the child intervention practice framework program policies and our case management system to align with the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act so that we can better meet the needs of children, youth, and families and ensure that those most vulnerable across our province are safe and supported.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you to the minister for that response.

I'm wondering, with respect to the child advocacy centres, whether or not the minister is able to speak to whether or not that includes a child advocacy centre located in Lethbridge, if that was completed.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services, if she wishes to speak.

**Ms Schulz:** I don't have that level of detail with me right now, but I'd be happy to get back to you on that.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you to the minister for that. I would appreciate it if perhaps she would provide that update in writing.

Can I just clarify, then, in terms of the \$8.3 million into the implementation of the action plan? Can the minister speak to whether or not this means that the timelines that were currently outlined in the action plan will be met, not just for the short term but as well for the medium-term and the long-term commitments?

**Ms Schulz:** That's a great question. The previous government had outlined the actions that came from the report into short-, medium-, and long-term actions. While funding was allocated for the short term – and this is what this \$8.3 million has gone to support – not all of the longer term recommendations have specific pieces that require a budget, but, you know, those are things that I think we will work towards in the coming months as we lay out our province's budget this fall.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you to the minister for that.

Just some fleshing out a little bit of the \$14.9 million, almost \$15 million for additional funding for child care subsidies and supports. I understand, of course, generally what that would include. Can you just break that down a little bit for clarification? Is that to support the continuation of the early learning and child care centres until the end of – will that fund them for the remainder of their contracts, or is there an investment in funds there that will go beyond the extension of their contracts right now?

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you. The child care funds that were outlined, the \$14.988 million for caseload pressures and carry-forward of the ELCC funding: the Alberta child care subsidy program provides financial support to lower income families with children in a licensed child care program. Additionally, the funding supported growth in specialized child care caseloads. Their supports assist child care programs to care for children who have high behavioural or developmental needs and can include additional staff, training, coaching, and other resources to support children.

As the member opposite does know, this was developed as a pilot program, and I think that, you know, to be responsible, the benefit of a pilot is to gather data and information and ensure that any program is meeting the needs of parents. Certainly, as a working

parent, and the member opposite being one as well, I know that we do understand that different parents need different things for their families, but we also know that not every child is the same. Certainly, we need to ensure that we have accessible child care, but we also need to make sure that we have choice in child care.

We have committed to maintaining the pilot for the three years, which is a good amount of time to get a baseline of feedback and data and information to make good decisions moving forward.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you to the minister. Yes, I do absolutely understand the pressures as a working parent as well as the minister is, especially, and I'm sure the minister would appreciate as well, how important it is to have some predictability when you do have children in child care. I think that for those parents who do currently have their children enrolled in one of those ELCCs, there's a lot of uncertainty about what's going to be happening at the end of those contracts and whether or not they'll continue to be able to afford child care and how to make arrangements if they can't. I appreciate the comments, but right now I think what we're looking for is some predictability and some assurances we can provide those families and those centres that are offering those programs.

I'm just wondering if the minister can comment at all about how the numbers that we see here on page 27 of the supplementary supply bill address indigenous services and indigenous services funding and whether or not there will be continued support for ensuring that there is no distinction in service between on-reserve and off-reserve services in the area of children's services. I'm wondering if the minister could comment on whether those numbers reflect that.

**Ms Schulz:** I do just want to remind the member opposite that supplementary funds are helping to keep services stable for Albertans and, obviously, are numbers that were put forward by the previous government. I certainly wouldn't want to presuppose what might be in upcoming budgets, but I can tell you that a lot of that work was what was brought forward in the action plan and part of what – you know, the changes to practice were a hugely important part.

Certainly, as I mentioned about supports for kinship care and supporting families and ensuring that our most vulnerable children, the things that we did learn through those panel consultations, things like, you know, looking at kinship care, ensuring that our children have connections to family and to culture – you know, I think that sometimes we look at the dollar amounts first. But I think that respect for indigenous culture and changing practices based on the good feedback – I know that members on both sides of the House took part in those discussions, and I really did, when I said it earlier today, take it really seriously. I know we put forward a lot of reports as a government, but I felt like it was really important to speak to the people who informed that work.

You know, if you have more specific questions about the budget and what's coming forward, we'll be in a better position to speak to that in a couple of months, but this is based on previous spending and keeping services stable and making good on the commitments that were made previously.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. Nothing further right now. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others with 50 seconds left?

Going to the government side of the House, I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate this opportunity to rise right now.

**The Deputy Chair:** However, is it my assumption that you'll be sharing time?

**Mr. Schow:** Yes. I'll be sharing time with the minister. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I apologize.

I do have a couple of questions for the minister, if I could, and I would start by saying that I'd like to ask the minister if the \$317 million in the supplementary supply for crude by rail was earmarked during the campaign period.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you to the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika for the question. I appreciate it. I think it's an important question, Mr. Chair, and the answer to his question is quite simple. The answer is yes. At least the commitments would have been made during the campaign period. I suspect he probably has a follow-up question to that, but that's when the commitment would have been made.

5:20

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah. I certainly do have a follow-up question to the minister. I have been knocking on a lot of doors, wearing out shoes during the campaign period, and heard from a lot of constituents with concerns about this purchase of these railcars. They were worried about some of the ethical lines that this manoeuvre may or may not have crossed or, frankly, blown right over. I wanted to know if the minister could maybe comment about that and if he has anything to say about the ethical lines that may or may not have been crossed by this.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Chair, the process, how it works in our province – in case some hon. members are not aware – is that in February 2019 we entered what is called the campaign period. While we know that the writ was dropped in March and ultimately the election date took place on April 16, our province ends up in a campaign period from February until, actually I think it ends on June 16 or something like that upcoming, when certain fundraising rules and those things that apply to our campaigns happen. At the same time government is to enter into a mode of starting to prepare for an election while recognizing that the end of their mandate is there.

Certainly, Mr. Chair, through you to the hon. member, I don't know specifically whether or not, you know, we could quote specific laws that were broken or something along those lines. What I can tell you is that I have heard from my constituents as well that it certainly looks inappropriate to do that during a campaign period, especially to make a commitment that ends up committing Albertans to spend almost \$3.5 billion in a desperate attempt in the dying days of an administration. [interjection]

I think the hon. member's point – and I know the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort would like to get involved. Calgary-Buffalo now. See, the ridings have changed. I'm always happy to hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. He's welcome to rise when he has the floor, but I have the floor right now. We will stick with me talking for a little bit, if that's okay, Mr. Chair, and to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

The reality is that the outgoing government committed us to \$3.5 billion. Of that, they've had to spend in supplementary supply, which has already been spent, about \$317 million as the hon.

member articulates very, very well in his question and I've confirmed. The point of his question, though, is whether or not it was appropriate for the government to make that decision in the dying days of their administration. I would submit to this Assembly and through you to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo that, no, it was not appropriate.

That is why our leader, the now-Premier of Alberta, the hon. Premier, made a commitment in February 2019 that any contract that the government entered into during that campaign period would be examined in the lens of what was appropriate for taxpayers. We made that very clear. In fact, he held a press conference. I remember we had a premeeting, the leadership of our caucus, to make a decision on what that announcement would be. We made it very, very clear that we would not automatically honour every agreement that the outgoing government did because our job, we recognized, was to protect taxpayers.

When you're dealing with something that is of a magnitude of that, \$3.5 billion, the largest expenditure, as far as I'm aware, probably in the history of the province for a one-item expenditure, certainly it was, I think, very appropriate of us as the opposition at that time to be able to position ourselves in a spot, if we were fortunate enough to form a government, to be able to stand up for taxpayers. I think it was certainly inappropriate of the government at that time, now the opposition, the NDP, to make a decision like that, which is turning out probably to be a boondoggle. I think you're going to hear more about that in the coming days and the mistakes that they made along that line.

Again, I'll close with this and go back to the hon. member, with his time that is remaining. Certainly, I think it was inappropriate, and I think most Albertans would think it was inappropriate.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have a couple more questions for the minister. This was certainly a large expenditure, my understanding is the largest expenditure in the history of the province. A number, I think it was \$3.5 billion or \$3.6 billion – maybe the former Finance minister can enlighten us at some point. But I'll move along. This is a big number, one that actually rivals a number that the former Premier's best friend, Mr. Trudeau, paid for a pipeline, a pipeline that he, as we understand, overpaid for by almost \$1 billion. Now, I think sometimes people have a difficult time comprehending how much a billion dollars is. I can only imagine how many teachers' and how many nurses' salaries can be paid with that kind of money.

So, you know, I'm hoping the minister here can help me understand. Does this move, this purchase, this \$3.7 billion that we paid for these rail cars, put us . . . [interjections] I appreciate the members opposite trying to occupy some time. The time is in fact mine to ask these questions, and I ask members to show some level of decorum in this House.

Does this move put the government in a bit of a financial crunch to pay for essential services like education and health care, and if it's an irresponsible move, which it possibly is, would it not be considered an attack on teachers and nurses, Mr. Chair?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, again, thank you to the hon. member for the question. Certainly, that would be the concern, the outgoing government making a decision of that magnitude, again, in the dying days of their administration, when they knew that they were in fact more than likely to lose the election, in a desperate Hail Mary pass, if you will, to try to be able to save their government. Yes. They do position the next government in a tough spot. I think that's what was inappropriate about that decision. But mostly what's

important, Mr. Chair . . . [interjection] The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, I know, doesn't have the same view about the protection of Alberta taxpayers as I do. Certainly, if you look at his time as Finance minister, that speaks for itself when it comes to how he cares about taxpayers.

But the reality is, to answer the member's question: yes. That makes another thing to add to the mess that the NDP have left us, some of which we're talking about here in supplementary supply and the challenge that we have to be able to overcome. What I can assure this House, though, as we have many times, is that we will work diligently to make sure that we can overcome the challenge that they left us with crude by rail, and Albertans can be confident that they now have a government in power that cares about taxpayers.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika if he has more questions.

**Mr. Schow:** I am done.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others looking to finish off the last minute and 45 seconds?

Seeing none, we'll push it back over to the opposition side. I see the hon. Member for St. Albert standing.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. I'd like to focus on page 31, line 4.2, the Ministry of Community and Social Services. My question specifically focuses on PDD services, persons with developmental disabilities. On page 31, line 4.2, we see an increase in funding for PDD services. Under our government we increased funding to this program by \$150 million and launched a comprehensive PDD review of the program. To the minister: first of all, what has been the caseload growth for PDD over the last three years? You are going to need this information to budget. Does this supplementary supply amount adequately account for the mid-year changes in caseload?

**Mr. Toews:** The answer to that is yes. It does.

Mr. Chair, if I can just respond to a couple of questions that were asked earlier previously that we didn't have an answer for, I would like to take that time and do that. There was a question related to the climate leadership projects and specifically to the \$3.3 million spend, what that related to. In fact, it was an increase in capital grants for an off-diesel program for four locations.

I also wanted to respond to a question related to culture and tourism. There was a question around the federal-provincial split for the YWCA Calgary hub facility. The federal amount was \$6 million. The provincial amount was \$8.6 million. Again, for the Jerry Forbes centre for community spirit renovation project the federal amount was \$1.8 million, and the provincial amount was \$5.8 million.

5:30

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thank you. The PDD review panel has been hard at work to make recommendations to improve the PDD program. A couple of things. Number one, when will the report be released to the public? Two, do the supplementary amounts reflect any supports for the panel?

Now, also to note, in the UCP platform document there was a reference to removing the IQ criteria for determination of eligibility under this program, so I'd like to know if that was factored in and how you got to those numbers.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** We've gone quite a way into supplementary supply, and I think the hon. the Finance minister has done an

excellent job of trying to answer detailed questions, which are fair inside this Assembly, and come back with information. Again, we are in supplementary supply. Mr. Chair, through you to the member, this is about money that your government formerly, just a few weeks ago, spent. If your question is about something to do with supplementary supply, the hon. Finance minister will continue to do his best to answer that. But as far as policy direction or budget direction some of those questions that the hon. member just asked probably would make sense in interim supply later on today, when we get to that conversation, and I would submit to you that the bulk of them actually make more sense when we discuss the budget this fall.

**Ms Renaud:** Well, thank you for that, but I'm going to ask it again. Will this government actually commit to releasing the report publicly? The financial implications of this report are huge. I think the member knows that. You can deflect all you like. Let me skip that. Clearly, you're not going to answer that.

Maybe this question is better directed to Treasury Board. I'm wondering if or where there are supplementary amounts to support the work of the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Chair, again, the report that the hon. member refers to is not a part of supplementary supply debate. I think that the best way for her to handle that is to send a note to the Minister of Community and Social Services, who is very accessible to all members of this House. I do know that. She's been able to provide me information on the same types of questions in the past. I think that would be probably the more effective way for her to be able to get a question about a specific report.

Again, I remind all hon. members, Mr. Chair, that this supplementary supply. It's not interim supply. It's not a budget debate. This is about money that the former government spent, and we're happy to answer the detailed questions about where that money went and what types of projects it was spent on. But this is not an opportunity for the opposition to have a conversation about interim supply or, more importantly, our budget process.

We've been clear that our budget process will take place over the coming months. There will come a day when we will first come before our standing committees as a part of the 30th Legislature, which includes members from all sides of the House, where we'll have to answer detailed questions on that. We'll be happy and excited to show what we intend to do on behalf of the province and how we think we've solved some of the problems that we have inherited. Then ultimately we'll come back to this Chamber, where this belongs, to have a budget that is passed and debated in a fulsome way – I welcome that – but not during supplementary supply.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Well, thank you. With all due respect for that second lecture I'm going to ask that again. To Treasury Board and Finance, I'm wondering if or where there are supplementary amounts to support the work of the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities. It's a pretty straightforward question. Yes or no?

The other part is that the member referred to how accessible the minister is. Well, I'm sorry, but I've offered a few times to meet as the critic for that particular ministry, and I've not been successful so far, nor have I been able to have a meeting with the office of the advocate. I'm not sure what that means. I will turn to Treasury Board and Finance and ask that question. Are there supplementary amounts to support the work of the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities? Yes or no?

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can only assume that the member opposite is asking whether the money spent actually went to that office. Again, this is all past tense. This was money that the previous government spent, and it is not money that this current government has any discretion in spending. It's gone. This money is gone.

I will just go through the summary of the supplementary amounts: \$31,385,000 are related to the ministry; \$18 million was for income support to people expected to work or working to support core and supplementary benefits rate increases indexed to the Alberta consumer price index and increased demand for financial benefits; \$5,455,000 was spent for assured income for the severely handicapped, including \$16,900,000 to support the benefit rate increase and indexation of benefits with the Alberta consumer price index, less \$11,750,000 made available from lower caseload growth in financial benefit grants and \$305,000 for the workload assessment model in program planning and delivery; \$7,930,000 was for disability services, including \$7,180,000 in persons with developmental disabilities supports to Albertans, including \$7 million for caseload and cost-per-case growth and \$180,000 for the workload assessment model; \$750,000 in family support for children with disabilities for their workload assessment model.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, that is quite interesting that there is a lower caseload – okay – considering AISH offices across the province get about 50 applications a day. I'll wait to find out more about that. Let me ask about AISH. On page 30 the ministry states there is a lower caseload growth than expected for the AISH program. Can you explain what the historical caseload growth rate has been, and how is it possible that there are fewer Albertans with disabilities in need of support?

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, to the hon. member, her commentary, quite frankly, probably not helpful to the conversation, but that's fine. That's her prerogative with her time. I would suggest that as she's looking for answers to these questions on how this money was spent before we were in government, that she ask her colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, who just a few short weeks ago was the minister that was responsible for the spending that she's referring to. Through you, Mr. Chair, to the hon. member, if there are concerns with the caseloads and whether or not the hon. minister formerly spent enough money on caseloads, I don't understand why that hon. member would not take it up with the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, who was the former minister and ultimately responsible for the spending that the Finance minister is discussing with this House today.

Again, Mr. Chair, through you to the hon. members across the way, I know time is short, and I want to respect their time . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Looking to the government side, are there any private members looking to ask questions? I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka sitting. Seeing none, looking to the opposition side. I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie standing with the call.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my privilege and honour to serve one of the most diverse ridings in Alberta. In my riding numerous organizations do plenty of work promoting multiculturalism through cultural, literary, and theatre collectives

and help communities integrate into the greatest, largest Canadian mosaic. I just wanted to bring to your attention that on page 35, line 2.9 there's an antiracism community grant program. Our government was proud to create this historic program to fight racism, build awareness, and collaborate with amazing community groups that are championing antiracism work.

I think I forgot to ask for my five minutes. Do I take my five minutes?

**The Deputy Chair:** Oh. Yeah. There was actually . . .

**Mr. Deol:** I'll just read my questions, and you can respond.

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt. One quick thing, I believe I introduced you as Edmonton-Ellerslie and not Edmonton-Meadows, so to clear that up.

**Mr. Deol:** It's good. I didn't hear you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Also, just as we get into the rhythm of this sometimes people just assume that the time is going to be shared. Is that your intention?

**Mr. Deol:** No.

**The Deputy Chair:** No, so five minutes to yourself. Please continue.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you. I have a question. To the minister: do you agree that the program we created is important and should be supported going forward to support antiracism work in Alberta?

I have another question. Question 2: given the Islamophobic incidents we have seen in the province, will any of the funding go towards combating Islamophobia in Alberta?

5:40

I have question 3. Can you explain why your government has ended all acknowledgements of indigenous land given your supposed commitment to antiracism work?

Many multicultural organizations have advocated for antiracism training and education. Will any of these supplementary funds be directed to antiracism education, including education for elected officials?

Question 5: will you ensure that antiracism and LGBTQ2S organizations may apply to this grant as seed funding, or will this community be sidelined once again by your government?

Question 6: is this supplementary amount requested for one-time investment into the grant program, or will the program be maintained every year going forward?

Question 7: to the minister, will you be changing any grant criteria for the program?

Question 8: to the minister, given that the latest submission deadline was June 1, can the minister please advise when successful grant applicants will be notified?

Last question, question 9: will any of this funding support the antiracism council?

I will be happy to have answers for all those nine questions. Mr. Chair, the minister can get back to me even in written responses. I will be happy to have those answered in writing. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister, with five minutes.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, I want to preface my comments with: the amounts we're looking at here have already been spent. They've been spent. It's not discretionary spending. There's no ability for this government to make decisions around

these funds. They were spent by the previous government, and so they're gone.

I think the other comment, though, I would like to make in response to your questions about efforts around antiracism. I just, again, want to assure all members in this House that this government takes racism seriously, and we certainly will make it a high priority to support efforts, antiracism efforts, going forward. Again, there will be very thoughtful and detailed budget deliberations by all the ministries over the course of the next weeks and months, and we will be rolling out a budget that will basically demonstrate our priorities in all areas, including the area of antiracism.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, and, Mr. Chair, I tried to listen to the hon. member's questions carefully. I have to say that, to the hon. member, I think you asked some important and meaningful questions. What we're having some trouble answering you about is that you're asking about the government's intentions in the future. There will be a place for you to ask those questions in interim supply and when the budget comes out and other times in question period and other committees and places to do it. This, respectfully, might not be your best source of information in this committee because we're actually asking about historical expenditures and what they're on. That's what's before us. A lot of your questions were on future intentions and expenditures.

I'm not berating your questions. I'm not berating the hon. member's questions. I'm actually saying that I think they're important. I'm just, I hope, in a friendly, helpful way suggesting the hon. member maybe ask his questions again in the future, in parts of the discussion, in parts of the budget discussion, in parts of the interim supply, where they would have a better chance of being answered. Because all we're really here to answer on this is on the way money was spent when the party that the hon. member belongs to was in government before we were here. This is an interesting piece, that we're actually answering questions about things that we didn't do or that the previous government did. I hope you'll accept my answer in the spirit of helpfulness with which it is offered.

**The Deputy Chair:** There are a few minutes remaining, and therefore there's an opportunity. None?

### Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2018-19 General Revenue Fund

**The Deputy Chair:** If there are no members who wish to speak, then I shall put the following questions after consideration of the 2018-19 supplementary supply estimates.

Agreed to:

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer	\$8,874,000
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**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Advanced Education	
Capital Investment	\$42,000,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Agriculture and Forestry	
Expense	\$192,149,000
Financial Transactions	\$500,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Children's Services	
Expense	\$23,296,000
Capital Investment	\$225,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Community and Social Services	
Expense	\$31,385,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Culture and Tourism	
Expense	\$11,880,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Economic Development and Trade	
Expense	\$500,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Education	
Expense	\$500,000
Capital Investment	\$6,667,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Energy	
Expense	\$6,700,000
Financial Transactions	\$311,262,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Indigenous Relations	
Expense	\$24,342,000
Financial Transactions	\$33,300,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Justice and Solicitor General	
Expense	\$24,167,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

5:50

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Municipal Affairs	
Expense	\$91,013,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Seniors and Housing	
Expense	\$16,628,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Service Alberta	
Expense	\$300,000
Capital Investment	\$3,736,000
Financial Transactions	\$17,000,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Status of Women	
Expense	\$500,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.



Agreed to:  
Department of Treasury Board and Finance  
Expense \$25,565,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Transfer from the Capital Investment vote of the Department of  
Service Alberta to the Expense vote of the Department of Service  
Alberta \$2,600,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Transfer from the Expense vote of the Department of Advanced  
Education to the Expense vote of the Department of Service  
Alberta \$3,143,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Transfer from the Expense vote of the Department of Community  
and Social Services to the Expense vote of the Department of  
Service Alberta \$3,000,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Transfer from the Expense vote of the Department of Indigenous  
Relations to the Expense vote of the Department of Service Alberta  
\$250,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake  
— oh. The Mace. I think I got excited after all those votes. My  
apologies to the Sergeant.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee  
of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports  
as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following  
resolutions relating to the 2018-19 supplementary supply estimates  
for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31,  
2019, have been approved.

Legislative Assembly, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer:  
\$8,874,000.

Advanced Education: capital investment, \$42,000,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$192,149,000; financial  
transactions, \$500,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$23,296,000; capital investment,  
\$225,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$31,385,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, \$11,880,000.

Economic Development and Trade: expense, \$500,000.

Education: expense, \$500,000; capital investment, \$6,667,000.

Energy: expense, \$6,700,000; financial transactions,  
\$311,262,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$24,342,000; financial  
transactions, \$33,300,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$24,167,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$91,013,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$16,628,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$300,000; capital investment,  
\$3,736,000; financial transactions, \$17,000,000.

Status of Women: expense, \$500,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$25,565,000.

The Committee of Supply has also approved the following amounts  
to be transferred.

Transfer from Service Alberta capital investment vote to Service  
Alberta expense vote, \$2,600,000.

Transfer to Service Alberta expense vote from the expense votes  
of Advanced Education, \$3,143,000; from Community and Social  
Services, \$3,000,000; from Indigenous Relations, \$250,000.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

I would like to alert hon. members that Standing Order 61(3)  
provides that upon the Assembly concurring in the report by the  
Committee of Supply, the Assembly immediately reverts to  
Introduction of Bills for introduction of the appropriation bill.

## Introduction of Bills

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

### Bill 5

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce  
Bill 5, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019. This  
being a money bill, Her Honour the Administrator, having been  
informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this  
Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank  
all members of the House for a good day of productive work, and I  
will move that we adjourn the Assembly until today at 7:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, June 12, 2019

Day 12

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

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Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
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Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

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Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Deol  
Ganley  
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Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Dach  
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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 12, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Bilous moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that further time is necessary to enable school boards to adjust their policies to comply with the proposed legislation and regulations.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment June 11: Mr. Bilous]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on amendment RA1. Is there anyone wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll just ask at the start. I'm not sure how much time I have left.

**The Speaker:** Four minutes.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 8. I believe that I left off moving a reasoned amendment to give school boards a little bit more time to adjust to what this bill is proposing. I highlighted earlier some of my concerns with Bill 8 and how it's currently written. One of the big concerns that I have – and there are a few – is the fact that this bill gives school boards the ability to essentially vote off or out one of their elected school board trustee colleagues. Now, that causes the alarm bells to go off, Mr. Speaker. School board trustees are duly elected, as is every member in this Assembly, and to give the authority to the other school board trustees to remove one from the board, quite frankly, is going to not only stifle innovation and robust democratic debate; it's going to stifle ideas, it's going to promote groupthink, it will ensure that members of a school board all think alike, and if anyone steps out of line, well, be careful. You could end up without a job.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that school board trustees are elected to serve the people that they represent, similar to all 87 members in this Chamber. As soon as you give the authority to the other members of the board, the majority of the board, to vote off a trustee when they may disagree with the person's opinion, they may tell them – if they're raising too many questions, maybe if they go to the public to disagree with a decision that the board has made, well, the board can then remove them.

I think of a number of school trustees who have spoken out with what they believed was right when the will of the rest of the board was incorrect. I can think of a couple of trustees that would have been voted off or out by the board. They have a responsibility to the people that elected them, not a responsibility to toe the line of the rest of the trustees, Mr. Speaker. This is a very dangerous precedent and quite shocking that the government has this in their Bill 8, the current Education Amendment Act, 2019.

Of course, other concerns that myself and my colleagues have raised are how much this weakens provisions to protect students when it comes to the LGBTQ2-plus community. I think that throughout the course of the day we've heard the government say that these are the strongest protections. There's nothing that could be further from reality, Mr. Speaker. We see in black and white what this bill is proposing compared to other jurisdictions that have much stronger protections, including here in Alberta under our government. These changes are actually going to remove protections for students, expose our young people again to bullying and being treated differently because of their sexual orientation. You know, to talk about how this is going to create more inclusive spaces, I don't think any Albertan is buying what this bill is trying to sell, quite frankly.

For that reason, I will encourage all members of this Assembly to support this reasoned amendment and ship this bill off.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Does anybody have any questions or comments for the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview?

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the hon. the Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this reasoned amendment in regard to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. You know, I was quite surprised that the government did go forward with this Education Act. We know that it was created quite a number of years ago by the former Conservative government and was never proclaimed. The consensus among school boards and people that worked on it and, I think, members of that Conservative government was that the Education Act as it stood was not ready for prime time. It had a number of controversial elements to it that were very difficult both to pay for, to accommodate for, and, as the previous speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview just pointed out, it had some basic undemocratic elements to it that just made it so that it was not to be proclaimed.

When our government was in office, what we did do was a very practical thing and take some elements of the Education Act that were practical, reasonable ideas and incorporated them into legislation rather than taking this whole big chunk of legislation that, quite frankly, by that time was starting to, you know, show its age. Mr. Speaker, then, instead, we just took some practical elements of it and had a bill that, I think, was quite successful.

Now analyzing what has led us to this moment, Mr. Speaker, I think is that the government during their election was looking for a way to move backwards on GSA legislation and was looking for a way to do that that could provide some cover – right? – instead of just having, you know, an act to reverse GSA policy, which so brazenly sort of goes against, I think, both popular opinion and what's right, what's correct, the right thing to do, using the Education Act as some cover. So here we are today. I know that the hon. minister has taken out some of the other elements in Bill 8 that otherwise cost money and were a problem and so forth, so here it lays even more bare this sort of rebirth of the Education Act in a Frankensteinian sort of way. It is even more clearly and brazenly just an act to get at the GSA legislation.

I think most people can see through it. If they haven't, they are seeing clear as day now. You know, it's a problem, quite frankly. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, from being witness to the evolution of protections for gay-straight alliances and queer-straight alliances from the debates that took place around what was Bill 10 from the

government as well that this was a very divisive and difficult process.

What I saw when I became Minister of Education is that Bill 10 was fraught with peril, quite frankly. It had lots of loopholes in it that either by design or by omission allowed schools and school boards to not act in an expedient and prompt sort of way when students wanted to form a gay-straight alliance or a queer-straight alliance and thus could just kind of rag the puck and maybe wait for that group of kids to leave the school and then try to forget about it, right? So obfuscation was very common. I had lots of people from around the province coming to me with stories about how they just couldn't get the principal and the school board to act.

Then, you know, it was kind of hoping that it would die on the vine, this notion of having a GSA in a school, so we knew that we had to make some law about that to say that when students would ask to form a GSA or QSA, a principal would act in an expedient way, as soon as possible, to help to expedite that request and to provide a responsible teacher to be supervising this and to make sure that the kids could call it a GSA or a QSA if they chose to do so, okay?

7:40

I mean, these were all rules and advancements and sort of reforms that we put into what was Bill 24 because we actually saw people using and displaying these behaviours in the field, in our schools, around the province. It was the same with protecting the confidentiality of students who were joining a GSA or a QSA, that if they chose to have that confidence to respect that, right? Again, we had to make that rule because schools were putting out newsletters and so forth here and there in and around the province. You know, the whole basis of a GSA or a QSA is that it provides a safe haven for very vulnerable students, so any notion that a teacher or an administrator could put out the names of the people joining a GSA or a QSA, again, was defying or eroding the very reason for a GSA or a QSA to exist.

That's it. I mean, those are all the things that we basically did in Bill 24 to strengthen GSAs and to make a safe place for kids in schools around the province. You know, I must say that it wasn't an easy thing to accomplish, but over the last couple of years we did see all public school boards in the province put up safe and caring policies that were not just adhering to the law but were exceeding and were very inspired, I think, in regard to protecting GSAs and QSAs.

Every Catholic school board put up policies, again, that were safe and caring and met the requirements of the regulation and exceeded it and, you know, kept the integrity of faith in all of those Catholic school policies as well – right? – of course, respecting that faith-based schools can have those things infused into their regulation and into their policy and into their teaching. The Catholic school boards came up with that and made it very well with flying colours. They did great, and I was very proud of that.

All of the charter schools in the province of Alberta, again, came up with very salient and often quite moving safe and caring policies that were in line with the policy of the province and were, you know, adhering to the spirit and the intention of a safe and caring environment for all students.

All of the francophone schools: same thing. They all came up with policies that were in keeping with the law. I had to presume that they did because I don't read French, but I was told that their policies were excellent, always. I'm very proud of the work that they did.

The vast majority of private schools did as well write policies that were in keeping with the spirit of what their private school was

intending to do, and if they were a faith-based one, they had the infusion of faith into their safe and caring policies and did a great, great job.

I'm telling you this, Mr. Speaker, because this is an indicator of just how far we came here in the province of Alberta in regard to school boards embracing the notion of the utility and the absolute necessity of GSAs to be protected in the way that we had outlined here in the province of Alberta, not just, you know, reluctantly following the law but embracing those ideas and, quite frankly, not just teaching students but also teachers and parents and all of us about the importance of creating a safe and caring place for all people regardless of their sexuality. You can move that further to their ethnicity, their gender, their geographic location, their socioeconomic condition, right? This was all part of what I would suggest is a movement to a greater understanding about each other as people.

I could see it and I'm sure you could see it, too, in your places. I can tell you that some of the most flourishing and, I guess, enthusiastic GSAs I saw were in, you know, places that you might not expect. You know very well, Mr. Speaker, the awesome GSA that is in Olds high school, for example, right? I went there. It was absolutely one of the best attended ones that I've seen, and it embraced this larger sort of social justice issue and learning about other issues as well and had reached out into the community as well. I think that when I went to that GSA meeting, there must have been at least 30-some people there, including teachers, the principal – I think there might have been a town councillor there – lots of kids, and really moving stories about this safe place for kids to talk about whatever, right?

You know, it's a place where people planned – like, they're raising money to send to a developing country, I believe, and were advocating for greater mental health supports for kids and stuff like that. It was just a really great GSA: organic, student-led, and something that I think everybody in the school and then, in affiliation with the college, the whole town could be proud of.

Here we are moving along on a very progressive track that, I think, gets the head nod from people right across the province, and I would go as far as to call it something of a sea change – right? – where suddenly it's like you build up this sort of accumulation of information plus understanding plus things happening and suddenly you had a collective head nod from Albertans, saying: "Yeah. You know what? LGBTQ-plus students and people in general are just citizens of this province and deserve the same respect and understanding." Not just tolerance but acceptance, Mr. Speaker, acceptance and inclusion. This happens over time. It's not easy, but – just think about it – we really did come a long way here in the province of Alberta. I'm not going to begin to say it was just because of the GSAs, but it's an indicator. It's like a litmus test. It's a test of the composition, of the chemistry of who we are.

People might say, "Whoa; you know, what's the big deal here with the Education Amendment Act?" and so forth. Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? It's going backwards. People know it. People who understand this situation know that this is regressive. I mean, I think it's up to the government to explain why they are choosing to do so. I'm not going to put words in other people's mouths, but here it is: you can only judge a person or a government or a bill based on what it intends to do, and here it is moving backwards on a lot of progress that we did do and have done and will continue to do despite road bumps like Bill 8, right? Some people are calling it Bill Hate, which I don't disagree with because it sends an underlying message that destroying or undermining or eroding the progress that we've made around GSAs is, quite frankly, unconscionable, and I won't stand for it. If you want to try and do this, I mean, I would say that it is at your own peril.

I know that there are lots of splits of opinion amongst people around how and why we should do such risky legislation as this and what the implications are. Well, I can tell you, as a cautionary tale, that it divides people. You can spin it all you want around saying: oh, well, you know, it's just the same as the one before. Well, why are you doing this, then? If it's just the same as it was before, why make those changes, Mr. Speaker? I think that the answer is obvious.

I don't think that it's good legislation. I don't think it's good, responsible use of power here in this House. Quite frankly, I mean, who am I to give advice to the government? But I'll do it anyway. You will lose from this. You will lose support, you will lose moral authority, and you will lose literally hundreds of thousands of young people, especially, who really think that something like this is regressive and a step backwards to building a modern, more just, inclusive, and accepting society, that they want to live in. You know, take that advice for what it is, and I would be happy to give you more.

7:50

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung rising on 29(2)(a). No, I don't see him. Interesting.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment? Now I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung rising to speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Dach:** That's right, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much. That's what I did want to speak to, the reasoned amendment that is before us now, an amendment that would allow school boards to do things that, frankly, I think are abhorrent, in particular, the measures which would allow school boards to fire an elected official, an elected trustee from amongst their numbers.

I really question the motivation behind this legislation. As well, I know that the former Minister of Education the Member for Edmonton-North West, the newly named riding of Edmonton-North West, spoke just recently about the risks the government was taking and told the government members that they could enact this legislation at their own political peril. Yet the government seems intent to go ahead, notwithstanding that inherent risk, and damn the torpedoes. I'm wondering aloud to myself and to this Chamber why exactly the government is so motivated to go ahead with measures such as this.

[Mr. Loewen in the chair]

Once again, it seems to be something that's on the Premier's list of pet peeves and something he wishes to accomplish in an effort to minimize any possible threat of opposition to his authority. It's another means and another way, another example of the Premier getting other people to do his dirty work. I think that that will be forthcoming in the future when we see, if indeed this measure is passed, that school boards who are actually looking to get rid of a member from amongst themselves are doing so in a manner that reflects the desire, the ideology, the wishes of this particular Premier. It's a rather insidious way of getting the central power's fingers into the workings of lower level political bodies such as school boards. I don't think I'm being overly concerned about it. I think it's something that's evident to me. I think the proof will be in the pudding.

Firing an elected school board trustee from amongst a body of trustees is a pretty serious measure, as was mentioned before in this House, Mr. Speaker. If indeed that was something that this body, this Chamber, this Legislature, was enabled to do, there would be

an outrage. By the same token, there should be outrage in considering that the government wants to invoke this measure in the province of Alberta, to allow such a thing to take place, where an elected member of a school board can be trounced out of office simply by a vote of the members of that same school board. Those individuals were elected to serve their constituents, and it should not be a vote of the body that they belong to that forces them off that school board. It's a very, very concerning and dangerous political precedent, and I think it's a threat to local democracy and thereby the whole democracy that we espouse in this province.

If school boards are on the hit list, what next? Where else will we expect the insidious central power to invade? This body, this Chamber? Will we see legislation next where the government wants to take aim at any member of the Legislature, perhaps, that they don't particularly like and would like to take measures to force out of office? I think that that's not beyond comprehension here in this Legislature. This government is capable of any type of attack on democracy, and I'm not surprised that this measure has come forward; I'm certainly disappointed.

Once again, we've seen in the past, previous to the election of this government, while they were having legacy parties get together, that before he was Premier, when he was attempting to gain leadership of the legacy parties, he revelled in getting other people to do his dirty work. This is an extension of that same theme here in the Legislature, and it's applied now to school boards. I think that I honestly have a right to wonder what's next. It wouldn't surprise me to see the members opposite bring forward legislation to enable them to attack and rid themselves of members of this Legislature who they feel are mounting opposition to them and represent a political threat to them. It's a concern. I raise that red flag and hope that other members opposite as well as our own caucus recognize this as well.

In other matters, though, the other side of the coin is the issue of the GSAs. Really, this legislation is an effort to destroy the gay-straight alliances, as has been mentioned by many members of this House, and this reasoned amendment, Mr. Speaker, is something that would allow school boards time to catch their breath and react properly to the measures that the government proposes. There are a lot of changes inherent in what these proposals are, and school boards, I think, should be given the opportunity, at the very least, to mount a defence, mount arguments, perhaps, to persuade the government that this is really not a direction that they should be going in.

I don't think it would take, you know, a year, but I'm wondering if the amount of time that is asked for in the reasoned amendment is enough. I'm certain that members of the various school boards throughout the province are already freaking out and wondering just what the heck is going on with this particular government. Three and a half weeks into a mandate, and they're, first of all, putting children's lives at risk and, secondly, looking at allowing the democratic process to be perverted by enabling school boards to get rid of duly elected members: a pretty roughshod piece of legislation that's been proposed. This amendment is, I think, a reasonable measure designed to basically tell the government: "Whoa. Take a breath and realize what you're doing. This is pretty dangerous stuff."

I echo the words of the Member for Edmonton-North West when he cautioned the government about the political risk they take in implementing these measures. There's a very, very large chance that this will be the government's Bill 6 right here. This is your Achilles tendon, and you're offering it up, so thank you very much. Go ahead, but the reality is that in the process you're damaging kids. It's incumbent upon us as members of the opposition not to goad you on to go ahead and jump over the cliff with this; it's to put a

stop to it if at all possible, using every means that we have to protect the children of this province and protect the democratic rights of elected members of school boards in this province. We're going to exercise that responsibility at every turn.

That's what we're doing here tonight by making sure that we voice on behalf of our constituents who respect democracy, who really don't want to be attending the funerals of children who were outed by members of the teaching profession, as they'll be enabled to do by legislation this government wants to enact – those things are some things we are going to do our very best to halt by at least giving the school boards an opportunity to make representations seriously to the government to seriously do a double take on what they're talking about doing and perhaps even put a full stop to it with respect to the GSAs as well as the ability to allow school boards to fire duly elected officials.

I fully support this amendment, and I expect that members on this side of the House will do so as well. I know that there are other members of our caucus who wish to express themselves and let their constituents know how strongly they feel and how strongly they carry forward their views that these are very damaging pieces of legislation and measures that are contained in this legislation, dangerous measures, that will actually cost children's lives, cost students' lives.

The proof is in the pudding as far as the GSAs are concerned. We know they save lives. Eliminating them, restricting them, making them ineffective will cost lives. That is not something that is to be taken lightly. As members of the Legislature, as a government, as a responsibility you have, number one, to protect life and limb. When a government goes ahead and actually enacts legislation, proposes legislation that will do the opposite, it's unfathomable. It's irresponsible. It's unconscionable.

8:00

Yet here in Alberta in 2019 we have a government that is saying: look, ideologically we're opposed to the concept of people having rights as members of the LGBTQ community. We wish to go back to 50 years ago, perhaps, even to when I went to high school, when those who were identified as members of the LGBTQ community were beaten up, seriously beaten up, and nearly killed. In every high school in this city and around the province identifying yourself as a member of the gay community was an invitation to be abused – and seriously abused – and that's the type of thing that we're going to end up going back to. We're inviting that type of abuse of our members of the LGBTQ-plus community by enabling legislation that allows students to be outed and basically creating an open season for those who are not in favour of the LGBTQ2S-plus community having similar human rights to all the rest of us.

Although the members opposite pay lip service to how they believe they're supporting the LGBTQ community and that they have legislation and measures that are just as strong as they ever were and that there's nothing to worry about here, folks, that's not the case. We had many, many letters – read into the record earlier in this session by the Member for St. Albert – whose strength goes beyond anything I could ever say on the issue regarding what they felt as a result of this government's measures to weaken and cut the legs out from under the GSAs that right now students in this province enjoy. The government should take heed, not of me but of every student that wrote those heartfelt letters. They were direct. They were very powerful. They were challenging to this government. They were real. They were scared. They were angry. Those letters from those students who are in the crosshairs of this government should be something that is taken very, very seriously and not just swatted aside with indifference.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I risked being called out of order, I think, today when I asked if members of the government opposite would attend the funerals of those individuals who lost their lives or took their own lives as a result of changes to legislation that this government is making. In the past, without the GSAs, children lost their lives. They took their own lives. They ended up on the street. Now taking away this protection that has saved lives is going to do the opposite. It will end up with children being dead, and I don't know if members opposite would be welcome at those funerals. I certainly would want to make sure that the public knows about every one of those individuals who end up dead as a result of not being valued, not being allowed to protect their identity until such time as they are able to properly bring forward their desire to come out to their parents at the time of their choosing and in a way that they felt would allow the family unit to be kept intact.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there may be others on this side of the House who wish to express themselves, because it is a deeply, deeply concerning measure that the government is bringing forward. At the very least, school boards should be given the opportunity to step on the brakes to this piece of legislation. The population of the province should be given an opportunity to have a dialogue with school boards, and the school boards should have an opportunity to consult their own constituents and bring their fears and concerns to the parents of the students they represent and to the students also who are attending those schools, saying: "Look, this is what's happening. This is what the government is wanting us to do. Please, for crying out loud, let us know what you're thinking, and let's get onto it."

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment to the member. Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate very much the Member for Edmonton-McClung's comments on this. We were both in here last night as well, and we both spoke to the bill then as well. Just on the amendment here, I wanted to let folks in this Chamber know that this certainly is a personal issue for me.

I wanted to just piggyback a little bit on what the Member for Edmonton-North West noted. He noted a few things that were really, really important and worth repeating. He said to members opposite: you know, who am I to tell you what to do? Well, I can tell you that as the former Education minister that member did so much work. He was able to take a very collaborative approach to get a number of schools onside, to have those deep conversations to explain just why GSAs, QSAs are so darn important, just why they do save lives. He was very successful. He's certainly being modest, but he was so successful in that role in really moving the conversation forward.

We've come a long way when it comes to LGBTQ2S rights. We've come a long way in advancing acceptance – as he said, not tolerance but acceptance – in our schools. There's still, obviously, more to be done, and of course our fear is that Bill 8 will roll that back, which is why we're urging this government to reconsider and, in this case, to delay.

To talk a little bit more about that member's successes, I mean, there were 28 schools, only 28, out of hundreds and hundreds across the province that didn't create policies to support GSAs. Under our plan those schools would have lost funding at the end of May. As I talked about last night, I worry for those students in those schools currently because we know there are students in at least some of

those schools who are struggling with their identity as we speak. What's going to happen to those students? If this act were to be implemented for September 1, I worry about a whole lot of other students across the province in schools where they perhaps have conformed to our previous legislation but will now be able to revert to the government prior to ours.

I just want to maybe throw back to the Member for Edmonton-McClung. You know, I'm certain that he, like myself and others in this Chamber, has heard from a number of folks in the community. If you could just share a little bit more about what you've been hearing first-hand from your own constituents.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for the opportunity once again to speak to the concerns of my constituents in Edmonton-McClung. As I mentioned in the House before, many, many people who worked very closely with me in the lead-up to the last election were from the LGBTQ-plus community, because they know that they are supported by this caucus and have always been and will always be supported by this caucus. They have a home with us because they know that we value them as equal citizens no matter what we're looking at, whether it be school boards, whether it be in the Legislature, whether it be any order of human rights that one can think of.

These constituents of mine who happen to be members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community are very much a part of the fabric of the community. They're very beloved as members of my inner circle. They are also, I know, very integrated in other elements of the community, whether it be their community league, whether it be their faith group, whether it be the community efforts with youth. There are a host of efforts that people in the LGBTQ2S-plus community involve themselves in because they know the necessity, the value of community service and community effort, of getting together, of coalescing, of collaborating. That lesson, I guess, is one of necessity.

8:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is rising to debate.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I remember being in high school, and being in high school, I was one of those kinds of guys who just kind of fit into various different groups. You know, I was big enough to play football back at Holy Trinity high school. I was part of the offensive team. But on top of hanging out with all the jocks – we well know them by that name – I also hung out with the drama club because I was really big into drama as well. I remember hearing it all, the kinds of derogatory names that would be called to people who were from the LGBTQ community.

You know, I'm so thankful because my parents always taught me to respect everybody no matter what. It didn't matter what their sexual orientation was, where they were from, what ethnic or cultural background they were. My parents taught me that treating everybody as equals is probably the most important thing that we can do and, not only that, to understand that because of the discrimination that exists in society, not only should we not contribute to the discrimination but also do our best to give that individual a hand up or help them out in some kind of way.

When I see the bill before us, as has been well stated by many of my colleagues, this is actually trying to reverse what our government so diligently was trying to set up here in the province of Alberta. You know what's unfathomable about this, Mr.

Speaker? The fact that this was all about creating a safe space for people who are discriminated against, a place where, because they are going through and perhaps even suffering with issues before them in terms of their own orientation, they can go and talk to other people, a safe space where they can discuss what they're feeling – their ideas, what's happening to them – where they will have other students that they can talk to. That's what unfathomable about this. It was only trying to create a safe space. I have to ask you all: what does that say about our society and our community if it's absolutely essential for us to create these safe spaces for individuals who are questioning and wondering about their sexual orientation and don't feel safe in their communities?

As was well stated by the Member for Edmonton-McClung, I remember times where people were actually abused and having to stand up for people and say, "Hey, hey, you can't do that," all because of sexual orientation. Not that these individuals even knew. They just assumed. That's what happens, unfortunately, in our communities and in our schools. People just assume: "Oh, this person is a little bit different. So what's the thing that we should do because they're different? Well, let's beat up on them." What does that say about our society, our communities? Where was that learned? Not only where was it learned, but why does it continue to happen?

So here our government tried to create safe spaces inside of schools, where every child, every student has the right to feel safe, and now this government wants to turn back the clock on that. And I know. I get it. I've heard it so many times, members from the opposite side saying: oh, this will be – I can't even remember the wording that they used. I'll be honest with you. I tend to unplug because we don't believe it.

You can't convince us that what this bill is going to do is create a safe space for all of those students that desperately need it. Desperately need it. This abuse is going to continue in our schools if we don't do anything about it. The bullying is going to continue, all because people are assuming about someone's sexual orientation. For me, that's what's incredibly unfathomable about this. We all should be able to feel safe in our communities and especially in our schools.

This bill is going to remove the protections, and school staff will be allowed to out students participating in GSAs. Now, I don't even want to imagine what it's like to be in a situation where you're questioning your sexual orientation and you don't even feel safe enough to tell your own parents because you know that if you tell your own parents, one of the things that they could potentially do is even kick you out of the house.

We know that this continues to happen here in Alberta. There are people that are so closed minded when it comes to sexual orientation that they would even be willing to kick their own child out of their home. Now, that's up to them what they do. But I know that the members on this side of the House want to make sure that that individual is well taken care of and that that individual feels safe.

8:20

So now what does it say when a government bill is willing to strip this protection from an individual, when even a teacher could then go and say, "Hey, your child is participating in this group; you should be concerned," when that child is so scared to even tell their own parent about what they're feeling, what they're experiencing? What right does another individual have to actually do that to a child? To a child. We're supposed to be a society that is supposed to protect children, and here now the government is putting forward a bill that is actually going to remove that protection from a child, which could actually lead that individual to be kicked out of their

own home. They could be homeless. I just can't understand why the government would do that.

I think this is very important, and members on this side of the House have already said it. I think that we should be really concerned and that the members opposite should be really concerned, because there are many in Alberta who will not stand for this. They will make their voices heard. I know that there are members in my community, people that I represent in my own riding who have already been very vocal on this issue. I'm here to make sure that their voices are heard when it comes to this bill. I want to ask the members opposite to really think about what they're putting forward here and how they are affecting the lives of children, students here in our province of Alberta. Ultimately, we are supposed to make sure that they have a safe place to live, and they should feel safe in their own community.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll just leave it at that for right now. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to make a brief question or comment with respect to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie's comments. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was appreciating the comments from my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie – thoughtful, measured, and very heartfelt, I thought – and I would appreciate the opportunity to hear him finish his thoughts.

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

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I can only relate what it was like growing up for me. As I've already shared in this House, my family came here, fleeing the violence in Chile, back in 1973. I remember what it was like to be made to feel like the "other." Now, I know that this isn't the majority of Canadians or even Albertans that discriminate against others.

I'll tell you that one of my first memories of being here in Canada – I wasn't even old enough to go to school yet – was being out on the front lawn of my house with my father and my older brother. We were raking up the leaves, and three young boys rode their bikes in front of our house. They remembered my brother, and they yelled at him: go home, you dirty Chilean.

Now, I'm not saying that the majority of Canadians are like this. That's not the intention of my words. What I am saying is that all it takes is one to leave that memory burned into your psyche. I haven't forgotten that day since. I was probably only three or four years old, something like that, but I remember that day. I am never going to forget that day.

That's exactly the kind of dehumanizing attitudes that we're trying to fight against. With this bill we're providing space for people to actually continue doing that same thing but just now in terms of sexual orientation. You're allowing it to happen by putting this bill forward. If you make this legislation, you'll continue to make sure that that kind of discrimination can continue to take place here in this province. That's what you're doing. I ask the government members: is this really what you're about? Is this really what you want to be about?

I can tell you that many constituents of mine are not very pleased with this, and I can only assume that there are constituents of your own that are not happy with this bill being put forward in the House. You're actually allowing this kind of discrimination to continue here in the province of Alberta by putting this bill forward. Even worse, not only are you making sure that the discrimination can continue, but then the people who actually feel that their

discrimination is warranted against people on sexual orientation feel that they can now act upon their discrimination, making it even worse.

I've already said it before, during my original statement. You're creating a situation where children will actually be in danger by putting this bill forward. So I'm really asking the government members to give this a sober second thought.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment this evening? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment. As the amendment suggests, it is very important that we take the time to reflect on this bill and the consequences, I think largely unintended consequences – I hope they're unintended consequences – of this bill so that we can ensure that we do the right thing before we enact in a rushed way an ill-considered bill. I want to do that by talking a little bit about the fundamental nature of human rights and the attack on human rights that is implicit in this particular bill.

Now, I think it's important that we start with the notion that human rights are a fundamental part of western democracies. It's a major reason why our societies are better in many ways than many other places in the world where human rights are not noted, are not respected, are not protected within the laws and particularly within constitutional law. It's something that in the past this Legislature has been particularly proud about.

In fact, indeed, it was a Conservative government that brought in the Alberta human rights legislation. I remember members at the time talking about how proud they were to stand up in this House. I'm talking about Conservative members who were proud to stand up in this House and to talk about the fact that they wished to protect human rights, and I celebrate them for that. I think that was something that was well beyond the time it should have been done, and I'm very happy that the Conservative members of this House at the time chose to pursue that.

8:30

Now, within our human rights legislation we have over the last number of years arrived at the place where we have clearly said within the province of Alberta and, of course, within the country of Canada that the human rights of members of the gay, lesbian, and transgendered community are to be protected, that it is a fact within human rights that sexual orientation is an article and, therefore, is deserving of the human rights. That's the basis of our concern here today with regard to GSAs.

There's a second part that I think is fundamentally important. I'd like to just read a couple of short lines regarding the nature of human rights. These short lines are in reference to what is referred to as the hollow rights doctrine. I'll read the lines first, and then speak to them. "It is an important doctrine of constitutional law that constitutional rights once granted must not be minimized nor diminished to 'hollow rights'. They must, in all interpretations, be given a large, liberal interpretation." I will of course bring into the House copies of the article I just read from for people to see.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I also want to indicate that that article, called *The Guarantee of Catholic Education: The Doctrines of Hollow Rights and Permeation*, was written by a lawyer in Edmonton by the name of Kevin Feehan, who was subsequently put on the bench, Queen's Bench, and has just recently been elevated to the Court of Appeal,

so obviously a very well versed scholar in the area, actually quite well known for his teaching of constitutional law at the University of Alberta.

The reason I bring this in is that it's really important that we understand what's being said here, that once we have declared that human rights exist and that they are protected under constitutional law, we cannot minimize them or diminish them to hollow rights; that is, we cannot say that, yes, they exist but then act in a way to diminish the actual practice of those rights. We can't do that. And it's fundamentally important that we do that. Otherwise what happens is that minorities and people who are members of minority groups end up having their rights taken away from them.

Now, in this particular case he's speaking about the right of Catholic education in the province of Alberta. He's appeared in front of the Supreme Court on five occasions to protect the rights of Catholic education in the province of Alberta and has been successful on all five occasions. I think we have to hear what it is that we learned from these times spent in front of the Supreme Court of Canada; that is, we protect rights because we have a positive duty to protect the vulnerable, and we have to recognize their rights, and we have to act in such a way that the exercise of those rights is also protected.

What we're saying here is not simply that we identify that gay people have rights to their own sexual orientation, but we also must recognize that they have a right to the expression of their orientation and the protection of their expression. As soon as we start to put a knife into that, then we start to put a knife into all minority groups. Originally this was written about the minority group which was the Catholic school system here in the province of Alberta, but the same concept applies to other minority groups. You must be able to protect their rights as long as their rights, of course, do not infringe upon the well-being of other people. I respect that. There are limitations. We get that.

In this case what we're asking is that gay students have the right to gather together, to be in free association with each other, and to do so without that right being impinged upon by people who do not respect their rights. What we're doing here in this act is that we are essentially trying to say that while we respect the rights of the gay community, we are trying to suffocate the expression of those rights by not allowing them the opportunity to gather together in gay-straight alliances without threat of being outed. That's the concern.

The piece that I want you to reflect on is how much energy over the last 50 years has been put into protecting people's rights to association. If we look at America and we look at the McCarthy era, the whole point of their anti-Americanism doctrine was to out people who disagreed with the majority, and in outing them, of course, people lost their jobs and indeed lost their lives. We as a collective in North America and many other parts of the world quite rightly look back on those eras as terrible times in the protection of human rights. Now we are strongly against those un-American activities commission type of behaviours. Yet in this bill we have just instituted the possibility of exactly that same kind of oppression of a minority group occurring.

Now, we know that it's quite possible even within faith-based communities to meet the requirements of the present legislation that was put in by the former Minister of Education, now the MLA for Edmonton for Edmonton-North West, because it's been done by school boards all across the province. It's been done by faith-based school boards across the province, Catholic schools in Edmonton and Calgary, for example. So we know it's possible.

What we do know, then, is that we have 28 schools, and perhaps there will be others, because part of this act is to create more charter schools, more alternative schools, others who will come and say to

the government of Alberta: we know that you have instituted laws that protect human rights, but because we don't like them, we are not going to abide by them. Think about what it is that you're doing when you do that. You are actually supporting people to defy the laws of this province when their personal belief systems go against the underlying human rights notions that we have in western democracies. Now, that's a scary thing for you to be doing as legislators, to be saying that while you will put in laws, you will turn a blind eye to people who are defying those laws in a clear and direct way, standing up publicly and saying: we will not obey that law. When you begin to do that, then you begin to open the door for many, many other oppressions of minorities.

I've got to ask the Education minister: are they prepared to stand up in the House and say that they believe in human rights? Or are they saying that personal belief systems supersede human rights? I'd like to see the Education minister stand up and make a declaration on that. When people are making decisions to defy the human rights of others, will the Education minister have the fortitude to stand up and protect human rights? Or will the concern about gathering votes for the next election supersede the idea of the protection of human rights? It's very important that our legislators are very clear on this kind of thing.

I always want to go back and remind you that we have been through this before. In the United States when the southern states were told that the black people had the same rights as the white people, they tried to do the same thing. They tried to suffocate the actual enactment of the right by saying: yes; the rights are equal but different. In other words, black people could have schools but not go to white schools. That was the whole point of Brown versus – whoever it was. Now I've forgotten.

8:40

**Mr. Eggen:** The Board of Education.

**Mr. Feehan:** The Board of Education. Thank you.

Do you in fact believe that black people do not have the right to go to the same schools as white people? That's the question at hand. What we decided as democracies is that it is absurd to say that people have rights but they cannot enact those rights and that somehow some people's rights are diminished or devalued as compared to other people's rights.

Yet here we are in this place now suggesting that we are going to open a door, a large door now, to groups of people coming forward and doing the very things which civil rights people in America and many others in Canada have fought against, helping us to create a new modern democracy in which people's human rights are respected. That's the fundamental question underlying this act here. It's not simply finding some kind of nice little balance between these people's beliefs and those people's beliefs. You either believe in human rights or not.

If somebody came along – and I know I have to move into hyperbole sometimes; I've talked about this – and suggested doing something terrible to other people in society, would you stand up and say, "I'm against it"? If they were to suggest, for example, that they were going to physically harm other members of society, that they were going to hurt them, would you stand up and say, "You cannot do that"? Or would you say: "It's a balance. We'll let you harm a few, or you can harm them a little bit, or you can harm them only when they're in your neighbourhood or your school"? Would you put those limitations? Would you allow their rights to become hollow rights? Of course not. You wouldn't do that. If they were asking to do something that you yourselves recognized as absurd or hurtful or harmful, you would be the first to stand up and say that that is not acceptable. But here we are in a place where we're clearly

being told that the consequences of outing kids in schools who are part of the gay community is hurtful and harmful.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie standing to speak.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was so enthralled with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford in terms of pinpointing specifically not only that people have these human rights but that they must be able to enact them, that they can live them. I think that's so important. I want to ask the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford if he could continue specifically on that, and why standing up to this bill is so important for him and his constituents.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. I appreciate the opportunity to just say a little bit more.

You've heard my argument around the fundamental human rights that are in danger by proceeding with this act and how it is contrary to the movement of societies and democratic societies for the last 50 years, everything that has happened from the great revolutions of the 1960s forward, where we started to understand and protect individual human rights, and they were actually brought into this Chamber by members of the Conservative Party at the time.

I want to add to that a second piece. Not only do we have a right to respect the laws of human rights and to ensure that they do not become hollow rights and that they're not diminished in any way in their enactment, but more than that, I think that when it comes to a question of rights and the moral imperative behind why we have rights in society, we actually have a positive duty. It's not simply a duty to not trample the rights of others. We have a positive duty, a duty that says that we must act on behalf of and protect and bring up and raise up those people who are most vulnerable. So it's not simply a matter of saying: we won't allow other people to harm you. We actually have the positive duty to ensure your well-being, and I think that's very important in terms of our work as legislators in this House.

We have a duty of protection for minorities because we have learned over the years that majorities have a tendency to diminish the rights of minorities, not always intentionally, but often, as we've seen in the last century or so or two centuries in the western world, sometimes majorities intentionally diminish the rights of minorities. You have to ask yourself: are you okay with that? Are you in a place where you've decided that as long as you've won the vote, as long as you're here with the majority, then other people don't matter? Is that the world in which you want to live? Is that the constitutional democracy that you want to support, or do you believe, as so many people have over the last few hundred years, that we actually bring society to a better place when we proactively recognize the rights of minorities and act to protect them so that they can express themselves, they can enact their rights in a way that they choose to do so?

Of course, on a very basic level of morality you want to make sure that majorities are not allowed to diminish the rights of minorities because someday you likely to be a minority in some way, perhaps the colour of your skin, perhaps the religion you choose to celebrate, perhaps the marriage you choose to enjoin will be viewed by others as outside the majority, as beyond the pale, as they would say in Ireland, in Dublin. So on a very basic level you want to protect minority rights because in some way or somehow you

yourselves will be members of a minority in one way or another, and you have to ask yourself . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, any other individuals looking to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre rising.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am always honoured to rise and speak in this place. Tonight as I stand to speak to this bill, I'm honoured to represent the voice of my constituents, but I guess I am also disappointed. I am disheartened. Indeed, there is a part of me that is disgusted at this legislation that I am speaking to here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that I enjoy rhetoric. I enjoy making a good and grand speech. I enjoy from time to time indulging even in a bit of hyperbole and taking a bit of poking and fun, but tonight I am going to endeavour to speak honestly about my thoughts on this particular piece of legislation, in particular, on the portion of the legislation which has led us to dub this bill Bill Hate, and I do not use that word lightly. I truly believe that the foundation of the changes that this government is choosing to introduce in what is, frankly, an incredibly underhanded and disingenuous way is ultimately rooted in hatred. Now, that is not hatred that I ascribe to any particular member of this House though I am well aware – and, again, I'm saying this honestly – of at least at times the contempt in which some members of this House hold myself and my colleagues.

**8:50**

I sat in this House today as we had questions to the Minister of Education and some others about this particular bill, and those were passionate questions, Mr. Speaker, with all the same passion and verve that members of this government used to deliver some of their questions from this side of the House on things such as the carbon tax or other things on which they felt passion. I listened to a member of this government referring to us as a gang of thugs, a gang of truth twisters, a gang of bullies, and then again as a vicious gang. It is unfortunate the level of partisanship and vitriol, the amount of political gamesmanship, which, frankly, this Premier has chosen to apply to an issue of such import and which will have such effect on vulnerable youth in our province.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, the roots of this discussion in this Legislature: it is a history of cowardice on the behalf of the government, on the behalf of the Conservative government of that time. When members of opposition brought forward a bill asking for the simplest of things for students who need peer support, who are in that vulnerable position, simply to have the ability to form a peer support group in their school, that government was afraid. They were afraid of members of their base that they felt would punish them, would grow angry. There were members of that government, indeed, themselves who were resistant to the idea for their particular moral or spiritual beliefs. When they saw that that bill was about to gain momentum and that there was no way they could hide from it, they tried to circumvent it. That was my predecessor, the former MLA for Edmonton-Centre, Ms Laurie Blakeman.

So they brought in their own bill, Bill 10, to try to circumvent and try to bring what they called balance. The Premier at the time, Mr. Jim Prentice, tried to frame Bill 10 as a balance between the rights of LGBTQ students and parents and school boards. The question at that time was really: what had to be balanced? Vulnerable youth simply wanting to create a club in their school where they could be safe: what was there to be afraid of? But that government was afraid, and they attempted to bring forward and attempted to move a bill in this House which was a sham, to try to



replace a bill that actually did something to support and protect those youth. Albertans would not have it.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, that was at that time a point of my own political activation, where I had begun to closely watch the politics of this province. I had watched the evolution of that particular government. I had watched the growth of arrogance. I had watched, frankly, what approached corruption, and then this.

What we had, Mr. Speaker, was that finally that government realized what this was going to cost them. They realized that they needed to do something if only to redeem their reputation, to save their electoral prospects, if not actually to do the morally right thing. So we had Bill 10. Yes, it was supported by all parties in this Legislature because it was a darn sight better than the garbage they had initially tried to push, and it was a significant step forward for the rights of LGBTQ youth in this province.

But as others have spoken before me, as the former Minister of Education, the Member for Edmonton-North West, laid out, it became clear that Bill 10 was designed with loopholes big enough to drive a semi-truck through, that it was all too easy and all too possible for any school, any administration that wanted to to simply put up obstruction after obstruction in the face of – let us remember again, Mr. Speaker – vulnerable youth. They were being forced to pit themselves against authorities without the tools to be able to fight back.

So our government took action. We closed those loopholes. We made sure that administration couldn't simply indefinitely delay the formation of a GSA or the appointment of a teacher to help with that GSA. We made it 100 per cent crystal clear what the rules were in terms of revealing a student's participation in a GSA, and teachers thanked us for that clarity.

As we brought forward that legislation and as we had that discussion, we saw the Premier, the then Leader of the Official Opposition, put out disingenuous argument after disingenuous argument, echoed by his members. Indeed, I remember the Member for Calgary-West standing in this House to move an amendment suggesting that GSAs were not, in fact, peer support groups but that they were a secret way for the government to attempt to smuggle in teaching on sexuality, that they were a secret way to smuggle in politics, the gay agenda, Mr. Speaker. That at heart is the paranoia, the conspiracy theory, the false belief that lies at the root of what this Premier, who I believe to be an intelligent enough man that I do not believe he truly believes that, though he has certainly made suggestions on the record about all sorts of other indoctrination that he does believe happens in public schools.

Frankly, we saw members of this House standing up and doing everything they could to misrepresent what a GSA was, I believe, to a certain extent simply for political gain, Mr. Speaker. We saw those same forces mobilize to support the now governing party. We see them revealed in individuals like Mr. John Carpay, who has been praised by his Premier and has had the most reprehensible views on the record, again promoting those same conspiracy theories and false ideas, polluting the public discourse around something that simply exists to support and protect vulnerable young people.

9:00

That brings us to where we are here today. We are debating this bill and we are looking at these changes so that the Premier, in my belief, can pay off a favour. Every member in this House that chooses to vote for this bill is choosing to support him in that work.

Mr. Speaker, I endeavour to hold every member of this House in respect and regard. I make every effort, despite the fact that I will proudly fly my party colours and I am proud of the caucus that I sit with, not to engage in cheap partisanship. It gets to me sometimes

in the heat of the moment. Sure, I've thrown a heckle or two. I try to honestly give every member in this House the benefit of the doubt in what they believe in and not to judge them for the decisions that they make, but I can tell you that there's no way around this for me. Any member in this House that votes for this bill that allows these provisions regarding gay-straight alliances in the province of Alberta to go forward, rolling back protections for students, exposing them, making it more difficult for them to access a simple safe space – I'm sorry – I will lose respect for that member. This is simply one line that for me I can't cross. This is my line in the sand.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, the number of people from the LGBTQ community that came to volunteer on my campaign, specifically stating their fear of this government and what it was going to do to GSAs, the fear of this Premier who indeed has been now called to account, and indeed the estimation even for some of his most Conservative friends dropped, like Mr. Charles Adler – this is shameful what this government is choosing to do. And members can rationalize it. They can try to say, "Well, it's just about finding balance. We just want to make sure that parents have their rights," but then, by all means, bring forward an amendment that principals must immediately grant a GSA when asked. That will not, in any way, abrogate any parents' rights or any individual's beliefs, but it will remove yet another obstacle from the path of young people who are struggling.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday standing to speak.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has made, and I really appreciate all of the comments that have been made by all members of the Assembly here this evening from this side of the House.

I know that the member had the opportunity to stand with students at Victoria school in the not-so-distant past with a few other members. Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was there, a few others, I believe, as well, the leader of our team over here on the Official Opposition, possibly the Member for Edmonton-North West, or definitely the Member Edmonton-North West. But I'm just hoping to find out – I mean, we've heard from the Minister of Education that this bill is in response to people asking for balance and we really haven't heard a clear definition or we haven't been able to find out what that balance is, where that balance is coming from, or who is asking for it and why they felt so strongly the need to weaken the legislation that was already approved by this Assembly. In the member's conversations with the students at that school I'm just hoping to find out if you heard them looking for more balance, how they felt about the idea of weakening this legislation.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, it is simple enough for this government to demonstrate their goodwill. There are some simple amendments they could make to improve this legislation that would show that they in fact do care about these students, that they are not simply paying the bill for social conservative activists, like Mr. John Carpay and others, who out of a misguided sense of paranoia and conspiracy want to take away this opportunity for young LGBTQ youth. This government has that chance.

My colleague asked about the question of balance. Indeed, that is, I believe, likely the talking point that was handed to the Minister

of Education to move forward with. Again, I want to speak honestly tonight, and that is what I truly believe. Frankly, it is an incredibly poor one, Mr. Speaker. Of all of the individuals that I've spoken to from the LGBTQ community, youth who are currently in schools, who came through schools, who participated in a GSA, who wished they had a GSA, not one has come to me and said: "Gee, I wish there had been better balance. I wish somebody would have thought about how my school felt about the word 'gay'." None have come to me and said, "I'm awfully afraid that if I want to tell my parents that I'm part of the GSA, I'm not going to be able to do that." The minister claims she has had young people come to her and say, "We need better balance in how we have GSAs." I would look forward to seeing one of those young people stand with her at a press conference, as we had many young people stand at ours.

This bill is not about balance or at least not about achieving a balance. It's about removing balance. It's about tilting the scales backwards and against the very youth we are saying that we are here to help. That is the effect this bill will have. That is the message this government will send to the LGBTQ community, LGBTQ youth, and their allies in this province. This government and members that vote for this bill will wear that like a scarlet letter, and I, Mr. Speaker, will make sure that Albertans know. This bill deserves to be called Bill Hate.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language**

**The Acting Speaker:** I would just advise every member in the House that it's the current Speaker's opinion that given that the term was just used for the second time – the first time it seemed more considered. Long story short, the term Bill Hate is currently being reviewed. It's a decision that will be rendered by Speaker Cooper – I believe he mentioned tomorrow – and if that's the case, then I would advise members of this House to be wary about using that word as it could technically become unparliamentary in a past tense if spoken today. I would just mention that my current view of this going forward is that I think it would probably be advisable for individuals to refer to it, perhaps, as Bill 8 or something a little more measured given that it is currently being considered and a decision is coming soon.

Please continue.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At such time as the Speaker renders his ruling, I will be happy to follow. I would note that looking about this House, I see no disorder.

**The Acting Speaker:** Okay. I have seen disorder from that. In fact, the reason why I stood up when it was stated the second time was for that exact reason. I would just ask people to be measured with regard to using that term until a decision on it has been rendered.

9:10

#### **Debate Continued**

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members looking to speak to RA1? I believe that the Member for Edmonton-West Henday is currently standing.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today on behalf of the constituents, well, hopefully, most of the constituents, of Edmonton-West Henday to speak to this motion to delay the passing of this legislation, recognizing that there is a complete lack of consultation that has been done on the bill that is before us. Of course, using the phrase that has been used several times in this House in regard to the name of this bill I understand is under review, whether it's right or not, but I would

say and I don't think that it's a stretch to say that this bill is mean spirited.

Now, I was so proud – one of the proudest days in my time as a Member of the Legislative Assembly was when the former minister, the MLA for Edmonton-North West, MLA for Edmonton-Calder at the time, put this bill before us. I had the opportunity to rise in this House and speak about the importance of this legislation to my constituents and to the people that I have met both in my time in high school, and even before that, but also in my time as a member of the Assembly and even through the friendships that I've built through this role.

You know, I've had volunteers come to me, and I shared a story of a volunteer that wanted their story to be told in this Assembly. When Bill 28 was before us, they asked that I speak to the fact that when they were in high school, they were discriminated against because of the way that they identified or the people that they chose to love. Being a member of the LGBTQ community negatively affected them because they didn't have something like a GSA in place at the time. They didn't have legislation to protect them. The story I shared went into some detail about the discrimination that they faced, about the sexual abuse that they faced by other students. I spoke about the fact that they had a home situation where their parents were not accepting of the way that they identified, and they had counsellors at school that did not understand how they identified. Even when they wanted to come out, even when they wanted somebody to talk to, there was no one for them to have these discussions with.

Now, I have concerns with the fact that over the last few weeks discussions of conversion therapy have been before us. The Minister of Health has said that they recognize the fact that conversion therapy discriminates against segments of our community, and that minister thinks it's wrong. Yet here we are debating a piece of legislation that is likely to push more people into situations like conversion therapy. Here, once again, we have other ministers, ministers that were happy to raise the pride flag – and I'm happy that they're willing to recognize sometimes the rights of the LGBTQ community. I'm sure that that's going to offend that member, but the fact is that they are going to stand with this government and they are going to support a piece of legislation that weakens the rights of the LGBTQ community, that weakens the responsibility and the role of educators to protect those students. So, no; I'm sorry. You don't get to be an ally if you don't stand with the community at every opportunity that you get. You don't get to be an ally if you're going to abstain from certain parts of the conversation because you had supporters or volunteers that got you here that you now owe something to. That's not acceptable.

Now, there are many flaws with this legislation before us. Of course, we've heard a great deal of conversation about how it's going to weaken GSAs. When Bill 24 was introduced, it was introduced recognizing that there were instances – many schools were already following these policies, and they were willing to support GSAs, gay-straight alliances. They were willing to recognize that this population was being discriminated against and that something needed to be done, but that wasn't the case in all schools or with all school boards, so something had to be done. We saw instances where, when requested, GSAs weren't being created and other instances where GSAs were trying to have meetings, and for whatever reason rooms were being booked over when they were trying to have meetings. Other times they were just told that they weren't allowed to.

It's very concerning for this piece of legislation to come before us and be touted as finding some balance. Really, I question the Education minister. I want to know where this balance is. I want to know who is telling them that something was wrong with the system. When I went to a local school in my community, I stood with the students at Michael Phair school. Now, it's not lost on me,

the symbolism of going to Michael Phair school and standing with them as they walked out against what they knew was coming in this piece of legislation.

Now, of course, other pieces of this legislation in regard to creating recall mechanisms for trustees are also very concerning. Just like any member of this Assembly, board members to local school boards are elected democratically, so I'm very concerned that we're going to start having conversations about being able to recall trustees, especially in an instance like this. If one of these trustees stands up against this harmful policy that this government is trying to implement, and the rest of the board stands with this government for whatever reason, there might be a concern of being recalled. That's very concerning to me. I think that people are elected democratically, and that vote should be recognized and respected.

Now, what is just as concerning is the fact that this government is leaving a bunch of the oversight in this legislation up to regulations. They're saying: "Don't worry. Trust us. We'll get it right after the fact. We can't tell you the details right now, but trust us." That's very concerning to me.

One of the main issues – and this is a discussion that we had in the 29th Legislative Assembly – is around school transportation. The 2.4-kilometre limit on being able to get your child access to transportation was a major concern to people in my community, people in Westview Village, the mobile-home community in Edmonton-Meadowlark at the time but Edmonton-West Henday now, that I have the honour of representing. They were concerned because they were being left out, and they were paying for yellow bus services. We were able to fix that, but now this piece of legislation that's before us is saying: "We'll figure it out after. In due course we'll figure that piece out."

And once again with the school fees. We worked very hard to reduce school fees. Once again: "In regulation. We'll figure it out." Well, when we have a budget that's not being presented until the fall, that's very concerning to hear the minister say: "Wait and see. Wait and see."

Now, we're seeing an underlying message coming from this government, whether it be with Bill 2, taking away pay from people under 18 years old, when we talk about the unwillingness of this government to stop conversion therapy from happening in this province, and with this bill before us talking about taking the rights of the LGBTQ community away from them. I'm very concerned with the direction of this government. I'm concerned that there is an effort or at least a perceived effort to attack kids. That is not your role as a government, to start taking rights, start taking pay away from youth in our province, and they are going to be very upset with you. Well, they already are.

9:20

I really don't know where this legislation is coming from. They were elected on economy, jobs, pipelines. They said that they were not going to focus on social issues; those were a distraction. Yet here we are in the first weeks of our first sitting, and they're taking the rights away from the LGBTQ community. They're taking pay away from young Albertans. It's very concerning that those are your top priorities.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate – I truly hesitate – to interrupt the hon. member, but having taken a look at the amendment, RA1, that we're looking at right now, the idea here is Bill 8. This is the amendment itself.

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that further time

is necessary to enable school boards to adjust their policies to comply with the proposed legislation and regulations.

I just want to ensure that we stay within the realm of this, because there will be opportunity to discuss the bill. There will be ample opportunity for that. That way we might be able to just move towards that as well.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, I appreciate that very much, Mr. Speaker, and I was getting to that point.

I think that it's important. I would argue that this legislation is rushed. I would argue that there has not been adequate time to consult with Albertans, which brings me back to the amendment. I think that there needs to be more time for school boards to work with this legislation. I think that there needs to be more time for teachers and school administrators to work with this. A lot of time and effort went into putting Bill 24 under scrutiny in terms of making sure that school boards were following the legislation to the T and respecting the law.

Now, the majority of elected school board trustees across the province were not around when the original Education Act was debated, so it's incredibly important that they have an opportunity to review what these changes mean to them and to their school boards.

Now, once again, Mr. Speaker, I want to just wrap back to the importance of consulting with everyone. You know, the opportunity that I had to go to local schools when we were first elected, I went with the then Minister of Education, once again the MLA for Edmonton-North West, to my high school, Jasper Place high school. They had a GSA at the time. They still do. Very inclusive, very supportive of the LGBTQ community, and I imagine that they were one of the earliest adopters of the legislation even before the legislation was in place. If we can get to a place where every school – I really don't understand why it's so hard to respect the rights of students.

When I had the opportunity to go to Jasper Place high school, when I had the opportunity to go to Michael Phair school, none of these students were saying that there was an imbalance of the legislation that was before them. So once again I would ask the Minister of Education – and I appreciate that that minister has been here to hear our concerns and take them into consideration. I really hope that the minister will support this amendment to delay this, to give school boards more opportunity to review this legislation.

I would also ask the other ministers that this legislation affects, as I said, the Minister of Health, the minister in charge of ensuring the end to conversion therapy, which they say that they support the end of – the minister of housing, who will have to house these vulnerable youth that, if they are outed by a school, God forbid, and they don't have a supportive relationship with their family or at least in the context of coming out to them, if they are pushed onto the street, what does that mean for the minister of housing? What does it mean for the minister of labour? I would appreciate it if we heard some more from ministers of this government on why they think that there needs to be a better balance here, why they didn't support the legislation in Bill 24, and why they think that this is strengthening opportunities for the LGBTQ community.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I think that members on this side of the House in the opposition have done a really good job of explaining why this legislation is not going to better the relationship between the LGBTQ community and school administrators or school board trustees. I think that they've done a good job of respecting the fact that this is a very sensitive situation, and while we always need to respect the rights of parents, it is just as important to respect the rights of the youth of our province.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is ...

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments from the hon. member. You know, it's kind of a trip down memory lane in a way, but these are important memories because it helps me to reconstruct both just how difficult it was to move and get Bill 24 on board, but how successful it was, right? Sometimes, you know, the best things in life are the most difficult to achieve, and this was one of those cases, for sure.

You know, the hon. member is in a unique situation compared to me, certainly. He could visit his old high school, which is Jasper Place high, with me ...

**Mr. Carson:** They'd think I'm a student.

**Mr. Eggen:** One of the teachers grabbed him and said: get back to class. No. That didn't happen.

... you know, within a period of a number of years and go back to that same place and see how things had changed over time, right? What I've heard from anecdotal evidence is that in schools that have strong GSAs and QSAs, the overall feeling of belonging and sort of safety and security is enhanced by the presence of a GSA. So it doesn't matter if the kids belong to it or not, but they know they can see that vulnerable kids that need help and need some safe sanctuary are being looked after and respected in the school, thus, by association, they can feel more respected and looked after in general, too. Maybe they're not part of a GSA or QSA, but they can see that: "Here we are. We're in a caring environment. This is happening around me, and I feel safe and secure by proxy." You know what I mean?

I'm just curious to know. You can remember, hon. member, us going to visit there. You probably went there a few other times, too, because you represented the area. How did you see the change and the development of a safe and caring school environment not just for the members of the GSA and the QSA, which are quite strong at Jasper Place, but for the whole school population? Let's not forget that Jasper Place high school has the largest school population in the entire province. It's like the size of a small town. It's, like, 3,000-some kids. That's a pretty good sample size to test this theory, that GSAs and QSAs don't just save lives of vulnerable LGBTQ-plus kids but also help to create a more safe and caring environment for everybody.

Could you help me with that?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-North West. I'm sure the member was asking that rhetorically because he spent a lot of time in schools as well. I'm very proud of the work that he did not only on this file but on all files, so I do thank him for that work.

You could definitely see a change. I mean, I will give a plug, actually. This year is my 10-year anniversary of graduating from high school in 2009. You know, I had the opportunity to see the change over the last 10 years. Even though while I was attending Jasper Place high school in 2009 – I was in grade 12 – and it was only a short period of time, as the conversation around supporting and protecting the LGBTQ community, you know, went on, you could see it reflected in the population of the school. As more people became allies to this population, it opened up the conversation for other people, too.

9:30

Overall, it just made people more inclusive and it made people respect that we all come from different places. We all have different values, to some extent. We should be free to love the people we want or to identify how we want. That's an important part of the conversation.

In this legislation – once again, it's incredibly important that we delay this, not only because of the repercussions of school boards and administrators not understanding what this legislation before them implicates but also the fact that it is turning back the clock. That is the exact opposite thing of what we should be doing. We need to show the province of Alberta that we are allies. If we are going to call ourselves allies, then we need to show it as well.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview standing; however, it is my understanding that because the amendment was moved by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on behalf of Edmonton-Riverview, it counts as though you have already spoken to this amendment.

Do I see any others looking to speak to amendment RA1? Anyone? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As much as I have tried to, you know, go through notes and listen to my colleagues on this side of the House and also the members opposite, I really want to support the amendment that my colleague moved yesterday.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Looking at all this, to me it did not really show that we are going through a crisis or we are in a situation that we can call an emergency that this bill has to address, so this amendment, to me, is a very, very reasonable proposal. It would help not only the school board, to give them time to adjust to the policies, but I also think it will provide opportunity to the stakeholders to give more input. As this bill states, the stakeholders – one of the most affected communities are the students, the children – have not been consulted while preparing the bill. They're the ones who are going to feel the biggest effect after this bill is passed.

Generally speaking – I don't know – I even have some problems understanding what the heck we are trying to address through this bill. GSA, QSA: why are we so afraid of these two names? How do we interpret, like, that this is a GSA or friendship group? When we are moving forward, is this the kind of example that we're going to just set or the signal that we're going to give to our community and to our children, that they are not able to be friends with the people or their colleagues or their classmates in the school?

It seems like this is something the members opposite are really, really offended by, without coming up with real proof that GSAs and QSAs, you know – why are they so offended? What real danger do they have in reflecting to the school boards or schools or the democratic institution itself? They have provided protection to the most vulnerable children in school.

I think the government has a duty to serve the public, serve the society. The right to live, the right to be free from harm are their fundamental rights. They should have actually moved forward to protect the children. In this case, it seems like every single act they have proposed in this act is actually weakening the protections of the GSAs and QSAs.

The other thing I've seen proposed in this bill is, basically – I don't know – an attack on democratic institutions, you know, or I will call it more of an attack on public sectors, maybe, as it says that it's enhancing the ordered requirements for school boards and it has language respecting the prior rights of parents with respect to their

children's education and it creates recall mechanisms for trustees that were democratically elected members to the board.

On the contrary, it removed the cap on charter schools, so it changes the requirements for establishing charter schools and extends rules on the fees of charter schools. And my colleagues, you know, mentioned how it's going to affect the children's ability to access the buses to school given that the changes were made so the students can, you know, qualify for the school buses and some of the moves the prior government has made to make education more affordable by eliminating the fees.

It didn't really seem like kind of the challenges and emergencies, basically, we are facing in this province that the urgency of this government is – seeing that they want to pass this bill right away when my colleagues just didn't really ask that. They asked to give it more time so that it will provide opportunity to stakeholders, the parents and teachers, to participate in the consultation process.

I really, you know, want to support the amendment as it reads on this.

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that further time is necessary to enable school boards to adjust their policies to comply with the proposed legislation and regulations.

I really wanted to actually support this amendment, and I ask my colleagues and the members of this House to please support this amendment. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Certainly, you know, I concur with the comments from my colleague here. You know, the amendment speaks to, really, the rushed way in which the UCP government is ramming this bill through. Having sober thought, a good consultation, things that he spoke of: I mean, that is just so important to us making sure that we have legislation – education is a very important area that we as the provincial government are responsible for and, of course, making sure that human rights are upheld in our province. That's also significant and important. I mean, there is much to be reviewed if, you know, just with one fell swoop this UCP government is now going to not make GSAs mandatory.

9:40

It's very important because we know that GSAs make a big difference not only for students in the LGBTQ community but also students who are just of the regular population. I know that the hon. member is concerned about people being treated well, so we want to make sure that all students are. So students who are part of a GSA – not only does it reduce suicide for LGBTQ students but also all students. Specifically, this research study that I was looking at that needs to be part of the consultation process says that, you know, male students who are heterosexual are also very much impacted by that. It makes a difference for them because it's a more inclusive environment. All are welcome. All people's human rights are upheld. It's just such a fundamental right in our society.

It's really a travesty what's going on here in this Legislature. You know, on this side of the House we're very proud of the work that we did on this issue. We know it saves lives, not only LGBTQ students but all students. I just thank the member very much for his contributions, and I just want to give him an opportunity to say a few more words.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to give me time to elaborate on what I was trying to say on this. You know, my biggest challenge: I am also refraining from saying something and trying to find the parliamentary language when I'm trying to express my views on anything I have to rise and say and give my views on in the House. Bill 8, I'll say this, is – I don't know. It's very hard for me to understand, basically. It's an attack on fundamental rights, and we say I don't know what kind of...

**Ms Sigurdson:** Do you want to read the study?

**Mr. Deol:** I can read this. I'm proud to be in the NDP caucus and working with my colleagues on this side of the House. This is not something, how would I say, if I get friends with my opposite members, Member for Calgary-McCall, on those days when we were discussing. And what we are afraid of in GSAs when it says: how do you interpret it? That's the biggest thing that's bothering me. Going forward in the 21st century it's right to mingle around, talk to your friend, and defend your friend in case of somebody's bullying after you see that your friend is in danger if you want to enjoy your time together. To address this issue – I don't know why this became so prevalent an issue for this government.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton...

**Mr. Dang:** South.

**The Deputy Speaker:** South West.

**Mr. Dang:** South. Just south.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just south?

**Mr. Dang:** Just south. No west this time. It's okay, Madam Speaker. It's getting a little bit late in the night tonight. I'm always pleased to rise and speak no matter how you name me.

Madam Speaker, it is really a great pleasure to be here tonight with the rest of my colleagues in the Assembly to speak to Bill 8, or perhaps Bill Hate, which really is something that is so unique in...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, we're on the amendment.

**Mr. Dang:** Sorry. On the reasoned amendment to Bill Hate.

It is really something that I think is so important that we really do take a deep dive into in this Assembly. The amendment makes it very clear that we do need to have more time available to school boards to make sure their policies are going to be able to comply with the proposed legislation and the regulations, that I'm sure will be forthcoming from the minister.

I think that this is important because we can look at, really, the lack of consultation that happened, and we can see that we saw different school boards across the entire province come out and say, "Well, yes, there are good things that the government decided to do in terms of changing some of the numbers around here and there," but it would have been nice if they'd gotten a phone call to let them know it was coming. We heard that from the Alberta School Boards Association, we heard that from a number of the major boards in this province as well, and I think it's very clear the government didn't do their homework.

I think this has become a recurring theme in this Assembly, Madam Speaker. I think it's becoming a common sight that the government really doesn't put in the work required to make sure their bills are ready to go, to make sure that their bills are well

thought out, to make sure their bills are written properly, and to make sure that all the relevant stakeholders have been consulted. This is something that we've seen time and time again.

I really do want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview for bringing forward this amendment, because I think it's something that's very important. Legislators have a duty to make sure that our legislation will work for the people it affects. I believe school boards and families are the people that this will affect, and none of those people were consulted when the government brought this forward.

I mean, really, clearly, we can see that the protections that Bill 8 would take away from vulnerable Albertans and vulnerable youth are quite substantial, and I think it speaks so clearly to how little the government either went out to seek advice or perhaps how little they listened. But, really, there needs to be more time to make sure that these policies and adjustments are possible. What is going to happen is that we are going to have some significantly weakened legislation that really does not protect gay-straight alliances or queer-straight alliances in this province, and that's something where we need to take a step back and let school boards understand the ramifications and let families understand the ramifications and let vulnerable youth understand the ramifications, Madam Speaker.

When we look at the bill and we look at how significantly this legislation will roll back the protections for the students, when we look at how significantly this will weaken them and how far behind other jurisdictions in Canada this will put us, it is something that is very concerning for all members of the opposition here and, I hope, for members of the government as well, that they would be concerned that this puts us behind the pack in protecting gay kids.

Madam Speaker, it's very important today that I use the word "gay" and the word "queer" because they are words, I believe, that are essential to the identity of so many Albertans that this legislation ostensibly is supposed to protect. Bill Hate: what it actually does is that it rolls back those protections.

We know that the Minister of Education took many days before she was comfortable enough to say those words. I'm here to reassure her that those words will not in fact affect her in any way. She should feel comfortable using those words, and perhaps the Premier should feel comfortable using those words as well. Gay-straight alliances and queer-straight alliances matter, and consultation with school boards needs to be done to ensure that we get them right. If the minister felt that it wasn't important enough to consult on this issue or that students didn't matter enough to be consulted on this issue or that vulnerable Albertans really didn't need to have a say, that gay kids themselves didn't need to have a say, then that's the minister's prerogative, Madam Speaker, but I really think that that's something we should all be concerned about in this Assembly. It's something that we shouldn't encourage in this Assembly.

That's why this amendment is so important, because it allows us to slow down and re-evaluate the implications of this. The implications of rushing through this legislation and this dangerous ideology will hurt LGBTQ2S-plus youth all across this province and all across the education system. Really, this act to destroy gay-straight alliances is something that we really shouldn't condone, so we really should be spending that time to make sure that we understand what it actually does and that school boards have the opportunity to understand what it actually does.

9:50

When the minister spoke about how this bill was introduced almost a decade ago now, she spoke about how timely it was because it was almost a decade old. Madam Speaker, I was still in primary school when this bill was first introduced in this Assembly. I think I've come a long way since then, but I think that certainly

the people that were consulted then perhaps aren't around now, and the people that were involved in GSAs back then perhaps are now lobbying to make sure we can get more GSAs put into this province and perhaps fighting against this very bill. I think it's very important that we have these conversations today in this Assembly. I think it's very important that we look at this bill and say that this reasoned amendment makes sense. It's something that we should move forward with. We should slow down this bill, and we should look what the actual implications are.

Gay kids matter, and that's one of the reasons that we're here, to stand up for all Albertans. It doesn't matter whether they're gay. It doesn't matter whether they're queer. I hope every single member of this Assembly will get up and at least say those words. I know it will make some members uncomfortable to say those words, but, Madam Speaker, I think it's important that they're recorded in *Hansard* here today. We know as the Official Opposition and I hope all legislators in this Assembly know that these are the people that we're trying to fight for. These are the people that this bill needs to protect, and it doesn't do that job. It doesn't do the job of protecting vulnerable youth, and that is something that is very concerning. That's why we need to slow down and take the further time that's necessary to enable boards to adjust to and comply with this legislation.

But, really, Madam Speaker, Bill Hate does not allow any of this to happen. Bill Hate puts us behind the pack. It puts us, in fact, well behind many other provinces' legislation, and that's something that we should not be standing for here in Alberta. We should not be standing here and letting gay kids down. We should not be standing here and watching our students across this entire province having to walk out of their classrooms to protest this minister's risky, ideological, and dangerous policies. That's something that's very concerning.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I know the Premier thinks that students shouldn't be politicking on their time, but students understand – perhaps they understand even more than this minister understands – how detrimental this bill will be, how detrimental and how dangerous this bill will be. I think it's something that we should be very concerned about. If students are concerned about it, then the Education minister should be concerned about it because the Education minister's job is indeed to ensure that these students have the best possible and safest learning environments, and the GSA legislation that's being brought in in Bill 8 really does not do that job. It really lets every single student down. It certainly lets every single gay student down and every single queer student down, and that's something that the minister should be concerned about. It's the minister's job and the minister's duty to protect these students and ensure they have a good education. It is the minister's job to ensure that.

This amendment allows us to go back and look at why the minister is failing to do that job, Mr. Speaker, because very clearly the minister has failed. The minister has absolutely failed to help protect GSAs in this province. When we look at this legislation, we can see very clearly that students across this province are outraged. They are standing up against this government, and they do not believe in the risky, ideological decisions of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I think, very clearly, this amendment absolutely needs to be passed. This is the right amendment at this time to move forward. It allows us to have a strong framework to begin figuring out how we can protect gay kids in the future, and that's why I'm going to encourage all members of this Assembly to vote for that amendment.

I'd also like to move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Government Motions

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Government House Leader is rising to ask for unanimous consent.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** That is correct, Mr. Speaker. I request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) to move a motion to rescind Government Motion 14, agreed to on June 11, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it is important that we listen closely to the direction of the Speaker over the next few minutes or so. I will ask only one question. Is anyone opposed to granting unanimous consent?

[Unanimous consent granted]

17. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly rescind its approval of Government Motion 14, agreed to on June 11, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Government House Leader has moved a motion. This is a debatable motion. If anyone has any reason to debate, please feel free to do so now.

[Government Motion 17 carried]

**The Speaker:** I see that the hon. Government House Leader is rising, perhaps to move unanimous consent.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, you are correct, Mr. Speaker. I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) to move a motion to rescind Government Motion 15, agreed to on June 11, 2019.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader is rising to move a motion.

18. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly rescind its approval of Government Motion 15, agreed to on June 11, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Government House Leader has moved a motion to rescind Government Motion 15, agreed to

on June 11, 2019. This is a debatable motion. Anyone wishing to add to the debate?

[Government Motion 18 carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader I believe is rising to ask for unanimous consent.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to revert to Notices of Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that, I will move the following motion:

Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Administrator, the 2019-20 interim supply estimates, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for providing notice to the Assembly.

The hon. Government House Leader would like to move oral notice of perhaps Government Motion 20.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, I'm glad we're on the same page, Mr. Speaker. That's always helpful. I will move the following motion, that I just provided oral notice for, which is:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2019-20 interim supply estimates for three hours on Tuesday, June 18, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, I feel like perhaps we've made some good progress in the last few minutes. Do you have any other motions that you might like to move?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we are on a roll, so with that, first of all, pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) I will advise the Assembly that there shall be no morning sittings for the following days: Thursday, June 13, 2019; Tuesday, June 18, 2019; Wednesday, June 19, 2019; and Thursday, June 20, 2019.

With that, I will move to adjourn the Assembly until tomorrow, Thursday, June 13, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:59 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, June 13, 2019

Day 13

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
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Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
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Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
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Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

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Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
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Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 13, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** The prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind the responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, joining us today in the galleries: from the constituency of Camrose, let us welcome the Holden elementary school and, from the constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the Strathcona Christian academy. Please feel free to welcome our students.

Those seated in the gallery, I invite you to rise when you hear your name or a reasonable facsimile of your name. Hon. members, if you'll keep your applause till the end as we do have a number of guests with us. Guests of the Member for Calgary-Klein: Mr. Kishore Kumar, Mr. Nash Kooner, Mr. Garry Bhandal. Guest of the Member for Calgary-Falconridge: Mr. Kal Toor. Guests of the Member for Edmonton-West Henday: Alice Nycholat and Nancy Steward. Guests of the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods: Gil McGowan, Siobhán Vipond, Heather Smith, Brad Readman, Mike Parker, Greg Jeffery, Guy Smith, Rory Gill, Jolene Armstrong, Karen Weiers, Brendan Bruce, Jerry Toews, Guy Desforges, Joy Correia, Susan Slade, Brendan Van Alstine, and Bonnie Gostola.

Members, please welcome them to the Assembly today.

### Members' Statements

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

#### World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When door-knocking in my constituency, I talk to many seniors who required family, friends, and sometimes a stranger to assist them with their day to day, whether that be shovelling the walk, repairs around the house, their finances, or even, in some cases, help with preparing her will. This requires significant trust on behalf of our seniors. That is why it is so devastating to hear of the many cases of elder abuse in Alberta.

On Saturday, June 15, people all over our province will lift their voices against elder abuse as we recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. We must speak openly and honestly about the terrible reality that many of our seniors face. We do so to reduce the stigma and to let people in our communities who are affected know that they are not alone and that there is help available.

On Friday my colleague the Minister of Seniors and Housing will recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day here in Edmonton. It will be an important moment to help us continue raising awareness about how we are all affected when older people are mistreated. Our government will continue working with our civil society partners to prevent and end abuse.

On Saturday please join me, Albertans, Canadians, and the entire world in raising the visibility of this issue. I encourage all of you proudly to wear purple, the colour of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and stand against elder abuse. Let us work together to end elder abuse and do our best for the safety and well-being of Alberta seniors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Public Service Front-line Workers

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of workers. I stand in support of every teacher that stays after the bell to go help a student with their math homework. I stand in support of every nurse that spends some extra time at the bedside of an elderly patient who's just looking for someone to talk to or show that they care. I stand in support of every emergency responder who puts themselves in harm's way to keep us safe. I stand in support of the caseworkers, the counsellors, the firefighters, the paramedics, the front lines, the working-class heroes. You name it, I stand in support of them all.

What I do not stand in support of is a government that would vilify these dedicated individuals. I do not stand in support of a government who would break the law and rip up contracts that protect workers' rights, Albertans who work very hard every day to feed their families. I do not stand in support of picking the pockets of Alberta families to pay for a \$4.5 billion tax giveaway that will do nothing to put dinner on the table in homes across Alberta.

I urge the government members in their caucus – many of them, I think, secretly worry about the state of their schools and hospitals in their constituencies when this Premier and this Finance minister are through – to think long and hard about who they stand in support of.

We know where we stand, and we stand on this side of the House with the workers of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

### Farmers

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise in this Assembly and celebrate the compelling history of Alberta farmers. In 1951 the government of Alberta recognized the importance of setting aside every second Friday in June to honour farmers from across Alberta.

I am proud to be one of those farmers. Rural Alberta has been home for me for my entire life, and I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to raise my family on the farm and among the rural community.

Communities and businesses from across Alberta thank local farmers for their contributions to our province. Simply put, farmers feed the world, and the fruits of their labour serve to nourish our souls. Unsurprisingly, Alberta farmers demonstrate distinction in their profession and have repeatedly proven themselves to be models of agricultural efficiency. Alberta farmers are not only innovators; we are also shrewd and rational businesspeople who have contributed to the Alberta economy just as expertly as to the crops and the livestock we tend. There is something very special about producing safe, nutritious, and sustainable food. As farmers we are the proud caretakers of our land and livestock.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is Alberta's second-largest industry but is by far the largest renewable industry we have and the backbone of our economy. We understand that 20, 50, 100 years from now the world will still need Alberta farmers to feed them, likely more so than ever before. As such, we implement the most sustainable

farming practices possible to ensure a strong and healthy future for all Albertans for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, may God bless all of our farmers this growing season. If you ate today, remember to thank a farmer.

### Rural Health Services

**Mr. Loewen:** Throughout my constituency and northwestern Alberta in general the accessibility of health services continues to be a pressing concern. Residents in rural Alberta understand that rural health care does not fit a one-size-fits-all model. Of course, we know that there are unique challenges we face delivering health services to rural and remote populations. We face issues such as longer wait times to make appointments and wait longer for ambulance services at times. Rural Albertans are often forced to subsidize the cost of their care by travelling long distances to services centralized far away from home. Some of these are the unavoidable result of geography and sparser population.

But I believe that innovative solutions exist and that this government is committed to finding them. Rural health care requires different solutions than in larger, urban settings. In the rural north we require the ability to make local decisions to improve the delivery of our services. We require flexibility to attract skilled professionals and incentivize them to come to our smaller towns.

1:40

I will continue to work with this new government to find ways that rural health care can be adaptive and responsive to our needs. I know that by involving various health professionals and looking into other opportunities, we can provide timely care that rural Albertans need. There are solutions to be found, and we need to continue to consult, listen, and react to these ideas. Simply improving access to a family doctor can avoid many costly hospital visits.

I have had productive conversations with both the ministers of Health and Infrastructure. We have discussed how our valuable tax dollars can be allocated more efficiently in order to get the care we need while keeping costs reasonable. We have discussed increasing flexibility in local decision-making to allow the outside-the-box solutions to be considered. I have toured the new Grande Prairie hospital, an important hub for care in the Peace Country, to discuss how this project can be effectively and quickly brought to completion, and I have spoken to the minister of seniors to talk about how we can keep our loved ones closer to their home communities in their elder years. I know that in this government we have both a true voice for rural health care and a committed listener.

Thank you.

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

### Albertans

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Member for Taber-Warner stood in this House and implied that the majority of the opposition caucus members were outsiders to Alberta. This is the same member who bragged about, quote, superior stock of certain groups and admitted his comments, quote, reeked of Aryan overtones. I am disturbed that the member opposite appeared to be sending a signal about which members of this Assembly are true Albertans based on how long they've lived here. It is deeply disappointing to see this government continue to use coded language, fear, and division to imply that some people are not true Albertans, that there are outsiders whose voices are less worth listening to because of when they came here or, perhaps, the way they look.

Of course, it is extra rich because this is the party whose own leader was not born here, a party that shipped in candidates from Ottawa to run in Alberta, including one candidate who had to step down over white supremacist comments, and a party that is full of senior staff from Ottawa and outside of Alberta. By highlighting the opposition caucus members who moved to Alberta from other provinces or countries but failing to point out that the same is true of many members in his own caucus, it was clear that the member was using coded language to send a message. I've heard the members across the aisle complain about identity politics. Maybe it's time they looked in the mirror.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans who are not indigenous to this land came to Alberta from other places to enjoy opportunity, freedom, and the beauty of this province. On this side of the aisle we believe in our duty to listen to the voices of all Albertans, not to pick and choose between insiders and outsiders. Whether someone came to our beautiful province a year ago or whether their family has been here for generations, all people should be welcomed and deserve to be represented in this House. This government would be wise to remember that. But I can assure Albertans that my colleagues on this side of the House absolutely do.

### Filibuster of June 5 to 6

**Ms Rosin:** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House today to discuss the learning experience that I underwent in the last week of my life. I came into politics knowing that the NDP and I had very different world views, but over the course of a 24-hour filibuster last week it became clear just how different those world views are.

I believe in democracy and free enterprise. After that marathon I can confidently say that our opposition does not. You see, governments typically filibuster to raise awareness on things the public may not be fully aware of. For example, Rand Paul filibustered to raise awareness of drone strikes on American soil, but the NDP: no; they filibustered a campaign promise. Nothing disrespects democracy and the voice of the people more than filibustering the very things that the largest number of Albertans in Albertan history just voted on with resounding support. There are no surprises in the legislation we are putting forward. Albertans knew what they were getting into when they voted for us at the polls, and it is a shame that our opposition would rather tell Albertans that they are wrong than listen to them.

It has also become clear to me just this last week how differently myself and the NDP view free enterprise. Time and time again, members of the opposition insulted job creators, assuming the worst in their character, and called our tax cut a giveaway. How socialist. They truly believe that every dollar Albertans earn and every dollar Albertan businesses generate belong to the government, not those who raised it. A tax cut is not a government revenue giveaway because that money that hard-working Albertans raise was never the government's money in the first place. Governments are not entitled to our money. Governments exist to serve the people; people don't exist to serve the government. Perhaps your opposition would have been a little more satisfied with the outcome of the democracy had they come to realize this.

Mr. Speaker, respect for democracy and free-enterprise spirit are what made Alberta the great place it is to live today. After listening to our opposition's rhetoric for 24 hours too many last week, I can confidently say that there's a reason that voters sent such a clear message at the polls in April, and I am confident that our United Conservative government will be the ones on the right side of history.

## Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I am pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. This bill was referred to the committee on May 30, 2019. The committee's final report recommends that Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act, proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the motion for concurrence in the report is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Are any members wishing to speak to the motion for concurrence?

Seeing none, the chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills has requested concurrence in the report on Bill 201. Does the Assembly agree to the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. In my opinion, the ayes have it. That is carried and ordered.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I am pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 202, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019, sponsored by the hon. member to my right, Calgary-West. This bill was referred to the committee on May 30, 2019. The committee's final report recommends that Bill 202, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019, proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 202, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the motion for concurrence in the report is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Are there any members who wish to speak to the motion for concurrence?

Seeing none, hon. members, the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills has requested concurrence in the report on Bill 202. Does the Assembly agree to the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. In my opinion, the ayes have it. That motion is carried and so ordered.

### Point of Order Epithets

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am prepared to rule in response to multiple points of order raised yesterday regarding the use of the mock bill title Bill Hate instead of the official title for Bill 8. Members, arguments on this matter can be found on pages 758 and 759 of yesterday's *Hansard*. I deferred my ruling to consider these arguments as I noted yesterday that many valid points were made

on both sides. On one hand, members of the Official Opposition have an important role in holding the government to account and may on occasion feel the need to use strong language to emphasize their position. However, as noted on page 100 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, one limitation on free speech of members "is provided by the authority of the Speaker under the Standing Orders to preserve order and decorum."

On November 30, 2011, Speaker Kowalski delivered a ruling related to comparing the contents of a bill to historical atrocities in Europe. While the former Speaker did not find a point of order on that occasion, he did provide the member with the opportunity to make a clarification and noted at page 1528 of *Hansard* for that day that "with the great privileges that... members enjoy permitting freedom of speech in this Assembly comes great responsibility."

1:50

A term used in one context may be parliamentary, but that same term in another context may be unparliamentary. As noted in *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, at paragraph 486(1), "It is impossible... to declare beforehand what expressions are or are not contrary to order; much depends upon the tone and manner, and intention, of the person speaking." For that reason, lists of unparliamentary terms may be of limited utility without context.

I might note that the Official Opposition House Leader yesterday referred at some length to lists that may or may not be available. As such, this is why I'm reluctant to declare a particular term to be or not to be parliamentary.

As I noted yesterday, Speaker Zwozdesky struggled with a similar issue during his time as Speaker. Ultimately, in a ruling on April 8, 2013, at page 1719 of *Hansard* for that day the former Speaker concluded that the repeated use of a particular term had taken so much time of the House that it was time for the House to move on and choose different language.

I also acknowledge the ruling referenced by the hon. Government House Leader in his arguments yesterday, which was delivered by Speaker Kowalski on March 22, 2000, at pages 595 and 596 of *Hansard* for that day. Like the matter before us, it also related to mock bill titles. In that case, as in the 2013 ruling, there had been repeated use of a term for many days prior to the ruling. Speaker Kowalski ruled that the reality is that a bill does have a name. A bill does have a title. He concluded that using a synonym or adjective to describe a bill instead of the proper title can provoke debate during question period and found that there was some merit to the point of order as question period is an opportunity for the government to provide information or for the opposition to try to get information, not for debate.

I ask members, as we move forward, to choose their language carefully. Ask yourself whether your intention is to insult or to inflame debate or to levy an accusation against a member opposite or – and perhaps this is the important part – to knowingly cause disorder. If so, I would suggest that you find another means to make your case.

As this is the first opportunity for members to be given this direction on the matter, I for today do not find this as a point of order. However, this ruling should not be considered *carte blanche* to proceed with using the mock bill title Bill Hate on a regular basis. In fact, I will be listening very closely to any use of the term and the context in which it is used. It is difficult to envision a scenario where the term might not cause disorder. Should we get to the point where order can no longer be maintained by the Speaker on any occasion on which the term is used, I will be prepared to deliver a similar ruling to that of Speaker Zwozdesky in 2013.

## Oral Question Period

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

### Public Service Wage Arbitration Postponement

**Ms Notley:** The most comprehensive platform in Alberta history – 117 pages, 375 commitments, yada, yada, yada – yet I can't find a single word giving this Finance minister the green light to break legal contracts in order to grab money from teachers, nurses, youth support workers, you name it. It looks to me like: promise hidden, workers broken. To the Minister of Finance: why didn't the UCP come clean on their plan to break the law with workers before the election?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we are just simply seeking to delay these arbitration hearings until this government can build a responsible path forward to ensure that we can bring this province to economic and fiscal balance and deliver high-quality services that Albertans expect, not only for this year but for years and generations to come.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I informed this House of a recent study referenced by a Nobel prize winning economist that shows that less than a third of the Trump corporate tax cut went to investment or to jobs. Meanwhile what we know here in Alberta is that every dime paid to, say, a nurse or a rehab worker goes directly to caring for our loved ones. To the minister. His corporate handout will waste 70 per cent of every dollar, and he is paying for this fiasco by attacking the wages of front-line health care workers. Why?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans elected this government to not only bring fiscal balance to this province but to create jobs, to attract investment, to create opportunities for all Albertans. Our job-creation tax cut is one piece in a major initiative that will attract investment, create job opportunities and opportunities for all Albertans, and will guarantee that we can have a world-class education and health care system for today and in future generations.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, this Finance minister is completely ignoring the people who devote their lives to caring for and keeping us safe. He wants to suppress the wages of nurses, of caregivers for seniors, of child therapists, you name it. There is no front-line worker that this minister won't force to bankroll his \$4.5 billion corporate tax giveaway. To the minister: when you're looking to find places to fund your gift to your inside friends, can you do Albertans a favour and not go after the very people caring for our loved ones when they need it the most?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, this government respects and greatly values the contribution that our public sector makes not only to the work of this government but, more importantly, to all Albertans. Again, this is not a removal of rights but simply a postponement of process. We're seeking to postpone the arbitration hearings. This is not about taking money from teachers and nurses.

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

### Worker Overtime Pay

**Ms Notley:** This government is not stopping just at public-sector workers when it comes to attacking people. New, independently verified data released today shows that this government's pick-your-pocket bill could cost up to 400,000 Alberta overtime workers an average of \$150 per week. This works out to an average of \$600

a month, most of the grocery bill. To the Premier: why won't he come clean and at least explain to these 400,000 Albertans why he believes they need to be giving up grocery money as part of the so-called UCP job-creation plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly disappointing that the members opposite continue to talk about changes that we're making to banked overtime hours as impacting overtime pay. That is simply not the case. The objective of this change is to provide flexibility for workers and for employers. The old policy led to many construction and seasonal employees having their overtime hours limited. This means they didn't earn money at time and a half or get the opportunity to bank overtime. This change will actually correct that failed policy.

Thank you.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly disappointing when the minister of labour continues to give untrue facts to this House.

Now, the news on wage cuts gets worse when it comes to the oil and gas sector. On average, overtime workers stand to lose \$320 per week. Folks working in this sector have already borne the brunt of the drop in oil prices and now the decades-long failure to build a pipeline to tidewater. To the Premier: does he really think that taking \$320 a week from the pockets of oil and gas workers is the fairest way to bring jobs back to this province?

2:00

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what the Premier thinks the fairest thing to do is, and he's already done it. That is to kill the job-killing carbon tax that that hon. member brought in while she was Premier, the largest tax increase on Albertans that was ever brought in . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . in the history of this province. Our Premier brought in the largest tax decrease in the history of this province. I'm incredibly proud of him. As we know now today from the announcement from the federal government, we know for sure that at least until January 2020 we're going to have the lowest gas prices in the entire country. Thank you again to the hon. Premier of Alberta for that.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:01.

**Ms Notley:** That temporary respite, Mr. Speaker, will help pay about 3 per cent of the pick-your-pockets bill that . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Notley:** . . . these guys just imposed. This \$320-per-week pick-your-pockets plan for oil and gas workers comes as we learn of more U.S. government delays to pipelines, this government's move to cancel our made-in-Alberta pipeline, and the federal government's decision to double down on slowing pipelines. Talk about piling on. To the Minister of Energy: when she attends rallies in support of the industry, do her speeches talk about her government's plans to cut the wages of those in attendance?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, there's no intention to cut the wages of anybody in attendance. There's just no intention. It's a ridiculous comment from the Leader of the Opposition.

But now that she is talking about the hon. Energy minister, let me just express to the House how proud we are also of the hon. Energy

minister, who is out fighting hard each and every day for our energy industry, our oil and gas industry, and the men and women who work in it, unlike the former government, who worked against them every day. I am so proud that we have an Energy minister that is out there fighting tooth and nail each and every day for our industry and the people that work in it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Public Service Contract Negotiations

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This Finance minister says one thing and does another. On Tuesday in this House he said that he wanted to bargain in good faith with public-sector unions. The very next day he served notice of his intention to break the very contracts that those unions have signed. To the minister: if this is what you consider good-faith bargaining, could you please explain what bargaining in bad faith looks like?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to working with all stakeholders going forward. We also have a great responsibility to Albertans to ensure that we're making fiscally and economically defensible decisions and to ensure that we can deliver high-quality services to Albertans. We're simply seeking a delay, a temporary delay, in these arbitration hearings until we have the best information to make the best decisions on behalf of all Albertans.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This from the party that continually talks about the rule of law. Well, let me educate this minister. Working in good faith involves constant communication, collaboration, and consultation. Many of this province's labour leaders have barely heard a word from this government. These labour leaders are gathered here today to keep the government honest. I'm curious: just what consultations did the Minister of Finance or the minister of labour do before plotting to rip up the contracts of nurses, sheriffs, and countless other workers?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our department officials have reached out to all affected stakeholders, including affected unions. We certainly intend to co-operate with all stakeholders and work together towards a mutually beneficial solution, a solution that will ensure that we can get onto a path of fiscal responsibility. The opposition, when they were in government, put this province on a trajectory to a hundred billion dollars of provincial debt. That's unacceptable.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Threatening letters are not good-faith consultation.

The moves by this Finance minister show where this government's true allegiances are. Wealthy corporations: they get a tax giveaway. Restaurant lobbyists: they get a whole menu of changes. Nurses: nothing but cuts and broken contracts. Teachers: nothing but layoffs and broken contracts. To the minister: when you're done paying off your friends, how long will emergency wait times be? How crowded will our classrooms be?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans elected this government to ensure that we can deliver high-quality services to Albertans in a sustainable manner. That's high-quality education and health care services for this generation and the next. [interjections] The previous government had us on an unsustainable path to bankruptcy, which would have meant the next generation would not have had any kind of a world-class system for health care and education.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:06.

### Public Service Wages and Women's Economic Equality

**Ms Phillips:** Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. This government's plan to pick the pockets of workers specifically targets women. Surprise, surprise with these guys. But the facts are clear: 66 per cent of teachers are women; 92 per cent of nurses are women. To the Minister of Finance: why is he making the second-worst gender pay gap in the country even worse?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance is rising.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, that is a ridiculous allegation. The reality is that we are moving forward to be the responsible government that Albertans expect and need at this point. We will bring balance and responsibility to the finances of the province and ensure that we're delivering high-quality services to Albertans.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, we know that this government caucus has trouble with women's issues. The Government House Leader once fired a woman who raised that she was being sexually harassed at work. While in opposition that same House leader directed his caucus to walk out on voting on women's health care a record 13 times. To the Finance minister: he does know that he's not supposed to bring those objectionable views towards women into public policy with this unconstitutional raid on nurses' wages, doesn't he?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister for the status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it absolutely reprehensible that the opposition brought in a carbon tax that absolutely impacted everyone at an unbelievable level – women, people of the middle class, people that were suffering, choosing between heating their homes and feeding their families – yet this member has the audacity to ask us, based on a platform that we ran on, on making sure that we get back to balance and making sure that ... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will have order.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, a history lesson. When the late Premier Ralph Klein went after health care workers in the 1990s, who stopped him? And Calgary laundry workers? Most of them were women. My question to the minister is simple. Why is his priority writing cheques to fancy lawyers in \$5,000 suits so that they can fight court challenge after court challenge for a law that is blatantly unconstitutional rather than acting fairly and lawfully towards hard-working women and men in scrubs? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. We will have order.

The hon. minister for the status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is obvious that the opposition absolutely did no door-knocking, did not spend any time

with their constituents, had absolutely no idea about the impact that their policies had on oil workers, gas workers. They keep talking about oil and gas. Do you know how many women are employed . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I had no challenge hearing the question. I'm having significant difficulty hearing the answer. I would like to do so. The minister will have as much time as she needs to answer the question if I'm having a hard time hearing her.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Do you know how many women are employed in the oil and gas sector? Thousands. Do you know how many women are employed in all of the sectors that this government brought absolutely detrimental policy to, which impacted hundreds of thousands of jobs, families, everybody, the difference between feeding your family and heating your house?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont is rising.

### Mental Health Services

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's youth are often overstressed from trying to balance work, school, and their social life. During this formative time for our young people extra stress can create a platform for mental illness and anxiety to fester. Can the Minister of Health please inform the House about the resources available to aid youth struggling with mental health problems.

2:10

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and answer the member's question. We campaigned on a fresh approach to mental health and addiction and a real plan. That includes the appointment of the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and a commitment of over \$100 million for a mental health strategy. We're investing in a full continuum of care, with a strong focus on prevention and youth. Our strategy will increase access in primary care because that's where we can intervene earlier to address a mental health problem before it becomes a crisis.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont is rising.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that all young people can benefit from having access to these resources and given that my constituents may not be aware of these resources and given the importance of lowering the stigma around mental health and increasing access to information, can the minister comment on how these services are advertised to those young people who need them the most? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I believe that the Speaker is on his feet. As we've learned on numerous occasions this week, when the Speaker is on his feet, everybody else stops talking, and when he's seated, you all have your opportunity.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do know that youth can be hard to reach, especially when they're dealing with mental health issues. Information about accessing mental health services is provided through 811, 211, through the AHS website, through social media. We're going to put patients at the centre of the health care system. That means working with providers in the community because they know their clients better than the government ever

can. Minister Luan is doing exactly that. In fact, just yesterday he had a great meeting with CASA here in Edmonton.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind the Minister of Health that no matter what the reason is, we wouldn't want to use the name of a minister or otherwise.

The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, again, to the minister. Given that the larger municipalities have greater access to mental health resources when compared to rural areas or smaller communities such as Leduc-Beaumont and given that youth in these communities are just as likely to suffer from mental health illness as the youth in larger municipalities, can the minister please inform my constituents about how these mental health services and advertising will be made accessible to the communities?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are more than 135 addiction and mental health community clinics throughout Alberta. There are also three youth integrated hubs in the province which provide drop-in services. The hubs are a partnership with primary health care providers and other community services. We also fund services in schools across the province through the mental health capacity-building program. Those are the foundations of the system, and we'll build on them with our mental health strategy to make sure of real improvements in access across the province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Public Service Contract Negotiations

(continued)

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week members on all sides of this House spoke to a motion about the value of public-sector jobs and what they bring to their local communities. We heard how important public employees like nurses and paramedics are to supporting their families and local businesses, not to mention improving and saving the lives of others. What could be more Albertan than that? Yet yesterday in this House the Minister of Finance repeatedly suggested that forcing them back from the bargaining table at the barrel of legislation is somehow putting Albertans first. To the Minister of Health: do you support your colleague's suggestion that front-line health care workers are somehow not everyday Albertans?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government greatly appreciates the contribution that our health care workers make to all Albertans. We recognize their incredible skill set and their deep commitment to better the lives of Albertans. Again, we're just seeking a delay in arbitration hearings – that's all we're seeking at this point – so that we can build the best plan forward on behalf of all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that front-line health care workers have the biggest impact on quality of care for Albertans and given that there's no way this government can keep its promise to improve services while reducing costs without tapping into their knowledge and expertise, to the Minister of Health: do you recognize that when your colleague breaks their contracts and talks about them like a problem to be solved or a cost to be reduced instead of as being valued partners in providing care,

he insults them, lowers morale, and makes it harder not only for them to do their jobs but for you to do yours?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, we campaigned on a commitment to Albertans to maintain or increase health care spending, and that's our commitment to Albertans. We began a process where we are reviewing the processes and the structure of AHS to make sure that we can find efficiencies so we can reinvest in our front-line workers. Our commitment is to continue working with our health care workers and making sure to continue to deliver world-class health care in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They did not campaign on breaking contracts.

Given that people, like capital, are mobile and given that uncertainty is every bit as damaging for workers as it is for business and given that under Premier Klein we saw a mass exodus of nurses, doctors, and other health care workers fleeing the uncertainty caused by his cuts and attacks on the public service, to the Minister of Health: do you recognize that the path your colleague is starting down could very well end in a significant loss of trained, experienced front-line workers at a time when Albertans need them most?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, again, as my colleague the Minister of Finance has said, this is about process. It's about a delay of process. We're going to continue to work with our civil service and make sure that we are going to continue to deliver world-class health care. It's incredibly rich that we're now being lectured about cuts to front-line workers when that is a government that cut 28 positions and nurses in the central zone in Red Deer. We are going to continue to make sure that we're going to work with our front-line workers and have patient-focused decisions.

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

#### **Children Living Independently and the Minimum Wage**

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we know, the government is implementing a minimum wage rollback for youth in this province. What concerns me about this attack is the youth and how it will affect our most vulnerable. Many foster-age children, aged 15 to 17, actually live independently. They balance going to school and working to pay the bills. Has the Minister of Children's Services spoken with foster children to get a sense of how this rollback on their income will affect their ability to keep a roof over their heads, or are children in care just less important than pleasing the UCP's donors?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's so ridiculous to continue to watch over and over the opposition stand up in the House and do these tactics. If they want to have a reasonable conversation and ask reasonable questions, it would be . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reality of the process the opposition continues to want to do in this House is to go through fear and smear. We talk about it all the time. It's all they want to do. It's such a ridiculous tactic. It's so disappointing to watch that behaviour. I mean, if you look at the Leader of the Official Opposition, I've never seen anything like it in my life.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted at 2:17.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is rising.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the response, I guess that's: no, foster children have not been spoken to.

Given that foster children living independently are often our most vulnerable youth in the province and given that this government is actually creating an incentive for these kids to drop out of school, the very students whom we should be supporting to stay in school, and given that these youth will now have a reduced income, making it difficult to put food on the table and support themselves, can the Minister of Children's Services update the House on any increased supports her ministry will offer these youth living on their own, considering they are cutting their wages?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this is about jobs for youth. This government made a commitment during the election to make sure we would stand up for youth, who are having some of the largest unemployment in our population because of that NDP government when they were in power. This is about standing up for the most vulnerable. This is about standing up to give youth opportunities inside our economy, something that the other side of the House just does not seem to understand. This is about jobs, and that's what this government is focused on with a laser focus – jobs, the economy, and pipelines – the complete opposite of those across from us.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard nothing so far to address my concerns about youth living on their own – and clearly that means that this government has not talked to them – and given that this government is in a rush to attack youth wages with just two weeks to go until this minister's plan comes into effect, will the minister of labour commit to delaying any cut to youth wages until he has properly consulted with his colleague the Minister of Children's Services, who will hopefully speak with foster children as well as other relevant groups supporting children and youth?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The student job-creation wage is about creating work opportunities for youth. Over 15,000 youth between 15 and 19 are currently looking for work in Alberta. We need to address this. We ran on this platform. We made this commitment. We're going to follow through on this commitment, and I think that our youth can't wait more than two weeks to actually make this happen.

Thank you. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Glenora will come to order.

#### **Farm and Ranch Safety**

**Mr. Rowsell:** Mr. Speaker, some of my constituents have raised concerns about the safety rules on farms and ranches. In particular, they're concerned about mandatory morning safety meetings and that family members who work on the farm have to attend these meetings. They think it's unnecessary and delays the start of the day. My question is to the Minister of Labour and Immigration. Why are these safety meetings mandatory for family members, and will the minister consider changing this?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright for the question. Occupational health and safety rules only apply to farms and ranches that have waged, nonfamily employees. The rules do not apply to family members or to farms that don't have waged, nonfamily employees. Morning safety meetings are not mandatory under OHS rules; however, it's always good practice for everyone working on the farm to assess potential hazards and talk about safety issues. Just a few minutes at the beginning of the day can help ensure that no one gets hurt during the day.

Thank you.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you for clarifying that, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents also raised concerns about having to record the hours and work activities of family members on the farm. Given that these recorded hours are for WCB insurance, that was mandated by Bill 6, can the minister explain this requirement and what the government's plan is for mandatory WCB coverage on farms and ranches?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration has the call.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like the OHS rules, WCB coverage is only mandatory on farms and ranches that have waged, nonfamily workers. Family members are exempt. A producer may voluntarily have WCB coverage for family members, but it's not mandatory.

As we promised in our platform, we will replace Bill 6 with the farm freedom and safety act. One part of that is giving farmers a choice of WCB insurance or getting workplace insurance from the private sector. I can tell the hon. member that my ministry is in discussions with both WCB and private insurance companies about options for farmers and ranchers.

**Mr. Rowswell:** My constituents will be happy to hear that, Minister.

My final question is also for the Minister of Labour and Immigration. Given that the previous NDP government drafted the current legislation without consulting Albertans and given that our government will be changing this flawed piece of legislation, will farmers and ranchers get to have input on how OHS rules apply to their operations, and when will this happen?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. As I said in my previous answer, we promised to replace Bill 6 with the farm freedom and safety act. In our platform we also promised to consult with farmers and ranchers before we did that. Their input will help us develop new rules that will work for farms and ranches. The new laws will balance the unique needs of farms and ranches with the need for a common-sense, flexible farm safety regime. We will ensure safety standards on farms and ranches while giving employers flexibility and choice. My colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and I will have more to say about consulting with farmers and ranchers in the near future.

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

## Red Tape Reduction and Job-creation Strategies

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, government can't work when one minister says one thing and another says another thing. Last week the minister of labour defended all parts of the pick-your-pockets bill, saying, "even if it creates just a little bit of red tape." This is in direct contradiction to the mandate of the associate minister of red tape. My question to the minister: do you agree with the labour minister that imposing red tape on job creators is worth it, or is it just more evidence that your mandate is just a little bit bogus?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, in four years our government will reduce regulatory burden on our job creators and innovators by one-third. We'll take Alberta from being one of the highest compliance-cost jurisdictions to the lowest-cost jurisdictions in North America. In a nutshell, we are going to make Alberta one of the freest and fastest moving economies in the world. In four years we will be able to look Albertans in the eyes and say: promise made, promise kept.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Make sure to give the minister a copy of that.

Given that the words of the Minister of Labour and Immigration essentially question the reason for the existence of the associate minister's portfolio and given that the associate minister's mandate says that his job will be to target unnecessary and burdensome overregulation that is currently weighing job creators down, my question again is to the associate minister of red tape. With the labour minister saying one thing and your mandate saying another when it comes to red tape, who is actually being straight with Albertans?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, you will remember that when that government was in office, I brought forward a private member's bill to be able to reduce regulatory burden, and they rejected that. Albertans have rejected them and said that there is absolutely no way that they can continue to do business.

This is one of our important measures that we are going to be bringing forward to Albertans to make sure that we can get them back to work and that Albertans can actually have a great place to live.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Sounds like none of them are being straight.

Given that the minister has committed to repealing regulations when new regulations are introduced and given that the labour minister's new zeal for imposing regulations on job creators with your pick-your-pockets legislation, to the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: can you list any of the regulations you've repealed to counter the additional red tape coming from the labour minister? And please be specific this time, Minister.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, that member was in my office twice, and we had the opportunity to talk about these issues. He's grandstanding right now, as this ND Party continues to do. What's so sad about it is that they are Team Angry. Rather than actually looking for real solutions to be able to actually create jobs and increase the economy for Alberta, they continue to be Team Angry. We will not. We will fight for Albertans every day.

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

## Driver's Licence Road Tests

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2018 our government took the necessary steps to reform the driver examination system. We heard about issues and concerns from Albertans about the existing system. High fees, poor service, and



lack of service in rural Alberta were all matters that Conservatives completely failed to address during their time in office. Now we see the Transportation minister moving to repeal these changes. To the Minister of Transportation: why are you committed to reimposing on Albertans a system that was generating seven complaints per day from Albertans? Is it ideology or another favour to your donors?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that new drivers in Alberta are adequately tested in a safe and timely manner. That's why we will be reviewing the public takeover of the driver's licence examinations to ensure that Albertans can reasonably access the testing system.

Thank you.

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

**Member Loyola:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that a 2016 report found that the previous system of driver examination had the highest fees in Canada and was perceived to be full of mistrust and, I quote, flawed and given that our government acted on this report to improve the system and given that the UCP is now publicly talking about going back to the problems, concerns, and issues that the report highlighted, to the Minister of Transportation. High fees, mistrust, no oversight, and flaws all around: is this really what you want to go back to?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Our focus, Mr. Speaker, is on meeting demand at registries across the province so that Albertans can take a road test in a timely manner, and we're committed to clearing the backlog.

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

**Member Loyola:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that the tragic Humboldt bus crash shocked all Canadians and given that our government responded by increasing the testing requirements through the mandatory entry-level training, or MELT, program and given that there is a fear expressed in the media today that the UCP might cancel the MELT program, which could dangerously send unqualified drivers onto the roads, to the Minister of Transportation: will you do the right thing and commit to this House that your government will maintain the MELT program?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we're committed to driver safety, and we are continuing to review this initiative closely. We'll review the effectiveness of the publicly delivered model to ensure that Albertans have the services that they need and that they require.

Thank you.

2:30

### Support for Agriculture

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta farmers rely heavily on exporting our commodities, whether that be wheat, canola, barley, beef, pork, or any of the vast array of products we produce. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what is this government doing to help develop new markets for trade?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to inform this House that Alberta's economic development and trade minister just returned from a trade mission to expand market access opportunities in Asia. That contrasts very sharply to the former NDP minister of economic development and trade, who just last week in this House said, "I'm sorry; if paying a few thousand

dollars extra a month [in carbon taxes] means you went out of business, maybe you need to look at your business plan or at least the management." I'm proud of our minister of economic development and trade, who works with Alberta businesses instead of ridiculing them.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta's agriculture industry has been facing challenges due to the restrictions on selling our canola and pork in China, can the minister tell us what this government is doing to help open up the canola trade in China?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Market access is extremely important to Alberta farmers, and improving trade relations with China is critical for our canola farmers. We are working with the federal government as Alberta farmers should not be paying the price of this diplomatic dispute. As the member opposite mentioned, when it comes to wheat, 90 per cent gets exported around the world; canola, 80 per cent; cattle, 60 per cent; 55 per cent for hogs. We're doing everything we can to help farmers during this difficult trade time.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given that farmers are faced with many different stresses and uncertainty, whether that be weather, markets, equipment failure, or the like, and given that spring input costs can be difficult to manage at the best of times but even more so in this time of uncertainty, Minister, what is this government doing to help farmers struggling to pay their spring seeding bills during this time of uncertainty?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Seeding is almost a hundred per cent complete here in Alberta, and by this fall farmers will have access to the full suite of business risk management programs that we have and farmers have used in the past, whether it's AgriStability, AgriInvest, AgriInsurance, and others, to help farmers out directly. But ultimately, with the carbon tax cut, the largest tax cut in Alberta's history, farmers know that they have a very supportive government.

### Bill 8 Consultations

**Member Irwin:** The Minister of Education has made a number of references to balance and the groups she's consulted in her attempts to destroy GSAs and QSAs. In October of last year she hosted an event for a known anti-LGBTQ organization, Parents for Choice in Education, that's been vocal about their opposition to GSAs. Can the minister please tell this House and all Albertans who else she's consulted in relation to this hateful bill, and, specifically, has she consulted anyone who doesn't agree with her on the attack on the rights of LGBTQ youth?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I have consulted broadly. I've consulted all of the major stakeholders. I've talked to children. I've talked to parents. I've talked to all of them, and that's what they... [interjections] To a large number of students and stakeholders. Thank you for the question.

**Member Irwin:** Well, you know, I've heard from a whole heck of a lot of kids, and they sure don't see balance in the legislation this government is proposing to destroy GSAs.

Given that Parents for Choice in Education is a front group for UCP VIP member John Carpay and given that Carpay compared the pride flag to the swastika and given that when those comments emerged, the Premier refused to revoke Carpay's UCP membership, stating that it was up to the party's board, to the government: is John Carpay still a proud UCP member, or are you working to find balance with him, too?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I fail to find any government policy in the question: is an individual a member of a political party or not?

Having said that, if the Government House Leader chooses to answer, he's welcome to do so.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree with you completely, but I will appreciate taking the opportunity to respond to the continued misrepresentation of facts by the opposition when it comes to GSAs in this province. I want to be clear again to this House that even once we pass this new legislation with Bill 8, we will still continue to have the strongest statutory protections when it comes to GSAs inside this province. That is a fact. I know the opposition is struggling with facts. They often do struggle with facts. It's, I think, kind of a symptom of the NDP. But the reality is that those are the facts. We'll have the strongest statutory protections in the country.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have no idea what the hon. member might be asking, but if it is about a particular individual and party-related matters, I will rule that question out of order. I encourage you to choose your words wisely.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Given that Carpay also brought forward a legal challenge attempting to stop the protections for LGBTQ youth that we introduced in Bill 24 and given that it was shot down in the courts, who ruled that the bill in no way restricts parents' rights, and given that the courts found that destroying GSAs would have negative effects on improving student performance, reducing drug use, and providing an increased sense of safety in schools, to this government. GSAs actually provide plenty of balance in our schools. They save lives. Why are you set on destroying them?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity again to make clear what this government's policy is. It's certainly not what the opposition is saying. It is to protect GSAs. That was in our platform. It is inside every act that we are making as a government when it comes to education. The Education minister has been clear on that. The Premier has been clear on that. I've been clear on that. By the end of this process we will continue to have the strongest statutory protection when it comes to GSAs. That's a fact. The hon. members, I know, are struggling with those facts. That fine. But the reality is that that is a fact. We will have the strongest statutory protections in the entire country.

### Abortion Rights

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, trigger warning. I'll be asking about bubble zones, so now may be a good time for the government to leave the Chamber. In the last Legislature our caucus voted 13 times to affirm the right of a woman to access legal health care without fear of harassment. The UCP rose 13 times and ran away. Our caucus showed the leadership needed and passed Bill 9 to create bubble zones around abortion clinics. Now we see the media reports

that the bubble zones have worked to deter harassment of their patients. Does the Government House Leader regret directing his colleagues to walk out on women's rights, and will you apologize to Albertans for . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of status of women. [interjections]

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I don't know if anybody is going to be able to hear me. The interesting thing about the questions that are coming right now from the opposition is that they're attacking. There's absolutely nothing to be able to be answered on this side because of the rhetoric. They're campaigning. They are still smearing and fearing throughout this entire House. If there is a question that is relevant, I would be happy to answer it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has the call.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that an entire caucus walking out of 13 votes has never been recorded before in Alberta history and given that a former Clerk of the Assembly described the UC's walkout as a total abrogation of opposition's responsibility and given that the Kensington clinic is now reporting that as a result of Bill 9 it is now safer for women to access their services and for the workers at the clinic, to the Minister of Health: will you commit to providing any and all supports and resources needed by any abortion clinics in Alberta to properly serve their patients?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister for the status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much for the question. I am absolutely committed to being able to do work to make sure that we adequately consult and make sure that all appropriate things are done.

Thank you so much.

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, given the astonishing 13 times the UCP walked out on their duty to serve Albertans and given that the improvements in safety that Bill 9 has made to the patients and workers of Alberta's abortion clinics and given the concern that the clinics have expressed regarding ongoing electronic harassment through e-mail and phone calling, to the Minister of Health: will you admit that Bill 9 was necessary and commit to working with clinics to combat electronic harassment, or will you and your colleagues turn your back on women's health care once again?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister for the status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Again to answer the question: absolutely we are committed to working with all parties that are asking these questions. As always, our doors are always open, and we are very happy to consult and make sure that we are protecting women's rights.

Thank you.

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

2:40

### Education Act

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. As a father of four I was incredibly happy to see the minister recently announce plans to modernize our Alberta education system by replacing the School Act with the Education Act. Unlike the previous NDP government, the minister has affirmed the government's commitment to respect the hard

work done by stakeholders over multiple years of robust consultation. Can the minister please explain how the Education Act will improve our province's education system?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the hon. member for the question. Proclaiming the Education Act will make Alberta schools the diverse, excellent classrooms that all Albertans desire and deserve. It modernizes our education system by replacing a piece of legislation originally introduced in 1988. To put it into perspective: cellphones and the Internet barely existed. At the end of the day, this legislation is based on values we believe are fundamental to supporting our students.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that modernizing our education system will require adjustments for our school boards, with the current school year coming to an end and the summer break about to begin, can the minister please explain to this House how the government will ensure a smooth transition for school authorities across this province?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. With our commitment to have the Education Act come into force for the next school year, we recognize that some updates to the legislation are needed. We have proposed that the current age of access, the age of compulsory attendance, and residency rules remain in effect under the Education Act. These existing rules are working well for students and school boards at this time. We believe our proposed amendments will provide schools with the certainty that they need to effectively transition for the upcoming school year.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that a concern that I've heard around the Education Act is about the rules for student transportation, school districts across this province are already communicating busing schedules to parents, and families are already creating transportation plans for the upcoming school year, can the minister please explain how the Education Act will affect transportation for students across this province?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the hon. member, for the question. I'm most happy to provide certainty and consistency to parents and school boards. We are proposing that we maintain the current rules for busing. Changes to eligibility or service this close to the coming school year could lead to significant financial implications or major service changes for families. We will remain committed to supporting our families and students and providing them with the supports they need to succeed during their studies.

Thank you so much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul is rising with a question.

## Fishing Regulations

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the last four years I have attended many town halls and meetings in communities concerned about the lack of fish harvesting opportunities. Although the message was consistent from anglers and guides that walleye populations were exploding in many northern lakes, the previous government's answer was to close more lakes and impose more restrictions on others. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: will you review the consultations conducted over the last few years, meet with concerned groups, and lift the new restrictions imposed in the 2019 regulations?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. The answer is simple: yes. We will be reviewing all prior consultation. I'm happy to meet with any stakeholder group involved in this important issue. I know that they struggled to get meetings with the previous government. I met with them often in opposition, and I look forward to meeting them as the Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much for the answer, minister. Given that residential licence purchases dropped by 35,582 from 2015 to 2018, a loss of \$996,296 in Alberta revenue, and given that nonresident licence purchases also dropped by two-thirds over that period at a loss of between \$400,000 and \$500,000, not to mention the tourism dollars lost — people are not coming to Alberta to fish — and given that at the same time walleye special draw applications doubled and 27,000 Albertans purchased licences in Saskatchewan ...

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member raises an important issue, and I think it's worth the conversation. To be clear, though, the Environment and Parks department, going forward, when it makes decisions in regard to species harvesting will be based on science that's available in making the best decision for the species to make sure that we have an opportunity to harvest now but will also have an opportunity to harvest for future generations. We will continue to balance both those issues. What I can assure the hon. member and through him to his constituents is that we will be open for that conversation and making sure that they are included in that process.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'll try to speak faster, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Cold Lake fish hatchery in my constituency was designed for and has the capacity to produce between 40 million and 60 million walleye fingerlings per year and those fingerlings have the potential to grow to 40 centimetres in just three years, Minister, we are losing opportunities for tourism to Saskatchewan, we are losing over \$1 million in license fees alone, and municipalities are willing to participate to diversify their economies. If a financial case can be made, will your ministry consider restoring the walleye program in Alberta?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the hon. member for the question. It's obvious that he's passionate about this issue. It's an interesting conversation around hatcheries. I think it's worth having that conversation. Just recently I had it with my department. We'll have a look at it going forward. We have a few ideas, and I think we'll have more to say in the

coming days, but I appreciate him bringing it forward, and I encourage him through you to continue with that passion. We'll make sure that we get it right.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 9

##### Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act.

This bill will enable government to postpone wage reopener arbitration for a number of major public-sector agreements. By deferring the arbitration hearings, we will know more about our economic situation and be able to consider the MacKinnon panel's expert advice. Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that no decision on how to proceed with the arbitrations has been made. Our intent is to merely postpone these proceedings until after October 31, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, and I look forward to providing more details shortly.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for first reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:47 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Sawhney
Allard	Long	Schow
Amery	Lovely	Schulz
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schweitzer
Copping	Milliken	Shandro
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nicolaides	Smith
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Stephan
Glubish	Nixon, Jeremy	Toews
Goodridge	Panda	Toor
Gotfried	Pon	Turton
Guthrie	Rehn	van Dijken
Hanson	Reid	Williams
Horner	Rosin	Wilson
Hunter	Rowswell	Yao
Jones	Rutherford	Yaseen
LaGrange		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Ganley	Pancholi
Carson	Goehring	Phillips
Ceci	Gray	Renaud
Dach	Hoffman	Sabir
Dang	Irwin	Schmidt
Deol	Loyola	Shepherd
Eggen	Nielsen	Sweet
Feehan	Notley	
Totals:	For – 49	Against – 23

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** I recognize the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to extend daily Routine past 3 p.m.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

#### Bill 10

##### Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 10, Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019.

Alberta's personal income tax system is closely linked with federal legislation that changed in the spring of 2018. The previous government failed to amend legislation that will ensure our tax system works efficiently with the federal system. Our government is introducing the amendments to ensure that Albertans, and especially members of the Canadian Forces and veterans, will have access to the tax credits they're entitled to. These changes also protect small-business owners from tax increases on the dividends they earn. Mr. Speaker, these amendments are largely technical in nature, but they ensure the continued, efficient functioning of our income tax system in harmony with the federal system.

With that, I move first reading of the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

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

#### Bill 203

##### An Act to Protect Public Health Care

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce Bill 203, An Act to Protect Public Health Care.

Mr. Speaker, access to health care should not depend on the size of your wallet or the balance on your credit card. This act will strengthen our ability to defend Albertans from American-style health care creeping into our province. This legislation will address issues associated with fee-based private health clinics that charge fees for access to necessary health services. The goal is to make sure that no Albertan will need to fear going into debt to pay for the medical services they need, and it will reduce the risk of preferential access to medically necessary health services.

Bill 203, An Act to Protect Public Health Care will protect access to publicly funded, publicly delivered health care in Alberta. This side of the House will continue to stand up and say no to American-style health care and ensure that our hospitals and health centres are available to everyone who needs them.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to table a document? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is looking to table a document.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite five copies of documentation, statistics from Statistics Canada, that show that the average employee who earns overtime will lose \$150 per week; oil and gas: \$320; and construction: potentially \$200. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other tablings today?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with the requisite number of copies to table a document I made reference to last evening in this Chamber called Legally Speaking: the Guarantee of Catholic Education: the Doctrines of Hollow Rites and Permeation, in which they tell us that it is an important doctrine of constitutional law that constitutional rights, once granted, must not be minimized or diminished to hollow rights. They must in all interpretations be given a large, liberal interpretation, and that includes rights for gay people. Thank you.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration, pursuant to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act, the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta annual report, 2018.

3:10

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. I might just add that I would hope that we will stay focused on the points of order and not have a continuation of debate from question period on a Thursday afternoon.

With that said, the hon. the Official Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order Epithets

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on Standing Orders (h), (i), (j). The Minister of Environment and Parks, who, I will say, coincidentally rose on a point of order minutes after my point of order for the exact same thing, yet the shoe is on the other foot. He referred to the “job-killing” carbon tax, which, of course, is a nickname that he and the UCP gave to a bill when we were government, yet he’s about to rise on a point of order for the “pick-your-pockets” bill, which it is, you know, affectionately referred to as by some Albertans and this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I think, again, this is a matter of debate. There is a freedom of speech allowed in this House, as we spoke about yesterday. I have a number of examples of the members that are now in government when they were in opposition. In fact, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, April 12, 2017, during question period referred to the job-killing carbon tax. On October 29, 2018, the Premier, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I’m not entirely convinced if you are defending a point of order or calling a point of order. Clearly, I heard in your statement that this is a matter of debate. It certainly sounds a lot like a matter of debate to me. Let’s see if you are correct in your assertion of what the Government House Leader was going to do on the second point of order.

### Point of Order Epithets

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise on a similar issue but from a different context, and I think that, as we talk about this point of order, context matters.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I am rising on 23(h), (i), and (j). I will be brief as it is Thursday, and I know you are probably anxious to go home to your family as much as everybody else in this Chamber.

But it’s disappointing that the opposition continues to choose to ignore the very warnings you issued in your ruling before question period. I don’t have the benefit of the Blues, but I believe you made reference to a ruling by the former Speaker on April 8, 2013, and at that time the former Speaker concluded that repeated use of a particular term has taken so much of the House time that it was time to choose a new language.

I draw your attention to the question asked by the Leader of the Official Opposition when referring to Bill 2 as the “pick-your-pocket” bill. I stress the word “bill.” Personally, I find that offensive. We’ve let it slide on numerous occasions. I believe the term . . . [interjection] Again, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, I have the floor. I believe the term has been used over 30 times in this sitting alone. Let’s be clear, the intent of the opposition is to imply that the members of this government are committing a crime with our legislation. I can tell you and the opposition that the provisions of Bill 2 were very well publicized in our platform commitments as part of our proposal to get Albertans back to work. In my opinion, I find the language of “pick-your-pockets,” in particular, to be offensive and, further to that, an allegation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your interjections, hon. member. I would just note that you are correct in your assertion that the context of how the statements are made is very, very important. I would suggest to you that using names for bills certainly could become unparliamentary, and, you know, with respect to my comments previously around Bill 8, I would say that this language is significantly stronger. You yourself said that this particular statement, “pick-your-pockets” bill, has been raised 30 times, and at no point has that created disorder inside the Chamber up until today. I clearly would say that on this occasion and the previous 30 occasions, that is not a point of order.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Opposition House Leader has indicated to me that he can’t remember the order of the points of orders, which is probably fair because, I think, several were called, so I’ll rise on my second and last one.

I’m a little bit concerned that the timing may not have been quite noted in the chaos of question period, but again I’m rising on Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). During question period the Leader of the Official Opposition stated in a question that would ultimately go to the labour minister: I’m disappointed when the minister of labour continues to give untrue statements. I think it’s quite clear that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to use language of a nature likely to create disorder. She had to apologize yesterday for making a similar statement, so to do it again in a second period seems kind of troubling. Yesterday you ruled that the context of the statement that she made yesterday, which was “the House leader just can’t stop saying things that are untrue” – perhaps the Official Opposition House Leader forgot to inform the Leader of the Opposition that he had to stand in this place yesterday, withdraw, and apologize on behalf of his leader, or she just has no respect for your rulings in this Chamber. Again, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that it’s the exact same situation and the Official Opposition House Leader should rise and apologize and withdraw on behalf of his leader.

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader, I’m happy to hear your interjections on this point of order.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader can’t have it both ways. Today in question period he used the phrase:

misrepresentation of the facts. The point of order yesterday was for the Leader of the Official Opposition using the word “stealing.” Today’s language is nowhere near yesterday’s language. It is not unparliamentary language. This is a difference of opinion, two different sets of facts that you have ruled on numerous times over. I will not apologize for the Leader of the Official Opposition’s language today when it is in line with language that the Government House Leader used today as far as a difference of opinion when it comes to the facts.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I would like to provide some comments around this particular point of order because during that particular question that was asked and answered, I was inclined to send a note to the Leader of the Official Opposition and remind her that yesterday she was corrected for saying that the member is making untrue statements. At that time yesterday I said that if the government or the opposition wants to use strong language referring to something that the government is doing, that would in fact be parliamentary, but implying that a member of the House is making untrue statements, like I ruled yesterday, is moving in the direction of saying that a member has lied. We all know that’s unparliamentary, and the Leader of the Official Opposition is welcome to apologize and withdraw.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, Mr. Speaker, seeing that you have provided some advice and direction in your infinite wisdom, I will take such advice and withdraw and apologize for her comment.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed. The Official Opposition House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder False Allegations**

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order. The time was around, I believe, 2:15. The Minister of Treasury Board and Finance said that we put the province on a path to bankruptcy. Now, I rise on 23(h), (i), (j) for a couple of reasons. The first and most obvious is that this comment is, of course, extremely insulting language that was intentionally used. We talk about context. That was used intentionally to create disorder in this House. Number two, the statement is also patently false. Our government was not about to run the government of Alberta or the treasury into bankruptcy. I think that’s a pretty clear black-and-white comment that is false. For those two reasons I rise on a point of order and request that the Government House Leader apologize and withdraw that comment.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll be brief. This is clearly a matter of debate and, you know, a difference of opinion when it comes to facts. I do recognize that the opposition is probably a little bit sensitive about the fact that they oversaw a government that put us on track to \$100 billion in debt, but the reality is that’s something that’s very free to be debated in this place, has been debated for a long time, and is a matter of debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the statement that was made – I do have the benefit of the Blues, and the hon. Official Opposition House Leader is correct. It says, “The previous government had us on an unsustainable path to bankruptcy, [interjections] which would have meant the next generation would not have had any kind of a world-class system for health care and education.” One of the particular challenges that is before us and something that we all need to be considerate of when we are using language that is strong,

that may create disorder is also the context in which we may or may not be making allegations about another member. I would remind all hon. members that we wouldn’t want to make to an allegation about the Leader of the Official Opposition, just like she wouldn’t want to make an allegation of you or of other members here in the Assembly. Having said that, I do agree with the Government House Leader that this is a matter of debate but would caution all members about the language that they choose.

Lastly.

3:20

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order that was then between 2:15 and 2:30, when one of our members was asking the Minister of Children’s Services questions – I believe it was the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud – to which the Government House Leader insisted on responding to the question. Obviously, that’s the prerogative of the front bench. However, the Minister of Environment and Parks went on to chastise the member for asking a question which was a question trying to derive information from the government, which is part of the reason for question period.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I jumped up on a point of order because the Government House Leader is trying intentionally to interfere with the opposition doing their job, which, during question period, is to derive information from ministers. At that point the Government House Leader used the 35 seconds to try to chastise the opposition for “fear and smear” when, quite frankly, their questions were directly to the Minister of Children’s Services trying to derive information about children and government policy. I find it very important that the opposition is able to do its job in this place, especially during question period, which is to hold the government to account and to ask for information. In this instance it was clearly a question deriving information. It was not a partisan question or attack. I think it’s extremely important that the government doesn’t interfere with the opposition trying to do their job, as the Government House Leader did.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I agree with many of the statements that you’ve made, including that it is important for the government not to interfere with the opposition trying to do your jobs. I also know that you know that, much to the chagrin of the Speaker from time to time, it is not the Speaker’s job to determine the quality of the answer. While I have no opinion of the Government House Leader’s answer, I don’t see any language that is likely to create disorder. I do not make the determination on who answers a question or who doesn’t answer a question. As such, I’m struggling to understand how the Government House Leader answering your question in a way that may not have been an effective answer would in fact create an inability for the opposition to do their job. As such, this point of order is not well taken.

We have concluded points of order.

### **Orders of the Day**

#### **Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor’s Speech**

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

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

We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your

Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak who have not yet done so?

[Motion carried]

### Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the Premier.

#### Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne

16. Mr. Jason Nixon moved on behalf of Mr. Kenney:  
Be it resolved that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion according to Standing Order 18(1)(a). Are there any wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the Government House Leader to close debate.

[Government Motion 16 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 7 Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and to the members for this opportunity to continue discussion with regard to the bill about nothing. But here we are debating it nonetheless. Just to reiterate, there was extensive – extensive – consultation that went into work with municipalities around the Municipal Government Act and subsequent reg packages. I think there were actually three substantial sets of reg packages that came forward that related to the MGA. This was done over a number of years under both governments, definitely the government under the time that Premier Hancock was Premier, probably Premier Redford, and definitely continued under future Premiers after that as well. This is something that worked quite extensively over many different iterations not just of government in terms of provincial government but government in terms of local municipal governments. There were extensive consultations – oh. [Disturbance outside the gallery] Sorry. It's hard to continue discussing this when clearly there is great enthusiasm in the rotunda to discuss labour law in this place.

**The Deputy Chair:** I can hear you, just so you know.

**Ms Hoffman:** You can't hear them?

**The Deputy Chair:** I can hear you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Oh, you can hear me. Yeah. I can hear myself. I can also hear them. Thank you very much.

I want to continue on by saying that through that very extensive consultation that happened over many, many years with municipal officials, both elected and nonelected, there was a commitment to develop a municipal governance act, and through that, again, subsequent sets of regulations that brought about significant changes, many of the changes that are actually in this proposed bill. I imagine there are more things that municipalities would like to see amended in terms of their working relationship and future encounters with provincial government and their autonomy and definitely their need for sustained funding that is sufficient to meet the needs of their municipalities. That's probably the number one that I've heard.

At the last event, I believe, I attended, it was important that municipalities talk about the funding model, that they make sure that they have opportunities for sustainable funding. They did not, I think I mentioned, at RMA bring up this proposed bill about nothing even once. Not one person there brought it up at RMA prior to the election, and I certainly haven't heard directly from municipal leaders that they wanted this since the election either.

3:30

Again, I believe that most of the municipalities that we've engaged with said that they found this confusing and weren't exactly sure why it was being proposed, that there were certainly a number of other things they would love the Minister of Municipal Affairs to bring forward to cabinet and subsequently to this Chamber to support them in doing their jobs. But this is not one of the things that they mentioned as being a barrier to them or desirable through the engagements we've had with mayors of mid-sized cities, and then of course the mayors of the large cities have been very vocal in what they've had to say about this.

That being said, I again feel that this bill is about nothing, and it doesn't behoove us to continue moving this through the process as I think that there are many, many, many things that are important for us to consider our precious time being used for. Certainly, discussing changes to labour law, I know, is something that members in the public space outside this Chamber are interested in us being accountable and transparent about, especially things that weren't mentioned in the election process or the platform.

I will cede my time at this point and turn the floor back to you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. government opposition – sorry. We're just going to go with Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am rising to speak to Bill 7, Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019. The reason I rise is that I know that my hon. colleague the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has been engaging with mayors around the province, trying to determine, you know, as quickly as he can, to what level this government consulted with municipalities. Quite frankly, he's heard from a number of mayors who are kind of scratching their heads as to where this came from.

For that reason, Mr. Chair, I am moving an amendment, which I will pass through the pages to yourself. Obviously, the top copy is the one signed by Parliamentary Counsel. At your direction I will read this into the record.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will read this, again, on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Moved that Bill 7, Municipal

Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by adding the following after section 9:

Report

- 10(1) In this section,
- (a) “city charter” means a charter established for a city under section 141.3 of the Municipal Government Act, and includes an amendment to a charter;
  - (b) “intermunicipal collaboration framework” means a framework as defined in section 708.26(1)(a) of the Municipal Government Act;
  - (c) “Minister” means the Minister of Municipal Affairs;
  - (d) “municipality” has the meaning given to it in the Municipal Government Act.
- (2) The Minister shall consult with municipalities on the amendments made by this Act, including any impacts on regional collaboration, city charters and intermunicipal collaboration frameworks.
- (3) Consultations required under subsection (2) shall be completed by September 1, 2019.
- (4) The Minister shall prepare a report outlining the results of the consultations required under subsection (2), and shall
- (a) make the report available to the public by September 30, 2019, and
  - (b) lay a copy of the report before the Legislative Assembly as soon as practicable if it is sitting or, if it is not sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Coming into force

- 11(1) Section 10 comes into force on August 1, 2019.
- (2) Sections 1 to 9 come into force on October 1, 2019.

Again, Mr. Chair, the purpose of this, for all members of the Assembly, is to ensure that the Minister of Municipal Affairs consults on these proposed changes to ensure that municipalities have a true, comprehensive understanding of the proposed changes.

As well, Mr. Chair, I think one of the concerns – and it was one that I outlined, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and other colleagues of ours. A number of changes that we had made to the Municipal Government Act, MGA, and also the direction that our government went were really trying to encourage collaboration between municipalities. That was whether through regional collaboration on intermunicipal collaboration frameworks as well as through funding. The CARES program, community and regional economic support, was for municipalities to be able to work together to be able to compete on the world stage. We want to ensure that we’re not going to cause municipalities to undo the incredible collaborative work that they’ve done in a race to the bottom in competition with each other in order to try to attract investment.

I’ve given examples in second reading of this bill, Mr. Chair, as far as examples like the trimunicipal partnership up in Grande Prairie, with the city of Grande Prairie, the county of Grande Prairie, and the MD of Greenview, as well as areas like Alberta’s Industrial Heartland Association, that has a number of municipalities that have agreed upon a revenue-sharing model in order to go out and attract investment and businesses. Had they followed the tools that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is outlining in this bill, they would be competing with each other instead of coming together as a region to say: “Come to this area. We recognize that we all benefit from it.” It’s not just property taxes; it’s the jobs, it’s the workers, and it’s the services that they rely on.

With that, we feel – and I’m proud to move this amendment on behalf of my colleague – that this would ensure that the Minister of Municipal Affairs takes the time to consult with municipalities, because, Mr. Chair, I do want to point out the fact that the current government, when they were opposition, would constantly talk

about how our government didn’t go out and consult when, in fact, we did. We’ve spoken to mayors who have said: they never talked to us about this. For me, it’s pretty rich that now that the shoe is on the other foot and the opposition is in government, suddenly consultation doesn’t matter. They talk about how they had a mandate. Well, you know what? The government may have won a significant number of seats, but they did not win the ability to be a dictator. They do still need to go out and consult with stakeholders. The mandate doesn’t give them carte blanche to do whatever they want.

What we’re doing through this amendment is saying: “We want to make sure that the municipal leaders have been properly engaged in this. Here’s an opportunity.” We’re not trying to kill this bill or end this bill. We’re just saying: go out and consult with municipal leaders, come back to the House, but let’s make sure that we preserve the incredible work that municipalities have made in collaborating with each other in order to compete on the world stage.

With that, I encourage all members of the Assembly to support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Do I see any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore standing.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you recognizing me so I can just add a couple of quick thoughts here on Bill 7. It won’t take very long. As you can imagine, I am in support of this amendment. I think the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview was very, very clear. I know there was a mandate from the people of Alberta that elected a UCP government, but they didn’t elect them to blow off consultations. There’s a responsibility on that part, and certainly in the last Legislature I heard from members who are sitting again in this House that would repeatedly, almost ad nauseam, talk about how our government wasn’t going out and consulting.

When I looked at the bill itself, I was trying to figure out what we were trying to accomplish here, and quite honestly it kind of started to revolve around creating some red tape here to do – I don’t know – something that it was already given the ability to do through changes to the MGA.

The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview also noted quite well about potentially creating conditions for municipalities to compete against themselves, which is that, as he said, race to the bottom. I’m starting to see a little bit of a theme here where we’re blindly racing to the bottom: “We don’t need to check because, you know, we knocked on a few doors, and that’s our mandate. We know what to do. We don’t need any consultations.”

3:40

I would certainly urge members in the House to look at this very, very closely because municipalities are rightfully concerned given that the government has already committed to a \$4.5 billion tax break here. They want to know where, quite honestly, their money is coming from, too. I think that by accepting this amendment, we give our municipalities the opportunity to quickly add their voices to the discussion, and we are able then to potentially create some legislation that they can work with. But at this time I’m getting a pretty good sense that that’s not the case.

With that, I will take my seat. I think I’ve added my comments there. I just don’t want to see this, again, bit of a conflict between: well, let’s get rid of red tape, but we’re going to create red tape. I’m trying to figure out how ministers are going to balance this kind of thing out.



**The Deputy Chair:** Other members looking to speak to amendment A1?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving back to Bill 7, are there any members looking to speak?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 7 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** All those opposed? Carried.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I move that we rise and report the bill.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following: Bill 7. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** This is a nondebatable report under Standing Order 18(1)(b). Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

I see the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to all hon. members from all parties in the House for another great week of progress. I wish everybody safe travelling back to their homes. With that, I will move to adjourn the Assembly until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:44 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, June 13, 2019**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve., adjourned on amendment*)

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — *(Jun. 13, 2019 , passed on division)*

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — *(Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed)*

**Bill 201 — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 *(May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)*

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 *(May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)*

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — *(Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills)*





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 17, 2019

Day 14

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
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Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
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Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
and Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

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Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
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Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 17, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power or desire to please or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind the responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, and children of all ages, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by R.J. Chambers. I would invite you to all join in in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you. You may be seated.

Hon. members, welcome back. It's a pleasure to see all of you. I might just add that I particularly appreciated the tempo of the national anthem today. It's like we won a national championship in basketball or something over the weekend.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Joining us today, this afternoon, we have a number of schools from the constituency of Red Deer-South. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

I'm also very pleased to welcome to the Speaker's gallery this afternoon with a very, very, very warm welcome our very own Deputy Chair of Committees' parents, Dr. A. Don Milliken and Dr. P. Jane Milliken.

As many of you will know, there are a number of constituency assistants in the capital region, and I have the pleasure of introducing mine. From the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, Brenda Berreth and Alana Gibson are with us in the Speaker's gallery.

I'm also pleased to welcome constituency assistants for the following constituencies: Central Peace-Notley, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, Lacombe-Ponoka. Also, guests of the Member for Banff-Kananaskis: Owen Neal, Ed Masters, Roger Grant, Chuck Collins, Wayne Peterson. Guests of the MLA for Highwood: Mrs. Sigurdson – I believe that's the lovely spouse of the Member for Highwood – also Michele Mason and Drew Mason. From the constituency of Calgary-Fish Creek: Tasha Schindel, Justin Gotfried, and Vanessa Siso. I invite you to all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Toronto Raptors' NBA Championship

**Mr. Schow:** We the North, Mr. Speaker, and board man Kawhi Leonard is king. Shortly after this House adjourned last Thursday, the Toronto Raptors won the NBA title and brought the Larry O'Brien trophy home for the first time in the team's storied history. This is a big deal for Toronto since it doesn't see a lot of championships come through town, especially if you're a Toronto Maple Leafs fan. But I digress.

The Raptors' playoff journey began on April 13, when they opened their first series with a loss to the Orlando Magic, only to come back and win four straight and advance to face a young, energetic Philadelphia 76ers team. Round 2 proved to be a real test, forcing the Raptors to a game 7 and the brink of elimination. It saw one of the most dramatic buzzer beaters I have ever witnessed. In the dying seconds Kawhi Leonard hoisted a high-arching jumpshot, while falling out of bounds over seven-foot Joel Embiid, that bounced around the rim for an eternity and finally went through the mesh, sinking the City of Brotherly Love, an odd title for a city that once threw snowballs at Santa Claus.

With that, the Raptors made the eastern conference finals for the second time in franchise history, to face the Milwaukee Bucks. The Bucks fought hard, taking two early games in Toronto. However, in four consecutive games the Raptors completed a stunning come-from-behind series win to advance to their first-ever NBA finals, setting up a historic faceoff with the defending champs, the Golden State Warriors. The final series tipped off on May 30 and, with it, a battle that would last six games, but on Thursday, June 13, the final buzzer sounded, and the score clock read 114-110 in favour of the good guys.

Bill Russell famously said, "This game has always been and will always be about buckets." Well, the Raptors got buckets, and the board man got paid. This is the first championship of what should be many more, and I couldn't be more proud of this moment. We the North, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** We the North, indeed. I might just let the House know that I believe that the Member for Cardston-Siksika is the first-ever Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to also have been a professional basketball player.

The Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Federal Bill C-69

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under our government we worked hard to fight for our energy industry and protect the environment because we know that creating jobs and protecting our land, air, and water is not a zero-sum game. Unfortunately, we have failed to see this kind of leadership from current provincial and federal governments. In Alberta this government has repealed the climate leadership plan and questioned whether climate change is real. Federally the government has demonized our province's industry and ignored the debacle that is C-69. These efforts to polarize Canadians are dangerous and disturbing.

This is why our government put forward a number of common-sense changes to improve C-69. This included exempting in situ projects, establishing common-sense timelines, and ensuring that the federal government cannot overreach into our provincial jurisdiction. We were pleased to see that the new government here in Alberta fully adopted our amendments. Unfortunately, the federal government didn't follow suit. They rejected the vast majority of these amendments just this past week, which is likely to

create uncertainty and unnecessary delays and put important projects at risk.

**1:40**

There is no question that this is a step backward for all Canadians. Mr. Speaker, while this legislation may create many jobs for lawyers, it will do nothing to help our industry. Our caucus stands fundamentally opposed to this legislation, and we call on the federal government to reverse this attack on Alberta's industry and workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Ponoka Stampede

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would first of all like to thank the voters of Lacombe, Ponoka, and Blackfalds for trusting me to be their voice in the Legislature for a second term.

Now for a few minutes I will speak about Canada's largest eight-day pro rodeo, that happens every year in my constituency. No, not the Calgary Stampede, the Ponoka Stampede. Yes, it is the largest rodeo in Canada on the professional circuit. This year the stampede will award \$800,000 in prize money. It is one of the five largest payout rodeos in the world, and the pro bull-riding event is the largest payout single-day event world-wide. This amazing week-long event will be from June 25 to July 1. What a great place to celebrate Canada Day.

The first Ponoka Stampede was held in 1936. Today it is way more than just a rodeo. It's a week-long party, a rural cultural pilgrimage, and a community achievement. From the volunteers to the competitors and visitors that it attracts from across Alberta and the world to the beer gardens to the many chuck wagon races to the country music shows to the three-mile-long parade, it is a week-long western whoop-up. The Ponoka Stampede is far more than just a rodeo; it's an 83-year tradition.

I say thank you to the many volunteers for the hours they put in. Year after year they build the stampede into a bigger and better experience. The Ponoka Stampede truly reflects what it means to be Albertan: work hard, ride hard, play hard, hang on for a wild ride, and get back on every time you get bucked off. When times are tough, your community rallies behind you. That's the spirit of western culture and Ponoka. They are willing to put everything aside to put on a great show, Albertans coming together from all walks of life to create something truly special. Eighty-three years of tradition, 800 volunteers, 80,000 visitors, \$800,000 in prize money: you don't want to miss it.

### Federal Bills C-48 and C-69

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the incredible disservice the Trudeau government has done to not only the people of Alberta but all Canadians with the rejection of the Senate amendments to Bill C-69 and the Senate's decision to proceed on Bill C-48. This is far from what the provinces, industries, indigenous groups, the chambers of commerce, and municipalities across this country were asking for. The federal government has demonstrated incompetence with this devastating legislation and lack of respect for this country.

Mr. Speaker, this is more than just an attack on the energy sector. This is an attack on Alberta. This is an attack on our constitutional right to make exclusive laws in relation to the development, conservation, and management of our natural resources, and the simplicity of this attack is not lost on anybody in this province. This House, our cabinet, and, to my knowledge, all provincial parties

stand united against this intrusion and the Trudeau government's attempt to shut down our way of life. This is something that is unheard of. It takes a significant act of aggression towards our province for all major political parties to stand together, unequivocally, against such a foe.

Mr. Speaker, this House will not stand idly by while such incompetence threatens Alberta and the entire country's well-being. Our UCP government will continue to fight for Alberta's resources – our resources – and our ability to develop, conserve, and manage them. I ask all members and all Albertans to reach out to their MPs in Ottawa and tell them this is not right. This is overreach. This is fundamentally egregious to our economy. We, united as Albertans, will not go quietly into the night. The Trudeau Liberals had better brace for impact because Alberta is ready to rumble.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Filibuster of June 5 to 6 and Political Discourse

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fallacies are mistaken beliefs based on unsound arguments. Last week, in particular, the government made several unsound arguments. I'll begin with the Member for Banff-Kananaskis. In her member's statement she declared that the opposition doesn't believe in democracy. Her logic for this is based on the fact that we filibustered Bill 2. She goes on to say that we "filibustered a campaign promise" and that that is disrespectful to Albertans because the UCP is government. Excuse me, Mr. Speaker? On this side of the House we stood up for workers' rights. We said no to reducing youth minimum wage. We said no to denying time and a half for working overtime. Her comments on June 13, 2019, are ridiculous. They are fallacies, unsound arguments.

There are several other fallacies that the UCP members promote. However, due to time constraints I'll bring forward just one further egregious fallacy. The UCP members like to say that since they won the election, all dissenting voices, particularly those of the Official Opposition, should be dismissed. Again, Mr. Speaker, excuse me? Pardon? This is the very essence of democracy. Opposition parties have a valuable role to play in shaping policy. We shine the light on concerns that legislation proposed may cause. Indeed, that is what we are doing in our challenges regarding Bill 2, a bill that picks the pockets of workers.

Mr. Speaker, I caution UCP members to not act arrogantly. Voices, including minority voices, deserve to be heard. In fact, this is a fundamental aspect of human rights. Just because you have the majority doesn't mean you trample on the rights of others. In addition, 45 per cent of Albertans voted for a party other than the UCP. That's a lot of Albertans. I encourage some humbleness. A government has a responsibility . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

### Northern Wildfire Evacuations

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While in my constituency of Lesser Slave Lake, visiting evacuation centres that welcomed thousands of individuals who were forced out of their homes – and as I flew over fires that now cover more than 260,000 hectares in Lesser Slave Lake alone, I was deeply concerned. I felt the uncertainty, and I could see the displacement. I could hear the chaos amongst the families at the registration centres and throughout my communities. It was just last week that constituents in Wabasca, Peerless Trout, and Bigstone Cree Nation were granted access to their homes after more than two weeks of evacuation. These are not

just constituents; these are families, colleagues, friends, and neighbours.

Reflecting upon the last month, I can only say thank you. Thank you to all the firefighters from across Canada as well as those from the United States who helped us in our time of need. Reflecting upon the U.S. Forest Service, they provided their own experienced, selfless, and brave individuals from Montana, Idaho, California, Nevada, Oregon, and Wisconsin. In total there are 219 Americans fighting Alberta fires. Each of them, along with the thousands of Canadian first responders, represents hope. They represent unity, and they represent an Alberta that's not going down without a fight.

I am particularly grateful to the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs as well as their staff for their relentless availability, maintaining open lines of communication with chiefs, mayors, reeves, and myself as well as providing assistance that assured comfort among evacuees.

Mr. Speaker, Les Brown once said, "Our ability to handle life's challenges is a measure of our strength of character." If such is the case, I am blessed to represent some of the strongest communities with some of the most vibrant character one can find. On behalf of these communities I would like to thank all of those who helped us in our time of need.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 21.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its support for the government in its efforts to challenge the federal government's attempt to impose a carbon tax on Alberta, which this Assembly views as a clear violation of provincial jurisdiction, including the launching of a constitutional challenge if necessary, acknowledge the negative impacts that the carbon tax has had upon the people of Alberta, including the increased cost to heat homes and run businesses in the midst of an economic downturn, and recognize that Alberta's oil and gas industry continues to be global leaders in emission reductions.

I also want to give oral notice of the following bills: Bill 11, fair registration practice act, sponsored by my friend the hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration; and Bill 12, the royalty guarantee act, sponsored by my friend the hon. the Minister of Energy.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Public Service Contract Negotiations

**Ms Notley:** Well, welcome back to the Premier. You know, over the last little while your ministers have been involved in quite the pattern of incorrect fact provision. For instance, your Minister of Finance claimed last week that your bad-faith bargaining bill merely imposes a delay in legally mandated wage negotiations with public-sector workers, but the bill actually contains an omnibus clause that allows this government to impose new contracts on these workers without ever returning to the Legislature. To the Premier: will you at least admit to Alberta's front-line workers that your plan is to do a lot more than just a little delay in negotiations?

**Mr. Kenney:** I thank the hon. the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Mr. Speaker, it's incumbent upon the government to respect collective bargaining rights as well as to respect the best

interests of taxpayers. Therefore, the only prudent and responsible way to proceed is to have the time to receive the complete information on the fiscal state of the province, which we'll be doing next month, when the MacKinnon commission reports back to government, after which we can make an informed and prudent decision about the way forward on collective bargaining agreements.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the bad-faith bargaining bill's omnibus clause authorizes any regulations required to carry out the intent of the act, and it references the so-called blue-ribbon panel, the chair of which is on the record advocating for wage cuts to front-line workers like nurses, paramedics, and teachers. To the Premier: will he assure this Assembly and, through it, the people of this province that under no circumstances will he be seeking wage rollbacks from unionized public-sector front-line workers?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we will not be prejudging the outcome of that eminent panel, which is chaired by a former NDP Finance minister, an NDP Finance minister, Dr. MacKinnon, who actually balanced budgets, which has long been the tradition for the NDP in Saskatchewan but certainly wasn't the tradition for the NDP in Alberta, that drove us from a \$13 billion to a \$65 billion debt and had us on track for \$100 billion in public debt, running the largest per capita deficit in the Dominion of Canada.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's bad-faith bargaining bill is illegal. His minister has hidden the fact that it tries to authorize wage cuts to be made in the backroom, and he will not guarantee the hard-working front-line workers of this province that he will refrain from taking money from their pockets. To the Premier: why didn't you come clean with Albertans during the election, that your \$4.5 billion tax gift to wealthy corporations was going to be paid for by cutting the salaries of nurses, ambulance drivers, paramedics, teachers, and many, many more?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's evident that the NDP anger machine still has not learned that after they raised taxes on job creators, revenues went down. The Alberta government collects less from businesses today than it did before the NDP raised business taxes by 20 per cent. Why? They punished job creators, who ended up creating fewer jobs. We're going to do the opposite. We're going to grow the economy so that we can increase government revenues, in part to ensure the future of high-quality public services.

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

**Ms Notley:** So, in short, he kept mum about this plan during the election. No mandate there, Mr. Speaker.

### Worker Overtime Pay

**Ms Notley:** This UCP government is also attempting again to pull the wool over the eyes of working Albertans. The labour minister posted a graphic this weekend claiming that workers will earn the same once he's through cutting banked overtime from time and a half to straight time. This minister either doesn't understand basic math, doesn't understand his legislation, or, worst of all, intentionally says things publicly he knows are incorrect. There's a word for that, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why won't your minister come clean on the fact that cutting people's banked overtime rate means they earn less?

**Mr. Kenney:** Because it doesn't, Mr. Speaker. The legislation is very clear. We're simply returning to the rules that existed throughout Alberta history until about a year ago. Of course, it will not affect

any employee who does not enter into an agreement with their employer with respect to banked overtime. It empowers those employees with additional flexibility in dealing with employers. It does not affect conventional overtime pay whatsoever.

**Ms Notley:** Well, it appears the Premier is doubling down on things that are not true.

The minister claimed his ridiculous math was actually verified by academics and experts but, strangely, did not list any of them, and he did not respond to questions seeking their names when asked by an interested public. To the minister: can you please list the experts and validators, or was that, too, a continuation of the pattern of regularly intentionally saying things that are full of incorrect facts?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, there have been no shortage of comments from labour lawyers and others confirming what is clearly black and white in the legislation, that this does not, contrary to the NDP's fear-and-smear tactics, affect in any way conventional overtime. Rather, it returns to workers the ability to negotiate voluntary agreements with employers to give them additional flexibility in how they schedule their time at work. We're empowering workers, and no one will be losing conventional overtime as a result.

**Ms Notley:** The Premier is incorrect. These agreements are not voluntary. He knows it.

Let me simplify this for the minister and the Premier. Before the pick-your-pockets bill a construction worker who puts in two weeks of overtime can take his family camping this summer for three weeks and get a paycheque every week. After the pick-your-pockets bill that construction worker will only get paid for two weeks on his camping trip and will have to have no pay in the third week – guess he's going hunting with the House leader – so a week less of pay. What part of this is too complicated for the minister or the Premier to understand? Would perhaps a meme help, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. the Leader of the Opposition clearly misunderstands the simple meaning of the bill, but I grasp that because the NDP understands economics generally, which is why they drove us into a jobs crisis in this province, with nearly 200,000 unemployed Albertans. Our economy shrank by 4 per cent under NDP mismanagement. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. Kenney:** Average family incomes were down by 6 per cent under the NDP. Taxes were up; jobs were down. We're turning it around with our job-creation strategy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has the call.

### Gay-Straight Alliances in Schools and Bill 8

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a public servant I worked directly on the Education Act under previous Conservative governments. Under Bill 8, the government's act, the major pieces of policy in the original legislation have been shelved while the amendments the NDP government made to the School Act around school fees, superintendent compensation, and trustee code of conduct have all been kept. All that's left is an act to destroy GSAs and out LGBTQ students. Like my colleagues, I think this legislation is better described as Bill Hate. To the Minister of Education: why are you in such a rush to ram through an attack on LGBTQ youth while letting other pieces of the Education Act slide?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I'm not sure what the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud means when she said that the bill that we have proposed is nowhere close to the one that she worked on. Nothing has changed in the Education Act since that MLA worked on it. It was passed in 2012, amended in 2015, and I actually have a copy ready to go to print from 2016.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the Minister of Education would like to read her own bill, Bill 8, which significantly amends the Education Act as well as the previous versions – Bill 24, the School Act – and she'd see that changes have been made.

Thank you. The minister has said that critical pieces of the original Education Act, like extending the age of access, compulsory attendance, and other items will require further consultation before they're put into effect, but the minister apparently sees no need to consult further before destroying GSAs despite mounting opposition from students, teachers, and parents. To the minister: are you worried about consulting further before you take away the rights of LGBTQ youth because you know that the majority of Albertans don't agree with it?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. My office and I have met with numerous, numerous stakeholders, including students, parents, system administrators, trustees, and teachers – and I can quote many of them – who support the amendments that we're bringing forward, including the college of Alberta superintendents, who say that they believe Bill 8... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, including the Minister of Education, we heard the question; we will hear the answer no matter how long that takes.

Hon. Minister of Education, if you'd like to conclude.

2:00

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you. Bevan Daverne, president-elect of the College of Alberta School Superintendents says, quote, CASS strongly believes Bill 8 demonstrates a willingness of the government to consider stakeholder feedback and to collaborate with education partners to support students in Alberta's world-class education system. We are looking forward to the opportunity to support them.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't sound like the minister has spoken to any LGBTQ students, but that's fine.

The Education Act that's before this House is not transformative; well, unless you're a queer or trans student. It is simply a vehicle to drive through an anti-LGBTQ agenda that this Premier has been working on for decades. Students will be outed, they will have no right to form an actual gay-straight alliance, and schools won't be held accountable for refusing to support GSAs. To the Premier. This clearly is not the Education Act. This clearly is not transformative. Why are you so determined to create a vehicle to harm LGBTQ youth?



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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, our government has been very clear. We oppose the mandatory parental notification for any student. We will have amongst the most comprehensive, which means that someone has to be on top I reiterate that we will have the most comprehensive protections for LGBTQ-plus students in Canada.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much. What a timely statement from the Education minister.

On June 3 the Premier told this House and I'm quoting from *Hansard*, "Our government will maintain the strongest legal protections for gay-straight alliances of any province in Canada," and his cabinet ministers repeated it many times since. Yet late Friday afternoon the Minister of Education released a statement that says that Albertans "will have among the most comprehensive statutory protections for gay-straight alliances (GSAs) in Canada." Those two are very different things. Has the Premier read his Education minister's statement, and is he now ready to apologize for making misleading statements to the people of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The Premier and I are on the same page on this. We know that we will have the most comprehensive protections for LGBTQ students in Canada. Nova Scotia and B.C. have ministerial orders and policy, not statutory protections like we will have.

Thank you.

**Ms Ganley:** Last week this opposition tabled written proof that Nova Scotia, Ontario, and British Columbia all have stronger legal protections than those in Bill Hate. Now that they have been caught, the Education minister has conceded in writing that Bill Hate rolls back the rights of students seeking to form a GSA, taking us from the best in the country to somewhere in the pack. Has the Premier actually read his own legislation, or is he relying on the advice of people like John Carpay and the member for Drayton Valley-Devon to advise him on how best to take away the rights of LGBTQ youth?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The opposition knows that regardless of how it describes it, the legal protections are clear and comprehensive under Bill 8, the Education Act, and our province's privacy legislation, FOIP and PIPA, which supersedes other pieces of legislation. It's time for the NDP to stop using these students as political props. [interjections]

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. We will have order.

**Ms Ganley:** Strong, stronger, strongest: I think you learn that in the third grade, Mr. Speaker. We know that there were 28 Alberta private schools due to lose their funding for refusing to accept gay-straight alliances, refusing to allow the words "gay" or "queer" in their school policies, and for developing GSA policies that were hateful or discriminatory. Schools that don't follow the law should not be funded. Accepting the rights of LGBTQ youth is the law. To the Premier: will you admit that the reason you're ramming through Bill Hate is because you want these schools to get a pass?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Once again, our government will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirited students, period. As far as the private schools, students attending private schools will receive the same protections under section 35.1. It is the law. They will have to follow the law.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### Highway 628 Capital Plan

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 628 is a vital transportation link that runs in an east-west direction and connects the town of Stony Plain to the Whitemud freeway in Edmonton. Previous governments committed to a reconstruction of highway 628, a project that is of an extremely high priority to everyone in the tri region. However, after years of neglect resulting in unsafe driving conditions that have claimed many lives, this project remains unfinished. To the Minister of Transportation: what is the current status of this project, and can the residents of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain finally get this major transportation link completed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question and for his advocacy. We understand the importance of highway 628 to the local residents and commuters that use it. Approximately 5,000 vehicles a day use this road. This summer, as necessary, maintenance work will be continued to ensure surface and gravel sections of 628 remain safe for travel. The project will be considered along other important capital projects in the province as we go through our capital planning and budget process. [interjection]

**Mr. Turton:** To the minister: given that this government has committed to working with our First Nations communities to provide greater access to economic opportunities and given that a better, safer reconstruction of the highway will increase access to multiple urban centres, will the minister commit to extending highway 628 eastward past highway 60 to the Whitemud freeway in Edmonton, giving Enoch First Nation better transportation options for the benefit of their residents?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I heard the member of the opposition calling to toll the road. We won't be doing that. What we will be doing is that we're committed to working with our First Nations communities on projects that will contribute to their success. We understand the importance of this project to First Nations communities and other citizens of Alberta that use this road. As noted, the project is under review. We will put it through our capital planning and budget process. This is an important project. We'll take it seriously, and when we make a decision, we will report the decision.

**Mr. Turton:** Again to the Minister of Transportation: given that the congestion on highway 16 is a barrier to a timely commute for the many constituents of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain who work in Edmonton and given that highway 628 in its current state is not at this point in time a safe alternative and given that this project has been a major issue for my constituents for a very long time, what is

this government doing to make sure that the reconstruction of this important highway is completed in a timely manner?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to know that safety is a top concern of our ministry. Based on what I just heard in the House, we will make sure somebody goes out and makes sure that is in safe condition today. The project will be considered in upcoming budget discussions. Our capital plan puts a high priority on safety among improving commute times and reducing congestion on highways across Alberta. [interjection] Even if the hon. member across doesn't care about safety, we do, and we'll look at it.

### Alberta Energy Regulator Board of Directors

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, during the election the UCP made a bunch of promises, hundreds of them, actually. Some of them they're actually keeping, like rolling back protections for LGBTQ youth, but some of them we're not so sure of. One of the strange and petty pledges that they made was to fire the entire board of the AER. To the environment minister: what's the status of the board of the AER, and when will you be handing out their pink slips?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it doesn't surprise me to see the opposition critic again making things up inside the Assembly from what I can tell. We will evaluate the AER. We're in the process of doing that together, the Energy minister and I. We will work together through that process to come up with a plan that works for Albertans. We'll have more to say about it in the coming weeks.

2:10

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would refer that hon. member to several points of order that he's made up in the past about me.

Given that the board includes Jack Royal, chairman of the Indian Business Corporation, and Chairman Sheila O'Brien, an experienced energy senior executive, and given that the new government is best served by the expertise and experience of their officials and given that the job of the AER is to make sure that we develop our natural resources responsibly, can the minister please explain what he has against all of these individuals, and was he simply planning to fire them to avoid criticism for not having a real plan to deal with climate change?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will have a very different approach when it comes to the AER. We'll be working with the AER to help work with our industry. This side of the House is proud of the oil and gas industry. I can tell you what will not be happening. We will not be having people like Ed Whittingham, who the NDP put on the Alberta Energy Regulator during their time, who is anti oil and gas, anti energy industry, as the NDP was. Our focus, again, will be on working with our energy industry. We're proud of our energy industry. We're proud of our record, and that's where we'll be headed when we work with the AER.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that the work of the AER includes allocating and conserving water, managing public lands, monitoring industry activity, assessing environmental risk of proposed energy projects, and much more, to the minister: which of these responsibilities most offends you?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, all of those issues are important. None of them offend me. What offends me, again, was the NDP when they were in power putting people like Ed Whittingham onto

the AER. That's what offends Albertans. The NDP's record when it comes to defending our oil and gas industry is also what offends me. Luckily and fortunately, on April 16 Albertans chose a government that will stand for the oil and gas industry, that will stand with the people that work inside the industry. It's a big contrast to what we saw with the NDP government when they were in power.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Electricity Market Review

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I noted with interest that late Friday afternoon the government decided to pass the transition to a capacity electricity market. Fridays are not usually when government announces things they are most proud of. I wonder if this is yet another example of the government finding ways to pay for the big corporate tax giveaways out of the wallets of Alberta families. To the minister: how will spending your summer with industry insiders make electricity affordable and predictable for regular Alberta families?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We committed to a 90-day review of the electricity market, whether we stay with an energy market or go to a capacity market. Unlike the previous government, we are taking this time to consult with Albertans, to listen to Albertans, and to find the right balance and make sure we have an energy sector that is reliable, affordable, and is something that serves Albertans and their best interests.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are other opportunities to consult.

Given that the transition to a capacity market was proposed by the Alberta Electric System Operator and given that substantial work has already been done to ensure a smooth and orderly transition to a capacity market by 2021, can the minister explain why she is engaging in this last-minute political interference?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, we are taking the time to consult with all Albertans, to consult with generators, to consult with distributors, and we are asking for an electricity system that is reliable, affordable, and attracts investment. We will take our time to get it right because we know that on many things the previous government took an ideological approach that was not in the best interests of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was AESO who recommended that transition.

Given that the transition to a capacity market will ensure that Albertans have stable access to electricity and will increase our capacity to renewables and given that Albertans need access to affordable electricity, not a return to the chaos of deregulation, will the minister commit here and now to maintaining the electricity price cap?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, the previous government cost Albertans billions of dollars in mismanaged electricity. We are taking our time to ask the right questions, to set up a framework that will serve Albertans best in the future based on affordability, reliability, and the ability to attract investment in electricity.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon is rising with a question.

### Support for the Energy Industry

**Mr. Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our United Conservative government campaigned on rebuilding the Alberta economy and on getting Albertans back to work. The NDP's record of mismanagement has led to a 10.6 per cent unemployment rate amongst my constituents. Drayton Valley-Devon was once a leader for Alberta's modern oil and gas industry but now suffers from economic devastation. My constituents want to see oil and gas workers back to work, the completion of pipelines to tidewater, and the chance for small, family-oriented companies to once again flourish. To the minister: can you outline for my constituents your short-term goals to revitalize our energy sector?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, we have nearly 200,000 oil and gas workers out of work in our province. We have staggering decline in investment in our energy sector. In 2018 we had drilling activity decline in Alberta by 8 per cent whereas it grew in the United States by 18 per cent. We have a problem. Since taking office a little over a month ago, we have been relentless in taking steps to attract investment back with our job-creation tax cut, open for business, red tape reduction, and we're working with . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many hard-working Albertans such as drillers, truck drivers, and mechanics, just to name a few professions, want to get back to work, the work that they love, and given that the innovation in energy sources like geothermal technologies is a big topic of conversation in my constituency, to the minister: is our government willing to take these innovative ideas into consideration as potential solutions for my constituents, and what steps are you taking to develop additional energy sources like geothermal?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, we're excited about the potential for geothermal in Alberta. It's innovative technologies like geothermal that'll help diversify our natural resource potential. There are several companies here in Alberta that have expressed interest in developing this potential. Alberta is already a leader in drilling technology, and we know that we can be leaders in geothermal, and we are happy to work with any company that wants to invest here.

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Alberta is an energy province and given that one form of energy that is becoming increasingly important in the world is the production of lithium and given that Alberta has underground salt lakes from which lithium can be harvested, can the minister explain how this government can encourage a new industry such as lithium and help put people in my constituency back to work drilling for another Alberta energy product?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, we're also very excited about the potential for lithium here in Alberta and understand that we have some very rich lithium brines in the Devonian formations near Fox Creek, Leduc, and Swan Hills. Encouraging investment in geothermal and lithium production is important for Alberta and important to diversifying our economy, and that's why we are taking steps to make Alberta the most competitive jurisdiction in all of North America to attract companies and innovation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

### Mobile-home Owner Consumer Protection

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years mobile-home owners have come to me with stories of sky-high lot rents and unaccountable management bodies. There are more than 30,000 Albertans living in mobile-home communities across our province. People purchase a mobile home with the belief that it will be an affordable way in to home ownership. However, the sad reality is that people are being priced out of their own homes because they can't afford to pay lot fees, which climb to upwards of \$1,000 a month. To the Minister of Service Alberta: will you commit today to launch a review of the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta is rising.

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. Thank you to the member opposite for bringing up this important topic. We know that mobile-home tenants and landlords have different concerns than do those living in and owning other residential property. We are hearing Albertans' concerns and are taking their concerns seriously. We are continuing to consult and encourage mobile-home site tenants and landlords to forward suggestions for amendments to the current legislation to [rta@gov.ab.ca](mailto:rta@gov.ab.ca).

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that mobile-home residents do not have any recourse against their management bodies and given that in many cases their lot rents have become higher than the mortgage payments for the home itself and given that these residents want access to the residential tenancy dispute resolution service, to the minister: will you consider giving the residents some form of recourse that allows them to avoid the costs, intimidation, and time commitment of taking these matters to court?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we have heard some concerns from the public, and we are listening to those concerns. I want to remind all Albertans, including the member opposite, that my door is open and I welcome discussions on this very important issue. It is also good to note that if someone wants to be added to the stakeholder list, they can also send an e-mail to the address I mentioned earlier, [rta@gov.ab.ca](mailto:rta@gov.ab.ca). Our government is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all Albertans, so we will continue to meet with stakeholders and those with concerns to better understand this issue.

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

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of the residents living in mobile homes are seniors and given that I've actually heard from seniors who were trapped in their homes because snow and ice wasn't cleared by the responsible management bodies and given that many seniors living on fixed incomes are asking how they are supposed to afford the rising costs with no way to pay for them, to the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what are doing to assist these residents, and do you believe they deserve a review of the act to ensure that their concerns are heard and addressed?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the member opposite that they had four years to act on this file, and if he's not happy with the current status, he should speak with his caucus colleagues. While he's doing that, our government will continue to meet and consult because we are committed to ensuring the safety and security of Albertans, including seniors. If the member has specific concerns, I would be pleased to meet with him outside of this Chamber to discuss this very important matter.

#### Bill 7 Consultation

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs why he failed to consult with Alberta's municipalities on Bill 7. His response was that he had given municipalities "a heads-up on the priorities of our ministry." Simply telling people what you're going to do to them is not consultation. Now, my caucus and I have been doing the consultation this minister skipped, and we're hearing that his priorities are creating a race to the bottom for municipalities. To the minister: why won't you actually start listening to municipalities and stop your race-to-the-bottom bill?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. In the last election municipalities asked us to give them more powers when it comes to offering tax incentives. We ran on this, and we were given a record mandate from Albertans to implement it. Since introducing Bill 7, we have had a lot of positive feedback from municipalities and business leaders.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. Given that municipalities have expressed concerns to us about not being consulted and given that municipalities have raised concerns about how this might impact industry in places like the Industrial Heartland, which rely on regional co-operation between municipalities, co-operation that could be impacted negatively by this bill, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: did you avoid consulting because you don't understand how important regional co-operation is, or is it that you simply don't care?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Once again, we have heard from a few municipalities. This is coming from the Fort Saskatchewan mayor, Gale Katchur. She said: municipalities have been lobbying the provincial government to improve the competitive landscape for investments through an incentive program; the city of Fort Saskatchewan looks forward to working with the provincial government and our regional partners to develop this overall Alberta-based approaches to attract investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Ceci:** Well, seeing as there are 342 municipalities, Mr. Speaker, it'd be interesting to hear the complete list. Given that we've heard from municipalities who weren't consulted on this legislation and given that we've heard from municipalities who weren't asking for this legislation and given that we heard from municipalities who are worried about how this legislation might impact their municipalities, their ratepayers, and their industries, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: will the minister today table a complete list of everyone who has been consulted about this legislation and their feedback? If he won't, is it because . . .

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The one thing we will not take from the NDP is lecturing us on how to create a viable environment for our businesses to do well. We ran on the promise to reignite our economy, give our municipalities the tools that they need to make sure they attract businesses. That is what we have done. It's a promise made, a promise kept.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

#### Pipeline Development

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 24 the people of Alberta won. They won because the B.C. Court of Appeal ruled that British Columbia's ideological NDP government cannot impose environmental laws aimed at killing the Trans Mountain pipeline. Alberta has continuously been attacked by other jurisdictions and interest groups, and it's nice to see a change. With this win and a new government that is committed to building pipelines, Alberta's hopes of getting a pipeline to tidewater grow. To the minister. There is still a lot of work to do. How do you intend on getting pipelines built when we still face so much opposition?

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you for that question. I would like to point out that it was exactly exactly five years ago today, on June 17, 2014, when the federal cabinet approved the Northern Gateway pipeline. The Northern Gateway pipeline, much like the Trans Mountain pipeline, at the time had the support of the majority of Canadians, not only Albertans but Canadians and British Columbians. But we know that that's not always enough to get a pipeline built, and that's why our government is taking a stronger approach to stand up and fight for pipelines.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's obvious that Alberta needs new pipelines in order for our energy sector to thrive. Given that numerous foreign interest groups sink millions of dollars into land-locking Alberta energy and given that the Alberta government has pledged to create an energy war room to take the fight to them and given that social media platforms these foreign interest groups use have been proven to be an uncontrollable platform of both good and bad information, how exactly does the minister plan to combat the barrage of negative attacks and the spreading of misinformation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy has the call.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is exactly why we're setting up the energy war room, to dispel the myths and lies about our energy sector. Governments have been far too complacent for far too long. We've already started to fight back, and we started that with the Trans Mountain Yes to TMX ad campaign. We launched our more assertive approach to fighting against C-69 and C-48. More recently I sent a letter to *National Geographic* dispelling the myths and the lies that were in their article, and we're setting up a public inquiry into foreign sources of foreign funding.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's our hope, of course, that new pipelines are in our future. Given that these pipelines are largely supported by the vast majority of communities in Alberta and British Columbia and given that a majority of First Nations have also shown their support and wish to be a partner in the

development of our resources, how does the minister plan to work with indigenous groups who are in opposition to the development of pipelines?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the majority of indigenous people support the Trans Mountain pipeline. There are over 130 First Nations who want to be participants and want to purchase and have an equity stake in the pipeline, so we are taking steps to support these groups, to support indigenous groups that are pro development. We're doing that through things like our indigenous opportunity corporation, that will help them buy equity, and through helping to fund pro-development groups to litigate with our \$10 million litigation fund.

### Artificial Intelligence Industry

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta is ranked third in the world for artificial intelligence and machine learning, and because of this, companies such as Google DeepMind have opened their first facility outside of the U.K. here in Edmonton, Alberta. Our NDP government recognized the critical timing of investing in AI, committing \$100 million over five years to ensure that Alberta remains a world leader. We clearly put a stake in the ground, sending a message to the world that Alberta is open for business when it comes to high tech and AI. To the minister of economic development: are you pulling that stake out of the ground, or will you commit to fully supporting the AI commitment we made?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fixing Alberta's fiscal and economic problems is job number one. We support programs to get Albertans back to work, but Albertans deserve fair return for their money. Programs such as the Alberta investor tax credit is a program that we are taking a close look at to determine whether it's a good program for Albertans.

**Mr. Bilous:** I appreciate that the minister is not just cutting that program.

Given that talent is the most important element in determining where tech companies like Apple, Google, and Facebook will go and given that low taxes are not a factor in their decision without a talent pipeline, they will go elsewhere and given that our NDP government made a \$50 million investment in high-tech seats at postsecondary institutions, resulting in 6,000 more grads, to the same minister: what steps have you taken to ensure that we will continue to develop talent to attract these tech giants?

2:30

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government will not take economic lessons from the previous government. What we are doing to attract investment in artificial intelligence to this province is attracting all sorts of investment through reducing red tape, scrapping the carbon tax, and introducing our job-creation tax cut. That will continue to attract all types of investment to our province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we'll have order.

**Mr. Bilous:** Clearly, the minister has not met with these companies.

Given that under our NDP government we put Alberta boots on the ground in Silicon Valley to attract investment back home and to support Alberta companies and given that our government worked with Air Canada, EIA, city of Edmonton, and the business community to secure a direct flight from Edmonton to San Francisco, will the minister commit to continuing the incredible work we started or will she tell Apple, Google, Facebook, and Microsoft that Alberta is closed for business because this UCP government doesn't understand the tech industry?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The incredible work the previous government did of driving us on a path towards \$100 billion in debt, mortgaging the future of our children and grandchildren – the NDP drove Alberta into a jobs crisis. They drove investment out of Alberta. That's why Albertans elected this government, to get Albertans working again and attract investment to this province.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising with a question.

### Out-of-province Health Services

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A constituent of mine, Rajdeep, was on his way back to Alberta when he began to experience cognitive issues during a layover in Vancouver. He was moved to a B.C. hospital, but his condition became worse, and he is currently in a coma. Rajdeep's family requested assistance from this Health minister on May 15 to have Rajdeep transferred to Alberta. It is unacceptable that when Rajdeep's family asked this government for help, the Health minister's office said that they were unwilling to pay for an air ambulance or provide any assistance. To the Minister of Health: why didn't you do more to bring Rajdeep home to his family?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I thank the member for the e-mail that was forwarded to me. I am happy to continue to try to get answers for her constituent on that issue.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that one can only imagine the distress that Rajdeep's family was in, being away from him during this difficult time, and that there is precedence for governments to help cover the costs of helping Albertans to get home to be with their families and to get the care and support that they need and given that the compassionate thing to do was just to help this family in their time of need, without delay, again to the Minister of Health: will you do what you should have done from the very start and cover the \$16,705 bill that the family had to pay out of pocket to get Rajdeep home?

**Mr. Shandro:** I think, Mr. Speaker, what I'm being asked to do is adjudicate a specific claim here on the floor of this Chamber, and I don't think that's responsible. I'm happy to take the concerns of the constituent of the hon. member and to get answers for that constituent so that they can understand what happened.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, unfortunately, Minister, that's not good enough.

Given that the Health minister's office was made aware again of this issue on May 15 through my office and took eight full days to get back to my constituent's family, only then to decline them assistance, and given that I again personally followed up with the

minister last Monday, again asking for assistance for this family, to the Minister of Health: will you at least apologize to this family for the undue stress that you have caused given your inadequate and irresponsible response to this family?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, a process is in place in the ministry and within AHS to decide on these types of issues. I don't think it's responsible for a minister to be adjudicating on a case-by-case basis here on the floor of the Chamber. I'm happy to try and find the answers for this constituent.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland is rising.

### Highway 60 Overpass

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The impacts of the economic downturn have affected all Albertans. In our area the largest impacts have been to the energy sector and also in the mining industry, a direct result of the NDP's premature phase-out of coal-generated power. The accelerated coal phase-out is not only killing jobs but it's also destroyed the tax base in the county of Parkland. Before the election there was an announcement for the construction of a highway 60 overpass, which would alleviate the traffic issues where a CN Rail line meets highway traffic. This overpass is vital to the industrial park's expansion, local businesses as well as fire and ambulance service in our area. To the Minister of Transportation: are you able to advise that the plans for the highway 60 overpass are proceeding?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question and his advocacy. I'd like him to know that the planning and design are completed for the twinning project. There are about 15,000 vehicles that travel this stretch of highway 60 every day, and 25 per cent of that is trucks. I understand it's a high-priority project for the area. As you know, our government is currently reviewing all projects to determine funding alongside other priorities. I will report this project when we get done the budget and capital planning process.

**Mr. Getson:** Given that the former government ignored how large a local impact the accelerated, premature closure of those coal mines would be and given that the overpass would at minimum reduce the severity of the economic impact of that decision on the business community and serve as a much-needed access for those vehicles, will the minister confirm that projects such as the overpass that assist in the generation of revenue will take priority over the feel-good, cash-hole projects promised by the province's government on their way out the door?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the thoughtlessness of the NDP government has caused needless pain all across Alberta but especially in coal-producing areas. I understand that this project is a high priority for the member and his constituents and that it has a positive effect on the vitality of the region. My department is working on securing the necessary lands for this project as well as relocating utilities before we can proceed further. I urge the hon. member to stay in touch on this one as we go.

**Mr. Getson:** Well, the minister has pretty much answered my question here, but this may be a little extra . . .

**The Speaker:** You can take a pass.

**Mr. Getson:** I might have to take a pass.

I really appreciate your answers, sir, and we'll get back to our constituencies. I want to ask if you would be willing to meet with the business owners out in the area as well as the county of Parkland to just bring them up to speed as well?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. You don't usually get reviews that good, so thank you. I will say, to answer the hon. member's question, that it would be my pleasure, at a time that you and I mutually arrange, to schedule a meeting with the good people from Parkland county and the good people from the Acheson Business Association, and we could talk about this further.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 16, 2019, Albertans overwhelmingly chose to elect a UCP government on a mandate of reversing the damages caused by negligent and harmful NDP socialist policies. Will the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance explain how the job-creation tax cut will benefit my constituents in Sherwood Park and all Albertans?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sherwood Park chamber of commerce executive director, Todd Banks, recently expressed optimism about the government's business-friendly policies. He said, and I quote: in the past four weeks just talking to our membership, there's a feeling of optimism by members and their businesses that will trickle down into jobs. Our commitment to Sherwood Park and to all Alberta is to make Alberta one of the most competitive places in North America, attracting new businesses and bringing thousands of jobs back into this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wow. That's great news.

Back to the minister. Given that government revenues declined when the NDP increased taxes, causing reduced competitiveness of small Alberta businesses, and given that their reduced competitiveness affected the ability of these small Alberta companies to gainfully employ young people and given that youth unemployment rose to staggering levels under the NDP, can the minister please expound on how the job-creation tax cut will bring opportunity back to our next generation of Albertans?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member was correct. In fact, when the members opposite were in government, when they raised corporate taxes, they actually collected less corporate tax revenue the next year. Under the NDP government youth unemployment rose to its highest levels in recent memory. The real minimum wage for far too many youth is zero dollars per hour. Bill 2 and Bill 3 will create opportunity and bring back employment and get our youth the much-needed jobs they need.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given our promise that we will honour our platform commitment to get Albertans back to work and given that Alberta must compete nationally and globally to ensure prosperity here at home, will the minister please explain how the job-creation tax cut will make Alberta competitive again, nationally and globally?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the midst of one of the worst recessions in this province's history the members opposite, when they were in government, implemented a 20 per cent increase in corporate taxes and the largest tax increase in the province's history without advising Albertans, the job-killing carbon tax. Our government is reversing those policies. We will bring employment and opportunity back into this province.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will move to the introduction of bills. Those of you that may have other engagements, I encourage you to exit the Chamber expeditiously.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Does anyone have a document to table? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of an e-mail from a family in my riding concerned that the Premier and the government are headed down the wrong path about the environment, and they want to know what the plan actually is.

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, ordres du jour.

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 201

#### Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move second reading of Bill 201.

Someone can have a life-threatening allergy and not know it until they have a severe reaction. This was my experience with myself and my children. While I knew my allergies and their severity, I had no idea they had passed on to my children. Bill 201 was inspired by my own experience as someone who suffers from life-threatening allergies and as a mother of two children with life-threatening allergies.

My personal story is what drove me to create Bill 201. The first is my children's allergies, which developed at ages two and five, and the other is as an adult with a life-threatening allergy. I've had accidental contacts with allergens that have given me anaphylactic reactions. An incident that happened to me as an adult: I had eaten a small piece of chicken, thinking it was coated in bread crumbs, but it was actually coated in pecans. It was one of my worst allergies. I went into severe anaphylactic shock; unable to breathe, eyes and throat were swelling, and, very confused, was unable to give myself my own EpiPen. I relied on a stranger to help me.

Bill 201 will do two things. One, it will mandate the presence of EpiPens in our schools. This would be the first in Canada. Two, it would mirror many of the great policies from Ontario's Sabrina's Law.

The bill applies to schools governed by the School Act and the Northland School Division Act.

An EpiPen is a standard dosage of epinephrine. When someone has a life-threatening reaction, epinephrine is the only medication that can save someone's life.

The primary responsibility for a student's allergy is the student's and their parents'. I don't want anyone to think that there's a shift in responsibility from families to schools. One reason for schools to have EpiPens on hand is in the case that someone doesn't know they have an allergy and then has a life-threatening reaction. Another reason is for those students with an EpiPen at school that cannot reach it during a crisis. Sabrina's Law was named after a child who had an EpiPen in their locker but could not reach it in time.

The other part of my bill will follow Ontario's Sabrina's Law. It mandates that schools have anaphylactic policies to reduce exposure to allergens. It also mandates that schools have a communication policy to distribute information about life-threatening allergies. Additionally, schools will need to keep a plan for children with life-threatening allergies on hand. Parents are responsible for supplying the key medical information and keeping it up to date. Schools must have regular training for their employees. Food Allergy Canada has a free 30-minute online course for educators and for the general public. I think this would be sufficient as far as the bill is concerned.

Boards will have the freedom to develop what they consider to be the appropriate level of training. Some have been concerned about the level of training, but an EpiPen is a standard dosage and is generally self-administered. Anyone who has ever used an EpiPen knows that it's orange to the thigh, blue to the sky. Training should be enough that an employee could help a student with a life-threatening allergic reaction without taking time away from other classroom initiatives. Employees will have liability protection when helping a student. They will have peace of mind knowing they can help a child and maybe save a life without fear of legal consequences.

Consultation was done with groups such as the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta School Boards Association, Food Allergy Canada, and the College of Alberta School Superintendents. The Alberta Teachers' Association is supportive of the bill. We are on the same page with training being sufficient for teachers to help a child in need without taking away from other classroom priorities. The ATA also appreciates the fact that EpiPens are standard doses and are autoinjectors. They do not need to be medical professionals to offer students assistance.

Superintendents and boards have some concerns, which we think we've addressed. There are concerns about liability for boards and staff, but Bill 201 provides liability protection for employees that help save a child's life. As requested, boards will have the freedom to acquire EpiPens in their own way. There are concerns about the costs of EpiPens, but many schools have had EpiPens on hand. I've donated to my school in the past, as many other parents have. We will be working with nonprofits to help lower the costs as much as possible.

I've been delighted with the feedback from the education community. I've received letters of support from school boards, administrators, teachers, and parents across Canada. The feedback has been supportive because they feel that this is the right approach to making our schools safer for children. Many of our schools already have policies in place and are proactively looking after kids.

We just want to make sure that there is a standard across the province.

When my daughter was two years old, she had spent the day with her grandparents. We had no idea she had any allergies. She had never even had an allergic reaction in her life. On that fateful day my daughter was visiting her grandparents, and like many grandparents, they'd left candies and nuts out on the table. I picked her up in the afternoon, went home, and then came back in the evening for another visit. She ate one peanut that she found on the floor, and went into severe anaphylactic shock.

Luckily, because of my own allergies, I recognized the signs of anaphylactic reaction. I gave her medication, but she got worse. Repeated shots of epinephrine did nothing to stabilize her, and she began the fight of her life. We took her to the hospital. They gave her more medication to save her life as we went by ambulance from Vegreville to Edmonton. Her condition was so severe that at one point STARS was hovering above us, just in case we needed them for a traffic jam. None of the medication was working, and at one point I decided to hold her straight up in the air so that she could breathe easier. She was blue and limp. Her eyes and face were swollen beyond recognition. But by a miracle, the peanut left her system, and she started to get better.

2:50

I made a promise that day to my God that I would advocate for children with life-threatening allergies. In 2007 I joined an ASBA advisory panel for anaphylaxis. I worked with a parent who is anaphylactic and has children who are anaphylactic. I worked with administrators, teachers, and anaphylaxis Canada to make our schools safer for children with life-threatening allergies. This bill will help families avoid reliving my own personal experience.

I hope that the House finds this bill in the best interest of these children and that it will support it. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201? The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak in support of Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act. I want to thank my colleague the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing forward this important piece of legislation. As someone who personally suffers from allergies, I understand the importance of being diligent about exposure to allergens and the critical need for EpiPens in the event of an anaphylactic reaction.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 201 is a common-sense piece of legislation. At the core of this bill is the protection of our children when they're at school. My hon. colleague from Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has already shared with us the tragic events involving 13-year-old Sabrina Shannon in 2004. While it took that terrible event for Ontario to act, we do not want or need it to be the case here in Alberta.

Bill 201 has two key components, prevention and treatment. In terms of prevention measures, this bill requires all schools to put anaphylactic policies in place. This requirement ensures that steps are taken to reduce exposure to allergens from the outset. Parents must also provide schools with current and accurate information about their children's allergies. In turn, schools must put a plan in place for each affected student. This plan will include the nature of the allergy, avoidance strategies, and how to treat the allergy if needed.

The second critical component of this bill relates to the last point, treatment. This bill mandates the presence of an EpiPen in all publicly funded schools. While students with life-threatening

allergies tend to have their own EpiPens, they may not always be able to find or use them in an emergency. For example, Sabrina's EpiPen was in her locker when she needed it the most. As we know, the consequences were fatal. The availability of EpiPens in schools will ensure that teachers and staff are able to respond decisively to a suspected anaphylactic reaction.

EpiPens are simple tools that have the power to save lives. As mentioned previously, it's blue to the sky, orange to the thigh. We anticipate that training on the use of EpiPens will be straightforward, and we're giving school boards the discretion to set up training for their schools.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The bill will also protect staff from liability if they administer the EpiPen in good faith. As a parent myself I know the joy of parenthood also comes with a fair share of worry. Every day parents across Alberta drop their kids off at school. For parents of children with life-threatening allergies their worries are compounded by the lack of reliable treatment options if their children experiences an anaphylactic reaction. This does not have to be the case. Madam Speaker, advances in modern technology have ensured that our children should not die from an anaphylactic reaction. We know how to prevent them and, when necessary, treat them. It is unthinkable to me that a child living in Canada in 2019 could be at risk of dying from an allergic reaction in school. I imagine that this tragic reality is unthinkable to other members of the Assembly.

This is why I urge all of us to vote in favour of this common-sense and potentially life-saving bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and take part in the first debate of the week on this bill from the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act. I'd like to thank that member for bringing this bill forward. I think this is an important discussion for us to have. Indeed, I guess, probably over the last decade, even a couple of decades, we've seen a rising number of allergies that children seem to develop early on in life. People can develop them later in life.

The severity of an anaphylactic reaction: I can only imagine what that experience is like. I've been fortunate, Madam Speaker, in that while I have a wide variety of food intolerances and a few medication allergies, I've yet to encounter any that for me has caused any form of an anaphylactic reaction. I can only imagine the fear and the anxiety that would come with that: feeling your throat beginning to close, beginning to lose your breath, not being able to breathe, not knowing why, and potentially not having anything on hand to reverse or stop that reaction. Certainly, we've heard some tragic stories of children and others who have lost their lives because they were unable to get treatment in time, so I think it's quite reasonable to sit down and have this discussion today and talk about how we can ensure that our schools at least may be a safer place.

Of course, as others have noted, Madam Speaker, and as has been discussed, we recognize that schools are places where children can be very easily accidentally exposed to a large number of things. Certainly, over the years we've developed a wide variety of protocols and other things in place by which schools try to protect students. We've seen some great advances in the food-production industry in labelling all products that contain nuts, trying to find a way to make products that do not in fact contain nuts. We've seen a wide variety of alternatives that have come forward to provide for children. Of course, schools have introduced a wide variety of



policies and approaches to try to minimize the opportunities for students who may be allergic to be exposed.

Even with that being the case, there are still opportunities and there are still occasions, as we've heard, where things can slip through the cracks and students can potentially be accidentally exposed to something to which they are allergic and find themselves in that situation of medical crisis. I think it's, again, appropriate that we look at ways that we can ensure that our schools are equipped, that teachers and other staff are informed, have a clear understanding of the dangers, how they can be averted, how they can be addressed if an allergic reaction occurs and, indeed, have a plan in place.

That may even be one of the more important parts, Madam Speaker. My understanding is that many schools have already taken this step. Indeed, we know that a lot of our schools are proactive. Our boards are proactive. They think ahead, so they plan for these sorts of circumstances. We know that there are schools existing now and boards that have already put procedures in place. They have procedures, and they know what steps to take if a child has an anaphylactic reaction. However, we recognize that that is not universal at this point, so it makes sense that we would put a system in place to ensure that all schools would take that prudent step and so that all parents can rest assured knowing that when their child goes to school, if they should be caught in that situation, there is a plan in place to address it. It makes sense. When you're dealing with a problem, you want to sit down, carefully think out the possibilities of the circumstances, and you want to carefully plan out, "What would be the best way for us to move forward?" and make sure you're putting a good and robust system in place.

As part of that, it seems reasonable as well to look at having each school have an epinephrine autoinjection device. Now, EpiPen is the common colloquial that's used. We recognize, of course, that that is a particular product name. There are some others, so I appreciate that the bill refers simply to the more generic so that, of course, the schools would have the opportunity to seek out what would be the most cost-effective epinephrine autoinjector to have on hand. That may be the EpiPen. It may be another brand.

Again, it makes sense that we look at working with schools to ensure that they would have at least one of these devices on-site so that, as has been noted by the member and by others, if a student should happen to forget theirs at home, if it's been misplaced, if it's in a locker and they're not able to give the combination because they're not able to breathe, not able to speak, the school would have something on-site to be able to assist them.

Now, when the last member was speaking, the Member for Camrose, I did note that she talked about one situation where a young girl died because her EpiPen was in her locker and that led to her death. Is that correct? The one thought that did occur to me on hearing that, Madam Speaker, is that it's also possible, I would imagine, that if the EpiPen in the school is at a location that is not close enough to where the student might be or if there's some fumbling or difficulty in accessing it, that also might not be able to occur, then, in time. Of course, I don't know the specific circumstances and how quickly it led to that situation for the young woman. That said, even if that is the case, the fact that the school has an EpiPen on-site would likely make it far more likely that that child would be able to be treated than not. Again, I don't think that would be any reason not to move forward with this.

3:00

But there are a couple of things that I have been thinking about with this, Madam Speaker. It's my understanding that there was not necessarily a great deal of consultation that went into bringing this bill forward. In many respects, I understand, this is what appears on

the surface to be a common-sense solution. Indeed, I think it is, as I said, a reasonable direction to move in. But what I always recognize and indeed I've recognized, you know, particularly in my work here but in some of my other lines of work that I've had before, is that often what appears to be a very simple thing on the surface may have complications to it that we don't necessarily understand or recognize. I think it's valuable in these situations where we have a proposal as legislators, where we say that this seems a reasonable step and this is something that we would like to see all schools implement, that we take at least a moment in some part of bringing this bill forward, in moving forward – perhaps if it doesn't happen before this bill passes in this House, assuming that it does, that even within the regulatory process there would be the opportunity to sit down with teachers, with school administrators, with medical professionals who work in schools, to talk with them about how best to implement this.

Of course, as I mentioned, we have schools that have already introduced processes and they already have protocols in place. So it would be worth while, perhaps, to sit down and do a review of those and be able to make a good recommendation to schools, then, on how they implement their own, or indeed to be sure that we structure it so the things that we are requiring schools to do are going to have the effect that we want them to have.

The other concern that I would bring forward, Madam Speaker, is that there's no provision for or discussion of, really, the cost of this in this bill. Ideally, in my view, if this is something that we as legislators are going to require schools to have and if it is indeed something that is there for student safety and it is there for the public good, then it makes sense to me that the government should provide the funding to cover it. You know, I've heard members talk about how they don't want to see that as a barrier, and I agree. I'd hate to see that be the reason for this not to be able to go forward.

I would note that in the discussions around this, the Member for Lethbridge-East did a quick calculation at the committee based on, I think – with numbers of about 200 students per school, 3,300, 3,400 schools, he estimated that it'd be roughly half a million dollars across the province. He termed that "a fairly minor cost." Respectfully, I think, yeah. I would agree with that in terms of something that's providing coverage for every school in the province, but that could, you know, be an unfair burden on some schools versus others, a school that has a thousand students versus a school that has a few hundred; that's a difference in cost and certainly a difference in funding that they receive from the province. Again, if we are imposing additional costs on schools, however small those may be, I think it's reasonable that the government then step up and provide funding.

Indeed, I've heard members talk about, you know, doing fund raising or nonprofits being able to step up and help, but we must remember, Madam Speaker, that many of those nonprofits also come back to government for funding and support because they are doing important and good work in the community. Unfortunately, in many cases I think nonprofits are having to step up to do work that government should have been doing in the first place. These are investments that previous governments have chosen not to make, whether that be around issues with housing, homelessness, mental health, addictions, and substance use. So I would prefer not to put another burden on nonprofits that are already doing important work in the community. I would prefer not to put parents in the situation where they have to do yet another fundraiser for their school. One of the things our government did was reduce school fees by 25 per cent, which is a very important step, and I'd hate to see further fees and costs being imposed on parents because of something we brought forward in this Legislature.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre for his comments with regard to this bill and for his support for this bill. Maybe just to comment on those for a second. I do know that in the last four years I did have several conversations with people, one with a young lady by the name of Mrs. Nicole Borsato, who brought this to my attention. In the process of hearing that the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville was putting this private member's bill forward, I took all of the information and all of the comments that she had provided to me and made sure that she had them. So there was at least some consultation that I know that went to the member.

You know, as a teacher for 30 years I'm glad to be able to speak to this bill, to Bill 201, the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act. I believe that it's an important bill. Now, I know that as a teacher one of the things I believed was that in many ways I was not very well prepared to handle some of the medical issues that my students would sometimes be faced with in school, and over a 30-year period of time there were many. I can remember having a student that would, on a fairly regular basis, go through petite mal seizures in the middle of class. I can remember one day a student in panic knocking on my door, bursting through the door, and saying that somebody was dying in the parking lot, and it was a student having a grand mal seizure. I can remember one of the first subbing incidents that I ever had, a student sliding down ice and falling and a piece of ice literally slicing the leg all the way up the thigh. Basketball injuries galore from knees to ankles to ACLs to you name it to concussions. It wasn't until the last five years of my 30-year teaching career that we actually had to go through concussion protocol as coaches. I can remember one student having been hit by a car and other students running the student into the hallway, literally dragging her, and me having to say: "Whoa, whoa. Stop. You could be doing some real damage here."

I'm very pleased to be able to stand here today and speak to Bill 201 because I believe that it addresses one of those issues that as a teacher we knew existed, and that was that students with severe allergies could potentially die from anaphylactic shock. We knew as teachers that many of our students had allergies and that they could have a severe allergic reaction and that that could, at the end of day, you know, restrict their airways to the point where they really could not breathe and could face very severe consequences. As the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville pointed out, children with allergies struggle not only with the physical realities of having these allergies but with sometimes being teased and even bullied, so I believe that this is a bill that is well worth being brought before this House. It's aimed at protecting children with allergies.

By mandating the creation of policies and procedures to react to anaphylactic reactions within the school, I believe that it does a good job of balancing the various responsibilities of parents, who are their guardians, and teachers and school boards and school board officials with trying to make sure that when we have these children under our care that they have the capacity to be taken care of and that they are safe at school. Under this bill families will still bear the primary responsibility for making sure that schools know what is happening in their children's lives and know that this could be a problem and that they have the responsibility of communicating that to the school, that the communication of information pertaining to life-threatening allergies will allow for the schools to be able to better respond should anaphylactic reactions occur at the school.

I can remember starting every year off with a staff meeting where we would go through a list of the students that had various issues in

their lives, where one of them would be allergies, and where we would have to make sure that as teachers we knew who in our classroom had allergic reactions and could have an anaphylactic reaction and where the EpiPens were in the school and those kinds of issues.

Parents would bear the responsibility under this bill for communicating this to the school, and the schools will therefore bear the responsibility of making sure that they have the capacity to respond to specific students, and they would have the responsibility to maintain a file for each of these students detailing pertinent information like instructions from health professionals that may be attached to these reports. They'd have the responsibility imposed on the school that they would ensure that parents supply the allergy information upon enrolment. We know that in many schools, at least in schools that I talked with in Drayton Valley, these were common practices. I don't think it's asking schools, necessarily, to go too far down what they're already doing in many cases.

**3:10**

School boards would bear the responsibility under this act to make sure that they maintain an anaphylaxis policy and to ensure that each school has at least one EpiPen. I think that's a very important thing if they haven't done so already. While many school boards have, I believe if they haven't done it, that they need to do that. You know, this bill leaves enough latitude to the school boards to be able to prepare for this if they haven't been ready to do that yet. I think it's January of 2020 that it gives the school boards notice to be prepared to be able to deal with this issue so that they're not caught off guard by a sudden change of policy.

Anaphylaxis can be extremely serious. We know that. It's a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. Much in this law is going to mirror a law that was in Ontario called Sabrina's Law that was passed in 2005. Sabrina's Law was passed and improved prevention and recognition and then intervention in order to save students from suffering the same fate as an Ontario student by the name of Sabrina Shannon, who died of an anaphylactic reaction.

Sabrina's Law covers the following kind of things in this law. It was the first piece of legislation in the world aimed at ensuring that children who suffered from anaphylactic reactions were actually protected while they were at school. It was named after Sabrina, a 13-year-old who died of an anaphylactic reaction while at school. It's been copied in over 10 American states and, I believe, in one Australian state. In Alberta we are following suit with these examples.

It mandates the creation of an exposure prevention strategy. Schools will have to consider who in their school has the capacity to have a reaction, an anaphylactic reaction, and maybe have the discussions about whether they're going to be a peanut-free zone or how they're going to deal with these kinds of issues. It mandates anaphylaxis management training for school personnel so that the teachers within the school or the aides or the administrators would have some understanding about how to recognize an anaphylactic reaction as well as how to deal with it, where the EpiPen is, and those kinds of things.

It requires establishment of individual anaphylaxis emergency management plans so that every teacher would have an understanding of what those processes are, what the steps are that have to be taken should they encounter this in their classroom or out on the field.

Sabrina's Law provides immunity from lawsuits for acts done in good faith. As professionals we have to understand that they're teachers primarily, first and foremost, but because they have a duty of care and a duty of protection, they would be expected to intervene. They shouldn't be worried about whether or not there's going to be a lawsuit should they try to take action.

Bill 201, the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act, mirrors these elements within Sabrina's Law. With various elements from the Ontario law being mirrored, our students can have similar protection to the students in Ontario.

In addition to the provisions which mirror Sabrina's Law, Bill 201 mandates that all publicly funded schools have an EpiPen on-site. Now, I think, probably, for most school districts and for most schools this is already being done. As a teacher of 30 years I know that for probably the last 15 years of my teaching career, at least the last 15 years, I believe that every school in the Wild Rose school division, especially in Drayton Valley that I'm aware of, had an EpiPen. We are all told where the EpiPen is stored, where we can find it if we need it. These were things that we just did as a matter of practice, a common practice at the beginning of the school year, so that we knew where everything was. We had that management plan so that we could work through it. I believe that probably for most school boards and for most schools in Alberta this is something that's already being done, but if it isn't, we now know that it's going to be mandated with this law.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very proud to stand and offer my support to the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for her bill, Bill 201. I'm very proud to have sat in on the Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee, subbing in for another member, and to have heard her very passionate defence of why she wanted to put this bill forward and what it means to her.

This bill really hits home for me personally as I, too, was a three-year-old going into anaphylactic shock at one point in my life. My very first time that I reacted to cashews, I was three years old, and I, too, was at my grandma's house. If there's one thing we can rely on grandmas for, it's that they always have really, really good snacks out. Unfortunately, I was allergic to what was on the table. Obviously, we didn't have an EpiPen available. I was three years old, and we didn't know. My grandma actually had to drive across town with a little girl in the back because she had no idea what was going on. Obviously, the regular signs of anaphylaxis were showing, but she didn't really know what she was getting herself into because I had never reacted before. Had she had an EpiPen, obviously everything would be much, much different. We weren't travelling from Vegreville to Edmonton, but we were definitely travelling from one end of town to the other. I continued to react a couple of other times, and what the doctors kept telling my family was that it will progressively get worse. You will have less and less time to administer an EpiPen or an injectable of epinephrine at any point. You will have less and less time because of the severity of the reaction getting stronger.

This bill is, I think, just integral within our schools. It's so important because, you know, if this is, say, the second or third time someone has reacted, you will have less time, and it's good to have one on hand. Now I, obviously, carry an EpiPen with me everywhere I go because, Lord knows, you don't want to react at any time. The nature of the job is that you're at different events, and you never know what you're going to come across. Now I carry my EpiPen in my purse, which is a lot more attractive than carrying it in a Winnie the Pooh fanny pack when I was in elementary school. Now I giggle about it because it was in all my school pictures. It was bright yellow and didn't really go with what I was wearing ever, but, hey, I was safe.

I was also bullied for that. When I was in school, I was known as the kid with the allergy: Michaela from whoever's class has a nut

allergy. I'm sorry I used my own name in the Chamber, Madam Speaker, but you don't want to be known as the nut allergy kid. I also think that this would reduce that stigma that's associated with allergies because in addition to that, the other parents weren't as kind to my parents either. This was a newer thing, anaphylaxis in schools, and some parents really took issue that they, you know, were asked not to send nuts to school. We're kids, we touch everything, we're not exactly the cleanest, and you don't want to send somebody else into anaphylactic shock because of crosscontamination. I'm very thankful to have had a wonderful secretary at my school who actually sat down with me at St. Michael's elementary school in Medicine Hat because she, too, has an allergy. She had an EpiPen, and she always kind of had my back. Actually, while I was door-knocking in the last election, I knocked on her door, and she said: hey, you're the kid with the nut allergy. So it still follows me today, but that's okay.

This bill would give many parents, grandparents, and people like the people in my family, I think, peace of mind sending their kids to school. This is a really relatively easy response. We face so many difficult decisions in this Legislature on the lines of partisanship, on the lines of what our constituents want versus what interest groups want. You never really know how to balance those things, but I think that in this instance this is very clear cut, common sense, and what I think the Member for Highwood in committee said, a no-brainer. I couldn't actually agree with that more because this is a very simple solution. Given that most of these schools already have EpiPens on hand, this is just legislation and a little bit of backup and peace of mind for those parents and grandparents and everybody else in between who maybe doesn't.

I actually had my most recent reaction a couple of days before our party policy convention in May. I will say that you do have less time. It was the night before. I had just finished some door-knocking for my nomination. I stopped to grab my favourite butter chicken, and all of a sudden, lo and behold, they had started putting cashew butter in their butter chicken. I didn't know that, so I took it home. I was eating it, thinking, "This tastes better than usual," not to know that, honestly, a couple of minutes later I would start to blow up like a balloon, with all the regular signs: ears running, nose running, sick, and could not breathe. I then drove myself to the hospital, which was not the best decision I've ever made. I didn't give myself my EpiPen because I thought: well, I'm still breathing.

3:20

This takes out that middleman. This takes the onus off the person having the reaction and makes it available to teachers, to support staff, to people who know, you know, that it's blue to the sky, orange to the thigh, whatever it is, that can administer that EpiPen and takes the stress off the student, who likely is very young, because they're still school aged. They wouldn't have to administer that themselves or be able to tell somebody else they were having an allergic reaction.

Like I said, I think this is a no-brainer. I mean, we're going to hear a lot of things in committee, in this House that are partisan and heated. This is one that's just in the best interests of Alberta students, Madam Speaker, and I really commend the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing this forward and bringing us something that really will impact kids the day it's implemented.

Once again, you know, we talk about consultation a lot in this House, and I know, myself included, we ran on being a party that values consultation. I think the real stakeholders in this bill, in this particular legislation, are kids. They're kids like me. They're kids like the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville's children. They're kids that we all know and love and appreciate. Those are

the kids that would ultimately be better off knowing that there's an EpiPen in their classroom or down the hall.

So I would just encourage all members of this House to put partisanship aside, to think about this from a parent's perspective, from my perspective, from the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville's perspective, and to vote yes to Bill 201. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill, private member's Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act. I'll start by thanking the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing forward an act to protect students as I think that that's a fundamental responsibility we have in this House as legislators, to pay attention and to do a good analysis of the needs of our constituents. That, of course, requires us to pay particular attention to the most vulnerable amongst us, in this case students, and to enact policies that will protect them, which I think are all very important socialist qualities. I'm very glad to see that they're bringing forward this kind of legislation in the House and speaking about, you know, the acts to protect and to seek out the vulnerabilities of the people who live in the province of Alberta and to make sure that the legislation supports the work that is being done for those vulnerable people.

I have some experience, as many of the members do, with, you know, dealing with people with allergies and the very serious and dramatic consequences of mistakenly being exposed to whatever allergen is there. I know that this is particularly often talked about with regard to peanuts, but many people know that epinephrine is very important for people with other kinds of allergies; for example, bee stings and so on. It's a very important medical device to have available in a school setting.

It really speaks to the values that we have here in the House, particularly on this side, where we seek to provide wide-ranging preventative health care services available to all Albertans. The fact that it's being particularly extended in this one narrow circumstance is quite positive, but I'd like to see it extended a little bit beyond that in time. But for the meantime I'm happy to support an act that at least takes a good step in the right direction with regard to, you know, universally available public health care in this province.

I worked for many years at Camp He Ho Ha, Camp Health, Hope & Happiness, just west of the city, and I had an opportunity in my adolescence to learn a lot about people with fragile health conditions. That included, of course, people with severe allergic reactions. Of course, being in a rural setting, in a camp setting, you know, it was not as carefully arranged as homes are in the sense that once you learn your child has an allergy, you can clear out your home for that. In a camp setting, of course, there are many different kinds of allergies and things are not necessarily taken care of in a way that is as safe. Peanuts or insects or other kinds of things are sometimes present whether you try to work in a preventative manner or not. As a result, we did definitely have a number of students who had very serious anaphylactic reactions to things out at Camp He Ho Ha and had to learn to provide injections on an emergency basis. I'm very happy to know that this is now being required in the schools.

I know that going through an anaphylactic reaction is both physically, medically dangerous and also emotionally draining. It's very scary to find yourself not being able to breathe and not being able to take care of yourself because of your own shock reaction. It's very important to have someone else around you who can

engage in the preventative health care that you require. I think that that's something that I very much would like to support in this act. I'm very happy that this act has been brought forward.

It does raise a couple of questions for me, however. Not in a negative sense; it provokes positively further thinking about the issue of: how do we protect the vulnerable amongst us, the children amongst us who have particular needs that may not be universal needs but are very important and specific to an individual? It speaks to a couple of things, I think, which are very important. The idea that we need to act as a society on behalf of others even when they may not affect us ourselves, I think, is a very important aspect of this kind of legislation.

I don't have any particular food allergies. I am clearly an omnivore. That's lucky for me. Just through some kind of genetic benevolence I don't have to worry about these kinds of things, yet I think it's very important that people like me are given the opportunity to act on behalf of others who do not have that kind of luck when it comes to their lives. Of course, I would love to see this government take on that kind of philosophical stance in general, where those of us who have the benefits of society and wealth and goodness of our biology are invited to and actually, in fact, through legislation are required to take care of others who do not have that level of luck in their lives.

I know, for example, that at Camp He Ho Ha we had on a regular basis kids come out who were learning to deal with their own type 1 diabetes and had been through a program at the Glenrose hospital, typically, and were now at a camp learning not simply to take their medications but how to do that when their life is not so structured and controlled as it often is at home, when suddenly they're at a camp where their exercise levels are very different, their access to foods is very different, where they're engaged in activities, staying up later than they might normally do or getting up very early or camping outside, where they're not sleeping very well, all of those kinds of things. They would frequently have reactions to either high blood sugar or low blood sugar requiring either some insulin or perhaps glucose on an emergency basis.

It speaks to me, again, about: how do we move this kind of a bill from being a bill about a particular approach to being a bill about a general approach to caring for others in society? This will be great for people with anaphylactic reactions. It does nothing for kids with diabetes. Now, that means I'm still in favour of the bill. Of course, I care about the kids with anaphylactic reactions. But it also speaks to the fact that we should be thinking broader. We should move up a level of analysis when we think of these things and not simply say: "I have a personal experience, and I need to have a drug. Therefore, we should make that drug available." We should go to that next level that says, "People need drugs, and they need drugs for various reasons, and as a society we should meet all of those levels of need" and not simply go on, "My personal experience has taught me I need a particular thing," moving away from the personal to the general.

3:30

I think it's important that we realize that this bill moves in the right direction and invites us to do the same thing with a variety of other things, for example, as I've mentioned, with diabetes. We have a great policy here for schools that will be required to actually have a policy and have implements necessary, medications and tools necessary, to respond to anaphylactic shock, but do we have the same kind of policy in schools with regard to kids who have diabetes? Do all the schools have glucose available? Do all the schools have insulin available? Are they teaching school personnel how to deal with those issues? Do we require them to have some kind of policy around these issues? That's the kind of moving up to

the next level that we have to talk about and not simply go on the basis of personalized experience to teach us what we have to do. We need to move to thinking about: what does this help us to understand?

I was very interested to see that in this bill there are a number of things that the government has made a decision to do. They have made a decision to require – it's very clear – every school and school board, including private and charter schools, to obey this law, which is very interesting because when it comes to GSAs, they're trying to work to not require the implementation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm speaking to the principle here as opposed to the act. The principle underlying it is that we are making decisions about requiring schools to follow good policy.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today and outline my support for Bill 201, introduced by the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. The intent of the bill is simple. It is to ensure that schools have the resources they need to prevent and treat allergic reactions and, by extension, to protect the lives of children who suffer from life-threatening allergies.

To contextualize this bill, I want to provide some key statistics about food allergies in Canada. According to the government of Canada 1.2 million Canadians may be experiencing food allergies, and they believe that this number is growing. They estimate that 6 per cent of children experience food allergies. These statistics put into perspective how prevalent food allergies are in our society. Given this prevalence we must ensure that we are doing whatever we can to protect our children from the risks associated with allergies. Intuitively, then, one of the first places we should address are schools.

This bill does three things to protect students with life-threatening allergies. The first and most obvious, it requires all publicly funded schools to have an EpiPen. These include francophone, private, and charter schools under the School Act and schools under the Northland School Division Act. As I'm sure members of this Assembly know, individuals can be allergic to a myriad of things. Worse than that, however, is that many are unaware that they have allergies in the first place. An EpiPen is proven as an effective tool to save the life of a person experiencing anaphylaxis. This is why it is so critical to have EpiPens in schools not only for the students who know about their allergies but especially for those who do not.

The second is that Bill 201 requires that parents work together with schools and create plans for students with severe allergies. The third is that teachers or staff who administer an EpiPen will not be liable to punishment if they do so in good faith. Parents are in the best position to communicate critical information about their children's allergies directly to schools, and given that children must spend much of their week under the supervision of teachers and school staff, those individuals are well positioned to prevent and respond to allergic reactions. To state the obvious, Madam Speaker, a child's allergies are with them wherever they go. Plans to prevent and respond to these allergies should be in place at schools, where children spend much of their time. To summarize, this bill ensures that schools will have an effective and available treatment option in an emergency, that plans will be made to avoid emergency situations to begin with, and that teachers can be free from fear when taking action during an emergency. The challenges of managing an allergy are difficult enough for adults, let alone children. Here in Alberta we want our children to go to school and be focused on what they learn. Our government wants them to be free to work

hard and play hard. The last thing we want them to be worried about is whether or not their allergies will flare up and whether anybody will be able to help them if they do.

Ninety-eight per cent of deaths occur when epinephrine is not administered within 15 minutes of an allergic reaction. Imagine, Madam Speaker, if your child was having difficulty breathing and their airways were swelling. Imagine then that they could be saved by a quick reaction and availability of an EpiPen. I am sure that everyone in this Assembly would be willing to do anything to save a child's life, and this bill will ensure teachers and staff can do exactly that. That is why I urge all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of Bill 201.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As many have already done, I will just share some of my thoughts on this bill and also acknowledge the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing this forward. Certainly, you know, her personal experience with her own allergies and the allergies of her children: obviously, that's a pretty scary circumstance for any mom, any parent. I really commend her for making a difference, bringing forward some important legislation that could absolutely save lives.

I just want to speak also, being a mom myself. I have three boys, and two of them don't have allergies, but my eldest does. Although EpiPens aren't sort of what he needs to be healthy, he does have very severe allergies. Certainly, when he was a young child, he would go outside and play in the grass and climb in the trees. Then he'd come in and his face would be all blown up, and he was having trouble breathing. We'd rush to emergency. It's kind of hard in the summer, when it's a beautiful day like today, to keep your kid indoors. As a person myself with no allergies, at first I didn't understand at all what was going on, so it was a scary time for me as a young mom. Unfortunately, we spent a lot of time in emergency throughout his childhood.

Mostly he just got oxygen because he had allergies to environmental things like grass and snow mould, to flowers, to trees plus to all sorts of animals: dogs, cats, birds, everything. So he really had a lot of challenges as a kid, and these kinds of allergens were triggers for him with his asthma. Of course, he was treated for asthma. Mostly the kind of treatment was different than this bill brings forward. He often needed to be on oxygen. Obviously, the allergen needed to be removed from his environment. Even though it's different, I certainly appreciate the challenges you face when your child is not breathing properly. It's a serious situation. So I certainly have some understanding and empathy for the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville as a mom myself who had a child with some severe allergies although in a different area.

Just to clarify – some folks know this – we have two brothers in this Assembly, but we also have a mom and a son. I'm the mom. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-Riverview, and my son is a page. It's not that son I'm talking about, just to clarify – he's my baby; this guy is much older – just so people aren't confusing them or asking him about his allergies, because he doesn't have any.

3:40

I guess I just want to also talk a little bit about: we know that private members' bills are not money bills, right? The government is not going to be paying for EpiPens in schools across our province. You know, they can't have money in them. So I guess I do have some questions just about that. I know that it doesn't seem like much. It's, like, \$150, \$100. I mean, there are a few different

approximations for how much an EpiPen costs. But who would bear the costs? That is a question about this bill. You know, a board may have several schools. You need one for each school. Of course, these pens do expire, so if it's not used in a year or so, then they have to be replaced. Then that means an annual cost. Of course, if they're used, they have to be replaced. These are just some of the questions I have about, you know, who is going to bear the cost for these EpiPens in every school in our province.

Just another question I do have, too, on one of the things I feel is a little bit unfortunate. Even though I certainly support it and think this private member's bill is important, it's always great to hear from people who have, you know, front-line experience working in schools across the province. Unfortunately, we weren't given the opportunity to have any consultation with any of these people. We could have spoken to school boards or even the Alberta School Boards Association, which is the umbrella organization for school boards across our province, or the Alberta Teachers' Association. They have an understanding of sort of what they do across all sorts of jurisdictions and about having best practices, you know, knowing what has worked.

In some areas, perhaps, this isn't in place, but in a lot of jurisdictions it is. So what is working well for that community that has these policies in place? It's just somewhat unfortunate that we're not having any consultations on this bill. There could be, you know, things that we wouldn't have even thought of yet that people may be able to have awareness of, and then that could be sort of dealt with, and some of the best practices could then be implemented across our province.

Of course, Alberta isn't the only province who has done some previous work on this. This has happened across our country. People have referred to Sabrina's Law. Many other jurisdictions, other provinces have brought that in. So I just want to, you know, be on record indicating that it would have been helpful because there are things that we may not know.

It could have made the implementation easier for the schools. You know, our schools, our staff are often very busy people. Having them develop a policy in a different way when maybe their existing policy actually fulfills a lot of what this bill says, so making sure that we're not making people do double work, that it's not redundant: these are just some things that I think would have helped if we did have some consultation, just to make it streamlined and smooth sailing and also to respect the professionals that are already involved in this, you know, for years, perhaps, understanding how these things work. There could be learning processes for other people who aren't having it.

Beyond just what's happening in the schools, through the boards and the Alberta Teachers' Association, is Food Allergy Canada or the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. That also could have been a stakeholder that we consulted with that I would just recommend. I think that that, again, could have made it a smoother implementation.

But as I've said at the outset, certainly, I stand in support of this bill. We want to make sure that all students have access to whatever medical care they need. This is kind of a dramatic situation, of course, as we know that if children don't have an EpiPen or there's not one available, it could end their lives, and we don't want that to happen. So I certainly want to make clear that that is really crucial, that these EpiPens be made available in all the school systems, but just to reiterate, wanting to understand a bit more about, you know, who's paying for this. Are these the individual schools, the individual school boards, or how is that going to be managed?

Then just some best practices, like, what's the best way to implement this, because, of course, we can always learn from many others. It's just a wise step for the consultation process.

I just want to say, then, that certainly this protection of students with life-threatening allergies makes a lot of sense. It's just that those consultations would have been helpful, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in support of this. I think it's a bill that's a very good idea. I think I have some lingering questions around it. As you'll no doubt be aware, it's often the case that when we do something, it can seem sort of obvious. On its face this seems like a really good thing, but the devil is always in the details, so it's always a question of implementation and how best to implement that and whether it has any further consequences, I think.

I think that probably the most important thing to note about this is that whatever the amount of money, the life of your child is inevitably worth considerably more than that, so I think that this is a great idea. I do know that there's a cost associated with EpiPens, but I think that that cost is probably going to be relatively minor, especially compared to – I mean, even the cost for every EpiPen in every school. If you can save even one life, I think it's worth it.

I think the question is going to be one of sort of training and implementation. For instance, in Calgary, certainly, there are some very large elementary schools. Up until recently there were some that were almost bursting at the seams, and the question is: "Say that you have an elementary school with 400 or 500 children in it. Do you just get one? What if that gets deployed?" Like, I don't know that we know how long it takes to order a new one, so do you have two in the school just in case there's a second allergy? I think some policies around that would probably be useful, some sort of conversations with teachers, with students, with staff at schools, and with parents about how this would be implemented. I think that, unfortunately, when things go wrong, they tend to seem to go very wrong all at once. You know, if you have these and they're available, it's worth having a policy about: "How are teachers trained? How are staff trained? What's said to the students?"

You know, for instance, I know that when I went to school, they used to have lots and lots of lunch supervisors, but we've sort of over time cut back on that to a certain degree, so you don't have as many of those folks around. So if a student sees another student have an allergic reaction to something on the field, say, at recess, when kids may be sharing snacks – even though I understand that these days they're not supposed to do that, I suspect it sometimes happens anyway – are all the kids ready to run and tell a teacher that this is what's needed? Even right down to sort of: where are you storing it, right? You could store it in the central office, but the question is: how long would it take someone? The furthest classroom from the office: how long would it take someone to get from there to the office and back again or to make a phone call? Do you have an emergency line that sort of supersedes? These are all just questions of implementation. Again, I think it's generally a good idea.

I think it'd probably be worth looking to other jurisdictions. Certainly, when we were in government and we were making policy, it was probably one of the first things that was always asked for, a crossjurisdictional scan. What do they have in other places in terms of legislation, regulation, and policy, and how is it working, right? What was the feedback there? Often you can get a lot of public official records about this or even news stories that sort of cover how it was implemented and how it worked and what problems have arisen. A lot of times when you go to implement something

like this, it's entirely possible that no matter how well you think it through, something may arise that perhaps you've not thought of.

You know, even right down to questions of, "Who's in charge of ensuring that it's replaced every year?" my understanding is that you have to replace an EpiPen every year, and presumably they don't look materially different than each other. So who's in charge of getting a new one, making sure the old one got disposed of, that sort of thing? I mean, the last thing you'd want is to think that you've helped a student by administering something which doesn't work anymore.

3:50

I'm not really sure what happens to expired medication, whether it, like, immediately sort of ceases to have any impact at all or whether it's just sort of a declining trajectory over time. That's probably a question worth having an answer to, I think, too, just in terms of employees, in terms of them sort of knowing what's going on. You can be very well intentioned, and certainly I know we had this conversation around injectable versus nasal spray naloxone with respect to first responders. There are certain required trainings and procedures around anything that's injectable. You can certainly be intending to help someone, and you could somehow injure them. So what happens to the liability from that, right?

If teachers are being asked to take on this additional role, which, again, I think is a good thing, you know, what happens if they go to perform an injection and there's a bruise or the needle breaks or any number of implementation sort of usage errors, I guess, occur? Who bears the liability for that, right? I think it's an open question. The staff is obviously trying to do their best, but what if the individual student is injured or not helped as a result of that error? Who is responsible for that? I think that's certainly a question that remains to be done. I think that, as with anything you're using in an emergency, it's better to overplan and never need to use it than it is to have potentially missed something in your plan, so I think ensuring that everyone has those conversations around: "Who's responsible for what? Who's responsible for administering, in what zone, at what time?"

In schools it's often the case that if a teacher becomes ill, you can have a substitute teacher, and they may come in on fairly short notice. So do you ensure that all of your substitutes are trained as well? They probably don't do this anymore either, but when I was a kid, if they went through the trained substitute teachers and no one was available, some of our parents who stayed home essentially sort of showed up as, like, the interim substitute teacher. That's probably not a thing that happens anymore, but how do you ensure that someone like that, who may be involved, would be trained?

On a field trip where children are possibly going to encounter substances that are new to their systems, how do you make sure that your parent volunteers are properly trained? Who is in charge of ensuring that, on a field trip, the EpiPen comes with you? Or does it come with you? I think that, yeah, there are a lot of interesting questions in ensuring that we implement this in the best and most effective way in terms of going forward.

But, again, I just want to make it clear – sometimes when you sort of raise questions about things, people are, like: oh, are you really against it? I'm not really against it; I'm really for it. I just think that there are a lot of steps that will need to be taken to ensure that it's implemented in the best possible way. That's pretty usual, right?

You know, members of this place will be familiar: normally we pass the legislation, the legislation surely gives you the umbrella, and it leaves to regulation those sorts of details. Or if there are very fine-grain details, it even leaves it to policy. But I think that because we're talking about schools and because we're talking about school

boards, there's an open question of: do we have one policy for the province, or do we have policies for different school boards? There are pros and cons, right?

You know, I think this is likely to be most important in more sort of rural and remote locations. They're farther from a hospital, so this becomes all that more likely to save a life. But, potentially, those are smaller schools, so the cost of maintaining the program per capita becomes relatively higher. I think that the cost is something that's worth investing in. I think my fear would be that if we're talking about the cost in terms of, like, parents having to fund raise for it or something, you'd wind up with a situation where your access to a potentially life-saving procedure is based on the ability of your local school to fund raise. That's a big concern. We see this with playgrounds all the time. That's why we took the step of saying that playgrounds will be included with schools, because schools are told: well, you'll fund raise for your playground. Well, in Calgary, a scenario that I can think of, there are some schools that are in a much stronger position to be able to fund raise for a playground for their students because the parents in the area are very affluent, so they have money to give to that sort of fundraising effort.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act. Like my colleague, I absolutely do support this legislation, but I do have a few questions and comments. Obviously, I wholeheartedly support any kind of life-saving pharmacare initiatives. I think our record has been pretty good on that. We have supported that. But I do have a few questions, and hopefully the member or somebody will be able to answer some of them.

Bill 201 requires that every school board, including private, charter, and boards of the School Act or Northland school division, establish and maintain an anaphylaxis policy, and then it goes on to say, you know, all of the things that each of the school boards must do. I guess my question sort of backs up a little bit and looks at the larger picture. Absolutely, there are far too many people, young people in particular, vulnerable people in school that do present with absolutely life-threatening allergies, and lack of access to appropriate medication or intervention can definitely mean the end of their lives. However, I think that is sort of one piece of a larger problem.

I'll give you a little bit of an example. I know that likely a lot of members in this House are not super fans of David Suzuki, who is with *The Nature of Things*, for a variety of reasons, but I actually am a fan and became a fan in October 2015, actually. There was a piece that aired called *The Allergy Fix*, and what that looked at was severe allergies.

My niece – her name is Elizabeth Waggoner – at the time was in, I think, the third grade, and she has life-threatening allergies. I'll give you an example of how life threatening. She had dishes that were assigned to her just so that they were clean because she couldn't have any residue, even milk residue, on those dishes or it could threaten her life. One morning I guess somebody didn't clean her dish properly, or maybe something spilled onto the bowl. She went to have breakfast, and there was enough leftover residue on that bowl that it caused a serious reaction. She was given the epinephrine. That didn't really help. Of course, the protocol is to always call 911 immediately, so she was transported to hospital, and this, sadly, had not been the first time that that happened. That's just an example of how severe her allergies are.

When she went to school, my sister actually became a full-time, stay-at-home/lunch lady mom, and part of the reason was that there wasn't enough staffing and there wasn't enough support for her to spend free time at school and be supervised to the extent that she needed supervision. She needed to be sure that she wasn't exposed to any milk products or things like that because even some touching her, in some cases, was enough to cause a problem.

So going back to David Suzuki and *The Nature of Things*, he actually did a piece called The Allergy Fix and shared some stats that currently, at the time – and this was in October 2015 – there were 2.5 million Canadians with significant, serious food allergies. Obviously, peanuts and milk are some of the allergies that we're very familiar with. He talked a lot about the germ theory, so, you know, obviously looking at how there's something serious going on with our immune systems, and oddly enough he looked at a lot of the kids that grew up on dairy farms, for example. They had stronger immune systems in this area because potentially they were exposed to more germs or bacteria.

4:00

That was the premise of this study that my niece was involved in at the time. What they did over many years was to try to introduce this product to her at just minuscule rates, and it was always done in the doctor's office because, again, she has a life-threatening allergy. What they did is that they started – I can't even remember what the fraction was, but let's say that it was one-twentieth – with a drop diluted, put into water. She would drink and ingest it and then wait. They would always give her medication before, you know, just in case, and then be ready with epinephrine in case things got worse.

They did this over many, many years. I think she probably went once a week to get used to this, just to introduce this, and it was successful. She's in high school now, actually. She still has a severe allergy, but if it touches her or if there's residue on her dishes or, let's say, in something she's eating – someone has cut something with a knife that touched something – it's not life threatening to her. This was introduced years ago, you know, and I think it has been somewhat successful.

The reason I bring this up is that her severe allergy – certainly, she went everywhere with an EpiPen, which is, you know, the name that we use. I've had them at my place. I know that she always had them everywhere. What this was is that it was more than just this intervention. It required a lot of support in her school life and in her life after school.

Let's say that she wanted to play soccer with her sister. She could not play soccer without the coaches having some training, without her mom or dad being there, without her teammates knowing what to recognize. It required a whole community to support a really severe allergy like she has. My sister really did have to come at lunch. They kind of made fun of her. She was the lunch lady, and all of the kids, of course, loved her – she's really awesome – but what that required was for her to just change gears to be there, to be with her daughter every single lunch hour, every single recess so that she knew that her daughter with life-threatening allergies was safe.

While I completely support whatever funds are required or whatever policy is required to make this life-saving medication available to all students, I think that you have to step back and look at the larger picture so that when we do have students with life-threatening allergies, seriously life-threatening allergies, not just accidentally maybe eating a peanut or smelling a peanut – I mean, I'm talking about, like, a fraction of milk in water with residue on a dish that's been washed that has the potential to end your life if you don't have access to help.

The reason, again, that I'm sharing this example and the story about my niece is that I think it is really important to look at the larger picture. It is one thing for a school board to say: "Okay. Everybody will have one EpiPen. You'll replace it every year. You'll have a backup EpiPen." You know, like my colleague brought up, when you go on a field trip, you've got to make sure that you take the EpiPen among the other things that you take. Maybe it's in a first-aid kit. I don't know. But these are all things that are important.

The other thing – as I was reading some of the notes about the school boards, it made me think of another issue, and this goes, again, to the larger picture – is that one of the school boards that was mentioned is the Northland school division. This triggered something for me, a good trigger. I remember the Auditor General and being a part of the Public Accounts Committee when we reviewed a report about chronic absenteeism in the Northland school division. Of course, there are, as you can imagine, a number of reasons why chronic absenteeism is a huge problem there, from the inappropriate housing for teachers to inappropriate support for communities and for students to hunger to just the legacy of residential schools and all of those things. It's a really compelling report, believe it or not, from the Auditor General.

One of the things it talked about was all of the ways that we can as a province, as a government support our students. The fact that this was mentioned just sort of reminded me that, yes, it's important to have EpiPens, but it's important to look at the larger picture. We do have students that present in our schools, in different school boards, in different areas of the province that do have significant life-threatening illnesses and risks, if you will, to them being able to learn. Allergies are certainly one of them, but there are many. There are many.

I think this is important enough for us to invest this time in this Chamber and the money that will be required by the school boards in terms of training, debriefing with people if they're required to use an EpiPen. I don't know if you've ever used one. It's kind of a big deal, and it's pretty frightening. If you've ever had to give CPR to someone, it's the same thing. It is pretty intense. It is quite frightening, especially if it's a child. So we have resources to invest in training, in debriefing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and to speak to Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act. I want to begin by thanking the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I also want to thank all the members who contributed to the debate today and, in particular, for sharing their own stories, sharing their own life experience, sharing their experiences in schools, sharing their family experiences. That certainly adds to the importance of this piece of legislation.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

Earlier my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was speaking, and he said, I guess, that the principle behind this piece of legislation is how we provide best supports or how we support the most vulnerable among ourselves. Clearly, the preamble to the legislation also states that students with life-threatening allergies should feel safe and supported at school. On this side of the House I think I can say that we believe that our students deserve cutting-edge education facilities and that they deserve a safe and supportive environment, be it this piece of legislation that protects those with allergies, be it those kids who don't have enough wherewithal to



have meals, be it those students who have a different sexual identity and need GSAs.

In every respect I think this side of the House is in favour of supporting students and making sure that students are safe and have the best supports available to them to facilitate learning, to provide them with the best learning experience and opportunity. Certainly, that's the reason that we are speaking in favour of this piece of legislation. We heard from members of this House on how these allergies can be life threatening and how these kinds of supports – having epinephrine, how to inject an EpiPen, which I guess was the word that was used, having those at hand – are critical in saving lives. Certainly, that's a step towards the right direction. However, nothing against the legislation, but I think there are still some questions.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

When the standing orders were changed and, I guess, the process was designed to send private members' bills to committee, one thing we heard was the idea that at the committee stage we would be able to hear from all concerned, we would be able to hear from stakeholders, we would be able to develop a common understanding on different pieces of legislation, and that that process would certainly add to the debate in this House. However, in this case, I do not believe that there was an opportunity for stakeholders, that there was an opportunity for school boards, the Alberta School Boards Association, families, students, teachers, teacher assistants, all those who deal with students on a daily basis and certainly would have meaningful insight to share with us.

4:10

We do know that there are school boards who have policies in place. Maybe not every school board, but there are school boards – the Calgary board of education, the Edmonton public school board – and there were also some guidelines that the Alberta School Boards Association released. I think that would have been an opportunity to look at those different guidelines, to look at those policy documents released by the Alberta School Boards Association and align all that into a more comprehensive policy.

My understanding is that this piece of legislation is based on legislation from Ontario, Sabrina's Law. As the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon mentioned, in 2003 there was an unfortunate incident in a school in Ontario, and a student died as a result. They brought forward a similar piece of legislation, and it's hoped that this piece of legislation will help us save lives and help us avoid similar incidents from happening in our school system.

As I mentioned, some school boards do have those policies, and having the opportunity to hear from the school boards, hearing from families and students, hearing from teachers and assistants: that's something that would have certainly improved our understanding of this issue and would have certainly helped us improve the piece of legislation. Again, as I've said, this has been tried before in Ontario, and our hope is that this will help us avoid similar incidents from happening in the future.

One other thing. There are, I guess, some details that would help us understand this legislation better on how it will be operationalized. As mentioned, like my colleagues, I'm supporting this piece of legislation, I'm in support of these policies, but at the same time we do know that school boards these days – I can speak for the Calgary school board in particular – are projecting shortfalls in their budgets. Like, the Calgary school board alone is projecting \$40 million in their budget, and they are still waiting to hear from this government on whether or not they will be provided funding. We have been pushing the government on that. We still don't have a

clear answer about whether school boards will be getting that funding.

There is certainly a concern there that this piece of legislation will result in additional costs, on how much those costs will be, and on whether this government will be providing those costs or not. Will they be provided separately, or will they be included in per-student funding, or will schools be expected to bear those costs? That's certainly something where if the member or anybody from the government side would explain, that would be helpful for the purpose of debate here, for those who have a vested interest in getting this legislation passed, to see how that will be operationalized. Students, parents: all of them would be happy to, I guess, hear about that as well.

Also, I think it prescribes what policies must include, which is that it also prescribes that school boards should have policies with some strategies to reduce the risk of exposure to anaphylactic agents in the classroom and school common areas. I guess: what strategies? Will it be left to the school boards? Will there be further direction from the government to the school boards? I do know that if there are too many policies, the minister of red tape may not like it because we are adding more red tape on it. This is a good policy. I don't see it as red tape.

Also, there is a communication plan that will need to be shared with the parents. Will it be the same kind of communication plan that will be shared all across Alberta or will it be school boards that will be creating that? Similarly, there is mandatory regular training dealing with these allergies. How will that training be operationalized, and what kind of support will school boards be getting?

At the same time, we do know that it's a medical condition, and I think there is always room for more collaboration, that school boards, teachers, parents can work with the health regions and health authorities to make sure that . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to start by thanking the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for her work on this bill. You know, as others have spoken in this House, I'm a former teacher and school administrator as well, so this is an important issue to me and to many of us who've worked in the education system. I appreciate how many members here have shared their own personal stories with allergies, food allergies, and so on.

We know that according to Food Allergy Canada, about 2.6 million Canadians, including half a million children, have food allergies. They've gone on the record saying that – you know what? – actually legislation is probably the best route to protect children because it sends an important signal to school leaders, to the entire school community, that they need to take that issue seriously and that staff need to be prepared and that all in the school environment need to have a strong understanding of what the consequences can be if we don't take such issues seriously. Of course, we saw this with Sabrina's Law in Ontario, and we know that since Sabrina's Law has been enacted, there haven't been any food allergy deaths reported in Ontario schools. I appreciate that there's a lot of concrete evidence that we can draw upon in approaching our response to this bill.

We know, as well, as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View talked about, that there needs to be a strong understanding at the school level of how this is going to be enacted. For instance, the clear location of the EpiPens, of the management packages: again, everyone needs to know exactly how we are going to approach this.

I was reading one article. It's Dr. Harold Kim, who's the – I don't want to get his title wrong – president of the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. He said that you need to ensure that there's an obvious unlocked location for these, just like an AED. I think that's one thing we just need to really impress upon folks, that consistent understanding needs to be there.

But what I want to speak mostly about is the consultative piece and the importance of taking a very co-operative approach. As other members have said, on both sides, you know, I appreciate the consultation, that there has been some that has taken place, but I do wonder just the extent to which consultation has been undertaken. Again, I know the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon talked about that there was some consultation that happened at his school division and, again, he's got that school of experience. I appreciate that. As the Member for Edmonton-City Centre talked about, consultation is critical. We'd hoped that this government would be consistent in the consultative approach that they take across the board when it comes to all bills that they are proposing.

I know that two of the boards that fall within the member's riding, parts of it anyway, have policies in place, so I would be curious to just hear what some of the feedback was that came from those boards. For instance, in the case of Elk Island public, in doing a little bit of a review of their policy, they actually have a pretty comprehensive policy in place that's available on their website. It gives a lot of background on ensuring the safety and well-being of all students and staff, the procedures for the safe administration of medication, personal care, severe, life-threatening medical situations, and they give a clear definition of allergies, of anaphylaxis, of what medication means, about what self-administering means, about significant health concerns.

It goes on to talk about the specific procedures. For instance, in this case of Elk Island public

the Division expects principals, central service administrators, and Student Transportation staff . . . to implement site procedures for the administration of medication, delivery of personal care, and for dealing with significant health concerns.

4:20

As has been mentioned already in this Chamber, I do wonder if we're already duplicating a lot of processes that have been in place. I will admit to not having done an entire survey of all school board policies, but I did try to dig into a few, including the school division at which I taught, Battle River, and I saw that in a lot of those school divisions, again, there are quite comprehensive policies. It's actually quite, I guess, reassuring to see how much work and thought has been put into these local policies. I was quite pleased to see that. In many cases, as well, you could see that the policies had been updated quite recently, which is, again, a very promising sign. You're not having any sort of stale policies in place. I gave one example there, of Elk Island specifically. Again, they've got a very comprehensive policy, but they're not alone in that.

Now, I do want to ask, though – you know, we've got some feedback from the boards. I know that the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville said that she'd also heard from a few other significant education stakeholders, the ATA being one. One of the things that the member said was that the ATA are supportive, but I want to just dig a little bit more into that. The Alberta Teachers' Association is generally supportive of Bill 201, their spokesperson, Jonathan Teghtmeyer, said last week, but they would like to see allergy response plans kept as part of one central school emergency plan rather than as individual records. He goes on to note that school boards should bear the legal responsibility for those plans rather than individual principals. The bill as written means

that each principal must develop an individual plan. It reads as follows:

every principal or designate [must]

- (i) develop an individual plan for each student who has an anaphylactic allergy,
- (ii) ensure that, upon enrollment, parents and students are asked to supply information on life-threatening allergies, if any, and
- (iii) maintain a file for each anaphylactic student including any current treatments, copies of any prescriptions, any instructions from health professionals and a current emergency contact list.

Just at first blush, I mean, this doesn't seem overly burdensome, and in a lot of cases I know that this would already be happening at the school level, but I do have to ask, and to the spokesperson for the Alberta Teachers' Association's point, if perhaps elevating that to the board level would be a better approach. I think about the schools where I taught. Again, these were kindergarten to grade 12 schools. You know, they were fairly small. As a vice-principal at one K to 12 school, Forestburg school, it would not have been a huge onus on me to take that on. However, if I were teaching here in Edmonton at one of our large, urban high schools that has, you know, 2,000 to 2,500 students, that is a lot to ask of a site-based administrator, to have to keep track of individual plans for each of those students in detail, as outlined in this bill.

Again, something to think about. We've got incredible school administrators. We've got incredible teachers across this province. I'm not saying that they couldn't do it and they wouldn't do it, but just let's think about elevating that to the board level so that it takes a little bit of the burden off those administrators.

Obviously, you know, as an administrator you want to know. You want to have a really firm grasp. I would want to know exactly which students in my school from kindergarten to grade 12 are dealing with any sort of severe food allergies, any other medical conditions. I would want to know so that when I see those little ones walking in the hallway, I'd be able to say, you know: so-and-so has an anaphylactic allergy; so-and-so has a whatever allergy. It's really important to have that understanding.

Again, I just want to clarify that I'm not saying that they wouldn't do that. It's just thinking about having it at the board level. I know the member also talked about just the consistency, right? Having it at the board level, as well, would ensure better consistency in how those plans are executed at each school, and there can also be conversations at the board level to just ensure that it is being enacted in a consistent way.

Again, just as other members have said, I want to be quite clear that I'm quite supportive of this and I'm quite appreciative of the work that the member did in proposing this bill, but when we do think about the consultative process and moving forward, if we could please consider a consistent approach to consultation and not just picking and choosing depending on the nature of the bill.

The other thing I just wanted to touch on briefly before I finish – and I know a few other folks have spoken to this – again, is just the cost piece. It was, in fact, the Member for Lethbridge-East who in committee talked about the fact that on basic numbers it's about half a million dollars, which he says is a fairly minor cost. I can speak to my experience in a rural board, where every dollar does make a difference. So I would think about asking the government to consider taking on that cost or at least, again, being consistent in how they approach the way in which it's paid for.

I think, on that, I've shared most of my points. Again, I just want to finally reiterate the piece on consultation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, what a great day of debate we're having here today. I know everyone is listening intently

online and in this House, including the third brother from the brothers of this Assembly family, who's joining us in the gallery today.

Are there any other members who would like to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act. I would like to thank the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing this forward and all the members that have shared their stories. Allergies are not uncommon and very scary when you're dealing with something like anaphylaxis.

I just want to say to the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat that I really understood where you were coming from when you talked about what it was like to be a child with an allergy. I'm younger than you, and I was a child that had an allergy, an anaphylactic reaction. What I had when I was a kid was an actual needle syringe. It was embarrassing to carry it around. It wasn't in a nice package, and it wasn't child friendly. I didn't want to talk to my teachers or my dance instructors or coaches or anybody about the fact that I had an allergy that required this really big, scary needle because I was afraid of it as a little girl. The fact that there's just been progress with that is really impressive, that the medical advances have occurred.

I'm also, not surprisingly, a mom to a child that has anaphylactic reactions. My daughter was nine months old when we introduced milk to her for the first time, and she had an anaphylactic reaction. I was terrified. We called 911, and the fire department came. The shock on their faces when they saw that she was nine months old, not nine years old as their file had indicated, caused me even more stress. Immediately they administered epinephrine, and we went straight to the hospital. At that moment I made sure that my child had epinephrine at all times. Her life as a tiny human was educating the grown-ups in her life about what that meant. So we made sure that daycare knew, we made sure that every single adult where she had a sleepover knew, and we went through the instruction process with them.

Initially in school it was a bit of a challenge. Sometimes the school wasn't comfortable with having an epinephrine needle on a child, and they would kind of advocate that maybe it should be stored in the school office. That, as a mom, was absolutely not negotiable. It was on her, she was trained how to do it, and I made sure that as a mom I had one-on-one meetings with all of her teachers and all the grown-ups in her life to make sure that she had access to that. Because we had experienced it and knowing how terrifying that is and how life-needing it is, that was part of our process. As she got older, she was able to engage in the school's policy-making and what that looked like in the schools. Fortunately, as a mom, we had great teachers, principals, educators that were onboard with creating really extensive policy for not just my daughter but for the schools that she attended and all of the kids.

As an advocate for this I'm in full support of it, but I do have some questions, Madam Speaker. I know that the bill talks about individual anaphylaxis plans. Again, it's making sure that the schools have the best policies related to all of their students. Section 5 talks about stocking epinephrine autoinjectors. I have a question about that because it says, "a minimum of one epinephrine auto-injector is maintained." As a child my daughter has gone through two different types of epinephrine injectors simply because of her weight. As a smaller child she used an EpiPen Jr. As she grew, she then switched to the adult version. I would hope that it would be injectable for both categories, the children and the older children that weigh a little bit more.

4:30

I also had some questions about what it means when a school goes on a field trip and they're leaving the school property. If their policy is to have one, does that stay in the office? What about the kids that are travelling outside of the school? We know – we see this here almost every day, Madam Speaker – that we have students come on field trips. They leave the school. Sometimes it's close; they're from Edmonton. Sometimes they come from all over the province, so they're quite a ways from home and quite a ways from their school. Just some clarifying questions about the stocking of it.

Then we've heard members in the House talk about the cost of it. Who is going to pay for that? I would hope that the government would look at covering the cost for that, because we ask so much of our schools, and to put that on them seems to be a bit much. I would imagine that the majority of the schools are onboard with this if not already doing some sort of policy, but when it comes to actually having the epinephrine injectors, I would think that we could ask government to help support them with that.

It's a bit concerning that there wasn't a lot of consultation that happened. Perhaps the schools would have said that if they had been talked to about what their needs were. We can all agree that this is absolutely essential – and I am supporting it, Madam Speaker – but I think that having that input from the schools, from the trustees, from parents and our young people about what would make sense for them would have been helpful and maybe made this a little bit more extensive in the legislation.

The other piece that I would like to mention is that families are paying attention to this, which is incredible. I have a really engaged constituency. I had a family reach out. They didn't have such a wonderful experience. They've indicated that they've been struggling to manage their daughter's life-threatening allergies with the schools and believe that this legislation is absolutely essential and is going to help. I couldn't agree more, Madam Speaker. I think that it would be wonderful if every single school board had clear policy about what to do in the case of a child having an anaphylactic reaction, because we can talk about it, but until you do training and those types of things, it's scary as a grown-up and especially as that young person going through it. Just making sure that there's ongoing training and support for our teachers and support staff that work out of the schools if that ever does occur in the school.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I think, really, that's all I have to say on this. I am supportive of this. I think that – again, a thank you to the member for bringing this forward. It is very much appreciated. I hope that all members in the House will support this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others wishing to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 201? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows rising.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising in the House to actually speak in favour of the bill. I do support this bill. Members in the House have already shared their personal experience in support of this bill. I really wanted to thank you, all those members on both sides of the House as, you know, they stood up and have spoken in favour of this bill.

I, too, come with the first-hand experience of someone in regard to what this bill is trying to address in the House. My son, at the age of 18, a very healthy young fellow, professional soccer player, all of a sudden, four years back developed something called celiac disease. That is the age, as an hon. member in the House already shared the experience, when kids really don't want to talk about it.

Kids don't really want to share what's going on with their bodies and what's going on with their health. They don't really want to talk to their friends, they don't really want to be named for something, and at this age sometimes they don't even really want to take it seriously and mention it to their parents.

You know, we were lucky to have a diagnosis in a timely manner, I would say. It was an experience he was going through. He would probably have one apple, one pear, so he didn't know what was going on with his body and the kind of reaction. On top of this, he would not only spend time in school, but he would end up playing two games but not having eaten anything. Whatever he would eat, he was not able to have proper digestion. So he extensively lost weight, as I said, a healthy six-foot six-inch tall soccer player. We were able to notice that he extensively lost weight. What the heck was going on with his health? He was referred to the University of Alberta hospital and diagnosed with celiac disease. Right now he's on the strictest diet. Thank God he's been taken care of.

Myself, you know, developing allergies from dust mites – I don't know – to other allergies: every single time, something new coming up, I know, changes my habits and my tastes, developing from the lactose-intolerant person. They can really have a huge effect on your life. I really want to thank the hon. member who brought this bill forward. This bill is really going to help Albertan students, children and save their lives in school.

On the allergies, as I already mentioned, you know, someone can be born with allergies, and allergies can be developed at any age. This is something really, really important, to have the program in place so people can be helped if they develop something like this. People could have known allergies, or people could have, like, suddenly something exposed to them, and they never had an experience before this. Having this kind of program in place surely is going to help lives in school and help students, parents and, I would say, help everyone – teachers, staff – keep them all off the hook. They can diligently deliver their responsibilities in school.

One of the aspects that I think most members have already actually elaborated or emphasized in the House in speaking on this bill: I would really like to also stress the consultation part of this bill. Definitely, you know, there is always room for . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but 115 minutes of debate have passed.

Under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to close debate on Bill 201.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bill is a common-sense bill, protecting the lives of our most vulnerable. I think all of us want to be able to look parents in the eye and tell them that we're making Alberta safer for our children. All of us should be committed to this goal, so I thank you all for your support on Bill 201.

With that, I close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a second time]

4:40

#### Bill 202

#### Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you so much. I move second reading of Bill 202.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on Bill 202. It brings me great joy to rise and speak to Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. Some members of this House will recall Bill 216, which I introduced in December of 2017. Unfortunately, that bill did not subsequently get debated before the session ended.

Now, being able to introduce and, hopefully, pass a private member's bill is a rare and incredible opportunity. You know, I was fortunate enough to do this under Bill 205, the pill press bill, which was the first of its kind to deal with the opioid crisis in Canada. So I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to present my bill once again, this time under Bill 202.

I'm grateful for our new Minister of Children's Services, who took the time to listen and understand what I am trying to accomplish with this piece of legislation and offered her support. It is clear to me that she and her office are working very hard to truly have the best interests of Alberta's children at heart. They're willing to put the efforts in to find solutions, not delay tactics but actually concrete action, and that is important to recognize. I also appreciate the recommendation of the standing committee on private bills for this bill to continue making its way through the House.

This bill is not about front-line workers. This bill is about the children of Alberta, full stop, and making it easier and simpler for the public to report child abuse to Children's Services. It is about accountability. This bill amends the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act to reinforce that all adult Albertans are responsible for contacting the authorities if they are aware of a child in need of intervention.

Currently the legislation stipulates that a person is to contact a director to report a child in danger, but it is not at all clear to people who a director is. When I asked the previous minister how to do this, it wasn't meant to embarrass her, but it was to prove a point, especially when she could not answer the question of how to contact a director. Let me read the definition of director in the current legislation.

... a person designated by the Minister as a director for the purposes of this Act and the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act and without limiting the generality of the foregoing includes a person designated as a director in accordance with an agreement under section 122(2) of this Act.

Even having read this definition, I think you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that it is still very confusing to the average person on who a director is or how a person goes about reporting this to a director.

This bill would add that a person can instead report their concerns to a police officer. They can contact either a police officer or a director and be in compliance with the act. Let me be clear. People have always been able to contact the police to report abuse. That hasn't changed. This is about accountability and society saying that one can no longer turn a blind eye to a child in need of intervention.

Under the law Albertans are already obligated to report children who are at risk, in need of intervention, to a director. While this amendment is a fairly simple concept and change, I would argue that this is a very significant amendment that would strengthen the legislation, would give it teeth, provide accountability. With this amendment there is no excuse for turning a blind eye to a child in need. Nobody can say, "I didn't know how to contact a director," when they know or ought to have known that a child was in need of intervention. That excuse can no longer be used. Everybody who observes any form of child abuse can contact a police officer, and it is certainly common to know to contact the police when you are in need of help or you know that somebody else is in need of help. Children in Alberta have died under inhumane circumstances that could have been prevented if an adult who knew or ought to have known the child was in need of intervention had spoken up.

Mr. Speaker, every member of this House who served last term is familiar with the story of little Serenity. Her case led to the establishment of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, which met over the span of a year. Several of my colleagues on both sides of this House participated on this panel in good faith. I do believe that every member in this House wants all children in Alberta to be safe and loved.

For the new members of this House who may not be familiar, Serenity is the subject of an investigation report published by the Child and Youth Advocate in October 2016. The advocate is restricted from publishing the real names of children and had titled the report 4-Year-Old Marie. Former journalist and now Senator Paula Simons dug a little bit deeper into the case and published a harrowing account of Serenity's short life that outraged the public and, I think, outraged every single person in Alberta who was aware of this story. In September 2014 Serenity arrived at a hospital suffering from hypothermia and a suspected head injury, weighing just 18 pounds, the weight of a typical nine-month-old baby. She had multiple bruises all over her body, including strong indications of sexual abuse.

There were more adults residing in that home other than her two legal guardians, and that is the point of this bill. There are other adults who knew or ought to have known that Serenity and her two siblings, who suffered equal amounts of abuse, were being abused, and through an investigation, if they did know, then people like them would be held accountable under this change in this act. Historian Yehuda Bauer forgave me the pronunciation, Mr. Speaker said, quote: thou shalt not be a victim, thou shalt not be a perpetrator, but, above all, thou shalt not be a bystander. Unquote. It fills me with anguish knowing that Serenity might still be here today if someone who knew or ought to have known that she was being abused and in serious danger, if they had actually done something about it before it was too late.

Serenity and her family inspired this bill. I know her mother. I know her mother is watching. I cannot use her name. She has sat in these halls, watched as the opposition said no to this bill at one point.

**Some Hon. Members:** Shame.

**Mr. Ellis:** Shame. Shame is right.

As a tribute to her, as a tribute to Serenity, I hope that this Assembly will take this step to prevent future deaths by sending a clear message to Albertans that if they see a child who needs help, they need to take action and report it to the police or to Children's Services. From my experience, Mr. Speaker, the truth is that there are children, as we speak right here, that are in need of intervention. We cannot delay this change any longer, and if we can save one child, then this piece of legislation is worth it.

There are more examples where people ignored children in dire situations and the worst possible outcome happened: the child died. In 2013 seven-year-old little Ryan from Calgary died after contracting a strep infection that kept him bedridden for 10 days. A friend of the mother testified that he was a child in the state of supreme suffering and that there was no routine at home. Ryan had little access to food. This person said that Ryan and his mom were, quote, living in a different reality. Unquote. They urged the mother to take him to the doctor, but she would not. People that are aware of children like Ryan, who are in danger, must inform Children's Services or a police officer, full stop, Mr. Speaker. It is the law, and as the government we need to reinforce that.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

4:50

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Member for Calgary-West.

I see that the hon. Member for Airdrie-East was in fact on her feet first, but I think in the long-standing tradition of the House of going from the government side to the opposition side, I will see the Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First off, just before I get into Bill 202, I would like to acknowledge Serenity's family and the tragedy of Serenity's death. I think many of us were impacted by the family's story, and we worked on the panel to try to address some of the concerns that are being discussed with that.

I will be supporting Bill 202 with caution. I was a child protection worker for many years before being elected, and it's not a job that people can put into black and white categories around whether or not someone is able to report, whether or not the issues are going to just automatically be resolved within that one call. We know that families have histories of being involved with Children's Services repeatedly through generations, through different struggles. When you're looking at mental health and you're looking at addictions and you're looking at poverty issues and you're looking at a variety of different things that impact families and the reasons why Children's Services becomes involved, it's just not that black and white. So although I appreciate the bill and I appreciate the member and the intention of the bill, just because someone makes a call, it's not necessarily going to prevent these things from happening. I hate to say that, but that is the truth.

Now, in speaking to why people should report and, you know, looking at the consequences of not reporting and different things like that, when I worked for Children's Services, people did call the police. People did call 911. They did call the 780.422.2001 phone number. The police did respond. I went out with police on responses when I worked as part of my crisis work.

The problem that we also have with just reporting and saying to people, "Well, report it to the police" is that the other piece that comes with that is that there were also weeks on end where all of a sudden I would get a report on my desk that said that someone had called the police two weeks ago for an issue that was impacting a child in care or a child that may be in need of supports, and I didn't see the report for two weeks because it wasn't deemed urgent enough. Then I would go out, and I would look at doing the assessment. What happens is that the police officer has to do the report, the report has to then go through their system, then it has to go to Children's Services, it has to go through the Children's Services system, and then it gets put on a desk of a worker. It doesn't mean that if it's urgent like, let's be clear. If there is an urgent call where it is very, very clear that a child is in immediate danger, automatically one of us goes, the police respond, all of those things that happen happen.

People do report. It doesn't mean that if someone picks up the phone and calls that day, someone goes out that day unless there's a very clear urgency attached to it, unless we know that there are dangerous people in the home or if the reporter is able to give a ton of detail about what is actually happening in that situation. There are a variety of different mechanisms in place to screen whether or not it is deemed urgent because, unfortunately, there are a lot of calls that come into Children's Services on a daily basis. It is a very, very, very busy department. So I appreciate the intention of this. I understand it.

The other struggle that we have is that you're right people don't report. People are scared to report. When it's a family member, they're worried that if they report, the family member is going to know it's them, and if you're dealing with criminal activity, gang

members, a different variety of things, people are scared. So, yes, it does limit their willingness to come forward sometimes and report.

To be clear, though, when there are the extreme situations that the member opposite is discussing around the severe neglect that could potentially harm a child to the point of death, there are mechanisms in place within two different systems. Under CYFE, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, there are charges that can be placed. It rarely rarely happens, but you can press charges towards someone for either failure to report or failure to protect. That can happen. That already exists. It already exists under the Criminal Code to be able to charge someone if they have a failure to protect or if they're negligent towards a child. Those mechanisms already do exist as well.

I appreciate what the member is trying to do. I totally do. But to say that those mechanisms don't exist when they do, to say that people have to report only to the director to have any type of action placed on them for being negligent is not necessarily the case. You can always call 911. Anybody can call 911. If you think a child is at risk, please call 911. If you think that there's something going on, you can always call the police. The police can arrive, the police can do an assessment, and they can call the crisis unit or they can call a worker, and a worker can come out and do the assessment. There are mechanisms.

I guess the part that I caution about is when we start getting into financial penalties for people's failure to report. When you live in an apartment building and Children's Services shows up at your neighbour's, it doesn't necessarily mean you knew. So for me the question would be: how do you determine when someone is willingly refusing to report? How do you determine that they were aware of the situation enough to say that they were negligent? If you're looking at those extreme cases, then fair enough, Member. In those extreme cases, absolutely people should be charged and people should be held to account. No child should ever be put in that situation. I didn't work in child protection for 12 years to say that it's okay, but I also understand the complexity of working with families, and I understand the complexity of working with children in care, and I understand the complexity of working in a multisystem where child protection is one cog in a wheel when it comes to the criminal justice system and when it comes to family law and when it comes to a variety of different things. None of these files are ever black and white.

There are always questions, even as workers, about whether or not what we did was in the best interests of the child in the moment that we had to make the decision about whether or not to apprehend or to keep that child at home or to have that child go to another family member. You are living in moments where you are literally, like, sitting in a room or standing in a room trying to make a decision with limited knowledge, having to make an immediate decision about this child and this person's life with very, very limited information. It is extremely difficult to say that people should be punished for not necessarily being what we would like to see as engaged or reporting when they should be reporting. Whether or not they report to the director, it doesn't matter if they report to the director as long as they report to somebody. It could be a police officer. I mean, it could be your friend the social worker. It could be a teacher. It could be a variety of different people. As long as Children's Services is aware of the situation, they will become involved if they deem it to be appropriate for them to be involved.

The struggle with that as well is that there were many times when I was a worker where people would be, like: "I can't believe you didn't open a file on that family. I can't believe you didn't apprehend that child out of that home." It's easy to look at a file and read a piece of paper and say: "Well, this is what it says. Therefore, the workers didn't do their job."

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. However, the time for consideration of this matter has concluded. You have approximately one minute remaining should you wish to continue when this item of business is called at a future date.

## 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

### Springbank Dam and Upstream Flood Mitigation

504. Ms Ganley moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to fully commit to the Springbank dam and upstream flood mitigation plans along the Bow River in order to protect Calgarians, their homes, and their livelihoods and, to ensure construction proceeds without delay, that the government commit to replacing any funding that would be lost if the climate leadership plan is cancelled.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, this was written before the climate leadership plan was cancelled.

Saturday we celebrated Neighbour Day in Calgary, a day when we remember the way the city pulled together after the 2013 floods. While it was great to see the way our city worked together at that time, rebuilding and carrying on, I think we can all agree that it would be much better to never have such an experience again. Unfortunately, we know that such weather events are bound to become more frequent as a result of climate change, and wishful thinking is not a strategy. I therefore bring forward this motion to continue to push the government to ensure that they invest in the necessary flood protection for the city of Calgary.

I'm very happy to see that this little motion has had an impact already. Having notice that the motion was coming forward, the government moved to get out in front of it, announcing on Friday their submission to the federal environmental review process on the Springbank dam. I doubt the timing was a coincidence, and I could not be more pleased. However, I do have some lingering concerns because a commitment to continue a regulatory process and a commitment to fund something are not quite the same thing. This motion calls on the government to commit to and fund the best option for upstream mitigation on both the Bow River and the Elbow River. In the case of the Elbow River, we already know what that is, and in the case of the Bow River we're still deliberating through three different options, which I'll discuss later.

Turning first to the Springbank dry dam, Springbank is the best, fastest, and most effective option for Calgary, and that was before we had spent four years already moving the process forward. Stopping to re-evaluate at this point could significantly jeopardize progress. There are hard questions in politics, Mr. Speaker. This is not one of them. I was very heartened to see the announcement from the government just this Friday that they would submit the answers to the questions arising from the federal environmental review. I believe it was almost 8,000 pages. The process has been a long one. I know that has been very, very frustrating for many Calgary communities, but it's important to see that it is moving forward. I would like to see a firm commitment on funding as well. I do recognize that the option isn't perfect. Unfortunately, in life there is almost never a perfect option, and all that can be done is to pick the best one based on the information available. This is easily the best option. It was four years ago, it is now, and, like I said, it's not a hard question, particularly several years into a lengthy

environmental assessment process, that would have to be started over with any other project.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that really bears saying on this project is that it is not a political toy, and I hope that the government is done using it as such. I hope that this announcement represents a final word on the matter because a lot of people in Calgary were very deeply traumatized by this experience, and they deserve to know that the government is moving forward as quickly as possible.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Above all, we in this place must care about honesty and integrity. During the election, while the now Premier waffled back and forth, the then candidate and now Member for Banff-Kananaskis was more than willing to say whatever it took to win. That member took advantage of the confusion to gain whatever advantage she could, with seemingly no concern for the truth. I hope that it was just one member. I hope that it doesn't represent the views of the government as a whole. I hope that they know how important this is to the people of Calgary and how important it is to get a truthful and honest and firm response. I sincerely hope this represents the final word because these people deserve to have a sense of safety and security in our homes restored. So I'd ask the government to be clear and to commit funding. I do see this as a positive step.

I'd now like to move to upstream mitigation on the Bow. Of course, the previous government, which was us, has done a lot of work in securing a contract with TransAlta to ensure that the current Ghost reservoir could be used as available capacity rather than filled earlier in the season. In addition, the upper plateau separation project, which separated the Sunnyside-Hillhurst water system to prevent backflow in that community due to a flood; the downtown and west Eau Claire flood barriers; the pump station 1 and 2 improvements; and the Inglewood Bridge among many, many others have been incredibly important steps.

I do however think that it is clear that there will be a need for upstream mitigation. The Bow River working group worked very hard to identify three main options: a new Glenbow reservoir, a new Morley reservoir, or expanding storage at the Ghost reservoir. Each of these options has possible options within them.

It's a complex task moving this file forward. There are facts to weigh, different considerations, different interests, but at the end of the day a decision must be made. There are so many incredible things about governing, but it definitely comes with a lot of tough decisions. I sincerely hope that this new government is committed to moving forward with the decisions as soon as possible. It's incredibly important to many Calgarians and to the whole province.

As with all major projects, it will require funding, funding which was previously committed, like the Springbank dry dam, from the climate leadership fund, which at this point no longer exists. I would like to see a commitment from the government on this project as well. Basically, in this instance what I'm asking for is a commitment to make the decisions as soon as possible when they come forward and then to commit the funds and start funding as soon as the regulatory process is complete and construction can begin.

Calgary cannot wait. I emphasize this because for years previous Conservative governments dilly-dallied on schools, hospitals, roads, pretty much every infrastructure build you could imagine. Conservatives tend to be about those short-term gains. They balance the books at the cost of infrastructure maintenance, which ultimately costs us more in the long run. Calgary can't wait. This is a commitment that needs to be made. They can't wonder if they will be protected when oil prices go up.

I suppose, in short, you could call this the no-more-dithering motion. Yes, things take time. Yes, there are regulatory processes. Yes, there are options to evaluate on the Bow. But what I'm asking today is for a strong commitment to action. On the Elbow, it should be easy. All we need is a firm yes to immediate funding as soon as the approval is granted. On the Bow, I'm asking for a commitment to proceed as quickly as possible and, again, to immediate funding. This is one of those circumstances where an infrastructure debt carries far more trouble and far more risk than a financial debt ever could. So I'm asking the government to please just say yes, not just for me but for all the people of Calgary. The decision to invest can be hard. There are always more good ideas than dollars to fund them, but I think that this is an incredibly important project, and I think that we need to move it forward.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, according to Standing Order 29(3)(c) all members have 10 minutes to speak to the motion. I see the hon. Minister of Transportation rising.

5:10

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Motion 504: unfortunately, the NDP's revision-of-history motion. I was interested to hear the comments from the hon. member just now. They were somewhat inconsistent with what has happened in the past.

Let me start off, Madam Speaker, by being perfectly clear. Our government is committed to providing flood mitigation for the city of Calgary and surrounding areas. Without effective flood mitigation, public safety, extensive property damage, and billions of dollars in economic activity are at risk. We are committed to doing what is necessary to complete the regulatory process for the Springbank reservoir and will ensure that there are no delays under our control to the regulatory review.

Now, Madam Speaker, since day one our government has taken action to ensure that the Springbank environmental review moves forward in a timely manner. In fact, one of our very first actions, as promised in the election, was to appoint an independent expert to review the regulatory process to date and to provide advice on the path forward. The expert will conclude his work shortly, and we will make the report public. Additionally, just last Friday Alberta Transportation submitted over 8,000 pages of information to the federal and provincial environmental regulators in response to almost 700 information requests left unanswered by the previous government. The submission marks a significant step in the regulatory process for the Springbank reservoir and demonstrates our commitment to doing what is necessary to complete the regulatory review as soon as possible.

Now, Springbank is a complex infrastructure project undergoing very intense regulatory review. The government is taking time to consult impacted communities and people, including the Tsuut'ina and the Stoney First Nations, Rocky View county, the citizens of Calgary, industry associations, and many other groups, who will continue to be consulted as the project moves forward. Consultation will ensure that our government takes the time to do it properly. Our goal is to make sure we have a full understanding of the concerns people may have and how they can be addressed. We will ensure there are no delays that are under our control to the regulatory review of the Springbank reservoir and are committed to doing what is necessary to complete the regulatory process.

Madam Speaker, the next flood is coming. The fact of the sixth anniversary of the last flood, the devastating floods of 2013, is not lost on me or on our government. We know that every time the river

has risen since, many people became nervous and anxious about it, and we want to alleviate this concern.

What doesn't help alleviate the concern is the partisan games by the opposition, who are trying to circumvent the environmental review by asking the Assembly to issue a decision on a project that is still under review. They're asking the Assembly to fully commit to something that the environmental assessment isn't done on. These are the people that actually claim that they care about environmental issues and try to hold themselves up as the champions of these issues today and asking us to shortcut those very issues. Those are partisan games.

The opposition want to prejudge a project's success or failure before it has completed the environmental review. This is not only irresponsible, but it may slow things down. Regulators don't like it much when you try to sneak things through or rush projects without completing them properly. The past government should know this. The NDP actually had their first EIA, environmental impact assessment, sent back because it wasn't done right, and they had to do a second one, which slowed down the process.

It's disingenuous to the many communities and nations that need to be properly consulted, the motion that's before us on the table today. I'm not sure how the NDP could approach the Tsuut'ina Nation, for example, to hear and understand their concerns on the Springbank project if the NDP had already decided they were going to go full steam ahead. Fortunately, they're not in government, so they don't get to make that decision. Fortunately, I hope we'll be able to talk to the Tsuut'ina Nation, the Stoney Nation, and other interested parties in a spirit of trust based on the fact that we are not prejudging an environmental assessment program that they care very much about and saying that we're going to go ahead without actually completing that process, as this motion would suggest we would do. It's clear to me that the NDP's concern for the city of Calgary, the surrounding communities, and the indigenous people is lip service, based on the motion here today. [interjection]

Oh, I see that the former Finance minister can't quite be quiet and listen to this, but let me remind the opposition of how they handled some things. Bill 6 was shoved through this Assembly by the previous government with little consultation of farmers and those impacted, and when people tried to voice their concerns, the NDP insisted that they knew best. Why? Simply because people disagreed with the NDP government. The NDP always feels like they know best.

Our government does not think that. We actually think that we need to engage with Albertans and find out what matters to them. I also remember the NDP carbon tax, once again, shoved through this Assembly by the previous government with little consultation of Albertans. It wasn't in their platform, it wasn't something they campaigned on, but the NDP determined that it needed to be done: "So why listen to anybody? Let's just make it happen."

In contrast, Madam Speaker, our mandate has been clear from the beginning. I challenge any member to examine the provenances of this government. Go back and take a look at how many times the Premier described our platform and what his government said they would do in the first 100 days. Now, shockingly, at least for the opposition, we're doing what we campaigned on and what Albertans elected us to do. In stark contrast to the previous government, the main bills before this Assembly were in our platform, vetted by Albertans, and were endorsed by over a million voters on April 16.

Because we believe in following the proper process and ensuring that people affected by our decisions are consulted and heard, it would be irresponsible, as this motion suggests, to commit to this project before the review process is complete, before the consultation process is complete, and before the project has

received the environmental authority from both the provincial and federal regulators. Again, the NDP claim to be champions of the environment, but before this House today they come with a motion to actually circumvent and go around the environmental approval process. Shameful.

The review process took a significant step forward last Friday when we submitted answers to those 700 responses. There are still, we believe, potentially many months ahead before the review process is complete. The review process could be closer to completion if the previous government did not drag their feet for the best part of four years. The NDP claimed to be champions of the Springbank reservoir in the 2019 election campaign. That was after they criticized the government on Springbank in the past, and their speeches today demonstrate a commitment to the project and flood mitigation in general. It's funny, though, the opposition is taking that position now, but it's exactly the opposite position they took in 2015, where they campaigned against this particular project.

This is what they said at that time: "Alberta's NDP would not support this project. Some of the core complaints about the project ring true for us, and it does not provide an adequate degree of protection for many of the communities in the surrounding areas." They won government and then the world looked a little bit different and they changed their minds. They campaigned against it and then changed their minds. You know what? I'm going to give them credit for one thing: when people get new information, at least it is okay sometimes to change their minds. However, they're a little bit disingenuous when they talk about being consistent and moving forward on this because they moved pretty slow from that point forward. Their attempt this afternoon, by the mover of the motion, to erase the history leaves us with the simple fact that our government is once again left to clean up the mess of the NDP, because it is a mess.

Again, I will remind the Assembly that the decision to proceed with flood mitigation was made in early 2015. The NDP had four full years of control over the government. It didn't make it happen. In contrast, three days after taking office our government hired an independent expert to review the regulatory process and provide input on a path forward to ensure the project moved ahead to a decision without any delay that we could avoid. On Friday, less than two months after taking office, we gave the answers to the 700 questions, the 8,000 pages. It's a little rich for the opposition to criticize the government for failing to take action. Our government is on track to do more for this project and for flood mitigation in southern Alberta in four months than the NDP got done in four years.

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

**Ms Issik:** Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise and speak to this motion today. I want to thank the hon. member for putting it forward because it gives me a chance to touch on a key theme: delay. Looking at this motion, "delay" is the word that jumps out at me the most. Those across the aisle would like to tack it onto us like we're playing pin the tail on the donkey, but I think it's more fitting to describe the previous government because it fits their four years oh so well.

5:20

Now, since we're talking about Springbank, let me set the tone by going back to 2013. Calgary experienced 248 millimetres of rain. The surrounding area reported almost 400 millimetres. With the massive ice packs that year we had a disaster of epic proportions, a 1-in-100-year event that, I'm sure, most Calgarians and Albertans



won't forget for a thousand years. Over 100,000 Calgarians were forced from their homes, the largest evacuation across Canada in more than 60 years. It wasn't just Calgarians; it was Albertans in smaller towns as well, over \$6 billion in total damages, the most costly disaster in Canadian history until Fort McMurray in 2016, and, sadly, five people dead. Even one death hits deep for all of us, and I'll say that my continued prayers are with those families of those five people and for all Albertans that were impacted.

Material loss matters, but some of the deepest scars come from the traumas that are unseen: losing a family member, losing property, those pictures of your grandparents, your child's first tooth. Experiencing such damaging devastation leaves lasting effects. For these reasons we will not delay, Madam Speaker, and we haven't. So I think it's rich for those on the other side to use that language when their government did delay. They had four years to do something about the billions of dollars lost by Albertans in Calgary and the surrounding area, four years to consult with First Nations groups, four years to engage with stakeholders, four years to help Albertans recover and provide them with peace of mind for the future. Yet they didn't get it done. Delay.

Now they want to sit on the other side of the aisle and delay some more while they filibuster our bills and try to prevent us on this side of the Legislature from bringing the change that over one million Albertans tasked us with. Well, Madam Speaker, our government won't delay on flood mitigation or any other project that protects Albertans.

Let me tell you what we didn't delay on. We didn't delay on hiring an independent expert to review the application for Springbank and provide us with feedback. We did that three days after our mandate, and we are eagerly waiting to share his results and findings with the public. We didn't delay on consulting with stakeholders and First Nations groups. We have met with them numerous times and will meet with them as much as is needed in order to make sure that they are listened to and treated with respect. They were even the first to know about our announcement that came out last Friday.

We didn't delay on answering all the questions from the regulators that previous governments delayed on. The questions that the regulators asked were unprecedented in number and scope, but we were happy to answer them and are happy to answer any more questions they may come at us with. I will also add, Madam Speaker, that we will not delay in working with the regulators and the regulations to get the flood mitigation that Albertans need and deserve.

What I find confusing is that members across the aisle want to act like they're so supportive of this project when they actually opposed it in 2015. During that year's election the city of Calgary conducted a survey of the provincial parties and their policies, and here's what the NDP said when asked about the Springbank dam:

Alberta's NDP would not support this project. Some of the core complaints about the project ring true for us, and it does not provide an adequate degree of protection for many of the communities in the surrounding areas. If a project this size is to be undertaken, it needs to ensure that as many communities as possible are protected.

Where did these feelings go? Perhaps we'll never know, but as you can see, the NDP are no friend of this project, just like they were never friends to pipelines, but I'll touch on that in a bit.

The previous government didn't delay on everything, though, to be fair. They didn't delay on bringing in the carbon tax even though they didn't promise it in 2015. They didn't delay on costing the province over 100,000 jobs, which I think is something they should apologize for. They didn't delay in driving billions of dollars of

investment away from the province, and they did not delay on making promises they couldn't deliver on.

Where is the social licence that the climate leadership plan was supposed to get us? Where are the pipelines they promised to build? If so much money was going to come from the climate leadership plan, then why are we in the financial mess that we are in now? Where are all the green jobs that the previous government said we would get? And let's not get into how they botched the relationship with the federal government and British Columbia.

The reality, Madam Speaker, is that the NDP have misled Albertans by falsely claiming that the carbon tax under their failed plan would give Albertans the world and more. But it didn't help them follow through with anything they set out to do, and it certainly can't pay for the infrastructure they think it will. But I have good news for Alberta. The infrastructure that Albertans need and deserve will be built. I can assure you of that. The idea that the carbon tax and the climate leadership plan offered anything but economic pain with no environmental gain is laughable. If that were remotely true, we would not have been headed to \$100 billion in debt under the previous government.

To build the infrastructure, we have to be responsible and we must follow the processes and the regulations. I know my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would like it if the government got to dictate everything with no input from anyone else, but Albertans didn't agree with that ideological approach. We have to work with the regulators, we have to work with the First Nations groups, and we have to work with other jurisdictions and all stakeholders involved. This is the way to protect Albertans. This is the way without delay.

The NDP hurt Albertans by dragging their heels on projects like SR 1 while rushing to implement failed plans like the climate leadership plan that raised everyone's taxes. Madam Speaker, we passed Bill 1, we scrapped the carbon tax, like we promised, without delay, and Albertans are better for it. We are building infrastructure and going through the processes without delay, and Albertans will be better for it.

With that, I believe this motion is misguided, misinformed, and attempts to defend the failures of the previous government. I'm not going to defend delay. I'm not going to defend hurting Albertans. I am not going to defend making and breaking promises, but luckily I don't have to because that's not what our government is here for. We are moving quickly to undo the damage of the previous government, and we are getting results for Albertans.

We have already passed Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, which has already led to savings for Alberta. Just look at the pumps. Promise made, promise kept. We have bills 2, 3, and 4, which are all designed to open Alberta for business again, stop the punishment to job creators, and reduce the red tape in our great province. That's what we promised Albertans we would do. It was in our platform, it's what we campaigned on, and it's what Albertans elected us to do. We are grateful for the overwhelming mandate Albertans gave to this government in April this year, and we will deliver on our promises.

In closing, I can say with confidence that our government is committed to working with regulators to provide effective flood mitigation. We are committed to building infrastructure that Albertans deserve, and that is infrastructure that they are going to get regardless of the carbon tax. We are committed to passing legislation that Albertans need to get back to work and to usher in prosperity to the province that was lost in the one-two punch of the 2013 floods and the four years of NDP failures, and we will do it all without delay. We will not commit to giving in to the NDP's misinformation, we will not commit to defending their previous failures as a government, and we will not let them get off that easy.

Albertans demanded something different. They gave us a mandate to right the wrongs of the previous government.

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

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, I guess 650,000 Albertans voting for this side, this opposition, is chopped liver in your mind, but there still are 650,000 Albertans who gave us a mandate to not just roll over.

I'm surprised, Madam Speaker, that a motion put forward by my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View – if, you know, the Member for Calgary-Hays was listening and the Member for Calgary-Glenmore was listening, she talked about the regulatory process. She didn't say: do away with the regulatory process. This motion is all contingent upon regulatory approval going through. It's not shortcutting anything. What it really wants to know is if this government is committed to following through with the Springbank dam, SR 1, and upstream flood mitigation should the regulator say: we're good to go here. That's what this is really about. We're not trying to say that anything should be shortcut.

5:30

I, too, went to Neighbour Day in Calgary, as I'm sure many other members of this House did on the weekend. The 16th of June is in recognition of the significant efforts that Calgarians put in and people outside of Calgary as well in supporting each other through the 2013 flood, which was pretty significant in the area of Cliff Bungalow-Mission, which I represent, Madam Speaker, on the Elbow River. That area, of course, had been flooded in 2005. The flood wasn't as significant in terms of all of the downtown, as it had affected all of downtown in 2013, but it was still significant and caused a great deal of damage.

Madam Speaker, it is necessary that we work as quickly as possible for SR1 for the Elbow River and, of course, the Bow River upstream mitigation. I'm really pleased to see the work that's been done on the Bow River in the communities of Sunnyside, Bowness, and Inglewood and the zoo to better armour and protect people from the flood waters that were damaging and destroying basements, houses, other public installations. We need those things to occur, and we need the government to follow through with the consultations it's undertaking, the government to follow through with the regulatory efforts that they're undertaking. We need to see where money is going to come from for all those things. It is a significant amount of money.

I remember \$400 million, \$500 million being talked about for this kind of improvement along the upstream of the Bow, so we need to see that happen, Madam Speaker. The Calgary centre, of course, was affected significantly. There was, over a week of that centre being shut down, billions of dollars lost, as was talked about by Calgary-Glenmore. Six billion dollars was the insurance impact and other things that happened as a result of that.

Madam Speaker, Calgary has not dithered in its efforts to do as much as they could to protect residents of their community and businesses. In fact, when I was first elected in 1995, the most challenging issue that was put on my plate immediately as the area alderman was to say yea or nay to Inglewood being protected, armouring itself with a raised flood wall along the new street backyards of 17 homes in that community. I can tell you that that divided the community, so I well understand why there are some people who believe that these things aren't needed, and there are some people who believe it's needed.

There were many people who stood up in '95-'96 in the community that I represented and said: "Let's not do this. Let's not raise the

rear yards of Inglewood because rivers flood. It's a natural thing, and we should just sort of understand that with the flood we can try and put temporary barriers in place." But I can tell you that that wasn't good enough for a substantial portion of the population.

Just like in this case, where there are some who believe that we shouldn't do anything – the Member for Banff-Kananaskis believes that nothing should be done, that we should, really, just pray and hope that another disastrous flood doesn't occur, but as the Member for Calgary-Hays said Friday and said again today, you know, we shouldn't think that floods won't happen. It will happen. We have to be prepared. I agree with him on that point. That's about the only point that I do agree with that member on.

This side, when we were government, did not delay and think that it wasn't important to put flood mitigation in place, Madam Speaker. That was always our plan. It was always my plan as a young alderman back in 1996 when there were many, many people who didn't want that to happen. Being protected and being prepared and putting flood walls or other things in place is what we need to do to be responsible. That's what legislators and elected representatives need to be able to stand up and say: I believe this is necessary because it's in the best interests of safety; it's in the best interest of protection of property. This side understood that just as much as the people on the other side.

It wasn't under my direct responsibility as a minister, but certainly making sure the funds were in place was under my responsibility. The Minister of Transportation was the point person for us in that regard, not unlike the current government and the Minister of Transportation being the point person with regard to SR 1, Madam Speaker. We found that the regulatory process that was put in place was not adequate, so we had to reload in that regard, and we did. It took time to get all of that work back together, but we were moving forward. As well, we were moving forward with engagement with property owners and talking with those and negotiating with those individuals who would negotiate with us with regard to buying property for this purpose. There was a significant interest. There was a significant importance placed on this issue. While we, campaigning for government in 2015, didn't know all the where and wherefores of this issue, once we became apprised of it and reviewed the file, we were firmly in support of moving forward with the necessary flood mitigations not only for Calgary but for communities downriver from the Bow River and Calgary.

In the meantime, while we were organizing, working with the regulator, outreaching to property owners who would work with us for the purchase of their properties, we were taking steps to put in place emergency responses for Calgary and to make sure that the things that could be done with proper approvals both from the environment and the federal regulators that were identified by my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View with respect to separations of the upper plateau from the lower parts of the valley in the Sunnyside area and above Sunnyside in Crescentwood took place and were funded. We took initiative to work with city of Calgary around Downtown West and Eau Claire to make sure that those projects would go forward so that there was better mitigation in the downtown part of Calgary.

All that, as well as continuing to work on moving SR 1 forward, was what we were doing, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members. The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased today to speak to Motion 504, referencing, among other things, the Springbank dam, the Bow River, and the climate leadership plan.

I'm going to address the motion in a few parts: first, our position on flood mitigation; second, the NDP's record on flood mitigation; and third, throughout my speech, the climate leadership plan.

Before I do that, I want to acknowledge that the motion references a project that is currently undergoing a critical and comprehensive assessment by two regulatory agencies, the provincial Natural Resources Conservation Board and the federal Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. This process takes several years and has many components. It primarily involves the proponent of the project, in this case Alberta Transportation, and the regulatory agencies going back and forth to review the viability of the project and its impacts on the environment. At the end of the review process the agencies will issue a recommendation, the NRCB to the provincial government and the CEAA to federal environment minister.

5:40

I am mentioning all of this information on process because I want to note that this motion attempts to go around the environmental process. The NDP want to ignore the work of the environmental review process and have the Assembly issue a directive that a project currently under review be committed to. That's not only a reckless approach to a massive infrastructure project, but it's a dangerous approach to take on impacted communities for consultation. You can't have a meaningful dialogue with something that you have already predetermined. You just can't do that, but that's typical of the NDP approach. When they brought forward far-reaching farm legislation, they neglected to properly consult stakeholders as radical as farmers. Even when protesters hounded the Legislature demanding simply that they be heard, the NDP refused to listen. This approach continued for the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, which, among other things, brought the carbon tax to Alberta. The NDP's 2015 campaign platform mentioned the carbon tax exactly zero times. They once again refused to take the time to properly consult Albertans.

The NDP attempted to sell the carbon tax on the argument that it would buy our province social licence to build a pipeline. You can tell by all the excellent new pipelines we have that that worked out quite well. Northern Gateway, approved by the Harper government, was immediately axed by the Trudeau Liberals. The Keystone XL pipeline was vetoed by the Obama White House. The Energy East pipeline was abandoned because of regulatory uncertainty caused by several levels of government in Canada. Now Albertans' last hope, the Trans Mountain pipeline, hangs by a thread. It became so precarious and uncertain that the federal government had to buy the pipeline in order to bring some sense of stability, not the carbon tax. No, the carbon tax brought economic pain to Alberta families. The opposition leader herself admitted that she had no idea what the environmental gain would be when asked just a few short months ago.

It's been clear from the beginning that the climate leadership plan was not really a plan and didn't include much in the way of leadership. Instead, Albertans got taxed for heating their homes and driving their cars. In our cold northern climate with long, dark winters Albertans were punished by the NDP simply for trying to live. The climate leadership plan was always a bad idea and is still a bad idea today, which is too bad because climate change is an important issue, and we need to consider all of our options. Our platform, in contrast to the NDP, made it clear that we're committed to creating programs that achieve real outcomes through an entrepreneurial approach, not the creation of slush funds. The NDP didn't run on the carbon tax, rammed it through the Assembly without regard for the opinions of Albertans, and refused to listen to anyone who had concerns with their approach. Now they want to

commit to a project before it has completed the environmental assessment process. It's an irresponsible approach to the environmental review but, again, not surprising that the NDP would like to skip through the proper process.

On we go to flood mitigation. Our government's position is clear. We are committed to providing flood mitigation for Calgary and the surrounding areas. We are committed to getting the Springbank reservoir project through the regulatory process to a decision. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View has talked about honesty in government, claiming that our government is conflicted. It's true that there's a healthy debate in our caucus on the issues, among many. Our caucus believes in representing our constituents to the best of our knowledge. That's called doing our job and a big reason why I ran underneath the UCP banner in the last election. The previous government may have believed in centralization and, indeed, they were routinely criticized for doing so, but ours believes that members must represent their constituents' beliefs first.

Additionally, in making such an argument about our caucus, the members opposite seem to forget that they not only had conflicting opinions about the Springbank and flood mitigation in Calgary, but they actively campaigned against the project in 2015. In response to a question from the city of Calgary, "The Springbank off-stream diversion and storage site . . . do you favour?" the NDP answered, "Alberta's NDP would not support this project." So it's ironic now to hear their resolute support for the Springbank considering their similar resolute opposition.

Now, it's healthy in a democracy to be open to changing your mind. That's important. When you get new information, you re-evaluate what you know. That's fair.

I'm not criticizing the NDP for supporting the project they campaigned against. What I do wish the members opposite would acknowledge is that their dithering led to four years of delay and inaction on flood mitigation, leaving our communities at risk. Four years later we are no further forward, only four years further behind.

What's the cost of that inaction? Let's go back to 2013 and what the city of Calgary experienced: a 1-in-100-year flood event that Calgary is still recovering from; over 100,000 Albertans forced from their homes, the largest evacuation in Canada in over 60 years; the costliest natural disaster at the time, over \$6 billion in total damages; sadly, five people lost their lives. These are the consequences. Every spring when the water rises, Calgarians like myself sit on edge, hoping and praying that we won't flood again. We've been lucky for six years, but next year or the year after we might not be so lucky.

It's important to do this project right to make sure that those who are impacted by this complex infrastructure project are properly consulted and feel heard. That is our government's goal, and we will ensure that we properly oversee this project. What does not help to move this project forward is motions, like this one today, which seek to prejudice the outcome of a review process before the review is completed.

What does help is a government that takes action. Let me remind this Assembly that our government has been committed to flood mitigation since day one, and I'm pretty proud of our minister for how quickly he got on top of this. Shortly after being sworn in, our government hired an independent expert to examine the review process to date and provide input on the process moving forward. Just last week the Minister of Transportation announced that his department had taken a significant step forward toward completing the regulatory process for the Springbank reservoir by submitting over 8,000 pages of information to the provincial and federal environmental regulators. These are concrete steps that we have done in the last six weeks. It's more than the NDP did in the last four years.

You don't hear the opposition talk much about their record on this file; it's because they have no record to defend. We campaigned on doing projects properly, engaging Albertans, and ensuring that we're taking a smart approach moving forward. That's what we promised Albertans we would do. It was in our platform. It's what Albertans elected us to do. We are grateful for the overwhelming mandate Albertans gave to this government in April this year, and we will deliver on our promises. I can say that the Minister of Transportation and our government are committed to providing effective flood mitigation for the city of Calgary and surrounding areas. We will continue to consult with affected Albertans to understand their concerns and how they can be addressed. We will take action where the NDP did not. We will not rush through a review, however, and ignore necessary processes simply because the opposition suddenly thinks it's expedient to do so.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, would the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View like to close debate?

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased for the opportunity to close debate on this matter, and I will make my own comments, unlike the previous speaker, who read identical notes to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore's.

The Minister of Transportation certainly likes to take shots about what our government did or didn't do. They have no basis in fact, but I don't think that that's the important thing to get into at this moment. What's important is that we move forward to protect the people of Calgary. What's important is getting it done.

The question on Springbank was quite clear. It was: will you commit funding once it makes it through the regulatory process? That's a pretty clear question, I think, and that's all we're asking the government to commit to. I know it's possible to do because our government did it. I think that it's rather rich for them to stand up and say: oh, well, this circumvents the regulatory process. No, of course, it doesn't. The regulatory process is associated with all sorts of things that have committed funding. When we commit to build a school, there are still, sometimes, environmental assessments that need to be done. There are geological assessments that need to be done. When you commit to build a road in certain places, there are environmental assessments that need to be done. You can make the commitment without circumventing the process. What we're saying here is: they should fully commit to following through on the process and to funding the dam.

5:50

What I think frustrates me most is that in the rather extensive and repetitive comments we heard, there was no mention of flood mitigation on the Bow. That is a real frustration for me because we were clear in it that we wanted, you know, to go through, to assess the options, to do the necessary work, but what we were looking for was a commitment to continue moving that forward. There are a lot of people that live along the Bow River. There are people in downtown, there are people in Eau Claire, there are people in west downtown, in Inglewood and in Sunnyside, Hillhurst in my riding, and many other people as well. I think that the fact that it didn't even bear mentioning is very, very troubling to me.

You know, during the campaign we heard commitments going back and forth, and that's fine. You get into government, sometimes you see the facts, and you make a different decision. I think that's how good governance works, and I'm fine with that. But what I'm

asking is – now that they've had the opportunity to see the facts, to see a commitment, and I'm not hearing a commitment, and that's really, really troubling to me. The government likes to talk about their huge mandate, a little like a 14-year-old boy, but I think, Madam Speaker, that at the end of the day, what's important is not how we got here but what we do now that we're here. I think that ultimately what will reflect us and what will reflect on us is what we accomplish in the time that we're here.

What I'm asking for in this motion is for the government to commit to moving both of these projects forward. I'm really, really troubled that we didn't hear more about flood mitigation on the Bow because I think it's still in process, and I think there are a lot of people who would like to continue to get information about that process. I think that the government owes to Albertans an answer on flood mitigation on the Bow. Are they going to go forward? Are they going to continue to assess the options?

We of all people know that regulatory processes can take an incredibly long time, a frustratingly long time. The most important thing you can do is to continue to communicate back and forth. I've had the opportunity to work with the Calgary River Communities Action Group and a number of other groups on these files, and we had ongoing conversations on the Springbank dam and where we were in the regulatory process and what was going on, likewise with flood mitigation on the Bow. What I would like to see is that continued conversation back and forth in order to ensure that we can make progress on this.

They're welcome to take shots at me, Madam Speaker. I'm just hopeful that they will commit to Calgarians. They don't need to commit to it for my sake. What I'm asking for is a commitment for the sake of not just my residents but the residents throughout Calgary.

With that, I will close debate. Thank you very much.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 504 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:53 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Ceci	Irwin	Sabir
Feehan	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley	Renaud	Sweet
Goehring		

Against the motion:

Allard	Luan	Savage
Amery	Madu	Sawhney
Dreeshen	McIver	Schulz
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Fir	Nixon, Jeremy	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Rosin	Walker
Issik	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely	Rutherford	Yao

Totals:	For 10	Against 30
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 504 lost]

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:10 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, June 17, 2019

Day 14

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, June 17, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Transmittal of Estimates

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I have received a certain message from Her Honour the Administrator, which I now transmit to you. This message will stand in the place of the messages tabled on June 11, 2019.

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

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Administrator transmits interim supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province and certain sums required for the lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I now wish to table the 2019-2020 interim supply estimates. These interim supply estimates will provide spending authority to the Legislative Assembly and the government for the period of April 1, 2019, to November 30, 2019. This interim funding authority will ensure continuity in the business of the province while our government assesses the province's finances before introducing a budget in the fall of 2019. When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$107 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$27.8 billion in expense funding, \$2.4 billion in capital investment funding, \$786 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$943 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund.

### Government Motions

19. Mr. Toews moved:

Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Administrator, the 2019-20 interim supply estimates, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this government motion is debatable according to Standing Order 18(1)(i). Are there any wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Finance to close debate.

**Mr. Toews:** I waive, sir.

[Government Motion 19 carried]

20. Mr. Toews moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2019-20 interim supply estimates for three hours on Tuesday, June 18, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion according to Standing Order 61(2).

[Government Motion 20 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 10

### Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019

**Mr. Toews:** I move second reading of Bill 10.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is focused on amendments to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act. The changes are largely technical and bring our legislation in line with how the Canada Revenue Agency is already administering Alberta's tax system. We need to do this because the federal government made legislative changes last year that affected how some of Alberta's personal tax credits are calculated. Our legislation needs to reflect these federal changes.

The previous NDP government failed to bring forward the legislative changes required to support the proper administration of Alberta's personal income taxes. However, they did ask Canada Revenue Agency to administer the changes when people filed their 2018 tax returns, with the promise that they would make the proper legislative changes or updates at the next available opportunity. Since that opportunity never presented itself for the previous government, I rise to bring forward these changes so Alberta's tax system can continue to function efficiently. If we don't implement these amendments to the act, Canada Revenue Agency's ability to administer the tax system on our behalf could be jeopardized. If that were to happen, it would increase confusion for taxpayers and raise taxes on the dividend income received by some small-business owners.

Having said that, I will now go over these three important amendments. First, we will ensure that a taxpayer's entire income is included in the calculation of certain credits. Second, we will ensure that certain benefits for Canadian Forces' members and veterans are eligible for a pension credit. This may mean some veterans will get a higher pension income credit. It also guarantees alignment with what is considered pension income when calculating Alberta income tax. Lastly, the amendments adjust the provincial dividend tax credit rate so that federal tax changes do not have a negative impact on Alberta taxpayers. Without this change, some small-business owners would face a slight tax increase on their dividend income.

Mr. Speaker, as I've stated, these amendments will properly maintain Alberta's tax system and are needed to support Canada Revenue Agency's administration of Alberta's 2018 tax system, taxes that have already been filed by the majority of Albertans. Their passage ensures that taxpayers are treated consistently compared to the previous year and protects taxpayers from any potential tax reassessments that could result from the misalignment of provincial and federal systems.

I now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverley-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [some applause] I will thank my caucus colleagues now for their warm round of applause although what I'm about to share is probably not as riveting as they might hope.

I do want to start off by just clarifying for the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance that – I always find it interesting when the government, at every opportunity, says: this is something the NDP said they were going to do and didn't. Well, let's look at why it wasn't done until this moment: because we couldn't. I appreciate the fact that the government is bringing this

in. You know, I can assure the Minister of Finance that had we formed government in the 2019 election, we would have brought this forward, but we accept the fact that the minister and this government are bringing it in, recognizing again that whenever there are federal changes, the province obviously needs to make amendments to ensure that we're in sync with the federal tax regulations and legislation.

7:40

I appreciate what these small changes do, again, especially for our Canadian Armed Forces. I mean, I think every member in this House recognizes the sacrifice that the men and women who serve our country make each and every day for all of us so that we may stand in this Legislature and debate. I also appreciate the fact that there's an amendment here for the small-business rate, which will impact our small businesses, so it's important that this is done speedily or expeditiously.

As my colleague the Member for Edmonton-North West said, you know, had we formed government, we might have brought this in as bill 3 or 4, so it's a little frustrating that the government had to wait until Bill 10 to bring this in. But we do support these changes and recognize that this is more of an administrative change. But I wanted to stand up and clarify on the record, Mr. Speaker, that this wasn't done by our government because our government never had the opportunity.

**Ms Hoffman:** Promise made, promise kept.

**Mr. Bilous:** That's right. According to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora: promise made, promise kept.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is rising to add to the debate.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I felt that this was a bill I just really wanted to speak to. I just wanted to say that there are few opportunities in this House where we can be all in consensus and have unanimous support, but I would like to share as well our support for this bill. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview just said, this seems like very straightforward changes. I'm glad that the government members are willing to follow through on something that the NDP government committed to do. We appreciate that very much. It seems like very straightforward changes to align our income tax system with the federal system. I'm sure there will be other opportunities where we will find that if we don't align with the federal regulations, they will impose them upon us. I think we might see that shortly, January 1, I believe. In any event, this seems very straightforward.

I'm glad to rise in support and to see this opportunity for all members of the House to come together unanimously and support what will only make – they may be administrative, but they will have benefits, particularly for our veterans, and that's a very important thing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise in support of this bill.

**The Speaker:** Well, teamwork does make the dream work.

Are there any others wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)? Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any others wishing to speak to Bill 10 at second reading?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to close debate.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and hear pretty unanimous support for this housekeeping bill, that really needs to get accomplished by this Legislature in order to serve Alberta taxpayers well for not only the upcoming year but, in fact, for 2018.

With that, I move to close debate.

**The Speaker:** Well done.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a second time]

## Bill 8

### Education Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Bilous moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that further time is necessary to enable school boards to adjust their policies to comply with the proposed legislation and regulations.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment June 12: Mr. Dang]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on an amendment to Bill 8. Anyone wishing to add to the debate this evening? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Just to clarify, Mr. Speaker, the amendment on Bill 8, correct?

**The Speaker:** Correct.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues for this opportunity to rise in this House and speak to why it's so important that we move forward on this referral amendment that is being proposed before this Assembly.

I have to say that it is with great sadness that we're here considering Bill Hate tonight. I think that my colleagues earlier today did an excellent job of walking through some of the legal history and background. I, too, was there at the time when we were considering this originally. I know that ATA members were brought forward. I know that parents were brought forward. I know that a lot of consultation happened around the province around high school completion rates – that was primarily the focus that I recall at many of the working group sessions that I went to – high school completion rates that were certainly among the lower portion of provinces in the country and not at a stage that I think we wanted to see moving forward. That's why I think the consultation that took place did in such a fulsome way.

I have to say that most of the amendments that were being proposed to the School Act – and then subsequently they came up with an act they called the Education Act – were done, again, with this focus on high school completion. The main thrust of that was around increasing access from 19 to 20 years of age, well, to 21, essentially, as of September 1. It would have meant that many more students would have access to that K to 12 school system in an attempt to support high school completion.

Many of the students who would have benefited from that in particular were students with disabilities and students who had a lot of other pressures outside of the regular K to 12 school day. At the time when I was on the school board and there was consultation in this area, I know that I represented students who attended Braemar school, which we heard about just a couple of weeks ago. Braemar is in the riding of Edmonton-Gold Bar. It's the name of the

neighbourhood. The elementary school used to be there. It's the name that was in Ottewell for that neighbourhood at the time.

The programming that's available there is focused specifically on pregnant and parenting teen moms. It's those moms who, when I met with them and discussed the changes, said: it would make a big difference for me if I felt like I could take an extra year or even two years. Most of the moms are only away from school for one to two weeks after they've given birth and usually bring their babies with them back to school. They said: you know, this is a change, if it was extended to 21, that would help me and my family and put some ease on some of the pressures that I face.

That's not what this bill is actually going to do. This bill is going to keep the age limits as they were, at 19. I understand that there are financial pressures that come with expanding the age of completion by two years and that the decision has been made not to move forward on that, but that, to me, was the main thrust of why the Education Act consultation took place.

I have spoken with many school board chairs, and when I spoke with my former colleague and, I guess, once-again colleague Mary Martin, the chair of Calgary Catholic, the piece in the Education Act that she was most excited about was the work to increase high school completion rates. She talked about how some of the consultation included going to prisons and talking to educators in prisons as well as inmates about what their experiences were in the school system. I've had many friends who've taught at the remand, for example, here in Edmonton, and they said that most of the folks who are there haven't completed high school. What a difference it would make if high school completion opportunities were more available for them in their earlier years, in their younger life.

Again, that was the original intent, I believe, of many of these conversations as well as aligning ages of entry, having more consistency and certainty for families so that it didn't matter, you know, if they lived on one boundary or another or if they chose Catholic or public but that they have greater certainty and consistency around age of entry and age of access. These were given to us in this decade-old consultation as the main reasons why the Education Act was being considered.

7:50

So this title still is here, Education Act, but certainly the focus of what this bill is is very different than what was proposed. I believe my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud talked about a transformative educational opportunity. I think that anywhere, anyplace, any time was one of the taglines that was used. It kind of reminds me of: right care, right place, right time, right provider. Interesting. Anywhere, anyplace, any time education: again, this act doesn't do that. It doesn't, I would say, do much to address high school completion at all.

Good news, Mr. Speaker. Over the last four years, with an NDP government that really focused on trying to make sure that schools had the supports they needed and that youth had an increase to their minimum wage and felt possibly less pressure to have to try to cram in as many hours of work and with a number of other initiatives, high school completion has increased. Is it where we want it to be? I imagine the Education minister would say no, that she wants it to continue to grow, and I do, too. I think it's important for every student to have the opportunity to benefit from an excellent public education, whether that be provided in a public school or otherwise, but with the idea that one of the components of public education is: free from fees. Right? That's what this purpose of considering the age of access is.

Okay. It doesn't do the things that were originally set out in consultation as the main focuses of the bill. Well, then, why do

it? I think that the truth is – and I think we've unpacked it over the last sort of two weeks and will continue to unpack it over the coming days – that this is a backdoor way, some might say, to undo the important work that was done with Bill 24 and other legislation brought forward by our fantastic MLA for Edmonton-North West, the former Minister of Education under the previous government, legislation that was brought forward because students and staff regularly said: we need greater clarity; we need greater certainty.

Some might say, the Education minister might say, and others might say: "Well, we have PIPA. We have FOIP. That's good enough. There's lots of privacy legislation." Actually, PIPA and FOIP have very clear assumptions that parents have a right to information, including section 85 . . .

**Ms Pancholi:** Section 84.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I was one section off.

Section 84 very clearly says that parents are entitled to have information about their children in the school system: their school records, these types of things. It has been argued that therefore parents should have the right to know about any extracurricular club or activity that their children are engaged in. That is exactly how this debate really started, when the Education minister at the time said: we're going to make sure that nobody is outed before they're ready, that students have the ability to be safe and protected and supported in their schools and have an ability to access a support group without having the risk of it putting them in a social situation that they themselves aren't ready for.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, I am of the opinion that no one – no one – should ever be outed before they are in a position where they feel confident in doing so. Sometimes it's hard, because sometimes people say: hey, there are people around you, people close to you who, like, come on, you know are probably gay. I say, you know, that I live my value of not outing anyone before they're ready to make that decision for themselves. I think that it's an important principle, and I think it applies to all, whether you are somebody who has lived for many, many decades or whether you are a youth. I think that those rights to have privacy and dignity should apply to all. Sometimes it's hard. I know that sometimes we feel pressure and that sometimes people feel compelled to try to disclose somebody else's orientation, but I think that that's an important value and principle. I think that people should be allowed to make their own decisions about talking about who and how they love if they ever choose to do so.

It was really clear that some schools said: "You know, I feel a lot of pressure when I'm acting in the role of guardian to disclose. FOIP has clause 84. I should probably disclose this to the parents. I don't feel like I'm in the best position to do that, and I worry that if I do and it does result in harm, I will have to live with that on my conscience."

So we, with the Education minister, entered into discussion with youth, primarily, as well as those who work with them, including teachers and others through the school system and so forth, and it was very clear that they wanted that clarity that they were not to out somebody. Sometimes we say: other duties as assigned. Outing kids would not be assigned. That would not be a duty where any educator would have to be put in a position to make that decision.

Many educators who support GSAs work with youth on how to have those conversations with their families, how to put themselves in a position where they're feeling strong enough to be able to have those conversations, and to have contingency plans if they need

them, of course. But many of them are supported in a proactive way in having their own voice and making their own decision about their own orientation and on how, if, and when to share that.

Given that this is going to undo that piece of legislation that was brought forward, I think it is very damaging. I've said in the House previously that we will have experiences in this House, experiences that are going to be very difficult, where people have to rise and answer for why something terrible happened. There will be ministers, primarily, that stand up and say: one child dying is one child too many. And they're right. One child dying is one child too many. One child being forced into homelessness is one child too many.

If you go to the youth emergency shelter here in Edmonton, a fantastic place on Whyte Avenue, or if you go to other homeless shelters for youth in your own ridings, you will talk to those case workers, and they will say that statistically there is significant overrepresentation of youth who are LGBTQ. Significant overrepresentation. One of the ways that we can prevent that is by making sure that they have some say over how their story is shared and with whom rather than by creating increased opportunities through existing legislation to put these kids in vulnerable positions. So that's one.

The other one is the timeliness piece. I am deeply concerned by the lack of commitment. I want to say that in the Education Act that's being proposed today, there are many things that we did through the School Act that the now government has taken and said, you know, that that was important. Like school fees: that was important; we're going to carry that on. Like a trustee code of conduct: that was important; we're going to carry that on. Like superintendent compensation: that was important; we're going to carry it on. But timeliness on creating support groups for vulnerable kids: "No. Not important. We're going to shelve that. We're going to shelve that. We're not going to create opportunities for these kids," who are often at their most vulnerable when they're asking for GSAs.

I'm going to back up for a second. I think of the fact that we even have to ask for GSAs, that you're saying to kids who are vulnerable, "Hey, put up your hand if you want us to create a support group." I talked to a number of youth who said: "You know, by the time I put up my hand, it's already a month or two into the school year. Then it takes a little while to set it up even if it was timely, and then the next year I have to ask all over again to have it created." There should just be one automatically, and if nobody shows up Wednesdays at lunch, so be it, you know. The teacher will eat their sandwich in their classroom, and that's that. But not only are we going to fail to make it easier for kids to set up, but we're actually going to remove that "immediately" clause so that it can be prolonged so that kids are asking, often in times of crisis: "Hey, I need a support group. I need somebody to talk to. I need a safe place at lunch. I need a bathroom where I can go without being worried that I'm going to be harassed."

I talked to an ATA member just last weekend who talked about how in all the years that his son rushed home and used the bathroom immediately as soon as he got home, he never thought, "Why aren't you using the bathroom at school?" Well, three years later, when his son did come out, he said, "Is that why you rushed home to use the bathroom?" He said: "Yeah. I didn't want to be in the bathroom. I was nervous. I was around all these guys. I didn't want them to see me. I didn't want them to harass me. I certainly didn't want to get beat up. There was already speculation that I was gay. I didn't want to have to put myself in that position, so I held it all day, and, yes, as soon as I got home, the first thing I did was that I ran into the bathroom."

If there had been a GSA at the school at that time, these are the kinds of things that can be discussed, and people can come up with plans around which bathroom you can use, when you can use it, and how we can make sure that you can focus on learning math instead of focusing on: how quickly can I get home so I don't pee my pants. Right?

It's pretty basic. Kids should be able to go to school, hang up their coat, put their books in their locker, go to class, and focus. Most of the kids that are benefiting from having GSAs can do that once they have some additional structures in place to give them opportunities to strategize and work with their classmates and work with other caring adults at that school. By saying that we're going to remove the obligation for it to be immediate, we're going to create an opportunity to sort of rag the puck a little bit longer for kids who are already in a position of significant vulnerability, and that, I think, is an injustice.

So, again, changes that we made in other areas of the School Act – superintendent compensation, board code of conduct, school fees – are being picked up and implemented into Bill Hate, but the protections around youth: "No. We're not going to do those." Okay. So that's actually going to also have a negative impact on high school completion rates. I'll tell you that I went to many outreach graduations over the years, and many of the students at those outreach graduations – you probably have some in your ridings too, hon. Speaker and colleagues.

8:00

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Indeed, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was greatly enjoying the remarks from my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora. I think she has some deep knowledge and expertise on this subject, having served as the chair of the Edmonton public school board, and I would appreciate it if she would like to share any final thoughts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

They would say: "I'm at outreach school, and I'm really proud that I'm completing now. One of the reasons why I ended up here is because I didn't feel safe in my neighbourhood high school. I didn't feel safe in the high school I was attending originally." If we can create opportunities for kids to feel safe, kids who are these vulnerable, marginalized youth, in their schools so that they don't have to end up going to an outreach school – I'm glad that outreach is there, but nobody should end up there because they felt that they weren't safe going to their regular neighbourhood school that they chose. I think we owe it to those kids.

Also, research, which are surveys that are done by Alberta Education and by others, is very clear that GSAs and the creation of LGBTQ stand-alone policies, not inclusion policies but LGBTQ stand-alone policies, in schools that have them, the sense of safety and the sense of inclusion for students who don't identify as LGBTQ also goes up because you create a culture where discrimination, harassment, bullying, and specifically naming out for sexual orientation and gender identity minority youth is unacceptable. To me you're keeping vulnerable kids safe, and you're also creating heightened opportunities for safety for others.

These are a few of the pieces why I feel that Bill 8 in its current form has nothing to do with the original intention of the Education



Act and everything to do with hate: outing kids, timing them out, and creating more risk and opportunities for harm for these youth who certainly didn't ask for it, certainly didn't ask to be different, certainly didn't ask to be harassed, and certainly don't deserve to be treated in the way that they are. I know that we will probably hear people say: we spoke to all the stakeholders. I will tell you that there are hundreds of kids who have reached out to me – and I will have opportunities, I imagine, to share some of their thoughts and words on this in the days to come – and said: “No, I didn't. I finally feel safe at my school. No, I didn't ask for my rights to be balanced against somebody else's rights. My rights are my rights, my human rights, and they aren't out of balance. They should be protected, and I deserve to have my voice and my rights respected.”

Again, during the election – and members opposite will talk about it – pipelines, economy, jobs. I remember those big words on placards up behind the now Premier. This wasn't put out there as one of the top three things that were proposed to be done, hon. members. This wasn't: “Hey, this is what we're really going to focus on. We're going to focus on finding new ways to out gay kids.”

Actually, I think when we said that there was a long history of the now Premier working to create unsafe situations for LGBTQ men and women in San Francisco in particular and for lack of equal marriage opportunities, then we got: “Oh, no, no, no. The now Premier says that he supports civil unions.” Well, that was in the face of losing challenges around equal marriage, right? Saying that your rights aren't equal rights, that we will have a subset of rights for another group of humans or class of individuals is wrong.

That's what these youth told me, and that's what I will continue to fight for. I will fight for their voices to be heard and for the changes that were implemented, under thoughtful consultation, to keep kids safe and save their lives not withheld as we continue to move forward. Somebody said, you know: well, don't you think it would be nice to have a few evenings off? I'm sure there are many people who want evenings off, but I would not bank on anyone having any evenings off until we have assurances that our kids will not be outed, our kids will have timely access, and that they will be supported and respected in their schools.

It's quite easy. Either pick up the same sections from the amended School Act and other pieces of legislation and move them over into this ed act, or shelve this ed act altogether. Let's be clear again. This isn't the implementation plan that original consultation a decade ago set out to achieve. There are a couple of choices on how we can get to a better outcome, where we actually do have the strongest protections in the country, because we have them today. We have them today, and nobody said that we need to move backwards. I doubt that anyone when we were door-knocking – and if people did, when you were door-knocking, say that we need to move backwards on protections for LGBTQ, I certainly welcome my hon. colleagues to stand up and say so because I will tell you that I heard not a lot about GSAs, and when I did, it was: thank you for the work you did to keep me safe.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join the debate this evening? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise. This is my first opportunity to speak in this House with respect to Bill 8. I suspect it will not be my last opportunity, and I promise you that I think I have enough material here to speak many, many, many times on Bill 8.

I'm pleased to rise today to voice my significant concerns regarding Bill Hate, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. It is a privilege to speak on this bill right after my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, after her expertise as a board chair for the Edmonton public school board, one of the largest school boards in the province, and also to sit on this side of the aisle with some excellent advocates for education such as the MLA for Edmonton-North West, David Eggen – pardon me – who was the former Minister of Education, who made some significant progress in bringing the School Act up to date.

I spoke today, Mr. Speaker, about my experience because I have significant and substantial experience with the Education Act, which this government is now bringing forward in an amended form. I was privileged to serve in the public service of this provincial government from 2006 to 2014. The last five years of that period of time I spent significant time working with three different Education ministers – Minister David Hancock, Minister Thomas Lukaszuk, and Minister Jeff Johnson – on three different versions of the Education Act, which was the result of, I think, some very good intentions, actually.

You know, I think it was in 2009, I believe, that the province underwent a significant consultation on the education system as a whole. That consultation was called Inspiring Education. It was also connected with a review of what was then called special education. We don't use that terminology anymore, but that was called Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta. I applaud those previous governments for doing significant consultation work with stakeholders, with parents, with students, to try to see a vision forward for education in this province.

The School Act has been in place since 1988; however, it is important to note that it has undergone a number of changes and amendments, in particular in the last four years. However, it was 1988 when that piece of legislation was formed.

I worked as part of the legislative services team within Alberta Education, working closely with colleagues in Alberta Justice, to try to put into legislative form some of the feedback that was heard throughout that consultation period and responding, of course, to the ministers with which I worked. What I can tell you is that there were very high ambitions with respect to overhauling and reforming and modernizing our education system, and there were some pieces within the Education Act which were intended to be transformative.

However, as somebody who literally spent hours and hours and hours reading every word of the School Act and rewriting every word of the Education Act, I can tell you that there was a little bit of a sense – actually more than a little bit; there was a significant sense of disappointment that where we landed with respect to the Education Act was actually not transformative.

What we had heard in the consultations, what the government had heard in the consultations was about removing sort of the bricks and mortar of schools and having a real way for students to learn any time, any place, any pace, and the idea was to support kids. At that time the main objective of that government was actually to increase high school completion. The goal was to think about education in a different way that would support all kids to be able to finish their high school diploma. Unfortunately, for various reasons, what we ended up with in terms of the Education Act was primarily a cleaned up version, some changes but, really, just a cleaned up version of the School Act.

There were some key pieces, though, that I think many of us who believed in the idea of any time, any place, any pace were excited about. There were some provisions in the Education Act that were going to really encourage kids to stay in school, to finish school, and learn at a pace that worked for them but that also allowed them to achieve success. What I am most disappointed about is that there

were a couple of pieces that were transformative, and those are the pieces that this government has decided not to go forward with in the Education Act. Those are the pieces that they're actually choosing to repeal from the Education Act.

**8:10**

Specifically, those are the pieces around increasing the age of access from the age of 19 to the age of 21, increasing the age of compulsory attendance at school, which means you can't drop out of school, to the age of 17 from the age of 16, and it was about basing residency of the student, which determines which school board is responsible for delivering education programs to that student, to be based on where the student lived, not where the student's parents lived. That was significant because, like many other services, health services in particular, services follow the recipient of the services. Where that person who's getting the services goes, that's where they get to receive it, and the thinking was that we have situations – we have many situations – where students unfortunately are not living with their parents, and they should not be denied access to the resident school board that they reside in simply because their parent does not live in the same school district. The idea was that kids, no matter where they are, should have access to the same high quality of education. Those were the changes that were probably the most transformative in terms of actually implementing the vision of Inspiring Education and Setting the Direction, which was focusing on: any time, any place, any place. Unfortunately, those are the provisions that Bill 8 chooses to repeal. So they're not going forward with it.

I actually appreciate very much the comments from my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora as well as, I know, the expertise of the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West of why those changes. They are difficult to implement, and I'm sympathetic towards that. There is a dollar figure attached to making those changes because if you're going to be requiring school boards to provide access to education to kids to the age of 21, yeah, that means kids are in school longer. Now, it does give them more opportunity to succeed and to complete their education, but it costs money.

I do want to point out, however – this is part of the privilege of having worked in public service and being a detail person. Our current education system – and this has been the case for quite some time – actually currently funds kids till the age of 20. Even though the legislation and the School Act says access till the age of 19, we actually provide funding up to the age of 20, so at the very least I think this government could have chosen to still increase the age of access to the age of 20. That is consistent with funding practice already as it is.

However, I want to speak a little bit more about the amendment that's before us today. It is talking about providing the opportunity for consultation, and I can tell you that there are a few reasons why. This legislation actually passed in 2012 originally. As a public servant who worked many long hours and weeks and days on that legislation, I can tell you that I was actually thrilled to see that Education Act finally pass, the work of many, many, many public servants who put in a lot of time and energy. However, there are a few things that – that was now almost seven years ago, and I can tell you that in that time two things have happened.

There was a reason why the Progressive Conservative government at the time did not proclaim that act right away. Let's remember. It passed in 2012. Government did not change until 2015, three years later. The reason why they didn't proclaim it was because the devil is in the details, because a significant amount of work under the Education Act was in the regulations. It's true of the School Act now, and I can tell you again that this is why it's not

that much different than the Education Act. If you look at the Education Act right now, there are a number of opportunities where regulations need to be developed, and those regulations are the meat and bones of the operations of school boards and private schools and charter schools in their system. Transportation, school fees, all of those things are set out in regulation. There was a significant amount of work that needed to be done before school boards, private schools, charter schools, parents, students were ready to operationalize the Education Act.

I can go through and I can identify that there is – for the lawyers, yeah. We like lots of regulations. That's what we do. We read that stuff all the time, but it's really important in the education system. I've worked in a number of different areas where we never look at the regulations. I can tell you that in the education world – and I worked in the provincial government and then I worked for school boards for five years – we look at those regulations a lot. We look at them a lot because the details are really set out. It's a process by which charter schools are approved. It's a process by which private schools are approved. It's a process by which home education is delivered by parents. It's a process by which transportation fees are set, school fees are set, school councils function, separate school establishments happen, student evaluations, student records, requirements that school boards have to have about what information they need to keep about their students. It's all in the regulations. So when we're sitting here today and we're talking about this reasoned amendment, which is to wait and consult, the reason is because this is not an act that we can simply snap our fingers and it will be implemented.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done, that school boards need to know, private school operators, charter school operators, home educators, those parents need to know to be able to implement this regulation. To date we do not know what those regulations are. It's a long process because I can tell you each piece of those regulations require as much – we've got stakeholders who are just as invested in those regulations as they are in the legislation. They want to be part of it. They want to be heard. They want to be consulted. They're important details. All you'll see in the act is very general: the minister may make regulations about this. But what's actually going to be in there requires discussion with those stakeholders in our education system.

I sit here and I remember thinking back in 2012 when the Education Act passed in this House: "I don't know how we are ever going to be able to get regulations, which almost each one is a mini-piece of legislation. How are we going to be able to get this done so that school boards know how to operate? Private schools, home educators: how are they going to do that?" It took years and next to no progress was made on that, and that was by the previous Progressive Conservative government.

We still don't know what those regulations will look like. As we draw to the end of the 2018-19 school year and we are a mere two months away from the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, I can tell you, those school boards, those operators, need to know those details. There is simply no time to prepare over the two months when, let's be honest, for school boards, just like a lot of our students, they're quieter times. We don't even know what those regulations are going to look like, so to expect them to be implementing them is a significant administrative burden. I think it's preparing ourselves for a real administrative nightmare come September 1, 2019.

I think the amendment before us is important because it's really talking about: "Let's talk about what those regulations will look like. Let's give an opportunity for the actors in our system to know what those are going to look like so that they can operationalize them." I think it's a very responsible thing to do because the other

reason – and I know this has come up in the House before – is more than 50 per cent of the current sitting school board trustees were elected in 2017, five years after the School Act passed. They were not involved in the consultations. They don't know what's in this act. The regulations were not going forward. There is no understanding for almost half of this province's school board trustees, very little understanding about what is actually going to be meant by implementation.

I can tell you that it's really easy. It is actually easy in this House as government to simply say: "Here's the law. Go follow it." Who it's really hard for are the actors in our system who are responsible for putting it into place. The amendment here today is a reasonable amendment because they are the people who are going to actually have to implement what's being proposed here today. I think we owe them a duty to speak to them, to prepare them, to talk to them, and to get their feedback. Otherwise, I can tell you what I anticipate is going to happen. I anticipate that this government is simply going to put forward the same regulations that currently exist under the School Act. That's what I anticipate is going to happen – and why? – because there's absolutely no time to do appropriate work and to actually develop strong regulations. What's going to happen is we're going to see regulations that look very close to what's currently in the School Act.

That goes to my other point, which is that this is really not transformative legislation. I talked already that there was a sense of disappointment about what actually came out of Inspiring Education with respect to the Education Act. The only really transformative pieces about it were those changes to the age of access, age of compulsory education, and residency based on the student. This government has taken those provisions out. I can tell you that – and we see it in Bill 8 – Bill 8 actively goes and looks at what this NDP government did, and it actually adopts those changes. It adopts the changes that NDP government made to the School Act because those were the good pieces from the Education Act: the piece about trustee code of conduct, the pieces about superintendent compensation.

The pieces actually that I think are really great – my husband is an assistant principal – are the establishment of leadership certificates and standards for superintendents. Those are great pieces, and I can tell the government agrees because they have also adopted those changes in Bill Hate to the Education Act. The good stuff that was in the Education Act has already been put into the School Act.

8:20

All that Bill Hate proposes to do right now is to take out what was great and was potentially transformative about the Education Act that was passed in 2012. It scraps that and it takes on all the good work that the NDP government did to amend the School Act. The only difference, the one outrageous outlier, the one piece of work that the NDP government did to amend the School Act, it amended the School Act with respect to GSAs. And that is the one piece.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Her comments very, very eloquently gave us a bit of a history lesson on how this all worked, getting to the point around some of the reasons why it is so necessary for these consultations. I was hoping that maybe she might give us a few more thoughts about who she thinks might be

best served by these consultations and maybe talk about some of the others that we could be reaching out to.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore for the question. As I was saying, one of the big outliers with respect to the provisions that this government has not taken from the School Act is the piece around GSAs. When we talk about consultation, that is key.

Unfortunately, what is being proposed in Bill Hate is going to affect kids. It's going to affect students. And those are the people whose voices that we most need to hear from, and those are the people whose voices are most difficult to hear from, especially if you're government and you're not opening your hearts and your minds to those conversations. I think it's very important.

I attended an event this past weekend with some fabulous teachers and administrators from Edmonton Catholic and Edmonton public schools who are part of their GSAs, and they've done great work to establish GSAs in their schools. What they said is: "We are teachers. We are not here to out kids. We are not here to be put in the middle between parents and students. We are here to simply support our kids and we want their voices to be heard. That's who we need to be talking to. We need to be talking to the kids."

I've heard the comments from the hon. Minister of Education. Unfortunately, I don't think she's talking to the same kids that we are talking to. Actually, the kids that we are talking to are the kids who are most likely to have their voices silenced, and we see that right now and we need to provide them – it is our duty. I take it very seriously. I think it's our duty to hear the voices of the most vulnerable, and that is who we really need to hear their comments on. I don't believe that this government has a mandate to roll back GSA protections to LGBTQ students. I promise you that I have a lot more to say about all of these issues. I could go into great detail in particular – and I will – but I will save that for, I'm sure, another opportunity to debate about why these GSA protections are weaker, substantially weaker.

The only thing I want to comment about, I want to come back to the fact that I was involved in this legislation. I've been asked the question, I have said that I'm proud of the work we did on the Education Act up until 2012, but I was not part of the public service for the last five years when this NDP government brought in the changes to Bill 24 and strengthened the protections for GSAs. Back when I was working on the Education Act, we weren't talking about GSAs. That was not part of it. When I say that I'm proud of it, I'm proud of what we did back then, but I see now, very clearly, that based on what we know about GSAs, based on what we hear from kids who are vulnerable and who need those GSAs to have a safe and secure place to be, that what we had in the Education Act was not adequate.

While I can speak to the great work of my colleagues in Alberta Education who worked very hard to develop that piece of legislation, I can say with absolute certainty: we did not know what we were talking about when it came to GSAs because we were not talking about GSAs. We had a lot to learn and a lot has been learned in the last five years. I can't see how it is a benefit to any Albertan to roll back. Why are we trying to forget what we've learned? We're trying to move forward and one of the conversations I've had with teachers about this, they said that there's still work we needed to do with respect to GSAs. There was more work about training trustees. One of the teachers mentioned that she knows that her local trustee is really interested in learning more about GSAs. They said that's the next step that they saw, was establish the protections, make sure

GSAs can be established in a timely and effective way and respond to the kids' needs. Then let's educate. Let's talk more at the principal level, at the superintendent level, at the school board level, and let's go further. She said: we were really looking forward to what was next in terms of protecting and supporting our LGBTQ students; instead, we're now fighting to just keep things from being rolled back.

I can say with an absolute clear conscience that we did great work on the Education Act, but what is in the School Act right now, particularly with respect to GSAs, is much better, is much stronger, is much more effective, and much more important. It is transformative, and I really think that if we are talking about modernizing our school system and really taking our school system forward, that is where we were going. What we're seeing by Bill Hate is really just regression. It's moving backwards in time. It's pretending that we don't know what we do know.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been pleased to speak to Bill 8, and I will speak to it again, for sure.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about Bill Hate and the amendment that this bill should not be now read a second time.

I've reviewed this legislation – and it's quite extensive – and I have lots of questions, Mr. Speaker, about what the intention of some of this is and what the real benefit of some of these pieces are. I know that one of the things that they're talking about is having no board for private schools. I know, as a mom, having the ability to advocate for something that may not be going right for my kids at school, whether it's with other students or whether it's with staff, if they don't have a board that reviews spending or best practices or decisions or disputes, how can parents solve disputes objectively? It seems that this would take away the rights of a parent to have some of those questions answered or the possibility of having a mediation.

I know that I used to work as a mediator with the city of Edmonton, specifically in schools, to talk about disputes, sometimes between kids and staff, sometimes between some of the students and students. Sometimes it was a parent conflict that had come into the school system. When you have another level such as a board, that gives the opportunity for more rights for parents. They have more of a voice. It's not just the staff. It gives them an opportunity to have their concerns expressed. It's not an absolute no, Mr. Speaker. If there is a concern that's happening, it gives that parent an extra venue to discuss concerns or anything of the sort.

I've had many constituents come to my office with questions and concerns about this. I have great working relationships with the school trustees in my area, and thankfully because of those working relationships, when there have been concerns that have been brought forward to my office, I've been able to work with the families as well as the trustees to get some resolutions to some of the concerns.

Sometimes it's not a resolution that the parent might be appreciative of. However, some of them have been positive. But in the moments where it wasn't perhaps the exact resolution that a parent had hoped for, having that opportunity to sit down and to talk about it can be a really wonderful process in just the talking, just being able to express their concern, feeling validated, feeling heard, because sometimes there's that power dynamic between the school and the family, and they just don't feel like they have the authority to come in. When there's that third person that's a part of that process, just sometimes being heard and feeling like there's

someone that's a real neutral party can have a huge impact on the outcome of a resolution.

There are sometimes concerns when a family is advocating for special services within their school. They might feel that their child deserves an aide, perhaps, and if the school says no, what is the parents' recourse? Are they able to appeal that decision? Are they able to have someone advocate on their behalf to assist with maybe what's not being seen as important in that school setting? I think by having a board and someone that you can talk to, it would perhaps alleviate some of those things when you have a child that's struggling and could use a little bit of help in the classroom. Having that extra person onside with you to listen and help advocate might help, Mr. Speaker. That's one of the concerns I have.

One of the changes says that all references to the "director" under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act are changed to "child intervention worker." Under CYFEA the director is clearly defined. It says:

- (j) "director" means a person designated by the Minister as a director for the purposes of this Act and the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act and without limiting the generality of the foregoing includes a person designated as a director in accordance with an agreement under section 122(2) of this Act.

**8:30**

Mr. Speaker, they're suggesting to take the word "director" out of CYFEA and replace it with "child intervention worker." Unfortunately, the words "child intervention worker" do not appear in CYFEA. So they're suggesting that you take a word that is clearly defined in CYFEA, replace it with a new term, and it's not defined. I'm curious what the intention of removing the director is because the director under CYFEA has the ability to delegate authority to different workers. They can deem whom they see as appropriate. Whether you're an assessor or a front-line worker or whatever the director has deemed your authority to be, they can provide that. If you take the word "director" out and delegate someone who is not even named under CYFEA, I'm confused about what that does.

I'm also confused about what the motivation behind it is. Notwithstanding that there is no such term in CYFEA, what's the intention of taking away the authority from the director to a child intervention worker? I know as a front-line worker myself under Children's Services that there's a lot of pressure on those front-line workers. I'm wondering: is this adding more work onto the front line without considering what the director would deem as appropriate? Right now under CYFEA the director decides who has the authority to do what. This would imply that it's just putting it directly onto a child intervention worker. Has there been any consideration into the pressures that that would put on the front line? Does this mean more paperwork directly to that front-line worker? Is it more red tape, perhaps, that they're adding to this legislation?

It is completely unnecessary because CYFEA already has a clear definition. It feels like it could be giving more responsibilities to front-line workers without actually talking to front-line workers about what their job is and what their day-to-day activities are. By changing this one piece of legislation, it could have a huge impact on front-line staff. I know as part of the child intervention panel that when we talked to front-line workers on their caseloads and concerns, this wasn't something they said that they would like to be identified and have specified in other pieces of legislation. So I'm curious if they've actually spoken to anyone from the Ministry of Children's Services to see about what this impact would be. I know that our front-line workers are struggling right now with the amount

of casework that they have on them. It's a little bit frustrating to see that there's this term in there that doesn't even exist, Mr. Speaker. So that tells me that they didn't consult with Children's Services.

The piece that I think is the most upsetting to me, Mr. Speaker, is everything around our GSAs. We know that when Bill 10 was originally introduced, we discovered that it was only somewhat of a shell of legislation with very little intention to ever be enforced. That's why we introduced legislation that took further steps to make sure that we were protecting our vulnerable children and our youth to create safe spaces. We know that GSAs save lives, that these are important to our children and youth. It's somewhere in their school, in their space where they spend most of their day, where they feel safe. The staff that support these GSAs, the other kids that are part of it can surround a youth and give them that one space in their school where they feel that they belong, where they feel that they can thrive, not just somewhere safe but somewhere where they can actually feel good about themselves. They have positive reinforcing messages.

I'm just confused why they would want to roll back that legislation in Bill Hate and put, literally, our little ones' lives at risk. It's concerning. It will allow staff to out students. We heard from the Alberta Teachers' Association that it was not in their job description to out children. They felt that that was something that they were not comfortable doing, and we heard that. We listened to them, and we felt that they should absolutely not be put in that position. It's a horrible situation for a teacher or staff to be put in. We heard that loud and clear from the teachers, and I'm confused about why this government would ignore teachers. If they spoke to teachers. They're saying that they need to support students to be in a healthy space and that they need Bill 24 to remain in place. I know that when I talk to parents whose kids attend a school with a GSA, whether their children are attending the GSA or not, they are supportive of that GSA. They know that there are kids at their child's school that feel supported.

I'm concerned that also under Bill Hate the GSAs are weakened for different schools. Private schools will no longer need to submit policies at all, and I'm curious, Mr. Speaker, why this would be allowed, other than an assumption that the intention would be that they do not have to do it. If there's no policy, there would be no expectation for them to actually have a GSA.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The fact that they don't have to have the word "gay" in the title: I've heard from the LGBTQ-plus community that it's like a slap in the face. It's a gay-straight alliance, or it's whatever the students want to call it, not the administration, not the principal, not the teachers. It's just really sad. It doesn't speak to inclusivity and support when they're not even allowed to say the word "gay," Madam Speaker.

It is concerning, too, that the timely establishment of a GSA, after students request it, would be removed. There's no time expectation that's put on the school. When a student comes forward, we heard several stories about students being fearful. Finally coming up with the courage to ask some of the grown-ups in their life for support, and then not having a timeline in place, Madam Speaker, is concerning. We know that some of the intention could be to just take the request and never look at it again. That's devastating to a student who has finally got the courage to come forward and say, "I would like the support of a gay-straight alliance in my school," to have a grown-up take that request and just sit on it and do nothing with it. It's concerning.

We know that when kids come forward and they speak their truth, it's important we listen. It's important that we support them and that

we provide leadership to our young people when they're being brave and coming forward and asking for support and asking for help. We can't turn our backs on them, Madam Speaker. I don't understand what the point is of having the legislation say that they can have a GSA if there's actually no time limit allotted for them to do it. Again, it makes me question what the intention of this bill is if it's not clearly identified that there's a timeline in place for it to be implemented for the students.

It just, again, reinforces that this government does not see value in GSAs. We continue to hear from the community that there's concern about this government, that they feel that they're being attacked, and when you look at the legislation and what it's allowing to happen in schools, I can't disagree with them. It feels like an attack on the LGBTQ-plus community. It's clear that they're trying to not encourage GSAs. They're making it difficult for young people to come forward and to get the support that they're bravely asking for. It's devastating. As a young person it's hard to necessarily express what you need and what your supports are, and to know that there was legislation in place that allowed that to happen, to know that it's now being taken away is terrifying. It gives a strong message to youth that they don't matter, Madam Speaker. To me, as a mom, as someone who sits in this Chamber to be the voice of all of my constituents regardless of age that's concerning.

I question what this government is doing regarding the GSAs. I mean, simply put, if you value our children and you value lives – we know that GSAs save lives. Children have said, "I felt alone; I felt isolated; I was depressed; I felt suicidal," and then knowing that there was a GSA available saved lives. They were able to come forward and sit in a group of people where they could openly express who they were in a safe environment without being judged, without being ridiculed. Taking that away is very, very frightening to me, Madam Speaker.

8:40

We know that the enforcement mechanism for school boards and private schools not complying with GSA legislation will be removed. I just again question: what is the government trying to do with this stipulation? They want to allow those who do not want to keep the safety and protections of LGBTQ-plus students at the top of mind. They want to support those who are not supportive of this community. That's what it feels like, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for, I think, perhaps helping to touch on something that we haven't talked about here in regard to GSAs and the former legislation and this current one. You were, I think, channelling some of your experience as a social worker in regard to students and offering those protections to the confidentiality if a student does choose to be in a GSA as a protection, as a safe place. Of course, Bill 24 does not exclude the intervention of a social worker for, you know, potentially criminal purposes or self-harm and so forth. I mean, that was already built into that very strong and, I think, coherent law that we have in place now, that seems to be under attack.

I was just hoping that maybe you could tell us a bit more about that because, you know, this was one of the false arguments that was brought forward on Bill 24, that someone would not have the confidentiality regardless of if they were in the potential for either self-harm or other criminal activities and so forth, which categorically wasn't true. But, I mean, it's always good to cast the

clear light of day on what is confusing and help to clarify that for everybody if you could.

Thanks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that's a valid point, in that there were some mistruths that were being spread around Bill 24. There was concern about things not being reported, when that is absolutely not true.

As a professional who works with children and youth, you have an obligation to report when there is a threat of harm to self, when there is a threat of harm to others, or when there's a threat of some sort of criminal activity or an awareness of a criminal activity. You are ethically responsible and, under most professions, legally responsible to report that. If a child involved in any activity at school, whether they're part of the chess club, whether they're part of the soccer team, or GSA, if that child discloses that they are considering self-harm, absolutely the school would be in contact with the authorities and the parents to ensure that that child is safe. But the simple fact of belonging to a GSA doesn't mean that that child is at risk and that that child is at harm of anything.

When my kids were involved in some of their extracurricular, I wasn't phoned as a mom to say: "Hey, guess what; your child just joined the glee club" or "Your child just joined soccer." It wasn't important for the school to reach out. As a parent I didn't feel that my rights were being infringed on because my child was participating in an activity that they felt they needed at that time, whether that's expression of drama or working on their sports skills or going somewhere where they feel safe and included.

As a mom I want my children to be able to access supports and services. If my children choose to tell me what those are, I think that's great. If they don't, I trust that the grown-ups at the schools have my children's best interests. And I know that ethically they have to report if there is something that is happening that is criminal or self-harm or hurting somebody else, Madam Speaker. I think that saying that that wouldn't happen under a GSA is inaccurate. It puts fear into parents, and it makes people wonder what's actually happening in these GSAs.

I can say that I've personally attended the GSA in my riding and met with the kids, met with the staff, and they are a great group of people. They bring speakers in. They talk about things that they're interested in. We had been asked to come in and talk about politics, Madam Speaker. To some that might be something that nobody wants to talk about at the dinner table. This group brought us in, so I brought myself and the former Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Estefania Cortes-Vargas. They wanted to come in and give their experience of being a minority, young, LGBTQ-plus member, to talk about what it was like for them in the Legislature, and give them someone to look up to and someone to ask questions of about if they chose a career in politics.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the reasoned amendment? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment on Bill 8, commonly known as Bill Hate. One of the things I just wanted to touch on or, again, just underline some of the things my colleagues have said, is that I think the members opposite have reminded us time and again about how important consultation is. Well, actually, I think they reminded us quite a bit before the election, not so much afterwards. But I do think that consultation is important and, I think, particularly as it relates to this bill.

Here are some important facts to think about. Nearly half of Alberta school board trustees are serving in their first term. I think the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud mentioned that also. They've not participated in any consultations on the Education Act. I think that's pretty important. Should school boards need to update their policies to comply with the Education Act, they will need to do the work via emergency meetings over the next three months. That doesn't seem reasonable to me. I don't know what the big rush is, actually. Why not give some thoughtful time to these elected people to do their jobs properly? Bill 28 and 24 both provided more than six months notice before coming into force to give school boards time to prepare. Some portions of Bill 28, the new professional practice standards, have had over a year lead time.

The last major consultation on the Education Act occurred in 2012, and for context students born in 2012 are in grade 2 now. The 2017 consultations on proposed amendments to the School Act addressed topics that Bill 83 doesn't even address such as age of access, as we've heard earlier. At the recent general meeting – I think this is important – school boards voted overwhelmingly to ask the government to delay the proclamation of the Education Act. Trustees have pointed out that the new legislation is concerning if it does not come with additional funding, and of course we know how that goes. We haven't heard exactly what that is and we will not until the fall, so why not delay? This government won't even confirm for school boards whether or not they will fund existing commitments such as the school nutrition program and class improvement fund.

I think there are ample reasons, Madam Speaker, to delay this in order to give all of the people that really have a vested interest in this to consult, to really consult, not just some people but wide consultation so that all stakeholders, particularly elected stakeholders, have a chance to weigh in on this important legislation. I've said this before; what I find quite disturbing is that throughout the election period all we heard was Jobs, Economy, Pipeline, or whichever order that went in, and what's really concerning is – it feels like a bait and switch – that this is what was sold, this is what was advertised as the focus of this new government, and suddenly we've just gone off the rails.

I don't really understand how folks across the way are okay with this. One of the very first things that you've done – and it's not that we don't realize that the changes you've made to this legislation will do the very thing that we were afraid that you were going to do. That is what you're doing. And it's really sort of – I mean, I don't want to give you credit for being sneaky, but it's really sneaky the way that you've done this. You've made this . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, through the chair, please.

**Ms Renaud:** Yup. Madam Speaker, I will.

I think it's really sneaky, Madam Speaker, that you are saying one thing, that you are moving us forward, that this is about progress, this is about making life better for people when, in fact, we're hearing from the very people that this will impact: elected school board trustees, teachers, and educators. We're hearing from the children themselves, we're hearing from people that did not have the benefit of GSAs that this is going to set them backwards, and that's really concerning.

**8:50**

Last week, I think it was, Madam Speaker, I read a portion of the letters that I received. I received 60 letters on May 3, before we even started having this discussion, from junior high students in St. Albert. They're upset about a few things, but they were primarily upset about GSAs. They were concerned that there would be

chipping away of the rights of students that relied on GSAs. Let's be clear, this legislation is chipping away by taking out provisions that give a definite timeline that principals have to respond to this request.

I can remember what it was like being a student. You know, if you're focused on something and you want to get it done but you're repeatedly told, "It's not possible; you have to wait," it gets put on the back burner. Life has a way of getting away from you, and it just goes on and on and doesn't happen. That is a really sort of backhanded way to reduce the strength of the legislation that was, really, put in place, Madam Speaker, to address the need when students are brave enough to say, "I would like a GSA or a QSA," or whatever they choose to call it. "I would like it right now, and here's why."

The legislation that we had before, the protection that we had sort of forced administrators to take the request seriously and to act on it immediately. I think that if a child in school is brave enough and recognizes that that is something that they need to be successful in school, we have a responsibility as legislators and as administrators to act as quickly as possible. I think it's important.

I also want to go back. I heard the Minister of Education – well, I think she did actually say the words "gay" and "queer" and some other words last week. I think she continues to refer to this particular support group as an inclusion group. While I appreciate the sentiment – you know, I have no problem with the word. I think it's a great word, particularly when it's used as an action, Madam Speaker, because "inclusion" isn't just a label that you attach to something. There has to be concentrated effort and resources put into inclusion. Inclusion to me is more than celebrating diversity or putting a stamp on something. It's actually understanding what that means and hearing from the people who require or would like inclusion who do not feel included, to hear from them, specifically: what does that mean to them?

I think that when you ask students who identify as part of the LGBTQ community, when they tell you, "I want a GSA," or "I want a QSA," or "I want a peer support group in my school. I know that I'm fully protected. I do not have to worry that anybody will tell my family until I'm ready," that's what they need to feel included. They need to feel supported. While I appreciate the sentiment of using the word "inclusion," I think it's important that we call GSAs or QSAs exactly what they are. They aren't inclusion groups; they're peer support groups that are requested by the people that need them.

One of my constituents that I'm sure people in this Chamber have heard of – his name is Dr. Kris Wells. He now, I believe, teaches at MacEwan University and was previously at the University of Alberta. I think he's a very knowledgeable man. He's obviously a leader when it comes to GSAs, and he constantly reminds me – and I think he likely reminds many of us – of the importance of GSAs. I was going back and reading some of the things he had said, and I think it's a really good reminder. Some of his words are a really good reminder. He himself is part of that community, and I think he speaks with a lot of authority. He reminds us to, first and foremost, remember that GSAs save lives. And that's what they do. They're about supporting the health and the safety of students, helping them thrive in their school environment and to live up to their potential, but I think what is most important is that GSAs save lives.

If you can remove any barriers to creating a GSA, if you could remove a barrier to a time delay to create a GSA, I think that that's worth while, just like earlier today when we voted in favour of second reading of a private member's bill to ensure that some medication was available in schools for students with life-threatening allergies. I feel the same way about this legislation, that the way it is right now does not provide the best protection and response to a student at risk who wants and needs a GSA. All of us

in this Chamber were in support of that legislation earlier, yet we have a very stark division right now about GSAs.

We're hearing from children and from educators and from trustees that are telling us: the legislation that you put forward is not the best it can be. It creates delays. It creates loopholes, and it is not the best it can be. It is not the best legislation to save lives, and we know that GSAs save lives.

Kids that are part of the LGBTQ community are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. I mean, that's a stark number. They are at risk for substance abuse, absenteeism, and, you know – we all know – that all of these things lead to far more harm and far more risk in their adult lives. We know that that risk continues should they then go on to become parents or make whatever choices that they're making in their lives. This will impact that. So this is also about prevention. If you knowingly turn away from protection and prevention that you know will have a direct impact on the lives of students and the lives of young people, why would you knowingly not take every possible step that you could to protect and prevent problems?

Dr. Wells actually quoted a leading medical journal that referenced the likelihood of people in the LGBTQ community – their likelihood of suicide attempts. This leading medical journal called *The Lancet* called it "a mental health crisis." I think we all recognize what a mental health crisis is. I hope we all recognize what a mental health crisis is. So if we have a medical journal, contributors to this medical journal, telling us that this is a mental health crisis from the rate of attempted suicide – and I would suggest that the successful suicide rate is very high as well – I would suggest that it's time to act. This legislation doesn't get us the place that we need to be. If we honestly . . .

#### Point of Order Quorum

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order, 5(2), quorum.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Ring the bells.

[Pursuant to Standing Order 5 the division bell was rung at 8:58 p.m., and the Deputy Speaker confirmed that a quorum was present]

#### Debate Continued

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, for that little break. Back at it.

Again, I'm just going to remind the members that perhaps weren't in the Chamber that GSAs are about supporting the health and safety of students and helping them thrive in their school environment and live up to their potential.

9:00

As I said earlier, people in the LGBTQ community are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. They are also often struggling with substance abuse and absenteeism while in school. Again, going back to my point, if you knew as a legislator, just like we did earlier today with all of us supporting legislation to ensure that children or students with severe, life-threatening allergies had access to support that they needed, intervention that they needed to live, to survive, to thrive, why would you knowingly, after we've told you, after elected trustees have told you, after students have told you, after other students that have used GSAs have told you that this legislation will cause problems – that is why we fixed the loopholes that we did when we were in government. Why would

you knowingly not work to amend the legislation that doesn't do the best that it could do to protect students, to ensure that they are not subjected to some of the things described? This is a mental health crisis. I'm not calling it that. Leading medical journal *The Lancet* is calling it that, a mental health crisis. I think a mental health crisis deserves intervention, intervention like a GSA.

For those of you that haven't ever visited a GSA or chatted with students who belong to a GSA, I guess I really don't understand what the big ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you so much for the insightful comments by the Member for St. Albert. I think that one thing that certainly caught my attention was talking about the larger societal impacts of an attack on GSAs here in the province of Alberta. As you mentioned, you know, of course, this is a relatively new protection that is being afforded young people in schools across the province, and lo and behold there are generations of people in the very same situation that were completely exposed with no protections whatsoever.

You know, when you talk about a larger mental health issue or crisis, as you said, as you referenced from *The Lancet* magazine, GSAs and QSAs and what they represent to not just kids in school but to LGBTQ2S-plus people and their allies in general – right? – because let's remember that GSA, the last word in that acronym is ally. What we have managed to achieve through the GSA and QSA fight here in the province of Alberta over the last number of years has helped to embolden and create confidence, a sense of security amongst thousands of other people besides the people that are actually involved in GSAs. You know, if you can just perhaps elaborate on that a bit.

One thing I saw that struck me last fall when we were at the Calgary Pride Parade and there were probably 70,000 people, and for the GSAs of Calgary we're the marshals – it was very emotional. Part of what I realized when people were often tearing up as they came through, and it caused me to do the same, is that there was a generation of these adults that saw kids in their own shoes 20 years before and didn't have those protections, and here they were, this new generation with this new-found empowerment and support from society. Perhaps if you could just elaborate more on that aspect of mental health and inclusion of all of us as Albertans, I would be grateful.

Thanks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Well, thank you for the question. We've all gone to school. I think we all understand the difference between feeling like you're part of something and you're included and when you're not. I actually had never heard of a GSA or a QSA until I started doing this job. I certainly was aware that support clubs were available, but I never really understood the value until I spoke with students that were a part of that group and I spoke with allies. What I heard from them was really quite simple, and it was kind of beautiful in the simplicity of it, that it was just a place that was free from labels. It was just private. You just knew that you could say what you needed to say. You could be with your friends. You could be with people that maybe you identified with, maybe people you didn't know yet. It was a place to feel safe and to know that your privacy would be respected. That was key, that your privacy would be respected.

Then you hear about the activities, and they were really no different from any other club, whether it was a bake sale that people

were having or a pizza party or a movie night or that somebody was talking about, you know, how awful their older siblings or their parents were. It was just a safe place to be. I suppose I always go to: why is it that people have such a problem with this club as opposed to – I don't know; the member earlier said the chess club – any other kind of club?

It boils right down to the premise of equality. Do you believe that students who are part of this community and their allies deserve the same rights and protection and access as every other student? I think they do, and I think that we need to listen to these students. It's not taking away from their education at all. In fact, I think the members before me have clearly explained that all of the protection is in place already, so if there is a danger to a student, that is taken care of. This is about ensuring that students get the GSA or QSA as quickly as possible when they request it, that their privacy is of utmost concern, and that they feel safe and secure in the knowledge that nobody is going to call their parents.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any more speakers to the reasoned amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me this evening to speak to Bill 8. As some of our speakers have already talked about this evening – you know, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud spoke very eloquently this evening about some of the history around how we got to where we are with regard to the legislation and some of the stories that we've heard. As you can imagine, I'm standing in full support of this amendment that we have before us to hit the pause button. Quite honestly, I think we need to do more than just hit the pause button. We need to drop anchor, we need to hit engines full reverse, and I think we need to tie a rope to the piano and throw that overboard, too, to stop this.

I know that Edmonton-Decore is home to 26 very fabulous schools. All three of the high schools in north Edmonton call Edmonton-Decore home, and in those schools I have some pretty fantastic students that attend as well as some GSAs that are absolutely amazing. One of the things that I learned when I very first had the opportunity to visit a GSA – you know, I'd heard some stories out there. I'd heard some positions out there. I'd heard some innuendo out there about what's going in these GSAs, what's happening in these GSAs, and how our students are somehow being – I don't know – corrupted, misled, uninformed. So what better way to find out than to go there and visit one and see what happens with your very own eyes?

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that what I saw was not what I was hearing. Some of the conversations that I had that day surprised me. We talked about things like: what are appropriate toppings on pizza? I tried to throw out there, of course, that maybe anchovies aren't one of the best, but a couple of the students there disagreed with me; they thought that was a great idea. We talked about, you know, what students are listening to in terms of music. They mentioned a couple of bands that I hadn't heard of, so clearly I need to do some homework around there. We even got into talking politics a little bit, actually quite a robust conversation around students being legislated so that they would get their birthday off school. There was quite a robust conversation around there.

**9:10**

The bottom line is that I'm starting to see a trend now with this government. I'm seeing a trend that is targeting young people, our young emerging leaders, the ones that will be taking over from us. I don't know if it's a mentality that's out there that we have to put our thumb down on them. I'm not too sure what it is. I've heard



members opposite go at this almost ad nauseam, about how: “We won the election. We got a mandate from Albertans. This is what we were elected to do.” I don’t remember this being in your platform, to take out GSAs. The funny thing that I’ve noticed about this: the ones that can’t vote in this election seem to be the ones with the crosshairs on them. We’re taking away their pay. We’re taking away their GSAs. I’m starting to wonder what’s next.

My concerns with this – and I’m not even going to begin to try to go into some of the details that I saw the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud go into, but I’m very laser-focused right now on what’s going on around this attempt to destroy GSAs. That may sound like some harsh language to some of the folks across the way, but that’s what the students think it is right now, Madam Speaker. They are out to destroy GSAs, the one place where they just want to feel like they belong. The Member for St. Albert was talking a little bit about that, a safe place to go where they can just, you know, be a youngster, be just part of the team, part of the group. Nobody is judging. Nobody is putting labels on. Nobody is, you know, coming up with some names to call them.

Because of the number of schools I have and because of the number of times I get to interact with these kids, I take what they say very, very seriously, and I really think that the government needs to start doing the same because our young emerging leaders happen to have some really great ideas, Madam Speaker. I think that the members of the government – you know how we say we’ve got two ears, two eyes, but only one mouth. They need to listen and watch them and take what our young emerging leaders are saying very, very seriously.

The number of concerns that I have had – my gosh, I mean, I’m in the grocery store and I run into one of my students: “Hey, Mr. Nielsen, can I talk to you for a second?” “Sure. I can probably direct you to the chip aisle.” “No, no, no. It’s this thing around Bill 8 and GSAs. I’ve got a friend that I really care about that belongs to a GSA. Why does the government want to take it away?” This is what’s going on out there, and you guys need to hear this.

I’ve had teachers express significant concerns around the positions that they might be placed in because the only thing that they are focused on is those kids. How do we teach those kids so that they grow up with what they need to go out into the world, lead on the world stage, have successful lives, and just have some fun? No. We’re going to take a safe space away from them because of – I don’t know – some ideology out there. I seem to remember, at great length in the 29th Legislature, Madam Speaker, being told about my ideology: it’s your ideology this, and it’s because of your ideology that.

**An Hon. Member:** It is.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, I hate to tell you this, Member, but if you’ve got to keep explaining to me about my ideology, maybe you have one of your own, and our kids notice it. Our kids notice it.

When I have rules requiring that the detailed policies to support GSAs are weakened within public schools and not even in existence in private schools and there are claims that we’re here to represent all Albertans: sounds like only a very small few, Madam Speaker.

No policy is allowed to use the word “gay.” That’s what this is about, gay-straight alliances, queer-straight alliances. Listen to the kids. I’ve learned some pretty incredible things from them.

Timelines. That’s all great. I remember the Minister of Education standing up here saying: “It says right here. Kids are allowed to ask for a GSA.” Great. They can ask. Then what? I don’t know. Maybe we’ll start giving them the answer: yeah; well, we’ll get back to you on that in due course.

We need to take a very long second sober thought on this, Madam Speaker. We need to hit the pause button. We need to go out. We need to talk to our young emerging leaders that are affected by this. You know what? It’s not even GSAs that I’ve heard from that say: whoa, whoa, whoa, slow down here. It’s other organizations that have come to me and said: “Can you come visit us? We’ve got some people that would really like to talk to you about protecting these clubs, these organizations that provide just a nice, caring, safe atmosphere so you can come in and – well, let’s talk about what’s appropriate to put on pizza.”

So I stand here imploring with the members opposite. I don’t know. I’m probably even willing to get down and beg because what I am hearing is scaring these kids. They’re worried they’re going to get outed before they’ve gotten to the point where they’re comfortable to do that.

I remember having a discussion with somebody around this, and they said, “Well, this infringes on my right to know what’s going on with my child.” I said, “Well, wouldn’t you agree that if you have the relationship with your child that’s open and caring and honest, they’re probably going to tell you?” Then I couldn’t help but ask. I said, “You know, if you think back to when you were a kid, did you tell your parents absolutely every single detail of what was going on in your life?” The person paused for a moment, two, three, five moments. I said: “I didn’t think so. Don’t worry. Neither did I. I just thought there were a couple of little details here and there that I didn’t need to share with them. They didn’t need to know.” Believe me, Madam Speaker, they weren’t actually that big a deal.

**9:20**

But for these kids it is a big deal. It is a huge deal. We’ve all agreed in this House, on many different things, that if that happens to one child, that’s one too many. Explain to me, then. I saw a tweet one time where supposedly a father tweeted out: I would rather have a dead son than a gay son. Is that one too many? Do we need 10 of those? Do we need 100, 1,000? I don’t know. At what point do we say: maybe we made a mistake; maybe we shouldn’t have done that.

I’m very adamant to stand here. I will not support this bill as presented, but we have a chance to change it. We have a chance to put on the brakes. We have a chance to go back. We have a chance to change it, put in the protections that we had in Bill 24. I very clearly heard that everybody was happy with those changes. It was, like: “Yeah. That’s exactly what we’re looking for. This will provide us with the atmospheres that we need to feel safe, to feel a part of, and be able to flourish.” But for some reason here, we seem to think: the bicycle is broken; we need to fix it. Again maybe I’ll pose a bit of a challenge here, Madam Speaker – it’s like with another amendment we proposed – to go back and to rethink this. Go back, rethink it, prove me wrong. I will be more than happy to eat humble pie. I’ll do it right here in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** 29(2)(a) is available. Any comments or question? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for his comments. I appreciate him talking with passion. Clearly, he has shared many a passionate speech in this place as well as through other channels. Your focus is appreciated, hon. member. I was hoping that the member could talk a little bit about some of his experiences, perhaps, as a dad and how his kids helped him get to a place of understanding over the years. Sometimes I think we do our best learning when we are in a position where we think that we’re there to instill wisdom but sometimes it comes back to us instead. I thought maybe he could talk about parallels he’d

experienced through his own parenting or that he's heard other youth talk about in how they've helped their parents come to greater understanding with regard to who they are.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that question. You know, it's always funny. As a parent, no matter how hard you look, there never seems to be an instruction manual that comes with your children for how you can best interact with them. I can easily look back and say: maybe I haven't made all of the best decisions around that. Certainly, as my daughter has gotten older, we've had conversations about things that, quite honestly, I was surprised that she shared with me, surprised in a very good way because I finally managed to build that relationship, that trust so that she felt it was okay to share with me that piece of information. I never at one time felt: "Well, jeez. My rights are being taken away. Why isn't my child talking to me about these things?" Because I didn't create the relationship for her to feel like there was an avenue there, I'm hoping that as we move forward and she gets older, into her adult years here now, there will be more that she'll share with me.

One of the other experiences. I have a friend from high school, and I follow him quite regularly on Facebook. He lives out in B.C. He's become a rather successful actor. One of his children approached him one day and said, you know, essentially: Dad, I feel like I should be a girl. To watch her journey – because he was incredibly supportive. I mean, she travels now; she speaks about her experiences. My gosh, the pride that I see that he shows for her journey is so, so inspiring. My gosh, I hope that one day I'll just get a chance to meet her and shake her hand. Hopefully, some of that energy that makes her who she is will – I don't know – maybe rub off, and I'll be a better person for it.

I've also seen experiences that didn't go so well. Those relationships deteriorated very, very quickly. That's when we start seeing our youth become homeless. We've seen some very, very staggering statistics around our homeless youth and the percentage of them that identify with the LGBTQ2S-plus community. You just can't ignore those figures – you can't – unless, of course, you're blindfolding yourself, turning your back, which, of course, is a whole other problem.

We need to pass this amendment. We need to pause. We need to take a sober second thought, Madam Speaker. We need to talk to the ones this most affects, our young emerging leaders. They are the future. We have a responsibility to set them up for success. I can tell you right now that Bill 8 the way it is set up right now will not set them up for success. It will set them up for failure, and I for one will not stand here and allow that to happen.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to be able to rise to speak to the amendment to refer the so-named Bill Hate to more consultation, something that I strongly, strongly support because it is my view that insufficient consultation has taken place. Throughout the debate in the 30th Legislature, of which we are a part, on multiple bills many, many members of the government caucus have stood to talk in this House about the mandate that they achieved in the recently held election.

When it comes to the debate on this topic, I would really like the members to question whether or not there has been adequate consultation, because in the previous election the slogan of the

governing party – Jobs, Economy, Pipelines – resoundingly resonated with Albertans. But how does rolling back protections for GSAs add jobs? How does rolling back protections for youth in GSAs help the economy? How does rolling back protections for youth in GSAs build pipelines? The government, who loves to talk about the mandate that the election gave them, was elected to focus on these issues. Rolling back protections for youth in GSAs was not the agenda you told Albertans you would work on. In fact, your party, the governing party, the then leader of the UCP, now our Premier, specifically avoided talking about policies like rolling back protections for youth in GSAs. This is not the agenda you told Albertans you would focus on.

I would suggest that if you had, if you had included this in your door-knocking script, particularly many of the members here from Calgary, you may not be sitting here, because I can tell you that Albertans do not support a socially conservative agenda. Albertans do not want to revisit these issues yet again. You will see that on the signs at rallies. They do not support rolling back the protections for youth in GSAs.

9:30

Now I do not say this out of opinion, Madam Speaker. We know that Albertans do not support socially conservative ideas, and we know that because during the election almost 74,000 people shared their thoughts using the CBC's Vote Compass online questionnaire. This is just one survey. But when most Albertans are asked, "Should parents be notified when their children join a gay-straight alliance group at school?" the overwhelming majority say that they disagree with that statement, 63 per cent of Albertans. In fact, 54 per cent of the voters in Calgary think parents should not be told about their child's participation in a GSA. To be clear, Bill Hate will allow parental notification when a child joins a GSA, as many of my colleagues have mentioned in this debate over and over because it is important and because it matters, particularly to these young people.

We know that Albertans do not support a policy that will allow young members of a GSA to be outed to their parents. We know, based on the polling, based on the conversations at the doorstep that we had – although members opposite may not have wanted to raise these social issues at the doors – that when students want to form a GSA, having that happen in a timely way is meaningful, that enforcement and administration of these powers are critically important, and that Bill Hate removes that "immediately" clause, that language that says that it shouldn't be a fight, that it shouldn't take somebody who is already likely in a vulnerable position having to argue to get a GSA started in their school, that it shouldn't be a fight to use the word "gay" when they get a GSA started in their school. As often as the members of the governing party like to refer to their mandate, like to refer to the results of the election, Albertans did not elect you to out gay students, and I will continue to repeat that as we discuss why this deserves more consultation.

Now, Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity to speak to Bill Hate once before, and during that earlier address there were a couple of things that I was able to raise that I think really speak to the need for more consultation. I'd like to just touch on them very briefly without repeating myself. I talked about, from the LGBTQ2S Youth Housing and Shelter Guidelines, some of the shocking, horrifying statistics that members of the LGBTQ2S communities face.

- Nearly one in three homeless youth in Canada identify as LGBTQ2S.
- [These] youth identify the primary reason for homelessness as family rejection due to gender identity or sexual orientation.

So 1 in 3 homeless youth are homeless because of family rejection due to gender identity or sexual orientation, which means that

outing kids to their families before they are ready poses a very, very real risk to a good number of those students.

- LGBTQ2S homeless youth face higher rates of discrimination, violence and abuse . . .
- [They] are at a higher risk of mental health concerns and self-harm and exhibit higher rates of suicidality than the general [populace].

And all of this paints what is, obviously, a very difficult picture for students going through high school or junior high.

Upon hearing that, I know it because I have had conversations with members of our society who think this way, that the higher rates of homelessness and the higher rates of mental health issues are connected to the fact that these youth are gay or are part of the LGBTQ2S society. But, fortunately, we just had a new study released, and I've already had the opportunity to table this, Madam Speaker. I realize most members will have already read it because we all read all of the tablings, but just in case somebody missed it, I really wanted to emphasize this important document, that I had the chance to table last week, titled *1 in 5 Queer Young Adults Attempted Suicide in the Past Year, Study Shows*.

Mental health should be taken seriously no matter what, but a new study shows it's . . . especially pressing . . . in the queer community.

A suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ youth released a report

on the mental health of queer young adults. The results are pretty horrifying: Nearly 1 in 5 LGBTQ people ages 13 to 24, and 1 in 3 transgender and nonbinary young people in the same age group, attempted suicide in the past 12 months. Approximately 39% of LGBTQ youth surveyed had seriously considered suicide in the past year.

When we are talking about youth who belong to the LGBTQ2S community, I would love for the members in this House to hold in their heads the image of a young person that you may know, if you know any members of the LGBTQ2S community in your life, and then think that there might be a 40 per cent chance that that person, whom you know and love, may have contemplated suicide. That's the reality of what is happening.

Now, the really critical piece to this report, Madam Speaker, is that these mental health issues are not widespread because of identity or orientation. They are there because of discrimination. They are there because of the barriers that members of the LGBTQ2S community face when people they know and love try to change their sexual orientation or gender identity or when they are stigmatized or when they are misunderstood or feel alone. Each of these factors is critically important, and the creators of this study hoped that the results would be "a wake-up call for mental health professionals and loved ones of queer individuals." I hope that it might be a wake-up call for the legislators who sit in this Chamber and talk about lessening the protections for young people wanting to start and join a GSA: "We'll still have nearly the best or kind of the best or, you know, among the top. Wouldn't that be good enough?" Let's remember who we're talking about. We are talking about vulnerable youth who already face barriers.

I'd like to speak a little bit more about the impact of those barriers on the lives of these young people. We know that LGBTQ2S students routinely experience harassment in their schools but that GSAs and other support clubs provide social supports. We know that students can hear homophobic remarks from students and, unfortunately, instructors at times. We know this from the history, from talking to members of the community. The more harassment students have reported, the more likely the student is to report higher levels of depression, lower self-esteem. But LGBTQ2S students attending a school with a GSA reported hearing fewer homophobic expressions, experienced less victimization than

LGBTQ2S students attending a high school without a GSA. They also had more positive outcomes when it came to high school belonging, school victimization, and whatnot.

Now, this was interesting to me. I spoke in my first remarks regarding Bill Hate about knowing that there was some good information and research out there about GSAs and wanting to bring that back into this discussion in lieu of proper consultation, which, with the acceptance of this amendment, we could do instead. But understanding that the government is not in favour of more consultation, I would really like to speak a little bit more about the different impacts when LGBTQ2S students are not properly supported through a GSA.

For example, there was a study that actually found that two-thirds of LGBTQ2S students reported feeling unsafe at school, so unsafe that they were missing school for safety concerns. It's not uncommon for a student who is struggling, who feels unsupported, to miss school, impacting their performance. That same study found that the GPA for LGBTQ2S students, children, was on average a half grade lower than for straight students. That could be an indicator that LGBTQ2S youth face different barriers to education than straight youth. LGBTQ youth in high school were less likely to report that they wanted to pursue further education than straight youth, and can you blame them? If they are in an unsupportive environment, if going through high school has been hell and they haven't been able to have the support networks that all of us need, going on to postsecondary and continuing to do more schooling is probably not at the top of their list.

**9:40**

But I think it's really important to remember that by having a supportive school, GSAs, the people there available to support a student, you can be impacting that student's future performance. Now, having an active GSA on a high school campus has been associated with better academic outcomes, so in this case, Madam Speaker, I'm identifying the problem but also the solution. LGBTQ2S students tend to have slightly lower grades, tend not to go on to postsecondary as often. But if they have a GSA, all of a sudden their outcomes improve, and all of a sudden they have a supportive school community. That is what we are talking about. That is what we are fighting about. Having to fight against school administration because the word "immediately" has been removed, having to fight with school administration because the administration is not required to allow the word "gay": these are the challenges that will prevent a GSA from being formed.

GSAs are also associated with better mental health outcomes for LGBTQ2S students. For a lot of those mental health challenges that I talked about earlier, in many ways the students can be supported with a GSA. Students with a GSA in their high school reported less depression, less general psychological distress, higher self-esteem than students without a GSA at their high school as well as less truancy. So those kids skipping school because they didn't feel safe: that starts to happen less and less, helping their academic performance.

LGBTQ2S students with a support club in their school also reported lower levels of victimization and suicide attempts in comparison to schools without a support group. This touches on another article I was already able to table last week, Madam Speaker, which was an opinion piece titled *UCP's Education Bill Plays Games with Students' Lives*. It says, "The truth is simple: GSAs reduce teen suicide – LGBTQ and straight alike."

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm wondering. I've been really enjoying the comments from my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods about the importance that GSAs play in the lives of an identified vulnerable group in our schools, particularly the LGBTQ2S community of students. I wanted to know if she would mind sharing some of her insight as a member of the NDP government over the last four years, when the strongest protections for GSAs were introduced by this government to protect these students. I'm wondering if she can share some of the stories or information that she heard during her time with that government that led to the government of the time's decision to bring in Bill 24.

She's spoken very eloquently about the personal and direct impact that these GSAs have on these kids' lives, how important they are with respect to providing them safety and security and making them feel welcome in their community. My understanding is that those Bill 24 provisions were brought in because there was an identified need for them, that voices were heard from many students, from teachers, from administrators about how the previous provisions, under what was Bill 10, were inadequate. I'm wondering if perhaps the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods could share some of the information that she received in her time as a cabinet minister within the government when Bill 24 protections were brought in.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. Well, Madam Speaker, when I think about Bill 24 and the changes that were implemented with Bill 24, they are essentially the direct opposite of what the government is doing now. Making sure that there was that enforcement and support, enabling legislation was an important first step. But then making sure that schools, school districts, principals, all members of the school community were adhering to and following that legislation and creating those safe and supportive communities was critically important.

Bill 24 was something that not only teachers were asking for to clear up confusion about outing LGBTQ2S students, but it was also something that the students themselves were asking for after running into difficulties forming GSAs. It is my opinion that by removing some of those protections, those enforcement provisions that were introduced through Bill 24, which is essentially what Bill Hate is all about, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has talked about now at length and other members of my caucus, all of the meat of that old Education Act, all of its intended purposes have been removed, and it is now just the dusky cloak that the removal of protections for youth in GSAs is now kind of hiding under so that it can get passed. It's an anti-GSA bill.

One thing I would like to just remark on is that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud in her remarks was talking about how the old Education Act was really focused on high school completion rates and getting kids to stay in school, and I just think it's so interesting that the version they've brought forward has lost that focus entirely. Instead, we have a government that is reducing the minimum wage for youth, but if they drop out of school, they'll get \$2 an hour more. Really, if we're talking about a pendulum, we're swinging all the way over. We're not worried about high school completion anymore. In fact, we're encouraging kids through a financial incentive to drop out, to make more money because they might need to support their families. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that it's not the well-supported youth that are going to do that. It's the vulnerable youth. It's the vulnerable youth that need that money to support themselves, possibly to support their own family. Making sure that we have more time to consult, to consider what these youth

and these students may be experiencing, and to talk to all members of school communities is really important.

In my research for my remarks today, Madam Speaker, one very interesting thing I found was that the mere presence of a GSA, whether or not students participated in it – you could just have attended a school that happened to have a GSA – is actually related to students' attitudes towards LGBTQ-plus people in their time in high school. We actually saw that university students who reported having a GSA in their high school were more likely to report positive attitudes towards LGBTQ2S individuals in general when attending university. I think that's important.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, shall I call the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 8 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:48 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Eggen	Nielsen
Carson	Goehring	Pancholi
Dang	Gray	Renaud
Deol	Hoffman	Shepherd

Against the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Schow
Copping	Long	Shandro
Getson	Nally	Toews
Glubish	Neudorf	Toor
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Turton
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Yao
Issik	Pon	Yaseen
Jones	Reid	

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 29
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[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 8 lost]

**The Speaker:** We are now back on the main bill. Are there any other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise tonight to speak to the main bill, which in our discussion of the bill our side of the House and indeed many Albertans have chosen to dub Bill Hate.

A quote, Madam Speaker: Albertans may not want “political agendas” in the classroom, but for the Premier education policy is all about ideology; his comments reflect an ambition to steer the province's K to 12 system toward a more socially conservative and market-oriented underpinning, even to encourage more Albertans to educate outside the traditional public system, and the fastest way for him to do that, critics say, is to undermine the public system itself. That is from an article about the Premier's vision for K to 12. That is what we are here talking about tonight: Bill 8, Bill Hate, the thinnest of fig leaves attempting to cover this Premier's attempt to make a socially conservative revision to schools in the province of Alberta.

Now, members of the government, Madam Speaker, have been very defensive on this point though not very verbally, at least not during debate on the bill. They've been relatively silent on that point. But in question period and at other times and certainly in talking to the media, they have tried to portray the Education Act as being about modernizing the education system here in the province of Alberta. I think several of my colleagues have quite capably disassembled that argument; they've taken it apart. It's quite clear, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud laid out, having herself been one of the main drafters of this very piece of legislation, that the bill we have in front of us today barely resembles and is but a pale shadow of what the Education Act actually was. It is thin, it is flimsy, and the majority of Albertans are not fooled.

You know, we talk about what the Education Act was originally intended to do. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that the only time in my first four years in office that I ever had a constituent talk to me about the Education Act and express an interest in seeing it proclaimed was when I visited with folks at the Boyle Street Education Centre, which is a charter school here in my constituency that works with high-risk and marginalized youth. It's a fantastic institution. It's been running for, I think, over 20 years. It's changed the lives and given new opportunity to many, many young people.

They spoke to me, and they said that one thing that they liked about the Education Act was that it was extending the age to 21. They have many students who come to them after having gone through significant trauma or had real struggles in their life, and for them to be cut off, you know, at the age of 18 often meant that those students would not complete their high school education. But if they had the opportunity to extend that to 21, for many of these youth who went through difficult times and came back to school a little later in their teenage years, that would give them the opportunity to complete it. That's the only time I had any constituent in my many conversations with teachers, schools, administrators, students, all kinds of stakeholders, ask for that bill to be resurrected. Even that, Madam Speaker, is being stripped out because this government felt that it would be too hasty to move forward on that now. Indeed, if they're looking to cut costs, they recognize that making that kind of a change would definitely increase costs in the system, so they're choosing to not act on that.

As we've discussed, the most important changes, the actual transformative pieces of the Education Act, have all been stripped out. In the meantime, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud noted, this government has been quick to adopt many of the changes we had already made to the School Act and implement them here. We thank them for the compliment.

**10:10**

However, on this one point, on the issue of students participating in a peer support group called a gay-straight or queer-straight alliance, this government is doubling down on ideology. It is clear, Madam Speaker, that the only reason we have this piece of legislation in front of us in this House today, the only reason that it was mentioned in the UCP platform – indeed in the UCP platform there was no detail provided. All that was said was: we will proclaim the Education Act. That was a big document. It was thick. It laid out all kinds of promises, but this government did not see fit to actually discuss any of the detail of why it wanted to proclaim the Education Act or how it would actually do it or what it actually intended to do with it. Indeed we did not hear a peep from a single member of this government as they canvassed at the doors, or at least none that were really out in the public. Perhaps they did have this conversation with some, but I think, as my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods noted, they were probably not at the

doors talking to people about the changes they wanted to make to GSAs in the province of Alberta.

I can tell you though, Madam Speaker, that when I was out knocking on the doors and talking to people and when I was out attending events and indeed when I was at forums in my community here, I did hear from a number of constituents who were very concerned, based on the record of comments that were previously made by this Premier in the press and in many other places, sometimes in private at some of the conferences he attended and to other members of this Legislature. As I discussed when I had the chance to speak to this bill last week, intentionally spreading misinformation about what a gay-straight alliance is, what a queer-straight alliance is, what it is meant to accomplish, claiming that these were ideological sex clubs, that these were groups that were intending to smuggle in teaching on sexual education that wouldn't be allowed otherwise, that these were groups that were intended for a political purpose – I can think of no other reason that this government would be bringing forward these changes, bringing forward this bill unless at some level they fundamentally believe that to be the case.

That's unfortunate, Madam Speaker. That's regrettable because this is a government that likes to be very proud of many things about our province and indeed insists that we must as a province have the best of everything. We must have the lowest corporate tax.

**Ms Hoffman:** By far.

**Mr. Shepherd:** By far indeed.

We must give employers the chance to pay a lower wage so that they can have that opportunity to grow their business, or so they claim. But when it comes to GSAs, when it comes to protecting vulnerable LGBTQ students, this government is content with good enough.

The only reason, Madam Speaker, to step back and to roll things back from the protections that we brought in for students, ensuring that when they ask to form a GSA, it must be provided immediately and cannot be indefinitely delayed by administration – they are removing that and leaving that ambiguous. Stating that a school must allow students, if they so wish, to use the words “gay” or “queer” in naming their club: they are removing that. Having the clarity laid out in a very simple statement that the only person who has the right to decide when a youth comes out is that youth themselves: they are removing that. The only reason to remove those simple protections, those simple provisions is because they do not believe that GSAs are what they are. They do not believe that they are simply clubs for youth to support each other.

They are believing in the conspiracy theories, the false information, some of the most foul suggestions about LGBTQ youth and not only about those youth, Madam Speaker. They are truly, to some extent, believing that there are adults that are coming in and interfering and looking to corrupt their youth. They believe that there is a gay agenda. That is the only reason to go in and make these changes, and no member of this government has stood up and given any other defence. The best they can do is an ambiguous comment about balance, but they will not define what that balance is or who they are trying to balance this for. They dare not speak it because they know that if they put that on the record, Albertans are not going to support them.

You know, it strikes me as strange, Madam Speaker, how this government decides what balance means. We have heard from the Minister of Advanced Education about his intentions for our postsecondary institutions here in the province of Alberta. He intends to bring in policies to have those institutions be forced to introduce policies that will guarantee free speech on their campus.

When it comes to postsecondary institutions, the rule of this government is that the rights of students to express themselves hold higher place than the values or standards of a particular institution. That's a clear statement. That's the policy they're going to bring forward.

But when it comes to GSAs, all of a sudden they stand their ethics on its head, they flip it upside down, and they insist that the purported values of an institution must be allowed to override the rights of a student to express themselves. They are twisting themselves in knots to try to justify what we recognize is this Premier's payoff to a very particular, socially conservative segment of his base. That is the only reason this government is proclaiming this Education Act, this gutted Education Act, this shell of its former self, and it's disappointing, Madam Speaker. It's disappointing that this government feels it is so important that they must move on it immediately, but they don't have the guts to stand and admit what it is that they are doing.

I had the chance to attend several events last week, Madam Speaker, for Pride Week. Let me tell you that we have an incredible community here in Edmonton, the LGBTQ2S-plus community, their allies. It was wonderful to see people of all ages out celebrating at these events. I can tell you again that at every event I went to, when I spoke to individuals, they said: "Thank you for holding this government to account. Thank you for speaking up against Bill Hate." They see and they recognize what this government is doing, and I think that you will see many of them here on Wednesday night.

As my colleagues have noted, Madam Speaker, this government did not have the courage to actually run on this significant change. I hope that suggests that maybe there is at least some sense of shame, though on the part of this Premier on this particular issue, I don't think there is. I think that's been demonstrated quite adequately over and over again.

Frankly, I don't envy members of the government who are sitting here now through this debate and having to put themselves in the position where, I think, many recognize what it is that they're doing here. They are making the choice, out of political expediency, to sit and remain silent, to not speak up on social media, to not speak in this House, to not go to their constituents and speak to them clearly about what it is that they are wishing to do. They will stand and they will vote for this bill to get that corporate tax cut, to maintain that solidarity with the caucus that they were elected with.

10:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is in effect. Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was so riveted to hear the comments from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I know that his experience and the diversity in his area bring a lot to this debate. Perhaps he would like to enlighten us a bit more on some of what the government should be ashamed of, and if they aren't, perhaps we can hear more from the member about why they should be.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think I've been pretty clear on what my thoughts are on this bill and on members of the government that choose to support it.

What I will say is that I understand from whence this comes. I grew up in a very conservative, religious family. I myself held many of these views for many, many years. What shifted it for me,

Madam Speaker, is when the bottom fell out of my own life and when I had a severe struggle with my mental health. I found out that just like members of the LGBTQ community, who at that time in my life I would have said were rightfully shut out from that community that I had grown up in and been part of, all of a sudden there was no place for me there. I didn't fit the ideology. I didn't fit that picture of faith and that world view, so I found myself on the outside. That was the beginning of a transformation for me. It took many more years for me to make that journey, but that's where it began.

I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, that that is what this bill is trying to codify again. It is trying to say to these students: "Well, okay. We recognize that we can't just shut you down all the way anymore, but we're going to put in a few things just to make sure you know your place. We're going to put in a few things just to make sure we can keep you enough in line that we don't have to challenge our world view or our personal values and we don't have to reconcile the fact that you are real and living human beings and that this is, in fact, who you are with the fact that my beliefs tell me otherwise." That's, I guess, the preacher in me coming out again.

But I can tell you that if there's anything that I have carried forward from what I learned of faith, if there was anything that I learned from the gospels and watching the life of Jesus and the way he treated people, it's that he did not make outsiders. He bent the rules, he broke the rules, he broke the social mores to recognize people as real human beings. The people he questioned were the religious authorities. Those were the people he challenged, and those were the systems he worked to tear down. That is not the spirit of this bill, Madam Speaker. That is not the spirit of those who pressed this Premier to make these changes, who fought and currently have their case in our courts, trying to defeat this support for students in our schools.

That's why it's incredibly important for me to stand and make my voice heard in this Legislature. I cannot stop this government from moving this bill, but I will speak my piece on behalf of my constituents, and I will work to make sure as many Albertans as possible know what this government is choosing to do, the impact that it is going to have on countless LGBTQ youth across this province and what that says about the character of this Premier and what that says about the priorities of this government. This bill is a betrayal of Albertans, Madam Speaker. It is a shameful thing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise in this Assembly and to debate at any hour. However, I wish that today we didn't have to stand here and debate Bill Hate, an act to destroy gay-straight alliances. I wish that we didn't have to stand here and explain to the government why what they are doing is going to hurt so many vulnerable students. I wish that we didn't have to stand here and explain why this is the wrong thing to do, because that should be self-evident. It should be clear when students are walking out of their classrooms to tell the government that they do not want this. It should be clear that when we look back to when Bill 10 was originally introduced, the revisions that are being rolled back today – the students are lined up in these hallways and in these galleries. It should be clear that what is being proposed in Bill Hate absolutely hurts the protections for vulnerable youth.

These are things that this Assembly should be ashamed of. We should be ashamed that we even have to stand here and defend these rights, because LGBTQ2S-plus rights are human rights. It is not something that we should have to debate in this Assembly. It is not something that we should be playing with because it is the will of

the Premier or the Minister of Education. These are rights that we should be looking out to protect for every single Albertan and every single one of our constituents. We know very clearly that the Premier is planning to roll back protections for students, and we know very clearly that this puts us behind the pack in Canada for protections for LGBTQ2S-plus youth. That is something that is going to be threatening for lives and for students, Madam Speaker. These are students who need these protections.

When we say things like “gay-straight alliances” and “queer-straight alliances,” those words matter. I know it took weeks before the Education minister had the courage to say those words. But I’ll let you know that students and the vulnerable young Albertans that we are fighting for, the opposition here on this side of the House, understand that those words matter. They understand how important it is that we recognize their identity and that we fight for their identity, Madam Speaker. If government members don’t understand how important that is, then I hope that in this debate they would open their eyes and perhaps open their ears, and they could learn, because this is something that, absolutely, Albertans can learn and, absolutely, we have the opportunity to teach.

I would hope that we’d be able to have a discussion on why these are important protections for young people. When we look at the priorities of this government – Jobs, Economy, Pipelines: I heard it time and time again in the campaign – the priorities of what this government set out to do, nowhere did I see: target young people; attack vulnerable youth. Those were not the priorities that I heard, Madam Speaker, and those were not the priorities that I was sent here to uphold.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, welcome back.

It is something that I absolutely will have to stand against because these vulnerable Albertans need a voice in this Assembly. They need a voice because this government does not understand or does not care about the harm that they are going to do to families. They do not understand or they do not care about the impact that taking out protections like mandatory acceptance of the word “gay” in these GSAs will have.

We can have many opportunities to bring forward witnesses, we can have many opportunities to bring forward experts in this area who can speak to how important it is, or we can listen to the people who have spoken before us on why this bill was changed so many times in the past and why there were so many protests just on the steps of this very Legislature not that long ago. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I know that students will be just as concerned today as they were years ago. That is something that our opposition will always stand with. We will always stand with the young Albertans who are being targeted by this government. They are being singled out and attacked, and I don’t understand why because members of the government and private members of the government caucus simply will not explain why they think it is okay to roll back these protections, that were some of the strongest protections in the country, and go back to protections that were fought against, basically, by every single student in this province, something that really does not go far enough and something that absolutely will endanger the lives of Alberta’s most vulnerable youth. These are the youth that absolutely need someone to recognize their identity, absolutely need somebody to help protect their identity and make sure that they are accepted in a loving manner.

10:30

I understand that the Minister of Education has said many times that she supports inclusion groups, Mr. Speaker, but that’s not good enough because when you use the words “inclusion group,” what

you are intentionally doing is excluding their identities. You are specifically trying to not say gay-straight alliance, you are specifically trying to not say queer-straight alliance, and you are specifically trying to move the message box away from gay kids. That’s what we are talking about in Bill Hate. That is what this bill does. It destroys gay-straight alliances, it attacks queer youth, and that is something that every single member of this Assembly should be concerned about. If they aren’t, this is their opportunity to learn about why they should be concerned because GSAs and QSAs are proven to help reduce the risk of things like teen suicide, to help improve teen mental health. This is just the tip of the iceberg. It is something that is essential for our school system to be able to protect these young people.

It is essential that we understand the damage this bill will do because this bill, I believe, actually goes against the mandate of the Education minister. It actually goes against the mandate of the Education minister because it puts students that are under her care at risk. It actually encourages students under her care to not have the safe spaces they need, and that is something the Education minister should be concerned about, that she was asked to put forward a bill that would actually harm the students under her care. That is something that all members of this Assembly should be concerned about.

If the Premier wants to push forward with that, that is the Premier’s prerogative, but I would hope that members of the government caucus and the government front bench here would understand what the ramifications of that will actually be, that they would understand how they would actually go in and hurt children where they are the most vulnerable, right in their classrooms.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I’m quite a bit younger than many members of this Assembly, and one of the things that I had in my high school was actually a GSA. I know that for a lot of members who perhaps went to school a few years before me, they maybe did not yet have GSAs, gay-straight alliances, established in their schools. One of the things I remember about GSAs was that I would go visit on occasion, and it was usually – I think they hosted it on a Thursday night. We’d walk into one of the film studies rooms, and they’d screen a movie, and for about 50 cents you’d get a little paper bag of popcorn. They had a popcorn machine in the corner. That was the extent of their activity that week. That was what a GSA was. A GSA was intended to create a safe space that every single student in the school could go to, have their little bag of popcorn, hang out, and speak to each other like real human beings.

It wasn’t something that you put your name on a list and decided whether you were going to be gay that day or not. It wasn’t something that you put your name on a list and decided which parents to send it home to. It wasn’t something that the teachers came to and recorded everyone who was there and said: okay; well, we’re going to be monitoring all these kids to see what they do in the next week or two or if they’re a mental health risk or anything like that, Mr. Speaker. No. A GSA is a social club for students to be able to have a safe, inclusive space so that people can broaden their horizons and understand what people from different backgrounds and different identities have in common with them.

I would encourage members of the government, who perhaps did not have the same opportunity to have those experiences as I did in school, to go out and actually talk to students in GSAs. If they actually went and talked to students in GSAs and QSAs, talked to actual gay kids and consulted with actual gay and queer students, they would understand what GSAs are and how GSAs work. What they would actually find out is that these groups are loving, caring spaces that create opportunity for students, that work and have strong supports.

These support systems are shown to reduce the risk of teen suicide, to reduce the risk of youth mental health issues. It's something as simple as that movie night every single Thursday, Mr. Speaker. It's that simple. But the government doesn't understand that, or they don't care. They either don't understand or they don't care that these simple clubs or gatherings of students are what saves lives, what actually makes a difference in saving the lives of students right here in our province, right here in our schools, right here in our neighbourhoods. That's something that I think all members of the government should take a deep look at and find out for themselves what that means.

These are our kids. These are the kids that go to school with your children. These may be your children themselves. Mr. Speaker, that is something that we should fight for every single day in this Assembly. We should fight for their protections because we understand that they are the ones that matter when we talk about education, when we talk about an education system. We are doing this to make sure that our students have the best possible place to learn and the safest and most loving environment, and GSAs and QSAs provide that. But when Bill Hate is introduced and when this bill goes in and destroys the protections for GSAs to call themselves that, for QSAs to call themselves that, that is all put at risk. The lives of these students are put at risk.

That is something that the government should be ashamed of, Mr. Speaker. It's something that they should be concerned about. Really, it's something that the Minister of Education should be deeply concerned about because those are her students. Her students are the ones that are going to suffer the most because in this province we used to have these protections, and now, very clearly, we will not. Now, very clearly, this Assembly and this government will vote to put those lives at risk.

That is something that the government should either be concerned about or, if they're not, they should be ashamed about. They should be aware of what they are doing, and if they are not, they should perhaps take the earphones out, and they should perhaps just start listening because these are the voices of students all across the province. These are the voices of young people who understand how important these spaces are for them, who understand the importance of being able to say that they attend a gay-straight alliance or that they are gay or bisexual or queer or two spirited, whatever the term is, Mr. Speaker, that they wish to self-identify as. That is so important.

We can see very clearly that the government did not run on this. They ran on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. Now what they've done instead is that they have shifted their tactics to attacking young people. On one hand, Mr. Speaker, they've said that they won't focus on social issues, and on the other, they've gone right in and then started to directly destroy the protections in place for vulnerable Albertans, and that is something that is very concerning. That is something that this entire Assembly should be extremely concerned about.

Now, I understand that this is very new for a lot of these members. Perhaps even when the protections were in place, in a lot of the schools that are in their areas GSAs never did exist or GSAs were not established. But, Mr. Speaker, ignorance is not an excuse. Just because there was no evidence of this in the past, just because there was no experience with this in the past does not mean that these students do not need protection today. It does not mean that these students do not need that protection. Just because in one school there is no GSA and things appear to be okay does not mean that we still do not need to protect those students if they so choose in the future, and that is what is being rolled back in this bill.

What is being rolled back in this bill is all of the protections that have been researched and understood to help save lives, and the

government needs to understand that. If they don't, then they need to listen. If they do and they don't care, then that is something that all Albertans should be extremely concerned about, Mr. Speaker, because these are the things that Albertans understand.

**10:40**

It's their families and the safety of their families that are under attack by this bill. It's that this bill goes into classrooms and goes into schools and attacks students. It attacks young vulnerable Albertans. It attacks all of the people who are fighting to protect their identities, and that's something that all members of this Assembly should be extremely concerned about.

I would urge everybody to take a deep listen and a deep look and vote against this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see that the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you. I appreciate an opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a). I'd like to address a couple of things raised by the hon. member. The very first thing I'd like to raise is some of his comments towards my friend the hon. Education minister, who was my friend long before we came to this Chamber and, I assure you, will be my friend long after we leave this Chamber, who's done a great job. I want to assure the entire Chamber that this caucus, this cabinet, and the Premier, for that matter, have nothing but utmost faith in the Education minister, who is working extremely hard. In all the years that I've known her and as you have, Mr. Speaker, she has done nothing but work very hard for the education system, has dedicated much of her life to the children of this province, and I'm proud of her for that. It's disappointing to continue to see members of the opposition misrepresent the hon. member's integrity and dedication to that fact.

I'd like to also just draw the hon. member's attention to page 60 of the United Conservative Party's platform, the Strong and Free platform, in which we make the following promise: to "proclaim the Education Act (2012)" – it's been around since 2012 – "taking effect on September 1, 2019." It then goes on to say that "a UCP government will trust the hard work done by those who created the 2012 Education Act, and proclaim that legislation, already passed by the Legislature, unlike the NDP's curriculum review," which was done largely in secret and without widespread consultation.

That is the difference between these two parties, and the hon. Education minister is following the platform promises that were made to Albertans and that were voted on by record numbers as the NDP were completely and utterly rejected by the people of this province and went on their way to become the only one-term government in the history of this province.

It's also disappointing to continue to watch the opposition members rise in this House, misrepresent facts, Mr. Speaker, and continue to use LGBTQ children as props in a political push about a bill, a fairly thick bill – I have it right here – a 41-page bill that does not address GSAs. In fact, Bill 10 was supported by both the legacy parties that make up the United Conservative Party and by the NDP when they were in opposition. That bill remains in place, Bill 10.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what will happen when a student or group of students wishes to create a gay-straight alliance right now even after this new bill passes? Do you know what'll happen? Well, step 1, the student or students will ask a staff member at a school to start a GSA. Well, that seems okay. It's seems a lot different than what the opposition is presenting. Step 2, the principal will permit the GSA, the complete opposite again of what the opposition is presenting. Step 3, the principal designates a staff liaison to support



the GSA, very different than what the opposition is presenting. Step 4, the students select a group name. My friends, my friends inside this Chamber, the students select the name of the group. Step 5, if the principal cannot find a staff liaison, the principal informs both the board and the minister, and the minister appoints a responsible adult. Step 6, as a student-led group the students with support from their staff liaison plan the next steps such as meeting dates, times, and activities. The final step: a GSA is formed. A gay-straight alliance is formed.

Nothing changes in Bill 8. The rules and the legislation that passed this very Chamber with the support of almost every member of the Legislature at the time and the majority of members of all parties that were in the Legislature remain in place.

**Ms Pancholi:** Then why are you changing it?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Now, the question that is being heckled at me, Madam – or Mr. Speaker. I thought you had left for the evening. Great to see you back.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are all very aware that you would never refer to the absence or the presence of a member in the Chamber. I'm sure the Government House Leader is happy to withdraw and apologize to the Speaker.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Not at all. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to withdraw and apologize if I referred to your absence, but you were here in the Chamber.

**The Speaker:** That's what I thought.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Of course, that's what I referred to the entire time.

My point is: why we would bring forward the education bill that we brought forward is because this is what was promised Albertans. While the NDP cannot defend the fact to speak against . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is anyone else wishing to speak to . . .

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Dang:** The hon. member to my right from Calgary-Klein here has just actually stated through a heckle, Mr. Speaker – I'm sure you can check the microphones if you'd like – “because you keep lying to them,” referring to myself and the hon. member right behind me. I believe that is actually an affront to this House, and it is clearly in the standing orders under 23(h), (i), and (j). Also, very clearly we know it is unparliamentary to refer to any individual member and say that they have lied to this House or to anybody else. I would ask him to withdraw and apologize.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, did you hear the comments because I certainly . . .

**The Speaker:** Whoa. Whoa. The hon. Government House Leader is rising to defend the point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought you had already recognized me.

I did not hear any such comments. I think it's pretty rich, though, for the hon. member to want to be talking about who's misrepresenting things inside this House. I won't use the unparliamentary term, but it's pretty clear what's been happening here this evening, and certainly I will not withdraw and apologize for that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, while I appreciate the withdrawal from the Government House Leader, I would say that it's a fairly long-standing parliamentary tradition that when the member is present and eligible or able to withdraw and apologize, the member would do that on their own behalf. Having said that . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I never said that he said it.

**The Speaker:** It's okay. Let's wait . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** Hang on. How about you wait to find out what my decision is before you disagree with my decision under Standing Order 13(2).

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I'm looking forward to it.

**The Speaker:** Me too.

I would ask that while the Speaker is on his feet, the Government House Leader – as much humour as he'd like to try to interject into this particular decision, perhaps he would keep his humour to himself while the Speaker is on his feet.

What I would say is that from time to time members will make comments from their seats that may or may not be heard by the Speaker. There have been other cases where I have heard members make comments that are certainly not parliamentary, and I have encouraged them to withdraw and apologize. Without the benefit of the Blues or the opportunity to hear what was said, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has quite rightly pointed out, if in fact the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein did make the accusation that someone was lying, it would be appropriate for him to stand, withdraw, and apologize for making that remark. I did not hear that remark, so it would be up to the hon. member to determine whether or not he chooses to do so.

Having said that, I would encourage all members of the Assembly, no matter the time of day, hour of night or early morning, that we would create an environment that promotes rigorous debate but without the use of unparliamentary language.

#### Debate Continued

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** On the bill.

**The Speaker:** You'd like to add to debate on Bill 8?

10:50

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes. Awesome. Thank you. I'd like to just finish a few of my comments on debate. You get to step 6 and there's a GSA that is formed. Now, you saw or you heard – I see them; you didn't see them – all of those steps. Where in all of those steps, Mr. Speaker, through you to all of the hon. members of the Chamber, does it call with this act to stop GSAs? For days we've listened to it in the Chamber from the NDP as they misrepresent those facts, clear facts, to this very Chamber and continue to use LGBTQ kids as a political prop rather than to debate this important piece of legislation. It's disappointing because they continue to basically

fearmonger with the LGBTQ community. They continue to tell the LGBTQ community that there will not be gay-straight alliances, that this legislation will stop that. They go so far as to tell the hon. members of this place that if they support this bill, that means that they don't support LGBTQ kids, but the problem is that the legislation actually does that.

Mr. Speaker, I know you were here in these buildings. At the time you were not an hon. member, I know, but you were here staffing one of the opposition caucuses. You were here for the historical debates that would go on to create Bill 10. The reality is that the majority of this Chamber established Bill 10 as law and this party, the United Conservative Party, who now has the privilege of being Her Majesty's government in this province, has always supported that since our conception. We've made that clear. We supported GSAs during the entire campaign, we will continue to support GSAs inside this Chamber, and the hon. the Education minister continues to support them with her education bill that is before this House by making sure that they will take place.

It's disappointing because it takes away from the real debate that should be happening about a bill that is 41 pages long. We've heard no comments from the opposition except for about a topic which, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you and to all the Chamber, is an important topic. GSAs and standing up for LGBTQ youth and any child, for that matter, who is being bullied inside our schools is something that's important to us in this Chamber and should be important to us in this Chamber. But the issue that they're raising is not part of this bill. Instead of talking on behalf of their constituents about the actual legislation before this House, they continue to fearmonger and tell the LGBTQ community that GSAs will not exist.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, who we were just talking about earlier, Mr. Speaker, dedicated much of his life to working with LGBTQ youth, much of his life. I know him well. He would not stand and support anything that would say what the hon. members from the opposition continue to say.

Now, I understand the members opposite are having trouble understanding this, but again I want to be clear. The Education Act is clear. The legislation guarantees students are entitled to create groups including GSAs and QSAs, complete opposite of what the hon. members across the way continue to say day in and day out, complete disservice to the people of Alberta. They have a job to do, a very important job to do. I've had the privilege, as you have, Mr. Speaker, to serve in opposition. I respect the opposition's role inside our parliamentary democracy. I think it's an important role. I think they should speak on behalf of their constituents. I will always encourage them to do that. But they should focus on what are actual facts inside the legislation instead of misrepresenting facts for their political gain inside this place. They do a disservice to the debate by doing that. They do a disservice to this legislation. It is our responsibility to get out of this Chamber the best bill that we can, but the hon. opposition, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, in this place won't even talk about the bill that's before the House. Instead, they continue to talk about misrepresented facts inside this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to clarify some additional misconceptions that have been raised by members of the opposition as I think it's important for us as legislators to set the record straight as we debate this very important bill. Now, last week during question period the Leader of the Opposition highlighted a policy for Nova Scotia. What she failed to clearly outline is that Nova Scotia has no overarching provincial statutes protecting GSAs. Unlike the policies for Nova Scotia, the protection provided by the Education Amendment Act, 2019, Bill 8, right here, that we are debating, and Alberta's already robust privacy legislations will all be enshrined

in law, as this side of the House has been saying for days, the best statutory protection in all of the country.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the hon. members, if they truly believe that it is their job as the Official Opposition to make legislation better, to stand up for constituents, that they come here with facts, show us the ways that bills could change, come up with good, concrete ideas on behalf of Albertans, bring forward amendments that we could do to make this legislation stronger, but don't stand up in the House and misrepresent facts over and over and over. Don't stand up in the House and attempt to bully an Education minister, who, by the way, ain't going to blink. I've known her a long time. She ain't going to blink, and nor should she because we committed to the people of Alberta that we would bring Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, to this Chamber. We brought it to this Chamber. We're going to pass it through this Chamber, I suspect. I know I'm looking forward to voting for it because it's a promise made and a promise kept. That's what we are focused on in this spring legislation.

The opposition should take a little bit of humility finally and maybe go back and look in the mirror and ask what has taken place for them to have to sit on that side of the House. I know, Mr. Speaker, I heard you speak about it much when you were in opposition, warning the then government that if they continued down the path that they have, ignoring Albertans, continued with fear and smear and attacking people, they would end up on that very side of the House. Shockingly, now that they're there, they still have not taken the time to sit down and reflect on what got them there. Instead, they have continued with the exact same tactics that put them inside those benches.

I see the Opposition House Leader shaking his head, but he knows deep down in his heart that I'm right. He knows. See, Mr. Speaker, he agrees. Sometimes when you get to a spot like that, that's when we could finally get some productive debate inside this Chamber.

I will close with this, Mr. Speaker, because I know that you're on the edge of your seat. The reality is this. The facts that are being presented by the opposition when it comes to Bill 8 are not factual. They are misrepresenting the facts. They are debating it from a position of attempting to score political points by using LGBTQ youth as a political prop, an important group of people that they should not be using as a political prop, and instead of making sure that we end up with the best Bill 8, the best Education Act that this province could ask for, they're spending their time trying to score cheap political points.

Mr. Speaker, I will assure, through you to all the LGBTQ youth of our province, that this government remains committed to protecting GSAs. We remain committed to Bill 10 – we've been clear on that – again, a bill that was supported by that opposition's legacy parties. Some of the members in that opposition party voted for Bill 10 at the time, voted for Bill 10. That will remain in place despite what the opposition continues to want to do, and when we're done here, whenever we finally can push the opposition to allow this to be voted on, we will go through with what Albertans have instructed us to do. We will pass Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, and you know what? We're not going to stop there. We're going to keep moving through the legislation we promised Albertans despite the fact that the NDP want to play games.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments. I see the hon. Opposition House Leader rising to ask a brief question or make a comment.

**Mr. Bilous:** Sure, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for this opportunity. I mean, I need to clarify some of the mistruths that were recently

just said about our government although first I want to start off by reminding all members of this House that regardless of what side of this House we sit on, for the UCP and for the Government House Leader, every single Albertan in his riding did not vote for him. There's no member in this House who collected or earned every single vote from every Albertan. So I find it a little rich considering the arrogance that we are seeing in this Chamber. I did not get every single vote in my riding. There were people who voted for the UCP, just as for every member in this House, including members who won under the UCP banner. They did not get every single vote in their riding. There are New Democrats around this province who didn't vote for them, just as there are members of the UCP around the province who didn't vote for us.

You know, I want to take a moment to remind members that we are here to serve all Albertans and that the government is – honestly, this current government is reminding me a lot of the government pre-2015 election as far as the level of arrogance: we were voted a majority; ergo, we can do whatever we want because Albertans gave us carte blanche to ram whatever legislation we want down their throats. Well, the reality is that they did not. The purpose of the opposition is to debate bills and legislation, and if the Government House Leader is tired of listening to the opposition, well, I'm sorry; you're going to have to listen for quite a while longer because I think we have a lot to say.

11:00

I heard our Member for Edmonton-Whitemud asking the Government House Leader to name some other amendments that this bill makes as far as changes to the other acts. I think what's fascinating is that when you listen to, for example, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud – she worked on the last few iterations of different education bills. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I was teaching at Inner City High School when Inspiring Education came around. I remember Dave Hancock coming to the school to talk to students and teachers and support staff about their vision for changing the Education Act back then.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there was, you know, no consultation on what this government is bringing in. Yes, they won a majority, but I don't think Albertans sent them here with a mandate to attack gay-straight alliances and attack the LGBTQ community, quite frankly. I don't remember that in the slogan of the UCP. So it's just a little rich getting lectured from the Government House Leader on the role of opposition, on what we are doing and how somehow by presenting facts, tabling reports that that is somehow spreading mistruths.

The Government House Leader tried to talk about Nova Scotia and the fact that theirs isn't enshrined in legislation. They still have stronger protections for their youth. Whether the tool is through legislation or through a ministerial order or through regulations is not relevant, Mr. Speaker; it's what protections are in place for our students. And I can tell you that Alberta, until Bill Hate passes, has the strongest protections for LGBTQ2-plus students in the country.

If the government thinks that theirs is stronger, again, I would encourage them to look at what this bill does and doesn't do. It actually makes it more difficult for students to create a GSA, and in fact there's no guarantee it will even be called a GSA. There are many schools that will refuse that. What the Government House Leader failed to point out is that a principal can indefinitely delay a decision to students; therefore, they will just outwait a student wanting to create a GSA.

The protections that are currently in place are much stronger than what this bill is proposing, Mr. Speaker, so I look forward to having more conversations with the government.

## Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

**The Speaker:** Prior to proceeding to other potential speakers on Bill 8 if I may, and I almost interjected after the remarks from the Government House Leader but, frankly, thought we may be adjourning debate so didn't. But if I could just say – and I think the Opposition House Leader proved my point – that if we, the rest of the evening, could perhaps do our best to do everything possible to not say “mistruths,” “you're not telling the truth,” “you are playing fast and loose with the facts,” if we could do everything that we can to refrain from implying that one side of the House or the other is lying about a particular issue, perhaps that would help decorum this evening as we move later into the evening. I think the Speaker has taken a fairly broad swath on allowing both sides of the House to imply that both sides of the House are spreading mistruths, but perhaps we might move the debate in another direction.

## Debate Continued

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows is rising on debate.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's actually my honour, and I'm so humbled and proud to be here. I will try to get the debate back to the original issue we were on. If I can move it from the election-style rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, by saying this, I just wanted to say, first of all, that let's see how privileged we are, like, on both sides of the House. On behalf of our constituents and ridings, you know, on behalf of all Albertans we can sit together and we can discuss their issues. We can not only discuss their issues, but we can address their issues. One thing I'm sure that everybody on both sides of this House will agree on is that we have some collective responsibilities, basically, when it comes to protecting the fundamental rights of Albertans. The reason I just stand up to give my input on this bill, on what I see and feel, is that the matter this bill takes in hand is reflecting something totally opposite.

I remember that my colleagues from this side of the House raised concern last week, if I'm not forgetting, to test if we are really on the same page when we are defining inclusion. Under this Bill 8 what do we really see moving forward? I will call the government's type of inclusion the same as like what we have seen, you know, happening in the name of secularism in Bill 21 in Quebec. What do we do?

The series of acts we are seeing through the different bills – it's also reflected in this bill – is that we are seeing that we are identifying people based on their age, gender, beliefs, sexual orientation, not to help them but to attack their fundamental rights by compromising their security to the fundamental protections that they deserve. This bill, Bill 8, failed to guarantee the rights to form a GSA and QSA. What does this GSA and QSA do? As has been said many times, these are just social clubs that serve the purpose to save lives and to provide a secure environment to the most vulnerable. Is that what offends this government? Was this exactly their platform in the election?

If this bill is passed, it will not only be a failure to provide a guarantee of fundamental rights to live safely and be free from harm but also a violation of the right to education in a safe environment. Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about who this government is trying to serve through this bill. We didn't really see a consultation report or something backed by facts, so what is the motivation the government has behind this bill?

We have already seen the students, you know, walk out in support of GSAs and QSAs. That wasn't long ago, so we can't say that we can't really remember. It's not even been two weeks or three weeks since all those students in Alberta walked out in support of GSAs and QSAs and against the proposed bill of the government, Bill 8. Not only this, but the Alberta Teachers' Association has mostly complete support for Bill 24, saying that teachers were put in a horrible situation under provisions of previous legislation.

**11:10**

We have seen the government leader, you know, blaming the opposition, saying that the opposition in the House is trying to prop up, use the GSAs and QSAs for their political purpose. What this bill will do with the kinds of changes it's enforcing is that school staff will be allowed to out students participating in GSAs. It weakens it for the public schools, and private schools will no longer need to submit policies at all on this. Those policies no longer require the explicit use of the word "gay." These are the kinds of changes you are proposing in the bill.

The provisions requiring the timely establishment of GSAs after it's requested by students would be removed if this bill is passed. Enforcement mechanisms for school boards and private schools not complying with GSA legislation will also be removed. These are the kinds of changes that are going forward in this bill, what we are showing everybody. The students of Alberta are walking out in support of GSAs and QSAs.

Some of the other areas are, you know, the Government House Leader says that this bill is quite long. We know it's quite a long bill, but we're trying to emphasize one of the most important parts of this bill. Yes, we are also aware and we are also concerned with the other changes this bill is proposing.

The government is already saying very little to commit to providing funding to public education. Moving forward, it's also enhancing audit requirements for school boards, creating even a recall mechanism for publicly elected trustees. We are bringing these kinds of changes through Bill 8. On the contrary, the proposal is that it will remove the cap on charter schools. It changes the requirements for establishing a charter school and extends rules and fees to charter schools. Mr. Speaker, we can see the clear direction the government is going in on opening up competition. We are not against competition but on how we are opening up competition. Competition might weaken the public education system.

I remember speaking at an event during my election campaign. A person came to me saying that I should have put more emphasis on our government's campaign of freezing tuition fees and how we are making education affordable. Mr. Speaker, you know who this person was? He was a teacher in one of the private schools. I just wanted to remind that this is how the people in my riding, this is how the people in Alberta value affordable education. By passing this bill, this bill attacks the affordability of education as well.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose this bill because I understand that I do come from a very conservative family. It was mentioned earlier by my fellow colleagues how hard it is for vulnerable children, vulnerable people to come out and seek support when they need it the most and before it gets too late. We're living in the 21st century, and we expect to move forward, and we should move forward. In this case, it looks like we're moving a step backwards. We need to look around at how the world around us is progressing on these issues or the competent codes they're intervening in. It's our collective responsibility: we should create a safe environment, not spread the politics of fear.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose the bill, and I ask my fellow members on both sides of the House, for the sake of, you know, protection of the most vulnerable, to please oppose the bill.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments. I see that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows for his thoughtful comments and feedback. I also want to take this opportunity to connect what he said to what a previous speaker was discussing. A previous speaker said: you know, this is what we ran on; this is what we said that we were going to do. Actually, what the government, today when they were campaigning, talked about was proclaiming the ed act, so this is very different than that.

Nonetheless, this is the situation we're in. They definitely didn't talk about: we're going to bring in a massive new bill, and we're going to do some of the things the NDP did but not other things the NDP did. I think that they did say that they thought that the protections we brought in were an overreach, that they thought that they were negative, and that's one of the reasons why we're spending so much time talking about why they aren't an overreach, why they're actually life saving and life fulfilling, and why it's so important that we do stand up for those who are vulnerable in our society, I think.

Many of us would say that – I know the Government House Leader said something about using children as props, and I would say that it's shameful to see government use children as punching bags. I really feel that that is – when I talked to the kids at the rallies in Calgary, they said: we are being attacked personally for what club we choose to become a part of. That, to me, is the shameful part, Mr. Speaker. That, to me, is a complete disrespect of what our sole obligation is.

I also heard the member say: well, in 2012 this Chamber passed a bill, and therefore we need to follow it by going back to the bill of 2012. Well, if you use that same logic – oh, it wasn't 2000 – in the early 1900s there were laws in place in this place, people in this place who passed bills saying that women shouldn't vote. Bills were passed 100 years ago saying that women shouldn't vote, so we shouldn't update the laws today and therefore have women voting.

Well, a bill that was passed in 2012 that kids said clearly was an infringement of their rights, that wasn't actually fulfilling the intended purpose of the day: I don't care how many legacy parties voted for it, hon. members, through you, Mr. Speaker. I don't care how many legacy parties voted for it. If it doesn't meet the needs of today, then that law needs to be updated, and that's what our Education minister did. That's why our Education minister worked swiftly to make sure that our kids, all of our kids, everyone's kids had the protections that they asked for in this province. You know, yes, a bunch of people voted on something a number of years ago and, yes, it passed then, but that doesn't mean that we should go back to what was in place in then. That is one of the first things I wanted to say.

There were other things that, certainly, the majority of people in this place passed that, certainly, the government has no intention to keep in place, and that is their right, but they should own that. If they're going to go back in time and if they're going to go to previous legislation that kids told us wasn't effective, that staff told us wasn't clear, and that we worked to improve – because that's absolutely what's happening here. I know that there are 40 pages to this bill, but the main purpose of this bill is to destroy GSAs, and that's why we're spending so much time talking about it.

There are many, many pages that take good things that our Education minister brought in like TQS and LQS, teacher quality standards and leadership quality standards, and put into legislation. That's good. We don't need to keep talking about that. We proposed

that, it passed, it got put into the School Act, it's getting moved over to the Education Act.

We need to talk about what this Education Act is undoing, and what the clear covert intention of it is, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're not going to stop talking. That's why, when these kids tell us to be their voice and to keep fighting for them and to make sure they have the right to be respected and loved and have some privacy when they're going through something that's so difficult, we won't stop fighting for them.

Mr. Speaker, I had to sort of make that part clear. Certainly, there are some people who think that we are doing this because of ulterior motives. I will tell you that my motive is simple: I want kids to live, I want kids to learn, and I want kids to feel love. That's it. That's my motive: live, learn, love.

11:20

**Mr. Eggen:** Busted.

**Ms Hoffman:** Busted.

That's my motive. That's my agenda. I know some people think there's another agenda, but that's my agenda. I want kids to have the opportunity to live their fullest lives and to feel love and to learn, Mr. Speaker. We have an opportunity in this place to discuss things that will help that, or we have the ability to hurt that. I feel very strongly that all members need to be aware that this is an act to destroy GSAs.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to speak to Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise again today to speak to Bill 8 and to express my deep concerns with what is being proposed here. I've been privileged. One of the privileges of being in this House actually is to hear the debate around it. I've been very moved and affected by the comments from my colleagues, many colleagues. In particular, I was very affected by the comments by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. He spoke very eloquently and passionately about his own journey, and I think it's something that we can all learn from. I am so honoured to hear the comments from my colleagues on this side of the aisle.

But what I continue to be troubled by is the lack of comments from the members on the other side setting out precisely why they're bringing forward this bill and why they're seeking to proclaim the Education Act. I've given a bit of a background and my history with this act. I admit, because of my work, because of my background as a lawyer, to knowing probably more detail about this act and the current act than probably most people care to know. My concern is that I believe that the members on the opposite side are counting on the fact that Albertans haven't read this bill, haven't read the Education Act, which is 300 sections long, don't know what's currently in the School Act. I think that to support that, the Government House Leader rose and spoke about and cited from the UCP platform, that they set out, that their intent was to proclaim the Education Act from 2012. That was coded very specifically in that language because they were counting on the fact that people don't know what's in the Education Act.

But the great thing is that I do. One of my concerns, particularly when we've seen the Minister of Education stand up and give what can only be called these talking points about why they're bringing forward the Education Act: they lack any detail or any specifics about the legislation. I think it's really important to know that there is a lot of detail and specifics in the Education Act, and we're not hearing about that content because we believe – and I think it is accurate – that there is only one, sole purpose behind bringing

forward the Education Act, and that is to roll back the provisions on GSAs. One of the things I'd like to talk about – and I think this may be educational and informative for the members on the opposite side as well – is what's actually in the Education Act, because I don't believe they know. We have not heard any of the comments. We've heard very little debate.

One of the challenges of being an opposition party is that we stand up here, and we actually have to know the legislation. We actually have to know what we're talking about because we have to carry the debate and we have to talk about it. We have to make sure that Albertans get the opportunity to hear about it. Unfortunately, the members on the other side have not shown the depth of knowledge and understanding. I have to say, unfortunately, that I don't believe the Minister of Education has demonstrated the depth of knowledge and understanding of the legislation that she's bringing forward.

As I mentioned in my earlier comments today, Mr. Speaker, there were a number of provisions that were supposed to be transformative, that were supposed to provide greater opportunity for students in this province to complete high school and the opportunity to recognize that students are mobile – they move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction – they have different needs, they have different challenges, and therefore sometimes the opportunity must be provided to them to complete high school in a flexible manner. That was why the Education Act brought forward provisions around age of access in compulsory education.

In fact, going back to *Hansard* discussions, Mr. Speaker, on the original Bill 18, the hon. Minister Dave Hancock, who, might I add, I think, was a great minister and cared very deeply about children in this province – I do think he was an excellent human being. He was also my predecessor as an MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud. I do believe he had the best intentions in mind when he brought forward a desire to overhaul the education system. I think he faced significant challenges, however, for financial reasons, for political will reasons. But one of the things that he was proud of – and I recall that very clearly – was the provisions around increasing the age of access in compulsory education.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, I'd like to quote from when Minister Hancock, on April 28, 2011, at page 966 of *Hansard*, spoke to the introduction of the Education Act. He talked about:

One significant change [under] the Education Act that will also affect students is the school leaving age being changed to age 17.

He said:

This change sends a clear message about the importance of education and the need to complete high school if one is to take full advantage of the opportunities Alberta has to offer, and it implements a portion of a private member's bill [that was] brought forward [earlier] . . .

He was very proud of that, yet this government has chosen not to implement that.

He was also very proud of the provisions around raising the age of access to age 21. This government has chosen not to implement that. He was very proud of the changes to change residency to be based on where students live, not where their parents live. Again, this government has chosen not to bring that forward. The original intent of this bill is not being reflected in what we see today as what's brought forward in Bill 8 under this current government.

The Minister of Education has stood up in this House, has done, you know, lots of statements in the media and commented about how this is going to modernize our education system. Mr. Speaker, I wish that were the case, but even putting aside the provisions on GSAs, it's simply not the case. It's simply not the case that the Education Act does really anything more than just tinker with the details of the School Act. I say that as somebody who did that

tinkering, who did that looking at those provisions, saying: well, how can we just . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** She's a tinkerer.

**Ms Pancholi:** I was a tinkerer.

. . . clean up those provisions? Unfortunately, there was not even a mandate back then. In the three times this bill came forward to this House, there was not the political will to do significant changes.

Mr. Speaker, one of my activities on the weekend – again, this is part of my lawyerly background – is that I actually went through all of the sections of the current Education Act, that's been proposed and amended today by the government. I went through. There are 300 sections in the Education Act. I can tell you that substantive changes are being made to 25 of them. That is less than 10 per cent of the act. That means 90 per cent of the Education Act reflects substantively exactly what's in the School Act. This is not a modernization. This is not transformational. This is simply about bringing forward, in an undercover kind of way, one change – one change – that this government wants to do.

But they were not forthcoming about that in their platform. What was put forward in their platform was proclaiming the Education Act. People might have presumed: "Oh, Education Act. That sounds new. That's probably got to be updated and modern." But it isn't, because the only thing that they want to do is to roll back the provisions on GSAs.

Again, going back to my legal training, one of the things, when we're drafting briefs or preparing factums or standing up in court to try to determine how to interpret and apply legislation, one of the key tools that any lawyer does – the first thing they do is that they look at the legislation, they look at previous forms of the legislation, they look at the debate in *Hansard*, and they say: "What was the intent? What was the intent behind the change?" And I can tell you that when we have a current School Act in place that provides really robust protections for GSAs, for LGBTQ students, and then they look at what was proposed and what is being put forward in the new legislation, they'll see that it is different. And how is it different? It is weaker. What the conclusion is that will be drawn, from lawyers, from everybody else who'll be looking at it, is that the intent of this government was to weaken protections for GSAs. Let's be honest.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I mean, the Government House Leader rose and went through the steps that are there for GSAs under the Education Act, yet what he failed to say is that what we currently have in the School Act is the same. It sets up a process, but it's better. It still provides the establishment of GSAs, it still provides that kids can be protected in a safe and secure environment, but it does it better. How does it do it better? The NDP government listened to the concerns that were brought forward from students, from administrators, and realized there was a problem, realized that there were schools, there were administrators who were using some of those provisions that this government is now trying to put back in place, they were using them to stall. They were using it to shame students. They were using it to scare students out of joining GSAs.

11:30

If this government is committed to GSAs, why would they have a problem with what's currently in the School Act? If they were truly committed to protecting the most vulnerable kids – I hesitate that we even stop to talk about this. My colleagues have done a fantastic job of laying out how statistically and factually accurate it is that LGBTQ students in this province, and actually in any province, are our most vulnerable kids, the most at risk kids – and

truly committed to having GSAs and protecting these kids, they should have no problem with carrying over the provisions in the School Act into the Education Act.

They had no problem carrying over the changes that the NDP government made around the separate school establishment process. They had no problems bringing over from the School Act the provisions around trustee code of conduct. They had no problem bringing over the provisions around establishing leadership certificates and superintendent certificates to make sure that all school administrators are held to a high standard of practice. They had no problem doing that. The only problem, the only section of the School Act that they seemed to have a problem with bringing over was the provisions around protections for GSAs and LGBTQ students.

This government might stand up, the Government House Leader might stand up and say, "Look, it's not factual that we're weakening it." But it is factual because if it wasn't, just keep it the way it is. I think it's really important to highlight once again that there are other changes provided in the Education Act. The reason why that doesn't get attention is because they're tinkering, because they're small. There are things that could easily be done to the School Act, and they would not have the impact of affecting the most vulnerable group of kids in our system.

I don't see any of the members from the other side rising up, you know, fiercely in defence of the Education Act provision that establishes an audit committee for school boards. I don't see them standing up and saying: "That's really important. It's going to transform our system. It's what we're hearing from our constituents. It's what we're hearing from our stakeholders that we really need." Hey, I actually think that's a great change. It's a good change.

**Ms Hoffman:** A lot of boards already do it.

**Ms Pancholi:** Exactly. It's not necessarily a necessary change because most boards already do it. Guess what? It would take about two seconds and two lines to amend the School Act to provide that.

I don't see the members from the other side standing up in fierce protection of the fact that the student advisory council is going to be legislated because one already exists. What we see is silence, and that's my concern. This government is proposing bringing in significant change to legislation. [interjection] I realize that the Government House Leader seems to have a high desire for attention right now, but I do have the floor, so I will continue to speak. I don't see that there is a lot of content to this act, but I feel like the members on the other side need to be familiar with and need to know what they're bringing forward. I think they're all just hoping that people won't know what's happening. I think they were counting on that.

I can tell you that when I was out door-knocking in my constituency – I've been quite forthcoming in this House about the fact that my constituency is not a very highly partisan group of voters; they don't stick to one party or the other; they want to hear reasonable, rational discussions about issues that they care about – there were a lot of members in my riding who were previously Progressive Conservatives, maybe voted UCP this time as well. But one of the things that I consistently heard around the time that this platform piece was being discussed during the campaign was that they knew what was going on. They knew that this was an intent without the government being forthcoming and saying that this was what they wanted to do. They knew that this is what they were trying to do, that they were trying to roll back protections for GSAs. I would have people at their door saying: "You know what? I voted

Progressive Conservative before. I've done that before. I can't get behind this, though. I cannot get behind this. I can't get behind the idea that this government would move forward with legislation that's going to make the most vulnerable kids more vulnerable again."

We have to show that we have moved forward, that we have progressed. This is the human rights issue of our generation right now. You know, it's coming forward because this is a serious need that's coming forward from kids. It's been brought forward because they are speaking out. They need us as their advocates in this House to pass legislation and to pass laws that protect them. That is our ultimate responsibility. When they're saying, "We need these protections," when they came forward to the NDP and said, "This is what we believe we need; we are still feeling vulnerable; we're still feeling threatened about being outed to our parents; we're still feeling like we're not safe and secure in our schools; we need further action," this government took action.

I am still not hearing a good explanation or rationale from this government as to why those protections need to be weakened. The most we've heard is the Minister of Education talking about balance, but what she's talking about there is balance between, you know, protections for vulnerable kids and ostensibly the parents' right to know.

I want to highlight – because the Minister of Education has mentioned numerous times: oh, there's FOIP, and that protects privacy. As the Member for Edmonton-Glenora mentioned, it's really important to know, for everybody to understand how privacy legislation really works in this province. Absolutely I believe that parents should be able to know some personal information. They should, and the FOIP Act actually protects that, but the FOIP Act creates the right for a parent to have access to the personal information of their child. In most cases that is absolutely one hundred per cent appropriate.

We know that, of course, there's personal information at schools that all kinds of public bodies keep about children, and of course their parents should have a right to that information. There's no doubt about that. I'm a parent of two children, one who has just entered the school system . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, I've been riveted quite literally all evening with the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's comments. They've been very, very insightful, very, very thorough, you know, giving us not only a history lesson of how we even got here but some of the background as to why those decisions were made. I know that the member was probably getting very close to wrapping up. I think that we need to hear those comments because we all need to be able to make a very informed decision in this House, and that information is crucial. I hope that she would continue to share that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Decore. I'm pleased to continue my comments.

I was speaking about the balance of privacy and that I believe, of course, as a parent that I should have access to my children's personal information. Nothing in Bill 24 or in the School Act prevents that from happening. The only thing it said is that principals should be limited in the information that they share of the fact that a GSA has been established in the school. It does not prevent a teacher or school administrator, when a child is in need of

support, is in need of services, from involving the parent. Nothing about that does that. The fallacy about the argument is that somehow the fact that a child has joined a GSA is personal information that a parent requires to know.

No. What they might need to know is that a child might be struggling with some mental health issues. What they might need to know is that their child is struggling in school, that the child is being bullied, that the child is being affected. That's information that nothing in Bill 24 or in the School Act provisions would prevent a teacher, a responsible, professional teacher, which all of our educators are, from actually speaking out and providing the supports and contacting a parent and saying: we believe your child is in need of supports. What this says is that it's not necessary to convey to parents that their child has joined a GSA because that's actually not in and of itself personal information that's sharing anything significant. What it is is a tactic that's being used to scare kids from joining GSAs.

I want to advocate again. I'm a mother, as many people in this House are parents. We want what's best for our kids. We want to know that if our child is in need of support, in need of help, that we will be notified. I'm married to a teacher. I have teachers in my family and my friends group. I've spoken to many teachers. They are professionals. Their job is not – they would not notify a parent about membership in a GSA because that in and of itself is not the important information. What they need to know is if their child is in need of supports and in need of help. That's what they will do. They're professionals.

When I spoke to a teacher with Edmonton Catholic schools this past weekend, she said: I don't see how in any way Bill 24 hampers me from doing my job. What it does is it just provides those children a means of security and safety to know that if they want to seek supports from a peer support group – because that's what we're talking about. GSAs are kids coming together to support each other. She said: "That's a support system that they're seeking out, and I want to encourage them to do that, but if a child is in need of help, I will absolutely – I'm bound by a code of conduct. I'm bound by professional standards, and we are bound by laws. We are bound by laws, as anybody who works with children is, to notify if a child is in need of help."

But the FOIP provisions, as they currently are, give a right of access to personal information. That is not an answer to the question of protecting kids who are trying to join GSAs. To say that we've got privacy legislation: that's true, but that's not the point. The point is that these kids need to be able to seek out these support groups in safety and security. If they choose to come out to their parents, if they choose to come out to their peers, if they choose to come out to school administrators, that is their choice. Nothing will prevent these kids from getting the support they need from their teachers, from their counsellors, from their parents. I feel it is a disregard and a disrespect for the professional standards of teachers and school administrators to think that they don't know or they won't step forward and talk to a parent when a child is in need, because that's what they do every day.

**11:40**

You know, I come back to – we can talk about the Education Act and what it is. I can go on ad nauseam about all the detailed provisions, but at the end of the day we know that the sole intent for proclaiming the Education Act is to roll back GSAs. If that wasn't the case, the government wouldn't be doing it, because they're taking a number of provisions from the School Act that the NDP passed. This is not a partisan issue because they certainly liked some of the provisions that the NDP government brought in, protections that they brought in in the School Act, but this is the one

that they won't. They're going to need to answer for why because if they are true about their commitment to protecting vulnerable kids, to GSA protections, there's no reason why they wouldn't keep the provisions that are in the School Act.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 9

### Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board is rising to debate.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading on Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act.

Bill 9 will postpone wage reopen arbitration hearings until after October 31, 2019. This will mean a postponement of hearings that have already begun as well as the temporary delay of hearings that are scheduled for early this fall. The legislation would affect 24 public-sector collective agreements. Mr. Speaker, we're simply asking for more time to consider Alberta's economic situation and make informed decisions. Public-sector workers make lives better for Albertans every day, and we want to be clear to all of those affected that we have not yet made any decisions regarding a future position.

Mr. Speaker, public-sector compensation is the largest government expenditure making up over half of the government's operating expenses. It would be fiscally irresponsible to have these discussions and make decisions without having the full picture of the province's economic situation. It would also be irresponsible and unfair to public-sector workers if we came to the table without being able to make informed decisions. Government needs time to consider our position and to review recommendations from the MacKinnon panel.

Mr. Speaker, I also think it's important to bring into context the time pressures we've been working under. Prior to the introduction of this bill we scheduled a number of face-to-face meetings and phone calls with employers and unions to explain our situation. The groups were also asked for written submissions so that everyone could adequately articulate their concerns. After receiving this feedback and considering our options, we decided that legislation was needed as time is needed to consider the impacts of our economic situation.

This legislation must be passed expeditiously in order to ensure that we, in fact, are able to defer public-sector wage arbitration processes that are currently in play. Mr. Speaker, we have committed to balancing the budget by 2022-23. We're committed to working in good faith in our arbitration discussions. We just need time to better understand our economic situation and plan a path forward. Let me be clear. This legislation is not a removal of right; it is simply a postponement of process.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is rising for debate.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to speak to Bill 9 at second reading. I'm afraid that the Minister

of Finance, who has moved this, may not get this legislation passed as expeditiously as he referred to in his speech because he seems to not understand how unprecedented and insulting this piece of legislation is to our public servants. The risky path that he is setting our province on by disrespecting the workers of our province not only by not participating in good-faith bargaining – we will have a chat about what good-faith bargaining means – but by claiming that he consulted with the workers involved prior to bringing in this legislation when what happened can only be described as threatening letters and some meetings with members of the public service and not the minister himself. The government did not make adequate attempts to even consider bargaining in good faith with our public-sector unions.

In the end, we now have this bill, which is breaking the law. It is breaking contracts. It is breaking the collective bargaining process, something that is constitutionally protected, something that we already know, should this bill be passed and then proclaimed, will immediately be challenged in the courts. We had several members of our labour organizations here upon introduction for first reading, and they said as much to the media as they were in our rotunda. Anyone who was in the building probably noticed them there. Mr. Speaker, you yourself may have heard either directly or indirectly an earful about the gathering in the rotunda, which is just the start of the reaction that we will hear from Albertans should this continue and proceed.

This is an abuse of power and an assault on front-line workers, many of whom have taken zeros for years, many of whom spend their working lives supporting Alberta by delivering the services that we all rely on and by doing a high-quality job. Now this government won't even sit down to negotiate with them. Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not a labour relations expert, but I have learned a few things about this. I certainly would like to share my perspective from what I've learned, having had many, many conversations and consultations with both the employer side and the worker side of the labour relations sphere. It can be boiled down very simply to say that collective bargaining and our labour relations system that we have today have developed from a very real need for systems and processes to balance out the difficulty that can arise when there are disagreements on how things proceed.

We have here a group of people who want to be employed, who want to provide a service, and we have a group of people who need workers to provide their services. Workers need employers; employers need workers. Seems like everyone should just be able to get along, but that's not what's happened historically. We just had the 100-year anniversary of the Winnipeg strikes, a key pivotal moment in Canadian history and one that impacted other provinces. In fact, Alberta has stories to tell about how we participated and supported workers 100 years ago. The system of labour relations that we have today has been developed over decades of finding ways to balance the needs of employers and the needs of workers and respecting the fact that both have power. They use and exercise that power in very different ways, but I can tell you that one of the ways that workers can exercise power is through withdrawing their labour, through striking. When workers feel disrespected, when workers feel that they do not have a voice, those types of decisions and actions are what start to happen. All workers want is to be respected for the hard work that they do each and every day on behalf of Albertans. This early move from a very new government taking action – even during the height of labour disputes and discord in the '90s Premier Klein never broke contracts, never reached in this way – is shocking. Workers should not have a government that is using legislation to delay their negotiated Supreme Court protected rights.



11:50

Now, how did we get to the point where arbitration was already beginning? I appreciate that the Minister of Finance recognized that this is directly impacting many groups of workers who were actively in the process of working with the government. This was a solution that was achieved through mediation, by sitting down with workers and working with them to develop a path forward. So it's very disrespectful to tear that up and throw that away and introduce legislation as this government has done. It can lead, as I've already mentioned, to labour unrest, compromised services, and more costly settlements. In fact, many governments that have tried to attack workers in similar ways have found that it has actually cost the government more money in the long run. I'm certain that I and my colleagues will be talking a little bit more about the history of collective bargaining in this province. Having a government that is using the law to abuse their power and to do this to workers is unfortunate, shocking, but not wholly unexpected given the platform that this government did run on.

I know that the workers that are being attacked and are feeling attacked right now will not take it lying down – they are upset; they are angry – after having worked with a government that treated workers with respect, bargained with them fairly, talked to them about the fiscal challenges in the province, and worked with them to find solutions, which I would suggest is a good-faith way of approaching bargaining and something I would recommend to this government.

Now, one of the narratives that is developing through all of the pieces of legislation that this government is bringing forward – Bill 2, Bill 9 – is that they are picking the pockets of workers, going after overtime, stat holiday pay, collective agreements. At the same time we have Bill 3, which was a very big tax giveaway to corporations. We have a government that has given itself a \$4.5 billion hole in its budget, one that, as we discussed thoroughly during our Bill 3 debate, does not begin to even remotely pay off in the form of higher tax revenues or other benefits for the first two years, putting themselves in a situation where now workers are worried that the government is going to try to balance the budget on workers' backs, workers who have done nothing but deliver high-quality public services to this province day in and day out: by being sheriffs, who protect this building; by being firefighters, who are fighting fires right now; by being nurses, who are caring for the sick; by being anyone within the public service, the drafters who are drafting all the ridiculous legislation that's coming in. We appreciate them, too, all of the workers.

Making sure that they are protected is incredibly important, so I will be standing in opposition to the introduction of Bill 9 and speaking to stand up for the workers of this province because this is an egregious act against them and really spits in the face of the collective bargaining process, that agreement, that negotiated partnership. We recognize the fact that workers need an employer, an employer needs workers, but we need to balance how we negotiate, and that's the collective bargaining process.

Now, I need to speak about another piece of Bill 9 that is very concerning. In his introductory remarks the hon. minister made clear an intention, the intention to simply delay to get a handle on the finances and then proceed. What he didn't say is that this bill also includes section 5(c), that gives the government the power to write regulations for anything within the intent of this act. Now, these are broad and sweeping powers: "respecting any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act." Well, what is the intent of this act? The intent of any act can be seen as defined in the preamble. When we look to the preamble we see:

Whereas the Government of Alberta is committed to balancing its budget by the 2022-2023 fiscal year;

Whereas public sector compensation is the largest government expenditure, constituting over half of the Government of Alberta's operating expense.

Just with those two sections, Mr. Speaker, it's clear to me that the case could be made that regulations in keeping with the intent of this act could be wage rollbacks, could be freezes, could be interfering even more with the collective bargaining process rather than just delaying. Why, if this is so wholesome and so simple as to delay, has the government seen fit to include vast regulation-making powers limited only by the intent of the act, and the intent of the act is public-sector workers cost too much? I'm concerned. Public-sector workers watching this debate are concerned. It's clear that this government is attacking workers.

Yes, the government is saying: "Thank you, public servants. We appreciate your hard work." They're saying those words. The Minister of Finance has said in good faith they are doing this. He's used the term "good faith" over and over and over, but I would suggest to you that he does not understand what good-faith bargaining would look like or what it should mean in this context given the crowd of angry workers in the rotunda who were chanting when this bill got introduced. This is not the normal way to do things. This is breaking the law. This is going against contracts. If the government broke contracts with businesses, well, that wouldn't be right. But breaking contracts with workers: it must be done. It doesn't have to be done, Mr. Speaker.

We need to reject these types of tactics from our government because it sends a terrible message to valuable public servants. It's not right, and we already know that we're getting very strong reactions from workers. People are tuning in because this isn't how it's supposed to work. Everyone is supposed to come to the table. We are all Albertans. We all are working for Alberta's success, each playing our own roles. Together we can get there, but attacking one another is not about it. Some of the leaders who came out referred to this as an egregious attack on workers' rights and legally binding collective agreements. They called it authoritarian, ideological, and something that would create labour unrest. They said very clearly that all Albertans should be concerned when a new government uses the power and authority of the state to crush basic rights.

In case someone missed it, I want to make it very, very clear that the Supreme Court through multiple rulings has protected the right to collectively bargain. This is not a little thing. This is a big thing. That right to collectively bargain and that right to be treated fairly, the system of labour relations that has grown and evolved over decades, has the goal of having labour peace, having strong delivery of services. We do not want disrespected public-sector workers to feel they need to begin withdrawing services, to feel that they need to start going on wildcat strikes. Mr. Speaker, if you google Alberta wildcat strikes, you'll get lots of articles. Our province has a history of workers withdrawing their services when employers are not treating them reasonably and fairly.

12:00

We are now moving into a new potential era of relationship with our public-sector workers, and I worry about the approach this government is taking when we know from four years of history that a government that respects workers and sits down at the bargaining table to bargain fairly and freely can get wonderful, productive conversations out of that process. We were able to create some excellent agreements with our public-sector workers that took into account the financial realities our province was in.

But we also need to take into account the financial realities of public-sector workers. I know I heard at least one person say that

there are some workers who've had zeros for six years, no increases. We know inflation hasn't been zero for six years. I'm not going to get into bargaining specifics and estimating what people deserve or what's happening, but I don't think we should go into this assuming that these are all workers who are just in it to get rich, that are in there to make a profit, make a buck. These are people who are dedicated public servants who do important jobs for our province, and this government is angering them. This government is disrespecting them and is disappointing a lot of people.

Again, at the start I said that I am not a labour relations expert. I've never taught a labour relations class. But what I do know is that our province has a history of contentious labour relations when governments have been disrespectful. I know that because, although I was not a member of any caucus at the time, in the fall of 2013, when the Conservative government introduced bills 45 and 46, everybody who was of age probably heard about that. It created a lot of noise. It created a lot of disorder: huge protests outside of the Legislature. In the end, the government needed to back down. They needed to back down because in that time, in that place they were bullying workers.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that several stakeholders have already called this a bullying bill, being used to attack workers and their constitutionally protected right to collectively bargain by tearing up legal contracts and including the clause that allows the government to create regulations "respecting any other matter . . . advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act." The intent of this act makes clear that wage rollbacks and freezes are on the table, especially because it talks about the blue-ribbon panel. The chair of the blue-ribbon panel has been given a very tough job, to only talk about spending reductions, to not talk about anything on the revenue side. The chair of that panel has historically made comments about the possibility of wage rollbacks and, in fact, the recommendations of wage rollbacks to fix the Alberta economy.

With this preamble that we have here in Bill 9, with the vast regulation-making authority granted under section 5(c), you can see where the concern is coming in from our public-sector workers and those who are on the front lines delivering the services.

Now, if there was to be a withdrawal of services, what could that look like? Mr. Speaker, I don't want to contemplate that. We want to have strong, stable public services for all citizens because they are critical, because we rely on them, and because we value the workers who are providing those services. They are our friends and our neighbours. They are our family members. The public service workers in our province deserve to be respected, and that is not what they are getting from this government, and that is not what they are getting from Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act.

When the Minister of Finance stands in this House and talks about how this is simply a deferral, I don't believe that he's being genuine, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join the debate this evening on Bill 9? The hon. Government House Leader is rising to add to the debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 49(2) I move that this question be now put. By moving the previous question, we're ensuring the most effective management of House proceedings. With a robust agenda and soon to be eight bills and three motions currently under consideration, it's important we give enough time for members to debate each piece of legislation. This motion allows for over nine hours to the Official Opposition alone just on second reading for a three-page

bill that simply defers arbitration by four months, which, I think, is entirely reasonable.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) will be available in just a couple of moments to anyone that has a brief question or comment for the Government House Leader.

As there are a number of new members in the Chamber, I think it would be reasonable to just provide a little bit of guidance from the chair. I'm certain that all of you are following along, but the hon. Government House Leader did make mention of Standing Order 49, which is a standing order which he has just used to put the previous question. What that essentially translates to is that all members of the Assembly will have one opportunity, subsequently or ongoing, to speak to the motion. It does not limit your ability to provide content, be it to the fact that the Government House Leader has just put the question or if you choose to speak to the content of the bill. Should the previous question pass in the affirmative, then we would move as a House immediately to the vote on second reading for Bill 9.

The other thing that I might just note is that "the previous question, until it is decided, shall preclude all amendment of the main [motion]." This would prevent any dilatory amendments from now being moved at second reading.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments if anyone has any.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier this evening about this government being shameful. Well, this takes the cake. One member of the Official Opposition spoke, a single member, and this government steps forward to invoke closure. My colleagues spoke earlier this evening of the arrogance of previous governments. Well, the level of arrogance that we are seeing here tonight from this government on a bill by which they are breaking contracts and breaking good faith to force unions back from the table at the barrel of legislation – and on that bill, after a single speaker, they are going to invoke closure and force us back from debate.

This is where we've come to in terms of democracy in our province, Mr. Speaker. This is the level of commitment of this government to democratic debate. This is the level of class and integrity. If the public sector, if public servants at this point weren't already disturbed enough by this bill, they can just take a look at the behaviour of this government here tonight. They can take from this that it's pretty clear what they are going to be looking at in terms of how willing this government is going to be to have legitimate debate, to genuinely sit down at the table and bargain in good faith. I mean, I recognize that this government has a penchant already for this. They like to pick fights: they're setting up their war room, they're preparing to go and waste Albertans' money on a constitutional challenge, and indeed they're inviting yet another by introducing this bill and moving this legislation forward. I suppose that perhaps even their intent tonight was to try to provoke us.

Well, that's fine. We recognize that the government has the power to do this. They have the power to be this petty, to be this cheap if they so choose. We will answer it in kind. We will take the opportunities that we have to stand up and debate this bill. We will take the opportunities to put this before Albertans and let them have the opportunity to judge the character and behaviour of this government. I don't think this sets quite the precedent that they hope, Mr. Speaker. I don't think this is going to be quite the success they seem to think it will be.

**12:10**

As my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods noted, Albertans have a deep-rooted history in standing up to governments

that attempt to bully their workers. Indeed, our caucus has a long history of standing up to governments that attempt to bully their way through this Legislature. I would note, Mr. Speaker, that in our time in government, to the best of my recollection, we invoked closure on a single bill, Bill 6. We never moved the previous motion. We never used such a cheap tactic on the opposition.

I recognize that members here may perhaps be getting a bit tired of doing their job. They may be getting a bit tired of listening to the opposition talk and provide our views on these particular bills, but I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have fond and not-so-fond memories of listening to many of these members who now sit across the aisle do precisely that, with far more disingenuity than I have heard from any of my colleagues on this side of the House. Now this government apparently doesn't have the stomach to actually sit and debate legislation that it brings forward in this House. It is too cowardly to actually engage in direct debate. They need to resort to cheap trickery. They need to resort to shutting down the voices of people who were voted here by Albertans to represent their voice and their perspective.

Mr. Speaker, again, that's their prerogative, and I suppose that if that's the standard they want to set, well, then I imagine that in going forward, in our continuing to work with them, and in our bargaining with them, we'll treat them with as much trust as I imagine most public servants do by the time this bill is done, which is not much. I think we owe it to Albertans to at least have a modicum of respect for how we approach things in this House, how we approach legislation. This government is cowardly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone wishing to debate this evening? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is rising.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I rise this evening, this morning, to speak on Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. I've seen a lot in this House, but I've certainly never seen the level of audacity and use and abuse of raw majority power to invoke this sort of closure at this stage of debate on any bill. Certainly, to do this on a bill that's as contentious as this one is just inviting discord and trouble, not just in this House but across the province in general.

More than 180,000 public-sector workers are affected by this potential bill. These are people that include front-line nurses, social workers, teachers, librarians, food inspectors, child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, correctional officers, sheriffs, indeed the guards that are guarding us here this evening. All of these people are under collective bargaining contracts that are legal documents, Mr. Speaker. They are legal documents that have been signed between the government and the workers that provide those services.

To undermine that process by bringing in legislation – and let's not pretend that this is just legislation for pause, as the President of the Treasury Board likes to very not truthfully point out. This is enabling legislation to move through each of the contracts that the nurses and the long-term care workers and teachers and so forth have to honour their work and to run roughshod through each one of those contracts.

We know that the panel that this government chose has a predisposition to an outcome that would cut the wages and benefits of those people that serve us in our public sector here in the province of Alberta. Anyone who would suggest that making a direct attack on those essential services is anything but irresponsible and destructive and contentious and divisive is not reading the writing on the wall.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Here we are with another exclamation put onto that sentence that this government does not bargain in good faith, that it does not trust the essential service workers that we are responsible to through collective bargaining. What just happened here in this Legislature, I think, pretty much can educate the rest of the population on what the true intentions of this government are. This is not a pause, Madam Speaker. It is a direct attack on the collective bargaining process that all of our public service workers here in the province do work through.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that when you do bargain in good faith, you're not just doing it for the wages and for the bottom line and the extra 25 cents an hour. You are bargaining for the good faith of the delivery of those services that we need from each of those 180,000-plus workers to run the province. The public sector is a very important element of what makes this province a great place to live and to work, to make sure that health care is there for you and your family when you need it, to make sure that you have an education for your kids, to make sure that this whole public service, from finance to social services to roads and infrastructure, functions to meet the needs of the population. You're not just negotiating nickels and dimes on wages; you're negotiating for the confidence of the population of this province to make sure that we're getting the services we need to raise our families and to run a just and equitable society.

Undermining all of those basic tenets of the responsibility that we are invested with here in the Legislature is profoundly irresponsible, Madam Speaker. It is profoundly short sighted and, as I say, strikes a discord that will take a great deal of time to hope to resolve. Just by when this was chosen to do so, to evoke closure after two speakers on perhaps one of the most important bills this government will debate, once again is setting a tone for a new government that's only a month old that declares war on the public service. I find that to be underhanded. I find it to be despicable. It is not something that will go unchallenged by any means.

You can't underdescribe what exactly the Bill 9 does do because it doesn't just say, "Okay; we're going to put a pause until we get a blue-ribbon panel result" and all of those kinds of things. It provides enabling legislation to wipe clean all of the contracts that all of our public service have and are currently due for negotiation. It undermines the process of negotiating those things. Some people say: well, that's just the cost of doing business, and we have to get our finances in order. These are people who actually provide the medical services that you need for your family – ambulances, EMS, firefighters, environment, parks and wildlife people – literally the largest employer in the province of Alberta. The services that they provide and the cost of that is not just a cost on a balance sheet. It's not just: oh, we can move a few numbers over from the red to the black and everything is put right.

I'm getting a sense of what this government is up to now. The last time something like this happened here in the province of Alberta, it took us a generation to recover, if we ever did, in regard to education and class size and building schools. I had to build 244 schools in the last four years because you know what? The last time the government chose to try to attack the public service through austerity, they didn't build schools. They didn't build hospitals. They didn't build the roads. We ended up with a generational deficit of capital investment, and that's just capital investment. You have to have the people that actually build those things and populate those schools and provide those long-term care services. The list goes on and on and on.

12:20

So if people thought, "Oh, well; let's always think of the best," you know, I think that tonight we got a strong dose of preparing for

the worst, expecting the best from this new government but then with solemn preparation for the worst, of which we can see the first salvo being fired here tonight by invoking closure on this important bill.

There are a lot of contracts that are up, for sure. You know, over the last four years when you're dealing with public service workers, they know that there's a shortage of money. They know that there's a recession on. It's not like you live in a bubble. Their wives and husbands, sisters and brothers working in oil and gas and so forth saw the economic recession due to a downturn in the price of energy, and they really negotiated responsibly. It was tough but fair negotiations that we invoked and that we engaged in over the last four years as government, and we did so in partnership with the good faith of sitting at a table as equals and looking each other in the eye and saying: okay; this is what we've got to do for the sake of the public good and for the sake of the integrity of the services which we are responsible to deliver for the people of Alberta.

When you undermine that level of good faith, Madam Speaker, that's when you really are showing your true colours. That's what we're seeing here tonight – right? – not sitting equally at a table, not looking each other in the eye and looking for what's best but, rather, for a short-sighted attack, I would dare say for ideological reasons, to demonstrate power and raw aggression towards the public service. I know. I was a teacher for 20 years in this province. I know very well what the Conservative government did in 1993 to undermine that profession, to undermine the integrity of class size, of teaching, and so forth, and it was a hard blow. It was part of the reason that I ended up where I am here today, making a choice as a teacher to become more politically active, because I saw that the attack on education, on health care, on my children's education – they were very small elementary students at the time – and for all of the students whom I was responsible for as a teacher was compromised by an ideological attack on the public service. I fear we're seeing the dark clouds forming again in a similar vein.

When we take responsibility to represent each of our individual constituencies and collectively the entire province, we must take that responsibility with a solemn oath to serve and to ensure that we provide the services that our people need regardless. You have to make adjustments for economic circumstances, but the basic investment that you make cannot be compromised.

When we formed government in 2015, at the beginning of the worst economic crisis around energy that we've seen in a generation, we chose to make a choice. Do we double down on the job losses, on the trouble that was associated with that economic recession, or do we make sure that we are still making investments in our kids, investments in education, investments in infrastructure that can provide for a growing population and can see us through an economic downturn? I think it was a difficult decision, but we made that difficult decision to ensure that we provided, for example, the education that our children needed. We didn't compromise that based on the price of oil and energy that happened to be trading on the world stage. I was proud of that decision. It wasn't easy to do. We made sacrifices in other areas to make sure that that whole new generation of seven-year-olds and six-year-olds and five-year-olds who were showing up in our public schools were getting that education that they needed, and we would find a way to make it happen.

You can dig deep and find a way for it to happen. You can dig deep and make innovative solutions, and the first place you look for those innovative solutions to try to solve the problem during an economic downturn is with the partnerships that you have with the public service. You don't go to the table with all guns drawn and say: okay; look, we're going to legislate your wages and your services now. You go there and ask for solutions together with those

people. If you do it with aggression, if you do it through legislation, then you are only making the situation worse, quite frankly. You know, fair warning. That's just the way things can unfold if we don't try to look for a more co-operative, collaborative solution to ensuring that our public services are met and that we're meeting the responsibilities as a government.

With that, Madam Speaker, certainly, there are lots of things that we need to talk about in regard to Bill 9. I think that a lot of people are going to wake up in the morning and realize that the strength that they have to ensure the integrity of the services to which they are responsible like teaching, nurses, law enforcement, and so forth, the integrity of the responsibilities to each of those teachers, nurses, police officers, and so forth depends on them to stand together in solidarity to make sure they fight for what's right.

A contract isn't just wages on a paper as well; it's working conditions, and when you talk about working conditions, you talk about the conditions of the people you are serving as well. Working conditions means having proper staffing levels in the hospital for the patients as well as the nurses. It's to make sure that you have enough support staff and teachers and custodial staff in a school to ensure that the working conditions for those children are met and the learning conditions for those children are met as well. So it's not just about dollars in people's pockets, as I'm sure this government will be tempted to do – right? – but, rather, it's around the integrity of those essential services for which we all depend on.

So think hard about it. Think hard about where you stand in regard to these things. I know that each of the individuals around us in this Legislature must be thinking hard. I'm thinking hard right now. It was a surprise and a shock to see this government invoke closure right from the beginning on a very important bill that reflects the future of where we're going as a province here and where this new government is going, too. It sends a bad message, but worse than that, it'll send confusion and fear as well, which I don't think anybody deserves in this province, especially after everybody worked so hard over the last four years to come out of this economic downturn.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for his comments. I can't help but reflect on the fact that I think he is either the longest or second-longest serving member.

**Mr. Eggen:** Second.

**Ms Hoffman:** Second-longest serving member of this Assembly right now. I imagine he can probably count on his hands the number of times he's had to deal with closure because it is something that happens very rarely in this place, very rarely in this place, I'd say, for a few reasons. The number one reason is that we all were elected to make decisions and to debate and to engage in thorough representation of our constituents. By moving closure, the House leader is telling all the members of this Assembly that, you know, the voices of the entire Assembly don't matter. I imagine he's probably said to some of his colleagues, maybe all of his colleagues, you know, to just sit in there, keep your head down, vote this through, and that this is what people want.

Well, I doubt many people heard on the doorsteps, Madam Speaker, "I want you to stymie debate. I want you to end debate. I want you to amend the standing orders so that you can abstain. I want you to do all of these things" that I think most people in this Chamber would probably say are an affront to democracy, an affront to having respectful discourse in this place where all voices matter. Not just the Government House Leader's voice matters. All

voices matter in this place because all of us were elected to represent our constituents and have our voices heard.

So I'm hoping my hon. colleague the Member for Edmonton-North West would elaborate a little bit on the rarity of closure as well as why he might believe that the Government House Leader has brought it in tonight and how he expects people might respond in the morning when they learn this news.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank very much. Yeah, I mean, I certainly have seen closure being invoked in the past, but usually during the course of the process, almost always, it's after the government is going through some levels of debate, and it feels like there's an impasse somehow. But that's completely logically and physically impossible here because we just had Bill 9 brought forward, with the Treasury Board minister and then the one critic, and then closure, boom, dropped right in. So there's no testing for the tone or the weather in the House as to whether there's going to be productive debate or if it's just going to be stalling.

12:30

Not to make excuses for when I did see Conservative governments use it, but, you know, they saw that the legislation maybe was spinning its wheels, and they've got to move it on because maybe there's an imminent problem if that legislation doesn't pass and so forth, right? But here we are after about – I don't know – maybe 15 minutes of debate or 20 minutes of debate, and, boom, they drop it like a lead balloon on top of this democratic Chamber. Again, sending a message and a tone with that, besides the actual legislation, which I think is derivative and not productive, is just, like, layering on this sense of aggression – right? – and definitely not respecting the workers that this represents, more than 180,000 individuals, but also not respecting this Chamber and the democratic institution which it serves.

Yeah. Thank you for asking me about that, because that's usually the way it goes. Bringing it in straight away – you know, I'm not going to try to get inside the heads of the members opposite because that could be a scary place to be, right? – I think demonstrates fear, quite frankly, fear and a very thin skin, fear of the strength and the capacity of one's own caucus in government to actually bring through something like this in a reasonable manner; rather, just drop in closure, watch the debate happen in the middle of the night, and batten down the hatches. I think that's kind of the overriding message that's being sent here.

Quite frankly, I am a little bit worried about that because when people do hear about this in the morning, they are going to ask a lot of questions. We certainly will use our platform here in the Legislature to ask those questions for them as well. You know, democracy is a funny thing. You can't just depend on the numbers that come out of any given election. Rather, it's a dynamic, living thing that reflects the performance of a government every step of the way, and if you don't perform, you will lose.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me in the wee hours of the evening here while we, I guess, very briefly now, start to debate Bill 9. I must say that I guess I shouldn't be surprised by invoking closure here. There's been a very clear – right from the outset the Premier said: well, we just want to blast forward with lightning speed; we want to limit

opposition. Well, I guess this is you guys limiting opposition. It should be interesting to see what things are like in the morning, when people find out that the opposition that they've brought to this House to debate bills, to propose amendments, things like that, has been taken away from them.

Maybe we should probably have, for those folks that may play this back later on so they understand what happened, a little bit of history, possibly, about this government. To bring a bill like this forward and then close debate after one speaker: if I may borrow a quick phrase from the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs – trigger warning: I'm about to say the word “union” – this is union busting at its finest, Madam Speaker. We've seen members of this current government, when they were in opposition, taking runs at trying to limit, make life harder for, stop, whatever the case may be, unions. It started with such things as, if you remember, the debate about the Rand formula. I mean, gosh, I even heard heckles from the other side: well, the Rand formula; that's never really been settled. You know, it's Chief Justice Rand. So that one was kind of settled. All the different names that I've heard being flung across the House: “big union bosses” and “cronies” and “thugs” and some other very interesting descriptions of unions.

I wonder what kind of descriptions might be coming out of this because, as I said, this is, very, very clearly, union busting, all under the guise of wanting to review Alberta's finances. The problem with that statement, Madam Speaker, is that the Minister of Treasury Board forgot – I can only guess – to give a mandate to this special blue-ribbon panel to not only check about the expenses, but maybe they should have checked about the finances, too. It would only seem to make sense. It would be prudent, fiscally prudent. I figured that word would maybe resonate a little bit more with some of the members on the other side, but I guess not. We're too focused on trying to ram an agenda down over 180,000 people's throats. You know, one minute we're praising them for this job that we so dearly love them doing, and the next minute it's, like: it's going to be our way or the highway. Unbelievable.

The Member for Edmonton-North West was talking about how a move like this is unprecedented; my fear is that we are now about to see more of these unprecedented moves in an attempt to limit or even silence opposition, to be able to move at lightning speed so that we can get our agenda passed, which a big majority of Albertans voted for. Well, it's funny because if you start to actually look at some of the numbers on how that breaks down – you know, kudos: it's a very impressive number – a little over 1.04 million Albertans definitely voted for the UCP. The problem is that as of January 1, 2019, there were 4.345 million voters in this province who didn't vote for you, okay? Now, I know you always love to throw that number around, 55 per cent, 56 per cent. Actually, out of the entire, total population of those that either didn't vote or didn't vote for you, that's only less than a quarter.

And here you are invoking closure after one speaker and making them accept legislation. Quite honestly, I don't know if it's reckless, disrespectful, or just that you haven't even thought this through. When I hear words, Madam Speaker, like “good-faith bargaining,” I can tell you right now that this does not come under the dictionary explanation of good-faith bargaining.

**An Hon. Member:** What would it come under?

12:40

**Mr. Nielsen:** Probably it would come under bad-faith bargaining.

I've seen a few of those little manoeuvres in my – here comes that trigger word again, “union”; again, kudos to the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for providing that. In my union world I've seen these kinds of things, and it usually results in a lot of workers

being really angry because they showed up to the table actually trying to bargain. You want to slow down the process: why didn't you just go to the bargaining table and ask? Pretty simple.

But no. Here we are at 20 to 1 in the morning on a beautiful Monday evening, and after one speaker we're going to shut it down. I don't know if I would necessarily want to be watching your social media feeds come early this morning because I have a feeling they're going to blow up. I wouldn't be surprised if we ended up seeing some more fine, hard-working Albertans come to this Legislature and let us know what their feelings are about this. I'm going to take a wild guess that it's not going to be very favourable because, rightfully so, they're going to start to wonder: what's next? We're already seeing language that's available on how we can roll back their wages without so much as even saying: guess what's coming? It's just going to happen. Very, very dangerous, unprecedented movements being made by this government, Madam Speaker.

I seem to remember getting lectured at length about the fiasco, supposedly, that we created with Bill 6. Well, heads up, folks. You might be facing your own on this one, yet all you had to do was go to the bargaining table, say: "Hey, this is our situation. What can you do to help us out?" You bargain it out. That's good-faith bargaining. This is bad-faith bargaining at its finest – at its finest – and it usually results in a whole lot of labour unrest. There are a lot of Albertans that are counting on services to be provided by these hard-working public-sector workers, and this is the way we're going to thank them, this is the way we're going to commend them for all their hard work? Absolutely unbelievable.

As you can imagine, Madam Speaker, I will most definitely not be supporting this in any way, shape, or form. I'm going to have a very, very hard time going back to my constituents and explaining to them how this piece of legislation has been ramrodded through. I believe I've heard that term several times in the last Legislature, too, around some of the things that we were doing. But as the Member for Edmonton-North West had said, even on some of the contentious ones we at least had some debate around it, not a whole whopping – what was it? – 10 minutes, 15 minutes, and already we're hitting the ejection button here.

I think this government will be placing itself in a very, very difficult position going forward here. I would not be surprised. I guess maybe the labour minister can bring in all kinds of just quick little bits of red tape to try to smooth things out here. I don't know. Maybe we can just ramrod some more legislation if people go on strike: hey, let's just order them back. Why not? It's not a big deal.

**Mr. Carson:** Don't give them any ideas.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I probably shouldn't give them any ideas, should I? Yeah. That's probably some good advice.

Madam Speaker, I would very highly suggest to the members in the House here right now that you reconsider this position very, very seriously. You want things to move smoothly in this government. You want this province to prosper. I can tell you right now that this is not the way to go about it. This is going to come back to bite you. But I guess that at the end of the day, when this debate is over, all I'll really be able to say is: I told you so.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there members with comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has expressed, I think, quite an emotive reaction, as I did just previously, not expecting this

sort of heavy-handed use of parliamentary procedure to invoke closure on a debate that just started.

You know, still thinking about that, I know that the Member for Edmonton-Decore has watched labour action over time, and I was just curious if he could perhaps think back to a good example of using a bargaining table to develop constructive contracts and perhaps a bad example of collective bargaining that didn't turn out so good.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for the question. Well, one of the very first things that comes to mind around the bad legislation: some will remember back to when the former PC government introduced bills 45 and 46, which resulted in a wildcat strike over at the remand centre. For members to get to such a point where they feel they have to, you know, break the rules around how strikes are supposed to be conducted, that's getting very, very serious. My concern is that we might be heading down the same path here. You know, that was probably a very, very easy question to answer around what not to do.

I've seen some very good examples of what to do, which can result in very favourable ways to go here. Now, it didn't start off so well, but before I was an MLA, my own union, UFCW, tried to talk with one of the large grocery stores. They ended up going out on strike for three days, at which point the company realized: maybe we were off base; let's try to work this out. In the past many, many times we've seen the UFCW go out on strike, and they've lasted very significant amounts of time. In this case, because the company came back and said, "Okay; look, we made a mistake; we didn't do things right," they managed to shorten that. After only three days they had an agreement, they were back on track, and people were getting their services: going to the grocery store, being able to get greeted by a very friendly face.

I'm a little concerned that what we might start to see is some of our public-sector workers going to deal with members of the public with this looming over them, and it's going to affect the service that members of the public are going to get. Of course, that's always going to end up snowballing because when people do get that sort of bad customer experience, they usually end up going out and telling a whole bunch of people versus, of course, that when they get a good experience, they maybe tell one or two.

**12:50**

I'm very concerned that we're starting to repeat history here a little bit around, you know, bills 45 and 46, possibly causing wildcat strikes here. Again, if somebody is getting to that point, where they're willing to take those risks, you have to step back for a second and go: "Okay. Whoa. How is it that we're getting to this point?" You can't just point at them and say: "It's all your fault. It's all you. Everything is on you." You might have to point back and go . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to the bill? Hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, I believe you've already spoken to . . .

**Mr. Shepherd:** No. Not since the question was put, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All right. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This government can play tricks, but they will not silence me. I appreciate the opportunity

to rise and speak after some cowardly actions by this government, who apparently don't have the guts to actually stand and debate this bill, much as they didn't have the guts to actually put this in their platform or discuss this in any way with Albertans or be in any way open and honest about the fact that they intended to immediately, on becoming government, come into this House and break contracts with public-sector workers, to make that assault on constitutional rights for workers in the province of Alberta. They wanted to hide it then, and they want to hide it now, so we will sit here, approaching 1 a.m., and we will have this debate, which I see all members of the government are engaged in with great interest.

You know, Madam Speaker, we've been down this road before. This is a familiar story here in the province of Alberta. Time and time again Conservative governments have decided that their way forward, their way to fiscal balance is to attack public-sector workers in the province of Alberta, to try to make villains out of the unions that represent them, to try to turn Albertans against each other, to try to make us feel resentful towards those who earn their living as doctors or nurses or teachers, social workers, paramedics, or sheriffs here at the Legislature. That is what we see here again with this bill, which is being brought forward to break collective agreements, to force them back from their legal right to be at the bargaining table until such time as this government feels they've generated sufficient cover, thrown enough flak in the air to begin their plans for wage rollbacks.

As I said, Madam Speaker, we've been down this road before. Indeed, not that long ago, a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend the state of the city address with Edmonton's mayor. Members of this House were there. I see some who were there. You know, the mayor spoke about the history that we have seen in this province before with decisions that have been made by previous Conservative governments. He talked about how back in the '90s Edmonton was gutted. Under Premier Klein, as I mentioned the other day during one of my questions during question period, we saw a direct attack on the public service. We saw drastic cuts that led to the loss of many jobs. And the mayor noted that as a result of that, here in the city of Edmonton we saw our economy hit hard.

Unlike the narrative that Conservative governments and, you know, their friends in particular parts of the media or with particular political organizations like to paint, the fact is that public-sector workers contribute back. The wages they earn go to support local businesses. The wages they earn go to pay for their children's daycare. The wages that they earn they pay taxes on, that go back to support your municipality, to support the provincial government. They are part of the community. They are our friends. They are our neighbours. They are our family.

So when Premier Klein targeted those public-sector workers, we saw those cuts, we saw those layoffs here in Edmonton. We saw a significant chunk of purchasing power that got pulled out of our economy. As a result, we saw a real stagnation here in Edmonton. Indeed, not only did we lose those people from our economy; we lost those people from our province and our city. I remember my own family doctor: in the late '90s he picked up and left. It wasn't worth working in Alberta anymore. Countless nurses, countless other health care workers, teachers, educators did the same.

Frankly, if your employer isn't going to respect you, if they are not going to think that you're worth while, well, then, people, like capital, are mobile. They'll go and they'll find someplace where they will. The impact that had on our city and indeed on much of our province is that we found ourselves with an incredible deficit. So when the boom came back, that being through no action of that particular government but by happenstance of chance – the price of natural gas rose; we had money again – it was: okay; well, now that royalties are up, we can invest back in health care and education. Well, at that point

we had skills shortages because so many of the people that had those skills, that were doing those jobs, had left the province. As the mayor noted in his state of the city address, because of that, it cost us 40 to 50 per cent more to rebuild everything that the government had just spent the last few years chopping down.

Now, the mayor went on to say that, you know, although he recognized that that had been the pattern before, he was still willing to work with this government. He figured there were opportunities for collaboration and chances to move forward and do some good work together, and I respect that. But I have to say that when I see a piece of legislation like this, when I see actions like the government's tonight, I have to seriously question what opportunities there are for any form of good-faith bargaining with this government, for genuine collaboration. We saw, with the introduction of this bill, how they approached discussion with the public sector: send a few threatening letters, have a couple of your department staff maybe meet with a couple of people, and then – boom – bring in legislation to force them back from that table. That's what this government considers collaboration. That's what they consider discussion.

At the first opportunity tonight the minister rises, he introduces and opens up the debate for second reading. Our critic for labour has the opportunity to speak, and no sooner is she done than this government invokes closure and says: "Yeah. That's it."

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Shepherd:** "Hear, hear," says one of their members. That's his commitment to democracy. Thank you, Member for Calgary-Klein. Glad to know that that's how you feel about democracy in this province. I'm sure your constituents will be proud.

Madam Speaker, another thing I noted when I asked my questions the other day regarding this bill that was being brought forward was that we need the co-operation of our public servants. This government claims that they can take 4 and a half billion dollars out of the budget, that they can go on to make other cuts – they have their blue-ribbon panel determining just where those are going to be – and that somehow they will balance the budget, and they will still be able to improve the delivery of public services. I certainly hope that's the case, Madam Speaker. It is not going to be a pretty scene if they're wrong.

**1:00**

I will say that if they want to achieve that goal, if they want to pull that rabbit out of the hat, they are going to need the co-operation, the goodwill of those workers on the front line, of those people who know the systems, of those people who understand where things can be changed, how we can improve delivery. But so far this government is showing that they have no intention of listening to those people. No. This government knows better, so best to just force everyone back, shut down debate, get rid of discussion. They've got all the answers.

This government likes to claim a lot of things about what it's doing and why, but when it comes down to it, very little of it often seems to be factual. They claim: this is only about a brief pause, just going to take a moment, just need to catch our breath, and then we'll sit down and we'll talk about this real promise. But then they slip in a clause which says, "But just in case, we are going to grant ourselves the opportunity to do anything that we feel we need to do to accomplish our goal," not through legislation, not through debate in this House, because we've clearly seen tonight how much they value that, but simply by regulation.

Again, it seems clear that this government is too cowardly to actually bring their agenda, their true agenda, to Albertans. They're

not willing to have that discussion in the light of day. They want to have the opportunity at every turn to do this through the back door, under cover of darkness, with utter disrespect for our public service workers and indeed for those who were elected alongside them to serve as the opposition in this House.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that I've had the opportunity to speak with many people on the front lines already, had the opportunity to post the questions that I posed to the minister online, and I can tell you that workers are not happy: nurses, teachers, paramedics, these folks that we depend on for these incredibly important public services; people, again, who are our friends, our family, our neighbours; for those of you that run businesses, your customers, your clients, your constituents. This is the level of disrespect with which you are treating them. This is the precedent you're setting for how we're going to move forward as a province over the next four years. This is not the way to move our province forward.

During our time in government we had an almost unprecedented era of labour peace. I had great respect for the work, the incredible work, that my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, when she served as Minister of Health, did going forward, sitting down with doctors in this province and negotiating a new payment system that would save us \$500 million. She did not have to do that at the barrel of legislation. She didn't have to pull any legislative trickery. She sat down at the table and had actual good-faith bargaining, as we did with every other public-sector union in this province, and now this government is going to take that goodwill and throw it away. They've already begun the process of doing so. It's not the best way to open a relationship, Madam Speaker. This is not the way to find balance in how we deliver our public services. This is not the way to approach democracy in our Legislature.

I know there will be other opportunities to speak to this bill. This will be my only opportunity at second reading thanks again to this government's choice to shut down debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the hon. member for the comments that he's raised thus far. I really do appreciate him talking about the good faith that we entered into with physicians, actually, not just at the time when we were up for contract negotiations; rather, to the contrary, actually. Contracts were signed under the former Conservative government that were so out of step with the realities of Albertans. What we did is that we sat down, and we showed the books. Lo and behold, we were able to have the physicians come back to the table far earlier than what was required by their collective agreement and renegotiate to have those funds turned back to the people of Alberta to be put to use in other areas. So I appreciate that the member brought that up.

I guess this was exceptional given the history with contract negotiations with physicians and what they asked for in places, that there be fair, good-faith bargaining moving forward, that they always be welcome to the table, that they always have an opportunity to engage in debate, and that they always be given an opportunity to reach an agreement before it be mandated upon them. I can't help but think about the contrast between what they asked for and what this government is pushing on them.

I wanted to say that and certainly welcome any further reflection from my hon. colleague with regard to collective agreements with public services. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate those reflections from my colleague and those comments and those thoughts. Indeed, it troubles me: the low regard in which I have seen so many who profess to be Conservatives hold their public-sector workers in the democratic institutions that are their unions, which serve to protect them for precisely this reason, from the tyranny of government that would choose to make them a scapegoat. It's unfortunate when I hear people talk about public-sector workers and say things like: well, they didn't have to feel the pain the last four years when other people were losing their jobs or having their wages cut. Indeed, they were the people that were helping keep their families going during that time when perhaps their spouse had lost their job. They were the ones that were still patronizing the businesses in their communities. This is not something to begrudge. The work they do and the compensation they receive for it is something to be thankful for. That's something for which we should treat them with respect, at least to have the respect to honour the contracts that have been signed with them. But this government is not choosing to do that.

1:10

So, again, the path forward is going to be that much more difficult for all of us, for these workers, for this government. I certainly intend to make this intended path of this government as difficult as possible because the decisions they are making, the direction they are heading is going to harm my constituents. It is going to do real damage to real people, both those who work in the public service and provide those key public services that people depend on and those who depend on those services.

The bill that this government has brought forward, as I said earlier, as much as the actions it has taken tonight, are both cowardly. They are shameful. They are without honour. Members can try to rationalize this, but again this is another thing that they did not run on. This is another thing that they did not campaign on to their constituents, that they did not discuss at the doors, for which they have no elected mandate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to my colleagues for this exciting, very public debate at 1:10 a.m. Just before the motion for closure was brought in, or the notice of closure because, of course, we don't have an opportunity to even debate whether or not it's appropriate to close – thanks for that standing order – I was looking at the AHS North Zone Twitter and saw that due to wildfires in the La Crête area, residents are being evacuated from the long-term care facility and relocated to other health facilities in Alberta. I wanted to start by saying how those folks are on our minds; the folks that are doing the evacuation and, of course, the folks who are being evacuated. These are some of the folks that will be impacted by the proposal to break the law, the proposal to breach their collective bargaining, but here they are. At the same time, the government is bringing in a motion to limit debate on whether or not they should rightfully be entitled to the collective bargaining process that they already agreed to and, yeah, we're calling them to go above and beyond. I know that there are, I think, just under 100,000 AHS employees alone in this province – that's about the size of Red Deer – working for that one employer that will certainly be impacted by this proposal should it move through.

It seems like the Government House Leader, anyway – I don't know if the whole government – seems dead set to move forward with this, full speed ahead, bringing in closure. Again, I want all



members of this House, because it is the entire Assembly that makes these decisions – it's maybe direction from one – all of you were asked to stand and vote at some point, and when you stand and vote, that's on the record, right? That's there for your constituents to call on and say, you know: when it came time to attacking my rights, how did the person that I elected to represent me vote on that issue?

Not to sharpen that point too much, just to reinforce that it's, you know – I think I said this the other day, and I really want to say it again. We will all be asked by people, whether they're our constituents, our bosses, or our friends, or our family: why did you do what you did? It's going to happen. It happens to us all the time, I'm sure. There are one of two answers to that question; it's either I did what I was told, or I did what I thought was right. And there will be times, maybe not yet, maybe so far everything that you were told is what you thought was right, but there are definitely going to be times when that isn't the case, and I will say that there will probably be, seeing the tone that has been set by the Government House Leader, many of them.

It seems like the Government House Leader is intent on running roughshod over this place and making sure he drives through his agenda as aggressively as he sees fit. I don't think that's becoming of a House leader, and I don't think it's becoming of the party that campaigned on doing things differently than its legacy parties. It certainly didn't campaign on building sky palaces and having among the most secretive history of governments in Alberta. I think it's important that I sort of frame it in that way.

I also think of the fact that we've shown over that last four years that you can absolutely have fair and reasonable collective agreements. People say: but our costs are the highest in the country when it comes to staffing. Sure. Yeah. And when did that happen? I'll tell you my experiences of training to be a teacher as well as of an employer of ATA members when I was with the Edmonton public school board. It was the AWE agreement. That was an agreement that was reached I believe it was with Premier Stelmach at the time. I think it was maybe Minister Liepert who sat down and negotiated with teachers: we'll tie your increase to the average weekly earnings. It sounds reasonable, right? If average weekly earnings in Alberta go up, then your pay will go up. It was a collective agreement that they reached.

As a result, teacher pay went up significantly because the price of oil had gone up. While not everyone was seeing the benefits, certainly the average weekly earnings in Alberta were out of step with the rest of the country, so teachers saw a big increase over those years of that agreement. But the government of the day didn't say, "We're going to tear up the agreement," because they knew that they had sat down at the table and they had reached that agreement.

It probably wasn't the best measure to use. They probably should have had something like zeros and a wage reopener, brought to you by the NDP. Everyone says: oh, the NDP is aligned with labour. And a lot of the times we are aligned with working people. But, you know, we certainly didn't write the kinds of agreements that resulted in the kinds of substantial increases that we saw under a former Conservative government. We saw zeros, many zeros, and a wage reopener, which means: we'll come back to the table, and we'll sit down, and we'll talk to you.

Except now, after they take those zeros, the government doesn't want to talk to them. The government brings in a bill that says: "No. We absolutely don't need to fulfill our legal requirements, the law that says that we will sit down and talk to you. We're going to delay that until we get a bunch of reports by somebody who has already said that our wages are out of line. Then, oh, PS: we'll incorporate a clause, a little omnibus clause, that allows us to indeed not even

have a negotiated contract. We can set our own conditions, and we can implement them."

[The Speaker in the chair]

That's what we're being asked to do here tonight, colleagues, through you, of course, Mr. Speaker. We're being asked to give, essentially, a blank cheque to the minister of labour or a designate to write whatever collective agreement, which isn't actually a collective agreement if it isn't agreed upon, to dictate the terms of employment to a lot of folks who, frankly, probably voted for you. Some voted for us; some voted for you. And you're being asked to rip up their contract, take away their rights, and bring that in at midnight so that nine hours later, maybe, whether it's today or another day, after only nine hours of debate, with only one speaker having gone previously, it will all be done and hidden away under the darkness of night.

It does not sit well with me, and I don't think it probably sits well with many members. I doubt that many members got up this morning – like, my favourite thing to always say to my team when I was Minister of Health and still in my constituency office to a smaller team but a mighty team is: we're going to get up today, and we're going to do something to make life better for the people we work for. I doubt that when you got up this morning, you thought: I can't wait to bring in closure, end debate, and legislate contracts. I doubt that that was what equated to you as getting up in the morning and doing something to make life better for the people we work for. So that's frustrating.

There are many, many, many Albertans – I mentioned the roughly 100,000 that work for AHS, but this bill, arguably, will impact almost double that, including, of course, many front-line workers, as were mentioned. I know that we have people who were employed in the public service in previous lives who would have definitely been impacted by this.

I'll tell you that when people ask me, "What inspired you to get into politics?" I usually start with the very first inspiration, which was the 5 per cent rollbacks that both of my parents got when they were teachers in the '90s, which I guess means that Ralph Klein helped to inspire me to get into politics. Certainly, if we hadn't have taken both of those rollbacks, neither of them probably would have talked about politics as much at the dinner table, but it definitely personally impacted our family.

When my dad was dying a few years after that, about a week before he died he said: "You know what? It wasn't just our income for those years. It was my pension." Because your pension is based on your five highest income-earning years, and his weren't the last five years. Those weren't his highest wage-earning years. I said: "Yeah. I'm really sorry about that." He said: "I'm not mad for me. I'm mad for your mom because my pension is what's going to pay her bills. Here I am, knowing I'm going to leave." Because there were legislated rollbacks in the '90s, that's what he was thinking about on his deathbed in 2007.

1:20

The decisions we make in this place have lasting impacts on families. Certainly, I know that probably many of you are being told to be good cheerleaders. Nobody runs for office to be a cheerleader. You run to be on the field, right? You run to be part of the action. You run to make decisions. You want to carry the ball, and you want to help take Alberta from where we are today to a better place. I remember many maiden speeches talking about that. Sitting in this place being good, quiet soldiers and voting to take away something that is put in law, something that has been negotiated and something the Supreme Court has ruled on, I don't think is leaving this place better than the way we found it. I think it's highly problematic.

I think that with regard to front-line workers, they deserve our respect. I think that you can stand in this place and you can say that we respect them, but when you do stuff like this, when you bring in bills, laws, that impact their ability to provide for their families, I think that that is a new level of honesty, let's say. You can say all the members' statements that you want, but people are going to judge you by what you do as well. They're going to judge you by what they know impacts them in their own personal lives.

We've seen an act to pick your pockets, and I would argue that this is probably another variation on that. Certainly, people took zeros for many years, knowing that it was the right thing to do and that they were in this together with government, that they weren't one set of Albertans that has different rights than another set of Albertans, that we are all Albertans, that we are all going to do our part, and they said: "Yeah. We will take all our zeros, and then we want to sit down at the table again." They didn't say, "Then we want a big increase." They said, "Then we want to sit down at the table," and that's what's being taken away.

I would tell you that if I were sitting down at that table the next time negotiations happened, I would have a very, very, very bad taste in my mouth about what I'd already experienced, and it would impact the tone in which I entered the discussion. You know, fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. If I was planning on entering into these discussions in good faith on the other side of the table and I saw this happen, I would probably be wanting to come to the table in more of an adversarial and aggressive way.

That is a little bit of what I wanted to say about that. I think that, again, when asked, "Why are we doing this?" many people will probably be told to say, "To get our fiscal house in order." I again say to you: when did it get out of order? How did it get out of order? Can you trust the same people who made the mistakes of bringing in AWE to make a decision today about how best to have fair compensation?

I think that all that working people want is to be able to sit down at the table and have a fair and reasonable conversation with their employer. When we talk about minimum wage or when we talk about overtime, the labour minister is very quick to say: well, people can negotiate. They can come in and they can say: "Hey, I know I'm making \$15 now. The law will say that I can make \$13 later. Would you please consider maybe letting me continue to make \$15?" We're saying that it's okay for them to come in and negotiate, but we're saying that it's not okay for the public sector to come in and negotiate? Like, you can't talk out of both sides of your mouth saying different things at the same time. It makes no sense, and that's what this is.

If you say that you want people to come in and negotiate with their employer, then you do that as the employer. You lead by example, and you say: absolutely, we welcome you to the table. And guess what? Sometimes you might get more out of that discussion than you anticipated because the people of this province who elected you are the people who are asking to sit at the table. Shutting them out of that discussion, I think, is really, really disrespectful.

I don't think it's becoming of the responsibilities that we entered into this line of work wanting to do: wanting to get up in the morning and make life better for our bosses – right? – the people of this province; wanting to make life better for the families that are counting on that pension payment; wanting to make life better for folks who know that they don't always have the most glamorous jobs, but they can do them with pride, and they feel respected working for a respected institution. When you disrespect those workers, no matter what lip service you pay, it's going to come back at you, and it's not going to be fun. I certainly wouldn't want to be sitting down at the table to negotiate after something like this got

pushed, somebody ran roughshod over the law, over the legally negotiated terms and conditions of those contracts.

I think that this is a betrayal of what the government said that they were going to do when they were campaigning. I think that they said that they were going to be fair and reasonable. I think bringing in a bill like this is not fair. It's not reasonable. It is certainly a way of squeezing power. Really, not just power from the folks that are going to be impacted by this, but it's squeezing power from caucus, to be quite frank. I doubt that a bunch of you went into your first caucus meeting and said: I think we should bring in closure and talk about potentially rolling back public-sector contracts.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Bilous:** Seeing the time and the healthy debate that's happened this evening, I move that we adjourn for the evening until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members. Hon. members, the Speaker is on his feet. Hon. members. [interjection] Member for Edmonton-North West, surely we wouldn't be making such inappropriate comments.

[Motion to adjourn lost]

### Bill 9 Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (continued)

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

#### Point of Order Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

**Mr. Dang:** Under 13(2), Mr. Speaker, to explain a ruling of the Speaker. I believe the Assembly had just decided to actually adjourn debate on this bill. I'd like to know why the Assembly is allowed to then return immediately. The decision has already been made by the Assembly, and you would not be able to retract the decision of the Assembly without unanimous consent.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the comments from the hon. Member for Edmonton-South. However, the Speaker didn't make a ruling. The government sets the order in which we are debating, and as such the table has called Bill 9.

### Debate Continued

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has one minute of debate remaining should she choose to continue.

**Ms Hoffman:** Oh. All sorts of transformational things I'm sure can be said in that one minute. Let me start by saying how much I appreciate the last few seconds there, seeing how the Government House Leader is treating the caucus that's made a decision to adjourn debate on this item.

That being said, I'd like to move that we adjourn debate on this motion since I still seem to have 30 seconds. Can we reconsider that, Mr. Speaker? I think it's probably in order.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:29 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Eggen	Nielsen
Carson	Goehring	Pancholi
Dang	Gray	Renaud
Deol	Hoffman	Shepherd

Against the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Pon
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Reid
Copping	Long	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pitt	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 30
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[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

### Speaker's Ruling

#### Debate on Second Reading

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if I might just add a brief Speaker's comment with respect to the procedural activities of the last 20 minutes or so and with respect to the Member for Edmonton-South's question. One of the reasons why we were able to continue debate on Bill 9 without moving to another piece of legislation that would be before the Assembly is that the Assembly considered an additional question in the intervening time period. We had initially adjourned debate, and then we considered the question on adjourning the House. That question was defeated, and as such, it would be reasonable to call Bill 9 again. That is exactly where we find ourselves.

#### Debate Continued

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone wishing to debate? The hon. member.

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I do see a point of order being called.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm seeing all kinds of procedural things that I've never ever seen before. I'm writing a journal, and it's going to be great.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, I think, had some interesting insights in regard to negotiating in good faith, and the key to that – and it's a lesson that I learned as well in the previous four years – is that you move with the presumption of full disclosure and without any presumption besides what is being brought to the table. You know, when negotiating in good faith like that, you can get all kinds of interesting insights on how to improve the quality of the work that's being done in any given workplace, be it a hospital, a long-term care facility, a school, working in almost any part of the public sector. The workers, who know best – they have their ears to the ground and are actually executing the job every day – will have all sorts of high-quality suggestions, that you can even

potentially put into a contract, that make life better for everyone who is using a hospital or a school and so forth.

So I just wanted, you know, to perhaps jog the memory of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora about some of those things that you can negotiate for and that we have negotiated for and that have actually improved the service that the workers and the government are responsible for when we enter into these agreements, thus doing your job better as a government and with people feeling happier about the jobs that they're doing and their quality service for the kids or the people that might be in a hospital, for example. If you could perhaps enlighten us as to some of those things that you've seen, I would be grateful.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I'm actually going to start on one that I saw under his leadership because I happen to sit on the public-sector compensation committee. He brought forward a recommendation around the classroom improvement fund. [interjection] What? What a great, brilliant idea: let's create a fund. Teachers sat down and said, "You know, we'd like to create a fund to increase opportunities for things like split classes or increased educational assistant support or increased technology, other things that will improve our classroom working conditions," because teachers' working conditions are kids' learning conditions. That was certainly an example of something that I think was creative. It certainly didn't have a net individual benefit to teachers' pockets, but it definitely did have a benefit to their working conditions and kids' learning conditions. That is one example.

1:50

Another one I'll mention: in working with physicians, we developed what used to be RPAP. It was the rural physician action plan, and we expanded it to be the rural health practitioner action plan, expanding the mandate from not just being about one profession. Of course, attracting physicians is great, but if you don't have all the other allied health and nursing supports and complementary health supports, you aren't going to be able to keep those doctors for very long. That was something that we discussed at the table, and we came up with a strategy to expand the mandate for RPAP, and RPAP was certainly willing to pick up that cause and carry it forward with us.

Also, we had negotiations, of course, with nurses, registered nurses as well as LPNs, as well as with exempt hospital staff. Some of the people who are exempt, for example, are the folks who are usually in the basement of hospitals. Medical device reprocessing they call it; they're cleaning the equipment that's used in that hospital to ensure the safety of patients. We saw years ago – it was in Vegreville, actually – where the equipment wasn't maintained, and there ended up being a terrible situation that resulted in putting patients at risk. We, through those conversations with folks that are exempt, made it a priority to invest in helping to bring those medical device reprocessing units, their equipment and their workspaces, up to an appropriate standard. Of course, it was important for patient safety, but it also is important for showing respect and supporting the morale of the people working in those areas as well, certainly areas that you don't always think about in the hospital as being important, but absolutely every member of that team is, and they deserve to have an opportunity to reach an agreement with their employer.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to speak? I see the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise tonight, or this morning, depending on how you look at it, to talk on Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill. I'm just really disappointed at kind of what's been going on in the House tonight. Having the government invoke closure to stop debate on this legislation after one speaker is just one more way that they are coming after front-line workers in the province. Not only are they breaking the law with this legislation, but they're abusing their power, and that's something that we continue to see over and over from this government.

I can speak to it first-hand when we found out through the media that they were stopping the working of the Conversion Therapy Working Group, a decision that had been made. Then when the media reported on this, the minister had said: no; that's not accurate. So, you know, there was some hope that perhaps the government was going to go back on that bad decision and consider the working group. That didn't happen, Mr. Speaker. They made a decision. They didn't consult with people on that decision. They just came forward and said: no; this is what we're doing. Again, this is something that we see this government doing. They make decisions based on what they want to do, without consultation.

Some other things that they've done in the House because they wanted to was all of the standing order changes, Mr. Speaker. They've taken tradition in this Assembly and just disregarded it. Why? Because they could. They have the power, and they're showing us and Albertans that they're going to use it.

When we look at this legislation, it's quite concerning that they are taking this away from the unions, the right to bargain. We've heard from several union leaders, Mr. Speaker, about their feelings on this legislation, and I would just like to share with you some of the things that are being said. We've heard words like "egregious," "disrespectful," "authoritarian," and "the biggest betrayal by government that I have ever seen." It's concerning.

We have leaders in our province who would enter into bargaining in good faith with the hopes that they would be able to sit down and come up with an agreement. Unfortunately, that's not happening, Mr. Speaker. They're using this legislation to break legally binding contracts, and that's simply bargaining in bad faith.

We have over 180,000 workers that this is going to impact. Who are those workers, Mr. Speaker? Front-line nurses, social workers, teachers, librarians, food inspectors, child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, corrections officers, sheriffs, and so many more. The fact that they're bringing back this old Conservative bullying tactic is just so disrespectful to our front-line workers. I'm not sure what the fear is around sitting around a table with a bunch of big, bad social workers or, you know, those terrifying child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, but what they're doing is that they're creating just an unsettling feeling right now in labour.

Our labour leaders are speaking out about their concerns. Gil McGowan, the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, said: raving mad reviews as public-sector union leaders call Jason Kenney – sorry – and the UCP's Bill 9 one of the most egregious abuses of power by a government ever seen in Alberta's history. Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill, will see Alberta break its own laws by overriding 24 collective agreements, representing 180,000 public-sector workers, and delaying wage talks until October 31, 2019. This is not about postponing the process; this is a bully bill. They are using the power of their majority in government to break legally binding contracts. It's unfair, inappropriate, and illegal.

Guy Smith, the president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees – that was my union, Mr. Speaker – says that this is an egregious attack on workers' rights and legally binding collective agreements. This is authoritarian. This is ideological, and it does nothing but create labour unrest. Albertans should be very

concerned when a new government uses the power and authority of the state to crush basic rights. That is exactly what's happening with this legislation, and the fact that closure has been invoked and is preventing full debate of this is really concerning.

Heather Smith, the president of the United Nurses of Alberta, says: I'm not terribly surprised, but I'm very, very disappointed; even Ralph Klein in the depths and darkness of the '90s didn't use legislation to reach in and violate workers' contracts; this is incredibly unprecedented and incredibly disappointing; it's the biggest betrayal by a government I have ever seen.

These are words of our leadership in our unions that are representing our workers, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to just go through some of these collective agreements that are being affected, Mr. Speaker, to maybe put a face to some of these workers that they are bringing this heavy hammer down on. I'm not sure if that's going to have an impact on the government or not, but maybe if they can identify who some of these people are that they haven't consulted with, it'll have an impact. I know, members of the government, that some of these people are in your communities.

The Alberta College of Art and Design and AUPE: a collective agreement between the board of governors of the Alberta College of Art and Design and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, local 071/006, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

Another AUPE and Alberta Health Services, Lamont health care centre, Allen Gray continuing care centre: a collective agreement between the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees – that's auxiliary nursing – and Alberta Health Services and Lamont health care centre and Allen Gray continuing care centre, April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2020.

AUPE again and Alberta Health Services: the collective agreement between Alberta Health Services and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, general support services, April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2020.

HSAA and Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Lamont centre: a collective agreement between the Health Sciences Association of Alberta, paramedical professional and technical employees, and the Bethany nursing home of Camrose, Alberta, and the Lamont health care centre and Alberta Health Services, April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2020.

UNA, Alberta Health Services: collective agreement between Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Lamont health care centre, the Bethany Group out of Camrose, and the United Nurses of Alberta, April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2020.

**2:00**

AUPE, Alberta Innovates: collective agreement between Alberta Innovates and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, local 060, October 1, 2017, to September 30, 2020.

Athabasca University, AUPE: collective agreement between the governors of Athabasca University and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees on behalf of local 069, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

Bow Valley College, Bow Valley College Faculty Association: collective agreement between the board of governors of Bow Valley College and the Bow Valley College Faculty Association, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

CUPE, a union that I belonged to. It was my very first union, Mr. Speaker, that I was involved with. It was a union that was brought in while I was working in a nonprofit. Unfortunately, we've heard stories in this House before about employers trying to stop unions, and there were definitely some bullying tactics that went on to try and prevent us from bringing the union in. A staff member got fired, actually, for bringing that legislation in. I can say that she went from

working as a child support worker to now being a labour law lawyer because of how she was treated by the employer when she tried to bring in a union.

It's just devastating to know that this government is attacking unions. They're doing the same thing that employers do when they feel that there's a threat or they feel that they're doing something they don't want. They just come in, use their power, and try and make workers' lives as miserable and uncomfortable as possible, and that's exactly what's happening right now. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that workers all across this province are feeling really unsettled and just distressed about what's happening right now. But I digress.

I'd like to continue to try and talk about some of the other agreements that are being impacted. The Calgary board of education, CUPE: Calgary board of education agreement between the board of trustees of the Calgary board of education and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, local 040, September 1, 2017, to August 31, 2020.

Fort McMurray Catholic board of education, CUPE: collective agreement between the Fort McMurray Catholic board of education and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, local 2559, September 1, 2017, to August 31, 2020.

AUPE, the government of the province of Alberta, which I was a member of, Mr. Speaker: master agreement between the government of the province of Alberta and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, November 4, 2018, to March 31, 2020.

InnoTech Alberta, AUPE: collective agreement between InnoTech Alberta and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, local 060, October 1, 2017, to September 30, 2020.

Keyano College, Keyano College Faculty Association: collective agreement between the board of governors of Keyano College and the Keyano College Faculty Association, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

Lakeland College, AUPE: collective agreement between the board of governors of Lakeland College and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, representing local 071, chapter 004, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

Lethbridge College, AUPE: collective agreement between the board of governors of Lethbridge College and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees on behalf of local 071/001, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, AUPE: collective agreement between the board of governors of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, local 038, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

Northern Lakes College, AUPE: collective agreement between the board of governors of Northern Lakes College and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, local 071, chapter 009, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

NorQuest College, AUPE: collective agreement between NorQuest College and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, local 071, chapter 010, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

Olds College, AUPE: collective agreement between the board of governors of Olds College and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, local 071, chapter 002, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

Red Deer College, AUPE: collective agreement between Red Deer College and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, local 071, chapter 014, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, SAIT Academic Faculty Association: collective agreement between the board of governors of the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) and the SAIT Academic Faculty Association, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

With that, I move that we adjourn the House. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:07 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Eggen	Nielsen
Carson	Goehring	Pancholi
Dang	Hoffman	Renaud
Deol		

Against the motion:

Allard	Jones	Pon
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Reid
Copping	Loewen	Schow
Getson	Long	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Yao
Issik	Panda	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 27
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[Motion to adjourn lost]

**The Speaker:** We are on the bill. Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for anyone wishing to make a brief comment or question. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora rising.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to say how excited I am for your next instalment of procedural video. I'm sure there will be much to say about the situation here tonight. Of course, one thing could be explaining to Albertans how government brings in closure or calls the previous question or the differences between closure and call the previous question. That certainly would be a stimulating conversation, I'm sure, for a video.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, while I appreciate your enthusiasm for the videos, I'm not entirely sure how that particular question or comment is relevant to the matter before the Assembly.

**Ms Hoffman:** Oh, I'll get there, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much. Certainly, I think understanding and explaining to the general public about some of the procedures that the Government House Leader chose to bring in tonight to try to make sure that this be time limited, of course, and stopping after just one speaker – I appreciate that the speaker for Edmonton-Castle Downs was going through some of the various collective agreements that are set to be impacted by the bad-faith bargaining bill, a bill to run roughshod to break the law. Mr. Speaker, I know that when she was going through it, I was thinking about some of the people I know who studied at ACAD and worked at ACAD. One was in the Minister of Advanced Education's riding, I believe. I remember going to a restaurant and the person who was serving the table talking about how she was a prof at ACAD and was so excited that we were moving it towards university status. So I want to thank the member for bringing up that example. It's interesting that not only is her pay likely going to be impacted by this piece of legislation but could very well be impacted by other pieces of legislation that the government is talking about bringing forward, potentially, around server wages and those types of things.

You know, these are, as the member said, not usually people that you expect a government to be scared to sit down and talk to, right?

This was a very pleasant, fantastic server who taught art by day and served tables by night. She is represented by a bargaining unit that made a deal in good faith to take zeros for many years in return for being able to sit back down at the table, no commitment to there being necessarily an increase but a commitment to sitting back down at the table. What's being proposed here tonight, of course, is to take away her right to fair representation and good-faith bargaining. So very troubling. I want to thank the member for mentioning that one example.

I wonder if there are any other collective agreements. It seems like most of them as well, I want to say, expire in about a year. These are collective agreements that aren't, you know, going on indefinitely throughout the term of this government and into another government. This is the term. Most of them are up in about a year. I wonder if the hon. member could share any other examples and if there are any other trends that she's noticing from going through these collective agreements.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm disappointed that we didn't win that vote. I thought we were close, but we were not. I am delighted, however, to continue to share some of the other collective agreements that are going to be impacted by this legislation, the public sector bad-faith bargaining bill, Bill 9.

I believe that I started to talk about SAIT and their academic faculty association. The collective agreement between the board of governors of the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, also known as SAIT, and the SAIT Academic Faculty Association: July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

The ATA, Mr. Speaker, which is across the entire province, and the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association. The central agreement between the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association: September 1, 2018, to August 31, 2020.

The University of Calgary and the Faculty Association of the University of Calgary. Collective agreement between the Faculty Association of the University of Calgary and the governors of the University of Calgary: July 1, 2019, to June 20, 2020.

The University of Lethbridge, Mr. Speaker, and the AUPE. Collective agreement between the governors of the University of Lethbridge and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees on behalf of local 53: July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020.

Mr. Speaker, those are the hard-working Albertans that are going to be impacted. Like I've said and so many other members in the House, that's 180,000 workers – front-line nurses, social workers, teachers, librarians – that are all going to be impacted. I hope that we do not support this bill.

Thank you.

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

I do share the opinion of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora when she highlighted the fact that there are lots of procedural activities that have taken place here, and perhaps a video by the Speaker identifying the tools that the government has as well as maybe some that the opposition has also used this evening or procedural tools at everyone's disposal for each of their advantage.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is rising.

2:30

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is my first time being in the House when closure has been invoked, and I have to admit – it's now been about two and a half hours since that took place – as

I imagine was the intent behind the action by the Government House Leader, that I was quite shocked. I was quite surprised.

I remember having a conversation with a constituent recently where they asked me about debates and filibustering and how it works, and I said: oh, you know, there's always the option for a government to shut down debate by invoking closure, but that rarely happens because that is the antithesis of the democratic process. I actually just had that conversation, and now, well, I guess we're seeing how the next four years are going to look because this government brought in closure after hearing one member of the opposition caucus speak in opposition to this bill.

I admit to having – like many of the members in this House, I'm a new member, and I'm learning the ropes, and I'm watching what's going on. I'm relying on my colleagues who are more experienced and are veterans, but I think I'm learning. I came in and I thought: I have a pretty good understanding of how the Legislature works. I've had the privilege of working in public service. I've had the privilege of supporting, working on bills that have gone through this House. I worked in a constituency office before. I've read *Hansard*. By all accounts I'm a pretty knowledgeable person about the process of what happens in this Legislature, yet I have been completely astounded by what I can only describe as an absolute contempt for the democratic process from this government. From the beginning I kept thinking: "Well, this is just one thing. This is just one thing. This is just one thing." But a pattern is clearly established.

More than anything, when I came in here two and a half hours ago, when closure was invoked by this government, I sat here and I felt like I was looking at the members on the opposite side, wondering if they felt the same shock that I did. Maybe they knew it was coming; maybe they didn't. But at the end of the day, this is setting a tone once again about the rights and privileges that we as members in this House have. We have already seen those rights as members be chipped away. We no longer get to introduce our families in the House. Private members' bills automatically get diverted to a committee first.

We've seen the opportunity – well, frankly, I haven't heard from most of my colleagues on the other side of the House. They certainly don't feel compelled to speak to the legislation that's been introduced by their government. They don't stand up and debate. We've seen many occasions where many members on the other side who sit in the cabinet, on the front bench, don't answer the questions they're asked. Other people answer them for them. Frankly, I don't really know a lot about a lot of the members on the other side because we don't hear them speak very much, and now we're finding out that this government is actually, clearly invoking closure and thinking that, I guess, maybe the very act of democratic debate is no longer necessary in this House.

I certainly found it amusing to hear that the Government House Leader's rationale was because this is only delaying, you know, the implementation of the arbitration hearings and these collective agreements by four months, right? Therefore, breaking collective agreements, breaking the law, bargaining in bad faith: that's no big deal; we don't need to debate that. What I'm actually sensing more and more is that there is a real contempt for the process but also for other views in this House, and I'm deeply troubled by that.

I think that we've made some statements in this House already about how there appears to be a sense from the members on the other side that because they won an election – by the way, this party won an election four years ago as well. Nobody holds the righteousness on being government. Most importantly, what happens is that you don't have 87 seats in this House. You don't. That's actually just – I think you're supposed to be good at math.

You're supposed to be good at crunching the numbers. If you had won all 87 seats, you wouldn't be listening to us tonight.

I already know that some of the members are pretty irritated about having to listen to us tonight. I know that we saw – two weeks ago, when this opposition caucus stood up to defend workers, particularly young workers but a lot of workers who are not having their voice heard, on Bill 2, all we heard was a lot of complaining about the filibuster. Again, I thought this was a government party and a caucus that are supposed to be about hard work, but when they actually have to do their jobs, we hear complaints. Well, I have a job, and I know what my job is, and I stand up here to do it.

But I think that even when I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing, the government is trying to silence my voice, trying to silence your voices, because that's been the theme. That has been the theme. There is one mandate that's going around, and that's what the Government House Leader and – I don't know who makes the decisions over there; I can only guess. But the theme is: let's shut down the democratic process. Frankly, I'm quite shocked.

I was hoping, when I came in and looked at the members on the other side, that some of them would be a little bit shocked by what happened as well. I'm not sure if that's the case. Like I said, I don't feel like I have a sense that I know a lot of the members on the other side because I haven't heard them speak a lot. I think you're getting a good sense of who all of us are because we're talking an awful lot. I don't know if you're shocked, but you should be. At the end of the day, you were elected by voters to do a job, and that job is to actually debate – it's not to impose, it's not to bring in a fiat, it's not to just simply say that this is the way it's going to happen – because you don't have 87 seats.

Even if you're not in the opposition and you don't have to debate it, I sure hope you know it. I sure hope you know what your government is doing. I sure hope you know the bills that you're passing, that you're imposing. I don't know if you know it because, frankly, I hear nothing. That's just my shock about what's happened tonight in terms of the democratic process. I'm happy to stay up all night and do the work that's important, that I've been elected to do, and to debate, and I'm shocked to hear that the members on the other side don't even feel that that's important. More importantly, I think Albertans will be shocked. They will hear about it. We know that they're already hearing about it, and they'll have their say about that.

Now, on to Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining act. I do want to say that I think the most important thing to keep in mind, that this government has been doing effectively – and I think they laid the groundwork for this even early on in the campaign – is that they're trying to paint unions and people who are union members as something other than what they are, which is Albertans. People who are part of unions are Albertan workers, and I don't know why their jobs and their work is so undervalued by this government.

I've talked about this before in this House. When I was door-knocking in my riding, a lot of people were two-income families. One member might have been affected by the drop in oil prices – they were in oil and gas or related industries somehow, and they were affected – and the other member of that household was often a public-sector worker. I'm sure that many of your families and many of your friends are public-sector workers. They are not a monolithic union. They are individual employees. They are Albertans who are doing work. For some reason this government seems to have an incredible lack of value for the work that they do.

When the economy went down, when international oil prices dropped – that's why the economy went down, and you should know that because it happened to previous Conservative governments before. When that happened, this government made a

choice. The Member for Edmonton-North West did a fantastic job of talking about the decision. It was a difficult decision to make, but the decision was made by the NDP government to not also further punish Albertans by destroying their public services.

We've already seen that this government seems to be taking an approach of devaluing the service, the public services themselves, by cutting the revenue sources to provide those services at a high quality, whether it be education or health care. Now they've made it abundantly clear, if they haven't already, that they also do not value the Albertans who provide those services.

I'm just completely astounded, because we've got to remember that these are human beings. We're talking about collective agreements. We're talking about wage arbitrations. It can get very easy to get caught up in the rhetoric around that, but these are people who already have not taken an increase for more than four years. They are people who still continue to provide high-quality services to our families, to all of us during an economic downturn. They are sometimes people who were responsible for continuing to support their households when somebody else in the household was affected by the drop in oil prices. These are people who are – we've gone through the list: 180,000 workers, nurses, teachers. These are people we know. These are people who provide things, services that we desperately value and need.

There's such a cavalier approach from this government to negotiations with them. You know, I can put on my labour lawyer hat and say: this is the very definition of bad-faith bargaining. Basically, the bargaining process is driven into the ground when one party doesn't play by the rules. And you know what the rules are? The rules are the collective agreement. These were binding collective agreements on all the parties. There were provisions in there for a reason. If the parties can't trust each other, then it's going to collapse and we're going to see labour unrest.

That doesn't serve anybody because not only, again, does it hurt the workers; it also hurts the provision of services to Albertans. I'm just astounded by why this government seems just laser focused on destroying public services and the people who provide them. Don't we all benefit from those services? Don't we all benefit by having labour stability to make sure that those services are provided when we need them? This is already a shocking action, I believe, to undermine that good-faith relationship in bargaining, which is just going to cause more trouble for Albertans, but to do it in a such a way that it really undermines the democratic process: you know, it really disheartens me.

2:40

This is not why I ran for office. I ran for office because I wanted to represent the views of my constituents, and this government is trying to stop me from doing that. I think that's shameful, and I hope Albertans will hold this government to task for that because that's not what our jobs are. Maybe it's time, when you talk about your laser focus on jobs, that you worry about your own jobs, that you worry about how you're doing your job, because I know that we on this side of the House are standing up every day and doing our jobs really well. We are listening, we're doing the work, we're doing the research, we're representing people who are bringing their concerns to us, and we're talking about the other side of the issue. That's the job that we've been elected to do.

I don't see the other side doing their job. In fact, I see them trying to undermine their jobs. I wish you paid as much attention to your work as you do to trying to undermine the work of public-sector employees in this province, who are delivering the services we need and value.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a question or comment for the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand up and talk about Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining act. Obviously, as my other colleagues have said, this bill is a gross abuse of power and an attack on front-line workers. Although I'm hugely disappointed, I'm not terribly shocked that this government has invoked closure.

I think back to all of the rhetoric before and during the election, and one of the things that always made me laugh a little bit was the frequency that some of the members and, particularly, our now Premier were boasting about how important it was to be humble, just stay humble. Humble. You know, we're going to focus on democracy, do what's best for Alberta. This isn't what democracy looks like. You don't use your numbers and throw your weight around and shut people down and shut them up just so that you can manipulate what happens in this place. I keep count a little bit because every day people are talking about the size of their mandate, as mentioned before. Again, it's not really the size of the mandate but what you do with it. What you've done with it is really lame. You've shut it down because you are unwilling to hear what we're saying.

Let me talk a little bit about St. Albert. That's the community that I represent. Oddly enough, it is actually a fairly established community. It's a really old community. It's a community that invests in a lot of local services, and 1 in 4 St. Albertans are public-sector workers. They are workers like nurses, social workers, teachers, food inspectors, child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, correction officers, sheriffs, and so much more, disability workers. These are people that are the foundation of this province. These are the people that provide essential services to us every single day. These are the people that we rely on every single day.

This is the group that is squarely under attack. I mean, you can say that you're not, but all of the steps that you're taking, all of the things that you're introducing are very, very clear that that is exactly what you are doing. I guess I don't really understand when we're coming out of a time that we're recovering from a recession, when we are facing all kinds of challenges, and one of the first things that this government does is actually attack the workers that are the people that we rely on.

Let's talk about some of those people. There are all kinds of people that I'm talking about tonight. I'd just like to name them, actually, and talk about some of the workers that we rely on, that our kids rely on to provide services. I'd like to mention some of the staff that will be impacted at Albert Lacombe school. These are some of the folks that are going to be impacted, and I apologize in advance if I don't get their names quite right: the principal of Albert Lacombe, Ms Charlene Kushniruk; vice-principal, Mr. Duane Hayes. He's going to be impacted. You've invoked closure, so we don't get to debate fully this legislation that has the ability to impact their lives and our communities. Some of the admin support staff: Mrs. Jocelyn Sigurdson, Mrs. Karen Watts, also admin staff for Albert Lacombe. We have learning services: learning support facilitator Mrs. Leisa Michael.

Our school counsellor here at Albert Lacombe – school counsellors provide essential services, and they're going to be particularly important because of the legislation that this government is going to jam through, that will reduce the effectiveness and the privacy afforded kids that choose to join or

form QSAs and GSAs. School counsellors are really important. Ms Donna Nelson at Albert Lacombe school is going to be impacted.

Let's talk about the sports academy facilitator, Mr. Geoff Giacobbo, and sports academy staff: soccer, Mr. Marc Loiselle; health and fitness, Mr. Massimo Provenzano.

Performing arts: Miss Kimberly Kaplar.

Prekindergarten. Who doesn't think prekindergarten is vitally important? These teachers and these staff are going to be impacted: teacher, Ms Melissa Gibb; educational assistant Ms Heather Cummings.

Occupational therapists. Occupational therapy is vitally important in schools. Mrs. Susan Patterson and speech language pathologist Mrs. Nicole McDougall: really important. Speech language pathology is an incredibly important skill, and these are incredibly important support staff to have.

Then we've got kindergarten; so important: Mrs. Christine Field. I actually met her. She's amazing.

Grade 1: Mrs. Kristie Brahim, Miss Lesley Kenyon. Grade 1 is a really difficult grade to teach. Although I've never myself taught grade 1, I hear it is very difficult. These are people that are going to be impacted.

Grade 2: Mrs. Kerrie Fedunyk. Grade 3: K.T. Jacula, Mrs. Cynthia Osicki. Grade 4: Mrs. Lindsey Pratt. Grade 4 and 5 – I can imagine the challenge of a blended classroom, not easy – Ms Leah Kres. Grade 5: Mrs. Caitlin Nobert. Grade 5/6 split – another very challenging class, I'm sure, as the hormones are raging at that time; I'm assuming they're starting – Mrs. Brianne Tworek, Miss Kim Kaplar. Grade 6, Miss Candace Leis.

Then the librarian – vitally important; kids need librarians – Mrs. Catherine Crothers.

Educational assistants. Now, these are particularly important. Although we have not seen this government's budget yet, we can only imagine. When school boards make cuts because of cuts passed on to them by the government, it is very often things like educational assistants that are the first to go. In a classroom that is packed because perhaps the government is not funding it adequately, educational assistants are not only important to support students that don't have challenges, but in order for inclusive classrooms to really be functional, educational assistants are vital. Especially in Albert Lacombe school they're incredibly vital. Educational assistants in that school currently are Mrs. Rhonda Armstrong, Miss Megan Atkinson, Mrs. Lynne Clayton Newton, Ms Heather Cummings, Mrs. Catherine Crothers, Mrs. Alison Giesbrecht, Mrs. Anna Wallace, and Mrs. Karen Webb. This is a group that will be directly impacted by changes.

**2:50**

I guess one of the other things that really is so funny to me – well, not funny; it's really weird, actually – is that this is a government that's so willing to take big risks and just plunge right in to do something like blow a \$4.5 billion hole in our budget so that they can give already-profitable corporations a huge tax break, yet they want to slow everything else down because they're not quite sure. They're not quite sure what their little panel is going to decide to cut, and they want to really look at where they're going to save. Let's be honest; we all know where that's going. That's going to be cuts to public-sector workers. That's fairly clear. This invoking closure is just one more signal to this group that, yeah, that's going to happen. If we didn't have enough hints already, this is a pretty good hint. First it was about how we're not allowed to introduce our own guests in this place. Then it was: well, no, we don't want you thumping; we'd rather have you clap. And then private members' bills: we don't want to discuss them here without a committee



dealing with them, so let's introduce more delays. If we didn't have enough signs, we do now.

**An Hon. Member:** More consultation.

**Ms Renaud:** Excuse me? You should stand up and speak if you have – yeah.

Let's look at another school: Bertha Kennedy, which is a St. Albert Catholic school. You guys will like this . . .

**Speaker's Ruling**  
**Repetition**  
**Relevance**

**The Speaker:** Member, I might just provide some brief commentary, as I would imagine that we are very close to the end of the evening. I think it is important that we are reminded about the rule of repetition and also the rule of relevance. I'm happy to provide some significant citations around that, but given the hour perhaps the member will just take my word for it and maybe not read significant lists to make your point. I'm happy to provide the context if you want, which is very clear here, but in the name of saving some time here, perhaps we might move on.

**Debate Continued**

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that 1 in 4 in St. Albert, in my constituency, are public-sector workers, I just felt that it was really important to name some of those people. Not that I can prove that they live there, but they do work there.

I'd like to talk about Bertha Kennedy Catholic school, some of the administration staff. Clearly, these are people that work really hard and don't get a lot of glory. Goodness knows they don't get a lot of pay, contrary to what this government might think, but these are important staff members. Let's talk about Mrs. Anna-Lisa Doll, Mrs. Cindy Pereira, and then of course there is office support staff, librarians, learning support facilitators, and of course the ever-important counsellor. We've got Mrs. Shelley Sadownyk, Miss Maria Pearson, Mrs. Kristi Sware, Mrs. Josie Cancian, Ms Donna Nelson. These are all vital support staff at Bertha Kennedy.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Agreed. Very important.

**Ms Renaud:** Some of our teachers – which is really interesting. I hear from the other side agreeing that these are really important people, yet they've invoked closure on a bill that has the potential to cause a lot of harm and a lot of damage. This is not in good faith. Not at all. We understand what you're doing.

Let's talk about those teachers that are going to be impacted. Mrs. Kelly Raypold; she's prekindergarten in the a.m., which is not an easy class to do, and kindergarten; p.m. kindergarten is Miss Katherine Watson. Again, not an easy class. We've got the second a.m. kindergarten: Miss Laura Van Hoof. Full-day progressive kindergarten – twice as difficult – Mrs. Julie Bolduc. We've got grade 1B: Mr. Raphael Bonot. We've got grade 2A: Mrs. Dolores Andressen. I might add that Mrs. Dolores Andressen is a woman who also lives in St. Albert, just walking distance from Bertha Kennedy, and she and her husband are quite lovely. I just wanted to add that. Grade 2F: we've got Miss Kylie Field. Mrs. Heather Flynn is doing grade 3R. Mrs. Nina Rawcliffe: grade 4R. Grade 4/5 split – again, not an easy class – Miss Karen Armitage. Grades 5 and 6: Mrs. Debra Kaplar. Grade 6, just straight grade 6: Mr. Curt

McDougall; nice to see a nice blend there, male and female. And then we've got the ever-important music teacher, Mrs. Elaine Groenenboom.

Educational assistants. Once more let me say that these educational assistants are absolutely vital to the health of any classroom and, of course, to the success of inclusion. Contrary to what people might think, inclusion just doesn't happen in clubs. Inclusion takes a lot of effort, and it requires appropriate staffing. That requires appropriate funding, and appropriate funding requires some security to know that you can count on that funding being there. Let me tell you that this kind of work as an educational assistant, particularly in a class where you perhaps have students with disabilities, is not an easy job whatsoever, and it requires a lot of skill. More than anything, you don't want to lose the staff that are doing this job, so retention is always key.

One of the things that I learned when I managed an organization that had a couple of hundred staff was that we had to work at retention. We had to do everything that we could to ensure that we would keep the staff, the good staff, the great staff, that were dedicating themselves to their jobs. We had to do everything that we could to retain them. One of the most important things, contrary to what people might think, was that pay was close to the top but it was job security. It was knowing that they would have a job, that they would be able to count on perhaps a small cost-of-living increase, that they would have good benefits, that they would know their colleagues would also be there, but it was about retention and about security and safety.

I'm sorry. When you have a government that comes barging in – of course, they do talk a lot about their large mandate and their ability to just blow through all kinds of legislation. When they look at this government and they see instantly that although they campaigned on jobs, pipeline, economy, what they're actually doing is taking an aim at working people. These are the people that actually need our protection and our thanks and our support, not to target them because they're public-sector workers. You know, we've heard all kinds of rhetoric from the other side about public-sector workers.

**The Speaker:** Before we proceed to 29(2)(a), I might just caution the hon. Member for St. Albert. Finally, the rule against repetition has been used by Speakers in various other ways to assist the House in making effective use of its time. Speakers have ruled against the tenuous reading of letters or lists even when they're used in support of their argument. Perhaps she might heed my advice in the future.

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

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to debate of Bill 9? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East is rising.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, thank you to all members of the House. Another good day. Progress all over the place. I love it. As such, I will adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow, where I anticipate we'll get more progress.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 2:59 a.m. on Tuesday]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 18, 2019

Day 15

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
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Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 18, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government and to all Members of the Legislative Assembly and to all in positions of power and responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there are a number of guests joining us today in a wide variety of the galleries. Please welcome to the Legislative Assembly a school group from Greystone Centennial middle school, joining us from the constituency of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain. As well, at 2 o'clock in the gallery will be Norwood elementary school from the constituency of Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin. I invite all those students to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. Thank you, hon. members.

In the Speaker's gallery today we have several guests with us this afternoon. First, a constituent of the Associate Minister of Natural Gas, Master Warrant Officer Mike Vollick. He has been deployed in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan throughout his military career and currently serves as the quartermaster senior instructor of the First Battalion of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. I invite members to welcome him.

We will welcome the rest of the members at the conclusion of their introduction.

Visiting us from the United Kingdom this afternoon and seated in the Speaker's gallery is Mr. Robert John Pooley, MBE. Mr. Pooley provides swords for the British and Commonwealth forces and is the official supplier of the swords to our very own Sergeant-at-Arms. Welcome, Mr. Pooley.

Also in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon are a number of dedicated individuals from the Calgary and Edmonton Salvation Army advisory board, including Major Margaret McLeod and Major Al Hoeft.

Last but certainly not least, in the Speaker's gallery today is a very familiar face to this Chamber, Mr. Pat Nixon, of course, the father of not only one but two hon. members.

Go ahead if you want, now that we're here. [applause]

Also today we have guests of the Minister of Seniors and Housing, Jamie Leong-Huxley, and the constituency manager of Calgary-Fish Creek, Christina Steed, and a guest of the hon. Deputy Speaker, Mary-Lou Stacey. Members, please welcome them to the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Property Rights Legislation

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the UCP campaign platform directly commits to enhancing property rights for all Albertans. The UCP's commitment to establishing an Alberta property rights preservation act, enshrining property rights for

Alberta in the Canadian Constitution, establishing adverse-effects legislation, and providing compensation for property owners being negatively affected by regulations is not only fair and just, but it will also ensure Alberta is a secure and more certain place to invest.

Currently, under Bill 36, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, and Bill 24, the Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act, we continue to see uncertainty as well as limited access to courts and timely and fair compensation. We also need to be considering the positive economic and social impacts of how a free market for environmental goods and services would impact our province. It would allow our top-shelf environmentally conscious farmers and ranchers the ability to promote and capitalize on the carbon they sequester and their ability to provide and enhance first-rate soil regeneration.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have always wondered why property rights resonate more in rural Alberta than in our cities. Perhaps it is because rural Alberta is huge, diverse, and pristine. Perhaps it is because rural Albertans face more encroachments on their title covenants, for which compensation may be owed.

Speaking of fencelines, as a teenager I spent many a summer night playing touch football in a friend's backyard because it was as big as Commonwealth Stadium. Twenty years later I sold the house during my real estate career. Oh my; an up-to-date real property report showed that not only were we playing football on my friend's neighbour's property all that time, but even his garage had been built on the neighbour's yard 30 years earlier. Mr. Speaker, it took all my negotiating skills to sort out that one fairly and according to property rights.

Mr. Speaker, good fences make good neighbours, and strong property rights provide . . .

#### Education Act GSA Provision Enforcement

**Ms Ganley:** Imagine, Mr. Speaker, if you were required to pay taxes, but there was no deadline. Would you still pay them on time, and would you count on everyone else to do the same? Have you ever tried to make a child apologize without a content requirement? It doesn't always go exactly as you were hoping. Imagine if we were to prohibit speeding but didn't say what the punishment was. Certainly, in all these cases most people would follow the rules, but it's hard to believe that everyone would. That's why we have laws, to make sure that everyone plays by the same rules. When you make a rule, you need to make more than just the rule. There needs to be a consequence, there needs to be content on how you comply, and there needs to be a timeline.

These are just a few examples, yet this is exactly the sort of thing the government expects us to take on faith with Bill Hate. The bill takes us back in time to a previous version of the legislation, that had problems with enforceability. We know that there were problems because students came forward to complain about schools dragging their heels. We know that schools tried to prevent students from calling a GSA and a QSA exactly that. We know that when schools produced discriminatory inclusivity policies, we had to change the law, exactly the same law that's proposed now, in order to enforce the spirit and intent.

Mr. Speaker, words matter, especially words in law. Now, it remains possible that all these questions will be answered in regulations. But if the government intended to do all that, the larger question arises: why change it at all? We have solved these problems. We have enforceability now. We have protection for our LGBTQ students now. So why go back to a law with less protection unless that was exactly the intent?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is rising to make a statement.

### Skilled Trades Caucus

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise in the Assembly today and celebrate the creation of the first-ever skilled trades caucus, for which I was elected chair. It is a pleasure to serve on this committee with my fellow caucus members the hon. members from Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, Peace River, Lesser Slave Lake, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, Lethbridge-East, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and Highwood.

The government and skilled trades caucus believes that apprenticeship learning and the skilled trades have every bit as much value and worth and merit as a university education. That's why we are committed to creating opportunities for young Albertans to learn practical job skills that meet the demands of the labour market and that will help them succeed and build prosperity for all of Alberta.

Alberta faces the dual challenge of retirement among skilled workers and the worst youth employment in decades. The department of labour predicts that from now until 2025 more than 3,000 skilled workers will retire every year, creating a steady demand for apprentices and skilled workers. We need to get ahead of these trends. Our government is committed to enhancing and expanding the apprenticeship model and the skilled trades by increasing the focus on skills for jobs, from high school through postsecondary and into the workplace.

**1:40**

I personally want to take this opportunity to recognize that there are more trades than just the typical construction trades that are most commonly thought of. I have a journeyman certificate as a beautician, which can be just as rewarding and provides a good living as well. I've worked in this profession for over 30 years.

The government has a strong plan to get Albertans back to work and rebuild our economy to make life better for all Albertans. By showing the world that we are open for business again, we will generate the economic growth we need to bring back balance to our province's finances, create jobs, and make life better for Albertans. The task before us is more than a promise; it's an obligation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand alongside my colleagues in fighting for skilled trades and apprenticeship learning.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

### Support for Young Parents

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week when I asked the Minister of Children's Services if she consulted with foster children affected by the minimum wage rollback, the Government House Leader got up instead to deflect the question and claimed that my question was "ridiculous" and unreasonable. As someone who has fought for social justice my entire life, this was truly disheartening.

Last week I attended Terra Centre's Promising Futures breakfast along with the Minister of Children's Services. This is an amazing breakfast, that helps raise funds to enable young parents to complete their high school education and gain parenting skills. We heard that many of these teens who get services from Terra come from poverty and have had past involvement with Children's Services. We also heard of how many of these young parents rely on the minimum wage and \$25-per-day child care programming provided at Braemar school.

Hearing the stories of these young people was truly moving, but it was also disheartening given the policies of this government. This government claims to care about young people, but they implement a youth minimum wage so that they will earn less money to support themselves and have an incentive to drop out of school. This government refuses to answer my questions about vulnerable young people in this province but also refuses to implement a long-term affordable child care strategy that will help young parents.

If the minister won't answer my questions in this House, it begs the question of whether the minister is even raising these issues with her cabinet colleagues. Or does the minister stand with the Government House Leader, who believes that these questions are unreasonable and ridiculous?

Mr. Speaker, vulnerable youth in our province deserve a champion. They deserve a minister who is not afraid to stand up for what is right, even when it is tough. As the NDP critic for Children's Services I will continue to stand up for all youth in this province and hold this minister accountable. I will continue to urge her to speak truth to power even when it is difficult.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### Skilled Trades Training

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I had the opportunity to tour the local 1325 carpenters' and millwrights' facility right here in Edmonton with my hon. colleagues the Minister of Labour and Immigration and the Minister of Advanced Education. As a 20-year member of local 1325 it was wonderful to see the training offered through one of these training centres and the positive effect it has had on people entering the workforce. I'm a dual-ticketed tradesperson myself, having earned my journeyman carpentry ticket from NAIT in 2004 and having earned my journeyman scaffolder's ticket from this very same training centre we had the pleasure of touring last week. Employers and contractors here in Alberta and across Canada and around the world recognize the need for a trained, professional, and safe workforce. Organizations like the Alberta Carpenters Training Centre allow Albertans to be among the best in the business, leading the field not just in performance but in safety as well.

I understand the importance that trades play in Alberta, and I'm excited to see the support being offered to our tradespeople and trades schools by this government. A source of great pride to my constituents, Mr. Speaker, is that NAIT has opened a satellite campus in Spruce Grove, allowing constituents of my riding greater access to apprenticeship training. Trades must become an option that is seen more highly by our high school students. Skilled trades should have every bit as much merit, weight, value, and worth as a university degree. I look forward to seeing what advances this government will make in apprenticeship and trades availability to small cities like mine, whether that be in high school programs or further postsecondary opportunities.

Thank you.

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

### LGBTQ2S-plus Youth and Bill 8

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. Adolescent LGBTQ youth who have been rejected by their families because of their sexual orientation or gender identity are over eight times more likely to attempt suicide. One study indicates that 28 per cent of

trans and two-spirit people had attempted suicide at least once. LGBTQ youth need a safe space.

Another study found that 49 per cent of trans students, 33 per cent of lesbian students, and 40 per cent of gay male students had experienced sexual harassment in school in the last year. Twenty per cent of LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted about their perceived gender identity or sexual orientation. That is why LGBTQ youth need a safe space.

According to the Child and Youth Advocate, LGBTQ2S-plus young people have specific vulnerabilities, needs, and circumstances that require particular attention. He made five specific recommendations to the government just this year, including the need to revise policy and practices to support LGBTQ2S-plus young people. Mr. Speaker, Bill 8 is actually altering policy and practices to lessen supports for these vulnerable youth, the opposite of the recommendations of the Child and Youth Advocate. The Child and Youth Advocate releases special reports when there are systemic issues affecting children and youth that need to be addressed by government, and 50 per cent of the reports in the last six years have been about LGBTQ2S-plus youth.

I cannot stress it enough. LGBTQ youth need a safe space. This is literally a matter of life and death. Bill 8, no matter how many times the members opposite deny it, will harm LGBTQ youth. It has so many loopholes in it so big that you could drive a Sunday school bus through it.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of the following motions. First, Government Motion 22.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Second, Government Motion 23. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:**

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is resumed, not more than six hours shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will have order while the Government House Leader is providing notice of his motion. We certainly will have lots of opportunity for debate, at which point in time I encourage the opposition to engage in it.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Government Motion 24, Mr. Speaker.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is resumed, not more than two hours shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a tabling today.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to table two articles. One is entitled Hansen Brothers Hockey, and the other one is called The Real Hansen Brothers from Camrose, Alberta and Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota. These articles detail the interesting lives of the Hansen brothers of Camrose, who comprised the Augsburg college hockey team during the late 1920s and almost represented the United States in the 1928 Olympics. They are composed by Gary Zeman, who is a constituent of mine. I have the appropriate . . .

**The Speaker:** I, too, look forward to reading the articles.

Is there anyone else who has a tabling? The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with the requisite number of copies of documentation: an advisory issued by the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner which clarifies the protections afforded to students participating in GSAs under privacy legislation.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other tablings? The Member for St. Albert is rising to table a document.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table a story. It's part of a CBC news series entitled In Our Backyard, which looks at the effects climate change is having in Canada, from extreme weather events to how it's reshaping our economy. This one is called 'It's a Problem for Society': Climate Change Is Making Some Homes Uninsurable.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

1:50

### Bill 9 Debate Time

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I imagine that some of the youth in the audience were wondering what that horrific response was. The response was to the fact that the Government House Leader last night brought in a motion to limit debate, and today he brings in closure because he's trying to stymie voices. Students learned that how a bill becomes a law is supposed to be a fair process with democratic debate and representation. Why won't the Premier allow that to happen? Why won't he stand up and face the workers that he's trying to take the rights away from?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, no one is taking anybody's rights away. We're proposing a bill to defer arbitration by four months to ensure that the government has adequate information on the fiscal state of the province. There will be ample debate. I've been advised by the Government House Leader that there will be somewhere between 25 and 30 hours of debate. That's more than one hour for every member of the opposition for a three-page bill on a four-month deferral.

**Ms Hoffman:** Minutes after midnight last night the government moved to shut down debate on its bad-faith bargaining bill. This is a bill that gives the government heavy-handed authority to delay legally mandated contracts, to break the law, to impose contracts on nurses, teachers, paramedics, the first responders who were evacuating the north last night. It's cowardly, and this Premier deserves to face the people he's rolling back the rights and protections for. Why won't he? Why won't he stand in this House and defend his bill?

**Mr. Kenney:** I am rising in the House and defending the bill, but, Mr. Speaker, I'm getting worried the member opposite is getting so agitated she might call the government sewer rats soon because she did it before. You know what? Conservatives and Albertans are not sewer rats. This government was elected with the largest democratic mandate in Alberta electoral history on a mandate to restore balance to our province's finances. That means proceeding with collective bargaining agreements in an informed and responsible way. That's exactly what we're doing with a mere four-month deferral on a couple of agreements.

**Ms Hoffman:** I don't call bullying teachers, nurses, and paramedics balance, Mr. Speaker. I call that an injustice.

I think it's rich for members who may have been in their bed last night while they had their cabinet do their dirty work to come into this House and say that they're bringing in balance. That is far from what's happening in this place. It's an embarrassment. This Premier knows better. Why won't he act better?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to bullying and incivility, we see a master class on that from the opposition in this place every day at question period.

This government has been entrusted with a mandate from the largest democratic vote in Alberta history to restore balance to the province's finances. We're going to do exactly that, in part by ensuring that we get all of the necessary information from the MacKinnon panel, chaired by a former New Democrat finance minister, before we can proceed in a responsible way with the wage reopeners and these collective bargaining agreements.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the Premier is pushing his cabinet and caucus to do is cowardly. It is the epitome of unconstitutional, law-breaking infringement on the rights of teachers, nurses, paramedics, and front-line public service members. I am embarrassed that this Premier thinks he can come in here and say that it's simply a delay until after the federal election, because he doesn't want his numbers to tank the same way his friend Doug Ford's numbers are tanking. Will the Premier admit that he – will he promise, let's try that. Will he promise to sit in this House for every stage of Bill 9 debate, or is he going to run away?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we can see the lack of respect that the NDP has for this Chamber, for the traditions of this institution, for basic civility and public discourse. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I heard the question. We will hear the answer.

**Mr. Kenney:** Shouting, heckling, attacking, fear and smear: Mr. Speaker, that's why they ended up with a historic repudiation from Alberta voters, voters who told us to act responsibly, to get our finances under control. That means we need all of the information necessary, and that is exactly why this is a modest, four-month deferral. While we fully respect collective bargaining agreements, we want to proceed in a responsible way.

**Ms Hoffman:** Forty per cent of Albertans voted for us, and even if they didn't, Mr. Speaker, they deserve to have their voices heard in this place. Shutting down debate, bringing in time limitation, and pretending that there's nothing to see here when clearly there is, the Government House Leader bumbled through some rationale for why he thought the House no longer needed to debate it, and then he says: we'll bring in further closure. That is the epitome of

bullying. Will the Government House Leader admit it, and will he stop bullying around his own caucus? They deserve to speak on this.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Premier has said, there will be over 30 hours of debate, over one hour for each member of the opposition if they want it. But you know what was very, very disappointing last night? You were sitting in the chair. I bet you were shocked to see it, as over and over the opposition used their time to debate on this bill to try adjourn debate and make sure that they could go home last night instead of being in here and working, not focusing on the legislation. We will give the time that is needed to debate this bill. [interjection]

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I suggest the opposition take the opportunity to do it.

**An Hon. Member:** Absolute liars.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if I wasn't mistaken, I heard someone from the opposition bench say: absolute liars. Of course, that wouldn't have happened because that would have been wildly inappropriate. It seems to me by the sheepish look from someone in the middle row there that perhaps that is what I heard.

I do note the point of order at 1:55 or so.

**Ms Hoffman:** An act to impose bad-faith bargaining practices that steamroll over legal, constitutional rights, Mr. Speaker, is nothing to be rushed. Absolutely. I'd be happy to inform the House leader that actually when you call a division, it doesn't count against debate time. It actually does bring attention to the fact that this should be debated in front of the public instead of under the darkness of night. Why won't the Government House Leader, why won't the Premier, look the workers that he's steamrolling over in the eye? Why did he send his caucus in here to do his dirty work?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, that member just magically inflated the NDP's popular vote by about a quarter. That party was repudiated by Albertans for many reasons, one of which is the exact incivility and anger that they are demonstrating in this place today. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kenney:** Another reason that they were repudiated, Mr. Speaker, was their gross fiscal irresponsibility, driving this province towards \$100 billion of debt. This government takes seriously our mandate to restore balance to the finances. We'll do that in a responsible way.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for the third question.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Ms Hoffman:** Hundreds of Albertans are planning to come to this Legislature tomorrow night for a nonpartisan rally to save gay-straight alliances. This event is called pride as protest. It's a direct response to this government's Bill Hate, which will destroy GSAs and allow . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** . . . students to be outed, Mr. Speaker. I will be attending this rally, and I know all members of our opposition

caucus will. My question is to the Premier: will you be attending the rally tomorrow night, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, Bill 8 constitutes part of our commitment to Albertans presented in our platform to bring into force the Education Act, the very same act that the NDP committed to bring into force in 2015. With respect to gay-straight alliances it simply re-establishes the law that the NDP voted for in 2014, which would be the strongest statutory protections for gay-straight alliances in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as the Privacy Commissioner has confirmed today, the privacy law will continue apply, as it always has, to the participation of students in extracurricular activities.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, perhaps when the Premier is gallivanting across Canada campaigning for his friends, he missed his own minister's memo on Friday, which admits that the law that they are proposing to bring in in no way is the strongest in Canada, Mr. Speaker. His own minister admitted that. She also indicated that she would continue to consult, but she said that she already had talked to everybody. My question to the minister is: will you join me at the rally tomorrow and allow me to introduce you to the folks who are here to protest against Bill Hate because they are terrified you are destroying their right to GSAs?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the law that the NDP is attacking was the law for the first three years of their government. It was the law they voted for in 2014. It was the law, the Education Act, they ran on proclaiming in 2015. I am proud to have last week been attracting a major international investment to this province and standing up and defending this province, defending our energy industry and jobs and building alliances to support our vital economic interests, something that the NDP never did.

2:00

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, today we have the strongest laws in Canada to protect gay kids and their allies. Should this government move forward with John Carpay crafted amendments to make sure that they bring in Bill Hate ...

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** ... that will no longer be the case. Will the minister rise in this House and admit that the bill she is bringing forward is a rollback, is an attack on gay-straight alliances and the kids who are a part of them?

**Mr. Kenney:** Of course, it's not, Mr. Speaker, and no amount of these kinds of absurd charges from the NDP makes it any more true. It's essentially re-establishing a law that existed for three years under the NDP government, with which they were perfectly satisfied until they decided to try cynically to use this issue to divide Albertans, but Albertans rejected that. You know when they rejected it? They rejected it on election day in giving this government the largest democratic mandate in Alberta history on an explicit commitment to bring into force the Education Act. That's exactly what Bill 8 facilitates.

**The Speaker:** I would just note the points of order that have been identified by the Government House Leader as well as the government whip in the first supplemental on the second question and in the third set of questions.

## Energy and Environmental Policies

**Ms Hoffman:** Alberta is expecting good news today, Mr. Speaker. Let me tell you, the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline is a victory for our leader and for all Albertans. We proved that a balancing approach, where you protect the environment and the economy, can produce real results for Alberta's energy sector. Decades of dithering by Conservative governments in Ottawa and Edmonton couldn't get a pipeline to tidewater. Will the Premier tell this House what he is planning to do to ensure that the approval of our pipeline isn't threatened by lack of adequate environmental protection and consultation with indigenous leaders, which, of course, is the reason why he failed for so many years in Ottawa?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it is astonishing to see how little the NDP learned from the humiliation delivered to them by Alberta voters, who were understandably outraged with the total failure of the NDP to make any progress on pipelines or on oil and gas, the NDP ...

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** ... that surrendered to the killing of Northern Gateway, that surrendered to a U.S. veto on Keystone, that surrendered to the Prime Minister killing Energy East. You know why, Mr. Speaker? We all know why. It's because the NDP has always been against our oil and gas industry. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members. [interjections] Hon. members. A point of order is noted, but I would encourage all members to acknowledge the need for decorum inside the Chamber. In particular, when asking or answering a question, it is important that the chair can hear both of those occasions.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, our government introduced a 100-megatonne emissions cap because it was endorsed by industry, indigenous groups, First Nations, and environmentalists alike. Industry told us that they got the oil out of the sand ...

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** ... and they could get the carbon out of the barrel, and with that cap in place Alberta is in a stronger position to protect our constitutional authority as owner and regulator of our natural resources against attacks like Bill C-69. To the Premier. You've been wishy-washy on this. Will you keep the 100-megatonne cap that helped us get this pipeline approval?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I understand why the NDP heckle so much. It's because they're angry. They're angry with Albertans for rejecting their failed economic policies. They're angry with Albertans for giving this government a mandate to repeal their job-killing carbon tax. They're angry with Albertans for wanting a government that will, without apology and relent, stand up and defend our oil and gas sector and jobs. We will take no lessons from the party that drove us into the longest period of economic decline and stagnation since the Great Depression. They were rejected for good reason on election day.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy. I'm happy that we are going to be one step closer to ensuring we get a fair price for our resource that Albertans own. The Premier is planning his victory lap, no doubt, with regard to TMX. I'm happy. He should be happy. All Albertans should be happy. What I fear is that he will use this approval of the pipeline to justify attacking those who care about both the economy and the planet. To the Premier. We got a pipeline;

we need more. Will you admit that we must protect both the economy and the environment to protect our access to future markets?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the socialists still don't get it. They talk about victory laps. They talk about it because they don't actually understand these issues. Every time there was some minor, putative step forward, you would have a rally with the NDP and high-fiving. You know what? Nobody should be high-fiving. Nobody should be doing any victory laps until oil flows through that pipe, until we see the repeal of things like Bill C-69 because we need multiple avenues of egress. One of the terrible mistakes of the NDP was to put all of their eggs in the one basket of TMX. This government is going to fight for multiple points of access to get fair price for our oil.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'll note the point of order at 2:04 from the Member for Edmonton-South.

### Crime Rates and the Criminal Justice System

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, under the NDP's watch Alberta witnessed a dramatic increase in crime. Police services across the province are reporting significantly higher robberies, assaults, sexual assaults, and property damage compared to five years ago today. This increase in part can be tied to the poor economic situation and job-killing NDP policies. Minister, my constituents want to know: what is the new government doing to ensure that Albertans are protected, and what is our plan to combat these increases in crime?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, all Albertans deserve to feel safe in their homes and communities. Unlike past governments that didn't have their priorities straight when it came to the Justice file, we're making sure that programs like ALERT have the funding that they need to disrupt gang activity, to disrupt the opioid trade that's going on in our province right now. We're also taking proactive steps. Just this last week we met with community leaders. Three cabinet ministers, a local MLA, and Calgary police met with community leaders to talk about gang violence in the northeast of Calgary. We're not going to delay. We're not going to wait for these galleries to be filled, like previous governments, to take action.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has the call.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in a recent 2009 *Maclean's* report called Canada's 20 Most Dangerous Places, 7 of the 10 with the worst increases in crime over the last five years were right here in Alberta and given that too many Albertans are being victimized and too many criminals are going through a revolving-door justice system, getting back out on the streets and claiming new victims, can the minister tell my constituents and all Albertans: how will this government stop the revolving door and ensure that we have a more effective criminal justice system?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we had what they called a triage system in our prosecution branch in this province before, under the previous government. Triage: that's a hospital type of term, not a justice term. We're going to be making sure that we hire the prosecutors we need. Fifty new prosecutors is our commitment under our platform. We're going to deliver to make sure our law enforcement officials have the tools and resources they need to make sure all Albertans feel safe in their communities, to make sure we put the criminals behind bars.

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

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. For clarification, that was a 2019 report.

Given that Alberta prosecutors are drowning in their caseloads, particularly in rural ridings, while repeat offenders are bogged down in the justice system and given that in order to get dangerous offenders off the streets, we need prosecutors to work these cases, Minister: can you please update all Albertans on what the government is doing to improve caseloads and ensure our criminal justice system functions properly?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to thank the hon. member, who actually has a long history in recruitment in legal services and in hiring lawyers. We're going to be making sure that we work with all the different stakeholders in the legal system to make sure that we can recruit prosecutors. I'm going to be meeting later this week with the dean of the University of Calgary law school and talking to him about how we can engage students in future careers, how we can engage lawyers at different stages of their careers and taking a look and making sure that they want to become prosecutors in our province. We need to get this done for Albertans. We need to reduce the caseload on our prosecutors.

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

### Public Service Wage Arbitration Postponement

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is breaking the law. They want to rip up contracts and prompt court challenges from public-sector unions. In the end Albertans will pay the price for poor management from this Premier and this Minister of Finance. We know that legal challenges are expected. To the Premier. We know legislation like this has cost provinces big in the past. How can you be sure we won't pay much more after judges weigh in on your costly and unconstitutional legislation?

2:10

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, Bill 9 is about simply seeking a delay in arbitration so this government can better understand a pathway forward, a path to fiscal balance. We committed to Albertans during the election campaign that we would bring this province to balance. We're committed to that. This delay in arbitration is about being responsible and prudent.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in 2002 the B.C. government imposed contracts that stripped away the ability of teachers to bargain collectively and given that it took the Supreme Court less than 20 minutes to rule against the government and in favour of teachers and given that it appears that this Premier and this Finance minister are attempting to run down the same path as that B.C. government, to the Premier: is booking us a date with the Supreme Court really part of your plan to help pay for your \$4.5 billion tax giveaway to corporations?

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate and this government greatly appreciates the tremendous work our public sector does day after day on behalf of Albertans. Again, this legislation is simply just delaying arbitration so that we can develop a responsible path forward, a responsible path forward that will ensure that we can continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans today and into the next generation.

**Ms Gray:** Given that showing respect is a great way to show your appreciation and given that our government worked in good faith with public-sector unions and negotiated contracts that worked for all sides and given that in just a month and a half this government has ruined all that hard work and potentially caused permanent damage between these workers and their relationship with government and given that real leadership doesn't involve sneaking in measures in the dead of night to shut down debate in the House, to the Premier: how much will this fool's errand cost us in high-priced lawyers?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you that what would cost Albertans is this particular opposition who, when they were in government, had us on a trajectory for a hundred billion dollars in accumulated debt. That would have guaranteed that future generations would not have a first-class, world-class education system or health care system. We are going to put this province back on a track to balance. We're committed to that.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, no one has ever seen this kind of undemocratic behaviour before, but no one has ever seen a Premier so preoccupied with politics outside the province. This is a Premier who cares far more about Ottawa than he does Onaway. Everyone can see that the Premier is deferring his wage war until after the federal election. This is so he can campaign in his happy place, which is Ontario, but do so before he's become as unpopular as Doug Ford. Will the Premier now admit he's planning to take thousands of dollars out of nurses' and others' pockets but not until he's done with the federal election, which is his real priority?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, we are simply seeking to delay arbitration so that this government can make prudent, thoughtful decisions on a path to balance for Albertans, decisions that will ensure that we can continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans. We have a Premier who's been advocating for the people of this province every day since he's been on the job.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that the government wants to cruelly seize take-home pay from corrections workers, conservation officers, nurses, lab techs, paramedics, tens of thousands of others, but given that this government doesn't want the wage war to inconvenience the dear leader, who is paying his way back to 24 Sussex, will the Premier now admit he is deferring his wage war on working people until October 31 just to buy time until after the federal election on October 22, at which time he will pick paramedics' pockets as soon as the ballots are counted?

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, this opposition has no idea how to ensure that finances are dealt with responsibly. They have no idea how to properly and respectfully deal with taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. We're about deliberating, ensuring we have time to make thoughtful, prudent decisions on behalf of Albertans and on behalf of the public sector.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that while the Premier might fancy himself a master Machiavellian, it is quite possible that tooting around Canada, campaigning on Albertans' time and dime, might just be too clever by half and given that Albertans have limited patience for entitled, out-of-touch Conservatives flying around everywhere but here, will the Premier commit to spending his time in Alberta until October 22, or will the siren call of spending our money on

interfering in the federal election campaign be too much for him to resist?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, what a ridiculous question. The opposition should try a lot harder. Let me be very clear. This side of the House and Albertans can be very proud of their Premier. I'm proud of our Premier, who has been working for years to campaign, to stand up for our province, who is travelling across and building a coalition that will stand up to Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberals for our provincial interests. That is in sharp contrast to that side of the House when they were in government, who spent their time shoring up Justin Trudeau, who spent their time going out of their way to help the federal Liberals work against Albertans. I'm proud of our Premier, and I want to thank him very much for his hard work.

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

### Calgary Ring Road Completion

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day in Calgary-Glenmore we face a sea of orange cones on our roadways, with virtually every major thoroughfare undergoing road construction, much of which on the west and north sides of the constituency is related to the construction of the southwest ring road. Further, many are subjected to the incessant song of the beeping of backup signals and the rhythm of piledriving. Most understand that we cannot continue to drive the north-south trade route for Alberta through the middle of Calgary, but they're frustrated. To the Minister of Transportation: when will the southwest portion of the ring road be completed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The southwest Calgary ring road project was actually approved in 2013 and started construction in 2016, and the hon. member can actually blame me for that approval if the hon. member chooses to. I would say that the whole southwest portion of the ring road is scheduled to be complete and open by the end of 2022. Currently the projects are on schedule. When it's complete, there will be a hundred kilometres of continuous road around the city of Calgary.

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

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that progress on the Calgary ring road has been arduous and is still expected to continue for some time and given the vital need for this roadway in Calgary for regular commuting purposes and also to support and sustain economic growth in Calgary and neighbouring regions, can the Minister of Transportation explain how this government will ensure that the project is kept on schedule?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for advocating on behalf of her constituents. I would have her know that the southwest portion of the road is more than 60 per cent complete today. It is on schedule to open for traffic by the fall of 2021, the southwest portion. Our contractor is working quickly, with an aggressive schedule. We have actually allowed them extended working hours and other considerations to help them stay on schedule, which they are currently.

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

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that an agreement to transfer land for the project was completed with the Tsuut'ina First Nation back in 2013 and given that the final sections of the ring road, the west and southwest sections, are not expected to be completed for a while, to the Minister of Transportation: how will this government ensure that the mistakes of previous governments are not repeated and that future projects do not take a decade to go from land acquisition to completion?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respect the hon. member's impatience. I will just say that the land transfer with the Tsuut'ina First Nation was finalized in 2015 after federal government approval, which, actually, the Premier helped out with when he was a federal minister. A contractor was selected in 2016, and construction began that year. A number of detours are under way right now. I will say to the hon. member that we are working hard to learn from our past experiences, both good and bad, and apply those lessons.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-McCall is rising with a question.

2:20

### Oil Transportation

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we are hoping to have Alberta's first pipeline to tidewater in more than 60 years approved, thanks to the hard work put in by the former Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition. Still, TMX will not fix the oil backlog overnight, and it will take years to build this pipeline. To the Minister of Energy: what will you do to move our resources to market while we wait for TMX to be built? Surely, your strategy includes much more than just social media posts from the much-hyped war room.

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, November 29, 2016, is a date that we all remember. It was that date that the federal Liberals approved Trans Mountain for the first time. On that date the former Premier was in Ottawa, and at the same time they cancelled Northern Gateway. That's the legacy of that party opposite in getting pipelines built. In the meantime we are standing up for Alberta, and we will get pipelines built.

**Mr. Sabir:** I think we can talk about that pipeline some other day, but today we are talking about TMX.

Given that on May 22 the Premier's second-favourite columnist wrote in the *Calgary Herald* that this government would cancel oil-by-rail contracts that our government signed even if it took legislation to do so and given that the Premier himself said that he would move the 120,000 barrels of oil that we planned to ship per day to the private sector, can the minister please tell this House exactly how many barrels they have successfully moved to a private company?

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

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The oil-by-rail contracts signed by the previous government were a boondoggle. They were absolutely devastating for this province. They were not on commercially responsible terms. We made a commitment in the election. We were very clear that we would not be in the business of competing with the private sector and we would not be honouring contracts signed by that government on the eve of an election campaign that were wrong for Albertans.

**Mr. Sabir:** And your answer was zero barrels.

Given that nearly a month after the *Herald* column ran, this House has heard no progress from this government on oil by rail and given that moving oil by rail is a medium-term strategy to protect jobs and generate \$2 billion in revenue for the provincial treasury, to the minister. Come clean to this House. Are you going to legislate away the oil-by-rail contracts this session and put countless jobs at risk, all to fulfill your Premier's ideological fantasies?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, we will be taking steps that are in the best interests of all Albertans. I reviewed those contracts, and those contracts that were signed would cause a \$1.5 billion loss to Albertans. The profits that they were talking about were some artificial numbers on potential income tax returns and upticks to royalties. I would note that that would . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have no problem, as I think we have seen, with heckling inside the Chamber. However, when the volume reaches a level that I am unable to hear the minister, you leave me no choice but to intervene.

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, those contracts were at a \$1.5 billion loss to Alberta taxpayers. We're taking the best interests of taxpayers and Albertans in mind, and we will not be proceeding with those contracts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows is rising to ask a question.

### Racism and Religious Discrimination

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Quebec has pushed through a disturbing piece of legislation that bans Muslim and Sikh teachers, lawyers, police officers, and judges from wearing turbans and hijabs at work. Albertans and Canadians have been horrified by this attack on religious and ethnic minorities, but our Premier hasn't said a peep. So to the Premier: will you break your silence and condemn this racist bill?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the first freedom mentioned in our Constitution is the freedom of religion. Our party has always stood for protecting Albertans' freedom of religion. We are for treating all Albertans equally no matter what their background, no matter who they are, no matter who they love, no matter their faith. We have always stood by that. We will continue to stand by that, and we encourage all provinces in this country to do the same.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, given that this past week our Premier had dinner with the Premier of Quebec and given that it has been known for some time that Quebec would be pursuing its racist Bill 21, to the Premier: did you raise concerns about this bill during dinner with the Premier of Quebec?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, let me be clear for the hon. member. We condemn all forms of racism, full stop. No exceptions. Every time. Having said that, I'll admit that I haven't read the Quebec bill. But we absolutely are against all forms of racism, period.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, given that we have seen the government repeatedly protect racist white supremacists and Islamophobic candidates and party members and given that this is totally out of step with Albertans' values of freedom, tolerance, and openness, to the Premier: will you commit to antiracism training for all members of your government?



**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member ought to look around and see our diverse caucus from across this great province. We stand against racism in all its forms. We always have, and we always will. The hon. member should be happy to know that. I believe that should more than answer his question.

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

### Road Construction and Wetland Conservation

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recent years Calgarians have raised concerns about the environmental impacts of the ring road, especially on the wetlands. Some concerned citizens even appeared before the Environmental Appeals Board in 2017. They obtained a decision forcing a former minister to release an order protecting several key wetlands. Now, ironically, the previous government, who hold themselves as heroic defenders of the environment, failed to enforce its own environmental protection measures. Can the Minister of Environment and Parks please update us on the status of this enforcement?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is right. The former government delayed many things when it came to the environment and really went out of their way not to work with the people of Alberta. Specifically to the issue that he's referring to, I'm going to have to get back to him on that issue.

But I think it's important to recognize the different approach you'll see in the Alberta Environment and Parks file going forward compared to the former government, an approach that will focus on balance, working with recreation users, economic users, and making sure that we conserve our important environment as well as working with all the different agencies looking for approvals.

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that it is our understanding that the ministerial order was not enforced and that the designated wetlands are significantly important to the residents in the area, can the Minister of Environment and Parks please share what our government is doing to address their concerns?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not aware of the ministerial order that the hon. member is referring to. But, again, we have heard often over the last few weeks about hard times that Albertans have had being able to contact the former environment minister as well as the former department. That's something that we're working very, very hard on for his constituents and all constituents, not just from the government caucus but as well from the opposition caucus. We'll continue to work to provide improvements to be able to make sure that there is better access to the department so that these types of questions can be answered better in the future.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous NDP government failed to implement its own ministerial order to protect these wetlands and that we are now in a situation where the damage to these wetlands is irreversible, can the minister please share what our government's approach will be to these kinds of concerns in the future?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's another good example of what was taking place under the NDP as they continued to delay talking about these important issues, not providing confirmation, either approval or nonapproval, of certain issues so that people knew which way to go forward. It was a pretty common approach of the NDP, of course, to not even reach out to anybody.

We know how bad the former minister failed when it came to consultation, for example in the Bighorn, by not even consulting the three First Nation communities that were there. This government will have a different approach that's much more focused on working with Albertans and finding the proper balances as we go forward.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has a question.

### 2:30 Health Care User Fees and Wait Times

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was proud to stand in this House and introduce Bill 203, An Act to Protect Public Health Care. This bill, if passed, will amend the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act to prohibit extra-billing for insurance services and to prevent fee-based private clinics from billing individuals for insured services. Now, this Premier seems to be rather elusive as he jet-sets around the country, so I will try this question. Do you support, Mr. Premier, Bill 203? Do you support a prohibition on extra-billing and preventing fee-based private clinics?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take the opportunity to talk about, again, what the opposition wants to keep talking about, our Premier travelling and working to build a coalition with like-minded Premiers across the country, and how refreshing it is to see that. This side of the House is proud of it. Albertans are proud of it. I hope that the Premier continues to do that. We're now going to have a solid coalition across this country, something that we've never had before because the NDP would not try to stand up to Justin Trudeau. Instead, as you know, they went out of their way each and every time that they could to vote with Justin Trudeau, to shore him up, and to stand with the Trudeau Liberals against Albertans.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. It's quite clear that this Premier is evading Alberta so he can open the door for private health care, which is very disturbing to me. Given that I worry that this government will never allow my Bill 203 to return from committee to a debate in this House and given that I believe the reason they would avoid debating my bill in this House is so they can avoid taking a position in support of universal public health care, to the Minister of Health: will you stand today in support of Bill 203? One way or the other, will you ensure that the contents of this bill are brought forward as legislation to this Chamber?

**The Speaker:** I would remind the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford that that was a very good use of a preamble. Unfortunately, after question 4 they are not allowed.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The quick answer is no. I, at least, will not be supporting Bill 203, not as it's written. I think

that as we're looking at the 50 to 80 physicians in this province that this bill would actually affect – we see the previous government completely ignoring the rest of the system, ignoring their record for four years and wait times going up and patients seeing worse service and the costs in Alberta Health Services increasing astronomically. We're going to be focusing as a government on patients.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Feehan:** And there it is: American health care right on the doorstep.

Given that the Premier has stumped for the Cambie surgeries corporation and its assembly-line approach to health care and given that the CEO of Cambie is currently leading the charge in court to destroy Canada's public health care system and given that the Premier, while touting Cambie, also implied that surgeons in our current system are lazy, can the Premier or the minister explain why this UCP government feels the need to constantly insult hard-working men and women who are literally saving lives in Alberta hospitals as we speak?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we're talking about people and Albertans who are being insulted, let's talk about everybody who is waiting for open-heart surgery in this province. Let's talk about all the Albertans who had a 50 per cent increase in their wait for open-heart surgery. That's an insult to those patients, insults that that member's party totally forgot. The cataract surgery wait times increased nearly 30 per cent, and hip replacement wait times increased nearly 30 per cent in the four years that that government was in power.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** I would just remind the... [interjections] Hon. members. I would remind the Minister of Health: direct your comments through the chair. You might make reference to that organization, but certainly you wouldn't make reference to that member.

Edmonton-Riverview has the call.

### Support for Seniors

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seniors built this province and deserve to live in dignity, close to their family and friends. Our government invested significantly in housing and other programs to support seniors. So far this UCP government has described our commitment to vulnerable Albertans as reckless spending and poor fiscal planning. These comments are shameful. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: since you don't like the commitment we've made to seniors, what parts of it do you plan on cutting?

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We, this government, care about seniors. We are looking at all program services, particularly for seniors, to make sure we continue to provide high-quality services and programs to all Alberta seniors, and we do it carefully.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that despite the minister's assurances that seniors will receive "all the funding [seniors] need and want," her government repeatedly says that there

is much government waste and given that perhaps she's referring to the elder abuse programs, which serve extremely vulnerable seniors in tragic situations – sadly, the prevalence of elder abuse in Alberta is about 10 per cent of the senior population – to the minister: will you commit the funding for these programs, or are they part of what you consider waste?

**Ms Pon:** As I mentioned, again, Mr. Speaker, we care about the seniors. I was on a road trip for eight days and visited 16 communities and over 1,000 senior stakeholders to listen to the concerns and consult on what is the best way to serve our seniors and how to care for them. That's what we're going to do and use our taxpayer money carefully to plan for our seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, given that we have over 600,000 seniors living in our province currently and given that over the next couple of decades that number will double and given that seniors deserve to live in dignity and the programs that serve them are not government waste, what is the UCP government doing to prepare for this growth? How are you going to cut this apparent waste and still support seniors?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be clear, if we continue to implement the NDP programs and policies from before, we will be running almost \$100 billion in deficit. Instead, this government is doing careful line-by-line analysis of the priorities to make life better for seniors and for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has a question.

### Trade Mission to Asia and Agricultural Exports

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The constituents of Banff-Kananaskis know the importance of international competition and attracting international investment first-hand through our history of competing on the international stage. Our agriculture industry is a key economic driver, and our farmers work very hard every day to feed the world. Given that Alberta's agricultural industry has been facing challenges due to international trade restrictions on beef and canola, can the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism tell us how her trade mission to Japan and South Korea addressed industry concerns?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It was a great privilege to attend this trade mission on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and promote Alberta's canola, beef, wheat, and pork sectors. We met with many businesses that are using Alberta's canola and beef products either in a processing or front-line sales capacity. This government is proud of Alberta, and we worked hard to spread the word that we are open for business.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Banff-Kananaskis is home to many hard-working farmers and ranchers and given that the success of our agricultural sector directly impacts the livelihood of Alberta's economy as a whole and given that Canada recently signed on to the comprehensive and progressive agreement for trans-Pacific

partnership, also known as the CPTPP, to pursue market success and further given that Japan recently lifted their restriction on Canadian beef after 16 years of restrictions, can the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism tell us how her time in Japan benefited our beef sector?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. While in Japan I had the privilege of meeting with dozens of industry and business officials who are eager to sell Alberta's beef in supermarkets across Japan. We were happy to promote our sector as safe, reliable, and of the highest quality. These included entities such as COSCO Japan and many other businesses and front-line sales entities.

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

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that South Korea is an emerging market for our agriculture sector and a new frontier for international trade development and given that Alberta is seeking to diversify our international trade markets in order to achieve a competitive edge that everyone in our province can be proud of, can the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism show how her time in South Korea served our agricultural sector overall?

2:40

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. While in South Korea I met with Korean businesses that are planning on investments in Alberta's agricultural industry, including Canada's beef and potato industry. The member will be happy to know that we were also able to add several meetings with the tourism and oil and gas sectors, that were strictly for our delegation, in order to take full advantage of the mission from an Alberta perspective.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will move to the most anticipated portion of the day, points of order. I encourage you to exit the Chamber expeditiously if possible.

Hey, McIver.

**Mr. McIver:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Minister of Transportation. Obviously, it would be inappropriate to use the name of any member in the Chamber, and if I did that, I sincerely apologize and withdraw.

Hon. members, we are at points of order. The first point of order was raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). At approximately 1:56, while the hon. Government House Leader was responding to questions being given by the hon. opposition members, in one of the responses it was even difficult for me, as close as I am to the Government House Leader, to hear his response. I noticed that you even heard it as well, but it directly came from the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, when he said directly in his comments, which appeared to be towards the Government House Leader, "You are such a liar,"

which, as you know, are very unparliamentary words and under (h), "makes [false] allegations against another Member; (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member"; and (j) are certainly unparliamentary. I would say, without having the benefit of the Blues, sir, that it was certainly loud enough to not only catch your attention but something that could even have been picked up by *Hansard*. I would ask that that member certainly apologize to the Government House Leader and to this House and withdraw any sort of comments in the future.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is rising.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I think the point of order was indeed in order. You know, I was perhaps getting a little excited about all this closure business. I think I said it probably the first time, and then the fourth and the fifth and the sixth times I think everybody heard. I do apologize to the hon. Government House Leader and ask that I could withdraw my comments.

**The Speaker:** I consider the matter concluded.

Points of order 2, 3, and 4 raised by the hon. Government House Leader.

#### Point of Order Epithets

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I can – if it works for you and, of course, the Opposition House Leader, I'd be happy to roll all three of these into one in the interests of time.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, in your ruling, which can be found on page 799 of *Alberta Hansard*, June 13, 2019, edition – I know you read them all every night – about the opposition referring to Bill 8 as "Hate," your comments were:

I ask members, as we move forward, to choose their language carefully. Ask yourself whether your intention is to insult or to inflame debate or to levy an accusation against a member opposite or – and perhaps this is the important part – to knowingly cause disorder. If so, I would suggest that you find another means to make your case.

You further remarked:

However, this ruling should not be considered carte blanche to proceed with using the mock bill title Bill Hate on a regular basis.

I think it's quite clear that the intention of the members opposite is to insult or inflame debate on what is a sensitive and very important topic. I think we are headed to a point where any use of the term "Bill Hate" in this Chamber will lead to points of order being called, which will disrupt question period – we already saw it today – and could very well lead to a point where order cannot be maintained in this Chamber. Again, Mr. Speaker, I think the opposition has reached that stage that you referred to and that you should instruct them to stop using Bill Hate inside question period, which is not a time for debate. It's a time for questions and answers.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is not a point of order. I appreciate what you had said last week. I will note that on the three occasions that the Government House Leader reports that our member used the term "Bill Hate," there wasn't a peep in this House. It's not when the House was raucous. There wasn't noise. There wasn't heckling. People weren't jumping up and down. In fact, it was dead quiet in here except for the Government House Leader jumping up on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker, I'll remind you that for years members of the opposition, while we were government, referred to the job-killing carbon tax over and over and over and over. They did that to try to cause disorder. We didn't call it a point of order. It wasn't ruled as a point of order.

This is not a point of order; it's a difference in opinion. It did not cause disorder in this House. I can tell you that there were other words today that caused disorder, but that wasn't one of them. Again, this place has a history of the opposition naming bills or nicknaming bills. In fact, the opposition even did it to my title when I was minister of economic development and trade. There are numerous examples in *Hansard* for many, many years, including the Government House Leader himself using a variety of different names to name bills when we were government. Those were not ruled as points of order, Mr. Speaker.

I think that if the Government House Leader doesn't want to waste the House's time, he should stop jumping up on a point of order when there isn't one to jump up on.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, thank you for your interjections.

I, too, have the benefit of the ruling from June 13, 2019, on page 799. I also would just like to provide some context with respect to that ruling as well as with respect to other debate that has taken place here in the Chamber over the last number of days. I would also make a comment that it sounds to me like the Official Opposition House Leader is asking me to rule on things that may or may not have been ruled on in the past by previous Speakers. Of course, I am hesitant to make a comment on what may or may not have happened in other situations.

Although we do have the benefit of precedent on our side and precedent has ruled on a number of different occasions on this particular issue, what I will say is that in the ruling from June 13 I provided some significant commentary around the times in which it may or may be likely to cause disorder. Specifically, in that ruling I referenced the use of Bill Hate during question period, which is an opportunity for questions and answers, not an opportunity for debate.

I would conclude by saying that I am yet hesitant to rule Bill Hate out of order during question period. I would say again that I will be listening closely, that it would be hard to imagine another time or a scenario where Bill Hate used during question period would be unlikely to cause disorder. As such, I will be left with very little option but to deliver a similar ruling to that of Speaker Zwozdesky in 2013 when he ruled "climate change denier" as something that is likely to create disorder. At this point, the point of order is not well taken but noted.

2:50

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, is there still an opportunity to seek clarification on your ruling?

**The Speaker:** There is no opportunity under – I suppose there is an opportunity under Standing Order 13(2), or you might question the chair. But I can tell you – perhaps you should have a seat while I'm speaking – that what the chair is likely to rule is that I have just gone through a thorough explanation of why I ruled, in which case I consider that point of order to be dealt with. But if you want to try me, feel free to do so.

Point of order 5, raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

#### Point of Order

##### Allegations against Members

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), (j). Around 2:05, I believe it was, the Premier in his comments, in

his response to one of the questions, talked about how the NDP is against the oil and gas sector. I rise on a point of order because, again, it is, I think, imperative in this House that members speak the truth when they are speaking in this place, and there's nothing that could be further from the truth. That comment clearly was intended to cause disorder, to paint a very false picture, which for me is concerning. Again, for those that may have tuned into question period for that moment to hear the Premier say, "Well, yes, the NDP is against the oil and gas sector," I can tell you that if you look at the history of the modernized royalty review, making us more competitive, introducing the capital investment tax credit, other means, including fighting for pipelines, promoting our oil and gas sector, getting federal dollars for orphaned wells to put people back to work, investing in different programs to use wells that were already drilled for geothermal . . . [interjections] I think I have the floor, Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Speaker, the comment and the reason I stand up on a point of order: that was clearly done to cause disorder. It is completely false. This isn't a difference of opinion. It is patently false, and for that I ask that the Premier or the House leader on his behalf withdraw and apologize.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's pretty rich for the Opposition House Leader to rise on this point of order given that the member that sits behind him has been seen all over videotapes on the steps of this very building chanting, "No more approvals" at antipipeline rallies. It's pretty rich when that member's leader stood by as Energy East was killed, supported Northern Gateway being killed. Their federal party, who they belong to – they are the same party, as you know – has a leader that travels across this country protesting and saying that they want to shut down our oil and gas industry. It is utterly ridiculous.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that what the Premier said is true, but that is also irrelevant. This is a matter of debate.

**The Speaker:** If there has ever been an example of a matter for debate, I think that point of order has proved it. I consider it dealt with and not well taken.

The Opposition House Leader on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-South.

#### Point of Order

##### Remarks off the Record

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), (j). It was around 2:05 or 2:06. The Member for Edmonton-Glenora was asking a question and referred to the 100-megatonne cap, that was mentioned, at which point in time the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka used expletives and said: yeah; it did bleep all. That kind of language in this House is not only unparliamentary; it's unbecoming of members, especially used in this Chamber. I think what's important here is that members are aware of what they say, whether the microphone is on or off, that there are people and often children in the galleries listening. That unparliamentary language is, first of all, unparliamentary, but second of all, it was used to cause disorder and successfully did that. So I would ask that the Government House Leader or the member apologize and withdraw.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Opposition House Leader is worried about decorum and how this place looks,

I suggest that he take some time this evening to go back and watch question period and watch the ridiculous behaviour of him and his colleagues inside this place.

As for this point of order, it's not a point of order. I don't have the benefit of the Blues. I don't know what he's referring to, and I will leave it at that, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity just to add a bit of my own observation. I do sit next to the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, and I did indeed overhear that particular remark. Indeed, we're exposed to some colourful commentary from that member quite often during question period and at times during debate. I referenced it during my own debate on Bill 8. While I recognize that you may not have heard that comment and it may not be contained in the Blues, I would suggest that that member give some due consideration to his own leader's admonition: work hard, stay humble, and earn every vote.

**The Speaker:** I am prepared to rule. [interjection] I'm prepared to rule. I'm happy to hear from the hon. member. I think that it would be reasonable and prudent for me to make reference to *Beauchesne's* 486(4), that says:

Remarks [that] do not appear on the public record and are therefore private conversations not heard by the Chair do not invite the intervention of the Speaker, although Members have apologized for hurtful remarks uttered in such circumstances.

What I would say is that if, in fact, members are using coarse language that is certainly unparliamentary, they do take the opportunity to apologize to the House should that be warranted. However, in the current circumstances I am unable to rule that that is or was not a point of order as I did not hear that. However, I will be interested to listen and see. I do have the benefit of the Blues, and it isn't recorded in the Blues, but I will have the opportunity to review that later as I'd like to encourage all members to use language as parliamentary as humanly possible.

Point of order 8, raised by the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, those were rolled into the point of order we already addressed.

**The Speaker:** Wonderful. Thank you.

## Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call Committee of Supply to order.

## Interim Supply Estimates 2019-20 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

**The Chair:** Hon. members, before we commence consideration of interim supply, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak ...

- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses [(a), (b), and] (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the first rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 20, approved by the Assembly yesterday, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

3:00

**Mr. Toews:** Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move the 2019-2020 interim supply estimates for the Legislative Assembly and government.

I'm privileged to rise in the House to present the interim supply estimates. I would like to begin my remarks today by talking a little bit about what I've learned from my first month in this role. First of all, I've learned from day 1 about the dedication and incredible hard work of the officials I'm privileged to serve beside in Treasury Board and the Ministry of Finance. From the very first day on the job they've demonstrated the most important tenet of the public service, and that is fearless advice and loyal implementation. I know they provided the same high standard of professional advice, insight, and policy analysis that the members opposite had access to when they were privileged to sit on this side of the House.

Now, I cannot speak to the extent to which members opposite were prepared to take that advice. I say that because what I have found to date is that there is a great deal of work for this government to do to return Alberta's government to a high standard of fiscal prudence, to meticulous budget management, and ultimately to the demonstration of respect for the money that Albertans send to us through their tax contributions. I can speak for all of my colleagues on this side of the House when I say that the administration of Alberta's taxpayers' dollars is a serious and solemn endeavour.

When our fellow citizens go to work every day, they are providing for their families, and they are working hard to give their children every advantage. Like every one of us, they are working to make their life better and better for their families and to give their children advantages that they did not have, and when they go to work every day, they send a portion of their earnings to us. So I say to every Albertan, whether they are working in our oil fields, in a restaurant, in an office, or whether they are out on a farm or a ranch: thank you. When you make that incredible effort for yourself and your families, you're also building Alberta and helping to provide services and programs that lift up everyone.

I also know that many Albertans have suffered over the past four years from the severe economic downturn overseen by the previous government. I'm keenly aware of that effort and those sacrifices as I stand before this Chamber today to ask for funding that will continue to provide services and programs while we, in turn, work very hard on behalf of Albertans to build a prudent budget, a budget that fulfills the promises that we made to Albertans when we sought their votes and the ability to form government. It is because of our respect and admiration for that effort that we are taking a careful approach to how we spend every one of those hard-earned dollars. We've undergone an extensive process to ensure that we are

securing the funding necessary to continue to provide the services and programs that Albertans have come to expect, and we've also paid careful attention to the work that is required to ensure that our campaign commitments will be implemented. Of course, we have very high expectations of the work of the MacKinnon panel, expectations that we are confident they will deliver on.

What needs to be understood is that this is not a budget. These are supply estimates to continue providing quality services to Albertans until we table a full budget in the fall. These interim supply estimates represent the work we have undertaken in my ministry and across all ministries to ensure that government has the funding required to continue to operate while we prepare our first budget. This will allow the business of our province to continue until the full 2019-2020 estimates are approved before the end of November. When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$107 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$27.8 billion in expense funding, \$2.4 billion in capital investment funding, \$786 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$943 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund. These estimates will be fully debated when the budget documents are tabled in the fall. Approval of interim supply estimates pending the release and approval of the budget will allow the Assembly the time it needs to review and debate those plans.

Now, my colleagues and I will be pleased to answer questions from Members of the Assembly. Thank you.

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

We'll now move to the opposition members of caucus for your first 20-minute block. Hon. Member for St. Albert, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

**Ms Renaud:** Yes, I would if that's acceptable to the minister.

**The Chair:** Minister, do you agree?

Okay. Member, please proceed.

**Ms Renaud:** Great. Thank you. I'd like to focus right now on Community and Social Services. First, I'd like to talk a little about AISH, which is assured income for the severely handicapped. The AISH budget for 2018 is approximately \$1.133 billion, an \$85 million increase over budget 2017, which is approximately a 9 per cent increase. February 2019 saw 62,745 AISH recipients, with approximately 50 new applications received across Alberta each day. What are the projections for the number of new AISH recipients for the next budget year or interim?

**Mr. Toews:** Could I politely ask the hon. member just to repeat the last part of that question?

**Ms Renaud:** I'd be happy to. What are the projections for the number of new AISH recipients for the next budget year or interim? Maybe I'll just add a little bit to that. Was this projection influenced by the AISH intake process changes, that being centralized intake, digital upgrades, that sort of thing?

**The Chair:** The minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point in time I don't have that detailed data in front of us. I'll look forward to providing that and advising the minister to provide that information. What I can say is that, again, with Community and Social Services, as with all ministries, this is not a budget. Interim supply is simply the resources required to fund government services between April 1

and the time we roll out the budget. In this case, funding is available until November 30.

**Ms Renaud:** Yes, I do understand what this is. Because applications have continued to come in, it's important that we understand where they're coming from and how many are coming.

Changes to intake processes have been implemented in the large urban centres, the Calgary and Edmonton regions, and have reduced decision wait time, which has a financial implication by approximately two weeks. What are the plans to extend this work, to streamline AISH processes – again, deficiencies were pointed out by the Auditor General – in communities outside of Calgary and Edmonton, so in rural communities that are also really struggling with the number of AISH applications they receive?

Thanks.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will commit to the member opposite that we will take those concerns and pass them on to the minister and provide any response that's appropriate.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. Just on that theme, will the centralized AISH intake process, which reduces the time to get to the eligibility decision, be implemented in areas outside of Calgary and Edmonton? I guess I'm asking: is this the plan? Will these processes, these digital upgrades that have been introduced to the large urban centres like Calgary and Edmonton, be expanded to rural communities? If the minister doesn't have that answer, could he commit to us that he will give us those answers in writing?

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Pon:** Madam Chair, thank you for the questions. Yes, it's in the plan. We've been working on it. I've been working with our deputy's office. The mixture that we're working on will make it streamlined, more or less, easier for the seniors and for the AISH program. It is planned, and it's making progress.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for clarification, AISH doesn't extend beyond 65 years of age. I just wanted to go back and ask about the projected cost savings or if there's, I guess, a thought to looking at this when the government will be budgeting for these added pressures, the projected cost savings of a reduced number of appeals due to difficult AISH application processes.

Again, going back to my earlier comment, The Auditor General spent a great deal of time informing the previous Legislature about the difficulties in that AISH application process. There has been a fair amount of work done under previous governments to streamline that, and I guess we're seeing these shorter wait times for eligibility decisions. Can the government let us know about their work or the work they'll undertake around projecting cost savings for those processes?

Thank you.

3:10

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We will provide a response to the member opposite. Again, there will be complete details when this government rolls out a budget, but in the meantime we will provide a response.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister. I'd like to switch over to another area, which is PDD, persons with developmental disabilities. In the fall of 2018 it was noted that there were approximately 60 to 80 people on wait-lists for PDD supports, with average wait times of 377 days. Edmonton and the south region had the highest number of people on wait-lists by far. What are the projected increases to address these wait-lists? Are the regions in most need being targeted? If the minister doesn't have that information readily available, if he could commit to giving us those answers in writing, that would be most appreciated.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We will certainly provide a response to the member opposite. I think it's probably appropriate to note that every ministry and certainly the Ministry of Community and Social Services will be working to find efficiencies during the weeks and months ahead up until the time that we prepare our budget. Again, we're committed to Albertans to deliver the services that they expect during this time, really between April 1 and the time that we roll out a budget this fall, and at the same time look for efficiencies and improved methodologies to continue to deliver these services.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Minister. Currently under PDD funding there are two main streams. One is that the families or people with disabilities can contract service providers, whether they're nonprofit or private, and that is how they are funded. There's also family-managed support, which is that the family undertakes the care of their family member and hires staff and all of that. There are only two right now – two – family-managed resource centres in Calgary and Edmonton. Those centres assist families to co-ordinate the work that is required to undertake those services, whether that's helping with remittances, staff training, staff hiring, and that exists to support people with disabilities to manage the funding that they receive. It's a great deal of work.

The UCP platform clearly described a commitment to increase the capacity of FMS, which is family-managed supports. Now, that is certainly great, that families will be allowed to choose how they want to support their family members. However, it's really important to address the need to support families that are undertaking this funding mechanism. What are the cost projections of the number of people who will choose the route of funding with additional support? Obviously, there's been some thought given to this stream of funding if it was in the UCP platform. I'd just like to know if there are any projections that sort of pushed that issue to the front to cause it to be on the platform document, and will we see this reflected in interim supply?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just respond to the member opposite that those details will be forthcoming during the budget process. Again, I'll just add that I know our Minister of Community and Social Services is actively looking for efficiencies and at the same time committed to delivering the services that Albertans expect during this time. I think within every ministry we're going to be looking for increased efficiencies, removing redundancies wherever possible, and every minister of every department and certainly the government as a whole will look forward to presenting a budget with detail this fall.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you to the minister. Just a word of caution that this sector, people with disabilities, has certainly been the target of efficiencies in the past. With the incredible wait-lists and the volume of people that are involved, just a word of caution on what that looks like.

I'd just like to go back again to PDD funding. One of the things that the previous government, our government, undertook was a PDD review. It was really quite a different review. It involved stakeholders from across the province and multiple different methods. One of the discussion points in the what-we-heard document from communities all over Alberta addressed PDD eligibility.

One of those old eligibility requirements focused on IQ, currently people under an IQ score of 70, which is – let's be honest – an old standardized test that is hardly relevant anymore. To the minister: will this government commit to introducing the results of that review and also costing out what the difference is in terms of people needing supports and cost if the PDD eligibility criteria are changed, specifically the removal of IQ measure, and will the minister commit to these answers in writing?

Thanks.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will pass that request on to our Minister of Community and Social Services. Again, there will be full details rolling out as we roll the budget out this fall.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. Another question. There is a line under this ministry called specialized community supports. Those typically include behavioural consultation services, professional assessment services, and counselling. They are regularly oversubscribed. I've heard of people being on wait-lists for that service for well over a year. Given the projected intake into PDD, what will this be expanded to?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My responses may sound a little bit repetitive, but we're excited to deliver a full, detailed budget this fall that will lay out the priorities and fiscal plans of every department. We look forward to doing it.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you to the minister. Currently persons with developmental disabilities does not support people with disabilities who live on-reserve. People are forced to leave the reserve to obtain services. PDD policy states that services are not delivered on-reserve, yet the PDD program is an in-scope program of the agreement for the funding and administration of social services, the ARA. PDD has not yet accessed this funding source and is not currently part of the bill-back process. The 2017-2018 number of indigenous people served is 553: on-reserve six, off-reserve 547. Can the government describe or explain to us if there is work focusing on this change to allow people to stay in their homes, stay in their communities, and receive the support they need?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We can, again, certainly pass that question on to the minister. I would just pose this question back to members opposite. When you were in government, which

was not many weeks ago, was there a reason why you didn't move forward with that initiative at that time?

**Ms Renaud:** Well, thank you to the minister. I'm going to switch gears a little bit – actually, I just wanted to respond to that. One of the reasons that we undertook the PDD review was to address these really serious concerns that we'd been hearing for years, not just four years but decades. I am anxiously awaiting this government's release of that review, and if indeed the review requires more work to get to the place where there are robust recommendations, then I look forward to hearing that.

Now I'm going to switch gears a little bit and talk about the disability advocate. In reference to I think it was page 1, after consulting with Albertans with disabilities, our government was proud to announce the first-ever disability advocate in Alberta's history. Can you confirm if the funding for this office will remain protected, and what are your plans for this office in the future? I would also like to add – actually, no. I'll go back. I'll stop and let you answer.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, we'll refer that question to the minister for a response. I think I'm happy to say that we look forward to delivering a full budget with the full details of our plans to go forward in each department.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you to the minister. In terms of income support, which is another program in reference to page 1, how many more Albertans are you expecting on the expected-to-work caseload, and what are you going to do about it?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, we will refer that question to the minister, and we'll look forward to rolling out full details upon the delivery of a budget.

3:20

**Ms Renaud:** Focusing on sexual assault survivors' funding, we know that the previous government committed \$8.1 million in increased funding for sexual assault survivors. Do these interim supply numbers include an ongoing annual commitment to SAS? Is this an increase from the previous government?

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The cash resources that are reflected in the interim supply certainly reflect the resources required to deliver services, high-quality services, to Albertans until the time we roll out the budget.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thank you. I want to just skip back a little bit to persons with developmental disabilities. Certainly, with over 12,000, I believe the number is, receiving supports from PDD, there is a significant percentage, certainly not all, but there is percentage, of people on that list who are able and willing to work but are unable to work or do not have jobs for a variety of reasons. The previous government, our government, undertook some steps, I think, that were quite important. One of those, when we looked at changes for AISH, is increasing the amount that people with disabilities could earn while on AISH without their AISH being impacted, sort of encouraging that transition. We also introduced an internship program. I guess my question is: can the minister talk a little bit

about the thought around employment for persons with disabilities and how that will impact future funding? Do you see that as a way to find efficiencies?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll refer this, the detailed question regarding program spending and rollout, to the minister, but I would like to talk a little bit about job creation and the importance of and dignity of a job. I think that it's very clear that one of the greatest dignities that we can have is the dignity of a job, dignity to provide for ourselves and for our families. So it's a great priority of this government to create additional job opportunities for all Albertans, including for Albertans with disabilities. Of course, we have rolled out a series of measures to get that accomplished. As you know, we've rolled out the job-creation tax cut, which is a key plank in terms of attracting investment into this province and providing jobs and opportunities as businesses come into this province and invest again. We know that that is a prerequisite to providing a sustainable job growth for Albertans. Many, many Albertans at this point in time are out of work. We find that unacceptable, and it's been a priority for this government to reverse that trend.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you for that. Just to follow up, I can't think of unemployed people with disabilities that are going to benefit from a large corporate tax cut, but okay.

Can the minister talk to us a little bit about that one of the things the previous government did was that we got rid of some regulation that allowed employers to apply for a minimum-wage exemption for people with disabilities? Now this government has introduced legislation to pay people under 18 less than minimum wage. Can the minister tell us if people with disabilities who are under 18 will also receive a wage decrease?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The reality is that in this province we have an incredibly underemployed demographic, and that is the youth in this province. You know, we've taken measures, multiple measures, to ensure that there are additional opportunities for all Albertans, including young Albertans, including Albertans with disabilities. Just to respond, I think, to the member opposite regarding the job-creation tax cut, individuals that are looking for a job, that want to be employed, individuals who will benefit from the dignity of a job and providing for themselves, will be benefited from this government creating a more competitive business environment, which will then attract investment and attract jobs for all Albertans.

**The Chair:** The hon. member. Go ahead.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I recognize that we have but a few seconds left in this 20-minute segment.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, are you wishing to go back and forth with the minister?

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yes, I would, if that's okay with the minister.

**The Chair:** Minister, is that agreeable?



**Mr. Shepherd:** Okay. I recognize that we have but a few seconds left in this 20-minute block, but I look forward to having the opportunity to continue afterwards.

I'd like to begin with talking a bit about continuing care. Now, we recognize, Madam Chair, that the percentage of population aged 65 or older in our province is expected to grow by about 3 per cent during this government's first term, about 5 per cent over the next 10 years. That's nearly 300,000 new seniors here in our province. With that are certainly going to come some particular cost pressures, and it's my hope that this government, as ours did, is making some investments in planning.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we are now on our second 20-minute block. I assume the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre will continue with the hon. Minister of Health. Do you wish to go back and forth?

**Mr. Shepherd:** If that's all right.

**The Chair:** Yes, it is.

All right. Member, please proceed.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As I was saying, there are going to be some increased costs that will come with this. Our government had planned for that and had sort of made some increases in funds going forward. Now, the total amount for continuing care, excluding capital, in 2018-19 was about \$2 billion. To the minister. Just wondering about this amount that we have here for health, just under \$14 billion. In that, what portion is set aside, then, for total continuing care under the Ministry of Health, and does that include any amounts to plan for expected growth?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, just to add a little bit and to echo comments that the hon. Minister of Finance had said, this is our interim supply requirement for Health, and it reflects our commitment to maintaining our health care spending. The quick answer regarding continuing care: yes, we will be increasing capacity for long-term care through bringing back the ASLI grants and allowing that to be the method by which we bring further capacity in the system.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do recognize that this document is not a budget, but I would ask that we do have this time here to have this discussion. It's my job on behalf of my constituents to ask questions about the numbers that have been brought forward. When I have a single expense of \$14 billion, I think it makes sense to ask some questions, and if the minister is able to provide any additional detail, I'd appreciate if he could do so in writing.

Moving along on that, Madam Chair, recognizing that there are also some other areas that are directly impacted by the expected growth in the population of seniors in the province of Alberta, one of those being the coverage for seniors in terms of pharmaceuticals and drugs, we know that we have an expected growth estimated of about 4.28 per cent on that coming up, so a total cost over the next 10 years likely of about \$8 billion. I'm just wondering, then, for this minister, recognizing that in these cases we're also not only talking about seniors but in some cases they may be having their dependents: while I recognize that it can be difficult to estimate precisely, within this \$14 billion can the minister provide any

clarity on what amounts are intended to plan for growth in coverage for seniors and drugs?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I can appreciate the hon. member's concerns about being given the three numbers in the interim supply. But this is interim supply. This is not a budget. This is, rather, about our cash-flow requirements to fund health care services until the full budget is presented in the fall. The NDP were quite clear when they introduced their interim supply last year.

Going back to the hon. member's question about seniors' drug benefits, I have to admit that the number doesn't sound familiar to me, Madam Chair. I think the correct number is \$576 million, which is based on the number that was spent last year, I believe. So to the hon. member's question about what is going to be happening, I guess, until we get to the fall budget: the amount that we're spending is going to be based on the previous year's budget.

**Mr. Shepherd:** I thank the minister for that answer, and I apologize if I was unclear. The figure that I mentioned was an expected cost over 10 years, projected cost over a decade. That's why it was a little bit higher. But thank you to the minister. I appreciate the clarity on that.

3:30

Now, of course, also one of the other things that we provide for seniors is dental assistance. Again, that similarly has a projected expected growth of about 4.28 per cent. Within this interim supply have there been any plans, then, for dental and optical assistance for seniors in terms of anticipated growth and coverage for existing?

**Mr. Shandro:** Madam Chair, just to go back to our campaign commitment for our government during the last campaign, our campaign commitment was to maintain or increase spending. How that was interpreted as we go through this interim supply – just a quick answer for every program for the hon. member as he asks these questions – is that every program will be maintained.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that answer from the minister. Indeed, that's good news, in a way, that they intend to maintain spending in all these areas. But, again, as I noted, particularly in the area of seniors, we can anticipate some significant growth in the population. With that is going to come growth in expectations and demand on each of these programs and these supports that we provide for seniors. That's not even counting the costs of inflation. So while I appreciate the minister's commitment to maintain funding, we need to recognize that if that is all this government will commit to doing, we are going to see a reduction in the amounts that are available to look after seniors in this province. Of course, I look forward to seeing what the overall plan is when they introduce their budget this fall.

Lastly, I did want to ask, then, just about the Alberta aids to daily living. I recognize that that is a program that does impact more than just seniors. It certainly impacts many of the people that my colleague the MLA for St. Albert had been discussing earlier. Just on that note, to the minister: would it be the same, then, for this particular program, with expected growth of about 4.28 per cent, that your intent at this time through this interim supply is to maintain spending from last year?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of questions to unpack there. I suppose the first one would be about increased pressures. To also highlight another one of our campaign commitments, for the first time in Alberta Health Services' 10-year history we have begun a review of their processes, of their policies, of their structure, to be able to find efficiencies. We are also finding efficiencies and working with our partners in the health care system, including AHS; for example, AHS continuing their work with organizational best practices to be able to find efficiencies throughout the system and be able to use that money to be able to reinvest in our front line.

Regarding the second question that the hon. member had regarding AADL, my memory is that this is a budget of \$156 million. I may have to be reminded of what the question was about, but I can confirm that there would be maintaining of that budget, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that, Minister. I appreciate having that additional clarity now.

Let's move on, then. Again, we have the larger number here of just under \$14 billion. Now, we have had the introduction in this House of Bill 9, which is looking to force our public-sector workers back from the table in terms of having the opportunity to engage in the wage negotiations that they had duly negotiated and contracted. I imagine that ministers at the cabinet table may have been aware that this legislation was coming and the intentions of their government to break these contracts. I just wanted to ask the minister, then, in terms of the budgeted amount that we have here, is there any anticipation within this number of changes to salaries for nurses or other health care workers that are part of the groups with whom they are choosing not to follow through on the duly negotiated negotiations? Or are they anticipating that they aren't going to be looking at any of these wage rollbacks until after their budget is presented in the fall?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Chair. First, because this is one of the first opportunities for me to be able to speak and reply to some of the rhetoric that we've heard from our friends on the other side when it comes to Bill 9, I reject all the premises that were proposed by the hon. member; for example, the rhetoric regarding forcing the front-line workers back to the negotiating table, that this is breaking some kind of a contract. I reject all those premises. But what I would say, if the hon. member is asking these questions, is to just to go back to that this isn't a budget. This is interim supply. This is our cash requirements to be able to get to a fall budget. This is not a budget.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I suppose we can have a discussion of what words mean and language, but I say that if you're passing a law to tell someone they can't do something, you are forcing them. That being the case, anyway, I appreciate the minister's clarity. I recognize again that this is not a budget, that this is interim supply. But this is an opportunity for me and my constituents to try to get a sense of the direction this government is headed. I realize we have some fairly broad platitudes from their platform, and I appreciate some of the clarification that the minister has been able to provide.

One other thing I would just ask about at this point, before I hand things off to one of my hon. colleagues, is in terms of EMS. Our

government committed an additional \$29 million last year to support EMS here in the province of Alberta. That included funds for new front-line staff, for some new ambulances, a few other pieces there. Within this \$14 billion I'm just wondering, then, if this government is intending at this point to simply continue the amounts that we had put forward and continue on the level of spending we had set for EMS from last year, or if they're anticipating within this \$14 billion any additional investment to address a growing need.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to reiterate, interim supply, at least for this ministry, is based on the previous year's budget, so just a very easy answer for the hon. member.

As well, before that, I think the previous question might have been for me, and that is a question about the direction where this government is headed. The answer, quite simply, Madam Chair, from our campaign commitment is to maintain or increase health care spending. That's our direction. That's the direction where this government is heading, and that's what we are doing.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point I think I'll cede the remaining time to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**The Chair:** Member for Edmonton-Glenora, would you like to share your time with the minister and go back and forth?

**Ms Hoffman:** I would be very happy to. All of my questions are about education, but if either the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Education want to respond, I'm fine with either.

**The Chair:** Minister, do you agree to go back and forth?

Please proceed, hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. Mostly I understand that this is an interim supply bill not a budget, but with the information in the interim supply bill school jurisdictions are being asked to set their budgets, and most have already done that back in May. They're trying to figure out whether or not they have sufficient funds to deliver their planned programming. I'm hopeful we'll have answers today. If not, I'm fine with responses in writing.

My first question would be around the classroom improvement fund. Will school jurisdictions, boards, or individual charter or private schools be seeing funds directed to them to fund the classroom improvement fund?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you. As you did say, it is not a budget. Rather, it is the cash flow to fund government services until the fall budget is presented this fall. This is very similar to when you presented yours last year. The only thing I can say about the classroom improvement fund is that it did have an end date of August 31 of this year.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think the point that many school authorities have been making to me is that they're making a plan now for the next school year. They can't – well, I guess they could – fire a bunch of teachers in the fall or hire a bunch in the fall. It certainly wouldn't be responsible planning for those kids. I think the clarity I heard is that there won't be funding

passed on to boards for the classroom improvement fund when they receive their funding allocations at the end of September. I imagine that the budget will come after the end of September, but of course school jurisdictions receive their funding based on enrolment on September 30 and their funds thereafter. If I could just have that clarity, that would be great, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. I can just reiterate what we have already expressed to boards. They're very well aware that we are funding enrolment growth. It's been accounted for, and it's going to be funded, and we're going to continue building schools. They're very much aware of that. The rest will come forward in the budget when it comes.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. What about the school nutrition program? Is there any money through this interim supply allocation going towards funding for the school nutrition program?

3:40

**Member LaGrange:** Well, again, this is the cash that takes us to the budget time, and anything that was promised up until that point in time is covered through the interim fund.

**Ms Hoffman:** The question that school authorities are asking me is: "Are we feeding kids lunch in the fall? Are we going to get money to do that or not?" I just would appreciate some clarity about whether or not they should keep employing those folks and buying the bread to make sandwiches or if they should cancel those programs until after the fall budget and at that time determine whether or not they're in a position to rehire folks through the school nutrition program. It was an individual line item before, so I'm wondering: are they going to receive a transfer to fund that line item?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Again, thank you for the question. I certainly understand. I was a trustee for 11-plus years, so I know the challenges. But at this point in time we have given them all the information we can. Once the budget comes out, we'll be able to share more, for sure.

**Ms Hoffman:** Okay. What about the per-pupil funding? Are there any changes to the existing formula? I know that there has been messaging from the Finance minister and now the Education minister around funding enrolment growth, but is it going to be the same base funding for enrolment growth that people had previously? Is the per-pupil funding level being maintained, or are there changes to the existing formula? How many new students are they anticipating?

**Member LaGrange:** As far as the number of students that will be funded on enrolment growth, it will be all the new students, and we anticipate that being between 14,000 and 15,000 new students, or 2.2 per cent. As far as the actual per-student funding, that will be something that will come forward in the budget, as you well know how those things work.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. Through you, Madam Chair, I guess the challenge is that I do know how those things work and that usually staffing is done by this point in the year, most people are getting ready for holidays, and most teachers would know whether or not

they have a job for the fall before a delayed fall budget, which is one of the reasons why I think it's so important to give that clarity at this point. There are hundreds of teachers across this province that I've heard from – and there are probably others that I haven't – through their leadership, that have said that they're cutting positions because of the lack of clarity. So I'm seeking that clarity. Is the funding formula changing for the per-pupil enrolment?

**Member LaGrange:** Once again, this is interim supply – it's not a budget – so I can't share that information. I've been meeting with boards, and they have not expressed that as a major concern for them at this point in time, the ones that I've met with thus far. They are very pleased with what we have brought forward, and they're very pleased to know that we will be funding enrolment growth.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Bill 8 proposes to remove – I think it has already actually been done under a previous School Act and then grandparented over – the transportation minimum kilometre requirement for receiving transportation funding. I know that that's moving into regulations that will be determined at a later point, but of course you set school bus routes, probably already, to determine how people are going to be picked up and transported to school. So I'm just wondering: can we get some clarity on school transportation, on how much will be allocated to different jurisdictions, so that they can have that certainty when they're setting their bus routes so that kids don't have chaos halfway through the fall?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you again for the question. Very much we had indicated with Bill 8 that it is to keep the system whole, that there is no real change to what is already currently happening because we did realize that challenge to parents. As I've said, this is interim supply. We will continue with things as they are at the moment, and more details will come in the budget.

**Ms Hoffman:** My next couple of questions relate to the construction season. I guess my first one is that I get that this isn't the budget, that this is interim supply, but the construction season is happening now. It's happening between now and when the budget is anticipated to come in. So how is this interim supply bill going to ensure that we're taking advantage of the summer construction season and that no existing school builds will be delayed by, arguably, a year? This isn't a budget – this is interim supply – but the construction season is today, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. We will continue with the building that has already been allocated. Right now in process we have numerous, numerous schools or modernizations going on. Those will continue. As far as what the priorities are in the fall, when we get the allocation for fall capital, then we will release those around the same time as the budget.

**Ms Hoffman:** Would the minister be willing to table in this House a list of the projects that are moving forward this summer with anticipated timelines and clarity for this House?

**Mr. McIver:** I can safely say that the projects coming forward are similar between Transportation and Infrastructure. It's part of the capital planning and budget process. I recognize why the hon. member is asking, but that is . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we have now completed our second 20-minute block.

We will start with the third. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, are you the first speaker?

**Ms Hoffman:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Would you like to just continue the questioning?

**Ms Hoffman:** Maybe I'll give the clarity, because I think it's missing from this.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Hold on. We need permission to proceed. Would you like to go back and forth?

**Ms Hoffman:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Do you agree to go back and forth, Minister? All right. Member, please proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. My question. I think the first answer was that all of the projects that have already started will continue to move forward throughout the summer, and there won't be delays. I'm not asking about new capital announcements. I'm asking for a commitment from the minister to table in this House which projects are continuing, where they're at in the process, and what the anticipated timeline is given that we're in the midst of the construction season right now and the new capital plan won't come out until the fall. I think I heard the minister say that construction that was anticipated to begin will have already begun. I'm just hoping that we can have a commitment to have that tabled in this House.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, our platform did commit that we would follow the capital plan that was in place. We're committed to doing that in the interim supply that we're discussing and debating in this House today. We'll accommodate that.

**Ms Hoffman:** Maybe I'll do it through a written question, Madam Chair, to get further clarity just specifically around the school projects, because I know there are many throughout the province that are anticipating construction right now, that have signs up. They just, I think, need to know if those projects that were anticipated to happen this summer are continuing. That is the thrust of my question. I'm happy to have one more shot at an answer, and then I'll move on to something else.

**Member LaGrange:** I've communicated that those that are moving forward have already been approved, and they've all been contacted, so their boards will have been notified as the usual process in building is going forward. There's nothing new. We've committed to doing it. They're going forward. As you said, the new budget will come in the fall.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for that clarity. I guess, then, we're safe to infer that if you didn't get a letter, it means that your project isn't going forward. I imagine that's, hopefully, not the case. I think it would be easier for the public – I appreciate that boards have been contacted individually – to just have tabled in the House which projects are moving forward or not. I'm not asking for anything that the minister hasn't said is already happening.

**Member LaGrange:** Again, the Minister of Infrastructure takes care of – you know how it works. Once we put things forward, then the Minister of Infrastructure takes on the building of it, so that would have to be communicated through him.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. I'm just communicating through the opposition to the government: these are the things that would help us feel confident in voting for the interim supply that's been brought forward. To the government, whoever wants to convey that back to the Infrastructure minister: I'm wanting confirmation about which projects are moving forward or not. If they aren't able to give that, I think it causes some uncertainty in the public about those projects, especially that we're in the midst of the construction season right now.

I'll ask about two specific projects. One is the new high school in south Edmonton. Then, of course, there was planning funding for a northeast Calgary high school previously approved, and that funding, the planning work, I understand, is nearly complete. I'm just hoping for clarity about those two projects specifically. If it's not possible to have all of them tabled – I would prefer to have all of them tabled in this House – then certainly clarity on at least these two fundamentally important projects would be very helpful unless the minister wants to give that clarity today verbally. That would be fine as well.

3:50

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Madam Chair, I understand that the hon. member is looking for a report tabled, but I would suggest, and I hope politely, that since school starts in September and that now we're at the end of June, if there's a school project going to be ready for September, the hon. member will be able to see it. If she can't see it, it won't be ready for September, and I'm pretty sure all the school boards will be aware of what they can see and what they can't. With all due respect, I think it's going to be probably painfully obvious by now which school projects will be ready for September and which ones will not.

**Ms Hoffman:** My question wasn't about: ready for September. My question was about the construction season and which schools are going to be under construction this summer. I appreciate the attempt to get to the September question, but my question was just about the construction season. I imagine there are probably schools in many hon. members' ridings that are due to have either major renovations or construction done this summer. I just think that the people who plan on sending their kids to them, even if it's three years down the road, deserve that clarity that these projects are being delayed because the government isn't in a position to present a budget right now; they're presenting interim supply. The people I talk to just want to know that there's certainty and that there's a plan and which projects are moving forward. That's what I think would give greater clarity.

The other things I'm asking for – and certainly it doesn't need to be tabled. They can be provided verbally here right now. I'll certainly welcome that. I would love information, and if it's not available verbally now, then I'm happy to receive it in another form. How much are the transfers to each of our public, our Catholic, and our francophone school boards, broken down by jurisdiction, as well as to private, charter, and parents who receive direct payment for home-schooling? I think that there has been some uncertainty about whether or not they're going to have the funds that they need, so I think that knowing now how much the projected transfers will be – I know that numbers aren't solidified until September 30, but staffing happens before that because kids show up before that. I

would appreciate knowing how much those transfers are to each of those jurisdictions.

Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We can provide that information in terms of specific amounts that will be going out. I think that information can be provided once it's assembled.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. Of course, if we could have that before we're asked to vote on the final decision about interim supply, I think that would be helpful, but I appreciate the commitment to get it. That would be my goal, that that be the target line.

With that, Madam Chair, I'm happy to cede the remainder of my time to my colleagues.

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

**Mr. Eggen:** Sure. That would be great if it pleases the minister.

**The Chair:** Minister, agreed?

**Mr. Eggen:** I'm here to ask some questions about Advanced Education, but I actually have one around Treasury Board and Finance as well, so maybe I'll start with that because that's kind of your gig, and then we can move from there to Advanced Education. I had a question. I was just looking through interim supply, and I noticed that there was quite a substantial increase in transfer of funds from the lottery funds. It seemed to be more than what had been done in the past in regard to the transference of funds, so I just wanted to ask the President of Treasury Board if he could explain why there's quite a substantial increase in transferring of lottery funds into the interim supply budget. Of course, if you don't have an answer straight away, you could always send me one in writing later.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We're just gathering up the amounts here. In interim supply, of course, the number that we've presented is \$943,387,000, and I believe that for the year ended, 2018-2019, in total it was \$1,439,443,000, or \$1.4 billion. So if we did an eight-twelfths calculation on that, it's going to be very close, I believe.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Thank you. So it's, in your view, a percentage difference that's in keeping with the adjustment we're making month by month. Yeah. Okay. Good. I just kind of felt like it was more than we had done before, and I will certainly pursue that further together with our Treasury Board and Finance critic.

I can now move to perhaps a couple of questions in regard to Advanced Education. Actually, maybe I'll move my questions around a little bit because the previous speaker, Edmonton-Glenora, I think, was pursuing something that is on the minds of a lot of different ministries, and that is capital projects. Again, with Advanced Education does this interim supply budget capture the necessary funds to move forward on the capital projects that had been committed to and started by our various postsecondary institutions here in the province of Alberta?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. For Advanced Education I think that in keeping with our platform commitment of following through with the existing capital plan, the interim supply will provide for the Advanced Education capital plan that's in existence.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you. Again, I did hear the minister of K to 12 education say that they were reassuring or sending, you know, comfort letters to schools and school boards around covering the funding for capital projects in K to 12. Would Advanced Education be pursuing the same strategy to ensure that the postsecondary institutions can feel that they can move with confidence on the capital projects that had been approved?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I can certainly pass this, perhaps, request on to the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you. Good.

My next question is around, you know, my understanding that executive warrants cover spending needs from June 30 of this year. I spent some time trying to figure out the comparisons for pro-rated expenses for Advanced Education, and there seems to be some discrepancy between last year and this year. I just wanted to know if this is a reflection of sending signals or projections as to funding reductions for postsecondary institutions for this next financial year. The discrepancies between the pro-rated interim supply, I think, might suggest that postsecondary institutions must brace themselves for cuts. I just wanted to get some clarification on that.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the question. Again, at this point I'll just reiterate that the interim supply is, as the member opposite knows, the resources required to get to budget time. Upon budget time we will roll out comprehensive details of the plan forward, and I'm confident that our Minister of Advanced Education will roll out a very detailed budget at that time.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you very much. You know, again, the next question I have is in regard to technology-related postsecondary programming spaces over the next I think at least five years. I know that this government has in their platform a commitment to trades and to technology, so just as a way by which I can probe into this interim supply – and you don't have to answer it now, but if I could get a written response, please – does this interim supply budget reflect the expanded technology-related postsecondary programming, which included, you know, 3,000 new spaces in institutions around the province?

It would give us some assurance that we were moving ahead with continuity to see that this funding has continued and is reflected in these interim estimates. I wouldn't expect you to answer that at this level of detail with the people you have here today, but I would ask if that could be forwarded to me in writing, please.

4:00

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I think we're really talking about a budget question, in fairness, and recognize the interest of the members opposite in the upcoming budget. What I

can say today is that we are and will continue to be working hard on developing a comprehensive budget. We'll be pleased to roll out those details, and when we do, members opposite will have full opportunity to discuss.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Thank you. My last question, then. Again, I would in no way expect this now. It kind of reflects the K to 12 question we asked, and that is if I could have in writing the funds that are being forwarded to our postsecondary institutions through this interim supply budget, detailing the monies that will be forwarded to each of our postsecondary institutions on an interim supply basis as soon as possible.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will pass that request along to the Minister of Advanced Education.

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

**Ms Phillips:** Yes, please.

**The Chair:** Minister, do you agree? Back and forth with the member?

**Mr. Toews:** Sure.

**The Chair:** All right. Member, please proceed.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister and his officials for joining us here this afternoon. I want to start with if the minister could confirm with the House that budget forecasts have been prepared in the fashion that they had been in previous years; that is to say, an average of private-sector forecasting and – well, essentially just that: private-sector forecasting firms with respect to the price of oil.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, in terms of interim supply, this isn't a budget at this point in time; this is determining the resources required between now and the time we roll out a budget this fall. This period is April 1 to November 30, and our interim supply amounts reflect, again, the cash or resources required to continue to deliver government services during that time to Albertans.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm wondering. So if it is to meet the demands between now and the end of October, mid-November, if the minister can confirm, though, with the House that funds forwarded, for example, for CFEP and CIP, which are, I think, on a quarterly intake basis or perhaps three times a year – I might be mistaken on that. If that intake period will be funded for the community facility enhancement program and the community investment program, if that can be confirmed, that those funds will be there for folks who are participating in application processes right now.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point in time I can't confirm. We can get back to the member opposite with that information, again, relative to the interim supply period.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you. Yeah, I think there are a lot of community groups who will be waiting and will be very interested to know that potentially the next intake period will be all for naught. These are nonprofits that make those applications, so we don't want them to waste their time.

Madam Chair, I'm wondering if the member can confirm. Certainly, I represent a very large university. I know that we had some back and forth with the Advanced Education critic, but I'm wondering if the member can confirm for us that the interim supply funds that are being forwarded for the beginning of the September academic year include a 2 per cent increase and backfilling of the tuition freeze, please.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again I would say this, that this is not a budget. Clearly, the Minister of Advanced Education will be rolling a budget out this fall. At this point in time, again, these are the resources required to get us to that point. In terms of budget details, they will be forthcoming later in this season.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, that concludes the last 20-minute block for opposition members.

We will now go to private government members for their first 20-minute block. Hon. Member for Red Deer-South, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

**Mr. Stephan:** Yes, please, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Minister, do you agree?

**Mr. Toews:** Sure.

**The Chair:** All right. Member, please proceed.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I appreciate the opportunity to ask some questions about the interim supply. I do enjoy numbers. I like numbers when they do well. Having said that, I know I'm a little bit unfamiliar with the process. As I understand it, this interim supply isn't a budget, and really the purpose of the interim supply is just to keep the day-to-day operating of government in an orderly manner to support the public interests of taxpayers.

I also understand, of course, that the reason we're having this interim supply is that the government is doing its careful due diligence, that we were elected on a platform and a commitment that we would live within our means, and that that allows for the sustainability of public services. Due diligence in this context means being in a position to make fully informed decisions, having the facts before you. I know that that's how things work in the real world. When you are entrusted with taxpayer funds, that is a sacred stewardship, and it's very important that this government has all the facts so that it can then act in a responsible way to support the public interest.

With that kind of preface in mind, I have about four questions I'd like to ask. The first question that I'd like to ask is going to be directed to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, and that is in respect of our financing costs that are in the interim supply.

I just want to provide a little bit of background to why I am concerned about this particular expense. Of course, our financing costs are a product of revenue less expenses. I've looked at the annual reports over the past couple of years that we have as this government. I note that the 2014-15 fiscal year was the last time that government reported a surplus. We had an operating surplus of \$1.1 billion reported in '14-15 in the annual report. That was sort of the last time. That would have been March 31, 2015. That was the last surplus we had.

Of course, we had a change in government a little over a month later, on May 5, 2015, and our world somewhat changed, and our interest costs somewhat changed, which I am going to ask the minister to comment on. But it's quite profound and dramatic, actually, as I kind of looked at the annual reports. We went from a \$1.1 billion surplus, and then the following year, just one year later, we had a \$6.4 billion operating deficit.

4:10

So that was \$6.4 billion. Then we went and we actually broke over \$10 billion in an operating deficit in only one year. That was \$10.7 billion, as I understand it. That was '16-17. Then from '17-18 I note that the operating deficit was over \$8 billion. I don't know if that's a definition of success, but compared to the prior year, it did go down. As I understand it, the operating deficit this year: based on the third-quarter reporting, it looks like we're going to have a year-end deficit somewhat towards \$6 billion.

So we have accumulated debt of over \$31 billion. I know that we lost a significant amount of corporate income tax revenue from prior-year reports as well, so we have this growing debt issue. Of course, with that, we are confronted with substantial debt-servicing costs that we've been seeing grow every year in prior-year annual reports. Of course, we're faced in this year with our interim supply costs with the interest debts that we now have inherited as well.

I was wondering if the Minister of Finance could comment on the current costs that we are now paying on our accumulated debts, that have certainly been growing astronomically over the last couple of years.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. For the year ended March 31, 2019, the expectation is that this province will be spending approximately \$2 billion in interest costs, in debt-servicing costs. That has risen, as the member noted, quite substantially in the last year. At this point in time it appears that over the last five years, again, this province will have basically moved in a negative financial way, basically lost approximately \$40 billion or in that range over the last five years in terms of balance sheet strength. That's a great concern for this government, and that concern, we believe – in fact, we know it's a great concern not only for this government but for Albertans in general, so we've taken a series of steps or are in the process of taking a series of steps to reignite the economy. We know that by reigniting the economy, the long-term effect will be to in fact enhance sustainable government revenues.

At the same time as we're reigniting the economy with a series of measures such as repealing the carbon tax, implementing the job-creation tax cut, or corporate tax cut, along with reducing our regulatory burden, our red tape in this province and modernizing our regulatory system – along with those measures, of course, Madam Chair, we will be taking a very fiscally responsible approach to our spending. We recognize that in this province we have some due diligence. There's some necessity to provide some real prudence in the way we respect and spend taxpayers' dollars.

So that will be a major initiative, and we know that it's a major initiative for all the ministries at this point in time as we head towards delivering a budget this fall.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you for those answers, Minister. I appreciate that, and I appreciate the government's message and commitment to sustaining the important public services that I think everyone in this House values and, indeed, Albertans in general.

One of the important principles often currently in terms of fiscal stewardship is the relationship between population and inflation growth and operational spending. I'm going to be asking the Minister of Finance to comment on that in respect to the interim supply estimates. In terms of general principles many taxpayer advocates advocate for governments to try and manage their spending, of course, to take into account population realities, inflation growth.

Based on information that is available in the public domain, again having looked at and having the benefit of the annual reports over the past number of years since we had a change in government with the members opposite becoming the government, by my calculations if I look at how operational spending has grown year over year with the members opposite when they were in government and if I compared a baseline comparison to inflation and population growth during that period, what we have is a divergence, Madam Chair. We have a divergence in where we would be from kind of an operating base starting point with a current operating base standing point, in other words where they ended at, of billions of dollars in difference, actually. In other words, had the government over the past four years merely increased spending to match population and inflation growth, our operating budget that they would have finished at would be billions of dollars less.

What I have a question about in respect to the interim supply numbers is: did they increase spending above population and inflation growth similar to what has occurred in the past in terms of the budgeting that has been done?

Thanks.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, with the interim supply concept, with the interim supply numbers that we are presenting before the House today, I think it would be difficult to extrapolate with a high degree of accuracy their correlation with population growth. We're confident that the interim supply amounts that are in front of this House will adequately fund this government until we roll out a budget. However, the member's question and comments I believe are quite pertinent, certainly pertinent as we go forward. I can take a look at population and inflation growth over the last few years, which have been, you know, for 2015-16, 2.7 per cent; 2016-17, 2.4 per cent; 2017-18, 2.8 per cent. Yet spending during those years on a percentage basis was materially higher at 3 per cent, 3.1 per cent, and 3.5 per cent.

4:20

I think going forward it will be very critical, as this government rolls out a budget, to be very mindful of the trajectory that we've been on under previous management and with the cost increases that have been materially beyond population growth and inflation. It will be incumbent upon this government to ensure that we are respecting taxpayers' dollars, that we are finding every efficiency possible within our departments so that we're delivering high-quality services in the most efficient, cost-effective manner, that we're reducing redundancies wherever possible, that we are

conducting performance reviews to ensure, again, that government delivers at the highest level possible on behalf of Albertans.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Minister. I know that some of my questions were a little bit more big picture in nature, but I want to go a little bit more granular. I want to talk about the crude-by-rail costs that are embedded in the interim supply budget. My understanding is that this was a fairly significant line item cost that, unfortunately, this government inherited, Madam Chair, which we are now having to bear the burden of, some of the uncommercial decisions that may have occurred here. So if I could just get an understanding of the estimated quantum of those costs in the interim supply. What kinds of assurances do we have going forward that these costs can be managed as one-time extraordinary costs? Hopefully, this isn't sort of a residual cost that is borne over a number of years by the government through budget cycles. If I could have the minister share with the members here and provide some more information on that cost, that would be really appreciated. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. Savage:** Yeah. Sure. As you know, this was a deal on a series of contracts signed by the previous government that we are committed to getting out of. We made it very clear in the election platform and subsequent to that that we will not be in the business of competing with the private sector on crude by rail. We are doing everything we possibly can to mitigate any costs associated with that, and we're pretty confident that there will be a private-sector solution to it. There have been some costs incurred prior to our government coming in, you know, some pre start-up costs that were paid, and there are some costs we're anticipating to have to incur while we're unwinding and getting out of these contracts.

**Mr. Stephan:** Just a follow-up question on that. Do we actually have a number in the interim supply relating to the costs for these crude-by-rail contract costs? I'm just trying to get a sense of the magnitude of that.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I think that on a specific number on that project, we wouldn't normally divulge that at this point. But I think it's important the member knows that there is an amount in interim supply that reflects what we believe will be an obligation of this government to meet during this interim supply period for costs and liabilities committed to by the previous government but now to be paid by the current government on behalf of Albertans during the interim supply period.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you. Again, with it being an interim supply schedule, I know that like crude for rail there were certain costs that this government inherited essentially from the prior government, you know, that may be extraordinary one-line items. I'm wondering if it has come to their attention if there are any other material extraordinary one-time costs that are reflected in this interim supply that were inherited by this government due to decisions that were made by the previous government other than or in addition to the crude-by-rail contracts?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's fair to say that this government has inherited a number of challenges from the

previous government in terms of the spend side. I think the crude-by-rail project is certainly one of those. I think every department has challenges that they've inherited. I think the commitment that we've made to Albertans is that we're going to very competently, responsibly work through those challenges and ensure that we're providing Albertans with maximum value for their hard-earned tax dollars.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we will now move on to the 10-minute block portions. The opposition will lead us off. Member for Lethbridge-West, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

**Ms Phillips:** Yes, please. I'd like to share my time, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Minister, do you agree?  
All right. Member, please proceed.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you. We just heard that, certainly, the previous government made some decisions with respect to projects. I couldn't agree more. One of those projects is, in fact, the Calgary cancer centre. We do see some funds being forwarded for capital investments within the interim supply. I would like the minister to confirm either in this House or in writing that the Calgary cancer centre capital investments and the timeline of the Calgary centre in terms of construction and other timelines will continue along the same timeline as previous and that there will be no change as a result of this interim supply.

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Chair, yes. As far as I know, the funding will continue, the construction will go on, and the timelines will be maintained. Thank you.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Minister. I think an answer that says, "as far as I know," is probably not enough for Calgary and southern Alberta cancer patients, so I think I'd like to request an undertaking in writing, if I could, that the capital funds are going to be forwarded in the right way, whether it's planning funds or other construction funds, to ensure that that project remains on time.

Similarly, the minister just gave us a long speech about how he's worried about borrowing, and that is fine although we do maintain a very good debt-to-GDP ratio.

**An Hon. Member:** Unnecessary borrowing.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, hon. member, for the commentary over to my right there.

Anyway, with the cancellation of the carbon price, there is now no money for Springbank, the green line, the valley line, or the Bow River mitigation. So I'm wondering if the minister can confirm that the funds for the green line are going to continue along the same timelines with the same construction schedule and if the minister could confirm that he is in fact borrowing those funds for the green line C-Train project and the valley line LRT project.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It was a campaign promise that the funding for the LRT lines, the green line in Calgary and the valley line in Edmonton, would remain in place, and so they shall.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.



**Ms Phillips:** Thank you. I think, again, I would like some confirmation that those projects will now in fact be borrowed for.

Similarly, I am wondering about the Bow River mitigation. Mitigation along the Bow is an integral part of responding to the 2013 flood event in Calgary, which we just passed the six-year anniversary of. Can the minister confirm that he will, in fact, either for the planning funds and the various studies that are going on or in the future capital plan, borrow for those projects?

4:30

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In fact, the answer to that will come out of the budget and capital planning process. The answer is not available today, to the hon. member. Sorry that that will probably disappoint the hon. member, but that is indeed the fact today. As we get through that process, that will become more final.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, certainly, the lack of planning funds for the Bow mitigation won't disappoint me as much as it will the citizens of Bowness and elsewhere.

I would now like the minister to confirm. With the new funds being forwarded to the Department of Energy, will the minister confirm that requests for contracting disclosures, requests for proposals, disclosure of contracts in the blue book, disclosure of salaries for political staff will all remain in place given the public comments about how these funds will be expended; that is to say, with more of a risk tolerance? I'm wondering if the minister can confirm with me that the due diligence around disclosure, competitive procurement, and audit and all of the normal functions of government will continue for this project where the chair of Executive Council has confirmed with us that it's going to be a risky project. I want to make sure that it is not \$30 million spent on friends, insiders, or a glorified Twitter account.

Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Madam Chair, I think the question was a little more rhetorical. There was quite a flourish at the end there, actually, a rhetorical flourish. I think that the hon. member was attempting to make some type of political statement, which, I suppose, based on our surroundings, is fair enough game. Again, based on the rhetorical flourish with that finish, I will say that when our government spends money on capital projects, we would intend to use that money in the best interests of Albertans and in getting the best deal that we can negotiate while delivering on those capital projects.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, a number of municipalities had a number of projects under the federal ICIP, and MSI was used as their matching component. Can the minister confirm that all of those provincial commitments for all of those projects will be honoured between now and September so that municipalities can continue their work on these important capital projects? Or are all those projects stalled?

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Chair, our government was actually magnanimous in adopting the capital plan laid out by the previous government. We said that we will maintain the spending at that level, but when it comes to specific projects, we're going through them. If there are strong business cases for those projects, whether they are shovel ready, whether they have funding in place from partner ministries or in some cases private money through donations and all, how many jobs they create, how much economic

activity they will create: those are the standards we are applying. We are reviewing all those projects, and they will be approved on that basis.

**Ms Phillips:** Okay. That's fine, but I think I'm looking a little deeper at what's going on with MSI capital. I'll just give an example: a new twin arena in Lethbridge. There is a provincial component through MSI that the city is using as the matching piece. I want to make sure on behalf of my constituents that that twin ice arena is not now going to lose its provincial share due to some decisions that are contained within this interim supply and that all of those commitments that have already been made are being made good upon. I do not want to return to my constituents that we've lost our twin ice arena, for example.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, we've committed to the capital plan that's in place. I think our hon. Infrastructure minister has noted that there is some review of some cost-shared projects that were in various stages, but certainly in general terms we're committed to the capital plan. There is funding available in interim supply consistent with that commitment.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, within Treasury Board and Finance I'm wondering: between now and September will the government continue the supports to small and local breweries and continue all of those various programs, or are they being cut in interim supply?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We recognize some of the challenges, certainly, with our small brewers. I would suggest that we've inherited a bit of a rat's nest, so to speak, from the previous government on this file. We're looking at various options going forward. We're committed to options that are fair and equitable, options that as much as possible, I think, recognize market signals, and also options that are going to serve our brewers in the best and most sustainable way going forward. We're working with that sector right now to identify solutions.

**The Chair:** Member, five seconds.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the . . .

**The Chair:** Apologies, hon. member.

We will now move to private government members' time. Hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, would you like to share your time with the minister?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Yes, please.

**The Chair:** Minister, do you agree?

Please proceed, Member.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Chair. I'm interested to hear conversation about debt and being worried about debt. Certainly, I'm worried about debt. I know that my constituents are worried about debt. I'm particularly happy to be able to stand here today and talk about spending and debt going forward for this government and making sure that we have adequate budgeting plans and that we're using the taxpayers' dollars wisely. Especially after campaigning on that for the last eight years, it's particularly satisfying to be here for that purpose. I would say that \$2 billion in debt servicing is

irresponsible. The other people that I know that are concerned about debt are my kids. I'm sure the members of this Assembly's kids are concerned for their future and making sure that we move forward and have a plan that doesn't leverage their future.

One of the things I wanted to start off talking a bit about, being a not-for-profit guy, is that we had to raise funds to do the work that we do. Every dollar was hard earned, not by us but by the people that donated that money to us. One of the stories that really stands out for me in my career was when a young lady came in and she poured out her piggy bank on the counter and asked us to use that money to help the poor. That's when it really hit me in regard to where this money was coming from and the importance that we exercise great fiscal stewardship of that money to make sure that it was used to the best purposes for that young lady and for the people that we were serving.

That struck home when I was door-knocking and talking to constituents in our communities as they were struggling under an increased tax burden in this community or job loss or other things, just thinking about how they worked so hard for their money and how we are going to use that money. Again, I think that we need to make sure that we frame any money conversations in that perspective, that this is hard-earned money by our constituents, by Albertans, and that we need to make sure that we're using those pennies to the best of our ability to serve Albertans and not put them into a risk situation. Certainly, hearing about the inherited risk from our previous government and hearing about the increased debt, those are all concerns and things that I think we need to make sure we're considering going forward.

I think part of that is making sure that we have realistic budgeting plans going forward and that we're using the money properly. I'm excited about the MacKinnon panel, that we're going to be fully digging into exactly how this money is being used and finding opportunities and ways to save the taxpayer and help the taxpayer get better value from that money. I'm excited to hear about those plans, that we're working towards getting all the information as we go into that process. I want to continue to be a voice for that, and I'm thankful for the minister and his hard work on this going forward.

**4:40**

You know, better managing our cash flow: I mean, we've talked a little bit about revenue staying relatively flat while we continue to increase government spending. Again, being a not-for-profit guy, I'll tell you that if I managed my shelter like that, I would lose my job. I guess that in a way the party to the left of me did lose their job. I'm thankful that we're here to get things back on track.

As one of the best examples of that, I think, just reading through this and being an Albertan for as long as I have been – you know, just seeing the Slave Lake fires, seeing the floods in Calgary, seeing the Fort McMurray fires – we know that emergency funding needs to be available for natural disasters. Just seeing that this was not included in this budget prepared by the previous government and seeing how much money was required in order to help support our communities that were at risk because of the fire, this shouldn't have been a surprise. One of the things I certainly want to advocate for going forward with any of this is that we are adequately preparing for emergencies in this province and that we have that money there. You know, the fact that this wasn't included or adequately planned for, knowing full well what our province has been dealing with year over year, I think is just poor planning and, frankly speaking, shameful. This is something that I think we need to make sure that we're prepared for going forward.

All that said, just within that context, I wanted to ask the minister to help me understand how delaying our budget is going to help us make better decisions in regard to our budgeting going forward.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member for Calgary-Klein I think raised some excellent points. Certainly, his observations as he spoke with Albertans during the campaign would have been very consistent with mine. We have tens of thousands of Albertans concerned not only with, you know, the economic malaise in this province but, in fact, with the trajectory of our accumulated debt, the recognition and concern about that accumulated debt and the effect that it will have on the next generation, on their children and grandchildren.

To respond to one of the concerns raised by the Member for Calgary-Klein on our response to emergencies and disasters that may come upon us in this province, of course, we all are aware of the fires in northern Alberta, and we have included in this interim supply amounts required to cover emergency response for that event. I think it's important for Albertans to know that this government will be committed during this interim period to any emergency response that's required to ensure that Albertans' needs are looked after.

I think that to take a little forward look to future budgeting processes, I clearly heard the recommendation from the Member for Calgary-Klein that within our budget deliberation process we look to ensure that we have a realistic amount budgeted for emergency preparedness going forward. I accept that recommendation. That'll be a recommendation we'll consider as we head into budget development.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you. Thank you for the work in regard to dedicating resources. I'm sure Albertans' minds and hearts will be a little more at ease when they're thinking about that stuff, so I appreciate it.

**An Hon. Member:** When they're listening to interim supply debate.

**The Chair:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** When they're listening to interim supply. I appreciate the comment there.

A little more information just for our sake and for my constituents – obviously, we want to make sure that we're taking in all the information that we have, that we're properly planning moving forward in any budget process but also in this process. You know, the NDP, of course, is committed to certain spending, and I know that you've looked at that. I'd like to understand a little bit better about what has informed the decision to ask for this money to fund the government operations over the next eight months.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll respond maybe to a question that I didn't adequately respond to in the member's first line of questioning as well. The member asked, I think, in his first line of questioning about basically the value of the interim process relative to our fiscal management for this province. I think that's a good question. What benefit does this period have for us as a government going forward, looking to ensure that we can present a very responsible budget?

While an interim period has its challenges in terms of funding government – and that’s why we’re here today. I appreciate all the members here as we’re looking to pass a bill that will ensure that we have resources to fund government until we roll out a budget. I think one of the reasons, the chief reason, why we’ve delayed rolling out a budget until this fall is so that we can really understand our options going forward to achieve balance by 2022-23, of course, achieve balance and at the same time continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans, which Albertans expect. Of course, we have initiated the MacKinnon panel, and they’re doing a deep dive into the finances of the province, particularly on the spend side, and we’re looking forward to those recommendations. We’re confident that they will produce some . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we are now back to the opposition line of questioning. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** My apologies. Do you want to go back and forth?

**Ms Pancholi:** That’s right.

**The Chair:** Minister, do you agree?  
All right. Please proceed.

**Ms Pancholi:** My questions are specifically with respect to the Ministry of Children’s Services. I don’t know if the minister would like to answer. I’m looking at page 1 of the interim supply, and I see that the budgeted amount or the amount for this interim period pretty much reflects what was in Budget 2018. My question for the minister is – as I know, the minister is very aware of the action plan coming out of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention. There were a number of immediate, intermediate, and long-term action plans and goals. Now, the previous budget would have been, I guess, focused on achieving a lot of the immediate goals. My question for the minister, though, is: how does this reflect the work, which will be different from what had been done over the last year, to achieve the immediate goals? How does this reflect a commitment to the work that is being done on the intermediate and long-term action plan goals, and does it mean that there is still a commitment to meet the timeline set out in the action plan?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Children’s Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think the answers that I can provide the member opposite today are very similar to what I provided last week in this House. The funding, obviously, in interim is based on last year’s budget. We’re going to continue that. A number of the shorter term, immediate-term goals outlined within the action plan have already been undertaken, and a lot of the medium- and longer term goals will require ongoing work with our community stakeholders, First Nations, community partners. I’m happy to say that some of those conversations started to happen again last week, so we will look to see what that looks like going forward.

I can’t speak to what’s going to be in the budget. As my colleagues have mentioned, we are in a very difficult fiscal position, but I do think that the numbers that you’re referencing in terms of our interim funding show that our government does value the young people in this province and that we want to make sure that our children and families, especially those most vulnerable, are safe and supported.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

4:50

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for her response. I guess my question a little bit more specifically is: the goals, the immediate goals, were different then, and some of them are related, but some of the immediate goals under the action plan had specific dollar amounts allocated to them whereas some of the intermediate and long-term goals were a bit more fluid and did not specify specific dollar amounts. Given that the work is going to be different – right? – because the nature of the goals and the work that needs to be done is different, I guess I’m questioning why the dollar figure amount is the same, because the work is different. I guess the question is – for some of the longer term goals you could imagine that the amount of work and investment in those would be maybe more substantial – does this figure represent that fewer funds are being allocated to the implementation of the intermediate and long-term goals or more? I’m open to hearing that. I’m just wondering how it breaks down in terms of the actual goals that are set out in the action plan.

**Ms Schulz:** There are, I think, two separate questions there. The first: speaking to numbers going forward, obviously, this is interim funding to get us through the time that we need to take to put forward a responsible budget that takes into account the fiscal position that we as a government are faced with but also recognizing that we have statutory requirements to take care of the children most vulnerable in our province, especially when we’re talking about child intervention. That’s what a lot of the actions outlined in the action plan and the panel work are focused on. Taking a step back, I think the member opposite is correct that not all of the mid- and long-term plans have dollar amounts allocated to them. I mean, a number of those pieces outline that we are going to begin work with stakeholders on certain things, and we are going to continue to do that work.

I also want to recognize that the work that the panel did was quite transformative in terms of changing practice. While we’ve certainly put dollars into that, one of the things that those conversations and that feedback and those recommendations that came forward had, taking into account feedback from our stakeholders, our indigenous leaders, indigenous communities, people with lived experience, was that real changes in practice needed to be made in terms of how we support children and families, trends in how we support children and families. Some of the things that we learned through that work was, ultimately, that we know that keeping children connected with their families and their communities and their culture is hugely important, especially for their longer term success. Certainly, those things have been changed in practice.

Then there are also different things that come up that do change some of our considerations for those action plans. Today we’re following closely what’s happening at the federal level with Bill C-92, and certainly that could have impact on the work that we do with our stakeholders. There were certainly things that were brought up by our indigenous leaders in the conversations that we had last week. I don’t want to presuppose any of that. More information will come on the actual spending when the government releases a budget this fall.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister. I agree with the minister’s characterization that the ministerial panel and the action plan are transformative, and I know that we share that commitment to implementing those changes because it will be very transformative for the children in this province if the action plan is fully implemented. Obviously, I thank

the minister for her comments. There is ongoing work, the day-to-day work of the ministry, that's very important. I think the action plan sets out, quite honestly, a lot of work that is on top of the day-to-day work. It is transforming. It is working with the stakeholders. It is that work.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Having worked in public service, when there are new projects and new things, that does take a commitment of resources with respect to the people in the ministry who maybe were previously tasked with other work, are now doing other things, maybe bringing on new staff. I know a number of the action plan goals involve providing additional supports and services to indigenous communities. While I appreciate that the day-to-day work is critical and still needs to be done, I do think that the action plan calls on – and the previous government made a commitment to additional funding to support the implementation of the action plan. I just wanted to highlight that I think it's – we need to see that the dollars are reflecting that there is additional work that has been given to this ministry to fully implement these recommendations.

While I appreciate the comments that there will be a budget coming forward in the fall and there will be more details there, a number of the intermediate goals in the action plan set out a target completion date of 2020, which is just not that long after the fall budget will be tabled. That work must be being done now.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

You know, we can't wait until a fall budget, and I'm not suggesting that that's what the minister is saying, but that work has to be happening now, not just when the budget is tabled in the fall. My hope is that on top of the additional work, the day-to-day work of the ministry, there is still a commitment to supporting the additional work related to the implementation of the action plan. So thank you to the minister for her comments.

I just wanted to ask a question with respect to indigenous services funding, both on-reserve and off-reserve. I'm wondering if the minister can comment on whether what we see in the interim supply includes additional resources to address the increasing disparity between on- and off-reserve services for children and whether or not this reflects a commitment to fill the gap between the federal government funding for on-reserve services, which we know is much weaker than the support that we provide. Do these estimates reflect a commitment to meet that gap?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Once again, the money outlined in these interim funds is based on last year's budget to get us through until our government puts forward a budget later this fall.

**Ms Pancholi:** Just a clarification. Does this mean that the band designate role will be fully funded by this government going forward as part of the commitment in the action plan? Just wondering if you can comment on that.

**Ms Schulz:** I can get back to the member opposite with a response to that question.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. I'd appreciate if the minister could provide that response in writing. That would be appreciated.

Sort of the last area that I would like to address is the funding for the early learning child care centres. I know the minister has

commented before that there is a continued – and I see, because the dollar figure is very similar to the previous budget for the three-year pilot project that began in 2017, which will end in 2020, that that commitment is still there to funding the early learning child care centres. But the question I'm going to continue to ask is: does this mean the government – you know, we don't see a change in dollar figures. Are they planning anything here in terms of investing in continuing that project beyond 2020? If the minister can comment on that.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we will now go to private government members' questions.

Hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley, would you like to share your time with the minister and go back and forth?

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes, if that's acceptable to him.

**The Chair:** Minister, do you agree?

Member, please proceed.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to take the opportunity today to talk a little bit about Bill 6 and interim supply. Since the previous government didn't produce a budget, obviously, we're in the situation now where we need to do an interim supply, or some people call it interim appropriation. Obviously, it's to fund our government operations until we do get a budget together, which will be this fall. Obviously, we're dealing with kind of a huge – I shouldn't say kind of. We're dealing with a huge financial mess that this previous government left us, and obviously this is an opportunity to enable us to keep services running until this fall, when we have a budget together.

One of the probably most startling things that I think Albertans are concerned about – and, of course, it was a topic at the doors in the election – was the debt. Of course, the previous government had us on track to head to over \$100 billion in debt. I guess I would maybe start with a little bit of a question here to the ministers. Where are we sitting at right now, or where will we be at, I guess, maybe at the end of this interim supply as far as total debt that the government is in?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The member raises an excellent question and, I think, again, a question that I expect all of us encountered at the doors during this last election campaign, and that is a great concern with the trajectory of the previous government, a great concern with government accumulating debt to pay for services, to pay for programming that we're experiencing today. I think, again, consistent with the member's concerns, I personally had many constituents, many Albertans really communicate to me the importance of governments delivering services in a sustainable way, the importance of one generation not expecting the next generation to pay for programming that we were receiving today.

5:00

I think many of us are parents in this House, and some of us are fortunate enough to be grandparents, and as we look down the road, the thought of actually leaving our children and grandchildren with the kind of debt that we're looking at – in fact, again, the previous government put us on a track to \$100 billion of accumulated debt. That's of great concern to Albertans. It's certainly of great concern to me.

I can certainly commit to the member that as we deliberate in our budgets going forward, we will in fact be developing a budget that's

responsible and, again, responsible in a twofold way. It needs to be responsible in delivering high-quality services to Albertans. Governments have a responsibility to protect those most vulnerable amongst us. We take that responsibility, Madam Chair, very seriously. We also have a responsibility to ensure that we're being fiscally and financially prudent. I do commit to the member that as we go forward, we will be delivering a budget that will achieve balance by 2022-23 and will continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate that.

I appreciate the comments, too, about future generations. Of course, having children of my own, which are older children, and having grandchildren now, too, obviously that's a great concern as we look forward to their future and what we leave them. I think we can all agree that we should not leave them in a situation where they're paying for the mismanagement of funds of previous governments. I think that's great to hear. I think it's also good – you know, we're all looking forward to hearing from the MacKinnon panel and hearing what they bring forward to the table as far as the government's finances and what situation we're in.

Of course, when we talk about debt, we also have to be concerned a lot about the financing charges and debt-servicing charges that we put ourselves under. Those financing charges: that's money that's not being spent on services that Albertans need and rely on. Obviously, the faster we can get ourselves to a balanced budget so that we're not going further into debt and, of course, then the opportunity to pay down the debt so that we can relieve some of those financing charges – hopefully, with the new government and a new financial plan, maybe some of these rating agencies, that decide what interest we pay, will become a little more kind to us. With the previous government I think we had six credit downgrades in four years, and that leaves us in not as good a situation as we could be; that's for sure. I'm wondering if I could have the minister just talk a little bit more about financing charges, debt-servicing charges, where we're at with that, and how things are looking as far as going through this interim supply time period.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the question from the member. Again, for the year 2018-2019, interest or debt-servicing costs are going to be approaching \$2 billion, and \$2 billion is a lot of money that could be spent on education, health care. It could be left in Albertans' hands should we have adequate funds to fund those important programs – again, health care and education – and look after the most vulnerable amongst us. Should we have resources for those endeavours and other expectations of Albertans, I personally believe that the money after that is best left in Albertans' hands. Typically Albertans know best what to do with their funds.

We know from past experience that when Albertans have those funds, they very often reinvest them in this province, which generates economic activity, which, in fact, grows the economy of this province, creates job, opportunities, and, in the future, future government revenues. Debt-service costs are a great concern and, I think, no doubt have informed this government in terms of its goals of ensuring that we're fiscally and financially responsible and its goal of ensuring that we are on a path to balance by 2022-23.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Minister. Obviously, the situation we're in: this is a pretty difficult financial position to be in. The previous government, of course, seemed to have no problem spending and maybe a little tougher time trying to make good financial decisions. I think one thing that we've found ourselves in – you know, I guess,

to maybe use a little bit of a pun, we could say that we're in a bit of a train wreck.

I guess I would like to maybe ask the minister a little bit about this situation we find ourselves in where the previous government, you know, during the actual campaign period made agreements with rail companies to lease railcars. Of course, that's incurred hundreds of millions of dollars of debt to Albertans. Of course, we know that this isn't in the best interests of Albertans. The return on investment on that is extremely poor, with a lot of risk there. Obviously, it was a desperate attempt to try to gain some sort of favour with the voters, but I think the voters saw through that desperate attempt. Any time that you're signing multibillion-dollar deals with large corporations, when the opportunity for return is very questionable and you do that during a campaign period, I think Albertans see that as a little bit disingenuous, to say the least.

I just want to see if the minister would want to comment on that just a little bit as far as where we are in that situation, the cost, and how we'll be moving forward there.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. minister . . . [A timer sounded] I'm going to cut you off.

It's time for opposition members. Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, would you like to share your time with the minister and go back and forth?

**Ms Ganley:** Share my time.

**The Chair:** Minister?

Member, please proceed.

**Ms Ganley:** Fantastic. I'll apologize if the question is a tiny bit detailed. I'm a bit of a detail person. My question is obviously about the total number as that's the number we're provided. Just by way of a little bit of background, obviously this number is just one number, but we can see open documents: last year's budgets and the previous year's budgets. Last year the voted expense was about \$1.38 billion, projected at Q3 to \$1.464 billion. The difference, Madam Chair, tends to arise from nonvoted funding like the motor vehicle accident fund paying out and that sort of thing. Not everything in budgets is voted.

Interim supply is intended to cover roughly two-thirds of the year. Now, obviously, the budget doesn't roll out perfectly evenly. My recollection is that in Justice legal aid grants go twice a year and municipal policing grants go earlier, so this interim supply should represent slightly over two-thirds of the total budget. In this case, the amount is \$844 million, which would make a total budget for the year of \$1.267 billion. Depending on which number you compare that to, whether that's the voted supply or the general, that is between \$113 million and \$200 million less than it was last year.

Of that \$1.4 billion from last year, now just under \$1.3 billion, about \$518 million is for public security. Now, I'm going to skip that in my questioning because the government has previously committed to increase funding, and public security is basically the contract with the RCMP. It's police grants to municipalities, ASIRT, ALERT, other sheriffs, fish and wildlife, other enforcement branches. So I'm taking it – and the minister can correct me if I'm wrong – that there wouldn't be a cut to that budget line.

**5:10**

About another \$100 million is for prosecutions, which, I understand, is going to increase, and \$287 million goes to corrections. Now, they've done fantastic work over the last four years to try to sort of bend that down, but the truth is that the inmate

population is actually increasing faster than the population. So it's never been the case that that number has dropped. The Ministry of Justice and the minister actually have a bit of a tough job because there's no real way to get that cost down. When people are sent to jail, we are required to house them. That takes up about \$900 million, from which basically no money can be removed. So that leaves at least \$100 million in cuts coming from the \$500 million that remain in the budget.

My question, then. The divisions which are left are the courts, which take up about \$200 million and are primarily for judges and court clerks and those sorts of people, who, in light of Jordan, we probably ought not be cutting; legal services, which is about \$58 million – and given this government's stance on things, I don't anticipate seeing those legal bills going down – justice services, which includes family support order services; the medical examiner, who, of course, we increased funds for recently for a lot of important reasons; legal aid; and the public guardian and trustee.

All of those things are very important things. I'm not saying that there are no efficiencies. I spent a long time parsing this budget, which is why I know it so well, for said efficiencies. But that's a lot. It's, like, almost 20 per cent of that remaining budget. So I'm just curious where we think these hypothetical \$100 million in efficiencies are coming from. Like, are they coming from the courts? Are they coming from the medical examiner? Where are they coming from?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice and keeper of the Great Seal.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** You like throwing that one in.

Madam Chair, as has been covered off many times over here today, this is not a budget. This is interim supply that we're seeking here to fund the operations of government for the duration of the period of time noted in the documentation. It's not a budget.

The hon. member, though, has gone through various parts of the department here in good detail, so just let me take a moment now to talk about the situation that we're in. Obviously, we're in the process of preparing a budget, that we'll be tabling in the fall. At that point in time we can go into great detail on what we're proposing to do at that stage. This is the situation, though, that we're inheriting, Madam Chair. Crime is up substantially across Alberta. In Edmonton alone, since 2015, assaults are up 11 per cent, property crimes are up 13 per cent, and sexual assaults are up 17 per cent. In Calgary over the last five years: a 6 per cent increase in property crimes, a 25 per cent increase in financial robberies, a 26.3 per cent increase in sex offences, a 27.6 per cent increase in robberies, and a 35.9 total increase in assault crimes . . .

**Ms Ganley:** I apologize. I'm willing to stipulate the fact that there are increased costs and that there are reasons to increase services. My question isn't about the fact that you will need to increase, potentially, a budget in some areas. My question is about the fact that this number is significantly lower than one would have expected it to be. My question is about what you're going to reduce services in.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, I'd like to get to actually respond. It was a fulsome question. It was about three, four minutes long, I believe, before they actually got to the question. I'm just trying to frame some context in providing my response. I would like the same courtesy . . .

**Ms Ganley:** I'm just stipulating . . .

**Mr. Schweitzer:** No, no. I'd like the same courtesy that was provided in asking the question to be extended back to me as I provide my response.

*Maclean's* Canada, on the most dangerous places in 2019, says that seven out of 10 cities with the worst increases in crime are in Alberta. This is the situation that we inherited from the former minister. This is the situation that we inherited here in Alberta.

If you go out and talk to people in rural communities about the lack of trust in the justice system right now, we have to go out there and restore that confidence in Alberta. We have to restore that. These galleries were filled time after time after time by Albertans that were concerned about the future. They were concerned about their communities. We're making sure that we actually don't waste any time. We're making sure that we're going out there and engaging with them and talking to them about their priorities.

In the northeast of Calgary there was gang activity, increasing crime there. We made sure immediately to go and engage those community leaders here in Alberta so they knew that they have confidence not only that their Justice minister was there for them to hear them, to help make sure that he could address their concerns in an expedient manner but also made sure that the police were there as well to engage with them and build confidence in what's happening in Alberta.

We're going to be doing the same thing with rural crime, making sure we go out and hear their priorities, making sure we tour this entire province to make sure that the stakeholders are engaged in this process. We'll be talking to them about the priorities of this government, making sure that our budget fits with our commitments in our platform that we have, to make sure that Albertans, all Albertans, feel safe in their communities.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the challenge that I'm having is that the questions that I'm asking are about the budget. I appreciate the minister's plan. It sounds like a fulsome plan. But my questions are not about consultation but specifically about the numbers that are before us today, and the purpose of this time is to discuss those numbers.

So I think the first question, then, I'll just ask. I guess for each division I'll just begin by asking whether you intend to maintain or increase funding. Certainly, the Education minister was willing to say this over and over again. With respect to public security, which was last year about \$518 million in the budget, do you intend to maintain or increase that funding?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, again, this is not a budget. We'll be tabling a full budget this fall, where we can answer questions relating to the future spending that would be there. This is to maintain government services in the interim period of time. If there are more detailed questions in the fall, once we've tabled a budget, we'll gladly answer their questions at that point in time. In the meantime we're going to continue to focus on the priorities of Albertans, making sure we engage in a fulsome way so they have confidence in our justice system.

**Ms Ganley:** Okay. I think my next question, then, would go with respect to prosecutions and the courts – those were about \$103 million and \$200 million respectively – and my question again is the same: in light of the fact that this funding would, annualized over the course of the year, represent over \$100 million in cuts, can the minister commit to maintaining or increasing spending in those areas?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Again, as has been said many times here in the last two hours and 15 minutes or so that we're into this, this is not a budget. This is interim supply that we're seeking here. I will note for the record that we're going to make sure that we tackle the issues that we have around Jordan issues and delays. We'll be making decisions to make sure that law enforcement officials have the resources that they need to get the job done. Many decisions, I would say . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we will now move to government members wishing to speak.

Hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika, would you like to share your time and go back and forth with the minister?

**Mr. Schow:** If it pleases the chair and pleases the minister, I would like to share my time back and forth.

**The Chair:** The minister agrees. Member, please proceed.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think it's a secret that we are dealing with a financial mess and potential catastrophe left to us by the previous government, and this interim supply will help enable us to keep services running until we can present a full budget in the fall after the results and recommendations are made from the MacKinnon panel.

I think about where we were heading over the last four years, and the immediate thought that comes to mind would be a fiscal cliff, one that has lasting effects for generations, potentially. That reminds me of a 1991 Hollywood classic where you find two women sitting in a 1966 Ford Thunderbird, staring at the Grand Canyon. Now, if I'm in that car – I'm in the passenger seat – and right as we begin going towards this Grand Canyon, I'm begging Louise not to do this, ultimately what do I do? I grab the steering wheel and I jerk it back around because that's the responsible thing to do, not to drive right off that fiscal cliff and make those promises that cannot be kept and put Alberta in a financial mess that will last and hurt our children and our grandchildren.

The previous government did have us on that path. They made promises they couldn't keep, and they used, say, interesting math. They made promises, for example, that were too high in their revenue projections for 2019-2020. They were \$379 million over, according to Stokes. In 2020-2021 they were \$2.9 billion over. In '21-22 they were \$3.7 billion over and in '22-23 \$1.6 billion over.

5:20

Now, I'm not sure. It's one of two things: these numbers are either bad math or maybe deliberately misleading the public. The previous government made three consecutive promises and broke each one of them. They promised to balance the budget in 2017-2018: epic fail. They promised to balance the budget in 2018-2019: same result. This year, 2019-2020: same thing. Why would electors believe them when they say they are going to balance the budget several years in advance?

**The Chair:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Schow:** I'm getting to my point if you would allow me, Madam Chair.

The point here is that there were some egregious mistakes made. I'm going to ask the minister if he could elaborate on what measures are being taken in the context of interim supply and also in future budgetary considerations to avoid a fiscal cliff and avoid the disaster that we were on until April 16 of this year?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for that question. Within the interim supply period, of course, ministries are going forward in a very responsible way. I think every ministry is looking for every efficiency that's available. They're looking at methodologies, where they need to be improved, to ensure that during this interim period we're delivering high-quality services but delivering them, again, in the most cost-effective manner. I think that as we head into the budget development process, it will be incredibly important for all ministries to take a very hard look at the way we deliver services and ensure that, again, we're delivering those services in the most efficient way.

Of course, we're waiting to hear from the MacKinnon panel. We're looking forward to the results of that panel. I think many in this House know that that panel has significant expertise, significant depth of experience, significant diversity and, I might add, is really a bipartisan panel. I'm confident that that panel will serve Albertans well, and they'll provide some very valuable recommendations in terms of a path to balance for this government and also, along the way, ensure again that we can deliver the services that Albertans expect from their government.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you to the minister and to the chair.

Going back to this fiscal cliff that I referenced before, there were some problems, again, with the numbers leading up to when the former government planned on balancing the budget. Stokes Economics suggested that we would be somewhere in the ballpark of about \$100 billion in debt by the time this previous government was done. Now, the debt is certainly a huge problem, but in addition to the debt we also experienced six credit downgrades over the last four years. While those downgrades were announced, to my astonishment we saw the former Finance minister smile and downplay this as if it wasn't a big deal.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we are on interim supply. I assume you are talking about that at some point rather quickly.

**Mr. Schow:** I certainly am, Madam Speaker. I appreciate your patience with my intro here.

To the minister, I am hoping that he may help us understand a little bit about, in the context of interim supply and future budgets, the government's plan to get our credit back to where it once was before this financial train wreck that we were on for the last four years.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, relative to our efforts during this interim supply period we are working actively to bring a discipline and fiscal prudence to the delivery of services. We're not waiting to roll out a budget to do that. We're embarking on that immediately, so that is very relative to the interim supply period.

There's no doubt that the credit downgrades that the member spoke of were significant, and credit downgrades, of course, do increase the cost of borrowing for the province. From that standpoint, even during the interim supply period we believe that it's really critical to send a message out to the capital markets that we are being fiscally responsible as a government, to ensure that the markets understand that we have a path to balance and a realistic path to balance. I think it's critically important that as we develop projections, we develop them in a very responsible and realistic manner, recognizing the volatility that this province can have in

terms of its revenues but, in that light, ensuring that we're using responsible and realistic forecasts.

I do believe that, again, the capital markets will look upon our measures as we exercise fiscal discipline and fiscal responsibility. I believe that the capital markets will recognize those efforts. As they take a look at our long-term initiatives to attract investment back into this province, create economic activity, jobs, and opportunities, I believe that, again, all of those things, the greater picture, will be considered by the capital markets, because I think, as many members have noted here today, excessive debt service costs are really untenable for Albertans. You know, to pay bondholders and creditors as opposed to teachers, nurses, and other recipients of program spending is really unacceptable in the long term for Albertans.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you. I want to thank the hon. minister for his answer and for the incredible work that he is doing to ensure that this 1966 Ford Thunderbird does not go off a fiscal cliff but, rather, we right the ship. I also understand – in the context of interim supply, I'm hoping that the minister can update the committee on the status of the enterprise resource planning system going forward.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would also like to thank the Member for Cardston-Siksika for this question. I'd like to just say that, you know, with my background as a venture capital investor I do understand the value of a well-designed enterprise resource planning system.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hate to interrupt. The time is now in the hands of the opposition.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, would you like to share your time with the minister?

**Ms Gray:** I would, yes. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Minister, do you agree? Yes. Absolutely.

Member, please proceed.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. Thank you to the ministers for answering questions today. Understanding that we are only talking about the interim supply period and funding the operations of government, I wanted to ask about some of the delivery of services to Albertans because, particularly with knowing that employment standards and occupational health and safety hadn't been fully updated in 30 years, there was a significant amount of change over the last several years. One of the needs that was identified was additional front-line supports for the delivery of services, additional FTEs, that essentially were happening not through new hires but just moving resources around government. Within this interim supply, to make sure that there's still timely and efficient delivery of services when someone has an employment standards complaint or when there is an OH and S issue, I was wondering if you could just speak to if the continued support for those front-line workers and making sure those resources are there are part of the interim supply budget that's been put before us.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. We're confident that the resources that we have in interim supply will ensure that government can deliver those services until we roll out a budget.

We recognize the importance of those services to Albertans, and we're confident that interim supply numbers will meet that need.

5:30

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. It's my hope that the plan to continue to kind of staff up in the areas where we needed to do that will continue. There was a very large backlog in complaints, particularly in employment standards. Making sure that when somebody hasn't gotten the paycheque that they were supposed to, that complaint can be dealt with in a really timely way I think continues to be important. It is a performance measure in the annual reports and budgets and so on. That's something we can continue to discuss in more depth with the actual budget, my concern being just the interim supply period and making sure that if there needs to be somebody hired or trained or moved, that can continue to happen, because there has been some language in the public about hiring freezes or job postings not being filled. Would you be able to speak to that? That's more of a government-wide question, but my concern is specifically front-line service delivery within the ministry of labour.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, to answer the question of the member opposite, we will be looking for efficiencies. We're going to be looking to do things better. By saying better, it's more efficiently. There may be instances where ministries may find an opportunity where they can deliver services with fewer resources. I think that's always the goal of government, to ensure that we're delivering a maximum service with the fewest resources possible. That is a big focus for our government during this time of interim supply, and it's certainly going to be a focus of our government as we head into budget preparation.

Madam Chair, with the consent of the member opposite I would like to make a request. There was a question by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora to our Education minister around capital expenditures, and I believe our Education minister has an answer. If I can indulge the member opposite, we'll ask the Education minister to deliver that into the record.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you. These are constructions and renovations that are currently ongoing. Ross Sheppard high school for Edmonton public school district No. 7 is in construction or renovation. I'm not sure which; it doesn't highlight it here. Alberta School for the Deaf, redevelopment, Edmonton school district; l'école J.E. Lapointe school, Black Gold regional division No. 18; St. Francis high school, Calgary Roman Catholic separate schools; Eagle Butte high school, Prairie Rose regional division No. 8; Holy Trinity senior high expansion, 10 to 12, Edmonton Catholic; St. Edmund Catholic elementary, junior high school, major modernization, Edmonton Catholic separate schools; l'école McTavish expansion to add grades 10 to 12, Fort McMurray public school district No. 2833; St. Kateri Catholic school, modernization, Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie Roman Catholic separate school district No. 28; St. Kateri Tekakwitha academy, greater St. Albert Roman Catholic school district No. 734; Meadow Ridge school, Foothills school division No. 38; Westpark middle school, Red Deer public school district No. 104; Joseph M. Demko school, St. Albert public school district No. 5565; D.A. Ferguson/W.R. Myers, Horizon school division No. 67; Four Winds public school,



Sturgeon school division No. 24; Airdrie elementary school, Calgary Roman Catholic separate school district No. 1; west Airdrie, Hillcrest, Rocky View school division No. 41; Banff elementary school, phase 2, Canadian Rockies regional division No. 12; Auburn Bay elementary school, Calgary Roman Catholic separate school district No. 1; Evergreen elementary school, Calgary school district No. 19; Forest Lawn high school, Calgary school district No. 19; Cranston elementary school, Calgary school district No. 19; Coventry Hills Village elementary school, Calgary school district No. 19; Evergreen elementary school, Wildrose school district No. 66; Pilot Sound K to 6; Soraya Hafez school, Edmonton school district No. 7; Larkspur 7 to 9, Thelma Chalifoux school, Edmonton school district No. 7; l'école Joseph Moreau school, greater north central francophone education region No. 2; Irma school, Buffalo Trail public schools regional division No. 28; Huntsville school, Palliser regional division No. 26; l'école les cypres, southern francophone education region No. 4; St. Patrick's community school, Red Deer Catholic regional division No. 39; Wye school, Elk Island public schools regional division No. 14; Woodhaven preservation-modernization, Parkland school division No. 70.

**The Chair:** Hon. minister, my apologies.

**Member LaGrange:** I've got four left to go.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed, Minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Sorry.

Peerless Lake school, Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council education authority; Trout Lake K to 12 school, Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council education authority; South Lethbridge school, Lethbridge school district No. 51; and Sturgeon school, Sturgeon school division No. 24 is tendered. Those do not include the design phase ones.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My questions start off – and I know I'm going to run out of time – to the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance on behalf of the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. First question: is the amount that's estimated here higher or lower than our budget, what we had budgeted for interim? Have you increased it or decreased it? Well, I'll start with that quick, easy question.

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

**Mr. Toews:** All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of the question relative to the budget, again, because interim supply is just the funding required and doesn't consider, you know, nonvoted amounts, doesn't consider amortization and other noncash amounts and because the spend is not linear, it's difficult to compare to budget. Again, I think what I can commit to the member opposite is that we're confident that the amounts here will take us to budget time, and we're going to look forward to rolling out a full budget.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Minister. I'm curious to know if the budgeted amounts or allotments in the current economic development and trade budget include monies for the investor tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, and the interactive digital media tax credit as well as if Alberta Innovates will continue to be funded or if you are changing their funding formula between now and November. I'm just grouping the questions. As well, for the artificial intelligence and high tech we committed \$50 million over

five years, and some of that would be coming through this interim supply.

**The Chair:** Ten seconds, hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point in time those programs are under review. Again, we're confident that . . . [Mr. Toews's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, the time goes to government members. The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Sorry. My apologies. Would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

**Mr. Rowswell:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Minister?

Okay. Please proceed.

**Mr. Rowswell:** My question is on some of the new associate ministries. The red tape ministry: like, there are lots of panels that are going to have to be started and funded. I know there are some specific things with the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and some of the issues he's working with in regard to linear assessment on dry gas and also the pipeline access for natural gas and what it's doing to the price of AECO gas.

I know that from the red tape side there are a lot of industry panels that are involved in there. When I was talking to Lakeland College in my constituency, I asked them if they are impacted by red tape, and they said yes. They had actually quantified it where it was going to cost them – the regulations that they felt they could get rid of would save them about \$3 million a year. Then when I talked to municipalities, they were saying: well, we'd like to have a panel, too, because there's lots of red tape that we have to deal with in order to, you know, just operate more efficiently and save money. My question is that these are new ministries. My understanding of interim supply is that we're funding what's existing and carrying on. What things are you trying to accomplish between now and this fall with regard to the associate ministries, and how are they funded? Where do you get the money for them?

5:40

**The Chair:** The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. As we've stated in the past, the associate ministries are going to be funded under the various ministries. For instance, my ministry will be under Finance, so it will be funded under Finance. We will not be actually increasing any cost or expense cost to Albertans. We would be just reallocating some of the resources within Finance to be able to fund this important endeavour. As you've already mentioned, the issue of regulatory burden affecting our job creators is substantial in this province, and it has been for many years. This government's commitment to being able to address this issue quickly and effectively is to put a specific associate minister responsible for this and centralize the efforts for all of the ministries. Now, that is going to be funded through Finance, and that's something that this government has been committed to and the Premier has been committed to. It was very clear in the mandate that we received from Albertans.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Yeah. If I could get the Associate Minister of Natural Gas to respond to that as well.

**The Chair:** The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, to begin, we have to sort of understand where we came from. You can appreciate that when you have an accidental government staffed by paper candidates managing a \$50 billion economy, it's going to create some neglect, and that neglect over four years became rot. We have an industry that is absolutely in dire straits right now.

I'll give you just one example, and it's one that's been in the news lately, the issue with the dry gas producers. The dry gas producers in this province are absolutely hurting. They are paying 60 per cent linear assessment. Now, I'll give a shout-out to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who has done a stellar job of stepping forward and partnering with us to work on this, but it's a difficult situation.

I'll give you one example. It was actually in the *Calgary Herald* yesterday. There was a great article about the natural gas industry. They interviewed the president of Pine Cliff. Pine Cliff has an enterprise value of \$120 million; unfortunately, they have an assessed value of \$691 million, and that's because their linear assessment hasn't changed. Just imagine any business, Madam Chair, that is going to have 60 per cent off the top of their revenue before they even touch operating costs or labour or anything like that. That's what's happening right now, and it's creating tremendous pressure on that industry.

This, of course, was, you know, also demonstrated by the recent Trident bankruptcy. When Trident went bankrupt, Madam Chair, they left 4,700 abandoned wells that were turned over to the Orphan Well Association. Now, I understand that some of those are going to get picked up, but at the end of the day it just becomes a death spiral for that entire industry, and it has become extremely painful.

One of the things that we've been doing, to the member's point: I'm a brand new associate minister, and we are embedded in the energy industry. What that essentially means from a cost perspective is that it's about reallocating funds. It's about priorities. The previous administration did not make it a priority. They neglected natural gas producers for four years. We're making it a priority. We're moving those funds around so that we can staff, you know, just a skeleton crew, if you will, that's going to focus on this important business.

We're also doing some work with stakeholders. Presidents and VPs of some of our biggest natural gas producers are actually part of a working group and are actually doing some work for us, and they're doing it at their own expense, Madam Chair.

You've got to appreciate that this industry has been neglected for so long. They are thrilled just to participate in the solution-building process. So they're doing it at their own expense, and I have to give a shout-out to them as well.

Thank you for the question.

**Mr. Rowswell:** I'll focus a little bit on agriculture. I notice the minister of agriculture is not here, so maybe Finance? Can I do that?

**The Chair:** Please withdraw your comment.

**Mr. Rowswell:** What's that?

**The Chair:** If you can withdraw that comment.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Oh. Okay. All right.

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

**Mr. Rowswell:** Crop insurance is a very vital tool for farmers – I'm sure they're putting out those grain bins right now – and we share in the cost of that. Also, as a matter of fact, agricultural societies normally would have their funding by now, and they don't have it. So I'm wondering: do we have to wait until this interim supply bill passes before they can expect that money? How is the crop insurance dealt with, and how are ag societies going to be dealt with?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In response to the question around the important programs for agriculture, there is a special warrant in place, and consequently there will be no disruptions to program spending or need relative to perhaps events of loss for the agriculture industry.

In terms of ag society funding, I will have to defer that question to the agriculture minister, and I expect that the minister can reply to the member on that directly.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Yeah. I'd just like to have the Minister of Service Alberta continue to speak from when he got cut off if he can remember.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you very much to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright for giving me an opportunity to expand a little bit on the topic of the ERP system upgrade, or the enterprise resource planning system upgrade. As I said before, with a background in venture capital, as an investor I certainly understand the value of a well-designed ERP system and the critical role that that plays in ensuring that large organizations run smoothly and efficiently. Certainly, the government of Alberta would qualify as a very, very large organization. I can assure the member and you, Madam Chair, that our plans for interim supply will allow us to continue with our upgrade to the ERP system as we continue to roll that out.

Again, as we've said before, this is not a budget. It is simply the cash flow to fund government services until a full budget is presented in the fall, very much in the same way as when the NDP presented an interim supply last year. But what I can tell you is that we are focused on bringing overdue discipline to government spending, cleaning up the mess from the previous administration that was left behind for Albertans.

And, to be clear, we are also working very hard with our department officials to develop...

**The Chair:** Hon. minister, I hate to interrupt.

The time goes to the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is rising. Hon. member, would you like to share your time with the minister?

**Mr. Shepherd:** If that would be all right, yes.

**The Chair:** Minister, would you agree?

Please proceed, Member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Okay. I assume a minister of some form will respond.

Thank you, Madam Chair. Just returning, then, to some of the areas that I've been looking at, again, I appreciate what we heard from the minister earlier, the Minister of Health, and his discussions on how the just under \$14 billion that's allocated to his budget for the interim supply would be applied. I did have some additional questions.

In regard to the capital in particular, so looking at the \$165 million that's set aside for capital in the interim supply period, there are a number of projects that we know have been under way. To begin, we know that this minister has chosen, for reasons that haven't really become clear yet, to put a pause on the construction of the Edmonton clinical lab hub. That was something that we had put forward funding for and was actually under construction. To the minister: can you clarify if those dollars are still included in the capital investment portion here under Health, and if so, how are they being allocated since they are clearly not being spent on construction of the lab?

5:50

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think, you know, our concerns with the lab hub were clear in our platform. At this point in time I can say that this government, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Infrastructure are making some final decisions around that project. Again, I think we put that question out to Albertans in the platform. I think we were quite clear.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. So there's no accounting currently for those dollars. Understood.

My next question, then, would be: do these capital commitments, then, include dollars for the completion of the Grande Prairie hospital? We know that that project has been under way. Individuals in that area have been awaiting the completion of that project. I just want to clarify, then, if the about \$166 million here includes the funding for the completion of the Grande Prairie hospital.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you for the question, Madam Chair, about the Grande Prairie hospital. The full funding is in place, actually. Myself and the Minister of Finance and our local MLAs from Grande Prairie and from Central Peace-Notley: all four of us have visited that hospital, reviewed the progress. There were some issues with the subtrades because the previous contractor, Graham, had some commercial disputes with the subcontractors there. But the new contractor, Clark Builders, actually mobilized. Now they've brought back 90 per cent of the previous trades, so the construction is going well. There is about 30 to 40 per cent of the work left but mostly interior work, so it's progressing really well. I think it will be completed next year.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you to the Minister of Infrastructure for that detailed answer. I appreciate that update. I'm glad to hear the project is going well and that those dollars are included here, then, in this figure.

While we have the Minister of Infrastructure here, actually, I'd be interested to ask this. I know there are a number of projects that had been approved or were in the process with the new federal government program, by which they provide funding for many different cultural institutions and projects but require that the provincial government submit a list of approved projects. I forget the name of the program off the top of my head, but I know that there were projects such as the Telus World of Science, the Winspear Centre, a completion project here in my own constituency, and several others that, unfortunately, due to some of the abundance of paperwork, shall we say, that was required by the federal government were not able to get completed before the election happened. To the minister: do you know if the capital amounts, then, that are included here for culture would

include those projects or the funding that would go toward those projects which your government chooses to approve for that federal program?

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Chair, the previous government had approved 17 projects before the election, and they announced those projects. Our government came in in the last few weeks, and we are reviewing that list of projects based on the cost-effectiveness of those projects, whether they're shovel ready or not, whether they would create economic activity in those areas where those projects are proposed, and whether the partner ministries have enough funding. We're looking at all those projects case by case, and very soon, probably in the next couple of weeks, we will let those stakeholders know which projects we are going ahead with.

Thank you.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Minister, and, again, I deeply appreciate the very clear answer and the update on that. I know that our stakeholders will be very happy to hear that they will have some sense of clarity on that soon. Thank you again for that.

I did wonder, then, also – there were a couple of other projects that were approved for planning stages: of course, the southwest Edmonton hospital, which was a significant commitment for the city of Edmonton, which has not seen a new hospital in some time, and, as the Member for Edmonton-South West well knows, his constituents in that area and others have been under quite some pressure for some time with relying on the aging Misericordia. I think many are quite excited to see that project move forward. We also have the child and youth mental health centre, that was committed to by our government, along with some funding from the Stollery foundation. To the minister: do you know if the capital amounts that are listed here for Health, just under \$166 million, include the amounts that were committed for the planning on those projects?

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Chair, all those projects are still happening. Money was allocated. I don't know the exact details, how much of it is for what stage. Some of them are in program planning and different stages. The money is allocated based on the progress the projects are making. If the member is interested, later on I can give him the project phase details. Currently I can say that those projects are all well funded.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you again to the Minister of Infrastructure. Indeed, Madam Chair, if I may say, I think this has probably been some of the most fruitful rounds of questions I've had the opportunity to take part in today. Thank you to the minister, who has clearly been doing his homework and has some good knowledge on his file.

Just looking through what opportunities I have here in the remaining minutes that we have, the one other question that I might have is to the Minister of Health. I know that there was funding that our government had committed for moving forward on supervised consumption sites in various jurisdictions across the province. This government has chosen at this time to put that funding on pause. I just wanted to clarify, while the government is conducting its review and considering whether or not it's going to fund these particular life-saving services...

**The Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Government Motion 20, agreed to on June 17, 2019, the allotted time of three hours has elapsed.

I will allow a few minutes for the hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Do I really need to ask for unanimous consent to go to as much as five minutes here to get this done, or can we get this done by 6 o'clock, do you think?

**The Chair:** No. We will just proceed with the vote as long as we need. Thank you.

### **Vote on Interim Supply Estimates 2019-20 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund**

**The Chair:** All right. After considering the 2019-20 interim supply estimates for the Legislative Assembly for the fiscal period from April 1, 2019, to November 30, 2019, I will now put the following questions.

Agreed to:  
Support to the Legislative Assembly \$47,398,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Auditor General \$18,000,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Ombudsman \$2,717,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Chief Electoral Officer \$22,153,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Ethics Commissioner \$630,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner \$4,582,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

**6:00**

Agreed to:  
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate: \$10,132,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Public Interest Commissioner: \$696,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Election Commissioner: \$1,018,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Department of Advanced Education:  
Expense \$1,685,728,000  
Capital Investment \$192,288,000  
Financial Transactions \$459,133,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Department of Agriculture and Forestry:  
Expense \$426,430,000  
Capital Investment \$8,925,000  
Financial Transactions \$873,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Department of Children's Services:  
Expense \$883,063,000  
Capital Investment \$25,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Department of Community and Social Services:  
Expense \$2,230,621,000  
Capital Investment \$365,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women:	
Expense	\$199,106,000
Capital Investment	\$1,111,000
Financial Transactions	\$523,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism:	
Expense	\$221,228,000
Capital Investment	\$4,183,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Education:	
Expense	\$3,270,586,000
Capital Investment	\$75,043,000
Financial Transactions	\$10,900,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Energy:	
Expense	\$309,651,000
Capital Investment	\$300,000
Financial Transactions	\$95,094,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Environment and Parks:	
Expense	\$435,307,000
Capital Investment	\$44,768,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Executive Council:	
Expense	\$13,555,000
Capital Investment	\$17,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Health:	
Expense	\$13,792,748,000
Capital Investment	\$165,923,000
Financial Transactions	\$45,213,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Indigenous Relations	
Expense	\$136,899,000
Capital Investment	\$17,000
Financial Transactions	\$14,157,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Infrastructure	
Expense	\$330,730,000
Capital Investment	\$981,000,000
Financial Transactions	\$37,000,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Justice and Solicitor General	
Expense	\$844,474,000
Capital Investment	\$2,968,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Labour and Immigration	
Expense	\$155,730,000
Capital Investment	\$767,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Municipal Affairs	
Expense	\$1,222,467,000
Capital Investment	\$5,467,000
Financial Transactions	\$31,905,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Seniors and Housing

Expense	\$336,926,000
---------	---------------

Capital Investment	\$107,430,000
--------------------	---------------

Financial Transactions	\$14,807,000
------------------------	--------------

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Service Alberta

Expense	\$405,937,000
---------	---------------

Capital Investment	\$65,800,000
--------------------	--------------

Financial Transactions	\$8,500,000
------------------------	-------------

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Transportation

Expense	\$804,955,000
---------	---------------

Capital Investment	\$702,338,000
--------------------	---------------

Financial Transactions	\$66,626,000
------------------------	--------------

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Treasury Board and Finance

Expense	\$139,976,000
---------	---------------

Capital Investment	\$17,000
--------------------	----------

Financial Transactions	\$908,000
------------------------	-----------

Transfer from the Lottery Fund	\$943,387,000
--------------------------------	---------------

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

6:10

The following resolutions relating to the 2019-2020 interim supply estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund for the fiscal period from April 1, 2019, to November 30, 2019, have been approved.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, \$47,398,000; office of the Auditor General, \$18 million; office of the Ombudsmen, \$2,717,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$22,153,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$630,000; office of the

Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$4,582,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$10,132,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$696,000; office of the Election Commissioner, \$1,018,000;

Advanced Education: expense, \$1,685,728,000; capital investment, \$192,288,000; financial transactions, \$459,133,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$426,430,000; capital investment, \$8,925,000; financial transactions, \$873,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$883,063,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$2,230,621,000; capital investment, \$365,000.

Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: expense, \$199,106,000; capital investment, \$1,111,000; financial transactions, \$523,000.

Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: expense, \$221,228,000; capital investment, \$4,183,000.

Education: expense, \$3,270,586,000; capital investment, \$75,043,000; financial transactions, \$10,900,000.

Energy: expense, \$309,651,000; capital investment, \$300,000; financial transactions, \$95,094,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$435,307,000; capital investment, \$44,768,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$13,555,000; capital investment, \$17,000.

Health: expense, \$13,792,748,000; capital investment, \$165,923,000; financial transactions, \$45,213,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$136,899,000; capital investment, \$17,000; financial transactions, \$14,157,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$330,730,000; capital investment, \$981,000,000; financial transactions, \$37,000,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$844,474,000; capital investment, \$2,968,000.

Labour and Immigration: expense, \$155,730,000; capital investment, \$767,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$1,222,467,000; capital investment, \$5,467,000; financial transactions, \$31,905,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$336,926,000; capital investment, \$107,430,000; financial transactions, \$14,807,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$405,937,000; capital investment, \$65,800,000; financial transactions, \$8,500,000.

Transportation: expense, \$804,955,000; capital investment, \$702,338,000; financial transactions, \$66,626,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$139,976,000; capital investment, \$17,000; financial transactions, \$908,000; transfer from the lottery fund, \$943,387,000.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

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

I would like to alert hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that upon the Assembly concurring in the report by Committee of Supply, the Assembly immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for introduction of the appropriation bill.

## Introduction of Bills

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

---

**Bill 6**  
**Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019**

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 6, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Administrator, having

been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:17 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, June 18, 2019

Day 15

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

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Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
-----------------	----------------------------------------

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

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 18, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

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

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 9

#### Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act

[Adjourned debate on the motion for the previous question June 17: Mr. Neudorf]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has time remaining if he should like to use it.

Seeing that he wouldn't like to, is there anyone else wishing to join the debate today? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to Bill 9 for the first time, an important piece of legislation in the agenda of this new government, I imagine. You know, so far we've seen from this government a complete disrespect or a lack of respect for the working people of this province. This piece of legislation is no different than the bills before it, whether we're talking about reducing the minimum wage for youth workers, whether we're talking about reducing the ability for workers to collect overtime or bank their overtime. We've seen attacks on that in this House so far, in the few short weeks that we've been here. We're starting to see – well, we're getting a good picture – what this government feels is a priority. On one hand, we have them rushing to move forward with a \$4.5 billion handout on the backs of everyday Albertans, taking taxpayers' dollars and handing them to the largest of corporations, with really no assurances that it will pay for itself in the near future. Their own platform budget showed that it doesn't do that.

Now, I have many concerns with this bill. Of course, as we sat here in the wee hours of the morning yesterday – or today, I suppose; excuse me – the government decided to force closure on this piece of legislation. They are very proud of that. We had members of the government saying: hear, hear. They're proud to take away our ability to continue debating this incredibly important piece of legislation, incredible in the way that it's going to undermine the workers of this province. It's going to undermine good-faith bargaining and undermine the process that public servants deserve to have when they're negotiating their contracts.

Now, really, this piece of legislation, I would say, is quite unprecedented. I have many concerns just moving back to the fact that we're moving towards closure on this legislation because the government doesn't feel that it is their responsibility to stand face to face with Albertans, stand face to face with the public servants that they stand in this House and say they support. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting way to show that you support those workers.

Now, on top of that, earlier today we saw a move by this government, a heavy-handed move once again to limit debate further. Closure wasn't enough. This government had to take it one step further and limit debate even more. Now, I'm not entirely sure why they decided to make this move. I imagine it's because they're afraid that this piece of legislation might see the light of day, that public servants might have the opportunity to really analyze and start to see

the priorities of this government, which, hopefully, they've been watching so far: the killing of overtime or reduction of overtime, a reduction of wage for youth workers. Of course, it shouldn't be a surprise. We've seen this Premier, before he was our Premier, talk about having to work late hours, that if he was working with unionized people, you'd have to pay them extra, and he thought that that wasn't okay. We're starting to see the priorities of this Premier.

We've seen members of this Legislature stand up in the 29th Legislature and call democratically elected union representatives "union thugs" and "union bosses." Now, Mr. Speaker, if I were to stand in this House and say one of those words about the Premier, I imagine it might be unparliamentary, but somehow it's okay to call out people that were also democratically elected by the workers that they represent.

Now, when we talk about the closure that's been moved on this piece of legislation, it kind of reminds me of playing Monopoly with an unwilling participant. You know, you get somehow through the game, and you're doing quite well: you've got a couple of thousand dollars, and your opponent has nothing; maybe he's stuck in jail for a couple of turns. At that point the other player gets sick of playing, so they flip the table over and say: "I'm not playing anymore. I've had enough of this. I don't like where you're coming from, so I'm not going to stand for it." Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this wasn't getting halfway through the game or nearing the end, when you know that all the cards have been played and you kind of see where the scenario is going. This was before we even had a chance to start the game.

There was one speaker, I believe, from the government side before they decided to invoke closure. So it really shows the priorities of this government: willing to move fast to give money away, money of hard-working Albertans, to large corporations, willing to roll back overtime, but when it comes to negotiating in good faith with the public servants of this province, well, we're going to have to wait for that. They say that they need to reflect on budgetary restrictions. Well, maybe it was a good idea to reflect on that before you decided to give \$4 billion away to large corporations. Once again, we're seeing the priorities of this government.

Now, at the end of the day, this piece of legislation is breaking the law. It's showing that this government is willing to do whatever it can to not fulfill its responsibility to bargain in good faith, to change the rules when the game isn't going in their favour or when the rules aren't working in their favour, and we saw this even passed in the legislation that we debated in this House. We saw this during the standing orders debate, when we as members had our ability to introduce community members, representatives of organizations in our constituencies, our rights as private members, taken away by this Premier and by this government. Hopefully, the members have had an opportunity to reflect on that. Mr. Speaker, as much as I appreciate your ability to introduce my guests for me, I think it's an important opportunity for me to introduce my own guests and advocate on their behalf, and when we bring people here, they want to see that.

Mr. Speaker, of course, this bill is impacting 180,000 workers across this province. It's impacting front-line nurses, social workers, teachers, librarians, food inspectors, child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, correctional officers, and sheriffs, the sheriffs in this very Legislature, that protect us day in and day out. They stay here with us no matter how late we work. You know, we as private members and cabinet members have the opportunity to take a little bit of time, take a break, refuel, but these sheriffs that are in this Legislature often don't have that same opportunity. So what you're saying is that their ability to negotiate is, well, not very important to you. It's very concerning for me.

When we talk about front-line nurses, the people in our hospitals, in our health care facilities that take care of our sick, young, and seniors, you're saying that they don't deserve the opportunity to negotiate their own wages. It's very concerning, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think it's fair, once again, that a government that stands day after day and says that they support these people and that they appreciate the work that they're doing in our communities – it's a funny way of showing it. I think that the workers who are going to be impacted by this legislation are going to be very concerned, which is why I do not agree with the fact that we are limiting debate on this legislation. I think it's important to hear from other government members on this Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill. I think that they're probably hearing from constituents of theirs. Considering that this piece of legislation is impacting nearly 200,000 workers, I imagine a few of them are in their constituencies.

So when they come into this House and advocate for new hospitals to be built, for more supports, more doctors, more physicians, more nurses, they're doing a disservice. Really, they're showing that they're really not that concerned, because if they were concerned, they wouldn't be supporting this piece of legislation. Now, I don't quite understand how they think these public servants are going to be happy to continue working on behalf of all Albertans while getting attacked by the very government that should be supporting them.

7:40

Of course, there are many more questions that we have around funding for these essential services in the first place: funding for EMS, funding for nurses in our health care system and for the many other workers at primary care networks, and for our teachers. You know, we were able to get a commitment from this government to fund enrolment for one year. Well, that's a great start. Let's talk about the next three years and after that even. On one hand, we have the government attacking the ability of these workers and these public servants to negotiate, and then on the other hand we have a government that's unwilling to commit to properly fund those services.

These public servants are getting attacked on all sides, and you're going to tell them: "It's okay. Your government supports you. Get back to work." We already see instances of teachers having to fund their own classrooms, bringing in supplies for the students because the programs are already inadequately supported. Yet with the bills that we've seen come forward from this government, there are just more questions and no answers, many questions, things left to regulation. The government says: trust us. Well, after this Bill 9 I don't know how these public servants are going to be able to trust this government.

Now, of course, the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs had the opportunity to list many of the contracts that are being negotiated that are going to be affected by the delay that this legislation is putting forward. I'm very concerned for those people. I'm concerned for the workers. I'm concerned for the students and the patients. Everyone in this Legislature should be very concerned. I would appreciate it if the government members, the private members on the government side, took the time to stand up and talk about why they support this, why they support delaying negotiations past the federal election, of course, which seems to be the main concern for this Premier. We've seen the Premier in Ontario struggling with his own numbers because of passing legislation that was not supported by the majority of people in that province. I think we're getting to a place where we may see the same concerns here, especially with a government that is so willing to undermine the public servants of this province.

Of course, this bill goes one step further. We've had the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance stand up and say: "This is only a delay. Nothing to see here. We'll get back to your regular programming in a few months, after the federal election." But, Mr. Speaker, this bill goes further. It gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council the opportunity to make regulations, which is very concerning because that's giving the government the opportunity or the power to regulate whatever they want. If they feel that maybe these health care workers should take a 2 per cent pay cut, well, who needs good-faith bargaining, really? I believe that that's a sentiment that some of the private members in this Legislature on the government side might believe. They might feel that public-sector workers are overpaid. I've seen that on social media quite a bit, and it wouldn't surprise me if some of the members in here believe that very thing. Once again, tax giveaways to large corporations, nothing for public servants: it's very concerning.

Of course, we had an MLA, that is currently on the government side, in discussion of Bill 7 when we were government . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie rising.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that it's so important that we continue to discuss how important it is to bargain in good faith, and I was hoping that the Member for Edmonton-West Henday could continue with his thoughts. I'd really appreciate that.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Just touching on the fact that in Ontario they're currently going through a very similar process in terms of a government that's unwilling to negotiate in good faith, I'm not quite certain if the legislation is before the House or if it's passed now, but the government is talking about capping wages through legislation, which is very concerning. These public servants, the people of our province who wake up every day to serve the people of this province, deserve to be able to negotiate in good faith. Of course, negotiation isn't just about getting a raise, as the government members seem to think. It's about getting higher quality standards of safety and making sure that we're protecting the ratios, whether it be in the health care system or in the education system.

We've been through these over the last four years, negotiations where the NDP government or representatives came to the table and said: "Look, we're going through a recession. We need to have a real conversation about what we can do to serve you while also recognizing that there's not a lot of wiggle room." Instead of this government doing that same thing, they're saying: "We don't really think your voice is important. We're going to decide what's right for you." That's very concerning, Mr. Speaker.

Now, just getting back to the conversation on Bill 7 in the 29th Legislative Assembly, the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon had concerns with the very regulations, the powers that were given under regulations very similar to what we're seeing under Bill 9. Now, I'm interested to hear if the member – I'm very happy he's here to be a part of the debate. I would be very interested to see if he's concerned about these same regulations that are presented to us in the legislation before us. I look forward to hearing him speak.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I think that the almost 200,000 workers of this province who are going to be affected by this legislation – the patients and the students and the workers that protect MLAs and are also affected by this legislation – deserve to have their voices

heard. That has clearly not happened. They deserve to be consulted: clearly, not happened. This was not something that was in the government's platform. It was not in the UCP platform. They talk a lot about their mandate. Was this part of your mandate? That's a question that I have. Did the voters of Alberta give you the right to break contracts? I suppose through your majority government they did, but you didn't discuss negotiating in bad faith with Albertans. So I'm very concerned.

Once again this is showing a complete disrespect for the public servants of this province. It's showing a complete disrespect for the ability of our members, who were elected here in just the same way that the members on the government side were, to debate this legislation, which does not bode well for democracy in this province.

Now, once again, I think that every member should stand up and discuss why they plan to support or not support this legislation. I look forward to hearing that debate. I'm very concerned about the idea of labour unrest in this province. We've seen it before, and at the rate this government is going, we are going to see it again, which is a great concern to me. That means compromised services and often more costly settlements. So I don't know if this government is prepared to try and legislate workers back to work when they say: our rights are being infringed upon. We'll see that day when it comes. Hopefully, it doesn't get to that.

Now, once again, we should not be using legislation to break legally binding contracts. We've seen it go to the Supreme Court before. We've seen it lose in the Supreme Court before. Really, this government is trying to create a problem for the future.

Thank you.

7:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo is rising.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise, my first time to speak to this bill, Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, brought forward by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. I want the opportunity and I'm taking the opportunity now to get my voice on the record in defence of workers in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I was very surprised, reading through the bill, that the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board would bring this forward, because it does not respect the people that he stands up and talks repeatedly about daily when he uses his key messages to talk in answer to questions put by my colleagues. Those key messages, frankly, ring hollow when you look at what's before us in Bill 9.

I heard my colleague just talk about another member of the opposition identifying all 24 of the employers and unions and agreement titles and dates. It's stunning to look down the list and think about the breadth of impact that this will have across the province of Alberta and the impact that this will have on hard-working public servants, whether they work directly for a related agency like Alberta Health Services, Lamont health care centre, Allen Gray continuing care centre, represented by AUPE in that case, or if they're, in fact, with the Alberta college of art and design, now called the university of art, in Calgary. The union that represents those workers there is the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees.

I've just mentioned two of the 24, but in the course of my brief talk today I'm going to mention them all so that workers across this province, if they hear where they're working, they'll get the message that this government is legislating away their fair chance to discuss their wages, which all collective bargaining agreements should continue to have going forward. When they don't, you break

the contract with those workers. Those workers then really have no need or should have no need and belief in the government that it will ever keep its word again. The two years of zeros that many of these collectively bargained agreements undertook was done by them, Mr. Speaker, because they recognized that there were challenges in the province with regard to revenues coming in. There were challenges in this province with regard to those revenues being stifled and stymied as a result of the takeaway capacity of our oil and gas products, that really drive the revenues for this province, in addition to other taxes and licences and fees.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so disappointed with what's before us that I really wish that all Albertans who are in these many employer situations – for instance, Alberta Health Services. It's massive in terms of the number of Albertans that work for Alberta Health Services that are represented by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. It's probably our third-largest employer in this province, and their collective agreement between AHS and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, general support services, which runs from April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2020, is being essentially ripped up. Those folks didn't bargain for that. They bargained for two years of zeros and then a wage reopener, and this is putting that off potentially indefinitely. I know it says to the end of October, but what the government has shown by bringing in this piece of legislation is that they can continue to abuse power in this province. They can continue to bring forward bills that even delay things further. What's holding them back? Nothing, as can be seen with this Bill 9.

I mentioned the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. I'm sure some members have heard – maybe not all have heard it – some of the feedback on this bill from the president of that union: this is an egregious attack on workers' rights and legally binding collective agreements; this is authoritarian; this is ideological, and it does nothing but create labour unrest; Albertans should be very concerned when a new government uses the power and authority of the state to crush basic rights.

Mr. Speaker, when the government that I was a part of was reaching out to all unions to ask them to look at taking zeros for two years, I visited Mr. Smith and his executive director, and he showed me a photograph on the wall of a massive, massive demonstration just outside on these steps. Not just the steps but the building was totally surrounded with workers in this province who came out to protest. I believe it was bills 45 and 46 that they were on the steps protesting. Bill 45, under the government of Premier Alison Redford in the fall of 2013, was the Public Sector Services Continuation Act, that intended to deter illegal strikes to save Albertans money. Bill 46 was the Public Service Salary Restraint Act. Different titles but probably the same intent, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Those bills caused a reaction that the government at that time was not anticipating. They were totally flummoxed by the amount of upset that they had caused by bringing forward those bills. As I said, the air photo of this entire precinct was covered with Albertans who let their representatives know that they would not stand for the kind of high-handed, bullying treatment from those bills and, I would argue, that this bill brings in, Mr. Speaker.

There are members of this Legislature today who were there then, in 2013. The Member for Calgary-Hays voted in support of Bill 45. The Member for Calgary-Hays voted in support of Bill 46. That person also supported Bill 24, which was the Public Sector Services Continuation Repeal Act. The Member for Calgary-Hays sponsored that bill and voted for the passage of the bill. Mr. Speaker, that same member will be supporting this bill when ultimately it goes to a

vote. I can tell you that, from my view of it, that member will be on the wrong side of history four times in just the four bills, the one before us and the three that that person supported.

8:00

In addition to those three employers, I want to mention, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, and the Lamont health centre, represented by HSAA, have a collective agreement that will not go forward for negotiation until after the Bill 9 time period is up and, potentially, even after that if another bill gets brought in by the government, which has shown that it will break the law and use its power, the legislative hammer it has, to break legally binding contracts with public-sector workers that are in wage talks.

The preamble of this bill also is something that I'm curious about. I haven't heard anybody from the other side speak to the preamble. It talks about significant changes having occurred in Alberta's economy since the 2018-2019 third-quarter fiscal update and economic statement. I haven't heard the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board address that with regard to Bill 9, Mr. Speaker. If he does have information that would talk about the significant changes that have occurred in the economy since the end of February 2019, perhaps he should elucidate this House on that.

An additional centre, the Bethany Group in Camrose, is going to be affected by this as well, Mr. Speaker. There are 180,000 workers across this province that will be getting the news, probably getting the news right away, from their representatives that their collective agreement with the government of Alberta is not worth the paper it's printed on because of this government's actions.

I want to also identify that the United Nurses of Alberta are negatively affected by what's before us also. The UNA president, Ms Heather Smith, says: I'm not terribly surprised, but I'm very, very disappointed; even Ralph Klein – she invokes the former Premier of this province – in the depths and darkness of the 1990s didn't use legislation to reach in and violate workers' contracts; this is incredibly unprecedented, incredibly disappointing; it is the biggest betrayal by the government I have ever seen.

You new members on the other side: you are part, in the view of the UNA president, of the biggest betrayal of workers' rights that she has ever seen by a government. She says that it's even worse than Ralph Klein. Congratulations. You have two months under your belt, and the feedback is in from a union president who has been serving this province . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Since the '80s.

**Member Ceci:** Since the '80s? I thought it was the early '90s. I think she's coming up to 25 years, Mr. Speaker, as the president of that union.

I think we can all agree that nurses have far more respect in the public eye than legislators, and I would say that the legislators on the government side are the ones who, in her view, are part of the biggest betrayal she has ever seen. It's not people on this side. On this side we respect contracts. We negotiated two years of zeros, with the promise of a wage reopener. There was not a promise that wages would go up. It was a promise that we would get back to the table with those collectively bargained groups and work with them.

So that's UNA.

We go now to Alberta Innovates, with AUPE representatives. It may not be . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie rising.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's imperative that everyone in this House understand exactly what bargaining in good faith means. I was hoping that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo could talk a little bit more about his experience going to the table, discussing with labour union leaders, and the experience that he had but specifically focusing on what that means in terms of bargaining in good faith.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll maybe just speak briefly about a couple of things that happened with regard to that. One, I was a city of Calgary social worker for eight years on the front line. I know another hon. member is a member of the city of Calgary's community and social services. I was a CUPE local 38 member, and I can tell you that the eight years I worked for the city were some of the best working conditions I ever had. Not that I had bad working conditions in other places, but I was never represented by a union or came in and had the benefit of a union that was organizing and looking out for my rights as an employee. That was, in my estimation, the benefit of belonging to a union. I think this government is not caring about those benefits, and it will backfire on them.

I just want to address this particular question from my hon. friend in the back and say that the Executive Council of the government that I was part of, the NDP government that was here from 2015 to 2019, had a respectful working relationship with all of the unions that we collaborated with. I didn't do the direct negotiations, Mr. Speaker – we had very capable people who did that – but I was part of the council of a small subcommittee of the cabinet that worked up the mandates, and then those mandates were taken out by the representative of the government, who sat down with the different unions and organized the collective agreements.

Mr. Speaker, we were very careful with regard to what we could afford and put on the table. These zeros were something we achieved. Sometimes there were improvements to working conditions and social kinds of improvements that benefited those agreements and got those agreements settled. But I can tell you that there was no agreement to de facto say: when you come back for the third year, your wages are going up. We said that we would look at the conditions, that we would look at where we were, and we would bargain. We never said: we will delay. We never said: it doesn't matter what you think about the third year; you're not going to get it. That is dirty pool. That is the kind of activity, the kind of action that someone who doesn't respect front-line people does and pulls and brings up in the – not the dead of night. We're not in the dead of night yet. But it certainly is something that is not fair.

People give their all, and we owe them better, Mr. Speaker. They're at the bedside. They're in jails. They're here. There's the Fort McMurray Catholic board of education that's affected. There are the government of Alberta workers that are affected. InnoTech Alberta is affected. Bow Valley College; Athabasca University; NorQuest, Olds, and Red Deer colleges: the workers there are all affected. Keyano, Lakeland, and Lethbridge colleges; the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology; Northern Lakes College: it's just staggering when you think about the breadth of this. The Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge . . .

8:10

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay. Let's talk a little bit about why it might be that conservation officers and custodians and

firefighters and paramedics and other people might be worried about this legislation and, indeed, why it is destined for the courts, and why it is more than likely that it will end up costing us more and being thrown out.

First, a little trip down memory lane. In 2002 the B.C. government brought in legislation, subsequently found unconstitutional, to limit the right of a union, a teachers' union in this case, the B.C. Teachers' Federation, to bargain on classroom size and complexity of classrooms. Specifically at issue was an education fund that ensured appropriate supports for children with disabilities. It took away the union's right to bargain on those issues. That was the original piece of legislation.

It was struck down in 2014 after a second piece of unconstitutional legislation was brought in in 2012. There were in the intervening time strikes. It was appealed. The B.C. Supreme Court decision was found unconstitutional in 2014, it was appealed on a technicality in '15, and then in 2016 the Supreme Court of Canada found, in a rare decision, straight from the bench – it took them 20 minutes in 2016 – that the 2014 decision was correct and that the government had behaved unconstitutionally in limiting the right to bargain on those and other issues for the B.C. teachers.

You know, a lot of this came down to supports for children with disabilities, and here's what one retired teacher said in response to the Supreme Court decision: every kid in 2002 who had special needs got no damn help for 14 years because of that government; that's what it means; all those little kids in kindergarten then have finished high school and never got the support they needed. This woman is named Patricia Gudlaugson.

Why is this important? Well, because the court concluded that the government did not negotiate in good faith . . . One of the problems was that the government representatives were pre-occupied by another strategy. Their strategy was to put such pressure on the union that it would provoke a strike . . . The government representatives thought this would give government the opportunity to gain political support for imposing legislation on the union.

Sound familiar?

Certainly, the court allowed that the government has a role and responsibility in respect of the education system that entitles it to establish some fiscal and policy parameters around the collective bargaining.

Well, this is obvious. We all understand this on this side of the House. That's why we bargained zeros out of people for the last four years. But there has to be, essentially, the court found – and that was reiterated by the Supreme Court – an orderly labour relations environment

so long as there can still be room for movement within those parameters.

What's interesting about this is that we're pushing this off into delaying arbitration. Now, an arbitrator, for the benefit of the House, performs a function similar to a judge or a court: holding hearings; evaluating submissions, evidence of the parties; making a binding decision; resolving matters in dispute. There are a couple of different kinds of arbitration in labour law, but the point here is that when you get to that point, you're beginning to come to the end of your time at the table, if you will, in negotiations. This is a normal function of labour relations. It's nowhere near the end of the line in terms of options either on the employer or the employee side.

But the right to that process, Mr. Speaker, unfettered by the state and unfettered by a government that has a different agenda – that is, as the court found, that the state used its power to provoke labour action – is actually guaranteed under section 2(d) of the Charter. You know, maybe people in this House are not as enthusiastic about the Charter as I am and, maybe, as people on this side of the House

are. Maybe that's why they want 7 out of 10 provinces to be Conservatives on the other side of the House so they can go ahead and amend away my reproductive rights out of section 7 or our right to be free from discrimination in section 15. That's quite possible and likely, and people will go and participate in an election campaign – evidently, they're going to – in order to make that a reality. But as it stands right now, we have the rule of law in this province.

Here's what section 2(d) does. This was found again in a B.C. decision. One of the first Supreme Court decisions to recognize the right of free association, the right to collective bargaining, under a section 2(d) Charter right was B.C. health sciences, again, because that particular government really went after labour. It wasn't just the teachers. It was others as well. In the health sciences decision, again, they spent a whole lot of money going to the Supreme Court, Mr. Speaker, which I assume this government is super enthusiastic about as well.

Section 2(d) . . . does not . . .

as the court wrote,

. . . guarantee the . . . objectives sought through . . .

joining a union

. . . but rather the process . . .

In other words, you don't get an outcome by joining a union, by engaging in collective bargaining, by going through the steps, by taking the votes, by going to mediation, by going to arbitration; all the various steps that one takes in an orderly labour relations environment. You're not guaranteed an outcome. I used to say this often to some of my friends who would enquire about the zeros in public service. I would say: yeah, you're not guaranteed an outcome; you're guaranteed a process with us. That's exactly what happened.

It means that employees have the right to unite, to present demands . . . collectively and to engage in discussions . . . Section 2(d) imposes corresponding duties on government employers to agree to meet and discuss with them.

That's the Supreme Court of Canada talking; that's not me.

It also puts constraints on the exercise of legislative powers in respect of the right to collective bargaining.

Wow. That was an easy Google search away for me, Mr. Speaker. I am not a labour lawyer, yet I found this fairly quickly. That is a more-than-decade-old Supreme Court decision, super easy to find. Just, you know, put in some key terms. Maybe people can get an assistant to do it for them, but I did it, no problem, at 7:30 at night on a Tuesday.

Now, here's the thing.

2(d) does not protect all aspects of . . .

joining a union or

. . . collective bargaining. It protects only against "substantial interference" . . .

against substantial government interference. But here's the thing that the court wrote.

It is enough if the effect of the state law . . . is to substantially interfere . . .

They don't have to have the intent. So when you hear folks over here say, "Oh, it's just a few months," it is enough if the state action is to substantially interfere with the activity.

To constitute substantial interference: what does that mean? It means two things.

(1) the importance of the matter affected [in] the process of collective bargaining . . . the capacity of union members to come together . . . pursue collective goals in concert; and (2) the manner in which the measure impacts on the collective right to good faith negotiation and consultation.

Again, that's the test on whether a government matter or government interference is serious enough to be struck down by the

Supreme Court or by any court, I guess. It'll probably be struck down at a lower court because it's fairly straightforward jurisprudence on this.

Now, obviously, as in all things in labour law, courts always look for balance.

If the matters . . . do not substantially impact on the process of collective bargaining, the measure does not violate section 2(d).

If the changes substantially touch on collective bargaining, such as a legislative interference in the orderly conduct of labour relations, they will violate section 2(d).

What is bargaining in good faith, anyways? Is it just being nice to each other? No, it is not, Mr. Speaker. It is not just that. It is the obligation to actually meet and to commit time to the process.

The parties have a duty to engage in meaningful dialogue, to exchange and explain their positions and to make a reasonable effort to arrive at an acceptable contract.

Where that comes in is that arbitration is part of that reasonable effort. Again, bargaining in good faith doesn't impose on the parties an obligation to even conclude a collective agreement. If the union feels that they cannot come to agreement, if the employer feels that they cannot come to an agreement, then there are steps to be taken, lawful steps, within an orderly labour relations environment. For sure, the court allows situations of exigency, urgency. Different situations might demand different processes, timelines, and that goes into bargaining in good faith.

8:20

But a failure to comply is not lightly found. It should be clearly supported on the record, so let's look at the record. Let's look at the justification record from this government. Government must, according to the courts, examine a range of options. The government must present evidence as to why this particular solution was chosen and why, and if there wasn't meaningful consultation with the unions about the range of options, then why not. This, writes the court, is

an important and significant piece of labour legislation which had the potential to affect the rights of employees dramatically and unusually.

This was in the case of B.C. health sciences. I would argue that for 180,000 public-sector workers the same applies.

Yet when the Supreme Court struck down the B.C. government's actions in health sciences in 2007, it was adopted rapidly with full knowledge that the unions were strongly opposed and without consideration of alternative ways to achieve the government objective and without explanation of the government's choices. That decision might as well be a cut-and-paste to what we know is going to happen in this province.

Just by way of a bracket, Mr. Speaker, what did the settlement with the B.C. Teachers' Federation cost? In the final analysis, it was about \$300 million just to bring the government into compliance with the legacy that it had left in 2002. The reinstatement of the education fund, as I understand it, ended up costing even more, but it was costed into the new government's platform, and people began to make good at least on the education file.

Now, in terms of arbitration, why would one want to delay this if not for other political reasons? As we've already established, the courts take a dim view of not having an actual reason to ride roughshod over duly enacted collective agreements and the various steps contained within labour relations legislation. You can't just do it because you don't like the election timing. You can't just do it because, you know, some lady is going to deliver you a report. That is not a good enough reason according to the courts and according also to common sense, just to be clear.

Arbitration is a form of dispute resolution. It is a form of dispute resolution that is widely favoured by both employers and

employees. The reason for that is a number of reasons. First of all, it does bring – this is widely available in the literature; this is employer-side literature. Industrial peace upholds the principle of voluntarism. That is to say that you get better collective agreements when both sides are at the table hammering it out together, and then they understand one another's fiscal position better.

You have access to procedural justice. We still have the rule of law around here. I'm not sure for how long, but we do now. Procedural justice is, in fact, a virtue that should be striven for on all sides of the House. It can allow for balance and, in particular on the employer's side, take into account the financial position of the employer. Once again, procedural justice doesn't require an outcome or a particularly positive outcome, necessarily, for employees. In fact, an arbitrator: that's their job, to take into account the relative fiscal position of whoever they're making an agreement with. Also, disputes can be settled at a lesser cost oftentimes with interest arbitration, so they are more efficient, Mr. Speaker.

All of these things would point to, one would think, going about labour relations in an orderly fashion unless – I come back to that previous finding, the B.C. Supreme Court decision, that the court found that the state used its power to provoke labour action. In fact, the court wrote: because the government had another agenda, which is that they thought that it would be politically advantageous for them to cast working people as the opponent and as the enemy. Sound familiar?

Now, there are a number of tweaks that one might make to an arbitration system, even if one was so inclined. The C.D. Howe Institute has – it's some 10 pages in length – a think piece on interest arbitration from a few years ago. Given that before the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour Supreme Court decision came into effect, we had a number of jurisdictions in which arbitration was the place where settlements had to go for public-sector workers, given that there was a wide and blanket prohibition on the right to withhold labour, which, of course, was struck down by the Supreme Court . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie standing.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I particularly think that they're really important, the comments that were being made by the Member for Lethbridge-West, in terms of the gravity in which this government is trying to introduce this in terms of the political interest, and I was hoping that she could continue those remarks, please.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member. I'm sure I've just gone down a little memory lane for him in terms of court decisions around our Charter rights to free association, among our other Charter rights, that sometimes are in question by the members across the way.

You know, I think what's important here is what politically is happening, given that there has been no real justification on a procedural side to interfere in the course of orderly labour relations, there's been no justification even on the fiscal side to examine our fiscal position. Well, that's exactly what arbitrators do. That's exactly what labour relations are for, to hammer those interests out on each side, employer and employee, at the bargaining table, because when you don't have it at the bargaining table, then it bleeds out into other areas of public life, Mr. Speaker. Then folks do take matters into their own hands, and they do engage in job action and so on. I think we can all agree, for those of us seeking

health care or education or seniors' care, child care, that this is not in the public interest.

Definitely, when government is using its power to paint 180,000 people as the enemy, they are using their power unjustly. State power: I mean, you'd think a conservative would understand this in their DNA, in their bones. Using state power in a way that is disproportionate and unnecessary should never be the place of first resort. I mean, it was, you know, essentially item 3 or 4 in the line of what these folks were going to get up to. It wasn't freedom and liberty and all of that sort of stuff. No. It was taking away equality rights in terms of earning a decent wage for young people, it was hammering on LGBTQS youth, and then it was casting entire segments of the economy – first responders, front-line health care, education, seniors' care workers – as the enemy and using the power of the state to do so. No one should ever take that lightly, Mr. Speaker. In fact, that's why the courts take such a dim view of using that power, that state power, like a hammer.

Who's going to be affected? Well, I think often of all of my years of knocking on doors in Lethbridge-West, talking to people who work in IT at the university, who haven't seen a wage increase in some six years, folks. I think of people who work grounds or maintenance at the college or at the university: same thing. I think often of parents on the doorstep, especially in 2015, before the classroom improvement fund. Mark my words: that will be the next thing on the list for this government. I think of that and all the educational assistance that parents of children with disabilities told me they needed, and our government responded through that classroom improvement fund, which will be on the chopping block. But now it's those people's labour rights that are being taken away, the right to just make a decent living. I think often of them.

8:30

I think of conservation officers out in places like Pincher Creek, who are working very, very hard, particularly over the summer weekends, to ensure that we're taking care of our air, land, and water and that there's something to fish and hunt for future generations.

I think of the corrections workers in Lethbridge. We have a provincial correctional facility just outside the boundaries of Lethbridge. Those are AUPE members, too. I can remember their wildcat strikes back in – what was it? – '12, '13, the winter of '14. My memory is fuzzy. Certainly, the experience of seeing the anger from those workers who were being treated so disrespectfully by the former PC government: I remember that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood standing to speak.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, perhaps better labelled the bad-faith bargaining bill. This proposed piece of legislation is going to be a complete attack on front-line workers. We're talking about over 180,000 workers who work hard every single day to provide high-quality services that all of us as Albertans depend on. These are nurses, social workers, teachers, child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, librarians, correctional officers, sheriffs who protect us, food inspectors, and so many more. The fact that they are going to be legislated out of a fair chance to discuss and to negotiate their wages is absolutely shameful. It's a return to historical Conservative bullying tactics of disrespecting our front-line workers.

You know, the Member for Lethbridge-West just spoke to some of the rallies that happened over the last number of years. I want to

give a little bit of historical background because I was at one of those. We know that Bill 45 and Bill 46 were introduced and passed under the Redford government in the fall of 2013. Bill 45, if you don't quite remember, was the Public Sector Services Continuation Act, and it was, quote, intended to deter illegal strikes to save Albertans money. Wow. Trampling of rights in the interest of saving Albertans money. In fact, it was my predecessor, Brian Mason, here in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood who noted that as you look at that bill, you will find in these pages a government prepared to force its employees to work even when they're not safe. You'll see a government that does not respect the fundamental rights of the people of this province.

I remember being at the rally against Bill 45. Gosh, it was probably minus 30 that day if not colder. I remember the Leader of the Official Opposition being there, the former member that I just mentioned from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Edmonton-Calder at the time, the current Member for Edmonton-Manning, and a number of others who stood up against that absolutely shameful, bullying bill. We saw Albertans coming out in force against this, and I think we're starting to see that with this one as well. Interesting that history seems to be repeating itself and that these governments aren't necessarily learning from some of the lessons of the past.

You know, I'm certainly not an expert on wage arbitration or on a number of these issues, but I've done a fair bit of research over the last little while trying to pull together the perspectives of a number of people who I do respect and that I do know have a lot of background on this. I want to start with the Leader of the Official Opposition. As she said, this isn't simply a delay in arbitration. It's the breach of a legal contract with nurses and other public-sector workers. She asked here in the House: why didn't the Finance minister tell Albertans that they were going to break the law, to steal money from nurses?

As the Member for Lethbridge-West so eloquently pointed out, courts have ruled that the Charter rights of workers are breached when governments interfere with collective bargaining. We're talking about fundamental rights. We're talking about Charter rights. I guess my question is: if the government is willing to breach Charter rights on this issue, where else are they willing to do so? As she pointed out, just weeks on the job and this government is already taking this approach. Gosh, it's going to be a long four years.

Now, I'll just flip back to what the Minister of Finance noted on this. He said, and I quote: Albertans expect us to be responsible with their hard-earned tax dollars. True, Minister. They absolutely do, and I think all of us take that responsibility quite seriously in our role as elected officials. But they also expect us to respect them as workers. Albertans expect us to respect them as workers. They expect good-faith bargaining. He goes on to say: actually, we're committed to working together in good faith with the public sector. But what about this reflects good faith? He also notes: it's unfortunate that we must take this step, but we introduced this legislation because time is of the essence. Interesting that he recognizes that. I think he's foreshadowing that he knows that there will be a number of unintended consequences of this.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Let me go back to a few other folks who I respect on this issue, people who've been around. I would like to just point out what the Member for Edmonton-North West noted when it comes to Bill 9. These folks have been on the job just a few weeks. They're already threatening public servants with legislation to delay wage talks, the Member for Edmonton-North West noted. It seems that the UCP is keen to follow the old Conservative bullying tactics of disrespecting

our front-line workers. He noted that that only leads, history shows, to labour unrest and ultimately to more costly settlements.

I point that out because the minister had just noted, gone on the record and said, that his priority is the province's finances, yet we know that more costly settlements are often the outcome. Again, we can point to multiple examples of that.

The Member for Edmonton-North West goes on to say that instead of a sham consultation, this minister should engage in good-faith discussions with workers without bringing down the hammer. It's not just bringing down the hammer on workers. Ultimately, that hammer gets brought down on kids in classrooms, on patients in hospitals and health care facilities, on the public in general, not just workers, workers' families.

My colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods, who I watched in awe as our labour minister: what an incredible job she did to build relationships with the public sector, to bring parties together, to move forward on a path of collaboration. I just watched her listen to and take in multiple perspectives on issues related to labour. I think she set a really good example for future ministers of labour, but I worry that that's not being followed. Now, as I said, I'm so proud of the work she accomplished. She noted that the government is putting this legislation forward as a first piece of a plan to gut wages for teachers, nurses, social workers, paramedics, and many more. As she points out, again, these are folks that are working long days every day to make life better for all of us, yet this government is refusing to sit down and do just what she would have done to model a way of collaboration and relationship building instead of, as she says, not being honest, plotting to steal money right out of their pockets.

I'd like to note, actually – I mean, my colleague from Lethbridge-West just shared a lot of really important points here. She noted: look, just last week was public service week, and this government is celebrating by not celebrating the public service, by acting in very bad faith and bringing down the legislative hammer on nurses, on librarians, social workers, food inspectors, sheriffs, and correctional officers. And, as I said as well, I mean, there was her brilliant assessment of the Charter rights, too.

8:40

You might say: well, that's great, Member; you're sharing thoughts from your side of the floor; we get to hear that a lot. Yeah. Well, I just wanted to make sure that all of those perspectives were on the record. But I also want to share the perspective of a number of others who, again, have been leaders in this province in the labour movement and beyond and have put workers' and Albertans' rights at the forefront.

We know that Guy Smith from the AUPE noted that this act is abusive. He called it an assault on collective bargaining, a violation of members' rights. Interestingly, he pointed out that this is authoritarian, that it's ideological, which is interesting because, of course, we hear from the other side so often that our moves are ideological. As I sat down and tried to analyze this bill and work through it, I can't really understand why this government is moving forward with this other than for ideological reasons. Yeah. Guy Smith points out that, you know, this does nothing but create labour unrest, and what concerns me is that he talked a little bit with the media about the fact that he has not seen this level of anger and worry amongst his members. Again, these aren't folks who are just out to get a wage increase. Not at all. They're looking for an opportunity to negotiate in good faith. They're looking to see their fundamental rights as workers respected. Guy Smith points out, as I noted earlier: listen, we know; we understand that any government is going to look at their financial situation, for sure; we get that. But this is a legally binding contract that his union, AUPE, entered into

with the government of Alberta and other employers, and the arbitration process was a really important part of that. They are breaking a contract.

Now, Gil McGowan from the Alberta Federation of Labour points out that – you know what? – we're talking about workers who've, you know, already willingly given up two years to wage freezes as a part of trying to assist the government in dealing with a recession that was quite damaging. So, again, we're talking about folks who've made a sacrifice in order to help the government, and now they're being burned. Reading through this a little bit, he points to section 5(c) as being most troubling. It notes that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations "respecting any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act." Essentially, what that means is that the government would be allowed to make regulations on anything that it deems necessary to fulfill the intent of the act, including, as we've talked about, imposing contracts without negotiation.

McGowan points out: listen, if it was only about postponing arbitration, there wouldn't be any need for this government to give themselves sweeping powers. If this government wants to move forward and wants to think about the repercussions on workers in this province, then maybe they should think about that clause and about removing it. There's really no other reason why it's in there. His point is, ultimately: let's put Bill 9 in the shredder. We know that it's a bit of a warning to this government that thousands and thousands of Albertans are going to be upset. Again, we've seen historically, when you get a whole heck of a lot of public-sector workers who are unhappy, what the outcome can be.

Now, a few folks in this Chamber tonight have spoken to the United Nurses' perspective on this. I think it's an important one. I'm happy that our leader in particular highlighted nurses because, of course, Bill 9 strips the contract of the provision on which the UNA's agreement to the previous wage freeze was based. Now, we know that if Bill 9 were to be passed, the UNA's negotiations will be put on hold, basically, until Halloween.

Now, the president, that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo spoke a little bit about as well – we know that she's been an incredible leader for the nurses and an incredible labour leader for decades now, and we very much respect her opinion and her experience – pointed out that she's never seen this level of interference. She said that she hadn't even seen it under the Klein government in the mid-90s. Even in the dark days of the 1990s the government didn't reach into collective agreements like this and violate the constitutional rights of workers in this province. Again, we're talking about unprecedented moves here.

The UNA and other unions, of course, are going to be kind of looking at their response here, but one of the things that David Harrigan, who is the director of labour relations, pointed out – again, it's public-sector employee week – is that he's concerned and worried about the morale of his workers. He's worried about the . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question or comment, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen to provide just that.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood expressed an incredibly important point in that this unconstitutional and, in fact, illegal way of this government acting is not only going to be affecting the workers of the unions that are being represented within these collective agreements but also their families. We're talking about 180,000 families from across Alberta that are going to be affected by this. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-



Norwood is an incredible door-knocker. She's always out at the doors in her constituency talking to people, and I was hoping that she could express a little bit about some of the conversations that she's had with her constituents as it may apply to this particular bill.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for that follow-up question. Yeah, absolutely, I did of course knock on a lot of doors many, many times, and I've pointed out a few times in this House that I'm so proud to represent Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. We are, I guess, what you might historically call sort of a working-class riding. You know, we do have a lot of folks who are in the labour movement. We've got a lot folks who've busted their rears for a very long time and have done a lot to build the labour movement.

In my time door-knocking – and if anyone is saying, “Well, you haven't been an MLA all that long,” I did of course have a federal run, so I've been knocking on doors for many, many years and been able to hear from a lot of folks in the constituency. We have teachers, we have nurses, and we have folks who are working in – this is actually making me remember a conversation I had with a sheriff who lives in the riding. He actually brought up with me that he was concerned about what might happen under another government. At that point, I mean, it was, obviously, pure speculation, but he was, I guess, correct in his early concerns about a different government.

In speaking with so many folks in my riding, I do think that I'll be hearing from a lot of them. I'm going to be sharing more about our caucus's stance against Bill 9, and I think this is going to resonate with a lot of folks in my riding. This is going to be a big concern because, as the member noted, it's not just an attack on workers; it's an attack on their families. There are a lot of folks in my riding who do struggle. We have some of the highest rates of poverty in the province. You know, for some of these folks who are struggling to get by, say one-salary families, an attack on their wages is not going to be accepted lightly.

I think I'll just continue a little bit because I wasn't quite finished. I want to just bring it back to some of the concerns that came from the nurses. Again, I've met with a lot of health care professionals and nurses in my riding, and I started to say that, you know, they're concerned about morale. I worry about thousands and thousands of nurses and teachers. I haven't even talked about teachers and education yet, which, of course, is my passion, but I'll talk about that later if I can.

8:50

As I noted, David Harrigan, who is the director of labour relations with the United Nurses of Alberta, mentioned that it's going to make it difficult not only to continue to have a boost in morale amongst his members but to attract and maintain staff, and he's worried that in the long term this is going to have an effect. He points out the fact – I mean, a lot of you know that I lived in rural Alberta for most of my life. I grew up in Barrhead, Alberta. I taught and was a vice-principal in Bawlf and Forestburg, Alberta. So I spent a lot of time in various parts of rural Alberta. In a lot of those areas they have a hard time attracting nurses and staffing hospitals and other health care facilities. Again, you know, if I'm a young person in one of those areas looking to go into a career, I may not be interested in nursing or teaching or some of these other areas that are going to be facing attacks from this government.

I think the UNA and the AUPE, the AFL, all these other organizations that I mentioned, are rightly concerned, and I urge this government to think carefully about . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are talking about Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. We understand that the purpose of this bill is to delay bargaining with unions in Alberta till the end of October, October 31, 2019, and we know that about 180,000 front-line workers will be impacted by this. Really, this is the government breaking the law. They're abusing their power by attacking front-line workers by legislating a delay in the wage talks.

We know that they're saying to us, you know, suggesting, that it's very innocent, that they just need to look at the government's financial situation, that they need to wait for this panel that is going to give us a report. I think the report is supposed to come out in August, yet it's October 31 that they're delaying until. There seems to be quite a bit of discrepancy in that time frame. So, then, I ask myself how that is. If they have, maybe, mid-September, that gives them a little time to review, but actually it's months later, October 31.

The argument for them delaying it that far is not clear. They're just saying that they need this time to look at it. I would suggest that perhaps it has something to do with the federal election and that they're delaying it this long because they don't want any kind of bad news in Alberta, where they indeed go much beyond delaying the talks but cutting the wages of front-line workers in our province.

Certainly, our government treated front-line workers with respect. We held good-faith discussions with public-sector workers. These workers are keenly aware of Alberta's economic circumstances. By our negotiating in good faith, we secured good deals for Albertans through tough economic times. But this Premier, this UCP government are actually stealing from workers in order to give a big corporate tax cut of \$4.5 billion to corporations, and they're doing it on the backs of workers. This is certainly why on this side of the House we are standing strong in that this is absolutely the wrong path forward. Asking workers once again – I mean, of course, Alberta has had a history of this, of not respecting workers' rights, but this is the most recent travesty.

You know, when the Premier was elected, he was asked a little bit about his vision and what he saw for the province. He was asked, “Are you going to have mandate letters for your ministers?” and he goes: “No, no, no. I'm not having mandate letters. Just look in the throne speech – you see the throne speech that we've laid out – and also go to the platform.” Since we don't have any mandate letters, I've done just a little bit of research. I've picked up the throne speech and have sort of dog-eared it and highlighted and underlined and done a few things, and I'm looking for: where does it say anything about this? It doesn't, Mr. Speaker. It's not in here. So it's a surprise.

The only thing I see that it really says is on page 2, where it says: “Bill 2 will be the Open for Business Act. It will strengthen the rights of Alberta workers within unions.” Excuse me? I mean, the actual Bill 9 does absolutely the opposite of that. Of course, Bill 9 is not in here. Nowhere is there any kind of indication shown that this was part of the government's plan. That's really the only thing I can see, but of course that's not being manifested. That's not what's happening. This delay is taking away workers' rights. It's not supporting them within unions; it's actually hurting them. So, okay, I looked into the throne speech because that was what the

Premier directed us to do to understand what he's doing, and I came up empty, as you can see by that.

Then I thought: okay; I'll dive into this UCP platform with all of their promises to Albertans in order to get elected. So I'm looking on page 12 now, and at the top of the page it says, "Our Top 5 Commitments." Commitment 4 says, "Get our fiscal house in order." And then it says, "Balance the budget in the first term through economic growth and prudent spending without cutting front-line services." I mean, really, in these five top commitments that's the only thing that's even close to addressing anything to do with, you know, the civil service and perhaps unions. I'm looking at that, but of course it says nothing about delaying negotiations with unions. It says that it's not going to cut front-line services, but certainly the suggestion now, Mr. Speaker, is that that indeed is what is going to happen. This, again, just like in the throne speech, seems to be doing the opposite of what they're professing. So I'm confused by that. I think that maybe some Albertans might be confused by that, too. That's only page 12, so I dug a little deeper. I'm still looking for some inkling of the UCP's indication that this was going to be something that they were going to do.

I know that something that they have taken great pleasure in attacking the NDP government on is: oh, it wasn't in your platform. They say this in a very proud manner. Yet happily they are passing this bill, which was not in their throne speech, not in their platform. I suppose we're just supposed to give them a pass on that. I don't know if they can see the unfairness in that. I guess I just want them to be aware that, you know, having integrity is an important quality.

On page 48, at the top of the page, it says, "Making Life Better for Albertans." In this one it talks about: "The United Conservative plan to make life better for Albertans includes the following commitments." Then at the very end of the page it says that they're going to be partnering with nonprofits, charities, and volunteers and that this "will help create a brighter future for Albertans who need a hand up by assisting the groups best positioned to help Albertans in their communities." Ah. Oh, I'm starting to sort of understand. Oh, okay. They're going to download government services even more to the nonprofit sector, to the voluntary sector, and really move to sort of a charity model of service rather than a human rights model. Okay. Well, that was in there. I don't know if everybody made the connections there, but that was just what I saw with that one.

Then I just dug a bit deeper. On page 72 it says:

Harnessing the Power of Civil Society  
Every day tens of thousands . . .

I'm reading from page 72.

. . . of Albertans give their time, treasure and talent to helping those most in need. These volunteer efforts are often informal, and sometimes take shape in charities and [nonprofits]. They care for those struggling with addiction, homelessness, social isolation, poverty, violence, and so many other challenges . . .

One of the first principles of conservatism is that civil society should come before government, and that voluntary groups are generally more effective in preventing and reducing social problems than a big, bureaucratic state.

Anyway, there's a whole bunch more of this.

9:00

So then I think: ah, it's coming even more clear. This government believes that volunteers in communities can deal with significant social issues like homelessness, violence, addiction. They really are going to deprofessionalize social services in Alberta. I think that's what I'm interpreting from this because it's, you know, talking about: oh, volunteers can do things just as well as professionals. That's what it's implying, and I would really caution this government to be very careful about that. These are complex social

issues, and if anything, we should be going in the other direction. We should have more professional services for vulnerable people.

Certainly, the outcry that I heard from, at the time, the opposition when we were government regarding Serenity's case was not that we should be deprofessionalizing social services but, actually, we should have more professionals. Now that they're government, it's like: anybody can do that work; you know, you just need to be a kind person. Well, I would challenge that argument. I would say that these people who are professionals in unions, who are social workers, mental health therapists, nurses have a very high level of education. They have training. They have experience. They are best suited to support people who are facing multiple challenges.

I have, of course, some first-hand experience of this working in, you know, child welfare. This was some time ago, but I worked front line serving very vulnerable families in very complex cases. My thought when I was working on those front lines was that, actually, we need higher levels of education than were there then, at that time. I would still say that that's still how it should be. Certainly, last year I had a disturbing diagnosis. I was diagnosed with leukemia, and I of course spent a tremendous amount of time in the hospital. After my 44 days in the hospital I then went every week for chemotherapy until the end of February. Let me tell you. Those doctors, nurses, people in support roles, the aides: they do tremendous work in that, and they need to be honoured and respected.

I don't hear that from this government. I don't hear that at all. I hear, like: okay; we have some fiscal troubles, so we need to have this panel and we need to review the situation here in Alberta. But why the delay for so long, if at all, of course? It's against the law. It's unconstitutional, as many people have said. It's these people who actually support all of us so fundamentally. It's so easy, a tax break of \$4.5 billion for corporations, yet people who are, you know, serving and committed to making life better for all Albertans are the first ones who are now being thrown under the bus. I guess, you know, even though it's certainly not explicit and I had to do a little bit of digging to find these things, I see more the direction, this sort of deprofessionalization and not valuing public services, not valuing unions, that the government is moving forward to be doing.

Of course, I'm certainly a firm believer in the human rights model of social services, not the charity model, where people have a right – people have a right – to housing, and people have a right to social programs. You know, in my time as the Minister of Seniors and Housing I can tell you some amazing stories about the public servants who served Albertans – I'm so proud to know them and to have worked with them over those years, as I have previously as a social worker – and how grateful I am to be a recipient of such expertise, professionalism, and care as a patient in our hospital system.

I just want to talk a little bit about the public servants in the Ministry of Seniors and Housing because I feel like, you know, I want the members opposite to realize who they're impacting, what these people do, for who they do it, and their dedication in so doing, to be conscious of who they're impacting. In the seniors division of Seniors and Housing there are several programs that are in the place. One of them is the Alberta seniors' benefit, and it's certainly an income support program that supports vulnerable seniors who are on low income. It tops them up from the federal funding that they have, and it supports them to be able to live with dignity. I'm so proud that our government indexed . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to hear a little bit more about all of those fantastic, positive stories about being the Minister of Seniors and Housing and really engaging with the broad diversity of this province and meeting people's needs in a way that is respectful and that also respects the work that front-line workers do in terms of the health care, social, and economic needs of the broad diversity of our population here in Alberta.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I'm pleased to continue. I was just talking about the Alberta seniors' benefit. As I said, this program serves 162,000 seniors with low income in our province. As I was saying, one of the things our government did was that we indexed it to the cost of inflation, so each year it wasn't like they were getting less and less. They were able to keep up. They're on tight incomes oftentimes. That's a lot of people they supported. Of course, who administered this program? Who made sure that people received their funds and their support? Who helped, you know, if there was a problem like someone moved and their address didn't change, all those things? Who took care of that? Those are public servants. They gave very important service to vulnerable seniors.

Another program that is administered, of course, by public servants – of course, they're part of AUPE here – is the seniors' home adaptation and repair program. That program provides low-interest home equity loans to seniors for repairs they may have. Sometimes seniors can't stay in their homes because maybe their roof needs to be fixed or maybe now they're in a wheelchair and that house has a lot of stairs and they can't navigate that. This program gives them a maximum loan of \$40,000, and it can support them to make those renovations in their home so that they don't want to move. Certainly, one of the things I heard loud and clear when I was Minister of Seniors and Housing was that seniors want to stay in their own homes. This program that we created helps seniors to do that.

I know one couple out in Sherwood Park. They had a four-level split. The wife has multiple sclerosis. Of course, it's a degenerative disease, so it's going to get worse. She has a walker. She can take the stairs, but some days she is better than others. Since they have a four-level split, you know, there are lots of stairs up and down to go to different floors. They looked into putting in sort of a lift up the stairs and down the stairs, and it was too expensive. They would have to move, they decided. They can't do it. That broke their hearts because they had this beautiful home that they had many years of living in with their children and many fond memories. They had this magnificent backyard with lots of trees and bird feeders that had been immaculately cared for over the years with much love, and it was breaking their hearts.

**9:10**

We know that oftentimes if people have to move from where they want to be, it can really negatively impact their quality of life. When this program came forward, they applied for it, and they found out that they did qualify. They were able to put in the lift, and that just made the big difference for them. They could stay for another 10, 15 years in that home. That meant their quality of life and their happiness was important. Who administers this program? Well, of course, union members, AUPE. I think that that is a valuable program for Albertans.

We also have a special-needs assistance program, and this program helps people who may need personal and health supports. Maybe they're diabetic and they have to pay for some of the materials they need to take care of themselves. This special-needs

assistance also supports people who may need some help buying new appliances. Maybe their appliance failed, and now they need a new one.

So these are all very important programs, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak to Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, a bill that we on this side of the House call, for good reason, the bargaining in bad faith act because there is an underlying assumption in this country and in most western democracies where the rule of law prevails and is respected, an underlying presumption and assumption, that the law will be followed, that bargaining will be done in good faith, and that governments, companies, and individuals will actually respect the contracts that they've entered into.

But, Mr. Speaker, don't take my word for it. I've been doing a little bit of research on the matter and found a very interesting Supreme Court decision in a case in 2014 in an article that I'll table in due course that was written by Drew Hasselback, November 13, 2014, in the *Financial Post*. The title of the article, indeed, says Supreme Court of Canada Imposes General Duty of Good Faith in Contract Performance.

The Supreme Court of Canada says 'good faith' is an implied term to all common law contracts [in Canada].

One would assume, Mr. Speaker, that that would apply to labour contracts entered into by one government which are then under the responsibility of a succeeding government. The implication is, of course, that the Supreme Court believes that contractual obligations would have to be respected by the succeeding government.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I will be speaking about this article a fair bit and quoting from it. As I mentioned, I will table it at the first opportunity. The article goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

Honesty isn't just the best policy – it's the law, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled. In a case released Thursday . . .

That would have been in November 2014.

. . . called *Bhasin v. Hrynew*, the court said Canadian contract law comes with a duty of good faith that requires parties to perform their contractual obligations honestly.

A pretty clear-cut case. The case judge goes on to say:

"Finding that there is a duty to perform contracts honestly will make the law more certain, more just and more in tune with reasonable commercial expectations," wrote Mr. Justice Thomas Cromwell in the unanimous seven-judge decision.

The article goes on to say:

Commercial lawyers have been following the case closely. Some specific areas of law, such as employment and insurance, come with implied terms of good faith. The question was whether the court might apply the doctrine of good faith to all deals made in Canada.

"I think this is the most important contract case in 20 years," said Neil Finkelstein of McCarthy Tétrault LLP, counsel for Harish Bhasin, the plaintiff who won the case. "We're going to find another series of jurisprudence arising out of this case over time about how far this duty of good faith and duty of honesty goes."

Justice Cromwell acknowledged that the common law has long resisted acknowledging a general duty of good faith in contracting outside those specific areas. The piecemeal approach of Canadian common law is out of step with the civil law in Quebec and in most U.S. jurisdictions, he wrote.

"In my view, it is time to take two incremental steps in order to make the common law less unsettled and piecemeal, more

coherent and more just. The first step is to acknowledge that good faith contractual performance is a general organizing principle of the common law of contract which underpins and informs the various rules in which the common law, in various situations and types of relationships, recognizes obligations of good faith contractual performance. The second is to recognize, as a further manifestation of this organizing principle of good faith, that there is a common law duty which applies to all contracts to act honestly in the performance of contractual obligations.”

Mr. Bhasin, the plaintiff, had a business that sold RESPs. He struck a deal to sell his customers RESP products provided by the defendant. The contract automatically renewed every three years. Either party had a non-renewal right on six months’ notice. The written agreement did not require the company to provide a reason for ending the deal.

Mr. Bhasin argued that the contract was terminated in bad faith. He won a judgment in an Alberta trial court, but that decision was overturned by the Alberta Court of Appeal. The provincial appellate court found that the trial court had erred by implying a term of good faith in a deal that contained a clear, unambiguous termination clause.

The Alberta appellate ruling was appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, which heard the case last February.

That would be in 2014.

Justice Cromwell said the respondent RESP company, which was formerly known as Canadian American Financial Corp. (Canada) Ltd., misled Mr. Bhasin about the circumstances involving the termination of the agreement in May 2001. The judge awarded him damages of \$87,000 plus interest.

Eli Lederman of Lenczner Slaght Royce Smith Griffin LLP, counsel for the defendants, said the case fills a gap in Canadian law by creating a general organized principle that parties are to act honestly in the performance of all contractual obligations. Yet that does raise questions, he said.

“What does it mean if you have a generalized duty to act honestly in your contractual obligations? When you exercise a contractual right not to renew an agreement, does that you mean you have to explain your reason for doing so?”

Counsel for Mr. Bhasin argued in their factum that the freedom to contract comes with reasonable limits. Good faith should exist when a party is exercising a discretionary power that can devastate a counter party, they wrote. He was represented by Mr. Finkelstein and Brandon Kain of McCarthy Tétrault LLP, John McCamus of Davis Ward Phillips & Vineberg LLP and Stephen Moreau of Cavalluzzo LLP.

“The law of contracts is not exempt from basic requirements of honesty and fairness,” Mr. Bhasin’s lawyers argued. “One need look no further than the existing jurisprudence of this court, which recognizes the duty of good faith in employment, insurance and tendering agreements, in addition to cases like this one where a discretionary power is exercised for an improper purpose so as to defeat a party’s legitimate contractual objectives.”

Mr. Lederman, Jon Laxer and Constanza Pauchulo of Lenczner Slaght, counsel for the defendant RESP company, countered that the first principle of common law contracting is that parties are bound by the terms they have agreed to, not what they ought to have agreed to. “To succeed in this appeal, Mr. Bhasin must persuade this Court to adopt a radically new contract model which would give effect to new, unbargained for rights and obligations,” they wrote.

9:20

Mr. Speaker, this case is a very interesting refutation of the principle underlying the government’s desire to run roughshod and totally disregard their obligation that is reinforced by the Supreme Court ruling in 2014, by their obligation to act honestly and in good faith. It’s enshrined in Supreme Court rulings that govern contract

law in this province. Whether it be in employment, whether it be in corporate law, in any type of law in this country, this ruling has clearly stated that all parties to a contract have an obligation to deal in good faith, an obligation to be honest, and not to arbitrarily believe that they have the right to break an existing contract with impunity.

What the Premier and the government are engaging in is going to be a very expensive and totally unnecessary exercise in court proceedings after they, if they’re able to, pass this legislation. If they decide not to back down and reconsider what the consequences of doing so are, there’s some clear-cut case law in this country, Mr. Speaker, which will, I believe, make a very, very short and clear and concise court decision, easy for judges to make, once appellants bring this legislation to court.

I can see very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that in very short order, if indeed this legislation is passed, you’ll find that the atmosphere in Alberta in the labour movement, in labour relations between this government and organized labour, is going to be very, very poisoned very, very quickly. In fact, I would go as far as to say that even the introduction of this legislation or this bill has caused a great mobilization among organized labour in this province. I think that’s indeed part of the intent of this government and this Premier, to provoke organized labour to do what this Premier and this government seem intent on doing in many fields, and that is to create chaos, to create acrimony, to create disharmony, dissonance, to be churlish, to look towards disarray, discord, and disorder, because this government, this Premier in particular, thrives on it. He indeed, I believe, is looking to create straw men and burn them down and then, as a result of that, suggest he’s solved the problem.

The real truth of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, the bargaining in bad faith act, is the government’s and the Premier’s dislike, distrust of organized labour. This is really a very unfortunate circumstance to be in, when you have a Premier who really doesn’t look at who comprises organized labour. I mean, it’s people. It’s families. It’s workers. Other speakers before me have gone into this in detail, Mr. Speaker. These are people who work in this building every day, people that we as members of the Legislature and our Premier purport to respect yet attack without mercy their right to negotiate freely and enter into a contract they should expect will be dealt with in good faith and honestly and would be adhered to by successive governments.

This bill purports to simply delay. It’s legislating a delay to wage talks. However, the real purpose behind it is multifold. It’s political. It looks to delay the dissonance that will occur as a result of labour unrest. It’s going to happen if indeed these labour negotiations are to take place before the next federal election. They wish to defer the breaking of these contracts and defer the renegotiation until after the next federal election in an effort to pave the way for the national blue machine, the Manning-Harper politburo, to do their work.

They’ve also seemingly gotten instructions through the Doug Ford Conservatives as well, and they seem to have been told, you know, to hold Doug Ford under a rock until after the next federal election is over. I believe that now the legislative session is over or nearly over in Ontario, a clear five months before the federal election, in an effort to make sure that the only thing that Doug Ford gets seen in is a flower lei in a pride parade, with the police along for the ride.

I’m not really surprised that the Premier in this province has made it his business to make sure that the labour legislation that would cause the chaos and disharmony that we see involved in this legislation – we see he wants to kick that can down the road past the next federal election. The – I don’t know what you’d call it – gang of six plus the federal triumvirate: those individuals all together in the Manning-Harper politburo are looking to install their

champion federally and end up with what they hope is a blue wave across the prairies and into Ontario.

We'll figure it out in good time, they think, but we've figured it out already, and we see through it pretty clearly. They seem pretty happy with themselves on the other side of the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie rising to talk.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was so enthralled by the comments of the Member for Edmonton-McClung, and I was hoping that he would continue expressing his opinions on: exactly what are the political interests behind what's happening here?

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

**Mr. Dach:** Well, thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. I know that much of what is done in this House is political, and this piece of legislation is no different. It's a mechanism to attack organized labour, and people will fight back. I know that this Premier is hoping that the organized labour forces in this province will go out with a whimper, but, no, they're not going to go out. They're going to come with a bang.

This Premier is maybe underestimating the forces that are at play here, and I think we're going to see in pretty short order the same kind of thing that Beijing recently saw when they started limiting rights in Hong Kong. That politburo there is definitely one that saw the rancour of their masses because they rose in uproar and put themselves in the streets. Millions of people in Hong Kong said: "Uh-uh. We're not taking this type of dictatorship, and we're not going to be losing our rights. You had a bargain when you took over Hong Kong, Beijing, and the bargain was that you would leave our democratic rights and freedoms in place."

Their attempts to break that bargain, their attempts to in bad faith and dishonestly disregard the bargain they had made in the handover in 1999 of Hong Kong to mainland China, are something that was resonating right through the whole Hong Kong people. It was a breath of fresh air, albeit a scary one, to see those people in Hong Kong rise up against a government that broke their promise, that brazenly thought that they could get away with disregarding the law, with breaking a contract, with breaking an agreement that was openly signed and freely signed by two parties in agreement.

Fundamentally in this country, Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation, according to the Supreme Court of Canada, to deal honestly and in good faith when we are observing contracts no matter which party is involved. The same goes for governments, honesty and in-good-faith contracting, whether it's an international contract such as the one that Beijing and Hong Kong entered into when the colony of Hong Kong's contract with Britain expired – Britain honoured that contract and handed it over, back to mainland China, expecting that republic to in good faith keep the fundamental freedoms that Hong Kong had been granted in that negotiated good-faith contract between Beijing and Great Britain. However, they decided that they would break that contract, and people rose up in the millions, knowing that ultimately, if a government is going to break contracts made in good faith, what's next is democracy in the streets.

9:30

That is indeed, Mr. Speaker, what we're going to see as far as the labour movement goes in this province. Maybe that's what the Premier wants. Maybe that's the type of fight he revels in. Maybe indeed pitting Albertans against each other is exactly his goal. Maybe it's his goal to see all the teachers and nurses and doctors

and public servants up in arms, worried about what their jobs are going to be and wondering why in the world their Premier saw fit to attack them when indeed they thought this Premier was one who would stand up and be a champion for democratic and fundamental rights, one who has fought for many things in his life with some pride and some distinction.

However, this is not one of them. This piece of legislation is something that he should be absolutely ashamed of, and the people of this province are going to rise up and tell him so, just as the people of Hong Kong have risen up to tell the politburo in Beijing that they will not stand for a broken-faith contract, that they will not stand for dishonesty, that they expect a deal to be a deal and that it will be abided by the government in power. As the Supreme Court of Canada here has said in this province in a case that was adjudicated in 2014, which established right across the legal world in Canada that a contract is a contract, that it must be abided, that it has to be respected, that bad-faith bargaining is unacceptable, and that the politburo in Canada, in this country, has to be held in check.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View standing.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise and speak to Bill 9. As my colleagues have said before me, I'm rather troubled by this bill. There are a series of legal, policy, and democratic reasons for that, but I think the one that actually speaks to me most strongly is that the way this has been framed is as some sort of grievance, some sort of standoff between the public, the taxpayer, and public-sector workers. I think the first thing to point out is that public-sector workers are people, too. They're people who pay their taxes and volunteer in their communities and contribute to their communities. I think that that distinction is a little bit arbitrary.

Another thing worth noting is that when this province went through a very devastating economic recession just recently, these were the first people to the tables. They came to the table, and most of them took zeros over the course of several years. Teachers, for instance, have had zeros for five years running now. It wasn't that they were trying to pull one over on the taxpayer or trying to get more than their due. They were more than willing to come and work collaboratively with the province. When we said to them, "Look, we're in a recession, and we're having a tough time," they understood that because they're part of the community. These are their friends and neighbours, and they contribute to that community. So those folks came to the table. They came to the table and they participated, and they did their part, like many others have done. I think that punishing that behaviour is inappropriate. Suggesting that they haven't done their share, that they haven't done their part, that they haven't been willing to work with the people of Alberta I think, frankly, is just wrong.

To me, the deepest and most resonant reason that I am troubled by this is because it didn't need to be done. These are people who have shown a willingness to be reasonable and open and to have reasonable conversations about how we can move ahead in a way that is helpful to everyone. I think that doing this was very unnecessary.

It obviously goes without saying that this breaks the law. I mean, not only does it break contracts, but it's clearly been ruled as contrary to the Charter, and I think it's an attack on front-line workers. I think it's part of our larger communications war against working people, and I'm troubled by it. I think that, you know, suggesting that workers, particularly workers who have had little or

no increases recently, are somehow the problem here is very inappropriate.

You know, we're using, essentially, a legislative mechanism to override a contract. Basically, the province made a deal. Admittedly, governments change in provinces. That's the case the world over. We nonetheless expect those entities to be held to their contract. Otherwise, no one would ever contract with the province if it was the case that every time an entity with a political head, whether it's a province or a state or a country, changed government, that government was just able to rescind magically all of the contracts that it had signed. No one would ever make a deal with the province because the province couldn't be held to its word in the right sort of way. That ability to hold an entity to the contracts that it has made is a pretty fundamental principle in the legal world. So this is a pretty big deal, not just because it's attacking workers but because it's breaking a contract. More to the point, it's breaking a contract which the Supreme Court has said shouldn't be done in this way. It's no longer considered appropriate. I would argue that it never was appropriate and that the court has just come to this recently.

Anyway, this bill will impact a lot of workers. It'll impact 180,000 workers, and those workers, again, are people in our community. They're people who have gone through the same recession that we have gone through. They're people who have experienced hardship, whose family members may have lost jobs and who may now be the sole income earner. They're also people who provide services to each and every Albertan.

I, obviously, had a child recently. It was during a recession. I am pleased to say that despite the recession, I still received the same quality care that I would have received had I had my child before the recession, and I think that's important. I think that when our loved ones get sick or when our children go to school, they should receive the same quality of care regardless of whether we're in a recession or not, and I think that's what's owed to folks who have paid in over the course of years.

I think the other thing that troubles me about this bill is that it's intended to shut down a conversation. The government didn't even go to these folks to negotiate, to talk about whether or not this might be reasonable, to talk about whether they might have some more time to consider the fiscal situation. They took this step almost immediately, and I think that that's, well, not a very good way to start off any relationship, really. I think it borders on bullying. Yeah, I'm troubled by what the reaction might be to this because I think people will stand up for themselves. I think that people will stand up and say: this isn't right. That can have a serious impact on front-line services.

In fact, you know, we've seen labour peace for the last four years, but it wasn't that long before that four years of labour peace that we had a fairly serious wildcat strike involving remand centres and courts and a whole series of employees, and I think that wasn't good, ultimately, for anyone. Those employees felt that they hadn't been heard. We spent a long time working with the union and working with those employees to try to ensure that in future they do feel more heard.

9:40

Ultimately, in any new situation when you come through the door, the first thing you should try to do is work with people. You shouldn't resort immediately to the hammer. You should begin by assuming that people are reasonable. If you come into a room and immediately behave unreasonably, if you come into a room and immediately throw a tantrum, your odds of getting reasonable behaviour back from the other parties in that room are a lot lower. That's essentially what this government is doing. It's stepping into

a room and using the biggest hammer it can think of and the biggest bully tactic it can think of right out of the gate. I think that it's bad faith, and I think that it's sad in light of the fact that the government for four years operated in good faith and made a lot of progress in terms of bending the costs.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if you're familiar with this, but before the NDP took government in 2015, the provincial budget growth sort of looked a lot like a porcupine. It was up. It was down. It was up. It was down. It didn't seem to have much relation to anything. Since then we've seen a levelling out of that, a predictability in costs, which is good for those providing the services, but it's also good for the taxpayer because instead of having costs spike unreasonably in some cases and then radical cuts in other cases, it just sort of floats along below CPI plus inflation, which I think is ultimately what we should all be aiming for.

This will postpone wage talks for a lot of workers. There's been a lot made of the fact that it's just a postponement, but it isn't really. If they just wanted to postpone it, they could have sat down with folks and asked them to postpone it, but they didn't choose to do that. The timing I don't think is a coincidence. I don't think the fact that the timing lands suspiciously immediately after the federal election is a coincidence. I think it is, in fact, by design, and I think it's by design because the members opposite don't want to suffer the fate that the Premier of Ontario has suffered with his dropping numbers, specifically when they're in a position to assist their federal friends in advance of the election. I think that it's disingenuous at best and also very, very sad.

The folks who are impacted by this, like I said, are people throughout the province, people that we deal with every day. They work at colleges and universities. They work in health care facilities. They're teachers. They're nurses. They're other health care professionals, administrators, professors, all sorts of people throughout the province.

You know, it's ironic, actually, that we're having this conversation right now because I think it was only two weeks ago when we all in this House had a long conversation about how important public-sector workers can be to smaller communities throughout Alberta. This arose, of course, out of the closing down of a federal facility. We all had a conversation urging the government to take into account those local economic impacts. But this will have local economic impacts, too. These workers often work in smaller communities. Often these are good jobs that can allow people to stay in those communities. Many people want to stay in those smaller communities. They don't necessarily want to move to a bigger centre like Calgary and Edmonton. These are decent, long-term jobs that can pay a mortgage, that can support a family, that allow people to stay in those communities where they were raised or where they've moved and chosen to live. I think that attacking those people is wrong. I feel like I should be able to come up with more synonyms for that, but I guess it is rather late in the evening.

The intent of this is clear. We've already sort of seen the communication signals. We've seen, "Oh, we've been lied to," which is usually the thing that Conservative governments say before they impose cuts, which, of course, couldn't possibly be the case because the books in Alberta are prepared by civil servants, and they're audited. Those people are honest and diligent and hard working, so they didn't lie. But that messaging is what's signalling to me, at least, that this isn't just a delay. This is a delay so that there isn't a big fight before the federal election. Then they'll come in and impose.

I mean, certainly, there have been a lot of comments coming from the labour movement from individuals working in these jobs and from individuals representing individuals working in these jobs

about how this is unfair, inappropriate, or illegal, that it's an egregious attack on workers' rights. I would agree with all of those statements, really. You know, ultimately, this will fall to be adjudicated by the court, and it will be adjudicated by the court over the course of several years. It will be expensive for the taxpayers to go through that litigation, and it will be deeply unnecessary, at the end of the day.

I think it speaks to a larger problem about disrespect for the rules. You know, it's one thing to come in and say: I want to disrupt things, and I want to sort of make positive change. Sometimes we talk about disruption as being positive in that way, but it's quite another to come in and to be actively disruptive in a way that attacks people. It's quite another to feel that you are above the law, that you are free to break contracts, that you're not interested in what the courts have to say, that you're not interested in the Constitution.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie rising.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that the member was onto a really important point in terms of the respect for contract law. Because of her background, I'd like to hear more of her thoughts on exactly that.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much. I think it was an exciting day for me. The Supreme Court has deliberated back and forth multiple times on this issue of people being allowed to form unions and being allowed to strike. Recently they had come to a decision that folks did in fact have the ability to take that collective action, that they did in fact have the ability to come together and choose to strike. That forced a lot of changes in the province, where previously public-sector workers were denied that right. I think that's good. I think that allowing people who have less power in a situation to come together and use their power collectively is incredible.

We read a lot of stories about this sort of thing, right? I don't know why Harry Potter is springing to mind, but that sort of initial scene in the first book, when Harry stands up to Malfoy, when the students come together to be willing to do that, I think, springs to mind. That's the sort of thing I think of now. That's the sort of thing – essentially, the court has said that individuals who usually have less power to negotiate in the circumstances are permitted to come together and collectively use their power so that they are on a more equal playing field and they're able to have a more equitable conversation, and those conversations have to be respected. I think that's delightful. And, well, I kind of feel like we have Voldemort coming in and taking our rights away.

9:50

Yeah, I think it's incredibly troubling to say that we don't have respect for these individuals, because, again, these are people. The government likes to sort of create this dichotomy, like there are people in the community who have suffered in the recession and there are public-sector workers who have taken advantage of it and there's some sort of big fight, but that's not true at all. Public-sector workers are just people. They're often married to people who work in the private sector. You know, they're in the same family, in the same community. I think that dichotomy just doesn't exist.

I think that this attack on those workers, on their rights, and, fundamentally, on the concept that you should keep your word, that all entities should keep their word regardless of whether they're people or corporations or government – if you make a promise, you

should stick to it. I think that that's a pretty fundamental principle not just in law but in the world more generally. This disrespects it, and that's troubling. We should all be troubled by it.

Folks out there may be thinking: well, this doesn't affect me because I'm not a union worker; I'm not a public-sector worker. Well, you know, when people start to come after other people's rights saying, "Oh, it's not me; those aren't my rights, so I'm not going to do anything about it," it can produce a troubling trend, because they don't normally stop at one group. They come after the rights of one group, then they come after the rights of another group, and then they come after the rights of another group. Before you know it, they're coming after yours as well.

This, for me, is the moment where we stand up and we say, "That isn't okay," so that is what I'm doing right now. I don't think that this is okay. I don't think that it's okay to push these contracts off, to break the deals that we have made, and to take away rights that people have fought for long and hard. I don't think it's okay to just break the law, knowing that it will take a while to sort out in the court system. You know, I've said this before in other contexts. The legal process itself should not be part of a punishment, suggesting that you're going to make the wrong decision and let the courts sort it out.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie rising to debate.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House today and speak to the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. I can only state emphatically, as so many other of my colleagues have gotten up to say, that this is an incredibly gross abuse of power.

I've gotten up in this House and I've said before that the current Premier, you know, likes to time travel. Actually, it's been said before – and I've said it – that one of the special powers that he wishes he would have if he was a superhero would be to travel back in time. You know, he may have said that in jest at the time, but you can believe that that's what he really wants to do. He wants to take us back in time, right? He wants to take us back to a time where collective bargaining – you know what? I think that's the problem here. He's an individual who's just so against this whole concept of working as a collective. He would much rather see people working as individuals and in a process where people are pitted against each other rather than all of us working together to reach common goals. That's exactly what's going to be happening here with the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act.

I mean, the member who spoke before me said it really well – and I want to emphasize that because I think it was such an important point – and that is that they set up this juxtaposition between people who are in the public sector and then taxpayers, as if they're not the same people, as if they're not the same people that contribute to this province and the way that it works.

Now, I've said it before that I used to represent the Non-Academic Staff Association at the University of Alberta, the union that represents all workers there at the university, and the motto of our union was: our university works because we do. That's exactly the point that the member was trying to make. Alberta works because the people of Alberta in that public sector make amazing sacrifices, like the Member for Edmonton-Riverview was highlighting.

Public-sector workers are very altruistic because they're dedicated to the people of this province. The Member for Edmonton-Riverview said it really well, said it incredibly well, that these are the rights of the citizens of this province. This isn't just a voluntary: oh, we're going to treat you nice because we're going to

be good to you. No. This is about the rights of people, and this government and this Premier want to run roughshod, specifically now, over the rights of workers in this province. It's not as if it was unexpected, Mr. Speaker, because this member has a long track record of doing exactly this, not only here in this province but at the federal level as well, of supporting bills and legislation that erode the rights of workers not only here in this province but across this great land of Canada.

I'll remind the members on the other side of the House that this is about the rights of our citizens, the people that work so hard to contribute to the economy of this here land and of this here province. I've said it before – and I'll say it again – that an economy is supposed to serve the people, not a people serving the economy. You know, it irks me that this government and specifically this Premier and other members of his cabinet continue to say that on this side of the House our government, when we were in power, was an ideological government when so clearly he is being ideological in presenting not only this bill but in so many others that have come before this House during this session in this sitting.

They continue to erode rights, whether it be for LGBTQ, two-spirited people, whether it be for workers, or whether it be for anybody else in this province, because they keep going back to that juxtaposition, trying to pit some people against other people when we should be, as a government, focusing on the common good, on mutually agreed ways of moving forward so that everybody in this province can win, not just some of us.

That's the thing, Mr. Speaker. We're going back to Conservative bully tactics of the 44 years prior to when this Alberta NDP government was in power in 2015 to 2019. When we came into power as a government, we decided to sit down with all stakeholders as much as we possibly could to create that mutually agreed understanding upon which we would create a better Alberta for all people, bringing environmentalists together with indigenous rights advocates, bringing people together from the private sector, bringing everybody together so that we could move this province forward into a more modern way of being rather than pitting the citizens of this here province against each other. Yet here we go again, back to the Conservative bully tactics of previous Conservative governments where they're pitting Albertans against each other. [interjections]

And now I hear a lot of jibber-jabber on the other side of the House right now, Mr. Speaker. They can't stand it when I get up in this House and I speak the truth because – you know what? – that's what the constituents of Edmonton-Ellerslie wanted. They wanted someone that would come into this House and not be afraid to say the truth – and no matter what happens to me, Mr. Speaker, I will continue to do that – come into this House and speak the truth against the ideological tactics of this here government and this here Premier, that are pitting Albertans against each other.

**10:00**

Now, this here law, this here proposed law, this bill, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is about breaking the law. It irks me as someone who comes from Latin American heritage because – you know what? – so many times these people who purport to support the rule of law will look at Latin America and other underdeveloped nations across this world. They'll point the finger at us and say – what's the word I'm looking for? – “Look how they break the law. Look how they break the law.” They say, “Look how corrupt” – that's the word I was looking for – “those underdeveloped nations are because they don't respect the rule of law.”

Yet here we have a government who's proposing a bill where they're going to be breaking the law. Mr. Speaker, this is just

incomprehensible – incomprehensible – how people will get up in this House and preach about how important democracy is and how important liberty is, how important freedom is, and at the same time will propose to break the law of this land and not only break the law of this land but run roughshod over the rights of workers here in this province.

The process of arbitration is a fair process, one designed to reach a mutual agreement between two parties, and this government is proposing to actually erode that process, that just political process. Now, tell me, Mr. Speaker, does that sound like corruption, where you want to break down the actual, mutually agreed to process where for so many years it was decided that this would be the way? This government, this UCP government and this Premier, want to erode exactly that right.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt. In the excitement of debate, I would just like to remind all members of this House to take a wide berth or steer relatively clear of entering into language that could be perceived as making allegations against another member.

Please continue.

**Member Loyola:** The truth sometimes isn't well liked by members who don't like to hear it, Mr. Speaker. But, like I said, the constituents of Edmonton-Ellerslie voted me in to be their voice and to speak that truth to power here in this House, and I'll continue to do that because that's my job. That's my job, and I take it very seriously.

[The Speaker in the chair]

You know, this Premier and this UCP government want to take us back to a time when individuals were pitted against each other, when they didn't have the collective right to bargain on their behalf as workers. Now, the International Labour Organization worked really hard for a very, very, very long time so that workers all across this world – and Canada has actually agreed to these International Labour Organization agreements on the rights of these workers. We cannot as a government here locally in this province decide which rights of those workers we're going to respect and which ones we aren't when these have been internationally agreed on, have been nationally agreed on by the federal government.

We need to respect those rights as we continue to move forward. We can't say: “Oh, these rights are okay, and those are not. We're going to decide what we're going to respect and what we're not.” At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, workers' rights are human rights. I stress it again, like the member who spoke previous to me said so eloquently: I'm going back to the idea that these same public-sector workers are the same taxpayers that this UCP government and this Premier here are stating that they are protecting. They're one and the same. They pay their taxes just like everybody else, and they deserve to have their rights respected.

This Premier wants to take us back to that time where the collective right to bargain isn't permitted because he would much rather see individuals pitted against each other and fighting for that opportunity to have that job that they so desperately need so that they can provide for their families and put food on the table. I want to remind all the members of this House of what I call that famous conservative saying: oh, no, don't bite the hand that feeds you. You see, the premise within that saying, “Don't bite the hand that feeds you,” that is so often said to workers when they want to stand up for their rights, is: don't stand up for your rights because – guess what? – it's the people that are providing the job, and you don't want to mess with them because they're going to end up firing you.



I see the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre laughing right now at the fact that workers' rights shouldn't be respected, and coming from him, it's real rich because, as we all know, it's been established in this House that a worker that was working for his company who suffered sexual harassment was fired by that same member. Her rights weren't respected that day, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was fascinating listening to the hon. member's comments, and there was so much content in there and not enough time within 29(2)(a) to be able to focus completely on everything that he brought forward. There are a couple of comments, though, that I would like to focus on in his presentation to the House tonight, primarily around his comments around democracy and the desire that he has, he says today, for us in this House to respect democracy. I find that in a little way almost humorous as I've watched his party in the last few weeks as they've adjusted to being in opposition.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the NDP are now the only party in the history of this province to be a one-term government.

**Mr. Kenney:** The only one?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The only one-term party ever in the history of this province.

**Mr. Kenney:** There must have been some special incompetence there.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Something must have happened there, for sure.

They ended up sitting on that side of the House and becoming the Official Opposition, and over the last few weeks they've had some trouble adjusting to that.

**Mr. Kenney:** I think they're angry about it.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** It's been interesting to watch that. I think "angry" would be the right word, Team Angry. Now, I've always kind of thought, Mr. Speaker – and I'm sure you'd agree, from your time in opposition, when you watched the NDP when they were in government – that the best way to probably describe them was Team Angry. Anybody who has been in here during question period, I'm sure, would agree with that. In fact, I had a guest come and visit from Calgary today who watched question period today, and I was just visiting with him after question period, and he indicated exactly that. He said that he was quite shocked at how angry the NDP were, how rude they were, and how obnoxious they were during question period.

**Mr. Kenney:** They're angry with Albertans.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** At its core, Mr. Speaker – and I think the Premier actually pointed this out today during question period – they're angry with Albertans. That's what's going on right now inside the House. They were always angry with the United Conservative Party, primarily because, I think, they're very disappointed to see the Wildrose Party and the Progressive Conservative Party, our two great legacy parties that make up this party, come together and unite free-enterprise Albertans.

10:10

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo shaking his head. But I do remember the opportunity to be able to inform the House that

we've been able to create the United Conservative Party and that the days of the NDP government were numbered, and it turns out I was right.

**Mr. Kenney:** It was prophetic.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Exactly. I encourage members to check out my Facebook pages. I usually pin that post up top, when I gave that announcement to the House.

But I want to get back to my point, Mr. Speaker, which is that the NDP are angry with Albertans. They're angry with democracy, which is what that hon. member brought up. Instead of going back and asking themselves why they are the only one-term government in the history of this province, why Albertans rejected them governing this province . . .

**Mr. Kenney:** That would require humility.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes. Humility is exactly the problem, Mr. Speaker. There's no humility from the opposition.

Now, I personally am excited – I'm personally excited – about that, Mr. Speaker, because I think that goes well for the United Conservative Party to continue to have the privilege of being the government of this province for many terms to come if this is going to be the approach of the NDP. Instead of examining the behaviour that put them onto that side of the House, they're going to instead take this approach, which is to come here full Team Angry, ignore democracy, ignore what the people of Alberta said.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, in record numbers, in constituencies like yours and mine, the two first MLAs in the history of this province to break 20,000 votes: that's got nothing to do with you or me; that was the people where we live outright rejecting the policies and the behaviour of the NDP government at the time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to help my hon. friends across the way because I respect the role of opposition in this House, and I really humbly suggest to them, through you to them, that they take some time – there are a couple of years till the next election; they could take a bit of a breath – and have a conversation on why they ended up on that side of the House, that they show a little bit of humility and look at their behaviour and examine if the approach that they continue to take to this Assembly actually benefits Albertans. [interjection]

Again, I hear the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo heckling away. One of the reasons why he is in that spot where he is right now is because he was the Finance minister for a government that had us on track to \$100 billion in debt.

**Mr. Kenney:** The biggest per capita deficit in Canada.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The biggest per capita debt in Canada. Think about that, Mr. Speaker. And all that hon. member can do is sit here and heckle. How is that helping his constituents right now? I'll tell you that it's not helping.

**Mr. Kenney:** What about his carbon tax?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Now, we talk about his carbon tax. That's right. It's a great point, Mr. Speaker, to bring in. Now, I'm running out of time, so I'm going to have some more to say about the carbon tax shortly.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others wishing to join in the debate this evening? The Member for Calgary-McCall has risen.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak in favour of 180,000 workers and their families that will be impacted by this legislation. They include front-line nurses, social workers, care workers, correctional officers, sheriffs, and many more. Sandra Azocar, Siobhán Vipond, two of the representatives, are here to witness this debate, and I welcome them here as well.

I think that when we talk about contracts, they're the cornerstone of our everyday relationships, our everyday lives. If we look around, there are many things that we enter into contracts for; for instance, cellphone and car-leasing arrangements, mortgages. When we enter into those contracts, we agree on certain terms and conditions. For instance, take the cellphone example. I will have this much data, this many minutes, this much service, this many texts, and in return I will pay a certain amount of money. I don't think that, of all of us who use that service, anybody would let the company change the pricing, change the terms and conditions every month just because they can do it. It will be unfair, and all reasonable people will see that as unfair.

Same thing with leasing arrangements on cars: exactly the terms and conditions are agreed upon and then followed by both the parties, so there is a certainty of the relationship, and I think that if a dispute arises, there are usually terms and conditions contained in those contracts, that are followed. Hence, I guess, life goes on in society.

Like those contracts, collective bargaining agreements are also contracts. They were entered into by two parties to agree on certain terms and conditions for what their relationship will look like, how each party will behave, what roles and responsibilities each party will have under that contract. Certainly, that benefits employees. It gives them certainty. It benefits employers. It gives them certainty. It benefits society at large.

But what we are seeing here – and these contracts, I think, if we just talk about union agreements, are also entered into through a democratic process. In the first place, when you establish a union, certify a union, that's a democratic process. People come together, and people agree on certain terms and conditions, and that's how they create those unions. Similarly, when they enter into agreements, that also follows a democratic process. It's not that a few people just sitting at the top of the union enter those contracts. Rather, the membership, through a democratic process, agrees to those contracts, ratifies those contracts. It's also a democratic process, and it ensures the dignity of those who may not have that ability to enter into contracts individually. It protects them. It protects the vulnerable in our society.

These rights are protected under our Constitution. These rights are even enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights; for instance, section 23(4), that gives the right to everyone to form and to join a trade union for the protection of his or her interests. Similarly, ILO, the International Labour Organization, also advocates for freedom to associate and bargain collectively. If we look at our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, I think it has been conclusively decided by the Supreme Court of Canada – and it's the law of the land – that section 2 of the Charter protects collective bargaining. Not only that, it also puts a corresponding duty to bargain in good faith. It puts an obligation on parties to meet in good faith. It puts an obligation on parties to set a time frame for the process. It puts an obligation on parties to have a meaningful dialogue.

What we are seeing here is an authoritarian, undemocratic – undemocratic – and heavy-handed tool that's used by this government to undermine the rights of workers in this province, that are protected under international instruments that Canada is a party to, that are protected under our Constitution, that supersedes all the

legislative enactments of provinces, the federal government. It's protected. That right is protected there, and here we are seeing this piece of legislation that will infringe on those rights, Charter-protected rights, constitutional rights. It's just a law that will give government the power to break the law. That's what it's doing, and it's affecting 180,000 Albertans across this province, their families, their kids.

10:20

We just heard from the Government House Leader about how they've got a mandate and how we didn't get the second term and all those things. They talk about the mandate all the time. These collective bargaining agreements, rights: these agreements were entered into from mandates from Albertans. Albertans gave those unions a mandate to negotiate their rights. If they want their mandate to be protected, respected, I think it's only fair that the same courtesy should be afforded to other democratic mandates, but that's not what we're seeing here.

They want to talk about their mandate, but nowhere during the election campaign, nowhere in any UCP document can they show me that they told Albertans: give us a mandate so we can walk roughshod on your rights, we can walk roughshod on your collective bargaining rights, we can walk roughshod on your overtime, we can walk roughshod on your minimum wage. Whatever we are seeing here, it's a pattern of austerity, and the only people who stand to lose are everyday working Albertans. When you look at their other pieces of legislation: same thing. There's a pattern. The working, everyday Albertans: they are the ones getting hit.

[Mr. Loewen in the chair]

In their preamble to the legislation they said, "significant changes have occurred in Alberta's economy since the 2018-2019 Third Quarter Fiscal Update and Economic Statement." I think that from '17-18 Alberta's economy has a positive growth. The only significant change that happened in Alberta's economy was a \$4.5 billion tax break to the most wealthy in this province. At that time, they didn't think about deferring that break, deferring that gift for a little bit until they hear from that so-called panel, the blue-ribbon panel, who can tell them about the state of the economy and the state of finances. They didn't wait for a second. They brought forward that piece of legislation so they can give that break to their donors and supporters.

Here they are saying that the economy has changed significantly. That was the only significant change that we can point to, and that's the reason that now they have to attack Albertan workers' rights, they have to attack their constitutionally protected bargaining rights. Had they not handed out that gift in such a hurry, I think they could have waited. They could have bargained with these unions, with these workers.

[The Speaker in the chair]

They're trying to say that as if they are getting 50 per cent of Alberta's budget and they're not doing anything. Wherever we go, I think, in schools, in hospitals, in colleges, everywhere, these are the workers who are providing essential services that Albertans depend on, rely on each and every day. These are important services that Albertans need and rely on. Now we are attacking all those Albertans. We are attacking their rights, and instead, I guess, of talking about who it will impact, we will just hear from the other side: oh, it's unions; they're spending this much money. But it's not. It's Alberta workers, and this bill is attacking their rights, their freedoms, their constitutionally accepted rights in Canadian jurisprudence.

The Minister of Finance got up here and said that Albertans want us to respect their hard-earned dollars. I'm sure Albertans want them to respect their constitutionally protected rights, too. Same principles should apply. Ask any Albertan. They want you to respect their hard-earned dollars. At the same time, they want you to respect their constitutionally protected rights. They never said anywhere: no; just protect our hard-earned dollars and walk roughshod on our rights.

Mr. Speaker, I think we are seeing a pattern here that is based in ideology, and many members on that side have followed that pattern, have done the things that go against collective bargaining rights, right of association. I can point to some pieces of legislation that were before this House and the previous Conservative government. In particular, I guess, the Member for Calgary-Hays will remember that because he voted in favour of all those pieces of legislation.

There were bills 45 and 46, that were passed in 2013. Bill 45 was the Public Sector Services Continuation Act, and that was intended to take away their rights to protest, to enter into strikes, essentially limiting their rights that were fundamental and also protected under the Charter. It was not about that piece of legislation. It was not about wages or unions. It was essentially about undermining the workers' rights, exactly the same thing we are seeing here. We are seeing the workers' rights, 180,000 Albertans' rights, undermined through this piece of legislation.

Bill 46, Public Service Salary Restraint Act, was also an attack on workers, and the Minister of Transportation and Member for Calgary-Hays voted to pass those pieces of legislation.

Then Bill 24 was introduced by the Prentice government in 2015. That was the Public Sector Services Continuation Repeal Act. Again, the Member for Calgary-Hays voted in favour of that, sponsored and voted for passage of that bill. It's the same ideological agenda that continues through this piece of legislation. It's an attack on Albertans' rights. No matter what you say, these are the services that Albertans relied on. I think that during the campaign they were told that their services will not be affected, but this bill is attacking the very people who offer those services.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always my pleasure to hear from my hon. colleague from Calgary-McCall. It is always a pleasure to hear his insights. I do wish to make a few brief comments because I think what he said is very important and is very pertinent to the debate we are having here today.

I would like to comment on what the government is doing in regard to attacking these workers' rights and absolutely attacking Albertans and their rights. I think that it is important to note how deeply the government is attacking the process by which we do this as well. The government has gone through and, in an unprecedented action, Mr. Speaker, under the cover of darkness, decided to move the previous question. What that has done is that it has effectively limited debate on this so that while they go and, as the member had said, attack workers and go after the very people who serve this province, we also are no longer able to effectively debate that right here in this Assembly and to hear insights like my hon. colleague's. That is something that Albertans should be deeply concerned with.

Then just today, Mr. Speaker, we saw the government introduce a motion for closure tomorrow. In fact, they only want one more hour of debate at this stage of this bill. That should also be extremely concerning because that is not the sign of a government

which is acting in good faith. It is not the sign of a government which is negotiating in good faith because when you negotiate, Mr. Speaker, you don't then slam the door right as the other team is about to open their mouth. That is not how you negotiate in good faith, that is not how you work for the benefit of all Albertans, and that is not how you show that you are indeed trying to have the best outcome for all Albertans.

**10:30**

I think this is something that every single member of this Assembly should be very concerned about. I'm pleased to have heard from so many of my colleagues here in the opposition. I hope that some members of the government caucus will also speak to why they think it's okay to shut down the very debate that this Assembly was built for, why members of the government and government private members think it is okay that they can trample over workers' rights and not even give this Assembly the chance to discuss it. That's something that I think is very important, Mr. Speaker. I think all members will agree with me that we were sent here to debate. We were sent here as MLAs. Our jobs, indeed, are to ensure that we debate legislation and vote on legislation.

What the government has done is that they have tried to make that as limited as possible. Indeed, they have tried to make it impossible for legislators in this Assembly to do their jobs. Mr. Speaker, I think that is something that is very shameful. It is something that members of the government front bench should be concerned about because their bills will not get the proper vetting of this Assembly, and it's something that members of the government backbench should be concerned about because they will not be able to have a say in the very legislation that comes through this Assembly. That's something that's very concerning.

When you move to shut down debate in this unprecedented manner under the cover of darkness, Mr. Speaker, it shows bad faith, just like the government is showing at the bargaining table. They've gone out and slapped workers in the face by introducing legislation that destroys the ability of the unions to have good-faith negotiations, and then they come to this Assembly and slap legislators in the face by preventing us from doing our jobs here in the Assembly. That is something that should be offensive and is offensive to all Albertans. I am deeply concerned with what the government's goal is here. If the government indeed is trying to act in good faith, they should get up and defend that. They should get up and explain to Albertans why they think their legislators, their elected officials, the over 10,000 people who voted for me in my riding shouldn't get a say in this Assembly. If we're measuring mandates, I actually have more votes than most members in this Assembly due to the population in my riding. Indeed, when we're measuring mandates, it really is important to consider that every single MLA in this Assembly has a voice. What this government is doing is trying to shut down that voice and shut down that voice while also shutting down negotiations with the workers that serve this province.

That is something that the government needs to stand up and defend themselves for. The government needs to stand up and explain to Albertans why it's okay that because they won this many seats, Mr. Speaker, they don't need to negotiate. They don't think workers are worth their time to negotiate, and they think that workers don't deserve to negotiate. That's something that all Albertans should be concerned about.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join in the debate this evening? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to join the debate to oppose this oppressive bill to deny workers their rights that have been long fought for not only in this country but in many westernized democracies for the last few hundred years. Here we are now having to stand up yet again. As they say, the right to freedom requires eternal vigilance. I think we find ourselves in that place once more.

I want to begin by speaking a little bit about the fact that these labour rights aren't simply the rights of a few individuals to, you know, do what they want. They're in fact embedded in the very concept of human rights. What we are defending here this evening is not simply the choice of some people around their particular work site to get some whim exercised but, rather, to in fact protect the fundamental reasons why western democracies are the best places to live in the world; that is, that we have a belief in the rule of law and that we base that rule of law on the concept of human rights. The fact, the idea that labour rights are human rights has been reinforced in our own Constitution and has been reinforced by the Supreme Court of Canada. So let me just take a moment to speak to that.

They say that the right to freedom of association, which includes the right of workers to join unions and bargain collectively, is a fundamental, universal human right and the cornerstone of democracy. It's not simply an issue of workplace conditions. It is, in fact, the fundamental cornerstone of what makes democracies work. Unionization and democracy both come from the same roots of protecting individuals, people who are citizens, with average amounts of power in society from the oppressions that come from tyranny, that come from the dictators and oligarchs and jackbooted thugs who've been trying to prevent people from expressing their human rights for centuries.

On June 8, 2007, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the guarantee of freedom of association in section 2(d) of the Charter of Rights protects the rights of Canadian workers to form a union and bargain collectively. It's not a point of debate. It's not something that we question. It's been brought forward already by legislators across this country and has gone to the highest court in the land, and the highest court in the land has said exactly what we are trying to defend here, that you have a right to join a union and that you have a right within that union to collective bargaining.

As I'd mentioned prior in this House, there is another, subsequent doctrine of constitutional law that once a right has been defined, you can't pretend to recognize that right but then undermine it. The doctrine of hollow rights is that once the right is protected, you must in fact take a liberal or broader, expansive approach to how that right is expressed. You can't then say: well, we'll recognize the right, but we'll take away all the ways in which that right can be expressed without actually saying that we're taking away the right itself. There's no back door here. You can't come in and artificially cut down the workers at their ankles by using this surreptitious and nasty technique of undermining the right that they have worked on in this country for over a hundred years. The doctrine of hollow rights indicates that you must listen to them, you must collectively bargain with them, and you must honour the results of that collective bargaining. Not doing those things is, in fact, a defiance of Canadian democracy, that which we have fought for for over a hundred years in this country.

In fact, it's very interesting that this government is attempting to attack unions a hundred years after the Winnipeg General Strike, which occurred almost exactly a hundred years ago now, in May 1919, in which at first over 30,000 private-sector workers left their jobs on the same day to demand the right to collective organization and to talk about the big union, as they called it, and to make sure that the benefits of this great country called Canada are shared not

just with a few folks in the corporate world, as they were in those days, but are shared broadly for workers.

It's fascinating what happened then. It was a Conservative government at the time that came in to suppress those union rights. In fact, the minister of the interior and the Acting Minister of Justice at the time, Arthur Meighen, who subsequently became Prime Minister of Canada, was sent to Winnipeg to suppress worker rights, a fine Conservative tradition there, I'll say. A hundred years later you're still at it. You clearly haven't learned anything from the history of bargaining rights in Canada.

What they did do when they arrived in Winnipeg was that they started to attack the workers by actually changing the laws. They changed the laws, saying that they would fire all of the federal workers who joined the private-sector workers on the general strike if they didn't go back to work. And then they changed the laws to allow them to attack even British-born immigrants so they could be deported if they participated in this. They actually went in to create laws in order to undermine collective bargaining. That's the kind of jackbooted activity that led to the Winnipeg General Strike.

**10:40**

In fact, one of the leaders of that Winnipeg General Strike, an incredibly important figure in Canadian history, J.S. Woodsworth, was arrested along with many other people. Subsequently, while many others spent six months or a year or two in jail, he was released. But I can tell you what happened. He then went on to form the party which we now represent here in this House. I can tell you what happens with this Conservative tradition of denying people basic human rights and acting to change laws in order to undermine those rights: you create the opposition. So I guess I can thank the Conservatives for helping to create the NDP in this province and in this country. Unfortunately, they do so only by being oppressive and denying the people the right to the fruits of their labour.

I think there's another interesting aspect to the history of the nature of collective rights that's essentially of the same impulse as the desire for democracy: the desire to take power away from a few people who have the power to write laws, who have the power to bring in the police, the military, and other people to enforce those laws and to spread that power into the populace and to give that power to people through the vote to elect and to remove or, in the case of collective bargaining, to allow people who contribute their labour to the benefits of a business or a government or a society to benefit from the goods that come out of that labour. It's rooted both democracy and collective bargaining in the learning that we've had in western democracy since the time of the Enlightenment. What we have now is a government that is trying to go back to pre-Enlightenment thinking in terms of their relationships with the people in society. It's completely appalling.

Let's talk about why. Through the Enlightenment, through the last few hundred years, the last hundred years in Canada since the Winnipeg General Strike, we have felt that in the modern world it is important and necessary to protect human rights because underlying the notion of collective rights and the freedom of association is the right to the integrity of the body. That is, when you put in your labour and you exercise your body in order to derive some benefit, you have the right to the benefits that come from that labour, and if you begin to pierce collective rights and collective bargaining, you begin to pierce the right to the integrity of the body.

Now, this is very well articulated by a great American writer by the name of Ta-Nehisi Coates, who indicates that the history of black men in the United States is the history of suppression of the black body. What he's talking about is that the great benefits that America has derived over the many years have been on the backs of the labour of black men and women, that every cotton field

benefited financially from people who were in slavery, whose body was taken, and the right to control that body was subverted by people who had power, using the law as a way of subverting that right to the integrity of the body. So if you remember that that's what we're talking about here, the fact that we have learned through hundreds of years that we need to create a society in which people have control of themselves and the fruits of the labour that comes from themselves, or else we end up in a society where some are enslaved for the benefits of others.

It seems ridiculous to us now, in 2019, to be talking about slavery, but I want us to remember the roots of the work that has gone into collective bargaining and what it's all about because at one time it did matter. At one time it was about slavery. It was about taking people's rights to control their own bodies in order to be able to fulfill their own needs and subverting that for the needs of other people to exercise power over. That's what we're challenging here today. We're reminding you that this came from somewhere. These rules didn't just appear out of magic one day. These rules came because we had to learn lessons over hundreds of years, since the Enlightenment, about how to create a society in which everyone, regardless of their skin, their religion, or their choice to associate with others – if we do not protect those things, we are on the road to perdition; we are on the road to denying people the very rights which will allow all of us to live the best life that we possibly can.

This movement that the conservatives around the world seem to be celebrating right now, of reducing the rights of the many and the wealth and the power of the many in order to give those to a smaller and smaller and smaller group of people so that the inequality is getting farther and farther from the top 1 per cent to the rest of us, is a dangerous trend and one that leads to the kind of suppression that we saw a hundred years ago in Europe and around the world, where people were attacked for simply wanting to join with their brothers and sisters in the protection of their bodies, of their labour, and their work for the benefit of all mankind.

Underlying what we're talking about today is the fact that we have thousands of public-sector workers who are out there every day committing themselves, their bodies, and their labour to the benefit not only of themselves but of the wider society. Because we have created these structures in society which allow us to share the benefits of society, we indeed have probably one of the best societies the world has ever known here in the province of Alberta and in the country of Canada. That's on the backs of those people who have contributed to the collective good. That's the benefit of recognizing that people need to be respected and that the laws that protect their collective rights need to be respected as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West has risen.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ordinarily I would not rise to respond to the types of comments that I have heard from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, but we are here to debate about the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. That particular act: the intent is clear on the title of this particular bill. What I have heard from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is to compare this bill to slavery. To say that that is outrageous and ridiculous is an understatement. And coming from . . .

**An Hon. Member:** It's disgusting.

10:50

**Mr. Madu:** It really is actually disgusting, Mr. Speaker. It is shameful, and I would ask the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford

and the members opposite to render their apology for this shameful analogy.

Mr. Speaker, one should never minimize the impact of slavery on the coloured people in the United States. We are talking about a political party that formed government, that nominated the highest number of immigrants in the last election. I can talk about my friend from Edmonton-North West, Ali Eltayeb. I can talk about my friend from Edmonton-South, Tunde Obasan, or myself and a host of other of our colleagues from different ethnic minorities in this province. If any political party in this dispensation is to lay the claim to have nurtured a welcoming environment for minorities to seek upward mobility and opportunity in this province, I think that I am confident, I am proud to say that it really is the United Conservative Party.

You know, I have heard several times in this House that members opposite like to talk about human rights and the rights of minorities. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm here tonight to tell you that from my own vantage point as someone who has lived the Alberta dream – and the reason why I am proud to say that I am Conservative and principled, for that matter, is precisely because of the rhetoric that I hear from the members opposite. The people the members opposite are referring to came to this country in pursuit of opportunity, an environment that will provide that opportunity that minorities are looking for to live, work, and raise their children, not to be used as a political football by a party that nearly destroyed our economy when they were in government. So it is outrageous for the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to make these allegations tonight in this House.

The time has come for the members opposite to recognize that it is precisely these identity and divisive politics that led the vast majority of the people of this province to reject their politics of fearmongering. I do not, for one, being someone of a minority ethnic group who is a proud Conservative – it was insulting for me to sit here and hear the member talk about a lived experience he knows nothing about. Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of the people of this province, including people like myself, came here in pursuit of opportunity. That is what our party and the UCP government has offered them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join the debate? I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to speak against the bill. I'm proud and, to be sure, honoured to speak against this bill, Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, that was put forward by the government. The reason I'm so proud to speak against the bill is that there's no way this bill will do any good for Albertans or Alberta workers or the people of Alberta at large.

This bill is a gross abuse of power and an attack on front-line workers. This is authoritarian and unethical behaviour, I will say, taking away workers' fair chance to discuss their wage rights. I'm still trying to understand, you know, what made this government conclude to put this Bill 9 forward. Was there something they tried to attempt to resolve, a problem with the stakeholders? Did they try to consult with them? Were they unsuccessful? Were there some challenges to this? Lack of consultation, lack of facts shows the clear motive, the political motives behind this bill, the ideological motive behind the bill. The government really wanted to send a signal as to what average Albertans can expect from this government going forward.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is going to affect approximately 180,000 Albertans. Who these 180,000 Albertans are and what they do: they

are front-line nurses, social workers, teachers, librarians, food inspectors, child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, correctional officers, sheriffs, and more, the kind of work that's so essential not only to serve society, serve Albertans, but also to make this place better.

It's not only these 180,000 workers that will be affected by this bill if it is passed but also their families, their children. They are in the hundreds of thousands. Maybe one-fourth of Albertans will be badly affected if this bill is passed. I'm very sure, you know, that they will not just sit back, and they will not just accept it, the government's attempt during the dark midnight. Then those people like nurses, when we are just discussing the bill that is attempting to take their right to the fair chance to discuss their wage, might be right now serving in a hospital so that our loved ones can have the care they need.

Not only that, but the other reason I'm feeling so proud to speak against this bill is that this bill is, I will say – I'm just trying to find the word – a unilateral, one-sided act and fails to consider the participation of the people that are going to be most affected, when those people have reflected very responsible behaviour in the past. Those are the people that spent the important years of their lives studying in colleges and universities and afforded costly education. And this government is not willing to do anything about tuition or to make education more affordable.

11:00

Those individuals not only worked hard to make their career but also chose a career that they can build their life on while serving the people of this province, where they can contribute to making this place better for all. I say that these people deserve much more respect than this bill is showing. Especially when our province was going through the deep recession due to the price differential, those were the people that showed leadership. They showed responsibility. They took zero. This government even, you know, failed to bring them to the table.

This act and the government's rush to pass this bill are showing that the government has something to pursue, maybe their hidden agenda. This was not even something in their election platform that they worried about, that they are very stubborn, I will say, about. It's very hard to understand why this government is so stubborn to pass this bill.

The government did not show any action to engage those people or that they had provided the opportunity to those responsible stakeholders, unions, associations, and they were not successful. So given the facts that we have in front of us, it strictly seems like their ideological move. They don't really believe in unions. They don't really believe in their right to fair wage negotiations.

Given that the government has just, you know, started their work six weeks ago, has not even completed two months, looking into the series of acts we have been going through, these seem, once again, not justifiable acts at all. That's why I'm proud to speak against this bill. In speaking against this bill, I surely feel this is my duty. This is the duty that my constituents have given me, and when I walk home tomorrow morning, I will not be ashamed. When this government was discussing something to take away the rights of everyday Albertans, I had my duty, and I did not sit back and listen. I had the courage to stand. I'll go back and I will explain to my constituents that I will stand on behalf of them.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, during the campaign I was door-knocking, and I know many of the members on both sides of the House had opportunities to door-knock and listen to thousands of people in their riding. I can still not even look into the eyes of the mother I

met at the doorstep who lost her son, you know, due to lack of service. He was suffering from mental illness, 18 years old, a young fellow. She could not even explain the pain she was going through. She couldn't even speak about it. She couldn't even finish what the problem was.

I'm still even thinking about how I'm going to get back to that person, how I'm going to find help for this person, how I'm going to talk to her about how we in this House are collectively, you know, discussing and are concerned about her concern and the pain she's going through, how we will collectively make sure that we will not let this happen to anyone else. We cannot return her loss, but we can make sure that this doesn't happen to anyone else. But in this House I'm seeing something very different happening, attacks on those people, the people providing services like for mental health, the services provided in our hospitals. That is the other reason I feel very proud to stand up and speak against this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that this is the biggest betrayal of workers' rights. These are their hard-fought rights. They did not just get them granted. There's a history of labour movements. There's a history behind the struggles of, you know, the people's achievements with respect to their rights of bargaining, their rights to make unions, their rights to participate in unions, their rights to become members of unions. That history does not even come from somewhere else. That very history belongs to this land. People did not just even struggle for centuries; people gave their lives to legislate for eight hours a day, to legislate for overtime, to legislate for holidays, sick leaves.

In this bill I'm seeing a reversal of those rights. It's an insult even to our martyrs, our seniors, our forefathers who fought very hard not only for their own rights or of their fellow citizens . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I believe that the individual who caught my eye is the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very interested in the perspective of the Member for Edmonton-Meadows. You know, it's coming right after the Minister of Municipal Affairs' perspective that he shared with us. Perhaps in a berating way of this side, he shared his views and, I think, missed the point that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was making to this House.

11:10

I'm really interested, hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows, in your perspective about how you wound up on this side, a different side than that member, who claims that perhaps all new Canadians, immigrants to this land, should end up on that side by right. That's not where you are. I'm really interested in your journey to these benches, to this opposition, and to this time if you can explain.

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

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, fighting for average people's rights is something I feel very lucky and proud that I got from the environment that I was lucky to have at home. When I'm talking about the fundamental rights of workers and respecting those rights, so helping or contributing to make this society better, not for the few or some but for all, I have witnessed even in my childhood how hard it was for people, my grandfather, my ancestors. They worked tirelessly. There was a time that a day was not legislated as eight hours, not only that but also for fundamental rights. This was a society, I will say, where women were not able to vote.

You know, my friends right now are trying to – I don't want to go out of context. I'm hearing them say terms like “trickle-down

effects.” You’ve got to look at the trickle-up effects. I was happy to see those kinds of struggles, workings, in the kind of environment I was able to grow up in. That was back in the ’70s, when it was surely a social stigma that people were not ready to send their children, the females, to schools. They were not comfortable sending them to school. It was not for them, the right to education. It was not their right to participate in social clubs or local councils.

That was a time in the early ’70s when my mom was so young, in her 20s. She was a person who was able to be elected as a member of the local council, and I think the credit goes to not only my mom but my parents and my family at large. Not only this, but my grandfather and numerous people from my village where I grew up, the party spirit and, you know, the struggle against colonial rule, knew that . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there other members wishing to debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to speak against Bill 9, the bill that will take away the rights of Albertans and of working people in this province. As many of the members are aware, in 2013 I represented the human services members of AUPE who worked in PDD, persons with developmental disabilities; the office of the public guardian; AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped; and Children’s Services. In this position I participated as a member of the bargaining team and have had the experience of going through arbitration.

Let’s spend a few minutes talking about the bargaining process. During former Premier Peter Lougheed’s leadership he deprived public employees of the right to strike in the event of an impasse in bargaining. However, in return they got access to compulsory arbitration processes; in other words, an arbiter who looks at the facts, the laws, and private-sector comparisons and who then has the right to impose a settlement on both parties. This process was a compromise that was established due to a respectful relationship between the government and the essential services employees. However, things have changed, Mr. Speaker.

In recent years the past government, under the leadership of Premier Redford, engaged in a process to dictate the salaries of all employees by introducing Bill 46, the Public Service Salary Restraint Act, that would impose a two-year salary freeze and negotiate the collective bargaining process and, of course, remove binding arbitration.

In addition to that legislation, a second piece was introduced, which was Bill 45, the Public Sector Services Continuation Act, 2012. This act significantly increased the penalties for illegal strikes by workers who are deemed to provide essential services. This bill was introduced as a response to the wildcat strike by correctional officers that began at the Edmonton Remand Centre earlier in the year. The government proposed to introduce harsh fines of up to \$100,000 per day on unions in the case of an illegal strike or even the threat of an illegal strike. But neither of these bills ever received royal assent. Now, the reason for this is the fact that there was a significant response from the labour movement in regard to these bills, in fact such a response that all members of the opposition, no matter the party affiliation, came together to oppose the PC government.

Now, the Minister of Environment and Parks just stood in this House and spoke about how he believes that the Official Opposition is upset about the merging of the PC and the Wildrose caucuses. Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, I’m actually a little bit curious about how that’s all working out with this new government in relation to this bill. The reason I say this is that I believe that there must be

some dispute in the caucus about how to deal with this bill and, in fact, knowledge of the trouble that is coming.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote some of the members of the current government caucus on how they felt about the impact of the legislation of arbitration. The current hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat said:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the hon. member if he’s not at all concerned about how arbitration rights seem to be the balance that’s been set in many, many jurisdictions for the public union’s legal inability to strike and if he’s not very, very concerned about how that removes individual freedoms.

I want to remind the individual member that in the last election tens of thousands of people in southern Alberta were very, very concerned with your government’s quick and easy decision to legislate away property rights, the same way you’re trying to do a quick legislation . . . here of individuals’ rights to have arbitration when they’re providing valuable – valuable – public services. I remember hundreds and hundreds of signs that had the arrow through the PC: don’t vote PC.

. . . Hon. member, are you concerned about taking away individuals’ rights to arbitration under Bill 46?

If anybody wants to follow along, that’s in *Hansard*, December 2, 2013.

In addition to that, here’s another quote:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m just wondering if the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo feels that the Premier and this government’s broken promises since the election date may have [been impacting] the crafting of Bills 45 and 46.

I’m also wondering – I know that in the Wildrose our position was recall in the last election, and I understand that in B.C. when the Campbell Liberal government kind of hid the truth from the people that they really wanted an HST, PST combined, [they started] the recall process of 21 MLAs for the Liberal party on Vancouver Island [which] made a huge change in [their] government policy. I wonder if the member would care to comment on if recall might be an option for this province down the road.

That’s from December 4, 2013.

Now, I have one more that I think is also interesting. I quote from a March 23, 2015, press release: we are interested in building a new spirit of co-operation with our public-sector unions; repealing Bill 45 is a clear indication that we want to work with our public-sector workers to develop legislation that ensures fairness for all employers, employees, and Albertans as a whole. That was by the then minister of jobs, skills, training, and labour. Did anyone guess who that was? A PC member, now the Minister of Transportation.

**11:20**

So I find it very, very interesting that we have two very, very clear indications from members in the current government that were part of the Wildrose and part of the PC caucuses that have now come together and who have been clear in their press releases and their comments in this House that they do not support this type of action with working people. What’s changed? Well, it would appear that one member learned after an election how working people in this province have a real issue when government impedes their rights while the other member realized he was going into an election and that Albertans didn’t like their rights to be impeded.

It is possible to learn from your mistakes, so I would encourage the members to look throughout their caucus and to discuss with each other the things that they have learned through the history of their parties, the PC caucus and the Wildrose caucus, and the different visions that they had when it came to arbitration, when it came to impeding workers’ rights, when it came to the rallies that happened in 2013 and 2014, and maybe think about the danger and the road that you are slowly going down. There are members of

your caucus that very clearly remember what happened, that clearly understood it was in their best interest, at the time of going into the election of 2015, that repealing any type of labour legislation that may upset the labour movement was a good idea.

I recognize that we are now at the beginning of a mandate of four years for this current government, so maybe the learning is: if we do it early enough, people will forget. But I would caution all of you in this House, all of the members, that the labour movement never forgets and that the labour movement understands and that working people in this province remember when you start taking away their rights. Albertans remember when you take away their rights, and if they didn't remember, then we wouldn't have seen the actions that we have seen by some of the members of your current caucus, when they were in government in 2013, 2014, and the beginning of 2015, to have to repeal legislation to make sure that when they went into the 2015 election, they didn't have to worry about losing their seats.

So what I will say in this House is that we will continue to fight. We will continue to fight for workers' rights. We will continue to fight for what is very clearly a breach of Albertans' Charter rights. We will very clearly remind workers repeatedly throughout the next four years about what it is that you are doing to working people in this province. You don't respect working people. If you did, you would actually be going through the arbitration process. You would be having a discussion.

The reality of this is – and we have seen it in other jurisdictions; we've seen it in B.C.; we've seen it in Saskatchewan – that when governments try to impede the legal process of arbitration, when they try to impede the Charter rights of Albertans, of people living in B.C., of Canadians, the governments ultimately lose. They lose every time, because a government does not have the overall authority to say that they have urgency within their policies that impedes the Charter rights of Albertans or of any Canadian. They lost with the teachers. They lost with the health care workers. They were substantially fined, which ended up costing more for the government in the end than it would have if they had just gone through the arbitration process.

The reality of it is that there are 180,000 workers that are impacted. There are nurses; there are social workers; there are teachers; there are youth workers; there are child mental health therapists; there are long-term care workers; there are correctional officers; there are sheriffs; there are many, many, many other workers that are under these arbitration agreements that will remember when you decided to take away their abilities to negotiate.

I guess the question that I have and the thoughts that continuously go through my mind around this are: how did you not learn from 2013 and 2014, when thousands and thousands of people were standing in minus 30 weather, minus 40 weather at Churchill Square...

**An Hon. Member:** It was cold.

**Ms Sweet:** It was cold. I remember. I couldn't feel my feet.

... protesting these bills. Then they came to the Legislature, and they rallied here. Then they came to committees, and committees had to be moved into bigger rooms, and more rooms had to be added because there were so many people waiting to speak against the bill. Ultimately, the bills died and were never proclaimed and were repealed.

You're heading down a very, very dangerous road. I mean, you're the government – you have a majority – so you can choose to do it, but for the new members in the House, I would do your research on the history of the labour movement in this province. I would do your research on the regressive legislative bills that have

been passed, even in the last eight years, in this province and how successful that was for governments.

Let's be clear. Part of the reason we were here in 2015 as government was because of what the Redford government did to the labour movement. I mean, it helped; there was no question. We became government because the Conservative bullying tactics and the disrespect for working people in this province helped them recognize that the NDP actually fights for working people, helped them recognize the fact that many of us come from working backgrounds. We were teachers and nurses and social workers and educators, lawyers, different things like that, and we came from the trenches. We were in the trenches with the working people of Alberta.

I just feel like it's something that you should all think about, all consider. Definitely, you want to look at the fact that, you know, when you did the Public Sector Services Continuation Repeal Act – that was the Minister of Transportation – it was repealed because a Supreme Court decision said that it was illegal. The Public Sector Services Continuation Act was intended to deter legal strikes, but again it wasn't legal.

What you're doing isn't legal. Like, let's just be clear. You're going to end up in court. You're going to end up spending a lot of taxpayer money, a lot of taxpayer dollars, that you continuously say that you're defending, to go to court and do court challenges on something where, if you were just being honest and you just wanted to work collaboratively with the public sector and actually have a conversation and go through the process, it probably wouldn't even cost you as much.

I guess the point is that this government has been very clear that \$4.5 billion for corporate taxes is okay and that doing constitutional court challenges on everything and anything just for the sake of doing constitutional challenges on anything and everything and not respecting jurisdictions, federalism, a variety of different things, seems to be the most effective way to use taxpayer dollars. Instead of investing in Albertans, you're just going to pay rich lawyers to go to court and to fight, when in reality you could just sit down at a table and have a conversation and actually negotiate and work collaboratively with your public-sector employees and maybe even be able to come up with a deal that makes sense.

When we were government, we could do it. I mean, we were honest with the public sector and said: "We can't give you any salary increases. Like, we just can't. There's no money." So they took zeros. I think that's pretty fair. I mean, no cost-of-living increase, and zero, zero, zero, some for four years, some for three. Some had taken them for much longer than that because they had zeros prior to the renegotiation of their last contract. Really, if you look at it, they've been ...

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, under 29(2)(a), I saw the hon. Government House Leader standing.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise under 29(2)(a) yet again this evening. I appreciate the hon. member's comments and her taking the time to participate in this debate. You know, it's something that's significantly different than what we saw last night from the opposition caucus, who spent most of the evening trying to adjourn debate. While I do disagree with the hon. member on many of her comments, I do appreciate that she's taken the opportunity to be able to debate this legislation in this House tonight.

**11:30**

One thing I just wanted to talk about briefly, though, in her comments was the comments about respecting working people. I



find it troubling that it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that over and over the opposition doesn't recognize that working people were dramatically impacted by recent decisions made by the NDP when they were in government. A party that ultimately ended up becoming, again, the only political party in this province to ever have a one-term government ended up taking us on track for almost \$100 billion in debt, oversaw the largest job losses in the history of this province. At the same time that those very working people were struggling to make ends meet and the people that created jobs for them, the employers in our province, were struggling to be able to keep people employed in our province, that member was part of a government that then brought in the largest tax increase in the history of this province, called the carbon tax, a tax that they knew and have admitted many times on the record was all economic pain and no environmental gain. I could tell you, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents, all of whom are working people, that they found that to be unfortunate and troubling for them and it caused them significant damage.

The second point I wanted to discuss. She referred to my comments specifically discussing the fact that the Wildrose Party and the PC Party – ultimately we would go on to become the United Conservative Party, and we were very proud of that. Mr. Speaker, I am still very proud of that fact. It has been a great journey over the last few years under the leadership of the hon. Premier and many other people, more than I could even name in any 29(2)(a), who have worked hard to take this movement together. Let me tell you: we are more united than we ever were.

Quite frankly, I'm happy to report to you that having been there from basically the very beginning of the United Conservative Party, in the room with my friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays when the documents were made that would make this party, both of us can say, Mr. Speaker, that I never thought it would work this well. I'm pretty excited about that and what happened on April 16 and the fact that Albertans agreed with us by giving us the largest vote total in the history of this province and a clear mandate to come back here and form government.

I think the hon. member missed my point altogether. I would rather just give an opportunity to make sure that that is clear with this 29(2)(a), if I could, Mr. Speaker, and that was about the humility that her opposition, now that they're not in government, should start to express. My advice to them – and I was being sincere in that advice because I respect the role of the opposition in this Chamber. I was proud to be a member of the Official Opposition in this Chamber and to do the important work that we had to do. Our constitutional responsibility was to hold the then government of the day to account. They have a responsibility to do that, too, and I respect that.

But they should also examine their own behaviour that led them to that side of the House. Examine it. Take time to process what took place, Mr. Speaker. The reality in this province is that Albertans don't reject governments very often. They have never in the history of this province until April 16, 2019, kicked out a party with only one term. Ever. The NDP have that: the first time ever, the first political party in over a hundred years of parliamentary democracy in this province, they were ejected from government after one term.

I suspect that's why they're so angry. They spend most of their time focusing on anger. You know what, Mr. Speaker? The NDP in the time that I've served in public life with them have always been about fear and smear. They've always been about fear and smear and smearing their opponents and doing that. What is new this time – I've sat in this Chamber for over four years with the NDP, and I've never seen them this angry. I'm pretty used to the fear and

smear, but the anger that is coming from the NDP since this election is quite shocking.

You know, my dad was here today, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** To continue debate, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods standing.

**Ms Gray:** Why, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll just comment very briefly that I think that this government is using a lot of important words that they don't understand. I just heard the member opposite use the word "respect" repeatedly, and I'm not sure that he understands what respect looks like. In fact, that segues very nicely into what this government is doing: breaking the law, abusing their power, attacking front-line workers, and legislating a delay in wage talks and not just a delay but giving themselves the opportunity to write regulations into the future that will potentially roll back wages, freeze wages, make other changes, regulation-making power as they should so choose to use.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to stand up to speak against this bad-faith bargaining bill. Speaking of bad-faith bargaining, that's another term that I'm not sure that the government understands. The Finance minister has stood up numerous times and used the term "good faith." Respect, good faith, democracy: there are a lot of words that are being thrown about without the action behind them. Showing respect for public-sector workers, showing respect for the people who care for seniors in this province, showing respect for the people who clean the government offices, showing respect for the people who prepare the requests that the ministers make day in and day out does not look like legislating an end to contracts.

We know that this attack on front-line workers is not constitutional and will not stand up in a court challenge. We know this, Mr. Speaker, because we've seen that these types of policies taken by governments in other jurisdictions and, as my colleague from Edmonton-Manning was talking about, attempted in many different ways here do not stand up to court challenge processes. Now, one of the bars our government set for ourselves was to stay within constitutional law: let's not introduce legislation that we know will be struck down. It seems like a reasonable bar to expect your government to operate to, but it was a little too high for this government.

We know that the public-sector workers that are going to be impacted by this legislation now with the delay in which legally mandated, contractually mandated wage reopeners, arbitrations as well as the public-sector workers who will be affected in the future by the regulations that roll back their wages because this government does not want to come back into this Chamber and have to redebate this fight again, so they made sure that their bill, Bill 9, included section 5(c). Allowing them to write regulations into the future is the old, Conservative tactic of disrespecting front-line workers.

With the very limited debate time that has been allowed to myself and members of the opposition and given the fact that this government has refused to look workers in the eye, to actually engage with them in conversations, I thought I would bring a few workers' voices into this debate, Mr. Speaker, because workers have been outraged by the actions taken by this government. I've grabbed a sample of a few different stories and thoughts – what do Albertans think about this? – because I know the government is not interested in what the opposition thinks because that would mean doing their jobs and listening to the feedback that we're providing.

Here are a few comments from Albertans: "Christina, I'm worried. I'm worried about the future of my public service job. I'm worried about what this government is going to do in the future. Bill 9: what is next? I appreciate that you continue to fight for us. I feel

cheated and betrayed by this government. I never thought that a UCP government would come after the food on my family's table."

Here's another story, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite have already started laughing, laughing at Albertans who are worried. That's the type of cruelty I expect but am always disappointed by because I expect better. Since 2011 ...

**The Acting Speaker:** I think that just at this point I don't think anybody knows what anybody's motives are with regard to any comments being made, so I think that's a fair statement in this stage of debate.

Please continue.

11:40

**Ms Gray:** Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Speaker.

"Since 2011 we have had only one only one small raise of 2 per cent for two years and 1 per cent for the last year, not even cost of living. I work as an administrative assistant and co-ordinator, and I have 12 staff I support in admin duties, and then I also co-ordinate a medical supply for 2,000 locations in Alberta. I'm at the top of my pay scale, and I make \$60,000 a year. I have a diploma and a certificate, and I paid over \$30,000 for my two pieces of education. Do you honestly think that I'm overpaid and deserve to have my wages frozen and then cut? Jason Kenney thinks so, and that's not fair."

**Some Hon. Members:** Names.

**Ms Gray:** Oh, my apology, Mr. Speaker. I will endeavour not to do that again. My apology.

Another message from an Albertan, Mr. Speaker: "My girlfriend and I both work in the public sector albeit in very different roles. Neither of us have had a cost-of-living raise in our time with the GOA: five years for me, six for her. I'm working 40-plus hours a week while also trying to finish a degree online. We can't afford a strike. We can't afford pay cuts. This isn't fair. We're taxpayers, too."

This is one that echoes a lot of what you've heard from the members of the Official Opposition over the debate that's happening in the 30th Legislature. "I'm quite amazed that the UCP and its supporters feel that this is a good move. I guarantee I spend more in Alberta to Albertans than those rich – I will not use the next word, Mr. Speaker – getting a massive tax break. Now, me, a public servant, won't again get a cost-of-living increase to get me and my family an extra dinner a month in an Albertan restaurant, yet oil executives get enough kickback to take their families overseas to spend that money. It just doesn't make sense."

Now, this comment, I think, echoes a lot of what the Official Opposition has been talking about, that the *modus operandi*, the plan, has been to blow a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget by giving large corporate tax giveaways to large, profitable corporations and then to fill that hole by rolling back the wages of public-sector workers of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, we've talked about this in the House a number of times. We know – we know – that when you give working people, when you give lower paid workers a little bit more, they spend that locally, and when you give large corporations a little bit more, they use it for share buybacks. They use it for executives to go on vacations in other parts of the world. When we're talking about the Alberta economy, this Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, this bad-faith bargaining bill, is a part of that economic discussion.

Now, a lot of Albertans have recognized that there are a number of aspects of this legislation that are unconstitutional because Albertans have seen this before, and they've seen it happen in other jurisdictions. I'd like to share with you a few of their thoughts

regarding what impact this will have on Alberta should the government continue to proceed and not listen to wisdom from the Official Opposition because we, of course, are here to help.

"It will cost Albertans much more in the end. After a few years of expensive court battles, they will lose and have to pay millions in reparations and penalties. Gordon Campbell and Christy Clark broke a contract with the B.C. teachers in 2002 and fought them in the courts until they lost the last appeal in 2016. Then the NDP got elected, and they are struck with the task and cost of restoring the conditions of the broken contract, restoring class sizes and special-needs programs 16 years later. It means finding space and trying to hire teachers and teachers' assistants and repairing years of neglect." Mr. Speaker, to that comment, another Albertan replied that it was the kids that had paid for that in the end.

This perspective, I think, is important, Mr. Speaker. Again, from an Albertan, a taxpayer: "The real cost when civil workers are hit is a human cost. It's the students in the classroom, the patients in the hospitals, public safety, and on and on and on. Alberta has been here before during the Klein years. It took years to recover from his slash, burn, and cut approach. Very sad but not shocked by this whatsoever."

This perspective is very similar. "Cutting wages or even freezing them can actually result in more spending. This happened with Klein, too. What will happen is we'll have an exodus of qualified personnel, which will mean that the people that remain will have to work more hours; i.e., overtime pay." Well, potentially at straight time, Mr. Speaker, but that's another matter. "Less public-sector workers will also severely impact tons of essential services. Less medical staff, for example, equals more overworked staff, equals more mistakes, and those mistakes will cost people's lives. The thing is that, in the end, a lot of public-sector workers will be fine – lots of them have a good education – but a lot of them might leave our province." Mr. Speaker, that is the fear that this Albertan has. He's also concerned about the impact on rural health care. "What's going to happen when they have less doctors, less nurses, less physiotherapists, less pharmacists? Most people working in rural health care are stretched to the max already."

These Albertans see the writing on the wall. They see what Bill 9 is: not only a piece of legislation that is allowing it to break contracts but a piece of legislation that will allow the government to implement wage rollbacks in the future and the impact that that will have on our public-sector services. Some are even worried about what workers may choose to do. A government strike would absolutely cripple the government. From forestry workers to prison guards to educational services and health, people would see pretty quickly what the civil service is doing for people in this province. Hopefully, it doesn't come to a strike. Hopefully, if it does, it doesn't last long. But this government seems content to see it getting to that place. Of course, AUPE is taking this legislation to court. I honestly think it will win because of previous governments who lost in similar cases.

I found this perspective interesting, Mr. Speaker. From somebody who has been working directly with this government: "I tell you what; if they want to cut back my wages, I'm not going to hurry up with their urgent briefings requested on unreasonable timelines. 'You want to know all the funding information for organization X over the last 20 years and you need to know today? Yeah. That's a level of effort greater than you're willing to compensate me for.' They shouldn't be so cruel and petty to the people who support the province, obviously, but it's absurd to cut off your own arms regarding the public service. That might have worked in the Klein years, before social media and mass e-mails, but now we get hundreds of complaints a day from all across the province, all of which need to be dealt with quickly to avoid a spiral.

These people are not logical thinkers.” There’s a different term in there, but I think that’s a good sampling from just a handful of comments and thoughts from Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I’m hearing from my constituents and from other Albertans outrage at this government’s actions to break contracts with its workers, outrage at using terms it doesn’t appear to understand like “respect,” and not being willing to work fairly with our public-sector unions and our workforce. This government, at its own peril, forgets that workers have power. Workers have the power to withdraw their services. Workers have the power of solidarity.

The Member for Edmonton-Manning spoke about the demonstrations and the mass outpouring of support for workers during bills 45 and 46 debates. It’s important that our government treat workers with respect, true respect: looking them in the eyes, engaging them in consultation, working with them at the bargaining table, and allowing legally mandated arguments to proceed because we know it works.

[The Speaker in the chair]

This is what is mind-boggling to me, Mr. Speaker. For the past four years, by genuinely approaching bargaining in a good-faith style, we were able to work with our Alberta brothers and sisters, friends, neighbours, siblings. These are the people who live on your street. These are not people who deserve to be vilified. These are the people who keep our province running, from emergency services to answering the briefing notes that these ministers request. Do you think about those people as we debate Bill 9? I hope you would because this government is stealing from public-sector workers to pay for their big corporate tax giveaway.

11:50

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

Oh, my goodness, I believe the Minister of Transportation caught my eye.

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I was interested in what we just heard, and I have to say that a few things caught my attention. One of the comments that caught my attention was how somehow an oil and gas worker is going to take whatever money they make and go on a vacation to Europe or something and other workers wouldn’t be able to afford a meal. Well, I agree with the hon. member on one thing: we should be thinking about the welfare of those working Albertans.

But I would say to the hon. member that those working Albertans have probably benefited from our government already because every time they fill up their vehicles with fuel, they save about 7 cents a litre. That’s about four or five bucks a tank, and that’s \$20 a month there. Every time they pay their electricity bill or their natural gas bill, they save somewhere between \$5 and \$25, depending on how much of each of those commodities they use. They’re saving, and in many cases they’ll be saving \$100 or \$200 a month, and in many cases that will get that extra meal. It’s important. [interjection] The hon. member from across is so enthusiastic that I hope he’ll take his turn later on.

Mr. Speaker, I agree when the hon. member says that workers have power. I couldn’t agree more. Anyone who has ever employed people knows that if your employees don’t show up for work, you’re out of business. That’s a fact, and I would agree with the hon. member on that. But the hon. member ought to be supporting our government’s policies because our government’s policies are designed to create more of those workers to have more power. Actually, our policies are designed to get the 180,000 people that

were out of work under the NDP back to work and to have more workers have more power.

I wonder how the hon. member feels about the fact that when you get some of those 180,000 people back to work, what they do is they spend their money. The problem with the NDP government’s policies is that with all the people out of work, they have less money to put into the marketplace, which means the local businesses close up, the local grocery stores have less business, which means fewer employees, and the local restaurants have less business, which means fewer employees. Every other local business has less profit, which means fewer workers, fewer employees. They should actually be supporting our government’s policies – I wonder how the member feels about that – to create more workers with wages to spend at the grocery store, with wages to spend at the restaurant, with wages to spend at the flower shop. Somehow the NDP thinks that’s negative for Alberta.

**An Hon. Member:** They’re all fat cats, all those small-business owners.

**Mr. McIver:** Yes. They all think that the people running the flower shops are fat cats, that those corporations are making too much money. You know what? More people to buy coffee, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the member ever considered the momentum of creating more jobs and how it creates more opportunities for people and how having maybe two paycheques in the home because there are more jobs available in the marketplace might be good for a family with the policies that our government is putting forward.

I heard a lot of talk about workers’ rights, but as the hon. Finance minister said, this is only about slightly delaying what is going to happen, not taking away anybody’s ability but, rather, slightly delaying the arbitration process so that we can have the information to deal with those workers in a responsible way, having good information in our hands to go forward in a proper way. I’m curious what the member thinks about those things, and I wonder if the folks on the NDP side ever thought about the benefits to Alberta workers, be they public-sector workers or private-sector workers, of actually having more people working in Alberta, creating more opportunities, and in fact making it more affordable for the government to keep and have additional workers. Because a province that will attract people when there are more jobs will be the opposite of what happened when the NDP was in government for the last four years, Mr. Speaker. I wonder very much if the hon. member who just spoke gives a thought to that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is anyone else wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South is rising.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise in this House and debate legislation which is going to affect hundreds of thousands of Albertans in ways that the government does not understand. That seems to be the recurring theme in this session of the Legislature, that the government simply does not understand the impact that the legislation they’re putting through will have. Now, a number of my colleagues here in the opposition have spoken quite at length on why this is true and quite a bit on how over 180,000 workers, including nurses, social workers, teachers, librarians, child health workers, therapists – you name it – are going to be affected in overwhelmingly negative ways if the minister moves forward with this legislation and violates their constitutional rights. That is something that I think has been well established in the Assembly, and the government has chosen to either be wilfully ignorant of it or perhaps they just don’t care that they are breaking the law and hurting ordinary Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I think that their attack on Albertans and their attack on workers goes further than just what is on the paper of this legislation. I think that when we saw them last night at the stroke of midnight move forward a motion to stifle debate on this, not only were they going after the front-line workers that make this province great, but they were also saying, "You don't deserve to have a voice in the Alberta Legislature." That is what is so shameful about this government. That is what is so shameful about what this government has done.

Then just today, Mr. Speaker, on this bill they moved forward a motion of closure. In fact, at this stage they want only one hour of debate. They want us to only have – that's four speakers, basically, plus the open and close. That is appalling, that they would believe you could have so little debate on this important legislation that is both unconstitutional and attacks over 180,000 workers. That is something that every single member of this Assembly should be concerned about because it is our duty. It is what we were sent here to do. Every single member that sits on the government bench, whether they are the front bench or the backbench, and the opposition were sent here to debate legislation and recognize when legislation is flawed. We were sent here to recognize when legislation hurts ordinary Albertans and to fight back against that. That is what we were sent here to do.

That was number one on the government's platform: jobs. So why are they attacking the jobs of these essential front-line workers? Why do they simply not care about their families? Why do they simply not care about how this affects the Alberta public service? It is very clear after numerous stories that have been told by the opposition here that this legislation is both unlawful and directly hurts families. It directly hurts the people that work for this government, and that is something the government should be ashamed about. Those are the employees that are under the charge of every single person on this front bench. Every single person on this front bench, I'm sure by now – I hope by now, perhaps – has made a request through their public service for briefing material, for an update on an issue, for information on legislation they wish to bring forward. Perhaps the Minister of Finance even sought legal counsel for this bill right here, and perhaps those very workers are the ones now being attacked. Those very workers that do the work that makes this Assembly possible are the ones being attacked.

Not only is it not enough for this government to attack those workers, but they then want to tell the Assembly that this Assembly has no right to debate that attack, to talk about how unlawful this is, to talk about how this goes after hard-working people and hard-working families, to talk about how this goes after ordinary, everyday Albertans. It's a gross abuse of the power that this government has been given. It is a gross abuse of the trust this government has been given, and every single public servant that works under this government's charge knows that, Mr. Speaker.

#### 12:00

It is something that every single member of this front bench should be concerned about. They should be concerned that they are attacking their own employees. If they don't recognize that, Mr. Speaker, if the members of this government do not understand that, then perhaps they should read the actual legislation and the case law behind it. Perhaps they should actually go and do the research. If they are not willing to do the research, because they do not wish to or perhaps they feel that they do not have enough time to do the research, whatever it may be – I'm not one to speak to what they do in their free time – then all they need to do is listen.

All they need to do is sit here, and instead of texting or working away on their laptops, all they need to do is listen, and they will understand the impact that this is having on the very employees

under their charge, the very teachers, the social workers, the nurses, the long-term care workers, the correctional officers, and so many more employees, Mr. Speaker, the very people that this government swore to work for in the province of Alberta, to further this great province. That is something that is very concerning.

They either don't understand or they don't care how dangerous this action is, how dangerous it is to take illegal, unlawful action against your own workers. That is the very definition of bad-faith bargaining. The government has tried to say time and time again that this is a good-faith thing. They want to use this legislation to move forward in good faith, but, Mr. Speaker, the case law shows that's not true. In fact, by them trying to force this through at the stroke of midnight last night and now saying that this legislation should be stifled, that we shouldn't be allowed to debate it in this very Assembly, that shows that this government simply does not care about those workers. It shows that this government simply does not even want those workers' voices to be heard in Assembly. It shows how little respect this government has for ordinary, working Albertans, and that is something they should be ashamed about. That is something that they should be ashamed about, or they should stand up and defend.

Mr. Speaker, that is their prerogative, to sit on their hands and not speak to why it's okay to stifle debate and not speak to why it's okay to leave their workers behind and legislate away all the problems that they'll have. That is the government's prerogative.

Albertans will know that they were let down by their own government, the people that are supposed to advance the interests of Alberta workers. Mr. Speaker, the government is showing that they simply don't care. Nothing they are saying is anything other than rhetoric. Nothing they are saying is anything other than campaign talking points. The campaign is over. Now is the time to govern, and now is the time to make sure that the people that have been put under your charge are taken care of and are able to do their best possible job for Alberta, for this great province.

Instead, what this government has decided to do is to go and throw a slap in the face right at those workers that are under their charge, Mr. Speaker. That is something that each and every minister should be ashamed about. That is something that each and every person on that front bench should be ashamed about. That is something that every single person on the backbench should be concerned about. If their own government ministers will not respect the people that are put under their charge, then how could government backbenchers expect to have their voices heard in a respectful manner from their own ministers?

It is something that is deeply concerning for all members of this Assembly because this Assembly has a duty to ensure that we have strong debate on every single bill that comes forward. It is our duty to ensure that every single bill sees the light of day and has thorough research and debate so that we don't put forth legislation that may be unlawful, as this one is, and we don't put forward legislation that will harm ordinary Albertans, as this one does, and we don't put forward legislation that will attack our public service and unions, as this one does.

Mr. Speaker, the government has shown that they either don't understand that that is their job or they really don't care that that is their job. Both of those are things that every single member of this Assembly should be concerned about. That is, indeed, Mr. Speaker, why they were sent to this Legislature. They were sent to this Legislature to debate bills. So when they introduce motions that say, "We only need one hour because we've got it right," well, very clearly, they do not. The bill is illegal. It is unconstitutional. It is breaking the law. If that is what they consider as having gotten it right, then I'm really concerned with what they do when they get it wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think it was what the government intended when they wrote their platform, to say: we're going to break the law, attack our workers, and then have a complete disregard for the Alberta public service. I don't think that's what the government intended. But that's what this bill does, and members of the front bench don't care. I see them fiddling away on their phones and texting away. That's their prerogative. But I really think they should be listening. They should be concerned with how thoroughly this attacks the people that have been put under their charge, how thoroughly this attacks the people that they need to do the duty of Albertans. That is something that is very concerning.

It really shows how the Conservatives have quickly fallen back into their old ways. They've fallen back into bullying workers and not allowing real debate to happen in this Assembly. They've gone out and decided to attack workers, bully them, and say: well, we know the law says one thing, but we're going to introduce legislation anyway because we can get away with it. That's something I think the government should think about really deeply. That is not what Albertans expect from a responsible government, and it's certainly not what our public service expects from responsible government, Mr. Speaker.

We know that a move like this will lead to labour unrest, compromise settlements, and ultimately, when this is taken to court, it is going to cause costly settlements for all Albertans. I know that the Minister of Finance, who introduced this bill, has spoken at length about how he wishes to be fiscally responsible and he wishes to control the cost pressures. Well, Mr. Speaker, to make it very, very clear, lawsuits and having to defend your illegal and unconstitutional legislation is not a way to reduce cost pressures. That is a way to make lawyers rich. Myself, I am not a lawyer. I would prefer if we tried to make Albertans rich. That is something that I think is very important that we do here in this Assembly.

When we look at this bill, which attacks workers, attacks ordinary Albertans, and really is a bad-faith bargaining tool, a bad-faith bargaining bill, we can see very clearly how little this government cares about ordinary Albertans. We can see very clearly how little this government cares about the very people they have under their charge. We can see very clearly how little this government cares that their public service provides essential services for Albertans, services like health care, services like education, services like food inspection. Those are the types of people that this government is attacking with this bill in bad faith. Those are the types of people that will see that this government has broken the law by attacking their collective rights, their collective rights as a union, and that is something this government should be ashamed of. This government absolutely should be ashamed because they have decided that they are above the law. They have decided that the law no longer applies when they bully workers.

That is something that Albertans will not stand for and this opposition will not stand for. We will continue to fight every single day, Mr. Speaker. We know that even though the government does not want any more debate on this, because the government recognizes how bad a bill this is, they recognize how bad this would be for workers. That's why they decided at the stroke of midnight to shut down debate on this. That's why today they only wanted one hour of debate at this stage of the bill. They recognized how harmful this bill is to ordinary workers and to our public servants and our unions. They recognized how much this attacks our workers, the employees under their charge, and because of that, they've tried to stifle debate.

But this opposition will not allow that to happen. We will continue to stand up for ordinary Albertans. We will continue to stand up and fight for those workers. We will continue to stand up and fight for their collective rights, their rights to organize as a

union, and that union's right to have a good-faith agreement. This government is opposed to that. This government is opposed to good-faith bargaining, and that is something they should be ashamed about. That is something they should be ashamed about, and they should be concerned about the lawsuit that'll be forthcoming.

I encourage all members to vote against this bill. Thank you.

12:10

**The Speaker:** Oh, my goodness. Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I believe that I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview rise.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise. I'm going to try to rise as often as I can because, Lord knows, it'll be very rare that we get to stand up and speak. I will be speaking more broadly to closure. Actually, we'll take a little trip down memory lane because it is fascinating how when the shoe is on the other foot, the rules just don't seem to apply. So I've got lots of beautiful quotes lined up of the hon. House leader, the Premier, the Member for Calgary-Hays, and others who set their hair on fire when our government was attempting to bring in closure in our four-year term.

I mean, it is quite a serious matter, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-South for his very passionate speech talking about what this means. I know that the Member for Edmonton-South has looked at *Hansard* for some of the bills that were brought in under the PC government, bills 9 and 10 and bills 45 and 46, which, of course, also were trying to take away workers' rights. Bills 9 and 10 were the pension bills that I was in this House debating, where the government of the day also brought in closure. I wonder if the Member for Edmonton-South can just talk about the fact that we're seeing this once again, week 3 of this new government, making an unprecedented move by bringing in closure, stifling democracy. This very Premier at every turn talks about how he is a fan of democracy, yet at the first opportunity does the opposite.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has approximately three minutes remaining.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to take a question or comment from my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I have to say that it really is almost ironic to hear what he said because it's true. There are members in the government today – some of them are in the government caucus, and indeed some of them are on the government front bench – who were here for those debates and who were here in this Assembly when those bills were introduced last time. They will obviously remember that those bills triggered mass outrage across this province. Not only did they trigger mass outrage; they actually triggered having to travel around this province and hear from workers about why this would be so detrimental. Indeed, it was determined that some of those rooms weren't large enough because so many workers were affected.

When we look at what happened before and how hard Alberta pushed back against a Conservative government that did not care about their rights, we can see today how quickly the Conservatives have fallen back into their old ways, how quickly these members, who should remember – if they don't, Mr. Speaker, maybe they're getting a little bit on in years, then perhaps they do need to refresh their memories. They need to refresh their memories on how aggressively they were pushed back on because it was Albertans that told them that this was unacceptable. It was Albertans that told them that this was an attack on their collective rights. That is happening here again, Mr. Speaker.

These collective rights are being trampled on by the government, and the people who were here before, the members who were here before, they should be able to remember how badly that went for them then, and they should know how badly it will go for them this time, Mr. Speaker. We understand here in the opposition that you do not get to walk over workers' rights. You do not get to walk over collective rights of employees because not only is that what the law says but it is absolutely the right thing to do. When the government decides to do the opposite, then what they are showing is that not only do they not care about the law but they also do not care about workers.

Mr. Speaker, it is so obvious that they have fallen back into their old ways, that we saw years ago, and they simply want to bully workers every single time they have a chance. Every single time they gain the seat of power in this Assembly, they suddenly decide that they need to go after collective rights and bully the workers that are under their charge, and that is a real shame.

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

Anyone else wishing to debate? It appears the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has something to add.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oh, I have lots to add, let me tell you. First of all, I just want to start off by saying that this bill, the bad-faith bargaining bill, is absolutely a slap in the face of democracy when the government brings in closure after one opposition member had a chance to speak. Now, in our term in office we did bring in closure on Bill 6 for one of the readings. I will quote some of the members opposite when they were in opposition, how they responded to that.

But what this government is trying to do, I think, is quite historic. Again, I did live through the period when the former PC government tried to ram through the pension bills and had to bring in closure. You know what, Mr. Speaker? It's really an affront and an attack on democracy, and I find it extremely rich for the Premier to be bringing this in considering that at every opportunity he stands up and talks about how he's trying to bring decorum to this place and democracy. Yet actions speak much louder than words.

I can tell you that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, back when we brought in closure for Bill 6 – and I'm quoting from *Hansard* – said:

The NDP is pulling every trick out of their book to ram through legislation that farmers and ranchers are simply asking to be consulted on, tricks that the NDP once railed against. Once upon a time the Government House Leader said that, quote, this time allocation thing is a way for the government to short-circuit democracy.

Wow. That's pretty rich, hey? Some might even say that the actions of the government are borderline hypocritical, Mr. Speaker. The member continues:

Premier, we've seen consultation ignored, debate muzzled, and now democracy subverted.

How many public-sector workers did you folks consult with before you brought in closure for this bill? How many did you talk to before you even introduced this bill?

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's incredibly rich that this government will go on and on about how what they've run on is what they're introducing in the House. I don't recall this being in your platform. Can any one of you speak to that? I doubt it. Yet, again, that was their infamous talking point when they talked about the carbon tax, that our government didn't run on it. Again, you're doing the same thing. Hmm. Very hypocritical actions.

Now, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, the Government House Leader, at this point in time in the Bill 6 debate, when we introduced closure, said:

It should be unacceptable to Albertans because this is the Assembly where their issues are supposed to be dealt with. This is where democracy is supposed to take place.

I guess that doesn't really apply anymore, does it, post 2019? You have a majority; therefore, you can run the place like a one-party state. Continuing on:

This is where debate is supposed to happen, and by the government taking this action, they are stifling debate. They're not just stifling the opposition members; they're stifling the people who sent us here to represent them, and I think they should very much be ashamed of their behaviour.

Wow. Well, I hope the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is feeling very ashamed to be hearing his own words. That was from, Mr. Speaker, December 9, 2015.

On that same day – we know that the Government House Leader and myself enjoy hearing ourselves speak – he said:

Now, Madam Speaker, as you no doubt know, the government chooses not to speak to their bills. That's unfortunate. I can see why they would want to end debate and go home, but the people that sent me here and have sent my colleagues in the Official Opposition party as well as the third party and the independent colleagues in this Assembly, our constituents, have made it clear that they want us to speak to this bill. They want us to debate this bill because it affects their lives.

12:20

Mr. Speaker, this bill will affect hundreds of thousands of Albertans, ones that provide critical services to the functioning of our society, and the government needs to ask itself: without nurses, health care practitioners, and teachers, how many businesses would come to Alberta? If they couldn't access health care at any level, if they couldn't put their kids in school, there wouldn't be businesses here. Businesses don't just come for taxes; businesses come because they want reliable, quality services.

What I find rich is that this government has clearly decided that they're going to give a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate tax cut as one of the first actions they take, and who's paying for it, Mr. Speaker? The men and women that make this province turn, that make this province go round. It is disgusting that this is a piece of legislation that they are ramming through. I don't doubt that the government will try to get this through before the end of the week.

Again, the members opposite can say: well, we've had some time to debate. Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? It's not up to them to say: you've had enough time to debate. Democracy and freedom of speech cannot be collared with time constraints and restrictions. That is exactly what this government is doing. They should be absolutely ashamed of themselves. As I had mentioned, it's more than a little rich that when they were in opposition, we did this, to my knowledge, once at one stage of a bill. Doing it for multiple stages, for this government, is shocking, and I think it is an attack on working people.

Again, I'm proud of the record of our government respecting the collective agreements, respecting negotiations with labour. I mean, I don't know if the government quite understands that by forcing this legislation, it's a slap in the face to all of the brothers and sisters in organized labour that this will affect. This is an affront to teachers, to nurses, to those that help. In fact, the very sheriffs that work in this building, that keep us safe, will be affected by this.

Mr. Speaker, the government, through their words in question period and in this House, are not coming clean with Albertans. They are not being truthful in that there is a clause in this bill that will give the Lieutenant Governor in Council, cabinet, sweeping authorities. In fact, I was talking with a friend earlier today, and this reminded me of Ralph Klein in the '90s, when he rolled back teachers' wages, not just taking zeros but rolling back the wages of

our teachers and others. You know what happened? They drove thousands of people out of this province. Highly qualified people left this province because it sent a very clear message that that government, similar to this government, does not value or respect them or the process.

Now, when the Finance minister gets up and says, “This is just a delay,” I think the government is being very mistruthful with . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The hon. Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). You know, it’s become almost comical to watch the opposition continue to try to skirt around the rules of this Chamber and refer to hon. members of this Chamber as lying or not telling the truth – there are certainly tons of Speakers’ rulings on that, lots of stuff in *Beauchesne’s* – totally inappropriate behaviour for this House. While I do appreciate that the hon. member may be frustrated, for him to imply in any way that the hon. the Finance minister is not being truthful is completely and utterly inappropriate for this Chamber.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it’s kind of rich because the Opposition House Leader has used as one of his points in his debate today the decorum in this place, respecting this place, and those type of actions. Again – sorry – those types of actions are completely inappropriate. Again, I even hesitate to rise on it, but it’s so sad to see the opposition continue to do this all the time. You just need to watch question period to watch the fact that the opposition is spending their entire time trying to figure out new and creative ways to call the government a liar. I think there are probably better ways to serve their constituents than that.

**The Speaker:** I might remind the hon. member that I am present for every question period thus far.

The Official Opposition House Leader is rising on the same point of order.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is not a point of order. First of all, I did not use the unparliamentary language “lied.” Second of all, I did not refer to the Minister of Finance. I referred to the government, not to an individual member. I sure did. I encourage the Government House Leader to check the *Blues* or *Hansard*. I was very, very cautious with my phraseology and wording.

Again, it’s rich coming from the Government House Leader. I think it was today, maybe yesterday – they’re kind of blending together – in question period that the Government House Leader talked about the opposition being mistruthful, misleading and said those words probably six or seven times in three sentences, which, Mr. Speaker, wasn’t a point of order. This is not a point of order. I would appreciate getting back to speaking, my one chance, to second reading of Bill 9.

**The Speaker:** Well, the good news for you, hon. member, is that the clock is stopped, and you will have that opportunity. The bad news, however, for you: while I appreciate your caution – and I was listening attentively, in fact, during debate. While you did use that phrase, I believe that I gave you a very high eyebrow at that time. As you’ll know, last night at approximately this time I reminded all members that we ought not do indirectly what we can’t do directly.

I am very sympathetic to the Government House Leader’s intervention when he has suggested that all members in the Chamber have been trying to find unique and innovative ways to call each other liars. The Government House Leader has apologized for doing this this week. The members of the opposition benches have apologized for doing this this week. [interjections] I might remind all members that the Speaker is on his feet, and as such they should remain silent while they’re in a sedentary position.

Here’s what I will say. Let us all endeavour to raise the level of decorum and not imply that the government is lying, that individuals are lying. Let’s do our very best to not try to do indirectly what we can’t do directly as my sense is that this will continue to lower the level of decorum and not increase the level of debate. While I won’t be asking for an apology as I do acknowledge that the Official Opposition House Leader was cautious in the way that he approached the situation, I would suggest that if he continues to do so, he will need to apologize and withdraw.

As such, let us continue the debate, where the hon. member has approximately six minutes and nine seconds remaining.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will endeavour to be more cautious with my language.

I think Albertans will see that despite the fact that the government claims that this is just a delay, it is quite clear – in fact, it’s in black and white – that it is not just a delay, that this is going to have a significant impact and, quite frankly, it’s going to have a cost. It’s going to have a cost to Albertans because it is unconstitutional. Again, the Premier and this government, rather than sitting down at the table and bargaining with our public-sector unions, which is something that they have earned, which is something that’s been done for decades, Mr. Speaker, would rather tie this up in the courts, pay a whole bunch of legal fees – you know, probably some friendly firms will benefit from that – and waste time and money as opposed to what our government did.

12:30

When we went through negotiations with labour, we did it in a respectful way, in good faith. This is part of the reason why this is unconstitutional. Legislating before you get to a table is bad faith, which is unconstitutional. Mr. Speaker, you can bet your bottom dollar that there will be court challenges immediately by a number of the very men and women that this government claims to appreciate and support yet – once again actions speak louder than words – is attacking the very people that take care of us, that ensure that we can get to and from work safely. Really, without the folks that this government is attacking – you know what? – we couldn’t do our jobs, quite frankly. It’s not a show of respect and appreciation. Again, it’s a slap in the face.

I know that there are a couple of members in the gallery that are here from labour to see first-hand how this government views unions and talks about them. I don’t have *Hansard* here, but let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I’ll pull it up because there are some choice examples of members like the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and others referring to unions as “thugs,” speaking in this Chamber using that word and speaking very negatively about them, when their goal is to ensure that working people have rights, because it wasn’t that long ago when they didn’t have rights. So this is an affront to them, to Alberta workers, you know, the very people that this government claims to support or stand up for. I mean, the good news, I guess, if there is good news, is that Albertans will see very, very clearly what this is.

I also find it fascinating, the timing of this, Mr. Speaker. I think it's no coincidence that, one, this government is trying to ram this bill through this week and, two, that it's this week that the legislation was tabled, and the government hopes to pass it through, very convenient, in the same week that the Trans Mountain pipeline was approved. I'm sure that the Premier wouldn't try to sneak something in in the cover of darkness, in the middle of the night while Albertans are thinking about some positive news.

This bill is awful. I don't know, quite frankly, if and how many amendments we'll be bringing forward. It should be scrapped. If anything, I think the Premier and this government should apologize to working people for their attack on them. I think that what the government doesn't realize is that in the last four years we haven't had any labour unrest. There are many examples in Alberta's history from not too long ago when the government attacked working people. I don't know if you recall, Mr. Speaker, the wildcat strikes that occurred between 2012 and 2015 at the remand centre and elsewhere because the government decided that it was going to attack workers and take away some of their benefits, all on this, you know, assertion or claim that we need to tighten our belts and times are tough. Again, I think Albertans will see – well, you've just given 4 and a half billion to corporations, so I guess times can't be that tough. But who's paying for it? The men and women that built this province and continue to build this province. So I think it's very, very offensive.

I think the government should sit down at the table with labour, the way we did. We were honest and up front with organized labour and said: "You know what? There are some years that we need to ask you to take a zero per cent salary increase." And they did, Mr. Speaker, because they're reasonable. But bringing forward legislation is not just unconstitutional and unreasonable; it's also, in my opinion, a very arrogant action on behalf of this government.

I can tell you that our caucus will not be supporting this bill, and I am sure that is exactly why the government has closure and I will only get one opportunity to speak to this bill in second reading.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I have seen on a number of occasions this evening the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon trying to catch my eye. As such, 29(2)(a) for a brief question or comment is available to you.

**Mr. Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for letting me rise and be able to speak to this 29(2)(a) and to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I want to start perhaps with a little different tack here. I had the opportunity today, as I was leaving the Chamber after QP, to bump into the gentleman that was sitting up in our gallery here who was from England and had been doing the creation of swords for the various regiments in the Commonwealth. We began talking, and I eventually toured him around Edmonton this afternoon to some of the various military establishments in the nearby area here and had a great time with him and dropped him off at the Hotel Macdonald around 6 o'clock.

One of the comments that he made to me, completely unsolicited, speaks to some of the issues that have been talked about by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview around the issue of decorum. One of his comments, as he was watched question period today, was just how impressed he was with the decorum of the government side of the Chamber and how we appeared to understand that in the thrust and parry of debate there's a time to listen, and then there's a time to talk. It would appear that there are still a few members in this Chamber as we speak that need to remember that there's a time to listen, and then there's a time to talk. I was very glad to have the time to listen to the member across the way from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and, for that matter, to

many of the members across the Chamber, Edmonton-South, et cetera, as they made points about this bill that we're discussing in this Chamber this evening.

I'd like to start by talking about a couple of the points that they've made as we've talked in this Chamber. Perhaps the first one is that without a good public sector – and I would understand, I guess, that what he's really talking about is a well-paid public sector – there would be no business in this province. I believe that's pretty much, almost, a direct quote from the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, and I guess that really speaks to the difference between the way we see things on this side of the House and the way they see things on that side of the House.

Honestly, when I talk with my constituents, they understand this very clearly: if we don't have a society that has the capacity to generate wealth, then you cannot generate taxes, and when you cannot generate taxes, Mr. Speaker, then you cannot provide the services that are necessary to be able to meet the needs of the public. If you cannot generate the taxes and you cannot generate the services, then you will not be able to hire public servants to meet the needs of the people of Alberta, and that's a very crucial difference of opinion and a point of view when it comes to this side of the House and the opposite members, that you have to be able to create an economy that allows you to be able to generate wealth so that you can indeed take care of those that are less fortunate and that you can hire the public servants that allow you to be able to do that, to do the very good things that we all agree on in this House like educating our students, like meeting the health care needs of our people, and like helping those that cannot help themselves. But you have to be able to generate the wealth first.

**12:40**

Now, that's why it's a little rich when I remember back to 2015 and back to some of the debates on Bill 6 or the carbon levy or tax, as we called it, or the electricity decisions, taking the rollback off coal and into natural gas and the jobs that I lost in my constituency because of that decision, because of the stranded assets that were left in the ground, because of the lawsuits that came out of that. I can remember standing up in this House and saying very clearly: "Listen. You know what? Compassion is not limited to one side or the other of this House." I would listen to the other members on this side when they speak their concern for workers and for their rights and for the capacity to take care of their families. I don't think compassion is limited to one side or the other on either side of this House. But what I would argue and what I argued in 2015 is that the people that are really compassionate . . .

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

Are there others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka is rising.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We spent the night here listening to the opposition raise all the drama they can and whip up all the fear and anxiety they possibly can and tramp around in the swamp as much as possible, but I think we should actually take the advice of one of the members who suggested: why don't we actually read the legal stuff? I have in my hand a copy of the collective agreement, a signed copy – I think 11 signatures on behalf of the employer and eight on behalf of the bargaining team. It says, "The undersigned hereby certify that the foregoing Collective Agreement properly sets forth the terms and conditions agreed upon in negotiations." That's on page 74.

I've read all 74 pages, up to that point that's been signed. There's not one bit in there that actually refers to the content of the bill that the government has put forward. You will find that part about 10



pages further on. There's a salary schedule addendum. There are a couple of other small addenda. You get to page 85, way past the signed portion of the actual agreement. We're down in a bunch of addenda. We have there a small paragraph that actually isn't even signed. After that it goes on to an additional letter of understanding with regard to some other issues.

But we have this little addendum at the end here, that talks about the three-year April 1, 2019, wage reopener. It says, "The Parties shall commence negotiations . . . on the wages payable in Year 3 (April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020) . . . no earlier than January 15, 2019."

In spite of the fact that we have the opposition continually bringing up that this government is trying to attack every aspect of the civil service, that we're trying to destroy democracy, that we're trying to create illegal agreements, in spite of all of this fearmongering and drama, literally, false passion and all the rest of it, what we actually have here, the part that the government bill actually refers to says simply – and I read it because I doubt that any of the opposition members have actually read it – that "the Parties agree that the only item open for negotiations shall be wages in the Salary Appendices . . ." Then it goes on to say a little bit farther down that "this reopener shall not be construed in any way as [actually] "opening the agreement" for negotiations on any other issues by either side."

So we have all of these things that they keep dragging forth as if we're attacking every aspect of the collective agreement, as if we want to destroy it, as if we want to tear it apart and shred it, an agreement that we're talking about that actually says that is not what's supposed to be happening. They say we haven't read it? They haven't read it.

Then it goes on a little bit further. It says that "any wage adjustment under this wage reopener shall be retroactive to April 1, 2019." I neglected to state at the beginning that this agreement actually doesn't even end until March 31, 2020. So all through this whole period of time the wages are going to continue in force, everybody is going to get paid, the entire collective agreement continues to exist just as it was – none of it can be reopened for negotiation by either side – and when it does finally get agreed to, it's all retroactive anyway. All of this drama and attack and nonsense is just almost unbelievable. It's fearmongering of the ultimate degree. I don't think that they've actually read their own agreement, because I have it in my hand and I'm reading from it.

Mr. Speaker, I just find it astounding, some of the things that have been said. I think that it truly is just meant to – I don't know. Maybe they still think they're campaigning. Maybe it's just because in their DNA they like to be revolutionaries. Maybe they just want to stir up opposition to this government in the hopes that somehow they will regain some sense of credibility. But I think they're just digging themselves a deeper and a deeper and a deeper hole. Because the agreement is still in force to its full effect until April 2020, as the government has said, we're simply asking for a delay in order to have a fair and an equitable opportunity to negotiate.

Now, I understand that everybody who goes into a negotiation wants to get the advantage on their side and wants to take the whole thing in a way that puts them in a favourable position against their opponent. I understand that, sure, they would like to be able to force the negotiations – actually, the arbitrator – prior to the government having the opportunity to understand where we're at. It would put them in a favourable negotiating position. But the truth of the matter is that we did actually, my understanding is, speak to the union leaders and ask for the opportunity to delay this a little bit. To their right, they chose not to. But then to turn around and say that we're bullying them and that we're overriding them and that we're

running over top of them is completely ludicrous. It just simply isn't the case.

We have an agreement that will stay in force until March of 2020. We've simply asked to delay a couple of months so that we can have a fair and an equitable negotiating time. All this other drama, Mr. Speaker, is nothing but just drama.

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

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am always pleasantly surprised when you recognize me, and of course I will take the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview's example of cautious phraseology when I choose my words in response to the remarks from the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

I want to thank the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka for his astute legal analysis of the collective agreements. I certainly will be making sure that my children don't ever attend a law school that this member intends to open up, Mr. Speaker, because this has been an incredible – an incredible – reading of the collective agreement, to suggest that it's no big deal to just scrap one part of the collective agreement, you know, that legislating, passing illegal legislation against the wishes of 200,000 public-sector workers is somehow not bullying.

You know, he doesn't understand why we would be upset except that it's in our nature to be revolutionaries. Certainly, on the topic of revolutionaries I wanted to remind the House that the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka in I believe it was the fall of 2017 warned this House that if we were to legalize cannabis, Mr. Speaker, that we would certainly be heading down the path to Communist revolution. I'm still waiting for the revolution to break to break out. I can certainly say that my own use of cannabis hasn't made me any more or less revolutionary than before, and I certainly don't see signs of that here in Alberta, broadly speaking.

12:50

Mr. Speaker, I also take offence at the member's suggestion that none of us have read the collective agreements. Certainly, as Minister of Advanced Education – and when I get to my regular speaking time, I will delve more deeply into this – I was continually apprised of the stated negotiations with a lot of the units that are listed here in the legislation: Alberta college of art and design, Athabasca University, Bow Valley College, Keyano College, Lakeland College, Lethbridge College. A lot of the workers that benefited from employment at agencies that I oversaw in my term as Minister of Advanced Education are definitely being targeted in this bill. If that has anything to do with, you know, the way that I have treated the members opposite, I'm sorry. If an apology will help stop this attack on the good workers of these educational institutions, then I would certainly offer that up.

I was continually apprised of the state of negotiations with all of these units, Mr. Speaker, so I'm more than well aware. Certainly, you know, I've been following this for years whereas the member just happened to flip through it here briefly while he was sitting here listening to debate in the last couple of minutes. For him to suggest that none of us are even aware of what's in the collective agreement is almost as ludicrous as his suggestion previously that legalizing cannabis would send Alberta down the road to Communist revolution.

Mr. Speaker, it's ridiculous to say that this is no big deal, that we're only – we're only – attacking one part of the collective agreement by passing illegal legislation here in this House, so why should we be concerned? You know, it's certainly indicative of the

government's willingness to run roughshod over collective bargaining rights using the powers of the legislation that are given to them. Why would we be upset about that? Who could possibly understand why people would want a government that honours the contracts that it signs in good faith with 200,000 working Albertans?

Mr. Speaker, again, I'll just remind everybody in the House that I won't take any lectures from the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka. I certainly won't be endorsing his law school if he ever chooses to open one.

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you, hon. member.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 9? I see the hon. the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the time between the last speaker's comments and my opportunity to rise to speak to this debate, I had some further thoughts on this matter. You know, I know that we're only a few hours into debate and that there is much ground that has yet to be covered.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I want to talk a little bit this evening about the impacts on rural Alberta that this legislation will have. Certainly, I want to talk about two issues related to rural Alberta. One is education and economic development, and the other is rural crime, Madam Speaker. On the topic of rural crime we've heard the members opposite on a number of occasions get up and talk about the rising epidemic of rural crime. Certainly, the UCP platform in the 2019 election had a couple of pages dedicated to talking about rural crime. You know, they tried to tell us that we didn't do enough even though we voted for an extra \$50 million in the budget, that they refused to vote for. Of course, the election platform talks about how tough on crime they're going to be.

Yet here we have a government that's actually knowingly committing a crime. They know that this legislation is going to be illegal, and they know that throwing out the duly negotiated contracts with all of these organizations listed in the bill is illegal. It's interesting to me that a party that prides itself on being a government of law and order would so willingly break the law when it comes to contracts.

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order, Madam.

**The Acting Speaker:** Go ahead, hon. member.

#### Point of Order

#### Imputing Falsehoods against a Member

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Under 23(h), (i), and (j), certainly, to be so direct as to suggest that anyone in this Chamber is knowingly breaking the law, to suggest that anyone in Executive Council is knowingly breaking the law is completely ludicrous and is indeed false. These are "allegations against another Member," "imputes false or unavowed motives," and, certainly, "likely to create disorder" in the House.

I would argue, Madam Speaker, that the hon. member, who is certainly familiar with points of order – in fact, I would almost argue that he would probably have his own time out corner, if that was the case, because there have been so many points of order against him. I would just suggest and caution him to maybe choose other language than making accusations against any member in this government that they are breaking the law. I mean, I think there has been some leeway here, and I think that people in your position as the Speaker have provided that leeway, but to be so direct, as he has

been, I think is completely outrageous. He certainly needs to withdraw those comments and apologize.

Thank you.

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Speaker, I don't think this is a point of order for a couple of reasons. Number one, throughout this whole evening we have talked about how this bill is unconstitutional and illegal, or breaking the law. The member did not identify any individual member as breaking the law or that their behaviour is. It's the government bringing forward a bill that is unconstitutional, which I will point out has been said by about 15 of my colleagues throughout the whole evening. Not once was that a point of order or did it cause disorder, yet it appears that the government has it out for the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and was even referenced by the hon. government whip when he said: look at the number of times that he's had points of order against him. That is irrelevant in an individual point of order. It's not a score that is being kept on individual members.

For that reason, it's not a point of order. It's a difference of opinion. I believe the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was merely referring to the fact that it is unconstitutional, and we will see that in the coming weeks should this bill pass in this House.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Speaker, the difference between what the Opposition House Leader just presented and what the chief government whip was presenting is that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar said that the government was committing a crime. The language changed significantly in that hon. member's presentation from what the Opposition House Leader just presented. Now, he may not have heard that – I don't know – but that is what he said, which is significantly different than what the Opposition House Leader just defended.

As for the concerns about the chief whip having it out for the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, I can assure you that that is not the case, though I am shocked to hear that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is excited to hear that he gets more points of order found against him than anybody else in the Chamber. That could be his record that he can take away from this place, but certainly he should not be calling the government criminals.

**The Acting Speaker:** Do you have anything to add, hon. member, that's of relevance to the debate?

**Mr. Dang:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South, and then that's it.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Very clearly – I would encourage you to check the Blues – the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar did not use the words "committing a crime." It is very clear and there is a long history of precedent in this House that matters of opinion that are presented by members of this Assembly are actually matters of debate. In many cases, as the current Speaker of the Assembly has ruled many times, this House may be required to accept multiple versions of the facts. I really do believe that this is not a point of order.

Thank you.

1:00

**The Acting Speaker:** Well, thank you, hon. members. I was wondering when I took the chair if this was going to happen.

To be clear, there has been significant leeway in this House around this bill specifically and discussion around whether it is illegal or it is not. It has been recommended in the past that when

these conversations are happening, it needs to be directed to government policy and directed at the government as a whole and not individuals. I did not hear the specifics around the term “criminal actions.” However, I am going to caution the member to rethink the debate and how you will continue to discuss this bill specifically. I would say at this point that it’s not a point of order.

The hon. member.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, I am also not a lawyer, so perhaps the difference between breaking the law and committing a crime is a difference that is lost on me, and I will be much more careful with my language. Certainly, I didn’t want to imply that the government is doing anything criminal, but I was absolutely clear that they are knowingly breaking the law.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I can say that with every confidence because, having sat in cabinet myself, I know that when legislation is brought forward, the lawyers that work for the public service provide advice to the members in cabinet on whether or not a law will be constitutional. Unless they’ve wholesale changed the legal staff in the public service, I am certain that the lawyers who are providing advice to cabinet did warn the members opposite in cabinet that it was unconstitutional. If they didn’t, Mr. Speaker, I would strongly advise them to hire different lawyers.

Anyway, it is bizarre to see the members opposite say that, you know, they’re not breaking the law, that all they are doing is delaying a date for arbitration from now until the end of October. If we were to draw and analogy to a criminal circumstance – to be clear, this is not a criminal circumstance – it would be like catching somebody who stole a car and then them explaining to the police officer that they didn’t steal it, that they were just borrowing it for a little while. That’s exactly what the government is trying to do with this legislation when they say it’s not illegal to break the collective bargaining agreements that they’re only seeking to delay.

It is illegal, and they are breaking the law in rural communities all across this province. They’re certainly breaking the law when it comes to, you know, the AUPE employees at the Lamont health care centre, the HSAA employees at the Lamont health care centre, and the Bethany Group. Alberta Innovates, I know, has a site in Vegreville, and they’re doing a lot of interesting things related to agricultural production, innovation there. Athabasca University represents a number of employees who live in the town of Athabasca. InnoTech, Keyano College, Lakeland College, Lethbridge College. Northern Lakes College has some 23 sites distributed all throughout northwestern Alberta. That affects employees in a number of ridings represented by government caucus members. Olds College, Red Deer College: those two institutions, Mr. Speaker, you’re well aware of the valuable contributions that they make to rural Alberta not just in the communities of Red Deer and Olds, but they also provide education services in towns like Ponoka and Stettler and Drumheller, for example, through the Campus Alberta central.

You know, it’s bewildering to me that the members opposite, of course, talk about what they’re doing to prevent law-breaking in rural communities, and then their ninth act of legislation breaks the law in a whole host of rural communities, but I guess it only matters that they’re breaking the laws that they don’t like whereas the people that they want to bring to justice are breaking the laws that they do like.

The further point is the valuable educational services that these institutions provide. Mr. Speaker, in my time as Minister of

Advanced Education I had the opportunity to visit all of the colleges and universities that are listed here, and I know that the members who work at these institutions provide valuable services to the students as well as the faculty and administration at each of these institutions. Without them, they wouldn’t be able to conduct the teaching and research that provides such a valuable resource to citizens all across this province. Indeed, it’s really the rural colleges that stand to lose the most with labour unrest. Certainly, institutions like – I want to talk about Northern Lakes College because that’s certainly one of the institutions that’s doing a lot of good work in providing education for rural and indigenous students in northern Alberta. Mr. Speaker, most of the students that attend these colleges are attending the only postsecondary educational institution that’s available to them. Most of these students live in communities that are very, very far away from Edmonton and Calgary, and it’s almost impossible for those students to make the trip to Edmonton or Calgary to attend university or college in the big city for a whole host of reasons, cost being one of them, transportation barriers being another. Certainly, the culture shock of moving from their hometowns to a big city like Edmonton or Calgary is a big barrier for a lot of people to overcome.

So it’s critical that we be able to provide high-quality education to citizens in these communities. By the work of the people who are represented by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees in these institutions, they can get that education that they need to go on to become the trained workers and professionals that their communities rely on. Certainly, when I talked to lots of people at Northern Lakes College, the college has an aboriginal teacher education program that trains indigenous students from northern Alberta to become teachers, and that’s often the only way that many of these communities in northern Alberta can get teachers to come to their communities, by sending their own students to this college to take the training and then return home.

My concern is that by creating all of this labour unrest, by ripping up contracts and making this unconstitutional move to destroy collective bargaining with these agencies, it’s going to put students at risk, Mr. Speaker, and it’s going to have an impact on thousands of students, especially in rural Alberta, thousands of students who don’t have the means to get an education, who don’t have a lot of other opportunities for education. When those students lose that opportunity for education, then their whole communities lose out. I hate to think of how many classrooms are going to go without teachers because students have lost the opportunity to take the teacher training, that they’re going to not have people trained to be paramedics or licensed practical nurses or social workers because they’ve lost the opportunity to receive that kind of education at these institutions because the members opposite have decided to agitate the workers and create all of this labour unrest by making this unconstitutional move.

1:10

In a time when, certainly, rural Albertans have borne the brunt of the economic downturn and certainly have a disadvantage when it comes to receiving higher education, it makes no sense to be weakening the higher education system in the very communities that stand to gain the most from a strong higher education system, Mr. Speaker. I don’t understand how the members opposite can run around claiming to be champions of rural Alberta education and rural economic development when they’re attacking the very foundations of education and rural economic development in their very own communities. I hope that the members opposite take the opportunity to reflect on this, go back to their communities, and talk to their constituents about the value of the education that is provided by these institutions and the possible negative consequences that

the students who attend those institutions would suffer if they create the kind of labour unrest that they seem to be intent on creating through passing this legislation. I can tell you from my own experience that rural Alberta communities will be hit hardest, and it will have a significant, lengthy impact on those communities that it will take a long time to recover from.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker, how much time I have left. I just want to make a pitch for Lakeland College in particular. I've got one minute. I know that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed is a good friend of the Premier of Saskatchewan. I would urge him to talk to the Premier of Saskatchewan and get the government of Saskatchewan to fund Lakeland College. We have a lot of Saskatchewan students who pay domestic tuition to Lakeland College, and of course we know that the operating budget of that institution is funded entirely by the people of Alberta. I don't think that that's fair.

So if they're looking for ways to cut the budgets of institutions, I would hope that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed and his fellows on Executive Council would reach out to the government of Saskatchewan and ask them to pony up for the high-quality education that has been provided to many citizens of Saskatchewan at a reduced cost due to the generosity of the people of Alberta for years and years and maybe ask them to reach into their own pockets and pay for the education of Saskatchewan students and not take that money out of the pockets of the AUPE workers who are providing those critical services to the students who are learning and will contribute so much to the fabric of this province and the province of Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** I was just riveted by what the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has been talking about and his plea for Lakeland College, and I do believe that he probably has a lot more that he could say requesting government to advocate for the many, many different agreements that are going to be impacted by this. I think that it's really important that he get to continue talking about his concerns and be able to express our general concern with where this bill is going. With that, I would like the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to continue.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. I was struggling to find how it was relevant to the debate, but perhaps the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar will be able to ensure that his pleas are also relevant to the debate that's before us.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit hurt that you would suggest that my comments weren't relevant to debate. You know, I will try to make it as relevant as I can.

Obviously, the government is looking for a place to make money, right? Rather than reaching into the pockets of the hard-working people who provide educational services, support services at Lakeland College, they could call up the Premier of Saskatchewan and say: "Hey, we're educating your students at no cost to you right now. Do you think that's fair?" Of course, I think built on the strong relationships that are clearly evident between the Member for Calgary-Lougheed and the current Premier of Saskatchewan, perhaps there would be a fruitful resolution to that issue, and they wouldn't have to reach into the pockets of the AUPE workers who are there at Lakeland College.

I wanted to talk a little bit about, you know, some other examples of valuable educational opportunities that are put at risk by this legislation. And thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for her question. I remember fondly visiting the campus of Lethbridge College, where they have a wind turbine installation program, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, during the time of our government Alberta became a continent leader in investment in wind energy, and the demand for people with the training to go to work in the wind sector was going through the roof. That will likely change since the members opposite are ideologically opposed to wind, other than the wind that's generated by their own members.

You know, we need to move to a renewable energy sector as quickly as we can. Certainly, I would agree with the Pope, who has also told us that we need to move to a renewable energy economy as quickly as possible. Lethbridge College is training a number of people to be able to go to work in that sector. If we create this labour unrest that the members opposite are intent to create with this very legislation that we're talking about, that puts not just the students' education at risk but Alberta's ability to move to a renewable energy economy at risk. We don't know how many potential wind turbine technicians we're going to lose as a result of this bill, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I know that I won't find too many sympathetic ears when it comes to renewable energy, but I certainly hope that we would find some sympathetic ears when it comes to fossil fuel development. I can certainly speak to the excellent work that Keyano College does in training the power engineers and other related technicians who are required to work in the oil sands industry in Fort McMurray. There is no better place to learn about working in that industry than Keyano College. They've invested significant resources in developing their ability to train people to go to work in the oil sands industry. That industry will also be put at risk because of the government's intent to create labour unrest at that institution, Mr. Speaker, and I think that that's a shame.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, if I might just provide a comment prior to calling the Government House Leader. I think that it's fair – when the Speaker makes an error in the Chamber, he'll be happy to apologize. Certainly, those comments were relevant, and my interjection was unwarranted.

I see the hon. Government House Leader rising. I'm happy to hear what his . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I'm confused, Mr. Speaker, if you're asking me something. I wasn't following. I'm intending to speak.

**The Speaker:** You have no opportunity to speak because you've already . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Because I already moved it. Yes; you're right. Correct.

**The Speaker:** If you're intending to speak to the bill, you are unable to do so as you moved the previous question. If you are perhaps moving a motion that I was unaware of, I recognize you to do so.

If there are any other members that wish to speak to the bill, now would be your opportunity to do so. I see that the hon. Member for Calgary-West has risen.

1:20

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, Bill 9 – I've been listening intently to the opposition as they have argued their case per se.

You know, I've certainly had an opportunity even to talk with my friend here from Leduc-Beaumont, who is a former police officer as well and somebody that was part of an association, both he and I, although one in Edmonton and one in Calgary. Certainly, we were part of collective bargaining agreements. We were somewhat reminiscing and talking about how there had been times where for two – I think in his case he mentioned two years. I think in my case I remember anywhere from two to three years where we were without a collective bargaining agreement and were still in negotiations with the city at that particular time.

You know, I reminisced with him as far as: what did we do? Well, we put our nose down and we just continued to work. At some point the agreement would eventually be reached and then there would be some form of compensation that would be paid back to us over a period of time, but that's just part of the process.

On Bill 9, to sit there and reflect and go, "You know what? We are looking for a few months after the complete fiscal disaster that the NDP had left us in so that we have an understanding of what the books are, the way the layout of the economy is" is not unreasonable. In fact, for them to insinuate or suggest that they have somehow, we'll say, *carte blanche* or some sort of ownership over all public-sector workers is completely false. I know full well many public-sector workers who are constituents, who are friends, who are people I've known for well over 20 years who do not support in any way the NDP.

I myself am a police officer. The gentleman from Leduc-Beaumont is a police officer. The hon. minister here just to my left is a social worker. Well, big surprise; we have a teacher over here from Drayton Valley-Devon. We have construction businesspeople. We have a carpenter, I learned only today, right? I mean, these are working-class people that understand the situation that the NDP has left us in, and that is why we had a victory on April 16, an overwhelming mandate from the people of Alberta with well over 55 per cent of the vote. That was a clear mandate saying that we want fiscal responsibility and we want restraint on spending. That's not unreasonable. To ask for a few months, just a few months, for us to take a look at this complete mess that we have been left is not an unreasonable ask from the people of this province.

When I take a look at this bill – you know, I know that we've had fun with our friend who is the Opposition House Leader when he was referred to as, in jest, the minister of one job, during the previous Legislature – I look at this bill as being almost three times larger than his bill, which was his job-description bill. I say that in jest with him. Certainly, we have talked offline.

I just want to reflect back when I reflect on Bill 9. Again, the comment on the people in this Chamber – you know, I cannot speak for the folks in the opposition, but I can speak for the hard-working people that spent months and months talking, door after door, to constituent after constituent. Certain cases and certain constituencies had unprecedented numbers – unprecedented numbers – of people who purchased memberships with the United Conservative Party to support this vision of bringing the Wildrose Party and the Progressive Conservative Party together. Again, things that were completely unprecedented. This did not happen by chance. This was not a fluke. This was hard work that was done at a grassroots level. So when we sit here and talk about asking for just a few months' grace – that's it, a few months' grace – to look at the disaster that has been placed in front of Treasury Board and Finance and has been placed in front of this government is again something, Mr. Speaker, that is not at all unreasonable.

You know, I know that there are always these references to – I heard references about rural crime. Look, I mean, we worked hard. We worked hard in putting together a rural crime report. We went

and talked to not just constituents, but we went out. Myself being from an urban riding, I remember going to your constituency, Mr. Speaker – and I think it was Three Hills – and talking to the frustrated people. We questioned the government. Where were they at the time? Where were they? They didn't go to any of these town hall meetings. I heard references earlier about listening to rural Albertans. Well, rural Albertans, they spoke, and they spoke very clearly on April 16, and that's why you see the majority that you see in the House that represents a good portion of rural Alberta.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** All of it.

**Mr. Ellis:** All. In fact, you're right. You're right, sir. Right? I mean, unless somebody can correct me, I think all of rural Alberta is part of the United Conservative Party. Again, that's something that is, I would say, to be almost unprecedented. Certainly, if somebody wants to look up the numbers on that – but the point is that we went.

We talked to constituents. We went to these town halls, you know, and these people have an understanding – an understanding – of what needed to be done. They knew – they knew – that there were going to be some tough decisions because of the massive fiscal hole that we have been left. As our Premier has stated, I think publicly, the numbers are bad. The numbers are really, really bad, and I'm sure at some point we're going to have that day where those numbers are going to be released. This is important. It's important. I see members of Executive Council here. I see our Premier in the wee hours of the morning, according to my watch 1:30 in the morning. We're here because we care. We care about Alberta. We care about the hole that was left by the previous government.

I know it was discussed already earlier about the history of Alberta, the history, you know, over a hundred years. We had one government that was there for 44 years. Another government was there for 36 years. Other governments were there for longer. It was unprecedented that we would have a one-term government. Unprecedented. It was given a clear mandate during the last election to have the fiscal responsibility to look at the books, and that's really what we're doing right now with Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. It gives us an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to look at where we are, how we got there, and we have a fantastic panel, what I would call a blue-ribbon panel, led by a former NDP Finance minister, right? Like, are they criticizing that, a former NDP Finance minister, right? They're going to come back with these recommendations. They're going to find out where we are as far as the previous government, the hole that they left us in.

1:30

This is something that, Mr. Speaker, is important to Albertans. It's important to Albertans as to where we are, but also it's important to Albertans as to how we got to where we are and also a plan as to where we're going. That's important. To sit there and to take a prudent approach, to sit there and be cautious: there's nothing wrong with that. That's reasonable, right? It's all we're asking: common sense, reason; slow things down; proceed with caution. We cannot have an open chequebook where we're just writing cheques. It's just not fiscally responsible.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close my remarks, and I certainly thank you very much for your time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see that the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me, and thank you to the hon. government whip for his comments. I note the time, so I will try to be brief with the time that I have. I just wanted to point out a couple of things after listening to the

debate for the last six hours this evening. I'd be curious about the chief whip's thoughts on this. It's been interesting to listen to the opposition members get up in this Assembly all night and last night as well and say that closure had been brought in on them, on this legislation, that they weren't going to be able to debate this legislation, and that they were being capped at one hour. I heard some of the members say that, that they couldn't speak to the bill and that this was a big affront to democracy. I feel that it's important to be clear to the Chamber what has taken place.

First of all, last night in this Chamber until about 3, 3:15 in the morning the opposition debated this piece of legislation for just over eight hours and this evening have now reach about six hours, which is a total of 14 hours, and we're only on second reading of the legislation. That's significantly longer than one hour. In addition to that, 22 members of the 24-member opposition caucus have spoken to this legislation so far on second reading alone.

**Mr. Kenney:** I thought we weren't letting them speak.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** If we weren't letting them speak, that's quite shocking. I don't know how you can make that argument with a straight face in this Chamber, though. We've watched them for 14 hours make the argument that they've only been here for one hour, and we've watched them for 14 hours as each and every one of the opposition got up one after another and said that they weren't being allowed to speak. It's kind of bizarre, Mr. Speaker, but that was their approach to this legislation. That is their right, to be able to approach debate however they want. It's their right to be able to communicate in this House. Whether they're communicating effectively or not: I won't judge on that.

But here's the reality. I have not as the Government House Leader moved a closure or time allocation motion on second reading, and I sense that it is about to pass second reading this evening. I will see what happens. I think the vote is imminent without a time allocation motion before the House. In fact, I would note for the House, with two members of the opposition caucus who still haven't spoken to it, that they're welcome to speak to it when we yield the floor here shortly, but what will likely happen here in a few short minutes is that you will call the question, second reading will take place after two votes, and off this legislation will proceed through the House. Again, we have two opposition members left that are welcome to speak to the bill if they like with no time allocation motion on the table. I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South, I think, continued to say that time allocation had been moved. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there has been no time allocation motion moved.

Lastly, just a reminder: 14 hours of debate so far, and we're not done on this legislation. It's important to us to be able to make sure that all members have an opportunity to debate this important motion. Again, as we move through to the next stages, I would encourage the members of the opposition to focus more on actually debating the bill that is in front of our House instead of spending their time trying to say that they're not being allowed to debate for 15 or 20 minutes while they're discussing that they're not allowed to debate. I think that's pretty fair, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I look forward to seeing if I'm correct in that the vote is imminent.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-West, there's approximately a minute and 25 seconds left.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, wonderful. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to have a final word here. You know, I concur with what the hon. Government House Leader has said. It's been 14 hours' worth of debate, so to suggest

in any way that there hasn't been an ample amount of time to talk about this – you know, when we listen here, the vast majority is not necessarily debate about the bill itself. The vast majority of the time, of the 15 minutes being used by each member, is usually in reference to a suggestion that they've only had an hour's worth of debate. We respectfully disagree with that opinion, right?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** It's a fact.

**Mr. Ellis:** I agree. Yes, the facts do disagree with what has actually happened.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you again for the opportunity. Again, Bill 9 is just a simple way to allow the government, the Executive Council, to take a look at the books, to give our Finance minister an opportunity to look at the fiscal mess that has been presented before him.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others wishing to speak to the previous question on Bill 9?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the previous question carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:37 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Madu	Rutherford
Barnes	McIver	Sawhney
Dreeshen	Milliken	Schulz
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hunter	Rehn	Stephan
Kenney	Reid	Turton
Loewen	Rosin	Walker
Lovely	Rowswell	Wilson
Luan		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Schmidt
Carson	Gray	Sweet
Dang	Irwin	

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 8
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[Motion on previous question on Bill 9 carried]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am hesitant to recognize the Opposition House Leader because, as he would know, we're going to proceed to the question on second reading, but seeing that we've come this far, perhaps I'll entertain what he has to say.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I request unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 49(3) I must now immediately put the question on the original motion for second reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:55 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Madu	Rutherford
Barnes	McIver	Sawhney
Dreeshen	Milliken	Schulz
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
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Against the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Schmidt
Carson	Gray	Sweet
Dang	Irwin	

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 8
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[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

## 2:00 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 10 Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 10 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

### Bill 9 Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I will have lots more to say on this, just not this evening. With that, I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Chair, I move that we rise and report Bill 10 and that we rise and report progress on Bill 9.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 10. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 9.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

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

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate all members of the House and want to just thank them, through you, for all their hard work tonight and thank them for all the progress that we've been able to do, and as such, I will move to adjourn the House till tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 2:04 a.m. on Wednesday]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 19, 2019

Day 16

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
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Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henda (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
and Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer.

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of power and responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, joining us this afternoon from the constituency of Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland is the Camilla school. If you'd like to welcome the school group.

Hon. members, in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon I'm happy to welcome Joanne Penner Herron. She's joining us from Lethbridge.

Hon. members, joining us this afternoon are the father and brother of the Minister of Service Alberta, Brian and Bennett Glubish.

Guests of the Minister of Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women today are Debra Tomlinson, Corinne Ofstie, Katie Kitschke, Patricia Arango, Stephanie Hadley, Samantha Pearson, and Mary Jane James.

Also joining us this afternoon, guests of the Minister of Labour and Immigration: Mohamed Alkadi, Vivian Feng, Jacqueline and Felix Sennyah, Mervin Cereno, Adrian Untalan, Chinoso Obiorah, Margaret Amangyen, Jennifer Bertrand, Dr. Troy Davies, Carlos Exclamador, and Marjorie Newman. I invite them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Democracy and Parliamentary Debate

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, what is democracy? Democracy is the vital concept that underpins our great province's system of government. Democracy is what allows 4.3 million Albertans, each with their own unique views, to live with one another in peace and prosperity.

To most of us democracy means free and fair elections on a regular schedule, and to be sure, that is a key part of it, but another part of democracy is the idea that those who are victorious in any election will govern well, not just for those who supported them but for all. Democracy also means having the ability to present alternative viewpoints to the government of the day. Some might even argue that it's this last part, having an official space for differing views, that is the real distinction between democracies and dictatorships. As we all know, many countries that toil under dictatorial leaders still have so-called elections.

It is, therefore, the lengthy debates that we have in this House and the ability of the opposition to suggest alternatives to the government's course that truly make up our democracy. That is why I'm so thoroughly disappointed by the recent actions of this government, Mr. Speaker. The recent decision by this government to pre-emptively shut down debate on Bill 9 is not just bad etiquette, but it quite literally constitutes an assault on our democracy itself.

I can understand that the government members may not like to hear the opposition explain to them the ways in which Bill 9 breaks the law and how eventually the Supreme Court of Canada will undo Bill 9's disregard for collectively bargained contracts, but it is the ability to speak these truths to power that make our province a democracy, Mr. Speaker.

While this government is free to bring forward as much deeply flawed legislation as they wish, I would ask them to recognize that their recent actions to pre-emptively shut down debate take them to an even worse low. There have been plenty of flawed pieces of legislation in this place, Mr. Speaker, but it is the debate itself that allows us to call this province a democracy, and I ask the government to get back to honouring their oath and maintaining it as such.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

#### International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and acknowledge June 19 as the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. This date was chosen to commemorate the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1820, in which the council condemned sexual violence as a tactic of war, an impediment to peace building. The term "conflict-related sexual violence" refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence perpetrated against women, men, girls, or boys that is indirectly linked to a conflict.

The year 2019 marks the 10-year anniversary of the establishment of the mandate of the special representative of the UN Secretary-General on sexual violence and conflict. Over the past decade there has been a fundamental shift in the understanding of conflict-related sexual violence as a threat to international peace and security. Threats of sexual violence leave entire communities of potential victims living in fear. This fear is used as a weapon by occupying forces to pacify the population and reinforce their grip on the community. This year's International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict will call for a survivor-centered approach that builds the resilience of affected individuals while minimizing the risk of retraumatization, social alienation, and stigma. No individual should be subjected to the kind of trauma these individuals are subjected to in conflict zones every single day.

Our United Conservative government stands in support with the victims of sexual assault and sexual violence, whether it's here in Alberta or anywhere in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May God bless the victims of these tragedies.

#### Government Policies

**Mr. Dang:** Team Angry, Mr. Speaker. That's what the government likes to sling at the Official Opposition when they've run out of insults. [interjections] Now, the government thinks that's degrading for some reason.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there is a long-standing tradition of absolutely no heckling during Members' Statements. I'd ask that the hon. member have the opportunity to restart the clock to two minutes, and he can begin again should he wish.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you. Team Angry. That's what the government likes to sling at the Official Opposition when they've run out of

insults and heckles. Now, the government thinks that's degrading for some reason. But, Mr. Speaker, I am angry.

I'm angry because this is a government which has no respect for Albertans or democracy. I'm angry because this is a government that decided to introduce Bill Hate, a bill which directly targets LGBTQ2S-plus kids and destroys GSAs. I'm angry because this government introduced legislation to break the law and attack the rights of workers. I am angry that this government is picking the pockets of everyday families to give a 4 and a half billion dollar tax break to their wealthy friends. I'm angry because this government is moving forward with risky ideological P3s that will hurt education and health care all across this province. I'm angry that this government doesn't tell the truth when it comes to their risky ideological privatization towards American-style health care. I'm angry that this government is cutting the minimum wage of young Albertans. It said, quote, people of modest human capital don't need to be paid fairly.

I'm angry that this government has protected and stood by candidates and party members who are white supremacists, racists, and who have compared the pride flag to a swastika. I'm angry that this government's House leader fired a woman for reporting sexual harassment and then was promoted. I'm angry that this government is trying to reopen long-settled issues like women's rights and reproductive rights. I am angry that this government hides from the media, refuses to answer questions of the public, and doesn't tell the truth to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, when the government calls us Team Angry, I want them to know that they're right. I am angry. I'm angry on behalf of all Albertans and all of those who were misled by this government. I'm angry because I know how important it is for us to keep fighting for the rights of our constituents. I will never stop standing up against injustices committed by this government.

Thank you. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

### Kiwanis Club of Calgary Centennial

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour today to rise in the House to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Kiwanis Club of Calgary. The Kiwanis Club is an international organization, with over 550,000 Kiwanians, dedicated to improving the lives of children one community at a time. The Kiwanis Club in Alberta began in Calgary and was founded by a group of World War I veterans on this very day in 1919. One of the most well-known Kiwanis Club initiatives is Kamp Kiwanis, which finds its home just east of Bragg Creek in the heart of our beautiful provincial riding of Banff-Kananaskis.

**1:40**

When I look back on my life growing up, some of my favourite childhood memories stem from attending summer camp year after year. Summer camp provided me and my friends the opportunity to get out in nature and just be kids while also learning independence while living away from our parents for a week. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend summer camp for many years of my life and eventually went on to become a camp counsellor for two summers. But not every child has the opportunity I had, and that is why Kamp Kiwanis exists.

Kamp Kiwanis is specifically for children from underprivileged or disadvantaged backgrounds. Every child who attends Kamp Kiwanis is one hundred per cent subsidized, allowing children who would not normally get to experience the joys of summer camp the gift of doing so. Last year 546 children between grades 4 and 12

were given the privilege of attending camp, all thanks to the work that the Kiwanis Club of Calgary and their generous donors do. Kamp Kiwanis also hosts an outdoor school and rents their facilities out to other community groups to run programs out of. Between all the services they offer, Kamp Kiwanis welcomes over 11,000 campers, students, and community members every single year. Kamp Kiwanis is a wonderful initiative, and I am proud to have them operate in my riding.

Today I hope all members of this House can join me in congratulating the Kiwanis Club of Calgary on 100 years well served and thousands of lives touched.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### ATCO Sale of Electric Power Plants

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was in Hanna this morning, and I'm happy to report that it absolutely poured, so this member's statement will not be about the pending drought.

I was in Hanna to meet with community leaders and the current and soon-to-be owners of the Sheerness and Battle River generating stations. ATCO has a pending sale of these assets, along with nine others, to Energy Capital Partners based out of New Jersey. The new Canadian entity will be dubbed Heartland Generation Ltd. Energy Capital Partners is a major top 10 power generator in the U.S. For context, Mr. Speaker, they own 27 gigawatts of generation while the entire grid in Alberta is approximately 10. They also own Calpine, the largest natural gas power-generation company in the United States. They purchased this suite of generating facilities from ATCO because they believe them to be best in class with strong growth opportunities.

The coal-to-gas conversion will continue at both Sheerness and Battle River. Engineering and equipment manufacturing is under way, and construction will begin in July for Battle River 5 and October for Sheerness. Both facilities will be able to co-fire – that is, burn a blend of gas and coal – by March of next year. Between March 2020 and the spring of 2022, the decision of how much to burn of gas or coal will be largely economic. By 2022 firm gas contracts will be in place, and the full weight of the accelerated coal phase-out will be felt by these communities.

The silver lining for me is that we have a company that wants to be here, will base its headquarters in Calgary, has promised to keep the same faces in the same roles, and is focused on the future and growth. However, it is lost on no one that the made-in-Alberta carbon tax accelerated this transition and cost communities like Hanna and Forestburg a hefty toll. The previous government demanded that these communities transition rapidly away from coal. We as a province are left with American-owned infrastructure and an Alberta grid that continues to import coal-fired power from other jurisdictions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie is rising to make a statement.

### Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Construction

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to report on the progress of the Grande Prairie regional hospital build. Originally approved in 2010, this project has been problematic, to say the least, and has cost Albertans far too much in delays and cost overruns. My commitment to the constituents of Grande Prairie is twofold: to regularly visit the site and personally ensure that progress is ongoing and to meet with stakeholders from the project to learn what went wrong at each stage and compile that learning to save taxpayer funds on future infrastructure projects. In

short, I want to get this hospital completed and open to serve Albertans, and I want to ensure that the lessons from this project are learned and the mistakes are not repeated.

It was timely, then, on June 7 to host the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and the hon. Minister of Finance as well as the Member for Central Peace-Notley at the hospital build site in Grande Prairie for a tour and a review of the next steps to get this project finally completed. The directive is clear: we need this hospital completed as soon as possible, and we need to deliver a quality facility to the people of the Grande Prairie area, who have been more than patient. As we toured with site leaders, it was encouraging to see such a positive and productive work site, including as many as 450 construction personnel, and to witness their focus on timely completion and the highest calibre of workmanship.

When completed, the Grande Prairie regional hospital will provide a wide range of health care services, including surgery, cancer care, and emergency services. The new hospital will include a state-of-the-art cancer centre, with two new radiation vaults, and will serve as a health care training facility in partnership with Grande Prairie Regional College.

This facility is long overdue, and my constituents have raised their concerns over the project with me repeatedly, so I want to take this opportunity to highlight this project as an identified priority for this government and for myself as the MLA for Grande Prairie.

On behalf of the city of Grande Prairie thank you to the ministers as well as the member for taking the time to join me on this tour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

#### Bill 11

#### Fair Registration Practices Act

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move first reading of Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act.

This bill introduces measures to ensure that regulated professions are governed by registration practices that are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair. This includes the creation of a fair registration practices office. This office will work with trade and professional licensing bodies to streamline, simplify, and accelerate foreign credential recognition, with the goal of giving applicants for licensure an interim decision within six months or less of their application. This legislation enables the government to work collaboratively with regulatory bodies to ensure that best practices are followed and that organizations fulfill their requirements as laid out in the act. With this proposed legislation we will remove unfair barriers while maintaining the high professional standards all Albertans have come to know and expect.

We're heard from many newcomers who are underemployed and unable to contribute to our economy at their skill level. All too often this is because they are waiting for months, even years for their credentials to be recognized. This delay not only impacts newcomers to our province; it also hurts our economy. We are inviting skilled immigrants to Alberta because their skills are in demand, and then due to unnecessary delays these skilled newcomers are not able to get to work in their profession. By introducing this legislation, we will create a win-win situation for newcomers as well as Alberta as their skills help to grow and diversify our economy. Bill 11 will speed up the process where possible, maintain high professional standards, and increase fairness and transparency. This is a key part

of our fairness for newcomers plan to reduce red tape, reignite the economy, and get all Albertans back to work.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of a tabling that I am making right now in regard to the Sherwood Park UCP constituency office, a fundraising letter that was sent out using the title of the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, which was dated on June 10.

I also have the requisite copies of a report, Supervised Injection Services: What Has Been Demonstrated? A Systematic Literature Review.

And another report: Reports of Needles Have Dropped Since Opening of Edmonton's Supervised Consumption Sites.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I have the appropriate number of copies of a news article from the Canadian Press cautiously welcoming yesterday's TMX approval. Jack Mintz, the tax policy and economics expert, echoed our Premier's comments yesterday. He said, "I think the champagne corks will come out if there's a feeling there won't be legal challenges that can stop the pipeline from being built." All my constituents are really concerned about the opposition from the NDP Premier, NDP leader . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you. You've already tabled the document.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I have tablings today. Yesterday in the House, while speaking to Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill, I referenced a *Financial Post* article written by Drew Hasselback, November 13, 2014, entitled Supreme Court of Canada Imposes General Duty of Good Faith in Contract Performance, which underlines the obligations of all contractors, including governments, including the Alberta government, to be honest in their performance of their execution of contracts and to do so in good faith. I have five copies.

1:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another story which is part of the CBC news series entitled In Our Backyard. This one is called How Climate Change Is Thawing the "Glue That Holds the Northern Landscape Together."

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a document here called Simply Having a Gay Straight Alliance Reduces Suicide Risk for All Students. In schools with GSAs heterosexual boys were half as likely to attempt suicide. I have the requisite five copies.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Bill 9 Debate Time

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The UCP are ramming through their bad-faith bargaining bill at a breakneck speed. They have invoked time allocation at all three levels of debate, and that's

something the Legislature library confirms hasn't happened in nearly 30 years. It's just ridiculous. What's more is that this bill is designed purely to gut the wages of teachers, nurses, and many more. To the Premier: why have you put a muzzle on this House? What are you afraid of?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I reject completely the premise of the question. First of all, closure has not been used. In fact, at second reading of Bill 9 I believe there's been 13 hours or 16 hours of debate. Twenty-two members of the opposition were able to speak. If that's closure, I can't imagine what an open-ended debate is. We're happy to hear from members of the opposition, but our commitment is to ensure that we get back to fiscal balance. That means getting all the information on the table, which the MacKinnon commission will be providing us with before we can proceed with correct information on the wage reopeners.

**Ms Hoffman:** It's the end of the school year, Mr. Speaker. Our teachers are focused on marking exams, filling out report cards, looking forward to a well-earned break, and now this government is attempting to ram through legislation that guts their wages before they've even had a chance to consider what the impacts will be. To the Premier: will you commit to actually bargaining with teachers and other workers and promise here and now that you will never impose a contract on them?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate but hardly surprising that the NDP anger machine continues to try to mislead Albertans with their tactics of fear and smear, precisely the tactics that were so resoundingly rejected on April 16. There is nothing in this bill about reducing anybody's wages. The collective bargaining agreements continue. This simply seeks a few months in order for the government to get adequate information to proceed to the wage reopeners in a way that is responsible and fully informed by the facts.

**Ms Hoffman:** The question was a simple one, Mr. Speaker. Will you commit that you will never impose an agreement on teachers that they actually haven't bargained and agreed to? The government has also cut the ability to bring amendments to the bill, and trust us: we want to amend it. This bill gives government both the ability to rip up contracts with public-sector workers and to impose contracts on those workers without even having to return to this House. That's right. The Premier wants to screw workers over and won't even look them in the eye while he's doing it. To the Premier: why are you such a coward?

#### **Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language**

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, it sounded a lot to me like you called the Premier a coward. I'm pretty sure that would be considered to be unparliamentary. I'll invite you to withdraw and apologize for such a comment.

**Ms Hoffman:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I certainly shouldn't have said, "Why are you being such a coward?" I should have said: why are you acting like such a coward? I apologize. I shouldn't have called him that specifically.

#### **Bill 9 Debate Time (continued)**

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the schoolyard bully tactics are not going to prevent this government from keeping our commitment to Albertans to restore the province's finances to balance after the

fiscal catastrophe of the NDP's \$100 billion debt plan. Now, Bill 9 very simply and very clearly is limited to giving the government a little bit more time to receive all of the facts about the NDP's fiscal catastrophe so we know what we're dealing with when we sit down and negotiate in good faith with our public-sector unions.

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

#### **Education Funding**

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education can't keep her stories straight. Whether it be enrolment funding – the Finance minister finally bailed her out there; we're really glad about that – whether it be the GSA bill, saying that it's the strongest legislation in the country – it's not – you name it, she changes her mind every day. Yesterday during interim supply I finally got a straight answer from the minister. I asked the minister if the classroom improvement fund our government introduced and the 400 teachers it adds to the classroom would be extended this fall. She said it wouldn't. To the minister: will you confirm once more to this House that the 400 teachers aren't important to you or your government?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, of course teachers are important to this government. My dad was a teacher. The Minister of Education worked for years as an elected member of her local school board, as president of her provincial school board trustees' association.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I need to come back to the previous question, where the member said that the government wasn't allowing amendments on Bill 9. Of course, that's absolutely ridiculous. The opposition and any member can bring forward amendments at report stage, and they'll be considered by the whole House, as is normal in any parliamentary democracy.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, not in second reading, Mr. Speaker.

The classroom improvement fund was critical for adding teacher support staff and programs for students with complex needs. Those were 400 teachers. That description was pulled right from the Alberta Education website. The school board this minister represented just last year, Red Deer Catholic, would have had another \$1.2 million to help students this fall. I'm sure that all the Calgary caucus members will be concerned to know that nearly \$20 million will be cut from Calgary public and Catholic boards alone by cancelling CIF. To the minister: can you explain why students with complex needs will be left behind so you can fund a \$4.5 billion tax giveaway to wealthy corporations?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the government has been clear that enrolment growth in the upcoming school year will be fully funded. At the same time, we are going to work with school boards, teachers, administrators to ensure that we're able to deliver high-quality public education more efficiently. The \$100 billion NDP debt is what really jeopardizes the future of our public services, including public education. They want to burden that generation of students with massive higher taxes through debt that has to be repaid with interest. We're not going to do that.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yesterday in interim supply the Minister of Education said that the classroom improvement fund would be gone this upcoming year. That's 400 teachers, Mr. Speaker. That is absolutely not what the Premier just said. Who's right: the Minister of Education or the Premier? Clearly they're not on the same page. Maybe the Finance minister needs to straighten things out again.

**Mr. Kenney:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we have the biggest spending public education system in Canada in per capita terms. We have the

highest paid teachers in Canada in per capita terms. [interjections] This government is going to continue funding enrolment growth. None of those facts will be changed by the anger machine angrily heckling in this Assembly. What we will do, however, is ensure the future of our public services, including education, by bringing balance back to the province's finances. We will not jeopardize the future of those services by spending billions of dollars on debt interest to the bankers and bondholders.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for the third question.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been nine days since the Finance minister announced that the government would fully fund enrolment, and I want to thank him again for the doing what the Education minister refused to do. Unfortunately, we still can't get an answer from this Education minister on what it really means. Districts like Foothills school district have to make choices now, and they're being forced to guess. Does the minister know how many teachers are being laid off in the Foothills school district while she hems and haws?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the New Democrats don't just see their opponents as opponents. There's this terrible tendency to demonize their opponents. They seem particularly uncomfortable with strong Conservative women like the hon. the Minister of Education, who's doing a fantastic job in this place to keep our platform commitments to high-quality public education, the funding levels of which we will maintain or increase, while also respecting our wonderful tradition of school choice in Alberta. We stand with our tremendous Minister of Education.

2:00

**Ms Hoffman:** That would be easier to believe if the Premier would actually let her speak when I ask her a question. The Member for Livingstone-MacLeod might want to know the answer to that question. It's at least 10 teachers and 20 educational assistants that are losing their jobs in Foothills on top of losses through attrition.

Let's try another. Does the minister know the consequences of her bungling of the Education budget for Banff's public schools?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the opposition attacked me when I wasn't here to answer questions because I was trying to bring investment to Alberta. Now they attack me for answering questions in the place. But, you know, it's perfect, because all they really know how to do is to attack. While they attack, while they denigrate, while they engage in ad hominem attacks, particularly against the women in these benches, we instead are focused on growing, on building, and on strengthening the Alberta economy and our public services.

**Ms Hoffman:** I think that asking a question about how many teachers are being laid off is a fair and reasonable question, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Banff-Kananaskis probably should have asked this question, but let me make sure that I tell her the answer. The answer is that staff morale is in the tank. They're cutting the music teacher from the elementary school, half the teachers at the elementary school are going to be new, and most of them will be on temporary contracts because they are worried that cuts are going to be even deeper in the fall.

Boards are bracing for the worst, Mr. Speaker, and this minister is doing nothing. Is the minister ready to stop her messaging and admit to her own caucus that she has no idea about the chaos that she's creating in her local school districts, or does she enjoy causing stress for . . .

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the full outrage from the NDP anger machine does not change the facts that this government was elected on a commitment to maintain or increase funding levels for public education and that we have committed to increasing enrolment growth next year. We've also committed to bringing our province's finances back to balance, to stop the NDP's reckless dive towards \$100 billion in debt. [interjection] I'm being heckled now by the most incompetent former Finance minister in Alberta history, who ran the largest per capita deficit in the country. We're going to stop that disastrous record.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-McCall is rising with a question.

### Energy Industry Update

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's start with jobs and the economy. Energy company Repsol has announced that they're laying off hundreds of staff from their downtown Calgary office as well as their Alberta field offices. Clearly, they haven't gotten the message from this Premier that Alberta is open for business. Perhaps it's because he hasn't done a thing to create jobs except hand out big tax giveaways to wealthy corporations and pray that in a few years it generates jobs. Clearly, Repsol wasn't sold. To the Premier: how many more companies will fire workers while we wait to see if your risky gamble pays off?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate news for the workers at Repsol here in Canada. I can tell you that I met with the CEO of Repsol last year. The Premier refused to meet with him, but I did as Leader of the Opposition, and he explained to me how the damaging policies of the NDP were jeopardizing the future of that company in this province. We inherited the worst economic record of any government since the Great Depression. We are doing everything we can to turn that around by restoring investor confidence and creating jobs in Alberta, but it won't happen overnight after four years of catastrophic economic mismanagement.

**Mr. Sabir:** Earlier this month oil company Nexen also announced it was laying off a hundred Calgary workers. Neither of these companies seem to be endorsing this Premier's plan. Certainly, firing workers indicates otherwise. To the Premier: have you tried to sell Repsol or Nexen on your much-touted platform? Perhaps this is something useful that your war room could do?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report to this House that last week I met with major global investors in the energy sector and in other sectors who are profoundly interested in new investments in Alberta precisely because of the job-creation strategy of this government. One global CEO was telling me that his company was getting close to a positive final investment decision on a prospective \$10 billion investment here precisely because of the job-creation tax cut enshrined in Bill 3, that I hope will be passed into law soon in this Legislature.

**Mr. Sabir:** One way to protect jobs while we wait for TMX and other pipelines to be built is to move oil by rail. This government is still claiming that it will rip up the contracts we signed that would move 120,000 barrels per day. The minister hasn't been able to tell us how many barrels he has secured in the private sector to replace these contracts. To the minister. Let's try again. Is it 20,000 or 100 or 20 or 10 or 1, or is it actually zero barrels?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it takes a lot of chutzpah for the NDP to stand up and ask a question like that, the party that urged Justin

Trudeau to kill the Northern Gateway pipeline. Oil should have been flowing through that pipeline by now. The NDP surrendered without a peep to the federal Liberals, killing the Energy East pipeline. The NDP supported the federal surrender to Obama's veto on Keystone XL. Why? Because they always opposed Keystone XL. The NDP appointed people like Tzaporah Berman who want to shut down the energy industry. Shame on them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Provincial Fiscal Sustainability

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2016 the Finance minister of the previous NDP government stated that they would not make the choice of balancing our books and reducing our debt on the backs of Albertans, an interesting statement for the NDP government to make before committing Albertans and their children to pay principal and interest on upwards of \$100 billion of debt. To the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance: can you comment on the need for our government, unlike the previous government, to not ignore the realities of debt and interest but, instead, to budget sustainably with the future of Albertans and their children in mind?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The members opposite had us on a trajectory of \$100 billion of accumulated provincial debt in this province. The interest payments alone would have been crippling. As it stands, Albertans pay \$1.9 billion per year right now as a result of that legacy. This is larger than most government departments' total budgets. We've made a commitment to Albertans to be responsible with their hard-earned tax dollars. We're looking forward to the recommendations of the MacKinnon panel, and we're committed to bringing this province to balance.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that under the previous NDP government Alberta has become one of the highest spenders in the country on health care and given that, despite this, wait times have been increasing while health outcomes have been declining, can the Minister of Finance comment on Alberta's current health care expenditures, including the proportion of our budget that health care represents and how Alberta's spending in this area compares to the national average and to other provinces?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise and answer on behalf of the hon. minister. Alberta spends close to \$22 billion per year on health care. This makes up about 40 per cent of our budget. The Canadian Institute for Health Information, or CIHI, found that we spent approximately 7 and a half thousand dollars per person on health care each year. This is about \$700 more than the Canadian average and puts us among the highest in Canada. Unfortunately, the high level of spending does not translate into stronger results for Albertans. We are committed to delivering on that value and providing Albertans with the quality health care services that they deserve.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Health minister. Given that Alberta is also spending comparatively higher

amounts on its education system and given that, despite this, constituencies like my own lack schools, playgrounds, and continue to struggle with excessive classroom sizes and declining math and reading scores, can the minister comment on Alberta's education system expenditures, including the proportion of our budget that education represents and how Alberta's spending in this area compares to the national average and other provinces?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We owe it to Albertans to examine how to achieve the best possible outcomes for our students. Right now Alberta is in the top three provinces when it comes to spending on a per-student basis. Our education investment makes up approximately 15 per cent of our total budget. Over the past 15 years operational funding for education has increased by 80 per cent, far outpacing inflation and enrolment growth. We will always ensure that Alberta's students receive a world-class education, and we know that there are ways to do that.

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

### 2:10 Publicly Funded Health Care

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier because clearly the Minister of Health doesn't care about keeping health care affordable for Albertans. Yesterday I asked the minister . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Feehan:** . . . if he would support my Bill 203, which bans billing for insured health services. He said no. This side of the House supports universal public health care, period. To the Premier: are you aware that your minister wants to bring credit card medicine to Alberta? Is this also what you want?

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:10.

**Mr. Kenney:** No, and no.

Mr. Speaker, this morning at about 1 a.m. I was in this place when that member stood up and compared Bill 9, a temporary delay in wage reopeners, to slavery. That is a gross abuse of the privilege of a member of this place, to draw such a grotesque and false analogy between a simple matter of getting information on collective bargaining and the practice of slavery. Will he apologize? Shame on him.

**Mr. Feehan:** I won't apologize to the guy who asked for an English to English translation of a Sikh Member of Parliament.

Given that the Premier has said that surgeons . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we don't use preambles after question 4.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm sorry?

**The Speaker:** Don't use a preamble after question 4.

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that the Premier has said that surgeons take too many coffee breaks when they could be operating on multiple patients at once and given that he's also said that health care workers waste their time on unnecessary duties like, say, sanitizing equipment, to the Premier: the next time you need an operation, is it okay if you're the fifth person or perhaps the 10th person to go under the knife? Is it all right if that knife is just a little dirty from the last guy?

**Mr. Kenney:** And they continue to descend into lower levels of mudslinging, of incivility, Mr. Speaker. But I'm not surprised. The member can't even acknowledge that his perverse analogy between Bill 9 and the practice of slavery was at best inappropriate and completely unbecoming of any member of this place. Again, I'm not surprised, though. That was the member who in the last session stood up and spent several minutes in this place ridiculing the Jewish Torah. He should be ashamed of himself.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, clearly, this Premier does not want to answer the questions. Must be something he's trying to hide.

Given that both the Premier and the minister are trying to shame health care workers so that they can justify swiping their pay with the bad-faith bargaining bill and given that it's clear that to pay for his \$4.5 billion tax giveaway to wealthy corporations, this Premier will turn to two-tiered, American-style health care in the near future, to the Premier: when I turn up at the emergency room, do you prefer that I use Visa, MasterCard, or American Express?

**Mr. Kenney:** You know what's peculiar, Mr. Speaker? The lines we just heard: classic, old-school NDP medi-scare lines used in every campaign that we've ever seen in Alberta, including the most recent campaign. Do you know what Albertans did when they heard the medi-scare threats from the NDP? They fired them. They gave us the largest democratic mandate in history, in part based on our public health guarantee to ensure high-quality, publicly funded, and universally accessible health care.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm still waiting for that member to apologize for his analogy between slavery and Bill 9.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows is rising.

### Quebec Bill 21

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the government to join the opposition members of this House in condemning Quebec's hateful Bill 21. The legislation poses an impossible choice between career and faith. It bans Muslim and Sikh teachers, lawyers, police officers, and judges from wearing turbans and hijabs at work. To the Premier: are you aware of the hateful Bill 21, and will you stand in this House today and condemn it?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I've always been clear that I oppose this bill, this approach. In fact, when I was the federal minister for multiculturalism, I publicly threatened to launch a constitutional challenge against the former PQ government for their charter of values, which included similar provisions. In Alberta we believe in pluralism and respect for religious freedom, including the right of people to wear the ostensible signs of their religious faith.

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

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier is said to be building a new friendship with the Quebec Premier and given that the two had dinner together last Wednesday, before the Quebec Premier spent his weekend fighting to ram through his government's racist legislation, to the Premier: did you raise concerns about Bill 21 with your friend the Quebec Premier, and did you ask him to kill the bill immediately?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I did indicate my opposition. I think I speak for the vast majority of Albertans in saying that we believe in religious freedom and that that religious freedom should be protected; for example, for public servants wearing ostensible religious symbols.

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

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the current Premier posted on social media that during his meeting with the Premier they, quote: discussed ways to better choose immigrants based on business needs. To the Premier: what exactly did you discuss with the Quebec Premier, and will you please speak out publicly on social media and condemn Bill 21 immediately?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I've already answered the question. The member has a hard time taking yes for an answer. I would just point out to him that when I was the federal multiculturalism minister, I championed the Multani case, for example, that allowed Sikh children to wear kirpans to the Montreal public schools. I worked to change the rules to allow kirpans, for example, to be worn at Canadian consulates and high commissions around the country. I supported the rights of girls in Montreal to wear hijabs while playing soccer, against a rule that had been adopted for them. My record of these matters is very clear.

### Highway 1A Interchange at Cochrane

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, the previous PC government had the intention to twin highway 1A through Cochrane, but the project was never completed. The following NDP government promised to alleviate the traffic pressure in my constituency of Airdrie-Cochrane by building an interchange at highways 1A and 22. However, the capital list this project was apparently on was never released to the electorate. To the Minister of Transportation: is it the intention of this government to make the capital list public?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Cochrane interchange project is listed in Alberta Transportation's 2018 construction program. Perhaps part of the reason why it never was advanced by the previous NDP government is that they actually let that agreement, that I signed with the nation, on the widening of 1A lapse.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given we know this project was not budgeted for, as no budget was released for this fiscal year, and given the previous NDP government had stated that they were building the highway interchange in Cochrane and given that 1A and 22 interchange is still in the design phase, can the minister tell me if this project is still currently on the capital list?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. I discussed this project, I'd have the hon. member know – and a thank you to him for his advocacy on behalf of his constituents. I talked to the mayor of Cochrane in May on this project. I know it's important. As we move ahead, we will attempt to get it back on the list when we have the agreement back with the nation. At that point it will be under consideration in the capital planning and budget.

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

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given this project is long overdue in the community of Cochrane and given that this roadway and interchange present a significant safety risk to commercial traffic, residents, and tourists alike, to the Minister of Transportation:

now that you've been able to review the situation in your department, will this much-needed interchange at 1A and 22 remain a priority moving forward?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The interchange itself is not part of the nation. I can say that to date \$2.2 million has been spent on planning, design, and engineering. Again, that piece will be considered as part of the overall capital planning and budget process for 2019. When we make those final decisions, we will certainly announce them. I appreciate the hon. member advocating for his constituency.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is rising to ask a question.

### Gay-straight Alliance Participant Privacy Protection

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education seems more than willing to pass the buck to the Privacy Commissioner when it comes to protecting our LGBTQ youth. She stated repeatedly that FOIP and PIPA would prevent students from being outed, but even the Privacy Commissioner acknowledged that schools have significant discretion under these acts to decide if it would be reasonable to out students. We brought in Bill 24 because some schools did think it was reasonable to out students. Is the minister's response to queer and trans kids that they can be outed because they can just file a complaint with the Privacy Commissioner?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's quite frankly odious that the NDP continues to suggest that there are people who want to, quote: out gay students. This is ridiculous. It's contrary to the law. If students disclose to a teacher or counsellor private information, for example, about their sexual orientation, obviously, there is both a professional obligation and a legal obligation under the privacy act for that information to be retained as private, as was confirmed yesterday by the Privacy Commissioner.

2:20

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government had several examples of situations where schools were outing kids to their parents.

Given that the Privacy Commissioner's own website says that it takes six to eight weeks to even confirm if they'll investigate a complaint and given that it takes another, at least, nine months to investigate and that it could take another 18 months or more to conduct an inquiry and have a formal decision, to the minister: I guess what you're basically saying is that if a student is outed and feels they cannot continue on in their school or in their home, it's okay; it will be dealt with in due course.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Privacy Commissioner confirmed the law – confirmed the law – for people who work in positions of authority and responsibility with students. Of course, they are trained and expected – they are professionally required, they are legally required – to respect the law. The NDP understood exactly this, which is why they did not bring forward Bill 24-style amendments when Bill 10 passed into law here in 2014, nor did they for their first three years in government. This is nothing but cheap divisive politics on the part of the NDP.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a number of outed kids would disagree with the Premier's statement and given that the Privacy Commissioner has said that they cannot issue fines, force any form of discipline, or act as an advocate for LGBTQ youth that have been outed, to the minister: what exactly would be the point of complaining to the Privacy Commissioner, why are you passing the buck to a pointless privacy investigation, and why do you continue to stand in this House every day and defend legislation that will put students' lives at risk?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, that line of questioning is so profoundly wrong and offensive. Yesterday the Privacy Commissioner confirmed that everything that the Minister of Education has said about this was absolutely correct and that the NDP has been trying to frighten people with their campaign of fear and smear. It didn't work in the campaign. It's not going to work now. We are keeping our word with Albertans to bring into effect the Education Act. Promise made, promise kept.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, this Education minister was caught on video just a few months ago saying that she believes protections for GSAs are based on, quote, flawed reasoning and were unnecessary to begin with. Unbelievable. I guess we know why she's so eager to destroy GSAs and QSAs. To the Minister of Education. It's hard to believe your position would change in just a few short months. Do you still believe that protecting LGBTQ youth is unnecessary?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education and this government agree with the law that was created almost unanimously in this place to allow for gay-straight alliances and other peer support groups to be created. We oppose mandatory notification. We also oppose the NDP's efforts to drive wedges on this issue rather than looking at the actual facts, the law, and realizing that this is a campaign of division being led by the NDP, which is beneath any member of this Legislature.

**Member Irwin:** It's not a campaign of division. It's a campaign of standing up for our young people.

Given that in addition to claiming that it was unnecessary to protect queer and trans youth, the minister was also caught on tape saying that these protections were just to further an agenda – you're darn right our side of the House has an agenda, and it's to protect our kids – to the minister: if this isn't on your agenda, what is? Or is there a hidden agenda?

**Mr. Kenney:** The accusation in that question is that the hon. minister was, quote, caught on tape having the temerity to disagree with the NDP. Well, you know what else was caught on tape, Mr. Speaker, on April 16? Over a million Alberta voters that repudiated the NDP's fear and smear politics and that endorsed our very specific platform to bring into force the Education Act, that the NDP itself promised to make law back in 2015.

**Member Irwin:** We're hearing from Albertans loudly and clearly that they're not going to stand for this attack on LGBTQ youth. They're going to be rallying tonight at the Legislature.

Given that the Minister of Education also thinks that any law put forward about GSAs is part of some sort of agenda – Minister, GSAs save lives; they make life better for all Alberta students – this minister has an opportunity right now to show some courage, clear



the record, apologize for her vile remarks. She's got 30 seconds. Go for it.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Education has answered dozens of questions on this, being absolutely clear about her support and that of this government for the ability of students to create positive peer support groups. It really is unfortunate that the NDP, instead of accepting that there is a broad level of consensus in Alberta on this matter, continues to try to drive wedges for their own political purposes. We instead are focused on ensuring that we keep our promises to Albertans with the implementation of the Education Act.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has a question.

### Surgery Wait Times

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the NDP's watch surgical wait times for Albertans increased, and so did the cost for health care delivery in Alberta. In fact, Alberta health care is now one of the most expensive systems in the world. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information Albertans are waiting longer for joint replacement and cataract surgeries than they were just three years ago. Universal access to quality, publicly funded health care is a fundamental principle for this government and a significant concern for my constituents. To the Minister of Health: what are you doing to reduce wait times for Albertans?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. Under the NDP wait times increased for four straight years. The NDP talk about their commitment to public health care – they talk and they talk and they talk – but for four years they watched wait times for surgery get longer. They watched access to continuing care decline. They watched our hospitals get more logjammed, and they did nothing about it. We were elected to deliver better results for Albertans, including shorter wait times, and that's what we're going to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that this government has confirmed their commitment to quality, publicly funded health care and given that citizens of Alberta are currently waiting far too long for surgeries like knee and hip replacements and given that some Albertans are even considering going out of province and paying out of their own pockets for surgeries they can't seem to get scheduled in a reasonable time frame here in Alberta, to the same minister: when will Albertans see wait times reduced and gain access to timely service?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again, the hon. member is correct. We campaigned on our commitment to our publicly funded health care system. [interjections] That's right. We're committed to publicly funded health care, but unlike the NDP, we want a public system which works for patients. We want what Albertans want, a public health care system where wait times go down, not up. That's why we're commissioning the first comprehensive review of AHS in 10 years. We'll have the final report by the end of this year, and Albertans are going to see a real plan for improvement by the end of this year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the minister. Given that Albertans deserve the same quality health care available in other parts of Canada and given that many Albertans are concerned about the current state of Alberta's health care and given that there are significant budget constraints as a result of the former NDP government's mismanagement of public funds, to the same minister: what will you do to ensure that budget constraints don't slow this promise to Albertans, and what are the specific steps your ministry is taking to see progress for those waiting in pain for a surgery date?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We campaigned on maintaining or increasing health care spending. There's enough money in the health care system currently to do better, and we're going to do better. The NDP ignored the data for four years, and now it's up to us to take it seriously. That's what the AHS review is all about. Finally Albertans have a government that takes performance seriously and takes accountability seriously. We're studying the Saskatchewan surgical initiative as well. The review will look at other ways we can learn from other provinces and other countries, and we're going to learn from our own people because we have some of the best clinicians in Canada.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Private Schools

**Ms Phillips:** The day the Minister of Education announced her act to destroy gay-straight alliances, she refused to condemn private school policies that spread hate about being gay. Those policies openly state that students would be outed against their will. Will the minister rise in this House, speak for herself, and condemn those illegal and discriminatory private school policies?

2:30

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we know that the NDP has always opposed independent schools. They've always been ideologically hostile to school choice. The NDP have never wanted to respect section 26(3) of the universal declaration of human rights, that says that "parents have a prior right to choose the . . . education" that is best for their children. This government and the vast majority of Albertans, however, respect school choice just as we respect the law under Bill 10 that allows kids to create supportive peer groups, including GSAs.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that we just heard that the Premier supports discriminatory policies, given that the Minister of Finance served as a board member for the Peace River Bible Institute and given that that school required all students to follow rules that banned same-sex relationships and shockingly compares these relationships to demonic activity, will the Minister of Finance condemn the policy of that institute, or does the minister support the comparison of same-gender relationships to demonic activity?

**Mr. Kenney:** Just to confirm what I said, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite characterized our support for pluralism and school choice as, quote, support for hatred. I don't understand why the NDP has such a hard time understanding that the first fundamental freedom enumerated in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the freedom of religion and why school choice is recognized in the universal declaration . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we heard the question; we'll hear the answer.

**Mr. Kenney:** The right to school choice is recognized in the universal declaration of human rights and in Alberta law, Mr. Speaker. We will protect kids, but we'll also protect school choice in this province.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, how can we actually expect Albertans to trust this government given the beliefs of people like the Minister of Finance, the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, what the Minister of Education herself was caught saying on video just a few months ago, and what the Premier just underlined in his support for discriminatory policies that we heard just a few minutes ago?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, every legacy member of the PC and Wildrose parties that make up this party voted in favour of Bill 10 to create statutory protection for gay-straight alliances and other peer-support groups. Where we differ with the NDP is that we don't believe that these are wedge issues that should be used to divide people. We believe that children should be protected, and we believe that can be done while also respecting the fundamental freedom of religion and the right of parents to choose the form of education that's best for their kids.

#### Royal Alberta Museum Former Site

**Ms Goehring:** It's collected all of our stories, and it itself became a great story: those are the words of Darrel Babuk in relation to the original site of the Royal Alberta Museum. Residents in the Edmonton-Glenora constituency that played host to the museum since 1967 are proud of its history and want this building to be there for future generations. To the minister of culture: will you commit in this House today that the Royal Alberta Museum building in Glenora is here to stay?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we'll take that question under advisement, and I'll ask the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Infrastructure to respond to the hon. member as quickly as possible with a detailed answer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that nearly 9,000 people have signed a petition to keep the former Royal Alberta Museum building, will the culture or Infrastructure minister commit to holding open town halls with residents about the future of this site, with the Member for Edmonton-Glenora as a full partner, before making any major decisions?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, actually, our department has asked for input from the stakeholders. We'll collect the stakeholder input and then make our decision based on that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the original RAM building was neglected under Conservative austerity measures that resulted in reduced maintenance and upkeep and given that this may result in a need for serious renovations, will the Minister of Infrastructure commit to dedicating funding to repairing the RAM site if it's determined that residents in Glenora want to keep it intact and viable for the future?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, decisions on facilities like the Glenora site are guided by evolving government needs, available budget, and how those needs fit relative to other funding priorities. There are no plans yet for the future of the Glenora site, but we'll look at all options regarding its future use.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Klein has a question.

#### Provincial Fiscal Sustainability and Budget 2019

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I campaigned on getting Alberta's finances back on track. I made a commitment to my constituents to no longer continue to leverage our children's future. What we are now seeing during supplementary supply estimates is a result of four years of mismanagement with this province's books by the previous government. To the Minister of Finance: with this new information, what commitments can we make at this time for getting back to balanced budgets by '22-23, as we initially promised?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member for the question. That is right. Our government campaigned on the commitment to bring this province back to balance. I take that commitment very seriously. The previous government had us on a path to bury this province in debt. Albertans expect much better from our government. We're bringing prudence and predictability back to this province's budget. We will achieve balance by 2022-23.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his response as well as his hard efforts in getting us back to balance. Given our commitment to getting the budget balanced without damaging the spending for necessary services like health care and education, can the minister ensure that we will also be able to commit to our election promise of maintaining or increasing health care spending?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is yes. That's our commitment to Albertans, and we're going to deliver on it. The bigger challenge is performance. We need to control costs, and we also need better results for Albertans: lower wait times, better access to emergency, better access to continuing care. Lower costs and better results: that's our commitment to Albertans.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Education recently announced plans to modernize Alberta's education system by replacing the School Act with the Education Act and given that the concern I'm hearing from my constituents is about education funding and given that I'm also hearing from teachers and parents in my riding about concern over increasing classroom sizes and given that we're about to expect 15,000 new students this fall, can the Minister of Finance confirm our platform promise to maintain or increase spending in education? [interjection]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South will come to order while the Member for Calgary-Klein is asking a question.

The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member again for this important question. As we have confirmed, increased enrolment growth will be accounted for and funded. Alberta's children deserve an excellent, world-class education, and

I can confirm that we will ensure that there is funding for these outcomes. We are committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for our children, period.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is rising with a question.

### Rural High-speed Internet

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you. In 2018 the CRTC declared that stable broadband infrastructure is a necessary component for Canadian participation in the digital economy and digital age. The communications industry has invested in and enabled this in our densely-populated urban areas, but rural communities do not have the same infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, 96 per cent of urban homes in Canada have access to fast, reliable Internet but only 39 per cent in the rural areas. To the Minister of Service Alberta: is our government investing in this crucial infrastructure?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member for the important question on behalf of rural Albertans. Our government knows how important reliable Internet access is to all Albertans and how frustrating life can be without it. We know that all Albertans have strong expectations for their technology, and we're continuing to learn from them how best we can address this issue and move forward. We are serious about technology and will work to ensure that we do this correctly and do it correctly the first time.

**Mr. Yao:** It is given, Mr. Speaker, that stable Internet access is becoming a necessity in our education system. This platform has enabled increased access to educational resources and more flexibility in distributing and accepting assignments. It has become as essential as pen and paper in our schools. What is this government doing to ensure Internet access for rural schools to enable this basic necessity in our digital age?

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

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that students are increasingly using digital resources for their school work. Times have changed since I was in school, but over the last 15 years in my career as a venture capital investor, I've learned a lot about the importance of technology and having technology accessible to students in schools as they're building the tools they need to succeed in their upcoming careers. One of the tools that helps them to do that is the Alberta SuperNet, which currently provides access to high-quality Internet services to 1,935 schools in addition to libraries and over 1,000 other government facilities.

2:40

**Mr. Yao:** It is given, Mr. Speaker, that there's a dismal divide between rural and urban high-speed Internet quality, and this is worrying for rural Alberta's economy. Businesses rely on the Internet for communicating with customers, suppliers, and vendors. They do their banking online and access legal support. In a report tabled in the Legislature last year only 13 per cent of rural communities in Alberta had access to Internet speeds that meet the target speeds as set by the CRTC. Can the government tell this House what the government's plan is to secure Internet access to support rural . . .

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to ensuring an environment in which Albertans and businesses can succeed. We recognize the importance of reliable Internet access for businesses, and that's why we're monitoring what is happening at all levels of government. We know that we need to work with the federal government, our provincial partners, municipal governments, and business owners on this very important matter. That is why we have been engaging with members from all of those stakeholder communities to look towards a path forward. I would be happy to follow up with the member offline. No pun intended.

**The Speaker:** I believe that the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays called a point of order.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. McIver:** Yes, I did, under 23(h), (i), and (j), imputing false motives to another member. I don't have the Blues, Mr. Speaker; perhaps you do. The hon. member said something to the effect of: the hon. minister doesn't care about health care or doesn't care about delivering services. It was about caring. That, of course, is exactly the definition of imputing a motive.

Mr. Speaker, I could understand – and this isn't a matter of opinion – if they said, "The hon. minister is doing a terrible job" or "I disagree with his policies" or "He hasn't done his homework," something like that, but to actually say that the hon. minister "doesn't care" about the main purpose of their ministry, I think it's straightforward imputing false motives to another member of the House. I would ask you to rule to ask the hon. member to withdraw those comments and apologize.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is clearly not a point of order. This is a matter of debate or a difference of opinion. I believe that the member talked about how the Minister of Health doesn't care about keeping health care affordable. That is his opinion. The members on the government side may have a different opinion. This is not a point of order. He did not make claims or whatever the hon. member is arguing in his point of order. It's not a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It's a matter of opinion.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I do in fact have the benefit of the Blues. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford said, "My question is to the Premier because clearly the Minister of Health doesn't care about keeping health care affordable for Albertans." I don't find the point of order well taken. I could be sympathetic to the Member for Calgary-Hays if, in fact, he did say: he doesn't care about health care. Perhaps that would be a point of order. It may, in fact, be a question of debate, but in this case I would suggest that that is not a point of order, and I consider the matter concluded.

Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Bill 5**  
**Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019**

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 5, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019.

Madam Speaker, the supplementary amounts provided by this bill reflect the fiscal picture outlined in the third-quarter fiscal update, released by the previous government on February 27. The spending is way beyond what was budgeted for in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Now it must be approved by the Legislative Assembly.

We recognize that over a fiscal year, unplanned expenses can come up; for example, the devastating fires in northern Alberta. I know my colleagues opposite will agree that the Alberta government will always provide funding and support for Albertans in their time of need, no matter who is in office at that time. However, when it comes to other spending, it is imperative that we plan and spend appropriately. While some of these expenses may be critical according to the opposition, we will be taking a more prudent approach as we move forward.

Madam Speaker, many of these expenses before you today were not spent using that approach, and now out of respect for our parliamentary process our government must spend nearly \$1 billion ensuring that many of those obligations are met. A billion dollars is a lot of money, and when one-third of that money is spent on a project that should never have been funded by the Alberta taxpayer, it makes it all the worse. I want to make this loud and clear. This is not how our government will be doing business in the future. The poorly negotiated contracts to lease railcars, signed on the eve of an election, have left our government to pay the bill. From the moment this issue was made public, we made it clear that we did not agree with this initiative. It is an irresponsible use of taxpayers' dollars, and we will not be continuing this track under our government. Our government will be more respectful and responsible about how we spend Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars. Since we took office, barely six weeks ago, we've been working to ensure that we're getting the most value for every dollar spent.

But before we can look forward, we must deal with the mistakes of the previous government. As a matter of law, our government must pass this legislation to honour Alberta's contractual commitments despite our own misgivings. I respectfully urge my colleagues in this House to support this bill and fulfill Alberta's contractual commitments from the last fiscal year. This ensures that there's appropriate oversight of government spending by the elected representatives standing before me today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the hon. Finance minister and President of Treasury Board said, this is kind of a backward-looking bill and not a forward-looking bill. It's an awkward situation where the government is required to support the expenditures that the previous government made before we were elected or else have those expenditures count against this year's spending, so it's an odd one. I imagine all sides of the House will vote for it because we kind of have to, and the opposition would be voting against what they did when they were in government. Nonetheless, it is one of the procedures that we live with in this House. It becomes a bit peculiar right after a change of government, an election.

With that, I will move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Bill 6**  
**Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019**

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 6, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019.

This bill will provide funding authority to the offices of the Legislative Assembly and to the government for the period April 1, 2019, to November 30, 2019, inclusive. The approval of this act will provide the funds needed to continue the business of our province while our government takes the time necessary to prepare Budget 2019, which will be presented in the fall. It also will give the Assembly time to review and debate the government's 2019-2020 budget plans.

To be clear, this is not a budget. The interim supply estimates reflect the expected costs, commitments, and timing of payments needed to keep government operating. For the next eight months we are simply beginning our work to deal with the financial mess left to us by the previous government. We must take action to reverse the province's deeper dive into debt. Our approach to interim supply places a strong emphasis on fiscal restraint as we work to meet the promise of balancing the budget by 2022-23.

2:50

Over the past four years, Alberta's spending has not meant better services for Albertans. In fact, we found that Alberta spends more per capita than other provinces without seeing better outcomes. That is not acceptable, Madam Speaker. Our government will find ways to do things differently and more effectively. However, those decisions take time. Our government recognizes that for our stakeholders and for all Albertans this is a difficult message to hear. Operating in the unknown can be uncomfortable. However, responsible choices take time and thoughtful planning. We are using the time requested for interim supply to develop a budget that reflects the promises we made to Albertans.

Recommendations from the MacKinnon panel and discussions with the staff in each of our ministries will help guide our decisions. We're looking at ways to eliminate waste, duplication, and nonessential spending so we can find ways to fund our government's key priorities and do things differently.

Over the past four years many Albertans have struggled under the decisions made by the previous government. We believe it is not fair to saddle future generations with the burden of onerous debt. If we don't begin work to balance that budget now, we'll end up spending billions of dollars on interest payments to bankers instead of funding Albertans' priorities. This is about looking to the long term, making responsible choices, and eliminating reliance on deficit spending, that steals from future schools, hospitals, and future generations.

Details on our government's plan to restore balance to Alberta's finances will be included in Budget 2019. As we develop that plan, I respectfully urge my colleagues in this House to support this bill to give us the time required to draft a thoughtful, prudent budget.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise to speak to this interim supply. We had not a lot of

time to talk about it when we were in the question phase, so I'm happy to be on the record to speak about it now.

I just wanted to highlight, I guess – I know we're repeatedly being told that, you know, with poor fiscal planning, waste, somehow the government programs under the NDP government were not actually serving Albertans. I just stand very deeply in my shoes here, Madam Speaker, to say that that's not true at all. We had invested very significantly to support vulnerable Albertans. I know that in the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, which I had the honour to be the minister of, we certainly supported so many people to live in dignity, close to their families and friends, in their communities. I guess I just want to be on the record to articulate how important it is to support people in Alberta.

Having looked at the numbers that are being presented, just as the Minister of Finance has indicated, they do seem low. They do seem like, yes, indeed, there will be cuts to these valuable programs. You know, this is a concern because we know that the needs are growing. We know that Alberta has 600,000 seniors currently, a little bit over that, but that number is going to double to a million in the next couple of decades. So actually what we should be doing is investing even more because we need to make sure that seniors are supported and cared for. Some of the ways that we have supported them which I think are extremely innovative – and I think also, you know, that even though the implication was that the things we did were not prudent, it was pretty prudent because if we support people to live in their own homes, which is what the seniors' home adaptation and repair program does, then actually that is great for the seniors because they get to stay in their same community, close to their family and friends, where they want to be, where all their connections are. The quality of life is enhanced because they have deep roots, oftentimes. So that investment in the SHARP program – that's the acronym for the seniors' home adaptation and repair program – actually, I think, saved the government money. Not only does it have an excellent social outcome, but it has an economic outcome that's excellent, too, and it actually cost the government less.

I'd just encourage the Minister of Seniors and Housing, when she's looking at what she has to slash from her budget – this is a program that we brought in in 2016, and it's been wildly successful. People from all over Alberta have applied to the program and been successful in receiving grants. We know that over 800 rural senior households have actually been recipients of these grants. That might be something for many of the members in the government to look at because I think a lot of their constituents benefited significantly from this program.

The program started in July 2016, so it was certainly our government that brought it in. Also, like, as I said, over 800 rural senior households benefited, so about 50 per cent of the loans in that program went to seniors in rural Alberta. They received \$9.6 million in loans, and the average loan was about \$14,000 for a senior. You know, they could use that to get a new roof, anything that they needed to make sure that they could still stay in their own home. That was important to them, so sometimes that was what they needed. They needed a new roof because their house was aging, and they needed to do that. Then they could continue to stay there.

I know I've shared with the House previously that I know a couple I met in Sherwood Park, and it really, you know, elongated the time they could stay in their home because the wife in the couple has MS, and she can't really manage stairs. They had a four-level split, and they needed to have some kind of a lift for her because she couldn't make it up or down. Of course, that made it impossible for them to stay in the home, but when they looked at the costs to be able to buy a lift, they absolutely couldn't afford it, and that broke their hearts because they wanted to stay in their own home.

When they saw this program, they applied to it, they were accepted, the lift was put in. They had the support they needed. [interjections] They could stay in that home for another 10 years or more, and that really made a huge difference in their lives.

So I would just suggest, Madam Speaker, that this is not . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, there's a lot of noise happening right now over the speaker. I'm just wondering if we could tone it down a little bit. Thank you.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Ms Sigurdson:** For this couple it certainly made a huge difference in that their ability – they just absolutely could not have stayed in their home.

I would say that this is not government waste, Madam Speaker. This is supporting people to live with dignity in their own homes. As I said, it not only has excellent social outcomes; it has good economic ones, too. It supports people to stay in their own homes – you know, it'd cost much more to have to live in some type of facility or things – plus their quality of life is much enhanced because they get to be where they want to be, and we know that seniors want that. That's why we developed this program, because we listened to seniors all across this province, and this is what they said: we want to stay in our communities; we want to stay close to families and friends. This is a really important program. I think that I'd just caution the government, if they're cutting programs – it does look, by the numbers, that they're going to be – that this is a valuable resource for thousands of seniors across our province.

There's also a component of it that is a grant program because sometimes seniors, you know, don't qualify for the loan because they don't have enough home equity. There are some restrictions so that the loan can be repaid. We don't want someone to be not able to repay the loan. There is a grant component, so that helps many more low-income seniors take advantage of that. That's just one of the programs that I think certainly is not government waste, is not poor fiscal planning, that we hear repeatedly from the government. That's a program that supports the dignity and well-being of Alberta seniors.

3:00

Another program that also supports our seniors here in Alberta is the Alberta seniors' benefit. One of the very important things that we did with that program is that we indexed that to the cost of living. This is an income support program. It augments people's, you know, monthly income from the federal government. This really supports quite low-income seniors who are receiving old age security, guaranteed annual income from the federal government. But their incomes are still quite low. This is kind of a top-up program that the provincial government does to support seniors on quite low incomes.

The importance of indexing, of course, is that our cost of living goes up each year. Oftentimes, if we're employed, that's taken into consideration when we sometimes have reviews each year, and we'll get an increase. But when you're on a fixed income like this, those programs don't necessarily have those bumps. So why are seniors really unfairly not benefiting from that when the rest of us are? I think that this is a very important one, especially when we're talking about people who are quite vulnerable. Those few dollars – and, really, they're not a lot, Madam Speaker, but at least it doesn't erode, you know, what they're getting each year on an annual basis.

Again, just as I was discussing the seniors' home adaptation and repair program, I would say that the indexing aspect of the Alberta seniors' benefit is also extremely important, and for seniors to live in dignity with the support, that is also a program that needs to be

invested in. In no way is this not prudent. It is an investment in the pioneers in our communities. I was very proud as the Minister of Seniors and Housing at that time to completely support the indexation.

If I move a little bit to the – there are sort of two aspects, I guess, to the ministry: one is seniors, and one is housing, and of course the two come together also as we do, you know, have affordable housing in Alberta. When we became government, we inherited a billion dollars in deferred maintenance, maintenance that needed to be done on the public delivery of affordable housing in our province. It really was quite disturbing for me as minister to come and see just how derelict some of these facilities were, and it was largely to do with a lack of funding by previous Conservative governments.

So our government made a bold move. We invested \$1.2 billion in affordable housing to address those significant maintenance needs and also augment what affordable housing we had so that people who were on low income, people who were on income support – maybe they had minimum wage jobs – were supported with their families. This bold move really created, you know, quite a significant move in building and in opening units so that more access to affordable housing could occur, because we know that we don't have enough affordable housing. We know that it's true in rural Alberta. We know that that's true in the big cities and in the medium-size cities. This investment, this \$1.2 billion that we invested, was four times more than the last Conservative government's budget, their capital budget, in affordable housing. As I said already, it was a very bold move.

We have in Alberta, you know, about 100 housing management bodies. These are organizations that do the delivery of affordable housing in our province, and these are people dedicated to making sure that people in their communities have access to affordable housing. What does that mean exactly when I say that? Like, what is affordable housing? What's our program here in Alberta? That is, like, seniors' lodges. Certainly, we know that oftentimes seniors' lodges in rural Alberta and communities – I mean, I grew up in Valleyview. We always had the lodge there in town, and it was just a hub where people came. It was a place for people who maybe could not maintain their own household anymore or maybe needed a little bit more support or perhaps one of the partners in that couple had passed away and they really wanted the social aspect and that connection. Alberta has an amazing lodge program all across the province, and they really are hubs in these small communities.

Of course, the lodge act came in in, like, the late 1950s, early 1960s, so many of those facilities were very – the infrastructure was extremely old. There had been some new building, but there still was a significant amount of need in that area. You know, in that alone we could be investing so, so much. But we did certainly step up that program to do that.

There is also seniors self-contained, and this is where, you know, seniors actually live in their own apartment-style units. We have over 14,000 of those units across our province. These are for seniors who are functionally independent, so they don't need that extra support. They can live independently, but they don't want to live in, say, their own single-family dwelling anymore. They want to live more communally. That's another program that's important.

We certainly do have community housing. This isn't based on age anymore. Seniors, obviously, are considered people who are 65 or over. Community housing is subsidized rental housing for low-income families. Here in Edmonton, Capital Region Housing is a significant provider of that. In Calgary it's the Calgary Housing Company. There are many other housing management bodies across the province.

I guess what I'm trying to do is get on the record, Madam Speaker, to have this government understand what these funds are

going to. They're helping seniors in our province, supporting them to live with dignity in their communities, and helping people who need affordable housing live so that they can raise their families in safe, secure, well-maintained, appropriate housing. I say to you, Madam Speaker, that this is not a waste. This is not, you know, us, the NDP government, acting with no prudence. This is actually a significant investment that helps many Albertans. I would say that even as a society, we all benefit from that, when we support our friends and neighbours.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

### Bill 5

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate June 19: Mr. McIver]

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

### 3:10 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This bill has now moved into committee. An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, it is called. It is not at all that when one examines the contents of this bill and some of its more egregious elements. Really, this is an act to pick your pocket. This pick-your-pockets bill will take workers' overtime. It will scoop holiday pay. It'll cut holiday pay to pay for a tax gift to corporations.

One of the things that we see, Madam Chair, as an ongoing theme from this government is a very uncaring approach in their first bills to the most vulnerable. This reveals, I think, who the priorities are, and it's certainly not an empathetic approach to young people, to people who might be working on an hourly basis, and certainly not for people who work in the service industry. Really, you know, this is a very well-trodden trail of authoritarian, right-wing governments who go after labour rights as one of their first items of business. It's really about the fact that the working class will pay for large gifts to friends, insiders, an increasing concentration of wealth at the top such that society becomes more unequal, such that workers lose bargaining power, such that young people revise their expectations of a good life and millennials are invited to abandon the dreams of a good, middle-class life that other generations have enjoyed in western industrialized democracies. That's what this is about.

You know, on the ground what it means is that this is a government whose essentially first item of business was to follow teenagers around pilfering toonies out of their pockets. That was job number one, apparently, to create a pool of labour that is not

compensated at the same rate, that does not enjoy the same protections as the rest of the workforce, and that is less able to form associations to bargain collectively for wages and working conditions. One of the really big issues that ought to be considered at the amendment stage of this bill is, when we have this youth differential wage, this idea that vulnerable teenagers could choose to drop out of school in order to earn a higher wage. That is of deep concern.

We've had some improvement over the last few years, I think. There's no question that the previous PC government, under Education Minister Hancock, and then more recent efforts by our government have increased the high school completion rate. There's no question about that, but that's been a sort of multiyear, multigovernment initiative and a good one at that, Madam Chair. But this proposes to start chipping away at that very good progress. That is something that this government should pause and consider as an impact of this reduction in a youth minimum wage.

I think, too, that the massive amount of red tape that this proposes ought to be a place where the government considers amending the legislation given that it's a confusing and very detailed calculation that has to be done with respect to what qualifies as a youth minimum wage. It applies for the first 28 hours of work in a week while school is in session. If they work more than 28 hours a week, they must be paid the general minimum wage for every hour beyond the first 28. During breaks and summer holidays the youth rate will apply to all hours worked.

You know, really, this is a whole lot of headache, Madam Chair, and that's why even the Klein government, that was not exactly predisposed to an orderly labour relations environment – I worked in opposition at that time. I can recall a number of different unhelpful initiatives on the part of that government, but even they scrapped this because there were just too many loopholes, too many hoops to jump through for employers, too much muddy water created for employers about when people are in school, when they're not, how many hours, back and forth, and so on and so forth. For a government that has put a bill in the window around red tape, which is a bit of a mannequin bill and indeed a bit of a mannequin minister on this file, with very little substance to go with it, it would seem to me that this is counterintuitive to the stated public policy aims that the government has put forward. Therefore, this section in particular could use some tightening up and some amendment. There's no question about that.

On the general holiday pay and, you know, questions around holiday pay and questions around statutory holidays and so on, I remember being in the service industry myself and this being a rather algebraic calculation for most of us coming up to Thanksgiving or other holidays on whether we would get the stat pay or not. I recall even for management it being a headache at the time given that our rules were so far out of step with other provinces. At a couple of the places I worked, managers had come from other places, and I remember – this was even back in the '90s – they used to roll their eyes at Alberta's sort of arcane and complicated rules around general holiday pay and stat holidays. Going back to some of these more difficult arrangements, putting us out of step with other provinces, again, creates confusion for employers. No other Canadian jurisdiction has similar rules. The changes that were brought in over the last few years were simply bringing Alberta in line with other jurisdictions.

You know, there were really no consultations taken on Bill 2. That is another reason why the government may want to pause and either amend this section or send it to committee, Madam Chair, given that there were absolutely no conversations undertaken with hardly anyone on this topic. You know, really, why would they? When we look at some of the issues around overtime, we know that

there is, in fact, no mandate for returning to straight time for banked overtime. The reason we know that is because people got pretty upset about it during the election campaign, and the leader of the party at the time, who is now the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, assured the electorate, in particular private-sector oil and gas workers, that they would not lose those thousands of dollars a year in overtime for banked overtime. Assurances were given, and then classically: say one thing; do another.

3:20

There is a reason why people are already asking questions about the straight talk coming from the leader of the members opposite. Certainly, there have always been questions among the electorate on this topic. Certainly, this issue proves that out, that what is said in the heat and enthusiasm of an election campaign is not necessarily the actual facts on the ground. Certainly, that is a concern. Just at a moment when we had a positive decision yesterday on the topic of market access and expansion of energy infrastructure; just as we may be again exiting from some of the uncertainties around market access and the price of WCS, that hurt economic growth in early 2019; just as we are moving beyond some of those challenges, Madam Chair, and returning to the levels of economic growth potentially – although private-sector forecasters aren't seeing it yet – that we saw in 2017 and 2018, when the province, when we were in government, led the country in economic growth two years in a row; just as we may be seeing some of those glimmers for private-sector oil and gas workers, we have a government that is going to scoop thousands of dollars out of their bank accounts. To be clear, this was really job one for the new government.

I think Albertans have every right to ask questions about this issue of banked overtime, especially given the assurances that were given over the course of the election campaign, assurances that have not proved to be factual, Madam Chair. This is another place where the government could pause, show some empathy and some consideration for families who work hard, and ensure that they get the overtime pay that they have worked for and, indeed, that they deserve. There are enough stories of families that have gone through hard times. When the price of oil dipped, the last thing they need is to have the long hand of this government pilfering around in their bank account to take \$2,500 out. When a family needs a roof replacement or they need to pay for specific supports for maybe a child or specific activities for that child or other pressures on the family budget, that amount of money can be really, really significant. This is about quality of life for people. It's not about extras.

Certainly, on the topic of extras, we see who's actually getting them, Madam Chair, and that's already-wealthy corporations who have profits over \$500,000. Those are the beneficiaries of the largesse of this government, but not ordinary people who work on an hourly basis either on contract or in a non-union atmosphere, in particular in construction and in the oil and gas industry.

I think some of the calculations collected by Statistics Canada bear this out. The average oil and gas worker earning \$43 an hour and working 10 hours of overtime every week on a 12-week project would see their wages differ, if all 120 hours are banked, by about \$2,600. That's a lot of money. It is reasonable, I think, for the new government to take a look at a number of the pieces of legislation: employment standards, labour relations. Certainly, when our government updated these pieces of legislation – there were reviews of the code done in '07 and 2014, and I was sort of adjacent to at least the latter. But no changes were made at that time. There were some specific changes that should have been made at that time, but the previous PC government was obviously wrapped up in its own

palace intrigue and unable to actually govern in the best interest of people.

But, you know, it's perfectly reasonable for this government to take another look at employment standards, the Labour Relations Code, and if they do in fact conclude, for example, that ensuring compassionate care leaves is not appropriate, then they should consult with Albertans and change that. If they do in fact, after a period of examining the changes that were made to overtime, go out and consult with private-sector workers and private-sector workers say, "Absolutely; I'm super not interested in having a couple of thousand dollars a month every quarter in my bank account" – not everyone is interested in getting paid fairly for their time, I'm sure – and they can reasonably demonstrate after a period of consultation that people aren't interested in their overtime, then they should make these changes, Madam Chair.

Here's the reasoning behind some of the changes that our government made. We did a focused review of existing laws. There were 7,300 submissions from business, industry, different labour and worker associations, academics, municipalities, nonprofits, the general public. If after a robust review of some of the changes that were made when legislation hadn't been updated in 30 years, I think the government would be fully within its rights to make some of these changes to overtime.

But the fact is that they've moved this through so quickly, without any of these requisite conversations with the broader public, and they'd be hard-pressed to find people who would wilfully give up a couple of thousand dollars every quarter just to satisfy a few backroom lobbyists in cigar-filled rooms and other folks that are seeking a gift of forgoing overtime. Certainly, that is what they've gotten. They've gotten a piece of legislation that has not been given its appropriate time of day in terms of consultation. That is unfortunate and is one of the things that should give government pause to find places to amend this piece of legislation. Perhaps send it to committee for some of the consultation that our government undertook. I would certainly replicate such an effort.

You know, when the members opposite rise to talk about some of the changes we made to employment standards, I guess the question that I would pose back would be: "What, of these changes, do the members object to? Is it compassionate care leave, or is it long-term illness and injury leave? Is it personal and family responsibility leave?" Certainly, one of the things that we did was an unpaid new leave that provided for up to five days of job protection for personal sickness or short-term care of an immediate family member. That was something that we didn't have prior. That was something that ought to have happened out of the 2014 review that didn't happen because people were busy – I don't know – building sky palaces and flying around and other things that were focused on themselves rather than focusing on parents like Amanda Jensen, who got fired for having to care for her son who was undertaking treatment for leukemia, childhood leukemia. Is it bereavement leave, domestic violence leave, or citizenship ceremony leave? Which of these changes, that the members opposite allege have somehow been problematic, do they object to?

I think they should be clear about that. I think that they should be straightforward with people and parents like Amanda Jensen and others who are struggling to care for sick children.

3:30

I think, too, that the code really clarified some things that really are of issue to ordinary people and people who work on an hourly basis, particularly in the service sector, so here I am talking about oftentimes young people or oftentimes women, oftentimes newer Canadians. Around deductions the code clarified some of the changes that our government brought in, which deductions are

allowed from wages as well as explicitly prohibiting deductions for faulty work and cash shortages such as dine-and-dash and gas-and-dash scenarios. So the members opposite, you know, when they run down the good work of the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, who was at the time the minister of labour, her very detailed work, they should be clear if they want to go back to a situation where we didn't have that kind of clarity for workers around deductions that were questionable at best around cash shortages and so on.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to pick up from where the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West left off if I could. You know, my view is also that this is a pick-your-pockets bill, that this really takes us back in time, takes away the good work that was done by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods that she undertook along with many other people. For instance, there was industry involved, there were stakeholders involved, people who had views about employment, organized labour, of course academics, municipalities, employers, many, many, many people with great knowledge about the impact of the current system of the labour code and laws with regard to employment in this province. Their work spanned a great deal of time. It took a long time because there was a lot of work that needed to be done, as the Member for Lethbridge-West talked about.

You know, it was 1987. The Employment Standards Code and Labour Relations Code had not been updated since that amount of time, 30 years, Madam Chair. Thirty years. I can remember the discussion in this House often about what was going on 30 years ago. It served as a bit of a mental reminder that the world has moved on, but Alberta's codes and laws with regard to labour hadn't. With the review that was taken, our oldest workplace legislation in Canada was updated, and I would like to spend my time talking about some of those updated standards and code changes. That's where the Member for Lethbridge-West was going.

Madam Chair, the work that the government undertook was done because we wanted to address many problems that had been left. The 2007 and 2014 previous government's actions, which didn't get followed through with, needed to be changed. For instance, in the area of minimum wage for people with disabilities it was okay prior to the changes in 2017 to pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage, and I think all would agree that that's not a benefit to that person with disabilities. It's a benefit to the employer, and it is something that other provinces have done away with and we did away with in 2017.

With regard to leaves, I know the Member for Lethbridge-West was talking about a number of them. One was the compassionate care leave. Their job protection was extended to 27 weeks, Madam Chair, from eight weeks, to better align with the federal insurance program benefits. That also, you can appreciate, was something that is of great benefit to people who have necessarily needed to take time to grieve and to spend time away from their workplace but with the assurance that they have 27 weeks to do that instead of just two months. That caregiver status was expanded, of course, to include nonprimary caregivers; not generous but how people live.

Long-term illness and injury leave: that was an unpaid leave provision, up to 16 weeks per year for personal injury and sickness, and that, again, aligned with the federal employment insurance program. That's unpaid, recognizing that businesses need to oftentimes backfill, but they're not paying that person for that who's taking that long-term illness or injury leave. That money – they're essentially keeping their payroll the same but being compassionate, again, to the person.



Personal and family responsibility leave: Madam Chair, that's a new leave that provides up to five days of protection per year for personal sickness or short-term care of an immediate family member. It includes attending to personal emergencies and caregiving responsibilities related to education of a child. We've done a lot of discussions about the Education Act and education in general here and GSAs in particular, but, you know, you can see where it might be really helpful for a family who is struggling with all sorts of issues regarding their child, whether that child is in a GSA or struggling with their gender identity. The parent in that case can take some time off to try and sort things out with their child, with the school, with people who need to be supportive of that young person.

Bereavement leave: it's a new unpaid leave. It provides up to three days' job protection per year for bereavement of an immediate family member. I don't think anybody would see that as overly generous or unusual, Madam Chair. What is unusual is that Alberta didn't have that in place, and the work of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, as the labour minister at the time, brought that into the code.

Domestic violence leave: certainly, something new in this province, but we can all appreciate where 10 days of job protection per year for employees addressing that situation of domestic violence is critical for their families and their own safety, mental health, and of the struggles that often go on for a person.

Citizenship ceremony leave: a new unpaid leave that provides up to a half day of job protection for employees attending their own ceremonies or their immediate family members' ceremonies, something we can all be proud of when new Canadian citizens – I was going to say are made or created or struck, but that's not the right word – receive their citizenship in Canada.

Critical illness of a child: a new unpaid leave that provides up to 36 weeks of job protection for parents of critically ill or injured children. That aligns, again, with federal insurance program regulations, Madam Chair. I've never been in that situation, but I'm very proud that Albertans who have a child in that situation now can take their time off work for that necessity of giving solace and support to and caring for their sick child.

Death or disappearance of a child: certainly, a new thing as well, Madam Chair, up to 52 weeks of job protection for employees whose child disappeared as a result of a crime or up to 104 weeks if a child died as a result of that crime. That aligns, again, with the federal employment insurance program. I can't imagine what parents go through in those situations, Madam Chair, but Alberta is now similar to the federal government and the Employment Insurance Act in that regard and probably many other provinces, but we didn't have it here. There's some really excellent work done.

3:40

Leave eligibility, Madam Chair, is the next area I want to talk about, that period for current and new leaves set at 90 days rather than one year, really, you know, some immediacy to decisions being made in that regard as opposed to employers saying: "I'll get to it. I'll get to it. I'll get to it." There's some kind of necessity to get to it within three months.

Maternity and parental leave: extending that, as was done by the federal government for the employment insurance benefits, from 37 to 52 weeks. Madam Chair, of course, it's critical for young children, babies that they have the care and ability to be cared for by parents who have that ability to take that time off work, and this gives them up to 52 weeks, another 15 weeks. We did that in alignment.

Rest periods: it's unbelievable, but it wasn't in the code that there should be a minimum of 30 minutes' break, paid or unpaid, for

every five hours of consecutive employment. We know that some work is taxing, back-breaking, and for people not to have rest periods is obviously a potential danger to them and their colleagues on the job. This rest period was another way of extending the best-in-class support to people in the workplace.

Overtime: we've talked a lot about overtime agreements and how we increased the allowable time to take that overtime to six months rather than the current three months, and that mirrors every jurisdiction in Canada, Madam Chair. The area that doesn't anymore is the removal of 1.5 hours for all hours worked of overtime banked and calculated at that amount. We have got out of step now with every other jurisdiction in Canada with regard to that, and that really doesn't benefit workers at all. Who it benefits in this case, I think, quite clearly is – the restaurant association of I think it's Canada lobbied quite hard for this and other things. That's a retrenchment or a step back for workers in this province.

Madam Chair, next I want to go to the whole idea of minimum wages and spend some time on that, particularly the youth minimum wage for youth under 18 years of age going back to \$13 an hour. When this bill hit the House, many employers like the Calgary Stampede, the Edmonton public library, I think, and others were in the process of the contracts they had established with young people. They were asked, you know: what are you going to do around all this? Because it's taking effect June 26, 2019, you can legally pay youth \$13 an hour who are going to be working for you. Of course, the Stampede has, I think, somewhere around 500 youth who will be a part of their summer contingent.

The Stampede, to their credit, said: you know, we made a handshake deal with those young people and had told them that it was going to be the minimum wage of the previous government's labour code that was brought in, and we're going to stick with that. The Edmonton public library said that as well, Madam Chair, and probably other entities that were put under the kind of glare of public scrutiny also said the same thing. It begs the question: if the Stampede, if the Edmonton public library, if many other places are sticking to their word of \$15 an hour, why is there a need to roll this back to \$13 an hour? I know the rationale from the other side is: well, it's going to help more youth get employed, and it's just going to be better for them. Well, it's not going to be better.

The words of our former minister of labour, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, were that the value of your work should depend on the effort and skill you put into it, not on what year you were born. So the value of your work should depend on the effort and skill you put into it. This change will make it harder for teenagers, who are often working to save up for their first car or put money away to pay for college. Vulnerable teens in particular, she outlined, may even choose to drop out of school in order to earn a higher wage, which is very concerning.

Madam Chair, I just don't see why we're rolling things back in some areas. It looks like it's targeted. "They can't speak up for themselves, so we'll take this opportunity to address our campaign promises to, particularly, the employers," whose lobby effort comes through the restaurant association and other kinds of similar things. Our Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, was very comprehensive. It was done to update something that was 30 years old, that the previous government attempted several times to throw up trial balloons around but, frankly, jammed or chickened out all of those times because they didn't want to upset the employers of this province. That's another thing that is pretty clear, that the balance here has shifted now away from an equal balance between employers' and employees' needs and addressing those needs and towards employers only. Employees give up much – employees give up much – and employees are the losers with regard to this bill, a bill to pick your pockets, and who benefits is not employees.

When we were in government, we made sure that Albertans had modern workplace laws that respected working people, set modern standards, and ensured that Albertans would be treated fairly. We worked on those things after decades of inaction, Madam Chair. The current bill before us does nothing to improve the situation for employees. When you roll back wages – it looks like this is what's going to be happening, not only for youth but for people and their banked overtime – the younger people are muzzled because they don't have a vote here and don't have a say. But that's why we're up here talking about that, spending time making sure that Albertans know that young people, people whose banked overtime is going to be affected, people who want to organize in the workplace, will be affected. Those and many, many other changes will be taking place.

The whole area of labour relations, I think, really needs to be outlined as well, because the certification process that was in place was working, Madam Chair. It was updated and mirroring other provinces who have done the same things. But the update was because PC governments before the current one were not supportive of organized workplaces. They took all actions to try and make sure that Alberta had the most regressive labour organization approaches in the country, and it worked for a long time.

3:50

It only worked until 2017, Madam Chair, when we had the foresight to make changes that would improve workplace relationships as a result of conflict being lessened because there were clear rules around how organized unions could be established. Establishing a program to support and assist employees who were seeking that information about their rights as a union member only had the benefit of improving situations in the workplace for both the employer and employees. Strengthening those rules in the workplace reduced the number of complaints that were going to multiple bodies, including the Human Rights Commission and the Labour Relations Board. Those changes are going to be rescinded, and that's another thing that's not going to be working out very well for the people in employment in this province.

Madam Chair, as I said earlier, the balance seems to be shifting back . . . [Mr. Ceci's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** Are there any more comments, questions, or amendments to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. A pleasure to have the opportunity to rise this afternoon and speak once again to Bill 2, an act to pick the pockets of Albertans. My colleague the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo – I wanted to say Calgary-Fort. That was his former constituency. He has shifted over to Calgary-Buffalo. He talked about balance, and the word “balance” is one that has come up quite a bit during this legislative session. It's been the topic of conversation on a number of bills: on this bill, on Bill 8. It's been a topic of conversation when we talk about Bill 3 and the corporate tax cut.

Indeed, Madam Chair, that's probably one of the biggest jobs of government, to seek to find balance for the people it serves, and the job of government is to weigh a lot of different interests, to take a look and see what the different interests are. Who are the people that are asking for different policies? What are the rules and regulations in other jurisdictions? What has the history been? It is the job of a government to keep current. When there are rulings or other legal opinions or other things that come forward that expand the rights of individuals or recognize rights that perhaps had been overlooked before, it is the job of a government to keep abreast and to update things on a regular basis. That is a government that is best

serving its citizens, and in so doing, it is the job of that government to determine: what is the best balance to bring into play between competing interests?

Now, as my colleagues have noted before me, the history of labour relations, the history of employment standards and rights of workers in the province of Alberta, is unfortunately not a story of balance. Indeed, previous Conservative governments were very out of balance in many respects. The challenge in finding balance, Madam Chair, is sometimes having to weigh, I guess, the interests and the needs or the wants of a particular group with whom you may feel more affinity against another group with whom you perhaps don't quite relate. It's going to be affected perhaps by your world view or – another word that gets tossed around in this Assembly quite a bit – ideology.

But we recognize, Madam Chair – I don't think anybody can argue – that in a province where we went nearly 30 years before some aspects of our employment standards or labour regulations were updated, we had governments that had a very poor sense of balance, so poor in some respects that it's a wonder they managed to stay on their feet.

That was one of the biggest jobs our government had in many respects. Actually, our government had a lot of big jobs. As I've said before in this House, Madam Chair, a number of times I had conversations with people about a wide variety of issues, and people came to me with particular concerns and said: “Why is something this way? Why is it like this? It wasn't like this when I was living in Ontario or when I lived in B.C. or in other places.” I had to tell them, “Well, Alberta is still the only jurisdiction in Canada that . . .” and very often these were not good things. So our government had a lot of work to do, frankly, to catch up on years of Conservative governments that chose to rag the puck on a number of things that they felt were too controversial or might cost them too much with some of their supporters.

We brought forward a bill that made a number of amendments to employment standards in the province of Alberta in seeking to bring Alberta back into balance, as had been demonstrated in other jurisdictions. I think it's fair to say, Madam Chair, that if something is the standard in every other jurisdiction in Canada, a balanced perspective would say: well, that should probably be the standard here, too, unless someone can present a very compelling argument why that balance would somehow be injurious.

Let's take, for example, the question of banked overtime. Alberta was the only jurisdiction in Canada that did not provide for workers when they worked an hour of overtime and would be paid an hour and a half for that overtime to also, then, if they banked that hour of overtime, bank an hour and a half, the actual value of the work they performed. Indeed, I just did a quick survey, Madam Chair, while sitting here awaiting my chance to speak. In B.C. it states: if an employee makes a written request, an employer can create a time bank and credit overtime wages for future time off; however, the time banked must be equal to the wage the employee would have been entitled to in working overtime. In other words, they must bank an hour and a half.

In Saskatchewan for every hour of overtime worked, one and a half hours must be banked.

Moving east to Manitoba, for every hour of overtime worked, one and a half hours of time is banked, which is paid at the regular wage when the employee takes the time off. Again, if the employee earned it at an hour and a half, they bank it at an hour and a half. If they take it as pay, they would be paid at the regular wage rate for overtime, that being an hour and a half.

In Ontario, if an employee has agreed to bank overtime hours, he or she must be given one and a half hours of paid time off for each hour of overtime worked.

In Quebec the employer may, at the request of the employee or in cases provided for by a collective agreement or decree, replace the payment of overtime by paid leave equivalent to the overtime worked plus 50 per cent.

In Nova Scotia: instead of overtime pay, an employee may receive one and a half hours of paid time off work for each hour of overtime worked when an employee and employer agree to do so.

In New Brunswick: banking of hours is actually not permitted in New Brunswick, interestingly. Employers must compensate employees for all overtime hours worked at the minimum overtime wage rate, that being time and a half.

In Prince Edward Island, if the employee requests it in writing and the employer agrees to that request, that employee, under the written agreement, must receive one and a half hours of paid time off for each hour of overtime they have accumulated.

In Newfoundland and Labrador instead of overtime pay an employee must receive one and a half hours of paid time off work for each hour of overtime worked when an employee and employer agree to do so.

4:00

Finally, in the Yukon the time off must be calculated by multiplying the hours of overtime worked by the employee by time and one half and be paid at his or her regular rate of pay at the time it was worked.

In every jurisdiction in Canada, Madam Chair – every single jurisdiction – if an employee works an hour of overtime, they either get paid an hour and a half or they bank an hour and a half. Alberta was the only province in Canada that said that employees' time was worth less. We corrected that. Now we have this new government who's coming into power. They've come into power, and their first thing to do is to roll this back. Apparently the Alberta advantage does not apply to workers in this province.

Now, I appreciate what members have shared about the need for some employees to have some flexibility in how they work with their employers. Indeed, that is why, like other provinces in Canada, there were provisions for employment averaging, where an employer and their employee could sit down, they'd come up with an agreement, it's approved, and they have different ways of approaching how they spread out those hours. But this government seems to feel that an hour worked in overtime is somehow worth less to an employee because they choose to bank that time as opposed to taking that as actual pay.

While we recognize that there is the need for there to be an agreement between an employee and an employer, we also recognize that not every workplace necessarily makes it easy for an employee to turn it down if that's what their employer tells them they are going to do. If I'm in a position where I desperately need that job and I'm told that the only way I can have that job is if I agree to the employer's imposition of that agreement and I sign my name to it, it is difficult if you're in that kind of vulnerable position to resist that kind of pressure. I don't think that's a door we should be opening as a government, to offer that opportunity for abuse.

And I am not, in saying that, suggesting that all or even a majority of employers are abusive. Indeed, I can count very few in my own career that I would say would take that kind of action: a very small number, but that number, Madam Chair, is not zero. Often that is going to be people who are in the most vulnerable positions. Governments should not be reopening loopholes to allow for people to pick the pockets of workers in this province, to allow people to take away what is their due right to earn, what is a right that they would enjoy in any other province in Canada.

That brings me back to what we were discussing, Madam Chair, that being balance. Now, it seems to be the view of this government

that balance must be tilted to the side of employers. Depending on one's perspective, you can decide how big that tilt is, whether it's a slight grade or whether, after all the changes that this government wants to bring in, it's a steeper hill. The fact is that that has been the history of Conservative governments in this province for many, many years. We see it even now with the legislation that this government wants to bring forward to break collective agreements, a view, again, that we as employers, as the government of Alberta, should have the right to override the duly negotiated rights of our employees, that somehow our quest to address the bottom line, which indeed is an important one, that that end justifies seemingly almost any means. In this bill we see that this government seems to be of the view that they must take the balance we created in bringing Alberta into line with every other jurisdiction in the country, that that balance must somehow be tipped back or there is no way we will ever see economic prosperity in this province again.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

That is not what I'm hearing from businesspeople in my constituency, Mr. Chair. That is not what I'm hearing from young entrepreneurs who are building neighbourhood businesses, who have indeed built franchises, suites of multiple businesses that are thriving within the Edmonton downtown core, who pay their employees above minimum wage and who treat them with the due dignity and respect that an employee, I believe, deserves and indeed that we have codified in law and that this government now wishes to roll back. This is not balance. This is tipping the balance. It betrays, I think, in many respects the disrespect in some ways – I don't know if that's quite the correct word; the lack of regard maybe – that some members of this Legislature seem to have for working people.

By all means, Mr. Chair, we should have respect for entrepreneurs. I respect people that start a business and operate a business. I recognize the risks that are involved. In my time as a customer service agent and a facilitator for the Canada Revenue Agency at the business inquiries call centre I talked with many business owners and I heard from them the challenges they faced. I talked with them about payroll. I talked with them about GST. I respect the challenge that comes with that.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

But to support and empower entrepreneurs, we do not have to roll back the rights of workers. Alberta workers do not have to be less than workers in any other province in Canada in order for entrepreneurs in our province to succeed. In some respects I would say that that is an insult to entrepreneurs in Alberta, to suggest that they are unable to thrive under the same conditions that entrepreneurs in other provinces can.

I recognize that we have come through a difficult time as a province, and indeed we are still emerging from that. I recognize that with that, there have been challenges for many people that operate businesses. Folks that operated restaurants and bars and other service industries in downtown Calgary indeed would have felt an impact from the world-wide drop in the price of oil and the impact that it had there. There are many things that you could point to and say were the issue there. There are many things that you could point to that indeed lie at the feet of many governments successively in this province, in the decisions on how they were going to structure the economy, how they were going to make investments, and how dependent they were going to be on oil and gas royalties to fund government services. There are a number of decisions that cascade up to this point, but frankly, Madam Chair, I do not believe that the culmination of those decisions should be borne by Alberta workers.

Our work over our four years in government was to try to find that balance. Were we successful in every front? Probably not. Nobody has a one thousand batting record in government. These are complex, difficult decisions to make. But the simplistic narrative that is being brought forward by this government, that by picking the pockets of Alberta workers they will somehow restore prosperity, it's a flimsy illusion.

4:10

The problems that we have, the difficulties that we need to face are for more complex than simply giving 4 and a half billion dollars back to wealthy corporations which may or may not choose to invest that back in the province and create jobs. It is not telling employees that the work that they are doing is worth less in Alberta than it is worth in any other province in Canada. It does not lie in telling young people that because they are under the age of 18, regardless of what experience or skill or whatever they have, they are worth \$2 less an hour. We do not help get other people ahead by handicapping workers.

I recognize that this is a point of philosophical disagreement, ideological disagreement, even, Madam Chair, between ourselves and this government. They will have the power to pass this legislation and move ahead, and I hope that they will be able to demonstrate that what they say this is going to do, it actually does. If not, this is clearly going to hurt Alberta workers. This going to create an imbalance between our province and every other province in Canada. It has the potential to exacerbate poverty for vulnerable individuals.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise again to speak against Bill 2, a pick-your-pockets bill. As members of Her Majesty's Official Opposition, you've heard over and over how we are against this bill and that on this side of the House we are standing up for hard-working Albertans. We made sure that Albertans had modern workplace laws that respected working people. We set modern standards and ensured that Albertans were treated fairly. After decades of inaction hard-working Albertans finally had the same rights and benefits as every other Canadian. We followed through on our promise to phase in a \$15 minimum wage so people didn't have to go from work to the food bank. We made workplaces more family friendly. We introduced job-protecting leaves and improved maternity leave and compassionate care standards.

We put a lot of time and effort into studying the impacts of minimum wage. We know that it put more dollars into the pockets of hard-working Albertans, who live, work, and spend their money here. We poured over studies, finding positive effects of raising minimum wage, effects like increased consumer spending, lower wage inequality, and better health outcomes with little negative impact on overall employment levels, Madam Chair. The opposition can study and release data, but it had better include the impacts on women, consumer spending, health, poverty, and so much more.

You've heard me speak in this House about the pride I take in being a social worker. I saw firsthand the impacts of poverty on all aspects of people's lives. Unfortunately, Madam Chair, most of the people impacted were women and children. These families had higher rates of illness, lower education, limited housing ability, and the list goes on. On this side of the House we believe that Albertans, young or old, deserve equal pay for equal work. Rolling back the minimum wage for young people demonstrates a lack of

compassion and a lack of respect for young workers. The value of your work should depend on the effort and the skill that you put in, not what year you were born.

The UCP is also proposing to implement \$2 an hour wage cuts to students between the ages of 13 and 17. The \$13 an hour minimum wage applies for the first 28 hours worked in a week while school is in session. If they work more than 28 hours in a week, they must be paid the general minimum wage for every hour beyond the first 28. During breaks and summer holidays the youth rate will apply to all hours worked. This could lead vulnerable youth to choose to drop out of school in order to earn a higher wage, which is very concerning to members on this side of the House, Madam Chair.

I would like to again talk briefly about some of these vulnerable youth, specifically young parents. I shared my personal story in this House about being a young single mother myself. Having worked with young parents for several years, I can speak first-hand to the negative impacts that this harmful legislation will have on these young people and their families, that depend on them. For young parents to be able to continue with their schooling is absolutely essential not only to their future but to the future of their children, that rely on them. Being able to support these families is so important. Proposing legislation that creates a dilemma between furthering their education or dropping out of school in order to increase the minimum wage differential is very concerning. Many young parents want to continue with their education. However, many face barriers such as access to affordable child care, access to transportation, access to affordable housing, and access to good-paying jobs.

Many of these young parents work in the service industry as they are putting themselves through school. The UCP is also proposing a liquor server differential wage. We believe that the minimum wage needs to be guaranteed for hard-working Albertans regardless of what place of business they work in. The government should not be creating different tiers of workers. We know that tips are not a stable form of income. Tips vary shift by shift, night by night, and business by business. A nightclub in Edmonton is different than a restaurant in Vegreville. You can't rely on an unstable source of income. When the UCP says that all servers make up the difference in tips, Madam Chair, how can they guarantee that?

Their pick-your-pockets bill will take your overtime, steal your holiday pay, and cut your holiday pay to pay for their big tax gift to corporations. This pick-your-pocket bill will impact roughly 400,000 Albertans working overtime to care for themselves and their families. Albertans in oil and gas, construction, and the skilled trades will be hit hard. These are Albertans working to a project deadline, who often put in the extra hours to get the job done and then take the paid time off later. If you're an oil and gas worker making average pay, putting in 10 overtime hours per week on a 12-week project, that's 120 hours in paid time off. The difference between banking that pay at time and a half pay versus straight time is over \$2,500, Madam Chair. That's a huge difference for working people. We're talking hundreds to thousands of dollars for people going above and beyond in the workplace, day in and day out.

What happens when the worker accumulated overtime with the understanding that they were going to receive 1.5 hours for each overtime hour? It's not taught to students or non-unionized workers to negotiate their rights as an employee. Who is to sit down with workers and explain that they have the right to request their overtime to be paid out? How will employers respond to that negotiating process, if they even allow the discussion to take place to begin with? There is absolutely a power dynamic at play in these discussions no matter how you frame this.

Employers' bottom-line profits are affected if they pay out overtime. Will they be open to doing so when they know that paying

out overtime will be at 1.5 hours for each hour worked versus time in lieu, which is hour for hour? The workers' time is not valued as it was in our legislation. Workers are at the mercy of employers' discretion to honour their important work, that generates those profits for the employers. How can members sit across there, vote this through, look Albertans in the eyes, and say, "Your work is not valued"?

Many of my constituents work in the trades, and their overtime is what has helped the families of Edmonton-Castle Downs get through economic downturns. When I was on the doors, I heard loud and clear from all constituents that overtime was the most important issue that crossed all demographics. I heard many times that the previous election reflected Alberta's wishes for the future of Alberta. Well, Edmonton-Castle Downs voted overwhelmingly against losing their overtime hours, losing their value.

4:20

I now have constituents coming to my office with fears that: "Now that this has been introduced, what will this mean for me? What will this mean for my family?" One constituent came in so upset that there is an expectation on workers to know how to negotiate to have their overtime paid out at time and a half instead of time in lieu at hour for hour. He's never had to do this before, Madam Chair. His concerns are that if he opposes the employer, he is at risk of losing his job. Therein lies the rub, the power dynamic at play that we worked to eliminate for workers' rights. He is speaking with his co-workers about how to have these discussions.

A working Alberta does not pit workers against employers. That is what this bill does. We both have a large stake in the outcome, workers needing their hours to be honoured for what they have earned versus the business bottom line. Workers take on overtime to help pay for a roof over their head. Workers take on overtime to help pay for braces. Workers take on overtime to help pay for their children's tuition costs. Because of this overtime, Madam Chair, workers miss out on major life moments by taking on overtime for the benefits of finishing the job and for earning additional money for their family to succeed in Alberta. Business bottom lines do not hug your child at night and tuck them in. Business bottom lines do not pay for formula and diapers. Business bottom lines cannot pay for missing a first step or a first word or a first "I love you."

What morale will this leave for the workforce? How will this play out for the economy if Alberta doesn't have that minimum of 2,500 additional dollars in their pocket? To hear the UCP repeat over and over that the \$1,000 of the carbon tax deserves to be in the hands of Albertans: what is the difference when they are taking over \$2,500 from Albertans? This is a prime example that they were concerned not with the amount of money in the hands of Alberta but with where the money from Albertans was going. Instead of having that money back in Alberta circulation, they would rather it be back in the hands of employers like large corporations, where their profits aren't reflected in the Alberta economy. For a party that shouts to the rooftops that they are about jobs and the economy of Alberta, this does not sound like they are at all concerned about Alberta's economy. The voters in Alberta voted for more jobs and an improved economy, but they did not vote for losing money out of the Alberta economy, and that is what this bill does.

I'd like to talk a little bit more about some of the things that we did with the minimum wage increase and some of the information that it has provided. We know that on October 1 our government increased the minimum wage to \$15 an hour to help hard-working families. More than a quarter million Albertans earn less than \$15 an hour. They represent over 11 per cent of all workers: 24 per cent are age 15 to 19, over 40 per cent are age 20 to 34, and over 12 per cent are age 55-plus. Alberta's overall employment increased

almost 2 per cent from October 2015 to August 2018. Alberta's employment in the three lowest paying occupations – sales support, service support, and salespersons – increased, Madam Chair, by about 6 per cent during that time. Employment in retail trade, the largest minimum wage sector, increased 4.8 per cent from August 2017 to August 2018.

We introduced Bill 17, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, in 2017. We know and we heard all throughout that time that Alberta had some of the oldest workplace legislation in Canada. Prior to our government's change, both the Employment Standards Code and Labour Relations Code had not been significantly updated in almost 30 years. I'm proud of the work that our government did to update those codes. While reviews of the code were done by previous governments in 2007 and 2014, no action was taken, Madam Chair.

Following a focused review of existing laws and over 7,300 submissions from businesses, industry, organized labour, academics, municipalities, nonprofits, and the general public we passed a series of changes as part of Bill 17. I'm curious, Madam Chair, who this government has consulted with when they introduced this piece of legislation. I feel that it's not as robust as what was done before because some of this simply would not have been introduced as part of the legislation.

Some of the Employment Standards Code changes that we made were that we repealed the ability for employers to pay employees with disabilities less than minimum wage.

We created job protection extended to 27 weeks from eight weeks to better align with federal employment insurance benefits around compassionate care leave, and caregiver status was expanded to include nonprimary caregivers, Madam Chair.

The long-term illness and injury leave: a new unpaid leave that provides up to 16 weeks of job protection per year for long-term personal sickness and injury. It also aligned with the federal employment insurance program.

Personal and family responsibility leave was an unpaid new leave that provided up to five days of job protection per year for personal sickness or short-term care of an immediate family member, including attending to personal emergencies and caregiver responsibilities related to the education of a child.

The bereavement leave was a new unpaid leave that provides up to three days of job protection per year for bereavement of an immediate family member.

One that I'm very proud of, Madam Chair, was a domestic violence leave, a new unpaid leave that provides up to 10 days of job protection per year for employees addressing a situation of domestic violence. This, I think, was essential in the legislation because we know that people fleeing domestic violence don't often identify to their employer why they're away. They may be sick. They may be dealing with other excuses that they're trying to create to keep their job. By introducing this piece of legislation, it gives permission for people to be honest with their employer about what's really happening at home and not fear losing their job because of that. So I'm very proud of that piece that we had added.

We also created citizenship ceremony leave, which is a new unpaid leave that provides up to half a day of job protection for employees attending a citizenship ceremony, Madam Chair. I know that in my role as an MLA I have had the incredible pleasure to be able to speak and preside at several community citizenship ceremonies. It is an absolutely heartwarming experience having people becoming Canadians, saying the oath, and seeing their family, their supporters, their loved ones coming to support them in that process. Several times I have taken the oath at the same time with them, and it's just, like I mentioned, an absolute honour. To be able to know that we provided an unpaid leave so that they could

attend that ceremony with job protection is something that I'm very proud of because it's an important part of being engaged in your community and being able to participate in that without the fear of losing your job. I think it's a very important process.

One that is upsetting that it was needed but I am very happy that it was included was the critical illness of a child, a new unpaid leave that provides up to 36 weeks of job protection for parents of critically ill or injured children. It aligned with the federal employment insurance program.

We included a new unpaid leave for the death or disappearance of a child, 52 weeks of job protection for employees whose child disappeared as the result of a crime or up to 104 weeks if a child died as a result of a crime. Again, this aligned with the federal employment insurance program.

4:30

Leave eligibility: the period for current and new leave set as 90 days rather than one year.

The maternity and parental leave: job protection for parental leave extended from 37 to 52 weeks to better align with proposed federal employment insurance benefits.

Legislation for the following, modified such that an employee may be terminated during the notice entitlement period only for situations where the business is closed or suspended: an employee whose pregnancy terminates within 16 weeks of the due date would still be eligible for maternity leave. I think that's a really important piece, Madam Chair, because for someone who has experienced a pregnancy termination, it can be devastating, and it has a huge impact on your life. Being able to take the time to grieve and to process that loss is huge. To not have to worry about your job being at risk, I think, is something that we are very proud of on this side of the House.

Rest periods: employees require a minimum of a 30-minute break, paid or unpaid, for every five hours of consecutive employment.

Overtime, Madam Chair: overtime agreements allow time to be banked for six months rather than the current three months. Like every other jurisdiction in Canada, overtime banking is calculated at 1.5 for all hours worked rather than hour for hour. Now, this was something that I heard, over and over, all across the province, workers were very, very appreciative of because Alberta was the only place in Canada that didn't acknowledge that. Now Bill 2 is taking this backwards.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to be in this House today and speak to important disagreements about legislation being brought into the House. I always welcome that opportunity because I think it is a true reflection of that which we all value, which is democracy and a chance to have some reasoned arguments about the differences we have in terms of approaching the well-being of Albertans, an opportunity to speak to the concerns I have about how this legislation shifts some of the well-being of some individuals within the province for the benefit of others and the concern I have when you're taking a side of that nature and who you're picking to support and who you're not picking to support. I think that's the underlying concern that I have here.

As I've addressed in the House before, I think that one of the responsibilities of the government is to do some assessment of society and have some sense that some people in society are more vulnerable than others and therefore are going to require some kind

of structural support in order to do well and be well in society, will need the rules to be set up in such a way that they will be protected and supported when they can't themselves achieve that kind of protection, because they're a single individual against a larger institution or against a larger majority of people or perhaps because they have some personal vulnerability which prevents them from achieving and seeking out the things that would be good for them in society.

We know that people are gifted differently. Some people will do well in any circumstance, will rise to the occasion, will face very serious challenges, and will be able to find ways to move through those challenges and find success and, in doing so, will create benefits not only for themselves but often for other people, their family members or even the community around them. Those people we celebrate. Those people we are quite happy to see succeed. We get behind them and cheer them on and try to pave the way for them when we can.

But we know that other people will just not be able to do that in quite the same way, that other people simply don't have the type of background, whatever it is – I wish we knew what it was – that allows them to succeed against all odds. As a result, it's often important that government understand that there's going to be that differential and to try, as much as possible, to ensure that people do not suffer as a result of not having whatever it is that allows that success to be possible for others.

That's part of my concern about all of this legislation here, that we do have people in society who need us to ensure that they have a set of rights and that those rights are protected and that those rights are encouraged and that, within those rights, they are given the best opportunity to succeed, just the chance to do the best that they can. Sometimes we have to worry that the balance of power in our society is not evenly distributed. That means that government, which has power, can help to share their power with the people who are more powerless in order to create that balanced and even playing field.

That was largely what was behind our decision to bring in the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act in the previous Legislature. It was a chance for us to look at: how do we create the best opportunity for people who are employees of businesses so that they can become successful and they can derive benefit from the well-being that Alberta so richly creates for so many people?

You know, I'm concerned here at this point that this government has come in and very quickly after being elected, without having an opportunity – of course, it simply didn't have the opportunity – not taking the opportunity to go out and to consult more widely and to begin to assess those concerns we have about who's going to benefit from these changes and who's going to suffer from these changes, to do a consultation but, more than a consultation, to do an assessment of: where is the vulnerability, where is the disproportionate amount of power, and how do we work as a society in order to create a more equal and balanced playing field so that one person does not have advantage over another?

On this particular legislation – I've had a chance to speak to it in the past, and I've addressed some of the concerns that I have – I want to speak about one particular thing that I haven't had a chance to address until this day. That is that for many people we have to worry that they have what we refer to as precarious work; that is, it's not dependable. It's not like many of us, like those of us in this Legislature. We know that at the end of every month we will receive a paycheque, and that paycheque will be exactly the same from month to month. We can do our budget, and we can schedule our lives around that, and we can derive great benefit from the satisfaction it gives us that we have that kind of stability and

security from fear of finding yourself in a very difficult financial spot, because you can plan for it.

Now, a very high number of workers in any province, of course, don't have that kind of work. Their work depends on the jobs that happen to come along, on the number of hours they're able to acquire from employers, and that goes up and down. It's really very much out of their control. It's not like they can simply choose for a new building to be built, for a new industry to be initiated. They have to wait. They have to wait to see what the world has to offer.

The world, you know, is not that settled and consistent a place. Things happen. The price of oil goes up and goes down. I know that it's often commented that in the time that we were in government, a lot of jobs were lost in this province as a result of changes in oil prices. Now, the government likes to blame that on policy that we have, but I just want to remind government members and, of course, everyone in the House that if you actually look at when the job losses began to occur, it was actually six months before we got elected. The most dramatic drop in job losses was actually not in our government but prior to our government. Between November 2014 and June 2015: that's when the vast majority of jobs were actually lost.

4:40

Now, unfortunately, we were hoping that there would be a quick recovery and that a lot of those jobs would come back, but they didn't. That's very unfortunate, but it didn't have to do with government policy. It had to do with world events. It had to do with things that happened not here in Alberta and not even in Canada but in the United States and other countries of the world that caused there to be this precarious set of circumstances that, of course, led to businesses being worried and businesses making decisions to contract in order to be able to kind of weather the storm. That makes sense. Nobody here would be against businesses making decisions to weather the storm, to get through this difficult time so that they can succeed in the new time that comes along when the weather changes and things are better.

But we would also want that for workers. We would also want workers to be able to weather the storm, to be able to have ways of getting themselves through those bad moments when the jobs just aren't coming, when they have to wait it out a little bit, when they have to wait their turn because there are only so many positions available and there are more people looking for those pieces of work. That's the time that I'm most worried about here.

The reason why I'm bringing that up is because I think overtime pay is one of those strategies that was available to workers for a long time. You could bank your overtime pay at one and a half times your regular salary and keep that as banked overtime until the day arrived when your precarious work took a negative turn and suddenly you found yourself, for perhaps weeks and sometimes perhaps months, without proper employment and therefore a proper income. People were able to make that decision, but they would put this money aside, and then when life got rough, when the vagaries of employment occurred in your world, you were able to know that you had this nest egg that you could draw on.

Now, of course, that still exists to some degree because it can still be banked at a 1 to 1 ratio. But what was happening before, of course, is that people were able to bank it at a higher ratio. Let's talk about why that higher ratio was even created in the first place because I think that's important. In many ways there is a disbalance between employers and employees. All the employee has to offer is their labour. That's it. That's all they can bring to the situation. They can work hard. They can do their best to help the company get better. They can be, you know, hard-working, thoughtful people who

contribute above and beyond. But that's it. They can just be good employees.

Employers have a variety of other things that they're able to do. They can make decisions that have extremely serious effects on workers. Having the opportunity for workers to be able to negotiate wages with their employer is a very important thing to occur because it allowed them to come to the table with something, to be able to say: look, I want to be able to work on your behalf so that your company grows, you gain profits, but I need to have some power at that table, not just take whatever comes my way.

One of the things that came from many years of union negotiations in Canada and, of course, around the world was the fact that we needed to find a way to create a win-win. An employer is in a good situation. They've got more work to be done. They've got things they want to have happen, so they go to the employees, and they ask them to put in more time. It's a win for them if the employee puts in more time because they can do more of whatever it is that they do well. If they're selling the product, if they're selling a service, they can do more of that. They can drive the benefits of that, particularly profits, of course, and that's a win on the employer's side.

What the old system had was a win also for the employee. It wasn't just a demand for more work. It wasn't just someone with power telling you: if you want to keep your job, you're going to give me more hours. It was a negotiation. It was an agreement. "Look, if you're going to get this win of being able to make more profits because I'm putting in more hours, then give me a win back. Give me a win back so I can take care of my life when life is precarious, when the work isn't there, so that I can bank hours so I can draw it out later. We both get a win out of this. You get more profits, and I get more profits. Kind of the same thing." That's a nice deal. It's nice because it brings everybody to the table. It gives everybody a win to go home with and helps to reduce the precariousness of income for people who don't know whether or not they're always going to have the work.

Now, this turns out to be a fairly significant amount of money for many people. In the oil and gas industry, for example, a lot of people work overtime consistently. They work overtime every day for weeks at a time. I notice that some of the stats indicate that if you put in about 10 hours extra a week over a period of three months, a little more than 120 hours for that three-month period, that can have the difference of \$2,500 to \$2,600 in terms of your household income. That's a lot of money to put aside. If you were able to put that money aside over a period of years, then you would have enough money to pay your rent and your groceries sometimes for months at a time.

I know a number of people who work in areas like carpentry, plumbing, and other kinds of technical trades that have really taken advantage of that when times got tough, when they knew it was going to be three, six months between the job that they have now and the next job that came down the road. Having that amount of money taken away from them just puts them more into that precarious world. You know, we can't stop all the vagaries of life – I understand that – but it's always incumbent upon us to try to find ways to create structures in society that provide that kind of stability when we can. It's a possibility, and it's a nice one because it's a win-win kind of possibility. It allows both the employer and the employee to get some extra benefit.

Now, I know employers may be concerned. "Well, then I'm paying out more money, and that's something of a loss in terms of my profit margin." Of course, if they're going to make more money, they have to do that calculation. Is it worth the extra time and a half? If it is, well, great. Good for them. We don't have a problem then. If it's not, then they do have another choice. That other choice is

that they simply hire more people to do the job so that overtime isn't required. They can reduce the amount of overtime they're paying out by making decisions to employ more people, which is, again, a win-win for us here in the province of Alberta. If we have employers making the decision to hire more people, that's a satisfactory outcome as well.

What I'm just arguing for is that there has been a good balance up till now in terms of people being able to negotiate their lives, to take care of the bad moments, and to move on in a positive, satisfactory kind of way. I would really like to see that continue, and I'm very concerned that we are moving away from that position in terms of the decisions that we're making right now. That is going to have an effect on somewhere around 400,000 Albertans who are included in this particular scenario that we're talking about, so it really has a huge effect on a large number of people.

I know I heard about this quite often on the doorstep because, of course, many people living in Edmonton were people whose partners would fly up to places like Fort McMurray or other places typically in northern Alberta and come back. You know, while the employee who is moving up to Fort McMurray is up there, they might as well work overtime. They're not at home with their family anyway, so it's a great way to put in some extra hours, get some extra money, and then come home and be able to live the life that we all desire with our families, with the benefits that they were able to accrue and the contribution that they're able to make to the GDP in the province of Alberta and to the local economy.

When they come home and they have that extra money, I can tell you that most employees spend that money in the local community, and that's one of the really nice things about employees, that that's where their dollars are spent. Their dollars are spent on things that the family needs. It allows them to buy a vehicle for the family. It allows them to perhaps go out to a restaurant every once in a while. It allows them to live a good life. Most of that is spent here, in the province of Alberta, which, again, turns over and increases the GDP here in the province of Alberta. So it's a really positive thing when we have that happening.

4:50

I want to take a moment to move on and speak a little bit more about the decision to lower student wages, from \$15 an hour to \$13 an hour. Again, I'm worried about the nature of the outcome of this, the unintended consequences that this will have for many young people, particularly with regard to the concern of precariousness in terms of employment. Now there is a complex set of rules here. There is red tape involved in the strategy that has been established for how people will be paid, how much, so much up to 28 hours, so much if you're in school or if you're not in school. Again, I've spoken to the fact that I'm very concerned that now people are not only not being paid for the work that they're doing, but they're also being paid based on some externality such as whether or not they're in school or whether they happen to be 18 or they happen to be 17. These are things that are very disconcerting for us here.

I'm also concerned that it sets up this competition between people who are in school and the people who are out of school, that it sets up a competition between people who are under 18 and people who are over 18, and that it makes their life precarious. The employers naturally will be in the position of wanting to maximize their profits and will start to make decisions that are difficult for employees, decisions that will pit them against their co-workers so that if you're 17, you might have an advantage over an 18-year-old because you can be paid less. Then suddenly you turn 18, and your work becomes precarious again because there's someone else who will be working for less.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak or offer amendments to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and discuss Bill 2. I have a couple of concerns and a couple of comments that I'd like to make in regard to the bill, but before I do that, for the sake of the House, I have an amendment. I will just take one copy. Would you like me to read it into the record or wait till you have a copy?

**The Chair:** Just wait till I have a copy, please.

This amendment will be known as amendment A1.

Member for Edmonton-Manning, please proceed.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will read it into the record. I move that Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended in section 1(2)(a) in the proposed section 23(2)(a) by adding "at least" after "overtime pay will be provided, taken and paid at."

Now, the reason for this amendment is that when we look at the legislation and the way that it reads as of right now, there is a concern around the fact that without the words "at least" this creates a loophole. The reason for what we would perceive as being a loophole to this legislation would be that there are existing contracts that private-sector employers have signed with their employees that already guarantee time-and-a-half pay. With the changes to this legislation, without adding "at least," an employer could interpret this by saying: well, the legislation says that I no longer have to honour that contract at time and a half, and I'm only now required to have to pay you straight time. What will happen is that we might see contracts in the private sector and, let's say, potentially, looking at some bills that are coming forward such as Bill 9, that maybe the public-sector employer would also like to look at this as an option, to not have to pay time and a half even though there's contracted language in regard to it.

This is another way for this government to create policy that actually allows the employer to say, "Well, the legislation now says that I can't pay you time and a half," even though the government has repeatedly said: well, it's a negotiation between the employer and the employee. We know how well negotiations go between this particular employer and their employees. So I would question the relevancy of whether or not that argument is valid. Again, it's just an opportunity to pick the pockets of our workers.

I would like to have the belief that the majority of the employers in our province wouldn't look at this and take it as an opportunity to not have to pay time and a half to workers that are currently working and have contracts that exist at time and a half. However, if there is a loophole and there is an opportunity, some may decide that it makes sense to be able to renege on a contract or to renege on paying workers time and a half when they don't necessarily have to.

I feel like this amendment is very important to this piece of legislation because it clarifies, and it's a little bit of a housekeeping tool to say that "at least" exists within this legislation instead of the way that it reads currently to be paid, which is at a "rate at a time that the employee could have worked and received wages from the employer." Again, we recognize that there are 400,000 Albertans that are going to be impacted by this piece of legislation. I would put out there that there might be an additional 180,000 workers that are impacted by Bill 9, that could potentially be impacted by this as well, for a total of 580,000 Albertans.

You know, again, I'm not trying to imply that employers are going to break their contracts. I mean, we would never want to do



that. We would never like to think that any employer in this province would ever want to break a contract because that could potentially be illegal, depending on the contract that's signed. But if there's an opportunity and there's a loophole that exists within pieces of legislation that could allow breaching of contracts, some might decide to try to take that route and see what happens.

I would encourage all members of the House to consider this amendment. It's a pretty reasonable amendment, I think. It's only two words. It's not substantial by any means, no. You know, be fair to the workers that are already working time and a half, that deserve to get paid out with their existing contracts, let's honour the contracts in Alberta. Let's ensure that employers understand that they don't have to pay employees at straight time, as this could be potentially interpreted. Let's just clean it up a little bit and make sure that employers understand that they have the opportunity to still pay at one and a half times versus it having to be at straight time because I think that's a substantial change for employees. I think it's important that employers understand that they can negotiate and make it time and a half and that they can pay their employees whatever they feel is a fair wage and fair compensation for their overtime, and the only way that we can do that is by making sure that this language is clear so that they don't feel like this government is now telling them that the only salary they can pay and the only compensation they can pay is straight time.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member for Edmonton-Manning, for bringing forward this amendment, that would certainly clarify that the minimum required for the employer is the wage rate, but there is no restriction as such in the legislation should they want it to be at a higher rate. I think the reason that this amendment is important is that we have heard many times from that side of the House that this bill will leave open the opportunity for employers and employees to negotiate the overtime. At least that intent will be reflected if we pass this amendment. It's a very common-sense, practical amendment brought forward by my colleague. I don't see any issue with it such that the government side won't support this amendment.

5:00

We know that ever since the UCP got the mandate, including this act, many other pieces of legislation, Bill 9, they're all designed to attack Alberta workers' rights. This piece of legislation, pick-your-pockets legislation, is essentially reversing all the changes that were brought forward by the previous government making workplaces more family friendly, introducing job-protected leaves, improving maternity leaves, compassionate care standards, and all those things. Where there is an opportunity to make this bill a bit more clear, I think that's the one, and we should certainly support this amendment.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

In general, I guess, this piece of legislation – I think the name says An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. I think their idea of making Alberta open for business attacks workers, takes their rights away. That's exactly what this piece of legislation is doing. It's picking pockets by cutting overtime, by taking away holiday pay, by cutting holiday pay, and by reducing youth minimum wage and all that to give a gift to corporations, multinational corporations.

It makes changes to employment standards and labour relations that will take Alberta backwards and not forward. When we were

in government, I think we conducted a review. We consulted with workers. We consulted with those representing our workers, those organizations. We consulted with businesses, and the changes we brought forward were common-sense changes, and they were not the radical, ideological changes as sometimes the other side would want to describe them. They were merely changes that will bring Alberta at par with other Canadian jurisdictions.

When we look at other Canadian jurisdictions, time and a half pay for overtime work, that's pretty much the norm, but here in Alberta we are seeing that they're after reversing that change that was brought forward after years and years of struggle from the labour movement, Albertans asking for those changes, and the previous Conservative government not paying any attention. Finally, when we became government, we brought forward those changes.

Similarly, when we became government, Alberta was towards the lower end of minimum wage. We increased the minimum wage to make sure that Albertans who go to work, full-time work, are able to put food on the table, are able to meet their basic needs. What we are seeing here is that they are reducing minimum wage as well from \$15 to \$13 for kids age 16 to 18. I think, as has been said by my colleagues here, a former minister and the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods, that work should never depend on your age. It should depend on your skill. It should depend on what you have to offer, but here we are seeing an arbitrary kind of two-tier wage system that only depends on how old you are. I think that discriminates against young workers in this province just because they are young, just because of their age. I don't think that in any way, shape, or manner that kind of policy will help us create jobs.

When Albertans elected this government, they were promised jobs, they were promised a pipeline, they were promised prosperity. So far, when we look at their legislative agenda, what we are seeing here is that, on one hand, they are trying to do their best to benefit their donors, benefit the wealthiest in this province, but at the expense of an attack on workers. Bill 2 does the same thing. Bill 9 does the same thing. Bill 3 does the same thing.

This piece of legislation is reversing the progress that was made under the previous government, under our government. It's repealing minimum wage, and I don't think that we heard during the campaign that they will be reversing minimum wage. Similarly, I don't think Albertans voted for their compassionate care leave, that was adjusted after a long wait, to be taken away. They didn't vote for their long-term illness and injury leave to be abolished. They didn't vote for their personal family responsibility leave to be taken away. They didn't vote for their bereavement leave to be taken away. They didn't vote for their domestic violence leave to be taken away. In fact, if they voted for anything, they voted for jobs, they voted for the economy, they voted for pipelines.

So far what we see from this government, I think, the evidence is that despite their repeal of the carbon tax, despite their big tax corporate giveaway of 4-plus billion dollars, what we are seeing in Calgary is that there is more job loss. There is more unemployment in Calgary. Certainly, those things that they did in the name of the economy, in the name of job creation didn't have the intended impact on the economy.

As was mentioned earlier today, just in the last week Repsol is laying off workers in Calgary. They're laying off workers from their field offices across Alberta, two different places in Alberta. Similarly, Nexen is also laying off people in Calgary. If their policy was to have any positive impact, if their policy – they were describing that the reason for job losses is that there is a carbon tax. The reason for job losses: maybe the taxes are high. Both those things, I guess, are in the UCP's legislative agenda. One has already been passed. If that was the reason, I don't think we will see more

job loss in Calgary. We won't see companies shutting down their field offices, companies restructuring them. So certainly that's not the issue. That's not the way you create jobs, by pitting businesses against Alberta workers.

This piece of legislation is an important one and will impact more than half a million Albertans. That's pretty much half of what you claimed your mandate to be. So that's half of your mandate that will be impacted by this piece of legislation.

The overtime pay plays a very critical role. Those who work at minimum wage jobs, those who work at low-paying jobs, and even those who are working in oil and gas, construction, skilled trades, they work hard. They work overtime so that they can meet their needs, and this change will affect them somewhere around \$2,500. It's a huge, huge amount of money for those who work hard to earn this overtime, and now with this law they will see that \$2,500 taken away from them. Their hard work is not valued.

At the same time they will see that this government would rather give \$4.5 billion in tax breaks for the corporations, for the wealthiest, for multinational corporations but not to hard-working Albertans, who work hard each and every day in the oil and gas sector, who work hard each and every day in the construction sector, who work hard in our health care system, in our education system. All those Albertans are getting impacted by this only so that the UCP government can pursue their ideological agenda of providing \$4.5 billion in tax breaks so they can follow the policies of the past, trickle-down economics, supply-side economic policies that have failed all across the globe and also here in Alberta many, many times before.

5:10

If they really want to create jobs, if they really want to help the economy, I think one way of doing that would be to create more takeaway capacity for our energy sector. There were oil-by-rail contracts signed by the previous government, which would have helped the Alberta economy to take another 120,000 barrels to market. That would have created jobs; that would have attracted investment. But what we are seeing here is that those contracts are being threatened. There's no answer. We were told that the private sector will take on that capacity and will create that capacity. When asked during question period how many barrels of capacity were added, there is absolutely zero evidence that any barrels, no capacity, was created through the private sector. When we brought those agreements, I think we looked into the market capacity, we looked into the existing capacity, and it was a well-thought-out decision that was based on sound advice from the Department of Energy and public service, but here we are. We will cut overtime, but we will not do anything to create jobs or attract investments.

They're cutting, through this, not only overtime pay but also young workers' wages. They're cutting it just based on their age. It should never depend on someone's age; rather it should be fair, and it should be based on equal pay for equal work and based on the effort and skill you put into any work. Instead, we are told that this cut somehow magically will also increase jobs for youth. There is no evidence that cutting existing workers' pay will create more jobs because businesses have a background in economics and businesses will only hire the amount of labour that they need, whether it's at \$15 or \$13. Somehow if the wage drops, they will not create additional positions that they don't need. There will only be positions that they need. They will only employ labour that they can accommodate and that they need. There is no economic theory whatsoever that I am aware of – if they can point to some, I would be happy to listen and look it up. Throughout my education, up until my master's in economics, I never heard of an economic theory that says that cutting youth wages will somehow create more youth jobs,

because businesses will only hire as much labour as they need, regardless of what the cost of that labour is. That's a critical factor in production that will account for that, whether it's higher or lower, but that will not create jobs.

This piece of legislation, again, is attacking youth. Somehow they think that that will magically create jobs. All of that is done in the name of making Alberta open for business. There is not a hint of that in this piece of legislation. What really is there is that they're taking overtime pay away, they're attacking their leaves, they're attacking their wages, and somehow that opens Alberta for business. I think a fair Alberta, an Alberta that looks out for businesses, looks out for workers, looks out for all Albertans, doesn't have to pit workers and businesses against each other. It doesn't have to pit the economy and the environment against each other. It doesn't have to hide these attacks in the name of business. It doesn't have to name the bill in such a way that no Albertan would ever guess that in Alberta, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business will have everything that amounts to an attack on Alberta workers.

At least this amendment put forth by my colleague from Edmonton-Manning will ensure what we heard from the other side, that their intention is that employer and employee can negotiate overtime. That's another thing, whether these negotiations are possible or not, but it leaves room there that the employer at least has to pay the employee at the wage rate. Should they choose to pay more, at least the legislation is open to that idea.

I think it's a common-sense amendment that will help clarify their intention as described by them. Although I believe that no amount of amendments, no amount of tweaks to this legislation will make this bill acceptable to Alberta workers, will make this bill acceptable to those who are working, those who are earning minimum wage. No amount of amendments will make this bill acceptable to those whose overtime is taken away in the amount of \$2,500, those whose leaves are taken away. No amount of amendments will kind of strike a balance where we can say that it's a fair piece of legislation and that it strikes a fair balance between employers and employees.

It's clearly tilted towards businesses along with their other acts, for instance, Bill 9, Bill 3, everything. I think the only people who stand to lose in these pieces of legislation are working Albertans, those who provide essential and important services every day, those who are there and who are needed to run hospitals, run schools, run these businesses. They're on the receiving end of this attack, and they're the ones who are losing their benefits.

At least this amendment will clarify their intention, make a little bit of a difference, and I hope that members on both sides of the House can support this amendment. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Are there others? I see the hon. Minister of Transportation rising to speak to this amendment.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise on this amendment made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, I think, if I have it correctly. Let me just say that our legal folks looked at this and they have determined that this will not be an improvement. It's essentially somewhat repetitive with the intention of the bill. The government side over here, we've been very clear about the intention of the bill. The bill is to provide the flexibility for employees and employers to work together in those cases where they could trade hours worked and bank them, to take them at a one-to-one basis when it works. Of course, if they get paid out, they will still get paid out at the one and a half rate.

The fact is that we've heard a lot in the last little while from the opposition, and they are doing their best to roll out every negative

scenario possible, and I suppose that's their job, so I'll give them a pass on that, at least to some degree. But if they looked at it in a more realistic way and talked to some more small businesses about how this works, they might actually be saying things differently than what we've heard in the House today.

A scenario that a member from the opposition the other day rolled out, that if somebody banked 40 hours' worth of work under the current legislation, they could take off a week and a half's holidays, and if they banked 40 hours' worth of work under the new legislation, they would only get a week's holidays. Let me say, if you look at it as the most negative scenario possible, that is one scenario.

But let me tell you about another scenario of how this could roll out, too. If an employer needed someone to work an extra 40 hours' work, after this legislation that we hope will pass comes forward, here are the possibilities. One possibility is what the NDP says. That's potentially a possibility, but the other possibility is that that worker might not get any overtime. The employer might either work themselves, or the employer might bring in a second employee at regular time. That employee, instead of having the benefit of those extra hours and getting some extra time off with his or her family, wouldn't get any overtime at all and wouldn't get that opportunity from their employer to have that extra benefit. That's actually a more realistic scenario. That's actually a more realistic example of what could possibly happen out in the world.

5:20

The opposition likes to talk about these examples, too. They always loved the expression "wealthy, greedy corporations," but the fact is, Mr. Chair, in many cases the organizations that will benefit the most from the banked-time provision are charities and nonprofits. They often will use the one-to-one banked time as a big part of fundraising, when you see galas, for example, special events that charities put on, whatever it happens to be, some gala with a theme where everybody goes and has dinner, and they try to talk them into spending money for the charity outside of the ticket price.

What happens, then, within the charities and the nonprofits is that their staff end up working sometimes 12, 16 hours a day for two, three days because it's a lot of work to get in, move decorations in, decorate the hall, host the event, work overtime, the next day clean up, undecorate the event, and move out. If the nonprofit or the charity had to pay one and a half times pay for all of that, it might actually not be worth doing it. Then, of course, you lose the benefit of that charitable work and the nonprofit work that they do out in the world.

Right now, in fact, many employees that work in these scenarios actually look forward to the events so that they can work the extra hours, and then they can, at a mutually agreed upon schedule with their employer, take a Friday off or a couple of Fridays off or a couple of Mondays off or they can take a day off to take a child or a spouse to a doctor's appointment or, heck, they can sleep in. They can ride their bicycle some day when it's sunny. There are all these scenarios, and there are a thousand more scenarios like that, that the opposition wants to ignore, than the things that don't really happen.

The other thing that exists is that there is lots of seasonal work. If you just think about agriculture, where in farm labour the fact is – well, it's not universal across all farms and ranches – anybody that grows a crop that has farmhands knows that during the spring when seeding is going on the work goes 12, 16, sometimes 24 hours a day. The farmhands know that part of the deal is that you've got to – the old-time expression is you've got to make hay when the sun is shining.

The same thing holds true in the fall in harvest when you make hay when the sun is shining, where you go from maybe a normal

workday to having people working on the combines and other pieces of equipment morning, noon, and night because they have a limited amount of time between when the crop is ripe and when the snow falls, and if they don't get it off the field, then the farmer or the rancher doesn't make anything unless they do. It's been going on for years with their employees in many cases. Those employees work – let's face it – really long, really tough hours during seeding and harvesting, and they get paid for working lesser days where they will maybe get a few weeks off when the crops are in the field and growing in the middle of June and there's a lot less daily work to be done.

Let's talk about February. There's not a lot of seeding or harvesting going on in February in Alberta, and there are lots of arrangements with the employers and the employees where they continue to get paid during the off-season. They and their families benefit more during the pay period but probably will have less tax taken off during the pay period. But let's be clear. At the end of the year when you file your taxes, that all evens out based on your total annual income. But the fact is that these arrangements are commonplace, and a lot of nonprofits suffered when the NDP changed the ability for employers and employees to come to these mutually beneficial arrangements.

A lot of small businesses suffered when this happened, and a lot of their employees, instead of getting time and a half, got nothing extra. A lot of them actually like being able to work hard. It makes them feel part of the team. They surely earn their money, but they get to have, perhaps, a day off in the summer or whenever they want. Maybe in the winter they get a day off to go skiing; maybe in the summer they get a day off to ride their bike or do something. But the fact is that the NDP's legislation has taken away this mutually agreed upon flexibility and quality of life improvement that has been going on for years.

They somehow just can't seem to get it through their minds that before they showed up and did their best to mess up the Alberta where almost everybody that wanted to be working was working – they are small-minded, in my view, in the way they look at these things. They don't consider both sides of the argument, Mr. Chair. Sure, the other side will jump up and say: well, what if an employer is bad? Well, you know what? That happens. There are bad employers and there are rules to deal with that, but in this particular case this is a mutually agreed upon arrangement that benefits the employee and the employer. Many times it's the difference between getting some overtime and getting days off when they really want it or not, and getting those days off and still being able to pay their monthly bills.

The other side always likes to talk about people that don't make a lot of money, and that's one of the things that I'll say I agree with them on. You've got to think more about people that don't make a lot of money in this world because they need us thinking about them more. But those are the ones that, because they don't make a lot of money, may not be able to afford to take a vacation. One of the things that helps them to be able to take a vacation is the one trade-off so that they can get the overtime, so they can take the vacation without missing the paycheque. In many cases they won't get any opportunity for the overtime because the employer will just hire somebody else, a second employee at straight time. They won't ever get any extra pay or any extra time off, and in some cases they won't get a Friday off. They won't get a vacation.

That's what the other side refuses to acknowledge. They know it's true. Some of them might even have received that benefit along the way. I don't know. I don't know whether they have or not. But the fact is that they refuse to acknowledge it. Why? Because they'd rather think of job creators as being bad instead of being good. On this side of the House we actually think job creators are part of the

solution. The other side of the House thinks job creators are the problem. We think job creators are the solution.

And it's the same. They talk about taking \$2 an hour away from young students. Again, I suppose if you want to look at it in the most negative way possible as the NDP does, because they think of job creators as being the problem rather than the solution, that's one way to look at it. The other way, the other legitimate way to look at it is that making \$13 an hour is \$13 an hour better than making zero dollars an hour if there is no job for them at all because the employer can't make a profit still or keep the doors open at the higher rate. That's a fact.

The other side doesn't like to acknowledge that businesses are under pressure, too, when they've got skilled or hard work. You can't get people to do some jobs at \$15 an hour, Chair. That's just an experience that lots of businesses have, and if they can't get them to do the jobs at \$15 an hour, they can't get them to do them at \$13 either. But more to the point, in many cases employers are giving their employees fewer hours. The employee starts off thinking: "Great; I got a \$2 an hour raise, beautiful. Multiply that by the 20 hours a week or the 12 hours a week I'm working while I'm in school." Then they find out that their hours are cut in half, and then they're not very happy at all.

I acknowledge it can cut both ways. In some cases some people will end up making a little bit less money. I acknowledge that. I wish the other side – we don't mind acknowledging that, but they refuse to acknowledge the other side of the argument that some people will be making zero, and it's better to make \$13 an hour than zero if you need the money. It's better to keep a business open and employing people rather than make the business close because they can't afford to stay open because they can't afford wages to keep their doors open.

5:30

The other side refuses to acknowledge that side of it. On this side of the House we're prepared to acknowledge both possibilities and allow for the job creators to do the magic they do. The magic is sometimes the risk that they take, many times putting a mortgage on their house to finance their business or taking out a personal line of credit to run their business and to pay the salaries on a Friday, whether the business made money at all that week or not. Some weeks businesses don't make money, but they pay their employees on Friday anyway so that they can still be open next week and hope that more people come through the door and spend money so they can maybe make the money back next week. We understand that. We acknowledge that.

The other side just thinks that they're bad people that take advantage of their employees. We think job creators are the solution; they think they're the problem. That's the real difference here. The real difference is that when we were in government, businesses felt like they were welcome here, and they wanted to be here. When they were in government, they made businesses feel like the government felt they were criminals, that they were taking advantage of people, and that their government didn't want them here. You know what? Businesses got the message. Eighty-billion dollars worth of investment left this province under the NDP.

Now we are left to clean up the mess, to do business-friendly things to bring businesses back and jobs back so that families will get those jobs and will have, hopefully, two jobs instead of one in the household or three instead of two because we're making the environment more business friendly. That is what the other side refuses to acknowledge. That is what this side understands a lot better than the other side does. That's why we are going ahead with An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

Mr. Chair, this amendment doesn't help, which is why we won't be supporting it.

**The Deputy Chair:** I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows standing a couple times to speak, so he has the call.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak in favour of this amendment to Bill 2, moved by my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. The amendment says: that Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended in section 1(2)(a) in the proposed section 23(2)(a) by adding "at least" after "overtime pay will be provided, taken and paid at." Looking at the bill and the changes this bill is proposing, I think the hon. member has moved a very reasonable and common-sense amendment, and that's why I feel honoured to rise and speak in favour of this amendment.

I just want to say something else. It was a pleasure to listen to the hon. member from the other side. Not only that, but a few weeks back, when the hon. member from Red Deer was addressing the bill giving \$4.5 billion to the largest corporations, he referred a lot to his professional experience dealing with businesses. He referred to the businesses when talking about the \$4.5 billion tax cut to the corporations, and he kept stressing the small-scale businesses, the mom-and-pop shops and hair salons, that have nothing to do, you know, with that bill that has to do with the tax cuts to the largest corporations in this province.

Having 16 years of experience operating a small-scale business, I am hearing lots of presumptions about small-scale business. Small-scale businesses are much different than those people who do not even know who their employees are or where they're working. Large corporations may employ people and they'll never see them or might not even be sitting in the same province, might not be sitting in the same country. When it comes to small-scale business, it's like we have kind of a family environment, people working together. In a small-scale business I'm sure the people are not worried about a dollar or two in salaries; rather, they're more concerned about the good, committed, retainable workers that they can rely on. That's the biggest challenge they're facing in industry. They don't want to turn their businesses into just, you know, training centres, where they hire a person today and then look for someone next week. That will actually create chaos for a small-scale business.

If we want to help small-scale business, grow small-scale business – yeah – I will be happy to see something coming forward. Look at the rising cost of their lease that they're struggling with and do something to address that. The rising cost of commodities, equipment, machinery: that is their biggest burden, and I haven't heard a single word regarding this. I know the members on the other side of the House somehow feel and want to claim that they are the only ones representing small-scale business in this House. Looking at the changes being proposed in this bill, it doesn't do any better for small-scale business or to attract investment or to create more jobs. It just creates more of a burden on average working Albertans.

I will call it a step backward as we are living in the 21st century. Instead of, you know, coming together and thinking about their welfare and how we can protect their basic rights, we see that the changes being proposed are going a step backward and removing their basic guarantees. As the hon. member from the government side was saying, this is a mutually agreed contract. Then why do we want to remove the basic guarantees? Why are we so afraid of the unions providing basic protections to the workers for their chance at fair-based negotiations for their contracts? I also see that it's not only workers, youth workers, the unions, but everything being

proposed is not even doing anything better to help the average Albertan.

If this bill is passed, what does it do? It addresses the general holiday pay. Does it do any better for the average worker? No. It proposes that the employee must work 30 days in the last 12 months before even being entitled to general holiday pay, and an employee who has to regularly work on a general holiday will be entitled to receive the holiday pay. If the holiday falls on a day that is not normally a workday for the employee and they work the holiday, then they're entitled to 1.5 times their regular wages. This is how it is right now. They can, you know, choose to get the pay, or they can just bank their overtime.

5:40

I don't see this as a burden on the employer in any way. If this is a help for the employee to choose to bank their holiday, to choose to get the time off later on, similarly this is a help for the employer as well. If the employer has, you know, a commitment to get work done in a timely manner and he gets help from the employee to complete that work in a timely manner, the employer also has the option to defer the payment. He doesn't have to come up right away with those, you know, extra monies. So I don't know where it's trying to resolve a dispute. It is just, I will say, an attack on the average worker's rights.

Now if the employee goes on holidays, he will be paid for three weeks if he has earned the overtime equal to the extra week, but if he chooses to bank the overtime, he will not be able to receive the wages for the third week. If he chooses to take, you know, the wages for the overtime, yes, he is entitled to it, but it might not be to the benefit of the small-scale employer. On the other hand, the people working in the biggest industries – oil sands, construction – they're going to have a big hit. A little bit fewer than half a million people will be, you know, affected by these changes. That's why I think this amendment is a very reasonable and common-sense amendment.

Also, with the changes being proposed to the labour laws, if this bill is passed, it will be mandatory for the unions to, you know, return to the secret ballot. It will restore the mandatory secret ballot for all unions seeking certification votes. They will need to establish a program to provide support and assistance to employees who are seeking information on – sorry. Just wanted to refer to the 90-day period for unions. They will need to provide evidence that employees support certification. It's tightening the requirements for the unions. The unions, I will say, are providing the minimum protection to the workers in industries like the oil sands and construction.

This is kind of, you know, tightening the rules on unions. It will be much harder for them to represent the average worker, and it will, I would say, infringe more on the average worker.

Reducing the minimum wage on youth workers is not, like, coming with any kind of – how would I say it? – description. It's just based on their age. It's not as if they are going to do something different, if they are not working on the same job as the person who is entitled to earn \$15. It's just simply because of their age difference. That's clearly discrimination based on someone's age, I think, especially for the innocent and vulnerable people, that did not even have the right to vote. They did not even give us their mandate. They are the most vulnerable people. They're going through an age and a time where they spare the time. You know, they go to school, full-time school, and they're under the pressure of keeping up with their education. At the same time, their needs are growing. They probably want to buy a computer, or they probably want to make some money to buy lunch, or they probably want to save money for their higher education. I don't know why this government wants to penalize those youth workers.

The claim this government is making, as it says in the title of the bill, is An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. We have a clear example in our neighbouring province. They did not address the issue of the minimum wage. They did not increase the minimum wage in Saskatchewan, but the youth unemployment rate is no less than ours. It's probably higher than ours. So the reason the government is giving for this bill does not really make sense. It's in no way going to help. The facts are clearly showing that it will not help in creating more jobs. But it will definitely make, you know, youth workers do the same thing and earn much less than they are entitled to under the current rule.

As I have already recorded on this, my predecessor, a former Speaker of this House, the hon. Gene Zwozdesky, stood up against any kind of, you know, discrimination. When it was pointed out by one of the candidates during a debate, "Oh, he's over 60; he has done enough; he should step aside; he should let someone else run," he stood up and said: "Focus on the issue, man. You want to just discriminate against me because of my age instead of looking at my experience and what I can contribute based on that?"

5:50

I think this is a totally wrong precedent. We are going in the wrong direction. There's no evidence that this is going to help anyone, that this is going to help our economy, that this is going to help small-scale industry, or that this is going to help create more jobs. That's why I rose to speak in favour of this amendment.

If the government is very serious, they can come up with some other programs. If they are really serious about helping small-scale industry grow and create more jobs, you know, they can come up with some more programs. Like, the government already has programs. I'm just trying to find what the name was. I don't exactly remember the term. Is it the STEP program?

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yeah, there's the STEP program.

**Mr. Deol:** The STEP program, yeah.

**Ms Sigurdson:** We brought it back.

**Mr. Deol:** Just look at that. Why roll back wages? How much are you going to save? I'm very sure as a former small-scale business owner for 16 years, where we were working six, seven, eight employees together, that we know how to understand each other's challenges. The wages, within a dollar or two, were never the issue. It's more of a commitment. It's a family environment of how we can help each other. It's more of how we can have someone for a long-term commitment. That is how we can retain an employee that we can depend on in the long term. That is what supports small-scale industry. That is what . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members? I believe that the hon. Member for Calgary-South East caught my eye.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you. The members opposite continue to vilify and assume the worst of our business owners and entrepreneurs. I've spent the last 10 years working with these people, and I find this offensive. Let me tell you what I saw while working directly with these villains over the last four years. I saw business owners taking on unprofitable or break-even work just to keep their employees working. I saw business owners taking out loans against their homes or loading up their credit cards to pay employees. I saw business owners reducing their own salary to zero to keep employees. I saw business owners cry after describing their inability to keep their employees, knowing that after laying them off, they

would be unable to find work. Do you know why they did this? Because they know that their employees are their greatest asset.

Throughout the economic downturn businesses in Alberta have faced margin compression and reduced profitability. They have faced increased taxation and burdensome regulation from a government that also chased away their customers. The result of this has been that many businesses, particularly those engaged in labour-intensive industries, could not afford to provide a service at time and a half, but they could at straight time. Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, enables employers and employees to agree to bank overtime at straight time, enabling a business to take on work that would otherwise be unprofitable. Thus, an employee can do work that they would not otherwise have been able to do. That employee and that employee's family need that money.

This amendment, like most of the policy from members opposite related to business, adds no value, and I will not be supporting it.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to put a motion to rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul rising.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So ordered.  
I see the hon. Deputy Government House Leader standing.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) I wish to advise the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting on Tuesday, June 25, 2019.

Further, Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I thank all hon. members for their work today and move to adjourn the Assembly until this evening at 7:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]











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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, June 19, 2019

Day 16

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
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Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

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Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Allard  
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Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
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Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

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Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
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Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Turton  
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Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening, everyone. Please be seated.

### Government Motions

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

### Time Allocation on Bill 9

23. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is resumed, not more than six hours shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you this evening. Do I go straight into my time right now? Thank you very much.

I want to start off by just pointing out the misconception that has been taking place inside this Chamber for the last few days. In fact, we watched hon. members of the opposition rise over and over in this House and say that time allocation had already taken place inside this House, which was not true. We watched some of the members rise and say that they had been allotted only one hour to speak on the bill though for two nights already this week, as you know because you've been in the Chamber, we have kept debate on Bill 9 going well into the wee hours of the morning. Last night I think it was 2:30.

**An Hon. Member:** It was the Premier who said an hour.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** No, it wasn't the Premier. It was the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Anyways, it was 2:30 in the morning. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The opposition will have the floor in a moment. I'm sure we can look forward to hearing what they have to say.

The point is that they are misrepresenting the facts when it comes to this issue. Bill 9 during second reading was well debated, two days. Interestingly enough, time allocation was not needed for us to proceed with the business of this House. Also, interestingly enough, Madam Speaker, not all of the members of the Official Opposition even bothered to speak to Bill 9. There were opportunities for that that were provided completely by the government because debate by the opposition is important. While I think that their communication ability on the bill has been very ineffective and that they have spent most of their time playing political games rather than debating the bill, that's their prerogative and their decision. But the reality is that they had more opportunity to debate it. If this was as important for the constituents that they represent as they have said, you would think that they would have made sure to use all that time to debate that legislation. They did not. Last night it passed second reading, with, again, room for hon. members to speak and no time allocation.

The reality is that we are going to pass the agenda that Albertans sent us to pass in this House. We are going to provide ample

opportunity for all members to be able to debate in this House, but if the opposition continues to play games as we move this legislation through, we will be moving reasonable time allocation to make sure that we don't plug up the House and so we can make sure that we do the business that Albertans sent us here to do. As such, I move time allocation on Committee of the Whole, a reasonable time allocation, not what the NDP used to do to us; it would be one hour or so. We'll have six hours tonight. I look forward to it.

I want to also point out one last misconception that has been brought forward by the Official Opposition, where they said that they were not allowed to do amendments to the bill. Well, Madam Speaker, that is also a misrepresentation of the facts. Here's their opportunity, as we go into Committee of the Whole, to move all the amendments that the opposition would like to move. That's more than an ample amount of time. In fact, during second reading – it was about 13 hours or so – again almost every member of the opposition was able to speak.

This is a reasonable amount of time, and I look forward to hearing what the Official Opposition has to say. Again, Madam Speaker, let me be clear. We will put the agenda that Albertans voted for in record numbers through this House, and we will use the tools that are available to us to move that agenda forward despite the protests from the opposition. Again, through you to them, I call on them, as always, to get some humility and to examine why they are the only one-term government in the history of this province and how they ended up on that side of the House. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I realize that tonight's debate might get rather heated, but I think it would be most respectful for us to make sure that all members, while speaking, are heard in this House. Thank you.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will close with this, my initial point, which is that the agenda that the people of Alberta voted for in record numbers will pass in this Chamber. Those are the instructions that we have been sent here with. Your constituents and my constituents made it clear to us when they sent us here. That's what will happen.

At the same time, we will go out of our way to make sure that the Official Opposition has every opportunity to be able to do their job. I encourage them to do it and stop playing games, as they have, inside this Legislature, to get focused on debating bills and not pretend that they haven't been allowed to, actually put forward speakers, using their time effectively inside this House, and to stop obstructing what Albertans voted for on April 16.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is now time for a member of the Official Opposition to speak. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Democracy in action UCP style, so we see. Let's clarify a couple of things first that the hon. Government House Leader said. First off, there has not been closure enacted on all three stages of a bill since 1990 – fun fact – when the NDP was the Official Opposition. So that's convenient. When we were in government, we enacted closure on one stage of two different bills – one stage – after two and a half weeks of debate, not a bill that was introduced at the beginning of a week that we are now progressing through in one week. That's a fun fact.

The other piece of this is that this was not a platform commitment by the UCP. They can stand here and say that they have credit and that they were voted in on this mandate. This was not in the platform; this was not a mandate that Albertans gave them. This is actually breaking the law. So let's clarify a couple of points there.

In addition to that, let's talk about closure and invoking time allocation. The now Premier of Alberta said on December 8, 1998:

The government announced its intention to invoke time allocation on both report stage and third reading only two hours into the debate. I must say that while I commend the minister for the work that he, his officials and his parliamentary secretary have put into this bill, I think it is disappointing, to say the least, that the government has, in passing such a critically important piece of legislation, so carelessly and callously disregarded the best traditions of [democracy] . . . in this place.

Another quote from the Premier of Alberta:

I am pleased to rise in debate on this bill at report stage. I regret the use of time allocation, closure and all the usual heavy-handed, undemocratic tactics employed by the government, as this has been my first opportunity to attempt to articulate the overwhelming consensus . . . on this matter.

How about we go to the Government House Leader and what he said when time allocation was implemented when he was in the opposition?

It should be unacceptable to Albertans because this is the Assembly where their issues are supposed to be dealt with. This is where democracy is supposed to take place. This is where debate is supposed to happen, and by the government taking this action, they are stifling debate. They're not just stifling the opposition members; they're stifling the people who sent us here to represent them, and I think that they should very much be ashamed of their behaviour.

Well, Madam Speaker, shame on them. Shame on them for putting time allocation on this bill. Shame on them for standing in this House not only a year ago saying how shameful it was for a government to do it and for doing the exact same thing they're doing now, and not only at one stage of a bill for a few hours but for all stages of this bill that they just implemented on Thursday, that they introduced and orally introduced. They didn't even give the opposition notification that it was coming. It is shameful; it is undemocratic. They should be completely ashamed of themselves, and they shouldn't be voting in favour of this.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 23 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:39 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Pon
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Rutherford
Copping	Long	Schow
Ellis	Lovely	Schweitzer
Getson	McIver	Shandro
Glubish	Milliken	Smith
Goodridge	Nally	Toews
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Toor
Horner	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Issik	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Jones	Panda	Yaseen
Kenney		

Against the motion:

Eggen	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Schmidt
Gray	Pancholi	Sweet
Hoffman		

Totals: For – 34 Against – 10

[Government Motion 23 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call this committee to order.

### Bill 9

#### Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments in relation to the bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you. I don't want to spend too much time speaking tonight because I'd like to give as much opportunity to all the members, particularly the Official Opposition, as they talk through committee . . . [interjection] Again, Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, she'll have her chance to take the floor, but this behaviour that we continue to see from the opposition is actually what I want to quickly talk about as it relates to Bill 9.

**Mr. Kenney:** Quickly but not so quickly.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. Exactly. Just to describe the opposition's behaviour when it comes to this legislation – you're right – could not happen quickly. It's quite ridiculous.

In particular, Madam Chair, as we watched the debate on the motion that just passed in this Chamber a few moments ago in relation to this, the hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader rose in the Chamber and said a couple of things that need to be addressed when it comes to this bill, but the first, I think, that's interesting is that since 1990, I believe, there have never been three time allocations done on a piece of legislation.

First of all, Madam Speaker, I'd like to back up and make it clear that when it comes to second reading of Bill 9, there was no time allocation done on Bill 9. Those who were in the House last night will have seen what I'm about to describe, and those who may watch the Legislature, maybe the three or four people that watch the Legislature at about 3:30 in the morning . . . [interjection] You're right. Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora: you're right. There are a lot of people up in the gallery right now, and that's good. They should probably know what happened last night as well.

There was no time allocation motion moved. Not one. In fact, I rose at one point to make it clear that there would be no time allocation motion moved and that there was an opportunity for every member to speak. Interestingly enough, Madam Chair, do you know how many members of the Official Opposition spoke on second reading of Bill 9?

**Mr. Kenney:** How many?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Twenty-three of 24. Twenty-three of 24 spoke when it came to second reading of Bill 9.

**Mr. Kenney:** What about the 24th?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The 24th, interestingly enough, did not speak. They had an opportunity. We didn't have time allocation. In fact, nobody rose at that point to speak to the legislation, and they quietly

let it pass through the House. I was kind of shocked by that, taken aback by that. I thought that, certainly, they would go 24 for 24 given how much the opposition said they wanted to speak to this legislation.

**Mr. Kenney:** I guess they don't care.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. They must not. But they got there, and they passed it.

Then they had the nerve to stand in this House today and say that we time allocated on second reading and that we're going to time allocate at all three stages of the bill when we had, in fact, not. In addition to that, they then said that it was the first time since 1990. I will draw your attention, Madam Chair – and this relates to Bill 9 because the primary argument from the Official Opposition in regard to Bill 9 that you're going to hear tonight and that we have heard for days is about the fact that they are not being allowed to debate the bill. They're spending their time when they're allowed to debate the bill arguing that they're not allowed to debate the bill. I can't even follow it.

But the point is – and, Madam Chair, you were in the Legislature with me when this happened. During Bill 6, which was certainly not in 1990, the then hon. Government House Leader moved . . .

**Mr. Kenney:** This was their attack on farmers?

8:00

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** This was the attack on farmers, yeah.

Let's recap that, too. That was a bill, Madam Chair, that was legislation attacking farm and ranch families that ultimately could have ended up in a situation, if we were not able to get an amendment passed inside this Chamber – thankfully, from the hard work of Albertans, not from anybody in this Chamber but from the hard work of Albertans who protested against the NDP's lack of consultation and their attack on farm and ranching families, we were able to get that amendment passed. But if we had not, kids weren't even going to be allowed to do 4-H anymore. That's what that legislation was.

The Government House Leader rose at that time – now he's left political life – Brian Mason, who was the Government House Leader for the . . .

**Mr. Kenney:** A good guy.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** A good guy who had been the House leader for the NDP and a long-time leader.

He moved three of them – I can table them in Orders of the Day tomorrow, Madam Chair. He moved three time allocations on every stage of the bill – every stage of the bill – including second reading. Interestingly enough, do you know how much time he gave the opposition? One hour on each of the three time allocations. One hour on each of the time allocations.

So when it comes to Bill 9, which is the legislation that's before the House right now, I think it's important that we actually encourage all members of the House, particularly the Official Opposition, to actually talk about Bill 9, not spend their time talking about this important legislation and indicating that they haven't been allowed to speak to it when we know that Monday night this week we were in this Chamber until 3 o'clock in the morning giving the Official Opposition time to speak on it. Last night we were here until about 2:30 or so in the morning giving the Official Opposition time to speak on it. I suspect we'll be here tonight probably even later than that. We worked to make sure that the Official Opposition has all the time in the world to be able to speak on this legislation because they've indicated that that's important to them.

But what I want them to do – and I'm challenging them – as they work through Bill 9 is not to misrepresent the facts inside this Chamber. I think it takes away from the important argument when it comes to Bill 9 and the people that they say that they're representing when their members stand up inside this Chamber and make a comment in their speeches – and you can check *Hansard*, Madam Chair. This happened on Bill 9. They said: hey, the Government House Leader has made it so I can only speak for an hour on the bill, only one hour. When that person was rising, we were already at somewhere around 10 hours into the piece of legislation. It does a disservice to the people that you represent. It's not accurate, and it's not appropriate.

**Mr. Kenney:** It's not truthful.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Not truthful, if you will. It's shocking to me to continue to see the Official Opposition do that.

My point – and, again, this matters to Bill 9, Madam Chair. I will tell you why, because I can see that right now you're trying to say: hon. Government House Leader, get back to the legislation. I've seen that look before. But this does matter to Bill 9 for two reasons. One, this is the argument that the Official Opposition has put forward for days inside this Chamber, that I am refuting right now. Second, I suspect they'll keep doing it. I might be wrong. We'll see shortly whether I'm wrong or not, but I suspect that they will continue to do that.

Second, it goes to whether or not you can trust what the NDP have to say when it comes to this legislation. When their argument both in this Chamber and outside of this Chamber is to say that they were time allocated when they were not, that they were limited to one hour to speak when they were not, that their members were not allowed to speak when they were: that goes to their credibility when they talked about Bill 9. It goes to their credibility when they say that Bill 9 will be legislation that – and they say some horrible things about my friend the hon. Finance minister, that he has a bill in front of the House to pickpocket people. That's ridiculous, Madam Chair. It fits with Team Angry. It fits with their approach, the NDP. But can Albertans really trust the Official Opposition in their arguments when it comes to Bill 9 if they spend their time in this Chamber misrepresenting the facts and saying that things are happening that are easily provable have not happened?

You know, Madam Chair, I am a father of three children, and sometimes your kids come forward with some really bizarre things. Usually when they're in trouble, you see them and they say – I'm watching my little brother, the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein. He's, also, the father of four children, actually.

**Mr. Kenney:** He's not so little.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. He's not so little; he's just littler than me. He has twins, like me, actually, Madam Chair. We both have twins. I've seen his twins. They come and stay at my house. They come and give you a sheepish look, and you know that they've been in trouble. You start to ask them questions, and then they come up with just the most bizarre stories sometimes because that's what kids do. And you know it's bizarre. That's kind of like what's happened here in the last couple of days, when the Official Opposition says that they've been time allocated when they have not been, that they're capped at one hour when they have not been. It's ridiculous.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I am enjoying, very much so, the stories of family, but let's take some of your own advice and focus on Bill 9.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I agree, Madam Chair. I think it's important that we talk about Bill 9. The argument that the opposition has against Bill 9 and the fact that we are moving it through this legislation – they want it to stop – is that, essentially, the government of the day should not be allowed to move forward the agenda inside this House. As I've spoken about several times over the last few days – and so have the hon. Premier and a few others – this goes down to the lack of humility from the Official Opposition to stand inside this place and debate against a piece of legislation like Bill 9, that does nothing except give a little bit more time to make sure that we're able to get this right as we look at the absolute, devastating mess that was created by the Official Opposition when they were government.

We talk about my little brother from Calgary-Klein's twins and my twins. This party across from me was going to saddle them with \$100 billion worth of debt, and they have the nerve to stand in this House over and over and over and say shame on us because we're going to take the time to get it right, to try to get a path to balance for our province, for my little brother's kids, for my kids, and for all Albertans' kids. Shame on them, Madam Chair, I say, for what they were going to do to this House. Shame on them for standing against a reasonable approach to be able to get our finances in order. Shame on them. Shame on them for continuing to come to this Assembly, showing no humility for being fired by the people of Alberta, the only political party in the history of this province to be a one-term government, fired by Albertans.

Instead, their approach on stuff like Bill 9 is to come here, make things up, attack the hon. Finance minister for bringing forward reasonable legislation to try to get it right – to do what, Madam Chair? – to fix the mess they made. Thank goodness that we've got a Finance minister that's willing to take the time to get this right so that we can start to change the mess that they made. Nobody else could be held responsible for the mess that was made inside this province except for the NDP when they were in government. They made the mess. Now, Albertans put them in the time-out box. I suspect they're going to stay there for a while, particularly because they can't adjust to it. They still haven't realized what they did wrong: bring in a carbon tax at the same time as we had the largest unemployment in the history of our province, take us on track to \$100 billion in debt. [interjections]

You can hear them, Madam Chair. They can't stop.

**Mr. Kenney:** They're angry.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** They're angry. Team Angry. That's all that they have when it comes to Bill 9, their anger. They've always been the party of fear and smear, Madam Chair. You know that, and I know that. But now they've taken it to a whole other level of angry. You know who they're angry at? And you'll see it in the debate tonight. Through you to my colleagues, who do you think that they're angry at? They're angry at Albertans. They should not be angry at Albertans. They should be angry at their leader, who took them down this path. They should be angry at themselves, their former cabinet, who took our province down the path of financial ruin. Now they stand in this House and filibuster and make things up and do whatever they do to try to stop the hon. Finance minister from using Bill 9 to be able to fix – to take the time just to be able to get this problem fixed so we can continue with the services that we need inside this province. It's sad.

**Ms Renaud:** Shame on us for protecting the law.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. They said, "Shame on us for protecting the law."

You know, again, I'll tell you another thing, Madam Chair, through you to them. Shame on them for continuing to misrepresent the facts, for continuing to say that people inside this House are not obeying the law. It's shameful that that's even been allowed to continue in this House for as long as it has. I'm proud of our side of the House, that doesn't behave like that. They should try better. They should try better.

I just want to close with this, because I actually intended to get up for just a few brief moments, Madam Chair. You've got a party in opposition who want to spend their time talking about this legislation – and this legislation is relevant to what I'm saying: it's a three-page bill – and you know what they spent the majority of their time on when debating Bill 9? Calling division bells to try to adjourn debate so they could go home to bed.

**8:10**

I don't know about you, Madam Chair, but my constituents sent me up here to work. I'm happy to work as late as we need to to get the job done. I encourage the NDP to do that.

Then the next day they spent all their time inventing a time allocation that did not happen instead of coming back to the importance of Bill 9, which is the discussion about whether it's a relevant piece of legislation that makes sense to pause things, to give the Finance minister and the blue-ribbon panel some time to get this right – to do what, Madam Chair? – to fix the mess the NDP made. That's the entire job. That's what Albertans sent us here to do in record numbers.

I get how that probably hurts the NDP. I get that. It has to hurt to lose an election at that magnitude. I mean, go look at an electoral map, Madam Chair, and see what Albertans think about the NDP and their policies: not one seat in rural Alberta, where I come from – not one seat – and devastated in Calgary. Albertans spoke loud and clear that they don't like the direction the NDP went in. They don't like the mess the NDP created, and they gave this side of the House a clear, record-breaking mandate for the now hon. Premier, his government, and his Finance minister to come and do the job right.

If the hon. members want to spend their time talking about that tonight, I'm sure the hon. Finance minister would like to get up and discuss this legislation and how this would work with them, but if they want to continue this approach of just fear and smear through to the end, I suspect that we're going to spend some time together listening to some bizarre speeches because we respect the right of the opposition to speak. [interjections] Unlike the opposition, who don't respect my right to speak inside this Chamber, we will respect their right to speak inside this Chamber. We won't heckle, and we won't shut them down. We will go out of our way to make sure that they have an opportunity to speak on behalf of their constituents. We just ask that they do it with respect, that they actually work on the piece of legislation, that they don't misrepresent the facts, and that they stand up and actually do what they're supposed to do for their constituents. That's it. That's all. That's pretty fair. And you know what, Madam Chair? I think that's what Albertans expect of them.

**The Chair:** Any other comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, hon. colleagues and Madam Chair. I am rising to speak to Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill. There are a few things I want to say in response to the comments just now raised by the Government House Leader. I have tremendous respect for our nonpartisan research staff here at the Legislature, including the library team. The library team did a very thorough review and

actually did one hundred per cent confirm that the only time, in easily searchable records, that they could find going back was in 1990, where in second reading calling the previous question occurred – some people call that closure; that's sort of a colloquial term; calling the previous question, I guess, is the technical term – which the government brought forward, which does limit debate because it limits speaking ability to only one time each. You can't bring forward amendments in second reading. I know these are all very technical things, but I think that they're important for people to know. So it essentially does limit the amount of time on debate, and it does limit the ability for people to bring forward amendments because it says that you can't. So facts.

I also want to clarify that absolutely every – first of all, oral notice was given late last week. The bill was actually introduced on Monday. It was well known that our leader would be speaking at a national conference in Toronto and, of course, tried very diligently to be back here. The fact that the Government House Leader drew attention to the fact that she wasn't able to speak is an embarrassment towards him, I would say.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Point of order. The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), Madam Chair, language to create disorder. We just watched the deputy leader of the NDP get up in this Chamber and say that I said that the Official Opposition leader was not able to speak and was not in the Chamber. I would not do that because it would be, first of all, against the rules to refer to an absence of a member, something that I would not do and, second, something the deputy leader just did to her own leader, which I don't quite get. In addition, it's not what I said.

Again, stick to the facts, and let's get to debate on the bill.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Although I recognize that the member is using points of order now to start buying into our six hours of timed debate, same with using the 15 minutes he just used, how about we just focus on the debate? There is no point of order here. I would like to request, respectfully, to the Government House Leader that he respect our six hours of this debate.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I suspect that Edmonton-Glenora has clarification on the matter.

**Ms Hoffman:** If he wants me to withdraw the remark, I am certainly able to do so, Madam Chair. I think it's important to give context to the comments that were given in this House completely out of context. I'm happy to continue with my time. I would like to continue with my time, if that's amenable to the table.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. Of course, the fact that the bill was only introduced on Monday and here we are on Wednesday and the government is moving forward at breakneck speed when it was well known that our leader would have additional commitments I think is of importance. I think the fact that this bill, which attacks 180,000-plus workers, many of whom are very busy

– teachers are one of the groups that it attacks because it threatens their collective agreements. Of course, what's happening this week? All of my teacher friends are talking about their last field trip, their last exam, their report cards, and getting ready for the summer. That's what people who are very busy this time of year do, and the fact that the government has brought forward this bill that has damaging impacts on their collective agreement, that was legally negotiated, that has national protections, I think is something that shows that the way the government is behaving on this is, I would say, unbecoming.

When I did follow up with the library, I said: is there another time when notice has been given for other stages of the reading, while it was still in second, that there was notice given about closure? The result was that the only time closure, going back through the research, had been brought in – of course, the Premier, when I raised this in question period yesterday, said that there would be between 25 and 30 hours. So it sure sounds like the Premier has already decided how many hours of debate there will be for this, which implies that there will be closure at all three readings. The fact is that the last time that happened was in 1990, that the library was easily able to find, anyway.

What was happening in 1990? One of the bills that they did that to – they did it to two bills – was the sell-off of an important public asset, Alberta Government Telephones. This was something that was contentious, and the government responded in a ham-fisted way, much like the government today is responding. I want to say that I do not apologize for the comments that I gave. The response that the Premier gave I think speaks to the fact that he absolutely intends to follow through on the motion that the Government House Leader gave.

What I am simply pointing out is the fact that this has not happened in almost 30 years because it is so ham-fisted to have closure at all three stages, or to call the previous question, whatever vernacular you want to use, limiting the amount of debate. Why is that? It's because this bill is about bargaining in bad faith. This bill is about breaking collective agreements, collective agreements that were ruled constitutionally as being workers' entitlements. They sat down at the table in good faith and negotiated.

You know what? I know that the Government House Leader is an expert at revisionist history, but let's review the facts again, which are that while the NDP held government in the last term, our partners in labour sat down at the table and struck very reasonable agreements, almost exclusively zeros, with us, right? They sat down at the table and said: "We get that it's a difficult financial situation. Obviously, our members would like increases, but if we have certainty that our rights will be respected, that we can solve some local issues, things like the classroom improvement fund, if we can find ways to make sure that we have a number of zeros and then a wage reopener or binding arbitration, we will accept the zeros." What the government today is doing is breaking those contracts by bringing forward this bill. It is breaking the law, and that's why we will keep calling it as we see it, Madam Chair.

I have deep concern that this could result in labour unrest. I think that it will in turn result in compromised services and ultimately cost Albertans a lot more than just following the law, following the agreements, and going to an arbitrator. I think that that is something that is fair and reasonable. By negotiating in good faith, we did secure those deals for Albertans during tough economic times. We did that by working in a very respectful way with our partners in labour, the people who provide those services that the government is obligated to provide to the people of Alberta.

**8:20**

I know that we don't do introductions anymore, but I want to note that there are a number of people in the gallery. I want to recognize

my long-time friend and co-worker John Vradenburgh, who is the CUPE 474 president, who's here to watch. CUPE 474: for the government's awareness, there are a number of different sectors that they represent, but the biggest one, the biggest area of membership, is custodians in public schools. These are the men and women who keep our schools safe and clean, who take care of the boiler systems, who make sure that when your kids – maybe the twins of the Government House Leader – lose a shoe up on the roof of the school, they can crawl up on the roof, get that shoe, and send it back down to those kids, right? Sometimes you kick a soccer ball and your shoe goes up on the roof. These are hard-working men and women who take care of our kids. When our kids show up at school every day and we say to our kids, "We expect you to do your best," it's custodians who are the first people that usually they see.

They definitely see the work of that custodian. In the middle of the winter it's the custodian who's at that school at the crack of dawn making sure the sidewalks are clean and safe. It's the custodian who makes sure that the school entrance is clean and welcoming. Kids know whether or not the people at the school are phoning it in or if they really mean it when they say: we expect you to do your best. To the custodians all across our province – specifically, John is on my mind right now through 474 – I want to say thank you. I think it's only fair that government treat the people that we expect to work and to do their best for kids in a fair and reasonable way. I think it's only fair that they not be railroaded into breaking the law, breaking the collective agreements that have been signed.

I also see Heather Smith, president of the United Nurses of Alberta. Nurses: again, another group that will be negatively impacted by this bill that is being moved through this House at such breakneck speed. Heather Smith, for the Government House Leader's awareness, has been the president of this local for many years and has probably seen labour unrest on more than one occasion but not in the last four years. Not in the last four years because we worked respectfully and collaboratively to make sure that we honoured nurses and the work they did. And what did nurses ask? They said: "We'll take zeros, but just put an opportunity to sit back down at the table in our contract." Right? "We deserve to sit back down at the table and continue to have a respectful relationship and get to a result that works for everybody."

When the government says that the NDP behaved in a way that set this province up for economic disaster, the government doesn't acknowledge the fact that it was the Conservative government that set most of the collective agreements that are at the rates we're at today, and it was an NDP government that sat down at the table and very respectfully worked with our front-line workers to make sure that they have an opportunity to continue working with government.

Obviously, this new government isn't interested in that. What's the first thing they did when they had a chance to show the working people of this province who work for the province, the public servants, the people on the front lines – you know, nurses, teachers, paramedics, and the sheriffs that keep this very building safe and make sure that our court systems run smoothly. I think they're one of the first ones that are due for arbitration. I think it was probably supposed to start next week. Maybe that's why this is moving at such breakneck speed, because when we have time for the sheriffs to sit down and have arbitration to have what they rightfully negotiated respected through their contract, the government can't move quickly enough to trample their rights and their ability to be heard.

Again, when the Government House Leader says, "Well, you say that you only have an hour," I want to refer to what was said by the Premier. Here's what I said, and here's what the Premier said. I said:

What the Premier is pushing his cabinet and caucus to do is cowardly. It's the epitome of unconstitutional, law-breaking infringement on the rights of teachers, nurses, paramedics, and front-line public service members.

And the Premier responded by saying: "There will be ample debate." Cue closure. Then the Premier goes on to say: "between 25 and 30 hours of debate. That's more than one hour for every member of the opposition." So the one-hour reference is referring to what was said by the hon. Premier. Again, that's a little bit of background and facts about what we're actually doing here today.

Why I think this is so frustrating – again, here we are debating a closure motion at 7:30 at night. It could have easily been debated in the middle of the day. We've been here for a good chunk of the day already. It could have been debated when the news broadcasts were happening. It could have been debated just after question period, after the daily Routine. But, no, the Government House Leader and the Premier chose to do it at 7:30 at night, and the time allocation will happen from 8 o'clock at night until – what is that? Like, a 2 in the morning time allocation, essentially? Not exactly peak watching of the House, watching what kind of tactics are being used by the government.

The other thing I want to mention, the other really interesting thing, is that Monday the bill gets introduced. Monday was also the day that the pipeline approval came through? Tuesday was the day the pipeline approval came through. Thank you very much, hon. members.

Again, people are either watching the news and hearing great news for our province about the pipeline approvals, which have been long overdue and we've been fighting for years to make happen, or they're marking their exams or they're doing the regular things that families do when they're heading into the summer season. I just think that the government can't move quickly enough. The last time a government acted in such a ham-fisted way was in 1990 with something so politically contentious as the sell-off of Alberta Government Telephones. Sorry; AGT.

Let's circle back. Today in question period we had a very good question from the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo about broadband and SuperNet and making sure that we have connectivity in the north. How is that possible? Of course, it would have been more possible if we actually had a public service through the telephone and through the Internet services. I just can't help but circle back to how pushing a harsh ideological practice of privatization and breaking collective agreements seems to be a recurring theme.

I imagine there will be other opportunities. We are in committee, and I imagine my colleagues will have some amendments at this stage since we are actually allowed at this stage to bring forward amendments. The government made it so we couldn't bring forward amendments at second reading. Certainly, I think it's important that we have an opportunity to hear from those colleagues about those important amendments.

I also wanted to say how much I appreciate – I know that it's a cold night; it's rainy – how many people are engaged and are here to witness what I hope becomes an open-minded debate.

I know the Government House Leader also said, "We're here, and we're going to pass this," sort of presupposing what's going to happen, how the caucus is going to vote. I imagine he probably has a pretty good idea, but I do want to remind the caucus that in no way was bargaining in bad faith part of the platform. In no way. When the Premier very happily stood up as a candidate, a leadership candidate, with a nurse and a paramedic who were candidates, I doubt he actually said to them before they signed their nomination papers: PS, we're going to break your collective agreements. Right? Like, I doubt he actually said to these lovely candidates: we're

going to trample on your rights, and if you aren't successful and you end up back working in the jobs you have now, we're going to break your collective agreements. I doubt that was something that was said to those candidates. It definitely wasn't something that was said in any of the campaign literature or any of the ads that we saw. It certainly wasn't something that the government was open and honest about with the people of Alberta.

Here they are – it's only Bill 9, right? Here we are so early in their mandate, a mandate that could bring about a number of other things. I remember there being things in their platform about midwifery. I remember there being things in their platform about rural health care. We're not here debating that. That was actually in the platform. Instead, we're here debating a bill about breaking collective agreements and bargaining in bad faith. I think that is certainly not the track record that the Government House Leader should probably be mapping out for his caucus. But that's what we've got tonight.

With that, I will cede my time, hopefully to my colleagues, and we will have an opportunity to continue this important debate and consider amendments. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, before we proceed with any further debate, I would just like to express some caution as we proceed with tonight's debate that we stick to the bill that we are debating, that we refrain from discussing closure or any other thing that does not have anything to do with the bill at hand, which is Bill 9. I hope we are in agreement.

The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Point of Clarification

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Standing Order 13(2): clarification on your ruling. We just watched the opposition speak for 20 minutes during the Bill 9 debate, with no opposition from the chair. Are we not going to be allowed to respond to that?

Second, I do think the opposition feels this is part of this legislation. I'm not really understanding your ruling.

**The Chair:** Hon. Government House Leader, I'd be happy to explain my suggestion that I made earlier. I might point out that we've now had one speaker from the government and one speaker from the opposition that both may have had a lot of leniency given when it came to the topic at hand, the bill.

8:30

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I will be happy to, then, rise and talk – I will try to stay away from the closure arguments given by the deputy leader of the NDP Party.

**Ms Sweet:** Point of order. Sorry, hon. member and Madam Chair. I didn't get a chance to respond to the 13(2), so I just wanted to . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I apologize, but that is up to the discretion of the chair. On 13(2) I explained my ruling.

**Ms Sweet:** You didn't give our side an opportunity to even engage.

**The Chair:** That's to the discretion of the chair to have additional voices. Would you like to call something else?

**Ms Sweet:** Okay. Well, then, I'll call it again, 13(2). Please explain to me why the opposition doesn't have a chance to respond to this ruling and give us more detail as to why we can't talk to time allotment.

#### Point of Clarification

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'm not sure what you want to debate here tonight. Bill 9 is on the Order Paper. I am simply ensuring that that is what is being debated here in this House. That is the ruling that I made, that's the ruling that I explained, and that is how we're going to continue on with debate this evening.

Hon. Government House Leader, would you please continue your portion of debate.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, then, I will stay away from time allocation, take your advice, Madam Chair. It was, frankly, what I indicated in my opening remarks. Hopefully, we can get to there.

I would like to just talk about another issue that was raised by the deputy leader of the NDP, and that's this whole concept of this not being in the United Conservative Party platform. First of all, Madam Chair, through you to that hon. member, that's pretty rich coming from a member that belonged to a government just a few short weeks ago that ran an entire campaign and did not tell Albertans about their plan to bring in the largest tax increase in the history of the province, then got elected without telling them that, and then came in and brought in the largest tax increase in the history of the province.

The reality is, though, that when it comes to Bill 9, our platform was clear that we were running on getting our province on a path to balance. That's all that Bill 9 is about. The Finance minister I know will talk about this a little bit later. This is about giving the Finance minister the opportunity to be able to slow things down to be able to understand exactly where the fiscal situation is.

The opposition left this province in an absolute dire situation: on track for a hundred billion dollars in debt, devastated the finances of this province, sat on their hands and did nothing for the hard-working people of this province as they underwent the largest unemployment in the history of this province, sat back as communities that I represent – the former Education minister is laughing as we talk about this. I don't laugh when I think about communities like Drayton Valley or Rocky Mountain House, who were decimated under the NDP's regime. Decimated. That's not an exaggeration. Go to Drayton Valley and see what your policies did to that community, Madam Chair, through you to them.

Our platform was to fix that. That's what we're going to do inside this place. The NDP can try to slow that down as much as they want. They can make the arguments that they want to make. That's their right inside this place. But to rise inside this House and say that this is not part of our platform, that it is not part of our platform to be on a path to balance, to get our finances back in order is a ridiculous argument, Madam Chair. Read the platform. I have it here. I have, like, two or three copies if the hon. members across the way would like to have a copy of it. There's some good stuff inside it. That's what we ran on.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. He often has things to say inside this House sometimes when he stands up, more often when he's yelling them across the way and interrupting other speakers. But he often has stuff to say. I'd like him to rise and see what he thinks about the comments of his deputy leader and the fact that he was part of a government who decimated the finances of this province, putting us in a situation where we had to evaluate the situation, take the time to get it right. Do you know why? The hon. Finance minister has done a good job of talking about this, as has the Premier. It's because of jobs that we have to do this. It's because of the services that Albertans depend on. It's because of the mess that the NDP made. What this bill comes down to at its core is about

the NDP's absolute fiscal mismanagement, and that's why you see Bill 9 on the floor today.

Now, I have a lot more to say about the misrepresentation of facts when it comes to the time process that's happening in this House, but, Madam Chair, I will eagerly await to see if the NDP will respect your ruling. But if they continue to rise inside this House and misrepresent facts, we will continue to rise, even though it's eating into their time, to clarify those facts.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am pleased to stand to speak against Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, an act that through debate many have already pointed out numerous flaws in. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill once more because it is such an egregious abuse of power and because it is attacking our front-line workers, the public servants who deliver important services, who are our friends and family, who are our neighbours, who are our visitors in the gallery this evening. These are the people that this bill is directly attacking in a gross abuse of power with a legislative hammer that is going to break legally binding contracts with public-sector workers who are in wage talks right now.

The government's motives to do this and to do it at a very quick pace appear to be tied with the fact that there is arbitration actively happening, actively scheduled to make sure that our public-sector workers are – after having gone through mediation and proper negotiation with our government, after having created contracts or collective agreements that included a wage reopener, this government is now trying to break that process. This is problematic for a number of different reasons.

When a collective agreement is signed, when a contract is signed, when an agreement between two parties is entered into, we expect both parties to uphold that. This bill is the government breaking contracts and not upholding its part of the bargain. It is disrespecting workers, it is disrespecting the collective bargaining process, which is very important, and it is putting us on a very dangerous path because our public-sector workers, all workers, deserve our respect. They deserve our respect, and when workers do not get the respect that they deserve, when they are not treated with respect, well, that's when workers start thinking about what their options are: potentially withdrawing services, job action, looking for other jobs, leaving the province, perhaps.

We all deserve to be treated with respect at all times, particularly in an employment situation, and this government is not doing that. Bill 9, which breaks the law – and many lawyers have already weighed in that this is unconstitutional. It will be taken to court – we've already seen that in the media – and could end up costing our government and our coffers more in the long run, which has happened in other jurisdictions. We've seen in B.C. in 2002 that the government reached in, broke that collective bargaining process with teachers. It took many years to resolve, and it ended up costing not just the B.C. government, but it cost the kids of that province in lesser services until this was resolved and negotiated, and the NDP government there has had to take that on.

At my last opportunity to speak to Bill 9 I made a very deliberate point of reading into the record the voices of Albertans, people who were horrified, people who were hurt, people who felt disrespected, people who were worried about what was happening with their employment situation, what would happen with their salaries, because they're concerned about what a government that would do this may do to them. It was important for me to read those voices into the record because so many Albertans have not been heard through this process. So many Albertans have not had the

opportunity to consider what Bill 9 is and what it might mean for them. We are now at a point where we have a limited amount of time to have that conversation with Albertans.

We know that this bill impacts nearly 200,000 workers, including nurses, social workers, teachers, the sheriffs who guard our Legislature and who are here working with us and will be staying here late into the night as we debate this piece of legislation, child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, librarians, custodians, correctional officers. The number of people this impacts is enormous, the variety of jobs and services they provide.

**8:40**

But one thing they all have in common is that a lot of these workers have worked collaboratively with the previous government at the negotiating table to negotiate agreements that both parties were able to work with, to live with, and for a lot of these workers that meant taking zeros. That's what got negotiated at the table by both parties because our Alberta public service workers, our partners, understood what was happening in our province, and we dealt with them in a fair way. We found alternative ways to negotiate to make sure that there were agreements. I know that my hon. colleague from Edmonton-North West, when he was the Minister of Education, introduced the classroom improvement fund, representing roughly 400 teachers, so although teachers at the negotiating table were able to negotiate and took zeros, other supports, other changes were provided.

This type of strong working relationship, of treating each other as partners, looking each other in the eyes, and negotiating is how collective bargaining is supposed to work, but this government is ignoring all of that at their own peril and at the peril of our Alberta public services, at the peril of service delivery within our province. Not only that; my fear is that this could lead to labour unrest, that this could lead to service disruptions, that this could lead to workers leaving the province. It could lead to a number of very negative impacts when we could have negotiated in good faith with them.

Now, this government in various remarks has used the term "good faith," which I do not believe they fully understand. They've used the term "respect," respect for workers and at times respect for the opposition, but, again, in both cases actions do not match their words. So making sure that we try to raise as much attention as we can to Bill 9 and the negative impacts it could have in our province is incredibly important.

Now, there's a particular section within Bill 9 that through the debate tonight we will have an opportunity to discuss, and that is section 5(c), which provides the government with the power to create regulations on any matter that they consider "necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act." These are very broad powers. These are powers that give the government the ability to write regulations on anything respecting the intent of this act. Madam Chair, how do we define what the intent of this act is? The preamble. And the preamble of this particular bill, the preamble which would bind the powers, those regulation-making powers, speaks about commitment to balancing the budget, speaks about "public sector compensation [being] the largest government expenditure," speaks about the blue-ribbon panel and its recommendations, and speaks in such language that the government could easily use that boundary to write regulations to roll back wages, to implement wage freezes, and to further impact that collective bargaining process with our public-sector unions. I have a great deal of concern about the bill as a whole, as I've outlined, and about that particular section.

We know that this legislation would apply to 24 collective agreements, including several where arbitrations have already begun. In today's *Edmonton Journal* there is an important story



drawing attention to the fact that there is an arbitration decision deadline that may be prompting the government to ram through the wage delay bill because there's arbitration that is scheduled to happen on Friday and Saturday of this week where the union involved, AUPE, "will argue that 23,000 front-line government employees deserve raises." Now, at that same table, Madam Chair, the government would also make its argument on economic factors, the current state of the economy, the current fiscal picture of Alberta. The information described in this preamble would all be things that the government would bring to make its arguments as well. That is the process by which an arbitrator would review all of the factors and issue a decision.

The article goes on to say that "the arbitrator could make a ruling as soon as Friday," and it includes some quotes from AUPE President Guy Smith: "That's why they're ramming it through . . . They don't want an independent third party, based on facts, to make a decision (about) front-line workers. I find that really quite disgraceful."

The government introducing a bill to break negotiated agreements with unions by delaying arbitration on wages until after October 31 is unconstitutional. It does a disservice to our public-sector workers, to Albertans. Again I will remind you that we are talking about our friends. We are talking about our family in many cases. I have family who work in the Alberta public service. We are talking about our neighbours. They live in all of the communities in Alberta because they serve every community in Alberta in so many ways.

On Monday night, while we debated this bill, members of Executive Council were on social media thanking front-line responders for helping to evacuate wildfire-impacted communities. That's a really great thank you. Thank you for helping to protect families and homes. We're going to stop your arbitration. We're going to reach into your collective bargaining process, and possibly we might do some wage rollbacks later because we've given ourselves the power to do that.

The disconnect: I suspect that those social media posts were sent from this Chamber while we debated Bill 9. Not being able to make the connection between these front-line responders, between the people we work with day in and day out, between the people who work to provide these ministers with the information they need to make sound decisions and the people this bill impacts is disconcerting to me, Madam Chair.

When contracts were originally negotiated in good faith by coming to the bargaining table and working together as partners, members of the public service agreed to multiple years of frozen wages in return for the ability to negotiate a wage increase in the final year of the contract. That's where we are today. To have that taken away from them is disrespectful, very upsetting. We have a lot of agitated public workers, and they have every right to be.

Interestingly enough, I had the opportunity to listen to someone in the labour relations community who was one of the mediators who helped negotiate this, and he felt that his reputation when he helped mediate this agreement was now impacted by the fact that the government has gone back on a contract, on a collective agreement that was duly negotiated at the bargaining table.

The clause that I referred to earlier, section 5(c): I do want to speak about that briefly. I believe that should the government stand to talk about clause 5(c), one of the things they would say is that this is commonly used, that this is a clause that we use all the time. That is not correct. It is a clause that can be put into legislation, but I can tell you from my four years in a government caucus that it is never lightly added to a piece of legislation. I had multiple discussions over different pieces of legislation when this clause was

used, and in many cases it was removed because it was seen to be too powerful or inappropriate.

In this case not only is this clause used but the preamble which defines the intent of this act is so broad that it could be used to do anything. Now, when the government gives itself regulation-making powers on the local food act, then the government can make some regulations within the boundaries of a bill that is about supporting our local agricultural producers, on a bill that is about local food. When the government puts the clause into Bill 9 and defines its intent as "public sector compensation is the largest government expenditure," that's something entirely different. Now, I understand that the Minister of Finance has created a social media clippable video, saying that they would not use this to do wage rollbacks. My question to the members of the government would be: if you're not going to use it, then why is it there? That type of a catch-all clause allowing regulations to be made can create unexpected and unintended consequences.

8:50

**Mr. Eggen:** Oh, I don't think it's unintended.

**Ms Gray:** Or intended consequences, as a member of my caucus has just pointed out.

The Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, the bad-faith bargaining bill, is a bad piece of legislation, Madam Chair. This is one that takes away our workers' rights, that disrespects the workers of this province, claims that it is only a delay but gives itself regulation-making powers that are far-reaching and inappropriate in this case unless the government can provide a convincing argument for why they are necessary. It is specifically designed to interfere with an arbitration, with multiple arbitrations, but specifically we have one that was scheduled to happen later this week. Union leaders have called the bill an egregious attack on the collective bargaining rights of all of these workers: government employees, nurses, teachers, health professionals, and others.

Now, when I talk about section 5(c), you don't need to just take my word for it. We've had it checked with multiple lawyers, who agree with our interpretation of how this could be used. In fact, our Alberta Federation of Labour president, Gil McGowan, said on Wednesday that a clause in Bill 9 could give the government the power to cut public worker wages without requiring legislation or negotiation. Another well-respected member of the labour relations community said that this fundamental loss of trust in the Kenney government is one consequence of this very bill.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I caution against the use of names in the Assembly.

**Ms Gray:** Oh, my apologies. That trips me up when I read things. Thank you, Madam Chair.

It bodes very poorly for the future of labour relations, and I agree with that concern wholeheartedly, Madam Chair.

So we find ourselves here, Wednesday night, starting a debate on a critically important piece of legislation, on which, I would submit, Albertans have not had proper opportunity to be consulted because the government did not talk about freezing arbitration or delaying arbitration throughout the election. They did not talk about breaking collective agreements or breaking contracts. This bill was introduced with oral notice exactly seven days ago. They did not give the opposition notice that this bill was coming. Normally the government would give the opposition and the press gallery: here is our agenda for the session. They did give us an agenda. This wasn't on it. A surprise bill intended to interrupt collective bargaining and then time allocated.

Madam Chair, it's really important to me that I repeat one more time that we are talking about friends, neighbours, family, the people we know and work with each and every day when we debate this bill, the sheriffs who are here protecting this building, the nurses that we see when we need help, the child mental health therapists who help the children in our communities.

I am not supporting Bill 9, and I look forward to hearing what my colleagues have to say on this bill as well as we continue to debate this, and I will be introducing amendments at a later time in the debate.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Madam Chair, we're back on talking about time allocation. The hon. member spent some time talking about the fact that the opposition was not informed about this legislation, that it was not something that was provided. That, in fact, is not true. I'm not saying that the hon. member is being untruthful; she may not have been informed by her Opposition House Leader, and that would be unfortunate if that's the case. I, through you to her, Madam Chair, would suggest she take that up with her House leader if that's the case. But that is not true. The opposition was fully informed of all of the legislative agenda of the government, including this bill. The Government House Leader, that's myself, and the Opposition House Leader had a meeting about our agenda, no different than what the NDP did when in government and I was the Opposition House Leader. That's a standard process. We exchange what the legislative agenda will look like for the upcoming sitting.

Now, from time to time – and the NDP did the same – occasionally, bills are added to that list, and then you contact the other side's House leader to inform them of that legislation. I want to, Madam Chair, through you to the entire House, assure the House that I did that. It's one of our goals, to always treat the opposition with respect when it comes to legislation. Again, the hon. member may not be aware, but her House leader was informed. It would be incumbent upon him at that point to inform their caucus. That's how the process is. This is not a secretive bill.

There's another issue that I'd point out in the same context, Madam Chair, and it was brought up by the member. The member brought up that this bill was magically tabled on Monday under some conspiracy theory, that we knew on this side of the House that Trans Mountain would be approved on Tuesday, the next day, and that this would somehow stop the press from covering this legislation, that this was some great secret. The reality, though, is that this bill was tabled on the Thursday, so four days before the hon. member says.

The point is that this is the problem. When it comes to everything the NDP is doing right now but particularly on this piece of legislation, they continue to misrepresent the facts of what took place in regard to this legislation. I can go through dozens of facts tonight. Even after I opened up debate on Bill 9 and pointed out that that party, when they were in power just a few short years ago, on Wednesday, December 9, 2015, while debating Bill 6, the farm safety act, the then hon. Government House Leader, Mr. Mason – I hope he's enjoying his retirement. If he's up watching us in Kelowna; I don't know what he's doing.

**Mr. Kenney:** From his vineyard? I doubt it.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I doubt it. But just in case he is: I hope you're enjoying your retirement, Brian.

He moved the following:

Oral notice having been given, Hon. Mr. Mason to propose the following motion:

Be it resolved that, when further consideration of Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the Bill in Second Reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the Bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**An Hon. Member:** How much time?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** One hour. One hour.

I could read again; I won't, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Eggen:** Madam Chair, point of order.

### Point of Order Relevance

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, your point of order.

**Mr. Eggen:** In regard to your previous comments about using this very limited time that we've had imposed upon us through closure, through the heavy-handedness of this government, you did, I think, very magnanimously suggest that we use the short amount of time to debate Bill 9. Clearly, the Government House Leader is abusing and circumventing that wise advice, taking up time talking about things that are only, you know, vaguely connected to anything, really, in this House, much less Bill 9. I would suggest, please, if you could redirect the debate back to why we're here in the first place.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I'll respond to that.

To be clear, Madam Chair, I rose to rebut the deputy leader of the NDP earlier. You made a ruling, which I respected. I moved away from time allocation and went to a couple of other things that the deputy leader brought up, and I yielded the floor in respect of your ruling. Since then I've been listening, and repeatedly, including with the last member, time allocation is being discussed, accusations are being made against this side of the House and the government that are misrepresenting facts, that, frankly, are not true, discussions about whether or not they were informed about the bills, those types of things.

9:00

Let me be clear. I will continue to rise and rebut misrepresented facts from the opposition. If they don't want to use their time on this bill to misrepresent facts inside this House, I will continue to rise and rebut them. I can either do it during debate or I'll do it on points of order over and over, but they will be rebutted. Again, through you, Madam Chair, to them, I suggest that they stick to the bill if they want to spend their time on it, but every time that they rise and misstate a fact, I will rise again and clarify it because I think it's important that House knows the facts.

**The Chair:** Hon. Government House Leader, I think it's fair to offer a rebuttal to comments that are made. I would suggest that they be as brief as possible in doing so.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Standing Order 13(2), Madam Chair, to get clarification on the ruling: is that how it will be for both sides?

**The Chair:** Of course, that is how it will be for both sides.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Good. Thank you.

### Debate Continued

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining act. I'd like to take a moment first to actually confirm something that the Government House Leader said, which is that, yes, you know, the day before oral notice was given to this House of the introduction of Bill 9, I do believe the Government House Leader did inform the Opposition House Leader that, quote, a labour bill would be introduced that would make us set our hair on fire. So one can only assume that the characterization . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader. A point of order.

### Point of Order

#### Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). I'll focus primarily on language to create disorder though there are a few other standing orders I could use in this case. The hon. member is now attempting to refer to a conversation that she was not part of and, again, putting forward a timeline that she's incorrect about. The opposition was informed that legislation of this magnitude would be coming more than one day before, certainly several. I don't have the exact date in front of me. I certainly do not believe I said anything about lighting hair on fire. I would be very concerned about my friend the deputy House leader the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays if was anybody was lighting their hair on fire. He only has so much left. Again I would encourage the opposition not to misstate facts inside this House.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, I don't see any point of order here at all. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is simply setting up the debate that she will very methodically deliver in regard to Bill 9 and the drama and the facts that have taken place around Bill 9 from the time that we first heard of it, which was scarcely a week ago, to when it is scheduled to terminate through this ham-fisted time allocation, sometime in the early morning hours of Thursday. I would be so happy to hear her continue with what I'm sure will be a most illuminating analysis.

**The Chair:** Again I will add some caution when we're talking about a decision that has already been made in this House in regard to time allocation. This is just clearly a dispute of the facts, who may or may not have been part of conversations. No one really knows.

Please proceed with caution, hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased that the rules around hearsay do not apply in the House, and the hon. Government House Leader should be aware of that.

This is to set up the characterization of how this act was introduced in the House. I don't intend to speak to the issues the chair has already ruled on. But it goes again to the fact that this government has introduced this bill because it has a complete disregard for Alberta workers. That is why it was introduced. In fact, it is a clear disregard for the collective agreements that were

appropriately negotiated between the parties to all these agreements. There might have been some intent to actually break them and to do that, and that's why they've introduced the bill that they've introduced. The characterization by the hon. Government House Leader, I think, speaks to the disdain with which this government is treating Alberta workers.

It's something that I've highlighted a number of times already in this House when I've spoken on other issues and when I've had the opportunity to speak to this bill the first time, that for some reason this government seems to have a complete disdain for the public-sector workers who deliver the public services that all Albertans rely upon. We've heard numerous times that the workers that they're challenging right now by breaching those collective agreements are the people who deliver our front-line services. They are nurses, they are teachers, and they are librarians. They are food inspectors, child mental health therapists. They are long-term care workers, correctional officers, sheriffs. These are not people that we need to disregard or that we should treat with disdain. These are Alberta workers. A government that campaigns on a platform of caring about jobs seems to still have very deep, deep, deep disdain for the people who actually perform those jobs. They seem to only care about them if they're private-sector workers.

Well, we care about the private sector as well, which is why we stood up in this House and talked about the disdain that this government was showing for workers in the oil and gas sector who work overtime, for minimum wage employees, for young workers. You know, jobs come with people attached to them. They come with people who need to put food on the table, who collectively bargain in good faith with their employers and with the government, and they expect those collective agreements to be upheld. I don't know why this government insists on treating Albertans with this disdain.

So if we're going to talk a little bit about the details of the bill – we've talked about in this House the fact that introducing this legislation is unconstitutional. I know that there is a great desire for the government caucus to engage in as many lawsuits as possible. We see that they like to keep lawyers employed, and, you know, as somebody who worked in private practice, I can say that I'm sure there are a lot of my former colleagues who will be thrilled by this government's agenda because it's going to keep a lot of them employed for a very long time. That's exactly what this government is doing. Apparently, the only workers that they really care about are lawyers, and, hey, as a lawyer I'd say thank you except that now I have a very significant role, which is to stand up for all Alberta workers, not just lawyers, in this House. But they seem to be dead set on setting this government down the path of repeated lawsuits.

Let me talk a little bit about the law, because I don't know if the government has considered the law at all. They seem to have callously and very recklessly introduced this legislation with the intent to bring on the ire of the opposition members but, clearly, also to trigger the ire of organized labour in this province. So let's talk a little bit about the law. It's very important that the government realize that while they think they have a large mandate, the Supreme Court of Canada still sets the law of the land for this province and will rule out governments who are acting unconstitutionally.

In 2007, Madam Chair, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *Health Services and Support – Facilities Subsector Bargaining Assn. versus British Columbia* that the right to collective bargaining under section 2(d) of the Constitution protects the right to good-faith bargaining and that governments will be held to account, just as employers are, when they bargain in bad faith. They set out the requirements that governments must be held to when they're introducing legislation that affects collective agreements. They talked about how that duty to bargain in good faith includes an

obligation to meet, to commit time to the process, and to engage in meaningful dialogue that is aimed at arriving at an acceptable agreement. This lies at the heart of the collective bargaining process.

In that decision by the Supreme Court the court stated that with respect to legislation introduced by governments to affect collective agreements, the court confirmed that legislation must as well conform to section 2(d) of the Charter and is void under section 52 of the Constitution Act if it does not comply with section 2(d).

So let's go back to what's at the heart of that right to bargain in good faith that is set out by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court says that section 2(d) of the Charter, which is freedom of association, does not protect activity that is a substantial interference with associational activity. If it affects the associational activity, it must not discourage the collective pursuit of common goals. "It is enough if the effect of the state law or action is to substantially interfere with the activity of collective bargaining, thereby discouraging the collective pursuit of common goals." I want to clarify because the Supreme Court actually talked about this and said that there doesn't need to be intent by the government to actually substantially interfere. It's just enough that there's an effect. But in this case I think we see both. We see an intent to substantially interfere and an effect.

The court stressed in that decision that "the right to bargain collectively protects not just the act of making representations, but also the right of employees to have their views heard in the context of a meaningful process of consultation and discussion," and that means that they should be able to rely upon the collective agreements that they negotiate.

The Supreme Court also stated that laws or state actions that prevent or deny meaningful discussion and consultation about working conditions between employees and their employer may substantially interfere with the activity of collective bargaining, as may laws that unilaterally nullify significant negotiated terms in existing collective agreements. That is exactly what we are seeing here. We have a number of collective agreements that have already been agreed to, that have been in place for a number of years, that have a wage arbitration provision in them. This is what was agreed to by the parties at the table, and this government is breaking those agreements. They are substantially interfering with the negotiating process and the collective agreements that have already been settled.

#### 9:10

It is an important aspect of good-faith bargaining in a collective agreement situation that all parties mutually respect the commitments that they have entered into. If the content of bargaining shows hostility from one party toward the collective bargaining process, this will constitute a breach of the duty to bargain in good faith.

This is why, Madam Chair, it is important how this bill was introduced. It is important because it shows that there is a lack of commitment, that there is an intent here to undermine the collective agreement process, and that they are breaching the agreements that were rightfully and lawfully entered into by the parties of these collective agreements. This government is doing that intentionally, and the process by which they've done it is important, the fact that they did not campaign on this mandate. It was not part of their platform that they would breach or alter collective agreements. It is key to know that that is what they're trying to do here. They did not give notice to Albertans that they were trying to breach their collective agreements. They simply did it, and they did it under cover of night. They did it with next to no notice. They did it by limiting debate. That's all important to the fact that it goes to the

intent of why it was done. It was done because they're trying to ram it through quickly, and they're trying to do it as fast as possible. As the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods said, they might actually also be doing it to get around the arbitration provisions that are coming forward right now.

I think it is very important that – you know, the Government House Leader wants to talk about the legislation. He wants to talk about the bill. That is why the context around how the bill was introduced is so important. I don't know that the Government House Leader is listening to the important constitutional provisions that we're talking about. Again, I think there is a very strong desire to enter into as many lawsuits as possible. For a government that its platform is on fiscal responsibility, I wonder how responsible it is for Albertans' dollars to be used in lawsuits rather than in delivering public services and maintaining their commitment to the public-sector workers who provide those services every day.

I look at the opposition members. We all know people in the public sector who work. I wonder how the Member for Calgary-North would feel about the fact that teachers in his riding might take collective agreement action. They might take strike action because their wage negotiations are going to be interfered with. How would his constituents feel about a disruption in the delivery of education in their schools for that reason? How would the Minister of Education feel about that? I'm not sure we'd hear much from her about that. I wonder how each member in this House would feel if in their constituency their constituents were not getting the public services that they are owed, that they deserve, that they need because their caucus has decided to bring forward a breach of collective agreements and are causing significant labour unrest.

One of the things that I'm very proud of coming into this government, not having been part of it for the last four years, was to watch particularly the work of the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. She did such a fantastic job working with unions, listening carefully, being a fantastic representative of government, of public-sector workers and public services but also doing it in a responsible way. She worked collaboratively with them. That is why, during a time of significant financial strain, with the drop in oil prices in this province, we did not have labour unrest. We did not have slashing and burning of government services. I think all Albertans, public-sector workers in particular, understood our responsibility in a time of economic difficulty to come together and do what was right for this province. Now this government is going to reward those employees, those workers, those public-sector workers who deliver these services to our province, by breaking those collective agreements.

I think it's important to note that the government keeps mentioning: "This is just a small bill. It's just a few clauses. It's just delaying it for four months." We have not heard a commitment from the Minister of Finance that there will actually be arbitration at the end of this time period put forward by Bill 9. There is no commitment. Frankly, I don't think that many public-sector workers will have much faith that that arbitration is going to come. We know what's happening. The government has been telling us for weeks – actually, they've been telling us for months about what they're going to do. They've been laying the groundwork through the Mackinnon panel, through the statements that we heard in this House about, oh, how much we spend on education, how much we spend on health care. They're laying the groundwork for significant cuts. Would they have any faith that there would be fair bargaining coming at the end of Bill 9's expiration? I don't think so.

I think it's also fair to say, as the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods pointed out, that this piece of legislation has one of those really tricky, convenient clauses that allows for the drafting of

regulations with a very broad regulation-making authority. Given that there should be no faith by Albertan workers in this government, I don't think we can have any faith that they would pass regulations that would be in the best interest of public-sector workers. We know that they'll be passing regulations that will continue to undermine the public services delivered by public-sector workers in this province.

I think we have a significant issue, and this deserves a significant debate because this government is trying to ram this through quickly. They've already made their decision with the MacKinnon panel. They gave clear direction that they're not to talk about opportunities to raise new revenues from tax increases, so where are those extra revenues going to come from? It's going to come from cutting services and cutting public-sector employee wages. This is clearly part of a pattern. We see what's coming, we anticipate it, we should be outraged, and we should be talking about it.

If the Government House Leader and the government caucus is not going to listen to public-sector employees, I know I am, and I know that my colleagues in this House are. I listened to them when I was on the doorsteps in Edmonton-Whitemud talking to constituents who were saying: thank you for not cutting our jobs. There are a significant number of public-sector workers in my riding, and they said: thank you for not cutting my job and not cutting the services to my family in a time of economic downturn. But somehow that is not appreciated by this government. They don't appreciate that. They're dead set on hurting Albertans and hurting the Albertans who work in those sectors even more than they are right now.

I think it's very significant that we talk about these things and we talk about the fact that this government is sending us down a path of considerable labour unrest in this province, considerable constitutional legal challenges, and that's not going to serve any of us well. All that's going to do is waste our time. It's going to upset Albertan workers. It's going to upset our services to our families and to our households, and it's only going to create a lot of money for lawyers.

I'm completely baffled by how this government claims to campaign on a platform of fiscal responsibility, yet all they want to do is blow our money on gambles, gambles on a \$4.5 billion gift in the corporate tax cut, a gamble that we've shown numerous times is not supported by research. There's plenty of research to talk about how that does not create jobs, but they're going to gamble that way. They're going to gamble our climate change future on the fact that, oh, well, you know, we'll challenge the federal carbon tax in court even though that challenge has already been defeated at the provincial level, but we'll just launch lawsuits. Now they're saying that we're going to gamble on our public service delivery, on our public service workers by breaching collective agreements. We'll just take a gamble that. We'll go to court and deal with it there.

I don't think that that's fiscal responsibility, and I think, quite frankly, all Albertans should be ashamed of that because we deserve a government with a plan, a plan to actually invest in our public service workers, a plan to invest in our public services and invest in things such as climate change and invest in things such as actually creating jobs rather than just hoping that by cutting taxes, somebody will come and create jobs here.

This government has not shown that it has done its research. It clearly has not done its research on the constitutional laws around freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, and bargaining in good faith. As somebody who used to work in public service, I feel a little bit of compassion for the lawyers who work in Alberta Justice who are now going to have to spend their time defending this because that's really all they're going to be doing.

They're going to be defending ourselves or perhaps leading challenges in court, and that's just wasting our public service dollars.

I'm, frankly, sorry that the Government House Leader seems so disdainful toward the opposition and the fact that we stand up and we will continue to stand up for the fact that this is something that we need to do. I know that the Government House Leader requires a great deal of attention every time he enters the room. He's looking for some attention right now as well. But we will certainly continue to advocate for Alberta workers because this government is not only not going to advocate for them; they're trying to hurt them. I myself am not going to stand for that. That's not my job. I was elected here to look out for Albertans, both who hold those jobs and who receive the services from our public-sector workers.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Others wishing to speak? Any other members? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mountain View – Calgary. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

9:20

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You almost moved me a little north.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I'm pleased to rise as well and speak on this bill. I think my colleague before me from Edmonton-Whitemud has done an amazing job of laying out some of the primary objections to this bill, laying out the ways in which it violates the Constitution. I think I could belabour that point at length because it does violate the Constitution. I think that we should all be concerned about that because we're not talking about – you know, we talk about the Constitution, and for some of us that document holds an enormous amount of weight. Fundamentally what we're talking about when we're talking about the Constitution is those fundamental principles which pull us together, things like basic rights, the basic rights of individuals to come together and act collectively to protect their interests. I can't think of anything more fundamental to a society than the ability to come together in that way.

I think we should watch this closely because it is part of an overall pattern. It is part of an overall pattern of disrespect for the rule of law and disrespect for the fundamental principles of our democracy. I think that is a huge shame. It isn't just this one set of people that are being disrespected, and I think that would be enough. That would be enough for me to stand up and for me to push back and to say: "This isn't appropriate. You can't do this. These are people, and those people have rights. You can't just run roughshod over them." But it isn't just this one group. It's youth. It's LGBTQ youth. It's youth employment. This is a much broader pattern of trying to sink those who have less power, of trying to push down on those who have less power in society, of taking away from those who are already vulnerable.

Essentially, what they're saying is that these individuals who have come to the table, who have participated with Albertans, who have come over a number of years to bargain in good faith with the province, often taking zeros – again, I've mentioned this before in the House. Teachers took five consecutive years of zeros because they, too, care about the future of this province because it is their province, too. To take that, to say, "You came to the table, you acted in good faith, and you treated us fairly" and to turn around and snub it and say, "We're not going to treat you like that. We don't respect the promises that we have made. We don't respect the contracts that bind us. We don't even respect the highest law in the land, the Constitution," I think is disgraceful.

You know, much has been said about the exact timelines in this House, but I think that when members opposite are rising to talk about how things used to be and how things are and who has disrespect for what, they ought to recall, because I certainly sat through many long nights in this Chamber, when members opposite wailed about being asked to consider a bill in under two weeks. Well, here we are looking at a bill in less than a week. I can't even imagine. I remember what the hon. Government House Leader had to say about being asked to do second reading a day or two after a bill was introduced. I can't imagine what he would have said about this. The comments that are made publicly about this: to maintain a reasonable and effective pace. A reasonable and effective pace that is higher than any pace that has been taken in the past? I mean, it's almost laughable that those are the words that are used to describe it.

We need to take the time to consider this because, again, what we're talking about is fundamental. It's fundamental to our democracy. We're talking about the Constitution. We're talking about violating the Constitution. Let's not give it any consideration; let's just put it through in less than a week. I mean, it's incredibly troubling. Again, my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud spelled out, I think, the legal framework around this in incredible detail. But I think that there's more than just legality behind this because, ultimately, this is a matter of the ties that bind us together as a society, the ability to make a promise, to say "I promise" and keep that promise. That's the basis of contract law.

Interestingly, I studied philosophy, and one of the things I took was an entire seminar on promising. It's considered philosophically a very interesting concept because it underlies so much of our society, because it underlies the legal world in a huge way. People's ability to say to each other, you know, "I will do A, and you will do B" and to make an agreement is the basis on which we are able to live together. If we do not have that, the exchange of saying, "I will give you \$10 now, and you will give me a goat tomorrow," if we're not able to make that exchange, if we're not able to rely on the word of the people around us, and if we're not able to rely on the system to force us to keep our word in that way, it really does impact our ability to function effectively moving forward.

Another thing which has been mentioned in this House extensively is the mandate, the mandate of the government, that the government was elected with a huge mandate. But what troubles me is that I don't recall seeing in the platform – and perhaps the hon. Government House Leader will help me out. He seems to like to rise repeatedly. [some laughter] That really wasn't intentional. That certainly wasn't in the platform, this plan to cut public-sector wages. It wasn't in the platform that they intended to roll back the rights of workers.

I mean, a lot has been said about facts or nonfacts or disputes of facts or various other things this evening, so I think it's worth referring to the actual text of the bill because I think, you know, at least in this case, the facts are in black and white. The clause that my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods referred to is a clause which is very rarely invoked in legislation.

- 5 The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations
  - (c) respecting any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act.

It's used infrequently because normally the House passes legislation, and then cabinet is able to make regulations. Those don't get the same kind of attention. They don't necessarily attract the same kind of public attention. So the reason that regulations are only used to support acts, the reason that regulation-making powers are not generally this broad is because, well, the public deserves to know what's happening.

Again, I've said that this clause is used infrequently. I do know that it has been used in the last four years because I certainly remember discussing it. But in instances in which it's used, it's usually used with an act that has a comparatively narrow focus. The problem is that the intent of the act is defined by the preamble. It's a series of whereases. Usually the preamble to a bill doesn't really add much, but in this instance, because of this particular clause, the preamble becomes highly relevant. In this instance the preamble refers to:

Whereas public sector compensation is the largest government expenditure, constituting over half of the Government of Alberta's operating expense . . .

Then I'm skipping one and moving down.

Whereas the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's Finances, an expert panel appointed by the Government of Alberta, will deliver a final report . . . and time is required to gather . . . [the] information.

9:30

We've had a significant amount of foreshadowing about what it is that this particular expert panel is going to say. We know that the chair has recommended closures of rural hospitals, has recommended wage rollbacks, has talked about wage rollbacks. I mean, they might as well have written right into the bill "whereas we would like to roll back the wages of public-sector employees" as part of the preamble. I mean, essentially, this preamble is foreshadowing exactly what's going to happen.

I'll say it again: if the government is saying that they're not going to do that, that they're not going to impact contracts, that they're not going to roll back the wages of public-sector workers, then why is this here? If you have no intention of using it, why is it there? Certainly, other clauses could have been used. There are a multitude – I mean, I can probably count hundreds – of different regulation-enabling powers that could have been used instead of this one. This one was chosen, and it was chosen with an incredibly broad preamble. It was chosen with a preamble that clearly foreshadows wage rollbacks. Yet here it is. I think it's clear what the intent of the bill is. [interjection] Sorry. I think it's clear what the intent of the bill is. It seemed as though the hon. Premier had something to add there.

I think, you know, the government is in a position to ultimately make these moves and to make them in cabinet with very little debate, which brings me back to the overall concern here, which is, again, that we're violating contracts, that we're violating that which fundamentally holds us together.

We're not just violating contracts for anyone. I think my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods and myself, in a previous statement, have been quite clear about this. You know, the government attempts to set up this dichotomy: like, there are public-sector workers, and then there are people. Well, public-sector workers are people. They're our friends, they're our spouses, they're our families, they're people next door, they're members in our community, and they contribute to this province, the same as we do. This attack on them should not be taken lightly because it isn't going to end here. It isn't just going to be this. It isn't just going to be the public-sector workers and young workers and LGBTQ youth. I mean, who knows who's next?

I think folks should take note of this because it clearly foreshadows what's coming. Again, despite significant talk about things being in the platform, I didn't see in the platform a statement that said: we're going to cut public-sector compensation. I didn't see in the platform a statement that said: we intend to violate our own contracts. I didn't see in the platform anything that said: we

intend to take away overtime. There are a fair number of these things, and it's not okay.

Again, it speaks to disrespect, and I think that in this House we've seen it on a number of different occasions, and I find it very troubling. There is this tendency to write off legitimate questions on the part of the government as, quote, unquote, fear and smear, as, quote, unquote, personal attacks. Well, asking how many teachers will be laid off because of a cutback isn't a personal attack; it's a legitimate policy question. We have a policy difference over whether or not we should cut public-sector workers' jobs in the midst of a recession.

That's probably our biggest fundamental difference, that and trickle-down economics, which I don't believe works and the members opposite obviously do. I think that to write that off as a personal attack and something that isn't worthy of an answer is incredibly inappropriate. To write off a question about whether Alberta's health services are going to continue to be publicly funded, publicly delivered health services that are accessible to all people is disrespectful. To suggest that policy debate like that, that a policy question like that is somehow out of order is disrespectful, the same way that breaking these contracts is disrespectful. I don't think that it's behaviour that should ultimately be tolerated.

I'm sure I can think of a few more additional – we did interim supply just recently, in which all members had an opportunity to go back and forth, and there were, I think, a series of allegations that legitimate policy questions were out of order in various ways. I myself, to my questions about budget numbers, received not a single response detailing a number. I received an angry diatribe that involved yelling and raising of voices and, just generally, angriness. I think that I have a right to ask in this place, on behalf of people I represent: hey, this budget is clearly going to be lower than the last one was; where are the cuts? I don't think that that should get an angry diatribe in return. I think that that is a legitimate policy question, and I think it should be met with a legitimate policy answer. I mean, I think the answer is clearly: of course, there will be cuts, and they will be deep. Otherwise, why would it be met with a long, angry, screaming rant?

Those are many of the places where this government, I feel, continues to be disrespectful of the opposition and our role. Again, a lot of Albertans voted for us. You know, this is the interesting thing, because this all ties back together, in my view. It's true: a majority of voters voted for the government. That's how that works. But that doesn't mean that all minority voices, the other 45 per cent of the population, can be entirely disregarded. In the same way, LGBTQ youth represent a minority of the population, but that doesn't mean that their rights ought to be disregarded. Public-sector workers represent a minority of the population, but that doesn't mean that their rights ought to be disregarded, yet we see this government again coming forward with a bill that says pretty much exactly that.

I'm troubled. I'm troubled by what this bill means, I'm troubled by what the agenda of this government means, and I'm troubled by the fact that I know that there are members on the government side of the House who don't agree with all of these. I know that there are members on the opposite side of the House who do have respect for LGBTQ youth and their rights. I know that there are members on the opposite side of the House who care about the rights of nurses, of teachers, of court workers, yet they don't rise. Not only do they not rise, but they vote to limit the ability of the opposition to rise, and they push through this bill in such a way that they limit the ability of the public to engage.

If there's any one flaw, I would say, in our democratic system, it is that public engagement has been diminishing, and I think that that is sad. It has a certain amount to do with the fact that there are fewer

members of the media, I think. I mean, they do an incredibly good job; they really do. They work incredibly hard at what they're . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, comments? I see the hon. Minister of Finance rising to speak.

**9:40**

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to refute, I think, some of the comments that have been made by the opposition regarding Bill 9. I think the first thing I want to say is that the intent on Bill 9 is clear. It really is, as the title would suggest, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. The intent is singular. The intent is simply to delay arbitration a few months, until this government has had time to fully assess our financial situation and, moreover, hear from the MacKinnon panel, a very competent, diverse, nonpartisan panel, that has been put in place to deliver, not only to this government but to the people of Alberta, a path forward to balance and, at the same time, a path to continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans.

We've heard from members opposite about what was and what was not in our platform, but, Mr. Chairman, I would suggest to all members tonight that there was something that was very clear in our platform, and that was to bring this province to balance. Albertans have put this government in place to deliver that mandate, and that is the purpose of delaying public-sector wage arbitration, not because we have determined what that outcome should be but, in fact, to ensure that we have sufficient time, sufficient information to be prudent and thoughtful and responsible not only to Albertans but to the public sector and not only for this generation but for future generations.

Mr. Chair, the previous government, the members opposite, had this province on a trajectory for \$100 billion of provincial debt. That is unacceptable to this government, but more importantly it was unacceptable to Albertans. That was one of the reasons why they elected this government, to make the decisions, financial decisions on behalf of Albertans. If our province was going to continue down that path to really unacceptable debt, it leaves Albertans with significant challenges. It has a very negative effect on investment in this province. It would have continued to encourage the flight of investment from this province and, with it, jobs and opportunities. We've heard the members opposite talk about the importance of jobs, and jobs are important, both in the public sector and in the private sector.

Continuing down the path of high and rising deficits, which contribute, amongst other things, to the flight of investment capital, the loss of jobs and opportunities, is a game of declining sums, Mr. Chair. Not only does it lead to future unemployment, job loss, and wealth loss for Albertans, but it will ultimately lead to governments not being able to deliver the high-quality services that Albertans expect and not being able to continue to employ a very vibrant, skilled public sector, that we need to deliver those high-quality services.

Mr. Chair, this Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act is about ensuring that we have the information that's required to make prudent, thoughtful decisions on behalf of Albertans so that we can ensure that we're able to deliver these high-quality services such as education and health care and other services to Albertans. I'm a lifelong Albertan. I've raised a family in this province. We have grandchildren in this province. We have been privileged to benefit from these services that the public sector has delivered, and I can truly say that I'm grateful for and appreciative of the public sector and the services that they deliver to Albertans every day. But the fact is that in order to ensure that we can continue these services, again, not only for this generation but for future generations, we

must be responsible, and this move to defer the arbitration is about being responsible so that we can make, again, thoughtful, prudent, informed decisions on behalf of Albertans.

There has been concern with one of the sections of the legislation, section 5(c), which states that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations “respecting any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent” of the bill. I would suggest, in fact I would state, Mr. Chair, that the intent of this bill is clear. The intent of this bill is simply to delay public-sector wage arbitration. That is the intent of the bill, and I would like to mention to the members opposite that in bills that the members opposite actually created and passed when they were in government, there was similar language in many, many of those bills. Let me read some of those tonight.

Bill 5, Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act; Bill 2, An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue; Bill 4, An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act; Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act; Bill 202, Alberta Local Food Act; Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services; Bill 5, Seniors’ Home Adaptation and Repair Act: that is not an exhaustive list. In fact, I can carry on. Bill 6, Securities Amendment Act, 2016; Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences; Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016; Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016; Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring; Bill 19, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act: Mr. Chair, there was very similar language in these bills as well.

I will reaffirm from this government that the intent of this bill is simply to delay arbitration for a few months. Again, this bill is not about the removal of rights. It’s simply about the postponement – the temporary postponement – of process. We take our responsibilities very seriously, the responsibilities that Albertans entrusted us with on April 16, the responsibility of delivering high-quality services to Albertans today, tomorrow, and ensuring that by virtue of doing so, we don’t do it in a way that jeopardizes that delivery to future generations. They also left us with a responsibility to bring this province to balance. We take those responsibilities seriously, Mr. Chair. We require time to deliver well. That is what Bill 9 is about, and we will follow through with that commitment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods standing.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for recognizing me, Mr. Chair. I would like to say thank you to the Finance minister for speaking specifically to section 5(c). The bills that he was referencing were all limited. The power in section 5(c) was limited by the intent of the act. The intent of this act is wide ranging and specifically talks about balancing the budget on the backs of workers. That is how it is read.

At this point, before I speak any more, I would like to move an amendment, Mr. Chair, to Bill 9 on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

9:50

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, this amendment will be known as A1 going forward, and if you would be so kind as to read it into the record, that would be great. Just to remind you, too, there are another 19 minutes and 12 seconds remaining as well on this part of your questions, comments, and amendments.

**Ms Gray:** Oh. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I don’t believe I’ll use the full amount of time.

The amendment on behalf of Member Bilous is to move that Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, be amended by striking out section 5(c).

Section 5(c): we’ve had the opportunity to discuss a number of times about the concerns, the strong concerns, that it gives the government power to impose wage freezes, wage rollbacks, that it gives very broad, far-reaching powers, particularly when you consider that it’s governed by the intent of the act. The intent of this act is a very long preamble that touches on a number of things, specifically public-sector compensation, specifically the need to balance the budget, all of this leading us to believe that this section can and will be used to freeze wages for our public-sector unions or roll back wages to our public-sector workers.

Similar to my earlier comments, I will remind this House that the workers we are talking about are the sheriffs in this building, our friends and neighbours, the people in our communities. With this amendment I would like to propose to the government that we strike section 5(c). If the government is intent on moving forward with this bill – and they are, having brought it forward and put in place closure – will you accept amendment of section 5(c)? If you will not accept this amendment, I would very much appreciate hearing the reasoning on why not. I would invite any member of the government to respond.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, are there any members wishing to make comments or questions on amendment A1? I see the hon. Government House Leader rising.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Chair, I’m happy to rise on this amendment. I’m looking at it. One of the concerns I have – and I have indicated that to the opposition in the past – is that it would be helpful to provide these with a little bit more notice, and we’d be able to provide them some feedback. I would, through you to the opposition, suggest that they spend a little bit more time articulating to us why this amendment is important, and I suspect we’ll be able to give them an answer to their question shortly.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora rising.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I think that one of the things was just mentioned. One of the criticisms that has been given on this bill has been mentioned by the Finance minister, and that’s concern that this section 5(c) is the section that gives sweeping powers to implement – let me read it for us: “respecting any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act.”

Really, because of the preamble, a question was asked: how is this different than when this clause was embedded in the Local Food Act, for example, one of the acts that the Finance minister gave as an example of where this clause was lifted from? Fair point. This clause is in other legislation, but the preamble to this act is very different than the preambles for other legislation. Usually the preamble is much more focused. The Local Food Act talked about – I don’t have the words in front of me, but it essentially said: whereas our intent is to support local producers, local agricultural producers, we are bringing forward the following legislation. So it was very clear that if the Lieutenant Governor in Council wanted to bring forward other pieces consistent with the intent of the act, that it be focused in that area, around local food for the Local Food Act.

The intent of this act is much broader given that the preamble talks about things like being “committed to providing high-quality front line services” and that “the Government of Alberta is committed to balancing its budget [in] 2022-2023.” Again, there’s



concern that that means that that will be the highest priority and that through an order in council there could be other, more sweeping impacts to collective agreements that would make that the primary focus.

In the preamble it says, “Public sector compensation is the largest government expenditure, constituting over half of the Government of Alberta’s operating expense.” This leaves concerns that if the LG, through orders in council, is going to be bringing forward amendments where that’s the focus, it would indeed lead to things beyond the scope that has been articulated in this House, around the scope being simply about delaying arbitration, that it would be far more sweeping, the ability to bring forward things through OIC. That’s a bit of rationale for the Government House Leader and all members to consider.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader is rising.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, just a few moments ago the hon. the Finance minister rose in this place and spoke about a couple of things, but what’s relevant to this legislation is that he spoke about the history of using a clause like 5(c) inside multiple pieces of legislation. It’s actually a very common clause inside legislation. I see the hon. member nodding in agreement, that certainly a significant amount of legislation that had a clause like 5(c) has been in this place in my time. I know that the hon. member in her time in cabinet moved legislation that had 5(c) in it, I would assume. Certainly, her colleagues had. You know, stuff like Bill 6, for example, had 5(c) as well as some of the municipal bills that the hon. Finance minister referred to earlier. This is a standard procedure within legislation. I see no need for this amendment. I appreciate the hon. members bringing it forward, but this side of the House will not support this.

The intent of this bill is clear. The Finance minister has made it clear what it is. It’s to keep a promise as we work through our balancing of the budget process, to provide a period of pause just to make sure that we can get all the facts straight and then be able to go through this process properly.

As such, I would encourage all of my hon. colleagues to vote against this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods rising again.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Government House Leader for the response. To respond specifically, yes, this is a clause that can be used in legislation. It always needs to be used cautiously. We always need to look at the bounds for how it can be used, and that is the intent. But the preamble for this bill is very wide ranging, has very big potential intent, and the connection between this preamble and using this section to freeze wages or to roll back wages is easily painted and has been confirmed with lawyers. That is why we have put forward the striking out of section 5(c).

Now, I’ve heard the Government House Leader state in this House that he will not be supporting this amendment. My question to him or to other members of the government is: will you state in this House that you will not use section 5(c) to freeze or roll back public-sector wages?

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any others?

I see the hon. Government House Leader rising to speak.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Chair, thank you to the hon. member for the question. The intent of the bill is clear. It’s been expressed clearly inside this House by many members of the cabinet as well as lots

by the hon. the Finance minister. This is, again, a standard clause that is in most pieces of legislation like this. I know that the Official Opposition has many amendments that they would like to move forward this evening, and I suggest they move on because I don’t believe the government will be accepting this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Government House Leader. Absolutely understanding that the government will not be supporting this amendment, I’m simply seeking a clarification. The Finance minister did do a social media video that was posted, but for the record and in this Legislature for Albertans who are watching in the gallery, online, or recorded into the future, the concern is that this section will be used to freeze or roll back public-sector wages. The government has said repeatedly that the intent is only to delay. Let’s connect these two thoughts. The intent is only to delay, so please state that your intention is not to freeze or roll back for public-sector workers.

10:00

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Chair, the minister has been clear on this point. The hon. member is referred to his comments, and it’s time to move on.

**The Deputy Chair:** Anyone looking to speak to A1? It looks like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore if I’m not mistaken.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. My second opportunity here to speak to Bill 9 and, of course, this amendment to the act to remove section 5(c). As you can imagine, I’ve been listening very intently over the course of this debate, and I have to say that history is a very interesting thing. We can learn a lot from history. We can learn what’s taken place, and we can learn how not to repeat mistakes that have been made in history but also something very important. We can learn what people might do in the future based on what they’ve done in history.

When I see a section like 5(c) in Bill 9, it gives me great pause because I look back as far as maybe only half an hour to what’s been just said around reviewing the finances of the province. The Finance minister said that we need to fully assess the finances, that we need to be prudent, thoughtful, and make informed decisions. He also made reference to the blue-ribbon panel, which, unfortunately, does not have the mandate to review the revenue side. So I struggle with whether our finances are going to be fully assessed, whether thoughtful and prudent decisions will be made.

When I look at 5(c) in Bill 9, I’m hearing, “Well, it’s just standard; we’re probably not going to use it,” yet we’re kind of almost cheaping out on what I was just talking about with reviewing the finances. We have members in the gallery tonight that believe the government is going to cheap out on 5(c) and that they are going to mandate either wage freezes or, probably most likely, wage rollbacks. To have the government be able to just come right in, do that without bargaining, well, Mr. Chair, that leads us back to why we’ve now dubbed this bill the Bad-faith Bargaining Act. So how is it that we give our members, our very hard-working public-sector Albertans, confidence that this government will not do that? This amendment here, by removing 5(c), would at least, hopefully, be a start.

There is still the whole concept around pushing off the bargaining that was made in good faith. You know, I remember one of the members – I’m not a hundred per cent sure; it could have been the Member for Calgary-Hays – talking about the diversity within the government caucus and all the different backgrounds, which is fantastic, Mr. Chair. I love it. What I’d like to do is that I’d like to

appeal to maybe some of the folks that have a business background. So let me ask you: if you're running a business and you've made a deal with somebody, be it a product or service that you require for your business, and partway through the other side says, "You know what; I'm just going to change that," I'm curious, hon. members, about how many of you would have a problem with that. If you don't raise your hand, I think that would concern me if you were a business owner, so why wouldn't these hard-working public-sector workers up in our gallery this evening be concerned? Why are you surprised that they would have a problem with Bill 9?

But we have an opportunity here, Mr. Chair. We have an opportunity to maybe extend an olive branch, to maybe say: well, look, we'll do this in good faith, trying to show you that it really is about just holding negotiations off for just a little while while we look at our finances. Of course, I would really love it if the Finance minister would fully assess our finances, including our revenue side, so that you can make prudent, thoughtful, and informed decisions.

But what concerns me, again, Mr. Chair, looking back in history, is when I've heard certain things said: one of the key elements of structural reform is to move quickly; speed creates momentum; it also makes it harder for opponents of reform to obstruct it, because we don't want to get bogged down with public consultation. Our hard-working public-sector workers in the gallery want the opportunity to bargain fairly, and Bill 9 is taking that away. But by removing 5(c), we're extending a bit of an olive branch, saying: "We won't freeze your wages. We won't roll them back. We'll actually consult you," which means bargain, "in good faith."

I'm curious. Maybe to the Member for Leduc-Beaumont: I wonder if hard-working police officers would have appreciated having their wages just automatically rolled back without even asking them. To the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo: I wonder if maybe our amazing paramedics, colleagues in his field, would have appreciated being told, "Your wage is frozen; thanks for coming." Maybe to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon: I wonder if any of his teacher colleagues would have liked having their wages rolled back. I bet we've probably even got some fine social workers up in the gallery this evening, that work very, very hard for Albertans each and every single day, and I really do appreciate that. Maybe to the Member for Calgary-Foothills: I wonder if any of his colleagues might have had a problem with having their wages just rolled back without even asking. That's what 5(c) tells me could possibly happen.

I look back in history at some of the things that we've heard said: making it harder for opponents to obstruct; not getting bogged down in consultation. That is a recipe, Mr. Chair, for labour unrest, and I would not blame these very hard-working women and men this evening if they took exception to what this government is proposing in Bill 9.

I do want to make sure that some of my other colleagues get the opportunity to speak. I may be up again on my feet, Mr. Chair, with more to say. As you can imagine, I fully support this amendment to remove 5(c). Let's extend an olive branch. Maybe we might be able to gain back some trust. I think that actually voting down Bill 9 as a whole will gain back a whole lot of trust from those hard-working public-sector workers in our gallery this evening.

**10:10**

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, comments, questions, or amendments? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising to speak.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to get up here and debate on such important legislation here in the Chamber.

I really do want to thank my hon. colleague for moving this amendment because I think it is something that is very important. We can look at Bill 9 and see that it gives the government carte blanche to roll back wages and to act in bad faith against so many workers across this province. I mean, I've noted that there are a number of unions that are going to be affected by this bill, and they're listed quite clearly in the schedule in the bill.

But I have a few questions, perhaps, to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. I mean, I've really got to ask the member: what is going to happen to the teachers and the students and the parents that are in the Drumheller Outreach school, those grades 7 to 12 students? I mean, those students absolutely do need the best possible education. If they're worried and their teachers are constantly worried about wage rollbacks or what this government will do without any consultation and without letting it be debated properly in this Assembly, what are those parents and teachers going to think?

I'm worried about what those grades 10, 11, and 12 students in Drumheller Valley secondary school will think as well. I mean, those students are going to be worried about what those negotiations are going to mean for things like their class sizes, for things like how many educational assistants they can have in their classrooms.

I mean, even in Greentree school, K to 6: those are some of the most formative years for students. I really hope that the member understands how aggressively this is going to be attacking those families in his community. And it's not just the public workers. Of course, this is about negotiations with those unions and with those teachers, but the families that go to those schools in your community, in Drumheller, right there, are the ones that are going to be under attack.

We also can look at some schools in Stettler. Stettler elementary has 600 students, grades K to 6, formative years for 600 students, and there are so many teachers that have to go into that. When we look at the class sizes that have to be negotiated and the remuneration for that and whether those teachers are going to be able to give their best if they're worried about this government attacking them without consultation, attacking them without allowing them to negotiate properly, in bad faith, I mean, that's something I would be very concerned about if that was my constituency and if those were my constituents. I assume that the vast majority of those teachers would live in your riding, Member. I would also assume that the vast majority of the families that go to those schools would live in that riding as well, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's.

I mean, those are just some of the bigger schools. Of course, we're talking about some fairly large towns here, but there are even schools that are quite a bit smaller, right? We can talk about schools like Byemoor school, which is a K to 9 school. There are only about 30 students, two and a half full-time professional staff, and 1.75 full-time paraprofessional staff. Most of those classrooms are even triple graded. If this negotiation goes on and aggressively attacks those classrooms, triple-graded classrooms with only two and a half full-time professionals, what if this negotiation brings it down to two or one and a half? That could be something that could be very aggressively targeting those 30 or so students right in that community. I'd encourage the Member for Drumheller-Stettler to maybe get up and explain to those families why it's okay to attack those teachers, that are working so hard to make sure these students have the best possible education in this province.

We talk about Coronation school. There are about 300 students there, K to 12, but 80 of those are in high school. Those 80 high school students absolutely need to have the best possible preparation they can have for things like their PATs and diplomas,

that are coming up right away. If you're going to be attacking the teachers that are going to prepare those high-schoolers, that's something that can be very aggressive to them. It's not just teachers. We know teachers really do affect our families in very large ways. Teachers teach our students and they teach our kids, and that's something that's very important. Those teachers and those students and those families live right in your members' ridings, just right there in Drumheller and Stettler.

We can also look at the other types of workers as well. There's the Drumheller health centre. There's a 24/7 emergency room there. They provide laboratory services. They provide things like ultrasounds, pharmacy services. All of those people who are under negotiation – I believe it would be probably HSAA and that organization. Those members that live in your riding: I'm sure a number of them voted for the Member for Drumheller-Stettler as well, Mr. Chair. Those members are now being attacked by this government and not being allowed to negotiate in good faith. That's something that I think that the member should be concerned about. I should perhaps explain to those members, explain to those union members and those constituents, indeed, why he is going to be supporting a bill that gives carte blanche for the government to go in and do wage rollbacks and freezes under regulation.

Perhaps he would like to speak to this amendment and explain why it's okay for this to go on, why he's okay with the families in his area not having a say in this Assembly, why the member is okay with the families in his area constantly having their rights taken away by this Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill here, Mr. Chair. I think it's something that all members of this Assembly – I know the opposition is very concerned about. I would hope that we don't have to do the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's job for him. I would hope that he can get up here in this Assembly and do that himself and explain to his own constituents, but I'm happy to stand here with my colleagues in the Official Opposition and stand up on behalf of those constituents of his because we know that when you're elected here to this place, you have to represent all constituents in Alberta, every single Albertan. You have to make sure you're acting in the best faith of all Albertans.

I know that there are nurses in the member's riding who work throughout his area. I know that there are doctors that work throughout his area. I know that there are many lab techs as well that would live and work in his area, Mr. Chair. Those are hard-working Albertans that contribute greatly to those communities because in a number of those communities, especially in those rural communities, when you're talking about health care professionals, sometimes there's just not as many. That nurse is going to be playing multiple roles, or that pharmacist is going to be playing multiple roles. That lab tech is going to be playing multiple roles, and we look at this. Suddenly the member is okay with that lab tech or that nurse not having a say. Suddenly the member is okay with giving an unprecedented wage rollback to that nurse. I hope the member will get up shortly here and explain to me why he thinks that's acceptable, why he thinks it's okay that he should vote against the interest of his own constituents. That's something that I think should be very concerning for him, that his constituent's would be directly attacked by this bill.

This amendment makes it a little bit better. I'd hope he'd support this amendment. Because those teachers, those nurses, those professionals all across his riding, Mr. Chair, it is certainly important that they have a voice in this Assembly. That's why I felt it so important that I get up here today with my colleagues here in the opposition to speak up on behalf of those workers because those workers are Albertans. We know that here in this Chamber every single Albertan deserves a voice, no matter where you come from, which riding you live in, and who you voted for.

Indeed, every single one of those constituents deserve a voice in this Assembly. It's unfortunate that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler doesn't want to give a voice to those constituents. It's unfortunate that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler doesn't think it's important that those nurses have a voice. It's unfortunate that he doesn't think it's important that those teachers have a voice. It's unfortunate that he thinks it's okay that those classes and those classrooms and those students should be allowed to suffer and those families should be allowed to suffer, the families that rely on that essential health care.

That's something that if that is indeed not what he thinks, he should be very welcome here to stand up shortly and defend attacking their wages and attacking their ability to negotiate in good faith, their constitutional right to negotiate in good faith, Mr. Chair. I really do hope he does get up and speak to this because I think every single member of this Assembly should get up and speak to why this is important in their area and why they think that taking away the constitutional rights of their constituents is acceptable.

10:20

Certainly, we can also look at the Member for Morinville-St. Albert, the hon. associate minister here. There are many schools across Morinville-St. Albert. There's Notre Dame elementary school, for example, and hundreds of students there. If those students are not worth having good teachers in their classrooms, perhaps the minister would like to get up and explain why. Or perhaps he'd like to explain to the families in Morinville public school why those teachers don't deserve the right to negotiate, as is their constitutional right. Perhaps he would like to explain to those families why those health workers that live in his riding aren't important. Perhaps he'd like to explain to those health workers why he thinks that their rights are fewer than anybody else in this Assembly or any of those other things. I mean, I think it's something that's really important because these are the issues that affect all of us in this Assembly. These are the issues that affect all of us.

I mean, coming back to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. There are a number of schools. Of course, there's Gus Wetter school in the Clearview school district here. Could you explain, perhaps, to Dale Blume, who's an education assistant in grade 5 and 6 in that school, why he shouldn't have the right to negotiate properly? Right here in black and white Bill 9 takes away that right. This amendment would help protect him a little bit. Could you explain to Dale why suddenly it's okay for him to have his rights taken away and you won't even accept a simple amendment to protect his rights? Perhaps could you maybe explain to Tyler Brochu, the phys ed teacher for grades 5 to 12, why he doesn't deserve the right to negotiate, why he doesn't deserve the right to understand what's going to come if there are wage rollbacks or wage freezes, why you think it's okay that Bill 9 should give carte blanche to these types of things?

This amendment would make a bad bill better, and that's why I'm supporting this amendment, but I want the Member for Drumheller-Stettler to come out and maybe speak to that. Ellyn Schaffner, who's the kindergarten teacher right in your riding – I'm sure she lives in the member's riding of Drumheller-Stettler – she teaches kindergarten day in and day out. Could he explain to her why that suddenly is less important than any other worker in this province, why their right to collective bargaining should be legislated away? I mean, that's something that I think is very concerning. Luke Peters, who teaches the very important CALM program for grade 9 to 12 students and social studies as well – in social studies you learn about how important democracy is and how important the Constitution is and the Charter here in Canada is. You learn about all these important things. But then the member would

go and say: well, actually, your constitutional right to negotiate, though I know you just taught that to the kids, is not important for you.

I mean, that's something that I think the member should get up here and explain to his constituents because there are so many teachers all across his riding that are going to be so significantly affected, the ones who live right in his neighbourhood, Mr. Chair. That's something that I think is very important. It's very important that every single member of this Assembly get up and explain to their constituents. This is just a small sampling of some of those constituents. I'm sure that there are constituents that live in your riding, Member for Drumheller-Stettler, that teach outside of your riding, but those constituents also deserve a voice because they're also going to be teaching or practising their profession and negotiating, and it's going to be affected significantly by this bill.

Really, when I say "affected significantly," I mean that you're going to be trying to break the law against them. That seems quite absurd, and it seems like it'd be quite offensive to many of those constituents. I hope you do get up and take this opportunity, Member, to explain to this Assembly why you think their rights are worth less. I'm sure a number of these people did vote for you, hon. member, and I'm sure a large number of these people are quite happy that you're their MLA, but I would ask that you explain to them, then, why you refuse to stand up on their behalf and why you would go and directly take away their rights at the bargaining table and go in bad faith and allow the government in bad faith to do all these things.

Through you, Mr. Chair, it is very clear that either the member doesn't care about his constituents or he doesn't know the impact that this bill will have on his constituents, and I think either of those would be unacceptable. It is important that we as elected officials in this Assembly get up and speak to bills and we understand the impact they're going to have on families in our riding. These teachers are friends, I'm sure, of many members here. You're friends with teachers, perhaps the teachers that taught their children. Perhaps some of these teachers even taught the children of the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. I mean, those teachers – we know that schools are the cornerstones of communities. We know that the teachers that interact with families all across the community become friends with many of those families, and that is so essential for our communities.

I would hope that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler would explain to those families and the friends of all of the teachers why he thinks it's okay to take away their rights. I mean, I think that's something that every single Albertan and every single member of the opposition, certainly, is very interested to know: why the Member for Drumheller-Stettler thinks it's so easy to take away the rights of the people that he would have sitting next to him in classrooms or the people that would be taking care of his children if he had to use the 24/7 emergency room, or indeed if he had to use the 24/7 emergency centre in the Drumheller health centre? Why would it be okay if, on one hand, he would ask them to help take care of his health, and on the other he would then take away their negotiating rights that are constitutionally protected and their bargaining rights that are constitutionally protected?

I mean, I think that all the workers who work in the member's riding of Drumheller-Stettler would be very curious about this. I think it's something that they would be very concerned about indeed because these are the people that have to take care of our families in our communities, especially in these rural communities, Mr. Chair, where the communities are so tight-knit and everybody knows everybody and everybody is often friends with everybody.

You have to explain to the nurse who works in the 24/7 emergency centre or you have to explain to the lab tech and you have to explain to the ultrasound tech why the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler thinks it's okay to take away their bargaining rights. That's something that the member will have to get up here and explain. I mean, the member will have to get up here and explain to Rebecca Clarke, who teaches high school English and grade 4 English at Gus Wetter school, why her rights are fewer than anybody else's in this province. The member either doesn't care or doesn't understand what the rights for his constituent are. I mean, that is something that is really important for us to get through here.

I mean, I think that every single member of this Assembly should get up and speak up on behalf of their constituents. They should get up and speak up on behalf of their constituents that really do feel the brunt of this because those families and those schools, those hospitals, those health centres, those families are the ones that we're sent here to protect and we're sent here to represent. It's something we see in this bill that directly attacks them. We know this amendment makes it a little bit better because it doesn't give the government carte blanche to do significant wage rollbacks or freezes without any consultation or any negotiation. I mean, I think that is something that we all should be proud to stand up in favour of because it would be creating a more fair system in the Assembly, Mr. Chair.

Maybe the Member for Drumheller-Stettler needs to explain to people like Jaymi Rausch, who teaches grade 2. Grade 2 is an extremely formative year for students, and when we look at students at that age, they absolutely do need the best education. But if the member is okay with holding legislation over the head of the teacher while that teacher is trying to make sure our students have the best possible education, then I'm concerned about what that means for students learning in his own riding, Mr. Chair.

The member has to understand that these impacts will impact those schools, those health centres, those teachers, those nurses, those families, and those communities right in his own riding. If he doesn't understand that, maybe he needs to get up and explain to us why he doesn't understand that. Maybe he needs to get up and explain to us why he doesn't care that it's going to affect those families in his community and those types of schools and health centres in his community.

It has to be one or the other, Mr. Chair. You have to understand the bill and understand what is going on. I mean, it really isn't that many pages. I'd encourage the member that, if he hasn't yet, to read the bill and the amendment. The amendment is only one sentence as well, so there's really not that much homework here for the member to do. He'd be able to understand the negative impact this will have on families in his area. Once he has done the reading and once he has done the research, then perhaps he can get up and explain to us why he's okay with attacking the workers and families that live in his own riding, why he's okay with voting against the interests of the families and communities right in his own riding.

The member has the opportunity here – we have many hours of debate ahead of us – to get up and defend those workers. The member has the opportunity here to get up and speak on behalf of those workers. But if he won't, I'm very happy to, Mr. Chair. I'm very happy to stand here and speak on behalf of all workers in Alberta because workers and their right to collective bargaining and their right to good-faith collective bargaining is something that we in the opposition believe is not only a Constitution right, but it's the ethical thing to do. It is absolutely the right thing that you should do and you should support.

10:30

If the member doesn't feel that way and the member thinks that their constitutional rights aren't important or that their ethical rights aren't important, then he should get up and explain to his constituents. He should explain to those teachers, he should explain to those nurses, he should explain to those health care workers why he doesn't think that their rights are important, why he doesn't think that he should stand up on behalf of them, and why he doesn't think that they deserve a strong voice here in this Assembly. That's what he was sent here to do, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. He was sent here to be their voice in this Assembly, and he has refused to do that today, Mr. Chair. I hope he will prove me wrong and get up and speak to why he thinks it's the right thing to do to attack those workers and it's the right thing to do to give the government carte blanche to attack them. But I'm worried that he won't.

I mean, that's why I'm standing up here today and speaking on behalf of all of his constituents. I'm speaking on behalf of those workers in his area, the ones who are in unions and the ones who are not, because this is something that attacks all workers. I think it's something that I think all members in this Assembly will be very concerned about, so I would encourage him to rise and speak.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, we are on amendment A1.

I see the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler standing to speak.

**Mr. Horner:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just like to be brief. I know the opposition has been quite clear about how valuable their time is to them here tonight, so I wouldn't like to take any more of it than I have to.

I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-South for taking the time to look up many of the wonderful schools in my riding and name-dropping a few of the great people that I've met in my travels. I just would like to say that if anybody in my riding has a problem with Bill 9 or any legislation that we bring forward, they can reach out, as many have. I would politely tell them that this is Alberta's response to asking for a little time to know the finances of the province. So far that has been very well received and very understood. I don't know. You said a few people voted for me in the riding. About 77 per cent did. That hospital that the hon. member mentioned in Drumheller my wife is a nurse at, so I try to keep tabs on the staff there and keep them abreast of what's happening here.

I just would like to say that that is almost the most I have heard that hon. member speak on anything other than daylight savings time. I know how you gauge the problems in Alberta and in our world, but I would just like to say thank you for naming those schools. I have been to most of the graduations. It hasn't come up. It hasn't come up on our e-mails. I'll continue to look and monitor, and I'll keep you posted.

Thank you for the attention.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South standing again.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do appreciate that the member would rise and speak so briefly but wouldn't address any of the core points of the amendment or the bill. I mean, perhaps he could tell us a little bit more because he did rise here and he spoke in his brief remarks about how many of his constituents have reached out to him about Bill 9 and how they supported it or perhaps some of their concerns as well.

I think that when we look at those schools and those communities – and I think it's great that the member has been to

so many of those high school graduations or perhaps grade 9 and grade 6 graduations. I think that's great. I hope that at those graduations the member explained to those students that if they wanted to go into a job in public service, he would then go after their wages and he would then go after their right to collectively bargain and he would then go after their right to negotiate. I think that's something that the member should explain very clearly to his constituents, and perhaps he should rise in this Assembly and explain to his constituents.

I want to know exactly what some of the things your constituents told you are, hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler and through you, Mr. Chair, exactly what some of those concerns were that were brought up regarding Bill 9 or other bills, regarding their right to collectively bargain, regarding their right to work in education and health care, and whether giving the government carte blanche to attack those rights of theirs is something that they supported. I think it's something that the member should get up and speak at length to because his constituents deserve more than a 30-second quip in this Assembly. I think that when they voted for him – I mean, he said he got 77 per cent. Well, that's quite impressive, but 77 per cent of his constituents I'm sure expect more than 30 seconds for their vote. I know I've spoken for more than 30 seconds here tonight, and I think that my constituents are getting a better value per vote right now than his constituents are. I think that that's certainly something that his constituents should be maybe a little bit concerned about. His constituents, I hope, will get a better value as the night goes on because there really is . . .

### Chair's Ruling

#### Behaviour of Guests in the Gallery

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. I do look forward to the rest of your comments. This is not intended to in any way, shape, or form slow your comments down.

I do want to take this opportunity to just remind those in the gallery that I have on several occasions heard what sounded like laughter, which could have been imputed as trying to influence the debate, which is not a privilege that would be allowable in this case. So just a general reminder to the gallery to maintain order and decorum. That would be much appreciated.

Please, hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, I can speak both at length and in quite many words per minute, so I'm sure that the value that my constituents will get will continue to be very high. But I think I want to compliment the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler on having such good cheer in his comments this evening because those 77 per cent of Albertans that were constituents that voted for him, I think, do deserve to have their voice here, and they do deserve for somebody to speak up on their behalf. That's why I will give them the value that they are not getting from that member. That's why I will speak up on behalf of them. The member will only speak for 30 seconds. I mean, I think that they deserve a bit more than that. I think they deserve to understand the implications of having their rights attacked, of having their collective bargaining rights attacked.

This section 5(c) of this bill directly gives the government a blank cheque, basically, Mr. Chair, to go out and do wage rollbacks and wage freezes without any consultation or negotiation. That attacks our constitutional rights, so I'm happy to stand here and speak at length on behalf of that member's constituents because that member's constituents deserve a strong voice. The entire opposition

here will work at length to make sure that every single Albertan has a strong voice in this Assembly regardless of whether they voted for us because that is our job. That is what we were sent here to do. We were sent here to make sure that every single Albertan has a strong voice. If the member does not want to provide that strong voice to his constituents tonight, then I'm happy to do that on his behalf.

I think it's something that is very interesting when we look at those teachers, when we look at those classrooms, when we look at those nurses, when we look at those health centres, because it's going to be people that the member mentioned previously. He said that he has met many of them in his travels, and I really do want to hear what some of those concerns from those people he met were, perhaps particularly around their rights to collectively bargain. I mean, I hope the member can get up and speak at length to that tonight. I hope that he can give his constituents a voice because if he's met with them – unfortunately, I have not personally met with many of his constituents, Mr. Chair, but he appears to say that he has, so he should get up and represent their voices here in this Assembly.

I think that is something that we would all relish here in this Assembly, especially us here in the Official Opposition. We would all be honoured to hear from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. We'd all be excited to hear how, perhaps, he explained to the grade 12 students at those graduations that if they chose to become teachers, he would directly attack their collective bargaining rights; how if they chose to become nurses, he would directly attack their collective bargaining rights. I think that is something that us here in the opposition would all be very excited to hear from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. We would be excited to hear at length from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler because we know that he has the opportunity and the ability to give a strong voice to his constituents. But for whatever reason he thinks that 30 seconds is sufficient for that.

I mean, if I had voted for the hon. member – and I will admit that I did not vote for the hon. member, not because I would not have but because I could not. I do not reside in the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's riding. But certainly, if I had voted for the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, I would expect that I would get a better value than just 30 seconds per vote because . . .

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** We'll hear the point of order from the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

#### Point of Order Brevity

**Mr. Schow:** Yeah. A point of order on Standing Order 23(c), persists in needless repetition. It's clear the member opposite has a bone to pick with the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, continuously repeating that he wants to hear from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. If he's so intrigued as to what the Member for Drumheller-Stettler has to say, maybe he would sit down and allow the member to speak as opposed to in vain repeating himself over and over and over and over.

10:40

**The Deputy Chair:** Is there anyone? Feel free to speak to the point of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is my right to speak to the point of order. I think there is much relevant new information that I bring to this Assembly, I mean, as I speak to many of the clauses in this

bill and to the effect of this amendment. I think it's important that matters of debate are allowed to run out here. I mean, we are each allocated a certain amount of time here, so when the hon. government deputy whip here speaks about how I should sit down and not speak, I actually would think that is an attack on the democracy of this House. Indeed, we are each allocated a certain amount of time to speak. When my time is complete or I choose to not take it, then the hon. member has his opportunity to speak. That is in the standing orders of this Assembly, so I think that I would ask you rule it as debate.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much for that. I hesitate to interrupt you. I just think that we were getting a little off the repetition side of things there. I would say that, in this case, it is one of the main jobs of the chair to ensure that freedom of speech is fully respected in this House. That said, I think that for the purposes of ensuring that order and decorum do continue, I would ask the hon. member to perhaps take his comments slightly away from directing at one individual member and perhaps starting to skirt up to the side of imputing motives of that member as well. I'm not saying you did that at this stage, but I would just say: please be cautious of that when you are making your comments.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-South, please continue.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I certainly would, through you, never impute motives of any member of this Assembly. I would certainly only speak to what the facts and the actions that we can see in this Assembly are and the facts of what this bill and legislation do to constituents of any member of this Assembly. Perhaps in particular I've named certain members such as the member for Drumheller-Stettler here tonight. I mean, I've named him at multiple points because I understand that as they affect all members of this Assembly, those issues are very pertinent. I think that those issues that we've named on behalf of his constituents and on behalf of all constituents of all members of this Assembly are very important.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

I think that's something that we need to keep pushing on. We need to keep talking about why every single Albertan, whether they are a teacher, whether they are a nurse, whether they are a professional or a nonprofessional, whether they are covered under a nonacademic association in organizations like SAIT, whether they are covered under the ATA, whether they're a staff member at NAIT or Northern Lakes College, wherever it is, Madam Chair, I think it's very important that we speak up on behalf of every single one of those constituents. If the hon. member chooses not to speak up on behalf of his constituents, I think that is something that would be very unfortunate here tonight. I think if the hon. deputy government House whip chooses not to speak up on behalf of his constituents but instead chooses to try to stifle debate in this Assembly and not support freedom of speech here in this Assembly, as the chair so rightfully pointed out, then I think that would be very unfortunate here in this Assembly as well.

I think certainly here in this Assembly we do strive to make sure that all members understand the ramifications of Bill 9, and that's why I was so proud to support this amendment that was moved to strike out clause 5(c), which really gives a blank cheque to the government to roll back wages and attack workers without any consideration for collective bargaining. I think that is something that every single member here should be very concerned about. If the deputy government House whip wishes to attack our method of

debate rather than the actual amendment, that is his prerogative, but I think that his constituents expect a better value than ad hominem attacks as well, Madam Chair. I think that certainly the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's constituents expect a better value than that. It's certainly something that I think that your and my constituents would expect a better value than.

It's something that I am very pleased to be able to rise here and speak to tonight because it is our duty as legislators to stand up and speak in this Assembly and to give voice to our constituents and to give voice to the concerns of our constituents. Whether we met them at high school graduations or we've met them in our travels in other ways, I think it is our duty to give voice to those concerns. So when we hear from them when we attend their health centres, when we hear from them when we attend their schools, when we hear from them – the Member for Drumheller-Stettler spoke at length about how he had heard from many of them and many of their concerns. It is his duty and it is our duty to stand up for those concerns here in this Assembly, and that's what I'm doing here today. I'm standing up and speaking on behalf of all members of this Assembly that refuse to stand up on behalf of their workers, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler being one of them.

I think that certainly we understand how crucial it is that the government not be given free rein to attack workers without any regard for their constitutional rights, without any regard for unions' rights to collectively bargain, and without any regard for the effect this will have on families, constituents, teachers, nurses, lab techs, and so forth, Madam Chair. It is very important that we understand the impacts of these things in our communities. It is very important that we have a considered debate and an extensive debate on these issues.

I look forward to when my time elapses or I choose to sit down here, Madam Chair. When I sit down here, I would be very pleased to hear from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler on why he thinks it's okay to attack those workers, the ones who live in his riding, to take away their collective bargaining rights, why he thinks it would be okay to take away the rights of the people who work in the health centres in his riding, the teachers that teach his kids and the students around them. It would be very encouraging to me if all members of this Assembly, including the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, would get up and speak to that. It is something that I think all members of this Assembly, all members of the opposition, for sure, and certainly members of the public and the people in the gallery here tonight – they have spent extensive amounts of time and taken time out of their evening to come sit here and watch us debate this bill and this amendment, which I think is a reasonable amendment.

It would be very important for us to be able to explain to the people watching why these actions are okay and why the Member for Drumheller-Stettler wouldn't support a simple amendment that makes the bill better. It just takes away this blank cheque for the government. If we really do respect workers and we respect good-faith bargaining and we respect Albertans, then the member perhaps would get up and explain to me why he would give a blank cheque to the government, because a blank cheque is not good-faith bargaining. It certainly does not respect workers' rights or union rights or collective bargaining rights or constitutional rights, Madam Chair, and I think that's something that is very important. I would encourage the member to rise here in this Assembly, explain to us why he thinks their constitutional rights are not important, explain to me and to all members of this Assembly what the concerns that were heard all throughout the riding were.

I mean, those are things that are very important in this debate because that is indeed what we were sent here to do. We were sent

here to have debate, and we were sent here to debate at length about these bills that affect our communities, that affect the families that attend those schools, that affect the families that have to use that emergency centre, that affect the families that have to suffer because we pass bad legislation in this House. Well, Madam Chair, if it was up to me, we wouldn't pass bad legislation in this House, but the government seems determined to go forward and do so.

I mean, at this point I think that I've spoken quite a bit at length about why I think the Member for Drumheller-Stettler is directly attacking his own constituents, the 77 per cent of constituents that voted for him and indeed those other 23 per cent who did not vote for him as well, Madam Chair. I would really encourage him to get up and explain to those 77 per cent and the 23 per cent, respectively, of his constituents what he thinks of their collective bargaining rights and why he thinks, after hearing their concerns, it's okay to continue to attack them.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I look forward to hearing from the member.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-South for name-dropping my riding so many times. It's wonderful to hear. You're doing a great job.

If I was too brief last time, I'll just say, you know, that if you're asking how I feel, right now I feel kind of embarrassed. I feel embarrassed to be four hours from home, with my little kids in bed without a dad, because I'm here listening to this, over a three- or four-month delay, when we're at \$60 billion headed to \$100 billion.

**Ms Renaud:** It's called democracy.

10:50

**Mr. Horner:** Okay. It's called democracy.

We've heard a lot over the last few days and long, late nights about contracts, who respects them, who understands them. I think that's a little rich coming from that side of the House, Madam Chair, considering that one of the reasons that I ran was because I was so frustrated with the treatment of the electricity file from when they were in government. The power purchase agreements, those contracts and the way those were treated . . .

**Ms Renaud:** How is that relative?

**Mr. Horner:** Pardon me?

**Ms Renaud:** How is that relative?

**The Chair:** Hon. member, through the chair, please.

**Mr. Horner:** Right. Thank you, Madam Chair.

So contracts. Because I was too brief last time, Madam Chair, I guess you'll have to indulge me, and I'll read you an entire article about them entitled \$1.8B and Growing – Cost to Alberta Consumers from Power Contract Fiasco Mounts.

Losses at Alberta's Balancing Pool from the controversial power purchase deals have now topped \$1.8 billion, but the bleeding is finally slowing – just as the new Kenney government prepares to call in the auditor general to study the fiasco.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I will caution you to not use members' names in this House.

**Mr. Horner:**

"This is a mess entirely of the NDP's making," Christine Myatt, spokeswoman for [the Premier], said in a statement.

"Albertans deserve to know how this happened and how much they are on the hook for."

The Balancing Pool, a government agency that backstops the province's power purchase agreements . . . released its annual report last Friday, showing the organization with net liabilities of \$946 million . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I apologize for interrupting. However, we are on amendment A1, and I would caution you to stay on topic.

**Mr. Horner:** Okay. I think you'll have to give me a little latitude, considering what I just listened to from the Member for Edmonton-South, regarding staying in your lane. This is about contracts, it's about the financial state of Alberta, and that's how we're here. That's why we're discussing this.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Horner:**

But looking at the total costs connected to the return of power purchase arrangements from industry players to the Balancing Pool in late 2015 and 2016 . . .

**Ms Sweet:** Point of order.

**Mr. Horner:**

. . . shows the mountain of red ink is still growing.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, a point of order has been called. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just under Standing Order 23:

- (b) speaks to matters other than
  - (i) the question under discussion,
  - (ii) a motion or amendment the Member intends to move, or
  - (iii) a point of order or question of privilege.

I would recognize that the member may be frustrated with the discussion that is happening around Bill 9 and what the member on our side has been discussing with him. However, what the member is reading is not relevant to this discussion. It doesn't matter if he agrees with what our member said or not. Going on and reading an article that is not related to Bill 9 or the amendment is not relevant to this discussion, and therefore it's a point of order.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's pretty rich coming from the opposition at this time of night, particularly after the last speaker for the opposition, the Member for Edmonton-South, spent somewhere around 20 minutes demanding that the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler get up and talk. Now that he gets up and talks, the opposition doesn't want him to talk.

**Ms Hoffman:** He can talk, but talk to the bill.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Talk to the bill? I haven't heard the opposition talk to the bill very much tonight – that's for sure – and I certainly didn't see the Member for Edmonton-South talk to the bill. What he did was that he talked about the Member for Drumheller-Stettler a lot. Now, I've known the Member for Drumheller-Stettler – he's a pretty cool guy – and I'm happy to talk about him any time you want, but the reality is that that member asked him to talk.

Now, with that said, I did not hear the specific article that was being read. I do not believe that this is a point of order, but I would caution members that if they are referring to reference material, it should be relevant, certainly, to the debate, and I suspect he will, Madam Chair. Again, they asked the member to get up and speak, and I was looking forward to hearing his remarks. I'm just shocked that the opposition doesn't want to hear from him now that they've asked him to speak.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, there's been a lot of leeway given with the prior speaker and the current speaker. I've already cautioned the current speaker, and I am assured that he will get to the point.

Hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, please proceed.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Horner:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. The gist of the article: somewhere between \$1.6 billion and \$2 billion were mismanaged by the previous government. I think that kind of ties the entire argument into the financial mess and state of affairs that we find Alberta in now, and we're forced to make some tough decisions and fulfill our mandate of balancing the budget within four years. That's the argument coming full circle.

If the Member for Edmonton-South would like to speak more about my riding and schools and the staff and children there, I guess I'd like to share one story that's very memorable as I was speaking to a class at the Stettler school. The kids are great, they ask the best questions, and the teachers are always engaged. The question was around class size, which I know was brought up a lot today regarding this bill and the amendment by the hon. member opposite. The teacher pulled me aside after and said – and I'm not making this up – with tears in her eyes: you know, I would rather teach 35 kids than 20 that are coming from a dark place because their parents don't have a job, because things are tough at home, because they're coming to the school and are coming from a dark place. She said that as clear as day. It'll never leave me.

This is about the big picture in Alberta and trying to take care of everybody, not sticking our head in the sand and not just staying in our lane. This is about the big picture. I couldn't be prouder to stand here in support of Bill 9, not of this amendment. Yeah, it's going to be a great evening.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, he was a tough act to follow. [interjection] No, he was, actually. He's got a lot of energy. I'm quite thankful for the Member for Edmonton-South. He's a young person. I think he's got a lot to add. I know that he caused a lot of laughter on the other side, so, you know, what's not to like? And he did get someone to stand up and speak, so that's a good thing.

Before I get going and start talking about the amendment to this bill, which is the Bad-faith Bargaining Act, I wanted to stop and just recognize and thank, really, all of the public-sector workers in Alberta, particularly the people that are represented here today, just to thank the nurses and the teachers. There are so many different workers to thank, I couldn't possibly list them all. I know that this is a stressful time, just not knowing what's happening, so I do want to thank them and thank them for making time to be here to watch us. I know it's not always super stimulating at this time of night, but I am thankful that they're here.

One of the things I find a little bit interesting. You know, I sat through years of listening to, first, the Wildrose Party, and there were little leftovers of the Conservatives, and then they became the



UCP. I listened to them for years, as they were in opposition, rail on and on about everything, everything under the sun.

Suddenly things are changed, and I need to spend some time going back through *Hansard*, Madam Chair, to find some clips to sort of talk about, just to address some of the things they're saying here today about what our job is as opposition and why it is important for us to stand up and speak and why democracy is important. You might not like what we're saying, but we have a right to say it. Yes, I know you have a great big mandate, you know, whatever. We hear that every day, multiple times a day. You like to talk about how big your mandate is – I get it – but we also have a mandate. We were also sent here by the communities and the people that voted for us. You may not like it, you may not like what we're saying, you may not like our point of view, but that is democracy.

You're not supposed to eat in the Chamber.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about my community, the community that I represent, which is St. Albert. One in 4 people that live in St. Albert actually are public-sector workers. I didn't realize that until we went through some of the census information, and it was really quite interesting to see where they're working. There obviously are nurses, teachers, and all of those things, so this is particularly important.

I get that the government is saying, "No, we're not doing anything bad; we're just stopping; we're just going to pause; we're going to look at the finances because, oh, my gosh, it's a horrific mess," which we knew they were going to say because this is how it goes. This is how they normally go, Madam Chair. This is the speech, right? "Oh, it's far worse than we ever thought. We're going to look. We're going to make tough decisions." Actually, there was a member that told us that you guys were going to make tough decisions before the election happened. We believed him, but the people opposite were saying, "No, that's not true; that's not going to be the way it is" because they weren't upfront about their platform. In the platform you didn't tell public-sector workers that you were going to pull this stunt.

11:00

Anyway, back to this bill. Let's go back to this. I believe that by doing this what you are doing is that you are creating stress in groups of people that already have very stressful jobs. The Sturgeon hospital in St. Albert is a busy, busy, busy hospital – really busy – that serves the north and all of the communities. It serves Morinville, Legal, Redwater, Gibbons. People from north Edmonton use the Sturgeon hospital. There are nurses, nurses' aides, nursing assistants that work there. I have never ever seen these workers and looked at them and thought: gee, I think we should stress you out a little bit more; let's add some unease to your caseload so that you don't know what's going to happen with your contract, whether or not you're going to get a cost-of-living increase.

Now, the people opposite will tell you: "Oh, the job-killing carbon tax. People can't live because of this extra \$100 a month. The farm is going to go under. My job is going to be gone because of that. I can't afford to put fuel in my vehicle." That stress was caused by a strategy, a tax on pollution, yet they can't understand the stress of not knowing if your contract will continue, if you will get an increase, if things will go the way you think they should go after very little increase for multiple years. They can't understand that kind of stress, but they could understand the other stress. This is putting stress on public-sector workers, and these are workers that already face enormous amounts of stress every single day.

I'll go to a sector that I know. Public-sector workers provide supports for people with disabilities. Believe it or not, government

actually does employ people that work with people with disabilities in Calgary, in Edmonton, and also in the central region, which is Red Deer. There is a large institution in Red Deer. I'm not going to get into that today. We have public-sector workers that work with people with disabilities, and that work is tough. They work with people with very complex issues, severe disabilities in many cases, behavioural challenges, complex needs. These are not highly paid people. These are unionized workers, and I'm thankful for that because they have benefits. They have some job security that people in other sectors don't have. I'm thankful for that. They don't make a lot of money, but they work hard to support their families. What this legislation is doing is telling them: you need to worry about this; there is a problem.

We had a previous government that negotiated in good faith, that did not break the law, that sat down with them at the table and talked to them. What this legislation does is tells them: you should be unsure; we don't know exactly what's going to happen.

Clearly, the government of the day does not respect the rule of law or this process, so much so that they're legislating.

Now, the Government House Leader: I don't know if he's had a few cocktails or what, but he's finding this quite funny. I'm not sure.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I would caution you to not incite the other side of this House.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. I'll take that back. Withdrawn.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

**Ms Renaud:** I didn't find my comments too funny. He clearly does.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, a point of order.

**The Chair:** Hon. Government House Leader, a point of order.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), language to create disorder, first of all, I assure the hon. member that it would take more than a few cocktails for me to be amused by her speech. Second of all, Madam Chair, that's completely inappropriate inside of the House, to be referring to another member and implying that they've been drinking. Again, it's so disappointing to continue to see the deterioration of the Official Opposition in this Chamber, from Team Angry to just Team Bizarre at this point.

**The Chair:** Hon. Government House Leader, I completely agree. I have already ruled on the matter. I will ask the hon. member to apologize and withdraw her comment and then move on.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. I apologize for suggesting that the Government House Leader had a few cocktails.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Renaud:** Just to move on a little bit with this bill, you know, we've heard over and over again that the reason that this legislation was brought forward is because the government needed time to look at the finances of the province. I find that a little bit rich considering that they had no problem going as fast as possible to create a situation that there is a massive tax cut for already profitable corporations. Now, estimates are 4 and a half billion dollars, that will blow a hole into our revenues. They didn't seem to have a

problem with that, they didn't need the time to stop and examine that, yet they need the time to stop and examine this issue. That's why they brought this legislation. That doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

I think that had the UCP been truthful when they were trying to sell themselves to Alberta voters, they would have told Albertans precisely what they plan to do. They would have been upfront with their plans. I don't recall hearing about this. I recall hearing: jobs, pipeline, economy, jobs, pipeline, economy, jobs, pipeline, economy. I don't remember hearing about changing legislation around public-sector wage arbitration. I don't recall hearing about changing the rules around GSAs. I don't recall those discussions, yet here we are.

I don't believe they're upfront with their plans, and I think public-sector workers are feeling the same way. They didn't tell Albertans that they'd trash good-faith negotiations that our front-line workers, public-sector workers rely on and expect. They didn't tell Albertans that they would turn their backs on the front-line workers and give a lame excuse that they needed to figure out the province's finances before they could do their job and negotiate in good faith with 180,000 front-line workers. That is a lot of Albertans. Albertans don't buy it. They're not going to buy it. They're going to see very quickly. I thought it would take a little bit longer than it has for the real sort of focus and aim to come out. I'm surprised, actually, at the speed that it's happening. I am really surprised at the speed that it's happening.

The UCP didn't campaign on breaking the law. That's what they're doing with this legislation. They didn't campaign on attacking workers that we rely on. They didn't campaign, Madam Chair, on attacking workers that protect us, not just in this Chamber but out in the community. They didn't talk about those workers. They didn't talk about the front-line workers that respond to our emergencies every single day. Every single day they are out there responding to fires, to health emergencies. They're intervening in all kinds of ways that we can't even imagine.

I've been lucky enough to do two ride-alongs with fire and EMS in St. Albert. Although I always imagined that that job was very stressful and took a lot of skill, I was astounded, actually, by the level of professionalism and skill of the firefighters and paramedics in St. Albert. It is incredible. They would go from a fire emergency to sort of acting as an emergency social worker with a couple that were having issues. The skill of these workers is phenomenal. We rely on those people, and I think we owe them some security in knowing that we will say what we do. If our laws tell us one thing, they should know that legislators and decision-makers will honour that law and follow that law.

The UCP didn't campaign on attacking workers who hold our loved ones' hands and reassure them when they endure rounds and rounds and rounds of chemotherapy or when they're supporting families as they're watching their loved one take their last breath. Those are the front-line workers that we're talking about. These are the people that are there for us when we're at our absolute lowest, and the skill and the professionalism of this group – they just don't deserve any of this.

The UCP didn't campaign on attacking the people who educate our children, our most precious resource. These people already have enough stress in their lives. Can you imagine being a grade 1 or 2 or kindergarten teacher, how tough that is already? I mean, I've visited a classroom just for an hour or two, and it's pretty overwhelming. These are the front-line workers. They don't need to be stressed by a government that at just the drop of a hat will decide: no, we need more time to examine this before we do our job and honour contracts and follow the law.

The UCP didn't campaign on breaking the law. The UCP didn't campaign on attacking workers who facilitate inclusion in our classrooms. These are educational assistants that are there every day doing really, really tough work in really tough situations. Often there are not nearly enough of them in our classrooms. Our classrooms are huge.

I heard somebody back there from the other side talk about someone telling them: I'd rather have 35 students in my classroom than 20 because of the dark days of the four years the NDP were in power. Well, after four decades of Conservative rule, okay, if you want to go with that story. But let me tell you: in a classroom of 35 students the chances are that a few of those students will also have disabilities. You add all of those students with the students with disabilities and then have maybe one or two assistants, and those children aren't going to learn. They're not going to learn in the way they need to learn, and inclusion will not happen in those classrooms if they're not funded properly and if they're not staffed properly. So perhaps you should go back and have a conversation with that person that talked to you and explain that difference.

**11:10**

The UCP didn't campaign on attacking the workers who teach and inspire our young people in postsecondary. You know, this is our future. They are our future. They're our future doctors and scientists and engineers and translators and social workers and all kinds of things. These folks also have very stressful jobs, and they work in conditions that are not always perfect. They, too, are understaffed and are dealing with massive classrooms, massive lists of students. These are people that deserve a sense of job security and a sense of belief to know that no matter who the government is, whether it's UCP, NDP, or whatever, they will respect the rule of law, they will respect the contract. You might not agree with it, might not like it, might not have been the way you negotiated, but you respect it.

They don't have that security now because they've seen this. They have seen that the UCP government has no problem giving a massive tax cut to wealthy, profitable corporations – they're secure enough to do that – but they have to stop and possibly add all of this stress to front-line workers because they're not sure of the state of finances. I don't know. I don't buy that. Albertans don't buy that.

You can be all smug in here and think: well, we got a great big mandate; we can do whatever we want. Albertans see what you're doing; 180,000 front-line workers see what you're doing. It will continue. This will catch up to you. People are watching. People are paying attention. You can think: we're just deferring; we're just going to wait; we're just going to see. People see what you're doing, and you will be accountable. You can feel, you know, cocky, secure in your great big mandate, but there will be a reckoning someday.

That's all I have to say, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise in this Chamber this evening to speak on the Bill 9 amendment moved by Member Bilous to move that Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, be amended by striking out section 5(c).

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I will caution you on the use of names in this House.

**Mr. Schow:** I was just reading the amendment.

**The Chair:** It's a tricky situation, but don't use the name.

**Mr. Schow:** Oh. Okay. I apologize, Madam Chair. I retract that. I thought I was within the confines of the rules reading the actual amendment moved by the member opposite.

I've certainly heard a lot of conversation tonight about this and specifically about protecting Alberta workers. I think that is paramount for this government. It's something that we are committed to doing. It's something that we think is an absolute priority. I just heard the member for Edmonton – oh, for heaven's sake. I'm sorry, member across the way. I forget your constituency. I do mean no disrespect. [interjections] What's that? St. Albert. I apologize.

I heard the Member for St. Albert talk about how Albertans are seeing what we're doing, and she is, in fact, right. I'm excited that they're seeing what we are doing because I stand in this Chamber and sit in this Chamber, depending upon the time of the day, and I hear what's coming from across the floor. All day I hear the negative, the fear and the smear, the anger machine turned up to level 10. Frankly, the knob is probably broken off because it was cranked so hard.

That's what we hear from the members opposite, and then we get to go home. We go home to our constituencies, wherever they may be across this beautiful province of ours, and we talk to those constituents. We go and we knock on their doors, we speak to the business owners, we speak to the public-sector workers, of which there are many in my own constituency, and they tell me that they are listening. They do hear what we're saying, and they love it. They love what this government had to offer during the election, they love what we had to say while we were in opposition, and now that we are in government, they love what we are doing because we are keeping promises that we made. In particular, there are a couple of people that I've talked to in places that I visited that have made specific note about the moves that we are making and the things that we're doing.

The reality is that this government is committed to getting back to balance. That is a priority of this government. We have said it time and time again. It's in our platform. Every time the Premier speaks, he talks about the importance of protecting this province and getting it back to balance, and a large part of that is ensuring that we know the financial state that we are in. It would be disingenuous to Albertans to move forward without knowing the details that we face, particularly with regard to finances. With regard to finances it's great to refer back to our constituents, even to the private sector, and relate it to them.

You know, there is a store in Cardston that I love to shop at and buy some clothes. Particularly over the last year and a half, as I've knocked on countless doors, I've worn through a lot of socks, so I love to go over to this store. It's called Atkins. It's owned by Kris MacDonnell. She has probably the largest sock collection that I have ever seen and some pretty awesome socks. I encourage everyone to visit Atkins and pick up some socks. The point I'm making here, Madam Chair, is that Kris MacDonnell has to order clothes on a regular basis as seasons change and fashions change, and she has to make decisions as she makes these orders based on what's trending, what's not trending, but also based on projected income and how much she can actually buy versus how much she is going to sell.

For Kris and Atkins to just buy a whole whack of clothing, a whole pile of new jeans or socks or whatever, with no real intent of selling it or without any idea of the financial situation her company is even in at the time would be dishonest to herself and to the business's future. So she takes those things into consideration when purchasing for her company, hoping to buy clothes that will be

purchased and that the business can continue to grow, a business that, I might add, has been around for over 100 years. I celebrate with that, then. It's a tremendous Alberta success story. I love this store and particularly Kris. She's a wonderful lady who's a good, strong supporter of what this government is doing. But if we take the mentality into negotiations, into any decisions we make, rather, without considering all the facts, we are not doing Albertans any service whatsoever.

Another example is Koster's Bakery in Picture Butte. Now, I might have spent half of my kids' college fund buying vanilla squares over at Koster's through the campaign – I was in Picture Butte often, knocking on doors – and its delicious treats. Again, I also encourage anyone, when you're in Picture Butte, to go by Koster's. You will not regret it. They make some fantastic baked goods. But they have to judge what they make every day based on what they intend on selling. If they were to bake 1,000 loaves of bread, which maybe they do, but only intend on selling 100, that business model won't last very long. That's not very good planning.

With regard to Bill 9 all we're asking is for an opportunity to delay negotiations until we understand the entire financial picture. It would be wrong for us to do anything with this government if we don't understand where we are at.

Now, the members opposite love to quote – and I love it when they do this – our campaign slogan: Jobs, Economy, Pipelines. We were pretty clear on that. In fact, we were so clear that the members opposite know it off by heart. They repeat it often, and when they do, I always give a good, “hear, hear,” because – I'll tell you – I love hearing it. It's like music to my ears. But the big thing here is jobs, protecting jobs. Now, I understand that the members opposite want to show up for those in the gallery behind me, for their people in the gallery behind me, and I can certainly respect that. But the reality is that we are not just governing for those behind me but, rather, for all Albertans, and what we would like to do is make sure that Albertans and the future of this province are secure. That means doing our due diligence as a government to understand our finances before we move forward with anything.

Now, back to jobs, economy, and pipelines, we do need to make sure that we have well-paying jobs in this province, that we are leaving the province better than we have at the moment, and those jobs ... [interjections]

**The Chair:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Schow:** Yes?

**The Chair:** Sorry.

Can I please have order in the gallery. Can I please have order in the gallery.

Hon. member, please proceed.

11:20

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do appreciate, regardless of whether we agree or not, the members opposite, that their opinion certainly is valued in this Chamber. But it is their opinion that we'd like to hear, not those in the gallery, so thank you for calling those in the gallery to order. I ask them to respect that moving forward.

But it's about jobs. It's about making sure that we have good-paying jobs in this province and that we're respecting the need to have them moving forward.

Now, I do also want to address something that the Member for Edmonton-South had said in his remarks, that when I asked him to sit down, I was suggesting that I'm trying to curtail debate. It is actually quite the opposite. I was simply bringing to the attention of the Chamber that he was engaging in vain repetition, and if he was

that interested in hearing from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, he should allow him to in fact respond.

I think that debate in this Chamber needs to be robust. This should be the highest level of debate in the province. This is, in fact, debate that is determining the future direction of the province, and under this United Conservative government I think it is the right direction. But to simply stand up and take up time and repeat oneself over and over isn't doing any service to anyone's constituents. If I take up five minutes or take up 20 minutes, if I get the message across from my constituents that I was elected to this Chamber to deliver, then I have in fact done my job. You don't have to be an acclaimed high school national debate champion to do that. Kudos to him. I always respect good competition. As those in this Chamber know, debate wasn't my forte in high school. It was more on the basketball court, but I digress.

Albertans do deserve the best. Objectively speaking – and I think the members opposite would agree – Alberta is an incredible province. It's a province that deserves what's best moving forward, and it deserves a government that takes all things into consideration when making decisions for the residents living here and those who we would like to attract to come here in the future. We're hoping that the decisions we make in this Chamber this evening and moving forward will increase migration to Alberta, will increase our workforce, will increase the number of students in our schools, because it is a beacon of hope and opportunity and prosperity across Canada and across the world.

But as we continue to make these decisions, Madam Chair, especially with respect to Bill 9, we must understand the facts. "Facts" might be a difficult word for the members opposite to comprehend. It's a difficult four-letter F-word for them, but facts . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Five, actually. And that's a fact.

**Mr. Schow:** Fact. Sorry. Fact. That is a fact. I do appreciate the member for correcting me on that. I was an athletic student, not a student athlete. What can I say?

But the facts are simple. This province is in a terrible state of affairs. This province needs immediate attention, and it needs a full understanding of the situation that we're currently in. That's why Bill 9 is so important. We're asking for time, Madam Chair. We're asking for an opportunity to analyze the facts, analyze the numbers, so that when the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board is making decisions in the caucus and in cabinet, he is well informed. Anyone who knows the Minister of Finance knows that he comes from a business background of his own. I suspect he's done well for himself. It doesn't happen by luck, something that the Leader of the Opposition said not long ago, during our 24-hour marathon. It's something that I personally took exception to and responded to because I'm looking at this – and Alberta didn't happen by luck. Alberta didn't happen by just pretending that we know the facts. We've done the work, we've done the research, and we know what needs to be done here.

Madam Chair, I simply put to this Chamber that Bill 9 is one that we should support, and we should not be supporting this amendment to Bill 9 because we need all the information possible to make the right decisions for Alberta. I do believe that right now we're on the right course to find that information, but we need time.

With that, Madam Chair, I will conclude my remarks.

**The Chair:** Are there any other hon. members that would like to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak to amendment A1, that is before us now. I think it's particularly relevant in that this is perhaps the most egregious part of Bill 9, which is the entire section that could be used to cancel contracts, to undermine any further negotiations – right? – on each of the affected contracts that are coming up here between the province of Alberta and any number of workers, from the teachers to the nurses, 180,000 workers.

We had the Treasury Board president and Finance minister emphatically jumping up and down and saying: no; this is just a pause to wage reopeners and arbitration and so forth, and then everything proceeds as normal. But, you know, this section 5(c), Madam Chair, undermines that or is quite contrary to that assertion. If you use section 5(c), you are in fact able to do any number of other legislated changes to individual contracts, including imposing the terms of contract and so forth. My question is: if you are so emphatic about only using Bill 9 as a pause, why does section 5(c) exist? Why is it there? I would beg an answer from the members opposite although I can see that many of them are wearing bright pink earplugs that their Premier is handing out to all of them right now. Probably many of them can't even hear what I'm saying right now. I'll test it with the House leader. Oh, he's coming. Testing: one, two, three. Oh, he took them out. That's great.

The point is, I guess, that if we want to move forward in a constructive way and in sort of a collaborative way, this particular amendment is a perfect way by which to send a sense of reassurance, albeit probably quite tentative, to the 180,000 or more workers that can see Bill 9 Threat categorically as a threat to bargaining, a threat to their family's income, to the conditions which they work in, and perhaps, quite frankly, a threat to many people's jobs – right? – because, of course, when you are interfering with contracts and fair collective bargaining, then the people that have less seniority or perhaps are in other circumstances: their very jobs can be threatened or undermined. I don't think I have to tell anybody here in this House or the people listening that Bill 9 or just the existence of Bill 9 categorically has sent a chill through the public service and all of the essential services to which they are responsible.

School boards are already not renewing contracts for teachers for the next school year, because they have to build their budgets. They're already many weeks behind in actually building their budgets. They had to defer to, you know, see where funding was with the interim supply at sort of the eleventh hour, the eleventh minute. Some funding for enrolment was achieved, but we also heard, almost in the same breath, that the Minister of Education took away classroom improvement funding, which, again, results in significant job loss and unstable funding for education.

Same thing with hospitals, right? We know that hospitals are not hiring. We know that hospitals are short-staffing on individual units. I talk to nurses and LPNs and so forth every day. They say: we've been short-staffed again. Tonight probably there are some nurses listening to this very thing that's happening here in this Legislature. They're working night shift, just like us – right? – caring for people who are sick and families and so forth. They are short-staffed already, even before the sword drops from this UCP government. Again, you have the letter of the law that's in a bill, and then you have the tone that is sent with that bill. By removing the particularly egregious section 5(c) from this Bill 9, then you perhaps soften that tone, which is aggressive and, you know, full of language around attacking, not respecting collective agreements and so forth, and perhaps go to a better place.

11:30

We know, Madam Chair, that when you're looking at the budget as a whole for the province of Alberta – it's a considerable budget – if you are taking out revenues, like the removal of the collection of the carbon levy, you know, reducing corporate tax, you end up with a multibillion-dollar hole in your budget. There are only so many ways by which you can hope to achieve to compensate for that, and the number one place is the wages for public-sector employees. So the idea that you march in after a month of being a government and you put in enabling legislation such as Bill 9, that can literally wipe out contracts, just at the time when the public service has so many outstanding contracts that need to be worked through, then, of course, people are nervous. Of course, people are looking for reassurance, and a way by which we can do that is not just through words but through action. I would say that by removing the section of Bill 9 that talks about using that as enabling legislation to rewrite contracts, to strip collective bargaining, would be a step in the right direction.

So often we hear with this government that they talk about their mandate and how they like to swing their big mandate around, and it's all very fun and good. But the mandate you do have, actually, as a government is to be responsible to the public services that you provide as a government: health care, education, infrastructure, social services, security, and protection. To in any way compromise the integrity of those essential services, which this government is responsible for, is irresponsible. Certainly, we still have a way by which we can pull back on this. I think it's not, you know, a done deal yet by any means. We know, by negotiating contracts over the last four years, that you can in fact negotiate in good faith. If you open up the books and you show the various sectors of the nurses and so forth and the teachers, show where you are, and you show where you want to be, you can come up with lots of great collaborative ways by which to solve financial problems and challenges in all sorts of sectors.

I know that for myself, personally, in regard to education that teachers, support staff knew that we were in a difficult financial circumstance, but they also knew by the authority of trust that we did invest in the collective bargaining process – going to the table as equals, going to the table in good faith – that you can come up with lots of other ways by which to not just negotiate wages but negotiate the quality of the service that you're delivering. So there you go with the contract, the first provincial contract with the teachers, you know, negotiating as a provincial body, entity, we came up at the table with the classroom improvement fund. What a fantastic way by which you can invest in the classroom, have meaningful discussions about where you make that investment to reduce class size, to maybe focus on basic skill learning.

We had lots of school boards like in Fort Saskatchewan, I know, that took on a school board wide initiative through the classroom improvement fund to increase reading levels amongst the youngest grades, right? They put in a multiyear program to ensure that students are reading at grade level by the time they get to grade 3 and were willing to take that classroom improvement fund money to pull everybody up to that level so that a seven- or eight-year-old, then, is reading at grade level, and they are set for the rest of their K to 12 education and beyond.

Those programs are in jeopardy now, Madam Chair, because we see already just from interim supply that the government is cutting the classroom improvement fund, a collaborative effort achieved at a bargaining table in good faith that came up with solutions that were going to improve student outcomes, improve students that were reading below grade level. Together, through the collective bargaining process, we came up with a way by which to make that

investment in those young kids. It improves the classroom conditions for the teachers, for the students, for the parents, for everybody.

What's the point of all that? That table is not just a place where, you know, you have a battle with the workers that you are negotiating with. It's a place where you can start, in good faith, to create a better circumstance for everyone. It doesn't always just involve wages. It involves the working conditions and the quality of the delivery of those services for which we are responsible.

Madam Chair, I would strongly suggest to all members of the Legislature that we take this modest amendment, which is the removal of section 5(c) from Bill 9, to ensure that this is an endeavour that is being exercised in good faith. If it's truly just as the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance emphatically says in person and on the Internet, that it's just a way to pause and take a second look at these things, then remove the section that otherwise would make Bill 9 a huge club to swing around to remove the rights of collective bargaining and setting of wages and working conditions for more than 180,000 workers. Those workers are skeptical right now, and I don't blame them. Quite frankly, I am skeptical as well.

I know that as a teacher – I taught for 20 years – in 1993, when I was a young teacher, the government went through an austerity process as well. They would say one thing, dangle it up to the right, and to the left they would take away wages. They would take away classroom conditions. They would take away the futures for kids, for young teachers, and hope for families as well.

I don't think that Albertans are in any mood for anything that resembles that again. If this UCP government thinks that their recent victory in the election is a mandate to do all of those things around austerity and to make deep cuts into essential services that Albertans depend on, then they are frightfully and woefully wrong. I would suggest otherwise, that this amendment is a nice way to send a better message, you know, for the sake of 180,000 public service workers and the many, many, many hundreds of thousands – I dare say millions – of Albertans that depend on those services to ensure the safety and the security and the good health and the education of themselves and their families and that we do follow through with this amendment. We'd all be better off for it.

Thanks a lot.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, shall I call the question on the amendment?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? Comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, it's been an interesting evening so far on the debate. I rise again to introduce another amendment. I will give you the original with the requisite number of copies.

**The Chair:** Member, please just wait a minute until I receive a copy.

11:40

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A2.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I feel that this amendment is a reasonable amendment, and I would like to encourage the government to take an open mind with this amendment and listen to my rationale, because I feel like it speaks to some of the conversation that we've actually been having in this House around the blue-ribbon panel and the fact that the full intention of this bill is actually just to allow the blue-ribbon panel to come back and to provide recommendations to the government about what they should be doing as they move forward around, specifically, arbitration with this bill but, of course, the other recommendations that may be coming around how to support the government in making fiscal choices.

What we see in Bill 9 is very clearly under the preamble, and I will read the preamble, just the piece specific, where it says:

Whereas the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's Finances, an expert panel appointed by the Government of Alberta, will deliver a final report by August 15, 2019, and time is required to gather other information on Alberta's economy and the Government of Alberta's financial state.

Fair enough. You've given us a very clear date, August 15, of when the blue-ribbon panel will be providing a report to the government.

What I'm recommending with this amendment is that we, then, look at section 2 as well as section 3 within Bill 9. First, section 2: what I recommend is that it is amended by striking out "October 31, 2019" and substituting "August 31, 2019" wherever it occurs and also in subsection (2)(b) by striking out "November 1, 2019" and substituting "September 1, 2019."

I will just speak specifically to section 2 to start, and then we can move into section 3. Section 2 is basically amending the shortening of the temporary suspension period by two months for arbitration. What Bill 9 currently says is that you will look at going back to arbitration on October 31, 2019, and start setting your new arbitration dates for negotiation with your bargaining units and the employer.

What I am suggesting is that because you've already indicated in your preamble that you will have your report by August 15, you actually start setting your arbitration dates on August 31, 2019. That's just setting the dates. That doesn't mandate you nor does it require you to be going straight into arbitration on August 31. All it asks you to do is to start working with the employers to set those new arbitration dates that you've already put on hold.

It is a two-month change, for sure. It's a two-month advance on what you've indicated in the bill because, of course, you've indicated that August 31 would be the date that you would then start going back to these bargaining units to set your dates. But the date of October 31, 2019, is just about setting dates; it's not actually about entering into the arbitration process. So if your argument is that you're waiting for the blue-ribbon panel to come back and to provide you a report, which they're going to provide to you on August 15, there should be no reason why the government wouldn't be willing to enter into talks with the bargaining units to start setting those dates then, like, August 31, 2019.

You also have other bargaining units that within this same section were going to be set for November 1, 2019, and all I'm saying is that instead of waiting till November 1, 2019, you start setting those dates on September 1, 2019. Again, yes, it's a two-month change. It brings your agreement to start talking about setting arbitration dates two months ahead, but it is still after your blue-ribbon panel's recommendations will have been received by this government. I think that's fair. I think that's reasonable. If the whole argument around arbitration and setting arbitration dates is because of the blue-ribbon panel, this still allows your blue-ribbon panel to give you the recommendations to the government, but what it says to the employer, to your bargaining units, is that you're willing to start

talking about arbitration again two weeks after you've received that report. It's not saying that you're going to start negotiating on those dates. It's just saying that you have a willingness to be co-operative and to work in a respectful relationship between the employer and the employees.

Again, I feel like this is fair. This meets your argument around the blue-ribbon panel and the recommendations, but it also speaks to your bargaining units to say that you're willing to bargain in good faith. It's a good-faith argument. It meets everybody's needs. It meets your bargaining units' needs because they're believing that you're entering into this with good faith, but it also meets your mandate, that you've clearly given all of us in this House, about the blue-ribbon panel recommendations having to be provided to the government. That's section 2.

Now, section 3 amends by moving the rescheduling deadline dates for the holding of arbitration hearings up by two months. Your deadlines currently in this legislation would be – for June 30 to August 1, 2019, they are the ones that you are currently putting on hold today, because you have bargaining units that are actually in arbitration that should be starting on June 30, to August 1. You've had some agreements that you've put on hold that you've asked the arbiter to put extensions on, which would be impacted by these dates. They would then go to October 15, 2019, instead of being December 15, 2019. Again, I'm pushing your dates up by two months. However, in saying that, this still meets your mandate around your blue-ribbon panel. It still gives your bargaining unit on the employer side an opportunity to review the recommendations, and it still gives you two months and a bit, actually, from August 15, when you receive the report, to be able to meet with your bargaining units on October 15 instead of waiting until December 15.

In addition to that, you also have August 2, 2019, to September 30, 2019, that would then become January 15, 2020. Now, again, same argument. You have bargaining units that were guaranteed to have an ability to enter into arbitration between the employer and the employee that you've asked to push those dates back. All I'm saying is that as a reasonable government who wants to work collaboratively with your bargaining units, then instead of pushing them all the way down the line from December as well as the other ones that were set in October, you actually just move them back here two months.

Your bill actually speaks to this already. In your amendments it was a two-month bump for every bargaining unit group that you had decided to push back. All I'm asking you to do is to be reasonable and to start entering into those conversations at the end of August and to start setting those dates, instead of in December, in September and October. I think it's reasonable. It still meets your mandate, your whole argument around the blue-ribbon panel, your whole argument of saying that we have to wait till you get your report back. Fair enough. If that's the direction that this government has decided to take, to wait till your panel comes back to give you some feedback on some fiscal decisions that you need to make and that arbitration is part of that process, it is totally within the government's prerogative to do that.

But if we're going to talk about good-faith bargaining, which is what we've been talking about for the last few days and what we've been asking you to do, which is to show all of these bargaining units that you respect this process, which is what we're asking you to do, which is what everybody is asking you to do, just respect the process, respect these bargaining units, respect that they have a right to arbitration, then instead of pushing all of these dates back to unreasonable time periods, in my opinion, then acknowledge that you have from the 15th to the 31st to start setting those dates. It still gives you two months to review the recommendations before you

start entering into the bargaining process. You can do the math. I'm sure it won't take you two months to do the math. I feel like you probably have some ideas already about maybe where you want to go. But let's look at that.

If it pleases the House, I can read section 3. I did read section 2. Section 3 is amended (a) by striking out "on or before November 30, 2019" and substituting "on or before September 30, 2019" and (b) in clause (a) by striking out "December 15, 2019" and substituting "October 15, 2019" and by striking out "during the time period beginning on June 30, 2019 and ending on October 1, 2019" and substituting "during the time period beginning on June 30, 2019 and ending on August 1, 2019." Again, in clause (b) by striking out "March 15, 2020" and substituting "January 15, 2020" and by striking out "during the time period beginning on October 2, 2019 and ending on November 30, 2019" and substituting "during the time period beginning on August 2, 2019 and ending on September 30, 2019."

Again, I just want to reiterate that I feel like this is a reasonable discussion to be having with the government. I feel that, you know, we all have very strong opinions, I believe, on both sides of the House, some believing that this side of the House doesn't appreciate the fiscal responsibility that the government has. I do appreciate the fiscal responsibility. I feel like the Finance minister and I have been able to have pretty reasonable conversations around different strategies, around different bills that we've discussed, around different ways that we can do economic stimulation and how you can manage budgets and different things like that. I feel like this speaks to that. I respect that you've created the blue-ribbon panel and that you're waiting for those recommendations to come back. I believe that that process is fair and that that is a decision that this government has made.

What I do not believe is fair is using it as a reason to push back fair bargaining practices and arbitration practices and to put workers in a vicarious position, not knowing what the process is going to be, when it's going to start, and what the outcome will be. I would encourage the government, please, to at least look at this amendment, take it into consideration, and recognize that I don't believe that it's actually asking for that much. It's asking for you just to push things back by two months. It's still allowing you to look at your recommendations and to implement them. It's not mandating you to immediately go into arbitration and bargaining processes. All it's doing is saying: we believe in good faith, we believe in the bargaining process, and we believe that the employer and the employee have a right to a conversation to actually set dates to begin this process again.

I will leave it at that, and I look forward to hearing the response.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to respond to the, I think, reasonable amendment that the hon. deputy House leader of the opposition has made. You know, as I listened to the hon. member's comments, it reminded me a little bit of the thought process that we had when we were considering the contents of this bill. We recognized the critical importance of hearing from the MacKinnon panel, and we also worked to understand how much time we would need as we worked through the conclusions of that panel and also melded those with our upcoming budget deliberations. So we recognized as well the importance of being, again, thoughtful and prudent and ensuring that we had full information in making those decisions.

Lastly, we wanted also to ensure that the dates we chose were the least intrusive on the public sector. We didn't want to extend it

longer than it needed to be, so we did put a fair bit of thought and deliberation into choosing the October 31 date. We believed that that would give us enough time to adequately consider the panel's report and conclusions, again, relative to our upcoming budget and relative to our plan and responsibility to balance in our first term and balance that out, again, recognizing the importance of creating as little intrusion into the public sector as possible.

To respond to the member opposite, our thought process was similar, I think, to what the member articulated, so we came down on these dates after, I think, an adequate amount of deliberation, conclusion, and input. I believe the dates we have in this bill are the dates that will serve the process most adequately and, ultimately, Albertans correctly.

**11:50**

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Finance minister for the response. I appreciate what he's saying. I do. I guess, for me, this is about actually just setting the dates. This isn't actually about working through the arbitration process. This is where I struggle. Arbitration can actually take a very, very long time. Going through it as a bargaining member and representing members at one point, it took us a very long time to be able to come to an agreement within the public sector, sometimes years to finally be able to get to a place.

I guess the part that I struggle with is that when we look at arbitration, an arbiter is supposed to be independent. We have a group of representatives from the employer side and we have a group of representatives from the employee side that start opening up a conversation around language, around specifically wages, I guess, in this context. The arbiter is supposed to be neutral. If the government is saying that from August 15 until October 31 they're not going to be able to have an understanding of what kind of wage negotiations they're going to be able to put in, I'm a little bit cautious around thinking that that could be the fact.

I feel like it won't take this government two months to decide what they're going to do around wages for public-sector workers or for any of these bargaining units. I also believe that these dates – again, it doesn't mean you're going to have an agreement that day. All it's saying is that you're willing to enter into an independent arbitration process between the employer and employee. I would be curious to think that the government would try to influence that process with directing the arbiter how to do that, because typically it would be the employer side having a group of individuals and the employee side having a group of individuals. There should be enough understanding, I would think – even given the fact that this bill is in front of us speaks to the fact that the government has thoughts about this already.

I also trust that the blue-ribbon panel, given its mandate and who sits on that panel, has been pretty transparent about some of their thoughts around supporting, you know, whether or not there should be salary freezes versus rollbacks for some of those things. We have seen reports written by some of the individuals on that panel about what they believe would be in the best interest of financial prudence in this province.

I struggle with the fact that the government isn't willing to just push these back to even just start the date. Again, this is about setting dates. This isn't actually about how long the arbitration process is going to take. This is just about setting dates and acknowledging the collective process and acknowledging the fact that all of these bargaining units have a right to arbitration and that they have a right to collective bargaining.

To have good faith and to show goodwill as the employer to these bargaining units, I would say that being willing to go back two months and just set the dates is reasonable given that it's still past your blue-ribbon panel. You can still have conversation amongst yourselves around what those negotiations will look like and what the outcome of those negotiations will be. As I'm sure the government is aware – and I know there are members within their government that worked at the labour board, so they're very aware of this process – there is time and there are many meetings, and there are many processes that go through this whole wage arbitration process and that it doesn't happen in a few weeks.

Even if you said, "August 31 we're going to start talking about setting dates," well, it could take a month or two to set those dates, so you might not even be going to your first arbitration meeting until December, which is still two months after your blue-ribbon panel has come back. Then, even after that, it could take who knows how long until you actually get to an agreement based on many discussions and many factors. Saying that October 31 we're going to start trying to figure out what date we can meet: I still think that is reasonable.

12:00

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's an honour to be able to rise to this very reasonable amendment. I do plan to support it, and I appreciate the member bringing it forward. I think that it's reasonable in the fact that while I will definitely not be supporting this bill as a whole, I think that we should be able to, as legislators, find some common ground here. Maybe the government doesn't plan to bargain in good faith with public-sector workers, but hopefully at some point we can find the ability to bargain in good faith here in this Legislature.

There were instances when we were in government over the last four years where amendments came forward from the opposition, Wildrose or UCP at that time, and we said, "Hey, you know, this is reasonable; this is a happy compromise, and we can find ourselves supporting it," and we did. I really hope that the government does consider supporting this. I think that the way that the bill is written right now leaves too much wiggle room. These public servants are expecting more from this government, and through Bill 9 we've seen that the government is not willing to listen to them.

The fact that they're giving a timeline for waiting for a blue-ribbon panel to come back with answers that the government already knows – the government knows what is going to come back, especially considering that the blue-ribbon panel is only considering one side of the equation when it comes to returning to balance and fiscal responsibility. The blue-ribbon panel is going to come back and say that we're spending too much money, but the fact is that the government hasn't given them the ability to look at the tax structure of the province, so they're going to come back and say – well, they're going to become a scapegoat for this government to look at public-sector and public servant wages and say: "Well, this is really the only mechanism we have to reduce the debt, and the blue-ribbon panel said that it was okay to do so, so we're going to start making cuts. We're going to start renegotiating wages and, like we're seeing in Ontario, start capping wages over the next four years and possibly worse." What we've seen through this legislation is the ability to roll back wages. Of course, that was the discussion of the last amendment – I won't get into it – that we put forward, the unbelievable power that this government's trying to give themselves to negotiate wages on behalf of these public servants.

I think that this amendment is reasonable, and I think that this government should really consider supporting it. Do I think that they're going to? Probably not, based on the quality of discussion or the willingness of the government to actually hear us out this evening and for the last few evenings of discussion on this bill. You know, we saw 20 minutes ago that the Premier or one of the members started handing out earplugs to the members of this Assembly, which is very concerning for me. We're sent to this Legislature by the people of each of our constituencies, and they expect us to be doing our job when we're in here, so to see members starting to put in earplugs, which I believe most of them have taken out now, is very concerning for me.

It really goes to show – I've been following the social media discussion on this issue, as I do with all discussions, and there was a community member in the constituency of Airdrie-Cochrane that was reaching out to their MLA on Twitter to find out: why are you supporting this bill, considering the unbelievable power that it's giving to the government to force contracts on public servants? And what was the response that this member of the public got? They got blocked instantly on Twitter.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, let's talk about the real world and this bill in this Legislature and not the social media world.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Well, this is the real world.

**The Chair:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order Freedom of Speech

**Mr. Bilous:** I rise on a point of order, Chair. In this Chamber in committee members are allowed a gross leeway to debate the bill, to discuss things like closure, which are related to the bill. That is part of the freedom of speech in *Beauchesne's* 75.

The privilege of freedom of speech is both the least questioned and the most fundamental right of the Member of Parliament on the floor of the House and in committee. It is primarily guaranteed in the British Bill of Rights which declared "that the freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place outside of Parliament."

So the member talking about the bill and how it relates to the proceedings in the Chamber here tonight I assert is the member's privilege as a member of the Chamber and he should be allowed to continue.

**The Chair:** Hon. Opposition House Leader, Standing Order 23(f) should be referenced here, should have been referenced in your debate. There has already been a ruling on the matter that has been dealt with in regard to calling the previous question. We've already discussed that matter. It's done. We're on Bill 9. We need to proceed with the matter at hand.

**Mr. Bilous:** Under 13(2), Madam Chair, I appreciate that the motion of closure has been enacted, but there very much are time constraints, and members can bring up the fact that there is a limited amount of time to discuss this procedure. It is parliamentary tradition. I encourage the chair to look at the past 75 years. I've been in this House the past seven years, and not once has a chair ever ruled talking about closure or time allocation, including members of the current government who were opposition when we brought in time allocation, discussed it at length.



**The Chair:** Hon. member, the issue is not with referencing the decision; it's with revisiting the decision that has already been made. We've been revisiting this decision multiple times in this Chamber, but we need to keep it on track, especially as the hour goes through the night.

**Mr. Bilous:** With all due respect, Madam Chair, again, this relates back to freedom of speech and members having the ability to be able to discuss. This is related to this very amendment. This is related to the bill, and I contest that members need to uphold the freedom of speech and the ability to allow members to speak.

**The Chair:** The member will be allowed to speak. He will not be allowed to speak about the matter in which we have already debated at length and has been decided on.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday. Please proceed with caution.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Now, I do want to revisit the point that when constituents reach out to us, whether it be on Facebook, Twitter, whatever social media it may be, it would be awfully convenient for me to say: well, this constituent is not living in the real world. So I do take concerns with the matter that was just brought before us and the comment that you made. I think that it's awfully important for us as politicians and as representatives of our community to be able to visit all mediums and hear from constituents in all sorts of ways, whether it's a phone call to our office or being reached out to on social media. It is a grave concern, and we have seen legal discussions in previous years about the fact that representatives should not have the ability, with, of course, exceptions, if there is targeted harassment, to be able to block constituents that they represent on social media.

So it was a great concern to me to see that happening on social media, to see the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane – whether it was the member or a staff member, it doesn't matter. It's a concern. They should consider revisiting that matter because each constituent of ours should have the opportunity to have that discussion even if the member doesn't agree with the position that the constituent is taking.

**An Hon. Member:** You responded pretty good.

**Mr. Carson:** Now, really, I did respond because I think that people across the province . . . [interjections] I'm being heckled by the member. I think that we should be listening to our constituents, and we should listen to everyone even if they are not in our constituency, which is why I responded to the member's constituent even though that member wasn't willing to do so.

Just getting back to the amendment, Madam Chair, I will be supporting this amendment. I think it's very reasonable. I think that setting some timelines, of course, not trying to force the government to begin negotiations but at least starting to consider them as soon as the blue-ribbon panel concludes – once again, I don't think that the government is going to receive any new information that they didn't already have before them with the wonderful public servants that they are provided with to gather this information for them in the first place. I do believe that it is going to become a scapegoat for them to start cutting wages and capping wages. But I'm planning to support this amendment. I hope that all members of the Assembly will.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Madam Chair, I hesitate to interrupt, but I did find it fascinating talking about Twitter. First, I wanted to agree with you. I don't think Twitter is the real world, but I don't know if that's really that relevant to the bill, which I think was your point. I just wanted to talk about what I think is the hon. member's point – I'm not sure; I'm having trouble following it – that he feels that the government is not talking to constituents and something about somebody blocking something on Twitter. I was still struggling to see how it had anything to do with Bill 9.

12:10

But the reason I wanted to jump up and have a quick conversation was my experience with NDPism. I'm sure yours has been, Madam Chair – you've been here as long as I have been. That's quite frankly been the biggest problem with the NDP, that we hear about all the time. I have had to spend significant time inside my large constituency that I represent, often had to spend time servicing constituents inside the old Banff-Canmore constituency, for example. I know that won't happen anymore because Banff – sorry; Banff-Cochrane riding, back then. Cochrane's now represented by two excellent members – or one excellent member of the Legislature. It's your town that now has two. Sorry, Madam Chair. And Banff-Kananaskis is also represented by an excellent member now, so I suspect that it won't happen.

If we want to talk about not helping constituents, I think that's a great example. The former Member for Banff-Kananaskis, he and I had an interaction to do with one of his constituents when he was first elected. I found this shocking. There was a gentleman from Sundre who came in to my office, and he was quite emotional. He had a brother at the time who was in his late 90s who landed in Normandy on D-Day, was knighted by the French government afterwards, a pretty interesting individual, a hero of our country. Then he came home and he settled inside Canmore and he married a young lady who became a nurse who then ended up running the hospital inside Canmore. They lived together for 50, 60 years inside the Canmore community. Then his wife got sick, unfortunately, Madam Chair, and they had no space for her in the Canmore hospital. They asked for her – because of that, they moved her to Calgary and by this point this gentleman could no longer drive.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hate to interrupt. I assume you are going to tie this in to the amendment.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** You bet, Madam Chair. I'm getting there, and I'm going to get right back to the bill. I'm coming there, full circle. Do not worry.

Anyways, he could not drive to see his wife anymore. His brother was a little bit younger and was quite emotional about that. They're having trouble getting them to connect. You can imagine, Madam Chair, how hard that would be for a couple that were married that many decades. Interestingly enough, they contacted their NDP MLA for just over six months for help. That MLA would not even return their phone call. Fortunately enough, they came to the Sundre constituency office and the staff there were great. They were able to reach out, and just a few short days later his wife was able to return to Canmore, where she remained for the remainder of her days, actually, close to her husband. He's passed away now.

But that's the type of service that we heard that NDP members gave their constituents, so I don't think that the hon. member should rise in the House and try to imply that the United Conservative Party members in any way are not keeping care of constituents. The now hon. Health minister told me this story when he took over his office: over 1,000 unreturned messages. So I don't think, Madam Chair, that they should bother going there. I think that's probably a little

bit of the pot calling the – how do you say that? Sorry; it's getting late.

**An Hon. Member:** The kettle black.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The kettle. Yeah. The kettle calling the pot black or the pot calling the kettle black.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to stop by and be part of tonight and partake in some sober debate here in the Legislature and offer some perspective on this particular bill and this particular amendment that we have before us. Seems it's been an interesting and entertaining evening. I had the opportunity to follow it earlier. Yeah. It's been interesting to listen along.

I appreciate this amendment that was brought forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Manning. I appreciate it for one particular reason. That's because multiple times in question period, here in this House tonight, over and over again, we have offered this government the opportunity to provide some level of clarity, some small sign of good faith to public-sector workers that what they claim their intentions with this bill are are in fact the intentions they are going to follow through. And this government is refusing to do that. They have been offered the opportunity to stand in this House and make it clear that they will not use this legislation to impose a contract or to impose a wage rollback. They will not offer that guarantee. They have refused to state that on the record. They go back to talking about the intentions of this bill.

We have brought forward amendments like this one here, which, again, is providing this government with the opportunity to demonstrate to public-sector workers in Alberta that they are indeed approaching this in good faith. We'll see what they choose to do with it because so far, Madam Chair, I can't say that the record of this government and how they have approached this particular situation really gives the public sector any reason to give this government their trust or to believe that there is any good faith intended in this legislation which is being brought forward to break their contracts. Now, let's be clear about that. Whatever the government's intentions are, their means of achieving them are to break a contract.

Let's just step back for a moment and run down the timeline of how we arrived here. On June 11 we discovered that this minister had had his staff send out a letter to the bargaining units, which were anticipating and waiting at the table, asking them to sit down and have a consultation. They then also mentioned: well, if you don't, we've got this bill that we've already got ready hanging over your head. Even one step further back from that, Madam Chair, is that this government hid their plan from Albertans. During the election campaign they hid the fact that they intended to take this step, that they intended to break these contracts. They were not straight with Albertans.

Now, the minister stood earlier and claimed that, in fact, while in the campaign platform they promised that they were going to balance the budget and that they were going to practice fiscal restraint, within that general vague bromide was contained their intention to break this contract. Unfortunately, Madam Chair, this Premier has repeatedly stated what the standard is for whether or not one is hiding something from Albertans.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

He has made it very clear, Mr. Chair, that if you do not have something one hundred per cent explicitly stated in your campaign platform and then bring forward legislation to implement it, you have acted in bad faith, you have hidden something from Albertans, and you deserve to be punished for it. That is repeatedly on the record in this House, in the media, and indeed I believe even in their own campaign platform, so by their own standard and their own measure they already began in bad faith.

Then they bring forward this letter, again, which they send to the bargaining units, more or less saying: "Hmm. Nice contract you have here. Shame if something were to happen to it." Two days, two days, Mr. Chair, after sending that letter, after not a single actual conversation – pardon me; I take that back. There was apparently some contact between department officials and the bargaining units, brief contact. But two days later this minister rose in this House and he tabled legislation to break contracts. He tabled this bill on bad-faith bargaining. Then, to follow that up, not only did they not want to actually sit down, not only did they hide this from Albertans, not only did they not have the courage to actually sit down and have real consultation and conversation with the individuals involved; now they do not even want to have that conversation in this House. They are limiting the time as much as possible because they recognize that they hid this from Albertans, and they are hoping that Albertans will not notice that they can hopefully slip through this breaking of contracts, this bad faith, in the dark of night.

12:20

And, to top that off, these members are willing to sit and wear earplugs. The Premier himself distributed them to his caucus members. Perhaps he was concerned with what his members might say. He felt that they could not actually even listen to the opposition. I didn't know we were that convincing.

That said, Mr. Chair, that is the standard that's being set. And then this government has the gall to say: "Trust us. We're from the government. We're here to help. Trust us. Ignore all that stuff over there. Ignore the fact that we have a blue-ribbon panel that's looking exclusively at how to cut money from the budget. Ignore the fact that we have punched a 4 and a half billion dollar hole in that same budget. Ignore the fact that we have repeatedly spoken so poorly of the democratically elected unions that represent our public-sector workers. Ignore all of that, and take it on good faith that this bill, on which we will offer no actual public guarantee, on which we will say nothing on the record to address any of your concerns – trust us that we're going to be okay on this."

I don't think public-sector workers in this province are going to do that, Mr. Chair, which is why we are here in the dead of night debating this bill, because this government is ashamed to actually have this public, to actually have Albertans watching. Indeed, the thing is that Albertans are watching and they are listening, which is why this minister is putting out videos on that platform, that apparently doesn't matter, trying to convince Albertans that, really, this is all okay but offering no new guarantees or information, not actually meeting any of the arguments but simply, again, saying: "Trust us. Trust us as we break your contracts. Trust us as we demonstrate our bad faith out of the gate. Trust us that our ends really will justify these means."

But Albertans aren't buying it, and they are paying attention, Mr. Chair. I was forwarded a message tonight from my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora that she received from one of her constituents and gave us the permission to read it here tonight. I'd like to do so.

That message reads: public-sector workers are Albertans; I am an Albertan; it has been my lifelong dream to work within Alberta's public sector since I was 12 years old; I finally made my dreams come true in 2018, something that took years of hard work and

sacrifice; I wanted to make life better for Albertans, but Bill 9 has completely betrayed my trust in this government; I would never have thought that this government would come after the food on my table, the clothes on my kids' backs; what is next? Are you coming after my job? I'm worried about my financial future and that I will suffer due to the desire to create a path forward; a deal is a deal; honour the rights of Albertans, all Albertans, not just the ones in the top 1 per cent; sincerely, a public servant.

You know, time and time again, Mr. Chair, we hear this government talking about needing to look after Albertans and somehow overlooking the fact that these workers are themselves Albertans. Now, I respect that this government indeed did get elected with a significant mandate and, in so doing, kind of cut a deal with Albertans on what they said that they would do. One of their promises was to balance the budget. They are claiming they can do so while pulling 4 and a half billion dollars out of that budget for a corporate tax cut, for which they have no returns for the next two years at least and no guarantees for anything beyond while planning to make cuts to services. They promised that they will maintain or increase funding for health care and education somehow, miraculously, and they claim that they will find efficiencies and that they will make these cuts and they will reduce their spending without impacting the delivery of public services. Indeed, they claim that they will improve them. That's a lot of big promises.

But what really undermines the faith, I think, of Albertans that they could deliver on that is when they immediately, as one of their first steps, come forward with something which they hid from Albertans during the election, which they knew they were going to do and did not tell Albertans that they would, when that is one of their first things, and that involves breaking the actual contracts that have been signed by the government of Alberta – but then they turn and say: trust us. Unfortunately, the record of Conservative governments in this province, Mr. Chair, has not been a friendly one with public-sector workers.

We've seen this time and time again. The price of oil drops. The government decides it must make cuts. We see reductions in service. We see cuts in programming. We see folks being laid off. We've seen Conservative governments that have gone after the pensions of public workers in the province in Alberta, and we've repeatedly seen Conservative politicians in this province use them as scapegoats, objects of resentment: "Look at your neighbour over there who works in the public sector. He didn't get laid off when the price of oil dropped. We need to make him feel some pain, too. His salary hasn't been cut. Of course, it also hasn't been raised in a number of years, but hey, you got hurt; we should hurt him, too."

That does nothing to help our economy, Mr. Chair. Ensuring that we have more Albertans who are earning less or perhaps not earning anything at all isn't going to support more local businesses. It isn't going to allow more people to keep their homes. For myself, Mr. Chair, I see no reason and this government has given me no reason to trust them on this. They have a lot of pretty words, and I will give this Premier that. He is a man who is good with his words. But because you hide something from Albertans with a smile on your face, it doesn't make you more trustworthy. The fact that you can dress it up in some fancy talking points and dance rather skilfully around the issue without actually addressing it: I think Albertans are starting to see through that.

That is why I and my colleagues are here tonight and why we're going to continue to debate this, and we are going to use every second of the time that this government has so generously allotted to us. Of course, we can recall all the comments from members of this government when they sat on this side of the aisle, when they

were concerned about an issue, and their deep and heartfelt protests about the abrogation of democracy when they were not given enough time and opportunity to speak. But we will continue to speak. We are continuing to put this out for Albertans. We're continuing to hear from public-sector workers. We saw an unprecedented unification of the leaders of our public-sector unions here at the Legislature just a few days ago. It goes back to years ago. You know, Premier Klein worked really hard to try to break that up. He tried to put the public sector at each other's throats. Well, kudos to this Premier. Not only did he unite the Conservatives in this province; he certainly united the public sector.

**12:30**

I'm not sure that this is a battle this government really wants to take on. I recognize the damage this is going to do, in my view – it's already begun to be done – the loss of faith that's already occurred with this government in the public sector, on whom, I remind the House again, as I have before, they are going to be dependent on achieving their incredibly lofty goals. Let's be clear, Mr. Chair. These are not new goals. If I took a shot every time a Conservative government in this province said that they were going to solve the budget deficit by finding efficiencies, well, I would not be able to stand in this Chamber, I can tell you that. This has been a repeated promise, over and over and over again, and not a single Conservative government in this province has managed to pull it off.

Now, of course, we have the much-praised Premier Klein, who himself went to battle with public-sector unions, and indeed he balanced the budget on paper. But he did that by drastically reducing services, by deeply cutting the public service, and by badly neglecting infrastructure across this province. As many have noted, it took years – and indeed I talk to public-sector workers today who work in laboratory tech, who work as paramedics, who work as nurses, and they tell me: we still have not recovered from the damage that Premier did, the capacity that we lost and never regained.

Even as this province went through the boom years and we drew population from across Canada and indeed from around the world, as we continue to do, we never caught up, and that is one of the reasons we have the expensive system we have today, because for all those workers that were laid off or who picked up and left Alberta, when Premier Klein all of a sudden had a little more cash in his pocket thanks to the rise in the price of natural gas, well, when they started hiring people back, it became more expensive.

Because governments chose to cut every time the price of oil dropped and to spend when the price of oil rose, we built infrastructure – not enough of it, mind you – and what infrastructure did get built got built at some of the most expensive times to build. Governments attempted to hide the fact that they were so dependent on the price of oil by cutting corners: promising lots of schools but not actually building them, tinkering around with the health care system, playing around with the edges, reorganizing this, reorganizing that, creating expenses, all the while . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, are there any others wishing to speak to A2? I see the hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Chair, I just feel compelled to stand and participate in this debate ever so slightly just due to the comments made by the hon. member. I represent the constituency of Calgary-Elbow, and there's one thing, when you knock on doors in Calgary-Elbow, that they take great pride in, the fact that Ralph Klein represented them for years. He held up the sign "Paid in Full." He set the foundation for Alberta to have years of prosperity. It is with

great pride that I rise as the now Member for Calgary-Elbow. Not a day goes by, when I go back to my constituents, where they don't tell me that they are proud of the fact that Ralph Klein, King Ralph, as they talk about him, was the Premier of this province, and they're looking for us to lead now in our time.

I also just want to say that I think we're at – what is it? – hour 15 of debate, Government House Leader, about hour 15, 16 now?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** A little more than that.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** A little more than that? A little more than that.

I just also want to put on the record that after all the points raised – some of them have been well articulated; some of them, I would say, may not have been that well articulated – I still have not been persuaded. I still believe that Bill 9 is the way forward. We need this to have a responsible way forward, Mr. Chair, to make sure that we act responsibly, to make sure that we act in the best interests of Albertans, to make sure we have a reasonable path forward.

I'm going to be very brief and now sit.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre rising.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, I thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow for his comments. I can tell you that when I knock on doors in my constituency, there is a very different opinion of Premier Klein, markedly different. But to each their own. Particularly when we're talking about historical figures, there can be many ways to view their records. Indeed, folks are open to their revisionism or to what aspects they want to look at or what aspects they don't.

I would also just note that my intention in standing and speaking here is not to convince the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow or any other member in this House. I recognize that these folks that are here are fairly early in their mandate. They recognize what brought them here, and they are going to do the bidding of their Premier. What I am here to do is to represent the voices of my constituents, who have overwhelmingly told me that they do not support this bill. They do not support this government acting in bad faith and choosing to break contracts and setting this as their precedent, their first action, in how they are going to work with public-sector workers in this province.

I'm here tonight and I'm engaging in this debate so that Albertans can know and understand what it is this government is choosing to do. Now, I regret that the Member for Calgary-Elbow, who's declared he's not going to be convinced, has to sit here and listen to my debate, whatever he might think of the quality of what I bring forward, but that's my job, and that's what I'm going to do.

Now, as I was saying, Mr. Chair, damage has been done to this province in terms of vilifying public-sector workers, of using them as objects of resentment, and, as I was noting, this government is going to need every single one of these workers onboard if they truly want to find efficiencies, if they truly want to improve these systems.

They can conduct their review of AHS. In some respects that's an admirable thing. Of course, there have been reviews that have been done. AHS has been around since 2009. Again, it was a creature created by previous Conservative governments, which, as I noted, love to tinker about with the health care system but never really seem to actually figure out how to begin to cut through the many layers that had accumulated on it over time and actually get down to better service delivery.

Indeed, for the past decade they were barely able to keep a minister in the portfolio for more than two years. There's hardly one that sat for a full term. I have to give credit to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora in that she lasted the full four years. In my

opinion, whether you disagree with her policies and the choices she made, I can't say that anyone could disagree with the fact that she knew her file and that she actually sat down and talked with all of the folks that worked in the different public sectors that informed her portfolio, that she was a minister that was on the ground.

I don't envy the Minister of Health for the work he's going to have to do and the water he's going to have to carry on behalf of this Premier when this is the first step out of the gate, when this is the tone that is being set for how we're going to work and negotiate with our public-sector workers in the health care field.

**12:40**

I can tell you that I'm already hearing from paramedics, from lab technicians, from nurses, from people all throughout our health care system about their frustration, about the fact that they are upset with this choice by this government, the fear that they have of what next steps this government is going to take. Again, we have given this government, as with this amendment that we have in front of us, the opportunity to offer some concrete reassurance to those workers. All we're asking here is that we actually give them some concrete dates, which, to be clear, Mr. Chair, they already had in a contract which was fairly negotiated at the table, signed, and completed. Now this government is introducing legislation to crack it open for their convenience without even a modicum of negotiation or discussion.

Now, as so many of my colleagues noted, of course, that's what this Premier said he was going to do. He was going to move quickly. He was going to have lots of stuff planned in advance. He wasn't going to tell Albertans what he had planned in advance – this particular piece: he made sure he hid that – but he was going to have it planned in advance so that he could move quickly to get past any potential opposition, so that no one would have time to stand up and question. Indeed, that's what we see happening with this bill.

What we are offering this government is the opportunity to maybe repair some of this damage that they've already started, to put a little bit of good faith back in on top of all this bad, that they're opening these discussions with our public-sector workers. This amendment simply says: "Okay. Well, you say that you can't do this date right now? Okay. Fine. You feel that you have to legislate and go in and break the contract? Fine. At least give them something to indicate that you intend to come back to this table."

The government refuses to give any sort of statement that they will not impose a contract and that they will not impose a wage rollback. They refuse to say it. They insist on keeping that option open in their back pocket, ready to pull out, hidden, much like they hid their intentions with this legislation. If they will not give the public sector at least that promise, at least that small bit of comfort in this era of uncertainty that they are now opening up for so many workers across the province of Alberta, they could at least agree that they would agree to some dates, at which point they will actually promise to sit back down at the table again.

That doesn't commit them to any actual action, Mr. Chair. All they're saying is, "We will sit down and talk to you at the table, starting between this date and this date." They can sit down at that table and say: "You know what? I'm sorry. We can't give anything more. We need to ask you to take a zero." They can sit down at that table and say: "You know what? We've looked at our budget, we've heard from the blue-ribbon panel, and we need to ask you to take a 5 per cent wage rollback." They can sit down at that table and say whatever they want, hold whatever position, negotiate from whatever position they want. This is simply a promise that they will do so and not simply arbitrarily make that decision, that they won't just sit down and say: "You get a haircut whether you like it or not. Your family is going to have less to live on this year regardless. No discussion."

We'll see, I guess, what this government chooses to do with this amendment. If they choose not to vote for this amendment – they keep saying: our intentions in this legislation are clear. Well, they are becoming clearer by the day, clearer by the minute. Clearer by the minute is probably more accurate. They're not allowing us an opportunity of days to discuss this. But I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that Albertans are watching.

During our four years in government we had a period of labour peace. We were able to sit down and negotiate with public-sector unions. We sat down to the table. We talked with them. Our negotiators from the government went and spoke, and we achieved agreements of zeros. Those were negotiated. That was with public-sector workers who had already taken zeros in previous years. We were able to do that in good faith: sit down, actually bargain with them, talk to them.

This government, right out of the gate, is burning that up. They're spending all of their capital right out, much like their corporate tax break. You know, they're gambling that 4 and a half million dollars, and they are all in. They're rolling those dice. I recognize that I'm mixing my gambling metaphors. On this, too, they apparently feel they've got enough political capital to spare that they can come, right out of the gate, breaking contracts with public-sector workers, which is saying: "If we want something, we'll simply legislate it. We're not going to sit down and talk about it. We're not going to discuss it with you. We're simply going to use the most powerful tool in our tool box to crush you." That is what this government is choosing to do.

Again, all we are asking for with this amendment, all we are offering is the opportunity for this government to demonstrate that – if it is not as dire as what I have been saying, if anything that I and my colleagues here have said is untrue, they have the opportunity to actually adopt an amendment that demonstrates that to be the case, to do more than simply say: "Trust us. Trust us on this policy, that we hid from Albertans, that we did not tell them we were going to implement because we knew what the reaction would be. Trust us that, really, this time when a Conservative government sits down and talks about, you know, needing to find efficiencies, it's not going to be borne on the backs of the workers." That hasn't been the record in this province, certainly not under the much-vaunted Premier Klein.

The fact is that this government is a big fan of offering overly simplistic answers to complex problems. That may win you an election, particularly when you hide the less savoury parts of your intentions and policies. But I'll tell you, Mr. Chair, that it is going to be much, much harder in practice, particularly when the government sets out on this kind of a fight, on this kind of bad faith right out of the gate. I mean, between this and Bill 8, this government is just out to burn up trust. I know that members are sitting here now, and members have risen in this House, and they've said: "Well, you know, actually, folks in my constituency aren't that concerned about this. I've even talked to a teacher or nurse or two, and they're okay with this."

What I would say is that this is the first brick in the wall. This is the first piece of what is going to prove to be a shaky foundation for this government. Maybe you don't feel it yet. But I'll tell you that there are nurses, there are teachers, there are correctional officers, there are paramedics and front-line workers in your constituency who are watching this, who are watching you. This is planting that first seed of doubt, and when your budget comes this fall, when you, hopefully, come back to the bargaining table – of course, you are unwilling to offer any guarantees that you will actually do that – they'll remember this. They'll remember what the first steps of the first action of this government were, and that trust is going to continue to erode. Those folks might be happy with you now, in the

warm, honeymoon glow after the election, but once the implications of these decisions that you're making begin to bear fruit, things aren't necessarily going to seem so rosy anymore.

**12:50**

But we have the opportunity here tonight with this amendment for this government to help mitigate that, for you to demonstrate to your constituents your good faith and your goodwill that you have in this Premier, that these members have in their Premier and their leader and in their minister. They're willing to take it on faith that what they are saying is what they are going to do, or perhaps they're aware that it's not, but they are willing to go with that, too. I can't say.

But here's an opportunity to demonstrate, for each of these members to demonstrate to the folks in their constituencies that this government intends to bargain in good faith with public-sector workers and that whatever they feel needs to be done, if they feel there needs to be sacrifice, they will sit down, they will look them in the eye and talk to them about it, that this government will be willing to actually go to the negotiating table and lay out their case and not simply, as they are choosing to do now, use legislation to ram it down the throats of public-sector workers and then go on a campaign of spreading further resentment, whether that's themselves personally or through their many proxies in conservative media in this province, folks who are more than happy to reprint the Premier's every word and press release.

I'm incredibly thankful, actually, for the legislative reporters that we have here in Edmonton, who I think do a fantastic job despite their clashes at times with ministers of this government and the Premier. I have great respect for the work they do. They are going to be here, and they're going to be covering this, too, and they're going to be letting Albertans know, as they have.

That is, again, part of why I and my colleagues are here tonight, because we intend to keep this story alive as long as we possibly can to ensure that Albertans understand the decisions that this government is making in bad faith, the incredibly poor precedent that it is choosing to set, and make sure that they are well aware and well clear that this is not a government that can be trusted, that perhaps they best be getting out their pickets, their cardboard, their markers and getting prepared because this government has yet to demonstrate at all on this bill that they are willing to show any semblance of good faith in how they are going to approach the livelihoods of folks that so many Albertans depend on.

The amendment is here. This government has an opportunity to demonstrate one last time, perhaps, what their intentions on this bill truly are. I look forward to seeing what they decide.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I would also take just a quick moment to mention that we are on amendment A2 at this time. I would never anticipate anybody's direction of debate, or I would not try to do that; however, having read the amendment, it does deal primarily with what look like schedules, so I would just mention that if this amendment was put to question, Bill 9 would also be available in totality to debate. It seems like we've given a wide berth with regard to every member's direction of debate, and that is also available to the House.

The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Chair. I will be brief. I will speak to the amendment, and once we vote on the amendment, after that I can speak to the bill again. I think it's an important and common-sense amendment, brought forward by my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Manning. The way I understand it, what this amendment

is doing is just reducing the time that's provided in the legislation, the time limit that government has set for September 30, 2019. I think this amendment is changing it to a shorter time frame. I think we have heard in this Legislature many times that this is something temporary. This is only for a short period of time, and the legislation itself refers to the report of blue-ribbon panel, that the final report will be available by August 15. That's the time frame they're looking at to, I guess, defer these agreements. If that's the intention as provided in the legislation, I think, then that's a reasonable amendment that provides government with a reasonable time to look into these agreements.

But I do want to say this on the record, that no amendment to this piece of legislation will make this legislation better, but at least this one provides a little bit of certainty, that what they are essentially saying, what they have shared with this House, what they are trying to achieve through this piece of legislation is exactly what will be delivered through this legislation. Since it's very clear in their legislation that they want to defer these agreements until they hear from the blue-ribbon panel – and that report will be out by August 15, and that will be the final report – this amendment sets out the time that should be enough for the government to consider that and if that is a temporary matter and if that's the only thing, that's the only purpose they're trying to achieve with this.

I think we need to take these amendments seriously, take this piece of legislation seriously because we know that this piece of legislation will impact one-fifth of their mandate. It's almost 200,000 Albertans, workers: front-line nurses, social workers, teachers, librarians, food inspectors, child mental health therapists, long-term care workers, correctional officers, sheriffs. There are a lot of Albertans who are impacted by this piece of legislation. There are a lot of jobs that are at stake. There are a lot of rights that are at stake. Putting a proper safeguard, putting a proper timeline: it's important that we have that clarity in the Legislature. That's why this amendment is important.

I will urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this amendment, to vote in favour of those workers whose rights have been impacted. This amendment will make it at least a bit more certain, will reduce the time that government may take to look into these contracts. They will have the information they need, as stated in the legislation, and I think it's a reasonable amendment that all members should be voting for.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. Member for Calgary-McCall. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo standing.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. At this late hour I wanted to just, of course, echo some of the thoughts that were just put. The Member for Edmonton-Manning brought forward a very reasoned amendment, I believe, that just moves timelines up. You know, there are about 200,000 people that'll be impacted by this legislation, this bill to defer their arbitration rights, their ability to sit down with government and deal with contracts that are coming up for wage negotiations, 200,000 Albertans who are our neighbours.

**1:00**

They work in places throughout the province, as you can see from the schedule here and the various places that are identified: postsecondary, AHS, ABCs, government itself, and other workplaces – 200,000 Albertans, Mr. Chair, who are our neighbours, who we all know personally. My colleague from Calgary-McCall talked about what those professional designations are, and they're numerous. We all know people in those positions.

They're public servants. They're teachers. They work for agencies, boards, and commissions throughout the province. Two hundred thousand workers are about 5 per cent of the population of Alberta. If you take away the under-18 part of the population, that percentage goes up maybe to 10 or 15 per cent, so 1 in 6 working Albertans are affected by what we're seeing here before us today.

I would think that those 1 in 6 Albertans want greater certainty about how long they're going to be impacted by Bill 9, a bill to really rip up the agreed upon contracts that they have. The Minister of Finance said that the bill was designed to be as little an intrusion into the public sector as possible, but I would disagree. I think it's a massive intrusion into the public sector and the working lives of 1 in 6 Albertans who are impacted by this.

I want to understand why government didn't sit down across the table from representatives and talk to them about the issues that they're going through with regard to the preamble here, why they didn't talk to them about the significant changes that have occurred and lay that out for those representatives of the different unions that would negotiate with government.

The experience of our government was that we did sit down. We laid out the situation with regard to finances and where things were at, and what we were able to achieve was an understanding with those labour negotiators, and we were able to achieve a good deal for Albertans, a three-year deal for Albertans. This government doesn't seem to want to follow accepted practice, which is to sit down at tables and to negotiate. This government wants to use a heavy-handed approach with far-off timelines for getting back to the table. You know, the people that they'll be dealing with are already skeptical that the government is going to deal in good faith when they finally get back to the table. This is seen as something that's in bad faith, bad-faith bargaining, Mr. Chair.

I don't think this is a little intrusion into the public sector. I think 1 in 6 workers, who will be impacted by the delay of their collective agreements not being followed through with, can rightly say that they're believing that the government is acting in bad faith. You just have to scan websites for the different bargaining units that are identified here: HSAA, AUPE, TEBA. You just have to scan those websites to see what they're saying about this government now, and none of it is flattering. None of it is believing that they have on the other side of the table a good-faith partner who will sit down with them and negotiate fairly.

They're already setting up legal information pickets at different work sites around Alberta, and those will be coming up in the next two weeks. It's a way to further inform the people who are impacted by Bill 9 on what is going to be happening and what their actions together will be with regard to this government. Mr. Chair, the numerous scheduling dates, moving them forward, is in a sense to give greater certainty, to shorten the timelines so that people around this province who are impacted by Bill 9 have less worry and less concern and less upset as a result of knowing that the government of Alberta has, essentially, ripped up contracts with them.

It's unprecedented in the last four years, Mr. Chair. This did not happen. As my friend down the way here from Edmonton-City Centre has said: the relative labour peace that was achieved was a new thing, the stability was a new thing. It was as a result of dealing with people fairly across the table, and they didn't come away from the table with massive increases. It was negotiated such that the times were very difficult. And if that is what the Finance minister is going to be saying to different labour groups when they get to the table, why doesn't he get there now? They have repeatedly said that they know what the books are like, they know what the economic conditions are like. Why don't they start talking at this point in time?

Mr. Chair, they are not talking, because, again, if you look at the websites for the different labour organizations, they're already talking about gearing up for the cuts that they believe will be coming as a result of this delay. So they've gone past the amount of time that's indicated here, and they are essentially saying that they know they're going to be at war with the government. That's not how we build a province. That's not how we build a province, on the backs of people, of workers, the workers for the government of Alberta, the workers for the agencies, boards, and commissions in Alberta, public servants in this province, who have for a long time given their everything to this province.

So I'm going to of course support the amendment. I'm going to believe that if members opposite want to assist their neighbours who are public servants around this province, that they will also support this amendment. There are a lot of public servants who work for the government of Alberta. Not all of them are covered by this Bill 9 – there are far more than that – but those public servants who aren't identified in Bill 9 are probably thinking that they're going to be dealt with in the same way, Mr. Chair, the same way that this government has shown that they are willing to deal in bad faith and rip up contracts, the same way that will get this government into deep trouble, like previous governments have been in the past with previous bills. That's not the kind of labour situation anybody needs or wants.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to sit down right now, but I do want us to support this.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to A1? I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is standing to speak.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** My apologies. I believe that I might have said A1. This is obviously A2.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to stand and talk about the amendment that was put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. Certainly, we know that this amendment helps to keep a tighter timeline on the arbitration, the bargaining that we know is due at this point. I think that that's a very important amendment that we should all support because it is showing, certainly, respect for the process, following the regular process, and I just want to stand in support of it.

**1:10**

I just want to also say that I'm not a labour lawyer, but I certainly know what fairness and justice are, and this amendment moves us closer to fairness and justice whereas the bill itself moves us further away. So I just really do support my colleague's amendment and, of course, am standing in support of it.

It's challenging for me as a member to see sort of the Minister of Finance repeatedly rise in this House and declare that it's just a delay in bargaining, you know, and it's presented extremely innocently, like: oh, it's just a delay. But even in the bill itself it implies that there is deep concern about the salaries of public servants, so it's already foreshadowing some decisions that this government is going to make. We know, and many of my colleagues have said this repeatedly, that it seems like it's important to make sure that certain segments of our population get support right away whereas others, it's not so important. Public servants are some of those ones that aren't so important to this UCP government.

On this side of the House we certainly believe that the service that public servants offer Albertans is extremely important and needs to be respected. Of course, this bad-faith bargaining bill

doesn't do that, and the amendment brings it closer. You know, it makes it more fair, for sure.

We've heard over and over, too, that it's just a delay because we need to have more information. We're a new government; we need to have this panel look at the government finances and help us have direction. We know that sometime in August, mid-August perhaps, they will have their report. But, of course, the delay is October 31, 2019, so it's, like, much later than the report comes out, so somehow there's just some faulty logic, then. Like, well, how come it is so much later? Really, the government has been silent on that. They haven't told us, you know, why exactly. They certainly said that they need this report, so maybe they need a few weeks, maybe even a month to look at it, but October 31? I guess what's not said is that that will be after the federal election, and they don't want any bad news from Alberta. That's not been explicitly said, but there's been nothing said to fill that gap, and I think it's a fair question. It's a question that Albertans are asking, and certainly I'm asking that because it is strange, the delay. That's certainly a concern.

This amendment will definitely bring sort of more fairness, justice, and respect for public servants.

I mean, this bill impacts the constituents in Edmonton-Riverview, which I have the honour to represent, pretty significantly. Edmonton-Riverview is a beautiful riding in central Edmonton, and like the name says, it does sort of hug both sides of the North Saskatchewan River. The University of Alberta is situated in it, the University hospital, the J.G. O'Donoghue Building, which has many government offices in it. It's got mature neighbourhoods like Windsor Park, Belgravia, Lansdowne. These are all beautiful parts of Edmonton. And then it goes across the river to Laurier Heights, Valleyview, Crestwood, and the Valley Zoo is in my riding. So this is really central. Besides the sort of larger institutions like the University hospital, the government's offices in the J.G. O'Donoghue Building – and I understand that community social services staff work out of those buildings; Alberta Infrastructure works out of those buildings – many staff work downtown, and it's a very short commute. You can take the LRT easily from McKernan, another community. I have a lot of public servants who work in the public service in my riding. As their representative in this Assembly I certainly am proud to stand very strongly against Bill 9 and see that this amendment is a way to make it a more fair bill. I mean, I don't support the bill at all, but I know my constituents are, you know, greatly impacted by that.

Certainly, when you think of the University of Alberta hospital, who's in the University of Alberta hospital besides the patients? It's all the staff. We have nurses. Are nurses impacted by this? They absolutely are. They're represented by the United Nurses of Alberta, and there are, you know – I don't know if I'm right in saying this – maybe thousands; maybe it's hundreds. I'm not sure, but there are a significant number of nurses who work at the University hospital every day dealing with very high-stress situations, helping people in life-and-death situations. Their work is very important, and they serve Albertans.

You know, I've said this in the House before, but about a year ago I was one of those people who was supported. I had a cancer diagnosis, and at first, when I went to emergency, it was touch and go. They didn't know if I was going to live, really. It was that close. But I had so many amazing United Nurses of Alberta staff serve me and really make a difference in my life, and I am forever grateful for that because I get to stand in the House today and speak about their important work.

I think that this government is forgetting who these people are. I've really been proud of my colleagues because everybody is being reminded of who these people are. They're Albertans. I think the government and certainly the opposition somehow would like to

dismiss these people as, "Oh, they're union people" or something, that that's somehow a bad thing. Well, certainly, on this side of the House we don't see it that way.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

Nurses, you know, work tirelessly to support Albertans in very difficult situations with high stress. They work shift work. Shift work can be very difficult for families and really challenging for them, but they are committed. They have chosen that path to be a nurse. But now it feels like, you know, a fundamental part about their work and their representation through the United Nurses of Alberta and the government of Alberta supporting them in their work – there seems to be a breakdown. It really saddens me to know that they're sort of first on the chopping list. They're, you know, a lower priority than other segments for this government, and I think that that's a really horrific thing because these are people who support Albertans in very difficult times. I just want to certainly thank them, from my own personal experience, and I know of thousands of other Albertans who have received caring, professional treatment from these nurses.

Also, you know, other government workers that are impacted by this are people who are represented by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. Some time ago I myself was one of those employees. I worked in child welfare, and I worked as a front-line social worker. I did become a supervisor in the time that I was there. This was, like, I would say, the early '90s, and we all know what happened in the early '90s. That was when Ralph Klein slashed public programs by 50 per cent. That devastated the public service and made our work very, very difficult.

1:20

I just want you to know who these people are who are working in child welfare. I think that certainly a lot of the members, when they were in opposition, were very concerned about, you know, if things are being done properly. Certainly, we had the devastating case of Serenity, a very young girl who lost her life in a very tragic situation. Of course, the professionals around that case: we need to make sure that they're supported and make sure that they have good connections with supervisors and managers and make sure that proper assessments are done, all of that.

But having worked in child welfare and having dear friends that still work there, I know first-hand that several positions just stay vacant. Management doesn't hire people. They're trying to cut costs all the time. Supervisors aren't available to front-line workers when they're doing assessments. Managers aren't available. They're short-staffed. They don't have a lot of resources to offer families a lot of times. Can you imagine being a front-line caseworker and having a caseload of perhaps 30 families? That's a chronic issue working in child welfare. You know, these are multiproblem families. These are families who are very vulnerable and have significant issues. Certainly, I would say that Serenity's family would be a good example of that, and obviously we know the very tragic circumstances around that.

Having worked directly in that area, I know first-hand just the tremendous dedication, the long hours, the weekends that these staff put in to make sure that families are safe. I think we would have much more tragedy, unfortunately, if we didn't have these kinds of dedicated workers. Maybe we could have less, but this bill, again, sort of says to these people who are really – I mean, it's not a job when you work in child welfare. You know, some people say that it's just a job. It's not a job. It's a vocation; it's a dedication. Myself, when I went home at night, I had trouble sleeping sometimes. I would do the best I could, but sometimes I couldn't do everything I needed to make sure those kids and those families were safe.

It is disturbing that these are the people who are the first on the chopping block of this government. I don't know; their work doesn't seem to be honoured. I know that this amendment really helps us at least give a shorter time for us to focus on the importance of remuneration, the support for workers. You know, they have families of their own, they have lives of their own, and they need to be supported. There is tremendous service that they give, and I thank my friends regularly that still work in child welfare, that serve and go way beyond. I mean, I have a good friend who's a supervisor, and oftentimes I can't see her because she's working the weekend. She says: oh, I'm too busy; I can't make it this week. Here I am, an MLA, with kind of a busy life, too, but oftentimes it's her schedule that prevents us, and that just shows her dedication. I would say that she's not an anomaly. She's routine. Many, if not all, of the staff do that. So this is how we reward them. This is how we reward them. I'd just caution the government to, you know, really remember who it is that we're impacting by this and what the ramifications are.

Also, some of the contracts that are being delayed, the arbitration that's being delayed: it does identify that in the bill itself. The Bethany Group in Camrose is impacted by that. Of course, I know the important work of the Bethany Group because I had previously been the Minister of Seniors and Housing. They do tremendous work with people who are living in affordable housing, our lodge program.

I just want to support the members to really realize who is being impacted by this, you know, significant delay. Of course, the union representing the Bethany Group is the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. In Camrose there's the affordable housing, which is Jamieson Manor. I know that the Member for Camrose likely knows this very well. There are many lodges that the Bethany Group supports. Some members are representatives of the Autumn Glen Lodge in Innisfail, the Meadows lodge in Bashaw, the Big Knife lodge in Forestburg, Eckville Manor in Eckville, Lacombe Senior Citizens Lodge in Lacombe, Peace Hills Lodge in Wetaskiwin, Rosealta Lodge in Camrose. These are just some. This is the Bethany Group's purview. They serve many, many Albertans in central Alberta. For many members in the UCP, these are in their constituencies.

You know, I certainly have heard from people how this is negatively impacting their work, and I'm sure that the members themselves would want to hear from their constituents about what this means. These people aren't highly paid. They're working to serve vulnerable Albertans. Knowing that there is an opportunity to review their contracts – we know that the cost of living goes up generally every year – you know, it's fair for them to have an opportunity to have their salaries go up, too. This amendment really does create a bit of a tighter timeline so that the process can get going. It just shouldn't be delayed. I'd just really caution the government that they are hurting people in their own backyards. I guess that is my point here. The Bethany Group does serve a large part of central Alberta, which many representatives do have constituents in.

Just the other day I was walking in the tunnel, and I ran into someone who I've probably known for 20 years. He works for the government of Alberta. I hadn't really seen him through my whole time in government, but I just, you know, serendipitously ran into him walking in the tunnel. He said, "Oh, it's good to see you," and I said, "Likewise." We chatted for a bit, and he told me: "I've never – I've never – seen the morale so low in the public service, and I've worked here for 30 years. I've never seen it so low." So, again, members, please know what you're doing. Please know what you're doing. You are disrespecting the people who are serving you, serving all Albertans, serving Albertans in your constituencies.



And you know what? If people are stressed in their work, if people are not supported in their work, it's harder for them to do their jobs. In fact, they become less effective. Well-supported public servants: it makes a big difference. Of course, by this government deciding, you know, to say, "Well, we're going to delay this, and we're not going to open arbitration," that's a significant thing. These are things that the public servants are counting on. I mean, we all need to have support in our lives, and this is just a very clear indication from this government that these are not people that they really respect.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise this morning, I guess it is, in the Chamber to speak to the amendment to Bill 9 that we've been having under consideration for some time now. Many folks have spoken quite passionately about it. I wish to add my comments to the arguments made so far and express my large disappointment in this government although I'm not shocked this government has gone in the direction they have. But I certainly am disappointed that indeed they've carried through to demonstrate what I expected they would in their first acts of legislation when it came to legislating in the field of labour law here in the province.

1:30

I think, Madam Chair, that there could be no more illustrative imagery produced, that nothing would illustrate more clearly than what was demonstrated today in the Chamber or more colourfully played out in this House tonight than that action of the Premier when he demonstrated his government's attitude towards working people in Alberta by participating personally in handing out orange foam earplugs to members of his caucus so they wouldn't have to suffer the indignity of listening to opposition members and voices who dare to stand in opposition to his centrepiece bad-faith bargaining bill.

In fact, members in this House on the government side pointed gleefully to their ears to demonstrate they were still wearing their orange foam earplugs, and some are doing that right now, happily suggesting that they really have no intention of listening to the voices of those working people they're attacking with this legislation tonight and throughout this whole process of implementation of Bill 9 to basically put to rest any opposition that working people and, particularly, public servants who are under contract negotiations might wish to mount to this government's onslaught against their rights to negotiate fairly.

I have mentioned in this House before an article in the *Financial Post* from November 2014 by Drew Hasselback titled *Supreme Court of Canada Imposes General Duty of Good Faith in Contract Performance*, where it's established, in that case, the case of *Bhasin versus Hrynew*, that the court said that Canadian contract law comes with a duty of good faith that requires parties to perform their contractual obligations honestly and to act in good faith no matter what side of the contract you're on.

This government is certainly not living up to the dictates of that Supreme Court case, which very clearly stated the obligation of all parties to contracts in this country and, specifically, to employment contracts to live up to the terms of those contracts in good faith, to bargain in good faith. This bill, that we've dubbed the bad-faith bill, is certainly diametrically opposed to the spirit if not the letter of that Supreme Court case, which in 2014 clearly spelled out what the actions of a government must be in terms of respecting the laws that are in place and the contracts that they have in place with their public service. They have to demonstrate their good faith and their

intention to deal in good faith, not to break a contract, not to deal in bad faith and disregard the clear legal descriptions placed in the law of the land by the Supreme Court of Canada. That prescription was to clearly follow the law and deal in good faith with parties to a contract. This piece of legislation is one which certainly is a clear demonstration of the government's disrespect for the Supreme Court's dictate to deal in good faith.

I know that in my working career I've been subjected to the ignominy of a party to a contract dealing in bad faith, where overnight the wages that I was paid were cut from, I think, 13 bucks an hour to nine bucks an hour because one company changed, the contract went from one company to another, and the law allowed them not to respect the contract that was in place. All the workers of that DATS bus driver system that I was a member of lost a significant amount of their paycheque overnight because labour legislation in this province allowed that contract that was in place to be disrespected. This is another example of the type of labour legislation that I've been living under all my life in the province of Alberta. I was doing my best and will continue to do my best to represent the working people and the public servants who work in my constituency to oppose these draconian measures, which are totally disrespectful of the law of this land. Notwithstanding the fact that the government can pass legislation and make it legal, it doesn't make it any more respectful of working people in this province.

It's an image that I can't get out of my mind, the Premier of this province walking around the House doling out orange earplugs so that members of his caucus won't have to listen to the opposition and, in turn, the people that they represent. I think that in all probability a gentleman named Malcolm Mayes is right now scribbling with his orange felt pen the large earplugs that the Premier was handing out in this Legislature. I can only imagine the political cartoon that he might come up with in the coming days, maybe even tomorrow, in the publications that he's a part of.

I hope that he comes up with one of his more charismatic cartoons, to really show the image that I have in mind, of our Premier reaching out to shake the hands of organized labour with a set of big, fluffy, orange earplugs stuffed into his ears, demonstrating that he's got no interest in listening to what they have to say while at the same time he's trying to do a deal with them. It's a pretty strong image in my mind, and I think that it's one that's going to stick with me if not every Albertan who happens to hear about the incident tonight where our Premier was handing out earplugs to his caucus so that they wouldn't have to listen to the opposition. Unbelievable. I couldn't believe that that was taking place, but indeed it has. It's historical, and it'll go down in the annals of our memory for a long, long time.

It reminds me of a story, and I've read this story to kids that I've visited in schools. I didn't realize that the book that I had as a child talking about *Top Cat* was such a serial book. This *Top Cat* series of books, of which I only had one, spoke about a group of stray cats who lived in a city, and they followed a leader named Top Cat. Top Cat was the leader of the band, and there were cats like Choo Choo and Benny and Fancy-Fancy. They were playing, and they were following their leader, Top Cat. They lived in the back alleys of the city, and they clanged together ashcan lids – bang – making a heck of a racket. One of the featured characters in the *Top Cat* book series – if you're a person of a certain age, you might recall – was Officer Dibbles, a police officer who was local to the neighbourhood. Of course, Top Cat and his gang of cats were clanging together their ashcan lids and making a heck of a racket, and Officer Dibbles said: "You can't do that anymore. You can't make that kind of noise anymore, Top Cat. You've got to get out of the alley."

**The Chair:** Hon. member, please sit for a minute. There is a standing order that does not allow you to bang on your desk, hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** I was trying to demonstrate the clashing of the ashcans together.

**The Chair:** Additionally, I'm having a hard time figuring out what this wonderful *Top Cat* story has to do with the amendment that we're on.

**Mr. Dach:** It has to do, Madam Chair, if I may . . .

**The Chair:** I will appreciate it if you get to the point of the amendment rather quickly.

**Mr. Dach:** I will do so. I'll speed it up.

**The Chair:** Please proceed, hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you so much. I will do my very best to do that.

Anyway, long story short, Madam Chair, to get to the point, Top Cat got kicked out of town for being too noisy, and he decided to take his gang of cats out to the countryside. They didn't like it – they got stung by bees, they got tripped up into the water, and the bull in the pasture gave them trouble – so they went back to the city. What they did when they got back to the city: they invoked Top Cat's great big idea to solve the problem. They gave Officer Dibbles a pair of earmuffs so he wouldn't have to hear the clanging of the ashcans. So that's what it was. That's what it was.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, back to the amendment now.

1:40

**Mr. Dach:** To the amendment, we're basically saying that this amendment would allow the government to take their earplugs out and listen to the people who they're negotiating with and have a little more respect for those individuals, those families that those people represent. I know what it would have been like had my father had to come home as a union carpenter . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, this is your last opportunity to speak to the relevance of this amendment that we are on.

**Mr. Dach:** All right. Well, I certainly thought the amendment that we're talking about, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act amendment, was going to be changing the timelines of the invocation of the effort of the government to have the blue-ribbon report heard first and then engage in arbitration later. That is what I'm getting at, that they weren't listening to individuals who were telling them: "We need to be respected. Take the earplugs out of your ears, and listen to working people, who need to end up in a position where they can trust that their government is going to respect contracts that they've entered into, that their bad-faith contracting practices cannot be accepted, that the Supreme Court dictates that as a government or as a contractor or an employer, you must respect the contracts that are agreed to by both parties. Those are the rules of this country, and indeed if you wish to engage otherwise, you're going to suffer the wrath of voting people."

But this Premier, this government, doesn't seem to care. They think that they can craft and cobble together a government, a majority in this province, repeatedly by not having to rely on the vote of organized labour. I think they do make that calculation at their own peril. In fact, I'll do my very best in my constituency to ensure that that peril exists for them for many terms to come. People in my constituency, Madam Chair, are really, really concerned that

their voices are not being listened to with respect to this government and its attitude towards arbitration and when, in fact, that is going to be happening.

The ruse that this blue-ribbon panel has to meet first in order for the government to have its information all together before they can make a decision on whether there's enough in the cupboard to pay what working people have fairly negotiated: that's something that working people aren't going to accept. It indeed is something where I couldn't imagine the Premier thinking of the kids in a working person's family, in a public-sector family, when that mother or father goes back home and the child sees them and wonders: "Why are mom and dad so upset? Like, what's the problem? Why are they not happy?"

What's the conversation around the dinner table? As a parent you've got to look your child in the eye and say: "Well, the government passed a law, and it said that the agreement that they entered into – they just tore it up. Well, that's the law of the land. They can do it. They said that they were elected to do that, and that's what the government did. That's democracy, young son, young daughter. That's what they did to us. Consequently, we're not going to be able to, you know, take that weekend to see your grandparents, or we're not going to be able to perhaps have the second pair of good-quality outfits that you'd like to have, or you're not going to be able to play hockey this year because the raise that we were going to get is not going to happen. I'm sorry. We thought we were going to end up having a bit of a raise. I know that we've gone for three years, Andrew, Angela" – whatever the child's name is – "and we agreed for three years to not take any kind of a raise. In return, we thought we were getting a bit of an increase this time round, but no. The government said that they don't have to respect the law, that they can just change it, because that's democracy, that they can tear this contract up. So me and John and Pete and Mary and other people that I work with are going to get together and tell their kids the same story, that democracy in this country means that you don't have to follow the dictates of the Supreme Court."

You just go your own way because you said that you had that in your election platform, and you just rip up that contract and change the law overnight and say: too bad, so sad; this is what we're going to do.

I, for one, am at a loss to describe to anybody or anybody's kids the rationale behind a government and a Premier who would, with a straight face, be able to stand up in front of a classroom of children, maybe even children who visit this Legislature to come to the School at the Leg. for a week, and explain to them exactly what it is that is behind their thinking when they say to parents and those children: "We had a deal, but we're going to rip it up. Your parents, your mom and dad, were going to get a slight increase this year. It was going to be an arbitration that happened if we couldn't come to an agreement, but the wage clause was going to be opened up, and they could anticipate getting an increase this year after three years of taking no increase in an effort to show everything they could. They knew finances were in a bind and that other people in this province were suffering and that other workers were without work, so for three years they took zeros in negotiated increases, yet in this year of the contract, where it promised in the contract to open it up and actually perhaps negotiate an increase, no, no, that's off the table. In fact, the deal is torn up, and we don't care whether the courts suggest" – not suggest; the courts tell us – "that we have to honestly and fairly bargain. We don't care about your parents, and we particularly could care less whether the children and your brothers and sisters get a little bit less after three years of getting no increase at all."

I'd really like to see our Premier, in a classroom of grade 6ers who come to visit our Legislature, explain that one. He may have no trouble at all looking at our opposition members across the way

and explaining, with a straight face, that they're out there to balance the books and that they were given that mandate to do that. But tell that to a group of grade 6ers who come and wonder why their parents don't have an opportunity to have a bit of an increase after three years of negotiated no increases. I think that might be a little bit more difficult audience for the Premier to hold sway with. I mean, you can't find a more honest audience than young people and children. I'd pay money to see that, actually – I really would – on top of a caption of Malcom Mayes showing the Premier of the province handing out earplugs or perhaps wearing a set of his own. That's an image that won't leave my mind.

I really think that the amendment that's been put forward to stifle – the initial bill to stifle the opportunity for the public-sector workers who are under these contracts, who expect to have their rights taken away, is somewhat blunted by this amendment that has been brought forward to change the timelines and allow the government to do in one way what it wanted to do, and that's basically to get beyond hearing their blue-ribbon panel.

1:50

**The Chair:** Hon. members, any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm rising in the House to take the opportunity to speak in favour of this amendment. By looking at this amendment – I think we couldn't do more than this. By presenting, proposing this amendment, my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning shows not only a very reasonable and common-sense amendment; she also shows the act of, you know, how positive and co-operative an opposition we are. By proposing this amendment – but it reflects, like, that we almost agree to what this government is trying to do through this bill after days of debate and just only want to make sure that we don't sit back after passing this bill. The processes still keep going. By tightening the time limit on this bill, we'll make sure that we don't forget about it.

By not showing the courage to accept this amendment, it reflects something on this government, that they're very, very committed to get through something. They had it very hidden from day one as this was not even on their election platform.

I just wanted to be brief as I know that I will probably come back to the original bill. So I just wanted to be on the record that I support this amendment, and I request each and every member of this House to show the courage, please, to vote for this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will speak as long as I can although I have a feeling that we'll be stifled in a matter of minutes. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment, which is attempting to amend a completely flawed bill. Not just flawed, Madam Chair; this bill is a direct attack on working people. I don't believe for a moment that this is about delaying, as the government has proposed or offered as an explanation. Essentially, what this is is an excuse for the government to shirk its responsibilities of good-faith bargaining with the unions in order to allow the blue-ribbon panel to come back to say: "Yeah. You know what? We can't afford to sit down and negotiate in good faith, not to have it predetermined."

But what I find rich is that one of the first moves this government did was to introduce a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate tax cut. So there are dollars for that but not a willingness to negotiate. I'm not saying: give the 4 and a half billion dollars over to the men and women of this province. But they do deserve a government that will negotiate in good faith. This is why we have dubbed this bill the

bad-faith bargaining bill. I mean, that's even a very sensitive way of framing it. It's quite unbelievable that what this bill does is attack the over 200,000 men and women that provide critical services for all Albertans.

This Premier and this government have the audacity to not just disrespect them but to not even sit down with them at the bargaining table and to bring in legislation in the dark of night. In fact, second reading started, I believe, a couple of minutes after midnight one evening. The government is passing this bill at breakneck speed, with three readings within a couple of days. You know, the Premier and others will talk about the hours of debate. I didn't realize that democracy had a time frame or a time limit on it. If you pass over a certain number of hours of debate, well, you can check the box that you've allowed members to speak.

Again, it's extremely rich considering that the Premier, when he was an opposition member in Parliament, railed against closure and time allocation as a member yet now, as Premier, has no problems using it, including a number of members – the Minister of Environment and Parks, as well, I quoted in second reading, who was, you know, quite upset at this concept of limiting debate and democracy . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we have already debated this matter. Please move on.

**Mr. Bilous:** It relates to this bill as far as how quickly we are passing it.

**The Chair:** The debate on that motion has already been settled. It is not relatable to this bill.

**Mr. Bilous:** It's relatable and will be in a matter of about a minute, when we then move into third reading, which has closure on it as well.

You know, this bill is an awful piece of legislation and unnecessary, quite frankly. I mean, really, this is just an excuse to pave the way for a blue-ribbon panel to come back to government, and for the government . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 23, agreed to on June 19, 2019, I must now put every question necessary for the disposal of Bill 9 at this stage.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

On the remaining clauses?

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 9 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:57 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard  
Dreeshen  
Ellis

Issik  
Jones  
Kenney

Rowswell  
Sawhney  
Schow

Fir	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Long	Singh
Glasgo	Madu	Stephan
Glubish	McIver	Toews
Goodridge	Milliken	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Horner	Nixon, Jeremy	Wilson
Hunter	Orr	Yao

Against:		
Bilous	Dang	Sabir
Carson	Deol	Shepherd
Ceci	Irwin	Sigurdson, L.
Dach	Phillips	

Totals: For – 33 Against – 11

[The remaining clauses of Bill 9 agreed to]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 9.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 9. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** Any opposed in the report, please say no. In my opinion, the ayes have it. That motion is carried and so ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 9

#### Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance is rising on debate.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise tonight to move third reading of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act.

The intent of Bill 9 is to simply postpone wage reopener arbitration hearings until October 31, 2019. It will temporarily delay hearings for 24 public-sector collective agreements. I've said this before and I'll say it again: this is not a cancellation of arbitration hearings, nor is it about wages. This is a procedural delay, full stop. It's a four-month postponement of the process. This bill and any regulations that might need to be created would not determine wages.

The proof is in the bill's heavily discussed preamble. Yes, the preamble talks about balancing the budget, but it also talks about providing high-quality front-line services for Albertans, and it talks about significant changes that have happened in Alberta's economy. Mr. Speaker, it talks about the time that we need, time to gather information about Alberta's economy both from the MacKinnon panel and from other information sources. The intent

of Bill 9 is described in the whole preamble, not just the parts that some in this House like to talk about.

Mr. Speaker, there's no denying that Alberta's public sector does important work. We have great respect for what they do for Albertans every day. They need to know that we are not denying their right to arbitration, just postponing the process temporarily for four months. We need more time to consider Alberta's economic situation. That's really what we're looking for here. It would be fiscally irresponsible if we proceeded with arbitrations without making an informed decision. It's not a fair process when one side doesn't have all the information they need. And it would be unfair and, frankly, disrespectful to Albertans if we represented their interest without having examined the province's economic situation first.

Putting forward this legislation was not a step we took lightly. But we urgently needed more time: more time to understand the impacts of our rapidly changing economic situation, more time to receive and review the MacKinnon panel's recommendation, and more time to plan our path forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues in this House who are supporting fiscal responsibility and informed decision-making through their support of the bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 9 this evening? The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will rise to speak to this bill at this late or early hour. Unfortunately, this will be my last opportunity to speak to this bill. I know that that disappoints most members in this Assembly.

It's frustrating when, you know, members of the opposition especially but all members have such limited time to debate a bill but also limited time to go out and consult. I mean, this is one of the main points that the opposition, the current government but when they were in opposition, made as far as trying to send most if not all bills that our government put forward to a committee. Their argument was that they needed time to go out and consult with Albertans, consult with their constituents.

2:20

What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that this bill was introduced, I believe, on Monday. It feels like this is a three-day bill. Now, I recognize the fact that there have been unique circumstances in the history of this province and of this place, where there, I believe, are four bills in the history of the Alberta Legislature that were passed, all three readings unanimously, in one day. That required unanimous consent of the House. In fact, the last bill was the recognition of the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day that our government brought forward and with unanimous consent of all opposition parties passed all three readings in one day. I believe the bill previous to that was one brought in by the hon. Gene Zwozdesky when he was minister, which recognized the Holodomor, or the death by starvation that happened to millions of Ukrainians under the Stalinist regime. So there have been a couple of different bills that have passed, but, again, those required unanimous consent.

I can tell you that this current government knew that the opposition would not give unanimous consent to attack working people. Because of their agenda, which I'll speak about shortly – because I think it's important that Albertans and even the members of government, the government backbench, are aware of the real reason that the government is pushing this through at breakneck speeds. You know, I mean, if this was just a matter, as

the Minister of Finance says, of delaying negotiations until we get a better picture of Alberta's finances – although that's quite rich considering this government was very, very quick to introduce a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate tax cut. You'd think that may have a little bit of an impact on the bottom line of the balance sheet.

But, regardless, it's convenient that as we speak, there are three different public-sector unions that have been negotiating with the government, and I believe that they will go into binding arbitration if this bill is not passed and proclaimed by this weekend. What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the reason for this breakneck speed isn't just to delay talks; it's to ensure that the government won't be going into binding arbitration with these three different unions. Of course, the reason for binding arbitration is to ensure that there is an agreement reached and a fair agreement for both sides.

Really, this is an attack not just on those unions but on, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, working people. For me it's frustrating to have our time of debate in this House limited. If I'm not mistaken, we have less than two hours to speak to this bill. We had six hours in committee. Despite the fact that the Government House Leader claims that there wasn't closure brought in on second reading, there wasn't time allocation brought in but there was closure. By moving the previous question, it ensured that the opposition couldn't make any amendments, either a referral or a reasoned amendment, to ensure that members, all members, have an opportunity, an ample opportunity, to speak to this. For me the frustration is that second reading started a little after midnight and, once again, we're now in third reading at 2:25 in the morning, when most Albertans are sleeping, and the government is trying to pass this as quickly as possible.

Now, I appreciate that our government did in one bill bring in motions for closure, which I'm sure the Government House Leader will be very quick to point out, which I do recognize. However, we did not pass or attempt to pass the bill in three days' time. What it does is that it basically handcuffs and inhibits private members', including the opposition's, especially the opposition's, ability to go out and talk to Albertans about it to ensure that there aren't unintended consequences.

Again, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board talks about how this merely just delays arbitration and does not dictate an outcome. I would contest that if that was the case, then the one section, section 5(c), shouldn't be in this bill, which allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council, cabinet, to make regulations "respecting any other matter that the [cabinet] considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act." You know what that does, Mr. Speaker? To put it into plain language, that gives the Premier and Executive Council the ability to not just impose contracts on public-sector workers; they can also impose rollbacks on public-sector workers. That is a direct attack on working people and the people who provide incredibly important services to all Albertans.

Now, I respect the fact that maybe the intent of the government is wanting to look at ways to be a little more cost-efficient or cost-conscious when they're looking at the global budget. But, again, you can't have one action where you race out and give up 4 and a half billion dollars of your budget for one sector or group, yet on the other hand tell another that you're absolutely hitting the brakes. I mean, the reality is – and the Minister of Finance and the Premier will know – that when we sat down to negotiate with the public sector, that was on a bunch of contracts that came up at the depths of the recession, and in good faith our government sat down with them, and they agreed to for the most part taking zero per cent increases.

But the point of this, Mr. Speaker, is that it was agreed to. It wasn't legislated. It wasn't shoved down their throats. It wasn't imposed on them. It was done through good faith and through bargaining and through sitting down with them. This government clearly has little respect for our public sector. For me it's quite frustrating. Then to rub salt into a wound, stifling debate and invoking closure at every stage of this bill, quite frankly, is undemocratic.

I want to read to you, Mr. Speaker, a few quotes from – now, let's see here. I believe it is the Premier who said this in his role in the federal House of Commons. On December 8, 1998, he had said:

The minister said that this bill respects the finest traditions of the parliamentary system. If that is the case, then why did he cut short democracy? Why did he cut short democratic deliberation when it came to this bill?

On the same day, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed said:

The government announced its intention to invoke time allocation on both the report stage and third reading only two hours into the debate. I must say that while I commend the minister for the work that he, his officials and his parliamentary secretary have put into this bill, I think it is disappointing, to say the least, that the government has, in passing such a critically important piece of legislation, so carelessly and callously disregarded the best traditions of democratic deliberation in this place.

Again on May 27, 1998, Mr. Speaker, the Premier had said in his former role:

I begin by condemning this government for allowing itself to trample on democracy and democratic deliberation by invoking closure and time allocation on [at that time] Bill C-36.

Mr. Speaker, on November 2, 1999, the Premier said:

Mr. Speaker, there we have it. They always blame it on the rules, but when it comes to an option to expand debate and to listen to the diverse voices of a pluralistic society, government members say no, no, no every time.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good one. I can't believe this wasn't ruled unparliamentary. Back on November 2 as well the Premier in his former role as a Member of Parliament said:

Mr. Speaker, I would not deign to suggest that member is a thief. He voted with his colleagues to take from me the right to speak on that bill by limiting debate through time allocation.

2:30

**An Hon. Member:** It seems relevant.

**Mr. Bilous:** It seems relevant. It seems a little rich that when the shoe is on the other foot, Mr. Speaker, at that point it's an affront to the democratic right of members, but when the Member for Calgary-Lougheed has the privilege of being in the Premier's chair, well, I guess those rules don't quite apply. There are words for that.

This is quite interesting. My list of excerpts of the hon. Premier is not ending at all. We have . . . [interjection] I'm sure that the Member for Calgary-Hays is very interested to hear me quote his leader. From May 25, 1998:

It is regretful, and I say this as a new member, that the government has failed to restrain its excessive use of what really should be a very rare lever to limit debate in this place.

Now, that's the Premier. I mean, my goodness.

Let's get on to the Minister of Environment and Parks when he was an opposition member. Back on December 9, 2015, the now Minister of Environment and Parks, the Member for Rimbeey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre:

Now, Madam Speaker, as you no doubt know, the government chooses not to speak to their bills. That's unfortunate. I can see why they would want to end debate and go home, but the people

that sent me here and have sent my colleagues in the Official Opposition party as well as the third party and independent colleagues in this Assembly, our constituents, have made it clear that they want us to speak to this bill. They want us to debate this bill because it affects their lives.

I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that there are over 200,000 men and women whose lives are being affected by this piece of legislation about which clearly, by the actions of this Premier and government, they don't care.

The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was quite articulate when he said on December 9, 2015:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP is pulling every trick out of their book to ram through legislation that farmers and ranchers are simply asking to be consulted on . . .

Probably, similarly, the men and women whom this piece of legislation is going to impact would like to be consulted. That was my own addition for *Hansard*.

. . . tricks that the NDP once railed against. Once upon a time the Government House Leader said that, quote, this time allocation thing is a way for the government to short-circuit democracy. Premier, we've seen consultation ignored, debate muzzled, and now democracy subverted. Is there any principle you won't sacrifice to ram through your agenda?

Well, that's interesting, Mr. Speaker. I wonder how the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat feels today about what his government and his Premier are doing.

Mr. Speaker, it's insulting. It's insulting to millions of Albertans, who elected all of us to this place to speak on their behalf, to have that debate stifled, to have closure invoked on our right. Quite frankly, it's not just the act of time allocation but the speed at which this bill is going through. In fact, if the shoe was on the other foot, I'm sure the former Wildrose Party would have spared no expense to put on a massive advertising campaign.

In fact, I think the last time that we did invoke closure was during Bill 6, and we know that there were thousands of people that came down to the Alberta Legislature. With that bill, despite the fact that there was closure, there was much more time for the members to go out and talk to their constituents. In three days' time, Mr. Speaker, it is extremely limiting for us to be able to engage members. The other thing is that I'm not sure what time we would be engaging our constituents, considering that we are spending, you know, copious amounts of time in this place.

Mr. Speaker, I think the government still has an opportunity to do the right thing and vote down this bill, to sit down with our public-sector unions, that provide such critically important services to this province, and show them, through actions, that they respect the work they do. I find it insulting and, I think, so do many of the spokespeople for labour. When the Minister of Finance stands up and says, "We respect the work that they've done; we appreciate it," well, you sure have a funny way of showing it, Minister. For me, my understanding of respect would be to sit down with them and to bargain in good faith, not to pull these types of heavy-handed moves. I wanted to say "shenanigans," but that almost makes light of it.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that we have in this bill. Again, we know that it's affecting 24 different collective agreements and will impact a number of different folks. To contrast, what our government did for years in this province – there wasn't any labour unrest. In fact, again, as I had mentioned, we were able to sit down in good faith with teachers, with nurses, with support staff to ask and negotiate and came to – I mean, obviously, those folks are very, very understanding. Teachers took zeros three years in a row and did that with the thought and hope that the future round of negotiations, as the economy started to improve, would at least mean that the government would have the courage to sit down with them and bargain. If you ask me, it is a cowardly act to ram through

legislation which strips the rights of working people in this province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, for the past four years we've listened to a number of members who now sit in the government caucus talk about their disdain for unions, their attack on the very value and purpose that unions serve, which, of course, is to ensure that their members are represented with a collective voice, which is much stronger than coming back as individuals.

Quite honestly, I lost my train of thought right there, Mr. Speaker. These things happen at this time of day although I'm sure one of my colleagues can help me get back my train of thought here.

**Mr. Dach:** Talk about the children.

**Ms Phillips:** Is there a Top Cat in this story?

**Mr. Bilous:** I don't think I could discuss or retell that story that the Member for Edmonton-McClung so eloquently shared with all members of the Assembly.

Again, I just want to draw attention – I'm sure my time is coming to a close – to that section of the bill which does much more than what the Finance minister is sharing with this House, saying that this merely delays negotiations with the public sector. Again, that's section 5(c), which likely will be unconstitutional, Mr. Speaker. What this government is doing under a guise of, "We need to look at our numbers": again, if that was the case, why doesn't that apply to the 4 and a half billion dollar corporate tax cut that you folks so quickly pushed through? You can't have it both ways.

So I call on all members to oppose this bill.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak in debate? I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a) – no, on the main bill itself. I forgot that the hon. Opposition House Leader does not have 29(2)(a), so I will take this opportunity to respond to a couple of the comments that he had made. It appears that we're now debating closure. I'm unaware of a closure motion at the moment on third reading of Bill 9, but I guess that's where we're at now, so we could spend maybe the next few hours discussing a hypothetical closure motion.

2:40

The hon. Opposition House Leader spent some time talking about the fact that he believes that when he was in government, just a few short weeks ago and over the last four years, they only used time allocation once. I hate to be the one to have to inform him of this, but he is wrong about that. Interestingly enough, the last time that the last NDP government used the time allocation motion, it was to force a vote on the Alberta Election Commissioner being put into place.

I know that my friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays is laughing because he remembers that debate, which got quite heated in this place. He talks about what was an issue where there were certainly some concerns that were being raised by the then opposition of the day in regard to that appointment. We felt that it was important for us to be able to spend some time debating that issue and having a conversation about whether or not that was the right direction for the Legislature to go. Interestingly enough, because of that, the government at the time decided to bring in time allocation after six hours.

Now, the hon. Member for – at the time she had the pleasure of being the Deputy Government House Leader, and I believe the hon.

member's riding changed, so I'm just checking, Mr. Speaker – Calgary-Mountain View, who was then the Justice minister and Deputy Government House Leader, said: "We began debating the motion [yesterday]. It has been debated multiple times, for a total of about six hours." She then proceeded to move a time allocation motion for one hour, so seven hours on just that. There are several – several – examples of the NDP, when they were in government, moving time allocation. It's happened before. Now, I personally think that it should be used sparingly by a government.

I always appreciate when the hon. Opposition House Leader is quoting me. I do appreciate that he takes time to read my comments in *Hansard*. I knew somebody was.

**Mr. Bilous:** Over and over.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. But the reality is that those comments were made about a piece of legislation that we felt was important to us when we were in opposition, and I respect that the Opposition House Leader feels that this is an important issue for him to be able to speak about. I think, though, Mr. Speaker, that it's important that we're clear, again, though, that there's been lots of opportunity provided to the opposition, and there will continue to be more opportunity for the opposition.

We started on this legislation, Mr. Speaker, last week, not this week. The opposition continues to say that this bill was brought in on Monday. It was not. It was brought in on Thursday of last week. We were in this Legislature until about 3 o'clock a.m. on Monday night. We were in the Legislature last night till about 2:30, accommodating the opposition, again to give them as much opportunity for them to be able to spend some time on this legislation. And now here we are again, at a quarter to 3, still working on this legislation on behalf of the people of Alberta. I thank the opposition for participating in that process. I hope that they continue to do it. But I still remain concerned that the majority of the time that the opposition are speaking about Bill 9, a bill that they continue to indicate that they're concerned about, they're actually not speaking about Bill 9.

I think that's what brings us to the point that we are at in the Chamber today, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that you saw it right now with the Official Opposition House Leader, who just rose and spent his entire 20-minute speech, in response to the hon. Finance minister, talking about a closure motion that has not even been moved, not about this legislation that he's indicated that he is here to argue about. You know, I think that's the point. We're at a point now where it's been pretty clear that the opposition is going to continue to delay the progress of the House. There's nothing wrong with the opposition standing and fighting on a bill that they think is important to them. That's their job. I respect that. We're going out of our way to make sure that can happen. We're calling legislation late at night to give them an opportunity to do it. [interjections] They laugh, but they've been given ample opportunities. Again, we're sitting round the clock for the people of Alberta to give the opposition the opportunity to be able to talk about these motions that are important to them.

I just want to talk about my friend the former Government House Leader, now retired, Brian Mason, a good friend to many across the aisle, I am sure, a friend to many of us over here, and think about some of the talks that he would bring when he was bringing in time allocation. He says one quote, and this is what I like: "I've been in opposition, and I know the game. They try to slow things down so that government has to invoke closure and then they point to the government and say: look, the government is being very undemocratic, and they don't want to debate."

That was a pretty good one, Mr. Speaker. I would submit to you and through you to the Chamber that we've seen that the last few days, again, not wanting to debate the bill but wanting to speak about closure so that they can now turn the debate about the hon. Finance minister's bill into a conversation about whether or not we're being democratic and stifling their debate. Brian Mason, December 8, 2015: The people of Alberta expect us to be here and do our job and get the business of the House done. I know the Opposition House Leader was probably in the House when his House leader was saying that the people of Alberta expect us to be here and do our job and get the business of the House done.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Alberta do expect us to be here, and they do expect us to get our job done when we come to this Chamber. The reason I bring that up is the other point the Opposition House Leader raised in his comment was to complain that we are here late at night. Now, we come to this Chamber to do work. This Chamber sits long hours. It's an important part of the process. I do appreciate that the Opposition House Leader lives here in Edmonton, so he may be less dedicated to wanting to stay here at night as some of us who are far away from home right now.

I said last time, when this conversation was taking place in the 24-hour sitting, to the media that I was 300 kilometres away from my family here and all I had was an empty motel waiting for me, Mr. Speaker. Maybe that's why I'm more eager to work late into the night on behalf of my constituents when I'm in Edmonton. I appreciate that, but they . . . I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West is chiming in and heckling. It's been a while since she's heckled me. It's great to see her back in the House, and I look forward to seeing her comments. Mr. Speaker . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment and Parks referred to a member being absent at a certain point in time and needs to apologize and withdraw.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, that's ridiculous. I did not refer to a member being absent from the House. I referred to a member being in the House. This is probably what happens as you get late into debate. I clearly said it was great to see the member back in the House. Mr. Speaker, it's great to see you back in the House. It's great to see the Premier back in the House. It's great to see the Official Opposition House Leader back in the House. It's great to see all the members back inside the House. This is not a point of order.

**The Speaker:** I would say, while I agree it's not a point of order to refer to people being in the House, the challenge is that we are doing indirectly what we can't do directly. I would caution the hon. member, but this point of order is not well taken.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I assure that it was not my intent. I am happy to see the member back in the House. Congratulations on returning to the House.

Now, we are back to what we were talking about, which is, again, the fact that we're on Bill 9. We are in third reading. The Official Opposition indicates that this is an important piece of legislation to them, that they want to continue to do that, and the government is going to continue to provide them that opportunity. I look forward to hearing the comments from the hon. members in the opposition party as they debate this legislation. I hope, Mr. Speaker, as we go

through third reading of Bill 9, that the opposition will actually begin to start to talk about the bill.

But, I will submit to you, Mr. Speaker, as I get ready to yield the floor, that as long as they continue this behaviour and wanting to talk about closure and not about the legislation, they prove my point, which is, as the former House leader Brian Mason always said, and I'm going to close with this one because I heard him say this many times when he did time allocation. I already said it once, but I just like it: "I've been in opposition, and I know the game. They try to slow things down so that the government has to invoke closure, and then they point to the government and say: look, the government is being very undemocratic, and they don't want to debate." Brian Mason, December 8, 2015, while invoking time allocation on Bill 6, the agriculture safety bill.

Mr. Speaker, you see that already again tonight from the Official Opposition House Leader. I suspect you'll see it again throughout the remainder of the morning because it appears the opposition doesn't want to debate this bill. They just want to debate whether or not the government is being democratic or not. I assure you we'll continue to provide the opposition as much time as possible, but we will not stifle the progress of legislation through this House because on April 16 Albertans voted in record numbers to give us instructions on what to do when we come here. We will do the job that we've been sent here to do despite the opposition trying to block the progress that Albertans have asked for.

2:50

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

**Mr. Dang:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise in this House and respond with some brief comments for the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks here. I think it is actually somewhat rich that he would enter this Assembly and speak at length about how their government is doing nothing wrong and that this is business as usual, when we can see very clearly the clock has almost struck 3 a.m. here in the Assembly. This government is clearly trying to ram through this legislation in the cover of darkness.

Really, it's a bill that should have deserved more daylight. It's a bill that workers should have had the opportunity to examine, our constituents should have had the opportunity to examine, and all members of this Assembly should have had more time to examine. But really the hon. Government House Leader there clearly does not agree that Albertans and democracy deserve a chance in this Assembly. He clearly does not agree that democracy includes free and open debate in this Assembly because it appears that they think that 3 a.m. is an appropriate time that we can demonstrate to Albertans what is happening here in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it is really rich when the Government House Leader tries to quote previous instances of time allocation being used. This is really unprecedented. We have spent basically three days debating this bill. I admit we have spent quite a bit of time over these three days on this bill, but by and large it has been under the cover of darkness. Nearly every night this week we have been here till 3 or past 3 a.m. The reality of it is that it's because this government is too embarrassed to do this during the daytime. They don't want Albertans to be able to see what is happening. That's why the Government House Leader won't put this up during the days. I believe he is trying to do this to avoid having Albertans see what is going on in this bill, workers see what is going on, and that is something that he should be ashamed of and I think the government should be ashamed of and every single

member of the government bench should be ashamed of, front and back.

I think it's also very clearly something that if they knew that they were going to be breaking the law, which I think they did with this bill, they wouldn't want Albertans to see what was happening, and that's why they would use this veil of darkness. Only by moonlight are we having the opportunity to debate this here, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that is a real shame.

It's a real shame that even with this unprecedented cover of darkness and restriction on the ability for us to debate, members like the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland would actually put in bright orange earplugs given to him by the hon. Premier. That is something that is absolutely shocking and unprecedented here in this Assembly, to be so disrespectful to other members who were duly elected here to this Assembly and not just to these members but also to all of the constituents of every single person who represents a seat in this Assembly. It is something that is absolutely an offence to this Assembly, and every single member should take offence. It is something that shows contempt towards the Assembly. It's something that shows that the proceedings of this House are not important enough. It is something that shows that the proceedings of this House should be tuned out, and it shows very clearly that the member cares not for the process of democracy.

That is something that is shameful, and it should be embarrassing, and the member should actually apologize for that not just to this House or to Albertans but really to his own constituents, for not doing his job in this Assembly and listening to Albertans and listening to the voices that Albertans sent here. That is what we were elected to do, Mr. Speaker, to debate in this House. But when the Premier decides to act in basically blatant disregard for the procedures and practices of this House, that is something that all Albertans should be concerned about. That is something I believe all Albertans are concerned about.

We will see, Mr. Speaker, when the sun rises and when Albertans discover that the Premier really has no regard for the rights of workers and has so little regard, in fact, that he doesn't want us to debate it during the daytime, and during the nighttime when it is debated, he would rather put in earplugs than actually listen to the debate in this Assembly. I think that is something that all Albertans will be offended by. I think that is something that all Albertans will understand is not what is expected of government, is not what is expected of their legislators, and is certainly not what they elected MLAs to do here tonight. Mr. Speaker, I am offended, and I think you should be as well. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Point of order?

**Mr. Dang:** I believe the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland was actually just recording me on his cellphone.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called. It appears that the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland would like to speak to the point of order.

#### **Point of Order Use of Electronic Devices in the Chamber**

**Mr. Getson:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard a lot of noise this evening and all the concerns about hearing loss. Obviously, the hon. members here are well aware of occupational health and safety records because they are completely tied in with the working



communities. Noise-induced hearing loss is no laughing matter, nor is tinnitus. I've been recording the decibel readings of these individuals to my left, which have peaked out at over 97 to 100 decibel readings, and 85 decibel readings equates to what could be sustained as noise-induced hearing loss. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has a very loud, boisterous voice. I have tinnitus in my left ear and, as such, had to plug out some of the noise lest all of their arguments fall upon deaf ears in this Chamber entirely. One of the members had checked earlier in the day to verify that I'm actually recording the noise in this Chamber coming from the hon. member to my left.

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege.

**The Speaker:** Keeping in mind that a point of privilege is a serious matter, I'm happy to hear the hon. member's concerns.

### Privilege

#### Use of Electronic Devices in the Chamber

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is very clearly established in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* as well as *Beauchesne's* that the practice of recording a member in the Assembly is a breach of the privilege of the Assembly. The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has actually just admitted to this Assembly in his remarks regarding the point of order that he was indeed recording the noise levels in this Assembly, his own words, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I would assure you that I did indeed, and other members here did indeed, hear the words that he said he was recording this Assembly. That is a very serious breach of privilege of the Assembly. I believe that he should immediately delete such a recording, and he should be held in contempt of this House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation is rising to speak to the point of privilege.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say that I was listening to the exchange just now. While I acknowledge that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland mentioned the word "recording," I think it's fairly obvious to me and everybody else in the House that the word he probably should have used was "measuring," which is not the same thing and is certainly not a breach of privilege. I appreciate that the word he used was "recording." I heard it. I'm sure that *Hansard* will say that, but I think it's pretty obvious to all of us that he used the wrong word, and the right word he probably should have used, which is not a breach of privilege, is he was "measuring." As such, I don't think it meets the standard for the very serious accusation that's being made by the member from the opposite side.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, if he wishes to provide some comment.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes, sir. I used the wrong word. It's a measuring device, an application for reading, not recording of either video or audio. It's simply taking a reading. The hon. member has obviously corrected my error in word usage at this early hour.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to speak to the point of privilege? Seeing and hearing none, I would agree that this particular situation is not a point of privilege. While it may be unconventional to measure the level of debate inside the Chamber with respect to technologies that are available and/or not, there is

no record of the information that has been shared or said. There is no ability for the member to then share that outside of the Chamber should he ever choose to do so. It's very, very clear that this is not a point of privilege. I consider the matter concluded, and we are continuing.

3:00

### Speaker's Ruling

#### Referring to an Absent Member

**The Speaker:** The other thing, though, that I will add is that even the chair from time to time can make an error. When he or she does that, we should recognize and acknowledge that. Moments ago the Opposition House Leader raised a point of order with respect to the member, essentially referring to the fact that a member had not been present at some point in time by referring to their presence. In *Beauchesne's* 481(c) it is very clear, so apologies from the chair to the members, that referring to the "presence or absence" of a specific member. As such, very clearly, the member referred to the presence.

I see the hon. Transportation minister rising. He must be rising to withdraw and apologize on behalf of the Government House Leader.

**Mr. McIver:** It's like you can read my mind, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Government House Leader I would like to rise, apologize for, and withdraw the remarks about the presence of a member in the House.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Debate Continued

**The Speaker:** We are on debate of third reading of Bill 9, and I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill. I will say that I can understand that some hon. members don't want to hear the opposition speak, but I will say that I will exercise my rights and privilege to speak in this place. I will not be measured on what kind of decibels I may or may not use, and I will seek permission from no man to talk in whatever tones that women speak in. I am here to speak to Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill. I will not be tone-policed while I do it, hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. This bill will define labour relations for at least the next three years.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The hon. Minister of Transportation.

### Point of Order

#### Addressing the Chair

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we just heard an example of the hon. member referring to my colleague from Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland in the second person as opposed to the third person, and I would ask you to insist that the hon. member address her remarks through the Speaker and not directly to another member of the House.

**The Speaker:** I would agree with the hon. Minister of Transportation that the member should be referring their comments through the chair, and I would encourage her to do so.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will rephrase and say that I will not be tone-policed by any member of this House, including the previous member or the Minister of Transportation, for that matter.

Now, this bill will define labour relations, Mr. Speaker, for at least the next three years or at least until the courts do the inevitable, which is strike it down. Let's talk about the mechanisms enabled in the law. It allows the government to delay arbitration in approximately 24 collective agreements covering approximately 180,000 people who work for the broadly conceived public sector. It covers the direct Alberta public service. It covers those who work for Alberta Health Services, many postsecondary institutions, educational institutions, schools, school boards, and others. This bill sets the stage for broad rollbacks of wages in the order of 5 per cent, 10 per cent – who knows? It will reduce pay for nurses, teachers, corrections officers, custodians, educational assistants, social workers, counsellors.

These are human beings, Mr. Speaker. They are Albertans. They built this province with us. They are our neighbours. They are our caregivers. They are the people who protect our air, land, and water. They keep us safe. They guard our prisons and put out our fires. They teach our kids. They are every single one of us, and, yes, they are our brothers and sisters; at least, they're mine. This is the first step away from collective bargaining in good faith, a basic human right affirmed by the courts and a fundamental pillar in the rule of law in a country such as Canada. The government must rethink the use of this legislation. They have so far failed to take our advice and scrap this legislation, this hammer, this affront to democracy and the rule of law, but they could still. They could still hold off on interfering in the normal course of bargaining for the arbitration decisions that are to take place as early as this Saturday.

Let's talk about this assertion, that I and others have made in this House, that it is unconstitutional. This bill, on the face of it, is unconstitutional. Why is it? This is an important point. Let's start with the facts. Of course, it's important to talk about values and fairness, working people trying to pay their bills, but what I want to focus on first are the underlying facts of the assertion.

I still believe in facts, Mr. Speaker. I still believe in reason that guides human progress. I still believe that some things are objectively true. Perhaps in 2019 that's a naive belief on my part as we see an unprecedented, in the postwar period, assault on the institutions that underpin our politics, our economy, and our society, but the foundation of the law around collective bargaining remains. That foundation is good faith. It lies at the heart of private contracts as well. Colloquially, this concept might be just characterized very simply as: you're going to do what you say that you're going to do, and if you didn't actually enumerate it within the contract, then you can trust that the other party will act reasonably, tell the truth, exercise restraint in any power that they may have within the terms of the contract or in negotiating new terms outside of an existing contract.

The collective bargaining right also has a different element to it. It's not just good faith, like it is in private-sector contracts. It's also protected under the Charter in a different way. Under section 2 of the Charter we are guaranteed rights to free association, which is to say that we are able, Mr. Speaker, to choose our friends, faith, bowling league. The state may not, within the obvious reasonable limits in terms of hate speech and other specifically enumerated limits under section 1, choose who my friends are, who I talk to, who I hang out with, who I make agreements with, who I make plans with, who I help, who I donate money to.

Similarly, the state may not interfere in my right to get together with my co-workers to talk to the employer about my wages or my working conditions. This has been upheld by successive Supreme Court decisions. The state may not compromise my individual liberty in this regard, my liberty to freely associate. The state may want to. Government people or others or their associated sock puppets may want to call people names for freely associating in a collective bargaining relationship. They may want to cast aspersions on the democratically elected leadership of whatever group people form to talk to their employer. They have freedom of speech rights to do so. They may say what they want. They have a free speech right, Mr. Speaker – anyone does – to be dismissive, to be arrogant, rude, obstinate, or mean to custodians, to educational assistants, to orderlies, or to anyone else who works hard for an honest day's pay. They have that right. But what they may not do is get in the way of the process of freely associating with one another and then bargaining in good faith.

Now, Conservatives do have the right to say mean things about front-line workers. They do it all the time. They exercise those rights as often, as loudly as they can, and that is fine. That is their right. But despite all that noise, the law of this land is that we must have the ability to get together with our co-workers and hammer out the details of our wages and working conditions.

What's more, section 2(d) of the Charter also guarantees us the right to a process when we get together with our co-workers, and if we are not allowed or able, reasonably able, to withdraw our labour as part of that process, the Supreme Court affirmed in the Sask Fed of Labour decision – I believe it was 2016 – that the right of association is actually relatively meaningless without the process that can ultimately end in the withdrawal of labour. That was the decision rendered by the Supreme Court a couple of years ago.

The courts have found that these rights to free association, to collective bargaining are not just *carte blanche*, but they have to be real. They have to be substantive, and any impediments to them have to be proportionate, have to be last resort, have to be justified. A number of tests have been developed in the jurisprudence on this over the years. In fact, what they can't do is to have an ulterior motive. This is what the courts have found. In fact, when the B.C. Supreme Court struck down a law very similar to this one – there were, in fact, two of them that were struck down by the B.C. Supreme Court – it was appealed and then appealed again at the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court upheld the original decision, which found that the state used its power to provoke labour action, that it passed those laws for reasons other than being proportionate or a justified last resort.

**3:10**

So what does this mean for the arbitration process? In this case it means that collective agreements have come to their wage reopener phase. The two parties are negotiating, but the negotiations have come to this phase of arbitration. Attempts at mediation have thus far stalled. Parties have a right to a meaningful continuation of that process but not to an outcome. Parties do not have any right to a wage increase. Employers don't have a right to a rollback. The parties must come and negotiate and bring their respective positions. If they cannot come to agreement, then they have a right to go to an arbitrator and make that case, Mr. Speaker.

But in this case we are frustrating that due process right by the long arm of the law and the long arm of government, where this government has not demonstrated the urgency, or they have not demonstrated that they are at the end of some kind of long, protracted exercise. This is, you know, barely a couple of months

in. And the claim that this interference in the normal course of collective bargaining is based on fiscal urgency is rather hollow given the fact that fiscal concerns can be and are always part of the negotiation process and the arbitrator's decisions, Mr. Speaker.

You know, it's shocking to me that that piece isn't fully understood by the Minister of Finance, clearly, or officials within the Premier's office. It portrays to me that either they don't know how to negotiate and how to go in there and make a deal – so much for, you know, some of the members' enthusiastic support of the great deal-maker to the south – don't know how to negotiate, maybe. Maybe they don't understand how to do negotiations. Maybe they don't trust their own negotiators on the government side. It's possible. Maybe they don't trust the officials giving them advice.

Or maybe the goal isn't this at all. Maybe the goal is in fact to create disorder among organized labour in order to find an enemy, build a political case for wage rollbacks, and set up a narrative of the undeserving union member versus the rest of Albertans to divide us from one another; from our neighbours; from the people who protect our air, land, and water; from the educational assistants in my and many of my hon. colleagues' kids' classrooms. Maybe the ultimate aim here, as we frustrate the good-faith process that is based on the rule of law, maybe the ultimate game here is to play politics with teachers, with public safety, with corrections officers, with orderlies, with lab techs. all of those people that we rely on every day to keep us safe, to keep us healthy, to keep us educated, to keep us cared for, Mr. Speaker.

Now, every once in a while – perhaps it's the late hour – the government side betrays a fit of transparency. Instead of saying, "Oh, no, we need time to assess the fiscal situation," which I have already described as extremely thin gruel and not really a reason, Mr. Speaker, every once in a while we get a fit of transparency and, you know, comments that may in fact end up in the courts at some point, which is that folks have said: well, this is about balancing the budget. In other words, what we have from the government side is already an admission that this is about rollbacks. They have already taken a bargaining position in this House, and they are betraying the fact that they are getting in the way of the rule of law in order to push a specific outcome.

This is not about taking several months to understand revenue projections, which should take a few minutes. It's not about that. This is about, certainly, balancing the budget. I can imagine that there are, in fact, challenges with a path to balance when you blow a 4 and a half billion dollar hole on the revenue side in that budget. It becomes awfully tough to balance things. For sure, that balance is going to have to come from the wage bill for nurses, teachers, health care workers, educational assistants, caregivers for seniors, and others, Mr. Speaker. What we have here is a very, very transparent admission, in actual fact, at the late hour during Committee of the Whole, that this isn't at all about waiting to understand the finances better or to get a hold of the projections. No, it's about, quote, unquote, balancing the budget, which, as I said, is a direct interference in the normal course of bargaining and is, due to how labour relations work, in actual fact unlawful.

That brings me to my final point. This bill is not being brought in for the reasons that the government claims. This bill is being brought in for political, not economic reasons. This bill is being brought in to set up a narrative between teachers, nurses, caregivers, and others and other people in Alberta. It is being brought in as a tactic, as a way to cast working people as the enemy of this government and Albertans, and they are not my enemy, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the Minister of Transportation has risen.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I tried to listen with care to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West. I just wonder how she feels about betraying her own arguments. She said in part of her debate that two months is not a long and protracted period of time, yet she is complaining that four months, which is what the hon. Treasury Board president is asking for in order to gather information, in order to hear from the MacKinnon panel and to come to understand the situation that the government is in after four years of severe mismanagement and poor governance by the previous government – I wonder how she feels about the fact that the opposition side has been complaining for hours and hours and hours and hours and hours. I think, again, we heard earlier that 23 of the 24 members spoke on a previous reading. Despite the protests of not being able to speak, everybody that wanted to speak apparently could speak and did speak.

However, I wonder how the hon. member feels about betraying her own arguments and the opposition's own arguments about what a long delay this is. Really, now we're down to a matter of degree. In terms of whether the delay is right or wrong, which I've heard the opposition say, earlier on this morning we heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview say – and this isn't an exact quote. I'm paraphrasing because I don't have the *Hansard* in front of me. It was something very close to the effect of: well, a one-month delay I could understand. So we've got the Member for Edmonton-Riverview saying that one month is okay. We've got the Member for Lethbridge-West saying that two months is not a long and protracted period of time. Now we're only down to a matter of degree, not the protests of something being wrong here that they've been trying to sell in this House for the last dozens of hours though they would call it shorter than that.

3:20

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that I'm curious about how the member feels about completely destroying the opposition's arguments against this bill, which is an honest and sincere attempt by the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board only to have enough time to put the government in a position to move forward with a reasonable amount of information and a reasonable amount of time to consider the government's position before they move into the arbitration process, not to take the process away from our very valued and important public servants but, rather, to put the government in a position to have an adequate amount of feedback and information before going into that important part of the process.

So, you know, I'm curious about the reflections of the hon. member, if you just think of the arguments that the Member for Lethbridge-West just made, making it clear that she doesn't consider two months to be a long and protracted period of time, combined with the argument from the Member for Edmonton-Riverview that a delay would be okay, that, really, there's only a matter of degree, only a matter of disagreement on the length of the delay. It seems to be completely counter to the arguments that the opposition has tried to offer to this House about bad faith and a bunch of other accusations that are unfounded when their own members in the last couple of hours have actually destroyed all those arguments with their own words.

I'm curious about what the hon. member feels about unravelling the opposition's entire argument during the speech which she just concluded about five minutes ago.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West in the time that's remaining.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, that's an easy one, Mr. Speaker. This isn't about the specific times. It's about the arbitration on Saturday.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall rising to speak to third reading.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 9. I was listening to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board making the claim that this piece of legislation is simply postponing, that it's a procedural delay, that the preamble needs to be looked at in its totality, all of those arguments that I will deal with. I think that nobody agrees with the government on this, that it's simply postponing, that it's a procedural delay. In the minds of workers, in the minds of 180,000 workers, their representatives, they know very clearly that this law seeks to break their legally binding contracts and the rights therein. There is no doubt in the minds of all those Albertans.

So it's not simply postponing. It's breaking legally binding contracts with the public service that they entered into in good faith, that they entered into, I guess, believing that the government will follow their contract. These are Albertans who provide high-quality service each and every day in our communities, in all our ridings. These are teachers, nurses, workers that provide the services that we need and rely on pretty much on a daily basis, that our constituents need and rely on on pretty much a daily basis.

Then the Minister of Finance also argued that it's not fair that one side doesn't have the information they need. The only time they don't have information is when it comes to workers and their rights. Well, when they brought forward a tax cut, a 4-some billion dollar tax break, for the wealthy multinationals, they didn't blink for a second. They had every information to do that, and they just went ahead with that decision. Even though we know that they were claiming that their decision will create jobs, will create prosperity, all those things, we are still seeing layoffs in our economy, in Calgary.

Same thing, that it will be disrespectful to make a decision without full information: that was another argument. That's the reason, they said, that they're bringing forward this legislation. I think they made every other decision without full information or without whatever information they had, and only for Alberta workers they don't have needed information and they need to find and dig into that information. I think the Alberta public service in Finance and Treasury – my colleague from Calgary-Buffero will attest to that – are very capable people. They're very capable of providing that information and on very short notice. Had, I guess, government sought that information, they would have provided that information. It's, I guess, not really an argument that they don't have the information to make that decision.

I think they would exactly know that cutting taxes, giving a tax break would create a hole in the budget and would make the deficit bigger and will require cutting services, will require breaking these contracts, legally binding contracts. I think contracts are fundamental to our relationship to our everyday dealings. I think that earlier, when I was speaking to it, I mentioned that we enter into many different contracts each and every day, from acquiring cellphone service to leasing to buying a house, and every time when we enter into a contract, I think that's the understanding, that this document will govern the relationship of both parties.

Parties enter into these relationships in good faith that both sides will honour their obligations. If we lease a car, there is a certain payment that the person who is leasing will make, and the

dealership will get that money, but there will be new regulations that will govern their relationship, how maintenance will be dealt with. But here government is using law to change that relationship unilaterally, and that is unfair, that is undemocratic, and that is not lawful. That is not the best use of their mandate and their power.

Earlier in the Legislature I think that, if I recall correctly, I heard the Premier refer to article 26 of the universal declaration of human rights. That article is with respect to education, and the specific provision that was shared was that "parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." So if that universal declaration of rights is here to guide them with the decision-making, I think there is another article in the same declaration – that is article 23 – which says that everyone has a right to form a trade union, and they have a right to do so to protect their interests. Certainly, protecting their interests will cover their collective bargaining rights. That's the reason that they're given that right. So if a universal right is a guide to them when it comes to education, it should guide them also when it comes to Albertans' right to associate, Albertans' right to join trade unions, and Albertans' right to collective bargaining. The same kinds of rights are also enshrined in the International Labour Organization charter as well, which gives not only the freedom to associate but also the freedom to bargain collectively.

3:30

Now, I think it's settled in our jurisprudence coming from the Supreme Court of Canada that our Charter protects these collective bargaining rights, not just that they have a right to unionize. It also puts corresponding duties on the parties to do so in good faith, a duty on the parties to meet in good faith, to set a time frame for the process, to agree on time frames, and to engage in meaningful dialogue.

But here we are seeing a heavy-handed tool, a heavy-handed piece of legislation, a heavy-handed legislative hammer to break these contracts, to wage a war on these public-sector workers who are in wage talks, which certainly clearly shows that the government is not approaching all this in good faith. The government is breaching their constitutionally protected rights and breaching those rights by dint of law, which we know can be challenged. I think that in our daily lives, when somebody breaches the contract, what do we do? We take them to the courts. So this might create jobs for some lawyers, but I think that overall it's not a fair thing to do. It's not a piece of legislation that we should be debating at this hour.

I think it's important for us to debate this because this is impacting almost 200,000 Albertans. Their rights are at stake. We hear a lot from the other side, that they have a mandate. Sure, they have a mandate, but I don't think these 180,000 Albertans gave the UCP, this government, a mandate to walk roughshod on their constitutionally protected rights, on the rights the Charter grants them, on the rights that are talked about in the universal declaration of human rights, that's advocated by labour organizations. I don't think that Albertans gave this government a mandate to do so. There's still time. They should reconsider and think about it.

When they talk about their mandate and wanting their mandate to be respected, I think they should also respect the mandates that unions come with. Unions are made in a democratic process. It's always the majority of the bargaining unit members that come together to create those unions, and when they enter into these negotiations, enter into these agreements, these agreements are democratically ratified by the union membership. They have a mandate there, too. So if they want their mandate to be respected, I think they should respect the union's mandate, too.

We hear a lot about the mandate, but I think a couple of weeks ago I saw their mandate challenged by kids, youth, in Calgary, and none of them – it was there, but I saw their mandate getting challenged on Bill 8 today, this evening around 6, 6:30. So I think they should reconsider what mandate Albertans have given them and how much mandate they should use. Certainly, what they are doing through this piece of legislation is not something Albertans mandated them to do.

They talk about the budget deficits, and they talk about respect for Albertans' dollars. Sure, Albertans are concerned about budget deficits, and they want their tax dollars to be used prudently, but I don't think that they want this government to do so at the cost of their basic, Charter-protected, legally binding contractual rights. Albertans don't expect them to walk roughshod on their rights.

Similarly, they talk about deficits. I think that when we talk about deficits, deficits are not just on the books. We inherited a lot of deficits in 2015 in our communities. We inherited a deficit in our school system. That was the reason that we invested in 244 schools across this province. That was also a deficit that was not reflected on the books but that was present in our communities. If we look at our seniors' housing, we inherited a huge deficit. There is still, I guess, a list of over some thousand people who are waiting on waiting lists. That's why we invested almost \$1.2 billion in seniors' housing. It's all depends on how you define deficit. There was a deficit left by the previous government, and that's why we invested in communities.

Albertans not only don't want deficits, but they also want to have cutting-edge education for their children, they want to have hospitals, and they want to have seniors' care centres. That was the reason that we were investing in all those things. Somehow their priorities didn't change overnight. Yes, they elected a different government, but their needs still remain the same. There are almost 15,000 kids who are going to our school system come September. They will still need schools, they will still need teachers, and they will still need teaching assistants.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise under 29(2)(a). I'm very interested, as always, in listening to the Member for Calgary-McCall speak. I know that members in this House realize that he's a lawyer and one of the finest minds in this Legislature. I know that the Member for Calgary-McCall understands that we do criticize countries who do not follow the rule of law, who do not respect the international declaration of human rights, that was actually created by a Canadian in conjunction with the widow of the 32nd President of the United States. Eleanor Roosevelt and John Humphrey created that together in 1946-1947.

I'm just wondering if the member, who has of course travelled the world and is a lawyer, can talk about what we lose, on top of the respect of the world community, when we fail to respect the rule of law ourselves. What other losses do we suffer when the standards of jurisprudence that I referenced when I talked about the Supreme Court of Canada decision saying that the law of the land is to confirm that honesty is absolutely necessary – and the court said that Canadian contract law comes with a duty of good faith that requires parties to perform their contractual obligations honestly. Now, indeed, we're not doing that with this Bill 9, this piece of legislation. I wondered, from a legal standpoint, how embarrassed we could become as a country if indeed this type of pattern of legislation continues.

3:40

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Member, for the detailed question. I think I will keep my comments to collective bargaining and the rule of law in that context. I think that collective bargaining has many benefits for employers, employees, and society at large as well. The fundamental thing or aspect of this is that it promotes negotiation, it promotes collaboration, and it encourages or brings parties together at a bargaining table. People think through their issues, people think through their interests, and they come together with agreements. Then they act upon those agreements, which leads to a peaceful society where the people understand their rights and they expect their rights to be respected.

If we breach contracts like this, we will certainly see labour unrest. The workers who will be impacted by this legislation: I don't think they will be very happy with this piece of legislation. That will also impact their workplace productivity. It also may impact their turnover. It will also impact retention rates and all those things.

I guess the rule of law in this context, that their contracts should be honoured, is important for many different reasons. For the most part, I think it's important for the fair and equitable functioning of a society where contracts are only entered into based on this understanding that parties will respect the rights and relationships agreed to in those documents. These contracts, especially collective bargaining contracts, I think, are important ones in that they are also protected under our Constitution, under our Charter, the Charter that gives Albertans, gives Canadians a right to make those associations, join trade unions, and also protects their right to collective bargaining. That's a right that shouldn't be interfered with lightly, that shouldn't be interfered with in the way this government has interfered with it.

If they were worried about their finances, all those things, I think they could have put the brakes on some of the other pieces of legislation, some of the other things they did; for instance, that giveaway of 4-some billion dollars in tax breaks. They could have waited on that promise until they figured out this, because that one was more important.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join the debate this evening for third reading of Bill 9? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. I apologize. I'm frozen. I cannot get warm, but I'm sure I will. We were standing outside, joining hundreds of young folks in support of LGBTQ youth, and I haven't quite gotten warm yet.

Yesterday, or at least I think it was yesterday – I'm not really sure what day it was – I spoke about the perspectives of a number of people on Bill 9. I wanted to share a number of stories, and I wanted to share a number of quotes. I'm going to do a little bit more of that today. I mean, yesterday I shared the wise words of our leader, of my colleagues from Edmonton-North West, Edmonton-Mill Woods. I talked about the positive approach she had taken to labour and the relationships that she'd built in that capacity and just how proud I was to see her leadership in her tenure as labour minister. I spoke a little bit about what the Member for Lethbridge-West had – she'd given a very good summary of Charter rights and so forth.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I wanted to focus as well on the thoughts of a number of labour leaders because we've seen in the last couple of days labour leaders really speaking out on behalf of their members: Guy Smith from the

Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, Gil McGowan from the Alberta Federation of Labour, and Heather Smith from the United Nurses of Alberta. I talked about their concerns with this unconstitutional approach, this absolute breach of rights, this all-out attack on workers.

I did speak in particular about the nurses. You know, Heather Smith is someone I respect a great deal. She noted that she'd never seen any interference to this degree even in the Klein era of the 1990s. She noted that even in the dark days of the 1990s the Alberta government never reached into collective agreements and violated the constitutional rights of public-sector workers.

I trust her, as I said. I trust her to stand up for workers, to stand up for rights. In fact, I saw her this evening – tonight – with us in solidarity with LGBTQ youth. She stood in the rain, in the cold, with our caucus and with hundreds of other Albertans. When she points out this betrayal, this breach of Charter rights of nurses, I trust her. I'm going to listen to her.

I didn't get a chance, however, to speak to the profession that is close to me, and that is teaching. I ran out of time, in fact, which is rare, because I would never think I would have run out of time when I got into this job. I'm not usually a person of a lot of words, but I'm having to become a person of more words. Many of you know I was a teacher and a proud member of the Alberta Teachers' Association, teaching in rural Alberta. Many of you have heard that I started my teaching career in Bawlf, Alberta, which is a tiny community near Camrose. I was also in Forestburg, Alberta.

Now, what I wanted to talk a little bit about was the Alberta Teachers' Association's perspective on Bill 9. Greg Jeffery is the past president and, again, someone who I respect greatly on this. I'd like to share his perspective. We know that the ATA is the professional association of teachers, and they act as the bargaining agent for 46,000 teachers who are employed across this province. Now, Greg Jeffery calls Bill 9 "a heavy-handed abuse of power that significantly erodes trust between this government and its public servants."

You may not know that in April 2019 a two-year agreement was reached between the ATA and the TEBA, which is the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association, after a government-appointed mediator recommended that independent arbitration be used to determine any salary increases. That agreement was thereafter ratified by a vote of teachers, school boards, and government representatives. It was agreed upon by all those parties. It was, as we call it, an agreement of good faith. As Greg Jeffery points out, you know: we had a collaborative relationship; we arrived at that agreement in good faith. And now what is this government doing? It's using its highest powers. It's using its hammer, as my colleague from Calgary-McCall talked about earlier, "to unilaterally change the terms of the agreement." He points out: imagine if this were to happen in the business world, if this were to happen in the private sector. If a contract was so blatantly ignored, you wouldn't do business with that corporation.

He points out that it's a huge interference, just as Heather Smith did. It's a huge interference. It's a huge reach into the collective bargaining process. He says: you know what? There's really no need to delay arbitration. We know that the blue-ribbon panel is scheduled to report back by August 15. Arbitration hearings with teachers aren't expected to begin until September.

It's offensive to teachers. Of course, just like other labour leaders, he's calling on this government to abandon its plans to pass this bill that we're debating currently and to respect public-sector workers, including teachers.

As many of you know, teachers agreed to this after already agreeing to take six years of zeros, of zero increases, in the past seven years. So it's not about teachers not being paid enough or

complaining about their wages. It's about teachers, again, having agreed in good faith to a contract, already agreeing to no increases and then being, basically, lied to.

3:50

The other interesting thing that he talks about and that the nurses' union talked about as well is concerns about morale. You know, right now it's June 20, and we've got teachers who are teaching the younger grades dealing with very excited students who are about to break for the summer and those teaching the higher grades dealing with diploma examinations and year-end examinations, and there is a lot of pressure and a lot of stress. Added to that is the pressure, the stress, of not knowing what's going to be happening with their collective agreement.

I'm also concerned about attraction and retention of public-sector workers and what such an approach by this government could mean, particularly in rural Alberta, where, you know, I spent my teaching career and where I grew up as well. We know that there are still rural areas in Alberta where they have a hard time attracting nurses. In fact, David Harrigan, who is also from the United Nurses of Alberta, noted that some of them are starting to use agency nurses. They're just not able to staff their hospitals and their health care facilities. As I said, having taught out there and seeing how it is hard to attract and retain folks in various parts of the public sector, I think about the students that I would have taught out in these small communities and what careers they'd be seeking. Would they want to seek a career in nursing or teaching knowing that there's this time of much unrest?

Greg Jeffery from the ATA points out, though, that this isn't going to change the delivery of public education, because he knows, like we know or most members of this House know, teachers are professionals. And despite the fact that there is uncertainty, despite the fact that they feel as if their rights are being breached, they will continue to do their incredible work and deliver the high-quality education that they have for years in this province. But the timing, of course, is tragic, as I've noted. I mean, these are teachers who've worked hard. They've put in a lot of hours, and they're heading into a summer of uncertainty, for sure. I've heard from many of them.

In fact, I'll make reference to the rally tonight out on the steps of the Legislature, again, hundreds of folks out there in the cold and the rain. A number of teachers came up to me, and of course they were supporting us for our work to support LGBTQ youth and the fight that we continue to have in us to ensure that those youth are protected. I actually had a few of them say to me, too, that they're concerned about these other bills, including Bill 9, and what that's going to mean.

You know, I chatted about nurses and teachers and some of their concerns. I actually had somebody reach out to me on Facebook, and she wanted her story shared. She is a worker in Calgary, and she'd reached out to me when she saw we were in the Chamber a little bit earlier than this time last night. She was one of those keen folks watching online at about 2 a.m., and she says the following:

As a pharmacy technician working to my full scope of practice I represent a significant cost savings as I perform tasks that only 3 years ago were performed by members with higher education qualifications. My role has had 20% staff turnover in the past year and a wage cut would make it impossible to ever be fully staffed. I work at a cancer centre where we are working beyond capacity to make hundreds of life saving individually dosed IV bags and thousands of oral medication doses every day and this government is telling me that my rights don't matter and I'm not worth negotiating with. Thank you for standing up for me. Thank you for showing me what a courageous caring MLA looks like.

Her story is, I'm sure, the story of hundreds, thousands of workers across this province who are just trying to do the best for Albertans

and feeling completely neglected, rejected by this government: something to think about.

As I was doing some research in preparation to talk about Bill 9, I wanted to share the perspective of someone else that I respect. His name is David Climenhaga. He's a writer, and he's got an interesting take on Bill 9. People might say: well, why is this a big deal? Right? We heard from members opposite tonight, from the Finance minister. We listened carefully to the words he chose as he was introducing third reading. You know, he used words like "just" and "nearly" and "just a temporary postponement."

David Climenhaga says, "Yeah, probably a lot of Albertans hear that and think: okay; it's not a big deal." Well, it is a big deal, and here's why. We all know that, once passed, this bill will postpone the start of any arbitration hearings until after Halloween, kind of a scary timing, and as we've outlined, 24 collective agreements are impacted, and so are about 180,000 employees across this province. So despite the fact that the members opposite will say that it's just a short procedural delay while this aforementioned blue-ribbon panel gets its handle on the province's finances, we should be worried. David Climenhaga notes that

this is because it is neither hyperbolic nor tendentious to declare that the government's motives in introducing a law that breaks important terms and conditions of legal contracts should be transparent to even a casual observer.

As one of my colleagues pointed out earlier, of course this government won't say this – this is not the narrative that they're sharing – but halting arbitration hearings is obviously intended to prevent one thing and one thing alone. And what is that? Arbitrators giving public employees like nurses, like teachers a raise.

The urgency for a government that has already decided to attack public sector salaries is that many Alberta public employees' unions negotiated "wage-reopener" agreements in their current contracts, which have now reached the point [where] these wages-only negotiations are about to start or are already underway.

As we know, if the parties to a wage reopener can't reach an agreement, compulsory binding arbitration is triggered, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview talked about earlier. The problem, of course, for a government like this one is that arbitrators have to make their decisions based on facts like comparable salaries paid to other workers, the cost of living, and the employer's finances, not based on ideology or based on hostility to the public sector or to unions.

So by tearing up this inconvenient part of the agreements signed just over two years ago by several unions, the government gives itself time to plot its . . . moves.

Of course, it gives the government an opportunity to breach a key part of collective agreements like those that I talked about earlier, that of the AUPE, the United Nurses of Alberta, the Health Sciences Association, of which that person I spoke of earlier is a member, and the Alberta Teachers' Association. Again, just like the teachers, these members sat down and agreed to multiple years of frozen wages in return for the ability to negotiate a wage increase in the final year of the contract. This bill, Bill 9, strips the contracts.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, I am always pleased to hear from my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I think she had a little bit more of a story to tell here and a little bit more that this Assembly would be privileged to hear, so I'd

encourage her to please get up and let us know what else she has to tell the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Yes. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-South. In fact, I'll just continue by noting that I'm quoting a lot of this from Mr. Climenhaga because I really appreciate his perspective on this.

I was just starting to say that Bill 9, this proposed legislation, strips the contracts of the provision on which members' agreement to a wage freeze was based, again a clear direction. He actually gives a similar example to Greg Jeffery from the Alberta Teachers' Association. Imagine – and I think the members opposite should consider this – just the outcry, the brouhaha that would result in the private sector and among Conservatives "if an NDP government, say, had told a contractor that a provision in its contract that allowed periodic renegotiation of its fees had been nullified by legislation!" Well, of course, we can imagine that people would be up in arms. As many of us have mentioned, this is a clear violation of rights that are enshrined in our Constitution.

4:00

As he points out, this is what public-sector unions are talking about when they say that their members' constitutional rights are being violated. Of course, it will inevitably be tested in our courts. As we know, this is all happening at the same time that this panel is doing its work. From history, from the backgrounds of some of those panel members, and from what we can speculate, the panel will likely come up with some nonshocking findings like recommendations for wage rollbacks, wage freezes, again, all fitting nicely into this government's narrative. As he also points out, we know that this panel is predestined for some unfair conclusions because they're not even looking at the revenue side, right? They're not even looking at the revenue side, nor are they able to perhaps re-examine the \$4.5 billion corporate tax cut. Again, I mean, that could be another way to look at the province's finances, but that's not in their mandate.

Just to end, I think I want to reiterate the concern for future labour relations and for the stability of this province. We're not talking about a small number of folks who are employed in these public-sector unions across this province. We're talking about a lot of folks. I shared the other day just how much Albertans stood up in opposition to previous Conservative governments' approaches to negotiating or, I guess, not negotiating. In the case of, say, bills 45 and 46 I stood with a lot of folks on a very cold day, in particular on Bill 45, years ago, and Albertans weren't standing for that, and I don't think that they're going to stand for this.

Again, it's not just about those workers. It's about the impact on their families. It's about communities in some cases. As many of you know, the riding that I represent, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, would be, you know, an area that a lot of folks would maybe label as working class. We've got a lot of folks who do struggle to get by and who have contributed significantly to the labour movement in this province. They're concerned, and rightly so. There is this brewing loss of trust in this government, that hasn't been in power all that long, and as I said, it bodes quite poorly for future labour relations as well.

So it's a bit of, I guess, a warning to the members opposite to consider the impacts because I think that probably every member opposite has someone in their family or their extended family who is employed in one of these unions and who will be affected, who are right now feeling like their rights are not being respected.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 9?

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

**The Speaker:** I think the Speaker calls the question.  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise and speak in the limited time that we have here in the Assembly to the bills that are brought before us, especially here today for Bill 9, the bad-faith bargaining bill. I mean, it's something that is really important for many, many Albertans. It's really important because what the Premier and the Conservative government here are doing is that they are moving forward to break the law. They are moving forward to abuse their power and attack front-line workers and unions. I think that is something that every single member of this Assembly should be concerned about. I think it's something that every single member of the opposition is concerned about. I think it's something that a lot of members of the unions and organized labour across this province are very concerned about.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I just had a message forwarded to me by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, and I understand that it's from a teacher who resides in her riding. I think it's something that has a very strong message, that I want every single member of this Assembly to hear. It reads: dear member, Bill 9 is an abuse of power that erodes any trust that existed between the government and teachers; an agreement was reached in good faith back in April 2019, and unilaterally delaying arbitration is heavy handed; I'm writing to ask that you please defend the mediation process and ask the government to allow the independent arbitration, which was agreed upon by teachers, school boards, and government representatives, to continue; the use of Bill 9 to break a contract in order to cause a delay that isn't necessary is reckless and sets a precedent that can only lead to future mistrust in negotiations. This is from a teacher from the member's riding.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that that is not an unusual thing to hear. In fact, I was in my riding just a few days ago, and I was going to visit some schools as graduations are proceeding around this time of year, as I'm sure all members are aware. One of the things that I do for my constituents is that I give scrolls to the students who graduate from grades 6, 9, and 12 and so forth. One of the things I did is that I stopped in to visit the principal of one of my local schools in my constituency. Indeed, she came up to me and thanked me for dropping the scrolls off, and the first thing she actually asked me was: "What do you think is going to happen with this arbitration bill? It's going to be so bad for us teachers."

That's the sentiment I'm hearing all across my riding, Mr. Speaker. That's what people are asking me unsolicited. When I told her that our opposition was fighting it every day and that we believed that it wouldn't hold up in court and it was absolutely unconstitutional, she said: well, that's good to hear, and I'm glad you guys got in at least as the opposition because these guys are going to tear us apart. That's how teachers feel about this government, that they're going to tear them apart, and I think that's something that's very concerning because teachers are the core of our education system and the core of shaping our future to make sure we have a strong education. When you negotiate with them in bad faith, it's something that's very grossly offensive, and I think that's something that we should be concerned about. Indeed, the teachers and nurses that are under attack by this bill are people that live in our communities and that we represent. They're the people that really hold our communities together.

I explained to that principal that we had actually been in until about 3:30 the night before, I believe. We had been in, and I had been debating on her behalf, really, until 3:30, trying to make sure that we had the opportunity to discuss the important issues of why the government shouldn't negotiate in bad faith. The government shouldn't break the law. They shouldn't violate the constitutional rights of teachers and nurses and union members.

Really, Albertans understand what that means. They understand that the government is indeed — right now, actually, they're laughing at the concept of being allowed to break the law. They're laughing that they're able to go out and use their bully tactics against front-line workers. I think that's something that's very unfortunate because what it's going to do is that it's going to lead to labour unrest. It's going to lead to compromised services. As this government goes to court, Mr. Speaker, it's going to lead to very costly settlements because this government is going to lose. As we've seen in other jurisdictions, when this has been brought to court, these rights are constitutionally protected.

We know that the people that are being attacked by this bad-faith bargaining bill are Albertans who work hard each and every day to provide high-quality services to Albertans, and they deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Unfortunately, it seems that the members of the government don't understand that or they don't care. They don't care that our front-line workers work very hard for this government day in and day out, and indeed many of those people that this government will be attacking are actually working right now across this province in emergency rooms and hospitals and health centres. Wherever they may be, there are people working right now under agreements with this government that are being attacked by this bill.

I mean, if the Minister of Finance doesn't think that their voices are important or that their rights to collectively bargain are important, then I'm really disappointed in that, Mr. Speaker. It's something that I actually think is a sign of poor governance. That's the government's prerogative. If they wish to govern in a poor manner, that is their right, but it's something that's disappointing. I don't think we should be legislating away a chance to discuss fair wages.

I don't think we should be using legislative tools as political props here. This is really being done to delay arbitration past the next federal election here. I know the Premier is very fond of Ottawa, and I know the Premier intends to try and spend a lot of time in Ottawa, as he already has and will in the future, coming up to this federal election. I mean, I prefer, of course, to stay here in Alberta in my constituency and fight for those workers and those workers' rights. The Premier certainly has the right to go and campaign on behalf of other parties in other jurisdictions that may or may not have the best interests of Albertans at heart. That's the Premier's prerogative.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think it really does speak to how little the government understands what this bill is going to do and how little the government understands what bad-faith bargaining actually means because they came in here and they told Albertans and they told this House that debate was not important. Indeed, after only one speaker had spoken at second reading, they moved the previous question. Then the next day they had notice on the Order Paper for time allocation. That notice remains right now. It still remains on the Order Paper as we speak. That is something that's a shame because this is a bill that deserves the time of day to be debated in this Assembly. It deserves that every single member who was sent here by their constituents for their constituents is able to speak here. I think it deserves to have more time than at 4:10 a.m. and 4:11 a.m. because Albertans deserve to see this.



4:10

I know, of course, that Assembly TV is broadcasting live right now. I believe it's on Shaw and Telus. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I think most Albertans, the ones that are currently working shift work – perhaps they're nurses that have to work overnight – are not going to be able to watch this because they're going to be working while their government takes away their rights, and the Albertans that are not working shift work right now will be working tomorrow. Teachers, for example, Mr. Speaker, are going to be asleep because they know they have to work hard tomorrow to have a strong Alberta and a strong future for our students. Unfortunately, they're going to wake up and find out that their government has also stripped away their rights.

I think that's something that's a real shame here. It's a shame that the correctional officers that are currently helping inmates reform and keeping us safe here, Mr. Speaker, when they get off their shift or, indeed, go on their shift or wake up to go on their shift: they're going to see that this government directly attacked them and directly took away their bargaining rights. That's what they're going to be reading about in the news tomorrow. That's what they're going to be seeing on the television and hearing on the radio as they drive to their workstations. That's something that I think is really unfortunate because this bill impacts over 180,000 workers, right? That's a significant amount. That's 180,000 workers not just here in Edmonton. The government, I know, has a great disdain for Edmonton, and they wish that Edmonton, perhaps, wasn't a part of this province at some point. I don't want to presume anything, but that's what I've heard. If that is what the government wishes, I mean, they will find out and they will realize soon enough that indeed a lot of these 180,000 workers live in their ridings as well. They don't only live here in Edmonton.

We have members in the opposition here from four different cities in this province. Indeed, in every single one of those cities there are people that work in the public service and whose rights are going to be taken away this morning by this government in bad faith, and really it's their rights that are protected by the Constitution.

When we look at what this bill does – here we are in third reading now. We've had a lot of opportunity and we tried to propose amendments that would make a bad bill better. Mr. Speaker, I think you've used that term yourself many times in the past when you were on this side of the House. We wish to sometimes help make a bad bill better. The government refused. The government refused because they knew that they were trying to take away these rights for workers and that if we did make it better, it would allow workers to be able to negotiate in better faith, not good faith – of course, this is the bad-faith bargaining bill – but in better faith.

The government either have to understand that or they have to not care. Really, they either don't care about the workers that are under their charge, the ones who are out there like, for the Minister of Environment and Parks, for example, the fish and wildlife officers who are out there right now keeping us safe and making sure our environment is protected – those workers, when they get off shift or perhaps right now are listening to their radios or are tuned in to Assembly TV and watching us, their rights are being stripped away by the minister right now.

I mean, of course, we can also see that many ministers such as the Minister of Education will have many teachers that will wake up in the morning and realize that ultimately their boss, Mr. Speaker, has voted against their own rights. Maybe that speaks to something about employers, but definitely I think it's something that in this Assembly we should strive to do better. We should strive

to have a stronger debate in this Assembly, and we should strive to protect our employees and the people who work on behalf of all Albertans and the unions that represent those workers.

We shouldn't work in bad faith. I mean, we heard at quite a bit at length from my colleagues here in the opposition stories of how teachers and nurses and lab techs and educational assistants and social workers and so forth will be negatively affected by this bill. If the government didn't have their earplugs in, maybe they would have understood. If the government and the Premier had decided to not put in their earplugs and had decided to not attack the very foundations of democracy in this Chamber, maybe they would understand where we're going. Instead, we see the hon. Premier laughing away in his corner over there as he strips away the rights of Albertans, and I think that's something that's a real shame.

I would say, as I have said before in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier should be ashamed of this bill, but indeed I know that the Premier certainly is not ashamed, and I think that in itself is something that I'm a little bit upset about because it shows poor judgment on behalf of this government. It shows such poor judgment on behalf of the government to directly attack workers and show no remorse. That's something that I think is shocking to me but perhaps is not shocking to many Albertans.

Actually, I did mention that it was shocking to me on social media at quite some length this evening and earlier in the morning here, and many Albertans wrote back saying that they were not surprised. So perhaps Albertans are now seeing what this government is doing. They are seeing the direct attack on workers that is going on here. They're seeing the direct attack on the rights of Albertans here and on unions, and I think that's something that's a real shame.

I mean, it's a real shame that the members like the Member for Calgary-Klein will heckle away and disregard the rights of those workers. He can go on at length about how he hasn't heard from any Albertans, but I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I have. I can assure you that those workers can hear that he doesn't care about their rights. I think that's actually something that Albertans will be very disappointed in that member for and will be disappointed in this entire government for.

And that's simply the truth, Mr. Speaker. The truth and the facts are that this is a gross abuse of power. It's an illegal act. It's a bill that breaks the constitutional rights of unions and workers in this province. It directly attacks all workers because an attack on one is an attack on all. It's something that really does not do any of the things that the Finance minister purports it will do.

He purports it's just for delaying the arbitration, but indeed he knows very well – or I would think that he knows very well; I wouldn't presume – that this would indeed actually impact the ability to negotiate in good faith, and that is something that has not just been established by members speaking in this Assembly, but it's something that has been established by the highest court of this land. It's been established by the Supreme Court of Canada here, Mr. Speaker. That is something that if the Finance minister is not aware of, that I'm trying to explain to him right now, and if he'd take the earplugs out and look away from his phone, perhaps he would understand.

Mr. Speaker, it appears that the government just does not care about workers and does not care about the people that are under their charge and the services that those employees provide to Albertans, and that's a real shame. That's something that is really upsetting to me because I understand, as my constituents understand and I'm sure many constituents of the members opposite understand, that these services are essential for Alberta, having strong organized labour that can negotiate in good faith to provide

the services like correctional officers, like sheriffs, like our peace officers across this province and fish and wildlife officers.

It is essential that we have strong laws in this province and that we uphold the rule of law in this province. Conservatives sure like to say it, Mr. Speaker, but here we can see tonight that they either don't understand what the rule of law is or they really don't care and that they would rather use it as a political talking point. That's really a shame.

I'd encourage all members to vote against this, but it looks like the government just won't care enough to do so.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. All members will know that I like to go back and forth between the opposition and the government when there is a choice. The opposition has had many opportunities to speak under (29)(2)(a), but I do see that the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has risen to speak under 29(2)(a) as well.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that it's been an incredible evening of debate and discussion, and it's exciting. Actually, I think it's been one of the more exciting nights that I've been here so far in session, to hear the back and forth between both sides of this House and the robust discussion that we've been able to have.

I wanted to make a quick comment, especially about our Member for Edmonton-South and his comments earlier about the importance of seeing members from both sides of the House stand up and debate and discuss, you know, on behalf of their constituents and speak up on behalf of their constituents. I thought it was important to be able to stand up and commend him and commend the members opposite for doing that as well as the members on our side of the floor, too.

4:20

I wanted to comment a little bit on something I heard earlier, the Member for Edmonton-South speaking up on behalf of the constituents of Drumheller-Stettler, the 23 per cent of the folks that didn't vote for our Member for Drumheller-Stettler. I thought it would be important to get up and speak on behalf of the 54 per cent of the voters that didn't vote for the Member for Edmonton-South.

You know, we heard a lot earlier today, actually, from the Member for Edmonton-West Henday about not representing or not getting back to constituents. I can tell you that that's very important to me, and probably few people in this House have knocked on as many doors as I have in making sure that I'm getting out there and hearing from the good people in Calgary-Klein, and that includes doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers, lab workers. I can tell you that I just spent a full weekend in my riding connecting with people who have those professions.

We heard a little bit from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre about a disdain from our party, our government towards these government workers. I can tell you that I have not heard anything negative from the members of this government or the ministers of this government towards our public service. In fact, I've heard nothing but positive things, respect for our public service and how hard they work for us, and I'm proud of that. I'm proud that this government stands with our public service and is committed to working with them.

Going back to this idea of the 54 per cent of the people that did not vote for the Member for Edmonton-South, they did not vote for the Member for Edmonton-South because of their economic record, because of their attack on jobs here in Alberta, because they saw how their policies significantly impacted the success of Alberta moving forward. I can tell you from door-knocking in my riding

that I had lots of nurses, lots of teachers, lots of social workers that voted for our party and, in fact, came out and door-knocked with me. They did that, again, because they recognized that we needed to get this fiscal house in order to have a sustainable path forward so that we did not continue to leverage our children's future, so that we had money and resources to be able to continue to provide excellence in government services going forward.

That's what I heard at the doors. That's what I continue to hear, and I can tell you that when I was back at my constituency, going from event to event to event and talking to hundreds of people this past weekend . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Through the chair.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** I'm of course talking through the chair.

. . . that included so many – so many – doctors, nurses, and social workers who were patting me on the back and thanking me for the hard work that we are doing up here to get our economy back on track and showing fiscal prudence, taking the time and the restraint to make sure that we have the right information so that we can move forward and make good fiscal decisions so that we have a sustainable path forward. I heard that from the doctors and nurses and teachers in my riding, and I'm sure I would hear that from the 54 per cent of the people that did not vote for the Member for Edmonton-South in his riding.

I'm happy to stand up on their behalf and to speak up for fiscal prudence and make sure that we show responsibility as a government going forward, that we're not making rash decisions, that we're being responsible with hard-earned tax dollars, that we're not wasting money and taking into full consideration – like I said the other day, when we take a look at who this money belongs to, it's not us. It belongs to taxpayers – it belongs to the people who have worked hard – and we need to demonstrate fiscal prudence for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West rising.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise and adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Motions

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

### Time Allocation on Bill 9

24. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:  
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is resumed, not more than two hours shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you. Mr. Speaker, this government will not be held hostage by the Official Opposition. When necessary, we will use the tools at our disposal in order to move forward with our legislative agenda.

Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of conversation this week about time allocation, and I think it's an important discussion. Whenever a government uses time allocation, they should be justified in it. I think it should be used sparingly. I think it's very important that the

Official Opposition has an opportunity to do their work on behalf of the people of this province. They have an important duty, which this side of the House certainly respects.

But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we have been through a process since, basically, Monday at 7:30 until now, Thursday morning at 4:30, working our way through this piece of legislation, which is a three-and-a-half-page bill. It's becoming quite clear that it is the opposition's intent to paralyze the Legislature and to stop the legislative agenda of this place moving forward, to block the majority who have a responsibility to move forward with the legislative agenda. We're not going to tolerate that, and we will use the tools that are available to us on behalf of Albertans when we need to.

With that said, we still want to provide the opposition with a little more time; hence, why we have two hours with this time allocation motion. I do know that when the hon. Opposition House Leader rises momentarily, he will have lots of quotes, likely from me. I look forward to hearing myself always in *Hansard*. It's a great experience. But I will leave you, Mr. Speaker, with a couple that I think illustrate my point.

First off, on behalf of a great House leader in this Assembly who we talked lots about today, Brian Mason. I'm sure he's really excited to watch the Conservative Party use his quotes tonight, and I'm happy to do it.

**Mr. Kenney:** He's not awake.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah, he's probably not awake, Mr. Speaker. I'll send him *Hansard* tomorrow.

In 2015, while invoking time allocation in a similar situation, he said: it's quite clear the opposition is trying to filibuster the motion; they're trying to block the business of the House, and we can't allow the Assembly to be paralyzed. I agree with Mr. Mason that there comes a time where the majority can't allow the Legislature to be paralyzed. I will add, again, Mr. Speaker, that I want to be clear on how much time has been given by the government to be able to accommodate that. We've been working on this since Monday evening all the way until now, a significant amount of time.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the last time that time allocation was used in the 29th Legislature was to force a vote on an appointment of a legislative officer of the Assembly. At that time the now hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View said: "Mr. Gibson has devoted many years to this issue and has a proven track record. But rather than stating their objections, then voting against the appointment, we have witnessed speaker after speaker simply repeating the same talking points." I do think it's pretty clear and anybody who's watched the Assembly for the last few days realizes that we've probably now reached that stage as well with the opposition, where we're seeing speaker after speaker say the same talking points, often not even about the bill.

Then, lastly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to close with a quote from the now hon. Opposition House Leader, who was a minister of the Crown at the time, speaking on a closure motion. He says: "This Assembly has now debated Bill 6 for approximately 24 hours. Nearly all opposition members have now participated in the debate, including the leaders of each of the opposition parties." He said that on December 9, 2015, just for my friends at *Hansard*. The reality is that we are headed now to a very similar time frame.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that I will heed my friend the hon. Official Opposition House Leader's advice, and we'll move forward with this motion and get our Assembly moving again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is unfortunate that I have to rise to debate this motion of closure or time allocation that the government has now done on three different phases of this bill. Despite the fact that the Government House Leader will try to argue that time allocation wasn't used in second reading, moving the previous question is a form of closure, a move that was done after one speaker of the opposition got up to speak to second reading. I haven't double-checked with *Hansard*, but that could be a precedent, as far as moving the previous question after one speaker. I know for a fact that when we were government, we didn't do that.

Mr. Speaker, I mean, this is an example, again, of a government trying to ram through a bill in the darkness of night. Most of the debate has been while Albertans are sleeping as opposed to debating this bill during the daylight hours. We have a government that is moving a bill not only through the dead of night but also a bill that very likely is unconstitutional. It will be challenged. It will cost taxpayers money.

4:30

To every single government member that stands up and talks about how we need to get our fiscal house in order: well, first of all, the first move of this government was to reduce revenues by 4 and a half billion dollars, so you can't argue that revenue is the issue if that was your first move. Second of all, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the Government House Leader loves to talk about Bill 6 and how our government moved closure on it. That bill was debated for 23 days, over three weeks, not three days, as this bill is. Now, I appreciate that the Government House Leader will say that, well, the bill was introduced on Thursday. That is correct: Thursday afternoon, when the week is done for this Assembly. Debate started on the Monday, and as the Government House Leader has pointed out, our first night was well into the night. In fact, the Bill 2 moving of the previous question happened after midnight.

My point is this, Mr. Speaker. This is an abuse of power that the government has: to use tools to stifle debate, to muzzle the opposition, and to ensure that Albertans do not have adequate time to be able to reach out to government members and to opposition members with their feedback. Again, it is coming from the very party that at every turn tried to send every bill to committee on the reasoning that more time is needed, that we need to consult our constituents. Clearly, this government is proving through action that consultation is meaningless to them, that they don't care what Albertans have to say. They want to move their ideology and ideological bill, which is an attack on working people and working people's rights and collective rights, through as quickly as possible and, again, at a time when the majority of Albertans are sleeping.

The members opposite have in previous debates, when they were in opposition, talked about how this is heavy handed, that this is the government ruling with an iron fist. It looks like the gauntlet is on the other hand. Of course, the Premier, as a Member of Parliament, on numerous occasions spoke at length in the House of Commons, when he was an opposition member, about how it was heavy-handed, undemocratic tactics employed by the government. He found it very, very disturbing that the government would insult the very ability of members to speak on behalf of their constituents with adequate time.

Now, the government can claim that the opposition has had adequate time. I would assert that it is not up to them to decide what is adequate and what is inadequate. Members are here to represent their constituents but as well to represent Albertans throughout various ridings. I know the government loves to talk about its majority, but it did not win a tyrannical dictatorship. It is a democratic government that must respect all members, and therefore this motion is undemocratic.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 24 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:34 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Issik	Pitt
Dreeshen	Jones	Rowswell
Ellis	Kenney	Sawhney
Fir	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Long	Singh
Glasgo	Madu	Stephan
Glubish	McIver	Toews
Goodridge	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Wilson
Horner	Orr	Yao
Hunter		

4:50

Against the motion:

Bilous	Dang	Phillips
Carson	Deol	Shepherd
Ceci	Irwin	Sigurdson, L.
Dach		

Totals: For – 31 Against – 10

[Government Motion 24 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 9

#### Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (continued)

[Adjourned debate June 19: Mr. Ellis]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I sense – and I could be wrong; my wife informs me that I’m wrong most of the time – that the House may like me to move for unanimous consent for one-minute bells.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Government House Leader has asked for unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the remainder of this afternoon’s sitting. This evening’s sitting? For Bill 9?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, for the remainder of, I guess, Wednesday’s sitting.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, for clarity’s sake, the Government House Leader has asked for unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the remainder of this evening’s sitting.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Anyone wishing to speak to Bill 9? The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m happy to rise at this early or late hour to talk about Bill 9. When I spoke earlier regarding this, I talked about sort of the innocence of the Minister of Finance suggesting: “It’s just a delay. There’s nothing more to it than that. We’re just waiting for these reports to get our information.”

I think I want to revise that. I’m not so sure it is innocence anymore. I think it might be duplicitous. Certainly, we hear very clearly words like: we care about public servants; this is just a delay. But I, when the NDP was government, sat across the way and heard often from the opposition at that time not even using the words “public servants” but actually words in a more pejorative sense of it, like “those bureaucrats.” I know that, you know, going back in *Hansard* you’ll see that, which was, I feel, certainly a more pejorative term. But now they are much more careful with their words, and they are assuring us, “We care about public servants,” regardless of this bill not caring about public servants. Of course, we also have other legislation that they’ve brought forward that also is disrespecting public servants, people who are connected with the union movement.

I also want to just bring up – you know, I know that many members in the government have talked about how they’re not enamoured with what we have to say. But perhaps their own constituents: they might listen to them more. I guess I just want to reiterate that many of these contracts that are being delayed are impacting their local home communities, like for the Member for Camrose. The Bashaw Meadows lodge is one of the facilities that serves vulnerable seniors, and that’s one of the facilities that their contract is not going to be honoured or the process is delayed. Of course, this is all part of the Bethany Group. Also Rosealta Lodge in Camrose is another one, Big Knife lodge in Forestburg. The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake: the Autumn Glen Lodge that’s in Innisfail. The Eckville Manor lodge: that’s in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Peace Hills Lodge in Wetaskiwin: that’s in Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin.

I guess, for the members just to realize that these are real people in their ridings, these are their constituents who are having their contracts delayed, that perhaps will bring it more to their attention, you know, if our words here in the opposition are not valued. I also encourage them to reflect because I think that this is a pretty serious thing, and it’s not just a simple delay. That’s certainly not what I see. It really is an attack on the union movement in our province. It’s not only in this bill; it’s in a previous bill that was introduced. For me this is really a significant issue because we know that unions are champions for workers. Certainly, I stand and I know that the NDP Official Opposition stands with workers in our province. We know that unions improve the wages of workers, they improve workplace safety, and they reduce inequality. These are fundamental things that are important to any society, and unions help enhance wages, workplace safety, and actually reduce inequality in our province.

In some of my remarks today I just want to acknowledge the Parkland Institute, who has done some extensive research in this area, and I’m referring to a report that actually came out in May 2014, so it was actually before the NDP government was in place. It really was doing a review of the legacy of the Conservative governments in our province that held power here for 44 years. One of the – not findings, but one of the things that they’re reporting, of course, is that Alberta has the lowest unionization rate and some of the most hostile union labour laws in our country. Our research shows that this does a great disservice to workers in the province of Alberta in general.

These two bills that are before us, Bill 9, which we are debating currently, and Bill 2, which we’ve debated previously, are an attack, again, on unions. We are going, again, backwards, and workers in Alberta are being compromised. Of course, the impact of unions in areas of wages, worker safety, income inequality are really significant and important.

When we look at some of the key findings from this report, it’s measured in terms of economic performance, wage growth in

Alberta. We know that wage growth in Alberta has been far lower than in other provinces with higher unionization rates. Women and young workers fare much better in unionized environments. Again, you know, in Bill 2 previously, there's an attack on young workers, so youth are now having their wages rolled back with youth minimum wage. We know that high unionization rates also put upward pressure for wages for nonunion workers, and I think I've talked in this House before about that. That's called the lighthouse effect. Unionized workplaces have higher wages, so the shop next door wants to have workers, too, and they need to see what the market is paying, and that influences them. That's good for workers, and I think it's good for a healthy society.

5:00

Unions play a key role in improving worker safety through education, worker empowerment, and government lobbying, and there's a strong correlation between falling unionization rates and growing income inequality in Alberta. As I said, unionization in Alberta continues to be the lowest among Canadian provinces. Workers have a particularly difficult time becoming unionized in Alberta. Applications to unionize are on the decline, and union members make up a shrinking percentage of the private-sector workforce, leaving unionization in the province increasingly restricted to the public sector. Of course, as I said before, when we were government, we updated labour laws significantly. Actually, we were able to improve them to a degree where people could become part of a union more easily. But, of course, you know, Bill 2, with their movement back to not looking at card checks anymore, which is pretty standard in all the other provinces, is taking us backwards again.

If I could just expand a bit on how it does support the wages of workers. Of course, my colleagues have shared many times who these people are. These people are nurses. These people are working in the public service, administrators, responding to calls of Albertans. They're social workers. Certainly, I was a public servant some years ago in child welfare; I've spoken about that before. These are people who are working on the front lines, people that I've heard this government does want to support, you know, and cares very much about. But in delaying this arbitration, they actually are showing the opposite of that, and that's, I guess, why, Mr. Speaker, I moved from indicating that it was sort of an innocent thing to more duplicitous. I'm concerned that workers are being disrespected.

If we look at wages, this is one of the main ways unions do support workers. When measured in terms of economic performance, wage growth in Alberta has been far lower, actually, than in any other province. But union wages in Alberta are, on average, 18 per cent higher than non-union wages, with the difference being most noticeable for women and young workers. Again, people who aren't part of sort of the more privileged classes, people who are younger or women, oftentimes get passed over. There is still, unfortunately, gender discrimination in our province, in our society.

Unions really take bold steps to support all workers, including ones that have maybe more barriers or disadvantages. You know, I'm very proud to say how important unions are, and I just want everyone to know that this bill, Bill 9, and Bill 2 are eroding some of the power that unions, I think, should have. Certainly, our government did enhance labour laws in this province, and it's very sad to see so quickly that those are being eroded by this Conservative government.

Another aspect that really is important is worker safety. Certainly, Alberta workplaces are dangerous, with official records indicating 145 occupational fatalities and approximately 30,000

serious workplace injuries in 2012. This report, as I said, was published in 2014. Employers demonstrate widespread noncompliance with provincial occupational health and safety regulations due in part to ineffective enforcement by the provincial government. Unions are the central force protecting worker safety, doing so through worker education, worker empowerment, and government lobbying.

So this is very distressing, Mr. Speaker. You know, early on in our mandate I was the minister of labour. One of the things that we did was that we expanded the number of safety officers, the people who were investigating if there was a workplace issue, and supported them to go out and make sure that workers were safe in their workplace. The public servants were somewhat shocked, really, because under the previous Conservative governments the mantra was always, "Get out of the way of business; let business do whatever they want," even compromising worker safety. They were very pleased because they were trained occupational health and safety officers. They cared very much about what they needed to do to protect workers. They didn't want people to not be going home at the end of the day. They wanted to make sure that workers were safe in their workplaces. I must say that we had a lot of public servants very proud and happy that their work became unfettered under our government.

The third key piece here on the importance of unions and why we should be respecting them and not delaying their arbitration is income inequality. The gap between the rich and poor has increased dramatically in Alberta and now is the highest in Canada. Again, Mr. Speaker, it's back to 2014, but that still holds true today, unfortunately. Income gains over the last three decades have gone almost exclusively to the wealthiest Albertans. Certainly, it's been a few years since this has been in the media a lot, but it's that top 1 per cent, right? So people who are already making significant incomes are getting even more, and that's very, very pronounced in our province. We know that rising income inequality is closely related to falling unionization rates in this province, so unions are critical to achieving a more equitable distribution of income.

Of course, you know, Mr. Speaker, we have already seen this government move boldly, giving that elite, top 1 per cent a big corporate tax break. Right away they were happy to do that while eroding the rights of workers. There are consequences for these kinds of policies. It does matter what government does. Policies matter. As this report identifies and as other reports do, oftentimes women and youth are most impacted by this.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has risen.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to respond to some of the comments I've heard here this morning. Again, I do want to acknowledge and I do appreciate the services, the exceptional services, that our public service provide Albertans day in, day out in our hospitals, in our schools, serving various government departments, and serving in communities right across this great province. They serve an exceptional purpose, and they do it and conduct their responsibilities. They serve Albertans exceptionally well, and I want to acknowledge that this morning.

Again, Bill 9 is about delaying a process, Mr. Speaker. It is about delaying a process so that this government can make thoughtful and informed decisions. This is what Albertans expect from this government. We've heard from the Member for Calgary-Klein, and I think my story during the campaign is similar to his when we were going door to door meeting with Albertans. You know, there were a variety of opinions on various issues that we would encounter, but

I would have to say this: the most consistent expectation that I heard from Albertans in my constituency was virtually regardless of age demographic, ethnic background, income level, or profession.

5:10

The concern that I heard time and time and time again was that they expected a government to be fiscally and financially responsible, to make thoughtful, informed, prudent decisions so that we did not burden future generations with ill-informed decision-making and irresponsible decision-making. Mr. Speaker, that's what Bill 9 is about. Bill 9 is about delaying a process so this government can hear from the MacKinnon panel on a path forward to balance for this province and on a path forward to continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans.

I also heard from many Albertans that were out of a job, quite frankly, during that time. I heard some very difficult stories from good folks who came from eastern Canada and were living in Grande Prairie without a job because they had lost it due to, certainly, a downturn in the energy industry and, I will say, as well due to some very ill-informed, really disastrous policies of the previous government such as a carbon tax, such as increasing corporate taxes by 20 per cent at a time when the industry could simply not afford it. Those were very tough stories, Mr. Speaker, but I will have to say this. Those individuals that were experiencing the toughest of financial times had an even greater expectation of this government to manage resources responsibly and prudently and wisely for this generation and the next.

That's what Bill 9 is about. We have a responsibility. Albertans have placed their trust in this government to make the decisions that will ensure we can deliver high-quality services today, tomorrow, and for the next generation. That's why I'm pleased to bring forward Bill 9, a responsible bill to ensure we have time to make the best decisions on behalf of all Albertans, including the public sector.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to speak in debate this evening? On the main motion, the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be able to rise in this Assembly once again at this beautiful, early hour today. I suppose I will just start by saying once again, you know, being a returning Member of the Legislative Assembly, being elected for the second time, I want to give my appreciation to the constituents in Edmonton-West Henday that put me here. I'm going to continue fighting against legislation like the piece that is before us.

Now, I suppose I will start – and I will not dwell too long on it – by just responding to comments that have been made in response to Bill 9 by both the Member for Calgary-Klein and also the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. You know, they've talked at length about consulting with their constituents during the election campaign and over the last week, having the opportunity to speak with many public-sector workers in their communities, and that they support the measures that this government is taking in working to get people back to work, which I can appreciate. However, I doubt that they had a conversation about legislating delays to their contracts.

You know, when we talk about election platforms, this, of course, wasn't a piece that was in there. I think we also, once again, have to reflect on the fact that, really, this government is putting large corporations ahead of the people that work so hard as public servants for our province. The government is talking about getting

our fiscal house in order before they're able to continue negotiating contracts, a few of which are due to come to a conclusion over the next few days, which, of course, is a concern of theirs and is one of the main reasons why they're slamming it through this House.

But I have concerns with the comments being made about returning to fiscal balance, considering what we've seen so far from this government. I mean, the first piece of legislation, of course, repealing the carbon tax, was a key campaign platform of theirs, but when you start pulling billions of dollars out of the economy, we need to have answers about how you're going to replace that.

To go further and give another \$4.5 billion to large corporations, taxpayers' dollars – we've heard that come up a few times tonight when we're talking about properly compensating the people that work so hard in our province, the public servants – we're not hearing about how they're going to replace that fund. When we talk about the valley line LRT or the green line LRT, this government is creating large amounts of debt, and they have not spoken about how they're going to pay for it, so I would be very interested to hear how they're coming to this conclusion that somehow they're bringing us back to balance while also blowing massive holes in the budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the fact, the bottom line of this legislation, is that the Premier and the UCP are breaking the law. Forcing legislation to delay arbitration and delay the ability of public servants to collectively bargain is an incredible concern. Not only is this piece of legislation before us, Bill 9, a concern, but really it's signalling something more. When in the First Session of this Assembly we're talking about infringing upon the rights of unions, of public servants in our communities to collectively bargain, they're signalling that there's more to come.

Now, if you look at the history of this Premier in his time as an MP in Ottawa under Stephen Harper, our former Prime Minister, you might think back to 2011, when the postal workers were having rolling strikes because they couldn't come to an agreement through arbitration. At the time the corporation of Canada Post was trying to lower the wages for new workers, among taking away other pieces of compensation. So the government, through Bill C-6, I believe, in the House of Commons, one, forced these people back to work, which I imagine we will probably see over the next four years – we'll wait and see, but I'm willing to almost bet on it; I'm not a betting man, but I would almost take that bet – and also the fact that they were willing to push through lowering the wages of these workers even past what the arbitration process had offered them, even past what Canada Post, the corporation, was going to offer them. The government came in, as far as I remember, and lowered the wages of people starting out at the company.

So we've seen a history from this Premier in his time as an MP of forcing through legislation that harmed public servants in our communities. Of course, in 2016 that piece of legislation was struck down because it did violate the Charter, and I imagine we'll see a similar argument on this piece of legislation. When the inevitable happens and the government, through arbitration, cannot come to an agreement with these public servants, I imagine we'll see further bills that violate the Charter. Of course, that will take years and much time in courts and paying for expensive lawyers before we see that answer, but there's no doubt that that will happen.

Now, Mr. Speaker, of course, I would just reiterate the fact that I'm very concerned about the values of this government. With the pieces of legislation that we've seen come forward so far – attacks on youth wages, attacks on overtime pay – I reflect on a comment that I had previously mentioned, that the Premier had made before he was the Premier, about a meeting that he had late into the evening. He was quite happy that he wasn't having this conversation with unionized workers because then he would have to pay them, I believe, time and a half, which, of course, now he's

working to get rid of. So I suppose that issue has been fixed for the Premier, thankfully for him.

5:20

Of course, we've seen attacks on the abilities of our members to advocate on our behalf – I brought that up – and, further to that, giving members the ability to abstain, which really is not a good thing, in my opinion. I think we went into great detail about that. But we are sent here to have an opinion, to speak to our constituents, and to be willing to make the decision, and sometimes it's not an easy decision. You'll often find that when you bring conversations to the people of our communities, 50 per cent of people agree with something and 50 per cent of people don't, and it is our responsibility as members of this Legislature to make that final decision.

Now, I do not believe that the majority of my constituents or the majority of constituents of any people in this Legislature would believe that this legislation is in the best interests of the people of this province. The fact is that it is a bill that is pushing to bargain in bad faith. It is not something that any member of this Assembly should be happy to support, no matter the situation that our fiscal framework is in. I think that it's important to recognize the ability of public servants to collectively bargain, and this is an attack on that and once again is signalling what is to come.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is very concerning that, you know, we have 40 minutes left to debate on this piece of legislation. We've all been in here for the last week, for quite some time debating this piece of legislation, but really I haven't had a whole lot of opportunity to take this back to the people of my community. Now, I'm pretty sure that if I go and have that conversation, I know where they're going to sit. I don't think that government should be imposing such strong-handed legislation on the people of this province, and I think that they would for the most part agree. Of course, there will be certain people that disagree, but overall the people that work in my communities as teachers, educators, front-line nurses, social workers – the list goes on. But I think that they would be very concerned with what this piece of legislation signals.

Now, once again I would just say that the people of Alberta should take a strong look at this legislation and the process over the last week that we've seen here in the Assembly and really consider the values that a government that's willing to go forward in a process like this and bring a piece of legislation like this forward, what kind of values they're reflecting. We can see it in the history of this Premier, in his time as an MP, the way that he's voted on legislation, which we've debated before, but really also in his respect for public servants and, specifically, unions and their ability to collectively bargain and their ability to represent the members of their unions as well.

Of course, at the time in 2011, just going back to the piece of legislation, C-6, which I believe this member was a part of, I'm sure – Canada Post had a CEO, Deepak Chopra, not to be confused with the Deepak Chopra that had quotes like "Happiness is a continuation of happenings which are not resisted." He may have invoked that quote during his time while he was busting the union. It's very concerning because the Conservative government under Stephen Harper had appointed Deepak Chopra, and he was in direct conflict, being, I believe, an owner in an organization that was in direct conflict with the mandate of Canada Post.

We saw, through the union-busting that happened then, the right-to-work legislation that happened then, that they had very little regard for the public servants who were affected by these contract negotiations. Really, in that time of those negotiations and the proceedings of the House of Commons we saw a government that continuously tried to undermine the public service in order to

convince the Canadian public that a private corporation could do the job better than a public organization could.

We are going to see that over the next four years. There's no doubt about that. We've heard this government twisting itself into pretzels talking about publicly funded health care, not talking about how it's going to be delivered. Not talking about how it's going to be delivered. So we will see this government constantly undermine the public servants of this province. We will see them continue to erode the ability of workers to unionize and to collectively bargain, and there is no doubt in my mind that at some point we will see this government impose right-to-work legislation on the people of Alberta, which will be struck down by the Supreme Court, too late, of course, but it will cost Alberta taxpayers a lot of money. If that doesn't happen and if this Premier doesn't end up invoking right-to-work legislation, then I suppose I will stand in this House at some point and say: I was wrong. But I really don't believe that I will be wrong on that point.

Mr. Speaker, with that being said, I think that we have a few other members here that do wish to speak to Bill 9 in the closing time that we have left. Very disappointed the way that this process has played out, I will not be supporting this legislation, and I suppose that is all.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to all. I believe that it's really important that we highlight the actual track record of this Premier and the work that he's done to undermine workers' rights, and I was hoping that the Member for Edmonton-West Henday could get up and share a little bit more of that history if he doesn't mind.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday should he choose to respond.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm wishing I had grabbed some more water here. I do appreciate the comments from the member. Of course, once again, I mean, the actions that happened in 2011 were really one of the main reasons that I got involved with politics. I had grave concerns with the way that the Conservative Party of Canada was treating public servants across Canada, and I continue to be concerned about the conversations and the way that they're treated. Of course, the government continues to stand up, whether it's the front bench or the backbench, with the little time that they're willing to give discussion to this legislation, and they say: "We support these public servants. They work so hard. You know, we need them in our community, but we just need them to wait."

Really, as has been brought up several times in this House over the last week, many of these workers have not seen a wage increase, of course, negotiated earlier under our government – and some of these negotiations happened before – for between three and six years. I can imagine being in the private sector, and, of course, before being elected I was an electrician in the private sector. I can only imagine how I would feel as an employee going to an employer after three years and saying: "Look, you know, I've worked really hard for you. You've made some money. You're still doing good. You're profitable" – of course, the government might try and argue that – "and I think that I've worked hard enough. I think we should at least have a discussion about my compensation." Now, what this government is saying is: "Maybe just wait. Wait another year. Wait another couple of years if we had our way." I'm sure they would like to do that.

Of course, this legislation doesn't really give a real timeline about when negotiating these contracts will be finished. I'm sure that if they had it their way, it would be longer than the October 31 deadline that they have to even start discussing those negotiations. I can only imagine being an employee working hard for a company, going to my employer, saying, "You know, it's time to have this discussion," and them saying: "Well, we just need to wait. We just need to wait." That is what this government is telling the workers of this province, and it should concern them. I know it does concern them because these are nurses in our hospitals providing care to our seniors and our children. They are working very hard, and they deserve to be respected, a respect that this government is not providing them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, standing order 29(2)(a) is available. I see no one.

Anyone else wishing to speak to the bill?

**Mr. Dang:** Under 29(2)(a), Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** It was available, but we've moved on.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

5:30

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 9 during this period of finality. I begin by echoing some of the words that I think describe the atmosphere that this legislation is creating in business in a province where the government is claiming that they're open for business, but the poisonous words that ring true when we look at this legislation are such words as: acrimony, disarray, disharmony, disorder, dissonance, turmoil, tumult, bedlam, disorganization, lawlessness. These are hardly the types of words to describe a province that is open for business, yet this is exactly the poisoned atmosphere that this type of legislation brings to bear because people who look towards a jurisdiction to do business want to make sure that they can do business and have their contract respected.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that I administered many, many contracts when I was in my real estate career. I had about six years as a sales manager, and during that time frame I had to arbitrate many, many situations with buyers and sellers. Usually if somebody was knocking on my door and they were salespeople, they were looking for permission to do something that they already knew they shouldn't be able to do. But if they were clients, either buyers or sellers, I never actually saw anybody in my 30 years and in my six years as a sales manager who wanted to unilaterally break a real estate contract just because they thought they should be able to get a better deal. Now, if somebody failed to complete a transaction, there were consequences. Many, many severe consequences would act as a brake on such behaviour. There were financial penalties, huge financial penalties, for breaking a contract, big consequences. On top of that, there were many, many exposures to potential lawsuits, which would also act as a brake.

For example, Mr. Speaker, I know that there was a situation, which was kind of a classic situation, where a widowed seller decided that she no longer wished to sell her property because her husband had been tragically killed and she sentimentally wanted to maintain her ownership of the house as a result. A young couple, a first-time homebuyer couple, had an offer, a binding contract, to buy the property. Upon seeking legal advice, the young couple discovered that, yes, they had rights to the house. Of course, they had some compassion for the widowed seller, but there indeed was a price to pay, even in those dire circumstances, whereby the widowed seller agreed to pay to the young couple who had

contracted to buy her house in a binding contract \$5,000 to basically relent and allow her to maintain her life estate in the house where she had lived with her late husband.

Consequences are very much something that people face if they break contracts. If indeed you're a government, those consequences are also there. But this government seems to be wanting to minimize those and suggest that in Alberta contracts aren't worth the paper that they're written on. This government is announcing to the world with this Bill 9 that people can't trust a contract written by the Alberta government. Whether it's labour negotiations, whether it's oil-by-rail contracts, whether it's electricity generation, open for business is not the sign that is on the door. It's: watch out; beware; your contract may actually be pulled out from underneath you.

That poisoned business atmosphere is something that this government is generating by creating disarray and disharmony with its labour negotiations, and this Bill 9 is a prime example of what people in business are going to come to expect from this province because they know that they can't really trust whether a contract that the province has entered into is going to be honoured in the final analysis regardless of what the Supreme Court of Canada has said.

Given that this atmosphere is poisoning the business climate in the province, I'm concerned about the long-term effects of Bill 9. I, therefore, Mr. Speaker, would like to move an amendment to Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. I will give the original and all copies to the page and await your instructions.

**The Speaker:** That's exactly what I was going to suggest.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this will be referred to as REC1.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this amendment, and it reads as follows. Notice of amendment to Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. Mr. Dach to move that the motion for third reading of Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act be not now read a third time, but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5(a) and (c).

Given that the amendment has now been read and the title and the subject matter are before the House, I'd like to make a few comments if I may, to provide a little flesh to the bones of the matter. I did kind of do a bit of a backdrop on my concerns to Bill 9, and that will lead me to determine even more in depth why I think the atmosphere that I described by using adjectives such as "acrimony," "chaos," "disharmony," "dissonance," "disorder," "tumult," "turmoil," "bedlam," and "lawlessness" – these are words that describe the business atmosphere that is being created by such actions as contemplated by Bill 9, where a binding labour contract is basically being torn up and the government is thinking that there will be no consequences to it, but indeed there are consequences to tearing up a binding contract.

We will see it reflected in the type of reputation that this province receives as a result of people losing confidence in the government. If you do end up doing what this Bill 9 contemplates, simply tearing up a binding agreement, it is contrary to Supreme Court direction that all governments, all contracts in fact, all parties to a contract have an obligation to deal in good faith, to be honest in their performance of those contracts. This flies in the face of that doctrine, that the Supreme Court of Canada established in a 2014 case that I've tabled in this House.



There are other historical bits of legislation that this government has already enacted or proposed to do. They've proposed to cancel the oil-by-rail contracts. They're looking at changing the electrical generation mechanisms in the province and tearing up existing contracts. They're looking at other labour negotiations, and in each case, Mr. Speaker, there's a risk to the province of having its reputation permanently damaged by the operation of this government, who will demonstrate to businesses that they can't trust to contract with this province. They don't know in the future if, indeed, this government will honour that contract. You get a pattern of disregarding legally binding contracts, and it's going to end up in reputational damage to the province.

I'm really concerned that the so-called open-for-business shingle that this government wants to hang on the province is one that is thin paper, indeed. You cannot go ahead and say on one hand that you're open for business and on the other hand that you won't honour the contracts that you enter into. It's a shameful practice.

5:40

I mean, if I ended up having clients in the real estate business who would enter into a binding contract, an unconditional contract, signed, sealed, and delivered, and they decided they just wanted to walk on it, I certainly wouldn't be advising them to be my client the second time around. The second thing: I'd be doing them a favour by inviting them to get legal opinions right off the bat. We're going to end up costing this province millions and millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, as a result of lawsuits that end up being filed against this government for passing legislation such as this, which negates by legislation binding negotiated labour contracts, and those costs are going to be borne by the taxpayers, of course, and those dollars are going to be spent by a provincial government, which indeed is doing so, creating a war room of their own against labour in this province. They like creating war rooms and this particular one is going to be aimed at their own citizens. It's a shame that this government sees fit to spend what will probably be millions and millions of dollars on frivolous lawsuits when they know, in fact, that they're going to lose those lawsuits. That war room, that war chest of provincial dollars is aimed directly at working people who are employed by the government that purportedly values their services, so it behooves me to see the rationale behind this.

The government simply looks to save money. They're looking to balance the budget, but in the same way that other Conservative governments have done so in this province over the decades, where on paper they have a balanced book but there's an infrastructure deficit, there's a deficit in services, there's a deficit that's not shown on paper that we ended up paying for for decades and we still are paying for from past Conservative governments, yet the claim is still made that we balanced the books.

Well, I'll tell you what. The books may have shown a clean slate, but the truth is that the public suffered greatly, whether it was in diminished health care services, whether it was in infrastructure that never got built, whether it was in 250 schools that our past government was actually trying to complete. That deficit is something that caused pain and hurt and damage and that we're still paying for.

**Member Loyola:** Deferred maintenance is one.

**Mr. Dach:** Pardon me?

**Member Loyola:** Deferred maintenance on some of those buildings.

**Mr. Dach:** Oh. Deferred maintenance is another thing as well.

I mean, the cost of that is not just seen in, you know, damage to your car, but it's also seen in the children that don't end up having schools that are properly functioning, they're in larger classrooms, they don't have educational assistants that they are in need of.

I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, that we're going down the same path here that we've seen before. Like we've all seen this movie in this province before, where you're going to see similar things, particularly maybe a backhanded swipe at Edmonton in terms of projects that get put on the back burner, like our LRT and public transit projects that got pushed down the road for decades because we had the audacity to vote the wrong way in Edmonton.

I know that our mayor is concerned about that as well. I know that there are infrastructure projects in the health care system that, particularly in my own riding of Edmonton-McClung, I'm very, very concerned about. We've announced a \$65 million construction project for a brand new emergency department at the Misericordia hospital when we were government. I attended that announcement with the then Health minister, and I'm very, very concerned that that project is going to be sent to the dustbin, collateral damage of this government's decision that it wants to have a paper balanced budget, but of course the deficit remains, the deficit in infrastructure spending in particular. That type of thinking has created the current emergency department at the Misericordia hospital right now. It is in dire, dire need of replacement, yet we may end up seeing that hospital needing a new ward for decades more to come.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) has expired, and I see the hon. Member for Calgary-South East is rising to speak to the main bill.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act: pretty self-explanatory to me, but if you listen to the members opposite, this delay is an attack on unions. I very much see it in their interests and in the interests of all Albertans. The entire purpose of this deferral is to get this right, to ensure that Alberta has and will continue to have . . .

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry, hon. member. We're under 29(2)(a), and I know you asked to speak to the main bill. It's my mistake. I'll call on you to speak to the main bill immediately following Standing Order 29(2)(a).

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is rising under Standing Order 29(2)(a), and he was rising when I inappropriately asked the Member for Calgary-South East.

The Opposition House Leader is rising on perhaps a point of order or something?

#### Point of Order Speaking Time

**Mr. Bilous:** Correct, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if we can get the time back that was just used, considering that we're on closure.

**The Speaker:** Oh, yes. There'll be five minutes of 29(2)(a), and the approximately 90 seconds prior to my noticing my error will be added at 6:53, the end of the debate. It will now be at 6:55.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was questioning what was going on there. I was, like: what's going on? Mr. Speaker must be tired perhaps, missing out on that 29(2)(a).

### Debate Continued

**Member Loyola:** Well, I think it's really important, the comments from the Member for Edmonton-McClung in discussing very intently the effects of balancing this budget on the backs of public-sector workers. It's not just about balancing the books on the backs of public-sector workers. It's that the services that those public service workers provide to the good citizens of this province are also going to be negatively impacted. I was hoping that the Member for Edmonton-McClung could highlight a little bit more about what those effects will be as it relates to the history of this province and how that was dealt with before under previous Conservative governments that also took the opportunity to balance the books on the backs of public-sector workers here in this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has approximately three minutes remaining.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I was mentioning in my remarks, there are prime examples of exactly what the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was alluding to right in my constituency. Of course, first of all, I was talking about the need for an emergency department to be completely built, brand new, on the west end of the Misericordia hospital. I've had occasion to have family members attend that emergency department, the existing one, over the last year or so, unfortunately more than once, and I have visited there as the MLA as well to witness exactly how those front-line workers are having to make do with a very, very old and ill laid out emergency department, operating with basically hallway medicine because they don't have the capacity and the room. That emergency department should have been rebuilt a long, long time ago, well before our four-year term began, and the medical practitioners there, the administration of that hospital, the board, and the community leaders have been begging for that to be rebuilt.

We did ensure that we had funds committed to get that project under way, and I know that the design and planning for it are well under way, yet I fear that given the rumblings from this government about having to perhaps tear up labour contracts to balance the budget, to look at everything a second time around to determine if indeed the project is really needed, to me, it threatens the fact that these things might actually not go ahead.

5:50

Another project, the southwest Henday twinning. The two lanes that were going to be added, one north, one south, on that leg of the Henday are something that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Transportation were talking about in question period the other day, and that leads me to be concerned that it wasn't the lead-up to say that, yes, indeed, it's going to be going ahead. It concerns me that the Minister of Transportation is going to be saying: "Oops. Too bad, so sad. We took a look at it, and we know there's crushing traffic there in every rush hour, but we just don't have the money right now. We're going to put that off and kick that can down the road." Then we are going to be in the southwest part of that Henday bumper to bumper morning, noon, and night because that roadway needs the extra lanes.

I think that people in Calgary should be concerned about their roadway, the ring road project, as well because of the same thing. Everything is under the microscope right now, and if indeed the government is intent on being as ruthless as it seems to be to reach the so-called balanced budget nirvana, I think that many things are going to be on the chopping block, and it scares me a lot. So this is a concern.

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

Now we are back on the main bill, on which the hon. Member for Calgary-South East would like to join the debate.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker. Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act: pretty self-explanatory to me, but if you listen to the members opposite, this delay is an attack on unions. I very much see it in their interests and in the interests of all Albertans. The entire purpose of this deferral is to get this right, to ensure Alberta has and will continue to have high-quality and sustainable services for the long term. I have to wonder: do the members opposite really not see the value in a brief deferral of negotiations until our government has full information on the state of Alberta's finances? I suppose it's difficult for the members opposite to appreciate the value of properly considering all the information before acting, particularly when it relates to government spending.

When the NDP were in power, there wasn't a problem that billions of hard-earned Albertan tax dollars couldn't fix. The power purchase agreements fiasco? Meh, just a couple of billion dollars. Coal power plants taking too long to naturally phase out and providing too much employment: \$1.3 billion. Failure to advance the energy industry and secure pipelines might hurt us in the election: \$3.7 billion in rail contracts it is. And if we bundle a superlab and laundry, we can get it for under a billion dollars. Fiscal responsibility and fabric softener: I love it. I wonder what their reaction was when they got the bill, the \$60 billion receipt for their poorly planned expenditures, probably something along the lines of: we should ramp up this carbon tax that nobody wants.

But I know what Albertans' reaction was. On April 16 Albertans fired the NDP as their financial managers. On April 16 Albertans could literally no longer afford an NDP government. My guess is that the NDP government didn't plan for that, just like they didn't plan when they blew through Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars over and over and over. We have committed to fix the financial disaster created by the NDP government and to approach all government spending with prudence and proper consideration. We have also committed to high-quality and sustainable health care and education, and that is what Bill 9 is about and the reason I support it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question and comment.

Seeing none, any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South is rising to speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to get up in this place and speak, especially when my hon. colleague from Edmonton-McClung moves an amendment. I think this amendment is something that is so important, that all members of the Assembly have the opportunity to debate. Unfortunately, we won't as the government has used time allocation to stifle free speech and democracy in this place today. But I think it's important that we look at the content of this amendment and at the content of the bill and realize how important it is that we have the opportunity to recommit this to Committee of the Whole.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

While this government pushed forward and rammed this legislation through in the cloud of darkness, in the shadow of darkness, through the night, the people that this will be affecting were either working shift work and unable to follow the debate, or perhaps they were sleeping as they were anticipating a busy day ahead of them here, Mr. Speaker. Instead, we now see that the time

has come when many of them will be rising, many of the people under the charge of the ministers right here, like the Minister of Environment and Parks. His very parks and forestry workers will be rising right now. Their alarms will be going off shortly, and they'll have the opportunity to tune into Assembly TV and watch us debate here as their rights are taken away, as that minister votes to take the rights away from his own workers.

That's something that we should have an opportunity to debate, the important amendments that we would have in Committee of the Whole, and be able to consider the clauses in a more thorough way in front of Albertans and to have people actually observe what is being brought forward here. Bringing through the bill with closure in the shadow of darkness is the opposite of open government, it's the opposite of transparency, and it shows that this government has no respect for the democratic process, has no respect for showing Albertans the truth of what is going on with this bill, about how this bill was a bad-faith bargaining bill, how it does none of the things the government purports that it will do. The government has spoken at length about how it's simply a delay in process, but indeed it's actually an attack on rights. It's an attack on the constitutional rights of workers, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, it's an attack on the constitutional rights of workers who this government is charged and sworn to protect and who have served our great province of Alberta. I think that's a shame.

I heard at some great length members of the government speak today and last night as well, and I think they spoke at length about how their constituents supported them attacking the rights of their fellow Albertans. Frankly, I find that pretty hard to believe. As we have moved through the very few days the government has granted for debate on this bill, we here in the opposition heard from hundreds and thousands of Albertans who are so strongly opposed to this bill. They are so strongly opposed to this bill, and they've asked us why we can't just make some amendments to make it better, to make a bad bill better. That's something that I know you, Mr. Speaker, have used in the past at length as a term to try to improve bills of the government. I think that you would appreciate that the opposition today is trying to make a bad bill better. Bringing it back to Committee of the Whole to bring back more of those amendments and allow Albertans to watch us bring back more of those amendments: I think that would be something that all members should welcome, to have that open debate and have that open discussion here in the Assembly.

I know that there are going to be people that are waking up right now and tuning in, and perhaps they haven't realized because there's been so little debate. The government has stifled debate to such an extent, and they've forced it through in such a short amount of time, only, really, three days of actual debate here, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps they haven't realized that their rights are about to be stricken away, stolen from them, and that the government is about to attack their very livelihoods and their families. That's something that I think teachers and nurses and paramedics and forestry and parks workers and so on will be very concerned about, when they find out what the government has done in the shadow of darkness here. I think that that's something that all members should be aware of, should be concerned about.

I mean, there are over 180,000 workers that are going to be affected by this. It affects many unions across this province and many of the workers that work under this government, and those workers deserve the opportunity to have this discussion in the House. Really, our constituents deserve the opportunity to have this discussion in the House. When we look at what this bill does, what this bill does is that it goes after our workers, it goes after the people who are trying their hardest to make this province a better place, and it goes after the people that work in every single one of our constituencies. It doesn't matter who we are in this Assembly or where we come from in this

Assembly, Mr. Speaker; every single one of us has public servants that work in our ridings and live in our ridings. I think those public servants and those public service workers deserve the opportunity to have their MLAs speak on their behalf here.

It's really important that the government has chosen to stifle debate and not have that happen and not have their members talk about why they think it's okay to attack the people that live in their ridings, attack the families that live in their ridings. But that's the government's prerogative. I mean, it's their prerogative, again, to disrespect this Assembly and hand out earplugs and put them in all throughout the night. It's the Premier's prerogative to do what I consider one of the most offensive things I've seen in the last four and some years that I've been here. Indeed, some members who have been here longer than me would say, Mr. Speaker, that they've never seen anything like it. They've never seen a Premier disrespect this Assembly in such an obvious way.

6:00

That's something that I think is really shocking. It sets the tone for the next four years of debate here, Mr. Speaker. Really, Albertans are watching. Albertans are watching the government not listen, essentially. They're watching the government intentionally obstruct our ability to speak to them in this Assembly. That's something that's a real shame. I would say that the Premier should be ashamed and the government should be ashamed that they are using such childish tactics. But, really, I know they're not ashamed. They've said as much. So, really, I feel almost embarrassed for them. I think that they should get up in this House and apologize for disrespecting democracy. They should get up in this House and apologize for disrespecting the process of democracy here and how we should be allowed to debate in this House. If the government feels that Albertans don't deserve to have a voice and that the voice that Albertans do have shouldn't be listened to, then that is the government's prerogative as well.

I mean, sometimes, Mr. Speaker, elected officials need to learn that their job is indeed to be here and debate and not to complain about the hours that we have to put in, because what we do is try to pass the best possible legislation for Albertans. This amendment would allow us to do that. It would allow us to go back and re-examine the clauses of this bill. It would allow us to make further changes that would make a bad bill better, and that's something that I think all Albertans would want to see this government allow and do here. I think they would actually prefer to see this government rescind their time allocation and allow proper debate so that Albertans could be notified of what will happen here. But we know that's not going to happen. I'd hope that we can go back to committee and make some changes to make a bad bill better. That is all this opposition wants to do. I know that my colleagues on this side of the House have spoken at length on why this bill is bad, why this bill attacks the rights of workers, attacks the rights of unions.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that it attacks the rights of unions because I know that "unions" isn't a bad word. Some of the members of the government caucus may – what that shows is a blatant disregard for the rights of people that live in our ridings. It's not just the ridings on the opposition side here; it's ridings all across this province in every single community. We need people like nurses, like teachers, like paramedics to take care of us in our communities and take care of our families and take care of our kids as they go to school. We don't want to be hanging these large, heavy, illegal, Constitution-breaking acts over their heads when they should be trying to focus on manning the emergency rooms or taking care of kids and teaching them in our classrooms.

It's a shame that the government either doesn't understand that or they just don't care. Mr. Speaker, the longer and longer we go on here

and as the opposition members have spoken quite at length here as to why this is a bad bill and why it needs to go back to committee and have the concepts brought forward, it becomes pretty clear they either are wilfully not listening – I mean, the earplugs can probably speak to that – or they really don't care. I think that perhaps there's a bit of both going on there. Their lack of regard for the workers that they're attacking that are under their charge is blatantly obvious. As we see, the minister has refused to speak to this bill. We see that the minister has refused to speak at length to the importance of taking away their rights and why their rights are not as important as any other workers' rights in this province.

I think there is a bit of both here. They don't want to learn how much this hurts families and how much this hurts workers in this province. They also don't care, and they don't care to learn either, Mr. Speaker. When they wear bright orange earplugs in this place, it's an affront to democracy. It's an affront to this Chamber. It's an affront to the members of this Assembly. [interjection] As members of the government laugh at that, I think that's actually something that they should be embarrassed about because they're laughing at hundreds of years of tradition of us having parliaments in the Westminster system to debate in these Assemblies.

That is why we were sent here. That is why we were sent to this Legislature, to debate and hear perspectives from all sides of the Assembly. That is why we are Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are given that title. We are entitled to be here and have speech and debate in this Assembly. But government members don't think that's important. They would rather put in their earplugs and tap away on their phones and their laptops. That speaks to how little they care about what Albertans have to say and hear in this Assembly. It's something that really is disappointing.

I would say that they should be ashamed, but again I know they aren't ashamed. I would say that, really, the members of the opposition here and, I think, Albertans are disappointed that the Premier would have a long-winded conversation across the entire Chamber instead of listening to debate that he was sent here to do in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I mean, that's something that's his prerogative, but I think that Albertans expect better. Albertans expect a Premier that isn't going to play childish games, isn't going to walk around giggling, handing out earplugs in the middle of the night. They expect a Premier that's going to work for Albertans. I don't think that when they elected this Premier, they expected him to be walking around giggling like a schoolchild, handing out earplugs in this Assembly.

It's a matter of fact. That's what he did. We all saw it here in this Assembly. I think it's something that's very important to point out on the record, that he walked around this entire Chamber, disrespecting the members who were speaking, just to hand out tools that would obstruct his own members from being able to hear the debate. That's something that I think is shameful. I know the Premier is not ashamed, but I think it's something that Albertans are disappointed in. Albertans expected better and Albertans want better from a Premier who purported to state – in fact, the Premier made a video at quite a bit of length during the campaign that stated: you will miss graduations, and you will spend long nights in the Assembly, and you will be fighting for the rights of all Albertans. Instead, what we see is the Premier deciding that the Assembly is a place for games and fun and deciding that he just wants to go around and hang out with his friends.

Mr. Speaker, that's the Premier's prerogative, but instead the opposition will stand here and fight in this House.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

## Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), language that creates disorder. The hon. member is talking in great detail, making, quite frankly, accusations against the Premier, his intent to create disorder in this Chamber, against every member of the government's intent to create disorder in the Chamber. First of all, I find that ironic, coming from that member, from that party as well. If anybody who has been in here has ever watched a question period lately, they would know which party in this Assembly is going out of their way to create disorder and, quite frankly, would also know the great work the Premier has done bringing order to this Chamber. I've enjoyed the calmness of this side of the House, as I'm sure you have.

When that member gets up and makes those types of accusations against the hon. Premier, the Premier of the province, who's sitting in here this evening, listening to the speech of that hon. member, who could then present something beside making accusations against the Premier, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that that language creates disorder.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is anybody else wishing to speak?

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, this is clearly a matter of debate, a debate of the facts of what happened here in this Assembly. The hon. Government House Leader spoke to how I was intending to create disorder in this Assembly. As you can clearly see and hear, no disorder was created. So I'd ask you to rule that it's not a point of order and allow me to continue with my speech.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much, Member. You know, I was about to rise myself. I think you were treading a little bit on the edge there about causing some disruption in the House, so I would caution you to reflect on the amendment to the bill and speak to that, please.

## Debate Continued

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I mean, very clearly here the stifling of debate continues. This Assembly would do well to go back to committee and speak at length on how we can improve this bill rather than plugging their ears and pretending that this bill won't hurt workers.

[The Speaker in the chair]

But, really, we know that's not true. That's why we've moved this amendment. That's why it's important, this amendment. It's because we know that we need to go back and not hand out earplugs. We need to go back and take those earplugs back, if the Premier would take them back from his members, and then allow them to listen to the debate in this Assembly, allow the committee to proceed with its good work.

Unfortunately, the committee was not able to proceed with its good work, perhaps because of what the Premier did earlier by handing out those earplugs so that his members could not hear what the members of the opposition and other members who spoke in this Assembly were proposing. I think that's something that Albertans are going to be disappointed about, Mr. Speaker. I think it's something that members of the opposition here are disappointed about. But that is the prerogative of the government, to disrespect this Assembly, to disrespect the process of this Assembly and disrespect the process of Committee of the Whole.

That's why I think it's important that we recommit to Committee of the Whole. If we go back, we can then have that debate properly.

The Premier could apologize for trying to disrupt this House by not allowing his own members to hear this debate. Then we'd be able to have that discussion and move those amendments that are important to this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, at great length I might add that we could have added many amendments that would have made a bad bill better. I mean, those are words you've used yourself while you were on this side of this House, that sometimes there's a bad bill that the government introduces and the opposition just wants to make it better. I think that's what was happening here.

I mean, obviously, the Premier didn't think his members should listen to suggestions for improvement. Those are the facts. I mean, he walked around and handed out devices to impair the listening of members. I think that's something that is an affront to the democracy of this House. It's an affront to us being able to do our jobs in this House. Our job is to speak to all members of the Assembly. I think that is something that we in the opposition here are proud to do. We're proud to speak on behalf of our constituents and on behalf of all workers in Alberta, who are having their rights taken away. As they wake up right now, I'm sure they're turning on their radios and turning on their TVs to Assembly TV, Mr. Speaker. They're watching in this Assembly right now that their rights are being taken away. The members' and minister's own workers who are under their charge are waking up right now and realizing that the minister is about to vote to take their rights away.

I think that's a shame, so I'd encourage all members to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

6:10

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, due to my proximity, can't help but enjoy the debate from my colleague from Edmonton-South. Indeed, it would be fair to say that there is no other quite like the MLA for Edmonton-South here in this Assembly, and I would appreciate the opportunity to hear him conclude his thoughts on this particular bill.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I endeavour to always keep my comments as brief and succinct as I can, and that is why I would take this opportunity to speak at just a little bit of length as to why it's so important we bring this back to committee. The very act of obstructing the committee from doing its work earlier, I think, should mean that we should go back and do that work properly and not wear the earplugs and not ignore the amendments and not ignore the concerns that are being raised by duly elected members of this Assembly.

I think every member of this Assembly should listen to the amendments. They should get up and actually speak to the amendments, and they should get up and do what we were sent here to do and what is our job, which is to debate legislation in this House, to have strong and thoughtful debate on how we can make bills better in this Assembly. I think that any member who accepted those earplugs from the Premier when he went around handing them out, giggling like a schoolgirl, during Committee of the Whole, which we should recommit back to, should come and apologize to this Assembly for disrespecting other members in this House in such a gross manner.

It is a gross disrespect to this Assembly to try and ignore what other members have to say, to try and disrespect and disregard what other members have to say and not do the work that their constituents sent

them here for. I've spoken quite a bit at length about how it is disrespectful to this Assembly, but I think what it's more disrespectful to is their own constituents, because their constituents are the ones that expect them to do debate in this Assembly, especially in Committee of the Whole, where substantive amendments are brought forward, which is what we're trying to recommit to right now. Especially in Committee of the Whole, where substantive amendments can make bad bills better, you would expect your MLAs and your elected officials to listen and reflect and consider whether to make changes. Unfortunately, it looks like the government members chose not to. They chose to disrespect democracy in this place, and that's why I want to give them a second chance.

I believe in second chances. I believe people can change, so I'd like to give all members of the Assembly a second chance to get up in committee and apologize for disrespecting us the first time and disrespecting their constituents the first time and then have a strong debate and reconsider amendments and consider whether we should move forward with this bill or not or whether we should make a bad bill better, Mr. Speaker. That's something I think is very important. I see members of the government are laughing away over there because they think it's not important to listen to debate in this House, that it's not important to have a strong, thoughtful discussion in this House. That's the prerogative of those members, especially the government whip, who doesn't have to do his job here in the Assembly and listen to debate and vote on bills here. I mean, the government actually introduced changes to the standing orders so they could abstain from their job, and that's their prerogative, but I think that we should go back to Committee of the Whole so that we can have that debate, so we can do our jobs and make a bad bill better.

We can improve the legislation that's been brought here to this Assembly. It's something that I wish and I hope all members would be open to. I think that certainly members of the government caucus and government backbench understand how disgraceful it is to disrespect this Assembly and their constituents, and I hope they get up and apologize for that, Mr. Speaker. I think that this is a really important amendment, that we should go back to committee and consider those amendments that were neglected in the first place and then have proper discussion on them. I think that discussion would improve our outcomes of this bill. It would make it so that our workers who are having their rights taken away this morning with very little opportunity to speak under the cover of darkness – I think that those workers would appreciate it if we had the opportunity to go back to Committee of the Whole. Those workers would appreciate it if we could have some of that debate. Now, I believe that the sun is probably coming up outside a little bit, Mr. Speaker, so with some sunlight they would appreciate being able to listen and see the debate that is happening in this Chamber and understand the ramifications this will have for their families, for their communities, and for the ability for them to service their communities as public workers.

I encourage everyone to accept this amendment. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on the main bill. I might just add that you can both sit down at this point in time. I've made my decision about who I'll recognize. I just want to provide a little bit of commentary.

As I was unable to have the pleasure of hearing all of the comments from the hon. Member for Edmonton-South, I thank the chair who was able to rule on the point of order. What I might just say is that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South might use significantly more caution when making accusations about other members in the Chamber, particularly when members of both the government and the opposition have had electronic devices that may impair their hearing for whatever reason they might choose to

do that. Whether they're working on other things, I have noticed many members in the Chamber throughout the night with earphones and other things. I would just perhaps provide some additional caution to the Member for Edmonton-South.

With that, I will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, who has risen to speak to the debate.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to, before I get into this, note how proud I am of our Premier and his efforts to not only raise the level of decorum but also, as a result, the dialogue in this House, which is something that I heard loud and clear from my constituents in Calgary-Klein as I was door-knocking and the general frustration about the decorum and the dialogue and the debate that was happening in the past. The fact is that, again, over the last several hours we have had a great back-and-forth discussion in this House. We have heard from several government members as well as several opposition members on this topic. I would say that this has been one of the best evenings of debate that we have had. I think it speaks to our commitment to having a good dialogue.

The other thing I wanted to quickly note – and thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your comments on this. Again, I don't want this to turn into a game of tattletale, but as we've had members that have been kindly pointing out actions, whether or not they were actually happening in this House when the member was saying that, talking about the importance of listening to the debate and hearing from the opposition: I have been paying attention. I've been thoughtfully sitting here and paying attention and hearing what each of the members has had to say, but while I've been watching and listening to you guys, I've also observed members in this House reading comic books, racy comic books, in front of me and the Member for Edmonton-City Centre and the Member for Edmonton-South doing online shopping while we were in here, while I'm trying to listen to the members here.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader has risen on a point of order.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, point of order: 23(h), (i), and (j). The reason why earlier the Member for Edmonton-South raised the question about recording was because the member for – forgive me; I don't know the constituency.

**Mr. Getson:** Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you.

Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland had divulged himself what he was doing, which was listening to the amps or measuring the volume of the House, which was divulged on his own.

Members, there is a tradition in this House that members do not identify members, nor what they are doing, whether they are working on other projects, signing cards, writing correspondence, working online, which, of course, Mr. Speaker, you will be very well aware of – I apologize; my words are not coming so quickly to me at this hour.

The Member for Calgary-Klein, by calling out members: I believe that falls in line with speaking about absences or the members that aren't present as well. I jumped up on a point of order because I think the member should cease going down this path that he is going on.

6:20

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, first, Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief because of the hour, and I know that time is important to the opposition. I do sympathize a little bit. The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein used to tattletale on me quite often when we were younger as well, so I hear that argument.

With that said, though, while I do sympathize with that, I do want to point out that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South just spent about 15 minutes in this Chamber calling out individual members of this Chamber. I know the Speaker has addressed that, so I don't want to spend too much time on that. I want to respect that, but the point is that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South called out individual members of this Chamber and asked them to rise to explain these types of things, including the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, who, from what I see, is rising to address the direct question that was asked by the Member for Edmonton-South, and he is using examples of members of the Opposition House Leader's party who are on their computers looking at cartoons or online shopping or those types of things. I think his point is well taken.

Mr. Speaker, with that said, I will encourage my little brother from Calgary-Klein to move on with his comments.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for the interjections. I don't think that we need to hear from the Member for Calgary-Klein on this particular issue, as I'm prepared to rule.

Herein lies the challenge before the Assembly. When members effort to walk down this road of making accusations, saying that this member is doing that or otherwise, both the Member for Edmonton-South and now the Member for Calgary-Klein, decorum in the Chamber is inevitably going to deteriorate and create disorder. I am sympathetic to the position that the Opposition House Leader has raised about how we treat each other in this Assembly, and members have a smattering of responsibilities that they need to take care of. The challenge here is that the decision that the Member for Calgary-Klein has made is to bring issues to the debate that are not necessarily all that relevant to the issue that is at hand. The issue that we are debating is a recommittal motion on the bill, Bill 9, and if both the Member for Edmonton-South and the Member for Calgary-Klein had kept their remarks more relevant with respect to the amendment, my sense is that decorum would not have deteriorated. As such, I would encourage the Member for Calgary-Klein to get back to the matter at hand and for all members, for the remaining time that we have left today, to focus purely on what is relevant to the debate in this Chamber.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly want to get back to the topic at hand. I'm certainly new in the Chamber, too, learning about this process from veterans in this Chamber and following their example. Thank you for the direction on that, and we'll move on. Again, we've heard a lot of debate in the House in regard to whether or not we're paying attention. I just wanted to make sure that the folks in the House – we rebutted and made sure that it was noted that we are sitting here. We are paying attention, and we are excited to be a part of this debate.

With that, I'll get to it a little bit here. Getting back to this debate, we were talking about the importance of hearing from our constituents, knowing that that's what I've been doing and spending my time doing. I also wanted to note that I have several family members that are public servants. I have a sister-in-law who is a

nurse. I have a brother who is a teacher. I have another sister-in-law who is a paramedic. I have another sister-in-law who's a lab tech. The hon. House leader and myself have lots of opportunity at family events to hear from our government workers in addition to what we're hearing from our own constituents.

One of the big things that I continuously hear from front-line government workers is the need to improve overall efficiency in our system, that we have so many opportunities to get better value from our government services. Again, this is part of why I think we need to make sure that we're getting all the information that we possibly can in order to inform our decisions on how we move forward as a government when it comes to public services, taking that time to hear from them, to dig into this, and make sure that we have all the best information available for us to move forward. It's about due process, emphasizing that effort to take that time and hear from our front lines.

I think the other thing we've heard a lot from, too, is just this concern over growing and mounting government debt and the need to have a sustainable path forward, so taking the time to figure that out. Again, that's why I commend the Minister of Finance and our Premier and this government for that fiscal responsibility, and I'm very proud of government and its efforts to do that.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, we are back on the amendment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to what we know is the final reading for Bill 9. You know, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." That's from, of course, the Book of Ecclesiastes, the man Solomon, his book of poetry, just recognizing that things move in cycles. We begin at one side; we move to the other. Here in this Chamber every day we can look up and we can see the sunrise and the sunset courtesy of Alberta indigenous artist Mr. Alex Janvier. On this bill again we find ourselves coming full circle in our debate, in our discussion; indeed, recognizing that, as I said earlier, this is a story we have seen played out before under many different Conservative governments in this province.

Indeed, you know, that bit from Ecclesiastes in some ways talks about futility, the futility of committing the same actions over and over and not seeming to get ahead, recognizing there are natural cycles. But then there are these sorts of situations; again, we have this government which is moving forward and bringing legislation to break contracts with Albertans. Now, the Minister of Finance rose and he spoke earlier on this particular bill, the bill in which, I would dare say, speaking of seasons, anyone trying to keep an eye on the shifting seasons of this particular bill as this government rushes it forward would probably get a severe case of whiplash, noting that they're in such a rush to move forward on this through the seasons, to plant the seed and reap their fruit, then plunge us into, seemingly, our winter of discontent.

But this minister rose in this House and he attempted to, in his view, clarify what the intent of this bill is and what the government is trying to do. He said that it would be fiscally irresponsible for this government not to go in and break contracts with workers. Mr. Speaker, what I would say the responsible thing is is to honour a deal that is made. The responsible thing is for government not to set the precedent that when it is convenient for them, that when it works better for their particular interests, they will simply use the heavy arm of the law to reach in and break contracts at their whim.

You know, often in this House we talk about uncertainty; indeed, members of the government caucus when they were in opposition

talked often about the damage that was done by creating uncertainty for businesses. They claimed that business didn't know which way the government was going to turn, what they were going to do, or how they could possibly invest and do their best to create prosperity in Alberta.

6:30

Well, I dare say, Mr. Speaker, as I noted in a question the other day to the Minister of Health, that uncertainty works for workers, too, and this government is choosing to create tremendous uncertainty in the public sector. For all the promises that they make standing in this House, for all the lovely words that they are finally coming around to saying, as they realize the attention that is being paid, the potential damage this is doing to their political capital, we recognize that they are creating uncertainty amongst our public service. I've heard it from many. My colleagues have talked about the others that they have spoken to who have heard it, too. They do not trust this government – indeed, why should they? – when this is the first step that they choose to take in their interactions with the public service in this province.

The minister talked about wanting to be sure that we had a fair process – a fair process – as government exercises its unilateral ability to reach in and break a contract, to break a deal. At which point now can workers ever trust that the government is not simply ever going to do that again, simply choose whenever it likes? If it dislikes the way a particular negotiation has gone, if it decides that it needs to change things for its own political convenience, that it's not simply going to rise in this House and again table a bill like this and force it through in the dead of night? That is not a fair process, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, the minister spoke about how not bringing forward this bill would be unfair to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, as I also noted the other day in my question to the Minister of Health, we are talking about Albertans, Albertans who sat down and had their representatives negotiate a fair deal. This is why I believe that this bill needs to be referred. These Albertans put their trust in their elected representatives. They participated in the set rules and processes of a system, that was there to protect them and their interests, in which they participated in good faith, and indeed our government did as well.

They signed a deal that they expected to be upheld in good faith, and this government is breaking it. That, Mr. Speaker, is unfair to those Albertans. Indeed, if this is where the government goes in terms of treating the very workers that it employs, for whom it is directly responsible, how can we trust them in good faith in any other aspect of their work? How can we trust them in business relationships or other contracts that this government may undertake if this government is simply willing to tear up, shred a deal when it's for their convenience?

The minister said that this is not a step they take lightly. Well, it's certainly a step they took rather quickly, Mr. Speaker. It's a step they took without giving any indication to Albertans that this was something they were looking at doing. Even though, I would suspect, they were well aware of this during the election campaign, they chose to hide that from Albertans. They told them that they would strike their blue-ribbon panel.

I cannot believe that this Premier, a man who I have clearly seen is a man of deep study, a very strategic thinker, who informs himself very well before he takes an action or before he moves forward, did not understand the implications of what was coming forward with public service contracts. I find it hard to believe that he was suddenly blindsided on entering office. Yet he and his members made absolutely no mention of the fact that they would, by force of law, force – not ask, not politely work with or negotiate but force –

public-sector workers in the province of Alberta to forgo the rights that they duly negotiated in their contract.

Now, we recognize that the government has this impending deadline tomorrow. As the arbitration would continue, they want to make sure that they push this law through so that they can break that contract before they have to deal with that, again, to act in bad faith for their own convenience. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't care whether they took this step lightly or not. The fact that they are taking it is an insult to public-sector workers in this province, the fact that they are willing to tear up these contracts, that were negotiated in good faith, with barely a shred of notice to those on whom they are imposing this.

This has all taken place, Mr. Speaker, within the span of a week. Again, anyone trying to keep track of this government's movement on this bill could well get whiplash. We know that this government has chosen to impose closure in this. They have chosen to limit debate, to limit us to only the few days that we have had in this Assembly, in which we as the opposition have diligently tried to make the best use of that time as we can to make sure that Albertans will be aware of the decision this government is making. Indeed, if this government is as proud of what they are doing as they claim they are, then by all means they should be quite happy to have Albertans fully understand it and be informed about it.

We've taken what opportunity we have available to make that known, to make that clear. I know our time is still limited. We don't have too much of it left this morning, so I won't take up too much more of it myself. But I will say that I have appreciated this opportunity to be here to represent the voice of my constituents, indeed, to take a break at times. Whether or not the Member for Calgary-Klein appreciates my taste in reading material or the random Internet ads that might pop up around it, I can tell you that Action Comics featuring Superman is an entertaining read.

That said, I appreciate the stamina of all members of this Assembly in taking part in this debate this evening. I've made it quite clear what I think of the government's intentions and plans with this bill. They've made it quite clear how they view that. In about 20 minutes we will have our vote, and then from there it will be up to Albertans to judge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you. I just had a couple of comments or thoughts that I wanted to share this morning. As the Member for Edmonton-City Centre spoke, he started out by talking about the importance of making sure that we don't break contracts. As you know, Mr. Speaker, as opposition we had the unfortunate opportunity to listen and watch as the NDP government continued to unravel and break contracts with our PPAs in this province, that ended up costing Albertans upwards of about \$2 billion. It's unfortunate for that member to say that he thinks what's going to happen with this is that we're going to break contracts, but he doesn't know. He's assuming that that's what this process is all about. Yet, in reality, this is about being able to take a reasonable approach to looking at Alberta's finances after this NDP government broke these PPA contracts.

Mr. Speaker, during the last election, when I was door-knocking, I was in Foremost. I was doing a meet-and-greet there. I had the opportunity to have a couple come up afterwards. They were an older couple, and they came up and said that they had voted for the NDP in every election where they were able to vote. In fact, this

gentleman had actually driven Grant Notley around in that area, drumming up votes.

**6:40**

Yet he said to me: this year I will be voting for the United Conservative Party. He said: for the first time I understand the concept that we need to have something that is sustainable, that the reason why the UCP is trying to be able to get the financial situation back on track is so that we can provide these wraparound services, the things that we hold so dear in Alberta: health care, a proper sustainable education system, good policing, and firefighters. He said: the reason why I am now voting for the United Conservative Party is because finally I understand the connect between having a strong, robust economy and sustainable wraparound services for Albertans. This is why he wanted to vote for the United Conservative Party.

What we've been asked to do by Albertans is to be able to have a reasonable approach, to be able to put together a go-forward plan for our children and grandchildren that can be sustainable. It's folly for the members opposite in the NDP to believe that you can continue to go towards \$100 billion of debt and still be able to provide in the future opportunities for good health care and good education. It's fiction; it's fantasy; it's only the things you read in comics.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side have pledged to Albertans, have committed to take a reasonable look at the books. We have struck the panel. The blue-ribbon panel is designed specifically to give us the information that we need so that we can go forward in the proper way, so that Albertans can know that there is going to be a sustainable system of wraparound services for them not just for today but into the future. When we presented to Albertans, we presented that to them, that concept of sustainability, and they were completely fine with the idea that we would be able to accomplish that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other argument that we've heard ad nauseam here is this idea that we are taking away their right to be able to represent their people. Unfortunately, at 19 hours we are nowhere near taking that away from them.

**The Speaker:** Hon members, we are back on the amendment. I see that the hon. Premier has risen.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, allow me to thank you and all personnel of the Assembly for their tremendous dedication and hard work. We appreciate their facilitating the work of this place. I'd like to congratulate and thank all members who have been participating in this debate around the clock as we approach 7 a.m.

The Member for Edmonton-South suggested that I was disrespecting this debate, that I wasn't respecting the Assembly. The fact is that I've been respectfully listening to speeches here this evening for some 11 hours and last night for some seven hours, about 18 hours of the nearly 24 hours that this matter has been debated in this Assembly. I've listened respectfully to all of the opposition speeches and those from the government side as well, Mr. Speaker.

I'm speaking against the recommitment amendment brought forward by, I believe it is, the Member for Edmonton-McClung because the Assembly has already decided to pass this matter through to third reading and I do support the adoption of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, at third reading.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre suggested moments ago that – I guess I should be flattered by his attribution to me of great sort of omniscience. The truth is that we were rather busy creating a new political party and running a very vigorous campaign, and I only became aware of the current state of play with respect to collective bargaining agreements with public-



sector unions in the transition phase, shortly after our government took office several weeks ago. I think that about two weeks but perhaps a week into the term of this new government senior officials from the Department of Finance and Treasury Board and from Executive Council informed me that a number of the current agreements were coming up for wage reopeners in the weeks to follow and that this new government does not yet have adequate information to enter into those negotiations on the wage reopeners and that we need a really solid understanding of the current fiscal reality.

That is why the fourth “whereas” clause of Bill 9 says:

Whereas significant changes have occurred in Alberta’s economy since the 2018-19 Third Quarter Fiscal Update and Economic Statement . . . [and]

Whereas the Government of Alberta needs to gather and fully consider the information and advice prior to wage arbitration hearings under collective agreements in respect of 2019-2020 that affect the Government of Alberta as an employer or funder,

that advice coming from

. . . the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta’s Finances, an expert panel appointed by the Government of Alberta, will deliver a final report by August 15, 2019, and time is required to gather . . . information on Alberta’s economy and the Government of Alberta’s financial state.

I and the ministers were presented with the emerging deadlines on wage reopeners, and we were briefed on the very significant fiscal implications therein, with some unions, I gather, making at least initial requests in the arbitration there for 5 or 6 per cent increases. At the same time, we’re being advised by Treasury Board and Finance that the fiscal situation of the province has deteriorated significantly since the former government’s third-quarter update. The advice we received is that we needed, to use an idiomatic phrase, to hit the pause button on this arbitration until we could come to the table in good faith with all of the necessary, requisite information. That’s exactly the responsible position that we’ve taken.

Mr. Speaker, we’ve heard over the last 24 hours of debate no end of conspiracy theories. We’ve heard about this bill being, according to some NDP members, analogous to slavery, to jackboot authoritarianism, to an end to unionism, to an attack on fundamental human rights. Bone-chilling accusations of every kind have been levelled at what is, frankly, I humbly submit, a modest effort by a new government to truly understand the fiscal context in which we will be negotiating collective bargaining agreements that collectively represent some 50 per cent of the \$49 billion in expenditures of the Alberta government. What government would not ask for a few more weeks, a few more months to actually have a proper understanding before proceeding?

It would be grossly irresponsible, I submit, for us to have ignored the advice that we received from the senior public service, to say, “No; we’re just going to move ahead based on a mandate from the previous government, based on dated information on our fiscal state,” which has since deteriorated, when we have some of the leading experts in Canada working right now to provide us with comprehensive, timely information and advice on our fiscal situation, a panel chaired by one of the most highly regarded modern Canadian Finance ministers, a New Democrat, Dr. Janice MacKinnon, also in her own right, by the way, a highly regarded Canadian historian; co-chaired by Dr. Mike Percy, the former shadow Finance minister of the Liberal Party in this place, the former dean of business at the University of Alberta, a man of widely accepted acclaim and deep economic credibility; as well as the former Deputy Minister of Finance in the province of British Columbia; as well as Mr. Mowat, the former chief executive officer

of Alberta Treasury Branches; as well as Jay Ramotar, who has been a deputy minister in I think at least five Alberta governments.

I want to thank on the floor of this Assembly those remarkable individuals for having given up much of their spring and summer to do a very difficult task, a deep dive into Alberta’s finances to help inform the fiscal policy of this new government and this province. I believe we owe it to them to get the information before we move ahead with decisions which ultimately could affect 50 per cent of the expenditures of the Alberta government, Mr. Speaker. About \$24 billion of the \$49 billion that we spend is represented by public-sector wages, salaries, and benefits.

6:50

I know that what I’m about to say gets dismissed by the opposition as being trite, but it’s true, Mr. Speaker. I and this government do respect the work of not only our public servants but those in the municipalities, universities, schools, hospitals, agencies, boards, and commissions, those in the broader public sector. I can tell you authentically – and you can speak to any of the senior public servants, for that matter – that I’m pretty sure that most of the front-line folks that worked in the departments that I had the privilege of serving in in Ottawa will say that I had a fantastic relationship with the public service there. I respected their advice, their fearless advice, their loyal implementation.

In a couple of departments over the course of several years, with their support and advice, I led deep and, I think, pretty positive reforms, complex policy reforms, even during a time of fiscal restraint, when we were reducing, in the two major departments I was at, by an average of 7 per cent operational expenditures without, I believe, negatively affecting the delivery of services. I trusted the public service to come forward with advice on how that could be done without layoffs but, rather, with attrition where it was necessary and without reductions in public-sector compensation.

Mr. Speaker, we were elected with a very clear mandate to restore the province’s finances to balance within this term. I think Albertans were right to give us that mandate. We cannot achieve that mandate by pretending that 50 per cent of expenditures on wages, salaries, and benefits are somehow immaterial to the fiscal health of the province. You know, I suppose we can infer where the NDP would go with this, which would be: take the wage openers and just throw a dart at the wall and see where it lands. It’s that kind of fiscal mismanagement which took us to nearly a \$60 billion debt.

With that, I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 24, agreed to on June 19, 2019, I must now put every question necessary for the disposal of Bill 9 at third reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:53 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Dach	Loyola
Carson	Deol	Phillips
Ceci	Goehring	Shepherd

Against the motion:

Allard	Hunter	Reid
Dreeshen	Issik	Rowswell
Ellis	Jones	Sawhney

Fir	Kenney	Sigurdson, R.J.	Glasgo	Long	Stephan
Getson	Loewen	Singh	Glubish	McIver	Walker
Glasgo	Long	Stephan	Goodridge	Nixon, Jason	Wilson
Glubish	McIver	Walker	Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Yao
Goodridge	Nixon, Jason	Wilson	Horner	Orr	
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Yao			
Horner	Orr				

**7:00**

Totals: For – 9 Against – 29

[Motion on amendment REC1 lost]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance has moved third reading of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:58 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Hunter	Reid
Dreeshen	Issik	Rowswell
Ellis	Jones	Sawhney
Fir	Kenney	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Loewen	Singh

Against the motion:

Bilous	Dach	Loyola
Carson	Deol	Phillips
Ceci	Goehring	Shepherd

Totals: For – 29 Against – 9

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a third time]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. First of all, just before I move my motion, I want to thank you for all your hard work this evening, through you to your team, but also to all the officials, the Sergeant-at-Arms and all of his staff. I certainly think I speak for all members of the House that we appreciate all that hard work.

To all hon. members, thank you for a good night's work, lots of progress. With that, I will move to adjourn the House until today at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 7:02 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, June 20, 2019

Day 17

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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Dach  
Dang  
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Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

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Sigurdson, R.J.

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Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 20, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through the love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind the responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests visiting. They include guests of the Minister of Seniors and Housing: Sandra and Don Beach and Roy Dallmann.

Also joining us today are guests of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I invite you to rise when you hear your name and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly upon conclusion: Patrick Etokudo, Moses Onmonya, Oge Aghaegbuna, Juliet Ojo, and Aminat Popoola.

Also, guests of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood who need no introduction to the Assembly: Personal Prince to the Emperor Walter; His Most Imperial and Sovereign Majesty Emperor XLIII-and-a-half Yeust Bobb; His Most Imperial and Sovereign Majesty Emperor Elect XLIII Davvid DragOn; and Her Most Imperial and Sovereign Majesty Empress XLIII Morgen Fair.

Welcome to all.

### Ministerial Statements

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

#### National Indigenous Peoples Day

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for allowing me to wear this shirt in the House today. We acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting ground and gathering place, and we recognize all the many First Nation and Métis footsteps which have marked these lands for generations.

Today I stand to recognize an important day on our calendar. Tomorrow, June 21, National Indigenous Peoples Day will be celebrated across the country, our province, and right here in our city. It's an honour to join in the celebrations that are being hosted throughout the month to celebrate the first people to inhabit this land. Many of the members in this Assembly will be doing just that in their own home constituencies tomorrow. I'd like to remind all Albertans that it's a time to honour the diverse history, language, and culture of the indigenous peoples, that strengthen Alberta.

We're proud to say that there are more than 258,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people who call Alberta home, many residing right here in Edmonton. While the growth of the population is exciting, it also brings challenges, but this government will work towards making life better, safer, and more engaging for our First Nations peoples. This incredible segment of our society contributes to the social, economic fabric of Alberta each and every day, making our province a great place to live and to work. Their history

and culture enriches our province. With the 48 First Nations and eight Métis settlements in Alberta, our government recognizes that indigenous people are an important part of both the history and the future of this province.

We're working towards including Alberta's First Nations as true partners in prosperity. Ours is a new approach that gives real meaning to the reconciliation where Alberta's First Nations are real owners of the resources on their land. Our government took this historic step to meet with all Albertan First Nations leadership within the first 50 days of our mandate. This clearly shows the priority we place on including our indigenous citizens as true owners of the resources on this land. We recognize the value of their input, the incredible energy and ideas they bring, and the positive and humble manner in which they live. The indigenous population is the youngest and the fastest growing segment of our population. We need their creative spirit, entrepreneurial skills, and desire to benefit from our economy to help us build a strong and free Alberta.

I encourage all Albertans to join me and the government in celebrating June 21, National Indigenous Peoples Day, across our great province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address this House on tomorrow's important day. Join me. Hay-hay.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to respond.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by acknowledging that we are on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting ground and gathering place. We recognize the many First Nations and Métis footsteps which have marked these lands for many generations.

I rise today on behalf of our caucus to speak about National Indigenous Peoples Day, on June 21. It is an honour to join in celebrations that are being hosted throughout the month to celebrate the first people to inhabit this land. This is a day for all Canadians to celebrate the diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples: the 48 First Nations, including the Beaver, Cree, Dene, Nakoda, and Blackfoot nations; the eight Métis settlements; and the Inuit people.

This is a day of celebration, but it's also a day to recognize that the path we are on is one of reconciliation. The history of settler involvement with indigenous people is a difficult one, involving residential schools, the '60s scoop, and other forms of oppression, but we can be part of the change and join in truth and reconciliation.

Our government was proud to focus on a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples in Alberta based on reconciliation, mutual respect, and co-operation. I'm proud to have been the first Minister of Indigenous Relations to have personally visited all 48 First Nations and all eight Métis settlements. I am proud to have been in the first government in Alberta to deliver apologies for residential schools and the '60s scoop, to have been among the first to call for a national commission into murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, and to make the commitment to equal access to health care under Jordan's principle.

I'm proud that we were the only provincial government to put \$100 million to bringing clean water to reserves. We initiated the redesign of the K to 12 curriculum to better reflect indigenous history, knowledge, and traditions. The indigenous climate leadership program saw over \$80 million committed to building green energy solutions. We supported indigenous languages, including Calgary's first-ever indigenous languages resource centre. Our indigenous housing capital program made available \$120 million to increase affordable rental housing units for indigenous people in need. We significantly increased funding for native friendship centres in 21

Alberta communities, and we supported economic development to create \$600 million worth of wind projects.

We are proud of our steps toward reconciliation, but there's much more work to do. That is why I'm calling on this government to protect and continue this important work and to commit to true partnership with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. I recommend that all members of this House and all Albertans get out on National Indigenous Peoples Day, wherever you are, and join the celebration. All summer long there are powwows, rodeos, and sun dance ceremonies throughout the province. Go with an open mind and open heart, and you will find your life enriched.

Thank you.

### Members' Statements

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

#### World Refugee Day

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and speak before you all today on World Refugee Day. Ever since our province was founded, more than 100 years ago, Alberta has been blessed to be a bastion of security, freedom, and liberty. As our province and our nation have grown, so has the standard of living for those who choose to call Alberta home. Because of this, today we enjoy an impressive quality of life that would have been all but unimaginable to the first pioneers that established our province.

However, to this day there are still areas throughout the world that aren't afforded any of the luxuries that we take for granted. In fact, there are millions of innocent people that still endure armed conflicts and social upheavals on a scale that would seem incomprehensible to most Albertans. As a result, countless civilians whose lives have been irreversibly altered by these conflicts have little choice other than to leave and flee their homes. These refugees have few financial prospects, and often it is only their unwavering desire to create a better life for themselves and their families that pulls them through.

This is why today, Mr. Speaker, we seek to honour the trials and hardships of the refugees across the world, who are fighting to improve their own lives and the lives of the ones they love. World Refugee Day serves to remind us of the common humanity we all share.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:40

#### Climate Change

**Ms Renaud:** The level of carbon now in our atmosphere has not been seen in 12 million years. The carbon dioxide in our air is at an all-time high of 415 parts per million. This pollution is rapidly pushing the climate back to a state not seen since the Eocene epoch, more than 33 million years ago, when there was no ice on either pole. We have a paleorecord, so we know quite a bit about what life was like millions of years ago. It was not conducive to life as we know it.

Our scientists have for decades been warning us that we have caused global temperatures to rise too quickly. Peer-reviewed science tells us that 75 to 80 per cent of the permanent ice on our planet has melted in the last 35 years. They also tell us that the likelihood that there will be any permanent ice left in the Arctic after 2022 is essentially zero. The loss of ice will speed up the devastation as more heat is absorbed and sea levels rise.

We no longer have the luxury of time, contrary to what the current UCP government would like you to believe. We need aggressive policies and actions to ensure that rising global temperatures do not

exceed two degrees, and that requires swift and aggressive action. We need to do more than acknowledge we have a climate crisis. This new government will be remembered for their failure to take this crisis seriously because they're too busy plotting political strategies or paying special-interest groups and donors.

Children around the world are demanding action from decision-makers. Sixteen-year-old Greta Thunberg said it best, and I quote: in the year 2078 I will celebrate my 75th birthday; if I have children, maybe they will spend the day with me; maybe they will ask me about you; maybe they will ask why you didn't do anything while there still was time to act; you say you love your children above all else, yet you are stealing their future in front of their eyes. Unquote.

Are you listening, Mr. Premier?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

#### National Indigenous Peoples Day

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1996 the government of Canada declared June 21 of every year to be National Indigenous Peoples Day. The date of June 21 was chosen to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day in part because it corresponds to the summer solstice, the first day of summer, and the day with the longest light and midnight sun. As a northerner this is one of my favourite days of the year. It is also the day when many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups have traditionally celebrated their culture and heritage. It is a day to celebrate the diverse histories, languages, and cultures of indigenous people who have enriched our vibrant province.

I am proud to say that more than 258,000 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit call Alberta home. This is 1 in 6 Albertans who are indigenous Canadians, which makes Alberta's the third-highest population of indigenous peoples in any province in Canada. Indigenous peoples contribute to the social and economic life of Alberta each and every day, making our province a great place to live and work.

Throughout the month of June communities across Canada host events to celebrate the cultures, histories, achievements, and contributions of the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people to Canada. In fact, we are privileged to have our Legislature Building located just steps from Rosedale Flats, an important historical meeting ground for indigenous peoples that goes back almost 3,000 years. I encourage all of you to join our National Indigenous Peoples Day celebration and to attend other events taking place in your community and across this province. It is my honour to be able to participate tomorrow in the First Nation, Métis, Inuit Festival, hosted by the McMurray Métis, in my home riding of Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche. It's a great opportunity to recognize and celebrate the dynamic heritage and culture of indigenous people in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, while we cannot change the past, we can strive to do better so that history does not repeat itself. With a sense of optimism we can develop a path forward together. [Remarks in Dene]

#### Vikings in the Streets Festival

**Ms Lovely:** Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending the eighth annual Vikings in the Streets Festival in the town of Viking this past weekend. This festival celebrates and promotes Viking heritage to the world with a variety of family-friendly events ranging from face painting to Viking foods and crafts and including a lutefisk contest. Lutfisk, to those who don't know, is a traditional Norwegian dish which is dried and salted fish with lye and is gelatinous in nature. The name lutefisk literally means lye fish and is a traditional food eaten by those with Norwegian heritage at Christmas. I would like

to send my congratulations to the third-time-winning champion Nancy Tkacyk. I admire your technique. The festival also includes a chili cook-off, jail-and-bail fundraiser, a parade, and a variety of vendors as well as a big top show.

The event was well attended this year by the community, and the weather was exceptional, ensuring that everyone enjoyed themselves. Another highlight to the festival was Odin's Ravens, a group of locals who dress in traditional costume and participate in historical re-enactment, demonstrating combat techniques. The kids in the audience were invited to participate and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

The town of Viking was settled in 1909 by Sivert Hafso and Ole Sorenson from Norway. Those who settled and founded Viking did so in the spirit and tradition of Norwegians dating back to the Vikings, who pioneered the first shores of eastern Canada. The event was well received, and I was happy to deliver greetings on behalf of Premier Kenney and the province of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind all hon. members that, no matter the circumstances, the use of names would be wildly inappropriate here inside the Chamber.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a statement.

### Education Funding and Bill 8

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the government caucus reminds this House frequently that they won the 2019 election, and they remind this House pretty frequently that their promise to Albertans was laser focused. They were focused on jobs, economy, and pipelines. They had some candidates forced out due to flirtation with hate groups, but still they vowed to Albertans that they would not be distracted on social issues.

Yet the Education minister has started to do exactly the opposite of what these honourable folks were elected to do. The education and training of our young people is surely one of the most fundamental economic issues for any family, but on this front this Education minister is silent and idle as school districts across the province hit the panic button and start laying off teachers and educational assistants. Alberta's kids are going to suffer, stuffed into overcrowded classrooms with classmates that have lost the developmental and behavioural supports that they rely on.

This minister is inexplicably oblivious to this urgent problem unfolding right now in every constituency across Alberta. All of her energy and activity has focused on the bizarre vendetta against gay kids, which has come to be known as Bill Hate. So I have to ask my honourable friends across the aisle: is this what you came here to do? How do you reconcile a laserlike economic mandate with a minister who is utterly ignoring a huge economic problem so she can focus on her own personal social agenda? Of course, it's not me that the members opposite will have to answer to. It's the parents that will be calling and writing and showing up at their offices and events this fall and for years to come. For those parents' sake and for their kids' sake I hope my honourable friends will tell this minister to put aside Bill Hate and focus on the issues they were elected for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I've dedicated my life to serving vulnerable people. Specifically, I spent 15 years serving the homeless in Calgary. I built and managed programs designed to help people overcome addiction and poverty. I've also built

programs that help people who have been pushed to the margins of society to rise up and find purpose, community, and hope.

This experience included managing a youth shelter. Over my time working in the shelter, I heard gut-wrenching stories of youth fleeing abuse and neglect. I also met many youth in my programs who identified as LGBTQ. I heard many stories about youth running away from home or being kicked out of home. My team and I worked extremely hard to make sure that all the youth in my program were safe and knew that they were loved. This included hiring many members of the LGBTQ community and designing programs specific for LGBTQ youth, but more than that, making sure that all the youth in my program were valued and felt safe to be themselves.

I can say with confidence that nobody in this House is happy about how these youth were treated by the people who should have loved them the most. That is why it is so very disappointing to hear members opposite hurl insults and insinuate that members of this government would ever want harm to come to these youth. It is why our government and our legacy parties stood united in support for GSA legislation. It is why our government is not supporting mandatory notification. The issues youth are facing in our schools are not black and white, and as such we cannot handcuff our teachers in a way that prevents them from seeking appropriate interventions in extreme cases. Any teacher I've talked to on this issue has cited this as an overreach and a conflict with their duty to care.

1:50

I will no longer stand for the NDP's fear and smear on this topic. The members to my left keep saying: the kids don't trust you. I would suggest their continuation in spreading misinformation about the heart of this government is to blame. I look forward to restoring that trust as these youth discover that the NDP's fear and smear is just that: a ploy to create fear amongst an already vulnerable group.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Parliamentary Debate and Public Discourse

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to give the government members a second to pop in their earplugs. My colleagues and I watched in shock last night as the Premier limited debate on his bad-faith bargaining bill, and then he proceeded to pass out earplugs and insult working Albertans with his childish and arrogant stunt. Cutting wages for nearly 200,000 public-sector workers and then literally plugging your ears so you don't have to hear the pain that it causes is spineless. Will the Premier apologize for this disrespect that he showed working Albertans last night?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this is a ridiculous question from the deputy Leader of the Opposition. What is so outrageous is the behaviour that continues to come from the NDP in this House. I get letters almost every day at my constituency offices or on Facebook about the appalling behaviour of the opposition; for example, just the other day when one of their hon. members inside this place compared Bill 9 to slavery. So, through you to that hon. member: will he stand in this House and finally apologize for that behaviour? Here's the reality. The NDP keep bringing decorum down in this place, and it's appalling.

**Ms Hoffman:** Speaking of social media, it turns out this Premier's immature leadership is setting a bad example for his MLAs, too. When asked by a constituent on social media to explain how he could possibly support the bad-faith bargaining bill, the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane provided no response and promptly blocked the constituent. That's right, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has now taught his MLAs that they're above accountability to their own constituents. To the Premier: will you pledge to do better from here on and set a better example for your MLAs?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Alberta, when he was Leader of the Opposition, brought the level of decorum to the highest levels in this place, unlike the current deputy Leader of the Opposition, who continues to bring it down. Speaking as a former deputy Leader of the Opposition, as you were, too, Mr. Speaker, I've been appalled to watch the current deputy Leader of the Opposition continue to allow her caucus to disrespect this Chamber so much, to disrespect the people of Alberta, to disrespect the people that elected us to come to this Chamber. The behaviour of the NDP inside this Chamber is appalling. It's ridiculous. They should stand up inside this Chamber and apologize for what they've been doing.

**Ms Hoffman:** Standing up for our constituents isn't appalling; it's our job. Listening to what those constituents have to say is the government's job, so I have to say that what I find beyond reproach is saying that we aren't allowed to bang our desks, but what? We'll bring in time allocation. We'll plug our ears, literally, and we'll fail to listen to the nearly 200,000 public-sector workers who this government is attacking. What is the government so afraid of, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate. That's a ridiculous accusation by the hon. member. She should do better than that. This Chamber deserves better than that. Her position deserves better than that.

Let's talk about the Member for St. Albert, who last night accused me of being intoxicated in this place. Is that the type of behaviour that the Leader of the Opposition expects from her caucus? Is that the type of behaviour that Albertans expect from the Official Opposition? Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition has an important job to do in this place, and so far they're failing Albertans at that job. They should stop their ridiculous behaviour and get to work for the people of Alberta.

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

### Bill 9 Debate

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bad-faith bargaining bill, Bill 9, will allow this government to rip up contracts and impose new ones on 200,000 Albertans who do some of our society's most important jobs. The Minister of Finance has tried to claim that the omnibus clause in his bill doesn't do that. In fact, he's accused us of lying. Last night while Albertans were sleeping and this government was ramming the bill through, I tried to amend the bill to remove this clause. To the minister: if the clause isn't intended to be used, why didn't you take it out when given the chance?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, nobody was ramming the bill through the Legislature. In fact, this Legislature has sat since Monday well into the night working very hard on this important piece of legislation. Now, what did the Official Opposition do while we were debating that legislation starting Monday night? Played silly games, trying to adjourn debate, trying to be able to go home, spent most of the time complaining about the fact that they had to

work late because they wanted to go home instead of doing the important work. Their constituents and people that are concerned about this legislation, that expect them to do a job should be very disappointed in their behaviour because they spent most of their time doing anything but actually working on the bill.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has rammed through Bill 9 in the dead of night to interrupt ongoing wage discussions that are happening right now. The government says that they want to delay these talks by four months to allow time for their so-called blue-ribbon panel to assess the budget, but that panel's report is due in August. So my colleague from Edmonton-Manning reasonably proposed to move discussions to that month, too. To the minister: did you oppose her amendment to try and buy yourself more time to figure out how deeply you're going to cut the pay of public-sector workers?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we've been clear all along. The intent of Bill 9 is simply to delay wage arbitration until this government can hear from the MacKinnon panel, develop a thoughtful, prudent path forward to bring this province back to balance. Albertans expect this from government, and we will deliver.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People who represent public-sector workers sat in this House for hours last night watching as this government rammed through the bad-faith bargaining bill. They came here concerned for their members and about the breakneck speed at which this government forced the bill through the Legislature. To the Premier: I know you wanted to plug your ears when we were telling you about how bad your bill was, but did you or any member of your caucus attempt to talk to the folks who were here last night? In fact, have you talked to any of the 200,000 Albertans that you are directly impacting?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of our Premier, who sat inside this Legislature throughout the debate on Bill 9, spent his time in even speaking to this piece of legislation and articulating why our government is headed this direction, stood here and had a great discussion with the opposition when they would discuss it. But, again, let's get back to actually what the opposition has done the last week. They've done everything but debate the bill. They spent most of their time talking about anything but the bill. The constituents that they claim to be trying to help inside this House should be very, very disappointed in the Official Opposition because they did nothing for them the last week. It's very disappointing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-North West.

### Postsecondary Worker Contract Negotiations

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that the most odious Bill 9 has been exposed for what it really is, I think it's important to trace it back to a letter from this government sent to Advanced Education employees, stating that the government is considering "all available options . . . including legislation." This is a full-blown attack on the public service, including thousands of postsecondary workers, but we have yet to hear a peep from the Minister of Advanced Education. I'm wondering if the minister can explain the implications of breaking legal contracts with postsecondary workers.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Again the opposition continues to mischaracterize things inside this House. It's disappointing that they always do that. This is their go-to with Team Angry. Here's the reality. We have a situation that has been inherited from the NDP government, who put us on track for \$100 billion in debt, absolutely devastated the Alberta economy. We ran on a platform to get us on a path to balance. The Finance minister and all ministers in this cabinet are taking time to make sure that we get this right for Albertans. Why? Because that's what we promised Albertans. I want to assure Albertans, through you, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to keep that promise.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are several contracts in postsecondary education that are well past due. Bill 9 breaks the law and removes the rights for postsecondary workers to collectively bargain. This government has literally cut off debate and plugged its ears, refusing to listen to why it's critical that they negotiate in good faith. I can feel the lawsuits coming. Can the Minister of Finance tell us how much this illegal action will cost, considering legal fees, fines, likely labour disruption, and the negative impact to the good reputation of Alberta's colleges and universities?

2:00

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Bill 9 is simply about deferring, temporarily postponing arbitration hearings for public-sector workers. This is about a government listening to Albertans. This is about a government taking time to ensure that we have all the information to make the best decisions on behalf of Albertans and the public sector. The previous government sent us on a trajectory to \$100 billion of accumulated debt. That is unacceptable to Albertans.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government is committed to contract discussions with Bow Valley College, NAIT, SAIT, the Alberta college of art and design, Athabasca University, and many others and then just a few weeks later they draw up legislation that not only delays these contract talks, but they won't even commit to whether they'll ever actually occur, to the Premier, the quarterback of this massive pickpocketing scheme on workers: don't you think it might be just a little bit awkward to show up on campuses when you made it abundantly clear that you cannot be trusted?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, speaking of pickpocketing bills, let's talk about the NDP's bill when they brought in the carbon tax, the largest pickpocketing bill in the history of this Legislature, something that they never campaigned on, something that they hid from Albertans while they were campaigning, and then came into this Assembly and forced it through on Albertans, a bill that was all economic pain, no environmental gain, that not just punished our economy and the businesses that are in it but went after fixed-income seniors, went after homeless shelters, went after food banks, went after schools and swimming pools, and attacked our community on a daily basis. We will not be lectured by that hon. member on anything, quite frankly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

#### Edmonton Medical Laboratory Infrastructure

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "The physical state of laboratory facilities in Edmonton has long been a... concern... The inability to replace aging equipment and to keep up with

innovation was the most significant issue... brought forward through the stakeholder engagement process." Those are quotes from the Health Quality Council of Alberta's recommendations on the future of lab services in Alberta. Our government moved to address them by building the Edmonton clinical lab hub. This government just announced that they are cancelling that project, with no solution other than maintaining the risky privatized model that's failed us for years. To this minister: what are you thinking? Is it worth putting people's health at risk to maintain your political posturing?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. member: did he just admit that his government failed to invest in infrastructure during their time in government? When it comes to this Alberta lab project, promise made, promise kept. This was a key campaign commitment of ours. We're pleased also to announce that we will be stopping the plans of the previous government to nationalize DynaLife. We will make decisions about health infrastructure based on what's best for patients, not based on an ideological drive to nationalize lab services.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Claiming savings for cancelling this project is like claiming savings by not fixing your roof or buying your children's insulin.

The Health Quality Council of Alberta was clear that there is a pressing need for "new laboratory infrastructure to meet the urgent needs in Edmonton," which we were building. To the Minister of Health: do you have an alternate plan to deliver the lab testing Albertans depend on for their health and their well-being, or have you simply jumped without a parachute because the Premier told you to?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, let's remember what the NDP planned for this site: first, to displace student housing; second, to build a giant parkade next to a train station here in Edmonton; third, to take pathologists out of hospitals, all to nationalize lab services. Let's start making decisions in the best interests of patients.

**Mr. Shepherd:** As always with this government, Mr. Speaker, no plan, stale talking points.

The Health Quality Council stated that our government's commitment to fund and plan for a new Edmonton lab hub was "very well received by the stakeholder community." There has been over a decade's worth of reports and reviews, all reaching the same conclusion, that we need new lab infrastructure for Edmonton and northern Alberta. We had it under construction. Albertans were building it. To the minister: will you tell this House how many jobs are now lost as a result of your decision, or will that come in due course?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, every patient care decision is going to either require an X-ray or lab work. Imagine all the patient care decisions in this province which were compromised by the NDP in the timeliness and the quality of that lab work. I look forward to the hon. member rising in this Assembly and apologizing to Albertans for the previous government's decisions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has a question.

#### Film Industry Tax Credit

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You might not know this, but southern Alberta has a steady, growing film industry. It is an

industry with huge potential. But despite the desire of many companies to shoot here, they're held back by our current system of government grants. As such, in our platform the government promised that we would transition provincial grants such as the screen-based production grant into a competitive tax credit like those used in other jurisdictions. Can the minister explain to this House how this will attract jobs and investment in the film industry into Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The amazing thing about some of these incentives is that if the incentives are there, the productions will come. We have crews that are ready to work. There's spinoff to tourism, transfer of skilled jobs, which is actually a very important piece of the puzzle given the economic downturn at this point in time. Also, one of the things that's really important within this industry is that for every dollar that is invested, there's a \$3.50 return to the Alberta economy. The tax credit actually gives an incredible ability for predictability and stable funding.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-MacLeod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government failed to do necessary consultations when it considered changes to funding programs such as this and given that the previous government was notorious for failing to consult Albertans in general and given that the previous government dropped the ball specifically as it pertains to consultations over changes to the film industry in Alberta, can the minister tell us whether or not she did the necessary consultations concerning the changes to the grant program?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much for the question. I'm very pleased to say that at this point in time we've actually met with well over 30 stakeholders. Alberta has the absolute pleasure of holding the Alberta media festival, and through that, there's an ability to actually have conversations with people around the world. Alberta is open for business. People are really excited about being able to film here. But we want to make sure that we get this right. There is a tremendous amount of consultation that needs to happen. We're really looking forward to that. So we will continue to consult to make sure that we get this right.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, my last question is once again for the minister. Given that the government committed to the implementation of this tax credit in favour of grants and given that the minister plans to follow through with the results of her consultation, can the minister tell this House what her timeline is for rolling out the new tax credit?

**The Speaker:** The minister of culture.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much. Actually, I think my answer for question 2 will probably answer this a little bit. Because of the necessity for consultations and because the industry is so incredibly diverse, we are looking at making sure that this tax credit is done appropriately. We're looking to have these consultations over the summer and into the fall, and hopefully we'll be rolling out legislation here in the near future, within the next year.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a question.

## Climate Change Strategy

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to keep my words soft and sweet so as not to damage the hearing of the members opposite, that they're so eager to protect. The Premier has been busy criss-crossing the country, campaigning for the federal Conservative leader, Andrew Scheer, and seemingly setting himself up to run for Prime Minister one day. He's also indicated his support for Scheer's climate plan. I want the members of the executive benches to tell us what aspects of the federal Conservative plan to tackle climate change they support.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The biggest aspect that I support right now is that it does not have a carbon tax, unlike what the NDP and the Liberal Party want to do. The NDP and their ally Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party want to go with a carbon tax to deal with climate change, which is all economic pain and no environmental gain. It does nothing to deal with the issue. From what I understand of Andrew Scheer's climate change plan, it has no carbon tax. We support that. As our Premier has said and as our caucus and our cabinet have said, we will fight the Justin Trudeau carbon tax both at the ballot box and in the court system if that's what's required.

2:10

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the question was about what aspects of the Conservatives' plan they do support.

Given that the Scheer plan states that it will collaborate with indigenous people on undertaking climate mitigation and adaptation projects, will the government follow the federal puppet master, work with indigenous communities, and commit to maintaining existing Alberta indigenous mitigation and adaptation programs like the indigenous retrofit program, the indigenous green employment program, and the indigenous solar program?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm excited to answer this question again. Of course we'll commit to working with indigenous communities and consulting with them. I'm really proud of our Premier and our government, who were able to reinstate meetings with all of the nations just a few weeks ago, something that the NDP, when they were in power, shut down, much to the disappointment of indigenous communities inside the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, through you to indigenous communities, I want to assure them that the Alberta government is committed to consulting with them and working with them, going forward, to better their communities but also to better Alberta. We're excited to talk more about that, I'm sure, when the hon. member follows up with another question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that those programs the hon. member mentioned were developed in consultation with the indigenous community here in Alberta and given that Scheer's plan also pledges to provide money for homeowners to retrofit their homes to be more energy efficient, much like our plan did, will the government commit to following the plan from Scheer, much like he follows his campaign path all across Canada, and maintain funding for Energy Efficiency Alberta's existing residential retrofit rebate program?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we've already committed to our direction. We're going to be focused on the TIER program. We'll have more to say about that over the summer as we begin to unroll

that. But I can tell you another thing: what we will not commit to is going the NDP route, which is hiring Ontario companies to come install light bulbs and faucets inside our homes. We are not focused on taxing hard-working Alberta families, like the NDP and the federal Liberals do, which is all economic pain and no environmental gain. Instead, we focus on working on technology, working with our industry, and making sure that we continue to be the best energy-producing place in the entire world.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night hundreds of Albertans from all over this province attended the rally to save GSAs right here at this Legislature. They had a clear message for this Premier: leave our kids alone. But still the Premier carries on with his Bill Hate, which will destroy GSAs and out LGBTQ youth. What's more is that he didn't even bother to attend the rally or acknowledge the young people gathered outside. To the Premier: what were you doing last night that was so important that you couldn't attend the rally? Buying earplugs?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We've been very, very clear that once a GSA, QSA, or an inclusion group is requested, it is not optional; it has to be allowed. I will trust the word of the independent Privacy Commissioner over the scare tactics of the NDP any day. We have always been there to support all our students.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** You know who's scared? The thousands of queer and trans kids who worry that they'll be homeless or worse if they're outed without their consent.

Given that Lea Cheeseman, a student from Calgary, came all the way to this Legislature to make one last attempt to be heard by this government and she called on this government to scrap this hateful bill in order to protect her and her peers from harm, to the minister. Not listening appears to be a pattern of this government. Why are you refusing to listen to the thousands of young voices that are telling you that Bill Hate will make them unsafe?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government has been extremely clear that we will not be outing kids. Our government will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited students in Canada, period.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that former teacher and school trustee Terry Reilly, a decades-long card-carrying member of the Progressive Conservative Party until this Premier invited extremists and homophobes into his party and his government, travelled all the way from Medicine Hat to say that, quote, protection for the rights of student privacy is our duty, is there any member of this cabinet that is willing to stand apart from the Premier or the Minister of Education and actually honour this duty?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier and this cabinet and all of this government caucus continue to stand for LGBTQ rights. We continue to stand with all Albertans. Most importantly, I want to assure LGBTQ students, through you, that we will continue to have the strongest statutory protections in the entire country. We will continue to stand for Bill 10. We will continue to stand and make sure GSAs are protected inside schools. That's a fact. I know they're hearing a lot of fearmongering from the NDP. That's what you get from Team Angry. But I promise we are going to keep care of it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order is noted both at 2:13 and 2:14.

The Member for Calgary-West is asking a question.

### Tourism Industry

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy has been suffering, and we all know that there are many industries with potential for growth in our province. Now, tourism is one sector that has huge potential in our province, and Calgary is just a short trip from the Rocky Mountains. What is the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism doing to grow the tourism sector for our province's largest city?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government is dedicated to growing the tourism industry across Alberta, which is why we are developing a 10-year tourism strategy with the goal of doubling tourism investment in our province by 2030. As a gateway to the Rockies and its beautiful scenery Calgary will be a key part of that strategy due to its size, strategic location, and its need for economic recovery after the disastrous reign of the NDP.

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Now, given that the tourism sector was neglected under the previous government and they failed to create an environment that allowed for investment or growth and they created huge, burdensome bureaucracies and regulatory regimes, what is the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism doing to help private-sector tourism operators?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again, thank you to the member for the question. Our government has already taken action to make things easier for private-sector tourism operators by cutting burdensome red tape and extending tourism tenures for tourism and commercial recreation operators' leases from 25 years to up to 60 years. This change puts us in line with British Columbia and the national parks and will make it easier for operators to secure long-term financing and will stimulate private-sector investment in our tourism industry, which in turn will make us more competitive.

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Calgary has untapped potential as a tourist destination and given that it is a world-class city that, unfortunately, has faced four years of neglect under the previous government,

what is the minister doing to promote Calgary as a tourism destination?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As I mentioned in my previous answer, we are cutting the red tape that burdens the tourism industry. One example is the changes to public land leases and lowering taxes for tourism operators with our repeal of the carbon tax and the job-creation tax cut. We are focused on making private-sector tourism a cornerstone of our economy, and we are working hard every day to develop a plan that will grow the industry in Calgary and across the province.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question.

### Educational Curriculum Review

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Teachers, parents, academics, and students have been working hard for years on a much-needed modernization of the K to 12 curriculum. Tens of thousands of Albertans provided their input, and hundreds of thousands of students are relying on a new curriculum to prepare them for a changing world. This Premier cares more about his ego than our kids. He said he would take the new curriculum and put it through the shredder. To the Education minister: will you first apologize to teachers, professionals, and volunteers who have worked tirelessly on this new curriculum while your boss dumped on their work for his political stunt?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government is pausing the curriculum to review and to consult more broadly with stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, and other subject-matter experts. We want to ensure that all of Alberta's new curriculum focuses on teaching essential knowledge and ensuring students develop foundational competencies and job-ready skills for life. That's what we're committed to; that's what we're going to do.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the curriculum process is now on pause or shredded and given that field testing of the new curriculum that so many people worked on was to begin this fall and given that the current curriculum is more than 30 years old – it predates the Internet, for crying out loud – to the Education Minister: what are you now planning when it comes to developing the new curriculum, and how will you remove your personal biases from it? Because, frankly, those really scare me.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The consultations are actually going to begin this summer. I've heard from my department. They're actually refreshed, and they're feeling very positive about the direction that we're going to be going in. I look forward to sharing that as soon as I possibly can.

Thank you.

2:20

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the Premier wants to roll back rights for LGBTQ youth and that many of his views seem to be stuck in the past and given that he often takes advice from extremists like John Carpay, to the Premier, then: will you tell Albertans who exactly is

working on the curriculum, and is the reason why you're stalling because you'd prefer our province was stuck in the 1980s?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again you continue to see Team Angry, particularly from the deputy leader of the NDP. Nobody on this side of the House, particularly the Premier, is going to be lectured by an hon. member who came to this place and called Albertans sewer rats. It's absolutely ridiculous. She should stand up and apologize for that behaviour inside this House, which she did, but not really because then she went out and said that, oh, that was not what she really meant. That's what you get from the NDP. They don't care about Albertans. They don't like Albertans. That hon. member showed it that day when she called every Albertan a sewer rat. Think about that.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stand in this House every day for our students, our teachers, our parents. The government caucus should be doing the same. Instead, Wetaskiwin Composite is going to see their career and technology class sizes double, and they're being forced to lay off their literacy and numeracy specialists because this government is cutting the classroom improvement fund. To the minister: is this what modernizing our education system looks like? Because that's what you're claiming to be doing.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I've actually been meeting with numerous boards. This morning I met with the CBE and they were able to confirm for me that the reports of 300 job losses are false. Their plan is to keep teachers in front of students and maintain existing staff levels. I'm happy to share that. I'm hearing positive things from our boards.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the teachers in the Parkland school district that I've been talking to are worried that layoffs will put staff in danger, that simply not having the educational assistants to support students with behavioural needs actually puts teachers at risk, that apparently assaults on teachers are on the rise and layoffs are planned for this fall because the Education minister keeps bungling the budget, to the minister: should teachers really have to worry about getting beat up at school because you want to cut their budget further?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I've also met with Edmonton Catholic, Edmonton public, and Calgary Catholic in this past week. None of those concerns were raised to me. Individual school districts are in the best position to address any questions about their specific budgets, but our government's commitment to funding education has been clear. Enrolment growth is being accounted for and funded.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks for bringing up Edmonton Catholic because when I met with their teachers, they said that special education funding was being cut by 9 per cent. Given that we know that the classroom improvement fund that was introduced by our government is now being killed – the minister admitted to that in supplementary supply. It was designed to specifically target students with complex needs. To the minister: will you admit that



students with severe learning disabilities take a back seat in your mind when you're looking at ways to give billions of dollars to wealthy corporations?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The hon. member knows, having been a former trustee herself, that it is the boards and the school districts that make the funding decisions, not the teachers. Therefore, I am quite confident that our boards know that we have continued enrolment growth funding. We are going to be building schools. That has been very clear. I'm not sure what else she needs to hear.

#### Nurse Practitioners

**Mr. Rowswell:** Mr. Speaker, recently a constituent of mine named Lynette Adamson brought to my attention how nurse practitioners are underutilized in all areas of care in our health care system despite their ability to provide care outcomes equal to their physician colleagues. As a nurse practitioner herself Lynette is vastly concerned about how limited her ability is to serve patients. In the government's platform it pledged to integrate nurse practitioners into the health care system. Can the Minister of Health tell my constituents how he plans on doing that?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we campaigned on a commitment to strengthen our publicly funded health system, and that includes making better use of the skills of nurse practitioners, an important and underused asset. We recently launched a new nurse practitioner support program for our 41 primary care networks. The program will oversee the hiring of 50 additional nurse practitioners over two years across Alberta. We're also expanding the services that nurse practitioners can provide. They can now set and reset bone fractures, as an example, and courtesy and provisional registrants can now provide the same range of care as fully registered nurse practitioners.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that wait times are often from there not being enough doctors and given that nurse practitioners are able to perform many of the same roles as doctors, from writing prescriptions to ordering tests to referring patients to a specialist, and given that our government was elected on a mandate to improve wait times in the health care system and given that rural communities suffer from longer wait times than urban communities, can the minister tell this place how nurse practitioners can help lower wait times?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a few ways, especially in primary care. They can, as an example, help address long-standing issues with lack of access to physicians, not instead of physicians but working with them as a team, and that means offering after-hours access and being available in underserved communities. That includes smaller and remote communities but also parts of our big cities. Nurse practitioners can help in other ways as well. They can provide urgent care to reduce crowding in emergency, provide triage for specialty services, and support acute care in a variety of ways.

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

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental is to the Minister of Health. Given that one of the largest barriers to Albertans in accessing the services provided by nurse practitioners is the lack of a stable, reliable funding formula for nurse practitioners and given that the lack of funding applies to all sectors of Alberta Health Services in hospitals, long-term care, and, most importantly for my constituents, in rural communities, my constituents want to know why this is. Can the minister please inform them?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the member that budget constraints will not stop us from moving forward and adding more nurse practitioners in our health system. That is a platform commitment, and we will deliver on it, Mr. Speaker.

Integrating nurse practitioners into the health system is about more than just how we pay them. Nurse practitioners are not just substitutes for doctors; they're nurses who bring their own strengths to the team. The team needs to adapt and make good use of their skills. That's happening, and our government is going to make sure it continues, as we promised Albertans in our platform.

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

#### United Conservative Party Fundraising

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago I raised a concern in this House about the UCP using their government positions to raise money for their party. I was very relieved to hear the Government House Leader say that they had "indicated to the party that we would prefer in the future not to use our titles that we have in this place," so you can imagine my confusion when I was shown again a UCP invitation dated June 3 advertising that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction would be a special guest speaker. My question is to the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. Did you approve this invite using your government title for this partisan event?

**The Speaker:** I might just remind hon. members that I didn't hear a particular topic of government policy there. I am more than happy to hear from the Government House Leader if he'd like to respond, but I wouldn't expect him to do so.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear any government policy there . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . but I would like to talk about some government policy. I'm really happy the hon. member brought up red tape and, in particular, the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, who is doing a really good job of keeping the promises that we've made to Albertans, working on cutting red tape and helping to get Albertans back to work, focusing on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. Big contrast to what the NDP did when they were in power, which focused on taxing Albertans, causing job creators to have to shut down, starting the largest unemployment in the history of this province, and driving us towards the largest debt in our history.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that we're talking about government positions and government ethics and given that the Government House Leader assured this House twice that the UCP practice of using taxpayer-paid government positions for their partisan gains

was over and given that this invitation was sent well after he made this pledge, again to the Government House Leader: is it going to be the policy of the UCP to promise one thing in this House and do the opposite outside?

**The Speaker:** Much better.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member did a good job on changing that back to government policy. I want to congratulate her on that. She is correct. I made it clear inside this Assembly that we have informed the party that we expect them to not use our Executive Council titles. The Ethics Commissioner has confirmed that that's not required, but we think that was the right thing to do. I saw the hon. member bring it up yesterday, and I have sent a note to the party to ask them what has taken place in this case. I am assured by the hon. member that he did not approve that message, and we'll wait to hear back from the party, but our direction has been clear in the future.

2:30

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given, Mr. Speaker, it's always great to hear the Government House Leader think that I can learn and given that I wrote about this issue to the Ethics Commissioner and given that in her response the commissioner cautioned the UCP about the use of government titles in their party fundraisers and warned that the use is considered inappropriate but it's not strictly prohibited by the Conflicts of Interest Act, to the Government House Leader: will you respect the advice of an Ethics Commissioner, apologize to this House for continuing this inappropriate practice, and commit to finally stopping the use of your government positions as fundraising draws for the UCP?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I've already addressed that question, but now that we're on the topic of the Ethics Commissioner and the things that she's written, she's actually called on that hon. member and her party to stop abusing the Ethics Commissioner's office for partisan gain. She does that in the exact same letter. She's referred to that hon. member many times, calling her out for playing political games with the Ethics Commissioner's office, so I'm curious: is she going to take the Ethics Commissioner's advice? We have. Maybe she should start.

### Regulation Reduction

**Mr. Nielsen:** A few weeks ago, when the Premier and the minister of red tape announced the introduction of Bill 4, the Premier and the minister bragged about having cut 17 regulations. At the time, the media pointed out that these eliminated regulations had not been posted anywhere publicly. This lack of transparency is a little concerning. To the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: is there a reason these regulations haven't been posted publicly, and what are you hiding from Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The question was actually brought up by the press when we did our announcement, and we told them that it was an oversight, that we would try to be able to take care of it as quick as possible, and that's what we're doing.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Given this minister's failure to be public with Albertans about the 17 regulations he's already cut and given that the Premier's commitment to post these eliminated regulations online appears to have gone by the wayside – another promise made, promise broken, I guess – and given that Albertans have a

right to know what this minister is doing, to the minister of red tape. This is your third chance in as many weeks. Can you please identify for this House just one piece of red tape you've cut?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. We've already stated that we are going to do everything we can to be able to make sure that it's on the website. There's no conspiracy. This is Team Angry continually saying that there is a nefarious approach this government is taking. We're trying to work through the process to make sure that Albertans are seeing what we're doing with red tape reduction, and we'll make sure we do that.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, given that this minister appears to struggle with transparency and given that the minister wields a great deal of power and that there is a potential to cut red tape that actually is helpful when it comes to keeping Albertans healthy and safe, to the minister: will you commit to a simple task of tabling a copy of every regulation you have cut in this House before the end of Routine today, and if not, what are you hiding?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, it's important that the member knows that the first thing we did to be able to cut some red tape is get rid of the carbon tax. That's a \$1.4 billion hit to Albertans that we were able to get rid of. Stay tuned. We're going to be making sure that we get rid of at least a third. I've got my scissors out. We're going to make sure that Albertans are the ones that we're protecting.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Sherwood Park has a question.

### Investment in Alberta and Job Creation

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For Albertans to prosper here at home, we must be deeply engaged abroad. On April 16, 2019, Albertans decisively elected a UCP government on the mandate of reversing record capital flight caused by damaging big-government NDP policies. Will the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism explain what her ministry is doing to signal to the world that Alberta is once again open for business?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Under the NDP, capital fled Alberta at a devastating rate. Many companies and communities were crippled by their job-killing policies and their tax increases. Our government has already taken common-sense steps to bring investment back to Alberta with our repeal of the carbon tax and the job-creation tax cut, and I and my ministry are working hard every day to let the world know that Alberta is once again open for business.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the minister. Given that investment declined under the NDP due to increased taxes and regulations, hurting Alberta's economy and profile abroad, and given that strong engagement with the Asia Pacific region, which contains 60 per cent of the world's population and 9 of our 12 Alberta international offices, is particularly important to making Alberta prosperous again, can the minister please elaborate on what her ministry is doing to raise Alberta's profile in and attract investment from the Asia Pacific?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development and trade.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government is absolutely dedicated to increasing our profile in the Asia Pacific and to attract investment from our trading partners there. As I mentioned before, I recently returned from a trade mission to Japan and South Korea on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, where I showcased the safe, reliable, high-quality goods of our agrifood sector as well as our tourism and energy sectors. Japan, in particular, is our third-largest agricultural trading partner, and South Korea is hungry for our energy resources.

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

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given our commitment to get Albertans back to work, in part by attracting international investment from big economies such as Japan, China, and South Korea, and given that Alberta must be competitive and engage internationally to ensure prosperity here at home, will the minister please explain how attracting international investment will make Alberta prosperous once more?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. Alberta has some of the highest quality products in the world, and by attracting international investment, we can ensure that those products are getting to new markets and expanding our presence in existing markets. The United States will always be our closest friend, ally, and trading partner, but we need to grow our exports to the rest of the world. Our government is working hard every day to make that happen.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

### Highway 28 Capital Plan

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Highway 28 stretches from Edmonton all the way to Cold Lake. While the section from Edmonton to highway 63 intersection has seen very much-needed repairs lately, the section from highway 63 to Bonnyville and Cold Lake has been neglected despite multiple requests from local MLAs and local municipalities. To the Minister of Transportation. Under the NDP improvements to this section of highway 28 did not even show up in the three-year plan. Will you be reassessing the priority plan and look into this vital stretch of highway in my constituency?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. I'd like the hon. member to know that highway 28 had a corridor study recently completed. The study identified a number of improvements that could be done along the corridor, and they include intersection improvements, passing lane opportunities, and places where safety rest areas could be added. The study also looked at the possible twinning between Bonnyville and Cold Lake. As is so often the case, this is amongst our capital planning and budget planning process, and we are . . .

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Minister, for the answer. Given that highway 28 is one of the only routes connecting one of the busiest and most productive bitumen-producing areas of the province and given that this area has contributed significantly to the economy of not only the province of Alberta but the entire country,

Minister, would you agree that areas like this that continue to drive our economy deserve a second look and perhaps some special consideration when it comes to setting infrastructure priorities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. The hon. member is correct. Cold Lake and area are very important and big contributors to Alberta's economy. One project of the ones I mentioned is now being considered. That's pavement between highway 63 and Waskatenau. There is also, I'd like the hon. member to know, the possibility that we're considering a roundabout at the intersections of highway 28 and 831. Other rehabilitation projects are also in the works and under consideration.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you again for the answer, Minister. Given that 4 Wing Cold Lake is the busiest fighter base in Canada and depends on highway 28 for fuel delivery as well as pretty much everything delivered by truck and given that 4 Wing hosts Maple Flag, an exercise attended by our allied forces from around the world, Minister, will you agree to drive up to my constituency this summer, preferably on your motorcycle so you can get the full experience of the highway, and visit this busy highway that is often the first impression of international visitors to our province?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to see an hon. member so proud of the area that he represents. There's certainly much to be proud of, with 4 Wing and the military up in Cold Lake. As the member knows, it's always my pleasure to meet people and discuss transportation projects and priorities. It's also my pleasure, whenever I can, to get on the motorcycle, and it's certainly my pleasure to go for perogies and to visit good people up there. I'll tell the hon. member that I would love to talk to him. I'll do my best to get it in the schedule and make that happen.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

2:40

### Trade with Asia

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much. In November of 2016 our NDP government led the largest trade delegation in Alberta's history to China, with more than 86 different businesses and entities. Mr. Speaker, between 2016 and 2019 trade with China increased by 25 per cent, or over a billion dollars. Companies like Nelson remediation have secured tens of millions of dollars in contracts because they participated in trade missions with our government: not my words; their words. To the minister of economic development: how many businesses did you bring on your mission, and how are you demonstrating a collaborative team Alberta approach the way our government did?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is open for business, and our government is taking action to expand and diversify our trade market. While in Japan and South Korea we met with more than 30 groups of government officials, industry stakeholders, and front-line workers, and we had positive, productive meetings. The NDP went on multiple trade missions as well. On our trade missions we brought people from the canola industries, beef industry, and pork industry as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As did we. I asked how many businesses accompanied you.

Given that our NDP government introduced the export expansion program because we know that we need to support Alberta businesses to access new markets and given that opening up new markets for Alberta businesses means more jobs here at home, higher revenues, and new supply chains and given that this program helped companies like Absolute Combustion, who's now doing business in more than 10 different countries, to the same minister: will you stand up today and assure Alberta businesses that this program will continue?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister for Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The biggest relationship that we could have had with China was the Northern Gateway pipeline, which they killed. Referring back to my mission to Japan and South Korea, we had people with us from the Canola Council of Canada, the Canadian Canola Growers Association, Cereals Canada, and Pulse Canada, just to name a few.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta canola producers have been hit hard by China's ban and given that this government recently completed a trade mission to open markets, although I find it fascinating the minister didn't invite business leaders, and given that canola farmers really need our help, not empty words or politicians playing the blame game, to the minister of agriculture: what specific supports are you giving to Alberta farmers to offset their losses in dollars, or are you just going to blame us, the federal government, or anyone else you can pass the buck on to?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreesen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. We do have a suite of programs, BRM programs, business risk management programs, that farmers will be able to get access to this year. But I do find it a bit rich coming from this member, who, I think it was a couple weeks ago, in this House came up and said that if farmers or any businesses were having difficulties paying \$3,000 or a few extra thousand dollars a month in carbon taxes, they should look at their management and they should look at their own business plan. That is just disrespectful, and it's surprising he asks these types of questions.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will move to the rest of daily Routine. I encourage everyone who has other engagements to exit quickly and drive safely.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to seek leave to introduce Bill 12, the Royalty Guarantee Act.

This legislation would deliver on a commitment that ensures that the royalty structure in place when a project is permitted and when investment decisions are made will have no major changes for at least 10 years. This legislation would strengthen Alberta's ability to compete in the global market while maintaining the flexibility needed to address significant market conditions and technology

changes. This guarantee can be legislated by an amendment to the existing Mines and Minerals Act, ensuring that the day-to-day business of the royalty structure would not change. By ensuring that the rules can't change halfway through the game, we will signal that Alberta's oil and gas sector is a stable place to invest and create jobs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to table three letters in support of Bill 201, with the prescribed number of copies of each. The first is from Assistant Principal Stan Travník in Leduc, the second is from the St. Paul education regional division 1, and the third is from Food Allergy Canada. We have indeed been consulting with stakeholders, and these letters show it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling an article called Why CBC News Is Doing a Series on Climate Change. That series is called In Our Backyard, and I have tabled other articles this week.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of e-mails to table from some angry constituents. One is from Chris Sadoway, who says that the member who was supplying the earplugs "should resign immediately." The second e-mail is from a constituent named Carrie Holstead, who said, "if I did anything like that in a meeting at my workplace, I would be fired." I have the appropriate number of copies of those to submit.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings today? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table correspondence regarding constituents from Lethbridge who were very concerned about what they termed the earplug stunt, thinking that it was quite repulsive and that the members involved should apologize.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a document which I received from a constituent who is "disgusted and appalled by the actions taken by the UCP and, regretfully, our premier" in regard to last night's debate, where, of course, he walked around and handed out earplugs.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yes. I'd like to also table some correspondence from a constituent about the earplug incident, about them frankly being "livid that the government decided to put in earplugs while the opposition was fighting for my spouses and families income." I have the requisite five copies.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At approximately 2:13, 2:14 the hon. Member for Edmonton-West raised a couple of points of order.

**Mr. Ellis:** Calgary-West, but thank you.

**The Speaker:** Oh. Potayto, potato.

2:50

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission, could we combine the two points of order that I had there?

### Point of Order Epithets

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this point of order. I certainly rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), but, I will say, more specifically, “language of a nature likely to create disorder.”

Last week, Mr. Speaker, in your ruling, which can be found on page 799 of *Alberta Hansard*, about the opposition referring to Bill 8 as Bill Hate, you stated:

I ask members, as we move forward, to choose their language carefully. Ask yourself whether your intention is to insult or to inflame debate or to levy an accusation against a member opposite or – and perhaps this is the [most] important part – to knowingly cause disorder.

I reference 23(j) of our standing orders.

If I may go back to the quote:

If so, I would suggest that you find another means to make your case.

You further remarked:

However, this ruling should not be considered *carte blanche* to proceed with using the mock bill title Bill Hate on a regular basis.

Now, I think it is quite clear that the intention of the members opposite is to insult or inflame debate on what is a very sensitive and important topic. I think that we are headed to a point where any use of the term “Bill Hate” in this Chamber will lead to points of order being called, which will disrupt question period and could very well lead to a point where order cannot be maintained. I would further add, Mr. Speaker, that if the opposition, of course, goes down this road, again I will continue to reference 23(j), of language that appears to be of an intent to likely cause disorder, it is only reasonable to conclude that it is meant to cause disorder.

I thank you for the time to speak on this. I certainly do not believe that this is a matter of debate or opinion. I think that this is a case where there is a clear intent by the opposition to cause disorder in this Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. deputy Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not a point of order. As you know and as we’ve discussed in this House many times, the government, when they were in opposition, nicknamed many, many, many of our government bills. We had the job-killing carbon tax, we had the no-more-pipeline law. Repeatedly the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo used “job-killing carbon tax.” The current Premier used “no more pipelines.” The hon. Minister of Transportation used “job-killing carbon tax.” This has happened numerous times in this House. When the government was in opposition, they were creative in many different ways on many different bills. We’ve discussed this already. I don’t believe that it’s a point of order.

The thing that I also find very interesting is that there is no consistency on the government side when they decide whether Bill Hate is actually inflaming something or not. It’s used frequently in this House, and even within this question period members referenced it more than once and there was no point of order. Then a certain member stood up, and all of a sudden it became a point of

order. So I would also like to maybe remind the government that sometimes they may be responding to certain members on our side of the House more frequently than they necessarily do other members in this House.

Again, I do not think that this is a point of order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am prepared to rule on the point of order. This particular point of order has been the subject of significant discussion in the House over the past couple of weeks. On numerous occasions the Speaker has provided caution with respect to the use of the term “Bill Hate.” On more than one occasion I provided guidance with respect to the ruling from 2013 of Speaker Zwozdesky. Even as late as yesterday I said:

I would conclude by saying that I am yet hesitant to rule Bill Hate out of order during question period. I would say again that I will be listening closely, that it would be hard to imagine another time or a scenario where Bill Hate used during question period would be unlikely to cause disorder. As such, I will be left with very little option but to deliver a similar ruling to that of Speaker Zwozdesky in 2013 when he ruled “climate change denier” as something that is likely to create disorder.

I don’t know that my direction could have been any stronger.

I take the deputy Official Opposition House Leader’s comments with a sense of reverence, around members utilizing names of bills other than the designated title. I can certainly see in the future that that practice will be permitted. However, with respect to Bill Hate I could also suggest that that particular title implies that other members may in fact hate individuals or the government hating individuals and has the ability to be particularly disruptive with respect to when the government may or may not call a point of order based on who may use it or may not use it. I’m not sure that that is particularly relevant with respect to this point of order today.

Having said that, I am prepared, as did Speaker Zwozdesky, for during Oral Question Period to rule the term “Bill Hate” out of order in the context that it is likely to create disorder and potentially lead to debate, as we have seen here today. Having said that, I am not prepared to rule that comment out of order during regular debate, as we have seen that it is significantly less likely to create disorder. Having said that, I wouldn’t provide a *carte blanche* ruling that would allow the opposition or other members of the Assembly to use the term “Bill Hate” during regular debate without consideration that it may in fact create disorder.

I consider this matter now concluded and would urge all members to refrain from using the term “Bill Hate” during Oral Question Period.

Point of order 3, raised by the hon. Opposition House Leader at approximately 14:27.

**Ms Sweet:** That was by the hon. Government House Leader, correct?

**The Speaker:** Sorry. Point of order 3 was raised during the question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. The Official Opposition House Leader raised the point of order, perhaps on your behalf, but I’m happy to hear from you if you are the one who is going to be arguing it today.

### Point of Clarification

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m actually standing under 13(2): “The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member.” The reason I’m raising this as a point of order – and I believe that the Government House Leader at the time raised it as a point of order – is that if you reference my first question, which I anticipate you may have a copy of the Blues on already in front of you, it spoke specifically to raising a concern in

the House about the UCP using their government positions to raise money for their party. You interrupted me during that period of time to caution me around whether or not I was speaking to government policy. You then allowed the government side to not have to answer the question and recommended that they didn't actually have to answer the question, which I feel is a little bit out of turn given how my question was actually formed.

I'm just requesting clarity from you as to why you would, first off, indicate that my question was not in order and then why you would also allow the government to not have to answer my question given the way that it was framed.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. What I did say in my remarks – and I do have the benefit of the Blues – is: “I might just remind hon. members that I didn't hear a particular topic of government policy there. I am more than happy to hear from the Government House Leader if he'd like to respond, but I wouldn't expect him to do so.”

At no point in time did I rule your question out of order. In fact, I didn't provide a ruling, only a cautionary tale. And, in fact, the Government House Leader did choose to answer your question, as is his responsibility.

What I would say in addition to that is that, now having the benefit of the Blues and having the opportunity to read the way that your question was framed, perhaps the intervention was unnecessary. But I do caution members, and I have spoken about this in the past. I'm happy to have members of the opposition or members of this House ask questions and ensure that they are tied to government business.

3:00

I also recognize that we are members of political organizations and that sometimes those two things can be very close. I want the opposition to be assured that I have no desire to prevent them from asking questions where those two things may join. But I want to encourage them to ensure that they do that in a manner that focuses on how that impacts the government or otherwise.

It is a cautionary tale, and I also will heed some of the advice or the reflection that the Member for Edmonton-Manning has provided today because upon reading the question, I would say that it's possible that the intervention was not warranted. If an apology is necessary, I'm happy to provide one both privately or publicly, but I encourage members that these questions need to be clearly tied to government policy so that the Speaker has clarity during the cut and thrust of debate around exactly what the member is asking.

As such, I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

I see the hon. deputy Official Opposition House Leader rising.

**Ms Sweet:** Standing Order 13(2), hon. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm happy to hear from you. Are you seeking . . .

**Ms Sweet:** Clarity here, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are you asking for Standing Order 13(2) on a 13(2), where I've literally just spent the last three minutes explaining why I said what I said?

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, I am rising under 13(2) to get clarity around your ruling around this particular issue. Given that I am the critic for ethics in democracy, I just need a little bit more clarity as to how you see fit that I am able to ask questions of this government and these particular members within the role of ethics in democracy when it relates specifically to government policy but also members of that government.

**The Speaker:** I think you did a fine job on the second question, as I gave indication there. I also literally just provided three minutes of clarity on the ruling that I had previously made. I also said that I considered the matter dealt with and concluded. I don't think it's very reasonable for the hon. member to continue to challenge the chair when the chair has ruled. If the hon. member would like to continue the discussion outside of the Chamber, my door is always open, as she is very well aware. As such, I consider the matter concluded.

We are at Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order, members.

#### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A1. Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to join the discussion that has been happening on Bill 2 in Committee of the Whole. I do have a number of concerns about this bill, which we've colloquially called the pick-your-pockets bill, specifically because of the financial impact it is going to have on workers in Alberta, particularly workers who depend on the minimum standards that are included in employment standards. To be clear, it is primarily vulnerable workers who rely on employment standards' minimum standards.

There are many, many, many workers around Alberta who work in environments that have employers who give them far, far more than the minimum, and that's wonderful. But as a government there is a responsibility to make sure that there is a fair and balanced minimum standard for all workers. Bill 2 actually rolls back standards in a number of really important places.

We've had members rise in this House even today to accuse the opposition of misinformation or misrepresenting things. I would suggest to you, Madam Chair, that the government has been misrepresenting some of the changes inside of Bill 2 through social media channels and in talking to Albertans, and I would really like to spend a little bit of time talking about that.

First, let's talk about overtime. To be very clear, the opposition understands quite well the overtime change that is being proposed in Bill 2. At this point I question whether the government and the minister of labour, who is moving this piece of legislation, do understand. There have been a number of back-and-forth discussions, let's say, through different mediums, including social media, where the opposition has been pointing out that the overtime changes in Bill 2 will literally take money out of the bank accounts of 400,000 Albertans who work overtime, and in response the government has been talking about the parts of overtime that they're not changing. So let me be clear. We understand that the government is not changing paid overtime – we are not talking about paid overtime – but the changes to banked overtime will cost Alberta workers money.

Even during question period we've been able to talk a little bit about this. The Leader of the Official Opposition rose in this House and gave what I thought was a very clear example of how overtime will impact workers. For example, today at time and a half overtime

banking, if a worker does the two-week equivalent of banked overtime, they would then get three paid weeks off, which means that in their bank account they will have the pay from three weeks' worth of work. Under this bill the minimum standards would change and that worker, rather than getting three paid weeks off - time with family, which they deserve, having done overtime hours - they would actually only get two. Not only is that less time with family, but that is less money in their bank account because their bank account now only has the money from two weeks' worth rather than three.

I'm confused as to why the government, that is bringing forward this bill, continues to mislead Albertans and continues to post graphics that show there are no changes to paid overtime. I agree that this bill doesn't try to change paid overtime, but it does significantly change banked overtime. I think that not being able to have a legitimate, factual conversation with Albertans about this is a sign of a flawed policy and one that the government isn't proud of. I think that's really unfortunate.

Certainly, in my time as a minister working to improve the minimum standards that protect vulnerable workers, I saw it as my responsibility to always deal with factual truths, to always deal with the debate, and to come at it from a place of honesty. To have the minister talking about paid overtime, which isn't even changing and isn't in the bill, as if the opposition doesn't understand, is disingenuous. I know he is a very, very intelligent person; I know he is well intentioned, but he is providing incorrect information to the Alberta public and confusing their potential understanding for these changes.

I know this because when I talk about what is actually happening, I get a number of questions: the government said that there wasn't going to be a change. Well, there is. There's a big change, and it's a change where instead of getting time and a half for banked overtime, they'll only get straight time.

**Ms Sweet:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning called a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Quorum**

**Ms Sweet:** Madam Chair, I believe that under Standing Order 5(1) "the presence of at least 20 Members of the Legislative Assembly is necessary to constitute a meeting of the Legislative Assembly."

**The Chair:** Ring the bells.

[Pursuant to Standing Order 5 the division bell was rung at 3:10 p.m. and the Chair of Committees confirmed that a quorum was present]

#### **Debate Continued**

**The Chair:** Please proceed, hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to continue talking about the changes to banked overtime. As I was just explaining to you, Madam Chair - but we have a number of new people who have joined us for the discussion - paid overtime is not changing, but banked overtime, which has been time and a half, is moving backwards to straight time. That is going to have a very real impact on working Albertans.

Now, we have tabled in this House documentation that shows 400,000 . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** A point of order. The hon. Government House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Referring to the Absence of Members**

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise. The hon. member was referring to members that aren't in the Chamber. Again, not within the rules. The member knows that. Please instruct her to change her tone.

**Ms Gray:** I certainly don't want to disrespect anyone. I believe I referred to members who were in the Chamber, but I apologize, and I'm happy to withdraw.

**The Chair:** Sure. I didn't hear that there was a specific absence of any particular member in this Assembly . . .

**Ms Gray:** No. I didn't.

**The Chair:** . . . but perhaps a reference to new members in the chairs. I would express that you should take some caution, as you have already mentioned that you will.

Edmonton-Mill Woods, please proceed.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Now, the other interesting factor in the difference between paid overtime and banked overtime and the changes introduced in Bill 2 is the fact that the changes to move to straight overtime put Alberta in an entirely unique position within all of Canada. Everywhere in Canada, including Alberta today, workers who do overtime and choose to bank that overtime are given the banked overtime at a rate of time and a half. This is specifically because overtime work that a worker will provide to their employer is seen to be done at a premium because you have someone who has already done either eight hours of work in a given day or 44 hours in a week, as the case may be.

This is additional time and effort over and above those minimum standards that deserve to have the compensation of time and a half either paid, which, again I acknowledge is not changing in this bill, or when they bank it because the additional overtime that those workers are doing is time away from their family, is often work done when they are working very hard, have already done eight hours and continue to do more to achieve the goals that they need to accomplish in their place of employment.

Overtime pay, whether it's paid out or banked, deserves to be done at time and a half. That is the Canadian standard, and I have not heard a good argument for why Alberta workers should deserve less than the average Canadian worker across the country. In British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec: where a jurisdiction allows overtime banking, it is always at time and a half. Looking at that Canadian standard and looking across the board at what Alberta workers deserve and expect is an important job of any government. I think that we need to really consider why this bill is suggesting that Alberta workers deserve less. Again, I will make the point that I think it's incumbent upon the government to stop confusing the issue and talking about paid overtime, which we all know and fully understand is not changing in this bill, but banked overtime is.

So I would encourage the government members either in this Chamber or even in public communications on social media to

engage reasonably and factually about banked overtime changes. When I raise a concern about banked overtime, it's not reasonable to tell me that paid overtime is staying the same. We all understand that. The only thing that's happening is trying to confuse Alberta workers, and that's disappointing, when I see that behaviour happen.

Making sure that workers who deserve that overtime premium when they spend extra time get it is very important to my caucus and me. That is one of the strongest reasons why I am in opposition to Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, because it will have a very significant impact on workers who depend on overtime banking to balance out their lives. A lot of workers in Alberta work in scenarios where they travel to their place of work and potentially stay there for weeks at a time. Taking away banked overtime at time and a half is potentially costing them time with their families, literally costing them time with their families, because, again, when they do two weeks' worth of overtime banking, rather than being able to take three weeks with their family, they will only be able to have two. That's time and less money in their bank accounts. Of course, as you know, Madam Chair, time is money, so taking time away from people is taking away money, especially because this is paid time. So I'm very concerned about this overtime provision.

Now, there's a second provision that changes the minimum employment standard for Alberta workers. I keep referring to the minimum standard because this government has made the point – and it is a fair point – that employers are able to do more than the minimum. Many, many employers do, but there are employers who will and do only provide the minimums that are in employment standards. Often the workers who find themselves relying on minimum employment standards are the least empowered workers in our workforce. This might be young workers, this could be newcomers, this could be many different people in difficult situations who may not feel empowered to argue with an employer. I think it's really important to consider that.

I would be interested to know if members in this House have that personal experience of not getting a statutory holiday, because that's what this bill will do to some workers, not to all workers. But some workers, as a result of this, will find themselves not getting time with their family or not getting statutory holiday pay because the holiday has fallen on a weekend or has fallen on a day they don't typically work.

Now, a point I made earlier in second reading, Madam Chair, I think bears repeating. We know from looking at this in the past that a lot of employers, particularly big employers who hire a lot of people, have very sophisticated HR management systems. What they used those systems to do before our government brought in the change that all workers deserve stat holiday pay is that they would specifically set up scheduling to make sure that as few workers as possible got statutory holidays. That is a cost to those workers. That is a detriment to those workers.

I do not see the reasoning for why Alberta workers don't deserve the same rights and benefits as other workers across Canada, because, like the overtime banking change, the holiday pay change for statutory holidays would put Alberta as the only jurisdiction where someone could get nothing for Christmas. No time off, no stat holiday pay: why would Alberta want that to be its distinguishing feature? Why would Alberta want to be out of step on that policy? Is it because there are no businesses that run anywhere else in Canada? That is not the case. Businesses are able to grow and thrive across Canada while their governments still respect workers and implement minimum standards that benefit all Canadians, except potentially here in Alberta if Bill 2 is allowed to continue without amendments to these sections.

I would also like to submit to you, Madam Chair, that one of the reasons we made changes to holiday pay and to statutory holidays

in particular was to align with the rest of Canada to make sure that we have workplace minimum standards here in Alberta that match other jurisdictions. Again I remind you, Madam Chair, because our employment standards hadn't been updated in 30 years prior to the changes our government brought in, we were way out of line in so many ways, and a lot of workers were, I would say, falling through the cracks. It was hurting a lot of particularly vulnerable workers. This was not the white-collar workers in office towers that this was happening to primarily.

3:20

When I questioned the re-addition of very complicated new criteria, which were old criteria reimplemented that employers had asked us to simplify, this struck me very seriously as the addition of red tape from a government that is focused on reducing red tape. Employers needing to calculate: if in the last five of the nine weeks preceding the work week in which the general holiday occurs, this is how we handle it, et cetera, et cetera. These calculations and this system complication aren't necessary if we all just agree that every worker deserves statutory holiday pay, which seems to me to be a very reasonable premise and something that all Canadians appear to believe except for this government here in Alberta.

Being in a position of working a full-time job, going in day in and day out, and then, because Christmas and New Year's Day fall on a weekend, not being able to spend extra time with family, not being able to have that extra statutory holiday pay that, I would suggest, all Canadian workers deserve, including workers in Alberta, is disappointing and not something that I believe a majority of Alberta workers agree with from this government. Making sure that we have minimum standards that align with the rest of Canada, that are fair and treat our workers with respect would be my recommendation to this government.

Not doing that seems like this government just wants to pick the pockets of these workers. Again, who are these workers? The most vulnerable workers, generally speaking, those who rely on those minimum employment standards. Many, many of our employers in this province provide far greater than the minimum employment standards, and I thank all employers who may be doing that. Minimum employment standards are perfectly adequate, but here we're lowering them, and that's what I object to. I think our minimum employment standards in Alberta should match the minimum employment standards from across Canada and in other jurisdictions. It does not make sense to me that workers in every other province will get either time off at Christmas or stat holiday pay but not in Alberta.

Those are two of the major concerns that I have with the changes in Bill 2. After decades of inaction Albertans finally got to the point where they had the same rights and benefits as every other Canadians, finally had more family-friendly workplaces, job-protected leaves, improved maternity leave, compassionate care, and changes to overtime banking and changes to statutory holiday pay that would put us in line with other jurisdictions.

Now, we had talked about overtime and the people that this will impact. I think it's really important to really focus on or highlight the fact that a lot of the workers who use overtime banking, who use overtime in general, whether it's paid out or banked, work in the oil and gas sector, work in construction, and work in seasonal industries where they may not have a lot of flexibility. So these changes are going to impact a large number of Alberta workers, and I think that's very unfortunate.

Now, another change related to Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, is starting a new policy or, rather, revisiting an old policy that was cancelled in the '90s of paying youth, students, less than the minimum wage, a new minimum of \$13 per hour. I have a lot of concerns with



this aspect of the package of changes that were announced with An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business because we know a number of things about youth and youth who work. They have different backgrounds, priorities, responsibilities. A lot of people opposed to increases in minimum wage will paint the picture that all youth who are working are living in their parents' basement and using the money to buy video games. We know that is not true. Of the youth who are working, there are youth who are supporting a family, either by helping to contribute to the family budget and support parents who may be in difficult situations or because they themselves are parents.

At the same time, I would hope that we would be encouraging all our youth in this province to stay in school because we know how beneficial that is not just to them but to our overall society and our economy, to have well-educated Albertans who are able to support themselves, who are able to not just survive but thrive. Getting a good high school education is an important first step, but this package of changes is actually going to encourage our most vulnerable students to drop out of school to get a \$2 per hour raise.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods not just for her comments but for all of the work that she did to support working Albertans in her time as minister of labour in the past government.

I know that one of the significant advances that she made in furthering the economic situation of working people was to grant them the ability to bank overtime hours at an overtime rate, just like our counterparts all across Canada. I, of course, want to speak to the amendment that is before us, which tries to at least re-enshrine this right to allow workers to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate. It's concerning to me that the members on the treasury benches continue to misrepresent what's actually going on here, because as my hon. friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods has stated time and again, time is money. If you're getting paid out overtime at the overtime rate, it only makes sense that you should be able to bank time at the overtime rate.

I want to share some personal stories about my own experience, family's experience, rather, working overtime. My dad is a welder. He continues to weld for a living, and that's how he supported his family when he was raising us, Madam Chair. My dad, of course, was smart enough to realize that you got better working conditions and wages and benefits if you worked union, so he continues to be a proud member of the plumbers and pipefitters local 488 here in Edmonton. Because of the higher wages and better benefits provided to unionized workers through local 488, he was able to provide for his family, a good life for his family, provide extended health care and dental benefits to us as children.

We are incredibly grateful for that because we know that there are many workers, particularly in Alberta, who don't have the benefit of a union and are really struggling to make ends meet because they don't have the high wages and the extended health benefits and pension plans that come from unionized work. I don't know, Madam Chair, if the contracts that he worked under guaranteed that they were able to bank at overtime rate for overtime hours. I would suspect that they do because, of course, construction labour unions are quite successful at negotiating good contracts with their employers. Certainly, it was the case when he worked on non-union jobs that that wasn't provided.

3:30

Now, Madam Chair, it was the case when we were children that my father had to work long hours far away from home. When we

were kids, we lived in southern Saskatchewan, and this was the early to late '80s. Of course, as you know, Saskatchewan at that time was being ravaged by the Grant Devine Conservative government, which was, without a doubt, the most incompetent and corrupt provincial government that any modern Canadian province has seen, and because of the incompetence and corruption of that government, the economy of Saskatchewan tanked. It had been managed effectively by NDP governments for decades, and it only took a few short years for Grant Devine and his gang of crooks to drive that economy into the ground. As a result, of course, my father had to seek employment outside of the province, and to do so, he often came to Alberta, which, you know, even though it was under a Conservative government, was at least managed competently and without the kind of corruption that Saskatchewan was seeing at the time.

So my father plied his welding trade in a number of locations. He worked at the pulp mill in Hinton. He worked at the pulp mill in Peace River. He worked on a number of pipeline projects all across the province. You know, he did his best, as many Albertans do, to provide a good living for himself and his family, but that work required him to spend long hours far away from home, like many Albertans do. I know that there are thousands and thousands of Albertans who are just like my father, who have to travel long distances and stay away from their families for extended periods of time.

You know, to think that my dad and thousands of workers like him don't even have the opportunity to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate is a shame. That means that, you know, he was sacrificing his time from his family, his children and only getting paid at the normal hourly rate for that. That's not how work should be structured, Madam Chair. We don't exist to simply work for our employers. We work for our own benefit as well, and an economy that works for everybody is one where people can work for a reasonable length of time and provide a good living for themselves and their family.

It's been a long-established practice to divide the work hours into eight-hour chunks – eight hours of work, eight hours of play or recreation or time with family, and eight hours of rest – and if you exceed that eight hours of work, Madam Chair, you should be paid or allowed to bank your overtime hours at the overtime rate because we recognize that that takes time out of the eight hours of rest and eight hours of time with your family and recreation that our society has agreed everybody should be entitled to.

Now, Madam Chair, working those long extended hours far away from home takes a toll on a family. There are thousands and thousands of Albertans who know the toll that it takes on a family to work those long hours away from home. In fact, when we were debating this bill in the filibuster last week, members of the UCP caucus identified that, you know, having to spend time here took time away from their other duties. As a result, we recognize that working beyond the normal hours takes time out of the things that we would also like to be doing with our time. So it's only fair that people be compensated at a premium rate for the time that is taken out of that eight hours of recreation and eight hours of rest that we deem to be appropriate. [interjections]

I have a feeling that the general noise in the Chamber is escalating to a point where nobody would really care what I'm saying. I could just talk about the weather.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I'm listening intently.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you. Yeah. Good. Good. Excellent. Thank you.

Back to my point, some of the projects that my dad worked on were pipeline projects. He continues to work on pipeline projects or would. He is currently unemployed because the line 3 project by Enbridge is held up in the Minnesota courts, but he will be back at work once that project resumes. Of course, like thousands of other Albertans, he is looking forward to going to work on, potentially, the TMX pipeline. It's remarkable to me, Madam Chair, that we are now creating a situation where we're very grateful that the pipeline projects are going forward, but if a person is working on the TMX pipeline or Enbridge line 3, working on those pipelines here in Alberta, they won't be guaranteed the ability to bank their overtime hours at overtime rates, yet the same person doing the same job on the same pipeline in British Columbia or Saskatchewan or Manitoba would be guaranteed the ability to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate.

Now, like I said, many of these workers are unionized, and I'm sure that thanks to the power of the union they're able to negotiate reasonable overtime payment agreements on behalf of their employees and their members. But not everybody, like I said, Madam Chair, works for a union or is covered by a union, and certainly there are measures in this bill that will make it harder for Albertans to unionize, so that's concerning to me. Not only are we taking away the guarantee that Albertans will be able to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate; we're also making it harder for them to organize collectively so that they have a union to bargain on their behalf to make sure that that guarantee is in place, which the government is failing to provide to them, which is grossly unfair, especially when we can look at any other province in the country and realize that that is the minimum standard that every employee is entitled to in every other province in the country.

It's also interesting that the ability of workers to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate doesn't seem to have any impact on employment rates. Certainly, if you look at B.C., right now they have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Saskatchewan, even though it's also had its challenges, has lower unemployment rates. In fact, almost every other province except for, of course, the Atlantic provinces, have lower unemployment rates than Alberta, yet they don't take away the ability for overtime hours to be banked at the overtime rates, Madam Chair. It just doesn't seem to make sense to me that taking away this significant economic benefit from people who are building this province will do anything to create jobs. There's no evidence that it will.

In fact, even in spite of this bill being before the Legislature right now and in spite of the government's successful repeal of the carbon tax and successful giveaway of 4 and a half billion dollars to the wealthiest corporations, we're still seeing layoffs occurring in this province, Madam Chair. We lost 21,000 full-time jobs in the month of May. Of course, the government caucus had been on the job for six weeks already at that point. We're, you know, more than two months into their mandate, and we see hundreds of people being laid off by Repsol just this week. Nexen, of course, is laying off hundreds of employees as well. At what point do we ask whether or not the legislation that has already been passed or that is under consideration by this House is having its intended effect of creating jobs and stimulating the economy?

3:40

It's interesting, Madam Chair. Every time we raise the fact that when workers have more money in their pockets, that stimulates the economy, of course, the members opposite disagree with us in the most vociferous terms possible, yet just in debate around Bill 9 the other night, you know, the Member for Calgary-Hays was telling us that we absolutely had to cut the deficit on the backs of public-sector employees because that will create jobs and those jobs will

put money in people's pockets that will stimulate the economy. The members opposite obviously agree that putting money in the pockets of working people will stimulate the economy. It's just that they don't want to do it through minimum-wage measures or allowing people to have overtime rates.

One of the other aspects that my hon. friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods raised was the fact that a lot of these employees who are affected by overtime rate changes are seasonal employees. They can't rely on regular work, Madam Chair, and it just makes sense that if they were able to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate, they would be able to give themselves more of a cushion to look for that next job. Instead of having two weeks of overtime banked or three weeks of overtime banked, they could have three weeks or six weeks of overtime banked when they inevitably lose their jobs due to the seasonal nature of the work that they're engaged in. That would give them a little bit more time to find the next job.

I know from my own experience watching my father go to work that once one job was over, it was often a long time until the next one rolled around. That anxiety, that nervousness about not being able to make ends meet once the time ran out and the money in the bank was running short created a lot of stress for him and our family. I'm sure that that creates a lot of stress for thousands of Alberta families who find themselves in the same position. So why are we reimposing that stress and that anxiety on the workers of Alberta now? What did they do to deserve to be put into a more precarious position?

It's extra baffling to me because, you know, we've heard from the Member for Calgary-Bow a number of times. We've also heard from the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain about the desire of the members opposite to raise the status and esteem of the skilled trades. Absolutely that's a goal that we share, Madam Chair, but we have to recognize that a lot of people who are engaged in the skilled trades work are also working on a seasonal basis. They're going from project to project. They can't rely on having work every day of the working week every week of the year. There are often extended times when they're waiting for the next project to start up or the next contract to kick in, and they have to provide for themselves and their families with the savings and the time that they've banked from the last project. At least when we had the ability to bank overtime at the overtime rate, that provided, like I said, those workers with that cushion to look for the next job without being afraid of how they were going to provide for themselves and their families.

If we want more people to go into the skilled trades, which is the express goal that the members opposite have stated, then we should create the working conditions that would allow people to look into the trades and say: "You know what? I can see a future for myself and my potential family in the skilled trades because I know that I will be able to go from job to job, save up the time and the money to carry me through those days when I'm not working, and able to still live comfortably."

I can tell you from my own personal experience, Madam Chair, that when I was Minister of Advanced Education, I talked to a lot of students who were looking at what their future careers would be, and that was one of the things that they raised. It was often people like me, who were raised by parents who were working in the skilled trades, who saw their parents having to sit at home because they were waiting for the next project and the next contract to come along, and they saw the anxiety on their parents' faces because they weren't sure how they were going to make ends meet while they were waiting for the next job to come along. Lots of students told me, you know: "I don't want to live that way. I want to be able to

have the kind of job security that I and my family can rely on and not have to endure that anxiety, that stress of not knowing when the next paycheque was going to come in and how I'm going to provide for myself and my family and make ends meet."

I would encourage the members opposite to seriously consider the impacts that taking away banked overtime at the overtime rates will have on the considerations that students right now are making about what careers they want to go into once they leave school. Certainly, if they want to attract people . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to spend a bit of time talking again about Bill 2, a bill to pick your pockets and take money away from average Albertans, particularly those working in the trades and those working precarious labour. I know that we spent the night here in the House taking away rights from public service employees, so I'm not surprised that we're now attacking private employees in our work. Very discouraging for all of us here in the House who would like to see the conditions that both public and private employees work under be the best they possibly can be and not create undue stress for them.

I've had a chance to speak to a couple of these issues in the past and bring up concerns. I know I spoke last time a little bit about my concern about the nature of the banked overtime and the fact that in the trades that work is often precarious, as the previous speaker has mentioned, and that having banked overtime is a tool that is available to workers to be able to be responsible and take care of their future needs, like you do when you save money for a pension or you put money aside for a family vacation or put money aside for those emergencies like the washing machine breaking down or your car needing repairs. One of the tools that workers have been using is the ability to bank some overtime so that when the inevitable occurs and the work that they have dries up, especially in difficult economic times as we've experienced in the province of Alberta for the last few years, they're able to use this technique to kind of stretch out the comfort zone that they have for responding to the vagaries of life.

Having taken an opportunity to speak to that a little bit in the past, I'd like to move on and talk a little bit about another part of the legislation, that allows a lower rate for students who are under the age of 18 to be paid, who are in school, dropping the minimum wage from \$15 an hour to \$13 an hour. Again, I'm very concerned about how this causes a disruption in the predictability of work and really interferes with the ability of students to be thoughtful and thinking of the future. Just as the banked overtime was like putting some money aside for life that was approaching, the same thing for the minimum wage. It's often used by students to prepare themselves for the next step in life.

3:50

I know that I had many opportunities to work as a student. I think my first job, my first paid job outside of the home, was actually when I was eight years old, working delivering flyers in our community with my older brother. Subsequently, of course, I went on to spend some time delivering newspapers, as many people, I'm sure, have done here in this House. I happened to pick up jobs in junior high, both at the local drugstore and at the local Red Rooster store, which I'm not sure continues to exist anymore in the province of Alberta.

**Ms Hoffman:** I think there's one in Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Feehan:** There's one in Sherwood Park still. Okay. We don't see them too often. But all of those jobs, I admit, when I was a young man did not require me to put a roof over my head or food in my mouth, so I used them in order to prepare in advance for the future. I used them to make decisions about places that I could go and do things that were important to me. Having put that money aside, it also allowed me to make choices around the type of work I did. I think that's really important because one of the things that I did in high school was make a decision that I was going to be working in the field of human services for my summer jobs, part-time jobs. I understood that that meant I would be paid less than many of my peers who were working in other more lucrative areas of employment and were able to get more than \$15 an hour.

In fact, I just want to point out to the House that in the 1970s, when my two older brothers were lifeguards for the city of Edmonton, they were earning more than \$15 an hour at that time. On the other hand, I was earning initially around \$2.50 an hour for the work that I was engaged in, but it meant that I also, because I was able to take that money and save that money, was able to make some choices.

One of the choices that I made was, in the summer after grade 11 – after grade 10 first, I guess, 10, 11, and then after first-year university; that's right – I made the choice to work at Camp He Ho Ha, Camp Health, Hope & Happiness, a camp designated for people with disabilities to come and enjoy the summer, but in a place where the particular needs that they had with regard to the accessibility of their wheelchair or canes or crutches or attendants to medical issues such as diabetes or cerebral palsy or other kinds of issues that may have come up for them allowed them to enjoy the same things that so many of us enjoy in the summer: getting out into the fresh air, getting out onto the water, learning some crafts, learning some activities such as riflery, which I taught, and archery, which I taught, and those kinds of activities. But the reality was that when you worked at Camp He Ho Ha, you knew that you were actually not going to be earning a lot of money.

At the time I was able to survive because I happened to have parents that were more than prepared to make sure that I had a roof over my head and food in my mouth. The money that I earned at places like the drugstore and at the Red Rooster I was able to put aside, and then when I worked over the summer at Camp He Ho Ha, I was able to say, "Okay; I'm not earning as much as I could be earning by going somewhere else," as some of my peers did, to some of the major corporations to get summer jobs. As a result, I could make a choice that was beneficial not only for myself, because it was an incredibly fantastic experience and really helped me to grow up and to learn some good things about the universe, but it also meant I was able to contribute and work in a place where people who are most vulnerable were able to enjoy all those things that make Alberta a wonderful place to live.

The thing that concerns me now is that if you reduce the wages for people who are under the age of 18, as I was for all of these times that I have mentioned, then you will be putting them in a place where they cannot make those kinds of choices. Because they're earning less money, they cannot put money aside. Therefore, when it comes time to find a new job, the only choice they have available to them is to try to find work that will pay them the maximum amount. Because they haven't been able to put anything away, they can't go to a place like Camp He Ho Ha and say, "Look, I'm prepared to work for less; I'm prepared to go with the summer camp hours," the 24 hours a day that you got paid for.

Back then, I just want to note, I actually only got paid \$400 for the whole summer, for two months, at Camp He Ho Ha the very first time. It was only because of my work throughout the year that I was able to make that kind of choice. This is what we're taking

away from students when we do that. Somehow we always assume that student money is not important, yet it was very important to me. It allowed me to make a contribution to society. I was able to put some money away.

Now, I think it's really important that we talk a little bit about what some of the benefits and values are in having a significant minimum wage. We know that minimum wages as they rise do in fact put more dollars in the hands of lower income people. The evidence is very clear that people who are in the lower income brackets, the lowest quintile or the lowest two quintiles, often do indeed have more expendable cash when the minimum wage rises. That's a good thing in and of itself. We have a benefit, then, of people who can take some mastery over their own lives and can make decisions because they have now some money to spend. Unfortunately, that often doesn't give them much choice. It just might mean a better quality of instant noodles than they happened to pick the last week. But it is a very important difference for many people.

We know that as the minimum wage rises, it actually also increases some positive effects in the work site, a good thing for employers. For example, the evidence indicates that job satisfaction increases with the increase of the minimum wage, and one of the things that comes along with job satisfaction is that there is reduced employee turnover. Your minimum wage is enough to allow you to make choices. There's nothing more frustrating than going to a job, feeling like you're contributing, feeling like you're working, feeling like you're putting in your time, and then getting your paycheque and realizing that it just doesn't feel like it was worth while because it doesn't allow you to pay the bills that you need to pay or to make the choices like I did, for example, to work at a summer camp or other choices that you might make as a student, particularly those students who don't live in the fortunate circumstance that I was raised in, where my parents were paying, you know, room and board for me and, of course, providing many other wonderful things for me.

Many of my peers didn't have that option. They couldn't go home to their families and expect their families to be able to contribute to their well-being. So every dime they earned was important in terms of whether or not they had new clothes at the beginning of the school year, whether or not they were able to go out and join in any activities with their peers when they said: hey, let's go see a movie. If they spent money on a movie, they didn't have money to contribute to the family, who might need that money for groceries or something else of that nature.

We know that the minimum wage has some really positive effects both for the person who receives the dollars and for the companies that provide a higher minimum wage: keeping employees, keeping their job satisfaction up.

There's another really important implication to the minimum wage that we cannot forget, and that is that minimum wage money tends to be spent almost a hundred per cent in the local economy. People who are on minimum wage, whether they're students or not, are spending their money often within blocks of their home. It is very unlikely that they would be spending money in another province or another land. As a result, we know that money comes back into our economy and recirculates, increasing the GDP in the local economy, which I think is a positive thing.

Now, one of the things that the government side of the House is often heard to say: talking about giving some support to the job creators. I think that's a very interesting phrase. It's one that we have to dissect a little bit here. When they refer to it, they refer to job creators as people who own businesses and who hire other people. I accept that. I think that that's a fine way to recognize the efforts of people who own businesses. One of the many

contributions that they make is that they create opportunities for others, and I appreciate that. I think we need to find ways to support that.

But the reality is that to call employers job creators, while it's true, is only a part of the truth of a very complex interweaving of dynamics in an economy, and that is that employers, in fact, don't really create jobs; consumers do. The reason why I say that is because no employer creates a job that doesn't have somebody wanting or needing to buy the product that they're producing. Without the consumer, no job gets created. Now, I guess that could also be said to be true about the employer. If there were no employers, there would be no jobs other than the ones that people create for themselves, which, of course, many people do.

I think it's important to remember that it's a very important, complex question here about how jobs get created, and to simply take one side of the equation and say, "We need to do everything for people who own a business for them to create jobs" without also saying, "We need to increase the money available to consumers so that they can create the jobs that the employers will be fulfilling in order to satisfy the needs of the consumers," then we're missing half the equation here.

I think this is particularly important because we are contrasting what this government has chosen to do. They have chosen to give very significant dollar value to the richest corporations in the world to reduce their taxes when we know that a significant part, often more than 70 per cent, of the dollars given to a major corporation is not spent in the local economy. It goes away. If you have a headquarters in another province, if you have headquarters in another country, those dollars are gone. We get little to no benefit from that here in the province of Alberta. Those same numbers of dollars given to the most vulnerable people at the lowest wage, the minimum wage, tend to be spent close to a hundred per cent.

You're talking a very significant increase in local spending when you provide that money to the people at the lower end of the income level, and that's a choice that the government has made. They have chosen not to increase jobs by increasing the amount of consumer spending that is possible here in this province. Instead, they're doing a very good job creating service jobs in foreign lands where rich corporation executives go to spend their holidays and go to employ people who will work in their business but work for less money. Very often the decision is made by corporations to leave Alberta because they can find a cheap labour force in a country where poverty is rampant. It's quite problematic that we're allowing all that money to be taken out of the province of Alberta and spent on creating employment for people at terrible wages.

I think it's important that we reconsider and take this amendment quite seriously and reconsider what it is we're doing here. It is inconsistent with the desire to create jobs here in the province of Alberta and to increase our local spending, the local GDP, therefore increasing demand, thereby creating employment. I know it's a big difference between us and the government side because they believe in supply-side economics and we believe in demand-side economics.

We have stood up in this House repeatedly bringing in reports from across North America and the world demonstrating that supply-side economics does not work. We tried to bring in evidence from universities. We tried to bring in evidence from associations which we felt they would like and support, like, for example, the evidence I brought in from the Congressional Budget Office in the United States. We don't want them to dismiss the information because they don't like the source.

We sought out information from highly respected economic units around North America that cannot be considered left wing by any stretch of the imagination. That evidence indicated that supply-side

economics does not have the support of people who do research, of the business associations that actually sit down and calculate numbers and make decisions.

This is why we are perplexed on this side of the House. We know so far that evidence, even the best evidence available in the world, is not going to change the government's opinion. We know that the lived experience of people here in the province of Alberta who are low income and who depend on those dollars – we share their stories – is not going to change the government's decision here.

It befuddles us that these kinds of bases for making decisions are not being used by this government, so it leaves us with one simple fact, and that is that the government is deriving a benefit from these decisions that has nothing to do with either evidence or the lived experience of vulnerable people, and that is that somehow there is some benefit to the government, that the government will be receiving something in the form of political contributions.

**The Chair:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to offer some reflections during committee in regard to Bill 2. You know, I've been thinking about this bill both in a general sort of way in regard to sending a message or a certain tone towards Alberta's working population and then about some specific changes that are being made and some of the implications that could come from those changes as well.

In regard to the general, I guess, tone or message that Bill 2 sends to Alberta's working population, it has a general message that we are taking things back from what workers have earned and what workers have achieved both in terms of wages here in the province of Alberta and in terms of working conditions as well. You know, we've had a lot of discussion around the banked overtime position, and I certainly will get back to that in my comments because I have been speaking to others around this and reflecting on the rollback for banked overtime and what the government is proposing here in Bill 2.

But I just want to touch, perhaps, on a couple of other issues that were less discussed here in the House, particularly, I think, some things that we need to think about a little more carefully. This whole idea around holiday pay and curtailing an individual's accessing of holiday pay is, I think, a serious issue that, you know, doesn't cost a great deal, necessarily, for employers but sends a message around working conditions and sends a message around looking after workers and their families.

You know, the simple issue, I guess, if we could focus on a single holiday, is around Christmas, right? It's generally a holiday that is recognized in labour law across this country and indeed in many countries around the world. For us to be somehow leaving holiday pay for Christmas Day to the discretion of an employer is a shift that involves money, but it's also a shift that involves power. What it is: it's taking the right of an individual to access holiday pay for Christmas, for example, and leaving it to the discretion of employers. I think that not only is this taking money from the pockets of workers, usually low-income workers, but it also, I would suggest, is just sending a very negative message.

4:10

You know, when you look at a bill like Bill 2, it sets certain parameters around taking away some holiday pay rights for workers and the minimum wage for young people as well, banked overtime for workers in that situation, but it also sends a message of direction, that the government is going to squeeze the noose on these things,

that we're looking for more, that we're looking for more places by which we can do so.

When we're trying to get Albertans back to work, when we're trying to build a framework by which, as the government's slogan suggests, we're open for business and so forth, well, you know, none of these things say that at all. They say a message that is quite the opposite, that we will curtail the working conditions and the pay of workers here in the province of Alberta. And you know what? Watch out, because who knows what's coming next?

When we look at holiday pay, for example, and leaving that to the discretion of an employer, then there are lots of other holidays and lots of other, I guess, leave provisions that are in the labour code that people are worried about: compassionate leave for an individual whose loved ones might be ill, maternity leave for those that are starting families and having young children, all sorts of others.

**Ms Hoffman:** Domestic violence.

**Mr. Eggen:** Domestic violence. Exactly. That's another one that is finally being recognized as something that should be protected for an individual to be working and dealing with issues around domestic violence.

I would suggest, Madam Chair, that it's not just the words that are printed on this particular bill, but it helps to define a direction that I think workers and working families in the province of Alberta would find troubling and disturbing as well. It's a question of respect, to respect workers and their place in our society and the essential way by which they actually help to make our society function. It is measured by wages, of course, because we need to feed our families and house them and clothe them, but also by having that confidence that those measures of protection through law are respected for the future so that you don't have to be looking over your shoulder for further cuts to wages or working conditions and so that you can have that sense of security to build your family, to get that mortgage, to have those kids, and to move forward with confidence on all matters that could support those things.

So here we are with Bill 2, which makes, I think, quite draconian cuts to overtime, banked overtime and so forth, and to the minimum wage for young people. I think the message has been brought forward loud and clear that any worker engaged in any employment should be paid equally for their labour and their time regardless of what their age is, right?

I mean, I was shocked to think about a simple fact for the grade 12 graduating class, which we were celebrating. There are commencements tonight at Queen Elizabeth high school, I believe, and probably in dozens of schools around the province in the next few days; many commencements already have taken place. That graduating class, which we are so proud of, if they had the misfortune of perhaps being born in one month or another, would be eligible for a 13 per cent differential in their wages as they move forward, whether they are not 17 until later in the year or if they are already 18 and so forth.

You know, that's a very simple analogy that I think all members in this Legislature should think about and realize that they're sending forward a message of discrimination, of arbitrary discrimination based on age. That sends a message to a young person's pocketbook, but as I say, it sends a message of disrespect as well.

You know, I learned from being a teacher for 20 years that when you are managing a class and encouraging them to learn, the first precondition to success in learning is the confidence that a student knows and internalizes that they will be treated fairly. So when this legislative body – if we could use that analogy of the Alberta

classroom writ large of the hundreds of thousands of young people that are in the situation of having their pay changed and cut by this government, then we are in the same way undermining the confidence of those young people to know that we have and will produce laws and regulations that will protect them. It undermines that confidence because here we are debating a law that removes protections, equality, justice, and fairness for young people.

That same analogy or that same principle can be applied directly to this notion of banked overtime, being able to bank and count on that overtime as it should be and being paid as the overtime that the person worked for in the first place. We know that Alberta has a very large project-based workforce, a very large seasonal workforce. You go hard when you are working, let's say, in a project in Fort McMurray, and then you are away and back to your family. Let's say that you might have been working in a camp, working very hard, very long hours and building a budget that was predicated on the total payment, including overtime, including banked overtime, so that you can space that out over the year and have a reliable budget that you can count on for yourself and your family to pay the bills that you need to pay. Again, taking money out of the pockets of individuals, picking that money, literally, of banked overtime that someone earned fairly by working hard in overtime but also, again, undermining the confidence and the security of knowing – is this legislative body building laws and regulations that will protect the rights of a worker and their family, or is it constraining those laws and regulations so that, again, you have to work hard and also look over your shoulder to see what the Legislative Assembly is going to take from you in these coming months and weeks and years?

As I say, it's not fair, and it's bad governance, quite frankly, Madam Chair. You know, when you do execute those things over a period of time, you lose the confidence of the people that put people into this Legislative Assembly in the first place. I mean, during the honeymoon period of a new government and all that kind of thing people are feeling good and talking about their mandate, feeling great about that. Well, that's fine and well. But you know what? You're judged only on the next thing that you do in this Legislature. You can rest on all your laurels a little bit, but really you're only as good as the next thing that you do.

I would suggest that the next thing that we should do in order to send a positive message to try to mitigate some of the damage, I think, that has happened in this legislative body over the last couple of weeks – right? – in regard to a number of, I think, punitive bills that have been brought forward here in this Assembly: take a long, hard second look at Bill 2 and try to temper it and say that, you know, there is a spirit of compromise that can reside in this Chamber, a spirit of compromise and collaboration that moves past the earplug stunts and the yelling and the ranting and the raving and going on about giant mandates and how you can just do anything you want with those things, undemocratic discussions, I would suggest, suggesting that democratic debate here is somehow not welcome in such a place as this. We can mitigate that. We can start to walk back from that precipice – right? – and look for a reasonable way by which we can, I guess, pull back on this Bill 2.

The first place I would suggest, Madam Chair, quite frankly, is simple. It's elegant, and it definitely will push back against this idea that we are making punitive laws against young people here in this Chamber. That would be to just abandon this minimum wage differential between young people and adult workers here in the province of Alberta.

4:20

Many employers are already speaking out very loudly and clearly that they don't think it's fair and that they will not abide by it. You

know, the hon. President of Treasury Board said: "Well, yeah, that's the way it should work. Then you have people making decisions." But there's a difference between a choice an employer can make and making sure that it's backstopped by regulation and law, knowing that there is a fair minimum that they must abide by, right? We can't just depend on the good graces and the magnanimous world view of employers to make sure that they pay a minimum wage. By definition a minimum wage is the legal line that we draw in the metaphorical sand of wages. You don't just say: okay; we'll have a minimum wage, and we'll have different minimum wages for different people in different circumstances. I know that this government has talked about a different minimum wage for people that serve alcohol – right? – or that work in nightclubs. The list goes on and on.

Once you start down that path of compromising the integrity of a minimum wage, then all bets are off, you know. Don't think that people that work in the entertainment industry aren't watching over their shoulder very, very carefully to see what further punitive constraints will be put on their income for themselves and their families based on the fact that this government has the audacity to differentiate between someone who happened to be born in June and somebody who was born in July, who is 17 or 18 years old, and have a 13.3 per cent differential in their wages just based on that happenstance of when they happen to be born.

Yeah. That would be my modest proposal, very reasonable, that you back off something like that. I mean, it would fit into this whole notion that this government ran on in terms of reducing red tape, you know. I think that it's a great idea to always make sure that regulations are coherent and sensible and logical and have some elegance in their simplicity to execute those regulations. Just imagine trying to chase down kids that are working part-time and then according to this – I think this bill said: well, maybe if they're not in school, then they can get the \$15 or if there are extenuating circumstances or something like that, right? I mean, that's pure unadulterated, Byzantine, reductive, not logical regulation for the sake of red tape.

I'll do the job for the new associate minister to reduce red tape and get rid of this minimum wage differential. There you go. You can steal the best ideas – I often do that as well – but credit it as well. Make sure that you mention: the Member for Edmonton-North West gave me this idea, and I thank him for it. You know, get rid of all this red tape. I don't know if you can have, like, truant officers wandering the streets of Calgary looking for students: "Are you going to school and working at Tim Hortons? Well, I'm afraid I'm going to cut your wages then." I mean, the whole thing has a level of absurdity that would be funny if it wasn't real, based on the laws and the proposals that are here in this bill.

When you present legislation, always try to make sure that it fits the matrix of being logical – right? – that it gives people the head nod, that regular working people say, "Yeah; that sounds good to me, sounds reasonable," and make sure that it's enforceable and that it's straightforward and simple. Bill 2 does not meet any of those criteria at all. Walk Bill 2 out right now down by the fountain there – it's not raining at the moment – and ask a few people about the differential in the minimum wage for young people, ask about the banked overtime and clawing that back. You know, I think that two years from now, if I'm doing my math correctly, Christmas is going to fall on a Saturday.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but according to Standing Order 4(3) we will now rise and report progress on Bill 2.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Guthrie:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

**Mrs. Savage:** I would ask that the House be adjourned.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:26 p.m.]





## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, June 20, 2019**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., adjourned, amendment introduced*)

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., adjourned*)

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019, passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201 — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 825-38 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 838-40 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 24, 2019

Day 18

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

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

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Toor

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Dang  
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Goehring  
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Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Horner  
Irwin  
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Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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Issik  
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Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 24, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Lord, God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

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

### Hon. Members:

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

**The Speaker:** A stirring rendition. Well done, everyone.  
Good afternoon. You may be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of visitors joining us today. In the Speaker's gallery I see the former member for the constituency of Calgary-Buffalo, Harvey Cenaiko, and his son Justin Cenaiko is also here. Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Also, members, joining us today are two groups of hard-working public servants, one from the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General and another from the Legislative Assembly Office. We'd all like to say thank you for all the work you do. Please feel free to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also joining us are family members of one of our team in the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms, Kaitlynn Church: her partner, Mike Kaczmarek, and his parents, Brenda and Richard Kaczmarek.

Also joining us today: a guest of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, Desiree Clarke; and a guest of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, Bob Cocking. I'd invite you to all rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

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

### La Francophonie Albertaine

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to wish all French Canadians a joyful celebration of their historic national day of la fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste. I have a statement I'm going to give primarily in French, and I understand that English translations are being circulated.

Je tiens à souhaiter également une bonne Fête nationale à tous les Québécois. Le Canada a été fondé en français. C'est donc à dire que les canadiens célèbrent la Saint-Jean-Baptiste depuis 360 ans. L'Alberta aussi a été fondée en français. Cette langue a été la première langue européenne parlée dans ce territoire. De nombreux franco-albertains peuvent retracer leurs racines dans notre province depuis plus de deux siècles.

La plupart des premiers commerçants de fourrures, des coureurs des bois, des premiers missionnaires, et de nombreux fermiers étaient francophones. La carte du nord de l'Alberta reflète particulièrement ce patrimoine, pensant aux villes de St. Albert, Beaumont, Lac Ste. Anne, Lac La Biche, et Bonnyville, pour nommer que celles-là.

De nos jours les personnes d'origine française qui vivent en Alberta y sont venues par hasard ou par choix. Elles sont nées ici ou au Québec mais aussi d'ailleurs au Canada, en Europe, en Afrique, en Amérique latine, dans les Caraïbes, et en Asie. La communauté francophone de notre province est l'une des celles dont la croissance est la plus rapide au pays. Plus d'un quart de million d'Albertains parlent couramment le français, et près d'un élève sur trois suivent un programme d'études en français.

Mars est le Mois de la Francophonie en Alberta, et le drapeau franco-albertain et un symbole officiel de distinction en vertu de la loi sur les emblèmes de l'Alberta. Le patrimoine francophone de l'Alberta et sa communauté florissante attire des francophones du monde entier. Ses gens savent qu'ils seront les bienvenues chez nous, qu'ils rencontreront de nombreux francophones, qu'ils pourront obtenir des services en français, qu'ils y trouveront des institutions francophones, et que leurs enfants auront l'occasion de fréquenter des écoles francophones. Et, bien sûr, comme tous les nouveaux arrivants en Alberta, peu importe leur origine ethnique ou leur langue, ils auront de nombreuses possibilités d'emplois, pourront créer leurs propres entreprises, élever une famille, et profiter de tout ce que l'Alberta a à offrir.

M. le Président, notre communauté franco-albertaine forte renforce notre province en nous lions à d'autres communautés francophones du Canada, dont celles de l'Ontario, du Nouveau-Brunswick, et bien sûr de la belle province du Québec. Et une communauté franco-albertaine forte nous aide aussi à nous rapprocher de la Francophonie partout dans le monde.

Une étude récente du Conference Board du Canada a révélé des retombées économiques positives découlant du fait français au Canada. Ces retombées se reflètent dans la diversification du commerce, dans les exportations et les importations, de même que dans les emplois et la croissance économique.

Our government recognizes all these economic, social, and cultural contributions of French-speaking Albertans.

C'est pourquoi nous appuyons pleinement la politique et le plan d'action du gouvernement de l'Alberta en matière de la Francophonie, y compris l'accès accru à des programmes et des services en français.

Let me pause to commend the former government for its action and its plans in this regard, which this government is proud to renew and commit ourselves to.

Nous nous engageons à réaliser ces initiatives en utilisant des moyens tangibles et durables qui renforceront nos communautés et feront croître notre économie.

M. le Président, je suis également ravi d'annoncer la nomination de la Députée de Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche au poste de secrétaire parlementaire responsable de la Francophonie en Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to announce as well the appointment of the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche as parliamentary secretary for la Francophonie in Alberta.

Maintenant les franco-albertains auront une défenseur dévouée qui travaillera avec notre cabinet pour faire avancer la politique et

le plan d'action en matière de la Francophonie, une défenseur qui, soit dit en passant, parle couramment le français et qui représente une région du nord de l'Alberta peuplée de nombreux francophones et qui possède une riche histoire et culture francophone.

1:40

In her new role the parliamentary secretary will work closely with the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, who will continue to be the minister responsible for the Francophone Secretariat, and have access to the resources of that department.

Cette nomination nous permet de reconnaître et d'honorer la richesse du passé, du présent, et de l'avenir de la Francophonie albertaine, et elle vient à point en ce jour où nous célébrons la fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste au Canada. Happy Saint-Jean-Baptiste to all of our francophone Alberta friends. Bonne fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

[Translation] Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish all Franco-Albertans a bonne fête for Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, a day of celebration for francophones across Canada for four centuries. Let me also wish our friends in Quebec une bonne fête nationale.

Canada was founded in French, so for more than 360 years Canadians have been celebrating the feast day of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Alberta was founded in French, too. It was the first European language spoken in our province.

Many Franco-Albertans can trace their roots in our province back more than two centuries. The early fur traders, the coureurs de bois, the first missionaries, and many farmers were largely French. The map of northern Alberta especially reflects that heritage, with towns and cities like St. Albert, Beaumont, Lac Ste. Anne, Lac La Biche, Bonnyville, and so many more.

Today people of French heritage are Albertans by chance and by choice, born here and coming here from Quebec, other parts of Canada, from Europe, and from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia. The francophone community in our province is among the fastest growing in the country. More than a quarter-million Albertans are fluent in French, and nearly 1 in 3 students are in a French-language education program.

March is Francophonie Month in Alberta, and the Franco-Albertan flag is an official symbol of distinction under the Emblems of Alberta Act.

Alberta's francophone heritage and thriving community attracts French-speaking peoples from around the globe. They know they will be welcomed here, that they will find many other francophones here as well as services and institutions in French, and that their children will have opportunities to attend francophone schools. And, of course, like all newcomers to Alberta, regardless of their ethnicity or language, they will find many opportunities for jobs, for creating businesses, raising families, and enjoying all the wonderful things Alberta has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, a strong Franco-Albertan community strengthens our province by helping connect us to other francophone communities across Canada, including Ontario, New Brunswick, and, of course, la belle province, Quebec. And a strong Franco-Albertan community also helps connect us to the Francophonie around the world.

A recent study by the Conference Board of Canada found positive economic impacts arising from the French fact in Canada, reflected in the diversification of trade, exports and imports, and jobs and economic growth. Our new government recognizes all these economic, social, and cultural contributions of French-speaking Albertans. That's why we fully support the government of Alberta French policy and action plan, including the provision of increased access to programs and services in French, and we are

committed to building on these initiatives in tangible and sustainable ways that will help strengthen our communities and grow our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I am also delighted to announce the appointment of the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche as parliamentary secretary responsible for the Alberta Francophonie. Now Franco-Albertans will have a dedicated advocate who will work with our cabinet to move the French policy and action plan forward, an advocate who is fluent in French, by the way, and who represents a region in northern Alberta with a large francophone population and a rich francophone history and culture.

In her new role the parliamentary secretary will work closely with the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women, who will continue to be the minister responsible for the Francophone Secretariat, and have access to the resources of her department. This appointment recognizes and honours Alberta's rich francophone past, present, and future and is a fitting way to mark Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day in Canada. [As submitted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert to respond.

**Ms Renaud:** Merci, M. le Président. Je me lève aujourd'hui pour célébrer la Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Aussi, le 24 juin c'est la Fête nationale du Québec. Je m'excuse à tout le monde; je n'ai pas eu le temps de traduire. Je vais lire en anglais.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in honour of Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, an important celebration for thousands of French-speaking Albertans in our province. On this day we honour and recognize the proud history of francophones in Alberta and the contributions they have made to the economic, social, cultural, and political fabric of Alberta. The French-speaking population of Alberta can trace its roots back almost 200 years. Today more than 268,000 Albertans speak French, 1 in 3 students are enrolled in a French-language program, and our French-speaking population is projected to lead the country, increasing between 25 and 50 per cent by 2036.

In 1982 the Franco-Albertan flag was created, and in June 2017 our government adopted it as its first symbol of distinction under the Emblems of Alberta Act. As a government we are strongly committed to upholding the language rights of Franco-Albertans and working closely with French-speaking Albertans to support greater opportunity and recognition. We were proud to create the first-ever French language policy to support the vitality and development of francophones in Alberta. We released a three-year action plan to enhance French-language services, support francophone organizations, and promote French language and culture. We increased funding for the Francophone Secretariat to enhance access to services in French for Albertans in health, employment services, and early childhood supports. In March 2018 we officially proclaimed March as the annual Mois de la Francophonie albertaine. As a French-speaking Albertan myself I am honoured to have been part of this important work. Now as the francophone critic I am honoured to hold this government to account and advocate on behalf of the thousands of Franco-Albertans.

During a time of celebration it is disturbing to see troubling attacks on French-speaking communities, including the cancellation of the francophone university and the French-language services commissioner under the Ford government in Ontario. I urge this government to condemn these actions and resist the paths taken by their allies in Ontario. We must remember that our diversity is what makes our province strong and such a great place to live. I urge all members of this House to get to know the francophone communities in their constituencies and participate in celebrations happening

across our province in support of the wonderful contributions of Franco-Albertans.

Merci, M. le Président, et joyeuse fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, just as a way of clarity for everyone, when members are speaking French inside the Chamber, they are welcome to do so without translation. However, should they choose to provide a translation for the benefit of the non-French speakers, that, of course, is always appreciated by us but certainly not a requirement as it is a significant tradition now in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to allow those who speak French to do so freely.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

#### National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty-four years ago yesterday 329 innocent people, many of them Canadians, died in the murderous bombing of Air India flight 182 over the Atlantic Ocean. This heartbreaking incident is why I rise here today to pay tribute and to honour every Canadian whose life has been cut short or forever changed by an act of terrorism. In the decades since, tragically, many Canadians have been lost in other terrorist atrocities at home and abroad. As we reflect on the lives lost from Air India to 9/11 to the murders of Corporal Nathan Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent in 2014 and countless others, we pay tribute to those around the world who have lost their lives to acts of terrorism, and we stand firm in the values we hold dear: freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

As Albertans we condemn all forms of terrorism. We stand in solidarity with our allies who fight terrorism at home and abroad, and we thank the men and women who risk their lives every day to stand up against these radical acts. Terrorists believe that through violent and cowardly acts they can make us doubt not only our safety but the very institutions that keep us safe. They are wrong. We are a society that believes in compassion, justice, inclusion, and equality, and these acts of terror only strengthen our resolve for unity. We must always strive to eradicate the evil of terrorism both here in Canada and around the world.

Our government remains unwavering in our commitment to the safety and security of Albertans, and on this sombre anniversary we stand in solidarity with the families and friends of all those who have been affected by terrorist attacks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Government Members' Actions during Bill 9 Debate

**Mr. Dang:** Last week the Premier, a man who occupies the most honourable office in our province, handed out earplugs to silence the opposition during critical debate on Bill 9. As he handed them out, he giggled and said: this is so that you don't have to listen to him and the others over there. He was clearly tired of hearing about how his illegal bill would hurt 180,000 workers, including nurses, teachers, and social workers.

But Albertans have shown that they aren't having it. They're outraged and angry at the stunning show of disrespect. Here are some of the comments that they've sent to the MLAs and to the Premier.

I was appalled to learn that the Premier of our province was displaying such behaviour as it demonstrates a total disregard for the democratic process . . .

. . . You are teaching supporters that a person holding an opinion that is different from yours can be mocked publicly and blatantly ignored. This kind of intolerance is closed-minded, disrespectful and dangerous.

Also:

The arrogance and blatant disrespect by the UCP to the principles of democracy, the official opposition and to the 180,000 Albertans who this bill will directly impact is unacceptable.

And:

Ignoring anyone who opposes your own views is a dangerous road to travel and a threat to a fair, democratic process, to which all Albertans are entitled. To read and see the elected Premier of Alberta laughing and telling his party members to ignore the opposition and to watch his party members join in on the fun clearly conveyed his and his party's feelings toward public-sector workers like myself, my wife, my sister, my sister-in-law, my brothers-in-law . . .

and so forth.

And:

I am frankly livid that the government has decided to put in earplugs while the opposition was fighting for my spouse's and family's income. The member that was supplying the earplugs should resign immediately.

Now, unfortunately, the Premier once again has put in his earplugs and is refusing to listen. Instead of taking responsibility and apologizing, he has chosen to mislead Albertans and cover up the true story. First he said that it didn't happen. Then he said that it was to boost morale. Now he says that he was helping a member with tinnitus. Mr. Speaker, Albertans aren't buying these preposterous excuses. Our caucus stands with Albertans in condemning this outrageous behaviour and will continue to fight for working people in our province, whether the government listens or not.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

#### La Francophonie Albertaine

**Ms Goodridge:** Merci, M. le Président. Je me lève aujourd'hui, le jour de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, pour souligner la vitalité de la Francophonie canadienne et le dynamisme de la langue et de la culture françaises en Alberta. De Plamondon à Grande Prairie, de Fort McMurray à Lethbridge, des communautés à travers l'Alberta ont souligné cette fête importante cette fin de semaine.

Le français était la première langue européenne parlée en Alberta, et elle demeure la langue la plus parlée après l'anglais. Bien qu'historiquement, une bonne partie de la population francophone albertaine pouvait retracer ses origines au Québec et à la France, mais aujourd'hui les francophones en Alberta proviennent de partout au pays et de partout au monde.

En effet, la population francophone de l'Alberta a doublé depuis 1996, et c'est la population francophone du Canada à l'extérieur du Québec qui croît le plus rapidement. De plus, il y a plus de 200 000 étudiants albertaines qui font le choix de suivre des programmes de langue française, soit près d'un étudiant sur trois.

La vitalité de cette population d'expression française est un atout pour l'Alberta.

Finalement, je profite de cette occasion pour remercier le premier ministre de m'avoir nommée secrétaire parlementaire pour la Francophonie albertaine.

1:50

Je suis ravie de pouvoir appuyer la ministre de la Culture, du Multiculturalisme et de la Condition féminine et ministre responsable du Secrétariat francophone dans la mise en oeuvre continue de la

politique en matière de francophonie, visant à améliorer les services gouvernementaux en français selon les ressources disponibles.

Merci à tous les membres de l'Assemblée pour leur appui, joyeuse fête de la Saint-Jean Baptiste, et merci, M. le Président.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Government Members' Actions during Bill 9 Debate

**Ms Notley:** Here we go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week this Premier lowered the bar once again in his display of disrespect for the people of Alberta. First they introduced legislation to gut the constitutional rights of 180,000 Albertans, then they literally plugged their ears when opposition members raised the concerns of these 180,000 Albertans, and then they changed their story about it repeatedly. To the Premier: will he rise and apologize for both this display of disrespect as well as the series of contradictory statements by him and his House leader?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the only apology in this place should be coming from the NDP for their constant vicious harassment of ministers verbally, their bullying tactics, their name calling, and their disrespectful comportment in this place. But the Leader of the Opposition instead – she's too busy taking credit for Justin Trudeau's carbon tax. Today in an interview in the *National Post* the Leader of the Opposition was proudly taking credit for the federal government's carbon tax and so-called climate leadership plan action. They might take credit for it; we're glad to be fighting it.

**Ms Notley:** Thursday morning the Premier's office put out a statement around the earplug use that said, quote: this is a harmless and light-hearted attempt to boost caucus morale. Thursday afternoon the House leader told the House that "nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate." Friday afternoon the Premier described a member with a hearing problem and said, quote: I gave him earplugs to reduce the volume. Thirty-six hours, three statements, three different stories. Albertans don't deserve pivots. They deserve honesty. Why won't you give it to them? Why won't you apologize?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I was proud to be here for 18 hours listening to that debate and members of this caucus for three straight nights listening to that debate. I can't say that for all the leaders in this place.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** It's interesting to lead a filibuster not in this place. But, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this much. We are getting the job done for Albertans. We committed to manage the province's finances responsibly. That requires a bit of time to get advice from the MacKinnon panel, expert advice on how to bring Alberta back to balance. That's exactly what we're going to do.

**Ms Notley:** Here's the real story, Mr. Speaker. The Premier displayed bad judgment that disrespected 180,000 Albertans when he encouraged his caucus to put in earplugs not to hear debate. The answer to this mistake is to honestly acknowledge it, apologize to Albertans, and move on. Instead, he's got a new story every time he opens his mouth. Why won't he just learn from, oh, Ralph Klein, admit his mistake, apologize for it, and instead not make Albertans endure days of ducking and diving and running away?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it tells you all you need to know about today's NDP that they think this is the most important issue in the province. I'll tell you what. You know, we'll apologize for that the moment that members of the opposition apologize for using earbuds in this place. But you know what they really need to apologize for? They need to apologize to 4.3 million Albertans for foisting a job-killing carbon tax that they didn't talk about in the last election campaign. They need to apologize to nearly 200,000 unemployed Albertans, so many of whom were driven out of work by the high-tax, high red tape policies of the NDP. We're proud to be undoing the damaging economic policies of the NDP.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order was noted at 1:54. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Bill 9

**Ms Notley:** The real issue is 180,000 Alberta public servants who are having their constitutional rights trampled by this Premier, Mr. Speaker. Today we're hearing, not surprisingly, that we'll be all headed to court as these workers seek to defend their most basic rights from attack by this Premier. We know this legislation is illegal. The government knows it's illegal. Why does the Premier believe that the rule of law applies to everyone but to him?

**Mr. Kenney:** Of course, we believe in the rule of law, which is why this Assembly adopted, after 24, 25 hours of debate, a law to allow for a temporary deferral in wage-reopener arbitration so that the government is fully informed in sitting down and negotiating those in good faith, Mr. Speaker. The real question is: why did the NDP take a \$13 billion debt, drive it to a \$60 billion debt, run the largest per capita deficit in Canada, oversee five credit downgrades, and have us headed towards \$100 billion in debt? That's a record that we're going to clean up.

**Ms Notley:** I believe what the Premier tried to claim there is that his bad-faith bargaining bill does not roll over the rights of working people. But given the earplug fiasco and the associated multiple different versions of the facts offered up by the Premier and his House leader just so comfortably, Albertans can be forgiven if they don't believe him. Will the Premier table all of the legal opinions received by the Premier that suggest his legislation is not a violation of the Constitution or the Charter?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well as a former Premier that legal advice from officials to the government is cabinet confidence. I can assure the leader of the NDP that we proceeded on this matter on the advice of the senior public service, who indicated that this is fully constitutionally compliant. Of course, it is. What the NDP is really up about is this: they're just angry with Albertans for firing them. They wish that they were still in power and driving us towards a \$100 billion debt. Thank goodness Alberta voters stopped them.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Premier fights to steal the hard-won, fundamental, constitutional and Charter rights of nurses, of teachers, of paramedics, of firefighters, of many, many other dedicated public servants, he appears only to be making progress on his one unheralded and myopic job-creation plan for lawyers. Can the Premier once again please tell this House exactly how much money this attack on working people is going to cost the Minister of Justice?

**Mr. Kenney:** Isn't it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP wouldn't sue Ottawa to protect our taxpayers from their carbon tax. They

wouldn't sue Ottawa for intruding in our jurisdiction through these outrageous bills C-48 and C-69, but they will support a lawsuit against Alberta taxpayers. That tells you all you need to know about the NDP: always and only defending the bosses who have formal affiliate membership in the NDP. We're talking about people who actually help to run the NDP. We're here to defend all Alberta taxpayers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I got an earful about the bad-faith bargaining bill from teachers and support staff in Lethbridge on the weekend. Almost a month ago the chair of the Lethbridge public school division warned the Minister of Finance that the bill would result in harm to future bargaining. I will table that letter. To the minister: given that Lethbridge already negotiated zero per cent increases for support staff in the fall school year, won't the minister just admit that this is actually about a massive rollback for teachers and support staff?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the intent of Bill 9 is clear. We've been clear with Albertans and all stakeholders. It is simply procedural delay so that we can make informed, responsible decisions on behalf of Albertans. We don't have an outcome in mind. The goal and the outcome we have in mind is to be fully informed and responsible to all Albertans.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, here we hear the same talking points, but in fact the letter calls attention to the fact that there has been a lack of transparency on purpose, Minister. The trustee chair of the Lethbridge public school board wrote, "There does not appear to be a genuine openness to 'discussing' the direction or exploring potential alternatives." To the minister: is this really a level of consultation that you think will hold up in the courts?

2:00

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, this government is taking the responsible tack forward. We're a government who believes in being fully informed. We're a government who believes in being responsible to Albertans. Albertans elected this government to bring this province to balance and ensure that we can deliver high-quality services for Albertans for this generation and the next. We intend to do that.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, this letter lays bare that Bill 9 interfered with bargaining in good faith, that it actually did achieve a zero per cent increase for support staff this fall in Lethbridge. In other words, Bill 9 is about rollbacks. It's not about a wage freeze. Was the minister briefed on the contents of this letter and the very clear interference in good-faith bargaining by his deputy minister, or did he have his earplugs in?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can say this. This government has been listening intently to Albertans and to Albertans' concerns to ensure that we can balance the budget and deliver high-quality services. The members opposite, when they were in government, had us on a track to \$100 billion in accumulated debt. With that kind of debt, we would not be able to provide, first, front-line services to Albertans in the long term and to the next generation. We're about being a responsible government.

## Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Numbers and this Minister of Education just don't jibe. She has tried to tell the parents of the more than 120,000 students attending Calgary public schools that her government will support classrooms, but we know that CBE expects 1,800 more students this fall and that they're cutting \$22 million from their school budgets. More students, less funding equals crowded classrooms, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: is this the type of math that you plan on teaching our kids, that you can cut and you can cram kids into classrooms and it's not going to make a difference? I call tell you that that math doesn't pass grade 1.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I had the pleasure of meeting with the board chair and the superintendent of CBE last week. They assured me that they are maintaining the current staffing levels. We have been perfectly clear on our commitment to fund education, and we will be continuing to fund it. We are funding enrolment growth, and we are going to build schools.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** If you actually looked at their budget or if you actually listened to any of their board meetings, you'd know that there are \$22 million being cut from schools. Twenty-two million dollars is 220 teachers, Mr. Speaker. The math is pretty simple. This minister keeps denying the reality that \$22 million is going to mean that there are less supports for schools, on average, the CBE has said, three fewer high school teachers in every single high school. Isn't the minister embarrassed? Enough with the talking points. Why won't you fund education properly?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I trust our local school boards to make those decisions. I have been assured by CBE that they will be maintaining their current staffing levels.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, it is totally unreasonable for the Minister of Education to stand in this place, when she knows there are \$22 million being cut from Calgary schools, and to continue to espouse talking points instead of admitting the facts. The facts are that there will be less supports in our schools this fall because of this minister's dithering. The facts are that the government isn't planning on bringing a budget forward until the fall, which means that we could be waiting until Christmas to find out if there are going to be enough teachers when kids are showing up in September. Why won't this minister admit that she's in over her head? Enough is enough. This is an embarrassment.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government and I are very committed to keeping teachers in front of students. We have already stated that we are funding enrolment growth – we've accounted for it – and we also will be building schools. It's time for the opposition to stop speculating on this topic. Enrolment growth, as I said, will be funded. I can actually give you a quote from a Lloydminster Catholic school division trustee, Chris Carnell, who recently said that he's extremely confident in our government – and I quote – that we will protect parental choice in education and fair student funding, and he feels that, quote, Alberta students are . . .

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

### St. Mary's University

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. St. Mary's University in Calgary-Fish Creek has been one of Alberta's fastest growing postsecondaries over the past five years. With over a thousand students in their parkside campus and a graduate placement rate of over 85 per cent of their education faculty, the people of my constituency are proud to have them as a valuable and history-laden member of the community. To the Minister of Advanced Education: could you please share with us the important role that independent academic institutions like St. Mary's play in ensuring choice and value for Alberta's postsecondary students?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and of course thank you to the hon. member for the very important question. The member is bang on. Independent academic institutions like St. Mary's play a vital role in providing our students with a wide variety of learning opportunities, which allows them to choose the institution that will best prepare them for success in their future endeavours. St. Mary's plays a key part in driving the economic engine of this province but also, more importantly, of south Calgary. The member is incredibly honoured, I believe, to have St. Mary's as part of his riding.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, given that St. Mary's University receives no infrastructure or capital funding from the province for its campus facilities and given this government's commitment to barrier-free living and learning for all Albertans, again to the minister: will you elaborate on your department's strategy around deploying targeted funding to assist in providing greater accessibility at accredited postsecondary institutions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are indeed, of course, committed to fiscal responsibility and ensuring that we get the best value for our taxpayer dollars. Postsecondary education, as the member knows and recognizes, is critical to Alberta's future economy, and managing our resources responsibly is also equally important. By continuing to support our postsecondary system and institutions like St. Mary's, we are delivering on our mandate to ensure that Alberta students can choose from a wide variety of high-quality educational programs to build rewarding careers and find good jobs.

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that independent academic institutions are a vital part of postsecondary offerings in this province and given the challenges and regional inconsistencies in funding, noting that St. Mary's is among the lowest funded postsecondary institutions in Alberta by full-load equivalent, again to the Minister of Advanced Education: will you assure the students and faculty at south Calgary's only postsecondary campus that you will engage with them to discuss sustainability and their commitment to being an accessible and affordable institution, open to all Albertans?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, yes. The answer to the member's question, quite clearly and directly, is yes. I'm committed to meeting with all of our postsecondary stakeholder groups to build collegial and collaborative relationships that are important to helping us move forward and renew and strengthen the postsecondary education system. I've recently had an opportunity to meet with all of the board chairs, all of the presidents, and student organizations, including the Council of Alberta University Students. Just later on this afternoon I'll be meeting with more students so that we can build a stronger postsecondary system together.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a question.

### Education Funding

*(continued)*

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday I revealed that because of this government's refusal to be up front about their cuts, three schools in my riding of Edmonton-Manning will be losing mental health therapists, that the parents and students have come to rely on. Students deserve every resource to ensure that they can learn, grow, and thrive while in school. This government has made a commitment to mental health supports, but talk is cheap. To the Minister of Education: will you immediately commit funding to restore the mental health therapists and any others that have been let go due to your mishandling of this Education file?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We will restore order to Alberta's economy and return our province to balance, all while ensuring that students and their families receive the supports they need. To the hon. member opposite: we have provided for our schools, and I know that they will be able to continue on.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that this government made a commitment to mental health and addictions – this would be related to mental health – and given that I received a letter from a concerned parent that said that

all of our children are important. They need to feel that they are safe mentally, physically and emotionally while they attend classes. This particular cut to the budget will remove two of those three [needed areas] from our children and our community,

and given the loss of mental health therapist positions and given that many of these ministers continue to stall on giving school boards the funding that they need, to the minister: will you commit to reaching out to every school board and offering to provide . . .

2:10

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. I've been in contact with many school boards, and they know that as a standard procedure funding information will be communicated to the boards following approval by the Legislature. There will be funding for enrolment growth. Again, we respect the autonomy of boards to make the decisions that are best for their boards and their divisions.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that the Education minister's preference is to pass the buck to school boards rather than to stand up for our teachers, our students, and our parents and given that the minister's press secretary actually accused me of, quote, creating fear because I stood with a brave group of parents last Friday about the impact

that will come from the loss of their mental health therapists and given that it is the minister and her office who have been creating fear by failing to give students the resources they need to take care of our children, again to the minister: will you take out your earbuds and listen to the parents concerned about your cuts and commit to mental health funding for our school system?

**Member LaGrange:** As a rehabilitative practitioner working with the mentally, physically challenged, a former trustee for 11-plus years, a mother of seven, a grandmother of four, I totally understand the supports that are needed in schools, and we will communicate the information as soon as possible. We respect school boards' autonomy to make those decisions that are best for their boards.

Thank you.

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

### Oil Transportation by Rail

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oil-by-rail contracts would have seen 120,000 barrels of oil a day moving at the end of this week and generating \$2.2 billion in revenue. That's the advice we received from our public service. This government is disputing that, disrespecting the public service and making fun of their advice. Instead, we were told they will create capacity in the private sector. To the minister again: how many barrels of capacity have you secured so far? How many barrels?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question because it allows us to highlight once again how bad these contracts were that the previous government negotiated. This contract, had it been fulfilled, would have resulted in a \$1.5 billion loss to Alberta taxpayers. We are taking our time to get this right and find a private-sector solution.

**Mr. Sabir:** That was a pretty simple question, Minister. You are embarrassing yourself.

Given that Albertans deserve to know clearly what you are doing to move oil to markets and given that all we have heard from you and the Premier is heated rhetoric and given that our oil remains in the ground and that Albertans continue to lose their jobs in the sector, again to the minister: can you please come clean on how many barrels per day, and where is the legislation on this matter that the Premier promised?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, every single barrel of oil that would have been moved by the NDP's crude-by-rail contract would have been run at a loss to Alberta taxpayers, a loss of a total of \$1.5 billion. We are doing everything we can to stand up for Alberta, to get pipelines built, to find a private-sector solution to crude by rail, but every single barrel that would have been moved in their contracts would cost Alberta taxpayers.

**Mr. Sabir:** The question actually is: how many barrels have you moved, have you secured in the private sector, and will you just admit that you have not moved any barrels and certainly not 120,000 barrels?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, the former NDP government, were moving our province towards a \$100 billion deficit. That crude-by-rail contract would move that another \$1.5 billion. It would be irresponsible to Alberta taxpayers to continue running up a debt for the NDP mismanagement of the oil and gas sector over four years.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Transportation Infrastructure in Leduc

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton International Airport is an economic driver for both the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont and the entire capital region, with \$3.2 billion in economic output, moving more cargo and over 8 million passengers annually, attracting over \$750 million in private-sector investment in the last seven years, and creating over 13,000 jobs over the last three years. To the Minister of Transportation: what are you doing to ensure that the Edmonton International Airport has the infrastructure needed to accommodate such growth?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. The winning of highway 19 is under way. Between highway 2 and range road 253: substantially complete and should be done this summer. The land acquisition and utility relocation for the west portion is under way, and we continue to work with the Edmonton International Airport on planning for the middle portion of highway 19. I thank the hon. member. It's an important issue.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that having three major transportation networks – the Edmonton International Airport, highway 2, and the Canadian Pacific Railway – right beside Leduc has made the city a transportation hub for central and northern Alberta and given that Leduc continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in the country, with one of the youngest populations, how does the Minister of Transportation intend on providing Leduc with the infrastructure investment it so desperately needs to meet the needs of a growing population and growing economic activity?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is moving ahead with improvements to highway 19. We've recently completed major improvements on the QE II between Edmonton and highway 19, including a new southbound lane, and we continue to work with the county of Leduc and the international airport on other improvements in the area. Our government will focus on infrastructure investments that support the economy and support Leduc and support the Edmonton International Airport.

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

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituents have been advocating alongside the airport for the 65th Avenue interchange for nearly a decade and given that this interchange is seen as a way to boost economic development in both Leduc and at the airport while greatly reducing traffic congestion and connecting to a larger trade corridor and given that the former government, the city of Leduc, and the airport have contributed \$1.2 million to engineering designs and given that the estimated private-sector investment in the airport alone will be over \$600 million when the interchange is completed, can the Minister of Transportation please update my constituents on the status . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, our government and its partners are supporting the planning for the interchange between the QE II and 65th Avenue. That project would include a new bridge over the QE

II, on- and off-ramps connecting 65th Avenue, and other improvements at 65th Avenue and 50th Street in Leduc. The project would help reduce congestion on the QE II, provide a new connection to commercial development in Leduc in the area of the airport, and will be given serious consideration as we move towards a new budget and capital plan. Thank you to the hon. member. This issue matters.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has a question.

#### Family Support for Children with Disabilities

**Ms Renaud:** Merci, M. le Président. Last year it came to our attention that parents of children with disabilities who access the family support for children with disabilities program, or FSCD, were being directed to training for themselves rather than to supports for kids from professionals. Our government was working with those families to make sure that they were no longer being asked to be parent, therapist, coach, and aid to their children. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: will you commit on behalf of your government that children and families in the FSCD program will be spared any cuts you have planned for disability programs?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, we are working within our department to review every single program, not just the FSCD program, to ensure that every taxpayer dollar is stretched to the maximum so that vulnerable Albertans get the supports that they need.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that all parents work around the clock to provide the best for their children and given that parents of children with disabilities must work even harder to care for and provide the resources that their kids need and given that children with disabilities who are provided proper supports are so much more likely to lead happy, fulfilled lives as adults, to the minister: have you met with parents of children with disabilities yet, and if not, will you commit to meeting with them before you implement cuts to their programs or stretching their dollars?

Thank you.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I have been very diligent about meeting with a variety of stakeholders, including parents of children with disabilities, to understand exactly what their needs are. I've received tremendous feedback, and we are going to do the best for these families to make sure that we get them the supports that they need.

2:20

**Ms Renaud:** Given that the FSCD program supports around 10,000 families in Alberta and given that in Doug Ford's Ontario funding for supports for children with disabilities has been decimated and given that we know that this Premier and Premier Ford like to, quote, finish each other's sentences, to the same minister: what does the end of that sentence look like for children with disabilities in Alberta?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, actually, there are more than 10,000 children who are being supported by this program. Certainly, I will reiterate the message that we are working very, very hard to make sure that all of our taxpayer dollars reach those children who need those supports, and we will do it efficiently, effectively, and with compassion.

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

#### Minimum Wage for Youth

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity stood in this House and clearly stated that youth wage differentials are a bad idea for a number of reasons. Now, that wasn't today's minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity, mind you, but, rather, the minister from 1998. He knew that youth wage differentials hurt young workers saving for their education, so he ended that bad policy. To the current minister of labour. We know this policy won't create more jobs. Why can't you and the Premier come up with a better idea than paying young people less than they're worth?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The student job-creation wage is about creating jobs for Alberta's youth. We have a job crisis in Alberta right now. According to Stats Canada, in the first quarter of 2019, for youth under 18 the unemployment rate was 21.5 per cent. That is three times the regular unemployment rate. We committed – we committed in our platform, and we committed to Albertans – that we would get Albertans working. We need to get our Alberta youth working, and we will do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that in 1998 the then minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity stated that most students are also working and contributing towards their postsecondary education and that they should be paid the same rate as workers with comparable skills and given that young people still work to save for postsecondary education and that everyone deserves equal pay for equal work regardless of the year they were born, to today's minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity: why don't you agree with your predecessor and the principles of equal pay for equal work?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated previously, we have a youth job crisis in this province right now. We need to get our youth working. This is as a result of the policies of the previous government, which raised the minimum wage by nearly 50 per cent in four short years in the face of one of Alberta's greatest economic downturns. We need to address that. We need to get our youth working, and \$13 an hour is far better than zero dollars an hour if they don't have a job.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that in 1998 the then minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity stated, "We had evidence where that training wage was being abused by employers, abused to the point where it had to be eliminated," to today's minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity: since you're ignoring Albertans in 2019, will you at least take out your earplugs, listen to your Conservative predecessor from '98, who already told this Chamber that a youth wage differential is a deeply flawed policy prone to abuse?

**Mr. Copping:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the student job-creation wage is about creating jobs for Alberta's youth who don't have them. When the minimum wage was increased by the previous government, employers were forced to lay off workers, and unfortunately it was the most inexperienced workers, the youth, who lost opportunities. By reducing costs to employers, we can help students get their first job, develop skills, and gain the experience that they need for the future.



**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

### Dementia Strategy

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of 2016 over 42,000 Albertans have been diagnosed and are living with dementia. Dementia is a category of neurological disease that causes long-term gradual loss of ability to think or remember in those that it affects. It is not only an immense stress to those who have it but also to their families and their caregivers. Will the Minister of Health please highlight Alberta's own plan to tackle this devastating condition and improve the quality of life for those who are afflicted by it?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dementia is devastating for patients and their families, and it's a major burden on the health system. More than 42,000 Albertans are living with dementia today, and our action plan is focused on raising awareness, diagnosing dementia early, improving quality of life, supporting families and their caregivers, and promoting research, but we do need to do more. As our population ages, we need a health system which is optimized in every way to deal with faster demand growth than we've ever seen before.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that dementia is having a growing and significant national impact and given that there are more than 419,000 Canadians aged 65 and older diagnosed with dementia and given that there are Canadians living with dementia in both rural and urban communities, will the Minister of Health please advise how the new dementia strategy will be incorporated into our own provincial strategy to make our communities more dementia inclusive?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new national strategy is a good contribution to the discussion around dementia. We're reviewing it, and we'll continue to work with the federal government. Services are, of course, a provincial responsibility. The national strategy supports our services by promoting awareness, reducing stigma, supporting evaluation, guidelines, and best practices. The key point is the same as our provincial action plan. We can't cure dementia, but we can do more to identify it early, help people adjust, and improve quality of life.

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

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental is once again to the Minister of Health. Given that the number of 419,000 Canadians diagnosed with dementia does not include those under the age of 65 and given that the number does not include the number of people who remain undiagnosed, possibly due, like you mentioned, to the stigma or other barriers, will the Minister of Health elaborate on what is being done to reduce the stigma of the disease and work towards early diagnosis to maximize quality of life for those with dementia?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, dementia is terrifying to seniors and their families. There's no cure, so people feel helpless, and it's a word they don't want to hear. The result is that people live with

undiagnosed dementia, and they don't get the support that would help them and reduce the burden on their families. It's important for us to end the stigma around dementia because, once again, once there's a diagnosis, there's actually a great deal that the health care providers can do to improve the quality of life and reduce the burden on the families.

### Flood Mitigation on the Bow River

**Member Loyola:** This spring our leader announced a bold and forward-looking commitment of \$1 billion towards upstream flood mitigation for the Bow River. It took this UCP government the better part of a year to determine whether they would support upstream mitigation on the Elbow River despite years of study and validation. I know that Calgarians hope that they will show much better leadership when it comes to the Bow River. To the minister: have you and your caucus sorted out whether or not you plan to protect families and businesses along the Bow River?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation is rising.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A platform promise that we made was to put flood mitigation in place for the city of Calgary, and we have every intention of fulfilling that commitment. The last government left questions unanswered, about 700, that we gave answers to last week, 8,000 pages' worth of work left undone by the previous government that we put in place already. We've done more in four weeks than they did over the four years, and we're not finished yet.

**Member Loyola:** Given that the city of Calgary is working hard to reinforce the river banks of the Bow and given that these efforts are important but don't address upstream mitigation, which will require funding and leadership from this government, and given that the Bow River working group has made a series of recommendations to government in partnership with the city of Calgary, to the minister: have you reviewed the recommendations made by the working group, and when will you conduct the necessary feasibility studies and consultations to proceed with Bow River flood mitigation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have every intention of talking to this group as well as to the city of Calgary, Rocky View, the Tsuut'ina Nation, the Stoney Nation. It's an ongoing process. We're committed to keeping the communication up. Let me say that we can't build anything until we get through the approval process. We hired an expert to help us with that on our third day on the job, and we are committed to not being the delay. We can't force the approval to be faster, but we are determined to not let it go any slower as a result of our efforts.

2:30

**Member Loyola:** Given that our changing climate means that Albertans will continue to endure more frequent and more severe extreme weather events and given that funding for future flood mitigation projects along the Bow River was to come from our government's climate leadership plan and given that finding a billion dollars isn't easy, especially when you're handing out \$4.5 billion over to wealthy corporations, will you consider holding back at least \$1 billion of the \$4.5 billion you plan on giving away and saving it for rainy days, or are the earplugs in way too tight?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the previous government was big on making promises, but after four years they did next to nothing, so I

guess they didn't actually spend any money. We are not going to do it that way. We have already started. We already hired an expert. We've already put out 8,000 pages' worth of research on it. We're going to commit to actually making sure that the consultation is done right. They had four years; they sat on their hands. This government will not do that.

### Freedom of Expression on Postsecondary Campuses

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that this government just doesn't like consulting, and this Advanced Education minister's plan to force deeply troubling speech rules on our postsecondary institutions is causing lots of concern. The University of Alberta Students' Union said last week that they're in the dark and worried about the minister's plan to push these policies in time for September. To the minister: will you pull out the earplugs and actually start listening to student unions?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education is rising.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely am listening to student organizations and to student leaders. As I mentioned, I think about a week ago I had a meeting with the Council of Alberta University Students to discuss their concerns. The other day as well I had an interview with the *Gateway*, which, if memory serves me correctly, is actually the student newspaper for the University of Alberta. I was able to provide them more information about our plans to adopt the Chicago principles of free expression to make sure that our academic institutions remain bastions of critical thinking and academic dialogue.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Muslim Students' Association at the University of Calgary said that they worry that these policies, the Chicago principles, will simply embolden racists and given that the minister has done nothing to reach out to this group or many others and given that he alone has decided that September will be the implementation date, to the minister: are you deliberately trying to allow racism to flourish in our campuses, or are you in over your head and unaware of the harm that the Chicago principles cause?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, the assertion is quite ridiculous. The Criminal Code of Canada and the Canadian Human Rights Act have very strong provisions in place to ensure that hate speech is not permitted. As well, as it relates to the Chicago principles, they are also very clear in ensuring that hateful language is not permitted on campus. I haven't heard from the Muslim Students' Association, but I am very happy to meet with them and discuss their concerns. As I said, I have met already with the Council of Alberta University Students, and this afternoon I will be meeting with many more student leaders.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that Glynnis Lieb, the executive director for the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta, said that she's already observed some with negative and hateful views feeling emboldened by the UCP's assertion of the Chicago principles and given that she was among the hundreds who came here to the Legislature last week to protest this government's hateful attack on gay-straight alliances, to the minister: will you actually listen to your stakeholders and shelve your plans, please, and get rid of this dangerous speech policy on campuses?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we do in fact listen to our stakeholders. In fact, on Friday, when I was meeting with the board of governors of all of our institutions, they all expressed their commitment to adopting the Chicago principles. So we're looking forward to implementing the principles. Let me be quite clear as well. When it comes to hate speech, that will not be tolerated in any way, shape, or form. There are already strong protections in the Criminal Code and in the Human Rights Act that protect against hate speech. The NDP is clearly so out of touch.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

### Chuckegg Creek Wildfire Update

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this House is aware, fire season is fraught with anxiety for residents of my constituency of Peace River. After the emotional roller coaster of alerts, evacuations, and returns, last Monday Mackenzie county was evacuated in the middle of the night, including my own home, due to a resurgent Chuckegg Creek wildfire. Happily, today we are allowed re-entry as of 2 p.m. Can the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry please provide an update on the recent wildfire behaviour?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Peace River, who has done an incredible job in his constituency, talking to all the volunteers and firefighters, and has just done an amazing, exemplary job. As the Member for Peace River mentioned, as of 36 minutes ago the mandatory evacuation order has been lifted, so residents from Mackenzie county may return home. But this is still a high-risk area, and it is an active wildfire that is in and around the area. The favourable weather over the weekend allowed for resources from across the province to add support to this fire, and we're doing everything we can to fight it.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you to the minister.

To the Minister of Community and Social Services: given that many of these individuals have been evacuated twice and given that thousands have been unable to work at the mill, stores, and other businesses that animate our local economy and support our families, can the minister please advise this House if these recently returned evacuees, who have not yet received one-time financial support, will be eligible for the \$1,250 one-time payment?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to support all Albertans who have been impacted by the wildfires. I want to assure the Member for Peace River, his constituents, and all Albertans who have been evacuated due to the wildfires that they are all eligible for the one-time payment of \$1,250 per adult and \$500 per child. Those who are eligible but have yet to receive a payment can do so online. I encourage those with questions or those who may need further support to call 310.4455.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. My constituents greatly appreciate the answer.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: given that this emergency is ongoing and given that it continues to threaten so many of my constituents' homes and their places of work and given that an evacuation alert remains in effect for the residents of Mackenzie county, including my own home, and given that many

are travelling back from long distances to return, will the Minister of Municipal Affairs please inform this House if another mandatory evacuation is possible or likely for these communities surrounding the Chuckegg Creek wildfire?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Peace River for that question. Last night I received a briefing about the Chuckegg Creek fire from emergency management experts at the Provincial Operations Centre. I am happy to say that conditions are improving for our first responders up north, and more than 8,000 Albertans from La Crête and Mackenzie county are returning home this afternoon. As always, we remind Albertans in at-risk areas to remain vigilant and ready to evacuate and get further updates at [emergencyalert.alberta.ca](http://emergencyalert.alberta.ca).

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has a question.

### Foreign Qualification and Credential Recognition

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Foreign professionals are a valuable part of Alberta's economy, and our province has a history of unnecessarily delaying the recognition of professional and university credentials. As a result, many immigrants to our province have been denied proper access to the positions they were trained for. Can the minister please assure my constituents that this government will make the professional needs of Albertan newcomers a priority?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Klein for the question. Earlier this week I was pleased to introduce Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act. We've heard from many newcomers who are underemployed and unable to contribute to our economy at their skill level. It is a travesty that we have so many skilled newcomers in our province who are not reaching their full personal, professional, and economic potential. All too often this is because they are waiting for months or even years for their credentials to be recognized. This delay impacts newcomers to our province, and we will correct this.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that a lot of new Canadians in my riding are going to be happy to hear that. Thank you to the minister as well for the response.

Given that Alberta newcomers who encounter issues in verifying their credentials are forced to work in positions far below their skill level and given that many families who immigrated to our province are still struggling to break through the red tape between them and the positions they were trained for, can the minister elaborate about the ways that this government plans to accelerate the verification of foreign credentials?

2:40

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you again to the member for the question. Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act, enables the government to work collaboratively with regulatory bodies to ensure that best practices are followed and that organizations fulfill requirements as laid out in the act. The act will remove unfair barriers while maintaining the high professional standards all Albertans have come to know and expect. One of the ways we aim to accelerate the verification process is by ensuring that regulatory bodies will

deliver an interim decision to newcomers within six months. This gives the applicants a road map forward so they can quickly get their credentials recognized.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that according to the Conference Board of Canada, Canadians would earn up to \$17 billion more annually if their learning credentials were fully recognized and given the sharp increase in over 300,000 additional Canadians that are facing challenges in having their credentials recognized since 2001, can the minister provide my constituents with a time frame for regulatory changes regarding the verification of foreign credentials?

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you again for the question. We recognize that lengthy delays in having foreign credentials recognized lead to underemployment and to a loss of critical skill sets for newcomers and Canadian citizens who are trained abroad. The legislation will come into effect upon proclamation, and we intend to work collaboratively with our professional regulatory organizations to develop reasonable timelines without jeopardizing high-quality standards. Bill 11 will speed up the process where possible, maintain high professional standards, and increase fairness and transparency.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements. I would remind all members, if you're leaving the Chamber for other meetings, to do so as quickly as possible.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

#### Lemonade Day

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday, across northern Alberta, Lemonade Day took place. Lemonade Day is a free, fun program that teaches youth how to start, own, and operate their own business. The main objective of Lemonade Day is to empower youth to take ownership of their lives and become productive members of society: the business leaders, social advocates, volunteers, and forward-thinking citizens of tomorrow. The program provides all the youth who register with a workbook that teaches them essential business lessons like creating budgets, setting profit-making goals, serving customers, repaying investors, and giving back to the community. Through their learning they acquire goal-setting and problem-solving skills and gain self-esteem, which is essential for future success.

I was fortunate enough on Saturday to visit lemonade stands in my constituency in the towns of Hinton and Whitecourt and was encouraged to see that the future of entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in our province. My most memorable stop of the day was at the stand of Isaac Richards. At just five years old he has been planning for months, with help from the program and his parents, to launch a successful business. All of Isaac's research, time, sacrifice, and strategy paid great dividends as he set up his stand and sold his lemonade with great success.

As inspiring as it was to see all of the youth pour their hearts and souls into this very special business venture and learn extremely valuable life lessons that will undoubtedly serve them well moving forward, I couldn't help but think of some of the conversations which have taken place in this Chamber in the last few weeks. That made me realize just how amazing it is that five-year-old Isaac

already has such a great understanding and respect for the effort and sacrifice it takes to run a business, and I'm hoping he is willing to come here and teach what it takes to run a business to the entire Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

### School Nutrition Programs

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the most shocking and disturbing elements of the UCP's season of repeal is the threat to Alberta's school nutrition programs. Today more than 37,000 children receive a healthy snack or meal as well as important lessons about making healthy food choices. The program's strength is in its simplicity. Schools must teach about healthy eating habits and follow the health and safety code. Other than that, school boards are free to make choices to suit the local needs.

For example, in one program in a town a local supermarket supplies healthy food to a school and then features these same healthy food choices in a display in their store. In another school district the local high school foods program prepares meals, and they're sent down the road to feed more than 300 students at the elementary school. Some schools are even growing some of the food that they serve.

There is ample evidence, Mr. Speaker, that school nutrition programs increase attendance, contribute to physical and mental well-being, and improve academic performance. Teachers report that the school nutrition program helps to promote good behaviour in the classroom as well since students will have more positive relationships when they sit down and share a meal or a snack with their peers. School nutrition programs are an important tool to help children and their families to thrive.

In these last four years, during difficult economic times, I'm very proud to say that under our government child poverty rates were cut in half. Part of the strategy that we employed to achieve this goal was the school nutrition program. It is unconscionable to cut school nutrition programs to pay for a big corporate tax cut. For the sake of our children, let's take the school nutrition program off the UCP chopping block.

### Opioid Use Prevention and Treatment

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, you don't have to spend much time in my riding of Calgary-Currie to get a glimpse into opioid addiction challenges. Once you start seeing used and discarded needles throughout the community, you can't stop finding more. You will find them in shopping mall parking lots. You'll find them in alleys behind buildings. You'll even find them in the parks where I take my two-year-old child to play.

While communities have rallied together to try to clean up these used and dangerous needles, it is vital to address the reason why they are littered throughout my constituency. While this crisis hits so close to many who are in Calgary-Currie, I know that we are not the only area facing this challenge. Across the province Albertans are battling the effects of this epidemic.

People who are suffering from addiction need to be treated with compassion, respect, and free from judgment. This disease is just that; it is a disease. Its victims cross socioeconomic lines and touch every aspect of Albertan communities.

Today I am proud to be a member of the United Conservative Party, with a real plan to combat this crisis. The appointment of the first-ever Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions marks a big step to giving this crisis the attention it deserves.

Also, this government was elected on a mandate to invest \$140 million over four years to expand support for mental health and addiction treatment, promote recovery, reduce wait times, and increase access to treatment, including more detox beds and more mobile detox programs. We need to ensure that those who are asking for help get the help they need. Addiction and mental health challenges can be life-or-death issues, and I am proud to be a member of a government that is fighting for these vulnerable Albertans.

Thank you.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund it's an honour to table the annual report covering the committee's activities for 2018. This report fulfills the requirements of Standing Order 55 and section 6(4)(c) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. This report will also be made available through the Assembly website.

Thank you.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act, sponsored by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

2:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) that at the appropriate time I'll rise to discuss the breach of privilege that occurred on June 20 in the House. I have the appropriate number of copies of a letter that was provided to your office this morning.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've two tablings today, both a very similar letter in support of Bill 201. Asher is a 12-year-old boy who lives in Airdrie. A good friend of his family is writing a letter in support as well as the mother of Asher.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek had risen.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to section 16(2) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act and as chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund it is my pleasure to table copies of the 2018-2019 annual report of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. A copy of this report will be provided to all members of the Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any others that wish to rise? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate copies of a letter that was received from an individual. He was very

disturbed about the whole earplug incident and said, you know, that this is disrespectful and an insult to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a letter to the Deputy Minister of Finance from Lethbridge school division No. 51 outlining how Bill 9 undid settled bargained contracts that were executed in good faith for the '19-20 year.

Mr. Speaker, I also have five copies of a letter from a constituent who's a probation officer in Lethbridge, who has grave concerns about losing bargaining rights under Bill 9.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with two tablings. The first is from a constituent who is a teacher. It's an e-mail titled UCP Behaviours in Alberta. They express concern "about the atrocious behaviour [of the Premier] with the ear plugs." They also express concern about budget cuts and the impact on education.

The second one is an e-mail from a constituent expressing concern about Bill 9 and their displeasure about "the disrespectful and undemocratic actions of the Premier and his party members."

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Morinville-St. Albert.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table A Celebration of Life for Raymond Johnston. You might remember him as Nicky Fordinski. He was the face of City Ford throughout the '80s and part of the '90s. He was a supporter, a friend, and, most importantly, a good man. I will table the requisite five copies.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the requisite number of copies of a letter, a very well-written letter, from an outraged constituent about a couple of things: one, the infringement of the Charter-protected rights to participate in collective bargaining and, as well, the frustration that the constituent has with the arrogance of handing out and using earplugs during debate.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you. I have the requisite number of copies of several e-mails my office has received around Earpluggate, one that even copied your office, too, Mr. Speaker, demanding apologies, very disgusted with the behaviour as well as even calling for a public apology or asking the member to resign.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration, pursuant to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta annual report 2018.

**The Speaker:** Points of order. The Official Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of a Member

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j). At approximately 1:54 this afternoon during question period the Premier – now, again, I will endeavour to quote him as closely as possible; I don't have the Blues in front of me, which likely you will – talked about how he was in the House for 18 hours and then made a reference that not all leaders were in the House.

Mr. Speaker, this is referencing a member's absence, which, of course, is in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 619:

Allusions to the presence or absence of a Member or Minister in the Chamber are unacceptable. Speakers have upheld this prohibition on the ground that "there are many places that Members have to be in order to carry out all of the obligations that go with their office."

Now, Mr. Speaker, as well, it's very interesting. Some members definitely are living in glass houses. This was a comment coming from the Premier, who missed almost two weeks in a row in this House. A little rich.

**The Speaker:** I'll address my comments to the Official Opposition House Leader after I hear the interjections from the Government House Leader.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, a backdoor attempt to do the exact same thing that the hon. Opposition House Leader is complaining about.

With that said, I would agree that the Premier did refer to the Leader of the Opposition's absence from this place and the fact that she did not participate in debate on Bill 9, that she was travelling and did not participate at all. I would recognize that that's unparliamentary and would withdraw it on behalf of the Premier.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate you withdrawing the remarks. I would have much preferred you doing so without potentially creating another point of order by referring, perhaps, to the presence or the absence of a member. And I might just remind the Official Opposition House Leader of the same, that we can't do indirectly what we can't do directly, which would be to refer to the absence or the presence of a member. As such, I consider this point of order concluded.

Points of privilege. I believe that the Official Opposition House Leader would like to rise on a point of privilege.

### Privilege

#### Misleading the House

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to a point of privilege. To open my remarks, I'd like to quote the hon. Government House Leader from when he was in opposition.

As you know, points of privilege should not be taken or entered into lightly. Points of privilege are a serious matter, and it's unfortunate that we have to address this issue today in this Chamber. But it needs to be addressed, as do many other serious matters that we address inside this Chamber on a daily basis.

I don't take this lightly, Mr. Speaker. I don't do so frivolously, nor will I without a full disclosure of the facts on this matter, and those facts, including a statement made by the Premier on June 21, are what have led to the belief that during Oral Question Period on June 20, 2019, the Minister of Environment and Parks and

Government House Leader misled the House and made misleading remarks.

As you well know, regarding privilege and the issues of contempt, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, speaks to breaches of privilege and issues of contempt in chapter 3. On page 82 it clearly states that one of these breaches is “deliberately attempting to mislead the House or a committee (by way of statement, evidence, or petition).” Mr. Speaker, I bring this to you today because, again, “the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which . . . tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions . . . or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House.” In *Erskine May, Parliamentary Practice*, 24th edition, page 254, section 15, under misconduct of officers we find that “the Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, I’ve provided the appropriate notice, and, as promised, I will provide you with a fulsome explanation for what I believe to be a breach of privilege undertaken by the Minister of Environment and Parks and esteemed Government House Leader during Oral Question Period on June 20, this being the first possible opportunity for me to do so. On that day the Government House Leader, answering on behalf of the Premier, when asked to apologize to the House by the deputy Leader of the Opposition on the disrespect shown to the House during debate of Bill 9 the previous evening in regard to the Premier handing out earplugs to members of government caucus, responded, “Mr. Speaker, this is a ridiculous question from the deputy Leader of the Opposition.”

Later, in response to a further question from the deputy House leader, the Government House Leader replied, “Mr. Speaker, nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate.” In that, the Government House Leader clearly denied the presence of earplugs, which would be used to reduce sound and input into the ears of the members of the House in the House during debate of Bill 9.

3:00

Now, we have in this House the benefit of multiple forms of recording. I admit that I was hamstrung a bit by the lack of a full *Hansard* for the debate on Bill 9, that the government insisted take place into the wee hours of June 20. I appreciate the work that *Hansard* does for us. Believe me, they are amazing. But, Mr. Speaker, you’ll be happy to know that I persisted. While *Hansard* doesn’t know the movement of members through the House, Assembly Online does, so please indulge me for a moment.

On June 20, during Oral Question Period the Government House Leader denied that there were earplugs distributed the evening of June 19 during the debate on Bill 9. However, that same day a statement was released from the Premier’s office stating, quote: this was a harmless and lighthearted attempt to boost government caucus morale after being forced to listen to the NDP’s insults, lies, and over-the-top rhetoric for hours on end. End quote. We have a dilemma here.

This is further confused by the statement our Premier made on *Power & Politics* on June 21, and I quote: yeah, we had a member with tinnitus who was sitting next to an opposition member who was shouting repeatedly, clocked at nearly 100 decibels, so, yeah, I gave him a pair of earplugs to reduce the volume that was coming from – and, you know, when we face that kind of out-of-control shouting in the Legislature, I don’t begrudge our MLAs trying to reduce, turn down the volume a notch. End quote. It would appear that the Premier is in fact admitting that at least one member of his caucus was wearing earplugs supplied by the Premier himself.

I could belabour the many issues I have with this, like the fact that recording devices are not allowed in the Chamber, so I wonder

how they were able to determine the decibel level of a member of the opposition’s speaking voice, which may or may not have been given at any time, or the fact that the member he’s referring to wasn’t speaking at the time that the earplugs in question were handed out. I had some free time this weekend, not much, Mr. Speaker, but in that time – and I can tell you that he stopped speaking at 10:45 at night – I isolated the video from the evening. At approximately 11:23:43 we can actually see the Premier walking behind the member for Leduc-Beaumont with what appears to be a package of earplugs on the government side of the House. But I digress.

Back to my point of privilege. I would again, in regard to this matter, continue to quote the Government House Leader, while he was a member of the opposition, in regard to a point of privilege.

As *Erskine May’s Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 24th edition, page 254, states with respect to the United Kingdom, “The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.” It is a three-part test for that to happen. First, as articulated by the former Clerk of the New Zealand House of the Assembly, David McGee – for those following along at home, it can be found in the third edition of this book, *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, on pages 653 to 654. The three parts of the test are as follows: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement the member intended to mislead the House.

Let us put this to a test, Mr. Speaker. For the first test, that it must be proven that the statement was misleading: clearly, given that on June 21 the Premier admitted on *Power & Politics* that earplugs were distributed and used in the House, for the Government House Leader to state, on June 20, that nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate on June 19 was misleading. To the second point: given that the Premier’s office admitted – twice, I might add – to the distribution of the earplugs and given that the House leader was present the evening of June 19, the Government House Leader knew his statement was misleading. And to the third point: given that the Government House Leader knew of the existence and the distribution of said earplugs, the Government House Leader therefore intentionally misled the House.

Mr. Speaker, what is most concerning about this incident is that the deputy Leader of the Opposition was just asking for an apology, an apology for an action that – let’s be clear here – was in poor taste. Instead of taking the high road, the Government House Leader intentionally misled the House. He intentionally misled Albertans. In fact, given that we have two different versions of events from the Premier and his office, it could be argued that recently there have been multiple instances where government members of this Assembly have been intentionally misleading.

We, the members of the Assembly, and the Albertans we represent have been given three scenarios: that it didn’t occur, that it was a joke, or that it was necessary to protect the hearing of a government member from the voice of a member who wasn’t even speaking at the time. All three can’t be true, Mr. Speaker. Someone was being misleading.

Mr. Speaker, I’ll close with this, again quoting the Government House Leader from his time as Opposition House Leader.

It’s very clear to me and I hope it is clear to you that the minister of environment, a minister of the Crown, misled this Assembly while attempting to deflect a question in question period. By misleading this Assembly, [he] has misled Albertans. As such, it is my hope that you, too, will find the same, that a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

As a point of privilege is a serious question, it is traditional that the Speaker would give the government or whoever is responding to the point of privilege 24 hours. I see the hon. Government House Leader. He can provide some direction, or he can respond immediately.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** We're good to argue today. First of all, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I find it, again, disappointing that the Opposition House Leader, instead of focusing his attention on ways we can work together to get Albertans back to work, restore the economy, and help the oil and gas industry build pipelines, is arguing once again on a frivolous point of privilege in this place. I do appreciate that he spent so much time reading about me in *Hansard*. It is quite flattering.

Where to start, Mr. Speaker? Well, first of all, I will note that the letter from the Official Opposition House Leader was intentionally vague about the nature of the remarks – sorry; his so-called fulsome remarks – he was going to be making. While I'm prepared to speak on this matter today, I don't see how the opposition can expect any kind of response from the government when they intentionally withhold the nature of their point of privilege.

I will state right at the outset that this does not rise to the level of a point of privilege, and in fact I believe the Opposition House Leader knows this full well. I think he's achieved his strategic objective by abusing the ability of members to call a point of privilege so that he can redebate an issue from last week; namely, that the Official Opposition does not approve of Bill 9. Mr. Speaker, I certainly got that from listening to close to 25 hours of debate from the member opposite. I would note for the record that all members of the Official Opposition spoke on that debate except for the Leader of the Official Opposition. It sounds like her priorities could be found out east. The Premier even made himself available to participate in that debate. But I digress.

My understanding from the opposition is that they are concerned about my usage of the term “nobody” in the quote “nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate,” from Thursday, June 20. That can be found on page 1080 of *Hansard*. The Premier, speaking on television, confirmed that a private member with a medical issue may have felt the need to wear an earplug due to the rising wall of noise that was coming from the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, both statements are factual and not contradictory or misleading at all. Members of the opposition should be aware of the distinction between members of Executive Council, also known as cabinet ministers, who may also be referred to as the government, and private members who may choose to sit in the government caucus in support of the government. In fact, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states on page 35, “Functionally, the House is divided into three groups: the Ministry and its Parliamentary Secretaries, Members who support the government, and Members who oppose the government.” Note that those who support the government are a distinct entity from a parliamentary standpoint. While I'm not surprised that the NDP doesn't appreciate that because, quite frankly, I haven't seen them show a lot of respect or understanding for the institution of parliament or parliamentary democracy during my time in this Chamber, that is, in fact, the reality.

The question you will see, Mr. Speaker, when you refer to *Hansard* is a clear question from the deputy Leader of the Opposition at the time stating nothing to do with earplugs but stating that this government was not listening during debate to the hon. members' arguments. Nothing, in fact, could be further from the truth. The government participated in over 25 hours of debate, 18 hours of it alone for the Premier. The Minister of Finance was up quite often

in debate, as were I and other members of the government. I made sure it was clear that was ludicrous.

Now, let's also turn to the fact that my statement on June 20 doesn't refer at all to earplugs. The question I was asked by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was: “We'll plug our ears, literally, and we'll fail to listen.” The link between my remarks and the Premier's remarks is drawn entirely at the opposition's conclusion, and while they are certainly permitted to draw whatever conclusion they want, it doesn't raise the conclusion to the level of a point of privilege.

My final point, Mr. Speaker, is that on the issue of points of privilege about misleading the Assembly, time and time again we turn to the advice given by David McGee in his book *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, second edition, where the Clerk of the New Zealand House of Representatives states, at page 491, that there are two ingredients to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt on this ground: the statement must, in fact, have been misleading; and it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was made that it was incorrect and that, in making it, the member intended to mislead the House.

I think we provided evidence from the government that we do not see this as being a misleading statement. I think that once again the Opposition House Leader might have to do his homework and a little more, and while he's at that, I will refer him once again to *Beauchesne's* 494, where it says:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted . . . On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

Accordingly, I hope that you'll find that this does not rise to being a *prima facie* case of a question of privilege.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I will say to the opposition, having the privilege of being able to go back home to our home county this weekend, that I really stress that it's time for them to get focused back on what Albertans want them focused on because it's pretty clear when we're back home that nobody is listening to what the opposition is doing, and they're very disappointed in their behaviour in this Assembly.

3:10

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you to both House leaders for your interventions this afternoon. While I'm inclined to rule today on whether or not this is, in fact, a breach of privilege, I think I will allow caution to prevail and rule tomorrow. My sense is that the ruling will be around whether or not the member intentionally intended to mislead the House. I'll spend some time in quiet reflection on that particular matter. As such, I consider this matter concluded until I rule.

Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

#### Bill 202

#### Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019

[Debate adjourned June 17: Ms Sweet speaking]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has one more minute.

Are there any other members? We have the hon. Member for Airdrie-East standing to speak.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. I would like to start off by thanking my hon. colleague the MLA for Calgary-West for bringing this bill forward for essentially the second time in our two terms now in this Legislature.

This is an extremely important bill. One should take note that, as I've already mentioned, this is the second time this piece of legislation has ended up in this House, but that's for a very important reason. Mr. Speaker, in 2015, when the terrible report of Serenity was tabled in this House and what had happened to her and the government's complete negligence at the time, the government of the day, their complete negligence in taking any action on the recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate was one that the public took pause and notice of because what had happened to Serenity was such a terrible act. The fact that the government of the day at that time took no action – so a private member, a member of the opposition of that time, the MLA for Calgary-West, came forward with his first private member's bill in an effort to protect children, to put some parameters around reporting of child abuse in our society.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 is very simple. It ensures and makes it very clear that if anyone is aware of a child being abused, they must, they will be compelled to report it to the authorities, the authorities being simply: pick up the phone, you call 911, and you will report this act to a police officer, and if you do not, you will face a hefty fine and, not only that, a very, very guilty conscience. This is a good piece of legislation. Why is this a good piece of legislation? Because it protects those who are most vulnerable. It does what it can very simply to ensure and to compel those who suspect one of abusing a child to be reporting it, and I hope that no one takes that lightly.

I want to share with my colleagues an article that came out in the CBC in 2017. I'll table it later. It pointed out that the existing part of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act dealing with the failure to report a child in need of intervention was added in 2003 and that the president of the Alberta College of Social Workers, Richard Gregory, said that it is a great piece of legislation and that the downside of it is that people don't know about it. Well, Mr. Speaker, my constituents are going to know about this piece of legislation. I hope that members in this House will all agree that this is a good piece of legislation, that we will all vote in favour of it, and this will be the law of the land.

There's also a great quote by former NHL player Sheldon Kennedy, who said that the reality is that other people a lot of times have gut feelings that something is not right, but they don't do anything about it. Somehow we need to enforce an act or empower people with the confidence and knowledge to make them act, those who have gut feelings. If hockey coaches, parents who supervise the lunchroom, teachers who supervise the playground have a gut feeling – and these are people who have generally had multiple interactions with children; these are good gut feelings – they have to report this to the authorities. This Bill 202 will compel them, and there will be penalties if they choose to ignore that gut feeling.

If a child shows up with bruising, if a child's behaviour starts to change, they will be compelled to alert the authorities, and an investigation will take place. The fact of the matter is that it is shocking that this doesn't currently exist. Prior to this legislation being brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-West, it was confusing even for the previous government to understand who

to report to. How is that even a possibility in this day and age, that it's confusing to figure out who to pick up the phone and call if you suspect that a child is being abused? This bill needs to be passed as quickly as possible and come into force in just the same way. By increasing the consequences of not reporting, this bill sends a very clear message to all adults about the gravity of our shared responsibility for vulnerable children, and ignoring even once a child who may be a victim of abuse, Mr. Speaker, is one time too many. Our hope is that through this bill all adults will be compelled, will be driven to act, driven to report this matter.

Bill 202 addresses the gaps in the existing legislation. I've already identified who to report to. How serious is this? Well, it's going to be \$10,000 serious for negligent adults. It increases the clarity and the consequences. That is good legislation that I know all members of this House can agree with. As MLAs we have a responsibility to support legislation that protects the most vulnerable, especially children. We have a responsibility to leave a positive and profound legacy for the children of our province, and Bill 202 does just that.

3:20

We as MLAs will be judged by our actions in this House and the legislation that we support and the legislation that we don't. We do not want our legacy to be one of failure, especially failure to protect vulnerable children and, especially because it appears to be complicated or ambiguous legislation, the failure to report child abuse. I urge all members of this House to not repeat the mistakes of the past, to create clarity around child abuse and reporting, implement hefty fines, create good-news headlines, create awareness around the duty to report child abuse so that we can make a difference for those kids who are currently suffering and all those gut feelings out there that no one is taking action on. Let it be known, Mr. Speaker, that there's a \$10,000 fine for those who fail vulnerable children in our province.

I urge all members of this House to vote in favour of Bill 202. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other hon. members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud standing.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today to Bill 202. I would like to begin by thanking the Member for Calgary-West for bringing this private member's bill forward. I think we are all in agreement in this House about the need to address any situation where a child, particularly a vulnerable child, is at risk and about increasing the opportunities for individuals who are aware of situations where a child may be at risk, bringing those reports forward. We know it's very critical to these kids' safety. I don't think there's anybody in this House that would disagree with the idea that we need to increase those opportunities for people to come forward, to make sure that people understand their obligation as members of this society to speak up and to come forward, particularly for vulnerable children.

We have seen a number of instances, of course, very tragically, where adults have not come forward and children have been injured or lost their lives as a result. Any steps forward that we can take to prevent that from happening are very critical for us to do.

I support this bill; however, I do want to note a couple of cautions. I first of all want to speak a little bit to the record of the previous government, the NDP government, on child intervention, primarily because it speaks to the complexity of the issues around child intervention. It's not a matter that we can address with a quick change. We know that this is a very complicated issue that brings up issues of poverty, of trust of the police, of government, and of



the complicated reasons why children end up in care in this province. Those situations require a complex assessment. They require clear communication channels with those who are affected – stakeholders, indigenous communities, experts in the field – to come up with solutions, and there's not going to be one solution. Of course, if there was one easy solution, then governments would have done it decades ago.

We know this is a complicated problem, and this is why I want to highlight a little bit of the track record of the previous government, the NDP government, in this area. In particular, under the NDP the government increased funding for child intervention by \$57.8 million to ensure stable front-line services and meet caseload growth. This included funding for foster and kinship caregivers and those with supports for permanency agreements by \$1.9 million so that caregivers have the resources to support the children in care.

Under the NDP government there was also an increase in funding for early intervention services of \$5.1 million, for a total of \$107.6 million to support front-line programming for culturally appropriate, community-based services. That includes parent link centres, parenting programs, and those are necessary to prevent the need for intervention at a later date. It also included \$1 million to develop an indigenous youth society plan.

Under the NDP government there was also the Alberta child benefit that was created, and it invested \$175 million in 2018 alone to put money right in the pockets of families who most need it, helping parents buy winter clothes for their kids and enrol them in extracurriculars for the first time.

Under the NDP government 59 additional child intervention staff were hired to manage caseloads and ensure children and youth get the care they need. Of course, I've spoken a few times already to the all-party Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, that was established under the NDP government, which was an unprecedented process that brought in stakeholders. It had transparent engagement with the communities that needed it most. As part of that process the NDP government passed Bill 18, the Child Protection and Accountability Act, which has really changed the way that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate operated. It provided a stronger, more effective office of the Child and Youth Advocate, it enhanced accountability and transparency, it improved the timeline in death reviews, it increased cultural competence, and it increased clarity and information sharing across the system.

Following phase 2 of that ministerial panel, the NDP government worked very closely with indigenous families and communities as well as stakeholders and community partners to co-create a public action plan that puts all the panel's recommendations in place. I've spoken about that a little bit. The action plan, which was A Stronger, Safer Tomorrow, created 39 recommendations and actions that the government should take to improve services for indigenous families, increase supports for children, youth, and all caregivers, and address the funding gap on-reserve.

That action plan contained 39 specific actions that were both short-term, intermediate, and long-term actions. Under the NDP government we've seen that a lot of the immediate actions have already taken place, in particular to address some of the most urgent needs. Under that panel the action plan they implemented is a first-of-its-kind agreement to fully implement Jordan's principle, which is to ensure that indigenous families don't have to go through red tape and bureaucracy to determine who should be providing services. But the services are provided first to the children, and then the federal and provincial governments can negotiate and discuss who should be responsible for paying for that.

Under the action plan an indigenous cultural understanding framework was developed and a provincial action plan for youth

suicide prevention. There were specific measures in place for each element of this action plan, and progress on these actions has been shared to date. I am confident that the government and the Minister of Children's Services will continue to update us on the implementation of that action plan.

I do also want to highlight that as part of the work that was done under that action plan, the NDP government brought forward An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities, which was passed by this Legislature in December 2018. It was intended to improve supports for children inside and outside of care. The UCP, as the opposition at that time, voted against that bill. I only want to bring all of this up because it is a complicated issue. Developing strategies to reduce the number of children in care but also to ensure that those children who are in care or any child is safe and protected requires a comprehensive approach.

I appreciate, obviously, that the intention of this bill is one that we can all get behind. However, I do want to highlight that there were some concerns that were raised by the opposition caucus during the consideration of this bill at the private members' bills committee. In particular, we felt that because of the potential impact of this bill on both Children's Services staff as well as on the police, there was some value that stakeholders should be consulted. We needed to hear from them as to how the implementation of the changes that were being put forward in the bill would affect their workload, how it would affect what they, as the experts who deal with these situations all the time, believed would best address the needs of kids who were in vulnerable situations.

You know, we believed it was important to get a technical briefing from the ministry on this issue because, again, as it currently stands under the Child, Youth, and Family Enhancement Act, it is an employee, the director of the association or of Children's Services, who is notified if there is a child in need of intervention. They would have the best information in terms of what kinds of calls they were getting: should they be going to the police first, or would that help? How would that affect the transfer of information to effect the most immediate way to address the concerns?

Again, this is only about: let's speak to the people who implement the changes, who would be responsible for the changes, to find out their feedback. Simply put, when we are developing laws, it's really important to speak to the people who are most directly affected and have the most knowledge about it. We felt it was important that that stakeholder consultation and ministry technical briefing was done at that stage. It would not have delayed consideration of this bill in this House. It simply would have provided a more fulsome understanding of the implications of the proposed legislation. We felt it would have helped the discussion in the House. It's something we could have talked about: what was the feedback from various police organizations, from the front-line workers who receive these calls? It only would have added to the quality of the debate as well as our understanding of the implications of the bill. As I mentioned, again, it was never intended to be any kind of delay on it, because we all agree with the intention of this bill.

3:30

I do want to highlight as well that it is our understanding from previous work that there have been very few charges laid under the current Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, which currently puts a duty to report to a director of Children's Services. There have been very few charges or offences laid under this provision. It's not clear whether changing the ability to report to a police officer would actually increase the number of offences or penalties that are given out. That simply is not clear. I understand that that is one of the intentions, to send a clear message to the

communities, to parents, to everybody to say that we all have a personal obligation when a child is in need to report that.

I'm just concerned that actually changing the penalty provisions doesn't actually achieve that outcome. It doesn't actually increase the number of people who will report. I don't know the answer to that. Again, that's one of the things where I think it would have been valuable to hear from our stakeholders and hear from the experts in the area to see how they think that would affect that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members looking to speak to second reading of Bill 202? I believe I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to point out to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud – and I know that she's new here and wasn't present when the panel was struck – that the NDP only acted and set up that panel after demands from all parties on the opposition side. It took a long time for them to finally, after embarrassment in the public eye, set up the child intervention panel. The results of that were quite disappointing, to say the least, but I digress.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise today and speak in favour of this Bill 202, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-West again for proposing this bill and for his service as a police officer on the front lines, where he protected Albertans both young and old.

The hon. member and I care deeply for our constituents, but there's a special place for the children and others who are prone to being victimized. Our children are the future, and protecting them is protecting our future. I'm glad to see this bill tabled after it was unsuccessful in the previous Legislature. This bill strengthens our ability to protect children in Alberta. It increases the penalties for failing to protect our little ones. It provides common-sense clarification to Albertans as to who they can contact when they observe a child in abusive situations. These are simple changes that can have an enormous impact on the lives of children, up to and including saving their lives.

We have seen cases in recent years of horrible abuse of children in this province. We have all been shocked to our core by each one: children starved, beaten, bruised, and broken; children suffering terrible physical or sexual abuse; children murdered; children taking their own lives because they are unable to cope with the toll. We can only feel extreme disgust and repulsion at these cases when they become public. As a member of the opposition in the previous government I attended on numerous occasions the child intervention panel as a stand-in. Some of the stories that we heard from people that have been through the child intervention system were shocking and very dismaying.

Unfortunately, all too often there were adults that were aware of the horrible conditions being endured by these children and did nothing, said nothing, apparently not disgusted or repulsed enough to pick up the phone and call someone to intervene. I think we can all agree that this is completely unacceptable. Increasing the penalties for wilfully turning a blind eye to this kind of evil is a common-sense response. If people cannot be motivated by the moral imperative to protect the vulnerable, especially children, perhaps greater legal consequences can provide some more incentive.

It's sad to think that some people might need any persuasion to protect children at all, but clearly some do. For those that still won't, hopefully the penalty forces them to reconsider what they will tolerate when some behaviour is so far outside the bounds of decent society. It's a tragedy that those who victimize children are often related to them. With that being the case, abuse of children can be

harder to spot. We should be willing to look a little bit closer, shouldn't we? We should be looking for kids that are in trouble.

It can be overwhelming being a child. Everything is a new experience, and in many cases a child does not know any better when they are being taken advantage of. Children learn what is right and wrong as they grow up. In tragic circumstances, their abuse can be seen as the normal course of life. That's why children need others to stand up for them when they're being taken advantage of.

Mr. Speaker, adding police officers to the list of authorities that may be contacted to report children who are at risk, in danger, or in need of intervention is a common-sense change that provides clarity to all Albertans. Many who will report would probably turn to our police officers first anyway, so this codifies what Albertans would do anyway because it is the common-sense thing to do. If you see a criminal activity taking place, you call the police. Why would that be different when seeing a child being abused or starved or gravely mistreated? That's what is expected and makes sense to most Albertans.

If a case needs child intervention authorities but not police intervention, Albertans can trust that the matter will be handed over and dealt with appropriately. They don't need to know the bureaucratic details of the intervention. All they care about is that if they see a child in need, they can report it and that child will be protected.

I understand that our neighbours in Saskatchewan require the reporting of information to an officer or peace officer, and the Prince Edward Island Child Protection Act states that a person must report "to the Director, or to a peace officer who shall report the information to the Director." This makes sense. The increased penalty proposed by this bill for failing to report a child in need is also already the penalty elsewhere. In British Columbia the penalty is a fine of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment for up to six months or both.

If we pass this bill, Mr. Speaker, Alberta won't be alone in having provisions like this. There's nothing inherently problematic about being the first province to pass a piece of legislation, but I do think that knowing policies are already in place elsewhere can provide some comfort to legislators who are committed to doing their due diligence.

For all these reasons I have shared, I encourage all members of this Assembly to vote in support of this bill. We all care deeply about this province and its future, and our children are, without question, that future. Protecting them with common-sense improvements to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act should be something that we can all agree on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein standing to speak.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and speak in support of Bill 202, brought forward by my colleague the Member for Calgary-West.

Last week the Member for Edmonton-Manning made the point that issues facing at-risk children are not black and white. I, like her, have an intimate understanding that there are a variety of issues facing young people and their families. However, I do not feel that this is a very good reason to advise caution on this bill. Frankly speaking, I believe that that completely misses the point. When I think through the many stories I've heard from the youth who recount their personal stories to me, it is hard to think of examples where there were not adults in their lives that could have spoken up for them, as has been stated a few times today in reference to child advocate Sheldon Kennedy.

I also can appreciate that people currently do call the police and acknowledge the many examples of responsible citizens doing just that, which is a good thing. However, there are some people that don't, and that is why we are here. The Member for Edmonton-Manning said it herself that if it is urgent, automatically police and Children's Services are deployed, which speaks to the importance of this bill.

The Member for Edmonton-Manning also cited her concern that people are scared to report. I will argue that this is not a sufficient reason, and there should be consequences, as highlighted by the initial intent of this law. To clarify, this change is about closing a loophole. This bill is not necessarily designed to prevent but to add some teeth to an already existing law. This law was put in initially to protect children and to provide a consequence for people who would turn a blind eye to children in crisis.

Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019, proposes straightforward and meaningful changes to the existing act. There are several key changes that I will discuss in detail throughout this speech, but before I begin, I want to contextualize Bill 202 for us and highlight why it matters to the people of Alberta and, consequently, to the members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Calgary-West has already emphasized, the impetus behind this bill was the heartbreaking story of little Serenity. In September 2014 Serenity was admitted into hospital with an injury to the head. At just over four years old she reportedly weighed a mere 18 pounds. Now, to put that into perspective, the typical weight for a four-year-old girl can be anywhere between 28 and 45 pounds. This means that Serenity was well below the normal weight of a child her age. In addition to being extremely underweight, doctors found significant bruising, and she was actually hypothermic. Ultimately, little Serenity passed away on September 27, 2014. Serenity's story was a call to action for all members of this Assembly.

3:40

This bill proposes to make three key changes to the existing legislation currently under the act. Individuals who suspect that a child needs intervention must immediately make a report to "a director." Now, I would suggest that members of this Assembly who are well versed with government legislation cannot immediately think of who in their local community would qualify as a director under this act, and I imagine this inability to immediately identify a director is shared by many other concerned members of the public. Bill 202 directly addresses this critical gap by including the option of reporting to a police officer. To state the obvious, Mr. Speaker, everybody knows where and how to contact a police officer.

This seemingly simple change will have a profound impact on the children of this province. In fact, a recent case from 2017 shows the decisive role it can play in suspected situations of abuse. A woman who was babysitting five children in Edmonton noticed that three of the children appeared malnourished. Going down to the basement, she found two other children who were being kept in furniture boxes. This babysitter contacted emergency services. Though the trauma of their experience will certainly take time to heal, their lives were saved because of her decisive action. This is exactly the kind of responsible action that Albertans should be expected to take, and it is what this bill will help facilitate. The obligation to notify a police officer sets a very clear and unambiguous expectation.

The second element of this bill is that once a police officer has been notified, they must immediately report the matter to a director. Immediately. We know that our men and women in uniform have

the knowledge and resources necessary to reach out to a director as specified by this legislation. This bill allows police officers to act as the bridge between citizens and the relevant officials within child services, all in the best interests of our children.

The third element of Bill 202 that I want to highlight is how it increases the consequences of failing to report. Under the existing legislation an individual who does not report an instance of suspected abuse can be fined up to \$2,000. Keeping in mind the grave nature of these abuses facing vulnerable children, I'm sure all members of this Assembly will agree that this punishment is far too lenient. To address this, Bill 202 will increase the possible penalty for not reporting to \$10,000. It will also include the option of sentencing someone to a maximum of six months' imprisonment. This bill further proposes that individuals who fail to report can be subject to both the fine and the prison sentence. Tragically, the incident involving Serenity has not been the only one of its kind in our province. Some of us may recall the tragic death of John Clark, who was just over a year old and whose death was partially caused by malnutrition. There were adults in his life who may have suspected he was not receiving the appropriate level of care, yet they did not act. Ryan Lovett died in 2013 at the tender age of seven due to various health issues, including pneumonia and multiple organ failure. Again, there were reports of individuals who knew about his deteriorating health and did not act.

I bring up these stories, Mr. Speaker, to draw attention to the real faces, the individual human beings whose lives have been tragically affected by abuse and neglect. These are not abstract stories. They are not hypotheticals. They are reality, a deeply unjust and sad reality. Given this reality I urge us all to take action.

I want to reiterate the three key changes that Bill 202 makes. The first is that it will allow individuals to contact either a director or, critically, a police officer if they suspect a child is in need of intervention. The second is that if they do report to a police officer, the officer would then be required to report the case to a director. And the third and final point is that individuals who decide not to report would face tougher penalties than they do under the present legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that Bill 202 will allow us to live up to our obligation to be a voice for the vulnerable and will ensure that every member of this province takes their responsibility to our children seriously. I hope that every member of this Assembly votes in favour of Bill 202 and that our action will allow Serenity's legacy to be one of hope for the vulnerable children of our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I believe I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford rising.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this bill, and I'd like to start by thanking the Member for Calgary-West for bringing it forward. I know that he has done incredibly good work for the Calgary Police Service and therefore has some personal experience in this area and is bringing a bill to the House that reflects some of the knowledge that he brought into the Legislature. I always appreciate it when people do that. As for all the members on the opposition side we would like to start by saying that we will support this bill. I would also like to use it as an opportunity to talk about some of the issues that I think are very important.

While I do support the bill because perhaps it will provide some clarity to people that they can and should speak to a police officer in the event that they know something about child abuse or neglect, I just want to point out that in many ways this actually does not

change the reality. I graduated with my first social work degree in 1982 and worked as a child welfare worker for the province of Alberta, here in the city of Edmonton, for three years subsequently. I can tell you that both in my training from the University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work and in my training from the department of child welfare here in the province we learned that it was indeed a requirement for people who were aware of child abuse and neglect to report to the director of Children's Services. That could be done, of course, through any number of vehicles – individuals such as a front-line child welfare worker or even through the hospital system or the police system – but if the clarity is necessary, why would I object to it?

I'm happy to speak to that. I subsequently, of course, worked as a social worker in the area of child sexual abuse for many years. I ran a private practice in the city of Edmonton where I was a counsellor for children who had been sexually abused. I have seen, unfortunately, I hate to say, over 1,200 children that had been sexually abused over the period of time that I worked in that area, so I had a very close relationship with the police force, who worked very well with us to ensure that we appropriately investigated situations of child sexual abuse and responded to them. Again, I want to commend that relationship. They're a very important structural piece that's put in place right now with the CARRT team, for example, the child abuse response team, in the city of Edmonton and other relationships that ensure that we do the right things.

I do want to address some concerns I have about the legislation being proposed here, though, not because I oppose where we're going, but I want to express a caution. The caution is that the problem is big and clearly needs to be addressed, and I think that everyone agrees with that, but the emphasis of how you respond to the problem is one that can be problematic. Because of the limited scope of a private member's bill, in this case, the choice perhaps has led to an emphasis on punishment in the event that someone does not report. I have some very serious concerns about that because that's not my experience, in my reading of the literature around it, that punishment is typically a really effective way of getting people to buy into something. Now, of course, many people here might say: well, I don't want to lose \$10,000, so I'm going to make the report. But that isn't the determining thought for many people in the community.

I particularly want to speak about many of the vulnerable people that I've had an opportunity to work with over the years as a social worker and how their experience is that working with authorities such as social workers, myself and my colleagues, or police officers is a scary proposition that they're experiencing. For example, in the First Nations and Métis communities, the indigenous peoples of this province, when they do engage with those authorities, they feel that they often lose control over the situation and that the consequences come down on them rather than on the incidents that they're concerned about. That is, if you're concerned that perhaps someone in your community is not properly caring for their child and you report that child to the authorities, too often in the past what happened is that child was simply removed and taken away from the community, and the child was lost to the First Nations community or to the Métis community, so the punishment was to the community. I think that that's an issue that we have to address.

We know that when fines are levied against people, it's very often vulnerable people who end up paying those fines more often than nonvulnerable people, that it's not just your average person who ends up with the fines, but people from indigenous communities somehow always end up with more fines more often than nonindigenous people. They've expressed that concern to me a number of times.

3:50

I guess I want to make a few suggestions about things that could be done to make this bill more fulsome and to address the issue of nonreporting in a more complex way. I, first of all, want to acknowledge that there's some incredibly important work that's been done by Dr. Cindy Blackstock, who is the executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, which has been in the press quite a bit over the last few years because of their challenging of the child welfare response to indigenous communities across this country for the last number of years. In fact, she's gone to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and has received three judgments from them that child welfare systems across the country and those paid for by the federal government have been consistently, dramatically underfunding services to people on First Nations reserves and communities across this province.

As long as we don't tend to those kind of structural problems, as long as they don't have the resources to pay for social workers and other support people to go in and to deal with these issues as they arise in a supportive, healing, change-oriented manner, then we're going to end up with a system that goes back to punishment when somebody doesn't report rather than a resolution of the underlying problems to prevent the abuse from happening in the first place or deal with it at its early stages. It's that emphasis, that difference between waiting for the bad thing to happen and then punishing people or actually responding early on and preventing the abuse from happening in the first place that I think is the difference here between what we would like to see on this side of the House and what is being proffered here on the government side of the House.

I think that we should take caution here not because I'm against the desire to make sure that people are aware of the requirement to report but – as I said, that's always, actually, been a requirement. If we need clarity to make sure that involves police officers as well, great. I mean, I'm happy to support that, but we can not do simply one small piece and expect that the work has been done when there are so many much larger, more significant pieces that are undone. As the Human Rights Commission has reported, you simply cannot continue to act in the way you've always acted and expect to have a different result. So you cannot underfund child welfare services on-reserve and expect there not to be a problem.

They have a number of suggestions that I think are really important, and I think we should speak a little bit about those kinds of suggestions. They talk about, first of all, bringing the funding level up on-reserve so it's equal to the funding off-reserve. It's a pretty simple request. That could've been added into this bill.

They talk about making sure that you recognize First Nations' jurisdiction over children on-reserve. That could have been included in this bill, and I would have liked to have seen it.

They talk about other issues that are associated with it, about the lack of housing, the high levels of poverty, dealing with the underlying structural reasons why people find themselves in a vulnerable place and become disenfranchised from larger society and therefore may not wish to engage in the programs such as reporting to police and social services because they're so disenfranchised through everything else that they also don't feel like they can enter into the system when it comes to child abuse and neglect, fear that they themselves may get into trouble, fear that their community may be angry at them because they're about to lose another child to the system, fear that the people who they may be related to or who they clearly know if they live in the same community will be very upset with them.

There are lots of underlying issues. I would love to see some of those underlying issues addressed here in this bill, where we work

on issues like housing, as the previous Minister for Seniors and Housing did with her First Nations housing authority money, \$110 million I believe it was, and we work on issues like poverty such as we had done in our government, where we reduced child poverty by 50 per cent, thereby increasing the likelihood that we don't need police intervention.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members? I see the hon. Minister of Children's Services standing to speak.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise to speak to Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019, put forward by my colleague the Member for Calgary-West.

This is a piece of legislation for which I am pleased to show my support. I want to sincerely thank the Member for Calgary-West for his continued work and advocacy on this bill. It's very clear that this is something he has been incredibly passionate about, and I am enormously grateful to have so many colleagues like the Member for Calgary-West who care so deeply about vulnerable children in our province and want to continually strive to do better and be better for our kids. The impetus for this legislation comes from the tragic story of a young girl named Serenity, whose horrific abuse was the catalyst for the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention.

I, first, want to thank members from both sides of the House for taking part in this important work. Hearing from researchers, First Nations and Métis communities, and people with lived experience identified many important changes to the child intervention practices and supports for families that needed to take place. As the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud noted, this is a complex issue.

Many of the reforms that came out of the work done by the panel have already been implemented or are actively being worked on. Our government is committed to continuing this work alongside our stakeholders. The advice received during the panel consultations is now also informing front-line practice in care of vulnerable children. The death of this little girl was tragic, but her legacy lives on in the work that this government continues to undertake and through the tireless efforts of many of my colleagues and by members on both sides of this Assembly, and it certainly lives on in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 is a common-sense piece of legislation, and common-sense legislation is part of what our government ran on. We need to find practical responses to real-world problems, and this bill does exactly that. This bill will amend the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, also known as CYFEA, to the following. In section 4(1): "Any person who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of intervention shall forthwith report the matter to (a) a director, or (b) a police officer." This may seem like a small change, but it is a common-sense change that will provide important clarity for Albertans on where they can turn should they have concerns about the safety of a child. The current legislation stipulates that an Albertan who believes that a child may be in danger can report the matter to a director.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Children's Services, in one of my first briefings, one of the questions that I asked was: who is the director? Director of what, exactly? Now I am fortunate to have access to experts in the public service who are very familiar with CYFEA and could answer my question about the act. The current definition of a director under CYFEA is

a person designated by the Minister as a director for the purposes of this Act and the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act and without limiting the generality of the foregoing includes a

person designated as a director in accordance with an agreement under section 122(2) of this Act.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is complex, and when we are talking about a matter as important as the safety of children and how to report, we'd like to be crystal clear.

Mr. Speaker, many Albertans do report when they see a child in danger, and our amazing police officers are already working with Children's Services to assess risk and keep kids safe, but this is a best practice that is not enshrined in legislation currently, and I'm told that it becomes problematic when trying to address those people who choose not to report a child in danger.

I understand that, as it stands right now, in practice there has never been a charge or prosecution under CYFEA for failing to report. I'm also told that it is extremely difficult to convict someone for failing to report because of the need to establish that the individual had knowledge giving rise to that duty and that there are people who, when faced with jail times and fines, could have a plausible defence that they did not know how to contact a director. Our current legislation lacks the clarity and could allow people to walk away unpunished for turning their backs on vulnerable children in need. There have been several high-profile cases, many of which we've heard about today, of child abuse and neglect in our province, where it was discovered in the aftermath that there were adults who either had concerns for the safety of a child but didn't report or who purposefully turned a blind eye.

Personally, Mr. Speaker, that breaks my heart. As a mom and as the Minister of Children's Services, these cases break my heart. This bill reminds us that being complicit is not okay. Being a complicit bystander is not okay. We hope that it sends a message that this government, our province, and the people of Alberta will not tolerate abuse or apathy when it comes to our children. It reminds the public, Mr. Speaker, that each of us has a responsibility to report concerns of abuse or neglect to the appropriate law enforcement officials. This bill will also increase penalties for those who do not report.

4:00

Currently our legislation stipulates:

4(6) Any person who fails to comply with subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$2000 and in default of payment to imprisonment for a term of not more than 6 months.

This bill will amend this subsection to read:

4(6) Any person who fails to comply with subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$10 000 or to imprisonment for a term of not more than 6 months, or to both a fine and imprisonment.

As has been raised by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, these changes will bring Alberta in line with several other jurisdictions in Canada and are a common-sense way to communicate to all Albertans that they, too, can and, in fact, must play a role in keeping children safe. Mr. Speaker, again, while it seems like a small change, if it saves one child, this bill will absolutely be worth it. Every child deserves to be cared for and raised in a safe, supportive home. Our government will continue to work to provide the supports that parents and caregivers sometimes need to build strong families in strong communities.

If I can send a message to Albertans across the province today, it is this. Each of us has an obligation to report a child in need or a child at risk of danger or harm. Please do not sit back and hope that you are wrong. When in doubt, speak up and reach out. Contact a Children's Services office, a delegated First Nation authority, or the child abuse hotline at 1-800-387-KIDS. Call law enforcement. Call 911.

I am happy to put my support behind Bill 202, and I would encourage all members of this House to do the same. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to this matter?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-West to close debate.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister and all those in the Chamber who supported and had very kind words to say about this bill. You know, as I sat in this Chamber before and I spoke about Bill 205, which pertained to the opioid crisis that we are still facing but faced a few years ago, Bill 205 was never meant to be a solution to the opioid crisis, as Bill 202 is not meant to be a solution to fix everything within the child welfare system. This is, quite simply, a loophole that has been discovered, and we're trying to fix this loophole to let everybody in Alberta know that you cannot turn a blind eye to a child in need of intervention. It's just not acceptable.

It's not acceptable as it still stands under the act. As the minister pointed out, there have never been any charges laid in regard to this current piece of legislation. It is very challenging, as I've stated in this House already, to lay a charge as it pertains to simply reporting to a director. I won't belabour it. It's certainly been explained a number of times already here.

This is not about anyone else, Mr. Speaker, other than the children, the children of Alberta. I could not agree more with the minister. If this can save the life of one child, just one child, then I think every one of us has done our job as legislators to do our part for the children of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, as previously stated by my colleague and friend from Calgary-Klein, who mentioned Mr. Sheldon Kennedy, who is a children's advocate who brought to light sex crimes by former junior hockey coach Graham James: "There are usually people who know what is happening and don't report it. If the law is there, it should be used." The reality is that other people a lot of the times have gut feelings that something is not right but don't do anything about it. Somehow we need to enforce an act or empower people with the confidence and knowledge to make them act.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is a common-sense bill. It is very straightforward. This is about the children of Alberta. This is something I've been advocating for a long time. I have done my homework on this. I have talked to stakeholders, and this is something that, although it is a very small change, would have enormous – enormous – benefits for the children of Alberta, especially those who are currently suffering as we speak.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. I thank everyone for supporting this bill, and I will yield the floor. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:07 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Rutherford
Allard	Loewen	Sabir
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Savage
Ceci	Loyola	Sawhney
Dreeshen	Luan	Schmidt
Eggen	Madu	Schow
Ellis	McIver	Schulz

Feehan	Milliken	Sigurdson, L.
Fir	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ganley	Nielsen	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Glubish	Pancholi	Stephan
Gray	Pitt	Sweet
Guthrie	Rehn	Walker
Hanson	Rosin	Wilson
Hoffman	Rowswell	Yao
Horner		

Totals:	For – 49	Against – 0
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[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 202 read a second time]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 201

#### Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat standing.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to actually propose an amendment to Bill 201. I have the copies here. Would you like me to wait until they're passed out to the House?

**The Deputy Chair:** Sure.

Hon. member, if you would be so kind as to read it into the record.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. There are three parts, and they read as follows. Section 1(f) is struck out. Section 2(2) is amended by striking out clause (d) and substituting the following:

- (d) a requirement that the board ensures that
  - (i) a risk reduction plan that meets the requirements set out in section 3 is in place in each school,
  - (ii) upon enrollment, parents and students are asked to supply information on life-threatening allergies, if any, and
  - (iii) each school operated by the board maintains a file for every student who has an anaphylactic allergy including any current treatments, copies of any prescriptions, any instructions from health professionals and a current emergency contact list.

Section 3 is struck out and the following is substituted:

#### Risk reduction plan

- 3 A risk reduction plan for a school shall include
  - (a) information about each student who has an anaphylactic allergy,
  - (b) information for employees and others who on a regular basis are in direct contact with a student who has an anaphylactic allergy regarding the type of allergy, monitoring and avoidance strategies and appropriate treatments,
  - (c) a readily accessible emergency procedure for each student, including emergency contact information, and
  - (d) provisions for and information regarding storage of epinephrine auto-injectors, where necessary.

Mr. Chair, this amendment was proposed as a result of consultation with stakeholders. I know that the Member for Fort

Saskatchewan-Vegreville has worked tirelessly on this file and that it is a deeply held belief of hers that we see this go forward. I know that I stand a hundred per cent in support of the bill. I just do believe that these small changes don't actually change the intent of the bill or anything of that nature, but they actually enhance the bill, creating it more in line with what she heard from stakeholders.

The amendment will change the name of the individual anaphylaxis plan to a risk reduction plan while retaining all the same elements of the individual plan. I know that last week, when we went over this bill, we seemed to see a lot of kickback and push-back. I mean, I was even a guest on the committee, substituting, when we heard the need for a lot more consultation on this bill. I think this amendment and the reaction from the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville proves that consultation was done, and this is a really good reaction to that, making sure that we have the adequate wording going forward to reflect that adequate consultation.

The intent of the amendment is to make section 2 more consistent by shifting responsibility for the development of risk reduction plans from the principal or designate to the board level. We know that many boards have these in place already, and this is just a backstop, ensuring that all boards would have these going forward. This makes sense as section 2 is all about board responsibility. If the amendment passes, all of section 2 will be focused on the responsibilities of the board, taking that away from individual schools, where we know there was a little bit of confusion. This will also be more consistent with actual practices, Mr. Chair. Most boards have similar policies in place already for children with life-threatening allergies, but like I said, these are developed at the board level and not at the school level.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this amendment. We didn't have notice of it – we're seeing it for the first time – but from what I can determine, looking at this amendment, it actually is, I would say, an improvement. I think, again, that the bill was very good. As you may recall, the last time we discussed this bill, there were a lot of questions, I think, that came forward from the opposition about how exactly this would be implemented and on whom the liability would rest. Those concerns were because, you know, you don't want to place a liability on an individual person that they can't themselves necessarily fulfill. It's usually better to have sort of an overarching entity.

4:30

In this case I think this amendment does exactly that. It sounds like it was in response to stakeholder feedback, probably, that it was better to have a board respond at a board level to have those policies in place so it would be uniform throughout that board than it would be to have each individual principal. It's also, I think, difficult for the principal because there will be a lot of analysis that needs to go into these policies: legal, medical, other sorts of analyses, risk-mitigation, that sort of thing. I think that placing the onus on the board is probably, in my view, an improvement.

I would say, yeah, again, I think that on the whole this is a good bill. I'm glad that some consultation with stakeholders has occurred. I hope that that consultation continues to be ongoing, because as is almost always the case with these things, even when something is a good idea, the devil is usually in the details in terms of the implementation. So I'm glad to hear that that consultation continues to be ongoing.

I think that, on balance, having just seen it, as sort of an initial reaction to this, I would urge members to vote in favour of this amendment. I think it probably does improve the bill and creates sort of a more coherent – not coherent; cohesive maybe. It will create the same thing at all schools throughout the same board, and I think that's good. So if you have, say, two kids that are in different schools, the policies will be the same. That's straightforward for parents. They can learn it and know what it is.

It also means that all that sort of additional administrative work that will need to go into developing these policies can be done at a board level instead of being repeated at each individual school level. I think there are probably some efficiencies there as well.

Saying that, I would thank the hon. member for bringing forward the amendment. It's well taken, and I would urge members to vote in favour of it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak?

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat for the amendment. I appreciate all the hard work that has been done by schools, administrators, and teachers. The bill was developed to ensure minimum standards across the province. Many boards have policies in place to manage students with life-threatening allergies. This is a credit to the boards that have the policies and will provide a plan for those that do not.

I'm in full support of this amendment, and I ask that my colleagues support it also. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford standing to speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to use a moment just to ask some questions back and forth with the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville around the amendment, just literally for my understanding since we're seeing it for the very first time.

I would note that under section B of the amendment you're striking out clause (d) of section 2(2) of the bill and substituting – the list here is quite long, so I won't read through it all. In the substitution I noticed two pieces that were eliminated, and I just want to understand the reasoning or the direction that it may be going in here. One of the sections that is eliminated is a communication plan for the dissemination to parents, students, and employees. In the old section it said under 2(2)(b): "a communication plan for the dissemination of information on life-threatening allergies to parents, students and employees." Will there no longer be a requirement for any kind of information to the rest of the members of the school community? I'm just wondering.

Again, the next one is section 2(2)(c), where it required "mandatory regular training on dealing with life-threatening allergies for all employees." It also seems to be eliminated. I'm just wondering if there's a decision to stop training and to stop the dissemination of information. Just a simple question, really.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate your recognizing me. It's my first time getting the chance to speak to Bill 201 here in the House. I'm happy to rise in support of this bill.

I first want to start by thanking the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing this forward and for the hard work she has done on this. As we all know, it can sometimes be difficult for private members to be able to do, I guess, the same level of consultation that, for instance, the government is able to undertake. I'm glad to see her put in the kind of work that the member was able to do around this.

My comments will be somewhat brief, and I guess they revolve a little bit more around the private members' bills committee. I really would have loved the opportunity to consult a couple of stakeholders. As you're probably aware, Mr. Chair, the committee has a very, very tight time mandate, in terms of when private members' business is handed to it, to get a chance to review it and then to make recommendations to the House. With those very, very tight timelines, of course, it would have been a little bit difficult to reach out to some people to get responses on this, but I think it would have been sort of helpful for us moving forward on that.

Again, I am happy to support this as a father who had a child that carried around an EpiPen for two and a half years or so. It would be a good safety net in terms of making sure that maybe kids who don't necessarily have, I guess, the same means that I did in protecting my child for that uncertain period that she did have. It would have been rather nice to know some of the smaller details around the implementation, maybe around even the potential funding. As we know, all private members' bills can't be money bills, but with our fantastic nonprofit organizations out there it's good to know that there are some that are already lined up, possibly, to step up to this. Having served on, for instance, the Children's Heart Society, having those things necessarily downloaded to us on top of everything else that we're doing isn't always the best thing. Hopefully, in the future, as we move this forward, maybe the government might consider something around funding this so that our fantastic nonprofits would be able to continue the work that they're doing.

Like I said, it's unfortunate that we didn't get a chance to chat with a few people, but I am very happy to stand in support of this. I would certainly urge all other members to support this. Again I thank the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for all her work on this.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 201 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The committee shall now rise and report.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 201. I wish to table

copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, say no. So ordered.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

4:40

**Mr. Ellis:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, we've made some great progress, and I would like to continue that progress. I would ask for unanimous consent to go to third reading of Bill 201.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 201

#### Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to see the progress on Bill 201. As the bill goes through its various stages, I've been overwhelmed by the support from those affected with life-threatening allergies. I've been touched by the stories not just of members in the House but of Albertans as well as people across Canada and the United States. The stories from those who have reached out are heartbreaking. One woman, who runs a charity in the United States, lost her daughter due to a peanut allergy. In her situation the reaction was so severe that she could not survive even though she received medical attention. As a concerned mother, like myself, she continued to advocate for children with life-threatening allergies.

I had a chance to review the discussion from second reading last week, and I've been really moved by stories told here in the Assembly. I'm quite happy to hear that this bill appears to have unanimous support from members of the government caucus and the opposition caucus. There seems to be consensus that this issue is something that does not divide us but unites us.

The MLA for Brooks-Medicine Hat, like myself, has a life-threatening allergy. I truly appreciate what she went through growing up with the stigma involved with an allergy. Our society has come a long way in understanding and embracing those with life-threatening allergies. I was heartened to hear about the progress made by a family member of the Member for St. Albert, and there's been a lot of good progress treating dairy allergies. Those who suffer from nut allergies are hopeful for a similar breakthrough.

I understand some of the arguments made by the members hoping this bill would be broader in scope. I did try to not lose sight through the development of this bill of what the limitations are of a private member's bill versus a government bill.

I want to be clear that I appreciate all the hard work of school administrators and teachers. The bill was developed with ensuring a minimum standard across the province. My goal was to make a step forward on an issue I deeply care about. Most boards do have policy in place to manage students with life-threatening allergies. It is a credit to the boards that have policies for students with other types of medical conditions. There are a variety of conditions that



students have to manage such as asthma and diabetes, which is why boards have developed policies for the medically fragile.

A few members of this Assembly inquired about the support of Food Allergy Canada and the Canadian Society of Allergy & Clinical Immunology. They're widely regarded as leading food allergy associations for parents, patients, and medical providers respectively. I'm happy to have tabled their letter of support for Bill 201 last week. We've been working with Food Allergy Canada as we develop this bill, and I can't say enough how grateful I am for their support. A special thank you to Beatrice and Joni for their support. Food Allergy Canada was also kind enough to let their supporters in Alberta know that this bill is currently debated in the Assembly. I know I've received letters of support from many parents cheering us on so we can pass this bill, and I know other members have received similar correspondence.

There were a few questions raised about liability last week. The most important point I will make is that this bill clearly states that employees that help a student in good faith are protected from liability. I had the opportunity to review some school policies. The policies of Westwind school division, in particular, clearly address that employees are further protected by their liability insurance coverage. I've also had the opportunity to consult with our stakeholders in Ontario about liability. Since Sabrina's law passed in Ontario, to their knowledge there have been no liability issues. Employees have been protected in the very situations we've been discussing.

I do have some experience in the insurance industry, and after reviewing last week's debate, the questions of liability triggered the insurance experience I've had. From my experience in the industry any steps taken to make sure something does not happen often results in a lower premium, and from an insurance perspective this makes sense. If you take steps to reduce a likelihood of something bad happening, it would be less likely to occur, and your premiums would be lower. I started to wonder: what if schools that put these policies in place and have epinephrine on hand would be recognized for risk management practices and pay lower premiums as a result? The cost savings may be small, but when talking about the cost of EpiPens, the costs are also small. My hope is that some really great practices will reduce the chances of an adverse event for a student and be cost neutral for boards.

There were implementation questions. Again, this is why I thought a date for the beginning of 2020 would allow the boards the proper amount of time to adjust. Given that the ASBA has voluntary policies and that most school boards have policies in place, I think the implementation of the bill would not be onerous. My colleague from Drayton Valley-Devon mentioned last week that a school board in his riding that he used to work for has been providing EpiPens for years. His school board will have no trouble implementing this bill and even could be a leader in the best practices for other boards.

I think Albertans are really excited about this bill. Our offices have been receiving letters of support, and I think it's a great start. There's been a lot of enthusiasm to go further now, whether it be regarding more medical conditions covered or other places students go on like buses. As someone with a life-threatening allergy and a mother with children with life-threatening allergies, I understand the emotional response for this bill. For many, they're finally feeling like they're recognized. But we have to start and get our feet grounded. Maybe in the future the government or other private members will seek to broaden the work started by this bill.

I don't want perfect to be the enemy of the good. I'm asking for the support of the Assembly in Committee of the Whole so that we

can send this bill to third reading – now we're here – and make it the law of the land.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, I just want to ensure that you moved third reading. Is that correct?

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Okay. I'm moving third reading.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to this matter? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore standing.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's a pleasure to rise so swiftly with the blessing of the House to third reading on Bill 201. Again, as I've stated before, my daughter carried around an EpiPen for about a year and a half. Luckily, we had the means with which to provide that, and I'm always thinking about, you know, who maybe doesn't necessarily have the means for that. I think Bill 201 will be able to provide, like, a safety net around that. Again, thanking the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for doing the work on this and bringing this forward, too. It's the type of bill that all legislators can get behind, and I think, as we've seen, an effort to move this swiftly kind of reminds me of the bill from the Member for Calgary-West, when we moved that around, the bill process, very, very swiftly.

My only other comment that I have around this was a little bit around when it was in the private members' bill committee, kind of a little bit like 202. Given the tight timelines that the committee has, it wouldn't have been too big of a delay to try to reach out to some stakeholders, get some brief comments about this because, I think, you know, when we're looking at 201, we want to see this move through very swiftly. We don't want to see it hit any speed bumps, which could slow it down or, at worse, we end up having stakeholders push back against it just because they don't necessarily understand it.

4:50

I'm hoping that moving forward, that committee will be a little bit more diligent at looking at these things, around getting some feedback just to ensure that there aren't any last-minute things that we might have missed. Of course, bringing that amendment forward earlier in Committee of the Whole managed to, I think, clean up some of the language in the bill to make sure that that gets streamlined and moved forward very, very briefly.

With that, I will end my comments. Again, I appreciate all the efforts. I'm happy to support this and would very much urge all members of this Assembly to support this as well through third reading.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to third reading?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to close debate.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank everybody for their time, and I hope to have the support of all of my colleagues. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a third time]

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've made some remarkable progress. I'm certainly proud of my colleague from Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

I notice that we're still close to 5 o'clock. Before we begin with the motions, I would ask unanimous consent of the House to continue with the progress of private members' business, which will help accelerate progress for all private members' business throughout the course of this spring session. If we could have unanimous consent of the House to go to Committee of the Whole for Bill 202.

Thank you.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Committee of the Whole  
(continued)**

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 202**

**Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's  
Children) Amendment Act, 2019**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. We are certainly doing some business very, very swiftly here this afternoon. Great to see. Of course, I fear that we might be a little bit short on time around this, but I will endeavour to try and make some comments around this.

Bill 202, of course, brings forward a little bit of a change in the language around who we can contact. Again, I find myself, as we saw just briefly discussing Bill 201, referring back to the private member's...

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt. I see the time is now 4:55. Pursuant to Standing Order 8(6) the committee shall now rise and report progress on Bill 202 in order that the Assembly can proceed to Motions Other than Government Motions at 5 p.m. The committee shall now rise and report.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill: Bill 202. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 202.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report? All those in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Those opposed, say no. So ordered.

**Motions Other than Government Motions  
Mountain Pine Beetle**

505. Mr. Long moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to partner with Alberta's forest industry and the federal government to aggressively combat the mountain

pine beetle infestation in Alberta and to encourage the government to implement its funding commitment of \$5 million to address the problem as expeditiously as possible.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to speak to Motion 505 today. Motion 505 calls for the government to work with the forest industry and the government of Canada to tackle to mountain pine beetle catastrophe head-on as soon as possible. It also asks the government to implement its \$5 million funding increase promised during the last election as soon as practically possible.

The mountain pine beetle is incredibly damaging. It is the most destructive pest for pine trees. While originally thought to only threaten lodgepole pine, it is now known to be a threat to all species of pine, including Jack pine, which is a major species of the boreal forest. It is a menace to our forests and is quickly spreading from British Columbia into Alberta. In its wake are dead forests and economic ruin. Due to a lack of progress and due to a lack of consistent resource action against the beetle, British Columbia between 1995 and 2015 lost more than half its saleable pine timber. That equates to the loss of tens of billions of dollars to the provincial economy and countless jobs over the coming decades. Mitigation of the mountain pine beetle costs Canadians tens of millions of dollars per year, and the loss of economic activity is even higher. Our forest industry contributes \$6 billion to our economy every year.

Our government recognizes the grave threat posed by the mountain pine beetle. That's why when our party announced standing up for Alberta's forestry workers, one of its key promises was to increase the annual funding to push back against this critical threat to our forests. Our government also promised to be a champion for our forest industry in recognition that our companies and workers are world leaders in forestry practices. Without active forest management the risk of infestation or wildfire increases. The forest industry contributes to a healthy forest and safer communities by harvesting mature trees before they become a risk to the area.

I know first-hand how incredible our foresters are. I've spent the last nine years with my sleeves rolled up working in the forest industry. It's been an honour to work in one of Alberta's largest and most advanced sectors. Forestry is highly technical and can be quite dangerous. Logging and forestry are considered some of the most dangerous professions that someone can work in.

The forest industry is critical to Alberta's economy. It directly employs 16,000 people, and it's indirectly employing over 20,000 people. The number of people employed in the industry doesn't do any justice to its importance in small northern Alberta towns. A mill in a town of a few thousand can employ 10 per cent of the town's population. The jobs that our foresters have are not only highly technical, but they can pay quite well. These jobs are the lifeblood of our small towns and flow through to the broader economy. Good jobs make for good communities. When the mills are doing well, our charities and nonprofits do well. They provide a helping hand to those in need.

5:00

I can't emphasize enough how important the forestry industry is to my riding of West Yellowhead. Drive through any of the great towns in my riding, and you can't help but see the forest industry around you. It doesn't matter if you're on your way to Jasper through Hinton or Edson, or heading north through Grande Cache, or on highway 43 going past Blue Ridge and Whitecourt on your way to Grande Prairie. The forest industry is right out your window.

When you're driving through my riding and you notice red trees, those trees are the wake of the pine beetle's destruction. Those red trees are actually dead trees already. The pine beetle has moved on to other, healthy trees.

I've talked about the threat of the mountain pine beetle and how deeply valued the forestry sector is in the riding I represent and other small towns in Alberta. As the devastation of the mountain pine beetle mounts, so does the frustration of my constituents and our foresters. They're frustrated that governments don't feel the same sense of urgency that they feel. The pine beetle is killing trees, and it renders them useless. As it spreads, it means that forestry companies have fewer opportunities to harvest trees, which throttles their production.

This throttling not only leads to environmental destruction but economic devastation and the potential for catastrophic events. Mountain pine beetle killed forests are more susceptible to fire. They'll burn at two and a half times the rate of a regular forest fire and burn much more severely. Imagine how my constituents have felt as they not only watched their forest die and communities suffer but as they are being left vulnerable to an increased risk of catastrophe and they're left helpless by what they see as government's inaction making the situation worse.

As this menace, this pine beetle, has grown and spread, timber access has been restricted, the industry has been overregulated, and the government seemed unable or unwilling to grapple with the problem. Millions of acres have become inaccessible at the expense of our industry and communities. The decisions made by the previous government seemed to many in forestry to be based on ideology and not based on a good balance between the environment and industry. The reality is that good environmental policy actually goes hand in hand with the world-leading forest management and stewardship that Alberta is known for.

Properly managed forests are essential for air and water quality, soil stability, and for wildlife habitat. In the past 20 years our forest industry has planted over 2 billion trees; 83 million of those were last year alone. Knowing that young healthy forests capture more carbon than old forests makes a strong forestry sector vital in our fight against climate change. However, it seemed to my constituents that the previous government didn't want a forest industry at all, that we would just shut down the mills and stop the forestry sector in its tracks.

It's understandable why my constituents and foresters would feel that way. The previous government, with almost no consultation, went about shutting the forestry sector down by creating parks and breaking leases. We saw this with the Castle and with Bighorn. We saw the same with the A La Pêche and Little Smoky ranges. The previous government didn't see the benefits to communities, the benefits to, quite frankly, the health of our forests. Not taking care of our forests, not allowing industry to help maintain the health of our forests has led to an increasing number of disasters in Alberta and the potential for even more.

We also need a change in the direction of the federal government. It seems like the current government in Ottawa is not paying attention to Alberta's forests. We know that they don't seem to care about our energy sector or our agriculture sector. Maybe they're working their way down the list of our biggest industries.

When I look at how Ottawa is tackling the spruce budworm issue on the east coast, plenty of resources are being deployed to tackle the issue. Yet when I stand in Jasper, where mountain pine beetle infected only 122 hectares in 2013 and, due to no management being taken, by 2017 over 93,000 hectares were destroyed – and now many communities in my riding are left vulnerable and are feeling powerless and helpless, yet the federal government is still

unwilling to help. I'm grateful to be part of a government that truly understands the gravity of this situation.

We are dealing with a serious threat to our environment, our economy, and our communities. We needed a change in government so that Alberta could tackle this situation head-on. I ask for the Assembly's support on this motion so that we can take immediate action to combat this catastrophe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to speak to Motion 505, which I believe is very similar to the motion that I put in the Legislature last session as Motion 506, so I will stand in support of the motion.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, life in many parts of our beautiful province revolves around forests. Many industries depend on our forests, from tourism and recreation to the forest product industry. The mountain pine beetle is a serious threat to our forests, affecting a quarter of Alberta's pine forest, with the most severe concentration being in the west-central pine belt. The scourge of the mountain pine beetle is threatening our economy and our environment.

If left unmanaged, mountain pine beetle populations could kill large amounts of Alberta pine resources, up to 6 million hectares of pine valued at more than \$8 billion. This would have a large impact on the forestry industry. Of the 25 major forest companies operating in Alberta, 14 rely on pine to continue operations. The importance of addressing this issue has become even more clear in the last weeks, with curtailment and the closing of sawmills in the interior of British Columbia. Many of these producers have cited the loss of fibre due to infestations of the pine beetle and the increase in wildfires.

This issue was identified by the industry decades ago, with little to no action, and, Mr. Speaker, we are headed down the same path. Without a plan to address the spread of the pine beetle in the federal parks and the surrounding areas, we too will have a significant decrease in access to pine fibre, potentially jeopardizing the 25 major employers in this area. Infestation also threatens watershed health and fish and wildlife habitats.

Since 2006 the province has controlled the mountain pine beetle spread by cutting down and burning more than 1.5 million infested trees. The mountain pine beetle infestation is also controlled through a number of best practices such as timber harvesting planning and prescribed fire. We know that without aggressive control, an estimated additional 564 million trees would be infested and/or killed.

I urge this government and the current minister to recommit to minimizing the spread of the beetle north and south and preventing them from spreading farther east. Removing infested trees is the most effective tool to control the spread. Another strategy is to have the forestry industry harvest susceptible pine stands in order to decrease the spread in the long term. In 2017-2018 alone the former Minister of Agriculture and Forestry allocated more than \$25 million to manage the infestation and impact of the beetle. I see that currently the member is only asking for \$5 million, which is less than what the previous government committed to this issue.

A main area of concern is the Hinton and Edson area, where the mountain pine beetle from Jasper national park is moving to Alberta's forest in great numbers. Of the approximately 950,000 infested trees being controlled this past winter, more than half were in the Hinton area. The Jasper park area has also created an increased safety concern not only for the residents of Jasper but also those who visit the park. Due to the damage caused by the mountain

pine beetle, many of the trees in the national park have died and are now standing matchsticks. We have seen over the past few years the devastation and safety risks that are associated with forest fires, and Jasper national park is the epicenter of the most potential wildfire.

The previous NDP government had provided significant funding for the mountain pine beetle related to research and to the impact on these municipalities, with \$500,000 for mountain pine beetle related research in 2017 and 2018. In April 2018 our NDP government announced it would be investing another \$600,000 to communities around the eastern slope to combat mountain pine beetle. The NDP government also created an agreement with Saskatchewan to help protect the spread to other parts of Canada. Alberta is the main front in preventing the spread eastward.

The huge problem of the mountain pine beetle can only be combated by working together and working co-operatively, hand in hand. I have personally heard from groups like the Alberta Forest Products Association and the mountain pine beetle advisory group in the Hinton area that more work is needed to contain the spread in our national parks. We need to know more about how the spread can be slowed down. We need a thorough assessment as to how much damage has already been done, and the federal government must look closely at their management of the mountain pine beetle, especially in our provincial national parks, not only to ensure that the park can continue to be accessed for generations to come but so that it can also address the safety concerns of the residents that live and visit these areas.

I know that Alberta mayors from affected areas and provincial ministers have sent letters to the federal government in support of our government's ask for assistance. I know that the Hinton chamber of commerce developed a new policy resolution on the mountain pine beetle that has since been adopted by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. One of the key pieces of this policy is a request for the federal government to reinstate the federal mountain pine beetle program with funds equivalent in scale to over \$200 million.

**5:10**

Such a program would support provinces like Alberta that are already infested with the mountain pine beetle and provide resources for community and economic diversification and resiliency to communities affected by the mountain pine beetle. The policy highlights that federal involvement is needed to support national mitigation plans, community safety initiatives due to a higher risk of wildfires, and continued research and education initiatives. Simply put, Alberta needs assistance from the federal government to support the good work we're already doing.

Since 2004 Alberta has invested nearly half a billion dollars in order to control this pest, and I know, for example, that the town of Hinton has dedicated efforts to this fight as well. Early in 2018 the province provided Yellowhead county and Hinton with funding to control, suppress, and eradicate the mountain pine beetle on municipal and private lands. The funds were part of the mountain pine beetle municipal grant program, which helps Alberta communities minimize the spread of the mountain pine beetle infestation in this area. I would encourage this minister to again continue this program.

Clearly, Alberta has done its part for quite some time. We need collaboration from our federal counterparts to effectively combat the spread of the mountain pine beetle and the devastation it causes. Co-operation is essential if we are to create an effective strategy towards the mountain pine beetle. Together is the only way we will win this battle.

I encourage all members of this Legislature to support this motion.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane is standing to speak.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to and support Motion 505. The spread of the mountain pine beetle across western forests in Canada has been devastating since it was detected 20 years ago in Tweedsmuir, B.C. The beetle's main target is old forest lodgepole pine, but it will attack other species of pine as well. This pest will destroy trees by implanting itself into the trunk and transmitting a blue stain fungus that cuts off water and nutrient flow and starves the tree.

This process doesn't take long. The pine beetle has killed more than half of the pine in British Columbia, and lack of efforts to control the movement of this infestation led to it quickly spreading to Alberta's forests in 2006. That advancement continues: north, east towards Saskatchewan, and now coming upon the southern forests of Alberta. The spread is occurring so fast that Jasper national park went from detection of the pine beetle in 2013 to an 80 per cent infestation as of last year. The speed and destructive nature of the pine beetle is utterly amazing. The trees of Jasper have turned into a sea of red from dead and dying trees. The lack of action, changes to forest management practices, and reduced funding to battle the mountain pine beetle infestation are to blame.

Now, learning from the mistakes of British Columbia's pine beetle disaster, the former Conservative government developed and implemented an effective plan to manage the mountain pine beetle's advance. The three-point plan included level 1, which would be single-tree removal in infected areas; level 2, the harvest of large infested stands by industry; and level 3 – and this is an important one – the removal of susceptible stands in areas ahead of the advancing movement of the pest.

There are other causes for the spread of the mountain pine beetle and the subsequent increased risk of forest fires. Alberta's boreal forest has a maximum life expectancy of about 150 years. The forest has reached full maturity at 80 to 100 years and can begin dying off after about the 80-year point. At maturity the risks of forest fires and infestations increase dramatically. Now, the mountain pine beetle thrives on old forest, and due to changes in forest management practices in Alberta's forests, we've gone from 40-year to 60-year and now over 80-year averages for these stands.

Our forests are not like others in other parts of the country or the world, for that matter, as forest lifespans can be relatively low as far as old forest goes. With the advanced age of Alberta's mature stands, we now have forests that are dying due to age and infestations. This has created increased risks of forest fires in the province and created fires that spread quickly, are larger and growing in intensity. For best results our forests should have a mix of varying ages of forest for best practice in pine beetle control, fire containment as well as ecological management.

The devastation of the pine beetle has so many implications, including, one, public safety risks from increased threat of forest fires. The communities within these areas damaged by the mountain pine beetle will be living in a virtual tinderbox, increasing the probability of damages to their homes along with an elevated safety risk to their families.

Next, risks to potable water: contamination from heavy metals, soil erosion, and ash after a fire are also concerns. The city of Calgary has identified forest fires as one of the largest risks to the city's water supply.

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from forest fires released two to three times the amount of this GHG and other gases as compared to emissions from burning fossil fuels from all provincial industrial sectors combined, and the impacts extend further as the trees killed by fires or pine beetle will decompose over years and decades and release more

CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Additionally, those trees that were destroyed will no longer be removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as living trees do.

Next, there's a risk of job losses due to the destruction of fibre required for mills to produce lumber, pulp, and paper within their processes. This will also be a result of this pest.

Finally, tourism will definitely be affected as the beauty of the forest has been compromised.

You see, the previous NDP government cut funding to pine beetle control as well as wildfire budgets over the course of their four-year run. Expecting a cold winter to kill pine beetles is not sound policy. Weather may slow down beetle populations, but it will not stop their advance. That same NDP government also refused to use the pine beetle strategies developed by the previous PC governments, which made matters worse and allowed for the further spread of the issue. Additionally, the previous government ignored forest management agreements and quotas held by industry and fought against the sector at every turn. This interfered with harvest cycles, which increased the spread of mountain pine beetle, increased the risk of forest fires, and hurt Alberta businesses in the process.

Forestry companies employ over 40,000 people, either directly through the forest industry or in jobs supported by the industry. The forest sector contributes \$7 billion in annual economic activity to the province, and these companies understand that having a healthy forest is the centerpiece of maintaining a viable, long-lasting, prolific business. Conservation efforts in Alberta for this renewable resource are second to none. This industry operates on 200-year forest management plans focused on wood harvest, wildlife habitats, soil quality, water quality, community engagement, and reforestation. Alberta is recognized as a world leader in forest stewardship, and by managing our forests sustainably, we can have a healthy industry and help control the effects of fires and pest infestations.

The problem is that due to maturing forests, pine beetle infestations, and general changes to government policy our forests have been left vulnerable. Jasper is a prime example of what can happen when not managed correctly. We need to work with industry to look for solutions. We should develop new strategies and reinstate the previous three-point plan to reduce the advancement of pine beetles in Alberta's forest.

I encourage all members to support this motion as it keeps up with the UCP's commitment to provide support to the people of this province by improving safety for residents as well as helping to save Alberta's forests and jobs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other hon. members? I see the hon. Member for Peace River standing to speak to this matter.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise happily today to speak in favour of this motion, and I thank the Member for West Yellowhead for bringing it forward. I begin with a little survey of the importance of the forestry industry not just in my constituency but in the province. We'll start in the northwest. A list of towns: Peace River, Fort Vermilion, Manning, La Crête, High Level. These aren't just the biggest communities in my constituency; they're also completely dependent on the health of the forestry industry for their survival as communities in the northwest. We live in one of the farthest, disparately spread-out parts of the province, and to be able to survive there, we need industry, we need access to these resources, and we need those resources to remain in a healthy condition.

5:20

On that, I'm going to cite a few numbers. In Alberta, working forests are about a \$6.5 billion industry annually. Harvesting operations, lumber sales, pulp, newsprint, wood panels, engineered wood products, bioenergy, and ecosystem services add up to provide the third-largest sector of our economy, coming only behind oil and gas. Now it employs more than 16,000 Albertans directly and 23,000 indirectly, with \$1.5 billion in salaries and wages. This has a direct impact on my constituency.

This industry is the lifeblood of the northwest and, I say, a mainstay of Alberta's economy, being the third largest. It might not always be quite as sexy as the panache of oil and gas, but I believe it to have a little more wherewithal than some of the other commodities. So I stand behind supporting this industry, the forestry industry, and that's why we're going to turn our attention now to the effect of the mountain pine beetle on this industry and the future of our province in this side of forestry.

With that, I will say not just how important it is to my constituents and the billions of dollars of economic industry that it has as a result. When we think of the problems of the forestry sector and what it faces, we can think often of forest fires that have hit recently, as we saw in my constituency – the Battle Complex, Chuckegg Creek – and neighbouring constituencies like the Member for Lesser Slave Lake's, with the McMillan Complex. We have huge issues there. We could also think, perhaps, of the softwood lumber disagreements that we have internationally with agreements with the United States. Alternatively, we could think of a lot of other issues. That might bring us to problems that the industry faces. But, first and foremost, for many of the members of this House, they can tell you that it's the mountain pine beetle that is the most direct threat to the prosperity or the future of the forestry industry going on.

Perhaps it's less publicized, but the ecological impacts are undeniable. It's clear to anyone who has driven along the highways in Alberta and B.C. over the last 15 years just how devastating an effect the mountain pine beetle has had on western Canadian forests, regardless of what side of the border you're on. From a car's window one can see large swaths of forest now painted in red, as the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane told us. I remember just this last May being blown away, when I was travelling Alberta's Rocky Mountains, to see how much of it has been affected. It's incredible to think that an insect less than a quarter-inch in size could cause such devastation every summer and spread further, destroying every tree in its path.

The first reference I found on the mountain pine beetle in *Hansard* was from June 1992. The then Member for Banff-Cochrane, predecessor to the speaker speaking previously, was describing to the House the way that the beetle was eating its way through Jasper national park. In the nearly 27 years since that first reference in this place the mountain pine beetle has continued to destroy millions of acres of forest and the economic future of the industry in Alberta, with many negative impacts, ecological and economic. In a speech in 2011 in this Chamber the former Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti Mr. Wayne Drysdale likened the mountain pine beetle to the Norwegian rat, unwelcome in Alberta. It is my hope that under this government Mr. Drysdale's hope that Alberta can be both rat and pine beetle free is realized.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at a few numbers. In British Columbia 16 million hectares of forest have already been killed by the mountain pine beetle. For context, the devastating Fort McMurray fire some years ago destroyed a little less than 600,000 hectares. By comparison, in Alberta more than 1.2 million hectares of forest have sustained some degree of damage from the mountain pine beetle.

There's a 6 million-hectare forest that is at risk of infestation today in our province. The economic impact has been tens of billions of dollars and the future impact untold, an incredible loss to many hard-working Albertans and particularly those in my constituency.

Let's talk about how much money the government has spent trying to deal with this problem. That figure is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, yet the pine beetle seems to persist, in its unfriendly way being a pain to the taxpayers and those invested in the industry. The money that we are committing: we ask it be done aggressively, as the motion is asking, to partner with industry and the federal government so that we might be able to defend our industry and spend those dollars smartly on behalf of taxpayers and the future of this economy in forestry.

The United Conservative Party has only one forest-related policy in its book, a book that I reference often. I suggest that all who are listening find the United Conservative policy book as it is filled with all sorts of interesting policies that we are in the process of enacting. The NDP platform reads that the government of Alberta should permit only one ecologically and economically sustainable forest management method. Our election platform more specifically restated that a United Conservative government would reverse four years of NDP reductions in the fight against the mountain pine beetle epidemic by raising funds from \$5 million to \$25 million. I'd like to point out that many detailed platform commitments can still be found online.

This motion calls for our government to stay true to its election platform and specifically address the mountain pine beetle issue. I am very pleased that my colleague the Member for West Yellowhead has taken up this cause. His riding has felt the economic consequences of the mountain pine beetle, but really each constituency member that represents an area with forests has been impacted by this insect.

In February of this year hon. members might remember how persistently cold the temperatures were in our province, particularly in the north. Many hoped that this would slow the spread of the mountain pine beetle. Let's all pray that that's true. However, even if it spreads slowly this year, the mountain pine beetle and its economic and ecological impact will still be felt by Albertans.

I commend the new Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. He's done a great job in his new role, already having dealt with huge wildfires, shipments of canola that are unable to go to market, and of course beginning the process of actually engaging farmers to get to work on Bill 6. There's no need to add more on his plate, but indeed it's incumbent upon this government to take this issue of the mountain pine beetle seriously and work towards eradicating it in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not an expert on forestry management, but I know that many professionals who work in our forestry and environment departments have been dealing with this issue for many years. They know how they can address the issue of the mountain pine beetle and slow and stop its spread. Our government is committed to giving the public service the tools and resources they need to do their jobs well. Committing this extra funding to the eradication of the mountain pine beetle is important for the many dedicated civil servants to preserve our province's natural habitat and economic and ecological future.

In closing, I'd like to thank all those who have worked on this file: the public servants in our forestry department, the minister, the hon. Member for West Yellowhead, and many others. It's my hope that our government will commit this funding to the problem and endeavour to address this issue. I implore all to vote in favour of the motion.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this motion. I do want to – well, obviously, I'm going to make a bunch of comments about this motion. First and foremost, I do support this motion. I applaud the member for bringing it forward. It looks strikingly similar to a motion that the Member for Edmonton-Manning brought forward to this Assembly a year ago, two years ago, interestingly. I find that fascinating. I am pleased that the member is bringing this forward.

I want to clarify some comments that government members have made as far as our caucus when we were government and what funds we allocated to fight the pine beetle. At the onset, I can tell you that in 2017-18 alone we allocated \$25 million. So the members need to correct their speaking notes or get their facts straight that we did put forward money. Now, I will say that this is – you know, the former Member for Grande Prairie Wayne Drysdale, whom I hold in high regard, did sound the alarm about the pine beetle for many years, in fact, when he was a former cabinet minister as well, to the former PC government and then through our term, recognizing – and I will echo the member's comments – that the forestry sector is absolutely critical to the Alberta economy.

5:30

I can tell you that as minister of economic development and trade I worked very, very closely with the Alberta Forest Products Association, Paul Whittaker and his team, as well as with a number of the companies individually who, coincidentally, accompanied me on a number of trade missions. We tried to increase the amount of timber that we were exporting to countries like Japan, not only to educate as far as the uses of timber – of course, Japan is only interested in J-grade wood – but to push them to increase the number of storeys in a building to use wood in order to increase their consumption.

You know, on the pine beetle, we see the devastating effects of it here in the province. We know they've been ravaging through British Columbia. Really, my point in this is that I appreciate that the member is calling on the government to commit \$5 million, but \$5 million is grossly inadequate to deal with this. You see the effects, especially of the pine beetle, in the last couple of years around Jasper. The number of trees that are completely destroyed is having an impact not just on the forestry sector, albeit a very critical industry for us, but also on the tourism sector. Tourists from all over the world, including Canada, want to come to our parks and don't want to see the red or blackened trees that are damaged by the pine beetle. I wish the hon. member who brought forward this motion would have significantly increased the amount from \$5 million because this is a considerable problem that the government does need to take seriously.

Again, you know, we allocated \$25 million. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if that was enough. This is definitely an ongoing issue. I do want to recognize the men and women that work in the departments, that work on the front lines to tackle this, even as the researchers are trying to do much-needed research on how we can eliminate this problem.

You know, I appreciate and hope that this provincial government will continue to put pressure on the federal government. They also have a responsibility to fund, and significantly fund, this ever-increasing, growing problem.

We know the impact that this is having, not just, again, as I have mentioned, on the timber supply in this province – although we have our forestry companies that are very, very concerned – but also

with the communities, whether it's communities like the town of Jasper and others that are significantly impacted by the pine beetle.

You know, I hope that the government will listen to their member and allocate dollars. Again, I'd like to see more substantive dollars than \$5 million going toward this very critical problem. Again, I say to the government members: if forestry is as important an industry as you're saying it is for your government, then dollars will follow and meaningful action will follow to address this issue.

I mean, we know right now that northern Alberta is struggling due to significant fires. We also know that the frequency and intensity of forest fires are growing and really, in part, significantly because the climate is changing, and we need to take meaningful action on that.

You know, our natural resources are extremely important. I mean, there are hundreds of thousands of men and women that rely on jobs in our natural resources sector. Again, Albertans are very, very blessed with the abundance of resources that we have, but we need to step up our efforts in order to ensure that we're protecting these areas and protecting the jobs of many men and women around the province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, but I will support this motion. I'm pleased that the Member for West Yellowhead has brought this forward. He sees the effects every day that he travels from home to this place, I'm sure. I hope that the government will listen and will recognize, quite frankly, that \$5 million isn't adequate in order to continue the fight that our government started. I would argue that the government before ours had been fighting the pine beetle. This isn't something new, but it is growing in intensity, so we need to redouble our efforts and ensure that we are protecting our province's fibre, the jobs that come with it, and, of course, the beautiful natural landscapes that we have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, any other hon. members wishing to speak? I do believe I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley standing.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak on Motion 505 also. The forest industry, of course, is our third-largest industry in the province, and it employs tens of thousands of Albertans. Forestry is such an essential part of our economy. In whole, it contributes about \$6 billion across our province, and there are over 70 communities that rely on, at least in part, the forestry industry. We need to protect our forests for the continued economic development of our province, especially rural Alberta.

Now, presently Alberta has over 38 million hectares of forest. These are trees which are indigenous to Alberta's boreal forests, and they reach maturity at the age of about 80 to a hundred years. These forests, of course, need proper forestry management. They need sensible, pragmatic environmental policies in place. These older forests will inevitably succumb to insect infestations and the forest fires that we see today if we don't protect them properly. When our forests are properly managed by Albertans, who love our environment, we are provided with numerous environmental benefits, which are vital for our exceptional air and water quality, soil stability, and for our wildlife habitats. Young, healthy forests capture more carbon than old forests.

I'm happy to say that our great province of Alberta is a world leader in forestry management and stewardship. Every single time one tree is harvested in our province, another two trees are planted. In 2018 alone the Alberta Forest Products Association managed to plant 83 million trees. Not only that, but over the span of the last 20

years, since 1999, there have been over 2 billion trees planted. These are numbers we like to hear.

Many Alberta communities and thousands of families across our great province are dependent on the continued success of the forestry industry. Unfortunately, the past few years have created uncertainty and unease for Alberta's forestry companies because of the ideologically driven agendas and closed-door meetings that the previous government has had. Under the last government, input from industry stakeholders fell on deaf ears. The forest industry faces uncertainty due to inaction on a destructive and devastating threat not only to the industry but to the very forests we all care about.

What, of course, we're talking about here today is the mountain pine beetle. The mountain pine beetle, while only half a centimetre in size, has had a devastating effect on millions of hectares of forest in North America. It starts when a beetle lays its eggs under the bark of a tree. From there the beetle introduces a fungus into the sapwood which prevents the tree from repelling and killing the beetle. In addition, this fungus prevents the transportation of water and nutrients within the tree, which contributes to the tree being in a weakened state. The tree succumbs to the beetles in only a few short weeks from the initial contact of the beetle planting its larva and introducing the fungus.

British Columbia has already been devastated by the mountain pine beetle. The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers reported that between 1995 and 2015 British Columbia lost more than half of its saleable pine lumber, resulting in the loss of tens of billions of dollars to the provincial economy and countless jobs over the coming decades. The impact from the mountain pine beetle cannot be measured in simple financial loss either. This goes beyond economic indicators or financial forecasting. There are additional research and studies indicating that areas that had mountain pine beetle that are faced with forest fires not only burn at a faster rate but burn more severely.

Now Alberta is facing an unfortunate and similar a fate as British Columbia. The mountain pine beetle has crossed into Alberta, and to the dismay of communities in their path, hands have been tied by regulations and partisan politics. For four years people begged the previous NDP government to consider changes to existing policy, but nobody would listen. These same stakeholders have done the same with the federal Trudeau Liberal government, and nobody would listen. The same so-called progressive parties, who are concerned about the environment, can't see the forest for the trees. Five years of inaction has caused damage by the mountain pine beetle in Jasper national park to grow from 122 hectares to almost 100,000 hectares of forest.

**5:40**

To put that in perspective, Jasper national park's total hectares of land come to almost 1.1 million hectares. Eight and a half per cent of the total surface area of Jasper national park has a mountain pine beetle problem, and it puts its nearby communities at risk. Without more action from all levels of government on this problem, it will only get worse, and the end result will have devastating and long-term impacts on communities and businesses.

This is not a problem that is limited to my constituency, to Alberta, or even to western Canada. This is a national problem. Lodgepole pine as a tree species is most impacted by mountain pine beetle, but it also affects Jack pine and many other species of pine. It's a common sight through our nation's great boreal forests, as are other species of pine. These trees are seen from the borders of the Yukon all the way to Halifax, and if action is not taken to control and eradicate this threat, it will continue to spread unabated into other regions of the country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, without proper forest management and without sensible and pragmatic environmental policies in place, older forests will inevitably succumb to insect infestations and forest fires, which we see today. We know that the mountain pine beetle prefers these mature trees. We know that the solutions for this are not easy solutions. We know, of course, for instance, that the caribou rely on the mature forests also. So we have conflicting issues here, with caribou requiring these forests and, of course, pine beetles feeding on these forests and causing problems there. The mountain pine beetle is a large threat to our wildlife and habitat also.

Now, British Columbia, of course, has already suffered huge losses, and of course in Alberta we're suffering big losses, too. We know that cold weather can help slow down the pine beetle spread. We had some cold weather this past winter, but of course the pine beetle, because of its nature, I guess, can create somewhat of an antifreeze or something to protect itself against cold weather. But really cold weather at the right times of the year can affect the pine beetle even more, so we could always hope for the weather to help us out in this regard. That would be the best help we could get, but of course we need to do something to help in the meantime. We know that fire also will help reduce the pine beetles, but of course these fires are usually coming after the pine beetles have already gone through and killed all the trees.

We know that money doesn't always solve all problems, but we know that we need to put something into this effort. We know that the additional \$5 million that this motion proposes is a good start. Again, it's about spending money wisely and doing things properly. A lot of times we find government just throwing money at things and expecting the problem to go away, but we know that if we take this money and we spend it wisely, if we do the research that we need, and if we work with forestry companies to help alleviate some of these concerns and some of these issues, we will be able to move forward and protect our environment here in Alberta.

Thank you.

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

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen to speak.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of this Motion 505, and I want to thank the Member for West Yellowhead for bringing it forward to the Legislature for consideration. I want to thank all of the members who've spoken so far, who've underlined the importance of the forestry industry to the province of Alberta. Certainly, as a child I benefited directly from the importance of the economic contributions of the forestry industry in Alberta. My dad was a welder who worked on the construction of the pulp mills in Hinton and Peace River. Certainly, during the '80s the forestry industry was what was keeping lots of folks like my dad employed because, as we all recall, the oil industry was on some pretty hard times at that time. So I'm grateful for everything that the forestry industry provided to me in my childhood, and I am certainly eager to protect the forestry industry to provide for the future prosperity of all Albertans.

I do have to express one concern. You know, after hearing the Member for West Yellowhead and the Member for Peace River and the Member for Central Peace-Notley talking about, you know, the mountain pine beetle and the threat that it poses to the forestry industry here in Alberta and, as a result, the prosperity of the people of Alberta, I am waiting for any one of them to mention that the underlying cause of the spread of the mountain pine beetle is, of course, climate change.

We've gotten dangerously close to admitting that climate change is the underlying cause for the spread of mountain pine beetle when

the Member for Peace River and the Member for Central Peace-Notley admitted that, in fact, cold winter months will prevent the spread of mountain pine beetle, but the fact is that we don't have the cold winter months that we used to anymore. In fact, global temperatures have been above average for every month of every year since 1984, so to rely on the Member for Peace River and the Member for Central Peace-Notley's strategy to just wait for cold weather to come back won't work, Mr. Speaker.

That's why I'm pleased to support, of course, the kinds of forest management strategies and government policies and actions to control the spread of mountain pine beetle, but I just wish that we could admit that climate change is one of the contributing factors here and that spending money to halt the advance of the mountain pine beetle is a climate change mitigation strategy that we all have to pay for. You know, we've talked about the significant costs. All of the members who have spoken have thrown around numbers that are significant. I will take issue with some of the accusations that the members opposite have made about our government's spending on mountain pine beetle mitigation. I would remind all members that if they want the government to spend money on this kind of work, we need to have the money in place to do it.

Now, our government had a plan to collect money for climate change mitigation and spend it on those kinds of things that would not only help prevent further carbon dioxide emissions but also mitigate the effects of climate change that we're already locked into. That was the carbon tax, and we would collect that carbon tax and spend that money on climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, Mr. Speaker. Now, there's nobody in this House who disagrees with the premise that government, through its tax dollars, has a responsibility to work to mitigate the spread of the mountain pine beetle, so if you follow the logic to its natural end, we all have a responsibility to contribute, through our tax dollars, to government action to halt the spread of the mountain pine beetle. It just doesn't make sense to me why they would do away with a carbon tax that levies a tax on people who are emitting carbon dioxide so that they can take that money and reduce the impacts that are one of the causes of the spread of mountain pine beetle.

We had a plan in place. I understand that the members opposite take issue with some of the programs that we developed on how those dollars were spent, but they could have left it in place, could have left the carbon levy in place, taken all of that money and spent it on mountain pine beetle mitigation if they wanted to. That would have been 1 and a half billion dollars worth of mountain pine beetle mitigation every year if they had just left that carbon tax in place and used it to mitigate one of the effects of climate change, which is the mountain pine beetle. Now, Mr. Speaker – all right – we don't want to have the carbon tax in place. Well, where else is the money going to come from for climate change mitigation for things like the mountain pine beetle?

We also recognize, through this resolution, that industry has a responsibility to mitigate the spread of mountain pine beetle, but we've just given every industry, every profitable corporation in the province a 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway. That money could have been collected, Mr. Speaker, and the \$5 million in additional funding commitments that the member is seeking easily found. We could have easily found that within the 4 and a half billion dollars that was given away to corporations in their Bill 3, but that money is no longer there.

I appreciate everyone's sincere desire to mitigate the impacts of the mountain pine beetle. It's just incredibly frustrating to me, Mr. Speaker, that we want to take action on it – and I have no doubt that all of the members here are sincere – but we're tying our hands behind our backs when it comes to actually giving ourselves the tools to deal with it. The primary tool that everybody in this



Chamber has identified this afternoon in this debate is money used to mitigate the spread. You know, if we had kept the carbon tax in place or if we had kept the corporate tax rate the same way it was, that would have been \$6 billion in next year's budget that this government could have had from which they could have found an appropriate amount of money to spend on mountain pine beetle mitigation.

5:50

I am, you know, more than happy to support this motion, Mr. Speaker. I just wish that all of the members would admit that this mountain pine beetle infestation is an effect of climate change, that it's our responsibility to do something about climate change to protect the health and the economic well-being of Albertans, that we had a plan in place to deal with it that they've just thrown out the window and haven't replaced with something else suitable, that we need the money to be able to tackle the problem effectively, and that they've reduced our capacity to tackle this problem and all of the other problems that Alberta is facing by throwing 4 and a half billion dollars in corporate taxes out the window.

Perhaps they know something that I don't know. Perhaps the forest industry is going to take some of their share of the 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway that they've been given and put it into mountain pine beetle mitigation. I would be more than happy to see that as a result of their corporate tax giveaway, Mr. Speaker. I doubt that's the case. Perhaps the Member for West Yellowhead can act on behalf of his constituents and demand that that 4 and a half billion dollars, at least some of it, be targeted to climate change mitigation.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for West Yellowhead to close debate on Motion 505.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, thank you to everyone else for your input today. This motion today is one that will likely not garner a lot of attention in this Chamber. It isn't a motion that's going to create headlines or sensationalism. The reality is that it shouldn't.

This motion today is simply one small, common-sense step that we need to make in order to, as government, get back on the right track. This is about our government increasing the funding to combat the mountain pine beetle by \$5 million from \$25 million to \$30 million, as we promised in our platform. This is about Alberta doing what Alberta has always done: lead the way.

We know that Alberta was left vulnerable by the inaction in British Columbia to combat the mountain pine beetle. We know that we were left vulnerable by the inaction to combat the pine beetle through the national parks. As I mentioned earlier, we now know that the pine beetle is attacking other species of pine, including the Jack pine, which is a major species of the boreal forest. What that means is that if we continue to turn our backs on the mountain pine beetle rather than tackling it head-on in Alberta, it has the potential to devastate the boreal forest from the Yukon all the way to Halifax.

It is essential that the Alberta government lead the way and work with our forestry sector as well as challenge the federal government to step up and help combat the mountain pine beetle. This will help ensure that we can have a strong, vibrant forestry sector from coast to coast that all Canadians can be proud of for generations to come.

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

**The Acting Speaker:** I believe that, just to clarify, we are potentially on a motion to close debate.

**Mr. Long:** Sorry. I move to close debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** Prior to us going through that question, I just want to clarify that debate is closed and we are voting on the Motion Other than Government Motion 505 as proposed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has the call.

**Mrs. Savage:** I would like to move to adjourn the House until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, June 24, 2019

Day 18

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, June 24, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening, everyone. Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 5 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just have a few questions that, hopefully, I can get some answers to for clarity on this. To give you some sense here in terms of our supplementary supply estimates that we received, on page 50, to give you a chance to find it, a couple of questions there.

The amount of \$24,324,200 is requested together with \$825,000 made available from lower than budgeted expenses and other programs to provide these monies. I am happy to go back and forth if the Minister of Finance would like to do that, or I can also just lay out a few questions and then stand up again, whatever is convenient for you. I'm just trying to get clarity.

My first question, then, would be about the \$18.5 million for the Lubicon land claim settlement. I'm just wanting to know if that signals the intention of the government to pay out the full land claim settlement in this term or if there's still some work that needs to be done before that land claim settlement will be completed. In other words, does this bring us to the final end of that land claim settlement, or are we just in a step process here? Would someone care to answer that now, or do you want me to ask a few questions first?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** You do know it's supplementary supply.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. This is supplementary, right? For Bill 5, yeah.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, through the chair, please.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. Sorry. I'm just not getting an answer whether they want to answer now or later, so I'll go on with some of my questions.

Specifically within that expense, again, still on page 50, there is \$6,667,000 for consultation and land claims. My question. We had recently increased the amount of money provided to First Nations and Métis settlements in November of last year, 2018, an increase in monies available to them for consultation purposes. That was distributed on a six-level system across to the nations. Again, I'm asking something about the intent behind this money. Does this money reflect a continuation of the dollars that they were given in November 2018, and does this reflect an intention of the government to continue to extend those dollars to the nations over time or whether or not there's any plan to make changes on that?

I'll put out one third question now, and then I will sit down and see if I can get an answer, but I'm happy to rise again later to discuss any answers I might get. That is on page 51 of supplementary

supply, under the financial transactions vote, line 7.1, First Nations housing. I see, if I read this correctly, that \$33.3 million has been set aside for First Nations housing, and it appears that that is part of the 2013 Alberta flooding liability retirement. Perhaps we can just have some clarity. If I'm reading this correctly, the information I have is quite thin. I'm curious about the \$33.3 million because this money for the Alberta flood recovery has been spent, well, since 2013.

We know that we previously retired the flood recovery monies for the Stoney Nation after having gone through some fairly significant changes in terms of responding to their needs and the decision to shift who was actually doing the build and so on in their community. I know, if my memory is correct, that that money was resolved and retired previously and that the only monies that were left were monies for Siksika First Nation. That money was originally intended to be resolved by the end of September, but at the request of Siksika, who had made the decision to be the general managers of their own build and who had gone through some dramatic difficulties in getting their build done – obviously, we're talking here six years later, and they're still working on the build.

They had some sit-ins and other things that prevented them from proceeding and some disagreements as to whether or not the houses will be built again on the flood plain or whether they will be built up on the hill in the new community that was being built on the townsite, so that did lead to some delays. However, last year we had come to an agreement that they would attempt to finish it by September. We realized that was impossible – just, you know, the physical build time would not allow it – so my understanding was that that money was merely extended to the end of the year, to the end of December 2018.

If I remember correctly, because I don't have access to the documents that I did in those days, that amount of money would have only been about \$3 million, not \$33 million. It seems to me that somehow in this process flood recovery monies have jumped \$30 million over the last month, so I need to have some understanding and ask some questions about why the amount of money that's put into supplementary supply is so dramatically different than what was previously required by these communities.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just a reminder to all members that we are in supplementary supply. There's a 20-minute block for any member that wishes to speak, and it's not really that back and forth as we have seen in other stages.

Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I'd like to remind the member that these were amounts that the previous government spent, and this House has an obligation to approve the amounts in this appropriation bill. Again, the \$18.5 million was related to Lubicon land claim settlements, that, in fact, the previous government had expensed, and the \$6,667,000 was for additional consultation and land claims.

In terms of the question around the \$33,300,000 related to the Siksika Nation, those, again, were funds that the previous government spent, and it was the full amount related to, you know, repairing and rebuilding flood-affected homes in the nation.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I realize that this is money put in previously. But my questions are wondering partly about the intent of the government moving forward, and I just wanted to have some sense of that. With regard to the Siksika rebuild, which is the only

build left, I just wanted to ask: do you have any sense whether or not that build has in fact been finished now or whether or not we're still in the process of completing that build? It's just so that I can get a sense of whether this is something that's finished and accomplished or something that we need to pay attention to as we move forward into future budgets from this government.

7:40

**The Chair:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I expect the minister of indigenous affairs would be pleased to provide more information to the member with that specific question.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 6 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and continue debate on interim supply. We've had the opportunity to have a bit of discussion about some of the numbers that the government has brought forward, had some very fruitful discussion just the other week with the Minister of Infrastructure, and I thank him again for being quite forthcoming on a number of issues that were, I think, of assistance in our discussion. I've had the opportunity to talk some with the Minister of Health and may take that opportunity today to perhaps delve into a few other things that might be involved with some of the numbers that we're looking at there.

For Health, as I recall, we had an amount of just under \$14 billion that's being set aside. Now, we've had the opportunity to get a bit of a clear idea of where this government may be headed in terms of, I guess, that there's the capital spend that's there as well, and the government has made it clear that they, in fact, have decided to cancel the consolidation of the superlab, the Edmonton clinical lab hub, that our government was in the process of building. We know that in the process of doing so, then, they are forgoing about \$23 million that have been sunk into that construction so far. We are going to be looking at additional construction penalties and then costs to remediate the site. To either the Minister of Infrastructure or the Minister of Health: perhaps if they could let us know, then, that within the capital budget that's allotted currently for Health in interim supply, have they calculated any of those costs in as part of that amount?

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, this is not a budget. This is the cash flow for the government to continue until a budget can be determined in the fall. I suppose, first, we can say that with the \$600 million, approximately, that was budgeted for the lab hub project, by that not going forward, those costs would have been budgeted within that amount unless I get any [inaudible]. I don't know if that helps the member with that question, but I'm happy to answer other questions that the member might have.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you to the Minister of Health for providing a bit of a comment on that. I appreciate that clarification. Recognizing that, as he noted, there was about \$600 million that our government had committed towards that and that, then, a portion of that would have been included in the capital spending for this year. Is the minister saying, then, that there would be a surplus in the capital amount allotted? If they were basing it and working off the numbers that we had put in place, it would have included any amounts, then, for that construction this year. That amount is no longer intended to be spent by this government. Are we looking, then, at a surplus in the capital budget for Health?

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I think I'll reiterate the fact that we've noted here, and that is that, again, interim supply is not a budget. It's simply the cash required to get us until budget time. We will be rolling out a fulsome budget in the fall. We'll look forward to full debate on that budget at that time.

**Mr. Shepherd:** I appreciate that answer from the minister, but I can say, Madam Chair, that I know that when we were on the other side of the aisle and some of the members that are now in the government were in the opposition, frankly, that was not an answer that they found acceptable. There were many times when I heard opposition members, who are now government members, rise in this House and point out that their constituents wanted to know how the government was spending their money, and to choose to simply put out a number and not provide any information or detail on that was, well, tantamount to a bit of an insult to those Albertans. I don't think the suggestion that government should be able to spend without scrutiny is one that these members would necessarily agree with.

Now, I recognize, again, that this is part of the process by which we go through and that part of the process is that these numbers are simply put forward, but the reason we're asking these questions, Madam Chair, is simply so that we can better understand some of the direction and intentions of the government, so I'll continue in hopes that we may be able to perhaps understand that a bit better.

One of this government's platform commitments, Madam Chair, was to undertake a full review of Alberta Health Services – we know that's been announced, that that is taking place – so the minister has announced that he intends to have that completed by the end of this year. I imagine that that would require some additional resources, some additional staff. I don't know if that's a third-party firm or someone else that's conducting that review, but it would be my assumption, then, that within this interim supply would be some dollars set aside for undertaking what should be a fairly substantial piece of work if they are in fact intending to do a full review of all aspects of AHS. To the minister: does this interim supply contain any dollars? Can you give us any sense of how that review is taking place?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Chair. Well, first, I would answer the hon. member's first question, about process. Quite frankly, this is not a process that our government decided. The fact that we are now requiring interim supply is a process that was determined by the previous government. The fact that we are not able to determine a budget until the fall: these were all decisions that were – in fact, the

previous government was proceeding on warrants until... [interjection] Sorry. It sounds like somebody else would like to speak. Is somebody else wanting to come up and speak? There's always lots of discussion in the Chamber, and I always want to make sure that the hon. members have plenty of opportunity to speak.

Madam Chair, the second question was about the AHS review. The hon. member might have missed it, but we did have a press release that was on May 30 in which we started an RFP process. The process is fully transparent. The RFP is going to be closing June 30. The amounts in our campaign commitments on being able to do a review of AHS were fully costed and included in our campaign platform. Those amounts weren't necessarily included in the RFP. We're allowing the proponents who are going to be submitting to be able to provide us with what they think would be an appropriate budget. We are looking forward to the RFP closing on June 30 and being able to choose a proponent in July and, as the hon. member said, then proceeding with that RFP and that review of AHS and having it completed by the end of the year.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that clarification and that information. The amounts, then, for this review are not currently included as part of interim supply. You're waiting for the RFP, and at that point you'll have the opportunity to determine what the cost of the review will be. I appreciate that.

Along similar lines, then, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has committed to doing a review of all of the current and proposed supervised consumption sites for the province of Alberta. Are we looking at a similar process, then? Has that been included as part of the interim supply, or is that something that is also out for RFP by a third party, and would we assume that the same process would take place?

**The Chair:** The hon. Health minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The answer, unfortunately, is that this is not a budget. This is the cash flow for the government to be able to proceed until it can have a budget in the fall. Our commitments to Albertans on our spending when it comes to mental health and addictions are included in our campaign commitments, fully costed in our platform. This right now, interim supply, is not a budget. Instead, this is the cash flow for us to be able to proceed until we have a budget in the fall.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Minister. It's unfortunate. It appears he has been given some instruction now to return to the standard talking point which we've consistently been hearing. It's unfortunate. We did have some useful conversation there for a moment, but I will continue in hopes that perhaps we can regain some of that.

Just recognizing that this government is continuing, then, on its work and its plan, perhaps I'll return to the Minister of Infrastructure, who's been most helpful on a number of points of discussion that we've had. Within the realm of Health but certainly also within the realm of Infrastructure we have the child and youth mental health centre, which was committed to be built here in my constituency of Edmonton-City Centre.

7:50

I was very pleased recently to see the opening of the access 24/7 mental health clinic at the Royal Alex hospital. That's something that our government provided funding for to help with the

renovations and indeed to allow AHS to hire up to 20 new staff to provide that 24-hour, one-door access for mental health coverage.

I did have a constituent that reached out to me recently, though, and sort of said: that's fantastic to have there, but we do need youth-specific services and services that are targeted to families. Indeed, we know that's part of what was planned for the child and youth mental health centre. We have dollars that were committed by the Stollery foundation. To the Minister of Infrastructure: within the interim supply, then, currently do we have the dollars to ensure that the initial planning stages for that child and youth mental health centre are able to continue?

**The Chair:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise on interim supply in Committee of the Whole. It appears that there's still some confusion with the opposition on what stage we are at with this piece of legislation. It's an opportunity now in Committee of the Whole to talk about how we feel about this bill and questions, thoughts, and comments that we may have about this legislation.

I'd like to take a few moments just to express my excitement that we're now moving past supplementary supply, which was brought forward – basically, our government now had to finalize the money that the former NDP government of the day already spent – and instead bringing forward interim supply, that will take us through to the next budget, a budget, Madam Chair, that will see us follow through on the commitment that we made inside our platform to be able to get Alberta's fiscal house back in order, to be able to bring forward a path to balance. I'm excited to be able to debate that when the time comes. I think I'm looking forward to the hon. the Finance minister and President of Treasury Board's budget speech and, ultimately, the opportunity within estimates to be able to have a discussion about what that budget will look like.

I know that the hon. members, particularly the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre at the moment, seem to be excited to already talk about that. Of course, the budget process is not done, but I can tell you that we will maintain that commitment that we made to Albertans, and it will show a path to be able to get to balance. I can also tell you, Madam Chair, through you to him, that it will not have the ridiculous path that the former government had, which was, shockingly, to take this province on a path to \$100 billion in debt and to mortgage my children's and grandchildren's future. That's not the direction that will be coming. I know the hon. member seems to be excited to hear about our budget. I'm glad that he shares that excitement, and I look forward to when that process happens. For the meantime we're here on interim supply, and that's the stage that we're at at the moment.

With that said, Madam Chair, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report progress on bills 5 and 6.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 5 and Bill 6.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

### **Government Bills and Orders Third Reading**

#### **Bill 10**

#### **Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019**

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move third reading of Bill 10, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019.

I want to thank the members of this Assembly for their thoughts on this technical bill. Alberta's tax laws are typically reviewed and amended annually to maintain the efficiency and integrity of our tax system. As I explained during previous readings, Alberta's income tax system is closely linked with federal legislation. The changes in this set of amendments will bring our legislation in line with federal changes that, for the most part, were implemented in 2018. The opportunity to make these changes did not present itself to the previous government, but they did ask the Canada Revenue Agency to administer the changes on 2018 tax returns and committed to making the necessary adjustments on our end at the next available opportunity.

I will recap the amendments within this bill briefly. These changes will ensure that taxpayers' entire income is included in the calculation of certain credits. The amendments also ensure that certain benefits for Canadian Forces members and veterans are eligible for the pension credit. And this bill will adjust the provincial dividend tax credit rate for dividends paid out of corporate income that was taxed at the small-business rate. Madam Speaker, these amendments will ensure that Alberta's tax system continues to function properly, and they are needed to support the Canada Revenue Agency's administration of our personal income tax system.

I encourage all members of the House to support these amendments. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, Minister, would you like to close debate? All right.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a third time]

#### **Bill 7**

#### **Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019**

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and move third reading of Bill 7, the Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019.

This legislation would help revitalize municipalities by empowering them to offer stronger property tax incentives to business and industry. I want to take this opportunity to thank the members of this House for sharing their opinions on this bill. I was happy to hear all of the different points of view on what I believe is a vital piece of legislation for our province. Municipalities want the ability to provide stronger tax incentives to attract business and

investment. This legislation would give that to them. Municipalities know what's best for the people they serve. This legislation wouldn't tell them what to do; it would give them the power to make their own decisions.

During second reading debate I heard a number of arguments against the need for this bill. Some of my colleagues across the aisle said that the bill doesn't actually do anything. With respect, I strongly disagree. This bill provides clarity and expands on what is currently in the Municipal Government Act. Right now the act enables councils to cancel or refund all or a portion of a property tax or defer the collection of a tax in a specific year for the purposes of providing tax relief in instances of hardship.

If passed, Bill 7 will expand the existing authority in the Municipal Government Act to include broader economic development purposes. The provisions of the act, which my friends cited so often in their debate, are intended to be used for one year only. This is the opinion of the experienced policy and legal experts within my department, and it is the opinion of other municipal legal experts. If passed, this amendment would allow municipalities to provide property tax incentives for up to 15 years. This would give businesses the kind of certainty they need when considering major investment decisions.

**8:00**

One of the other matters the members of the opposition raised was the perceived lack of consultation on this bill. Again I must disagree. Our election platform clearly had this as one of our proposed legislative changes, and Albertans who voted for us as government expect this program to be put in place. Some of the criticisms I heard revolved around an idea that this legislation, if passed, may lead to increased competition between municipalities, Madam Speaker. I will reiterate what I said at second reading of this bill: increased competition is exactly what we are looking for. With that being said, there are many ways that municipalities must work together for the betterment of their overall regions. The Municipal Government Act requires municipalities with common boundaries to complete an intermunicipal collaborative framework by 2020.

In addition, there are metro regional boards in both Calgary and Edmonton and in Edmonton areas that give municipalities a chance to work together on a vision for each of those regions. We can have competition and collaboration at the same time, Madam Speaker. This government was elected on a platform of getting Albertans back to work and strengthening the competitive position of this province. We want to grow our economy, not just manage it. The Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019, is a key part of achieving those goals by empowering municipalities to attract investment, create jobs, and realize their full economic potential.

I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 7. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to address this. I think I'll start out by agreeing with the hon. minister that there are powers in the MGA that allow municipalities to undertake the work that he is talking about now. He talks about expanding that so there's economic development focus in addition to the ones around hardship, the ones around being able to do these on a yearly basis. I can tell you, from experience, that municipalities already undertook property tax exemptions for businesses. They would do that regularly. They do do that regularly. With respect, I think this bill is not necessary. It's not needed. It is

something that's already in the MGA, and it's already working. With respect, I don't think there's anything new here.

I can tell you that the work of this government in reaching out to municipalities is woefully inadequate. Again, the minister talks about: we put this in our election platform; it's there for all to see. It's true. It is there for all to see, but I would, with respect, say that many people are surprised by this. Frankly, I haven't found anyone in a municipal context who was involved in the discussions on this before it hit the Order Paper here in this House.

Madam Speaker, when this side, the NDP government, was in place, we of course worked closely with the AUMA and the RMA and other organizations. I can tell you that from the 2018 resolutions session of the AUMA they talk about their vision. The AUMA's vision is that all Alberta municipalities "have an enduring partnership with the Government of Alberta that recognizes the shared responsibility" of working together. I don't see the shared responsibility here. I see the government of Alberta and their ideology today bringing forward this bill because they believe it will assist municipalities.

As I said, Madam Speaker, it's already in the MGA, and municipalities, if they want to use it, can use it. They have used it, and they have attracted businesses. I don't see where this gives any more clarity for municipalities out there. In fact, I think there are many damaging things it does to municipalities as a result of this bill coming forward.

But I do want to emphasize that, overall, there is nothing to see here. This is a nothing bill that doesn't need to be taking up the time. In fact, I think it moves the relationship that municipalities have through their associations and individually and through their regional boards backwards, Madam Speaker. It moves it backwards because they weren't involved in the discussions. When we were government, we worked closely with municipalities. As I said, the response to that resolution by the ADM on behalf of government was: we are committed to the development of legislated funding frameworks and have engaged with municipal associations in discussions on this key component of the framework.

Madam Speaker, instead of allowing municipalities, as it was framed here, you know, to compete with one another, we sat down with their associations and we talked about how we can all grow the pie and how it can be shared in a predictable, rational, consistent manner so that everyone benefits. There clearly will be losers as a result of this bill coming forward. I'm not sure there will be the collaboration that has just been talked about by the minister. I see another future, and that future is predictable in the sense that businesses will talk to different municipalities, and instead of looking out for the needs of people, the kind of amenities that exist in municipalities, they'll be looking for the least amount of taxes they can pay. That will of course create that competition so that the metro regional boards, though they are collaborating at this time, may find themselves pulled and rent apart as a result of this bill coming forward. It's not just my opinion; it's the opinion of many, many people.

Now, I do know that the hon. minister had a press conference about this maybe about three weeks ago, four weeks ago. It occurred out in Strathcona county. He had the mayor and a business entity representative there, and he was there, and there were some other MLAs there. They were standing up and they talked about all the good things that might happen. But, Madam Speaker, that's one mayor. If you ask that hon. minister how many mayors have come forward with support and maybe tabled letters of support, I'd be interested in seeing those. I know that recently there was a southeast and southwest mayors and reeves conference down in southern Alberta, and there were dozens of people in attendance. Indeed, the hon. Member for Taber-Warner was there, and the feedback I got

was that he was touting this as a really good thing. There wasn't a great uptake. There wasn't, you know: let's put him on our shoulders and walk around and talk about how great this is. People were questioning the whole thing. They were saying: "Where did this come from? Did you talk to us? What will it do to the relationships we have in southern Alberta as mayors and reeves?"

Maybe there are some municipalities that have a little more ability, a little more flexibility to give up tax money for potentially 15 years from a business, but, you know, it's going to make the less prosperous municipalities kind of lose further or get behind the game.

The mid-city mayors is another organization that probably has a great number of questions with regard to where all of this is going, and they meet in the very near future, Madam Speaker.

**8:10**

You know, the organizations that are out there, the RMA and the AUMA, talk about potential unintended consequences of going forward with this bill, Madam Speaker, and I think that's the kind of overall message I get when I talk to people. They're wondering why this is such an important item on the government's agenda when, in fact, they already have the ability and have used the ability.

The government likes to talk about, you know, consultation, but I would ask: has there been any consultation with regard to this bill, or was the consultation, again, the fact that it was in the platform paper, the platform of this government? Is that consultation? It's something that municipalities already use, Madam Speaker, through their own auspices. They work and negotiate with businesses, and businesses locate, if they're being attracted, knowing they can get exemptions from taxes. True, the municipalities do have to work at this on a regular basis so that those exemptions continue, but it has happened, and it will continue to happen even without this bill going forward. With mayors being shocked by the presence of this on the Order Paper and with mayors already feeling like what they really want to talk about is stable and predictable funds, that's what this government should be working on through reasserting discussions around MSI, and that's not what's happening here.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The other concern that gets talked about – and I want to stress that I don't think this bill is needed, because they can already do these kinds of things – is: who pays the bill, ultimately? You know, if you're a smaller municipality or a smaller county and a business has come and said, "The only way we'll really locate here is if you give us 15 years of tax relief" and the council is kind of feeling concerned that that business will potentially go down the road to another county if they don't fess up and give that tax relief, the concern that I think ratepayers can have on the residential side is that they're going to be picking up the bill for that business, who has kind of argued for getting tax exemptions. Mr. Speaker, that's not fair for residential taxpayers. Again, those are some of the concerns that are brought forward.

Mr. Speaker, we're also, of course, concerned that – and generally the word that gets talked about is the race to the bottom. I think the minister was going to go there in terms of talking about one of the unintended consequences of his bill. The race to the bottom means that, you know, everybody loses. Everybody loses because they're not collecting taxes from a business that should be paying their taxes. The different mayors and reeves out there and their councils should be justifiably concerned about this race to the bottom and what it'll mean for their residential taxpayers or ratepayers, who will potentially have to pay more as a result of this

bill, and the businesses going to mayors and reeves and asking for these exemptions.

This is not the kind of predictable, stable funds they want, Mr. Speaker. They really want to get back to the table, through their associations, to talk about MSI. If this was such a good idea of a bill, why wasn't it talked about? Why wasn't it brought forward by the minister, through the associations, to say: "You know, this is what we want to do. What do you think about these things? Should we do them together?" Then they'd be able to stand with the associations and the organizations shoulder to shoulder to shoulder and say: this is what Alberta needs.

No, Mr. Speaker, I think what we're seeing here is more ideology, believing that if we give tax breaks to businesses, those businesses will somehow magically put municipalities on a more steady basis. I think that mayors and reeves, justifiably, have to be concerned that if they're getting less tax money as a result of this bill, they'll have smaller government, and smaller government will mean less services or it'll mean higher residential taxes for the people who will be paying the taxes.

In Calgary we were able to attract large businesses like the headquarters for CP many, many years ago, Mr. Speaker. As a result of having a good property tax base on the residential, though the nonres has taken some hits of late as a result of the downturn in the economy, we were able to build up available services and amenities in the city of Calgary – roads, sewers, and other things that businesses need – and we're able to attract businesses. Now, that's not the same for smaller counties, I understand, but we're going to make it hard for those smaller counties because there's going to be competition amongst them, and that competition will cause a race to the bottom.

Mr. Speaker, if it was such a good bill, why wasn't it talked about by this minister and by the Premier when they had an opportunity to speak with the associations? They've had opportunity. I know the Premier met with different associations prior to the election. I don't know if he talked about this in his platform, specifically around Bill 7, or what were municipal tax incentives. I think he didn't because, you know, it was a surprise. This whole municipal tax incentive program was a surprise for many, many, many people in elected office at the local level. They wouldn't put this at the top of their agenda of things to do.

As the Minister of Municipal Affairs you only get so many opportunities at the cabinet table to bring bills forward. Why would you bring something forward that no one's asking for in the municipalities and the local governments? I can appreciate that getting cabinet's time to talk about a bill like this might be, you know, exciting. It might be something you think is good, but I can tell you that this is a waste of cabinet's time in terms of asking them to go through this and to support this. It's not something that municipalities are clamouring for. I have yet to speak to anybody who really wanted this to go through, really wanted the government of Alberta to bring forward the municipal tax incentive bill that is before us today, because they already know that they have the opportunity to do these things if they want to do them.

The kind of work that they really need this government to do is around opening up the discussions about MSI because that ends in 2021, Mr. Speaker. They are concerned because they have to bring forward three- to five-year budgets, three years on the operating side and five years on the capital side. When you start to look at where 2021 is, it's right in that wheelhouse in terms of a high level of concern with the kinds of budgets that they have to make available to the government of Alberta and their ratepayers and taxpayers to get things in place to address the requirements in the MGA.

Mr. Speaker, again, Bill 7 is not something they asked for. Bill 7 is in the ideological framework of this government's competition approach. Competition will lead to a race to the bottom. If they want to give tax incentives, they can do that now with the MGA. If they want to attract businesses, they can do that now with the MGA. They don't need Bill 7 that's before them. They need co-operation and partnership, and that's not something that this minister has undertaken with regard to Bill 7.

8:20

When we were government, we worked with Edmonton and Calgary and set a framework in place for municipal funding. We were going to be working with the RMA. We were working with the RMA – it was called the AAMD and C then – and we were working with the AUMA and didn't get it over the goal line because of the election or the term being up, Mr. Speaker. But that would have been work that we would have gotten back to instead of Bill 7, which no one was asking for. No one was asking for it because they don't see the benefit of working that way. They see the benefit of stable, predictable funds and revenue sharing that would occur as a result of getting back to the table and having those discussions.

Of course, the Minister of Finance might say that we're not there yet. We have to wait until the budget is all prepared and ready in October, November before we can have those discussions. But with Bill 7 here I wonder if municipalities are going to be able to have that discussion at all or if the government will just lean on: we gave you something; why don't you go out and see if you can make it work? That's not what they want. It's not what they asked for. In the spirit of partnership, it's not what this government should be bringing forward.

Instead of saying, you know, that there was a platform that everybody could read at their leisure and it was buried in there with two lines or three lines, Mr. Speaker, what they should be saying to municipalities and counties around this province is: we want to hear what you think is necessary to make your lives and our lives together better for the people of Alberta. That's not how this was developed. It's a gross omission of the responsibility of government, I think, to present something as a fait accompli and say: "We'll work things out once we put this in place. You're going to be able to collaborate with each other, we promise, but we also want you to compete with each other. That's going to make things better."

Mr. Speaker, what I hear from leaders around the province is that they want the ability to sit down with this government and talk through the many important issues that are ongoing, particularly: where is stable, predictable funding for municipalities and revenue sharing in the future? That's what I believe should be done, not the bill that's before us.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Would the hon. Government House Leader like to speak to the main bill?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** That is what is available to you.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I'm excited to speak to the main bill. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo's comments. You know, Mr. Speaker, as I sat not too far away from where the hon. member sits now, over the last four years inside this place, and watched as he was the Finance minister of the then government and watched his then government proceed with their mandate here inside this place for four years, I often wondered to myself how they could be so bad at their job. I often wondered how

that hon. member could have been so bad at being Finance minister that he saw us on the way to six credit downgrades, the largest debts in the history of our province, brought in a carbon tax and put it on the people of Alberta at the exact moment that they were in a recession.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker – in fact, you and I used to be bench mates – I don't know. I wouldn't speak for you, of course, but I wonder that you must've thought the same thing sometimes over the years: how could the NDP be so bad at their job? Well, I finally heard the answer. It's because they have no idea what they're doing.

That hon. member used to be a city councillor of the largest city in this province. He used to be the Finance minister of this province. He's a two-term member of the Legislature, and he clearly, based on his presentation, has not even read the MGA. A multiple-term councillor of the largest city in this province and former Finance minister who has not even read the MGA, Mr. Speaker.

No wonder this is the only one-term government in the history of our province that's now sitting in opposition. No wonder they were so bad at their job when they were here. No wonder we ended up with the largest debts in our history. No wonder we saw all those credit downgrades under that hon. member when he was the Finance minister. He has no idea what he's doing.

Now, I would not have guessed that when I was on the other side of the House. I thought sometimes that it was just purely ideology that was causing the NDP to get into trouble. I think their ideological beliefs probably did cause a significant amount of trouble, Mr. Speaker, but clearly, based on that presentation, that hon. member has no idea. He just stood in this Assembly and said things were in the MGA that were not in the MGA, said that the ability to do this was in the MGA. It's not. It's not within the MGA.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** No, it's not. Mr. Speaker, again, a multiple-term councillor.

There's another former cabinet minister heckling over the way. They should take the time to read the MGA before they stand up inside this place and say such ridiculous comments, Mr. Speaker. They deserve better researchers. I don't know; maybe that's what's going on. Maybe they need some research help. Though I'd still have to say that a former multi-term councillor of the largest city in the province and the former Finance minister, you would think, would have taken the time to read the MGA before he got up and said those ridiculous comments.

In addition, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo had some other comments to say about consultation, and he spoke a lot about the fact that mayors would be upset about this. You know, I have not seen the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo often leave Calgary or Edmonton. I certainly have not seen him, when he was Finance minister, spending much of his time talking to communities like where I represent or where you represent.

Now, on the weekend I had the privilege of going home to the great riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Of course, you know it well; it's where all the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills come on vacation, where we have the eastern slopes; west-central Alberta, one of the most beautiful places in the world. I have the privilege of representing, as you know, lots of towns and counties. This weekend when I was home, I got to be in the great town of Sundre, my hometown. I also spent some time in Rocky Mountain House, Clearwater county, Mountain View county, and a little bit of time in your city, too, Mr. Speaker, in Olds. Made it all the way up to the north as well to the great communities of Bluffton, Rimbey, spent some time in Bentley, Ponoka county, Lacombe county, down in Eckville, and a little bit of time in Benalto, just for

the heck of it because, you know, we were moving around pretty good on the weekend. It was rodeo weekend in many spots, Mr. Speaker.

I had the privilege of spending lots of time this weekend with many municipal leaders of all of those municipalities that I have the privilege of representing in this Chamber. That's just a fraction of the towns that I represent. As you know, just like yourself, I have close to 200 elected representatives in my constituency, municipal and school board representatives, that I have the privilege of representing in this Chamber. I can tell you that every one of them said: "Thank you. Thank you so much that your government is now in charge. Thank you so much. In the period of eight weeks we've seen more ministers come and help us with our communities than the entire time that that hon. member was the Finance minister of this province." Not one municipal leader approached me and said: "Well, we don't feel like we're being consulted."

Now, Mr. Speaker, of course they would not say that because, as you know because you represent a lot of small towns, the former government could not be bothered with rural Alberta. In fact, I only saw one or two cabinet ministers ever come to the constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre during their time in government, a handful of them, very rarely. Often when my communities had to come here for meetings with cabinet ministers, they would be cancelled. Sometimes even after they'd travelled all the way to the capital and spent a night in motels, all of a sudden the meetings were cancelled. Famously, we had a former environment minister, my predecessor, tell this Chamber that she'd met with municipal leaders when she had not met with municipal leaders. That happened inside this Chamber.

For that former Finance minister, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, now to even have the nerve to rise in this House and somehow say that he was in a better spot to consult with communities, over this side of the House, currently this government, is an absolutely ridiculous thing for him to say, Mr. Speaker. I know your communities would agree with my statement when it comes to that.

Now, the reality is, though, as the now hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs said in his excellent presentation as he moved third reading on Bill 7, there has been consultation on this bill. It's called an election, Mr. Speaker, something that this side of the House... [interjections] Now, the Premier often points out how angry the NDP are. I'm sure the Member for Calgary-Buffalo is just as angry as the rest of them because he's usually the one heckling almost the loudest over there. I know he's mad with Albertans. He makes it very, very clear. He was always part of the fear and the smear and the ideological beliefs of the NDP and that approach to politics that most Albertans just disdain. That was what he was always a part of.

What is new now, Mr. Speaker, is that he's also part of Team Angry. He's mad because Albertans cast judgment on him on April 16. He was the Finance minister of the government that they cast judgment on. He was the Finance minister of that government that Albertans cast a clear judgment on when they fired him. [interjection] I understand why he's so upset and yelling at me. I would probably be just as upset if I was the Finance minister of the only one-term government in the history of this province. That would probably hurt, but that's what he is.

Oh, sorry, Mr. Speaker. I didn't see that you'd stood up.

8:30

#### Speaker's Ruling Relevance

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I might just see if I could encourage the hon. House Leader to perhaps inform the House

about some of the content of Bill 9 as opposed to what the former Finance minister did or didn't do as those sorts of comments often lead to a lack of decorum inside the Chamber.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that Bill 9 has passed the House, I'm assuming you want me to go to Bill 7. I just want it clarified.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, this is very important for Bill 7, particularly when you look at the presentation by the former Finance minister in this Chamber, who was debating Bill 7. These are the points that he raised, and we as a government and myself as a member of the government are responding to the concerns that he raised in regard to this legislation, but I'll go back to Bill 7.

My point is this, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the former government, the one-term government, the one-term NDP government that we have sitting on that side of the House, that that hon. member was the Finance minister of, this side of the House did consult with Albertans. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs articulated very well in his presentation to the House today how this fit into our election platform, and while the NDP may continue to want to spend their time being angry at Albertans for casting their judgment on them, this side of the House and the hon. Municipal Affairs minister ain't gonna waste our time on that. Instead, we're going to come here and we're going to continue to move the agenda forward inside this House. [interjection]

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo still heckling away at me, Mr. Speaker, and that's my point. I understand that he's part of Team Angry now. I understand, Mr. Speaker, through you to him, that he's mad at Albertans because they made him be the Finance minister of the only one-term government in this province's history. I get it. What really matters is what the Minister of Municipal Affairs is trying to do.

This is what I reject, and this applies to Bill 7, Mr. Speaker, because of what it means for our communities. That hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo also said that there are no other communities that basically would need this. That shows, again, the core of why he's part of a government that was fired, because he's clearly never been to communities like Drayton Valley. He's clearly never been to communities like Hanna. He's clearly never been to communities like I represent and you represent, Mr. Speaker, who are hanging on, barely, because of the NDP's ideological policies and – we find out tonight – incompetence. They don't even know what the MGA says. He's clearly never been there. He's clearly never left his bubble.

If you watch, Mr. Speaker, the actions of the opposition, you could see that they basically suffer from what Ralph Klein would call dome disease, living within a bubble in their own echo chamber of people that keep telling them that they got it right.

Well, I was home again this weekend. I was happy to be there at one of my favourite events of the year, the Sundre parade. I just love it, Mr. Speaker, as you know. I know you've had the privilege of being in the Sundre parade. It's a great parade and a great rodeo. It's been a good rodeo weekend there, and to watch hundreds of people lining up all along the streets – you know what they were yelling at us? They were yelling: "Keep going. Stand up for us. Keep doing what you promised. Keep doing it. Keep going all the way." That's what they said.

They said: "Go and tell the Premier that we're with him one hundred per cent. Ignore the NDP." They actually said that in the middle of a parade on rodeo day, Mr. Speaker. You have people yelling out, "Keep going; don't stop; ignore the NDP," because they gave us clear instructions on April 16 to ignore the NDP, to get the

job done. I'm with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. That's what we're going to do inside this House. It does not matter how much Team Angry yells. It does not matter how much Team Angry calls us names or tries to bully our members inside this Chamber. The United Conservative Party is going to get 'er done.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Seeing none, are there any others wishing to . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I believe I was to my feet fast enough for 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is rising quickly to make a brief question or comment under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure. It's always interesting to listen to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Again, the term "interesting" I chose very, very carefully.

Now, it's interesting that, you know, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment and Parks talks about this side of the House as Team Angry, yet for the most part, for 10 minutes there, much vitriol came out of his mouth talking about the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. I'd love to ask the member if he's read the MGA. As a former Minister of Municipal Affairs I doubt it. It's the second-largest piece of legislation that exists on the books in government. It is extremely comprehensive.

I think the point that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo is trying to raise is that section 347, I believe, of the existing MGA gives municipalities the ability to lower property taxes, to create a business zone or an industrial park in order to attract business, so I'm not sure why exactly the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre felt like he had to berate the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that I think it's a little rich, especially when the Government House Leader talks about us throwing stones, yet he is grabbing them by the handful, saying that we're Team Angry. You know what? Our job is to hold the government to account and to ensure that whatever legislation they bring to this place has been given its due attention, that they've spoken with municipalities. I disagree that the government has carte blanche to do whatever it wants without any type of consultation. I also disagree that winning an election – an election is not consultation. They're two very different things. Does the government have a mandate? Yes. Did the majority of Albertans vote them in? Yes. Is that and does that replace consultation? No. That's really what our municipalities were reaching out to us saying: we had no idea the government was going to bring this in. They just wanted a little time, which is what I think was the Member for Calgary-Buffalo's point.

Again, I appreciate that many members in this place are brand new, but those that have been here for at least a term know that on almost every single bill that we brought forward, the former opposition wanted it sent to committee, talked about more time, more time, more time. In fact, if they had it their way, there wouldn't have been a single bill that passed in the four-year term. Now, we're not proposing the exact same thing, but time is needed to ensure that stakeholders are adequately consulted. You know what? I'll be the first to stand up and say that we accepted amendments from all parties in the House in our four-year term. I mean, some of them, no, but reasonable amendments we did accept. We accepted some from the Official Opposition because, again, as legislators, you know, we want to ensure that we are passing the best possible bills.



You know, I mean, really, I'm rising under 29(2)(a) to ask the Government House Leader: why is he so angry at the fact that the opposition is trying to do our job, asking legitimate questions? I'd love to hear the minister respond. In the previous version of the MGA section 347 does, in my opinion, what the minister is proposing to do in this bill. I'm happy to hear how this new bill changes the existing powers that municipalities had. I encourage the minister to do that in a way to answer the question because I think that it's a legitimate question. I'm not trying to score partisan points or jump up and down. It's a fair question to say: if you're bringing forward legislation that is going to give municipalities more tools – okay? – well, please outline them for me. Section 347 gives them the tools that I've read in this bill.

I've outlined my concern before, Mr. Speaker, which is, really, that the work that we did to encourage municipalities to collaborate, to work together to form agreements, whether it's intermunicipal collaboration agreements or others, again, looking to municipalities that have done an amazing job coming together to say, "How do we attract industry to our area . . ."

**The Speaker:** Others wishing to speak to Bill 7? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to this bill. I also listened to the Government House Leader's – I don't know – comments. They were not about the bill at all, and many opinions contained in it were presented as facts. As the saying goes, you're entitled to your opinions but not to your facts. I don't think that my colleague the MLA for Calgary-Buffero said anything that was not factually correct. Since I didn't have any earplugs or anything, I was listening to my colleague very carefully, and I think there were three themes that my colleague tried to elaborate on. One thing that's clear for this government is that municipalities are looking for a real plan, real leadership, and that's not what it is.

**8:40**

The Government House Leader was challenging whether the MLA for Calgary-Buffero has looked into the legislation. He was a five-term councillor. I think he certainly has. He has this Municipal Government Act that he has graciously given to me. I'm looking at the section because the Government House Leader was saying that there is no such power in the legislation. Section 347: I do want to read it one more time into the *Hansard* to just clarify, I guess, that this authority exists in the existing legislation. Section 347(1) reads:

If a council considers it equitable to do so, it may, generally or with respect to a particular taxable property or business or a class of taxable property or business, do one or more of the following [things], with or without conditions:

- (a) cancel or reduce tax arrears;
- (b) cancel or refund all or part of a tax;
- (c) defer the collection of a tax.

Subsection (2) of 347:

A council may phase in a tax increase or decrease resulting from the preparation of any new assessment.

That's right from the legislation. That's the law as it stands now. I think that's what my colleague from Calgary-Buffero was mentioning, that what the government is claiming is that somehow this piece of legislation is giving municipalities powers that already didn't exist. Based on this provision, based on my understanding of the Municipal Government Act – also, I do have a background in law – the way I read it, I think that authority exists and that the MLA for Calgary-Buffero is exactly right in saying that whatever Bill 7 is trying to do, that already exists in our legislation.

I think we can talk about what it's trying to do. If we listen to the mayors, listen to the leadership in municipalities – plus, I was at RMA – I think their number one issue was not Bill 7. For sure, their number one issue was MSI, their future funding, the predictability of funding for municipalities, and I do not believe that this bill addresses any of that that we heard from municipal leaders as a priority. Many of the concerns with this bill outlined by my colleague are the ones that are coming from the municipal leaders across this province.

For instance, Mayor Nenshi from Calgary said, and I can quote as well: I would be very interested to see if we can actually use these regulations to accomplish what we are trying to do, which is to give small businesses looking at huge tax increases a break; we want to make sure that this doesn't lead to a race to the bottom with different jurisdictions who are competing for businesses to start giving them tax breaks and tax breaks and tax breaks. End quote. That's a direct quote from the mayor of Calgary, who is also sharing the same concerns that are articulated by this side, that were articulated by the MLA for Calgary-Buffero, that it's not giving them new powers. There is a concern that it may just get them into competing with each other in a race to the bottom.

Similarly, the mayor of Edmonton has also shared similar concerns, and I quote: I think we have got to have a conversation in our region on how to use these tools to grow the regional economy because selective use by one of us to undermine the other could be one risk here.

A couple of things, I think, are clear as concerns coming from the mayor of Edmonton. Here they are trying to collaborate with each other and make development plans in collaboration with the surrounding municipalities. Clearly, this bill has the potential to start a competition among various municipalities and jurisdictions. Again, it's that same thing: it's a race to the bottom. That's exactly what, I guess, this side of the House has outlined. These are legitimate concerns coming from municipalities, municipal leaders. Like, more than 50 per cent of the population of Alberta lives in just these two cities, and both mayors of these cities are warning you that these are unintended consequences, that these are the consequences that can follow from this piece of legislation.

The second thing is that every bill they come up with has the same kind of speaking notes, that it will somehow create jobs and that it will kick-start the economy. That was, I guess, their campaign platform, that they will create jobs, that they will build pipelines, that they will kick-start the economy. But there is nothing in this bill that gives us any indication that it will lead to the creation of jobs. In fact, so far what they have done is that they have reversed the carbon levy, and they have given almost \$4.5 billion in a tax break, all in the name of: it will create jobs.

I represent Calgary, and we know that people in Calgary are still looking for jobs. Despite these policies that when in opposition they always described as killing jobs and that that was the reason the jobs were not coming to Calgary, we saw in the last couple of weeks Repsol laying off 30 per cent of the staff from Calgary in their regional Alberta offices. If those were the recipes for job creation, I think we would have seen otherwise. There should be some more investment. There should be some positive job numbers. But, no, their policies, whether it's Bill 7, whether it's their corporate tax break, whether it's their repeal of the carbon levy, are not the solution.

In fact, I have been asking about oil-by-rail contracts for the last few weeks now. When we were in government, we got credible advice. We got advice from the public service that it would create 120,000 barrels of capacity per day and that it would give the province 2 billion plus dollars in revenues. Now somehow they're saying: "No. It would have cost the province \$1.5 billion in losses."

That's exactly the kind of project, that's exactly the kind of initiative where we worked with industry. They told us that we needed takeaway capacity, and that would have created takeaway capacity, but we don't hear anything about that, where we have a real chance of getting some jobs, getting some activity in the economy. We don't get any answers, and now we are, I guess, supposed to believe that somehow Bill 7 is kick-starting this economy and creating jobs. It's not.

The other thing, I guess, relates to when I was talking about the general themes, that my colleague talked about, with respect to consultation. If there was proper consultation with the municipalities, I think the number one issue, Minister, that you will hear will be the MSI. They're not looking for anything that's already in the legislation. They're not looking for further clarification of section 347 of the Municipal Government Act. They're asking for something completely different, and that's their future funding arrangement with the province. They're looking for something that we started with Edmonton and Calgary. They're looking to build a relationship, a sustainable relationship, with the province so that they can serve their communities. This in no way, shape, or manner helps our municipalities.

8:50

The third thing. Not only does this power exist in this legislation; there are numerous examples of when cities relied on this section and did exactly what that side, the government side, is describing that this bill will do, that they will be able to defer taxes for multiple years, that they will be able to give tax breaks. Sure, there are many examples. The most recent one, again, was from Calgary. There was huge concern with respect to taxation. Small-business owners were worried about it. There was some vacancy in the downtown. There was a rally as well around that. Council met with business leaders, and they agreed on a tax break of \$130 million, I believe. That's exactly the kind of thing that we heard that this bill will do, but municipalities are already doing exactly the same kind of thing.

There are other examples. In 2015 Lethbridge did exactly the same thing. They established a TRIP, a targeted redevelopment incentive policy, to promote new construction or major renovation of medium- to large-scale commercial retail in mixed-use building projects that generate significant and ongoing expansion to the assessment base in the downtown core. Clearly, there is that ability, and clearly that section, that provision, is already working. Municipalities are relying on these powers and provisions to serve their constituents and to serve their municipalities.

Chestermere in 2019 relied on similar provisions and brought forward a cancellation for nonresidential commercial developments and seniors' housing and multifamily housing in the form of three- to four-storey apartment buildings. The city provided an example of a \$10 million building that qualified for the amount. The developer used municipal taxes, and the taxes were waived so that they could receive a refund. Clearly, Chestermere has used that provision and has used the powers that are already in the Municipal Government Act to create those kinds of incentives. If businesses are struggling, if there is any need to reduce taxes or even refund taxes, they're already doing it.

Calgary has done it before as well, where they cancelled the taxes owed by the Royal Canadian Legion in Kensington in the amount of \$94,000.

Not only do these powers exist in our Municipal Government Act, the current legislative framework, but these powers are used by municipalities for exactly the kinds of purposes that this government described that Bill 7 will achieve. So Bill 7 is clearly a redundant piece of legislation and a redundant authority because this authority already exists, and municipalities have been using it

that way for a long time. I think that authority is working, and we never heard that any municipality was looking for that, as I mentioned previously.

When I met with municipal leaders, I think the number one issue coming from municipal leaders was that they want a sustainable, predictable funding relationship with the province so that they can set their priorities on their budget cycle and planning cycle, and they are clearly not getting that from this government. They are rightfully worried about that, too, because for everything we ask government about – funding schools, funding programs, even when we ask about numbers in interim supply . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much. I was listening to the Member for Calgary-McCall, and I just have a couple of things that I'd like him to expand on. The first is that I know he had some really difficult files when he was the minister of – was it human services?

**Mr. Sabir:** Community and Social Services.

**Member Ceci:** At the end it was Community and Social Services, but before that it was a more expanded ministry. He had a number of difficult files in that ministry and just couldn't move forward unilaterally. There were many stakeholders, interested groups, quite vocal, and he had to work with his ministry officials to design consultation approaches. So one question I would have is: what did real consultation look like to you as a minister? I know that the government keeps relying on the fact that they won the election. "The platform said that we would bring in municipal tax incentives. So there you go. Here it is."

The last thing I have to ask you about is that when you were a minister, when I was a minister, when the former minister of economic development and trade was a minister, you only get so much time around the cabinet table. You have to work closely with the policy co-ordination office to bring forward bills, and there are a number of committees you have to kind of work with that are subcommittees of cabinet to see what the economic implications are, to see what the social implications of your bill are, et cetera. It can be quite, you know, attractive to get in front of all of those different committees and to push your bill. The question I have is: did you ever find yourself in a position where you were pushing back on administration and saying, "No; this bill is not ready" or "It's not the right kind of thing we're bringing forward; we don't need to bring it forward at this time; let's revise it"?

I'd just like to know what your experience was.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you for the question. I think I can start off by saying that, yes, Community and Social Services, or human services, is one of the most important files in that pretty much on a monthly basis it deals with almost a quarter of a million people. Oftentimes these are Albertans who find themselves in circumstances where they need the government to step up and help them address issues facing them.

I can say one thing with absolute, I guess, confidence. My colleague the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo was the only Finance minister who I can say saw people behind those numbers. Those numbers on these budget documents were never just the numbers; he could see people behind those numbers. I was able to make progress on many different files; for instance, Bill 26, that ties the rate of income support, AISH, seniors' benefits to the consumer

price index so that over time, with the rising costs, the value of the benefit doesn't erode. Certainly, I have a lot of respect for the member and the work that he did as Finance minister.

With respect to consultation, when I became minister, the first file that landed on my desk was with respect to safety standards that were brought forward by the previous government. Clearly, some good suggestions with respect to safety were in there, but they were brought forward without consultation with the stakeholders in the persons with developmental disabilities program. The first thing that they shared with me was the slogan Nothing about Us without Us. Even though in that regulation there may have been some things that were critical to their safety, the way those things were brought forward – they never weighed in on those things. They never were consulted on those things, and their viewpoint was that they're the ones who know their safety the best. That's why we went into consultation. For the first time in the history of this province more than 2,000 people from that program . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, would the minister like to close debate? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to close debate on Bill 7. Again, I have listened to some of the comments made by my colleagues on the other side. They talked about consultation, about no need for the bill. They talked about MSI. It really is rich coming from the members opposite. It strikes me that they don't understand what it would require to undo the damage that their four years did to this province. They talk about consultation. They brought in a multibillion-dollar carbon tax that they did not even mention to the people of this particular province, a carbon tax they had no mandate whatsoever to impose upon this province, that has devastated families and communities.

9:00

Madam Speaker, you know, debt and deficit were the order of the day in the last four years that the NDP presided over this province. They took a province that had a combined debt of \$12.9 billion to nearly \$60 billion, projected by their own fiscal quarter announcement sometime in March 2018. That particular debt is likely projected to be more than \$100 billion. They presided over a province where there are more than 200,000 of our fellow citizens out of work across this province.

You know, again, it is rich that they don't understand that this is one part of our entire package to reinvigorate our economy, to get those 200,000 people back to work. Madam Speaker, they presided over an economy that saw businesses fleeing this province in record numbers. It used to be the case that investors saw Alberta as a destination of choice for investment. In the last four years that they have presided over Alberta, we saw a record flight of investors. They caused so much lack of investor confidence in our province that investors were so scared to invest in our province. This province used to attract workers from across this country and across the globe in pursuit of opportunity. In the last four years that the NDP presided over our province, we saw a record number of people leaving our province because they could no longer conclude that Alberta was that land of opportunity. That was the extent of the damage that the NDP did to our province and economy, and it is what we have inherited from them that we are now trying to undo to kick-start our economy.

The property tax incentives that we are proposing, Madam Speaker, would help in that effort. You know, MSI: what I've heard from them is a presumption that MSI is not on the table. We have

been consulting with our municipal partners. When I was sworn in, my first task in the last one week was to reach out to reeves and mayors across this province. There are 352 of them, and I am still on that particular task. I don't want us to confuse MSI, which we are going to have to deal with, with what we are discussing here today.

Again, this is one part of what we need to do to rebuild our economy. I have had the opportunity to discuss Bill 7 with our municipal partners, Madam Speaker. In fact, I have travelled to many of the regional meetings of the AUMA to discuss this particular issue, and I can tell you that there's a lot of support for this particular bill, contrary to what the members opposite would like you to believe.

With that, Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to close debate on this particular bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate June 17: Mr. Shandro]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me to further the debate here on Bill 8, which, as we all know, should be aptly named Bill Hate. I want to focus on that because I know I've got concerns around other parts of the bill, things like that, but this is the one that I have very, very serious concerns about. I keep hearing from the government benches about how: "We won the election. We have a mandate to move our agenda forward. Oh, my gosh, we even had . . ."

**Member Ceci:** You've never heard that.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Unfortunately, I have heard that. Yeah. You know, as early as this evening the hon. Government House Leader was talking about listening to cheers and telling him to move his agenda forward.

Well, the problem that I have, Madam Speaker, is that I don't believe that the Education minister consulted the one stakeholder that this directly affects, and that's the kids that are in the GSAs and QSAs. I don't believe that. If you did, prove it to me. I'm willing to stand here and eat humble pie, more than happy to do it. But I don't think you can because I've stood outside schools, and students are outraged. I stood outside on the steps of this Legislature, and people were outraged. If so much consultation went into that section, why are we seeing these protests? Why do we have students who couldn't vote in the last election, couldn't have their voices heard – I'm betting if they could've had their voices heard, they would not have been voting for this on this one simple point.

Words mean a lot, Madam Speaker, language. Maybe I would suggest that some of the hon. members might want to take a good, old-fashioned union course on simple language because when you look at the language around GSAs, it is not some of the most comprehensive. It is not some of the strongest in the country. What we have right now is, and that's why you're seeing all of these protests because even the kids can figure it out. They're the ones that this affects. I am happy to give the government benches a chance to re-examine this, a chance to go back, consult with the ones that this affects, the ones that couldn't vote in the last election.

With that, Madam Speaker, I have an amendment that I will pass to you and await instructions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This will be known as REF1.

Hon. member, please proceed.

9:10

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to be able on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-North West to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Here is your chance to consult with the single-largest stakeholder that this bill affects, the membership of the GSAs and QSAs. You are able, through the committee, which we have seen all of our private members’ bills sent through because it was so important to get that feedback – here is our opportunity now to send this to committee to be able to consult with the students that are affected by this, get their feedback. My bet is that once you hear that, all of the clauses that you see around this bill with regard to GSAs: there won’t be an amendment that can come fast enough to get rid of it.

We have seen so many protests across the province from our young emerging leaders that want a safe space to be themselves. They just want something to belong to, and the language in here currently as proposed will put that at risk. Rules requiring posting of details around the supports for GSAs. Policies won’t be able to use the word “gay.” I don’t understand what the problem with the word “gay” is, but for some reason we seem to have to address it. It’s like we have to somehow reinvent the bicycle wheel here.

So I cannot stand here in good conscience, Madam Speaker, allow this to go through as is. We need to send this to committee. We need to get proper consultation. I’ve heard about how so much work has been done in the first 25 days, 21 days. I know, hon. member, you think it’s kind of funny, but the kids certainly don’t. They don’t find it funny at all. If you’ve been able to move so fast to do so much in such a short period of time, it should take you no time to get this done, no time whatsoever. Go out; consult with the kids that are directly affected by this. I bet you’ll be surprised to find out what you hear. I don’t know how in good conscience we can vote this through knowing full well the risk that this will put our kids at. I’ve made mention of this before. I’ve seen tweets that have said: I would rather have a dead son than a gay son.

**Mr. Nally:** Table it.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I’d be happy to do that.

We’ve had discussions in here about that one is too many. Well, is that one too many? Is 10 too many, Madam Speaker? A hundred? A thousand? At what point do we have to stop and say, “It’s gone too far. There’s too much risk. We need to back up. We need to rethink our position”? So here’s our chance. Here’s our chance to pause the process, step on the brake, send this to committee, consult with the stakeholders that this affects directly, the kids. I would strongly urge all members of this House to support this amendment. Don’t put any of these kids at risk before you talk to them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore for bringing forward this

amendment. I think it’s an excellent idea that we send this bill to committee and consult with stakeholders because, clearly, the government hasn’t done this.

I’d like the member from Edmonton-Decore to give me some comments. I know that he received a bit of a rough ride from the members opposite. Of course, the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain was trying to shout him down as he was bringing forward this amendment. Obviously, he didn’t like the idea of consulting. Perhaps he’s, you know, not too concerned about the welfare of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students in his riding, which is a real shame, Madam Speaker. I can tell that member that we are deeply concerned about those students, and that’s why we’re working so hard to protect them.

I saw the Member for Morinville-St. Albert encourage the Member for Edmonton-Decore to table a tweet in which the tweeter said that he would rather have a dead son than a gay son, as if the Member for Morinville-St. Albert doesn’t even believe that it’s possible in this day and age that parents would be outraged and horrified that their children came out as homosexual.

Madam Speaker, that’s the very problem with this bill as it is. Those members opposite will refuse to even acknowledge that this is a problem that needs to be solved. It’s my hope that by sending this bill to committee, we can actually hear from people who will be negatively affected by the very proposals that this government is putting forward so that those members for Morinville-St. Albert and Spruce Grove-Stony Plain can hear from people who will be affected by this and wipe the smirks off their faces.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, through the chair.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes. I appreciate that, Madam Speaker. It’s a little bit upsetting to me when the members opposite sit there, you know, grinning like little children who have just filled their pants at the thought of sending this bill to committee and the thought of parents actually kicking their children out of their houses because they’ve come out as gay.

I’d like the Member for Edmonton-Decore to tell us what he’s going to likely hear from his constituents when he tells them that the members for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and Morinville-St. Albert sat here smugly denying the problem, that is very real and that many students in this province are struggling with.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. The member is quite correct. You know, we didn’t even have to see some of these displays this evening. I’ve already heard from students that were quite angry that this bill has been brought forward and without even allowing them a chance to have their say on it.

I recall speaking with one group, and this part is going to be very hard for me, Madam Speaker, because I get very emotional about it. The student looked at me straight in the eye and asked me: “Why is it that they hate me so much for being who I am?” I didn’t have an answer. I said, “I don’t know.” The student said: “I just want to be who I am. I just want to have friends like everybody else. I just want to be treated normal, but because I’m a little bit different looking, I have to potentially get subjected to stuff before I’m ready to tell people about it.” It was very, very difficult for me. Very, very difficult. I promised that person that I would not go quietly on this.

9:20

We need to consult with these kids. We need to hear the fear in their voices, because they are scared. Like I said, I’ve certainly seen examples where the parents have been absolutely accepting and

loving and have promoted that. My gosh, I've seen a close friend of mine from high school whose daughter has become an incredible...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today in support of the amendment brought forward by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Decore, that amendment, of course, to refer this matter to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities for further consultation.

What I'd actually like to talk about today is something that I think has been remarkably absent from our conversations around Bill 8, and that's largely because I don't think much consideration or, frankly, thought has been given to this by the government that's brought forward this bill. I'd actually like to speak to the other pieces of the Education Act, the legislation that this government is seeking to proclaim, because I think it's important to remember that there are quite a few other provisions in the Education Act, although largely unsubstantive and not achieving the intent which the Minister of Education has suggested they will achieve, which I think will further go to show that this is really a smokescreen for bringing forward provisions to roll back protections for LGBTQ students and weaken GSAs.

However, I'd like to actually speak to some of the other pieces of the Education Act. I think my fellow colleagues – I've already spoken a fair bit about it, but I will continue to speak about it, and I know my colleagues will as well. But I have a bit of an advantage here, which is, as I've mentioned before in this House, in this Assembly, that I worked on the Education Act in my period of time while I was a civil servant in Alberta Education. In fact, between the periods of time of 2009 and 2013 that was some of the primary work that I did, work with three former ministers of Education under Progressive Conservative governments on the consultation, on the drafting, on the revisions around the Education Act. So I do have a great deal of experience and knowledge with this act.

It is actually a bit of a disappointment for me that a project that I'd worked on for many years, which I had sort of accepted was no longer current or appropriate legislation even despite the good work of the many people who worked on it – I'd long ago let go of that since it has been over seven years since this legislation was passed. But now to see it brought forward: the irony is that it's being brought forward, I believe, only to weaken GSAs. That's a little bit heartbreaking for me, I have to say, as somebody who worked so hard on those former pieces of legislation, but I will talk a little bit about it.

The first pieces I want to talk about. I mentioned in this House that the Education Act came as a result of a long consultation on overhauling the education system as a whole, and that consultation was called Inspiring Education. It was led by then minister David Hancock, and a great deal of resources and money, frankly, were spent on that consultation with Albertans to talk about how would we envision education for the future in this province. The Inspiring Education document, which is still available – you can do a Google search and find that – while it's a great piece of information and a great document outlining what was heard during the Inspiring Education consultation, what unfortunately did not come out of it was a great deal of detail in terms of how to revise one piece of education, which is legislation. Legislation is only one way that we influence and impact and develop our education system.

There wasn't a lot of detail that came out of Inspiring Education, but one piece that did come out was a conversation around the

importance of allowing learners, students, in the future to be able to learn at their own pace and to have a more flexible understanding of the environments in which they'd learn and the pace at which they would learn. To support that in legislation, the Education Act made a number of changes to what was currently in the School Act, and those are changes around the age of access. With that, Madam Speaker, what I'm referring to is that under the current School Act and the School Act at the time there was – you know, children between a certain age have a right of access to education in this province. That means that if they approach any school board within that age, they are entitled to receive an education program, and their resident school board is required to provide them an education program that's consistent with the standards that are set out by the ministry. For the longest time that has been that by September 1 of any given year any child who is six years of age or older or younger than 19 years of age was entitled to receive an education program. That's what was in the School Act at the time. That is what's still in the School Act. What the Education Act did was propose a change to raise the maximum age of entitlement to an education program to age 21. That meant that any student who was 21 years of age as of September 1 was entitled to go to school and receive an education program by their resident school board.

That was important because what we heard was that here was a significant concern amongst the government at the time, the ministry at the time, about encouraging kids to complete high school. For a lot of kids having a longer time within which they were entitled to go to school would be key to them completing their education, particularly students who might have come to Canada at a later age. Maybe they were English language learners for the first time when they came to Canada. They needed a little bit more time to complete high school. The government at the time felt it was very important to encourage kids to do that because, of course, having a high school diploma is key to being able to access so many more jobs, skills training, postsecondary. It's a basic. It's a fundamental. I think we can all agree that we want to encourage kids to complete high school. Increasing the age to 21 was meant to do that.

Now, I do want to point out that at the time and even currently, now, the Alberta Education funding manual will fund students up to the age of 20, so this was actually only extending the age of access by one year. I mean, that was the intent. We've heard the Minister of Education rise in this House and say that the purpose of proclaiming the Education Act was to modernize the school system. That was one of the key ways that the government at the time when the Education Act was drafted meant to achieve that goal, to actually say: okay; if we're going to modernize, we're going to let kids attend school for a longer period of time. Unfortunately, though, that is one of the key pieces in Bill 8 that has been repealed. The government is not actually moving forward with that piece of transformation which was in the Education Act, which was to extend the age of access of education. They've rolled it back to what's currently in the School Act.

Now, I'm not going to, you know, dispute that the previous NDP government also did not adopt that. They still had the School Act. They were under no obligation to take that on, but they didn't extend the age of access either, and the reality is because it does cost money. To provide kids' education for a longer period of time means you've got older kids who are going to be going to school. They're going to be funded students. School boards would have to find spaces for them. That, realistically, does cost money, but the NDP government was at least honest about the fact that by not raising the age of access, they were doing so because they couldn't afford to at the time. I know that will shock some of the members across the aisle because they seem to believe that the NDP did not

make any decisions based on fiscal responsibility, but – ha, ha, ha, guess what? – they did.

The other piece about this. Another piece that was brought forward as part of the Education Act was increasing the age of compulsory attendance at school. Again, the current School Act states that right now a student may drop out, essentially, from school at age 16, so beyond the age of 16 kids are not required to stay in school. Certainly, because of the age of access they can stay in school longer, but they're not required to beyond the age of 16. Again, the original intent behind the Education Act as was drafted in 2012 is that the government wanted to encourage kids to stay in school. They didn't want to make it easy for kids to drop out. Some kids could turn 16 before they even start grade 11, so some kids could, honestly, have dropped out of school in grade 10.

There was a thought: let's encourage kids by requiring them to stay in school until the age of 17. They had to stay in school. This is another piece that, yeah, I guess I'm not even really sure if it actually could cost more money. It could in theory because, you know, I don't think any government is banking on kids dropping out of school early as a way to save a buck. In theory, I guess, there are some kids who would stay in school longer. Again, I'm disappointed to see that this was a very actually common-sense thing to do, to encourage kids to stay in school, to actually require them to do so, but this government under Bill 8 has once again not gone forward with that change either, which I think is disappointing.

So what changes will the Education Act as proclaimed if Bill 8 passes by this minister – what changes will happen? Again, I don't think that much light has been given to any of these issues. I think they speak to the need to refer this matter to a committee because these are things that nobody is talking about in this House. We're not hearing about it, and I'm not even confident – I'll be quite honest – that the government members across the way even know about some of these changes.

**9:30**

One of them is that under the Education Act school boards will be permitted to operate alternative programs outside of their boundaries. During the time that I was in Alberta Education, there was certainly a plethora of private schools that sought to become alternative programs operated by public and separate school boards. There are a lot of reasons for that. School boards were willing to take these programs on as alternative programs because they would get funding for the students who are now enrolled in these alternative programs. For private schools, it also allowed for full funding. The operating body that operated the previous private school saw advantages to being part of the public system as well because, again, these kids would get full funding. Often transportation would be provided. So it was seen to be an advantage.

Now, there were many, many, many examples when I was with Alberta Education – and I can say this continued on well past that; I worked for another five years directly for school boards – where there were many former private schools that became alternative programs that still continued to operate as if they were private schools, with the giant exception of getting full funding, which is hugely problematic. For an alternative program, the school board should be responsible for operating those programs.

One of the things that we saw happen in the early 2000s, which the Education Act was looking at, was the fact that there were school jurisdictions that were operating as alternative programs, programs that were outside of their jurisdictions. Now, we can have philosophical discussions about whether or not we agree with that. The situations that arose that led to this piece of the Education Act were because there were some school boards that

were operating alternative programs, like, across the province from where they were. This is not just in the neighbouring jurisdiction. It was far across the province, and it was largely because the private school that operated that former alternative program could not convince their local school board to take them on as an alternative program, so they shopped around until they found a school board that would.

In my view, this is a very problematic provision. The Education Act is now going to expressly allow for school boards to operate programs outside of their jurisdiction. That's a problem, in my view, because school boards are locally elected bodies. They are elected by the electors in their jurisdiction to represent their interests, just as we all are. They are locally elected to operate programs that serve their students in their jurisdictions and respond to the needs of their communities. When school boards are operating programs outside of their jurisdictions, they're actually acting outside their means. It would be the same as one of us trying to affect policy in another province. We were not elected to do that. We have our jurisdictions, we have our boundaries, and that's who we're meant to serve. We're not intended to serve residents or electors outside of our boundaries.

Frankly, I think it was very problematic, and it allowed for an undermining of the very foundation of what locally elected school boards are supposed to be about because they're now serving in a community where there's no elected representative in that jurisdiction on the school board. They're serving students that don't belong there. They're serving parents who can't vote for those trustees. I think that's problematic, but at the very least that's my view on it.

I think who'd have a very strong view on this are school board trustees. Again, we've mentioned in this House a few times that over 50 per cent of current sitting school board trustees were not around when this Education Act was passed in 2012. They haven't had the opportunity to express what they believe is an appropriate role of a school board trustee should they be operating programs outside of their jurisdiction. As I've indicated, I don't agree with it, but certainly I'm sure – and I worked with many, many school boards – some might; some might not. But that is a discussion that those school board trustees should have an opportunity to have. That's one of the reasons why I believe this referral to the committee is important.

Another amendment to the current School Act that the Education Act would bring in is a requirement that all school boards have audit committees. Specifically, it will set out that all school boards and charter schools will be required to appoint an auditor – they're already required to do that – but must also establish an audit committee consisting of public members. The audit committee will recommend the appointment of an auditor to the board, review the audited financial statements, and report to the board.

A comment I have on this one is just that, in fact, many school boards already do this. They already have an audit committee where public members get to review the audited financial statements of the jurisdiction of the school board and comment on it. This may be an unnecessary change. I certainly don't object to it. I think everybody should agree that public bodies such as school boards, who are almost primarily publicly funded, should have their books open and reviewable by the public. I don't think anybody would disagree with that. Again, I'm not even certain if that's the kind of revolutionary or transformational change that the minister is looking to achieve by bringing forward Bill 8. It's a nice administrative change – I certainly think many people might like it, might not like it – but you wouldn't even need to pass legislation to do that, really.

Honestly, the minister has significant authorities already under the School Act around audited financial statements. We've seen ministers do it. Previous Progressive Conservative ministers . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)?  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just, as always, very impressed by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's knowledge on this topic. I know she's got a great deal more that she can share, so I would ask her to please continue with her thoughts.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Audit committees. I will end on saying that I just think it's a fine change, but to require it by legislation could be characterized by some to be a little bit of red tape and just unnecessary, frankly. School boards should be held accountable, but I don't think it's necessary to do it in legislation.

Actually, another change that I think a lot of school board trustees would have a lot of things to say about is the establishment – not a requirement, but there is an establishment – by the Education Act that all school boards will be required to have a trustee code of conduct. Now, the NDP government already under the former Minister of Education did bring in changes to the School Act to require that school boards have trustee codes of conduct. In fact, most of them should have had that in place already by September 1, 2018. What's key about what's being proposed in the Education Act is that not only must each board have a trustee code of conduct and that trustee code of conduct must set out sanctions for breaches of their code of conduct, but the Education Act will allow for sanctions that lead up to and include disqualification of a trustee from a board. That means that a school board, if there is a dysfunctional member on their board, could in theory disqualify one of their own members.

Now, again, that's a good conversation to have, but some might argue that an elected official who is a school board trustee should not be able to be disqualified by its colleagues. I actually say this knowing that there are certainly some situations where I've worked with school boards that have had one or two very problematic and disruptive trustees, who can really hamper the functioning of the board. That can be very problematic, but I think that even more problematic is the idea of an elected official being disqualified by a majority vote of their colleagues. I think we would all as elected officials be very troubled by the idea that any of us could be disqualified by our colleagues.

There are already clear provisions in the School Act and in the Education Act where there is automatic disqualification for certain, you know, breaches of conflict of interest, breaches of the Criminal Code, and those are all very standard and should be necessary for all elected officials. But the idea that a board of trustees could disqualify one of its own: again, I can guarantee you that the 50 per cent of current school board trustees who were not around when this change was presented might have thoughts on that. They might have a lot of thoughts about the idea. We know that sometimes school boards can be fractious. Sometimes there can be factions. There can be all of that, as happens in elected bodies. I'm sure a lot of them would have some very strong views on that, which is yet another reason why it would be important to refer this to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities to talk to school board trustees about what they think about the idea that one of them could be disqualified by their colleagues.

These are just examples. I can tell you that I'm certain there are going to be plenty of opportunities for me to speak to the other

changes in the School Act. I bring this forward because I think it's very important for the members on the other side to really know what it means to proclaim the Education Act. I'm not saying that all of these changes are good or bad. I have very strong views about the changes that weaken the protections for GSAs, but there is a lot of other content and material in this bill that we need to be cognizant of. It's not simply just rubber-stamping something. It was seven years ago. A lot has changed. Many of the members in this House have changed since then. Therefore, I think we need to give very real thought to the implications.

More importantly – I highlighted this the last time I spoke to this bill – there is a significant amount of detail that still governs the education system, that will continue to govern the education system under the new act, that the government is trying to proclaim, that is set out in regulation. We are sitting here at the end of June, and the government intends to proclaim this as of September 1.

School boards and charter schools and private schools and parents and home educators need to know the rules by which they are operating. Schools don't just begin operating on September 1. There is a great deal of planning that goes into that. Whether it be transportation or fees or financial accountability requirements or charter school operations, those are significant pieces of information that I think the school system requires to be able to function efficiently and smoothly. I know this government believes in efficient functioning of government bodies and public bodies – and I agree with you – but we need to give the system time to do that.

Thank you.

9:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there other members to speak to the bill?  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's always a privilege to rise in this House and speak to everyone. But before I do, I'm hoping that you'll grant me some leeway tonight. Someone very special to me is watching from her home right now. Through you to her, I just want to say: Adriana, I love you. A little bit unconventional, I know, but she's watching, so I just wanted to let her know.

Privilege. I wanted to specifically focus on why it's so important for this bill to go to committee. The reality is that we all have a certain level of privilege. Now, there are very few people in this House who can actually say that they've lived their lives from the experience of someone who identifies as LGBTQ-two-spirited. Very few people in this House. Number one, we have to check the fact that we live with the privilege of not having gone through the experiences that people who identify as LGBTQ-two-spirited have to live. We don't know the realities that they have to live.

Luckily, on this side of the House we have a member who's very vocal about her experience, and I've learned so much from her on the realities that she has had to live with here in the city; not only that but also coming from rural Alberta and what that experience was like, growing up in rural Alberta and going through the reality of having to first understand the reality that they were living and then also being able to identify as someone who's LGBTQ and sharing that with the rest of the world when she thought it was necessary to share that reality with the world, not when somebody who she thought she could trust could actually go out and out her to the rest of her community or her family.

Now, by no means am I saying that I know everything that there is to know just because I've spoken to one person. I would never claim that. But what I am saying is that I do have the privilege of not having to actually live that reality and the discrimination that

comes along with being someone who has come out and has decided to share their sexual orientation with the rest of the world. I don't believe that many members of this House do. This is why it's so important.

I thank the Member for Edmonton-Decore for actually bringing forward this amendment to Bill 8 so that it can be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities specifically for this reason. Then we have the opportunity to actually hear from members of the LGBTQ-two-spirited community, that we can potentially invite to actually speak to the committee. Now, what better way to consult on the bill than to provide those people with a voice? Let me please remind all the members of this House that . . . [An electronic device sounded] Thank you for the musical accompaniment. I really appreciate it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, perhaps take it outside.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

As I was saying – as I was saying – not only do we have the privilege, but we also have the duty, because I'm pretty sure that every member in this House has constituents that identify as LGBTQ-two-spirited that actually live in their ridings, and it is our duty to represent everybody in our ridings, not just those that we are closest to or our family members or our close friends. It's our duty to actually reach out and speak to as many constituents as we can make possible throughout our role as representatives and MLAs, to actually get out there and speak to people and ask them about the realities that they are living, the issues and the concerns that they have.

I know that this is not new to the members in this House – I know – but it's very easy to have blinders on when you're always meeting with the same constituents and the same stakeholders and you're listening to similar issues and similar concerns on the regular, and you're not getting out there and speaking to people who perhaps don't share your same views. I've often said this to constituents of mine who don't necessarily agree with me ideologically: "Yes, I do have my own political ideology. It's mine. I grew up with it. I was educated in it. I learned as much as I possibly could about my own political ideology. But my role in this House is not only to represent that particular ideology; it's also to get out there on the doorsteps and meet with people, talk to them, and also listen to their perspective and, hopefully, be able to learn from that perspective as well."

Now, I've shared in the House before my cultural background, the fact that my family came to Canada fleeing violence from the September 11, 1973, military coup, and because of that, I had the honour and privilege, even though I came from that reality, that violence and was now here, of then learning and standing up for human rights and about the atrocities that were being committed all over Latin America at the time. I've spoken before of the discrimination that even my brother had to endure when we first came, because, of course, I came as a child – I only came as a two-year-old – and the fact is that I wasn't in school when my brother went. My older brother experienced discrimination at that point because we were the newest newcomers to Canada at the time, like many other newcomers have had the experience since.

Like I've mentioned before, the majority of Canadians and Albertans are very welcoming and very nice and always extend a hand, but it only takes one to create that doubt in one's mind if this is really home or not.

Now, I'm very happy that I've had the privilege to come from that reality, that refugee experience, and now stand here in this House and be able to come and share that refugee experience with the rest of Albertans as we continue to make legislation or, in this

case, voice our concern with this particular legislation so that we can make sure that this bill actually goes to committee. That's what solidarity is about. When you have a certain perspective and you can see how your human rights have been trampled upon, when it comes to other people's human rights, it's not only sympathy that you have, but you actually empathize with that person because you've actually had to live an experience where you know – now, you're not living the same experience.

9:50

This is going back to the whole issue of privilege that I was talking about. We have the privilege of not having to live the experience of someone who identifies as LGBTQ-two-spirited. We have the privilege of not having to suffer the same discrimination while we are in public. But through other experiences we can gather that – and in my case it was racial discrimination. And because of that racial discrimination and the fact that I was a newcomer to Canada and my family all came as newcomers, having experienced that discrimination, I can only imagine the discrimination that people who identify as LGBTQ-two-spirited are going through, but at least I gather that they're going through it.

Therefore, it's a responsibility, when one has this privilege, to then make sure to extend through solidarity the fact that we need to make sure that all people that are suffering discrimination here in this province don't have to go through it. That's what this amendment is really about.

As I've explained before when getting up to speak to Bill 8, GSAs and QSAs are about creating safe spaces in our schools. Now, the school is a hub for the community, and many times what happens is that the school is a starting point from which information and education actually filter out into our communities. I see this all the time, and I'm sure that members on the other side of the House see it, too, when they go and visit the schools in their ridings. You have that opportunity to actually go into the schools and speak to the children, the students who are actually sitting in those schools, and learn what they're talking about.

I've had the opportunity to meet with so many students. You know, they're not students who actually identify as LGBTQ-two-spirited, but they get it. They get why GSAs and QSAs are necessary within our schools. I bet that if you go into any school right now, Madam Speaker, any school in this entire province right now, and you speak to students, they're going to share with you how aware they are about antibullying policies and how important it is to treat each other with respect and dignity, which is what GSAs and QSAs are all about, an opportunity for people who are questioning and are going through a process of coming out and identifying as LGBTQ-two-spirited to have that opportunity and have this safe space where they can have the support from their peers within their school so that they can share what they're going through and not have to fear being outed to their parents.

If someone is going through this process of questioning, the last thing that they're going to want to do is to share that with people who could potentially, as I said before, kick them out of the house, like the Member for Edmonton-Decore was sharing. He actually got a tweet from somebody, and I don't want to put words in his mouth, so I'm not even going to try to repeat what the tweet said because I can't remember. I just remember that it was horrendous. It was along the lines that a child would – oh. Now I remember. It was: I'd rather have a dead son than a gay son.

GSAs and QSAs would be weakened by Bill 8. Now, I know that the minister has stood in this House several times and has said the opposite. I respect the minister and the minister's opinion, where she's coming from, but in my humble opinion, I can't agree with that. In my very humble opinion, I cannot agree with it because I



know that the legislation would actually weaken GSAs and QSAs. The fact that not all educational institutions across this province would actually have the responsibility of making sure that when students request a GSA or a QSA, they would actually have to implement it within their school. That's part of the problem here.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to rise in the Chamber today under 29(2)(a) and to respond to the member opposite, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, against this amendment. I must say that I am slightly disappointed when the member opposite asked for some leniency. I thought we were going to hear maybe another verse, another track from his poetry. My disappointment was furthered when the Member for Calgary-McCall started playing some music, and I thought we were going to hear a nice rendition of Jodeci or something. But I digress.

You know, we've talked a lot tonight about this amendment, and I need to speak out against it and speak in favour of Bill 8 because I do believe that Bill 8 is one that intends to protect students, keep them safe, and that is exactly what the Minister of Education has intended to do. It should not come as a surprise, Madam Speaker, with Bill 8, given that in our policy platform on two separate occasions, that I was able to come up with very quickly, one on page 48, it says:

- Education will be strengthened by working with parents, teachers, principals, and trustees to protect school choice, improve accountability, and deliver the best possible outcomes for our children.

And on page 60, in proclaiming the Education Act, 2012, to take effect on September 1, 2019:

- A UCP government will trust the hard work done by those who created the 2012 Education Act and proclaim that legislation, already passed by the Legislature.

There's been a lot of talk about the concern for bullying, and I wanted to maybe mention quickly the definition of bullying – I don't usually do this – and thought I'd read it out: the blustering, quarrelsome, overbearing person who habitually badgers and intimidates others. Oftentimes sitting in this House, listening to this debate, I find that we are getting just that from the members opposite. In particular, I remember hearing the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on June 12 say: I tune out sometimes because I don't agree. The purpose of this Chamber is to represent our constituents, not to bully each other or do as the member said. He said that he goes out and knocks on doors and listens to others' perspectives. Well, he has now contradicted himself.

Madam Speaker, I contend that the purpose of this bill is in fact to protect children, and we have also said that schools cannot disclose a student's membership in an inclusion group as there are student privacy considerations that trump other legislation. But the members opposite have been very creative with the things that they have said. If they spent as much time talking to constituents as they do in creating new names for the bills that we introduce in this Legislature – something like the pick-your-pockets bill, Bill Hate, or the bad-faith bargaining bill – they might actually listen to other constituents who actually don't agree with them, constituents like those in Cardston-Siksika; constituents who believe that parents, not legislators, know what's best for their kids; constituents that believe that our job as a government is also to pass legislation that keeps their kids safe. And kids need to feel safe in schools. That is paramount.

10:00

The legislation that we're debating today respects the hard work done by Albertans over the years of consultation, and I wanted to highlight that briefly, specifically the work that began in the mid-2000s to replace the outdated School Act, which has been in place since 1988. The '80s were great years, but it's time to replace the bill. The world and, you know, school officials and students along with the education system are changing, and we needed legislation that reflected that.

Though the Education Act never came into force after the 2015 election, it was our job to do just that, and we'll proclaim the Education Act of 2012 to ensure that kids are safe in schools, to ensure that they get the education that they deserve because, frankly, Madam Speaker, all kids deserve to go to school and get a world-class education in a safe environment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment. I would very much like to see this bill be referred to committee for a number of reasons. I doubt, in my short 15 minutes, that I'll have a chance to elucidate all of them, but I will begin and see how far we get and try to add a bit more in our further discussions and further readings of the bill. I think there are a lot of complexities within this bill that have implications that are unrealized by the government side of the House. I'm very concerned about the unintended consequences of a bill of this nature.

I know that there has been a lot of focus on the GSAs – and I will get a chance to speak to that, hopefully tonight or, if not, the next time we get together to speak – but there's one part of the bill that I have previously asked some questions about and that I think it's very important that we get a chance to get an answer on, because I really haven't heard an answer at all to some of my concerns in this. It's because I haven't heard those answers that I really think we need to accept this amendment and refer it to committee, because we need to get the answers. To simply, you know, have serious concerns brought up by this side of the House and then just dismiss them and move on really is a betrayal of the concerns that our constituents bring forward. As a result, I'll take an opportunity to kind of address the issue again that I previously raised and talk about it a little bit further because I think it's a complex issue.

The last time I was up, I was speaking about the fact that there are a number of things happening at the same time in this bill, and it's the interaction of those things that becomes very problematic. Now, as had previously been mentioned by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, who, as we all know, actually helped to write some of the education bills over the last number of years and has great, detailed information about the thinking that went into the construction of these bills, some of the things that she was concerned about hadn't been properly addressed, and some of the things that she's very concerned about continue to reside inside this bill.

One of them that I want to point out, the third point that she had mentioned, was that this bill in its present form will allow school boards to operate schools outside of their own jurisdictions. Now, she had a moment to speak to the fact that that's very problematic in the sense that it means that people who attend a particular school in a particular jurisdiction will not be able to vote for or vote out members of school boards, then, who have influence over their school, if that happens, which is truly an undermining of democracy. I mean, the right to representation is well known as the

centre post of democracy, and the fact that we would cavalierly just throw that out without taking the time to recognize the implications of that is pretty dramatic, and I think we should be sitting down in sober second thought and having a conversation, you know, with people who are going to be influenced by this.

I want to address this in some particularity and talk about where I'm concerned about the potentiality for problems. I've had the very wonderful opportunity to speak very closely with First Nations across this province about some of their concerns around the school system and some of the things that they find problematic.

One of the things that has been addressed with me on a number of occasions is that if you live on-reserve, you are not able to vote in municipal elections because you're not considered part of the municipality. But we put our school board elections in the municipal elections. That means that not only are they not voting in the municipalities that they happen to live beside – that, as you know, is interesting because now we're saying that somebody can run a school board in a jurisdiction that's not theirs – but you can't vote for somebody who is outside of the jurisdiction. So you're doubling down on the problem that they've already articulated. It means that their kids are in schools that they have absolutely no input on in terms of the electoral process right now.

Now, you are doubling down on that in the sense that their kids will be in schools that may not even be run by the local municipality; that is, they had no vote so therefore no influence over the school from an electoral point of view. But they did have some influence by virtue of being part of the community and could talk to other members of the community and express their concerns and so on. Now if the school is being run by a jurisdiction far away, they don't even have that influence. They can't even talk to their neighbours. They can't actually address concerns they have either fundamentally through democracy or through relationship, and that means they're disenfranchised. What you're suggesting here is that people will be sending the kids to the school and not have any ability to control what happens in that school. This is a very serious problem for some.

Taking one particular example, when I was up in Beaver First Nation, I learned that the band office is on the south side of the major road, and on the north side of the major road is the school that all of the children go to. It's literally just across the street. They have serious problems as a result of that. One of the problems is that while a hundred per cent, and one should never say a hundred per cent, the vast majority of their students go to that school – in fact, they did tell me that the school population is over 80 per cent Beaver First Nation students – they are unable to vote for anybody on that school board. They have no control over what happens, and it's literally across the street, no farther than I am sitting across from the members of the government side of the House right now.

Now you're suggesting that a school board down in, let's say, Cardston-Siksika or somewhere else along the way can actually take on that school and turn that school into a charter school, which is one of the things that is being enhanced in this particular bill here, and make that charter school consistent with whatever belief system they have, whatever world view they have. In no way will these First Nation students have any ability to vote on any matters, to attend the school in any way and reflect their First Nation's concerns. It means that you could essentially have a school board in southern Alberta create a charter school in northern Alberta and functionally make the public schools around it become nonviable because the number of children that are in the charter school undermines the ability of the public schools nearby to stay open, because they don't have enough kids.

I know that's not a concern in a major urban area. There are always alternative schools maybe 15 or 20 minutes away or even

an hour away. You can hop on a bus and get there. That's not a reality for Beaver First Nation. It's well over an hour's drive to the next major town or city, and if that school across the street, that's only a few, maybe a dozen yards away from their band council office, suddenly becomes a charter school, their children will then be attending a charter school because they have no other choice.

**10:10**

One of the things that we hear from the government side of the House all the time is that they'd like to increase choice, but in this case they're forcing people to attend a charter school because there is no choice. Now, I know that wasn't the intention. I don't think that they want to force all First Nations into schools against their will. We've been through the residential schools. We know that the outcome of that is devastating and terrible. But I think they don't realize that if you increase the charter schools and you allow somebody from another jurisdiction to be able to have control over it, you have no local input then. You cannot vote in the election, and you cannot go to the school and say, "I don't like what you're doing," because the charter school is following the world view of the community on the other end of the province. It's coming into the jurisdiction because it's trying to create a charter school that reflects their value system, not because it is responding to the values of the local community.

I think this is very problematic. I think it undermines the very nature of what we have done well in western democracies, and that is that we have reflected the needs of the local community and created opportunities for the average person to have influence over the institutions that govern their lives, and in this case it's the school board.

I'm very concerned that we have set this situation up and that we are not responding to it at all. What happens if a charter school undermines the viability of local schools? I don't have an answer for that. Nobody has stood up and responded to my questions as I asked these questions a few weeks ago. So I'm asking again. Of course, I know I won't get an answer, so what I'm asking, then, instead is: can we refer it to committee so I can ask the question? Maybe you have a reasonable answer. Maybe there's something I don't understand in terms of how you would respond to that dynamic that I've just outlined. If you do, I'd love to hear it.

I am more than willing to listen, to open my ears and hear what it is that you have to say about how you would respond to this kind of dynamic so that I can go back to the chief of the Beaver First Nation and say: "Look, you don't have to worry. You're going to have some control over what happens here. You're going to be able to have your values as a First Nations person reflected in the school system." I'd love to be able to do that. I'd love to give him assurance, because I can assure you that Chief Mercredi is very concerned about this and has addressed it with me on a number of occasions.

So I would like an opportunity for Chief Mercredi to come and speak to the members of this House as well, to come and sit at this committee and to talk about what it's like to have all of your kids go into a system that you have absolutely no input into, even when that system is literally across the street from your band office and the community, of course, all around the band office, and have an opportunity for him to share about the needs that he has to have a school that reflects First Nations beliefs, values, and traditions.

That's what I'd like to see, and I would love to have the opportunity. I will do the work. I will phone the First Nations chiefs and other members and say: "I'm inviting you down to committee. Come on down and tell us a little bit about what it's like and talk to us about how we can create a circumstance for you to be able to

have input into the school system that almost all of your children go to, the school system in which your children at present constitute about 80 per cent of the children involved. I'm offering that. I'm offering to work with you to sit down . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 64(4) we must now proceed to Committee of the Whole to vote on the appropriation bills.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order. Pursuant to Standing Order 64(4) I must now put the following question. Does the committee approve the following bills: Bill 5, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019, and Bill 6, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019?

[Motion carried]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 64(4) the committee shall now immediately rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Jones:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 5, Bill 6.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

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

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019 (continued)

[Debate adjourned June 24: Mr. Feehan speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to finish my time and to talk a little bit more about some of the other issues that I think are very important with regard to this particular bill and why we'd like to have the referral.

I think I've articulated my concern around the school boards and parental choice that is being eliminated by this act, at least for First Nations people or, I imagine, for other small community members. I think the potential is there for real problems in those kind of smaller communities. I think it can be fixed, by the way. I mean, the hope in making the referral to the committee is that we would be able to look at those kinds of dynamics and look at the situation that I described coming up and eliminate that problem by going to the committee. Of course, we'd be doing it in relationship with the people who are most greatly affected, in this case the individuals from the First Nations and Métis settlements that I'm talking to. But, again, I'd be more than happy to make some phone calls to some of the smaller communities and invite them in.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? Sorry; 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was wondering if the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford could speak a little bit around, you know, from his experience as a former Minister of Indigenous Relations around how our peoples found consultation in the past around these kinds of subjects. Did they feel that they were always fully consulted, or did they feel that they never were consulted? I was hoping – his experience having been the first minister to travel around to every single nation in the province, and some of the things that he might have heard around this subject.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much for the question from the MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

The issue of consultation actually speaks to kind of a larger problem, I think, that is expressed by the indigenous community here, that their experience with the school system is that they have had little to no involvement throughout the years. That has been a pretty deep frustration for them because for them it's not simply a matter of, you know, having a chance to have a voice in things. It's also attached to a traumatic history. The history of residential schools in this country is one of deep pain and trauma for the indigenous community.

10:20

The experience of having people with a particular world view open up schools in their community – and, of course, in those days it was a situation where that world view was such that it told the students that they, first of all, must come to the school. They had no choice, or an RCMP officer would show up at their door and take those children away. In fact, many of them talk about the day that their children were taken away from their homes and brought into these residential schools, where they had no choice as parents to speak to any aspect of it, and talk about living in a small community and seeing the float plane come in in early September and land on the shore and them all being required to walk their children out to the end of the dock and say goodbye to their as young as five-year-olds and six-year-olds and put them on a float plane and tell them: I will not see you again until next summer. Literally, you have children as young as five being separated from their parents at that tender age, being absent from their family homes for 10 months of the year.

Of course, what was worse about the residential schools – not that it needs to be any worse than being separated from your own family – but in addition to that was the fact that in the residential schools there was a particular world view which was very antagonistic to the indigenous world view, and that world view required a number of things to happen.

One is that children were brought into the schools, and they were stripped of all of their clothing. Anything that identified them as First Nations was taken away. Their hair was cut off because that was part of the indigenous world view but not part of this school system's world view. They were severely punished for speaking the language that they were raised with in their communities, and the punishment was severe. We are talking very serious consequences such as the beatings and so on, and all of those implications were terrible.

Now, of course, the trauma for First Nations goes even yet again beyond that because it wasn't simply a difference of two world views that were in collision and that weren't talking to each other

and so on, which is probably more likely to be the thing that they would object to today, but in those days the trauma was much deeper. The reason why I'm speaking to it now is because that trauma really influences their feelings about not having control over the schools that their children are in now because in those days not only was it the beatings for speaking languages like Blackfoot or Cree or Dene or Nakota Sioux or any of the other languages; it was also that the children often experienced serious trauma leading even to death. So the amount of physical abuse and sexual abuse that occurred in those residential schools was very high.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Okay. We will now seek speakers to the amendment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I want to thank all of my hon. colleagues for their thoughtful interventions on this matter. It's clear from listening to the speeches of all of my friends here on this side that not only do we know a lot about the pitfalls of the Education Act, but we're able to articulate quite clearly a number of the concerns that our constituents have brought forward with respect to the proclamation of the amendments to this bill.

I want to share some personal stories, I guess, if I may, about why we would want to send this bill to committee, Madam Speaker. It's truly my belief that if we consult adequately, we will be able to change the hearts and minds of the very members who are proposing this bill in the first place, particularly with respect to the amendments around removing the protections for gay-straight alliances in our schools.

I want to share a couple of stories with the members of the House through you, Madam Speaker. When our government brought forward Bill 24 to create the protections that currently exist for gay-straight alliances in our schools, I had a mother and her son – I believe he was about 10 years old – who was home-schooled, come in to talk to me about their concerns around the bill. This was part of his education around provincial government. He was studying the grade 6 curriculum at the time. He was being home-schooled, so his mom, who was also his teacher, thought that it would be a good idea to come in to my office and talk to me about my role as an MLA and what we were up to at the Legislature. Then he would be able to express some of the concerns about legislation that was before the House at the time.

Of course, he had some concerns about Bill 24. You know, he asked me a simple question. He asked me why I thought it wasn't the right of parents to know whether or not their kids are in a gay-straight alliance. I looked at that little boy, and I told him that I know that his mom loved him very much and that I'm sure that regardless of what he did or said, he could count on his mother loving him and taking good care of him for as long as she needed to do that because he was lucky enough to grow up in a home where he was supported for being the person that he was and that most of us are fortunate enough to grow up in those kinds of situations. I said: but just a few blocks west of my constituency office there is the Youth Empowerment & Support Services building. It used to be called the youth emergency shelter. They've changed their name, Madam Speaker. I told him and his mother that if they were to go to the youth emergency shelter that day and ask the kids there how they ended up there, more than half of them would say that they had been kicked out of the house because their parents found out that they were gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transsexual.

When that young home-schooler heard that story, his eyes got as big as saucers, and his jaw dropped, and so did his mother's because neither of them had any idea that coming out as gay or being outed as gay was the leading cause of teenage homelessness in this city.

They had no idea. It was completely out of their realm of experience. They didn't know anybody who had gone through that. They had certainly never heard the stories before. Just by sharing that information with them, I think I moved them along the line of changing their minds around whether or not these protections for GSAs that were in Bill 24 were necessary. I can't say for sure, Madam Speaker. They didn't tell me that they were going to support my vote for Bill 24, but I could see on their faces that they were genuinely shocked by the story.

Certainly, if you go to the youth emergency shelter in my riding – and I would extend the invitation to all members here to come with me on a tour of the youth emergency shelter in my riding – you will hear these stories from the young people who have been kicked out of their houses by their parents because their parents found out that they were gay. Like the Member for Edmonton-Decore said, there are a shocking number of parents out there who would rather have a dead son than a gay son.

[The Speaker in the chair]

So these poor souls are left on the streets to fend for themselves and occasionally pop in to the youth emergency shelter to get a night out of the cold or a night out of the rain and a free meal and sent along their way, and simply because they are gay and their parents found out about it, these kids are often forced into a life of poverty. It's an experience that is so traumatic that it leads them down the path to drug addiction, Mr. Speaker, because being rejected for who you are is such a painful experience that these kids will do anything to numb the pain, including using drugs to kill the pain if only for a little while.

10:30

Of course, these poor young people have difficulty finding a job. It's awfully hard to get a job without a high school education, Mr. Speaker. You know, certainly, we know that the Member for Calgary-Varsity is keen to make sure that even if you do get a job as a young person, you certainly can't make a living at it. You can't support yourself from it. I'm disappointed that not only are we looking at a government who is forcing young people into homelessness, but we are also taking away their ability to fend for themselves by lowering the minimum wage to which they are entitled. So maybe by engaging with some of these young folks who find themselves at the youth emergency shelter, not only could we get the members opposite to have a change of heart with respect to the portions of this bill that take away the gay-straight alliance protections, but maybe we could have them have a change of heart around their minimum wage reductions as well.

Hope springs eternal, Mr. Speaker, and I am nothing if not a hopeful person. I am certainly, as many here, a big believer in salvation. Maybe by listening to the stories of these young people who are negatively impacted by this government's proposed policies, the members opposite will have a change of heart and take back, because it's not right that any person should be thrown out of their home and onto the streets into a life of drug addiction, abuse, being prone to trafficking, including sexual trafficking, just to make ends meet simply because they're gay.

You know, I have also heard from students at Hardisty school in my riding, Mr. Speaker. It may be of interest to note for many of the members here that Hardisty has a Christian education program. Hardisty also provides their students with a gay-straight alliance. When I was at the Hardisty school a couple of years ago talking about the provisions of Bill 24, I had a young girl in grade 9 get up and talk about how the gay-straight alliance saved her life. She was at that age where she was realizing that she was gay and was surrounded by a lot of negative thoughts, objections to her

orientation. She didn't think that she would be able to make it, but she found friends and support in the gay-straight alliance in her school, and she credited that gay-straight alliance with saving her from suicide. She also said that it was her choice as to whether or not she came out as gay to her friends and her family and didn't want that choice taken away from her by the government. That protection that was offered to her as a member of a gay-straight alliance in her school was the key ingredient to saving that young woman's life.

So it's my hope that by being able to hear these stories, these very powerful stories, about how important the protections that currently exist for gay-straight alliances are for our students, the significant, horrible consequences of being outed to friends and family before you're ready, it will change the hearts and minds of the people here in this Chamber who are proposing these hateful amendments right now.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, from personal experience that there is a significant electoral price that will be paid if the members opposite refuse to back down from these proposed amendments. I know that from personal experience, because the reason I'm sitting here is largely because of the failure of my predecessor, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, David Dorward, to stand up for gay and lesbian students in his riding.

Just to remind everybody, in April 2014 before this House was a motion that a Liberal MLA brought forward calling on the government to protect GSAs into law. That motion was voted down by a majority of PC members but not all PC members. There were some PC members in the Edmonton area who voted in favour of the motion. I believe Dave Hancock was one of them. I would have to check. But one of them who didn't, Mr. Speaker, was David Dorward, the MLA for Edmonton-Gold Bar at the time. I can tell you that he received an earful from his constituents because he was so far out of step with where the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar were on the GSA issue that they sent him letters, they phoned his office, and they protested in front of his office. They gave him a very rough ride and eventually voted him out in 2015, in large part because they realized, through his vote against this motion, how significantly out of step with their values he was.

Now, did that give him pause to reflect? No, Mr. Speaker, it did not, because when these issues were before the Legislature during our term in government – of course, we were talking about the protections for GSAs. We were also talking about guidelines for making schools safe spaces, which included some discussion around washrooms. Of course, there were a lot of ridiculous things said by many people around the issue of washrooms. The former Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, even though he had been kicked out of office largely because of his refusal to stand up for gay and lesbian students in his riding, didn't pause and reflect to see whether or not his views were out of step with his constituents and insisted on making up stories around transgender people and their use of washrooms to sexually attack young children in schools. He claimed on Facebook to have personally known people who masqueraded as transgender individuals for the sole purpose of victimizing young children in schools.

Now, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that at the public forum that was held in Edmonton-Gold Bar during the 2019 election, Mr. Dorward received a big earful about that as well, about his history of failing to stand up for lesbian and gay students and his willingness to make up stories to victimize transgender people in defence of some imagined conspiracy to make schools safe havens for pedophiles. Young people, old people, people from all walks of life were at that forum, and they all gave him an earful about this. On election day, of course, he faced defeat again at the hands of the

people of Edmonton-Gold Bar because he was so far out of step with their values.

So I urge the members opposite to reconsider this if not only for the lesbian and gay students but for their own electoral fates.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nothing ceases to amaze me anymore when it comes to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and his comments in this place. His ridiculous behaviour is well known. I mean, you have had to call him out on it many times before. But to try to call out former members inside the Legislature who can't defend themselves inside this place is, quite frankly, a new low for the hon. member.

But what is even worse is to listen to the hon. member continue to misrepresent what Bill 8 actually is. I had the privilege of being the executive director at the Mustard Seed street ministry inside Calgary for many years. My father, of course, was the founder, as you know, Mr. Speaker, of the Mustard Seed, and I had the privilege of growing up, as did the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, with the very kids that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is speaking about. What he is correct about is that a tremendous amount of youth and adolescent homelessness comes as a result of kids that are in situations where, quite frankly, they have not been able to live at home anymore because they are LGBTQ, which is completely inappropriate.

**10:40**

I can remember standing at the door of the Mustard Seed in Calgary, right in the main Centre Street doors, in my younger days, when I still worked downtown in Calgary on the front lines of the streets, with young people who have been in that exact situation. Unfortunately, sometimes parents don't treat their kids right. Sometimes parents go way too far and hurt their children and put them in horrific situations where they end up living on the streets, having to resort to substances to try to deal with their pain, as the hon. member said.

What the people in those situations are not served by is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar continuing to misrepresent the facts when it comes to Bill 8. The reality, as we have said in this House many times, Mr. Speaker, is that Alberta will continue to have the strongest statutory requirements when it comes to GSAs in the entire country. That's not what the hon. member is speaking about. In fact, he is doing a disservice to people in those situations by continuing to tell them that they will not have GSAs or that GSAs will not be protected inside this province. It's disappointing, and it takes away from the important issue that should be discussed, obviously, in the context of reality. The situation that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has presented to this House as far as the past that has happened in this Chamber is also unfortunate. The former Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar voted for Bill 10, as did almost every member of both legacy caucuses that make up the current government, something that the hon. member either continues to forget or deliberately forgets. It's disappointing, and he does a disservice to the very people that he pretends to help.

The reality is that he's not here to help those people. Instead, he's here to use them as political props. He's here to play a political game. He's here to provide misinformation to them. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker. That hon. member should be ashamed of himself. He is absolutely acting shameful in this place over and over as he continues to be part of a caucus that is focused on Team Angry, that is focused on fear and smear. That member in particular, who is one of the biggest fear-and-smear members of that entire caucus, has had a record in this Chamber of having to apologize over and over

for his behaviour. Why any Albertan would take what he says seriously would be beyond me because he continues to stand inside this House, misrepresent the facts, mislead people, LGBTQ adolescents, who do not need to be misled, who need to be helped and supported, not have a member of the Legislature continue to stand in this place and mislead and misrepresent facts inside this Chamber. That hon. member should be ashamed of himself. He does a disservice to the opposition.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

#### Point of Order

##### Accusations against a Member

**Mr. Bilous:** Standing Order 23 (h), (i), and (j), Mr. Speaker. You've ruled on this a number of times. The Government House Leader keeps saying that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has misled and misleads the House. You've been very clear in your rulings that members may speak to the government or the opposition but not to individual members accusing them of misleading the House, so I call upon the Government House Leader to apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** I might just suggest that perhaps the hon. Opposition House Leader would wait for me to recognize him before he speaks, but either way, I'm happy to hear from the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** I was going to encourage you to do so.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The reality is that the hon. member belongs to an opposition caucus who continues to misrepresent the facts inside this Chamber, and he should be ashamed of that. He should be ashamed of participating in that, Mr. Speaker. He should be, quite frankly, ashamed. I know I would be ashamed if I was him.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the Government House Leader's comments. I just might suggest that when members of the House directly speak to members, saying that he should be ashamed, that he should do that, that she should do this, that she is doing that, the likelihood that it's going to create disorder inside the Chamber increases, increases, increases after each accusation that is so close to the line of what's appropriate and what isn't appropriate inside the House that inevitably we end up here.

In the 30 seconds or so that the member has left, I encourage him to govern himself accordingly.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it could create disorder, obviously. I respect that point. If you're the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, you're great at creating disorder. I will close with my opening remarks, and that is that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar should be ashamed of his behaviour in this Assembly because it's unbecoming of the opposition.

**The Speaker:** Anyone else wishing to speak to the bill, Bill 8, on the amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has risen.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this amendment. It's funny. I said to myself the other day that the next time we debate Bill 8, or Bill Hate, I wasn't going

to speak to the GSA aspect of it because there are so many other pieces that I could talk about given my background in education. I thought, you know, just because I'm the ML-gay in this House, that doesn't mean I need to speak to all the gay things. Then the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud spoke, and she did very well. I can't compete with that. Truly, my mind, I guess, my heart keeps going back to GSAs. It's a battle that we're fighting, and it's an important one despite some of the rhetoric that we're hearing. I'm going to return to GSAs. I'm going to speak to them a little bit.

I want to share more about sort of the personal side of things. We know that mental health, in particular, is a huge issue for many in the LGBTQ2S community, folks of all ages. I know this first-hand. I know what it's like to struggle. I know what it's like when you feel like you can't talk to anyone. I know what it's like when you feel like you have to pretend that you're someone else. I came out as an adult after I'd been a teacher in rural Alberta. I was in my late 20s, in fact. I came out late, and it was really, really hard. I can't – I can't – honestly imagine what it's like for some of these young people and the experiences that they're going through. We saw last week hundreds and hundreds of kids, parents, teachers, allies all out in the rain to stand in support of GSAs and the people that they care about.

GSAs, we know, offer a safe space for kids. They offer a place to talk about these things, to hear others' stories of struggle and of success as well, to talk about their worries if they do come out, you know, whether it be with their parents, their faith community, whatever it might be, and to talk about mental health and to talk about strategies to address any issues that any of them might be experiencing.

Just this month the Trevor Project, which is a suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ youth, released a report addressing the mental health of queer young adults. These are American stats – I'll tell you that – but the results are pretty horrifying. Nearly 1 in 5 LGBTQ youth aged 13 to 24 and 1 in 3 transgender and nonbinary young people in the same age group attempted suicide in the past 12 months. Approximately 39 per cent of LGBTQ youth surveyed had seriously considered suicide in the past year. As Scott Fenwick pointed out in a recent article in the *Edmonton Journal*, "the truth is [quite] simple," and it's quite clear. "GSAs reduce teen suicide" for both LGBTQ folks and their straight counterparts.

A 2014 University of British Columbia study found that among Canadian high schools that had a GSA, the odds of suicidal thoughts among sexual minority students were cut by more than half. Further – and this is fascinating – straight boys in schools with GSAs were also half as likely to attempt suicide. Researchers believe that this is because homophobic bullying is used by boys to sort of perpetuate and reinforce masculine behaviour and status, so having GSAs combats that.

You know what? I saw this first-hand as a teacher in rural Alberta. I know I've shared this before. I've shared my own guilt and my own, you know, shame in not calling out what I saw were homophobic actions and behaviours. There was just such a culture of homophobia and of shaming it and of calling people names, and it was so entrenched at some of the schools that I taught at out in rural Alberta. Again, that just shows how critical GSAs can be in combating this.

#### 10:50

Stats from the same project, the Trevor Project in the United States, show that two-thirds of LGBTQ youth reported that someone had attempted to convince them to change their sexual orientation or gender identity, and 71 per cent of respondents – again, this is very recent data – said that they had experienced

discrimination because of their orientation or identity. They point out in this article that it is important to note that LGBTQ youth are not at higher risk of suicide just simply because they are LGBTQ. They are at a higher risk because they face harmful rejection and discrimination from friends, families, and communities, which can make them feel like their lives are worth less than their straight or cisgendered peers.

This is why, you know, we need to offer that space in schools, that free space, where students can access it without having to communicate it with their parents, where they can go to an administrator and won't have to worry about delay, delay, delay. As we know, any sort of delay could mean a young person's life when you're struggling that seriously. GSAs offer youth just that. They offer that idea that they know that they're not alone. So let us consider mental health as a paramount consideration as we tackle this issue. We keep hearing that these protections are the strongest and that we're going to continue to be a leader. But what are the motivations behind these changes, then? If things are fine as they are, if the protections were the strongest, then why bother changing? Why introduce this at all?

Last week I had asked the Education minister who she was consulting on this bill other than groups like Parents for Choice in Education, who have been known to have espoused anti-LGBTQ views. The script was then going after me, asking for me to retract my statement. Of course, I won't. You know, the minister herself hosted an event with this organization last year, and I haven't seen a shift in their attitudes or in their beliefs. So I ask: what is she hearing from groups like those?

We've heard things like this fear of the gay agenda. You know, I could tell you a little bit about my gay agenda. It's one I'm quite proud of. I get up in the morning. I drink some coffee. I go to work. I fight for the constituents of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I come home. Sometimes I mow my lawn, not often enough. Sometimes I clean my house, also not often enough. These are all parts of my grand gay agenda, and I am surrounded by friends in my neighbourhood, in my community, who are married, who are raising kids. They're doing all the same things that our straight friends are. If that's a gay agenda, then, yes, we are very much guilty of that.

You know, I've shared a lot of personal stories here, and I've got more. I've had a lot of young people reach out to me. In some cases they have allowed me to share their stories publicly. In other cases I won't share, but I'll hold those stories. I'll take them to heart, and I'll take them seriously because they keep me motivated to continue fighting here in this House and beyond. So I want to share a story that a young person shared with me just last week. I'm not going to share his name, but I do have permission to share it with you. He says the following:

So growing up I moved around a lot from town to town, during which time I was struggling to discover my identity. At the time (around age 14-15) I only knew that I wasn't completely into or attracted to what family, school, or community told me I should be, and there was no queer representation in my small town. It wasn't until I was in high school in [my town – I won't name it] that I discovered that I identified as homosexual. Unfortunately for me that school and town environment was highly homophobic and embedded in abusive conservative Christian values. I truly did not feel like I belonged and for a long while actually felt that there was something wrong with me, as homophobic slurs and insults were the norm with students, teachers, and parents. I remember waiting until I graduated and left for university here in Edmonton until I came out, to make sure I was safe first to do so.

He said:

It wasn't until university did I discover that GSAs and queer culture were a thing, and many of my ... peers told me stories

about the work their GSAs did to support other queer folk and raise awareness. I remember feeling incredibly let down that I wasn't given the opportunity to feel safe and welcomed growing up in school. So instead, I spent 2-3 years in university to volunteer for LGBTQ+ support centers and groups to learn more and give back to those who were in similar situations as I was. Many stories I heard were either about how folks' GSAs were so supportive of their journeys or how, like me, a lack of GSA or any queer representation was truly oppressive and, in some cases, fatal. One thing was clear: the presence of queer representation created an environment of safety and belonging. If anything, stories told to me showed that GSAs are a huge part of representation.

He continues:

Fast forward to today, I am thankful and lucky that I was able to discover my own identity and am now in a place where I feel safe to belong. I run my own business which I make my mission to be as queer safe and inclusive as possible ... and I'm happy to be able to hold safe spaces for my queer friends who need a zone to exist. But at the same time, I'm aware of what's happening politically. Queer kids' lives are being put on the line by a government who calls us "whatevers." I've got homeless youth who come around talking about how their wages are being cut for working while being in school. And students, parents, queer communities, and allies are marching in opposition to the changes [that this government] are making that will put youth lives at risk. It's not right.

He says:

It's a scary time to be queer at this moment, and we are fighting hard to change that, but seeing leaders like yourself standing up for our queer kids and communities is inspiring and it shows that we haven't been forgotten about.

And he says:

Keep fighting that good fight ... [and you're giving us] hope that we have the right to be safe and feel like we belong.

You know, his story is the story of many. I can tell you that I'm not exaggerating when I say that I've had a lot – a lot – of folks reach out to me on Facebook, on Instagram, on Twitter, in person at events. I know I'm not alone. I know that my colleagues have heard from many people as well. The Member for Lethbridge-West was at Lethbridge pride this weekend, and she said that she had hundreds of people speak to her and express their concerns but also their support for the work that we are doing. I was in Red Deer this past weekend, and I had a number of people come up to me with their concerns as well. One woman from a rural community shared with me that as a queer woman she's worried for herself, for her community, and for her family.

I don't think that we can minimize these experiences. We're talking about a lot of young people. We're talking about a lot of kids, a lot of families, and a lot of folks who are worried and who are affected by the possible changes that this government might make.

Now, again, I've got a lot of stories, because I've shared mine a few times in this House already, and I think it's important that folks in this Chamber realize that while we're talking about a minority, we're talking about a pretty significant minority. As I've said, we've heard from a lot of youth, for sure, but I've also heard from a lot of teachers. As a teacher myself I take teachers' professional judgment seriously, and I take their concerns seriously when I hear from teachers who say things like that they're worried their administration will dither if asked to create a GSA.

Keep in mind that we've got a lot of schools who are doing incredible things across this province. We've got a lot of schools that have really strong GSAs, QSAs that have been in place for a long time. But we've got other schools. Like I said, I taught in parts of rural Alberta, where I know there's work to be done, where I

know there are kids currently who don't feel safe. They don't feel safe at school, they don't feel safe at home, they may not feel safe in their broader community, and that's a worry for me.

What I would like to do is share the story of another young person. I actually spoke with this young person not too long ago as well, and he actually shared his story more publicly. He, Ben Angus, shared it in the *Red Deer Advocate*. I'm not going to read his whole story because I actually think some other folks in the House have already shared this. What I found interesting about his story is that he talks about his experience in a Catholic high school, and this is the concern that I've touched on a few times. He notes:

I approached my school's administration in hopes of starting a GSA. In response, I was told that if the school were to tell students "of that lifestyle" ("that lifestyle" meaning being queer) that it was OK to live the way they do, but they were not accepted at home and were to self-harm because of it, the burden would rest on my shoulders.

As he says:

This is an absurd burden to place on anyone, let alone a 17-year old who had only recently come to terms with his sexuality.

Now, I'm going to – I see that my time is going to run out.

**11:00**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen under 29(2)(a) to make a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for her words but, more importantly, her advocacy. It is at a level that's absolutely stunning and something that I certainly aspire to. I know that this amendment is very, very important, and I was hoping that she might be willing to continue to explain why it is we need to move this to committee.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Decore. I'll finish with just sharing this young person, Ben's, concern.

As I started to say there, it's an absolutely absurd burden to put on a young person, that he would be responsible for any reaction to a GSA being instilled in the school. Now, what he says on Bill 8 – he actually gives a really good summary of it.

This is done by not guaranteeing the usage of the words "gay" and "queer," and forcing vulnerable students to have to appeal to the school board . . .

Put simply, this is . . . extremely problematic.

He says that he tried to fight for a GSA and that it led him to being outed to the school's administrative team before he had the opportunity to tell his own family. As he points out:

This was all legal and perfectly acceptable before [Bill 24 had passed] . . .

Those protections are so important: students need to know they won't have to fight to protect their own privacy.

The point is that there's still very much that concerns. I know there have been conversations around the privacy legislation, FOIP and PIPA. Again, we've got examples of schools – and I know there were examples when the former Education minister spoke with schools – where students didn't feel safe with their administration, and they were very much concerned about being outed with some teachers as well. Again, this is not to smear. I was a teacher. I was an administrator. I get it fully, and I get that often you're put in compromising situations, but there need to be extremely clear guidelines in place. I've heard my colleagues speak to some of the intricacies around the privacy legislation and whatnot. It's complicated. It's complex. For any teacher or administrator working day to day, that's a lot for them to try to navigate. I worry that Bill 8 won't be clear enough to protect our young people.

To get back to the member's question about why we need to amend this and move this to committee, I think that will give an

opportunity for us to delve more deeply into some of these really important conversations around privacy, around potential outing of students. I'm still concerned about the removal of the immediacy clause. As I said, I think that in some cases you may have school administrators who aren't dithering on purpose, they're not delaying on purpose, but they're trying to maybe, again, navigate the legislation and figure out how they can do this to still protect young people. Without that immediacy clause, we're talking about lives potentially being at risk here. That's not hyperbole at all.

I can tell you that I think it's really important that we take an evidence-based approach to this as well. We've brought in some of the stats. Myself and other members in this House have shared data that says that we're talking about significant issues with mental health. We know what happens, and we've got young people who have shared their stories in writing and have told me that we can share them publicly, that their lives are at risk here. I don't know what else we need to do. If it's not the countless stories of young people, I don't know what else we need to present to the folks opposite to convince them that this legislation needs to be further studied and needs to be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities so that we can investigate some of these things a little bit more closely.

I do and I want to believe and I know that people in this Chamber have good intentions and have good hearts. I think we just need to take a step back because, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud talked about as well, there's a lot more to this than just the GSA piece. This is obviously something that is impactful for me, and it's something that makes me emotional, but I could go on ad nauseam on some of the other pieces around here, you know, whether it be the concerns for school boards about implementation because even if this bill . . . [Member Irwin's speaking time expired] I'll continue at another time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are back on the amendment. Anyone wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen to join the debate.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise in support of this amendment referring the bill to the Committee on Families and Communities. Certainly, I know that we have heard from the minister herself, saying originally that Bill 8 had the best protections in Canada for LGBTQ kids. That has been revised as time has gone on. Now it's sort of among the strongest protections. But if this bill was referred to the committee, which I am highly recommending – I am on that committee along with many of my learned colleagues – we would be able to do some deep dive into it and be able to look at all of what is needed, indeed. It seems like the intent is that they do want to have the strongest protections, which, of course, we did have under our government, and we would like to, you know, help that process to continue, so I think that this referral makes a lot of sense.

Mr. Speaker, there are other aspects besides the significant focus on GSAs, which we all, certainly, on this side of the House believe are very important. Also, there has been a tremendous lack of consultation. School boards really haven't been part of this process in developing it, and really they should be a part of it. We know that with our Bill 24 we provided more than six months' notice before its coming into force and for some parts of it more than a year of lead time. You know, I find this quite ironic because that was something that was so important to the Official Opposition when we were government. Consultation was *de rigueur*. It was so important that that be done, and if we dared move without a very robust consultation process, that was reason for condemnation.

Unfortunately, now that they are in government, they don't seem to have the integrity of their previous words. I think that's a



concern, and I think it is a concern for the community, too, because they are just ramming this bill through. Referring it to committee would give us additional time to actually look more deeply at it and to see, maybe, some of the issues that it does bring up and that are, you know, needing to be addressed because I think it does put specifically LGBTQ students in a precarious situation.

We know that, certainly, many of us in this Assembly are parents. I know that, myself, I have three sons, and I care deeply for them, as parents do. But sometimes there are parents who are misguided. I must say from a professional stance also – I have been a social worker for 30 years – that I have worked with families who have significant challenges. Those challenges prevent the parents from really making good choices on behalf of their children, and I don't feel that it's because they are cruel or malicious. I feel that sometimes they have their own very significant mental health or addiction issues. They could have had their own experience of abuse. It could be exacerbated by poverty. There are so many things that get in the way, so these are often multiproblem families. As the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar said, children oftentimes who are homeless may identify as part of the LGBTQ community.

**11:10**

I guess I just wanted to be on record saying that these GSAs are really oftentimes very important safe havens for children who cannot safely be who they are in their family system, and that is such a tragedy. But when our government brought in Bill 24, that changed things significantly. I'm very concerned with how this new Bill 8 is actually now making it, you know, not support kids not as much, because if a student does ask for the creation of a GSA, there are really no timelines for implementation. You know, the principal doesn't have to – I mean, people have used the word “dither” – move forward on that. Having some time, a mechanism so that they have to respond in a timely manner, I think is very important because these kids need that support now. They probably needed it yesterday or the day before that. I'm very concerned that now it can kind of be put off for some time.

You know, when my middle son was in elementary, when he was probably in grade 4 or so, he was bullied. I didn't know that he was being bullied. He was sort of a shy, timid young fellow, and I didn't really find out about this until a couple of years later; therefore, I couldn't have been there to support him. I know how much that has affected him in his life, even to this day, and he's a 20-year-old young man. I can only imagine if he would have had to deal with his sexual identity being not part of sort of the dominant sexual identity, a heterosexual male, and how much that would have exacerbated things for him.

I'm speaking already of, you know, a young fellow who had been bullied, but for someone who is struggling to find their place in the world, who doesn't have these kinds of supports, it is, I think, just the wrong way to go. Therefore, referring this to committee would actually give us some opportunity to review it further and look at how we can make this stronger. It seems like that was the intent of the minister. She very clearly did proclaim wanting it to be the strongest in Canada. The committee could certainly do that work to support that.

My colleagues have spoken for some time about the efficacy of gay-straight alliances and referred to various research. I'm just going to refer to some further research that does talk about it and just the benefits for the whole school system. You know, it's really quite a tremendous shift that happens when gay-straight alliances have been established. Oftentimes it is a cumulative effect. When they first come in, people are getting used to it, but when they've been in for one, two, three years, the schools have found that the whole community becomes inclusive, much more acceptance for all.

I'm just going to refer to some research here from B.C. It says: we know that LGBTQ students are at a higher risk for suicide in part because they are more often targeted for bullying and discrimination, but heterosexual students can also be the target of homophobic bullying; when policies and supportive programs like GSAs are in place long enough to change the environment of the school, it's better for students' mental health no matter what their orientation. So it's beneficial for all. It just shows how important these are and how important it is to have them established over a period of time.

I just, again, would like to support acceptance of this amendment so that we can make sure that the legislation for GSAs in our province is the strongest in the country, like it is, actually, now and was brought in by our government.

I also want to talk a little bit about a young man that I know. He's in his mid-20s, maybe going towards his later 20s now. When he went to school, there were no gay-straight alliances in his high school or junior high. Now this young man has an undergraduate degree. He has a responsible job, he takes care of himself and pays all his own bills, and he has lots of great relationships with many people. But he's never come out to his parents. He's never told them that he is a gay man. He's still afraid despite, you know, the maturity of age. So I just would like the members to think about how students are in junior high and high school, how terrifying it would be for them. It isn't part of sort of straight culture. If you have parents, likely they're straight because, obviously, they have a heterosexual relationship if they're your biological parents. So even older adults are afraid to come out despite having many other successes and supports.

This is something that is just really sort of a humanitarian thing to do: to make sure that students are protected, that GSAs can be created quickly to support, and that the whole school, both gay and straight kids, can be included in that. All benefit because there's a much more broad acceptance of difference, and difference is okay. We don't all have to be the same. I think that this is, you know, a very important piece of legislation and something that we shouldn't be cavalier about. It is something that will protect children and will protect lives, and we've talked about that for such a long time.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I guess I'm just focusing on sort of two aspects of it. One of the aspects is something that I feel like the opposition lectured me on substantially when our government was in power. It's really incumbent on them to be responsible and to be consulting with the community, with school boards, with teachers, and with students themselves so that they're getting a good understanding of the decisions that they're making when they're creating this legislation, Bill 8.

We also know that, really, the last consultations on the Education Act were back in 2012, so half of the trustees currently elected were not elected then, were not part of that consultation, and don't know anything about it. So it's just good process. It's really supporting people, to be able to have their input and to make good decisions, you know, barring that we go back completely to the drawing board on this bill, that it be referred to the Families and Communities Committee so that we can look at making sure that it has those best protections, that we understand members on both sides of the House want in this bill. I'm just cautioning the government to be careful about moving forward too rapidly on something that is really a very serious matter and that makes a huge difference in children's lives. We want to make sure.

Even though we know that parents, you know, love their children, they sometimes make poor decisions regarding them. As I've said previously, as a social worker I know that first-hand. It doesn't mean that those parents are cruel. It often means that those parents aren't very healthy themselves and that they need assistance and

support. Children live in environments that may be unhealthy. This haven of a GSA in a school, especially for a son or daughter, a child, who is struggling with their sexual identity, which is extremely confusing for them and hard for them to understand, would go a long way to supporting them.

**11:20**

I mean, many of the hon. members on this side have spoken about the very tragic situation of a student contemplating taking their own life or actually taking their life. We know that children who are part of GSAs, who have the support in their school environment even if they don't in their family system, do oftentimes make better choices in terms of their own mental health and caring for themselves and don't do extreme things because they feel so desperate that they don't know what to do. They feel strange. They don't fit in anywhere. That's what a GSA can provide to them, acceptance in those places.

So, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen to ask a brief question or comment under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member's comments. I hope to tap in a little bit to her profession as a social worker when we're talking about consulting fully with all our stakeholders, including our students. When we look at potentially bypassing that, not giving the largest stakeholders, the members, the kids, that partake in these GSAs, when we deny that, what kind of impact could that have on things like their mental health going forward? What kind of example is that setting for them, that as legislators we would be clearly failing at?

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much. Certainly, when policy is created, you know, we as legislators come together, and as we've talked about previously, sometimes there's consultation; sometimes there's not. But what happens oftentimes when there's not is that there may be unintended consequences. Those unintended consequences aren't necessarily something that the legislators, obviously, because they're unintended, meant to create by putting forward the legislation, but indeed they're doing it anyway because they're not doing the full job of proper development of legislation. So it's not only the people who will benefit from GSAs, like the students themselves, but it also should be the teachers, the principals, the school boards, certainly families, parents, professionals in the area. It should be a robust consultation because then you get the best policy.

You know, earlier today, Mr. Speaker, we had the passage of a bill, a private member's bill. Certainly, I'm on the private members' committee with other members, and one of the things that our caucus wanted to do was to do some consultation on that bill. We wanted to make sure of some things that we might just innocently not know, because we're not necessarily experts in that area or we don't have the lived experience of people who will be impacted by this, and unfortunately we were sort of voted down in that committee, and there couldn't be any consultation.

Then there was an amendment today that actually was from some stakeholders that, you know, members on the other side did speak to, and then they decided to amend it themselves. So good for them. But it just kind of made me scratch my head because I thought: well, isn't that what we wanted? We do want to talk to those people who have that lived experience, who have to implement it, who are the professionals who are working in that area.

You know, it is just kind of part of a healthy process in development. Sometimes it's not just when it's created, but it should also be along the time of implementation because we may find out some things that nobody realized along the way. It's kind of like a living policy so that we want it to most effectively serve, you know, students, for example, in this case.

I think that point was made, was sort of proven earlier today, when the government did decide to accept some feedback from stakeholders. I think that when we start making assumptions about what's right or what's wrong or what we should do, we are doing a disservice. You know, we're not really doing the job of our position. If we think that just because we have an experience, just because we're elected officials, that transcends everyone's experience, I think that we're sadly mistaken. I feel like that can cause grave issues for people who are impacted most directly by that policy.

Certainly, those sitting at the table: are those people around that table who are giving feedback a diverse group of people, or do they all have the same backgrounds? We know that that makes a significant difference, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how good and how appropriate policy is. I know, you know, from my many years of living, that a lot of times I didn't get to be at the table and that people made decisions for me that often were not beneficial.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Government House Leader although I'm not sure that you haven't already spoken to the amendment.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I checked already with the Clerk, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Wonderful. That was very wise of you.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Just thought I'd get ahead of that for you.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Always happy to help.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the amendment, which is a referral amendment, I believe, to send Bill 8 to committee. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to listen to some of the comments that we've heard tonight. You know, the reality is that Bill 8 is a piece of legislation that does not refer to the issue that the hon. members of the opposition want to continue to spend their time talking about rather than the content of Bill 8.

I'd like to talk briefly, in my time on this referral amendment, about some of the comments that were made by the Official Opposition in regard to GSAs and also in regard to some of the comments that have been made about consultation and the need for this legislation to go to committee. There have been a lot of comments made, Mr. Speaker, by the opposition, today and other days during debate on Bill 8, in regard to the fact that somehow Alberta will no longer have protection for GSAs if this bill was to pass.

Now, the hon. the Education minister has done a great job presenting to this House why that, in fact, is not true, as have many other members of the government in question period and members of the government caucus who have spoken about this bill during debate. Now, for her trouble in expressing that, she's been continually bullied by the Official Opposition, which is disappointing. But that's the approach that they seem to want to take. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that if they continue to do this, they continue to lose the trust of Albertans. What they're talking about, in fact, is just not reality when it comes to this legislation.

You're probably interested to know, Mr. Speaker, what steps will be taken in regard to GSAs if Bill 8 was to pass in this Assembly sometime in the near future, and I think it's important that we state this for the record.

Step 1: a student or students will ask a staff member at a school to start a GSA. That will still take place.

Step 2: the principal will permit the GSA. That will still take place.

Step 3: the principal designates a staff liaison to support the GSA.

Step 4: the students – this is very important because the hon. members in the opposition continue to either not understand or the opposition continues to misrepresent the facts on this very important issue – select a group name. Very different, Mr. Speaker, than what the opposition continues to say in this place.

Step 5: if the principal cannot find a staff liaison, the principal informs both the board and the minister, and then the minister appoints a responsible adult.

Step 6: as a student-led group the students, with support from the staff liaison, plan the next steps such as meeting dates, times, and activities.

Mr. Speaker, six steps, and then a GSA is formed, with no difference between how it is today and how it will be after Bill 8 is passed in this House if that is what this Assembly decides.

I understand if the members opposite – actually, Mr. Speaker, I don't understand anymore why the members opposite continue to have trouble understanding this. This has been discussed inside this House significantly. The Education Act is clear. The legislation guarantees that students are entitled to create groups, including GSAs and QSAs.

**11:30**

That is a direct contradiction of what the Official Opposition continues to present inside this place, Mr. Speaker. I find it quite appalling, the approach that the Official Opposition has chosen to take with this legislation, refusing to even discuss this important piece of legislation in this House, instead focusing on something that is not reality and implying to this Chamber and, worse yet, implying to LGBTQ kids and adolescents and children that are in schools that GSAs will not still, in fact, be in place after Bill 8 passes. That is not a reality, and it does an extreme disservice to students and to people that are counting on GSAs going forward. I find it quite disappointing, and I'm sure that students will, when they realize after Bill 8 is passed that nothing has changed, be quite disappointed in the Official Opposition's behaviour.

Now, in addition to that, there have been a lot of points brought up by the Official Opposition in regard to consultation and that somehow this was not spoken about. I have read the platform inside this Chamber during other portions of Bill 8 debate when it comes to that very fact, and as you know, Mr. Speaker, because I'm sure you had to campaign on it in your own constituency, our platform is very, very clear that we would be going forward with the Education Act. That is not a secret. That is a pretty broad form of consultation that ended up with the people of Alberta speaking in record numbers on April 16, giving a clear mandate to the United Conservative Party, who is now government, to go forward with their plan on Bill 8, which is exactly what the Education minister is doing.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Education minister. She's not going to blink just because the Official Opposition bullies her and comes to this place and misrepresents facts. That's not what's going to happen to the Education minister or anybody in this government. The people of Alberta spoke on April 16 and sent us here with clear instructions on how to proceed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do understand that the Official Opposition continues to not want to accept the judgment that Albertans cast on them on April 16, which was a clear – you know, clearly, they fired them, overwhelmingly. I know that in constituencies like yours and mine people lined up for hours just to be able to cast their votes on the very first day. In my constituency I had people as far away as the United States, who were working, drop their work just to come back in person to vote, travelling all that way because they wanted to make sure their ballots were counted on election night. They did not want to risk it being counted in advance polls or advance ballots. That's how much they wanted to fire this former government.

Now, granted, in my constituency 82 per cent of people voted for the Conservative Party, and only 18 per cent voted for other parties. Mr. Speaker, yours was similar. I think you may have been about 60 or so votes behind the great riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, but it was pretty clear in the places . . .

**The Speaker:** Who's counting?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. Who's counting? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

. . . that we represented that there was a clear mandate from Albertans to be able to proceed with this. That's not just in rural Alberta, where we come from; it was in rural central Alberta, I should say. It was in northern Alberta. It was in Calgary. It was in the greater Edmonton area, where there were clear instructions that the NDP had to go.

It was interesting. I talked a little bit earlier in my other speech tonight on Bill 8, Mr. Speaker, I mean under 29(2)(a), about the reaction to the Sundre parade this year. As you know, the Sundre parade is one of my favourite days of the year to be able to travel through the community of Sundre and enjoy the rodeo and our pancake breakfasts and see all my friends and neighbours. But it was pretty clear, even at the parade as the crowds kept telling us, me and the hon. minister of agriculture, who was travelling with me through the Sundre parade this weekend, to continue to implement the agenda that we promised, to continue to not let the NDP bully us. They made sure it was clear that they were with us a hundred per cent, as they were with us on April 16. That's the mandate that we'll bring through this Assembly despite the fact that the NDP continues to be Team Angry and angry at Albertans as a result of that or, more importantly, as the Premier has rightly pointed out, to have no humility, to continue to not understand the mistakes that they made.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview laughing, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what I'm referring to, just no recognition of the fact that when they were in government, they made so many terrible mistakes that they went on their way to become the only one-term government in the history of this province. The only one-term government in the history of this province: I don't think that's something that I would be very, very proud of. I think, at its core, that comes down to the fact that they continue, because of the behaviour that you see now and even when they were in government, to completely ignore the people of Alberta, to come to this Chamber and misrepresent facts then as government, now as an opposition, and expect Albertans to fall for it. Well, they didn't fall for it on April 16, and they're not falling for it now. The Official Opposition should try to do a little better. I know they're struggling with it, but I wish them the very best as they go through that process, because the Official Opposition has an important job. It ain't this, though.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It's not to come to this place and misrepresent facts and to scare LGBTQ children and youth that they're not going to have their GSAs, which is all that this opposition has spent their time doing.

Madam Speaker, good to see you tonight.

As I said earlier, it's shameful, and unfortunately it's what it appears the Official Opposition has become inside this province. That's disappointing, but our government will head a different way.

With that said, Madam Speaker, I will move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House stands adjourned – oh.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** One more step to go, Madam Speaker. I appreciate your enthusiasm, though. With that, I will move to adjourn the Legislature until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:36 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 25, 2019

Day 19

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
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Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Singh  
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Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 25, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Lord, God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead our province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon I would like to welcome back a very familiar and friendly face to the Chamber, the former Member for Calgary-Bow, Deborah Drever.

Hon. members, joining us today from the constituency of St. Albert, also in the Speaker's gallery are Olga Barceló and Henry Wearmouth.

Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this afternoon we have, joining us from the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont, l'école Champs Vallée school. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

I would like to remind all hon. members that if they have guests joining us, it is a requirement for them to be in by 11:30; however, if you're the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, perhaps a small extension will be allowed today. Joining him in the gallery are His Worship Michael Doerksen, Bart Guyon, Dan and Brenda Madlung, and Manny Deol. Please receive the warm welcome of this House.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

#### Camrose Purple Martin Festival

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend I had the pleasure of giving greetings on behalf of the Premier and the government of Alberta to the 10th annual Purple Martin Festival in Camrose. The festival is a yearly wildlife festival dedicated to learning about species of birds that live in our province, with a special focus on the purple martin. It's a type of swallow native to North and South America. Some of the highlights of this year's festival included advice on backyard birding and presentations on bird migration and the co-evolution of brood parasites and their hosts, which were respectively presented by Dr. Lu Carbyn, a retired researcher at the federal government's department of environment, and Dr. Dorothy Hill, an associate professor at Mount Royal University. The festival is a family-friendly affair, so there were some great activities for the kids: crafts, a search for aquatic invertebrates, and a presentation by the Beaverhill Bird Observatory.

Of course, who would be able to forget the main attraction, the purple martins themselves? Purple martins are a species of North

American swallow, and they're on the larger end of the sparrow species, usually reaching up to 20 centimetres in length. Now, the biggest reason for the Purple Martin Festival stems from the fact that east of the Rocky Mountains they don't nest in nests that they build themselves or cavities made by other wildlife; they nearly exclusively build their nests in birdhouses made by humans. This has led to the people of Camrose organizing the festival in order to welcome the returning purple martins as they migrate back north to Alberta. Once a year they gather as a community to build, renovate, and repair homes for these birds.

Mr. Speaker, this is such a wonderful community event, focused on helping Alberta's diverse wildlife, and, just as importantly, an event that is truly unique to Camrose. I'm honoured to have been able to attend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Government and Official Opposition Policies

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend the NDP held its spring Provincial Council in Red Deer. This was an opportunity for members and delegates from across Alberta to gather together to talk about victory in 2023 and pass policy resolutions with a vision to lead this province forward. I was proud to stand with the hundreds of delegates to discuss important policy issues such as climate change, adaptation strategies, diversifying Alberta's energy sector, seniors' aging-in-place supports, and child care spaces in schools.

This is quite a contrast to what we've seen in this House from this government. During this session we've seen this government give tax giveaways to wealthy corporations while leaving school boards forced to cut millions from school budgets. We've seen this government ram through their bad-faith bargaining bill, giving themselves the power to rip up contracts of 180,000 public-sector workers. To add insult to injury, the Premier handed out earplugs during debate in a complete affront to teachers, nurses, paramedics, and more. We've seen an unprecedented attack on LGBTQ2S students with the dangerous Bill Hate, an act designed to destroy gay-straight alliances and roll back protections for students.

But there's more. The UCP's pick-your-pockets bill, Bill 2, allows employers to force workers to take banked overtime at straight time instead of time and a half, meaning that the average oil and gas worker could lose up to \$320 a week while the average construction worker could lose up to \$200 a week. What's worse is that this government limited debate on Bill 9, imposing antidemocratic restraints on this House. We now find ourselves with a government working for the few, not the many.

I am proud to stand on this side of the House as a member of the Alberta NDP, fighting in the strongest Official Opposition in the province's history. We will continue to fight for the things that matter most to Albertans: a diversified economy, high-quality health care, more and safer schools, and, without question, a steadfast respect for the rights of all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Vegreville Economic Development

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many are aware, the case processing centre in the town of Vegreville was closed down by the federal government. It's often hard for those that live in larger centres to understand the impact to a town the size of Vegreville, so I wish to comment on this.

The workers at the centre represented almost 10 per cent of the town's workforce – in perspective, losing 280 jobs in Vegreville is equivalent to losing 35,000 jobs in Edmonton – the loss of \$15 million in GDP, \$14.5 million in labour income, and \$1.2 million in municipal revenues annually.

In addition to this, there have been a significant number of residential listings due to people looking to leave town for employment. This has caused a drop in the market values of homes by approximately 25 to 30 per cent, in addition to the previous 17 per cent decrease in market values from 2014 to 2017.

The town of Vegreville will not be held down. We are working on new opportunities. The town has come up with plans to put in an industrial and commercial park. This requires infrastructure such as waterlines, sewers, roads, telecoms, and other needed amenities to attract private investment in the area.

The town is already hearing from a hemp processing company that would like to build a facility in the town as well. Construction alone will create jobs and positions at the facility once it's built. Value-added companies that produce hemp products are likely to be attracted to the area due to the close access to the hemp facility and rail lines.

The Prime Minister and his Liberal government and the previous provincial government both failed my riding when they closed down the claims processing centre without the appropriate socioeconomic consultations and consideration.

The situation is urgent, and I look forward to working with my UCP government and colleagues on a solution that can help the town of Vegreville through this difficult economic time.

Thank you.

1:40

### Alberta Prosperity

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, I believe in Albertan exceptionalism. I believe that Alberta is the greatest province in Canada fundamentally because of our free-enterprise values. Albertans know from our history that excessive government is the enemy of excellence and empathy. They know that limited government is the ally of prosperity, achievement, and compassion. Alberta is exceptional because of the values that we hold dear. We believe that faith, family, and freedom must always be our guiding stars for they show us the way, and they give us hope.

Mr. Speaker, as we move forward, the former government's tenure will be viewed as an historical anomaly. The previous government's socialist philosophy of rule by an elite few over the many goes against Alberta's traditional principles of self-rule and representative government. In 2019 Albertans decided decisively to renew our commitment to the Albertan creed of free markets, free enterprise, and individual freedom.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta must rediscover that the key to greater economic growth, opportunity, and prosperity for all is to unbridle the energies of free enterprise. The Albertan miracle, which the rest of Canada and the world have long admired, has historically been a triumph of free people and their private institutions, not government. It has been individual workers, businesspeople, families, and religious and civil society organizations, not government, that have been primarily responsible for creating the greatest opportunity society in Canada: Alberta.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I declare the following: may we as Albertans never forget our proud origins, never fail to dream heroic dreams, and never lose our God-given optimism, always believing, as our ancestors did, that for Alberta there shall always be a bright new dawn ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### EPCOR Gold Bar Waste-water Treatment Plant

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar who banded together and formed the Save Gold Bar Park Alliance. This group formed to fight back against EPCOR's plan to expand the parking lot at the Gold Bar waste-water treatment plant into Gold Bar park, degrading the quality of the park and damaging some of the multiuse trails that many people enjoy. The good news is that last Monday the good citizens of the Save Gold Bar Park Alliance were successful in achieving their original objective when EPCOR announced that they were abandoning their plan to expand the parking lot.

The bad news is that in their work fighting the expansion of the parking lot, the alliance uncovered EPCOR's plan to expand the volume of waste water that the treatment plant would process by rerouting a planned sewage trunk line from the capital waste-water treatment plant to the Gold Bar plant. Expanding the sewage treatment plant at Gold Bar would be a mistake. The site is too close to residences and has historically had problems with emissions, that would only get worse if the volume of sewage treated were to grow significantly. Moreover, the facility may have to expand its footprint to accommodate the extra waste, putting precious river valley parkland at risk.

Building the sewage trunk line to the capital waste-water treatment plant just makes sense. It's appropriately sited far away from residential zones, and there's enough room to expand the facility to accommodate the anticipated sewage volume growth that the city expects. As the environmental regulator responsible for the plant this government should listen to the citizens of Gold Bar's objections to expanding this site.

I'm proud of the citizens of the Save Gold Bar Park Alliance. I support their work, and on their behalf I urge the members of the government to commit to refusing to grant the provincial permits needed to expand the Gold Bar waste-water treatment plant.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Health Care System

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Alberta's health system has enjoyed one of its most uninterrupted periods of stability under the NDP's reign": the words of Keith Gerein, health reporter and columnist with the *Edmonton Journal*. He's right. Our government gave Alberta a welcome respite from years of constant chaos overseen by Conservatives.

They spent years tinkering with our health care system with no clear focus or intention other than increasing privatization. From Premier Klein's reckless cuts, firing thousands of workers, blowing up hospitals, and musing about a third way, to Minister Liepert dissolving nine health care regions in 24 hours to create Alberta Health Services, and risky experiments with private surgery bailed out on the public dime, over 10 years Health had six ministers, none lasting a full term. AHS had six CEOs, the first a symbol of Conservative arrogance as he shunned the press in favour of eating his cookie. The board, fired by Minister Horne for refusing an impossible order, was replaced by a single administrator.

Spending, Mr. Speaker. Health spending was a roller coaster. Oil is up? Well, spending, too: 4 per cent, 6 per cent, 7 per cent. Oil is down? Time for cuts. To quote columnist Don Braid, "Staffing and programs were flatlined, resuscitated and then put through the same survival cycle again. It was chaotic for doctors, nurses and too often for patients."

Mr. Speaker, our government restored balance. As Don Braid noted, we "calmed down the system, made significant improvements

and provided stability for health planners, professionals and workers.” Stable, predictable funding, with annual growth capped at 3 per cent, increased community-focused funding for capital infrastructure, a new AHS board, and we negotiated new agreements with physicians for pay and contracts at no increased cost. Now this government seems intent on bringing chaos back: freezing spending as population grows, breaking contracts with front-line workers, cancelling needed infrastructure with no alternate plan, and promising to further privatize care.

Mr. Speaker, we’ve been down this road before. We know where it ends: higher costs, longer wait times, poorer care. Albertans deserve better, and that’s what we will fight for.

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** I beg your indulgence for just moments. I neglected to recognize a group of students, student leaders who were on my list – my apologies; it was my mistake – from all across this great province of ours who have come to Edmonton to chat with members of the government and the opposition. I invite them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**Member Ceci:** I’d like to table five copies of a letter addressed to my office and the Member for Calgary-Lougheed talking about their upsetness around the Earpluggate scandal.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings this afternoon. One is a letter from one of my constituents, who refers to Earpluggate as appalling; the second one is concerned with the ramming through of Bill 9; and a third tabling is from the *Edmonton Journal* regarding Saturday’s letters. There are six letters in total that say that handing out earplugs was arrogant. I’m tabling those with the requisite number of copies.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two tablings: additional letters of support for private member’s Bill 201 from the father of 12-year-old Asher in Airdrie, who suffers from serious allergies, and from a family friend of 12-year-old Asher in support of Bill 201.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-West has a tabling.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of correspondence from a constituent who is a health care worker with AHS. She finds Bill 9 shows a deep level of disrespect for health care workers.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to table today the requisite copies of three different e-mails from constituents referring to the deplorable and disrespectful action of UCP MLAs, referring to the Premier’s actions to distribute earplugs as immature, and talking about how the actions of the Premier by handing out earplugs was an affront to democracy and the traditions of the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to rise and table the requisite number of copies in relation to a letter from a constituent who’s quite concerned about this government’s display of contempt and arrogance related to Earpluggate.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for St. Albert is rising.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of an article by Jeffrey Kluger, who is editor-at-large for *Time* magazine: Why We Keep Ignoring Even the Most Dire Climate Change Warnings.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-West has an additional tabling?

**Ms Phillips:** Yes. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I have a copy of an e-mail from a constituent of Eckville, Alberta, who finds, on the actions in this House around distribution of earplugs, that it would be nice if elected officials would stop tripping over a bar that is very low.

1:50

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently, while speaking in this Chamber, I referenced a cartoon storybook I read as a young child called *Top Cat*, which I was reminded of when the Premier handed out earplugs to his caucus so they wouldn’t suffer the indignity of listening to the duly elected Official Opposition and the thousands of constituents who expect their voices to be heard and respected. I do have five copies of portions of the book to table. I did actually create a sixth copy so that the children of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, including your own, might enjoy the wonderful world of *Top Cat*.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the tabling, hon. member. I think we saw a number of your colleagues display a very succinct way to table similar information. I’d encourage you to do so in the future.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Oil Transportation by Rail

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Northern Gateway: stopped in its tracks by Stephen Harper’s unwillingness to consult. Energy East: Harper’s appointees, again, botched that one. TMX: now finally approved but won’t reach tidewater for years. Those who believe Conservatives get pipelines built to tidewater need only look at the last 60 years to see that that’s not true. And now we have a Premier who’s refusing to move oil by rail for one simple reason, ideology. To the Premier: is it some sort of Conservative tradition to keep our oil away from market?

**Mr. Kenney:** Now, Mr. Speaker, I’ve got to admit that nothing makes me happier than having the socialists ask us about pipelines. That’s the leader of a party, half of whose caucus used to habitually attend antipipeline, anti oil and gas rallies saying: no more dirty Alberta oil. That’s the leader of a party that opposed Northern Gateway, that opposed Keystone XL, that surrendered to the Trudeau government’s killing of Energy East, surrendered to the Trudeau government’s vetoing of Northern Gateway, and did precisely nothing to protest the Obama administration’s veto of

Keystone XL. This government, however, is standing up for pipelines.

**Ms Notley:** Well, that was highly predictable, Mr. Speaker.

But contrary to the Premier's desire to find efficiencies with the facts, our crude-by-rail plan would have given Albertans a \$2 billion profit, more takeaway capacity, and more jobs, starting next week. We know line 3 and KXL are delayed, and even with TMX we risk extended curtailment and more jobs lost. To the Premier. This Monday our rail plan would have moved tens of thousands of barrels. Instead, we will move zero. Can you tell Albertans just how many jobs you sacrificed for politics?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, they haven't learned a thing. They signed a desperate last-minute deal, that sold Alberta taxpayers down the river, to do what? To buy a headline, to do something that the private sector was perfectly prepared to do itself at its expense. The NDP, because they've always opposed our energy industry – that's really been their *raison d'être* in modern Alberta political history, to oppose what they've always called the corrosive influence of, quote, big oil in Alberta politics. We, on the other hand, understand the integral role that industry plays in our province's economy and in our prosperity.

**Ms Notley:** Well, I'm not surprised that the Premier wants to continue to tell tales and, more importantly, to deflect, because he has no answer, Mr. Speaker. He's caught between his ridiculous campaign promise to rip up the oil-by-rail contract on the one hand and protecting jobs on the other. Now, perhaps a few tweets from his energy war room will create some jobs, but I doubt it. To the Premier: if you won't move oil by rail, how will you do it? Send it in airplanes? Drive it to the coast in your big blue truck? Albertans deserve more than talking points, Mr. Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** They certainly do, Mr. Speaker, which is why Albertans gave this government the largest democratic mandate in history to undo the massive damage done to our jobs and prosperity by the high-tax, reckless policies of the NDP. Their surrender, their actual asking of the federal government to veto Northern Gateway, is part of what created this situation. I'll tell you. On crude by rail, we know and believe that more oil should be moved by rail at the risk and cost of the private sector, not by costing taxpayers billions of dollars we can't afford.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Clearly, the Premier is more interested in political talking points than the facts or getting the job done when it comes to education.

### Education Funding

**Ms Notley:** So let's turn to another file they're bungling, education. Now, it's been over two weeks since the Minister of Finance claimed that enrolment would be funded, but school boards that we spoke to as recently as this morning say that they've received nothing in writing. To the Premier: what's the problem here? Are your ministers of Finance and Education still fighting over who's in charge, or are they just unable to connect the printer, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, our commitment on education funding is absolutely clear. In the campaign we committed to maintaining or increasing funding levels for education. We have since confirmed that there will be an increase in funding for enrolment

growth in the upcoming school year. Of course, the minister is communicating with stakeholders, including school boards. I'll tell you one thing: if we had allowed the NDP a chance to drive us to a \$100 billion debt, that's really what would jeopardize the future of funding high-quality public education.

**Ms Notley:** Back to the topic at hand, Mr. Speaker, I have a document I've mentioned which I will table today. It's one example of the standard notice that is sent out to boards, typically in April. It includes helpful bits of information like the exact projected enrolment, specific base funding for early childhood, grades 1 to 9, and high school. It also includes specific grants for things like ESL, inclusive education, and school nutrition. To the Premier: to date no board has received this critical information. Why is his minister failing to do her job?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education is doing a fantastic job balancing the need to provide adequate support for what is one of the most expensive public education systems in Canada while also working with school boards and in the future ensuring that we can do all of this within the bounds of fiscal responsibility. In April there was an election. This government has had eight weeks to get on top of the fiscal mess left behind by the NDP. The minister is communicating with school boards, and there is certainty that they will receive enrolment growth funding for the upcoming year.

**Ms Notley:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, on the question of the minister's competence, the Premier is economizing on the facts. School boards should not have to rely on reading answers in question period to learn about next year's funding. This minister's incompetence means that positions are currently being cut, hiring is delayed, and kids' education is hurt, yet it persists. To the Premier: is the real problem here that the enrolment funding promise is as reliable as this Premier's word on legislating social issues, cutting overtime, ripping up contracts, or earplugs?

**Mr. Kenney:** The real problem here, Mr. Speaker, is an NDP that's angry with Alberta voters for repudiating them. You know, I see here an interview that the Leader of the Opposition did with the *National Post* a couple of days ago, in which she is queried about what mistakes the NDP may have made that led to their historic repudiation as the first and only ever one-term government in Alberta history. [interjection] You know what? The leader of the NDP, who is impolitely heckling me, could not identify a single mistake made by the NDP, proving that they still haven't learned their lesson. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. We will have order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Holiday Pay and the Minimum Wage for Youth

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, Charles Dickens wrote, "For it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas." But then Dickens didn't live in the UCP's Alberta, where mom and dad could be made to work the holiday without any extra compensation or time off. And the children will be working, too, but for less money than the adults doing the exact same job. To the Premier. Your proposed reforms to Alberta's labour laws will only make life harder for Alberta families. Why are you being such a Scrooge?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, it didn't take long, Mr. Speaker, for the NDP smear machine to accuse us of creating a Dickensian society here. You know what? If the NDP had a tiny patina of humility, they



would stand up and acknowledge and apologize for the reckless economic policies that left nearly 200,000 Albertans jobless, that drove down average family incomes by 6 per cent, that shrunk our economy by 4 per cent over four years. They would apologize for the worst economic and fiscal record in Alberta history.

2:00

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The UCP treat the first half of Dickens' novel *A Christmas Carol* like a how-to guide on labour policy. They're stripping Albertans of holiday pay and youth of fair wages. To the Premier: won't you acknowledge that stealing holidays and fair youth wages is just greedy and will do little to improve the economy? Do we really want to wait and see if Ebenezer's ghost comes knocking on your door?

**Mr. Kenney:** I will acknowledge that none of that is even remotely true, Mr. Speaker. I will acknowledge that this government was elected with a historic mandate to get Alberta back to work and to undo the deep damage caused by reckless NDP economic and tax policies. That's exactly what we're doing. The NDP was perfectly satisfied to drive tens of thousands of young people out of work, moving from the minimum wage to no wage. [interjections] We're more ambitious for our young people. We want them to find that first job that can help prepare them for a lifetime of success. That's why we're focused on job creation for Albertans, especially young Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will have order when the government is answering questions.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, *A Christmas Carol* was fiction, but this Premier's plans for causing working Albertans pain are very real. Today I was proud to stand with three of many businesses who've stood up for fair wages for our youth, and I know there are many businesses who will continue to actually provide holiday pay. To the Premier. This really is your last chance. Will you put a halt to gutting youth wages? Do you really want the damage caused by your picking the pockets of youth workers to be something that haunts you for a long, long time?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, you would think that after their repudiation by Alberta voters the NDP would be haunted – haunted – by the 30,000 young Albertans looking for work who cannot find jobs; haunted by the fact that the youth unemployment rate is twice as high as the general unemployment rate; haunted by the fact that they drove us to the highest level of unemployment in Canada for most of their mandate. But we're going to exercise the ghosts of bad economic policy by the NDP by getting Albertans back to work with our job-creation tax cut, our youth job-creation strategy, and our cutting red tape. We're going to get Alberta back on track.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a question.

#### Medical Laboratory Services in Edmonton

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Repeatedly the Minister of Health has stood in this House and claimed that I was misrepresenting the Health Quality Council of Alberta in stating that they support a new consolidated clinical lab hub for Edmonton and northern Alberta. Well, last week Andrew Neuner, CEO of the HQCA, spoke with CBC and told them that the evidence supporting the need for a superlab in Edmonton still stands. To the minister:

there it is, straight from the HQCA. Will you now admit you've been getting it wrong, or will you simply put in your earplugs and double down on your short-sighted campaign promise?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, it's time for the NDP to start being honest with Albertans about what those two reports from the Health Quality Council actually say. There is in those reports information that says that we do need to invest in lab infrastructure here in Alberta, something they failed to do because they were waiting. They were ragging the puck so they could use that opportunity to try and nationalize private partners in health care. It's a shame that they tried to do that. It's a shame that they're not being honest with Albertans about what's said in those reports. They never said to have a megalab to try and replace private partners and, honestly, to remove jobs from the member's own riding.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quotes from the CEO. Mr. Neuner went on to say that their recommendation to bring lab services under a single public-sector platform is still valid and that he respects the government's need to balance priorities and funding but that it doesn't change the evidence. He pointed to outdated equipment, inconsistent information systems, and reporting protocols and said that consolidating lab services would increase efficiency, allow for faster test results, and provide better control over public policy. To the minister. The need is clear; the solution is, too. Why do you insist that you know better than the HQCA?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, again we see the NDP failing to be honest with Albertans with what's in that report. Again we see the NDP misrepresenting facts to Albertans about the state of affairs here in health care in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, the two reports – there are two of them – of the HQCA never said to replace private partners in health care with this megalab. It never said to have it on that spot, on that site, with that size of laboratory infrastructure. It's time for the NDP to start being honest with Albertans with what's in that report.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I am quoting the CEO of the HQCA.

Now, yesterday morning on Danielle Smith's radio show the minister stated that he doesn't know why the Health Sciences Association of Alberta disagrees with his decision to cancel the lab hub, that he believes they're not considering the best interest of patients. Now, I've had conversations, perhaps unlike the minister, with lab technicians and technologists who have repeatedly expressed concern that outdated equipment and facilities are jeopardizing patient care. To the minister: are you really trying to suggest that front-line health care workers don't care about patients? Why would you make such a ridiculous and disruptive claim?

**Mr. Shandro:** Again we see the NDP, actually, Mr. Speaker, admitting to Albertans that throughout their four years they did not invest in lab infrastructure in this province. They rag the puck to be able to try and use this as an opportunity to nationalize DynaLife. It's a shame. That's not what we're going to do. We're going to do what's in the best interests of patients.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Livingstone-Macleod is rising to ask a question.

### Electricity Market Review

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Historically Alberta's competitive market for electricity has kept prices low and encouraged investment. However, the previous government has made costly changes to the system, costing taxpayers and consumers billions of dollars. For decades Alberta's competitive market for electricity encouraged investment. We need a system that will encourage investment but will still meet the best interests of Albertans. My constituents were deeply concerned to hear about all of the problems and particularly the costs associated with these contracts. Albertans expect better from their leaders. Can the minister tell us how much the Alberta . . .

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP's ideological meddling with the electricity system cost our province, taxpayers, and consumers nearly \$2 billion. The PPA contracts, the power purchase contracts, that were in place prior to 2015 had a clause that allowed electricity generators to get out of the contract if the government changed the rules to their detriment, which the NDP did, and that led to a multibillion-dollar mishandling of the electricity sector.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a sustainable solution is desperately needed and given that this solution comes in the form of a long-term viable market for all Albertans and given that our United Conservative government was elected on a strong mandate from Albertans to once again make Alberta open for business, to the minister: what further actions need to be taken to correct the mistakes of the previous government to ensure that Albertans are getting fair prices and not paying for these mistakes with their tax dollars?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP's mishandling of the electricity system involved cancellation of contracts, court cases, bungling and mishandling of the return of the contracts, higher electricity costs, subsidies, resignation of the entire Balancing Pool. We have an election campaign platform commitment of a 90-day review of the capacity market, which we launched two weeks ago, and with that, we are going to ask Albertans the best way forward.

**Mr. Reid:** Given that the renewable energy program is now a series of costly subsidies that Albertans are now paying the price for and given that our United Conservative government campaigned on the promise to ensure that Alberta's electricity market is fair and affordable and given that our government will always do what is in the best interest of Albertans, to the minister: can you update my constituents on what steps you are taking to address the previous policies that may not be in the best interest of Albertans?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, our election platform was clear that we would end costly subsidies after the renewable energy program, round 3. Last week I sent a letter to the AESO informing them that we will not be proceeding with REP 4. We are in favour and we welcome market-driven solutions for renewables like wind, solar, and hydro, but they must be able to compete on a market basis.

2:10

### Solar Energy Use

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our NDP government was proud to provide incentives to bring investment to the renewable energy sector that didn't cost taxpayers any money at the industrial scale. Included among those was the residential and commercial solar programs, which offered rebates on installation costs for homes and

business solar projects and led to our solar industry growing by an incredible 500 per cent. But now it seems that the sun is setting on solar in Alberta, with this government cancelling the program. To the minister: if you're so intent on bringing investment to this province, why are you cancelling the very program that does just that?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, subsidies that didn't cost the taxpayers any money? It just shows that the NDP continue to not understand what has gone wrong and why they are the only one-term government in the history of this province. They brought in the largest tax increase in the history of this province, the carbon tax, which I'm proud this government has now gotten rid of. They brought in nothing but economic pain and no environmental gain for the people of this province. Again, to the hon. members, it's time to examine what has gone wrong and what they did wrong and apologize to Albertans for it.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our solar rebate program was so popular that even Andrew Scheer agrees with it.

Given that these jobs are now stalled, with the president of Great Canadian Solar telling CBC last week, quote: we can't look at hiring right now, whether it's engineering, installation, sales, support staff – what happens to those jobs? To the minister: what is happening to those jobs? Are you so intent on cancelling every initiative that our government started that you're willing to throw people out of work just to make a point?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, nobody in this government will be lectured to by that hon. member about jobs when he was part of a government that oversaw something like 200,000 people being out of work in this province.

In regard to Andrew Scheer, I'm happy to report that our colleagues federally in the CPC also have a climate change policy that does not include a carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, because they recognize that a carbon tax is all economic pain and no environmental gain. [interjections] I understand that the NDP, as they heckle me right now, are still struggling to understand why Albertans are so angry with them, but they fired them on April 16.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that Canadians are embracing solar energy, Canadians like Andrew Scheer, with solar panels popping up on homes and businesses across the province and given that the town of Raymond has put solar panels on almost all municipally owned buildings and is the first town in Canada, possibly North America, to be electrically net zero, will the minister admit that the province of Alberta is behind the times when it comes to solar energy?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this government has no concerns with solar energy; in fact, we encourage people to look at solar options. What the difference is between this government and the previous NDP government is that we're not going to use taxpayers' dollars to subsidize the solar industry. [interjection]

I know I can hear the former Premier heckling right now because she's extraordinarily frustrated because Albertans fired her on April 16 largely because they brought in a carbon tax, which was all economic pain and no environmental gain and disproportionately punished people like fixed-income seniors and the vulnerable, homeless shelters, food banks, and on and on, Mr. Speaker. So very disappointing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### Technology and Entrepreneurship Educational Curricula

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The world is changing, and we need to change with it to maintain our competitive advantage. Alberta is ranked third in the world for artificial intelligence and machine learning, and we have a vibrant and diverse tech sector. To attract investment, we need to make sure that Alberta is home to a highly skilled and technologically literate workforce. To the Minister of Education: how exactly does your needless delay on a new Alberta curriculum help prepare our students for these high-tech jobs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very important that as we look to the future, it's a priority for us to ensure that we have a skilled and educated workforce that will help us meet the demands of a fast-paced and changing environment. We recognize this as a priority, and within the Ministry of Advanced Education we'll be looking to expand the apprenticeship model of education and have that applied to areas such as coding and green technologies, areas and industries that are in demand, so that we can ensure that we are ahead of the curve in ensuring that we have the labour force that we need.

**Mr. Dang:** That has nothing to do with IT. Zero.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I think everyone can hear you in the middle of a question when the Speaker is on his feet.

I might just ask all members to keep their comments to themselves.

**Mr. Bilous:** Hopefully, everyone had their plugs in. That might have been clocked at 101 decibels, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the curriculum needs to include coding, entrepreneurship, and foundational skills so students will be able to compete for technology jobs and given that students need to start learning these skills now, not years from now, and given that Alberta's postsecondary institutions are at the leading edge of graduating students ready to make their mark in digital industries, to the Minister of Education: will the minister commit to ensuring that coding and entrepreneurship are added immediately to the curriculum, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education is rising.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned, looking at applying the apprenticeship model, specifically in areas of coding, is something that our government is working towards. We're also working to ensure that we can get more students from the K to 12 curriculum to pursue vocational educational opportunities and help them to enter the skilled trades. That includes looking at building NAIT collegiate to foster a labour force that will help us address the labour demands not just of today but of tomorrow. Our government is being proactive, and we're taking steps to ensure that that'll be done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start off by saying that this is going to the Minister of Education. Given that some of Alberta's curriculum is over 30 years old and given that industry players do not need to wait for our classrooms to catch up to their workforce needs when they can simply move to other labour markets, to the Minister of Education: given that the Premier himself promised during the recent election that his education

platform would create, quote, a workforce that's ready for the future – forgive me. This is to the Premier: does your workforce for the future involve Commodore 64s?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education has risen.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's incredibly important that we evaluate, of course, the labour market needs and impacts of degree programs and of educational opportunities. We recognize that that's important. We want to ensure that when our students are moving through K to 12 and entering into postsecondary, they have a good sense and a good understanding of what the labour market needs are and what the labour market impacts are of the programs that they're seeking to enter. We believe it's important to provide that information and clarity to our students.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

### Driver's Licence Road Tests

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some time has passed now, giving our ministers time to settle into their new roles. The previous government made significant changes to the scheduling of road tests. Rural communities such as mine in the Camrose constituency are particularly negatively impacted as scheduled testers do not honour their scheduled appointments, leaving those who have scheduled their drivers' tests in a situation where they have taken time off work for the appointment. Many also drive long distances. Can the Minister of Transportation please give this House an update on the status of this inefficient system?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct. On March 1 of this year the NDP government blew up the driver examiner system at the start of the busiest time of the year. That's why we're working quickly to clean up the mess the NDP left in this file. We've hired extra examiners. There are more than 140 on the job now. By the end of this week there should be over 150, which puts us essentially at full strength. We're working hard. I encourage Albertans to keep calling to get their tests. We'll start catching up now that we have re-created the labour force to do this.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you so much, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans are not able to take scheduled road tests, will the minister consider returning to the previous system whereby local testers are scheduled, returning to a more efficient privatized system whereby travel of testers does not cut into time which can be better used testing rather than driving to or from testing destinations?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

2:20

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that the previous government rushed the implementation of this system, causing months of delays during the peak season. To answer the question, we will not redisrupt the market in the middle of the main part of the season. We'll be speaking now with the driver examiners, registries, and other stakeholders to determine next steps. In the meantime, our focus is on clearing the NDP backlog and ensuring that Albertans have timely access to the current system, which the NDP messed up on March 1.

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

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. My final question is to the same minister. Given that residents who live in my constituency of Camrose have expressed concern regarding the inefficiencies in our revised system, can you please explain to this House what Albertans can expect from this newly elected government as it pertains to scheduling road tests?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government will do our best to keep cleaning up the mess the NDP has caused on this file. We're working quickly to ensure that the applicants have timely and reliable access to drivers' exams. As I said, we've hired extra examiners and added weekends and Saturday bookings to help clear the backlog. By mid-July Albertans should be able to book a test as much as 90 days in advance and, equally important, they shouldn't have to wait as long to get the test if they're in a hurry. Every class of licence was in a mess. We're cleaning it up, and it's taking some time.

#### Minister of Finance

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans expect public policy to be developed in a manner that adheres to conflict-of-interest legislation, so why is the Minister of Finance listed as a director of a corporation that provides "oversight for the ministry" of the Peace River Bible Institute?"

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to answer that question, I resigned as a director earlier this year. I think what I really want to say is that I ensured that I resigned.

Albertans elected this government to clean the mess up that the previous government made. The previous government was taking this province on a track to \$100 billion of debt. Albertans said no to that and yes to responsible government. That's what we're here to do, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that if this is the case, the minister should have no problem tabling this evidence by the end of question period today and given that the Conflicts of Interest Act specifically cautions against the appearance of impropriety, why does it appear that the minister is breaking the conflict-of-interest laws in order to further a private interest as a director for a corporation?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I have cleared everything with the Ethics Commissioner.

What the members opposite are struggling with is that on April 16 Albertans said: "We need a change. We need a government who will stand up for our interests. We need a government who will make responsible decisions to ensure that this generation and the next generation have a future." Mr. Speaker, that's what this government is about, and we will deliver to Albertans.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Conflicts of Interest Act specifically prohibits ministers from being part of decisions affecting organizations or avoiding the appearance of being part of decisions affecting organizations that they are directly associated with, is it government policy to appear to blatantly disregard the guidance of the conflict-of-interest legislation? Why the oversight?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. the Finance minister was clear on this. He's resigned from that position and, like all of us, has been through a process with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure he's completely in compliance with his role as the Finance minister of Alberta.

What is ridiculous is that member continuing with that line of attack even after it was confirmed by the Finance minister that he resigned from that position. It's shameful. Now, it doesn't surprise me, coming from that particular member, whose role when she was the environment minister was not to consult with Albertans, was to basically go out of her way to cause trouble inside of our communities, refused to meet with the very people that they did, and even went out of her way to lie about the RCMP.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:24.

#### Conversion Therapy Use in Alberta

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Lethbridge-West for raising some additional troubling information about this Minister of Finance. Sadly, there's more. This government has already refused to take conversion therapy seriously. The Minister of Health has disbanded the working group tasked with banning this harmful practice. Thankfully, my colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs is carrying the work forward. To the Minister of Finance: are you familiar with the organization Journey Canada and its connections to conversion therapy?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's so sad to see the NDP in opposition continue to go out of their way with fear and smear and to waste their constituents' time inside this place. [interjections] It is so disappointing. You can see right now the behaviour of the NDP, the former Premier of Alberta heckling away in a very childish way inside this place. Albertans find that unacceptable. I suspect that's why they fired them on April 16. While I recognize that the hon. leader of the NDP is frustrated that she was fired, that's the reality. Albertans cast that judgment. If they keep doing it this way, they'll cast it again, I'm sure.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister is listed publicly as a member of the board that thrice published a newsletter featuring the minister that contained an ad for a Journey Canada event called the church and same-sex attraction and given that the description of this event is aimed at "equipping . . . friends and caregivers to walk with those who are experiencing unwanted same-sex attraction," to the minister: to what extent are your policy choices informed by antigay organizations that want to pray the gay away or much, much worse?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The behaviour by the Official Opposition in this place is appalling. This may be the worst Official Opposition in history by this point. It is unbelievable. You know, it's interesting, when I was back home in my constituency this weekend, how many people came and talked to me about the behaviour of the NDP. I can tell you that everyday Albertans are extremely frustrated with how their Official Opposition is acting in this place. They're shocked by it. You see it over and over. I know that you must be frustrated by it, Mr. Speaker. It's ridiculous. The fear and smear should stop. Certainly, Team Angry should stop, and they should accept the judgment of Albertans.

**Member Irwin:** Given that conversion therapy is dangerous and that it ruins lives, no matter what the ministers and this government say, and given that being gay doesn't make you a demon, not to my knowledge anyway – neither does yoga, for that matter – and given that the UCP ran another candidate in this past election that had direct ties to Journey Canada and its harmful conversion therapy practices, will the minister stand in this House and apologize for his past views, and if not, will he recuse himself from any discussion in this House or in cabinet relating to conversion therapy?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, who should apologize in this House is the Official Opposition. They should apologize for the way that they have approached their job. It's disappointing. It does a disservice to Albertans. It's ridiculous. It's completely inappropriate, what you've seen . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . taking place here, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] You see it right now, heckling away, language that would be inappropriate anywhere else. These are the things that Albertans are disappointed in. This is why the NDP is the only one-term government in the history of this province. They can do better. I encourage them to do better, but sadly it looks like they have no intention of doing that. Instead, they're going to attempt to bully people and go out of their way to act like this in this House. It's shameful.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order noted at 2:29.

#### Agricultural Education

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, southern Alberta was one of the early hubs of agriculture in the province and has always been a leader in ag production, innovation, and education, especially in my constituency of Cardston-Siksika. Most recently Magrath high school developed a partnership with the Westwind school district and several local producers to create the sustainable agriculture education partnership in an effort to bring agriculture literacy to our students. To the minister: how do you intend to replicate programs that inspire students to think about their futures such as the one in Magrath?

**Member LaGrange:** I'm very glad to hear success stories like this, where a school district is taking advantage of the career and technology programs offered within our world-class education system. Programs like career and technology studies, dual credit, and off-campus learning encourage partnerships within the community and are wonderful learning opportunities for our students. These programs allow students to develop job-ready skills and address labour market needs within a local context. I'd like to congratulate Westwind school district, Magrath, and Cardston on their partnership.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister, for the answer. Now, this program doesn't end there. Given that Wade Alston, the CAO of the town of Magrath, stated to the media that the enrolment in this program is strong and given that he foresees an expansion of this program to other regions, including partnerships with the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College, and given that these types of programs have proven effective in other countries around the world, how will the minister

assist in the expansion of these kinds of programs, and how will the minister roll this program out?

2:30

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for that question, hon. member. We encourage growth within all our career and technology programs. School authorities have the flexibility to identify opportunities for growth of these programs within their communities. I would also like to encourage schools to take advantage of the flexibility inherent in programs like career and technology studies and dual credit and to participate in the amazing opportunities available through Skills Alberta. We are always listening to our school authorities and industry partners, and we will always support opportunities that enrich the lives of our students, their families, and their communities.

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's agriculture and agrifood industries are an underappreciated sector in our economy and given that the agriculture and agrifood industries are rapidly expanding while employment in the sector dissipates and given that youth in Alberta are taking on tens of thousands of dollars in debt each year, facing a nearly 10 per cent unemployment rate and minimal prospects of well-paying jobs after graduating, what will this minister do to empower partnerships that show students the career options available to them like the ones in Magrath?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government was elected on the promise to improve access to career and technology programs for students across the province. In addition to funding programs through Skills Alberta and Careers: the Next Generation, I know that a number of school divisions, including Westwind school division, will be developing additional dual-credit opportunities this fall thanks to this government's commitment to education. Alberta's dual-credit program has been well received, and we will be looking at building on this program this fall.

Thank you.

#### Payday Loan Consumer Protection

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I asked the Minister of Service Alberta if he was prepared to commit to protecting the consumer protection laws that our government brought in around the automotive industry. His response was less than encouraging. So let's try again and give this minister another chance to show Albertans that he's in it for them and not just for UCP donors. To the Minister of Service Alberta: do you support the payday loan legislation introduced by our government in the previous Legislature? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. Our government is monitoring the impact of this current legislation. We know that when Albertans are not working and are paying too much in taxes, the need for short-term credit increases. That's why our government is putting forward legislation that will help job creators to create jobs so that Albertans can get back to work. Alberta succeeds when individual Albertans succeed, and we are committed to doing what we can to ensure conditions for success are in place.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that our government acted on payday loans by bringing in the lowest borrowing rate in Canada and given that our government acted by lowering the annual interest rates and gave borrowers the right to pay back their loans in instalments over two months and given that affirming support for common-sense regulations like this should be the simplest thing for the minister to do, again to the Minister of Service Alberta: has the minister or any member of his staff had any meetings with any lobbyist representing the payday loan industry, seeking to roll back our legislation on payday loans?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, this is a clear case of the member opposite trying to create a problem where there isn't one. The Alberta Lobbyists Act requires that lobbying activities be registered and that that information is publicly available. We are committed to protecting and creating the conditions for Albertans to have success and to be protected and to balancing the needs of consumers and business and also to ensuring that we are creating jobs and attracting investment to this province. Albertans voted overwhelmingly for the vision that we put forward, and we are committed to following through on our commitments to Albertans.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that high-interest payday loans keep low-income Albertans in the cycle of poverty and given that it's an important responsibility of the government to protect Albertans from predatory businesses, to the Minister of Service Alberta: will you commit here and now to not taking any action that would allow predatory payday loan providers to regain ground in this province?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you is that licences for those providing payday loans or high-cost credit loans are obtained under the Consumer Protection Act, and it is important to note that my department conducts inspections and will investigate complaints that it receives. Albertans know that we have their best interests at heart when it comes to helping them earn a living and to keeping more money in their pockets. That's why they voted overwhelmingly for change in this last election, and I'll remind all Albertans that we are working hard to deliver on that change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for St. Albert.

### PDD Program Applications

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the persons with developmental disabilities program received over 2,000 applications for support to enable Albertans who meet the criteria to live and work in their communities. Requests for new services are sometimes due to aging of people or the onset of dementia, severe illness, or a changing living situation. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: has your department developed a new funding approval process for PDD applicants, and if so, what criteria is being applied, and will you share that criteria with Albertans?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Mr. Speaker, it was part of our platform commitment that we were going to review the PDD program, and certainly we are taking steps right now to go through that program in depth and to determine what the next steps are going to be.

**Ms Renaud:** Actually, the review is already under way.

Given that approximately 200 youth transition from FSCD, family support for children with disabilities, funding to PDD

funding for adults with developmental disabilities each year, can the Minister of Community and Social Services confirm that the intake and approval process has not been altered with the addition of bureaucratic layers to lengthen the approval and appeal timeline?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, while that program has been reviewed, it hasn't been reviewed sufficiently at this point. That transition period from FSCD to the PDD program is very problematic. Certainly, the previous government had four years to fix that issue, and they didn't.

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

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Given the fact that the average wait time for someone approved for PDD funding is approximately 377 days and given the fact that wait-lists range in number from 60 to 300, can the Minister of Community and Social Services assure Albertans whose lives and well-being rely on essential supports that eligible applicants will not be deferred because there is no funding or the funding is too stretched to be available?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, the wait-list issue was already in existence during the previous government's tenure. It continues to be a problem, and we're looking at that problem right now to try to see how we can address it efficiently.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

### Red Tape Reduction Strategy

**Mrs. Allard:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When red tape comes up, the focus seems to be more on business, in particular on reducing the regulatory burden for businesses, investment, and industry. However, I hear from many constituents in my riding who are not necessarily businesspeople, and they, too, have red tape concerns. Along with these concerns many have creative solutions to bring to the table. To the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: we know that you're easing the regulatory burden on job creators, but how can other Albertans participate as well?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. All Albertans are encouraged to submit their red tape concerns to make life better for Albertans. Red tape reduction ideas can be submitted to our newly launched website, [cutredtape.alberta.ca](http://cutredtape.alberta.ca), or sent by e-mail to [cutredtape@gov.ab.ca](mailto:cutredtape@gov.ab.ca). To show how excited Albertans are about this initiative, in less than 24 hours we've already received 800 submissions. If you see red tape, we're all ears.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that as an MLA I frequently hear of processes that can be sped up, inefficiencies to be fixed, and redundancies plaguing job creators, how can the businesses in my riding let you know what the actual key challenges and holdups are on the ground?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, for far too long our job creators have been told that they're greedy and that they don't care about their employees. This has been especially true over the past four years under the NDP. What's ironic is that after treating them this way, the NDP would ask them to create jobs and grow the economy. We're going to do things differently. We're going to reduce the

layers of red tape heaped upon their backs, allowing them to do what they do best, create jobs. We are going to provide them multiple vehicles to submit their ideas through panels and an open-door policy with this government.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that your ministry is an associate ministry, which results in fewer resources and limited manpower, to the same minister: how will you extend your red tape reduction efforts to ensure that you accomplish your mandate for the people of Alberta?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, we have made sure that our associate ministry is lean yet effective. We have reallocated resources from the Ministry of Finance in order to deliver a competent team in order to meet our goal of reducing red tape by one-third. We'll also have MLAs supporting us as they move individual submissions through to completion. One final point: we have complete support from the Premier and all ministers to be able to accomplish this great work.

### Rural Crime Strategy

**Mr. Loewen:** Rural crime remains an important issue for my constituents in Central Peace-Notley, and I know it is for many of the MLAs on this side of the Chamber. The safety of all Albertans should be a priority for any government. Unfortunately, very few of the NDP MLAs were from rural constituencies in the previous government. Therefore, they allocated insufficient resources and didn't devote any real energy to the issue of rural crime. My question is for the Minister of Justice: can the minister please tell us here today what this government's strategy is regarding the important issue of rural crime?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the hon. member for his continued advocacy on this important issue facing so many of our rural communities and his advocacy for the Peace Country. Our government is committed to implementing our rural crime strategy, that we outlined in our campaign. On a regular basis I'm talking with our police, our chief judges, to make sure that we're on top of the challenges in our court system as well as on the ground in our communities. I can also let the Assembly know that last week I sent a letter in support of Conservative member Blaine Calkins' proposed amendment to the Criminal Code to strengthen provisions relating to rural crime.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that rural crime was not a priority for the previous government even though rural crime affects so many Albertans and given that this government's platform included robust rural crime policies because the issue of rural crime is such a serious safety and property issue and given that Albertans' priorities are this government's priorities, can the minister tell this Chamber if continuing and further consultations have been carried out with Albertans about a rural crime policy?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend all of the members of our rural caucus that on a regular basis come to me, meet with me, bring issues forward. We're in the process right now of engaging with our MLAs, engaging with our ministry, to go out across Alberta over the summer and into the fall to consult and hear directly from communities regarding the challenges that they face. We want to listen. We want to make sure that we address these

issues and make sure that all communities know about the resources that are going to be made available to them.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that crime is a pressing issue for Alberta's rural constituencies because of the great distances from law enforcement that residents find themselves in, resulting in longer response times, and given that in my constituency new crime watch groups have started to fight rural crime and given that having safe rural communities benefits all Albertans, can the minister please inform this House what resources will be allocated to help fight rural crime for the benefit of all Albertans?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, all Albertans deserve to feel safe in their communities and their homes. Our government has been clear that we're going to make sure that we provide our law enforcement officials with the resources that they need, from hiring 50 new prosecutors to providing ALERT with \$50 million to combat the opioid crisis facing our province as well as making sure that they have the resources to tackle gang violence. Our priorities are clear. We're going to make sure we provide our police and prosecutors with the resources that they need. Our priorities are not providing free light bulbs and shower heads.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to tabling of returns and reports.

### Tabling Returns and Reports (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies from the Peace River Bible Institute website that were downloaded today indicating that the Minister of Finance forms the corporation of the Peace River Bible Institute.

I also have, Mr. Speaker, a letter from a constituent of Lethbridge-West who is a teacher, from both her and her husband, who is also a teacher, thanking the opposition for their work on Bill 9 and registering their firm opposition to getting in the way of collective bargaining.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition a document that she referenced as far as school districts normally getting their budgets in March/April.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen to table a document.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table today, with the requisite number of copies. First, at the disbelieving urging from the Member for Morinville-St. Albert, an article, which I believe I saw through a tweet, which is titled Brazil President: I'd Rather Have a Dead Son than a Gay Son. Imagine that, an elected official.

I also have an article about a dad accused of murder, who, once he found out his son had a boyfriend, grabbed a gun and shot him.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Minister LaGrange, Minister of Education, pursuant to the

Teaching Profession Act the Alberta Teachers' Association 2018 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order.

The first point of order was raised by the Official Opposition House Leader. However, I am not in need of his interjections. What I am in need of is not the continuation of debate. The Government House Leader knows what he did, and he will withdraw and apologize.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw and apologize.

**The Speaker:** Point of order 2, I believe, was raised by the Member for Central Peace-Notley.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In question period today I think we all heard this because it was shouted out so clearly and audibly. The Member for St. Albert shouted out: your arrogance is appalling. Now, of course, I think that would fall under 23(h), (i), and (j), probably all three of them. You know, we put up with a lot of abuse in this House from the members from the opposition side shouting out different things throughout question period, and I would suggest that that member should apologize and withdraw her remarks.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, what I will say is that it's pretty rich coming from the member who sat as opposition when we were government and hurled insults every day during question period for the full 35 seconds while ministers were responding. You know what? If the member said that – I mean, the government is acting very arrogantly, but it's not a point of order. It's a difference of opinion. It was a heckle that clearly was an effective heckle if it bothered the member. But I can tell you that it's not a point of order; it's a difference of opinion. I will not be apologizing or withdrawing that comment.

**The Speaker:** Well, you may have to, depending on the ruling of the chair, so I would perhaps suggest that you take a different tack when finishing your points of order.

Having said that, as all members of the Assembly will know, it would be impossible for a chair to rule on comments that they may or may not have heard that are not on the record. While it is quite possible that the Member for St. Albert did in fact say that, I myself at that time was intently trying to listen to the question and the answer, the cut and thrust of debate, and everyone will know that in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 624, it is well accepted that "the Chair cannot be expected to rule in the absence of a reliable record." So in this case I would consider it not to be a point of order. Of course, all members are responsible for decorum inside this Chamber.

Having said that, the chair is prepared to rule on the point of privilege.

### Privilege Misleading the House

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised yesterday, June 24, 2019, by the Official Opposition House Leader relating to comments made by the

Government House Leader and Minister of Environment and Parks on June 20, 2019.

2:50

The Official Opposition House Leader provided notice to my office at 11:25 yesterday morning of this question of privilege, with a copy to the Government House Leader, and therefore met the requirements under Standing Order 15(2). I might provide some guidance to the Official Opposition House Leader that it is customary to outline in some detail what the purpose of the point of privilege shall be. In this particular case, the letter was vague at best.

As stated in his arguments yesterday afternoon at pages 1113 and 1114 of *Hansard*, the Official Opposition House Leader alleges that the Government House Leader made – and this is the important part – deliberately misleading statements to the Assembly on June 20, 2019, and that these statements constitute a contempt of the Assembly. The statements in question are found on pages 1079 and 1080 of *Hansard* from June 20 and were made during Oral Question Period by the Government House Leader in response to questions from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. The primary issue raised by the House leader for the Official Opposition was with respect to the Government House Leader's answer to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora's second supplemental question, which can be found on page 1080 of *Hansard*. The Government House Leader said, "Mr. Speaker, nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate."

The test for deliberately misleading the House can be found in the fourth edition of *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, pages 775 and 776. The test has three elements. "The statement must, in fact, have been misleading; the member must have known that the statement was inaccurate at the time [in which] the statement was made; and the member must have intended to mislead the House." As Speaker Wanner, my predecessor, noted on March 22, 2018, at page 313 of *Hansard* for that day, this test "is very difficult to meet."

I must accept an explanation provided by the Government House Leader, as I must accept any explanation by any member of this Assembly, for I am duty bound. Yesterday afternoon at page 1115 of *Hansard* the Government House Leader said that his remarks were intended to refer to members of the Executive Council and not entirely to the government caucus. On that basis, I cannot find that the elements of the test have been met. As is noted in paragraph 494 of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, "statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted."

I understand that members of the opposition have rightly taken offence at certain activities that occurred during the evening of June 19, 2019. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it has not been my experience that there is a positive correlation between sitting late into the night and decorum inside this Assembly. While it is the opposition's right to raise concerns regarding incidents that occur within the Chamber that may affect decorum, I want to emphasize that a question of privilege and, in particular, the assertion that a member has misled this Assembly is a very serious matter. I would also like to remind members that we all must work together, no matter what time of the day or night, to ensure that order and decorum are maintained in this Assembly.

There is no prima facie question of privilege with respect to intentionally misleading this House. The matter is now closed.

We are at Ordres du jour.



## Orders of the Day

### Government Motions

#### Federal Carbon Tax

21. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its support for the government in its efforts to challenge the federal government's attempts to impose a carbon tax on Alberta, which this Assembly views as a clear violation of provincial jurisdiction, including the launching of a constitutional challenge if necessary; acknowledge the negative impacts that a carbon tax has upon the people of Alberta, including the increased cost to heat homes and run businesses in the midst of an economic downturn; and recognize that Alberta's oil and gas industries continue to be global leaders in emissions reduction.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion according to Standing Order 18(1)(a). Are there those wishing to speak? The hon. the Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in support of Motion 21. Let me begin with some context. In the spring of 2015 the NDP ran on a platform which did not include a single reference nor even an intimation of the imposition of a carbon tax. Indeed, if you consult the fiscal annex of the 2015 NDP platform, there is a detailed iteration of tax changes under a prospective NDP government – increases in personal income taxes, increases in taxes on job creators, various other tax increases – but strangely you will note, Mr. Speaker, the complete omission of any reference to a carbon tax, a carbon levy, a climate leadership plan levy, or any other euphemism that could be used to describe the carbon tax.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Yet immediately upon forming government, the previous NDP administration commissioned a panel which recommended the imposition of a carbon tax, which the NDP promptly did in the fall of that year, just scarce months after having received a mandate without a carbon tax commitment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that constituted the single largest tax increase in Alberta history. It took \$1.8 billion out of the pockets of Albertans. It made everything more expensive. It made it more expensive for ordinary working families to fill up their gas tanks, for seniors to heat their homes, for charities and nonprofits simply to operate. It punished people, Albertans, for living ordinary lives in this cold northern climate. And it did all of that with no measurable environmental benefit. In fact, it was very simply and obviously a cash grab. In fact, in the NDP's 2018 budget they hid in the numbers their ultimate intention, to which they confessed under questioning from the media and the opposition, to raise the carbon tax from the initial \$20 to \$30 a tonne and then to \$50 a tonne. Their plan was to raise it by that additional 67 per cent without any offsetting increase in low-income rebates and without any offsetting increase in, ostensibly, environmental spending.

As the tax grew and became a bigger and bigger burden on people, it increasingly was designed by the NDP to become a regressive tax, a tax on the poor, a tax that would make it – I always thought, Mr. Speaker, to put one's mind, if one can, to think about this from the NDP perspective, that this must have been a bitter pill to swallow. I don't know how the former Finance minister and the Premier got away with persuading a party that used to pretend to be a voice of economic progress, of redistribution of wealth. How did they get away with persuading their caucus and party to impose the

most punishingly regressive tax conceivable, a tax on the consumption of energy, with no offsetting rebates, one hundred per cent of which incremental revenues were to be directed – where, Mr. Speaker? – to the general budget slush fund, the general revenue fund, to pay for the NDP's fiscal mismanagement?

3:00

And so they were forced, in the spring of 2018, to admit what Albertans suspected all along, that their secret carbon tax agenda was little more than a regressive cash grab that would punish the poor for heating their homes. That's one of the reasons why, Mr. Speaker, two-thirds of Albertans consistently in public opinion polls indicated their opposition to the NDP's carbon tax cash grab.

That's notwithstanding the previous government having added insult to injury by taking tens of millions of dollars generated by the punitive carbon tax to then pay for advertising telling Albertans why they should be grateful to pay the carbon tax. I'll never forget being at a movie theatre in Calgary, and they had the chutzpah to run a trailer ad before the movie began telling people how lucky they were to give the NDP government a cash grab, which elicited a chorus of boos through the movie theatre. When I heard that, I thought: you know, maybe the NDP is actually not listening to Albertans on this.

But we did. I'm proud to say that we did, Mr. Speaker. We did, and that is why we ran on a commitment to introduce as Bill 1 in this Legislature the carbon tax repeal act. It was announced in the Speech from the Throne of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, and I was proud to stand in this place that afternoon and introduce for first reading the carbon tax repeal act. I would like to thank the majority of members in this place, all of them in the government, the United Conservative caucus, for having voted to repeal the carbon tax. I was immensely proud to join the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board in Her Honour's office opposite our Chamber as I witnessed her granting royal assent to make the carbon tax repeal law.

Do you know what happened immediately, Mr. Speaker? Gas prices went down by about 6 or 7 cents a litre all across the province, and everywhere you looked, gas prices were typically under a buck. Everywhere I go, people come up to me and say: thank you for what you're doing, especially for saving me money on filling up my car. So the people are benefiting already from a government that listens to Albertans in eliminating that punitive tax.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the House, however, that the NDP, if I'm not mistaken – I want to consult here with the hon. the Government House Leader. Am I correct in asserting that the NDP voted against Bill 1?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** That's correct. Shameful. But yeah.

**Mr. Kenney:** The NDP, Mr. Speaker: shockingly, they had a chance – they had a good month or a few weeks after the election – to go into a period of reflection and soul-searching. Now, I've been through that before. I've been in a party that lost an election. Normally what you do is that you take a step back and you ask yourselves: "What did we do wrong? How did we lose people's confidence?" Now, I would think that impulse towards introspection might be particularly urgent for the first political party in Alberta history to have lost government after just one term. I can tell you that if I had been in such a party, I would say to my colleagues, "You know, we need to take a step back and think about: how did we get so profoundly offside public opinion that we just suffered one of the worst trouncings in Alberta electoral history after just one term?"

I would have thought that the NDP caucus, perhaps in a spirit of humility, might have gathered and said to each other: “You know, maybe that carbon tax that we hid from voters and then imposed on them and then raised by 50 per cent and then planned on raising by another 67 per cent, that carbon tax that we had planned to make a regressive tax on the poor and a transparent cash grab – maybe that was one of the big mistakes. Maybe we should pull back a half step and just rethink this. Maybe there’s some other way. Maybe we can actually have an effective environmental policy that reduces emissions without punishing seniors for heating their homes and nonprofits for turning on the lights.”

I guess that was too much to expect of the NDP because as we can see through their comportment in question period and elsewhere, Mr. Speaker, they’re angry. Instead of moving into a moment of introspection and analysis about this and other issues, they’re angry with Albertans for disagreeing with their ideological cash grab called the carbon tax.

That is why, shockingly, they voted against Bill 1, which was the centrepiece of the largest democratic mandate granted to a party in Alberta political history. And in that vote against Bill 1, you know what the NDP was telling Albertans? “You were wrong, Albertans. You were wrong to elect a government with a mandate to repeal the carbon tax.” The NDP said, frankly, in its arrogance that not only were you wrong, but implicit in that vote was a commitment by the NDP to reintroduce the carbon tax should they ever get the chance to do so. Well, thankfully, they won’t.

That’s one of the reasons that we have brought forward Motion 21 before the Assembly today, because we want to give the NDP a chance to redeem themselves, to redeem their vote in favour of the carbon tax and their original imposition of it. I just plead with them, Mr. Speaker, to think about listening to Albertans on the carbon tax. If they vote in favour of Motion 21, what they will be doing is voting to endorse our government’s defence of Alberta taxpayers against the encroachment on our jurisdiction with a punitive federal carbon tax, which is slated for introduction in this province on January 1 of next year.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Before I get to that, Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Assembly that the United Conservative Party, even while in opposition, joined with a growing number of provincial allies across the federation to defend our taxpayers and taxpayers from coast to coast. Let me single out for recognition and commendation the government of Saskatchewan, which led a valiant fight against the overwhelming pro carbon tax forces in Canadian politics for two years until being joined by allies in other provinces. Let me thank former Premier Brad Wall and current Premier Scott Moe for their leadership in this respect, which leadership ultimately was reflected in a judicial reference to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal on the federal carbon tax.

I’m pleased to inform the Assembly that the United Conservative Party, at its own expense, applied for and obtained intervenor status at the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal to support the reference of the government of Saskatchewan. We regret the decision of the court, a 3 to 2 split decision, to decide in favour of the federal imposition.

But, Mr. Speaker, I hasten to add – and I’m sure my friend the hon. and learned the Attorney General and Solicitor General will be able to provide a more detailed explication of the quite technical grounds upon which the 3 to 2 majority ruled in favour of the federal Crown in that dispute. Let me say as a layman in this respect – and I’m sure the Attorney General will correct me if I violate any sub judice rule here – that it’s interesting to note that almost all of the federal claims in their initial pleadings were dismissed by the

majority. The decision was made on fairly narrow grounds with respect to the peace, order, and good government power.

Mr. Speaker, the important thing is that the government of Saskatchewan is now appealing that decision to the Supreme Court of Canada. We understand that it will be heard in December, and Her Majesty’s Alberta government has applied or will be applying to support our friends in Saskatchewan at the Supreme Court in this case.

Secondly, we sought and obtained intervenor status before the Ontario superior court with an analogous judicial reference on the federal imposition of a carbon tax in that province. I understand we are expecting a decision from that court any day or week at this time.

Thirdly, we’ve indicated to the provinces of Manitoba and New Brunswick that we will also support their prospective judicial references defending their taxpayers. I, Mr. Speaker, am proud to stand on behalf of Albertans with the governments of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick in defending Canadian taxpayers.

3:10

Let me add, Mr. Speaker, just a quick review of how this issue is playing out in other provinces. This is very interesting. In Atlantic Canada the federal government cut a special side deal, which allowed – let’s be polite and call it a creative workaround of the carbon tax in the Atlantic region. For example, in P.E.I. and Newfoundland and Labrador the federal government has imposed a carbon tax which, they agree, could be immediately offset by proportionate reduction in the provincial excise tax on gasoline. Effectively, it’s a shell game, with no net increase in the tax on consumers.

The federal government has allowed their partisan allies in Atlantic Canada to live with a deal that takes no more money out of people’s pockets, essentially, yet they’re threatening to punish Albertans, Ontarians, Manitobans, New Brunswickers, and Saskatchewan for not complying.

Let me shift, then, to Quebec. This is very interesting. Quebec is allowed to engage in a different kind of a workaround. It’s called a cap and trade system.

The truth is this. I refer to an op-ed dated May 9, 2019, in the *Financial Post*, written by Jean Michaud and Germain Belzile of the Montreal Economic Institute, in which they estimate that the effective cost on the Quebec economy of that province’s cap and trade substitute is 50 per cent of the cost of the carbon tax being imposed on Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the other provinces. Let me cite from this article.

One province should not pay an effective rate that’s higher than another. Even worse, in those provinces where the federal carbon tax “backstop” is imposed – Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick and likely soon Alberta – the tax will be twice as high, if it reaches \$50 [a] tonne in 2022 as scheduled, than the de facto rate in Quebec, which is expected [at that point] to reach around \$25. This is because the price of Quebec’s cap-and-trade plan is linked to the price of permits sold on a market it shares with California, and where the California government deliberately oversupplies permits to keep prices low. Projections for prices on that market show permit prices rising to remain below \$25 by 2022. Still, the federal government approved Quebec’s cheaper plan as sufficient to avoid the more expensive federal “backstop” carbon tax. We are therefore punishing certain producers more than others, which will certainly hurt an industry already faced with many problems.

Indeed, the Canadian oil and gas sector is dealing with several challenges; a higher carbon tax just adds insult to injury.

That is not from an Alberta Conservative source. These are from Quebec economists pointing out that the federal government is seeking to impose a carbon tax on us that is effectively twice the level of the one that they are accepting in Quebec. How is that fair in the federation, Mr. Speaker? It's not. It's one of the many grounds upon which we will file our judicial reference, that was announced by the hon. the Attorney General five days ago.

I'll close my tour of the federation on carbon taxes by pointing out that British Columbia, often referred to as a great model by the NDP opposite – well, guess what? In part thanks to their carbon tax, folks are paying a buck 70 to fill up their gas tanks. We all have friends and relatives in the Lower Mainland. What's the number one issue down there right now? A buck 70 gas. Part of that is because they're not getting enough product, oil, shipped to B.C. – and we hope to correct that with the Trans Mountain expansion – but a big part of it is the B.C. carbon tax. By the way, Mr. Speaker, here's an inconvenient truth for you: emissions in British Columbia, CO<sub>2</sub> and GHG emissions, are higher today than when they introduced the carbon tax several years ago. All economic pain, no environmental gain.

On that point, let me point out that here in Alberta, we had the same experience. Last December the CBC interviewed the former Premier, asking her if she could identify by how much – and I'll quote this: "We've had two years with a provincial carbon tax. What kind of decline in fuel consumption have we seen in Alberta in those two years?" The then Premier, now opposition leader, answered: "I would have to get back to you on that. Because, of course, it's related to economic activity . . . So you've got a lot of different things going on at the same time." A follow-up question from CBC: "Do you know if [you've] had a decrease in car emissions during that time" [from that carbon tax]? Answer from the opposition leader: "I honestly can't tell you right now because I wasn't prepped for that."

Mr. Speaker, this was the keynote, singular, centrepiece policy of the former NDP government, that they were saving the planet. In fact, a bunch of them implied that if we hadn't repealed the carbon tax, we wouldn't have forest fires in northern Alberta this summer. Somehow we were saving the planet by punishing seniors for heating their homes in the winter with a tax whose emissions reduction could not even be quantified by the head of that government. Now, maybe the Premier had a bad day, and maybe she just wasn't prepped or whatever.

So let's go to another source, then. Mark Jaccard is an economics professor at Simon Fraser University, a very highly regarded academic. I have tremendous respect for him and his research, and I do respect the fact that he is a strong proponent of carbon taxation. I disagree with him, but he is a proponent. In December of last year, interestingly enough, around the same time the Premier said that she could not articulate the carbon reductions from her tax, Professor Jaccard wrote a very interesting op-ed in the *Globe and Mail*. In it he said – we're always doing this, House leader; I've got some quotes right here on this – that the provincial carbon tax in Alberta had, quote, no discernible impact on emissions, and that the effect of the Alberta NDP carbon tax in reducing emissions was, quote, at most responsible for 5 per cent of the reductions target. Five per cent. Five per cent. So 95 per cent of the purported emissions reduction under the previous government's plan had nothing to do with the carbon tax.

No wonder Albertans threw them out on April 16. No wonder they were fired for punishing – I've told this story before, but I think it bears repeating. Mr. Speaker, my friend the hon. the Government House Leader and the Minister of Environment and Parks had me visit Sundre, which is, I think, known as the beating heart of the Cowboy Trail. It's a great town. He took me to the West Country

seniors' centre, and we visited. You know what drew me to that place? I saw a story on the CBC which I could hardly believe. Occasionally that happens when I see CBC stories. So I decided to go and check it out myself. You know, I followed Ronald Reagan's advice to Mikhail Gorbachev: "Trust, but verify." So I went on a recon mission to the West Country seniors' lodge and met the wonderful volunteer leaders and . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Ray Sharp.

**Mr. Kenney:** . . . Ray Sharp, the vice-president, because at the time the president was away and couldn't greet me. Mr. Sharp and some of the members of the executive toured me around that wonderful place that keeps seniors in our rural communities out there active. They were playing shuffleboard and darts, and they've got, you know, dances for the seniors and some exercise classes. They only have a budget of \$18,000. Almost all of it is a \$20-a-year membership fee, and the rest is hall rentals. They actually rent out the hall to a Sunday church service. I hope that doesn't offend anybody here, Mr. Speaker. It's a wonderful community initiative.

The thing is this, Mr. Speaker. When the carbon tax came in, at first it was a \$700 charge, and then it was going to go up to a \$1,400 and then a \$2,100 charge out of an \$18,000 budget. They said: we don't know where to go for the money; we're dealing with a lot of low-income seniors on fixed incomes out here in Sundre.

3:20

Ray Sharp told me that they were seriously looking at closing the joint down because they couldn't pay their heating bills. I mean, I was shocked. Then Mr. Sharp called the former Premier's office and said: do you have any assistance for us? They said: we suggest that you raise your membership fees. That was the NDP's answer to a bunch of low-income seniors trying to – you know, politicians are always lecturing people about wellness. The Minister of Health will agree with me about the importance of wellness. I know the Minister of Health wants to encourage seniors to maintain active lives. It's good for both their physical and their mental health. But the NDP was just about to put out of business the one thing in Sundre that keeps seniors most active. That's just one little microcosm.

I remember that with some of my colleagues we went and visited the Calgary Food Bank, Mr. Speaker, just before Christmastime. We pitched in with a volunteer shift for a couple or three hours and packed some boxes. The staff there told me that the effect of the carbon tax on the Calgary Food Bank, if I'm not mistaken, was in the range of \$40,000 to \$50,000. They could have hired a whole new full-time employee to move things faster, to serve more customers. They could have bought a whole lot more supplies for the poor, but they couldn't because of the NDP. I remember – boy, we hear a lot from them about schools, Mr. Speaker. They're not giving us any credit, though, for reducing the carbon tax on schools. The Calgary public board had to spend I think it was up to \$3 million on the carbon tax. They had to take a bunch of buses out of service and cut back on the full-day kindergarten services in their school board jurisdiction as a result. Here's my point. For a tax that was supposed to save the planet, it had no meaningful impact on emissions but had a very real impact on how all of those organizations operated.

Let me continue quoting Professor Jaccard. He said, "I'll bet [the former Alberta Premier] wishes an economist had told her she didn't need the tax, and that it does almost nothing anyway." He goes on further: "Carbon pricing," also known as carbon taxes, "is doing little to decarbonize the economy." Professor Jaccard further went on to say that Ottawa's carbon tax will, quote, only account

for 15 per cent of their emissions targets. So not only was it ineffective in Alberta; it is ineffective federally when it comes to the actual environmental goals that we all share to reduce emissions.

Let me hasten to add, Mr. Speaker, in that respect that our government, first of all, will be launching consultations this summer, led by the hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks, on the development of our technology and innovation emissions reduction levy and fund. That will ensure that major industrial emitters do pay a levy to disincentivize carbon intensity and greenhouse gas emissions. That levy will be designed in a way that provides a lower tax or lower levy on companies that are best-in-class performers with lower than average emissions for similar companies, but it will have a higher price point for companies that have higher than average emissions for their industry sector. This will be an intelligently designed plan that incentivizes constant environmental improvement. It is estimated that the levy will impact 60 to 65 per cent of the emissions produced by the entire Alberta economy and that it will reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 40 to 45 megatonnes as against the baseline year. So this is a very significant contribution to the imperative of reducing emissions.

I hasten to add this, Mr. Speaker, because one difference, I submit, between the policy setting of our government and that of our friends in Saskatchewan is that we will have a more robust, wide-ranging levy on industrial emissions, which, I believe, will demonstrate to the courts that we as a province have decided to occupy the regulatory space of carbon pricing, to use the language of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. We hope that we'll be in a position to announce the details on the technology innovation and emissions reduction levy and fund in the autumn, in time for consideration by the Alberta Court of Appeal in our judicial reference.

I hasten to add that most of the revenues generated by the TIER fund will be directed to a technology fund to support much of the ongoing work that's existed since the time of Premier Stelmach's government to develop technology that reduces carbon output, technology which can then be commercialized and exported to the developing world.

I want to underscore that this is one of the problems with the NDP's approach, Mr. Speaker. They never understood that their carbon tax policy seemed to imply that Alberta was some sort of hermetically sealed jurisdiction with respect to greenhouse gas emissions, like there was some kind of a biodome over the province, and that's why we had people from the left saying that the Alberta carbon tax was somehow linked to the forest fires in Alberta. That comes from people who don't understand the science. They don't accept the science. We accept the science. The science says that this is a global challenge, not an Alberta challenge. We are responsible for 1.6 per cent approximately of global greenhouse gas emissions; that's as a country. Alberta has about .4 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

We could shut down the entire Alberta economy tomorrow – and Lord knows that the NDP tried – and we would have, Mr. Speaker, an immeasurable impact on global greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, in the same time next year China's incremental growth in emissions would entirely make up for the elimination of the Alberta economy from global emissions.

I urge the NDP to stop denying the science, Mr. Speaker, to stop being science deniers and to start accepting the scientific data, which are clear that this is a global challenge, and if we want to have a real impact on greenhouse gas emissions, it must be a global impact. One way through which we could do so is by investing in technology that can be exported to India, to China, to Africa, to Asia, to these countries that rightfully want to increase energy production to help lift their people from poverty.

I'm pleased – let me go on the record in this debate – to commend my friend the Hon. Andrew Scheer, the federal Leader of the Opposition, for having outlined a very detailed plan centred around this idea of technology as the core solution to the environmental challenge that we together face and the commercialization and exportation of that technology to other jurisdictions. We can be real global leaders on that. That's what the TIER fund will enable us to do.

Mr. Speaker, on this point, though, about the global nature of emissions, this also applies to carbon taxes, as none other than Professor Andrew Leach of the University of Alberta admitted in 2015. Now, he was the principal author of the Alberta NDP carbon tax, but Professor Leach in a moment of commendable honesty said, quote: until the rest of the world has policies that impose similar costs, you're not actually reducing emissions to the extent you think; you're just displacing the emissions and the economic activity to other jurisdictions. This is such an important point that I'm going to read it back into the record a second time. Quote: until the rest of the world has policies that impose similar costs to the carbon tax, you're not actually reducing emissions to the extent you think; you're just displacing the emissions and the economic activity to other jurisdictions, unquote. That's not coming from some Conservative partisan. That's coming from the author of the NDP carbon tax.

3:30

Really, what Professor Leach is talking about there is the problem of carbon leakage. Now, this clearly applied in the case of the Alberta NDP carbon tax, right? Lord knows, we saw a massive displacement of economic activity to other jurisdictions, tens and tens of billions of dollars of investment that fled Alberta under the NDP to other jurisdictions, and most of that fled our energy-producing sector to be reinvested in the energy-producing sector in other jurisdictions that do not have carbon taxes.

I look to my friend the hon. the Minister of Infrastructure, who has spent his life as a professional engineer in the oil and gas sector. In fact, he helped to plan the building of the largest refinery on Earth in Jamnagar, Gujarat, India. He knows the industry in intimate detail. I invite the hon. minister to correct me if I'm wrong, but we've seen a massive relocation of capital from Alberta oil and gas to Texas, Colorado, and North Dakota, in particular.

**Mr. Panda:** Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

**Mr. Kenney:** And Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan and Iran and elsewhere.

Could the minister tell me: do any of those jurisdictions have a carbon tax? No. I didn't think so, Mr. Speaker. I just needed to confirm that. None of them have carbon taxes, but you know what they have now? They have billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs that we used to have in Alberta. That is what Professor Leach calls the displacement of economic activity. Let me put that in regular language: that's jobs. That's jobs that fled this province. And guess what? Those engineers, those rig hands, those rig operators, all of them: Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, on Sunday I joined my friend the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville at the Ukrainian Catholic vidpust for Saints Peter and Paul church in Mundare, a historic centre of the Canadian-Ukrainian community. At the luncheon that followed the Divine Liturgy, I met a lovely mom with three young boys, ages I think one through five. I was asking about the kids, and she broke down in tears in front of me. She got very emotional. She asked for pictures. She said: "Mr. Kenney, I want to send this to my husband. He's working in Cuba in the oil and gas sector because he lost a job

under the NDP here in Alberta. He just wants to come back and see his boys.” How many colleagues have heard stories like that? Well, I’ve heard them every darn day. You know what? That lady’s husband: that was the displacement of economic activity under the NDP.

Oh, by the way, I know my friends from the NDP, a lot of them, are big fans of the Cuban Communist regime, Mr. Speaker, and Venezuela’s socialist dictatorship. Let me ask a question. Does Communist Cuba have a carbon tax? No. That’s a rhetorical question. The answer is no. There is no carbon tax in the Communist regime of Cuba, but that Mundare lady’s husband is there because of carbon leakage. He’s helping produce energy in Cuba that is emitting carbon without a carbon tax. Does that help the global planet, to have displaced that unit of economic activity, that worker from here to there? All it does is move it to a jurisdiction with not only lower environmental standards but no human rights. In that socialist utopia – guess what? – they don’t allow unions either. You can’t make this up.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the reasons why we have sought leave at the Alberta Court of Appeal for judicial reference on the imposition of a federal carbon tax, on which let me say this. We believe the federal carbon tax is a *prima facie* violation of provincial constitutional environmental jurisdiction, and we will make that case very persuasively. We will demonstrate to the court that Alberta is occupying the relevant regulatory space through our TIER fund and other activities that constitute part of our forthcoming climate strategy as a government.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that as bad as the federal carbon tax is – and we’ll fight it every step of the way – it is actually less bad than the NDP carbon tax. Now, why would I say that? Well, I’ll give you a couple of reasons. First of all, 90 per cent of the revenues generated by the federal carbon tax will be recycled back in the form of rebates to one hundred per cent of households whereas only 40 per cent of the revenues generated by the Alberta NDP carbon tax were recycled back as rebates to 60 per cent of households. Right there, from a just pocketbook point of view, it is much less bad.

Now, that, of course, begs the question that Premier Brad Wall raised: what’s the point of taxing people just to run it through an expensive federal bureaucracy, punish them for heating their homes, and then tell them to wait for a government cheque? Could it be, Mr. Speaker, that the real point is to make them grateful to the government for the cheque that they get? I don’t know. I’m just going to go out on a limb here. I think that perhaps – perhaps – the ability to send people another cheque from the government will in the minds of Ottawa render that government more popular with Canadians. I don’t think that Canadians are gullible like that, though. I know that Albertans certainly aren’t. They didn’t buy it.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, all the polling indicated – and I’m proud to say this – that the United Conservative Party trounced the NDP on April 16 amongst low-income Albertans, and those are the people who were getting the rebate cheques from the NDP. You know what? I used to have people say to me: aren’t you concerned that all those rebate cheques are going to, you know, like the previous government intended, buy voters’ support? Here’s the good news. This is a province filled with a surplus of common sense. People weren’t going to be bought with their own money, and they sent that lot packing after trying to buy votes with their own tax dollars. Today we heard it in question period. My friend the Minister of Environment and Parks got a question from across the way about how they had a subsidy program for solar panels that wasn’t costing taxpayers. Only in the voodoo economics world of the NDP can you have a subsidy that doesn’t cost taxpayers anything. Albertans are too smart; they saw through it. They

understood that there was a very heavy cost, the biggest tax hike in Alberta history, the carbon tax.

Let me say, parenthetically, that I’ll endorse the comments of my hon. colleague during question period. Sure, we encourage people if they want to invest in solar panels as companies, as individuals – bully for them – but we’re not going to force their neighbours to pay for their solar panels. We’re not going to punish the Sundre seniors’ centre to subsidize solar panels for people living in million-dollar homes in Calgary and Edmonton, Mr. Speaker. We’re not going to do that. We’re not going to transfer wealth through a regressive tax from low-income people who could never afford solar panels in a regressive upward transfer of income to upper middle class and wealthy people to have subsidized solar panels. No. We’re not going to pursue regressive and punitive policies like that. That, again, is one of the reasons why we are making this application.

Let me finally say, on the TIER approach, the technology innovation and emissions reduction fund, that we have indicated – I said to the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister on April 18, when we spoke by phone, and reconfirmed this with him six weeks ago in Ottawa – that we are prepared to work with the federal government on the details of the application of the TIER levy, and we seek to find common ground. I would plead with the federal government not to make this legal dispute necessary.

Instead, they could seek the path of compromise. They could seek the path of collaboration with the provincial governments. We all share the goal of real, practical reduction in emissions. In our case we also have as a goal reducing a tax burden on ordinary people and growing our economy. Surely, we could sit down in good faith and try to find some way of working together, at least on the major emitters portion. It is, however, regrettable to see the sort of take-no-prisoners, Ottawa-always-knows-best attitude of the hon. federal environment minister McKenna and the federal Liberal government.

3:40

You know, let me give you an example. Manitoba was prepared, in the spirit of compromise within the federation, to impose its own carbon tax, but guess what? They weren’t willing to punish Manitobans enough to satisfy the federal Liberal government. Instead of sitting down with Manitoba, as Premier Pallister offered to do with his federal counterparts, instead of sitting down and working out a compromise situation, perhaps at the price point and the technical rules around its application, the feds said: no; it’s Ottawa’s way or the highway. They had a potential ally on this issue, Premier Pallister, pull out and instead join us and the growing majority of provinces defending taxpayers against carbon taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I would just make one last appeal to the federal government. Stop the Ottawa’s-way-or-the-highway approach. The Prime Minister was elected on a promise to establish an open and balanced federalism. Threatening our taxpayers with a massive new burden on January 1 that will initially raise gas prices by seven cents a litre and then raising it by another 67 per cent to \$50 a tonne: that’s not the way of compromise. That’s not open federalism.

I hasten to add, Mr. Speaker, that raising the federal rate to \$50 a tonne is just the beginning. Two weeks ago the Parliamentary Budget Officer calculated that the federal Liberal carbon tax will have to rise at least five times higher than it is today in order for Canada to reach its Paris targets. That’s over \$100 a tonne. That’s a very modest estimate, because there was in 2017, I believe, a document leaked from Environment Canada that had been prepared for Minister McKenna which said that the carbon tax would have to rise to \$300 a tonne by 2050 to make the targets. That’s 10 times the current rate.

The IPCC, the International Panel on Climate Change, in a report released last year estimated that carbon taxes would have to be between \$500 and \$5,500 a tonne. I've described this frog-in-the-pot syndrome before. Mr. Speaker, when we go to court this fall in this reference to defend Albertans, please understand that it's not just on a \$20-, \$30-a-tonne carbon tax; it's to defend us from their ultimate hidden agenda.

Let's face it. What is that agenda at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker? It's more control over people's lives. That's really where I just can't agree with this agenda. It's politicians who have the arrogance to try to control people's lives and the choices they make in just living ordinary lives.

You know, I talked about those low-income folks who voted overwhelmingly for the United Conservative Party recently, the same people who were getting the rebate cheques but weren't going to take that as an electoral inducement, the same people the NDP wanted to punish with the increasingly regressive NDP carbon tax. You know what, Mr. Speaker? Not only are those the people who can't afford to put solar panels on their houses even with the government subsidy; they can't afford to go and buy a \$90,000 Tesla even if it's subsidized. All those subsidy programs: they tend to work out really well for the upper middle class and really badly for working people. That's why it's so shocking that the NDP pretends to be a party representing working people, but it wants them, through a regressive carbon tax, to pay for subsidies for the choices that well-off people with discretionary income want to make.

**Mr. Schow:** Champagne socialists.

**Mr. Kenney:** Oh, I think my friend from Cardston-Siksika just coined a phrase. I think he said, "Champagne socialists." Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not our style. Those are not our values. Our values are to defend ordinary working people who live ordinary lives from unnecessary interference from government and allow them to have a little bit of relief from the constant cost of higher taxation.

Mr. Speaker, I will just close by reiterating that the motion before the House, Motion 21, is I think a magnanimous opportunity on the part of the government to the NDP opposition to demonstrate to Albertans that they've learned their lesson. They obviously made a mistake by voting against the carbon tax repeal. Maybe that was just because they were so emotional after the election, so angry, that they hadn't had a chance to really think about it yet. It's now two, three weeks later. I hope they've had a chance to reflect introspectively on the message that Albertans sent them on April 16. I note with curiosity that the NDP is very excited, febrile with excitement, that some union presidents with whom they are formally affiliated are suing Alberta taxpayers right now. The NDP just are thrilled about that, to see their allies suing Alberta taxpayers.

Here's the weird thing, Mr. Speaker. They were never prepared as a government to stand up for Albertans and sue the federal government over its threatened carbon tax, to sue the federal government over its intrusion into our exclusive provincial jurisdiction to control our own resources, contra bills C-48 and C-69. They're happy to sue Alberta taxpayers, but maybe they'll change their minds. So far their record is that they're opposed to using every legal tool available to us to defend Alberta taxpayers. But they can change that record by voting in favour of Motion 21, by endorsing Alberta's reference to the appeal court on the constitutionality of the carbon tax. In so doing, they can join the growing majority of Canadian provinces.

I plead with the NDP: please don't put yourself in a position where the governments of New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan are joining us in court to defend Alberta taxpayers

when the NDP won't even do so. What a strange world that would be to see the government of Ontario doing more, and I suspect they will probably intervene in our case to support us. Wouldn't it be peculiar, passing strange, to see central and eastern Canadian governments more concerned about the welfare of Alberta taxpayers than Alberta's Official Opposition that just weeks ago formed government.

Mr. Speaker, I offer this opportunity to the NDP, an opportunity to stand up and vote for Alberta taxpayers by opposing the threatened imposition of a federal carbon tax. We certainly will. We invite them to join with us.

I move that we adjourn debate on Motion 21. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 8

#### Education Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Nielsen moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment June 24: Mr. Jason Nixon]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone wishing to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak today on Bill 8 and the amendment. As discussed in this House before – and I was pleased to speak to this bill just the other night, last night actually, to speak about my concerns with respect to the Education Act and what is being proposed by this government. In particular, I highlighted last night and I began to talk about a number of the changes that were brought in . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, it is regrettable to inform you; however, it appears that you have already spoken to the amendment. My apologies for recognizing you.

However, I believe that the Leader of the Official Opposition would like to be recognized.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

3:50

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to rise to speak to what we have all commenced to refer to as Bill Hate, this government's plan to take away the rights of young LGBTQ kids in our schools. You know, it's interesting. Yesterday it was quite fascinating, really, to listen to the Premier in question period where he had the temerity, really, to frame himself and others in his caucus as being victims, victims of bullying, he claimed, actually. I have to say that it really struck me as being quite something. This is a government that in its very, very short period of time has actually done more in three months than many governments have in three terms on the matter of bullying.

For instance, Madam Speaker, we have a government that has set aside \$30 million not to advertise to Canadians to promote the good sense and the smart economic policies around supporting our oil and gas industry and ensuring that we have responsible, sustainable

means of moving an ever increasingly environmentally sustainable product to market – not that kind of thing – but rather to demonize any person, including any Albertan, who would actually have the temerity to stand up and speak in support of taking action to protect our climate or to protect our environment. In fact, one of the first things this government did was that they set aside \$30 million so that they could then start demonizing people who are concerned about the environment. Interestingly, polling will tell you that that group of people tends to be a younger group of people, and we'll get back to that theme in a moment.

Now, of course, they've also set aside or embarked upon some committee work to study whether or not they should take the \$15 an hour minimum wage – of course, a minimum wage that is received by often the most vulnerable in society and those who have access to the least because it is a minimum wage – and consider whether or not we should take that away and rip that away from people who serve alcohol. Of course, we know that that is primarily women, so they're thinking about taking stuff away from women, thinking about going after people who are concerned about the climate and the environment.

They also, as we know, through Bill 9 decided to strip away the hard-won constitutional rights of people who belong to unions. Who are those people? Particularly public-sector workers who belong to unions. I'm sure it will come as no surprise to you, Madam Speaker, that the majority of those people are women, and those people actually often work protecting vulnerable Albertans. But according to this government things like the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: well, if you're a public-sector worker you don't deserve them, and you must, in fact, submit yourself to the bullying of a government that wants to rip up legal contracts that they have with you and potentially pay you less. So there's a bit of bullying there.

Then, of course, we have, I think, the bullying that is inherent in the demonstration we saw last week, where the members opposite gleefully plugged in earplugs so that they wouldn't have to hear about the consequences of ripping away the constitutional and Charter rights of hard-working public servants. I mean, it was a very sort of schoolyard version of bullying, I will say. It was only designed to be funny as the schoolyard version of bullying usually is, but I think, as we all know, it often becomes a thing.

Then on top of it, of course, these folks are also geared towards and focused on definitely taking the minimum wage away from workers under the age of 18 and enforcing a 14 per cent wage cut to workers who are under the age of 18. Again, the most vulnerable workers in Alberta. Absolutely, those are the ones that should be paying the price for the drop in the price of oil. You betcha. Let's make the most vulnerable among us, those who didn't even have a right to vote, pay the cost of that by shouldering a 14 per cent pay cut. But we're the bullies, Madam Speaker. You betcha.

Anyway, the most heinous example of this, though, Madam Speaker, of course, is what these folks are proposing to do with respect to Bill Hate. We know incontrovertibly that LGBTQ kids in our schools are far more likely to be bullied. They are far more likely to commit suicide. They are far more likely to end up on the streets. They are vulnerable. What is the answer of this UCP government to their condition? To strip away their rights to engage in a club which would provide them the emotional and psychological support to help combat what is otherwise a very likely path for many of those vulnerable kids. Well, if you spent the next three months trying to paint a more overt picture of bullying, I don't think you could possibly – possibly – come up with one which is more precise than what we see demonstrated by this UCP government towards LGBTQ kids in our province.

Let's be very clear, Madam Speaker. That is exactly what these folks are doing. It is exactly what they are intending to do. It is exactly the opposite of what their leader said in the election. Their leader said: we will not legislate on divisive social issues. Yet we know that Bill Hate is absolutely and entirely dedicated to legislating on what they believe are divisive, but which are not actually divisive, social issues. They are doing that by taking away these rights. We know that.

I mean, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud did a very good job last week outlining what was in the previous Education Act. What one would do if one were actually interested in bringing into force the previous Education Act, which was introduced in about 2012 and remained unproclaimed by the predecessor government to the UCP for three years and then, of course, was not proclaimed by our government because there were sound reasons not to proclaim it and we didn't agree with much of it. Then they brought it forward again after the election, and they stripped out almost anything in it that would change what's currently policy except that it allowed them to legislate on divisive – their words; not ours – social issues in complete violation, contradiction, and in a profound demonstration of dishonesty to the people of Alberta, because what they always wanted to do was to go after young LGBTQ people in our schools.

4:00

Let me talk a little bit about the history of this issue, Madam Speaker. It actually started in the fall of 2014. Many, many members of this Assembly were not here at that time. Actually, let me correct. It goes back to I think it might have been the spring of 2014 and maybe even the fall of 2013. It started because the then Member for Calgary-Buffalo, Kent Hehr – I believe I call him by his name now that he's no longer in the House – won one of those draws that those of us in our tiny little opposition back in the day never won. Certainly, we never won it when we were the fourth party. But Kent Hehr did win a draw. He got to put forward a motion to this House, just to be clear, much like the motion that the Premier just put forward about when you're a private member, you never got to do what the Premier just did.

Just to be clear, I did listen briefly to much of what the Premier was just saying, and I look forward to countering the many, many inaccuracies embedded in the long list of inaccuracies, that some poor people who were in here were subjected to and forced to listen to. Anyway, that will be later. I digress.

When in opposition it's very rare that you get a chance to put forward a motion. But Kent Hehr did. He put forward a motion calling on the government to establish a right to GSAs, and the government promptly voted him down. We then suddenly realized that this was an issue. A lot of people at that point stood up and said: "Wait a minute. Why would you do this?" A lot of kids were hurt and disappointed and saddened by it. We started to hear more and more of the stories about why this was such a bad thing. At that point the Edmonton public school board actually did encourage GSAs, in part because of the, frankly, continent-leading policies that were established under the leadership of the now Member for Edmonton-Glenora and former Minister of Health when she was the chair of the Edmonton public school board.

So that happened. Then flash forward to the fall of 2014. Once again, the Liberal opposition won a lottery and got a chance to introduce a private member's bill, a very rare thing. My whole time in opposition, Madam Speaker, I never got to do a motion, never got to do a private member's bill. But the Liberals were very lucky that year. So the then Member for Edmonton-Centre, Laurie Blakeman, introduced a bill to guarantee GSAs and to guarantee the right to GSAs on request of students in the school.

Now, as a result of the debate that occurred around the motion, you know, six months or 12 months previously, the new Premier, Mr. Prentice, understood that this was a divisive issue in his caucus and that lots of folks were not onside with this and really did not want this bill to be debated on the floor of the House. He understood that it would create a great deal of conflict and it would be very embarrassing for Albertans to learn how many members of their caucus at that time had very retrograde views of LGBTQ people and the rights of LGBTQ kids. So they rushed to create a replacement bill by the government to use that procedurally to push that private member's bill off the agenda so that nobody could debate it, and they succeeded. Laurie Blakeman's bill was pushed to the side, and it was never debated, and she couldn't vote on it.

The problem was that in their fury to play that little legislative game and knock that political bombshell off the front page, they replaced it with a bill which, unfortunately for them, really did reveal much of the homophobia that they'd been trying to hide from the rest of Albertans. That bill, if possible, actually rolled back the rights, what little there were, that existed for those students at the time. I remember that as we started going through it and we read through the bill, we were appalled. We referred to it as the Jim Crow bill. They were setting up a separate but equal situation where LGBTQ kids could request a GSA, and if the principal rejected it – the principal retained the right to reject that request – then the student could ask the Department of Education to provide them with a facilitator, and they could meet somewhere off school grounds.

Lucky them. They could have their own school club that didn't involve a school administrator, nor did it involve happening anywhere near the school. We used to joke around about how: "Oh, that's just great. You know, they're just going to go across the street and meet in the 7-Eleven in the parking lot. Isn't that a lovely demonstration of how much this Conservative, now UCP, group believes in equality?" It was shocking.

Then the other idiotic element of that particular piece of legislation was that if the school would not facilitate helping them find a place to meet offsite, well, then the student could take an application directly to a Court of Queen's Bench judge. Oh, how lovely for them. You know, we could just picture the flurry of vulnerable 15-year-old kids rushing into the courthouse to submit their arguments to a Court of Queen's Bench judge because every 15-year-old feels that empowered. You betcha.

Anyway, it was an outrageous piece of legislation, and the government of the time, the predecessor to this UCP, was laughed out of the press gallery, laughed out of this Assembly. They looked ridiculous. Their homophobia was showing. It was a profound embarrassment, and they had to withdraw the bill.

Now, three months later we came back in the spring, and because this was still an issue, it was still burgeoning – they had made a huge mess of it, and Albertans saw what they saw – they introduced round 2 when they introduced Bill 10. Now, I will acknowledge, as many others on the other side have argued, that our caucus did vote in favour of Bill 10 because at the time it seemed to fix many of the problems of that outrageous insult of the predecessor bill and it essentially replicated the bill that had been put forward by the Liberals. We ultimately thought: "Okay. They've finally come around. Here we go. They must be prepared to do stuff. You know, they finally realized they were wrong. In principle the right things were included in that bill, so we will vote for it." That, of course, is the bill that Bill Hate is now putting back into place.

Here's the thing, Madam Speaker. Just a few short months later the predecessor party to this UCP was voted out of office, and we set about doing the job in government. Soon we started receiving complaints from students and from families, and we started learning

that students' rights were still being regularly rejected, regularly subverted, regularly trod upon. They were regularly being victims of bullying. We said to the public service: oh, this is outrageous; we have to finish this. Then we started digging into things, and we discovered, lo and behold, that Bill 10 actually was rife – rife – with loopholes that were designed to ensure that a school that did not want to have a GSA could very, very effectively prohibit having a GSA. That is the situation that we are dealing with now.

How did that happen, and how does that work? I mean, I think people have talked about it already, but let me just review it again. Bill 10 and/or Bill Hate now does not require schools, any schools, to have an LGBTQ policy. It requires public schools to say yes to a GSA if a GSA is requested. It does not, however, require those schools to have an LGBTQ2S-plus-positive policy.

#### 4:10

What we discovered was happening in many public schools was that the teachers and the guidance counsellors and the principals and others who came into the school would teach classes or articulate to students in a number of different settings that homosexuality was wrong, that marriage is only truly between a man and a woman, that girls must dress like girls and boys must dress like boys and those are the only two things that there are. They were told that anything else was wrong, and that permeated throughout the school. There was no policy to prohibit that.

Then, lo and behold, these schools would come to us all innocent and say: oh, well, no, we don't have a GSA, but that's because no student ever requested one. Well, for heaven's sake, Madam Speaker, why would a student in that setting ever request a GSA when each and every day that they were in school, they were told by the teachers and the guidance counsellors and the leaders of that school that to request a GSA would be to put themselves out of the norm of what was acceptable within that publicly funded school? We very clearly realized that what was happening and what the UCP predecessor party had put in place was a clear system to allow schools to actively discourage kids from making that request for a GSA.

That was the first thing, so what we decided in Bill 24 and what we did, which this group is trying very hard now through Bill Hate to reverse, is we said: there must be a policy that prohibits a school from doing that kind of stuff. It's not acceptable for there to be an institutionalized form of bullying within our schools, and we actually knew that it existed. So that's the first thing that we did, and that's exactly what these guys want to undo. They want to permit an institutionalized form of bullying. That is what Bill Hate does, Madam Speaker.

Now, the next thing that we discovered was that there were great swaths of schools that received public funding throughout the province of Alberta that had outrageous policies that discriminated overtly against LGBTQ kids. They had written policies, written practices, written doctrines that discriminate against the LGBTQ community, doctrines that were very similar to the kind of thing we saw replicated at the private university institution that the Finance minister was recently a board member for, outright discriminatory policies. Yet, we discovered, Bill 10 or what now would be, if this passes, Bill Hate included nothing to protect kids in those private schools. It had no application to those private schools, so there could be institutionalized, written in black and white, discriminatory bullying in schools that received 70 per cent of their funding from Albertans, in stark violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and, more importantly, in stark violation of what I believe is the Alberta consensus against discrimination and bullying in any setting that is a public space, and by "public space" I mean a space that receives taxpayer dollars.



So, Madam Speaker, we said: no; that's got to change, too. That is not acceptable. We said: we are going to extend the application of the former Bill 10, the current Bill Hate, and we are going to make sure that all schools that receive public funding from the people of Alberta will be compelled to refrain from institutionalized discrimination and bullying.

The next thing we discovered was that even where we were in a situation where we had a public school and a child had requested a GSA, they could make the request for the GSA, but the administration of the school could think about it for eight, nine, 10 months until the school year was over or until that child had graduated or until they dropped out because they felt so isolated and bullied by the administration or until they moved on to something else and just gave up. The school had succeeded in teaching that child that giving up on protecting their own psychological, emotional, mental health, not to mention their own right to be free from discrimination, was the right way to go. That's what the school was teaching them.

So we said: that's got to change. We cannot have principals or other leaders in these schools ragging the puck on this, imposing significant psychological and emotional damage on these kids at the same time. We can't have that because that's not what Albertans believe. That's not what we agree on. It's also wrong. It's actually just a really crappy thing to do. So we said: we'll change that.

Then the final thing that we learned was that even where we had a publicly funded school and even where the child had managed to push through the institutionalized resistance or discrimination within that public school and even where they requested the GSA, instead of ragging the puck, the principal or whoever said: nope; you cannot have a GSA because it makes people feel uncomfortable. Where that had happened, we then discovered that even there we couldn't do anything about it because there were actually no enforcement provisions within the legislation that had been sneakily put in place by the predecessor to this UCP government, so there was no way to actually force the schools to do the thing that the legislation told them they should do. Once again we said: "Okay. Well, that's not cool. We're going to have to make sure that these schools do that."

I hope that by walking through that you can see how the disingenuous assertions by the members of the UCP government that they are somehow putting in place the most progressive or fulsome protection for GSAs in the country are deeply offensive to anybody who has spent any time reviewing the legislation and the practice and the policy on this issue ever. It is disrespectful to anybody in this House for members opposite to ever utter that phrase again because what I just described is what is real, and members opposite have either intentionally refused to learn the issue or are intentionally misleading the House when they make those kinds of statements.

I will tell you this. When we were working to enforce this legislation, we had school officials come to us and say: "You can't enforce this legislation. We were promised by the previous government that they would never make us do it." That is exactly what the members opposite are going back to, because in contrast to the stated commitments that their leader made during the last provincial election, they are legislating on social issues. They are legislating to ensure that institutionalized discrimination against LGBTQ kids can be maintained and preserved in the province of Alberta, and that is shameful, Madam Speaker, absolutely shameful.

The last thing that came up while we were looking through why we needed to change the legislation was the issue of whether or not children who requested a GSA would be outed to their parents. Now, we have so much independent evidence about why this is an important issue. Look to the reports that have been made by the child advocate. Look to the countless declarations of their own

history, the stories that have been told by real kids who outline what happened to them. One hopes that in most cases parents will love and accept and support their kids for who they are, but it doesn't happen every time.

4:20

As I said previously in this Legislature just two and a half weeks ago, I ran into a complete stranger who offered up to me his story, that if he had come out to his parents when he was in high school, he would have been beaten. He knew that. I have very dear friends who hid their sexuality from their parents for decades because they believed that they would be ejected from the family. This is a true thing. It is real. It is the reality of these kids. So protecting their privacy is fundamental.

When we were going through the legislation and the change to Bill 24, we realized that we were still in a position where this issue of telling the parents about a kid asking for a GSA would likely prevent many kids from pursuing this, so we set about to fix that as well. That is what we did through Bill 24.

I want to digress for just a little bit here on the issue of outing kids. In a strange turn of events we saw the Privacy Commissioner weigh in on this issue, not normally a thing that you see. As much as I have, on many different issues, great respect for the work that the Privacy Commissioner has done and continues to do to ensure transparency in the province of Alberta, I will say that on this her intervention was not helpful, nor was it terribly accurate. In essence, she tried to argue that kids would be prevented from being outed under the legislation or the language in Bill Hate, and I would argue that Bill Hate essentially says that kids can be outed only if the information that they are entitled to keep private somehow could put them at risk.

The problem is that there is no clear understanding of how that is to be interpreted, and in a school that is run by people who believe that being a member of the LGBTQ2S-plus community is wrong, is a violation of their religion, is a violation of what traditional marriage should look like, is a violation of how you should be your best self, that person could easily decide that telling the parents that the child made that request is in their best interests and good for their safety. Indeed, these schools often are connected to these same organizations that practise this outrageously assaultive approach of conversion therapy. The fact of the matter is that that standard is unclear. There's no clear test. It has to be litigated over and over.

Right there, on the very front end, I disagree with what the Privacy Commissioner suggested because putting in that kind of uncertainty opens the door to anybody's interpretation, and back we are to where kids are being told: "Oh, I think, you know, I'm a little worried about you, that you've decided you want this. I think I'm a little worried about how you're feeling right now. I think we might have to talk to your parents because we're a little worried about your mental health." That's the way it would unfold. Then – boom – we are off to tell the parents, and then suddenly the very risk that the kids are worried about and, more importantly, the privacy to which they should be entitled have been breached.

The privacy officer says: well, if that's the case, come to me, and I'll litigate, and I'll consider this, and I'll make a ruling. Well, with the greatest of respect, it's one thing for the Privacy Commissioner to make rulings about whether the bureaucracy does or does not disclose information in a timely fashion in response to requests from various public interest organizations looking for specific reports on specific commissions, yada, yada, yada, and when it takes two and a half years for the Privacy Commissioner to do that, that's one thing. It's not great, but it's one thing. But to suggest that the Privacy Commissioner is somehow equipped to immediately respond to the request by a student for protection from being outed

is ridiculous. That is not something that the Privacy Commissioner's office is equipped to do.

Moreover, going to the Privacy Commissioner's office is not something that that 15-year-old kid who's just been outed and may well be living on the street is equipped to do. Quite honestly, the suggestion that that is the way to go is one of the most tone-deaf things I've ever seen come out of the mouth of the Privacy Commissioner. We shall leave it at that in terms of that particular issue. What kids need is certainty and clarity on what their rights are, and the people who are working with them need to have certainty and clarity around what the rights of those students are.

What exactly are the kinds of policies that we were fighting? I gave you a little bit of an example, but I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, that when we looked through the policies of the many schools as we slowly tried to sort of educate schools and bring them along, I mean, many did great jobs. They set to work – the school boards, that is – and they came up with some wonderfully inclusive policies. They hadn't really turned their minds to it, but once they did, it was a good process, and I think they felt better about it. Sometimes they included the kids, and the kids felt better about it, and the families felt better about it, you know, in terms of creating the policies. It was a good thing.

But some of the policies that came forward were, on their face, breaches of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly if they might have applied to a child of a certain age, and they were definitely discriminatory and bullying in nature. So anyone who thinks that this isn't an issue is wrong, absolutely, completely, and utterly wrong. We know very clearly that there were many schools out there that wanted to perpetuate divisive, bullying, institutionalized versions of discrimination against the kids in their schools that were members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community.

We also know this because, of course, one of the schools that decided to challenge our legislation is a big supporter of the UCP and the Premier. Their lawyer, a member of the UCP and a huge supporter of the Premier, well known for many, many extreme views and positions taken in the courts, too, has said things which were outrageous, comparing the pride flag to the swastika. Could you imagine a 15-year-old kid who, we'll say, is struggling – we'll call him a "him" – with coming to terms with his sexual orientation, who lives in a small community, maybe in northern Alberta, is struggling with how to come to terms with what he believes is his reality and his truth and his orientation, going into school and being told by somebody that being proud of being gay is akin to being proud of being a Nazi? Can you actually imagine that? Yet the guy who said that is a member of the party that now is in government. The guy who said that has not been asked to leave that party. The guy who said that I think probably still has the ear of the Premier because certainly his colleagues are working in the Premier's office, and then suddenly we have Bill Hate.

I know the members opposite will say, "You know, you guys litigated this in the election, and Albertans were more concerned about our fake claims to know how to create jobs," which, to be clear, are fake claims, and sooner or later Albertans are going to realize that, if anything, these guys are going to kill jobs, not create jobs. They're going to certainly suppress wages. That we know already. That's a thing. I think they're likely going to kill jobs as well and also, you know, undermine schools and hospitals and all of those things. Nonetheless, that's me. It's going to take a bit of time for folks to see the stats on that one.

4:30

Nonetheless, they'll say: well, they only cared about our fake plans to create jobs, and they didn't care about all this whining that you guys in the NDP are doing about GSAs. I will grant you that,

obviously, people are very worried about job creation, and there is no question that we did not win the election. You know, the members opposite, today was a particularly arrogant day where it seemed to have been worked into the answer to every question. You know, do what you want. Carry on if you want. A piece of advice: that's going to get really old really fast. But please keep it in your talking points for the next four years. I think it's awesome. I beg of you, in fact. The more you say that, the better.

[Mr. Loewen in the chair]

What I will say is this: I believe absolutely, completely, and without qualifications that Albertans did not believe or expect that these folks would come in and act to introduce a piece of legislation that is almost exclusively designed to perpetrate institutionalized discrimination in the schools in this province. I don't believe that that's what Albertans voted for. I believe they were misled by the leader of the UCP during the course of the election.

I also believe that they care about this issue and that while the front-and-centre issue for Albertans is jobs and the health of the economy – I get that. It should be. It's an important issue. People's overall sense of economic security is critical, so I get that. But I also believe that Albertans are fair-minded people who care about other people who are struggling, who are not drawn into rigid, extreme views of hate against minority groups simply because they don't understand them or because they are different than them. That is not the Alberta I know. The Alberta I know is young, well-educated, inclusive, entrepreneurial, optimistic, forward-looking.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill Hate is not that. Bill Hate is divisive. It is ugly, it is exclusive, it is hurtful, and it is an example of bullying in its finest form. This is why we will not support this bill, and this is why members in this House should support our amendment, in order to ensure that this bill goes no further, because it is a historic declaration of hate and division against a community in this province that has been here for as long as this province has been here, that will be here for as long as this province will be here, and that deserves to take its rightful place as equal citizens with equal rights, without fear of discrimination or hateful views or bullying by anybody in the UCP or by their lawyers or by the Premier's political staff or by the Premier. They deserve better, and Albertans expect them to get better, and that is why this legislation is wrong.

There is not a single thing that I said today that I would not be happy, Madam Speaker, to swear an affidavit about and go in front of a judge and be penalized if there was a single thing that I said that was untrue. What I say in this House must be true because I respect this House. I will not say things that I know to be not true because I respect this House, because it is an extension of the democracy of this province. I want you to know that.

I would urge members opposite to change their approach on this issue and join us in adopting this approach and at least acknowledge what they are doing. Have the courage of your convictions. If you want to promote division, if you want to treat LGBTQ kids differently, if you want to take away their rights because you believe in your heart that that's the thing that needs to be done – the member opposite is shaking his head. I don't know. Maybe that's what you want to do. If that's what you want to do, tell Albertans. Have the courage of your convictions, respect this Legislature, tell the truth, stop saying things that are not true, and come clean with Albertans on what your vision is for inclusion, for justice, for equality for all Albertans regardless of where they came from, what they look like, or who they love.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any comments or questions?

Seeing none, are there any more speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I suppose someone always has the misfortune of going after the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I will attempt to be as articulate as she was. I think there are a couple of things I'd like to discuss with respect to this bill and with respect to this amendment. Obviously, the amendment would not see it read, and I think that that is the right thing to do in this instance.

The first thing to talk about is the concept of a right, because it gets bandied about a lot. The second thing I'd like to talk about is the concept of bullying and, in particular, my concern that if we begin to call everything bullying, every legitimate question bullying, we lose the ability to make any progress on it. Finally, I would like to touch on the comment of the Privacy Commissioner. I believe that the test that she has presented actually illustrates what the problem with this bill is as opposed to the solution.

The thing that I would like to say is that this is legislating on social issues. There's no question about it. This is a bill that does nothing substantive except to roll back protections on GSAs. It does nothing else of substance. To call it anything but legislating against social issues would be entirely misleading.

I think the first piece that I'd like to discuss is the concept of what a right is. It's important to recognize that if someone in fact has a right, that right imposes obligations on the people around you. In law school they talk about differentiating between a liberty and a right. They do this in ethics as well. The point here is that in the absence of an obligation imposed on someone else, if your right doesn't force someone else to have to respect it, it isn't really a right. In this case that's exactly what the problem is.

We're saying: oh, students have a right to form a GSA, but no one has the obligation to allow them to do that. Well, that's not really a right. In order for it to be a right, when a student stands up and says, "I want to form a GSA," they have to be allowed to do that, and they have to be allowed to do it immediately. If the school is allowed to wait, if the school is allowed to delay, if the school is allowed to deny, if the school is allowed to question the student multiple times on whether that's really what they intend to do, or if they're allowed to force the student to make a different sort of club, that's not really a right. What this bill does is that it takes what would have been a right to form a GSA, and it transforms it into a liberty to form a GSA, that folks can have if they happen to want one.

I think another thing to acknowledge here is that the intention of these clubs is to prevent bullying. They are there so that students can seek the support of their peers so that at a time in their life when they're potentially very vulnerable, when they're struggling with their identity in the most fundamental sense, they have people they can turn to that make them feel safe and protected and heard. In that time when they are vulnerable, if other people are less than charitable and less than accepting about that vulnerability, they have people they can turn to to rely on for support. That's critical. We know that that's critical at any moment in your life when you're struggling with something.

The idea that when legitimate questions are asked about a government that is removing the right of a student, students who are afraid of bullying – that that itself is labelled as bullying I just think is absurd on a level that's almost impossible to comprehend. The idea that calling a legitimate question or a legitimate policy debate bullying and trying to put it into that category is just so deeply offensive to anyone who has ever actually been bullied.

4:40

I think, again, that the idea that standing up for someone else's rights is bullying – I mean, there's a lot of misunderstanding out there in the world about what constitutes bullying. But I think it's pretty clear that if you're talking about a group of people who have all the power – and in this case we're talking about the government. The government has a significant amount of power. They can legislate. They can regulate. They can do a lot of things to affect people around them. Saying that asking the government a question is bullying and that it's somehow on par with what happens to a youth who is in a school who is potentially being pushed into a locker, who is being called names, who is being told horrible things by their peers just boggles the mind. The fact that ministers would be so insensitive as to equate them being questioned with what happens to those youth is shocking to me.

I will say this again. This is legislating on social issues. That's exactly what it is. The government can't get its ducks in a row on a series of fronts. They can't figure out a budget, but they can legislate on social issues, and it has to happen immediately.

I think another thing worth commenting on is the recent ruling of the Privacy Commissioner, because I think it was unhelpful in the deepest sense. Essentially what the Privacy Commissioner has said is: here's a long list of choose-your-own-adventure tests that a student can use to enforce their rights. Well, Madam Speaker, that's absurd. I think probably the most obvious problem with that is when a parent comes forward to a teacher and asks them directly, "Has my child joined a GSA?" and the teacher says, "Pardon me while I get a legal opinion." That's probably going to out the student right there. I think the idea that it's anything but that is absurd. What this needs is a simple rule. The simple rule should be: don't out the student. If you need to perform some sort of analysis after that, fine. But the idea that if a parent comes forward, they're told, "Oh, hang on while I get a legal opinion," or "Hang on while I engage in this long and complicated analysis" – the outing has occurred. This is incredibly unhelpful.

In addition, the test relies on a reasonableness test. Probably close to half of the volume of civil court cases is actually people arguing over whether things are reasonable because most things in law have a reasonableness test. Reasonableness is defined over and over and over again. It's in all sorts of different tests. The ink that has been spilled describing what reasonableness is is incredibly extensive. This is not helpful to students because the problem is that you can always have a valid argument that it was reasonable. It doesn't even require that someone at the school be intentionally trying to be difficult. Someone doesn't have to be trying to fit their view into a definition of reasonableness. They could simply be confused.

That's very, very problematic because we're then leaving ourselves in a position where we're litigating after the fact something that's already – I mean, if that student really is in an unsafe situation, they're long since kicked out of their house. They're long since living on the street. They're long since a young person fighting for their very survival. We're ruling for the Privacy Commissioner two and a half years later? I mean, it's just not going to help. Basically, I think my problem with this is that it implies that there is a clear test when, in fact, there isn't. All one needs to do is look at what the Privacy – it's two pages long. It's got multiple components, none of which are clearly defined. It's not a test that's going to be helpful to a young person.

I think the other thing worth noting on this file is that there's no reason to do this. That's what troubles me the most about it. This sort of weak justification has been advanced about the Education Act, except that the actual legislation doesn't do anything. I think my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud has laid that out in excruciating detail.

The truth is that all this does substantively is impact GSAs. It's nothing but an attempt to remove rights from individuals who are young and therefore less able to stand up for themselves, who are potentially in vulnerable situations and therefore less able to stand up for themselves. It is, in my view, the very definition of bullying. It takes advantage of someone who has lesser power in society. I think the fact that in its very first legislative session this government that promised Albertans that they would not legislate on social issues has done exactly that is deeply troubling to me.

I think with that, Madam Speaker, I will move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 12, the Royalty Guarantee Act.

This legislation is an important step in strengthening investment stability in Alberta. There have been several royalty reviews in recent years, Madam Speaker, and these reviews have reaffirmed that royalty rates in Alberta are competitive with other energy jurisdictions. But the reviews themselves have also had negative impacts on investor confidence and our province's ability to compete with other jurisdictions. Industry needs certainty and stability, and without this guarantee, Alberta remains at a competitive disadvantage. Through this bill we are recommending an approach that would guarantee no major changes to the oil and gas royalty structure for at least 10 years.

We will also be guaranteeing that once a well starts producing, it won't be subject to a royalty change for the majority of its lifespan. This guarantee would apply to oil sands oil along with hydrocarbon natural gas. The bill would ensure that the basic structures of our royalty system would remain in place while preserving the ability for regular adjustments, like setting monthly par prices. The existing structure rules and processes would provide industry and government with the ability to address significant market and technology changes while providing stability for investors. To implement this guarantee, we recommend amending the Mines and Minerals Act, which will allow for the use of existing regulatory powers, eliminating the need for new legislation and more red tape.

Madam Speaker, we know that investors can lose faith in a jurisdiction if there is uncertainty surrounding regulations and royalties, which is exactly what happened in Alberta in recent years under the NDP government. Investment literally fled the province, leaving us with nearly 200,000 unemployed oil and gas workers. This legislation is part of a suite of measures designed to let the world know that Alberta is open for business and designed to attract investment back to this province.

I hope that all members will support me in moving forward with Bill 12. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With that, I would also move to adjourn debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, before we deal with the motion, just to clarify, you moved second reading in the opening of your speech?

**Mrs. Savage:** Yes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Okay. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

4:50

## Bill 11 Fair Registration Practices Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act.

This bill will ensure that regulated professions and individuals applying for registration by regulated professions are governed by practices that are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair. This legislation will, first, remove unfair barriers to the full economic inclusion of new Albertans and foreign-trained Albertans while maintaining the high professional standards that Albertans have come to know and expect; second, ensure fairness in the registration process of foreign-trained individuals who wish to work in the regulated professions and designated trades; and, finally, it will contribute to the outcomes of Alberta's foreign qualification recognition plan, help to build on the existing FQR initiatives, and allow Alberta to benefit from the skills that newcomers bring to the province. This legislation will also apply to trades designated under the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act. The proposed legislation is part of our plan to bring jobs and economic growth back to Alberta.

Newcomers are important to our province, and they should be able to fully contribute to the economy. Underemployment causes unnecessary stress for immigrant families when their education and skills are not being used to their full potential, and this problem also represents a significant loss of productivity for the Albertan economy. By removing unfair barriers and maintaining Alberta's high professional standards, the economy will benefit from maximizing productivity and innovation from newcomers.

Now I will make some comments concerning the scope and application of the act. This act will apply to regulated designated trades, regulated nonhealth professions, and regulated health professions. The scope and application of the legislation is to all regulatory bodies outlined in schedules 1 and 2 of Bill 11. In schedule 1 we have included the regulatory bodies that provide registration and licensing for individuals entering the occupation. This is an extensive list to ensure that everyone who applies for registration and licensing in a regulated occupation is treated fairly and equitably. Schedule 2 covers all the government of Alberta ministries that provide registration and licensing, and you will notice that this goes beyond the Department of Advanced Education and the Department of Education. This comprehensive list will ensure transparency and reassure the public that occupations regulated by our government are subject to the same expectations as external regulatory bodies.

It will also include a paramountcy clause stating that where this act and subsequent regulations conflict with the provisions of another act or regulation, this act or the regulation made under this act will prevail. This is similar to legislation in Ontario and Manitoba.

I will now speak to roles and responsibilities as outlined in the act. Through this act we will create a fair registration practices office with oversight from the Minister of Labour and Immigration. The minister will be responsible for all matters under the act, including issuing fines and compliance orders. The minister can delegate specific responsibilities under the act to a Public Service Act employee through regulation, but the legislation will refer to the minister.

Now on to the legislation structure. A fair registration practices code is included in the act. It outlines the general and specific duties that constitute fair registration. These specific duties include:

information provision; timely decisions, responses, and reasons; internal review processes; documentation on qualifications and assessment of qualifications; training; and access to records. For reference, legislation in Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia also have fair registration practices codes.

This legislation will include specific provisions in the act to allow regulatory organizations to accept alternative information when making registration decisions where circumstances warrant. We have heard from foreign-trained professionals that circumstances have arisen where they were not able to provide documentation such as a university transcript due to civil unrest in the country where they were educated. Examples of alternative information can include letters of reference or an extensive resumé that can be challenged and evaluated via competency-based examinations.

Under the act a regulated profession shall, first, ensure that it makes an interim registration decision within six months from the time all the required information is received from an applicant – and I note that final registration decisions must be made within a reasonable time frame from the time all the necessary information is provided – second, provide written responses to applicants within a reasonable time; and, third, provide written reasons to applicants within a reasonable time in respect of all registration decisions and internal review or appeal decisions.

In addition, a regulatory body shall make information publicly available on what documentation of qualifications must accompany an application, and where documentation cannot be obtained by an applicant for reasons beyond the applicant's control, advise the applicant what alternative information may be supplied by the applicant that may be acceptable to the regulating body where possible.

There will also be provisions requiring a regulated profession to provide an internal review of or appeal concerning its registration decisions within a reasonable time frame. The act specifies that applicants should have an opportunity to make submissions orally, in writing, or by electronic means. In addition, the internal review or appeal process should not be conducted by persons who made the original decision.

The minister will have the authority to create different classes of regulated professions to impose different requirements, conditions, or restrictions related to this act. If needed, classes would be created by operational policy. The legislation in Ontario and Manitoba also allows this authority and provides greater flexibility.

In addition, it is designated in the act that regulatory bodies are required to provide a report to the minister in the form and with the content prescribed by the minister, provide any additional information requested, and conduct any audits as directed by the minister related to the compliance with the act and regulations. Existing annual reports can be modified to address these requirements.

The minister will also be able to issue compliance orders following consultations with the regulatory body to compel the body to provide the minister with the information deemed necessary to administer the act. Before issuing a compliance order, the minister must provide a detailed notice to the regulatory body and an opportunity for the body to make written submissions.

This act would prescribe a fine for an individual or a body who provides misleading or false information, fails to comply with orders made by the minister, obstructs the minister from performing their duties, or fails to co-operate with a required audit. Persons guilty of the offence are subject to a fine of not more than \$25,000 or in the case of a corporation or regulatory body a fine of not more than \$50,000.

The act will designate that the minister and any employee of the fair registration practices office may not be involved with influencing individual registration decisions or providing advice or

representation to individuals related to individual registration decisions, including internal review and appeal processes. The timing of the review of the act will be subject to the discretion of the minister.

This legislation is similar to that in Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia as it includes the ability of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations pertaining to the execution and administration of the act, including the delegation of specific responsibilities that are housed with the minister. While we have studied legislation in other provinces and included similar aspects in this act, Bill 11, please note that the legislation is very much designed for Alberta's specific needs.

The last section I will speak to is the fair registration practices office. This office will reduce the red tape associated with the assessment of foreign credentials and ensure that registration practices are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair. The office, under the minister's oversight, will be responsible for providing information and advice to regulated professions to help them understand requirements under the act. It will also be responsible for reviewing registration practices of regulated professions to make recommendations to regulated professions about how to improve their own compliance and be responsible for advising regulated professions, government agencies, community organizations, postsecondary educational institutions, and third parties about matters under the act.

Advising government departments about matters under this act that may affect the department or a regulated profession for which the minister of that department is responsible will also include reporting to the minister on registration practices related to internationally educated individuals and their registration by regulated professions, advising the minister on matters related to the administration of the act, and, finally, performing any other functions provided for in the regulations.

Instead of creating an access centre, we will establish quality electronic information sources to assist internationally trained individuals seeking licensure.

The Fair Registration Practices Act will come into force upon proclamation.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, our goal is to get all Albertans back to work, including newcomers. I recognize that some newcomer professionals do not yet have the education or skills to meet Alberta's high professional standards. However, the experience of many highly trained immigrant professionals suggests that some professional and trades regulators have unnecessarily complex procedures for licensure, which can sometimes cause professionals to spend years jumping through regulatory hoops while their skills atrophy. This legislation will remedy that problem. Bill 11 is an important part of our efforts to restore the Alberta advantage and ensure fairness for newcomers. It exemplifies our government's commitment to economic growth, job creation, and cutting red tape.

Thank you.

5:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to provide some comments and analysis on Bill 11 here this afternoon, the Fair Registration Practices Act. You know, I'm very pleased to see this direction happening here in the province of Alberta, and I just wanted to provide, perhaps, a little bit of background for members and for the general public to know the evolution of this idea and how our caucus together with the government will work hard to try to ensure that people with credentials from outside of the

province of Alberta and outside of Canada can have a fair assessment of their credentials so that they can work to the full potential to which they are trained.

You know, the basic concept, I think, is around fairness. We know that there are quite strict criteria, say, to immigrate to Canada from other countries. The criterion by which people can enter Canada is a points system, and a lot of that points system is oriented towards a person's education backgrounds and their credentials and what they can offer to their new home, in this case in Alberta. It's the height of irony that, really, the way by which an individual is admitted into Canada as a permanent resident and then as a citizen is through education, yet when that person does get into our province and into the country, those same credentials that allowed them to immigrate to Canada are not being recognized on a professional level. Thus, that person is not working to their full potential.

I know that this is not an easy process, but it's really encouraging to see that beginning of engagement to look for fair registration practices here in the province of Alberta, that we're starting down that path. Of course, what I think precipitated this – I mean, this is a discussion that we've all had in our constituencies and with the people that live in each of our constituencies because this has been an ongoing problem for a long time, right? Everyone knows the stories of the medical doctor who's driving a taxi or the petroleum engineer that's working at Tim Hortons and so forth. This has been an ongoing challenge that I think needs more formal sort of action by governments across the country.

About three years ago we started the process of taking action against racism, and I was charged to build a plan for the province of Alberta by which we could tackle racism, foster acceptance, and promote inclusion. One of the issues that came up in my travels around the province of Alberta consulting on what actions we should take to promote acceptance and foster inclusion was foreign credentials and fair registration of those credentials that people bring into our province. We heard it over and over again.

You know, I did form a taskforce, a group to work on these same issues just before the last election. Again, this was one of the issues that rose to the top – right? – in terms of taking action against racism with the antiracism group that we had. I think that during the election we saw how things move very quickly and people make sure that they are at least meeting or trying to exceed some good ideas so that they can have them as part of their platform.

I saw, lo and behold, this same concept pop up onto the UCP platform. You know, I was actually very pleased to see that because, of course, we have it covered both ways then, with the government and the opposition both pushing for fair registration and the recognition of foreign credentials, using our combined forces for good, and that's kind of where we're at today.

I guess my observations from the antiracism work that we were doing as the government of Alberta and now looking at this bill is that I think that the biggest focus is to make sure that you're building good relations with each of the professional organizations that exist here in the province of Alberta, that we want to allow some more latitude or discussion of the recognition of foreign credentials. You have a list of organizations that would be covered and it's extensive. It's quite ambitious. My experience, quite frankly, trying to introduce this idea of the recognition of foreign credentials is that sometimes you can run into some resistance with professional organizations that want to maintain a certain number of their professionals in any given field, and they try to set up a quota or they want to protect their lists of their membership.

You know, you have to be very diplomatic around those things because, of course, when any given group – like, you have the paramedics here, pharmacy, social workers, architects, landscape architects, Boilers Safety Association, the Insurance Council,

veterinarians. There's got to be probably about 50 or 60 different groups on this list. You want them to be working together with you to ensure that we are maintaining the highest standards for any of those professional organizations so that Albertans cannot be somehow compromised with the delivery of the Professional Outfitters Society or the Alberta Securities Commission or the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association.

We want to maintain or exceed the standards that are set currently by each of these organizations, and we want to make sure that we maintain an open-door dialogue with those professional organizations every step of the way because, of course, you're introducing – there are people that might have the credentials to be a medical diagnostic and therapeutic technologist from another jurisdiction. You want to make sure that that person is being recognized and being respected for that training that they might have received in a different province or a different country, but you also want to make sure you're respecting the standard by which we expect those professionals in agrology or biology and assessors, forest management professionals – I mean the list goes on – to maintain the standard which we expect here in the province of Alberta in regard to those professions as well.

We know that, Madam Speaker, to ensure diversity and a strong economy, you want to make sure that people are trained and are working to the fullest potential of their ability, of their professional training, and of their capacity to contribute to the economy to help themselves and their family and to help to pay taxes and be part of the larger provincial community. We have to be careful as well because there will be naysayers around this saying: "Well, you know, we have high unemployment already. Why should we be introducing more of these biologists or dental technologists or speech language pathologists or what have you?" But the point is that when you build the pie, just like an economy, you make it larger and you build the economy, too. It's not like just a finite amount of jobs that people are competing for. That's a reductive view of things. But by using the full potential of your population and the workforce that they represent, you will build the economy.

People immigrate to Alberta. Alberta is a very strong place for people to move from other parts of the country and other parts of the world as well. Even during an economic downturn our economy is much more highly functional with higher wages and so forth than most parts of Canada, and vastly more than most parts of the world as well. People want to come here and we want to recognize them for the potential and the training and the expertise that they bring with them. Having those credentials recognized helps to build the economy, helps to diversify the economy. I think those are all things that we value, hopefully, on both sides of the House here.

5:10

We know that if, you know, people are moving here and they're not working to their full potential, then that's not just an economic loss; that's a loss of human dignity – right? – and a loss of feeling confident about oneself and for themselves and for their families as well. I think that we owe it to Albertans. We have the youngest population in the country. We have the highest level of training, I think, in the country, arguably, and we can see it reflected in our schools, which are growing quickly. We have a very fast enrolment growth, I would say the highest in the country. People are having families here. There's a sense of hope and optimism that carried through even during the economic downturn. People have moved here from all over the place and brought with them tremendous training and experience that we should be recognizing and using and contributing to to help to build a stronger province.

Yeah. We can talk about this. There's lots of regulation, I think, that's going to be a challenge, let's say. You know, it's a problem,

but it's a challenge that we can overcome. It's a complicated introduction, but setting down the path for setting up a fair registration practice here in the province of Alberta is an awesome start. I certainly was there to do this in the last government. We put in the foreign qualification recognition fund with our government. We put this as a keystone part of our taking action against racism, and I'm glad to see this concept moving into this 30th Legislature, where hopefully we can achieve some positive good.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and offer my thoughts on Bill 11. I certainly want to thank the minister of labour for bringing this forward and, of course, the Member for Edmonton-North West for his comments. In particular I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for the good work that he did while Minister of Education overseeing the work of the antiracism council and the work that he did jointly with the minister of labour at the time, now the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, for the work they did in creating the foreign qualifications recognition innovation fund that he mentioned.

There are a couple of things that concern me about this bill, and, you know, this is a common theme in this session, Madam Speaker, that the bill is making an appearance of doing something while not actually achieving much in relation to what they want to say. You know, the Member for Calgary-Varsity introduced an open for business act that actually just picked workers' pockets. The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti is talking about creating businesses by offering corporate tax cuts. Well, that's just going to make shareholders wealthier and do nothing to create jobs, Madam Speaker.

I think we have something similar here with this Fair Registration Practices Act. We are creating another government office that will busy itself poking its nose into places that it doesn't really have any business poking its nose and probably won't streamline the process of recognizing foreign credentials in any significant way.

You know, Madam Speaker, there are a couple of different specific tacks I want to take in my comments. I want to make some comments with respect to recognition of trades because in my time as Advanced Education minister, of course, I oversaw the Alberta apprenticeship system, so I have some familiarity with that system, and I have to say that in all of my years in that position I never once had skilled tradespeople come to me and tell me that we needed to make it easier for skilled tradespeople to come and practice here in Alberta. In fact, there were thousands of unemployed electricians, unemployed carpenters, unemployed welders who were concerned that maybe the value of their trade ticket that they got here in Alberta was being diluted by people who were holding themselves out to be qualified in those trades when, in fact, they weren't and were practising those trades illegally.

In my time as Advanced Education minister I directed the department to crack down on the illegal use of people who were holding themselves out to be members of the trades but who didn't actually have tickets. I have to say that we met with some success. In the skilled trades, Madam Speaker, we found a lot of people who were practising trades when they, in fact, had no qualifications to do so. Certainly, the skilled tradespeople that I interacted with were thankful for that. It gave the people who had recognized qualifications the ability to go back to work. Of course, when people who aren't qualified to practise that work are not allowed to do that work, then people who are allowed to do that work will have an easier time finding a job.

I have to say that in my discussions with tradespeople from all across Alberta, they certainly had some questions around whether or not qualifications that were granted in other jurisdictions, even within Canada, were equivalent to our own. Alberta leads the country when it comes to the training of people in the certified trades and occupations. Our trades training system is recognized as one of the best in the world, Madam Speaker, and we want to be able to uphold that standard by making sure that everybody who is practising those trades meets our own standards. So when people come from other jurisdictions in the country or from other countries who don't meet those standards, they shouldn't be allowed to work until they can demonstrate that they meet those standards.

I think that if I heard any criticisms of the apprenticeship system, it was that maybe we didn't do a good enough job of assessing the qualifications of people from outside of the province. Certainly, the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board is engaged in that process, Madam Speaker. The ministry is engaged in that process. We don't need a fair registration practices office poking its nose into the Ministry of Advanced Education, telling welders how they should evaluate other welders or telling electricians how they should evaluate other electricians or telling carpenters how to evaluate other carpenters. The people in the Ministry of Advanced Education and on the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board are more than qualified to do that work already.

I don't think there's any additional value to be found in creating a fair registration practices office with people whose qualifications are unknown at this point. We don't know whether or not they can add any value to the registration processes that already exist. I would urge the members opposite to maybe reconsider using this as a way to improve the registration of people who want to work in the trades in Alberta and to perhaps just review the existing ministry procedures and the work of the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board to see if there are some internal efficiencies that could be found.

Now, it is without question, Madam Speaker, that there are times when people with foreign credentials in the trades are needed in Alberta, and the ministry has worked quite hard to identify those. In fact, every so often Alberta goes to Ireland to recruit welders, in particular, to come and work on short-term projects that require welders. We've had a long-standing relationship with the trades system in Ireland. It has worked very well. It has served the needs of the people of Alberta for a long time.

If we are looking to expand the reach of those programs, then it's not the creation of a fair registration practices office that will do that. It's actually the Minister of Advanced Education's office that will seek to identify other countries around the world where we could come up with agreements on equivalent trades qualifications, and we could have similar situations, where we could go to other countries and import for the short term people to come and work in the skilled trades whenever we have a skilled labour shortage in the future.

5:20

Now, I would recommend to the members opposite that that would probably be a better way, if we identify skilled trade shortages, to do that work: send people from the Ministry of Advanced Education to identify trades training systems around the world that are equivalent to our own and prequalify them so that they can come to work in Alberta on a short-term basis on relatively quick notice. That would meet the needs of industry much better than a fair registration practices office and would certainly be a much more efficient system than the one that's created here.

The other concern that I have is government poking its nose into areas where it doesn't belong, and that's into the self-regulating

professions. It's shocking to me, Madam Speaker, that a party that is supposedly the party of small government is creating an office to extend government's reach into areas it has no business reaching into, and that is the self-regulating professions.

I am not familiar with all of the organizations in schedule 1, but I am certainly very familiar with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta. I am a nonpractising member of that association. I practised as a geoscientist for a number of years prior to my election, and I actually had to go through the process of having my foreign credentials certified by that association because I was trained in Germany.

Now, it was not an easy process, Madam Speaker. It did take a long time. However, I was able to work as a geoscientist while I was waiting for my credentials to be assessed. They assessed me on a number of exams that I had to write to prove the equivalency of my qualifications. At the end of it all, I was able to satisfy the association that I had the qualifications to practise as a geoscientist here in Alberta. I was able to get my stamp and be able to hold myself out as a professional geoscientist here in the province of Alberta.

I understand that it's a frustrating process for a lot of people to go through. However, you know, in the case of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists it's up to them and it's up to their peers to decide what the fair registration process is and what qualifications an engineer or a geoscientist needs to be able to practise engineering or geoscience here in the province of Alberta. That's the whole premise upon which self-regulation of professions is built.

I am very concerned about a couple of sections of this act, and hopefully somebody from the opposite side can speak to these concerns if I have misplaced them. I'm looking at the bill here. Under Powers and Duties of the Minister, section 10(1):

- (b) for the purposes of determining compliance with this Act and the regulations, review the registration and assessment practices of regulatory bodies, including the use of third parties to assess the qualifications of applicants.

Madam Speaker, on the face of it, it certainly looks like this bill gives the power to the minister to go into the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta and tell them what their registration practices should be and tell them what qualifies a person to become an engineer or a geoscientist in the province of Alberta. Now, if that's not the intent of the bill, then perhaps we can amend it so that it makes it clear that we're only monitoring the activities of the associations and that we're not actually going to dictate to them the qualifications that the associations must have in order to qualify somebody to be a member of that association.

I am also very concerned, Madam Speaker, about the regulations. Under section 23(1)

the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations . . .

- (c) respecting additional powers, duties and functions of the Minister.

Now, this kind of clause comes up quite frequently in legislation. I can recall a number of occasions when we introduced legislation with this very clause or something similar. Of course, the members opposite would express their concerns that this clause gives the minister quite significant powers. I must echo those concerns and wonder openly about the kinds of additional powers, duties, and functions that the minister is seeking for himself in this case. Again, we're opening the door to the Member for Calgary-Varsity, or whoever the minister of the day will be, poking their nose into the regulation of self-regulating professions when that's not the case, Madam Speaker.

You know, I understand that the registration procedures for self-regulating professions are not easy to go through, that there are a

number of hoops that people have to go through, but we also have to understand that these professions have decided among a group of their peers what the qualifications are that a person needs to meet to become a member of that association, to work in that profession, and it's agreed upon by all of those people in that profession that those are the minimum qualifications.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Who are we as the government to tell members of that profession what qualifications their members need to have in order to become a member of that association? I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that government is not the proper authority for deciding what the qualifications of a member of that association are, that it is up to the members of those bodies themselves.

I hope that we can have those concerns addressed.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see that the Minister of Labour and Immigration has risen.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to just provide a few comments concerning the comments made by the members for Edmonton-North West and Edmonton-Gold Bar.

First of all, I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for, you know, recognizing that this is an issue. He heard about it, in terms of his consultation, as a serious issue that we actually need to address, and this is our first step in addressing it as part of our plan for newcomers to Alberta and part of our Alberta immigration strategy. So I want to thank him for that.

There were a number of questions raised by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I'd like to address just a couple of them for clarification and better understanding concerning the intent behind the bill. One comment, you know, made by the hon. member was that the bill doesn't do much, that there are not a lot of specific or actual details in regard to what is required. The intent of this bill, quite frankly, is as enabling legislation. As both members pointed out, there are well over 60 different professional regulatory bodies we're addressing here. This is not prescriptive legislation. Rather, it's enabling legislation to allow us to work with the regulatory bodies to ensure that their processes are fair, transparent, flexible, and efficient. Right?

One of the issues that we've heard from a number of immigrants is that they come to this country, and quite rightly we invite them in through the federal program. We nominate them because there's a skill shortage in Alberta. We need these skills to grow our economy. They're here because they have that skill set. They make an application to these regulatory bodies, and in certain cases there is no clear path forward. So one thing that this bill does with a great deal of clarity is that at least within the first six months, once they've provided the information and made the application to the regulatory body, they need a path forward, and that regulatory body will provide that path forward. And we do that.

Secondly, they have to have a response once they get the path forward. It's going to be different for every profession and for every individual because every individual will have a different set of experiences. They may have to go write different sets of exams or get more education in a particular area, which is fine and good. The legislation also says that the final decision needs to be rendered within a reasonable time frame. The act sets that out and also the code that all regulatory bodies must follow, and that deals with good governance issues.

I would submit to the hon. member opposite that this legislation, by necessity, isn't prescriptive because of the complexity of all the various different regulatory bodies but actually allows the minister to work with these regulatory bodies to ensure that processes are in



place which are fair and transparent, and it requires them to actually have those processes in place.

5:30

The second point I want to deal with is that the hon. member suggests that, you know, government is poking its nose where it doesn't belong, Mr. Speaker. I would like to point out again and to emphasize that these regulatory bodies are creatures of the province. They are established because it's of critical importance that these professions which provide services to all Albertans have the high-level certification and will get it right. We're talking about doctors. We're talking about veterinarians. We're talking about engineers. You don't want bridges falling down. You don't want people getting hurt in the services. They're of critical importance. So these professional regulatory bodies are actually established by the province to ensure the safety of Albertans and that they get the services that they deserve and they expect. So they are creatures of the province.

But we also need to ensure that there's good governance. The intent of this legislation is not to tell these regulatory bodies what the standards are. It is still up to the regulatory body to do that. We're not going to interfere. Actually, there are a number of provisions in the act which say: this is your choice. We don't want to get involved in this as government because, quite frankly, we can't; we don't have the expertise. What we can do and what this bill intends to do is to provide a high-level, overarching framework to ensure that the processes that all these different organizations have are fair and transparent; in essence, follow good governance principles.

We're not new to this game, right? There are other provinces who have done this before – Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia – and we are actually using this as our first step. Our intent is not to tell the regulatory bodies – and we're not doing that – and the regulatory powers that are in the act are not intended to tell them what the standards are but, rather, to ensure that their processes follow good governance principles.

The last thing that I'd like to just comment on and that the hon. member mentioned is section 10(1)(b). Again, the intent is to make sure that the processes are fair, not to tell the organizations what to do, and section 23(1)(c), again, is a standard clause to be able to do that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 11 at second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to rise and speak to Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act. I was very pleased to hear the comments from my colleague the Member for Edmonton-North West, you know, that we do support common-sense legislation. I think we can all agree with that.

My parents were immigrants to this country. They were not covered in the fields of work that are covered under this legislation, but certainly they came at a time when a lot of people immigrated to this country, in 1968, with various skill sets and faced challenges, absolutely, finding work. My mother was actually a teacher in Tanzania before she came. I don't know to what extent she made efforts to teach here in Canada, but she ended up doing completely different work. I know she often regretted that she didn't choose to pursue teaching further in Canada.

Certainly, my life experience: my family is all formed from immigrants. We're all actually immigrants to this country. They've had this experience. This is not an unusual experience, where we've

heard about people coming from other countries who have incredible skill sets and that we would all benefit from them being able to contribute to our economy and our workforce in their area of skill and training and education. Actually, I really appreciated the comment that the Member for Edmonton-North West made, which was that it's not just about contributing to the economy but also about self-dignity because I think that's very important, really. I think that's one of the reasons why we've all heard those stories, because it is frustrating for those individuals who have incredible education and have invested a lot of their time in life training and having the skills to not be able to contribute. It's a loss for them as well. I certainly think that this is a good concept in this legislation.

I'm actually willing to indicate that I support this legislation that the government is bringing forward. I was pleased to hear that it is a carry-over or perhaps an extension of work that was begun under the previous government with taking action against racism. The Member for Edmonton-North West spoke very strongly about the work that was done as part of that consultation with many, many Albertans. I note that as part of that process, taking action against racism, the issue of valuing skills and recognizing expertise in the workplace was very much a key part of that consultation. There was definitely messaging that came out of that about how important it is. It is part of an antiracism strategy, that people who come from other countries should be able to have their work valued and their education valued.

I'm pleased to see this legislation come forward. I think it's something that I can support myself. I was actually pleased to see the professional organization that I'm a member of, which is the Law Society of Alberta, and I am still currently an active member of that organization. The law societies – and I'm not going to single out Alberta's – across Canada have historically imposed significant barriers on people being able to practise. Actually, they imposed those barriers even within Canada. It was very difficult for somebody to go from one province to the next and practise law, and we know that there were reasons for that.

The Member for Edmonton-North West spoke about that, about protecting their membership very tightly. In fact, the year that I graduated law school, which was 2004, just prior to that the national mobility agreement was signed between provinces in Canada to allow for even lawyers to go between provinces to practise, and I benefited from that because I was trained in Ontario and was called to the bar in Ontario, but then I was able to come home to Alberta and practise here without significant barriers whereas probably just a year or two prior there would have been significant barriers to my doing that. I would have had to article again. I would have had to do my bar exams all over again. That's just within Canada. That's just my experience there, but I can certainly say that it's a great thing to hear that the Law Society of Alberta would be encouraged – now, I know that there would probably be a lot of people who would say that the last thing we need is more lawyers in the world. Who doesn't love a good lawyer joke? I think it is a good thing for professional bodies to have a process and to have some criteria to consider when approached for qualification by members from outside of Alberta, outside of Canada.

I do take the heed and the caution that I think my colleagues on this side of the House mentioned, which is that it can be very challenging to work with professional organizations. I respect the comments from the Minister of Labour, which is that the intent of this bill is not to interfere in the professional regulatory responsibilities of those bodies, but it is going to a bit, as I'm sure the minister is anticipating. He's sort of saying that this is a first step. I think that is going to be where the challenge is going to lie, between respecting the autonomy and the authority of these professional

regulatory bodies to determine their own standards and criteria to make sure that they are fair.

We all have an interest, of course, as well in making sure that the people who are certified and qualified meet certain standards. We all expect that from all of the services that are provided by the individuals who are authorized under these bodies. We all have a value in that, and of course it is the obligation of those professional organizations to make sure that that is upheld. We do need to respect their autonomy and authority to do that; however, in order to make this work, there has to be some kind of oversight, and I think that's what the minister has recognized, that there is a role.

I do actually take the comment from my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar. I did think about this, which is that, you know, this is government. If it's not interference, it is certainly oversight into what has traditionally been something that government has stayed hands off of, but I think we can all see that this is an example of a situation where it is appropriate for government to play a role. I think we can agree that there are circumstances where government plays an appropriate role, and I look forward to seeing how this is implemented.

On of the questions that I had when I was reviewing the bill is that I note, of course, that there is certainly no mechanism within this for individuals to complain. I certainly don't see that this legislation is establishing in any way that the minister or – and I'm going to say the name wrong – the fair registration practices office will hear individual complaints from people stating that the professional body did not assess their qualifications in a timely manner.

Meanwhile, I defer to the Minister of Labour to perhaps correct me if I'm wrong, but it does not appear that there is an obligation on the professional bodies to report to the minister. To me a bit of the question lies with: how do we determine whether or not the professional organizations are complying? I mean, really, whenever we're talking about legislation – and, you know, not all legislation, not all areas that are covered by legislation require strict enforcement provisions. But a question that arose for me as I was reviewing the bill was: how do we determine whether or not the requirements for these professional organizations to assess qualifications for individuals within a timely manner and to have an appeal process – how do we confirm that that's actually being carried out? There are 60 organizations here. There is no duty to report on behalf of the professional – I do not see one – to the minister or to the office. There's no individual complaint process to the minister or to the fair registration practices office. I guess my question is going to be: how will we know how effective this process and this legislation will be?

5:40

Certainly, we see that part of the platform – and I think that's perhaps one of the reasons for the establishment of the associate ministry of red tape reduction. The government is intent on making sure that where we have legislation, where we have regulations, it is being enforced, it is useful, it is effective, and it is not simply red tape. The question I have about this one is: how will we know that that is happening? I'm not saying, by any means, that I think there should be individual complaint processes. I'm posing the question more than anything else. I do see that the minister has the authority to review the registration and assessment practices of regulatory bodies. That provision I think is in section 10 of the act. But I'm wondering what would trigger that review. How would the minister know that there is a review if there's no acceptance of individual complaints or there's no duty to report, which would raise an alarm or raise question marks for the minister? That's a question I have.

Of course, it is not the job of this House. Unfortunately, we do not review regulations in this body. But as I mentioned in my comments on another government bill, Bill 8, quite often the meat and bones and the devil are in the details. Details are not always bad. Regulations are not always bad. But, you know, I think we're venturing into uncharted waters a little bit here.

The substance of those regulations will be important to how this is actually executed. I think we'd all be interested in knowing what those regulations are and how they're developed and who's been consulted on that. Again, the reference has been made to the delicate dance that's sometimes done between professional bodies and government. I imagine that those professional organizations will want an opportunity to weigh in on the regulations in particular. Of course, with so many bodies, you know, some of them more sophisticated than others in terms of their organization and advocacy – just a fair opportunity for them to raise their questions and comments.

I'm not sure yet whether the minister has indicated – and my apologies, Minister, if you had mentioned this. I'm not sure if you've received feedback from professional bodies in response to the introduction of this legislation, if your sense is that they are supportive or at least understanding of the purposes and intent and are, you know, onboard with compliance. I mean, I understand that when legislation is established, they will be expected to comply no matter what, but certainly their feedback with respect to the impact on their organization – maybe for some of them it will not be difficult to comply with this. For some of them it might be that it is or that maybe they simply don't even get a lot of applications from individuals who need their certification assessed.

For some of them I can imagine this will be a substantial amount of work. I'm not familiar with, say, as an example, what the timeline for the College of Physicians & Surgeons right now would be and the timeline that's now in the legislation. How significant of a difference is that? You know, is this going to significantly impact what they're currently doing? I'd be interested to know what the feedback has been from some of these organizations on this. Going back to that comment of the right balance, the more resistant organizations might be, the more challenging it will be to enforce this.

I mean, overall I think I can say that I look forward to seeing what the regulations will look like on this legislation. As a child of immigrants myself and somebody who has a lot of people in my family and circle of friends who are highly qualified and have come to this country – and I think that's the case for a lot of my constituents as well. I can say that. I think that any opportunities that we have to value and recognize the skills of the people who have come to this country, who have often worked very hard to come to this country and to this province to work, to value those skills and education and put them to work not only for the value it brings to our economy but to their human dignity, that is incredibly important.

I'm optimistic, and I'm hopeful that this legislation will be effective. These are just some questions I have. I'd like to say thank you for the opportunity to speak to this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The Minister of Labour and Immigration has risen to make a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Copping:** I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for her comments. Also, she raised a number of questions, and I'd like to try to address that as part of this right now.

I agree that, you know, there is a huge range, looking at the number of regulatory bodies. Some are highly sophisticated, and quite frankly they are doing this already. So this will be no change. There are others who tend to be, actually, a lot smaller, who don't have the resources and may require some work for this.

In terms of the timing the intent behind the proclamation is that we're not going to proclaim this until we've had an opportunity to have detailed conversations with all the regulatory bodies. The intent is that by the end of this year we have the conversation, but we fully expect – the key requirement is that they have their processes in place or at least they're en route to get the processes in place that are fair and impartial – that they actually hit that, you know, six-month interim deadline or at least a minimum of six months. That six months is actually common in other codes, and our understanding is that most are hitting that right now because there are certain organizations already that provide in their annual reports reporting on these types of issues, right?

I just want to go to a couple of other issues that you asked for concerning feedback from regulatory bodies. The feedback in the main has generally been very positive. When we announced this, we had a town hall. All the regulatory bodies were invited. I don't know the exact number, but there were, like, 40 to 50 that were on the call. They indicated their support with this, that this is the right direction and that they want to actually work with us to do that. That's what this enabling legislation does. It provides an opportunity for the fair registration practices office to work with all the organizations to make sure that these processes are in place.

You asked the question in regard to: well, where is it in the act that gives us the power to do a couple of things, like, for example, with appeals? Now, you're right; the fair registration practices office is not a complaint office. However, the act does, in item 7, require that each organization, regulatory body, has an internal review or appeal process and that it must be a third party, it must be a clear process. But it's not the fair registration practices office making the decision; it's still the body because they are the ones who actually have to apply it. But they need to have a clear process that's fair. If you don't like the decision that they made, you can actually appeal that.

Then if you actually go to item 17, the report to the minister, regulatory bodies are required to report. I'll be tabling – actually, I will not be. On my behalf Mr. Speaker will be tabling a number of annual reports over the next few weeks, and you'll actually see in them that they'll actually say: these are the number of applications made, these were what was rejected, these are the appeals that were done, and here's what the outcome of the appeals was. Not all of them have it, but a number of them have it in their reports. We will require that through the act they actually report on this so we can actually understand that.

Then, well, how do you make sure? The next question, which is a good question, which I'm sure you would ask if you had the mic right now, is: okay; how do we make sure that they were actually reporting this stuff, right? Well, then you go back to item 16, which is audit powers for the fair registration practices office to actually go in and audit and do this.

But, again, you're right. There is a dance here. My expectation and the expectation of the office is that the regulatory bodies are largely in support of this, and they actually see the benefit not only for themselves but for the entire economy. They want to work with us to do that. Then our first step will be a conversation with them: what's working, what's not working, try to put that in place. Then we proclaim it. Ongoing reporting: some will be perfectly fine and doing it very well, and others we may have to use more extensive involvement orders, hopefully not fines. We may have to go down that road, but our sense is, you know, that we're not going to start

there. We're going to start at the very front, which is, "Where are you at? Let's do the reporting. Let's work together to make this happen for the benefit of the society, for the immigrants," which, you noted, is critically important, "and for all Albertans and the economy."

Thanks very much for your questions.

**The Speaker:** We are still on 29(2)(a). If anyone would like to make a question or comment on 29(2)(a), there's about a minute left.

**Ms Pancholi:** I would just like to thank the minister of labour for the feedback. It's a breath of fresh air to be able to actually engage constructively on some of the legislation. It has not been the case so far, so I'd like to thank the minister of labour for his forthcoming responses.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? We're on 29(2)(a) still. There are approximately 30 seconds left.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen to speak to the main bill.

5:50

**Member Ceci:** Thank you for the opportunity to address Bill 11, and thank you to the members for Edmonton-Gold Bar and Edmonton-North West and, indeed, Edmonton-Whitemud for their review of this bill and discussion with you, Mr. Minister. I can see the benefit of the Fair Registration Practices Act, especially with regard to many new Canadians that come to Canada looking for an opportunity to participate in their chosen professions and find it challenging from time to time to wind their way through the myriad of regulations, that sometimes they have to when they go to one of the colleges.

I guess I would have a couple questions that hopefully the minister will have an opportunity to address. What does he anticipate from the feedback from listening and sharing with the 40 or 50 colleges and regulatory bodies with regard to their dues or fees? Have they given him any indication that those might be going up as a result of the additional requirements that are identified in the fair registration practices code? For instance, right now I think the last time I paid social work dues to the Alberta College of Social Workers, it was about \$500, and I'm not sure exactly how they go through and evaluate the qualifications of social workers from other provinces and other countries to essentially allow those social workers to challenge registration and become professionally accredited in this province. But I wonder if there would be a concern that was brought forward with regard to the colleges and regulatory bodies across the province with regard to their dues going up as a result of this and if the province is addressing that in any fashion.

Also, I can wonder if this is the full extent of colleges and regulatory bodies in the province. I think the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud said that there were 60 here. I didn't count them all, but I wonder if there are any that are currently in Alberta and self-regulating that have been left out. It doesn't look like it in the main, but I may be wrong.

With regard to something like Horse Racing Alberta I just wonder why that's here as well. I'm not sure who's being regulated in that regard.

Those would be some questions that I could see needing to be answered in advance of voting on this, but as I heard my colleagues and from your explanation, I think it is beneficial for there to be clear processes for newcomers and others who want to work in their profession. I think there is a great amount of capacity that's

underutilized as a result of people not being able to work in their profession.

I do know that if it's clearer and people approach their regulatory body, it may address some of the perhaps unrealistic expectations some individuals have when they have approached me and others saying that, you know, they could do this job, but clearly they may not have the qualifications that are identified in these regulatory bodies to do the job. So they could get that feedback sooner instead of holding on to that hope when it is possible they may need additional education, additional time to upgrade their skills before they actually practise. But many people hold on to the hope of working in their professions, and I think anything that clears that avenue up for them to get that feedback in a clear way is not a bad thing to do.

Maybe I'll just stop there. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Copping:** I'd like thank the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for his comments. Just in terms of feedback there have been no concerns raised at this point in time from a fee standpoint. As indicated before in my earlier remarks, a lot of the organizations are doing this already. Some may need some assistance in terms of the proper management, in terms of what processes are put in place, and that's what the purpose of the office will do.

On your couple of other questions I'll have to get back to you. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else on Standing Order 29(2)(a) that would like to make a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, is there anyone wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Opposition House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act. It's no surprise, I'm sure, to members of the Assembly that I have a similar opinion to many of my colleagues that have preceded me today. I want to start off by thanking the hon. minister for jumping

up and addressing questions. I know that often it doesn't happen in second reading. It's easier to do in Committee of the Whole, but I appreciate him taking the time to give some thoughtful responses to the questions that my colleagues are proposing.

I, too, you know, recognize the fact that immigrants have made incredible contributions to our province. They make incredible sacrifices, and quite frankly I don't think our province would function without the support of immigrants that come to Alberta. We know that we're, I believe, one of the youngest provinces in the country, one of the fastest growing provinces, and that's been the case for a number of years. So I appreciate that I often hear, from constituents who have come from all over, talk about the frustration with trying to get their credentials recognized and to get to work in areas that, one, are needed, that there's a shortage of skilled workers in a number of different professions and fields.

I find it a tragedy that you have many that have been practising a profession in their original countries or country, that they've come from, and they come here and hit roadblock after roadblock. In fact, I engage in conversations with people regularly to discover that. So I appreciate the intention, what this bill is trying to do.

I know that colleagues of mine have had a number of questions. I appreciate the fact that with this piece of legislation the minister is working with organizations, in fact, many, many different organizations, that will be affected by this to ensure that these entities – and again there are lots of the different colleges and different associations – will be able to do their part in helping to expedite this process.

I do know that quite a lot of detail will be coming in the regulations, which some of my colleagues, especially from Edmonton-North West and Edmonton-Whitemud, identified as some of their questions as far as the details of how the legislation will actually work . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Standing Order 4(4) the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, June 25, 2019

Day 19

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 25, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 5

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader is rising on behalf of the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is correct. I rise today on behalf of the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move third reading of Bill 5, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, this bill provides the funding to meet the obligations of the province from the 2018-19 fiscal year, which ended on March 31, 2019. I would remind the House that that's prior to the last election on April 16, 2019, and prior to the current government coming into its place in this Assembly. The amounts specified in this bill reflect the picture that was presented in the third-quarter fiscal update and includes spending beyond what was budgeted for the previous fiscal year.

The bill is backwards looking, where government is asking the Legislative Assembly to approve spending brought forward by the previous government. Due to our commitment to the parliamentary process, Mr. Speaker, we are here today to ask for approval to ensure the obligations of the province are met. As has been stated before, we understand that unplanned expenses come up, like natural disasters, and we recognize that our key commitment as a government is to provide support for Albertans in times of emergency. I believe that in these cases it's appropriate to ask for supplementary funding, funding that ensures people are evacuated safely, their communities are re-established in a timely manner, and their return is managed as smoothly, effectively, and efficiently as possible.

However, where I differ from the opposition on this idea is on requesting supplementary funding to pay for poorly thought out and negotiated projects that do not add value for all Albertans. This is not a prudent use of Alberta taxpayer dollars, and our government will not be continuing this practice of the former government. Moving forward, we plan to do things differently to bring prudence and predictability to Alberta's budget planning, and through these careful actions we will bring Alberta's budget to balance by 2022-23 and begin reversing the course of the previous government's path towards almost \$100 billion in debt, Mr. Speaker. A hundred billion dollars in debt.

But before we can start our work on Alberta's finances for the future, we must clear up the outstanding issues from the NDP's past. Our intention with Bill 5 is to clear previous obligations from the table so our government can approach Budget 2019 with a clean slate. I'd like to thank the House for its support of Bill 5 even though I'm sure it's hard in some cases, Mr. Speaker, to vote for such a bill, and I encourage my colleagues on both sides to do just that so we can start with a clean slate and move past the NDP's past.

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

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### Bill 6

#### Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader is rising on behalf of the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You are correct. I am rising today on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance to now move third reading of Bill 6, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019.

This interim supply bill allows the normal course of government business to be carried out for the first eight months of the 2019-20 fiscal year. By passing this bill, we are ensuring that government operations can continue as a new fiscal year begins on April 1. This also allows the work of the MacKinnon panel to be completed and considered by our government. The eight-month time frame will give our government time to develop and debate a budget through the Committee of Supply process. We are asking for this time so we can take time to be prudent and carefully approach the next budget, making sure that our priorities represent those of Albertans. We know that action must be taken to bring Alberta's budget back to balance, and we are dedicated to taking the time to ensure we are making the right decisions without sacrificing front-line services that Albertans are counting on.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans can be confident that our government is making thoughtful, prudent decisions to ensure there is funding both now and for future generations. If we do not balance the budget now, we'll end up spending billions on interest payments to bankers instead of funding Albertans' priorities. This is about looking to the long term, making responsible choices, and eliminating reliance on debt financing that steals from future Albertans. These are the decisions we can't make without first taking the time to understand the problem. We will be gathering input, including the report from the MacKinnon panel and discussions that are happening in each ministry as we speak, Mr. Speaker. We look forward to incorporating this feedback into our government's first budget.

In the meantime I'd like to thank my colleagues for their thoughtful comments on this bill, and now I must ask for the support to allow us the time we need to create the best plan for Albertans. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 6, interim supply? The hon. the Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to interim supply. We'll have some specific questions as well, but before I do that, I just want to begin by saying that, essentially, through this bill government is asking for almost \$28 billion just in expenses. There are very few details that have been provided. These amounts will be for eight months, for most part of the year.

Every time when we ask any question in this House, the answer is: there will be a budget, and details will be provided therein. However, when we were in government, I do still remember the Government House Leader's comments on interim supply, every time they got up: the government is asking for a blank cheque; government is asking for a carte blanche. I think the same applies here, too. Government is asking for a blank cheque for eight months, they are asking for a carte blanche for eight months, and they're not willing to provide any details whatsoever. The only thing we hear is that it's the normal course of government business. Certainly, when we are in question period, we do hear that they have cancelled this and they will not pursue that plan, this plan, but when we ask where it's reflected in these numbers, we do not get any

answers whatsoever. I think it's a huge sum of money that government wants through this bill, and Albertans deserve to know that how this money will be spent.

It's not that government doesn't know what these expenses are, what these departments will do. They have a platform. They have their priorities, which they talk about all the time in question period. Certainly, these sums will go to fulfilling those commitments, and Albertans do deserve to know how their money is spent since it's a huge sum of money and it's for eight months, for most part of the year. There are questions that we will want to know before we can vote. Otherwise, I think government is just asking us blindly to vote for these billions of dollars and wants us and wants Albertans to believe that somehow this money will be spent in their best interest.

7:40

Since the Minister of Energy is here, if I look at those numbers, there is an increase in expense from \$262 million dollars they are seeking. They are asking for \$309 million. Certainly, some priorities factored in. There certainly are some plans that they have to increase the expense from \$262 million to \$309 million. Similarly, with capital investment there was none before in the previous Budget '18-19, but now they're adding \$300,000. Similarly, in financial transactions there is also a huge difference because previously it was \$378 million. Now they are asking for \$95 million.

These are not just the numbers that are pro-rated based on the previous numbers. Certainly, there is a huge difference in this number, in the 2018 numbers, and Albertans deserve to know. I think we as opposition need to know before we can decide to vote on this, how these monies will be spent. Especially in this Energy estimates supply amount, there is a huge difference, so I would really appreciate if the Minister of Energy will help us understand where these increases or decreases will go because that's important information.

Also, we have heard before that they're not planning on moving ahead with oil-by-rail contracts, which, based on the advice we received, would have seen oil moving by next week and would have helped us create a 120,000-barrel takeaway capacity and also generated \$2.2 billion in revenues. Since they are not pursuing those contracts, following through on those contracts, I think it will be helpful if the Minister of Energy could tell us whether there was some amount that will be going towards cancelling those contracts.

Similarly, in other areas, other ministries: same thing. There are many ministries where expenses are higher or lower than the previous years, so I would encourage the respective ministers to at least help us understand those differences. Otherwise, it's just a blank cheque of 27-plus billion dollars, and we would not be in a position to sign off without knowing anything whatsoever.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing from the Minister of Energy and other ministers with respect to the fluctuation in their presented estimates from the previous 2018-19 estimates. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Would anyone else like to speak to Bill 6, the interim supply – oh. Correction: Bill 5. Bill 6? Bill 6. We are on Bill 6, the interim supply bill. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen to join the debate.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to the interim supply bill no matter what number it has. I think it's important that we have this opportunity to discuss some of the significant issues that I see, and I'm going to speak primarily about the Education budget given that I know there has been a

considerable amount of messaging, but there has been very little clarity provided to school boards and to parents.

You've heard me talk about the Calgary Board of Education earlier today. They were debating their budget, of course, making assumptions based on provincial funding. Consistent with what they heard during the election campaign they're assuming flat funding year over year, so that means a \$40 million shortfall, they're saying, based on growth and other pressures. When I asked how that'll be split up, they said that \$18 million will be absorbed within central units – absorbed means cut from central units – and \$22 million will be passed on to schools. Of course, Mr. Speaker, \$22 million being passed onto schools is a considerable amount, especially when the biggest cost for any school district and, arguably, for the government is its human cost, the fact that we employ a significant number of people working in the public sector as well as in schools on the front lines.

So \$22 million coming out of schools and the front lines. Teacher unit costs in Alberta for the last more than five years, probably six years, has been \$100,000, when you factor in benefits, when you factor in other types of incentives that teachers receive, not salary but the total unit cost. Of course, the Calgary board of education, ATA local 38, has said that that is the equivalent of 220 teachers.

Now, not all schools, of course, will see strictly teacher reductions. They have said that on average it'll be net reduction of three teachers in a Calgary high school and a net reduction of half a teacher in an elementary school. Many elementary schools have seven classrooms, kindergarten through grade 6, straight classes. How do you take half a teacher away from seven? You can't, really, unless you have lots of complicated combined grades, basically split grades at all levels, causing a lot of misconfiguration through the school. What many of the elementary schools are doing is reducing their educational assistants.

Well, Mr. Speaker, those educational assistants provide valuable service for the children they work with and, of course, for all children in the classroom. I know that when I had the opportunity to spend time in a classroom, if it wasn't for the educational assistants that were paired up with me, I would have had significantly more issues with overall classroom environment. I think we spend a lot of time training students who are aspiring teachers how to develop IPPs, how to work on these individual programs, but how do we actually support them in having the time to be able to deliver them? That's what these educational assistants often do. They actually implement the strategies, that we've invested in in giving those skills through postsecondary and through further education, to make sure that there are these individual program plans. Of course, if you don't have the actual people there to deliver them, not only do those children who have those IPPs suffer, but the entire class does. It certainly creates a greater sense of disorder and lack of opportunity for all students to be able to focus and achieve their full potential.

The CBE, I know, was debating their budget just a few hours ago. Members of the government will say: well, they'll get their actual budget in the fall. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Kids show up to school in September. They don't wait until October, November, when this government chooses to bring in a budget. They certainly won't wait to show up to school until after this government has passed a budget, which could be well into December. Unless something has changed. Maybe the government has decided they're just not going to have kids come back to school in September. They can wait until a budget gets passed. Well, that certainly would be irresponsible. And I assert that it's irresponsible to have kids go back to school without actually giving those targets.

Now, I know that when we formed government around a similar timeline, slightly later, we did interim supply as well, but we

actually gave that clarity around: we will be funding enrolment; we will be ensuring that it's the same formulas that's been in the past. We haven't gotten that clarity from the government benches. They say, "Enrolment will be funded," and when people say, "well, does that mean that there's going to be a tinkering to the formula?" you know, it's radio silence. Essentially, what's being told back is: well, when the budget comes out, then you'll have more details. Well, when the budget comes out and then later when the budget is passed, kids are almost halfway through the school year, Mr. Speaker. That certainly isn't fair to those kids or to the staff.

Edmonton public had their board meeting earlier today as well, probably just wrapping up, I'm going to guess. They are assuming, from what they've heard in this Chamber and what they haven't heard through direct correspondence from the Ministry of Education, that the classroom improvement fund is being cut. Well, that classroom improvement fund was used specifically to support students with severe special needs and other students.

Again, with the lack of clarity through this interim supply and subsequent lack of correspondence with two boards from government we have of course come to the assumption that these types of programs, that the minister herself said in interim supply were set to expire this summer – we will have to wait until after there's a budget, well into the fall, to know whether or not they're back. Well, it's really unfair for boards to either have to try to reconfigure classroom configuration well into December, once students have already formed those relationships, or lay off teachers, which will be probably even more problematic if they did that well into the fall, after this government brings in a budget, and then had to do reconfiguration but into even larger class sizes.

Those are the two largest boards.

7:50

I wanted to touch on one of the smaller boards but still with a significant number of schools and a number of students, and that's the Battle River school division. I imagine the Member for Camrose will take an interest in this as well as the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I know she taught in Bawlf, which is, of course, one of the schools in the Battle River school division. Some other schools include Forestburg, Hay Lakes, Killam, Ryley. None of these schools next year will have learning coaches. None of them. What's a learning coach, you ask? That formerly used to be referred to as a special education teacher. Speaking directly with the ATA there, they have told us that every single one of what were formerly referred to as special education teachers, now learning coaches – every single one – from the district will be gone. That's what they've told us.

These teachers are on the front lines. Many of them have worked in this area and have developed tremendous expertise over the years and relationships with the children that they work with, the students that they work with. Many of them, fortunately, if they have worked for many years, have continuous contracts, so they won't actually be getting a pink slip, but they will absolutely be moved into a different position, often positions that they've never taught before or have the expertise to teach, which, of course, is difficult for those teachers. It's also incredibly difficult for those students who rely on these special education teachers or learning coaches to give them that direct mentorship skill building to ensure that they're set up for success.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the government says that, you know, they'll just have to wait until the fall, hopefully most kids in Alberta will only experience grade 3 once, right? Most kids will only get this opportunity once. If we say to them, "Wait until you're halfway through your grade 3 year, and then we may find money; we may not," I would say that that is incredibly irresponsible. I know that

there are many parents of young children in this very Chamber, and I can't help but express the frustration that I imagine even they are feeling even though they're being told to vote for this interim supply bill. When you think about how these impacts are going to affect your child, I think it's very problematic.

I also have met with some parents who choose to home-school, and they said: "Well, what is it going to mean to me if I have another child I'm planning on home-schooling – I have one now, and I have a second one I'm planning on home-schooling next year – how is that formula going to change? What is our allocation going to be? Are we going to get the same kinds of supports times two that we had last year, or are we going to see a chipping away at the formula that we get and the supports that our schools that support us like Argyll and others get to provide us with enrichment opportunities for those who choose to home-school?"

These are very fair questions. People have been asking these since the election in April, and they have yet to get clarity. The little bit of clarity that has been received in interim supply was that the classroom improvement fund is gone, which, again, primarily focused on making better learning conditions, especially for students with special needs, and that, you know, after the budget is passed, then we'll have more to say about the school nutrition program. Well, that won't put food in the stomachs of the 33,000 students who get it today and whose families need that support in September, Mr. Speaker.

These are a few of the things that I think frustrate me deeply about the lack of clarity and the lack of detail with regard to this interim supply. And it's not just me. It's the other boards that are making decisions based on assumptions. I know that the hon. the Premier will say: you know, they don't need to make these decisions; we've said that we're going to fund enrolment. Well, then questions come in about: well, is enrolment going to be funded in the same formula in the same way it has been in the past? And then, again, nothing but talking points. No clarity. Well, okay: are we going to fund the classroom improvement fund? Silence: we'll have more to say after the budget gets passed. Okay: is the school nutrition fund going to be provided? Again, nothing but silence.

This is why there have been so many days – and I know probably hon. members are sick of me asking about these things in question period. Trust me; I don't want to ask about them either. I want our teachers, our students, and our families to have clarity and certainty and sufficient – I would say more than sufficient. When you do a report card and you write, "has sufficiently met the learner outcomes," that's kind of a C. That kind of means that you passed; not great, but you passed. That's what we're asking for right now. We're asking the government to at least give a pass to the Education budget. Give a sufficient amount of funding and a sufficient amount of detail, and we can't even get that. We're getting: we'll wait in due course.

Well, you know, if I was asked to hand in an assignment on time and I was a student and I said: "You know, I'll get back to you in due course. I need a few more months. I'll get back to you in December, but – guess what? – the course I'm in ends right now" – because it does. This is the week. This is the last couple days of school. This is a week where staffing is being slotted. If I said, "I'll get back to you at Christmas," I can tell you what my teacher would say if I was a student. My teacher would say: "Not good enough. Not good enough. You get a fail. Or get your butt in here over the summer. Make sure you get the job done. Give us that clarity. Finish your assignment." And that's what I have to say to the government about Education funding.

That's probably the bulk of my comments. The other one I want to mention is just around assumptions in the Health budget, and I do wish the Health minister the best of luck in achieving what I was

very proud we achieved over the last two years, which was no requirement for supplementary supply. It's not an easy feat in Health because different from Education, in Education you can say: we're freezing your funding, and you're going to cram more kids into the classroom. I'm not saying that's good, but you can do that.

In hospitals when more patients show up, you don't say: sorry; we're full; we've already hit our targets. When more patients come in, physicians see them, staff might have to work overtime, and most of the physicians in Alberta are on a fee-for-service arrangement, which means more patients, more fees. Again, yeah, very difficult to constrain that budget when there's something like a difficult flu season or other outbreaks and same with a necessity to have overtime for nursing staff and other allied health and supports within acute care in particular. I do certainly wish him all the best, but I fear that with some of the pressures that are being put on him at this time, it will be a significant challenge.

The last thing I want to say is that if these interim supply numbers are based off projections that were created by our government, which has become my understanding, then there should be a continuation with important projects like ensuring that we have a state-of-the-art lab for folks who live in Edmonton and the north zone. Having fragmented lab services in a facility that is past its best-before-date does not say that you've got the best. I have been proud when I had my time as Health minister to say that I believe that we have the best health care system, not only in Canada but in the world, here in Alberta. I worry that if the Premier and his cabinet keep pushing ideological choices over patient-centred choices, we won't be able to say that for much longer.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Motions

### Federal Carbon Tax

21. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its support for the government in its efforts to challenge the federal government's attempts to impose a carbon tax on Alberta, which this Assembly views as a clear violation of provincial jurisdiction, including the launching of a constitutional challenge if necessary; acknowledge the negative impacts that a carbon tax has upon the people of Alberta, including the increased cost to heat homes and run businesses in the midst of an economic downturn; and recognize that Alberta's oil and gas industries continue to be global leaders in emissions reduction.

[Adjourned debate June 25: Mr. Kenney]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone wishing to join the debate on Government Motion 21? The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal carbon tax being imposed on Alberta is unconstitutional. Alberta has constitutional power to manage our own local undertakings, natural resources, economy, and greenhouse gas emissions plan. It is a clear violation of provincial jurisdiction, and our government will challenge the federal government's attempts to impose a carbon tax on Alberta.

The federal carbon tax is an imposition. This is because it is all economic pain for no environmental gain. This federal cash grab will only punish Albertans for heating their homes and driving to work. A \$50-a-tonne carbon tax would sacrifice over 6,000 new jobs and take almost \$2 billion out of Albertans' pockets. The Trudeau carbon tax would also increase the cost of food and other

goods for Alberta families at the cash till and make us less competitive in Canada and around the world.

We all saw our soaring gas prices when the NDP government imposed their carbon tax cash grab. Albertans elected this government to create jobs, growth, and economic diversification, to help get Albertans back to work and make life easier for families who need to pay their bills. We did this by having our first piece of legislation to repeal the carbon tax. Promise made; promise kept. The government of Alberta delivered on its promise to repeal the NDP carbon tax and will explore all available avenues, including legal challenges, to protect our province's economy from the federal carbon tax that causes economic pain with no environmental gain.

Our government recognizes that climate change is a real and important issue in our province and is committed to working on a climate change plan that strikes a balance between economic growth and environmental protection and achieves real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. A carbon tax imposed on Albertans doesn't solve the climate change issue but, rather, contributes to less economic growth that could be invested into real solutions.

8:00

Albertans are frustrated. They do not get a say in the matter. Either we have our own carbon tax that we saw destroy jobs and our economy, or we have a federal carbon tax imposed on us that will destroy jobs and the economy. It is a no-win situation for Albertans. They elected a government that will fight for them. They elected a government that would put their best interests in mind. Having a federal carbon tax imposed on Albertans without our consent is not in Albertans' best interests. That is why we will challenge the unconstitutional federal carbon tax.

The federal carbon tax would disrupt the balance of Canada's federation by undermining Alberta's exclusive constitutional power to manage its own local undertakings, natural resources, economy, and greenhouse gas emissions plans. Alberta has the constitutional authority to make policy choices within our own jurisdiction. Our government is going to take action to keep jobs and the economy secure in Alberta. We were elected on this platform and are determined to keep our promise we made to Albertans. The job-killing carbon tax the Trudeau government is putting on hard-working Albertans is unfair and unconstitutional. We cannot lay back and let them destroy our economy. It is unjust to let the federal cash grab punish Albertans for heating their homes and driving to work. Imposing this job-killing carbon tax is not constitutionally viable, and it infringes on our province's authority to make policy choices within our own jurisdiction.

We do not believe that punishing Albertans to heat their homes and gas up to go to work is an effective way to reduce carbon emissions. As our members across the floor know, it is an effective way to lose an election. We can't have an effective climate change action plan without having a strong economy. It is impossible to fund innovative projects without money to invest. We can't be running enormous budgets to leave our children and grandchildren to pay for because we wanted to impose failed ideological experiments such as a carbon tax that does not produce effective results to combat climate change. Our government is going to fight for Albertans. We are going to make sure our voice is heard and challenge this unconstitutional job-killing carbon tax.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Anyone wishing to ask a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is very excited to join the debate.



**Mr. Bilous:** Oh, I'm very excited, Mr. Speaker, to rise and speak to this. I will probably end up taking much of my time only because I need to clarify some of the comments or misconceptions that were laid out earlier today by a couple of speakers as far as the reality of a price on carbon and a number of other messages. I have the benefit of having the Premier's words printed in front of me and will actually address many of his comments.

I want to say, first of all, Mr. Speaker, that it's clear that this government struggles with the science of climate change. I know their previous iteration of a party, the Wildrose Party, denied the science of climate change or that climate change was human caused or that we impacted the planet. I think, you know, quite frankly, what our government tried to do was to demonstrate that the environment and the economy can go hand in hand. They are not opposites. You don't need to sacrifice one for the other. The day that our government introduced our climate leadership plan was really a historic day in Alberta. Quite frankly, it made news around the world because onstage there not only was the Premier and the former Minister of Environment and Parks; there also were CEOs of large oil sands companies standing shoulder to shoulder with indigenous leaders as well as with environmental NGOs, all recognizing that there is a part to play in improving our environmental standards and reducing our greenhouse gases, reducing our environmental footprint.

I will talk about some of the tools that our government introduced, which is quite humorous to the extent that the current Premier now talks about an innovation fund. Well, you know, I think he's about three and a half years behind the times, Mr. Speaker, because I recall standing onstage with the former Minister of Environment and Parks announcing a \$1.4 billion innovation fund to, similar to how the government currently describes, work with some of the largest industrial polluters, looking at investing dollars for them to find real-world solutions to reduce their environmental footprint, to enhance efficiency and reduce their bottom line. It had a significant benefit of meaning that companies were reducing their bottom line, so becoming more profitable at the same time as taking significant action.

You know, there are a number of companies that have used some new technology, some that was codetrieved from the Alberta Innovates Corporation, which does incredible work. You know, I'll highlight the fact that I really encourage this government and hope that as they are looking to stand up their fund, again, similar to the \$1.4 billion fund that we introduced, they talk to and consult with Alberta Innovates. There are some folks that are incredible experts who know who to talk to. I would encourage them to talk to the former Emissions Reduction Alberta as well, who helped design some of the programs but also deliver these programs, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure I'll find it later on in my notes.

The other thing I want to highlight, Mr. Speaker, is that the climate leadership plan that our government put forward is part of the reason that the TMX was approved in the first place. Again, I think what this current government fails to understand and grasp is that there is an interest around the planet in every nation in stepping up their efforts to do more to protect our climate, which – you know, I appreciate the fact of how important the economy is, but there can be and are ways to take meaningful action to address climate change while also supporting the economy. I can tell you that doing nothing is not a solution. I can tell you I can't wait for the government members to go into their schools and talk to especially school-aged kids, who understand that the time for action is now and are extremely disappointed that this government is going down the path that they're currently going down.

Now, the other thing that's interesting about this motion, Mr. Speaker, is to challenge the federal government's attempts to

impose a carbon tax on Alberta. I can't support a motion to waste taxpayers' dollars to fight the federal government and lose because, I think, it's going to be very clear that the federal government does in fact have jurisdiction. But what's fascinating is that just earlier today the Premier talked about how, through unions that are now filing court challenges to the unconstitutional Bill 9, our party was opposed to Bill 9; therefore, we are in favour of unions suing taxpayers.

Well, if that logic is correct, this current government is about to sue the federal government, who are the same taxpayers that they accused us of trying to sue doing the exact same thing. By taking the federal government to court, they're actually taking Canadians to court and trying to sue them. I think, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, they're going to be unsuccessful. This is where, when the government repealed the carbon tax, my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar affectionately named it the Act to Impose Justin Trudeau's Federal Carbon Tax on Alberta, which I think we will see.

**8:10**

I do have a question for the government. In the whole dialogue of a carbon tax and its impact on the economy and on people the government loves to say "the job-killing carbon tax," to which I'd like them to table documents that show exactly how many jobs were lost because of the imposition of a carbon tax. I appreciate that it did impact costs. We tried to mitigate that. I appreciate that not all of those costs were mitigated. But I'd like to see the government table documents on how many jobs were killed by the carbon tax, and if not, then maybe they can stand up and admit that the government is actually spreading mistruths in this place. Prove how many jobs were lost from an imposition of a carbon tax.

I'm going to continue to move along, Mr. Speaker. Looking at the hon. Premier's speech from earlier today, you know, he was talking about how Albertans elected this government and accused us of being arrogant, which I find ironic coming from the members from that side. What the Premier needs to recognize is that not every Albertan is opposed to paying a price on carbon. I recognize that, again, there are some Albertans, absolutely, who disliked the carbon tax, but not every Albertan was opposed to it. Again, there are Albertans, especially in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, who saw some of the benefit of where those dollars were going both in Edmonton and Calgary, in the green line. I'll be curious to see how the current government plans to fund those projects.

As well, I think it's naive to try to frame or deny the fact that humans have and do impact climate change. I think what we are seeing is an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, whether it be forest fires or floods, depending on where you are in the world, and that there is a responsibility for governments to take around the planet. I can't stand that argument of, like: you know, country X pollutes more than we do, so therefore we should do nothing. Well, that's great. That's how you drop the bar to the ground as opposed to trying to raise the bar.

Again, I mean, you know, the hon. Premier, who I know loves globe-trotting, will also know that China is investing tens if not hundreds of billions of dollars into innovation, especially around wanting to make significant reductions in how much they pollute. Now, if we compared them to Alberta today, of course, Alberta would be not even a pin drop compared to the country of China. My point, Mr. Speaker, is that they are taking meaningful action and recognizing that just denying it and pretending that it doesn't exist and doing nothing is not the solution.

I finally found that part, Mr. Speaker, where the Premier talked about the development of their technology and innovations emission reduction levy and fund. I encourage the Premier and the

government to look at that \$1.4 billion fund that we made available. That wasn't just to the oil and gas sector. Primarily they benefited from accessing those funds. It was also available to manufacturers. It was available to the agriculture sector, the forestry sector, and then broad-scale manufacturing as well. I encourage them to look at the strides and progress that we made.

What's interesting is that earlier the Premier talked about how the Minister of Environment and Parks got a question today about a subsidy program for solar panels, and the Premier referred to it as "voodoo economics." I find it fascinating. A significant reduction in corporate taxes: is that not an indirect way of providing a subsidy to industry? I think, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we know that there isn't any significant or substantial proof that dropping the corporate tax rate will result in job growth. We have a number of examples to point to around the globe. Now, again, some companies, sure, will use it to hire more people, invest it back into their company. Will all of them? No, Mr. Speaker. Will they result in the numbers that the Minister of Finance has put out or anticipated? Not necessarily. So we're really, you know, going on this whole: well, trust us that this will create the growth and economic activity that this government wants it to.

I find it interesting as well when the Premier talks about the carbon tax and talks about the debt and deficit that increased under our government, but, you know, I'll remind Albertans, quite frankly, that when the Premier was a senior cabinet minister in the Harper government, they ran tens of billions of dollars of deficit every year. In fact, I think the Premier's greatest accomplishment – maybe he should have a little badge and a star – was that one year he ran a \$150 billion deficit in the federal government.

**Ms Hoffman:** Sorry. How much?

**Mr. Bilous:** A hundred and fifty billion.

That's fascinating. I mean, for someone who is supposed to be anti debt and deficit, that's quite an accomplishment, quite frankly. You know, it's a little rich to run up massive deficits federally, come back to Alberta, and then talk about how we're bad for doing that.

What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that because of the investments that we made when the economy was in a recession, we got incredible prices on much-needed infrastructure builds around this province, whether it's schools, roads, bridges, hospitals, rather than competing with the private sector when the economy is red hot. At the same time, it obviously resulted in tens of thousands of construction jobs that were much-needed when the price of oil went from \$127 a barrel at its peak down to \$27 a barrel at its trough. Again, I appreciate that the UCP's talking points are about the job-killing carbon tax. Again, I'd love to see evidence of how many jobs were lost from the price on carbon that we put on.

The other thing that's fascinating is that members from the other side, the whole time we introduced our climate leadership plan, talked about the slush fund that would be created from the collection of the carbon taxes. We reinvested every single dollar back into the economy through subsidies, through programs. What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that this current government, with their Bill 1, repealed the carbon tax. Guess what they've done with the significant amount of money that was collected from the carbon tax? It's gone into a slush fund. Well, isn't that interesting? Again, how quickly things change when a party moves from opposition to government.

Mr. Speaker, for those reasons, I will not be supporting this motion.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I believe that the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction was first on his feet.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to rise to the occasion to address the concern or the question that was asked by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. He asked for evidence of the job-killing carbon tax, and I would like to submit that he is sitting with the remnants of those who survived the job-killing carbon tax. According to the last election their caucus moved from 52 MLAs down to 24 MLAs, which lost 28 NDP jobs as MLAs. This was a direct result of Albertans casting their vote saying: enough is enough; we are not going to accept the carbon tax and their iteration of being able to save Alberta. The member is looking for evidence. I submit to him that their party is the evidence.

**8:20**

There was an election document, that either has been tabled or will be tabled, called – the Election Act provides for that evidence, to show that Albertans rejected that carbon tax and rejected the fact that it was killing jobs, to the tune of over a million people who voted in favour of our approach to being able to have the heavy emitters price on carbon rather than the job-killing carbon tax the NDP had introduced.

Mr. Speaker, from my riding I had the opportunity of being able to speak with a company, Lantic Sugar, better known as Rogers Sugar. When I sat down with the general manager there, he told me that they're price takers, not price makers. They're an international market. They cannot pass the price on to consumers. This is what really happened with the carbon tax. It was just an inflationary measure when you think about it. Anybody who could pass the price of that carbon tax on did. So this was just an inflation on our regular, everyday Albertans. People who were affected most by this were senior citizens on fixed incomes, charities. Schools, who cannot pass that price on, had to eat that, just the same as Rogers Sugar had to eat that price increase. They told me that if this was to continue to where the NDP wanted to go, which was \$50 per tonne, that would actually drive their business south to a jurisdiction that did not have a price on carbon, a carbon tax, and we would lose one of the largest employers in my community of Taber.

Mr. Speaker, they had to make changes to be able to deal with the \$10 million that they had to deal with for the extra cost. They had to make changes. This was not something where they could just say: "Well, you know what? We're rich. We make so much money. We can just eat that cost." They had to make some changes, and there was a cost to the labour in that community. The cost, if they had had to carry on with an NDP carbon tax, would have been substantial to that community and to that business. They would have left. They would have gone down to the United States, where there was no carbon tax.

The assertion that provides us with evidence: I actually think that it's the hard-work ethic, the get 'er done attitude of Albertans that actually helped us survive these last four years. This is what actually helped us survive the carbon tax and all the other poor legislation that this NDP added to our job creators and to our innovators, to regular Albertans. It was their can-do attitude, their "we will survive this, we've been survivors, and we will always be survivors" that got it done. It wasn't the fact that this was not egregious legislation.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to Government Motion 21? I see the hon. Member for Sherwood Park has risen to speak to the motion.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is extremely hard for Albertans who don't have the luxury of having a public

transportation system in their community to be able to get to work every day without emitting carbon. Because of where they live, they are being punished by the Trudeau carbon tax. This is a reality for many rural Albertans. Many Albertans have to travel across the province in order to visit their family on their days off from work or travel to larger communities because their community doesn't have the facilities for their children to actively participate in sports. We heard from all Albertans that those who live in rural areas were being punished for going to work; that is, if they already had not gotten laid off due to the actions of the former government. Many jobs were lost due to the NDP carbon tax, and we are certain that this is going to happen again if the Trudeau cash-grab carbon tax happens again from the Laurentian elite.

If the federal government wants to invest in LRT systems across our entire province, be our guest, but we don't see much investment into Alberta happening with the Trudeau government planning on killing pipelines and banning all transport of our critical resources. The federal government doesn't care about the everyday problems Albertans have. They don't care that a parent has to take off time from work to take their kids to hockey practice, let alone pay extra at the pump, and can't afford the carbon taxes imposed on them. The carbon tax is a one-size-fits-all solution that doesn't work for every province, let alone all communities in one province, Mr. Speaker. No one in this nation, let alone this province, should confuse climate action with the carbon tax. Imposing a carbon tax on Albertans is not constitutionally viable and infringes on our province's authority to make policy choices within our own jurisdiction.

Our government is aware of these issues that rural Albertans have, also that climate change is a real and important issue, but we believe that we should have a climate change plan that doesn't halt economic growth and take money from hard-working Albertans. Our platform makes it clear that we are committed to a practical approach that achieves real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We need a solution that can strike a balance between economic growth and environmental protection. Again, one more time for the members opposite: an approach that will strike a balance between economic growth and environmental protection.

Our government was elected on a mandate to create jobs, growth, and economic diversification. This federal carbon tax being imposed on Albertans inhibits our ability to keep that promise. Our 6,000 new jobs and almost \$2.4 billion out of Albertans' pockets would be sacrificed if a \$50-a-tonne carbon tax was imposed on Albertans. The federal carbon tax would also increase the cost of food and other goods for Alberta families at the cash till and make us less competitive in Canada and around the world. The federal carbon tax would disrupt the balance of Canada's federation by undermining Alberta's exclusive constitutional power to manage its local undertakings, natural resources, economy, and greenhouse gas emission plans. Alberta has the constitutional authority to make policy choices within our own jurisdiction.

But we will not go down without a fight, Mr. Speaker. The federal carbon tax is a clear invasion of Alberta's jurisdiction of having the exclusive constitutional power to manage its own natural resources, economy, local undertakings, and greenhouse gas emission plans.

Albertans made the decision to scrap the job-killing carbon tax this last election, when they voted in this government. It is unfair and unconstitutional for the federal government to impose a carbon tax after clearly seeing that this isn't what the people want. Imposing a carbon tax on Albertans is not constitutionally viable and infringes on our province's authority to make policy choices, again, within our own jurisdiction. We should have the authority to be able to make alternative environmental plans rather than a carbon

tax that kills economic growth in our province. We delivered on a promise to repeal the NDP carbon tax and will explore all available avenues, including legal challenges – you betcha – to protect our province's economy from the federal carbon tax, that causes economic pain with absolutely zero environmental gain.

Our government made a promise to fight for Albertans against the economy-killing carbon tax. We are going to challenge the unjust carbon tax. Promise made, promise kept, Mr. Speaker.

Then, briefly, Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk a bit on other reasons why I strongly support Government Motion 21, where we acknowledge the negative impacts that a carbon tax has had upon the people of Alberta. It has been great. I want to give just quickly an international perspective on how these job-killing carbon tax policies, be it from the Laurentian elite in Ottawa or here from our colleagues across the way, the former government, have hurt Albertans.

Foreign direct investment is so important to generating prosperity in any jurisdiction, including here in Alberta, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the last four years have been a period of darkness, with incredible capital flight from foreign jurisdictions and foreign companies as they've been turned off by the high-regulation, carbon-tax-imposing policies of the former NDP government.

**8:30**

Let's just look at a couple of examples. The big Asian economies of China, India, and Japan, Mr. Speaker, are carbon hungry, and they will be for at least 30 or 40 years to come. But they have been greatly turned off by carbon tax policies that make us uncompetitive when competing for critical international investment. China is the world's second-largest economy, Japan the third-largest, and India now the sixth.

Again, in man's long climb from the swamp to the stars there has never been a resource or a mechanism, if you will, Mr. Speaker, to allow people upward social mobility, which is their God-given right, like fossil fuels. We have the greatest record in the world, when it comes to environmental standards and human rights, of any other jurisdiction, so we need to really support and promote a global Alberta product for our fossil fuels. The carbon tax that is seeking to be imposed by the Trudeau Liberals will make us less internationally competitive, as did the carbon tax imposed by the members across the way. Thankfully, we have scrapped that.

You know, in the big Asian economies right now, Mr. Speaker, you have strong, in two cases democratic governments that, again, are desperate and really want to seek Alberta's energy products and fossil fuels, but they've been turned off by the antibusiness practices, including the carbon tax, imposed by the former government. You have Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India, who's just been re-elected with a second thumping majority government. He has a majority through his own BJP ruling party. He won 303 seats in the Lok Sabha, or what is the lower House of the Indian Parliament. And then you have Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, where he's won his third straight majority government. Quite incredible. For the last two government mandates he's had supermajorities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe desperately want Alberta energy products.

For a second, Mr. Speaker, while I still have time, let's take a look at Japan just quickly. Japan is the world's third-largest economy. It is the most energy-dependent developed nation on earth. Let's take a look. Coal: 96 per cent they import. Oil: 99 per cent they import. And 99 per cent of their liquid natural gas is also imported. There are just such great opportunities here with India, China, Japan, for example, to do really big things. And the carbon tax being imposed by the Laurentian elite in Ottawa through Prime

Minister Trudeau or the former NDP government really took away from great opportunities over the last four years, and that undermined Albertan prosperity and greatly hurt Albertans' ability to prosper: incredible negative impacts.

Continuing on, Mr. Speaker, just speaking about the incredible foreign direct investment opportunities from the world's, for example, third-largest economy. You know, Japan is an FDI superpower. It holds more than \$9.5 trillion in financial assets, including \$2 trillion in cash. Japanese households possess a record \$8 trillion in cash savings. The Japanese people are the greatest people when it comes to savings. Furthermore, the Japanese public pension plan is the world's largest publicly funded pension plan, being valued at over \$1.2 trillion. From Indian companies to Japanese companies, which have been involved in the oil sands since 1978, there are such incredible opportunities.

Going back to this motion, Mr. Speaker, again, one of the reasons I strongly support it as the proud Member for Sherwood Park, if I'm allowed to speak in the third person – I don't know, but hopefully – is it acknowledges the negative impacts that the carbon tax has upon the people of Alberta. We have missed out on tens of billions of dollars in foreign direct investment. You know, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview: I deeply appreciate his passion for international relations, which is one I share, but I would say: what the heck was the former government doing over the previous four years, losing tens of billions of dollars of investment when you have these incredible opportunities, real strong leaders like Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who were ready to do big deals with us? But they see our jurisdiction as not competitive, so they'll go to Malaysia, they'll go to the south or they'll go to the Middle East.

You know, we have to sell our energy to allow Albertans to prosper once we fight against the Trudeau Liberals with their job-killing, imposed carbon tax. We have to sell our fossil fuels not only as the most environmentally and ethically top-notch, but also, frankly, Mr. Speaker, we have to sell our security premium. There's always great conflict and tension going on and happening in the Middle East, and here in Alberta and Canada we are an oasis of stability. We need to tell that story once we become economically competitive again, fixing the disastrous mess left by the former government.

You know, Alberta greatly prospered under the golden tenure of Premier Peter Lougheed, a very wise man, a person I greatly admire. A key reason, in part, why Alberta prospered so greatly then was because of great tensions in the Middle East during the 1970s and '80s, which allowed oil prices to spike and Alberta to greatly prosper. You had the 1973 Arab-Israeli war as well as the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. At that time Alberta was incredibly competitive internationally, attracting lots of foreign direct investment, but we've lost that, Mr. Speaker, or we did under the former NDP government, but we can get it back.

I would just conclude, Mr. Speaker, after going around the world to some major economies in Japan, China, and India, that I strongly support this motion. Again, a key reason is that there have just been incredible negative impacts that the carbon tax has had upon the people of Alberta, especially in the realm of international relations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for . . .

**Member Ceci:** His enthusiasm.

**Ms Hoffman:** . . . his enthusiasm. Thank you, Member for Calgary-Buffalo. He was certainly enthusiastic.

I have to say that during parts of his speech I stopped to reflect on the remarks that you share with us every day, Mr. Speaker: may they never lead our province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or untrustworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind the responsibility to seek improvement for the condition of all. Wise, wise words. What that means to me in the context of this debate: certainly I'm thinking about the fact that I think the member for Medicine Hat – and I forget the other half of the name of the riding . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Brooks.

**Ms Hoffman:** Brooks-Medicine Hat. Thank you.

. . . talked in her main speech about going camping with her parents and them telling her to leave the campsite better than the way you found it. Mine did the same. When I was little it meant that I gathered kindling. When I was older it meant that I chopped some extra wood. Now it means that I pick up all the trash in the area and make all the littles who go camping with me do the same.

There are different ways that you leave the condition better for all. I would say that one of the main ways – and I brought Sadie in, the young woman, a grade 6 student, who wrote to me with her fears about climate change and a desire for her to be able to do something to combat it and make sure that we have a better condition for all.

Certainly, I would say that the science is in. Climate change is real. It's man-made, but the good news is that we can do something about it. I appreciate that the member did at one point say something about – I think the remarks were around: our plan was only punishment, and it didn't fix things. Well, at least we had a plan, Mr. Speaker. I'd argue that we did many things to fix conditions. You only need to visit – I'm sure that probably every riding that each of us represents has at least one school that's engaging in renewable energy in some way. I know that the First Nations who took advantage of the opportunities to do energy retrofits or renewable energy certainly embarked on that, and it definitely is more sustainable in the long term for the areas that they were using it. I know that it led to many jobs still in the energy industry and in other areas of renewables and energy efficiency.

So when I think about that "leave the campsite better than the way you found it," I can't help but think that irresponsible blinders when it comes to climate change – and the man-made responsibility we have to act in a way that takes care of our energy interests, takes care of jobs, and protects our environment, I would say, is the minimum in leaving the campsite at least not worse than we found it. I think we do owe it to leave it better than we did.

"Never lead our province wrongly through love of power." Well, certainly, we keep hearing about: well, the best way to lose elections is to act on climate change. Well, Mr. Speaker, the best way to lead is through vision and through leadership. Certainly, fighting against something is one way to run a campaign, and it certainly was successful in winning this last election campaign, but now that's done. Now it's time to lead, and it's time to show what the Alberta government will do to actually act on this. Sure, show us another path, but don't stand still and pretend that the reality is not here.

**8:40**

The reality is that when we see the devastating impacts that we've had even in this most recent wildfire season – you know, the hon. the Premier will say: well, the number of fires is the same. Sure, approximately the same, but the land mass of these fires, I believe I've heard scientists say, is about double what it is in a typical fire

season. These consequences are real, and they have lasting impacts for all of us.

I think it is important that we reflect on when you say “desire to please” – I’ve touched on that – “or unworthy ideas”: well, I would say that it’s certainly unworthy to only act in opposition to something without proposing what you’re going to do to address it moving forward. Then, of course, “laying aside all private interests”: well, Mr. Speaker, I think it is in the public interest of all Albertans as well as our nation to make sure that we are acting in a responsible way for our planet.

By doing this previously – I know that we got the approvals on Trans Mountain. Part of why the Trans Mountain did get approved is because the marker for public support across the nation moved from 4 in 10 Canadians four years ago to 7 in 10 Canadians at the time of the last provincial election supporting the change in moving forward with a pipeline to tidewater. I’d say those are certainly important accomplishments.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has been trying to rise, and I’ll recognize him now.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Government Motion 21 this evening. I’ll start by sort of taking note of some of the debate that’s been taking place so far in this Chamber this evening around this issue of action on climate change. I wanted to pay particular attention to the Conservative movement’s continuous momentum to keep kicking this can down the road on the climate change issue and other issues, which ends up costing the Albertan taxpayer, in this case, more down the road because the problem is not addressed.

Basically, there’s a false premise underlying much of Alberta government policy about the global warming issue. They’re very sensitive to accusations that they don’t understand or they don’t accept the science of climate change and that global warming is a real thing. They vehemently claim, you know, that the opposition is vilifying them incorrectly when we accuse them of not really enveloping the problem and creating solutions that are really, actually existing to endorse the fact that it is a problem. They never ever really seem to grasp that it’s necessary to, first of all, give more than lip service to the fact that global warming is a problem and climate change is affecting us all even now. The reason that they do this is because they create the false premise that it’s a problem. They’ll admit repeatedly: “Yes, it’s a problem. We know it, just like the opposition, the NDP. Yup. We agree with you that it’s a problem. Global warming exists. But, guess what, Mr. and Mrs. Taxpayer? You don’t have to pay to fix it.”

That was the underlying false premise that they used repeatedly in the last election and has become government policy and is further reflected in Government Motion 21 here. Too clever by half, perhaps, but indeed they used it effectively in the election and now are trying to foist the same argument on Albertans and the rest of the country by claiming to the general public that a price on carbon is not the most efficient way to attack climate change. What they did was to offer Albertans a climate change coupon, if I may, to finance the solution, saying that heavy emitters will be capable of financing the solution to climate change: “You won’t have to pay for it, Mr. and Mrs. Taxpayer. They will. Those other guys will. Therefore, you know, rest easy. Don’t worry about it. It exists. It’s a problem, but those other guys are going to pay for it.” It was an effective argument. A lot of people bought that argument. But, in fact, it’s poor leadership. It’s poor government. It’s irresponsible government; that is what it is.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

We’re seeing in this country the effects of climate change in every province and territory. We see the northern Arctic Ocean practically being ice free, and it very soon will be ice free year-round. The Russians certainly know that because they’re rapidly making investments in their northern seaports so that their passage through the Arctic waters will be open year-round, and they’re going to become leaders in that northern cap of the world because of the fact that climate change is changing the sea-ice patterns and there won’t be sea ice in the Arctic.

Our Arctic tundra is melting. We’re having methane gases released that will really exacerbate the problem caused by global warming and multiply the effects of it. We’re going to see the effects of it in our country, in the northern part of the country in particular, more than any other part of the world and more quickly.

I’ve been to Antarctica. I’ve been to the ice shelf on the coast of Antarctica and seen with my own eyes the melting ice and how, in fact, those ice patterns are shifting. It’s a reality that the government says that they accept and says that they realize and boast that they are on top of a plan to fix our reaction to climate change, but in fact it’s really an ineffective one at best. To say that heavy emitters will finance the solution is gratuitous at best. The platform, the arguments that helped get them an election win will not prepare the people of this province to adapt to the certain, huge challenges that we as a people are facing now and will face in the future due to climate change.

It’s been established very clearly that a price on carbon, paid by everyone who uses carbon, is the most efficient way to attack the issue of global warming and climate change. But perhaps there’s another way. I know that the Member for Sherwood Park was suggesting that upward social mobility is a God-given right. Maybe we should tell that to the 1 per cent of the population who have that upward mobility at the pinnacle. Therefore, it must be that those who are in poverty are the work of the devil, I imagine.

In any case, my point on that is that leaving it to the wind is not an option, Mr. Speaker. As a government we have to take responsible measures, not only recognizing and paying lip service to the fact that there is a problem, a global problem, a global warming issue that’s causing us to look at possible consequences that include social breakdown. You know, today on CBC Radio there was a commentator talking about the social consequences, the governmental consequences globally of failing to take action on climate change and what we’re going to be seeing when whole coastlines start disappearing, when major coastal cities start to really, really see the effects of climate change, sooner than one might think possible.

I know that we’ve seen some pretty devastating flooding in New York City not too long ago; Vanuatu, a Polynesian island, disappearing. Our projections about our own west coastline and east coastline are pretty alarming as well, the fact that we have the permafrost melting and causing large difficulties in many of our northern communities. The highway newly constructed to Tuktoyaktuk from Inuvik: I was speaking with an Inuk from that area who was in town to celebrate indigenous days on June 21. He indicated to me that, yeah, they were having significant problems with that highway because of the fact that global warming was melting the permafrost. Notwithstanding the fact that they had new technologies to build that piece of highway versus what was used to build the Alaska portion of the highway during the 1940s, they are still facing significant challenges in maintaining that roadbed because the permafrost is giving way underneath it, melting, and the road is under threat.

8:50

This government struggles with the science of climate change, and really there's no need for it. In fact, it's irresponsible to not tackle this problem head on. They're trying to create enemies within our own society. They want to pit the environment and the economy against one another and, by virtue of that, Albertans against one another, and that is a very, very sad commentary on how this government governs. They choose to seek adversaries within our own society and pit one against the other and try to create – they talk about us as an NDP government trying to pick winners and losers. Well, that's what they're trying to do with our society. They're looking at winners and losers in society. It's a zero-sum game. Some people win, some people lose, and those that end up on the short end of the stick, Mr. Speaker, are those that this government doesn't agree with, and that turns out to be usually individuals who are the most vulnerable in our society. It's really sad to see.

I know that the economy and the environment must be shown to work together. The government pays lip service to this, but – you know what? – in our past government it was proven to be the case that you could do that. You could have the environment and the economy working together, and the proof was our climate leadership plan and the approval of TMX. Now, you know, in the short time after this current government took office, TMX was approved. I don't think that they can take any credit for that. I think that the approval is proof of the effectiveness of what we had in place, the climate leadership plan. By not committing to some pieces of the climate leadership plan, as this government is showing it's going to do, we risk our economic future.

You know, the creation of a war chest, a war room, to vilify people will not work. I know that part of the reason the pipeline got approved is because we were able to move support for TMX from 4 in 10 Canadians to 7 in 10 Canadians. That's what I mean, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about leadership. True strength and quality leadership is about bringing people together. It's not about creating opponents within your own society and bashing them together and cobbling together a winning majority out of the remnants. That's not leadership. That's a way of splitting and dividing a society for your own benefit, and that's a cheap way of governing. The hardest way to govern is to look for ways to bring disparate views together and to have people act in a collaborative way, in a more harmonious way. That's really the government that ends up with a society that, in the long term, looks out for each other rather than attacking each other. This is what we're ending up with in this province, a polarity that need not exist, but this government thrives on that polarity.

They showed that during the election, and that's what they intend to keep on doing based on the type of actions that they argue in Government Motion 21. The resolution is something that I cannot in good conscience support. I don't understand why this government struggles with the science of climate change. As I mentioned, contrary to what they would have us believe, pitting the environment and the economy against each other will not move this province ahead. It will not lead to increased investment. They conveniently forget, of course, what happened to the price of oil shortly after we took office and the fact that we had a huge hole in our budget as a result, and that resulted in the necessity to take some very different actions in order to bridge the gap that we found ourselves in as a government. As has been said before, we made a choice. We did our best to protect Albertans from the job losses that would have resulted had we not invested in public services and in infrastructure to keep people working instead of adding to the unemployment rolls when we faced such a downturn in the economy because of the drop in the price of oil. We understood that

we had to take those steps because Albertans would have suffered even more.

Certainly, we're very much aware of the job losses that occurred in the oil patch and the many that have still not recovered as yet. But the things that we did were always geared towards taking steps to mitigate those things and the concrete steps for the long term that had to be done in order to create value in our resource sector and in the long term make sure that we gained market access and world price for our oil products by such things as the TMX pipeline, by doing things in recognition of the global warming that we faced to have the credibility to gain the approval of the rest of the country.

Once again, bringing people together, Mr. Speaker, is what leadership is all about. Dividing people, as this Premier and this government seem intent on doing, is not going to ingratiate ourselves to long-term success. I know that there are many people in this province who reacted with a rah-rah when the Premier took a stance to argue vehemently and loudly against other people in the country who had a differing view on the pipeline. In fact, it didn't have to be that way. Our former Premier, when we were government, engaged people with cogent arguments.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I believe I saw the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise under 29(2)(a) and question the member. You know, what we hear from the other side when it comes to carbon and the carbon tax – the Member for Edmonton-McClung mentioned that he had actually been to Antarctica. I just wonder how much carbon it takes to get a gentleman from Edmonton all the way down to Antarctica just to visit. [interjection] Yeah. Actually, the hypocrisy is thick, thick, thick in this House. Absolutely.

You know, we heard the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview justifying the carbon tax by saying that Edmonton residents and Calgary residents were happy because they saw the benefit of the green line and valley line LRT. Well, that falls right into one of my favourite arguments, that the brunt of the carbon tax was felt by rural Albertans, who have absolutely no choice on their mode of transportation. The valley line LRT, the new one that's going over to the west side of Edmonton from downtown: right now if I'm an Edmontonian or a visitor, I have a choice; I can take a cab, I can take a Uber, I can ride my bike, all on bitumen-supplied pavement roads, by the way. I've pointed out a number of times in the House that every tonne of pavement takes six barrels of bitumen, which is very interesting. That includes bike paths, Mr. Speaker. So if you want your bike paths through the river valley, you'd better be a bitumen supporter because, otherwise, you're going to be riding on gravel.

Another thing, through the chair . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt. I think that we've already come to the decision that we were looking for, at least the idea that we were going to present to the House, so please continue.

**Mr. Hanson:** Oh, thank you very much, and through the chair, sir.

One of the other things I'd like to point out is that when we were debating the carbon tax when we were in opposition, we put multiple, multiple amendments forward trying to get exemptions for food banks, trying to get exemptions for schools, for school boards, for charitable organizations, hospitals, and each time we requested a standing vote so that we could make sure that we got the government standing up and being counted. One time I commented on them being like lemmings jumping off the political cliffs, so to speak, every time that they stood up and were

recognized by Albertans as opposing the exemption of carbon taxes on schools and school boards and food banks.

9:00

Another thing. When we talk about job losses due to the carbon tax, I'd like to point out that one of my school boards spent \$300,000 in 2018 just on the carbon tax. That's a lot of teachers. That's a lot of teacher support staff. That's a lot of school books. So when we talk about job losses due to the carbon tax, I think we should maybe look at some of their big supporters, which are, you know, the Alberta Teachers' Association; hospitals, that had to pay carbon tax; all of these organizations that hire and have staff that are public-sector employees, that couldn't afford to hire more people or give them raises because of the carbon tax. I think that's something that we need to look at.

I would be really interested in listening to comments from the member, especially about his trip to Antarctica and how many boats it took him to get there, how many airplane trips, nights in hotels, you know, all those things that are very interesting, and how he feels about his contribution to the carbon footprint and the carbon attack on the Antarctic icefield that he is so concerned about.

You know, just going back to the carbon tax and the effects on the green line and valley line LRTs, like I said, I questioned the Minister of Transportation last week on highway 28. For three years in the NDP's strategic plan highway 28 didn't even show up. That's a single road that goes up into my area. That's their only road of choice other than gravel side roads that are supported by the municipalities. So my argument would be that rural Albertans bore the brunt of the NDP's carbon tax and saw absolutely no benefit from it. They voted very resoundingly, I think, in numbers in April to send a very, very clear message.

You know, I look at something I think I've tabled a number of times in the House. It's called the Leap Manifesto, Mr. Speaker. I'll read you a section of it, and I'll be happy to table it again. I think I've tabled it three times in the House, and I'll be very happy to table it again. It says here:

There is no longer an excuse for building new infrastructure projects that lock us into increased extraction decades into the future. The new iron law of energy development must be: if you wouldn't want it in your backyard, then it doesn't belong in anyone's backyard. That applies equally to oil and gas pipelines . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe that the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has been up a few times, and I see him now ready to speak.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have seen the unfair and unjust treatment that the federal government has imposed on our province, first with delaying pipeline development, creating bills that target Alberta oil, and now imposing a federal carbon tax. The province of Alberta has a constitutional right to make policy choices within our own jurisdiction. The federal carbon tax would disrupt the balance of Canada's federation by undermining Alberta's exclusive constitutional power to manage its own local affairs, natural resources, economy, and greenhouse gas emission plans. We have seen the negative impacts that a carbon tax has upon the people of Alberta, including the increased costs to heat homes and run businesses. We have seen how many jobs were lost because of the NDP job-killing carbon tax imposed on Albertans in the midst of the greatest economic downturn we have ever gone through.

Our platform makes it clear that we're committed to a practical approach that achieves real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We saw the soaring gas prices, the number of jobs lost, and the

number of homeless people rising. The carbon tax doesn't help anyone but those imposing it. We want to fight for Albertans. This money-grabbing carbon tax is unconstitutional and unjust. We listened to Albertans all across this province. We saw how they voted in this past election. The majority of Albertans do not want a carbon tax imposed on them. Albertans care about the environment, but they also want effective solutions. They don't want to be taxed on ineffective methods of fighting climate change.

This carbon tax is only a tax grab by the Trudeau government, and we shouldn't confuse climate action with a carbon tax. Our government recognizes that climate change is a real and important issue in our province and is committed to working on a climate change plan that strikes a balance between economic growth and environmental protection and achieves real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Our government knows that there is a better way to reduce emissions than this impractical and unconstitutional tax grab. We know we can't have our cake and eat it, too. We know that we cannot impose a carbon tax that kills jobs and destroys our economy and creates a huge deficit, then promise to invest into a project that will combat climate change. We believe that we should talk with stakeholders to discuss a practical and more effective plan of action to reduce emissions instead of rushing into failed ideological experiments that hurt ordinary Albertans.

If the Trudeau carbon tax goes through, Albertans will lose out on 6,000 jobs, \$2.4 billion, see increased food costs and other goods rise, see prices rise to heat their homes and get to work, and less investment will be made in our province, making us less competitive in Canada and around the world. This job-killing carbon tax is a one-size-fits-all solution that doesn't work for every province. The federal government fails to recognize that Alberta's oil and gas industries continue to be global leaders in emissions reductions. But, again, they don't care about Albertans and would rather buy foreign oil that isn't up to the same environmental standards that Albertan producers produce right here at home.

We were elected with a mandate to create jobs, growth, and economic diversification, to help Albertans get back to work and make life easier for families who need to pay their bills, and our first piece of legislation repealed was the carbon tax. Now we face this federal carbon tax. Our government will challenge the federal government's attempts to impose a carbon tax on Alberta. If the Trudeau government will not listen to Albertans' concerns, we will make them listen.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), I see no one.

Therefore, going back to the main motion, I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo standing.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just rise to speak to the motion before us and make three short points. A part of this motion says, "the government in its efforts to challenge the federal government's attempts to impose a carbon tax on Alberta, which this Assembly views as a clear violation of provincial jurisdiction, including the launching of a constitutional challenge if necessary." I don't agree with that. That's one of the points that I want to make. The other is the positive impacts of the former climate leadership plan. And the last is the need to take meaningful action on climate change.

With regard to the first point, the constitutional challenge, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal has already ruled on this, and Premier Moe has lost in the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal with regard to that challenge. The Court of Appeal underlined the fact that the federal government does have the constitutional jurisdiction to impose a carbon tax. As my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-

Clareview talked about earlier, it is something that we already know the outcome of, Mr. Speaker, and it is something that we'll lose at when we challenge.

We know that Ontario is in the same place of challenging the constitutionality of the carbon tax, and I anticipate that a similar decision will be the outcome of that challenge. We will be wasting taxpayers' money in that challenge, Mr. Speaker. The constitutionality is clear. Though this government may want to challenge, it likely will turn out the same result as the previous challenge in Saskatchewan and subsequent ones that are coming up. That's the first point.

The positive impacts of the carbon levy that was in place in Alberta are many, Mr. Speaker. They include the greening of the energy grid, including solar panels and wind energy, and those transitions to a greener energy electricity grid are positive, of course, for this province for the reduction of emissions that occurs.

Another important area, Mr. Speaker, that the carbon levy was helping to fuel is to work on the capture of methane, so working with organizations, companies who were looking to capture methane because that gas is highly problematic, even more so than CO<sub>2</sub>. It would leak from well sites and wells, and it would accumulate in our atmosphere and cause the degradation of our atmosphere faster than CO<sub>2</sub> but was happening at a pretty high rate. Anything that works to capture methane is a positive thing.

9:10

Making innovations happen across our economy in the oil and gas sector industries. The carbon levy was funding those kinds of innovations happening as well, Mr. Speaker. Those were positive in terms of our world-leading oil and gas sector and making sure that even more carbon is taken out of the barrel.

The rebating of a portion of the levy back to low- and middle-income Albertans. In the case of low-income Albertans fully offsetting their carbon price cost was something that mitigated the cost for those individuals, whether they were in rural Alberta or they were in urban Alberta.

We know, of course, that energy efficiencies occurred in many public buildings and other institutions across this province as a result of the investment in those institutions and public buildings and other places. Municipalities were working with Energy Efficiency Alberta as well as the government of Alberta to do more, Mr. Speaker. We heard about the town of Raymond earlier today, that is going to be net zero in terms of its electrical energy use, and that's not something that wasn't supported in part by the carbon levy that was previously in place. It was supported in part. The whole movement towards reducing the carbon footprint, whether you're a town, whether you're an individual like myself or any of us, is positive action towards our climate and climate change.

Mr. Speaker, that's the second thing I wanted to talk about. The third thing, of course, is a need to take meaningful action. Taking meaningful action on climate change is something we do for ourselves, of course, in this province and people currently, but we do it for future generations. Many leading experts in the oil and gas sector, economists, and others have endorsed a price on carbon. The TIER approach that the government has taken will capture less of the economy's emissions in Alberta than the previous government's climate leadership plan. The TIER approach is really a step down. It's not as broad based in terms of the emissions that it addresses.

I just want to, of course, go back to the leading experts in the oil and gas sector and economists who believe that the action of a price on carbon is the right way to go, Mr. Speaker. I know the government would say: well, we're putting a price on carbon. Again, I would argue that it's less of a job and fewer emissions are being captured as a result of the work that the government is doing.

A couple of years ago people like the president and CEO of Cenovus said, "We fully support Alberta taking a leadership role in addressing climate change and we believe one of the best ways to do that is through an economy-wide carbon levy as well as by supporting the development of carbon-reducing technologies." How I would interpret what the government today is doing and what Mr. Ferguson was talking about is – of course, I can't put words in his mouth, but we had more of an economy-wide carbon levy, and the government is taking a lesser approach to all of that.

Mr. Hornby, vice-president of government affairs and policy of GE Canada said, "GE supports carbon pricing and continued investment in researching new technologies and digital tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions." They have a 10-year ecostrategy.

Mr. Speaker, going on here to someone we all know, Mr. Steve Williams, CEO of Suncor. I think he's just in the final days of his tenure at Suncor, and he'll be stepping down. We all, of course, wish him the best of luck in his retirement if that's what he chooses to do. It probably won't be. Mr. Williams said:

We think climate change is happening. We believe a broad-based carbon price is the right answer and we're pleased to see the Alberta government . . .

The previous Alberta government, not this one.

. . . is taking steps to implement [a] climate leadership [plan].

Those aren't words I hear from the other side, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Williams was talking about the previous NDP government, that was here from 2015 to 2019.

Somebody we all know, of course, is Professor Bev Dahlby. He's a distinguished fellow in tax and economic growth at the School of Public Policy and a professor of economics at the University of Calgary. Mr. Dahlby says:

Smart carbon policy means pricing carbon broadly . . .

Again I'd argue that the government is not doing that.

. . . and this is exactly what Alberta's new carbon levy does.

Our carbon levy.

Carbon pricing is the most cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and Alberta's strengthened policy will help the province support a strong economy and environment into the future.

He goes on and on and on, and of course talks about some of the things I talked about.

By investing in rebates for affected families, tax cuts for small business . . .

I omitted saying that and the positive impacts. It's still happening, Mr. Speaker, at \$185 million a year, from 3 to 2 per cent.

. . . green infrastructure and clean technology the Government of Alberta has done just that.

I won't belabour the fact except to say that I think that the meaningful action that we were taking was in the right direction.

I will make one final comment. You know, I probably spend too much time online looking at social media, but – there it is – I think many people here do the same thing. I saw something. I'm smiling because it's so silly, but it upsets a lot of people. I think it's a new bumper sticker, and I'll just say what it says. It says: let it idle; support the patch. Mr. Speaker, that seems like a really wasteful thing to do. You're wasting gas when you do that, you're creating emissions, including CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and SO<sub>x</sub>. You're not doing anything positive for the environment, all in the view that you're helping out the oil patch, the oil and gas sector.

Well, I think, reading from some of the leaders in the oil and gas sector, some of the CEOs and presidents, that they don't see things like that. They don't see that we need to support the oil and gas sector by wasting fuel and creating emissions needlessly. I think what we need to do, Mr. Speaker, is to act smarter, take deliberate



action today, work across our economy, and continue to think about future generations and those people who will take over after us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe I saw the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women standing.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond. I don't know where to start, actually. There have been so many things that have been said, but in response to what the hon. member said and especially with regard to solar panels, wind, and all of these kinds of things, the thing that the opposition keeps forgetting is that when the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine, we still need to make sure that we keep the lights on. More than that, there's an entire double build that happens behind all of these projects that's not taken into consideration when all of these statistics are put forward about how much the REPs cost, what we came in on for wind. None of that is incorporated into any of the amounts of money that we understand are being put forward to taxpayers and what comes off their bill and why it's costing this much.

9:20

Another thing I'd like to bring up, too, is that if you consider, in the previous government, when the previous minister of environment would go overseas to talk about Canada and Canadian energy, it was interesting to me that all of the feedback that came back was about the tar sands and dirty oil and how it was that we produced here instead of standing up for an industry that actually promotes the entire country, about unity, about making sure that we are talking about an incredible energy. Not only to mention that, but on top of that, if we want to talk about leadership or what is responsible, do you know what's responsible? The human rights of other countries that don't have access to our oil and gas as a result of ideological choices from governments that have shut down our prosperity in this country.

Let's look at that for just a minute. I was in India last year, and I'll be going back this year. The air index quality in Hyderabad on any given day is probably well over 195. That's particulates in the air. Part of that has to do with a couple of different things. One of them is that they rely on solid energy – coal, heating fuel, kerosene – but also they use cow dung, the impoverished people of the world. If you ever get a chance, you pick it up, you make a patty out of it, you put it on the wall, you dry it, and then you burn it to feed your family. Do you want to understand what's polluting the world? That's part of it. You want to know why that's happening? Because we can't get our energy to those countries to take women and children out of poverty. That's called energy poverty. Then on top of that, we have carbon leakage from other industries around the world that don't even have close to the human rights that we have here, promoted by the government, by antipipeline activists.

Let's take a look at what actually is going on. You want to talk about responsible energy? That's our province. We are the leaders of that. You want to talk about a few other things? One of the members had mentioned about arrogance. Let's talk about that for a minute. What about when the Premier told rural families to take the bus?

**Mr. Kenney:** Former Premier.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Sorry. Pardon me. When the former Premier told Albertans to take the bus.

What about when the former Premier talked about – I can talk about, in my old riding of Chestermere-Rocky View, the Bears Den.

Because of the cumulative actions of this government of carbon tax, minimum wage increases, all of a sudden the people that ate at the Bears Den were spending \$80 on their meal, but the people who worked there had to go to the food bank. It was absolutely disrespectful and didn't even take into consideration that the carbon tax and all of the policies that the previous government had put on had impacted restaurants, small businesses. You want to talk about businesses and the job-killing carbon tax? I can tell you of several small businesses in Chestermere that were not able to continue on because of the cumulative number of policy decisions that actually shut down small business, which is one of the fabrics of this province. So let's talk about that.

You want to talk about pulling people out of poverty? I'd really like India to be a winner. The Member for Sherwood Park was talking about Prime Minister Modi. Prime Minister Modi has a big problem on his hands with actual pollution in that country. When there's an inversion, people can't walk outside. They cannot function. Yet we can't get our incredible, responsible resource development to those countries because we have governments that would rather use ideological statements like social licence. Because suddenly somehow that's going to make our product better, when, actually, the promotion should have been there.

Where was the former Premier when C-69 was in Parliament in Ottawa or, for that matter, C-48? Both of them are dependent on each other. If the shippers can't get their quantities, it doesn't matter how many pipelines you have if you don't have people who are able to accept the amount of product that is going to go overseas.

**The Acting Speaker:** I believe I saw the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat standing for the call.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government knows that taking job-killing policies and taxes imposed on us from another government that is hypocritical with their own ecological footprint is wrong. The Trudeau government imposes unjust taxes and overreaching policies that he himself does not even follow. The Prime Minister should know that the most effective way to make a point, especially regarding a very important and controversial topic such as the environment, is by leading by example. The Trudeau government is all over the place with their environmental policies and impositions.

First, they want to pass bills C-48 and C-69, both of which are bills that hinder Alberta's ability to transport our natural resources. As we know, Justin Trudeau's government approved TMX, and then they delayed for over a year. Next, to gain votes from the environmentalists, he announced that Canada will ban single-use plastics by 2021. In his bumbling he stated, and I will quote: uh, we, uh, have recently switched to drinking, uh, plastic bottles out of, uh, water out of, uh, when we have water bottles, uh, out of plastic, uh, sorry, away from plastic, uh, towards paper, uh, like, drink boxed water bottle sorts of things. Wow. He could not answer a simple question, Mr. Speaker, about how he will cut down on his plastic water bottle use. [interjection] I'm getting there, Premier; don't you worry.

For his information, drinking tap water or using a reusable water bottle would suffice. Then, after his announcement, a report came out that the Prime Minister's family spends over \$300 on plastic bottles. That's a month.

But wait; there's more. While taking a personal vacation out of the country, we know that the Prime Minister flies back and forth on his fancy government plane to take press release photos and the occasional selfie. As I recall, the plane is not environmentally friendly. It actually pumps about as much carbon dioxide into the

atmosphere as the average Canadian in a whole year. But remember: the carbon tax is all about emissions.

In all seriousness, we understand that the Prime Minister needs to meet with Canadians. That is part of his job. But what, then, do you say to Canadians who have a carbon-intensive reality? How do we just expect that someone else will make the needed reductions? We need our leaders to take responsibility and not to be hypocrites when it comes to our environment. How can Canadians expect to take the Prime Minister's policies seriously if he himself is not doing anything, if he still is drinking boxed water bottle sorts of things to the tune of \$300 a month?

Canadians are so sick and tired of hearing about hypocritical actions from the federal and the past NDP government. They voted for a government that is going to produce effective environmental solutions that won't kill jobs and the economy. Trudeau's cash-grab carbon tax is a one-size-fits-all solution that, frankly, does not work for Alberta. We have already seen the negative impacts that the NDP carbon tax did to the economy and jobs.

Not only is this a bad economic plan; it's unconstitutional. The federal government tax is a clear invasion of Alberta's jurisdiction. It is all economic pain for no environmental gain. This federal tax grab will only punish Albertans for heating their homes and driving to work. We are keeping our commitment to defend Alberta taxpayers. A \$50-a-tonne carbon tax would sacrifice over 6,000 new jobs and take almost \$2.4 billion out of Albertans' pockets. The federal government's carbon tax would also increase the cost of food and other goods for Alberta families at the checkout and make us less competitive in Canada and around the world.

Our government has worked hard and kept our commitment to scrap the previous government's carbon tax. Now we have to work even harder to challenge the federal government's attempts to impose a carbon tax on Alberta. Albertans do not get a say in the matter. According to the opposition and their close friend and personal ally Justin Trudeau the carbon tax will not destroy jobs or hurt our economy, but they would rather have a federal carbon tax imposed on us that would do the exact same thing. It's a no-win for Alberta.

Our government recognizes that we need to strike a balance between economic growth and environmental protection while achieving real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Our election platform, that received a massive and historic mandate, made it clear to all Albertans that we're committed to a practical approach that achieves real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. There's a better way for us to reduce these emissions than an impractical and unconstitutional tax grab. No one in this nation or in this Assembly should make the mistake of equating climate action with the carbon tax ever again.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I believe I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora standing.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks. I definitely don't plan on taking all five minutes, so I imagine there will be time for other members. I want to say, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat that when other Conservative women attacked the Prime Minister – and I'm not a defender of the Prime Minister; I think many people probably know that I am likely one of the last people to defend him – when people attacked him for his stutter and speech impediment, it reflected poorly upon those Conservative women, who were set up to do that. To the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat: I think she had many really valuable things to say in her comments. I think that attacking any individual for a speech impediment or a stutter is unbecoming of them. Certainly, when you're switching languages, I imagine that it's even more difficult.

9:30

What I wanted to say is that I think the member had many things of note to say. I think that sometimes when people are pushing members to say things, attacking individuals and potentially impediments, it makes it problematic for hearing the message. I know that some people are having a hard time hearing my message now. Certainly, I cede the floor to others. But I just wanted to say that to the hon. member.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, there are still four minutes under 29(2)(a). I see the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat standing.

**Ms Glasgo:** Yeah. I think I still have a little bit of time. While I appreciate the comments from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, I will not take lessons from a member who referred to Albertans such as my dad and the people who work in the oil and gas industry as sewer rats. I'm sorry.

Quite frankly, I'm actually really glad that she mentioned Conservative women. We are strong, and what this government seems to have a problem with is strong Conservative women. We see that now, right now in this House, and we see that every day with the Minister of Education. I would just like to say for the record, Mr. Speaker, that I would never make fun of someone for a speech impediment.

This government and this Prime Minister have shown over and over again that he is unable to represent the views of Albertans, and that is why we are challenging him on this federal carbon tax. It is nothing more than a tax grab. I will stand up on the record every single day of the week, and that's repealing the carbon tax and giving Albertans what they asked for in the last election.

**The Acting Speaker:** Two and a half minutes remaining under 29(2)(a).

Not seeing anyone, are there any other hon. members who would like to speak to the bill? I believe I see that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition and Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has the floor.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to spend a great deal of time speaking on this motion. I did have a chance to put a lot of my thoughts about the government's resistance to taking meaningful action on climate change on the record when we discussed Bill 1. So I won't do that.

However, as I've said before, there is a growing pattern that we have seen with the Premier and his frequency of saying things which independent opportunities to verify the facts would suggest simply aren't true. So having reviewed his comments from the Blues, I felt the need to get up and just respond to a few things that the Premier said, which were utterly false, and simply to correct the record there. Of course, I'm sure we have to allow – because it's the Blues. Perhaps the Blues inadvertently got it wrong. Nonetheless, going with what we saw there, I think it's important to make a couple of points, about eight or nine. But I'll try to be brief.

First of all, of course, the Premier began with his constant sort of note that somehow we ran in the election in 2015 without talking about what we would do with respect to climate change or without saying to Albertans that we had a very full plan and every intention to combat climate change seriously, and that's exactly what we did. We went off to get a significant amount of expert advice, and we consulted with many, many Albertans. We ultimately were in a position to have key leaders in the oil industry who were definitely not NDP supporters, environmental leaders, community leaders,

aboriginal leaders, indigenous leaders all come together to support the plan that we finally developed after the election but with the advice of a large amount of expertise that we didn't have available to us beforehand.

But make no mistake, Mr. Speaker; we were very clear in the last election that we did intend to take climate change seriously. We did believe that climate change was a real and a pressing threat to everybody in the world, let alone Albertans, and that we had a responsibility to do our part. So when the Premier makes statements like that there was not even a hint that we would be doing something like that, that is simply not correct.

Now, the second thing that I found particularly striking in terms of its disconnect with reality was the ridiculous assertions made by the Premier that the carbon levy and our system of pricing carbon was somewhat regressive. On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The decision of this government to cancel carbon pricing is itself a regressive decision as far as who benefits and who loses.

The reality is that the way the carbon pricing system works – any economist, anybody who studies these things will tell you that wealthy people pay more. That's the way it works because things that burn carbon, on average, are things that wealthy people are more likely to use more. So if you're in a 3,000-square-foot house, you will pay more of a carbon price than you would if you were in a 700-square-foot apartment. As a result, people with more money paid more.

By cancelling the carbon levy, what we are doing is giving a regressive tax break, one that the rich get a bigger benefit from not only as a percentage but in terms of a global amount. This is further enhanced, of course, by the fact that we did in fact, contrary to statements that I saw the Premier make earlier today, put in place rebates which were very much designed to support low-income Albertans. As a result, low-income Albertans in many cases actually came out ahead with our carbon pricing scheme. We were very intentional about putting it in place that way because we were very concerned about making sure that we adopted a progressive approach. So it is absolutely mathematically incorrect what the Premier suggested, and it's really important that the people of Alberta hear the facts.

Now, the third thing that I'd like to point out is that the Premier has taken to repeating another falsehood, which is this notion that we had decided that should we have ever raised the price of carbon to \$40 or \$50 a tonne, which was a very conditional position on our part all along, we had decided that there would be no rebates going along with that. In fact, that was not true, Mr. Speaker. That decision was never made, so I know we didn't say it because we hadn't made the decision. Yet the Premier insists on carrying on and making this claim, knowing that it's not correct. It's really a thing that I wish he would stop doing because it is not correct. It is a false statement. It is really becoming quite overwhelmingly the comfort level of this Premier with respect to that particular strategy of debate.

Now, another thing that the Premier spoke about was a couple of examples that he suggested where the carbon levy caused huge bills for certain organizations, and he talked about those in his comments today. He talked about suggestions that the Calgary Food Bank had a \$50,000 bill one year because of the carbon levy. Interestingly, during the election some rigorous folks in the media – there weren't a lot of them; there were not very many folks in the media with enough resources to do this kind of thing – set about to do fact checks both in relation to things that those of us in our party said as well as things that people in the UCP said. With respect to the \$50,000 bill at the Calgary Food Bank they subsequently spoke to the executive director at the Calgary Food Bank, who said, well, no; actually, the UCP is completely wrong; that was not true; we never

had a bill like that. It was about less than 25 per cent of the number that the UCP likes to use in its talking points.

Maybe it was an innocent mistake by the UCP, but I would think, Mr. Speaker, that when you have the executive director of the very organization that you are referring to coming out and saying, "No; actually, you are inflating this number by over 400 per cent," that at the very least, I mean, you might actually apologize and say: "Oops; my bad. Sorry. I guess I shouldn't have said that." But even if you don't do that, you wouldn't then get up in the House and speak on *Hansard* and get it on the record again. You know full well that it was wrong. You know that you just inflated the number by over 400 per cent. But there's the Premier happily marching in, saying things that he knows are not true. It just is quite overwhelming, Mr. Speaker, because I honestly have never seen this in politics before. I truly haven't.

9:40

I know I'm getting a little animated here, but I just, in my many years of watching politics – you may or may not know, but I actually was forced to start watching politics at the age of four, when my dad got involved. I was six when he got elected. Honestly, I literally had to watch it on TV once it started, played on TV. I mean, it was really a very tough childhood, Mr. Speaker. But what I will say is that through all that time, going back that far, I never saw anybody so loose with the facts, so willing to come into this building and put on the record things that they know not to be true. It's really disappointing.

Anyway, the next thing the Premier talked about was the bill paid by the CBE. Now, in that case, I think it was more or less accurate. But I think it's really important to put it in context. He talks about, "Oh, there was, you know, two or three million dollars that the CBE might have had to pay in carbon levy." And then he said, "Oh, well, you know, the school buses had to stop, and people were no longer getting to school, and kids would probably" – he didn't actually say, but the implication was that kids were walking 20 miles in the snow because they couldn't afford to run buses anymore.

Let's just be clear. The CBE has a \$1.4 billion budget. Even if the number is correct and their carbon levy cost came to \$3 million, that amounts to .2 per cent of their budget. More importantly, over the four years that our government was in power, we increased their budget by \$100 million, Mr. Speaker. So when we hear them say that because of the NDP buses suddenly screeched to a halt in Calgary, through the Calgary board of education, at the same time that we gave them \$100 million extra, well, that in itself is a little extra. I would say that the member needs to put his comments in context if he wants to be taken seriously.

Another thing the Premier talked about is the matter of carbon leakage. I want to say that that is actually a legitimate policy issue and one with which our government was very, very seized. I'm hopeful that some people over there, probably not the Premier but someone, did actually dig in a little bit to the many elements and complexities of the carbon leadership plan to know that, of course, we had extremely complex and dedicated efforts, consultation with industry, a great deal of economic analysis, more consultation, more analysis, all that kind of stuff, all of which was designed to come up with a very precise and sophisticated set of levers to ensure that we were able to protect trade-exposed industries from the consequences of the phenomena of carbon leakage. There was a lot of work done on that with a number of different trade-exposed industries.

It's just frustrating to see the Premier talk about carbon leakage and then not acknowledge the complexity and the depth of the work that was done to account for carbon leakage and to support industry to ensure that they did not suffer from the matter of the carbon

leakage in a way that would have made them unprofitable or unable to carry on business. There was a highly complex, sophisticated set of deliberations that went into ensuring that that was the case.

Another thing, as it relates – well, let me back up just a little bit. Another thing that I noted that the Premier talked about with respect to the climate leadership plan as a whole and the issue of the carbon tax is this whole argument that: well, other parts of the world create more emissions than we do; therefore, we don't have to do anything. Of course, you know, that form of analysis is a recipe for doing nothing, and heaven forbid that everybody did that. Then, presumably, only the single-biggest emitter would ever have any obligation to do anything, and the second-biggest emitter would never have an obligation to do anything, and the third-biggest emitter and so on, and so on, and so on.

The notion that we have no obligation because everybody else does so much more and we are such a small part of the world is an incredibly destructive, insular, parochial approach to things, and it is something that is better left a century ago. For those of us who are concerned about global issues and the increasing globalization of many, many issues in our world, we need to take this matter very, very seriously. I would go beyond sort of the morality of it all and just even talk about the economics of it. We cannot remove ourselves from a global economy. To approach it this way is just very selfish and negative and, ultimately, illogical. So I won't spend too much more time on that issue.

Of course, the Premier also loves to talk about the fact that, you know, on my eighth interview around Christmas I was unable to remember the exact amount of emissions that had been reduced by our climate leadership plan. Well, good on him. It was not my best interview, for sure. By all means, dine out on that if you like. But I would suggest that it's a bit disingenuous because, of course, the next day we made a point of actually providing that information. Indeed, the information is that we had already in that one year alone reduced emissions by about seven megatonnes, which, just to put that in context, is about one-third of the annual emissions of the whole province of Manitoba. So it's not nothing, Mr. Speaker. It's really quite a bit, actually. So that was there.

Now, was that entirely attributable to the tax as opposed to other elements in our climate leadership plan? It's hard to say. The Premier tries to suggest: oh, it's because you shut down the economy. Well, not really. I think that probably a good part of it had to do with the acceleration of the coal phase-out. But even that, Mr. Speaker, was enabled by the funds that went into the carbon levy, because we were able to ensure a just transition and also a transition that provided a minimum level of investor certainty. So that's what was done with the proceeds of the carbon pricing system, that's what enabled the acceleration of the coal phase-out, and that is probably the single biggest contributor to the seven megatonne reduction in that particular year.

The other thing that I would like to talk about just a little bit goes back to this issue of sort of intellectual honesty when we talk about things in this House. I note that it was referenced in the Premier's conversation about the climate leadership plan. Also, though, it's something that they certainly like to say a lot, a lot, a lot, which is where they make the suggestion that the carbon levy is somehow the cause of the significant job losses that were experienced in Alberta. That, of course, is ridiculous.

What we do know is that the price of oil went from about \$140 a barrel down to \$29. We know that the energy industry itself went into a massive amount of restructuring, which it would have done anyway, to increase efficiency and further shed jobs and probably not bring them back ever. We also know that the U.S. oil and gas market changed dramatically. We also know that our ability to move our product also became significantly constricted. All of

these things – actually, I've described them in the past as like a slow car crash that we could see coming for about the last 10 years, mostly while those guys were at the wheel, and that is the primary reason why we saw these significant job losses and restructuring. It's a little bit like, going back to the CBE example, suggesting that a \$3 million carbon price on a \$1.4 billion budget is why the CBE suddenly can't find enough buses to move people around the city.

9:50

It's ridiculous, Mr. Speaker – certainly, that's exactly what that assertion is – and it's illogical. It's not based on the facts, and there's not an economist in the world that would ever suggest that our carbon levy is the reason why the jobs that the Premier constantly refers to being lost were lost because it's simply not, and he knows it. I think he's sufficiently well read to know that he is, once again, playing fast and loose with the facts. What he doesn't, of course, like to talk about is that for two years during our government's tenure we actually had the fastest growing economy in the country. From the depths of the recession in 2016 to now we've actually created over 100,000 jobs. I know that the facts are, as they used to say, inconvenient. I think they're more than inconvenient. I think they are kind of hostile to them. I think we've moved beyond inconvenience.

The other thing that I would like to talk about just a little bit, though, is that the motion itself refers to many things. There are actually some things in the motion that I don't disagree with, but what makes it difficult for me to support the motion is that it says that we all have to link arms and say that the carbon tax was absolutely bad for all Albertans. I'm afraid that I just can't quite get there, Mr. Speaker. Unlike what the member opposite suggests, that somehow we don't accept what Albertans said in the last election, that's not actually true. I've actually said very clearly on the record that I get that Albertans weren't big fans of the carbon tax, but I also believe that they are actually big fans of doing something to address the hazards and the risks of climate change. I don't think that they're in anywhere near the level of denial that the members of the UCP are.

Either way, though, what I will say is that there has been a tremendous amount of misrepresentation by the government at every opportunity in every setting in every community all the time about what was going on with the climate leadership plan. Indeed, I saw that, unfortunately, extend into the remarks by the Premier tonight. This was not going into a slush fund. That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. The climate leadership plan was constrained by legislation, and the funds associated with the climate leadership plan were very much dedicated to certain projects. One was funding the 33 per cent drop in the small-business tax. Another was the rebates to low- and middle-income families. Another was for investing and incenting renewable energy, primarily renewable energy in the production of electricity for all Albertans on a commercial and utility-based scale, something that has of course generated tremendous levels of economic activity and investment interest in the province of Alberta.

Now, as an interesting side note, Mr. Speaker, I note that the Premier made that comment: well, I don't have any problems if my neighbour wants to put a solar panel on his roof. To be clear, the whole solar panels on people's roofs thing was a very small element, a very small component, of what the climate leadership plan was paying for. Just to back up a little bit, you know, what he said was: bully for my neighbour if he wants to put a solar panel on his roof, but I don't want my dollars to go to it. Well, you know what? A couple of hundred years ago that's what people used to say: bully for my neighbour if he wants to pay for his own fire services, but I don't want my taxpayer dollars to go for that. You

know what ended up happening? If you didn't pay for your own fire services and then your house caught on fire – guess what? – your neighbour's did, too. It turns out that some things actually require people to pool their resources to do the best job on it. That's actually sort of the genesis of good governance.

Now, I know that for these folks over here, at the end of the day, it's not about creating jobs. It's not about supporting entrepreneurs. It's not about any of that. It's about making all the arguments they can, most of which are economically flawed and have been proven to be so over and over and over again. It's really just about shrinking government so that they can pull it back from those who need it most in order to give money back to those who need it least. That is ultimately the fundamental basis of right-wing politics. That's what they're here to do, and that's what they are doing here. But I will say that climate change is actually something that we need to pull together on. If we all live in our little bubbles, there's going to be a problem in the long term.

Let me just go back to the other things that the levy paid for. We have incenting renewable energy on a commercial-wide basis, we have the small-business tax cut, we have a progressive rebate, we have the coal phase-out, and we have a significant investment in innovation funding. The members opposite keep talking as though they are the only ones that ever thought of investing in technology and innovation funding. Quite honestly, the level of resources that were dedicated to our energy industry, to support their bump in innovation funding and reducing the amount of carbon in a barrel, was significant. It was \$1.4 billion over five years. That is a huge bump from what was being directed to the energy industry before.

When the Premier says ridiculous things like he did in question period today, that we have never done anything to support the energy industry and that we hate the energy industry, which is actually something he said, which was, again, another one of those "Why be bothered with the facts?" kinds of statements, in fact, what we did and what the carbon levy was going towards was significantly supporting industry's work that they were already doing but needed more work to do in order to stay ahead of what was happening in the rest of the world and ensure that our product remained the best in terms of taking carbon out of the barrel.

Another thing, of course, that the carbon levy was funding was the LRT. We've had lots of talks about the green line, the LRT here in Edmonton, something that we know takes tens of thousands of cars off the road and, of course, reduces emissions significantly.

The final thing that the climate levy was designed to fund was adaptation efforts. There is a plethora of adaptation efforts that need to be going on across our province which are not happening right now, Mr. Speaker, because we have a shortage of funds. Whether it's accelerating significantly the FireSmart initiatives around rural communities throughout the province, particularly smaller indigenous communities but also other fairly large communities that haven't been able to fully fund the costs of FireSmart, whether we're talking about flood mitigation – and I know the current Minister of Transportation likes to confound the questions of flood mitigation on the Elbow River versus flood mitigation on the Bow, but in fact those are two different projects, and they both need to happen.

Work is, as he's correctly identified, because of the regulatory hurdles – and I'll be the first to admit that that's a very frustrating process – slowly moving ahead with the Springbank, which is focused on the Elbow. There is a whole bunch of work that has to go on with the Bow. It's a whole other financial commitment, and there is no plan afoot. You might have been able to pay for it through the climate leadership plan, but that's been cancelled. Quite frankly, the people of Calgary need that to go ahead, and all we have from the minister responsible for it are sneaky little efforts to

confound the issue and pretend he's talking about one effort when, in fact, he's talking about an entirely different one. Frankly, the people of Calgary deserve far better.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The point I make about describing these programs, Mr. Speaker, is simply this, that the carbon levy was not ever dedicated to an alleged slush fund. It was entirely dedicated to matters that were geared towards reducing emissions or supporting adaptation as required because of the risks associated with climate change. That's all it ever was, and when he calls it a slush fund, once again he is playing fast and loose with the facts, which, again, is something he really needs to stop doing. We know, because they have now cancelled the carbon levy and they've paired that with a 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway – read subsidy – to large, profitable corporations asking not a single solitary thing in return except maybe an invite to Brett Wilson's parties. I don't know. The reality is that what we have here, then, is a situation where we don't have an answer to the problems and the questions that are facing Albertans as a result of the threats that are presented by climate change, whether they're the economic threat of losing market access, whether they are the air, land, and water threat just in terms of the degradation of our environment, or whether they are the extreme weather threats that require significant adaptations.

10:00

All those things are things we must address, that we now don't have the tools to address because the government has eliminated both the carbon levy as well as 4 and a half billion dollars in the form of subsidies to wealthy, profitable corporations in return for – wait for it – nothing. Because of that, that part of the motion that is put before us is not something that we can support. That's the difficulty that we have.

Now, on the flip side, the concerns around whether we may or may not end up with inappropriate strolls into provincial jurisdiction, those are issues that, honestly, we could potentially consider supporting. But I think quite clearly we know that this motion was not actually constructed to generate or to secure our support; quite the opposite. It was structured to play a little political game so they could, you know, make it impossible for us to support it and then play games of running around and telling everybody: "Oh, look. The NDP didn't support this thing."

In summary, what I will say is this: there were a number of factual inaccuracies in the comments made by the Premier today.

Two, there are a number of things that are – or there were until very recently – paid for by the proceeds of the carbon levy for which there is now no source of income, and therefore we are not entirely sure how they will be paid unless these folks want to, you know, actually get somewhere close to the alleged \$100 billion in debt they also talk about even though we all know that's not true either. Or, conversely, just not do those things. Because there are important things that are paid for, we need to outline what they were. They are not there anymore, therefore we have difficulty with that element of the motion.

Thirdly, I will say that we, too, share concerns around a little bit of overreach on the part of the federal government, so that is worthy of a measured and balanced discussion. Now, obviously, that's not what's going on here because all of this is really about, you know, the Premier's desire to relitigate the 2015 federal election. I find it very ironic that he refers to us as being angry about losing the 2019 legislation when in fact all of Alberta has been forced to suffer through his anger about the 2015 federal election, but anyhow.

Because of that, I suspect it is likely the case – and as much as we've enjoyed participating in this conversation given the brand

new opportunity provided by the standing orders that were forced through this House by the UCP – that we may consider availing ourselves of the ability to abstain from this particular motion. We shall see what we ultimately do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this motion, and I look forward to hearing what others might have to say. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has risen to ask a brief question or make a comment.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, listening to all the debates, really I want to have a chance to share my first-hand experience not only going through the campaigns here but also to reflect lots of life experience that I lived from being born in Communist China. I lived the first half of my adult life there and experienced how the system, the policies, impact people's lives. Then in the latter part of my life coming to Canada to witness the beauty of democracy, the freedom, and so forth. I want to tie it to my question of how the NDP's carbon tax is so out of touch with reality, based on ideological differences but causing all kinds of harm.

Let me begin by saying that some of you have probably heard about the Cultural Revolution back in China. It's a period of time when people lived on high ideals. It all sounds wonderful. I was born and raised in a time that we were told we were the richest nation, because we don't have anything, but we have everything. Everything the country has belongs to you. I vividly remember my first 20-some years of experience. I worked hard, you know, I studied hard. I was picked by the country as one of the model citizens to visit Japan when the country finally had a chance to open the door.

I remember that first trip to Tokyo. I kept looking for the 80 per cent of people – according to what we were told, the capitalist society is only good because a small handful of people are living off the large majority. There's only a handful of people who are rich, and the large majority is supposed to be poor. So I was vividly looking for: where are the large majority? Everybody I encountered, I felt like they were all 10 times, 50 times more prosperous than I was, and I came representing the new generation of China, supposed to be the higher end of the class there. I really struggled to the deep core with that, but within months I realized that lots of the stuff that we were led to believe was not true. What happened is that we were so out of touch. Within the circle when you close your eyes, when you don't interact with the world, you think you're the best, but when you have a chance to compare – I went out and I realized that as a nation, as a society we'd been falling behind so terribly because we were so out of touch.

Now, let me talk about the carbon tax and my sort of experience on this. When I campaigned, people said: "Jason, you're a social worker. You're supposed to be more on the left side. Why are you in the Conservative government?" So I told them my personal story. I said, "I reject it when people have sort of stereotypical kinds of thinking like that." I told them about my story.

I also said, "I drive a hybrid Toyota." I said: "You see, it's right here in front of me. I reject people who say that Conservatives are not caring about the environment. I care about the environment." But I said: "Ten years ago I looked at the same car. It's a Toyota Camry. They had two choices; you had the hybrid one, you had the normal one. I chose the normal one because the technology at that time was not mature enough. My calculations and my estimate was that I would spend more time fixing this technology rather than save anything. But 10 years later when I revisited it, when I traded in my

old car, getting this new one, my calculation was that for \$3,000 more, I will save. Within three years the \$3,000 will be back. For the rest of the 15 years that I drive: not only good for me, good for the environment.

I show people now, and I say: "You know, you talk about carbon tax. When we live in an environment like Alberta, Canada, you have no choice; you're going to have to heat your house and drive your car." There is no impact to the behaviour of how the tax will influence how you consume the energy here, but there is a difference. I said, "For Conservatives we have very practical proposals of how we address this." I hear the Premier in this House talk about LNGs, if we supply those to China . . . [A timer sounded] Did I run out of time?

**The Speaker:** You're out of time, yes. My apologies. Your time for debate has expired on 29(2)(a).

I believe the Government House Leader, perhaps, is rising to make a motion.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I am, Mr. Speaker. Man, you have, like, Speaker senses. I would like to move pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2), I wish to advise the Assembly – actually, I don't want to move a motion. Sorry. I just want to advise the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting tomorrow, Wednesday, June 26, 2019.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, if you will allow me, I will move one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

**The Speaker:** Well, the Government House Leader will know that unanimous consent would be required for that, so I will ask only one question.

[Unanimous consent granted]

10:10

## Government Motions

### Federal Carbon Tax (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very privileged and pleased to rise today to speak to Government Motion 21. The motion starts by saying, "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its support for the government in its efforts to challenge the federal government's attempts to impose a carbon tax on Alberta." I rise today to say that I am very pleased to speak to this motion and to speak in support of it.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that \$2.4 billion will be lost if the Trudeau government's carbon tax goes forward, and that much money could go to investments to create a whole lot of infrastructure in this province and to create jobs and investment into effective climate change solutions. Without a strong economy it's impossible to invest in alternative energy projects.

We saw from the previous government, Mr. Speaker, that imposing carbon taxes actually creates job losses. It produces a weak economy for Alberta, which, in turn, is going to halt many of the innovative projects that could be pursued. Projects such as solar or thermal power plants are not economically feasible without having a strong economy to support them. The job-killing carbon tax that the NDP government imposed: well, we know that it created a downturn that made it impossible for projects like Capital Power to be able to run.

We need, Mr. Speaker, to take proactive measures to be able to ensure that our economy is strong enough to fund and to run these types of projects. We need a responsible government that understands economics and that will create economic and

environmentally friendly plans to combat climate change. Now, much like the past NDP government, we know that the Trudeau government doesn't really understand economics and how the carbon tax is actually killing jobs in Alberta. They do not really understand that creating deficits and making Albertans pay out of their pockets is not going to solve the climate problem.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Albertans actually do care about the environment, but many of them don't want to be paying a carbon tax that is not effective. We should have a practical and an effective approach when combatting climate change, not a job-killing tax grab that simply punishes ordinary Albertans. Now, our government made a platform commitment to scrap the provincial carbon tax, and Albertans resoundingly supported this move during last April's election. Now that we've scrapped the provincial carbon tax, we have to challenge the federal one. Both will be ineffective ways to combat climate change.

We saw how our previous government drove our economy down and lost many jobs for Albertans. Homeless rates went up, so did crime. The carbon tax is not an effective way to combat climate change. It is just another way to punish Albertans. We punish Albertans for heating their homes, punish Albertans for taking their kids to hockey practice. It is not an efficient way of combatting climate change.

Our government was elected to fight for Albertans and to fight for their best interests. The Trudeau carbon tax . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon will have approximately 11 minutes remaining for his remarks after we vote on the appropriation bills.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** In accordance with Standing Order 64(5) the chair is required to put the question to the House on appropriation bills on the Order Paper for third reading.

#### Bill 5

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a third time]

#### Bill 6

#### Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a third time]

## Government Motions

### Federal Carbon Tax

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon if he has any additional remarks to make.

**Mr. Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to know that the government is going to have the money that it needs to continue serving the people of Alberta.

Thank you for letting me get back to my remarks. You know, our government was elected very clearly. It was elected to fight for Albertans' best interests. The Trudeau carbon tax is not in Alberta's best interests. It is just another way to impose the money-grabbing taxes that obviously have and will continue to kill our economy. Now, having a \$50-a-tonne tax would actually mean, Mr. Speaker,

losing about 6,000 new jobs. It would take \$2.4 billion out of Albertans' pockets. It's going to raise, as we can all see, all of us living in the real world that we live in, the costs of goods, it's going to raise the cost of food, it's going to increase the prices at the pumps, and it's going to make Alberta less competitive.

Our government will not allow the Trudeau government to impose their economy-killing carbon tax without a fight. We are not alone in our fight. We are not alone in our fight against this unjust carbon tax. We are not the only province fighting the federal government on this unconstitutional carbon tax. Alberta, as with the other provinces challenging the federal government, has the constitutional authority to make policy choices within our own jurisdiction. The federal government's carbon tax disrupts the balance of Canada's federation by undermining Alberta's exclusive constitutional powers to manage our own local undertakings, our own natural resources, the economy, and the greenhouse gas emission plans that we choose to put forward.

Our government is determined, Mr. Speaker, to be working on a climate change plan that strikes a balance between economic growth and environmental protection and actually achieves real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We should not have to sacrifice jobs or economic development and growth in order to reduce emissions and to combat climate change. We know that there are better solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the time tonight to talk just a little bit about some of the things that are going on in my constituency that do exactly that, that actually create jobs, that promote economic development while at the same time reducing emissions and combating climate change. In the Drayton Valley-Devon constituency it looks very likely that by this new year we will have the first deep-well geothermal project in the history of the world, of anywhere on Planet Earth. We will have the first deep-well geothermal project that will produce electricity and heat from a geothermal loop. It will produce electricity without any carbon emissions while using abandoned and orphaned wells and while producing jobs for the drillers, for all of the people that are a part of my community that have traditionally been drilling for energy in oil and gas. They will now be drilling for geothermal electric energy. This is an example of working towards creating jobs, creating wealth, reducing carbon while working in the best interests of Albertans. I'm very excited, should all of the things come together, that this project will begin in the new year.

10:20

Mr. Speaker, I was talking today with a gentleman that works with Capital Power. He phoned me up – and we had a conversation – to tell me that they are now as a part of the Genesee power plant going to be mixing natural gas with coal and that they will be able to keep many of the jobs, almost all of the jobs, at the Westmoreland Coal plant that has traditionally supported the Genesee power plant. Rather than getting rid of all of those jobs because of some ideological greenhouse initiative, they are going to be using technology and they're going to be using Alberta common sense so that when natural gas is the best alternative for producing electricity, they'll use natural gas. When in the winter natural gas is really expensive, they'll be able to use coal, and when they decide to use both, they'll use both. What a practical, Alberta way of ensuring that we are – and at the same time they'll be reducing their emissions by about 30 per cent. This is how you address climate change. This is how you address being environmentally responsible, where you produce jobs, you produce wealth, you use the technology that's available, and you support the environment at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that I was contacted by the very people that came to the previous NDP government and were asked

to help them put forward the PACE program. They sat down with me and they suggested to me that when they were talking with the previous government about implementing the PACE program, which would allow house owners to be able to put in solar panels and windows that would be more thermally capable of reducing carbon emissions and keeping houses warmer, they would be able to produce that same program not through government subsidies and dependent upon the carbon tax incentives, but, rather, they could produce that same PACE program completely privately, without government incentives, so that we get the same environmental gain without the pain to the Alberta taxpayer's wallet. What a unique idea.

Mr. Speaker, the point of our speech here tonight is that we believe that a carbon tax provides a whole lot of pain without any environmental gain, that the Trudeau carbon tax is no better and no different than the carbon tax that the NDP put forward on us, and that we can move forward in a way that we know provides better solutions. Our platform makes it clear that we're committed to a practical approach that achieves real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. But we want to make it clear to Albertans that our government does not believe that climate action equals a carbon tax. Our government is going to ensure that we fight for Alberta's best interests and that we find a better way to reduce emissions than this impractical and unconstitutional tax grab.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for those wishing to bring a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview on the main motion.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm standing today, of course, against Government Motion 21. Certainly, the current UCP government is talking about wanting to challenge the federal government regarding the carbon tax, possibly as far as a constitutional challenge in the courts. We know that the government of Saskatchewan has already made this constitutional challenge and that they have lost. The UCP government following through on this court challenge is a waste of time and resources. Certainly, for financial reasons it doesn't make sense to move forward on Government Motion 21.

It also makes no sense to move forward on Government Motion 21 for environmental reasons. We all know that climate change is real, Mr. Speaker. We know that through many reports. One is the UN report, that was recently released, that says that we've got 12 years to do something or else it's too late. We've heard recently about the Canadian Arctic permafrost, that it's melting 70 years sooner than was anticipated previously. Each year we know more species are becoming extinct. Each year natural disasters caused by human-made climate change are increasing, from fires to floods. We know that first-hand here in Alberta, from the Fort McMurray wildfire to flooding in southern Alberta. These are just a few examples.

We also hear repeatedly from the UCP government that there are no results from the NDP's climate leadership plan. Certainly, the Leader of the Official Opposition spoke about this and did identify, of course, that that is not true. We know that it has made and continues to make an impact, a positive one. Edmonton, which is where my riding of Edmonton-Riverview is situated, actually just released a report about the decrease in air pollution in our city.

I might just take this moment, Mr. Speaker, to talk about some of the positive movements forward that Edmonton is doing in terms of greening our capital city. Certainly, they have been working very hard to make Edmonton a walkable city. We know that the more

people can live and work and go to stores in their communities by walking there, maybe biking there, then we know that they are using their vehicles less. We know that vehicles cause a lot of emissions that, of course, hurt our environment.

Other kinds of alternate transportation – certainly the increase in bike lanes, increasing public transit, and the expansion of the LRT – all have very positive outcomes for reducing climate change. Edmonton is a leader in doing this. Certainly, in my riding of Edmonton-Riverview, because it does sort of hug both sides of the river, there are many beautiful, walkable trails. People in the mature neighbourhoods in Edmonton-Riverview do bike, cycle, take transit, and that's really being responsible citizens themselves to reduce climate change.

Besides the environmental improvements, certainly, that our climate leadership plan did present, it also provided millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, to Albertans to go green, to support the shift to a green economy. As the previous Minister of Seniors and Housing, we had a significant investment in affordable housing in our province that supported our infrastructure to be more energy efficient. The first step in that process was doing energy audits on some of the facilities that were government owned and that provided affordable housing for citizens in our province. We know that many of those housing management bodies that do provide affordable housing to citizens are very aged. You know, a lot of the structures may have been built 30 years ago. They're not very energy efficient.

Our climate leadership plan did afford us the opportunity to be able to put in energy-efficient furnaces, to replace the windows that created a draft or those doors that weren't sealed appropriately so that the elements – of course, we all know that here in Alberta it can get pretty cold and windy and rainy. These funds made a significant difference in terms of how much energy was being wasted or even in terms of the roofs when you had to have that roof replaced on a building so that the heat wasn't leaving through that. These funds were used in a very responsible manner, making a big difference for the housing management bodies across Alberta. We have over a hundred housing management bodies in small communities, in rural Alberta, and also in our larger centres. This fund went back into supporting green infrastructure, making a significant difference for people living in affordable housing and certainly reducing the cost for the housing operators.

**10:30**

A second piece I did want to speak about. Certainly, it has been held up that somehow the NDP government was derelict in our duties to support seniors. I, too, similar to the Leader of the Official Opposition, want to articulate how mistaken the UCP government actually are. The energy rebates: we know that two-thirds of seniors in Alberta received funding from our climate leadership plan. They were better off at the end of the day because of that. They actually came away with more funds than they had previously. This sort of characterization of these vulnerable seniors who were on fixed incomes, that we had no regard for them: of course we did. We made sure that they had rebates. Honestly, they were better off at the end of the day, so how they're being characterized is completely wrong.

You know, even beyond that, there are so many things our government did to support seniors that seem to be forgotten or not understood by the UCP government, and I'm just going to articulate a few of those here. We indexed the Alberta seniors' benefit to the cost of living. It's an income support program for seniors in our province. That's a significant move, Mr. Speaker, because that means that each year when the cost of living goes up – and it generally does – those seniors, those vulnerable seniors on fixed



incomes, actually have their Alberta seniors' benefit go up, too, so that they can better pay for those services that they need. I was very proud as minister of seniors and housing that we did that. That is a significant way that we did help vulnerable seniors.

Besides that, we also substantially increased funding to affordable housing for seniors. You know, when we were comparing sort of the investment that we made with the previous Conservative government's investment – this would have been in the last budget of Premier Prentice – our budget was four times more than the previous Conservative government's. Our investment was significant. Just so members realize, a significant portion of that went to rural Alberta, to a lot of the lodges that are quite aged. We supported Albertans all across our province in areas that had really been extremely neglected by the previous Conservative governments. Mr. Speaker, we inherited a \$1.2 billion hole in maintenance and renewal for these facilities, so we really stepped up and made sure that people had the facilities they need and made sure that they were taken care of.

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, that I want to talk about. You know, as a minister you learn things and you think: what can I do to better serve the population I'm being asked to serve? One of the things that was not sort of on the books and where nothing had really been done, as far as I could tell, for the decades that the Conservatives were in power in our province: there was no sort of support to seniors' centres. There was no decision to support seniors' centres in any way.

Seniors' centres are actually a very preventative resource. Sometimes communities would use the funding from family and community social services to invest in them, but sometimes communities didn't do that. There was no sort of targeted funding for seniors' centres, and I always thought that was a bit strange. I thought that these centres oftentimes are gathering places in small communities. They create a social connection. We know that there are issues around seniors and social isolation. We need to support them to be connected to their communities. We know that the outcomes for that in terms of health, both mental health and physical health, are significant. I talked with my department staff, and we tried to devise a plan to support seniors' centres.

Even in very tough economic times we prioritized seniors, and we made sure that they were supported in Alberta. We did not cut programs to them. We created the aging well in community grant program, which supports seniors' centres so that they can receive support for some of the amazing programs that they provide to seniors locally. I've talked in this House already previously many times about the seniors' home adaptation and repair program, where seniors can receive funds.

You know, having travelled the province, seniors say: first of all, I want to age in my own community, in my own home for as long as I can. That's what they want. Sometimes there are barriers to them being able to do that. You know, maybe now they have a walker, and it's hard for them to get around, or they have a rug that, if they move their walker, will trip them up. So they actually need to get rid of that carpet, maybe put in a hardwood floor or linoleum, something that's easier to do. Oftentimes it's not a very large cost, but sometimes it's too big for them. This program helps seniors to be able to make those home renovations, whatever they may be, and to stay longer in that community, in that home that they love, close to family and friends. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of that investment also.

You know, I think there's been significant support that the NDP government did provide to seniors. Certainly, we took considerable effort and consideration and supported seniors in many ways and in many ways that I'm very proud of.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, certainly, I am standing against Motion 21. You know, it's clear. We all know that the Supreme Court of Canada did already reject Saskatchewan's Court of Appeal constitutional challenge, so really Alberta is just throwing good money after bad, making a mistake, and wasting the time and resources of Albertans to pursue this further. Of course, there are also the environmental reasons that I've already articulated, that our climate leadership plan did make a significant difference and continues to.

I'm certainly, as the previous minister, concerned: what's going to happen to that support for housing management bodies who are in the process of trying to green their facilities and, you know, putting in those energy-efficient furnaces and replacing the windows so that they are more air tight, and just in general caring for their facilities so that we aren't wasting energy and we're being much more energy efficient? I wonder what's going to happen with those programs seeing as now the program won't have the funding for that. I think that this well-thought-out plan that the NDP government put forward made a significant difference in the lives of many people, certainly seniors and those experiencing low income and living in the affordable housing system.

I certainly don't support this motion at all, Mr. Speaker, and will conclude my remarks now.

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available to those wishing to make a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to stand before you today to speak out against the federal government's attempts to impose a carbon tax on Alberta. During the historic provincial election this past April the largest number of Albertans in history stood together and forced the world to recognize our needs. By electing this government, we Albertans took back the right to decide the destiny of our province, and we will relentlessly continue to pursue this vision we shared until we restore our Alberta advantage.

On April 16 the hard-working Albertans that once drove the growth of our provincial and federal economies voted for a provincial government that would ensure that our demands won't be ignored in our time of greatest need. As the government officials that were elected by the people of this province, it is now our responsibility to act as the voice of our constituents. It is also our responsibility to act accountably and in the best interests of Alberta's needs.

For us to properly repay the faith that our fellow Albertans have entrusted in us, our government has resolved in Motion 21 to firmly oppose the imposition of any federal carbon tax grab on our province. Any brief review of the NDP's carbon tax will clearly show the massive negative impact it had on Alberta taxpayers, on families, businesses, and even a greenhouse near my riding, that can no longer afford to grow trees after paying the cost of the NDP carbon tax and, as such, had to burn more fuel to transport trees in from B.C. to meet their demands. Even those trying to help the environment were hindered from doing so by this devastating policy. How ironic. Instead of reducing Alberta's emissions, the NDP's failed ideological carbon tax only increased the financial burden on Albertans, who were already feeling the effects of the worst financial crisis in the recent history of our province.

**10:40**

In the interest of properly keeping the promises that we made to voters, our government will forever oppose any actions that

threaten the ability of our province to responsibly determine our own affairs. Although it may be difficult for our Prime Minister to appreciate, many normal Albertans aren't afforded access to extravagant trust funds. Instead of building their lives by riding the coattails of their family's reputation, most of us Albertans need to spend our hard-earned money to feed and supply the families that we built from the ground up. The carbon tax that the federal government plans to impose on our province directly harms the financial well-being of these diligent Alberta taxpayers. In fact, this carbon tax grab by our federal government effectively takes food right off the tables of Alberta families.

When Alberta voters elected our party, they did so because they envisioned a province with affordable access to groceries, energy, transportation, and other necessities of a happy life. Albertans envisioned a province where our senior citizens would not be punished for heating their homes in the brutal Canadian winter. They envisioned a province where the hard-working workers who were hardest hit by the recent oil crisis would not be punished for simply driving themselves to the jobs that feed their families. The simple fact of the matter is that Albertans need to use oil and gas products to live long, healthy, and prosperous lives, and they should not be punished for the heinous crime of using our God-given resources to sustain themselves.

The proposed federal carbon tax is clearly an affront to Alberta's sovereignty, and it is a slap in the face to every single Albertan that voted against the NDP's failed carbon tax just last April. And let me tell you that that's a lot of Albertans. Meanwhile the establishment, that seems to show such distaste and disregard for everyday working Albertans and our oil and gas industry, allows the Prime Minister to nibble caviar with his silver spoon while he jet-sets around the world in the comfort of his private jet, that he fuels using our taxpayers' money. Simply put, despite the Prime Minister's superficial posturing as an environmentalist, amongst many other things like a feminist and a Bollywood dancer, he appears completely incapable of actually leading by example.

As a result, the proposed federal carbon tax on our province clearly illustrates the federal government's complete failure to hold themselves to the same standards they expect from Albertans. Not only is it hypocritical, but it is a gross overreach by the Canadian federal government into affairs that have been previously settled by our provincial government. This is why our government will finish the job that we started, when we repealed the NDP's failed carbon tax, by continuing to oppose the imposition of any federal carbon tax on our province. Albertans don't deserve to be punished for heating our homes in the winter or charged unreasonable prices for buying our groceries and other necessities. That is why our government is committed to fighting this battle all the way to the courts so that in four years we can proudly announce to all Albertans: promises made, promises kept.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, anyone else wishing to speak to Government Motion 21? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to provide some thoughts on Motion 21. Certainly, this motion is designed in a way for the opposition side to oppose it because it does allow the province a free pass to continue to do nothing about climate change.

There are indeed some things in this motion that we don't have a quarrel with, particularly the last phrase, where we "recognize that Alberta's oil and gas industries continue to be global leaders in emissions reduction." That is, in fact, a true fact. I think we ought

to recognize when the government engages in facts. I do support that part of it. In fact, you know, our climate leadership plan was strategically designed to keep the federal government from colouring too far into the lines of a shared jurisdiction. It is a fact that the environment is not unlike some other areas of the Constitution that are, in fact, a shared jurisdiction.

It is difficult for me to support this motion. Here's why. First, the Premier has indicated that he believes that climate change is real though he says that there is a diversity of opinion tolerated within Conservative ranks. Certainly, so that Conservatives no longer embarrass themselves as philistines, they now just pretend that they think that climate change is real. All right. We'll allow that, but if one doesn't want to do anything about it, then those statements ring fairly hollow.

Second, we have heard it asserted from the government benches and the Premier himself that a price on carbon does not reduce emissions. Mr. Speaker, I think that in a small way I will allow a sliver of sunshine to shine upon this argument. A poorly designed or outdated price on carbon such as we had prior to 2015 will not reduce emissions. That's why industry asked us to update those policies to the specified gas emitters regulation and to ensure that those same companies would be able to raise capital with something approaching a substantive answer on climate policy in the markets with which they do business. They also wanted climate policy predictability. That's why they asked for it, and that's why we delivered it.

I think that overall the statement that the Premier and others are making around this issue of price on carbon not reducing emissions is, in fact, false. The way we know this is that the Premier should have instructed his lawyers to argue the position he takes that carbon prices don't reduce emissions. If he actually believes that position, then the high-priced lawyers the party hired – they didn't use Albertans' money for this; they used UCP donor money for those lawyers that lost the Saskatchewan case – would have contested the evidence before the court, that carbon pricing reduces emissions. But both the majority and the minority wrote that no party before the court contested the evidence that pricing carbon reduces emissions. No one contested that evidence, nor did the minority opinion, that I have heard the Premier now hang his hat on.

Now, I know that the Premier and others on the government benches have been told by lawyers seeking more billable hours that the Saskatchewan decision was actually quite narrow and that if we just put more money into the slot machine, maybe we'll win next time in Ontario or the next time in Manitoba or the next time in Alberta. Well, this is as ill advised as going back to the cashier to get more toonies for the VLTs, Mr. Speaker. Except it's not the Premier's money; it's our money. It's not rolls of toonies; it's wads of hundreds of dollars per hour for expensive lawyers.

Here is why that is ill advised, Mr. Speaker. Both the majority and the minority in the Saskatchewan reference found that carbon pricing reduces emissions. Both the majority and the minority found that the federal government has the constitutional authority to price carbon. Where they disagreed was around the head of federal power, where that authority comes from. The minority found that it didn't meet the national concern test as the majority did find. They did find that if it was designed as a tax rather than a levy to address an issue of national concern, it would be constitutional. Both the majority and the minority wrote that addressing climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time. They simply disagreed as to where the federal authority arises from. So when we have statements in this House that people are going to fight the federal government in their efforts to impose a

price on carbon, what the Saskatchewan court actually found is that the federal government has the power to set minimum national standards.

The provinces have latitude in tailoring these policies. That's what the court actually wrote. I still believe in facts, Mr. Speaker. I know that's naive on my part, but when it's written down right in front of my face, I tend to agree. For example, provinces do have latitude. One might develop a methane-offset protocol as a carrot to voluntary compliance, with a regulatory backstop taking effect some years later, incenting early action on one of the most potent greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, some seven times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>. In exchange, there might be an upstream processing exemption for that period of time. There might be investments in technology around methane abatement. One might do that as a provincial policy, for example.

Now, next, certainly the Premier likes to lean on a selective reading of the Leach report. At least, he isn't picking fights with a private citizen on Twitter anymore although that is not a hard-and-fast rule. But every other economic analysis of carbon pricing does take into account this question of competitiveness, and so, too, did the majority and minority positions in recognizing part 2 of the federal act.

It's easy. I have heard the government side many, many times, both when they were in opposition and now, bring a number of unrelated anecdotes into that conversation around international pressures and international competitiveness, but let's absolutely talk about international efforts to price carbon as part of meeting Canada's Paris agreement targets. The Premier, for example, in his remarks indicated that oil and gas investment is going to places like Kazakhstan. Well, they have had a carbon pricing system since 2013, and other jurisdictions have, too. Forty-six national jurisdictions have brought in carbon pricing and 28 subnational jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker.

Around jobs claims, the fact of the matter is that Alberta led the country in economic growth in 2017 and 2018. We're among the leaders in job growth as well. Again, Mr. Speaker, I know that facts don't matter, but I still do care about them. I still think reason is real.

**10:50**

Let's talk a little bit about what the future looks like, Mr. Speaker, without climate policy. I think it looks like ecological scarcity. It looks like dividing us from one another. It looks like a world that is more chaotic, where our ambient sense of uncertainty rises, reactionary ideas gain more appeal, our ability to solve problems in a collective way, to get together and solve something so important, is then torn apart. That's why conservatives oppose climate action. We have an opportunity, a very unique one now, to address climate change through very peaceful, co-operative, efficient means. We can only do that if we actually care about this issue.

I was unable during Bill 1 to read into the record what I said on election night directed to my children, so I'm going to read it now, Mr. Speaker.

To my kids, Finn and Hudson: you were four and six when I was elected. You don't remember the first two campaigns, but I know you understand this one. I know you have made sacrifices of your time and some of your childhood to mom's job. I want you to know that your mom knows that, and I want you to have learned at least this: hard things are hard, but the harder it is, the more it is worth doing, like taking action on climate change. I want you to learn this as a lesson. Making the world a better place is always worth it. You will have to live with the consequences of climate change, so I want you to know one more thing: mom did her best.

I won't be supporting this motion because it is a way for this government to direct resources into interfering in an election outside our borders. It is a way to direct Albertans' money into a federal election campaign. It is a way to make excuses for inaction.

It is a way to continue to say things that aren't true on the grounds that they win elections and just continue to build a conservative movement on this tissue of mistruths. It is a way to revisit spurious arguments in front of a court that is likely, on a balance of probabilities, to strike them down.

For those reasons, I will not be supporting this motion, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to Government Motion 21?

Seeing none, Hon. Government House Leader, would you like to close debate?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Waive.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 21 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:53 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Long	Sawhney
Allard	Lovely	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Luan	Schweitzer
Barnes	Madu	Sigurdson, R.J.
Copping	McIver	Singh
Ellis	Milliken	Smith
Getson	Neudorf	Stephan
Glasgo	Nicolaides	Toews
Glubish	Nixon, Jason	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Hanson	Orr	van Dijken
Horner	Pon	Walker
Hunter	Rehn	Williams
Issik	Rosin	Wilson
Jones	Rowswell	Yao
Kenney	Rutherford	Yaseen
LaGrange	Savage	

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Phillips
Carson	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Irwin	Sabir
Dach	Notley	Sigurdson, L.

Totals:	For – 50	Against – 12
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[Government Motion 21 carried]

[some applause]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to seek unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells also in committee for the duration of the evening.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## **11:00 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

## Bill 2 An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

**The Deputy Chair:** We are currently on amendment A1. Are there any comments or questions?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Back on Bill 2, are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West standing.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to rise to move an amendment, if I could, that amends the title by striking out "An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business" and substitutes "Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2019," and in the following provisions "An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business" is struck out wherever it occurs and "Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2019," is substituted.

I will now table that amendment and just provide some brief remarks to it if I might. Essentially, Mr. Chair, this amendment is designed to help. We know that we have heard many times from the government side . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** I apologize for interrupting.

**Ms Phillips:** Am I allowed to do that?

**The Deputy Chair:** We have to just wait until we've got it at the table so that we can take a look at it, and then we may want to take a minute just to allow members to take a look at it as well. I do appreciate the fact that you did already read it in. We'll just give a minute for it to go around.

We will be referring to this amendment as amendment A2.

Seeing that it looks like we have distribution of the amendment, please continue.

**Ms Phillips:** Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for indulging my relative rookie status on moving amendments.

This amendment is designed to help, as indicated. We have heard from the government side that they prefer that bill titles not be used for communications or other public relations purposes, so we have helpfully provided our input on that in order to simply have the bill do what it says that it's going to do as part of existing statutes, Mr. Chair. Certainly, it is not a universally held sentiment that chasing teenagers around to take toonies out of their pockets or taking people's overtime is in fact a recipe for making anyone really open for business. These are employment standards amendments and ought to be treated as such.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Any other hon. members looking to speak to A2? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung standing.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to the amendment, which I think is a reasonable proposal and indeed really reflects more accurately what this Bill 2 is actually proposing to do. I would tell you that taking \$2 an hour out of a young person's pocket isn't a way to encourage further activity in our economy because what it does is takes money out of the pockets of people who actually spend it in the local economy. Indeed, I think it's counterproductive to do that if you're hoping to create economic activity. Just on that element alone it's certainly counterintuitive to the initial title of the bill that the government gave this Bill 2. I think the amendment more accurately reflects the matter at hand.

I know that this legislation is something that the government is proud of. I'd be, let's say, less proud to be standing on the other side trying to argue and defend this piece of legislation, which goes ahead and takes money out of the pockets of, in particular, young, hard-working people who are either looking to pay for their education or perhaps even to help their families out. For those individuals who are in the workforce who are under 18 years of age and are standing beside somebody who is a couple of years older than them and they're earning \$2 less an hour, it must be something pretty hard to take. When the minister of labour stands up and argues, as other members of the government will do and as the Premier, in fact, himself argues, that this wage reduction is better than no wage at all, it is an empty argument. It disregards the fact that a person in this society deserves to earn the same money for the same work regardless of one's age.

I can only wonder what individuals who are in the position of taking a \$2 cut if this bill passes tomorrow, a \$2 cut to their wages – I know that I've suffered a similar fate, as I've mentioned in this House before, where my wages were cut by about \$4 an hour because of a contract that changed from one contractor to another. The workers who drove DATS buses at the time, of which I was one, suffered an overnight reduction of \$4 an hour, and it was a tremendous slap in the face. It was pretty degrading.

The best that the government can offer is a sorry explanation that indeed they think this is going to be allowing businesses and tempting businesses to reinvest and create more jobs, more low-paying jobs, for young people. In fact, that's not going to happen. They know full well that's not going to happen. All this is a sop to those businesses that believe that paying a wage differential, a lower wage to young people, is an appropriate thing to do. But as far as them turning around and reinvesting that two bucks an hour that they're saving back into creating more positions for young workers, that's not something that's going to come to fruition, and that will be seen and be very evident over the course of the next few weeks if indeed this bill does pass and see the light of day.

There will be an incentive, all right. There will be an incentive for people who are affected by this \$2 drop in wages to become politically motivated and three years from now let the government know in fact just how strongly they feel about the measures that the government is taking against them. I mean, to turn your back on young people and to cynically suggest that this \$2 reduction in your wages is good for you, just to pat them on the back and paternalistically say, "Don't worry; it's good for you; take this medicine; it may taste like cod-liver oil, but it will make you feel better." I don't get that. I don't think anybody who is subjected to this wage cut is going to feel better.

**11:10**

You know what? There are a lot of businesses in this province who don't feel good about it either. There's a website out there right now that is being joined by an increasing number of businesses who publicly are demonstrating their disdain and their lack of taste to participate in this government's decision to roll back wages on young people by saying: "Look, we're going to maintain the \$15 an hour minimum wage. We're not going to cut the wages as the government has proposed we do because we don't think it's the right thing to do. We're embarrassed to know that other businesses are doing it. In fact, we're not playing that game. We're going to publicly demonstrate our disdain for this action of the government by saying that we're a business that will not go forward and put in place a reduction of the minimum wage that we're paying. We're going to maintain the \$15 an hour because we respect our employees. We want to maintain our employees. We think it's a shameful thing for the government to go ahead and try to claim that

businesses are going to create more jobs by taking the money, \$2 an hour, out of the pockets of young people.”

As I indicated before, if you do the calculation, it's approaching \$4,000 a year that this government is taking out of the pockets of young people who are saving to go to university, to help their families out, for whatever purpose they're using it for. It's money that's going to be going into the economy right away again, to circulate again.

It's money that the government, who are supposedly the champions of small businesses and who are the economic gurus of free enterprise, who claim that we across the aisle in the opposition are the ones who have a lesson to learn – those are the individuals who are unwilling to acknowledge that they're countering their own business philosophy when they think that this \$2 an hour savings is going to be reinvested by businesses in creating more jobs. By keeping that money in the economy, by making sure that the \$15 an hour wage is at least approaching a living wage – it's not there. It would be closer to \$17 or \$18 an hour to actually pay these people a living wage as a minimum wage. But to keep that wage at \$15 an hour means that that money, that \$4,000 per worker, approximately, is actually being spent and reinvested in the economy.

The members across the way know full well that the largest percentage of our economy is the consumer economy, that 70 to 75 per cent of your economic activity is consumer spending. This government is trying to convince us that taking that money out of the economy is a good thing and that businesses are going to thrive as a result. It is a confounding argument for members of a government, who purport to understand business, to make.

I've been a small-business man for all of my business career, since I was in my mid-20s, in the real estate industry. I never ever paid anybody minimum wage or, really, close to it. It was a significant amount over because I fully intended to have those people continue working for me for a long while, not just to have them see it as a stepping stone to something better. I wanted them to stay with me and to retain them as workers. So the wages that I paid to the people who worked for me were at a level that I hoped would attract them to stay.

The people that did work for me did stay for extended periods of time. I was proud to know that they were able to go to university in the fall, after the summer employment season was over, if they were working for me on a seasonal basis. I went around my office with my head held high knowing that anybody who worked for me made a wage that they could live on, that they could save for university on. I knew that they would probably tell a friend that, yeah, working for Dach was a respected thing to do and you could expect to be paid a fair wage.

I mean, another thing, too, is overtime. I remember working in the oil patch on a service rig and being paid straight time for all the hours that I worked. It was just the way of the world. There was labour legislation that allowed these employers to get away with it in the '80s. We were working 17 hours a day in some rather rigorous and unsafe conditions on service rigs, but if you didn't like it, you left it. We ended up working long hours at straight pay and basically were being robbed of thousands and thousands of dollars of overtime pay, that otherwise would have been in my pocket and then also into the economy.

Let me tell you, Mr. Chair, that the employer there, in that case, didn't hire another three or four rig hands just to have them sitting around or to get another rig working. They put the money in their pockets as profits, as corporate profits. I can tell you for a fact that they weren't investing in extra safety for their workers either. We were an input cost at best, as a consideration, to those companies that were doing the well servicing in the '80s. It's a wonder that many of us actually lived through the experience. There were lots of people

that I saw in that industry who had injuries that were disfiguring: missing fingers, broken bones. I nearly lost my life more than once in the summer that I worked in that industry. It wasn't a situation where the company was looking to invest in their workers.

Now, there are many, many companies in the province, of course, who obviously do care for their workers. That was a situation where I didn't feel valued in any way, shape, or form. I don't accept the argument the government is making that companies will automatically invest their savings into hiring new employees.

We know that the pick-your-pockets bill, the overtime element of it, will impact roughly 400,000 Albertans working overtime to care for themselves and their families. If you're working overtime, you're getting paid time and a half. If you go ahead and you decide to work that overtime and you wish to take time off in lieu, you should be getting the same rate. The same ratio of time and a half should apply. You shouldn't give that up even though your employer is giving you the quote, unquote, choice to do so. There's no real choice involved, Mr. Chair. The difference between banking that pay at time and a half pay versus straight time is a lot.

Now, if you're an oil and gas worker making average pay, putting in 10 overtime hours every week on a 12-week project, that's 120 hours in paid time off. The difference between banking that pay at time and a half versus straight time is 2,500 bucks. That's a whole lot of cash, and it's being taken right out of the pockets of working people, who don't have the empowerment to oppose this so-called negotiated agreement with their employer. It's a huge difference for working people. We're talking about hundreds to thousands of dollars for people going above and beyond in the workplace day in and day out.

I'm frankly ashamed to know that in this day and age, in 2019, the government in the province of Alberta would see their way clear to going backwards in time, but that's precisely the *modus operandi* of this government. They think that they have a winning formula in turning back the clock no matter whether it's labour legislation, whether it's gay-straight alliances, whether it's any ministry that you care to think of. Turning back the clock is what they prefer to do.

Liquor server wage differentials: I mean, you're going to end up with a similar situation here. We believe the minimum wage needs to be guaranteed for anyone, for hard-working Albertans regardless of what place of business they work in. We should not be creating different tiers of workers. As I mentioned in the House earlier today, that's exactly what the government is hoping to do, to create divisions amongst Albertans and exploit those divisions for their own political benefit. They don't really care about that. The Premier is certainly using this as a tactic or a strategy regularly. It doesn't really matter what legislation you're talking about; you're certainly looking to exploit divisions, whether it be social policy or economic policy. If there's a political benefit for the government, they think that the damage they do in passing this type of legislation is worth the price because, in fact, the only thing that counts with this government is a political win.

#### 11:20

But, in my humble opinion, Mr. Chair, the Premier doesn't care. He doesn't care two hoots about the collateral damage that he leaves behind because, in fact, in my view, I don't think the Premier plans to be here much beyond the next federal election. I think that he's got his eyes on a prize that's further east of this province, and I think that as soon as the federal election is over, should the Trudeau Liberals win, which I think the Premier is counting on, the siren call will be out for our current Premier to go lead the federal Conservatives. I think that's what he's really up to. So we'll see the collateral damage pile up.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** A point of order has been called.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Chair, I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). I know that the hon. Leader of the Opposition continues to do an incredible discredit to the role of the Leader of the Opposition in this place . . . [interjection]. She continues to heckle during a point of order, but what else can you expect?

The hon. member just said that the Premier does not care.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** You can't have a point of order during a point of order, Mr. Opposition House Leader.

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. members, but it is my understanding that you can't call a point of order in the middle of a point of order, so we will continue with this point of order, and should it be completed today or once we have decided upon it, then there will be an opportunity to continue with another point of order should that be the choice.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** That certainly is correct, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

The hon. member in his comments just said that the Premier does not care. That imputes false and unavowed motives against him.

In addition to that, though, Mr. Chair, the hon. member then indicated that the Premier is intending to run for Prime Minister and somehow did this bizarre conspiracy process to work his way to become the Prime Minister by going through – let's be clear what that would have taken. That would have taken leaving Ottawa and what was guaranteed, if the Premier so chose, to become the leader of the CPC party and therefore the Leader of the Opposition.

**An Hon. Member:** Guaranteed?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Absolutely, Mr. Chair, almost certainly.

And he then came all the way back – let's just think about this, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Bilous:** How is this a point of order?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** This is a point of order because this is what we're talking about, Mr. Chair.

He came all the way back to Alberta . . .

**Ms Notley:** Just because you're talking, doesn't make it right.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, I get that the Leader of the Opposition struggles with her role in this place, which is why she continues to be so rude to the office.

Anyways, Mr. Chair, I'll just stick with this. "The Premier doesn't care": it imputes false or unavowed motives. It doesn't even begin to talk about the ridiculous arguments that are being brought forward by the opposition.

Again, Mr. Chair, I would ask of you to instruct the opposition to actually try to do their job. It's absolutely embarrassing how the Leader of the Opposition continues to allow her members to behave in this place. It's shameful.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much, hon. member.

I will hear now from the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Chair, I think that the Government House Leader is making a joke out of usage of points of order. He must be very sensitive at this hour of the day.

Mr. Chair, this is not a point of order. This is a difference of opinion. It's the opinion of the hon. member that the Premier feels a certain way. I appreciate the Government House Leader saying: no; the Premier doesn't feel that way; he feels a different way. Well, that's great. That's a difference of opinion and debate. It is not a point of order. For all we know, the Premier could be in Alberta as a stomping ground on his way back to Ottawa. We don't know.

The point is that this is not a point of order, but in the midst of arguing a point of order, what I think is disrespectful is trying to drag the Leader of the Official Opposition through the mud in an argument that this is a point of order, which has nothing to do with the point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. I am prepared to rule.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** In committee we often allow a wide berth with regard to the debate that is brought up in committee. As such, I think I also allowed a wide berth with regard to the debate on the point of order.

In this case, I do not find that there is a point of order. I think that the circumstances of the comments would not rise to the level of a point of order, so at this point I will consider that matter closed.

I will also take an opportunity to remind hon. members that when we are discussing an amendment, we should probably stick to the amendment. As we move back to the actual bill, then the breadth of debate will continue.

Please, hon. member, with four minutes on this.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for your considered ruling on my discourse earlier on the amendment. I certainly am of the opinion that the theory that I am speaking about is plausible, and we'll see how it pans out. But we'll leave that for another day.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dach:** When I speak to Bill 2 and the proposals in the member's amendment, I am brought to the conclusion that the government was hoping to create an impression that this bill, Bill 2, was actually going to create employment and help the business environment. The title of that is indicative of that intent, but the amendment that we speak to, that was brought forward by the Member for Lethbridge-West, more accurately portrays the true intent of the legislation. It's a bill that changes a number of things in the work environment, particularly for low-wage workers, and is really an attack on young people and people in the entry-level workforce. Whether you're a person under the age of 18 or whether you're working in the liquor service industry, it's a direct attack on you.

Yet the argument the government is trying to make is saying: "Well, yes, we know we're taking money right out of your pocket, but it's good for you. Take it with a grain of salt. It'll get better over time. At some point you will know that that \$4,000 or so that you don't have in your pocket was an investment in the betterment of Alberta, that Alberta is going to be better off, and thank you very much for that contribution to the province of Alberta and our well-being as a society."

That \$4,000 that you would have had: "Well, you didn't really need it anyway because you were simply just going to spend it on frivolous things if you're a person under 18." Maybe you're

working in the liquor service industry: “Well, heck, the children you’re trying to support as a single mom working as a liquor server really didn’t need that extra couple of bucks an hour. You can have a different wage than a person working beside you who’s not actually serving liquor because you’re getting tips. You rely on the charity of others. If you really work your tail off or if you somehow impress your customer, well, then, you deserve to get a little bit more money. Tell you what: we’re not going to insist that employers actually pay you the same as other workers working in the same establishment. You can rely on tips, and you can just go after those tips by hustling your butt and seeing if you can earn something a bit more than your neighbour next door, who’s competing for the same dollar from customers that might come back time after time.”

Once again, pitting people against each other is exactly what this government is becoming famous for, dividing individuals and exploiting those who are least able to stand up to the measures that the government wishes to impose upon them, particularly in the workforce and upon wage labourers in the province.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, we are on A2. I see the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I’m excited to rise, particularly given the leeway that we have during Committee of the Whole. I’m excited that you were able to bring that up, and I’m looking forward to having a little bit of a conversation about what the hon. member presented today.

It’s quite shocking, again, to continue to watch the bizarre behaviour of the Official Opposition inside the Legislature as they continue to take the level of ridiculousness down to a different level at every moment. I find it humorous to watch the Leader of the Opposition and her caucus continue to heckle during the process there and to say things to people, and then they look. They look over – people at home probably can’t see this – to see if everybody looked at it, just like my kids do when they’re playing ridiculous games and trying to get attention. It’s so disappointing. [interjections] Again, you see the former Health minister – I can’t remember her constituency – going on and on, heckling away, taking the decorum to the lowest level.

11:30

Mr. Chair, what I found most interesting about the hon. member’s comments is comparing records of leaders. I’d be happy to talk about the record of our leader at any time and specifically how it relates to this legislation and his intentions compared to the Leader of the Official Opposition, who, by the way, oversaw a government that saw the largest job losses in the history of this province, who sat here in Edmonton and ignored the people of this province over and over despite the fact that they were having trouble, who called them Chicken Little because they brought up concerns, who told them to take the bus because they brought up concerns about the carbon tax, who sat there without saying anything as their Deputy Premier at the time called them sewer rats. I’m happy to talk about the record of the Leader of the Official Opposition if that’s what the hon. member wants.

I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Chair, was just recently in Ottawa. Is she planning to run for the NDP leadership? Was this her great plan, to get elected as Premier, then become the only one-term Premier in the history of the province, or oversee the only one-term government in the history of the province, lose that after absolutely decimating the province that she lives in and hurting the citizens that she was supposed to govern with her policies, and then go some secret way all the way up to the

federal leadership? That seems bizarre. But if you take what the Official Opposition is saying at face value in regard to the now Premier of Alberta, that would quite frankly make more sense than what they’re presenting.

They’re trying to indicate that the now Premier of Alberta, the hon. the Premier of Alberta, left a high-ranking position within the opposition caucus federally and then came all the way to Alberta and, under tremendous risk, travelled across the province in a blue truck to help unite both the Progressive Conservative Party and the Wildrose Party – I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that all of us that are here in the room that know the process that took place: everybody said that he couldn’t do it. In fact, I can tell you that at the beginning of that he probably wondered if he could. But then he brought those parties together, which ultimately became the demise of the NDP inside the province of Alberta, the end of the Leader of the Official Opposition’s reign of tax increases and decimation of jobs and the way of life in this province.

He then had a leadership race, was able to successfully win that leadership race, and then ran in a provincial campaign and went on to win the second-highest vote percentage in the history of the province and the highest vote total in the history of the province, defeating the now Leader of the Official Opposition, absolutely decimating her and her party in the election, and then made it to here, where he could become the hon. Premier. Now, magically, he’s going to head back to Ottawa. That’s such a ridiculous argument, Mr. Chair. I don’t believe that probably about the Leader of the Opposition Leader either. I certainly know that it’s not true about the Premier. But that’s all the NDP have.

Now, why this is important, Mr. Chair, is because as they rise to talk about Bill 2 and the legislation inside this House – and they continue to do it with Bill 8 as well – they continue to misrepresent the facts, something the Leader of the Opposition and her party are well known for: misrepresent the facts inside this Legislature and then act like they have some sort of credibility. But then when you see the arguments that they’re making, for example, with the Premier, you know, about him taking this bizarre side trip all the way through Alberta, through multiple elections just to make his way back to the election that he should have ran in the first place if that’s what he wanted – it wasn’t what he wanted. He came back to help save Alberta from the Leader of the Opposition and her party, who were destroying this province when she was then the Premier.

Albertans have to look at that and look at the facts that are presented in this House. No wonder the majority of Albertans have rejected the NDP Party. They don’t trust the NDP Party. They, frankly, don’t believe the NDP Party, Mr. Chair. They don’t believe them because they prove it time and time again that they cannot be trusted. They cannot be trusted. The Leader of the Official Opposition and her party cannot be trusted. They misrepresent facts, and they cannot be trusted to be able to do things for Albertans. Again, the Leader of the Opposition, who still continues to smile and laugh about the fact that she told my constituents to fund raise to pay for her carbon tax; smiles and laughs at communities like Drayton Valley that were decimated because of her decisions when she was the Premier of Alberta; probably smiles and laughs, for all I know, Mr. Chair, when she looks at the electoral map and watched how her party was completely wiped out, solid blue across every corner of the province, most of our constituencies rejecting, my constituency rejecting the NDP by something like 86 per cent – rejected the NDP and said: we won’t put up with that anymore because of the ridiculous behaviour of the then Premier and her party. Those are the facts.

Then they find themselves in opposition, and rather than showing some humility on how they ended up in that spot, they continue to stand up here day in, night out and say ridiculous things to the

Chamber. That's all they say, Mr. Chair, ridiculous things to the Chamber. Over and over, one ridiculous argument after another because they can't put together any argument. They can't. They're completely stuck on the fact that they're mad at Albertans. They're mad at us for winning the election. They're mad at Albertans for making a decision to fire them and to make them the only one-term government in the history of this province. They're just mad, maybe mad at themselves, for all I know. So they should go and deal with that, take some time to examine how they ended up in this situation, maybe learn from their situation instead of coming here and continuing to laugh and smirk at the people of Alberta.

But what else would you expect, again, from the party that called them sewer rats, that told them they were Chicken Little for raising concerns, that told them to take the bus, that told fixed-income seniors to fund raise to pay for their carbon tax, that brought in the largest tax increase in the history of the province that increased the prices of everything, that ignored all of Alberta, that went out of their way to start a fight with farmers and ranchers across this province as one of their first bills inside this Chamber by refusing to consult with them at all, jamming through legislation and ultimately causing the NDP – who, by the way, was born in rural Alberta, or in this province anyway, who has now been for many generations wiped out in rural Alberta. All of us from rural Alberta know there's no coming back for the NDP because of what the former Premier, now Leader of the Opposition did with her time in leadership of the NDP when she was in government. That's what the real situation is here, Mr. Chair.

So to stand up each and every day and say such bizarre things about other people – you saw it today in question period, the bizarre attack on the hon. Finance minister, going back to the politics of fear and smear. That's all they could do during the election, that's all they could do before the election, and that's all they can do now. That's why they're on their way from being government to a 27-some seat opposition and ultimately back down to probably a three- or four-seat third or fourth party inside the Legislature, because Albertans are not going to put up with this behaviour. Use your time in opposition to actually do something constructive and help the people of Alberta. If not, shame on them. Shame on them for using their time in this way inside this Chamber.

Oh, I understand that the Leader of the Opposition is angry. I understand that she is frustrated that Albertans fired her and rejected her behaviour and her policies, but that is what happened. If she truly cares about her party or her role inside this Chamber, she will instruct her caucus to actually take it seriously, to stop playing the politics of fear and smear and personal attacks on people and spend time actually doing something constructive. But you know what? I

doubt they will, because you know what? For the entire time that I've seen the NDP in public life, they can't do it. They're not capable of doing it. They're only capable of insulting people, making up ridiculous arguments, and acting the way that they have.

With that said, Mr. Chair, I think we've all had enough of listening to it for tonight, so I will move to adjourn debate.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. Government House Leader, just to confirm, as there's no other bill to debate as far as I understand, then, are you looking to rise and report progress?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** That would be a fair point, Mr. Chair. Yes. I move that we rise and report progress.

**The Deputy Chair:** Yup. Just to confirm, rise and report progress on Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business?

11:40

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** That's correct.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

[Motion carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** The committee shall now rise and report progress.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed, say no. Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn the Assembly till tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:42 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 26, 2019

Day 20

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

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

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of power and responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, joining us this afternoon in the Speaker's gallery is another familiar face to the Chamber, the former Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, Mr. Oneil Carlier.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this afternoon we have a group of hard-working public service employees in our galleries from the Ministry of Service Alberta. Thank you for all you do. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members, in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon: the father of the Member for Banff-Kananaskis, Mr. Murray Rosin.

A special guest of mine – you can feel free to rise if you'd like – in the gallery is a member who's very keen on the parliamentary process, a young member, Seth Bourke.

Guests of the Minister of Health: Andrew Neuner and Jessica Gish.

Also joining us today are guests of the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: Zahra Somani, Sameer Thawer, Mohib Samnani, Moe Rahemtulla, Amin Poonja, Shafin Kanji, Arif Karmali, Farah Jivraj, and Naz Hasham.

I'd invite you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs would like to make a statement.

#### Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day, June 27, which the teal ribbon represents. In 2016 I was honoured to bring forward a private member's bill that would acknowledge PTSD Awareness Day annually. It was introduced and passed, all in the span of 18 days. It was incredible to be a part of that moment, when all of my colleagues sitting in 2016 made this a nonpartisan issue and allowed the bill to become a reality.

Mr. Speaker, posttraumatic stress disorder, PTSD, is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event, either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

The consultation process was a monumental opportunity to hear from Albertans on the impacts of PTSD. I heard repeatedly that more supports were needed within the mental health system. I advocated for this with my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora. The recent opening of the Addiction & Mental Health Access 24/7 clinic at the Royal Alexandra hospital is just one example of how our previous government made a commitment to prioritizing and funding Albertans' mental health care.

The subject of conversion therapy also came up during these consultations. We know that conversion therapy can cause PTSD, yet the current Minister of Health, the very person in charge of protecting patients from harmful practices in Alberta, not only disbanded but also stated that he will not support the working group going forward.

Despite how this government has responded to that situation, I want to be very clear with my message. To all who are impacted by PTSD: you are not alone. We will continue to fight for your mental health services and continue to put action behind our words.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Cross has a statement.

#### Imamat Day

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise before you today to speak about Imamat Day. On July 11 Ismaili Muslims from across the world and, in fact, in our province come together to mark the anniversary of the ascension of His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV to the throne of the Imamat. This day of celebration is dedicated to strengthening one's spirituality and reaffirming one's commitment to the Ismaili doctrine of the Shia Islamic faith.

It has been 62 years since His Highness Aga Khan became the 49th imam and the spiritual leader of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims. Throughout this time the Aga Khan and the Canadian government have been steadfast allies in the promotion of important causes such as international development, human rights, and pluralism. Likewise, the Aga Khan has devoted his personal efforts to addressing important humanitarian causes such as the eradication of poverty, increasing accessibility to education, and providing the basic necessities of life, including health care and water, to the people in his care and to those all across the globe.

This vital partnership was memorialized in 2010 by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who rewarded the Aga Khan with an honorary Canadian citizenship. It is important to note that after receiving this honour from our Prime Minister, the Aga Khan became the first spiritual leader to address both Houses of our Canadian Parliament.

Today we offer our warmest congratulations to His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV on the 62nd anniversary of his ascension as imam. On behalf of our province and the United Conservative Party of Alberta we wish to extend our best thoughts and wishes to Ismaili Muslims across the province on this holiest of days. It is our honour to wish Ismaili Albertans that are practising Imamat Day our sincerest Khushiali Mubarak.

#### Lethbridge Pride Fest

**Ms Phillips:** This past weekend I attended Lethbridge pride along with about 3,000 or 4,000 other people. The weather held up for the indigenous hoop dancer, for the drag shows from kings and queens alike, for the local food vendors and, importantly, the beer gardens. It was the biggest Pride Fest yet. Lethbridge pride has grown from a potluck in a park to one of the biggest summer festivals in Galt

Gardens, and Lethbridge has inspired pride events in Cardston, Taber, and Fort Macleod. This year almost a thousand people signed my petition to protect LGBTQ youth from being outed for joining a GSA. People lined up to sign the petition.

On Friday I also attended the pride awards. This year Levi Cox got the legacy award for his 20 years of service in building Pride Fest into what it is today. Deonie Hudson and Jo-Anne Finch both received awards that recognized their respective and distinct records of service and support. Kari Tanaka received the award on behalf of the University of Lethbridge Bookstore. Jordan Payne was recognized for his contributions to Theatre Outré and Club Didi. ARCHES received an award for community health and well-being, and Cyndi Starzyk-Frey won for her work in counselling. Tate Montgomery and Indira Brower were recognized as emerging leaders. Pride wouldn't happen without a volunteer board, and they are Glen Herbst, Levi Cox, Tyler Gschaider, Katherine Culley, Jesse Harsanyi, Elisabeth Hegerat, Austin Walsh, Dave Fritz, Carter Cannady, Linda McFalls, and Mac Miles.

Pride is about more than events. It's about politics. You don't just show up once a year for a pretty picture with rainbows. Substantive support to the community is what's required. I was honoured to help enact equality rights whenever I had the chance in government, and the community can continue to count on my voice in this Legislature and wherever else they need it. I take my promise and my responsibility to the queer community in southern Alberta very seriously.

Happy pride, Lethbridge. You will always count on my support, my love, and my solidarity.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

#### 1:40 Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The pipeline is not intended to grow production, just diversify markets: those were the words spoken by the Prime Minister in French, then reiterated by both his Finance and environment ministers when the federal government approved the TMX project for the second time. The pipeline file has been mismanaged by the Trudeau government since they took office, in the fall of 2015.

Last week we got confirmation of what many of us feared: this isn't a pipeline being approved to grow a provincial economy; this was a political attempt to placate Alberta until after the federal election in October. While I appreciate the federal government approval of TMX, again, neither I nor Albertans will be tricked into believing that the Trudeau government is doing anything special for our province. After four years of attacks, with bills C-48, C-69, the cancellation of Northern Gateway, and the stifling of Energy East, it is clear that he is no friend to Alberta. When asked if they would approve additional pipelines, the Prime Minister snickered and passed off to Minister Morneau, who stated that this was the only one they were focused on. With bills C-48 and C-69 passing through the House of Commons only two days after the TMX approval, the foreshadowing from the federal government seems clear.

Alberta is in a precarious position. Our economy is showing signs of optimism since the UCP election win, but our province must continue to be vigilant against Ottawa and their interference in our economy. This pipeline must be built. The fight is not over. We cannot celebrate until barrels are flowing through that pipeline and bills C-48 and C-69 are repealed. Brian Mulroney once said: Trudeau's contribution was not to build Canada but to destroy it. Mr. Speaker, it appears that Justin Trudeau is following in the footsteps of his father.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

#### Constables Ezio Faraone and Daniel Woodall

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 25, 1990, Edmonton Police Service member Constable Ezio Faraone was killed in the line of duty while responding to an armed robbery. Constable Faraone's sacrifice that day should stand as a reminder to us all of the risk our front-line responders take every day. It is important to recognize also that some of the members of the Legislature security staff worked with Constable Faraone and were members of the Edmonton Police Service when he was killed.

The Legislature security service is comprised of retired members of the Edmonton Police Service and the RCMP. Several of those members were Constable Faraone's friends and colleagues. Three of them were working with Constable Faraone in the tactical unit the day he was killed. Constable Faraone is described as a man of honour, a great friend and family man, and a colleague.

On June 8, 2015, Constable Dan Woodall was shot and killed while executing a search warrant. I worked with Constable Woodall. He was my partner on numerous shifts, and I had the privilege of getting to know a dedicated police officer, father, and husband.

Constable Faraone and Constable Woodall were responding to calls that I, the Member for Calgary-West, many members of the Legislature security staff, and police officers across Alberta have responded to. When Constable Woodall and Constable Faraone died, the outpouring of support from the community was amazing to see and feel. It was a reminder to us all in law enforcement of how much the community cares and appreciates the work we do. We should take time to reflect on their sacrifices and the sacrifice their families made that day.

To the Edmonton Police Service family and to all law enforcement across Alberta and around the country: thank you for the risk you take, the dedication you have to your communities, your towns and cities, and your province. In the face of such tragedy and loss the least we can do is keep them in our memory, to not forget to honour the lives they lived and the positive effects they had on all the lives they touched and the sacrifice they made for us all.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

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

The hon. Member for Airdrie-East has a statement to make.

#### Airdrie Pro Rodeo

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the honour of rising in this House to highlight an amazing event in my constituency, the Airdrie Pro Rodeo. This great event starts this Friday, June 28, and goes until Canada Day. Every year thousands gather to watch the rodeo, participate in family events, and just enjoy the festivities. At the grounds there will be something for everyone: kids' activities, food trucks, beer gardens, and even live entertainment.

The Airdrie Pro Rodeo is one of the 10 largest rodeos in all of Canada and is Airdrie's longest standing athletic event, dating back to 1967. The junior rodeo aspects provide an opportunity for future cowboys and cowgirls to test out their skills in activities like mutton busting, wild pony race, and the sheep scramble while the pro rodeo attracts some of the best athletes in the nation to compete in bull riding, steer wrestling, barrel racing, and many other events.

The five-day rodeo is organized by the Airdrie Rodeo Ranch Association, a not-for-profit, 100 per cent volunteer-driven group. They are committed to preserving our rural connection and

promoting our great community. They believe that while Airdrie grows in size, it is important that we don't lose our rural roots. This growing event is a pillar for community achievement and wouldn't be possible without all the dedicated volunteers. This event offers our city a unique tradition to celebrate and be proud of.

I want to encourage everyone across the province to come on out and support this fantastic event. I couldn't think of a better place to spend this long weekend. Canada Day in Airdrie will kick off with an awesome parade at 10 a.m., followed by the bull-riding bonanza at 2:30. It's sure to be an amazing event, and I hope to see y'all there.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

#### Bill 13 Alberta Senate Election Act

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move first reading of Bill 13, Alberta Senate Election Act.

Last week's passage of Bill C-48, a prejudicial attack on Alberta, and Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill, made it clear to us that elected Senators who are accountable to Alberta voters are more likely to defend our province's interests. This bill is based on the version of the Senate election law that expired in 2016, and passing it would restore Albertans' opportunity to directly participate in choosing Senate nominees.

The Alberta Senate Election Act will continue Alberta's push for the democratization of the Canadian Senate so that Alberta's Senators have a mandate from Albertans to be effective voices for our province in the federal Parliament. I look forward to sharing the details of the bill with the Legislature during second reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** It's my first day, hon. members.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South is rising to make a tabling.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and table a letter I received that was addressed to myself, the hon. Premier, and yourself, Mr. Speaker. It's in regard to the lack of decorum in the Alberta Legislature. It refers to Earpluggate, and it says that she is "disgusted by this disgraceful degradation of our Legislative Assembly."

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, just to correct the record here.

Last night during my speech I mentioned the NDP's Leap Manifesto, where it mentions tanker bans and no more pipelines. It could have been penned by Justin Trudeau himself.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table the appropriate number of copies of a document entitled Zurich Signs up to UN Business Pledge to Limit Global Temperature Rise and Announces It Will Use Only Renewable Energy by 2022. This

document states that Zurich insurance will no longer underwrite oil sands operations.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of correspondence that I received in my constituency office regarding the distribution of earplugs in this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members. [interjections] It's okay. We're moving on, and we'll return to tablings.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, here we go again. It seems we really can't go for long without another member of this cabinet being questioned by the RCMP about voter fraud in the 2017 UCP leadership contest. Yesterday we learned from the media – from the media – that the Infrastructure minister was interviewed by the RCMP about this scandal. Last time it was the Attorney General questioned. We also found that out from the media. To the Premier: will he please advise or direct his Minister of Infrastructure to come clean with Albertans about his role in this issue?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, regrettable but entirely predictable to see the NDP's smear tactics continue on a daily basis. My understanding is that the minister was asked for an interview, was told that he is not subject to any investigation, and co-operated, as we've always indicated any member of this government will do.

Mr. Speaker, the real issue that the NDP doesn't want to talk about is how last night they voted to defend the Trudeau carbon tax on Alberta by voting against our motion to seek support from this Assembly, to stand up for Alberta taxpayers. While this government is defending Alberta taxpayers, they're defending their close ally Justin Trudeau.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP are investigating. Now, this Premier may want to diminish the importance of law and order by distraction or name-calling, but the fact is that these are serious issues, and Albertans deserve to have their government take them seriously. In that vein, it is wrong that Albertans keep discovering the growing web of UCP cabinet ministers being questioned as part of this fraud investigation through the media. To the leader: will he rise today and assure the House that no other members of Executive Council have been questioned about this fraud investigation?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, not to my knowledge. It was always said that ministers will co-operate if they've been asked for information. I understand in this case that the minister had, really, no relevant information to offer. It was a brief interview. He's not subject to any investigation. It's unfortunate that the opposition leader is trying to drag this honourable man's name through the mud, but we can expect nothing less from an NDP leader who still cannot identify a single mistake made by her government that rendered her the first-ever one-term Premier defeated by voters in the next election.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is precisely because we get answers like that from the Premier that it is so important that this government appoint a special prosecutor to objectively and independently guide the investigation and ultimate decision around

charges and, of course, the fact that the Attorney General was also a witness and a participant in the event under investigation. But it's been four weeks, and we haven't heard a peep. To the Attorney General: why haven't you publicly announced the name and appointment of the special prosecutor yet?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'd refer the hon. member to the RCMP for a commentary regarding their investigation. It's my understanding, through the department, that they've reached out to folks in Ontario to handle legal advice that the RCMP may need with respect to this matter.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, reaching out for advice is not the same as appointing a special prosecutor, and that is what the people of this province were promised. If what we are doing now is backpedalling on that commitment, will the Attorney General please rise and clarify for the people of Alberta: who is the special prosecutor? Why won't you announce their name?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'll reiterate and clarify for the hon. member. Ontario has been asked to provide legal advice. The title of that could be special prosecutor. It's external legal advice to the RCMP. I'd refer them again to the RCMP if they have further questions with respect to their independent investigation. Again, we respect the police and their independence in this matter.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Ontario is not a person. I mean, I hate to break it to the Attorney General. A special prosecutor is a person. They are a person who is held accountable. They are a person who Albertans can know is separate and objective and independent from this government. Why won't the Attorney General announce the name? And will he assure us that it's not the Premier of Ontario, heaven forbid?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, the assistant deputy minister for our department had made a public statement regarding how they were handling this matter in referring it to the province of Ontario for legal advice, to the RCMP regarding this. Again, this is just another instance where they simply do not want to be held accountable for their record in 2015. They're just continuing to bring up things from the past. We're focused on the priorities of Albertans, which is jobs, the economy, and pipelines.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the government's record is that they said that they would appoint a special prosecutor, and, God knows, it is necessary because far too many members of Executive Council have been drawn into this investigation into allegations of conspiracy to commit fraud. As a result, it is critically important that the name of the special prosecutor be provided to the people of Alberta. Why won't the Attorney General do his job?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned many other times here today, I'd refer them again to the statement that was made by our department regarding providing for the service of a special prosecutor from the province of Ontario. If they're looking for further details regarding this investigation, I'd refer them again – again, numerous times – to talk to the RCMP regarding their independent investigation regarding this. We respect that independence of the RCMP. I would hope that this hon. member would respect that as well.

**Mr. Dach:** Name the prosecutor.

**The Speaker:** Oh. The Member for Edmonton-McClung will come to order.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, school boards are being forced to make cuts because this Education minister is failing to do her job. The reality is that with the loss of things like the classroom improvement fund there will be fewer dollars, and it will have an impact on our schools: that's a superintendent, Darrel Robertson, from Edmonton public schools, speaking yesterday when they voted on their budget. In his words, quote: there's no sugar-coating that. So I'll make this short. Will the government provide certainty to school boards so they don't have to guess where you're planning to cut?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. People need to stop with their scare tactics and stop playing politics with our children. Our government has committed to funding education and supports for our students, and enrolment growth will be accounted for and funded. As a standard procedure funding information will be communicated to school boards following the approval by the Legislature. We know that. They know that.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** It's totally irresponsible for the Minister of Education, a former school board chair, to stand in this place and say that they'll just have to wait, Mr. Speaker. School is out this week. Staff are being terminated across this province because of this government's dithering. Is this minister sleeping well at night knowing that there'll be more students and fewer teachers? As I can tell you, trustees with Edmonton public aren't. They're talking about staying up all night because they're stressed out by what you're inflicting on their board.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. People need to stop with the scare tactics. I just said it; I'll say it again. They need to stop playing politics with our children. This is about improving outcomes for Alberta students. We spend among the most per capita on education, but the outcomes just aren't there. So we are continuing to keep the system whole.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** To manage the massive degree of uncertainty facing the Edmonton public school board, they've pulled millions of dollars out of reserves to balance the 2019-20 budget. To the Premier: if school boards are forced to go into reserves to fund your government's incompetence here, how will they make up the difference next year? Will they (a) get more funding, (b) get a new minister, or (c) both?

**Member LaGrange:** Again with the scare tactics. Our government has committed to funding education and supports for our students. Funding enrolment growth will be accounted for. We will be building schools. We are working on improving these outcomes for students, something the NDP failed to do. We are going to get it right.

Thank you.

### **LGBTQ Teacher and Educational Staff Employment Protection**

**Member Irwin:** A school that is not a safe and welcoming space for gender minority teachers cannot be a safe and welcoming space for gender minority students: that was the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association today, calling on this government to include employment protections for LGBTQ teachers and staff, and I hope that it would be a message that everyone in this House can embrace. Our government took it seriously and included employment protections in Bill 24. Sadly, those protections do not appear in Bill 8. To the Minister of Education: why did you remove employment protections for LGBTQ teachers and staff in the hateful Bill 8?

2:00

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We are all about protecting our children and our staff. Our government will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for our LGBTQ students in Canada. We continue to say it; we will always say it.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Listen carefully: we strongly urge this government to adopt amendments to Bill 8 that would see these protections continue. That again was the president of the ATA voicing his concern about the removal of employment protections for LGBTQ teachers and staff in Bill 8. To the Minister of Education again. Let's hope that this was an oversight rather than another attack on the LGBTQ community from this government. I ask you: will you commit in the next 35 seconds to restoring the employment protections that you removed?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. All our staff are protected under the human bill of rights and under the labour code. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we heard the question; we'll hear the answer.

The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We protect all our staff under the human bill of rights and also under the labour code. All of our staff are protected.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** We know that this government has a bad track record when it comes to protecting LGBTQ teachers. The Premier was a vocal opponent of the Vriend decision, going as far as to call that landmark case a virus of judicial activism. The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon even wrote a policy paper suggesting that schools should be allowed to fire LGBTQ teachers. To the Minister of Education: why won't you commit to standing up for LGBTQ teachers? Is it because you think that people like me don't belong in classrooms?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Education minister answered that question not once but twice already inside this Assembly.

**Ms Hoffman:** No, she didn't.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I know that the deputy Leader of the Opposition continues to heckle and act inappropriate in the House during

question period. That's unfortunate, but the Education minister already answered that.

What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that this is an attempt by the opposition to distract from the fact that last night they stood in this House and voted with Justin Trudeau, voted yet again against the people of Alberta.

**Ms Notley:** That is so disrespectful to those kids and those teachers.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** That's the history. That's the history of the Leader of the Opposition, who's now heckling and using inappropriate language inside this place, Mr. Speaker, standing with Justin Trudeau against Albertans. That's the NDP way. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** We will have order.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

### **Domestic Violence Prevention**

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All Albertans deserve to feel safe. Unfortunately, not everyone does, particularly in my riding of Airdrie-East, where many are affected by domestic violence and have been left behind by the justice system. Victims need protection from those who have victimized them. They need a government that stands up for victims' rights and protects this vulnerable group in society, many of whom are women and children. Minister, can you please tell my constituents what this government is doing to protect victims of domestic violence?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, and thank you very much for the question. We were elected on a platform commitment to protect vulnerable women and girls, people generally. We know that call crises are up by 10 per cent across the last few years in Alberta, and those at risk of being murdered by an intimate partner – I along with my colleague from Community and Social Services as well as other members in this Assembly were proud to have opened the provincial One Line number, the 24-hour call tech service. It's in over 200 languages.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a United Conservative promise during the campaign was to provide \$2 million in funding to expand the use of electronic monitoring or ankle bracelets for those convicted of domestic assault and given that this has been a successful pilot program running in Red Deer, can the minister tell us how this promise will protect victims of domestic violence and when we can see this program expanded right across the province?

**The Speaker:** The minister of status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much. I don't have a timeline for you as of this point in time. We are reviewing the pilot program. It was a very successful pilot program. Thank you so much for the question. The more important piece about this is that the ankle bracelets actually create a virtual fence. What ends up happening is that any victim that has had this particular situation happen to them doesn't have to look over their shoulder every day when they're going to work, when they're doing their jobs, taking their children to school, or any of those other things. These protections are highly necessary to make sure that victims have a high quality of life.

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

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much, Minister, for that answer. Given that research shows that homicides against women are often preceded by domestic violence by an intimate partner and given that we know that information sharing saves lives and that a United Conservative campaign promise was to enact a version of Clare's law in order to protect future victims, can the minister provide us more details on how our government plans to fulfill this commitment?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services has risen.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the hon. member for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to taking meaningful action to end the cycle of abuse and violence in Alberta. In addition to maintaining funding for women's shelters, we will also be introducing an Alberta version of Clare's law, which will allow those at risk of domestic violence to receive information about an intimate partner's history of violence. This information will provide individuals with a better understanding of the potential risks of remaining in a potentially abusive relationship.

### Agricultural Exports to China

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, this week the government of China took the shocking step of banning all Canadian meat exports, putting the livelihoods of thousands of Alberta farmers at risk. We know that Alberta has world-class farmers and the most rigorous food safety standards in the world. Producers are rightfully demanding that this government take action and fight this ban. To the minister: why have you not committed to more concrete action to ensure that our producers are not penalized by China's moratorium on our products?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can inform the member opposite in this House that I have talked to the federal agriculture minister yesterday. It is unfortunate, it is actually very disappointing, and farmers are quite concerned with the export certificates for beef and for pork that have been cancelled to China. All ongoing shipments to China that are en route right now will actually be honoured. However, any existing ones going forward are something that – we're working with CBSA and the RCMP and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to make sure that if there's anything we as a province can do to help in this investigation, we'll offer those services.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that multiple media outlets have suggested that this is a politically motivated attack as a result of the detainment of the CFO of Chinese company Huawei and given that this is an important issue that must be dealt with immediately, to the same minister: what will you personally do today to ensure that these unfair bans on our products are lifted? Are you looking for other markets? Surely you're doing something and have ideas that you can bring forward today.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to opening up global markets for our farmers. We export a tremendous amount here in Alberta. We produce high-quality foodstuffs that the world needs and wants. With a growing population, we need to find more markets around the world so we can get our high-quality products to feed the world – the minister of trade, actually, a couple of weeks ago was in Korea and Japan trying to open up markets and gain more market access for our farmers there – and it's something that this government has committed to do.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I note that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry wasn't at that trade conference.

Given that this government has been so focused on earplugs and unconstitutional attacks on public-sector workers that they are forgetting to do the actual work of protecting and advocating for our key industries, to the same minister: given that China may soon target other critical agricultural industries in Alberta, what specific supports will you provide farmers to protect them from these international trade disputes on a proactive basis?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, we will look at if there are any damages done from this trade issue, but right now it's too early to tell. The farmers, their crops, and everything: we haven't actually seen any impacts on them, but it is something that we'll closely monitor. We'll work with farmers to see if there is any economic harm.

It's a little rich coming from that side of the House, about economic trade, because it's something where you had a former economic trade and development minister who in this very House said that if farmers and businesses were having trouble paying the carbon tax, they need to look at their own management.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is rising.

2:10

### Public Health Care

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve to have fair access to health care regardless of the depth of their pockets. That's why I was so dismayed to see Bill 203, which would ban block billing for insurance services in the province of Alberta, be killed by government members in committee. The practice of block billing for health services represents an affront to public health care and seems to fly directly in the face of this Premier's so-called public health guarantee. To the Premier: won't you come clean and admit that you have no plan to keep public health care in this province and that credit card medicine is on the horizon?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier and our government have been clear that we stand for public health care. We'll continue to protect public health care.

The hon. member is referring to a standing committee that the Premier is not a member of. I do look forward to hearing the recommendations from that private members' committee when they send those recommendations to the House for a decision by all of this Assembly. I guess, from what the hon. member is saying, there may be a recommendation not to proceed with this bill. I'll be interested to see why the committee thought that it was the right decision, and then we'll see if the House agrees with the committee's decision.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that government members limited debate on Bill 203 to 30 minutes at most in committee yesterday and given that those members would not even let the bill proceed to this House for normal, regular debate, to the Premier: won't you admit that this new process of taking private members' bills through committee is really just a way to kill all legislation offered by the Official Opposition?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, that committee is designed to be able to expedite lots of private members' motions.

But, again, when it comes to the member, Albertans have got to ask if they can really trust what he's saying. He just said there that the government members of that standing committee went out of their way to limit debate for 30 minutes when, in fact, I'm informed that it was all members of the committee . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** You just said that they weren't government yesterday.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . all members of the committee – despite the fact that the deputy leader of the NDP wants to heckle and say rude things even during that, those are the facts of what took place during the committee. Again, Albertans should ask: can they really trust that member?

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this Premier has insulted health care workers and given that my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre pointed out yesterday that the Minister of Health has tried to claim just this week that front-line health care workers aren't putting patient care first, to the Premier: you're really just setting up our public health care system, aren't you, for cuts and privatization? Why won't you just admit it?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Again, the Premier and our government have been clear. We stand for public health care. We're going to work hard to make sure that our system can continue to provide the services that Albertans expect. I'm very proud of our Minister of Health, who's working very hard despite the fact that he inherited an absolute mess from the NDP, again, who destroyed our province's economy and our financial situation. Despite that, he's still working forward on our health care guarantee, fighting to protect front-line workers in our health care system, fighting to protect our public health care system so that Albertans can enjoy and utilize that system. Again, I appreciate all his hard work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

#### Water Licensing and Cochrane's Water Supply

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cochrane's consumptive water licence can accommodate approximately 40,000 residents. The town's current population is 30,000, and with Cochrane being one of Canada's fastest growing communities, our town could run out its water licence in just seven to eight years. Can the minister of the environment tell this House if the government will consider changes to the water licence transfer process to allow nonconsumptive licences to be changed to consumptive licences when municipalities can demonstrate they will have no impact on withdrawal from the river?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for the question. We are aware of Cochrane's water needs and continue to work with the town on its development of long-term solutions to that problem and getting a steady supply of safe drinking water to the community. Changing a nonconsumptive licence for a consumptive licence sometimes comes with consequences. It's important that we make sure that we go through that process properly with the community of Cochrane. We'll continue to do that. We will work, of course, with the hon. member as well as with this community to make sure that we can solve the problems for the town of Cochrane.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that there are various ways by which water consumption can be reduced and given that stormwater and treated waste water can be used to support irrigation of recreational green spaces, would the government be willing to consider policy amendments to current legislation to allow municipalities to reuse stormwater for use in irrigation of these green spaces?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for bringing it up, a valuable opportunity to streamline our processes around waste water and stormwater use. Waste water and stormwater are already being used in many communities across the province for irrigation and other purposes. It's a great idea. I appreciate the hon. member raising it in this House. Of course, we're always looking for ways to eliminate red tape and streamline processes to be able to help our communities. We'd love to hear more of his ideas on that important issue. We'll continue to work towards that.

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

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the town of Cochrane has negotiated a potential transfer with a local organization that possesses a nonconsumptive water licence in exchange for the town providing that group with water and sewer services and given that this mutually beneficial deal will give the town access to a much-needed water resource, can the minister inform the Chamber whether his ministry has given consideration to approving such a transfer?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have not seen that particular file across my desk yet. Innovative solutions like that are things that we are interested in. We look forward to hearing more from the hon. member on this issue, and we are happy to work with both him and his community to try to find a way forward on that.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

#### Minimum Wage for Youth

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a sad day in Alberta history when a government with no idea on how to actually boost youth employment rates desperately reintroduced age-based wage discrimination, a discredited policy that was rightly removed 20 years ago. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what do you plan to tell postsecondary students who find their employment cut in favour of the now cheaper underage workers?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday the member opposite asked me to listen to the words of a former MLA for Calgary-Varsity and minister of labour, words that he said over 20 years ago. Instead of listening to what he had to say 20 years ago, I spoke to him yesterday, and I asked him about our current process. He shared with me that this is a very different time and very different circumstances. He is supportive of our policy to get our youth back to work and all Albertans, and that is exactly what the student job-creation wage will do. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the only other province that has this policy has higher than average youth unemployment, proving it a failure, and given that today's new wage policy unfairly targets only those who are both underage and in school and given that the government has now created a strong financial incentive for underage workers to shed their status as students so that they'll be paid more, to the Education minister: do you support this flawed policy, that will obviously increase high school dropout rates?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. We have a youth job crisis in this province. According to Stats Canada in the first quarter of this year, 2019, youth unemployment rate for under 18 was 21.5 per cent. This is three times higher than the average unemployment rate. We need to get our students back to work. They need to get their first job so they get on the job ladder, get the experience and skills they need so that when they actually finish school, they can enter the workforce and have a great career.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have access to *Hansard*, that shows us that the Conservative government of the late '90s found that age-based wage discrimination was a flawed policy, prone to confusion and abuse, and given that I hope the minister asked about employers abusing young workers when he spoke to the former minister, to the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: will you fulfill the mandate of your office and immediately take steps to remove this new age-based wage discrimination policy, which was identified as being onerous for employers in the '90s?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, again, I spoke to the minister previously, who is now a constituent of Calgary-Varsity, who indicated that he is supportive of these measures to get our youth back to work. I'd like to point out that this is a student job-creation wage. This is not discrimination. In fact, they have a similar wage structure in Ontario.

I'd like to also point out that the member opposite also helped prove the point that by reducing the wages, we can actually get Albertans back to work. An employer who was supporting her yesterday came forward and said that they actually pay students lower wages until they get employed.

Thank you.

2:20

#### Minister of Finance

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to learn new details about this Minister of Finance and his links to groups that promote discrimination against LGBT Albertans. In a news article last year the minister said that in general he supports parental notification of GSA membership. To the minister, who shouldn't need a guard dog, so the House leader can stay on his leash: does the Minister of Finance support GSAs, support them being called gay-straight alliances, and should all public, Catholic, and private schools be required to allow GSAs?

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

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted at 2:20.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This government and I personally support GSAs in school. I think our Education minister has been clear that this government and this province will have the strongest statutory protections for GSAs across the country. I'm supportive of that, and I appreciate the opportunity to express it.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given that the Minister of Finance's answer is not factual, given that yesterday on social media Devyn Rorem, who grew up in the minister's constituency, reminded Albertans about the Minister of Finance's connections to a school that bans same-sex relationships and compared those relationships to demonic activity, given that Devyn wrote, "How are LGBT+ youth supposed to feel when their MLA is part of institutions that do not welcome them?" will the Minister of Finance confirm for this House that he does not think being gay makes one a demon, and will he answer Devyn Rorem's question?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've made my position clear on GSAs, and I will say this. Constituents in Grande Prairie-Wapiti overwhelmingly elected me to serve them; in fact, by 75 per cent. The opposition continues to distract this government from the reason that Albertans sent us here to form a government, that is to deal with the economy, that is ensure that we're creating jobs and opportunities for all Albertans.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that also yesterday Albertans learned that the Minister of Finance is tied to an organization that promoted an event about helping people deal with, quote, unwanted same-sex attractions and given that this minister won't even answer questions about his links to conversion therapy, to the Minister of Finance, not the House leader: will the Minister of Finance stand in this House and disavow conversion therapy once and for all? It's easy to do.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has disavowed conversion therapy. I absolutely support that position. Again, I think we have an example of the opposition just seeking distraction from their record. Albertans overwhelmingly fired them on April 16 to elect a government with Albertans' priorities. That is this government. We will keep our eye on the ball.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

#### Affordable Housing in Lethbridge

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lethbridge social housing has nearly 400 senior's units, 300 family units, and 100 affordable housing units but nearly 400 households on the wait-list at any given time. These wait-lists leave our valuable community members out in the dark or keep them relying on the kindness of friends and family for a place to call home. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what are this government's plans to meet the housing needs of these seniors and make sure that these seniors have a reliable home?

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to hon. member for the question. Affordable housing is a critical issue for some Albertans, particularly those with low income and some seniors on fixed incomes. Our government will ensure more affordable housing is available for those who need it. We pledged to expand



the use of mixed-income housing to help all Albertans, including seniors, to continue to stay in their home community. We will honour that pledge.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that affordable housing needs to be exactly that and given that an individual living in homelessness costs the system an average of \$114,850 a year, meaning that there could be a more fiscally responsible solution to getting folks without homes into reliable housing situations, to the same minister: how will this ministry affordably and responsibly build housing to meet the needs of Lethbridge seniors requiring safe homes?

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

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuing a private and public partnership option to bring private-sector capital into helping build much-needed public infrastructure will mean that our taxpayer dollars will go much further. This partnership will mean that this government will be able to support the building of more affordable housing for the same monetary investment, giving our community members the chance to lead enjoyable lives.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Given that current affordable housing legislation bogs down our management bodies, delays processing times, perpetuates the wait-list problem for those who need to find homes, surely costing taxpayers additional money through backlogging the system, and fails to serve on an annual basis as many as 2,550 Albertans in Lethbridge, a city of 101,482 inhabitants, to the same minister: how will your department work to help seniors and low-income Albertans secure a dependable and affordable home?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Seniors and Housing in partnership with the associate ministry of red tape reduction has just started reviewing red tape reduction opportunities. Once efficiencies that we are implementing are automatically – then assured income for the severely handicapped clients transition to the Alberta seniors' benefits program. We will continue to have discussions with our department staff and stakeholders to identify and reduce the burden of red tape by . . .

#### School Nutrition Program at Normandeau School

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, 452 students at Normandeau school in Red Deer will go hungry this school year. A number of these kids come from homes that are struggling to make ends meet. While this government moves full steam ahead with their plan to give billions away to wealthy corporations, kids will lose steam without food in their bellies. Premier: why is it more important to fatten the coffers of your wealthy friends and donors while children go hungry?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it never ceases to amaze me how low the Official Opposition will go. What a thing to say about the hon. Premier of this province. It is so ridiculous what the opposition continues to do inside this House. Do you know why that is? It's because last night the opposition stood in this House and one by one voted with Justin Trudeau, voted to not defend this province against his attack on our province with a carbon tax. They're trying to distract Albertans from that. But I can tell you that back home where you and I come from, Olds and Sundre, for example, they haven't forgotten.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the hungry kids will be glad to hear that they're a distraction.

Normandeau school is so worried about losing their school nutrition funding that they are asking businesses to donate a hundred dollars per month . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Preamble.

**Mr. Dang:** . . . or a thousand dollars for a school year to keep the program going.

**Some Hon. Members:** Preamble.

**Mr. Dang:** For many of these kids, getting breakfast and lunch at school are the only meals they'll get in a day.

**Some Hon. Members:** Preamble.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there is one person in this room who decides what a preamble is, and none of them are on that side of the dais.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South can start his question again.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to hear that those hungry kids will hear that their cause is a distraction.

Given that Normandeau school is so worried about losing their school nutrition funding that they are asking businesses to donate a hundred dollars per month or a thousand dollars for the school year to keep it going and that for many of these kids breakfast and lunch at school are the only meals they'll get in a day, Premier: I know your path to balance is a bit meandering, but is this really the plan, to make up for lost revenues in corporate tax giveaways by soliciting donations from small businesses . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, the question is ludicrous, not because of what it's about; it's the way it's being asked. Again, to imply that the hon. Premier would not care about children in any way is completely inappropriate. [interjections] But here are the facts, Mr. Speaker. The Official Opposition destroyed . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we heard the question very well this time. We will hear the answer very well this time.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The Official Opposition destroyed this province when they were in government, particularly the finances, had us on track for a hundred billion dollars in debt. We will work with our province. We will make sure that we keep the front-line services that Albertans need, but we will also get us on a path to balance because that's what Albertans voted for on April 16, and that's what this government is going to do.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that we know the school is crowdfunding because the minister and Premier refuse to give them clarity and yesterday the Premier complained that the minister just hadn't had enough time since the election to do her job – when we were elected we had even less time and school boards were not forced to make panicked cuts in the absence of the information they needed – given this, there is no excuse. To the Minister of Education: why won't somebody over there make sure the minister's job is done? Hungry kids are waiting.

2:30

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a ludicrous statement. We understand, I understand about feeding children and how important it is. As we saw with enrolment growth, the NDP is using speculation and scare tactics to create undue stress in our education system. Our government has been consistent. We're committed to funding education and supporting our students. We're going to do it. We did it yesterday. We're going to do it tomorrow. We're going to do it next week.

Thank you.

### Film and Television Industry Support

**Ms Goehring:** It was good to see the minister of culture speak about Alberta's screen industry in question period recently. Alberta's movie and television industries are an important part of building and diversifying our economy. The minister said in her response to a question about the industry that she had met with well over 30 stakeholders. To the minister of culture: can you inform the Assembly as to who some of those stakeholders were?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you for the question. We were really, really honoured to be able to attend the Banff media festival. At the festival we had everyone from smaller media groups that work with the Canadian media fund and the Alberta media fund all the way to Netflix, HBO, the Oprah Winfrey group as well as other media groups.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the UCP's platform stated it would remove the screen industry's current system of grants in lieu of a tax credit and given that the minister stated in QP that a tax credit actually gives an incredible ability, forward predictability, and stable funding, again to the minister of culture: will the tax credit be just another grant program under a different name, or will it be a labour-based tax credit, or both?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of culture.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Those are actually all things that we're working on right now. It's a really good question. We will be going to a tax credit. It's significantly different from a fund because there's an opportunity to really, really build and diversify the business within the province, everything from screen-based production to postproduction to bricks and mortar. We're really, really excited to get this rolling.

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

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that attracting new screen productions to Alberta provides many economic benefits such as jobs, full hotels and restaurants, and helps to promote tourism, to the minister of culture: will the screen industry be addressed in this fall's budget, and will the cap be raised for the Alberta media fund?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you again for the great question. We're just working towards that right now. As you know, we're just finishing off with some of our interim supply, moving towards what is going to be happening with the panel coming forward. We're extremely excited about working with the industry even more. There's a lot more consultation that still has to be done in order to figure out what

the best system is moving forward. Very excited to be able to share that with you in the near future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Agricultural Exports to China (continued)

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. China is considering halting all pork and beef imports from Canada over unwarranted food safety concerns, concerns that from an Alberta perspective are political rather than health related. Alberta's farmers are already under pressure to maintain secure access to export markets for agrifood products, all while our federal government exacerbates the issue. Can the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry update this House on the status of Albertan agriculture exports?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that very important question as we do share a border and a lot of farmers, and I'm sure you're hearing the same that I am about how important this issue is. As I mentioned earlier, the Alberta government has been notified of a temporary suspension placed on Canadian export certificates for beef and pork. Something that even the Canadian Cattlemen's Association said today is that in the first quarter of 2019 exports to mainland China were \$48 million, and the temporary loss of beef access to the Chinese market is unfortunate and may have financial impacts for both the live animals and processing sectors. So it is something that we take very seriously.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the answer. Given that the ruling Chinese government has halted imports for canola, pork, and now beef as a political tool and given that western Canada is disproportionately affected by market access concerns for agriproducts and given that China is one of the largest importers of our agricultural exports, what is this government doing to ensure that the situation for Alberta farmers doesn't get any worse?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke with Minister Bibeau, the federal agriculture minister, and we're doing everything we can from a provincial standpoint to work with our partners in the federal government to ensure that we do anything that we can to help in this, the investigation that's going on between the Canadian Border Services Agency as well as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the RCMP to try to get to the bottom of the fraudulent export certificates that have been found. We're trying to make sure that we can normalize trade with China but, as well, to ensure that global market access around the world is available to our farmers.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that this block on Canadian meat is the second step taken by Chinese authorities after blocking imports on canola in March and given that my constituents are dramatically affected by concerns with market access, what is the minister doing to ensure that more countries don't follow China's lead and block Canadian exports?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, it's working through other countries around the world to make sure that we can expand our market access, whether it's Korea or Japan, other Asian countries, every corner around the world to make sure that we do a good job of selling our high-quality food products that we produce here in

Alberta. About 40 per cent of our canola exports go to China. If we are to find other markets around the world, we have to do a good job of selling the good Canadian story that we have here, that we produce a great, high-quality food that can feed the growing population around the world.

### Skilled Trades Labour Supply

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, as a red seal tradesman and owner of a construction company it's become more and more apparent that over the past 20 years we continue to see an ongoing trend of qualified tradespeople retiring at a rate far greater than what is graduating. It is obvious that if not addressed now, this will continue to hinder our economy and the sustainability of our province. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what steps are you taking to increase enrolment in our trades programs?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. It's something that we do indeed recognize and is a top priority for us. Working towards making sure that we have more people pursuing vocational educational opportunities and entering the skilled trades is a high priority. To help us achieve that, we'll be working with a number of different organizations to help strengthen the great work that they're doing, including organizations like Skills Canada Alberta, Careers: the Next Generation, and Women Building Futures.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is more than apparent that a principal cause of this shortage is a lack of youth interest and engagement in the trades. Given that a main key to solving this problem now and in the future will be to try to find a way to improve youth enrolment in the skilled trades, to the Minister of Advanced Education: what specific steps are you taking to encourage youth involvement in the skilled trades?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you as well to the hon. member for the question. He is indeed correct. Apart from the high unemployment that we're seeing, particularly affecting our youth, we are seeing that translate, of course, into less inclination to pursue skilled trades. We recognize it as a problem, so we have some very specific action that we're going to take to help encourage younger people to pursue vocational educational opportunities, including some additional scholarships for high school students to help them pursue the skilled trades.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you to the minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. After working and mentoring hundreds of apprentices, it has become apparent that technology and equipment are advancing faster than the trades curriculum. It is time that we make sure to prepare our tradespeople to be successful in the workforce. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what is your plan to help modernize our trades program and continue to make sure that our trades education leads Canada and the world?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the hon. member for the question. He's correct with

respect to the advancement of technological change and technological initiatives. I was reading recently a report by the Conference Board of Canada that indicated that over a third of Alberta's workers are in jobs that are susceptible to automation. So we will be proactive in making sure that the skilled trades are changing in a way to meet that growing change in technological innovation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Seniors' Drug Coverage

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government made seniors a priority. We ensured they received the care they needed. We built more than 2,000 new long-term care and dementia beds while increasing funding for home care. In fact, our 2019 platform committed to full drug coverage for all low- and middle-income seniors. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing. You have told this House that seniors will receive all the funding that seniors need and want. Will the UCP commit to providing full drug coverage for seniors, or are seniors living on fixed income not a priority for this government?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question, hon. member. This government cares about seniors so much, and we are working every day to plan for service and programs and to serve seniors. We want to make sure that Alberta seniors live the way they need.

Thank you.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that approximately 10 per cent of seniors with multiple prescriptions spend as much as \$500 a year on copayments and given that this means there are seniors in Alberta who are forced to choose between filling their prescriptions or filling the fridge, to the Minister of Seniors and Housing. Under our plan 4 out of 5 seniors in Alberta would no longer have to make copayments. Will your government commit to improving drug access, or does the UCP government just consider these services as waste?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government will work closely with stakeholders to make certain the seniors' concerns are heard and that they have supports to age safely and independently in their own community. This government will also support the societies and organizations that provide service and care to seniors. We will continue to work diligently and tirelessly to provide financial benefits to help seniors with low incomes to meet their basic needs and to make sure that they get care in their homes and affordable personal and health supports.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unacceptable that seniors are still struggling to pay for day-to-day necessities like prescription drugs. Under our plan the average eligible senior would have saved \$200 per year. Again to the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how will your government support some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens, or will they suffer from the government's impending cuts to pay for its massive tax giveaway to wealthy corporations?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government has repeatedly failed our seniors. The NDP has had four years to adjust to the needs of the growing senior population. Our government will ensure that our most cherished residents have the support that they need.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to the tablings.

### Tabling Returns and Reports (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. First, a CBC article that I referenced in my question to the Minister of Health yesterday, in which CBC spoke with the Health Quality Council CEO, Andrew Neuner, who we have welcomed in the House today, and stated that the council believes “the evidence supporting the need for a superlab in Edmonton still stands.”

I also have an opinion piece from today’s *Edmonton Journal* by Sara Chow, a front-line lab technologist, who states, “The cancellation of the Edmonton Hub Lab . . . will impact patient care” and that “DynaLife does not have the expertise or technology to perform the specialized testing . . . that Albertans need.”

Lastly, I have a letter from Sandra Simard, a front-line medical lab tech – I will table this after.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of a letter on the topic of Bill 9 from a correctional worker, in fact two of them, very concerned about the unconstitutionality of Bill 9 and the safety of their pension.

I also have another five copies of a very lengthy letter from a fellow from Coaldale, Alberta, who’s a corrections worker and who goes into some detail on how he does not support Bill 9’s challenge to his livelihood. Again, a corrections worker, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by Edmonton-Glenora.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with the requisite five copies of three letters from three different constituents who were, in their view, to paraphrase quickly, frankly very deplored at the Premier’s behaviour in handing out earplugs in the Chamber, encouraging his members to ignore the opposition.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton Glenora, followed by St. Albert.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a letter from the Deputy Minister of Alberta Education, Curtis Clarke, directing Alberta educators to be well aware that the government is moving forward on bringing back provincial achievement tests for eight-year-olds with grade 3 provincial achievement tests.

The second is a letter from Karin Brusse-Paterson, president of Battle River local 32, who expresses her deep concern with this. “Imposing standardized testing of 8-year olds is wrong,” she says. She also goes on to infer that when it comes to outing LGBTQ kids, the government trusts their judgment on that, but the government doesn’t trust their judgment on assessment, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of a letter from one of my constituents. Her name is Brandi Potter, and she is a licensed practical nurse. She has very serious concerns about Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, or bad-faith bargaining.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For my final tabling, a letter from Sandra Simard, a front-line medical lab technologist for 37 years, as posted on the Health Sciences Association website, where she states that “the construction of a super lab is imperative” and that it would “streamline testing to effect cost savings” and that a public-private lab system would be more costly and less efficient than a fully public or private system.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others?

I have a tabling today. I have the requisite six copies of the 2018-2019 annual report from the Health Quality Council.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration, pursuant to the Agrology Profession Act the Alberta Institute of Agrologists’ 73rd annual general meeting report; pursuant to the Architects Act the Alberta Association of Architects 2018 annual report; pursuant to the Workers’ Compensation Act the Workers’ Compensation Board of Alberta 2018 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order, and there was a point of order raised by the hon. Minister of Transportation. I will hear his comments now.

### Point of Order Insulting Language

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m sad to say – and we all witnessed it – that the NDP is sinking to new lows every day, and today was no exception to that case. It was a terrible example of behaviour. The Member for Lethbridge-West essentially called the Government House Leader a dog. Now, I will get to my recitations. I don’t have the Blues, of course, but she said something to the effect that somebody doesn’t “need a guard dog” and to keep the Government House Leader “on his leash.” There is no doubt that she was referring directly to the Government House Leader and calling him a dog. Had it been on the other foot, I would dare say that it would be on the front page of the newspaper if the hon. Government House Leader had called the Member for Lethbridge-West a dog. It would lead the news tonight at 6 o’clock.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, further, it’s disrespectful to the people of Sundre to hear their favourite son referred to as a dog. Under 23(h), (i), and (j) this certainly qualifies as “abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.” Under *Beauchesne*’s, sixth edition, page 142, section 484(2): “When members are entitled to the designation, they are referred to in the House as” that designation, not as a dog.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I will need no interjections from the Official Opposition. However, I expect that I will call upon you momentarily because I do in fact have the benefit of the Blues. The minister stated: “To the minister, who shouldn’t need a guard dog, so the House leader can

stay on his leash.” Hon. members, we all are very aware of personal attacks, insults, or obscenities that are not in order based upon *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 63. The minister knows what she did. She was aware of what she said. She will stand, apologize, and withdraw.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I do concur in regard to both the standing orders and *Beauchesne’s*. I think it’s entirely appropriate that we on behalf of the Member for Lethbridge-West do withdraw those comments.

**The Speaker:** Correction: I called the member a minister. That is also not the case, but I appreciate the withdrawal.

We are at Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I’d like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A2. Are there any comments, questions to be offered with respect to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment to change the name of the act from An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business to a more appropriate name, substituting “Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2019.”

I think it’s important that we speak to what’s underlying the desire to change the name of the act, and that is that it is fairly apparent that the intention of this bill is not, in fact, to make Alberta open for business. We’ve had the opportunity in this House to speak a number of times about the research that has been done on reduction of corporate taxes and the fact that they, in fact, do not lead to changes in employment and do not allow for greater access for businesses to do good things. Instead, I think the emphasis on this act simply is to suppress the well-being of the labour force and to stop the members of the community from appropriately working on their own behalf.

I’m very concerned about the nature of this bill and feel that it’s appropriate that we stop making it sound like it’s doing something that, in fact, it is not doing. I would like to see any evidence from the government, in fact, that this bill will enhance business in the province of Alberta. We’ve had a great deal of time speaking about the fact that it doesn’t enhance the well-being of people in this province and, instead, is removing the rights of workers to represent themselves and to ensure that they are full participants in the benefits of their own labour.

Given that that is what is happening here and that it is not actually opening up Alberta for business, then I think it’s appropriate that we speak about what it is. It’s a limitation on labour. It’s an attempt to stop labour from engaging in the activities that they need to in order to be appropriately represented. The reality is that labour members in this community only have one thing to offer in their employment setting, and that is their labour; that is, the things that they do. They, then, also need a right to be able to gather collectively to share the power that comes from representation in an

organized union in order to be able to be appropriately represented with an appropriate amount of power.

The issue in any labour relations is the fact that employers have, ultimately, all the power. They can make the decisions about how much you get paid. They can make the decisions about when you’ll be working. They can make the decisions about what kind of safety mechanisms are brought into place. All the union members can do is that they can gather together in order to be able to suggest that should the employer begin to act in an egregious way – and we know that this happens all the time – they need to be able to be protected. That means they need to be able to have a right to form unions. One of the things that this bill does is that it makes it very difficult to form those unions without exposing themselves to intimidation by employers.

Now, I’m very clear, of course, that there are very many employers out there who are excellent employers. I’ve enjoyed really positive relationships with all of my employers, I would say, throughout my career, and I feel quite privileged as a result of that, that I happened to work with industries and business owners who were very nice and very considerate. In those cases, those business owners also were not opposed to the workers bringing forward their concerns and indeed forming unions in the workplace. In fact, some of them quite openly allowed meetings for unionization to occur in their setting because they understood that what the workers are simply asking for is an opportunity to have a voice, to be able to speak on their own behalf.

Any good employer is quite happy to have workers voice their concerns because they know that they will learn a lot about what is best for the employees, and if the employees are well represented and if they’re protected in the work site, they will be happier, and they will stay in the business much longer. I think that we have a long history of having achieved this notion of collective bargaining in western democracies, and it’s very important that we seek to protect and enhance the benefits that come out of this kind of collective action.

It’s not that people are opposed to, you know, businesses doing what it is they wish to do. They just simply wish to be part of it and not be secondary in the considerations that are made for moving forward and for seeking success in a business. The vast majority of employees that I know are quite happy to see their employers be very successful, and they wish their employers to benefit from the successes that they achieve by the creation of industry and will do things often quite extraordinary to ensure that that happens.

3:00

I mean, many business leaders that I know will tell you about how important it is that particular individuals have done the work that they’ve done, you know, the person at the front desk, the secretary that helps to keep you organized and helps to keep you focused and makes sure that you respond to correspondence in an appropriate and timely way to concerns coming from the community. Sometimes it absolutely saved businesses from great devastation, and employers are very seriously sad to see it when they leave. And we know that workers that are protected by collective bargaining tend to be more satisfied and tend to move around less in their communities and to stay in the business more.

It’s a pretty straightforward request here, that we look at what is actually happening here in this bill, that we actually take some time to not pretend that this is about creating businesses but it’s really, in this bill, an attempt to change labour legislation. You know, we could have suggested something ridiculous and ironic for the title of this bill, but we’re trying to co-operate with the government side of the House, trying to help them to be more clear in their deliberations, so we are suggesting, rather, to remove the title, which

is An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, and instead replace it with a reasonable title to reflect what actually happens in the bill itself, which is Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act because that's exactly what's happening in this bill. They're intending to amend the labour relations in this province.

Now, we, of course, thought that amending the labour relations in this province was important because, in fact, many labour relations had not even been examined for over 30 years in this province. For over 30 years it was neglected by the previous PC governments, and we felt it was time to bring this forward, so we did. But all of our changes were focused on ensuring that labour relations were good in this province, that we didn't have threats of strikes, that we didn't have concerns with the employees in this province either in terms of their dissatisfaction with their work settings or, you know, issues around safety. Many of our changes were around safety in the workplace and so on. You'll see that we actually engaged in significantly more labour relations changes in the last four years than had been done in many, many more years previous to that. As I say, sometimes statutes were on the books for over 30 years without any kind of a second look, so it was important, then, that we bring this forward.

I'm very discouraged that one of the very first things that happened when this new government got elected is that they came in to undo work that had been long requested and long overdue in this province simply because they have an ideological bent that they can't seem to exercise. They come in and from their rigid 1950s ideology step in to try to suppress the ability of workers to take care of themselves and to have a voice at the table.

Now, I know that, you know, not hearing the voices of other people is a pretty consistent aspect of this particular government, having handed out earplugs to specifically not hear the voices and, of course, using committees, for example, to suppress bills that they don't like so that they don't even have to see those bills in the first place. Now here we are having bills that, really, go against the ability of workers to participate in their own well-being.

I would suggest that it's very important that we be honest in our deliberations here today and that we are clear with people that what's happening in this bill is not in fact making Alberta open for business. It's always been open for business. Businesses have done very well. Unfortunately, we went through very difficult economic times in the last four years, and I know that the government likes to blame that on our government all the time. But you notice that they don't stand up and say: oh, yeah, and the conservative government in Saskatchewan was also bad, too.

If you look at the statistics, you'll see that the things that they throw at our face, the loss of jobs, for example, which we agree on, and the reduction of our standing with credit agencies – we understand those are problems, but they are not reflective of the government of the day. Those exact same things happened to the conservative government right next door. Clearly, they are misusing statistics to be able to create a narrative which is in fact not supported by the statistics if they look at them more broadly. Look at them not simply as to how it is that things got difficult in the province of Alberta but also as that they were equally difficult in other places that had the same issue as we did; that is, a dependence on oil and gas as a major source of income in the province.

We know that they like to create a narrative, and they do that mostly by keeping the blinders on and not being willing to look at the broad truth, as is expressed by numbers and the statistics that are widely available. Simply choosing to look at one downturn without looking at the other dozens of downturns that have occurred in the country of Canada tells us that they're not really interested in

the downturn at all. That is just simply a narrative that they used effectively to get themselves returned to government.

I know that the denial of research is something that's sort of endemic in this government. You know, we've demonstrated in the past that cutting corporate taxes doesn't increase jobs, that taking the rights away from workers is not going to increase jobs. For example, in the case of GSAs, the elimination of GSAs are likely to increase the number of adolescent suicides both, by the way, the research indicates, for gay students but also for nongay students in schools that have GSAs.

The point of all that is that the evidence is there. The statistics are there. You have to read statistics with an underlying understanding of what it is that you're trying to ask when you create the statistic and that helps you to make decisions about the outcome, not simply to cherry-pick small slivers of statistics in order to be able to make a narrative that isn't true if you look at the broad breadth of the statistics such as in this case, where we're able to say that Alberta did not suffer the slings and arrows of misfortune that have been visited upon us somehow differentially than other places in the country such as the province of Saskatchewan, which, in fact, has a conservative government and which actually used different mechanisms to respond to that. They were doing cutbacks in Saskatchewan, shutting down libraries, closing school programs, and other things like that at the same time that we were actually creating jobs by building bridges, building hospitals, and building the cancer centre in Calgary.

The government side of the House likes to say that jobs were lost under our tenure. We understand that many jobs were lost. But, actually, if you read the statistics properly and look at it not simply as to how many jobs have been lost in the time since the day we got elected till now but, rather, when the job loss began to occur, you see that it actually began to occur in November of 2014, while the Conservatives were in office. In fact, the vast majority of the significant downturn, more than 50 per cent of the job loss, occurred before the election actually occurred. Yes, it did continue after the election. Of course, much of that continued in the month or two before we had a chance to even begin governance in this province. So the vast majority of job loss in this province is on the Conservatives' failure to prepare for a downturn in the oil and gas economy.

You know, it's a bit of a ruse for them to say that somehow our policies had created job loss in this province. In fact, if you look at the last two years, the number of actual people employed in the province of Alberta increased, did not decrease, and to say otherwise would be to mislead this House, this Chamber. Our policies, as they came into effect, indeed did increase the number of jobs in the province of Alberta. As a result, every time they stand up with this narrative that somehow we were in office while people lost jobs, I'd suggest that this is a falsehood that they know very well is a falsehood, but because it creates a narrative, they're prepared to use it.

**3:10**

I think the title of this particular bill is part of that narrative, is part of this notion that somehow Alberta was not open for business. But, indeed, Alberta was open for business, always was. We experienced a downturn, and unfortunately our government paid the price, as governments often do when there is an economic downturn, even though the policies of the government itself are not particularly related to the downturn or did not cause the downturn. In fact, a careful reading of the statistics, which I'm very happy to walk through in detail if the government wishes me to do – I'm more than happy to bring in and walk through month by month when the job losses occurred. I can demonstrate to them that, in

fact, under our government more people were employed in the province of Alberta than at any other time in the history of the province of Alberta.

However, subsequent to the election of this government the number of job losses has gone up. Here we have a situation where they come in and say that they're going to focus on jobs and increase jobs but, in fact, they are also suffering the slings and arrows of misfortune from across the broader economy. But should I stand here today and accuse this government of removing jobs from this province? I can do that. That's what they have done to us. That's what they have said repeatedly. Should I stand here and say that this government has lost 26,000 jobs since they came in? Has this Labour minister actually failed already? Should this Labour minister be replaced because they have lost that number of jobs? That's what they're saying about our time in. But I can actually say that during our time the number of people employed was higher than ever before. This Labour minister can't say that.

I think, then, that means that we should stop trying to mislead the public, stop trying to use bills to create a narrative which does not adequately and properly reflect the statistics that are available to us. If they choose to do that, then it tells me that they know something and they are trying to hide something and they are trying to mislead the public in the province of Alberta. That's not something that I wish to participate in. I have no desire to mislead the citizens of the province of Alberta, in spite of the fact that this government would like to drag us along on this ruse. So I would suggest that it is time that we stand up and say the truth about this bill.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise today to offer more comment on the amendment before us and I'd like to commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for his thoughtful analysis that he just offered to the Legislature on why he thought that the amendment, renaming the bill which is initially called An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business is an appropriate amendment, because the naming of the bill as An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business is one that actually deflects from what the content of the bill actually accomplishes.

What it does, Madam Chair, is something that actually changes labour relations statutes and amends labour relations law and employment standards in the province of Alberta. As such, it should be appropriately named in a way that reflects what it actually does. The amendment does that by substituting an alternate name, that being "Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2019." It's an appropriate effort to properly describe this piece of legislation as an act that makes some very significant changes to employment standards and labour relations statutes in the province of Alberta.

I think we've made a very large effort and we continue to do so to explain to all those in the province who have an interest in protecting workers' rights in Alberta that this piece of legislation is an attack on working people. It's an attack on young workers in particular. It's an attack in many cases on young females in the workplace who are liquor servers. It's an attack on those who are in the oil patch, who are amongst workers who commonly work overtime and may seek to bank that wage.

It's not anything that would resemble something that would make for an atmosphere where you'd claim that we have a healthy business environment as a result. Anything that creates disharmony in your labour market and creates a distrust or a mistrust between working people and the employers that employ them is not

something that creates an atmosphere that is healthy for business to operate in a way that is attractive for people to want to invest in it. You have to have contentment, let's say, on both sides of the table, where employers and employees reach fairly negotiated settlements. The underlying values that allow that to happen are embedded in labour legislation.

What we see, I think, by the government in naming the act as they initially have, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, is maybe an attempt to tell the world that this piece of legislation is actually slanted to favour the business community as opposed to having balanced labour relations in the province that respects both parties to labour negotiations. The claim that it makes Alberta open for business maybe is an unveiled advertisement that the favourite son of this government is the business community, and they would rather see labour legislation tilted in favour of the business community and against working people. The measures that are included in this Bill 2 certainly almost without exception take money away from individuals and give it corporations.

That shows the underlying values of this government. They really see people as being servants of an economy rather than seeing it as incumbent upon them as a government to help design an economy that serves people. That, I think, is the crux of the matter, that individual working people are not valued. They're seen as input costs to serve an economy, and the benefits of their labour should flow up towards business. Trickle-down economics has been discredited time and time again, yet this government seems to cling to it in the hopes that somehow this time it'll be different, that the laissez-faire Adam Smith ideology and philosophy will somehow change overnight and money will flow to working people and it will be equitable. It doesn't happen that way. I mean, there has to be legislation in place to protect those who are less powerful in the labour relations negotiation process. You have to have fair processes.

This really goes ahead and tilts the balance against working people. For example, when you look at the reduction in minimum wage, I mean, the argument made by the government to do that, that in fact that \$2 reduction in minimum wage for youth workers is going to incent business owners to create more employment, that they're going to take that \$2 an hour or roughly \$3,500 to \$4,000 a year per employee who's subjected to this wage rollback and they're automatically going to invest it in new jobs, simply hasn't borne fruit. It doesn't have a historical record in fact, but that's the argument that the government relies upon. What happens, in fact, is that the individual business owners will simply pad their profits. They don't necessarily go out and hire new people as a result of those savings.

3:20

I really try to put myself in the position of, say, a young student who's in grade 10 to 12 right now. We've seen lots of graduation ceremonies happen. In fact, I'm going to address the graduating class in Jasper Place high school later on this afternoon. Those students are people that I'm going to be facing and talking with about this piece of legislation, and I'm just imagining what they're thinking right now, where they maybe have been planning to go to work at a summer job and they're looking at what they might earn over the course of their summer earnings and they're calculating it based on the minimum wage that we've managed to raise up to \$15 an hour in incremental steps. Now, with this new government in place, they've had to step back and say: "Whoa. I thought I was making \$15 an hour, but I guess not. I'm down to \$13 an hour."

I'm sure they're scratching their heads and wondering how the government thinks that this is going to help them, when the government makes the case to this House and to Albertans to say:

"Look. Reducing your wage, young man or young lady who's going to be in the workforce earning \$13 an hour now rather than the \$15 you were expecting, is going to be a good thing for the province of Alberta and the Alberta economy, so thank you very much for that significant contribution. You've given up a significant part of your earnings because we've legislated that your wages are going to get dropped. But don't worry. It's going to be good for the province as a whole, and we appreciate your sacrifice. It's something that we think we can do to better the province, and – guess what? – we're doing it to you because we think we can get away with it. We think that you have less value to us than other people, and you're not voting right now."

Guess what, Madam Chair? These young people are being mobilized and motivated, and I certainly expect to hear an earful when I go to a graduation ceremony later today about this government's policy of reducing minimum wage for young workers under 18 years of age. I think it's disgraceful. A jurisdiction that has a minimum wage that is below a living wage is one that is making a statement to its population that they don't value those who have the least amount of political power to protect themselves from a government who will side with the employers, who create false arguments saying that those dollars saved will be reinvested to create greater employment.

It's not an argument that any of those students that I'll be meeting tonight, I expect, will be quoting to me. They're going to be wondering why they were hurt on purpose by this government. I'm fully expecting to hear many of them ask how they can step in to oppose such measures, what can be done to ensure that this government gets a message from them that they are very, very unhappy. They're perplexed, they feel undervalued, and they are motivated to do something to oppose this type of legislation now and in the future from this Conservative government.

The other measures involved in this piece of legislation that the motion before us purports to amend by way of changing the title are other examples of basically picking the pockets of people who are wage earners in the province. It's shameful that this government sees that working people are a target that they should attack. It's a continuation of a theme that this government has lapsed into right from day one, where they're looking to divide Albertans against each other, pit working people against employers, saying that, you know, working people don't deserve a living wage. It's causing economic downturn when in fact people who earn living wages, people who are earning at the lower end of the spectrum actually create opportunity when they spend those dollars.

The consumer economy is 70 to 75 per cent of the economic activity in any of the western democracies, and it's pretty clear to see from that statistic alone that if an individual or government wants to stimulate spending and create employment, the thing to do is to put money in the pockets of those who are most likely to spend it, that being the lower income spectrum of your population. That's what we tried to do with a number of measures when we were government, Madam Chair: to ensure that individual families who were on the lowest end of the wage spectrum or lower income spectrum had monies to live respectably and in dignity and, in turn, stimulate the economy as well.

Families earning the subsidies that the government gave to low-income people received a generous increase, which was well deserved. That was much appreciated by many, many families through the Alberta child tax credit increases that we instituted, and it improved their lives tremendously, the living standards, the quality of life for so many families throughout this province. It cut the poverty rate in half; 44,000 people were brought out of poverty as a result. That's something that you herald as a government and can be proud of.

Yet this government seems to be proud of doing the opposite and taking money out of working families' pockets and saying that it's something that is a respectable thing to do. It's part of their value structure to do this in an effort to somehow create an economy that businesses can thrive in. It just doesn't hold water with me or with those young students that I'm going to meet tonight when they are told that cutting their wages is going to be good for them.

Other things that they wish to do are equally disturbing. The people who earn overtime, as I mentioned before, who are quite often in the oil patch, will only get to bank it at straight time if indeed they come to a so-called agreement with their employer. What it basically does is open up an option where the employer is in a greater strength of power vis-à-vis the employee. The net result is that the employee who had wages at time and a half coming to them will end up entering into agreements coercively, not voluntarily. There's coercion involved to take a significant reduction in what they're ultimately owed. Their take-home pay, their balance sheet are going to be hit hard by these measures.

As I mentioned, if you're an oil and gas worker making an average pay, putting in 10 hours of overtime every week on a 12-week project, that's 120 hours in paid time off. Now the difference between banking that pay at time and a half pay versus straight time is over \$2,500, and the government is saying: "It's good for you. Don't worry. In the long term it's good for you. It's a job-creation measure. We'll see the numbers in employment go up, and thank you very much for that donation of 2,500 bucks. That'll go and join that of your son or daughter, who just donated 4,000 bucks as a university student or a student working a summer job. So your family – congratulations – just donated 6,500 bucks to the Alberta treasury."

Now, that's a huge amount of money, 6,500 bucks. How many kids in that family? Maybe it's even more. Maybe it's a family with a couple of kids, and you can add another \$4,000 onto that. That's 10,000 bucks that that family has just donated to the Alberta treasury, and this government is cheering that on.

3:30

When I talk to students later on this evening about these measures and ask them: "How are you affected, Alyssa or Michael, in your take-home pay? What does it mean to your family that this government is saying that we're going to stimulate economic activity and you're going to pay for it? But it's good for you; don't worry" – look those students in the eye, slap them on the back, congratulate them and say: "Job well done; 12 years of school, you've done a fine job. You're the future of this province. We greatly value your contribution and what you're going to do in the world, and, by goodness, we're going to show that appreciation by cutting your wages by 2 bucks an hour. Hallelujah."

That's a pretty hypocritical statement, and it's an exposure of the values that really underlie the principles that this government is following in terms of the application of economic policy, where it looks to stimulate the economy to create employment to counter an economic downturn that was caused by a systemic drop in the price of oil, which really knocked the socks off the revenue stream that this provincial government had. Yet the answer to this dilemma for this government is to look towards its lowest paid citizens and say, "Look; we're taking it out of your pocket" and also to those who are in many cases hit hardest if they're working right now at all as a result of the downturn, and to the individuals who are receiving overtime in the oil and gas sector, taking about 2,500 bucks out of their pocket over the course of a week where they work 10 hours every week on a 12-week project.

It's a huge difference for working people, Madam Chair, and we don't think that this government has the interests of working people



at heart at all when they can proceed gleefully with the type of legislation that Bill 2 is. We believe it should really be named appropriately as a major shift in employment standards and labour relations and call it the employment standards and . . . [Mr. Dach's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to this amendment to Bill 2, which proposes to change the title. Now, I'm a student of communications. I've long had an interest in advertising, marketing, how we use words to communicate ideas. English was my favourite subject in high school. I was one of those strange kids that actually enjoyed writing essays, and that's something that has continued on in my life. I put my creative energies for a time into music and took the opportunity to do some songwriting and some other things there, but when I decided to go back to school and earn a second degree, I ended up doing a bachelor of arts in professional communication. I was fascinated with learning the history of communications but, in particular, how we use words, images, different things to convince people of ideas. Indeed, I was particularly fascinated by political communications. That's when it first came into my head that maybe someday I might like to run for office. Happened a little sooner than I anticipated; that's how, in part, I find myself here today.

That's what we are looking at here with this particular bill. I understand the reasons why the government wishes to call this An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. That is a large part of what this government ran on and what it claimed it was going to focus on doing. Now, one can certainly question a number of the actions that this government has made since coming into office and whether or not they have maintained that supposed laserlike focus, which they stated they would. That aside, I can understand why they brought forward this bill title. However, as someone who strongly believes in truth in advertising, I have to say that I think this is a very good amendment because, as my colleagues have outlined and as others have said, I do not believe that this is a bill that truly makes Alberta open for business or that, indeed, that is the message that this bill actually sends in the things that it's choosing to do and what it hopes to accomplish.

We've had a lot of discussion in this House about the various different aspects in this bill. Indeed, I suppose it's par for the course that in many ways so far this government has proven to not be quite what it advertised itself to be. We've certainly seen that in, you know, their claims that they would be coming in to protect public health care but immediately using their private committee that they forced onto the Assembly to kill a private member's bill on that very particular topic with barely any discussion. This is a government that claimed it would not legislate on social issues. It immediately brought forward Bill 8 and the changes that are being done there, cancelled the conversion therapy working group, taking other steps which show that clearly they are not as advertised.

This bill, while it does, I guess, fulfill some of their campaign promises – in this case they actually deigned to tell Albertans what they were going to do, unlike their recent Bill 9, which they did not mention in their campaign platform, in which they hid from Albertans their intent to mount that attack on Alberta's public-sector workers and to break their contracts, to set that troubling precedent right out of the gate. Unlike that bill, they did campaign on these particular things, so I can't say that the bill is not doing what they said they would do. It certainly is. I have to give them

credit for that. However, I would dispute their claim that these are decisions that communicate that we are open for business or that Alberta is a great place to do business.

First of all, Madam Chair, I've talked at great length and, I'm sure to the pleasure of all members, I'm going to talk at some length again about changes to overtime provisions. What message does that send to folks across Canada, to workers who may want to come here to bolster our labour force, to folks who are looking to come here to start a business, that we would be the only province in Canada who values workers' time for less, that we feel the only way that a business can succeed in Alberta is to rob every single worker who works an hour of overtime and banks that overtime of a half-hour of their time? The only jurisdiction. I am proud to have Alberta be exceptional on many fronts. This is not one, I think, that casts us in a good light.

To me, that does not say that Alberta is open for business. That says to me that this particular government at least in Alberta is open to lobbyists. They are open to businesses that want to cut back on what they pay to their employees. They want to take away, want to pick the pockets of Albertans for the time that they have duly worked for and earned. For that reason I think it's far better to go with a nice clinical title for the bill, which states roughly what it is but doesn't aspire to claims for what the bill does not in fact do. In fact, in some ways it says precisely the opposite of the message that it claims, and that is one of the troubling aspects of this bill, Madam Chair. It's what it conveys about this government's mentality about businesses and employees and workers.

I've talked before about how we've had that problem in this province for many, many years, how previous Conservative governments chose not to act while the rest of Canada progressed on many fronts in terms of labour legislation, recognizing protections and rights for workers and improving conditions and other opportunities. Alberta remained a laggard because Conservative governments in Alberta seemed to feel that the balance needed to stay permanently tipped towards the side of business.

3:40

That in no way, Madam Chair, is casting any disparagement on employers in Alberta, but there have certainly been very particular employers or particular businesses who were great contributors to previous Conservative governments before we removed during our government's term the influence of corporate donations to political parties. In the past Conservative governments were great friends with particular businesses, who would contribute large sums of money, and for that reason they chose to keep the labour laws in Alberta tilted in that direction. I suppose there weren't enough workers that they felt were making contributions.

So we find ourselves here today where, of course, during the last election the particular party that has now formed government was not able to directly solicit corporate donations, but we certainly did see that there were a number that decided to form political action committees or to contribute to the same, looking forward to extracting favours from this party should they take government. In fact, that is what has happened, and that is, in fact, what we see happening now. So this is the first of what I'm sure will be many favours this government will look to do for particular businesses, again tilting that scale, choosing to take away some of the balance that's been enabled for workers in the province of Alberta, again the same balance that exists in every other jurisdiction in Canada.

On overtime in particular, Madam Chair, this government feels the need to take that away from Alberta workers, to tell them they are worth less because that provides an advantage for this government. That is not a statement of being open for business, at least not open for the kind of business they want to suggest. It

certainly notes the kind of business that they were open for during the election campaign.

So we find ourselves here today with this bill, and that is one of the reasons why I support this amendment. It's a lot more honest, or at least it's neutral. You know, if we wanted to give this a truly honest title – well, perhaps I won't go there. I might strain the language that would not be parliamentary. We have here instead the opportunity to apply a strictly neutral and technical title to this bill, which is seeking to pick the pockets of Albertans.

I spoke about the changes in overtime, Madam Chair, for which this government has provided no justification. I have certainly had no flurry of workers coming to my door demanding that they be allowed to take half an hour less of their overtime.

Then we have, of course, what is now being put in place with the youth wage differential. Madam Chair, I'm not sure how it says that we are open for business when the changes that are happening are simply saying that we are willing to make changes that, again, are frankly inconsistent with most of the rest of Canada. We recognize, of course, that in Ontario this policy has been in place, and I think my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods has been very good in outlining just how unsuccessful that policy has been there, the additional red tape it's created, the fact that they still have a high youth unemployment rate, the fact that there is abuse and discrimination that occurs.

That is what this government wants to introduce into Alberta. They want to create red tape. They want to invite abuse. They want to encourage youth to drop out of school. Those things, to me, Madam Chair, are not suggestions that we are open for business, at least not the kind of business that they want to say that we are open for. It suggests that this government was certainly open to lobbyists during the election campaign and in the production of their policy platform and indeed now in the legislation that they are bringing forward in this House. But that is not the kind of business that is going to benefit Albertans, Madam Chair. It may benefit this particular government and that particular party, but that is not the kind of business that is going to benefit our communities.

We have here this amendment, which is a reasonable amendment, to simply add a neutral title to the bill as opposed to one that would more reflect, well, what I'm starting to think more and more of this bill, that this is an act to declare Alberta open for lobbyists. Certainly, we saw that there was an intense campaign from Restaurants Canada advocating for precisely these kinds of changes because they feel that their restaurants could not maintain their bottom line paying youth the same wage as they pay other employees.

As I've stated previously, Madam Chair, I know many business owners in downtown Edmonton who have opened successful restaurants and cafés and other service businesses who are not asking for this, who are not saying that they need this to succeed. These are forward-thinking, progressive business owners. I would also note that the majority of them are not franchises. It's good to see that locally owned and locally created businesses have the ability to thrive in the environment and pay their employees a fair wage. That's not to say that all franchises are in the same boat. Indeed, I know that there are some franchise owners who place the priorities of their employees a bit higher and want to maintain fairness in their wages and in the hiring practice. But I think, to a certain extent, there are very particular business models that are pushing for this.

Frankly, Madam Chair, I would rather see businesses thrive that treat their employees well than attempts to cut the bottom line at every opportunity, even if that means lobbying government to make these kinds of changes, changes like our government made: cutting the small-business tax from 3 per cent to 2 per cent. That is something that helps business. That was something that was not

borne on the backs of workers. That was not something where we felt we had to tilt the scale.

I've spoken often on a number of bills from this government about that question of balance. This government seems to have a very skewed view of where the point of balance in this province should lie and indeed who holds the majority of power and who holds positions of privilege in this province. Certainly, there were some that were mightily offended that anyone other than a Conservative government would ever have been in place in the province of Alberta and spent much of the last four years bemoaning that fact. They feel that now that that is no longer the case, rightful balance has been restored and we can go back to the way everything was.

Well, Madam Chair, there are some things on which I think a lot of Albertans are going to disagree in regard to that. On this particular issue, when it comes to things like reducing the youth wage, taking away the same rights that people have in every other part of Canada, where when they work an hour of overtime, they are paid or they bank an hour and a half of time, that is not about balance.

I recognize, Madam Chair, that the relationship between employer and employee is a symbiotic one. You know, the two need to work together. Generally you are not going to have a business able to grow without employees. Likewise, no one is going to be able to be an employee unless there are employers. That is reasonable.

But the question of what kind of balance there needs to be between the two – the suggestion that this bill makes, that in order to be open for business, we have to reduce the rights of employees, that they should be grateful that they have a job, these kinds of changes that, again, are without justification, without any proof of being valid in any other jurisdiction in this country: that, to me, is suggesting an unfortunate view on the part of this government that employees are more of a problem, that employees must be willing to accept less for the privilege of having a job in the province of Alberta. If that is open for business, that is not any kind of business that I am interested in.

3:50

I think we can strike a fair balance in this province. I think we can declare that this province is open for business, that our employers in the province of Alberta, the people that start and operate businesses, are able to compete on the same terms as employers and business owners in every other province in Canada. We offer them many advantages, Madam Chair. Alberta remains the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada, period. Our businesses do not pay a sales tax. They do not, like some do in other parts of Canada, have to pay any health premiums on behalf of their employees.

Now, that is not to say, Madam Chair, that I think it's easy. I recognize the challenge of operating a business. I myself in the past, in my work as a musician, had to hire employees at times. It was on a contract basis. Yeah, I had to think about: how can I make this work? How can I pay my guys fairly for doing a gig? Indeed, I was the one that went out and hustled and found a particular gig and put things together, and I wrote up the charts. I put everything together, and then we sat down and rehearsed, but I recognized that that was my job. That was my ambition. That was what I wanted to do. It was not my right to put that on the backs of the guys that I hired to help me accomplish that.

Again, it's a symbiotic relationship. We need to find ways to work together. It wouldn't have worked for me if venues were paying too little – and indeed there were those that did – or, you know, if there were costs being imposed on it that were too much

for me to be able to make that work. Ultimately, these are decisions that I make when I choose to strike out on my own.

I think that there are definitely ways that government can act to try to better support businesses. I have the opportunity to speak with many business owners in my constituency of many different, various industries that they work in, and I recognize this government's intent . . .

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to speak to this amendment. I've had the opportunity over last night and for some of the debate this morning to hear some of the arguments put forward by the hon. members for Edmonton-McClung, Edmonton-Rutherford, and Edmonton-City Centre, and I'd like to actually take this opportunity to respond to them.

As I understand it, the argument being put forward by the hon. members across the aisle is that we need to change the name of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, largely because they believe that, in their view, this bill and the youth job-creation minimum wage, which is actually not part of this bill but we've implemented at the same time, will actually not create jobs, and some would even suggest that this is actually an attack on workers. Madam Chair, I have to say that this clearly demonstrates that the members across – we have a significant difference in world view, but quite frankly they don't get it. They do not understand how to support our job creators. They do not understand the implications of the policies that they put in place during one of the worst economic downturns in our history in Alberta and what impact that had on job creators.

Madam Chair, I was listening to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who said: "Please let me show you the research. Listen to the research. We actually created jobs. Our government did a good job, and our policies had no negative impact." I disagree, and I strongly disagree, because research, quite frankly, shows the opposite.

I just want to talk about not everything that was said across. That would take me far too long, and my time is limited here. But I do want to speak to a couple of items particularly, even though it's not part of the bill. I'll speak to it because it was spoken to by a large number of the members across, the youth minimum wage. I'll speak to the general holiday changes and also speak to banked overtime.

Before I get to that, I want to talk about some of the research that actually was done. First, you know, I'd like to talk about a study done by the Conference Board of Canada. Actually, it was done while the members opposite were in government and were increasing the minimum wage by nearly 50 per cent in the face of one of the worst economic downturns in the province. What the Conference Board of Canada said – and this was done midway through the changes – was that these changes will have a negative impact on jobs. What they said, Madam Chair, is that context matters, that we were in the face of one of the greatest downturns in our history, and that this means there will be a negative impact on jobs. Did the members opposite listen to that research? No. They moved ahead and continued to increase the minimum wage, right?

The studies showed at that point in time that roughly a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage would result in a 1 to 3 per cent decrease in jobs. Did they do 10 per cent? No. Did they do 20 per cent? No. They did nearly a 50 per cent increase in the minimum wage. Granted, that's a study. That's research. So let's take a step back and explore a little bit: what were the implications of these changes?

Studies were done by the CFIB, and they asked 1,000 Alberta businesses, you know, on the increase in minimum wage: what was the implication? Over 50 per cent said: we actually laid off staff or we reduced hours because of that. Same with the Calgary Chamber of commerce, right? They did a study. What were the actual implications of the increase to the minimum wage? Again, over half laid off staff, reduced hours.

So to hear the members opposite say, "No, no; we created jobs, and our policies didn't have a negative impact," Madam Chair, I submit to you, is totally incorrect. Their changes in policies, the minimum wage and – sorry. One other comment. I know that one of the members opposite was talking about Restaurants Canada. They did research as well: tens of thousands of jobs lost. And what we heard from them is that not only the minimum wage but the change in the general holiday rules resulted in, again, employees laid off and reduction of hours. This is the research that's shown. This is what actual employers have said in Alberta, and this is why we need to make the change to get Albertans working again.

The implications of this? We spoke to it earlier today, and I've mentioned this stat before. Our youth, the youngest and the least experienced, are those most hard hit. Those are the people who have been most severely impacted by these changes – right? – the policy changes made by the previous government: 21.5 per cent in the first quarter of this year, 1 in 5 students and young people under the age of 18, are unemployed. This doesn't even count the number of people who actually left the workforce, Madam Chair. They left the workforce because they couldn't find a job, so they can't earn money for school. They can't earn money to buy a car. They can't earn money to help and support their families because they don't have a job.

We need to make a change, and this is what the research showed. We actually made this change, again, outside of Bill 2, the youth job-creation minimum wage. We also are making changes to part of Bill 2 to return to the old rules in terms of the general holiday rules so that we can help our youth in particular get their first job, get on the job ladder, and move forward.

I'd like to point out, Madam Chair, that this is just a minimum. A minimum is just that, a minimum. It's not a maximum. Some employers choose to actually pay more than that, which is fantastic – right? – because they hire someone at a lower wage, they get experience, they actually get wage increases, and they move them up the job ladder, and they get the experience. They build their skill set, and this sets them up for life, and by getting on the job ladder, they can actually get wages. This is how business works, and clearly it appears that the members opposite just don't understand this, and they just don't get that.

4:00

I'd like to turn my comments now to talk about banked overtime. You know, we've said on this side of the House that the changes to banked overtime, first of all, are not about pay. If an individual wants to get paid time and a half, which is the minimum according to employment standards, they may do so. Other employers pay more. Collective agreements pay more. That doesn't impact that at all. If they want to get paid time and a half, they can be paid time and a half. This refers to banked overtime. So when the members opposite say that they are going to lose pay because of that, that is simply misleading. It is incorrect. They're not going to lose pay because of this.

Now, what this is about is about providing the opportunity and the flexibility for employees and employers to reach agreements to their mutual benefit. You know, we've said before that we've heard from employers and employees in developing this as part of Bill 2, our open for business act, which was in our platform, Madam Chair.

We ran on this, and Albertans expect us to deliver on this. This is in our platform. What we heard from both employers and employees is that because of the policy change by the previous government, there was a loss of opportunity.

I want to read to you a very short letter that was sent to the government because this encapsulates what employers and employees are saying. This is from a small-business cabinetmaker, and it was sent to the Premier. I quote: "Dear Premier, thank you very much for repealing the NDP's disastrous labour laws. The banked overtime at time and a half rule greatly hurt our company and our employees. In our business labour counts for 65 per cent of the price of the product. Overtime is just not possible because no customer will pay 30 per cent more for their cabinets. In such a competitive market that rule forced us to turn away business during busy times and cut our employees' hours during slow times. What a disaster for Alberta business and Alberta families. Now we can go back to making hay when the sun shines and get on with business."

It goes on to say: "Today your policy created new jobs. You gave me faith to hire. A few minutes ago I advertised four new jobs on the Canada job site. It is because of you. It's just four jobs for now, but I'm sure that those four people will be very grateful, just as I am."

Madam Chair, this bill is about us being open for business. It's about this cabinetmaker, who has faith and the ability not only to provide flexibility with other employees and hire new employees and actually go after more businesses, something that's good for the employee and the employer, but it's about the restaurant owner, retail owners to be able to say: I can now actually hire people at a lower wage and get them on the job ladder.

Again, last week I had a restaurant owner come in, who actually came from out of Canada, an immigrant. He came to Canada about four years ago, a small-business person. He invested – it was a franchise in this case – in three franchises. He indicated to me that with the policy changes made by the previous government, he no longer could actually hire anyone without experience and had no one working for him under 18 in three of his restaurants. He indicated to me that now with the change – and one other thing. I'll just back up. Because of that, he actually laid off people, and it was the younger people. But now with the change he can actually hire younger people to work in their first job as hosts and hostesses or in the kitchen, washing, just getting experience, and then moving them up the ladder – right? – because of this change.

Getting back to the change and the name being suggested by the members opposite, I simply, from my perspective, cannot agree. This bill is about creating opportunities for Albertans, this bill is about getting our young people in particular but all Albertans working, and this bill is about signalling to the community that Alberta is open for business. We need to drive investment here, create jobs. Madam Chair, that is what we ran on, that is what we promised in our platform commitment, and that is what I'm focused on delivering.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to this amendment, which is essentially asking to name this bill exactly what it does. It changes employment standards, it changes provisions in employment standards and labour relations, and it actually picks the pockets of working Albertans.

I do understand that the UCP ran a campaign on creating jobs, the economy, and pipelines, but they have not done a single thing to create jobs ever since they became the government. Instead, under their watch we have lost more jobs. I'm talking about

Calgary. When we were in government, we were told that taxes were somehow killing jobs; the carbon levy was killing jobs. What they did: they got rid of the carbon levy; they gave the biggest tax break in the history of this province to the richest few and their shareholders. But what we are seeing in Calgary in the same sector is that Repsol was laying off 30 per cent of their workers from the Calgary office and Alberta field offices. Nexen was laying off workers.

Naming an act that it's open for business, that it's doing something for business doesn't create jobs. It's a deception that this act has anything to do with business. All it does is that it attacks workers' rights, it attacks their overtime pay, it cuts the pay for youth workers, it picks the pockets of young Albertans, and it doesn't create any more jobs. Being a student of economics, I can say that I haven't read any economic theory which says that cutting somebody's wages somehow magically creates more jobs.

The minister is saying that we have 21 per cent youth unemployment. Sure, we do have youth unemployment, but for those who are employed, cutting \$2 per hour from their wages doesn't create any more jobs. It won't change this number by any means. They are saying that by cutting overtime, they're opening up flexibility for workers and employers to negotiate. There is a huge power differential when you're working on minimum wage. I have personally worked on minimum wage pretty much until 2012. Before I got the law degree, I was working on minimum wage. I do understand how much flexibility you have to negotiate with your employer when you're working minimum wage, that this will be the overtime, this will be the holiday. You don't have that kind of flexibility when you're working on minimum wage.

That was the reason that this change was made under our watch, so that all Albertans who are working full-time are able to put food, and they're able to provide for their shelter. You're taking away food, taking away shelter from those who are working on minimum wages. It will not create jobs. Rather, it will push those Albertans into poverty, push those Albertans into conditions they shouldn't be living in.

The reason I am saying this is that, one, I have worked minimum wage, and also I represent a constituency which is among the constituencies that has the lowest median income. For instance, Saddle Ridge, the neighbourhood, has a population of 20,000 people, and the median income for those 15 years and older is \$30,000 as compared to the \$43,251 average for Calgary. And 30 per cent of the people in that neighbourhood are paying more than 30 per cent of their income on just shelter. That's why this bill is important for my constituents. Taradale: another neighbourhood with a population of almost 20,000. Their median income for the population 15 years and older is \$28,000 as compared to the average of \$43,251 for Calgary. Again, 31 per cent of the people living in Taradale are paying more than 30 per cent of their income just on shelter needs. Martindale, another neighbourhood, has an almost 15,000-plus population. The median income of the population 15 years and older is \$29,000 compared to the \$43,251 Calgary average.

4:10

These are neighbourhoods, these are my constituents, who oftentimes find themselves working more than one job and often in jobs that are minimum wage paying jobs. These things, these minimum wages, this overtime pay: those things matter to my constituents, and this bill is attacking the livelihood of the people who are living in these neighbourhoods. Those neighbourhood profiles are not any different from any other neighbourhood in the northeast.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

For instance, the Calgary-North East neighbourhoods will be in the same position. The Calgary-Falconridge neighbourhoods will be in the same position. In no way, shape, or manner is this piece of legislation helping those in my riding, in my communities. No wonder the UCP's policies were rejected, your mandate was rejected in Calgary-McCall. That was the reason, because the changes you have made so far, cutting corporate taxes, in no way, shape, or manner helps us in these communities. It's benefiting some corporation, their multinational corporation and their shareholders, who may not be in Calgary altogether. They may be investors, but this is not helping create any jobs.

Instead, for those who are working, you're reducing their employment income by \$2 per hour and want us to believe that somehow there is some economic right-wing theory out there that suggests that that will create more jobs. I can tell you with absolute certainty – I have a master's in economics – that I didn't learn about any of that kind of economic theory that suggests that cutting wages somehow creates more employment. Cutting wages may improve the bottom line for businesses, but it doesn't create employment because businesses will only employ as much labour as they need. They will not create more jobs just because the wages are low. There is no such theory.

All these policies, all these ideological policies follow supply-side, trickle-down economics, which we have seen failing in the '80s, which we have seen failing in the '90s, which we have seen failing in the States, which we have seen failing in Britain, which we have seen failing in Canada under previous Conservative governments as well. Cutting taxes doesn't create jobs. Cutting taxes doesn't magically add investment to the economy.

What our economy is facing here is takeaway capacity, on which you haven't done anything. Instead, we entered into oil-by-rail contracts. You're cancelling that. That would have created, starting next week, almost 120,000 capacity. It would have created more opportunities for people to get employed, would have created more opportunities for businesses, but here we just listen to a narrative that somehow everything the UCP is doing is creating jobs, is helping businesses.

The Member for Calgary-Hays, his talking points are almost as old – I think I heard them when I came into this Legislature for the first time, that somehow the NDP is against businesses, they hurt profits, and the UCP and previous Conservative governments have a copyright on businesses. That's not the case. Similarly, the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore will say that we hate the oil sands, we are against pipelines, all those things. That's not true.

We also come from business families. My family has a small business. We have been employed by these businesses. We have worked in industry. We do come from a diverse range of expertise. We do know how economies are run. We do know how businesses are run. What the UCP is doing: I can tell you with absolute certainty that that's not how businesses are run. That's not how economies are run. That's how you can pick winners and losers. Yes, you can pick a side and try to benefit them left, right, and centre at the expense of working Albertans, everyday Albertans. You can give a \$4.5 billion tax break and not tell school boards across this province when they will get funding.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

My school board, the Calgary school board, my own trustee from my ward: she appeared in a CBC interview yesterday complaining about that uncertainty. They are a school who is still waiting to hear from this government whether they will get funding.

At the same time, you will get up here and tell us that we don't know how businesses are run, that you will give \$4.5 billion in tax

breaks and not commit to funding the school nutrition program that was feeding 30,000 kids, 30,000 young Albertans who cannot afford to go to school and have food. Their parents have to make a choice between sending them to school, providing for their needs, and feeding them. That was the program our government was funding. So, yes, we do have different priorities. A fair society, a balanced society, a balanced economy is one that watches out for everyone.

We have heard this ideological, trickle-down economic rhetoric during your campaign and during the debate here, but nothing much has changed since April 16. Albertans are still looking for work. They are still looking for this government – actually, I should say that a lot has been changed. There is a lot more uncertainty now. School boards are not sure whether they will get funding, cities are not sure whether they will get anything on MSI, and health authorities are not sure whether they will get funding. We are seeing projects like the Edmonton lab project getting cancelled just because they have to pay for the \$4.5 billion tax break.

In short, what I want to say is that this piece of legislation has nothing to do with business. It's not opening anything for business. All it is doing is attacking workers and their rights, that workers across this country enjoy in every other jurisdiction. It is changing the employment standards and labour relations changes that we made from 2015 onwards.

Every time the other side gets up, what we hear is that somehow they can blame everything on the four years that we were in government. This province, except for those four years from '15 to '19, always had Conservative governments. No reasonable Canadian, no reasonable Albertan will buy that only because of these four years Alberta is somehow facing some kinds of challenges.

There were previous Conservative governments for 43 years. They didn't do much to diversify the economy. I think the only economic policy they had was: let's get together and pray every morning that the oil price goes up to \$100 and it never comes down. That was the only economic policy they were following, and that policy failed every time we witnessed fluctuations in oil prices.

That's exactly what happened in 2015. Oil prices hit bottom. They were down to \$27 a barrel, and the choice was whether to cut services, cut education, cut health care or to provide for those things that Albertans rely on and need in times when they are struggling. We chose to fund education, to fund health care. I've said that before, will say it again, that from 2008 to 2013 not a single school was built in Calgary, not one school.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we are on amendment A2. Just a friendly reminder.

**Mr. Sabir:** I'm bringing it back to the amendment.

**The Chair:** I knew you were. Just wanted to make sure that we were on the same page.

**Mr. Sabir:** Just to finish that off, not a single school was built between 2008 and '13. We invested in 244 schools.

But here what we are seeing is that instead of doing anything to attract businesses to Alberta, they're just naming their act An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. Alberta was never closed for business. What you are doing here: the changes Alberta made between 2015 and 2019 you're reversing. Those changes are contained in two pieces of legislation, the employment standards and labour relations, so we should name this legislation appropriately and say that this act is amending those two pieces of legislation and taking away workers' rights that were provided in the last four years.

That's why this amendment is important, and I fully support and I urge all members of this House to support this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

4:20

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to address this House, through you, in support of Bill 2 and against this amendment. I would like to bring a blue-collar perspective on the matter of banked overtime. There's been a lot of theoretical debate on this issue, but I spent most of the last 25 years working in the nonsalaried and seasonal field of construction, which is similar to other seasonal jobs like many of the trades, road building, and similar to oil and gas workers, amongst many others. By bringing my practical perspective to this House, I hope that I can enlighten why this bill is so crucial for our economic future.

It is important to state at the beginning that this bill does not override any workers with contractual agreements. When I worked as an hourly paid employee, when I didn't work, I didn't get paid, making bad weather, appointments, sick children, and discretionary time off a challenge to the personal budget as well as the schedule. In this realm, nearly every job is procured in a realm of fixed costs: low bid, cost-plus, project management, negotiated bid, all with preset rates of pay. We used to love being able to work overtime when we could and get regular pay to cover those days off.

When the previous government changed the overtime payout to time and a half in an effort to help us, they actually hurt us. Why, Madam Chair? Because our bosses didn't have the flexibility to let us work extra time now for regular time off later. Overtime disappeared. It just didn't happen anymore. You can imagine the amount of stress this placed on the shoulders of Albertans who relied on overtime to make sure work-life balance was still a part of their lives. Having no opportunity or flexibility to take overtime meant missed appointments, missed holidays, missed family events, and so many of the small things that make getting up and working those long hours a little bit easier.

Where overtime didn't disappear, costs went way up, 50 per cent higher in many cases, and jobs were lost. Owners weren't happy because jobs took longer and cost more. Employers weren't happy because bidding became much harder, trying to predict how much overtime may or may not be required. Employees weren't happy because overtime hours disappeared. You can see here how the question of overtime becomes a lot more complex and the equation becomes less simple than time and a half meaning greater benefit to those who banked overtime. When you consider the implications of what this means, from the perspective of a job creator to the perspective of an employee, you start to understand why Albertans have supported the Bill 2 mandate.

Flexibility to work a few extra hours on Monday or Tuesday in order to take off early on a Friday or for a vacation or a doctor's appointment now just means time off without pay. We understood the concept of fair trade and that the favour done for the company today meant a favour given to us tomorrow. The changes proposed in Bill 2 directly respond to what workers who utilize overtime to balance the demands of work and home life have been asking for. By giving employees the ability to bank overtime hours in a way that suits their needs, we are empowering both employees and employers to come to agreements that consider both of their priorities.

But empowerment granted to workers and employees doesn't stop there, Madam Chair. Bill 2 is crucial to getting Alberta's economy back on track. That's why the barriers set on job creators

that limited our economic growth in the past are being undone by this bill. This bill will truly ensure that Albertans get back to work and that we ensure that Alberta remains open for business. Blue-collar workers across the province have built our industries by hand. From our skilled trade sector to our agricultural sector to our small businesses and the coming dreams of future entrepreneurs, there has never been a more crucial time to implement changes that will bring back the competitive edge to our economy, that once made our province a beacon for a brighter future anyone could access.

I know what this economic edge means first-hand, and so do my constituents. I have worked and succeeded in industries that have benefited from the Alberta advantage. My past experiences, including the stories of my friends, my neighbours, and previous co-workers, are a crucial part of why I'm standing in this House today and supporting the changes presented in this bill. We have all lived and experienced changes to legislation that have fundamentally affected our occupations and our ways of life. I know this legislation will change it for the better. That is why I support this bill and the name of this bill. I support blue-collar workers in construction and the trades and those working hard in my constituency. This bill's name represents them, what they want, and common sense. It gives them freedom.

I call upon my fellow members of this House to support this bill and support our efforts to grant workers the kinds of freedoms and opportunities of self-empowerment that they so clearly asked for. Thank you.

Madam Chair, I would like to rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 11 Fair Registration Practices Act

[Debate adjourned June 25: Mr. Bilous speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pleasure to have the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act. I think it's fair to say that it's become clear that I disagree with this government on a number of issues. Certainly, we've had some robust discussion on a number of pieces of debate, and certainly we have had some different views of the facts, shall we say. Certainly, there are many portions of the UCP election platform that I was not shy to criticize, both during the election and

since, but what I can say is that on this particular bill I think indeed we have some common ground.

Over the last four years I had the opportunity to spend a lot of time talking with folks who have gone through the immigration process and have come here as newcomers to Canada, whether that was some of the individuals who came here with the group of Syrian refugees in early 2016 or people from a wide breadth of the African and Caribbean communities here in the city of Edmonton. Indeed, in talking with many of them, you know, many, many of them come to Canada with great expertise, knowledge, skills that they worked hard to earn in their home countries. But what I heard from many of them is that they face real and significant challenges in being able to find work in their field, those opportunities, when they arrive in Canada.

Now, the barriers they face can be many, Madam Speaker. Of course, a lot of them face, first of all, the challenges of language. For those who do not come from a country where English or French is a prominent language, they have the challenge of having to first learn English. It's unfortunate. Many times they are not treated with full respect and acknowledgement of the intelligence that they possess, the knowledge, the skill set because they do not yet have the ability to communicate it. That's the first challenge they face. They have to find time, then resources to be able to learn English while getting settled here in Canada.

4:30

Secondly, it can be a very challenging thing for them to learn how to navigate our systems. Of course, in many cases they're having to first of all learn how to navigate our culture, which itself can be enough of a shock. But on top of learning how our culture works and what the expectations are and then having to learn the language, they are then, thirdly, having to learn how to navigate our bureaucratic systems. Now, Madam Speaker, of course, as you are part of a government caucus that appointed an associate minister of red tape, I think you're well aware that not all government systems are clear and efficient. So they struggle with some of those things on that side.

Certainly, our government took some steps to try to clear that up, making it easier for some to access a driver's licence, to be able to get through some of the systems, clearing up some of the processes so that there were fewer obstacles in their path.

But the other challenge lies, as I'm sure you're aware, Madam Speaker, for those who have a professional designation that they wish to begin to make use of here in Canada, in that they then encounter a whole other bureaucratic system to get licensed, registered, and be able to practise. Now, it's understandable that we have a system to vet individuals that want to work in these professions because we recognize, of course, that within these professions there are great amounts of responsibility. If someone wishes to work in a medical field, they are taking on, well, frankly, the care and support of an individual's life. It's incredibly important that we be sure that the qualifications they possess, the training that they have, the experience they've gained are going to translate and that they fully understand what differences there might be between practices in their home country and how things are practised and what the expectations are here.

The same goes for law, engineering, any of these fields in which an individual might have a professional designation, indeed even something as basic as accounting, though I imagine the Member for Red Deer-South would probably contest suggesting that accounting was somehow less of a complex field than law or another field. Accounting itself also has incredibly important implications. There are a lot that can make a big difference to somebody's business, some of these things, so it makes sense that we would also want to

make sure somebody coming here properly understood Canadian laws, businesses, et cetera, what the expectations and rules were, indeed, Canadian tax law, et cetera.

We recognize, however, that in some cases individuals are experiencing extensive delays, and they're having a difficult time trying to figure out how to navigate the process of working with these different independent bodies, which are rightfully set up to help safeguard the professional standards of their particular occupations. What I heard from individuals was that, yeah, in many cases they felt that they were not being given the chance to move forward at all, that they found it difficult to navigate the process, that they found it difficult to get information to understand what the next steps and expectations were, and that processes were extended for quite some time.

Our government looked to take some action on this as well. A lot of this discussion came up during the time that the then Minister of Education, now the Member for Edmonton-North West, spent many weeks going across the province speaking with individuals from multiple cultural communities as part of our consultation on how the government could help support Albertans in pushing back against racism and discrimination. Now, that is not to suggest, Madam Speaker, that professional bodies, in their work to vet candidates in the profession and to help them gain their qualifications, are engaging in discrimination. But it is something that came up in that conversation as one of many barriers that individuals who came here to Canada from other countries faced in trying to get ahead and establish themselves here.

We heard from many that they had difficulties working through this process, so our government created a fund and put some investment into that to start looking at if we could create some tools that would help these particular professional organizations be able to do a better job of vetting candidates and assess not only their actual academic qualifications and certifications but also their experience and real-world skill set gained in their time in their area of employment.

Of course, we had the election that came, so we had the change in government. I applaud this government for stepping forward with their own solution to this problem. We have here Bill 11, which is going to put in some clearer standards for professional organizations in the province – that will help provide clearer expectations for individuals that are working through those processes – creating a fair registration practices office, removing any unfair barriers to licensure, improving procedural fairness of how licences are processed, requiring that they provide an interim assessment decision within six months, having the regulatory bodies provide reports on their registration practices as requested, and allowing the minister to perform audits and issue compliance orders if necessary.

I think those are good first steps, Madam Speaker. I think those are reasonable. We are adding, I guess, some additional oversight, what some might call red tape, but frankly I'm not averse to creating such processes when it is appropriate and necessary. That is the very reason we have regulation. We recognize that there are systems that are not working or may not be working to their ideal level, so we introduce things into those systems to help steer them into a better path.

Within Bill 11 it also, then, requires that regulatory bodies assess applications and communicate their decisions within a very specific time frame. That's six months initially, which provides, I think, a good deal more certainty for individuals when they're first coming to Canada. They know that: "Okay. I've put in my paperwork. I've filled out all the applications. I've done all the things I needed to do. I will have an answer within six months. That will at least give me an indication of whether I indeed will have the opportunity to move forward in my field or not."

By requiring the organizations to provide reports to the minister, we have the opportunity then for government to better understand how these processes are working. Again, these are independent bodies, and I think for those of us in government – although we have constituents that come to us to express their concerns about what they're experiencing in the process, I have to admit, Madam Speaker, I don't personally know all of the steps that one must go through, if you're coming from another country, to be certified as an engineer or an accountant or a medical doctor in the province of Alberta. Having the opportunity for them to submit regular reports as directed by the minister, to provide more information about the process, the steps they are taking to ensure that they are all doing their due diligence: I think that is a reasonable and good step forward.

We will have the fair registration practices office. I think that's a good thing to have. They are going to work directly with the licensing bodies to see how we can streamline, simplify, and accelerate foreign credential recognition. I think that's a good step. You know, I recognize that this government has taken a similar step in other cases. They're doing a full review of Alberta Health Services to similarly look for efficiencies. I think that's reasonable. I look forward to seeing that report. In a similar way it makes sense here, I think, that we have some folks dedicated in government who will be able to sit down and work with the trade and professional licensing bodies to take a look at the processes that are in place, to talk through it and discuss it with them, to have it a bit of an arm's length from the political process.

Again, Madam Speaker, as much as I have constituents who've come to me to express concerns about how they were treated in a particular hospital or decisions that were made by a particular physician, as an MLA I don't feel that it's appropriate for me, from a political lens, to go in and question the judgment of a medical professional. In the same way, however, we do have within Alberta Health Services, within the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta avenues by which they can do that. Folks who also have medical expertise can sit down and have that discussion. We have those avenues within government and government agencies. Similarly, within the fair registration practices offices we will have folks who have the knowledge and the skill set, who are not politically motivated, who can sit down and work with these licensing bodies to make sure that they are providing the best opportunity for folks who have the skills, who have the knowledge, who could be making great contributions to our economy and to our communities to have the opportunity to do so as quickly as possible.

4:40

Part of the work also will be publicly identifying and holding accountable regulatory bodies that have unreasonable barriers to credential recognition. This is again, I think, a reasonable thing. If we are going to hold organizations to a particular standard, it makes sense that we would have folks in place to measure if they're meeting that standard and, if they are not, to have some means to hold them to account. However, I am interested to find out a bit more detail about this to get a better understanding of the suggestions of what penalties there might be or what approaches might be taken.

Again, Madam Speaker, while I certainly recognize that this is a problem that needs to be addressed, we want to be careful in how we approach things with these licensing and regulatory bodies. We want to do this in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration. We don't want to, I think, come out of the gate with an antagonistic stance. Let's save that for the pipeline war room.

I would say that what we want is to first of all be able to sit down at the table and have some good, fruitful discussion for the fair registration practices office, to be able to have those discussions, better understand the systems in place, talk about what changes can

be made, look at how these organizations can best implement this initial requirement for an interim decision within six months, and from there be able to look at how we work with organizations that we may feel are not being as flexible.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was very interested in what the Member for Edmonton-City Centre was speaking about. The last point he was making was talking about holding to account those regulatory bodies and colleges and other organizations that somehow do not meet up to the expectations that are identified in this bill, the Fair Registration Practices Act. I was just wondering what approaches he thought should be taken to ensure that there is fruitful discussion and that changes happen for the benefit of the person with the foreign qualifications that is being judged by these colleges and organizations but is not making their way through to licensure. I wonder if he could talk more about that and what the outcome might be if that organization or college doesn't address this in a fashion that's conclusive and helpful to the person who is trying to get their foreign qualifications study.

Thank you.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for that question. As I was saying, I think it's very important that we approach this in a spirit of collaboration with these organizations but, indeed, that we find ways to find them accountable. I myself am looking forward to sitting down and having some discussions. I have reached out, in my role as the opposition Health critic, to the College of Physicians & Surgeons, the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta, and some others in the medical field to have the opportunity to get their thoughts on how this legislation may affect them and get their thoughts on sort of how they see these systems working in their particular fields and what kinds of steps we might be able to take in conjunction with government to streamline the process for individuals coming from outside of Canada to work in those fields.

The Member for Calgary-Buffalo was asking sort of, I guess, my thoughts on what might be appropriate steps to take. Certainly, I have read that there is the opportunity for monetary fines. I think that's a reasonable step to have in place. We see that being an effective measure in everything from parking to condominium associations and all the way up the chain. I think that's a reasonable tool to have in the tool box here.

I think that we would not want to move immediately to monetary fines. I think it would be reasonable to have the opportunity, as we do, say, within health and safety and other areas, for them to be issued a warning, for them to be issued a reprimand, for other steps to be taken first. Certainly, if an organization is found to be continually failing to support new Albertans and new Canadians in fairly gaining access to the opportunity to work in a particular field, a monetary fine of an amount significant enough that it would get their attention would be a reasonable step.

Now, I have heard that within the discussion of bringing in the legislation, there was mention of removing the ability of a regulatory body to continue to function in that purpose. That seems challenging, Madam Speaker. I'd be interested to hear a bit more of the thought process with that. I can't see how we could remove the ability of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta to licence physicians and surgeons because we do not have a backup, and that is the case with most of these organizations. I recognize that would probably be considered a fairly extreme step, but I'm not even sure it's a step that would be capable of being carried out.



I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to learn a bit more about this bill and have some more discussion in that regard. But, ultimately, to return to where I began, Madam Speaker, this bill, I think, is an excellent opportunity for us to have some bipartisan goodwill in this House. There are some very good things in this piece of legislation. I one hundred per cent support the goals that the government has in bringing this forward. I applaud them for doing so. I think this is an important discussion to highlight. It also gives us the chance within the province to have greater recognition of the value that newcomers bring to our province at a time when, unfortunately, we are hearing many voices of prejudice.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House to speak in favour of this bill. This bill is really providing some hope to, I will say, the issues that are very real and very close to my personal experience and the issues of our communities.

Madam Speaker, speaking to this bill, I really wanted to share some of the stories that I have heard from the people I have had, you know, the privilege to meet and listen to their first-hand experience on issues related to this. When I first moved to Canada in 1993, I had a chance to meet a person. Actually, the person really actually attracted me to and provided a platform to engage in active politics in Alberta. The man happened to be one of the candidates. He was contesting for Mill Woods for MLA.

This gentleman moved to Canada in 1968. He would share his stories, like how he has worked hard in, you know, forestry in B.C., then he was working on the farms here in Alberta. He was working for an employer in his nursery somewhere in Edmonton. It was all of a sudden that the conversation broke and the employer really actually wanted to know about him and asked about his background. The member explained that he has, you know, a master's in English. He is a postgraduate. And the employer was stunned to learn that the person who was working in his nursery was a highly, highly educated person and how this was a missed opportunity that he never got to use his education, experience, and skills; not only a lost opportunity for him, but also a lost opportunity for us here in Canada, Alberta, and in Edmonton. Not only that, but the employer was so impressed and touched by his story that I think he was able to arrange the media and break this story in the media.

4:50

I remember another incident, sitting at the family socials, where a friend of ours, you know, reiterated a reference to one of his friends, that we already knew: "You know this friend. He has a PhD in this." And we were surprised. We knew him for a long time but never knew his educational background. "Oh, you have a PhD?" And he replied: "Oh, yeah. A kind of PhD." We were surprised, you know? What did he really mean by "kind of PhD"? He said, "I'm always saying, 'kind of PhD,' because this is a PhD I had, but with the time I spent and worked on that PhD, it never really worked for me."

That is the kind of experience that I really wanted to share. The reason we wanted to support this bill is in the hope that the bill provides some solution to these people going forward.

I also wanted to share stories as I had the opportunity to work in the taxi industry for a year or so where I was privileged to, you know, form the association for the taxi industry where we could just come together, share stories, and address some of the issues and challenges we were facing. I was surprised to see that the people around had degrees, they were graduates of world-class, recognized

universities, but they never happened to get a chance to show their real talent and find jobs in their field because of red tape in this area.

I recently was talking to a fellow born and raised in Malaysia. He's a young fellow in his late 20s. He's a cardiologist. I was offering, if he's willing to come to Canada, if he wanted to see if this would be a good place for him. You know, he blatantly declined. "No, no, no. Not Canada. I don't even consider thinking about Canada." He said: "I have no plan to spend five, six more years in university. I have already spent enough time of my life learning, so I will not be spending another six years there. I would rather think of something else. I would rather think about the U.S.A., not Canada."

These are the kinds of challenges – I just wanted to share stories – that the ethnic communities are facing when they come from their own countries with the experience and the education that they have. They not only can choose the place where they can make their life better, but they can also probably contribute with their talent and experience to make this society better for all. By supporting this bill, this is one thing that I can go back to my constituents with and I can give them some hope that, going forward, our next generation or generations to come might not go through the same experience.

I wanted to refer to some of the stories. I know a friend of mine, my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, shared some of the, you know, problems he sees in this – I don't know – the potential problems, and how they can be hurdles to achieve the goal we are setting in this bill. But I really wanted to share the stories I heard from the people, our seniors. They migrated to Canada in the '60s. They will tell stories, you know: "When we came, we were prepared for whatever job we would get. We knew that our degrees would not probably be recognized, that we would not probably be able to find jobs in the field that we were qualified to do."

That was the time that Alberta was going through the crisis, and they were, you know, anxiously looking for the professionals who could help them in the education system. They were looking for teachers, and they were looking for professionals. That message resonated, and the people from back home with degrees in education, like a B.Ed., moved here. They were able to help our education system in the rural areas, the rural communities. They tell stories that this is not the case anymore.

Madam Speaker, I'm so humbled and honoured and feeling privileged to support this common-sense legislation that will help the skilled newcomers to find jobs in their fields. It's not only help for them; it is help for us. We can take advantage. We can use their real assets. They can use their talent to contribute to this society, contribute to this society to make it better. The diversity in the province is our strength. Ensuring that newcomers have fair access to support for credentials will strengthen our workforce.

While we are pleased to see this government is taking this action on this important issue, this work is not new. We also, you know, really wanted to bring to attention that successive Alberta governments have worked on this, and we need to get full progress in this area. It is something very, very little that we can dwell on.

My riding of Edmonton-Meadows is one of the most diverse ridings in Alberta communities. You know, even I went through this issue. Getting credentials evaluated is huge. By supporting this bill, I'm so proud. I'm feeling so proud that I had the opportunity to give my input on behalf of not only constituents but the fellow Albertans who actually were not able to use their talents and their education due to lack of, I would say, programming or law or regulation.

5:00

I will be brief on this in my closing remarks. Once again, I wanted to say this: we have lots of hope from this bill, and I will expect that we will see some outcomes, contrary to, as I mentioned, successive governments. They have touched this issue, but we did not see much help from this in the past. Many times we have seen these issues debated in the elections and similar steps proposed, but the people in our communities did not really see something moving forward. Today by supporting this bill, I have lots of hope. So when I go back to my riding and I talk to my constituents, I will say that the government is serious, this House is serious.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There's a storm brewing outside.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. Any comments or questions?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 11, Fair Registration Practices Act. I want to say at the outset that I will be speaking in principle in favour of this legislation. It's an important issue. It's personally important to me. It's important to many living in my riding and across Alberta, in particular those who chose to make Canada home. When they come with qualifications from other countries, it's a challenge to get them recognized here. That's the reason that I will be speaking in favour of it.

Personally, I can say that I came with a master's degree in economics and I've been through this process. I can say it's a difficult process; it's a long process. There is no streamlined kind of procedure or one office where you can go to, in fact, to just get the evaluation done. Oftentimes different institutions have different requirements, so there is no such overarching kind of evaluation body whose evaluation will be acceptable throughout Alberta, throughout Canada. That is one issue that I faced, and I'm sure that there are many Albertans here who will share these stories, how recognition of their qualification is a hurdle, is a barrier for them starting a new life here in Alberta, here in Canada.

I can also say that education comes with a lot of benefits. It improves your personal lives, increases your earning potential, increases your economic well-being and stability, and helps us create more fair and prosperous societies. If we want this province to be a place which offers opportunity for everyone, that's one issue that we must address by removing those barriers, removing these hurdles that newcomers face in terms of getting their credentials recognized, that essentially hinders their full participation in the economy, in society, and that hinders them from realizing their full potential. That should be and that is unacceptable in a fair and just society.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I have heard many times before that the credentials that many newcomers rely upon to immigrate to Canada were good enough to get them that immigration, but once they land in Canada, once they get to any province, then those credentials are no longer valid. Those credentials no longer are helpful in landing them the job in their profession or the job appropriate to their training. This is not a new issue, and I'm sure the Premier, who once was the minister of immigration, must have heard about this issue before. But in our communities, newcomer communities, that's not something that he's known for. He certainly had the opportunity to make a difference, but, no, that's not something that he is known for in our communities. Rather, from his time in federal government and immigration, in my communities, in our communities people may

know him from niqab citizenship ceremonies. They may remember him for cuts to refugees and newcomers' health benefits, and they may remember him for bungling the temporary foreign worker file. They may remember him from the barbaric cultural practices hotline and things like that. But I think that's not the topic today.

We are talking about the recognition of these credentials, and it's certainly a good initiative. As I said, I will be supporting it, but I will also outline some of my concerns that I have with respect to this piece of legislation.

As I mentioned, that's not a brand new initiative. Many previous governments, federal and provincial, have worked on it. It still remains an issue, and the hope is that this time around we will be able to make some progress. Back when we were in government in 2017, the Premier committed to taking action against racism after six Muslims were killed in a Quebec City mosque. There were extensive consultations led by my colleague, then Minister of Education, the Edmonton-North West MLA. He met over a hundred groups. I was part of those consultations in Calgary, in Edmonton, in Red Deer, in Lethbridge, and also in Fort Mac. I personally was part of those consultations.

Out of those consultations we heard many things. There were almost eight or nine key recommendations. Two of them were implemented right away, one creating an antiracism advisory council and then creating an antiracism grant program. Those two initiatives were implemented right after the release of the report.

5:10

There were other things that were brought forward by the groups that we consulted. One of those things was foreign worker credentials and qualifications, career mentorship programs, and there were other things as well. I think I should mention a few others: provincial hate crime unit, funding the Alberta Hate Crimes Committee, updating the provincial curriculum, and expanding a number of languages in our school system. With respect to foreign qualification recognition we established a foreign qualification recognition fund as well, and we were in the process of engaging further with the communities across this province.

As has been outlined in the legislation, there are a number of bodies that have been included in this one. As I said, it's a complex issue. It's not the first time that some government is trying to resolve it, but we didn't see any consultation with respect to this with these organizations and bodies that are listed in schedule 1. It's a long list of bodies, and as much as I want these credentials to be recognized, I'm mindful that we need to make sure that we are getting it right and we are doing it in a way that ensures that those credentials are equal to what the standards are here in Canada, that those credentials are equal to what standards have been set by these self-governing professions in order to serve the best interests of Albertans, in order to maintain the high standards of professionalism in different professions across our province. That's certainly very important.

In order to get that right, I think we need to work with these bodies across our province, these self-governing organizations, as well as those communities, those individuals who are in the process of getting these credentials recognized. There are many organizations. For instance, just in my own riding there are two or three organizations that I can name. MDI is an organization of doctors who are foreign trained, and it's basically a support group trying to help each other, members, newcomers, to get their test and get their credentials recognized. Similarly, there is another organization, the Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America, APPNA. Last week I went to the inauguration of their Alberta chapter. Essentially, that organization is, among other things, providing support to foreign-qualified doctors to get their

credentials recognized. Similarly, there is ABEC, an organization of foreign-qualified engineers who are, among other things, helping newcomers to get their credentials recognized.

Those organizations, I think, will be in a position to help this government understand the viewpoints of those who are going through this process, to understand what issues and challenges they are facing, what their concerns are. Certainly, my hope is that at some point this government will consult these organizations. When we look at the legislation, it provides for an initial decision, an interim decision within six months, and after that every decision is, I guess, subject to a reasonable time. There is no clarity. There is no certainty to what reasonable time would mean. Certainly, in every case that would mean something different. Getting a medical credential recognized may be different than getting a credential in economics recognized because it's not a self-governing profession.

So there are a lot of details that are still not there. I understand that that will take some time, but there is no process outlined, as such, as to when we will see those things in place. A lot of the work has been left to regulations, but again my hope is that before drafting these regulations, the government will take the time to reach out to those individuals, reach out to these bodies like MDI, APPNA, ABEC to get the input, get the feedback about their concerns, about their issues.

There are other things that also need to be looked at that at this time are not in this draft legislation, and I'm hoping that some of those things may make it to regulations. One thing is about the evaluation body. Like, there is, for instance, IQAS, I think, an organization that provides evaluation services. But I think what we need to do, from my practical experience, from my conversations with many newcomers who are in the process of getting their credentials recognized, is that there needs to be an evaluating body whose evaluation is acceptable throughout the province, preferably throughout Canada, so that you don't have to get a new evaluation every time you apply for something. Some universities, some postsecondaries have their own evaluation system.

Again, there needs to be conversations with postsecondaries, with institutions, with these colleges, with professional bodies, with those individuals, with evaluating bodies to have that . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments, a five-minute question and comment period. I see the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women standing.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. It's been really nice to hear some of the responses coming from our colleagues in this place to help bring forward this legislation. There are a few things I just wanted to bring up. First of all, and maybe this has just been my luck and the way that things go, having had this portfolio even just for a short period of time, just over two months now, with the multiculturalism piece and with culture, the outreach into the community has been immensely – for lack of a better word, I'm overjoyed with the amount of time and energy that you get to spend with so many wonderful people and new Canadians especially.

Without a doubt, almost everywhere I go, every single time, every group that I'm with, somebody comes up to me and mentions to me that the Premier was the one who brought them into the country, that he was part of that when he had immigration, that he was the one who actually signed the papers that brought them into the country. Everywhere I go. It's actually quite unbelievable. You hear those things, that he was the best immigration minister that Canada ever had, and then you actually go out into the world, and you see these people who literally come up to you and say: did you

know that your Premier actually signed my papers to come into this country? On top of that, multiculturalism is a part of his personality. He actually took it with him into every other portfolio that he held. That is how important this profile is to him.

5:20

The opposition was talking yesterday, and I think it was the former Minister of Education who was speaking about how some of the ideas that he had brought forward maybe were something that simulated this. You know, good ideas come from a lot of different places. But to his point, there has been a long-standing issue about making sure that professional designations are brought forward. I think the part that was probably the most interesting to me – and I have to quote this. I'll actually read from my notes here. In terms of why the legislation is being proposed, just to be clear, it is to ensure that newcomers and all Albertans are successfully employed and that they're able to contribute to the Alberta economy in their skill levels, and the legislation introduced measures to ensure that regulated professions and trades and registration practices are transparent, that they are objective, impartial, and fair.

Pretty straightforward. The goal is to achieve that balance between responsibility that ensures safety, especially like the member across the way was talking about with doctors and other professions that especially require that piece of it, and actually other professions as well, and the independence of the regulatory bodies, and our commitment is to ensure that that registration and practices are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair.

Interestingly enough, when I read the *Hansard* from yesterday of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar – and, you know, I happily would open my office doors any time for multiculturalism to explain to the member about the intersectionality of the people and, really, how important it is that we actually create an inclusive space. Maybe he might want to come and see me and talk to me about this.

We don't need a fair registration practices office poking its nose into the Ministry . . .

I think he was talking about Advanced Education at the time.

. . . telling welders how they should evaluate other welders or telling electricians how they should evaluate other electricians or telling carpenters how to evaluate other carpenters.

I think, Mr. Speaker, he missed the point. This is actually about people who have been attracted to this country, who have worked so hard. To the point of the member across the way about how difficult it is, how hard this process is: we hear heartbreaking stories every single day of how much when people come here – they were really resilient before they even entered the country of Canada. Then they have to go through the process of becoming a Canadian. Then, on top of that, they have to hopefully get their professional designations to acknowledge the work and who they were when they came to this country, the whole reason for coming here.

Yet we have a member from that side who, in so many words, basically says: no; that's not important. Poking its nose: are you kidding me? This is about transparency and making sure that people who are coming here, new Canadians, are recognized for their value, their worth, so they are able to live positive, wonderful, fulfilling lives in a province that really, really is set up to make sure that those folks can function here.

I also wanted to outline quickly that he also mentioned yesterday that he doesn't think that "there's any additional value to be found in creating a fair registration practices office with people whose qualifications are unknown at this point." That is the point, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood standing to speak to the bill.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise on Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act. You know, it's not often in my short tenure here that I've been able to rise and be supportive of things in this House, so this is new. But this is okay because we need to recognize at times that there are issues that are not about partisanship, for sure, but about doing the right thing.

My riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is a very diverse one, made up of many people from countries all around the world. I know the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore had a chance to visit it just the other day.

**Mrs. Aheer:** It's an awesome riding.

**Member Irwin:** It sounds like she enjoyed it.

You know, as I said, a lot of folks come from all over the world to our neighbourhoods. In fact, some of my friends were actually at the announcement, so it's kind of interesting to be able to speak about this.

I know that the members for Calgary-McCall and Edmonton-Meadows shared some really important personal stories. Obviously, I can't share anything from my own life, but I can share the stories of many others.

My own doctor is actually from Libya, and she's amazing. I actually went for years here without a family doctor. I just couldn't seem to get one. I know that for every doctor like mine, there are many others who haven't yet had their credentials recognized. I've heard from some of those folks in my own neighbourhood as well. You know, we're so lucky to be able to attract such incredible talent to our province and to our country.

You know, many years ago I spent a summer in Toronto, and I volunteered at something called job camp, which was put on by Youth Employment Services of Toronto. There I heard first-hand the stories of many newcomers, countless people, who just arrived in the city and who were struggling and were looking for any sort of job and employment advice. Their credentials just weren't being recognized, and in many cases they felt like they were being treated as less than human. As I said, I mean, these stories are innumerable across our province and our country.

I know that many of my constituents will be so happy to hear about this work to ensure that we are going to collaborate and to help ensure that their credentials are being recognized and that this government is continuing the work that we started, that our NDP caucus is here for them and for their families. We know how important it is that education and experience be recognized, that their credentials be considered equal to those of their counterparts.

It's about respect. It's about valuing work and labour. It's about valuing the contributions of our neighbours. It's about equality. It's about fairness. These are the values of the NDP, and these are my values. So to the newcomers out there, many of whom I'm so proud to call friends: we're going to continue to fight to ensure that you get treated equitably because you give so much to our province and to our country and you deserve that recognition.

In fact, our Premier noted just the other day that too often we hear stories about doctors-driving-cabs syndrome. So we're going to be taking action. It's not about, you know – and he's certainly not saying this either – demeaning those who drive cabs. These are very important jobs. It's about having those credentials recognized.

As I said, I've heard those stories, many of them, from folks in my own riding. Our country, our province has been able to attract incredible people, but too many of them struggle for years, sometimes even decades, when their credentials aren't being recognized. When they struggle, it's a great loss to our country because we need their skills and we need them to be realizing their full potential. We also know that this affects more than just their

own families and their communities; in some cases it's their own mental health and sense of worth. We know that when Albertans are treated equitably, all of society benefits. Fairness is important to Albertans. We've seen that in a lot of cases. This bill aids in fairness.

Now, Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act, would remove barriers, would speed up the processes where possible, would hold professional bodies accountable, and, as I said, would increase fairness. It's enabling legislation that would provide the authority to create a fair registration practices office; would reduce, in theory, some of the red tape associated with this whole credentialing process; would work with regulators; and would try to maintain Alberta's high professional standards.

Someone I respect greatly is Barry Cavanaugh. He is the CEO of the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta. He noted that his own professional association has long since adopted high standards of fairness in their admission practices, and as a result they're happy to see this work moving forward. As I said, this is an important step in equality.

If the moral and the societal benefits don't sway you, well, let's look at some of the economic benefits here. According to the Conference Board of Canada Canadians would earn up to \$17 billion more annually if their credentials were fully recognized, and of course immigrants are the largest group here, with an estimated 524,000 of those folks being affected by a lack of recognition. In fact, after doing a little digging, these numbers vary depending on the report that you look at.

According to 2016 stats Canada-wide this is an issue that affects nearly 1 million immigrants. A report released in January 2016 said that nearly 850,000 Canadians, over 60 per cent of whom are immigrants, end up underemployed or unemployed because their credentials are not recognized in our country. In fact, a 2012 report found in a survey of 50,000 cab drivers across Canada that 200 were doctors or had PhDs and that 20 per cent of drivers who immigrated to Canada had at least an undergrad level or a master's degree level.

We know as well that many other jurisdictions have addressed this issue and have taken these steps earlier. Provinces like Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia have this fairness legislation in place.

5:30

So I am quite hopeful, and I want to repeat that I am quite hopeful about this bill. I'm quite hopeful to see that this government is moving forward with something that affects so many Albertans and Canadians, but I think it's also important to temper my optimism a little bit. It's really critical that this bill be executed, be implemented correctly and that they get the regulations right on this.

There are a few specifics here. For instance, we know that the Labour and Immigration minister will have the authority to intervene in individual cases. He will then, in turn, be able to work with regulators to ensure that the processes are fair and issue orders if they're not complying. Of course, all of these expectations will be laid out in the legislation, but I do have some worry because some individuals may still feel that their concerns aren't being fully acknowledged and that they're not getting a timely enough response.

There are a whole number of organizations listed: the Alberta Association of Architects, for example; Alberta College of Optometrists; Alberta Insurance Council – I'm just picking a few here because these are some pretty significant bodies – the Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta; let's see, the college of midwives of Alberta. Again, the list goes on and on. We're talking about countless organizations. We know that these organizations

will have six months to provide applicants with an interim decision, which could include advice on what is needed, what additional documentation, what extra training is needed or required. But there won't be a deadline for an applicant to receive a final decision because these different professions do have different requirements, different criteria set out under each of their practices.

We do know that any organizations that are issued compliance orders may face a fine of up to \$50,000. Will that be enough to deter and to ensure that organizations are following? I'm not sure. Again, I think this is where the regulations and the implementation are going to be so, so important.

We know that the minister can, under this proposed act, perform audits and can ask for those and ask for detailed reports into how any of these organizations are in fact operating. My concern will be that with the lack of a specific or standardized deadline across bodies, things could be delayed. Of course, if we're talking about the case of someone who's trying to support their family, too much of a delay could certainly be problematic. Again, I think it's incumbent upon all of us to ensure that some of these specifics are quite clear because if we're going to take this step forward, we need to get it fully right.

Now, I want to just talk a little bit as well about some of the work that the Member for Calgary-McCall talked about as well. We know that we heard loudly and clearly from Albertans through things like the antiracism consultations. I wasn't as involved as that member was, but I was tangentially involved in some of the consultations and some of the organizing of that. In reading and in hearing some of the reports from those consultations, we did hear loudly and clearly that action needs to be taken. That's exactly why we invested in a foreign qualification recognition fund and started to take steps to ensure that Albertans were treated fairly. We expect and we hope that the government will take the necessary steps to ensure that any interactions with those professional regulatory bodies and associations are done in a timely and, I guess, a standardized manner.

I think what I'll do is I'll close by just – I've praised this government for the steps that they're taking. But, yeah, I just want to ensure that we move forward with this in a way that truly will be fair and be respectful. Again, I'm here as the voice of the constituents of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, many of whom are new Canadians, many of whom have shared with me their struggles as they arrived in our country. I just urge us to really listen to each other and listen to their voices as we move forward with Bill 11.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a second time]

## Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

[Adjourned debate June 25: Ms Savage]

**The Acting Speaker:** Do I see any members looking to speak to Bill 12? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to my hon. colleagues for this opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 12, the Royalty Guarantee Act. The Royalty Guarantee Act is an important step towards strengthening investor confidence in our province's oil and

gas sector. This act will provide long-term certainty to investors by affirming that the current royalty structure will be maintained for at least 10 years. I'm also glad to say that this guarantee is a platform promise and demonstrates the United Conservative Party's commitment to stand up for Albertans and to create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things I want to touch on. Our province has had a couple of royalty reviews in the last 11 or 12 years, one in 2007-2008 and another one in 2016. I want to touch on the great uncertainty that this caused to our oil and gas producers and our companies. Of course, we know that one of the things that businesses crave is certainty. In a competitive world, in a world where it's sometimes hard to control and manage and budget your costs, what a company doesn't need is surprises.

I want to talk about how I saw the royalty review in 2007-2008 and what it did to Medicine Hat and what it did to our good oil and gas companies down there. Mr. Speaker, for a start, I'd like to give you a little bit of background on Medicine Hat. Of course, we're the Gas City. We have developed a tremendous amount of oil, a tremendous amount of natural gas for all Albertans, for all Canadians. We have been leaders, like so many other people in Alberta, so many other parts of Alberta, in ensuring that natural gas was a valuable commodity produced at a good price for Albertans to use.

Just a little history, Mr. Speaker. Not a lot of people know that in 1907 Rudyard Kipling coined the phrase that Medicine Hat was an area with all hell for a basement. Interestingly, at the time the citizens of Medicine Hat were actually thinking of changing the name to Gasburg. Thank goodness that they kept the Blackfoot tradition. The words "hat" and "medicine" kind of come from the Blackfoot word "Saamis," and that continued. That shows the connection that the southeastern part of our province, that the good people of southeastern Alberta and Medicine Hat have to the oil and gas industry, have to the removal of carbon, and have to promoting that.

Mr. Speaker, it only got better. Right next door to Medicine Hat is the Suffield Block, hundreds and hundreds of square miles where the British army three or four times a year brings in approximately 2,500 soldiers to train, where the Canadian government and Canadian scientists for years have conducted first-rate research. It's been an amazing partnership between the Canadian government, the British soldiers that train, and our good oil and gas business. It's one of the areas where Alberta Energy in the '70s first developed, where Albertans and Canadians got really, really good at extracting natural gas and oil and sharing the wealth. Some years our area paid billions of dollars in royalties to the Alberta Treasury.

5:40

Mr. Speaker, here's what happened without the certainty that we're going to see Bill 12 provide in the Royalty Guarantee Act. When the first royalty was conducted in 2008, the government at the time was told by our good producers that the margins were tight, but other jurisdictions offered more certainty and more opportunity, and if they persisted, many would leave. What happened is that five or six big ones, good employers, did leave as the royalty review was happening, costing our city, costing our area tens and tens of jobs, costing the wealth and the income that that would circulate. That's one of the reasons that I am so pleased to see that the Royalty Guarantee Act – and I'll say it again – affirms that the current royalty structure will be maintained for at least 10 years, the certainty that these companies need to provide the jobs, invest the tens and tens of millions in capital to make it happen.

Mr. Speaker, the Royalty Guarantee Act will help restore Alberta's competitive advantage. It's a guarantee. It's a major step towards assuring investors that Alberta is a stable place to invest. I want to

talk a little bit, too, about how important that is from my business background and my experience, the number of times I've talked to our good, hard-working job creators and small-business people, oil and gas and otherwise, that are lucky to eke out a 2, 3, or 4 per cent return at the end of the year. As a matter of fact, I had coffee this morning with an executive who's in a fairly big business, who told me that at the year-end they feel lucky if they make 4 per cent of their revenue. This is why they need certainty. A small change can wipe out investment dollars. Worse yet, it can kill jobs. That is why this certainty is crucial, and that's why I'm such a supporter of the Royalty Guarantee Act here at second reading.

Mr. Speaker, the uncertainty created by an open-end wholesale review of our royalty structure, like was done in 2008, like the past government just did in 2016, that froze investment, caused uncertainty, lost jobs, will not be done under this government because of the Royalty Guarantee Act. Investors will no longer need to worry that the rules in Alberta will change at the halfway mark, halfway through a project. We're recommending a guarantee of no major changes to the oil and gas royalty structure for at least 10 years. We're also guaranteeing that once a well starts producing, it will be under the same royalty system for the same length of time.

Mr. Speaker, I reached out and I talked to some oil and gas investors who felt that that 10 years was absolutely adequate, that felt that the 10 years was a strong guarantee, coupled with a free enterprise and a business-focused government, coupled with the good work of my colleague the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. That's a problem, too. Absolutely. This will restore hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in the Alberta oil and natural gas business to make sure that we can stay being a leader.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about what the last government also did to our good producers, that can't be forgotten. At the same time as they put them through another royalty review in 2016, freezing investment, scaring the creation of jobs, there was a 20 per cent provincial tax hike – a 20 per cent provincial tax hike – that made us not competitive, and a carbon tax that other competing jurisdictions didn't have that led to carbon leakage, that made it harder on rural Alberta, made it harder on our not-for-profits and on our school divisions, but also made it much, much harder on our families, with food costs, with gas costs, and made it much, much harder on our oil and gas producers because of the costs.

Then there were the signals that the last government used to show when the Leader of the Opposition, as Premier, refused to stand up to foreign interference in our oil and gas industry to land-lock our resources, never mind even acknowledge it. Many of the past government's cabinet were seen protesting our great hydrocarbon industry, never mind what the other half of their party, the federal party, said with the Leap Manifesto, never mind a 100-megatonne cap on emissions. It was a clear signal that they did not want this industry to grow, that they did not want this industry to thrive, that they did not want this industry to provide the jobs and the wealth and the billions and billions of dollars of transfer payments for all Canadians to benefit from, for all Canadians to benefit from with jobs and social programs.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta: a great opportunity, a great place to live, and it's about that Alberta advantage. It's about that Alberta advantage of the most opportunity, the most competitive taxes, and the best social programs. That's exactly why we need Bill 12, the Royalty Guarantee Act, to provide the confidence for those who create jobs, those who create wealth, those who invest billions of dollars, certainly tens of millions of dollars, to make it happen.

I want to come back to the royalty review in 2007-2008, which was one of the reasons I decided to enter politics. I don't know

whether to call it, you know, the first of a thousand cuts. Certainly, I had the good fortune to knock on so many doors in the last campaign and see how resilient and how strong so many Albertans are. They're willing to travel to work, willing to do what it takes, willing to bear down. But it was a step back when I heard last week that for some of our natural gas companies the spot price for natural gas right now is actually negative, meaning they have to pay to take away their oil and gas, or their gas in this case. Mr. Speaker, there have been so many issues that have made it hard for this industry. This certainty is required. This certainty will not only create jobs, but it will protect what we have.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you a little bit more about Medicine Hat and some of the layers of burden that the past government put on them. At a time when things were a bit challenging, instead of doing something like a Royalty Guarantee Act, where we know that things aren't going to change for 10 years, the last government decided to make it tougher with that 20 per cent tax increase I talked about, with the carbon tax, with extra layers of regulation, with a 100-megatonne cap. And here are some of the effects. Knocking on doors it was absolutely alarming how many Cypress-Medicine Hatters were on their way to North Dakota, Texas, Wyoming, Oklahoma, even Argentina, even Iran because that's where the work was. It was alarming.

5:50

In the city of Medicine Hat our gas department used to return considerable profits to the good people of Medicine Hat. Unfortunately, now it's losing money, and a \$24 million dividend that used to assist in providing good public services is no longer available. Mr. Speaker, the mayor and the council people in Medicine Hat are having to find \$24 million of annual savings because they don't get this dividend anymore. That's comparable to Calgary or Edmonton having to find \$500 million in savings.

Mr. Speaker, the problems and the reverberation of our oil and gas industry not being strong are widely felt. That is why we need Bill 12. That is why we need to have the guarantee of royalty protection so these people can invest and create jobs.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about some other layers that have to be addressed. The federal government, under the Species at Risk Act, has an environmental protection order to protect sage grouse in our area. Everybody wants to protect the sage grouse. Everybody wants to make sure that they thrive, that industry thrives, and everyone has a chance to do well. But here's what's happened. A company called LGX ended up going into receivership; hundreds of families that used to work there affected. The city of Medicine Hat ended up suing the federal government for \$42 million because of this being placed.

People that care about the sage grouse are noticing that with the introduction of fox, with hardly any families out there, there are more coyotes. They're noticing that the sage grouse, the leks where they mate and dance, seem to be in areas where people used to live. They're hoping that this is the kind of thing, again, that rules and regulations and a government that cares about family and free enterprise in the oil and gas industry can have an opportunity to look at, to make sure that we work hand in hand better to protect our environment, to protect our species, and to make sure that all Alberta families have an opportunity to flourish, to do well, and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close with just simply that I very, very much support the Royalty Guarantee Act. I very much know that good, ethical, safe development of oil and gas is what Alberta has done best. I'm so pleased that southeastern Alberta and Medicine Hat has been a leader in that area since the '50s and '60s and very, very much wants to continue to do that. I know that this act will

provide the long-term certainty that investors need to invest their money, take some risk but at the same time create some jobs and pay some royalties so Alberta can continue to have the best social programs in all of Canada. I'm especially glad that this guarantee is a platform promise and demonstrates our commitment to stand up for all Albertans and create jobs.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other hon. members looking to speak to the bill?

**An Hon. Member:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**The Acting Speaker:** Not on this one. He was the second speaker. On the next speaker there would be 29(2)(a). This one would be 15 minutes for the initial debate time.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore standing.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always enjoy being able to rise in this House to speak to various pieces of legislation, especially Bill 12. You know, I have to say that it's been interesting listening to some of the speakers, especially the last one, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and, frankly, a lot of the members over on the government side. What I found interesting is some of the spin that we hear around things. There's some spin in Bill 12 that I'll address, but I think I should clarify why I'm talking about spin.

For example, we hear the government talking at length about the biggest mandate that they've had in the history of Alberta, you know, a 56 per cent mandate, that over a million people voted for them. The problem is that there are 3.3 million people in Alberta, which is less than 25 per cent, 23.9 per cent to be exact. It's always interesting to hear the spin.

We could talk about the corporate tax rate, that it was raised by 20 per cent. The last time I looked, 12 per cent up from 10 per cent is only 2 per cent. Again, it's all around spin. [interjections] I know that members are heckling away, and I know I have the floor right now, Mr. Speaker, so perhaps they might want to listen to some of the things I have to say.

We have spin in Bill 12. I'm looking at Bill 12 right now, and one of the things I'm a little bit concerned about is red tape. Here we are creating some structure around red tape, so I'm . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt. I just want to take a moment to remind the House that there will be ample opportunity to debate this matter. At the present time I'm actually having a little bit of trouble hearing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Please continue.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

Getting back to what I was mentioning around red tape, I mean, we've seen the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction have a mandate looking to cut red tape in the province of Alberta by one-third, with a bit of a one-in, one-out type of focus. Of course, I was very, very pleased to finally see the posting of the 17 regulations that were eliminated over a 21-day period. I was very excited to be able to see that. Of course, a lot of people don't quite understand why it was eliminated, how it could affect them, you know, but we'll work on that a little bit later.

When we talk about that mandate around red tape, you know, we've seen some bills that are bringing in red tape. So if we start to look at this, is there going to be a rush to try to eliminate red tape to keep up with the red tape that we have coming into the Assembly here right now? I'm a little bit concerned about that around this bill and several others.

Again, when I was talking a little bit about spin, I could even refer a little bit to Bill Hate, where you've talked about, you know, some of the biggest protections for GSAs, yet there are some loopholes that I could probably fly the space shuttle through from the backseat.

Here we are talking about guaranteeing over the next 10 years some of the rates, but this is a little bit misleading, Mr. Speaker. When I see things around whatever actions the government considers appropriate and consistent with legislation, that tells me that, well, if it's prudent and convenient, we're going to start changing things just on a bit of a whim, so that really doesn't actually provide certainty for investors when they're looking at these royalties.

You know, here we are. We're focused on trying to look at the rates that we're using. With probably, unfortunately, a bit of limited time, hopefully, I'll be able to get back to this later. I can get through a little bit of a history of where we're at in terms of our royalties. Again, I'm a little bit concerned that there's going to be a bit of a rush to get through some of this stuff, and then we'll have to try to make up for it going forward.

So I'm really hoping that the government isn't going down yet another path where they're selling Albertans a bill of goods that really isn't going to be in their best interests. I'm really concerned that Bill 12 happens to be one of those bills of goods that really isn't going to be in their best interests. At the end of the day, royalties belong to Albertans. They should be getting a good, fair price for them, making sure that we take that money and are able to invest it back into Alberta.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member for a second time, but seeing that it is 6 p.m., the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, June 26, 2019

Day 20

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening, everyone.

I'll take a moment and say hello to my daughter, Molly, who is tuned in this evening to watch our proceedings. Hi, Molly.

Now you may all take a seat.

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

##### Bill 12

##### Royalty Guarantee Act

[Debate adjourned June 26: Mr. Nielsen speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good evening to you and all the thousands of viewers that are probably watching us here intently debating Bill 12 at this time. When we had left off, I was just concluding some remarks a little bit around red tape and how I felt that there was a concern on my part around maybe a potential rush by the government to feel that they would need to reduce a lot of red tape because of some of the red tape that they have been introducing, part of which I think Bill 12 might be doing here.

I didn't want to . . . [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, can we just keep the volume down a little bit so I can hear our speaker? Thank you.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. That's twice now that we've had to quiet down the folks here.

I wanted to quickly touch just a little bit on some of the work that was done around the royalty review by the former NDP government, with just a couple of quick quotes that I would like to go through.

When we started this process we committed to listening to Albertans and industry. Seeing our recommendations brought to life means Albertans can know their views are reflected in the Modernized Royalty Framework. This is a system that is built to last and I'm pleased to see the positive reaction to it.

Of course, that was said by Dave Mowat, the president and CEO of ATB Financial and the past chair of the royalty review advisory panel.

I'd also like to quote Tim McMillan, the president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. He said:

I commend the Alberta government for its timely approach to create a more modern royalty system through a constructive process. This has led to a royalty system that is true to the principles of the royalty advisory report. The new royalty system helps provide more clarity that investors need to plan for the future.

And one other quick one that I just wanted to touch on:

The Explorers and Producers Association of Canada is pleased that the conclusion of this royalty calibration process will allow investors and oil and gas producers to move forward with a clear understanding of the new royalty and fiscal terms. The well-run process allowed the thorough exchange of analysis and information between government and industry. The result is a modernized royalty framework, with more transparency and better suited to support investment and development of Alberta's future energy resource opportunities.

Of course, that was Gary Leach, president of the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada.

What I am essentially saying, Madam Speaker, is that the system we have in place currently works. It's providing certainty for investors within the industry. It's providing certainty for our businesses that take our resources and bring those to market, providing a fair and balanced return to Albertans. I think Bill 12 will upset that applecart, and that is doing a little bit of a disservice to Albertans.

Unfortunately, as some members are probably expecting, I won't be supporting Bill 12. I still feel that, you know, this is potentially going to create a bit of a race to reduce red tape, as we've seen. There are many bills that are coming forward that are creating a whole bunch of red tape, which is a little bit counterproductive to one of the platform commitments that the government brought forward.

With that, though, I will take my seat. I'm interested to hear the rest of the debate of this going forward, and I look forward to some of the comments that I'm sure we'll be hearing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers?

Would the hon. Minister of Energy like to close debate?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a second time]

##### Bill 8

##### Education Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Nielsen moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment June 25: Ms Ganley]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Speaker, I would like to move the following unanimous consent motion to go to one-minute bells for the duration of the evening, including in Committee of the Whole. I will seek the table's advice if we've accomplished my objective or if I need to say it differently.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are now on Bill 8. Are there any speakers wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 8 here this evening. We know that we've heard a lot of issues around Bill 8 in regard to ensuring safe and caring schools. Quite frankly, I should know because I was the Minister of Education and looking for ways by which we could build a cohesive safe and caring schools policy for students here in the province of Alberta. I was around when Bill 10 was being debated as well, so part of the evolution, the time unfolding around these issues. I was both witness to and partly the architect of these events. I can speak on good authority and give some practical history as to why it was necessary to strengthen the School Act, Bill 10, and safe and caring schools in order to make sure the integrity

of GSAs and QSAs was retained and they were allowed to flourish here in the province of Alberta.

When I became minister and was watching with interest GSAs and QSAs starting up in the province of Alberta, I did notice that there was a lot of inconsistency. I was getting a lot of feedback and complaints from students, individual schools, parents, and so forth where certain things were happening that would help to slow down the timely creation of GSAs and QSAs in schools and, you know, somehow dilute the purpose of the GSA and the QSA in the first place. I mean, there are a myriad of reasons why that might have been happening. I don't want to judge or generalize about what the motives or the intentions were around those events happening, but, I mean, I can tell you that they were definitely happening.

For example, a common challenge that we ran across with building GSAs or QSAs is that an individual administrator at a school would simply drag their feet. You know, perhaps it was a grade 11 student or a grade 12 student in their school that was looking to form a GSA or a QSA and sponsor that, and we saw circumstances where an administrator would simply kind of drag their feet and wait for that student to graduate or leave the school, looking at it not as an opportunity to create something special in the school and to help vulnerable kids but treating it as a problem and maybe treating it like the individual that was advocating for the GSA was a problem. The administrator would rag the puck or not move in a timely fashion, and there would be a lot of frustration associated with that.

7:40

We were talking about kids that are, like, 15, 16, 17 years old, so when the full force of an administrator at a school comes forward and is obviously obfuscating and getting in the way, then that's really hard for a young person, and often the GSA or the QSA just didn't happen, and the kid might move schools or, like I say, would graduate and be gone in the interim.

Another common problem that I was trying to mediate and work with was that administrators would say: "Okay. You want to start a GSA or a QSA. That's fine, but you can't call it that. You know, we just don't want that kind of language around, so you can call it a culture club, or you can call it an inclusion club or a rainbow club." I had a couple of those along the way, and the kids said: "No, we want to call it . . ." – and maybe they do. Maybe some kids do want to have a different name, culture club or whatever, but not allowing students to actually use "gay-straight alliance" or "queer-straight alliance," really, was an issue quite a lot in different schools around the province. Again, I was making a list of practical things that were happening that needed to change in order to strengthen the legislation and to make it whole.

Another common issue that we ran across – again, you know, this is a sensitive one, but it's very key to the integrity of a GSA – is that students could join the GSA and retain the confidentiality of that if they chose to do so. Again, you know, it's sensitive, and I know that people opposed to GSAs and QSAs really struck on this point as being a reason to fight against gay-straight alliances and queer-straight alliances, but it's sort of the essence of what those groups are. It's a safe place for a young person who is just coming to terms with their sexuality.

Maybe it's only a temporal thing, like they're just saying: "Okay. I need to have this place, and it needs to be on the q.t. that I am joining onto this because I need to think about this." It's a very sensitive time in a person's life. I was just listening to the radio driving over here, and it was a podcast on CBC talking about LGBTQ issues and about people choosing to come out to their family and friends. It's not easy to do, by any means, and the GSA

or QSA model is a place to create a safe space and a safe haven for people, and then they can make choices around that later, right?

I mean, it's important to realize and to know that the legislation as it stands now, which is very strong, very cohesive legislation, still doesn't override the law in regard to safety, imminent danger, and social services as well. It's not as though the GSA legislation would retain the confidentiality of someone even if their life was in danger or if there was something that was deemed to be so by social services and so forth, but it retains the confidentiality if a student chooses to have that confidentiality within certain parameters. Again, eminently reasonable, and any suggestion that students should be compelled to release that information to anyone in any normal circumstance is just not logical. Like I say, it undermines the whole reason and purpose of a GSA and a QSA in the first place.

By making those simple adjustments, you know, we saw the phenomenon where GSAs and QSAs were beginning to flourish across the province. It was quite obvious that there was a need and an interest in these groups in schools because they just started to proliferate at quite an astounding rate.

Another phenomenon that I saw over time, over the last three years now, I guess, is that school boards started to come onboard in regard to creating a safe and caring schools policy that was in keeping with a certain standard. I mean, I definitely had lots of foot-dragging for the first couple of years, but, you know, at the end of the day, we stood with every single public school in the province of Alberta in putting together a coherent and acceptable and often outstanding safe and caring schools policy that was completely in compliance with the law.

We had every single Catholic school board in the province of Alberta build a safe and caring schools policy that was in compliance with the law and was truly outstanding and had infused and threaded through it articles of faith – right? – because, of course, that's the prerogative and, I think, the importance of our Catholic school system, to have faith-based teaching. And they did it, every single Catholic school board. In other words, every Catholic school in Alberta was under a safe and caring schools policy that was coherent, that was sensitive, that was infused with faith. That went really well. I mean, I think we can be very proud of that, to see that work. I can tell you that it wasn't easy, by any means, but – you know what? – sometimes the very best, most important things in life are not easy to achieve. We did manage to put that together, and I was very proud of that.

Every single francophone school and school board, again, has a safe and caring schools policy that is coherent, that is sensitive, and completely in compliance with the law. As I mentioned, I think, the other night, I have to take the account of people that can translate for me because I can't read their policies, but they passed with flying colours, and I'm very proud of them as well.

Every single school in terms of charter schools, again, building a safe and caring schools policy in compliance with the law and often doing a very outstanding job and meeting the local needs as well to build in language that would meet the articles of the charter that that school happened to be under: that turned out really well, and I was very proud of the work that they did as well.

The vast majority, Madam Speaker – the vast majority – of private schools here in the province of Alberta undertook the same exercise and came up with a safe and caring schools policy that was outstanding, quite frankly. They did a great job, and I was very proud to see what was produced. You know, I think that that whole aspect of this journey that we've been on around gay-straight alliances here in the province of Alberta was extremely rewarding to see, by far the vast majority of schools, 90 some per cent or more – I can't remember what it was – going through this process in an authentic and genuine way and coming up with something that they

can be proud of. I mean, it's as simple as that in terms of the history of where we are today.

You know, I know that the government is trying to sell these changes to safe and caring schools policies as just being something inconsequential and so forth, but obviously it's not because, number one, we just went through that whole process of coming up to the level that we're standing at here today. We're at a place where we literally have moved people's minds and understanding about this whole issue around inclusion and acceptance of LGBTQ people in general, not just students, in our society.

I will say, Madam Speaker, that I was a person that travelled on that journey over the last three years as well, gaining understanding of not just sort of something on paper or some basic idea around justice and equality but a true understanding of inclusivity and acceptance that, you know, I internalized in everything that I do. I feel like I'm a stronger person for it. I'm a more understanding person for it. I think as well that literally hundreds of thousands of other people had gained some useful knowledge and understanding about this issue as well. You could literally see Alberta moving from a place where we were before to a more caring and accepting and inclusive place for all of us to live, so I think that we need to look at that as part of what we have done here today and where we're going in the future as well.

7:50

I think that those who know me know that I am a reasonable person that looks for ways by which we can collaborate to create something that we can all live with and that still will demonstrate progress in terms of anything that we debate here in this Legislature. You know, with this one, this particular Bill 8, I think that we all need to take a long, hard look at what is the purpose of the legislation in the first place, go back to those first principles, make sure that every aspect of that is built in a cohesive way to ensure that we are looking after vulnerable youth, that we are instilling a sense of justice and equality into the policies that we put forward in regard to LGBTQ issues and with GSAs and QSAs specifically, and that we're retaining a sense of safety and security for people as well.

By this being on the docket, so to speak, Madam Speaker, up for debate here, it literally has shattered the level of security and confidence that we did create over this last number of years because people say: "Why are we changing this? I mean, what's the point? Why is it that we should be feeling compelled to make a change when we have gone through so much work to build coherent policy, have allowed GSAs and QSAs to flourish, and have allowed that process to start?" I just know that people are feeling insecure.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any speakers under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I would not want to put you in a spot where I was moving the same unanimous consent motion, but as you well know, I'm always here to help – it's my main goal each day when I come here – so I'm going to try this in a different way. I'm going to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 32(2) and (3) to go to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening, which, just so you know and for those following at home, would mean both in and outside of committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That would be the House deciding on a procedural amendment, so we will seek unanimous consent to waive the standing orders.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Anybody else on the amendment?

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any other speakers to the bill?

Would the hon. minister like to close debate?

**Member LaGrange:** Yes, I will close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill?

**Mrs. Savage:** Madam Chair, Bill 12, Royalty Guarantee Act, is a very important step towards strengthening investor confidence in our province's oil and gas sector. This act would provide long-term certainty to those making investment decisions by affirming that the current royalty structure will be maintained for at least 10 years. This guarantee is also one of our platform promises and demonstrates our commitment to stand up for our energy sector and create more jobs for Albertans.

Madam Chair, Alberta went through two royalty reviews, in 2008 and in 2016, and those reviews told us what we already knew, that royalty rates in Alberta are competitive with other jurisdictions, including Saskatchewan and many U.S. states. However, these reviews also fundamentally altered how investors viewed Alberta. Before these reviews took place, our province was viewed as a stable place to make long-term investments, which brought prosperity and investment to Alberta, but these two royalty reviews created a climate of uncertainty and unpredictability, which impacted how investors viewed Alberta, and have had a profound negative impact on our province's ability to compete. As a result, investors started leaving our province in search of other jurisdictions with a more stable investment climate. Unfortunately, this kind of uncertainty has contributed to our province losing billions of dollars in investment opportunities, and we still have not recovered.

This trend of investors wondering what curveballs might be thrown their way has to stop. Industry needs certainty. The Royalty Guarantee Act will help restore Alberta's competitive advantage. This guarantee is a major step towards assuring investors that Alberta is once again a stable place to invest. We want to send a strong signal to investors that the uncertainty created by open-ended, wholesale reviews of our royalty structure is not going to happen again. By enshrining stability into law, it becomes crystal clear. Investors would no longer need to worry that the rules in Alberta could change halfway through the game.

Through Bill 12 we're recommending an approach that would guarantee no major changes to the oil and gas royalty structure for at least 10 years. We'll also guarantee that once a well starts producing, it will be under the same royalty system for that length of time. This time frame is intended to provide a reasonable time to recover most of the producible oil and gas from new and existing

wells. This guarantee would apply to current oil, oil sands, and natural gas royalty frameworks, including crude oil, pentanes, methane, ethane, propane, and butane.

Through this legislation the basic royalty structures will remain in place, including the ability for regular required adjustments such as setting monthly par prices. The existing structure, rules, and processes will continue to enable industry and government to address significant market and technology changes. It will also allow us to reduce red tape and to simplify processes and provide much-needed clarity to industry. This legislation also confirms that the transition to the modernized royalty framework for wells drilled on or before December 31, 2016, would occur as planned in 2026.

To implement this guarantee, we can do this through amending the Mines and Minerals Act. This would allow government to use existing regulatory powers in an existing piece of legislation, eliminating the need for new legislation and avoiding new red tape.

Madam Chair, the guarantee this bill provides means that stability isn't just something we talk about in Alberta. It's the law. This legislation will help get Alberta back on track and help to restore our competitive advantage and investor confidence.

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

8:00

## Bill 8

### Education Amendment Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise today in Committee of the Whole to discuss Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. First, let me thank all the members who offered their support for this legislation. Of course, a few members of this Assembly have expressed some concerns and questions, and I appreciate having this opportunity to provide some clarification and further details. I will make a few general comments before diving into some of the points raised during second reading.

With the Education Amendment Act I am proud to say that we are building on our province's foundation of excellence, a foundation established by the talented teachers, principals, schools, support staff, and trustees who work day in and day out to support our students. The Education Amendment Act will help them deliver a modern education system so all Alberta children can reach their full potential.

The original Education Act was passed by the Legislature in 2012. It is an act built on years of consultation with Albertans and the education system itself. It has broad support from school boards, teachers, parents, and everyday Albertans. It went through further revision in past amendments in 2015 and was further consulted on for regulations. The Education Act strengthens local decision-making and puts school boards in the best position to determine the needs of their students. The bottom line is that we will have an education system that is more collaborative, more flexible, and more focused on student success. Our proposed amendments will maintain some aspects of the current legislation, and by maintaining the current rules in some areas, we are providing certainty and consistency for the upcoming school year.

As the world continues to change, our school system needs to change with it. I am proud to say that through the Education Amendment Act we are building the framework that puts the student first and is accountable at a local level, and we'll make sure that our students receive the excellent education that all Albertans expect and deserve.

As we all know, the most prevalent comments we heard on this bill had to do with protections for students who participate in GSAs and other inclusion groups. I feel that it's important to clarify a few important misconceptions about student protections for LGBTQ2S-plus students under the Education Act. To be absolutely clear, our government opposes mandatory parental notification of student involvement in inclusion groups. Alberta will have among the most comprehensive statutory protections for gay-straight alliances in Canada. Once requested by students, creating a GSA is not optional. In Alberta, like Manitoba and Ontario, the Education Act specifically guarantees in legislation that students are entitled to create inclusion groups, including GSAs and QSAs. Compared to legislation in Ontario and Manitoba, the Education Act provides greater direction regarding the appointment of a staff liaison for the student organization.

Consultation with the principal is not required when selecting a name for the student organization in Ontario and Manitoba. This may be interpreted as slightly stronger protection than in the Education Act. However, despite what some people have suggested, the Education Act specifically states that students may select gay-straight alliance or queer-straight alliance as the group name.

With amendments introduced through Bill 8, we are also clarifying that board obligations regarding welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments, policies, and publicly available student codes of conduct apply to all publicly funded schools, including accredited private schools.

Reference has also been made to Nova Scotia and British Columbia, which have no overarching provincial statutes protecting GSAs. Unlike the Education Act, British Columbia's ministry directive and Nova Scotia's provincial policy are not enshrined in provincial legislation.

In Alberta the privacy of students is also protected under strict privacy laws. As many of you know, the Privacy Commissioner recently brought independent, additional clarity to this point as well, for which I am grateful. Students cannot disclose a student's membership in any inclusion group as there are student privacy considerations that trump all other legislation, including the Education Act and the previous government's Bill 24. All school authorities are required to follow privacy legislation. Public schools must follow the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and private schools must adhere to the Personal Information Protection Act. School authorities may only disclose personal information if authorized under these laws. This government also recognizes that every child is unique and every circumstance is different. Legislation needs to balance protecting children and their privacy with the rights of parents so children are getting the supports that they need. This approach provides a clear balance between student privacy and parental rights, a balance and a clarity that was not found in Bill 24.

I know that timelines have been mentioned several times when it comes to creating a GSA. Let me be clear. School authorities are expected to follow the law. This means that when the Education Act comes into force, school authorities will be responsible for ensuring that schools adhere to the policies and practices under the act. If the student, parent, or guardian feels that the teachers or the principal in a school are not meeting their obligations, they can elevate their concern to the superintendent, their school board, and, if necessary,

the minister, as is proper procedure. Despite what some suggest, our government believes that the safety of all students in schools is paramount.

I look forward to engaging students, parents, teachers, and administrators as we work together to build a modern education system which supports all students.

Another frequent topic raised during the debate had to do with trustees. Some of the members opposite seem to think that when the Education Act is in force, a group of trustees can gang up on another trustee at any time for any reason and fire them. That is ludicrous. Under the Education Act, boards are required to develop and implement a code of conduct for trustees, which includes definitions of breaches and sanctions up to and including disqualification of a trustee from the board. This is about professional conduct and clarity of expectations for trustees. Each board will develop a code of conduct that defines what type of trustee behaviour or breach would result in such a disqualification. Each trustee would then be expected to follow that code and could face sanctions, including disqualification, if they do not do so. This will create clarity for trustees on what exactly is a breach and what the sanctions would be for that breach. Elected or not, Albertans expect school trustees to work hard for their students in a professional manner. As a former trustee myself I think this expectation is both fair and reasonable. More than that, it is just common sense.

During the second reading debate we also heard a few comments on school charters. There seems to be an underlying fear that by supporting charter schools, we will negatively affect the public school system. This couldn't be further from the truth. Alberta has a long and successful tradition of supporting school choice, and our government is committed to ensuring parents have options that best meet the educational needs of their children. Charter schools play an important role in Alberta's education system by offering more choice for students and their parents. Charter schools are public schools that operate under a term-specific agreement with the Minister of Education. Charter schools follow provincial curriculum while also providing unique programs or learning approaches designed to improve student learning. Charter schools cannot be faith based.

Anyone wanting to start a charter school must first approach a local school board to see if the board can accommodate the alternative program. This was the case under the School Act, and it will continue under the Education Act. Charter schools are also expected to share their innovative practices and learning outcomes with others in the educational community so that all students may benefit.

One of the members opposite suggested that under the Education Act the, quote, duty to report, unquote, will not apply to charters. This is simply not true. The same member also suggested that the act removed protections for charter students to being exposed to hateful or discriminatory views. This, too, is not true as the welcoming, safe, and caring section of the act applies to charter schools.

Choice is one of the reasons Alberta has one of the best education systems in the world, and we intend to keep it that way. Choice of schools, including charters, is about meeting the needs and interests of our kids so that they can reach their full potential. Let me be as clear as possible: we believe in charter schools, and charter schools are here to stay.

**8:10**

The members opposite also touched upon several other points during the debate, so I'd like to take some time to clarify a few things. One of the members pointed out that the word "specialized"

was removed from the bill. This is true. The term was removed in some places in an effort to recognize that supports and services need to be provided to all students, not just to students in need of special education. On the surface, this is a small administrative change, but it is a positive one. We are making this change to be more inclusive.

During the debate the topic of inclusion policies was raised. With our amendments we are clarifying that board obligations regarding welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments, policies, and student codes of conduct apply to all publicly funded schools, including accredited private schools.

We are also ensuring that a certain class of schools will continue to be exempt. For example, heritage language schools, which offer authorized language and cultural courses outside of regular school hours, usually on Saturdays, could be exempt. I would just like to clarify that these are the only class of schools that would be exempt.

Now, "director" versus "child intervention worker": one of the members highlighted that the word "director" is being taken out for "child intervention worker." Children's Services made this change some time ago. Because they made that change, we are aligning language in the Education Act with the language used by Children's Services.

Finally, the same member also raised concerns that government is talking about not having boards for private schools. This is just not the case. In the Education Act the terminology we are using is changing from "operator of a private school" to "a person responsible for the operation of a private school." However, this is just a terminology change, but it still means the same thing. The definition of "person" can refer to one person or persons or a corporation like a society. Under the Education Act, where a person or society is operating a private school and they don't have elected trustees but they have a governing board of the society, many of the rules in the Education Act still apply.

I was proud to take part in the conversation and collaboration over the many years that we'd been working on and awaiting the Education Act coming into force. It's been gratifying over the last number of weeks, on an almost daily basis, to hear from trustees, boards, administrators, parents, and, yes, even students that are pleased that Bill 8 has been introduced. Hopefully, the Education Act will finally come into force.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank all the members who have shared their thoughts and supports for Bill 8. The original Education Act, together with the proposed amendments, will deliver a provincial framework focused on educational excellence in Alberta, one that Albertans expect and deserve and one that I am proud to be the minister of.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I move to adjourn debate.

**The Chair:** Would you like to adjourn debate and rise and report progress on Bill 8?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I move to adjourn debate on Bill 8, and I would like to go to Bill 11.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 11 Fair Registration Practices Act

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 11. I'm sorry I didn't have a chance to

speak at second reading because, of course, second reading is the time when we get an opportunity to speak to the intent of the bill. I would have liked to have taken the time to express my support to the government for bringing forward a bill doing this kind of work and, you know, talk a little bit about the importance of the work that we are all doing to try to create a much more inclusive society and to make sure that people, no matter where you come from and what your background is, have a chance to participate in the great opportunities that the province of Alberta offers to everyone.

I can tell you that just in my personal experience – and I'll speak about some of my work experience – as an MLA in my community, every Friday I set some time aside to meet with people who require some documents that are done for purposes of submitting their credentials such as when they need a notary public or a Commissioner for Oaths. I really like doing that. It's one of the pleasant times in my day. You know, we deal with many challenging issues as MLAs, and sometimes you do feel very sad that you can't always address the issues that people bring to you because they're very complex. But in this case, when someone comes in for simple documents, it allows you to do the work quickly. It doesn't take longer than usually about five or 10 minutes. But it also, then, allows you an opportunity to speak with people a little bit about where they're coming from and what it is that brought them in to have the documents signed.

The vast majority of people that do come in are people who are immigrants to Canada and who are working very hard to create a space for themselves and their families in this country. I think that, you know, it's a real pleasure to hear from people who have worked very hard in their country of origin, where they were born, and then have made a very, I think, courageous decision to move from whatever country that is to come here. I haven't had to leave my country – opportunities have always been very positive for me here – so I have a deep respect for people who have uprooted themselves and come here. I know, as a descendant of Irish immigrants to Canada a little over 160 years ago, that my family must have gone through some very difficult times that led to them wanting to come to Canada and participate.

I think it's incredibly important that we're doing this piece of work. I would like to support the intent of the government in terms of doing this piece of work, but as we're in Committee of the Whole, I need to take some time to speak to some of the concerns I have about this bill. While I do intend to support it, my overall concern with this bill essentially is that it is just simply too weak. It has taken what I think is a very significant issue, one that we should be tackling and probably could tackle from both sides of the floor in a nonpartisan way. I haven't heard anybody fundamentally disagree with the notion that if you've been trained as a doctor or an engineer or a teacher in another land, we should be seriously looking at the credentials that you have and welcoming you into this country to help add to the good things that we have here in the province of Alberta.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

What, unfortunately, has happened here, though, is that the government has just decided to take a quick win rather than actually deal with the problem. They said: how can we get something that looks good and where we can go out and we can tout to all of the members of our community who are part of immigrant communities and are looking for their credentials to be recognized and say to them, "Look, we've done something for you"?

8:20

My underlying issue here is that this bill has no depth, and I'm concerned. A number of the bills that have come forward to us here

in this House reflect the same underlying problem, that while they may have a positive intention, may be going in the right direction, the government simply hasn't done the work to sit down and look at: how can we actually tackle the problem at hand? Not: how do we create a press conference? Not: how do we create a meme or some social media post so that we can look like we're doing things? But, rather: how do we actually solve a problem that's in existence?

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

I want to speak a little bit about some work that I was involved in quite a few years ago now. I'm one of the older people in this House, so my dates sometimes sound a little askew to some of the other members. But back in 1999 I was working for the Edmonton Social Planning Council. We took the time to work very closely with a group of immigrant women from across the province of Alberta and speak to them about this exact problem. I wanted to point out the date of it because I wanted to point out that it was 20 years ago that this work was completed. We put together, I thought, a fairly reasonable report on the very slim amount of money that was available to us at the Edmonton Social Planning Council – I will table it at the appropriate time tomorrow – and that report was called *Over-qualified, Underemployed: Accessibility Barriers to Accreditation for Immigrant Women with Foreign Qualifications*.

I want to point out this piece of work. Partly, you know, I'm proud of the work that I did. In fact, I was trying to address this issue that you're trying to address today 20 years ago. Thanks for catching up. I would like to talk a little bit about some of the things that could have been in this bill if the government had decided to actually take the time and consult with people in the community about what it is that they need, because that's the problem with this bill, not what your intention was. I'm a hundred per cent in favour of it. I'd work with you on it.

I often offer to, you know, provide a little bit of information to the government side. So far they haven't taken me up on it, but in this case I can just offer you a report that's publicly available and has been publicly available for 20 years. I'd suggest to you that had you gone to a group like the Edmonton Social Planning Council or many of the other ones that work in this area, these incredibly great organizations that we have in Alberta – the Mennonite centre, for example, which works with people from all around; Catholic Social Services, which is probably the longest standing immigrant social agency in the city of Edmonton, well, perhaps in the province of Alberta; and also, for example, Assist Community Services Centre, which has an office in my constituency, the incredible constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford; and, of course, there are many others – if you had taken the time to actually take this bill out and speak to those people, you could have made it so much more comprehensive. You could have added to it some really important things that would only have taken a short period of time to determine.

I want to just briefly look at some of the recommendations that came out on this topic 20 years ago in a report that was freely available to this government by simply typing "immigrant women's qualifications" into a Google search. Even us old guys know about Google, you know. I think that it would have been really nice had you actually gone for a win on this one that was comprehensive and actually met the needs of the community. I know I'm sounding negative right now, but I'm going to vote for this bill because I really want people to have their qualifications properly assessed. But I've got to tell you that I would have loved to have seen more work being put into this so that I'd be happy to vote for it rather than saying: "Well, I guess that's all I'm going to get. I'll take what I can get, and then hopefully we can help push the government to do a little bit more real work as time goes on."

I noticed that under these recommendations – and there are just eight of them, so it's not that complicated. It's a fairly short report, about 40 pages. We were only given about \$10,000 to do this study and to provide the report. There are a number of recommendations that I think are really important. The first one is that they recommend that we develop here in the province of Alberta

a consistent accreditation policy, so the University Co-ordinating Council, IQAS ...

which, of course, is the international qualifications assessment service,

... and the professional associations agree on what is required.

Now, that one, I think, is what this bill is about, that we're actually trying to make sure that we understand what needs to happen. I congratulate you on getting one of the eight. I think it's a positive win.

But let's move on, just for a second, to the second recommendation that's here, and that is what is referred to in the report. When you go to read it – I'm sure many of you will be looking for it, certainly, after – the biggest barrier is the cost barrier for immigrant women. I assume it's also immigrant men, but we were only able, in our particular study, to speak with immigrant women. The second recommendation is to

remove the cost barrier that prevents women from having their education assessed and their professional credentials accredited.

I think it would have been great in this bill if we could have put a section in that actually spoke to the costs and provided some kind of granting system or some kind of support for immigrant people to come into the province and have their foreign credentials recognized.

For many of you, I'm sure you've had a chance to speak with people in the community – or perhaps some of you even had the opportunity to go through this process; I don't know – and I'm sure you know that, in fact, in some cases it can be literally thousands of dollars to have this kind of a process completed, from beginning to end, as you apply for membership in organizations, as you apply for the opportunity to have your credentials analyzed. Of course, you have to obtain your credentials from a foreign country, and then frequently you have to have those credentials converted in terms of language, interpreted, and then, of course, you have to go to a Commissioner for Oaths or a notary public to get them approved, all stamped, and sent off. Thank goodness, MLAs can do that for you for free, but not everybody is aware of that, and that's one of the issues, I think, that's come up and that I think is addressed a little bit more going on here.

I would have really liked to have seen this government actually take a real good dig on this and find out: what are the barriers? Now, this is an old report. I recognize that maybe things have changed quite a bit, but in speaking to the people who come to my door, they're telling me that costs are still a problem. I would have really enjoyed it if there had been some kind of a mechanism addressed to reduce this or at least limit the amount of cost, suggesting to organizations that they can only charge a certain amount before someone is accredited. That would have been an addition to the bill that I would have deeply welcomed.

The third recommendation here in this report is to develop an IQAS ...

That is the international qualifications assessment service.

... marketing plan so employers and immigrants become aware of the service and its significance.

Now, it's been a while since the report was written, but I do know, from my conversations with people who come into my office, that they often do not know about everything that is available. I mean, I know that because very often they tell me how surprised they are that they can come to get the documents signed by myself as a

notary public or a Commissioner for Oaths. And they only know about it because one of their friends happened to tell them about it or because I work very hard to work with the members of my own community and attend churches and synagogues and mosques and, you know, other community groups. Assist, as I mentioned, is in my community, and I try to drop by there three or four times a year and go out to their fundraising events. I am very much aware that there needs to be greater clarity on the process and some kind of a plan to make sure that people are aware of the services that are available.

This bill, again, could have spoken to that, some kind of action to actually help them. When you come into this country, there is so much that you have to contend with. Just moving into a new country is, by itself, a very significant issue, and it would be very nice if somehow the road was at least paved a little bit better, made a little bit smoother so that you could be more successful. I mean, we know from research that when immigrants come to this country, in the first couple of years that they are here, they often depend on a variety of social and public services, and I think that's great. Let me assure you that the left has worked very hard to create those services over the years in this country.

**8:30**

But we also know that they're absolutely worth the investment, that if you do create these kinds of services and you do smooth the road for them as they enter into the country, it does not take very long before they are absolute net contributors to the economy and they are running businesses and they're working for our institutions, whether they are private or public. They really are major contributors to why Canada is so successful, so why don't we pave the road for them a bit? Why don't we make sure that this all works very well?

Another one of the recommendations – in fact, two of the recommendations are very much the same, very close together – is that we review exams for foreign professionals to ensure that they test professional skills rather than English language skills and also review exams for foreign professionals to ensure that they test professional skills rather than English language skills with regard to each individual's profession examinations. One of the things that happens a lot, I know, when people come into my office to see me and ask for my help in terms of moving ahead on that immigrant experience is the fact that very often the barrier that stops people from moving forward is their English language skill, not their knowledge of medicine, not their knowledge of engineering, those kinds of things. What happens sometimes is that the testing does not show their knowledge of medicine or engineering because the language barriers are in the way.

To ask various organizations to make sure that they have clarity – which I think this bill does; therefore, I'm welcoming the bill. In terms of the process it would also be very important that you ask the organizations to ensure that their information is accessible to immigrants as they come into the country, and that means that things are written in plain language, that different terms or uses of knowledge that are quite appropriate to the profession involved are recognized even though they may not be the primary term that's used here in Canada. It may be a different approach in terms of how it's used in other places.

One of the other recommendations here is to allow foreign workers to work toward certification before they immigrate to Canada. Again, this bill: it would have been very nice if we could have created with these organizations an opportunity for people to begin the process long before they even come to Canada so that they aren't arriving at step zero and then moving forward but, rather, arriving much closer to the date of actually being accepted into the

profession. Once they're here, they have so many other things they have to cope with. You have to put a roof over your head and food on the table. You have to get a job as a waiter or a cab driver or some other kind of activity because, obviously, the immediate needs need to be fulfilled. If you could have had most of your credentialing done when you were still back at your country of origin and you didn't have to worry in the same way about all those things because you had much greater family support and perhaps already owned a home and so on there, then you'd be much farther ahead.

The sixth recommendation here is that we need to do more to recognize foreign work experiences, and that means we need to actually ask institutions like medical associations and engineering associations to begin to work with us on – and I think the government has a very important role in all of this – how do we recognize the work that has been done somewhere else? What often people tell me is that when they arrive here, they're being told that they're starting at the very beginning all over again. They've suddenly gone from having been a doctor... [Mr. Feehan's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any others? The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Great. Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to rise and speak to Bill 11 and provide some commentary concerning the comments provided by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. First of all, I'd like to thank you for your support of the intent of the bill. That is greatly appreciated. It is fantastic that we work together, you know, on certain items that are of benefit to all Albertans and particularly to the immigrant community. That's greatly appreciated.

I wanted to comment on a couple of your comments that you made, concerns that Bill 11 is too weak or has no depth and just provide some opportunity for the background on this. I guess the first comment that I would make is that Bill 11 is the first step in our fairness for newcomers action plan. It's simply the first step. It is, you know, by its nature, not prescriptive legislation. It's overarching legislation, and it's very comprehensive in the number of trades and regulatory bodies that we deal with. If you refer to schedule 1, there are 64 bodies that we're dealing with. They all have different requirements and different approaches. By its very nature, because it's overarching and it's a governance document, it needs to be very general, but the intent behind it is to ensure – and we borrowed from the best of legislation in other jurisdictions, so Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia. The best elements we put here are so that we can work with the regulatory bodies to ensure that credentials can be recognized in a manner that's fair, that's transparent, efficient, and fast.

I understand your concern, actually, your first look at it, saying that it's not very prescriptive. That is by design because everyone is going to be different. But it does do some things I think that are really important. First, a six-month maximum for an interim decision. One of the things that we've heard and I'm sure you have heard from some of your constituents visiting you is that they've applied for their credentials, they get a response back, and the path forward is not clear, right? Or they get their response back, and it takes months and months and months for their response to get back, and some have even given up. This actually will impose a requirement that within six months of application, maximum, they must have a response and a clear path forward, so at least they know how they continue.

The second thing that it does is that it establishes an office, and the office will help these organizations put in a code. This code we actually pulled from the other legislations, and the code is really that you must have mechanisms that are fair and transparent, appeal mechanisms. On purpose we didn't set up this office to be the appeal mechanism because when you're talking about 64 different bodies, for us to become the arbitrator of all of these different bodies and different criteria would be incredibly difficult, and the potential to get it wrong is very high. We still believe that these regulatory bodies have the role, and this is the statutory role that we gave them to protect the interests of the public. What this does is say: you must do it in a fair way. We gave this bill teeth. This is a paramountcy clause in this, so it applies to all these regulatory bodies but also to government departments and the regulations and the legislation that applies to them. I would submit to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford that we are deadly serious about this and getting it right and making it happen.

Then, as well, I would like to just point out some of the enforcement mechanisms, ability to do audits, and then our intent to work with the regulatory bodies. If we can't work with them, then the minister has the authority to issue compliance orders, fines, and then we go from there because at the end of the day, as the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford rightly points out, they are creatures of the state, and we need to control them.

I want to thank you for pulling out the report that you did in terms of other recommendations. As I indicated in my earlier remarks, the fairness for newcomers action plan: this is simply the first step. I would like to point you to our fairness for newcomers plan, which is in our platform. I'll mention a couple of things. As you were speaking in terms of recommendations, saying: where is the depth on these other issues? We actually have them in our plan. We just haven't gotten to them yet. For example:

Create an Alberta Government Mentorship for Newcomers Program to match immigrant professionals with mentors in the public service who can help to guide them through the process of credential recognition and finding employment at their skill level.

You mentioned IQAS, the international qualifications assessment service. We have a point in there to support and expand their work that assesses foreign degrees against the Canadian postsecondary standard. You mentioned concerns about – and we've recognized this – when newcomers come to Canada and their credentials aren't recognized, so they're having difficulty to pay for the exam. One point we have in here is to work with nonprofit groups like Windmill Microlending, which do this, to expand access to low-interest loans for immigrant professionals so they can actually write this exam. That was another point that you mentioned. Additionally, "support the work of immigrant settlement agencies to offer skills upgrading," so when they actually need to do some upgrading in terms of the courses that aren't recognized.

8:40

Then, lastly, one point you also made is: work with the federal government to offer prearrival orientation so they can start the credential process before they even get here. At the end of the day, what this is about is about bringing skilled workers into Canada to meet a skills shortage we have here. If we can't meet that skills shortage, our economy doesn't grow, and that's to the detriment not only of the new immigrants, but it's to the detriment of the Alberta economy as a whole.

One other thing I'd just like to point out in terms of our Alberta advantage immigration strategy is that we also made a commitment that we will do consultation on this. So recognizing that it's 20 years



old, we need to update that to see what else is there – right? – and then move forward.

I would like to thank you for your support for the bill and concept, but hopefully with the bill in its context, you can be supportive of how it's written and the rest of our plan. Thank you for your comments.

**The Chair:** Any other comments, questions, or amendments with respect to Bill 11?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 11 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 11 and progress on 12 and 8.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 11. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 12, Bill 8.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move for a unanimous consent motion to waive Standing Order 77(1) and to move forward with third reading on Bill 11, which is the Fair Registration Practices Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 11 Fair Registration Practices Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured to rise for the third reading of Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act.

This act builds on the good work that this government is already doing to grow Alberta's economy, get Albertans back to work, reduce red tape, and let the world know that Alberta is open for business. Once passed, Bill 11 will remove unfair barriers to professional licensure while maintaining Alberta's high professional standards.

Last week I had the opportunity to sit down and talk to a group of newcomers who experienced issues having their skills and

experience recognized in Alberta. Along with the Premier, Minister Nicolaides, Parliamentary Secretary Yaseen, and representatives of professional regulatory organizations and agencies that provide assistance for new immigrants, I got to hear their stories.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, I'll just caution you on the use of names in this Assembly.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much. My apologies.

We talked about the regulatory roadblocks that prevent skilled immigrants from achieving their full potential in their chosen professions. Mohamed Alkadi told us how Canadian institutions won't recognize his education unless he provides them with original credentials from the university he attended, but that university is back home in Syria, and Mohamed can't return to his war-ravaged country without risking being conscripted into the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad's army or worse.

We also heard from Jacqueline and Felix Sennyah, both natives of Malaysia, who recently became Canadian citizens. Jacqueline has a medical degree from a college in India and Felix has a law degree from the University of London. Neither is working in the professions they trained for because the accreditation process here is costly, lengthy, and uncertain. Instead, they had to take training and work in other jobs to provide income security for their young family.

We heard from Mervin Cereno, a graduate from the Philippines with over 20 years of professional experience. Mervin immigrated to Canada in 2016 as a federal skilled worker. He has been working hard ever since to get accredited in his field in Alberta, but he is still awaiting final approval.

Stories like these of frustrated dreams, wasted talent, and missed opportunities are far too common in our province. For too long too many highly trained and experienced immigrants with skills our province needs have been forced into jobs that they are overqualified for. It's one thing to take the best job available when work in your chosen field dries up; it's something else entirely when you can't get a job because of a flawed or unfair accreditation process.

In Canada it can take many months or sometimes even years for business and professional licensing bodies to recognize the credentials that newcomers earned elsewhere. In the meantime engineers are driving cabs on roads they should be designing, and doctors are cleaning floors in hospitals, where they should be saving lives. This is a tragic waste of human potential and a loss for all of us.

According to the Conference Board of Canada there are over half a million new Canadians working in low-paying jobs that they are overqualified for. The board estimates that they would earn as much as \$12 billion more if their credentials were fully recognized, and they could be making a much larger contribution to our economy, including paying more taxes.

We want to work collaboratively with professional regulatory organizations to speed up the process where possible and increase fairness and transparency. Since introducing this legislation, we have heard positive feedback from many of these professional regulatory bodies, and we are confident that we can work together to reach our goals.

Turning to Bill 11, the primary emphasis for establishing regulatory requirements for a profession is public protection. However, regulatory professions must also serve the public interest by not placing unnecessary barriers for entry to a professional regulatory organization. The proposed legislation will ensure fairness and access to regulated professions for internationally trained individuals. It will achieve a balance between the mandate to ensure the safety of the public, the independence of professional regulatory organizations, and the Alberta government's commitment to ensure that registration practices are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair.

Provinces such as Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia have fairness legislation to ensure that professional regulatory organizations have fair registration practices and ways to administer this legislation.

We need to make this a priority. Work will flow through the fair registration practices office, and this office will reduce the red tape associated with the assessment of foreign credentials and remove barriers to the full economic inclusion of new Albertans. The proposed legislation makes sense for Alberta. International talent will help grow our economy and show the world that Alberta is open for business.

I thank all members of the Legislature for the comments they've made thus far, and I urge everyone in this Chamber to support this legislation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the government and specifically the Minister of Labour and Immigration for bringing this bill forward because, of course, as has been stated time and time again, it's desperately needed. Speaking as someone from an immigrant community, I can tell you how difficult it was for my parents when they came here to Canada. Their credentials weren't recognized, and it took them a long while to get jobs in their specific field. Not only that, I remember my mother actually having to go back to postsecondary. She did design at NAIT so that she could upgrade and get the things that she needed so that she could then later on work here in the province of Alberta.

8:50

That being said, I can tell you that in the constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie it's widely diverse. You probably have people from all over the world that call Edmonton-Ellerslie home now. It's like having our own little United Nations there. There are many, many newcomers who call Edmonton-Ellerslie home, and I'm very happy to represent them.

I had the opportunity to grow up here. As I mentioned before in the House, there's a big difference between coming here as a refugee and coming as an immigrant. Of course, those who come as refugees are fleeing violence. They basically flee with the clothes that they have on their backs, maybe a few things. They're not prepared to actually leave in any concerted way. Immigrants usually have a lot longer to plan for their trip out of the country and to the new country that they're going to call home. The other big difference is the fact that refugees had to flee or they were exiled, and they're always thinking that they're going to be able to go back sometime because, of course, where they have come from is their home. There's a big difference there.

One of the things that I want to share as well is that not all refugees are able to go back home. This is the experience of the gentleman from Syria that you mentioned. It doesn't look like Syria is going to be changing any time soon, so a lot of the refugees that are coming from Syria, I suspect, are planning on staying here for quite a while and calling this their home forever.

That was the experience of many Chileans, of course. The military dictatorship ended up lasting 17 years. We never thought that it was going to last that long. We thought it was going to be maybe three, four years at the very most and that families would be able to go back. After 17 years there were a number of Chilean families that did end up going back, but there was a big difference. It was a big change. The country was not the same country that they had left, of course, not only politically speaking but economically

speaking and also culturally speaking. There were a number of changes that had occurred.

That being said, the experience of many newcomers, as distinct as they may be – it's really important to consult with them. I'm glad that you had the opportunity to speak to some of them, Minister. I want to say that under the previous government, the Alberta NDP government, as has been shared a number of times, through our antiracism framework and strategy we actually went out and consulted with a number of communities. Within Edmonton-Ellerslie I took the opportunity to meet with a number of different ethnic communities. It was really interesting because all of them identified this as a major issue. All of them. Each and every ethnic community identified this as being a major problem.

I just want to be able to share with the minister a little bit of the feedback that I received while I was doing this consultation program. Now, of course, before I go into that, though, one of the things that the Alberta NDP government did was to work on establishing the mentorship program for accreditation, which seems quite similar to this. Other issues that were brought up by constituents were, specifically, the cost of having to go through the accreditation process.

Now, in the bill there are a number of associations listed, but the majority of the people that I spoke to were specifically nurses, doctors, some engineers, of course. All of them identified the cost of the accreditation process as being astronomical. There was one doctor that told me that through the process of having to go through several steps and then having to take a number of tests and things like that, it was almost \$30,000 for him to get his accreditation and that, even still, he wasn't able to practise here in the province of Alberta. I think that the cost of the accreditation process is something that really desperately needs to be looked at. Perhaps that can be brought into line or made more economical or there are other ways that we can find to help specifically newcomers.

Of course, refugees, newcomers are coming with limited economic resources. For them to invest \$30,000, \$50,000 into an accreditation process is a significant amount of money, something that they could put towards buying a house or buying a car instead, which they also desperately need so that they can continue to function and work within the specific qualifications that they have.

Now, second was the completion of the English language requirement. There were so many of the constituents that I spoke to that highlighted this as being a major problem. It was the IELTS exam specifically that they were speaking about, that they had to reach a level of 8 in every classification. Some would go and take the exam, and they would get an 8 in all of them with the exception of one, where they would get a 7. So they would fail the exam. Then they would study, go back, and pay for the exam again – and I can't remember how much it was, off the top of my head, but it was a significant amount of money – and then they would get a 7 in another classification. What a lot of the constituents were saying to me is that if there was a way that they could perhaps amalgamate all the times that they take the exam – if they got an 8 the first time but the second time they got a 7, why couldn't they take both exams into consideration?

Of course, at the end of the day what we need are people who can speak English well, and the majority of these people can speak English very well. I mean, I would challenge each and every member within this House to go take that IELTS exam and see if they pass. I can tell you that I don't know if I would pass each level, all five of them. That's something that I'd like to share with the minister, of course, that they have to go through the process of taking several exams and it was very difficult.

The other thing that was highlighted by so many of the constituents that I spoke to was that regardless of going through the

accreditation process and paying all that money, when they finally got the accreditation, the answer that they would get when they applied for jobs was: well, you don't have any Canadian work experience. Of course, other members have spoken to this already, that it's not only about foreign qualifications but also about foreign experience and if that could be taken into consideration.

When talking with constituents, we were kind of hashing out ideas, just kind of putting ideas out there. It would be really great if there was some kind of an incentive for Canadian businesses, Canadian institutions, through some kind of a subsidy, perhaps, similar to the summer temporary employment program, where if companies could be encouraged to hire newcomers, they would get the subsidy. That person could then train for six months, 12 months, whatever the case may be, at a subsidized rate and then continue to work within that institution or business, having now been accredited. They get the work experience that they need, and then they can continue either with that business or, now they have six to 12 months of Canadian work experience, they can go and apply for a job somewhere else. That was something that the constituents shared with me, of course.

Now, all this comes down to, of course, the dignity of work. I just really want to share this with all of you because so many times you hear this rhetoric, and I'm not suggesting that it's coming from anybody here in the House. So many times you tend to hear, "Oh, these immigrants are coming to take our jobs," which is something that you hear out in the public sometimes. I think that has got to be taken into consideration. There's that level of racism that exists within Alberta society. Some people have that kind of a viewpoint. Regardless, I mean, it's something that has to be taken a look at.

Then, of course, the other thing that's really important is that all of these people are coming here because they have families. The majority of them have families. Either those families are here, or they have families back home which they are desperately trying to bring here. I just want to give you the case of a Pakistani gentleman who lives in my constituency. He's lived in my constituency for over the past 10 years. His wife and his three children are still back home in Pakistan. He's desperately trying to bring them here. He's also going through this accreditation process of trying to get recognized as a doctor here in Alberta. Of course, he's working as a taxi driver, and I think he has one other job that he does during the day in order to make ends meet. At the same time, he's providing for his family back home, trying to bring them here. Of course, I just say this because newcomers to Canada are really hard-working people.

9:00

There's also the example of a recent Syrian refugee who opened up their own business. I think it was like a Nut Man kind of venue, where he roasts all of his own nuts and then goes to different businesses selling all of that, of course. This is just another example. These individuals that we're trying to help: they deserve their own dignity, and our government should be trying to do their very best to make sure that we're providing opportunities for everybody, where everybody has the opportunity to participate in this economy. We'll find that these newcomers to Canada have so much to contribute, and they're only going to enrich not only our economy but our culture and our political system.

With that, I'll say thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I'll take my seat.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there anybody else wishing to speak to Bill 11? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me so I can just quickly stand in support of Bill 11. I

know a lot of my colleagues here have spoken very, very well about this. Of course, Edmonton-Decore being as diverse as it is, this is some welcome legislation that I think builds very, very well on some of the work that the Member for Edmonton-North West did, especially around antiracism. This was one of the components that was very clearly identified as being a barrier to success for new Canadians coming to Alberta to work.

Just a couple of, I guess, brief comments that I hope will be taken well here. Going forward, as we know, there will be some regulations that are set up in terms of trying to work with the extensive list of associations and colleges and whatnot. My hope is that as these are established, they won't create a bit of a sense of urgency within government around its red tape mandate, the one in, one out. I don't want to see that rushed because they're trying to keep to a bit of a timetable here. It's, like: "Oh, my gosh. We brought in all these new regulations. We need to quickly bring out some other ones and rush around that."

My other comments, again, are just around all of the different organizations that are going to be working around this. There have been comments, of course, around working in co-operation with them and, you know, potential difficulties that may occur around that. Of course, I'm certainly no expert when it comes to some of these organizations, as maybe some of my other colleagues are with the ones that are self-regulating. Of course, I'm sure the process to get to that stage, to be able to self-regulate, wasn't a swift one, and there was probably a lot of effort that went into that.

You know, with a few of them, with just maybe some of the other legislation that's come through here, hopefully there hasn't been any significant animosity that's been created with these organizations that could create a barrier to this one being able to go through very, very smoothly. Hopefully, that will be taken into consideration as we go forward. Sometimes people can inadvertently think that their toes are being stepped on, and we certainly don't want to see that happen.

Again, you know, I'm very pleased to see this coming forward. I think it's good work that's being moved forward from what has been done previously by the former government. I look forward to hopefully seeing more of this in the future, that will allow my residents of Edmonton-Decore – as they come in with high credentials and whatnot, we can get them using that to the benefit of all Albertans going forward.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I'll just remind all members to keep your conversations as low as possible. It's getting rather loud on all sides of this House when members are trying to speak.

With that, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if there are any comments or questions.

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, would the hon. minister like to close debate?

**Mr. Copping:** I move to close debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Very simple.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a third time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 8**  
**Education Amendment Act, 2019**  
*(continued)*

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I move pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2), I believe – thanks to Mr. Mason, actually, we don't have to move a motion. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) to give notice that there will be no morning sitting tomorrow, June 27, 2019. Do I have to do it outside of committee? We can do it after we rise and report later? Okay. That's fine.

**The Chair:** Okay. Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to put forward an amendment to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. I have the requisite copies here to distribute. I'll give it a moment.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1.  
Hon. member, please proceed.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Would you like me to read the entire amendment?

**The Chair:** Pardon me?

**Ms Pancholi:** Would you prefer that I read the entire amendment?

**The Chair:** Yes, please.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment that we're putting forward today is an amendment to section 33 of the Education Act, 2012. It amends section 33(1)(c) by striking out "specialized," which is currently, actually, proposed in Bill 8, and by also adding the following after subsection (2) of section 33 of the Education Act.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The amended provision is subsection (2.1), and it states:

A policy established under subsection (2) must contain a distinct portion that addresses the board's responsibilities under section 35.1, and the distinct portion of the policy

- (a) must provide that a principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in section 35.1(1)
  - (i) is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity, and
  - (ii) is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities,

and

- (b) must provide that a principal is required to
  - (i) immediately grant permission to establish a voluntary student organization or hold an activity at the school under section 35.1(1)(a), and
  - (ii) designate a staff member to serve as a staff liaison under section 35.1(1)(b) within a reasonable amount of time after receiving a request to establish a voluntary student organization or to assist in the organizing of an activity subject to section 35.1(4).

To break that down, Mr. Chair, to summarize, essentially what we are proposing here is an amendment that is consistent with what the Minister of Education has stated is her intent, which is to provide fulsome protections to LGBTQ students who are seeking to establish a GSA in their school.

**9:10**

This amendment would require that a principal is required to, first of all, immediately grant permission when a student makes a request for the establishment of a GSA or a QSA in their school and to designate a staff member within a reasonable amount of time after receiving the request to establish said GSA or QSA. It also requires that a principal is limited in their notification regarding the GSA or QSA. They're just simply limited to only notifying the fact of the establishment of the GSA or QSA and to otherwise treat the GSA and QSA as any other school activity or club or organization within the school.

Essentially, what we're doing here is appealing to the common sense of the Minister of Education in this Assembly. They have stated consistently in this House that they are looking to provide full protections to LGBTQ students by ensuring that they can seek the safety and security of a GSA. It is consistent with the spirit although not precisely of what's in the School Act currently, but really what it does is that it requires a principal to immediately establish that GSA and QSA when it is requested. This is really a common-sense amendment that came as a result of what we know to have been the case. I don't think anybody, even on the other side, has disputed that there are situations where we know that there were school administrators and principals which were hesitant, stalling, dragging their feet on establishing a GSA and QSA, putting it off so that the ultimate result was that a QSA or GSA was not established in a school even though a student had requested it.

This amendment would do precisely what the Minister of Education has said that she wants to do, which is to provide full protections to these students by requiring that the principal immediately establish that GSA. There should be really no, I guess, real reason why this would not proceed, because nobody here has said that they want to discourage the establishment of GSAs and QSAs. Simply providing clear direction to school administrators to do so immediately should not be anything that anybody in this House should have any issue with.

The other piece of this amendment is, again, to require that principals limit the notification to that there has been a GSA established or a QSA established in a school and to treat it as they would any other student organization or activity, just as, you know, a school administrator or teacher does not notify a parent or anybody else when their child joins the drama club or joins the chess club – you can tell what I did in high school – or joins, I guess, an athletic activity.

**An Hon. Member:** What?

**Ms Pancholi:** My fellow members are just realizing what I said.

It simply is treating the establishment of these clubs the same way as others and making sure that parents and teachers have clear direction about expectations around privacy.

Again, the Minister of Education has stood up just very recently, when she spoke to this bill on it being introduced in Committee of the Whole, and stated that she does not support the mandatory outing of kids. We're just asking, simply, that clear direction be provided to school administrators, which is exactly what they asked for a couple of years ago, which is saying: we need some assistance in dealing with, potentially, children and students fearing that they're going to be outed for joining a GSA. We know that there

are instances where school administrators did advise students that if they were to join a GSA or to ever request a GSA, they may have to speak to their parents. We know that's the case. That is a factual statement. We have provided information repeatedly in this House in evidence of that. We need to give students assurances that they can seek to establish a GSA or a QSA and not fear that they will be outed.

This is going to also provide clear direction to any school administrator who is questioning the application of the FOIP Act, because the FOIP Act provides a lot of discretion. This amendment will provide direction to school administrators as to how to apply that discretion under the FOIP Act. The FOIP Act currently allows for school administrators to determine whether or not it is unreasonable to disclose membership in a GSA as a breach of privacy, whether that is a breach of privacy. There's incredible discretion allowed in the FOIP Act for them to do that.

This provision in the Education Act will provide clear direction that it is presumed that there will not be a disclosure. That is the kind of direction that members, that teachers, that principals have sought. They've sought; they've looked to it. They spoke to the previous government and said: "We need your help. We need your help to make sure our members know how to protect their students' rights, how to interpret these complicated privacy provisions, how to apply this discretion. Therefore, we need some direction." It provided clarity, which is exactly what teachers needed, and most importantly it's what students needed. These students are the most vulnerable students. We've repeatedly provided significant evidence to talk about how vulnerable they are, how much it takes for them even to come forward in a school setting to request a GSA, and they need additional assurances to know that joining a QSA or requesting the establishment of one is not going to result in the disclosure of very deeply personal, private information about their sexual orientation, which in very real circumstances has led and could lead to safety concerns, could lead to damage to their mental health, could lead to them being shunned by their family or their community. It was very important that everybody be very clear that this is meant to be a private space. This is meant to be a space for security and for safety for students.

We bring forward this amendment because we think it is true to the intentions that the Minister of Education has stated in this House, that she is seeking to protect these vulnerable students. These amendments can be brought forward with the Education Act. As the minister has stated, she would like to modernize the education system. She believes that bringing forward the Education Act and proclaiming it will do that. That may be the case, but she also has stated very repeatedly that she wants to protect these students, so we're asking, we're appealing to this House and this Assembly to please consider making these very common-sense amendments, which can provide clear direction and security to some of the most vulnerable students in our school system. It is what kids are asking for, and it is what school administrators are asking for, and it is what teachers are asking for, and it is what we owe these kids.

I really encourage the members of this House to consider this. This is a common-sense, practical change that responded to a very real need that was brought up previously. We have lots of evidence – and you've heard it in this House – to support it. We're asking, we're appealing to say: please consider these amendments; they are practical, they are reasonable, and they're the right things to do.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Going forward, this amendment will be referred to as A1. Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Northwest, indeed. Go northwest, young man. Thank you so much for this opportunity, Chair, to speak to this amendment to Bill 8. I'm really glad to see this come to the Chamber. As I have described a couple of times, the construction of Bill 24 and the changes that I made to reform what was Bill 10, the first stab at building GSA and QSA legislation here in the province of Alberta, were based on real-life experience and practical considerations from the field. I received a lot of complaints about timeliness in regard to putting together or allowing a GSA and getting a teacher sponsor for that GSA.

So I think that this amendment brought forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud seeks to address that in a very practical, reasonable sort of way. Mr. Chair, what I had described to you before as a scenario by which we can seek some common ground and try to, you know, demonstrate first principles, which are that we are building legislation here with Bill 8, the education act, to ensure the high quality of education and the protection and the safe and caring environment that we want to create for all children in schools so that they can learn: this amendment, I believe, adheres to those principles in all ways.

I think that what all schools are looking for is clarity, and they're looking for an acknowledgement of the work that they've already done in regard to building their own school policies, you know, going through sometimes several years of having GSAs and so forth. They're looking for an affirmation and acknowledgement that that work that they've done will remain secure and that the next generation of kids coming up next fall in school will have the opportunity for a safe and caring environment, which can include a GSA or a QSA if students choose to call it as such.

9:20

Yeah. I mean, I'm going to keep it quite succinct here, Mr. Chair, because I think that the amendment kind of speaks for itself. I think that if the government sort of thinks through it, this one is pretty acceptable.

You know, again, I don't want to be the one giving out free bits of advice, but this whole thing is very volatile. Like I said before, just the notion of opening up how GSAs are run and the whole thing that's happened here in the last few weeks has really compromised a lot of people in terms of feeling safe and secure. And we're talking about kids that are already not feeling particularly secure, right? So by perhaps reaching back and demonstrating collaborative work here in this Chamber, we can help to walk some of that back, because there are the words that are printed on the page, Mr. Chair, around the laws that we pass here, but then there's the tone that we set in general by moving in a certain direction.

I would suggest that this amendment helps to defuse some of those problems that have been created over the last few weeks. In my humble opinion, I think that this would be a reasonable amendment for all members of the House this evening to accept.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Do I see any other hon. members? I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has the call.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak on this amendment, that was thoughtfully put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I have to say that it's really a privilege for me as leader of this party to be able to rise to speak to this amendment after, first, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, who was a diligent public servant and lawyer who worked within

the public service to do a tremendous amount of the drafting of the Education Act, which Bill 8 is allegedly designed to bring in, notwithstanding that she didn't work on the part with the flawed attempts to protect LGBTQ kids. Nonetheless, she comes to the table with a tremendous amount of expertise on this as well as a dedicated record of public service that is focused on actually getting the job done.

Then, of course, on the second hand, I'm honoured to be able to speak after the Member for Edmonton-North West, who I personally know spent a tremendous amount of time working on constructing Bill 24 in order to fix the plethora of problems that existed in both the School Act and Education Act as a result of the changes that were included in the previous government's Bill 10. Indeed, we spent a lot of time working together because every time we thought we'd fixed something, we would realize there was another problem and then be coming back, and we'd be trying to problem solve it. And we got a number of legal opinions to try and figure out what was the best way to genuinely protect these vulnerable kids in these schools.

You know, we talked yesterday and I talked yesterday about the very long and sordid history of the efforts of the LGBTQ community in Alberta to have rights for these kids in schools protected. We've gone through the many, many elements of what is currently in this bill and the way in which it will very actively serve to leave them unprotected.

But what this amendment does is that in that very limited application, in the public schools that this government has chosen to have covered by this sort of protection, it would apply just to them. This amendment does not extend the right to be free from discrimination to the private schools that nonetheless receive 70 per cent of their funding from the taxpayers. Rather, it would just apply to public schools. In addition, this amendment does not deal with the idea of creating a safe and caring school overall. You know, as we've said before, the current Bill 8 rolls back the provisions that our government had put in place to ensure that schools had safe and caring policies that specifically spoke to the right of LGBTQ kids and teachers to be treated with respect and equality and safety in the school environment.

Now, the members opposite, for some reason, are uncomfortable with having that kind of policy. Nonetheless, they claim that they are still interested in ensuring that kids who request a GSA will get a GSA. Now, to be clear, we have laid out that you're going to get a much lower number of kids requesting a GSA if they go to school within a school where institutionalized discrimination is permitted, as is the case now in many, many schools across this province.

Nonetheless, let us for a moment take the Education minister at her word, where she says that she wants, really, for kids who want a GSA to be able to have a GSA should they request a GSA in that smaller subset of schools where this government thinks that that is appropriate. All we are trying to do is give meaning to the words and the assertions of the Education minister, that in that smaller subset of schools in the province of Alberta that are fully publicly funded where a kid, regardless of whether or not they are operating within a school that has discriminatory practices, has the courage of their convictions and they seek out the opportunity to create their own supports in order to support both themselves and/or others, other kids in that school, to provide them support, and reach out and ask for that GSA to be established, it be established.

We have told Albertans and we have told this government over and over that we weren't just making this up. The reality was that we had a very serious problem that existed in a number of the fully publicly funded schools in this province where, when an LGBTQ child came forward or, quite frankly, a straight kid who wanted to support their friends who were members of the LGBTQ community

came forward and asked to establish a GSA, in effect the administration could subvert that request by delaying it and by dragging their feet and making sure that it never happened. We heard that this happened and that this happened a lot and that sometimes they just dragged their feet and it never actually happened.

Other times they dragged their feet, and they started negotiating with the kids: "Really? You want a GSA? How about you just have an outdoor recreation club and invite those friends to it. Really? You want a GSA? What about a drama club? Really? You want a GSA? How about a social justice club?" These were the kinds of things. And slowly these kids were sort of, you know, broken down by the ongoing, very intentional delay and refusal of senior administrators within the schools to say: "Yes, of course. You have come forward, and you have asked for a GSA, and the Minister of Education has been on the record saying that kids who want a GSA should get a GSA, so of course we shall have a GSA."

All this amendment that we are putting forward today is designed to do is to ensure that where a GSA is requested, it is in fact permitted immediately. It doesn't mean that the principal has to wave a magic wand and set up a GSA that second. That's not it at all. All they have to say is: "Yes. I give permission. There will be a GSA." Then the other work has to happen within a reasonable time, the work of finding an adviser and all that kind of stuff, and reasonability is read into the amount of time that it takes to actually create that school club.

**9:30**

So this is a very, very, very simple amendment. It is solely designed to ensure that in that subset of Alberta schools that are fully publicly funded, this government has limited itself to paying attention, with respect to the rights of LGBTQ kids, in that in those schools, notwithstanding policies that may well overtly or subtly discriminate against LGBTQ kids, those kids can have a GSA should they push through that subtle or overt discrimination or, should there be no subtle or overt discrimination, they simply articulate their right to have a GSA. This is about making sure that they get to assert that right. This is about addressing the real problems that we know are true, that without this language they will not be able to assert the right if the principal doesn't want them to. That's the bottom line. Without this language, they will never have the right to assert their request to have a GSA. That is the meaning of the language as it exists; the amendment will fix that.

We have heard the House leader, we have heard the Premier, we have heard the Minister of Education, and I believe we might even have heard the Minister of Children's Services say: we have the best statutory protection for GSAs in the country. What we are telling you is that the way this legislation is written right now – well, on the face of it, we already know that it's not the best because we've already tabled, of course, a number of other examples which are much more fulsome. But even here, if what you really mean is that you want to give that subset of kids who attend publicly funded schools in the province of Alberta the right to have a GSA, then you must write the language to give them that right.

That is not what the language says right now. The amendment that was put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud would fix that. It's a very, very simple change, and I can't imagine why anyone would vote against this amendment if they truly believed that this was what they were trying to achieve. It really is a litmus test for whether that is what this government is trying to achieve or not. I, like my colleagues, will not take a long time talking about it other than to say that the test is there for you, and now you have to take the test. We urge you to pass the test. We urge you to act in accordance with your stated objectives.

More important than whether or not you act in accordance with your stated objectives, we also urge you to make these amendments that are necessary to protect these vulnerable kids in our schools. Over and over and over again we have outlined what you must know is true. LGBTQ kids who are forced to hide who they are, whose families don't support them, who are bullied at school, who are told by their teachers or their coaches that they're not good enough, who are told by other leaders in their communities that they are not good enough: those kids are at greater risk not only of the worst outcome, you know, hurting themselves, suicide, but also they are at greater risk of anxiety, of depression, of ill health, of homelessness, of general family disorder, and ultimately unhappiness.

I can't imagine that a person in this House would actually want to allow that to continue, understanding what they do, that this is true, that this is what happens when LGBTQ kids are not allowed access to the kinds of supports they need in order to fully explore who they are in a loving, accepting, supportive environment. That's all these are about. It is really ultimately on their behalf that we are making this request that this government move forward and ensure that this provision is put in place so that in that smaller subset of groups of schools where kids request a GSA, even where they request it in the face of other policies and actions and behaviours that are allowed to prevail within the school, they still can get that safe place in the school for them. They need to have one safe place in that school. We've eliminated the obligation for the school to provide that the whole school is a safe place. That's what we've already done through Bill 8.

What we are asking is that you give meaning to the request that they have one safe place and that that be the GSA. That is what this amendment will do. We urge members to vote for that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to rise in this Assembly and to speak on this amendment here. It's always difficult to rise after the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. She speaks so eloquently on why this amendment is so important.

I think it's something that when we actually stop and read the contents of this amendment, when we actually go through it, we realize that, basically, it only adds one thing, an immediacy requirement – right? – a requirement that principals not drag their feet on allowing a gay-straight alliance or a queer-straight alliance to be established, a GSA or a QSA.

I know that hon. members of the government bench and the government backbench have spoken quite a bit at length about. I know the hon. Minister of Education has stated many times that this government unequivocally supports GSAs. I know the hon. Minister of Justice, in fact, many times during his leadership campaign and then many times thereafter spoke at length about how he supports GSAs and that homophobia should have no place in the Conservative caucus. I believe that many members of the government and the government caucus actually do believe that, Mr. Chair. They do understand how important it is for GSAs to exist and for QSAs to exist and how these actual programs and clubs do save lives. I know the hon. Minister of Finance himself, in fact, just today in question period spoke about how he unequivocally supported GSAs and supported – he referred them to as inclusion groups. I understand that sometimes it's hard to say “gay-straight alliance,” but that's the reality of what we're fighting for here.

If the reality is that these members are telling the truth and that the government bench is telling the truth, Mr. Chair, it should be a small matter to go forward and say that, well, they do believe that

they want the strongest provisions and that they're trying to build the strongest provisions in the entire country around gay-straight alliances. We know it's not quite there yet, but this is a step towards that direction. Immediately granting this permission to students would allow students to then have a discussion around: who is a reasonable staffperson, when will we be able to meet, and when will we have a facility established? Those are the types of questions that are logistical concerns, but we know that we're getting towards the right step. That's something that I think all members of the Assembly can recognize is a good thing for students – right? – to give students the certainty that they will be allowed to establish the clubs they want.

Mr. Chair, I'll admit I'm quite a bit younger than most people in this Assembly, and in fact I remember that in 2014, when the original Bill 10 was being brought through this Assembly, I was a student. I was a student in high school. I recall the arrogant Conservative government, the Progressive Conservative government at the time, actually telling students: well, if your principal doesn't want to give you a GSA and drags their feet, you should take them to court, right? That was the messaging, the arrogance that the Conservatives had at the time, that the Progressive Conservatives had at the time. It was something that I thought was shocking. I mean, students thought it was shocking, and it was something that I know this government doesn't want. This government doesn't want to be wasting school board resources and education resources on fighting frivolous lawsuits around GSAs and QSAs that are legislatively protected, that we know need to be established immediately.

What this amendment does is for greater clarity. It would allow these students to know that they have that right to a GSA, to be in, as the government likes to call them, inclusion groups, to be included in their own schools. It would immediately give them that protection.

If we truly believe, which I know many members do – and I've spoken to many members who have spoken at length about how they believe that – that students deserve this right and that this will help save the lives of those students and improve their mental well-being and the mental health of those students, I think it's important that we stop and say that this isn't a time for partisanship. This isn't a time to reject an amendment because it comes from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. This isn't a time to play games with students' lives. This is a time to realize that if we can pass a good amendment that will help kids, we should.

**9:40**

I really hope that members of the government will get up and speak to this sometime tonight. I mean, I know that a number of opposition members have already spoken to this tonight, spoken to why it is so important. But the stories that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and Leader of the Opposition had spoken to about how principals would say, “Well, would you rather join a drama club?” or “Would you rather join a rugby club?” or “Would you rather do X or Y?”: those were the types of stories that weren't just around as fables or as hypotheticals. Those were the things that were actually happening on the coattails of the arrogance of the Conservatives, and they knew that was going to happen in 2014 there. They knew that was going to happen, and that's why they asked students to go to court.

I don't think anybody in this Assembly believes that high school students should be wasting their time hiring lawyers and going to court. Especially not if they're making \$13 an hour can they afford many lawyers, Mr. Chair. I don't believe that anybody in this Assembly thinks that students should be going to court to fight for their rights and fight for what this legislation ostensibly protects. I

don't think anybody in this Assembly thinks that students should have to file appeals with the Privacy Commissioner after they've already been outed.

I think that we have the opportunity here to close a loophole that perhaps was an oversight by the Minister of Education. Perhaps it was something the government hadn't considered, that this immediacy and the relevance of moving forward with speed for these GSAs was important. I mean, we recognize that, of course, it takes time to establish these clubs, and it takes time to designate a teacher. It takes time to designate a staff liaison. That's why in section 2.1(b)(ii) there is a reasonableness clause – right? – that allows for an amount of time after receiving a request.

But those students, Mr. Chair, in that interim before that club is actually established, deserve the certainty and the peace of mind to know that they are allowed to move forward, to know that they have a government that is looking out for them, to know that they will not be blocked because of politics, to know that they will not be blocked because one teacher or one principal does not agree with their lifestyle, does not agree that they are gay, and does not think that it's something that is wholesome for them. I think that is something that this Assembly can send as a strong message to students, that they will immediately have those protections. I think that's something that is a very reasonable request of this Assembly. It's something that isn't partisan. If what the members of the government have said is true, if they truly do support GSAs, then it's something that I think we should all be able to support.

This actually aligns, I think, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and the Member for Edmonton-North West spoke at length about, to what this government has been saying over and over and over again in this Assembly. It actually agrees with the principle that we should be protecting these students. It actually agrees with the principle that GSAs and QSAs are important to our students, and I think it's something that's very important.

I mean, I hope we're going to hear from one of the ministers here, perhaps, or even a government backbencher on what their caucus may decide tonight about this amendment. This amendment is not just a small change in one word. I mean, legislatively it's not a large document, of course – it's one page – but what it will do is that it will show students that we are putting our actions into play and that it's not just all empty talk, Mr. Chair. That's what we're showing students, that it's not just partisanship, it's not just talk, but we're actually showing them that this legislation will work.

I mean, I can't speculate, Mr. Chair, but I would be concerned about some of the things that perhaps the school that the Minister of Finance is on the board for would do without immediacy, because there are ample opportunities for a school like his, where the Minister of Finance was actually on the board, and in their actual policy book it spoke to how these were demonic practices and how they were sins. I know that many members of this Assembly don't agree with that. I know the Minister of Finance has spoken at length himself, especially in question period, about how he supports GSAs now. I really do want to believe that. I really do want to believe that students that attended that school that the minister was on the board of would have the opportunity to start a GSA if they so requested, would have the opportunity to start a QSA if they so requested. But I will actually assure the Minister of Finance. I will assure him that this amendment actually doesn't affect that because this amendment is only for public schools. It doesn't affect private institutions. It doesn't affect religious institutions like that. But, in fact, it is something that we are only keeping narrowly defined to what is already in the scope of this bill.

So I think it's a very reasonable ask. It doesn't impede the minister's rights and the minister's schools' rights. It doesn't impede his ability to tell students to be gay or not to be gay. But it

does allow us to tell students in public institutions that the bill will be enacted immediately, that the protections they have will be enacted immediately.

It's something that, Mr. Chair, I feel very strongly is important because I saw first-hand, when I was in high school, how important these clubs were, how important GSAs and QSAs were. Again, I've spoken to it in the past, but these weren't anything creative or special. At the GSA at my high school they had a popcorn machine, and we'd go into the film studies room and screen a film – I believe it was every Thursday – and then after everybody would talk. I think they charged 25 cents for a little paper bag of popcorn. That was the entirety of the meetings that we had every week, and it was important because it showed students that it didn't matter whether you were lesbian, whether you were gay, whether you were bisexual, whether you were two-spirited, whether you were queer, whatever you identified as; students were able to come together and watch the latest *Toy Story* movie, because that's all students want to do.

They want to know that as a group they can feel safe and hang out. That's what we want principals in schools to do immediately for students. For our publicly funded and separate schools, we want them to be able to immediately know that they can go have that movie night under the name "GSA" or "QSA." That, I think, is something that students deserve.

I know, Mr. Chair, that students perhaps can't vote. They're not 18 yet in the majority of cases, but even though that's true, I think that they deserve the opportunity to live their lives the way they see fit. We know that in many cases students feel the safest at school because that's where all their friends are, that's where the teachers they trust are, and that's where they spend the vast majority of their formative years.

Because of that, we understand that having the GSA on school grounds is one of the most important things. It provides a venue, and you're not, then, asking students to have to go rent a community hall with funds they won't have. You're not asking students to go and fight in court to get something started with funds and lawyers that they don't have access to. We understand that the relevance of having that quickly implemented is important for these students because students, especially students who are in a vulnerable mental state, Mr. Chair, who may have mental health issues, who may be LGBTQ and have many things going on in their lives – we know that sometimes you just need a little bit of certainty. Sometimes you just need a space that you can go to and where you know your friends are there and you know that the people you trust and care about are going to pat you on the back.

Mr. Chair, I'm sure every single member of this Assembly can relate to that. I'm sure every single member of this Assembly can name a time that maybe they were feeling a little down and needed a friend. That's what GSAs do. We should immediately grant permission for these kids to be able to identify that way and have that space where they can pat each other on the back, where they can go watch a movie, where they can share a soda pop. It's not complicated. It's not something that is special. It's not something that is unusual. What students want to do is be students, be kids, and be allowed to be who they are while they're being kids.

I hope members of the government can understand that. I mean, I know that a lot of them have spoken at length about how they understand that. They have spoken at length about how they unilaterally support, unequivocally support gay-straight alliances, Mr. Chair, and support the formation of gay-straight alliances. If they indeed were telling the truth, if they indeed actually support GSAs, then there is no reason not to tell schools and school administrators that GSAs must immediately be granted permission.



9:50

That's all students are asking for. They're asking for permission to hang out in a space that will be safe for them. They're asking for permission to have a childhood where they feel like they are accepted, where they feel they are loved, and that is something I think every single member of this Assembly, Mr. Chair, should be proud to fight for. We should be proud to be supporting our students to have, as the government likes to call them, inclusion groups. We should be proud to be able to say that those inclusion groups would be formed immediately.

I can't think of a single reason not to accept this amendment, Mr. Chair. I hope that somebody from the government will get up tonight and explain to us what their direction will be on this, whether they support this amendment, whether they think there are flaws with this amendment and would like to amend it again, whether they will be rejecting this amendment.

Mr. Chair, these are the questions that Albertans and students deserve answered, because there are no tricks behind this amendment. There is nothing in this amendment that will attack private or charter schools. There is nothing in this amendment that will infringe on the rights of parents. There is nothing in this amendment that is a blatant partisan attack. All it is is a common-sense updating of language so that students can have timeliness to their requests. I think that's something that most members of this Assembly should understand.

In fact, Mr. Chair, the government speaks at length to how they are conservatives and they strive for efficiency and all of those things, and really all we're asking for is a little bit of efficiency in making sure these GSAs and QSAs get established – right? – making sure that these gay kids and queer kids are able to have that space immediately. I hope members of the government are listening.

I hope members of the government understand the impact this will have, because this was fought already, Mr. Chair. This exact debate happened in this Chamber basically five years ago, in 2014, when Bill 10 was first introduced and with Bill 202 as well under Laurie Blakeman. When this debate happened, Albertans and students made it clear that the right to establish a GSA shouldn't be dictated by how much your school administrator liked you, right?

Mr. Chair, I'm sure many members of this Assembly will have a story about how they got into an argument with a teacher, with a principal, or a vice-principal at some point in their lives. Perhaps they mouthed off at the wrong time. We don't believe here in the opposition that that should be a reason you're not allowed to have a GSA, that that should be a reason that that administrator can then drag their feet. That's something that I feel very strongly about. I feel very strongly that no matter who you are or what you've done, you should be able to have that safe and caring environment provided for you, especially when we are as legislators and as the education system and the Education minister in charge of so many of these students' formative years, so many of these students' lives for so much of their time.

Why would we vote against this? Why would we speak against this? I could not tell you, Mr. Chair. I'm hoping we'll hear from any member of the government on how they feel about this amendment. I hope we'll hear from any member of the government backbench on how they feel about this. Perhaps the Member for Drumheller-Stettler would like to get up and talk about how he supports GSAs and that this would be something that he would support having in one of the schools he taught at. Perhaps the Minister of Finance would like to get up and speak about how he would support a GSA in the school that he was a board member of. I think those are all very important questions.

I think it's very important that we take a good, long look at the amendment and realize that there are no tricks going on. I feel like the government looks at our legislation and amendments and they always think there's going to be a trap door. Well, Mr. Chair, the trap door is only there if you walk into it. Really, the solution is going to be to support this common-sense amendment, allow it to pass, and let students know that they are safe, they are protected, and their government cares for them.

We have the opportunity to do the right thing right here tonight. We have the opportunity to tell every single student in this province that we care about them. So I really urge all members of the government and the opposition here to support this amendment. I hope we will hear from a member from the government, whether it is the Minister of Finance or the Member for Drumheller-Stettler or anybody else, for that matter. But we will see, Mr. Chair, and I think that will be the test, and that will tell us whether they walk into that trap door.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview standing to speak to amendment A1.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise and also speak to the amendment from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Of course, as has been described by my colleagues, the slight adjustment to the bill in the form of the amendment is to include that a principal must immediately grant permission to create a GSA and designate a staff liaison so that students may have a GSA in a very timely manner. This, of course, gives a timeline for fulfilling this request, which, sadly, Bill 8 doesn't include at this time. We know that students don't need GSAs in due course; they need them now. This amendment will absolutely ensure that principals do act now. So although it's sort of a small step, it is a significant one.

We know that students who are grappling with their sexuality often feel isolated. They're not accepted, they feel that they don't belong, and indeed they're afraid to actually be open about who they are. It may not be safe for them to reveal their true selves. Of course, part of, you know, being a human being is that we all need to belong. It's just a fundamental aspect of being human. For young people, when they're trying to fit in, the teenage years are – I don't know; for me, for sure, they were horrific. I know that it's a very difficult time, and when you have this added challenge, when you know you're sort of, in quotes, not normal, it can be extremely painful and create a lot of challenges for young people. This fundamental need to belong can be met by the creation of a GSA in a timely manner for students so that they can be with straight, gay, queer, trans, other kids and be accepted in, you know, a safe community.

I spoke previously in the House regarding my middle son. He was bullied quite a bit when he was in sort of later elementary, grades 5 and 6, and he, of course, never ever shared this with me. He blamed himself and just kept it all quiet, to himself, instead of reaching out to his teachers or his dad or to me as his mom. He didn't actually reveal this to me until he was in his junior high years, so maybe it was grade 8 or 9. This made all the difference for him because I was able to accept and love him despite this challenge, because he kind of blamed himself. He thought that he was doing something weird and that that's why kids were giving him a hard time, and he had a lot of shame. I mean, I'm not trying to equate this at all with the things that kids who are struggling with their sexuality go through, but I think that, you know, all of us can understand just how hard it is when you're not belonging and, in fact, you're being ridiculed

because you're different or people are sort of picking on some weakness that's part of you.

I know that for my son it made all the difference for him when he could be accepted and supported. He didn't have a group that would accept him in school so much, but he did find that in his home. Unfortunately, so many children don't have that. They won't be accepted, unfortunately, in their homes, and that is sad. Certainly, I think that the more, perhaps, different you are, the more likely that is.

**10:00**

You know, working as a social worker for the last 30 years, I certainly saw a lot of kids who were not accepted by their parents, and for various reasons a lot of times parents themselves certainly had their own challenges. They had lots of barriers to them being able to be present and supportive of their children. It could be from poverty or their own, you know, significant abuse that they'd experienced as children and that perhaps they were experiencing right now in an unhealthy domestic violence situation. These kinds of things take people out, and they cannot always be there for their kids. So why wouldn't we create a GSA in schools so that kids can have that support in an environment that is available to them already, with a timeline on that so that the principals do not put this off? As the Leader of the Official Opposition spoke about previously, unfortunately some principals had suggested different kinds of groups that might address that issue and weren't really willing to create a GSA in a timely manner.

We all say, of course, that this is what we want, you know, that people will do this or want to support kids. But we do have to have timelines. We do have to make sure that the full intent of supporting kids is implemented. As has been said before, if this sometimes isn't in place, things are not carried through on.

I think this amendment makes eminent sense, and I think that it can very much support children to have a safe place where they may not have that safe place anywhere. As I've said before, we know that having, really, just one relationship where people can reveal who they are and still be accepted for who they are, you know, could make all the difference in someone's life. That can shift their thinking from blaming themselves and getting down on themselves so much to a point where they might start having suicidal ideation. They might start thinking that that's the best way for them to resolve these issues and these challenges that they're experiencing, and then they begin to develop a plan, and they think about: "How am I going to do this? I'm going to go to my parents' cabinet maybe, and I'll get some drugs out of that." There are a million ways that kids can think of to do that. Unfortunately, we know that suicide amongst the LGBTQ community is much higher than for the straight community.

Again, Mr. Chair, it just makes a lot of sense that we would not delay, that we would make sure that principals would act on creating GSAs in a timely manner immediately, and that we would also make sure that there is staff support to help the young people who would be attending this. I did cite previously that we know that not only are LGBTQ kids supported through these gay-straight alliances, but also other kids are. The risk of actual suicide for heterosexual males was cut by 50 per cent. A study in B.C. was done. It just creates a whole inclusive environment in a school, and it, of course, builds momentum over time. If a GSA has been created that first year, maybe people are a little bit hesitant, but as time goes on, that school – it actually impacts how welcoming and supportive they are of difference, and I think that that is something that needs to be responded to. Therefore, the amendment, that says, "Yes, a principal must fulfill this request immediately," is very important.

I've also spoken previously about a younger friend of mine who is, you know, a professional. He has an undergraduate degree. He has many relationships, has been successful in his career, can provide for himself, takes care of himself financially, but he has still, at the age of 26, 27, not told his parents that he's a gay man. He's still afraid to at this age. I just want members to reflect on that, that a man who's had worldly success and achieved some significant goals is still afraid to share with his parents. So how much greater would that fear be for a younger person? I think that when we're making a decision about this, we need to really keep that in mind.

I mean, this amendment certainly ensures that a GSA is established in a timely manner. It's a small but vitally important amendment to Bill 8. I think that it's really so crucial that all members of the House support this amendment so that vulnerable kids can actually have the support of a GSA in their schools, support that they may not have at home. Even if they may have it at home, they may still not be sure about their sexuality, so they're not willing to bring that up themselves.

I mean, you know, my son is a straight male, but at that time he couldn't tell me. Like, he was at his own developmental level. He was just afraid, and he felt like he was to blame or something for that bullying. I think that that is kind of a normal thing for young people, that they often sort of think: "Well, it's my fault. I'm weird. I shouldn't be like this. It's my fault that someone is giving me a hard time." Certainly, we know that that's true oftentimes in relationships where there is abuse and things like that. Oftentimes the victim blames themselves; therefore, they don't seek out help.

Creating these safe havens for these young people in a timely manner with support from staff at the school is crucial, really, to supporting kids to feel like they belong, and then the benefit, as we've talked about previously, has a ripple effect. Not only is that LGBTQ student supported, but so is that heterosexual student, and so is maybe that newcomer to the community or maybe that kid who moved from a little, small town to the city and now are in this place that they don't feel like they belong. You know, we could go into many different constellations of characters to see who could be supported.

I just want to stress, Mr. Chair, that, you know, creating safe spaces for students is key, and it's not something that can be delayed. These students need support. We know of too many – too many – tragic stories where they're not supported, and then there sometimes are very dire consequences before that. So I urge all members of this Assembly to vote in support of this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie rising to speak.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Everything okay?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Absolutely. How are you doing?

**Member Loyola:** I'm doing fantastic, sir. I'm doing fantastic.

**The Deputy Chair:** Through the chair is the comment that I would like to make at this point.

**Member Loyola:** Through you, of course, Mr. Chair.

Through you, I stand to support the amendment that has been brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, of course, and speak briefly to it. Before actually getting into the specifics of the amendment, I just want to kind of set the stage and frame it because I think it's very important that we all have a

particular understanding. I know that a lot of people have shared their particular perspectives on this issue.

**10:10**

I want to go back to what I talked about yesterday in terms of privilege. Unless you've actually lived the experience of someone who is LGBTQ, you don't really understand the fear, for example, that the Member for Edmonton-Riverview was highlighting as she was speaking and talking about the fact that her friend, who is a man, is still not out and finds it very difficult to share his sexual orientation with the rest of the world. The reality of that is because people fear having to lose opportunities because of discrimination. It's very clear that this discrimination against people of a specific sexual orientation continues to exist. Because of this, it's very important that people who have the privilege of not being LGBTQ or not having the experience of living the reality and not knowing what that discrimination looks like are strongly aware that the lack of opportunities exist for people who are LGBTQ because of the discrimination that continues to exist.

Of course, the proper way to address this as a society is by making sure that we establish healthy relationships. We all need to learn how to be more healthy with one another. Before you can do that, you actually need to create a space where you can have dialogue. When I was at the University of Alberta as a staff member, we used to organize both in the fall semester and in the winter semester a week's worth of events called Solidarity Week. During this time it was an opportunity for people from different ethnic backgrounds to come together and actually share their experiences with one another. It was an opportunity to share our history and realize that there are common struggles. Much like between colonizer and colonized, there also exist some correlations between racial discrimination and, of course, discrimination against sexual orientation. Although it is different, there are some correlations there in terms of the outcomes suffered by people who are discriminated against.

Getting back to the point, you need to have a space where people who suffer these indignities as a result of the discrimination can actually voice what their experience is and for those who do not have the experience to actually listen. Those of us who have enough privilege in society that we don't have to face this discrimination can actually listen to someone that is actually living it and going through it. Whether you sympathize or empathize with the person, well, that's up to the individual. You may question whether that discrimination really exists, but of course, at the end of the day, it's an opportunity for you, at the bare minimum, to listen to the experiences that someone who is LGBTQ would have.

Now, underlying the reality of trying to make a change so that we can have a more healthy society is the fact – and I think that everybody in the House knows this. I don't need to specifically focus on this for too long. I think it's important for us to all have a reminder because sometimes you need to hear it from somebody else's lips before you can actually pay some mind to it. Of course, for healthy relationships to exist, there needs to be respect. The reality is that that respect does not exist.

I remember that when I was working on the University of Alberta campus, there were a number of times when there were gay, bisexual, or even trans students who were specifically beaten up on campus. Now, this is happening at a University of Alberta campus. This is where the students are much older. You can only imagine what is happening at other levels of education, be it in elementary school, junior high, or even high school. That same kind of disrespect towards individuals: it's just unfathomable that it would go so far as to go to violence, where someone thinks that the discrimination is so incredible that this individual thinks that it's

okay to use violence against someone who is of a different sexual orientation. Why they would do it, I have no idea. I'm not too sure why. I wasn't brought up to be that way.

The reality is that we have to respect. If you think you can use violence to change people, well, then, we're in a very sad state of affairs if that's what we think. It's very important that we teach children, specifically students in this case, that that's not the way that we need to move forward as a society. As everybody recognizes – I believe the Member for Airdrie-East got up in the House this morning and did a member's statement on domestic violence – violence against people of a specific sexual orientation is not the only problem. This is a crisis that continues to exist in our society. There's even domestic violence. As she pointed out in her member's statement today, it's usually that of a close family member. The tendency is that it usually is a male against a female although not in all cases. But that is the tendency.

We have this overarching problem of people using violence in our society, and of course it's a fact that there is no respect there. There is no respect. For healthy relationships to exist, we also need to make sure that people feel supported. As the Member for Edmonton-Riverview was highlighting as she was sharing with the House, this is something that's really important. When we create these safe spaces as GSAs and QSAs in schools, that's indeed what is happening. It's creating a safe space where people who identify as LGBTQ-two-spirited can also go and feel like they're being supported as they continue to work through their identity and where they won't feel bullied, where they will feel supported and will feel that they have a group of students in their school that will support them and respect them.

Of course, the last part of healthy relationships that I'd like to highlight is the dignity of the human person. The sole fact that we are alive, that we are a human being demands the right that we be treated with dignity. I think that's something that everybody in this House can agree to.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Agreed.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, hon. House leader, for agreeing with me.

Dignity of the human person, regardless of how that person identifies in terms of sexual orientation or ethnicity or culture or religion or creed, as highlighted in the international agreement on human rights, will be respected. I think that this is something that we often overlook. You know, there are these great laws that we write. We write these great laws which highlight specifically what our intention is, but often the spirit of the law is not taken into account when it's actually being implemented. This is the reason why I think it's so important that we approve this amendment, and I call on all the members of this House to please give this serious consideration. I know that everybody is kind of wrapped up in their own thing, and people might be a little bit tired tonight, but please – please – read this amendment. Please read it because this will only make the bill that much better.

Of course, this is making sure that the principals in schools are responsible for actually making sure that these safe spaces, where GSAs and QSAs are going to be created and that students can actually go to, are created in a timely manner and that the principals are actually responsible not only for making sure that they go forward but also that they're basically promoted within the school so that all the students know that this is actually an opportunity for them if they want to get involved. Right? It would be promoted just like any other club – any other club – within the school, whether it

be the social justice club or a sports team or whatever the case may be. Notifications would have to be sent out just like for any other activity or group within the school.

10:20

Going back, the reality is that, historically speaking, people who discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation are not going to feel responsible to actually do something about it if it's not actually written into the law no matter what the law states. This is why I'm saying that it doesn't matter what is written, actually, in the bill. If it omits this specific piece, which specifically states that a principal is the individual responsible for making sure that it happens, then nobody is going to take it seriously, and nobody will actually implement it. This is what this amendment is trying to do. It's to actually give the responsibility of making sure that it is implemented within each and every school to the principal of that school, the head administrator, to make sure that they are there not only to make sure that notifications for the GSA and QSA are actually put through as any other activity or group like the social justice group but that they will also make sure to appoint a designated staff member as a staff liaison to make sure that the group has support so that it can continue to go forward.

As the hon. Member for Edmonton-South was saying, it can be as simple as students getting together to watch a movie like *Toy Story*, whatever it is that the students want to do, because, I mean, at the end of the day, they will be the ones determining what activities they will do together as a group under the newly formed GSA or QSA. I remind everybody that this is simply a safe space where every student will be treated with respect and will feel supported, because each and every one of them deserves to be treated with dignity. That's why it's so important that somebody actually be responsible for the implementation, and the head administrator must fulfill that role.

That being said, hon. members, I think it's very important. I mean, I would go so far as to say that we have the duty to accommodate in this situation, and I would highly encourage each and every one of you in this House to not only give this serious consideration but to actually vote in favour of this amendment this evening.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak to the amendment to Bill 8, which very simply goes to the heart of the matter and insists that the implementation of a GSA be permitted immediately upon request from a student and that staff be designated in a timely manner to implement the establishment of the GSA thereafter. Really, what it does is get to the crux of the matter, that being that we wish to ensure that the establishment of a GSA is legitimized in the eyes of those it's supposed to benefit, that being the students who wish a safe place to prepare themselves to come out to family members and friends and to identify themselves as a member of the nonheterosexual community in whatever form that may take for them.

I know that hope was raised in the hearts of many young students who were contemplating and agonizing over how they were going to come out to their family. Hope was raised by the previous government's legislation, and many students – I'm just trying to picture myself, put myself in the minds of students who were perhaps preparing themselves during the tenure of the existing legislation to come out, making use of a GSA, yet had their hopes dashed with the new government's proposals to bring forward Bill

8, which will remove the safe haven in the minds of many who were hoping to perhaps use a GSA to find a way to come out to their parents.

The bottom line, Madam Chair, what our government's motivation was – and, hopefully, it's the same motivation that the current government has in its own legislation with respect to GSAs – was saving lives. Now, that's kind of a homogenized way of saying “preventing death,” but that's really what we're doing. I mean, bottom line, we're talking about death. We're talking about young people dying and not in a pretty way. Like, the death of a young person is never pretty. It's an unnatural thing. What we're talking about is death by suicide, death by some violent means because a young person has found themselves kicked out of their own home and living on the street; death by drug overdose because of a life of addiction that's caused by a young person who is ostracized by their family having no place to go and ending up trying to support themselves with the sale of drugs or ending up prostituting themselves on the streets of Alberta cities.

We're talking about those individuals dying, so when we are here to discuss such a serious matter as young people dying, we're reminded of a government's primary responsibility. Your first priority as a government is the protection of human life, of our citizens. There are many ways to do this with legislation, but here we have at its most fundamental core the government's responsibility to protect the lives of children. We're letting in many cases, I believe, religion get in the way of our thinking on this. It's not a question of what your fundamental core religious beliefs might be. It's a matter of whether or not these children's lives are at risk as a result of the legislation that we're looking at implementing in this province.

I implore members, on all sides of the House, to try tonight, as we talk about the amendment, to reimplement, basically, a major piece of what we had in our legislation – and that is the permission for a GSA to be immediately established, the requirement that it be immediately established upon request and why, indeed, that's so necessary – to be able to place themselves in the mindset, the mind, of a young person, a young boy or a young girl, say, in grade 7 or 8, a student in a junior high school in Alberta, knowing that they've identified themselves as not being heterosexual, knowing that they have a family that is not accepting of them.

I know that there are members, on both sides of the House, who have worked in social work and witnessed these situations and heard stories of that, but we have in some cases heard conflicting thoughts about the benefit of GSAs. I don't know where that comes from, because in the mind of a young person who knows for sure that their family is going to kick them out if they come out to them, who knows that they don't have the tools and they don't know how they're going to tell that story to their parents and their family in a way that's going to save that family unit and allow them to stay in that home – it's got to be a terrible black hole. I mean, to really think that there's no way that they can be who they are within their own family unit: what an absolutely depressing and very dark place to be.

10:30

I can well imagine that there are young people now who thought they were in the planning stages to use a GSA, to find the tools to come out to their family members, and who now have had their hopes dashed. If indeed you can wrap your mind around that situation, as somebody in grade 7 or 8, you know how fragile you were yourself as a grade 7 or 8 student regardless of having the potential challenge to your own thoughts about your own sexuality and then coming to terms with that yourself. And then you know: if I indeed bring forward this challenge that I have within myself to

my family, I'm going to end up kicked out of the family unit. But then you think: well, gee whiz, this GSA is something where I can get some help, a place where I can talk to somebody, and I'm going to go ahead and do that.

You contemplate that for a while, you roll it around in your mind, and you're fearful and you're scared to go ahead and make that choice, and then – bang – the government changed. Guess what? Rules have changed. “You know, I may be able to go ahead and talk to the principal about setting up a GSA, but I'm no longer guaranteed that that request is going to be kept private. I mean, there's a possibility that that person is going to go right away and inform my parents.” Right away the whole legitimacy of that GSA is out the window, and that person is back at square one, back in that dark hole, that place of fear, wondering if indeed they'll ever be able to come out to their family and declare who they are.

Given that lack of opportunity and the safe space to go to, there's a risk that when they go to their family, they will be kicked out. And that happens. That happens in pristine families, religious and nonreligious families. The fact is, though – and it's been noted by members of the government here in their social work in past lives – that, yes, indeed it was a religious philosophy that prevented the family member from accepting their own child as being gay, and the result that we're talking about here, fundamentally, is the death of children.

I fail to understand why the government, in its wisdom, can't see the way a young person is seeing this situation as I'm trying so desperately to describe what the mindset, what the process is. I certainly can't imagine it any more deeply than just my own personal experience because I've not been there, but I'm doing my best to grasp what the thought process is of a young person who ends up being ostracized by their family and then contemplates how they're going to kill themselves. It's so dark and so bad that they're wondering: should I do it? How do you kill yourself? If you're a young person who is 16 or 17, do you think that maybe it's pills? Jumping off the High Level Bridge? It's tough. It's tough to think about that, but that's what we're thinking about: it's young people dying.

Madam Chair, I am really, really concerned that if we don't pass this amendment to re-establish the legitimacy of these GSAs in the minds of those young people who are contemplating the most dark and black options any human being could ever contemplate, there are going to be a growing number of young people who end up adding to the body count of individuals who've already died as a result of not having GSAs in the past in this province. That will be deeply troubling, and I don't look forward to that at all.

I hope that the members opposite see their way clear to try to put themselves in the mindset of those young people who are so terribly conflicted and facing the most tragic decisions of their life without the support of the government, whose primary responsibility is to help save lives. That lifesaver is being withdrawn from them by the GSA legislation proposed by this government. This amendment to re-establish legitimacy of the GSAs is essential not only for saving lives, as I say, but for preventing death.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment, that I absolutely will support. Thank you for the comments, actually. You know, we heard for years, when we sat on that side, when we heard from the opposition, that one of the jobs was to try to make legislation better. One of the things that I've been hearing from constituents is that the thing that we fixed previously was removing the ability of administrators or principals

to delay in any way the creation of a QSA or a GSA so that there wasn't any mechanism for people in positions of power to delay these decisions, that are actually quite important.

This amendment, really, allows the government an opportunity. If indeed their goal is to create safe spaces for students and to create a mechanism for these clubs to be allowed and to be supported, then why not clarify that for our kids, for our students, for their families, and for their allies? What we're hearing is that, again, we're going to go backwards with this legislation, without an amendment like this, so that there is the ability for administrators to put in delays. Like the previous member said, there are some huge risks associated with that.

This last weekend in St. Albert we celebrated pride. It was our fourth celebration, and I think it was our biggest celebration. We had hundreds and hundreds, maybe thousands of people. I'm not sure. I didn't count. We had a lot of people come out. What was really interesting is that we didn't have just people from St. Albert. We had people come over and tell us that they were coming in from Morinville. I met some people that had come in from Westlock. They wanted to come into a place that was a safe place to celebrate with their friends and their family, to be in a place that just celebrated their uniqueness, really. It was a lot of fun.

One of the things that we did at our tent was that we actually did face painting, which is a lot of fun. It's a good way to meet families, especially to interact with kids, and what's not fun about that? I had a lot of students, probably junior high, early high school, and some of the people were coming up and asking me to paint different flags on their faces, all different flags, all different colours. I learned what all the colours were in the different flags. It was kind of fun. There was a lot of pride, actually, and it kind of reinforced to me what pride means. They were really proud to have these colours on their faces: “You know, I identify as this” and “I identify as this” and “This is my flag, and I'm quite happy to have it painted on my face.”

As I was doing that, I met four young ladies who were junior high students from a school in St. Albert called Lorne Akins. Maybe some of the members remember that I tabled some letters earlier this session. They were written, I think, on May 3, and I received them. There were 60 letters from junior high students in St. Albert. Some of them were addressed to the Premier, and some of them were addressed: to whom it may concern. They were specifically about GSAs and some of their fears around changes to legislation or changes to policy or regulations that would impede the speedy and safe creation of a GSA or a QSA.

What was really interesting about the letters was that some of the students talked about the fact that they themselves identified in that community as a member of that community. They talked about the fear that they had of being forced or having their families find out before they were ready, and they talked about some of the harm that would come to their family and to themselves and to their lives. Some of the students talked about the fact that they were just allies and that they were concerned for their friends.

These were based on conversations that friends have, that junior high students have together. They spend a lot of time together, and they talk. They were really passionate. To see these young students, junior high students, talking about how important this was – they felt that we were finally making progress, and they were really frightened that this would go backwards.

Now, you know, we've heard the government say: well, there's nothing to worry about. Well, there is something to worry about, because when you create loopholes in rules and legislation and regulations, sometimes people take advantage of that. Not everybody, but sometimes people take advantage of that. I think that if we can create legislation and regulations that close those loopholes or that create truly safe spaces or create rules so that we

can know that we are doing the absolute best that we can to prevent any harm to any people, then I think we're doing a good job.

10:40

The reality of LGBTQ students: I don't know; I wasn't one of those students. When I went to school – that was a long time ago now – I know that I witnessed in the schools that I went to bullying of students that were clearly members of that community, that looked different, that spoke differently, that maybe shared who they were. They were bullied as a result. I have heard of kids getting beaten up. I've certainly heard of kids getting kicked out of their homes. I think we all probably have. If we're honest with ourselves, we know that this is a risk that these students face. Why not do everything that we can to prevent any harm coming to these students?

I said earlier this week, or last week now, when we talked about the private member's bill around ensuring that we had medication in schools for students with severe allergies, that it's important to make that investment, to ensure that even if we save one child with this legislation and with this financial investment, then we will have done our job to prevent harm to or the death of one child. It's not that different. If this amendment to this legislation has the potential to save a life or to close a loophole and eventually save a life, that doesn't seem like a bad idea. We know that suicide, ultimately, is the end, but there are all of these horrible things that happen before that. We have mental illnesses. We have students that struggle with depression and all of the results of bullying, being ostracized, not being accepted by your family, being homeless, all of those things. I think we can understand what that does to a young person.

Ultimately, the risk of suicide is a very real risk. We know that suicide is the second-leading cause of death among youth 15 to 24 and the third-leading cause of death in young people between 10 and 14. Again, I think that if you can save the life of one person, what is the harm in that? If truly your goal in this legislation is not to make changes that will be harmful to these students, then why not make this change? Why not make this amendment if you can prevent one death? Suicide is a horrific fact, and it happens all too frequently with our young people. We know that. We invest in mental health supports. We invest in prevention. We do everything we can to prevent harm from coming to our children. We vaccinate them. We teach them about safety. We use seat belts. We use car seats. We do everything that we possibly can to prevent harm from coming to our children. Why not do this? When it gets to the point of suicide, it's too late. There's nothing else you can do.

Twenty years ago my brother, who struggled with a mental illness and as far as I know didn't identify himself as being part of the LGBTQ community, for whatever reason saw that suicide was the only option for him, and that's what he did. He ended his life, and that was it. There was nothing I could do about it after that, and it's final. If there was something that could have been done along the way to have prevented that – and that's a question I've always asked myself since then – I would love to turn back time and to have done that.

So I would encourage these members to think about, beyond the legislation, just an individual child that might be a constituent of yours. If there is something that you could do that you know would save a life, that you know would close a loophole that maybe somehow somebody would use that would delay the creation of a club where a child could go to feel supported, to feel included, and to be able to navigate their lives, which are kind of complex when you're a student, if there's anything that you could do to fix that, to change that, to prevent that, why wouldn't you do this?

That is all I have to say about this. I would encourage everybody to seriously think about this, about the lives of the children in your constituency.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment, which, of course, as you can imagine, I wholly support. My comments are going to actually be quite brief because what I'm going to do is that I'm going to create the conditions such that should somebody decide to vote against this amendment, it's going to be because they're blatantly and purposely ignoring it.

In my time before being an elected official in this House, I spent many years in the labour movement. My job was to make sure that my membership was treated with dignity and respect, that they were treated fairly, that they got a fair wage, and that all revolved around language. Language is everything. When you look at a union contract, if you change one little word in that – if you will do something, that means that's going to happen, but if you may do something, well, that's up in the air.

Earlier this evening I did hear the Minister of Education talk about how schools are expected to follow the policy. Language. That tells me there is no guarantee that they will follow the language. Now, if you had said that the schools will follow the policy, that is more of a guarantee. I'm going to maybe borrow a little line that I've heard before. What this amendment will do is take weak language that we have right now and make it less weak, okay?

We have gotten caught in a little bit of a loop here, where we've been trying to compare the language around GSAs proposed in this bill to other language across the country, and we've explored this. What we haven't seemed to concentrate on is comparing this language to what we have right now. Right now the language that we have – and I thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for, in his job as the Education minister, putting together Bill 24. It was the strongest language in the country. But what we're doing with this proposed language here is making ourselves just part of the pack. Why should we settle for that? We should be settling for the best, the best language. If we're so intent to not use the best language, this amendment here will make weak language less weak. As we read this, we know this improves it. So to ignore it means we're doing that purposely.

So I encourage all members: don't ignore this. Strengthen the language. Make it less weak. And let's give our kids some certainty that their elected officials really are on their side because right now they don't think so.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak?

Shall I call the question on amendment A1?

[The voice vote indicated that motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:49 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Dach	Goehring	Renaud
Dang	Loyola	Schmidt

Eggen	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Feehan	Pancholi	Sweet
Against the motion:		
Allard	LaGrange	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Rutherford
Copping	Long	Schow
Ellis	Milliken	Schulz
Fir	Nally	Schweitzer
Getson	Neudorf	Shandro
Glubish	Nicolaides	Toews
Goodridge	Nixon, Jason	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Guthrie	Panda	Williams
Issik	Pon	
Totals:	For – 12	Against – 32

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we are now back on the main. Are there any hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to rise in the Chamber this evening. I do have a couple of comments that I would like to express to the House this evening. I've been listening to the debate with great interest. I do appreciate all hon. members participating in the process. I still become alarmed as I listen to the opposition continue to misrepresent the facts when it comes to Bill 8, in presentation after presentation to talk about things that just aren't part of the bill, to represent things inside this place that do not fit with the legislation. They're not factual in their presentation.

Why I think that is so unfortunate, primarily, is for LGBTQ youth who are watching this or listening to this in other capacities as we watch the debate develop around Bill 8. They continue to see the Official Opposition rise in this Chamber and make implications that in the end, Madam Chair, are not found within fact. They have chosen to spend a tremendous amount of their time in their conversation with Bill 8. I don't actually have the direct copy of Bill 8 in front of me at the moment, Madam Chair, but it's a fairly decent-sized piece of legislation. I've heard no comments from the Official Opposition on that piece of legislation except for one topic, which, quite frankly, is not within that piece of legislation, and the topic that they're referring to, GSAs and the ability of youth inside schools to be able to form a GSA, does not change as a result of that legislation despite the fact that the Official Opposition continues to want to rise in this Chamber and present that as a fact.

You know, Madam Chair, I think it's important that we are clear yet again that even if Bill 8 passes in this Chamber – I would not want to presume what the Assembly will decide in the coming days, though I have to say that nothing the opposition has presented has changed my mind. At this point I still intend to vote on behalf of the people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre in support of Bill 8, the hon. the Education minister's piece of legislation. But what I want to talk about are the steps that actually happen around GSAs. I've spoken about it a few times along the way in regard to Bill 8, but I think it bears repeating for the record what will take place, still, when it comes to gay-straight alliances or queer-straight alliances or those types of student organizations within a school even after Bill 8 passes.

Again, Madam Chair, this is what would happen. Step 1, the students or a student will ask a staff member at the school to start a GSA.

Step 2, the principal permits a GSA. We're already at step 2, and the entire argument that the Official Opposition has presented in this Chamber for weeks has fallen apart just at step 2.

Step 3, the principal designates a staff liaison to support the GSA. The Official Opposition has presented a lot of commentary this evening about the need to make sure that principals would designate somebody in authority or of the staff within the school to be able to support a GSA. Again, you can see right here that by step 3 that would still continue under Bill 8.

The Official Opposition continues to struggle with the facts, Madam Chair. I know that my constituents find that frustrating, and I'm sure the constituents of Airdrie-East will probably find that frustrating as well. I know in my experience, when I visit the great constituency of Airdrie, that they do like the facts.

Step 4, the students – the students, Madam Chair – select a group name, not the government, not the teachers, not the Official Opposition; the students who are forming the gay-straight alliance select the name. Extremely different than what the Official Opposition continues to present in this place.

Step 5, if the principal cannot find a staff liaison, the principal informs both the board, so the school board, and the minister, the hon. the Education minister, and then the minister appoints a responsible adult. So it will still go as far as that if the school principal is unable to appoint a designated staff liaison for that GSA, the minister would then become responsible to have to make sure it happened. It has to happen, and she would have to deal with that. Again, step 5, right there, clear as day, and the Official Opposition continues to struggle with the facts and, instead, Madam Chair, spends their time when they're supposed to be in here speaking about issues that are relevant to the legislation, quite frankly, basically inventing things that have nothing to do with the legislation and things that are certainly not found within fact.

Step 6 is that as a student-led group the students, with support from their staff liaison, plan the next steps such as meeting dates, times, and activities. Madam Chair, the students – it's very important that we're clear on that – plan the next steps such as meeting dates, times, and activities.

So the students get to decide if there's a GSA. The principal is to accommodate that and he must get a staffperson that could help them accommodate that. The students choose the title or the name of what that group would look like. And then the students decide the next steps such as meeting dates, times, and activities.

Madam Chair, I know that you've been in the chair for much of the debate during this legislation. I would not want to speak of when you may or may not be in the House. You've heard the arguments that have been given by the Official Opposition, that contradict significantly – significantly – what they're saying with the reality that is actually inside this legislation.

Again, in six steps, Madam Chair – in six steps – a GSA is formed. Nowhere along the way do any of the things that the opposition have presented in this place take place. Their arguments are not found in facts.

I think, at its core, Madam Chair, that it comes down to, quite frankly, an inability to act as the Official Opposition in this place. What I've seen in the last few weeks, as the Official Opposition adjusts to their new role inside this Chamber, is a complete inability to be able to act as the Official Opposition on behalf of the people of Alberta, instead spending their time focusing on things that are just not factual, not spending their time on debating legislation, improving legislation, and working to do their constitutional role as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in this place. I think that's disappointing.

11:00

I know it's disappointing to many Albertans that I speak to. I spoke a few times this week about being back home this weekend. I know you made it home this weekend as well, Madam Chair. We had, of course, the Sundre rodeo, one of my favourite events of the year, where my community gets to come together. Often as I spoke to hundreds of people throughout the weekend, they brought up their concern that the NDP just could not rise to the ability of being the Official Opposition. I think you see it, time and time again, that they've lost – you know, they don't understand what their role is inside this Chamber.

But clearly, in my opinion, speaking as a former Leader of the Official Opposition inside this very Chamber, that is not what their role is. You served in the Official Opposition. You know, Madam Chair, that this is not the role of the Official Opposition, to come here and focus on facts that are not accurate, focus on spreading inaccurate facts and causing deep concern for a whole section of our society, namely LGBTQ youth, telling them that they will not have GSAs despite the fact that that's just not the reality of what this piece of legislation would do, when and if this House puts it into law.

At it's core, Madam Chair – we spoke about it often inside this Chamber – this comes down to the fact that the NDP are frustrated. They're angry. They're disappointed, and I respect that they're disappointed. It had to be hard on April 16 to be fired by the people of Alberta and to go into the Official Opposition benches as the only one-term government in the history of this province. It had to hurt. I respect that. But the reality is that they have to accept the judgment of the people of Alberta, stop focusing on being angry, stop focusing on misconceptions and misrepresenting facts inside this Chamber and instead focus on their role as the Official Opposition and help to do the important work of this Chamber to make strong legislation and make sure that the laws that we pass inside this place end up being the best for Albertans.

The Official Opposition: tonight, Madam Chair, as they go home shortly, I hope that they reflect on that and reflect on what their role is in the history of this place and what their responsibilities are to Albertans because what I have witnessed over the last few weeks is certainly not Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition doing her job. Now, I would not want to presume how Her Majesty feels about Her Loyal Opposition – that would be against the standing orders – but I've got to tell you that if I was sitting outside of this Chamber, not even being in this Chamber, I would be disappointed in the Official Opposition and questioning whether or not the Leader of the

Official Opposition and her caucus are up to the task, the important task that they've been given by the people of Alberta.

Hopefully, I just want to encourage them, through you, Madam Chair, to take some time to reflect on that and to try to rise to the responsibility and the privilege that they've been given. It's a privilege for us to have been given the opportunity to form Her Majesty's government. We recognize that. It is a privilege for the United Conservative Party to have been given this responsibility. We recognize that. We intend to work very, very hard and earn that privilege. But it's also a privilege to have been given the opportunity to form Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition inside this Chamber. I think the members should take that seriously.

As such, I want to give them an opportunity to do that before we continue with any more debate on Bill 8, and as such I will move to adjourn debate on Bill 8 and rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 8. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. First off, I'm rising pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2), the Brian Mason standing order, if I may, to advise this Assembly that there will be no morning sitting tomorrow, which is Thursday, June 27. I just want to make sure I have that right. In addition to that, there will be no morning sitting, pursuant to the same standing order, on Tuesday, July 2.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn the Legislative Assembly of Alberta until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:06 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, June 27, 2019

Day 21

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
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Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
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Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 27, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests or visitors joining us today. First and foremost, we have the hon. the former MLA and former member of Executive Council Dr. Lyle Oberg. Please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests as well joining us, guests of the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women in the galleries. If you are part of any of these groups, I encourage you to rise and we will greet you upon the introduction of all members.

Members from the Edmonton Heritage Festival Association, members from the Edmonton Intercultural Centre, members from the Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, members of the Alberta Somali Cultural Community Centre, the Balanbalis Downtown Islamic Association, and the Al Sabah mosque.

Also joining us are guests of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, public servants throughout the government of Alberta as well as Dr. Collins Ugochukwu, Dr. Marcus Edino, Dr. Bede Eke, Dr. Clement Agboma, Mr. Joseph Otitoju, Mr. Augustine Onwuegbuzie, and Ms Bolu Idowu. Welcome to everyone.

Just a couple more for us today: very close friends of the Member for Lesser Slave Lake. Welcome here today Emily and Tom Wanyandie. There are also members of the Minister of Advanced Education: Sanjeev Kad; Dalip Cheba; Lee, Voula, Helen, and Billy Martin; Brandon, Stephanie, Josiah, and Lincoln Stutheit; Joanne Birce; Lynn Bangs; Bernie Goruk; and Kim Caves. Last but not least, guest of the Member for Calgary-McCall, Umer Farooq. Please, members, welcome all of these folks to the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

### Canadian Multiculturalism Day

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2002 the government of Canada designated June 27 of each year as Canadian Multiculturalism Day. Canada was the first country to officially become a multicultural society in 1971, and Alberta adopted multicultural legislation in 1984 with the passage of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Act. Multiculturalism Day is a day to recognize

and celebrate the diverse cultures that Canadians have and to signify our unity in all aspects of life within Canadian culture.

Whether an Albertan is here by choice or by chance, we are a province built by people of many nationalities and faiths. We continue to welcome those who want to help write the next chapter of Alberta's story. People choose to come to Alberta because they know this is a place where hard work, enterprise, education, and skills are rewarded with economic opportunity and a warm welcome from our communities. Celebrating our differences helps us to understand each other and discourage hatred and violence. It is important to value the dignity of all Canadians no matter their race, ethnic group, or religion.

Although Multiculturalism Day is only on June 27, our province experiences many opportunities throughout the year to celebrate, such as heritage festivals, multicultural affairs, and many more festivities across the province. Alberta is proudly home to the world's largest multicultural festival, the UNESCO-designated Edmonton Heritage Festival, which showcases almost 100 different cultures and attracts half a million visitors every year. I encourage everyone to celebrate their culture and to go to a festival or celebration this year to learn about another culture in our diverse province.

Mr. Speaker, today I call on all Albertans to join me in celebrating the diverse roots of our province, which reach every country and every continent around the world, and all the people who continue to enrich it today. Thank you.

### Government Policies and Parliamentary Debate

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, we're starting to see an interesting pattern in this House. Asking about outing gay kids? The government's response: fear and smear. Asking about picking the pockets of hard-working Albertans? Fear and smear. Asking about fighting climate change? Fear and smear. Asking about the harmful practice of conversion therapy? Fear and smear. Asking about racism and intolerance? Fear and smear. Asking about stripping away the constitutional rights of thousands of Alberta's workers? Yup. You guessed it. All together now.

**Some Hon. Members:** Fear and smear.

**Member Irwin:** Now, Mr. Speaker, it sounds like a bad joke, reiterating the same tired old line in hopes to deflect from their disastrous first session as government. But you know what? This is no joke. In many cases the fear is very real. I'm fearful for that queer student who's worried that they'll be outed. I'm fearful for that person who's struggling with addiction but not sure where she can go for support. I'm fearful for that worker whose overtime will now be cut. I'm fearful for that kid who's being pressured by his community to reject his sexual identity. And you know what? I'm fearful that this government will continue to dismiss the real, legitimate concerns of hundreds of thousands of Albertans who are counting on us as their Official Opposition to stand up for their rights.

Fear and smear: one of the many baseless talking points of the same government that's limited debate in the House and saw many of their members literally plugging their ears. This is a troubling pattern, laced with arrogance and a complete disdain for the very people who elected members into this House. This government is saying: we don't actually need to listen to you.

On this side of the House we stand up for our constituents. We demand answers to valid questions and concerns, and we hold this government to account when they refuse to do their job. We won't stop fighting for issues that matter to Albertans, high-quality public health care, a strong education system with safe schools for all. We

will leave the arrogance at the door because Albertans deserve better.

Thank you.

### Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, June 27 is Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day. Also simply known as PTSD, it's been identified as a mental illness. Many people who suffer from PTSD often have vivid nightmares, flashbacks, or thoughts of the event that seem to come from nowhere. The trauma it causes is often unexpected, and many people say they felt powerless to stop or change the event. For millions of people around the world the most traumatic events of their lives have never ended.

One of the most at-risk groups for PTSD are our veterans and first responders. They're exposed to sights that most people rarely experience. They see people in great pain and suffering and even death and are themselves exposed to such a potential fate. I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to the paramedics, the firefighters, the military personnel, and police officers for everything they do day in and day out. While most would head in the opposite direction, these men and women are the ones who run towards the danger. These efforts can sometimes mean that they're left to deal with the haunting images, the sounds, the smells, that can stay with these responders for a lifetime.

A welding truck and a car suffer a head-on collision. That left unusual odours and bodies that, interestingly enough, weren't burned, but it had melted the skin over their faces. A SIDS call where a baby already had rigor mortis set in. A newlywed couple and their baby dead and freezing in a car on the highway in minus 40 temperatures. A woman beaten by her boyfriend, broken, bruised, and bloodied while her two young children clutched at her dress. These can be some of the experiences that stay with a responder for a lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, the best way to celebrate this day is to take the time to understand the experiences and the day-to-day realities of those around you who may be suffering from PTSD. With support people can recover from PTSD and the effects of trauma. Let's remind those with PTSD that they are never alone and that we are here to help them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

1:40

### Somali Independence Day

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On July 1 we celebrate Somalia's Independence Day. Fifty-nine years ago the present-day north and south Somalia, which were under British and Italian control respectively, merged to form one nation, the Republic of Somalia, thus ushering in a new chapter in the history of the country. Since then, this day has been observed as the Independence Day of Somalia. Somali Independence Day commemorates the Somali people's struggle for freedom and their victory. It celebrates the beginning of a new nation by merging to form one nation.

Somalia is a beautiful country located in the horn of east Africa. It consists mainly of plateaus, plains, highlands, and has Africa's longest coastline. Its official languages are Somali and Arabic. Somalia is roughly the same size as Alberta but has over 10 million more people than we do. Somalia's ties to the Arab world allowed it to be accepted into the Arab League in 1974. Somalia also belongs to the African Union, the organization of Islamic conference, and the United Nations. It supported antiapartheid groups and countries in Africa wanting to gain independence. The country has maintained a free-market economy despite its instability.

Somalis have a long history in Canada. While many came as refugees following the country's civil war in the early 1990s, a number of Somalis came to Canada in the 1960s and '70s as students. Here in Alberta we have Canada's third-largest Somali population, with over 20,000 Somali people living in Edmonton alone. We are happy to have a shared day to celebrate both our countries and encourage that all Albertans join in celebrating Somali Independence Day.

Mahadsanid.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Religious Freedom and Human Rights

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Religious freedom is a fundamental right. That is why Albertans have been shocked and disturbed by Quebec's recent law that bans turbans, hijabs, and other religious symbols in public spaces. It is particularly concerning for many in my riding as it's home to people of many different cultures and faiths, many of whom actually have witnessed or experienced discrimination and violence. History has shown time and again that discrimination can lead to unrest and often violence.

There are many Sikh families who fell victim to the 1984 genocide and are still looking for justice and closure. We also remember the 2002 riots in Gujarat, where Muslims were murdered only because they were Muslims. More recently we have seen a rise in attacks on religious places such as on a church in Sri Lanka on Easter Monday and on a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, and ongoing violations of human rights in Kashmir, which is threatening peace in the entire Southeast Asia.

Mr. Speaker, we know we are not immune to human rights violations of religious and ethnic communities even right here in Canada. In fact, this government has had candidates with connections to white supremacists, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim groups. We have a Premier who has advocated for the niqab ban, the barbaric cultural practices hotline, cut refugee health care, and brags about his two-decade long friendship with the Prime Minister of India. In fact, many in my riding would want this Premier to raise the 1984 Sikh genocide, the 2002 killings in Gujarat, and human rights violations in Kashmir with his friend the Prime Minister of India. There is no question that on this side of the House we fully condemn violence, and I urge this government to do that same.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

### Tom Wanyandie

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2001 I purchased a sawmill and timber quota near Grande Cache. I hired some young indigenous men: Lance, Lane, Doug, and Clint Wanyandie. We needed a couple more workers, and they suggested Emily, their mother, and Tom Wanyandie, their grandpa. I asked how old Tom was, and they said that he was in his 70s. I didn't know if Tom could handle the hard physical work, but he truly amazed me.

Ten years ago this month Tom and his son James were walking in the bush when suddenly a grizzly bear came out of nowhere. James tried to take a shot, but he missed, and the grizzly grabbed onto James' arm, shaking him like a rag doll, and threw him to the ground and pounced on him. Tom bravely charged the bear, yelling curse words in Cree and hitting the bear repeatedly with a walking stick. The bear reared up on its hind legs and turned towards Tom, mouth open, ready to attack. Tom could count every tooth in that crazed animal's mouth. He plunged his walking stick into the bear's mouth. The bear quickly flipped his head sideways, dislodging the stick. Then biting Tom's arm, he broke it and jumped on top of Tom

and took him to the ground. James, with a broken arm, still on the ground, poked at the bear with the barrel of his rifle. The grizzly jumped off Tom and gave James a vicious swat, knocking him about 10 feet, and pounced back on top of James. Tom got up, yelling and cursing with his fists in the air, heading straight for the grizzly bear. The grizzly looked at Tom and decided it was time to go. As Tom chased after the grizzly bear, yelling with his fists in the air, James had to say: Dad, please come back.

News headlines described Tom Wanyandie as Badass of the Week and a feisty senior who stuck it to a grizzly. Tom Wanyandie has always worked hard, stayed humble, and earned every dollar he ever made. Grandpa is 88 years old and truly an amazing inspiration to all of us.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Sounds like Tom would be a perfect fit for this job.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I'm pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 203, An Act to Protect Public Health Care, sponsored by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. This bill was referred to the committee on June 13, 2019. The committee's final report recommends that the bill, Bill 203, An Act to Protect Public Health Care, not proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 203.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the motion for concurrence in the report is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Are there any members who wish to speak to the motion for concurrence? Seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Given that members wish to speak to the motion for concurrence in the report, that consideration will take place on the next available Monday under the item of business motions for concurrence in committee reports on public bills other than government bills.

Prior to us getting to tablings today, I beg the indulgence of the House. Not to draw attention to their tardiness, but I did see the MPs Arnold Viersen and Garnett Genuis sneak into the Speaker's gallery just a few moments ago. I hope that you'll welcome them and encourage them to arrive on time next time.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has a tabling.

**Member Irwin:** Yes, I do. Thank you. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of an ad in an organization affiliated with the Finance minister related to conversion therapy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a document entitled Alberta Crown Prosecution Service Statement, wherein they indicate that an extraprovincial prosecutor will be responsible for advice to the police on the kamikaze scandal.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a tabling.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of correspondence I received from a constituent who is deeply troubled and concerned about the behaviour of the government on June 19 at 2325 hours, approximately the time that the orange earplugs were distributed in this House, and says that it doesn't reflect the values that she expects of a government.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a letter that I received indicating that the opposition and I "did solid work" regarding the earplug incident and shaming the government for their actions.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first one is copies of the what-we-heard document from the PDD review panel, who stopped in St. Paul, Fort McMurray, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Edmonton, and Calgary.

The second is a local article reminding us that when the candidates laid it all on the table at the UCP forum, the Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul member told Albertans: it's going to hurt.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the integrity of our justice system is paramount. Yesterday our leader asked why it's been a month and this government still hasn't followed through on its promise to appoint a special prosecutor to oversee the UCP leadership voting scandal. But the Attorney General said his department had, quote, reached out to folks in Ontario to handle legal advice. Well, now our understanding is that a special prosecutor has been appointed. To the minister: would you just be upfront for once on this disturbing matter and just tell us who this special prosecutor is?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has been very clear inside this Chamber that the process is independent from the government, that this government respects this, as does the minister. He referred the hon. members to the press release and to the appropriate officials within the department if they wanted to seek more information as well as to the RCMP. The question, then, becomes: why won't the members in the opposition take the time to actually do that process? To continue to come here day after day and question the Minister of Justice's integrity is ridiculous and fits in with the NDP's fear and smear tactics.

**Ms Hoffman:** I ask for the name of the prosecutor; the Government House Leader says "fear and smear". It's actually facts that we're asking for, facts that are very reasonable to be shared with the public.

Yesterday the Premier stood in this House and started to describe the RCMP's recent interview with the Minister of Infrastructure about the UCP voting fraud scandal. It is very concerning given that we know there were fraudulent votes cast for the Premier, who ultimately won the leadership contest in question. To the Minister of Infrastructure: what exactly did you tell the Premier about the RCMP interview, and do you think it was appropriate given that the voting fraud scandal ultimately may have led to the Premier becoming that himself?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, at the request of the RCMP I met with them briefly on June 23, and they assured me that I'm not the subject of any investigation.

**Ms Hoffman:** My question was about what the minister said to the Premier in the Premier's office about the investigation.

The investigation into the UCP voter fraud has been going on for months, Mr. Speaker. Information continues to trickle out in the media in dribs and drabs, and every time it does, this government looks less credible. It's time to be transparent and public. Will all members of this House who have been interviewed by the RCMP about the UCP voter fraud please stand up?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, to be clear, I have not been interviewed by the RCMP. I think that's probably important given the context of the question from the hon. member.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and our government and our party have been clear that we have instructed and want everybody to fully co-operate with the RCMP investigation. We respect the independence of the RCMP. We suggest the members do the same. We let the RCMP do their work, and in the meantime, inside this Chamber, we're focused on defending Albertans on jobs, the economy, and pipelines, and that's what we'll continue to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a question.

#### Oil Transportation by Rail

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about pipelines. Four times in the past two weeks I have asked the Minister of Energy to tell Albertans how many barrels of oil she has moved using private rail companies. She has dodged the question every time. Today she put out a statement that had very little detail. Certainly, there was no number of barrels being moved, so to the minister, for the last time: can you please state exactly how many barrels you are moving by private rail companies?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, we have taken the next step today in shifting the NDP crude-by-rail deal to the private sector by engaging CIBC Capital Markets to help oversee the divestment of this program to the private sector. We have always said that moving crude by rail is something that the private sector is in the best position to do. The private sector is doing it now, and they will continue to do so in the future. In fact, the private sector has increased their capacity and moved 25,000 barrels a day additional on crude by rail.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Starting Tuesday our government would be moving tens of thousands of barrels per day thanks to the rail contract we signed. Ripping up our contracts puts many jobs at risk, but this minister doesn't seem to care, and the Premier's federal Conservative friends in Ottawa botched Northern Gateway and Energy East and all the jobs that would have come with those projects. To the minister: can you tell us how many jobs would be lost by this latest failure to act on the contracts?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, that's a great, great question. Their crude by rail would have moved an additional 10,000 barrels of oil a day. I just said and told this House that the private sector has already moved an additional 25,000 barrels on their own. Every single barrel of oil that would have moved through the NDP crude-by-rail program would have done so at a loss of money, and that

would be paid for by the Alberta taxpayer. No responsible government would impose that upon the Alberta taxpayers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you. I was asking about the jobs that would have come with the contracts that we entered into.

I think that the Energy minister claims to be a long-time advocate for the oil industry, and she's supposed to be taking steps to move our products to market, but she has continuously dodged the questions, so I think that zero barrels have been moved so far. To the minister: if you don't want to do your job, can you at least ask somebody else to do it for you?

**Mrs. Savage:** Look, Mr. Speaker, the NDP's disastrous crude-by-rail program wasn't even going to start losing money for taxpayers until July 1, so, of course, even under their own crude-by-rail program there wouldn't have been any moved. The private sector is already moving 25,000 barrels a day additional on their own. Look, the NDP wouldn't even know how to run a lemonade stand. They would run a lemonade stand and think, using some of the numbers from crude by rail, that they could set up the lemonade stand at \$3.70, sell the lemonade for \$2 . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. [interjections]

**Ms Pancholi:** Is that Edmonton . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order! I'm sure you're all very excited to hear the question from the hon. member.

#### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools and Bill 8

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm hoping that the MLAs from across the way will also be smiling, or maybe they were smiling, when last night 32 UCP MLAs stood in this House and voted against restoring a clause that would allow for the immediate establishment of GSAs when a student requests it. It was a single word with a massive meaning to our LGBTQ youth. We know that prior to Bill 24 requests to establish GSAs were being stalled and student needs were being pushed aside. The Minister of Education provided no reason for why she voted this down. To the minister. Here's your chance to explain yourself. Why would you object to the immediate establishment of GSAs if you are truly supportive of LGBTQ . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I categorically disagree with what was just said. We have been perfectly clear that we oppose mandatory notification of any student. Also, once requested by a student, creating a GSA, a QSA, or any other inclusion group will absolutely be allowed, and there is a process in place. Our government will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for LGBTQ students in the country. We've said it over and over again. They don't hear it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More tone-deaf key messages. I don't know why the Minister of Education would stand up here and say that she disagrees with facts, which is that she voted against an amendment . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Pancholi:** ... which was a compassionate thing. So here's the thing. Kids are being put at risk by the hateful Bill 8. We know that, they know that, and the minister stands in this House and provides nothing of substance. Perhaps I'll have to ask her colleagues. To the Minister of Children's Services. Your job is to protect kids. How could you possibly vote against immediately establishing GSAs when kids ask for them? I really hope you answer and don't rely on the House leader, a man who fired a woman who complained about being sexually harassed. You are a strong, intelligent woman. Please let us hear your voice on this issue.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The NDP need to stop with their scare tactics and stop playing politics with our children. I am a strong woman, and I believe in protecting all children, and I will do that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe she is a strong woman who has continued to fail to explain why she would be opposed to the amendment to allow immediate establishment of GSAs. We brought forward a simple amendment that would signal to the LGBTQ community that this government actually cares, but they have shown that they don't. The minister of labour had a big Wednesday. He officially cut wages for youth workers. Then he sat in this House last night and voted to cut their rights.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Pancholi:** To the minister of labour. Please explain to the young constituents in your Calgary-Varsity riding why you don't feel they're worth as much as others and explain why if they're gay, you don't think they should have the utmost protections they're asking for. I don't need the House leader, by the way; we're coming for you.

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted.

The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that question. I can't even thank you for that question. That was unheard of. The NDP are continuing with their fear and smear. This is totally even below them. I apologize to any student in that gallery because I feel that we should be the examples, and we are not being good examples. We're being ... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will have order.

**Ms Hoffman:** The Minister of Education absolutely should apologize for failing to stand up for kids last night, when we brought forward a very reasonable amendment. Who else failed to? The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** He also voted against immediately establishing GSAs last night. It's on the record.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** As the minister responsible for preparing our students for their futures – this fixation seems to be on bringing in controversial Chicago principles on postsecondary campuses. To the Minister of Advanced Education. I guess our K to 12 schools won't be safe for LGBTQ youth because of your government. Is it your goal to make sure that we keep bullying and abuse going once they get to university as well?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is just so ridiculous. Our government has been so clear on our support of GSAs and of the LGBTQ community. We're going to continue to do that. We're going to continue to stand and support them and not listen to the fear and smear coming from the other side of the aisle.

**Ms Hoffman:** Last night, after his flock of loyal MLAs made it clear that they really don't want to support GSAs, the Government House Leader stood and said that what we were saying wasn't factual. Well, I guess the House leader is now an expert on what protecting kids is, so let's give him a chance. I really don't think he should be turning to his key messages. I think he should stand in this House and tell people the truth, not blah, blah, blah. To the House leader: stand in this House and explain why you voted against the immediacy clause, please.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, here comes the Official Opposition with their fear and smear and their just ridiculous, absolute practices. It's bizarre to see what the opposition continues to do inside this place. Here are the facts. We'll have the strongest statutory protections for GSAs. We've been clear about that. Our government stands by that. We made that clear again last night inside the House. That's the reality. Unfortunately, the opposition continues to want to fearmonger and tell Albertans things that just are not factual. It's disappointing.

**Ms Hoffman:** The Government House Leader could give Donald Trump a lesson in spreading misinformation, Mr. Speaker. The Government House Leader knows full right that hundreds of youth have protested, have written letters, have said: bring the word "immediate" back. The Government House Leader and all of his caucus continue to vote down these kids and make it more difficult for them to form GSAs. Enough of the talking points, enough of blaming us for standing up for kids. Government should be standing up for kids. Why won't you? Why did you vote against the immediate clause, the word "immediate"? Just stand up and tell us: why is it so wrong for it to be "immediate"?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again we've got Team Angry, particularly that member. Well, actually, I'd go as far as to say her leader probably the most. But I know that member is frustrated that Albertans fired her on April 16. I understand that party is frustrated with the judgment of Albertans, but that does not mean that they should take this approach as the Official Opposition. What you're seeing here right now is an absolute embarrassment to the institution. It may be at this point the worst Official Opposition in this Chamber's history. It's ridiculous. We will not be lectured or bullied by these people. We will continue to stand up for our constituents inside this Assembly.

**Ms Sweet:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Well, we have a bevy of points of order from the government, that I have now acknowledged, and a point of order from the Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Now we will hear from the Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Condominium Governance Regulations

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I became the MLA for Calgary-Glenmore, in April, I've been increasingly alarmed at the growing number of condo stakeholders, including owners, management companies, and boards of directors, in my constituency expressing concern that some of the regulations set to come into force on July 1, this Monday, represent a major increase in red tape and, therefore, costs. As examples, I've heard concerns about everything from hard-copy-only documentation to changes around voting rights. To the minister: what is the status of the regulations, and what is being done to engage condo owners, boards, and other impacted stakeholders?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member has noted, there were a number of regulations set to come into effect on July 1. Since the election we have heard serious concerns from stakeholders. They don't feel that these concerns were addressed by the previous government. Considering this, we have taken decisive action by pressing pause on those regulations so that we can review them to reduce red tape. Let me quote to you what we've heard from Willis Law, specialists in condominium law, in response to this action. "I applaud the government for listening to these concerns of over-regulation and impracticality on certain regulations and taking action to correct."

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that these changes are quite broad in scope and given that the feedback I've been hearing has come from multiple sources, not solely owners or boards or managers, can the Minister of Service Alberta please tell us who will benefit the most by pausing the governance regulations? Will it be owners, condo boards, condo corporations, or condo managers?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell the member that removing red tape and administrative burdens benefits everyone. It benefits owners, boards, managers, and corporations. Condo owners benefit because they can avoid higher condo fees, that would have accompanied some of these regulations, and boards, managers, and corporations can do their jobs more efficiently. This is a common-sense action that will benefit everyone who lives in, operates, governs, or manages a condominium. Don Brown of Core Real Estate Group has said: "These regulations... represent additional burdens on boards and management companies, which end up increasing the costs for owners. We are happy to see the government..."

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that when the order in council was issued by the previous government last December, there were two coming-into-force provisions and given that the majority of regulations were set to come into force on July 1, this Monday, of this year and given that a number of regulations related to insurance and reserve fund surveys and who's qualified to conduct them were set to come into force on January 1, 2020, to the minister: will the regulations set to come into force on January 1, 2020, be delayed as well?

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you to the member for the question. We are pressing pause only on the regulations that were set to come into effect on Monday in order to review them. As a result, all of the pending regulations, including insurance requirements, will come into force on January 1, 2020. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the president of the Canadian Condominium Institute has said that in their education efforts they have "found that many people are still unaware and unprepared for the proposed changes. We are happy to support the government's pause on this." Again, this will enable us to look at the regulations with fresh eyes in preparation for all pending regulations to come into effect January 1, 2020.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Scare tactics: that's what the Minister of Education repeated over and over yesterday when asked about real cuts coming to Alberta classrooms. The Calgary board of education is cutting hundreds of teachers. Edmonton public schools is losing millions of dollars dedicated to students with complex needs. These are real situations being detailed by superintendents and school trustees. Minister, the only thing that I see that is scary is your lack of leadership and the consequences we have for Alberta students. Why won't you show an ounce of leadership and fund education properly?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we talk lots about the fear and smear unfortunately coming from the opposition. We see it in Team Angry, but also what you're seeing right now is that hon. member posturing for her future leadership race, I suspect, that's going on here inside this Chamber. As the NDP go through their internal problems, as they go through maybe their self-reflection or whatever is going on to determine their future, I suggest that they keep that internally and not bring it into this Chamber. We're here to work for the people of Alberta. We're here to return jobs to this province. We're here to get pipelines built and to get our economy going. Clearly, the opposition is just here to play games.

**Ms Hoffman:** Every single member of our caucus is united in standing up for the people of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. We won't be intimidated to stop asking about the ludicrous work that's being done by the government in terms of funding education.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora will get to the question as there are no preambles after question 4.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the reminder, Mr. Speaker.

Ludicrous: given that that's how the minister described our proof that Normandeau school in her own backyard is being forced to crowd-source to keep its school nutrition program going and given that it's ludicrous to tell 33,000 students to go hungry, why won't the minister come clean and tell us...

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We absolutely look forward to the program, the nutrition program – we know the value that it has, how it impacts our schools – but we also have a procedure in place for funding. Information comes at certain times. We've communicated this to school boards. In fact, I've been in touch with many school boards, including Calgary public, Calgary Catholic, and I could go on and on and on. They've told me that the level of collaboration that we've been able to have, that my department and I have had, is refreshing and unprecedented.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the minister said, and I quote, that it's standard procedure – and she essentially said the same today – to communicate budget details to schools after they come to the Legislature but given that that will be months into the school year this time, Mr. Speaker, and given that her so-called standard procedure will see Battle River school division cut all of their special education teachers, to the minister. Hundreds of teachers lost, students going hungry, and boards cutting key educational supports for students with severe disabilities: is this what the minister calls standard procedure? I call it cruel.

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government has committed to funding education and supports for our students. We are committed to funding enrolment growth. We are committed to building schools. We are committed to providing the resources and keeping teachers in front of students. Our schools know this, and I know they're looking forward to a wonderful summer.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

### PDD Program Applications

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People are waiting for decisions about the status of their PDD funding, and they're hearing from staff that funding for PDD is now frozen and no new funding requests are being approved. Day after day I hear the Minister of Community and Social Services repeat empty talking points. Albertans with disabilities and their families deserve straight answers in plain language. Here's a very simple question: are new PDD applications for funding being frozen? Yes or no? Might as well be honest. We will find out.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, let me say very clearly in plain language that no operational decisions have been made in regard to the PDD program. What we have in place is very much the program that we inherited from the previous government, and certainly no changes have been made at this time.

**Ms Renaud:** That's not what I asked.

Given that people with disabilities who do not receive funding approvals within a reasonable time frame face increased risk of homelessness, abuse, and neglect and given that right now service providers and families are being told that there is no new funding for PDD, will this minister assure Albertans with disabilities and their families that eligible applications will be processed and funded without delay? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will reiterate that we have not made any changes to the PDD program at this time, and I'm working with stakeholders and the disability community quite diligently, actually, to determine what their needs and concerns are so that we can improve the existing program. No changes have been made yet, but the changes that will be made will be effective and efficient.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. That is not what we're asking.

Given that the community-led PDD review launched by our government is currently in limbo under this UCP government and

given that I've asked questions previously and received no answer from this minister, let me try again. To the same minister: will you come clean about the PDD review and provide an exact date of when the panel's report will be shared with the public, or have you fired the PDD panel and not told us yet?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, it actually pains me that the previous government waited four years to initiate this PDD review panel. They could have done it at any time. To do a proper job, to make sure that it's done efficiently and with compassion takes time, and I will take that time to make sure that this review report is looked at thoroughly and also to demonstrate respect to the panel as well for their great work. That report will be released, and I will let everyone know when it's released.

### Alberta Senators Federal Bills C-48 and C-69

**Ms Glasgo:** Mr. Speaker, my dad is one of the people who builds the pipelines that take our resources to market. I'm so proud of the work that men and women like him do every single day. Unfortunately, that same mindset isn't shared by the Alberta Senators that voted to support bills C-48 and C-69, that aim to shut down Alberta's energy sector. It is clear that independent Liberal appointees like Patti LaBoucane-Benson, Grant Mitchell, and Paula Simons are completely out of touch with everyday Albertans. To the Minister of Justice: what is being done to ensure that Alberta Senators are effective and represent the interests of everyday Albertans?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of the work of our elected Senators here in Alberta. Senator Doug Black, Senator Scott Tannas: they led the charge in Ottawa fighting against Bill C-48 and Bill C-69. It's a great honour to, hopefully, you know, with the passage in this Assembly of this act, get Alberta Senate elections back here in Alberta and have the will of the Alberta people heard in Ottawa.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that the NDP failed Albertans by not renewing the Senatorial Selection Act in 2017 and given that an election and a strong mandate from the people of Alberta embolden those who are in the Senate with the legitimacy of being elected and given that those who were previously elected as Senators and appointed by Prime Minister Harper – namely, Doug Black and Scott Tannas – have been champions for our energy sector, can the Minister of Justice update this House as to what our government is doing to ensure that further Senate appointments from Alberta have been recommended by the people of Alberta, not Justin Trudeau and his anti-energy views?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we've held four Senate elections in Alberta. Half of the people that were nominated by this province were appointed to the Senate. These are some of the most effective parliamentarians that we've had here in our history. While the opposition rolled over with their best friend, Justin Trudeau, we're going to make sure we send people to Ottawa that have the best interests of Albertans at heart.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. minister. Given that bills C-69 and C-48, coupled with the imposition of a federal carbon tax, have stoked tensions across the country, fuelled

by the Prime Minister's failure to recognize these policies for what they are, an assault on this province's oil and gas sector and the humble, hard-working people that work within it, and given that this bill threatens the very national unity of Canada, can the government inform the House as to what is being done to challenge these harmful bills and stand up for Alberta?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, just last week we launched the constitutional reference to challenge the carbon tax. The Premier has been clear: we're going to use every legal tool possible to make sure we fight against Bill C-48 and Bill C-69. Remember, too, about Bill C-48: two votes. If two votes had gone the other way, we could have defeated Bill C-48. I would propose that if elected Senators were there in Ottawa, we would have defeated Bill C-48.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has a question.

### Justice Ministry Funding

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government's refusal to provide budget certainty is creating chaos in education. I'm hoping the same won't happen in the justice system. Interim supply at the end of November represents more than two-thirds of the Justice budget. The figures the ministry is using signal over \$100 million in cuts. Over half a billion of the \$1.4 billion budget last year went to policing and jails. Judges decide who goes to jail, so you can't cut that. Can the minister reassure the public and confirm that there will be no cuts to public security?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, as we have clearly articulated, that was not a budget. We're going to be looking forward to bringing forward a detailed budget this fall.

As we articulated in our campaign platform, we're going to be providing our law enforcement officials with the resources that they need. Just remember here the previous record of the last government: seven out of 10 cities that had the highest increase in crime intensity were here in Alberta. We're going to make sure we reverse this trend.

**Ms Ganley:** But no commitment to police funding.

Given that of roughly \$600 million remaining after excluding police and jails, \$100 million in cuts would represent a significant portion and given that the Jordan decision puts significant pressure on the courts and prosecutors, pressure that requires additional resources each year just to keep up, to the minister. You claim to be tough on crime. Laying off court clerks would result in matters not going to trial. Can you commit that you will not cut the clerks or prosecutors?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times I've said in this House our campaign commitment to hire 50 new prosecutors.

Let's talk about the record of the previous government. These galleries were full of Albertans concerned about safety in their community. Not a day goes by that I don't get a phone call or a meeting with somebody that's worried about what's happening in rural Alberta. The previous government let rural Albertans down. We're going to make sure that we deliver on our campaign commitments, to be there for Albertans so that all Albertans – all Albertans – can feel safe in their communities.

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister's colleagues voted repeatedly against funding for the RCMP and for prosecutors to support rural crime-fighting efforts and given that all the minister has committed to do so far is study the issue and that he appears to now be sliding in over a hundred million dollars in cuts and given that we know that the RCMP needs to hire constantly just to maintain staffing levels in rural areas, to the minister: if you can't commit to Albertans to maintain police funding, can you at least promise to commit to the RCMP so that they don't have to quit hiring as a result of your uncertainty?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'll gladly rise all day to talk about the failed justice of the past government. Let's keep doing this. The fact of the matter is that crime continues to go up in rural communities. We're going to be there for these people. We're going to make sure our police officers, our prosecutors have the resources that they need. We're going to be providing \$50 million to ALERT. We're going to be making sure we expand drug treatment courts. We're going to be making sure we have the priorities of Albertans at heart. We're going to deliver on our campaign promises.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

### Condominium Governance Regulations (continued)

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government was proud to bring in new condominium rules to protect Alberta consumers. We put caps on fees, enhanced transparency for condominium boards, and we introduced protections for first-time homebuyers. Today this government has announced that they're putting a pause on the work we did. This is concerning to me and my constituents. To the Minister of Service Alberta: why would you ever pause rules designed to protect condo owners?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, glad to have a follow-up on this very important topic. We place a great deal of value on input from condominium stakeholders, and these stakeholders have told us that the new condo regulations, scheduled to come into effect this summer, will cause an unnecessary administrative burden. We take these concerns very seriously. We have said that we want to ensure that Alberta is the best place to live, work, and raise a family. We are serious about that. Part of that means reducing red tape where we can and making sure that we are not adding unnecessary burdens to condominium owners, managers, associations. This is what our government is focused on delivering.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, it seems we're seeing a pattern of weakened consumer protections under this minister.

Given that 1 in 5 Albertans live in a condo and given that we know that condo owners endured outrageous fees and had no recourse and given that this government has a long track record of putting their wealthy donors first – and I fear they may be doing it here again – to the minister: can you confirm that your only goal here is to actually enhance consumer protections, not like, say, the promises you've made to your used-car dealer donors?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, I'm having trouble with this one. The member opposite is really just trying to create problems where we're trying to bring about solutions. All we are doing with this is pressing pause on these regulations so that we can review them with fresh eyes and incorporate the feedback we have received from the stakeholders in this community. Albertans elected us to take action. We are committed to delivering on their best interests. I've already heard from stakeholders that this change is good news and that the



regulations that they were facing were impractical and overregulated and that they were going to increase costs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I've heard stories, too. Given that we've heard heartbreaking stories of Albertans losing their condo deposits and stories of special assessments bankrupting families and given that these victims had nowhere to turn prior to the actions taken by our NDP government, to the minister: will you please commit to involving condo owners in whatever study you're conducting, and will you be open and transparent on who else is being consulted?

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as a former apartment condo owner and also a former director on my local condo board, I can assure the member opposite that I understand the serious nature of these issues. I can tell you that we have talked to stakeholders, which includes condo owners. We are going to take the time to get this right, and we are going to include the feedback from stakeholders. I can't tell you enough how much these stakeholders have told us already in the last two months that the previous government got this wrong. We will get it right. We are standing up for Albertans' interests, and we will not apologize for that.

#### Support for Persons with Disabilities

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, approximately 444,000 Albertans are reported to be living with a disability. While not all disabled persons are unable to work, statistics show that individuals with disabilities tend to have lower incomes and higher rates of unemployment than people without disabilities. All Albertans deserve to live with dignity and support themselves in the manner that they see fit. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: what is our government doing to ensure supports for all Albertans with disabilities?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, as a government we are deeply committed to providing quality services to vulnerable Albertans, including those with disabilities. We have strong platform commitments around the PDD program, employment opportunities, and enhancing supports for children with disabilities. Currently we have not made any changes to any of the programs. We are very much in listening mode. I have been working in co-ordination with stakeholders, students, families, and other members of the disability community to better understand their concerns and needs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Only 11,000 of these 440,000 disabled Albertans qualify for the persons with developmental disabilities program, and of these 11,000, only 16 per cent are actually employed. Given that often businesses are reluctant to take on the responsibility of employing a disabled person and given that there is often a job shortage for individuals with disabilities looking for work, to the minister: what is our government doing to help these individuals find gainful employment?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in the workforce, and we will change that. We want all Albertans to be able to participate in society and the economy. That is why, as part of our job-creation plan, we will provide \$5 million per year to local

partner organizations like Abilities at Work and the Rotary employment partnership program to help create these job opportunities. We're also committed to making the government of Alberta a leader in hiring people with disabilities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that response. Given that the early years of a child's life are the most important for a child's development and given that certain disabilities have a direct impact on learning capabilities and given that children in Alberta deserve the best shot at life, can the Minister of Community and Social Services please outline what our government is doing for children with disabilities?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, all children deserve to be protected, nurtured, and kept safe. Our government believes that prevention should be a guiding policy principle in social services. That is why our government plans to restore the wellness resiliency partnership program to help children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder succeed in school. We will also be updating the standards of special education to reflect modern technologies and practices. All children deserve a quality, inclusive education regardless of ability.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

#### Minimum Wage for Youth

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a recent opinion piece to the *Morinville News* the labour minister wrote, "With the stats showing that unemployment for those under 18 for Q1 of 2019 is almost triple the adult unemployment rate, we can see that the previous government's policy has failed." What he fails to mention is that the youth unemployment rate has been triple the adult unemployment rate for several decades. He used a statistic many Albertans may not be familiar with to try and justify his assault on the wages of hard-working Alberta students. To the minister: when will you stop hiding behind partial statistics?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member across the aisle and also to the party: what they failed to realize is the harm that their policies had on job creators and on the youth that they are trying to protect. What they failed to realize is that by increasing by nearly 50 per cent the minimum wage during the course of one of the worst economic downturns in Alberta's history, they actually created greater damage on employment and reduced opportunities for youth.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister is still pretending that the ratio of youth unemployment to general unemployment shifted due to the increased minimum wage, when it didn't, and given that Saskatchewan has almost exactly the same ratio, just as in Alberta, roughly around three times, and didn't have an increase to their minimum wage, to the minister: when can the *Morinville News* expect your correction, and when can Alberta students expect the \$2 an hour you lifted from them?

2:30

**Mr. Copping:** I struggle with the comments made by the hon. member on the other side mainly because there's a failure to recognize that their drive to \$15 per hour in the face of one of the worst economic downturns had an impact. The Conference Board

of Canada indicated that a 10 per cent – 10 per cent – increase in the minimum wage would result in a 1 to 3 per cent increase in unemployment, and they did nearly a 50 per cent increase. Mr. Speaker, 21 per cent of our youth aren't working. We need to get them back working, and this minimum wage job creation for youth will do that.

Thank you.

**Ms Gray:** Given that the minister is quoting studies where we can see what happened in Alberta and what happened to Saskatchewan – both saw an increase in youth unemployment not related to the increase in minimum wage – and given that squeezing working students out of a couple of bucks an hour won't alter the state of Alberta's economy but will cause great pain to the youth who rely on that money, will the minister finally admit that the UCP labour policy is not about what's good for Alberta's economy but, rather, only what's good for the UCP's friends and donors?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, the student job-creation wage is about creating jobs for Alberta's youth. Not only were there studies done while the government was actually increasing its minimum wage urging them not to do so in the context, but after the fact we had studies done by the Calgary Chamber of commerce, also by other business organizations, where businesses in Calgary and across Alberta indicated that because of the changes that they made in terms of the increase in minimum wages and changes to general holiday pay, there were layoffs and a reduction in jobs, and there was also a reduction in hours. This hurt youth the most, and we're going to correct that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is rising to ask a question.

### School Infrastructure Capital Projects

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Father Michael Mireau school in my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie is desperately in need of new portables in time for the start of classes in September. A letter from Edmonton Catholic schools on June 13 indicates that the modular units are ready to go, but the school board can't proceed with installation without this minister. To the Minister of Education: are you aware of this situation, and can you please confirm here and now that you will approve these modulars?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. With the interim supply just passing, we are in the process of going through with all of the capital projects, including the modular projects that were approved.

Thank you.

**Member Loyola:** Given that portables have become a long-time reality in Alberta after decades of Tory governments that were unwilling to build schools and given that Edmonton Catholic was due to prepare the site for the modulars at Father Michael Mireau this week and given that time is tight to get the modulars in place, will the minister commit to looking into this matter immediately after question period, and will she ensure the modular installations by the end of the day tomorrow?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I will absolutely – my door has been open. I've been receiving

numerous calls to meet on various capital issues. I continue to meet, and I welcome the information to be sent to me.

Thank you.

**Member Loyola:** Given that our government built or renovated 240 schools in just a four-year term and given that this minister has committed to building more schools in the future and given that the Minister of Infrastructure has said that he's going to use the capital plan created by our government, to the Minister of Infrastructure: will you commit here and now that every single school project across this province that was approved by our government will go forward and do so on the same timelines that we had planned?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well that we're going through a budget process. As I've said before, we are looking at every project. We told them that we will honour their capital plan, but we'll still prioritize the projects. They also have left us in a ditch with a projected \$100 billion debt, so we have to handle that, too. We're trying to balance and trying to deliver the key infrastructure projects for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has a question.

### Infrastructure Project Prioritization

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities need transparency from the provincial government. Without transparency from the government it becomes impossible for municipalities to properly plan limited infrastructure resources for the many needs each and every municipality faces. To the Minister of Infrastructure: when will the government uphold its campaign promises to provide transparency on prioritization criteria, establish predictable funding levels, and ensure adequate maintenance of existing infrastructure assets?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was in our government's election campaign commitment platform to provide transparency on prioritization criteria for infrastructure projects and to establish predictable funding levels and to ensure adequate maintenance of existing assets, and this will be contained in the proposed Alberta infrastructure act. My staff in my department have started the work to ensure the bill is drafted, and I hope to table the bill in the spring of 2020.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the previous government's utter contempt for transparency of the infrastructure priorities list and given that this absolute lack of transparency drives away potential P3 partnerships which could increase the quality of Alberta infrastructure and decrease the cost and given that without predictability and funding it is difficult, bordering on impossible, for municipalities to plan for growth and other challenges, how does the government intend to uphold its promises of transparency?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question and for his advocacy. It is true that the previous government derided P3s. For example, the Calgary cancer centre was supposed to be a P3, but the NDP chose the most expensive design and did not source out the building operations and maintenance. I know we could have saved millions of dollars on that

project. The Alberta infrastructure act will bring more transparency on how these kinds of decisions will be made in the future.

**Mr. Turton:** Mr. Speaker, given the previous government's obscuring of the infrastructure priorities and the criteria for choosing them and given that previous administrations have interfered in infrastructure priorities in an attempt to buy the votes of Albertans with their own tax dollars, how will this minister ensure accountability and transparency on the prioritization criteria to Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Panda:** Thanks again, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member. As you know, the NDP government attempted to buy votes, like the Member for Lethbridge-West trying to build backcountry huts in the Castle provincial park while the schools needed to be built and the roads needed to be paved. I want Albertans to know two things. One, I'll be publishing an annual infrastructure report to provide detailed information on the progress being made to meet the commitments of this government. There will also be a 20-year strategic capital plan that looks forward to see . . .

### Seniors' Housing

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, seniors are the most valued members of any community. They have served their families, friends, and co-workers admirably and have built Alberta into what it is today. Over the past four years, though, the NDP failed Alberta's seniors. Wait times for care centres increased while their plans to build new care facilities were 10 to 15 times more expensive than previous government estimates. Minister, seniors in my riding want to know: what is this government doing to reduce wait times for more seniors' housing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the hon. member. We fully support seniors aging in their own communities through funding to build, operate, and maintain housing for low- to moderate-income seniors. Allowing for more creative community options such as personal care homes for seniors who need more care that can't be provided at home but less than a supportive living facility is an innovative solution for many of our seniors as the demand for seniors' housing continues to grow.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many seniors' homes in my constituency of Calgary-Currie are out-of-date facilities that can't keep up with the needs of the residents and given that a United Conservative Party campaign promise was to build more affordable housing for seniors who need it, Minister: can you please let my constituents know what the government is doing to provide quality housing for seniors in Calgary-Currie and across Alberta?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seniors have established Alberta's values of hard work, responsibility, and community, and they deserve our support. We are currently working with our housing partners to evaluate current housing facilities and prioritize future projects to best serve our seniors.

**Mr. Milliken:** Given that while Alberta was under the NDP's watch the cost to the government for seniors' housing skyrocketed without having any measurable improvement on the quality of the few residences they provided and given that as Alberta's population ages more and more seniors will need more housing, to the minister: how will this UCP government reduce the cost per bed while providing the highest quality care for our seniors?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP had four years to address this issue, yet there are more than 4,800 seniors' households on the waiting list. The cost of a bed under the previous government was 10 to 15 times more than it should have been. While the NDP has failed Albertans and seniors, our government will work with private and civic society partners to provide more affordable housing units in a fiscally responsible way.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'll ask you to exit quickly in just a brief moment. I invite you to travel home safely, those of you who have other commitments, and please enjoy a very, very happy Canada Day. I invite all members to join us here at the Assembly. There are programs for the public between the hours of 12 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Hon. members, we are at points of order. The first point of order was raised by the hon. Minister of Transportation and Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe you received a note expressing my intention to change my point of order to a question of privilege. I reluctantly do this in regard to the threatening comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud during question period. I would appreciate it if you would allow me until the next sitting day to prepare my arguments.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Minister of Transportation has provided oral notice for a Standing Order 15, which will be debated on Tuesday.

We are still at points of order. The Government House Leader also rose on a number of points of order throughout the afternoon. For any points of order of similar topics, if you can address them in one, I think it would be reasonable.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Of course, Mr. Speaker. I completely agree. I have two different topics. The bulk of the points of order are on one issue and then one separate if that works for you. I suspect it works for the Opposition House Leader as well.

### Point of Order

#### Reflections on a Decision of the Assembly

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I am rising first under Standing Order 23 which says:

- A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member . . .
  - (c) persists in needless repetition or raises matters that have been decided during the current session.

I would also point out a couple of other subsections of Standing Order 23:

- (d) refers at length to debates of the current session . . .

and then, lastly,

- (f) debates any previous vote of the Assembly unless it is that Member's intention to move that it be rescinded.

Throughout question period today, Mr. Speaker, the opposition referred repeatedly to a vote that took place in the Assembly last

night on an amendment, at some length. I think you could see throughout today, during question period, that there's no doubt that that was referenced repeatedly. Sadly, it was also done in such a way that certainly could be perceived as threatening to the hon. members of the government. With that said, I think that'll be addressed on Tuesday.

The reality is – we'll see how you feel about it – I think, that it's inappropriate for that to continue inside this place and that members should withdraw those comments, apologize for those comments, and return to proper decorum inside question period.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition deputy House leader.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just clarifying the point that the Government House Leader, I believe, is referring to the votes that occurred last night in his point of order. Just for point of clarity, it is public record. I mean, all of our votes are recorded. It was a matter that did occur last night.

I think that, just to remind the government side and the ministers, they are responsible as, you know, members of Executive Council to be part of this legislation and to engage in the debate around the legislation. A vote occurred last night, and it is obviously one of the ones that we've been significantly debating over the last few weeks – significantly – and the member, of course, wanted to ensure that and provide an opportunity for Executive Council to explain why they chose to vote the way that they did. Again, it's public record, so that would not, in my opinion, be a matter that is really a point of order or a matter of dispute given that it's on the record.

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you for the interventions.

I would highlight, just for those of you following along at home, that the Government House Leader's point of order, I believe, is specifically referring to Standing Order 23(f). "Debates any previous vote of the Assembly unless it is that Member's intention to move that it be rescinded" is how the standing order is worded in our Standing Orders.

The Government House Leader also made some reference to prior debates that have taken place inside the Assembly in the same session. While I am not nearly as sympathetic to his position on the discussion of prior debate in a previous session, I think that there may be some validity to that.

Having said that, with respect to specifically 23(f), as Speaker Wanner also ruled with reference to the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 617, when it reflects on specifically commenting on how individuals have voted in the Assembly and therefore reflecting on a previous vote of the Assembly, in Speaker Wanner's words: "'Members may not speak against or reflect upon any decision of the House.' In other words, an allegation or question concerning how a member has voted is [in fact] offside." That is May 9, 2017, on page 924.

As such, I agree with the ruling that Speaker Wanner made on that day, and while I won't ask for an apology or a withdrawal today, I will strongly encourage members of the Official Opposition, when asking their questions, to not refer specifically to the voting record of any member of the Assembly as that would very clearly be in violation of Standing Order 23(f).

We are continuing with points of order. The hon. Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Supplementary Questions

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** My last one, Mr. Speaker. It's in regard to the question that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud had today. In

the interest of time I'll just refer to two previous Speaker rulings. Speaker Kowalski ruled on May 12, 2004:

Now, there's also a tradition we follow here that if an hon. member is recognized, they raise a first question and then they're allowed two supplementals. It has always been understood that supplementals must have something to do with the first question.

In addition, a second ruling I would refer you to, Mr. Speaker. On March 30, 1998, Speaker Kowalski as well ruled: "There is a consistent rule that there should be some flow with the questions and they should be in a similar type of subject." I find those, actually, in a ruling that was also made by Speaker Wanner on the same type of topic on December 6, 2016.

2:50

I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but if you listen to the hon. member's questions, she began talking about children's services and education issues on her original question and her first supplemental and then made a drastic switch well over to minimum wage, going to another minister. While I have no concern with asking multiple questions of different ministers in the Chamber, I would submit to you that it was a drastic change in topic and fits within that ruling.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the hon. Government House Leader's remarks. I don't know if the Official Opposition House Leader would like to speak, but I am also prepared to rule.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just really quickly, I am sure that you have the benefit of the Blues now. I do believe that all three questions were related to the bill last night and to the previous ruling that you just made, so I won't go into that piece, but all three questions were related to Bill 8 as of last night. Although directed to different ministers, it was related to that part.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to both House leaders for your comments.

I unfortunately don't have the benefit of the Blues for this particular question, and my memory on a Thursday afternoon perhaps isn't as sharp as it might be. I think it's possible that a case could be made that the questions that were being asked were about the overall health and well-being of young people. As such, it's possible that they were in order. Without the benefit of the Blues I am unable to rule, but I think that we need to offer all members of the Assembly certain levels of latitude when asking questions. It is the opposition's opportunity to hold the government to account, and I would say that I'll likely be hesitant to make further comment on this particular situation after reviewing the Blues, but if I feel there's a need, I'll do so on Tuesday.

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), making allegations against another member, imputing false or unavowed motives to another member, using insulting language of a nature likely to cause disorder. I'm specifically speaking to the word "bullying" as the example that the Government House Leader used in one of his responses to the Official Opposition. However, I would like to speak to a broader context around the tone that I feel the government is using when responding to the opposition with their "fear and smear" language, and then specifically the bullying component.

I think if you would refer to *Beauchesne's* section 3, page 4 – I'll just read it back to you really quickly. In

The whole concept of the parliamentary Question Period depends on the tradition that the Cabinet is willing to submit its conduct of public affairs to the scrutiny of the Opposition on a regular basis. More tentative are such traditional features as respect for the rights of the minority, which precludes a Government from using to excess the [excessive] powers that it has to limit debate or to proceed in what the public and the Opposition might interpret as unorthodox ways.

I appreciate that this new government is not a big fan of question period or being held to account for, you know, some of the decisions that this Executive Council has decided to make around legislation and how that may be impacting Albertans and specifically a minority group within Alberta, but our position and our responsibility as the Official Opposition in this House is to hold this government to account. The language around we're "bullying" them, the language around using "fear and smear" in this House I deem to be trying, deliberately, to impute false motives of the Official Opposition. I also believe that it is used deliberately to create disorder in this House on a regular basis by the Executive Council. I also believe that it has allegations to members of this Official Opposition about what our motives are.

I would just like to ask the government and this Executive Council to maybe just be respectful of the parliamentary process and the role of the Official Opposition, reference *Beauchesne's* if you would like, and maybe take a step back and . . . [interjection] I appreciate that one of the members of the Executive Council is actually heckling me right now about this while I am trying to speak to decorum in the House, something that I believe their leader has been very clear is important to them.

So again I would ask that there be some level of respect and that we may bring down the allegations of us bullying this Executive Council and maybe just answering the questions as a government should.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, for this opposition to try to attempt to lecture anybody in decorum is an absolute joke. Anybody who's seen what's taken place in this Assembly knows that.

With that said, I don't have the benefit of the Blues specifically for the comment the hon. member refers to. But, again, the context that I recall is making it clear that this government will not be bullied by the opposition. It is disappointing to have seen what has taken place over the last few weeks inside this Chamber as over and over the opposition has bullied particularly our female members. Completely inappropriate. Now, they might disagree that they're doing that. I would submit to you, then, I guess, that that's a matter of debate and a disagreement on the facts. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that that's certainly how this government feels. I think anybody watching how that opposition has operated inside this House agrees. In fact, I know they do because I've heard from constituents often on how appalled they are about their behaviour on that issue. I'll be happy to start tabling those comments if that would help with the situation.

In addition to fear and smear, while I understand that the opposition doesn't like to have that pointed out, that is certainly how we feel their tactics are, not only in the House but as a party. Again, a disagreement as to the facts and a matter of debate. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, as far as this Chamber is concerned, it's something that this government thinks is taking place. We will point out the opposition's behaviour to the people of Alberta despite the fact that today they went quite out of their way to try to be able to stop the government from pointing out how they're behaving. That is our

right to answer that question and to point out the concerns that we have with what is being presented by the opposition.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I do in fact have the benefit of the Blues, and I am pleased to rise to speak to this important point of order. The statement made by the Government House Leader is: "It's ridiculous. We will not be lectured or bullied by these people. We will continue to stand up for our constituents inside this Assembly."

I have some significant concern around the use of the word "bullying." In fact, I was having this conversation with members of my team earlier today. Inside this Chamber I have heard members of the government use the term, that the opposition is bullying certain members, and I, in fact, on numerous occasions have heard in questioning from the Official Opposition that this government is bullying other individuals.

As hon. members of this Assembly I understand that we are here battling for ideas, but when we start to make accusations about one member bullying another, I believe that it actually does a significant disservice to the major impact that bullying has on our young people. We need to be very cautious with both how we engage in decorum in this Assembly as well as what we communicate to others. When we make accusations about each other, bullying inside this Chamber, I believe that it minimizes the significant bullying that in fact takes place online and in schools and of our young people.

So I call upon all members to raise the level of decorum. Let's think very cautiously, both members of the opposition, to be clear, and members of the government, when we use the term "bullying," that we're not minimizing the impact that it's having on youth, children, teens in what I would say is the real world and not just here in this Chamber. I encourage all members to govern themselves accordingly as we move forward together to work to raise the level of decorum inside this Chamber.

We are at Ordres du jour.

3:00

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, under 13(2) I rise to . . .

**The Speaker:** We are at Orders of the Day, ordres du jour.

The Government House Leader would like to speak under 13(2)?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** No. The Deputy Government House Leader would like to speak under 13(2).

**Mrs. Savage:** I would like to speak under 13(2).

**The Speaker:** Sure.

#### Point of Clarification

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, respectfully, I feel your remarks don't understand the effect that some on our side of the House have felt in feeling bullied during question period, and I want it on the record that I think it's real. I think the effects are real, and I believe and feel that perhaps your comments have minimized that impact to the women on this side of the House.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate your comments. Here's what I would say. I think that you've proven my point. We use this accusation: members of the opposition are doing certain things, and the government is bullying. The government responds with: the opposition is bullying us. We all need to raise our level of decorum. [interjection] The Government House Leader may disagree, but making accusations about bullying people, on both sides of the Chamber – I'm speaking to the opposition, and I'm speaking to the government, responding to the fact that they have, then, felt bullied.

We're talking about a very, very significant issue that widely impacts predominantly young people in our province, and as adults we need to reflect much better on those young people and on each other and govern ourselves accordingly. The opposition should not be accusing the government of bullying Albertans or bullying others, and the government shouldn't be making accusations of the opposition bullying them. We are here for a battle of ideas, not to be focused on bullying each other inside this Chamber.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 13 Alberta Senate Election Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act.

This bill is based on historic Senate election law here in Alberta that expired in 2016. The law was not renewed by the NDP in 2016, and pursuant to its sunset clause it expired. We've held four Senate elections here in this province, starting in 1989. The last one was in 2012.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Through that process Alberta has nominated 10 nominees for recommendation for appointment to the Senate, five of whom were appointed to represent us in the Senate in Ottawa. Those include Stan Waters, Bert Brown, Betty Unger, Doug Black, and Scott Tannas.

I have personal knowledge, Mr. Speaker, of the Senate election campaign from 2012. I happened to run the campaign for Senator Doug Black in that process, and it was one of the most enriching political campaigns that I've ever been involved in. Now, Senator Black toured across this great province, meeting with hundreds and hundreds of Albertans in communities ranging from Grande Prairie to Sundre down to Lethbridge. It was an amazing experience for a Senator who wants to represent all Albertans to go through, the process of earning the trust of Alberta voters. In that election over a million people in Alberta cast ballots for Senators here in this great province. Senator Black received 428,000 votes. That is a democratic mandate. That is important.

This bill reflects the belief that Senators that have that mandate, Senators that go through that process, that earn the trust of voters, have the democratic authority then to go to Ottawa and represent them in our Parliament.

We currently have six Senators in Alberta pursuant to our Constitution, Mr. Speaker. Last week, with the passage of Bill C-48, a prejudicial attack on Alberta, and Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines act, we saw it play out in our Parliament why it is so important to have elected Senators from here in Alberta. The two Senators that were leading the charge against this attack on Alberta's prosperity were elected Senator Doug Black and elected Senator Scott Tannas. From the government side we just thank them so much for fighting so hard for the future of this province.

Conversely, unelected, unaccountable Senators that were appointed to the Senate from Alberta did not all vote in Alberta's best interest, Mr. Speaker. They did not vote in Alberta's best interest. All we needed to stop Bill C-48 was to turn two votes. Now, if people had gone through an election and if the six Senators representing Alberta were elected Senators, I would contend that the voting results on Bill C-48 would have been very different. We

probably would have seen that bill defeated. That would have been in Alberta's best interest.

That's why it is so important that we set the example for this country on the democratization of our Senate. When Albertans have had a say as to who represents them best, they've always chosen individuals of the highest calibre. The five Senators elected by Albertans that were appointed to the Senate have shown that they've effectively stood up for Alberta's economy, jobs, and families. When the federal government ignores our concerns, elected Senators have been our voice of reason there, fighting for Albertans. Alberta has always taken a leadership role in Confederation. We have led the discussion around Senate reform and provincial rights. Our elected Senators have set an example for other provinces of the benefits of having elected Senators.

It also sends a message to Ottawa and Justin Trudeau, who refused to appoint Senator-in-waiting Mike Shaikh, who received a democratic mandate from Albertans. I was so proud of the fact that our Premier yesterday said that if this bill passes, Mr. Speaker, he would appoint Mike Shaikh, who has the democratic mandate of Albertans, as a Senate nominee for our great province. We would highly encourage the Prime Minister to listen to the democratic mandate of Albertans and appoint Mike Shaikh when an opportunity is there for an appointment to Alberta on the Senate piece.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in 2012 over 1.3 million Albertans voted for who they believe should represent them in the Senate. We need to make sure that the Senate is accountable to the people. This is an important bill to get that done. This is the best way to make sure that our voice is heard in Ottawa to fight against other bills like C-48 and C-69, that are so damaging to our province.

Again, it is my honour and privilege to introduce this bill. We are showing Albertans once again that they have their say. This was a key election promise of ours to Albertans, Mr. Speaker. Promise made, promise kept.

I now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 12. I thought we were speaking to a different bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** We are currently debating in committee Bill 12, Royalty Guarantee Act.

**Member Irwin:** Okay. So we are on Bill 12?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes.

**Member Irwin:** Okay. Thank you. We know that Alberta's energy resources are owned by the people of Alberta, and our job is to steward those resources to provide the right return for Albertans and to not squander them for tomorrow. This is exactly why our

government appointed an expert panel in 2015 to review royalties and ensure that we're competitive with other jurisdictions. That work is something that we should all be quite proud of. Based on that panel's recommendations, we were able to create a modernized royalty framework that is much stronger, that was much more efficient and more competitive.

3:10

But, as we're seeing, the UCP is taking a different approach. Instead of taking real action, we see that this Premier is misleading Albertans with yet another empty promise. My concern and the concern of my colleagues is that this bill does not create the certainty that our industry needs. In fact, it's full of loopholes that allow the government to change royalty rates whenever they want. We call upon this government and this Premier to stop with these empty promises, these gimmicks, and take real action.

We know that it's important that we get our oil moving. By cancelling our oil-by-rail deal, our Premier is risking jobs. You know, I've talked about this in the House before. My own father actually worked in oil and gas for decades, for nearly 40 years. I saw how hard he worked and how much he had to sacrifice to support our family, so I worry about folks like him who are employed in the oil and gas industry who are working so hard to support our province's economy.

Now, I want to talk a little bit more about the modernized framework that we introduced. I was not, obviously, a member of this government when the framework was put forward, but I saw how hard our government, the cabinet, and our former Premier worked on this issue. In August 2015 – that was pretty early into their mandate as well, I should point out – our government appointed the panel, including Calgary-based energy economist Peter Tertzakian; the mayor of Beaverlodge, Leona Hanson; the president and vice-chancellor of the University of Winnipeg, Annette Trimbee; and, of course, the chair, who was Dave Mowat.

The panel took a lot of time and put in a lot of effort to ensure that they were hearing from everybody, not just from industry experts but from labour groups, from environmental groups, from a whole number of academics working in a range of fields, from business leaders, community leaders, thousands of other Albertans who participated in person or online, and from workers as well, which is crucial. Their consultations with Albertans included more than 7,000 online responses.

What did that panel find? Well, I talked a little bit about it, but I want to share a little bit more detail. Overall, royalty rates are comparable to other jurisdictions. They recognized that there are issues with crude oil, liquids, natural gas. They recommended that all changes to that new framework should apply to new wells in 2017, that existing royalties should remain in effect for 10 years on any wells drilled before 2017, and that more transparency and more disclosure is needed about calculations and royalties per project.

What did our government do? Well, we took the advice of this expert panel and accepted that royalty review panel's recommendation. As a result, we released a modernized royalty framework in January 2017 to try to, as the panel urged, encourage industry to innovate and to reduce costs, to make those same companies competitive, and, of course, most importantly, encourage more investment in Alberta.

I'm not going to go on a lot about this one, but I wanted to get on the record here, because I haven't yet spoken to Bill 12, that we're concerned about the lack of certainty in this bill. We're concerned about the loopholes that, as I said, will allow government to change royalty rates.

What I'm going to do is that I'm going to move that we adjourn debate on this bill and move forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 2

### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has jumped up to speak to this bill.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. While I was quite happy to speak to Bill 12, I'd also love to speak to Bill 2. All right. Look, 13 bucks an hour, that's a heck of a lot more than zero bucks an hour, and that's the option here: that was our Premier speaking after Bill 2, the open for business act, was tabled in the Legislature. I want to rise today and speak to this bill and speak to the amendment as well to propose changing the name of this Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, to make it be called the employment standards and labour relations statutes amendment act, 2019.

I want to just talk a little bit more about the words of our Premier and why I'm quite concerned about his approach to this bill. He says that we've got 30,000 young Albertans here out of work, that we want to get them their first job experience, that we're talking about part-time, teenagers, who are typically in high school. He goes on to say that this will reduce costs for businesses and allow job creators to hire more young people who are just starting out in the workforce, that they're working typically 20 hours a week or less.

Now, these statements fail to recognize that there are many young people in Alberta who are actually working more than that. I can pull in some stats from a number of places, but I've got the Alberta Federation of Labour here, who estimates that there are approximately 35,609 workers in Alberta age 15 to 17 that will be negatively impacted by lowering their wages. They point out that this minimum wage cut will make life harder for young workers who are saving for school or contributing to their household's income.

We know that this government is saying that they're trying to address these higher unemployment rates, which, our Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods pointed out earlier, is simply not true. This is a discriminatory policy that tells young Albertans that the work they do is worth less than other Albertans'. We know that there are young people who work more than one job, that there are young people who work day in and day out to support their families. It's not about working to buy fun extras but actually to put food on their family's table, to help pay the bills. Certainly, we know there are some young people out there who are fortunate enough to just be able to work because they want to, to have extra pocket money, but that's not the reality for all young people.

That's not the reality of many of my constituents who shared with me that they're concerned about what this minimum wage cut will mean for them and for their families. For these young people a \$2-an-hour difference is huge. It's a big deal. It's a significant amount. We need to consider these young people as we move forward. I want to echo the words of 16-year-old Karissa Goulding, who works at a Fort Saskatchewan restaurant. She said, quite simply, that these changes don't seem ethical. She said: I think it's crazy for me to be paid less when I work just as hard as my adult colleagues.

The concept that the Premier put forward, that young people don't have to pay bills, is dead wrong. Karissa, like many young Albertans, is supporting her family. We see this a lot. There are statistics that show that, particularly in newcomer families, young people are trying to help support their families, their parents, or perhaps just one parent.

She says: the youth wage cut represents the government telling me that they know more about my situation than I do, that my work is not valued as much as my adult colleagues. Pretty strong, pretty insightful words from a 16-year-old. She said that her boss told her that her wages will be cut when the change comes into effect, which is as of yesterday.

What I found most troubling as a former teacher is that she said that as a result, she's going to have to work more hours, which will eat into her study time. So there you go, an example of a student who's quite worried about this change. It's not only cutting into the money that she worked so hard to earn; it's potentially damaging to her academic career. She needs to work more hours to make up for those lost wages, and in turn her studies are potentially compromised. Of course, the Premier says that this will, quote, get young people back to work. You're right. It'll get some people back to work, young people like Karissa, who now need to work even more hours just to make ends meet.

3:20

As I said, I was a teacher. I was a high school teacher. I worked a lot with young people in that age range, 16 years old, just like Karissa. In my role as a teacher I often had to sit with students to urge them to stay in school. I was an academic counsellor, and I was a vice-principal, so I took it seriously to really keep kids in school. I mean, a lot of those kids out in rural Alberta, where I taught, were quite drawn to some pretty high-paying jobs or at least jobs that would lead to high-paying jobs in the future, particularly, at that time, in oil and gas, other industries. As I said, I had to sit with those students to really urge them to stay in school. You've got your whole life to earn money in a full-time sort of role. Many of them wanted to get out there, and it was tempting to drop out. I worry that with this move to cut wages, kids like those ones that I used to teach will be further pushed to drop out of school.

I'm concerned about young people. I'm concerned about the students, like the ones I used to teach and the ones that are out there right now, who are now, now that this wage cut has come into effect, being impacted. Their families are being impacted in many cases.

It's not just about the students. As I said, I wanted to hammer that point home because it's an issue that's – you know, the livelihood of students is something that I take quite seriously. But it's also about workers generally. We've seen from this government a continued attack on workers.

Joel French, executive director of Public Interest Alberta, noted:

These changes will create a perverse incentive for employers to maximize profits by hiring youth instead of other workers because they can be paid less for doing the same work . . . [and it's] clear discrimination against a [group] of workers who are not even able to express their opinion at the ballot box.

As I've said before, I mean, I was a social studies teacher, so in that role – central to the Alberta social studies curriculum program of studies, kindergarten to grade 12, is the importance of active, engaged citizenship. My role as a teacher was to encourage my students to voice their concerns when they felt that they were being discriminated against. If I were a teacher in a school right now and I was hearing from my students their concerns about this, I'd sure be encouraging them to write letters, to send off e-mails. I know, at least on our side of the House, we've certainly been CCed on some of those e-mails.

Now, Joel French goes on to say that – you know what? – this is about more than just the impact on youth workers. It's about the impact on adult workers as well. He pulls in data, which I think is an important approach to take, an evidence-based approach, and says:

We can easily predict that this will cause a drop in employment for vulnerable groups of adult low wage earners, who tend to be young adults, women, and people of colour . . .

groups that we know, here in Alberta,

. . . are already struggling in our economy, and the last thing they need is an attack on their employment.

This is a deep concern.

We know that there are stats that raise concern from a global context, too. Our party, the NDP: we take this seriously. We will stand in this House and tell you that the youth minimum wage is discriminatory. Don't just take our word for it; take the words of young people who have gone on the record to say the very same thing. As information from the Alberta Federation of Labour outlines, a youth minimum wage "violates international standards on fair pay." Youth workers cannot be universally judged to have lower productivity than older workers, especially given the types of jobs that we typically find youth workers in. The International Labour Organization, the ILO, and the international community have embraced the principle, a principle that we should all embrace, of equal remuneration for work of equal value, equal pay for equal work.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Sounds like socialism.

**Member Irwin:** Right?

We'd like to take a jurisdictional approach. It's important that we look at what's been done Canada-wide and internationally as well. All Canadian provinces embraced this standard in the 1980s and the 1990s. Countries such as New Zealand have moved to a single minimum wage because they saw that it was discriminatory. They saw that, in fact, the very people it was intending to help were being hurt by the policy. By implementing a tiered minimum wage, as our province has sadly done, Alberta is arguably in contravention of international labour standards and is pushing even lower wages on some of the people who are already the lowest wage workers in our society.

I'd like to just close by reiterating my concern about this bill, my concern about the unintended consequences of some of the policies inherent in it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any other hon. members?

I will also just say – I didn't say this at the outset of the comments from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood – that we are still on amendment A2. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore rising to speak, please.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you recognizing me so I get the opportunity to speak, as you mentioned, specifically to the amendment to Bill 2 to change the name of the bill. Quite frankly, when I look at this bill, it's highly incorrect. We are trying to say that we are going to make Alberta open for business. We're just going to force it. It's just going to happen. That would mean to suggest that Alberta was closed for business to begin with. So I'd like to point out just a couple of little details that maybe members opposite might have missed.

Over the last few years we've seen a company called Seven Generations Energy building a natural gas processing facility to the tune of \$1.2 billion, Mr. Chair. We've seen a company, which, of course, I'm very aware of in my free time, with a little bit of the gaming that I get to do – but I was very impressed when the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview as the former minister of economic development and trade brought in the digital media tax credit, which is credited for bringing the company Improbable to move their head office to Edmonton. We've seen Amazon set up a



warehouse here in Alberta. That warehouse is a \$120 million investment into Alberta.

CN Rail had decided to make a significant investment in its network to expand and strengthen all of its infrastructure. That's about a \$370 million commitment by that company. Something tells me that someone like CN wouldn't make that kind of investment in our province if they didn't think it was open for business already. Pembina Pipeline Corporation is building a petrochemical plant. That is a \$4.5 billion investment here in Alberta. Another quick one I could mention is Inter Pipeline building another petrochemical facility to the tune of \$2.1 billion.

Just quickly, that is roughly over \$8.2 billion of investment here in Alberta over the last three years. If Alberta wasn't open for business already, I doubt that any of these companies would have made these types of investments here in the province of Alberta.

**Mr. Schmidt:** They're making it opener for business.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I don't know if it's possible to make it opener. Is that even a word?

I think that to aptly rename this the employment standards and labour relations statutes amendment act, 2019, is more appropriate. When we look at some of the things that are being done throughout Bill 2, we've seen some regulations that, of course, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood had mentioned earlier, around lowering the youth minimum wage.

It's amazing. I came from a graduation earlier this morning. Getting the opportunity to hang out with our young emerging leaders here in the province, it's incredible how much they are paying attention and how much they know what's going on. I think I recall this story from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, speaking to some students that she happened to recognize in a mall that she was at at that time, and they said: you know, we're very confused about this youth minimum wage. They were working. If there were five people on shift at that time and two of them were 17 years old and in school, they would get \$2 an hour less. The thing that they were able to very quickly realize, apparently, was that if it only requires five people on staff during that shift, it magically, because two of them are making \$2 an hour less, does not mean that a sixth person is required to do the work.

Of course, I have heard the same thing from some of my business owners throughout Edmonton-Decore. It's, like: look, you know, maybe I kind of, sort of, possibly appreciate the government's attempt to save me some money, but because they're going to make \$2 an hour less is not going to change my hiring practices.

3:30

Again, when I'm looking at Bill 2, calling it An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, how does taking away hard-working Albertans' overtime make Alberta open for business? I think that is highly, highly incorrect – highly incorrect – because when people have money in their pocket, they spend it in the local economy. Now, I mean, maybe some of my colleagues on this side of the House might be able to help me out. I know that in Edmonton-Decore a lot of my residents aren't taking this money and squirrelling it away in a Cayman Islands account for some rainy-day investment or something like that. They're spending it right in Edmonton-Decore, not only on the things that they need but also on the things that they want. When they have that money, businesses will flourish.

I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that things in Edmonton-Decore are hopping. I was joking both back in the 2015 election and even in the 2019 election that I found it very, very hard to try to find a campaign office because the great news was that business was

booming in Edmonton-Decore. There was no room. Of course, I guess, you know, it was a bit of a struggle because there was no room. But you know what? That is a fantastic problem, I think, to have.

When we consider this amendment to change the name, it's because of language like that in this bill, Bill 2. Trying to call it An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business is highly, highly incorrect. Taking away, potentially, people's ability to get holiday pay: you know, you start adding all kinds of criteria in order for them to qualify for that.

See, Mr. Chair, the unfortunate part is that, in my experience from the labour movement, we have unfortunately seen some bad actors out there that will very, very quickly take advantage of people on this. You know, I know that the other side has talked about how: well, for the people that are under union contracts, this doesn't affect them. That is slightly correct because, unlike the government not honouring bargaining contracts, thankfully there are companies out there that are honouring these things. But once that expires, potentially all bets are off, and that is what's called a concession, and that's going to essentially be imposed on hard-working Albertans, all under the name of "I can't compete," because we've created the conditions to allow our bad actors to exploit people, and our good employers, who are really trying so hard to be good employers – to create a safe working environment, to value their employees – get put at a disadvantage because of that. I don't see at all how that makes Alberta open for business.

Like I said, even just in that one word – people have probably heard me speak a little bit ad nauseam around this, around language. Language means everything. You change one little word, and it completely alters a sentence. So to say that you're going to make Alberta open for business, that means you're going to try to force things to happen. A lot of times what we see happen when things get forced is unintended consequences. Now, this bill is already filled with all kinds of consequences that are intended, which is a problem in itself, so I think that by accepting this amendment, calling it what it is, that we are changing the employment standards and labour relations statutes, it more accurately reflects what is going on in Bill 2 right now.

This title, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, does not reflect that. I think that when Albertans see that kind of a title, they're easily confused. "Oh, well, they're going to make it open for business; that must sound pretty good." And then they start to read the details. Their overtime is getting taken away, and they're being put at a disadvantage in terms of their stat holiday pay. Again, like I said – here's my union background kicking in again – I have seen employers that will do this. Why are we creating conditions to allow the bad actors to circumvent these types of things?

I guess I could probably even tie that back to red tape, you know. Some of this red tape was put in to prevent those bad actors from taking advantage of hard-working Albertans. If you are going to take your time away from your family, your friends, or just your plain old free time, you deserve a reward for doing that, and that reward was time and a half. Overtime is overtime. It doesn't matter whether you're getting paid out for it or whether you're banking it. It is still overtime.

I find this title very, very confusing for people. I have had a few people ask me why that's happening. As I've mentioned, I've even had a couple of friends that have called me up that don't share my political views. Of course, I can't share, really, the contents of that conversation, Mr. Chair, because it would be highly, highly unparliamentary, but they were very, very disappointed with this bill, and I'm going to tell the members opposite: they voted for you. They voted for you. They are not happy. They even mentioned, you know: "How is taking away my overtime making Alberta open for

business? It sounds like it's making conditions to pick my pocket." That is probably why we ended up calling it the pick-your-pockets bill.

I think that if we are to take the time to rename this, this will bring at least a little bit more clarity to what is, really, a bad bill and allow Albertans to see it for what it really is. It's not making Alberta open for business. Alberta was already open for business. I've only mentioned a very short list, like I said, to the tune of \$8.2 billion worth of investment. I'm sure that there are a whole lot more that I could go on with, but, you know, I certainly don't want to take up too much time, because I know that there are other speakers that want to get up and speak to this amendment.

I would really recommend that all members of this House accept this amendment. This is a correct amendment. It more clearly reflects the language that is going on in this bill. As I said, language is everything. We need to be clear with Albertans about what's going on. We shouldn't be fooling them with fancy titles. I certainly know that there are members opposite that were part of the 29th Legislature that used to get quite up in arms about fancy titles, yet here we are – I think I've said this before, Mr. Chair – second verse, same as the first. It seems a little bit rich that a government complains about what was going on, how it should have been done properly, that we should have gone down this path, that this is how we should have handled it, and then when they get the opportunity to show Albertans how the right way to do it is, they end up just kind of repeating sort of the same things that they were apparently up in arms about. I find that just a little bit confusing, just like the title of this bill.

I'd like to see that changed, and I would highly recommend that members in this House accept this amendment so that we can more accurately reflect to Albertans what this bill is really doing.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, those looking to speak to amendment A2? I see the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar rising.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment to Bill 2. First of all, I want to give credit where credit is due. I've been keenly watching the debate around Bill 11, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Varsity for his thoughtful engagement in that debate. In my opinion, I think he has distinguished himself from his peers on the front bench as someone who has constructively engaged in debate and has been at least willing to hear some of the things that we on this side of the House have been able to say. I appreciate that. Having sat on both sides of the House, it's not easy to take the things that the members opposite say seriously and engage constructively, and I really appreciate the sincere efforts that he made on Bill 11 with respect to that effort.

3:40

Knowing that he's capable of doing that, I would really appreciate some constructive engagement on this bill as well. It's been a stark contrast between the points that he's made with respect to Bill 11 and the points that he's made with respect to Bill 2. With Bill 11, he's talked at length, very thoughtfully, about what the intent of the bill was. He's admitted its shortcomings and has at least given us a plan for moving forward and given all of us in this House, I think, some confidence that he is taking the issue of fair registration seriously and that he's intending to do more. I've been disappointed, Mr. Chair, though, that when it comes to the content of Bill 2, he hasn't been as engaged. He has relied on the talking points that I suspect have probably come from the Premier's office and were not generated out of his own office. He's been less willing to engage, and I'm a little bit disappointed to see that. I would hope

that he would take the opportunity today in Committee of the Whole or at some point during the Committee of the Whole to thoughtfully engage because I do have some questions.

When you look at the bill, the bill is all about reducing wages for workers. It reduces wages for minimum wage workers. It reduces wages for people who are on banked overtime agreements that are forced upon them by their employers. It reduces wages by making it harder to form a union in your workplace, and it also reduces wages by removing eligibility for some general holiday pay. There are four different ways that this bill reduces wages for workers, Mr. Chair. Under the title of the bill we're told that that's going to make Alberta open for business, that all of a sudden because we're taking these four measures to lower workers' wages, Alberta will have a sudden influx of business investment.

Now, Mr. Chair, that flies in the face of all of the facts that we see on the ground. For a long time Alberta has had, on average, the highest wages in the country. That is one of the benefits of living in Alberta, that we have, on average, the highest wages in the country. We as New Democrats, we as social democrats believe that a successful economy is an economy where everyone has the opportunity to go to school, get a job, be able to work and provide for your family, and retire in dignity. People are more likely to be able to do that in Alberta than in any other part of the country because we've had the highest wages. We've also had the highest business investment of any province in the country. Just on the face of it, just on those two elements alone, we've had the highest wages and the highest business investment. Now, I'm not saying that one causes the other. I'm certainly not saying that high wages create an attractive business environment although there are certainly some economists who do believe that higher wages inject more money into the local economy. Certainly, nobody can argue that higher wages dissuade investment in Alberta because it hasn't been the case.

In fact, if you look at the unemployment situation right now in every other jurisdiction in the country except for our brothers and sisters in the Maritimes, who continue to struggle with high unemployment rates, we see that every other jurisdiction in the country has lower unemployment than Alberta right now even though they don't pay their students a lower minimum wage, with the exception of Ontario, which, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has repeatedly pointed out, has similar youth unemployment rates to our own.

In every other jurisdiction where somebody is eligible to bank overtime hours, they're eligible to bank them at the overtime rate, except for Alberta. That hasn't had a negative impact on employment or business investment. In every other jurisdiction, in the province people get the same general holiday pay structure that this bill is taking away, and it's easier to form a union.

I'm hoping that the Member for Calgary-Varsity can summon his powers of reasoning and skilful argument, which he's clearly demonstrated over this past week and over the six weeks we've sat here in the Legislature, and tell me what the case is. Where is the evidence that lowering workers' wages in these ways will actually spur investment and create jobs? I don't see any evidence. Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, this bill, at least when it comes to UCP talking points, has been a fact-free zone. I would encourage the Member for Calgary-Varsity to bring some more evidence to bear in supporting his arguments because we know that he's capable of doing that.

You know, I talked about some of the cases that people have made for higher wages actually improving the economic conditions in the province. I want to refer to an opinion article that was written in the *Edmonton Journal* on March 30, 2019, by Katy Ingraham, who is a business owner in the great constituency of Edmonton-

Gold Bar. She runs a local restaurant called Cartago, and she is a member of a collection of businesses that have banded together, formed [alberta15.ca](http://alberta15.ca). People of Alberta can go to [alberta15.ca](http://alberta15.ca) and find a list of people who are minimum wage employers who have promised to not adopt the student minimum wage.

She quite effectively lays out the economic case for keeping minimum wages higher in this article, and I want to quote some of it.

Better income is linked to a variety of benefits, including decreased employee turnover, fewer absences due to illness, and increased loyalty and productivity from employees. Paying a fair wage demonstrates that work and skill is valued. And workers with more money have more money to spend.

That's not to downplay the fact that businesses have had to adapt . . .

She acknowledges in this article that it's been a challenging time in Alberta over the last few years. She said:

Despite having the hottest economy in the country for years, in the decade prior,

Alberta also had Canada's lowest wages.

For most businesses, minimum wage won't make the difference between opening and closing . . . But it will make those workers more vulnerable to coercion and harassment.

Paying youth . . . won't suddenly create a ton of new jobs. But it will create an incentive to ditch an 18-year-old for a newer model . . .

Despite low oil prices these past five years, Alberta [had been] inching closer to fairness . . . Our child poverty rate is decreasing. [She] can't help but feel that higher wages . . . had a positive impact.

I've had a chance to discuss that article with Katy in person. I know that it took a significant amount of bravery on her part to write that article because she was under a significant amount of pressure from many of her colleagues in the restaurant industry to not voice her opinion against lowering the student minimum wage.

In the article she also references an advertising campaign that was launched by Restaurants Canada that, she said, was nothing but "fear and intimidation." I know that we get accused of running fear and intimidation. I suspect that might be members opposite projecting their own campaign techniques onto us, but that's a matter for another day.

3:50

I would like to give the Member for Calgary-Varsity an opportunity during Committee of the Whole, during this debate, to actually provide some evidence. What evidence has he seen? I'm genuinely asking the question, Mr. Chair. I'm not trying to trap the member. I'm not trying to box the government into a corner that they can't get out of to score political points. I am genuinely interested to see what evidence he's seen that lowering wages will actually increase investment beyond what we currently expect Alberta to see and to bring some facts to bear in this case, because, like I said in my earlier comments, we know that he's fully capable of doing so, and I think this debate desperately needs it. The people of Alberta desperately want to know the reasoning behind this bill because, to them, it looks like an attack on their wages and nothing more.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Red Deer-South has risen to speak.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to take a few minutes just to stand and speak against the suggested amendment to change the name of Bill 2, which is currently named An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. It was interesting because the member

opposite just recently, just prior to the one who just spoke, said that the implication of the title suggested that prior to the change in government, Alberta was not open for business. I would suggest that the member opposite is leading with their chin a little bit.

I want to talk about some facts because we've been asked to, you know, be fact focused. Let's think about: what are the key success indicators of whether a province is open for business? Well, Mr. Chair, I think all of us in this House would agree that a key success indicator of whether a province is open for business is its private-sector employment. What happened under the NDP? Well, here are the facts. There were tens of thousands more private-sector jobs when the NDP came into government than when they got fired a few months ago. That is a profound failure. These are real individuals and families, and I met some of them. It was devastating for them.

That, to me, is a key success indicator, private-sector employment. Well, what happened under the prior government? It fell. Every year, that should actually grow. Every year, the number of people employed in the private sector should actually grow. In the four-year period that you were in government, you shrank it by tens of thousands of individuals. That is a profound failure, which suggests that maybe Alberta wasn't as open for business.

But let's go on to another key success indicator as to whether or not a province is open for business. I would suggest that corporate tax revenue would be a pretty good indicator, if a province is open for business. Every year the government of Alberta issues an annual report based on fact. The annual report contains a schedule that allows the public to compare current results with historical results, so let's consider the numbers. When the NDP came into power, corporate tax revenue, as reported in the annual report, was \$5.7 billion. Then the NDP increased the corporate tax rate by 20 per cent. Did corporate tax revenue increase by 20 per cent? No. It decreased by over \$1.5 billion. And here's this: the corporate tax revenue for the remaining years that they were in government never reached the 2015 levels just prior to them coming into government, despite their 20 per cent increase. Mr. Chair, does this speak to a province that was open for business? Well, if businesses are no longer succeeding and paying taxes, I would submit, it is not.

Let's talk about another key success indicator as to whether or not a province is open for business, and that is: can government walk the talk? You know, can it live within its means in a responsible, businesslike manner? Is it competent to instill confidence in the sustainability and the stability of government? March 31, 2015, was the last time that Alberta posted a surplus. It was about \$1.1 billion. Then the NDP came into power. Well, what happened the next year? A \$6.4 billion deficit in 2016-17, then the following year a \$10.7 billion deficit, and for this upcoming year a projected deficit, based on third-quarter results, of over \$6 billion.

These deficits added more than \$30 billion of debt. By analogy, that would buy all the houses in Red Deer and Lethbridge. They would do that with their deficits alone, and they did that in only four years. Of course, while they were in government, their spending exceeded population and inflation growth by billions of dollars. Mr. Chair, here's a really important thing that I think the members opposite are confused about. The definition of successful government is not spending money you don't have. The definition of a successful government is not spending money you do not have, right? Living off your credit cards does not make one a responsible individual. That is why you were fired.

Now, we've kind of talked a little bit about – we've kind of listened to the NDP, and it's important that we understand their world view, okay? The world view of the NDP is not shared by the majority of Albertans. Here is the world view of the members opposite. Let's refer to their constitution. Their constitution states

that its purpose is to establish and maintain a democratic socialist government in Alberta. Socialism is their world view. That world view and their record, if it was distilled into an act, would be An Act to Make Alberta Closed for Business.

4:00

This bill, Bill 2, is completely appropriate and why I will be voting against the amendment. Bill 2 repudiates NDP governments that, at their core, have an undercurrent of hostility towards businesses that made Alberta closed for business, and their record speaks for itself.

I do want to talk specifically, though. Bill 2 reinstates the concept of a secret ballot for joining a union. You're upset about that. The NDP does not like secret ballots and changed the law to take them away. They wanted to deny employees the choice to make the private decision as to whether they want to join a union. You know, that ability, that choice, that private decision is common throughout the other jurisdictions in Canada, but the NDP took it away. What are the members opposite afraid of? A secret ballot is a form of accountability, protecting against compulsion and undue pressure. They do not trust employees to make the decision they wanted. You know, socialism is not comfortable with freedom. That is the culture of the NDP, and it does not work in the real world.

In closing, Mr. Chair, I'm very happy to speak in favour of not changing the title of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen to speak.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm incredibly disappointed. I made my comments asking for some thoughtful interventions, particularly from the Member for Calgary-Varsity, and I had hoped that maybe the Member for Calgary-Varsity would rise and respond to some of the questions that I had asked in my phrase. Instead, we got the Member for Red Deer-South, who issued us some talking points that they teach in UCP kindergarten. You know, it's like: oh, unemployment is up and corporate tax revenues are down; the NDP must have chased away investment because they're socialists.

Now, first of all, on the issue of socialism, the Member for Red Deer-South, the only thing that he got right in his speech was the fact that we are a democratic socialist party, and we're proud to be so. I just want to share for the Member for Red Deer-South, who is obviously ripe for education . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. I do believe that I heard desk thumping during that.

**Mr. Schmidt:** On behalf of whichever member did that, I apologize.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please continue.

**Mr. Schmidt:** We will refrain from thumping our desks.

I want to share with the House a quote made by President Harry Truman in 1952 when he was campaigning for Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic presidential candidate in that year's election. He said:

Socialism is a scareword they have hurled at every advance the people have made in the last 20 years. Socialism is what they called public power. Socialism is what they called social security. Socialism is what they called farm price supports. Socialism is what they called bank deposit insurance. Socialism is what they called the growth of free and independent labour organizations. Socialism is their name for almost anything that helps all the people.

You know, we've been in this game here in the NDP for 86 years. We were founded in 1933, Mr. Chair. We were founded in Calgary, actually, Calgary, Alberta. When the member opposite says that, you know, a majority of Albertans don't share our world view, he couldn't be further from the truth. People in Alberta along with other Canadians love public health care, they love public education, they love old-age pensions, and they love free roads and infrastructure, all of those things that the member opposite would call socialism unless they were being built in his riding, in which case that's just prudent governance, right? But when we provide those things for everybody in Alberta, then it's socialism.

Of course, we've seen that here in question period over the last six weeks. Everybody on the UCP side is in favour of big cuts except in their own ridings. We know that the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock doesn't want public-sector jobs to be taken out of his riding. We know that, I don't know, Mr. Chair, all of these guys here to my right look alike. They all stand up and ask for roads and interchanges and bridges and schools to be built in their own ridings, but they don't want it to be built at any cost to taxpayers, and they certainly want it to be taken away from other people because providing those things fairly to everybody would of course be socialism.

But I want to address some of the – I don't know how to phrase it. Unemployment was up, corporate tax revenues were down, and deficits were up during our term in government. Those things are true, Mr. Chair. I will grant you that those things were true. None of those things can be linked to anything other than the lack of market access for our oil and gas and the fact that the price of oil dropped from \$100 a barrel to almost giving it away at Christmas of last year. We, of course, had the choice of cutting spending to not have a deficit. That would have meant a \$10 billion reduction in the spending of the province of Alberta on a \$50-billion-a-year budget. Give or take, that is a 20 per cent cut. You know, applied evenly, that means 1 out of every 5 patients wouldn't get treated. You could only get to grade 10. You wouldn't be able to get grade 12. We'd have to shut down 20 per cent of the universities and colleges in this province.

We chose not to do that, Mr. Chair. We chose not to burden the people of Alberta with the fallout of low oil prices and a lack of market access. In fact, we chose, I think quite wisely, to run deficits in the short term while we were working diligently on enhancing market access for our oil and gas products, trying to add value so that we retain more of the value of the oil and gas products that were extracted here in the province of Alberta in the hopes that the economy would turn around and that economic activity would increase and we would no longer have to employ those deficits.

I am really looking forward to the budget this year to see what kinds of decisions the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti will make when it comes to tackling the deficit. It is either going to create a significant amount of pain for average Albertans, or they're going to admit that cutting the deficit is a lot harder than they thought it was when they were in opposition, and they're going to say that their plan isn't really that different from the one that we had put forward when we were in government.

4:10

Now, Mr. Chair, it's also important to remind the Member for Red Deer-South that when we raised corporate taxes, we raised corporate taxes from 10 per cent to 12 per cent, which brought them in line with corporate taxes all across the country. Every other province in the country has a corporate tax rate of approximately 11 or 12 per cent. We weren't leading the country by any means. We were certainly not taxing corporations beyond their means. It was simply the fact that they were getting 10 per cent less of the value

of the resources that they were selling than they were in 2015, and they couldn't move their products as well as they could in the run-up to 2015.

Mr. Chair, again, being an optimist, I hope that we can get back to the amendment, which is simply that this is an act to amend employment standards and labour relations. It has nothing to do with creating investment, generating investment in the province of Alberta. Unless somebody shows me otherwise, there is not a positive correlation. There is no reason to think that lowering wages, picking workers' pockets, will make it more likely for businesses to invest in Alberta. It hasn't happened in any other jurisdiction, and nobody from the other side has presented a coherent case as to why that's the case. You know, I live in hope that we will abandon the stale talking points, the kindergarten Conservative communication style that we saw from the Member for Red Deer-South, and actually get to a thoughtful debate and convince us with some evidence and facts.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration standing to speak.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for asking me to speak again on this amendment. As you may recall, I spoke at length on this. I'll do a quick summary of that, but I don't want to spend a lot of time on that detail and getting into this, so my comments will be brief.

I would like to respond as well to a couple of comments that the member had made. You know, it's interesting that the hon. member had admitted that under their government, despite them actually increasing the corporate tax rate, corporate taxes went down, unemployment, particularly on the private-sector side, went up, and that debt continued to increase and was on track for a \$100 billion debt, and the deficit was continuing to rise.

One thing that I found striking about the comments, and I reiterated this in my comments yesterday, is that he made the comment that none of this can be linked to the policy; it was all the economy. Mr. Chair, that cannot be further from the truth. Speaking in particular, let's talk about the increase in minimum wage that occurred under the previous government, an increase by nearly 50 per cent in a few short years during an economic recession. The Conference Board of Canada did a study while they were midway through this increase, and that study suggested that an increase by 10 per cent, an increase of 10 per cent in the minimum wage, could result in a 1 to 3 per cent increase in unemployment.

But despite that being done, that advice from the Conference Board, that caution from the Conference Board – let me also add one more thing. Part of that caution was also that context matters and that in doing that in the face of an economic recession, it could potentially be worse. Right? I recognize there are different views from different economists, but context matters, and the Conference Board came out and made this statement. But what did the previous government do? They continued to increase the minimum wage, and not by 10 per cent, not by 20 per cent, but, Mr. Chair, by 50 per cent.

So I can understand the argument, you know, from the members opposite saying: "No, no. Well, this is just an economist doing a study. That's their assessment." But, then, let's talk to the job creators, Albertan companies, Calgary companies. Studies were done, and these companies responded and said: we have laid off employees and reduced the hours because of these changes.

The chamber of commerce put out the layering effect. It was not only the changes in the minimum wage, general holiday changes, you know, the increase in taxes but all of that layered together. They

said: "We are reducing employment. We are reducing opportunities. We are not hiring." Particularly, those hardest hit were the youth in our society.

So when the member opposite says, "You know, show me," there is a lack of understanding of the implications that their policies had. I go to the hon. member for Red Deer's previous comments. This is what I actually meant in my comments the other day. There is a divide. We have a different world view, right? When the members opposite can't even recognize what impact their policy changes have had, well, then, there's no way that they can recognize that decreasing the minimum wage will have any impact. They didn't even recognize that by increasing the minimum wage, it had any impact to start off with.

Mr. Chair, these changes we're making in this bill will create jobs and signal that we are open for business. As I indicated in my comments – and I'm not going to reiterate all of them that I made yesterday – you know, that is why I cannot agree to this amendment.

I'll make one further comment. You know, I'd like to thank again the member across for having great debate on Bill 11 and for the support from both sides of the House in that regard. I am happy to engage in debate, but on this particular point, Mr. Chair, we are coming from very different sides. Their philosophy appears to be that their policies made no difference on the job creators and didn't result in increased unemployment even though there's a recognition that it was all the economy. Quite frankly, the evidence shows the opposite.

We were elected – we were elected – on a platform to get Albertans working again, and very specifically we were elected on a platform in which Bill 2, that was outlined, said that we would create a youth minimum wage, that we would make changes to general holidays, that we would make changes to banked overtime, and that we would make changes to the Labour Relations Code to reinstate the private vote and put the power back in the hands of workers in that regard. That's exactly what Bill 2 does. It signals a desperate signal that we need to give to the investment community, in addition to bills 1, 3, and 4 and our whole, entire platform, that we are open for business. We want businesses to invest back into this economy and get Albertans working.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this amendment, that makes, you know, quite a modest suggestion that we change the name of Bill 2 to a statues amendment act moniker. I think that this is eminently reasonable.

Language is a funny thing, Mr. Chair. You know, it is powerful, and it, of course, conveys the meaning of the words that are on the page, but it also conveys a certain tone – right? – which is kind of the theme that I've been talking about for the last couple of days here. For this one, "Alberta Open for Business," it's pretty strong, and it sort of implies a lot. But when you start to unpack that as language around something like reducing the minimum wage for younger workers, it sort of says "open for business" as in: we're exposing our youth to an unequal and unjust differential in wages just to be open for business. Right?

You start to explore that, and you realize that it's almost like you're presenting our youth here in the province as being willing to sacrifice by 13.3 per cent their wages for the sake of the title of this bill. You know, the same with "open for business" and looking at holiday pay eligibility. We're willing to, you know, allow businesses to have a choice as to whether they pay overtime or a

differential for Christmas, let's say, for example. We're willing to sacrifice those businesses that choose to not pay holiday pay for Christmas for the sake of being open for business. You could go on and on with this, Mr. Chair. It sort of exposes this notion that by compromising labour standards or money in the pockets of workers in the case of overtime, somehow that sacrifice, that compromise will suddenly open the doors of business here in the province.

4:20

We all want to see a healthy economy, we all want to see it expanding, and we all want to see prosperity for all. You know, it's been a challenging time over the last number of years. The economic downturn affected our province quite a lot. The price of energy and market access really did have a marked effect on our economy. But when you're in a tight spot like that, that's when you really have to make the tough decisions around how and who you're going to serve to ensure a level of economic stability for a household budget, economic stability for young individuals, and to ensure that services that you need for yourself and your family are there when you need them, including health care and education. That's when really difficult decisions need to be made – and the choices need to be made there, too – on: who do you serve?

I think that it's an easy job to be a whip with the Alberta New Democrats because we have guiding principles that ensure that we know what the correct decision is every step of the way to make sure you look after everyone even during an economic downturn. You don't cut the minimum wage; you look for ways to make it a living wage. You don't cut overtime pay; you look for ways by which you can have fair compensation that ensures the viability of a business, and you move forward with that. You don't negotiate through the Legislature, through the tip of a legislative pen – right? – which weaponizes the very notion of negotiating, but you sit down and you bargain in good faith even during an economic downturn.

You will find that you will end up with outcomes that will come as creative solutions from both the management side and the worker side, things like, for example, with the teachers, the classroom improvement fund, this organic, creative thing that came off the negotiating table, a negotiating table that was infused with the notion of good faith. We looked for ways by which we said: "Hey, we only have, you know, very limited funds, but we have to educate our kids. What's the best way to spend those very, very difficult funds during an economic downturn to ensure the maximum return for kids?" And – boom – in negotiating in good faith for that, you ended up with something as very effective as the classroom improvement fund, which this current government is cutting.

I bring up that point just to say, you know, Mr. Chair, that semantics and language are powerful and meaningful. An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business is really just a statutes amendment act that is fraught with peril. But we're always so helpful over here on the opposition side. We want to make life better for Albertans, and we want to make language clearer for Albertans, too, so we're offering this amendment as a way by which to make this modest change. You know what? I mean, I can't speak for everybody here

today, because we haven't talked about it yet, but I'm willing to say that if you change this name to a statutes amendment act, I personally will consider not calling Bill 2 the pick-your-pockets bill. You know what I mean?

**Ms Pancholi:** Yeah.

**Mr. Eggen:** I've got one there.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah.

**Mr. Eggen:** And I've got another one there. There you go. I mean, this is the way we work. Let's make a deal. We will use language. We will, you know, have a language détente, so to speak, at 4:25 on a Thursday afternoon. If you guys change this to a statutes amendment act, I will stand down on the pick-your-pockets bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora rising.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. That was how I was planning on proposing my opening remarks, hon. Member for Edmonton-North West. But I'm happy to say that that was exactly when the member for Lethbridge . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but under Standing Order 4(3), seeing the time, the committee shall now rise and report progress without question put. For clarity, we will be rising and reporting progress on Bill 12, Royalty Guarantee Act, and we will rise and report progress on Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. The committee shall now rise and report progress.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 12 and Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed, say no. Carried. So ordered.

I see the hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** I move to adjourn until Tuesday, July 2, at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:27 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, June 27, 2019**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft., adjourned, amendment introduced*)

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

### **Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

**Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., adjourned*)

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019, passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 13 — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 201\* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 825-38 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 838-40 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft.*), 1115-22 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., adjourned*)



**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — *(Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), (Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)*



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, July 2, 2019

Day 22

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
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Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
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Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
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Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Glasgo  
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Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
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Pancholi  
Rutherford  
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Yao

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Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, July 2, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Jinting Zhao. I invite you all to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a stirring rendition. Perhaps you were practising yesterday. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon we are joined by former Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar Mr. David Dorward and Mr. Ian Murray. Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, today in the gallery are seated guests of the MLA from Calgary-Falconridge: Komalpreet Sandhu and Gobinder Singh Khara. I invite you to rise, if you are present, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also joining us in the Speaker's gallery today are some folks who are very near and dear to my heart. I see my son Porter, my daughter Paxton, my daughter Peyton, and they are accompanied by their nana and papa, Mr. Harold and Mary Cooper.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Page Recognition

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we proceed to the Routine today, I have a very important presentation to make this afternoon. Before we continue the usual business, I'd like to call forward all of the pages who are here. If they could join me at the dais.

Go ahead, members, be seated. We'll all have a quick seat while the pages join us.

Awesome. Thank you. Some of the pages were unable to join us today, but it is a pleasure. As some of you who've been around the House will know, the retiring pages have the opportunity to address the House, if you will, through the Speaker. It comes to you unedited, I might add. It always makes the Speaker a little uncomfortable, but I'm sure they've done a fine job. Here it is.

Dear Mr. Speaker:

What can be said about an experience as enriching and unique as that of being a Page of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta? Pages often struggle to explain the intricacies of their work to those who've never seen us in action [before], so it seems only natural now that when we seek words to commemorate our time here, we find ourselves speechless. For many this session, the Chamber is a new and exciting place, full of the promise of things to come. For the retiring Pages, however, coming to work each day is a warming and familiar experience – a building filled with memories of new and old friends, happy moments, and the conquering of all sorts of challenges. Simply put, coming in to work each day is much like coming home.

While we may rejoice in our successes we understand that they are not ours alone, instead, stemming from a complex web of our supportive colleagues. You, Mr. Speaker, have demonstrated for us determination and tenacity, complemented by your impartiality that represents a steady source of justice in an ever-changing world. The Sergeant-At-Arms has many a time offered us his wisdom and helped us learn from our mistakes, allowing each of us to flourish. The Clerk and Table Officers have always been ready to offer an encouraging remark or assistance should we ever need it. And who better to keep us company as we hold the doors for divisions than the L.A.S.S., upon whose protection and service we are all dependent. Finally, we would like to extend our biggest thank you to the staff of the Office of the Sergeant-At-Arms, who have supported each one of us with an unrivalled level of care. Without these dedicated, gracious employees, the Page Programme would be unable to function as efficiently and effectively as it does.

It has truly been an honour to serve the Members of this Assembly and the staff of the LAO in our Page role and as members of the greater LAO community. With heavy hearts we will hand in our cravats and our cufflinks, holding dear our memories of this building and the wonderful people in it. We will be forever appreciative of the lessons we learned while employed by the LAO, the friendships we made, and the growth we experienced. We, the retiring Pages of 2019, extend our biggest "hear, hear" to all who have supported and encouraged us during our time walking these marbled halls.

Yours Truly,

Mary Frank (Speaker's Page), Rebecca Hicks (Page Peer Mentor), Angel Choga, Carolyn Huang, Jessica Hermary, Jordan Cowan, Kiki Reed, Kyra Larison, Nicolas Makarian... and Summer Smyth.

29th and 30th Legislatures.

I would like to ask the Deputy Speaker if she might come forward and congratulate our page peer mentor Rebecca Hicks and Angel Choga and Jessica Hermary.

Hon. members, please join me in expressing our deepest gratitude to this exemplary group of young Albertans for their patience, determination, and incredibly hard work they offer us each and every day. [Standing ovation]

Thank you so much, guys. We so, so much appreciate it. We do have a token of our appreciation for all the retiring pages, which will be presented at a later date.

Thank you so much.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has a statement to make.

#### Lethbridge

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm always proud to stand in this House and speak to my colleagues about my home, the city

of Lethbridge, but what I'm prouder of still is my privilege to stand in the House today and address the over 100,000 fellow Lethbridgeans who have chosen to call my city and my riding home. The 2019 census results have been released, and Lethbridge is officially 101,482 residents strong. We like a bit of healthy competition on this side of the House, so I hope the hon. Member for Red Deer-South and the hon. minister from Red Deer-North don't mind that Lethbridge has reclaimed the title of Alberta's third-largest city from their community.

1:40

In all fairness, I am humbled to represent this community, that has grown to become a vibrant city of amazing diversity and market stability. That number, 101,482, represents neighbours, family, friends, business owners, university and college students, and so many others who have chosen to believe in our community and make it their home. The slow and steady growth Lethbridge has experienced over the recent past demonstrates the hopes, dreams, and leaps of faith Albertans and families from around the world are taking in making Lethbridge their home. Their belief in our community and their willingness to take a chance and hope for the best is the story of many who moved from across our province and our country to the city of Lethbridge, and that tenacity, that pioneering spirit, which leads to the work ethic that makes us proud to be Albertan, Mr. Speaker, is what brings us all closer together. I believe that our government's common-sense policies will strengthen the spirit and will only continue to aid our community's successful growth.

If you'll lend me a little indulgence today as I share the spotlight with the hon. member across the aisle the MLA for Lethbridge-West, the pride we have in our community and our gratitude for being able to represent the people who make our city a great place to call home: here's to a community with a rich history, a strong foundation, and a bright future, Lethbridge, Alberta's third-largest city, at least until next year's census.

### Provincial Fiscal Position

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the responsibility we have to ensure that all Albertans have a clear sense of the economic stability of this province. Ever since the Premier waded back into provincial politics, he has held strong to his talking points that the NDP has been a poor fiscal steward. In reality, under the leadership of the Leader of the Official Opposition and the NDP, Alberta now has the largest GDP per capita in the country.

The Premier waxes on about how the NDP causes investment to flee the province, yet in reality Alberta continues to lead the country in per capita business investment.

The Premier confidently tells Albertans that the NDP spending was out of control. However, during the worst recession in a generation the NDP refused to make it worse by cutting and instead made sure that spending was increased to cover inflation and population growth, and that's it, certainly not the spending spree this government likes to talk about.

Similarly, when the Premier gets on his soapbox, he routinely fails to mention that under the NDP leadership Alberta now has the lowest per capita debt in the country. Even the annual report that was released late last week shows that under the Leader of the Official Opposition, Alberta saw a \$2.1 billion reduction in the deficit. Our path to balance was working faster than expected.

It is clear from this side of the House that the Premier is presenting this fiscal fairy tale to Albertans in order to justify cuts to education and health care to pay for a \$4.5 billion corporate tax giveaway.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that they don't have a path to balance, and they don't have a plan for our economy. Albertans deserve the truth, and the UCP needs to be held accountable for the cuts they will impose on Albertans in order to pay off their wealthy friends and donors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Southern Alberta Summer Games

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Southern Alberta Summer Games. The Southern Alberta Summer Games is an annual sporting and cultural event held yearly in the south of the province. It was launched in 1970. The games rotate through communities each year, and I'm happy to say that this year they will be hosted in Pincher Creek, a town in Livingstone-Macleod.

Beginning tomorrow, through July 6 over 2,000 athletes will compete in Alberta's longest running annual sporting event. The events are open to all ages, with competitions like minisoccer being open to young kids and sports like archery having dedicated age groups for all participants.

I mentioned earlier that there are cultural events that are highlighted by the games. This year Pincher Creek is proud to showcase its artistic community, its pioneer history, its agricultural background, and even its local microbrewery.

I'm proud to see the summer games being hosted in Livingstone-Macleod this year. This is a special event for southern Albertans as it brings us together for fun, some healthy competition, and time in the great outdoors of our province's most beautiful region.

I know that the 50th games will be as successful as the previous 49 and would like to thank all the counties and MDs that form the backbone of the games, from the Crowsnest Pass and Pincher Creek in the west, Warner and Cardston in the south, Newell and Vulcan in the north, to Cypress county and Medicine Hat in the east, and of course I would be remiss if I did not mention the multitude of volunteers that make the games a great success.

Finally, I would like to wish all competitors good luck, and to those who will be watching, have fun. I know I will. Enjoy your time in Pincher Creek and enjoy the games.

### Minister of Education

**Ms Hoffman:** I can't help but notice that the Education minister has taken to wearing the Children First pin, and who could argue with that? Surely, the best interests of children should come first for everyone in this place.

This minister could have acted to fund students with special needs and hire new teachers for students. Instead, last week our largest school districts passed budgets based on guesswork because this minister wasn't competent enough to write her own budget before kids return to school in September. She sat idle while children across Alberta lost their teachers and educational assistants and even tried to deny that it was happening. For this minister those children don't come first.

When a certain kind of student steals lunch money from other children, there's a name for that, Mr. Speaker. We tell kids to ask an adult to intervene, and when someone threatens to take lunch money from 33,000 students, you bet I'll intervene and stand up for those kids. Here's the clincher: it's being done to pay for a \$4.5 billion gift to the Premier's donors.

Did the minister speak up in cabinet and say: "Hey. How about we only give them \$4.47 billion instead and keep \$30 million for

the school nutrition program?” Obviously not, because for this minister those children don’t come first. I honestly don’t know why feeding hungry children is a partisan issue, Mr. Speaker. Surely, if there was ever a single thing we could all agree on, it’s that feeding hungry children is a good thing. But apparently not.

I think all of the members opposite should be reminded that they will have to answer for this decision, too. To the minister those children don’t come first. So she can wear her golden pin on her lapel, Mr. Speaker, but I hope in the moments of contemplation as she pins it on, she thinks about the harm that she’s actually causing children in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Women in the Skilled Trades

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to acknowledge the important contributions that women can and do make with the trade industries. Women make valuable contributions to our economy every day as tradespeople. As I have previously mentioned while speaking in this House, there are many trades that are often overlooked when the word “trades” is mentioned. Some of these trades that are less often thought of are driving professionals, glaziers, bakers, locksmiths, cooks, communication technicians, beauticians, to name a few. Women have worked in many of these professions for years. Today I recognize these women and say thank you for your hard work.

I’m sure there are many in this room that remember a time where it seemed inappropriate for women to be in the more commonly acknowledged construction trades. In recent years women have been encouraged to train in and join these honourable professions. Women Building Futures has done amazing work in advocating for women who work in trades and for those looking to begin their careers.

Amazing work has been done to encourage women to participate in construction trades. In 2017 it was reported that only 4.5 per cent of skilled workers in Canada were women. However, in Alberta in 2017 that number was 15 per cent, with up to 30 per cent of those women working in on-site construction occupations.

As the chair of the newly formed skilled trades caucus, I will work with my colleagues to continue to find ways to further increase the participation of women in these important professions. We must ensure that not only do women have the opportunities to become tradespeople, but we must ensure that women feel comfortable in joining an industry of which they have not historically been part of but of which they are most welcome.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Inclusion

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Inclusion Alberta is a family-based nonprofit that has a long and proud history of advocating for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Their work has made a huge and lasting impact in our province and has helped thousands of people achieve their goals and be fully included in their communities.

Unfortunately, Inclusion Alberta’s vision of a better life for people with disabilities is not supported by this UCP government. Health care for persons with disabilities has been called a giveaway by a UCP minister. Individuals with disabilities and families have been told there is no money in the PDD budget for critical services.

Young people with disabilities have been turned away from school due to looming budget cuts, and now this UCP government is backtracking on its promise to continue our government’s investment in inclusive postsecondary education. Advocates in the disability community are hearing that the money they were promised for inclusive postsecondary in the UCP platform – I’m not sure if it was platform 1 or 2 – will now be redirected to segregated employment programs. Many of these segregated employment programs come with an expectation of unpaid work at a local business or institution, which is in keeping with the world view of members opposite, who served under the Progressive Conservatives and allowed people with disabilities to be paid less than a minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very concerning move by this government as many people with disabilities want to attend postsecondary studies and pursue their passions. Eighty per cent of students with disabilities that go on to postsecondary education enter into the workforce and begin to contribute not only to our economy but in all aspects of life, enriching Alberta’s diversity.

1:50

Our government understood that and was proud to make strong investments in inclusive postsecondary, increasing funding for PDD by \$150 million and launching a PDD review to find further improvements. Mr. Speaker, we believe that Albertans with disabilities deserve respect, dignity, and most of all, inclusion, and they deserve a government that will keep their promises.

I call on this government to do what is right and ensure every dollar of the \$2 million that was promised goes to inclusive postsecondary to make life better for people with disabilities in our province.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty’s Official Opposition.

### Provincial Debt and Fiscal Policy

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They lied to Albertans about the economy and the revenues: that was this Premier on April 30 running his own fear-and-smear campaign to his favourite scribe about Alberta’s finances. Fast forward to last Friday, and the Q4 update shows we cut the deficit by \$2 billion more than projected, ever so slightly better than what we reported to Albertans on the eve of the election. To the Premier: will he now abandon his pre-election fear and smear and admit that the numbers we reported to Albertans were the truth?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, they didn’t shrink the deficit. They created the deficit. The NDP ran on a 2015 platform to add just a few billion dollars to the provincial debt then to start running surpluses. Instead, they took a \$13 billion debt; they drove it up to \$60 billion on a track to \$100 billion dollar debt. They ran the largest per capita deficit in Canada for four straight years. They presided over five major credit downgrades. One of the reasons they were fired by Albertans in April is because they had one of the worst fiscal records in Alberta history.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, about 90 per cent of that was not true.

Nonetheless, our fiscal plan preserved important front-line services for Albertans. We incented economic growth with strategic capital investment. We led the country in economic growth two years in a row. Now, first the Premier panned that, claiming our finances were false. Now that he’s been proven wrong, he wants to claim that our future plans are off. But here’s the thing. That’s under

his watch, Mr. Speaker. Why won't the Premier admit that it's his \$4.5 billion corporate tax giveaway to friends and insiders that is actually unsustainable and irresponsible?

**Mr. Kenney:** Because it's simply untrue, Mr. Speaker. Now, here I have the 2015 NDP platform in which they committed to Albertans to run a surplus last year of \$600 million. Instead of a \$600 million surplus they gave us nearly a \$7 billion deficit. They broke their promises, and that was on top of the hidden agenda of the carbon tax, the largest tax increase in Alberta history, and the higher corporate taxes that reduced revenues from corporations.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can read platform promises from the Conservative Party when oil was at a hundred dollars a barrel, too, but that is not the answer. It's no wonder the Premier is searching for a scapegoat. Going forward, the projections will be off because you've given away \$4.5 billion in corporate tax cuts, cancelled the carbon levy but still claim to be funding several of the projects – that's another \$7 billion hole – and cancelled crude by rail for another \$2 billion loss. So, yeah, the Premier has got a fiscal problem, but why won't he admit it? It's his.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, when the NDP committed to run a \$600 million surplus last year, when they made that commitment, we'd already been through nine months of lower oil prices. They made a commitment that they had no intention of keeping. It's true; the Leader of the Opposition is correct in saying that this government has a huge fiscal challenge, one that we inherited from the NDP, with orders from Albertans to clean up the huge fiscal disaster, the fiscal train wreck created by the NDP.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it would appear that we have seen that all this government has to offer this spring is billions handed over to wealthy corporations, possible wage rollbacks for 180,000 public servants, definite wage rollbacks for young workers, significant cuts to overtime pay, layoffs in schools, cancelled private-sector investment in renewables, and in May we saw the loss of 3,000 jobs. To the Premier: where are all the jobs that you promised in the last campaign?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Leader of the Opposition is categorically wrong in her assessment of the purported revenue loss through the job-creation tax cut. Professor Bev Dahlby, one of the most highly recognized tax economists in the country, estimates that over four years, through additional economic growth of some \$13 billion, it will actually raise the per capita GDP by 6 per cent and increase government revenues by \$1.2 billion. Professor Mintz estimates it will create 55,000 jobs. But the NDP, by trying to sock it to job creators, ended up reducing revenues from Alberta businesses.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Actually, corporate tax revenues are higher in the last year than they ever have been. How did that happen, I wonder?

Anyway, we already learned last month that Spanish oil giant Repsol plans to cut its staff by 30 per cent, and figures from Petroleum Labour Market Information report that nearly 3,000 oil and gas workers left this province just in May. To the Premier. Now, I can list the jobs that have been lost since you've come into

power, excluding the lawyers who've been given a new lease on life by your government. Can you provide us with a list of the jobs that have been created?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Leader of the Opposition is categorically false when she said that corporate income tax revenues increased under the NDP. Corporate tax revenues for the year just ended were below where they were in 2014. After the NDP raised the rates by 20 per cent, they chased away investment, they killed jobs, and the revenues went down for four years. That's socialist economics. Oddly enough, the same thing happened with personal income taxes. They raised the highest marginal rates by 50 per cent and generated less revenue. We, instead, have a plan to actually create revenues and jobs in this province.

**Ms Notley:** This Premier's insistence on trying to ignore that the price of oil went from \$120 a barrel to \$25 a barrel makes him look silly when he makes these kinds of statements, Mr. Speaker.

Nonetheless, the fact is that his predictions are that oil and gas jobs are going to go down in part due to the impact of curtailment, you know, the plan this Premier just extended by backing out of the crude-by-rail plan. You're jeopardizing good jobs by cancelling crude by rail, renewables investment, high-tech support, and new education seats. Now the Premier is forcing Albertans to bankroll the risky tax giveaway and wait somewhere between years and forever for the . . .

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, while the NDP created a jobs crisis, while they presided over and helped to deepen one of the longest and deepest recessions in our history, while the NDP drove our debt from \$13 billion to \$60 billion, while the NDP shrunk personal and corporate tax revenues by raising the rates, while they did all of that, I am pleased to announce that effective yesterday, as a result of our job-creation tax cut, Alberta has begun to regain the Alberta advantage, with the lowest taxes for job creators in Canada, and we're going to create tens of thousands of jobs as a result.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Technology Industry Programs

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier is stalling on programs that would have created jobs and diversified the economy. It appears that he is doing this for petty political reasons. The media reports today that the government hasn't committed to 3,000 high-tech jobs that our NDP government was creating through our artificial intelligence strategy. That commitment had attracted interest from 200 companies, including some major multinationals. Will the Premier confirm that he is going to cancel the artificial intelligence strategy?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that there was no intelligence behind the NDP's economic policy. That's why we ended up with nearly 200,000 unemployed Albertans. [interjections]

The worst Finance minister in Alberta history is heckling me right now, and I understand why. It's because he presided over five credit downgrades, a jobs crisis, one of the longest recessions in our history. We are going to make investments, where they make sense for taxpayers, that will help to continue diversifying our economy. [interjections] But the main thing is to get the economic fundamentals right, and that's why we've delivered the job-creation tax cut.

2:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would love to hear the answers. Whether or not we all like them is for every member to determine, but I would like to hear them.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It appears that you won't confirm that our artificial intelligence strategy will be funded.

The jobs funded by the AI strategy were to work in lockstep with our creation of 3,000 more high-tech postsecondary seats in Alberta postsecondary institutions. This was about setting us up for the future. This Premier has shown that he's determined to drag us back in time. Once again I will ask the Premier to confirm: if he's cancelling the AI strategy, can we also assume that the postsecondary technology seats are gone, too?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we are reviewing the NDP election commitments that were made. We are going to make investments that help to create the right environment for Alberta to once again become the job-creation engine of Canada after the worst jobs record of any major modern Alberta administration, but that starts with getting the fundamentals right. That's why we've delivered the job-creation tax cut, that will, once fully implemented, give us the lowest taxes on job creators in Canada. By an order of magnitude it will be the lowest in North America, with the exception of four U.S. states. Alberta will once again have the advantage.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans now know that this Premier will cut artificial intelligence and other technology investments because they weren't his idea. That is how arrogant he is.

Will the Premier now commit that he is also cancelling the value-added petrochemical diversification initiatives, slamming the door on \$75 billion worth of new oil and gas upgrading investments and 70,000 new jobs because he just doesn't care about jobs for ordinary people?

**Mr. Kenney:** Not caring about jobs for ordinary people: you know, Mr. Speaker, I can't think of a better description of the NDP's four-year economic and fiscal train wreck, a government that in the midst of an historic recession poured fuel on the flames by raising taxes on everything that moves – on heating homes, on filling up gas tanks, on hiring employees, on working – higher income taxes, higher business taxes, higher property taxes. They supported their ally Mr. Trudeau's higher payroll taxes. [interjections] We're going to do just the opposite by creating jobs in this province.

**Ms Notley:** We're waiting.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, including the Leader of the Opposition, we will have order.

I might just provide some commentary. It might be parliamentary to say "That's how arrogant a member is," but to say "That's how arrogant he is" certainly would not be considered parliamentary, and I would consider you – choose your words wisely.

### Renewable Energy Procurement

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, it came as zero surprise to any electricity executive I spoke to last week that this Minister of Energy doesn't actually understand contract for difference, competitive procurement. They were not surprised that the minister waved her

hand during a puffball last week and cancelled the fourth round of the renewable energy procurement, likely subsequent rounds of procurement, sending \$7 billion of new private-sector investment and power that reduces overall prices for consumers looking for a home elsewhere. Minister, it does not appear that you consulted with anyone prior to issuing this decision. Why not?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, one would have thought that after their historic election trouncing the NDP might take a step back and reflect on why Albertans repudiated their entire record. Instead, all that we get is heckling and personal insults. Let me tell you that it's time for the NDP to stand up and apologize for the 200,000 unemployed Albertans, to those people who lost their homes, to those who lost their businesses, to those who had to pay more for everything in this province. It's time to hear a bit of humility from the NDP.

**Ms Phillips:** It also came as zero surprise to indigenous people with whom I spoke last week that this minister didn't acknowledge the tremendous loss of equity participation opportunities that she caused by cancelling the competitive option for renewables procurement. Unlike a backbench puffball, indigenous people won't be mollified with a stale talking point. When will the minister meet with indigenous leaders, look them in the eye, and level with them that she just cancelled hundreds of millions of new dollars of economic opportunities for them? Face the music, Minister.

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP faced the music on April 16, and it didn't turn out so well for them. I can tell you that at the cabinet meeting with our 46 treaty chiefs, a meeting that the NDP refused to have for four years, we discussed exactly this issue. I explained to our partners in the indigenous leadership that we've eliminated the carbon tax to reduce costs on all Albertans, including indigenous Albertans. I didn't get any rebuttal. I'll tell you what we did get: tremendous interest in being partners in major projects, in part through the indigenous opportunities corporation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This minister doesn't answer her own questions. She appears to have a loose grasp of her files and is as articulate on electricity policy as she is respectful of companies who want to do business here, which is to say, not very. Why won't the minister commit to engaging relevant stakeholders on the phase-in of new renewables and natural gas generation to replace the coal that is being phased out by decisions taken by her own Premier and Prime Minister Harper?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, this is going from the sublime to the ridiculous, to have a former NDP minister stand up and actually raise electricity policy. That minister was in part responsible for one of the biggest boondoggles and fiscal scandals in Alberta history. She and her government cost Alberta taxpayers and ratepayers at least \$2 billion through their complete mismanagement of the power purchasing agreements, but she has an opportunity to stand up right now and apologize for the \$2 billion that she cost us.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West is rising with a question.

### Fair Registration Practices Act

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member for Calgary-West I am proud to represent many hard-working immigrants who chose this province as their home. Their stories of

courage and resilience are a true embodiment of the Alberta spirit. Now, sadly, many of our highly trained immigrants, professionals, have faced an uphill battle to get their skills recognized. Can the Minister of Labour and Immigration please update this House on the feedback he received on this issue at his recent panel with newcomers?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-West for the question. The Premier and I were very fortunate to sit down with a group of newcomers and hear their stories, their personal struggles trying to get their credentials recognized here in Alberta. We heard about the unnecessary stress it caused them and their families. We heard about the barriers they faced and their time spent in survival jobs. We also heard about newcomers giving up their pursuit to get their credentials recognized, and that is why this government is proud of Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act, and what it will do for newcomers in our province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the vast majority of immigrants enter Canada through a point system which encourages highly skilled and highly educated individuals to apply and given that many of these professionals are then underemployed and unable to use those very skills because of complex and ambiguous processes, can the minister please tell this Assembly the impact that Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act, will make?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member. Bill 11, which was passed in this House last week, introduces measures to ensure that the regulated professions and individuals applying for registration by regulated professions are governed by practices that are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair. It includes a fair practices code, fair registration practices office, and a requirement that an interim decision be made within six months. Our goal is to maintain high professional standards while speeding up and improving foreign credential recognition so that newcomers can fully integrate and support their families and contribute to the Alberta economy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many newcomers have to make a difficult choice between feeding their families and pursuing reaccreditation and given that the full and fair integration of highly qualified immigrants into the workforce is both a moral imperative and an unequivocal benefit for the Alberta economy, can the minister please inform this Assembly and Albertans just how much we stand to gain from this new legislation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. Newcomers are so important to our province. Underemployment can cause unnecessary stress for immigrant families whose education and skills are not being used to their full potential. Not only is this a moral issue – we need to help these families fully integrate – but it also represents a significant loss of economic productivity for the Alberta economy. All Albertans will benefit from maximizing the productivity and innovation that newcomers have to offer. Remember that Bill 11 applies to all

Albertans applying for licensure and accreditation, not just newcomers.

2:10

## Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, another day, another headline that makes it clear that the Education minister isn't doing her job. Parents of children with severe learning disabilities are rightfully stressed about the \$40 million in cuts that the Calgary board of education is bringing forward. This means less educational assistance to ensure that students with severe special needs thrive. All it would take to make these problems go away is for the minister to fund enrolment, the classroom improvement fund, at the current formula. To the minister: will you please just tell us what you're funding this fall? It is your job.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I stand to say that we are continuing to fund education. We will continue to build schools. Also, it's standard procedure that funding information is communicated to school boards following approval by the Legislature. All of these things I've said numerous times, over and over again. The hon. opposition needs to stop with their scare tactics. It's not working. People know that we are funding education for all students.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the minister herself claimed on Thursday to have "refreshing and unprecedented" collaboration with boards and given that apparently that collaboration doesn't involve telling them how much money they'll have this fall and given that parents quoted in today's *Calgary Herald* worry that no budget will make the situation worse for their children with severe learning disabilities, to the minister: will you at least pick up the phone and make sure these parents who came forward have their concerns addressed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. My office is always open. I'm hearing from numerous parents on various issues. I can assure you that in Alberta we spend amongst the most per capita on education, but the outcomes just aren't there, so we're going to continue to make improvements and work towards doing the best for each and every child. My heart is with children, and I will spend my time focused on doing the absolute best for every single child that is under our care.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the parents at the Calgary board of education are far from alone in their concerns and given that we are expecting 15,000 new students this fall yet the minister has not committed a single new dollar formally to assist those students, to the minister. School is out for the summer. Are you going to make anxious parents wait until October, November, or December to find out how terrible classroom conditions will be under your leadership?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I believe I've answered this numerous times over. Again, we are working on improving those outcomes, and we're going to do what the NDP failed to do.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View is rising.

### 2017 UCP Leadership Campaign Investigation

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A member of the government caucus is the focus of a criminal investigation. Two cabinet ministers have been questioned by the police in relation to this matter, including the Attorney General, yet it remains unclear if Alberta Justice has appointed a special prosecutor to oversee the investigation. Let's put aside the evasive "the matter has been referred to Ontario" language and ask a very simple question: has Alberta appointed a special prosecutor? Yes or no?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, as the member has been aware since early May of the process on this, the ADM of the Alberta Crown prosecution service made the decision to appoint a special prosecutor. They've gone and retained Ontario justice to provide legal advice that may be required by the RCMP. This is done independent of elected officials. I'd refer the hon. member to the RCMP for further questions about this matter. That is all I know. I don't know what questions the RCMP may be asking, who they are going to be asking, if they are asking. Refer them to the RCMP.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we took the Attorney General's advice and called the RCMP, who were not aware of any special prosecutor and referred us to the Crown prosecution service, who in turn referred us to the Attorney General's office, who had no answer either, can the minister quit this embarrassing runaround and say if there's a special prosecutor? Yes or no?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, public servants have made a clear statement regarding the fact that they are retaining special prosecutors to handle this matter. I'm advised that they have prosecutors from Ontario justice handling this matter should the RCMP require further advice regarding this.

Thank you.

**Ms Ganley:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to wait for the Attorney General to actually name the human being who will perform this work and given that he continues to pass the buck to the police, who cannot name this person, will the Attorney General tell this House if there's a special prosecutor, a secret prosecutor, or no prosecutor at all?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, this line of questioning is ridiculous. The public servants have made a clear statement, the same public servants that were representing when that person was the Minister of Justice. They've made a clear statement that they've retained a special prosecutor to provide legal advice regarding this from Ontario justice. This is independent of elected officials. This is the proper protocol for handling matters like this. They just don't like the answer. We keep providing it. I'll keep providing it again.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

### Rural Crime Prevention

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock constituency is a vast rural constituency, covering an area of 24,000 square kilometres. Over the last four years I continually heard from constituents concerned about their safety and the increased hostility and combative nature of rural crime. To the Minister of Justice: with many of the rural crimes being committed by repeat offenders travelling from one jurisdiction to another, what steps are being taken to improve the communication and information sharing of policing departments?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, on a regular basis I'm talking to officials with ALERT, the RCMP, the Calgary Police Service, the Edmonton Police Service, and stakeholders in other provinces regarding ways that we can make sure that information flows in an efficient way. We've had successes with project elder, which led to many arrests and taking drugs off the street. In addition to that, I plan on listening to Albertans. This is something that the previous government did not do. We're going to be making sure that we go out to rural communities, listen to people that are on the ground to make sure that we can help facilitate this and make sure we respond to Albertans.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given that the province of Alberta has seen an increase in rural crime under the previous NDP government and given that many of these crimes are being committed by repeat offenders and given that my constituents as well as local law enforcement agencies are becoming increasingly frustrated with a system that appears to be failing them, to the minister: what is this government doing to address the repeat offender problem within our justice system?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, we're going to be making sure that we provide our law enforcement officials with the tools and resources that they need, making sure that prosecutors are focusing on making sure they prosecute the important cases that are before the court. In addition to that, we're going to be providing funding for electronic monitoring technology. We're going to be making sure we listen to, basically, the concerns of Albertans. All Albertans deserve to feel safe in their community. Not a day goes by when I don't talk to one of our members here bringing me a new story about how people are concerned in rural Alberta. We're going to make sure we listen to Albertans and fulfill our campaign commitments.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given that many rural Albertans continue to feel unsafe in their homes even though they deserve to feel safe and given that law enforcement response times to help protect many of my constituents in remote locations can be over an hour, to the minister: what are you doing to help rural Albertans feel like the justice system is there to protect them, their loved ones, and their property?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, one of our campaign commitments was to make sure that we advocated for Criminal Code amendments, to make sure that they reflected the reality of the challenges facing so many Albertans in rural Alberta. Just recently I wrote a letter of support for Blaine Calkins' amendment to the Criminal Code that did just that. He tried to amend the Criminal Code. I hope that amendment gets the support it needs in our House of Commons and that changes happen through our Criminal Code. We won't stop fighting to make sure the Criminal Code reflects the reality so many Albertans are facing in rural Alberta. In addition to that, we're going to make sure that police and prosecutors have the resources they need to do their jobs well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a question.

### Opioid-related Deaths and Supervised Drug Consumption Sites

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A report released last week shows a decline in the number of opioid-related deaths although there is still more work to do. The associate minister hasn't said a word about this since the report came out on Friday. In fact,

advocates are now calling him out for downplaying the report and accusing him of doing so because it doesn't fit this UC government's plan to defund safe consumption sites. To the associate minister: will you admit that these sites may be playing a role in the decline in opioid-related deaths?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're aware of the update of the current stats. Let me tell you that when the number goes down, we're very pleased to see that. But we've been given the very cautious notion that because it's early in the day of having the data, we cannot be in any way less sort of conscious about the crisis that's still here. We're working diligently to address that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister's press secretary told the CBC that he expects the numbers in the quarterly report to rise and given that a drug policy researcher with the University of Calgary said that the lack of positive communication by this associate minister about the decline in deaths was because, quote, it's going against this current government's mandate to stall and review services, to the associate minister: were you really trying to downplay these figures because they run counter to the government philosophy around harm reduction and you know that by cancelling these sites, the rates will increase?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government happens to believe that the solution for this community crisis requires all communities working together. We're not here to judge whether one contribution is bigger than the other. We're working very hard to do a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy. We hope, through that, that we'll find multiple ways to work with all Albertans to make a difference.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that this government is only reviewing safe consumption sites and I'm curious as to how that answer makes any sense and given that after the quarterly report was released, Dr. Virani said that there's no excuse for not continuing to support and expand harm reduction and given that we have barely heard a word from this associate minister about the progress of his so-called review, to the minister. It's time to be open and transparent. Who's involved in the review, what is the status of the review, and will Albertans know what you really plan to do about the safe consumption sites that you've frozen funding for?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Mr. Luan:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to challenge my colleague on the other side. I understand that she's a social worker, too. When we talk about complex issues like this one, it requires comprehensive services. A system of care is what we're promoting here. We're not going to be just talking about one way of intervention as if that's the only way to solve the problem. We'll continue to work on this side of the House to develop the continuum of care with the recovery covered system of care to serve Albertans when they are ready to get help.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is rising.

### Affordable Daycare in Rural Communities

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This side of the House understands that it's integral for new mothers to gain access back into the workforce when they see fit. However, access to affordable child care proves to be a continual barrier for working moms, especially in rural Alberta. In our platform we committed to expanding \$25-per-day child care all across Alberta, including family day homes, making it easier for rural parents to get back to work, yet we continue to hear nothing from this government on any plans for affordable child care options. To the Premier: why is your government neglecting this important issue and ignoring the needs of rural working Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services has risen.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, we heard over the last four years that Albertans were struggling. Opportunity to find work and provide for their families is something that Albertans were looking for. We also know that a strong economy is what allows us to take care of those who need it the most. The \$25-a-day care program is a pilot. We are reviewing the results of the pilot, and I'm happy to see what that brings forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I received an e-mail from a farmer in Fairview whose wife is a public health nurse who is now debating whether they can afford to have another child because it is just too expensive to find reliable child care in rural Alberta and given that this family is contemplating that the mother drop out of the workforce, letting her skills atrophy and losing a valued public health nurse from the community, can the Minister of Children's Services outline how she will be addressing the lack of child care options in rural Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As a working parent myself, I do understand first-hand the challenges that parents face when trying to find child care that works for their children. I also want to recognize that what works for one family may not work for another and that what works for one child may not work for another. What we do have is a number of resources that can help parents to make the best decisions as they find child care for their families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think Albertans are needing some more concrete answers than that.

Given that this family from Fairview has gone to their local Economic Development Committee and discovered there are many other families in the same situation and given that this family raised this issue with the Member for Central Peace-Notley during the campaign but did not feel that the UCP had any plans to address the problem and given that this family appropriately sees this issue as critical to the economic health of this province, to the minister of economic development and trade: how will you be helping these families, or do you believe that ensuring women's participation in the workforce and the economy is just not your problem?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services.



**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our party ran on 375 commitments that focus on getting Albertans back to work and growing our economy so that we can provide the supports needed for families. I understand that finding child care can be a difficult decision for many families, but what we want to make sure is that parents have the resources they need to make informed decisions that suit the needs and circumstances of each individual child and their family.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Agricultural Concerns

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the previous administration our family farms in Alberta were put through tough times dealing with skyrocketing costs just simply trying to make a living. Alberta's agricultural payrolls have plummeted in unacceptable ways. Agricultural employment has dropped 19 per cent in four years. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how will this government maintain this important driver of Alberta's employment and economy?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first, I'd like to congratulate the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka on a very successful Ponoka Stampede.

But on that very important question, the past four years have been very difficult for Alberta farmers. First, Alberta farmers had increased input costs through the retail carbon tax from the NDP. Second, Alberta farmers had increased regulatory burden through unnecessary red tape and impractical compliance rules such as the disastrous NDP Bill 6. But this summer I will be touring around Alberta, actually, consulting with and talking to farmers on how we can make improvements.

**Mr. Orr:** Given that employment insurance premiums are rising, costing more money annually for employers, and given that the previous government made it mandatory for farmers to have WCB coverage for their employees, to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how will this government address the safety concerns of employees and employers' obligation to provide safe workplaces while balancing these with the costs of mandatory insurance coverage farmers now must pay?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago I consulted with over 30 commodity groups, over a hundred farmers and industry people, and one of the biggest things that did come up was the mandatory WCB insurance. From that consultation that we had, over 142 recommendations came to correct the NDP's failed Bill 6, and a survey after that consultation found that 97 per cent of the participants felt that the questions that we were asking were on the right track. Although 97 per cent isn't perfect, we're striving for it.

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, given that small farms especially do not have the same capabilities in terms of manpower or monetary funds as other businesses and given that farms have long been the backbone of our province's economy, to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how will this government ensure that small farms are able to survive and be viable participants in Alberta's economy going forward?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** I'd like to thank the member again for that very important question. Our consultations that we'll be doing this summer are going to have all different types of farms and all different sizes of farms because Albertans know that Alberta farmers grow high-quality food that feeds a global population. Mr.

Speaker, I would like to extend an invitation to you personally and to government members and also to members of the opposition to a barbecue tomorrow that we're having to show solidarity for our farmers that are having difficulty through market access and some trade issues. It's something where we'll be able to show the solidarity of this House to our farmers here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has a question.

### Métis Harvesting Policy

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In March our government signed historic agreements with the Metis Settlements General Council and the Métis Nation of Alberta that expanded Métis harvesting areas and recognized the rights of Métis people to hunt for subsistence, as is their time-honoured tradition. Has the Minister of Indigenous Relations reviewed these new agreements, and will he honour and protect them against outside pressures from nonindigenous hunters?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. The Métis people of Alberta have shaped Alberta's rich cultural history, society, and economy even before Alberta became a province, and we will continue to work with the Métis communities in ways that respect both their culture and the conservation of wildlife. To that end, under our stewardship this government commits itself to the path of reconciliation with the Métis people's right to hunt, fish, and trap for food where their ancestors have harvested game, and we support Environment and Parks in their Métis harvesting policy.

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Métis harvesters told us that these new agreements were a good step forward, and given that fish and wildlife officers do their job to the best of their ability according to the existing laws and given that under the previous policy Métis harvesters were routinely being charged and the old harvesting regions did not recognize the historic harvesting patterns of Métis people and given that the new policy ensures provisions for conservation and population management for fish and game, to the same minister: do you agree that these new agreements signed by our government strike the right balance between conservation and the rights of Métis harvesters?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government will take the necessary steps to monitor and implement the Métis harvesting in Alberta policy and evaluate opportunities for improvement. The updated policy will take effect in September of this year. We look forward to hearing how the policy is working, and we continue to engage with the Métis people of this province to ensure the traditional way of life.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that under these new agreements Métis harvesters are expecting to apply for the harvesting identification stickers in September and given that the Métis harvesters who hunt for subsistence contribute to the culture and identity of the communities and given that limiting those rights would represent a substantial step backwards in reconciliation, will

the minister ensure that Métis harvesters will be able to enjoy their rights to practise traditional subsistence hunting this September, as planned, with stickers on their Métis cards?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The revised policy embodies a change to identify new and expanded harvesting areas and supports the preferred means of fishing for Métis harvesters. These new regional areas are more reflective of traditional territories and use areas. This government is open to any feedback and changes that will need to be made in the spirit of open and honest dialogue, reflecting our commitment to reconciliation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

#### Edmonton Courthouse

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent rain forced staff upholding justice in Edmonton law courts to work their way through a maze of two dozen or more buckets to collect water leaking from the ceiling to get to work. Given that this Minister of Infrastructure's response left much to be desired – his spokesperson said they had, quote, mitigated the major sources of water – we need a longer term solution. To the Minister of Infrastructure: have you fixed the roof permanently, or should the law courts staff keep their buckets at the ready?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, yes, there was a leak, and that particular facility required some repair. The source of the leak has been located and permanently sealed. The general contractor, Bird Construction, confirmed it was a test hole that was drilled at some point during the construction exploration for the new galleria, and the problem has been rectified.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good to hear, but given that the presence of buckets in the lobby is still a common one and given that the building is in need of major repairs due to the presence of asbestos, cramped conditions, and inadequate insulation and air circulation and given that this ongoing water damage will only make the situation worse, to the same minister: will you commit to a plan for a major overhaul or replacement of the building? Clearly, the weather shouldn't dictate whether justice can be served in this province.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, the problem has been addressed, and the room has thoroughly dried and has been cleared of any mould or environmental concerns. The department is finishing cleaning and will be putting the area back into service in the coming days.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't address the inadequate insulation, the asbestos, or any of the cramped conditions that were asked about in that second question.

Given that they want a robust justice system to address rural crime, I can't figure out what the priorities of this government are. The members on this side know that investing in justice is important, unlike the members opposite, who voted against the funding. Now, to the Minister of Justice: are you aware that while your Premier gives a 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway on one hand to wealthy donors, your colleague the Infrastructure minister is letting your justice system literally fall apart?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South will ask his questions without a preamble following question 4.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I really wonder. I mean, if this member, when he was in government, had put that much energy into asking his Finance minister, his Justice minister to fix the financial issues we got into the fiscal mess, \$100 billion debt, if they had fixed that, today we wouldn't need the buckets to collect the water remaining.

#### Investment in Alberta and Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, under the previous NDP government we saw a mass exodus of capital and investment out of Alberta. While Albertans were stuck dealing with the recession and tough economic times, the NDP's policies only made matters worse. The carbon tax, unnecessary red tape, and other ideological bills made it even harder for everyday Albertans simply to just get by. Minister, can you please tell this House: what is the government doing to right the wrongs of the previous NDP government and help get Albertans back to work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has risen.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. The previous NDP government left this province in a fiscal mess. It left this province with a very uncompetitive business environment. We saw the flight of capital by the billions from this province and with it jobs and opportunities. Our government has taken very quick action to materially improve the business environment by repealing the carbon tax, introducing the job-creation corporate tax cut, working on reducing red tape, and modernizing our regulatory regime.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that under the previous government we saw investment decrease in almost every industry – a 61 per cent decrease in the mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction sector, a 27 per cent decrease in the finance, insurance, and real estate sector, and a 21 per cent decrease in investment in the construction sector – can the minister please update us all on what the government's plan is to bring investment back to Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member lays out the challenge, I think, very well this afternoon. Again, our government has moved very quickly to create a much more competitive, in fact the most competitive, business environment in all of Canada and one of the most competitive business environments in North America by introducing the job-creation tax cut, which will move our corporate tax rate from 12 per cent to 8 per cent. We've repealed the carbon tax, which will provide relief to not only every business but every Albertan.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you to the minister for the answer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that during this economic downturn everyday Albertans were tightening their belts and trying desperately to spend within their means and given that the NDP's spending addiction put Alberta on a path for 100 or more billion dollars in debt in just a few short years, will the minister please let this House know: how is the government dealing with the financial

mess left behind by the NDP, and what is the path forward to finally ensure that Alberta's books are balanced?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans elected our government to bring fiscal balance to this province, to make decisions that are in the best interests of Albertans. The MacKinnon panel will be providing a report to this government ahead of our budget deliberations. We look forward to that report. The annual report, which was just released, demonstrated a \$40 billion loss in equity in this province's balance sheet over the last five years. This government will do better.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has the call.

### Tourism Promotion

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a beautiful province that offers so much to see and do. People come from all over the province, all over the country, and indeed all over the world to experience the many sights and attractions we have to offer. The beauty of the west country is one such example in my constituency, that I am proud to represent. A strong tourism sector will create jobs and growth in Alberta, and our government supports innovative approaches to sustaining funding for tourism, promotion, and marketing through partnerships with the private sector. Will the minister explain how Travel Alberta's mandate will be reoriented to support this endeavour?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The tourism sector contributes more than \$8.5 billion towards our economy each year and employs more than 130,000 full-time employees. We are currently working on developing a 10-year tourism strategy that will reorient Travel Alberta's mandate to more effectively work with the private sector and the creation of public-private partnerships.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in the last two months I've had many conversations with the towns of Breton, Thorsby, and Drayton Valley, among other centres, about increasing tourism in my constituency and given that cutting red tape is an important objective of this government and given that we have heard from many in the tourism industry of the intrusive laws, rules, and regulations, will the minister please advise what our government is planning to do to remove unnecessary hurdles for our tourism operators?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. We have already taken action to remove unnecessary red tape for our tourism operators. My colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks has increased the lease lengths on public lands from 25 to 60 years. This move came at the request of the tourism sector and will allow operators to secure long-term financing, attract investment, and expand to showcase Alberta in new and innovative ways.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the private sector delivers the services that support the tourism industry in Alberta and given that the private sector has a role to play in assisting government in promoting Alberta as a tourism destination and given that tourism cannot grow in Alberta if government and the private sector do not work together and given that our platform calls for a reprofile of existing government funding for tourism into a tourism partnership incentive fund, will the minister please advise how it will manage this fund to attract and identify sources of private sector support within my constituency?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The tourism partnership investment fund will be a combination of several existing funds and programs and will be a formative part of our 10-year tourism strategy, which will engage tourism stakeholders from across our province to grow the sector. Travel Alberta will use this fund to identify effective private-sector operators that can be partners with our government in growing the tourism sector, particularly in the wake of our changes to public land leases.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will move to the rest of the daily Routine. If you have other commitments outside of the Chamber, please get to those quickly and move expediently.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of Government Motion 27.

Be it resolved that the 2017 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future for review. The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued. In accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 60 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has a tabling.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the copies of an article in *The Guardian* by Mark Rice-Oxley, and it's titled *Austerity and Inequality Fuelling Mental Illness, Says Top UN Envoy*.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? Well done.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act the government of Alberta 2018-19 annual report. On behalf of hon.

Mr. Madu, Minister of Municipal Affairs, pursuant to the Municipal Government Act Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board 2018-2019 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order, points of privilege. The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

### Privilege Threatening a Member

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, Standing Order 15(5) says that

a Member may always raise a question of privilege in the Assembly immediately after the words are uttered or the events occur that give rise to the question, in which case the written notice required under suborder (2) is not required.

As you are aware, a question of privilege was raised by the Minister of Transportation on Thursday, June 27, during the course of debate regarding threatening comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. In the course of an exchange in question period last Thursday the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud clearly stated, on page 1283 of *Hansard*, "I don't need the House leader, by the way; we're coming for you."

Now, Mr. Speaker, as an experienced law enforcement officer I can tell you that outside of this Assembly this is a clear investigation if a complaint was made to the police. Then we would be investigating the complaint under section 264.1(1)(a) of the Criminal Code. The mens rea in the case can only lead a reasonable person to conclude that the words uttered by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud were meant to convey a threat and even imply violence. In other words, they were meant to intimidate.

In *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* by Maingot it states that:

Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. The assaulting, menacing, or insulting of any Member on the floor of the House or while he is coming or going to or from the House, or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament, is a violation of the rights of Parliament.

Now, Mr. Speaker, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the third edition, states on page 107 and 108:

In order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, Members should be able to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. Assaulting, threatening, or insulting a Member during a proceeding of Parliament, or while the Member is circulating within the Parliamentary Precinct, is a violation of the rights of Parliament. Any form of intimidation of a Member with respect to the Member's actions during a proceeding in Parliament could amount to contempt.

Now, *Erskine May Parliamentary Practice* discusses intimidation on page 146, and it states:

To attempt to intimidate a Member in his parliamentary conduct by threats is also a contempt, cognate to those mentioned above. Actions of this character which have been proceeded against include impugning the conduct of Members and threatening them with further exposure if they took part in debates.

There are also a few examples, Mr. Speaker:

threatening to communicate with Members' constituents to the effect that, if they did not reply to a questionnaire, they should be considered as not objecting to certain sports; publishing posters containing a threat regarding the voting of Members in a forthcoming debate; informing Members that to vote for a particular bill would be regarded as treasonable by a future administration; summoning a Member to a disciplinary hearing of his trade union in consequence of a vote given in the House; and threatening to end investment by a public corporation in a Member's constituency, if the Member persisted in making speeches along the lines of those in a preceding debate.

Mr. Speaker, which one of these examples that I previously mentioned was the member talking about, or is there another example that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud meant when she said "by the way; we're coming for you"? If these actions or comments were made outside of this Chamber and a complaint was made by the Government House Leader, then the police would have reasonable suspicion to begin an investigation for uttering threats. With video evidence, with witness testimony I would argue that the evidence is sufficient on reasonable and probable grounds to possibly lay a charge of uttering threats. However, these comments were made inside this Chamber, and therefore the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud enjoys freedom of speech and therefore immunity from criminal or civil action, but that doesn't mean that there aren't some limits on that freedom inside the Chamber.

2:50

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 97 states under the heading Misuse of Freedom of Speech:

The privilege of freedom of speech is an extremely powerful immunity and on occasion Speakers have had to caution Members about its misuse.

It goes on to say:

Speaker Parent also emphasized the need for Members to use great care in exercising their right to speak freely in the House:

... paramount to our political and parliamentary systems is the principle of freedom of speech, a member's right to stand in this House unhindered to speak his or her mind. However when debate in the House centres on sensitive issues, as it often does, I would expect that members would always bear in mind the possible effects of their statements and hence be prudent in their tone and choice of words.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would further argue that the words of the member were directed at the Government House Leader and were done in a way that was meant to silence him and therefore deny both his right to freedom of speech in this Assembly and the rights of his constituents to be represented. In fact, this wasn't the first time that the NDP Official Opposition have tried to silence the Government House Leader. You may remember the distasteful remarks made on June 26, 2019, by the Member for Lethbridge-West when she said, "To the minister, who shouldn't need a guard dog, so the House leader can stay on his leash."

I would also draw your attention to a similar situation on December 5, 2017, Mr. Speaker, made by the Government House Leader of the day, Mr. Brian Mason, when there was an alleged threatening gesture. He felt that there was a prima facie breach of privilege due to how the government viewed the threatening gesture made by a member of the opposition.

Now, I will conclude, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a matter of debate, that this is not a matter of opinion or a difference as to the facts. This was clearly meant by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to threaten and attempt to intimidate the Government House Leader in the performance and execution of his parliamentary duties. Therefore, this is a prima facie question of privilege.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to rise and respond to the government. I just would like to start off by saying that this is not a point of privilege, however would have been better suited through the point of order at the time. If we reference *Beauchesne*, section 26, page 12:

A question of order concerns the interpretation to be put upon the rules of procedure and is a matter for the Speaker or, in a committee, for the Chairman to determine.

(2) A question of privilege, on the other hand, is a question partly of fact and partly of law – the law of contempt of Parliament.

While the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud could have been more careful in her choice of phrasing, in context she clearly intended to communicate that the minister would be called on to answer a question later in the day if we refer to *Hansard* of 1281 and 1289 for that day. Using unparliamentary language does not constitute a prima facie breach of privilege. While the language may have been unparliamentary, it does not rise to level of breaching the member's privileges.

Our member, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, is prepared to apologize and withdraw her remarks, but this is not a breach of privilege. I hardly think that calling on a minister to wait his turn and let his colleagues answer a question directed at them constitutes a breach.

In *Beauchesne*, section 420, on page 123, “the Chair will allow a question to be put to a certain Minister; but it cannot insist that that Minister rather than another should answer it.”

Also in section 31 of *Beauchesne* on page 13, “A dispute arising between two Members, as to the allegation of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.” The minister was not in fact obstructed. He continued to participate robustly in question period. He rose three times to address questions after the alleged incident occurred.

If you refer to *Hansard* on 1283 to 1289, the *House of Commons* on page 109,

In order to find a prima facie breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the Member's claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions and that the matter is directly related to a proceeding [of this House].

Again, I think it's important to acknowledge that the Government House Leader did rise again repeatedly after that incident, responding to the questions at hand, which directly demonstrates that he at that time did not feel like he was being intimidated, nor did it impede his ability to continue to do his job. Again I would point out that this is not a point of privilege in concerning the rights of members, and it did not impede the work of the member in his capacity.

Again, if we look at the precedents on page 18, March 6, 2017, Speaker Wanner ruled that the language used was unparliamentary and that it did cause disorder, which would have been the subject of a point of order, but uttering words that are unparliamentary does not constitute a question of privilege.

**The Speaker:** Well, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to offer my apologies for the statement I made last week. It was a misstatement. I misspoke. I meant to say: we are coming to you next. I said: coming for you next. I acknowledge that that was an inappropriate comment and it was a misstatement. I retract the statement if you permit, and through you to the Government House Leader I offer my apologies for any fear or intimidation he might have felt. Certainly, it was a misstatement on my part. I accept your judgment on this, and I apologize for it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am uncertain as to what the best path forward is.

As many will know, it is customary for this Assembly and many Assemblies that with respect to a question of privilege if a member withdraws their comments and apologizes, that would traditionally

conclude the matter. However, the Deputy Government House Leader for the Official Opposition chose to spend a good portion of time speaking directly to how this, in fact, wasn't a point of privilege. As such, I am inclined to take some time to consider whether or not she, in fact, was correct. The difficult position that we are all in is that I must take the member at her word when she apologizes and withdraws.

What I will do is that I will say this. I will accept the withdrawal and apology of this very serious matter with respect to uttering threats and a point of privilege inside the Assembly. However, I wish to make some additional comments considering the remarks from last week. I'd like to remind members of the Official Opposition that they alone are responsible for the tone of the words that they use and that they should ensure that these remarks do not inflame the debate or lead to disorder or a lack of decorum inside the Assembly.

Now, I recognize that we are all moving into the seventh consecutive week of sitting, but we bear the responsibility of ensuring that the words that we use are chosen carefully and that the words we use are in accordance with the parliamentary traditions that this Assembly and the Westminster parliamentary system deserves. I implore upon this hon. member that they do a much better job in the future when a question of privilege could arise with respect to uttering threats directed at the government.

As such, I will accept the apology. This matter is concluded, and I consider it dealt with.

We are at ordres du jour.

3:00

## Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 2 An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any questions or comments? As a reminder, we are on amendment A2, where the substance had to do with possibly changing the title. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods standing.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm very pleased to rise to speak to Bill 2 during this Committee of the Whole debate. I hope that everyone had a really happy Canada Day long weekend. I hope that all members had the opportunity to visit their constituents in their ridings, take in the many celebrations as Canadians came together to celebrate living in the greatest country in this world, and I hope that members of the government caucus had the opportunity to talk to their constituents about what Bill 2 would mean, which is that this past Canada Day was the last statutory holiday, should Bill 2 pass with no amendments, where all Albertans would receive maybe some time off, maybe a day's wage so that they can spend time with their family and celebrate something that we all hold very dear.

With Canada Day in mind, I would like to raise my concerns with Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, because it is going to roll back protections for statutory holiday pay, essentially taking money away from workers who depend on it. Now, often when I speak to Bill 2, Mr. Chair, I like to remind this Assembly that the changes we are making are to the minimum employment standards. Those who rely on the minimum employment standards are often our more

vulnerable workers, perhaps our newest entrants into the workforce, perhaps those who are working in precarious jobs. That tends to be where minimum employment standards are truly relied upon.

The people who will be deprived through the changes in Bill 2 of general holiday pay on important holidays like Canada Day are going to be those who likely need that money the most, where that little bit of a day's wage means more time spent with family. So in honour of Canada Day, which just happened to fall on a Monday this year but is one of those holidays that lands on different days of the week any given year – when Canada Day falls on a Saturday, office workers and those who tend to work Monday to Friday, 9 to 5, could be the ones who receive no benefit for that statutory holiday.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand to speak once again on Bill 2 but to really put that very recent memory of a joyous Canada Day celebration into the minds of the members. It is the workers who were there celebrating on Canada Day that would not receive general holiday pay if it was a nonstandard workday for them, reintroducing a rule that will be unique to Alberta. No other jurisdiction has this rule, Mr. Chair. Alberta was the outlier before we came along and updated it for the first time in 30 years – employment standards hadn't been updated in that long – to review all other jurisdictions and make changes to put Alberta on a similar playing field, to make sure that Canadian citizens no matter which province they live in all get to celebrate Canada Day and all get that statutory holiday benefit of maybe another day off, maybe a little bit of pay. This change in Bill 2 is going to put us out of step again with every other province because Alberta will become the only place where, perhaps, someone would not receive any benefit.

As an example, in 2022, Mr. Chair, Christmas will fall on a weekend, and New Year's Day will fall on a weekend. That means many families may not receive any additional time off, may not receive wages for those statutory holidays. I object strongly to this change because I believe that Albertans, just like every other Canadian, deserve to have the same basic protections that are the Canadian standard and that we brought into the employment standards changes in what I would call the Canadian mainstream.

Bill 2 rolls back the general holidays, could impact and will impact workers when it comes to Canada Day, and adds back in eligibility requirements such that someone needs to have worked 30 days in the last 12 months in order to apply, which can be difficult sometimes when someone starts as part-time, when somebody works irregular hours. Reintroducing that eligibility period, I would suggest, doesn't put us wildly out of line. There are other provinces with eligibility periods, but I do think it's a little bit of, to use a Christmas analogy, a Grinch move.

I would like to see changes to employment standards work to address the challenges that we currently have in the system, the fact that so many of our precarious workers are not necessarily covered by those minimum employment standards. When somebody works in a contractlike position, if somebody is driving for Uber, minimum wages and hours of work and such can be very, very difficultly applied to them. So a lot of our precarious workers are lacking basic protections.

Bill 2 doesn't address some of those more complicated issues. It simply rolls back the rights of workers when it comes to holiday pay, when it comes to making sure that our workers get what is owed to them when they do, for example, overtime. That's another aspect of this act that I have spoken about, but it bears a little bit of repeating. Under these changes banked overtime in Alberta only, no other jurisdiction in Canada, will be banked at straight time rather than time and a half, essentially ignoring the fact that overtime, time spent away from family, time spent beyond eight

hours per day or 44 hours per week, should be done at a premium that recognizes the extra work that that employee is doing.

I even heard on a CBC radio interview, Mr. Chair, an employer talking about when the previous government first implemented the time-and-a-half change. Their concern was that it was going to be too onerous a cost. But on this CBC lunch-hour call-in show this business owner said that as soon as they began paying time and a half for overtime, they actually saw the efficiency of their workers. The workers' interest in making sure they were hitting their deadlines, by giving those few extra hours of overtime, went way up, and it increased profitability for the company because when you pay workers that fair wage, when you treat workers with respect, that is good for business.

This bill, which is predicated on removing the banking of overtime at time and a half, moving it down to straight time, which is predicated on taking away stat holidays when every other Canadian worker – I will say that this government has done a very poor job of communicating on this bill, first, around the overtime piece with misleading information, confusing banked overtime and paid overtime. To be clear to you, Mr. Chair, I understand that paid overtime is not changing. I still have strong concerns around the banked overtime rate being paid at straight time rather than time and a half specifically because it still is less money for those workers, it is less time with family, and it is less value for those workers.

### 3:10

Also, when it comes to the stat holiday piece, the true impact of this change to workers is that in 2022 a worker working Monday to Friday from 9 to 5, unlike every other Canadian, would not receive any benefit. Where this government, I think, could do a better job of communicating this is: why? Why do Albertans deserve less when it comes to a stat holiday than every other Canadian? Why does Alberta deserve to have lower minimum standards than every other jurisdiction in Canada?

These are very important questions and strong concerns that I have regarding this piece of legislation. The general holiday pay change and the banked overtime change put us completely out of line with the rest of our country. We've just all spent Canada Day celebrating how great our country is, celebrating all of the things that we value about the country of Canada, our diversity and the opportunity for people to work hard, to make something of themselves. These changes, which change the minimum standards, impact the most vulnerable among us. That is who will lose out on the wages. That is who is going to lose out on stat holiday pay, who is going to lose out on banked overtime.

We know because of the Alberta government's past experiences, because of the consultation that I had the honour of doing when we were introducing Bill 17, those first changes to employment standards. There were many, many workers in our province who felt intimidated by employers, who felt powerless when it came to banked overtime agreements. When you're talking about an employer-employee relationship, especially when you're dealing with our most vulnerable workers, it is not always as easy as just walking into your boss's office and negotiating a better salary or asking for a better overtime banking agreement. That's not realistic. It ignores the reality of hundreds of thousands of our workers. When they are working to put food on the table and are dependent on that job, they're not always in a position of power where they're able to go in and demand changes.

While I was out talking to people throughout Canada Day – I ended up at eight different events, Mr. Chair; it was a really busy day – throughout the day it really struck me that there were people at Canada Day celebrations yesterday who would be getting stat

holiday pay, as they should, but it would maybe be the last time that that would happen if Canada Day should ever fall on a Monday again. That's done deliberately on the part of this government to bow to the lobbyists who have asked for these changes, putting Alberta out of line with the rest of Canada.

I'm going to go back to the comment I had earlier, Mr. Chair, which is simply that this government has not explained why Alberta workers deserve less than every other Canadian worker in our country, why they would not all deserve statutory holiday pay, why Alberta would be the only place where someone could receive no benefit for Christmas Day or Canada Day, why in Alberta banked overtime would be at straight time rather than time and a half. They've titled this bill An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, but I do not believe that there is a company that will move here and start their business because they won't have to pay for Christmas anymore. I don't think that's what we want for our citizens, and I'm very concerned about the changes in this bill.

Having just come from Canada Day celebrations, having had the opportunity to enjoy barbecue and cake, the fact that that was a stat holiday that some workers were receiving a benefit for but may not receive that benefit again really struck me. I was certainly curious whether members of the government caucus were having similar thoughts as they talked to joyous people on Canada Day or whether the connection between Bill 2, the legislation they're passing in this House, and the people they represent, the voters that they were talking to at those barbecues, has been drawn clearly enough, because that is who we're talking about. We're talking about the people who keep this province running, the workers, hard-working Albertans, and they deserve to have modern workplace laws. They deserve to be treated fairly, as other Canadians, across this province.

Making sure that Albertans have the same rights and benefits as other Canadians was something that I was most proud of that came from the work that I was able to do as minister of labour in my time in that office. To see that immediately attacked, and in a way that puts us out of line with the rest of Canada, strikes me as very disappointing. I think that working towards more family-friendly workplaces, making sure that there are adequate protections for vulnerable workers and that we're tackling some of the modern challenges in our workplaces, like precarious work, is very important work, that I would encourage the government to turn their attention to.

But picking the pockets, stealing holiday pay, and cutting banked overtime: these are rolling back things for Alberta workers. I just don't believe that the government is getting it right with these changes to Bill 2. I really appreciate the opportunity to stand and to speak to these concerns once more, Mr. Chair, especially given Canada Day having just finished.

It was quite the celebration. I want to say thank you to all the volunteers who put on the amazing events all around the province. I saw lots of photos from different corners of the province and amazing, amazing celebrations taking place. I would wish everyone: I hope you had a great Canada Day.

I hope you will not accept what's currently drafted in Bill 2 to take away stat holiday pay for our most vulnerable workers. It's not something that we need. We haven't clearly articulated why Albertans deserve less than other Canadians. I strongly object to this part of Bill 2; as well, of course, the changing to banked overtime.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I will also take this opportunity to just remind the House that we are discussing amendment A2. I took the opportunity at the very

start to say that, but that's okay. Obviously, members have as many opportunities to speak in Committee of the Whole as they would like, so I didn't think that there was any issue with that at the time.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West rising.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You're most telepathic in your ability to see that I wanted to speak even before. I was just thinking about speaking, and you read that. That's a skill. Well, thank you. I take the opportunity to speak on amendment A2 with some interest, and I certainly think that we are trying to be very reasonable here as the Official Opposition, looking for practical ways by which we can collaborate to make this sort of raw clay of Bill 2 into something positive.

I was thinking about Bill 2 over the weekend, actually, not in a dissimilar way to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, because, of course, we did have one of our big statutory holidays yesterday. You can see that people were anxious, after the pretty rough weather during the day, to get out and enjoy themselves with the fireworks and families and tens of thousands of people, really, out and about. Again, it makes you think about the importance of statutory holidays but the importance of enshrining them with coherent legislation and regulation that allows the time off for people to enjoy events like that and to be compensated properly, too.

You know, when we start to send messages that would compromise the integrity of our labour laws in regard to regulation and overtime pay and so forth, then things start to break apart. I just got a message from a constituent on Saturday talking about an overtime issue – yesterday, actually; it would have been yesterday, yeah, on the actual holiday – where their employer was taking some liberty around working on the statutory holiday and kind of changed the rules on the fly, which was, of course, against the law, and this employer will have to retract and pay compensation properly. But I thought to myself: you know, once you start opening up fissures or cracks or weak points here at the legislative level, the message trickles down to employers: hey, things are on the change, or things are loose, and I can perhaps make changes myself – right? – around overtime pay. That just further causes confusion, and we don't need that, I think, Mr. Chair.

3:20

Another thing I was thinking about on the weekend as well is that it's important for this Chamber to look across the country to make sure that the laws we make generally are in keeping with the standard that is set across Canada and specifically that we have labour law that's coherent and matches or is some facsimile of laws and regulations in other jurisdictions and provinces across the country. If we are doing these things in regard to holiday pay, for example, we will be out of sync, synchronization, with places like British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec – right? – all of the big populations, the big provinces. You know, when you are out of step with your provincial cousins, then you start to create some asymmetrical behaviour across the country.

I know from our experience in making the laws and regulations over the last four years that this is a very important consideration, that we'd always take into account: what are the other jurisdictions doing? It was funny, almost, in a way because it became this pattern where we were, like, the 10th province to put in some regulation that would make things safer or more streamlined or more efficient. It was so often that Alberta's regulations and laws were so out of keeping, out of step, with the rest of the provinces. It's like we missed the boat on so many things.

That is just a useful way to remind yourself – right? – that if we make these holiday pay changes, we will be out of sync with most

of the other provinces in the country. In regard to the banked overtime changes we would be out of sync with all of the other provinces and territories in the country of Canada. You know, again, that's really not the best message to send, right? It clearly demonstrates that this is a regressive law that we are debating here and that it needs and deserves careful, second consideration at the very least.

Yeah, Mr. Chair, I just wanted to kind of bring up those things that I was thinking about on the weekend in regard to labour law generally and Bill 2 specifically. I think it's eminently reasonable that we do move forward on amendment A2, and I encourage all members to vote with us here as soon as we can.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, anyone to speak to A2? I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud standing.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to amendment A2, which I, again, think is a very reasonable amendment with respect to the title of this bill. As you know, the members on this side of the House had been suggesting that a more appropriate title for the bill might be the pick-your-pockets bill, and we still maintain that. However, I think that we wouldn't anticipate that the government would necessarily agree with such a change in the name of the title of the bill. But what's being put forward here in amendment A2, I think, is actually an accurate reflection, at least, that the government can get behind.

You know, we've been standing up on this side of the House on every bill that the government has brought forward. Of course, our responsibility as the Official Opposition is to do just that and to make sure that all bills that are brought forward by government do get proper debate and discussion in this Assembly. Sometimes it appears as though the members on the other side are shocked or quite disappointed that we continue to debate this legislation, but of course – and many of the members on the other side will recall that – that is the job of the Official Opposition. More importantly, I would just point out that with respect to many of these bills, if we were not to stand up here and give them a fulsome discussion and fulsome debate, I think we would find that these bills would not be discussed at all because there's very little coming from the members on the government side to actually explain their rationale and their thinking around this bill, around many of the bills. Therefore, we are going to keep standing up.

One of the reasons why we continue to debate Bill 2 and to propose amendments to that bill is because we believe, on this side of the House, that this is not what Albertans voted for. Now, we know that the members on the other side continually stand up and say that they won the election and they won 63 seats in the election. That is accurate, of course. But not everything that was part of their platform was fully endorsed by Albertans. I think we're going to find that those will peter out as this government's term continues on.

With respect to what's being proposed in Bill 2 and with respect to overtime, that was certainly not part of what was put forward by the government as part of their mandate. No. In fact, I see that the hon. minister of labour is nodding his head. However, with respect to overtime, unfortunately, I've got, actually, a tweet here from the Premier from April 3, 2019, in which he actually says, if I may:

The latest NDP lie is a ridiculous claim that the UCP is going to somehow jeopardize or weaken overtime pay for Alberta workers.

That is complete rubbish. Of course we will continue with the legal obligation for overtime. Period. That's not up for debate.

That was during the election campaign. That was the Premier standing up and saying that, no, overtime pay was not going to be messed with, was not going to be altered by the government.

Then we see, a couple of weeks into their legislative session, that, yes, in fact, they are bringing forward legislation to change overtime. At the very least I think the minister of labour and I can agree that there is some room for dispute, given the Premier's comments. It is not straightforward to say that it was very clear to all workers in Alberta that their overtime pay would be reduced. Certainly, the Premier gave some assurances during the campaign that that would not take place, yet here we are.

On that matter, we do believe it is our obligation as the Official Opposition to stand up on behalf of our constituents, particularly those workers who were affected by the drop in oil prices. For particularly the oil and gas workers to then be told that their overtime pay is also going to be cut: I'm quite shocked by that. I think it is our obligation to stand up in this House and speak to that because I don't believe that voters voted to have their pay cut. That's not what they agreed to. So we will stand up and continue to debate that.

My colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West did an excellent job talking about how we should be considering what other provinces do in the country. One of the things I've mentioned before in this House; I'll continue to mention it: as just a citizen watching what was going on and somebody who practises in labour and employment, I saw the previous government, the NDP government, do a lot of work just to bring our labour and employment code up to the national standards. A lot of the changes that were made were not going above and beyond what was happening in other provinces. It was simply time in this province to have the legislation brought up to the standards that workers all across this country get to enjoy. That's significant.

There was significant work that was done around compassionate leave and sick leave and all those kinds of things, but some of those included bringing up our overtime pay, our banked overtime pay requirements, to just simply match what other provinces were doing. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West went through and talked about what happened in other provinces. You know, I'll list them, the other provinces that provide overtime banked pay at time and a half. British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut all do that. They all provide overtime pay at time and a half, not at straight time.

3:30

It's one thing, I think, for a government to say: we've got a different agenda; we're going to implement a different ideology, a different principle. Of course, that's what happens when you have a change in government. However, what is being proposed by the government right now is actually just regressive. It's actually moving us backwards in time to a time when Alberta was the black sheep of the legislative labour and employment codes. We were so far behind on so many things. I don't see how this government sees that it serves Alberta workers to continue to do that again.

I think there were a lot of oil and gas workers, construction workers – a lot of those people live in my riding – that were very concerned about this. I heard that at the doors. They couldn't actually believe that a government that claimed that their platform is based on, you know, economy, jobs, pipeline would actually cut the pay of those workers, who had worked so hard and had fought to maintain their employment in many situations over the last four years, during the recession, with the drop in oil prices. Now they're being hurt and punished. I don't think that that was what they were expecting. They couldn't believe that this government was doing it. We continue to not believe that they're doing it, and that's why we're here today.



The same is true with respect to the crossjurisdictional comparison of what's happened with the general holiday pay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West did a great job talking about, again, what we're talking about doing here, maintaining Alberta at the same level as other provinces in this country. Again, I believe that this approach of rolling back general holiday pay eligibility for people who do not work on that day is really just going to simply hurt workers.

The government has made a lot of promises as to how they're going to bring back jobs in this province. They're gambling on a lot of big things like the 4.5 billion dollar tax cut to corporations, and they're gambling on some little things. At the end of the day, those little things to them, cutting general holiday pay, are actually making an impact on average families. I simply don't know why in this province, when it comes to basic protections for employees and for workers, we want to be the furthest behind. When the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods was the minister of labour, what she was doing was not taking Alberta so far ahead of all the other provinces that it was outrageous for employers. I worked on behalf of employers, and certainly a lot of them did take some time to adjust to the new changes, but it was not going to be so hurtful to them to simply maintain what was going on across the country. It was maintaining a minimum national standard, and it was simply Alberta catching up – catching up – with what was going on across this country.

Now, this government seems dead set on rolling back on the pockets, on the backs of average workers. I think that in this House we've already gone through the numbers about the impact that this has on the average worker: oil and gas workers, \$350 a week; construction workers, \$200 a week. I know that the government and the minister of labour will speak about how these are averaging agreements that the employees enter into. But let's be honest. We sit here and we talk a lot about how tough it has been economically in this province since the drop in oil prices. Those employees are not in a great bargaining position to talk about what they want and don't want in those averaging agreements.

If they've got a job, a steady job, with an employer or are starting a new job with an employer who says, "I want to enter into an agreement," there's not a lot of bargaining power. It's not accurate or fair to describe the relationship between employees and employers when it comes to negotiating these agreements as balanced; it's not. For any employee who's being approached by an employer saying, "I want to enter into a flexible averaging agreement; you don't have to do it, but, you know, I'm sure there'll be an employee who would," they're going to do it. I don't think it's a fair assessment of the situation to simply say, "Well, employees, it's an agreement; it's a mutual agreement between the parties," because, really, as is often the case, the bargaining power is off, particularly at a time when workers are feeling most vulnerable.

In that situation I think we have to be honest about what we're doing here, which is that we're really rolling back the employment and labour standards in this province to be, again, the weakest across the country. I simply don't know and I don't think that it's going to have the impact that this government or the minister of labour would suggest it's going to have on the economy, on building jobs. This, to me, seems like a petty way to put a little bit more money back into employers' pockets, taking it away from workers. I simply don't think that that's something we should be proud of in this province, to say that we've got the weakest labour and employment standards for workers. I'm not proud of that.

I think we want to at least meet the national standard, and then can't we see if we can be even better? Employees, workers, once

again, are Albertans. They are the people who we want to be spending their money in the economy, investing. They've got mortgages to pay; they've got rent to pay. It benefits us all as well. There seems to be a focus from this government of focusing on making sure there's money in the pockets of employers and corporations to invest, but we also need to make sure that there's money in the pockets of workers and employees so that they can spend that money, so that they can pay their mortgages, so that they can take their kids on vacation, so that they can buy their kids the things they need, basic supplies often.

I do believe that if we're not going to be amending the name of the bill to the pick-your-pockets bill, I think what's being proposed in amendment A2 is a reasonable amendment, and I hope that the members will support that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Any other members looking to speak? I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to this item. I just want to correct a couple of issues raised by the other side. I've spoken twice already to this, so I will be short and brief. You know, just a couple of items. Again, you know, thank you to all hon. members.

As indicated in my previous remarks, we will probably agree to disagree on this because we have a very different view of what the impacts will be, but the question being asked by the other side in terms of the changes is: why are we doing this? This is about creating jobs. This is what we ran on, and this is what we put in our platform. In particular, I'd like to comment. You know, one of the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud: this wasn't in your platform. I would like to refer you to page 21 of the platform in terms of both banked overtime and general holidays. This was very clearly in our platform, that we would reverse the change in 2018 that eliminated the option for workers and employers to develop a straight-time banked hours arrangement, and this has no impact on overtime pay.

This is exactly what we're doing. The legislative change that we're making in Bill 2 is going back to banked overtime. It does not impact payment of overtime. If individuals are going to get paid overtime, it will still be done at time and a half. I just want to point out to the hon. member across the way that we did run on this and, in fact, got elected on this item.

The other point I'd like to make is on general holidays, changing the rules about general holidays. We ran on this. Again, it's clearly stated on page 21 as part of Bill 2:

- Return to a regular/irregular workday distinction for calculating holiday pay
- Return to a holiday pay qualifying period of 30 ... days in the 12 months preceding a general holiday.

The reason for actually making these changes, Mr. Chair, is about creating jobs. We heard from employers that the increase in the minimum wage and the change to general holiday rules resulted, particularly in the restaurant industry but in other industries as well, in these higher costs, resulting in reduction of hours and fewer staff. So this is about creating jobs. Now, the members opposite don't believe that, but they also don't believe that their increase in the minimum wage impacted jobs in spite of the evidence. That is what we're doing here. We're addressing an issue, created by the previous government policies, to get Albertans back to work, and that's what we're doing here with Bill 2.

The last item I just want to point out – and I find it interesting. There are arguments on the other side, you know, to look at general holiday and banked overtime and that we are different than

everybody else – right? – and that we shouldn't be doing that. Well, we're doing that to actually provide more flexibility, Mr. Chair, and to create jobs. But I note that that argument wasn't part of their lexicon when they raced to a \$15-an-hour minimum wage in this country, the highest in this country and still far above the average in this country. They didn't actually talk about what the average is when they actually made those changes.

Again, as I indicated previously, you know, these changes are about getting Albertans back to work and providing greater flexibility. It is about signalling that we're open for business, Mr. Chair. That's why I urge everyone to vote against this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there others? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore standing to speak.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. I know there has been a flood of members from the government caucus side jumping up to try to speak, but you managed to somehow pick me out. I'm very appreciative of that opportunity to get my two cents in, I guess, as they say.

**An Hon. Member:** He's got a keen eye.

**Mr. Nielsen:** It's a very keen eye, yes, and I'm appreciative of that.

Obviously, we're speaking to Bill 2 right now and, more directly, to the amendment to the bill to change the title. What we're looking at here is that we're talking about changes to labour standards, to the way things are done, and it really isn't about making Alberta open for business. That would indicate to me that we're trying to force something here. We're trying to just make it happen.

3:40

You know, that isn't always necessarily the case. I know, in speaking to another bill previously, that in my experience playing basketball over the years at the college level and whatnot, every time a player wants to force a play, it usually doesn't end up working out so well. You end up throwing the ball away to the other team and probably letting them score.

Obviously, the reason I think we should be changing the name of the bill, hence the amendment that was brought forward, is because of some of the changes that are occurring. First, I'd like to talk a little bit about the youth minimum wage here that's coming in, where we're going to have somebody who because of their age is now going to get paid \$2 an hour less, all under the guise of creating more jobs. The funny thing is that the more students that I get a chance to speak to – of course, I have 26 schools in Edmonton-Decore. The kids have certainly figured this out.

I did have a chance to speak with some of my employers. As I've said before, if you have five people on a shift at a time and two or even three of them happen to be 17 years old, because you pay them each \$2 an hour less does not mean you magically need a sixth person on that shift to do the job. You still only require the five people on shift. Employers know this. I've heard them say: just because I'm going to pay them a few dollars less isn't going to prompt me to go hire another person that I know I don't need to get the job done during that period of time.

In my opinion, this is targeting youth that did not get to vote for you in the election. They weren't able to vote. Maybe you should bring forward some legislation around letting the youth vote. Let's see what happens then.

I think what this also is creating is some red tape, Mr. Chair. I think we're going to create a whole lot of extra work now for the associate minister of red tape, trying to find other things to eliminate. There has been this rush of red tape being brought

forward here by the government. We need to start eliminating it to balance it because, you know, we committed to eliminating red tape by one-third, a one in, one out kind of thing. There have been a whole lot of one-ins, but I'm concerned about the one-outs that will be coming up trying to catch up to some of this.

For employers to have to try to keep track of what birthday that youth worker has at the time or if they are in school, quite frankly, I think this potentially sets up kids to start actually making a choice of, "Well, I could be making more money if I – I don't know – say that I'm not in school" or, even worse, maybe just outright drop out. Because of family needs, they need to try to help support their families. We have cultures here in Canada, Mr. Chair, where family is absolutely everything. Youngsters go out – bless their hearts – and help the family, and here we are, you know, taking away their means to be able to do that effectively. Of course, we do have students that have found that conditions at home just aren't the best and end up moving out. Sometimes it's mostly our LGBTQ2S-plus youth that move out. This will very disproportionately hurt them in terms of being able to allow them to be able to pay their bills.

I think that with this youth minimum wage, which, quite frankly, doesn't exist pretty much anywhere – they've all determined that it's a bad idea – why we want to force the play here to try to think, "Oh, well, we'll just put this in, and we'll just make it work" – it's not going to happen. We're going to be back in here, we're going to be undoing this, and we'll have created a whole bunch of problems and red tape that we didn't need to create.

Obviously, I think we need to change the name of the bill because now we're also talking about things around holiday pay. You know, Mr. Chair, in my experience in the labour world, I have seen unionized employers play games around scheduling. You start setting up all kinds of criteria around: well, if you've only worked this before and this after, then you might get paid.

I'm telling you that there will be bad actors out there that will take advantage of this. I've even seen this in my very own workplace where I used to work. I remember the language, Mr. Chair, where if an employee worked 13 consecutive weeks at full-time hours, a full-time position was deemed to have existed, but it was funny that every time it was, "Well, I'm sorry; we had this person away sick" or, "I'm sorry; this person was away on leave" or, "Oh, wait. Well, no. This person was on disability, so that didn't quite count there." Of course, the very simplest one that they used to do, Madam Chair, was cut their hours in that 13th week so that they just didn't quite make it to the finish line, and then they'd say: "Well, see? There's no full-time position here."

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

What this is inadvertently going to start to create, Madam Chair, is conditions where the bad actors that will take advantage of this end up putting pressure on the good employers, the ones that are really trying hard to do it right, to create good work environments, because they have to somehow figure out how to compete with these bad actors. It starts to tempt them, possibly, to start going down this route just simply to compete.

I don't think that's quite the message that we want to be sending to our employers here in Alberta, who are working so very hard and so very diligently to create good working environments, to pay their workers fairly, to give them some benefits so that they, you know, reduce the amount of turnover because you have employees that are sticking around. I've always said that Costco is a fantastic example of that; their turnover rate of staff is less than 2 per cent. I mean, that is just incredibly, incredibly low. But when you look at it, they're paying them decently, they're getting benefits, they've got

good working conditions. Surprise, surprise: they don't have much employee turnaround because they're sticking around.

You know, I've probably said this with a lot of others things: history can teach us a lot. What I've seen is that when you start doing these kinds of changes, you get a race to the bottom. I don't understand why we're constantly trying to think that racing to the bottom is the best solution. You want to race to the top. You want everybody to flourish because when everybody is prosperous, they're spending their money in the local economy.

I've always said that a very significant portion of the residents of Edmonton-Decore aren't squirreling their money away in a Cayman Islands account to go invest one day in something. They spend it in the local economy not only on the things that they need but also on the things that they want. Maybe they want to buy that big-screen TV. Maybe they want to upgrade that vehicle. Maybe they want to go on that nice vacation that one year and book it through one of their local travel agents. Maybe they just don't feel like cooking dinner for the family this evening, so they head out to the local restaurant, and rather than just going somewhere that's the cheapest that they could possibly afford, sometimes they'll even go to the really nice restaurant because they want to treat themselves and have a really nice night out with the family. Picking their pockets is just not the way to do that, and you're potentially setting that up with the rules around the paid holidays.

That segues me right into the overtime issue here. What this, again, is setting up is that employers who are bad actors will start imposing these types of conditions on their employees: "You have to bank your overtime hours at straight time if you want to work here. You don't want that? Well, that's okay. I'm sure you can find a job down the street, maybe, somewhere that might do that." Again, what we've seen is that it'll start to create the conditions which may pressure the good employers, in order to compete, to start having to bring in these same sorts of things, okay?

Again, I've seen these situations where, you know, they bank their overtime even at time and a half, and then hopefully they get to take the time off when it's mutually agreeable. But that mutually agreeable time never seems to happen. It's always: "Well, it's busy right now" or "So-and-so has been hurt and is off" or "Well, somebody is on vacation this week, so we just can't let you go. Tell you what. If you really want, we can pay out that money, but we'll pay it out at straight time."

3:50

The bottom line is that when you work overtime, the reward for working overtime is time and a half. That's the reward for taking your time away from your family, from your friends, or like I say, just plain old free time. This, again, is another component that's going to create a race to the bottom, but it's not going to make Alberta open for business.

You know, I can't help but circle back around here a little bit with the title itself, which is probably why we think on this side that there needs to be a change. It suggests that Alberta was closed for business to begin with. I know that we heard even just today in question period some interesting stats about all this money that fled.

You know, I can't help but look back at Seven Generations Energy getting ready to put in \$1.2 billion in a processing facility and probably moving their head office here. I know that the Member for Edmonton-West Henday, both of us, are very familiar with that company and what they do. Amazon is investing \$120 million in a warehouse here in the province, and CN Rail is looking to strengthen and expand its network to the tune of \$370 million. I have a feeling that companies don't plan to invest \$370 million if they think that Alberta is closed for business. They think it's already open and that things are moving, and they want to be a part of it and

capture some of that. Pembina petrochemical plant: \$4.5 billion investment. I'm sure that companies around here don't invest that kind of change thinking that the province is closed for business. Inter Pipeline: 2.1 billion. I mean, just in that short list, Madam Chair, there's \$8.2 billion worth of investment in the province. That would suggest to me that it was never closed to begin with.

I think we need to appropriately change this name. I guess that, at the end of the day, like I said, Madam Chair, history teaches us a lot. We've seen that the race to the bottom doesn't work. Disadvantaging our youth simply because of their age is not a way to promote open business because youth spend their money in the economy, too. Trying to claim that it's going to create jobs – as I said, five people on shift: just because you pay two or three of them less, heck, if you pay all five of them less, it doesn't magically create a sixth position when only five are needed to get the job done.

Again, I'm also concerned about the red tape that's being created throughout this bill. I'm a little concerned that the associate minister of red tape is going to feel pressured and rushed to need to start catching up. I mean, I was grateful to finally see the list of 17 that have been promoted. I've already heard of a whole bunch of others that have been added. I haven't seen those come out yet. My hopes are that those will get posted, too, but maybe again it could be because the minister is very rushed and pressed to get things done here to catch up.

As I said, Madam Chair, I was thankful that I got a chance to speak here. I know that there's been a rush from the government members' side to get up and speak to this bill. Thankfully, I managed to get my two cents in. I'm hoping that members throughout this House will accept this amendment for what it is because that's what we're doing. We are changing the labour relations laws and how they work and providing regulations for that. That does not indicate that it makes Alberta open for business; it makes labour law changes.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise today and speak to this amendment put forward by the Member for Lethbridge-West, which I'm very happy to stand in support of. Of course, the piece of legislation that we have before us in Bill 2, titled An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, is very concerning to me. For one, I think that the last speaker, my colleague from Edmonton-Decore, put it quite well in the fact that Alberta was never closed for business.

Of course, over the last four or five years, even before the NDP was elected in 2015, we saw a recession hit our province and the price of oil fall by 50 per cent in some cases, so that put a lot of strain on local businesses. People, workers in our province had less spending power, which meant that less money was being spent. People were putting it away where they could to ensure that if they found themselves looking for work over the next four years of the recession, they would be able to pay as good as they could pay for the things that were important to them.

You know, we've heard a few good names that I would support over An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. We saw the pick-your-pockets bill. I think An Act to Weaken Workers' Rights in Alberta would also have been a better name and even maybe, to the point, Make Alberta Open for Exploitation because, really, that's what we're seeing here.

When we were elected, we were elected on a platform of raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and we were elected on strengthening labour and employment standards. Here we are four years later with a government who's looking for any excuse to take

away the rights of workers in our province. Once again I would ask this government – they're very concerned for large multinational corporations, not so concerned about the workers who make their living here, who keep their taxes in the province. That's very concerning for me.

Just to touch on the \$15 minimum wage piece once more here, you know, I raised the story of my own family and my own living situation. My mother was 14 years old when I was born, and she made the decision to stay in school, which this government is now actually discouraging people like her from doing. This government is telling people like my mother that if they are to have a child under the age of 18, they can actually drop out of school and get a raise. That's very concerning for me, considering that she finished high school without missing a beat. She was lucky enough to be able to get a student loan and go off to university without missing a beat.

This government is saying: "Ah, don't worry about postsecondary. You know, we'll give you a raise if you just drop out when you're 15, 16 years old." That's very concerning for me, especially when we look at high school completion rates and the responsibility of the Minister of Education and the minister of postsecondary education in some cases. It's their responsibility to encourage people to continue their studies, yet here we are with a bill in front of us that actually weakens their ability to do so. That's very concerning for me.

Now, when we look at the name, *An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business* – again, I mean, we've seen the direction of this government when they're giving away \$4.5 billion of hard-earned taxpayer dollars to large multinational corporations, and I wonder what the conversations were like when they made these decisions.

When we look at programs that the NDP had brought in like subsidized child care and tax credits for local businesses, which had very strong criteria about how the money can be spent, what it's invested in, and in some instances the type of people that are being hired, there was a 5 per cent tax credit labour piece within one of our bills that we brought forward, where it would actually offer a 5 per cent, I believe, higher tax credit if you were to hire somebody that had a disability or from other minority sectors. I think that's an important piece that we need to look at when we talk about the intersectionality of things.

What we have here is a government that's just willing to give all of this money away, with really little research that shows that this is the best way to actually invest taxpayer dollars to get a good return on investment, yet here we are. I would be very interested to see how those conversations came about because I doubt that they really had deep consultations with the companies that are actually benefiting from these tax credits that we brought forward. It sounds like we're going to see those tax credits disappear, which is very concerning for many of the companies and workers of those companies that were able to receive employment and create employment because of those tax credits.

Now, we continue to hear the minister of labour talk about this legislation not affecting overtime pay, but I really beg to differ, Madam Chair. I'm very concerned. Once again, I shared my own story about working for a company, one of those bad actors – of course, maybe it was an outlier – a corporation that was willing to really hold not only overtime pay but general holiday pay, really hold it hostage above my head. We've heard several stories from members on this side where corporations and constituents of theirs came and told them about corporations that were doing this, you know, changing the rules mid-game to take away their holiday pay, changing the rules around overtime pay as well.

4:00

I worked at a corporation, and I would work my, you know, eight hours a day or 44 hours a week depending on how they were feeling,

and they would come to me and they would say, "Thank you for working overtime. We'll give you a day off to cover that time that you just worked," where it would have been considered straight-time banked overtime, which is what this minister is proposing.

I'm very concerned with that because if I'm working overtime, I should be fairly compensated for that. This minister is saying: "Well, you're not losing any money. You're just not getting the same amount of time off. We're taking away the amount of time off you're getting." But that is compensation, Madam Chair. You are taking away the amount of time I'm getting for working above and beyond what my regular scheduled routine would have been. The minister keeps dancing around this point. I'm very concerned because it's really not doing justice to the point. If they are moving these pieces of legislation forward, then they should be proud to stand up and say: "Yes. You know, we think it's too burdensome for businesses. We're taking away overtime compensation." That is what is happening in this bill. Once again, this isn't about opening Alberta for business. That has always been the case. Once again, the Member for Edmonton-Decore shared some very important investments that have been made over the last three years or are being made currently without these changes that are being proposed by this government.

Now, I really want to know why this Premier and this labour minister are so intent on putting Alberta at the back of the pack when it comes to labour and employment standards across Canada. We saw the discussions about us becoming an outlier when we talked about general holiday pay and even the minimum wage piece as well, moving towards lowering the minimum wage for youth, very concerning, and even further about lowering the minimum wage for people that are servers. I mean, there are people in small towns who are compensated quite differently than, say, somebody that works in downtown Edmonton or on Whyte Avenue on a Saturday night. Yes, they often will be fairly compensated above and beyond what their regular minimum wage is. But somebody working in Vegreville or somebody working in a smaller municipality is not going to get the same amount of tip out that somebody in downtown Edmonton makes. Now we are taking money out of the pockets of regular workers and trying to say that it will create more jobs, which truly has not been laid out very well by this government. I don't tend to believe their talking points on that piece.

Once again, there were many opportunities to look at things like subsidized child care, grants, tax credits, all much better than just handing away our money without any kind of stipulation about whether that money stays here or not.

You know, I think this government should go back to the drawing board. I don't think *An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business* makes sense for this piece of legislation at all. We continue to have no PST. Our province has no payroll taxes. We have wonderful public health care, something that American corporations, of course, do not have the opportunity to offer their workers.

When we look at the direction of this government in terms of looking at renewable investments, well, we surely aren't open for business for renewable companies and for renewable investments. We see this government doing a drastic one-eighty in their willingness to support renewable energy in our province and renewable business owners. It's surely not open for business when we talk about artificial intelligence. Of course, the University of Alberta is world renowned for their artificial intelligence, but once again we have a government that's playing, you know, fast and loose – I messed that term up. Anyway, they're really not willing to come forward with any details about what their plans are for artificial intelligence investments in the future, so that's also very concerning. We actually have a government that is closing doors on certain

industries, industries that are going to lead us into the next generation and going back to the same old ways. Unfortunately, Madam Chair, the world is changing, whether this government likes it or not. The things, the products, and the industries that will be invested in are going to change whether this government likes it or not, and I think that they should start paying attention to those trends before we get disrupted out of business.

Madam Chair, once again, I am supporting this amendment to change the name of this legislation. I think it's much better suited to talk about the fact that we're changing employment standards and labour relations statutes, makes much more sense than what the government has put forward for the name of this bill.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to this amendment to the name of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. While I was going through the act, the only time in this entire act that the word "business" comes up is only in its name. I guess that goes to show as well that it has nothing to do with what this name suggests, an act to open businesses. Rather, we know that it's changing workplaces, the rules and regulations around workplaces. It changes job-protected leaves, it changes compassionate care leaves, and it changes the minimum wage for youth and all those things that are contained in the Employment Standards Code or the Labour Relations Code. The amendment proposed by my colleague essentially names the bill exactly what it does, employment standards and labour relations statutes amendment act, 2019. That's exactly what this piece of legislation is doing.

While every one of us was in our constituency over the weekend, I had the opportunity to meet many of my constituents. When they ask about the session, government's legislative agenda, a few bills come up. Bill 2 and the other one dealing with credentials certainly come up time and again. When I was talking to them, I think that they were concerned because many in my riding do work in minimum wage jobs. Actually, my riding consists of three neighbourhoods, which are among those neighbourhoods that have lower than average median income in Calgary.

For instance, the individual median income for 15-year-olds and older is \$43,251 to be exact. In Saddle Ridge that median income is \$30,493, so there's a huge income gap there. You can also say that clearly people in these neighbourhoods, those 15 years and older, are not working in the highest paying jobs. That's the reason why their income is well, well below, almost 33 per cent below, the average compared to \$43,000 for Calgary and \$30,000 for the neighbourhood. Another concerning thing is that in these neighbourhoods 30 per cent of the people are using more than 30 per cent of their income just on their shelter. Similarly in Taradale, that median income is even lower. It's \$28,800 for those who are working, 15 years and up. Again, compared to Calgary's average, it's a huge difference. On average they are making \$17,000 less than what everybody else makes in Calgary. In Martindale it's also lower, \$29,500, compared to \$43,000 for Calgary.

**4:10**

The reason I am giving these numbers is that clearly this data shows that people, my constituents, are in jobs that are not as high paying, and they are already making less than what the average person 15 years and older makes in Calgary. This bill is particularly concerning to my constituents and to all those who are working on minimum wage, who are working at low-paying jobs, and who often work more than one job or who often work overtime to make

ends meet. Clearly, this bill is attacking the livelihoods of those who are living in my riding and working in those low-paying jobs, minimum wage jobs and all those across this province who are working at low-paying and minimum wage jobs. Clearly, this act has nothing to do with what it's suggesting, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. It is, clearly, changing the rules and regulations. It's attacking the rights and privileges of those who are in minimum wage jobs, and it tinkers with the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code.

That's why this amendment is important. It exactly names what this bill is doing. But the government just wants us to believe that by naming their pieces of legislation something "business," somehow jobs will be created. But what we are seeing, practically, in our province: the latest reports were that 3,000 jobs were lost in May alone. There were many other companies like Repsol and Nexen who are also laying off workers, so it's not opening Alberta for business. Their policy, their legislative agenda, is not in the right direction. Rather, it's just attacking workers' rights based on their ideological belief that trickle-down economics, the supply-side economics, that never worked before in Canada, U.S., and United Kingdom, somehow this time will yield some different results and magically create the jobs they promised during the campaign.

Also, earlier my colleague was talking about how they're saying it's about job creation. I completely fail to understand how cutting the youth wage by \$2 per hour will create more jobs. As I have said before here, businesses only employ the labour that they need. If you need two people and if you somehow cut wages by \$2, you won't have another person working there; you will only employ as many people as you need. There is no link between these claims that somehow cutting youth wages will impact the youth unemployment, which is somewhere at 21 per cent, which certainly is concerning. If we really want to create youth employment, we need to start a program that can help us create that.

For instance, when we became government, we brought back the STEP program that was cut by the previous Conservative government. There is clear evidence that by investing around \$10 million in that program, there were many youth across this province who benefited from that program, and there was youth employment created in the economy. But cutting their wages will not create any employment, and clearly we are seeing the job numbers from the private sector forecasters that actually Alberta is losing jobs. That should serve as a caution for this government that their policies are not helping us create more jobs. Their policies are not helping us attract businesses. Their tax breaks are not helping us with anything.

Before Albertans were told that somehow they were in a fiscal mess, and we didn't get them the number right. But their year-end report for 2018-19 clearly shows that our path to balance was intact, our economy was improving, and there was considerable, I guess, progress made under our watch. But they are taking this opportunity, they are taking this made-up fiscal story to attack workers' rights, to attack the labour standards and things that everywhere else in Canada Canadians enjoy. The changes we made were nothing so radical. They were only there to help us catch up with the rest of the jurisdictions in Canada. There are other jurisdictions that do pay overtime by 1.5. Alberta will be the only province that will pay it in straight time if we pass this piece of legislation. That's just taking us backward. We shouldn't be supporting, we will not be supporting, and I urge all members to not support this piece of legislation.

To bring it back to the amendment, I will ask all members of this House. Since this piece of legislation is changing things in employment standards, it's making changes to labour relations, this amendment properly captures the essence of changes contained in

this legislation, and all members should be supporting this amendment.

A couple of other things that I also want to highlight. As I said earlier, the only time the word “business” appears in this bill is in its name. There’s nowhere else, as far as I can tell, that the word “business” is even mentioned. The reason for that is that it’s primarily dealing with workers’ rights. It’s picking their pockets, it’s taking money from youth, and it’s taking the rights that in every other jurisdiction Canadians enjoy. It’s reversing the changes that we made to catch up to other jurisdictions in Canada.

So the name given by the government is not the appropriate name for it. Instead, what we are suggesting is very common sense. It will clearly tell what this piece of legislation is doing, and it will help Albertans understand what this piece of legislation is about. Again, it’s about making changes to employment standards. It’s, again, making changes to the Labour Relations Code. It’s changing their banked overtime. It’s changing the criteria around banked overtime. It’s changing the youth minimum wage and all those things that are contained in the pieces of legislation that I mentioned.

Alberta was never closed for business, and this bill in no way, shape, or manner is helping us attract investment, create more jobs, or build pipelines that this government was promising. This amendment will clearly reflect what this piece of legislation is doing, so I urge all my colleagues to support this amendment.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of the amendment, a very reasonable amendment, in my view, that simply proposes that the name of the bill be drained of its political statements and simply reflect the reality that it is amending certain portions of existing statutes, employment standards and the labour code. Certainly, we proposed this amendment because, you know, the term “misnomer” means misnamed. And we certainly believe that these proposals within these amendments to employment standards and the labour code will not in fact accomplish the stated goal, which is why we have proposed this amendment, but instead, in many cases, work against this notion of being open for business, a term that has been borrowed, I suppose, copied and pasted from our friends in Ontario.

4:20

We’re seeing how well rhetorical flourishes and other similar policies to what we’re seeing proposed in this province – it doesn’t matter what they’re named; open for business – they are rendering that particular government in Ontario deeply unpopular. Certainly, some of these approaches are being borrowed from the quote, unquote, open-for-business approach of Doug Ford and his various friends and family members that are running the government in Ontario, and family members of friends, and so on, and so forth. It seems that the trail of friends and insiders never ends in Ontario.

Anyway, you know, this government has already, despite their affection for renaming bills, in 2015, during the 29th Legislature, if you will, had great affection for renaming bills, whatever they were, while in opposition. Our view is that in this case we ought to revert to the standard convention in parliamentary democracies of simply calling something what it is. In this case we are making certain amendments to employment standards, in particular, and that’s probably where I will focus my comments, Madam Chair.

I think it’s reasonable to point out ways in which this act is not – in fact, it closes business depending on which businesses and which people’s business we are discussing. For example, if you are a person who works in a restaurant that is normally closed on

Mondays, and many are – like, hairstylists and others oftentimes will close on Mondays and Tuesdays and kind of take the weekend then or, at least, Mondays as downtime for staff or owners or others. If one normally does not work Mondays, but Canada Day, for example, falls on a Monday, as it did yesterday, and the business chooses to be open, obviously, because there are more people in the streets, more people out and about – it’s a holiday for people so, obviously, they are going to be bringing their dollars to various eating and drinking establishments, as is conventional in Canada – what ends up happening, then, is that a person who is a server in an establishment such as that will not benefit from statutory pay for working that statutory holiday.

That makes things confusing oftentimes for people who have not worked so many Mondays in the last month. Those kinds of calculations which are sometimes quite difficult, particularly for young people – obviously, people do get paid the overtime if they normally work a Monday, but not if they don’t. Certainly, when it comes time to be open for the business of expanding consumer opportunities and ability to pay one’s bills, for people working in the service industry this act is not appropriately named. It doesn’t open up service industry people in such a situation as to be able to get ahead when they are working away at jobs like that.

Similarly, a proposed liquor server differential does nothing for people working in that industry to be able to get ahead. Certainly, there are some other provisions here – hourly workers in the oil and gas sector, for example, not being able to benefit from time and a half, being paid out on their banked overtime is certainly not something that is going to allow them to get ahead or potentially open their own business eventually, to have the capital to be able to do so through savings, which a lot of people do with their overtime pay, use it to further other initiatives that they might be undertaking, whether that’s fixing their own roof or starting their own business or meeting the needs of their families.

You know, this bill is a gift for certain people but not others. Certainly, in using that catchphrase, in Ontario we’re seeing that a year and a half on now or about a year on. It would be regrettable, indeed, if this government was going down that same road of sloganeering at the expense of ordinary, working-class people.

Other ways that this bill is not particularly open for business, so therefore it would be wise to rename it, is that a number of other things remain untouched; for example, the question of paid or unpaid internships, tips, mandatory fees for things like uniforms. Those are the kinds of things, when you talk to ordinary people about employment standards, that they’re really, actually, quite concerned about. And that’s where, if we wanted to actually take some action on fairness, there would’ve been some opportunities, I think, for this government to really engage with the service industry, if they wanted to actually put their mark on this and stand up for some of our lowest paid workers, minimum wage workers, who are often disadvantaged by these types of policies.

You know, I think what’s interesting here is the overall context of calling something open for business when you actually talk to people. I know that when I talk to small-business owners and medium-sized enterprises as well, certainly in southern Alberta, and when we talk to larger enterprises, we’re looking at large investments of private capital in Alberta. What do we see that actually makes us open for business, and what do we hear? Well, we hear things like investors of various kinds, from small and up to big, are looking for a highly educated population, which indeed Alberta has. We are still, as far as I know – I’d be happy to correct the record on this – the youngest and best educated population in Canada, or at least it was the case. I haven’t seen any policies in Ontario recently that would cause them to overtake us, but who knows if there are updated numbers on that matter. Employers and

large investors look for a good health care system. It's a tremendous expense for those doing business south of the border when they have to cover those costs on their own. That's what makes Alberta open for business.

A well-functioning, integrated postsecondary education system that values both the research side, commercialization of intellectual property on the higher education side, as well as appropriate investments in skilled trades and playing to where the puck is going and not where it is: that's what makes Alberta open for business. So when we have a labour market development and training approach that turns a blind eye to emerging industries such as artificial intelligence, we have to wonder just how open for business we really are, Madam Chair.

Certainly, one of the things that one hears from large investors is the question of infrastructure. Given that so much of our foreign direct investment, in particular, is focused in heavy industry, investors are looking for jurisdictions where the bridges, the roads are in good shape and can handle some of the larger investments and transportation of heavy equipment and so on that define a large part of our economic activity here in Alberta. So, you know, simply taking a pass on investing in infrastructure because of some debt-aversion ideology that doesn't recognize that that's how you pay for capital investments doesn't make us open for business. That's, again, another way in which the government's approach and sort of desire to build a certain story or narrative is incorrect and off the mark given that they are now, with every available opportunity, engaging in a number of different stories around Alberta's relative debt position and the need to invest in infrastructure, tilling the soil and softening up the electorate for a large rethink on our infrastructure investments, which, I'm sure, will come as a great surprise to municipalities and others who were just starting to catch up on their infrastructure needs. Certainly, that is coming. Those are the sorts of things, Madam Chair, that make a jurisdiction open for business, if you will, on the business side.

4:30

Another point I want to make in discussing this bill as being quote, unquote, open for business is to look at what happened. It is reversing a number of changes that were made in Bill 17. The act itself was brought in in 2017 and came into force January 1, 2018, so let's have a look at what happened in 2018. Was Alberta all of a sudden closed for business and that necessitated some of the changes that we see in this bill? The answer is no.

If one is interested in an evidence-based analysis of what happened in the Alberta economy in 2018, if one is interested in looking at the facts of the economic record in 2018, we had the fastest growing economy in Canada at that point. We led the country in a number of different important indicators, including manufacturing, exports, some indicators of employment growth, and continued to lead the country in average weekly earnings and, I believe, in private capital investment per capita as well. Generally speaking, Alberta is far and away a leader this year. Even with the slowing of the economy in April and May, we still tend to lead the country in per capita business investment simply given, first of all, the size of our economy and the kinds of investments that the private sector is making in this province.

Certainly, the evidence doesn't show at all that the reasonable changes that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods brought in, the changes that indeed placed Alberta squarely within the mainstream of employment standards statutory guidance to employers – no doors were closed. In fact, in the context of these changes Alberta was a leader, an economic leader in the country, and 2018 was really when we saw the recovery that was built to last

begin to take shape and actually have a material impact for ordinary people in this province.

If the changes that were focused on ordinary people and making life just that little bit better in terms of minimum wage standards, leaves, you know, holiday pay distinctions – those kinds of changes certainly reduced red tape as well for small employers. There's no question about that. If those changes were accompanied by relatively positive economic indicators across the board and didn't close anyone to business – in fact, the biggest drops in our economic activity came prior to this act coming into force, that is to say between about August 2014 and about January 2016, when we saw a precipitous slide in the price of oil, both of WTI and WCS, and then the recovery began in 2017. New employment standards and so on came into effect in 2018. The province continued to lead the country in a number of indicators.

If it wasn't this bill that closed us for business, then what is this bill for? It is to amend sections of the labour code and the employment standards by taking things away from ordinary people whose lives were made just that little bit better, just that little bit easier. Now we're just giving those gifts back to employers. Certainly, we are not open for business for all segments of Alberta's society and are, in fact, closing off opportunities for many people.

You know, one of the other things that makes us open for business, I believe, and is not in this act is that back when employment standards were reviewed in '07 and certainly in 2014, there were a number of submissions at that time – I was involved in some of this in my previous life – around people with disabilities and better integration into the workforce. One of the things that we did in 2018 was that we abolished the differential wage, or the minimum wage exemption, if you will, for people with disabilities. You know, again, if the minister and others in the government wanted to amend employment standards to beef some of that up, they had the opportunity to do so, to make sure that we had broadly inclusive workplaces, that we had appropriate work, and all of those kinds of things. Some of that could have been captured within the Employment Standards Code, for sure. I mean, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is a superhero, in my view, on her reconsideration of employment standards and the labour code, but I'm sure that upon consultation there was probably more to do there around inclusive workplaces and so on.

What really alarmed me today was in learning that some of the redirection of inclusive postsecondary education funds would be redirected into trades or other training away from postsecondaries. Now, I'm going to double-check whether, in fact, that is the case. I certainly heard that today during I think it was a member's statement. You know, that would be unfortunate indeed because, actually, what makes us open for business is that we have opportunities for everyone. The slogan of the city of Lethbridge is opportunity for all, not opportunity for some people who have certain abilities and find themselves differently abled in other ways.

You know, certainly, there's work to be done there around inclusion because that's actually what makes us stronger. That's actually what makes the business climate in better shape in this province, to be broadly inclusive and to ensure that all work is valued by all people. So I think there was a missed opportunity there, and there may even be more to say on this matter if we are reprofiling funds out of inclusive postsecondary education into other trades or vocational initiatives. We wouldn't want to see instances where employment standards directors were finding ways to somehow circumvent the minimum wage requirements or other requirements for people with disabilities. That would be very alarming and certainly, I think, contrary to the intent of how this government and how this minister wants to proceed relative to people with disabilities. I believe them when they say that they want

broadly inclusive workplaces in societies. I think we share those values on both sides of the House, and I certainly wouldn't want to see any backslide on that.

I think I have mostly covered here, Madam Chair, why I support this amendment. You know, this amendment is pretty common sense. It's pretty simple. Let's just call this bill what it is. You know, with the trajectory of the government of Doug Ford, I'm not sure anybody is going to want to name anything after any slogan that he's been using given how deeply unpopular he is and how he just can't seem to help himself in terms of hiring his buddies and his buddies' family members and using the government of Ontario in ways that are maybe not consistent with . . .

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

4:40

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I, too, am going to be supporting the amendment before us. Of course, I believe it to be a more strategic and clear name than An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

You know, you might say that, well, the NDP government, Edmonton-Mill Woods and the NDP government at the time, of course, named ours the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act in 2017. We did that particularly because the prior Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code had not been significantly improved, updated for almost 30 years. There needed to be a massive communication effort for workers in this province that the kinds of things that were being done would make our employment standards and labour relations far more friendly to the people in those workplaces, and it was far more fair.

A number of important changes took place under the Employment Standards Code changes, namely minimum wage changes, which this government has chosen to roll back for young people. Leaves were also significantly improved after being far too long out of the mainstream with regard to changes to leaves across the country, leaving Alberta far less desirable from a perspective of a worker's point of view on their family lives in particular.

The other kinds of important changes under the Employment Standards Code changes that took place were with regard to rest periods and overtime, termination and temporary layoffs, and vacation pay deductions, general holiday and general holiday pay. Those were all under the Employment Standards Code changes for what we thought was a fair title for Bill 17, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, at the time. Madam Chair, that was something that was received well by workers across this province.

The other part of the work that we did was with regard to the Labour Relations Code changes. Again, you've heard where those hadn't changed for a significant period of time, leaving our workers out of step with the rest of the country.

You know, the government probably believes that An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business is not a bad title as well, but I can tell you that, as my colleague from Lethbridge-West was just talking about with regard to the annual report that was just tabled, I believe, on Friday of last week, business in Alberta, as reported in this annual report, was doing better – well, the amount of corporate income tax was \$4.9 billion, Madam Chair, \$1.4 billion more than 2017-18 and \$320 million greater than budget. So if we just look at that, we can understand that businesses were doing better coming out of the recession, and they had posted greater corporate income tax revenue, greater profits, and then greater revenue to the government of Alberta. The forecast in that Budget 2018 was based on the corporate profits continuing to improve, and early in 2018-19 this was supported by elevated oil prices.

I was just taking a look back at the history provided on the back of this executive summary. I can tell you, Madam Chair, that the only two years in the last 10 that corporate income tax revenue was higher was when – I was just trying to identify the price of WTI and WCS in those years, and I can tell you that they were significant. I think it was '08. No. It was '13-14, '14-15. In '13-14 the oil price per WTI barrel on average was \$99.05; call it a hundred dollars. In '14-15 it was \$80.48; call it \$81. A hundred dollars per WTI barrel on average in that fiscal year and the corporate income tax revenue was \$5.488 billion. In '14-15, when it was \$81 a barrel, it was \$5.796 billion.

If we look at what this NDP government had to deal with in regard to the oil barrel, when we came in, it was \$45 a barrel. The next year it was \$48 a barrel, call it. The next year, in '17-18, it was \$54 a barrel, call it. Then in the '18-19 year, which this annual report is based on, it was \$63 a barrel. WCS basically followed that as well.

The previous PC government had the benefit of \$100 a barrel in '13-14 and \$81 a barrel in '14-15. We had significantly less at \$45. I think our leader: that was her first question off the top earlier today. She was talking about the previous PC government: you couldn't balance the budget. You can see that where there are deficits in all of those years when the PC government was in power. You couldn't balance the budget at \$100 a barrel: that's what she was talking about.

Madam Chair, I think the point that you can see that I'm making is that Alberta was open for business. The work we were doing was seeing more corporate income tax come in in 2018-19 than was anticipated in our budget, and that was because businesses were coming out of the recession. We had a corporate tax amount that was in the middle of all of the provinces, and we were not giving up corporate income tax, as this government wishes to do, which will cause a significant hole going forward in the revenues of this province. That's the first point I wanted to make.

I also wanted to say that the amendment that we're talking about here makes a great deal more sense in terms of what is actually being identified. Though we called ours something different when we were in power and had the opportunity to label it, we did it because there was a great need to communicate the fact that the workplaces were more family friendly as a result of introducing job-protected leaves and improving maternity leave and compassionate care standards for Albertans, something that hadn't been significantly updated in 30 years in this province, which is an abrogation of responsibility of a government, Madam Chair. To throw trial balloons up and then to quash them because portions of the business community or electorate don't like them is really not a way to govern and more of a way to go sideways for about 30 years than should have happened.

Madam Chair, the other thing that we need to recognize is that the work we were doing was to ensure that, as I said, the workplaces were more friendly for workers, but we were also looking to support low-wage working people in this province. If we could have kept that in place with the new government, that would have been a kind of a stellar thing in Alberta, where it is more expensive to live, we know, because the private sector, being so successful for so many years here, has driven up the hourly wages across our province. We were behind significantly in terms of vulnerable low-wage workers, who are more vulnerable to switches, changes in the economy: they would be the first out the door. What we did was put those low-wage workers on a step where they could use those monies to reinvest into the economy significantly and to improve the quality of life for them and their children. That has now been taken away.



4:50

I know the government says that, you know, this is a minimum in terms of what youth can be paid, but we know that people from the western Canada Restaurants Canada actually believe that paying young workers less will cause many more of them to get first-time job opportunities. I think what it'll actually cause – and this has been identified by many of my colleagues previously – is those young workers to be not exploited but hired over people with greater experience, who will be put out as a result of the \$13 minimum wage being put forward by this government.

Madam Chair, we in Alberta hold many things to be truths about this province. One of them in particular is that we're self-starters. We've always kind of worked hard, we don't look for any kind of handouts from any people or any other individuals, and we care deeply about each other and family. I would submit that those same sorts of beliefs are held by every elected official in every province and territory in this country, so we're not that different. We're not that different from people on the east coast or west coast or, indeed, northern Canada. We all just want to make sure that we take care of our families, we support good communities, and we all live by the rule of law.

An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, as I've said previously, Madam Chair, is too far balanced on the side of business interests only, and we're not just businesses. For sure, there are job creators who do a great yeoman service for this province. I can tell you, by looking at the annual report, that those same job creators paid more in corporate income tax last year than they did the year before and the year before, and the only times when they paid more corporate income tax is when oil was out of this world in terms of stratospheric prices for an oil barrel. Those times, as we all know, are not coming back any time soon.

The right thing to do is to continue to support the incredible improvements that were made in 2017. The right thing to do would be to support the amendment that's before us, that gives greater clarity to what this bill is actually about. The right thing to do is to continue to support young workers with a \$15-an-hour minimum wage in this province. The right thing to do is to get back to balance in a way that is measured, a way that doesn't unduly harm or burden segments of our society; namely, low-wage workers, who are in jobs that can change at any moment as a result of the economy.

Madam Chair, we were going down that road, and I think that if you look at the executive summary or the full report, you can see that there were significant improvements made by the previous government in terms of the reductions in the deficit. We would have got to where we said we were going to get, which is balancing by 2023-2024, taking this measured approach and ensuring that we continue to support those at the lower end of society, fairly deal with those who are job creators, like every other province is dealing with them, and that we continue to invest in capital infrastructure and keep Albertans working. Now, that's what our Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act endeavoured to do.

The struggle I'm having is that this Bill 2, which we have from time to time called the pick-your-pockets bill, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, is speaking only to one segment of our population, and that's those in the corporate world. I guess it relies on the great work that the NDP government did in the past around the fair and family workplaces act, but it takes out too many of the improvements that for too long had been significantly not addressed by the previous PC governments in this province.

Madam Chair, I do think the amendment makes a great deal of sense. I believe that it's clear in An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, and I do think we need to make things clear for not only the electorate but Albertans in general. One of the things we can

clear up is that corporate profits were going up and corporate income taxes were going up in this province far more than we had anticipated with Budget 2018 in the first place.

With that, Madam Chair, I'm going to sit down and give way. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for his thoughtful interventions on this matter. Of course, he has a long track record of working on behalf of poor and vulnerable people in the city of Calgary throughout his life, and I think he has a lot of valuable things to say in this debate.

I want to build on some of the comments that were made by my colleague and friend from Lethbridge-West, who was talking about the impact of a lot of these employment standards and Labour Relations Code changes on postsecondary education. Of course, this is all in the context of the amendment which we're speaking to, which suggests that we should stop talking about the measures in this bill making this province open for business but, in fact, be a little bit more forthcoming with the actual reality of what the bill does and just call it the Changes to the Employment Standards and Labour Relations Act.

One of the things that concerned me about the exchange that we had in question period, with relation to potential clawbacks of funding to the Alberta machine-learning institute and the refusal of the UCP members to commit to continuing to fund tech education programs in the advanced education sector, is the fact that in order for Alberta to be open for business, we need to be open to all businesses and that by removing government support in these nascent industries, we really threaten to make Alberta closed to businesses that haven't traditionally made their homes here. Certainly, in my time as Minister of Advanced Education we heard from a number of tech employers who were interested in coming to Alberta but refused to do so because they simply couldn't hire the skilled professionals to fill the jobs that would become available if those companies set up shop here. One of the reasons that our government undertook a \$50 million, five-year initiative to expand the number of tech-related education seats in postsecondary institutions all across the province was to meet that demand.

It's interesting, Madam Chair, that even today, when I go to look at the Alberta provincial government Economic Dashboard website, though we have an unemployment rate of just under 7 per cent, there are more than 37,000 vacant jobs available today in the province of Alberta. A lot of those job vacancies exist because we don't have people with the education that's required to fill those jobs.

5:00

Now, my friend from Lethbridge-West in her comments remarked that Alberta has the youngest and most educated professional workforce in the country, and that's true, but we really have a tale of two provinces when it comes to advanced education. We have a significant number of people who move to Alberta because of the opportunities that exist here, and they are very highly educated and motivated to go to work in their sector of choice. They bring with them their skills and their education, and that's what inflates our education statistics here in the province of Alberta.

If a student, though, is born and raised and completes their education here in Alberta, they're less likely to move on to advanced education than students in any other part of the country except for Manitoba, Madam Chair, and I would humbly suggest that perhaps

Manitoba is not the measure of success when it comes to educating our workforce.

You know, if we were truly open for business, we would be looking to fill those job vacancies that tech employers are telling us they need to fill and continue to invest in the education of the workforce here in Alberta. I certainly hope that the members opposite take their own aspirations to heart and implement some concrete action that will actually increase Alberta's business activity in sectors that we haven't traditionally been focused on developing and spend that money developing a high-tech workforce.

With that, Madam Chair, I know that my friends here on this side have a number of things that we'd like to contribute to debate, but I think that at this time I would move that we adjourn debate on this matter.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Schmidt:** Would we rise and report progress, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, please say no. Carried.

## Government Motions

### Voting Rights of Members

9. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize the right of members to vote freely on all matters of conscience.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in support of Motion 9, which is before the Assembly. This should not be a motion of the slightest contention but, rather, a reaffirmation of an ancient parliamentary and democratic principle and one that is, nevertheless, important to restate, I believe, in our time and in this place.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when the members of the government caucus were sworn into this place, I quoted at length from one of the great statesmen of Parliament, the great Edmund Burke, who helped, really, to define the modern concept of parliamentary government, particularly the responsibility of parliamentarians to their constituents.

Edmund Burke, in one of the most famous political speeches of the modern era, said to his electors in Bristol:

Certainly... it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinion, high respect; their business, unremitted attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his

satisfactions, to theirs [to his constituents]; and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The only caveat that Burke placed on this duty in his famous speech was on matters of conscience, on which he said:

But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living.

Mr. Speaker, this is the principle that we seek to reaffirm in Motion 9.

Now, I note with pleasure that the House earlier adopted Motion 11, which changed the standing orders to deliver on another of our platform commitments, which was to more narrowly define matters of confidence in order to allow more free votes on all matters in the Legislature, not just matters of conscience. Allow me, therefore, to quote at length from Alberta Strong & Free, the blueprint for government offered by members of the government caucus in the recent election, which was, I believe, the most detailed and comprehensive election platform ever published, with 375 specific commitments, over 117 pages, including a very robust section on democratic reform, including reform of the practices in this place.

Albertans want to know that their MLAs are truly representing them in the Legislature. While party cohesion is an important element of our Parliamentary democracy – especially on budget matters and election platform commitments – there is a widespread view that MLAs do not have enough flexibility to vote according to their best judgement, or to represent a clear local consensus.

The 1985 Special Committee on the Reform of the House of Commons...

It was known as the McGrath committee.

... noted that "strict party discipline had developed into an article of faith, despite the fact that very few votes actually involve true questions of confidence," and recommended that "only explicit motions of confidence, or matters central to the government's platform, be treated as such," with the expectation that this would lead to more free votes.

By the way, all parties were represented on this committee. My good friend the former federal and long-standing House leader of the New Democrats in the House of Commons, Bill Blaikie, was, I know, in strong concurrence with these recommendations.

While this proposed reform has never been fully [and formally] adopted in Canadian legislatures, it has become both the convention and [indeed] the law in [our Mother Parliament] Westminster... where a government must lose an explicit confidence motion to cause a potential election. This gives much greater latitude to MPs to vote freely, as not every vote is automatically considered a potential matter of confidence.

I carry on quoting from our platform:

A United Conservative Government would make it clear on the first day of the next legislative session that only explicit matters of confidence, or matters central to its platform, will be treated as confidence measures. This will give government MLAs much greater scope to vote freely. All matters of conscience will be subject to free votes, consistent with centuries of Parliamentary convention.

It was upon that basis that my friend the hon. Government House Leader introduced Motion 11, which passed through this place last month. Motion 11 constituted an amendment to the standing orders, now to read:

31.1 The confidence of the Assembly in the Government may be raised by means of a vote on

- (a) a motion explicitly worded to declare that the Assembly has, or has not, confidence in the Government,

- (b) a motion by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, "That the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the Government,"
- (c) a motion for the passage of an Appropriation Bill as defined in Standing Order 64,
- (d) a motion for an address in reply to the Lieutenant Governor's speech, or
- (e) any other motion that the Government has expressly declared a question of confidence.

Mr. Speaker, that was, I'm pleased to say, adopted by this place.

5:10

I should also emphasize that this is not only now the convention but indeed the law in our Mother Parliament at Westminster. In fact, the U.K. House of Commons has enumerated criteria very similar to those I just cited as the basis for confidence votes in the Mother Parliament. The reason they have done so is because over time there was sort of a broadening of the confidence convention to include votes on virtually everything, which circumscribed the prerogative of members to apply their own judgment and to represent their constituents and in some cases perhaps to vote in accordance with their duly formed conscience.

I know that not only my New Democrat friend Bill Blaikie, not only the nonpartisan McGrath commission but also Preston Manning, the son of Alberta's longest ever serving Premier – Preston himself was a very close student of this place. I mean, he did his homework in a room off the side of the Premier's office all through school and university and followed the debates of this place very closely. Mr. Manning has long been a critic of this problem with misinterpretation of the confidence convention in the Canadian Legislatures and has long argued that if the House of Commons, for example, or other Legislatures were to more clearly circumscribe what constitutes a confidence convention, it would expand the ambit for regular parliamentarians to vote freely when the confidence of the House is not at question.

In adopting Standing Order 31.1, we have essentially adopted the relatively new convention of the Westminster Parliament in this respect, but we thought it was meritorious for this Assembly to focus specifically on the prerogative of members to vote freely on matters of conscience. That should apply broadly, Mr. Speaker, in my judgment, even when it might touch on, for example, a major platform commitment, because there is nothing more important than conscience.

It is no coincidence that the first fundamental freedom enumerated in the Canadian 1960 Bill of Rights and the 1982 Charter of Rights is the freedom of conscience and religion, freedoms that are also enumerated in the universal declaration of human rights and, I believe, in every major human rights instrument around the world, freedoms that are deeply ingrained in our own tradition of parliamentary government.

I quoted earlier from Edmund Burke, and I could also quote, as I did on the day of our swearing in as MLAs, from William Pitt the Younger, one of the great Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and who was also head of government for the Canadian colonies at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. Pitt was a conservative reformer who was distressed with the abuse of the so-called rotten boroughs, which allowed for a growing disconnection between parliamentarians and their constituents. In response to this, in his great Reform Act Pitt said the following:

That beautiful frame of government, which has made us the envy and admiration of mankind, in which the people were entitled to hold so distinguished a share, was so far dwindled and departed from its original purity, as that the representatives ceased, in a great degree, to be connected with the people. It was the essence

of the constitution, that the people had a share in the government by the means of representation; and its excellence and permanency was calculated to consist in this representation, having been designed to be equal, easy, practicable, and complete. When it ceased to be so; when the representative ceased to have connection with the constituent . . . there was a defect in the frame of representation, and it was not innovation, but recovery of constitution, to repair it.

That, again, I think, is the sentiment, the constitutional sentiment, which informed the government motion which adopted 31.1 of the standing orders.

Mr. Speaker, essentially what we are saying through this very modest motion is a recommitment of this place to not just the freedom but, I believe, the responsibility of legislators to vote in accordance with their conscience.

Let me go one step further and say, Mr. Speaker, that in acknowledging the freedom of conscience, we also touch on one of the principles which parliamentary government is dependent upon, and that is the principle of civility. I would in this context define civility as a basic posture of mutual respect, respect for the views and the most deeply held convictions of others. In a lack of civility, in an incivil political culture, which arguably is what we see in many parts of the democratic world today – where there is a lack of civility, there is a deep lack for the basic views or convictions of others, even the most deeply felt convictions. With that lack of mutual respect, with that lack of civility can come the tendency to demonize one's opponents, and that demonization I believe can coarsen public discourse to a point where working together across partisan, philosophical, ideological lines can become very difficult indeed. I believe this is what we see, tragically, in some political systems around the world. We may even see it in this place from time to time. I hope that does not become a habit.

I believe it is incumbent upon all of us – none of us are perfect in this respect, Mr. Speaker – as custodians of this parliamentary institution to be as mindful as we can about the need for that civility which is predicated on mutual respect for one another, for the views of those that we do not share.

Now, thank goodness that in our parliamentary democracy we resolve those differences peacefully through elections – we've just been through such an election – and then we come to this place and continue to debate those differences. But the whole premise of this institution is that the foundation of that never-ending organic or democratic debate is, at the core, some degree of mutual respect of civility so that we can clash, disagree with each other strongly, passionately, pointedly from time to time, but hopefully that clash does not descend into a kind of coarse and sometimes even vulgar demonization of one's political adversaries.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Really, at the heart of that mutual respect must lie the freedom of conscience, I submit, Madam Deputy Speaker, the responsibility to acknowledge that people come to their own most deeply held convictions on matters of moral conscience, for example, through introspection, through different lived experiences, operating from different first principles. I believe that freedom of conscience is particularly important in a pluralistic society such as ours.

I look around this Assembly, and I see colleagues of mine, either here or who may not be present but who are members, from many different faiths and philosophical traditions. I see a friend of mine, the Minister of Infrastructure, who grew up in India, who was raised in the Hindu tradition and is an observant practitioner of that ancient religious tradition. I see my friend the Member for Calgary-North, who was raised in Pakistan, who is devoted to his Islamic faith and who holds the values of that faith dearly. I see members of this place

who have no explicit religious conviction but nevertheless come into this Assembly with their own first principles, with a kind of natural faith in how the world works, in what matters most in life. I see friends of the Christian tradition, of, I know, many different – the Buddhist tradition in this caucus as well.

5:20

All of them, each and every one of them, Madam Deputy Speaker, arrive with the responsibility, in this place, to exercise their very best judgment. Often that judgment is formed in part by their conscience, which is informed by their most deeply held values. I submit that at this sometimes tense and difficult time in our public discourse it is important for us to reinforce the mutual respect amongst one another for those convictions rooted in conscience.

Madam Speaker, I believe it's very important for us to reaffirm that principle, which we seek to do in this motion, and I commend it to all members of the Assembly.

I adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

### Caucus Affiliation

10. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its opposition to the practice of members changing their caucus affiliation unless that member is to sit as an independent or has resigned and been returned to the Assembly after being re-elected in a by-election under the new affiliation.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in support of Government Motion 10, as just quoted by my colleague the hon. Government House Leader. I quoted moments ago from the United Conservative platform with respect to democratic reform and free votes, confidence votes on matters of conscience. To clarify, I'm actually quoting from the backgrounders that were issued in support of the UCP platform. Believe it or not, the 117 pages. If we were to actually include all of the background materials, which include many of the more specific and detailed commitments, it would run in the hundreds of pages.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Now, that's a mandate.

**Mr. Kenney:** It's a very deep mandate.

I'd like to quote from some of the background material that was published in support of Alberta Strong & Free, our election platform. Under the headline Ban Floor Crossing it reads:

Albertans are frustrated with MLAs who disregard their electoral mandate by "crossing the floor," i.e. joining a political party other than the one for which they were elected. In particular, the notorious mass floor crossing of 2014 damaged the confidence that Albertans have in the value of their vote.

There is now a strong convention in the Westminster . . . Parliament that any MP seeking to join another party must first resign, and run under that new party's banner in a byelection.

A United Conservative Government would introduce a motion at the beginning of the next legislative session calling for this practice to be observed by any Member before they can cross the floor to join another party.

The United Conservative Caucus will not accept an MLA from another party seeking to join its caucus, unless that MLA first resigns and is elected under the UCP banner in a byelection.

Madam Speaker, I would allude back to some of the most important historic citations of the nature of parliament by Burke and Pitt in my earlier speech to reinforce the importance of the connection of trust between parliamentarians and their constituents. In the way that the Westminster system has evolved, the vast majority of parliamentarians – in fact, in this instance, in this Assembly, all of us – were elected as representatives, as members, as candidates for a particular political party. As we know, political parties are essentially coalitions of people with common values and interests who express those values and interests in platforms for which they seek a mandate. When a member is elected according to such a platform, there is, I believe, an implicit expectation on the part of that MLA's constituents that they will, during the subsequent term, conduct themselves in supporting that platform, in supporting those specific policy commitments and the values that undergird them.

At the same time, this is a bit of a complex issue because I certainly recognize, as would Burke, that a parliamentarian owes his or her constituents their best judgment and that there must be in this place a great latitude for members to act in accordance with that judgment. Madam Deputy Speaker, I for one can certainly conceive of legitimate circumstances where an MLA would conclude that they are no longer able to keep trust with their voters by sitting in a particular party caucus. Often when people leave a party caucus, they say, "My party left me," and sometimes that's true. We can certainly think of times in Canadian parliamentary history where there have been significant changes in the makeup, the leadership, the policy direction of a party, where an MLA, an MP could, I think, legitimately conclude that they are best served outside of that caucus.

Sometimes major issues arise where an MLA might be on the losing side of an internal caucus debate on a really centrally important issue for themselves or their constituents and they feel that they can no longer support the direction of that caucus or its leadership. I respect that, and that is why I believe that it is both undesirable and impracticable for the Assembly to seek to prevent a member from leaving their caucus. I understand that there could be reasons why a member decides to go and sit as an independent, for example.

However – however, Madam Deputy Speaker – if a member chooses to not just leave their caucus but to, in the parlance of the parliamentary tradition, cross the floor and join another party whose values and policy commitments are substantially different from the one for which they were elected, then that, I think, raises a deep concern about violating the trust between the representative and their electors. We've seen many cases of that. Well, in the last Legislature we saw a member elected for the Progressive Conservative party on a particular mandate cross the floor to the NDP party. There were very few issues on which those two parties agreed.

I can think of another case back in the 1990s, when I think it was Stan Woloshyn left. He was elected as a New Democrat MLA for Stony Plain, left that party and joined the Progressive Conservative caucus of Ralph Klein. In fact, I think a couple of Liberal MLAs did as well at that time. Those are parties who in that context had substantially different policy visions, Madam Speaker, which means that these MLAs were elected to pursue one set of policies – that was their de facto contract with their electors – and then they decided midstream to completely jettison the program which they were elected to implement and represent to cross the floor for various reasons and pursue an entirely different policy agenda.

You know, this reached kind of an apogee in December of 2014, with the notorious mass floor crossings that occurred in this place. I think one could argue, Madam Speaker, that there were not

profound policy differences between the then Wildrose and Progressive Conservative parties, but certainly the public concluded – overwhelmingly, the public concluded – that there was no defensible rationale for that mass floor crossing, that it represented a kind of cynical backroom deal-making done without any degree of transparency or consultation or democratic consent. I would argue, I think without much contention, that that decision led in part to the downfall of the Progressive Conservative government after some four and a half decades. Voters sent that party and, I believe, all of us a very strong message, which was a rejection of the cynicism of that kind of large-scale backroom deal-making and floor crossing.

That is one of the reasons why we committed in our platform to address the problem of unprincipled floor crossings, and that is why we are proposing this motion, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'll read from it again:

... that the Legislative Assembly express its opposition to the practice of members changing their caucus affiliation unless that member is to sit as an independent or has resigned and been returned to the Assembly after being re-elected in a by-election under the new affiliation.

5:30

Now, let me say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this is not an amendment to the standing orders. It is not a bill. It is merely what I would characterize as a sense-of-the-House motion. The former New Democrat government of former Premier Gary Doer in Manitoba, in fact, did bring forward a bill, which is now an act of the Manitoba Legislature which makes it ostensibly illegal for a member to cross the floor. Now, I have my doubts about the enforceability of that statute or, for that matter, its constitutionality, but no one has challenged it.

We are not proposing to go as far as the New Democrat government of Manitoba did a decade ago in creating a legal prohibition against the practice of floor crossing. Instead, what we seek to do in this motion is to put members on the record, because we're all going to have to vote on this. We're asking members to go on the record in voting for or against this principle.

And then should some member subsequent to that decide that they're going to up and cross the floor – I think in this Legislature there's a fairly low probability of that happening, but you can never discount it. I'm sure my NDP friends couldn't imagine, even begin to conceive the possibility of this happening. They should refer to – there were CCF MPs who became Tory MPs back in the day, like, for example, the great Douglas Fisher. Oh, my goodness, we're missing that the – I'm sorry. I shouldn't comment on anybody's absence. I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. I'll take that back.

We have in this Assembly the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, whose uncle, I believe, crossed the floor from being a Conservative to a member of the Trudeau Liberal cabinet, and I think that there are still people – unfortunately, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler still lost votes on that 35 years later.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** It stopped him from breaking even.

**Mr. Kenney:** That stopped him at 78 per cent.

As I mentioned, there was Stan Woloshyn, who crossed the floor from the NDP caucus to the Progressive Conservative caucus of Ralph Klein, the man whose memory is much derided by the NDP. So anything is possible.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Karen McPherson, in the last Legislature, to the Alberta Party.

**Mr. Kenney:** Indeed.

For those reasons, Madam Deputy Speaker, I submit that it's valuable for us to put ourselves on the record so if one of us suddenly decides that we're no longer comfortable in a particular party and decides to adopt midstream another political agenda without consulting with our voters, at least the voters can then say: "Just a minute. You voted on this. You said that you wouldn't do this without resigning and calling a by-election."

Now, some people might say: oh, this is some weird innovation, and there's no justifiable expense for a by-election. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would point those skeptics to the new convention that has developed in our Mother Parliament in Westminster. I don't know when exactly it began, but certainly in the last – I mean, this is something that would have happened back in the 18th century, the 19th century but is now once again the strong convention in the Mother Parliament. For example, in the last parliament, two Conservative members of the British House of Commons left their caucus to go and sit as members of the United Kingdom Independence Party, UKIP. They both resigned their seats and ran an immediate by-election. They both regained their mandates to serve with fresh, renewed mandates as UKIP members. This has happened in a number of cases of members coming and going between parties in the House of Commons at Westminster in the past 15 years or so. That has become – I think that is an entirely reasonable expectation, I submit, Madam Deputy Speaker.

All we're trying to do here is offer a sense-of-the-House motion, an expectation that if members leave their caucus to join another caucus, they should refresh their mandate from their voters in a by-election. Now, I note that in this motion we are not proposing that members should be required to do so in order to sit as an independent because, again, I don't think that's the same as adopting an entirely different political agenda.

Finally, as I quoted from our platform, the United Conservative Party will give this more practical expression by adopting voluntarily as an internal policy that we will not accept an MLA from another party seeking to join our caucus unless that MLA first resigns and is elected under the UCP banner in a by-election. I believe that's a position supported by the vast majority of Albertans. I believe that this more strongly reinforces our individual accountability to our voters to respect the electoral mandates that we have received.

With that, I encourage members to vote in favour of Motion 10, and I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)**

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

### **Bill 2 An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (continued)**

**The Chair:** Again, we are on amendment A2. Are there any comments, questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate you recognizing me. Like I said, I know there have been members from the opposite side just jumping up in droves, but somehow you managed to pick me out of the crowd, so I appreciate that very

much. We're back talking about the amendment to change the title of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, which I think should be more appropriately renamed the Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2019.

Of course, I have gone on at a little bit of length about why we need to rename this because what's been proposed in Bill 2, which has fondly become known as the Act to Pick Albertans' Pockets, really is not setting up Alberta to be open for business. Of course, it would be suggested that it would have to be closed to begin with, which it wasn't, because as I've mentioned before, you know, we have seen billions of dollars being invested in this province. We have seen billions of dollars setting up to invest in this province, including in places like the renewable energy market, the digital media market.

I had mentioned a fantastic company called Improbable, that had moved their head office here. I have to admit, Madam Chair, that I was quite surprised. I did at the time lobby the former minister of economic development and trade on trying to balance out what was going on between British Columbia and Quebec in that industry, which eventually came out as the digital media tax credit. Wow. The response? Boom: Improbable was here the next day practically, so that was very, very encouraging to see. I've always believed that the digital media industry is something that Alberta was missing the boat on, quite honestly. We have postsecondary institutions of very high calibre training potential employees, and whereas these industries would have to recruit these people from Alberta, to have them be able to set up right here – because we've levelled the playing field between two industries that are very robust both in B.C. and Quebec, we've now been able to attract that business and that industry.

I think there's a lot more to be had in that industry, but it means that we need to invest more in it. That was growing. Again, since it was growing, to suggest that Bill 2 will make Alberta open for business – I would surmise that it's already been open for business. Otherwise, none of these companies would have been investing this money or have planned to invest this money.

The renewable energy market: we saw a lot of companies out in Ontario that were eyeing Alberta very, very seriously because Ontario had made moves to close business in that sector there. They thought: "Wow. Alberta is the place. It's going to be happening, so maybe it might be time to pull up stakes and move to Alberta. There's a lot more business going on there."

Certainly, when I look in my own riding of Edmonton-Decore, I mentioned that in 2015 I had a very, very difficult time just trying to find a campaign office and ultimately didn't. In 2019 I was lucky to find one almost at the last minute, so the great news was that business was booming in Edmonton-Decore, and there was no room.

5:40

Again, to suggest that we're going to make Alberta open for business I think is a little bit misleading, and this amendment will correct that. What we're talking about here are more amendments to the labour relations statutes, where these changes are actually being made.

You know, again, when I look at some of these changes being proposed, I cannot really figure out how lowering the youth rate from \$15 an hour to \$13 an hour simply because you're not 18 – I'm not too sure how that opens Alberta for business. What I think it does do is take our youth and put them at a great disadvantage, quite honestly.

I was speaking a bit earlier around our youth, for instance, from our LGBTQ2S-plus community who find themselves in situations where they can no longer stay at home. So they strike out on their

own, which means they have bills to pay, rent, food, maybe car payments, things like that. This may very disproportionately affect them. Of course, in talking to some of these kids and, more broadly, with the three high schools that I have in Edmonton-Decore – I have all three of the high schools in north Edmonton – the students there have figured it out. They even said to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora when she was visiting and ran into some of her students at Westmount mall: look, if we've got five people on shift, just because you pay a couple of us or even all five of us \$2 an hour less, our employer will not hire a sixth person because it only takes five to do the job. So to try to claim that lowering youth by \$2 an hour because they happen to be one year younger certainly doesn't create jobs.

My concerns around the holiday pay, again, are in my own experience through the labour movement, you know, not only seeing bad actors that take advantage of workers – and my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday described his own personal experience over that and being taken advantage of in terms of his holiday pay, his overtime pay. I've seen this even within union contracts, where employers will start to play games. Unfortunately, I even saw those games in my own workplace, where it was unionized. We had great contract language in there that said that after 13 consecutive weeks of working full time, a full-time position was deemed to exist. There was always an excuse, whether it was that somebody was sick, somebody was on vacation, somebody was on disability, and they would say: "Well, sorry. You know, they were actually replacing them." Then, when we would actually get a period where there wasn't anybody off or sick or on vacation, which did actually happen from time to time, it was a case of: well, we're just going to cut your hours in that 13th week. Then you didn't qualify for that full-time position.

I'm very, very concerned that the language in here around the holiday pay may be abused as well. It just seems like it's too easy for those bad actors to start playing around, to create the situations where employees won't get their holiday pay that, you know, they've worked so hard for their employer to do.

The overtime issue I've been very, very clear about. Again, I've seen this in my own experience, where bad actors will set the conditions up so that employers are: if you want to get a job here, well, you're going to have to agree to banking your overtime at straight time, okay? But if you're going to take away your time from your family, from your friends, your plain old free time, that is taking money out of your pocket. I've heard plenty of times from members opposite, you know: well, time is money. Well, time is money here, folks. You've got to stay consistent around this.

So by changing the name, I think it more accurately reflects what Bill 2 is trying to achieve, which – I must be very clear – I don't agree with. I think this is a bad bill. It goes after hard-working Albertans right in their pocketbook.

Of course, you know, if we want to actually make Alberta open for business, we have to make sure that Albertans have the ability to participate in the marketplace and make that business go around because, as I've stated time and time again, a good portion of my constituents in Edmonton-Decore do not squirrel their money away in a Cayman Islands account waiting for that next big stock tip to come by so they can invest thousands of dollars into that; they're buying their food, their shelter, their clothing, their transportation. But wouldn't it be nice if they could also go out and get the things that they want, not only the things they need to survive, be it that big-screen TV, an upgraded vehicle that's more fuel efficient, or booking a nice vacation with their local travel agent, and spend that money locally in the economy?

With that, I find myself just having to really ask members of the government side to really reconsider this because we're not making

Alberta open for business. We're changing labour relations, we're changing standards, and I think the title of this is a little bit misleading and not really true.

I heard members opposite in the 29th Legislature. They used to always chastise the government for its creative names. Here I am again saying: well, if you're going to claim to do this a better way, then you actually have to step up and do this. I think this amendment would achieve that. So I'm urging all members to support this amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to ask that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

**Mrs. Savage:** Looking at the clock and seeing it is approaching 6 o'clock, not quite 6, I move to adjourn the proceedings till 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:49 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, July 2, 2019

Day 22

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Ganley  
Glasgo  
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Sweet

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Horner  
Irwin  
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Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
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Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, July 2, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Motions

#### Adjournment of Spring Session

26. Mr. Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2019 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Great to see you this evening. The motion is fairly self-explanatory.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion according to Standing Order 3(9).

[Government Motion 26 carried]

#### Committee Referral for Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act

25. Mr. Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that:

1. The Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and the Committee shall be deemed to be the special committee of the Assembly for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review pursuant to section 14 of that act;
2. The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
3. In accordance with section 14 of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act the committee must submit its report to the Assembly within six months after beginning its review, and that report is to include any amendments recommended by the committee.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion is also self-explanatory.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion according to Standing Order 18. Is there anyone wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Waive.

[Government Motion 25 carried]

#### Voting Rights of Members

9. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize the right of members to vote freely on all matters of conscience.

[Adjourned debate July 2: Mr. Kenney]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and speak to Government Motion 9. I'm just double-checking with you and the table that we are on Motion 9 and not Motion 10. Excellent.

This is the government motion on matters of conscience. Now, I know the Premier spoke at length earlier today. I don't plan to go on at length on this motion. I know for a fact that this was part of the UCP's platform. This motion obviously relies on standing order changes. What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is free votes on matters of conscience and the definitions of that. What I find fascinating is that I think that, really, what this is is a way for the government to be addressing very controversial topics. We saw, when we were government, our proposed piece of legislation – actually, that passed – on safe zones, bubble zones for women. I have never in my time in this place, a short seven years, seen the opposition scurry out of this place 13 times, 14 times . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** About that, yeah.

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay.

. . . at least a dozen times, Mr. Speaker, running away from a vote. Now, with this new government motion, I'm not sure if that would change things. I don't know if this is the Premier and the government trying to appease their base wanting some kind of ability within his government.

Now, what's interesting are a couple of things. This is a government motion, which means that it has no enforcement mechanism whatsoever. There is no way to enforce this, nor are any members having to follow this or not follow this. I don't know if this is in part doing the job of the whip on the other side in that maybe then, you know, certain matters need to be whipped or less whipped. I think one way that this could be interpreted is: is this a way as far as providing clarity on matters of conscience as opposed to matters of confidence? That's an interesting conversation.

You know, I think that with this motion – I won't belabour the point, Mr. Speaker – our time is better spent debating bills rather than motions that have no enforcement whatsoever and, really, are either to appease a base or to talk to its own membership rather than actually getting on to more productive matters in this place.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there others wishing to speak to Government Motion 9? I see that the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has risen.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday Canada celebrated its 152nd birthday. At 152 our country can boldly claim to be one of the world's longest lasting democracies, something to be truly proud of, I think. We have seen our democracy evolve over time, changing with public opinion and new political realities. In addition, we have seen our political culture change and adapt. As a nation we should be making a concerted effort to improve our democracy and create a more free and fair system for Canadians and Albertans, specifically, to contribute, share their ideas, and have their voices represented in this Chamber.

In February I was honoured to be on the stage alongside a dynamic and bright group of candidates for our United Conservative Election Readiness convention. There was much applause, cheering, and many exciting promises announced, but the commitment to reaffirming the conscience rights of elected representatives got a resounding applause. I heard from many at the

convention and in my travels during the campaign about just how important this protection is for them. I believe that Government Motion 9, affirming free votes on matters of conscience, is an important step to advancing the freedom of our democracy and its elected officials to represent their constituents ardently and with conviction.

The constituents of Brooks-Medicine Hat represent a broad range of ideas, viewpoints, values, and personal convictions. If as their representative I cannot represent them on matters of personal moral conviction, then I believe that I am failing them.

So much of our political discourse is presently polarized. We have pundits saying one thing, our friends in the media reporting what they see, and in the Twittersphere, well, they're providing their own commentary. There are issues that have been deemed to be politically sensitive or difficult or downright untouchable. I, for one, think that it is a sad state of affairs to see this occurring.

Through the cut and thrust of debate and by allowing MLAs to vote in line with their personally held moral values, we become stronger legislators and are able to serve as a true reflection of the discourse that exists, albeit not on Twitter but across the province.

One thing that I have noticed, Mr. Speaker, is that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms gets referred to a lot in this place. Regardless of partisanship we all look to the Charter as a guide and guarantor for the freedoms that we all hold deeply and as part of our intrinsic understanding of what defines true freedom and democracy more fully. Section 2(a) expressly articulates that all Canadians regardless of religion or background have conscience rights. Any infringement upon conscience rights has, writ large, been deemed to be contrary to our Canadian values.

Historically the same holds true. Some of western civilization's earlier political thought refers to the importance of the conscience rights of individuals. As early as St. Thomas Aquinas, thinkers were saying that conscience was the rational application of knowledge to activity. John Locke, on whose work a number of our democratic principles are based, taught that liberty of conscience is every man's natural right and was ultimately governed by reason.

As for more contemporary examples, Dr. Kimberley Brownlee, a legal philosopher at the University of Warwick, wrote in 2012 that by living by our conscience, it offers us a greater capacity to live much of our life in a range of wholesomeness, including kindness, compassion, generosity, forgiveness, and love.

The first President of the Czech Republic after the collapse of the Soviet Union, who was, by the way, not in any way ideologically aligned with the conservative movement, stated that we must trust the voice of our conscience to be guided by reason and support the truth. The ability to present and debate views that may be outside of the mainstream is the very cornerstone of democracy. Every single voice matters.

If we take a small dive into the history books, we can see examples of where conscience votes were limited. I can assure all members of this House that they do not want to be on the wrong side of history. Take, for example, the gag rule passed in the American House of Representatives in the mid-1830s. As a refresher, the gag rule prevented the presentation of petitions in the House of Representatives denouncing slavery in an attempt to stop the growing abolitionist movement. It was, in the end, pro-abolition politicians that led to the 13th and later the 15th amendments.

7:40

Some may ask why this motion is necessary. After all, conscience rights are protected as a constitutional right, as I've already mentioned. However, we saw within as recently as the last federal Parliament that conscience rights are not guaranteed for all, especially when it comes to receiving summer grants and faith

groups and summer camps who wished to receive funding for their summer jobs program from the Trudeau Liberals. This attack on religious, moral, and conscience rights had organizations choosing whether or not to sign away their convictions in hopes of receiving grant funding for students. Mr. Speaker, this is shameful. This included organizations within my own riding of Brooks-Medicine Hat who are actually taking them to court.

In an example more close to home, here in this House, while not dealing expressly with conscience rights but no doubt dealing with the spirit of the idea that MLAs' responsibilities are first to their constituents, just last session the former Member for Calgary-East was actually kicked out of caucus after writing a letter that stated that there was "a culture of fear and intimidation that leads to MLA's being unable to properly represent their constituents in the legislature."

In sum, this motion reaffirms our government's commitment to the grassroots and to a promise that Charter rights are upheld in the day-to-day proceedings of this Assembly. Unlike the last government, this government is committed to allowing MLAs to represent their constituents. The protection of MLAs' rights to vote to their conscience should be seen as critical to ensuring the continued health of our democracy.

I understand if the Official Opposition is pressured by the party brass to oppose this motion. After all, one of their former MLAs said that she couldn't represent her own constituents as a result of bullying from NDP Party leadership.

Ultimately, the power in our democracy lies within the good faith of those who elected us that we will effectively represent their interests and maintain our own integrity. This motion is a critical step to ensuring that we can do that. I want to thank the hon. House leader for bringing this motion forward. I look forward to supporting it, and I hope the rest of the House will as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Anyone wishing to ask a brief question or to comment?

Seeing none, anyone wishing to speak to Government Motion 9? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to stand up and speak to this motion tonight. I want to thank the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat for her comments on this.

"Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize the right of members to vote freely on all matters of conscience." Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend a little bit of time tonight talking about this because I believe it's a really important issue, one that has been discussed throughout the history of our British Westminster parliamentary tradition. It's important because it deals with the issues of voting along party lines, voting for our constituents, and voting by the conscience of the member that has been elected to this House.

I want to start today by talking about two Albertans and an Englishman sandwiched in between them. I want to talk about Frederick Haultain, I want to talk a little bit about Edmund Burke, and I want to talk a little bit about Preston Manning in my remarks today.

For those of you that know the history of Alberta, you'll know that Sir Frederick William Alpin Gordon Haultain had a huge influence on this province, that Haultain was elected to the bar in the Northwest Territories in 1884, and that he settled in Fort Macleod in southern Alberta. He was elected to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly in 1887, and from 1888 to 1905 he spent his time in the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly.

Now, from 1897 through 1905 he had the position of executive council, which was, in effect, the Premier of the Northwest Territories, and he more than any other westerner, I believe, helped to shape the provincial landscape that we have in western Canada today as he helped to transition us from being a territory in the North-West Territories to being the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Now, Haultain challenged the conventional wisdom of his day by advocating for at least two major ideas. The first was that there should be the creation of only one province, not two. Rather than having an Alberta and a Saskatchewan, he wanted one province, because as he saw Saskatchewan and Alberta at the time, their resource base was there, the people made their living from the same land, they had the same culture and outlook on life, and he thought Canada would be best served by having one province.

His second belief that he was known for was a belief with regard to a political system that he wanted to see modelled, where there would be the abolition of party lines within the Legislative Assembly. He believed that the people of the Northwest Territories and the new provinces would be best served by an abolition of party lines. Now, as you can see, Haultain was very much an independent thinker for his time, and I believe that today's motion points us toward the political balance that he was trying to move towards and necessary, I believe, for a successful MLA and for a successful government. There's always this balance between party lines, your conscience as an MLA and the will and the wishes of your constituents. I believe that he perhaps most famously in the early 1900s shaped that and had that conversation. So this motion is not a motion that's being brought forward without some history behind it.

Governments have dealt with these kinds of issues of how to try to balance these equally important issues for a long time. I would draw you to Edmund Burke, the famous British parliamentarian, who spoke to this balancing of political decision-making. It's a little bit of a long quote, but I think it's a really important one. We've probably all heard portions of it, but I don't know if we've heard significant portions of this. He said:

It ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinion, high respect; their business, unremitted attention.

He called us as MLAs to our first calling. It should be to represent the people who have taken their trust and placed it in us as their representative.

It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfactions, to theirs; and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own.

I think that's a really important thing for us as MLAs to remember. Whatever the issue of the day that we are debating in this House, we should always remember that we should be placing and voting and making decisions and speaking to not just simply our interests but primarily to the interests of the people that have placed their trust in us.

But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure; no, nor from the law and the constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

I believe that Edmund Burke, when he spoke those words, was trying to bring some balance, trying to explain to a young and an emerging democracy in England that it's important for us to listen

to our constituents but that as MLAs, as representatives who do this 24 hours a day, 365 and a quarter days – I'm not sure we ever take a day off sometimes – we have to apply judgment. There are times when we have to ensure that we help our constituents to understand the issues and why we believe that we should move forward. There is a place for conscience, for good conscience for an MLA, and they should never sacrifice that or should rarely sacrifice it.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this motion addresses that delicate debate, that delicate balance that this House and that we as MLAs must maintain: the freedom to represent our constituents, their wishes, their political direction while maintaining both our personal conscience and moving together as members of a larger political party towards a goal that we have, in this case, just recently campaigned on. So I am very happy to see this motion brought before the House.

7:50

Finally, I'd like to bring forward another great Albertan, I believe, one of my heroes, a man that I have worked with, worked for, volunteered with and helped to run his first federal election campaign in 1987, Mr. Preston Manning. I know that in the 1980s when I became involved with the Reform Party, we were faced with an eastern government that was not listening to the will of the people, was not listening to western Canada. For those of you that were around at that time, you heard the slogan of the early Reform Party, The West Wants In.

It was, I believe, an incredibly important political movement that occurred, one that I believe actually helped to save this country. We know that this was during the days of that national energy program, when the federal government was moving in on Alberta's resources, was ignoring the constitutional rights, I would argue, of the province of Alberta, and was creating serious damage to this country. I believe that the Reform Party and that slogan, The West Wants In, blunted this movement of separation in this country because it allowed the people of western Canada to have a voice.

One of the early ideas in the movement of the Reform Party was this idea of a triple-E Senate, free votes, and recall. Each of these things speaks to allowing the people to have a voice in government through their MLA, through their Member of Parliament. I believe that it allows us the people to hold government to account and to reflect the will of the people. It spoke to a need for balance within the federal and, I believe, the provincial scene.

It is for that reason that I can and I will support this motion for it helps to point us in a direction of a political balance that I believe is necessary to ensure a principled and balanced democracy in the tradition of Burke and Haultain and Manning. That tradition, in my opinion, is in the best interests of all Albertans, so this motion will have my support.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Anyone wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

We are on Government Motion 9. I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika perhaps rising to make a request of the Assembly.

**Mr. Schow:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask for unanimous consent for this Chamber to go to one-minute bells for all motions this evening.

**The Speaker:** Just seeking some clarification from the hon. member, are you speaking specifically to motions or all votes this evening? What are we asking for here?

**Mr. Schow:** Speaking specifically to motions, Mr. Speaker.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** We are on Government Motion 9. Anyone wishing to speak to the motion? I see the hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in support of this motion, Motion 9, and I'm very grateful to speak on it because there are some misconceptions in our public discourse today. The popular misconception that's been circulating for quite some time is that public duties are more important than privately held convictions. As with all good misconceptions and lies, there is some truth in this. Public duty often demands that we forgo our own private opinions and preferences in order to serve the common good. Giving up one's own private interests in order to further the common good has long been heralded as civic virtue in action in our democracies. Cicero stated: not for us alone are we born; our country, our friends have a share in us.

However, deeply held conviction, or what some call conscience, is not simply a private opinion. In fact, enormous harm is done when public duty is used as an excuse to violate one's own conscience. It is for this reason I was greatly pleased to hear, as I'm sure all my colleagues were in this House, the Premier rise earlier today to speak with such force and vigour compellingly in defence of free votes in this House in conscience. Here we have the Queen's first minister of Alberta advocating for the rights and free expression of conscience in our democracy for all members and citizens. We should be well pleased with that.

It has not always been the case that the will of the Crown is aligned so much with the interest of the members of a parliament. The parliamentary drama which I'm thinking of and first comes to mind is that great division under King Henry VIII and Sir Thomas More, which was immortalized by the playwright for our generation, Robert Bolt, in *A Man for all Seasons*. Sir Thomas More in opposition to the King and Crown, defending his belief from a place of conscience, says, "When statesmen forsake their own private conscience for the sake of their public duties . . . they lead their country by a short route to chaos." It is for this reason that we must take such pride and cling so closely to conscience in this House.

What, then, is conscience? As I stated, it is not just personal preference or private opinion. Conscience is a precursor to all moral decision-making. As noted again in the speech from the Premier and again by the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, it is the first right enumerated in our Charter, and by no coincidence freedom of conscience has primacy over all other freedoms because it is a prerequisite for all subsequent freedoms. The freedom of religion is listed afterwards. Freedom of thought, belief, opinion, expression, including freedom of the press and other media, of communication, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom of association: every one of these is not possible without, first, the freedom of conscience.

Even the activist and progressive jurist Justice Bertha Wilson wrote from the Supreme Court that "conscientious beliefs which are not religiously motivated are equally protected by freedom of conscience." It is a precursor to all moral belief, and we ought not check our morality and ethics as we enter into the public space. Rather, conscience is a moral awareness whereby we judge right from wrong in concrete situations. This moral awareness is not just a matter of opinion. If we look at the word "conscience," we can see that it has two parts from its Latin, "com," with, and "scientia," knowledge, the root word of "science" as well. Therefore, conscience means to act with knowledge. It is not devoid of input from edification and education. We must take what we know and use it to properly exercise our conscience. Conscience requires knowledge and is not subject to simple emotion. The base point I

want to get across is that freedom without conscience is no freedom at all. It hollows all of these freedoms out.

What, then, is conscience? It is the judgment of reason by which the human person recognizes the morality and quality of acts in a concrete way. In other words, it is our ability to judge between right and wrong in concrete, everyday situations. Why must it be free? Without freedom of conscience, without freedom to refuse to do wrong, all other freedoms end up empty. What good is my freedom of expression if I'm not free to speak according to my beliefs and conscience? What good is my freedom of religion if I am not able to believe according to my conscience? What good is my life, liberty, and security of person if I cannot act according to my conscience? These freedoms are all empty tombs filled with dead corpses unless they are first animated by the life-giving spirit of conscience. That is why conscience must be free, so we are advocating for it even in this Chamber.

How do free votes support the freedom of conscience? Free votes ensure that conscience is empowered. They ensure that conscience is not trampled under the boot of government nor obliged to bow before the whip of party discipline. That being said, free votes do not grant freedom of conscience. They merely recognize the pre-existing right for which conscience has always been there. Nothing can oblige anyone anywhere at any time to act contrary to his or her conscience. We might forget we have a conscience. We may act contrary to that conscience. We can never say that we have none. Every individual, no matter walk of life, has a line they wish to not cross. It is not a matter of religion; it is not a matter of one world view. It is a matter of being human that we have consciences. In all offices and public vocations that ought to be respected.

There were a number of our predecessors in Parliament throughout its history who thought that it was a small price to pay to trade their life for their conscience. The pain of death was a pittance and a trifle compared to the grievous harm of betraying their consciences. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that we give them thought, that we ponder how men and women might trade their lives for conscience. We will further examine that as we quote a final quote that I have from the minister of employment and social development of Canada in 2014, where he said:

The spirit of the age can be a powerful juggernaut that is wont to run roughshod over the consciences of those who would resist it. We remember Thomas More because he was strong enough to stand against the spirit of the age. No neck is strong enough to resist the executioner's axe, but a few courageous souls are strong enough to resist the demands of the one who commands the executioner. A healthy political culture – the kind with which we have been blessed since Canada's founding – seeks to prevent a conflict between the rights and duties of conscience, and the demands of the sovereign and the sovereign's government.

**8:00**

Here we have the first minister of the Crown advocating for our conscience, advocating that we use these free votes. So my plea to this Assembly, to my colleagues, is not just that we vote in support of this motion but that we use it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone else wishing to ask a brief question or make a comment?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and colleagues, for the opportunity to engage in this discussion. I think I'm of two minds, and I'm going to touch base on a couple of things. This one is with regard to matters of conscience and how I feel that that's

quite an open-ended category. When I think of matters of conscience, I think about – I’ve heard Joe Biden say it recently; I’m sure many others have throughout history – “Don’t tell me what you value. Show me your budget, and I’ll tell you what you value.” Certainly, I would assume that budget votes would be matters of conscience, matters of value decisions.

We saw members of the then Wildrose and PC caucuses – actually, I think it was even after they were one caucus – vote against things like increased funding for rural crime prevention initiatives and then come back into this place and say over and over again that they needed to do more on rural crime. Indeed, when that line item had been broken out, they continued to vote against it. Was that a conscience vote, or was that a matter that was not seen as a matter of conscience? I would say that making sure that we have enough folks on the front lines to protect us is certainly something that I would consider a conscience vote. So that’s one side of this situation for me.

The other side: I went down memory lane. I’m sure many members were there. It was back in May 2018, after a UCP convention, where there was a motion brought forward around requiring minors to get permission from their parents for health procedures. Wilberforce was of course whipping up a lot of votes at that convention. I believe that motion passed with 74 per cent, and the then aspiring Premier, now Premier, said: not to worry. Quote: I’ve been clear that I won’t be bringing forward any legislative measures on abortion. End quote. I would assume that many would argue that abortion is probably a matter of conscience.

Is this creating an opportunity for a private member to bring forward a resolution and for the more than 24 members of Conservative caucuses – I guess it was the UCP at the time who either walked out of the Legislature or have a very active track record, including the Member for Peace River, of opposing women’s bodily autonomy and the right to make our own decisions around our own bodies – creating an opportunity for somebody other than the Premier to bring forward a bill or a resolution and to say: “This is a matter of conscience; therefore, there will be free votes. Therefore, I’m not breaking my promise that I made in 2018, when I was seeking the opportunity to become Premier, because I didn’t bring forward this motion. Somebody else brought forward this motion or this bill?”

I’m of two minds on this. One, I assume that every matter we discuss in this place is a matter of conscience. When I come here every day, I have to consider what my values are and how they have determined which party I sit with, which party I campaign with, and how I carry myself in this place and in my community. That is the one side: show me your budget, and I’ll tell you what your values are.

Does that mean that every money bill we have in here is a matter of conscience? I think it is. I think that we have an opportunity – and I imagine many of us have very thorough discussions. I would hope that the government caucus does as well although I know that the Government House Leader has taken to not calling members of the caucus who aren’t in cabinet members of government but, rather, private members. I would hope that all members who ran for the UCP have an opportunity to express their views and opinions and that when the government brings forward something, that thing that they’re bringing forward represents the opinion of that party and the folks who have chosen to be members of that party, not just the vision of Executive Council or the Premier or the minister who is moving it. I would hope that there is an opportunity for all of us in our respective caucuses to have these discussions and bring forward ideas that we’re proud of collectively.

This is why I am of clearly two minds on this. One, I think that everything we do is a conscience decision. Two, I think the Premier made it very clear that he won’t be moving on matters like abortion.

I think he’s talked about other social issues that he called divisive, that I call standing up for human rights. I think that it is concerning to me that, on one hand, we’ll have somebody say, “Well, it’s important to vote for matters of conscience,” and have, on the other hand, somebody who was running to be Premier, running to govern this place, say, “I won’t legislate on these issues” but then, of course, creating a separate opportunity for people to do exactly that.

We know that there are many people in this place who feel that they are beholden to what I would call extreme sections, feel that they helped them get nominations, feel that they helped them win elections and that they owe them action on certain issues that may or may not be of their individual conscience or the conscience of the folks that they represent, all the folks that they represent in their riding.

That is why I’m of two minds on this matter. Mr. Speaker, I’m happy to listen to further debate on this, but at this point I am of two opinions. One, every decision we make is a matter of conscience, and two, is this just a way for the Premier to legislate on social issues that we should be well past? My right to make decisions about my body should not be revisited in this place. Is that what we’re creating an opportunity for people to do through this motion and for the Premier to not have to own the effect that that’s what is indeed happening? That’s troubling for me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment for the hon. member. I see the Premier has risen.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d just like to respond to the unfortunate implication of the hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora in which she characterized views of government members as being, quote, extreme. In particular, I think she was referring to those who just offered speeches in favour of the what I thought was universally accepted principle of freedom of conscience, what is certainly the first fundamental freedom enumerated in both the Bill of Rights and the Charter of Rights, a freedom which is enumerated in every major human rights instrument ratified around the world, at least by democracies.

In particular, the member opposite was seeking yet again to slur members of the party which I have the privilege of leading. She has a regrettable tendency to do just that, Mr. Speaker. I would remind members that this was the former Deputy Premier who rose in this seat in a prepared remark to accuse Conservatives in Alberta of being, quote, sewer rats, unquote. I repeat: the member opposite showed her regard for democracy, for civility, for decorum, for the views of the majority of Albertans, as expressed in the most recent election, as being those of, quote, sewer rats, unquote. I can barely think of a metaphor nor a simile which is more degrading, more dehumanizing, more humiliating, more, frankly, disgusting than to characterize people as being, quote, sewer rats.

Earlier today, in speaking in favour of this reaffirmation by this Assembly of a primordial and universally recognized human right, I called for civility. I submitted that respect for freedom of conscience is predicated upon and reinforces our best democratic tradition of civility, which I defined as constituting in part a mutual respect for the views of others with which we disagree. We just heard from that member once again her regrettable habit of insulting the convictions of other people, including those who are democratically elected. She alleged that they were extreme.

If I’m not mistaken, the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat won what percentage of the popular vote?

**Ms Glasgo:** Sixty-five per cent.

**Mr. Kenney:** Sixty-five per cent.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon won . . .

**Mr. Smith:** Seventy-two per cent.

**Mr. Kenney:** Seventy-two per cent.

The Member for Peace River?

**Mr. Williams:** Seventy per cent.

**8:10**

**Mr. Kenney:** Seventy per cent.

Extreme views of sewer rats according to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Mr. Speaker, I disagree with that member on many matters, but I've not alleged that her views are extreme. I've not alleged that those who support her are subhuman vermin, sewer rats. You know, that metaphor, interestingly, is a metaphor that was frequently used in the 1930s in Germany to dehumanize certain people, to condition the public discourse for the full dehumanization of an entire category of people. It is a kind of metaphor which should be completely beneath our public discourse in this liberal democracy or in any parliamentary government.

Mr. Speaker, to stand in this place and to characterize or I should say mischaracterize the views of recently elected members who have been sent to this place by supermajorities of their fellow citizens is, frankly, offensive. As I did less pointedly this afternoon, I rise in this place yet again to appeal to the members opposite to begin to demonstrate a modicum of civility that I think is expected by not just the voters, the 55 per cent of Albertans who elected this government in the single largest democratic mandate in Alberta electoral history, over a million voters. I would ask that the members opposite demonstrate a modicum of respect for those voters, for the supermajority, the 60 and 70 per cent who elected those three members who just spoke. Instead, what do we get from the opposition? A nonstop diatribe of disrespect and incivility. Albertans deserve better.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Government Motion 9. I see the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to have an opportunity to speak to Motion 9. Of course, I feel a need to respond to the comments of the Premier just given . . .

**Mr. Kenney:** Just another sewer rat over here.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, I'm glad that he's, you know, heckling me with sewer rat comments because it really points out the point of what it is I'd like to speak about here today.

I think it's important that, you know, in this House we do speak to issues of conscience and we have opportunity to address things that are important to us. Of course, each one of us decides when we get elected which party we're going to run for. Hopefully, we've done our work and spent time researching the values of the various parties and make a decision to run on the basis of that.

Of course, you know, I and members of this party made choices to run for the NDP because we firmly believe in the value of the common good and believe in sharing the good things of this world with the rest of society. As a result, we've worked very hard to try to ensure that everyone benefits, not just the people who have money and have power, as opposed to the nature of the work that's been brought forward by the government today, in which there is a very strong attempt to coalesce both power and financial well-being in very few pockets and to try to ensure that some people are in a better position in society than others.

In fact, there seems to be a regular pattern and habit on the government side of seeking out people who are in vulnerable places and acting to diminish their rights, whether that be through reducing the minimum wage of people who aren't even able to vote and therefore are vulnerable to this kind of attack or whether it be to undermine the collective bargaining rights of public service workers or to undermine the rights of gay and lesbian people to gather together and collect in a safe space where they can come to terms with some of the realities that they are frequently coping with, including issues such as bullying and so on. I think it's very important that we note that on this side of the House our reaction to all of those things has been governed by our conscience, and I think it's very important that we do that.

I do want to take a moment to speak to some of the comments the Premier has just made. I know he has taken great delight in taking a statement made some years ago by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, a statement for which she apologized but which I feel has largely been taken out of context and again tonight was taken out of context and has been described as, somehow, a statement referring to all Albertans and so on.

You know, sometimes in this House statements come out of your mouth. In this case it was just sort of a rhyming couplet that I think was intended to be mildly amusing. Of course, because it crossed the line, she stood up and apologized for having done that. It gets used over and over again. I think that that's an example of lack of civility: when someone apologizes for something, not taking an apology and refusing to respond.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I might just remind all members of the Assembly to keep their comments to themselves. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has the call. I think it's best if we allow him to continue the debate, but I would encourage members to stay focused on the issue at hand, which is Government Motion 9.

**Mr. Feehan:** I understand that, Mr. Speaker, and I understand that you also gave five minutes of time to the Premier to speak about an issue that was three years old. I would appreciate the same.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

**The Speaker:** I'm back on my feet, sir. You have now approximately spoken for five minutes as well. Let's not be making tit-for-tat on what the Speaker is ruling or what the Speaker isn't ruling. I'm merely suggesting that we stay on the topic at hand, which is Government Motion 9. If we continue down this trail, we will wind up in a significant level of negative decorum. I get it. [interjections]

There's no need to stand under 13(2) because I have not made a ruling. I merely asked all members of the Assembly to keep their comments to themselves, from both benches. Then I reminded the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to speak to the issue and for us to stay on task. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford then chose to challenge the rule of the chair based upon the amount of time that the Premier spent speaking about this particular issue. The good news is that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has also spent about five minutes speaking specifically to the same issue, and I'm encouraging all members, both from the government side and from the opposition side, to stay focused on the task at hand this evening, which is Government Motion 9.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take your words to heart. I think I've already made my point about the fact that not accepting

an apology is an example of doing something that we're being asked to do, but it's not being done by the other side.

I'd also like to speak to the fact that speeches in this House from the government side often begin with some kind of a diminishment of the comments being made from the opposition side of the House. It's a rare day when the Government House Leader doesn't stand up and use a word such as "hysterical" or "ridiculous" to describe comments on this side of the House. The fact that those kinds of words are used as a way of diminishing the conversation that goes on in this House tells me that there is a problem of what's good for the goose is not good for the gander with this government, one that I'm going to seek to challenge on a regular basis because, speaking of Government Motion 9, I think that we need to stand up and speak our conscience. As a result, I will stand up and speak to my conscience when I hear that kind of hypocrisy coming across the floor, as it does on a regular basis.

I think that if people do err – and sometimes we do; it gets late here at night sometimes. Your mind moves along and sometimes you say bits of things when you actually mean something much more complex, and it comes across much worse than you intended. That's just the nature of humanity. I think that sometimes we have to, you know, have a little flexibility and let that go, but holding people to that kind of thing for many years after the fact, particularly after they've apologized, seems to me like not an example of the conduct that the Premier has been asking us to engage in.

8:20

Therefore, I am standing today speaking my conscience on the fact that I think there's hypocrisy in that. I do appreciate that everyone here in this House wants to, you know, make sure that we're actually debating things that are serious and important, but the reality is that many times when we stand in the House, we're not able to get across the point that we want in the most easy and articulate way because we just are people that sometimes fail. If that happens, we have to have a little bit of flexibility.

I think it really behooves the government to actually act in the way that they are asking the opposition to act. I'll pay attention over the next number of weeks to see if, in fact, the Government House Leader and other people stand up and routinely describe the language being used across the House with words such as "ridiculous" and "hysterical" because then I'll know whether or not they actually are prepared to live the behaviour that they're requesting of other people on this side of the House. So far I haven't seen it. So far I've seen exactly the opposite. I can tell you that, you know, the worst possible take on everything that's being said is always taken by members of the government side of the House, and as a result we don't actually end up with serious debate a lot of the time.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Schow:** Yeah. I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, 23(b)(i). We are debating Motion 9 here, not necessarily the decorum of the House but, rather, this motion in particular. I would ask that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford actually discuss the motion as opposed to his opinions on decorum in the House, which we are trying to raise on a daily basis.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the interjections; however, there's no point of order here. The hon. member has on numerous occasions talked about how this applies to his conscience and how he's risen to his feet to make the point that he comes here to speak his conscience around these issues. He's well and truly in his right to do so. There's no point of order.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do take the words of the government deputy whip seriously. I will speak more specifically about the issue of conscience voting rights, and that is that, I mean, I guess I fundamentally agree with the notion. I think that that's what you should be doing all the time. As one of our Auditors General once said, you shouldn't need a corset of rules if you have a backbone in terms of your decision-making. I think that that's true.

I think that each one of us should be speaking to the issues that are important to us. In my case, for example, that means I will be defending the vulnerable people in our society, that I will be looking for rules and laws that do wonderful things like reduce child poverty in half, which we did in our term; that do things like raise the minimum wage for the most vulnerable members of society, which we did in our term; that build hospitals for people across the province, including cancer hospitals in Calgary, which we did in our term; that build schools for families and children, like we did 244 times in our term.

These are the kinds of things that speak to my conscience and that speak to the fact that I think we should be doing work in this House to ensure that the things that come out of this House are beneficial not just for individuals but, of course, for all society. That means that you can't just treat all society equally. You have to have a preferential option for those people who are most vulnerable. You have to articulate good social structures that will enable and allow those people who are most vulnerable to have a chance whereas through other circumstances in their life they may not have a chance.

We all like to think that we are here because we succeed on our own efforts. That may be true, and I hope it is true. I expect it is, but I can assure you that anybody in this House did not arrive here because you yourself worked very hard. You also arrived here because many other people worked very hard. You are here on the backs of and on the benefits of other people.

Now, they of course have chosen to do that because they share your values, and they hope that you will vote your conscience in the way that they have come to know you. That's what I think we should all be doing in this House. I will continue to do that. I will continue to have that preferential option for the poor, based on the values that have been honed by myself over my almost 60 years here, and I will expect to see members opposite do that as well. I would hope that that does not mean that they will use opportunities like running away from the House to avoid doing that kind of thing, leaving just because they don't like to hear what other people are saying, putting things in their ears so that they don't have to hear it, refusing to even debate a private member's bill in this House so that they don't have to see it.

It disturbs me that over the last week or so we've had the government literally plug their ears and close their eyes. One more monkey, and they've got the full set. You know, I really think that we have to make sure that when we say that we want to have this House debate things fully and in conscience, then we have to act in a way that allows that to happen. For example, if someone brings a private member's bill, let's say on health care, we would not shut it down in committee. Rather, we would bring it into the House and

actually have a discussion about it. The government has a majority. They can defeat it. There's no reason why something like that should not be here so that we can vote our conscience on it. Yet here we have a situation, a conflict, a hypocrisy, as I've mentioned earlier, where the government is saying that we want people to have a free vote on conscience and then putting in some kind of a corset of rules that prevents an actual free vote on a matter of conscience.

In this case, it's my conscience that I believe that health care is a universal good and that health care needs to be universally available and free and publicly provided and that it meets all five conditions of the Canada Health Act. All I was asking in that case was to have a personal conscience vote here in the House, yet the government has denied that. So I'm left wondering what they really believe.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone else wishing to ask a brief question or comment of the member?

Seeing none, are there others wishing to speak to Government Motion 9? The hon. the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise briefly – briefly – on this motion.

Perhaps I'll begin by saying that the reason I want to try and be brief on it is because, you know, the members opposite spend a good deal of time talking about the wise use of taxpayers' money, and I would suggest that this particular motion amounts to an unwise use of that as it relates to our time here in this Legislature. Members opposite understand that these motions are nonbinding. If they were binding, it would be profoundly out of order because, of course, in our parliamentary system the majority of the House does not have the right to dictate the way in which the minority, any minority, within the House operates. Were this meaningful and actually able to bind us, it would be out of order. It is not out of order because it is nonbinding, which raises the question: why are we having this conversation anyway? It's really about the conduct of individual caucuses and the rules that they make for themselves, so not a particularly good use of our time.

So then the question becomes: why are we doing it? I think the members opposite, or members certainly in our caucus, have probably at this point raised the theory that we are doing this because the leader opposite and people leading the government caucus are struggling somewhat with the fact that they have created a bit of a Franken-party. Within that, they have managed to attract a few folks with very closely held views. You know, that's great. Everyone is entitled to their closely held views, and they are entitled to speak them, providing that they don't, you know, run afoul of hate laws and the Criminal Code as it relates to hate laws. But that isn't always very convenient for people in politics, to have members of their caucus speaking about things which tend to be offside with the majority view of the electorate.

8:30

Of course, we've identified already some of those issues that would fall under that category. The majority of Albertans believe that a woman should be able to exercise her basic human right to choose what to do with her body, whether to maintain a pregnancy or end a pregnancy. That is something that the majority of Albertans believe. And the majority of Albertans believe that members of the government should not be weighing in on the right of a woman to make decisions about her body. Yet members opposite have a growing number of members within that caucus who do not agree with the majority of Albertans on that, so much so that in the last

session we, of course, saw the unprecedented example of the opposition walking out of the Legislature 13 times in a clear demonstration of a profound desire to not do their job. That was awkward. Perhaps this is an effort to sort of pander to the same kinds of groups that pushed them into that ridiculous demonstration of parliamentary behaviour.

The other issue, of course, is the matter that we've been already discussing at great length in this House in this first session, which is the hostility that many members opposite feel around the equality rights of members of the LGBTQ community – for example, as evidenced by the only three- or four-year-old statements made by the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon – where we see them saying things like, "Gay love is not real love" and sayings like that and, you know, codes of conduct where students have to promise to refrain from homosexual behaviour, things like that, which clearly demonstrate a belief by some members on the other side that members of the LGBTQ community are somehow less than the majority. Those are very, I would say if I were in charge of that particular group of folks over there, awkward opinions for members of the government caucus to have because they're very much out of line with what most Albertans believe.

Now, I'll be the first to admit that Albertans did not make their voting decisions on the basis of those issues. They chose to vote for the members opposite notwithstanding that many members of the government caucus hold the views which are so incongruent and discordant with the opinions of most Albertans. Fair enough. But it doesn't mean that it isn't a liability for the members opposite and for the government caucus or that it won't become a liability once again. They are offside, Mr. Speaker, with the majority view of most Albertans on these fundamental issues of human rights, rights that should be enjoyed by women, rights that should be enjoyed by members of the LGBTQ community, rights which some members of the government caucus would like to undermine.

Obviously, this is an effort to pander to those folks, to allow them to walk away or to vote a different way as long as the government majority is maintained on whatever vote is under way at that time. I guess that's why this is going on, although, again, to be clear, it's nonbinding, so who knows, really.

Now, the Premier took the time to argue that somehow this and the need for people to acknowledge the right to vote on their conscience were somehow linked to decorum. I'm not going to spend a lot of time talking about that, but I will say just a couple of things. I would urge all members opposite to understand that one of the single biggest threats to decorum is the decision to abandon the need for us to have a common understanding of the facts. I've mentioned this previously in the last couple of weeks, that this is unprecedented, you know, the degree to which members opposite are prepared to operate from a different set of facts. They don't feel at all bound to actually identify a common set of facts, and then we can debate till the cows come home, or maybe not that long. Maybe we'll let the cows stay out a bit later and stop debating at a certain point. But the point is that we'll do that on the application of the facts or the interpretation of the facts or what the solution would be arising from the combination of the facts, but we shouldn't actually be debating what is true and what is not true. There's an unprecedented departure from this idea that we respect a common set of facts with the debate that I've seen in this House since the election, as led by the government caucus.

I will say that I'm certainly not the only person to notice it, and it is the unfortunate development, I believe, of some folks here, particularly those in government caucus, spending a bit too much time learning at the feet of American politicians, particularly American right-wing politicians, and believing that that means of political discourse or that form of political discourse will somehow



improve the political discourse here. If we just, you know, start from disagreeing on whether the sun rises in the east or the west, well, then we can do a very good job of never discussing how to deal with the consequences of the sun coming up earlier than people plan. We never have to talk about a solution if we can't even agree on whether the sun rises in the east or the west. For people who are fundamentally opposed to government, who are fundamentally opposed to collective action, I suppose that it's a legitimate strategy: just debate whether the sun rises in the east or the west forever, and we can avoid doing anything useful. Ultimately, from an ideological perspective, I guess their job is done. Fortunately, I don't really think that that's what people expect of their governments anymore.

As a result, this sort of profound willingness to begin by debating fundamental facts or rejecting fundamental facts like whether the sun rises in the east or the west, for example, creates a tremendous amount of discord. I would suggest that focusing on trying to get back to that world where we have good, healthy debates on a common set of facts, around their application and their interpretation and how they come together, would be a better tool to improve decorum than the motion which we are currently discussing.

The final thing that I will say on the matter of decorum is that, I'd say, in the last five or six days I've seen repeatedly members opposite use as a fundamental tenet to their argument: what you are saying is wrong because we got more votes than you; what you are saying has less value because we got more votes than you; and in fact you don't even have a right to stand and say what you are saying because we got more votes than you. Then at the end of that we are lectured on how we need to develop humility, which is, as you can imagine, probably the kind of thing that starts to undermine decorum.

But I would suggest that members opposite might want to consider learning tools to bring more grace to their victory. They could do so not by – certainly, they would not look to us. Why should they? You know, we are very much at loggerheads all the time, and very few people would ever be able to do that. But look to their predecessors. Back in the day, a very, very, very long time ago, there was an opposition of two Official Opposition members and two independent members. The rest were Conservatives, as led by former Premier Peter Lougheed. I can tell you without a word or a moment or a millisecond of hesitation that never, when my father rose to raise concerns, legitimate concerns, in his role as the Leader of the Opposition, would he have ever been faced with the spectre of Premier Peter Lougheed saying: what you are saying isn't valuable; what you are saying is wrong; in fact, you don't have a right to say what you are saying because we got more votes than you. I know that would never have been done.

8:40

You know why, Mr. Speaker? Because each and every person that got elected here got elected by their constituents, and each and every member of this Assembly is here as a result of those votes. Each of us here has a role to play, and in opposition we have a particular role to play. We were not elected to clap every time the members opposite stand up and announce an initiative. That's not what people elected us to do. They elected us to engage in critical analysis, to ask pointed questions, to ensure accountability, to ask for transparency. These are fundamental things that opposition members who know how to do their job, who are committed to doing their job, who do what the voters ask them to do, do.

That is something that members opposite on the front bench and particularly the Premier need to remember. If they remember that and if they take their roles seriously – just as they take their role to

lead the government and to make decisions about the budget and about the future of this province over the next four years seriously, we too have an obligation to take our role seriously. Walking in and being told that, no, apparently 55 per cent means 100 per cent and we're going to operate as though we got 100 per cent and when you complain that we are operating as though we got 100 per cent, we are then going to accuse you of not having decorum: well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you can understand why decorum would start to be jeopardized in those settings.

Again, I would suggest that there are better strategies that the members opposite could use to ensure decorum rather than bringing a motion like this forward to pander to the uncomfortable views held by, I suspect, the minority of their caucus and bringing forward a motion which is nonbinding and/or out of order. We could rather be spending our time here debating the bills which fundamentally undermine basic human rights of a significant portion of the province, of the population or debating a bill that would potentially undermine the rights of elected school board trustees or debating a bill that will undermine the right to the same level of compensation received by employees prior to the bill's introduction. These things matter to Albertans.

Whether or not the government caucus can agree amongst themselves about who gets to vote their conscience and who has to be the one to make sure that the caucus still wins the vote – because, of course, we all know that's the other thing about this that's so ironic. You know, you're always going to do the numbers. You're always going to do the math before you figure out how many people get to vote their conscience, right? There'll be so many, and then after that, nobody else does because, of course, you've still got to win the vote. I mean, that's another thing about this that's so silly.

Nonetheless, that being said, I would suggest that there are many better things that we could debate in this House right now that are more meaningful to the day-to-day lives of people than the political problem solving and issue management that are required by those who are managing this government caucus. I also believe that there are much more productive ways in which we could pursue the matter of decorum than that suggested by the Premier or others in their comments on this motion, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, with that, I will take my seat. Hopefully, soon we can vote on this.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question or comment. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel like the person who was asked to step forward to volunteer and everybody else took a step back. Anyway, I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for her thoughtful comments on this government motion and for indulging me in a hypothetical question, if she would, because it's been very interesting to me to listen to the members opposite argue in favour of the rights of MLAs to vote according to their conscience. Of course, we've dived deeply into the history of the British parliamentary system, which is something that we all enjoy tremendously. It's odd, the strain of Catholic thought that has influenced the British parliamentary system, which is strange because, of course, it developed in a very strongly Protestant framework. Anyway, I'm getting sidetracked.

One of the questions that hasn't been addressed by the members opposite in this debate is whether or not members of cabinet would be allowed to vote their conscience on government bills and motions that are being brought forward to the House. So if I can engage the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in a hypothetical, how would she have dealt with the issue of allowing free votes on

matters of conscience and what expectations she would have placed on cabinet members in her government if those things had come up, and what does she think perhaps the members opposite would do if confronted with those issues?

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition if she wishes to respond.

**Ms Notley:** Well, that's a very interesting hypothetical question, and I believe that the member opposite is heading to a hypothetical destination. I'm just not sure what it is. I'm trying to think back. What particular axe does he have to grind right now? Anyway, I'm sure there is none.

But, I mean, I think you raise a very important question because there is a difference. Obviously, members of Executive Council have additional obligations that go above and beyond the obligations that exist within a caucus or within the Assembly, certainly, as they relate to confidentiality and also in some respects with respect to the execution of the functions of Executive Council. It does, of course, raise an interesting question if you have Executive Council moving forward on, let's say, a wise decision to fund additional access to abortion services in order to support the basic human rights of half of the population, and what would happen if members of Executive Council, potentially the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Health, were opposed to that? That would be very difficult.

Another matter, of course, we know already is that we have an Education minister who has previously stated things that are less than supportive of the LGBTQ community. Of course, we have a Minister of Finance who is a board member of an institution which has stated, clear, black-and-white written policies which are very hostile to the LGBTQ community. Interestingly, both are in a position right now to consider whether or not funding should be provided to private schools which are continuing to operate with exceptionally discriminatory policies in place in relation, in particular, to LGBTQ students. Of course, the potential is there, the authority right now is there to withdraw public funding from those schools because why would we give that kind of public money, those taxpayer dollars, which are so, so valuable, to schools that are actually promoting a breach of the Charter and the Constitution and the subversion of basic human rights? Why would we do that?

But then if you as a member of Executive Council have your own ideas around these and you're allowed to vote your conscience, then suddenly there's a conflict.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, any others wishing to speak to Government Motion 9?

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 9 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:50 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schow
Barnes	Madu	Schulz
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Schweitzer
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Orr	Singh
Hanson	Pitt	Smith
Horner	Rehn	Stephan

Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Loewen		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Phillips
Ceci	Hoffman	Renaud
Dach	Irwin	Schmidt
Feehan	Notley	Shepherd

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 12
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[Government Motion 9 carried]

### Caucus Affiliation

10. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its opposition to the practice of members changing their caucus affiliation unless that member is to sit as an independent or has resigned and been returned to the Assembly after being re-elected in a by-election under the new affiliation.

[Adjourned debate July 2: Mr. Kenney]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the motion?

**Ms Lovely:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Government Motion 10. In the previous two provincial elections I was a Wildrose candidate. I'm against floor crossing. The past four years have taught us that a United Conservative government is what Albertans want and need in order to clean up the mess left behind by this previous NDP government.

The Wildrose floor crossing caused much anguish for my supporters. Many of them contacted me to express their disbelief with what happened and shared a sense of collective anger for not being consulted. What bothered my supporters more than anything was the disconnect in the communication which happened. There was no consultation conducted with voters to see if this floor crossing was something that they supported. The Wildrose caucus was not united in their decision to cross the floor. How then could they assume that Albertans would be united behind their decision?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Another issue which caused considerable upset was the money donated to the Wildrose cause. Those supporters described the sense of sting they felt with the action taken without member consultation. Those donors felt that their money had been wasted as they had intended it to be used for the Wildrose cause.

When the floor crossing happened, it changed the dynamic. The Wildrose opposition failed to continue in the way they had supported. Although many floor-crossers benefited government at that time, voters sent a clear message in the next election. Not one floor-crosser was re-elected.

Floor crossing has been a major issue in politics. It is a selfish, undemocratic process that leaves voters unsatisfied with their chosen representative, who left the party they voted for. Voters want a certain party in, and if their representative doesn't follow those party lines, then they should go back to the voters to determine if they are best to represent them.

It is our jobs as MLAs of our constituents to represent them in the best and most effective way possible. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry, hon. member. I'll just take a moment.

Hon. members, it's rather loud in here. I am very close to the speaker, and I cannot hear her. So all sides of the House, please just quiet down. Thank you.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you.

It is our jobs as MLAs of our constituencies to represent them in the best and most effective way possible. We are the voice of our constituents so that they may be heard at all times. Our government will not accept any floor-crossers without a by-election. This is to determine if that is what their constituents want them to do. It is important to the democratic process that our constituents have a member that will appropriately represent them. It is ridiculous for a member to cross the floor to a very different party without consulting their voters first. They should be able to hold their representatives accountable and ensure that they are representing the voices of their constituents. It is important for the democratic right of our constituents that they have an MLA that follows their beliefs.

However, Madam Speaker, it is undemocratic to have an MLA cross the floor without first consulting their constituents, and if they must do so, they should have an immediate by-election. In the case that MLAs do choose to continue to cross the floor, we ask they resign and then run under their new party's banner in a by-election. If constituents are not happy with the party their MLA is in and want them to leave their current party, they can sit as an independent. However, we want to express how important this is to the democratic system that members should have a by-election to ensure that voters have the final say on who represents them.

Our government wants to ensure that constituents know that they are our bosses and that they have the final say on who represents them. We need to represent our citizens accordingly and reaffirm the role of citizens as the boss. Our government wants to ensure that Albertans have a voice in the House through their representatives and that they can hold their representatives accountable. They should be heard every day, not just on election day. This isn't about party loyalty or party-line politics; it's about democracy. We represent the people who elected us. The people trust us to represent them according to how they voted, and we should honour their decision. If an MLA can't stay with their elected party, they should have a by-election. It is only democratic. Every member here who wants to do right by their constituents and support their democratic rights should support this motion, Madam Speaker.

9:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much. Again, I'm not going to take a lot of time to speak to this although I will again be rising in opposition to this motion. The first reason is very similar to the reason that I gave to the last motion, which is that, in fact, it is nonbinding, absolutely nonbinding, and were it binding, it would be out of order.

Again, it's one of those things that the members opposite seem inclined to do, which is to announce that they are doing something and then do something else which is sort of designed to look like the thing that they promised they would do, but they actually all know that it doesn't do that. That's what's going on here again. There are pieces of legislation that they've introduced in this session already: "You know, here we are. We've introduced a piece of legislation. This was in our platform. Look at us. We're doing

the thing we promised we would do." Then you read through the legislation, and it's, like: "No. Actually, no, you're not. This is window dressing, and the legislation does not actually do what you say it does." This motion is much like that.

This motion is absolutely nonbinding. Within our parliamentary system it is not possible to tell individual elected members of this Assembly that they cannot cross the floor should they choose to, so this is meaningless, yet here we are debating it. Now, it's particularly ironic that we are here debating it because when the UCP was in the Official Opposition, it was, of course, at that time entirely made up of people who had crossed the floor.

That is deeply ironic – and I'll get back to that in a moment – but it's also a little bit interesting coming from the Premier and the leader of this party because certainly, as much as they were all very inclined back in the day when they were in the Reform and they were all about democracy and they would say, "oh, no floor crossing" and "everyone should resign" and all these great sort of democratic principles, once they got into government, their story changed. In I believe it was 2006 there was a well-known Liberal MP who was elected as a Liberal, and two weeks after the election he crossed the floor to the Harper Conservatives, directly into cabinet. So strange, all those years . . .

**Member Ceci:** Vancouver.

**Ms Notley:** Was he from Vancouver? Yes. I think he was from Vancouver, David Emerson.

. . . that the former Prime Minister Stephen Harper claimed to be running from the right, from that populist base, talking about a triple-E Senate and all these different kinds of democratic reforms like the one that we are now talking about today and, you know, two weeks into it, suddenly we've got a Liberal crossing the floor into his cabinet. I'm sure that many of the members of his caucus who actually ran under the Conservative banner were not terribly pleased to see that happen, but that is hypocrisy, I guess, in action.

Now, another example, going back to the federal Conservatives, that I think maybe members here should think about a little bit because it's quite instructive: there was another Conservative MP who was under investigation for election fraud.

**Ms Hoffman:** Really?

**Ms Notley:** Yes, he was.

Now, back over there, they were a little bit more concerned about the seriousness of being under RCMP investigation than the members opposite. While he was under investigation for election fraud, the then Prime Minister Harper said: "You know what? You're under RCMP investigation. This is a little dicey. We're not really keen on that in our caucus, so you need to sit as an independent." So he left the caucus, and he sat as an independent.

Now, eventually he was convicted, or he was charged. Maybe it was when he was charged that he had to sit. Either way, eventually, when he was convicted, he had to step down, but he had that little sort of purgatory place, sort of crossing the floor to sit with the independents while he was under investigation or awaiting the outcome of his charges. Just a cautionary tale to the members opposite since we do seem to have an ongoing RCMP investigation into the whole process by which your leader was chosen. I'm just saying that you might want to hold onto that little strategy for some of yourselves in case that becomes something that is necessary and there might be an occasion where potentially crossing the floor to sit as an independent will be a helpful safety net for some of the folks.

Now, going back sort of slightly more seriously, though, I do think that this is deeply ironic that the amount of floor crossing, back and forth, that begat the UCP is unprecedented in Canadian parliamentary history. I mean, I was elected in 2008, and by about – I'm going to go with '10 – 2010 we had then Conservative MLAs: one was kicked out, and two others crossed the floor to join with a fourth one who had actually been elected as a Wildrose. Maybe they elected them afterwards.

Anyway, they crossed, and then they created the Wildrose, and then the Wildrose did their thing, and then leading up to the 2015 election, a big bunch of them crossed back to the Conservatives, and then the election happened and the Conservatives came third, so then there was this whole backing and forth. Some of them wanted to cross, and some of them didn't, and then they created the new party, and some of them crossed to become part of the new party, and some of them held onto their original seats in accordance with the spirit of this motion, actually, and then, of course, lost those seats. Anyway, there were a couple of them that hung onto the original spirit of the motion, that they would finish out their term in the role that they were elected in, but they were by far the minority. The majority went on to essentially create the UCP, so it is deeply ironic that this is coming from this particular group.

Now, that being said, this whole issue would stop with: well, this is meaningless because it's not binding, but, oh, isn't it funny to talk about how this is actually emanating from this group given that nobody has crossed the floor as much as UCPers and the people that are now in the UCP but were previously in other parties. But the other thing that's going on here, which I think is a little bit troublesome, is that this is an effort on the part of the Premier to persuade members within his caucus to not cross the floor again, because, you know, once you do it that many times, it's just sort of like getting up in the morning and putting on a new pair of socks, I guess.

When you forcefully draw together two parties which had clearly divided over a number of issues and force them together in the pursuit of power – what we know is that over four years we will learn that a very small minority of members opposite in that caucus will have any access to any form or any version of power. The rest will be expected to hopefully represent their constituents and hopefully not have to spend too much time explaining to them why it was their school was closed or their hospital was cancelled or their roads were not being paved or their municipal taxes just went up and actually be able to talk about good things that are going on within their riding. Nonetheless, that will be a big part of the work that many of those who are not in Executive Council will be doing.

Given that this party is the product of two parties that had split on their own for, in my observation, relatively significant reasons – you know, there were those who were pro life and those who were pro choice. There were those who were not hostile to the LGBTQ community; there were those who were. There were those who think that funding education appropriately is a good thing; there are others who would prefer to see more private education and just starve public education altogether. There are actually significant differences that, at least at one time, lived within this conglomerate of the UCP. As a result, it would make sense to me that there is a risk that people might want to cross the floor at a certain point.

**9:10**

So it's ironic that the party whose genesis is nothing but floor crossing is now attempting to bring in a motion to ban floor crossing, a motion that actually is technically and legally incapable of banning floor crossing. Again, it is both ironic and an incredible waste of the time of the people in this Assembly because, again, this motion cannot do what it purports to do. It would be

unconstitutional were it to be able to do that. As I said before, I think there are much more important issues that we can discuss other than spending time listening to members of the UCP caucus try to convince their voters that they did a thing that they promised in their platform even when most of them fully understood that they had no ability to make that promise and that right now this motion does nothing to actually fulfill the promise which they actually don't have the ability to make.

With that, I will take my seat and reinforce that we will not be voting in favour of this nonbinding and deeply ineffectual motion. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

**Mr. Hunter:** Madam Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, I believe, got up maybe 30 minutes ago and talked about the hypocrisy of what we on this side of the House have been saying, yet I just heard the Leader of the Official Opposition stand up twice now, talk about how we don't need to be discussing this or debating this, and then she went on to speak for 15 minutes on why we shouldn't be debating this. I would say that that is the meaning of hypocrisy. Hopefully, we can get on with business, and hopefully we can vote on this and see the views of this House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to take a few moments on 29(2)(a) to speak to this issue. I think it's important, what the Leader of the Opposition is saying here, because of the fact that the party who is putting forward this motion has its whole existence dependent on doing exactly what they're trying to stop other people from doing now. The party as it exists would not exist if a hundred per cent of the people sitting in the House at the time that this party came together, the governing party came together, hadn't crossed the floor from whatever party they were in into this brand new party called the UCP. A hundred per cent.

I think that says something about them, that they would choose to deny other people the powers that they used in order to create advantage for themselves. This is something I've spoken to in this House before, that for some reason this party, this government party, likes to coalesce power around themselves and then deny power to other people. I find that, you know, quite disturbing. They talk about decorum. They talk about all kinds of things. They present motions that they know are trivial because they cannot be enforced. In fact, they may even be violations of the Constitution. They do all of this so that they can centre the power around themselves and deny other people rights that they have, and then members stand up and say that it's a violation of democracy if somebody crosses the floor.

It makes me question whether or not they've actually spent time looking at the historical democracy of the Westminster parliamentary system. You do not vote for a party; you vote for an individual in your constituency. At no point do you say: I vote for this party, and I will take whatever representative comes from that party. If they want a proportional representation system, they should vote for one, a perfectly legitimate debate to bring into the House. To say that it's a violation of democracy to do what democracy is actually designed to do, and that is to vote for an individual who will go and represent you in the House, is to completely misunderstand the nature of the Westminster parliamentary system.

I find myself a bit flabbergasted that they would sit here and do this at this particular time, that they would actually come forward and propose to do something that they themselves took advantage

of and somehow make it sound like anybody else who does that thing is bad, that they're against democracy and bad human beings. What do you say about a person who says that it's good for me, but it's not good for anybody else? What language do we have to describe somebody who says, you know, "I get to do things and take advantage of them, but nobody else should be allowed to do that"?

Well, I've found myself using the word "hypocrisy" a number of times this evening and have been challenged on that now, yet that's exactly what's happening here: the hypocrisy of actually taking advantage of a rule and then stopping somebody else from taking advantage of it. You climb the ladder and then pull up the ladder after you so nobody else can benefit, so nobody else can actually succeed. What kind of thinking is that? Now I'm back to being worried about allowing them to vote with their conscience because it seems to me that somebody who climbs the ladder and then pulls the ladder . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Would the government like to close debate? The hon. chief deputy whip.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, we'd like to close debate.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 10 carried]-+

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:17 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Schow
Amery	Luan	Schulz
Barnes	Madu	Schweitzer
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Rosin	Walker
Hunter	Rowswell	Wilson
Loewen	Sawhney	

9:20

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Phillips
Ceci	Hoffman	Renaud
Dach	Irwin	Schmidt
Feehan	Notley	Shepherd
Totals:	For – 29	Against – 12

[Government Motion 10 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 13 Alberta Senate Election Act

[Adjourned debate June 27: Mr. Schweitzer]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the bill? The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is again a pleasure to rise to speak on this bill and once again to speak against this bill. Let me start by saying that it is interesting that it's worked out this way, that I'm speaking about this bill right after speaking about the two government motions. This follows right along the lines of those motions in that it's one of those things that people tend to point to as an opportunity to enhance democracy, yet as soon as you dig into it a little bit, you realize that it's meaningless. It can't do what it purports to do. It doesn't work within the overall system that we have. It's an empty promise. That is exactly – exactly – what this piece of legislation delivers, yet another empty promise.

This is a piece of legislation that is designed to convince people that somehow we will get Ottawa to listen more effectively to us if we have the Senators, who are elected for life. I need to be very clear: that won't happen. It is, I think, disingenuous for people to advocate this particular strategy as a means to getting better representation for the people of Alberta or other provinces in the west, quite frankly. It doesn't work that way. You know, it's just really, as a result, disingenuous.

You know, we go back to the origins of the Senate. We know that it was originally put in place to establish greater levels of equality between certain regions in the country. The problem is that the regions, as they were defined at the time, were a heck of a lot different than they are now. In fact, the Senate now is an incredibly discriminatory body as far as regional representation goes. Here in the west, where we should have far more Senators than we do in order to actually have the Senate fulfill that purpose of being sort of a more regionalized mechanism of sober second thought, instead what we have is a Senate that is a more discriminatory version of a regionalized opportunity for sober second thought, where we are bound to have the interests of other parts of Canada take precedence over the interests of the west any time that the Senate actually flexes its muscle to do anything of substance.

You know, the Maritimes have more Senators than we do. Even though we're growing much faster and we've long since overtaken them in population and all that kind of stuff, there is an incredibly unequal distribution of Senators. That is part of the Constitution. Until such time as we change the Constitution, that will be the law. As a result, because that is the law, what you then have to do is make sure that the Senate – because it is so unequal, those of us in the west need to not give the Senate more credibility or give it more opportunity to flex its muscles because if we do that, it will ultimately be used against us by the other parts of the country, which actually have way more Senators than we do because the Senate is fundamentally unfair.

Right there, I'm not sure why it is we are embarking upon this particular strategy because it does not deliver what the members opposite suggest that it delivers, yet again another piece in this unfolding pattern of governance by this UCP government. Promise something, put something in the window, say: hey; this product here is going to fix your problem, this thing that we promised to fix, even though it doesn't. It's a strange way of governing.

Now, there is no question that in the last six months or eight months or 12 months we have seen the Senate flex its muscles to some degree and almost succeed in ensuring an outcome that would have been better for Albertans and for the west and, perhaps, even for the people in the Maritimes. Ultimately, it didn't quite happen, but it almost did.

There is a saying out there, for those of us in the legal world, which is: good facts make bad law. What we've done here is that we've got this one little sort of glimpse into an occasion where the Senate almost was an advocate for the interests of the west, and coincidentally one or two of the Senators that were part of that, certainly not the only part but one part of it, were elected and then

appointed as a result of the election. But that is really, Madam Speaker, more of a coincidence than a map for change because it is a function of the particular political dynamics at this moment and the particular issue. You cannot expect it to work that way on other issues. Really, what we saw was a very short-term political situation, political gamesmanship, very much related to the, I would say, at most 48-month political narrative that we are dealing with right now. The problem is that the Senate does not operate in 48-month cycles; the Senate operates for life.

[The Speaker in the chair]

So whether we elect them or don't elect them, once someone is appointed, they are appointed for life. Lots of things can happen over the duration of a Senator's appointment. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms can come into effect, for instance. Governments can change completely. Laws can change completely. Societal norms can change completely. The Internet can be invented, for instance, over a Senator's term. So this idea that we can look to the last six, 12 months as a guidepost for what we can expect over the next 24 years of the Senate is profoundly unwise.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Let's just go back to the fundamentals of the Senate. The fundamentals are that it is regionally unfair to the west, and it is based on appointments for life. What this purports to do is to have an opportunity for people to elect their Senators, who may then be appointed. Now, quite honestly, Madam Speaker, some people might argue: well, at least if they're elected, then they know who elected them, and they'll function that way. You know, I think the reality is that one of the things that makes politicians accountable to their electorate is the possibility of the next election, Madam Speaker. One election and then, woo-hoo, you're in for life and you've got your pension guaranteed and you've got your 27 houses in your different provinces, depending on all that kind of stuff: all that happens, and you never have to face the voters again.

9:30

You know what? That does not achieve what this bill is telling people who are worried about the Senate it will achieve. Anyone who knows anything about electoral politics understands that it will not achieve it. You get elected once; you get elected for life. The accountability piece is gone and with it, I would argue, the effectiveness piece as well, probably, because most politicians' effectiveness is linked to their accountability. It's linked to the fact that ultimately they're going to have to face the voters again. As a result, this simply won't work, but it will for a brief window in time give more credibility to an institution which is profoundly unfair to the west because we don't have anywhere near the representation that we should.

In addition to this, there are a couple of other things that are happening in this bill which are also troubling. One is that it appears to open up a darn big great old hole in our Election Act in terms of raising the spending limits of certain political parties. Depending on the timing of the election and what else is going on in the election, you can actually end up almost doubling the spending limits for political parties. That is a problem, a very significant problem. One, I don't think there's a soul in Alberta, if you were to ask the question – maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it's only 90 per cent of people who would answer it the way I think they would. Maybe I'm wrong overall, but I think if you went to Albertans and said, "Hey, do you think we need more big money in politics? Is that the answer to our democratic woes?" I'm pretty sure most Albertans would not say, "Yup, we need more money. That's what we need to make our politics better, more money." Yet that's what this does.

A creative trip through the loopholes which are built into this act could actually allow for a significant elevation of the spending ceiling, depending on the timing of the elections.

Now, perhaps when we get to committee, members opposite will consider amendments that will allow us to close that loophole such that we won't perceive this bill to be an end run around the fair elections act and the object that we certainly have, which is to get big money out of politics, and indeed the object that one of the UCP's predecessor parties, the Wildrose, actually agreed with us on. We shall see.

The other thing that I think is very troubling about this act is that, because it allows political parties to come in and spend money on senatorial candidates, it essentially demands that senatorial candidates be partisan. When this idea of having a Senator who is representing Alberta and ensuring that they must be partisan is paired, then, with this fact that they are elected for life, I think it is wrong. If you're going to create a system that encourages or almost demands partisan alignment in order to compete within the senatorial election milieu, then you had better find a way to make sure that that person is not there for life because the two don't work together properly and you're going to end up with a great deal of dysfunction. Frankly, I don't think that we should be injecting the requirement to be partisan into the notion of senatorial politics if we are going to have the notion of senatorial politics. Again, I'm not entirely sure why we're so interested in giving power and influence to a body that is so discriminatory to the west, to western Canada.

Finally, the last thing that this act does, which again should go against the basic bread and butter of the UCP, so I'm surprised again at why we are playing in this pond, is that, of course, it's expensive. It's expensive. We are having a faux election to elect someone, who may or may not actually then have a right to end up in the Senate, to a body that is discriminatory to the west so that a person can be elected for life even if they outlive the partisan group that originally worked to get them elected. I know the UCP thinks that they're going to govern for the next 45 years. You know, I wouldn't bank on that quite yet. Quite frankly, most Albertans would not think that that was a reasonable plan, just as I don't think anyone would be very comfortable with electing somebody for life. But in any event, I don't think they're going to be comfortable with electing somebody for life to a dysfunctional body that discriminates against the west and spending taxpayers' dollars on it.

[The Speaker in the chair]

This will be expensive. You know, for a government that claims to be worried about the bottom line, that is putting thousands of families across this province under great stress because the Minister of Education can't be bothered to tell school boards whether special-needs students will have aides with them when school starts in September because she can't be bothered to actually tell them how much money they're going to get – and I don't know why because they've certainly had more time than our government did in the same situation and we were able to tell them, but for some reason the Minister of Education can't because she has to wait for the blue-ribbon panel to tell her what she can do. But somehow we can still go ahead and create a whole new expense item which is the cost of electing somebody for life to a dysfunctional body which discriminates against the west. Why?

I know you love to tell the story of good Senator Black and what's happened over the course of the last six to 18 months around two pieces of legislation, but that is not the way this works. The Senate is built into the Constitution. It will outlast this legislation. The partisanship around the senatorial appointment will not outlast this legislation. The Senate will outlast all of that. We will be left

with, again, the remnants of trying to breathe life into a body that discriminates against the west, because for one political moment in time there is a thought that there are more Conservatives there than not. You know what? It's not going to work that way. It's going to work against the west. When people wonder why the Senate is not a place that is speaking up for us, they will be looking to this government and why it is that this government chose to try to give the Senate more credibility.

I will say that it's amusing because, of course, I suppose, in one sense it's good that this particular government doesn't get to appoint or recommend appointments because their record almost blew up the Senate. We thought that you needed to change the Constitution to blow up the Senate, but frankly the Harper Conservatives almost blew up the Senate with the outrageously poor selections that they made in their appointments and some of the scandal that ensued. You almost did manage to blow up the Senate. Now it's coming back into more repute, slightly, but, again, waxes and wanes.

Even as these things change, the fact that the west is disproportionately represented and that these people are appointed for life: nobody can change those things without changing the Constitution. Both those elements, to me, render the Senate a fundamentally flawed institution which we should not be spending good hard-earned taxpayers' dollars on propping up for political gamesmanship, which is really what this is about. I would urge members to vote against this because we have better things to spend our money on.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the bill as I don't believe that Standing Order 29(2)(a) is yet available? Anyone else wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen. And by risen, I mean I don't see that he has risen. Is there anyone else wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 13?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:40 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schow
Barnes	Madu	Schulz
Dreeschen	Neudorf	Schweitzer
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Orr	Singh
Hanson	Pitt	Smith
Horner	Rehn	Stephan
Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Loewen	Rowswell	Wilson

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Phillips
Ceci	Hoffman	Renaud
Dach	Irwin	Schmidt
Feehan	Notley	

Totals: For – 30 Against – 11

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A2. Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and offer a few additional comments on this amendment that's before us. Of course, in this amendment we're proposing to change the name to more accurately reflect the intent of the legislation, and that is, of course, to make changes to the employment standards and labour relations acts.

In comments made by my colleague from Lethbridge-West earlier this afternoon, she had indicated in debate that it was really inaccurate to call this act An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business because, of course, there is nothing about lowering workers' wages that will make Alberta open for business.

10:00

We already have, of course, the lowest tax jurisdiction in the country. That's even prior to this UCP government enacting a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate tax giveaway. That became effective yesterday.

Of course, we already led the country in growth in 2017. We were among the leaders in 2018. Even though the economic outlooks that have been issued – well, let me say that the economic outlooks that have been issued for the province of Alberta for 2019 and 2020 put Alberta at the back of the pack when it comes to comparing us to other jurisdictions with respect to expectations for economic growth, and that's in spite of and not because of what the members opposite have enacted as far as legislation goes.

You know, the economic forecasters are well aware of the government's intent to lower corporate taxes. They're well aware of the government's intent to lower workers' wages. They're well aware of the government's intent to stop promoting the renewable energy sector in this province. And in spite of those things or because of those things the economic forecasts for the province of Alberta are not good for the year 2019. In fact, a lot of economic forecasters show that Alberta will lag most of the country in terms of economic growth for 2019, which is unfortunate.

It's unfortunate because at a time when economic growth is stagnating, of course people turn to governments to provide the services that they need, and government is moving quickly to make sure that it doesn't have the financial resources that it needs to provide services to the people of Alberta in their time of need. On top of that, they're piling on by lowering workers' wages, so when Albertans aren't able to get the services that they need from the government, they're not able to draw on their own resources because their wages have been lowered in a number of cases. Who will they turn to? I'm not sure, Madam Chair. It certainly seems that if people are falling upon hard times, they won't be able to turn to their governments, and they won't be able to turn to their own resources because the UCP has worked very hard and very quickly to make sure that neither government nor individuals working in these jobs have the resources that they need to look after themselves and look after the people of the province.

My friend from Lethbridge-West was correct in saying that it is inaccurate to call this act An Act to Make Alberta Open for

Business. In her comments she touched upon some of the things that the government could do to actually indicate that we are open for business. One of the things that she highlighted was investments in postsecondary education. I want to reiterate the importance of those investments. That's certainly something that we saw as important to diversifying the economy and helping Alberta recover from one of the worst recessions in generations. That's why we increased funding for universities and colleges across the province. It's why we froze tuition, to make sure that people who wanted to go back to school faced lower financial barriers to do so. It's why we increased the number of scholarships and grants that were available to students, so that they had more financial resources to do that.

That's also why we proposed to invest \$50 million over five years in tech-related education programs. We had heard clearly from the high-tech sector, who were working in Alberta or wanted to set up shop in Alberta, that access to skilled employees able to go to work in jobs that were available in the high-tech sector was not adequate and that we needed to train more Albertans to be able to go to work in that sector. It's really unfortunate that today in question period the government didn't commit to that education funding that we had committed to, that would lead to a lot of economic diversification in the high-tech sector, lead the high-tech sector to be able to hire people with the skills they need to be able to go to work in that sector. That's something that would truly make Alberta open for business.

Now, Madam Chair, with respect to postsecondary education there are some concerns, of course, that I have with what this legislation does in terms of restricting access to postsecondary education. Now, I knew many students in my time at university who worked construction jobs and worked significant hours of overtime, put in significant overtime hours in the summer while they were going to university, to pay for their schooling. For a very brief period of time students in those situations were able to bank their overtime hours at time and a half, and now the government has taken that time and a half banking away from them. As we've clearly established here during the debate, time is money, and when you're taking time out of students' pockets, you're taking money out of students' pockets, money that could be used, that would be used to further their education in university. By taking away the overtime, it's making it harder for Alberta students to pay for their advanced education, which, of course, will mean that the skills shortage that already exists will not be addressed and will continue to be a problem that plagues a number of sectors, including the high-tech sector.

I did want to raise an issue with respect to the minimum wage, of course, which is related to this legislation. The discriminatory student minimum wage came into effect last week, so now students under the age of 18 are only paid \$13 an hour, which means two things, Madam Chair, that students under the age of 18 who are trying to work a job to save up and pay for postsecondary education have to work that many more hours to be able to save for their education, and of course those who are 18 will have to now compete with people who are 17 years old who are making \$13 an hour, making it less likely for them to be able to get a job in the first place. That will create a lot of financial stress on young people who are seeking higher education in the province of Alberta or anywhere else, for that matter, because, of course, Albertans go across the country and around the world to pursue higher education when the opportunities present themselves.

Whenever a student's personal financial circumstances fall short of being able to meet the costs of pursuing higher education, the province of Alberta has historically stepped in and provided access to student loans, and now I think the government has

unintentionally increased the future demand for student loans in the province of Alberta by making sure that students under the age of 18 can't adequately save up enough money for higher education and those over the age of 18 have to compete that much harder for jobs that would allow them to be able to fund their higher education. That means that that shortfall will fall to the student loan program administered by the province of Alberta.

It was interesting, Madam Chair, to read the annual report for the province of Alberta, that was released last week. One of the items that was listed was the growing student loan portfolio administered by the Department of Advanced Education. In 2018, I believe it was, 2017-2018, the student loan portfolio accounted for approximately 2 and a half billion dollars. In 2018-2019 that grew significantly, to almost \$2.9 billion. That's a 13 per cent increase in the student loan portfolio in one year. Of course, related to the growth in student loans is the growth in the cost of covering the interest rates, the growth in the costs of covering defaults, all of those costs associated with providing the student loans to the students of Alberta.

**10:10**

Now, in addition to that noted increase in the student loan portfolio in the Ministry of Advanced Education, one of the increased expenses unanticipated during the year was the growth in the cost of student loans. There was an additional \$25 million that was unaccounted for when the budget was created in 2018 because the student loan portfolio was growing so quickly that we were unable to account for the growth in the costs of carrying all of those student loans. That, Madam Chair, can only be anticipated to grow if the government continues to make it harder for students to be able to earn enough money from their work during school and during the summer breaks to be able to finance the costs of their higher education.

So it's curious to me what tack the members opposite will take in trying to tackle the deficit, trying to get the economy going again, all while making it harder for students to earn a living sufficient enough for them to be able to pay for their higher education and cap the student loan increases in costs. I would encourage the members opposite to maybe give their minimum wage plan a rethink not necessarily with the lens of job creation, since we couldn't convince them that minimum wages don't have a significant effect on job creation for young people, but if only to see it through the lens of what lower wages for youth mean to the bottom line of the province of Alberta because the government has been quite explicit in its intent to eliminate the deficit and reduce the debt, and they won't be able to do that if the student loan portfolio continues to grow at the significant rates that it grew over the last couple of years, Madam Chair.

The other option is probably the one that I expect the government to go down, and that is to both limit the availability of student loans to students and limit their financial ability to earn enough money to pay for themselves and to continue to leave Alberta students in the lurch when it comes to being able to afford a higher education of any kind. Of course, that was the situation that Albertans were in for a number of years under previous Conservative governments. That's why we lagged the entire country in terms of participation in advanced education, and that's one of the reasons that we continue to struggle with this issue of economic diversification, because when we don't have people pursuing higher education at levels high enough, at levels comparable to other jurisdictions in the country, we will continue to be left behind when it comes to developing new industrial sectors, new commercial sectors in the province. We'll continue to be left behind when it comes to innovation and economic diversification outside of the traditional strengths of the Alberta economy.



In relation to that, additional costs that the government is imposing upon itself by cutting the minimum wage and, you know, the knock-on effect of having to increase student loans is, of course, the knock-on effect of accessibility of the Alberta heritage scholarships. Now, many people here in this House are likely familiar with some of the Alberta heritage scholarships. The Alexander Rutherford scholarship is, of course, available to all students who achieve a minimum grade point average in high school, and it's commonly seen as a birthright of Alberta students, that if they achieve that given level of ability in school, they qualify for the Alexander Rutherford scholarship, that they can take and use to pay for higher education at any institution in the world.

Of course, the costs of administering the Alexander Rutherford scholarship are also growing very quickly, Madam Chair. The government hasn't given us any indication of how it plans to maintain scholarships and grants for students who can't otherwise afford to pay for higher education, and it's, as I've said before, taking away, through a number of measures in this bill before us, the ability of students to pay for their own higher education. I hope that the government doesn't decide to cap accessibility of scholarships as well to control its own costs, because, again, we'll be left in the same situation as with the student loan program. If we cap access to those programs, then students won't be able to earn enough money from their minimum wage jobs to be able to pay for their higher education, and they won't be able to access the financial resources through the student loan program or the grant program to be able to pay for it either.

So it's for these reasons, Madam Chair, that I really think it's inappropriate for this bill to be named An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. As my hon. friend from Lethbridge-West indicated, a province that's truly open for business is one that invests in its students and makes sure that its students have ready access to affordable higher education. We can see from this legislation, of course, that we're making it harder for students to be able to earn sufficient wages to be able to pay for their education. We've seen it from other movements that the government has made with respect to corporate tax giveaways and a commitment to eliminating the deficit over three years. I fear that we're also going to see significant reductions in the student loan programs and student scholarships and grants. That means that Alberta will be less open for business than it was four years ago, when we were elected. We'll be cutting off access to students' abilities to receive higher education in this province, which is truly a shame.

With that, Madam Chair, I urge all members to truly consider what a province that can realistically call itself open for business would look like. I hope that members reflect upon the hardships that we're foisting upon the young people of this province in terms of them being able to reach their dreams of pursuing higher education. At least be honest with the people of Alberta and call this An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act, and do away with this charade of saying that Alberta is open for business when, in fact, we're not.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to amendment A2, which is the amendment to change the name of the act from An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business to a more appropriate and descriptive title, which is the employment standards and labour relations statutes amendment act, 2019.

10:20

Given that we've been hearing a lot of instruction about the desire in this House to be more focused on the debate that should be occurring in this House and less on some of the partisan attacks, I would think that the government would want to lead that by actually being more transparent about their act and not using this as an opportunity just to cloud the conversation with a descriptor which is, in fact, not a very accurate descriptor and one that implies things about the previous government that aren't true. Therefore, it leads to conversation in the House which is considered unparliamentary and should not be instigated by the government. Yet, you know, they stand up at one time and ask us to not go down that road, and then they stand up at another time and begin to instigate difficulties, again back to the "do what I say and not what I do" that the government seems to be pretty consistently engaging in over the last little while in this House.

I have a couple of major issues I need to talk about, and I probably will not be able to finish them both in the time that I have available to me right now, so I will stick around the House and stand again to speak to some more later. I would like to take this particular segment of time to talk about one issue which I think is very important, one that, you know, has always been very important to me as previously having had the privilege of serving as the Minister of Indigenous Relations in this province and still being committed to the issues that were addressed to me as Minister of Indigenous Relations by members of the community and the things that they'd like to see happen.

I think that it's important that we look at the name of this bill, which is An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. We then immediately have to look at the question of: is it in fact making Alberta open for business for indigenous people? It's an excellent question for us to be asking. We should always be making decisions in this House that are reflective of the needs of the indigenous community in the province of Alberta. In fact, any act that we do engage in that doesn't seek to understand and address the concerns and the needs of the indigenous population would on some level actually be an undermining of the declaration of the rights of indigenous people, the United Nations declaration, commonly referred to as UNDRIP, in which one of the articles refers to "free, prior and informed consent." In this case, we clearly don't have free, prior, and informed consent in terms of how it may affect indigenous people.

I'm very concerned that this government has not yet, by the way, stood up and declared their support for the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. It concerns me that they're this far into their term without having taken a very clear stance on that, and clearly through their behaviour they are also not engaged in behaviour consistent with that declaration.

The issue at hand for us is whether or not this particular bill, which is apparently to encourage business in the province of Alberta, does so for indigenous people. I can tell you that I'm very concerned about some of the choices this government has made. I think it tells me that while they want to speak out of one side of their mouth on the nature of business, they in fact act more closely for the other side, which is not to support business. In this case, I'm particularly concerned about indigenous businesses.

I noticed, for example, that when this government said, "Oh, we are doing things for indigenous people; we've created this indigenous opportunities corporation and have created this possibility that indigenous people can borrow some billions of dollars, with government backstops, in order to invest in the energy sector," they did not say to the indigenous people, "We would like to support your businesses" and say, "We are going to provide you

with the resources that are necessary for those businesses to exist," which they could have done.

This could have been open for indigenous businesses, for example, by talking about resource revenue sharing with the indigenous communities, allowing them the opportunity to benefit from the royalties that are coming off the lands that have been their lands since time immemorial, and they chose not to do that. They didn't create an opportunity for indigenous businesses to avail themselves of the profits from resource revenues, which they could have done. But they chose not to do that, so it isn't supporting businesses in the indigenous community in that way. It's not open for business in that way.

They did announce this indigenous opportunities corporation, but I notice that even in the APTN report on the meeting in which this corporation was announced, Chief Roy Fox of the Kainai First Nation, often referred to as the Blood Tribe, was quoted as saying: we have a 200-megawatt wind farm, and we are proposing another one, another 200 megawatts. End of quote. I think it's very interesting that at that very meeting Chief Fox was saying: we want to be invested in green energies; we have already invested much of our own business energy into green energy, and we'd like to continue to do that. Yet this government, within a few weeks of having had that meeting and promising to participate with the First Nations in creating businesses, without notice, without consultation just cancelled the REP program, that was coming up in the next number of months, that would allow Chief Fox to build his other 200-megawatt wind farm.

It's a big concern for me that he came and said, "The very thing that I'm supporting this for, the thing that I want to do with this, is to build a wind farm," and then two weeks later the government, who says that they're open for business, cancelled the very opportunity to create that business and cancelled the funding on which that was based, through the carbon levy. You can't say that you're open for business and then immediately attack an existing proposal for business because it is a business that you don't happen to support or share.

I notice that in this work that is going on, there's no comment about the fact that one of the most significant and important businesses for the indigenous community had been green businesses. I'm sure that many people in the House have heard me speak about the incredible solar projects that are going on throughout the province. I'm very proud of the fact there are over 30 indigenous communities that have put solar panels up through the money in the indigenous climate leadership program, which, of course, came from the carbon levy, and that many of those communities not only have put up the solar panels, but they have actually begun the process of teaching and training citizens, members of their nations, to become installers and to even start businesses that do this kind of work throughout the province.

I have remarked previously, in the past, how on my early trip in my tenure as Minister of Indigenous Relations I had an opportunity to go to the Montana band, just south of Edmonton, and meet with them about their solar installation project, which, in fact, inspired much of the program that we ultimately put together, and I learned that they had put together an incredible business called Green Arrow. The whole point of the Green Arrow program was to teach people in their community about the installation of solar programs and to build on those programs so that they can not only have jobs in the installation, but they can actually run a business that would derive income from putting installations up in other places throughout the province of Alberta.

This bill does nothing for that. It's wholly inconsistent that the monies that went into that climate leadership program, the indigenous climate leadership program, have been taken away by

the cancellation of the carbon levy, and no monies have been put in through this bill to help replace that. Nothing in this bill is going to help small First Nations put together solar programs and businesses like they would like to do.

**10:30**

I know, for example, that in Maskwacis they continue to wish to build more solar programs. Fortunately, they did receive some monies through the previous government to put together not only solar panels onto the buildings but a one-megawatt solar field, which is going to be opening very soon. I will be very proud to be at that opening and to talk about how the indigenous climate leadership program contributed to that kind of business, which has employed a number of people from the Maskwacis community and will continue to provide income for the Maskwacis community so that they can expand and grow the rest of their businesses.

My concern is that it seems to be that the government has a desire to be open for business but then is acting against it, particularly if it's a business they don't like, if it's a business they don't understand, if it's about saving the planet, if it's about passing the Earth on to our children and grandchildren in a good way. They don't seem to be interested in that, so how can they say that they're open for business? I mean, perhaps if they had labelled it, "Open for the businesses we'd like to pick and choose, that are consistent with our personal value system or the friends that have supported us in the election's value systems," then it might make more sense, but it doesn't even do that, in fact.

What it speaks about instead in this bill is the diminishment of rights of others, the diminishment of the salaries for people who are under the age of 18, the diminishment of people who wish to bank overtime consistent with the rules and regulations across the country, the diminishment of unions to create unions to represent members in terms of their contract negotiations with industry. That's all it talks about. It talks about labour legislation. It talks about those employment conditions, so why not call it a bill about that? Why not call it a bill about employment standards and labour relations? Because you're trying to say something that you're not doing. In fact, you're consistently acting against this with all the other bills that you're putting together.

Now, I look at this, and I think about: what are some of the other businesses that have been started in the province of Alberta by the indigenous community? I look at places like Fort Chip, where the ACFN have put together a business selling groceries because, of course, we know that in northern communities groceries are extremely expensive. I know that a four-litre jug of milk often costs more than \$20. So they decided that they would actually create a business that did two things: that not only created for them a business which they could run, and that business would employ their own members, thereby increasing employment in their community, but derive some income so that they could start other businesses in the community. Those are all good things. Fortunately, our indigenous climate leadership program was around to help them with that project because they were able to bring in sophisticated high-tech refrigerators that require much less energy, based on the support that we provided them through the indigenous climate leadership program.

I look at this bill and say: will this bill help the ACFN sell more groceries or run more businesses in Fort Chip? The answer is no. I don't see that. They may be supporting some business, but so far they're not supporting green businesses, and they're not supporting grocery stores. Also a grocery store in Kainai that, again, Chief Fox is very proud of. But I don't see this bill speaking to the issues that are necessary in order for them to build businesses such as grocery stores or perhaps the other businesses that are built in many other

communities. Grocery stores, of course, are becoming more common because food is a big issue for communities and being able to sell products at a good cost is something that's fundamentally important to the community. But clearly nobody went to talk to the indigenous community and ask them: would you like to continue these kinds of supports that are available now to ensure that food becomes more available at a reasonable cost in these far afield communities?

I also know, in talking to some of the northern First Nations, that they're interested in other forms of advancement. For example, in the Beaver First Nation in northern Alberta they are very interested in construction and very interested in doing things like building fire roads and doing paving and working closely with the forest industry and so on. But again, I don't see this bill providing them any enhancement. They last received a large Caterpillar machine through the aboriginal business investment fund. I see no addition to the aboriginal investment fund in this bill. I don't see any enhancement to that program, which has demonstrated itself to be extremely effective and has helped to start many First Nations businesses across this province and has really led to some great employment levels. That's all taken away.

What I see is us reducing the number of jobs that are available in industries that are extremely important to First Nations communities, jobs that are about local development, jobs that are about the grocery store, jobs that are about reducing their costs by putting up solar panels, jobs that are about taking care of the forest, which is a huge part of their land, their culture, and their relationship to the Earth. I don't see any of that supported by this particular bill, which apparently is about making Alberta open for business. I can tell you, though, that all of that was available under the previous government. Under the previous government we were open to all those businesses. We worked regularly with the communities to ensure that those businesses got developed. How can you say you're now open for business, implying that you weren't open for business before, when, in fact, the opposite is true, that we did indeed have programs that were effective with one of the populations that has not always had the chance to be successful in our Alberta society?

Here we are actually working with the community that most needs that benefit, that is willing to take advantage of new opportunities in the world's transition toward a greener economy, and instead of supporting those jobs and enhancing those jobs, you're taking those jobs away. I can't imagine, I can't support your calling this bill a bill about making Alberta open for business when, in fact, you're not doing that at all. I would really like this government to take some time to stop this bill and to go and to consult with the indigenous community and to ask them about the types of things that would really work in the indigenous community. What is going to help indigenous businesses to thrive? What kinds of mechanisms are available that would provide job opportunities for individual First Nations members and Métis people?

**The Chair:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for — where are you from? — Edmonton-Riverview.

**Mr. Dach:** McClung.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-McClung. What time is it? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. It is your turn to speak.

10:40

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll start now that I've been duly named and identified. I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the

House once again to speak to Bill 2 and the amendment to rename the piece of legislation more appropriately, something other than the open for business act. In fact, calling it an open for business act is a misnomer. It is something that even my 84-year-old mother doesn't agree with.

She gets it. In conversations I've had with her, actually, when I visit, she asks what legislation the House is considering, and of course Bill 2 has been debated for a while in this House. It's a very contentious and divisive piece of legislation, and now the name amendment is on the table for debate. You know, I go and review with her what the legislation is all about, and even at her advanced age she reacts almost immediately to some of the things that I tell her it's about. She says: well, what does it do? I say: well, if you're under 18 years of age, it means that you're going to have your wages cut by two bucks an hour. She says: well, son of a — I won't finish her sentence because it would be unparliamentary. But she wasn't tickled with that at all. She didn't think that was very fair. It was instantaneous. There was no second-guessing what her response was. At 84 years old she knew there was an injustice right off the bat.

She said: "Well, how much is that? I mean, if you're looking at an hourly cut of two bucks an hour, how much is that over the course of a year?" I said: "Well, you know, if you're looking to save for university education, Mom, for your grandson, that's going to be about four thousand bucks that somehow his family is going to have to pick up. That \$4,000 isn't growing on trees. It means that, you know, Uncle Lorne and Grandma Dach will have to fork over for that." Family members of these individuals, these young people who are having their wages cut by two bucks an hour, are going to have to pick up the slack.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

So open for business has a second side to the coin. By the behaviour of this government it appears that it's a zero-sum game because opening for business means open season on workers, and it's not only the student workers under 18 who are targeted by this legislation, which is so inaptly named. It's pretty much every worker in the province. The government does not seem to view working people and their role as working people as worthy of rights that are afforded working people in many jurisdictions in the world where labour laws are a little more respectful.

I know I've mentioned in this House before how I've experienced a number of the setbacks that this piece of legislation proposes to impose upon workers in Alberta, whether it be in a unionized workforce or a nonunionized labour force. In all these things even an 84-year-old woman at first glance knows the injustice that's inherently involved. When I talked about the wage differential, she really just couldn't fathom that just because her grandson happened to be under 18, he or she would earn less than the person they were working beside who happened to be over the age of 18 doing the same work.

In the same vein, when I told her that if you were going to be serving liquor as part of your occupation, your wage would be lower because it was expected you'd be making up the difference in tips and hustling for tips rather than being able to rely on a wage that paid you fairly, pitting you against your other employees in a competition for tips that didn't respect the fact that you went to work and should be paid by an employer and shouldn't be relying upon the charity of your customers to determine what you ended up earning at the end of the day.

We often say that the government is an arbiter between competing interests, but with the naming of the original bill, the open for business act, I'm wondering if the government wasn't very

plainly showing their bias and indicating to Albertans quite clearly that they're really not that arbiter. They're not that go-between for competing interests who will look at reacting fairly to what's necessary and just and coming down at some middle ground. What they're doing in this particular case is very clearly stating that workers are less valued by them. They definitely side with businesses owners, seeing that as the Holy Grail for government arbitration, that businesses come out on top and working people are merely pawns in the game.

It's a sad state of affairs when a government doesn't value the humanity that elects them. It's a really sad day when you see the progress that had been made in the previous government, where the government finally, after decades of labour legislation that stagnated, stood up for hard-working Albertans. We made sure that Albertans had modern workplace laws that respected working people and set modern standards and ensured fair treatment, and there was a breath of fresh air in labour circles and throughout the workplace, knowing that there was actual balance coming back to the arbitration between competing interests that government was supposed to play a leading role in.

It wasn't that we were tilting the balance in favour of working people. It was that we were rebalancing the whole scope of labour relations in the province, meaning that both sides had to be respected, meaning that individuals who worked for a living and provided their labour to an employer would be treated fairly. After decades of inaction hard-working Albertans finally had the same rights and benefits as other Canadians. We followed through on our promise to phase in a minimum \$15 wage so people didn't have to go from their jobs to the food bank. Even that is not a true living wage in our major cities of Edmonton and Calgary, which would be closer to \$17 to \$18 an hour. However, we set the minimum wage at \$15 an hour to get as close as possible to a living wage in the economic times that we're in even though we'd hoped to do even more.

That sent a message to the rest of the province, the people working in this province, to young people who were joining the workforce that they were valued, that they meant something to the government that represented them. To now look at the situation where it's reversed and those people who were looking forward to being able to put together maybe in the course of a working summer \$6,000 of savings, they're going to end up with maybe a thousand dollars less over the summer for their university tuition, living expenses. That is something that is a hard reality to take. I'll never forget my mom's jaw dropping and her eyes gaping open wide when she heard that the two bucks an hour was going to cost the average student about \$4,000 a year. Knowing how hard it is to save that kind of money for the average family to put somebody through school, you don't want to end up with, if you can avoid it, huge student loans or family debt.

**10:50**

Here we have the government talking about how they support Alberta families, how individual families are the bottom line, and how they value people, but this is a direct attack on those people that they claim to value so highly. Believe me, those people, particularly those who are 16, 17 years old right now and in high school, will express themselves within the next two years if they're not already doing so now. I've had calls, and I've talked with students in high schools who are pretty angry about being disrespected in this way after finally having a government that brought to light the holes in the labour legislation and did something to rectify them, including raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. To have their knees chopped off from underneath them is something that these young people are not going to easily forget.

Then to further disrespect students by calling it the employment creation wage, it's, like, thank you very much for your contribution to the Alberta balanced budget effort that we're undertaking, but guess what? You're going to pay for it. You can't vote right now, but this is your introduction to politics 101 in Alberta. We're going to cut your wages by two bucks an hour, and it's going to cost you 4,000 bucks over the course of a year. You're going to end up having to come up with the shortfall to pay for your university. You're going to have a huge debt or bigger debt than you otherwise would have. You're either going to pay that off yourself, or somehow your family member is going to end up paying for it. We don't value you, and we think that we're going to incentivize businesses to hire more people because of the fact that they have a lower wage rate when, in fact, we know that that's not going to happen.

It's a cynical effort on the part of the government to buy favour with the business community, but, Mr. Chair, the business community isn't along for the ride in its entirety. The new \$13 an hour job-creation wage for students isn't something that's being universally adopted by employers. There are over 110 employers who've registered and pledged that they're not going to be adopting the new wage rate policy. They're going to be maintaining and pledging to maintain the \$15 an hour wage. There's a growing count of businesses that are joining this pledge to stand firm in their belief that this was an unfair and unjust attack on labour and youth labour in particular.

The very individuals, the very people that this government purports to be responding to, small businesses in particular, a growing number of them are saying: "Uh-uh. Not on the backs of our young people. This is not the way we want to go. This is not something we feel proud to endorse, and we're not going to participate in it." It'll be interesting to watch and see how many more businesses decide to make that pledge and join and put their name on that website to say: "No. We're not sharing the sentiment of this government. We don't believe that we have to go backwards in labour legislation. We've made strides forward. Going back in time on this particular issue is not something that we're comfortable doing. We're in fact ashamed to pass along the government's reduction in wages, and we're not going to participate."

Overtime is another big issue that my mother quickly grasped when she asked what this bill did. Over a cup of tea I explained to her that if you're earning overtime at time and a half, now the employer has the right to enter into an agreement, let's say, and pay you straight time only for the hours that you've worked. Once again she scratched her head and wondered: "What in the world? Why would they want to do that? It's not fair. Like, what did those people do to deserve this type of legislation from a government that's supposed to be serving them?" At 84 years old her reaction was swift and immediate, total disgust. I was actually pretty impressed with how astute and how quick to argue against these changes she was when I mentioned them one by one as I went through them. She's shared reasonable political interest with me over the years. I'm not always on the same track, but when it comes to justice and fairness, we're pretty much on the same side.

I was pretty proud of her reactions. Like I said, we don't always see eye to eye, but this struck her as patently unfair, whereby – you know, she remembered the days when I worked as a rig worker on a service rig. There was no choice in the matter back then. Labour laws were even weaker in the '80s, and if indeed the toolpush said that you're working 17 hours a day, you work 17 hours until the pipe stand was empty and the job was done or the rig was moved. If you didn't like it, somebody else was standing in line for the job. But those straight time hours cost everybody on that rig tens of thousands of dollars even at seven bucks an hour back then. I know

how angry I was that this could happen in my Alberta, in the place that I grew up in and called home, and thought: "These guys on these rigs, they're making a pretty good dollar. They're very profitable, yet they see fit to dig into our pockets."

It seems as though some sentiments haven't changed. Philosophically this Conservative Party is still in the same mindset to pick the pockets of working people. They think they can do so with impunity, but I believe very firmly that they are misjudging Albertans. When these individuals who were affected by this legislation have the opportunity to express themselves at the ballot box next time, this government will find out just how much they disagree with being treated as less than first-class citizens, that hundreds of thousands of dollars for people going above and beyond in the workplace is out of their pockets. If you're an oil and gas worker making average pay putting in 10 overtime hours every week on a 12-week project, that's 120 hours in paid time. The difference between banking that pay at time and a half pay versus straight time is over \$2,500. That's not small potatoes. That's significant money. You will see that reaction from individuals who are having that money picked from their pocket at the ballot box.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

That's not necessarily the reason we're so determined to make our voices heard against this piece of legislation, against the name of the bill as well as the bill itself. It's because we absolutely are committed to supporting those Albertans who every day go out and work honestly for a living serving an employer, whether it be in the service industry or the oil patch. Whatever type of work they're doing, the expectation is in this day and age in Alberta that you're going to be treated fairly, with dignity, with respect. You're not going to be told that you're a second-class citizen and have your wages rolled back as a job-creation project that's going to help you in the end. A patronizing pat on the back.

11:00

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to my colleagues for their thoughtful debate this evening as we consider what I think is a very reasonable and not political title at all. If we wanted to give it a political title, we would have said: the pick-your-pockets bill. That's the title we've used to frame this and the response to the government saying that this is about being open for business.

We do know, Madam Chair, that no other province in Canada has the rules that are being proposed in this legislation, particularly the rules around overtime. Just before we came back this evening, I snuck out for a little bit. I was at a grocery store, and I said to the cashier, "How long have you been here?" She said, "A long time, but, hey, I'm getting overtime." Right? We all know people for whom that little extra incentive of getting that time and a half instead of getting straight time makes the long shift a little bit less long when it comes to your overall compensation, giving you a better outlook on the work conditions or the potential length of your day.

This is what one of the main attacks in this bill is on working people. By simply proposing that we name it about amending the act that it actually amends rather than putting a spin on it one way or the other, I think that that is a fair and reasonable middle ground, that I often hear members opposite say that they aspire for us to find.

What does that pick-your-pockets bill with regard to forcing straight time on workers instead of time and a half equate to? Well, just in the oil and gas sector alone, 27 per cent of oil and gas workers

in our province, in Alberta, according to the last statistics that we were able to gather, earned overtime, and on average it was about \$320 a week. So when members talk about a desire to, you know, embolden the free market and create more opportunities for people to achieve the fullness that is possible through our natural resources, I would say that taking away the overtime premium from workers does not do that. I would say that it does the opposite.

Then what other members will often say is: well, this will create an advantage for us, you know, over other jurisdictions. Because we're going to be paying everyone here less on their overtime, employers will pick up their capital, and they'll come here and set up shop. Well, if that were the case, before we brought Alberta in line with every other province in the country a year and a half ago, Alberta would have had every business, every employer, every opportunity in Canada, and there would have been nobody setting up shop in Ontario or Saskatchewan or B.C. or Manitoba or Quebec or Newfoundland or Prince Edward Island or Nova Scotia or New Brunswick because we had this, quote, advantage of paying straight time instead of paying time and a half.

We've only very recently caught up to the rest of the country by bringing in through legislation the obligation to do this. Many work sites will have negotiated contracts. I know that with the bad-faith bargaining bill, that spoke specifically to public-sector workers and breaking their collective agreements and their right to either sit down at the table again or to enter into arbitration. So this isn't about them. They have collective agreements that presumably give them time and a half, unless that's something else that could be imposed, I guess, through that bill. I hadn't thought about that. Let's hope that that isn't the intention of that bill, attacking overtime on those collective agreements as well.

This is about nonorganized labour, I'd say, primarily, the move from time and a half, that premium, to simply straight time, which, again, is about \$320 a week, not an inconsequential amount for the average oil and gas worker in the industry, the 27 per cent who are earning overtime on a regular basis. Certainly, I would say that in no way does the current bill create a climate that makes us more open for business or slightly more open. I think that it is simply an attack on the work that we achieved in recent years to bring us in line with the rest of the country.

Other areas that it attacks: changing pay for general holiday pay and overtime pay, returning to previous rules where general holiday and banked overtime have been in place for a few years here and bringing in requirements like that employees must work 30 days in the last 12 months before a general holiday in order to qualify for general holiday pay. Well, we know that there are workers who are only hired during those peak times. We know that there are workers in greenhouses all across our province who probably worked on Canada Day and that they themselves wouldn't be entitled to this should this change go through. That requirement of having to work 30 days in the last 12 months when you're a seasonal worker essentially eliminates the ability for seasonal workers to be recognized for working on stat holidays.

Certainly, I believe that stat holidays are there for a reason, not just for long-term employees or permanent employees. I think they're there because we all believe in the concept of celebrating our nation for Canada Day, for example. We all believe that people should have the opportunity to embrace the democracy that we have here and the work that we've achieved over the last 152 years with regard to that democracy and that we are on a path to being able to celebrate with one another. For those who are working on those days – there are some people who work, absolutely. I can think of many businesses in the riding I represent that are open on those days. For them not being with their families and for them not participating in celebrating this general holiday, they deserve a

premium, in my opinion, to be paid a little bit extra for the hard work that they do.

I know there were people working on these Leg. Grounds. Even though it was raining yesterday, there were a lot of people down here at the Legislature. That's their tradition. They come here every year. They participate in the activities on the grounds. Many of them were indoors yesterday, which means that there were even more people probably working on keeping this building in tip-top shape, and I think they deserve a premium when it comes to the work that they do on that holiday.

I don't think the requirement to have worked 30 days in the 12 months before and that, well, maybe they want to work the extra overtime for straight time – I don't think that that's a fair request to put on workers. I think most of the time workers will say yes when the boss asks them to do something. I think that's generally the attitude that a lot of folks have. I think it's up to government to make sure that we set up fair conditions so that bosses ask them to do fair things. I think that that's fair and reasonable.

The other piece that I want to mention is that if a holiday falls on a day that's not normally worked, a day when the employee would not normally have worked on that holiday, then they're not entitled to that pay either. For employees, again, general holiday pay and banked overtime changes would take effect on September 1, 2019, so not long from now. This is something that could, I think, have significant impacts on a lot of families. I know a lot of people who were paying attention during the campaign heard the now government talk a lot about job creation, and we still haven't seen the fruits of those promises made during the election.

I also want to talk a little bit about labour relations and changes to the code. Again, people will talk about restoring that mandatory secret ballot. I know of some work sites that are very small, some work sites where there is even one employee who wanted to form or wanted to be affiliated with a union. To say that you need a 90-day period for the union to provide evidence of the employees' support for certification I think is disrespectful to that one worker or maybe three or four workers, who can have a simple conversation, decide they want to organize, sign their cards, and be part of a union, which is their democratic right. I think that requiring this mandatory 90-day period is not beneficial to respecting people's choice. If there isn't a substantial majority – I believe it was about two-thirds that was set forward in the legislation that's now being proposed to be amended – then there would still be a period to have a secret ballot and the requirement for such, but slowing down the process for employees who have clearly made their voice and their position known I think is not useful for those workers or for the employer either, to be frank.

Also, strengthening the rules for corporate workplace complaints when these complaints involve multiple bodies such as the Human Rights Commission and the Labour Relations Board: okay. Labour relations changes would come into effect upon receiving royal assent: okay. These are all amendments to the act, which is why I think it's very reasonable to have the act actually named as such rather than named as something that it isn't. Even according to their own projections from their platform, I don't think these are considered as being significant in terms of driving up the numbers that are being proposed.

#### 11:10

The other thing that we've talked about considerably and which I know has already actually been enacted on June 26 was the rollback for youth workers, those under the age of 18 for whom the new minimum wage became automatically \$13. I know there are a lot of questions in the community from young workers about what that's going to mean on their next paycheque, and I've talked to

some who've said: "I'm not going to ask my boss because I don't want to raise their awareness, but I'd like to know if I'm going to be making \$15 or if I'm going to be making \$13. They haven't told me. I know that the law has just changed, but I'm not going to bring it up because I don't want to cost myself a toonie every hour for asking and wanting to be able to plan."

This brings me back to the point raised by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I remember being at a few conventions with him where we were discussing party policy around postsecondary, tuition fees precisely. As you know, members, we brought in – and it was supported, I think, unanimously at the time by the Official Opposition and our government – a bill to index tuition to inflation, a fair and reasonable policy.

It was members of the NDYA, our youth caucus, who said: "Rather than just indexing it to inflation and because people might earn a lot more money in sectors that we aren't able to work in, wouldn't it be more fair and more reasonable to have it tied to the minimum wage? Most university students, college students, technical institute students can get a minimum wage job in the summer, and under the presumption that you're working 40 hours a week, shouldn't there be some sort of formula that assumes that while maybe you'll have to borrow for your cost of living or borrow for accommodations and those types of things, you'd be able to earn enough money in the summer to cover off your tuition?" I thought: fair and reasonable point.

I don't think that we made that policy change, but I think it brings about a very good question about affordability and the relationship between the minimum wage and the things that we all aspire for our families to achieve. Some of you may have spent some time listening to the Democrat nominees for President over the last week. I know that I have, and when I hear them talking about the attainability of the American dream, I think that language speaks to a lot of people in North America. I think it speaks to my family, who definitely wanted me, when growing up, to have the opportunity to achieve the fullest in postsecondary.

I know that my parents both went to university. I said to my mom, "How did you decide to become a teacher?" She said: "I didn't like blood, so I wasn't going to be a nurse, so that meant I was going to be a teacher." My dad said that he needed to go to a program where he could start making money within one year. Fortunately, there was one-year teachers' college at the time, and over many, many years he was able to achieve a degree and then a postgraduate certificate as well in leadership. But that was only possible because he got in and got out quickly. I am glad that both of them had careers that they loved and that they, I would say, created a lot of positive change in our world because of their ending up in those professions. But I think that it would be a more just answer for all if they had said: because I really wanted to be a teacher, because I woke up and knew that this was a calling that I could make a difference in. But it was really about that one-year in and out to start making money.

I worry that with attacks on youth, whether it be attacking their minimum wage or attacking their rights to form support groups and other initiatives or bringing in opportunities for extreme groups to be spreading hate on campus, we're limiting opportunities for our youth to choose careers that they feel inspired by. Again, I'm really glad that it worked out for them, and I think that it worked out for me, but that's probably why they put so much support behind me going to postsecondary when I was young. Even though I grew up in a rural community and it would mean I'd have to move away, it was a priority for them that I go to school and I be in school until I was able to choose a career that I was really excited about.

I think that putting these increased pressures on youth by cutting their wages, particularly the wages for youth who are in school, because, again, there's that escape clause, that if you're not in

school or if you say that you're not in school, you can get paid \$2 more an hour, is going to be counter to what I know the goals of our government were and what I believe were the goals of Premier Hancock when he was Education minister and many others who did the work behind Inspiring Ed in the first place, which was around, as I recall the consultations, going out and talking to those who the school system hadn't well served and finding ways that the system could be changed to meet the needs of learners. Anywhere, anyplace, any time? Any pace, anyplace, any time? I forget the specific mantra. But it really was around taking the opportunity to learn and taking away the barriers that existed for it. Again, through this legislation and through its subsequent regulations, what we're doing is putting more barriers in place to make it harder for people to achieve the postsecondary that they aspire to.

Those are things that I think are counter to the important role of government in terms of creating an opportunity for – again, what the Democratic nominees for President have been talking about is that opportunity to live the full American dream, whatever that looks like for those families. I'd say that those are the values that I think many of us are here to help achieve as well. I think there are some bills where we start to try to chip away at that, right?

I think of the bill that was brought forward around trying to streamline and make more efficient the registration process with regulatory colleges. When I think about the motivation that I hope is behind that bill, I think it's about creating opportunities for people to achieve their potential and work in the career path of their choosing, especially ones that they've already been working in in other jurisdictions, which gave them the points to come here in the first place. Now, those points, of course, don't necessarily mean that they work in that field that they were recruited to come to Canada for, because they had earned those points through the immigration process. So this bill really is counter, I think, to some of the initiatives that are being raised in other bills.

The other one that I want to highlight again is the bill around red tape and the fact that there's a website being created to say, "Hey, send in your great ideas on how to cut red tape," and at the same time there are bills coming forward like this that are going to create more red tape. How do we make sure that we aren't just creating work on one side of the desk to shove over to the new associate minister on the other side of the desk?

Back to that oil and gas worker who is putting in overtime: I think we said 320 bucks a week on average. If you're an oil and gas worker making average pay, putting in about 10 hours every week in overtime on a 12-week project, that's 120 hours of paid overtime or paid time off. The difference between banking that pay at time and a half and straight pay is over \$2,500. I know that for a lot of people that might be the cost to register your kids in summer camps for the whole summer or the cost to pay for hockey or the cost of, you know, making sure that your family gets to go on a vacation to one of our great provincial or national parks right here within the province, or it could actually be the difference in you making your mortgage payment or not.

These are significant differences for people's lives, and I think that we shouldn't be trying to pad or sugar-coat the legislative change. I think that if people want to call it what it is, an amendment act to an existing piece of legislation, that is at least more forthright and less political, to be frank. If this is straight up about public policy and making public policy amendments to existing legislation, let's call it that.

There's also the piece around discussions – and I don't believe it's in this bill, but we know that it's been discussed before by this government, probably before they were government. That was around: if we already have two minimum wages – now we're going

to have a minimum wage for people over 18 and a minimum wage for people under 18 – where do we stop? Do we bring in other ...

11:20

**The Chair:** Are there any other members to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to address this amendment to rename An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, to strike that out and talk about it as the Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2019. The reason why it's important to do that – and I articulated this earlier this evening, and I'm certainly prepared to do it again when I get another opportunity to speak to this act, Bill 2 – is because it's more clear and it's more germane to call it by what is actually located within the act than to come up with some kind of selling point for, I guess, the greater population of Alberta to say: oh, we're open for business.

You know, I had the opportunity, while I was listening to many of my colleagues here make their points, that were helpful for me to think about and, I'm sure, all members of the House, to look at the Measuring Up document, that's in our consolidated annual financial report of 2018-19, that the government of Alberta has just put out and that really reflects on the work of the previous NDP government and its efforts to return to balance and to achieve the outcomes that we set out. There are a number of measures in this, Madam Chair, that I think bear some talking about, especially when we're talking about a new act to make Alberta open for business and just some of strategic priority 1, which was talking about diversifying the economy. I think any review of – and I'd urge all members of the House to review the Measuring Up document. The various ministries put a lot of time into identifying the outcomes they want to measure to see if government is achieving the goals it set out.

There are various programs talked about here. For instance, the petrochemicals diversification program, round 2, was identified in the Measuring Up document, which talked about its outcomes relative to the two companies that have taken up \$150 million in royalty credits to develop an industry that, frankly, had not happened in this province because of the previous PC government's reliance on one industry for the most part, and that's the oil and gas industry and sector in this province. While we know that agriculture and tourism are also very important, I would argue that the PC governments past really just hung their hat on the oil and gas sector. When it did well, Albertans did well and government did well, and when it didn't, when there were the usual downturns as a result of external criteria going on in the world, then of course the oil and gas sector did badly. The petrochemicals diversification program, round 2, is a way to get more value out of the oil and gas sector and to have a steady revenue return rate.

Other parts that we worked on to diversify the economy as a government. The Alberta investor tax credit: that achieved 150 Alberta-based small and medium-sized enterprises being invested in by the venture capital corporation, and 1,850 investors and seven VCCs took part in that. That's really a way for Albertans to show their commitment to business in this province and to give it a leg-up with capital to do better. The capital investment tax credit is another program that was getting off the ground. We had seen that get promoted, and it was supported as well. The interactive digital media tax credit: that was another one where we worked to show that Alberta was diversifying businesses. Of course, there were other programs like that. Then if you flip and look at the outcomes of those different measures, I can tell you that the previous

government achieved their targets in all of those areas, when you scan the work on pages 84 and 85 of the Measuring Up document.

That's, I think, a better way to go, Madam Chair, than to look at the various ways that what we call the pick-your-pockets bill will impact Albertans. Of course, we know that it'll impact the youth and student wage differential. A liquor service differential wage was put on hold, but there are studies to probably bring that in at some point in time. We don't think that those are the ways to go. That's why we want to make sure that Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act actually is put on this bill, so that people know what's in it.

You know, the reason for doing all these things to diversify the economy, to bring more steady revenues in is to address the programs and services Albertans require. That's the second aspect or second part of priority 2 of the Measuring Up document, which looks at performance measures and indicators around the ability of government to deliver the services that it commits to deliver.

I'll get into those in a second, but I just wanted to say that under the previous government gross domestic product in this province went up after two years of recession – of course, we know that '15 and '16 were that – but it bounced back at 3.4 per cent in 2017 and stayed at 1.8 per cent in 2018. Of course, 2019 is not finished yet, but we know that it's a challenging one for this province. It looks like it's going to be around zero or just below zero GDP. That's not on this side, Madam Chair. It's on the other side in terms of their activities that will take \$4.5 billion out of the government revenues in the very near future.

I just want to focus a little bit on performance measures that I think, if you relate them back to the bill that the government has before us and our amendment to change that name, would be harmed if the government followed through with this bill. That's around, for instance, access to continuing care spaces, and I'm proud to say that 58 per cent of people who wanted to access continuing care did so within 30 days, so just about 6 in 10 people got into their space within 30 days. That's an improvement, Madam Chair, and likely an improvement over where the Conservative governments were in the past. I see it is.

You know, I don't want to leave off without talking about returning to balance and that strategic priority. Obviously, this whole bill is predicated on bringing in more government revenues as a result of more business being generated, more workers paying personal income tax, more businesses being located here and spending money, and corporate income tax going up. I just want to mention that our priorities under returning to balance, including sustainable operating spending growth – this is something I'm incredibly proud of with the previous Notley government. We were able to bring spending growth down from – and I've said it many times here in the past, and members of previous government, opposition will remember me talking about the sawtooth, jagged operational increases to operating spending growth and then the drops when the revenue dropped in this province, Madam Chair. We were able to flatten that out, as you can see on page 92, and bring that down to 3.4 per cent in our final year of operational spending growth.

We did that because of lower than expected spending in the Ministry of Health. I'm so proud of the former Minister of Health, who was able to constrain health spending to 3.3 per cent from the previous year, growth of 3.3 per cent, where previous PC governments were at 6 per cent spending growth, year over year over year, every year. We were able to constrain that with new pricing agreements, with generic drugs, with a new pharmacy agreement, and work to recover more money.

11:30

The really great thing I want to talk about is the provincial financial wealth ranking, which is number one for Alberta and has been the whole of our term. I think the Premier kind of talked about it, but he talked about it differently than it's talked about here. I think he talked about Alberta's debt per capita, and that's a kind of fast and dirty way of getting away with something that really should have been talked about as: Alberta's net debt was \$6,450 per capita, the lowest among provinces and about one-third of the 10-province average of \$18,000 per capita.

So what we're hearing from the Premier is different than what we're reading in the Measuring Up document, namely that Alberta's net debt per capita was the lowest amongst all provinces. But regularly we hear from the other side that it's unsustainable and we need to – and I think they're softening Albertans up for austerity measures that are coming as a result of the Blue Ribbon Panel, as a result of their giving away money to corporations. That doesn't have to happen because when we look at the interprovincial tax comparisons, Madam Chair, we can see that Alberta has the lowest overall taxes amongst provinces in Canada, with no sales tax, no health premium, and no payroll tax.

I would argue that our amended title for Bill 2 is a lot more accurate than what we're seeing here because what we'll see with An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business is that our provincial financial wealth ranking will drop. We'll see our interprovincial tax comparisons, well, probably stay number one, but they're number one right now, Madam Chair. We will see our operating spending growth – well, that's debatable about where that's going to go. I don't think the austerity will make very many Albertans happy, and if we had a performance measure that talked about the satisfaction of Albertans with regard to austerity measures, like we're finding in Ontario as a result of the Ford government changes there, many, many, many – personal popularity aside for Premier Ford. Just the satisfaction of Ontarians with that government, if that were a performance measure here, as I'm suggesting perhaps it should be in the future, we'll see that drop significantly.

Madam Chair, the performance measures that are in the Measuring Up document really speak to the good work that was done by the previous government and perhaps the challenges that are going to be here as a result of this government's bill, that rightly should be renamed the Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2019. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Madam Chair, fascinating progress so far. I'd like to move to rise and report progress on Bill 2. I believe that's the only bill we've talked about in committee today, but I could stand to be corrected.

**The Chair:** I believe you are correct, Mr. Government House Leader.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.



**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed, please say no. Carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. First, I would like to rise and say that pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) I would like to advise the Assembly that there will be no morning sitting tomorrow, Wednesday, July 3, 2019.

Then I would like to move for unanimous consent to go to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening, both in and out of committee.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I will call the committee to order.

### Bill 2 An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (continued)

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A2. Are there any comments or questions?

All right. I'll call the question on amendment A2 as proposed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:37 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Phillips
Ceci	Hoffman	Renaud
Dach	Irwin	Schmidt
Feehan	Notley	Shepherd

11:40

Against the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schow
Barnes	Madu	Schulz
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Schweitzer
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	Singh
Hanson	Orr	Smith
Horner	Rehn	Stephan
Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Loewen	Rowswell	Wilson

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 30
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We are now back on the main bill. Are there any comments or questions or amendments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm disappointed that the government members were not convinced by our arguments to retitle the bill. But I am certain that I have an amendment that you will all feel compelled to support, so I would like to propose this amendment. I have the original and the copies, and I will give that a moment.

**The Chair:** Wonderful. Thank you, hon. member.

This will be known as amendment A3. Hon. member, please continue.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you. Madam Chair, fellow members of the Legislature, as we have titled many other things, this amendment has its own title. This is the Save Christmas Amendment.

I have spoken at length about the changes in Bill 2 to statutory holiday pay, about the fact that yesterday we were all at Canada Day barbecues talking to people, some of whom were getting maybe some time off later or a little bit of extra pay because it was a stat holiday. But after Bill 2 that will not happen for them. That is part of the changes here.

The reason that it was in your platform and that as a government you moved that forward was because of very strong voices from the restaurant lobbyists, particularly because so many stat holidays fall on Mondays, days that restaurants are typically closed. But nobody has asked you to not pay people on Christmas. Christmas will only fall on a Monday once out of seven years. Christmas will only fall on a weekend twice out of seven years. There are leap years in there. That may not be entirely accurate, but roughly Christmas is usually a working day, and when it is not, all Albertans, just like all Canadians, deserve to get the value of that statutory holiday, either in a little bit of time off or a little bit of extra pay.

In this amendment I am asking you to vote for Christmas. Every Albertan deserves Christmas and deserves stat holiday recognition for Christmas. This will not upset those restaurateurs because none of them were asking you to take away Christmas from their employees. They were asking for a particular Monday problem, which remains solved with the changes in Bill 2. What this amendment does is that it makes sure that in that 2022 year, which I've talked about, when Christmas falls on a weekend, there aren't numbers of Albertans who did not get time off with family or a little bit of that holiday pay, which every other Canadian is getting.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

Please let me remind everyone, Mr. Chair, that Alberta, with the changes in Bill 2, will be the only jurisdiction where working people may not get a benefit from stat holiday pay. It's something, in my mind, we had fixed when we brought Alberta's employment standards up to that kind of mainstream Canadian standard. Bill 2 rolls that back.

What this amendment does is that it saves Christmas, and it makes sure that Christmas will always be considered a stat holiday. Whether it falls on a weekend or a weekday, whether it falls on a Thursday or a Monday, Christmas will be protected. Just a few question periods ago I was quoting the old Christmas fable, *A Christmas Carol*: it is sometimes good to be children but always at Christmas. That is the amendment that I have before you because the idea that some Albertans will not get stat holidays hurts my heart. The idea that some Albertans won't get Christmas hurts my heart. This is why I'm asking you to vote for this amendment. Very clearly it's an easy-to-read amendment. It simply says:

For the purposes of this Division, and notwithstanding section 27, Christmas Day shall be deemed to be a day that would normally have been a work day for an employee.

All this does is that it treats a single day, Christmas Day, as always being considered a workday no matter which day of the week it falls on. I'll remind you again that it's only going to fall on a weekend 2 out of every 7 years. This is not a big hardship on companies.

This is making sure that stat holiday pay that every other jurisdiction provides is given to workers in Alberta on Christmas. I can tell you from talking to workers – and I believe I've mentioned this during our Bill 2 debates at various phases – the workers who rely on something like stat holiday pay for Christmas are some of our lowest paid, some of our most vulnerable workers, and as your minister has pointed out, the changes in Bill 2 change the minimum standard. Lots of employers can, will, and do better than the minimum, but the minimum is there as a floor to catch the people who need it most.

That is why I've proposed this amendment here today: to save Christmas, to make sure that we always have that statutory holiday. We know that in 2022 Christmas and New Year's Day are both going to fall on weekends and there will be people who work office-type jobs Monday to Friday, 9 to 5, who will get no benefit for statutory holidays happening in that year. We know this because it's happened in the past. It's how the rules used to be. I know from first-hand experience that that happened to Albertans, and I don't want to see that happen again.

I certainly hope that all members will genuinely consider this save-Christmas amendment because it is put forward with our constituents in mind. I don't believe that there is a good reason to not support this amendment given the other changes in Bill 2 are responding to the concerns we've heard from restaurateurs, where stat holidays falling on Mondays and restaurants being closed on Mondays caused consternation and an additional discussion. Here we are simply making sure that Christmas Day will always be deemed a day that would normally have been worked. What that means is that even if somebody wasn't scheduled to work, it's still considered a stat holiday for them, and I would remind this House again: this is how it works in every other province. This is my save-Christmas amendment that I hope all members of the government caucus will give due consideration to, and I appreciate you listening to my arguments. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Members, any other speakers to amendment A3? Recognizing the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Irwin:** Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**The Acting Chair:** Highlands. That's okay.

**Member Irwin:** Perfect. No problem.

I'm pleased to stand in favour of this amendment, and I very much appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for her strong, impactful, impassioned defence of Christmas.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

You know, I'm proud to be able to stand in support of saving Christmas. My own father actually worked in oil and gas in rural Alberta for many, many years. Actually, for nearly 40 years he worked up in the Swan Hills area of northern Alberta, and in his work he missed a lot of family holidays. He missed a lot of Christmases, and growing up that had an impact for sure. Like many Albertans, he worked and continues to work very hard and had to make a lot of sacrifices. I think about people like him, and I think about all the other hard-working Albertans that do the same. You

know, it made a huge difference for our family, particularly when my mom wasn't working, like, we needed that extra pay from Christmas. Every holiday made a difference.

**11:50**

You know, this is, I think, one of those issues about fairness and about equality and what our values are here, and I really think, to echo the member, this is sort of a no-brainer, and I'd urge the members opposite to think about this, to think about the fairness side of things, and to think as well about what other provinces do. We know that by moving forward with this component of Bill 2, we will not be in step with other provinces, other jurisdictions, and I think it's important we consider that because, again, if you think about somebody working in Lloydminster, for instance, gosh, they'd be hoping they're on the Saskatchewan side, that's for sure.

I'm not going to speak about this too much, but I do urge you to think about the personal impact. Think about those hard-working Albertans like my own father and like many others who sacrifice a lot to keep our economy going. I just think this is one where the members opposite can give a little because this will be a win for you; this will be a win for Albertans. It makes sense. I will end on that, and I just will urge the members opposite to not be Scrooges and to please save Christmas.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers on amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to this amendment. I think it's a good one. I think it's an important one. I think my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has raised some good points here.

We've had the chance to talk quite a bit on this bill about the kinds of effects this is going to have on Albertans, different aspects. We've talked a lot about the challenges that some individuals in this province face, particularly lower income families. You know, as the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was just sharing about her own experience and, indeed, I know for myself, this is something that I have thought about a fair amount.

I've had the honour of being part of the stewardship round-table with an organization called EndPovertyEdmonton, an initiative started by the city of Edmonton that's now sort of become its own independent entity but working to end poverty within our city within a generation, and on that stewardship round-table having the opportunity to talk with a number of people who have been focused on the area of poverty reduction.

You know, one of the things, Madam Chair, is that we recognize that folks who are living in poverty, folks who have been struggling in lower income face a number of barriers, a number of stresses that make it very difficult for them to find their way out. With that, we know, comes severe emotional and mental stress. I know from my own experience having gone through some periods in my life where I was very low income as I struggled with my health and as I was going back to school and other things, and I remember the incredible stress there could be from one month to the next, when I wasn't sure if I was going to have enough to cover those bills. That's something that can eat away at you, that can tire you out.

To top that off, for many of these families and these individuals, then, they're working multiple jobs; they're trying to look after their kids; they've got all these other things going on. That means that for them having a day off, having a true holiday is an incredibly rare thing, in part because often they can't afford to take that day off. They can't afford to go a day without pay. Of course, for many of these individuals, they're going to be working in precisely the kinds of jobs that we're talking about and in some cases the kinds of

businesses that were lobbying this government for the changes that they're bringing forward in this bill, individuals that are working in the restaurant industry or in retail or other aspects of the service industry.

Now, we have seen that this government is intent on moving forward with these changes. We've stood and we've made our arguments. We've tried to convince them to make some changes, but so far they've been resistant. They insist they're going to go full steam ahead. Fair enough, but this is one small thing that we could do to make life a little bit easier and a little bit better for these individuals, to give them one day a year, that one day that all of us set aside to be with our families, to truly take that day of rest, and to allow these families, these individuals who so often cannot afford to take that time, to be paid for that day.

As my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods noted, this is a small thing. Its impact to the businesses and the folks who have told this government that this is a necessary change in order for them to be able to continue to have their businesses be viable: this would have a very minimal impact on them. Indeed, I'll be honest, Madam Chair, I did have some folks who operate restaurants that did reach out to me and express some concerns around the changes in holiday pay at the time that we brought these changes in. As the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods mentioned, that was being around the fact that many of them had chosen to keep their restaurant closed on Mondays to get around and take advantage of that provision that was there in the law, and it had helped them save a little bit. But as the member noted, it's going to be rare that Christmas will fall on that Monday. It'd have an impact once every seven years, so that's a small thing. I can't think that there are many restaurant owners that would begrudge that, that once every seven years they would pay their employees for a Christmas day on a Monday.

Here's an opportunity that we're presenting to this government to make one small change that could make a difference in the lives of many people on a day that is traditionally known for being a day of giving, a day when we are more generous with our fellow man, a day when we look to go above and beyond in recognizing the value of each other as human beings and seek to spread peace and goodwill. This is an opportunity for the government to make a bad bill a little bit better. This is the opportunity for the government to show that they have a little bit less of the Grinch and Scrooge, all those wonderful Christmas villains we have. I was thinking earlier of the Heat Miser and the Snow Miser. I don't know how many people remember that one. You know, Christmas specials from the 1970s, indeed.

This is the opportunity for us to show a little bit of Christmas cheer here today while we are still six months out or so from Christmas. I know that the amendment, indeed, was dated June 25, precisely six months before Christmas. This could be a bit of an early Christmas gift to the working people of Alberta. While this government is choosing with this bill to take so much away, to pick the pockets of working Albertans, here is an opportunity to put a little bit of something back, a small stocking stuffer, as it were, to balance out the lump of coal.

It's my hope that members of government would take this opportunity to do one small bit of good on an evening when they have just voted strongly in support that each of them should have a free vote in this Assembly, that they would exercise those conscience rights to do a little bit of good for a lot of people, indeed. I can't think of a single Christmas tradition in any culture around the world that does not include trying to do something good for your fellow man. That is the very meaning of Christmas, isn't it? Here in this amendment we have a chance to exercise that today, and I

would encourage all members of this House to support this amendment and do so.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

12:00

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

**The Chair:** I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:01 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Irwin	Schmidt
Dach	Phillips	Shepherd
Gray		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Schow
Amery	Luan	Schulz
Barnes	Madu	Schweitzer
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Rosin	Walker
Hunter	Rowswell	Wilson
Loewen	Sawhney	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 29
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there any more members to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to try to amend the pick-your-pockets bill, the bill that I know a number of our caucus have spoken to, that is flawed for a number of reasons. I think, you know, I'm going to channel the Government House Leader and Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre for all of the times that he stood up trying to amend bills when we were in government, saying: I need to amend this awful bill to make it a little less awful. That's really what I'm attempting to do. I will send the original to you and wait for them to be distributed.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

This will be known as amendment A4.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, please proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll read this into the record. I am moving this on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Decore. He moves that Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended by striking out section 1(2).

Now, Madam Chair, I'm sure you're thinking: "Wow. This is a very tiny amendment. What could it possibly do?" But it has a significant impact. What this does is to ensure that employees and workers who have banked overtime will get that banked overtime

paid out at time and a half. It doesn't allow employers to retroactively pay out straight time.

Now, I can tell you, Madam Chair, this is a significant amendment. I know that the government tries to deny that this is a pick-your-pockets bill, but really we've demonstrated through debate on this bill the amount of money that different workers would lose depending on what industry they're in; of course, our oil and gas sector being one of the hardest hit from this change. I know that the government is saying: well, this saves employers money. But I hope that the government recognizes that it is the workers that are the reason that we have a flourishing oil and gas sector. They are the ones that are constructing or improving our province and building Alberta.

We recognize that this government is adamant about moving this bill through, but what this does is ensure that it protects those that have already worked under the impression or under the notion or under the contract, even, that they would be paid time and a half for their overtime hours. It is one thing for the government to say: we are clawing that back moving forward. It is a whole other story for the government to say: "You know the hours that you agreed to work in overtime and you thought you were getting time and a half? You know the paycheques that you're counting on to pay the bills or for special occasions or for summer holidays?" With this amendment now, at least, we have secured or ensured that they will get their time and a half.

I honestly think this amendment is a reasonable amendment. It makes sense, and I think, quite frankly, Madam Chair, if the government votes down this amendment, shame on them. It says that you do not respect the contracts that were agreed to between employers and employees. Don't pull the line that it gives them the option. Well, you know, for those that have been employers, if you had the option of paying out straight time or time and a half, I'd love to see an honest show of hands of how many are jumping up and down to pay the time and a half.

Now, I do know that there are employers who have committed to do this. I recognize that. There are some incredible employers in this province who have said: "You know what? If they have worked and banked those hours already, we promised them time and a half. We're going to deliver." What this does is it ensures that all employers do that for the already banked time. Going forward we recognize, once this bill is proclaimed, that workers will be paid out straight time. I get that it's up to the employer to negotiate with the employee. We've already gone over this. There are some employers that are writing this into contracts so the employee has a choice. They can either take the job and straight time or look somewhere else for a job. I think it's a little bit of a misnomer to say that this is a complete choice and it'll be decided on between the employer and employee. In some cases it will. In all cases, no, it won't, and anybody who thinks otherwise is, quite honestly, deluding themselves.

**12:10**

But what this does is it at least protects those that have counted on that money to pay the bills, to make ends meet. They've worked the overtime. They've banked it. They were under the impression – and they probably wouldn't have agreed to it if they knew that employers can retroactively now refuse to pay them out their time and a half.

So I urge all members of the Assembly, and especially the government and the Government House Leader, to respect the hours worked and banked by workers, the hard-working men and women of Alberta, many of whom live in the riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, who have worked hard and deserve to be paid for their overtime that they've already worked.

Again, this is a small amendment with a significant impact on many families around this province, and I urge all members to support this.

**The Chair:** Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. Not to belabour the point, but I want to thank the member for bringing forward this very reasonable amendment. I think that this is fair. I think it says that there won't be retroactive changes to a contract that was entered into or an agreement that was entered into when the rules were one set, which were the rules of the day and the rules that were amended about a year and a half ago, when overtime was paid at a premium. I think it's reasonable to say that if the government wants to change the rules moving forward, they will do that but that we're not going to take pay away from folks that had earned it under one set of rules. This is essentially ensuring that it isn't retroactive legislation on overtime that was earned.

I see the House leader ripping up the amendment. I assume that's because he's got it memorized. He knows how great it is, and he's ready to vote on it, because certainly I think we made the attempt to save Christmas. We made the attempt to name the bill what it actually is. This is an amending act. I think the amendment that's being proposed now is fair and reasonable, saying that time that's been earned before this bill is proclaimed, essentially, not be retroactively taken away. That's, as we said, about \$320 for the average oil and gas worker, 27 per cent of which are earning overtime. So I think it's fair and reasonable at least to make the bill a little bit less bad.

Thank you to the member for the motion to amend.

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you for the quick opportunity to speak on this amendment. I do thank the opposition for participating in debate and providing some amendments and some discussion about this legislation. It's a pleasant change. Sometimes they spend a tremendous amount of time on amendments, and tonight they seem excited to be able to talk about them, which is exciting. Specifically to this one, I do appreciate all the members recognizing the great constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. They're right. People sure do work hard in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

They also know that this bill, in regard to overtime, would go back to the same rules as before the NDP came into power and started to destroy the province, and it requires employees and employers to enter into overtime agreements before anything can be done with overtime. It has to be a mutual agreement, so employees would have to agree to that. The people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, of course, understand that. This amendment, quite frankly, is not needed because, again, Madam Chair, this is something that employees and employers can enter into willingly.

I do know that the NDP has been clear in this House that they don't trust any employer or job creators in general and are generally working against them. The Opposition House Leader even told them that if they struggled to pay the carbon tax, they should check their business plan and that it was somehow their fault that they'd be struggling, but the NDP had, you know, destroyed the economy while they were here. But people understand that it will go to exactly how it was before the NDP came into power and wrecked things. I know that all my constituents and yours – I was in Airdrie the other day, Madam Chair – were pretty excited to see us moving forward past the NDP's mess.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. I just want to get one point of clarification from the Government House Leader. Is it his assertion,

through you, Madam Chair, that no worker will see their already earned overtime clawed back? He's saying that that's not the case. I just want it to be clear and on the record that if any worker sees their overtime clawed back – the hon. member says that the bill can't do that. So if we find even one worker that says that they earned overtime and that it was paid out at straight time instead of time and a half – I don't know what I'm asking you to do but, I guess, attest that it will not be the case, no matter what. What I think I heard the member say is that no matter what, there will be no workers forced to take straight time instead of time and a half. I'm just wondering: will he confirm that that is indeed the case moving forward and that if we find any workers who say otherwise, he'd be happy to meet with them and provide that clarity to them in person?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Madam Chair, that is the point, that it would be an optional thing between employees and employers. Employees would have to agree to that. That's how it was before the NDP started messing with the system and causing all sorts of troubles, not just in this area but in general. Again, it's optional. It's something that employers and employees would have to work through together. Yes, an employee would have to agree to do this. Nobody can be forced to do anything.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:17 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Irwin	Schmidt
Dach	Phillips	Shepherd
Gray		

12:20

Against the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schow
Barnes	Madu	Schulz
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Schweitzer
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	Singh
Hanson	Orr	Smith
Horner	Rehn	Stephan
Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Loewen	Rowswell	Wilson

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 30
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the bill. Any comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am a little disappointed that the amendments up to this point have not been accepted by the government caucus, particularly the one to save Christmas, which was near and dear to my heart. That being said, onward and upward. I believe after the hours and hours and hours of debate that we have had on Bill 2, the number of issues that we have raised on how out of step the changes to overtime and overtime banking as well as stat holidays put Alberta, we'd be the only province with systems, employment standards minimums, to do time banking at straight time and the only province in all of Canada that would not give statutory holiday benefit of some kind to all employees. The concerns with the changes to collective bargaining and union certification that have been raised – and, of course, throughout this all we've also been talking about the decision to roll back minimum wage for Alberta's youth in a misguided effort to create jobs when the solution is going to further create problems, add complications. We've talked about a lot of this at length.

I would like to propose an amendment at this point, Madam Chair, that will give us an opportunity to consider all of these things.

**The Chair:** This is amendment A5.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, please proceed.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This amendment – and I realize that not everyone has the benefit of having a copy of it yet. Thank you to the pages who are here at this hour supporting us. Really appreciate you. [some applause] Yes. Make sure you bank that overtime now.

This amendment reads:

On or before October 1, 2021, a committee of the Legislative Assembly must begin a comprehensive review of the amendments made by this Act and must submit to the Assembly, within one year after beginning the review, a report that includes any amendments recommended by the committee.

This amendment does quite a few things. First off, it allows a committee of the Legislature the opportunity to review the amendments made by this act, and it allows that committee the opportunity to talk to stakeholders and to discuss it. It gives the government an opportunity to not only implement its changes but to be able to come back and responsibly discuss them roughly two years after they've been put in place. What impact has the change to statutory holidays had not just on our business environment but on the working people that it impacts? What change do we see, maybe through Stats Canada labour force statistics, when we make the change from having banked overtime at time and a half to straight time? What impact is that having on our major industries, oil and gas and construction, where predominantly these hours are done? It gives an opportunity to consider the impact of the changes on union certification as well. Not only to have a review but also to send that report through to a committee, where we can work in a collaborative way together to review the impacts of Bill 2.

Bill 2 is titled An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, and as the argument was made numerous times, this side of the House does not believe that this act fulfills its intended purpose. By committing to a review of the amendments of this act, by committing to take a look at the actual impacts, it gives us an opportunity to further evaluate and adjust if a course adjustment is necessary. I consider this to be a very reasonable amendment, one that supports the government's current intent, which is to pass Bill 2, but gives us that opportunity to circle back around, review what's happened, look at it through a committee, and make a determination from that point.

So I hope that all members of the Assembly will be able to support this amendment A5 this evening, Madam Chair. Thank you, all, very much for your consideration.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, just to confirm, you're moving this on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View?

**Ms Gray:** I absolutely am.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any other speakers to amendment A5? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** I'll just briefly add a small comment. This very reasonable amendment reminds me of a former member of this Legislature who would get up to speak in the long hours of the night and be a real good soldier on many, many amendments. That was the former Member for West Yellowhead. His comment quite often, after reading an amendment such as this, knowing how reasonable and good it was, was to say quite loudly in the House: well, what's wrong with that? That's what I'm reminded of tonight, and I ask the same question. What's wrong with that? Hail, West Yellowhead and Mr. Rosendahl.

**The Chair:** Oh, this hour of the night.

Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Shall I call the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:28 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Irwin	Schmidt
Dach	Phillips	Shepherd
Gray		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schow
Barnes	Madu	Schulz
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Schweitzer
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	Singh
Hanson	Orr	Smith
Horner	Rehn	Stephan
Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Loewen	Rowswell	Wilson

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 30
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[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there any more speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, shall I call the question on Bill 2?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 2 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 2 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:34 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schow
Barnes	Madu	Schulz
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Schweitzer
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	Singh
Hanson	Orr	Smith
Horner	Rehn	Stephan
Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Loewen		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Irwin	Schmidt
Dach	Phillips	Shepherd
Gray		

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 10
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[Request to report Bill 2 carried]

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report Bill 2.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** So carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the opposition for all the progress today. We're moving through at lightning speed, and as such I think it'd be time to move to adjourn the House till tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:40 a.m. on Wednesday]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, July 3, 2019

Day 23

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
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Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

### Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
and Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 3, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests joining us today in the galleries. Guests of the Member for Calgary-West and members of the Sudanese community, please feel free to rise when I call your name if you can recognize it: Gar Gar, Angelo Wol Mawien Dut, Garang Kuot, and Chol Gar.

Guest of the Member for Calgary-Falconridge: Gobinder Khaira.

Also in the gallery today a guest of the Member for Grande Prairie: Alex Dorscheid.

Guests from Lacombe-Ponoka: Sean Stroud and Martin Zuidhof.

In the gallery as a guest of the Minister of Labour and Immigration: Donovan Makus.

Hon. members, please welcome our guests to the Assembly today.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo would like to make a statement.

#### Calgary Stampede

**Member Ceci:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. All year long Calgarians look forward to the Calgary Stampede. In only a few short days it will be here again. Cowpokes and city slickers alike will put on their cowboy hats and boots to enjoy the parade, pancake breakfast, and chuckwagon races, and our NDP caucus will be there to join in the fun.

Mr. Speaker, our government was proud to invest in the Stampede to make sure it can continue for years to come. We approved a 20-year extension to the CRL program to fund the BMO Centre expansion on Stampede grounds. This will make the BMO Centre the second-largest convention centre in Canada, support the creation of 2,250 jobs, and contribute \$223 million annually to the Alberta economy. Last year we saw our investments working. This year's chuckwagon canvas auction came in \$50,000 higher than last year, for a total of \$3.29 million. Things are looking up because of our investments in Calgary. We fought for pipelines, invested in the Calgary cancer centre and the LRT green line, and we refused to turn our backs on Calgarians when times were tough.

Mr. Speaker, as a Calgarian the Stampede is one of my favourite times of year. I'm so proud we get to showcase this incredible city and celebrate what it means to be an Albertan. I look forward to welcoming all members of this House to Calgary for 10 days of festivities at the greatest outdoor show on Earth. Yahoo!

**The Speaker:** Apparently, the great debate, whether it's yee-haw or yahoo, has been settled.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

#### South Sudanese Community

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today and address this Chamber. I want to take this opportunity to recognize Alberta's South Sudanese community and the contributions they make to our great province. The Republic of South Sudan is located in east-central Africa. The country gained independence on July 9, 2011, making it the most recent state to join the international system.

Now, I recently connected with a member of this community who is a guest of mine here today. As you know, Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to celebrating the diverse cultural groups in Alberta, and the South Sudanese community is a key thread in the rich cultural fabric of our province. There are many values that United Conservatives share with this wonderful community. We want to make life better for our families. We are resilient in times of hardship. We are devoted in service to our communities. We are not afraid of hard work. We want to ensure that our future generations are prosperous. As well, we value democracy, and we value freedom. These are the values that guide my work and the work of my colleagues on this side of the House every day. I believe that these same values are shared with my guests and our United Conservative movement.

I want to close by quoting our Premier when he said, quote: Alberta isn't just a place on a map, and it's not just random collection of people; Alberta is an idea. Unquote. Mr. Speaker, today I want to thank the South Sudanese community, especially those joining us here today, for helping us to build this idea through their ongoing civic engagement and for contributing to the vibrancy of our democracy and enriching the culture of our province. I am sure that I speak for all of my colleagues when I say that we look forward to working alongside them in our efforts to renew the Alberta advantage and to make Alberta strong and free.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Abortion Rights

**Ms Renaud:** Controlling when and if you reproduce is a basic human right. Women in Canada have the right to access reproductive health procedures; however, we've seen a deliberate erosion of access to these medical services in provinces where socially conservative governments backed by antichoice organizations use whatever means available to them to impose barriers to those services. These groups are powerful lobbyists.

While abortion remains legal and somewhat accessible, there are plenty of ways these rights have been limited and suppressed. Antichoice groups like Campaign Life Coalition, Wilberforce, RightNow, and the Association for Reformed Political Action boast about their work nominating and electing antiabortion politicians. By my count, there are at least 28 antiabortion MLAs here.

In 2004 at a March for Life rally on Parliament Hill the crowd assembled was challenged by this Premier to ask politicians how they stand on abortion. He said, quote: if they say they're personally opposed to abortion but they don't want to impose their opposition on society, ask them if they're personally opposed to child abuse and ask them if they're personally opposed to slavery. He equated abortion, a medical procedure, to child abuse and slavery. Make no mistake, antiabortion politicians make antiabortion laws.

For many girls and women, particularly those who are poor, live in rural areas, are young, disabled, indigenous, are in a racial

minority, or are immigrants, access to abortion is limited. Access to reproductive health care is essential to women's health, and not all women in Alberta have adequate or, in some cases, any access to abortion.

Later this session I will be tabling Motion 506, that will focus on reviewing access to abortion services with the goal of removing barriers and creating equitable access in all communities across this province. I hope this new government won't run away and hide their votes from the women of this province.

Thank you.

### Canadian Rockies School Division Update

**Ms Rosin:** On June 19 the Member for Edmonton-Glenora quoted:

Does the minister know the consequences of her bungling of the Education budget for Banff's public schools? . . . The Member for Banff-Kananaskis probably should have asked this question, but let me make sure that I tell her the answer. The answer is that staff morale is in the tank. They're cutting the music teacher from the elementary school [and] half the teachers . . . are going to be new.

This comment was made without proof, so it is a public, direct insult to the hard-working individuals who manage the Canadian Rockies public school division.

I called up the superintendent of the school division to get the facts straight. Today I don't need to be told the answer by the member opposite; I'll put the truth on the record myself. CRPS is not cutting the music teacher. In fact, there are nearly two full-time music teachers that they are keeping, and interestingly one of them is the president of the local ATA.

Further, CRPS is not cutting one, single front-line worker or teacher of any subject. Only three teachers are going to be new next year, and any turnover they occasionally do have is because the average cost of housing in Banff is \$1.2 million, making it hard for anybody to settle down there.

Let's talk about staff morale. This school division attracts teachers from all over the world because of their unique, experiential for-credit trips that get students and teachers out of the classroom and into the wild.

1:40

CRPS management called me, and they were insulted to hear these false claims levied against their school division, and they actually encouraged me to set the record straight today. So to quote the superintendent of CRPS: I suggest that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora get her facts straight and actually call the school division directly rather than listen to street gossip. He continued, saying that the previous NDP government's costly policies are the real reason their budgets are tight as they've been forced to implement OH and S changes, labour code changes, and paperless practices.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member should focus on representing her own constituents rather than mine. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Balanced and Deficit Budgets

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, balance is one of the most important first steps in protecting our core services. Over the past few weeks I've heard, over and over, never-ending criticism from the opposition about this government's plan to restore balance, yet I sit back and question how those same members can criticize our plan to renew our economy and create jobs when their record is crystal clear. Their uncontrolled growth and expenditures, exacerbated by poor

decision-making, produced a serious and unsustainable imbalance that must be corrected. Without the actions outlined by this government, we risk increasing our debt to unsupportable levels and we jeopardize our long-term economic growth.

In four years the previous government's willingness to mortgage our future has left Alberta with the biggest deficit and the highest net debt recorded in our history. Their poorly implemented and timed policies eroded investor confidence, contributed to record job losses. Their uncontrolled spending contributed to a debt on track to \$100 billion, that will now cost Albertans \$1.9 billion in interest payments every year until it's paid off, interest payments made by hard-earned tax dollars, tax dollars that will not go to education or supporting our public-sector workers or health care. It goes directly to foreign banks. Should we not ask ourselves how passing on billions of dollars of debt to future generations is responsible or even fair?

With 55 per cent of the vote, the largest mandate in Alberta history supported this government's commitment to fiscal balance. Our government knows that it is important that Albertans have a thorough understanding of the reality so we can begin to work together on solutions. Without balance there is no future for education, without balance there's no future for our health care system, and without balance there is no future for our children here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie is making a statement.

### Canada Day

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today as a proud and patriotic Canadian and recognize our country's 152nd birthday. No matter where we are, as Canadians, each July 1 we celebrate Canada and the people who have built this country we love.

Our nation was united through the pursuit of a dream that many once thought to be impossible. On the first day of July 1867 our nation's founders created this great country and gave truth to that dream of a fair, free, and democratic country stretching from sea to sea to shining sea.

Here in Alberta we had the privilege of joining Confederation in 1905 along with our friends in Saskatchewan. I am grateful for the vision of those Albertans that have gone before us to join in this beautiful country of Canada. In the words of our national anthem:

God keep our land glorious and free!

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

We know we can count on Canadians. We stand up for each other. Our success has always come from its people, lifting each other up, one community at a time. From our indigenous people, francophone, ethnic communities, and faith communities to our pioneers and newcomers, we will continue to be a country that welcomes and offers opportunity to all.

Each time others have tried to extinguish the liberties we enjoy, Canadians have confidently stood up to defend our values. We take immense pride in our Canadian Armed Forces, and we admire their role as protectors and peacekeepers, both globally and within our borders.

Canada Day is an opportunity for all Canadians to set aside any disputes or differences that we may have so that together we can acknowledge and enjoy the abundance that our nation has to offer. Together we will keep building a country where every Canadian, no matter where you're from, has a real and fair chance to succeed. On behalf of the United Conservative government I wish everyone a belated Happy Canada Day. Bonne fête du Canada.

May God bless Alberta, and may God bless Canada and keep her glorious and free. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a petition.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to present a petition today, organized by workers themselves, regarding the inclusion of banked overtime provisions in all overtime agreements. The petition states:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, [urge] the Legislative Assembly . . . to ensure that workers in Alberta are not subjected to violence, harassment, fear or intimidation by continuing to adequately protect workers through recently amended workplace legislation, including the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Workers' Compensation Act and the amendments to the Employment Standards Code requiring that [all] banked overtime provisions are contained in all overtime agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to present a petition today. The petition relates to the government's stance on GSAs and was signed by over 200 Albertans. The petition states:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, urge the Legislative Assembly to [defeat] Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019, a law that will remove legal protections for GSAs and QSAs meaning LGBTQ2S+ students who join could be outed without their consent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there other petitions? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies, five, of a petition signed by almost 1,000 people in Lethbridge: we the undersigned call upon the Alberta government to ensure safe and inclusive schools for all by removing any barriers to students creating GSAs or QSAs and calling them such.

**The Speaker:** Prior to you tabling the petition, just for clarity's sake, was that particular petition approved by Parliamentary Counsel?

**Ms Phillips:** I'm not sure, so it can be just tabled.

**The Speaker:** My recommendation would be that you table that under Tabling Returns and Reports, and I'll provide you with another opportunity to do so at that time.

**Ms Phillips:** Okay.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a petition with the appropriate number of copies that was done by Lynn Macdonald from Rimbey in regard to concerns with

daylight saving time and asking the government to look at the Daylight Saving Time Act.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, sir.

**The Speaker:** Details, details.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have here the requisite number of copies of the Alberta New Democrats' constitution, specifically where they reserve seats for the Alberta Federation of Labour on their provincial executive. They have special voting rights at their convention to set policy, perhaps the real reason that the NDP is so interested in Bill 9.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise to table the requisite number of copies of a petition calling on the government to ensure immediacy and confidentiality in forming a GSA or QSA in any Alberta school.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first is from today's *Calgary Herald*. It's about gas producers being given interim tax relief for this year by the province, backfilling that.

The second is from today's *Globe and Mail*, and it talks about the government likely curtailing production of natural gas in Alberta to achieve higher prices, something we did with crude in January.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with the requisite copies of a document in regard to the earplug saga unfolding.

An additional document, also from a constituent: the earplug controversy continues as UCP accused was leaving the House.

Also, a third tabling with the requisite copies, that will be referenced by the Official Opposition Leader, titled, with the Premier's name, Said NDP 'Lied' about Alberta's Finances; New Numbers Suggest Otherwise, from CBC Calgary.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few tablings this afternoon. First of all, from the *Edmonton Journal*, Cancelling Superlab Undermines Foundation of Patient Care by Cheryl Mather, a clinical assistant professor and anatomic in molecular pathology, who states that the Edmonton hub lab "was not an indulgence; it was the best option to improve our ability to offer care."

I have five copies of a Facebook post from a laboratory scientist calling the decision to cancel the Edmonton clinical lab hub short-sighted and noting the loss of an innovative plan, amazing things that could have been accomplished, and the money that could have been saved.

I have another Facebook post from an assistant professor and laboratory technologist noting cramped offices shared by pathologists and supervisors, lack of space for equipment, and the support of the Health Quality Council of Alberta.

I have another from a lab technologist expressing her frustration with the Minister of Health's suggestion that cancelling the lab hub

was about patient care, stating: “We are a vital part of health care . . . We show up for every shift with our focus on our patients.”

An e-mail from a laboratory scientist noting . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. We will return to tablings following our favourite part of the day.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty’s Official Opposition.

#### Premier’s Remarks

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, first this Premier claimed that we lied about the province’s finances. Then after the Q4 report proved that wasn’t true, he doubled down on that inaccuracy and claimed that we created the deficit. Now, for the record that’s also not true. This Premier’s predecessor party introduced a budget predicated on \$54 oil, imposed costly health care premiums, fee hikes, service cuts, and still promised a \$5 billion deficit. To the Premier: will you apologize to the people of this province for repeatedly providing inaccurate statements to them?

**Mr. Kenney:** No, because I haven’t, Mr. Speaker. It’s time for the NDP to apologize to Albertans for creating a fiscal train wreck. Of course, I was speaking about the fiscal year that we inherited, and it’s absolutely clear, as the MacKinnon commission will report, that the fiscal situation of the province has deteriorated since the third-quarter report made by the NDP. That was a party that committed to Albertans a \$600 million surplus this year, instead left a multibillion-dollar deficit, the largest per capita deficit in Canada. They were only off by \$7 billion. It’s time for them to apologize.

**Ms Notley:** Well, here’s the thing about continuing, as we just heard, to spin tall tales: eventually, you can’t remember what’s true and what’s not. That’s a thing that does plague this Premier. Now, in discussing his recorded inconsistencies, respected political scientist Duane Bratt said, quote: he either didn’t know and then doubles down even though he could have realized those numbers, or he did know the answer and is basically bull-bleeping Albertans. To the Premier: which is it? Did he accuse us of lying without knowing, or did he actually know and decide to bull-bleep Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I was clearly talking about the fiscal year that we inherited, on which the MacKinnon report will shed light, shed light on how badly the fiscal situation is compared to what the NDP projected in their third-quarter report. We can also compare their commitment to Albertans in 2015 to a \$600 million surplus when, in fact, we have a massive deficit. The NDP promised to add only a few billion dollars to the provincial debt but instead took it from \$13 billion to \$60 billion, headed to \$100 billion, five credit downgrades at the . . .

**Ms Notley:** Well, again he’s wrong.

You know, Albertans deserve a Premier who won’t call people liars with no evidence. They deserve a Premier who won’t strip constitutional rights from 180,000 workers right after an election where he hid the plan. They deserve a Premier who won’t promise to preserve people’s overtime a mere month before clawing back a third of their overtime. They deserve a Premier who won’t rule out legislating on social issues who then immediately legislates on social issues. To the Premier: why does this government so consistently misrepresent so much?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader, who was the first Premier in Alberta’s history to lose an election after one term, just said that what I said was wrong. Now, what was wrong? Was I wrong when I claimed that their platform committed to a \$600 million surplus this year? Was I wrong when I said that they drove the debt from \$13 billion to \$60 billion? Was I wrong when I said that they were headed to \$100 billion? Was I wrong when I said that they went through five credit downgrades? Was I wrong when I said that they had the largest per capita deficit in Canada? Was I wrong when I said that they missed their target this year by several billion dollars? All of that is absolutely demonstrably true.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### GSA Policy Compliance and School Funding

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, there are 28 private schools refusing to support gay-straight alliances, in some cases refusing to even accept that people are gay or transgender. Here’s a direct quote from one policy: a covenant relationship between one man and one woman is the sole environment in which sexual activity is permitted and is the context in which children are to be raised. To the Premier. This school is publicly funded. Why do you believe it should receive public funding if it’s going to push these types of discriminatory policies?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as we’ve been absolutely clear, this government will maintain the strongest statutory protection for gay-straight alliances and peer support groups of any province in Canada, the right of the ability for students to create such groups. At the same time, unlike the NDP, we believe in pluralism, diversity, and religious freedom, as reflected in Alberta’s strong tradition of school choice. [interjections] I hear the NDP angrily heckling. That’s all they’ve got left. While they insult people, we’ll defend school choice in Alberta.

**Ms Notley:** What they will defend, Mr. Speaker, is overt discrimination.

We tried to work with these 28 schools, and we gave them a great deal of time to come in line with our Bill 24 and the Charter rights it seeks to protect. They refused, so their public funding was to have been pulled last week. One policy reads, quote, men and women are to dress and behave in accordance with their biological sex. To the Premier: has he pulled funding for this transphobic school, or is Bill Straight specifically designed to protect it from the consequences of discriminating against its students?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we know that the NDP, as a party of division, has always opposed school choice in Alberta because they don’t believe in pluralism and diversity. They don’t seem to have much regard for religious freedom as it’s expressed in this province’s long tradition of school choice. We fundamentally disagree, and we believe in respect for everybody. We also believe that respect extends to faith-based communities and the right of parents to choose an education which they believe is rooted in the universal declaration of human rights, section 26(3), the right of parents to choose their children’s education.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta taxpayers should not be paying for anyone to choose to discriminate against children. We know it’s critical to have safe and caring schools where LGBTQ youth are not outed against their will. One policy states: the school will involve parents as appropriate and necessary regarding their children’s participation in school groups. To the Premier: why are you and your Education minister working so hard to provide the legislative



protection for these schools to out kids and potentially put their lives at risk?

**Mr. Kenney:** We're not, Mr. Speaker, but I find it passing strange the NDP is asking why this government is continuing to fund schools that the NDP funded for four years. That shows the total lack of coherence from the increasingly angry and divisive . . .

**Ms Notley:** You know that the funding would have ended last week.

**Mr. Kenney:** The former Premier is heckling, Mr. Speaker, because she's angry with Albertans for having rejected the NDP's divisive record and total economic failure. You know, she tried to . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. We will have order.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Her government tried to defund the largest home-schooling group in Alberta until a court of law stopped them, because the courts won't tolerate the NDP stripping people's religious freedom in school choice.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

#### Shallow Gas Tax Relief

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week news emerged of a tax relief program for natural gas producers. The government is touting it as a job support program, but the municipalities I'm talking to worry about the cost of this tax relief being downloaded ultimately onto them and Alberta's families. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas. Somebody has got to pay. You're picking up the tab this year. Will municipalities ultimately be called on to cover the bill next year?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the reckless policies of the NDP government were jeopardizing several companies and thousands of jobs. We saw Trident Exploration declare bankruptcy earlier this year, and multiple shallow gas producers report that they are on the verge of bankruptcy. There is a broad acknowledgement that the assessment guidelines have caused those producers to pay much higher than the real value of the assessment of their linear property. We are providing some short-term relief here to help save jobs in the Alberta economy.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government didn't involve municipalities in developing this relief program until it was a fait accompli. I'm hearing that this associate minister turned up with a fully developed program that municipalities had no input in. This comes after the Minister of Municipal Affairs also jammed municipalities with Bill 7, which they didn't want, didn't ask for, and which, many will fear, there'll be a race to the bottom as a result of. To the Premier. Your ministers have now failed on multiple occasions to take the advice of locally elected mayors, reeves, and councillors. What is it about the word "partnership" that you all don't get?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, Bill 7 was in the election platform of the United Conservative Party at the request of municipalities like Strathcona county and the Industrial Heartland Association, who want to be able to attract job-creating investment. So, you know, we said yes to our municipal partners in that respect.

With respect to linear taxation for shallow gas producers, we will be consulting with municipalities in the months to come to ensure an accurate, fair, and proper assessment of those properties to avoid driving those businesses into bankruptcy.

**Member Ceci:** Forty-two municipalities. You heard from one. The fear I'm hearing from municipalities is that business alone is driving the agenda of this government.

Now, our natural gas producers are important, and that's why we commissioned a study on how best to support that industry, but our businesses are nothing without consideration of the municipalities they're located in. This rushed program could result in higher taxes or cut services that communities rely on. To the associate minister: will you promise here and now that local taxpayers won't foot the bill for your heavily rushed tax relief program?

**Mr. Kenney:** Classic NDP economic incompetence. They commissioned a study and then did precisely nothing to implement a single recommendation while we have been facing a crisis amongst shallow gas producers, jeopardizing thousands of good-paying jobs.

By the way, if those companies go under, Mr. Speaker, there'll be zero revenue coming from those sources for municipalities or the provincial government. Rather than just talking and studying, this government is acting to preserve and create jobs in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Classroom Improvement Fund

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some very concerning information has come out about students struggling with severe learning disabilities in Calgary schools. Autism Calgary reports that students are being suspended from school because they don't have the staff to support them. This is an issue that I hope this entire House can agree is unacceptable. We need to do more to support these students. That's exactly what the classroom improvement fund was intended to do. To the minister. It's been weeks of questioning. Will you please commit today that you will maintain funding for the classroom improvement fund?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I am committed to looking after each and every one of our students in our classrooms. As was said earlier numerous times, day in and day out, we have committed to funding education, to providing the supports that are necessary. We will be accounting for enrolment growth, and we're going to be building schools. We continue to say the same things. More information will come out as we bring things forward.

**Ms Hoffman:** I don't think it's acceptable for schools to suspend children because this minister fails to commit to the classroom improvement fund.

We know that boards are cutting key support positions because this minister refuses to provide them with the clarity that they need. The classroom improvement fund would have added 400 important teachers and educational assistants to our schools this fall, in September, when kids show up. Without those, our students with severe learning disabilities are going to suffer the most. To the minister: why won't you confirm that this funding is coming? Is it cut, or is it that you just don't care?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. As the hon. member knows, the classroom improvement fund was due to end August 31 of this year. No decisions have been made on funding for the upcoming year. As a standard procedure funding information will be communicated to school boards following approval by the Legislature in the fall.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** School starts in September. It's unacceptable to make these children go home suspended and make their parents miss days of work because this minister can't get a budget together. That's completely unacceptable.

Autism Calgary is warning that the CBE implications will be even worse with the \$22 million in budget cuts to schools that have been passed down by this UCP government and this minister. The minister said yesterday that her heart is with the children. Autism Calgary says that things are going to get worse under the UCP. Minister, if your heart is honestly with the children, is this acceptable to you or to any member of your government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again we're seeing the opposition continue to play politics with our children, using scare tactics. We have heard from the hon. minister back here that there's been misinformation being spread. We spend amongst the most per capita on education, but the outcomes just aren't there. We're going to review the outcomes. We're going to provide for our students. We're going to look after every single student, especially those that have the largest needs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has risen.

#### **Rural Crime Prevention and Policing**

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the downturn in the economy, that was made far worse by the policies of the previous NDP government, crime has increased, particularly in rural Alberta. Many rural communities in my constituency, like Fort Macleod and many more, have seen a spike in crime. Residents are scared for the safety of their property but, more importantly, the safety of their families. To the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: what is being done to ensure the safety of rural Albertans and to show that this issue is being taken seriously?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General has the call.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for his advocacy on this. All Albertans deserve to feel safe in their communities. Rural crime is a real crisis that was ignored for far too long by the NDP. We're going to make sure that we're committed to ensuring that our law enforcement officials have the tools that they need to get the job done. I'm regularly talking with our law enforcement officials as well as meeting with municipal leaders across our province to make sure that I listen to them and hear their concerns to make sure that we provide our police forces with the tools that they need to get the job done.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the RCMP have had staffing issues that an increase in funding doesn't seem to be solving and that the matter of rural crime here in Alberta is getting worse and given that Ontario, for example, has its own provincial police force instead of the RCMP, does the

minister have an idea of the approximate cost of having a provincial police force here in the province of Alberta as opposed to contracting the RCMP from the federal government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have an estimate for the hon. member regarding this request. However, this question does come up a lot, particularly from people in rural Alberta that have concerns about policing in their communities. This stems back to the loss of confidence in the previous government and the feeling of alienation that they had in the smaller communities across Alberta. [interjection] This is a very serious issue, and we're getting heckled by the NDP right now. This is a serious issue for rural Albertans. This is one of the top issues for them. So many people do not feel safe in their communities. Again, it's disappointing to hear heckling from the other side on this.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the RCMP have a requirement that members be flexible in moving around the country to available postings and given that this may hamper their ability to recruit members that prefer to stay in one place and given that the province of Alberta set up the Alberta sheriffs branch in 2006 and have already begun to fill gaps in law enforcement here in Alberta, can the minister comment on the feasibility of expanding the mandate of the Alberta sheriffs to become a provincial police force, and could that potentially increase our effectiveness in dealing with rural crime?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for this question. I'm regularly talking with law enforcement leaders across our province about how best to use our resources, from policing to sheriffs to making sure that we use community leaders as well, to help spread information about how to protect people and make them feel safe in their communities. We're going to be making sure that we tour this province this summer and fall. I'm looking forward to listening to community leaders, municipal leaders about how best to make sure that all Albertans feel safe in their communities.

#### **Abandoned Oil and Gas Well Liability Management**

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, abandoned oil and gas wells pose significant health and environmental risks and severely harm landowners' ability to develop or sell their own land. The Alberta Energy Regulator estimates the total liabilities of these wells at more than \$18 billion while third-party estimates have those liabilities at values much, much higher. Some of these liabilities will be passed on to the Orphan Well Association. Can the government share with this House how it's working with the Orphan Well Association to make sure that it has the money to deal with those liabilities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy is rising.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that the economic environment exists where private industry can be successful, allowing them to bear the costs themselves of well abandonment and build on Alberta's strong record of responsible environmental reclamation. We will be opening a consultation on liability management, and we'll be reporting back to the House.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, given that timely oil and gas well abandonment prevents liabilities from being passed on to the

Orphan Well Association and given that the UCP often holds up Texas and North Dakota as jurisdictions with which we must compete for oil and gas development and given that both Texas and North Dakota have strict timelines for gas wells to be reclaimed, will the government level the playing field for oil and gas companies operating in all these jurisdictions and enact timelines for abandoned wells to be reclaimed?

2:10

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, as previously committed to, we are working with the AER and industry to overhaul the entire liability management framework in Alberta. We want to ensure that liabilities are covered without unduly distracting and discouraging new investment. It's important to keep our energy industry alive and thriving, and it's important to reclaim and ensure environmental cleanup. We have to get the balance right, and that's what we're doing.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, given that oil and gas liabilities are the responsibility of the last licensee on record and given that when a licensee goes bankrupt, those liabilities are passed on to the Orphan Well Association, what is the UCP doing to make sure that big companies aren't spinning off their liabilities to shell companies that have no hope of being able to pay for the reclamation costs, leaving the taxpayer on the hook for the cleanup?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are doing a full, comprehensive review of the entire liability framework. We want to ensure that we don't detract investment. We want to make sure that liabilities are cleaned up and the environment is managed properly. That will take time. I would note that the orphan levy has increased to \$60 million; companies are investing in it. We want to make sure we get the balance right.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

#### Film and Television Industry Grants

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Screen production grants play a major role in attracting film and television productions to our cities. However, it has come to our attention and to many in the industry that some approved project grants are on hold and that some new requests are not being sent forward for project approval. This is only going to hurt our industry, and no explanation is being provided. To the minister of culture: what is behind the delay in processing and approving screen production grants?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, and thank you for the question. Right now, as we are going through our projects and through budgets and finding out everything that's going on, as I had said earlier to the member, we're going to take our time with the rollout of the tax credit. There is also a lot of consultation that needs to be done. Until we actually know what is going on, we will make sure that the industry is well aware of what's happening.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the film industry contributes greatly to the Alberta economy and given that only a little while ago the minister of culture herself pointed out that every dollar invested generated a \$3.50 return to Albertans and given that many of the grant delays appear to be in the form of

postproduction grants, to the same minister: why do the post-production grants appear to be feeling the brunt of this government's delays?

**Mrs. Aheer:** That's a great question. Actually, there are no delays as we know that these roll out at certain times. There are certain intakes, and there are certain times that they come out. I find it extremely rich coming from them, considering the number of promises that came from them by overspending on the capacity of the dollars going out. If you actually want to talk about the amount of money that went out – there are commitments that need to be made to this industry. We are going to make sure and follow through on those commitments. But, at the same time, it's very interesting, coming from that side, considering that they overspent by \$90 million.

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that an interruption in reliable screen production grants causes uncertainty in the industry, particularly with investors, and given that the minister of culture has already acknowledged the economic benefit of the Alberta film industry, including benefits for the tourism industry and skilled jobs, to the same minister: how does this uncertainty demonstrate to the world that Alberta's screen industry is open for business?

**Mrs. Aheer:** That's a great question. The industry is excited to come here not only because we got rid of the carbon tax, not only because we have the lowest taxes in the country for companies to come here, but they're also very excited about the changeover to the tax credit. Of course, the NDP actually way overspent in this capacity. We are taking a look at those numbers to make sure that we hold to our commitments to the industry. But, more than that, it's actually about attracting the industry here, sir. This is something that we're very excited to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

#### Bighorn Area Land Use

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Environment and Parks. It was extremely evident during the campaign that the lack of consultation relating to the Bighorn proposal infuriated Albertans. The previous government and the previous minister pretended to consult, calling town halls when they might as well have just called to tell stakeholders how it would be. As a constituent joked to me, "Come on down and let us tell you what we're going to do." I sincerely hope, Minister, that you will not do this. Please tell this House that you will consult with the people most affected and that you will not pretend to consult, like Alberta's previous government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I can assure him that this government will consult Albertans when it comes to land-use decisions, not only in the Bighorn but elsewhere inside the province. It was very disappointing to see the previous government not work with First Nation communities, municipalities, business owners, recreation users – and the list goes on and on – when they made their land-use decisions. We have a different approach. We're focused on finding balance between economic, recreation, and environmental needs. We recognize that we can't manage places like the west country

without working in partnership with the municipalities, First Nation communities that are there, and the nonprofit sector, that works so hard every day to preserve the west country.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for your answer. Minister, given that there was and is a belief that something should be done, needs to be done, and that the regional plans should be followed through on and given that the previous government led a sham consultation with stakeholders, I ask the hon. minister to update this House on the direction that our government will take regarding the Bighorn.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it's important that we do things inside the west country. The communities that are there have been calling for it for a long time. As we promised during the campaign, we will return to the North Saskatchewan regional planning process. The difference is that we won't have secret meetings, where we don't allow the community to participate. Instead, we will focus on building a partnership, making sure that we're able to provide the resources that are needed to the community, standing with the indigenous communities that are in the area, that were very frustrated with the NDP's approach, standing with the municipalities that are in the area to be able to find solutions that will work for Albertans long term to be able to protect my backyard, one of the most beautiful places in the world.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that our government has made a promise to empower the people most affected by changes in regulation to help set the rules rather than deciding from afar, as the previous government chose to do, would the minister please elaborate on what specific strategies are being taken to enhance the consultation project and make sure that the affected stakeholders are properly consulted?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the big differences between the previous government and our government is that we will not be having people in ivory towers in Edmonton determining the future of places like the Bighorn. Instead, we'll be working with the people that actually live inside the community and working very hard to be able to make sure that we get it right. They're the experts. There are some amazing things already happening in the Bighorn despite the fact that the NDP did not want to acknowledge the hard work of the community already there. We recognize that there has to be a partnership, particularly with the First Nation communities in the area, the municipalities that are in the area, tourism businesses that are already doing an extraordinary amount of work, being able to give people access to our big area. We'll co-operate with people. That's the difference between our government and theirs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

### Hospitals

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that when you ask this government about why they are breaking contracts, slashing wages, not saying how they will be funding education, you get the same stale, old talking point about how they're waiting on their blue-ribbon panel and given that the chair of that panel shut down 52 rural hospitals in Saskatchewan in 1993, cutting people's rights to

free and accessible health care, to the Minister of Infrastructure: will you commit today that you will not close a single hospital for the duration of this term regardless of what your prize panel says?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, we are going through the budgeting process. All the hospital projects that are under construction are continuing construction, and for all the new projects, we will review the capital project list in due course and get back to them.

**Mr. Dang:** That sounds like a big fat no, Mr. Speaker.

Given that in 2009, when reflecting on the closure of, again, 52 rural hospitals, the chair of the blue-ribbon panel actually acknowledged that the savings from closing these hospitals was, quote, far less than what was expected and given that I hope that all members of this House would agree that compromising health care for rural Albertans for a pittance in savings isn't worth it, to the Minister of Health: can you confirm you will not stand by if your colleague moves to shutter rural hospitals, and would you please explain how exactly you're going to expand access to health care in rural Alberta while you shovel a multibillion-dollar tax giveaway?

2:20

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we have a clear commitment to maintain or increase health care funding. In fact, we have continued to invest in the completion of hospitals under construction. But what I find really insightful is that we now see the huge gap between Alberta's increasingly left-wing NDP and the mainstream NDP in Saskatchewan. This member is attacking Dr. Janice MacKinnon, one of the most highly regarded fiscal experts in the country. You know what? After she made difficult choices to balance Saskatchewan's budget, her government, unlike theirs, was re-elected three times.

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds like we're going to be losing some hospitals all across this province.

Now, given that last week the Infrastructure minister hedged on his previous promise to commit to the capital plan and given that while he previously said that he would honour the capital plan – he said that he would prioritize the projects; he said that he was looking at every project – to the minister: will you commit to at least building hospital projects that were committed to on the original timelines? Yes or no?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the minister and the government have been clear on that matter, but what we have here is the spectacle of an NDP MLA attacking one of this country's most highly regarded former New Democrat ministers, Dr. MacKinnon. [interjections] Now they're heckling her. Now they're groaning. They're so angry. You know why? Because Dr. MacKinnon and Roy Romanow's government were re-elected and re-elected in part because, like Tommy Douglas, they understood the importance of fiscal responsibility, unlike this lot, who were thrown out after their first term in office.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

### Personal Care Standards in Seniors' Facilities

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 30 Leslie Peers and Sandy McCabe wrote to the Minister of Health with their concerns about the quality of care provided to their mother, Marilyn, at Rutherford Heights' privately run, publicly funded, high-care needs ward. Left unsupervised, Marilyn fell twice over two weeks, breaking her pelvis. At different times her family found

feces on her toilet and on the bedroom floor and that she'd been left wearing the same dirty clothes for three days straight. To the Minister of Health. It's been a month since they wrote to your office. Why haven't you or your staff responded to their serious concerns?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know the specifics of that specific piece of correspondence. I'm happy to go back to my office and understand which letter that was and get back to the constituent if they have not received a response. Obviously, if we do provide a response and if it was provided to us through the hon. member's constituency office or any member's constituency office, we don't disclose personal information about somebody's health care. We would not let any other member of this Assembly know about that correspondence, but I look forward to getting back to the member.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that addressing situations like those raised by Marilyn's family is indeed no easy task but given that this government has stated it intends to continue to invest in this model of publicly funded but privately delivered care and given that this minister has a duty to listen to issues like those faced by Marilyn's family and to act on them, to the Minister of Health: what steps will you be taking to ensure that facilities like this maintain the staff needed to provide residents with the dignity and quality of care that they deserve?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear. We were clear throughout the campaign and we've been clear since April 16, since the election, that we were going to maintain or increase our spending in our health care system and continue to build on the strength of our front-line workers. That's our commitment to patients in this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Marilyn's family eventually had to resort to staying with her 24 hours a day until they could find another place for her to live and given that she is now happy and receiving excellent care alongside her husband in a personal care home and given that in their platform this government has stated it would support the creation of more of these community-based spaces, to the Minister of Health: will you commit to meeting with Sandy McCabe and myself to hear her concerns and discuss how we can provide proper, dignified care for seniors like her mother, Marilyn?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times in this House, my office is open to all Albertans who want to discuss health care concerns. To the extent that the constituent wants the hon. member to be at the meeting, I leave that to that constituent to make that decision.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has a question.

### Domestic Violence Prevention

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I would like to quote a promise from the 2019 UCP campaign platform: "A United Conservative government will introduce legislation to protect vulnerable Albertans and increase funding for Alberta's specialized law enforcement agencies that combat domestic violence." Given this clear commitment to Albertans and the importance of preventing

domestic violence, would the minister please outline the steps that she is taking to proactively protect those at risk?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government made a commitment to address domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence. Among other initiatives under way, we pledge to pass an Alberta version of Clare's law to ensure that Albertans at risk of domestic violence have fuller awareness of an intimate partner's previous history of domestic violence or violent acts. Working together with the Minister of Justice, I will be tabling legislation for an Alberta version of Clare's law in this Assembly in the fall of 2019.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Alberta has the third-highest rate of police-reported intimate partner violence in the country and saw 166 deaths in Alberta due to family violence between 2008 and 2017 and given that over half of all female homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner or relative and that 29 per cent of Canadian women will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime, can the Minister of Community and Social Services please outline her process for implementing Clare's law here in Alberta?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, the responsibility to protect vulnerable Albertans, including from domestic violence, is one that this government takes very seriously. The process will involve a broad consultation with stakeholders, including women's shelters, First Nations and Métis communities, victims' advocates, police associations, new-Canadian and immigrant support centres, and offender advocates. I also look forward to the member's input and input from this entire Assembly as we move Clare's law through the legislative process.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you. Given that Clare's law was implemented in the United Kingdom in 2014 after Clare Wood was murdered by a man with a history of violence against women and given that Saskatchewan has also implemented its own version of the legislation to protect survivors and those at risk from domestic or gender-based violence and further given that many survivors of domestic violence, male or female, don't want to report but must be adequately protected from this violence as well, can the minister please address the effectiveness of Clare's law in preventing domestic violence in relationships?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, with domestic violence there is no one single solution. The intention behind Clare's law will be to equip potential victims of domestic violence to be informed of their partner's previous convictions for violence. We believe that potential victims of domestic abuse have a right to know about that individual's criminal history. Our legislation would allow the person at risk and family members to apply for this information although only the at-risk person would receive it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has a question.

### Clubroot of Canola

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canola farmers are being hit hard this year, whether it be from a ban on their product, invasions from cutworms, or facing reduced crop yields as a result of clubroot. I recently met privately with a local canola producer who

shared his grave concerns about the proliferation of this disease in Alberta, and he noted that clubroot is now found in southern Alberta and the Peace River area, where it was not supposed to thrive. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what steps is his ministry taking to control this disease, that threatens the future of one of our most important export crops?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question and also for attending the barbecue that we had today at the Legislature, which was a great show of solidarity for our farmers. Most of those are up in the gallery today: our beef producers, our canola growers, and also our pork producers.

To that very important question on clubroot, it is a disease that we are working on and monitoring, and it is something that we're trying our best to get a handle on to make sure that when it comes to canola around the world, we have high-quality and the best canola. We do a great job of selling it. It is controlled, and we work with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as well as other departments to make sure that we can get . . .

**Mr. Dach:** Given that mitigation measures to combat clubroot in infected fields such as extended crop rotation, planting clubroot-resistant seed, and minimizing movement of soil contaminated with clubroot spores are only as good as the enforcement measures that govern them, can the minister please explain to this House what legislation governs the spread of clubroot disease, and what level of government is charged with enforcing that act?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We trust farmers to make sure that they do the best type of crop rotation. They have the land, lots for generations, for over 100 years, and they want to do what's best for their farms and for their land. It is something that this side of the House, that we actually trust farmers to do what's best for their crop rotations, and it isn't something that we're going to mandate something of that nature. It is great to see the canola producers here in the House, and I'm sure that they can attest that they know their land a lot better than any government official ever would.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it's the Agricultural Pests Act and the municipalities of Alberta that are in charge, invested with enforcement. So I hope the minister informs himself of that. Thank you again.

To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: given that fighting clubroot disease costs producers money and lowers their net income per acre and given that as a result some canola producers may choose not to extend their crop rotation, grow canola-resistant seed, or wash soil off their contaminated equipment before moving it from field to field to save money in the short term and given this increases the potential risk of spreading the disease to their neighbours . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite. What are we doing about it? What is this government doing about it? We're working with farmers to make sure that they can make their money from the mailbox – from the marketplace. Sorry, Mr. Speaker; not the mailbox. It is something that government shouldn't get involved in, businesses like that, and it's great to see that farmers do such a great job. They produce such a high quality of food that we're proud as a government to be able

to support, whether it's on the international stage and promoting it around the world or to here at home as well. As a message that we had at the barbecue today, to all Albertans watching: please buy Albertan.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Legal Aid

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A publicly funded legal aid system helps to ensure that Albertans have access to necessary legal advice and, in turn, ensures that we are all equal before the law. I've been unable to get a clear answer from the Minister of Justice about funding for legal aid or even a commitment that legal aid is an important part of a functioning system. The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul even went so far as to say that legal aid is money for criminals. To the minister: will you take this opportunity to set the record straight and publicly recognize the critical importance of legal aid?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, legal aid is an important part of a fair and accessible justice system. My wife actually articulated doing legal aid work. It's an important part of our justice system. All Albertans deserve to have a reasonable defence. It's an important part, foundational, to make sure we have also an efficient justice system.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that legal aid, the government of Alberta, the Law Society, and many other stakeholders have worked tirelessly to reach an agreement that will provide better service to Albertans, a sustainable program, and certainty for the legal community and given that this program is critical to ensuring timely access to legal aid, which in turn ensures that matters move through the system and are not stayed due to Jordan, to the minister: will you commit to ensuring that budget uncertainty created by your government will not lead to cases being stayed?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we're going to be providing a detailed budget this fall. I find it a bit rich talking to somebody on the other side when for four years we saw a clogged up justice system here in Alberta, cases being dismissed through a triage system. That member brought in a triage system to our prosecution services. We're going to be making sure our police and prosecution have the tools that they need to make sure that we're prosecuting the cases in Alberta's best interests to make sure that Albertans feel safe in their homes.

**Ms Ganley:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that Premier Kenney's close friend and ally Doug Ford recently made a massive \$133 million cut to Ontario legal aid and given that Premier Ford and the Premier stated that they finish each other's sentences and engage in a long-standing bromance and given that cuts to legal aid will have a devastating impact and given that the first thing to be cut is always family law services, that put vulnerable women and children at risk, to the minister: when you answer in a moment, will you finish your sentence with a commitment to legal aid?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, legal aid is an important part of an efficient justice system. But let's talk about this and our justice system that we have right now. In Edmonton since 2015 assaults were up 11 per cent, property crimes are up 13 per cent, sexual assaults are up 17 per cent. That's the record of the opposition on justice. We're going to make sure that our police and prosecutors have the tools that they need to get the job done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge has a question.

**Shallow Gas Tax Relief**  
(continued)

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Associate Minister of Natural Gas announced urgent tax relief for shallow gas producers and municipalities. This news was welcomed by associations like the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada and the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, who were happy to see the government of Alberta finally take action on this file. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs explain why this was such an urgent priority for his office?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Immediately upon taking office, I found out that the NDP did nothing for the past four years. They let companies get assessment rates that were far too high. They let companies go bankrupt. They let our municipalities suffer. Our government has taken action to support shallow gas producers and protect municipalities. We are also reviewing how wells are assessed as that model hasn't changed since 2005 despite drastic changes in the industry. The NDP did nothing. We are taking action.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that tax relief for shallow gas producers serves as a temporary approach to address the out-of-date uniform assessment of gas wells established in 2005, which causes differences in current property values, and given that the system is broken and the gas producers are selling products at very low prices, to the Associate Minister of Natural Gas: can you provide some reassurance that providing this short-term tax relief for shallow gas producers will help in the establishment of a long-term, viable solution for the industry?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Natural Gas is rising.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is creating real solutions for natural gas producers because, unlike members across the aisle, we understand how important this industry is to Albertans. Yesterday's measures correct a long-term inequity that has resulted in our natural gas producers being overtaxed. It is a stopgap solution that addresses a complex issue until we can complete a full assessment. I should note that this government will not tax business into bankruptcy. The NDP might want to take note.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the government has pledged to work with municipalities to help shallow gas producers receive more than \$23 million in total support from this tax relief, can the minister explain what steps are being taken to help municipalities lower these taxes for the 2019 assessment year?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are helping municipalities to provide this tax relief by giving them a list of qualifying wells, helping with reporting, and

reducing the amount of education property tax they owe by the same amount. I was proud to make this announcement with the Associate Minister of Natural Gas, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada. They understand how bad the situation has become, and that's why we are taking action.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Airdrie-Cochrane is rising.

**Economic Development and Job Creation**

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Years of poor decision-making and policy choices under the previous government in tandem with a large recession has left Alberta barren and stripped of jobs. Our provincial unemployment rate is staying flat at 6.7 per cent while the rest of Canada is improving and even breaking records. Many of my constituents are struggling to find gainful employment, and they want to know what the Minister of Finance and our government are doing to foster job creation.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Alberta does have an unacceptably high unemployment rate. We've inherited that rate from the previous government due to failed economic policies that they've implemented. Albertans expect this government to change that. We're doing just that. We've implemented a job-creation tax cut. The first point of that tax cut took place two days ago, on Monday. That is the first of many measures that we know will bring back investment and job creation to this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that Calgary has the highest unemployment rate out of all major Canadian metropolitan cities, at an unacceptably high rate of 7.6 per cent, and given that the previous government did little to help alleviate the financial difficulties experienced by Calgary and area residents and given that many of their poorly thought out economic policies only hurt job creators, what are the next steps to ensuring that the Calgary region gets back on track in terms of economic development and job growth?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've mentioned, we've been quick to act to turn around the harmful policies put in place by the previous government. Along with the job-creation tax cut we've repealed the carbon tax, that killed thousands of jobs, many of those in the energy sector and felt acutely by Calgarians. Additionally, we passed Bill 7, which allows municipalities the property tax flexibility to attract investment in an increasingly competitive global environment. We're doing all we can to improve Alberta's job market. That includes the city of Calgary. But every municipality needs to ensure that their policies accomplish the same thing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's economic growth suffered tremendously due to antijob policies such as the 50 per cent hike to minimum wage, increased labour regulations, massive tax hikes, and changes to statutory holiday

pay, what can be done to reverse the massive damage these poorly thought out policies have done to my constituents?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell the member that we're committed to bringing back jobs to Alberta, and that's just what we're doing. We're supporting our province's job creators by, again, initiating the Red Tape Reduction Act, the open for business act, reducing red tape, and bringing common sense back to the workplace. Our government is reversing the trend of fleeing investment. We're bringing prosperity back to the province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, order.

In 30 seconds or less we will return to the daily Routine.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

(continued)

**The Speaker:** We were at the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to complete my tablings. I have two more. I have an e-mail from a laboratory scientist who notes that "increases in the number of necessary analyzers in facilities not designed to accommodate them [are producing] facilities that are hot, noisy, and crowded."

Then, lastly, an e-mail from a clinic molecular technologist expressing great concern regarding the cancellation of the Edmonton clinical lab and noting that investing in "a single building would have decreased waste by reducing redundancy and achieving economy of scale."

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first one is from *The Guardian*: The Female Game Designers Fighting Back on Abortion Rights. "Through video games, live-action role-playing games and interactive documentaries, developers are challenging the conversation."

The second one is: June was Hottest Ever Recorded on Earth, European Satellite Agency Announces. This is from yesterday, I believe.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the requisite number of copies of an article as advice to the Premier and the front bench about where they seek economic ideas from. The article is titled Harper's Economic Record the Worst in Canada's Postwar History.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings?

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Panda, Minister of Infrastructure, supplemental

responses to questions regarding the former Royal Alberta Museum site, posed by Ms Goehring, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, during Oral Question Period on June 19, 2019; supplemental responses to questions regarding modular classrooms for Father Michael Mireau school, posed by MLA Loyola, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, during Oral Question Period on June 27, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to a Member by Name

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I believe was noted by the hon. Government House Leader, I did in fact use the Premier's surname in my question earlier today. I would like to take the opportunity to apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I consider that point of order concluded, and I appreciate your expeditious work there. Very quickly, very fine.

We are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

##### Alberta Property Rights Advocate

27. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that:

1. The 2017 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future for review;
2. The committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
3. In accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 60 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the motion is fairly self-explanatory.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion according to Standing Order 18. Are there any members wishing to add to the debate?

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Waive.

[Government Motion 27 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order.



## Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. Madam Chair, if you would be so inclined, can you refresh us about which amendment we are on?

**The Chair:** We're on, actually, the main bill.

**Ms Pancholi:** The main bill. Fantastic. Thank you. That's what I thought. I wanted to be sure. Thank you. I appreciate that, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to rise again to speak to Bill 8. I've had the opportunity to speak to Bill 8 a few times, but I will continue to because there are some pieces of this act, Madam Chair, that I believe are very important to discuss which to date have not been discussed. As the members of this Assembly who may have heard me rise to speak to this bill before will know, I do have a great deal of familiarity with the Education Act, which is being amended by Bill 8. The context of the Education Act: it was work that I completed while I was a public servant working for Alberta Education and Alberta Justice, and I was pleased to be heavily involved in that work, so I have a very deep understanding of the Education Act, which is being amended by this bill.

One of the things that I would like to raise and I'd like to use my knowledge of this act to do is to talk about those provisions of the act which, frankly, the government has failed to talk about at all. The government talks about the fact that they're seeking to proclaim the Education Act because it will modernize the school system. However, we have failed to hear any discussion from members opposite about what exactly it's going to do that's going to modernize the current education system. Because of my deep familiarity with both the Education Act and the School Act, one of the exercises that I went through was to actually compare the provisions of the Education Act, which the government is seeking to proclaim, with the current provisions of the School Act.

2:50

Again, as the government's intent was to propose legislation that will modernize and transform and bring the education system into the future, it's interesting to note – and I believe all members should be aware of this – that only about 25 out of the 300 provisions of the Education Act are in any way different than what's currently in the School Act. For a piece of legislation that is apparently going to modernize and transform the education system, only about 10 per cent, less than 10 per cent, of its provisions are in any way actually different from the existing School Act. What's interesting to note is that even those provisions that are different are only minorly so. They're minor amendments, sometimes to clarify language. There's change in terminology throughout the Education Act, and it's simply to comply with that.

Again, I want to make sure that everybody in this House is familiar with, when we talk about the Education Act and how transformative it is, that it's really not achieving that end, particularly, as I've mentioned before, because the government has repealed some of the provisions from the Education Act which may have actually had a bit of a transformative effect on the act and on the education system. I won't go through that in detail because I have mentioned it before, and those are the changes to raising the age of access and the age of mandatory or compulsory education. Those have not been changed by this government. Really, what we have here is the government seeking to proclaim a piece of

legislation that is, for all intents and purposes, pretty much the same as the current School Act, so much so, in fact, that some of the amendments that are being proposed in Bill 8 to the Education Act are actually to carry forward changes that the NDP government made to the School Act.

When drafting Bill 8, the members across the aisle clearly thought that there was some value in a lot of the work that had been done by the NDP to update the School Act. In particular, the sections that the government has chosen to adopt from the NDP's agenda to change the School Act include those provisions around school fees, include the provisions around superintendent compensation, the provisions around First Nations education services agreements, otherwise known as tuition agreements, that are entered into between school boards and First Nations for the education of students who live on-reserve in provincial school board schools. The government has chosen to adopt the NDP's amendments with respect to certification requirements for superintendents and principals. They've chosen as well to adopt the NDP's changes to the School Act around the separate school establishment process.

Clearly, there is a lot that the government believes that the NDP did that was actually very useful because they've actually transported some of those provisions right into the Education Act. Of course, the significant outlier in terms of the provisions where the government has taken from the NDP and made changes to the Education Act, the one giant, big, glaring outlier is the provisions around gay-straight alliances. That is the one area where apparently the government does not believe that the changes that were made – and we know that, that the government does not believe that the Bill 24 changes that were made to the School Act were worth transferring over.

Now, my colleagues have spoken at great length as to why the NDP made those changes to Bill 24, why they made those changes to the gay-straight alliance process. It seems to be falling on deaf ears because we keep getting talking points about how the Education Act provisions allow a process for gay-straight alliance establishment, never mind the fact that the deficits in that process which were acknowledged and recognized by the NDP government have been completely ignored by this government. I actually am not going to speak too much longer about that because I believe I'll have plenty of opportunities to do that further and my colleagues have done a great job on that already.

I'm going to also speak to some of the other changes in the Education Act, the fewer than 25 sections out of the 300 sections that are being amended, and talk about what they are because I don't think they've gotten any light of day in this Assembly. They will be changes to the system. I think all the members across the way who may not already be familiar with it and also any school boards, parents, teachers, students, private schools, charter schools, home educators should also know what those changes are.

One of the changes, actually, that the Education Act makes is around charter schools. It's actually an amendment that I think is a good one. What it does is that it goes back to the heart of what charter schools were intended to be when they were brought into our provincial system. As many people will know, if you look into the history of the charter schools in this province, they were established in order to provide centres of research and innovation for teaching in Alberta. The idea was that if there was a group of people, an organization, parents who had a potentially innovative and research-based way to offer education in a way that's different than a school board is already offering it, they could establish a charter school.

The idea was that it was almost like a pilot project. It was supposed to be an idea, an opportunity for a new way, innovative

ways of teaching to be done, and if it was research based and it was successful, then the charter schools could then share those learnings with school boards, and school boards could adopt it. It was meant to be an innovative way to approach education. For that reason, charter schools were intended to be temporary. They were not supposed to be permanent because the idea was that if what they were doing, their programming, was actually innovative and research based, it would be adopted by the school boards. That was the idea. They were temporary pilot projects, really, to help infuse some fresh thought into our school system.

Over time that's not exactly how charter schools grew to evolve. It tended to be that charter schools – and there are plenty of fantastic charter schools in this province – sometimes grew to be a very devoted and invested group of people who were not willing to then become folded under a school board even after years of operating successfully. They felt they had been operating quite well for some time, and they wanted to continue to do that. The problem was that the concept behind a charter school just simply was not being realized in the sense that the learnings in research were not being infused into the broader school system.

One of the amendments that the Education Act would do is actually require that charter schools as part of their approval process and continuing approval process would have to demonstrate collaboration or engagement with a postsecondary institution or school division. I actually think this is a good change. I actually think this is a change that goes back to the heart of what a charter school is meant to be. In this case, charter schools now have to work collaboratively with postsecondary – so there's the research; there are the innovative ways of learning – and work collaboratively with school divisions. That's really great as well because the idea, again, is that if there are great learnings to be had from the operation of the charter school, why would we not want to infuse that throughout the school system? I think this is actually a great change.

Now, another change that the Education Act makes around charter schools is that it will lift the cap on charter schools. Currently the cap is at 15 charter schools although, to my understanding, for quite some time there have actually only been 13 or 14 charter schools. There actually hasn't been a rush for more to be approved. So I'm not sure what effect lifting the cap will do because, as I've mentioned, there doesn't seem to have been a great desire for there to be more charter schools, but so be it. That's one of the changes that will come in under the Education Act if proclaimed.

Another change that the Education Act will bring in is that it will require school boards to establish a policy respecting the resolution of disputes or concerns at the school level between parents and school staff. Now, what's interesting about this amendment is really that it's, quite frankly, unnecessary. As I worked quite heavily with many school boards in this province over the last five years and prior to that with Alberta Education, I can say with quite a bit of certainty that almost every school has a school dispute resolution process at the school level. In fact, that is the heart of what principals often do. They are navigating issues between their teachers, between parents, between students.

In fact, collaborative ways to resolve disputes are something that is pretty much a key part of a job description of any school administrator. Certainly, standardization of a school dispute resolution process is not a problem although I think most school boards already have that. But, then again, it seems to be that there is certainly some desire from members on the other side to sometimes mandate policies and things that already exist despite their commitment to red tape reduction. But so be it. So the Education Act will require that all schools have a dispute resolution process at the school level.

One of the other things, actually, that the Education Act will do, if proclaimed, is that it will provide certain rights to parents and children who are receiving early childhood services, or ECS services. ECS is actually that programming that's provided to children before they enter grade 1. It's commonly thought of as kindergarten although there's often some programming that can be provided to children with identified special needs at an earlier age, also known as PUF funding, or program unit funding, so certain children even under the age of kindergarten will receive some support for ECS services.

Now, one of the things that the Education Act will do – and, in fact, I will again put this one in the category of a change that I actually think is a good change. It will make sure that operators of ECS programs – and for those who are not familiar with that, ECS programs are offered quite regularly by almost all school boards. I'm sure you all have kids who've gone to kindergarten at your local school, but it's also provided by private schools or private operators of ECS services.

3:00

One of the changes that the Education Act will make, if proclaimed, is that it will require those operators of ECS programs to keep student records for even the children that are enrolled in ECS programs. This is important because the student record actually contains some pretty important information about the student, particularly when it comes to things such as assessments, that can provide some continuity of programming once they get into the grade 1 system and become what's known as "students" under the School Act, which are all children enrolled in programming above grade 1. That's one of the changes that the Education Act, once proclaimed, will do. It will require operators of ECS programming to keep those records for even those children in ECS programming. That, again, I'll put in the category of things that I think are a good change.

Another change that it will do is that it will allow parents of children receiving ECS programming to have a right to appeal to the school board and potentially to the minister if they have disagreements around the programming that their child is receiving in ECS programming. This is a right that is mandated for all students in grade 1 to grade 12, and now that right will be extended to parents of children in ECS programming, again a change that I think was a good thing.

Now, one of the things that is a little bit more controversial about the changes that will come into effect if the Education Act is proclaimed is that it actually will allow for separate school electors – that's the very formal School Act, Education Act way to refer to what we typically think of as Catholic in our public and Catholic systems. It is typically the Catholic supporters. Usually the way it works is that you are eligible to vote for a trustee, depending on which system you claim to be a resident of. Are you a resident of the public system, or are you a resident of the separate school system? Typically you are only allowed to vote in the election for whichever school system you are an elector for. So if you're a public school resident, you vote for the public school trustee. If you are a Catholic school elector – and I'm using "Catholic" generally; really, it should be "separate" – you vote for the Catholic trustees. That's the way the system works.

Now, the Education Act will propose a change to that, and the change will be that Catholic voters will be able to vote in either the public or the separate school election process. That may seem a bit controversial to some people because the right is not reversed. Public school electors are not allowed to vote in a Catholic election. They can only vote in the public. But under the Education Act a Catholic voter may choose – they cannot vote in both – which one

they want to vote in. So even though they are a declared Catholic and are a resident of the Catholic system, they may choose to vote, instead, in the public system.

Now, a little bit of background on that is that, actually, that came about as a result of a human rights complaint that was filed by a former trustee, and his name was Roy Brassard. This was probably in the early 2000s, maybe 2006, 2007, I believe. I'd have to check my dates on that. Roy Brassard was actually a public school trustee in an area where there was no separate school board. There was no Catholic school board. He had been sitting as a public school trustee for a long time, and everybody knew that Roy Brassard was a Catholic. He talked regularly. He spoke about his Catholic roots and his beliefs and his traditions, but he was a public school trustee because there was actually no Catholic system in that area at the time.

Then through the process of separate school establishment, which is set out in the School Act – it's quite a detailed process – a separate school board actually established in the area that covered the jurisdiction of which Roy Brassard was a public school trustee. By virtue of the way the separate school establishment process works, because he was a Catholic in an area that now had a Catholic separate school board, the law, the traditions that fell in both the School Act and hearkening back to the Constitution and the Alberta Act of 1905 stated that if you are a resident of the separate school board and a separate school jurisdiction exists in your area, you are therefore a resident of the Catholic system and ineligible to be a trustee in the public system.

Despite the fact that he'd been a trustee for quite some time in the public system, he suddenly, because a separate school board had established in his area, was no longer eligible to sit on the public school board anymore, and he very much wanted to sit on the public school board. So he launched a human rights complaint and argued that by virtue of being a Catholic, he was being discriminated against because he was no longer eligible to be a public school trustee.

Now, that human rights complaint was never actually resolved because, unfortunately, Mr. Brassard passed away before it was decided by the human rights tribunal, so it was withdrawn. However, that certainly raised a question for the education system about what to do when a Catholic system formed in an area that previously had no Catholic system and how that affected the eligibility of those individuals who identified as Catholic in that area.

That's just a bit of a history lesson behind why this provision is a part of the Education Act. I'm certain that the Education minister probably has this background and could do this as well, but we haven't heard about any of these provisions from the Education minister yet. So that's why I'm raising them in the House today.

I certainly think that this idea of a Catholic resident or elector being able to vote for a public trustee is something that's worthy of discussion. It's certainly controversial. It's certainly not required. As I mentioned, the human rights complaint was never actually heard or resolved, so there's no statement of law as to whether or not that's appropriate. I recall that during my time with Alberta Education there were a significant number of Catholic trustees who were very concerned about this idea that a Catholic elector being able to choose who they wanted to vote for may undermine the separate school system and the Catholic system. They felt that, you know, there were certain constitutional provisions that were very clear, that if you are a Catholic resident, you vote for the Catholic system. That's who you're eligible to vote for. If Catholic voters were allowed to choose, that may undermine support for their Catholic system.

I recall that being a concern that was raised by trustees during consultation, but again, to highlight, that consultation took place over 10 years ago. At least 50 per cent of the sitting public and separate school trustees right now were not part of those discussions. They were not a part of those consultations. I'm certain that there are certain public board trustees who might have thoughts about whether or not this is appropriate. I know that there were historically some separate school trustees who had significant concerns about this provision.

Again, we're talking about proclaiming an act that is now over seven years old, where consultation took place over 10 years ago. I'm not confident, certainly, based on the conversations and what we're hearing from the Minister of Education and from the members on the other side – although not many other members have spoken to this, and I don't know that any discussion has been had with school board trustees about this or if they're aware of the potential erosion of their separate school rights as trustees. I would like to hear that feedback, and I think government should give some thought to that before implementing a change that could potentially impact our separate school system.

One of the other things that the Education Act would do, if it is proclaimed, is that it would actually change the process by which school boards can establish their wards within their jurisdiction. Again, many school boards in the province have a ward structure, and that's, of course, particularly in the rural areas, where a school board jurisdiction can be quite vast.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and continue to take part in the debate on Bill 8, the amendments this government is choosing to make to the Education Act before they bring it forward for proclamation and indeed, in particular, some of the elements that they are choosing not to include from the School Act.

We've had some fairly robust discussion on this. Indeed, my colleague for Edmonton-Whitemud has been very good in outlining how many of the changes that we brought forward in the School Act this government has chosen to include in these amendments, recognizing that by bringing in the Education Act, they are effectively replacing the School Act, which we had made a number of amendments to. It's wonderful to see that the government supports so many of those amendments and is moving them over into the Education Act. But there are some very key and specific provisions which this government is choosing not to move over. That being the case, that suggests that for this particular government there are very particular things that they are hoping to accomplish, that that is a very intentional step.

Now, as we've discussed in this House, those elements that they are intentionally choosing not to introduce, recognizing again, Madam Chair, that they are removing the majority of what the Education Act itself was actually intending to do, as my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud has very ably and thoroughly pointed out on the record – they are taking the Education Act, largely hollowing it out, refilling it with the majority of what we had in the School Act, and leaving out these very specific elements that have to do with providing protections for LGBTQ youth and their allies who want to form a GSA.

3:10

Despite the protestations from this government, from multiple ministers and members who have stood in this House, it is very

clear what their intention is here. It is to attempt, with as little public notice as possible, to remove particular provisions that were there to protect LGBTQ students and youth and their allies in the formation of a GSA at the behest of particular stakeholders that this Premier finds himself beholden to. Now, it's been clear from comments that have been made by this Premier in the past and indeed not that long ago; from the rather vague statements that have been made by the Minister of Education around the need to provide balance, without being able to provide any definition or clarity as to what that balance is; and indeed by the close relationship which this Premier has with his close friend and ally Mr. John Carpay, who has made such reprehensible remarks such as comparing the pride flag to the Nazi swastika, where this springs from.

Now, the thing is, Madam Chair, that I've spoken a little bit about my own history. I grew up in a conservative Christian environment. I understand that world view well. I know people that are still part of that. I have members of my family that are still part of that. I have seen the kinds of, to quote this Premier, fear and smear which is regularly spread amongst some members of some of those communities, certainly not all but some, regarding the LGBTQ community. I've talked about it at some length in this House already, the types of conspiracy theories that lie behind the kinds of hateful remarks made by Mr. Carpay and, I would hope, are not hailed by members of this House. Certainly, we have heard from some members who are sitting here today remarks that very much strayed in that direction.

But to set that aside, Madam Chair, I do want to acknowledge that there are people in the faith community who understand the importance of truly standing up for LGBTQ youth, of not just making a vague, broad statement and then not following through with action, of actually standing up for these youth and ensuring they have protection, not simply mouthing the words that you feel need to be said in order to maintain your political position.

I have here today a letter that I received from the Reverend Rachel Frey. She says:

Dear Mr. Shepherd,

I am writing to you – as both a parent and as a person of faith – to express my deep concern for the proposed changes to the Education Act with Bill 8. While I find several aspects of The Education Amendment Act troubling, of preeminent importance to me is the threat to students' privacy regarding involvement with Gay-Straight or Queer-Straight Alliances. I am an ordained Christian minister, and in my many years of ministry, I have often served with LGBTQ youth. While privacy and maintaining confidentiality are essential ethical components of any ministry, they are especially crucial when working with LGBTQ young persons as outing youth can place them in dangerous – even deadly – situations. The previous School Act provided protections for student privacy, not allowing student involvement in GSAs to be disclosed to their parents/guardians, who may not be supportive of their children's sexual identity. Rolling back these protections potentially exposes our children to violence – both emotional and physical.

Gay-Straight Alliances offer LGBTQ children/youth and their allies safe spaces to be themselves. They provide sanctuary, a word from the Judeo-Christian tradition which means both a "holy place" and a "place of refuge or protection."

I believe that all humans are created in the image of God, and I also hold that sexuality and gender identity are aspects that reveal the divine within each of us. I know that many people who profess my faith or other faiths do not share this view, instead believing that certain sexuality or gender expressions are not in line with their religious traditions. And sadly, their religious beliefs can become a barrier to their expression of love for their children and/or the youth in their faith communities. Thus, homes and faith communities are not always safe places – or sanctuaries

– for LGBTQ children and youth. The risks to these youth can include: emotional isolation leading to depression and suicide, psychological abuse, neglect or shunning, and physical violence, among other dangers.

I have seen the damage done by forced outing. I knew "Cassidy" ...

She makes a note here that all names have been changed to protect the identities of the youth she references.

... who joined our youth group after she was called before her entire congregation to confess her "sin of impure thought" after confiding her attraction to other girls to her youth pastor, a person she thought was safe. And I counselled "Blake," whose parents kicked him out of the house after reading a love note he had written to another boy. His father, a leader in the family's house of worship, also repeatedly punched him to "toughen him up." I could list many others. Their names and unique situations vary, but the common thread throughout their stories is that these young people suffered tremendous trauma and abuse after being outed to their families and faith communities.

As a person of faith, I believe it is a moral imperative both of society and of individuals to keep our children safe. I identify as Christian, which means I strive to follow the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, who throughout his ministry, according to Christian teaching, taught his followers to care for and protect children. I believe that the protections established by the School Act safeguard some of our most vulnerable children – those who identify as LGBTQ and their allies. I implore you to call upon the government to keep these protections in place.

Thank you for your continued witness on behalf of your constituents and Alberta,

Rev. Rachel Frey

I deeply appreciate these words from the reverend, and indeed I can tell you, Madam Chair, that I have heard from many faith leaders from a wide background of faiths and beliefs. Indeed, I am looking forward in the coming days to sharing more of their thoughts on this legislation as well, because while government members may tire of listening to our debate on this topic, it is one, I believe, of crucial importance. No matter how much this Premier, his ministers, and members of this government caucus protest that they are simply making common-sense amendments with the introduction of the Education Act, as much as they claim that they intend to maintain the best protections in Canada for LGBTQ youth, it is demonstrable and it is incontrovertible that they are intentionally choosing to lessen protections that are already in place, and not a single member of this government has had the courage to stand in this House and give any reason for doing so.

We've heard any number of talking points. We've heard any number of claims that their choice to do this does not in any way besmirch their support for the LGBTQ community. But they cannot offer any explanation whatsoever as to why they are choosing to remove the word "immediately" in the provisions for when a youth requests that a principal allow them to form a GSA. There is absolutely no reason to remove that word, to not bring that over from the School Act, as they did with so many other provisions. Not a single member of this government has provided any explanation for why they are not doing so. Not a single member of this government has been willing to stand in this House and explain why they feel we should not have a clear and explicit explanation of what the expectation is in terms of a school revealing a student's participation in a GSA.

3:20

Members of this government have stood and said: well, it's there in the privacy act, in those provisions there, in the province of Alberta. A government that is dedicated to removing red tape, that is dedicated to providing clarity and certainty for businesses in this

province and in so many other areas is content to hide behind a rat's nest of legislation when it comes to a question that, as the Reverend Rachel Frey noted, is of such deep significance and can have such an incredible impact on the life of a vulnerable young person. Not a single member of this government has the courage to stand in this House and explain why they feel that clarity should not exist.

Given that these are such simple and basic things, Madam Chair, I can only come to the conclusion that it is the kind of hateful rhetoric that we have heard from members of this governing party that we saw brought forward during their policy convention, in which members sought to pass a policy mandating that schools have the option to out LGBTQ youth if they felt that that was appropriate within their discretion, that parents had the right to know that fact even if the child had decided they do not want to share that information. Given that in this government not a single member has offered any other plausible explanation, we have to assume that they are removing these protections, that they are potentially endangering and making life more difficult for LGBTQ youth who simply want to create a safe space in their school, that they are doing so to satisfy what I hope is a small minority but clearly a powerful one within the ranks of their party and their supporters.

That is a disappointment, Madam Chair. That, I would say, is not the Christian thing to do. That is not the moral thing to do. I would say that that is a cowardly thing to do. Despite the fact that I know we have all been here in this House for some weeks and we have had extensive debate on this bill – we have brought forward many amendments, and I imagine we will likely introduce a few more – and though I recognize that perhaps members of this government grow weary of the debate and perhaps may resent the fact that we continue to bring this up and hold this debate in this place, this is a question of enough moral importance for me that I feel the need to continue to stand in this place and speak.

My constituents have been clear, Madam Chair, that they oppose what this government is choosing to do, that they do not support its choice to remove very clear provisions and protections that our government put in place after seeing concrete examples where school boards, administrators, principals were exploiting loopholes to impose their own beliefs and ideologies as obstacles in the way of LGBTQ youth who simply want to create a safe space in their schools. What this government wants to do is say to those youth, “We’re going to take those protections away; we’re going to take that clarity away; if you run into a problem, just let us know,” and some vague, undefined process will take place.

The Minister of Education and indeed the Government House Leader have stood several times and read out their list: these are the steps that will happen in the creation of a GSA. But, again, within those steps there is no clarity regarding timelines, and there is no clarity about when those things will occur, this from a government which is up in arms about any other process which, in their view, is set up and creates red tape and possible interminable processes. Indeed, I support the concerns that they raised around Bill C-69, which suggested similar sorts of processes and concerns around what kinds of delays could be had in building pipelines and other energy infrastructure. That’s a reasonable thing to note in a piece of legislation. A lack of clarity around timelines indicates there is a lack of appetite, perhaps, in actually getting the job done.

Again, in so many areas this government is happy to provide and indeed seeking to provide clarity – talking about freezing royalty rates for oil companies so that they can be sure to have that clarity going forward and so they can have that certainty – yet for LGBTQ youth, vulnerable young people who have but a mere three years in junior high school, three years in high school, which, as I’m sure many in this House can attest to, at times can feel like an eternity when you’re there, we are taking away certainty for those youth,

saying: “Trust us; we’re the government. We’ll make sure nothing happens; we promise. We won’t tell you how. We won’t give you a clear process. Just trust that every last single adult involved in this system is going to handle it honestly and with your best interests in mind despite the fact that we have seen demonstrably that that has not been the case.” Again, I believe that the vast majority of school administrators, principals, teachers, indeed the vast majority that I’ve spoken with, are going to support these youth, absolutely. But I’ll tell you that every single one of them that I’ve spoken to that support these youth also supports keeping the protections that we put in place with Bill 24.

The reason sometimes that government steps up and legislates and provides clarity and lays things out clearly and specifically is because we recognize that while we have a majority of good actors, we will at times have a minority of bad, so it is incumbent on us to do our responsibility as a government and provide the maximum level of protection for these youth, because when it comes to balance, youth are not the ones in the system that have too much power.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I’m pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 8. I think we’ve probably expounded for a long time on the importance of this, but one thing that may or may not have been touched on and that I certainly haven’t touched on yet has to do with the importance of agency. I think one of the reasons that GSAs are so important and one of the reasons for ensuring that youth are able to come out and share information with whom they want, when they want, and in the order they want is because it’s their story.

At the end of the day, these are things that are very personal to an individual: what gender you identify with, whom you love. These are some of the most fundamental things about us, and I think that it’s incredibly important that we be permitted to share those things and to tell those things in our own way. I think it’s very inappropriate to suggest, whether a teacher or a parent is well intentioned or not, that those people have the right to make a decision on behalf of someone else.

3:30

These youth should have the right to choose what they share about themselves, when they share it, and with whom they share it. I don’t think that that’s an unreasonable ask. I think that a 16-year-old who may be struggling with their sexuality or their gender identity, who’s trying to determine who they are, has a right to have a safe space to have that conversation, to explore it, to consider it, and to tell the people that they want to tell when they are ready to tell them. That doesn’t necessarily mean that the people they’re telling, be they parents or others, are ill intentioned. It just means that that youth ought to have the agency to make that decision for themselves, that they should have the right to share very personal details of their own lives with people when and how they choose. I think that’s one thing that we should not lose in this conversation.

I think another thing here is that at the end of the day, what we are talking about is people’s rights. There’s been a lot of talk back and forth on this issue. There’s been a lot of talk from the government side about why it is that we’re so concerned about this. Well, we’re concerned about it because we’re talking about people’s rights. If there’s one thing that a government, that the state should do for people, it’s to ensure that their rights are protected. I feel like that’s a pretty low bar to expect to clear. What we’re doing when we stand up is that we’re standing up to fight for those youth.

They're standing up throughout this province, over and over again, to fight for themselves, which I also think is at the same time both incredibly heartening, to see that youth are willing to fight in that way for themselves and for each other, and also incredibly sad, that in this day and age they have to do that, that in this day and age they would be required to stand up to the government and ask the government to respect their rights.

The government has said over and over again that their intention here is to proclaim the Education Act. Now, again, my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud has outlined in, I think, incredible detail the fact that most of the provisions that they're talking about in the Education Act have been removed. None of the purposes of the Education Act are achieved by this move. In fact, the only thing that is achieved by this move is these changes to GSAs and QSAs.

Really, at the end of the day, this is a conversation about intention, and it's actually quite interesting because one of the things, for those who have not worked in human rights law before, that's difficult about this is that it's often difficult to prove intent. When someone's human rights are violated and they go before the tribunal or they go before a court for whatever reason or often an arbitrator, because these are often adjudicated in the context of labour disputes where a union is supporting the rights of the individual employee and the employer is on the other side, I think one of the most challenging things there is to prove intention.

But the interesting thing is that at the human rights tribunal, in the court, it's not actually necessary to prove it directly. If you have sufficient evidence to indirectly prove that there could have been no other motive for the action – if an employee comes forward and says, “My job was terminated, and it was terminated because of my sexual orientation,” you don't actually have to catch the employer saying to the employee, “I am terminating your employment because you're gay.” The fact that there is no other possible, credible explanation or the fact that there are many other factors that point to the termination being because of the individual's sexual orientation is often sufficient to prove that intention, and I think that's exactly what we have here. The government lacks any other credible explanation for these changes. There is no other credible reason. All of the reasons that they have given have been disproven over and over again. There is no other possible reason they could be doing this besides making these changes with respect to GSAs. So I think that is really sufficient to demonstrate their intention.

I think another thing that demonstrates their intention incredibly clearly is their refusal of the amendment “immediately.” Earlier, of course, we saw the government refuse to amend this new legislation to permit a GSA to be formed immediately. Well, if your intention wasn't to roll back protections on GSAs, then what does this harm? Denying the inclusion of “immediately”: the only effect that that has is that schools can drag their heels and essentially prevent a GSA from ever being formed. Say you have a grade 12 student who comes forward in September or October and says: I would like to form a GSA. Essentially, the school can just wait until that student graduates, and then they never have to do it. Maybe that person was speaking on behalf of other people. Maybe that person was the brave person who was coming forward on behalf of several other people who were seeking that GSA. I think their failure to accept that amendment, their refusal to accept “immediately,” speaks volumes to their intention.

The fact that this doesn't do any of the other things that the Education Act was intended to do speaks volumes to their intentions. The fact that they claim to care about modernizing education: after countless people from all different perspectives throughout the system came together and reviewed a curriculum that is more than 30 years old, they have prevented that curriculum

from going in in September for ideological reasons. I mean, it clearly signals that they have no commitment to renewing education or bringing it into the future.

I think that all of those things signal their intention incredibly clearly, and I think, honestly, that Albertans see that. Certainly, the students protesting throughout the province to support their rights and the rights of their peers see that, and I think that Albertans generally see that.

Another thing, again, that is worth noting – and it'll be interesting to see different members speak over time in this House because we've had such vacillation from the government on their messaging. But we seem to have returned – after saying, “oh, they are the strongest protections,” and then obviously having gotten advice from nonpartisan department officials that, in fact, they are not the strongest, the language was walked by to say, “among the strongest,” which is a thing that's more difficult to prove is inaccurate.

Now we're seeing them return to this language of “strongest” at this moment. I think that that is, well, sad, because it's not the strongest. We've tabled evidence that it's not the strongest. People need only to go and actually look at the laws in other places to see that it clearly isn't the strongest. Honestly, again, if they wanted the strongest, Alberta has the strongest currently. Before this bill passes, what we did under Bill 24 was the strongest protection, so if they wanted to be able to say that we had the strongest, all they had to do was absolutely nothing, which I think again speaks volumes and volumes as to the intention of this bill. That intention, again, is to roll back the rights of LGBTQ students.

I think another thing worth noting on this issue is that it is legislating on social issues, and I think that that should be incredibly troubling. The government stands up every time a question is raised about anything. I mean, honestly, we can ask a question about: “Hey, I've noticed there's a cut in the budget. Why is that cut, and what do you intend to do about it?” They stand up and say: “We have a huge mandate. We got elected, and therefore no one cares.” I actually think they're wrong about that. I think the idea that no one cares about, you know, potential election fraud because they got elected is ridiculous, but that is the answer that we're given over and over again. I think it's worth pointing out that when they talk about their mandate, when they talk about the fact that Albertans elected them on their platform, what they leave out is the fact that they made an explicit promise not to legislate on social issues, and in the very first term they have broken that promise. This is nothing more.

As I've said, their actions speak very clearly to intent. Just because they've never said that they intended to roll back protections for LGBTQ students: that is (a) the effect of their actions; (b) they have no other credible explanation for why this bill would even come forward; and finally, their failure to accept “immediately.” I think it's clear. I think we would prove in any court of law, on any standard of proof we would be able to demonstrate fairly clearly that what we're talking about here is, in fact, an intention to roll back these protections for youth.

3:40

Despite their promise, they legislated on social issues. I think that that is one of the most troubling things about that, and I think it should be troubling to everyone throughout Alberta because, essentially, the response we're getting from the government is: “We got elected, and we are allowed to do whatever we want. We are no longer accountable to the people who elected us.” I think that that is pretty troubling. I think the suggestion that, you know, this was somehow part of their mandate is absurd because (a) the Premier explicitly said to the contrary. He explicitly said: I will not legislate

on social issues. In the very first term, here they are legislating on social issues.

There are a number of places in which this has happened. He explicitly said during the campaign that he would not cut overtime for workers, yet that's exactly what he did. They certainly didn't explicitly say they were going to violate the rights of unionized employees and break contracts, yet that's exactly what they did. I imagine that the reason we're here doing this at this time, in July, is because they hope that while they break their promises that were made during the campaign, maybe people are on vacation and they won't notice. I think that's incredibly sad.

I think another thing worth noting about this is that it is an inherently political conversation. People are sometimes uncomfortable talking about political issues. We often hear from the members opposite: well, you're turning it into a political issue. We're not turning it into a political issue when the government takes away rights from individuals out there in society. That's inherently a political issue. Nobody needs to turn it into a political issue. You know, if the government says, "Oh, we're going to take away rights from this group, and we're going to take away rights from this group, and we're going to take away rights from this group, and that's all okay because we're the majority," well, the whole point behind rights, the whole idea of rights is to protect minorities from the majority. What we have is a government who's essentially saying: we are the majority, and therefore we don't have to pay attention to the rights of minority groups.

That's incredibly troubling, and it is, in and of itself, inherently not just a political act, but the response to it . . .

**Mr. Nielsen:** Arrogant.

**Ms Ganley:** It is. It's incredibly arrogant. That is an appropriate way to put it, to suggest that.

I actually think that it's not in keeping with the majority of Albertans. Majority government or no, I actually think that the majority of Albertans are in favour of LGBTQ rights. I think that the majority of Albertans are in favour of the protection of LGBTQ youth. I don't think that there's really an open question about that. I think that's actually, probably, the reason that this Premier, who has some pretty troubling stances on minority rights in his past, had explicitly promised not to legislate on social issues, because he knew that the majority of Albertans support rights for LGBTQ people throughout this province.

I think that coming here and doing this, again, in the very first legislative session, at the very first available opportunity, should really cause people a lot of pause. I mean, there's speculation – there's significant speculation – as to what's coming. You know, we can see budget cuts coming in the future, and that will certainly roll back services and entitlements and potentially even rights with respect to special-needs children in schools, which is itself troubling.

But this isn't even an indirect action. This isn't even: well, we've withdrawn funding to save money, so indirectly that has the impact of violating your rights. This is a direct action. This is a purposeful and intentional move to take away rights from a group of people who the government thinks is weaker in society and therefore won't be able to stand up for themselves. I don't think the majority of Albertans would support it. I think that the majority of Albertans would be very, very troubled by it, and I think that that's the reason we're seeing these sort of weird, weak justifications coming forward.

We haven't actually even heard, that I'm aware of, an attempted justification for the refusal of the term "immediately." I don't think we've heard anyone even try to explain why that is. Certainly, we've heard over and over people laying out the process for how a

GSA is formed, but what's lacking in said process is a timeline, right? I mean, the thing is that people can – these are, interestingly, exactly some of the complaints that we heard about, some of the processes that we reviewed while were in government, the fact that people would come forward and they'd have a complaint, and it would sort of trail along indefinitely, right? That's the thing. People want certainty.

You know, if you're a 15-year-old gay student, you're not interested in having your rights recognized when you're 25. You're interested in having your rights recognized now. To say that you'll have to wait until you're 25 to have your rights recognized, I think, is pretty troubling. I think many in the community, in the LGBTQ2S-plus community, have fought long and hard for those rights so that those who came after them would have it different than they had it. They fought long and hard for those rights to ensure that subsequent generations didn't go through what they went through, and this, particularly in combination with the defunding of the working group on conversion therapy, is really troubling. I think we should be moving forward and not backward.

I think it's sad to see. I think it's sad to see this concept that we're going to roll back the rights of minority groups and for no reason that I can see. That's the other thing that's incredibly troubling about this. It's not like it's intended to have beneficial impacts somewhere else. This is the only thing it does. The only thing it does is damage the rights of those students.

Certainly, there were those, I believe, about 28 schools that had noncompliant policies, and let me tell you in no uncertain terms that Bill 10, the old legislation, didn't give the government the tools to deal with those noncompliant policies. I am extremely well aware of this because it was something that we had to look over. When they came forward with their noncompliant policies, obviously, lawyers from the government were involved in looking at: how can we make these schools come up with more compliant policies? And the answer was: we can't. That was incredibly troubling.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, is there anyone else that would like to speak to Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to continue our debate regarding Bill 8. Like many of my colleagues have done, I'm going to also focus on sort of the most concerning part of the legislation, which is the weakening of previous legislation, where granting permission to create a GSA has no kind of structure in terms of timelines. It just is sort of a broad, vague willingness to create them by the principal, but there is no specific timeline. Of course, you know, the current legislation does have that, and this is a concerning piece about this Bill 8 that is hurting kids now. We want to make sure that they do have access to GSAs.

3:50

Of course, inserting, as we've talked about before, immediately granting permission by the principal to create a GSA and designating a staff liaison is really what we're asking the UCP government to look at. In that way, then students will have access to these very important GSAs, that really support them through a difficult time when they're grappling with their own sexuality and wanting some support in that. You know, as my colleagues have, I just want to say that students don't need a GSA whenever; they need it now. We know that students grappling with their sexuality often feel isolated. They're not accepted, they feel they don't belong, and indeed they're afraid to actually be open about who they are. There's good reason for this, Madam Chair. It may not be safe for them to reveal their true selves.

We know, of course, that it is very important for each of us to have a sense of belonging. As human beings we all want to belong. We all want to be part of our family. We want to be part of our community, our province, and indeed our country. We saw an amazing display of that just earlier this week, of course, on Canada Day, where people do extraordinary things so that they can belong and be part of our great nation. We wear red and white and sometimes stick flags in our hair and wear caps and all sorts of things to belong. But when you're different and you feel like everyone around you is heterosexual and nobody is talking about different sexual orientations, it can be extremely isolating and also shaming.

They feel ashamed. They're afraid to speak that out loud. Depending on their family system, the values, the type of faith, religion, maybe country of origin, if they're newcomers or refugees to the country, there could be many layers to them feeling like they don't belong and also extremely fearful of sharing the truth that is fundamental to them. Of course, GSAs create that safety. It is for both the LGBTQ community and straight kids also, so people are joined together and can have sort of a safe haven, where perhaps there isn't that safe haven at their home.

You know, I spoke previously in this House regarding my middle son, who had been bullied in elementary school. He blamed himself, and instead of reaching out to his teachers or to his dad or to me, he kept it all inside. It was just mostly about his personality, being a young guy that's kind of timid. There were just some more aggressive, boisterous boys, and he just became sort of the target of attack. That was really difficult for him, but he was ashamed. He blamed himself for that, so he didn't reach out to his mom, who would have accepted him and supported him. Maybe there could have been something that we did within the school system to make sure that that was stopped not only for him but perhaps for other kids, but he just kept quiet. He isolated himself, and I never knew. I never knew.

I know that my son for years just always was not belonging. He always was kind of the kid on the edge. It wasn't really until he was in junior high that he told me one day about this, and then, of course, I was able to support him, help him, and listen to his concerns. He was loved and accepted for who he was. You know, this is just a minor – a minor – example to what someone who's struggling with their sexual orientation is going through. As a mom I certainly have some empathy for that because I can see how much my own son, who wasn't really grappling with such a large issue as that, was still sort of part of the dominant culture in terms of his sexuality and how much it hurt him. It really delayed some of his progress, I feel, for those years.

The sad thing about children who are grappling with their sexual orientation is that they may not be accepted by their family. They may not be understood or loved, and the support just is not available to them. That's why this is so important, because a school can really act as a safe haven for these kids. Even though at home it's all secret and they mustn't share any of it because the consequences could be grave, in the school system they have maybe some reprieve for a few hours of the day where they're accepted and have a sense of belonging.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I've been a social worker for about 30 years, and certainly I worked with a lot of vulnerable children. Some of my colleagues have already shared some stats, but I just want to reiterate that we know that homeless youth, about 50 per cent of them, identify as being part of the LGBTQ community. So they're not on the streets by happenstance, the majority. They're out there because they

indeed maybe have revealed or someone, a parent, has suspected, and they've been kicked out. Now they have no place to go. Tragically, their parents just don't have the ability for whatever reason to be able to accept them as they are.

Another thing I know about being a social worker is that all parents do not have the best interests of their children at heart. It's a sad fact, but I'm not naive. I know that some parents aren't able really to care for their kids. It's not necessarily because parents are malicious, but a lot of times it's because parents aren't well themselves. They have their own significant barriers. They probably weren't parented very well or supported. There are so many things that get in the way. If a parent is not very healthy, can't really have that compassion or empathy, put themselves over to have understanding of their child because they're so lost in their own angst and stress – you know, there are so many barriers that parents may face.

I mean, addiction is one clear one, whether it's drugs or alcohol. If you're an addicted person, then you're consumed by that need to have your next fix or your next drink or whatever it is. So this kid, who's just causing you problems, is just in your way, and you're not able to give them compassion or understanding. For many parents we know that that's a key issue. We know that Alberta has some of the highest rates of addiction in all of Canada.

We also know that parents have mental health issues, that people have different concerns with depression or anxiety. People can be bipolar. People can have a myriad of issues that prevent them, again, from supporting their children when they're in vulnerable situations. Certainly, sometimes, you know, those things go together, addiction and mental health, because people are experiencing some great anxiety, perhaps. "Well, guess what? I'm going to have a drink because that makes me feel better, and – guess what? – that makes me even less accessible to that vulnerable young girl or young boy": this prevents parents from being available to them, to their children.

Also, family violence. Sadly, again, Alberta has some of the highest rates of family violence in the country. Kids, you know, are just in the way. I mean, there's so much chaos in that family system. How can people be present for one another? The adults aren't present for each other. There's tremendous stress. Again, that's another huge barrier that children experience. Maybe that family is experiencing poverty, so they're not able to really make ends meet. They're challenged significantly by just getting enough food on the table, keeping a roof over their heads. Maybe that single mom might be working three jobs at minimum wage, and she's just not available. She's not around. She's exhausted when she is. All she does is work and sleep, so she can't be present for that child.

Certainly, there just is general stress for a myriad of reasons. That can also get in the way. Divorce, you know, a family system that breaks up: then there's obviously much less attention for children. It can cause tremendous stress. I mean, I'm a single mom myself, so I certainly know what it was like for my kids, especially early on and when they were little, just how difficult it was to be able to keep a job, support the kids. You're doing it all as a single person.

All of these things that parents – I guess I just want people to be aware that parents aren't the panacea. We need to have a healthy society so that parents can be supported in that society and then indeed they can support their children, but the school system needs to also support parents and children. So creating GSAs in a timely manner, you know, as we're suggesting – the principal would immediately fulfill this request of a student that comes forward and have a staff liaison be part of that to help those students – is just key. There are so many things in our society, so many challenges that really it's incumbent on us to make sure that, you know, vulnerable students do have the support.



4:00

Just recently in the *Edmonton Journal*, actually on June 27, there was an opinion editorial by Dr. Kristopher Wells. Of course, Dr. Kristopher Wells is a local expert. He's the Canada research chair for the public understanding of sexual and gender minority youth, and he's an associate professor in the Faculty of Health and Community Studies at MacEwan University. I'm just going to repeat some of the things that he shared in his opinion editorial, you know, coming from a deep understanding, an academic, as well as working very closely with his community for many years.

He begins by saying:

Over 20 years of global peer-reviewed research indicates that LGBTQ youth are among the most vulnerable groups of students in schools today, with significantly higher rates of substance use, smoking rates, eating disorders, homelessness, depression, self-harm, and suicidality when compared to their heterosexual peers.

These risk factors are not because of who LGBTQ are or how they identify. They are the compounding product of discrimination, harassment, and prejudice, which all contribute to the development of unsafe school environments that impact the mental and physical health, safety, and well-being of sexual and gender-minority youth.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has noted that schools are a critical site for targeted interventions to help reduce these risks by supporting the development of protective factors.

What are protective factors? They're

inclusive policies ...

and certainly a GSA would qualify,

... and evidence-informed programs designed to help build resilience, increase safety, and improve mental health.

Contemporary research demonstrates that GSAs are one such important intervention that not only reduces risk and helps to build resilience, but can also save over \$183,000 in future student-related health-care costs that result when discrimination and prejudice are allowed to flourish in schools.

Not only is there a human rights argument to supporting children in schools through GSAs; there's an economic argument, Mr. Chair.

Notably, research shows that GSAs are a vital public-health intervention, which not only creates safer school [environments] for lesbian, gay, and bisexual ... youth, but also for heterosexual youth. One very recent study from the University of British Columbia, which included over 39,000 students in Grades 7-12, found that the longer a school had a GSA the greater its protective power was for all students.

When you've had a GSA for one year, there's some improvement. When you've had it for two and three years, there's even more because the environment changes. All types of discrimination are reduced, not only for a gay student but also a heterosexual student.

The length of time and presence of a GSA is positively related to increased feelings of school safety for both LGB students and heterosexual students. This finding lends strong support to not only the importance of GSAs, but also to their long-term, cumulative, and positive impact on school climates and student safety.

Research unmistakably indicates that GSAs make schools safer, so why would any government seek to limit, weaken, or reduce their implementation? Rather than seek to restrict GSAs, the UCP government should strive to increase support and amplify their impact in all schools.

Unfortunately, Bill 8 does exactly the opposite of what the UCP proclaims it will do. If Bill 8 is passed, schools will become less safe, policies more vague and ineffective, and both LGBTQ and heterosexual students will suffer the long-term consequences.

GSAs do not just change lives, they save them. Government legislation should at the very minimum seek to do no harm. Bill 8 will remove important protections and increase risk impacting the health and well-being of all students. It is legislation that is

not supported by research or evidence. Instead, it appears to be crafted out of willful ignorance, ideological dogma, and wanton prejudice.

Bill 8 is the kind of retrogressive legislation one might expect in Alabama, not in a modern and progressive Alberta.

I'm deeply concerned, Mr. Chair, regarding the lack of understanding from the current government of the importance of this time allocation, that principals must provide access to a GSA in a very timely manner – immediately, meaning within a very short time – so that students are protected. You know, even though our government did bring in Bill 24, which had those kinds of timelines, where it was necessary for principals to immediately create GSAs, we still had some resistance from schools, a lot of the private schools. Actually, 28 of them were very difficult to work with, and they were unwilling to bring in the proper policies and programs to support students. Despite giving them additional time to fulfill what they needed to, they still were unwilling to do that.

I guess I hope that the UCP government isn't naive, that just by saying yes, they're to create these with no specifics, that indeed this will be done. It won't be done necessarily, and then those kids will be vulnerable. It's so important that this timeline, that makes it incumbent on principals to fulfill the request for a GSA immediately, be fulfilled.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall progress on Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be reported when the committee rises? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

### Bill 13 Alberta Senate Election Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning rising to speak.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, for recognizing me to speak to Bill 13, the Senate election reform act, I guess we can call it. What I would actually call it is an opportunity to create loopholes and put big money back into politics.

We all know that there were Senators that were elected in the past in Alberta. The legislation at the time lapsed, and part of the reason that the legislation was allowed to lapse under the NDP government is that we recognized that this is something that we actually have absolutely zero jurisdiction in being able to enforce. You know, Albertans have a right to a voice in the Senate, for sure. However, in saying that, just because they're elected in Alberta, that doesn't mean that they have to be appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada. We've seen that in the past.

4:10

What I see this bill actually doing is creating partisan politics in an area that's supposed to be nonpartisan, which is what we believe the Senate should be. This legislation actually mandates that anybody who chooses to run in Alberta as a Senator must first be affiliated to a federal political party. Of course, the question then becomes: are we just now creating the Senate into a political force where Conservative and Liberal parties have an opportunity to use partisan politics to push through governance?

Really, the current version of the bill reads that any CFO of a third party who does any type of election advertising can now spend

up to \$100,000 a year, and it also allows for political parties, both provincially and federally, to fund raise on behalf of Senators. It allows the political parties to then spend fundraising dollars during a Senate campaign, which is really interesting because when we were government, our focus was on taking big money out of politics and ensuring that all voices of Albertans were heard.

Now, we've heard from the government side that, you know, part of the reason why they want Senators to be elected in Alberta is that they want Albertans to have a voice in the Senate, and they want that voice to be an elected voice because then there's accountability. But the reality of it is that what this really is doing is allowing political parties to fund raise. It's allowing political parties to, then, use their platform, whether it be federally or provincially, to argue what they believe is the philosophy, policies from their political parties.

This bill also allows for an election for Senators to occur really at any time. It can be during a federal election. It can be during a provincial election. It can be in a municipal election, and it can also just be in a referendum. What that also does, then, is that during municipal elections, you now have political parties, both federal and provincial, campaigning. Our municipal system within Alberta does not have the ability or the structure in it to have affiliations with political parties. Now we're creating another ability for political parties to start influencing municipal elections using their message box, using their policies, under the guise of electing Senators.

It also allows a governing party who decides that they want to have an opportunity to campaign between election cycles to then call a referendum and say: well, now we're going to call a referendum because we want to be able to have a Senator elected. Then it allows for another campaign period of time that would not normally be seen in Alberta.

The other piece that this legislation, that is supposed to just be about supporting individuals to run for the Senate, does is it brings provincial politics back into what is a federal jurisdiction. You know, it raises some questions. I mean, the first question would be: why does a political party need to get involved in the federal jurisdiction and the federal election of a Senator? Why would this legislation even speak about provincial parties when it actually has zero jurisdiction within the federal context?

The other question that I would have as well is that when you're looking at the changes around having Senators elected during municipal campaigns and/or potential referendums, when we look at our First Nations communities, they actually don't have polling stations in First Nations communities typically during municipal elections, nor do they have them typically during referendums unless there is a request by the community to have those polling stations put in First Nations communities. This bill is actually excluding a population within Alberta who has a right to a voice in the Senate given that it's federal jurisdiction, given that those are the bodies that have the most influence over our First Nations communities and our relationship with the Crown, yet we don't see that really being discussed in this bill.

Now, I think it's important that we look at exactly how much money we're actually talking about because this isn't small amounts of money. The money that this bill is actually allowing to come back into provincial politics, federal politics is quite substantial. We see that for an individual Senator, they can raise over \$100,000 just for their nomination.

Right now we have potentially up to three vacancies that are going to be existing in the Senate over the next few years as people retire, so let's just use the number of three people running for nomination because, again, through this legislation you now have to be registered and you have to be endorsed by a political party.

Let's say that the political parties, the federal Conservatives, the Liberals say, "Well, we're only going to run three in the province," just because that would, you know, make sense. Heaven forbid that this legislation be used to fund raise any additional on top of three candidates. It would be \$100,000 for their nomination, and then it would also be \$500,000 that they would be able to fund raise and then spend on their campaign, because I guess the argument is that it is a provincial campaign.

The interesting thing about this legislation as well is that even though we're talking about provincial representation and we're talking about Albertans having a right to representation in the Senate, there's no regional requirement in this legislation, so every single Senator that could be elected could maybe be from Calgary.

**Member Ceci:** Yahoo.

**Ms Sweet:** Yahoo.

Or maybe they could be just from southern Alberta. There's no requirement in this legislation to say that those who are running to be in the Senate to represent Albertans equally and fairly should have to represent northern Alberta, central Alberta, and southern Alberta. It just is a global "as long as you're an Albertan," which I think is interesting given the fact that there are different interests depending on where you are in Alberta. There may be different philosophies about where you are in Alberta, and there's definitely a different need for where you are in Alberta.

There are definitely lots of questions, and I know that we will probably have quite a bit to say about this, specifically around the fundraising component, as we move forward.

But before that, as we reviewed the legislation, we did note that the government would like some help from the opposition on, you know, some of their ideas around this piece of legislation, so I have an amendment, which I feel is a friendly amendment.

Mr. Chair, I'll just wait until you have a copy.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. If you would wish to continue speaking to this amendment, we will be referring to it as A1. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I was saying, I mean, the opposition is always here to help. We like to help the government out when we think there's an opportunity for us to do that. I feel that this is a friendly amendment to Bill 13. I think it's actually a very helpful amendment to Bill 13. I'll read it into the record. The Member for Edmonton-Manning to move that Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act, be amended in section 51(22) by striking out the proposed section 44.9499(1) and substituting the following:

44.9499(1) The chief financial officer of a third party whose election advertising expenses are \$20,000 or more shall file an audited financial statement with the Chief Electoral Officer within 6 months after polling day.

4:20

Now, the reason for this amendment, Mr. Chair, is the fact that I believe there was just maybe a word or a spelling mistake or something that happened in this piece of the legislation that, you know, because we're here to help, we caught for the government and decided that to make their legislation just that much better and effective and to maybe clarify the piece that the hon. minister probably intended this piece of legislation to actually say, we decided to change it for you.

The current version of the bill reads that a CFO "of a third party whose election advertising expenses are \$100,000 or more shall file an audited financial statement with the Chief Electoral Officer within 6 months after polling day." The bill also limits third-party

expenses during a Senate election race to \$30,000; therefore, this doesn't make any sense. During a regular provincial general election third parties may incur expenses up to \$150,000 and the \$100,000 threshold for an audited financial statement applies. So \$100,000 is two-thirds of the allowable expenses; therefore, the \$20,000 threshold is two-thirds of the allowable expenses for senatorial election races and applies the same standard to third parties.

Again, I think this is a common-sense amendment to ensure clarity for both the chief financial officers as well as Elections Alberta and the Election Commissioner. The current limit of \$100,000 in 44.9499(1) is inconsistent with section 44.942(1), which reads:

A registered third party shall not incur advertising expenses in an amount of more than \$30,000 in the aggregate, as adjusted in accordance with section 41.5, in relation to a senatorial selection advertising period.

So it is clear that if the limit on expenses is \$30,000, a third party will never reach the limit of \$100,000.

I'm assuming that this was just an oversight in the legislation, and I urge that all members of the House support this reasonable amendment to ensure that the legislation, if it's passed, is clear with the intent and the direction. To fail to do so will leave a loophole in this bill that could have unintended consequences. Third parties may never have to provide an audited financial statement to the Chief Electoral Officer. This removes accountability and transparency from this process. We work hard to ensure that the elections in the province are accountable to their voters and, of course, not to their donors, and this could potentially undermine democracy in the province for these types of elections.

While I don't agree that this bill is necessary or beneficial to Albertans as a whole, I do believe that in this House when legislation is passed, it is our duty to ensure that it is good, complete, and accurate. Therefore, I urge all members on both sides of the House to please put aside your partisanship, and I urge them to simply do the opposite of what we usually do, and for the sake of this province and Albertans support this common-sense amendment.

Thank you.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Chair, I heard the words "good" and "better." I'll accept those parts of the submissions of my friend. Everybody here is probably a little bit tired after a very long session that we've had here for – are we on six or seven weeks now? Sometimes I lose count as to where we're at. But I just want to make sure for all of our guys that are here that sometimes don't necessarily tune in all of the time for all the different amendments that are proposed, I am in favour of this friendly amendment being proposed by the member. It does improve the legislation.

Thank you so much for giving me an advance notice last night so that I could run it to ground internally. I really do appreciate that. I do think it makes this legislation better. Again, we might disagree on what the intent of this legislation is or what the goal of it is, but thank you very much for the heads-up and this reasonable amendment. I would encourage my colleagues here to vote in favour of this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back to Bill 13. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to rise to speak at Committee of the Whole to Bill 13, the Alberta Senate

Election Act. I'm going to keep my comments focused primarily on the elections financing related pieces because I see in this bill several concerning trends of the government appearing to bring big money back into politics. Our government worked very hard to put in some reasonable things that Alberta had been lacking for a very long time. Looking at Bill 13, I have a number of concerns going forward.

Just as a quick recap, during our term in government we took significant action to minimize the impact of big money on politics, specifically provincial politics, obviously: banning corporate and union donations, forming the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, inviting all parties to take a look at the Election Act, elections financing, and then bringing forward Bill 35, that for this province did some very major things. It brought down contribution limits, which previously had been set incredibly high: \$15,000 contribution limits provincially and a doubling of those contribution limits during an election year, moving that to a more reasonable bar of \$4,000 which, still, when you look across jurisdictions, is actually on the relatively high side, but it is much more reasonable than \$15,000.

We introduced spending limits for everything from nomination contestants to the elections themselves, what candidates can spend. We all ran our campaigns under these new spending limits: \$50,000 for local campaigns, \$2 million for parties. Then Bill 16 came later, making sure that parties were not colluding and circumventing the spending limits.

Finally, under Bill 35 we also introduced very strong third-party advertising rules. This was something that a lot of Albertans were concerned about, dark money getting into politics. So during an election period third-party advertisers are limited to spending \$150,000 province-wide and no more than \$3,000 in a specific constituency against a specific candidate. We really tried to walk an important line, which was to try to limit big money's influence and those third-party advertising campaigns. Honestly, a lot of the general public and Albertans see those and wonder why that's allowed and how this can happen, depending on who's advertising for whom.

We also needed to balance the rights to freedom of speech and freedom of expression and political expression not only for individuals but courts have ruled that corporate interests, union interests have that right to freedom of expression. Jurisdictions that have tried to overly restrict third-party advertising have had those laws struck down by the courts at one level or another, so we paid very close attention to what was happening in other jurisdictions as we were bringing in third-party advertising laws and putting those limits on spending.

Now, we also, both through the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee and then through the legislation that we introduced, put limits around government advertising. We tried to, again, strike a good balance because in this province we had seen some less than ethical behaviour, I would suggest; for example, schools being announced in ridings during which an active by-election was happening. That would be an example of inappropriate government advertising, potentially designed to influence the outcome of a by-election. There was even a private member's bill introduced by a Wildrose member to address this, and it was incorporated and eventually became part of our government bills, changing elections financing and making those amendments.

All of this, I think, is really important work that we started. What Bill 13 appears to me to do is weaken some of those things. First off, regarding government advertising, Bill 13 specifically allows government advertising during a senatorial election, which – okay – maybe is not related to the government and provincial politics except Bill 13 also specifically includes provincial politics and

provincial parties supporting senatorial candidates and spending money on their behalf.

4:30

I would submit that if you have something that the NDP or the UCP are spending money to support during an election period, that ban on government advertising should be maintained at the same time. The opportunities and the optics for there to be appearances of inappropriate influence, undue influence when a provincial party – let's say that the UCP is endorsing a particular senatorial candidate, yet now the government is allowed to advertise at the same time. These are some of the things that I think are very concerning within Bill 13.

I also question why the contribution limits to senatorial candidates are set at the \$4,000 mark. I note that this matches what we currently have provincially, but we're talking about Senators elected into a federal context, which is the hope of this bill, so that a Senator winning the election would then get selected by the Prime Minister to become a Senator. Why not use the \$1,600 federal contribution limit? Why are we using the \$4,000 provincial contribution limit? I think that that's a concern as well.

I'm also interested in finding out more about why the spending limits for these candidates were set at the rate that they are: \$500,000 spending limits as well as the provincial party being able to spend an extra \$100,000 in support of that candidate. It strikes me as being very high. Making sure that we have reasonable spending limits is an important part of maintaining our democratic system, and that was work that our government worked very hard to do.

I have a number of questions in that regard, but my strongest concern is around that potential for government advertising, where the government has chosen, through Bill 13, to introduce provincial political parties and their money into this senatorial election. My colleague from Edmonton-Manning already questioned: why has that been included in this bill at all? But to do that and then not include a ban on government advertising I think gives the governing party an unfair advantage. It seems to have been very deliberately done because the sections of the Election Act that deal with government advertising were specifically, essentially, referenced in the bill, but then the exception has been left out.

I would be very interested to hear the government's response to some of those questions. I do have a few others, but I think that at this point I will pause and maybe see if anyone in the government caucus is prepared to respond to some of these concerns with the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore rising quickly to speak.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm always amazed at your ability to be able to pick me out of the throng of people jumping up to speak. Thank you so much for those sharp eyes of yours. I appreciate that.

Of course, we're busy talking about Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act. I have to be honest here, Mr. Chair. I'm kind of wondering sort of what's going on. You know, although the Senate, I could certainly agree, is broken and needs to be fixed, we cannot fix it at Alberta's level. That has to be fixed at the federal level. So I can't help but wonder, when bringing in Bill 13, sort of what the Premier is expecting to accomplish. I can't help but wonder why it wasn't accomplished back when he was a senior cabinet minister representing a Calgary riding here in Alberta, why some of these changes weren't brought forward then to address the Senate.

I kind of briefly sort of run through what's going on here with the bill, obviously establishing Senate elections, to be held in Alberta, to elect a nominee. Elections can take place as a stand-alone election, alongside a provincial general election or a municipal election, or alongside a referendum.

Candidates. You must be aligned with a federal party or run as an independent, or a federal affiliation will be displayed on the ballot. Candidates can also be endorsed by a provincial party, then allowing that provincial party to spend \$100,000 per candidate during that campaign period. Of course, candidates are also allowed to spend up to half a million dollars on their campaign and \$100,000 on just their nomination. Third-party advertisers are able to spend up to \$30,000. The maximum spots filled by the election would be the number of impending vacancies in the Senate for Alberta. The next election taking place is the 2021 municipal election. Nominees remain on the list until they are no longer eligible.

When I kind of start to work through these things and how we're going to be addressing this, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, it looks like a whole lot of red tape, which this government clearly ran on to try to get rid of. As I've stated in other discussions, in other debates around this seemingly rushed approach, in bringing in a bunch of red tape, I'm concerned about what may happen, going forward, in their commitment to reduce red tape. I remember the promise was to eliminate it by one-third, on a one-in, one-out basis. I've seen very recently how we've had a whole lot of ones coming in. Certainly, this bill, Bill 13, is quite thick, too. I start to wonder: what is going to be on the chopping block in a rush to compensate for some of these things coming in?

I just wanted to quickly add those comments around that. I think this is something that, again, should have been dealt with when there was a chance to actually deal with it. The Premier as a federal cabinet minister, during his time representing a Calgary riding down there, could have looked at trying to update the Senate, which, again, I agree there are certainly some problems around. It needs to be addressed, but we do not have the ability to effect those changes. I mean, we pass this bill. Great. I'm sure the Premier can then run to the Prime Minister and say: look, we need to fix the Senate, and here it is. The Prime Minister, quite honestly, can say, "Well, thank you for that" and toss it into the garbage can if he wants.

I wonder why we're spending a lot of taxpayers' money around trying to monitor all of this through Elections Alberta as well as even the federal elections. I don't think this is necessarily money that's being spent wisely considering the government's quest to review all of its finances, of course not reviewing any of the revenues coming in. I struggle to find out where we're going to benefit from this.

I know that we managed to, I think, get the first amendment passed in this entire session. Congratulations to the Member for Edmonton-Manning for providing a very good case, that government members just absolutely could not ignore this time around. Unfortunately, I'm not prepared, even with that amendment, to support this. But the debate is not over. There may be some other ones that might make this possibly a little better. But at this time I don't see how we can effectually change the Senate even by passing this. It should have been done by the Premier when he was a minister in Ottawa.

With that, I'll take my seat and allow others to jump into the conversation.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, are there any others? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise again on Bill 13. Just continuing, now that we've completed some of the

housekeeping pieces, on sort of what this bill is actually going to do. Again, I do want to reinforce that this is just another ability and another loophole to allow money back into politics, to allow political parties to fund raise.

4:40

I think one of the pieces that I didn't mention before was also this \$4,000 cap. Now, that was a cap that we put in place as government when we did the financial review on getting money out of politics under our democratic renewal. What we've seen now is that that same \$4,000 cap, that is supposed to be used for individuals to donate to political parties, is now being doubled under this act, so people will actually be allowed to donate an additional \$4,000 to a candidate that's going to be running for the Senate. Because, again, the bill as it reads speaks to the fact that you must be endorsed by a political party, a federal political party, what this is allowing, then, is that \$4,000 can go to that political party, whether it be the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party, and then an additional \$4,000 can go to that Senator candidate, the candidate that's running for the Senate, who is also endorsed by that same political party. In a way, it's kind of double-dipping.

I recognize, in discussions with the minister, that the tax credit that individuals will receive due to their personal donations of \$4,000 will not change, and therefore even if you give \$8,000 as an individual under the nomination process and/or to the candidate, you will only get a tax credit that's equal to the \$4,000, not the \$8,000. However, my question would be: why are we doubling it and allowing for political parties to now have opportunities to raise an additional \$4,000? Where does that money go if the candidate happens to have a surplus, or is there an expectation that whatever they raise must be used? Those are some pieces of the questions that I have.

The other piece that I have is that I'm not really sure why we need to be looking at having these elections happen during municipal elections or referendums, for that matter. Again, this is a piece of legislation where even though people will be elected on behalf of Albertans to be candidates to the Senate, their names put forward to the Prime Minister, there's absolutely nothing binding to it. A Prime Minister does not have to appoint the individuals that Albertans may decide to vote for. Because of that, we are now starting to influence municipal elections with partisan politics. During the last municipal election in my area alone we had 14 people running to be city councillor. Like, that was pretty confusing in itself, to have to decide between 14 people who should be the city councillor for the area. To now add an additional component of a candidate for the Senate on the ballot will, I think, create additional confusion for many people in Alberta.

Because of that and because I'm not sure that that's an effective use – I just don't think you should be getting elections for Senators involved in municipal politics – I now have an additional amendment, because I'm all about amendments today. I will wait until you have the original and copies, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** We will be speaking to this amendment and referring to it as A2.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning rising to continue.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Would you like me to read the whole two pages into the record?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes, please.

**Ms Sweet:** Yes, please. Okay. I move that Bill 13, Alberta Senate Election Act, be amended as follows:

A. Section 1(1) is amended

- (a) by striking out clause (c);
- (b) in clause (d) by striking out “or an officer under the Local Authorities Election Act, as the case may be.”
- B. Part 1 is amended
  - (a) in section 2
    - (i) in clause (a) by striking out “or a deputy under the Local Authorities Election Act, as the case may be”;
    - (ii) in clause (b) by striking out “or election day as defined in the Local Authorities Election Act, as the case may be”;
    - (iii) in clause (c) by striking out “or a voting station as defined in the Local Authorities Election Act, as the case may be”;
    - (iv) in clause (d) by striking out “or a returning officer or a substitute returning officer under the Local Authorities Election Act, as the case may be”;
  - (b) in section 5
    - (i) in subsection (1)(a) by adding “or” at the end of subclause (i), by striking out “or” at the end of subclause (ii) and by striking out subclause (iii);
    - (ii) by striking out subsection (5);
  - (c) in section 7 by striking out clause (c);
  - (d) in section 19 by striking out subsection (5);
  - (e) in section 27
    - (i) in subsection (1)(h) by striking out subclause (ii);
    - (ii) by striking out subsections (3) and (4).
- C. Part 3 is struck out.
- D. Part 4 is amended
  - (a) in section 51
    - (i) in subsection (2)(a)(i), in the proposed section 1(1)(b), by striking out subclause (iii.2);
    - (ii) in subsection (22), in the proposed section 44.941(1)(h), by striking out subclause (ii).
  - (b) by striking out section 52.

All of that being said, in summary, I'm asking that these elections would not be held in municipal elections. It just removes all of the clauses out of the bill. This amendment removes the ability to hold a senatorial election during municipal elections.

The UCP has announced that the next senatorial election will take place in conjunction with the 2021 municipal election. Senatorial candidates are endorsed by provincial parties and federal parties, which brings provincial politics into municipal elections. This would allow provincial parties that have endorsed candidates to spend up to \$100,000 per candidate on political advertising during a municipal election cycle. If a party endorses three candidates, that would mean \$300,000 would be spent during that time, which would add up to a minimum of \$1.5 million that the parties themselves would be allowed to spend.

Provincial and federal parties do not have a place in our municipal system. Mr. Chair, this amendment removes the ability for senatorial elections to be held in conjunction with municipal elections, and there's good reason for this. Municipal election candidates do not run under any party banners. Municipalities are not party systems. Candidates are all independents that run on their own merits, ideas, and platforms. Political parties and their endorsed candidates have no space in this arena. This is a dangerous first step in fundamentally changing the landscape of municipal politics in this province.

It will also bring more money into municipal elections because donors can then contribute \$4,000 to a municipal candidate, \$4,000 to a senatorial candidate, and \$4,000 to a political party. Mr. Chair, that's \$12,000 – \$16,000, actually, which is \$8,000 more than the limits that were in place at the request of municipalities, I might add, less than a year ago.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

On top of that, holding senatorial elections during municipal elections would allow provincial parties that have endorsed candidates to spend up to \$100,000 per candidate on political advertising during municipal election cycles. If a party endorses three candidates, again, that would be \$300,000 that could be spent during this time.

You see, we have a theme here. We take money out of politics, and the UCP is putting it right back in. Madam Chair, Albertans deserve better than this. They deserve a government that will stand up for democratic institutions. They deserve a government that believes that people should be elected on the merits of their ideas and on their character, not on the amount of money in their bank account, and if the members opposite won't give this to Albertans, Albertans deserve an explanation why. Why is this government using campaign promises to create loopholes to give their wealthy donors access to all levels of government in this province?

**The Chair:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

4:50

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Manning for something that I think is an incredibly reasonable amendment. She asked some really important questions. I hope we will hear from the government members, their response, too. I certainly hope they will consider supporting this amendment because I think it does something really important, which is kind of change the direction just a little bit to keep provincial and federal politics and the party system of politics out of our municipal elections.

Now, I had the opportunity to consult with a lot of different Albertans as we worked, first, on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee and, secondly, as the minister responsible for democratic renewal, talking to people about the Election Act and election financing, and then, thirdly, when I was working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs during the updating of the Local Authorities Election Act, when he was specifically working with municipalities. Particularly when I'm talking to constituents, to Albertans, Albertans don't want the political party system brought into their municipal elections, and I've heard that clearly.

In fact, through my own anecdotal viewing of it, candidates who align themselves with a particular political party in running for municipal elections often do not find themselves successful regardless of the political party. Long-standing people who are known to be somewhat aligned to particular political parties won't come out and identify that they are a member of X, Y, or Z. Many candidates specifically do not join provincial parties or do not join federal parties so that they can say that they are neutral, that they're there to represent the views of their constituents so that they can run on their own platform of ideas. I've seen that in my own cities but also when travelling the province and talking to other municipalities.

What I see in Bill 13 is essentially bringing the provincial parties into municipal elections, both explicitly, by allowing the senatorial elections to be held at the same time as municipal elections, and then also combining that with allowing provincial parties to endorse and spend money in support. Now, we can picture that during a municipal election we will have UCP-branded election signs because they'll be there to advertise for their senatorial candidates. I think that that influx of money, \$100,000 per candidate – they can endorse up to three candidates – could have many negative effects on our municipal elections, and I think it opens the door to bring more of that partisan party politics into the municipal level.

I have serious concerns with that just based on the conversations I've had with Albertans on this and my own experience in this province watching municipal elections, because I know that although it is different in other jurisdictions – I understand that party politics are a big part of municipal elections in British Columbia, for example; I understand that there are other jurisdictions where that is the norm – here in Alberta, throughout the province, having independent, free-from-political-party candidates has been the Alberta way.

The changes in Bill 13: although many Albertans may not be aware of what Bill 13 is about to do, because, of course, it's being introduced and talked about as if it's bringing back the previously held senatorial elections, there are so many changes. Like, it's not the same thing. They didn't just bring that bill back. There are significant amendments and changes happening here, including the ones that allow political parties to step in and spend money and start to influence what's happening, married to the fact that these elections can happen at the same time as a municipal election.

My colleague from Edmonton-Manning also raises the very important point about potential loopholes around big money coming back in because of what's happening now provincially: someone in a given year can donate \$4,000 to provincial-related entities, whether that be a political party, candidate, leadership candidate, anything like that, and they will get a provincial tax receipt. But now they can also donate \$4,000 to municipal candidates and \$4,000 to a political party. Now, we're talking about people who have \$12,000 in a single year to put into politics and to further a particular political agenda. I can tell you that I heard clearly from Albertans that the idea that somebody being rich means that they have more ability to influence the elections was something that Albertans felt was distasteful. They generally disagreed with \$50,000 donations to provincial political parties, and now we have essentially \$12,000 because all of these things will be happening at the same time. It's essentially bringing big money back into politics.

My support for this amendment, which I think is a very reasonable amendment that helps this legislation significantly, comes from – municipal elections in Alberta have not historically included political party affiliations. From my consultations, talking to constituents and just talking to Albertans and talking to political leaders in municipalities, there has been no desire to incorporate that. I think this does something that Albertans are not interested in. And then the big loopholes around \$12,000 of political influence in a single year, a single municipal election event, because of the different orders of government involved, are very concerning to me. As someone who was part of a government that worked really hard to get big money out of politics, I think this amendment addresses some of the concerns that I have regarding Bill 13 and the loopholes that it's putting in to bring big money back in and to start to almost encourage provincial parties to get more active during municipal elections and to do that through the senatorial elections.

For those reasons, I will be supporting the amendments proposed by my hon. colleague, and I hope all members will. I'm also hopeful that the government might respond to this amendment and respond to some of the questions that the Member for Edmonton-Manning asked and the concerns that I've echoed.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand and speak in support of this amendment. I think it's a really important amendment. I understand that the UCP talked about this

in their platform, and I understand the big rush to push this through. Now I really understand the rush to push this through. I think that once you take the time to read through this, you realize all of the loopholes that are created. This is sort of piggybacking on what my colleague just said.

I, too, was part of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, and we spent quite a bit of time, all parties, actually, talking about: what could we do other than taking the big money, corporate and union donations, out? That was the first thing we did when we formed government, Bill 1. But what else could we do to ensure the integrity of elections, to ensure that it was individual Albertans that were choosing their representatives and their government as opposed to just the wealthy and the well connected?

This amendment removes the ability to hold senatorial elections during municipal elections. Apparently, the UCP has announced that the next senatorial election will take place in conjunction with the 2021 municipal elections. Now, I'm sure that the municipal elections weren't that long ago. I'm sure everybody remembers what that was like and why municipal elections are indeed so different from provincial and federal elections.

One of the things that I appreciated in my community of St. Albert is that all of the people that ran – the men and women: I'm happy to report that there is some gender balance on St. Albert city council – ran on their ideas. They ran on their individual ideas that they had heard from community members, that they had tested. Some were very new to municipal politics, others were seeking re-election, and they really did run on their own individual platforms, if you will. You heard that sort of loud and clear in the different debates or the written responses that they shared with constituents or citizens. What was really important about that is that it was about individual people and ideas, not political affiliation. I think that to preserve the integrity of municipal elections – this amendment is really quite important.

Now we have the proposition by the government that with senatorial candidates being endorsed by provincial parties, which indeed then brings provincial politics into municipal elections – that will erode, I think, the unique nature, in particular, of municipal elections. It also allows provincial political parties that have endorsed candidates to spend up to \$100,000 per candidate on political advertising during the municipal election cycle.

5:00

You know, you can sort of shrug your shoulders or – I don't know – put your hands up and say: well, you know, it's just \$100,000. But we already know that big money – which is why we sort of invested the time and energy to remove big money from politics. We already know that people that are powerful in terms of finances, financial ability, and connectedness or the ability to influence change, not unlike some of the successful lobbying that we've seen which has resulted in the legislation that we debate in this place – we know that when you let money sort of colour things, it has an impact. And when you start to bring in this kind of financial backing, clouding the issues, bringing in partisan politics, you are going to chip away at the integrity of municipal elections, so I can't imagine that our municipalities would be comfortable with this.

I think that some of the beauty of municipal politics or some of the municipal candidates is that these very much are, in the best sense, really, grassroots campaigns. Very often it is neighbours, co-workers, people that have formed little groups in their community, and then it grows from there. It's not a large, well-connected, well-funded party that is swooping in and influencing the way people vote or the way issues are framed. This is very concerning.

If a party, let's say, going back to this financing, endorses three candidates, that literally means an additional \$300,000 is possible

in terms of spending during that time. This is in addition to the minimum of \$1.5 million that the candidate is already allowed to spend. You know – I've said it before – provincial and federal parties in politics have no place in our municipal politics.

We brought in some changes to municipal election financing, and I think that was a great step forward. Once again, we can see that this new government is unhappy with the way that we've tried to make elections a little bit more fair financially, and once again here we go introducing some loopholes that will take us in another direction.

We've already heard of the tens of thousands of dollars in fines that the government has received because they had difficulty with rules around election financing. I think the earlier amendments to this bill would perhaps provide some clarity in terms of election financing. Obviously, this government has issues with election financing, understanding how the rules work. These amendments are important because they are going to provide some clarity and fairness. In order to get people, just average, everyday Albertans, to participate in this process, whether it's by putting their name forward as a candidate or by choosing the best person for them, we have a responsibility, I think, to keep the level playing field, to keep things as fair as possible.

I can remember back to one of the discussions we had at one of the Ethics and Accountability Committee meetings, and that was about the lack of women in politics, the low numbers of women who run for office, the numbers of women who are successful running for office. This was an important discussion because we talked a lot about the need to make the playing field as equal as possible. Now, that's not an easy thing to do, but I think when you start to look at big money in politics and levelling that playing field, it does help, particularly when you start to bring in these really large political parties that are well financed, well connected, and very much have an agenda. If Albertans don't see that happening right here in this place, they're not paying attention, because it is happening.

We see the impact of money in politics, lobbyists, and parties. We see it all the time. We saw it just before the election. We saw Restaurants Canada lobbying for changes very quickly after the election. Surprise. Here we go. They're getting exactly what they lobbied for, all under the guise of creating jobs by cutting the wages of youth. Anyway, I digress. Back to the amendment.

This amendment, which I think is a very reasonable amendment, removes the ability for senatorial elections to be held in conjunction with municipal elections. I think that's fair, and I think it's essential. I think it's important not to be, whether it's on purpose or whether it's just underhanded – I think it's really important to allow municipalities and residents of municipalities to be as independent as possible when they select who will represent them on a city council and things like that.

Municipal election candidates don't run under any party banner, and that's done for a reason. Municipalities are not party systems. This amendment, although, you know, I certainly do not support this bill, would help clarify a little bit and provide a little bit of protection to keep municipal elections as independent as possible. Political parties and their endorsed candidates have no space in a municipal election arena. They don't. This is a dangerous first step to fundamentally changing the landscape of municipal elections in this province, and it'll bring more money into municipal elections because donors can contribute.

Now, I know this government isn't super pumped on consulting. They were clear about that even before the election. I think their then leader told us that he was just going to do things quickly, no time for consulting because, really, the election was the consultation. Well, no. The election was the election, but that's okay. What this

has done is create change on a level that we won't even understand until the municipal election occurs, and even then we won't really know. By making these fundamental changes to the fairness and the structure of municipal elections, we are influencing way past what is ours to influence. I mean, I hope I'm wrong, but I don't get the sense that this government took the time to consult with municipalities on this legislation.

The legislation, Bill 13, Alberta Senate Election Act, seems on the surface, you know, the pretty old way of '80s politics. Let's create some division. We need to do this. We already know how that turned out, but okay. But this goes a little bit further because it starts to stick your fingers into municipal elections and the fairness of municipal elections. I don't recall hearing that before the election. I don't recall seeing that in the platform document.

I mean, I would question. Did the Minister of Municipal Affairs consult with anyone, with AUMA to talk to them about: how do you feel about this change to municipal elections? Did the Premier take any time to talk about this other than, you know, "We must do this in Ottawa," because, clearly, his focus usually is Ottawa?

Hearing the rhetoric just last week about one of Alberta's Senators, Paula Simons, an independent Senator, some of the flack she's been getting is just horrendous. I thank her publicly for her service.

I think, going back to this legislation, this was supposed to be simply about Senate elections, you know, I guess, for whatever reason. But this overreach is a little bit stunning. This is overreach of a government that is now wanting to interfere by creating these loopholes or aligning dates or changing totals to involve themselves in something that should not be their business. They should not be involved in municipal elections. They shouldn't.

You know, I'm concerned, too, about the amount of money. Again, going back to this recent election we just went through, obviously some people had more difficulty than others in understanding what those limits were. I guess they're feeling the penalties of that now. These loopholes created in this legislation will indeed bring more money into municipal elections because donors can now contribute \$4,000 to a municipal candidate, \$4,000 to a senatorial candidate, and then \$4,000 to a political party. That's \$12,000, which is \$8,000 more than the limits that were put in place at the request of municipalities, I might add, less than a year ago.

5:10

I think we heard pretty clearly from municipalities that they wanted some of the same structure that we had put in place for provincial elections. I heard that in St. Albert. I don't know what other people heard in their communities or if they asked that question. I don't know if this government took a breather and asked municipalities what they thought of provincial and federal politics bleeding into municipal elections. I'd be very curious to hear that answer, and I know that I will spend some time in St. Albert asking those very questions.

That's \$12,000, \$8,000 more. On top of that, holding senatorial elections during municipal elections will also allow provincial parties that have endorsed candidates to spend up to \$100,000 per candidate on political advertising during the municipal election cycle, once again trying to influence something that, really, we have no business influencing. I think we saw this try to bleed into some school board elections, or we had allegations of that. But this is not our place to decide on who the leadership is for our municipalities.

We worked really hard to remove big money, whether it was from unions, whether it was from corporations, and it seems like since our new Premier turned up in Alberta full time, he has done whatever he can to sort of muddy these waters. I think a really good example of that – and why I support this amendment – is the PC

leadership race. You know, we heard very loud and clear that once that race was done, those donors would be released. When that was done, that full list was not released.

That's just one more reason why we knew it was so important to make the rules very clear. These are the limits. These are the periods of time during which you can spend that money. These are rules for lobbyists. Here's a registry. Here are rules for lobbyists. Here's what you must report. We made those things very clear. You know what? Municipalities liked the changes that we were making and asked for assistance to do that on a local basis.

Sadly, you know, I think that, like my colleague said, we tried really hard to take money out of politics. We worked diligently, I think, through Bill 1, through the all-party committee that did some good, sometimes interesting work. We actually did introduce some changes that started to change the landscape a little bit and started to be a little bit more fair, started to remove big money out of politics so that everyday Albertans, those that aren't wealthy, that aren't necessarily well connected or lobbyists: their vote and their voice is worth the same as somebody else. That was important.

On that, I'm going to end my comments and just say that I support this amendment, other amendments, and I hope that this government, at the very least, will make these changes. The best-case scenario is to put the brakes on, pause, do your job, and consult. Do your job and look at what is fair in your municipalities. I'm guessing that you haven't consulted with those municipalities, whose elections you will impact with this legislation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the hon. Member for St. Albert and her views about all of this, and I must agree that I think the amendment is needed, Madam Chair, because the municipal election periods are the wrong time to have a senatorial election as well.

You know, when you think about what goes on during municipal elections, we really need citizens across this province to be laser focused on the issues in their community. Those issues aren't espoused by senatorial elections or senatorial contests. They are espoused by people running for city or IDs or Métis settlements or summer villages and the views that they have in terms of making their communities a better place.

The citizens, during municipal elections: we all know that they also have to focus on school board elections for trustees. I can't think of two more important things to focus on than education of our young people and the trustees that are committed to guiding that education and making sure that they adequately prepare the classrooms, the schools, and all other places for the young people to get that education.

The other critical thing that goes on during municipal elections, of course – and I mentioned it before just now – is electing councillors, whether that's a small county or MD or a large city like Edmonton and Calgary. It's reflective of the times, I guess, where, as the Member for St. Albert was saying, that partisanship and party politics is entering municipal politics, and I can tell you that that's the wrong thing. We need municipal councillors to be elected on their own merit.

Back in 1995 I stood for election on a platform on my own merit, not involved with a party. I didn't hold a party card until probably sometime in the mid-2000s. In 1995 I ran on a platform of doing better for the communities that I was working for as a community social worker and making sure that those communities got what they deserved in terms of support from the city of Calgary. That



was a contest with seven people in it. I was the fourth one into it, and then there were three others who joined after me, and none of us – none of us – were endorsed by a party. None of us were seeking the support of the party mechanisms to get elected. We ran on our own, and we did the things that, you know, maybe are not so normal anymore. We did things like we got our own committee together to support us. We raised funds on our own. We put out our signs and literature on our own, and none of it looked like orange for the NDP or blue for you guys or red for the Liberals. It was quite something to put your slate up, essentially, and say: this is what I stand for.

Now to muddy that with a senatorial election at the same time is going in the wrong direction. We need focus for what is ailing us in our communities, and that does not get better with another election going on at the same time for Senators, who will muddy the waters with regard to the platforms of the parties that they represent.

Another thing that I think we need to speak to with this – and I certainly support the amendment wholeheartedly and believe it will be a positive addition to the bill that's before us, Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act – is that the Alberta Senator elections in this bill talk about enhancing democracy. You know, what we need for municipalities during municipal election times to enhance democracy in those communities is a focus on the issues in those communities, and I don't believe that the Senators necessarily will be doing that. I think they will be going around Alberta, of course, to get support for not their nomination but their election. They won't be focusing on, say in Calgary, the challenges around the downtown core assessment. They won't be focusing on the issues related to, in Calgary again, the need to have good flood protection in place immediately for those communities along the Bow River and the Elbow River. They will be looking at, like, larger party issues, and those party issues don't drill down far enough to what needs to happen in communities all across this province.

5:20

All across this province we need to enhance or get higher the percentage of the vote that goes on in municipalities. You know, often the votes in municipalities, the percentage of people eligible to vote voting in municipalities, is in the 20 to 30 per cent range, which is just abysmal. It is indicative, you know, that unfortunately many people don't see their right to express their vote at the local, municipal, level as an important thing. As we used to say at the city of Calgary, if it's a 30 per cent turnout to vote, you often hear from those 70 per cent of the people who don't vote, and they're the most vociferous sometimes.

So we need to raise the level of the popular vote in municipalities, and senatorial elections are not the way to do it. We need to put more emphasis on municipalities. We need to put more emphasis on the local needs in municipalities so that people can actually come out and get excited about getting behind the different views of different candidates. As I was saying, in 1995 my own race was very much focused around social issues and trying to ensure that the people in the east end of Calgary got the supports they need because it's a challenged area in many respects. The seven of us in the race had different views about that. I remember one person in the race had the view that he needed to support a golf course in the ward with better funds coming from the city of Calgary. He didn't win, of course, but he was very enthusiastic about talking about the golf course on a regular basis.

You know, the work that the Minister of Municipal Affairs perhaps and the government should be focused on is: how can we get more people out and better quality people to put their name forward for municipal councillors all across this province? How can we support people to put their name forward? Are there kinds of additional training, any kinds of in-services that can be given on the

quality of people who want to support their communities as an elected local councillor? I think there is, Madam Chair. There's lots of work that can be done there. It won't help for the parties to be going around and to be kind of muddying the waters with regard to what's going on in municipalities. It wouldn't help at all for those things to take place.

I, of course, want to let people know that, you know, the Senate elections have happened in the past here. I believe I ran during one of them, and I don't think it added to the focus of the municipal election that I was in. I do want to say that the expense of running these elections is another problematic piece for me. I think municipal elections have just gotten too expensive for everybody who chooses to put their name forward. I'm so proud of the NDP government in curtailing the amount of expenses that can go into provincial elections. That was, in my estimation, long overdue, and the Wild West in terms of elections is something we often heard about before we brought in the bills that my hon. colleague down the way here brought in.

We have too many important issues. I can think of that in Edmonton: you know, the whole focus on mass transit. How is a senatorial election going to assist in all of that? It's not going to assist in it. It's going to, as I said, divert people's attention from the important local issues that they need to essentially hire a councillor, a person running for council, to address for them on their behalf. Edmonton, Calgary, the 340 other municipalities in this province don't need the additional expense, and that's a question: like, will Elections Alberta pay for it? I'm searching through this bill to find out if that's a commitment here. I know that municipalities are stretched, and when they bring forward their own elections, they need to budget far in advance to make those contributions to their elections fund happen.

In Calgary's case there was an additional requirement put on by the previous government to make sure that the Olympics were something that people supported in terms of a referendum. There are not only, you know, elections municipally and for trustees that happen on a four-year cycle now, but there are things to take advantage of, potentially an Olympics in this province. We put the requirement on that municipality, that they bring forward a referendum for people to make a decision on. There's a cost to that as well, Madam Chair. Of course, it was cost shared. No, it wasn't, actually. It was \$2 million by the province of Alberta in that regard.

You can see how the costs do mount quickly, if you were to talk about senatorial elections throughout the province, in each jurisdiction in this province – and there are hundreds and hundreds of them – you know, the fact that that has to be paid for, when we have far, far, far more pressing issues in this province to deal with; namely, the impact of climate change on our communities and making sure that they're resilient and can withstand the vagaries of climate when climate events happen throughout the province. There are important local issues that need to be addressed as well. That's what a once-every-four-years mandate does for elections in terms of the election cycle in this province.

I think, Madam Chair, the work that the previous government did to enhance democracy in this province is more germane than a Senate elections act. I know that you've got the numbers to essentially bring forward and pass this bill. I know that there are many, many people on the Conservative side who have let me know that they're interested and want to be appointed as Senators. I know that the Liberal government in Ottawa probably won't follow through with that. It has been followed through with before, but it required a Conservative Prime Minister to make it happen.

I just don't see the sense in following through with this. It'll cost more money for Alberta. It will defocus on the important local issues in our communities. That's not what citizens need at this

time. They need focus on the important issues like climate change. How are we going to ensure that employment gets fully realized for people who are able to work in our province? You know, just making sure that the trustees address the education needs in our province, throughout the province, and through the elections: those are the things that we need to focus on repeatedly. Those are the things that are identified in our amendment in terms of removing this from municipal election cycles, and those are the things that I will continue to focus on when I'm in my community, my riding.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment in regard to Bill 13. You know, I must say, in a more global sense, that I'm not that supportive of the Senate in general, so I have to try to think through that initial prejudice that I have. I think a lot of Canadians have the same feeling, right?

That being said, you know, in the interest of democracy I do want to explore this bill generally, and then this amendment, I think, helps the bill considerably. I don't have to repeat what the hon. members from St. Albert and from Calgary . . .

5:30

**Member Ceci:** Buffalo.

**Mr. Eggen:** . . . Buffalo mentioned. I always know where you come from, Calgary-Buffalo. Don't you worry about that. Absolutely.

Actually, you know, one thing that you mentioned that's very interesting that I just wanted to point out is that we did have that referendum on whether to have the Olympics in Calgary just recently, and now the International Olympic Committee is considering that to be a global prerogative, to insist that candidate cities have a referendum as a law, based on what they had seen take place here in Alberta and in Calgary. That's kind of cool, I think. Certainly, I mean, that underlines the importance of having elections in the broadest possible way, the broadest possible offering for elections in any given jurisdiction, Alberta here specifically. We want to encourage people to vote and get engaged in the issues of the day that affect themselves and their communities and their families, and all of those are very, very good things.

But also in the evolution of elections, be they municipal, provincial, or senatorial, is the importance of continuing down the direction of ensuring that big money does not dominate electoral politics here in the province of Alberta. Money and donations are an important part of democratic processes. We need money to run campaigns. You know, people make donations to who and what party they might favour, and that's all well and good, but it's absolutely essential to put limits in place and to keep those limits modest and in keeping with what is affordable and reasonable for the vast majority of Albertans.

You know, we managed to stake a beachhead on the reduction in getting big money out of politics here on a provincial and a municipal level, but, lo and behold, we have this proposal that would overstep any of those gains that we might have made in regard to having fair, reasonable election financing laws in place by this suggestion here with Bill 13, which puts a lot of money into elections and, I believe, will distort the integrity of municipal elections by having otherwise pretty modest campaigns for individual councillors and, as you say, summer communities and Métis settlements – a lot of these elections are just really down-to-earth, grassroots affairs which have very modest spending limits in place that these candidates have to adhere to. Then suddenly this thing rolls in – right? – potentially, which is a senatorial race, a

whole different level of government, and exponentially larger amounts of money can be spent on those senatorial elections.

You know, Madam Chair, I really think that this goes against what we've been trying to achieve. I know that everyone here in this room was carefully adhering to the provincial spending rules that were in place through Elections Alberta, and I think that it worked out okay, right? Here you all are, and you won your respective constituencies, and you didn't have to spend a million zillion dollars.

I've run a number of times, and before we put these spending limits in place, you would see individual MLAs in constituency races spending more than \$100,000, \$120,000, up to \$180,000. I saw \$180,000 dollars being spent on one of these 87 seats to become an MLA, and that's such an obvious distortion of the principle of democracy, right? Then suddenly here we are again, now debating whether to allow the floodgates to open again and have considerable money being spent, more than \$100,000 per candidate, on these elections for senatorial seats in the province of Alberta. Honestly, I don't think that it's a good idea. It sends the wrong message, you know.

Again, I always am looking for the letter of the law but also, you know, what direction we are going in, right? I know that Albertans are starting to pay attention to improprieties in regard to election financing. The appointment of a special prosecutor from outside of Alberta to deal with the perception of impropriety in leadership races here, I think, has pricked people's ears up, quite frankly, and the idea of a lot of money changing hands and with the lack of transparency around those things: it's poison, Madam Chair, in electoral politics. It's certainly poisonous to a party that might engage in those things.

It does not help the democratic process in general, either, to have big money floating around. What it does – it sends a message that the average person says: "Oh, yeah. You know what? These Senate races and so forth are out of my range. 'Senators' sounds like some kind of big shot, big money thing, and it's happening outside of my life." Not only is somebody being costed out of ever running for those things, but they get tuned out with all of these large numbers as well, saying: this isn't my thing. And the population starts to look more cynically at the process in general. You know, we don't want any of those things, I think.

This amendment that is brought forward to make sure that we separate at the very least Senate elections from municipal elections, I think, is eminently reasonable, and I encourage everybody to support this amendment.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amendment proposed by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Manning with respect to Bill 13. I just want to echo some of the comments made by my colleagues.

To begin with, I believe my approach with respect to this bill is simply that, as raised by a number of my colleagues, there are significant concerns that I have about the efficacy and the value of what's being put forward with Bill 13. In particular, you know, I actually somewhat sympathize with the sentiment that I believe is behind Bill 13, which is that there is frustration with the way the Senate operates, so I understand that the government feels that frustration. I believe a lot of Albertans do.

While I might sympathize with that sentiment, I still believe in good public policy-making, and I still believe in effective use of public dollars. I don't believe that this bill achieves those ends, primarily because there are fundamental issues with the Senate, and

this bill does not address them. What it does do is allow for a process that I think bestows some legitimacy upon an institution that, quite frankly, doesn't have that legitimacy right now for most Albertans.

To imply that having an elected Senator or a number of elected Senators from Alberta somehow makes the Senate more democratic simply is not true because we know that, to begin with, as a basic principle, whoever the governing party is, the federal governing party at the time, there's certainly no obligation upon that party to select from the list of elected Senators from Alberta. The exercise of electing Senators really does not in any way guarantee that an elected Senator will end up in the Senate representing Alberta.

Now, I understand – I'm presuming that the government is presuming that they know who will be the next federal government. They seem to be campaigning quite heavily for one federal political party, and I appreciate that they certainly have a hope and desire as to who will be the governing party in the next federal election. But the reality is that, again, our job here is to do good public policy-making. Making changes, putting in place a process that is costly, that is time intensive on the hope that one party might stay the governing federal party forever simply is poor public policy-making. For one thing, you know, there's no guarantee that this process will in any way change the face of who is representing Alberta in the Senate.

5:40

It also doesn't change the very antidemocratic process that is involved with Senators. Simply because an individual is elected in Alberta to be a Senator-in-waiting, even if chosen to be a Senator, they don't have to face re-election. They remain a Senator until they are 75 years old. Again, if we're talking about democracy and elected officials, I don't think that anybody in this House can stand and say that an appointment until you're 75 years old is true democracy. There's no process for recall. There's no process by which that person has to be re-elected. Again, we're seeing a bill that might have at its heart or intent some sort of democratic reform, but the result is not actually aligned with democratic principles.

I believe that several members on this side of the House and I know that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition have made comments several times that one of the key issues with the Senate is that we have six Senators for all of Alberta whereas there are Maritime provinces with a fifth of the population of Alberta who have the same number of Senators. We are underrepresented in the Senate. There is no doubt about that. Based on population, it's quite clear that Alberta's interests are not adequately represented in the Senate, yet again these proposed changes do nothing to affect that. They do not change in any way our ability to be represented properly based on our population and our interests in the Senate. It simply continues to legitimize in some respect a process that is antidemocratic.

Now, there's a long history, as many people know, about the Senate and the role of the Senate. You know, I think we could have a healthy and spirited debate about that topic in and of itself. I don't think that's the role of today's debate on Bill 13, but I will say that if we are seeking to change the way the Senate operates in this country, which there could be merit in doing, this is not an effective way to do that. It's simply not going to achieve that end.

With those overarching comments with respect to my concern, what I am fearful of, in particular, is that by going through this process of electing Senators, we are misleading Albertans. We are misleading the public about what that process really is about and what the outcome of that will be. I think there is already a lot of confusion about the role of the Senate, and by going through this, frankly, it's a bit of a charade when it comes to going through a

process of electing somebody when there's no power to recall, who has a lifetime appointment and does not need to be chosen to sit in the Senate. I think we are somehow going to give some confusion to Albertans.

Just to the amendment, I want to say that I believe the municipal election process is already quite confusing for a lot of individuals. My background is with school board elections. School board elections are always held at the same time as municipal elections, and we see all kinds of confusion around that as it is, how those are administered. To that end, you know, I don't think we need to add further confusion by adding a partisan senatorial election process to that.

To that end, I'll take my seat, Madam Chair. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, I just want to provide a brief response. Hopefully, after that I'll seek to adjourn debate on this one and move to a different bill. The intent here is to uphold the flexibility to hold Senate elections as needed. That's why we've provided flexibility in this bill. Depending on when Senate vacancies may arise, now or in the future, the intent here is to make sure that we can hold these elections to make sure that Albertans' voices are heard and so that we can have democratically elected people representing us in the Senate as vacancies come up. We need that flexibility. A perfect example of that is that the next vacancy is scheduled to happen in 2021. We have one person remaining on the Senate nominee list that we put forward, Mike Shaikh. After that point in time there will be nobody remaining on that list.

The next available opportunity to hold an election that we think would be reasonable as well from a taxpayer's perspective would be in line with the next municipal election here, Madam Chair. The intent of this is not to impact municipal elections. Municipal elections will continue to go on as they have in our province. The intent here is just to allow for flexibility for elections to be held for the Senate as needed.

Again, Bill 13 is based on the historical act that we've had here in Alberta, but it also builds in concepts that were actually brought in by the NDP under the last government, concepts around donation limits, other things like that. I've heard many commentaries from the other side, basically comments around their own amendments. They're not happy with their own legislation that they drafted, but here we are trying to build a concept consistent with existing election finance laws here in Alberta.

Madam Chair, the intent here is to allow us to hold Senate elections. We think it's very critical that we have Senators that are elected to represent us. Over half of the Senate nominees that have been brought forward by Alberta have been appointed to the Senate, and those have been some of the strongest advocates for our province.

With that, I'm going to move to adjourn debate on Bill 13.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 12 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, I think we've made some excellent progress so far here today. I would propose that we rise and report progress on bills 8, 12, and report Bill 13.

**The Chair:** To clarify, we are going to rise and report progress on Bill 8 and Bill 13, and we are going to report Bill 12?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Correct.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the

following bill: Bill 12. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 8, Bill 13. Madam Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Speaker, I think we've made some excellent progress at this point in time here today. Given the clock and where we're at and noticing that folks might be a little bit hungry, I would propose that we adjourn until 7:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:49 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, July 3, 2019

Day 23

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 3, 2019

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Please be seated.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They say that if you seek it, sometimes you will get it. I would like to ask for unanimous consent of the House to have one-minute bells for the entire evening, including during the points when we are in Committee of the Whole.

[Unanimous consent denied]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 13 Alberta Senate Election Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any questions or comments? We are currently on amendment A2.

**Mr. Bilous:** Can I ask, Mr. Chair, for clarity on which amendment A2 is, please?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes, hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. The amendment was earlier read into the official record by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Mr. Bilous:** If I can just clarify, is that the amendment, Mr. Chair, that deals with the election advertising expenses of \$20,000, or is that the lengthy amendment?

**The Deputy Chair:** It's the lengthy one.

**Mr. Bilous:** The lengthy one. Yeah. Okay. Excellent.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thanks.

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay. I rise to speak to this amendment. I'm just confirming that I in fact have the correct speaking notes, which I believe I do. This is an amendment that removes the ability to hold a senatorial election during a municipal election, I believe.

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that.

There are a number of challenges that we have and I have, quite frankly, with the idea of this coinciding with the 2021 municipal election because we have senatorial candidates that are endorsed by provincial parties, which is bringing provincial politics into municipal elections. Now, we all know that in the province of Alberta with our municipal elections there are no party affiliations, at least not formally, with any of the candidates that run.

The other thing that's challenging about this is that provincial political parties that have endorsed a candidate also can spend up to \$100,000 per candidate on political advertising. That is a significant amount of money. That is going to significantly influence voters during this election. I mean, essentially what that does is that if you

had a number of different political parties that all endorsed the same candidate, we're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars that could be spent. Now, that's in addition already to, I believe, the \$1.5 million that candidates themselves would be allowed to spend.

You know, what we're trying to do through a series of amendments on this side of the House, Mr. Chair, is to ensure that big money does not come creeping back into elections. Quite frankly, the way that this bill is currently written, it's not that it's creeping in; there's a gaping hole that we're driving semi trucks through in order to influence voters. These are no small sums of money.

I think that this amendment is reasonable in the sense that this is a dangerous first step, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, in fundamentally changing how municipal elections are funded, how they operate within our province. I can tell you that I've spoken with dozens and dozens of municipal candidates who enjoy the fact that there is a separation between federal-provincial politics or partisan or party politics with municipal politics. We're going down a dangerous road with this bill in its current state, the way it's currently written.

Now, I think part of the reason why our government's first bill, Bill 1, that we introduced was to ban corporate and union donations. That was, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, because we believe that a person should get elected based on their merit, not based on the depth of their pockets. We know that advertising and fundraising greatly influence and can influence voters through a number of different means, but I think Albertans, one, will be very curious to know why these certain provisions in this bill currently exist. I'm not sure if we've had members of the front bench jump up to respond to some of our questions and concerns when it comes to this bill directly.

I think Albertans, you know, need a bit of an answer or an explanation from this government as to why they are creating loopholes to be able to give those who do have deeper pockets a significant opportunity to influence senatorial elections. If you add up the amount of money that is allowed through a number of different sections of this bill, it's well over a million dollars, Mr. Chair, which is a significant amount of money influencing voters for an individual, single Senator election. I mean, there are other concerns I have with the bill in its current state, but I'll keep, for the time being, my comments to this amendment. But I can tell you that, again, with our Bill 1 we heard loud and clear from Albertans that they wanted big money out of politics.

Now, again, whether that comes from a business or from a union – we could have, when we were government, banned one of those in order to benefit ourselves but said: “No. You know what? We need to level the playing field for donations in general and put a cap on it.” Obviously, money is needed to be able to purchase signs and other forms of advertising, but, again, without a cap it becomes, really, a race of who can raise the most amount of money. Suddenly now for those candidates that want to run, run for the right reasons, run and want the race to be based on merit, they are often at a disadvantage because if they can't raise or don't have the backing of a political party to be able to have access to hundreds of thousands of dollars that political parties can now spend during a senatorial race – I think it sets a very dangerous precedent, Mr. Chair. I also think that it's taking us down a path that I know for sure that Albertans would be curious to know why this government is adamant on doing this.

But, as well, at the moment the Senate elections in Alberta: I mean, it's a bit of a joke, Mr. Chair, because the federal government appoints Senators regardless of who is elected or not. But an election costs money. I always find it interesting when you have a Conservative party or government looking at ways of spending more tax dollars in one breath yet criticizing us in another of having spent too much. Yet, this very bill will put Albertans and taxpayers

on the hook for millions of dollars for an election that doesn't amount to anything because they're appointed. And even if it did, it's a pretty interesting dynamic that it's a one time in your lifetime election. Once you're elected once, you're there until you're 75. Well, that doesn't really seem that democratic. That doesn't seem like the folks that are elected to the Senate are beholden to their very voters. They are the first time. So say whatever you want to get the election, and then once you're elected, you can do whatever you want. Your actions and words can be completely incongruent because there's nothing holding you accountable to the very people who put you there.

7:40 p.m.

I mean, there are a number of challenges with this bill. I'm not surprised, quite frankly, at all that this bill is coming from our current Premier, who, you know, at every turn is trying to bring Ottawa to Alberta. I think he might be better off going back the other way as opposed to trying to bring it all here to this province.

The Senate has a number of challenges, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, I mean, from some of the challenges that we've seen in the Senate's actions, especially around bills that are hurting our province, to the fact that there's an unequal distribution of seats and appointments across the country. Alberta is home to I believe it's over 4.4 million people, more than, I believe, all of the Maritimes combined, yet they have more Senators appointed than Alberta does. So are we not, in fact, legitimizing a very process that discriminates against Alberta? You know, my hope is that members opposite will look into this with real interest because we are legitimizing a process that is flawed to begin with.

Again, you know, these Senators aren't necessarily beholden to the people that they represent because they're appointed for life, and they're appointed based on the Prime Minister. I appreciate that the government loves to talk about how former Prime Minister Harper appointed the Senators who won their elections. Well, in Alberta, maybe. In other provinces he did not, so there's nothing holding whoever is Prime Minister. Now, maybe this is a nice little bill that the government is hoping to tee up with their fingers crossed that Andrew Scheer will become the Prime Minister. But having said that, even if he did, he's under no obligation to follow this act, which has no enforcement mechanism but spends Alberta dollars and opens up these senatorial elections to, really, you know, a hyperpartisan political party election where whoever has the most money is going to significantly influence the very voters and who they're going to choose.

You know, my hope is that members will consider this amendment. I know our caucus has brought forward a number of amendments on this bill, but I think these are really valid concerns that we're trying to raise with this bill as it's currently written. Again, this is a blatant attempt at bringing big money back into politics. My question to the government is: what is the larger, broader plan? Is this step 1 in trying to bring big dollars back into politics to influence the outcome of elections? If it is, I think Albertans deserve to know.

With that, I'm hoping my colleagues will join me in asking some of these questions and sharing their comments. I encourage the government to respond to some of these questions. I'd love to have some answers and have some of my concerns quelled. With that, I will take my seat, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has stood to speak.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Yes. I've watched this bill with interest. I think certainly we heard, or some of us

heard, the comments from the minister of justice with respect to this particular update. I actually think that this particular amendment adds something to the bill. I have broader concerns about Senate elections or the way they're structured in this bill, but I think my specific concerns around this amendment, which I will deal with first, relate to the fact that it's not totally clear how this is going to function.

I think one of the things worth noting is on municipalities. There's provincial legislation that governs how municipalities run their elections, but within that legislation municipalities have a certain amount of movement, so they don't all do it the same. The exact formats of elections in Calgary and Edmonton, for example, are not identical. While municipal elections will occur throughout the province at the same time and with the same sort of set of guidelines, the rules will be a little bit different from place to place. What I wonder is: will that add complication and cost if we're having Senate elections at the same time? Obviously, the Senate elections would have to be identical throughout the province, which means that if, say, for instance, Calgary and Edmonton have slightly different rules around exactly how they're holding their municipal elections, then the Senate elections can't simply mirror the elections in a municipality because the Senate elections would have to be the same.

We know that municipal elections sometimes differ in certain technical ways from one another. Now, these aren't huge, major differences, but I think they're enough of a difference that it would drive cost relative to, say, having a senatorial election at the same time as a provincial election, because the provincial election is of course held the same throughout the province. I think that is one of the biggest concerns.

I am also concerned that in addition to the additional cost associated with the fact that they won't be able to perfectly mirror what's going on in terms of the municipal elections, I'd also say that I'm concerned that just the fact that different organizations are holding the elections themselves may drive costs. It's not really clear. The devil with these things is always in the details, and it's not totally clear to me exactly how this will be rolled out. Will the same officers in the same locations who are counting municipal ballots be counting senatorial ballots, and if, like I said, the rules are slightly different in Edmonton than they are in Calgary in terms of voting, how will that be accounted for?

Will the rules be different for the senatorial election, or will they be the same throughout the province? It seems to me that they must be the same throughout the province, so I'm a little concerned that we'll add additional personnel in there for additional costs. If I recall correctly, the last time we held senatorial elections, they cost about \$2 million. Of course, as with all things, the cost of that will have gone up over time. That's probably – what? – \$3 million, \$4 million. But now we're doing it on a municipal election, so that probably drives the cost even higher. I wonder at spending that kind of money to achieve a very uncertain outcome. That's one of the concerns that I definitely have about rejecting this particular amendment. Yeah, I think this is a little bit odd.

I also am concerned about the fact that elections generate a lot of media. There's a lot of focus on them. There's a lot of sort of messaging going back and forth, and I'm a little concerned that this generates a lot of interference for people who are trying to pay attention during an election. I perhaps ascribe – I don't want to say in an old-fashioned way – to a version that exists more in people's heads than it does in reality, but I would like to think that when people go to vote, they read platforms and consider questions, and they ask their candidates questions when they come to their house at the door. It was often my experience that when I arrived at people's doors, they were surprised by my arrival and therefore

didn't have questions prepared, but some of them would e-mail questions afterwards, or some of them had questions at the ready. I think that that's an important part of democracy.

My concern is that you have sort of municipal issues going on over here, and then you have senatorial stuff going on over here, and I'm concerned that that's a lot of noise and interference all at the same time. It's a lot for people to process all at once, and I'm concerned that there could be some cross-pollination that would have an impact on the senatorial elections and have an impact on the municipal elections, potentially an impact that's unfair.

I mean, it's very I don't want to say confusing, but I think that sometimes it's difficult to understand different levels of government and what their jurisdiction is. I frequently got questions, when I went door-knocking, about local traffic issues that were within municipal jurisdictions. I suspect that all members of this House have had that same experience. My concern is that we'll have candidates running on things that are outside of their jurisdiction. We see this sometimes even in provincial politics with respect to candidates, parties, ministers running on amending legislation that isn't theirs. For instance, here in the province, obviously, we don't have jurisdiction over the Criminal Code; that's the federal government. I'm quite concerned that people will run on issues that they can't actually impact and that that will occur because those two things are happening simultaneously.

7:50 p.m.

I think my larger concerns with respect to this and one of the reasons that this amendment would be good, because it would push things off a little further and maybe we wouldn't need to pass this legislation immediately, have to do with the fact – in my view, one of the points of elections is accountability. One of the most important things that elections generate is accountability. We must all be accountable to the public because we will come back before them to be rehired or not rehired again in another four years. Having senatorial elections, while it is an election, the problem is that once that person is elected, they're just in forever, so it doesn't have that same impact in terms of generating accountability, and I think that that's a pretty big concern.

Also, if you look at Alberta, it has – what? – I think six Senators. That's a very low number, especially relative to our population sort of relative to the rest of the country. I mean, I think there are some Maritime provinces that have 10, so that's a bit unequal. I'm a little concerned that this adds legitimacy to a thing that – I mean, it is legitimate. It's in the Constitution. But it adds a sort of veneer of democracy to a thing that really isn't that democratic. That's, I think, my concern with the idea that we're going to have these elections. We're going to elect a Senator, but then a Senator will be there indefinitely. At that point they lose the accountability, which is, in my view, sort of the point of elections, generating that accountability to the public. I don't think that this does that. So that's a big concern.

Some of my other concerns: this is a very lengthy piece of legislation. We have managed to identify a problem and actually work with the minister – and I have to say: kudos for that – in order to have an amendment accepted that fixes a problem that existed with this bill. When we look at the totals, the amount that people are allowed to spend on elections, like, we're talking about half a million dollars per Senator. That's pretty pricey. I mean, by comparison, each individual candidate in their local riding in a provincial election is permitted to spend \$50,000, so that's one-tenth. You're talking about a single candidate spending 10 times what a provincial candidate would be able to spend. That's a lot of money, and I think it's a concern in terms of sort of the creeping in of unnecessary influence and undue influence from those who have

deeper pockets, particularly in light of the fact that these are people who, again, raise that half a million dollars, potentially make promises they ought not make, get in, and feel beholden to their donors. But they aren't really accountable to the electorate because they're not up for re-election. I think that, yeah, it's a big concern.

We're also looking at: a provincial party can transfer up to \$100,000 to a candidate. But then the question with that becomes: well, if a provincial party runs a whole slate of candidates, is it \$100,000 in total, or is it \$100,000 for each candidate? I think that's concerning because it's sort of doing indirectly what one cannot do directly in a lot of ways. What happens to that money at the end? If, say, the individual doesn't spend it all, does it return to a political party? I think that's a concern as well.

Again, I mean, this is a very hefty piece of legislation. It's being billed as just doing this one simple thing, but I think it's a little bit more complicated than that. I think that the people of Alberta deserve sort of some time to weigh in and to consider this and to consider the impact that it will have, especially, again, in light of the fact that we're talking about spending a lot of money and potentially, you know, people donating a lot of money to run an election that ultimately may or may not have any impact on anything. At the end of the day, there's no requirement that the federal government respect this.

Honestly, in a lot of ways, I think that one of the bigger problems with the Senate is that it's sort of disproportionate in the sense that the number of Senators that Alberta has relative to its population is low, so we don't have as much of a voice as we should have. I feel that sort of adding this democratic veneer to that maybe doesn't address that problem. Now, obviously, that problem can't be addressed here. It can't be addressed by the provincial Legislature. It's an issue at the federal level, so I think, you know, to me, that continues to be an issue.

Returning to the amendment, again, one of the concerns that I have is this cross-pollination of issues. You have Senators running and talking about federal issues at the same time that you have municipal councillors running and talking about municipal issues. Again, it's not immediately obvious to folks in all instances what level of government has their concern, so I have a little bit of a concern about sort of cross-pollination, about those people getting confused about which issues belong with which politicians. Sometimes politicians play to that – we certainly see that with respect to the provincial government and the Criminal Code – and I think that's concerning.

Ultimately, at the end of the day, I actually think that we all benefit from a transparent democracy. I genuinely believe that the more open conversations we can have about issues and about governance, the better our province will be. Now, I think there are a lot of reasons why that doesn't maybe occur quite as well as it could. Certainly, it's the case that we have sort of fewer reporters tending to report on more issues. It makes it challenging to sort of get as in depth as maybe one might like, so that's a concern. Certainly, people sometimes have a bit of a tendency to prefer to boil issues down to short statements when, in fact, the issue itself is quite complex, and that can have an unfortunate impact.

Really, at the end of the day, we often have sort of people – I, of course, do tend to see growing income inequality as one of the greatest challenges of our time. One of the things that that generates is a lot of people who are working a lot of hours, trying to get their kids from here to there. They often live a long way from where they work, so there's a long commute involved. They're having to work more than one job sometimes to make ends meet and to support their family, and that makes it sometimes more challenging for them to engage in a great deal of depth on an issue. I actually think that if we were in a position where everybody had that ability to

engage in those issues in greater depth, we might see some solutions to some problems that we have. I mean, one can't of course completely get rid of the influence of the country immediately to the south of us, that has some very challenging politics.

To sum up, I think some of the questions that I would like to have answered are around how we keep those two things separate when we're running these two things at the same time, mostly around cost, around whether or not the cost is going to be driven, and around the particulars of how we have a common election, that occurs throughout the province, while we have elections occurring under slightly different procedures in different municipalities. I think that it would be reassuring in terms of the answers that we could potentially have.

I'm also, like I said, concerned about the dollars and the movement of dollars back and forth between different entities and just the volume, the half a million dollars. I think that's quite a significant amount of money. Admittedly, these individuals are running throughout the province, but it still seems like a very high amount of money. I'm also concerned about the idea of donations coming in from political parties during that cycle.

Those are some of the concerns that I have with this bill and with the rejection of this amendment specifically.

I think that, with that, I will close my comments. I'm sure that some of my colleagues have additional comments to make.

8:00 p.m.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to speak.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to the amendment before us this evening. I'm not going to speak for a great deal of time. I know that my personal views on the Senate are ones that I've held for a long, long time. Bottom line: I don't think much of the Senate in terms of its function in our democracy. I think it's a very broken House, the upper Chamber. In my personal view, it should be abolished. However, where we're at right now with it, it's a very complex issue.

At the moment here in the Alberta Legislature we're considering an amendment to a piece of legislation which reinstates Senate elections for nominees in the province. The amendment before us basically looks to eliminate the coincidental occurrence of municipal elections and the senatorial election. The mixing of the two, I think, is a dangerous precedent.

Really, I'm quite grateful that we in this province so far haven't had our municipal elections completely imbued with party politics. I think it's a very positive thing. It's sort of knocking on the door of becoming more and more partisan directly and in name. So far municipal elections in Alberta are not flavoured by party politics to the extent that many jurisdictions are, and I think we should keep it that way. It's healthy. There are other jurisdictions in the country which are also forming their decisions by consensus rather than partisan party views, such as the NWT council, the Northwest Territories council. That works very well.

Party politics being introduced into the municipal elections in our country would be, I think, a very sad event to occur. The twinning of the two elections would go a long way to making that happen and to marrying the principle of party politics to municipal politics and vice versa, and for that reason, I think that this amendment is a very wise effort at countering the movement towards party politics becoming part and parcel of municipal elections in Alberta. It would be a very simple thing for us to adopt this amendment and eliminate the possibility for the coincidental election of a Senator nominee during municipal elections, and I think that's what we

should do. If we look at what the results of that might be if indeed we did go down this road and had a senatorial nominee election coincidentally with municipal elections, you're going to end up having a mixing of the two, and you're going to end up seeing party politics get involved in slates of municipal councillors. Smaller municipalities will be even more deeply affected. It's the wrong path to go down.

So I'm very much supportive of the amendment to eliminate the mixing of senatorial elections with municipal elections. I'm very much opposed to reinstating the whole concept of electing senatorial nominees because, of course, as I mentioned, my views on the Senate are ones that are not wholly supportive of that body continuing in its present form, as a supposed Chamber of sober second thought in the country.

There have been some changes that have taken place in the Senate with the current Prime Minister eliminating party bonds from members of the Senate who had been appointed by Liberal Prime Ministers, releasing those bonds. We'll see the effects of that over time. By and large, I'm kind of half interested only in what takes place in the machinations of the Senate and what indeed the nominees may accomplish or may not accomplish if they happen to be appointed by the Prime Minister of the day to actually join the Senate to represent Alberta regionally in the Senate.

The Premier knows full well that no bill will give him the power to appoint Senators on behalf of the province. It's totally federal jurisdiction. Of the 10 nominees that have so far been presented, I think only half have actually been appointed to the Senate. I know that the Premier's explanation or justification for putting forward the bill in the legislation to reimplement the nomination of Senators by election is to try to ensure that Alberta Senators are more beholden to a province-friendly position, one that perhaps may favour the government of the day. I don't know if that's a reasonable expectation given that the appointments are not made by the Premier and that there's no second election that these Senators will have to face. It's simply one and done, so these Senators, once elected, will follow their own particular viewpoint on a given issue of the day, and there are no means of holding them to account. The accountability isn't there because it's an appointment and not an actual election, and there lies the difficulty that I have with the federal Senate.

It's a bit of a conundrum when you think of how embedded the Senate is into our Constitution and into our democracy. To envision how one in future might actually do away with that upper Chamber is a very complex issue. There have been lots of legal minds applied to it. There are unicameral legislatures federally in many places in the world which work just fine, but to disentangle oneself from a bicameral federal legislature to enter into a unicameral system would be one of the most complex things that a government and a legislative structure could potentially do.

We've basically muddled through in this country with the Senate that we have, hoping that the individuals who are appointed to it have our best interests in mind. By and large, I believe that the individuals who are appointed to the Senate do have the best interests of the country in mind. If you look at the quality of the individuals, largely they are people of high stature and are very learned. In fact, you know, the body to which they're appointed is the problem; it's structurally ineffective.

You know, many argue that it does accomplish a lot. I know that former Senator Tommy Banks, who was a very, very beloved individual here in Alberta, in Edmonton in particular, thought very highly of the Senate and spoke and wrote very deeply about his commitment to the work that the Senate did. There are others like him who were very passionately devoted to the concept that the work of the Senate was integral to the democracy that we have in



this country. However, as I mentioned before, I don't share that view. I don't believe the Senate is a body that adds on a net basis to our democracy because, of course, it's an appointed body. Therefore, legitimizing the whole process by having senatorial nominee elections is something that I don't support in principle.

**8:10 p.m.**

But, as I mentioned, given that we're now faced with a piece of legislation that we're trying to amend, Bill 13, we're speaking about an amendment which will, I think, make the bill better by eliminating the possibility of senatorial nominee elections being held at the same time as municipal elections across the province. It basically has a negative effect on the municipal election process, and it would be damaging unnecessarily. I don't believe that anyone who seriously thinks about the process of municipal elections in Alberta would think that putting these two together, the Senate nominee election in conjunction with the municipal election, is something that will lead to anything but a devolution of party politics into the process of the municipal elections in the province.

I've been involved in some municipal elections. I mentioned before that my grandmother was involved as a deputy mayor of her village for many years, and she ran regularly. She did have her own political party roots, but they never flavoured what she actually did when she ran as a municipal candidate. She was dedicated to the whole village that she ran in and was elected multiple times. In fact, the time when she didn't get elected, she ended up leaving town. My Uncle Bill didn't vote. She lost by one vote. She could have killed him, but she pulled up stakes and left town. It wasn't because of political affiliation that she won or lost that election because political affiliation didn't come into the picture.

I'm fearful that had there been senatorial nominee elections occurring at the same time as some of the municipal elections that my grandmother ran in and won, except for the last one of course, then we might have already seen party politics completely flavouring the municipal elections in Alberta.

Many people in this House have been councillors and reeves and mayors and deputy mayors and so forth, and many people who are listening to this debate right now are former elected officials from councils and counties, which should actually cause them to think seriously about what effect the municipal elections being run in conjunction with the senatorial nominee elections would have. I'm very glad that municipal politics don't have the partisan political flavours that we have at the provincial and federal levels. It just works better. It's a different type of local politics.

I quite often look at the fishbowl that our city councillors are in. I look at the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and I think: "Wow. He was in that fishbowl." If you think it's a fishbowl in this House, look at the 12 or 13 members of an elected body who are right there, front and centre, television cameras on them. It's a city of – what? – over a million people, 1.2 million people, and you're under the gun. To couple that with partisan political requirements and party politics I think takes away from the real type of local connection that councillors develop with their electorate. The relationship is different in municipal politics between the council and their electorate. There's no expectation or demand that party politics puts on councillors. They are their own gunslingers. They are able to go ahead and fire off at will. In places like Calgary I know the Member for Calgary-Buffalo always tried to aim straight, but he definitely shot at will. I wouldn't want to do anything that would influence the freedom of those municipal councillors to act as they saw fit by tainting their process with party politics, as I feel would happen if indeed we had the municipal elections run in conjunction with senatorial nominee elections.

I also have some pretty serious misgivings, Mr. Chair, about some of the money parts of this election act. Half a million bucks on a campaign: that's a huge amount of money. I'm unclear as to what happens with that kind of money after the campaign is finished. Now, if some of that money remains unspent, does it go into the political coffers of the party that supported the individual, or does it go back to the municipality that the individual comes from? Where indeed would any excess unspent monies go? A hundred thousand dollars can be spent on a nomination, and I'm given to understand that the provincial parties would be able to transfer up to a hundred thousand dollars to a candidate. Now, I'm not sure how many candidates they could transfer that hundred thousand dollars to, but it sure seems like a pretty available conduit to move a lot of money to places where political parties, provincial political parties, might want it to end up. This bill, this legislation, makes it easier to move some pretty big sums of money around to benefit provincial parties that want to play the game of electing a nominee for the Senate. Third-party advertisers can spend up to 30,000 bucks, but is that over and above the already defined limits?

There are a lot of unanswered questions about the numbers, the money parts, of this piece of legislation, and the amendment that we seek to have passed here in the House, Mr. Chair, regarding the running of the election with the municipal elections in tandem, is only one item that I think we need to see clarification on. I can see myself coming forward with a number of different amendments to this legislation because there are a whole lot of red flags that abound whenever you take even a cursory look at Bill 13.

Right now the current amendment deals directly with the fact that one of the events that the Senate nominee election could be held in conjunction with is a municipal election. You may think it's a simple thing to add it onto the ballot, but what you're doing is basically running two horse races on the same track, and the sulkies are colliding with the thoroughbreds. You're running that risk of mixing the two, and I don't think that even former Premier Klein would have done that. I mean, he used to like the sulkies, but I don't know if he would ever have wanted them to run with a thoroughbred on the same track at the same time.

The analogy that I use may be a little bit strained or stretched, but I think you get the concept that I fear would happen when you have a municipal election run in conjunction with a Senate nominee election. They're two different races being run at the same time, and they shouldn't be mixed. They should be separately run, and there may be other ways to do it that are outlined in the legislation. One, of course, is as a stand-alone election. We could also run it with a provincial election. That might make more sense. It would give an opportunity . . .

**8:20 p.m.**

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen to speak.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. What a great opportunity this night to rise and speak on this amendment, that has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, I believe, which appears to be an attempt to prevent a Senate election from happening in the province of Alberta, which is, really, just basically against the entire point. I don't know why the opposition would want to prevent a Senate election happening. Maybe it's because they want to continue what they did when they were in government, which was to spend their time trying to support Justin Trudeau and things like the carbon tax, which we know the opposition, when they were in government, spent a considerable amount of time on as their main focus, with the opportunity that they had while they were in power.

As you know, Mr. Chair, they spent most of their efforts inside this place shoring up the former Premier's close friend and ally Justin Trudeau, standing with him repeatedly, sometimes even in here, Mr. Chair. You weren't here yet inside this Chamber, so you didn't see it. It was shocking to watch her and her caucus repeatedly stand in this place and vote with Justin Trudeau, stand and vote against Albertans and instead vote with Justin Trudeau down in Ottawa.

The reality is what we saw happen in the Senate recently with bills C-69 and C-48, with Senators voting against their own province, Mr. Chair, voting against the interest of our province and the people that live here, again standing with their overlord Justin Trudeau and forcing through a piece of legislation that has devastating impacts on our industry and our economy and the people that live here. You know, I know that the NDP often want to have this conversation in the context of the word "corporation." They talk a lot about corporations and how it is somehow evil to be some sort of a job creator. But the reality is what we're talking about when industry is impacted by things that Justin Trudeau has done with his ally the now Leader of the Opposition, with his allies inside the Senate.

That affects real, everyday people. That affects people inside your community and inside my community. That affects people who are struggling to pay their mortgage. It means unemployed people. It means people that are suffering. I know the NDP don't seem to care about unemployment. They oversaw the largest unemployment in the history of this province, all of that without seeming to ever even care about the people that had lost their jobs. I think it was over 200,000 people who lost their jobs under the NDP government, something that, by the way, they still haven't apologized to them for, shockingly.

My point, though, Mr. Chair, is that they seem to think that this is just about what will negatively impact corporations. The reality is that this impacts everyday people. Bringing an amendment into this House that would stop us from being able to have an election to elect Senators, that could then be appointed to represent our interests . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Shame.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . it's a shame. It's shameful. Absolutely. I appreciate the hon. deputy House leader for pointing that out. It is absolutely shameful.

Now, nothing surprises me anymore when it comes to the NDP. The reality that I have seen inside this Chamber is that time and time again they stand with their ideology and against Albertans. They almost never stand and defend the people of this province. Instead, they stand and defend people like Justin Trudeau.

Now, I saw the former Premier, the first leader of a political party and the first Premier of this province to ever oversee a one-term government – so we know she lost credibility with Albertans and has clearly lost touch with Albertans.

**Mr. McIver:** One and done.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** One and done, if you will, Mr. Chair.

I saw her speak a lot in this Chamber on this bill, about the fact that this was a waste of time and a waste of money and that it would have no impact. But here's the reality. There have been Senator elections in this province. We saw the fight happen over bills C-69 and C-48. The Senators that fought for us fearlessly, that defended this province, that stood with Albertans were elected Senators that were appointed by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. They were people that were given a mandate by the people of this province to represent them in the Senate. They went and they

represented them inside the Senate. I appreciate that. I think all of us inside this House or at least on the government side of this House appreciate the fact that they would fight for the people of Alberta. Now, who did not fight for Albertans? Which Senators chose to side with Justin Trudeau and side against the people of Alberta, to side against our best interest, to make it so that people would continue to struggle to pay their mortgages, to disrespect this province, to continue to allow the Prime Minister of this country, his majority in the House of Commons and his majority in the Senate, to cause significant devastation to this province and devastate our largest industry? Which Senators chose to support him, Mr. Chair? It was the unelected Senators.

This opposition party, who's coming to this Chamber trying to stop Senator elections from being able to happen, are proposing to the people of Alberta that we continue to just go with the status quo of unelected Senators who will not stand up for our citizens, who will not stand up for the very people that they are supposed to represent inside the Senate, instead of the alternative, which is to elect Senators and, hopefully, have them appointed to be able to go with a mandate to represent this province.

Now, I think, Mr. Chair, this continues to show how out of touch the opposition, the NDP opposition, inside this province is with what Ralph Klein called severely normal Albertans. They do not understand what has taken place and the fact that they have been utterly rejected by the people of this province. Again, the only one-term government in the history of this province, a Premier who served one term and then ultimately got wiped out in an election that saw the largest mandate ever handed to her opponent, ever, and still can't come here and show any humility at all and show any sign of understanding that the people of Alberta have rejected the NDP's policies, have rejected the NDP's ideological arguments because of things exactly like this, that they spend their time inside this Chamber filibustering legislation that would allow Albertans to elect Senators that could go to the Senate to, hopefully, represent them and stand up for us. That's what they're spending their time doing, clearly not understanding the fact that when Albertans fired this Leader of the Opposition as Premier and her cabinet and her caucus on April 16, they fired her for a reason, because they were not listening to the people of Alberta.

Overwhelmingly most Albertans that I talk to want us to go back to some sort of Senator election. Ideally there are many people in Alberta that would like to see, certainly, even bigger reforms to the Senate. There are some complications constitutionally in the process why that is problematic to accomplish – others have tried – certainly problematic for a provincial Legislature to be able to address, but what we can do is that we can put in a process to be able to elect Senators as we have in the past and, ultimately, hopefully, get some Senators inside the Senate that will defend the province of Alberta.

The opposition needs to ask themselves where their priorities are, where they spend their time.

**Mr. McIver:** Who are they working for?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Like, who are they working for? It's a fair question. The hon. Deputy Government House Leader asked: who are they working for? Who right now is this opposition party working for inside this Legislature at 8:30 at night, filibustering a bill, trying to prevent Albertans the opportunity of electing Senators that could then go on to represent them in the Senate? Who are they working for?

Now, in my time inside this Chamber with the Leader of the Opposition and her colleagues that were with her while she was in government, I very rarely saw her work for the people of Alberta. I

most of the time saw her work against the people of Alberta. Her track record and her record in this Chamber are, in my opinion, quite appalling when it comes to the actions that they took that caused Albertans significant consequences, spending their time, of course, starting inside this Chamber with the job-killing carbon tax, which, Mr. Chair, I'm excited to report is gone. Thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the now hon. Premier of this province, who made a promise and kept it, campaigned hard and was able to dispose of the carbon tax.

But the reality is that when that member sat in this chair right here, she spent most of her time trying to bring in the largest tax increase in the history of this province on the people of Alberta. When they protested and said, "This isn't right; you never campaigned on this; you hid this from us when you were going through the campaign; this is having consequences on us because it's a tax on everything; you're increasing our taxes during a recession," when they brought that forward inside this Chamber, you know what she said, Mr. Chair? I know you weren't here, so you may not have known. She called them Chicken Little. She told them to take the bus. Her office told seniors – I bring this up all the time because it's so absolutely appalling – inside my community to go hold a fundraiser to pay for her carbon tax.

Fast-forward to April 16. What happened? They got fired despite the fact that when we were sitting on that side of the House, we would warn them over and over. My friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays would stand inside this Chamber and say: you're getting this one wrong; if you keep doing this, you're going to lose your job; you're not going to be in government if you keep going in this direction. They continued to go down this direction.

8:30 p.m.

Well, Mr. Chair, I'll do it on this side of the House, through you to the Official Opposition: if you keep behaving this way, spending your time protesting and filibustering against the will of Albertans, you're not going to have the job of Official Opposition much longer. You will go back to being the third party or maybe not have any members inside this Chamber because you're disconnected from the people of Alberta. You're not hearing what they want. There is not one person in this province that I've ever talked to that said that they wanted their Official Opposition to come here and bring an amendment like this to this Chamber that tries to stop senatorial elections. There's not one person that I heard say that.

Now, granted, there are different ideological beliefs inside this province. There are different political beliefs. That's why we have more than one political party in this Chamber. That's why we're supposed to have a civil debate, and it's okay for the opposition to do that. In fact, Mr. Chair, that's their job. But they know – they know – that they're standing up against senatorial elections purely based on their ideology, not on any of their constituents'. They know that.

They're here supporting their friend Justin Trudeau, who does not want to see any more elected Senators like Senator Black and Senator Tannas in the Senate, because they don't want to see it any more. They're just still doing the bidding of their boss Justin Trudeau in Ottawa. They've done it the entire time that they've been in this Chamber. Justin Trudeau's greatest ally in this country – I want you to think about that, Mr. Chair – his greatest ally in this country was the former Premier of Alberta. The former Premier, let's be clear. His greatest ally is not the current Premier of Alberta. The former Premier of Alberta was Justin Trudeau's greatest ally and still is. Think about that. A Prime Minister who is overseeing direct attacks on our province and our largest industry, a Prime Minister who has forced through bill after bill that hurts the very

people that we were sent here to represent, and his biggest ally is the then Premier of Alberta, now the Leader of the Opposition.

Do you know how long it took for the now Leader of the Opposition, then Premier, to even go and talk about Bill C-69 despite the fact that this party, when it was in opposition, continued to raise it in question period, continued to bring it up each and every day inside this Chamber before they would even take the time to say the words "Bill C-69" and get on an airplane finally and go down there to see Justin Trudeau and talk about it? Two hundred and some days. [interjections] They're heckling me because they don't want to hear about it. They don't want to hear about what they did. They don't want to hear about the fact that they hid for 200 and some days trying to back up their friend Justin Trudeau instead of getting on an airplane and going down there.

In fact, the now deputy leader of the NDP, who was Deputy Premier at the time, attacked me in question period because I had the nerve, she said, to suggest that somebody in the government get on an airplane and fly down to Ottawa and defend us on Bill C-69. She got up and made fun of me, that we want to spend all of our time in Ottawa. I don't want to spend all my time in Ottawa, Mr. Chair. I'm quite happy to be here in Alberta, but what I do want is my government to stand up against Ottawa and stand up against Justin Trudeau when they come and attack Albertans' interests. That's what I want. I certainly don't want the Official Opposition of Alberta to sit inside this Chamber and filibuster Albertans' opportunity to be able to elect Senators.

Now, this used to be in place here. Some of my hon. colleagues may not be aware that this was a process, one that we have used successfully in the past, that expired, I believe – I don't know if my friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays remembers.

**Mr. McIver:** A couple of years ago.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Oh, two years ago. It stopped at that time. The then government of the day, the NDP, let it lapse despite protests from the opposition.

You know, here is the reality. I hope that my good friend Andrew Scheer will be the Prime Minister of this great country at the end of October. I intend to do my best to be able to campaign so that he will do that. I can tell you what, Mr. Chair. If this province sets up a system to elect Senators, Andrew Scheer will respect the mandate that Albertans give him, and he will put him in the Senate, just like Stephen Harper did. Then we'll have more elected Senators inside the Chamber standing up for Alberta. Then if, God forbid, for some reason the NDP are ever able to regain this side of the House – I can't see it happening if this is their approach to legislating – at least then there would be more elected Senators inside that Chamber in Ottawa able to stand up for this province.

Tonight as we labour away in the Legislature, we have Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition spending their time filibustering a piece of legislation that Albertans want, that would allow them to elect their Senators. Mr. Chair, I don't know how your constituents feel about that. I do know how my constituents feel about that. They're not happy. Now, the opposition giggles because they know that in my constituency there are not a lot of people that are happy with the NDP, period.

**An Hon. Member:** What about Twitter?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, if Twitter was in charge, Mr. Chair, Greg Clark would be Premier. We're okay with that.

The opposition continues to show that they have absolutely no idea what severely normal Albertans think. They have lost. I would submit to you that they have what Ralph Klein called dome disease, and they've had it from the moment that they were elected in 2015

to sit on this side of the House. They still have it. I thought that they would finally show a little bit of humility, take a step back and say: "How did we end up being the only one-term government in the history of the province? How did we end up losing an election so badly that we handed our opponents the largest mandate in the history of the province?"

**Mr. McIver:** Without making any mistakes on the way, too.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah.

How? How? Have they done that, Mr. Chair? No. They spend their time trying to come up with new and better ways to filibuster the very thing that Albertans voted for.

Put aside the fact that the consequences to our province, based on the fact that the Senate voted the way that they did and the NDP stopping us from having more elected representation in there – they seem to have an ideological belief that there should not be elected Senators. That's their prerogative, I guess. But what they're really putting aside is the election promise that we made Albertans to do this. This is not something that needs to be consulted on anymore. This has been consulted on. It's called an election. On April 16 Albertans gave us an historical mandate to come and get this type of things passed. Mr. Chair, we've said it in here many times: this side of the House is going to keep our promises.

Mr. Chair, I don't know if in your time as a new MLA in this Chamber you got to experience the same thing, but my very favourite thing about being an MLA is actually when you get to go home on the weekend and talk to your constituents, go to the coffee shops, show up at the rodeos, go to the grocery store – for us rural guys grocery stores can be quite a journey that lasts several hours – and see the people that sent you here to represent them in this Chamber and see what they think. What I can tell you is that they continue to say the same thing over and over: "Good job. Go back there. Do what we sent you there to do. Tell the Premier he's doing a good job. We stand with him a hundred per cent. And tell the opposition to stop playing games and to start doing things for Albertans."

If you can't stand up in this Chamber and be united with the government against an Ottawa that just brought in and passed bills C-69 and C-48, when could you stand up in this Chamber with Albertans? Of all the things to fight against, they choose this. Of all the things. Think about that, Mr. Chair. Of all the things that they could choose inside this Chamber, there are lots of opportunities. There's been a lot of debate on legislation inside this place. There are other bills we could even be talking about today, but they choose to filibuster Senate elections. They can't give Albertans just that?

**Mr. McIver:** It should be a gimme.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** This is a gimme. Absolutely.

I'm actually shocked by it, Mr. Chair. Now, I guess at this point I shouldn't be shocked anymore when it comes to this Official Opposition. We know that they were the party of fear and smear. You've seen it the entire time that we've seen the NDP. At least under the leadership of this current leader, their focus is on fear and smear, attacking people personally, going with the politics of the negative. They have nothing positive that they can defend on their own record. That's why they always ended up there, brutally – brutally – focusing on that over and over and over. That's why Albertans fired them; because they're not interested in that. They instead chose the hon. Premier, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed's positive vision for this province. They made that decision on April 16. They said: "Take the fear and smear and put them on the other side of the House. Put that guy in charge, and we'll go with the positive vision." That's what they focused on.

But what is new since we've been here, Mr. Chair, this time around in the 30th Legislature is that they've moved from fear and smear to anger. Anger. You see it in question period: anger. It's just anger. It's what it is. My favourite thing is sometimes when they're doing it, they even look over real quick to see if we're all looking at them to see if we can watch them be angry, like my kids do when they're trying to get attention. Anger. Angry at whom? Well, I think they're angry at Albertans. They're angry at Albertans for firing them. They're angry that they got sent to the time-out box over there for their behaviour. They're mad about it.

But that's the wrong approach, Mr. Chair, and that's how you end up in a spot where you're voting against Albertans, where you're filibustering against Albertans on something like senatorial elections. It's because you're focused on the anger. You're not focused on: hey, what did I do wrong to end up on that side of the House? What did the Leader of the Official Opposition do wrong that she's not the Premier anymore?

*8:40 p.m.*

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, on A2 I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall rising to speak.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that we were talking about the amendment to a bill. I heard the Government House Leader speak about that we are blocking this election. This amendment is not blocking any election. I wish that he had read this amendment so that he would know what this amendment is actually doing to this piece of legislation, the Alberta Senate Election Act.

I guess on this side of the House I will agree to this much, that what this piece of legislation is trying to do is bring in some kind of process where the Senate can be elected and not selected. We, at the same time, do know that the Senate plays an important role in scrutinizing legislation, suggesting improvements, and they can even originate pieces of legislation in their Chamber. Those are decisions that impact Albertans, impact Canadians. I would certainly agree with the other side that there needs to be some process, that there needs to be some accountability. At the same time, we do know that in order to reform the Senate in a meaningful way, a constitutional change is required, and nothing short of that will cut it.

We have seen this kind of legislation before, and in fact under that piece of legislation on April 23, 2012, along with the provincial election, senatorial elections were also held. Out of 13 candidates the top three were Doug Black, Scott Tannas, and Mike Shaikh. Mike Shaikh: I will talk a little bit more about him. Two of these three people, Doug Black and Scott Tannas, were appointed by then Prime Minister Harper back in 2013. Mike Shaikh is still waiting, I guess, for that appointment. He got almost 309,000 votes. He is a fairly established person. He is involved in the community at large in Calgary with the Alberta children's hospital, with the Paralympic Foundation, with the Calgary Police Commission, and the list goes on and on.

At that time, in 2013, is when they appointed the two. After that if they'd wanted to appoint Mike Shaikh, they could have done so back then. While I was at a community event where the Premier was present and Mike Shaikh was present as well, at that time I heard about this piece of legislation, that they're bringing in this legislation so that people like Mike can get elected.

But we do know, at the end of the day, that it's a constitutional body, and the appointment to that body is governed by the Constitution. It's the prerogative of the Prime Minister to appoint whoever they want. Certainly, if the process were to be followed, Mike Shaikh would have been a Senator, but what we see here is that he is still not a Senator. In fact, this Premier, when he was in

Ottawa, had that opportunity to appoint Mike Shaikh to the Senate, and they didn't do that.

Again, this government was elected on a promise of jobs, the economy, and pipelines, and we are seeing here that they are doing the kinds of things that don't create jobs, don't help the economy. Instead, these are some kinds of political stances that may help the Premier down the road should he choose to take a run at the Prime Ministership. Other than that, I don't think that that was the platform, the mandate that this government was given.

What essentially this amendment is doing is keeping these elections separate from elections under the local authorities act, municipal elections, because we know that municipal elections are not party based, and now they're politicizing this process in a way that political parties, federal and provincial, should be able to nominate Senate candidates and bring politics into the municipal election. That's all this amendment is doing, asking this government to consider separating Senate elections from the Municipal Government Act, and it was not what the House leader from the government was suggesting.

There are many other things in this piece of legislation that are troublesome. Certainly, holding an election will incur expenses, and we are incurring public expenses through public dollars on a process that we know didn't work in the past. We also know that it's not likely to work in the future because these elections will in no way, shape, or manner bind the Prime Minister, whoever is in that position, in that office. They are not binding on the Prime Minister, so it's an exercise which will waste taxpayer money.

In fact, this time we are going one step further. We are also creating regulation-making powers under this piece of legislation, where, among other things, government, through order in council, will be able to set the remuneration and expenses that need to be paid to Senate nominees which, at the end of the day, may not end up in the Senate.

This is a piece of legislation that's not needed at all because we know that appointment to the Senate is a constitutional process, and this election will have no binding effect on those appointments. These elections didn't result in orderly appointments before for the Senators-elect in the 2012 elections, and they're not likely to be followed going forward, but they may give this government an opportunity, I guess, to rally the troops around their nominees, collect data, get contacts for their fundraising, and create opportunities for them to channel in the money that we were trying to prevent from affecting the outcomes of elections.

As government our first piece of legislation was to ban corporate and union donations, ban big money from politics. This is indirectly, I guess, bringing that money back into politics, where even political parties will be able to spend \$300,000 more on the Senate election and not only affect the outcome of elections through money, but they will also impact the municipal election, which will be happening at the same time.

This amendment: all it's doing is asking to separate these two elections. When it comes to the main bill, we can still talk to the merits of the bill, whether this election is at all needed, whether this process is at all legitimate or there are some other motives behind bringing forward this piece of legislation, whether it's just to please some people, that they will have a chance to run for the Senate and this government will have a chance to collect data, collect donors' information, and all those things. To conclude, I will say that this is a common-sense amendment, and this amendment will make sure that the elections under the Local Authorities Election Act are separate from this election, which doesn't have any kind of legitimacy in that it's not binding on the Prime Minister. It will not result in Senate appointments.

8:50 p.m.

If this Premier wanted to amend the way Senate appointments are made, they had that opportunity when they were in the federal government. They were there for 10 years, but they knew very well that that would require a constitutional change in order to meaningfully reform the Senate. They didn't dare touch the Constitution because opening the Constitution is difficult and its process of amendment is quite difficult. You need 50 per cent of the population with 50 per cent of the provinces agreeing to the amendment.

Again, this piece of legislation is a waste of taxpayers' money. It's not the process that has any kind of guarantee that it will be followed. It was not followed in the past and, in fact, not followed when, as I mentioned, Mike Shaikh was number three in that election in 2013. The other two Senators were appointed in 2013, and Mike Shaikh kept waiting for his appointment until now.

I think I will urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this amendment, that will result in separating Senate elections from the municipal elections. It's a common-sense amendment. I urge all members of the House to vote in favour of it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to clarify a couple of points, interestingly, that the Government House Leader made. First of all, it's clear he hasn't actually read the amendment because what the amendment does is not cancel or kill this bill, although I'm going to have a really hard time voting in favour of this bill. The amendment removes the ability to hold senatorial elections during municipal elections. The concern that we've been raising for the last little while is that having a senatorial election in the way the bill is written, being backed and funded by provincial parties, takes the nonpartisan element out of municipal elections and confuses them.

The other thing that's interesting is that, you know, the members opposite talk about how Stephen Harper appointed those that won their election races. However, he didn't do that across the country. He did it in a couple of instances. I think the issue that many of us on this side of the House have is that we are creating a piece of legislation that actually does nothing. It has no teeth. There are no consequences. We can't make the federal government adhere to whatever legislation regarding senatorial elections or races here in the province of Alberta.

The other thing is that what this bill is wanting to do actually costs taxpayers more money. I find it interesting that for a party and a government that talks about trying to save tax dollars, this bill does the exact opposite of that, again, putting up a front as far as an elected Senator who isn't actually elected; they're appointed.

Now, maybe part of the hope is that somehow this will get the attention of Ottawa, and they will make changes to the Senate. It's interesting that the Premier, who used to be a cabinet minister under the Harper government, had an opportunity to completely restructure the Senate. Well, he spent 10 years in Ottawa yet chose not to. At that time there were no problems with the Prime Minister appointing Senators because it would appear that it worked in their favour. Now, with a federal Liberal government, they're not getting their appointees or electeds appointed.

But, I mean, the amendment here is not to kill this bill. The amendment here is because of concerns that we have with this senatorial election taking place at the same time as the municipal elections and, especially, allowing provincial parties to contribute a significant amount of money. In fact, \$100,000 per candidate is a significant amount. Keep in mind, Mr. Chair, that just a few short

years ago we passed a bill in this House that restricted the amount that provincial candidates could spend during the election campaign to \$50,000. So the fact that political parties can spend \$100,000 – and that's just per political party per candidate. Again, as I mentioned earlier, you know, if there was a party that endorsed a number of candidates, well, they're doling out hundreds of thousands of dollars to the different candidates.

I just really wanted to clarify – I know that the Government House Leader loves to jump up and accuse us of attacking and fear and smear yet spends 20 minutes doing so as opposed to talking to the amendment to fix this bill. Again, the challenge that I have is that we are bringing forward legislation that has no impact whatsoever because this is federal jurisdiction.

Oh, the other point I just wanted to make is that at 8:30 p.m. this is not a filibuster. Welcome to work. This sounds very familiar to when the opposition voted against morning sittings because they didn't want to start at 9 a.m. I remember how much Albertans found that interesting. Now, we have filibustered. Of course, we have. It's a tool that the opposition can use. The Wildrose opposition used it. In fact, it's been used ever since we've had Legislatures. But, Mr. Chair, I want to clarify that at 8:30 p.m. this is the first time – well, it was. This is now the second time I'm speaking to this amendment. That was the first time I was speaking to the amendment. That's not a filibuster. Again, happy to show the Government House Leader what a filibuster looks like, maybe not in this moment, but at some point. But I just wanted to clarify that this is not a filibuster.

This amendment does not kill this bill; this amendment tries to amend it. The Government House Leader knows that, sat in opposition for the last four years, knows full well that the role of the opposition is to hold the government to account and to propose amendments to try to strengthen bills, which is exactly what we're doing, and, in that vein, also to talk about what the amendment would do in an attempt to sway members to use their good judgment to say: "You know what? This is a reasonable amendment, and we can support it because it will enhance this bill."

With that, because I'm not filibustering, I'll take my seat.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, do I see anybody else looking to speak to A2? I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I, too, will rise relatively briefly just to speak to this particular amendment. I think it's worth while, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview did already point out, to point out again that when the hon. House leader begins his commentary by suggesting that somehow the members on this side of the House are not doing their jobs as opposition members because we are introducing an amendment designed to kill their bill, he does himself quite a disservice, having very obviously not read the amendment. I can understand that there might be some members of the government caucus who are here just because they've been told to be here in case there's a vote, but as the House leader it would seem to me that it would be part of his job to read the amendments that we are introducing and certainly to read the amendments about which he is then going to engage in a rather passionate and loud series of accusations and statements.

I will say that listening to the hon. House leader lecture us about (a) being too angry or (b) not having enough humility is a little bit like – I don't know – listening to someone like Mike Duffy lecture Canadians on representational politics and best practices in filing expense claims. You know, there are some people who are credible on the issue, and there are others who are not. I would suggest that on the matters of showing an absence of anger or an abundance of humility, probably the Government House Leader is not the government's best foot forward on those two issues.

**9:00 p.m.**

Beyond that, you know, there is no question, as I stated the other night, that this is a bill that is a bit of a waste of time for all the reasons that many people on this side have outlined. The Prime Minister, whether it be the current Prime Minister or a future Prime Minister or even potentially the current Premier – heaven knows that many people suggest that that's a glint in his eye – may or may not choose to appoint Senators who have been elected. In fact, as has been pointed out, previous Conservative Prime Ministers did not appoint every elected Senator as a matter of course. They picked and chose. Even where there were elections, even those people who ran on the old-style Reform ideas of a triple-E Senate back in the day, when they had the chance, didn't act with the courage of their convictions. They acted with the courage of their convenience. They picked a few of the elected Senators that they wanted to appoint, and they ignored others. It is, actually, historically – well, let's just call it rich, for lack of a more descriptive term.

Nonetheless, you know, just on the overall issue of the Senate, I've yet to actually hear from members opposite, since they are so bent on moving forward and giving the Senate more credibility by, hopefully, having a few people who have had some passing democratic relationship with the people whom they would be seeking to represent. When they do that work of building up the Senate, the members opposite have yet to answer the question: do they think this notion of being elected for life is a thing to which we want to give authority, agency, credibility, power? I don't know.

It is true. I wouldn't call the NDP's long-standing opposition to the Senate an ideological thing. I would call it a democratic thing. I would call it the outcome of a group of people who have come together, whether right or left. It's not really a right, left issue. We just came together and looked at how the Senate functions and said that under the current rules there is no way to fix the democratic deficit which surrounds the Senate. This little sort of nibbling on the edges that this piece of legislation is attempting to do is not enough to fix the fundamental democratic deficit.

And contrary to what the hon. House leader suggested, that somehow that was an ideological position, I don't think it is an ideological position, at least from the context of things that are on the right or the left. It is simply a position that grows from a profound respect for democracy. The fact of giving more credibility to an institution which is built on people who are, for the most part, appointed or, conversely, appointed where elected at the discretion of the Prime Minister, as happened with the Conservatives when they were in power, and appointed for life – even if they get into the Senate as a result of the election, it is then for life. Are these things that folks over there in the UCP actually think are good democratic principles to enhance and to grow? I don't know. It seems kind of simplistic to me.

I would also suggest that there's another problem that, again, members opposite haven't really answered or discussed really clearly with Albertans, and that is the fact that the Senate is itself so nonrepresentational. We know that roughly – one second; let me just look at this – just under 10 per cent of Canadians live in the province of Nova Scotia. Sorry. I got that wrong. Just over 2 and a half per cent of Canadians live in the province of Nova Scotia, yet they have almost 10 per cent of the Senators. The same is true for the people of New Brunswick. Two per cent live in New Brunswick, and they, too, have almost 10 per cent of the Senators. Half a per cent of Canadians live in Prince Edward Island, and they have 4 per cent of the Senators. Then over here in Alberta almost 12 per cent of Canadians live in Alberta, yet we only have less than 6 per cent of the Senators. And that disproportionality extends to Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and B.C. What this is is an undemocratic

institution which crystallizes a lack of representation by population for people in the west, so why do we want to grow that?

Now, this is just an interesting conversation. I understand that members opposite put this in their platform, that they promised that they would do this. I think it was probably not a particularly salient part of what made people vote for the UCP. I don't think that it was a fully canvassed conversation with Albertans. Nonetheless, it was in the platform, so by all means go ahead and do it. We're certainly not here to filibuster this issue because, of course, it was in your platform, and, you know, have at 'er, go ahead, and do the thing. It's costly. It's going to cost us in terms of the money put into an election, and it will not bring about the outcome that you are pursuing, but you put it in your platform, so I guess that's good enough.

But like the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview indicated, talking about this in Committee of the Whole for the second time at 5 after 9, when we just resumed at 7:30, is not a filibuster, for heaven's sake. I mean, it's, I would say, a little delicate of the folks over there on the other side to start referring to hour 3 of the debate on this as a filibuster. Trust me; it's not a filibuster.

Just on the matter of filibustering and the matter of acknowledging the democratic will of the people of Alberta, there are some things that we think, certain criteria that we would consider in terms of what is or isn't appropriate for a filibuster. I would say that if the matter that was under debate was something that was in direct contradiction to what the members opposite told Albertans in the last election, well, what I would say, as a result of being so respectful to the people of Alberta and the will expressed in the last election, is that we have a very positive obligation to be here for a long time.

For instance, when the Premier said to Albertans, "We will not legislate on what we perceive to be divisive social issues" and then turns around and immediately legislates on divisive social issues, well, we have an obligation to filibuster because someone has got to hold the Premier to account, because Albertans voted for a promise that was then broken.

It is the same as when the Premier said to members of the media during the election campaign, "We will not do anything to undermine the entitlement of Albertans to overtime," and then they turn around and bring in legislation that absolutely cuts overtime by a third. Well, I listen to electors, and if electors voted for their platform, which they did, and the platform said one thing and then these guys turn around and do something absolutely different, well, it seems to me that it's actually my obligation to filibuster as much or as long as we can because certainly that was the will of Albertans, because we can only go on what it was that the Premier said to them during the election. In some cases what we've seen since the election is a direct contradiction of what the Premier said during the election, so we therefore have that obligation in front of us.

Nonetheless, I will say, going back to the first point, that the House leader ought to have read the amendment, because this conversation that we're having right now on this amendment is not about whether this bill should go ahead or not go ahead. As I said before, members put it in their platform. I think it's a bit ill advised. We're going to point out why we think it's ill advised, but if the members opposite want to go ahead with it, have at 'er.

The challenge that we have with this is that what the members opposite did not do and what the Premier did not do when he talked about this in the platform is that he did not say: we're going to write this in a way to create a whole bunch of loopholes in order to allow more money into politics. That's actually what this amendment is geared towards. This amendment is trying to avoid having more big money come into politics, increasing spending limits, and allowing

political parties to play around in areas that previously were not particularly partisan. That's a new thing, and that's not something that was actually in the platform of the UCP, so it is incumbent upon us to question that and to poke at it. What this amendment is about is ensuring that we don't have ourselves in a situation with the municipal election – we have previously had a practice in Alberta of not having provincial political parties engage in the campaigns of municipal politicians – where we start running slates or have municipal politicians with specific alignments to political parties and then use the senatorial campaign as a mechanism of getting more money into that campaign.

9:10 p.m.

That's what this is really about. It's about ensuring that the fundamental principles around getting big money out of politics, putting caps on how much money you can spend, making sure that votes win elections, not dollars, that those principles and those overall principles of democracy are protected and preserved.

By all means, carry on. Elect your Senators. Do your thing. It is not going to get you what you need. It's going to waste a bit of money. It's going to be a fruitless exercise, but – whatever – if you love it so much, go ahead. But don't use that as a means to then undermine the election financing laws that we put in place, that were hugely popular with Albertans, that members of this House, including the predecessor parties of the UCP, voted in favour of when we brought them through. You, too, are accountable to voters for that because voters believed that you agreed with the idea of keeping spending under control and getting big money out of politics. That's what you voted for when we brought this legislation in in the last term, and that's what the Wildrose ran on in 2015. That's certainly what we ran on in 2015, and that's what we delivered, and voters thought that that's what they'd gotten. The key, then, is to not use this piece of legislation as a Trojan Horse to somehow undermine the consensus that clearly existed in Alberta to get a lot of money out of politics and to ensure that votes win elections, not dollars.

I know the members opposite love to talk about, you know, the biggest democratic mandate ever, blah, blah, blah. As with everything, there are different sorts of variations of the facts that members opposite tend to go on. You know, there's sort of the – anyway, I won't get into all the descriptions right now, but one is sort of a half-correct fact, shall we call it. This is where, yes, the biggest number of voters voted for this government, because, of course, the population has grown. Obviously, they are nowhere near close to having the largest percentage of the vote of Albertans, not now and not even close. It's not like you're running second; it's not like you're running third. That percentage of the vote was surpassed by a number of other political leaders in this province's history. But, by all means, you know, wrap yourself in the cloak of population growth and pat yourself on the back and then accuse us of having no humility. Carry on and see where that gets you. Nonetheless, I digress.

The key here is that what we are urging people here and members opposite to do is to carry on. By all means, go ahead with your bill, but don't use your bill to undermine the principle of democracy driven by votes as opposed to democracy driven by dollars. Everybody here agreed that that was not a good thing a few short years ago. Albertans did not vote to have lots of big money come back into politics. That was not in your platform, so don't do it.

Our amendment is about ensuring that that is not what happens. So we would urge members opposite to support this amendment and understand that, contrary to what the House leader suggested in a very ill-informed way, this amendment is not about killing the bill. It is simply about making sure that the bill is focused on its

stated objective and does not allow other unstated objectives to be achieved as it currently is written in the bill. We certainly hope to see people support this amendment on that basis.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Hon members, are there any members wishing to speak to A2?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:15 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Dach	Notley
Ceci	Ganley	

Against the motion:

Allard	Jones	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Shandro
Copping	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	Long	Toews
Fir	McIver	Toor
Getson	Nally	Turton
Glubish	Nicolaides	van Dijken
Goodridge	Nixon, Jason	Williams
Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	Yao
Guthrie	Pon	Yaseen
Issik		

Totals:	For – 5	Against – 31
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving to the bill, I see the hon. Minister of Service Alberta rising to speak.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise in this Chamber to speak to Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act. I've listened to many powerful and persuasive speeches from my colleagues in this Chamber over the last few weeks, and I have to say, through you to them, just how proud I am to serve in this Legislature by their side. I am proud of our collective commitment to deliver on our promises.

But, Mr. Chair, sometimes we face obstacles on our path to keeping our promises to Albertans. Some of those obstacles come to us from the federal government. A perfect example of what I mean by this is the federal government's Bill C-69, otherwise known as the No More Pipelines Bill, and Bill C-48, the west coast tanker ban. These bills are bad for Alberta, they stifle our energy industry, they hurt our economy, and they kill Alberta jobs.

Mr. Chair, in this House we don't often find unanimous agreement, but one thing we did agree on was Government Motion 8, which said:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly call upon the Senate of Canada to reject Bill C-48, which unjustly discriminates against Alberta and prevents the export of its energy through the north coast of British Columbia, and to reject Bill C-69 as originally drafted, unless it is comprehensively amended to ensure respect for Alberta's exclusive provincial jurisdiction over its non-renewable natural resources and to ensure greater certainty for investors in major resource development projects.

I was proud to vote in favour of this motion, and I was pleased to see that we could all put our partisan differences aside to support

this motion. This motion passed with 80 votes for and not a single vote against.

This unanimous support sent a strong signal to Ottawa that bills C-69 and C-48 were bad for Alberta and that this was not a partisan position; it was an Albertan position. But, Mr. Chair, it didn't matter that Albertans were united on this issue because our Senators were divided on this issue. When the Senate ultimately voted on the fates of bills C-48 and C-69, it was our elected representatives in the Senate who had our backs. It was the elected representatives in the Senate who voted to send a message to the Trudeau Liberals that these bills were unacceptable.

But what about our unelected, appointed representatives? They didn't have our backs. Albertans deserve better, Mr. Chair, and that is why I am pleased to speak in favour of Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act. You see, bills C-69 and C-48 are not the only anti-Alberta pieces of legislation to come out of the Trudeau Liberal government in recent years. Trudeau's government is also pushing for a national carbon tax. Albertans rejected the carbon tax in the last provincial election, and I intend to stand firm and fight this Ottawa-led agenda.

I'd like to tell you a story from my home in the riding of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. During the election campaign I knocked on thousands of doors. I started in November of last year, and I didn't stop until election day, April 16. Furthermore, I hosted several town halls across rural Strathcona county, from Ardrossan to Colchester, from Cooking Lake to Antler Lake. I can tell you that the residents in my riding were most passionate in their desire to repeal the carbon tax. I assured them time and again that a United Conservative government's first action, if elected, would be to pass Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act. Mr. Chair, I'm happy to say through you to my constituents back home: promise made, promise kept.

But, Mr. Chair, I will tell you that many of my constituents were worried about what comes next. They were worried about Prime Minister Trudeau and his Liberal government's threat to impose a federal carbon tax on Alberta. I'll tell you now what I told them then. I told them that, if elected, I would fight every day along with my colleagues in this Legislature to stand up for Alberta, to defend our interests, and to fight against Trudeau and his agenda to impose a carbon tax on Alberta. I told them that we would not sit idly by and allow another carbon tax to kill Alberta jobs, to chase investment away from Alberta, and to raise the cost of living for all Albertans. My constituents were encouraged by my commitment to stand up for them, but, understandably so, they still held concerns about the federal government. That is why it is so important for us to pass the Alberta Senate Election Act. We need to make Alberta Senators more accountable to Albertans.

If you'll indulge me for a moment, Mr. Chair, I'd like to return to the campaign trail and the carbon tax conversation. I was often asked by my constituents: "What if you fail? What if Trudeau wins?" I'll tell you now what I told them then, that failure is not an option. We cannot afford to lose this fight. We cannot afford to treat the Trudeau government's carbon tax agenda with casual indifference. We cannot afford to cede our constitutional jurisdiction on this very important matter. How much more confidence could we have if all Alberta Senators were elected? As we have seen with bills C-69 and C-48, our elected representatives in the Senate have proven to be more likely to fight for our province's interests.

Back to the campaign trail and the carbon tax conversation, Mr. Chair, I was sometimes asked, "What will it cost to fight this fight?" I'll tell you now what I told them then: "What is the cost to Alberta if we choose to abandon this fight?" We've had a taste of this cost over the last four years under the previous government, when they



brought in their job-killing carbon tax, and it wasn't pretty. We cannot afford to allow a multibillion-dollar carbon tax to be imposed on Albertans, we cannot afford to chase away tens of billions of dollars of investment from our province, and we cannot afford to drive more Albertans into poverty due to rising unemployment and an ever-increasing cost of living. This is why it is so important that we pass the Alberta Senate Election Act to ensure that future Senate representatives will have our backs and stand up for Alberta.

One last time, Mr. Chair, I'll return to the campaign trail and the carbon tax conversation. Sometimes I was asked: "What about the environment? What is your plan for the environment if you repeal the carbon tax?" I'll tell you now what I told them then: "The world needs more Alberta energy, not less." I'll say it again because I'm not ashamed of the Alberta record of excellence when it comes to responsible natural resource development: "The world needs more Alberta energy, not less."

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

As we see the global demand for energy increase, it would be irresponsible for Alberta to voluntarily give up market share to other oil-producing countries, yet thanks to the mismanagement of the previous NDP government and the current federal government, this is exactly what is happening. If we don't produce it, someone else will. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and Russia will meet the global demand, and they will do so with a failing grade on environmental standards, they will do so with a failing grade on human rights protections, and they will do so with a failing grade on safety.

So I'll say it again, Madam Chair: the world needs more Alberta energy, not less. Developing our resources is the responsible thing to do. We have proven that we can balance our vital economic interests with the need to be responsible global citizens and good stewards of the environment. This is why I will never tire of standing up for the world-class Alberta energy industry, for if our energy producers meet the rising global demand, we will displace the volume supplied by other high-polluting energy nations. Indeed, the global environment will be better off. Not only that, but all Albertans will be better off because of the wealth generated by the responsible development of our resources. This wealth will create jobs. It will facilitate investment into our economy, including investment in new technologies and innovation.

9:40 p.m.

As you know, Madam Chair, given my past career as a venture capital investor I'm very passionate about technology and innovation. The wealth generated by a thriving energy industry would support ongoing investment into new technologies and innovation in our industry. This would position us well to harness technology and innovation, to protect our position as global leaders and responsible developers of our natural resources. This, again, is why we need to pass the Alberta Senate Election Act, to ensure that our Senators will have our back.

Madam Chair, to recap quickly, I've shared with you four things that I shared with my constituents during the election campaign regarding the threat of a federal carbon tax and, on a broader scale, the threat of a federal government imposing policies that are bad for Alberta. One, I told them: if elected, I will fight against a carbon tax and stand up for Alberta's interests. Two, I told them: failure is not an option. Three, the cost of abandoning this fight is far greater than the cost of seeing it through. Fourth and finally, the world needs more Alberta energy, not less. I want to take this opportunity to assure my constituents that I am as committed as ever to standing up for them. One tangible way that I can demonstrate my

commitment is by speaking in favour of and voting for Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act.

To wrap up, I'd like to tell you about a phone call I had recently with a friend and constituent from Strathcona-Sherwood Park. While I was on my way to the Legislature to prepare for the debate and the vote on Government Motion 21, my friend asked me what we would be working on that day, so I filled him in on the motion. I told him about how it supports our government's efforts to challenge the federal government's attempt to impose a carbon tax on Alberta. I told him about how it acknowledges that the federal government's carbon tax would violate our provincial jurisdiction and that we would launch a constitutional challenge, if necessary. I told him about how it recognizes the negative impacts that a carbon tax has on our way of life, and I told him about how it recognizes that Alberta's oil and gas industries continue to be global leaders in emissions reductions. You know what he said to me, Madam Chair? He said: thank you; thank you for standing up for us.

Madam Chair, through you, I want to send a message to my friend and to all of my constituents: I've got your back, this government has got your back, and if we pass Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act, we will be one significant step closer to ensuring that our Senators will have your back as well. That is why I am proud to support this bill.

**The Chair:** Other members on Bill 13? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a great pleasure of mine to be able to stand up and speak to Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act. There are times when we have to remind ourselves about the truly awesome responsibility that we have in this Chamber. I am one of 87 people in this entire province that has the capacity to stand up and to speak on behalf of my constituents to legislation. We should never forget how important this exercise that we call democracy is.

I think that sometimes we need to stop and take pieces of legislation and remind ourselves of the historical context which we are addressing in this bill today. I would draw to your attention that we are talking about a Senate elections act, that from 1864 through 1867 a group of gentlemen in various colonies of the British North American colonies had the opportunity to meet in places like Charlottetown and Quebec City to debate the union of the British North American colonies. In that debate they had to discuss: "What is the best form of government that we could have? How would we organize this democracy for this country, this idea, this thing called Canada and what it would become?"

Macdonald, Cartier, Brown: Fathers of Confederation. The Fathers of Confederation, Madam Chair, that brought the wisdom of this young country together to decide: how would we best organize ourselves? They chose a federation. They chose a federal system of government, one that would have a national government, one that would have provincial governments, a government that would be a bicameral Legislature within our national federal system of government. Why? We understood even from our very inception that it was critical that in a House of Commons that would be dominated by Ontario and Quebec, a Senate would be there to represent those parts of the country that were less populous, that could not defend themselves against an Ontario and a Quebec that could dominate the House of Commons.

Now, I've heard many of the opposition over the last day talk about the problems with the Senate, and there are problems with the Senate. I've heard them talk about the problems that they're bringing up in relation to this bill: "It's going to cost too much. There's no more accountability once they've been elected. They

stay there till they're 75. It could confuse the people by having them vote while there's a municipal election." Well, all I can say to the hon. members of the opposition is that sometimes democracy gets messy and sometimes democracy is imperfect and sometimes it's costly and sometimes it's confusing, but it's still better than any of the other systems that we have. As we move forward towards creating a better form of democracy in this country, it's always worth the effort.

We choose to have a federal system of government and we choose to have a bicameral Legislature because we understand that there needs to be checks and balances in this the second-largest country in the world, where somehow we have to manage to combine not only a national perspective but one that recognizes a local perspective at the same time. We're a country of very different local perspectives – we have huge diversity – and I believe that a Senate is an important cog in this experiment that we have for the rest of the world for how we can govern ourselves and do it with respect for the diversity of the people of this country and create laws that represent the will of the people. The Senate is an important cog in that, Madam Chair.

The Senate is there to be a second body of sober thought. The Senate is there to represent the interests of the provinces or the local communities and regions in this country. The Senate is there to act as a check on the power of the House of Commons, that can sometimes represent only portions of this country and not all of it.

There are problems with the Senate. We all understand that. What most Canadians don't understand is that the Senate is almost as powerful as the House of Commons – as a matter of fact, about the only thing that the Senate cannot do is initiate a money bill – and that it represents the regions of this great nation of ours: 24 from Ontario; 24 Senators from Quebec; 24 from the Maritimes; 24 from the western provinces, of which six come from Alberta; six from Newfoundland and Labrador; and one for each of the three territories.

The Senate can be a very powerful institution, but it rarely uses that power, Madam Chair, and it rarely uses it because it's unelected. It does not have in the minds of itself or in the people of this country the political right to defeat a bill that comes from the elected representatives of the House of Commons. It lacks the moral legitimacy to, on a routine basis, act and use its power of checking the powers of the House of Commons, that can become dominated by the more populous provinces in this federation. It rarely acts as a second body of sober thought with any real impact because it's not elected.

*9:50 p.m.*

Of course, this conundrum is most recently highlighted in the passing of bills C-48 and C-69 through the Senate, where it was obvious to all Senators that these were blatant attacks on Alberta and on its resources and on our ability to control our resources and our oil industry and that these bills still passed because in too many cases it believed it lacked the moral legitimacy.

Madam Chair, this is not the first time. I want to bring some context. Whether we're talking about Marc Lalonde or Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau or today's current crop of Liberal leaders, we see clearly leaders who spoke and who have created and who have passed legislation which has allowed the House of Commons, in the interests of Ontario and Quebec, to dominate this federation. The Senate has shown over the history of its existence that it is not a perfect institution and that it is often incapable of defending the legitimate interests of the less populated provinces in this federation.

It is because of these political realities, Madam Chair, over the many decades of our experiment that we call Canada, that Albertans

have fought for a better deal within Confederation. Albertans have traditionally fought for a triple-E Senate. Whether we're talking about the wake of the national energy program as it attacked Alberta's interests or whether we're talking about the more recent attacks through Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, we see that Albertans have consistently said that they want a Senate that is actually effective, they want a Senate that is elected, they want a Senate that is equal, and they want a Senate that can effectively represent the interests of Alberta. This is not unusual. Most federal systems of government have a Senate that operates as a triple-E.

If we take a look at the United States and we go back into the history of the United States, we can see that at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 the primary issue of debate would be: what kind of a Senate would the United States have? They came literally within minutes of falling on their face, of not having a Constitution, of not having the legal foundation for a United States of America as delegates left from the smaller, less populated states because they said: unless we have a triple-E Senate, we will not join this union. For six long weeks they called it "the turmoil," and it was only when the larger, more populated states agreed to an equal and elected Senate that they were capable of moving forward.

We've had our own debates through the Meech Lake accord, through the Charlottetown accord. We have consistently as Albertans lobbied for an elected Senate. We understand that to move forward with an equal Senate would mean that the federal government would have to move through legislation and that that's going to be difficult, but we in Alberta have always been the generator of new political ideas to draw this country together and to move it forward in a democratic manner.

We started with the Reform Party. Alberta led the way after looking at the push that the Reform Party brought forward for a triple-E Senate. You know, it was people like Bert Brown, an Albertan who carved "triple-E" in his greenfield. It's Albertans that have pushed for a Senate that's been elected, and finally in 1987 Alberta passed the Senatorial Selection Act.

It was my pleasure, in a small way, to work on the campaign of the first elected Senator in the history of this great nation, Stan Waters. Stan was the first Senate nominee and the first Senate nominee to be appointed to the Senate as a representative of the people of Alberta. Stan was a former military man, and he carried himself with a friendly and an outgoing nature, but there was also very much a no-nonsense, military bearing to the man. I remember travelling with him through the Yellowhead constituency as he campaigned to be our first Senate nominee. It was with great pleasure that I watched Stan Waters and eventually Bert Brown become our Senator nominees and be appointed to the Senate in Canada.

We had four Senate nominee elections in the province of Alberta between 1989 and 2012. Five of the 10 elected nominees in Alberta have been appointed to the Senate, and the Senator nominees are, we believe, more likely to fight on behalf of Albertans and for our provincial interests and to actually fulfill the role and the mandate that the Senate was supposed to have from day one.

I had the opportunity to travel on behalf of this Legislature down to Los Angeles for the National Conference of State Legislatures, and I chanced to bump into Senator Doug Black, and I can tell you that he was one of the people that spoke up at every meeting in defence of Alberta oil and gas interests in the United States. I heard him do that, and we've seen him do that with bills C-48 and C-69. He has defended the interests of Albertans wherever he has gone.

It was therefore with great consternation and great dismay that in 2016 it became apparent to myself and the opposition, the rest of my opposition colleagues, that the NDP government was not willing to renew the Senatorial Selection Act. Madam Chair, I don't

believe that I am aware of any other time in the history of this great nation when a government has actually taken away the right to the franchise, the right to vote of another group of Canadians, and they did that in 2016, when they refused to allow the renewal of the Senatorial Selection Act. Shame. Shame. How short-sighted, how dangerous when a government believes that it can take away the right to vote and the right to the franchise because they have so little respect for what the Senate is and what it could be and how it could defend the interests of Alberta. Of course, they see that they made a bad mistake because they did this at the same time that they desperately needed the Senate to have the moral legitimacy to actually intervene and defend Alberta's interests on Bill C-48 and Bill C-69.

So I am pleased today to speak to Bill 13 and to speak of my support for Bill 13. We all understand in this House that Bill 13 is not going to result in a triple-E Senate. Bill 13 will however move us forward along that path towards creating a stronger and better democracy in this country by allowing Albertans to have the opportunity to once again, through the democratic process, elect their Senate nominees so that our Prime Minister can respect the will of Albertans and appoint those duly selected Senate nominees to their rightful spot in the Senate.

Madam Chair, it is my firm conviction that Albertans have shown that they support the election of their Senators. I believe that in 2012, the last election, 1.2 million people voted in favour of a Senate nominee and took part in that Senate election. Albertans want us to move in a direction that will create a more effective Senate, one that is elected, and, hopefully, someday one that is equal.

**10:00 p.m.**

Bill 13 is not the final step, but it is, once again, a first step towards that goal that will create a better, stronger, more productive country because all of its people will have the capacity to know that they are listened to and that they have the capacity to influence the laws and the rules that will govern them. Bill 13 will restore once again to Albertans their rightful franchise, and for that reason I am very proud to support Bill 13.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just jump right to an amendment that I have and that I will hand over to a page. The top copy is for you, Madam Chair. I'll wait a moment till you receive it.

**The Chair:** This is amendment A3.  
Please proceed, hon. member.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm moving this on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning. The member moves that Bill 13, Alberta Senate Election Act, be amended in section 51 in subsection (17) in clause (b) by striking out proposed section 41.2(1.1) and substituting the following:

(1.1) With respect to an election under the Alberta Senate Election Act, no registered party and no chief financial officer of a registered party shall, with respect to each registered candidate that it has officially endorsed, incur any election expenses.

by striking out clauses (c), (d), and (e); and by striking out subsection 21(a).

I mean, the way that this bill is currently written, it appears blatantly obvious that the bill is about circumventing the elections financing rules in this province by allowing political parties to incur debt during a senatorial election. Keep in mind that this is about

provincial political parties incurring debt on behalf of senatorial candidates. In my opinion, again, if this bill truly is about the Senate, which are federal appointments, then why are provincial political parties incurring debts for this? This is about getting money, big money, back into politics and the electoral system.

As well, I've spoken at length. I don't think that this is actually democratic. I don't see the need for a provincial party to be involved at all. Through this bill, in other sections, senatorial candidates have the ability to raise and spend significant amounts of money; in fact, far more than any provincial candidate running.

So, Madam Chair, with this, I will encourage all members to vote in favour of this amendment because, once again, there's no reason for political parties to incur expenses on behalf of senatorial candidates.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of this amendment. I think, as my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview had indicated with respect to this particular amendment, you know, the idea here that we're allowing provincial parties to incur debt that they otherwise could not incur in order to support a senatorial election is a bit troubling. I've had the great honour on behalf of our government, when we were in government, to introduce our very first bill. That bill was a bill which got union and corporate donations out of politics. I still feel incredibly strongly about that bill. I think it was an incredible move on behalf of the people of Alberta.

When we look south of the border, I think we see a very troubling circumstance where the level of influence that money has on politics is very disturbing. The number of instances in which that money has had influence with respect to things even as straightforward as lobbying on behalf of the sugar industry, lobbying on behalf of the tobacco industry, lobbying on behalf of things that generate harm to human health – but they are able down there to get folks elected who essentially owe favours to these groups and individuals. I think that's a huge challenge with the system down there.

Now, we don't have that system up here. We do certainly see money coming into politics but not to that level. And I think that's good. I think that speaks incredibly well of our society, that we don't see that kind of influence. We don't see that kind of influence peddling. We don't see the same sorts of antics that we see south of the border. I think we should protect that. I think we should do everything we can to protect that because I think it's incredibly important, moving forward, to do that. So to see this bill coming in that potentially allows sort of back doors to allow that kind of money back into politics I think is a big concern. This would help to prevent that from happening. This sort of closes a loophole that this bill would otherwise be generating.

So I definitely am in agreement with this. I think it's a good idea. I think, again, that we should do everything we can to avoid American-style sort of money-influenced, peddling-type politics.

With that, I think I will close my comments.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A3?  
Shall I call the question?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:08 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Dach	Notley
Ceci	Ganley	

10:10 p.m.

Against the motion:

Allard	Jones	Pon
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Reid
Copping	Loewen	Shandro
Ellis	Long	Toews
Fir	McIver	Toor
Getson	Milliken	Turton
Glubish	Nally	van Dijken
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Williams
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Yao
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Yaseen
Issik		
Totals:	For – 5	Against – 31

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this again. I do know that, yeah, this is a fairly lengthy bill. There are a number of different parts to it. I have a question, and I'm hoping that the sponsoring minister will be willing to answer with respect to this. One of things that I always find interesting in bills is the regulation-making powers. I know that not everyone is the sort of legislative nerd that I am, but I always find it very interesting because the regulation-making powers potentially outline things that are in the bill but not really in the bill. There are sections that don't necessarily come in the bill, but then if you have strong regulation-making authority, potentially you have things coming in by way of regulation that are collateral to, associated with the bill but may not in fact be directly touched on in the bill.

The thing that particularly concerns me in the regulation authority in this case is section 27 of the bill. It begins on page 19. In this case, section 27(1)(c) is what interests me. What it says is: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations." Then it lists a couple of things, and (c) is "respecting the remuneration and expenses to be paid to a Senate nominee." Madam Chair, I think my concern with regard to talking about regulations about the remuneration that can be paid to a Senate nominee is that this suggests that what's going to happen is that someone will be elected by way of this election, and potentially there's a long time before they get appointed, years before they get appointed, and they are being given remuneration and expenses. I think that that's a pretty big concern.

I think the first question I have with respect to that is: who is it that's paying remuneration to these Senate nominees? To be clear, what we're talking about here are people who are nominated to the Senate but haven't actually been appointed yet, so at this point they are not actually performing any work. They're not doing a job. Essentially, what's happening here is that we're talking about a nominee who, again, is not yet doing the work, who has been elected but has not been appointed to the Senate so they are not working as a Senator, being paid.

Obviously, they are not going to be paid by the federal government because they're not a Senator, so I'm a little concerned that what this is saying is that we're talking about individuals – obviously, the government doesn't believe so, but I think that this idea of people being paid by the Alberta taxpayer to not do any work is actually a fairly serious issue. They obviously find it a bit funny, but I think it's a real concern. This is just an interesting regulation-making authority, that suggests that individuals are going to be paid to not do anything, that individuals are going to be paid to just wait around to one day be appointed to the Senate. I don't actually think that that is a very good use of funds. I think that that's actually a bit of a concern.

My hope is that there can be some sort of explanation provided on behalf of the sponsoring minister in respect to why it is that this particular regulation-making authority is in there, particularly if the plan is – and this suggests that it is – to essentially have these people elected and then, while they wait sometimes for eight, 10 years to get appointed to the Senate, have the Alberta taxpayer pay these individuals essentially to do no work, to do nothing of value. I think that that's a concern. I think that this House deserves to know what that remuneration is and deserves to deliberate on that remuneration and deserves to give consideration to that remuneration. I think the idea that we're going to pass an act that doesn't say directly, "Hey, we're going to pay people while they wait" and then, essentially, enable the government to pass a regulation about how much we're going to pay those people while they wait, that's a concern. I think it should be a concern to every member of this House. I think it should be a concern to members of the public.

I mean, I think it's just another question about how much this bill is going to cost the people of Alberta. Now, I'm not someone who thinks that the government should never spend money. I think the government delivers a lot of very important services, and those services need to be funded. But I'm not sure that paying folks who have been elected to one day serve in the Senate at some nebulous point in the future, potentially for years and years and years while they wait, is a good idea, particularly since what you're sort of getting here is an indirect way to pay someone.

I guess part of my concern with respect to this regulation-making authority is that you have political parties potentially supporting candidates, potentially paying to get people elected. Then, say, the election returns three or four names or whatever it is. So the first person gets appointed, but the last person may not get appointed for a number of years. In the interim the people of Alberta are going to pay this person to do what? Be on Twitter and essentially be a partisan person being paid by the Alberta taxpayer to work for a political party? I think that's a big concern.

Yeah. I think we should definitely be concerned about that, particularly when, again, we're talking about that there's no requirement on the federal government to appoint these people. So potentially, depending on who the federal government is, these people could be waiting for a really, really long time. Potentially, then, what we're doing here is that we're electing someone to sit on government salary, paid for by the people of Alberta, for an indefinite period of time and not do any work. I think that that is something we should be very deeply concerned about, and I think it's something that deserves an answer as to why it is that a regulation-making authority for that should be in there.

If the intention is to pay these people – so if that regulation-making authority is actually going to be utilized – why wouldn't there be reference to it explicitly in the bill? Why wouldn't the bill explicitly reference the fact that these people are going to be remunerated in the interim? I think the reason that it doesn't do that is because the people of Alberta would not be supportive of that. I think that if you asked the people of Alberta, "Do you want to have

an election with the municipal election to elect Senators, who may be appointed who knows when, and then to pay them for years or possibly decades on the taxpayers' dime while they don't do any work yet?" I'm not sure that that would have the same level of support.

**10:20 p.m.**

I mean, I think it's the very biggest concern in government. You know, it's exactly what allegations were over numbers of years about the former, former governments, the Progressive Conservative government, that they put folks on boards to not really do anything while they waited to be candidates. That was something that the people of Alberta didn't support. I think this is worse than that. They're not even ostensibly doing anything. They don't even appear to be doing anything. They're just not doing things, or potentially, worse still, they're being paid by the taxpayers to do partisan political work, to sit on Twitter and attack people. I think that that should be of deep concern to everyone here in this House.

That is my question on that issue. I think it's probably worth at this point, then, moving on to the bill more generally. Again, a large part of my concern about this is that it claims to do one thing, and it doesn't necessarily achieve that aim.

I think we can all agree in this House that the Senate isn't a big value-add in its present form. I think it doesn't do what we really want it to do, and I think that's a concern to everyone. I think the fact that Alberta is underrepresented in the Senate is a big concern. I think the fact that Senators are not accountable by way of election is a big concern but one that isn't necessarily addressed by this bill. Being accountable by way of election means that once you've been elected once, you're accountable to the public because you must stand for election at some point again in the future. These folks will not be in that situation as a result of this bill. So it adds elections, but it doesn't necessarily add that element of accountability because the element of accountability comes with re-election. The element of accountability comes with the fact that you come before the taxpayer again.

Also, I mean, it costs money, quite a considerable amount of money. I'm not saying that it never does anything useful, but in light of the inequality of representation, in light of the inability to hold individuals to account through future elections, I think that amount of money might be excessive.

I feel like there are solutions to that problem, but those solutions come through constitutional amendment. I think, honestly, there may need to be a bigger debate about not just whether this entity, the Senate, needs to continue to exist in its present form but whether it ought to exist at all, whether there is in fact a value-add, whether there is in fact sober second thought, as it were, occurring. I mean, I think, you know, if we look to other places, there are potentially challenges – right? – if you wind up with one Chamber having one partisan leaning and another Chamber having another partisan leaning. If people aren't able to see the common interest in the same way, you sort of get people blocking each other. So maybe that isn't an improvement. On the other hand, it seems in many ways like it might be.

Yes. I want to make it really, really clear that I'm not saying that I'm in favour of the Senate in its current form. That is absolutely not under any circumstances what I'm saying here. What I'm saying here is that I'm not sure that this bill fixes the major problems. I think that that would require a constitutional amendment. In particular, I am concerned at this stage about the idea that we may be remunerating people who have been elected but not yet appointed and are therefore being remunerated to perform no work. I think that that is a concern.

With that, I will close my comments on that and take my seat. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 13.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 13. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 12, Royalty Guarantee Act.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry, hon. member. We need third reading to be moved by the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Madam Speaker. I'm excited to move third reading of Bill 12.

This binder has Bill 13 in it, so it's not very helpful to me, Madam Speaker. But I am excited as all heck to move Bill 12, to bring back some stability when it comes to royalties inside this province. I want to congratulate the hon. Energy minister on bringing it forward, one step closer to bringing stability to the industry to overcome the obstacles that were put in place by the NDP and their former Premier and her government at the time, who put in a royalty review at the exact moment that Albertans were facing a recession, one of the worst recessions in our lifetime, that would go on as a result of that decision to create great instability inside an industry that struggled as a result of that.

Now, Madam Speaker, we shouldn't be surprised by that because, of course, we know that that then Premier oversaw a cabinet that spent most of their time before they were in government protesting pipelines and the energy industry, famously her Education minister, who stood on the stairs of this Legislature chanting "no more approvals" to a crowd of protesters against the energy industry. Of course, the then Premier, now Leader of the Opposition, let Northern Gateway be killed by Justin Trudeau without a protest, stood by as Energy East was put to bed as a result of Justin Trudeau policies without a protest, in fact spoke against Keystone XL when she was in opposition, on and on and on, so Albertans probably should not have been surprised at the action that the NDP would take when they came into power.

In case you were not following along – I know there's lots of legislation moving through, Madam Speaker – the passage of this bill would be an important step in strengthening investment stability in Alberta and put an end to the uncertainty caused by royalty reviews.

There have been two recent reviews, and they both told us what we already know, Madam Speaker, that Alberta rates were competitive with other jurisdictions, including those in the United States. But these reviews came sadly at a high price, at a high price for Albertans. The uncertainty caused by not knowing if the rates would change along with not knowing when the next review would be called resulted in industry leaving our province and billions of dollars of investments flowing out of our province. The outflow of billions of dollars of investment to competitive jurisdictions has been a severe blow to our economy and has impacted everyday Albertans.

Now, this royalty guarantee would help put our province back on the right track, providing long-term stability for investment and for jobs. Through this bill we're recommending an approach that would guarantee stability, ensuring no major changes to the oil and gas royalty structure for at least 10 years while also guaranteeing that once a well starts producing, it won't be subject to a royalty change for the same time period. The existing structure and process would still provide the ability to carry out the day-to-day requirements while being able to address significant market and technology changes.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, good evening. Great to see you.

Our government takes investor stability seriously. In fact, it's not just something we talk about; we are working to make it the law.

10:30 p.m.

Now, at this point I'd also like to thank all of my colleagues in the House for supporting this bill, and with that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing the debate when it comes to the Royalty Guarantee Act. I do in particular hope that the Official Opposition will take the time to continue to support this legislation as it moves through the House and support the hon. the Energy minister and the important work that she does to begin to undo the mistakes made by the NDP government, to provide stability to this province's largest industry, and to try to support this government as we begin to try to bring back jobs, restore our economy and faith in our industries, particularly our energy industry, and, basically, to undo the mistakes that were made by the former Premier and her former cabinet and government, many of whom – I should not say most of whom; most of them, actually, were not re-elected as a result of those decisions – still sit with her in opposition.

This is an opportunity for them to show Albertans that they recognize some of the mistakes that the former Premier made that caused her to be the only Premier of a one-term government in the history of this province and that they're rethinking some of their approaches and will no longer continue to go after our largest industry and instead will show support for them, the jobs that they create and the wealth that they create in the province of Alberta, recognizing that not only do they make our province better, but they also make it the economic engine of this country. Certainly, I think that her ally in Ottawa, while he wants to continue to get her support for things like carbon taxes, may not know it, but he needs her to actually support our largest industry because it's paying many of the bills, that this country depends on, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I would ask the Official Opposition to join with the government and support this important piece of legislation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is such a lovely opportunity to get up to speak to this bill, the Royalty Guarantee Act. I need to begin, again, by just sort of commenting and noting the degree to which the Government House Leader is prone to getting up and speaking and, unfortunately, demonstrating the fact that he hasn't really read what it is he's speaking to. This, unfortunately, is yet another example of that. He truly doesn't appear to understand what this bill is designed to do, at least in theory. What this bill is designed to do is maintain in place for 10 years the rules that our government developed. This is, in effect, the UCP's celebration and approval of the royalty regime that our government put in place, yet you wouldn't know that from the talking points, which are highly disconnected from the facts, that we were all forced to listen to just now. So it's very ironic that that's what this bill is allegedly doing.

What I'm going to do is just talk a little bit about the modernized royalty framework, the one that our government put in, then I'm going to talk about the process that led to that, and then I'm going to talk about why ultimately we will not be supporting this bill although it has nothing to do with the connection between this bill and our modernized royalty framework. Quite frankly, there's almost no connection between the two. Frankly, there's not much connection between this bill and anything that impacts the oil and gas industry, but we'll get there in a moment.

This bill, of course, talks about ensuring that there's no fundamental change or restructuring to oil and gas royalties for the next 10 years, which, of course, means, then, that we are left with the current state of the royalty regime, which, as I just outlined, is a system that was put in place by our government. Now, how did we go about that, Mr. Speaker? Of course, when we ran in 2015, we made it very clear that what we were going to do was that we were going to do the work as transparently as possible to evaluate the state of play of the royalty regime in the province of Alberta to make sure that the people of Alberta were getting the best value in the most sort of sophisticated and strategic way possible for the resources that we all own.

In August 2015 our government named the royalty review advisory panel, and we included a number of people, including Calgary-based energy economist Peter Tertzakian; the mayor of Beaverlodge, Leona Hanson; the vice-chancellor of the University of Winnipeg, Annette Trimbee; and, of course, the panel chair, Dave Mowat, who I'm sure people on the other side will know from more recent hits, including the UCP's blue-ribbon panel. These are the radical, leftist, antipipeline, environmentalist, crazy people that we, of course, immediately ran to appoint to this job because, to hear the Government House Leader speak, that's all we ever planned to do, and that's all we ever did. Obviously, I'm being sarcastic, for those who are reading *Hansard*.

In fact, what we did was that we appointed a very balanced group of informed people to analyze the oil and gas royalty regime governing the province of Alberta. They set about their work. They listened to industry, they listened to labour, they listened to environmental groups, and they listened to academics, business leaders, community leaders, and thousands of other people. We had about 7,000 online responses. We had 132 documents submitted by stakeholders. They held about 65 different stakeholder meetings across the province, and they spoke to over 20,000 Albertans through telephone town halls.

Now, back in the day, when they were in opposition, a common refrain by the UCP or their predecessor parties was: "You didn't talk to enough people. You didn't consult enough." Interestingly,

what we did with the royalty review framework was that we consulted in the way I just described, which, to be clear, is very, very different than the level of consultation that preceded this bill, which I believe was the sum of zero. Anyway, two different processes.

Nonetheless, that panel did its work under the leadership of the then Energy minister, Marg McCuaig-Boyd, and they came to a number of conclusions. I'm not going to go through all of them, but in effect there was quite a fundamental shift in how the costs of industry were being calculated and how the royalties were being calculated. In essence, the shift was made to reward high-tech, efficient production but at the same time to ensure that we were encouraging more activity in a more environmental and economically sustainable way and at the same time ensuring that ultimately Albertans received a greater return.

In addition, what we did was that we built in greater transparency obligations to the system and greater reporting obligations to the system to ensure that Albertans could access and have an ongoing greater understanding of what they were receiving in the way of royalties from the production and extraction of the resource that we as Albertans all own. That is what we did.

The other element of the royalty review is that it also sort of helped lay the groundwork and set up the framework for additional efforts that we subsequently took action on with respect to encouraging and incenting additional upgrading and value-added work in the oil and gas sector. Of course, we all understood that what we needed to do was stop simply ripping and shipping and do more to upgrade and add value here in Alberta because, at the end of the day, probably the single biggest value that we get out of the resources is the jobs that they create.

Contrary to the rather ridiculous assertions, once again, made by the Government House Leader, we were not hostile to the oil and gas industry. We were not working against them. We didn't make horrendous changes that devastated the oil and gas industry. In fact, they were quite pleased with the process, and they were quite pleased with the outcome. Indeed, it demonstrates the Government House Leader's failure to understand the actual legislation that his government caucus is bringing forward in that, as I said before, the legislation itself is designed to maintain the system that our government put in place.

**10:40 p.m.**

Again, you know, I just truly wish we could just be a little bit more respectful of the facts in this House. I think it would truly help us get our work done, and I think it would raise considerably the level of respect that all members of this House enjoy from Albertans if we could be a little bit more respectful ourselves of the facts and the history.

But don't take it from me. I mean, we had a number of people comment on the modernized royalty framework that we brought into place. Peter Tertzakian, as I've already outlined, a well-known and well-respected energy economist out of Calgary, said:

The Modernized Royalty Framework was a much needed policy in Alberta to match the pace of innovation and competition in the energy industry. One year later, we have a system that meets the needs of the people of Alberta and the industries that support our resource economy. Increased drilling and capital expenditures early in the year are positive trends that are being driven by commodity price recovery, industry innovation and effective policy.

Just to be clear, that effective policy is a reference to the policy that was introduced by our government.

Tim McMillan: I think people here will know him from other common favourites like the Canadian Association of Petroleum

Producers and part of a group of folks that is generally supportive of the current Premier. He said:

I commend the Alberta government for its timely approach to create a more modern royalty system through a constructive process. This has led to a royalty system that is true to the principles of the royalty advisory report. The new royalty system helps provide more clarity that investors need to plan for the future.

Again, that was not coming from a raving environmentalist who was trying to shut down pipelines. No. That was the commentary of a strong ally of the UCP and indeed of the Premier himself, and that was what they were saying about the work our government did on the royalty review framework.

So, again, it would be really helpful, Mr. Speaker, if the Government House Leader would stop saying things that are outright misstatements of the facts such that we are in a position where his government as a whole is misrepresenting the history to the people of Alberta.

Now, another person who commented on this was Gary Leach, the president of the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada.

The Explorers and Producers Association of Canada is pleased that the conclusion of this royalty calibration process will allow investors and oil and gas producers to move forward with a clear understanding of the new royalty and fiscal terms. The well-run process allowed the thorough exchange of analysis and information between government and industry. The result is a modernized royalty framework, with more transparency and better suited to support investment and development of Alberta's future energy resource opportunities.

Again, those are the comments that were made about the royalty framework that we brought in. I know that it is hard to actually listen to facts that counter the things that are being said by the leadership of this government, but it is really important that people do that.

Anyways, those are some of the people. I won't read all of them. I will simply leave that with you to outline, of course, that pretty much everything that the Government House Leader said in the introduction to this bill was inaccurate.

The reason, however, that we will not actually be voting in favour of Bill 12 has nothing to do with the merits of the modernized royalty framework or the merits of the issue of maintaining some certainty for investors or any of the things that are claimed by the government, once again inaccurately, to be the objective or the purpose of Bill 12. The reason we will be voting against Bill 12 is because Bill 12 follows a pattern that we have observed with respect to this government in a very short period of time, where there's a lot of what I would refer to as gimmick legislation, legislation that is explained to the people of Alberta or described – I'm sorry; that's a better word – to the people of Alberta as achieving a certain objective. But then, when you actually read the legislation, you learn that, no, it doesn't achieve that objective. Either it achieves something quite insidiously different than what is proposed, like, say, for instance, Bill 2, or it is simply a communications tool, an empty, fluffy communications tool that achieves nothing. Bill 7 falls into that category. I would argue that Bill 13 falls into that category.

But definitely Bill 12 falls into that category. Albertans voted for this UCP because they promised that they would end the practice of royalty reviews that create industry uncertainty. In saying that, they denied the history that our royalty review was actually ultimately accepted and welcomed by the industry. In addition, they said that they would end the practice, but then they brought in a piece of legislation that purports to end the practice for a mere 10 years, which actually is what was already included in the royalty

framework that we put in place. Then they didn't do what they said they were going to do in their platform. So it's another divergence from their platform.

On top of it, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't even do what they claim it does, even as they are diverging from their platform, because, in fact, this bill doesn't stop any significant changes to the royalty framework for 10 years. Oh, no, no, no. There are so many loopholes in this bill that you could drive 14 rigs through it tomorrow, and you could completely rewrite the royalty framework the day after.

The amusing thing about this is that it is not a Royalty Guarantee Act. It is – I'm not quite sure; what's the opposite of a guarantee? – a royalty revision act. It is an act to enable the revision of the royalty system, because there are several sections within which the government gives itself permission to ignore the guarantee. So I have no idea, Mr. Speaker, why in heaven's name they would bother bringing this piece of legislation in, because the stakeholders that they promised this to, most of them, are sufficiently informed and equipped to be able to look at this and say: "Well, this is meaningless. This is a fluffy piece of nothing. Why are they doing this?" Then presumably what they want to be able to do is hold up this piece of paper to the less informed folks within the oil and gas industry and misinform them on a consistent and ritualistic basis about what they have done.

Why does this government insist on so consistently building its record on misinformation? I do not know, Mr. Speaker. You would think that if they had the courage of their convictions, they would simply do the things they believed were right and say that they were doing them and then do them. Why we have to have this cat-and-mouse game between the facts and the objectives and the actual outcomes I have no idea. I mean, they're acting like a 25-year-old government in terms of the sneakiness of this stuff. It's really quite something.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, the leader has a lot of experience.

**Ms Notley:** Again, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview does outline that the leader actually has been in government for a long time. Maybe he's coming at this a little bit longer in the tooth than people had actually expected, with a little bit more cynicism in said elongated tooth, because this is a very cynical bill, Mr. Speaker. Ultimately, that's why we can't support it.

The royalty review that our government did in 2015 was something we did because that was what we promised in the election of 2015. We consulted widely, fully, comprehensively with people within the oil and gas industry. When we presented the outcome of that review, we were met with almost unanimous support from within the industry. Industry doesn't want it changed.

This government ran on a platform saying, "We will not have any more royalty reviews; everything will stay the way it is," which is an implicit endorsement of what we did, so the House leader needs to stop suggesting that what we did was wrong. But then having done that, they introduce this piece of legislation, which is not a Royalty Guarantee Act; it is Permission to Revise the Royalty Regime Act. It is absolutely the opposite of what they are claiming to the people of Alberta they are doing. It is a communications gimmick. That's the best we can say. I could actually get into unparliamentary language that talks about calling something that is black white, with intention. We all know what the word might be for that. I will not use that word. I will simply call it a gimmick, and it is a gimmick that we cannot participate in.

**10:50 p.m.**

Albertans have a comprehensive, thoughtful, strategic, reasonably well-working royalty regime thanks to the work of our government, thanks to the work of the people that we appointed to the panel, thanks to the work of the thousands of Albertans who participated in it and contributed their thought, their insight, their advice, their knowledge. As a result of that, we came to rest on a solution that works for the industry. So we have a good system in place. There is no need to change it. The system itself recommends that we not change it except in exceptional circumstances. This bill changes that not one bit, so it is not really worth the paper it's written on, I'm afraid.

As much as we are happy to continue to support this government in its efforts to work appropriately and collaboratively with the industry, to grow the industry, and to create the jobs that the industry supports in this province and across the country – and we are happy to do that; that has been our record from day one – we are not happy to participate in a gimmick or an effort to mislead the people of Alberta about what this piece of legislation does.

We will continue to stand up for the oil and gas industry. We will continue to support working people within that industry. We will continue to do the work that we had started before the last election, which was to invest significantly in long-overdue value-add and upgrading efforts to get more value out of each barrel of our resources to the people of Alberta as opposed to the people of Texas or other places in the world where they are processing our product. We will continue to do that work because I think that's fundamental and that's what all Albertans want to see. They want to see more jobs here. They want to see more upgrading here. They want to see more value-add here, and I'll support this government's efforts in doing that. I absolutely will. It's something that we should be joined together on because it means creating more good jobs for Albertans and for Canadians.

But this bill isn't that at all. This bill is a bit of pulling the wool over people's eyes around what this government is actually doing, and I think, frankly – I mean, I know that you're new. I know that maybe you don't have your plans completely lined up yet, but you don't need to play games like this to make people believe you're doing something. I would suggest that you just do your homework first and then do something real rather than putting out something like this, which is meaningless and, I think, almost a bit disrespectful to people who are operating within the industry, who expect to be treated as though they are capable of reading legislation and understanding what it means. I think we can all do better.

As I said before, there were a number of good programs that we had begun work on, and I hope that we'll see them continue because those are the programs that are going to get people back to work. Not fighting with Ottawa on some unwinnable fight about Senate reform, that politicians across this country have been working on for 30 or 40 years, solely for the sake of grandstanding and political positioning but actually rolling up our sleeves to come up with the programs that will get people back to work through the kinds of programs that we had in place like PDP and others: that's the way you stand up for Albertans, not using them as a prop in a political narrative, a story that you're trying to tell across the country for some other objective that, frankly, is somewhat irrelevant to the people of Alberta.

Anyway, let's focus on getting the real job done and not pretending to do it through gimmicky pieces of legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.



**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to join the debate this evening? I see the Member for Calgary-McCall has risen.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this Bill 12, Royalty Guarantee Act. I will begin by saying that it's another piece of legislation, a feel-good kind of piece of legislation, which actually does nothing for the industry. The UCP said many things in their campaign. One of those things was that industry had uncertainty and all those kinds of things, just like they said, about our budget numbers, that we have misled Albertans about the numbers and that we have fudged the numbers. At the end of the day, when that year-end report came in, actually we saw a reduction in the deficit by \$2 billion, meaning that we were on track, and the things they said to mislead Albertans during that campaign were not true. Their own year-end report, I guess, published under their watch, confirms that.

Similarly, they said many things about the oil industry as well, and now they're just trying to put forward a piece of legislation that somehow will bring certainty to the industry or bring stability to the industry, but it's actually proposing things that are already in place through our modernized royalty framework.

I will also briefly talk about that process, that framework. As the Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned, we put together a panel, and the panel consisted of highly respected business leaders, industry leaders, academia from Alberta and beyond. They listened to industry. They listened to labour. They listened to environmental groups. They listened to academics, business leaders, community leaders, and thousands of Albertans, who are the owners of these resources. During that process they had 7,000 online responses to the questions posted through the website. They had 132 submissions from stakeholders, 65 stakeholder meetings, and they reached 22,710 Albertans through telephone town hall meetings. That shows how inclusive and thorough that process was.

What the panel found: they found that overall our royalty regime rates were comparable to other jurisdictions. They also identified certain issues in terms of crude oil, liquids, and natural gas, and they recommended that the new framework and the changes should apply to the new wells starting in 2017. They also recommended that existing royalties should remain in effect for 10 years on wells that were drilled prior to 2017. Other recommendations included that there needs to be more transparent, thorough disclosure about the calculations and royalties per project, and rightfully so, because Albertans as owners need to know how their resources are sold, how they are provided the royalties, all those things.

Our government accepted all these recommendations. We accepted all these recommendations, and the chair of the panel, Dave Mowat, former president and CEO of ATB Financial, said:

When we started this process we committed to listening to Albertans and industry. Seeing our recommendations brought to life means Albertans can know their views are reflected in the Modernized Royalty Framework. This is a system that is built to last and I am pleased to see the positive reaction to it.

That was the chair of the panel saying that. The work they did included input from Albertans, from industry, from relevant stakeholders, and the recommendations they put together were, I guess, agreed-upon recommendations based on expert opinion. As I indicated, those recommendations included a guarantee of 10 years. They are trying to tell Albertans that somehow it was not there and that this act is putting that certainty there. That's, I guess, not accurate because that guarantee is already there.

**11:00 p.m.**

When we released the report in 2017, we made a number of changes to that. Certainly, those things, as they were coming from

industry, provided certainty to the energy industry. They asked us to put that 10-year guarantee there, and that guarantee was there that wells drilled before 2017 will see no change to their royalties for 10 years. By maintaining that existing structure for 10 years, industry has that certainty that they're suggesting that this bill will provide.

We also worked to set out a structure to encourage the reduction of costs in the industry, which will help them increase net revenues, and that will also help improve the return that Albertans can get on those resources. We also maintained the current oil sands royalty regime, which was examined by the panel and determined to be competitive. There were no changes to that royalty regime. We also, as recommended, provided unprecedented transparency by annually publishing a capital cost index for oil and gas wells and a wide range of data so that Albertans would be able to see how their investments are doing.

With all that, we also laid the groundwork for strategic development of value-added industry in the natural gas and oil sands sector with the establishment of a working group on energy diversification. We brought in annual performance measures against competitive jurisdictions using the principles Albertans identified as important during the review, including return to province, industry costs, investment levels, job creation, and environmental performance. With all these things in place, industry had that certainty, industry has that certainty, including that 10-year guarantee that was recommended by the panel.

If this government really wants to help the industry, I think there are a number of things that we can propose, can suggest that industry is looking for. For instance, we do know that we have production. We have the capacity to produce more, even with investments right now that exist in our resource sector. But we do know that we don't have the needed takeaway capacity, and that's exactly what industry is looking for. If we somehow create that capacity, that will certainly give them certainty. But what we saw from this government is that the oil-by-rail contracts, that would have seen oil moving by rail and creating a 120,000-barrel-per-day capacity – they are cancelling that, exactly the opposite of what industry is looking for.

When we were in charge, we worked to get TMX built, and the work our leader put in, the then Premier put in, is the reason we saw the progress on TMX, the first pipeline in more than 60 years to tidewater. We had Conservative governments here in Alberta, we had a Conservative federal government, and we didn't see that progress. Clearly, we did take the steps, the right steps, so that we can get our products to market and create that takeaway capacity that will attract investments in our resource sector.

We also stood up for Alberta interests and put forward a number of amendments when the federal government brought forward Bill C-69, and here in the House they will say that we didn't do enough to stand up against Justin Trudeau and all that. Actually, the amendments we put forward on Bill C-69 were accepted by this government, the Premier, and no other amendment was put forward by this government. They actually agreed before the Senate that the amendments that were brought forward by the then Premier, the now Leader of the Official Opposition, were great and that that's the way to go. They adopted all those amendments. Those were the kinds of things that industry was looking for.

We also increased our focus on diversification of our industry by bringing in the petrochemicals diversification program. That helped us bring new investment to Alberta. We created, in consultation with the stakeholders, two new tax credits to encourage capital investment in our province. We increased ATB Financial's borrowing limits by \$1.5 billion to support small and medium-sized business entrepreneurs so that we can attract more investments.

Those were the kinds of things that industry and stakeholders wanted, and that's why we brought forward those changes.

Now there is this bill, which is, again, a communication tool that somehow there is uncertainty about these royalties and that by bringing in this piece of legislation, they will bring that certainty back. That certainty that they are trying to guarantee in that: that was recommended by the industry, that was recommended by our Royalty Review Advisory Panel, and we accepted all those recommendations, and that certainty is already there. This will not help industry in any way to address issues that they are facing.

With that, I can also say that, like many other names of their bills, this bill is not providing any guarantee that royalties will not be changed. Actually, industry is better off relying on the guarantee that is provided to them through the Royalty Review Advisory Panel, through those recommendations, because in this piece of legislation there are many, many provisions that allow the government to tinker with the royalties and in quite a substantial manner. For instance, the legislation allows to simplify or streamline cost calculations, processes, reporting, and all those things.

**11:10 p.m.**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment to the hon. member.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to the bill?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:11 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Jones	Pon
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Reid
Copping	Loewen	Shandro
Ellis	Long	Toews
Fir	McIver	Toor
Getson	Milliken	Turton
Glubish	Nally	van Dijken
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Williams
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Yao
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Yaseen
Issik	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Bilous	Dach	Notley
Ceci	Ganley	Sabir
Totals:	For – 32	Against – 6

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

## Bill 2

### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move third reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

For the past month this government has shown that it can and will deliver on its promises, that we are committed to following through on the very things we heard from Albertans. We committed to

restoring democracy in the workplace so that workers can make decisions free from intimidation and harassment. We committed to easing the burden on workers when they have an issue that requires review from multiple bodies, often at times that are difficult and confusing for them. We committed to ensuring that both employers and employees have flexibility on how they choose to deal with overtime. We committed to restoring fairness to general holiday pay. Finally, we committed to working without relent to get Albertans back to work.

The open for business act will reduce the burden on job creators, get Albertans back to work, give workers flexibility, and let investors know that Alberta is open for business. We know that it is the free market and entrepreneurial drive that has made Alberta the great province it is today. We want our province to continue to grow by ensuring that it is the best place to live, work, and raise a family, and this bill is part of that dream.

This bill is about creating jobs and opportunity, the very thing that has been bringing people to Alberta for over 100 years. I'm so blessed to have grown up in this province, and I want to ensure that my children and their children have the same chance. Part of that is ensuring that there are jobs, good jobs, and that each Albertan has the ability to step into the labour market and onto the labour market ladder and become part of the economic engine of this amazing province. Through Bill 2, along with the youth job creation wage, we are doing just that.

I had the opportunity to engage in a hearty debate over Bill 2, and what became clear during this time is that our government and the members opposite fundamentally disagree on the best course of action to create jobs and opportunity for all Albertans, especially our youth.

**11:30 p.m.**

Research shows that rapidly increasing the minimum wage in the face of an economic downturn has a negative impact on jobs. However, the members opposite chose to ignore those facts even when they came from the Bank of Canada. Associations representing businesses all across Alberta surveyed their members and have been able to measure the real-life consequences of raising the minimum wage by nearly 50 per cent. The consequences were that people were laid off, hours were reduced, and young people could no longer find jobs. The changes to the minimum wage and other changes that added burdens to our job creators were not victimless policy changes. They had real-life consequences on Albertans, but we are here, Mr. Speaker, to change that.

Once passed, Bill 2 will make common-sense changes to the Employment Standards Code related to holiday pay and banked overtime. With these changes, employees will qualify for general holiday pay if they work 30 days in the 12 months before the holiday. In addition, employers will no longer have to pay employees general holiday pay when the holiday lands on a day that the business isn't open. We heard from a restaurateur in Calgary that was forced to pay out \$11,000 in general holiday pay on January 1, 2018, a Monday, a day of the week the restaurant wasn't open and had never been open previously. The policies of the former government made it harder and harder for small business in this province to keep their doors open, costing Albertans thousands of jobs. Balancing workers' rights with common-sense rules for business is a change that just makes sense and one that will help our job creators get Albertans back to work.

In terms of banked overtime, we are reversing changes made in 2018 so employers and employees can once again develop straight-time banked arrangements. We heard loud and clear throughout the election that when the previous government changed banked time rules, the employers could no longer afford to give workers

overtime. Call them unintended consequences, but the implications of this were that workers were neither having their overtime paid out nor banked. This was a change that went against the wishes of workers and employers. This is a problem Bill 2 will fix. Bill 2 will allow for employees and employers to reach agreements to their mutual benefit. For all those whose overtime is paid out, there will be no change. They will continue to be paid out at one and a half hours for every hour of overtime work. For those banking time, written agreements must be present between worker and employer, and if the agreement between the employer and the employee is going to be modified or cancelled, it requires 30 days' notice.

We have heard that this bill is going to force families to cancel Christmas, but between changes like those made to the general holiday pay, banked overtime, and changes to the minimum wage, among many others, Christmas really was cancelled for many families. Over the past four years Alberta families have endured economic hardship due to the policies of the former government. Mr. Speaker, we are here to change that.

Other changes in Bill 2 will restore democracy in the workplace by returning to mandatory secret ballots for all employees when voting on union certification. Decisions on whether to join a union will be free of intimidation or harassment, a fundamental principle in a democracy. Bill 2 also gives employees the option to seek advice from a neutral source on issues related to labour law. The bill will allow the Ministry of Labour and Immigration to create a program that provides or co-ordinates support for union members or potential members who would like assistance.

Other changes will strengthen marshalling provisions currently available under the Labour Relations Code. These changes will allow marshalling orders made by the Labour Relations Board to include any related investigations or inquiries. As well, a provision is being added so that newly established bodies can be included in the marshalling efforts, and this will make the lives of workers easier by cutting red tape.

The proposed changes we've talked about today are practical and common sense. They make it easier for employers to create more jobs for Albertans, and they provide a fairer and more balanced workplace for employees. Most importantly, they reflect what we heard from regular Albertans throughout the election and offer further proof that our government will follow through on the commitments we have made.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, these changes were outlined in our platform. We were elected to get Albertans back to work in part through this open for business act, and this is exactly what we will do. In the words of our hon. Premier, "Promise made, promise kept." I urge everyone in this Chamber to support this legislation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join the debate on Bill 2 this evening? I see that the Leader of the Official Opposition has risen.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise to begin speaking about why our caucus is adamantly opposed to this pick-your-pockets bill in third reading. This bill does not in any way, shape, or form encourage more jobs or greater business activity. What it does do is undermine the rights of the very people that this government is claiming to be supporting, and in so doing, it undermines the economy here in Alberta because taking money out of the pockets of working people means that there is less activity in our economy as a result.

Moreover, on a principle basis, it is just not our view that you create jobs by forcing people to work for less in more difficult circumstances with fewer rights. It is true that there are economies

that operate that way, but those are not economies that we want to replicate. That's not who Albertans are, Mr. Speaker. That is not the innovative, progressive, educated society that we have in this province. We are not here to provide cheap labour, where people can barely afford to make ends meet, in order to attract business. That is not the business model that we need to be pursuing in this province. We can do better, and I think Albertans expect us to do better. So this whole idea that we are going to attract business by a race to the bottom is backwards. It takes Alberta backwards. It's not who we are as a province.

What we did when we were in government was decide that we would endeavour to modernize Alberta's labour laws and bring them in line with the rest of the country. We weren't going way out on a limb or anything. What we were doing was bringing our laws in line with the rest of the country. For too long our laws had been out of step, and there were a number of examples of exploitation as a result of that.

One example, of course, that many people have heard us talk a lot about, is the matter of overtime. Up until the changes that we made, Alberta stood alone as the province in this country where people earning banked overtime were only paid at straight time. It was done in a way where it was not done by agreement. There were many opportunities for employers to drive through the legislation in order to compel workers to agree to take banked overtime at straight time. Of course, even though the rules around when you took banked overtime as opposed to paid overtime in Alberta were not dissimilar from other provinces, because in Alberta there was a difference between straight time and time and a half, there was a huge impetus and incentive for employers to drive around those rules in order to compel workers to take overtime in the banked form rather than in the paid form and therefore to have their overtime compensated at the rate of straight time rather than time and a half.

These are things that members opposite know. You know full well that this is the case, and it's somewhat duplicitous to sort of grab little pieces and pretend that that's not the case. We know that that is true. That's why employers lobbied so hard for it, for heaven's sake, because it saves them a lot of money, and it takes a lot of money out of the pockets of working people. Now, I'll be quite honest. I mean, certainly in my time, back when I was working, not in politics, I liked the idea of being able to take time instead of pay and always wanted to have the flexibility to do that, but I happened to work in an environment where I was able, because I was in a unionized environment, to negotiate those occasions.

But most workers are not in a union environment, and of course even fewer will be because of other changes proposed within this bill. As a result, we know fully that where an employer established a banked-time agreement with three or four employees in January and that's the agreement in the workplace, then because they tend to do seasonal work or project-based work and other employees come on staff, they find that that is the status quo at the job. They have no way to get out of that agreement if they want to keep the job. You know, the idea that they do have the ability, particularly in this job market, to compel the employer to rewrite the overtime agreement is fiction. It is absolute fiction, and the members opposite know it.

*11:40 p.m.*

What it means, then, is that people who were getting overtime at time and a half are now going to be jammed into arrangements where they are compelled to take their overtime in the form of banked overtime at straight time. As members opposite know, we did some rough calculations about what this would mean to the roughly 400,000 Albertans who earn overtime in the course of their

work. We relied on Statistics Canada information to come up with an understanding of the average number of hours these people worked. We also came up with an understanding of the average salaries these workers earned. We did the math, and we concluded that over 12 weeks those Albertans who work overtime stand to lose up to \$2,000. This is not small potatoes.

It's no wonder that Merit Contractors and the other people that ran well-funded third-party campaigns to support the UCP demanded that that legislation be changed. Of course they did. After running billboards supporting the UCP for the last two years, they got their reward, and the reward is being paid for by working people in this province. That's what's going on.

Let us be absolutely clear. This is not about opening Alberta for business. This is about making workers take less and earn less. Much to the point, Mr. Speaker, this is also in direct contradiction of the clear position that the Premier took to the media in writing during the election, where he said: this overtime plan will not negatively impact what people are paid. That just wasn't true. That wasn't true. We are doing something that represents a profound misrepresentation by this government to the people of Alberta, and it is one where working folks are going to see a significant reduction in what they earn.

Some people believe that the way to generate economic activity is to cut billions and billions of dollars of taxes for the very, very wealthy and then turn around and make working people earn less. That is not my view of how we build a progressive, sophisticated economy. It's the way you build a regressive, exploitive economy where we only succeed in racing further and further to the bottom and in reducing the opportunities for a growing majority of the population year after year after year.

There are other elements to this bill which are equally problematic. Of course, the members opposite have heard about that from many of the people in our caucus, all of whom have had the opportunity to speak about how offended they are by the pick-your-pockets elements of this bill and the attack on working people that it represents. We, of course, see the changes that are being proposed with respect to general holiday pay, and once again we see that Alberta will be out of step with almost every other province in Canada by making an unfair distinction. We pay less overtime and we give less general holiday pay because apparently Alberta workers aren't worth it. They're just not worth it. This government is saying to working people in Alberta who earn a wage that they're just not as worth while as workers in B.C. or Saskatchewan or Manitoba or Ontario or Quebec or anywhere else. If you are a working person in Alberta, you are worth less than people in other parts of the country: that is the message that the members of this government are saying to working people across this province.

The same, of course, is to be said about eligibility requirements for general holiday pay. Now, there are some provinces that do have eligibility requirements but not Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, or Quebec. Apparently, in Alberta we're not as good as the workers in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, or Quebec, and therefore we have to work longer in order to become eligible for general holiday pay. That is apparently the decision and the belief of the UCP and their Premier.

Then, of course, we have talked at some length as well about the issue of the changes to the Labour Relations Code. Again, the members opposite persist in discussing the fiction that somehow as a result of the card check process union organizers are able to sneak into the workplace and intimidate working people and that meanwhile employers, who actually have legal care and control of the workplace as described by the courts, have no capacity to control or intimidate people and that therefore the card check process is somehow undemocratic and that what we need to do

instead is give employers, who have complete care and control of the workplace as determined repeatedly by the courts, the opportunity to exercise their care and control of the workplace in a way to discourage people from choosing to join a union.

Once again, we have decided that because the UCP – I mean, we've seen it, quite honestly, from statements made by the hon. Premier. You know, he talks about union thugs. This guy has a clear hostility to unions. He absolutely has no respect for the constitutionally protected rights of individuals to come together in order to assert their rights and to grow their economic livelihood, and he fundamentally distrusts unions and the rights that they represent and, I guess, through them, the individual rights of working people.

That is a target of hostility for this Premier, and therefore anything that can be done to undermine an agency that would give some level of equality and voice or agency to individual workers in a setting where they otherwise are legally bound to follow the complete direction and care and demands of the employer, that is something that the Premier believes is fundamentally incorrect and wrong. Therefore, anything that we can do to undermine unions is a good thing in the eyes of this Premier, notwithstanding that the courts have examined in great detail the way unions work, the rights of working people, and the interaction between those things and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That is something that, from an ideological perspective, the Premier is very, very much opposed to.

Then, finally, although it's not specifically contained in this act, we do of course have references to the decision already to pick the pockets of the most vulnerable workers in society, which are those young workers under the age of 18. That process has officially begun under the watch of this government. They sort of sat around in a room and thought: "Who are the absolute most vulnerable workers we could take a run at? Is it the retired people? No. They're pretty good at lobbying these days. Might it be folks who struggle with disabilities? Well, no. I mean, you know, it's kind of politically difficult to take a run at them. I know. How about people who can't vote, who are under 18? Let's take a run at them." So they did.

*11:50 p.m.*

But it really does not speak highly to the notion of fairness or equality. We, of course, have heard from countless workers, countless employers who will talk about how what they do is that they pay people on the basis of the quality of their work. They don't care when they were born. They don't care if they have classes the next day or not. Those are ridiculous criteria. Obviously, this legislation is protected from the Canadian Charter challenge, likely because they are under 18. Again, another convenient group to target, but still it is a vulnerable group that this government has chosen to target.

Now, of course, they love to make this ridiculous argument about: well, the minimum wage means that that's why youth unemployment is so high. Well, in fact, what we know is that in economy after economy after economy and jurisdiction after jurisdiction after jurisdiction, when employment drops, young workers are the first to feel the effects, and that is just a thing that happens. To suggest that the unemployment rate for young people is high in Alberta because of the minimum wage is an illogical argument which is not backed by the evidence or the facts. As we've said many times, just look next door to Saskatchewan, that didn't raise its minimum wage. Their youth unemployment rate is equally high because they, too, were subjected to the slowdown created by the drop in the price of oil.

Moreover, the reality is that what you're going to see now – and I absolutely predict it; we all know it's going to be true – is that the

unemployment rate amongst young people between the ages of 18 to 20 is probably going to shoot up because they're going to be competing now with these kids that are 16 and 17. They're going to find it that much harder to find work. Quite frankly, you know, when you're 18 or 19 or 20 and you're just leaving home, that's probably when you need work even more. There's going to be this huge disincentive.

All around, it's just a bad idea for so many reasons. We, of course, have been pleased to outline that, in fact, you know, Ralph Klein's government recognized that it was a mean-spirited strategy that achieved no measurable policy objectives and that it needed to be abandoned. Now it's, of course, sort of a back-to-the-future moment here, where we are actually going back to before Ralph Klein and making mistakes that we should have long since moved away from.

Now, it is interesting. We just heard, generally speaking, in the introduction to third reading by the minister that he didn't just speak about the minimum wage as it relates to young people, but he also spoke in broad terms about how the minimum wage overall was just a very bad thing for our economy, that people lost their jobs, yada, yada, yada. Interesting that we're starting to hear that language. I'm curious because, of course, in the last election, again, the Premier very clearly stated that he would not go after the minimum wage for anyone other than young people and, you know, fingers crossed in the mind of the Premier, hopefully, women who serve alcohol in restaurants, because I'm sure that for whatever reason the Premier is not a big fan of theirs either. But, generally speaking, outside of women who serve alcohol in restaurants and young people, the Premier committed that the minimum wage would remain intact.

Yet it's interesting listening to the minister of labour because it really starts to sound like, overall, you have some concerns with the minimum wage. Now, obviously, the Premier understood that it was a very, very popular decision and that the vast majority of Albertans supported it pretty much from day one. I'm curious as to whether what we're now starting to do is start to move towards actually breaking that promise as well. I certainly hope not because, you know, again, it would be yet another broken promise by this Premier. Nonetheless, it is troubling that we are going after it with respect to youth, young people and students.

It's also very concerning, as I've said before, this notion of considering a liquor server differential. Just to be clear, I mean, I've been in this House since 2008. I sat on committees where the lobbyists for the restaurant association came to the committee and begged us to drop the minimum wage for people who serve liquor, and they came in with all their stories about the tips and yada, yada, yada. Then, of course, we would have other people come in. You know, we had weeks and weeks and weeks of hearings on these things back in – I don't know – 2008, 2009. I can't remember exactly when. Other people would come in. Economists would come in, and they'd say: well, actually, all of the stuff that the lobbyists for the restaurant association were telling you is mostly not true; here are the stats, and here's what we see.

Interestingly, I remember we actually had the Catholic bishops come in to speak to the committee, and to their credit they said: this is almost immoral, to suggest that we reduce the minimum wage for certain sectors of the population like this. They talked about poverty, and they talked about the impact of and the growth in poverty that would be experienced if that approach had been taken. I hadn't really expected that. I was just, you know, a fairly new MLA sitting on this committee, and I was very impressed with the depth and breadth of the representations that were made to that committee, not just by the normal sort of antipoverty activists, not in any way to diminish, of course, what they would say, but by a broad swath of people outside of the antipoverty groups, talking

about how bad dropping the minimum wage for anybody would be in our society and in our communities and talking about how much our communities depended on people who earn the minimum wage to contribute to the economy.

I would certainly urge the minister to review the submissions that were made at that review, that was, as I say, I think around 2009, 2010, something like that, because it was quite compelling. In fact, it's interesting because at that time, if I recall, the committee recommended against any kind of differential wage of any type. Then what happened, I think, at that time was that the Premier's office overruled it, but the committee itself, including the government members of the committee, had been quite taken with the depth and breadth of the submissions that they had considered.

That's why, of course, this idea, this ridiculousness – I mean, I don't know how many people over there have worked as waiters or waitresses in the service sector. Certainly, I've done my time there. I can tell you that nobody plans their life on the basis of tips. There are no rules, of course, around how much of the tips get kept by the servers in many jurisdictions. Often, you know, you'll have the same restaurant owners, who insist that their workers are overpaid because they get too many tips, actually then reach in and say: well, we demand that we get X percentage of your tips. Of course, there are no laws against that either.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

More to the point, the amount of tips that a waitress or waiter can earn is very much dependent on the employer. You can earn great tips if your employer invests in food and systems and the environment and all of those kinds of things that attract people that are going to give the tips – the kind of service or the kind of, you know, quality of the experience is going to generate people or encourage people to give tips – or you can run your restaurant in a way where the staff are run off their feet so that they are not typically getting as many tips because, quite frankly, they're fixing salads, they're doing dishes, they're isn't enough space to get drinks fast, or they're waiting in line. All the kinds of things that require good investment to provide good service: some restaurant owners won't make those changes. Who pays the cost of that? The servers. So then their tips go down. Anyway, I mean, this is just one of a thousand examples around the variability of tips.

12:00 a.m.

Frankly, as a woman, you know, you can get lots of great tips or you cannot get lots of great tips depending on what you're wearing, the height of your heels, how you respond to inappropriate jokes, all those kinds of things. And, quite frankly, those are not the things that should define what you earn in Alberta. We know that the majority of servers are women, and we know that when you're serving alcohol, that kind of dynamic is actually enhanced and accelerated. So you are actually creating a situation where women are almost putting themselves in some level of jeopardy in order to earn an appropriate income. I mean, it's just a mess all around. I can't imagine why anyone would ever think that was a good idea.

Anyway, I know that's not directly part of this bill, but obviously in association with announcing this bill, there was talk about setting up this minimum wage panel that is going to look at these things. It is a recipe for, you know, exploitation and abuse by employers but also abuse of the serving staff themselves, who are primarily women.

All in all, I would argue that there are many things this government can do to create more economic opportunity for Albertans. I would say again that we should start from the starting point that each and every Albertan has a right to earn enough money to be able to enjoy a reasonable quality of life for themselves and

their family. We should not be creating an economy that is built on people living below the poverty line. If we have to have people who are working in this province living below the poverty line in order to attract business, then we are not doing it right because in this province, in this country we can and should be able to do better.

We should build an economy based on innovation, on education, on aspiring to lead the country and the world in terms of economic diversification, economic innovation, technological innovation, those kinds of things. That's what we should be aspiring to do. We should not be aspiring to create an impoverished underclass so that we can attract businesses who rely on that business model to make money. Quite frankly, if that's the business model you need to rely on to make money, it's not a business that should be doing well. A business that needs to exploit others to make money, a business that needs to exploit its employees to make money: that's not the kind of business that we should have in Alberta. We need businesses that contribute to the economy, that grow productivity, that grow the economy overall, and create good jobs so that workers can live good lives. By "good lives" I don't mean that everybody needs to have everything, but we should be building an economy where people are technically and functionally living above the poverty line.

In effect, this whole notion of Bill 2 is this idea that that's what we have to do, that we have to allow for a situation where employers can exploit workers. I mean, this whole idea that by suppressing workers' rights, we attract business: underlying that is this idea that business will come if they can force their employees to work for less, to take less, and in many cases to live under the poverty line. I just don't understand why we would need to do that. We have so much in Alberta. We have so many resources. We have the youngest, most well-educated, growing population in the country, and we have so many tools to work with in order to grow and restore job creation in this province.

Quite frankly, I mean, even if this were to work the way the members opposite think it will, which I don't think it actually will, but even if it were to, if you march in here a year from now and say, "Oh, look; this bill created 10,000 more jobs, and they're all jobs where they're paying \$13 an hour," well, big deal. I mean, is that the model of economic growth that we want in this province? That's not what Albertans are looking for. It's not what they're used to. Albertans have had the benefit of a great deal of prosperity. Now we're struggling. Now many, many people are struggling, and all of us need to be very, very seized with how we move through the challenges that many, many working people in this province are facing right now. But the way to do it isn't to create a bunch of McJobs and say: oh, look; I've taken this \$80,000-a-year job and replaced it with a \$13-an-hour job. I mean, that's not a win.

About two years before the election we had introduced the first round of the PDP program, one of the first major investments in significantly upgrading and adding value to our oil and gas sector in about 20 years. It was designed to attract other investment and for more manufacturing to build off it because we were creating inexpensive feedstock for other manufacturing associated with it. We had done a good deal of research and been working with a number of different companies and believed that we could level up again and continue that process.

It was an incentive program for these businesses where they got tax breaks, but we still ended up with incremental income because this was income that we were pretty sure we weren't going to get otherwise, and we were creating jobs, attracting high-paying jobs that actually then, as I said, created sort of hubs of activity that would then, without any government activity, attract further jobs because we were doing things that weren't being done in other parts of Canada and only one or two other places on the continent.

Those kinds of things are where you leverage the tremendous assets that this province has to incent the creation of those kinds of well-paying, long-term jobs that require people with good educations. At the same time we were investing in our education system to create more high-tech positions in order to ensure that Albertans could get the education they needed to be prepared for the jobs that were actually out there.

I'm sure many people here are aware that high-tech employers were complaining, saying: "Well, you know, yes, Alberta is one of the best educated provinces in the country, and, yes, you have this very young, diverse workforce, but you're trained in the wrong stuff, and we need you to be better able at this stuff. Yet we have some core components that are going to attract our businesses to you: good infrastructure, good tech infrastructure, a high-quality of life, those kinds of things, but we still need people that actually have the skills that we need." So we announced 3,000 new high-tech spaces across the province to try and get people, not only young people but people that needed to retrain, to be able to go into these new jobs.

That's the kind of thing that you do. You don't strip away people's basic rights and invite employers to come in to pay below poverty rates and then work to kill unionization so that you can suppress wages. That's not a job-creation strategy. What you want to do is work more strategically to create the kinds of jobs that Alberta has the capacity to create.

Again, that's why I think that this is absolutely the wrong direction. What we know for sure, what we can touch and feel and count, is the absence of money in the pockets of working people. In return for that, we have no guarantees of additional jobs, additional investment, any of these kinds of things. We know – yeah – we just have no guarantees of that. There is no evidence of that. There's no evidence of that in the literature. There's no evidence of that from economists. This is simply a response to lobbyists. It's a response to, as I said before, the Merit Contractors and others like them. It sells out hard-working people who need every bit of money that they earn in order to support themselves and their families.

*12:10 a.m.*

At the end of the day, this is effectively a clear example of the differences between the governing party and our party. We believe that we move forward if all Albertans move forward. We believe that inequality is, in fact, an impediment to economic growth, and it is an impediment to quality of life. Members opposite seem to think that inequality is, in fact, itself an economic strategy. I think it's an economic strategy for a very small group of shareholders. It is not an economic strategy for a province or a community. That's the fundamental difference between the governing party and ours, and that is why I'm sure it will come as no surprise to members opposite that we will not be changing our position on this bill at this stage from the position that we took at the first stage, the second, and at committee. We will in fact be adamantly opposing it as we work to stand up for the people whose pockets will be significantly emptier as a result of this bill.

Again, I don't believe that this will do what the members opposite suggest it will. It is not about attracting business. It is simply about taking money from working people and giving it to well-organized employer groups who contributed significant amounts to the election of the current government. That is an unfortunate choice on the part of the government, and eventually, again, as I say, we'll also, I believe, see Albertans coming to realize that the Premier was not entirely honest with them in the last election on this matter of overtime and that what he said did not reflect what the intention was at the time nor what is happening in this bill now. So there is a

disconnect between what the Premier said to voters and what he is delivering now.

Ultimately, people will lose patience with that approach to governance, and I suspect they will particularly lose patience given the amount of money that this change reflects. But I suppose we shall see. In the meantime we will be certainly here to do everything we can to stand up for working people in Alberta and to be their voice and to continue, outside of this bill, to find as many places as we can to support this government if they do at some point begin to walk down the path of actually trying to create high-value jobs that people can count on from day to day, where they earn enough to genuinely support themselves and their families.

Should they come up with strategies that actually secure those kinds of outcomes, you can bet we'll be right there beside them, because I know that all Albertans do share a tremendous desire to have more jobs and to see the economy grow, and I do think that we all share in that desire in this House. I look forward to the day when we're able to see the members opposite come forward with the kinds of plans that will secure exactly that outcome for the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon members, are there any others wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This isn't actually, I think, the first time that I've had the misfortune of following our leader, so I will endeavour to be at least half as eloquent.

There are a lot of technical things I could say about this bill, but I think the first thing worth noting about it is that primarily my objection comes, actually, from the very thing that I would say was the thing that drove me into politics in the first place, and that is income inequality. I don't think that we build a stronger society by having some people make 1,000 times more than other people do. Now, I'm not suggesting by any means that everyone should make the same regardless of their background or training or experience or what it is they do. I definitely don't think that that's the case. But what does concern me is the trend that we've seen over the last 20 or 30 years, where people who are working jobs are not in a position that they can afford to meet their basic needs. They're not in a position where they can buy houses and put away savings and afford for their children to go to school. I don't think that that creates a better society. I think that a better society is one in which people who are working full-time are able to do that. I'm not suggesting that they should have a lavish lifestyle, but I'm suggesting that, you know, food and shelter should not be out of their reach.

That is why I'm so troubled by bills like this because it does exactly that. It takes away from those who have the least and gives to those who have the most, and I don't think it is a strategy that will diversify the economy. I don't think it is a strategy that will create additional jobs. I think there's a lot of evidence out there and there's a lot of research that's been done that suggests that taking from those who have the least and giving to those who have the most does not drive your economy.

I think that even if we look at it from sort of a hypothetical perspective, even if we consider, say, a small coffee shop in which you have 10 people on shift at any given point in time, and those 10 people are the number of people that are necessary to do the work given how busy the coffee shop is, I think that if you take those 10 people and instead of paying them \$15 an hour you pay them \$13 an hour, that isn't going to cause the employer to go out and hire an

11th person even though the amount of work hasn't changed. I don't think anybody runs a business like that. I think it would be crazy to run a business like that. You wouldn't hire another person to do work that doesn't exist. That's just not how it works.

So I think this idea that we generate jobs by taking away from those who have the least just doesn't work. By contrast, if we actually pay those front-line coffee shop workers a little bit more – they are people who have less, who probably can't afford to purchase a coffee at a coffee shop, who are probably struggling to pay for their groceries and their rent – they're way more likely to go out and buy a coffee at that shop, which drives demand for the coffee in the shop, and that driving of demand is actually what will cause that employer to hire an 11th person.

I think that there is an enormous amount of good analysis out there that would lead us to believe that, but I think that even if we sit back and reflect on it, it's more obvious that putting money in the hands of those who have less has more of a beneficial impact on the economy than putting money in the hands of those who have more. This bill clearly does the opposite of what I would like it to do. It puts money in the hands of those who have more and takes it away from those who have less. It takes it away in the form of overtime. It takes it away in the form of compensation. It takes it away by removing the rights of workers to unionize and thereby sort of driving down wages throughout sectors of the economy in which people are already paid less. I think that that is really, really sad.

[The Speaker in the chair]

As the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out on several occasions, that isn't a business model we should be striving to create here in Alberta. I don't think we should be engaged in a race to the bottom. I think that we have an intelligent, educated – I think this is one of the best places in the world to live. I think that we should have faith in those people and their ability to move forward and to generate a better economy that doesn't require that we race to the bottom, that doesn't require that we take from those who have the least, that doesn't require that we rely upon the labour of those who at the end of the day are having trouble affording shelter and food, just the basics.

12:20 a.m.

That is probably one of the things that is most troubling about this to me. I think we've seen this from the government on a number of fronts the idea of putting money in the hands of the richest in terms of the economy. I think it's wrong on a number of bases, but quite apart from talking about the incomes that people earn, I think another thing worth talking about is what people come into all this. Say that you turn 18. You've come from a certain background. I was lucky. I came from a background in which my parents were educated, and they were able to pay for me to go to university. I had savings already when I turned 18 as a result of money that had accumulated, you know, in the forms of birthday gifts from my grandparents, that sort of thing.

Many people don't have that. Many people, say, have come from a family who doesn't have those sorts of means. They've had to start working when they were 15, 16 years old, and if they're lucky, they save enough to go to university. Some people have come to the country recently. Their parents have come to the country recently. They're working multiple jobs just to try to make ends meet, and they're young people who are working, they're 15- and 16-year-olds who are working. They're not even working to save for university. They're working to help put food on the family table.

I think the idea that we should ensure that we're giving cuts on profits, on corporate profits that go to shareholders, that go to

people who have come forward who have money to invest, and that we should take that money away from people who don't have anything, who don't have any money to put in and all they have to put in is their hard work and their dedication and their labour, I don't think that builds a better society. I think that those people who come into it who don't have capital when they hit the age of 18 and all they have to contribute is their hard work and they don't have any money, those people should have just as much chance to build a life, to raise their children, to put their children in postsecondary as anyone else has. That's what troubles me about bills like this and several other ones we've seen.

Another problem that I have with this bill is that they talk about making Alberta open for business, and they talk about driving the economy, but I think it sort of misunderstands what we're talking about. An economy, I mean, at the end of the day sort of philosophically is a relation amongst things. It's how we sort of distribute goods and how we distribute money. We're making choices. We're making choices about how we distribute those different things, and when we make the choice to continue to put more money into the hands of the wealthy, again, I don't think there's any evidence that that grows the economy, and I don't think that that's the kind of growth that we want to inspire, quite apart from the fact that it doesn't grow the economy. I think that there are other things that do grow the economy and do it better. I think investment in education, in diversification, in ensuring that we have skills training, investment in those who have the least to bring them up to a reasonable standard of living so that they themselves are able to contribute to that economy as well: I think all of those things have a beneficial impact.

I also think one of the things that I find troubling about this is, of course, that we do tend to be arguing about facts. The essential philosophical divide is that the current government thinks that when you put more money in the hands of those who are wealthy, it grows the economy. Those of us in the opposition side think that when you put more money in the hands of those who are in the middle class or below, that grows the economy. I think that, you know, there have been papers written on either side, but one of the things that really bothers me is the intentional misuse of numbers. We've seen that in this House. We've seen the minister of labour stand and refer to the youth unemployment rate, of course, never making mention of the fact that it's the same in Saskatchewan and they haven't raised their minimum wage at all, so in fact the two things are not causal in that way. I think that sort of thing bothers me. I think that not trying to talk to the public in as real a way as possible really, really bothers me.

One of my favourite classes at school – it was actually in my first degree, which is in psychology – was a class on the use of statistics in experimental methodology. That class had a huge impact on me going forward because it enabled me to do a thing that I actually think we should train all children in our schools to do, and that is to analyze the information that was coming in at me. It is possible to say only things that are true and still misrepresent the situation. If we strategically pick those things which we say and exclude other facts that would alter the picture, we can say only things that are true and still leave a vastly misrepresented picture for the public.

You know, I think of the Manning Centre and the Fraser Institute, all these places whose purpose of existence is to do exactly that, to create a misleading picture by using selective statistics and using selective studies and failing to have appropriate control groups. It really bothers me because I think that it's people intentionally misusing the information that they have. I don't think that that is how democracy is supposed to work at the end of the day. I think it leads us to make poor decisions like the poor decision that, in my view, is being made right now with this bill.

I think there are a couple of things that are worth commenting on in specific. One of the things that I would like to comment on is this idea around voluntary agreement around banked overtime. Sure, voluntary, but when courts analyze contracts, often even in contracts which are – I mean, arguably all contracts are quote, unquote, voluntarily entered into, and there is still an analysis performed of that voluntariness. Now, you have to reach a really high standard to hit unconscionable, but it is sometimes the case that there is a recognition of that. In fact, even in cases where we're not voiding a contract, where we're not saying that it's unconscionable, the court will recognize a disparity in bargaining power. That disparity in bargaining power can, in combination with other factors, add up to a situation in which the contract is considered inappropriate.

I really think that these quote, unquote, contracts to voluntarily have your overtime banked at straight time are a huge example. I'm not saying in every case. I'm sure there are some in which people are genuinely voluntarily entering into them, but I think there are a lot in which they aren't. I say that because before I went to law school, I took a job in which I voluntarily entered into such an agreement. I wasn't even aware that I had voluntarily entered into such an agreement or that I had a right to decline to enter into such an agreement. You know, I signed a stack of paperwork probably at least 100 pages thick with signatures and initials, and I went off to this job. It was always the case that there was no getting paid out for your overtime. You banked your overtime, and it was because you banked at straight time.

At the time I was already a university-educated person, fairly intelligent, and I guess that's all I have to say about that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Rachel said . . .

**The Speaker:** I would caution the Government House Leader for using names inside of this Assembly.

The Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

*12:30 a.m.*

**Member Ceci:** Well, I was listening, and I think you got to the point, hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, where you were talking about not knowing that you had signed away your time and a half because it was built in at straight time. If you'd like to finish that, I'd love to hear it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much. I think, essentially, where I was going with that is that I was a reasonably informed person at the time, yet I had signed this not knowing that I had signed this. In fact, I didn't know that I had any right not to sign it. So I think the voluntariness of this is what we sometimes refer to as a legal fiction, which is to say that we act as though it's voluntary, but in fact it's not voluntary. We use legal fictions all the time. They do sort of misrepresent the universe to a certain degree. I think that is a big concern.

One of the other pieces of this bill that I think would be worth commenting on is just the piece around the youth minimum wage, because there's a whole bunch of things that trouble me about it, one of which has to do with the fact that if you're in school versus not in school, that has an impact. I think this idea that we should go delving into people's lives and determine what they're doing with their money in order to decide what they're worth paying and that we decide on the basis of their age that they're not doing anything



useful with their money and therefore they don't need to be paid the same thing or they're not worth as much on the basis of the fact that they're still in school, that somehow they don't need the money or they're not using it appropriately – I think that just delving into people's lives in a way that concerns itself with whether or not we think they're deserving of the money or they're going to use it appropriately is pretty troubling to me.

At the time I think the phrase that was used about it was: people of lesser human capital. That phrase concerns me also because in this case we're referring to youth workers, but I kind of wonder where it could be extended to, and that is, I think, something that will continue to be very, very troubling.

With that, I think I will close and simply say that the reason that I oppose this bill is because I don't believe it has economic benefits and I do believe that it creates greater income inequality. I do believe that it puts more and more Albertans in a position where they are not able to meet their basic needs, and I fundamentally believe that those who work full-time should be able to afford food and shelter and to put their kids in school.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there are approximately two minutes remaining in Standing Order 29(2)(a). Does anyone else have a brief question or comment that they'd like to make?

Seeing none, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung is very excited to rise this evening.

**Mr. Dach:** I am indeed, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I'm always excited to rise in the House to speak to any piece of legislation. I do warn all members present in the House that I'm about to enter into another one of my in-depth technical analyses of legislation before the House, so get your pencils and rulers ready, and we'll see how deep a dive we get into today.

Tell you what, Mr. Speaker, if I thought my efforts tonight speaking to Bill 2 would result in convincing members opposite to vote against the bill, I'd speak until 2023. So just nod across the way if indeed you think that's something that would be even possible in the deepest, darkest realm of possibility, and I'll keep talking and keep changing the calendar, because it's that important to us on this side of the House to ensure that this bill never sees the light of day although the government seems intent on passing it. We're going to continue to ensure that the voices of those who are affected by this piece of legislation are heard loud and clear through us in the Official Opposition.

It appears as though the government wants to go back to old norms rather than the new normal, that breathed a breath of fresh air in the province over the four years during our government's reign. The new normal had a foothold for a while, but the old norms seem to be what this government is intent on going back to, dragging people down rather than lifting people up. We know that during the downturn, due to the price of oil, people were hurting because of that downturn in our oil industry, and the answer that the government has to this now, this current government, is to spread the pain. The government's role, they believe, is to enforce austerity economics, and we definitely are opposed to that attitude.

We had in the party I represent, the New Democratic Party of Alberta, a magazine. Actually, it was a newsprint magazine that went on for a number of different iterations, but one of the titles that it had for a long time – it was a newsprint magazine. It came out quarterly when we could afford to do it when we were struggling as a party. It was called vision in action, and that magazine is titled with a title that I think encompasses what we did as a government in the four years that we were in power, that we intend to do once again; that is, to make sure that we're always driven by a vision that's put into action to benefit Albertans, to move people forward

with a very positive notion of what the future is all about, because, indeed, we've always been a forward-looking party. I think that Albertans expect that.

The population has changed. The demographics have changed in this province over the last decade or more, and people from all across the country have moved here. We're one of the youngest jurisdictions in North America. I believe we're the youngest jurisdiction in Canada. Individuals who have that youth and that drive and that idealism don't wish to be dragged down by leadership that wants to take them back into their past and plant them in the dustbin of history and say that economic downturns are something that you're going to have to pay for with an austerity budget that's going to end up maybe balancing the budget, but it's going you put your family in the hole for a whole generation, and your children are going to suffer as well.

That's what Bill 2 is doing. It does things that punish people. It's no fault of their own if they're in a situation that they're in, whether they're young people or students working to go to school or whether they're in the oil patch and they've had to take on a different job, maybe a lower paying job. Any time that we've seen a downturn in the cycle in this province that has resulted in losses of employment, Conservative governments have responded with austerity measures, and they've taken a deep dive to balance the budget on the backs of working people so that they can create the so-called environment that business thrives in. That has been a failed experiment time and time again, and we're going down that same garden path. It's evidenced by Bill 2 that this government has learned nothing from the mistakes of past Conservative governments that adopted austerity politics, austerity measures of economics, and trickle-down economics to attempt to right the economic ship, as they say.

We saw a very different way of doing things. With our vision we took action, and we always will say that you should be looking forward. We did things like value-added processing and tried to incent that. We were looking to promote artificial intelligence investments. We are looking at new technology adoption. We were looking at diversifying our markets for all our products: agricultural, petroleum, intellectual. All these things are exciting, new, forward-looking technologies, and it's a vision that the current government seems to be lacking. Like, they just seem to be focusing on the problems that we have and seeing that the solution is to cocoon ourselves.

You've got a couple of choices. If you're under siege economically, as we are in Alberta, you can batten down the hatches and take a deep dive, or you can do something to empower your people to fight back, using every tool that the government has and can muster, and proactively drive consumer demand by putting money in the pockets of people who actually will spend it to generate economic activity. Consumer spending: 70 per cent of our economy.

**12:40 a.m.**

As the previous speaker just alluded to, there's a philosophical divide that is very evident here, and it's something that seems to be driving all the conversations on both sides of the House. The government of the day believes that trickle-down economics works, where if you put money in the hands of those people who have the most in society, they will spend it and invest and create jobs. That has been discredited for decades. We know that if you put money in the hands of the people who are at the lowest rungs of society or in the middle class or lower, they will spend it. They don't have the capacity to save, necessarily. They will put that money into the economy and thereby create employment.

It's commonly known that 70 per cent of your economy is consumer spending. Your small businesses thrive in that atmosphere because people will be locally spending and not investing just simply to create shareholder value and dividends. They spend it locally, and it gets invested and cycled and grows in your economy. That's been proven time and time again. Yet this current government seems to be continuing to drink the Kool-Aid of the Austrian school of economics or trickle-down or Reaganomics, whatever title you want to give. That is something that we will always be diametrically opposed to.

Now, I listened to a couple of our MLAs talking about their working in restaurants, and I don't know if I've spoken about the work that I've done in restaurants yet, but I actually did work in a restaurant. There used to be a restaurant called Franklin's that was on Mayfield Road and 112 Avenue, and I wasn't waiting tables – I was a cook; it was a university job, and I was there quite often on the night shift till 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning – but I did get a chance to observe the many servers, particularly women, who were having to suffer the ignominy of doing some of the things that our previous speakers talked about, where they, in order to earn the tips that they hoped to earn to get a living wage out of the work that they were providing, were wearing clothing that would perhaps encourage a tip. They were shutting their ears and shutting their mouths to the lewd language that was coming from some of the customers, especially after drinks were consumed.

They were wearing high heels that were pretty dangerous to wear, especially on the floor. I know that in the kitchen, in order to preserve the safety of our kitchen staff, we would actually salt the floors. We would throw salt on the floors, and that was a fairly common thing to do in a restaurant with a slick tile floor. You throw salt down. They get greasy and oily in front of the food prep areas, and so that you don't end up having slip-and-fall injuries, you throw salt down. But it didn't help much when you were having your servers come in from the restaurant area wearing the high heels on a slippery floor like that, and yet these young women, you know, were put in that position because of the fact that the wages that they had been forced to work for didn't bring their earnings up to a proper living wage.

The tips that they relied upon were pooled on top of that, and then they were skimmed. They were gathered together, and then the management actually took a percentage of those pooled tips. There was an excuse about needing to take that in an effort to – I'm not sure what – pad the bottom line. It was apparently an effort to create enough money to pay the costs of keeping the restaurant open. But the workers knew exactly what it was. It was basically the owner taking a percentage of the tips and putting it in the pocket of the restaurant and the bottom line of the restaurant. They didn't have anything to say about it. It was a situation where they either accepted that or didn't work there.

That's a part of the old norms that this government wants to go back to. Frankly, I'm very convinced that the people that I'm talking to in my constituency who are working in these restaurants are not going to forget. The attempt to roll back the clock by this government is very much stuck in the minds of people who are working in the restaurant industry, for sure, who are young people, who are student workers, who are under 18 years of age, between 16 and 18, who are suffering a wage rollback in many cases or are just not being able to earn the 15 bucks an hour that they were before and know that with that reduction of two bucks an hour they're going to end up having about a \$4,000 shortfall each and every year.

That is something that those individuals will never forget. Over the next three and a half years many of those individuals, of course, will become of voting age, and they'll be passing onto others in the

high schools that they go to their experiences. This government will soon learn that if you basically try to place the burden of economic recovery on the backs of people who have little to spare, those individuals don't forget it. But far be it from me to tell the government to stop what they're doing. I mean, if they continue down this path, they will alienate a large section of the Alberta population, and it'll be politically beneficial for us.

But the carnage that happens as a result is not something that I want to see. You know, I'd far rather have the government put a halt to this plunge backwards into the depths of labour legislation that we should have long since parted from and adopt an attitude of really looking forward to the future because that's what our young people deserve. I mean, they don't deserve to have the negative, defeatist attitude that this government is inculcating. They're being told: "The only way to infuse an economy is to give the wealthy even more money, and they'll invest it to your benefit. But you, young man, young lady, who are 16, 17 years of age: we're going to cut your wages by two bucks an hour and cost you 4,000 bucks, and you're going to contribute that to the Alberta bottom line."

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to make a brief question or comment. I see that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View would like to do just that.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very interested in what the hon. member was saying. I always enjoy his comments, particularly on this sort of legislation, and I thought perhaps he might like to continue with those comments.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has the call.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for her gracious request for me to continue talking about the values that we have on this side of the House and how we think that they should be reflected in the government's treatment of its most vulnerable citizens, including those who would be earning minimum wage, whether they be students or not.

I'm not sure what's next. What is the next step for this government? They stepped back from the precipice of actually rolling back the minimum wage for everybody, and they just made it youth workers', which they thought maybe would be less politically painful for them to do. I really wonder with this government: what's next that they think they might be able to get away with? Is the next step going to be rolling back the minimum wage for everybody? I wouldn't put it past them. I'm sure they considered it, and they walked themselves back from that precipice, but I think that that's something that they probably would like to do if they thought they could potentially get away with it.

**12:50 a.m.**

But the pain that they're causing just with the youth minimum wage is something that they will find is going to be thrown back at them when those youth are finally voters in a couple of years. I know that I have many of those young people in my constituency in high school right now. I've talked to them, and it has had an effect of motivating those individuals to be much more politically active than they otherwise might have been.

It's a healthy sign, to see young people fight back and decide that what they see in their government isn't acceptable and to – you can't have a more effective social studies course in political activism than to have 16- and 17-year-old high school students have their wages cut by two bucks an hour. That motivates a lot of young

people to learn a lot more than they otherwise might about social studies and political activism and the fact that government matters. When that government is telling them, “Don’t worry; it’s good for you; it’ll be good for the Alberta economy; thank you for that \$4,000 investment,” those individuals are going to say: “Yeah. You know what? It really does matter who governs us. Honesty matters, and the intentional misuse of numbers matters. Who governs me matters. Whether I get involved in political activism matters. Goodness gracious, going to a protest matters. Going to the steps of the Legislature matters. Getting my friends together to talk about what we can do about this matters.”

It’s really helpful from a motivating standpoint to show these young people just what they can do to let their government know that they don’t appreciate being treated as second-class citizens or as collateral damage in this government’s race to try to balance the budget, to create a climate, quote, unquote, that will be conducive to investors, where they are the ones, the young people, who are getting this wage cut, exploited to create this climate that investors apparently will thrive in.

I won’t go into detail about so many of the very insidious changes to labour legislation that this bill, this pick-your-pockets bill, has proposed to encumber our population with. But just as far as the overall sentiment or the feeling of it, it is something that I don’t feel is going to do anything positive for the population in the province. There’s a total lack of vision. I mean, we hear from the other side so often – they talk about this Alberta spirit, the Alberta advantage, the entrepreneurial spirit – but it’s just so desultory, the underlying malaise that you get from talking . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate?

**Member Ceci:** I’ll join in the debate.

**The Speaker:** Well, this sounds wonderful. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has the call.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to join in the debate on Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. I think, more accurately, we’ve been using the term Bill to Pick the Pockets of Albertans. I would like to begin by complimenting some of my colleagues here, from Calgary-Mountain View, from Edmonton-McClung, just on some of the things they’ve been talking about. Like, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View talked about income inequality, and the reason that she ran in the first place was to make life in society more equal for people, not the same for everybody, but to ensure that those with the least have the opportunity to get ahead. I think that’s a great virtue to have for running for office, and I commend her for it.

When I think about the work my colleague from Edmonton-McClung has done, he too has brought forward a number of issues that are important for him. I want to tell him that I’ve never worked in a restaurant – everybody here has worked at a restaurant, it seems, except me – but I, of course, want to support people who work in lower wage positions. That’s why I got into the profession I did, early on, as a young social worker and tried to assist. I know there are many around this House who kind of travelled that same journey.

You know, I look at this bill, the pick-your-pockets bill, and I think about it, and I think about other bills that have been brought forward by this government. The bad-faith bargaining bill is having reverberations right now in Calgary, with I think over 700 people out, an information picket in front of Foothills hospital, protesting the actions of this government in terms of ripping up contracts with

people. I think there’s lots to look at in terms of the issues that are going on here with regard to the bills that have been brought forward. The hon. Leader of the Opposition talked about Bill 7, a bill to do nothing. We’ve got many, many bills that we believe will be problematic for Albertans for many years in the future.

As we tried to modernize the labour standards and employment standards in this province . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I understand that a shift change may be taking place. However, I encourage you to keep your conversations to yourself, or there are lounges available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has the floor, and I’d love to hear him.

**Member Ceci:** I appreciate it, all.

With regard to the Picking the Pockets of Workers in This Province Bill, the legislation introduces a number of problems, including cutting banked overtime, slashes to holiday pay, rollbacks to youth wages. The Leader of the Opposition and the critic for the area from Edmonton-Whitemud have all talked about the problems with all of those areas.

We on this side want to continue to support progressive legislation around labour legislation instead of things like paying out overtime hours at straight time instead of time and a half. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, that will affect 400,000 workers in this province and affect people in the oil and gas sector the hardest in this province. Of course, we’ve talked about looking at: over a 10-week period it would be \$2,600 that that worker would lose. We don’t think that’s a positive thing going forward for workers. As the colleague for Edmonton-McClung and others have said on this side, you know, every dollar that a worker, especially a low-wage worker, gets goes back into the economy, helps the economy out in terms of cycling in the economy, which is far better than putting it into the pockets of shareholders and going to the States or foreign countries, as we’ll do with the outcome of a bill like this.

We don’t see where this bill will create jobs. In fact, the government seems to be affecting jobs in this province negatively already. The colleague from Calgary-McCall has identified many places, many companies who have laid off workers already as a result of the efforts of the government and will continue to perhaps go down a negative vein as a result of the work of this government, which is not what we want.

We know that when Albertans bank their overtime hours and take some paid time off with their families, they shouldn’t end up with less money in their pocket, Mr. Speaker, and in their bank accounts, but that’s what will happen with this bill.

We heard, too, from the Leader of the Opposition earlier tonight that the Premier did not talk about this specific action during the election. In fact, what he said was totally opposite to what is now taking place. The Premier claimed that this move would not diminish overtime pay, but under Alberta law paid time off for banked overtime is considered wages and must be paid at time and a half.

**1:00 a.m.**

We know now that we’re getting behind the eight ball with respect to where Alberta will be. We will be behind about four or five other provinces, and all of them will be ahead of us. The provinces of B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador, and the territories all require overtime to be banked at time and a half. I can’t see where that’s progressive, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the actions. We know that, as the critic for this area has said, Albertans work hard, and they deserve to earn the same overtime pay as other Canadians do. Why

does the Premier believe that Albertans deserve less? It doesn't make sense to me.

We believe that banked overtime isn't the only change that's going to hurt workers in this province. The UCP is proposing to implement a \$2-per-hour wage cut to students between 13 and 17, and we heard a significant amount of that from, again, my colleague from Edmonton-McClung. We oppose those kinds of changes strongly, Mr. Speaker, because we believe that workers deserve equal pay regardless of their age or educational status. As has been said by the critic for this area, again, the value of your work should depend on the effort and skill that you put into it, not the year you were born.

Mr. Speaker, I was born many years ago, but I can tell you that I have never worked for a youth wage in Canada. It's been a long time since I've been a youth. Growing up in Ontario, that wasn't there. You were paid the same minimum wage as everybody else, and I don't see why Alberta would want to change and go back to a time when wage and age discrimination took place. It's going to make it harder for teenagers who are often working to save up for their first possessions, like a car, or to pay for college, and vulnerable teenagers may take the opportunity to be less than honest about their situation so that they can earn a higher wage. That's concerning.

I'm not really wild about the changes that'll happen around the holiday pay as well, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're not supporting this legislation as it is written. We had prepared a suite of amendments, but regrettably I don't think any of them passed. On this bill not one of them has passed. So for that and other reasons I'm not going to support the pick-your-pockets bill, and I would say that, you know, we're going to continue to stand up for workers on this side. We believe that hard-working Albertans deserve what we're putting forward, and we want to make sure that modern workplace laws respect working people, and that's not what's happening here.

As I've said, the Foothills hospital information picket, with, they say, 700 hospital workers out in front, is an example of some of the pain that's being caused by this government with regard to their actions. When we were in government, Mr. Speaker, we made progress on joint governance of pensions. We heavily invested in a capital plan that kept people working in this province, and those are the things that build your economy.

I would just say, Mr. Speaker, that I wish to adjourn debate on this item.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### **Bill 13 Alberta Senate Election Act (continued)**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenmore.

**Ms Hoffman:** Glenora. Glenmore is lovely, too, in Calgary.

**The Deputy Chair:** It is. Time check: 1 in the morning.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and colleagues, for the stimulating debate thus far. I'm sure it will be an

exciting evening/morning in discussion. I want to reinforce a few of the things that our leader said with regard to Bill 13 yesterday. It certainly was something that I think dates back a number of decades to this being brought forward by this government. I know I've heard some people talk about Preston Manning and the Reform days, and I appreciate what they've had to say about that.

I also want to say that I think the fact that the Senate exists in its current form is the biggest issue, not how people become part of the Senate. For example, the provinces of Ontario and Quebec both have 24 Senators; British Columbia, six; Alberta, six; Manitoba, six; Saskatchewan, six; Nova Scotia, 10; New Brunswick, 10; P.E.I., four; Newfoundland and Labrador, six; Northwest Territories, one; Yukon, one; Nunavut, one. That gives us a whopping six Senators out of 105, certainly not proportional to the population. That's approximately 5 per cent, and I think we've recently passed 10 per cent of the national population. This, I would say, is the biggest issue with the current structure of the Senate.

I think that talking about how we put those folks forward is fine and probably not the most important use of our time and consideration, but I think that if we wanted to do more about the Senate, we could push for radical reforms. That would be more where I'd like to see our efforts than on elections, which are very costly and won't actually change the structure or the purpose of the Senate either.

I have grave concerns that we are spending our time focused on something that is not the root cause or concern for most Albertans. I know that there were many, many things, in both of our platforms, that people raised with me on the doorsteps. I don't recall any conversations in any of the ridings I door-knocked in talking about Senate appointments and whether or not they should be elected, for this last provincial election anyway. Interesting that it took priority to become Bill 13 in the First Session, the first sitting, of this Legislature.

I want to say that in terms of how election financing works, too, I think that there are some concerns about that. Do we want to take those same concerns and move them to yet another expensive form of election? I'd say not. I don't think that outside groups should have the ability to impact outcomes for Albertans through our democratic elections. I think that we've seen from the party in government time and time again that they're often beholden to special-interest groups and rich donors. For example, here we are in the very first sitting of this government, and the first thing they did was cut a substantial stream of revenue, and the third thing they did was cut another substantial stream of revenue. Why did they do that? Well, it appears that that \$4.5 billion giveaway to already profitable corporations – again, large corporations, not small businesses as defined through our own tax laws: a \$4.5 billion giveaway.

**1:10 a.m.**

If we adopted the same election policies around the appointment of Senators, I don't think that that would do anything to change the numbers of folks that we have in the Senate; that's for sure. We'd still only have about 5 per cent of the Senators even though we have 10 per cent of the population. I think it would create more opportunities for more folks to be beholden to wealthy donors who don't necessarily have the same interests as the ordinary folks that we are all here to represent.

I can't help but think about all the changes that have been done for corporations and how it couldn't have been done quickly enough, but when it comes to bringing forward an education budget or a health care budget, we're told that we need to wait well into the fall. Well, that doesn't seem to make sense when kids will be returning to school on September 1. In making those decisions on

how to underfund their education, you know, even if they're unpopular decisions, which, I imagine, many, many decisions will be, at least be straight with the folks who are entrusted to educate our children and make sure that we have the resources in place or not in place so that they can at least plan accordingly. Right now they're going on their best guess, and that certainly isn't fair. For seven weeks we've been in this place, and we've been asking for accountability on that, and we have yet to receive any.

What Bill 13 does is that it establishes that Senate elections will be held in Alberta to elect a nominee. Again, that doesn't mean you're electing a Senator. You're electing a nominee, who may be brought forward for consideration by the federal government of the day. Elections can take place as a stand-alone election. Well, that certainly doesn't seem very financially efficient or, like, a good way to engage voters. I can tell you that when we have municipal elections, the fact that people vote for a mayor, a councillor, or a reeve, I guess, a council member, as well as the opportunity for school board representatives certainly makes it more likely that people will vote for all three than if they had to go on three separate occasions to vote for individual positions.

Having stand-alone elections doesn't seem effective. They're already, I would argue, not a great use of resources for donors and potentially for the public to be investing in Senate elections. Well, definitely the public because somebody has to run the elections themselves. Then, of course, they could also be held at the same time as other elections. But the fact that they could be independent or at the same time as a referendum, too, brings forward other questions for me, Mr. Chair.

To be a candidate on the ballot, you must be aligned with a federal party or run as an independent. Again, doesn't that just create even more opportunities for undue influence over folks who should be appointed, I would say, to act in the best interests of all the folks that live in that jurisdiction that they're there to represent? The federal affiliation would be displayed on the ballot. Well, I guess that makes sense if you agree with the election at all, in the first place, and the fact that they're parties, in the second place. And then candidates can be endorsed by provincial parties, which, of course, don't necessarily align with federal parties. I would say that that is becoming ever so often the case across Canada.

The provincial party will be allowed to spend \$100,000 per candidate during the campaign period. Well, that's interesting. They're supposed to be federal candidates or independents, so why would provincial parties be investing money? When we receive donations for provincial candidates, of course, it comes with a provincial tax receipt. So again we're taking taxpayer money out of service for things like health care and education and roads and safety in our communities and moving that money over towards having very costly elections for positions where we certainly don't have our fair representation, at least in seats and in a number of other areas as well.

As well, candidates could spend \$500,000 on their campaign. Youch. That certainly is a lot more than the campaign spending limit that we've set for provincial elections or now municipal elections. I think that the spending limits we have are fair and reasonable and give people an opportunity to have their message heard without undue influence by anyone who is able to access deeper pockets.

They can also spend \$100,000 on their nomination. Wow. Again, that is significant, and that is exactly the amount that a provincial party would be allowed to spend as well. That sure seems intense.

Then, of course, there's also a component for third-party advertisers, which I understand. Freedom of speech. Third parties need to have the ability to weigh in on matters that they have

consideration for. They would be allowed to each spend \$30,000, any third-party PAC.

It wouldn't be unreasonable for us to see an individual candidate's total expenses be about a million dollars, a million dollars to run to be seen as the nominee for a position that still the federal government gets to determine who's appointed. It doesn't matter who's been nominated, and at the end of the day Alberta doesn't have the kind of numbers that I think today in a contemporary Canada – perhaps 152 years ago the numbers made sense. Perhaps 152 years ago the west having such small numbers and particularly the numbers for Alberta, specifically, made sense.

What I don't think makes sense is that we are talking about spending so much on electing a nominee that may or may not get appointed, that these elections would be held at a time that doesn't necessarily entice good voter participation levels, and that at the end of the day I think we have deeper concerns with the Senate than how individuals get chosen to serve on it. Those are the main points I wanted to make.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton City-Centre has risen to make a comment.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, and good morning, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to return to the House and have the opportunity to speak to Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act. It's a bill on which I have a number of thoughts. This is a bill, I guess, that's very much in line with what appears to be the philosophy of this government in many respects, reflecting what this Premier seems to like to engage in, that being very grand and showy gestures that have a lot to say about his own political style but are more or less lacking in significant substance, at least in terms of what they are actually intended to achieve. That is a theme, indeed, I think we've seen with this government in many respects, that it likes to introduce bills that suggest a particular intent but really seem to have quite another effect.

What we have with this bill is, according to this government, a bill that is returning us to a system that we had previously, that was instituted by a previous Conservative government in this province, by which we would hold elections for candidates that then potentially could be appointed to the Senate. As my colleagues have noted, of course, there is no guarantee that this will be the case. Indeed, there have been a limited number of individuals that have gone through the selection process in the province of Alberta who have in fact then been appointed to the Senate. That was even when we had governments that were aligned, Conservative governments in Alberta and a Conservative Prime Minister, a Prime Minister in whose government the Premier sat and who was at least initially in his term apparently very dedicated to Senate reform although eventually they ran into the constitutional realities and did absolutely nothing to improve or change the operation of the Senate or to fulfill any of their campaign promises on that front. As I noted, this Premier was a member of the government, a senior member.

We had this process in Alberta, and indeed it was something that we allowed to lapse during our time as government because, again, it was a very grand gesture that ultimately had little or no value, in my personal view and in the view of many of my constituents with whom I have spoken. However, this government, again, seems to want to bring that back. Despite their statement that that is what they are doing, as my colleagues have noted and as I'm going to speak about now, there is much, much more in this bill than what

once existed in previous legislation in and around this particular issue.

**1:20 a.m.**

Now, of course, it's not surprising that this is the direction this government is choosing to go. We're seeing them do this on a number of fronts, in which they want to spend taxpayer money to make grand political gestures, to essentially advertise for their own political policy. We're seeing this as they prepare to spend \$30 million on their war room to do work that oil and gas companies, frankly, have the ability to do themselves, have been doing themselves, and should take the responsibility of doing themselves. However, our government wants to spend \$30 million of tax money on them. That's their choice.

We see the court challenges that they want to mount against federal carbon policy. We've seen how successful that's been for other jurisdictions, which is not at all. But this government, again, wants to choose to spend taxpayer money on their own political grandstanding. What we have here in this bill strikes me as being much of the same.

As my colleagues have noted, what we have in this bill is a blurring of jurisdictions. Currently, if we were having a provincial election, provincial political parties are the ones who are spending on provincial political candidates, who are speaking to provincial issues. As clearly delineated, we do not have the federal Conservative Party coming and spending on an Alberta provincial election to support Alberta provincial candidates. When we have a municipal election, we do not have provincial political parties spending and getting involved in advertising on behalf of provincial candidates. [interjections]

I hear some heckling from the members across the way. Perhaps they can rise and speak to that later on if they feel that they have an opinion that's worth putting on the record.

**An Hon. Member:** I actually did.

**Mr. Shepherd:** I would invite you to do that, Member for Calgary-West.

The fact is, Mr. Chair, that what we have here is a government attempt to bring in legislation so that they can continue to politically advertise during other levels of government. They want to blur political lines. They want to involve larger and larger amounts of political money from partisan sources to continue their broad political campaigns during elections that have nothing to do with the levels of government that they want to get involved in this.

Now, as my colleagues have noted, we're talking about a large sum of money here, \$500,000 for a senatorial campaign, far, far more than any other level of government is currently permitted to spend in this province for a campaign. There is no reason for that, Mr. Chair. It is not something that existed in the previous legislation. It is something brand new that they are attempting, as they have done with so many of their pieces of legislation, to slip in through the back door. Again, they did not mention this in their campaign platform, yet another one of those items that they had chosen to hide from Albertans.

This is in line with the practice and the behaviour of this Premier, the use of dollars from one level of government to campaign for another. We saw this Premier, when he was sitting as a member, an MP in Ottawa, campaigning while on the federal payroll for his position as a leader of a provincial political party here in Alberta. That was his first entrance onto the political field here. Now, after he became the leader of first the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta, then the United Conservative Party of Alberta, and now sits as the Premier, he is making use of his paid position here to

campaign for his future position as Prime Minister, or so his aspirations are. Indeed, some would suggest that he is making use of his current position to campaign for the current Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, as he gallivants about the country on the taxpayer dime, crusading.

I would suggest that perhaps he's not even necessarily after that particular end. He's perhaps waiting for the opportunity to take that position for himself and make use of taxpayer dollars from Alberta to support his work in that. So it makes sense that they would want to further that work by now introducing extreme amounts of spending for senatorial campaigns on a purely partisan basis within the province of Alberta.

Now, I'm hearing a good deal of commentary from government members, so I assume that perhaps we'll see some robust debate on this front, and perhaps they'll have something to say on the record.

But what I will say is that I think it is quite clear to anyone who sits down and takes a look at this bill that this is not about a simple question of democracy in the way that this government would like to frame it. This is about bringing huge amounts of more spending into the political process here in the province of Alberta.

Now, we have seen in the last round of municipal elections – indeed, we saw a massive mobilization amongst some conservative groups to attempt to remove municipal politicians that they felt were running against their interests. We saw this Premier speaking in favour of a slate of candidates for the Calgary board of education. So we're already seeing this blurring of partisan lines. We're already seeing that they are looking for every opportunity to increase spending and influence in all levels of government, and through this bill it's clear that it's their intent to simply continue to expand that.

I am concerned about the effect this could have within the province of Alberta. Setting aside the fact that, again, this is generally just a grand and empty gesture, which is fine – sometimes it is worth making a symbolic gesture. Sometimes it is worth, I guess, knowing that you are not necessarily going to have an impact but still feeling the need to stand up and make a particular statement. But when it comes to spending millions of dollars of taxpayer money to make that grand and empty gesture, that is where I begin to question whether that is the best priority, whether that is the best place to be placing a limited investment given that we are currently awaiting the report from a panel whose sole job is to figure out where we can cut spending in the province of Alberta. Yet we want to increase a taxpayer subsidy for a process which ultimately has no influence, a process which is intended, quite clearly, simply to continue to increase partisan presence within processes that have generally been nonpartisan to this point.

Speaking to that in particular, the involvement of this with municipal elections – you know, my colleague from Edmonton-Manning spoke to this earlier today. Indeed, I find that troublesome, that in the midst of a municipal election, when taxpayers and when residents of our cities, townships, counties already have so much information to process, already are considering issues of such great import, into that process we are going to inject yet another level of partisan politics, which does not belong there, another layer of confusion, an insane level of spending.

No mayor would be spending this much to get elected. No city councillor or reeve. Well, perhaps a mayor.

**Ms Hoffman:** They used to.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Okay. I will take that back.

**Ms Hoffman:** I think they brought in caps.

**Mr. Shepherd:** But, I mean, we have at least capped that spending, right? There are limits. But on this process for some reason this government feels that this should be without limit, that we should simply be throwing money around. Third-party advertising: \$30,000 on a senatorial candidate, Mr. Chair. Thirty thousand dollars per third-party advertiser.

**1:30 a.m.**

If this government simply wanted to restore what they consider to be a democratic process, if they simply wanted to bring back a sign of what they believe is a symbol of how they believe the Senate should work, they could have done that. They simply could have reintroduced the legislation which we had. That would have been a simple thing. Or if they, as they say, liked the changes that we brought in so much around disclosure and financing, they could have applied similar limits rather than the extremely large ones which they are putting in place instead. But they are not.

My only conclusion is that they are looking for more opportunities, more methods through the back door to involve money in the political process, money which, frankly, does not need to be here, is not needed to accomplish the goal that they claim they have, money that is not involved in any other jurisdiction in Canada, which is something we've talked about quite a bit. Again, I'm quite happy when Alberta is exceptional for positive things, but this government seems intent on making us exceptional on so many regressive ideas.

With that in mind, I believe that one of my colleagues has some thoughts on this in regard to how this may apply and the effects it may have for indigenous communities in the province of Alberta, and I'm looking forward to hearing his thoughts on that. So perhaps at this time, having made my own thoughts clear, I will take my seat and give him the opportunity to offer his thoughts.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Do I see any other members wishing – I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Unfortunately, I'm not the speaker who will be providing those comments, but I do want to just put myself on the record here. I don't plan to speak too long because I think that the members in opposition here have summed up my concerns with this Bill 13 quite well. But I do just want to, once again, put my name on the record saying that I do not support this legislation.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

Of course, one of my main concerns is the prevalence of third-party advertising money that has been coming into our province over the last few number of years. We're seeing it from organizations like Rebel media, even Facebook campaigns and social media campaigns like Alberta Proud or Ontario Proud, depending on the province that you live in. I have very big concerns about that because the money that is going to those campaigns is largely unaccountable and unaccounted for, much like the leadership contest of the Conservatives that we saw, which elected this Premier as their leader. Of course, there was a conversation within there that he would be forthcoming with the details of who donated to him. Unfortunately, we never saw those details, so after him becoming the Premier, we're still in a position where we don't truly understand who he is beholden to when we talk about how he got to where he is now. [interjection] Unfortunately, it sounds like the members across the way have concerns with my comments. They can also stand up and share their concerns. It might also just be getting kind of loud because they have earplugs in and they can't

necessarily hear each other even though they're sitting next to each other, but that's neither here nor there.

I also have some concerns with, as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre brought up, the fact that this Premier, when in the federal government, tippytoed around this issue, around Senate reform. Of course, as was mentioned, they maybe sat around the table and discussed the prospects of changing the Senate and realized that it's actually quite a hard process to undergo, and they decided not to do that. So, of course, you know, he comes and becomes the Premier of the province, and all of a sudden he has ideas about Senate reform. Well, it would have been a good idea to bring those forward when he was a federal minister under the Stephen Harper government. That's also a very big concern.

Of course, this is once again very symbolic, it seems, of the bigger picture of this government, you know, willing to take action when they're not actually able to take action. You know, I personally do believe that we need Senate reform; unfortunately, Bill 13 does not address the real concerns that I have with the Senate. Really, it's just blowing loopholes into elections financing, and our government over the last four years worked very hard to strengthen the democracy of our province and strengthen the voice of Albertans and not as much unaccounted for, third-party advertisers. Of course, in the election we saw slanderous accusations on billboards across this province. Some of them got a slap on the wrist by Elections Alberta, and unfortunately others didn't have the proper action taken against them, in my opinion. But here we are, and we have a government that's willing to continue weakening democracy in our province. I have great concerns with that.

With that being said, I will not be supporting Bill 13. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I welcome the opportunity to speak to this bill for a few moments, and then I do have an amendment I will be bringing forward. I just thought I'd make a few preliminary comments about the bill because it's always interesting to go back in time and to relitigate a conversation that happened 20 years ago in this province. It brings me back to the old television shows I used to watch, going back in time. I couldn't quite decide whether the bill was more reflective of the comedy *It's About Time*, where spacemen went back to the caveman era, or *The Time Tunnel*, which was a more fascinating, science-based show in which the time travel was all in error because the science didn't work. They hadn't thought it through before they did it. In either case, I think, reflective of the bill before us.

I think there are a couple of issues with the bill. I mean, of course, they've all been pointed out repeatedly by this side of the House to deaf ears. I think I'll take just a moment to reflect on some of that. The major point is that it's quite clear that we know that there is no ability for the province of Alberta to actually elect someone to the Senate. You know, it's simply a dog whistle to members of the community. This is yet another bill that is shallow and unthought out, unthought through by the government. We've seen repeatedly over this session – perhaps not because they don't know that they're shallow, because they are. They might be quite aware of that, but choosing to do it anyways because somehow they'll win some kind of a victory with their base, particularly the extreme base they have that wishes to find some way to cut us off from the rest of Canada.

I think that one of the things that's particularly a concern in this particular bill is the fact that there actually is no plan that goes with it if we actually had an elected Senate. If that's the ultimate goal

and that's the direction we're going, there's no plan to actually describe what the nature of government would be. It's obviously some kind of a thin borrowing of an American-style, two-House constitutional body, but they don't have any plan for how that would work. As a result, they have absolutely no plan for how they would deal with the constitutional gridlock that would result if we had two separate elected bodies who differ on various bills before them.

You know, I think again I'm finding myself saying: I wish they'd just taken the time and actually thought this through before they brought it forward. But we know what they're doing is that they're really bringing it forward so they can ignore it for the rest of the term, being able to go back to their base and say: it was in our platform, so we did it. I understand that, but we know as well that because this province has absolutely no ability whatsoever to actually elect someone to the Senate, what they're trying to do is that they're trying to do it by stealth.

I think that's very interesting because that question has actually already been tested in the Supreme Court of Canada in a reference case that was brought forward by the Harper government, of which our Premier was a member. The Supreme Court made it absolutely clear that you cannot change the Constitution by stealth. The question has been asked, the question has been answered by the highest court in the land, and this government has just chosen to ignore it completely. So I guess we waste taxpayers' money so that the boys can play with themselves.

1:40 a.m.

**Mr. McIver:** Pardon me. Really?

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. Really.

I would like to move this conversation a little to an amendment. I have the requisite number of copies for this amendment, and I will pass them along before we get started. Thank you.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A4.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to read the contents of the amendment while it's being passed out and then get an opportunity to speak to it. While some of my earlier comments were obviously frivolous, I'm quite serious about the nature of this amendment. I'm hoping that the government will actually take a moment to listen to this amendment because it's a fairly quick, simple one and one that I think will actually lead to a better relationship with the indigenous community if they choose to do it.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, just to clarify, you're moving this on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview?

**Mr. Feehan:** Ah. Yes, I am.

**The Chair:** For *Hansard's* sake. Thank you.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview I move that Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act, be amended in section 38 by adding the following after subsection (5):

(5.1) The Minister responsible for the Local Authorities Election Act shall enter into an agreement under subsection (5) if requested to do so by an elected authority, band council of an Indian band, advisory committee or council to which subsection (5) applies.

The simple intent here is to ensure that First Nations in the province of Alberta are able to participate in this election.

Now, I've already said that I don't agree with the nature of having these faux elections for the Senate. However, I understand the nature of our democracy, and I understand that we are outnumbered and that this bill will pass because the government chooses to do so regardless of the Supreme Court decisions on this matter. So given that I realize that it is going to pass, I'm asking this government to consider a small change to this bill, just simply to ensure that if, indeed, you are going to go ahead with this and you are going to have Senate elections . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. Minister of Transportation, a point of order?

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. The hon. member just said a couple of times that the bill is going to pass. I think it's against parliamentary good practice to presume the outcome of something that's before the Legislative Assembly. The hon. member ought to know that we don't know which way people are going to vote until they can vote. The hon. member is free to speculate, but to actually take the House for granted is definitely a point of order. I would request respectfully that you correct the hon. member and ask him to withdraw that remark.

**The Chair:** Hon. member?

**Mr. Feehan:** I will withdraw the remarks.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Feehan:** I think that the serious point here, the thing that we should be paying attention to is the fact that there is a danger in this act that First Nations will not have the facility to vote in a Senate election should one occur, and I think we need to correct that.

The problem lies in just a function of the structure of how this is set up. The reality is that First Nations are not allowed to vote in municipal elections because their reserves are considered Crown land, federal land, and they're not part of any municipality. As a result, if we tie the Senate election to a municipal election, as is suggested in this section of the act, then there will be no possibility for people who do not live in a municipality, ergo all of the First Nations who live on-reserve, to vote in a Senate election.

All I'm simply asking is that the government side take the moment to consider this and to make an effort to reach out to the indigenous community by ensuring that if a Senate election does occur, members of the First Nations can participate. We know that the First Nations are very concerned about their relationship with Canada at large and prefer a government-to-government relationship, with an emphasis, of course, on dealing with the senior Crown, the federal government. As the Senate is part of the senior Crown, it would give an opportunity for them to have direct input into the senior Crown, apparently. The government believes that to be true.

You know, I just ask the government to take the time to review this bill and, particularly, this amendment so that we can ensure that we are not by accident, through unintended consequences, excluding all the First Nations across the province of Alberta, at least those members that live on-reserve, which is somewhere over a hundred thousand people right now in the province of Alberta. I think that to systematically exclude a hundred thousand people from a vote that you wish to have is problematic. It is a serious



amendment I'm bringing forward and one that I will be discussing in my conversations with the First Nations as we move forward.

We all know, just from looking at the record of the First Nations votes in the province of Alberta, that there has been a significant increase in interest amongst First Nations in voting in non First Nations elections and that that's a change, and I think it's one we want to support and encourage because for so long members of the First Nations felt extremely disenfranchised in this province. The fact that they are willing to come and give voice to their concerns within elections, which they often do not view as their own elections: I think that we should open the door and at least give them a choice.

If they look at it and they decide, "This is not our election; we are not interested, and we wish not to participate," as so many people in my own party, for example, did in the last Senate election – I remember myself going in to vote in an election and being offered a second ballot which included the Senate nominees and officially declining that ballot, as many other NDP people did, because we didn't want to participate in a farce. We can't stop it, but we certainly don't feel that we want to be contributors. However, I don't think my choice should govern other people's choices, and I think that in this case I would just like to – despite the fact that I would never use it. I can't as I'm not indigenous, but I would not use it even if it were given to me. I would still like to offer that to the First Nations in this province because I think that's a sign of respect.

You know, we say that we would like people to participate and that we'd like to hear their voices and that we encourage their participation. I don't think we should immediately, then, introduce an act which undermines that participation. It just seems contradictory, to use slightly polite language here at this particular time.

**1:50 a.m.**

I'll leave my comments at that for this evening, but I welcome any other people speaking to this amendment if they choose to do so. If people have concerns about whether or not the First Nations community is concerned about this, I'd be happy to do some work to connect members of the government with the First Nations community so that they can address this issue.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the time.

**The Chair:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:51 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Irwin	Sabir
Feehan	Phillips	Shepherd
Hoffman		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Jones	Rosin
Allard	Loewen	Rowswell
Amery	Lovely	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Luan	Schow
Getson	Madu	Singh
Glasgo	McIver	Smith

Hanson	Neudorf	Toor
Horner	Orr	Walker
Hunter	Rehn	Yao
Totals:	For – 7	Against – 27

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill?

If not, shall I call the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 13 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

### Bill 8

#### Education Amendment Act, 2019

**The Chair:** We are on the main bill. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be moving an amendment to this piece of legislation, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. I have the requisite number of copies of the amendment. Do you want me to wait, or do you want me to read?

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A2.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**2:10 a.m.**

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member for Calgary-McCall to move that Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by striking out section 15 and substituting the following:

15 Section 59 is amended

(a) by repealing subsection (1) and substituting the following:

Transportation

59(1) A board must provide for transportation of a student to and from the site of the school in which the school has enrolled the student if the student resides within the boundaries of the school division.

(b) by repealing subsections (3), (4) and (5).

Madam Chair, it's an important amendment, and it's important to many families, many parents and students in my own riding and in northeast Calgary in general. It relates to transportation, that I believe is squarely an issue of access to education. Having transportation makes sure that students can get to and from the schools. In 2017-18 certain changes were made by the CBE, the Calgary board of education, to transportation. They discontinued the yellow bus service for students going to many schools, in particular schools other than their designated schools such as the traditional learning academy, FFCA charter school, and the like. Currently the act provides, the current regulations provide that if you're living 2.4 kilometres from your home to your designated school, you will be provided transportation. But that's not the case if you're going to a different school or traditional learning centres, TLC schools, or a school of your choice.

When those changes were made by the CBE, essentially many members of the opposition – then the UCP, the Alberta Party – were actively organizing around this issue, around myself and the government, on how the changes we made through Bill 1 had created this issue, which was not the case. That was absolutely not true because Bill 1 was reducing fees, transportation fees and other instructional fees, and gave almost \$54 million in savings to the parents.

After that I spoke to many parents – many families attended town hall meetings on the same issue – and committed to them that I will be working on this issue with my colleagues. I think it was a huge concern. When I will be out and about in the constituency, parents will approach me and talk about how difficult those changes are on their families. In fact, when I will get home, because my own nephew was also impacted by this change, I will get to hear more at home as well from my sister and brother-in-law.

**Ms Hoffman:** And nephew.

**Mr. Sabir:** And nephew as well.

I worked with the Minister of Education then, now the MLA for Edmonton-North West, and we decided to have a look at transportation in the education system as a whole. We started consulting with the stakeholders, and we also came up with a survey to assess the transportation needs and to see what Albertans want from their government. Clearly, at that point what we heard was that Albertans want to make sure that transportation is available as a right to all students and not just for their designated school. Other schools are also publicly funded schools, and I think what they were saying was that those are also Alberta students. They also deserve to have access to their school like any other student. What we had discussed, back when we were in government, was that we were trying to fix this for every student and make sure that if you're registered in a school division, for instance the CBE – it doesn't matter which school you go to – you should get transportation to and from your school as a right.

Now you are in charge. This government is in charge. Now they have this opportunity to fix that, which they were advocating back then, when they were in opposition, and which they were organizing on about this transportation. Now this amendment will make sure that we have this in legislation, that transportation to and from the school is a student right and that if they live within the boundaries of a school district, the school district will be responsible. The school division will be responsible for providing that transportation.

I ask all members of this House to take this amendment seriously and vote in favour. In particular, I think my colleagues from Calgary-Falconridge, Calgary-Cross, Calgary-North East, Calgary-North West, Calgary-North will be familiar with this issue. It was a huge, huge issue in those areas. I think that Albertans elected us to represent them and their interests. Certainly, if I'm here at 2:15 this morning, I'm here to defend my constituents. I am here to stand up for the issues they're facing, and I'm here to stand up for the students and the families, to make sure that they have access to education through transportation. This amendment will do exactly that. It will make sure that students who are registered in the school district, for instance the CBE, kids who are in northeast Calgary – it doesn't matter if they are going to TLC, or if they are going to FFCA. This amendment will make sure that the responsibility to provide transportation rests with the school division and that the government is supporting every student and their access to education.

Thank you so much, Madam Chair, and once more I urge all my colleagues, on both sides of the House, to support this amendment. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As the Education critic and colleague of the Member for Calgary-McCall I want to thank him for this very thoughtful amendment. I know that many parents, particularly on Calgary's north side but parents all across Alberta, would find him to be somebody who is a champion, clearly, for their children and for their access to education.

I am going to say that choice without access is no choice at all. I think that what the member is putting forward through this amendment is very fair and reasonable. He's saying that if a school board allows you to live in that district and to enrol in a school, a school of your choice within that district, they should help you get to that school. I think that's a pretty simple rationale. He doesn't say that it must be provided for free. He doesn't say that it must be a certain drive-time limit or things like that. He just says that if you're living in a school district and you're allowed to enrol in a school in that district, the district should help you get there. I think that that's fair and reasonable, and I think that expecting the government to support transportation costs would also be fair and reasonable.

I can't help but think about, again, the leadership race that's happening south of the border for the Democratic nominee and the story of Kamala Harris, when she talked about her time growing up in L.A. at the time when desegregation was a concept that had begun to be embarked on. She was only in the second class of kids to be bused from her home community to another school. The reason why her family wanted her there was because they wanted her to have an excellent education. I think that that's the reason why any parent chooses a school for their child: they want them to have that opportunity to have an excellent education. With that come a number of sacrifices, but if it isn't feasible for that child to take – I think it was Johanzaib who had to take how many buses, hon. member?

**Mr. Sabir:** I don't know exactly, but it was more than one.

2:20 a.m.

**Ms Hoffman:** Too many buses, more than one bus. A teenager had to transfer buses to get to the school that he had been previously provided transportation to. And city bus transportation rather than yellow bus transportation, I imagine, caused a great amount of undue stress for his parents.

When you look at concepts like Kamala raised in the debate around desegregation, making sure that kids can get from one neighbourhood to another neighbourhood is fundamental to making sure that you have equality of access and equality of choice. I certainly am proud to support parental choice, but I think that with that come responsibilities for school districts and for the province to exercise some investment in making sure that that choice is a lived choice.

I think that if we fail to provide transportation to children who enrol in schools – of course, we're talking a lot about school choice, where there is a neighbourhood school and you're choosing another school, but without this amendment I worry about what, now having taken out the 2.4 from the act itself, it might say down the road, when we get back the report of the blue-ribbon panel: whether or not transportation should be provided at all, whether there should be government-invested transportation at all for youth. We might

be talking about Calgary, but this could very well be an issue that impacts rural constituencies in a significant way.

I can tell you that the school I grew up going to – the village had 300 people, the school had 300 students, so you can bet that the majority of those were bused in. Certainly, we didn't have 300 students living in town when we only had 300 people. That, I think, is one of the reasons why I'll be supporting this amendment.

The other piece I wanted to raise is that when I think back on my time with the Edmonton public school district, I have lots of points of pride, particularly the work we did around protecting vulnerable students. One area where I wish we would have done a little bit more – and I think this would help do that work here on an even larger, macro scale – is around ensuring transportation for students who wanted to study in another language, particularly in the second official language of our country, but I think any other language would be an ultimate goal. It's great that many districts have choice programs in a variety of languages, but again the question is: choice for whom? If it's a public institution and we allow students to enrol from across the residing jurisdiction, I think we should help them get there. This would be one of the ways that we would help provide that increased opportunity of choice for students choosing to study in French, particularly, as well as other opportunities as well.

I think those are the main points I want to raise on this. Again, I'd just say to the Member for Calgary-McCall that I wasn't the Minister of Education. I certainly heard his loud advocacy at every stage in deliberations around our table and appreciate all of the work that he did to support the message getting to our government, getting to the local school district as well and the advocacy that he's done, not just for the parents and the students in Edmonton-McCall but all across northeastern Calgary and northern Calgary in general. I think this is something that was particularly loud in that part of the city, but I know it has impacted many Albertans and has the potential, through the passing of this amendment, to very positively impact many Albertans right across our province. Thank you to the member for his tenacious advocacy and for bringing this amendment forward for our consideration.

Here we are at 2:25. I think this is an important item, and I hope that members of the government, should they choose not to support this, would at least stand and tell us why. I think that this is fair and reasonable, and I think that if we don't want to support transportation, we should at least stand in this House and say why it is that we don't think kids should receive busing and why we think that we should leave it to parents to try to figure out how they're going to get children to school or even put them on a city bus, when they could be of a young age and it could take even longer than yellow bus services would require.

Those are some of the points that I'll leave with my colleagues for consideration, and thank you very much to the member for bringing forward this thoughtful amendment.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. member . . .

**Mr. Toor:** Madam Chair, I have a question for the member opposite.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge, you want to speak to the bill?

**Mr. Toor:** Yeah. A question for the member.

**The Chair:** To the amendment?

**Mr. Toor:** I'm sorry. [interjection] Okay. I'll sit down.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. I just have to say how disappointed I am that here we had the Member for Calgary-Falconridge on his feet wanting to speak to this important amendment. I imagine that if he hasn't heard parents already contact him – he probably has, particularly during the election. But I imagine that the parents and the students that live in his riding expect him to speak and vote on this matter. I would expect that it's probably a vote of conscience, whether or not we support children being transported to the schools that their parents choose. I would expect that it's something that we would allow free and thoughtful debate on in this House. I would expect free and thoughtful votes but at least free and thoughtful debate, Madam Chair. I certainly want to hear from the Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? No?

I'll call the question on amendment A2.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:26 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Irwin	Sabir
Feehan	Phillips	Shepherd
Hoffman		

2:30 a.m.

Against the motion:

Aheer	Jones	Rosin
Allard	Loewen	Rowswell
Amery	Lovely	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Luan	Schow
Dreeshen	Madu	Singh
Getson	McIver	Smith
Glasgo	Neudorf	Toor
Hanson	Orr	Walker
Horner	Rehn	Yao
Hunter		

Totals:	For – 7	Against – 28
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I welcome the opportunity to speak about Bill 8. Of course, I've had an opportunity at other times in the reading of this bill to speak about other aspects of the bill. Previously I've talked about my concerns about the bill increasing the number of charter schools, particularly attaching that to the ability of school boards to operate schools outside of their own jurisdiction, and the effect that I'm concerned that could potentially have on First Nations and other small communities around Alberta such that they will again be disenfranchised. I'm very concerned that this is a trend that this government has been continuing along. Having defeated my motion to ensure that First

Nations are adequately represented in Senate elections, we now find them again being disenfranchised in terms of their schools. It's a great concern to me that this government is choosing to repeatedly and continually ignore First Nations on matters of governance and clearly have not taken on their responsibilities under the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples to respect the prior and informed consent of First Nations in terms of legislation.

But having had an opportunity to speak to some of that in the past, I would like to take a bit of time to speak to an issue that I haven't actually spent as much time on in this debate, and that is my concern about the diminishment of the rights of the gay and lesbian community to gather together and freely associate in a safe space in order to speak with their peers about issues that may be important to them. Now, I have a couple of different angles from which I think it's important that we consider this legislation. One of them, of course, is the fact that in my 35-plus years as a social worker in the province of Alberta, I have worked with many people who have experienced various forms of family dysfunction and child abuse and neglect. I had the opportunity to work with many members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community and speak about how their family dynamic led to them being ostracized and treated extremely poorly, both within their family and outside of their family in the school system. Because, of course, if you're not supported by your family, it tends to bleed over into other areas of your life and create a great deal of stress for you.

I know that we can't always make laws for the few, and I realize that the LGBTQ2S-plus community is a minority within our population, but I think it's also very important that government not allow a dictatorship of the majority in cases where that majority chooses to diminish or eliminate the rights of the minority. The very nature of democracy is that we are not allowing a single mindset to rule and govern others or to deny rights to individuals who they don't like.

I think that it's fair to say that I'm talking about the slippery slope argument here and the thin edge of the wedge that's being created by this, and that is that it's very clear in the province of Alberta that we have taken the time here in this Chamber and throughout the province to discuss the nature of gay rights and to come to the decision that the gay community has rights that need to be protected, and that includes the rights that are protected for all of us under the Constitution, including the right to free association. I think it's important if we have made the decision, which we have in this Chamber, that the gay community has rights to the expression of their sexual orientation, that those rights are protected by the Human Rights Act.

I do remember members of the Progressive Conservative Party at the time talking about how proud they were to stand in this House to support the creation of the Human Rights Act and subsequently to ensure that the rights of the gay community are enshrined in that act. Now we have the next Conservative government coming and finding ways to surreptitiously undermine that right.

You know, I've spoken to that before. I've spoken to the fact that I think it's very dangerous when we start to say that we recognize rights exist but we're going to start to take away those rights from groups that we don't particularly admire or respect or engage with. I think that's the underlying argument there.

I want to also speak about the fact that the work that is done by gay-straight alliances is incredibly important work. As a social worker for over 35 years in the province of Alberta I can tell you that I have seen the consequence of when young gay people are in difficult family situations. I can tell you that I've worked with young people who have been in the process of coming out in their families and trying to describe their needs to their family members

and have seen very horrible – that's all I can say – things happen to them as a result.

Many of you will know that I have worked in the area of child abuse and neglect for the vast majority of my career and have seen the consequences for children that have come out in their families. I recognize that this isn't the majority or even a significant number of family members. The number of families in which child abuse or neglect occurs is somewhere around 7 or 8 per cent, generally, in the province of Alberta. I understand that I'm speaking for a small minority of people, but I feel like it's important that in a democracy we stand up and speak for a small minority of people. That's one of the great things about the Canadian democracy, that we have consistently done that. We've stood up and said that our laws need to govern all peoples, even peoples who are not widely represented by the overwhelming group in society.

I know that members on the opposite side of the House are fond of standing up and saying: we won a majority in the election, and it was even a really big one.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Feehan:** See? They're even cheering now. It's like a dog whistle. I can say it again and see if it happens.

But they did win a . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Feehan:** It works every time. Pavlovian.

I know that they like to say that, but then that very much worries me. That means that they fall into the problem of believing that a majority equates to a dictatorship, and I just don't think that that's an appropriate way for us to be viewing things.

Instead, we should be understanding that a majority helps to guide our movement forward in an appropriate way, but then we also need to say: what are the concerns of the minority? That was why we moved towards the creation of the human rights commissions in both the province of Alberta and the country of Canada. That's why we've had the protection of rights of individuals enshrined in those acts in this province and in the country. It's because even though it is only a small group, perhaps 7 per cent of the population, that experiences child abuse and neglect, I can tell you that the consequences of being a victim of child abuse and neglect are horrendous.

**2:40 a.m.**

I can tell you that, you know, I'm always cautious, as somebody who has dealt on a very personal level with people who've experienced that, before they talk about what happened to them. But I can tell you that kids that have come out to their families and the ones that showed up in my private practice in the work that I did would tell me stories about being rejected by their family members, having family members who would literally not speak to them again, being thrown out of their house, coming home one day and finding all of their baggage and suitcases out on the front step and being told, even though they were only 14 or 15 years of age, that they no longer could live in that house.

Most horrendously, I had a number of situations in which children were actually sexually abused by parents after coming out because they somehow diminished the child after that moment and felt that it was an appropriate punishment. I know that's horrendous and terrible. As somebody who has spent hours and hours and hours listening to those kinds of stories in dealing with people, I can tell you that the consequence of when that happens is so severe that even if it only happened to one child, it's something that we need to pay attention to. It's dramatic and horrible and terrible.

My concern here is that while I know the government says, "Look, you know, most of the time there'll be GSAs in a bunch of the schools," the fact that they are not willing to stand up and be counted for the human rights that would say, "No; GSAs need to be in every school" – and we know it's possible. We know that it is completely possible for a school system to put together a completely reasonable child safety program within their school. It's been done by public schools, it's been done by Catholic schools, and it's even been done by private schools. It's been done. The ones that aren't doing it, they're not resisting because it's too difficult; they're resisting because they're not prepared to respect the rights of the children, and I'm very concerned about that.

This is exactly the kind of situation with which I am concerned, that the consequences of coming from a dysfunctional family will be mostly exacerbated in a school system. To be rejected by your family, to be physically abused, or even, as I mentioned, sexually abused by your family as a result of your coming out and then to have that in any way reflected or echoed by the school system is very traumatic. I guess, you know, I think it's important that we take the time to reflect on how it is that we can prevent that kind of double trauma from occurring in a child's life. It's bad enough when the trauma occurs in the first place, but when it gets double downed by the system, it always makes it worse.

I know that there are many members of the other side who have talked about that. I've listened the Member for Calgary-West many times talk about his concern as a police officer about seeing the abuse of children and how awful that was for him to have to witness that. Good on him to have that kind of empathy and open heart, to be sorely wounded by watching that kind of abuse going on, and I know that he has introduced legislation into the House in a private member's bill to ensure that that small minority of people who are abused are being taken care of by being able to approach police officers to report that kind of abuse. We on this side of the House stood up and supported that because we agree with him. We agree with that member of the government side who says that: yes, it only happens to a small group, but it is so serious that we need to pay attention to it and ensure that we do everything structurally possible to reduce the occurrence of it in the first place and to reduce the danger of double traumatization by the structural problems that occur within the institutions.

I just wish that same philosophy, the same belief system that was expressed already by government members, was being shared here again. We know it's there. We know they have an understanding of that philosophy. We know they're willing to stand up when they are suggesting it, but now we find that even though they have that experience and they demonstrated it here in the House, they're not willing to do so here. I'm very deeply concerned about that because of what happens to kids.

I could spend a lot of time talking about individual kids that I've worked with. I have to be careful not to say anything that would, you know, disclose information, so I'll talk more generally about children that are out of their house by the age of 14, that find themselves on the street and, because they are not streetwise, don't have very many places to go, and how vulnerable they become to what happens on the street. They go places to try to find a place to camp out for the night – under a bridge, in a doorway, that kind of thing – and who is it that generally comes up to talk to them in those situations? It's often people who are perpetrators against the vulnerable people in our society, who have that radar for kids that are vulnerable. They go and they find them and then they draw them into a world in which the child becomes somewhat invested.

One of the big traumas I dealt with is children often talking about how they felt guilty because they participated in the activities that were proffered by these abusive individuals and how awful that was

for them in terms of their sense of self. But I understood why they had to do that: because nobody else was listening to them. Their family wasn't listening to them. Their family put their suitcases out on the doorstep, and they were off on the street at the age of 14. The only person who would hear them out, the only person who offered them some care and guidance and so on, turned out to be a perpetrator and often sophisticated perpetrators who understood the cycle of perpetration and the grooming behaviour that is necessary to shift a child who is a potential victim into an actual victim.

That's what we're seeing here. One of the things that GSAs do is that they interrupt that. They interrupt it because they give a second, alternative place where you can be heard, you can be loved, and you can be received with open arms, not from a perpetrator who is only doing the kindness as a way of grooming you into engaging in activities which will subsequently cause you deep trauma not only because of the abusiveness of the activity itself but because of your belief that somehow you participated in it because you were seeking something. You were seeking some warmth, some relationship, some love with somebody who would be kind to you.

What we have instead is that we've created these wonderful clubs, these clubs where people do really amazing things like eat pizza and watch television and, you know, once a year put on pink T-shirts and say, "Everybody is lovable" and make little signs, little stickies to put on lockers that say: "You're a great person. Have a great day." That's the kind of activity that they're engaged in.

Imagine that you're a 14-year-old. You've been kicked out of your house, perhaps after having been physically or sexually abused, clearly emotionally or psychologically abused, and have an opportunity to go to a place where the underlying message is: you are valuable, you are loved, and you are worth while. You know, that's all we're asking for – and we're asking for every child, not just the ones coming from good, successful families but every child in the province of Alberta – the opportunity to experience that, to have a place where they can go where their vulnerability is not used as a licence for perpetration but, rather, their vulnerability is responded to in an empathetic, heartwarming, loving, reasonable way. That's all we're asking. It doesn't seem like much.

It seems that the government side of the House wants that, too, when it comes to introducing legislation to make changes in the child welfare act to enable people to report to police officers. Just last week we heard the government talking about how important that was. Yet here it is today, and everything that they were saying in support of that private member's bill would be completely relevant to this bill today, but they somehow forgot what happened last week, what came out of their mouths when it comes to the point that we're making here today.

We as a government have a responsibility for a preferential option for the vulnerable. That's one of our jobs. Otherwise, we end up in this place where the majority of people can do terrible things to the minority of people. I won't give examples because I tend to get myself in trouble when I do – I'm not going there again – but the point is that I think if we look at our history, we can find many examples where the majority of people made bad choices.

**2:50 a.m.**

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Chair and Speaker: two hats. Two hats, one human. One hat, I think, actually. It's sitting beside the chair. Thank you for this opportunity to engage. Over the last seven weeks, as it became clear that this bill was coming in and that this bill clearly had massive intended loopholes to create less welcoming and safe schools, students have

written me and other members of our caucus to share some of their experiences. I have written some of them back and said: would I have your permission to share this?

Here's one that I want to share. They wanted all members of this House to hear their experiences. Here we go.

QSAs save lives. I work with newcomer families, who have diverse cultural understandings of gender and sexuality. A student tried to come out as trans in elementary school and was told by school staff "it's a phase, just wait a little while and see how you feel." In middle school, they tried to die by suicide from the isolation. After we connected, we were able to refer them to their QSA, that they didn't know existed. They were able to join [the] QSA and safely meet and learn about gender diverse people. They came out again, [and] this time there was someone [there] to say "I believe you." In collaboration with the school QSA staff and our settlement staff, we were able to engage the parents with culturally appropriate conversations about gender and the importance of the QSA for their child. Today, they are a happy, engaged student with a rockin new hair cut and a new cultural outfit their dad bought them, that reflects their true gender.

They are a special kid, and we almost lost them. Instead, we get to see them thrive because this QSA and the staff were there to support them.

This is what we're talking about. We're not talking about doing things that are intended to create tension between parents and students; we're talking about finding ways to save kids' lives, literally. When we say this, I know sometimes people become desensitized, which is why I think hearing directly from people with lived experience and people who've worked with them about the fact that this was a kid who tried to die of suicide, this was a kid who saw no hope because they were told, "It's a phase, just wait a little while and [we'll] see how you feel." They knew how they felt. They felt like they wanted to die. I'm so glad that that child didn't die.

Madam Chair, I just want to call a point of order, actually.

**The Chair:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** Standing Order 13(5): "No person shall pass between the chair and the Table, nor the chair and the Mace." Just a reminder for everyone.

**The Chair:** Okay. Hon. member, that only applies for Assembly, not Committee of the Whole.

**Ms Hoffman:** Oh, really? Okay.

**The Chair:** A learning experience for us all right now.

**Ms Hoffman:** Hmm. It doesn't say that in the Standing Orders. That's good to know that that's been the interpretation. Thank you.

The point that I again want to make is that because there was a QSA there – and I know that we've spent a lot of time talking about the immediacy. I think that's an important conversation. I wish what we were talking about is the permanency, not the immediacy. I wish that it didn't take children feeling that they're at the point of despair and isolation to have to ask for there to be a club created. I know that this club being there, from reading this correspondence, made a big difference in this child's life. I think if they had to ask for a club after they'd already asked once for help with their understanding of their gender, that would have made it even more complicated for that young person, who was living such a difficult part of their life and their story.

I'll go to another story, perhaps. This person gave permission to use their name, so I will. This one is Sierra Grace.

When I was in high school, there were no GSA's. There was no safe place where you could go to explore your identity while still being a minor. Most of the time, I felt completely alone with my struggle.

While I walked the halls I was shoved into lockers and called a fag.

On more than one occasion I was physically assaulted by another student.

And when I went home things weren't much better. At first I was just ignored, my family didn't want to acknowledge my identity.

Then when I came out [finally] ... as transgender, and therefore lesbian, my family treated me like an abomination.

They shouted at me for "mutilating" my body when I took my hormones, they threatened to cut off my hair, and for years my pronouns and new name were not respected

I was disowned, and [I was] kicked out of the house.

For a year, I lived either on my friend's couch or on the street.

I considered suicide almost every day and attempted it more than once.

But, the worst part was that I knew that I wasn't the only one going through this.

Many of my friends went through the same thing, they were kicked out, attempted suicide, and more than a few of them died.

I'm going to say that again: more than a few of them died.

When I found out that my sister is gay, I was terrified for her.

I knew what our family was like, and I didn't want what happened to me to happen to her.

It was right around that time when I first heard of a GSA.

[A] supposed safe place for LGBTQ+ youth to go to.

A place [where] they could find support and resources regardless of what stage of self exploration they were at.

Parents weren't notified of your membership so you were free to come out in your own time.

It was a relief to know that my sister had somewhere to go and be safe.

As a result of the GSA at my sister's school she was able to navigate through high school much easier than I was, [and] she was able to educate my family on gay issues enough that she wasn't disowned and even I was allowed to be around my family again after years away.

Now, after GSA's have been established for quite a few years, there are proposed changes that [would] strip LGBTQ+ and questioning youth of their safe space.

The proposed changes would allow teachers to inform parents that their child has joined a GSA.

The risk of being outed would topple the structure of safety that we all have worked so hard to establish.

The changes would signal a return to how things were when I was in high school.

A return to LGBT youth being forced onto the streets or into a body bag if they weren't accepted.

A return to the constant fear of physical violence.

A return to a world where a gay couple can't hold hands in the same way that straight couples do every day.

This is the world that these changes could bring back.

But there is hope.

And that hope exists because we will continue [to fight] for our LGBTQ+ youth.

It exists because there are people, like us, who will accept these youth and support them through whatever the world throws at them.

I'll give copies of these to *Hansard*, who I know works to make sure that they reflect the discussion here and, I think, even more importantly, the prose that these folks supplied to us and asked that we put on the record, and that the people who are here, making

decisions about the lives of these youth and other youth who – honestly, the number of youth who probably are too busy just going day by day, surviving, to stress out about what’s being done in this Chamber are the ones that I think we need to pause and pay extra close reflection to, because I know that there are some who feel strong enough to come and speak. I know that there are some who feel strong enough to stand in the rain on the steps of the Legislature and make sure that their voices are heard.

But there are countless others who are too busy just trying to survive, and having an opportunity to go to a lunchroom, a classroom, watch TV together, make positive affirmations, tell each other, “you are loved, you are valued, and we will keep you safe” – when I attended the rally that the students organized in Calgary, probably four weeks ago now, that was their message. They had us all chant it together, and it was really powerful, actually. You are loved, you are valued, and we will keep you safe: that’s all they’re asking for. They’ve made great strides over the last, probably, 10 years.

**3:00 a.m.**

A lot of this started because of the It Gets Better campaign, that I’m sure many of you probably remember starting in the U.S. Seattle, I think, is where it first started. It Gets Better was a good message. It happened, of course, right after there were gay men, youth murdered and many committing suicide. The message was: “It gets better, so tough it out. It’ll be a few more years. It’ll get better.” For many it does.

But what the youth here in Edmonton and around Alberta, many of them, told us is: “Thanks for telling us that. You actually have the power to do something to make it better. It’s nice for you to give us messages of hope, but you can actually act to make it better today instead of telling us that we have to wait to be adults to be who we are.” Fair point. Good on those youth. They shouldn’t have to wait until they are living on their own to be able to express who they are. They shouldn’t have to wait until they are older to be able to feel loved.

They shouldn’t have to wait until they pass adolescence to stop wanting to kill themselves. The statistics are appalling, and I imagine many of my colleagues will probably go through them. The number of homeless youth who identify as LGBTQ is, I think, about five times what the population is of youth who identify as LGBTQ. Statistically, being gay makes you more likely to be homeless. Being gay makes you more likely to fail high school, to drop out of high school. Being gay makes you more likely to do self-harm. Being gay makes you more likely to commit suicide. When you look at statistics like this – and I think a big part of our responsibilities as government is to look at data and trends and think about how public policy can be created to counter them and to keep people safe, to show them they are loved, and to make sure that they are valued. It’s a pretty simple message that these kids are sending us.

We have an opportunity here tonight. Just yesterday the motion was passed saying: vote with your conscience. Vote with your conscience. I imagine there are many, many members of this place who, when they agreed to run and sought nominations, sought nominations because they really cared about pipelines, jobs, and the economy, and they believed their leader when he said: social issues are not things that we will legislate on. Then here we are, seven weeks in, and we’re considering a bill that legislates on social issues and can cause grave harm. I don’t expect that most people who ran in the last election ran to cause grave harm, ran to increase the likelihood of suicide, self-harm, homelessness, dropouts, and family dysfunction.

The thing is that we’ve seen from one case study with two women in southern Alberta, or two people in southern Alberta, in the same family – I shouldn’t presume women – how differently it can go when people have the opportunity to express themselves on their own timeline and with the love and support of staff at a school to support them in having difficult conversations with their family and how that can be so healing, not just for that immediate relationship but for other relationships in that family as well.

I really do hope that the motion that was voted on last night is something that applies today. I guess this will be probably one of the first tests. I think that we have a real opportunity to see if people are actually supported in voting with their conscience when it comes to pieces of what I would say are socially regressive legislation.

We’re not asking that we move the yardstick forward. I want to be very clear on that. We’re asking that we don’t move it backwards. We don’t need to always be moving forward, but please don’t move us backwards, don’t cause more harm for these kids, because they have made it very clear that they want to be loved, they want to be valued, and they want to be kept safe. That’s it. They don’t want government to make choices that put them in harm’s way. I think that we owe it to them to hear their voices.

I imagine that there will be more stories from these youth that we will hear in the coming hours, and I certainly appreciate how many sent us their stories. There might even be some sitting up right now listening to this debate, and if they want to send them to me, I’ll check my e-mail, sarah.hoffman@assembly.ab.ca. I imagine we’ll hear more of these over the night. I had somebody reach out to me on Instagram the other day, when we were talking about the bad-faith bargaining bill, and my hon. colleague the Member for Edmonton-City Centre read their comments into the record. I think it’s pretty powerful to see elected representatives in the Official Opposition be able to act in such a responsive way. To these two people who took the time to share their stories, I really want to say thank you.

I’m sure that there will be many more because I think that this is something that a lot of people care deeply about. I know that we’re discussing it here in the middle of the night on the first week of summer holidays. Perhaps that was by design; perhaps it was by coincidence. There aren’t really a ton of people here filling the Chamber, but there are a ton of people who do care deeply about this issue.

When they find out about the impacts, I think that many of them will wonder why it is that the new UCP government chose to make this one of their first bills, why it is that when, clearly, beginning with the leadership selection, members of the media and public were asking, “Well, are you going to legislate on social issues?” and were told over and over again, “Don’t worry; we’re not going to legislate on social issues” – and then here we are with Bill 8, Bill Hate, Bill Straight, whatever you want to call it.

**Ms Phillips:** Call it Bill Hate.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. Bill Hate, Bill Straight, Bill 8, hateful Bill 8, whatever you want to call it, whatever is in order.

I’m sure that this is something that a lot of people didn’t expect to be a high priority item. We did. We anticipated that this might come, but I don’t think a lot of the electorate probably did. It’s disappointing to me.

The one other piece I’m going to mention with regard to this in general is that when I was with Edmonton public, I heard from a number of staff who, after the youth asked for their schools to create GSAs, felt so much more empowered and supported in being who they were, feeling loved and feeling respected. I remember talking

to one teacher who said: “For the first time I’ve hung a picture of spouse and myself in my classroom. I wasn’t afraid I was going to get fired. I wasn’t afraid I was going to get transferred.”

I remember receiving some correspondence from some parents who were not supportive. Let’s be frank. There are going to be people speaking up who aren’t ready for where the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has landed, which is that you can’t be discriminated against based on your sexual orientation or gender identity. I remember reading one of these e-mails to somebody who worked at the school board, and I was pretty emotional. It was somebody who said: if I ever found out that my kid was in a classroom with a gay teacher, I’d pull them from that classroom, and I’d transfer them to another school, and I’d make sure that they weren’t subject to learning from somebody who is gay.

I read this e-mail to this principal, who said: “Sarah, on my first day as a principal I walked into the staff room and saw a teacher with a cigarette hanging out of their mouth giving the kid the strap. You know, times change. We have to help people catch up.” That’s true. Times do change. That was the late ’70s, early ’80s. We haven’t had smoking in schools since probably the late ’80s or early ’90s. I think the strap left in the early ’90s, corporal punishment. It was sort of a blurry timeline. I think it went school district by school district.

But times have changed, and I think it’s time that we catch up. At least, don’t move backwards. That’s what these kids are asking us to do, to keep the yard marker where it’s at today. Don’t move the ball back up the field. Let’s make sure that we keep protecting these youth and we keep finding ways to show them that they are loved, they are valued, and that we will keep them safe.

Those are some of the remarks I wanted to share at this point in the evening. I imagine there will be more as time continues. Thank you so much, colleagues, for your consideration.

**3:10 a.m.**

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I’ll just caution you that there were a few times where you may have said your name. One was in an e-mail format. Just to caution you moving forward that even if you’re spelling your name . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Oh, thank you. Did I? I did spell it. Yeah. Sorry. Thank you.

**The Chair:** You did say it, too, but just a caution to all members.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I’ve risen in this House multiple times to share my thoughts on Bill 8, Bill Hate, Bill Straight, whatever you’d like to call it, as the Member for Edmonton-Glenora noted. The last time I spoke, I spoke a lot about sort of the mental health side of things, the higher rates of suicide. I talked about my own struggles, not just with coming out and with being a closeted teacher in rural Alberta but just seeing what some of my own students went through. I talked about my regrets, and I talked about how I still, with regret, look back on not calling out homophobia that I saw as a teacher in rural Alberta.

It was interesting. Just yesterday one of my former students actually messaged me and said, you know, that he hated so much the school environment he was in, that I taught at as well in rural Alberta. He said that he’d been called “fag” and he’d be subject to homophobic slurs, and that just really reinforced for me – you know, he doesn’t identify as a queer person anyway. He went on to

say: it’s fine; I’m a strong person now, and I’ve left that. It just really reinforced for me just how important this is. This is not ancient history. These are stories that are happening now. As the Member for Edmonton-Glenora said, all of us, I think, at least on this side of the House, have countless personal accounts that we can share and that we will be sharing.

I think that the interesting thing is that as hard as this has been, to be having to, I guess, fight this battle at this point, it also has been really positive because I’ve heard so many stories. I’ve had so many people reach out – like the Member for Edmonton-Glenora noted, you know, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook – so many young people reaching out and wanting to share their stories, wanting to just send kudos to us for how proud they are that they see people fighting for them, reaching out to me individually and saying that it means a lot to have somebody from the community in the Legislature, somebody who is unapologetically queer and open, because many people aren’t there yet. I wasn’t there for a very long time. I wasn’t there until I was a grown adult in my late 20s.

I’ve shared, and I’ve got many, many more stories that I can share if need be. I’ve shared a lot of, you know, accounts from students in particular and some of their own struggles, some of which are really hard to hear and hard to read, but they’re real, and they’re raw. It’s important that we don’t sugar-coat this.

Now, I’d like at this early hour, though, to start by sharing the voice of both a parent and an academic. Her words, I think, really show what being an ally is, what being a vocal proponent is even when you aren’t directly affected by these issues. I’m going to start by sharing those. She wrote, actually, a pretty detailed letter, and then she actually sent a follow-up letter as well, if you will indulge me on that. She addressed this to me, and she says:

I wanted to share with you a letter that I sent to the minister of education today. I also wanted to thank you for your tireless and impassioned efforts to protect GSAs in Alberta schools. You have my support and the support of [many, many] Albertans. Here [is what] I sent to the [Education] minister.

She’s totally fine with me sharing her name and her information.

My name is Amy Abe. I am a multi-award winning educator, nationally recognized, with a background in educational policy and leadership. I thank you for taking the time to read my comments and concerns when it comes to GSAs in Alberta schools. I urge you to read my comments, though they may not align with your feelings on this matter.

While I recognize that GSAs will still be allowed to form in theory, the matter of the protections that once surrounded them being senselessly stripped away is another . . . We know from experience that protections and regulations are necessary, especially when it comes to human rights. We have human rights declarations by virtue of the fact that there are those who violate them. We have UNDRIP [the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples], which exists by virtue of the fact that people violate those principles. We have warning messages on inedible products saying, “do not eat this” by virtue of the fact that some people do eat those inedible things. When it comes to GSAs, we must recognize that there are adults – [including] principals and teachers – who will deny the right of the GSA to exist, which is why their right to exist must be protected in legislation. We know that adults may not exercise the best judgment when it comes to ‘informing’ parents of GSA participation in the same way that many don’t exercise judgment when [say] they consume that inedible [product].

We also know that many educators are uncomfortable with the word “gay.” What this means is, these adults are uncomfortable with the idea that gay people exist at all and therefore they use [that] discomfort as a way of making invisible not only the LGBTQ2 population but also their specific concerns around safety and inclusion.



Yet gay people exist. Gay youth exist, and these youth are specifically targeted by both adults and peers for abuse and harassment because of this discomfort, which is really a poor euphemism for bigotry.

Should we let people who are 'uncomfortable' with the gay community guide governmental decision-making? Should people who are 'uncomfortable' with gay... youth be the ones who make decisions about their safety and well-being? Imagine if educators [were to say that] they were uncomfortable with words "Black" or "Blind" or "Woman." Would this be acceptable? These are educators who could use their privilege and discomfort to foster marginalization and discrimination.

These are, in fact, the educators who could themselves benefit from the formation of GSAs.

These are the same educators who do not understand what it means to create a safe space for youth who are targeted for hate, abuse, and marginalization, and may not take the best steps to protect these children. These are also the parents who might, upon learning their child is part of the LGBTQ2 community, ... throw them onto the streets,

where they become vulnerable to further adult exploitation.

LGBTQ2 youth are over-represented among homeless youth and are over-represented in youth suicide deaths. This number is not shrinking, but it could with the kind of work and safety a protected ... GSA could provide. Sometimes, it is the adults that children must be protected from, and this is why those fundamental legal protections around GSA formation ought to remain in place.

It's also true that schools do have anti-bullying policies. Yet, to suggest that a GSA is formed merely as an anti-bullying measure is to suggest that [say] Shoppers Drug Marts are built to merely provide the latest shade in lipstick – that is to say, you're missing fundamental aspects of their purpose and [their] impact in a community. The kinds of education and supports that GSAs provide extend beyond anti-bullying.

And when it comes to antibullying, we should not assume that the solution to the issue of bullying is one size fits all. We do not treat all cancers the same way. We do not provide the same mental health care for postpartum mothers that we do for trauma victims.

We should not be asking ourselves why LGBTQ2 youth need a 'special' place. What we really should be asking is, what is it about this space that necessitates having that (special) space? What is it about this space that is inherently marginalizing, threatening, or even dangerous?

I suggest to you that a decision to take away the protection surrounding GSAs is not one that should be divided by party lines or political ideology. It should not be a political act to say, "I will do everything within my power to ensure children are safe at school."

**3:20 a.m.**

Protecting GSAs does not affect jobs or employment rates. It does not affect the number of hospital beds or who pays for health care. It does not increase or decrease class sizes. It does not make it easier for teachers to do their jobs. It is a decision that [purely and simply] affects the safety of children [and young people, and as such, it is] a decision that should be bringing people, and political parties, together.

You have the power to do this, to bring people together, to make children safe.

Therefore, it should be a simple matter of saying, "I prioritize safety", even if you do not need that safety yourself or [you don't] comprehend why others need it – [people] are telling you, GSA protections are necessary. Removing those protections seems to be a decision that seems to be made out of, at the very best, ignorance, or at the very worst, out of spite or [perhaps] a distinct lack of empathy. I strongly urge you, to reconsider your position on GSA protections.

There is integrity in coming to understand and appreciate a perspective that is not initially your own, to change one's position in the face of compelling evidence.

She says:

My fear is that politicians in general are afraid to 'hear' and be guided by the 'other' side because of ego or 'face'. Is [this] 'face' worth the cost of children's safety and well-being? Please don't let this be the case. Let the safety and well-being of Alberta's students be your guiding principle. Let the voices of those this decision will actually affect be the experts who guide your decision-making.

Now, she sent a follow-up e-mail as well, and I'll read some of that. But I just want to touch on a couple of points that Amy made in her letter and her final point around integrity and coming to understand and appreciate a perspective that's not your own and to change one's position when there's alternate evidence, when there's evidence to support that: "You know what? You might want to take a second look."

My colleague from Edmonton-Glenora noted, you know, that we've had discussion in this House around matters of conscience, and I shared yesterday that there have been a couple of folks in this House on the other side who have come up to me after I've spoken on issues related to LGBTQ2S and have expressed their support. I appreciate that – I really do – because it shows that these aren't partisan issues, and it shows that you take value in what I've said. But I ask those members and others who've maybe not shared with me but I know are allies and I know take these issues seriously: this is an opportunity to show your constituents what side of history you're willing to be on. Do consider your freedom to vote according to conscience as we continue to discuss Bill 8 and as we talk about some of the amendments that you know are forthcoming.

I also just want to touch on another point that she made. She said that protecting GSAs doesn't affect jobs or employment rates. You know, we know that this government was elected on a message of jobs, the economy, and pipelines. We've all got it memorized. It was clearly an effective line. This is not related to any of those issues, directly anyway, although I think you could make a tangential connection. This is about fundamental human rights. If we are now going to be discussing social issues, here's an opportunity to, again, show where you stand.

I want to finally just touch on, before I come back to some of her remarks, the point about LGBTQ youth being overrepresented among homeless youth and overrepresented in youth suicide deaths. I've shared those stats, actually, a couple of times in this House already, so I won't note them again, but the evidence is there. Again, I'll come back to her argument, that in the face of evidence, let's think about the power we have here to heed that evidence, to heed that research that exists, the large body of research that exists to show that strong GSA protections do in fact, do indeed save lives.

As I said, I want to just point out that – I told Amy that I really wanted to share her comments here in the House. She sent a follow-up e-mail, which she personalized. She said:

I have two children, aged 6 and 8. They're young, they're tiny little children. They're still ... Ninjago.

And, like, I don't actually know what Ninjago is.

**Ms Phillips:** Ninjago.

**Member Irwin:** Ninjago. Thank you. I need to look at that. Lego, but ninja, maybe? Okay.

She says:

I don't know if my kids are cis or trans, gay or straight or somewhere in between – but whoever they will be, they already are. As they grow into adolescence and young adulthood, there is nothing I can do to 'make' them gay or 'keep' them straight. As

they grow into adolescence and young adulthood, my children will discover who they already are. This, for most youth (regardless of where they are . . . ), is tumultuous and confusing on so many levels.

She says:

As a cis, hetero woman, I didn't have the same pressures on me that LGBTQ2 youth have, like the fear of wondering if my parents would disown me for being straight or bringing home a boy, and while there has always been a concern of gendered violence, my sexual orientation was never on my . . . radar. I had that privilege.

I want my kids to have that privilege – not the privilege of being straight, but the privilege of being in a school where it won't matter if they're straight, [if they're] gay, or questioning, or cis, or trans. They are who they are. I want them to be [just] surrounded by adults and children who have their best interests at heart. I want them to swim in the river without worrying about the water.

More than this, my children will have gay classmates. They will have gay teachers. This is an inevitability. It is a certainty. I want them to be part of a school and a community that knows how to demonstrate acceptance and compassion and appreciation. I want my children to grow into the kind of people who know what ally-ship and advocacy means. I want them to become people like you and all those out there who have been fighting against the kind of laws that would put kids, all Alberta kids, in a kind of jeopardy.

She says:

Thank you for the work you have done, and . . . I'm certain you will continue doing. Just wanted you to know that Albertans aren't ready to give up . . . yet, and we're out here, thinking of the kids, and we've got your back in the same way you've got ours.

I want us to heed the words of Amy and the many parents I've heard from on this issue. Again, what struck me the most about her words and about some of the other words that have been shared with me: again, they're from folks who aren't even directly affected by these issues, but they have a vision for the kind of Alberta they want for their kids, the kind of society that they want in the future. She talks about how important it is for her six- and eight-year-old children to be in an open, welcoming school environment no matter what their sexual or gender orientation is or will be. She talks about privilege. She talks about the fact she acknowledges her own privilege in that she's not had to worry, she's not had to experience any of these challenges herself, and she acknowledges that she's fortunate, but she also points out that she recognizes not everyone is, right?

Again, I said this once in the House before. I would bet every member in this House has people in their lives who are members of the LGBTQ2S community. If you don't – I know you do. You just may not know. They may not have shared that with you yet. So I want them to think about those people in your lives, and I also want them to think about, Madam Chair, their own privilege and how fortunate they may have been to have not experienced any discrimination, any oppression, any microaggressions because of their gender, because of their sexual identity, because of their sexual orientation.

I think I still have a few more moments. I'd like to share an example from a young person because, as I said, even today – oh, I've only got a minute left. Well, just talking about Alyssa, who's a teacher and a GSA co-ordinator at a school in my riding, I met with her today, and she's a queer person herself. She's a gay teacher, and she just talked about how, you know, important GSAs are, how life-changing she's seen that they are for her own students. What an opportunity for those young people to have a teacher who's such a leader, someone from the community and someone who's fighting day in and day out for those kids in her school, and she's worried.

She's definitely worried. She's in a school where, you know, the administration, the staff are pretty open, but she knows it's not like that everywhere else. She knows that there are schools in Edmonton where there remain a lot of challenges for both school staff and students.

As I wrap up my comments here, I just really want to reiterate my point. Let us consider the voices of these students, of these teachers, and of these parents as we move forward with debating Bill 8.

3:30 a.m.

**The Chair:** Are there other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise again tonight, this early hour of the morning, to continue an important debate in discussion on Bill 8. I recognize that this is a bill on which we have had a lot of discussion, one which I have spoken to many times and that I've approached from a lot of different angles. This morning I'd like to take the opportunity to follow, I guess, in the footsteps of my colleagues, who have been taking this opportunity this morning to reflect on the voices of Albertans that we are hearing from, who are expressing their concerns with the introduction of this bill, with the specific aspects of the Education Act that are looking at changing, basically eliminating particular provisions that are there to protect the ability of students to expediently, in a reasonable length of time without obstacle, without undue delay, form a peer support group known as a gay-straight alliance or queer-straight alliance and ensure that their participation in that club would not in any way endanger their personal well-being by it being revealed against their will.

As I've mentioned previously in this debate, this is an issue that is of great significance to many of my constituents and a large number of people that came out to volunteer and support my re-election campaign, who specifically stated their concerns that a United Conservative Party government would take just this kind of step. I know that it's true for many of my colleagues as well, and indeed we've had the opportunity to reach out and speak with many. Several have sent us their thoughts, and I'd like to share the thoughts of one mother from the city of Lethbridge.

She says:

I thought I brought my daughter up in a house where everyone is accepted and loved for being them. She ate with Muslim friends at Eid, celebrated Christmas with Christians, would light candles for missing and murdered indigenous women and walked in the city Pride Parade in various outfits: always dancing and always celebrating diversity, inclusion and love. Over the years different clues hung in the air and I let them settle. I let them settle because she needed to know she was my girl, no matter who she brought home, loved or obsessed over – as only teenage girls do. As different questions arose – I aimed to answer them, as different observations were made of the people she found attractive as we walked through a mall or park – always female, always cute, I would listen without judgement. So I thought she was safe. I thought she felt welcomed and accepted and loved. But the night came when she decided to come out: watching her struggle, sobbing through the hair hung over her face, terrified of rejection – I realized just how much more I needed to do to make it less traumatic for her. I hadn't created a safe enough environment for her to come out with ease because ultimately, with so much hate, diatribe and politicizing of sexuality – I couldn't overcome those constant negative messages and hate alone. It would have indeed taken a village to make her feel safe and our society is not there yet. It's after watching her in such distress with me, someone who loves her more than life itself, that I realized what a vital role GSAs play for those young people who need support, the tools to

communicate understanding and acceptance. I don't want the blood or life of young people who suicide or harm themselves on my hands because they've been rejected by family. Community, here in Southern Alberta is not yet as inclusive as we may hope, families aren't quite as safe and school, for many, is the happiest place they can be – yet you [Mr. Premier] wish to take that away from the kids who are most at risk. Please leave kids to be safe in GSAs and be accepted in at least one place – school. Teach them and support them, don't out them and devalue them in the name of politics and votes. Lastly, I'll tell you what I said that night as my beautiful, clever and kind daughter told me to expect her to bring girls home to meet us – I said: You can bring home anyone you want, [bring them] home for dinner and we'll love them and accept them too, but just don't bring home a bigot.

She has some strong words here for the Premier. She suggests that he is not a guest that she would wish to have for dinner, but she does wish him love and wishes that he would never have the life of a young person on his conscience, yet experience and statistics and this hostile climate that he has had a part in creating suggests that may happen. She concludes by saying:

Don't buy the votes of bigots [Mr. Premier], please. I urge you: protect and love the brave.

That's quite a story from a mother who very much loved and supported her daughter, who very much wanted to provide that daughter with a safe and accepting home, who went well out of her way to promote tolerance and diversity in their family but discovered that even that was not enough because of the environment that her daughter was living in, other influences in the community, voices in the media, the ongoing struggles we have as human beings to advance and progress in how we view others and see the world.

All that cumulatively still wore her daughter down to the point where even with a mother that was open and accepting and had always been willing to listen to her, it was a difficult and painful thing for her to come out. What I appreciate about this mother's words is that she's willing to recognize that there can be value in having other help and supports to support her daughter. She does not take that as a personal threat. She does not take that as a judgment on her own ability as a parent. Indeed, as we discuss this bill and we discuss the importance of GSAs, I think it's important to highlight that we are not looking to pass judgment on any parent.

You know, Madam Chair, I think back to my own adolescence, and it was not an easy time. I've talked before in this House about the personal struggles that I had with my mental health, with anxiety, with many questions about who I was. I do not question the fact that my parents loved me or that they wanted the best for me, but they were not able to provide everything I needed. If I'd had the opportunity to access a peer support group like this – although for me it was not a struggle of questions of my sexuality or the sorts of things that young people struggle with, their gender identity or other questions about themselves. Still, if I'd had the opportunity and a safe space to be able to talk through the things that I could not talk with my parents about – which indeed later in life I did have the opportunity to talk with them about, when we were both in a better place and had a chance to grow, but which at that time simply was not possible – the difference that could have made for me personally. And in saying that, that is not in any way a judgment on my parents. It's simply reflecting the reality and recognizing the limitations that we have as human beings and the value that different supports and aspects of community can add.

3:40 a.m.

Now, part of the challenge here is that to a large extent I don't think there's any member of this House that would stand here and disagree with what I just said. Every member of this House that has

stood to speak to this bill has said that they, in fact, support exactly that and that they believe that GSAs should in fact have the right to exist. That's progress. We've come a ways from when this first came up for discussion in this Legislature under Bill 10, at least in that we've reached the point where it's no longer politically saleable to come out and publicly say that you are against GSAs. But let's set that aside. I will say that I genuinely believe all members of this House support the existence of a GSA.

Now, the question we have, though, is why we feel the need to reduce the protections that are put in place to be able to allow them to exist, to allow students to participate in them and to do so safely, to feel secure that the information about their participation, about the things they may have to share in what is supposed to be a safe space will not be shared without their direct consent and permission, why we feel that it should not be one hundred per cent clear that when a student makes this request, it should be granted immediately, without delay.

There has been much discussion about balance, and the suggestion that working to close some of these loopholes, which, again, were clearly identified and which we had clear examples of their being exploited, the suggestion that somehow, in working to close those, we were upsetting balance and we were taking away the rights of parents or schools to hold their own particular private views. When we are talking about balance, Madam Chair, we are talking about a balance of power. So if we are having that discussion about the balance of power in these situations, we have to ask: whose power are we speaking of? What power do these students have in this situation? I'd say: relatively little for youth that are in this vulnerable position, who are LGBTQ2S-plus, who are struggling with their identity, who are attempting to find their place in a world that until fairly recently has been hostile to that identity.

These are not youth that are coming in with an agenda. These are not youth that are coming in and attempting to create trouble. These are youth who are simply looking for an opportunity to have a place of safety and to provide that safety to others. Students within a school system are generally subject to power and authority by their teachers, their principals, their administrators, the authority of their parents, the authority of a number of figures in their lives. What we are attempting to balance here is that power and authority of all these different figures in their lives with the needs of the young people themselves.

I think that when we have had clear demonstration that some of those individuals, some of those authorities, some of those figures who wield and hold power have used that power to attempt to stymie these youth, to block them, to delay them, it really doesn't matter the reason for that. Whether it is out of honest belief that they are morally protecting these youth by doing so or whether it is out of some form of prejudice, it does not matter what the reason. The fact is that they are abusing the power that has been put in their hands. The question of balance, then, Madam Chair, is about ensuring that such abuse does not and is not able to take place, which is the reason that we brought forward the changes that we did in Bill 24.

I have here another letter, written by another resident of southern Alberta. He says:

Gay Straight Alliances are an important part of creating a safe and respectful environment for all students in every school in our province. The schools where those student led clubs are most needed, those schools with intolerant administrators, teachers, and students are those least likely to provide voluntary and enthusiastic support for students. As we have seen since the passage of [the legislation], there are many individuals who do not want to support these student led clubs. I have sat in conversations with school board trustees and former

superintendents where they discussed how to circumvent the legislation and deny full support to these students. I sat in meetings where those same individuals discussed how to inform the parents of these students that they were in those clubs, knowing that would out extremely vulnerable students – teenagers and children – to their parents. I know teenagers who have been made homeless in grade 11 and 12 because someone outed them to their parents. Outing a person is an inherently violent act, and by passing Bill 8, [this Premier's] conservatives are allowing and even encouraging parents and administrators to do that to their own students. Parents and caregivers should be the safe and loving first resource, support, and advocate of every child. Tragically, that is not always the case. Parents who love and support their children, who have regular and open conversations about their child's interests, personality, and identity will be aware of things that pertain to their child's life, like their participation in a student led club, or their child's orientation and identity. Allowing or encouraging educators to out their students in this manner is totally unnecessary and even dangerous. In the words of a parent from Stirling, Alberta, "If I know my kids, then I'll be fine." Professional psychological and education associations across North America conclude that outing children and teenagers to unsupportive or homophobic parents is unethical. It can be completely unforeseen as well. Teachers know parents on a more impersonal level than do their children. Allowing children to have those sensitive conversations with parents when it is safe for them to do so is best. Please do not put that kind of pressure on students, on teachers, or on administrators. Please continue to ensure that all students have a right to a school supported group for community that is not subject to the whims of unsupportive school staff. Please make schools safe, welcoming and respectful places for all Albertans; every single one of us. Respect our humanity. Stop pandering to a fearful base. Be leaders in compassion, kindness, understanding, and empathy. Do not pass this law that fundamentally leaves schools unsafe places, and lets adults bully children, protected by their status and by the systems they are a part of. This is an unnecessary and harmful law. For the sake of my children; for the sake of our schools and teachers and public institutions; for the sake of our communities . . .

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

3:50 a.m.

**Ms Phillips:** All right. Well, good morning, Madam Chair. I often say that it's my pleasure to rise to speak to a bill. What I've said about Bill Hate, though, is that it is not my pleasure to rise to speak to this bill. It's my profound irritation to rise and speak to this bill.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I think it would be okay if we were not having the conversation in and around GSAs. You know, we can disagree on some of the age of access or transportation or other provisions within the Education Act, and that's fine. But on this issue, Mr. Chair, this one makes me wonder. It makes me wonder about the real priorities of this government, makes me wonder about the actual priorities of my hon. colleagues, and makes me wonder about what the motivation is.

I think the first thing that I want to talk about – and I'm sure I'll have other opportunities; I've got a whole bunch of rants in me on this topic – is: why are we doing this? Like, why are we standing here having this conversation? Really, why we're doing this and the reason why it was such a high priority is because this provision of this act is aimed at a specific group of people. We know that that's not where great public policy comes from, so that's the first kind of problem with this.

What we're doing here is that we're aiming at relieving 28 schools, private schools, of their obligations under the current legislation to establish a safe, inclusive, and caring schools policy that's consistent with the basic principles of immediacy and confidentiality in forming a GSA or a QSA and then with how people's membership in that club is sort of managed and how the status of their membership and that information is managed at the level of the school. What this is about is relieving those 28 schools of the duty to follow the law as it is currently written.

To be clear, everyone else has complied with this rule. There are hundreds of schools in this province, various charter, faith-based schools. I'm thinking here of the Jewish school in southwest Calgary, to which some of my friends' children go. I'm thinking here of some of the Islamic schools that are within the public system, within the charter system. I'm thinking here of Catholic schools, all of whom have complied with Bill 24, for all of whom, really, you know, this topic is ticking along just fine.

There are these 28 remaining schools. They're being represented by John Carpay in a lawsuit. The idea here is that they won't have to continue with their lawsuit and John Carpay won't have to continue to represent these people for not following the law if this passes. Right? That's nice, that we're doing specific legislation to satisfy the John Carpays of the world. You know, down memory lane here: this is a dude who compared the pride flag to a swastika, which is not only really awful for LGBT people and what the pride flag means for LGBT people in terms of struggle and equality, but it's also super, deeply offensive to Jewish people. But he wasn't kicked out, and he wasn't particularly censured for those remarks. I think he, like, did a sort of half-apology, half-hearted, and then, I think, promptly doubled down.

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Ms Phillips:** We're doing that . . .

**The Acting Chair:** Member, please. A point of order.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. McIver:** Well, under Standing Order 23 it talks about talking about matters that are not part of what's before us, and I think the hon. member was doing just that. I know that she feels strongly about what she's saying, but it just doesn't happen to be relevant to the bill that's before the House.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you very much.

Would you like to respond?

**Ms Phillips:** Sure. I believe that the sentence or at least the paragraph – we could check the Blues – began with: why are we having this conversation about this bill? That is directly related to the bill. You know, while I think it's nice that the hon. member has now woken up, this is not a point of order.

**The Acting Chair:** Hon. member, I'd caution you. You're kind of crossing the line there with mentioning the other member's status in the House. If you would please just stick to the bill at hand. It is getting late.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Phillips:** Sure. This is why we are having this conversation about Bill 8, and this is the background for this conversation. You know, I think that what's interesting here is that a lot of this doesn't

really have to do with some of the basic tenets of conservative thought and some of the reasons why I have a lot of time for conservatives overall. I would basically boil it down to three things, the things that I like the best about conservatives, which are respect for individual liberty, rule of law, and respect for institutions and the establishment. That's where this bill, point one, is wildly offside of the concept of individual liberty in particular: the individual's ability to disclose their sexuality on their own time, their own terms, an individual's right to in fact have their own choice of sexuality or gender identity.

I think the why is very interesting, and I think that what we're doing here is making a law for one group that doesn't actually uphold that basic concept that undergirds a lot of conservative thought and is one of the reasons why, you know, at least historically, a social democrat like me could have a beer with a conservative, which is that both have a great deal of time for individual liberty. That's one of the big issues with this bill.

The other issue that I think needs to be queried a little bit is around how open-hearted expressions of faith then intersect with the rule of law around individual liberty. These things are not at odds. We've often heard the Premier talk about how these things are at odds, and they're just not, Mr. Chair. I think it's important to unravel that a little bit. I think, you know, the vast, vast majority of people of faith would agree with me on this, that in an open-hearted expression of faith, whatever the faith-based system is, we take care of one another. We understand that we have certain individual liberties, all of us, and that faith is a community. A community has certain responsibilities to one another. I think that's one of the reasons why this bill is, in fact, so irritating to me, and that is because we're seeing a number of excuses dressed up as expressions of faith, which I think are not particularly valid. I'll refer here to other expressions of faith in correspondence that I have received from faith leaders.

Just as an aside here, one of the reasons why I feel so passionately about LGBT issues, why I've dedicated my life to trying to learn how to be a decent ally, a decent human being on these topics, is because one of the first places I ever encountered these issues as a teenager was actually through the Anglican faith.

**4:00 a.m.**

You know, I was raised in the Anglican faith. I was baptized Anglican. I would go to youth camps when I was a kid and a teenager, in particular. That was a long time ago, and I'm very old, so it was the first place that I learned about apartheid, for example. It was the first place that I learned about sort of international social justice. It was the first place I learned about LGBT issues, the first place I ever met a gay person, in fact. You know, when you grow up kind of on the farm north of Spruce Grove, Alberta, you don't come across a whole lot of that, not at that time. To that end, what I learned from the faith community was that open-hearted expression of community and that understanding of our care for one another. That's where I think it's important to give that faith community a voice, in particular in this House on this bill, because people from different faith communities have reached out to me on this matter.

One person – no relation – is Erin Phillips. Erin is the chaplain of the University of Lethbridge, and she's also an Anglican minister. I think she's out of Taber now, but she was at Coaldale, and my mom was her parishioner for some time. Here's what Erin has to say about GSAs.

I've been working with university and college students for almost 25 years as chaplain and nearly 30 as an instructor. I've gotten to know many students who grew up in environments where they didn't feel it was safe for them to be honest about who they were.

I've dealt with the long-term damage that that kind of fear and vigilance has caused them. In a few tragic cases I've been involved with their funerals. I've also worked in the parish for over 20 years, and as a parish priest I've worked with many youth. I've been grateful that the two churches I've served were open and welcoming communities, but I know it isn't the case with all churches. It's a difficult time for many kids as they try to sort out who they are and what's important to them. They need safe and supportive communities where they can grow and mature. GSAs provide those kinds of safe spaces. They provide a place where they can learn not only who they are but also how to be a supportive community for other kids. They learn to care for and value the kid who is marginalized and the kid who needs a place to belong.

I would just remind the members across the way that the terms "GSA" and "QSA" involve the word "straight" as well. I mean, these are clubs for kids, and sometimes they're about just making connections with other kids.

Erin goes on:

Sadly, this is not always the case for families, and it is . . .

in Erin Phillips's words,

. . . reprehensible that the government is considering outing youth to their parents when they may not be ready.

That's the word from the chaplain at the University of Lethbridge, an Anglican minister down there.

I have another letter here, from Reverend Lindsey Jorgensen-Skakum, who is the associate pastor at the Holy Spirit Lutheran church. I won't read their whole letter, but I will read some of it.

We've been blessed to serve the areas of Malmo and Lendrum for over 54 years, providing care and support to our members, friends, and neighbours. During this time we have come to centre our practices of worship and service around works of social justice and solidarity within both our community and the wider world. So much of what we hold dear as a community of faith has come under fire as of late by the UCP government. The right of LGBTQ2SIA-plus students to form and join GSAs without fear of being outed to their guardians, the rights of all Albertans to a fair and equal wage . . .

and so on and so forth.

They say:

We have taken to writing letters to the UCP government to express our grave concerns. As this is the case, I also wish to write a letter of support and encouragement for your efforts . . .

This is addressed to me.

. . . within the Legislature over the last few months to try to keep these movements alive. Not only have you all weathered the storm of a hard-fought election, but you've immediately taken up the fight for everyday Albertans. This member is of the Official Opposition. There have been so many long sessions as of late, stretching well into the early hours of the morning, during which you have uplifted the concerns of Albertans before the government. While I recognize that this is a part of the change your position as an MLA holds, these are long hours spent away from your families, friends, and communities of support. The work you are doing, while at times tiring, is so important. I know that over the next four years there may not be many "victories" due to the status of the majority UCP government. But please know that every time you stand for justice, every time you fight for workers' rights, every time you work to uphold the rights of LGBTQ2SIA-plus youth, every time you rise within the Chamber to raise your voice for the voiceless, we give thanks for you all. We are grateful for your tireless work and continue to hold you and our government in our prayers.

Sincerely,

Reverend Lindsey Jorgensen-Skakum,  
who is the associate pastor at Holy Spirit Lutheran church.

Obviously, there are a lot of open-hearted expressions of faith, Mr. Chair, that could inform this bill, but they don't.

Another aspect that could inform this bill and would mean that the government would be open to amending it is about a gentleman named Rick Fraser and his experience with his own son, that he spoke about at length in this Chamber, a former PC colleague of the members opposite. He spoke movingly and emotionally a couple of different times. He also spoke to me and to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview a couple of times privately about this matter. He's a good man, Rick Fraser, our former colleague. He was here for the right reasons. He was here to do what he felt was right, and good on him. I wish him all the best.

You know, I'll never forget him standing in this House and talking about the challenges of his son coming out to him. Rick and his wife provided a very supportive environment and a supportive household, and that was still really tough on him. He was duly elected by his constituents to be a Conservative in this House, and I have to wonder what he would be thinking or what he is thinking about this backslide that is contained within Bill 8 as we now discuss this matter in the House. I think of him often because he was, again, one of those kinds of Conservatives where we might disagree on certain matters having to do with economic policy and even some aspects of social policy, I'm quite certain, but that element of fundamental individual liberty and individual human rights that was protected under Bill 24 and is being eroded and jammed into reverse under Bill 8, Bill Hate, is regrettable. Indeed, I think this does a great disservice to some of the people who have honourably served this Chamber as Conservatives in the past.

I'll now bring some more voices from constituents. Here's a Lethbridge-East resident named Jack.

GSAs matter to me because of the impact I see it make in my community, the fact of providing a safe space for my peers and letting them get involved in a group where they feel they are appreciated, because many people don't share that same love and kindness. Letting people have a place to express themselves is so essential to protecting Albertans even if they love someone different from you. The LGBT community deserves to feel respected by all Albertans, and even though Bill 8 will be debated back and forth on the benefits and faults, at the end of the day, by passing this bill, the message that's sent is clear, that the lives of thousands and thousands of Albertans, every LGBT friend I have, feels hurt, left behind, disregarded by Bill 8. The message that this bill sends is loud and clear to every gay, lesbian, trans, and plus person I know. What it says is that they don't matter, that their lifestyle, which is different, is wrong, and that the UCP doesn't care about them, doesn't respect them, doesn't love them.

Jack goes on to say:

I'm sure many people will argue that that's not true, but the fact is that that's the message being sent. No Albertan should feel that way. No person should feel that way.

**4:10 a.m.**

Jack goes on to write:

Please stop Bill 8. Take a second to see the effect on the lives of people, not the political ramifications but the message the government is sending because it is painful and disrespectful to the LGBT Albertans that it's your job to represent.

That's Jack, who I think is still 17, and will be, most certainly, a voter in 2023.

I have a constituent here named Zane. Zane has taught me a tremendous amount with some feedback about Bill 8. On a personal level, I really want to thank Zane for everything that she's taught me. We're always learning about that journey for trans people, of transition, of acceptance, of, you know, so-called passing, for ensuring that you're living according to the gender that you feel you

were born with. Yeah, Zane is a wonderful human being, and this is what she has to say:

There have been numerous peer-reviewed academic studies on the positive effects of GSAs, QSAs on LGBTQ-plus youth as well as the general public. It is not hyperbole when the NDP states that GSAs, QSAs save lives. It's the truth. The truth is that when you get to start a GSA, QSA, it provides an opportunity for everyone to ask questions, wonder about gender, sexuality but, most importantly, break down the wall of the us-versus-them attitude.

This part she puts in a big box.

LGBTQ-plus Albertans pay taxes, have opinions, enjoy the wilderness, the very things that the UCP members like and do. We must protect the youth from uncaring families.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you very much, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and happy Thursday to everyone. Of course, happy Thursday to all my hon. friends on this side of the House and in the UCP caucus. Many of them have travelled great distances to be here for this, what could be the final week, potentially, of the legislative session. We have worked some long hours this week and in the weeks before it. Of course, for all members, that means time away from our families. It's time away from our businesses, from volunteering, from community groups, from many of the things that bring us fulfillment in life. That's the sacrifice, of course, that we took on when we ran for public office, and we make that sacrifice in order to be part of something larger.

I think that our current Premier gave a speech to that effect not too long ago, in the past, but I do wonder if some of the members opposite, when the Premier isn't around or during those long hours on the highway, reflect on their role in this government, especially after last week, when the Government House Leader successfully argued that those members are not actually part of the government at all. I think that that's got to be demoralizing if you've travelled all the way from, say, Central Peace-Notley or Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. You might think that if they're not members of the government, they might enjoy some freedom to speak. But, no, they don't have a voice in this place beyond reading the badly written notes they're handed by the government. These members don't listen to debate on legislation since the government told them to plug their ears. They can't introduce their own guests.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Chair, this is fascinating. Point of order. This is fascinating; it just doesn't really have anything to do with the legislation in front of us, as interesting as it really is.

**The Acting Chair:** Yes.

Please, Member, I'd ask you to speak to the bill.

**Mr. Carson:** Of course, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that. I will quickly get to my point here. I think it's important to recognize the debate that's happening here.

Anyway, we found ourselves not being able to introduce our own guests since the government stripped us of that century-old right.

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Point of order.

**Mr. McIver:** At some point I would ask you, respectfully, to suggest to the hon. member that he address the legislation before the Assembly, please.

**Mr. Shepherd:** If I may, Mr. Chair, to the point of order. Generally within Committee of the Whole I believe that if you look at previous precedent and past practice, there's a fair amount of latitude that's allowed to members to expand on their thoughts on a piece of legislation. There's the opportunity to explore a number of directions as long as things do come around to the point. This is something that I know the Member for Calgary-Hays has personally exploited on many an occasion, and I respect that he may not be interested in listening to us tonight and may be interested in trying to perhaps suppress the free speech of members here. But I would suggest to him that perhaps our time would be best exercised, as in past practice, respecting that opportunity for members.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Member for Edmonton-West Henday, I'd just ask you, for the benefit of those that are tuning in and may not know exactly what you've been talking about might be, to stick to the relevance of the bill so that we could figure out where we're at. Thank you.

**Mr. Carson:** Wonderful. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Considering some of the long-winded speeches I've heard over the last few weeks here, I think that I haven't gone too far off the mark.

Back to the point. Of course, we're discussing Bill 8 and the concerns that this opposition party has with that legislation and my concerns with the fact that this government – well, I suppose, not this government but the members that are part of the UCP caucus who are not being afforded the opportunity to speak unless it's been handed to them by the government. Of course, it is a real shame, Mr. Chair, that they aren't taking the opportunity to discuss this.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

This is really part of a bigger picture that we've seen once again, the fact that we've seen this legislation, Bill 8, come forward and that many questions have been asked not only by the opposition caucus but also by members of the media about, to quote the Minister of Education, finding balance in the current legislation. We're hoping to find out what that means, but really the Education minister nor any other member of the government or the UCP caucus has been able to properly explain or explain at all what they mean by finding that balance. The question has been raised by several members on this side of the House, what that actually means.

It's very concerning to see legislation come forward in this House where members of the caucus that is bringing this legislation forward are unwilling to speak to that legislation. We've seen it in amendments that have passed, even within the morning here. They're unwilling to speak to it at all, and I have grave concerns with that.

Of course, during the election our now Premier said, as has been brought up several times, that he will not get distracted by GSAs and other issues that voters aren't talking about. Once again, I'm very concerned that while our now Premier said that he would not get distracted, here we are in the First Session of our four-year term, and we're seeing legislation attacking the rights of the LGBTQ2S-plus community.

Now, once again I want to go back to the fact that members are not able to raise their voice on issues with this. We saw earlier the rights of members stripped away when introducing guests. We saw the rights of members or, I suppose, the ability of members to really make decisions. We saw it earlier today, where a member, the Member for Calgary-Falconridge, wanted to stand up and speak to an amendment that was put forward on this very bill, and their caucus whip told the member to be seated, which is very concerning for me, when we talk about respecting democracy, when a member

wants to speak to something and they're told to sit down, maybe because he didn't have the prepared notes handed to him. I'm not sure what the issue was there, but the fact is that it happened. It's very concerning to see that in the House. Madam Chair, that's gravely concerning to me, especially on such an important piece of legislation.

Really, just to get back to the point here, I mean, I remember when Bill 24 was introduced in this House by our NDP government and the conversation that happened around there. Of course, our members of the government supported Bill 24, recognizing that it was a step forward in the protection of GSAs and the strengthening of GSAs and QSAs, and all of the members opposite that were in I guess it was the Wildrose, I suppose, at the time – I don't know: Wildrose, UCP, same thing – voted against it. Very concerning that here we are again, and they're using the same line: well, we support GSAs and QSAs; we're just going to weaken the ability of students to form them. Very concerning for me.

Of course, we have the Minister of Children's Services, the minister of mental health, and I would like to hear from them how they think weakening the rights of children or the rights of youth to support and start GSAs is somehow furthering their agenda when we talk about protecting children and protecting the mental health of children, especially with the stats that I'm sure have been raised earlier in this debate.

4:20 a.m.

But I would like to focus on them just for a little while here. Once again, 33 per cent of the LGBTQ youth have attempted suicide in comparison to 7 per cent of youth in general, and I think I raised that very point in the Bill 24 debate. Over half of members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community, 47 per cent of males and 73 per cent of females, have thought about suicide. When we compare the situation of those in the LGBTQ community to those who aren't, we're seeing a picture here. Increasingly, studies are confirming that suicidal ideation and behaviour are disproportionately affecting and prevalent among LGBTQ members. Once again, I'm very concerned that we have ministers in this government that are put in charge of protecting the mental health of children, and they're willing to see the rights of the LGBTQ community eroded through this piece of legislation. Very concerning.

During the election we had multiple UCP candidates who came into the limelight because of the comments they've made or the thoughts that they've had towards the LGBTQ community. Some of those people made it into this House. They've been pretty quiet on this issue, I'll tell you. It would be interesting to hear them stand up and talk of how they think this is supporting the LGBTQ community. At the time that one of them stepped down, thankfully – thankfully, they're not here today – our Premier thanked the member for their selfless move to step down. No reprimand for what they had said about the LGBTQ community, just: thank you for your selfless work; we'll see you next time, I suppose. Maybe they'll run in the next election. But that's very concerning for me, and I think it's very concerning for the people in this community who are being affected by this piece of legislation, because they're seeing in this government a willingness to let their rights be eroded. That's very concerning for me.

Many members on this side of the House shared stories and letters from their community, and I do appreciate that because it's important to put faces and names to the people. I think that a big part of the misunderstanding here – unfortunately, we're legislating on a misunderstanding. But I'm not sure that some of these government members who are about to vote on this really, maybe, necessarily understand the issue. I don't know if they've never met somebody from the LGBTQ community, because we see a lot of

times that fear comes from the unknown, and fear comes from misunderstanding, and there might be some of that here. Unfortunately, it's going to see its way through legislation, and it's going to negatively affect people in this community. That's very concerning for me.

Once again, just thinking back to the Bill 24 debate, that took place under our NDP government, something that I remember quite often is a comment that was made by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, who is no longer in the House, of course. The member said something like, "Views have changed quite a bit over the last decade even." I made a comment back to him saying, "You know, if you're learning from people or if you're listening to people who are willing to take the human rights of another community and talk down about them, then you should be concerned about who you're learning from and who is teaching you." Once again, I think that that is an important point to make. If there are people out there in the community who are teaching you that it's wrong to identify differently than some other person or to love somebody that somebody thinks you shouldn't when it comes to LGBTQ, that's very concerning, and you should second-guess who is giving this information.

Now, I also want to raise a point. The Premier yesterday, I suppose, in question period raised the fact that when we raise concerns about funding going to private charter schools even though they weren't willing to recognize QSAs and GSAs – and our government had planned to pull funding from these schools, which were not willing to respect the human rights of this community. The Premier, as he does every time he's asked the question, pushes it off and puts some political spin on it, saying something along the lines of: well, we're going to continue funding them. So what he's saying is that he does not take the concerns of this community seriously, and he's willing to continue funding these. I imagine we'll see, potentially in the fall session, with a budget release, that he might even go further and start funding them even more. We're going to see the rights of the LGBTQ community taken away from them, and then we're going to give them more money, which is very concerning.

These discussions, of course, were not easy discussions for our government to have under Bill 24. It was just the right thing to do. Becoming a New Democrat in Alberta isn't the easiest thing to do. Obviously, I'm a little biased here, but I think it's the right thing to do. Of course, well, we can debate that all night, too.

Once again, it's very concerning that this Premier is willing to continue funding these schools who aren't willing to respect the human rights that should be given to this community and that have been enshrined in legislation to protect this community.

Now, once again, I truly don't understand, with a Premier who said during the election that legislating on social issues was the last thing that he wanted to do, how we made it to this place. Of course, the Education minister continues to say that this is about modernizing the Education Act or modernizing the education system, which, when you look through the legislation that's before us, is really quite clearly just an attack on the LGBTQ community and an attack on GSAs and QSAs. The minister still hasn't given us any clear indication of why they're doing this. I think that we can come to our own conclusions about the support in terms of volunteer capacity and money that came into their party. That money talks for this government, and they have some dues that they have to pay back, which, unfortunately, is going to work against the kids in our schools.

You know, I also brought up the fact that over the last four years I had the opportunity to represent Jasper Place high school. They were early adopters of GSAs, and it was an honour to go there with our former Premier, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, as well as the former Education minister, the Member for Edmonton-North

West, to share in their GSA and talk about Bill 24 at the time, which was being discussed and consulted upon, which really brings me to another point, the fact that this piece of legislation that's before us has had very little consultation if any at all. I would be very interested to find out what consultation the Education minister has done. I know that the question has been raised quite a few times, and we haven't, once again, gotten a very clear answer on that. Maybe you talked to a couple of teachers at a charter school or something.

That would be interesting to find out because the implications of this piece of legislation moving forward gravely concern me, and it concerns teachers across this province. Once again, as was stated in the Bill 24 debate and the Bill 10 debate and now this debate, teachers do not want the responsibility to have to choose whether to out a child or not, and they shouldn't have to have that responsibility. They really should not. A child should be able to choose when they decide to come out, if they decide to come out to their parents at all. Who knows? Maybe that just doesn't happen. Maybe that's something that they keep to themselves, which is unfortunate, if they do feel that way, but maybe that also can make them happy. But the fact is that that decision should be theirs and not a teacher's and not a parent's and not a school administrator's, and that's the bottom line.

The fact that we brought forward some very reasonable amendments – and I imagine we'll have some more here as the debate goes on. The fact that, for one, we're hearing very little debate from the government and the UCP caucus as a whole, very little debate on our amendments and on the bill itself, shows that maybe there's some concern. Maybe not, but I hope that there's some concern, because when I look at this piece of legislation, I think about how I might feel if I started eroding the rights of these vulnerable children in our schools. I think I might have a little trouble sleeping at night, to be honest, because it's our responsibility as legislators to raise all boats and to think about the people that are being harmed and how we can protect them. And here we are taking those rights away from them when it comes to ensuring that "gay" can be in the name of the GSA, ensuring that timely establishment of a GSA is done, which was voted down once already, of course, by this caucus.

**4:30 a.m.**

Of course, there are many other issues with this piece of legislation. When we look at talking about school board trustees being able to fire other school board trustees, that's very concerning. You know, people are elected democratically, and for school board trustees to unilaterally be able to throw somebody off the board because they aren't happy with them – imagine if that happened in this House. Imagine if the UCP government or, well, the front bench and the backbench decided with their majority mandate that: well, we don't like what the NDP is saying today, so instead of putting in earplugs, we're just going to throw one off the boat. I'm sure they would love to do that, but unfortunately that's not how democracy works.

**Ms Hoffman:** What if it happened to themselves?

**Mr. Carson:** Yeah. What if it happened to one of their own members? I mean, we've heard they're interested in recall legislation. We'll see how that goes now that they're in government.

It's very concerning that they think that school board trustees should be able to start throwing each other off. It would also create a lot of infighting, which is unfortunate because they were elected democratically, just like we were as well.



Once again, I do hope to hear more from the government front bench and the caucus behind them about why they're really supporting this because when I look at it, I don't see any good news here. I think that it's very concerning that the first thing this government goes after is the social issue of protecting students in GSAs and QSAs. There are still many questions about classroom improvement funds, about nutrition programs, things that are going to affect the health and wellness of children on top of this, on top of this erosion of their rights. On one hand, the government is saying, "Well, we're going to move fast to take their rights away," but on the other hand, they're going to move as slow as they want when we talk about funding vital, important programs for these students as well. A little bit of give and take, I suppose, from this government.

Madam Chair, I imagine I'm going to have a lot more time to speak to this piece of legislation tonight. I will just once again say that I'm very concerned about the conversation that has happened here or the lack of conversation from the government side of the House, the lack of answers from the Education minister and the Premier himself. You know, he also – I believe it was in question period earlier today – said: well, the NDP supported Bill 10. Well, yes. That's true. We supported Bill 10 because it was a small step forward. But the fact is that at the first chance we had, we moved forward to strengthen what was in Bill 10, of course, through a totally new piece of legislation. We strengthened it. So why would this government want to turn the clock back on that? It's very, very concerning.

You know, I also had the chance earlier to talk about my friend who asked me to share their story in the House about the fact that they didn't have a house that was welcoming . . .

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I'm very interested to hear the speeches given by my peers here on the opposition side of the House because I think there are lots of significant points that are made.

You know, along the way I've tried to join in and share some of the concerns from different constituencies that I represent in one way or another. That has included, of course, the students in my area of Edmonton-Rutherford but also indigenous voices around the province, who I often try to bring into the House just to make sure that there's at least some conversation and some concern about how this legislation or any other legislation may affect indigenous peoples. I sure would have appreciated it if at some point in the time that we are together debating this bill along with the other ones, someone on the government side of the House would address how this bill or other bills affect indigenous communities. I am sure they have some thoughts around that. It would just be nice to hear some points of view. We could have an exchange and perhaps one in which we would agree with each other substantively about the importance of representing the voice of indigenous people here in this House.

But, you know, I have spoken to those issues a number of times over the last few weeks. Today I indicated that I would be, as I spoke earlier, making a little bit of a shift in terms of my conversation. While others have spoken at great length about the GSAs, I haven't previously spent as much time on that. Tonight I wish to spend a little bit of time on that.

Previously I spoke about the perspective of myself as a social worker, having worked in the area of child abuse and neglect for many years, in fact, the majority of my 35 years as a social worker,

talking about how bills of this nature have a very serious effect for a small group of people but a group of people that I personally have devoted a significant portion of my career to working with and protecting. I feel that it's important that I do that while I'm in the House as well because, you know, when you're in a private practice, you have the opportunity to support people on a one-to-one basis, on an individual basis, which is extremely important because that's where we get our sense of social support from.

You know, as a PhD student at the university I did a significant amount of work around the area of social support. One of the things that we found in the research – and it's pretty consistent across various aspects of the research; that is, social support as it relates to a number of different issues, but my focus, of course, was on child abuse and neglect – is that there is a significant difference in outcomes for children when they have some form of social support given their lack of support in their family situation. This doesn't only apply to issues such as the existence or nonexistence of GSAs or even just around issues of sexual orientation but applies to a variety of dysfunctional concerns that may happen in a family such that there actually is a significant change in the outcomes, the statistics, that we worry about when a child has experienced abuse or neglect.

For example, while only about 7 or 8 per cent – and the research does vary in terms of the specific numbers, but I'll use that as a rough average; I'm prepared to be challenged on that to some degree – of children experience some form of abuse or neglect in their childhood, one of things that we do know is that if you have been abused as a child yourself, are one of that 7 or 8 per cent, the likelihood of you becoming an abuser jumps up to about 20, 21 per cent or so. So we know that the experiences of childhood become the teaching moments that lead to the ultimate outcome in terms of your adult behaviour. Thus, if you are abused as a child, you are more likely to become an abuser.

But it's not all bad news. My point is that it does raise the percentage of people who become abusers significantly, by about three times, approximately. You know, research always questions the actual numbers because there are many variables that need to be accounted for, but the trend is pretty clear that the likelihood of your becoming an abuser if you have been abused goes up significantly. For the sake of argument, let's use three times because I think that's reasonably defensible given the statistics.

**4:40 a.m.**

However, the thing I want to point out about that is that even if it is raised by that much, even if the structural impetus from your childhood experience does raise it that much, it's still important for us to remember that the vast majority of people who were abused as kids don't go on to abuse their own kids. Remember, I indicated that it only goes up to 21 per cent. It doesn't go up to 100 per cent, which actually tells us something. It tells us that the vast majority of people who are abused as kids do not become offenders themselves when they reach that age and have children of their own: 21 per cent might, but that tells me that some 79 per cent are not.

That became a very big focus of the research for a number of years. If having had that experience as a child tends to exacerbate the likelihood of your becoming an offender, then of course we want to pay attention to what the mechanism is that causes you to become an offender having experienced that kind of violation yourself. But it also led to the next question, or the obvious question: if you did have the experience and the vast majority – using the stats that I'm using right now, somewhere around 79 per cent – of people don't become offenders, there must have been something that stopped them from becoming an offender,

something that interfered with that draw, that pull that comes from the childhood experience.

Of course, that's a very interesting question because we wish to encourage whatever that is. We wish to, you know, find ways to structurally enhance that in our society because if we could shift that 79 per cent to 89 per cent or perhaps even 99 per cent, we could become very close to eliminating child abuse and neglect in our society, which is obviously a desirable outcome.

The research done on this has led in a number of different directions that have been very helpful for those of us who worked in the field in terms of making decisions about the things that we would do both as therapists, on the individual level, but also societally, on that more structural level, because, of course, the frustration that many of us experience in working with individuals, you know, one on one in a private practice such as my own, was that you weren't actually changing the underlying problem. You were helping that individual, which is a noble pursuit and the right thing to do for that individual, but it doesn't change the overall amount of abuse that happens in society. In looking at that question, what are the things that we can do?

One of the things that came out most strongly in terms of what actually prevents people from going from being abused to becoming an abuser was what the literature refers to as social support. The evidence is actually quite interesting because in much of the research they talk about the fact that it doesn't have to be the vast majority of the people in your life that support you, that help you to become part of that group of people that's able to overcome the personal experience of abuse and ensure that you don't move into an offending set of behaviours.

Even the presence of a single identifiable individual who was present to you and who stayed consistently in a relationship with you was enough to begin to have an effect. Now, of course, you know, if it's many people, it's much better, but in some of the research that my supervisor, for example, had been researching, some people were able to say: "There was this one teacher, there was an aunt, an uncle, there was a neighbour, there was a cousin, or someone who knew what was going on for me and who stayed in a relationship with me. That really helped me to go from being an abused child to being a nonabusive parent." We know that social support has a pretty powerful effect, and it's really important that we try to create that.

Now, there are a variety of ways in which we can try to create that kind of social support. There are incredible individuals out there – teachers, for example; church members are often cited; neighbours, extended relatives, all kinds of groups of people – who can come forward. It's wonderful when they do, and I praise them when they do step up and help us to transform what could have been a tragedy into a great success story. But because we know that that works, we should also be concerned about the fact that there is that 21 per cent of people, or some number, that don't seem to be receiving that kind of support, that for some reason don't get the kind of level of support that allows them to overcome the trauma of their own personal history and to move into a healthier place in society.

I think that the question of what we can do as a society to provide that for people who don't have it naturally or don't have someone who steps up for them – there are a variety of ways that that happens. There are organizations, wonderful ones like Big Brothers Big Sisters, for example, just off the top of my head, which step up every day to try to provide that kind of social support. I'm very proud to have worked with Big Brothers Big Sisters in providing services to children who are working with that agency and very proud to have spent many, many weekends meeting with young

people and helping them to make that transition and to give them the sense of social support that's necessary.

I'm very proud of Big Brothers Big Sisters here in Edmonton, who have particularly been reaching out to the LGBTQ2S-plus community to make sure that they have big brothers and big sisters who are either themselves part of the queer community or are very open and supportive of the queer community to match with children who are part of the queer community or who perhaps are even not necessarily at the place yet where they fully have come to the realization of their orientation but are questioning or exploring or concerned or just need reassurance. You know, I want to thank that agency. I want to thank Big Brothers Big Sisters for reaching out in that way.

Of course, again, it becomes one of those situations where, if you happen to be lucky and if you're in the right place and have the right kind of social worker or somebody else who says, "Hey, there's this organization out there that might be really good for you" and hooks you up and makes sure that you get that kind of support, then that's great. But the issue we have at hand is that that's not always readily available. Big Brothers Big Sisters struggles every single year with trying to find enough mentors – that is, big brothers or big sisters – to connect with young people. They just can't meet the need in the way that they would choose to meet the need, so there need to be other ways. There can't just be one mechanism of providing that level of social support that's necessary for young people.

This is where GSAs come in. GSAs come in because they provide a very specific kind of social support that allows young people to have a mechanism for dealing with trauma. It's not a clinical mechanism like therapy, like I provided for many years in my private practice. It's a social support mechanism, and it's wonderful because there's lots of evidence to indicate that social support, in fact, is one of the most effective mechanisms. We want to see that continue. We want to enhance that whenever possible.

#### *4:50 a.m.*

Because we can't rely on it happening by chance all the time in families or in other kinds of situations, it really behooves us to try to find a more structural way to provide opportunities for all students to have that level of social support, not just the ones that happen to have a great aunt or a great uncle or a good neighbour or a good church member or a good Girl Guide or Boy Scout leader or some other person. We want a structural way of ensuring that something is available to all students, not haphazard, not just for the lucky ones that happen to be, you know, in the right family circumstance.

That's what GSAs provide. They provide an opportunity for people to get that social support, which is good. We should celebrate that because we can say that research has actually demonstrated the veracity of that kind of intervention in people's lives, and when we have something like that, we want to encourage it, the same as we do when it comes to medicine, for example. If we know that chemotherapy helps people with cancer, of course we want to make sure that chemotherapy is available to everybody. That makes sense. If we know that insulin helps people with diabetes, of course we want to make sure that that's readily available to people so that it would save their lives.

It's very much the same argument that we have here with GSAs. We have learned something. The science, the research have demonstrated that it's effective. If we've learned something and we have the evidence to demonstrate that it isn't just, you know, a one-off story told by an individual that may or may not have underlying truth to it, then we should be using that kind of evidence to guide the decisions we make, to employ the lessons that we get from that kind of research to help to create a better world for people,

particularly those people whose natural families and extended systems have not been able to step up for them.

That's why I think it's important, from a social work perspective, that we create GSAs and ensure that they're structurally available, not just occasionally, that if you happen to be in the right school, if you happen to be in the right neighbourhood, then it's available to you. It should be available to all students so that all students can go from having been victimized to being healthy adults, which, you know, as I've indicated, seems to be one of the things that social support is very effective in doing, rather than them going from being victimized to being unhealthy adults.

Now, I want to just talk about my own son for a few moments. I have spoken to him about speaking about this in the House, and I have permission to do so. I just want to make sure that people are aware of that. I want to talk about the fact that he came from a family that is completely open to sexual orientation.

**The Chair:** Are there other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I do definitely want to speak to this bill, but I would be very keen to hear the member complete his story about his lived experience and his family if he would so choose.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Glenora for giving me the opportunity to add a bit more to this conversation.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

The piece that I wanted to talk about in terms of my son is the fact that he has been fortunate in many ways, as I was, of course, in my own day, to come from a stable, middle-class family that, you know, truly loves each other. In fact, I'm happy to say to the House that I just celebrated my 25th wedding anniversary last night.

**Ms Hoffman:** Celebrated it here.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yes, I was here during that time, and I'm still married today.

I think that, like every other parent, I've got many faults, but I do feel like we were good enough parents, as the expression often goes, good enough to have done most of the things right enough that he had a lot of social support. Of course, in our family sexual orientation is a nonissue in the sense that it wasn't a concern at all for him. In fact, at one point I had a conversation with him after he came out, originally in junior high, and said to him, "Well, how many people know now?" That's sort of one of the things you discuss with gay children who come out. Who knows and who doesn't: that is always kind of one of the questions. He said to me, "Well, maybe about a hundred people or so."

In this conversation that I'm remembering, I said, "And how many of them rejected you or said something really horrible?" He said, "Zero," which was really, really quite amazing. I was shocked to hear that answer. I was expecting him to say something else. We are a large Catholic family, and we anticipated that there would be some people that might have a religious objection to it, but it turns out that none of them did. We're quite open and supportive of him and so on. I'm just trying to lay the picture here that he really has a fair amount of social support.

But I want to talk to you about the fact that it turned out that even in a family with that level of social support, being able to attend a GSA became a profound moment in his life and something that

really allowed him to do some things he couldn't do with his mom and dad no matter how much we love him, and we do. I think it's important – and parents need to understand that – that it wasn't that he was trying to hide anything from us when he went to the GSA. We found out about it. We heard about him going to his high school – his junior high didn't have one – Strathcona high school, on the south side of Edmonton here. At the beginning of the school year you go into the gym, and all the clubs have these tables set up around the outside. You can go and sign up for the drama club or the chess club or the sports clubs or whatever else you want to do.

One of the clubs that was there was the GSA. He came back that day talking about how he had sort of circled around the gym four times and couldn't quite go over to the table and found it really difficult, didn't know whether he wanted to do that or not and how hard it was for him. Then he eventually kind of went over and just sort of had a quick chat but then kind of got away because he didn't want people thinking he was too interested, you know, that kind of thing. I thought it was very interesting because he didn't say to us before he went to the gym that day: I'm going to go find out about the GSA. This is a conversation we had afterwards because he felt comfortable enough to come back and tell us about his nerve-racking experience of trying to put himself out there and join the GSA.

It was really incredible because once he joined the GSA, it became a pretty fundamental part of his high school career. In fact, he became the president of the Strathcona GSA and as part of that one day was here on the front steps of the Legislature, during the Bill 10 debate, speaking about his experience of being in the GSA. I thought it was very interesting that he still wanted to be part of the GSA even though he came from a basically supportive family, you know, with all our foibles. I know that. But there wasn't major rejection at home, and he still talked about how significant it was for him to be able to talk to other people who were actually in the community and had that experience. He could come home and talk to mom and dad and say, "I'm gay, and it means X, Y, or Z." We'd kind of look blankly at him from our heterosexual lives and say: "Oh. Okay." But we don't kind of get it on some level, right? We don't fully understand it. But he could go to the GSA and he could just talk, and other kids would go: "Yeah; me, too" or "Yeah; I get that" and talk about how weird it is and about some of the strange things that happened.

5:00 a.m.

You know, we had this kind of funny little thing happen in junior high. He was a pretty good-looking little guy in junior high and would often have young women come up and kind of flirt with him, as junior high students often do with each other, and he would just kind of look at them and not react and go away. They became a little annoyed at him that he wouldn't respond to their attempts to initiate a relationship. At the time he didn't even understand why, but he just wasn't interested. It just didn't happen for him at all. He didn't fully understand it because he also hadn't really had a serious attraction to another male either. What was happening, though, was that he was feeling some ostracization from his peers because they couldn't figure out why he wouldn't react to the natural flirtations that go on in junior high. He could talk to his parents about that, but we don't understand that. We don't live that experience.

But he can go to the GSA and he can have that kind of experience, and he can talk to other kids and say: it's just weird because until I really got to understand who I was and what it was that motivated me, I didn't understand the reactions I was getting from my peers. It wasn't even because they were being bad or terrible but because it just set him apart. He had a sense that there was a wall, that there was a block between his experience and the experience of the

majority of the students in his school. Being able to talk with people who are not on the other side of the wall, who don't have that barrier of, "I don't know what you're talking about, son," I think is important. It actually became something that was incredibly important for him as he moved forward. That sense of social support has lasted with him to this day. Some of the friendships he made in his GSA, as for many of us in the various things that we do in our junior high and high school, have lasted with him for the whole time of his life till now.

He is now somebody who can really clearly articulate more about his experiences in such a way that he's actually able to help other people. One of the things I noticed was that by the time he became the president of the GSA in grade 12 I think it was, he himself had learned a lot from the supports that he received from other people and, as a result, was then able to develop a set of skills that allowed him to be a supporter. So here we had this circumstance where a child who could have been quite devastated by some of the reactions of his peers or other people in his family or in his world instead had an opportunity to be in a place that was safe enough and supportive enough that he used it as an opportunity to actually engage in skill development, something that's really positive, something that he's going to take with him the rest of his life, where he's able to reach out.

I can tell you that some of the stories that he brought home from the GSA about some of the other students' experience were horrendous. You know, I'm always tempted as a social worker to actually go into some of these stories and tell them in detail in hopes that that would trigger something for you, but I also don't feel they're my stories to tell. I guess that's a big part of it. Also, I don't want to sound like I'm trying to force some emotional reaction here. I just want people to understand that it's really important that people have that kind of level of support.

One of the other things that I thought was very interesting around that particular GSA and my son's experiences is that when I was first entering politics, I happened to knock on a door, and a gentleman came out and said to me on the doorstep: "Do you have a son who went to this school?" "Yeah." "Was he the president of the GSA?" I said yeah. He said, "I want to tell you how important that GSA is to my children; thank you for raising such a great son," which I immediately passed on to him. Proud papa.

What I thought was interesting was that this man said: neither of my two children is gay, but both of them have disabilities which identify them as other in the school system. One child had Tourette's syndrome, which causes uncontrolled utterances to occur. Of course, that sets you off in the school, when all of a sudden in the middle of a class you say things. I know the classic is swearing, but it's actually not true. Tourette's can be a variety of sounds or noises or utterances. He talked about how both of his children had identifiable issues that set them apart in the school and that neither of them had a place to go. There is no Tourette's syndrome club at the school because, you know, there couldn't possibly be. What they both knew, apparently, was that they could go to the GSA, and they would still be accepted, that the understanding of otherness, of being separated, of being thought of as different would be the same even if the reason for that otherness was different.

I think there are some profoundly wonderful things there, and I was very pleased as a father to be stopped on the doorstep and have somebody tell me about how important the GSAs had been to their children, who were not in fact gay.

It really speaks to the research that we've seen that says that GSAs don't just help the kids who are gay in the school. They actually have a transformative effect on the school itself, on the school community itself. At the schools in which there are GSAs,

we know that the suicides amongst students in general go down, not just amongst gay students. That's got to be a desirable outcome. That's got to be something that we want to pursue. If the GSAs can be that place where kids who are struggling with a feeling of otherness, of being different can go and receive the social support that we know from research and that, of course, many of us know from our lived experience actually has the effect of transforming what could have been a traumatic experience to a growth-inducing, mentorship-producing experience, it seems to me that that's got to be something we want to support, not something we want to undermine.

There's my plea to the government side of the House. Can we be part of doing that? Can we be part of creating a society for even those people who do not have all the lucky things in life that some of us have: the supportive families, you know, the physical well-being, the good physical and mental health? Can we be part of ensuring that truly everyone, no matter their background, will have the chance and the opportunity to overcome the struggles or the barriers that have been put in their way and to succeed in our society and become themselves part of healthy families raising healthy children? That's a pretty noble pursuit and one I'd certainly like to see this government supporting.

I'll wrap up my comments on that at this time, but I'd like to thank you all for indulging me in an opportunity to be a proud papa for a little while and to talk about my incredible child. I would ask your support in helping to give other kids the opportunity to also have that wonderful moment in their life.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Are there other members wishing to speak to the bill? Go ahead, Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. Thank you so much, colleague, for sharing so thoughtfully. I have been thinking about this book that I've had at home, and I thought: oh, shoot; it would be so appropriate to read tonight. Then, of course, I went on Kindle, and it's available. So I purchased a book, and I thought I'd read it to us. It directly relates to the bill that we're considering here. It's called *Piggy Bunny*. It's by Rachel Vail. It's a children's book. I won't show you the pictures – I'm not using a prop – but I will read the text.

**5:10 a.m.**

Liam was just like all the other piglets except for one thing. All the other piglets wanted to grow up to be pigs. Liam wanted to be the Easter Bunny. Liam tried to practise hopping, he tried to enjoy eating salad, and he tried to deliver eggs. "The Easter Bunny?" said Liam's big brother. "Seriously?" "Yes," said Liam. "You are a piglet," said Liam's sister. "Deal with it." "I am dealing with it," said Liam. Liam was dealing with it by trying to practise hopping and trying to enjoy salad and trying to deliver eggs. "You are a terrific piglet," said Liam's mom. "We love your squiggly tail and your little black eyes and your snouty nose and your adorable triangular ears." "You are perfect," said Liam's dad, "just exactly the way you are." "Just exactly the way I am," said Liam, "as a piglet who is going to grow up to be the Easter Bunny." "Do we even believe in the Easter Bunny?" asked Liam's little sister. "Um," said Liam's dad, "we are more of a believe-in-oinking kind of family." "I believe in the Easter Bunny," said Liam.

When Liam's grandparents came to visit, everybody said, "Oink, oink, oink, oink, oink, oink," everybody except Liam. Liam said: "Hello. My name is Liam, and I'll be your Easter Bunny." "Bunny?" asked Liam's grandpa. "Did this piglet just say he's the Easter Bunny?" "The Easter Bunny," said Liam.

“Oh,” said Grandpa. “He doesn’t look like a bunny to me,” said one of the neighbours. All the pigs and piglets stared at Liam, and he didn’t look like a bunny to any of them. “Of course he doesn’t look like a bunny,” said Liam’s dad. “He looks like a perfect piglet.” “And he doesn’t have to try to be anything else,” said Liam’s mom. “He’s our piglet, and we love him.” Liam felt loved, but he also felt sad. Everybody was sure he would never be the Easter Bunny. Liam knew that they were wrong, but he wondered a little bit: “What if they were right?” Liam sighed. “This is the kind of problem,” he said, “that’s called heartbreaking.”

“Baloney,” said Liam’s grandpa. “They just all have the imagination the size of a kumquat, the whole lot of them.” So his grandma shook her large head and said, “Go put on your Easter Bunny suit, Liam, then they’ll all see.” Liam blinked his little black eyes and said, “But, Grandma, I don’t have an Easter Bunny suit.” Liam’s grandpa smiled gently. “This is the kind of problem,” he whispered, “that’s called fixable.” So Liam hopped around with this grandparents, with his triangular ears twitching with excitement. “You know how to make an Easter Bunny suit?” he asked them. “Absolutely not,” said Grandma. “We’ll order one on the Internet.”

While he waited for his Easter Bunny suit to arrive, Liam practised hopping and enjoying salad and even delivering eggs, and he got pretty good, though salad remained a bit of a challenge. When his suit finally arrived, Liam tried it on. It was a bit tight in some places and way too big in others, and one of the long bunny ears had trouble standing up straight even after Grandma fiddled with the wire that was inside it. Also, it was itchy. Liam looked in the mirror. He didn’t notice the string hanging down in front of his snout, the wobbly ear, the too-long sleeves, or the seam coming loose a little bit around his belly, and he even stopped noticing the itch because what he saw in the mirror looking back at him was Liam the Easter Bunny.

**The Acting Chair:** Member, I’d like to stop you temporarily. We’re really enjoying the story, but I’d like to hear your own remarks on Bill 8, please, if you could.

**Ms Hoffman:** There are literally two pages left, and they do relate directly to the story.

**The Acting Chair:** Have you got copyright permission to read the whole book into the record?

**Ms Hoffman:** I gave credit to the author. I’m sure she’d be happy. Liam smiled and whispered, “Yes.” Off he hopped and everyone believed in him.

I’ve read it to some of the kids in my life, and I usually ask them what they think the story means. Some of them say that it means you should eat your vegetables, you know, try to eat salad and maybe good things will come. Some of them say that it reminds them of how their parents want them to become doctors and lawyers, and they want to become artists. One little girl, when I read it to her, said: it makes me think about people who are trans. Everyone, I think, can find a story that relates back: feeling like you are one thing, your family loving you but not knowing how to help you. The point of this is that even though the family loved him and they said, “We love you just exactly the way you are,” it still hurt. It still hurt because the way he was wasn’t the way the world saw him. The way he was didn’t align with the body that he was in or the person he felt he was.

I think that when we are talking about stories like this and how – certainly, I have no doubt that the parents in this story and most parents love their children deeply, but there can still be harm that’s caused when we don’t accept or know how to accept people for who they actually feel they are, not just when who they are on the outside

matches our hopes and dreams for them. I think that that story relates a bit to what the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford just said. I think that it goes back to the point that sometimes it’s important to have structures and supports in place to ensure that you are in a place that’s going to support you in being and achieving what you need to achieve.

I’ve talked a little bit about my time on the Edmonton public school board. I want to tell one more anecdote before I share some more words from other people. [interjection] Yeah. Okay. I won’t read any more stories, but I’ll share more letters. The anecdote I want to tell was about being at a school board meeting when we were considering our LGBTQ-inclusive policies to ensure that all staff, students, and families had the ability to come into our schools and feel safe, respected, and like they belonged. “Everyone’s in, and everyone contributes” was one of the tag lines that we tried to use. Everyone succeeds: that’s the other part, too. How do you create an environment for that, where everyone’s in, everyone contributes, and everyone succeeds, when people aren’t welcome to come as they are?

One of the moms who came didn’t have a child that I know of who identified as LGBTQ, but she talked about how her goal for her kids is that they be able to come to school, hang up their coat, and do math without having to worry about a bunch of other stuff going on in their lives, without having to worry about being harassed when they walked down a hallway, without having to worry about – maybe the mom was gay; who knows, right? – her kids feeling shame or discrimination. Her goal for her child and for every child in our district was that they be able to come to school, hang up their coat, and do their work.

When I talk to students at farewells – and I’ve been at a number of them recently, a grade 9 farewell last week that really stood out and a number of grade 6 farewells, too – I think about the kids who go to school and have so many other things going on in their lives. We often say: in the real world blah, blah, blah. But, like, a lot of the things our kids are dealing with are so real, and their worlds are so complex.

I was thinking about one of the students who spoke at a grade 9 celebration last week. When she was up at the mic, she and the person she was with said very lovely things that they’d scripted out ahead of time. When she got to the end of her formal remarks, she stopped, and she said, “I just want to tell you – I’m not supposed to say this – that I’m so proud of myself today.” A few people yelled, “You should be,” you know, things like that. She said: “I know that it’s not supposed to be a big deal, finishing grade 9, but on the reserve I grew up on, most kids dropped out by the end of grade 3. When I started going to school, I thought that this is a place I’ll be for a little while, and it’s not a place I’ll finish. Here I am finishing grade 9, and I know I can finish grade 12. I feel like I’m on the right track, and I really want to thank everyone for the decisions that they made to help me get to where I am today. I’m really proud of myself.”

It was really lovely to hear her share such a sense of pride with her whole school community, and they were certainly very proud of her. A lot of the kids in that school have a lot of real-life stuff going on, and they all deserve an opportunity to go to school, hang up their coat, do math, and not worry about life. Worry about school. Worry about learning. That should be the goal, I think, for all of us: how do we create a culture where everyone can do their job without fear of harassment, intimidation, how it’s going to impact them outside of school as well, and how their life could be impacted by things beyond their own control.

5:20 a.m.

I’m going to go back to another letter that I received. This one was from Theresa Miranda, who lives in Calgary. Theresa says:

There was no GSA at my junior high when I started dating Amy.

The whole school knew and [they knew] quickly.

We had our close friends and a few teachers who were clearly supportive but it was clear we made people uncomfortable.

We had a student in the middle of class behind us whispering “faggot” until my girlfriend cried.

The teacher . . . was supportive of me [and] asked me to step out of the classroom before I took any action.

She said she would bring it up with the principal of course the principal simply told him not to do it again and of course it happened again.

[So] the students see that teachers don’t respect gay students they [don’t] respect gay students either in my experience at least.

Very lucky it never got violent or dangerous.

There was another incident that I want to tell you about because, again, I think it came from people trying to do something good, but I think it caused grave harm. That was when I was talking to students who went to J.H. Picard here in Edmonton, a great French immersion Catholic school. They talked about how there was one student who came out, and a lot of the girls were excited to have a gay boyfriend at school. They surrounded themselves with him. They were very keen. They watched *Queer Eye*, and they were keen on helping him be the best gay he possibly could. This is the kids telling me this story. They said: “You know, we really need to work on your fashion. Let’s take you shopping. Let’s buy you cute clothes. Let’s get you a haircut, and let’s do all these things to your appearance.” There wasn’t a GSA at this school, but these girls surrounded him. They surrounded him, and they tried to help him be who he was.

What it did actually is that he developed an eating disorder because he didn’t think he was skinny enough to be a hot gay. That’s one of the things that he learned from his peers, who certainly weren’t trying to hurt him in any way. They were trying to be supportive, but they didn’t have the skills to be able to know how to help him be who he was in the skin he had, because what they were doing they took from pop culture. They tried to surround him with love and show him a way that he could live this life, and he developed a serious eating disorder. It caused a lot of damage to his physical and psychological body as well, of course.

These are the some of the things that can be easily addressed that are less dramatic than some of the ones we raised earlier. We talked about homelessness. We talked about suicide. Certainly, an eating disorder is very serious as well, but if there would have been a teacher working with these awesome girls who were working with this awesome guy who was figuring out how to be the best gay he could be, he may very well have been healthier at the end of the day instead of judging and treating himself in a way that was harmful.

It’s still, I think, important for us to consider how it is that when somebody wakes up and they say, “I’m a pig who’s going to be the Easter Bunny,” we don’t laugh or dismiss or judge. We don’t try to convince them that they’re not who they say they are. We just say: I love you, and I’m here to support you. So those kids, again, in Calgary: you are loved, you are valued, and we will fight to keep you safe. All they’re asking for is for this government not to move things backwards. They’re not even asking for big progress moving forward.

I know that there were some members who – the minister for culture, I know, attended the first rural GSA summit, that was held in Strathmore last year. I was there as well. It was pretty amazing. There were somewhere between 100 and 200 kids, probably, from all rural ridings throughout Alberta. Just being in the same room, being together, and having an opportunity to wear their school sweaters with pride and be in an event that was focused on pride,

not shame, was really powerful, to be able to participate in it. They talked about the history of how the GSA legislation came to be. Those kids, those 200 kids in that room, definitely were well aware of the voting records of the MLAs who voted against Bill 24 or chose to leave the House when Bill 24 came up. They will be watching again.

I know that sometimes we think: “Well, it’s a long time. Four years is a long time for a term.” I’ll tell you from my own personal experience that four years goes by incredibly quickly, and four years means 14-year-olds will be 18-year-olds, and 18-year-olds will remember. They will remember the kinds of policies that were made in these early days and the implications they had on them. I think they will remember that their schools became less safe places. I think they will remember the jeopardy of funding for their schools.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

I think they will remember that \$2 per hour got taken away from them. The Member for Lethbridge-West and I were talking about: usually you see teenagers rummaging around change dishes because they’re taking the toonies. It’s not because they’re watching somebody else come in and take their toonies. How backwards, that here we are in this First Session of the 30th Legislature, and it seems like there’s a lot of obsession with kids. I wouldn’t say that it’s a healthy obsession. I’d say that it’s damaging, and I think it’s going to have a harmful impact.

Again, interesting timing, with a motion being voted on yesterday around conscience rights votes and being able to vote with conscience. I know that when I read that book, I did it with conscience and that when I read that letter, I did it with conscience. Certainly, when it comes to having to make decisions about this legislation, it weighs heavily on my conscience. I think that there is going to be a time, probably not too far in the future, where we are all asked to answer for the decisions we make in this place, maybe when you go home, eventually, whenever that might be.

I think that this is a very important and serious topic for us to consider. I wish that this was about updating and modernizing the education system. I really wish it was, but this in no way is. Bill Hate is about going back in time. I shouldn’t be surprised. I know that the Premier, when he first became leader, did the *Sun* 20 questions. I know that when he was asked, “If you had one superpower, what would it be?” he said, “The ability to go back in time.” Time travel I get. It’d be cool to jump around and see what things were like. The ability to fly: I totally get that one. I would love to be able to do that. The ability to hold my breath as long as necessary and, like, scuba dive without worrying about my lungs exploding or having to run out of air: that’d be pretty awesome. But going back in time? Not my number one superpower.

No. I think it’s important that we move forward. I think it’s important that we move forward, and as I said before with that principal who talked to me about her first day in the staff room, seeing a teacher with a cigarette hanging out of their mouth, giving a kid the strap, I don’t want to move back. I want to move forward. I want to keep protecting kids. I want to keep them alive. I want to make sure that we do more than just tell them that it gets better. I want to make a better world for them. I think we did a lot of that over the last four years.

We’re just saying: let’s not undo that. Let’s not undo that. Let’s help these families that have talked about the positive differences that having a GSA has made on them, continue to do that work around the province. Let’s help those staff members and schools who say: I’m okay with hosting a club, but I don’t know what to do. Let’s make sure they get the resources so that they know what they can do. Some good examples: watch videos, eat pizza, and make

Post-its that say positive, affirming things. You are beautiful, equity is something we aspire for, equality is a good thing: these are some of the Post-it Notes that I've seen put around schools because of GSAs.

Oh, I just remembered another one. Right after we passed our policy, I had a student come up to me and say: I'm so glad you passed your policy. That student was at school in their cafeteria, and they pulled out their pride flag, and they plopped it down in the middle of the table. They had a little thing of clay or Fun-Tak or whatever it is on the table, and they put a little, tiny – you know the ones that say “winners” on the bottom that you get for free at the parade? They put it on the table. It was a table where most of the queer kids at school ate their lunch. And the lunch lady came over and said, “You have to take that down.” The kids said: “No, we don't. No, we don't. Our board passed a policy. We can do this. We can have a flag up and eat lunch.” Because we passed a policy, which is what we do here – we pass laws – that said you are loved, you are respected, and we will keep you safe, they felt confident enough to keep up a flag. The lunch lady had a conversation with the administration and then later went back and apologized to the kids and said: “Yeah. That's fine. Make sure that it doesn't turn into a rowdy party in here, but of course you can have your flag up.”

Little symbols like that are very powerful. I can tell you that a lot of kids, when they walk into a classroom, look to see if their teacher has a safe and caring poster up or not. They look to see: is there that heart and the rainbow colours up or not? Is this a place where I can feel a little bit safer? A lot of kids who aren't gay look for those signs, too.

5:30 a.m.

**The Chair:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill?

Sorry. Actually, before that, hon. members, just a reminder to table those letters being read in the House at your earliest possible convenience.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise again. It feels like I just did it an hour or so ago. You know, when I last rose in this House, I shared the words of a parent and an educator and shared her own experiences with just being an ally and being someone who wants the best for her students and for her family. I reiterated to this House the importance of heeding those voices. As I've noted many times here in this Chamber, GSAs aren't just for students. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford shared a really personal story, and he talked about how far-reaching the impact was of his own son being the president of a GSA. GSAs support teachers. They support school staff. They support allies. They support the entire school community.

As I've shared many times in this House, I think it's really important that as legislators we take the time to amplify the voices of those who aren't necessarily being heard, those folks who are reaching out to us. As I said earlier, I've had countless young people reach out to me, in some cases asking for anonymity, in other cases asking for their stories and their names to be shared. I don't take it lightly that we have an opportunity in this House to pass along their concerns, to pass along their stories.

I want to start by sharing the voice of another young person, of a student. These words are real, these words are true, and I found them tough to read. This was shared with me on Instagram just last week. He says: hello there.

I'm very grateful that people like you exist! As a gay youth individual myself, I am thankful to be surrounded in an accepting environment and I do believe that this is due to GSA's that run in

my school, as well as other schools that my friends attend. It is terrifying to see that [the Premier] has introduced Bill 8, considering that I have not come out to my parents yet. It's frustrating to know that [the Premier] (most likely) does not understand the fear of coming out. As a gay high school student, I feel that GSA's provide a welcoming atmosphere not only for the LGBTQ+ individuals, but to anyone because GSA's can be a [symbol] of acceptance towards individuals who may be different in age, race, gender, [and so on].

I'm just going to interrupt his thoughts for a minute to echo what my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford pointed out, the example of young people with different abilities. He talked about a young person with Tourette's who found that the GSA was a safe space for him to be and just that opportunity to bring together so many young people with different stories, different backgrounds and to have a safe place to share all those stories.

He goes on to say:

It warms my heart to see individuals like you, who represent the LGBTQ+ community, fight for what is right because to this day, homophobia, transphobia, and prejudice towards [our community] still exists. No one deserves to receive such hate from others.

He says:

... I'd also like to mention that there are times [that] my parents make some sort of homo/transphobic comments (I haven't come out to them yet), it always hurts my heart and always makes me sad and puts me in a state of stress – the stress that makes me worry on how I will come out, how things will change for me, and such. It always brings me joy and happiness when I know that GSA's exist because I know that there will always be a safe place where I, along with LGBTQ+ individuals (and even straight people!), can freely discuss topics related to [our community].

That's hard. It's hard to read. I just think about this young person's stress that he's dealing with right now, this fear that weighs on him, every moment, of being outed. He hasn't come out to his parents yet, yet he has to hear regularly homophobic and transphobic comments. What a burden for a young person to have to bear.

He points out how fortunate he is that he has access to a GSA. For him, it's an opportunity to escape the hell that he's living in at home. He can't say anything to his parents. He doesn't feel like he's in a place to call them out for their language. He doesn't know how they'll react if he is accidentally outed. The GSA offers a true safe space for him, where he can be himself, where he, as he says, finds joy, where he knows that there's no judgment, no fear of being ridiculed like there is when he's at home. As he points out, it's not just a safe space for gay people but for allies and for straight people.

I liked what my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Glenora said about young people knowing that there are teachers and that there are spaces in their school that they can go to. She mentioned, you know, that a lot of teachers will have welcoming signs that it's a safe space, and that's just so important for someone like this. We do know – and I've shared examples already – that even in school environments there are teachers that some young people know that they can't turn to. They know that there are spaces in their school that aren't safe for them to be themselves.

I want to share another story. This one is from Jess, and she said that I could share her name. This one came via Twitter. She said:

I never really had an experience with GSAs in high school. In 2009, I moved to ... a very conservative town, and didn't figure out that I wasn't straight until grade 12. I had no idea GSAs existed. I have no idea if my high school had one (though I [really] doubt it because of [how conservative it was]), and I [sure] feel like I would have benefitted from them. I was viewed as the strange lesbian in high school, and I was the victim of a lot of targeted bullying and ridicule. I didn't necessarily hide my

identity, but I did go back and forth between labels because I wasn't properly educated or informed on my identity. At 24, I'm still figuring [things] out . . . and not only do I think GSAs are important for the protection of LGBTQIAP+ students, but I believe it's important for queer kids to be educated on identities and have a sense of community, to have people that share similar struggles. I think that GSAs are important and are way too often demonized, because spaces for queer people, even queer youth, are often sexualized. I think this is detrimental to kids and their protection, and cultivating and fighting for these spaces is something that's really important to me. I want queer kids to have the opportunities in high school that I didn't get to have.

There are a couple of really important things that I want to touch on in her comments. You know, I too grew up in a rural community. I grew up in Barrhead, Alberta. I wasn't out. Actually, I wasn't even really struggling with my identity when I was in high school although maybe, looking back, there were some indicators. I do know, as I think back, that there was one person who was trans. The treatment that she received in our school, because it was so different – it was odd; it was strange; it was the unknown; it was the other. She was treated terribly. When I think back, I think: "Oh, gosh. Again, I wish I would have had the courage or, I guess, the foresight to have been a voice in support of her." But it was a lot easier, especially in a small town, where being different wasn't really an option, to just go with the crowd. And Jess shares a similar story there.

5:40 a.m.

Another piece that resonates with me in her thoughts is that she says, "At 24, I'm still figuring [things] out." She's an adult, and she's still struggling with identity, with label. You know, this resonates so much with me because I was still struggling with my own identity into even my late 20s. As any member of the community knows, these struggles continue even when you're out and when you're an adult who's fully comfortable with your sexuality.

I still get questions about my sexuality, about my identity, about my gender even. It's not really anyone's business, but it still does happen. Right? I get nonsense all the time online, you know, folks commenting on my gender and my appearance. There are times that it can be hard. Mostly I've learned to let it go and ignore most of the trolls, but I'm also an adult who is comfortable with who I am.

**Ms Hoffman:** You signed up for this job.

**Member Irwin:** Right. I signed up for this job. I signed up to be a public figure.

I just got another awful Twitter DM that I can't even read to you because it's laced with vulgar language, but I can laugh because I know it's not a reflection on me. A lot of times when I do respond – I know I'm not supposed to feed the trolls – I reach out with love because in many cases these are real people. These are real people. They're not trolls. In one case there's an elderly couple in north Edmonton who are two of the worst trolls. They are real people, and when I don't hear from them for a while, I worry about them. They're always commenting on me and on the fact that I'm always focused on LGBTQ issues.

Again, my point in sharing all this is that I'm an adult. I've struggled with this. I've wrestled with this. It was hard. I dealt with a lot of challenges, as I've shared in this House, but we can't say the same for a lot of young people who are not only experiencing bullying online, toxic online behaviour, but they're also feeling the pain in their school environment and, in the case of the other fellow, his story that I shared, at home as well. I can't imagine being a young queer person right now who's getting bombarded on all these

different fronts. As my colleagues have shared tonight – this morning, whatever time it is – no wonder the statistics are staggering when it comes to LGBTQ suicide and rates of mental health struggles.

Again, I ache for those young people who aren't where I'm at and who aren't able to access any sort of space where they can, you know, access the tools. As Jess shares in her comments, she wishes that she'd been able to have access to the language and just tools to be able to navigate the difficult situations that she was going through. GSAs provide that. What a great resource for young people to access various resources so that they can have those conversations. Then, of course, it has a ripple effect throughout the school community when you see that poster, when you see a pamphlet that explains what it means to be a member of the community, for instance.

We can, you know, tell these kids that it'll get better, that it's just a tough time in their lives, but when you're in that moment – again, I know it first-hand – when you're struggling every second, platitudes don't help. Platitudes don't help. Tangible supports are what matter, having that loving, open teacher, having that room where you can go and eat pizza and you can talk about the issues that you're facing at home or elsewhere. What do those supports look like? Those supports look like fully inclusive GSAs.

Here's another story. This one is from Krystal, who gave permission, again, to share her name. She says – and I appreciate her saying this – that she wants to start by acknowledging that everyone who's in the Legislature, she believes, is trying to do the best that they can with what they know, both the government and the Official Opposition. She says:

I just hope my perspective can lend itself to a more understanding lens everyone can hear. As a queer person, who can easily pass as heterosexual, I have to out myself over and over. I'm lucky to have the resiliency to do that, but it doesn't come without caution. I never had a GSA when I was younger. I imagine that if I did, today I would be able to live my most authentic life.

I love that language, "my most authentic life."

If I imagine the experience of young people today, they are met with higher pressure for competition and more severe bullying, both of which lead to more severe mental health issues. I am an instructor for Mental Health First Aid and consistently when we discuss suicide, students ask me how to better help LGBTQ youth. This includes my work with Cornerstone Counselling, [which is] a Christian based counselling centre and my friends, [who are] a group of pastors with the Seventh Day Adventist religion.

She says:

I don't know what the right answer is for GSA's, but I do know that Bill 8 can do better. I don't only use my own experience as a queer person to tell me that. I listen. I listen to kids who I work with. I listen to experts in the field. I read documents like the recommendations from the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and hear what their research concluded . . . Protecting GSA's and the identity of children who participate in them does more than save lives. They help children troubleshoot who they are, learn how to navigate difficult conversations such as talking to their parents, and teaches them about the power of community. I didn't have a GSA, and it's taken me 31 years to start to figure out some of those things. Give children a chance to do this sooner, rather than later. I ask that you . . . use professional humility when making this decision.

Wow. From Krystal's comments I take a few things: the power of listening not just to kids but to experts, although I'd say that a lot of the time the kids are the experts, right? They are the ones that are experiencing this day in and day out. She talks about research, the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, the large body of research that exists. We've got folks here in our own city who are experts on



studying sexual minority youth and have been in the field for a long time. Read some of that literature, that talks about the transformative power of GSAs and shows the data that they do in fact save lives.

What also is interesting here is that, you know, she talks about navigating, again, being given the tools to navigate difficult conversations and set you up for success later in life. So think about the longer lasting impacts of GSAs, right? We have students in junior high, and if they've got access to such robust supports at the age of 12, imagine how well equipped they are as they head into later years of junior high and then into high school.

I want to echo another comment that she says here. She says, just like the previous story that I shared, "I didn't have a GSA, and it's taken me 31 years to start to figure out some of those things." Again, another person who is an adult and is still grappling with her own identity and with addressing some of her own struggles in the past. And her point about being able to live her "most authentic life": I mean, so many mental health struggles, when you are a member of the LGBTQ community, come from that disconnect of not being able to be true to yourself, not being able to live your own life.

I think back to some of my hardest times, where, yeah, you felt like you were always having to hide. You had to be careful who you said what to, and you kind of had to trace the conversations that you had. It's an awful place to be. I was fortunate because ultimately I had a lot of supportive people in my life. My family was generally okay with it, and my friends were as well. Of course, there were some that weren't, but with them, I look to them with love and with empathy and try to help them get to that place of acceptance and understanding.

As I end here, I just, again, want us to really consider the voices of those experts, students, young people. To echo comments prior, we've talked about conscience rights and the ability to vote according to conscience, so I ask the members opposite to consider this as we move forward with some amendments on Bill 8 that will be forthcoming. Yeah, think about the message that you want to send to your constituents and to the province.

5:50 a.m.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise again and continue to speak to, in particular, the aspects of Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, that are looking to make adjustments, to put it politely, to the protections that have been put in place for LGBTQ youth in our province, their ability to request and form a gay-straight or queer-straight alliance, and to participate in a GSA or QSA safely.

This is all part of a larger discussion, Madam Chair, a progression that we've been working to make as a society. In my previous opportunities to speak to this bill, I've been pretty clear in outlining where this is coming from, and it's been pretty clear, in the discussion here in the province over the years since we first saw legislation brought into this House on this particular issue, where the resistance lies. But where the concerns lie in this are on the question of balancing religious freedoms versus societal progress and the larger public good. The concerns that have been brought forward have largely been around folks that feel like Mr. Carpay in his lawsuit with the 28 schools which are resistant to bringing in safe, inclusive policies, around their feelings that that requirement is trampling on their religious freedoms.

At pretty much every step of progress that we've made as a society, as human beings, as a human race, frankly, we've had this

question of balance that has come forward. I found it interesting as I was sort of taking a moment to read about this online in the context of this legislation. Considering that that is where this resistance lies, it's clear that that is where this Premier and this government have chosen to take their direction in changing how legislation provides these protections in the province of Alberta.

I came across an interesting article in the *Washington Post* from 2017 by Ms Tisa Wenger, an associate professor of American religious history at the Yale Divinity School. Now, Ms Wenger was talking about the situation back in 2017, where there was a legal case with a gentleman named Jack Phillips, who had refused to create a wedding cake for a same-sex couple on the grounds that he felt that it violated his right to free expression, his free exercise of religion as a conservative, evangelical Christian. Ms Wenger notes that while the issues around that particular court case were fresh, it really reflected a larger tension that goes back quite a way between religious freedom and civil rights, that goes quite a way back in American history and indeed, I think, in Canada and many other jurisdictions. This has been a question that we have struggled with as human beings.

She specifically looks back to discussing the challenges around slavery and racial segregation in the U.S., reflecting on the fact that religion and scripture were often cited as justification for those elements of discrimination, and indeed, for what was some serious inequality in the civil rights era, when people refused to serve African-Americans, individuals like myself, they would often do so under the guise of religious freedom. But she notes that as our social norms changed over time, then we no longer considered it acceptable to try to claim a religious justification for blatant discrimination. She notes that historically that has been a challenge that we've had to grapple with, recognizing the sincerity and genuineness of religious belief and wanting to respect that for individuals but also recognizing that, in her words, "religious freedom has been weaponized so frequently in civil liberties debates because of the cultural and constitutional weight it carries."

In other words, recognizing that an individual's personal spiritual beliefs have such deep roots for people, that they are such a personal thing, unfortunately those who may have less than pure motives at times seek to tap into the depth of importance that belief can hold for people in order to use it for their own ends. She notes that those kinds of appeals can have the potential to really

reshape [our] cultural and religious worlds: to make a group's political convictions and cultural practices appear more "religious," or more central to their religion, than they otherwise might have been.

In other words, for particular issues some groups may, for political purposes or to gain greater influence or power, choose to focus on what is really a small element in the larger scheme of a particular spiritual tradition or religious belief and blow that out of proportion.

Her suggestion is that that is what we sort of saw with some as they attempted to justify what was, frankly, purely discrimination by attaching that to their religious belief. She suggests that for that reason, recognizing the power that religious belief holds and its place within our culture traditionally, it's incredibly important that religious freedom needs to be balanced against our other ideals to ensure that it is not used as a means to trample other deeply held values. As I said, she notes that going back quite a way, people who owned slaves – and their sympathizers – would defend slavery by pointing to its presence in the Bible and saying that that was part of God's plan for social order.

She goes on to note that for a gentleman like Mr. Phillips and the folks that were supporting him in refusing to create this cake for this couple, suggesting that their objections were even "of a different order," something "more fundamental," that they were

believing to be clear, that their beliefs regarding LGBTQ individuals and God's opinion of them was something that was even more Biblically substantial, there was more clear scripture sort of outlining the reasons for that discrimination than there had been for racial segregation. She says: you know what? She recognizes that those convictions can be very sincerely held. She is not disputing that, and certainly I don't dispute that. Any individual has the right to hold whatever beliefs they want to hold as sincerely as they wish, whether it's that LGBTQ individuals are disordered or that the Earth is flat or that the moon is made of green cheese. They may hold those beliefs as sincerely as they wish.

But, ultimately, when it comes down to questions like this, when we're talking about civil rights and discrimination within the public sphere and indeed within public institutions funded with public dollars, sincerity is not enough. And Ms Wenger notes that in the kinds of discriminatory beliefs that were being held by Mr. Phillips and were dictating his actions, there was little to distinguish them from "the segregationists who argued that they should not be forced to hire, serve or associate with African Americans." She says:

In short, religious freedom should not be granted this much power.

If religious freedom trumps equality under the law, it provides a "cover" that actually encourages discrimination.

Her reasoning here is that it is choosing to define religious belief solely in the negative, that one's religious belief is simply about what one condemns, what one stands against, who one wishes to exclude. It becomes solely an avenue of judgment.

**6:00 a.m.**

Now, there are many, many, I think, positive aspects, Madam Chair, about spiritual traditions and religious belief that can add a lot of benefit to our world and help move things forward. Indeed, individuals like the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King made great use of his spiritual traditions and his religious beliefs to advance the cause of civil rights, to advance the cause of inclusiveness. Indeed, I shared a letter earlier today from a reverend here in Edmonton who believes the same for the LGBTQ2S-plus community. We've heard from others tonight who have shared similar letters from people of faith, and they also have a deep sincerity of belief. But, again, to be clear, as Ms Wenger was noting and as I note here myself, I am not here to question anybody's sincerity of belief but simply to note that that sincerity should have no bearing on whether that belief should have influence on public policy or the rights of individuals, which brings us back to this legislation and the changes that this government is seeking to make, what balance it is seeking to restore.

As I discussed earlier, Madam Chair, there was clearly an imbalance of power between students, teachers, faculty, administrators, school boards. It's very clear where the balance of power lies and which way that balance is skewed. The question that we are discussing, that is quite clear, is the balance for a few particular schools', a few particular individuals' religious beliefs versus the protection and the support for LGBTQ2S-plus students.

As we have determined in the past, regardless of how sincerely those beliefs are held, whether or not an individual like Mr. Carpay is doing this genuinely out of his belief or whether it has some other roots, which some of the, frankly, reprehensible comments he has made seem to me to indicate, it should not form a basis on which we are making decisions about how we implement our public policy or about what protections are available for youth in our schools, about whether or not we should be explicit in stating that when students request to form a GSA, it be done immediately, about whether or not we choose to be explicit in our legislation and

provide absolute clarity about what the expectations are for a school or for a teacher or for administration in terms of whether or not they choose to reveal a student's participation in a GSA or a QSA to their parents without their permission.

As I have noted earlier, this government and its members have provided no justification for removing these provisions. They have not provided any reason to this Assembly, so all we can go on is what we have clearly seen from individuals and members of the party, who brought forward provisions like they did at their policy convention back in 2018. They brought forward a proposed provision to insist that parents should be told when their child joins a gay-straight alliance. Members that are currently sitting in this House stood and spoke against that provision. The Minister of Transportation, the Government House Leader and Minister of Environment and Parks, and the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women all spoke out against that. Indeed, the Minister of Transportation noted: this is about outing gay kids. The CBC article has noted that "he was jeered by the crowd" when he brought that up. "Jeered." At the time he said: this will really severely hurt our chances at winning; don't do that to yourself.

I would suggest there are better motives for avoiding that kind of a policy, but that was a concern at the time, and you know what? It turned out that, no, that wasn't enough to prevent this party from forming government. So he was mistaken on that point, but I don't think he was mistaken in recognizing where the roots of these changes and this argument are coming from. Again, as I have discussed previously in this House, I truly believe this is stemming from a mistaken understanding of the place of spiritual belief in forming public policy, a conspiracy theory that, unfortunately, pervades some areas of belief that there are forces in the world that are actively out to destroy people who hold a spiritual belief.

Again, that comes back to our question of discussing: what is the balance of power, and who is it here within this discussion that is the vulnerable party? I recognize that for some who are people of faith, it can be challenging and disconcerting to have the world changing around you and to be confronted with the fact that a majority of society no longer holds to particular ideas that you feel are central to your belief. That does not, in my view, Madam Chair, mean the world is actively out to oppress them, as much as an individual like Mr. Carpay would like to claim, I think, that he and these 28 schools are the victims here of what they believe is an agenda of activists, what they believe is a group of people who are, in their view, intentionally trying to hurt or damage youth, as, unfortunately, members of this government and indeed this Premier at times have tried to suggest.

That is an unreality, that is a fiction, Madam Chair, and it is one that is damaging to vulnerable LGBTQ2S-plus youth. We've been through this cycle in history on so many things before, and we keep coming back around to it. But it is clear, as we continue to progress as a society, that we need to let go of these kinds of prejudices and certainly should not be taking steps to enshrine this kind of mistaken belief and protect it through legislation or regulation. That is not the place of government. The place of government is to uphold the fundamental human rights of all individuals, without prejudice and regardless of religious belief.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear. Absolutely. Nobody here disagrees with you.

**Mr. Shepherd:** I hear one of the members here agreeing with me from the government caucus. I'm pleased to hear that. I recognize that we have no disagreement on that fundamental point.

The question we have is on where that balance lies, and that brings me back around to where I began, Madam Chair. In doing what this government is choosing to do by introducing this legislation, what it is doing by the back door because it does not have the courage to do it publicly and directly, it is not creating balance; it is removing it. It is attempting to hand back – I can't think of anything else to call it – the privilege of discrimination.

6:10 a.m.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I first want to rise to speak against this bill. This morning I'm going to dedicate this one to someone. I was at the Save-On on 109th, just over here, at about 11 o'clock last night, and the young man who was the cashier was doing the announcement to everyone, "The store is closing; get out of here," you know, that announcement. I was picking up a few supplies for this overnight adventure that I was about to go on. This young man, named Chris, was doing his announcement, which he did with an incredible amount of gusto and flair. Here's a guy who's really good at his job.

He puts down the little loudspeaker thing and looks at me and goes, "Oh, it's you." He said my name – I'm not allowed to say my name in here – and he started rattling off the names of all of my colleagues on this side of the House. He said, "You must be going into the Legislature." I said: "Yeah. I'm picking up my Red Bull Sugarfree to go over there. I'm walking over there now." He said, "Go get them" and all of that kind of thing. You know, he was really excited, obviously a really attuned to politics young fellow and obviously doing his job really well, as well, because he was entertaining everyone in the line as he was doing his announcement.

Anyway, speaking to this bill this morning is for Chris. Chris, I'll grab the *Hansard* and drop it off at Save-On-Foods on 109th for you when I'm done.

I'm walking back and I'm thinking to myself: "Okay. I'm going to be speaking to the Education Act and amendments to the Education Act. This is about young people. This is about people like Chris." I mean, he's obviously past high school, likely, given the hour at which he was working, but this is about young people.

So I started thinking about youth movements, and I started thinking about when young people change the world and how the education system is always a part of that – right? – for better and for worse. I've talked about this before. We see social change being tried through the education system in good ways and in bad ways. You know, we saw it with residential schools in bad ways. We've seen it through learning about gender equality, even starting in the 1980s and so on, in good ways. Certainly, we see the creation of GSAs, which we never had when I was in high school in the 1990s, being one of those ways that the education system was weaving together a new consensus around gender identity and sexual orientation at a time when people needed it the most.

You know, I maintain such a fundamental belief in young people and in youth movements towards justice. I was thinking about some of those things – and Chris at Save-On made me think of them – throughout our history and how the education system is often, so often, the catalyst for this.

We just passed June 16, which is Youth Day in South Africa. Why? Because in 1976 there were uprisings around educational reforms that the apartheid regime brought in. They were called Bantu education. It meant that for the African population, they were only educated to be labourers and servants. But also at that time, in 1975, they brought in these reforms that, in addition to English, there had to be Afrikaans taught in the schools. Young people came

together, and they revolted. It was an attempt by a regime to change society through the education system, and it was young people that stood up and said no.

On June 16, 1976, Hector Pieterse, who was 13 years old, was shot in Soweto when there were thousands of people demonstrating. There is a massive memorial to him in Soweto now. That uprising led to the world looking at apartheid through a different lens. It also led to thousands of exiled South Africans and the antiapartheid movement as we now know it. It came from children in the streets. So mess with the young people and the education system at your peril.

My hon. colleague from Edmonton-City Centre just quoted the Minister of Transportation as saying, "Oh, you know, this will have electoral consequences if we move forward with this lake of fire idea," which is the changes that are being contemplated before us now, and as my hon. colleague points out, it did not have those electoral consequences on April 16, 2019. This is not to say that it will not in the future. Young people will be heard.

One of the reasons that I think this has to be the case is that there's a long-standing quote from Dr. Martin Luther King that I think of often, and that is: the arc of history bends toward justice. It actually wasn't his quote originally, and when he writes about it, he actually puts it in quotation marks. The reason for that is because it comes from – I looked it up because it was in my head as I was thinking about why this step backwards is so brutally unnecessary, especially in a liberal democracy, when in particular our constituents and others expect us to move forward on questions of, certainly, civil liberties and equality.

You know, that whole idea of progress and leaving our kids something better than the way we found it and even in the course of our lifetime seeing things get better was kind of borne out of this 19th-century idea of a modernist, in the philosophical way of thinking about it, that we structured ourselves on and structured our thinking on. We weren't stuck in some kind of preordained social hierarchy or any other hierarchy. We could do better. We'd expect better for our kids.

Theodore Parker, actually, the Internet thinks, was the first to use this phrase: the arc of history bends towards justice. In 1853 he published *Ten Sermons of Religion*. He was a Unitarian minister. He was a prominent abolitionist. Here's what he said:

Look at the facts of the world. You see a continual and progressive triumph of the right. I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice.

I, too, am sure that the arc of history bends towards justice. We will look back on this time, this time of taking a couple of steps backwards. Historians will look at the long record of my colleagues speaking on this matter, bringing forth facts and arguments, and they will look at it in the context that eventually justice will, I believe, prevail, just as it did with Bill 24.

You know, in some way things have to get better, and one of the reasons I fundamentally believe that is because I remember what it was like when they weren't better. I remember the first gay man at the age of 17 coming out to me. He was one of my friends. I remember the look of terror in his eyes as he said to me, "Do not tell anyone; my stepdad," of whom he was terrified, "will kill me, and the kids at school will kill me." Knowing what I knew about where I grew up, I couldn't dispute that, the kind of language that we heard, the sorts of violence that we often heard, so I and the two other girlfriends that I had at the time – we were all friends of his – kept it to ourselves. There was no GSA in the 1990s. There was no help for him.

6:20 a.m.

Things have to get better. One of my roommates, when I was in my mid-20s, used to sit when we were watching TV and he would kind of crack his jaw, you know, in that really irritating way. I would say to him, "Can you not do that?" He would say: "Sorry. I can't actually help it. They broke my jaw when I was in high school because they thought I was gay. Ever since then I've kind of done that unconsciously." It turned out that he's not gay; he was just sort of slightly effeminate in northern British Columbia. But they broke his jaw because they thought he was gay.

I think things have to get better because of a conversation I had about two weeks ago at Lethbridge pride. A woman – I believe her name was Catherine; I'm going to have to look it up; I know I wrote it down in my notes – came up to me at the Lethbridge pride beer gardens, a place that I am known to frequent on a Saturday afternoon, and she said: "Yeah. Of course, I want to sign that petition. I could have really used this." She went to a private school a couple of years ago, one of the private schools that is part of the 28, a private religious school. She said, "My parents sent me there because they weren't exactly open to me coming out and my sexuality, so they sent me there." And she said, "And I went there, and I was ostracized during my time in that high school."

Things have to get better for kids like her. They absolutely have to. I don't ever, ever want to have somebody look me in the eye and say: "They're going to kill me. They broke my jaw. I was ostracized." I never want to hear that again as long as I live. That's why I'll stand here for as long as it takes and speak for folks in as many different ways as it takes to get through to this government that taking steps backwards on this is the wrong thing to do. It will ultimately be undone because the kids are all right, and the kids will change it.

I want to read a few interventions that I have received from my own constituents and from across southern Alberta because, you know, maybe if the members opposite are not interested in hearing from me or my colleagues and our anecdotes, perhaps they want to hear from people who, within about 45 minutes of us putting out the call, wrote to us a number of different thoughts.

There's one from Mary, who's a member of the LDS church and lives in Lethbridge.

GSAs are important because they help our children feel included and supported. The research is clear on this. My children have been active in GSAs, and it made a big difference for them so they could connect with other youth. GSAs are crucially important and need to remain safe. Thanks.

I want to read something from a woman in Coalhurst.

I have raised two of my own children but housed more than 17 other teenagers who had to leave home during high school or immediately afterwards. Some have lived with us for as long as three years. For some of these kids a GSA could have made a real difference, but they were not common before 2015. I will keep taking young people into my home when they need a safe place to live, but I really wish that more people could open their hearts to how tough it is for some kids.

If you made it through high school with only great memories, then you are the weird one. Most kids have stories of rejection and pain, some are abused, and many feel alone. Some of those kids cannot turn to home for help, so they find someone like me. Imagine what a safe place at school and a safe teacher at school could do for a kid who needed it.

Please keep fighting for our young people. They need you. They need GSAs, and they need them to be safe and private.

Here's another thought from a constituent of Lethbridge-East.

As a community member who currently works with at-risk persons, worked in schools for more than five years, an individual who still has family members working in the education system, I

cannot speak out against Bill 8 more. Not only does this bill needlessly place the lives of students in danger; it removes the element of social safety that keeps students thriving. GSAs offer an opportunity for self-expression and peer support.

If it isn't bad enough that the government is looking to put thousands of youth at risk, the change in the age allowable to remain in high school from 21 to 19 impedes the opportunity for those who are already on the 21-year-old track to graduate.

This bill does not at all represent the Alberta that I expected to be witnessed by our youth. We have a responsibility to ensure our youth are well educated, both academically and socially, that they have safe spaces to be and to find themselves, and that we are not wilfully willing to put their lives at risk for the sake of political gain. I expect better of my elected representatives. Thank you, NDP, for continuing to fight for the coming generations.

I heard from a number of different constituents. I actually didn't get to finish reading the letter from Zane when I spoke a few hours ago, so I want to give her maybe a few more words here. Zane talks about the peer-reviewed academic studies on the positive effects of GSAs and QSAs. Zane talks about how LGBT Albertans are just like everyone else and that they pay taxes, have opinions, and want the very things the UCP members want in this world. She then goes on – and this was the part I didn't get to say earlier – to say:

We must protect the youth from uncaring families. If the UCP don't want to spend money on social housing – many LGBTQ youth are homeless after coming out to family – then uphold the GSA, QSA protections.

She goes on to write:

Many UCP members think that being LGBTQ is a choice. It's as much of a choice as any member in the Legislature being heterosexual and cisgender.

From Zane, one of my constituents. Bless her.

You know, finally, if I have an opportunity and a bit of time, I'm going to read a letter from an instructor in psychology at Lethbridge College. Her name is Jennifer Davis, and she writes in this letter, which was originally a letter to the Lethbridge school district – the reason she had written the letter is because there was a group of anti-LGBT activists who tried to stop the school district from bringing in a GSA policy, in and around the time of Bill 24, even within the public system. This is where we're going to see this eroding over time in some places.

I mean, they were not successful, those anti-LGBT activists in Lethbridge. The public school board brought in the policy and has reaffirmed to me time and again that there are no plans to change it. They think it works for them. But this letter was written at that time. As is consistent with this particular professor of psychology, everything is footnoted, so I will table it for *Hansard*. Here it goes.

My name is Jennifer Davis. I have a PhD in psychology. I've published articles on parent-child interactions. I teach child development and adolescent development, but today I'm here as a mother. Today I'm here to represent the rights of our children, all of our children.

I guess it wasn't a letter. It was a speech. Sorry, Madam Chair.

Some argue that this policy is unnecessary, that it goes too far. They say that our children are already protected. The very existence of this meeting proves that they are not.

I've provided the context, Madam Chair. This is about people trying to undo GSA policies at the local board level.

Some say that they support our queer youth and that they oppose this policy for other reasons. This is not what our children hear. They hear that our school board is trying to pass a policy intended to protect them and that these people are trying to stop it. Imagine how this makes them feel. LGBTQ children in this province are thrown out of their homes. They're living homeless

on the streets. They're dying. They're as much as 10 times more likely to attempt suicide, 14 times in Calgary.

That is footnoted.

Suicide is the leading cause of death among LGBTQ youth, yet some would block the policy designed to try to keep them alive or rewrite it to erase their existence. These things are happening right now in this province to children just because they are gay, lesbian, or transgender, maybe not to your children, maybe not to mine, but they are happening, and these children are somebody's children. They are our children. They are our responsibility and our protection.

Ms Davis goes on as part of her speech:

"Parental rights," some may argue. "I have a right to know what my child is telling their teachers."

I will table this speech, Madam Chair.

6:30 a.m.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise again to speak on behalf of, I imagine, the majority of my constituents, who are very concerned with the changes proposed under this piece of legislation, Bill 8.

Once again, I am left with many questions. I do appreciate the comments that have been made by my hon. colleagues here in the House this morning, and I appreciate that it comes from a wealth of knowledge in the backgrounds that my caucus members have. Unfortunately, I don't have the same background as them, but it's always enlightening to hear from them, of course.

When we're legislating on education or the system of education, I think that the members on this side of the House are quite well equipped to comment on those facts considering the people that we have here: of course, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora being the chair of the public school board here in Edmonton for a period of time and also the Health minister. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood drafted policies during the curriculum redevelopment, drafted pieces of that, and of course also a teacher; the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and his experience working with people who have been affected by issues like the one before us. I imagine I could go on and on. Also, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud had a very close hand in informing the Education Act that is being proposed to be brought forward, and she went into great detail about the concerns, even after the piece of legislation was drafted, that continued to be there and how this legislation before us actually weakens what was even there in the first place.

You know, we talk about consulting on pieces of legislation like Bill 8, and we've heard many concerns in this House about what it means to push this piece of legislation forward, so I'm very concerned that so far this morning we've only heard one side of the House talk. I'm very concerned that we aren't hearing answers, and I think that if the government and UCP caucus were properly respecting the voice and the concerns of Albertans, they would stand up and speak, too. Whether it's scripted by someone else other than themselves or not is a totally different point.

Now, I also want to touch on the fact that this legislation is going to disproportionately affect and harm people and youth in rural communities. You know, here in Edmonton we have many nonprofits that support members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community, but those same resources are not necessarily available to youth in rural communities. If they happen to go to a school that does not necessarily support GSAs and QSAs the same way that a school in Edmonton or Calgary or any other municipality might, then they really have very little other resources or recourse to have

their questions answered or even just finding a support group that identifies the same way that they do, so that's very concerning for me. What happens when the resources aren't there? Well, I hate to break it to you, but kids go to the Internet. That is a whole different scary world, for people to be throwing things into Google and, you know: I'm feeling lucky today; hopefully, I'll get some real answers. Most of the time they're probably not. So it's very concerning that the members of this government and the private members of the UCP caucus do not understand that this is not good. This is not a good piece of legislation.

Of course, I really also question how the front bench of this government went from recognizing that legislating on an issue like Bill 8, like weakening protections for GSAs and QSAs, how they went from having this discussion at their policy convention and members that are now ministers bringing forward the fact that this was not good politics, not only for re-election, which didn't affect them, I suppose – good for them – but it's still going to negatively affect the youth in our communities. So how they went from advocating that members vote against weakening these protections to actually sitting in the government and thinking that it was a good idea to actually move forward with weakening these protections, once again, leads me to believe that they have been receiving great support from special-interest groups, that are now coming back with receipts and saying, "Well, you owe us one, and we're ready to cash these cheques now in the form of weakening protections for youth in marginalized communities." It is very concerning that these are the voices that these members are going to listen to, the voices that the ministers are going to listen to when we have a wealth of knowledge out there in the school system across the province who are saying that this is not a good idea, that this is going to harm youth. Statistics show – and they've been read into the record – that this is going to lead to more self-harm by those who identify as LGBTQ.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

It's very concerning that the members aren't taking this seriously enough to stand up and put their voice on the record. I mean, if they have concerns with the balance, quote, unquote, that was put forward in Bill 24 and the protections that we put forward, then these members of the government should be willing to stand up and say so. The sad fact is that they haven't been willing to stand up and say that, which is very unfortunate because people across the province have questions and they have concerns and they want to be heard. I'm seeing it on social media even as this debate continues. There are members of constituencies across this province – I won't get into naming constituencies specifically, but there are people looking for answers, and they're being ignored by the members opposite, which is very concerning. I think that if you're going to sit in this House and make a decision on a vote and voice your opinion and not listen to the members of your community, whether it's the majority or the minority of people in your community, you should at least be willing to respond to them and tell them why you're voting the way that you are.

Now, I also want to just come back to the fact that – you know, I've been watching the campaign of corporations getting involved with supporting the LGBTQ community, which I think overall is very important, for them to voice their support as well. But just even the things that people say, which is much easier for them when they hide behind a fake account on social media – and we've heard the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood share some. Maybe you didn't get into specific details, but I've seen the things that are said about that member on social media, and it's so disheartening. I really can't put into words how disgusting, really, it is that people

are willing to go out of their way to try and break somebody down because of the way that they identify or the person that they love. I would never go out onto social media and attack somebody, a male loving a female or whatever it is, or for religion or for anything because at the end of the day, it's discrimination. The fact that people in this province think it's okay to go out there and feel like it brings something to themselves to go out there and do that is very disheartening, and it's frustrating.

I just wanted to point out that people in the LGBTQ community are some of the bravest people that I've ever met. You know, for somebody in grade 7 to recognize that they fundamentally identify as something other than what they were born as or love somebody other than what society is telling them is the norm is incredibly brave, especially against all odds and the people, the naysayers, out there that tell them that they're wrong. That they're willing to continue fighting for what they believe in and fighting for their own rights and the rights of other people is incredibly brave, and I really want to commend them for that.

6:40 a.m.

I also just want to point out the fact that the government and the UCP caucus members here today that are, well, presumably going to vote Bill 8 through – of course, we don't know that yet. Maybe some of them will have a change of heart. We'll wait and see. The fact is that you are siding with these people who go out on social media day after day and attack people in the LGBT community, and they demoralize people in this community. These people are the ones that are applauding your move to weaken GSA protections. I'm wondering how that makes you feel, when the people who are on the side of the LGBT community are saying, "You're going to hurt this community; you're going to increase concerns around mental health and increase concerns around suicide" while you have this other group of people that don't believe that being LGBTQ or identifying as such is a normal thing, people that think it's a mental illness, that think these people are sick. Those are the people that are siding with this government. So I really am interested to find out why you are deciding to go with that side of the argument. That's also very concerning to me.

Now, once again, overall with this bill, you know, the Education minister has gone on at length to say that this is strengthening the education system in our province. Really, if you listen to the people who are going to have to work within the system, they are saying the exact opposite. The fact is that we've seen some minor changes throughout the bill, throughout the amendment act, and really a focus on weakening gay-straight alliances, on weakening the provisions for students to be able to create them in a timely manner, to be able to name them queer-straight alliances or gay-straight alliances, so it's very concerning that this is what this government is focusing on.

I think we have some amendments coming forward very soon, and I'm very interested to hear how the government feels about them. We've seen some common-sense amendments brought forward already that had very little conversation around, which is also very concerning. At the end of the day, this government is going to have to be accountable for the decisions and the legislation that they put forward. They are going to have to be accountable to these at-risk youth, who are going to question their judgment and are going to question: where were you when we needed you? You know, not only today but in the next 10 years these people are going to have questions for you. I suppose if you're willing to go to them and say, "Look, unfortunately, our donors were more important than protecting your rights," then I guess that's a conversation that you can have with those people at that time.

Once again, I look forward to continuing to speak to this bill and share my disagreements with it. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood standing to speak.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise for the third time this fine morning to . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Three times is the charm.

**Member Irwin:** That's right. Yeah.

Anyways, it is a privilege to speak in this House at any time. I don't take that privilege lightly. I've spoken many times about my own experience and my own background as a teacher and a vice-principal in rural Alberta. Last week I asked our minister about protections for teachers. I didn't get an answer. Instead the answer was something about distraction and about focusing on divisive issues. You know, I have to say that I have truly heard from countless teachers, parents, students both from the community and not, allies as well. I've heard from a lot of teachers from different corners of this province: rural, urban, Catholic, not, new teachers, older teachers.

Here's just one example, a message that came from Twitter.

I just wanted to send a message of appreciation and support for everything you are doing to challenge and fight the Conservatives on Bill H8. I'm a gay Albertan teacher worried about my students and my own protection at work. You are defending a lot of people, and I'm so grateful we have people like you in government representing us. Thank you for everything you do.

Here's another one from someone on Instagram:

Thank you for everything you're [doing] in the Legislature. My wife and I are both teachers and it's so important for our LGBTQ2+ kids. We'll both lose our jobs before we out a kid.

Here's another one from Instagram. If you don't know Instagram, or Insta, as the kids call it, that's where it's at.

**Mr. Eggen:** What is this?

**Member Irwin:** I will tell you all about it, hon. member.

This, actually, teacher said:

I'm . . . part of a Teacher GSA for Edmonton Catholic. It was the first teacher GSA in Alberta and honestly it made me more comfortable with myself and how to navigate the catholic world while being gay. Now I'm working with the public district in my area to create a joint public/catholic GSA. That too has been amazing.

We know that last week the Alberta Teachers' Association raised their concerns about the potential loss of protections for LGBTQ teachers and staff. Past ATA president Greg Jeffery noted:

A school that is not a safe and welcoming space for gender minority teachers cannot be a safe and welcoming space for gender minority students.

He called on the Legislature to pass amendments to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, to maintain employment protections for LGBTQ-plus teachers and other staff. He said:

We are concerned about the . . . effect of the legislation on GSAs and on LGBTQ+ students, but we are also very concerned about the removal of explicit protections for sexual and gender minority teachers and other staff when [it's] proclaimed.

As you know, Bill 24, which was An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances, passed in 2017 by my hon. colleague here when he was Education minister, the Member for Edmonton-North West, amended the School Act to introduce a requirement for school boards to establish policies that would affirm the Charter and the

human rights of staff, and it contained specific statements that boards could not, would not discriminate against any staff on the protected grounds outlined in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But as Mr. Jeffrey says:

Unfortunately, some school boards have chosen to discriminate against gender minority employees, justifying their actions as an exercise of their denominational rights. Bill 24 added protection by committing boards to pledge that they would not do this.

We know the ATA is very clear in supporting and defending the constitutional rights of Catholic schools boards to provide faith-based education. That's not in question here. But they do draw a line when school boards attempt to use their denominational rights to justify discriminatory practices or disregard other human rights. In cases where this has happened – and it has – the ATA has vigorously defended the rights of those teachers affected.

Saying all that, it's clear that teachers, that staff, that the Alberta Teachers' Association have all expressed their concerns about the loss of those protections in Bill 8. As such, I would like to move an amendment that would address some of these issues. I will wait for it to be dispersed, and then I will speak to it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you. Given that we have a limited number of pages, would you be so kind as to just read it into the record for everybody's benefit?

**Member Irwin:** I will do that right now.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please feel free immediately to continue speaking.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by striking out section 10 and substituting the following:

10 Section 33 is amended

- (a) in subsection 1(e) by striking out "specialized";
- (b) in subsection (3)(d)(ii) by adding ", in addition to any other requirements under subsection (3.1)" after "one or more statements that address the prohibited grounds of discrimination set out in the Alberta Human Rights Act";
- (c) by adding the following after subsection (3):
  - (3.1) A policy and a code of conduct established under subsection (2) must
    - (a) affirm the rights, as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, of each staff member employed by the board and each student enrolled in a school operated by the board, and
    - (b) contain one or more statements that staff members employed by the board and students enrolled in a school operated by the board will not be discriminated against as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** For everybody's benefit, this amendment will be referred to as A3.

6:50 a.m.

**Member Irwin:** Okay. With that, I'm going to allow my colleague to speak to it, and then I'll come back to it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen to speak.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to my colleague for taking the time to prepare this important amendment. I really have to say that she every day comes to this place with her charisma, her uniqueness, her nerve, and her talent, and she puts it to work for good. I am so honoured to work alongside her.

I thought I'd mention a couple of RuPaul quotes. Just so you know, it's 7 a.m. Nothing more inspiring than a beautiful sunrise and a little RuPaul. One quote that I think is fitting for today is that RuPaul says: I think this life is hard without assistance from others. Pretty simple. Pretty interesting quote. For those of you who aren't familiar with RuPaul, I encourage you, when you have some downtime, to fire up Netflix and watch a few episodes of *Drag Race*. I think it says a lot about the human spirit, and there's something about seeing men get all taped up that makes me feel like things are right in this world. I think there's a lot to be said for taking the situation you have, finding your own inner peace.

One of her famous lines is: you know, if you can't love yourself, how the hell are you going to love somebody else, right? Again, a pretty philosophical statement coming from a very famous drag queen. Definitely, this life is hard without assistance from others. This is from somebody who talks about growing up as a boy in the southwest, not really seeing himself. Or maybe in the southern United States. I forget exactly where. Somewhere where they use a roux to make a lot of bases for good sauces and good Creole cooking. I think that's where the name came from. Not seeing yourself reflected in the society that you live in, it's hard without assistance from others.

One of the things that I think about when I walk into this place with my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is one day when I was in a society and education class at the U of A, just across this beautiful river. You can see it from the balcony outside. We did a survey on day one in that class, and it was pretty clear that the vast majority of us were white and middle class. I don't remember if "straight" was one of the metrics that we discussed, but we were a pretty homogeneous group of folks that were entering into the profession of teaching. Then we learned a little about the complexities that we would be serving in our society through our classrooms. One of the things that our professor talked about is that there are a lot of kids who won't see themselves in you. They won't see themselves reflected in who you are when you walk into the classroom, so you're going to have to find ways to help inspire them to see themselves in you but also to see themselves in the profession and to see themselves as higher learners and to see themselves as potentially becoming teachers.

I think the universities are working to try to attract more students who are representative of the population at large in our society. I think one of the areas we often talk about is indigenous students and indigenous classroom completion rates or high school completion rates. Of course, aspiring to have more indigenous students in classrooms is, I think, an attainable goal, and I think it's one that we should achieve all day, every day as best we can. I think it's important for us to find opportunities for students to see themselves reflected in the people who are there teaching them. And it's the same for LGBTQ kids and LGBTQ parents.

By considering this amendment that's been brought forward by my hon. colleague, we're saying to LGBTQ adults: you belong in a classroom. But we're also saying to LGBTQ kids: this is a career path you can aspire to. I think both of those are important pieces. I think the idea of this amendment came forward originally from the Alberta Teachers' Association. I know we have members of this

House who maybe aren't current or active members but have been members of the ATA for many years. We probably have some very active members, too. The ATA said: this is important for our profession. This is in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We've had cases of postsecondary institutions not respecting, trying to be able to dismiss somebody based on their orientation. I know that the now Premier spoke out in support of those decisions to terminate employees. Of course, we know the story. It went as high as the Supreme Court of Canada, and Delwin Vriend won his case. It was determined that there was no right for him to be terminated from his place of employment. He absolutely had a right as a gay man to teach at King's University College, I'm assuming, at that time.

This amendment doesn't need to come forward. We could just stick with the legislation the way we have it. We don't need to pass Bill 8. But if everyone is committed to passing Bill 8, this is one of the things that will make Bill 8 less hateful, less divisive, less damaging.

This life is hard without assistance from others. We have an opportunity today to assist others and to make sure that the profession and the teachers who are already in the profession know that they are safe in their profession and that they are respected by the Members of this Legislative Assembly. We also have an opportunity to say to our LGBTQ youth, "You belong in the teaching profession, too," again, a demographic that's statistically more likely to drop out, less likely to have high rates of completion. I think that that's something that we should all be working to make sure we address.

The last thing I want to say before I ask my colleague to comment more from her lived experience as well as the work that she's done, one more RuPaul quote just to round it off: "My [goal] is to always come from a place of love, but sometimes you just have to break it down . . ." So to my colleague: would you please break it down for us, why this amendment is so necessary in today's consideration of this legislation?

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has risen to speak.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. What I'd like to do is that I'd like to share – I think it would be really helpful for the members opposite to hear the story; they've heard my story a lot in this House – a story and some anecdotes from Dan Grassick. He is an award-winning Alberta teacher with almost two decades of experience working in the province's public education system as a teacher, a school leader, and a university instructor. He told me about his years working in middle and junior high schools in Calgary and how, before the passage of Bill 24, his LGBTQ students struggled to feel safe with who they are in the places where they learn. He told me about the important role that GSAs play for all students.

He told me about a brave grade 9 boy who took the chance to come out to his mother one evening. Her response was to tell him that he was just going through a phase and that it's too early to know that he's gay. Although his parents were very supportive of their son's school, sports, and other successes, where this student's sexuality was concerned, unfortunately they fell short.

He told me about another student who struggled through junior and senior high to feel that they could come out to their family despite the fact that his parents and siblings were wonderfully loving and supportive. Ultimately, this student's friends staged a kind of intervention where they told him that he was loved and accepted for who he was and that he could come to them for support until he was able to share his orientation with his family.

He told me the tragic story of delivering a eulogy at the funeral of a high school student who had taken his own life on Valentine's Day. This is a student who seemed to have it all going – good looks, loving friends and family, academic achievement, athleticism, musical talent, you name it – but he didn't have anyone to talk to about the one part of his being with which he struggled the most.

*7:00 a.m.*

He told me his anecdotes in the hopes that they would remind us that GSAs don't just provide a safe space for those LGBTQ students with difficult home lives and situations that put them at the increased risk of homelessness, as reported in the academic literature, but also for students from supportive, stable homes who need a place where they can be welcomed unconditionally and receive support.

GSAs are not the ideological sex clubs that fringe social conservatives describe. They're simply safe spaces for students to sit, to have lunch. Those GSAs that are more organized may put on events that increase the overall well-being and inclusivity of the entire school community. There's nothing to fear from GSAs, and the value they provide to LGBTQ youth is beyond measure.

He also shared that even LGBTQ youth who are blessed with cognitive, physical, and emotional gifts, who come from loving families, who are surrounded by supportive friends, they too need the structured safe spaces that GSAs provide. He also shared with me, as a teacher, that except for very recently he's kept his own sexual orientation a secret.

He describes overt and casual homophobia as being rampant when he was a student and a beginning teacher. He told me about being in junior and senior high and how he was teased for being gay even though he was relatively straight acting and he took steps to fake the heterosexual norm. He told me about years of being called "fag" and "queer" in the hallways. He told me about sitting with friends at lunch and watching an older student go out of their way to come over to punch him in the arm and call him "homo." He told me about being spat on while minding his own business on the school bus and how his cries for someone to help were ignored by his fellow students. He told me about how he gradually became more involved in school leadership, intramurals, and clubs so that he could hide from his persecutors over the lunch hours. He told me how he occasionally considered suicide and self-harm but that these feelings passed quickly.

He credits his resiliency to his loving family and summers spent as a camper and staff member at a YMCA residential camp. He says: "I learned early in my youth who I was and that I had many strengths. This self-actualization made it relatively easy for me to push the bullying and harassment I received aside." But despite this, he told me that he didn't come out to his closest friends and family until his late 20s. He certainly didn't confess to being gay to his teaching colleagues. He wishes that GSAs were present during his K to 12 education, and he laments that he wasn't able to be out when he started teaching. He's concerned that this government's changes to the Education Act are a backwards step that could create barriers for our young LGBTQ Albertans.

The topics we're discussing today aren't bumper sticker issues. They're matters of fundamental human rights that have been ignored for too long. Having vanilla safe and caring school policies, boilerplate inclusivity policies: those aren't enough to create the safe learning and working environments that Alberta's LGBTQ students and teachers deserve. Dan's story is the story of many. As I said, I'm not exaggerating when I say that multiple teachers have reached out to me to share their concerns.

I'll end my comments by again urging this government to consider this amendment. This is reasonable. This simply affirms



the rights for teachers and for staff as provided in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As a queer teacher myself, how can I provide a safe space for my students if I don't feel safe myself?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to speak.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to follow up, I think, a very excellent presentation of some concerns with regard to the safety of queer teachers in the public system as it's reflected in this act. I have some personal connection with a little bit of what has been discussed earlier as I once shared a room in a building with Delwin Vriend, who was mentioned earlier. He was an instructor at King's college and was released from his employment because of being a queer instructor at King's college at the time, now King's University. This became a very significant case in the history of Alberta, going all the way to the Supreme Court, where it was identified that it was unconstitutional for an institution, including an institution with a religious orientation such as King's, to fire someone on the basis of sexual orientation because it was protected by the Constitution and the Human Rights Act.

You know, having been witness to much of that going on in this province and the effect that it had on some of the legislation that subsequently got enacted here in the province of Alberta, thankfully, based on the Supreme Court decision, to continue to protect the rights of individuals who are part of the LGBTTTQ-plus community in their positions as employees of institutions.

I am concerned that we are taking a step back from some of the work that has been done, I must say, not only by progressive governments such as our own but even by the Progressive Conservative government prior to our term in the government. I think it's important that there be no lack of clarity in this act to identify the importance of protecting people in their employment situation. Of course, we have spent many years in this province, really in all western democracies, establishing a rule of law that guides us when we make decisions.

Of course, by establishing and, in our case, repatriating and subsequently amending our Constitution here in Canada, we ensure that the rights of people are protected not only with regard to traditional areas of concern such as the rights of people based on religion or gender or other factors like that but also to include sexual orientation.

I think it's important that this government not be seen to be trying to diminish the rights not only of people in the queer community but also the rights of employees who have been working for many years to ensure that they have the ability to engage in a fruitful occupation and derive an appropriate income without fear that they will lose the ability to provide for themselves and provide for their families because of factors which are not in any way interfering with the work that they have signed on to provide to the institution or to the agency or organization that has hired them.

**7:10 a.m.**

I think that this is an opportunity for the government just to set down now, once and for all, their ongoing commitment to continue to support the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to enshrine that in law and to declare that with this particular government they are not heading back in time, reversing the work that had been done by many previous governments since the 1980s, when the Vriend decision was initiated and ultimately ended up in the Supreme Court of Canada.

I would be very concerned if the government side simply chose not to do that.

We're starting to fear, on this side of the House, a trend in government legislation that has been brought forward of a diminishment of people's rights, taking away things that have been long established and have been repeatedly reinforced by the Supreme Court with regard to both LGBTQ2S-plus rights and with regard to labour rights. If we are seeing the thin edge of the wedge, I'm getting very concerned about where we'll be four years hence if that wedge begins to split open the long-established rights that have been recognized by this government in the past and leads us to a place of having folks identified as somehow lesser than others in one way or another and suffering personal loss as a result of that being viewed as lesser than.

I guess I would ask this government to take the opportunity to clear that up, to cast aside any concern that may be held, if you're on this side of the House, about the intentions of this government. We know that should they choose to infringe on those rights, inevitably this will end up back in the courts, and I would imagine that sooner rather than later and inevitably it will rise through the courts of appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, where we will get the same answer that we have had repeatedly in the past when these decisions have been brought forward to the Supreme Court of Canada. There has been an extremely high level of consistency in the Supreme Court decisions over the last 30 or 40 years on the rights of individuals, as are reflected by the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I think that this is a great chance for the government not only to declare themselves and to save some individuals a significant level of grief as they have to go through all that court process repeatedly, one court to the next to the next, but also, of course, save this government significant dollars and wasted energy and the time of the public servants on pursuing actions that are doomed to failure. Again, another thing that we are becoming increasingly concerned about on this side of the House: the government seems bent on engaging in acts that we know will be defeated by the Supreme Court when they get there. It's a shame that we have to go through a process to arrive at that moment given that we have literally spent the last 30 years in this province asking those questions and seeking the answers, receiving those answers, and then moving on.

With the desire to head backwards in time and to go to a previous era and to relitigate the rights that have been well established and honoured not only in the province of Alberta but throughout Canada, in the individual provinces, and, of course, by the federal government itself, as a result I think it's time for us to just be clear, to set the record straight, and to have this government move out of the past and into beginning to plan the future, begin to tell us, declare to us how they will help to build this province rather than to fight and destroy and to take back that which has been built over the last 30 or 40 years.

This is a great opportunity, and I'd like to give the government an opportunity to stand now, to rise in this House and show their commitment to those long-established and hard-fought rights. I would most welcome joining with them in some formal declaration of those rights such as the inclusion of this amendment into Bill 8.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Minister of Education has risen to speak.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak to the amendment. I thank you for the amendment. I've had a chance to review the Education Act and specifically sections 31 and 33, where it is being proposed. I find that in the Education Act

we do have those protections in place. When you look at section 33(1) – it's quite extensive – under Board Responsibilities it says:

A board, as a partner in education, has the responsibility to

- (a) deliver appropriate education programming to meet the needs of all students enrolled in a school operated by the board and to enable their success.

It goes on. We go to subsection (d), where it says:

- (d) ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by the board and each staff member employed by the board is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.

It goes on to name numerous other things that are responsibilities of the board.

Then we flip the page over – it does go to page 38 – to subsection (3), which says that it will contain the following items:

- (i) a statement of purpose that provides a rationale for the code of conduct, with a focus on welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments;
- (ii) one or more statements that address the prohibited grounds of discrimination set out in the Alberta Human Rights Act.

So right there we have it, in writing, in the Education Act: "One or more statements that address the prohibited grounds of discrimination set out in the Alberta Human Rights Act."

Then it goes on:

- (iii) one or more statements about what is acceptable behaviour and what is unacceptable behaviour, whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the . . . day or by electronic means;
- (iv) one or more statements about the consequences of unacceptable behaviour, which must take account of the student's age, maturity and individual circumstances . . .

et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Again, this notion that LGBTQ-plus teachers and other school staff are no longer protected is complete fiction. It's another example that we are being manipulated by scare tactics. We do have this comprehensive rights law in Alberta. The opposition knows that.

I do feel that this amendment is redundant. Everything that they are looking for is already contained within the body of the Education Act. Therefore, I would ask my fellow caucus members to vote against it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any members looking to speak to A3? I heard some conversation happening regarding it. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen to speak.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise with great interest in speaking to this amendment, which is A3. Is that what you said? Okay. Great. I was very interested as well to hear comments from the Education minister in this regard. You know, I find it very interesting and deeply ironic that the Education minister would choose to come forward and both speak against this amendment and then talk about some individual places in the Education Act where she feels that this would make this particular amendment redundant.

7:20 a.m.

You know, Mr. Chair, again, we know what's been happening here in the province of Alberta over the last number of months. I can remember very specifically where individual school boards were having a problem. There were discriminatory cases being brought forward where certain teachers in Catholic boards were

actually having these rights compromised. I mean, if anything, it underlines the absolute necessity of making sure that these aspects of this amendment in regard to the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms must be and should be underlined at this very point in time in history. I know that I specifically as Minister of Education asked for school boards to submit their policies to ensure that there was not discrimination built into any of the employment contracts that they were signing with individuals working in their school boards.

I'd be curious to know – actually, I've asked the minister – if she could perhaps give us an update as to the status of those analyses of those contracts to ensure that there is not built into contracts between teachers or support staff, custodial staff, administration any sign of a discriminatory practice that would somehow compromise the integrity of that person to do their job. Quite frankly, Mr. Chair, this is exactly the reason and the substance behind why we had to build Bill 24 in the first place. It was not just to help to protect and create safe and caring environments and to help to create GSAs and the integrity of GSAs and QSAs, but it was also to protect the integrity of staff, all people working in schools, students and teachers and support staff and administration, and to ensure that there was a safe and caring environment for them in which to operate.

You know, that, again, simply underlines the hypocrisy of moving back to this Education Act, which is, by the way, Mr. Chair, just a hollow shell of what this government is trying to sell to the people of Alberta, calling it some sort of improvement, modernization of education here in the province of Alberta. Quite frankly, the Education Act is not dissimilar – I'm sure many members can appreciate this metaphor, right? It's like that old tractor that you parked out on the back 40, and you figured that someday you're going to fix it up. But what you ended up doing is taking parts off it from year to year until there's nothing left to plow the field with. That's what this Education Act is.

I specifically went to this Education Act as minister and took out the bits that we needed to update the School Act. Along the way we saw this old tractor, again, as it sat there out on the back 40 – right? – with people taking the wheels off it and the crankshaft and the power takeoff, and then suddenly they're resurrecting it now. The new government takes over, finds this old hulk of a tractor sitting out in the field, puts a coat of paint on it, and says that it's the new, modern education system. I mean, well, I think it's a pretty good metaphor. It's a little bit amusing, but it's also pathetic. Really, it's purely, you know, trying to sell something that is simply not the case.

With this amendment, Mr. Chair, it's a great opportunity – and I thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for bringing this forward – a great way by which we can punctuate the absolute necessity of protecting all children and staff under the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I think it's a great way to try to at least move in a direction that, you know, this government seems to be doing in regard to the Education Act, this insistence on moving the Education Act. I appreciate the sentiment that's behind it.

I know as a teacher that one of the best techniques by which to drive home an idea is to make sure that you can use some repetition, right? By repetition, you learn something. What I know from teaching my own children when they were little is that, you know, you've got to at least try seven times before they sort of internalize something.

Again, since the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are being compromised by this government and by this Education Act, then this amendment at least helps to remind us of what our responsibilities are in regard to basic

human rights. This amendment helps to underline that. I thank the hon. member for doing that and punctuating it using the time-honoured tradition of teaching through repetition to make sure that we get it right.

I think that a lot of people will watch and listen to what's been happening in regard to this Bill 8 – right? – Bill Straight, Bill Hate. It's going to move and continue to move through conversations with Albertans over the summer, over the next winter, back into the fall again, and will continue to evolve and move. While this government seems to want to move backwards, move Alberta backwards, the population of this province sure doesn't want to go backwards. They are moving forwards. They're a young, dynamic, well-educated, and engaged population, and this is an issue that deserves and will garner plenty of attention and not just now.

It's not going to be swept under the rug – right? – with talking points and saying: we're modernizing the education system. Well, you know, teachers and parents and students, that are engaged in the education system every day, will find out pretty quick that that old tractor that this government tried to put a new paint job on and sell a bill of goods on as being modernization is not anything that resembles that at all. It's quite the opposite, moving backwards, using education as a political tool rather than a functioning part of what's best for kids and what's best for our society.

Yeah, I would encourage everyone to read the amendment carefully and support it, as I do. Hopefully, we can move on to building better legislation here in the future.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, we are on A3. I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has risen to speak.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise today to speak to A3, that was brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, that says that she moves that Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by striking out section 10 and substituting the following. This is an amendment that just simply makes sense. It talks about acknowledging what is already in place under the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and it would just simply enhance the safety “of each staff member employed by the board and each student enrolled . . . by the board.”

I can echo a lot of what other members on this side of the House have been saying, Mr. Chair, when it comes to supporting our GSAs and having this conversation that's happening across the province. We've heard from so many people from the LGBTQ-plus community, from people that are allies of the community such as teachers, principals, support staff, social workers, like myself, and parents that are just concerned that this is something that their children may one day need or maybe already need.

It's quite concerning, Mr. Chair, that this is something that we're talking about today. This is a conversation that should have been dealt with back when Bill 10 was originally introduced. We know that Bill 10 was simply a shell of a piece of legislation, that was never really intended to be enforced. When we became government, we saw that, so we made steps to make sure that it was something that actually protected students' rights and that they had a safe place in their school. We created legislation that would thoroughly support and enhance the rights of students and teachers within their schools.

7:30 a.m.

We heard loud and clear from teachers across this province that they needed stronger legislation that would support them in their ability to do their job. They didn't see outing children as part of

their job. Quite frankly, Mr. Chair, it isn't part of our job as human beings. Whether my profession is social work, politics, teacher, it is not my job or my place, for that matter, to out students. Having their simple human rights respected is not too much to ask. It's the baseline for where we should be starting legislation, and we had that in Bill 24. This piece of legislation being proposed as it is takes us back, which is absolutely not acceptable. It's 2019, and we know that GSAs save lives, full stop. Why we are putting vulnerable students at risk and putting teachers and staff in a position that would cause risk to some students is just simply not acceptable.

I know that as a social worker I've worked with vulnerable children within child and family services, and I worked in group care as well with children and youth that were in government care. These were children that weren't able to be at home for whatever reason, Mr. Chair. Sometimes it was something that was beyond their family's control. Sometimes it was, you know, supporting parents in a place where they needed to just work on themselves a little bit before they could have their kids return safely to their care. Working first-hand my entire career with vulnerable children, it's just heartbreaking to know that we're in a place in this Legislature where we're rolling back the clock and would put kids at risk.

Fundamentally, I believe that this is wrong. We know that a GSA saves lives. We know this. We know that kids, teachers, parents across the province, not just in Alberta but across the country, know that supporting vulnerable youth, specifically LGBTQ-plus children, makes sense. It's just something that as legislators we shouldn't even have to be talking about, Mr. Chair. I just wonder how many members across the way have sat down and talked with any of the students in a GSA or any of the support staff that help facilitate a GSA to talk about what's really happening at their schools, to hear first-hand from the children that are being impacted by this dangerous legislation that's being proposed. When you know, you have statistics, and you have testimony of people saying that GSAs save lives, how is it a question that we're bringing forward this piece of legislation today to talk about rolling back rights?

I think this amendment is a nice way to clean up the legislation. It protects youth and it protects staff so that they're not discriminated against. It's laid out very clearly in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The other members across the floor are saying that, you know, they're supporting GSAs. Their language is saying that when we ask them why they're doing this. They're telling us that they support GSAs. Supporting this amendment would show that they actually are supporting the GSAs in the province and are taking the Charter of Rights and Freedoms seriously, Mr. Chair. It would just simply enhance the piece of legislation under Bill Hate that is being introduced and give some clarity to their words.

I'm just very confused as to why the government is doing something that we know puts children's lives at risk, why they would create legislation that would directly impact our vulnerable population. I know as the chair for the conversion therapy working group – again, another example of what feels like an attack on LGBTQ people in our province. We have clear data and statistics and first-hand testimony of the dangers of not only getting rid of the GSA protections but also of the conversion therapy, Mr. Chair. Despite evidence, despite testimony, despite pleas from Albertans this government has gone ahead and just stopped that process. They will say that their doors are always open. They will say things like: this is the most comprehensive piece of legislation. That simply is not true.

When you talk to people in the province, they know that it's not true. They know that this is just lip service that's being provided and that it feels like it's an attack on the LGBTQ community. I hear

it all the time, Mr. Chair. When I was at several pride events during pride here in Edmonton, people are talking about their concern and their fear of what's happening with this government and this attack on the LGBTQ community and, specifically with this piece of legislation, our youth. I fail to understand the intentions of what this is. People have asked: why do you think they're doing this? I can't answer that. I honestly cannot say why this government is proceeding in the way that they are. It's hurtful, it's harmful, and people are at risk. I simply just have no words to explain why they would be making these conscious decisions, knowing that GSAs save lives.

Looking at this amendment, I would sincerely hope that members from government, all members look at this. It makes sense, Mr. Chair. It's a piece of legislation that would tighten up the rights to support our youth, our children, and our staff, which is what we know the Alberta Teachers' Association has asked for. They have said it very clearly not only when we did Bill 24; they said that Bill 10 put them in a horrible situation, that they were in a place where they didn't feel comfortable as teachers with this piece of legislation. They asked for more teeth to it, if you will, to talk about being able to truly create a safe space in their school for children, which is ultimately what the teachers are asking for. Our government listened to that, and we reopened that piece of legislation to make sure that it was inclusive and got rid of some of those loopholes, if you will. Not only is this government seeming to ignore the voice of LGBTQ-plus youth; they're ignoring the voice of teachers who are professionals, and this is what they do every day. They chose a career where they want to support children. They want to enhance their lives and, baseline, keep them safe.

This amendment enhances the bill and would allow that to come forward through the legislation. I don't understand why this wouldn't be supported, Mr. Chair. We are hearing loud and clear from parents, from schools, and from children that they need something in the legislation that will actually support students to be healthy and safe in their schools, and this will do that. They've asked that Bill 24 remain as it is, that it not be opened and changed so drastically because they're aware of the dangers of doing that. Why we're not listening is beyond me. We know that the way that's it's being proposed weakens the legislation for GSAs in public schools. Private schools no longer need to submit policies at all, which is very confusing, why there's a discrepancy between public and private, and I'm unclear why this would be allowed other than that it's intentional to ensure that some of the schools don't have to put a policy forward. That's frightening. We've heard throughout the debate on this that the policy no longer even needs to have the word "gay."

**7:40 a.m.**

This amendment that we're proposing would ensure that students' and teachers' human rights and freedoms are being protected, which is a very simple request, Mr. Chair. They talk about inclusivity and support, and not being able to say the word "gay" doesn't support that. They're just very, I believe, misleading in some of what they're saying as opposed to what their actions are. Albertans know what the intention is behind Bill Hate, and we're hearing from the community all across the province, pleading with us to protect GSAs, to keep them the way that they are for our children's sake, for our parents' sake, for the safety of everybody that attends a school, whether it's public or private, in this province.

We also know, Mr. Chair, that the timely establishment of a GSA after it's been requested is being removed, which goes against the right of a student. If they don't have to create a GSA when it's being requested, how is that the most comprehensive piece of legislation? It's saying that, sure, the kids can come forward and ask for this,

but there's actually no accountability or timeline on the school to actually implement and create a group for these children to come and gather and feel safe in their own school.

I don't know what the government's intention is in that, other than that they don't see the value of having a GSA in the school when a child is asking for it. Having a young person bravely come forward and say that this is something that they need in their school – I think it goes even beyond a want – is heartbreaking for a young person who is trying to ask for support from the grown-ups in their lives. They find the courage to come forward and say: I would like a GSA; I would like to have some grown-ups show me that I'm safe in my school. To have the grown-ups in their life just simply disregard that and not implement it is heartbreaking. Knowing that a child or a youth is coming forward bravely to establish a GSA – it takes a lot of courage to be able to do that, to express when you are struggling and express a desire to have a certain group.

I can't imagine that a student that was asking for, let's say, a chess club would face those same types of discriminations, that they couldn't call it a chess club or that they would have an unrealistic timeline in place for doing that. Simply because it's a GSA shouldn't mean that a school can't move forward in a timely manner to support that request.

The name GSA, gay-straight alliance, shows that there's unity amongst students and that regardless if you're LGBTQ-identifying or someone who wants to come and support their friend, their peer, they can be involved. It just sends a message to our youth that they're not important and that they don't matter, and that's heartbreaking. They're a community that's vulnerable; they're a community that's isolated. To have that in their own school once they come forward and say that they need support – it's devastating that the adults who are there to ensure that they're safe and protected in their school can simply disregard that request. It's very sad, Mr. Chair. Again, I would think that this is a way to discourage GSAs and to not hold the school where it's being asked for accountable. There is no expectation that they comply with that.

Under this amendment it speaks to their human rights that are already established in Alberta and in Canada. I just don't understand not having enforcement mechanisms in place for not complying with GSAs. Why this is being removed, I think, speaks clearly that this government simply does not support GSAs. Despite all of their language saying that it's the most comprehensive and that they are the most supportive, it's just simply not true. This legislation wouldn't be worded the way it is if that was true. They would simply have left it alone as it stood. What our government did was make sure that the shell of Bill 10 was actually enhanced and supported and that the schools were accountable when asked to provide a GSA to students.

It's very confusing why they believe that this is being believed by Albertans. We hear that Albertans know that this isn't the intention, that they are removing the stipulation. They are not in a place where they are being truthful with what the intention is. Albertans see through that, and they are asking us to stand up and continue to fight, which is what we're doing, Mr. Chair. We are making sure that the voices of those who may not necessarily have a voice are being heard in this Chamber. I just hope that members opposite are listening to the pleas of Albertans when it comes to supporting GSAs in the province.

If they truly want to support the LGBTQ-plus community, doing something simple like this amendment should be supported. It makes sense. Like I've said, it already exists under the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Simply adding this in, if their intention is to do what they are saying, should be supported.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, on A3, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday rising to speak.

**Mr. Carson:** That's correct. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise on the amendment that is before us as proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I appreciate this thoughtful amendment. I think it's a very important one, considering the discussions that have happened so far, and I do appreciate that the Education minister took a moment to stand up.

I do have some concerns with the points that the member raised. I think that the former Education minister, the Member for Edmonton-North West, raised some important points about the need to go further than what is in the current Education Act as proposed by this government. He just took a moment to look at some of the articles that have been put forward over the last few years, and I would be happy to table them in the nearest future, at my earliest opportunity. Unfortunately, I think it is very important for this conversation, so I will just read a little bit from there.

This one is titled *Alberta LGBTQ Teachers Say a Reversal of Bill 24 Could Hurt Them Too*. It kind of contradicts the conversation that the Education minister brought forward. It goes on to say that this teacher was attending a teachers' college, and it was quite explicit that they were told to try not to rock the boat and to keep their identity as a gay man a secret. He goes on to say, "Maybe you don't put a picture of you and your partner on your desk whereas if I was a straight teacher, I could proudly display pictures of my family." This teacher began teaching in 2016. In his first year he was openly out to his colleagues but not his students until the amendments that we brought forward under Bill 24 in 2017 affirming protections under the Human Rights Act for each staff member employed by all school authorities.

7:50 a.m.

I think that's an important point to make, because whether or not what the Education minister is saying is completely true, I think it's important that we go as far as we can to enshrine in legislation that these people will be fully protected. This teacher was very concerned that they would not be if this bill, Bill 24, was reversed, which we are now seeing.

In another article, which I'd be happy to table, titled *Former Principal Alleges Calgary Catholic School District Pushed Her Out over Her Sexuality*, it says that she served as a teacher and over a period of 15 years claims she reluctantly quit and is taking her concerns to the Alberta Human Rights Commission... [because of a] "Don't ask, don't tell" approach [that] was prevalent.

Of course, just the fact that these concerns are being raised on multiple occasions is enough to question whether the legislation under the proposed Education Act is going far enough. Further to that, I have concerns about provisions within the Education Act that's before us that leave the ability within regulations to exempt certain schools or certain school boards. When the Education minister stands up and says that the legislation will fully protect all schools across the province to the full extent, well, if you're leaving this space to, behind closed doors, have conversations about, "Oh, maybe this school board doesn't need to follow these rules the same as a different school board," whether that's the case or not, the possibility of that is offered within the legislation, which is very concerning and is one of the loopholes that we closed with Bill 24. I'd be very interested to hear the minister's comments on that.

I would also be interested to find out, once again, as the Member for Edmonton-North West pointed out, that these concerns were before that member at the time of being the minister. Now, I'm sure

that they're before this new Education minister, and I would be very interested to find out what that member's plan is moving forward.

There are concerns from teachers about protecting their ability to identify as LGBTQ or come out in the greater sense and be protected with legislation. What is going to happen or what are you going to do if you find school boards or school districts or administrators, whatever it may be, not following that? I think that's important. What reassurances can you give us that you aren't going to exempt certain schools that are potentially making agreements or contract agreements that are not necessarily protecting these staff the way that we would expect the legislation to do? Those are questions that I have.

Once again, I'm very concerned that the government is unwilling to even consider this amendment that's before them. It goes on to strengthen this gutted Education Act that has been brought forward by this government. That's very concerning. I think that if we can take this amendment that's before us and strengthen it, why wouldn't we? But, once again, it is because we have a government before us that is getting its marching orders from special-interest groups and that has not, to my knowledge, accepted any amendment that we've put forward, and they've all been very reasonable. I'm sure that we will have more reasonable amendments coming in the future.

Hopefully, we can get to somewhere where we can get support from this government. What we're doing here as the opposition caucus is providing educated amendments that have been consulted on for years, that were consulted on through the Bill 10 discussions and, once again, through the Bill 24 discussions. We made these changes because it was the right thing to do. For a government to come in and put everything, all of that hard work of not only our NDP government – of course, they disagree with many of the things that we talked about. I would hope that they didn't disagree with protecting LGBTQ students and teachers. But the picture that they're painting is a little different.

I really think that they should consider supporting this one because it has been consulted on. They have obviously done very little consultation on Bill 8 as a whole, that is before us. It's very frustrating. I hope that they might change their mind and support this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, on amendment A3, I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen to speak.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you recognizing me to be able to add my comments again on this amendment, that's been proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

I must say that I found myself thinking back in history when the member was reading that one statement from that teacher. It actually got me thinking some time back, maybe to some of my actions even as far back as high school with some of the, you know, fellow students that were in school. How did I possibly treat them? Did I do what I could have to make them feel welcome and wanted in that school? I know, certainly, I had the privilege to be considered, I guess, sort of one of the leadership students there with the different sports that I played, the things that I was involved in. It always makes me wonder now: did I do everything I could to make sure that they felt welcome around me and welcome around the school?

Certainly, when we talk about our teachers, do we do everything to make them feel welcome around the school, you know, after hearing the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford talking about that case where that teacher ended up having to go to court?

I guess I could ask the members opposite in general or maybe I'll just ask the Education minister to answer me this: do you think a school employer should be able to ask during the interview if the applying teacher is gay? Do you think that's an appropriate question? For some reason, in the case that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was talking about, the teacher was hired based on their qualifications. They were competent to teach, and it had nothing to do with them being gay, nothing whatsoever. So I'm just wondering. By this amendment we are saying to these teachers: it's safe for you.

I'm hoping that maybe the Education minister might be reconsidering the position taken in not supporting this amendment, because by not supporting it, we're essentially saying that we should, then, be able to ask during an interview process: "Are you gay? If we find out you are, well, maybe we can't exactly hire you because for some reason that has a direct influence on your ability to teach even though you went to school for years and received your credentials saying that you are capable of being a teacher."

To hear that the Education minister is not in favour of this amendment – you know, I've spoken at length on other bills and probably even this one as well. History and language. History teaches us a lot: what went on, what not to do in the future to avoid mistakes. As I've also said, language is everything, and I've heard the Education minister very clearly say – I would have to pull up *Hansard* to get the absolute, exact quote – that schools are expected to follow the policy. Expected. That's not a guarantee that they must follow the policy. We're kind of crossing our fingers, maybe even both, and hoping that absolutely every player is going to play by the rules. By bringing in this amendment, we are saying to all the players that you have to play by the rules. Otherwise, all we're simply doing is hoping that that will happen, and when one doesn't, well, I guess we'll deal with the fallout from that point.

**8:00 a.m.**

The problem with that kind of an attitude, Mr. Chair, is that damage has already been done. Like the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford talked about, the damage was already done. The teacher had to go all the way to the Supreme Court to get it rectified, but how long did that take? Now, if we even translated that to the kids – I mean, we've heard: well, the privacy rules will protect everything. After the fact, after it's happened, and after the damage has been done. I've tabled two articles where we had an elected official that said: I'd rather have a dead son than a gay son.

**Mr. Nally:** That was supposed to be a tweet. You never did table it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Through the chair.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I did table it, Member, and you might as well go and read it. Have fun.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I'll take this opportunity just to remind everybody that in committee there's ample opportunity to discuss the amendment A3 or the bill after the amendment has been decided upon, so going forward, I will say that members should remember to put their comments through the chair.

With that, I will ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore to continue with his comments.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. As I was saying, when you have that kind of an attitude that's present and if it's one child – and the Education minister: I know that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has pointed out very clearly about the pin that I'm sure she proudly wears – that would put that one child at risk.

With regard to the amendment, are we willing to put that one teacher at risk? I would say that we shouldn't. It's our responsibility as legislators to ensure that everybody has a fair opportunity to prosper, and it doesn't matter where they come from, what their family's economic background is, what religion they follow, or who they love. It should not affect their ability to do the job if they are qualified to do it, and if you're interviewing somebody to be a teacher, I'm pretty sure that they've got those qualifications. This amendment will say to them: it doesn't matter if you're gay or not; the bottom line is that you're qualified to do the job. Otherwise, as I said, then we might as well be asking in the interview process, while you're interviewing: "Are you gay? Because if you are, I'm not going to give you the job." We might as well go there. I would be interested to see if constituents of the members opposite would agree with that wholeheartedly. It'd be interesting to find out. I think, probably not. This is a very, very common-sense amendment to be looking at.

Again, I've talked about language being everything, and some of the language that I've seen from the Education minister does not line up with the language that is being proposed in Bill 8. This amendment will attempt to fix that a little bit, but my concern is – and we've already seen some very common-sense amendments that would fix the language, so either people don't understand how language works or they're blatantly ignoring it and following what they're told to do, which kind of maybe goes a little bit contrary to some of the motions that we've seen here around voting with your conscience and being able to speak your mind. The problem is that I haven't seen anybody speaking their mind. I heard, though, that there was one member that was about to and very quickly got told to sit down.

If you're going to follow the language, then your actions have to also follow with it, and not accepting this amendment would say that your actions aren't following the language, which means, then, I have to question whether you're pandering to a small group of donors or supporters while putting others at risk, which means, then, I question why you're here in this House. Every day we talk in the morning about putting those kinds of things aside for the betterment of all Albertans. This amendment will provide a small group of those Albertans the safety that they need to be able to go into our schools, do their job, teach our young emerging leaders what they need to know so that when they get out into the world, they will be leading on the world stage, not following everybody else, not being like everybody else. Leading the world stage. I firmly believe that, Mr. Chair, about all of our students in this province. We have some amazing teachers.

As I said, I've got 26 schools in Edmonton-Decore, all three high schools in the north end. I get to talk to the teachers all the time, and some of my teachers have expressed concern about their colleagues. I've never had one of them name me, as they probably shouldn't unless that colleague comes out themselves first and says: hey, I'm gay. Not that it matters. I want to know if they're a competent teacher to teach our young emerging leaders. This amendment will provide some security for them. I hope that the Education minister, based on the language that I've heard, little pins, things like that – you now have to walk the talk, reconsider the position of not supporting this amendment, and take a common-sense approach: support this amendment, give those teachers the peace of mind they need so they can be focused on teaching our young emerging leaders.

I'm really hoping that maybe somebody on the opposite side will ask me that question that I asked earlier: do you think a school employer should be able to ask during the interview if the applying teacher is gay? By shooting down this amendment, that's pretty much what you're saying should be allowed to happen. I look

forward to seeing a response. I hope I get one, but, Mr. Chair, I'll have to say: don't be surprised if I don't hold my breath.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora rising to speak on amendment A3.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for what I think is a really important amendment. I want to start by saying that it was the ATA who said that they wanted to see the language that was in Bill 24 around teachers reflected in an amendment to the Education Act if the Education Act was to move forward, adding the words:

- (a) affirm the rights, as provided . . . [by] the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, of each staff member employed by the board and each student enrolled in a school operated by the board, and
- (b) contain one or more statements that staff members employed by the board and students enrolled in a school operated by the board will not be discriminated against as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I heard the minister earlier say: well, that's not necessary; it's redundant. My question is: if the government truly feels that it's unnecessary and redundant, then why not accept it? If it doesn't do anything new, then why not say, "Yes, we hear your concerns; we absolutely will protect all sexual minority and gender identity minority staff in our schools; not to worry; we will add this wording" if it is actually redundant?

8:10 a.m.

If there is reluctance to do that, it makes me wonder: is it because there's an alternative position here, a position that actually says, through some dog-whistle politics, the statement that was written by the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon when he was in the Wildrose caucus? I'm not sure if he was Education critic at the time, but definitely he was seen as somebody who had strong opinions and experience as a teacher and a member of the ATA. When that policy position was written and considered by the Wildrose, that talked about the rights of employers to discriminate against teachers specifically – or maybe it was all school staff. I think it was teachers specifically, based on their sexual orientation or their gender identity. I am concerned that by rejecting this amendment – if it is truly something that the minister feels is redundant, then why not accept it?

I think the reality here is that because there are other pressures within caucus, potentially, within the party, almost certainly – and I think that's truly concerning. If this is simply about updating language in a bill, then let's do that, and let's make sure that we act on the amendment that somebody with lived experience has brought forward in this House, somebody who herself was reluctant to talk about who she was because she didn't feel confident and safe in doing that at the time and now is in a position to create macro change and create a more respectful and loving environment for other school staff.

I also want to touch on a few people that I met in my time through education, and one was a teacher who I like a lot. When his partner passed away, he did not feel safe telling his school administrator why he needed to take three days off. He needed three days to plan a funeral and bury the person he'd loved for decades, but he couldn't tell the people he worked with because he wasn't sure that he would be able to keep his position. He definitely didn't feel like he would be supported, and I think that that's the opposite message we want to send to people who are serving our students and people who are serving our province. I am concerned by the reluctance to

accept an amendment that the minister herself says is redundant. If it's redundant, then why not accept it?

I want to take a minute. I've shared a few stories over the morning, and I want to take a moment to share another one, that was provided by Thomas Cline. Thomas goes on to say – I will be happy to provide copies to *Hansard* and then later table it when an opportunity presents itself.

The GSAs were so helpful to make connections with people and getting support.

It was halfway through Grade 10 when the GSAs came in and I hadn't yet come out, but I joined the group and was the only member who had come every week for the last half of my Grade 10 year.

GSAs are in trouble now, especially with the legislation coming in because all Bill 8 is going to do is cause an increase in mental health problems with queer youth and an increase in queer youth suicide and homelessness.

With parental groups wanting more parental control and want to be told if their child is joining [a] GSA, they won't know if their child is allied or if they are gay or queer and I think telling parents is a bad decision.

The support of the teachers and the GSA helped me feel comfortable enough to come out.

I'm extremely concerned because having a GSA helped me when I was in high school and these changes are going to hurt them.

I've said a few times in a few ways that GSAs: I think the evidence is very clear that they do save lives, they help academic achievement, and they help school culture of not just the students who are a part of them but create a more inclusive school culture overall.

The other piece, though, is that they also create a culture not just for the students but for parents and for staff to know that they are accepted and loved for who they are as well. There were a number of parents that I've talked to who said: "You know, when I showed up at the parent-teacher interviews, they said: oh, are you the aunt? And I said: no, I'm the mom. And they'd say: well, there's another lady who drops off this child at school, so we just assumed you were the aunt instead. And I said: well, there are two moms in our family."

The fact that parents are still explaining about these kinds of family structures when they show up to an interview that's designed for parents I think is not only unfortunate but I think it can be harmful and damaging, and I think that all staff deserve to feel that they will be protected and supported. No wonder they're asking for these amendments. The Premier has a very long track record of voting against LGBTQ rights, voting against them in the House of Commons and in work that was done before he was in political life as well. I guess it was still political life but before he was an elected official.

In asking for these amendments, when teachers ask us for them and when the ATA says that having that same language that was in Bill 24 would give their members the confidence that this isn't an attack on them, when the government is reluctant to make those amendments, it makes them feel like it's an attack on them. So if it truly isn't, then why not pass this amendment? It might not be fun to accept opposition amendments. I accepted a number of them when I was a minister because I felt like it was the right thing to do on more than one occasion. When we come to this place, we come here with an obligation to do good for the people that we were elected to serve.

When we gather every day, our Speaker takes the time to remind us. He says:

Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to the Members of the Legislative Assembly,

and to all in positions of power and responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power . . .

Love of power: that's an interesting line. I find that relevant to today's debate.

. . . desire to please . . .

Who are we trying to please by bringing in this bill and rolling back protections that we've created? I have a few ideas but would be willing to hear who it is, actually, that has the desire to please by rolling back these protections for staff, students, and families.

. . . or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice . . .

Certainly, I'm deeply concerned that there are a number of prejudices that are guiding this legislation and the reluctance to accept these amendments.

. . . keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

"Seek to improve the condition of all." Honestly, what the ATA, what teachers, what youth are telling us is: just don't make it worse. The Speaker calls on us every day to "seek to improve the condition of all," but these kids are saying: just don't make it worse. Just don't make it worse.

We've made a number of strides. We know that that makes some people uncomfortable, but these are strides in human rights. We need to keep moving forward. We can't move backwards. Let's seek to improve the condition of all, maintaining the condition where staff know definitively, because this language was put into Bill 24, that they are protected. How is removing that by passing this new bill and not allowing for this amendment improving the condition of all? It absolutely does no such thing.

In fact, it creates a lot of concern and a lot of nervousness on the part of many, so if it really isn't necessary, if it really is redundant, just accept it. Just accept the amendment. Sometimes it's good to take one from the opposition and say: "You know what? The role you played contributed to the improvement of this bill." We'll probably still say that it's not a great bill because there are a lot of things in it that we find problematic. This is one of them, and we're trying to bring forward an idea to make it less bad. I know a number of Wildrose members used to come to this House and sit where my right is now and say: you know, we're here to help. We are here to help. We're here to bring forward something that teachers have told us will help make this less bad.

8:20 a.m.

Please, I request that all members of this House take into consideration the motion that was passed yesterday about voting with conscience, the comments that were made by their leader in the lead-up to the provincial election about not legislating on social issues. I'm sure that many people who sought nominations believed the leader when he said that he wouldn't legislate on social issues. And here we are. It's Bill 8, and what's happening is legislation on social issues. We have an opportunity through this amendment to make it less bad, to make it less harmful, and to create more confidence for our staff, students, and families that we aren't moving backwards, that we're going to stay where we're at. Maybe don't move forward, but just stay still for a little while. If you're not going to seek to improve the condition of all, just seek to not make the condition worse for some. Sometimes that's a win – right? – just not moving backwards, not making things worse.

Those are some of the main points I wanted to make with regard to this amendment. I think that it is something that has the ability to help school staff feel more confident in their place of work, have students feel more confident in their place of learning – of course, we know that teachers' teaching conditions are students' learning conditions – making sure that the staff who are in that school feel

loved and respected and safe in being who they are and that that teacher could take three days off for bereavement leave to make sure that he could bury his partner. They are pretty simple things that teachers are asking for and things that they shouldn't have to go to the Supreme Court for to make sure are enshrined. They already did that. The case law has been determined. Please don't make them have to fight it again. Please make it crystal clear in this amending piece of legislation that their rights will be protected, that their minority rights will not be attacked yet again, and that they won't have to keep going to court to fight for their own right to be a part of a profession that they have chosen.

Those are some of the main things I wanted to say with regard to that. I do hope that folks have an open mind when considering this. I don't think people woke up this morning or yesterday morning or whenever they woke up and thought: I can't wait to come into the Legislature and roll back human rights. I just don't. I don't think that that's what inspires people to run for office. I think there's something else going on here. I think it's upon all of us to make sure that we ensure – and my colleague for Lethbridge-West talked about her friend who had his jaw broken because somebody thought he was gay – that we don't create those conditions, that we seek to improve the condition of all, that we create a more loving and just society. I also think it's important that we lead by example by making that consideration here today through this amendment.

Again, I want to thank my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for the thoughtful amendment that she brought forward, that I think inspires a lot of us to think about potential other amendments that can be made in other areas of this legislation to make it less harmful and to really improve the condition of all in that workplace.

With that, I'll cede my time to my colleagues and thank you for your consideration. I'll say it once again just in case it wasn't heard: if this really does nothing, then what's the harm in passing it?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, questions, comments on A3? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to speak.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to address a few aspects of Bill 8. I had an opportunity to speak on a number of occasions, and now I enjoy the opportunity to speak to this amendment. Of course, as I previously indicated, I really support this amendment and encourage all the House to support this amendment because the thing that it does primarily is bring clarity to an issue that we shouldn't even be disagreeing on in the first place.

As has been mentioned previously, it isn't just the progressive side of the House that has been working on these kinds of aspects of provincial legislation that enshrine the Canadian Charter of Rights in our legislation. It's also been the Conservative side of the House that has done that over time in this Chamber. It's not asking something that is somehow in opposition to the values previously expressed by the Conservative side of the House. It would be nice to be able to see the House continue with the tradition that's been established. It reaches across the floor. It reflects the values of both of us. As a result, it would be a good place for us to join together and see some co-operative governance happen in the House.

It doesn't always happen here in the House when the opportunity arises for us to stand together and to support each other in making a declaration that helps to, you know, define Alberta as a place where human rights are protected and that helps us to establish a reputation in the world as a good, safe place where people of any nationality or race or religion or, in this case, sexual orientation can come and enjoy the benefits of being an Albertan and the benefits



of being part of this great country, that recently has been voted as the best country in the world and has been in that place a number of times over the last number of years, partly because we've made some pretty incredible advances in terms of the protection of people's rights, in terms of establishing the structures of society which allow us to ensure the well-being of all people.

You know, I think this is a wonderful opportunity for the government side of the House to stand together with the opposition side of the House and declare that in spite of the fact that we frequently have differences and that we often find reasons to argue with each other even when the differences are small, in this case there isn't an underlying value difference between us if we stand together on this, if we say that we actually believe in the Charter and in the Alberta Human Rights Act.

I know that the Minister of Education has risen in this House and has indicated that, you know, the things we're concerned about are somehow referred to or referenced in other parts of the act and that, as a result, somehow this becomes redundant, but my reading of the act indicates that specific reference to the rights protected by the Canadian Charter is not referenced in this act. What this does is that this provides clarity. This provides a specific reference to the Charter and the values inherent in the Charter that govern this act, which then allows us to identify that we have heard the Supreme Court decisions on these matters and, frankly, the national discussion on these matters that has occurred over the last 40 or 50 years and that we are responding appropriately to this.

You know, so often in this House we are at loggerheads, we're opposed to each other on issues, so having an opportunity to not be opposed but, rather, to be supportive of each other is one we should welcome. I'd like to do that in that spirit of reaching across the floor and trying to find that common ground for us to work together as we create this society that we want to have and that we wish everyone in the world were to have. It's a pretty great society. Compared to many of the other ones that people have to survive in in the world, in war-torn places or places where there are dictators or where there is a lack of rule of law or a lack of democracy, this is great.

In that spirit, I want to identify a number of areas in the act that I appreciate that you put in, that I appreciate you have included in Bill 8, so that you can see that I support some of the things you put into Bill 8, and then hopefully we can come to an agreement to include one more that we can all support on Bill 8.

**8:30 a.m.**

Let me just identify some of those pieces right now so that you can feel proud of some of the work you've done and know that this side of the House agrees with you and is happy that you have made these kinds of decisions to move forward. All of these are ones that are actually additions in Bill 8 to the 2012 act, so you're not simply going back to the 2012 act, as sometimes is said in the House, that somehow it's just a return to a previously passed act in this House that just was never proclaimed. In fact, you are changing things from that act. You're not just going back and saying: oh, we're just going to pick up where that one left off. You have made a number of decisions to alter the act from its original form, so we know that you're prepared to alter the act. We know that you have done so in some really positive ways. I'm going to identify at least three of them right now, and I just would like to add a fourth with this amendment.

One of the ones that I think is really important is the leadership and professional practice certification. In this case it updates the professional practice standards for teachers and school leaders and superintendents. All that is expected to be provided by September 1, 2019, so right away, this year. I think that's a positive thing. The

old 2012 act did not include all of that. It did have some reference to existing teacher qualification standards, but it did not have the full update of the professional practice standards for all teachers, school leaders, and superintendents and for education administrators. So there you are. There's one thing that you've added that, in fact, came pretty much from our bill and was inserted here, so you've obviously read some of the updates that we included in the Education Act and have found them to be positive.

Here we are agreeing with each other. Isn't that great? You've read our act, you've found places to agree, and you've included it in your act. So we know that that's possible. We know that we can work together to make an act better when we get together and we share ideas and we include that in the act. Thank you for that. Thank you for your work on the leadership professional practice certification.

Another one that I want to identify is the separate school district establishment piece. That is the changes you've made to update and to clarify the process for establishing a new territory for a separate or a Catholic school division. I appreciate that you've done that. It's very important. We know that under the Constitution of Canada Catholic schools are protected and Catholic schools cannot be eliminated or diminished in any way and they need to be supported. I think that's a really wonderful thing, so thank you. I appreciate that you've included that in the act.

I know that when we put our bill together, we actually spent a significant amount of time with the PSBAA and the ACSTA in consultation with the Alberta School Boards Association to look at exactly that question. We actually spent time in the community with the significant organizations, got together, and with the people who were being affected, we made some good decisions to provide clarity and to provide updates. As a result, it got included in the act that we introduced into this House. Here you have taken it almost verbatim and included it in this act. So thank you again. Again a place where good work was done with the community and with our policy developers: you have seen that, that that's a positive. While it was neglected – or I guess maybe “not mentioned” may be a better word – in the 2012 act, you've seen that that was an addition that was positive and included it in the act that you are bringing forward with Bill 8.

Here we have already two places where the work that was done by our government and the work that was done by your government have come together and formed a better act and moved us ahead in a positive way and as a reflection of sophisticated dialogue with the community members who were affected by this act. I find it just great to have an opportunity to say: thank you; continue the good work. These are important pieces of work that we want to continue.

Another one that I think is also important is the superintendent compensation piece, and that is that we made a decision in our 2017 School Act to bring the decision about compensation back to the Minister of Education so that the Minister of Education needed to approve the compensation. Of course, there were some concerns that the compensation as it was being negotiated out there in the community was not always reflective of where Alberta needed to be, that the compensation amounts were disproportionate to the monies that were being offered to other professionals in the field or comparable to people with other, similar kinds of responsibilities. And here, after we had put it into our act, again I find that in this Bill 8 you have adopted that. You've taken that strategy, a strategy which did not exist in the 2012 act, and added it in.

Here I am now with three different areas that I would like to say thank you to the government. I congratulate you on moving past partisanship and accepting changes that you see to be positive and to be furthering the cause of good legislation as it relates to schools in our province. Having done that, having found that common

ground on at least three occasions – and if I went through, I'm sure I could find a few other things that would also be reflective of melding together the work of two different governments from different sides of the floor into a better act.

I guess on that basis and with that history and knowing the positiveness that we have been able to achieve so far, I would ask that you add one more, that you increase the number of successes that we have here in this Chamber by one, and that is just to bring clarity to something that we already agree on. It's not something that we're fighting over. The underlying value that's inherent here is not something that somehow divides us. We both, your side and our side, believe in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We believe in the Human Rights Act, that was brought in by Conservatives here in this Chamber.

Given that we share those same sets of values, that we have a tradition on both sides of this House of furthering the protection of human rights, that makes Alberta and Canada such a great place to live, so that we end up on the top of the list of great places to live in the world consistently and we continue that tradition together in a positive, nonpartisan reach across the floor to achieve something good for all Albertans, I ask you to take a moment to deeply consider this amendment, that would allow us to make a substantial declaration of clarity on behalf of both the people who seek protections as members of an identifiable minority and, of course, people in the workforce who are seeking protections of their labour rights so that they can enjoy the fruits of a wonderful country, a wonderful province, and a history of achieving success on behalf of a greater society here in this Chamber, something that is noble, that is admirable, and that will help us all to stand up with our heads held high and declare to the world that Alberta is a great place to live. We welcome you here, and wherever you come from, whatever faith you have, whatever nationality you were born with, whatever job you hold, and whatever sexual orientation you have, you will find that you are protected and supported by a profoundly thoughtful government act.

Thank you.

8:40 a.m.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, comments on amendment A3? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen to speak.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to make some further comment on amendment A3 as brought forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I just want to acknowledge as well the perspective that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford brought to this Chamber. It made me think. You know, it edified me in a way because I think he very aptly pointed out the positive changes that we see reflected in the Education Act as brought forward by this government.

Earlier I was speaking metaphorically around the history of the Education Act and how it sat for a long time, with two governments, in regard to its implementation. It was passed, I believe, in 2012 but was not proclaimed either by the Progressive Conservative government nor our last government, although as I did mention, I did take a number of the useful and utilitarian aspects of the Education Act as it appeared in 2012 and built an amendment act to include a unified age of attendance, I think, for the age of entry for kids to enrol in kindergarten. We also assumed the revisions to the establishment of Catholic school boards, and I think that was definitely a positive change.

As brought forward by the Edmonton-Rutherford MLA's comments, these were all positive changes that, again, were subsumed and otherwise brought forward for review and debate as part of this Education Act, Bill 8. Again, you can see the evolution

over time of how legislation is built and how it is refined and how these things can take place over the course of different governments – right? – with the former Progressive Conservative government, with our last government, and here today with this UCP government bringing forward Bill 8.

You know, in the spirit of that idea, I just wanted to perhaps reflect, I think, on the urgency and the need for this amendment A3 to be considered here this morning. I believe that it is very much in the spirit of that evolution that we described, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and then as I'm just talking here now as well. I think the key here is to kind of remember where we were and how far we've come.

I know for a fact that when we were bringing through and compelling school boards around the province of Alberta to write and to implement safe and caring policies, it was a bumpy road. You know, it wasn't just, like: yeah, everybody was there, and we had 87 safe and caring schools policies that were just immediately coming forward from all the school boards. No. It took a lot of work, and I think part of the strategy that I employed was to make sure that individual school boards were writing their safe and caring schools policies themselves so that they were not just getting something from the provincial government, from Edmonton, and then having that imposed on them.

**Ms Hoffman:** Can I call a point of order?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, of course. Absolutely. That's part of the game.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. I'll call the point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

#### Point of Order Decorum

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. Point of order. Section 13(1) and 13(4), about decorum and order in the House. I understand that some people are coming and going, but I think it definitely doesn't respect the speaker who has the call when the Government House Leader comes into the House singing and chanting. I think that it's fun, but I don't think it's following Standing Order 13(1) or (4).

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. I am prepared to rule on this. I think that throughout these last 12 or so hours there have been some comments made, from both sides of the House, at different times. At this stage I'm not going to find a point of order. I will remind all members that when they do make comments, to make sure that they make them through the chair. I will take the comments from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora into account with regard to making sure that order and decorum is of the utmost importance to ensure an effective debate.

We are currently debating amendment A3. I believe that it was the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West speaking. I would ask him to continue.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for, you know, perhaps reminding us in the most magnanimous and friendly sort of way.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

## Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you. I really am privileged to have an opportunity to rise under 23(b). I'd encourage you to encourage the hon. member to speak about the question that's under discussion, which currently he's not doing. He wants to now speak to a point of order that you already ruled on, Mr. Chair, which is clearly a violation of the standing orders. I know he's probably getting tired as he tries to maintain his filibusters against things like royalty guarantees and Senate reform, and I appreciate that. But that's his job, so I'd ask him to get back on the bill at hand, please.

**The Deputy Chair:** If I'm not mistaken, you are referring to relevance.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I'm referring to relevance, sure, if that's what you'd like to call it. I'm specifically referring to 23(b)(i), debating the question that is under discussion. It says that the Speaker will call the member to order if he does not refer to the question that is under discussion. The hon. member is getting up and attempting to re-argue a point of order that you just ruled on, Mr. Chair, certainly not the question that is under discussion.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, you know, I beg to differ. I mean, we can look at the *Hansard* as it comes through. I was making reference to the way by which members, both Edmonton-Rutherford and Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Decore and others, are helping to perhaps forward this argument, that amendment A3 is, in fact, relevant. I certainly stand by my comments, as I will continue to do so here presently, and look forward to continuing the discussion.

**The Deputy Chair:** At this stage I'm again not finding a point of order. There has been a wide swath with regard to debate up to this point. I would, however, take this opportunity, something that I was going to do, potentially, a little while ago, to remind people that there will be, obviously, ample time to debate the bill as a whole after we have debated amendment A3, which is currently before us. So I'd ask members, if they could, to try to ensure that they are effectively dealing with the amendment at hand so that once that is decided, then we can of course go back to the bill as a whole.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

8:50 a.m.

## Debate Continued

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the clarification and so forth, and I must say that I'm feeling very strong and feeling very, I think, thoughtful and reflective on the matter at hand, which is amendment A3. I know that part of what we're trying to do here, I believe – and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora I think framed the context of this amendment very well – is that we're looking for common ground.

I think about the insertion that amendment A3 does ask for in the Education Act in regard to the underlying importance of the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and how we underline that in regard to the protections that those two documents do afford each staff member employed by the board and each student enrolled in a school operated by the board as well.

Again, I think part of what we saw in a practical sort of way – I'll get back to my original point that I wanted to make, which is that when we were building the safe and caring schools policies or

compelling school boards to have safe and caring schools policies and to write them themselves, they were meant to, and eventually very successfully, build policy that protects students but protects staff as well so that you can see a symmetry that students and everyone and the public as well can see, a symmetry of protections for the integrity of a staff member regardless of their sexual orientation to be enshrined in the safe and caring schools policies that each school board was meant to build.

This took time, and it was a relationship that was served both by the Department of Education, through debate and reflection, and writing each individual school board. I mean, this wasn't an easy process, but I think that it really helped to internalize and to build policy that was in keeping with local needs of each school board. You know, Mr. Chair, when you actually do sit down and write something together as a community, then you internalize that much more strongly, and it becomes ultimately stronger and, I think, accepted by people.

Through that process, Mr. Chair, we managed to have excellent safe and caring schools policies that protected students and protected staff, written and developed and accepted by all public school boards here in the province of Alberta, all separate schools, Catholic schools and school boards in the province of Alberta, all charter schools, all francophone schools, and the vast majority of private schools as well. I believe that is the hallmark of a very successful process by which we make sure that people are included and that people are writing their own policies and moving through that process over time.

What underscores all of that process? It is to make sure that we build coherent law that's in keeping with what school boards manage to accomplish. I mean, obviously, we don't agree with resurrecting this Education Act to somehow move backwards in regard to safe and caring schools policies for schools and school boards around the province of Alberta. I believe that with this amendment at least we help to mitigate some of that lost ground that bringing forward the Education Act in its current form will definitely cause here in the province of Alberta. You know, by articulating the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms explicitly in this clause, I believe that we have helped to achieve that goal.

I'd like to thank a number of school boards who really helped to build safe and caring schools policy as a model, that allowed other school boards to see that it was possible, for example, to build safe and caring schools policy for students and staff and still, you know, make sure that you're retaining the individual character and the beliefs of each school board around the province. Edmonton public certainly did a lot of the leading work by creating a safe and caring schools policy that was quite remarkable, really, and once other school boards looked at this document and saw it being executed in the more than 220 schools in Edmonton public . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** I think we only had about 197 then. Somebody built a bunch of schools.

**Mr. Eggen:** Oh, that's right. We built so many more schools.

I think that once people saw those safe and caring schools policies writ large in our second-biggest school board in the province of Alberta, then that helped to really pave the way as well. I'd like to also acknowledge the work that Calgary Catholic school district did in regard to building safe and caring schools policy that also adhered to the statement of faith that that school board is founded on.

You know, again, we were just looking for leadership in this regard, but we also looked for direction. We also know that the work is not over – right? – because, of course, there are still

individual cases with staff and so forth feeling as though they had been maybe discriminated against and otherwise marginalized because of their sexuality. Again, I think that serves as a good reminder, Mr. Chair, about the importance for us to set a positive example here in this Chamber in making laws and regulations that reflect the need for more protections and for people to know that we have their backs covered and that if individual circumstances might arise around discriminatory employment practices, then we can help to protect those people.

But if we are sending a message that is somehow ambiguous or not clear or changing policy, then we're sending quite the opposite message. I think that that's not a good reflection of our responsibility here as legislators. I think that every step of the way we must make sure that people can hear loud and clear – underlined, underscored, all caps, right? – our commitment to both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act. I know that by moving forward on amendment A3, we can achieve that goal and others because, of course, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora reminded us – and I will say it again – we're here to help. We want to make sure that through collaboration we build legislation that reflects the values of who we are as Albertans, that reflects our responsibility to ensure that all people are protected in an equal and just sort of way. Accepting amendment A3 I think is a good way to express that sense of collaboration, and I encourage all members to vote alongside us to accept this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, on amendment A3, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

9:00 a.m.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I should say a happy Thursday and probably through you as well a happy Thursday to my hon. friends in the UCP caucus. Many of them travelled great distances to be here for what, well, could be our final week of the legislative session.

We've been working some long hours again this week, and of course for all members that does mean time away from our families, time away from our businesses, from volunteering, from groups, from many of the things that bring us fulfillment in life. That's the sacrifice that we took when we ran for public office, and we make that sacrifice in order to be part of something larger, and I think, actually, the Premier gave a similar speech to his caucus not too long ago.

I wonder if some of the members opposite, when the Premier isn't around or during those long hours on the highway, reflect on their role in this government, especially after last week when the Government House Leader successfully argued that those members are not actually part of the government at all. That's got to be demoralizing if you've travelled all the way from – I don't know – Central Peace-Notley or Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo or Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder Items Previously Decided

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). Again, the hon. member, while trying to survive through his filibuster, spending his time trying to block Albertans being able to vote for Senators and those types of things, is using language that would create disorder in this place and also is debating a decision that

was already made by the House, yet again. He referred directly to it. He referred to the fact that the Government House Leader successfully argued – those are the exact words that he used – that there was a difference between cabinet and government caucus, which there is. There is a difference within *Beauchesne's*, within *Parliamentary Procedure*, but that does not mean that the government caucus is not part of this government team. Mr. Chair, we definitely are.

You could tell – while I understand what's happening across the way as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora and others are getting ready for their leadership race, and of course you have a situation with their interim leader . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I believe that I am prepared to make a ruling on this.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Within this, sometimes comments do ride up to the line within contextual ideas as to whether or not they could be considered parliamentary or not. In this case, I don't find that there was unparliamentary language that was . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, 13(2), Mr. Chair. You don't find there's unparliamentary language about, again, standing order . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** With regard to your statement, before you get into that aspect of it, commenting on previous rulings, there is within context – you cannot debate previous rulings or re-create debate on that, but commenting in certain circumstances is acceptable.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Chair, I'm sure you'll find that it will continue to create disorder in this Chamber if you'll continue to allow the opposition to behave this way. You'll witness it shortly.

**The Deputy Chair:** I'll take your comments under advisement. I think that it also does lend to the opportunity for me to remind the Chamber again that when debating amendment A3, there is ample opportunity once that amendment is decided to then debate the bill as a whole, and if members could ensure that they stay within the context of the amendment, that would probably do wonders with regard to ensuring that decorum and order are kept in check, which, in turn, for all of our benefits, then allows for effective debate on the matters at hand. I consider the matter closed.

Would the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore please continue on amendment A3.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, I appreciate that. Actually, speaking directly to what I've seen as nonaction from some of our members in this House, I have to wonder, you know, why government members aren't speaking to the amendment. I think my comments are directly related to that and why I sort of referenced that because you might think that if, you know, you're not a member of the government, you might enjoy some freedom. But no, they don't seem to have a voice in this place beyond reading – I don't know – badly written notes that they're handed maybe by the government. These members at some point don't seem to be listening to debate on legislation since the government maybe told them to plug their ears.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I rise on 23(h),(i), and (j). It's also very rich for the hon. member to refer to implying motives towards other members of this House that they may or may not be listening to debate, particularly when the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein last time that we were in an all-night sitting pointed out the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, who was using his computer to look at what he described as racy comics, those type of examples. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South, who was online shopping on his computer: there was a point of order discussed about this.

So I think the hon. member referring to that is inappropriate. Now nobody on this side of the House, of course, is doing that; it's his side of the House that's doing it. But the point is, Mr. Chair, the Speaker already ruled that that was inappropriate, and I suggest, again, that you caution the member that this will continue to create disorder if this continues to take place.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.  
The hon. Member . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** . . . for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** I would think that there seems to be a proliferation of points of order from the member opposite. I'm not exactly sure why, but it certainly doesn't fit within the boundaries of the standing orders here in this Chamber nor does it contribute to, you know, clarification around the debate at hand. We're trying to work through something that is very sensitive and important, right? I know that this government claimed that they weren't going to legislate on social issues, but here we are up to our necks in debating social issues. I would strongly suggest that the member opposite stand down from his spurious points of order at this time.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. members.

At this stage with regard to the context of the comments that were made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, I'm inclined to decide that there is not a point of order on that specific matter.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind members to speak through the chair and ensure that they are called upon before they discuss. That said, of course, points of order are always welcome.

I would, however, also remind members that using points of order to interject and engage in debate is not an effective use of points of order. That said, I am obviously not trying to dissuade points of order from being made, and we will rule on them as they come. I consider this matter to be closed.

Please, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. I think I left off somewhere around my comments – I mean, I could probably even go as far as, you know, not being able to introduce their own guests since we've decided to change, you know, a century-old tradition within the House. So I'm wondering if to this government they don't have much value beyond a seat from behind.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I rise on 23 . . . [interjections]

**The Deputy Chair:** Again, please, keep comments through the chair to all members.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I rise on 23(b), again, "speaks to matters other than . . . the question under discussion." He continues to persist with that behaviour, Mr. Chair. I'll try it from a different angle.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** You can't call a point of order during a point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** I'm prepared to speak here. First and foremost, you cannot make a point of order during the course of another point of order.

With regard to the swath of debate and relevance there such, there has been some breadth that has been allowed to all sides of the House, and as such, as I was listening to the comments from Edmonton-Decore at the time, I still believe that they were within the realm of context to the debate on the amendment A3. Going forward, then, on this point of order, I would say that the matter is closed.

If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore would please . . .

9:10 a.m.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I rise on 13(2). Can you explain the ruling, why you're not enforcing 23(b), Mr. Chair?

**The Deputy Chair:** I would mention to the hon. Government House Leader that I believe that I am enforcing the rule that we just referred to. Whether that ruling is something that he agrees with or not, I would say that that ruling has been made. I do consider the matter to be closed.

If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore could please continue at this time.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe we can get through more than maybe a sentence or two here of some of my comments here.

Well, I do know, when speaking to this amendment – again, we've been hoping to hear from members opposite around this amendment, around what their thoughts are. I believe that earlier this evening we saw the Member for Calgary-Falconridge stand to speak to the amendment which was brought forward, and I believe the hon. Transportation minister immediately told him to sit down, told him not to speak and – I don't know – maybe even how to vote.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

### Point of Order Imputing Falsehoods against a Member

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on 23 . . . [interjections] Again, the hon. member, who clearly has no respect for this place, continues to heckle during the point of order. But what's new with the NDP?

I rise on 23(i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." You just watched that member stand in this House and say that the hon. Transportation minister tried to influence somebody's vote or order somebody to do something. He has absolutely no right to be able to say that. He has no evidence of any kind to be able to present to this Chamber. He's disrespecting an hon. member of this Chamber, Mr. Chair.

Now, that's what the NDP do. They're angry. They're angry people. We see it each and every day in here, but that's completely inappropriate. Again, I understand, as they all wave around and get ready for their leadership race with their interim leader that they have in this Chamber and get ready and fight amongst each other and try to posture for the leadership race that's coming, that this is maybe their approach, but they should not impute false motives on the hon. Transportation minister.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. Nobody did such a thing. If the hon. Government House Leader chooses to review the Blues, he will see clear evidence that there was a time where the Member for Calgary-Falconridge stood. He was called upon. There was some back and forth. I'm sure he can review the Blues. I think it was about 3 a.m. or 2 a.m., somewhere around there. Certainly, I appreciate his attempt to call a point of order, but there is no such point of order. It's simply a member restating the events of the evening.

**The Deputy Chair:** I do believe that in this case we have what I would consider to be a disagreement of facts. As such, I will allow the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore to continue. That said, I would ask all members of this House to be cognizant of the level of order and decorum in the House and whether or not their comments may be perceived to push that decorum in a way that may not lead to effective debate within the House. I think, as all of us will agree, our goal is effective debate.

As such, if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore could please continue.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you. Let me conclude with this. I would like to wish you, Mr. Chair, a happy Thursday.

Let's carry on with this debate. Hopefully, we'll see some government members get up to actually speak to it because I know, on this side of the House, that severely limiting that ability to do anything to support their constituents is a disservice to them. I would hope that we will see some comments of any kind, other than, of course, points of order, that will help our constituents understand some of the failings of this bill in certain areas.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, very much for your patience.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has risen to speak on amendment A3 to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to A3, the amendment to the Education Amendment Act, 2019, brought forward by a member from this side of the Chamber. Now, I've been listening to the debate that's been going on around Bill 8 in general and specifically to this amendment, and I have to say that I agree with a lot of what the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford had talked about when he spoke to this a little earlier this morning. He talked about a history of collaboration in this Chamber and about some past experiences where members from opposite sides of the House have brought forward amendments and have been supported in this Chamber by all members of the House. When an amendment makes sense, when it's clearly moving forward with legislation and it's being inclusive and supportive – that's the history that we have in this Chamber. So I'm hoping that, with this amendment, we see that again in this Chamber.

This is too important to our youth and our teachers and our support staff to not support this amendment, which simply states:

- (3.1) A policy and a code of conduct established under subsection (2) must
  - (a) affirm the rights, as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, of each staff member employed by the board and each student enrolled in a school operated by the board, and
  - (b) contain one or more statements that staff members employed by the board and students enrolled in a school operated by the board will not be discriminated against as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to do a little bit of a history lesson when we talk about collaboration in this Chamber and ways that both sides of the House have been able to come together and agree when something has come forward by someone that perhaps isn't government. In Bill 202, the Safe and Inclusive Schools Statutes Amendment Act, 2014, it is written:

The presence of gay-straight alliance groups will reduce the risk of bullying and suicide for all students; and

Whereas other Canadian jurisdictions have recognized the need to enact similar legislation to protect the human rights and dignity of young persons in schools.

Mr. Chair, this was voted in under a Conservative government five years ago. A Conservative government supported this. Now we're at a place where a Conservative government is government, and they want to roll back the legislation that was brought forward, when five years ago this was a motion that was supported by a Conservative government. By having this act amended, as was proposed by a member on this side of the House, I think it would show that this Conservative government is supporting GSAs. We've heard members speak to this, saying that they are supportive, that it's the most comprehensive legislation. I would argue that by supporting this, that we've heard members say is redundant, there's no harm in including this amendment in the legislation the way it's written.

I really hope that all members in the Assembly can come together, like had occurred in 2014, and support this piece of legislation being amended by a member from this side of the House. It speaks to simple human rights that are acknowledged in Alberta and in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that already exist. By including this in the language of Bill 8, it could only clarify, Mr. Chair, what the government is intending to do.

**9:20 a.m.**

I've spoken in this House before about some of my concerns with legislation that's come forward and about power dynamics that are being created while the government is introducing legislation. I see this as another power dynamic, Mr. Chair, knowing that in order to have a student implement a GSA, there's a whole bunch of hurdles that have to be overcome that not every student may be equipped to handle. It's concerning knowing that this was perhaps intentionally structured that way.

When I spoke to this before in the House, on Bill 2, it was talking about livelihoods being on the line, Mr. Chair. Right now, with Bill 8, lives are on the line. We've heard members from this side of the House talk at length about the life-saving supports that a GSA in a school provides to students and the impact that it has on staff as well if they are from the LGBTQ community. Knowing that their rights are also protected is essential. We've heard over and over from teachers and school staff that they simply do not want to be put in a situation that this legislation would create. It's really frightening that the government is wanting to move ahead with this

despite hearing from professionals, from students, from parents, from families, from Albertans about their concerns with moving forward with this.

By accepting this amendment, it would show that there is some agreement on both sides of the Chamber. I think it's essential that the government listen to some of the amendments that are being brought forward by the opposition, not just simply have a mindset that it's just going to be opposed because it was brought forward by a member of the opposition. We've seen where members of all parties can bring forward reasoned amendments and they're supported by the government because it makes sense, and there's evidence to support why this amendment going forward makes sense, Mr. Chair.

When we have been talking about this in the community, I have had people coming forward to me expressing concern about how Bill Hate has been written. They're pleading with members of the opposition and the government to make amendments, if this bill is going forward, to make it better, to actually support GSAs in the schools and not go against human rights and safety of students and teachers.

I had a constituent reach out to me asking not to be named. They wanted to share their story, so I would like to share that. They knew that we were speaking to Bill 8 and that we were proposing amendments that we believe would help support GSAs and all students as well as staff, teachers in the schools. I would like to read it out, Mr. Chair. They start by saying:

I would prefer to not be named . . . if that is okay.

I work for the government, and I always feel very vulnerable acknowledging I am transgendered – at the same time, now more than ever, queer people do need to speak up.

I am transgendered. I grew up in a stoutly catholic family with parents who, like our education minister, had extreme difficulty acknowledging the existence of people who are different (since it's so hard to actually be able to name and say that transgendered and homosexual people actually exist).

The largest and most commonly accepted study of transgendered people to date found that 43% of people like me have attempted suicide.

The same study found that family acceptance lowers suicide attempt rates to the same as the regular population.

Where people's families (like mine) do not accept gender variant people, homosexual people, and people who are different, kids struggle like I did.

A GSA would have made a huge difference in my small town 1990s Barrhead upbringing.

While I might not have come out widely, I also would have been way less likely to have self mutilated as much as I did.

I would have felt better about myself. I would have come to terms with what I am at a younger age and in a much healthier fashion.

Bill 8 is an attack on GSAs.

Bill 8 is an attack on children.

Glibly pretending to struggle to find the words to name LGBT people and then calling them "whatever" instead of even having the respect to acknowledge them as people does not erase their existence.

Doing so also fails to reduce the numbers of LGBT people in Alberta.

That was sent to me, like I said, by a constituent who is terrified about this piece of legislation going forward as it is. This brave person is an adult and talks about suicide and the higher rates that occur in transgender communities. This is something that we can't argue. It's fact, Mr. Chair.

Being in a place of being able to make legislative decisions and knowingly making a decision that is going to put people at risk is simply unacceptable. When we look at the amendment that was

brought forward, it simply makes sense, and hearing that it's redundant is not a reason to not support this reasoned amendment, Mr. Chair. It should be self-explanatory that if it's redundant, there should be absolutely no harm in government members accepting this amendment. If they feel that it's already addressed in their bill as it is, then accept the amendment. I don't believe that that's an argument as to why it shouldn't be supported, saying "because it's already there." It just doesn't make sense to me.

I think that having this clarity in the bill is a small step to showing our youth and our teachers and our school support staff that their rights matter, that their human rights matter, and we're going to ensure that it's put in the legislation to clarify that, because when a student is asking for a GSA, they have the right to do that. They have the right to be safe in their school.

The teachers are asking for clarity around some of this legislation and are afraid that they're going to be put in a position where it's not supported by the board or supported by the principals that are governing the school when a child asks. Knowing that one child comes forward and asks for a GSA and perhaps one teacher supports that decision, that teacher might be up against administration that has no responsibility to move forward with implementing that GSA. It just creates an unrealistic, unfair disadvantage for our children, and I think that having the clarity that this amendment provides is essential and is something that all members should be able to support.

I like that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford went through the legislation and highlighted some of the areas of this bill that we support and that we can get behind and say: you know, this is a great addition to the Education Act. But we've heard loud and clear from members of the LGBTQ community, from allies, from faith leaders, from community members, teachers, support staff, parents, kids that this piece is not okay. It's not acceptable. What we're trying to do is to make it a little bit better.

**9:30 a.m.**

We know that there's been a history of government to date pushing through legislation regardless of evidence that's being provided to show that it might not make sense the way that it's been presented, and perhaps it could be amended. I think this is a great opportunity for that to occur, Mr. Chair, knowing that there is research behind the supportive impacts of having a GSA in the school and knowing that there's an ability to just highlight the protections that already exist under the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It makes sense. Having it clarified in the legislation is a small step forward in being able to move forward with this Bill 8.

I know that teachers across the province have been reaching out to government and expressing concern. They've been reaching out to my office, and I know that they're CCing the Premier, the Education minister, other members pleading for there to be some sort of changes that come forward in Bill 8.

Recently, I've heard from a teacher in my community, Mr. Chair, who felt it upon herself not only as a teacher but as a mom to come forward and express some concerns about many things that this government is doing but, specifically knowing that we are debating Bill Hate and that we're fighting for our LGBTQ youth, felt it important to reach out specifically about this piece. She sent me an e-mail, and she says:

I've been a teacher for almost 10 years. One thing that is supported by both research and my experience, students require their basic needs to be met in order to learn. This includes food, warmth and it definitely includes safety; when students don't feel safe at school, it's not that they don't learn, it's that they can't learn.

Teachers have a responsibility to create a safe space to help students learn to the best of their ability and GSAs help this happen. They let LGBTQ students know that each and every one of them is valuable and deserving of the same acceptance and opportunities as every other student. One teacher can make a difference, but this can be thoroughly undermined by an administration that does not show full support.

I see how many people have contacted [government] about this issue, I see it all around me; can you, the elected representatives, in good conscience ignore these concerns? Can you put this bill forward as is and truly claim it is in everyone's best interests? You claim [you] want to improve students' academic performance, do you understand that this is taking you in the wrong direction?

This government can send a message to every student in this province by making GSAs immediate and automatic; it tells every child, especially LGBTQ students, you are valued, you are accepted, you are safe. Doing anything else is telling them the opposite.

This amendment is doing exactly what my constituent is asking. It's clarifying, enhancing the legislation. On behalf of her and so many others we're pleading with government to accept the amendments that we're introducing to make this bill a little bit better and to make it supportive of GSAs and supportive of our students that are asking for them and supportive of our teachers and all of those employed by the school and the board, to put them in a place where it's clear what the expectations are and what the human rights are.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for those comments on amendment A3.

I would re-remind all other members of the House that we are on A3. As such, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise again to amendment A3. I think it's a very important amendment, as has been discussed by the members on this side of the House. Once again, I would like to hear more comments from the government side. I think it's important to have a fulsome debate on this and hear from more of the government members why they are or aren't supporting this piece of legislation.

Once again, I appreciate the Minister of Education standing up for a few short moments and discussing why they won't be supporting this amendment, but once again I still have the same concerns that I raised earlier and that were raised by the Member for Edmonton-North West, around loopholes that we're seeing. I mean, the minister says that the topic that's brought forward in this amendment is already covered within the legislation. We brought forward some more questions around provisions within the Education Act that exempt or potentially exempt, through regulations, the responsibility within this amendment when it comes to private schools or charter schools. That's definitely a concern.

That was a concern that was there when Bill 24 was introduced, and that's why it extended that legislation to private schools and to charter schools. Once again, there was a conversation that continued on when we were in government, when the NDP was in government, because we had certain school boards that weren't willing to follow the legislation that we put in place. We said that we were going to take action. Of course, with the election turning out the way it did, things changed. Once again, my question to this Education minister is: what are you going to do? If you're going to enforce the legislation that you have before this House, if passed, what are you going to do when these school boards come back to

you and say, "No, we are not going to allow GSAs to be formed"? We had that happening. I would still like some clarification on that answer.

I would like some clarification on how this is redundant when the minister's own legislation leaves a loophole in the fact that school boards will be able to sidestep it, potentially, through regulations. I would also like reassurances that the minister is not going to, in the near future or the future, exempt some of these school boards from having to follow through on their obligation through this legislation and on their obligation through Alberta human rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I just want to touch back on a conversation or an article that I raised earlier that I'm more than happy to table at my earliest convenience, just a quote from it. It says:

While a key piece of Bill 24 is the protection it provides for the privacy of students who are part of a gay-straight alliance at their school, it also spells out specific protections for staff members under Section 45.1, in accordance to [the Alberta] Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and [specifically] extends those protections to private schools.

There are concerns that with the changes that are put forward by this government and by this minister, those protections will no longer be in place. If the minister truly believes in their heart of hearts that this is strong enough protection, then they need to reassure these teachers and these administrators that are concerned that this is, in fact, weakening the legislation, that that's not the case.

**9:40 a.m.**

I want to continue here.

This "works to echo and reinforce – and arguably extend – obligations not to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or other grounds."

That was said by Jessica Eisen, a law professor at the University of Alberta. Jessica also added:

Bill 24... provides alternatives to costly and lengthy Human Rights Act processes...

something, I think, that should be of grave concern to this government. I mean, we already know that there are expensive costs to pushing these to courts, and just like we don't think students should have to go to court to fight for their human rights after the fact that they've been discriminated against, I don't think that the best recourse should be for a teacher to also have to go to court.

Here we have two instances where instead of putting in legislation on the front end protecting both teachers and students from discrimination, the minister is asking them to go to court and go through that lengthy and expensive process. That's very concerning to me. Once again, I really hope that the Education minister, who – I'm happy – took a moment to speak to this amendment, will stand up again and clarify some of these concerns that we have because they are very concerning. Teachers and educators across the province do want to have reassurances that their rights will be respected and that they won't have to go to court to have their rights respected.

I do just want to quickly touch back on correspondence that was received by my office. I believe it was quoted at some length by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Just a short quote here. The constituent said: "We know that some educators are uncomfortable with the word 'gay.' What this means is that these adults are uncomfortable with the idea that gay people exist at all and therefore use their discomfort as a way of making invisible not only the LGBTQ2 population but also their specific concerns around safety and inclusion." I think that's something that's very important as we discuss the gutting of Bill 24 and the introduction of Bill 8, which would replace it.



We as legislators, for the most part, are coming from places of great privilege, so when we stand up and say that teachers didn't have issues before Bill 24 or educators are fine with Bill 8, it's coming from a place of privilege. There are many instances that we've seen, that have been shared by the opposition caucus here, where teachers, whether real or perceived, felt that their rights were infringed upon. I think that as this conversation goes forward, once again the Minister of Education needs to provide clarity that these rights will be protected.

I mean, we heard from the minister that FOIP and PIPA are strong enough protections, but once again we don't want to get to a point where we're fighting in courts an issue that is really just common sense. Don't discriminate against students that want to form a GSA, don't discriminate against students that identify as or are members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community, and don't do it to teachers. There's no need to do it because, you know, we just need to have some more respect for each other, and we can avoid a lot of court costs, the fact is.

Once again, I think that this is a common-sense amendment that has been put forward. I would really be interested to hear why or if the government is supporting it or members of the government caucus will be supporting it. Why or why not? It's been quite quiet on that side of the House other than what happened a few minutes earlier, of course, but I'd be very interested to hear more from the members.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, on A3, the amendment that we are on for Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford standing to speak.

### Chair's Ruling Repetition

**The Deputy Chair:** I would also just take a quick moment and caution members that when quoting from, as an example, correspondence and then later tabling that document or documents, in order to ensure that we have effective debates, to not perhaps read the same quote several times. Once it's in the record, then that portion of debate could be construed as being completed, I guess. I thought I'd make a quick mention of that to make sure we have an effective debate going forward.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, I believe, was looking to speak.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate this opportunity, and I take to heart your caution about reading things more than once into the record, so I shall endeavour to not do that in the time allotted to me right now.

I have had an opportunity to rise and speak to this amendment on a couple of occasions already. Each time I rise, I take a slightly different focus to the amendment and the requests that I have of the government to participate. The first time I rose, it was really around the protection of human rights and my concern about the fact that, you know, we've spent a lot of time as a society establishing and creating human rights as a fundamental part of our national character and the combination of human rights along with our reference to the rule of law and our democratic processes and ensuring that this is a safe and good place for all of its citizens.

I spoke earlier about the fact that those benefits are not widely shared around the world, unfortunately, although I do believe that the arc of history does bend toward justice, as has been commented

on earlier in the House by the Member for Lethbridge-West. I do think we are headed in that direction. Unfortunately, as with most progress, it's not a single vector. It often has movement forward and movement back. As we know with liberty itself, the price of it is eternal vigilance, so that's true about a variety of other aspects of our modern world such as human rights, the rule of law, and democracy.

I'm very proud to be one of a number of people standing up in this House and declaring ourselves prepared to spend a great deal of time protecting the achievements that have been garnered through the efforts of many people in this Chamber over many years, including, as I have mentioned before, not just members of the progressive parties but also of the conservative parties who have introduced some of this legislation into the House.

I appreciate the opportunity that I've had to speak to the question of human rights. The last time that I rose in this House, I used it as an opportunity to congratulate the government, to speak about some of the additions that they have put into this bill that were not present in the 2012 bill that they are referring us back to now and the fact that they clearly had paid attention to the amendments that were made and the construction of the bill and found within things that they could agree with and things that would actually improve the act as it's introduced here in the province of Alberta and as a result have, maybe somewhat accidentally, reached across the floor and shared some common values, similar to the ones that I have mentioned, like the rule of law and human rights, and have used those to make this act better.

I think that this amendment is one that will add to that, that this amendment is a continuation of the good work that can be done when positive suggestions are brought forward by the opposition to help an act reach a higher bar and to achieve something that would not have been achieved if there was a narrow, blinded vision to suggestions from people across the floor merely because they are across the floor.

**9:50 a.m.**

Having had an opportunity to speak to those two issues in my previous times rising during this Committee of the Whole, I would now like to move on to a third area of concern for me related particularly to this amendment, and that is that the objections to this amendment seem to be part of an ongoing pattern by the government over the last number of weeks in that they appear to be choosing to engage in parliamentary procedures resulting in acts that lead to setting up future litigation on the acts themselves, knowing that if they establish something now, those things that they establish will be challenged because we have a history of them being challenged already in our society and have gone through due process both within the parliamentary system and in the courts system, and as a result are essentially preventing the enactment of decisions that have already been made by the Supreme Court, already have been made by members of this House in this Chamber and Chambers across Canada and Houses across Canada, Legislatures, and the House of Commons.

I'm not quite sure why this government is choosing to use future litigation as an alternative to just simply adopting pieces into the act that will clarify and make better the act based on agreements we've already made as a society as to where we would like to be. I notice that this has happened a number of times, that they have simply chosen to plug their ears and blind their eyes to the decisions that have already instructed us into the position that we are in right now in society.

For example, in Bill 9 we know that the Supreme Court has already made judgments on these union activities and collective bargaining, yet in that case they chose to do it anyway, knowing

that there would be future litigation and that eventually their decision here today would be overturned in the future, having wasted a lot of money, having wasted a lot of time, and having wasted a lot of the energies of the government of Alberta and all of its public and civil servants.

This refusal to accept this amendment is similar. It's similar in that we know now that whatever this government chooses to do, ultimately what will reign supreme is the Supreme Court decisions, the Supreme Court decisions that uphold the Charter of Rights. I think if the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is being violated, then obviously this will go through an extended process of years. I remember when Mr. Vriend was fired from The Kings college, The Kings University now. That process took over 10 years to be resolved. For 10 years the province of Alberta was part of a conflictual process that cost this province a considerable amount of money and resulted in serious delays in moving forward with the agenda that we knew would need to move forward anyway.

I'm concerned that in this case we've done the same thing, and they could resolve it today. They could resolve it by adopting an amendment that brings clarity to the acceptance of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They could do that right now. They could do that in a matter of minutes and save this province and save the people affected by this kind of decision, perhaps as in the case of Mr. Vriend, 10 years of litigation and difficulty, which is not something that I think we should be putting our citizens through. Yet here we are in this place where we could stop that right now by adopting this amendment.

I notice this trend again was repeated in this same act when we tried to introduce an amendment that would ensure that GSAs would be set up immediately and that children would not be outed to their parents. The minister at the time stood up and said: we've gone to the Privacy Commissioner, and the Privacy Commissioner said that that will be a violation of privacy laws and regulations and that if that were to happen, then students, typically under the age of 18, minors under the law, could actually challenge the violation of their privacy rights after the fact and take years in the process. We know that appeals to the Privacy Commissioner often take a year or two years in order to get things rectified.

You can't put the genie back in the bottle. Once your privacy has been violated, you can't make it unviolated. You can be proven to be correct by the Privacy Commissioner, but you can't actually fix what went wrong. You can just simply prove that it was wrong so that you would hope that people in the future would be less likely to engage in that kind of behaviour again. It doesn't actually help the individual at all.

Here we are again. In this act we are setting up a circumstance where the government is actually trying to encourage litigation against its own bill, its own act. They're setting up circumstances where the only response that individuals have in order to have their rights reflected and honoured is to actually challenge the government and take on the government at great expense and for the great number of years that it would cost to do that. I don't know why a government would choose to set themselves up for future litigation. That's why I think this amendment is very important. This amendment will help to stop the trend the government has set itself upon. This will stop the government from setting itself up for a course of extended fighting with their own citizens and litigating things we already know the answer to.

We already know how these things will be decided once they get through the processes that the government says are available to people because we have been down that road before in this province. We've set the precedents. We've had the cases. We've had the Vriend case in this province, debated in this Legislature, brought to the courts in this province, and subsequently brought to

the courts in the nation. We've been down that road. As the kids would say: been there; done that. I'm too old to say it myself, so I have to attribute it to younger people.

I think it's really important that we understand what the intention of this amendment is and we understand that this is not a slam against the government. As I've already articulated in previous times that I've risen here in the Chamber overnight, last night, we actually have an underlying agreement here between our sides. We all believe in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Because we have a shared underlying value, it would make sense for us, then, to not set up a fight between us, to not create a circumstance where here we are having to fight this over and over again, having to speak on the same issue all night long, as we have a number of times throughout this Legislature because the government just somehow doesn't want to include things that are being introduced in the Chamber by this side of the House. Yet we know that they've included some of our other amendments that we had put in our bill that were not in the previous 2012 bill. So we know that they can. If they're not trying to somehow save face, or whatever it is they're trying to do, they can hear suggestions and adopt those suggestions. In fact, some of them are adopted almost verbatim from our bill. We know that if they do that, then it improves the bill. They obviously believe it improves the bill. I was able to speak to three different times in the current bill, Bill 8, that reflect the previous act, that we as a government established in this province. So we know they can do that.

*10:00 a.m.*

It's a mystery. It's confusing to us to see that instead of taking the high road of choosing to work in a nonpartisan way, to build a better act, and to avoid future litigation, they are refusing to add a few simple words for clarity, to adopt within this act a specific reference to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. A simple thing to do. It's not like we are asking them to include reference to NDP doctrine or our constitution for our party or something that they might object to. We're asking them to include reference to an act in a bill that they have already acknowledged they agree with.

I would truly like to see the government step up to be the stand-up kind of people that we need and to reflect in their behaviours the long tradition that has been built up in this province and, of course, in western democracies around the world of supporting human rights, the Bill of Rights, labour legislation, all of which have been supported by provincial governments, the federal government, and, of course, the federal courts, the Supreme Court of Canada time and time again. I would be discouraged to sit back and watch, as I did with the Vriend case, the government waste the time and the money for 10 years to resist something that was inevitable. And here they're choosing to do it again.

I'm not sure why they want to go back in time. I'm not sure what was good about the past, so much so that they want to ignore the progress that we've made, that somehow there is this magic era back in our youth or, in the case of some of the members of the House, before they were even born, where somehow things were all perfect and rosy and good, because we know they weren't. We know they weren't because of the hard work that's been done by people like Mr. Vriend, by members of both sides of this House over the last 30 or 40 years to try to achieve a better world, a better world not only for those of us who are here in Alberta but, by virtue of teaching the world, a better world for people all around, reflecting the progress we've made and understanding how to create a society that actually is best for all people, including, of course, those people who are most vulnerable and need the structural protections of the rule of law.

That's all we're asking here. That's what governments do best, create those kinds of structural protections. That's what I'd like to see here in this House today by the simple inclusion of this amendment in the bill, which just identifies something that we all agree on and provides clarity to anyone who may be in doubt of the stance of this particular government, as opposed to previous Conservative governments, and maybe is fearful for themselves, fearful for their employment, fearful for the protection of their sexual orientation rights, and is concerned with the direction of this government.

I'll wrap up my comments and thank the government for listening in advance. I hope and anticipate that they will take the time to support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West rising to speak to amendment A3.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate your time and consideration in regard to this amendment A3. I do want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford once again, who helped to put these issues into context. You know, so often we think that we've progressed to a certain point in our society and with conventional wisdom that says that, yeah, we will accept teachers that might be gay, lesbian, transgendered, and so forth and that we've moved past that sort of overt discrimination that we have seen in the very recent past, but these are only things where you can achieve a sense of equality and justice and fairness through enshrinement in law and in the execution of that law with individual cases. It can be delusional to think: oh, well, conventional wisdom says that we're past all that, and the Vriend case settled the issue around discriminatory practices by employers generally and education institutions specifically, discriminating on one's sexuality.

You know, these are hard-won battles. Without enshrining and allowing these things to gel in our schools, it's so easy to step backwards, to make steps backwards. We saw as recently as January of this year a number of people stepping forward, saying: yeah, I have felt discrimination by my school board around my sexuality, and I've been instructed quietly to make sure to get back into the closet, quite frankly.

You know, I was compelled as Education minister at the time to compel a review of individual employment contracts because these cases were popping up on a much more frequent basis. Since that time, of course, we've had a change of government, and I'd be curious to ask the Education minister: what did you do with those files, right? Are they sitting on your desk? Are there more outstanding cases whereby individuals were compromised because of their sexuality? Is that part of the hiring process that is still being employed in some corners of our province today?

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I did watch with interest and I did collect those contracts and, you know, we reviewed them. I mean, we have to be clear that the vast majority of employers are scrupulous and follow best practices and they're, quite frankly, well within the law. But our job is to ensure that everybody is within the law.

When we bring forward legislation such as Bill 8, which is clearly a step backwards – I've said this before in the House. There's the letter of the law, and this government has argued up and down that they've made practical changes to ensure student safety and so forth, but people know that this is a step backwards. There are some people that may have been held down by what has been happening

with Bill 24 and the letter of the law and the progress that we've made but that will see Bill 8 as an opportunity to return to those regressive practices of discriminating against teachers based on their sexuality and perhaps suppressing and dragging, ragging the puck on forming a GSA and so forth, and they're just waiting for that signal which Bill 8 could give to, you know, head back in time and return to those regressive and discriminatory practices.

You know, I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford as well for just reminding us of how recent some of these hard-won battles are, quite frankly. I got a personal sense of that last September, I think, during the Calgary Pride Parade. The Pride Calgary organization chose to make GSAs in Calgary collectively the parade marshals for that particular parade. It was amazing. I've never seen such enthusiastic participation by the city of Calgary in regard to the Pride Parade or any parade, really. I think there were more than 70,000 people on the streets. As I say, the organizing committee chose GSAs in Calgary to be the collective parade marshals for that event.

*10:10 a.m.*

I was up at the head of the parade with various GSAs, and I noticed as we were moving through the crowd, the throngs of people, tens of thousands, that there were a lot of people that were super emotional, older people that saw the kids coming down the street under the banners of GSAs or QSAs from the schools. I had sort of, Mr. Chair, just, like, an epiphany, a moment of clarity where you can see an insight that you might not have had before. I realized that, you know, so many of these people watching the parade were quite emotional – a lot of people, you can sort of tell if they're feeling tears and feeling emotional – and that they were seeing a new generation of students that were protected by law to be free to join a GSA and a QSA, and that was a protection that was not afforded to those older people in the audience watching these kids come forward.

You know, it's not that long ago when there was overt discrimination and putting people into the closet was the norm and was almost an expectation. Only sometimes by the thin thread of carefully crafted law do we protect people from going back into that regressive situation, going back into the closet, going back into discriminatory practices of employers based on sexuality.

That's why amendment A3 is so important, to reaffirm the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to remind and underline that in this legislation that's before us today. I don't like the legislation that's before us today. I know what happened, right? I mean, I know that it is something that's too clever by half – right? – that this government wanted to move backwards on LGBTQ legislation, on GSAs and QSAs, and they looked for a way by which they could bring it through using some version of the Education Act, that had been sitting on a shelf for years, quite frankly.

I mean, as I said earlier this morning, we took the practical elements of the Education Act and put them into an amendment act a couple of years ago – right? – talking about separate schools' establishment, age of access for kindergarten, trustee code of conduct, and a few other pieces that were good, practical elements of the Education Act that, you know, could be used. I mean, otherwise, Mr. Chair, it's no accident that the Education Act, as it was built, from 2012 sat on the shelf by both the PC government and our former government. It's because it had lots of other problems associated with it.

When you sort of, like I say, take the good bits out of that Education Act and then somehow try to slap a new coat of paint on it and, you know, trot it out as being education reform, I mean, that's simply dishonest, right? We know what happened and where

it was with the Education Act. It sat out rusting in the field for years, and suddenly it's being dragged back here to serve as cover for an attempt to make regressive changes to GSAs and QSAs.

You know, I don't like that, but that being said, I'm a very practical legislator, and I believe that the amendment A3 at least reaffirms some sense of equality and justice to what we are debating here today, and thus I strongly encourage each member here this morning to support amendment A3 as brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I look forward to hearing anyone describe why that shouldn't be so.

Thank you very much for your time, and I appreciate the opportunity to, you know, look for ways by which we can make practical, collaborative deals here on these issues. I believe that that's where the best legislation comes from, when we sort of put our heads together and decide to look for collaboration and look for ways to meet the stated goals of the government and the expectations of the public with progressive legislation.

You know, the word "progressive" doesn't necessarily have to be attached to a particular political party. I don't claim to have exclusive rights or domain over progressive ideas. I mean, good ideas can be used by anybody, quite frankly, and we see that pretty clearly in how we saw other elements of Bill 8 taking pieces from the School Act and from the Education Act. Obviously, people did a lot of work on it. We're talking about this amendment, which is around specific issues around discrimination and so forth, but there are lots of other parts to Bill 8 that are pretty meat-and-potatoes – right? – in terms of building electoral subdivision structures or First Nation service agreements, early childhood services, elections for separate schools, trustee appointments, and so forth. Financial administration to private schools: I mean, that's a very important one, I think. All of these have bubbled up and are some version of maybe what we had before but, obviously, involve some practical thought and consideration.

I'm just suggesting that this amendment that we will bring forward here, that I hope everybody should agree with, is further to that very practical and reasonable side to things as they stand. I certainly welcome, you know, hearing any other views on this issue, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak in this Chamber on matters that are so important, I think. That's the way that we do it right here. You know, it's not like we're looking for ways to take things down.

I guess, you know, my initial reaction as the architect of Bill 24 is that it wasn't easy to get it going. I mean, I knew that by having school boards writing their own safe and caring schools policies, there would be a lot of consternation and a lot of reflection and sometimes difficulty. I know that there were some meetings around the province that got hot in different towns and cities. It was a process by which we literally had hundreds of thousands of Albertans talking about these issues around the kitchen table. It wasn't just like we made some decree from Edmonton and passed it down through the mail and away we go. It was an organic process that created some very, very positive results.

If I could encapsulate my feelings about this now, you know, it's not just words on a page and another law that we passed, but it's moving backwards on literally a movement of understanding and education, not just in our schools but in the whole society. To see anything like that go backwards, I think it's not logical, but I think it also hurts. I think that we all need to consider that with this bill generally and this amendment specifically.

With that, I will take my chair, and I welcome any other comments.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to be able to rise to speak in favour of this amendment put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. It's a very thoughtful amendment and yet another attempt to undo the damage which is being done by this government to the rights of young LGBTQ community members in this province and, in particular, those who are in our schools.

*10:20 a.m.*

Before I get to the amendment, just to sort of review where we are, generally speaking, as members here, I'm sure, are very clear on, we oppose in a very, very definitive and clear and principled way every element, basically, of this bill. The starting point, of course, is that this bill is not about the Education Act, as we have pointed out very clearly. The Education Act, which was drafted by the previous Conservative government in, roughly, about 2012, ultimately included in it a number of difficulties. As a result, when our government was elected in 2015, we did not simply proclaim it because we didn't agree with many elements of it. What we did was that we pulled the pieces out of it which we believed were the best of it, and we amended the School Act on that basis. Then we also subsequently amended the School Act with our Bill 24, which was very much designed specifically to deal effectively with the issues being faced by LGBTQ2S-plus students in our schools across this province.

Then when we had the election, of course, the Premier, or the then Leader of the Opposition, who was running to be Premier, committed to Albertans that he would not, notwithstanding his quite heinous record of attacking members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community over the last 30 years of his political and public career, promised Albertans that he would not legislate on divisive social issues. He did, however, at that time say that what he was going to do was proclaim the Education Act. What we didn't know, though, and what he wasn't honest with Albertans about was that actually he wasn't really going to proclaim the Education Act. He was going to pretend to proclaim the Education Act, but then he was going to amend it to basically ensure that we essentially, with one or two exceptions, maintained the status quo and simply legislated away the protections that our government had put in for the LGBTQ2S-plus community through Bill 24, in effect breaking his promise to Albertans. Essentially, Bill 8 is about legislating on social issues, exactly what that Premier told Albertans he wouldn't do, exactly what he told Albertans they didn't need to worry about.

I remember when we first saw the heinous videos that showed the now Premier talking, bragging about his success at blocking people who were dying from AIDS from seeing their loved ones. You know, it was shocking. But at the time the Premier said: "Oh, my views have changed. Everything has changed. Don't you worry. I may well have done these things in the past, but my views have changed. I understand where Albertans are, and I will not legislate on divisive social issues." Then flash forward to – well, when was this introduced? – sometime in May, I think, so not even two months after the election, and what is he doing? He is legislating on social issues. A broken promise, something that Albertans should think about because that goes to the fundamentals of who a person is.

Anyway, then what does Bill Straight do? Well, it of course removes the obligation for all schools, both public and private, to have safe and caring schools policies in place that specifically speak to the rights of members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community to be protected. They removed that. They have eliminated the ability to enforce the requirement to put these policies in place. They have eliminated the prohibition on outing students who request a GSA. They have eliminated the requirement for principals to give

permission for a GSA immediately upon the request by the student. Of course, they have removed the obligation for private schools to even have GSAs.

Then in the public schools even they have removed the obligation to have a safe and caring schools policy that would protect these kids. Even in the public schools, in certain public schools, we know that the administration, for a variety of reasons, because of relationships with outside bodies, also are opposed to protecting the rights of members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community and are opposed to GSAs. As a result, they may still say: "Oh, yeah. Okay. Well, if someone asks for a GSA, they can have a GSA." But then at the same time they have a series of policies and principles that permeate throughout the school which make it very clear to students that they are not welcome to ask for a GSA.

Then when that is paired, of course, with the decision of the principal to rag the puck, as it were, on the request for the GSA, what has happened is that we then very clearly, systematically, institutionally in a significant number of schools across this province reject the rights and oppress the rights of these LGBTQ2S-plus students. That is what this minister, this Premier, this government is doing. It's a direct attack on the rights of those students.

Now, what this amendment speaks to, though, is another element of that attack. If you are an LGBTQ2S-plus student in the schools and, you know, you've got policies running around the school saying that marriage is a sacrament only between men and women and that our religion rejects homosexuality and you have principals who refuse to answer a child's request for a GSA within, say, eight months, already, of course, you are creating an environment within which that child is very much at risk: at risk of being bullied, at risk of self-harm. I'm not exaggerating. I'm not being hysterical here. I am simply repeating the literature, the research, the lived experiences of people.

So if that's your context, then imagine that you have a teacher to whom many of these students look for safety, for security, for acceptance, who is perhaps a role model to them. That teacher is then fired or that teacher is pushed out because that teacher has now somehow done something which the administration or the board does not approve of. In particular, that teacher has lived an out gay or transgendered lifestyle outside of the school, so the board or the principal decides that that teacher is no longer someone that should be employed there.

I want to talk about what the impact of that is on both people here. There's been a lot of talk about the rights of these teachers, the rights of these humans to have fair and equal employment, and that's very important. Of course, people have talked already about the Vriend decision. People have talked about the Trinity Western decision notwithstanding that the Premier's good friend and ally John Carpay, Mr. Pride Flag Equals the Swastika – excellent friends to keep company with, I must say – is fighting very hard against the Trinity Western decision. We know that after many, many years the courts will ultimately reach the conclusion that that kind of discrimination is wrong. We've talked about that, but it still undermines the rights of those people if, as a matter of course, they have to assume that they're going to have to go somewhere between six and 36 months to have their rights protected.

To be quite honest, the process of being fired or demoted or disciplined or pushed out and then having to file a complaint with the human rights code and then potentially having to protect that win at the human rights tribunal in the courts and then potentially having to have it go to another court, that in and of itself is a traumatizing experience. People invariably lose income as a result of that. They also lose employment security as a result of that. They lose financial security as a result of that. They have tremendous

chaos in their lives as a result of that. They may, almost definitely will, 36 months later win the case, but they have suffered, and a lesson has been taught to their colleagues in the staff room who may also be members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community: "Don't do this. You don't want to do this. It's too much work. It's too hard on your life. Don't do this. Just let us quietly discriminate the heck out of you. Just let us discriminate against you, and suck it up." That is what happens if there is no direct mechanism to stop school boards from engaging in this heinous practice.

*10:30 a.m.*

As the former Minister of Education, our whip and the MLA for Edmonton-North West, pointed out, we know that there are examples of this throughout the province. As recently as less than a year ago he was involved in examining these kinds of contracts and hearing from teachers who were experiencing these kinds of discriminatory actions. Sometimes it's overt, and sometimes it's subtle. Let me be clear. I mean, I don't have to have the former Minister of Education walk me through the examples. I can also speak to the direct evidence that I have received from many friends and acquaintances who are teachers in Catholic schools.

I remember speaking to a principal of a Catholic school in Calgary who was in a 25-, 30-year-long loving relationship with his partner, who, by the way, was an exceptionally well-respected business and intellectual leader in the community of Calgary. He talked about how he could not have a picture of himself and his 25-, 30-year partner in his office at the school. He could not have a picture of himself and his husband at school because it would be looked down upon by the board and by the people to whom he answered at the Catholic school board in Calgary. This is just someone who was a random person at a dinner party. You know, I didn't ask to have this conversation. It wasn't sort of the issue at the time. He just told me the story. This is a very, very successful person. That was just the reality that he experienced. He knew what the expectations were.

You know, that's that experience. I've heard that description from long-time friends of mine who have worked in schools. They have just rolled their eyes at the idea that you would ever as a teacher in certain public schools, primarily Catholic schools, be out about being in a loving relationship with a person of the same gender.

I also remember, of course, the case of Jan Buterman. I was elected in 2008. It was only within six to 12 months that Jan came to my office to talk about the fact that he had been dismissed from employment at the St. Albert Catholic school board. This was before Jan had transitioned. I met him with I believe it was his daughter. We talked about what this had done to his life, being fired, that openly telling his students that he was about to embark upon the process of transitioning was a breach of the rules, of what the Catholic school board expected of its employees, and therefore they were going to fire him. They did fire him, and he fought that for years before it was ultimately resolved. I remember meeting with him in the middle of that process, and I can tell you that it took an incredible toll on him. It took an incredible toll on his family. His rights were clearly – clearly – breached as a result of that.

Now, the Minister of Education will say: we don't need this in the Education Act because the law already protects them. What I am describing right now is stuff that is happening right now under the law that the minister thinks is adequate. It's not. It's happening. Just be very clear. It's happening. You know it's happening. The law is not adequate. That's why we are proposing this change. That's exactly why we are proposing this change, to ensure that there are multiple mechanisms through which people can be protected.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

So we've talked a bit about, you know, what happened. We've heard lots about what happened in the Vriend decision and what happened to Mr. Vriend many, many, many years ago and how that made him suffer. We've heard a little bit about Jan Buterman. That happened in about 2009 under the current regime, that the minister claims actually protects people but doesn't. We've heard an example about people who haven't actually filed claims to protect themselves who simply live a discriminated-against life. They live their life with subtle forms of discrimination that they internalize, and they just live, because it's okay under the current regime. We have a very narrow set of mechanisms through which this form of subtle but pervasive discrimination can be challenged, and the Minister of Education wants to keep it that way.

I want to talk as well for a moment not just about what that does to the teachers. That's what I've been doing right now, talking about the implication and the impact on the teachers who are pervasively discriminated against each and every day under the watch and with the apparent endorsement of the Minister of Education. I also want to talk about what it does, again, to the students. As you know, teachers, particularly teachers in high school, have a class of anywhere between 25 and 40 students, and every kid knows their teacher. They might not like their teacher, but they play a critical role in their life, and many kids, of course, very much do like and respect their teachers. That's the way it should be.

They play a critical role in the development not only intellectually and generally academically but also socially and psychologically, the development of kids who are between the ages of 15 and 18. Imagine the profoundly negative, painful consequences to a kid who is struggling with being a member of the LGBTQ2S-plus community watching a teacher who they perceive to be in control, who they perceive to be someone who has played by the rules and is someone that they should respect and listen to and who they perceive to be, in some cases, a lifeline as they go through their own challenges, watching that teacher being systematically discriminated against within the school in which they teach. Every day that that happens, 30 kids learn that it's okay to pervasively discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. We teach it. By modelling it, we teach it.

This is critical. I'm here to talk about the rights of teachers, but I'm also here to talk about the next generation. We cannot model discrimination for kids in our schools, but by allowing the pervasive, systemic discrimination that exists against teachers in certain public and many private schools in this province, that is exactly what we will do. That is why we absolutely must accept this amendment, because what this amendment does is give the Minister of Education extra authority to ensure that that kind of pervasive, systemic discrimination – subtle and overt, both types – against teachers who are members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community can be stopped. It must be stopped because by not stopping it, we teach thousands of kids every day that discrimination is okay, and it's not.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to A3?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:40 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Feehan	Nielsen
Eggen	Goehring	Notley

Against the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Sawhney
Copping	Loewen	Schulz
Ellis	Long	Shandro
Fir	McIver	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glubish	Nally	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Turton
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Hunter	Pon	Wilson
Issik	Reid	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 6	Against – 30
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We will move back to Bill 8 proper. Are there any members looking to speak to Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, whether that be questions, comments, or amendments? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I know that you know that I just want to speak on some of the other parts of the education act, Bill 8, because, of course, we've given quite exhaustive consideration to the gay-straight alliance part of this bill. But there are other bits as well. I just wanted to perhaps highlight some of those and provide some constructive criticism. I know that there are different elements of the 2012 Education Act that had been revised or, as I said, that I had included in an amendment act to the School Act a couple of years ago, and then some small changes that the government made here today.

I just wanted to start with the age of access element to this bill. You know, the Education Act was taken off the shelf from 2012. The government here today has chosen to change that part of the age of access quite dramatically from the Education Act.

Just a little bit by way of review. I mean, I know that elements of developing the Education Act were in motion back when I was still teaching even, Mr. Chair. You know, it was a very ambitious project that I believe the minister of the day, Dave Hancock, embarked on with Inspiring Education. It was very ambitious, and it garnered a lot of interest amongst teachers because it tried to look at learning a bit differently. There were some, I think, creative and progressive elements to Inspiring Education. It's funny and it's deeply ironic, too, because some of the bits actually did come through to some degree like, for example, discovery math – right? I never really liked that very much at all. I wasn't a math teacher, but I had kids in school and I knew from when they were in early elementary that they weren't learning math with the expectations that I had. You know, we had to get extra lessons to learn math. The Progressive Conservative government started on a pretty interesting and ambitious journey with Inspiring Ed, and all we ended up with was discovery math, which kind of was a crash and burn thing.

I tried to help to fix some of the elements of mathematics teaching here in the province of Alberta with curriculum – right? – putting a greater emphasis on basic skills in early grades, putting some pretty strict elements of what the learning expectations were at each grade level, reintroducing written portions of the mathematics tests in grade 6 and grade 9, which I think was a good idea as well. I know this current government took that and ran with it in a very distorted way, suggesting that the sky was falling. You know, all it was was a reflection of where kids were in terms of written math in grade 9

in a certain year and at certain time. I knew that it would be a difficult result, but it was part of the way by which we could change some learning so that kids could pick up different skills, including no-calculator portions to the exam. I did the same thing with the grade 6 exam two years before, and the first-year results of a no-calculator, written portion of the exam were challenging at best, right? By golly, the next year the results were good because people changed their teaching and the expectation was there, and the same thing will happen with grade 9 results as well.

Anyway, my point is that, you know, you make changes, and this Education Act was sort of a product of those changes, but you have to make sure that you are analyzing the utility of those changes every step of the way and not just bringing things in for the sake of change. Sometimes it can be damaging – right? – as I said, with some of the elements of the math curriculum.

**10:50 a.m.**

I hope that the government sees fit to look past the political grandstanding that they engaged in, indulged in, during this last election in regard to curriculum. We built an excellent K to 4 curriculum prototype for students, and it's all ready to go and needs to be field tested. By not doing that, we are sitting behind. If this government talks about wanting to engage in education reform, there's a good place to start: an excellent curriculum development program, that has been recognized almost universally as an excellent K to 4 prototype, just sitting there, waiting for this government to start field testing. I encourage them to do so.

Anyway, the age of access element to this bill. It's interesting that they, the government, went back to the School Act, basically, because the 2012 Education Act talked about 21 years of age as a number for students to be able to access education. I know, again, being minister, that this is ambitious and super expensive. I think the government, this present government, recognized that, too. But, I mean, I think I would like to make the point here, Mr. Chair, this morning that it is very important to think of creative ways by which we can be flexible with the access to K to 12 education for our general population because we have challenging completion rates, lower than many other provinces around the country. There are many different reasons for that, but I think one of them is some inflexibility around students being able to access their grade 12 education after the conventional three years of learning that we provide in a high school.

I know that many school boards have built outreach schools, storefront schools, and lots of different options because they recognize the need. But I think it's incumbent upon this provincial Legislature to offer more support and more flexibility around students being able to access and complete their high school diploma after they, maybe, are outside of that window of normal, regular attendance at a high school.

One of the issues or one of the avenues that I was pursuing – and I am happy for people to steal good ideas; here's a good one right now – is to look for ways by which postsecondary institutions can offer diploma equivalency courses at a much more affordable price. Currently, taking any individual class for math 30 or, let's say, English 30 or so forth is, I believe, around \$500 per course. That is a barrier for many students to go back and finish their diploma, that cost. Using existing postsecondary institutions to offer more choice and availability for high school completion I think is really a good idea. I would certainly encourage the Minister of Education to collaborate with the minister of postsecondary education, who is, I know, thinking about this very hard right now, to look for more creative ways by which we can have math 30 or English 30 or bio and so forth in our colleges around the province.

I think it would be a good shot in the arm for postsecondary institutions as well, especially ones in smaller areas or colleges like Portage or Lakeland and so forth to have more space and opportunity for kids to pick up high school equivalency courses. I was kind of actively pursuing that before the last election, and that would be so cool if this government would consider pursuing that. We all know that if someone can complete within five years, then they will carry on and probably go to a postsecondary institution and carry on with their lives. If they don't, then often they will be socioeconomically disadvantaged, and that will be a pattern that will continue for a long time, if not for that individual's entire working life.

Again, another advantage of opening the postsecondary institutions to high school equivalency is that it gets somebody's foot in the door so that they might go to a college like Lakeland or Portage and finish their high school and then say, "Hey, I like it here," and maybe go and take some college courses and sign up and get an advanced degree over time. Yeah. I mean, that is the age of access part of this bill.

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** A point of order has been called by the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

#### **Point of Order Relevance**

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much. With all due respect, I certainly appreciate the comments that are being made by the member opposite. However, I rise under, you know, 23(b)(i), "the question under discussion." I also appreciate, Mr. Chair, that you do give great latitude in these types of discussions, but we're talking about the Education Act itself. I was continuing to hear comments regarding postsecondary, age of access, and really something that is what I would consider to be beyond that of the scope of the Education Act, which affects children, obviously, in elementary, junior high, and high school. I would ask under relevance that the member stay on the bill itself.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I am prepared to rule. I don't believe that this is a point of order, but I do believe that this is an opportunity to restate to all hon. members of this House that if they would ensure, for the purposes of order and decorum, that debate continues in an effective and efficient manner, that they continue to keep their comments focused on Bill 8, which is currently under consideration. With that said, I consider the matter to be closed.

If the hon. member so chooses to continue, the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Eggen:** Sure. No. That's great. Thank you for those wise words, Mr. Chair. Certainly, it's important for us to stay focused on the issues of the day, which currently is Bill 8.

An important element of Bill 8, just to reiterate then, is the age of access part of this bill, which, again, in this current form that we're debating right now, is younger than 19 as of September 1. Okay? Of course, boards have discretion to be able to allow student access past that, but it costs a lot of money. I remember running the Education Act through back in 2015-2016 as minister. When I met with boards – I think I managed to meet them all, maybe except for one – they always brought up the age of access as being a

problematic element to the Education Act because (a) it costs a lot of money, and then (b) they were concerned about kids older than 18 or 19 or even up to 21 in the same institution as 15-year-old kids or 14-year-old kids.

You know, these were issues that were ongoing. Just by way of perspective, number one, it costs a lot of money; number two, boards have to be ready to accommodate. That's just something to think about. But again, age of access is super important because of the arguments that I just have stated previously.

Another element to Bill 8 is the age of entry. The other end of the school system, Mr. Chair, which, of course, is when kids are entering kindergarten, right? Again, the only change that I can see here, and maybe the minister can help me with my analysis, but it seems like the only change from the School Act is that the age of entry is being enshrined as a regulation rather than being part of the actual bill. I'm not exactly sure why that's the case, that change they made, and perhaps the minister can help me by letting me know why they did that.

**11:00 a.m.**

Another element – I guess I'm just looking for highlights of changes that Bill 8 does have, other than, of course, the GSA element, that we've talked about quite a lot – is in regard to charter schools. You know, the criteria that we use for charter schools I think is something that I reflected a lot on as minister. I certainly appreciated the value of the 14 charter schools, I think, that we have out in the province right now. As minister I did support those schools fully financially as well as, you know, changing some of them. Their charters, I think, needed to be extended, like for Westmount Charter in Calgary. I did extend that one. I did change the scope of the Suzuki Charter School here in Edmonton for them to start offering higher grades. I know I worked a lot with Foundations for the Future in Calgary to help them to get a new facility and so forth. So, certainly, I worked closely with charter schools. I changed some with Aurora school as well. I think I changed their enrolment numbers to allow them to expand.

You know, working with them, I appreciated the work that they did, but it also made me think, Mr. Chair, that there was a good chance to take a pause and for reflection and to remind charter schools of their reason for existence in the first place, which was to provide innovation and to provide innovation that can be integrated through dialogue and active work with public and separate school boards.

Again, the changes that Bill 8 does make around evaluating charter schools and so forth: I would suggest that perhaps in the regulations around establishment criteria and so forth and the evaluation of extending charters, changing their caps, and all that kind of thing, there's specific criteria built into that that restates and reminds the charter schools of their reason for existence in the first place – right? – which is to provide innovation and provide demonstrable interaction and collaboration with school boards in the province. You know, I think that that would be a useful element to this charter school part to Bill 8. That would be something that could be worked into regulation and policy as well.

I see that Bill 8 does include the trustee code of conduct. I think that there was a lot of talk about this when I had my interactions with school boards around the province. The one element of this that I think we all need to take pause on – and, you know, I think it's a critical flaw in this Bill 8, that we're debating today – is the ability to disqualify a trustee from a board. I think it's an incorrect addition to this trustee code. School board trustees are democratically elected members, so I think that this idea of a board having the capacity and the power to kick a trustee off a board

defies the democratic foundation of how trustees are selected in the first place, right?

I know that it would never happen to me, of course, but can you imagine the rest of you deciding to vote an MLA out of the Chamber? This would be, you know, just unthinkable, right? I think that we should use that thought experiment to realize that the recall or the disqualification of a trustee by other trustees is not acceptable. I think we need to look at that critically, and that's what we're here to do, which is great.

I noticed that the establishment of electoral subdivisions is in here. There are a whole number of things that I think needed to get cleaned up around these issues. Of course, the establishment of new Catholic school boards was one that the separate school district establishes, and I did work really hard on this and brought it in as a part of the amendments to the School Act a couple of years ago. You know, we managed to work hard, and I know the minister was part of that work, and I thank her for that very much.

You know, this is something, again, that needed to be cleaned up, for sure, and it's often a source of controversy, so I think that we really did, through those amending negotiations, build something that's better. To see that being moved over into this Bill 8, the Education Act, I'm really happy about that. I'm glad that that is here today.

Transportation is something, again, that I know is an ongoing challenge. Probably as the new minister knows, you get lots of calls and so forth around transportation. The Education Act, as I see it here, this Bill 8 that's being brought forward, talks in a section about how the board and the parent enter into agreements if the parent is transporting the student, and then the minister may direct boards to co-operate around that. I mean, I think that is something that needs to be pursued more strongly. I just started that process of compelling boards to co-operate with each other, and it's kind of in its infancy.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate being recognized here and being able to get up and start talking again on the main bill, Bill 8. It's unfortunate that we weren't able to clarify some language, which is kind of ironic considering that we're talking about the Education Act. You probably want to have language that's as clear and concise as possible, so it was unfortunate that we weren't able to clean some of that up.

The last time we were speaking on the main bill, I remember listening quite intently to a few of the different members – the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre – and listening to some of their comments. I want to just quickly talk about and address some of the comments that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud had mentioned. As I said before, history is a big thing, and when people have participated in that history who were actually there, actually doing the work, seeing what was going on, trying to argue differently tends to be a little futile.

I do remember that back in my days at my old employer, when we would enter bargaining, one of the members that sat with me on that bargaining committee had the history of being in bargaining for the last seven or eight times before that. So it was always interesting listening to the company come and say: "Well, no, no. This is what happened." You know, my colleague would say: "Well, actually, no. That's not the case. This is what happened."

With the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's experience working on the Education Act, we've been able to get some very,



very clear, concise details about what was going on at the time, what was being thought. So when I look at this, the fact that it was first introduced seven years ago, I mean, my gosh, Mr. Chair, again, just referring back to my bargaining days, I couldn't even imagine bargaining a contract for a seven-year length. There's just no way you could see what would be happening seven years into the future. Sure, you can make some, you know, predictions. If you rub that crystal ball hard enough, maybe you might see a few things.

*11:10 a.m.*

So when I look at a bill that is seven years old and the consultations that took place with that being as much as even a decade old, bringing that information three years even further back, I think that for us to just all of a sudden kind of decide to bring in some of that information without checking first is almost a little bit reckless, to be honest.

When I look at some of these things – I know the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud drew my attention around dispute resolution. As we know, most school boards already have dispute resolution in place. So I'm wondering: maybe somebody from the government side might want to get up and speak to this a little bit, clarify things, or maybe the Education minister will want to do this. Is there a need to standardize that process right across the province? I ask that because when I've seen some other bills that we've debated and maybe some suggestions around standardization, there's been a little bit of push-back, saying: "Well, what about the local autonomy? What about the local issues that are going on and their needs and how things are going on in those areas?" And then here we are trying to standardize things, I think, across the province. A little bit confusing there, so I wouldn't mind maybe a chance for somebody to explain what the purpose is, why the need for the standardization. I mean, I don't necessarily have a problem with it, but if it's going to create problems for these local school boards, I think we need to know how they're going to be able to manage those things.

The other thing that I know the member drew my attention to was around the voting of trustees and how, you know, one minute you could be voting for a Catholic trustee, and then maybe the next year you're voting for a public trustee. My gosh, talk about confusion. Quite honestly, it almost even sounds a little bit like some red tape. From the sense that I get from that, it's almost equivalent to us here in Alberta maybe voting for another MLA outside of the province, which is, I think, ridiculous. I think this is potentially trying to open up maybe a can of worms that I don't think we necessarily should be opening. You know, if you're participating in the public system, you vote for the public trustee. If you're participating in the Catholic system, you vote for the Catholic trustee and so forth. I think that mixing it up is going to create a lot of problems. We have seen some other legislation potentially starting to intermix things. I don't know if that's an intent or maybe again just not quite seeing what the problems were.

That brings me now to some of the comments that I heard the last time we were on the main bill here, with the Member for Edmonton-City Centre speaking to that local reverend in his local community about the impacts that were going on around GSAs and about what we need to do as legislators and maybe as a society as a whole and how we need to be more inclusive, need to be more understanding, need to be more accepting in our positions.

It got me thinking about a story that I heard from one of my local pastors in Edmonton-Decore. You would love this guy, Mr. Chair. He's quite the character. He has had some very, very real-world experiences with somebody that was close to him in his younger days that he ended up finding out was gay. I mean, the impacts of that – the story, quite frankly, brought tears to my eyes. He was

initially telling it in sort of a third person, and it was about three-quarters of the way through that we started to understand that he was the other participant in there.

I just can't help but start to think about, you know: "How many stories do we need to hear? How many instances do we need to hear about? How many protests do we need to see out front before we start to question whether we're heading down the right direction?" I find myself struggling with it. Are we heading down this route because we have some small group that we're owing to, donors that we're owing to? I can't shake that feeling, Mr. Chair, that we're doing this simply to pander to that group at the expense, literally, of a minority group of individuals who the only thing they're guilty of is loving who they want to love. I think it's incredibly sad if that is indeed the direction that we're going.

Maybe once this session has ended and we all get a chance to get back to our constituencies, we need to take a really, really hard look deep down inside of each one of us and make sure that we're here for the right reasons, that we're here to serve all Albertans. I'll be the first one to say, Mr. Chair, that I don't always agree with some of my constituents, and I'm sure that they don't always agree with me, but we are able to have that conversation in a respectful way. At the end of the day, I think we can all agree that nobody wants to put somebody at risk.

We've already seen multiple, multiple examples: you know, the Leader of the Official Opposition telling the story earlier that wasn't even solicited. I think every single member of the opposition has risen in this House showing statistics, showing stories, showing e-mails, their own personal experiences before being elected officials here. Again I just have to ask: how much more evidence do we need before we finally take a step back, pause, and rethink, maybe, what we're doing? Again, I just always have to ask: how many is it going to take? Hoping that schools are expected to follow the policy sounds like a whole lot of dice-rolling. We're hoping that every single school in this province will follow the rules. I mean, you know, I would love to see that.

I remember I think it was a *W5* news story or something. They had set up a fridge with a defect on purpose, and they'd brought in repairmen to look at that fridge to see if they would be honest, up front. Some were, and that's fantastic. Unfortunately, there is always one or two – they came in and tried to oversell them and tried to fix things that weren't broken. I look at this with the hope that all schools will follow the rules. I think we would be safer to make sure that they follow the rules, which would mean not changing what we currently have in terms of the language around GSAs, which is contained in Bill 24. As I've always said, Mr. Chair, language is everything. You change one little word; you change the whole sentence.

One minute I'm hearing: you know, we'll have the strongest protections in the country. Then it was: well, we're among the strongest. Instead of being mediocre or average, why don't we just be the best? That is what we have right now. We have the best language. There's no need to change it unless – again, I can't shake that feeling that we're pandering to a small group that maybe we're beholden to. Maybe they were donors. I don't know. I wish I could shake this feeling, but I just can't.

*11:20 a.m.*

I've also heard some rationale: well, you know, if by some chance, then the privacy laws will protect. The problem is that it's after the fact. It's after the damage is done. It's after the youth has been outed before they're ready. I've just seen too many things and heard too many stories for us to take that risk and jeopardize those youth, whether it be to get kicked out, ostracized, bullied, whatever the case.

If we're really true to what we're trying to stand for in here, where every child matters, every single one, we cannot take the risk by just hoping that the safety net of privacy laws to protect students will catch them. Then to expect them to have to go through a lengthy procedure in terms of legal considerations and everything like that: now we're just exacerbating the problem because they didn't want to be outed or come out yet at that moment in time, and now we're starting to make an even bigger deal of it. It's just the wrong direction to go with this.

So my hope is that the government members will take a step back here and say to themselves: are we indeed putting somebody at risk? And if you get to that point, then you come to the conclusion of: we just can't take that risk. Then again, I'll start asking the question: if we're ready to go down that road, if we're ready to take that risk, how many will be too many? Will it be one student? Will it be 10 students? Will it be one teacher? Will it be 10 teachers? At what point do we decide: "Okay. This has gone too far. It's gotten out of hand. We have to stop it"? What is an acceptable price to pay? I think that on this side of the House we've been very, very clear that the acceptable price to pay is zero, none, no students, no teachers.

You know, when I visited my GSAs, the things that we discussed during my visit there, as I said, Mr. Chair, surprised me. I was not expecting that. I was expecting maybe some discussions around hardships that the students were having, maybe some concerns that they were having at home, or maybe even discussions that they were contemplating informing people around their sexual orientation. What I found was that we talked about what was appropriate to put on pizza. We talked about what was appropriate music to be listening to. Apparently, I'm out of step. I know I love my '80s music, but some of the youth there thought that that was just a little bit too far back and that I should probably update my playlist a little bit. We talked about who their favourite teachers were, what their favourite class was, and even about some of the projects that they were working on in some of those classes. This narrative that has been put out into the public about them being some kind of crazy, driven sex club or something like that: nothing could be more wrong than that.

We've seen our students protest around why these GSAs are so important. Do you know what I also noticed, Mr. Chair? It wasn't just some of the students that belonged to the GSA; it was also some of their friends that support them. Now, not only do we have students partaking in these GSAs to find a safe place where they can just be themselves, but they do have a lot of friends that support them greatly, and even they were out on the street. I was, you know, absolutely in awe finding out, when I went to one of my school graduations, that a few students at the grade 6 level also went out and protested. I mean, at grade 6 they know how important these things are and how they need to support their classmates so that they feel included, so they feel safe, so they feel like they're part of the group.

Again, how long do we go on ignoring this? I mean, I think that to us on this side of the House it's so blatantly obvious. I guess that sometimes I wish – you know, 21st century – that I could just maybe plug somebody's brain into the back of mine, and after a few seconds they'd be able to go: oh, I get it; oh, that's why. We have to take a step back on this around our GSAs because we are simply heading down a road where, if we don't change direction now, we are going to create harm. And then it's after the fact; the harm is done at that point. I'm personally not willing to take that risk. I doubt that any of my colleagues here on this side of the House are willing to take that risk. Zero. I've mentioned before that the Education minister very proudly wore that pin, so we need to take that to heart. I think our walk needs to look like our talk. We simply can't put one at risk.

History has told us – again, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud very eloquently talked about how we got to this point. I think we have outdated language. Like the Member for Edmonton-North West and . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any members looking to speak to Bill 8? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has risen.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to the main bill, Bill Hate, and I would just like to give an affirmation to my colleague and Member for Edmonton-Decore: you are loved and accepted despite your '80s playlist. Having those conversations in the GSAs is wonderful, talking about what the kids enjoy, what they're listening to. I can relate to you, hon. member, in the sense that my playlist has a lot of '80s music. There are a lot of great conversations that come from talking about music. When you're . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Through the chair, I wouldn't mind, hon. member.

**Ms Goehring:** I apologize, Mr. Chair.

Yeah, I think that talking about some other conversations that happen in a GSA is great. I wonder how many members across the floor here have actually sat in the GSAs in their communities and talked with the kids and learned about what's going on in the GSAs. Something as fun as debating music and talking about playlists, as innocent as that, occurs. I would encourage all members across the House to sit down with these groups in their GSAs and chat with the kids about why it's so important and what some of the fun things are that they're doing as kids.

Most of my career I spent working with youth. You know, they challenge our beliefs and our values as adults and can provide a lot of insight into kind of a world view that's maybe a little bit more progressive than what we had when we were youths. It's very refreshing to hear from youth about what matters to them and why it's important. As a grown-up, as a legislator in this very Chamber, to be able to have those experiences is something that I'm very, very grateful for. It means a lot to me when I can sit down with people and talk about their stories and hear the impacts that their support people in their life have on them and hearing about what's working for them as youth and what's not working.

Regarding Bill 8, the general bill, there's been a lot of discussion around the GSAs, but like the Member for Edmonton-North West reminded us this morning, there's more in this piece of legislation that's being brought forward that causes concern, Mr. Chair.

**11:30 a.m.**

One of those concerns is the trustee code of conduct and recall. It outlines that the trustee code of conduct would provide definitions of breaches and provide for sanctions, including the ability to disqualify a trustee from the board. That's concerning, Mr. Chair. As an elected official I believe that the electors should be able to make that decision when they are no longer supporting that person that they had elected. It concerns me that a trustee could come out against the general group of other trustees and be fired for having an opinion that's different from everybody. That creates an environment where you are simply agreeing because you're fearful of the position that you were elected to do. At any point, as an elected official, if I'm fearful of consequence, I'm not able to speak freely.

That's exactly what this Chamber represents. We should have the ability to stand up and speak what we believe and what has been shared with us through our constituents. I stand in this Chamber expressing concerns, asking questions from people that I represent

in Edmonton-Castle Downs and across the province as the Official Opposition liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces as well as the culture critic. I should be able to ask questions of government and not have the same opinion. That's one thing that makes democracy incredible, that there are various opinions and various forms of expressing those. Having the ability to be fired by the trustees, the board, is concerning as an elected official. I think that this is something that could have more discussion going forward.

Another piece of this legislation that is a little bit concerning is no boards for private schools. Not having a board to review spending, best practices, review decisions or disputes between parents and staff is confusing to me. I know that as a parent I would like an opportunity to be able to solve any sort of dispute in an objective, well-detailed manner. By taking that away from a parent, I think it creates some level of conflict and some uncertainty in parents' rights and what their ability to express concerns is.

While I am personally appreciative of the great relationship that I have with the trustees in Edmonton-Castle Downs, I know that it's because of that relationship that things get resolved. There is a voice for parents at the table when there's a concern within the school. Through my office parents can come to me, and I immediately reach out to the school trustee to help build that relationship so that they have a voice within the school their child attends. I think that removing that is a concern. Fortunately, when you have that third party involved, it can be successful. It's someone who's impartial, someone who is not on the side of the school or not on the side of the parents. They're someone that can come in and help facilitate a conversation and often successfully resolve it in a positive way.

I'm curious how families under this piece of legislation would find support to mediate their children's education or access to supports. I know that early in my career I worked with the city of Edmonton under a pilot project with the mediation program in the school board. I was able to work with students and with parents as well as school administration to help mediate conflict within the school. While I wasn't a trustee, there was a specific project that had taken place to help facilitate that communication. It's essential that if there's a dispute, you have a way to get it resolved.

As a mediator my job was to be impartial and to listen to all sides and have those involved come up with a solution that worked for everybody. It's successful when you have people come to the table, but when you take away that opportunity, I'm concerned what's going to happen, Mr. Chair. I know that it could result in some parents and children feeling unheard, not feeling supported. Not having that extra avenue of support is concerning. They might not feel that they have a voice. They might not have a way – well, they won't have a way to resolve conflict if there's a conflict between a parent and the administration of the school. There isn't that impartial person that is there for them to be their voice.

I've talked a little bit about another concern, Mr. Chair, under this bill. It talks about the removal of the director under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, taking out the term "director" and changing it to "child intervention worker." We know that CYFEA has the director clearly defined under that act, under what it means. To remove that from this act and replace it with a term that isn't even in CYFEA: it is unclear what the intention of doing that is. I know, as someone who came from child intervention and worked under that, I had a lot of different responsibilities, if you will. The director of Children's Services, then, would give us delegation, depending on our role, and they would decide what our responsibilities were. Removing the term "director" and putting in a term that doesn't even exist is not providing any clarity. It's confusing what the intention of doing this is. The question is whether it's going to be putting more work on the front line.

I know as a front-line worker that there's a lot that's expected of workers in Children's Services. They carry a lot of responsibility, and to add more onto them without a clear, supported piece of legislation is confusing. It seems to be that it could be perhaps increasing red tape. When we're looking at this legislation and what the intention is, it could also be perhaps as a consequence, without intention, downloading more responsibility onto workers. That's a bit concerning. When I was involved with the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, we heard loud and clear from front-line workers that they have a lot of responsibilities on their plate. Looking at caseload pressures was something that needed to happen. When a decision like this is being made, to change what might seem simple wording, there is an unintended consequence of that. I'm just concerned that perhaps that wasn't the intention, but that's what might happen if that change occurs.

Talking a little bit more about Bill 8 and the GSAs, I mean, I can't say it enough how concerning it is that this introduced legislation is going to roll back the clock on protections for our GSAs and our young people. It's very concerning, Mr. Chair. We can't as government ignore the pleas from our teachers, from our students about what this piece of legislation is going to do. We've been asked to just leave it alone. When we formed government and did Bill 24, we were able to look at the current legislation under what Bill 10 was and realized that it was a shell of legislation and that we needed to actually enhance it and create actual safety for our GSAs and students that were accessing them and not putting lives at risk. There is a fear in Albertans that this is exactly what this does.

As the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs I can say that I have not had anyone reach out to me to say that they support destroying GSAs. It hasn't happened. I can say that myself and my staff have outwardly shown support of GSAs by wearing a simple pin, Mr. Chair, that members of the public have stopped us to chat about the importance of fighting for our GSAs, people that don't know why we're wearing the pin. They just see these buttons that say, "Support GSAs," "Save GSAs" and are inspired to come up to you and approach you and express concern about the status of the GSAs here in the province.

*11:40 a.m.*

It's heartwarming to know that so many people are paying attention and are watching what this government is doing, and it's heartbreaking that they're still going ahead and ignoring the pleas of so many Albertans to stop with this hurtful legislation, this legislation that we know, as we've heard over and over again, puts lives at risk by not allowing GSAs to be formed in a timely fashion, policies that don't essentially allow the word "gay" to be part of the title. It's very, very concerning.

Mr. Chair, I've talked about my engagement with my great GSA in Edmonton-Castle Downs. I had brought in the former Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Estefania Cortes-Vargas, to come and share their story with the youth that attended the GSA. They were able to share their resiliency growing up and what their role as an MLA was, and it was inspiring to witness young people looking at someone from their community talking about their experience in the role as an MLA and being able to see that, you know, that is something that they could have as a future aspiration, right? Seeing yourself reflected in government is important. And I can say that members on this side of the House are here advocating for and supporting and listening to our young people and what matters to them.

Again, I would ask the members opposite if they've had the opportunity to go and engage with GSAs in their community and listen first-hand to the experiences of these young people and how

it's had an impact on them. Perhaps some have; some have not. I just worry that they're not listening to the entire story.

I had a constituent and a very dear friend of mine reach out, and they had indicated that I could share their story. They've said that they've talked a lot about GSAs and being gay publicly before, and they want to share it again for kids in a similar situation to see. He says:

I knew I was gay from a very young age, and for a lot of my childhood it was a very scary feeling. No one around me was like me, and I didn't know how to express that I was different. Without anyone else being gay that I knew, I came to the conclusion, at 12 years old, that I was not normal. That I had done something wrong or was having inappropriate feelings that I should be ashamed of.

I would wait until everyone else in my family was out of the house as a kid, turn on the TV and watch Will and Grace, making sure to sit close to the television so I could lunge [to change the channel] if someone came home, like it was wrong for me to watch it. I loved that show because they were people like me and that's how I learned what being gay was like. Because you didn't learn about it in school. Because when I put my anonymous question about gay relationships into the bucket in sex ed class to be answered, the teacher pulled it out, said it was an inappropriate question, and threw it away without addressing it.

When I was younger, I would deliberately burn and freeze myself in the shower as punishment for having "gay thoughts". I didn't know what else to do because I didn't have anywhere to go to express these feelings. It's easy to say I could have talked to a parent or therapist about it, but when you are a scared child who thinks he's not feeling the way he's supposed to and that he's done something wrong, you can't. You can't face that humiliation and you don't want your parents to be disappointed in you.

My high school gay-straight alliance is what saved my life. Mr. Chair, I think that bears repeating. "My high school gay-straight alliance is what saved my life."

Being gay is something you can hide, so it is almost impossible to seek out other gay people to talk to about the hurt and the pain that we feel as youth, thinking we're not normal or worthy of love. Having a GSA made it possible to connect with other kids questioning their identities, and it was one of the first times I felt known and accepted in my life. I didn't feel like it was a dark secret or a shameful thing I had to hide and feel bad about.

I came out to my classmates in September of Grade 10, but I wasn't ready to talk to my family about it yet. Not because I thought they were bad people, but because I didn't want to let them down. Having a space to go without my mom being told about it was the point of going. Can you imagine if I went to a GSA to figure out how to best come out to my mom, and the school told her first? Without me knowing they did? Your mom only gets that moment of honesty and truth once, and you deprived the child from being able to do it themselves? My mom is one of my best friends now, and one of the most supportive allies I have, but I needed the GSA to be able to come out to her in a way that was best for our relationship. She promised not to tell my dad when I told her, and she kept that promise. A relationship between spouses is one of the most powerful and enduring things on the planet, and even then my mom agreed that some secrets need to be kept, for a period of time. Why can't a school recognize that, and keep that secret for the health of a child being able to come out in their own way?

I can't imagine not having had a space like a GSA in my high school growing up. It's harder still to imagine being that student that has the courage to ask for one . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. I would remind you to table the document that you were quoting from at the appropriate time.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday rising to speak.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to once again rise to speak to Bill 8. Of course, this is a very important piece of legislation in the protections that it is going to strip away from the LGBTQ community, not only the students that go to school in the classrooms across our province but also the teachers who teach in those classrooms and are there to supervise these students and should be protected as well.

I think that it is important to take a moment to look at how we got here. Of course, the Premier was elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in March 2017. Eleven days later he told the *Calgary Herald* editorial board that he believes that parents should be notified if their child joins a GSA. His direct quote from that interview: "I don't think it's right to keep secrets from parents about challenges . . . kids are going through." Eleven days on the job and rolling back GSA protections was firmly in the sights of this Premier and his caucus, or is firmly in the sights, I suppose.

It wasn't just teachers, kids, and the LGBTQ community who had an issue with the now Premier's comments. The now Justice minister at the time had some concerns. He even sent an e-mail to the members of his party entitled Why I Couldn't March in Pride. Mr. Chair, do you know the reason the now Justice minister gave for why he couldn't march in pride? Quoting him directly here: the Premier has come back from Ottawa and brought with him a long track record of voting against the LGBTQ community. Interesting how times have changed.

Now, the now Justice minister also expressed his dismay that the Premier wasn't meeting with the LGBTQ community to discuss their concerns. Quoting what he said, "We don't need another lake of fire, period," is how the now Justice minister closed the e-mail. Now, pay attention to that phrase, Mr. Chair. You'll hear it again very soon.

**11:50 a.m.**

Of course, the now Premier won the UCP leadership, and although we could and should have a long conversation about how he won and the lingering results of that and the investigations to come, that can wait for another day. But he won that leadership and then declared that Bill 24, a bill put forward by our government, a bill about protections for GSAs, wasn't actually about protecting GSAs. It was about him. Sounds a little crazy. I think you might agree, Mr. Chair, but that's what this Premier said at the time. He told the media that Bill 24, An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances, was about attacking him personally. He instructed his caucus to vote against the bill, and they did. At every opportunity every single UCP MLA stood up and voted against an act to protect GSAs, I believe except for the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore, who abstained from the vote and made that public record through the media if I'm correct. If not, the member can correct me, and I apologize.

Of course, the now Premier held a conference, and at the policy conference a policy came forward to require notification of a student's enrolment in extracurricular clubs.

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. Just for my own clarity, are you currently reading from a document that was e-mailed to you or something?

**Mr. Carson:** No. No, Mr. Chair. This is something that I put together myself. It's not correspondence. Yeah. Thank you very much.

At the policy conference a policy came forward to require notification of a student's enrolment in extracurricular clubs. I'm hoping that you might be able to guess what extracurricular clubs they were referring to. The now Minister of Transportation figured it out quite quickly, as has been stated in this House. He stood up and told the room loudly, quote: this is about outing gay kids. He got booed by a room full of his members, but that is exactly what the member said. Now, I wonder where that same concern and compassion for the LGBTQ kids across our province is today. Once again the member was quoted saying: don't be called the lake of fire party. I'm begging you: is what he said next. He wasn't alone in that belief that this policy was going to result in a lake of fire within the party.

The now culture minister shared those same worries, stating, "Please vote against this resolution," pleading with the delegates. Both ministers failed in their attempts to persuade the party who overwhelmingly passed the resolution.

Of course, it wasn't just the now Transportation minister and the now culture minister. The now Justice minister came back to raise concerns again, tweeting that he was going to move the needle and repeal that policy that the members of his party supported. Well, that policy continues to be on their website, which should tell you how effective that member, the now Justice minister, is at moving the needle within his own party when it comes to protecting the LGBTQ community. [interjections]

I continue to get heckles from members beside me here. Hopefully, they might decide to speak to the legislation themselves instead of interrupting my opportunity to speak on behalf of my constituents. Thank you very much.

The UCP once again proudly keeps that piece of policy on their website. So they continue to support the outing of the LGBTQ community. Now the UCP has a policy that their now Transportation minister told Albertans is about outing gay kids, that the now Justice minister said needs to be repealed, and that the now culture minister thinks shouldn't be passed, and I really wonder how each of them will vote on this piece of legislation because Albertans are watching, just as they stood to oppose policy like this in front of their members months ago.

All of that brings us to where we find ourselves today, debating a bill that will go backwards on protecting GSAs and the kids and staff who rely on them. Mr. Chair, honestly, I'm begging you that we do not turn back the clock.

Now, once again I think that we could reflect even further on how we came here today besides the backwards policies of this UCP government and their members. Unfortunately, Alberta was a bit late to the game when it comes to recognizing the rights of the LGBTQ community. In 1998, of course, the Supreme Court provided a landmark ruling in *Vriend* versus Alberta. Delwin Vriend was fired from his teaching position for his sexual orientation, and he was not able to contest that decision because he was not protected under Alberta law. Same-sex marriage was not legally recognized in this province until 2005. We were one of the last jurisdictions in Canada to grant this recognition to Albertans. In 2008 a Catholic school division fired a teacher for being trans.

That's a sad chapter in our history and one I thought we had closed, but then came Bill 10. It wasn't Bill 10 at first, of course. First it was a motion calling on the government to protect GSAs in law. The motion was voted down by the PCs and the Wildrose at the time. As members of this House know, motions are not binding. They are simply expressions of the will of this House, and in 2014 this House would not affirm that students deserve legal protections. Very unfortunate, Mr. Chair.

So MLAs who believed that LGBTQ youth rights matter tried again. Bill 202 was introduced in November 2014. It was modelled

off some of the strongest protections and statutes in Canada that existed at the time, and it would have, one, made it mandatory for schools to establish GSAs where students request them. It enshrined references to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act and protected the name gay-straight alliance in law, something that this government is not willing to do, but the government wouldn't even do that.

Over a weekend in December 2014 the Prentice government hastily drafted Bill 10. Bill 10 did not protect the formation of GSAs. Instead, should a student be refused the right to form a GSA, they would have to seek a judicial review of the board's decision, and the bill gave staff the explicit right to refuse to support the establishment of a GSA subject to appeal to the board and subsequent judicial review. Of course, as is the history, Albertans did not stand for that outrageous suggestion, that students should have to sue their school boards for the right to be safe at school. Albertans stood out in the cold in December, right in front of this very House, to make sure the government of the day listened and stood up for the LGBTQ youth of our province, and an amended Bill 10 was passed that spring.

Of course, early in our government's term cases came to light that highlighted loopholes in Bill 10 in the practise of that legislation. We heard the story of Jane MacNeil, a student who wanted a GSA in Calgary and faced delay after delay. A mother of a seven-year-old girl had to file a human rights complaint to have her trans daughter's rights recognized at school. Now, what we were asking youth to go through to simply form a club where they would feel safe and accepted at school was nothing short of heroic on those students' parts.

Then in March 2017 the now Premier told the *Calgary Herald* editorial board that he believed children should be outed if they join a GSA. Now, there's nothing balanced about that, Mr. Chair. So our government introduced a bill that would close the loopholes of Bill 10. Of course, that led to Bill 24, An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances, which we've had the opportunity to discuss at length as to why that piece of legislation goes far and beyond in terms of strengthening and protecting the LGBTQ community and the students in our schools.

You know, once again, it's very unfortunate that this government is, one, not willing to stand up and speak what they believe. If they believe that weakening the legislation that's already in place in Alberta is the right thing to do, then stand up – stand up – for your convictions. Unfortunately, it seems that the government or members of the government don't have the courage to stand up and say: I have stakeholders who want to weaken this legislation, so I'm going to support it. Unfortunately, they're only speaking half of the story, so I'm here to have that conversation about the other half. Well, I suppose they're speaking half the story, except they're actually not speaking at all. So that's a whole other matter.

There are many other concerns with this legislation, some of which I laid out in my speech there, but we continue to hear from school boards and from the ATA and other representatives of educators across this province that this legislation has been moved forward too quickly. There has not been any real consultation on it. A majority of the changes that are actually being made in this legislation are going to be forced through regulation, which is very concerning.

You know, I heard this government at length when they were in opposition complaining every time our government brought forward pieces of legislation that required enforcement or changes through regulation. Now here we are, and they're going to move forward with a piece of legislation that heavily relies on discussions through regulations, which they have said would be moving forward in September, I believe. Unfortunately, that's too little too

late for these school boards that are going to have to grapple with the decisions that they make through regulations at the last minute.

**12:00 p.m.**

Of course, rules requiring detailed policies to support GSAs have been weakened through this legislation. Once again, a big concern of mine is that this minister, the Education minister, has not spoken about the fact that she stood up in this House and said that all students will be protected, yet she's left loopholes through regulations where they could actually exempt certain schools – charter schools, private schools – from having to follow the legislation, as weak as it is, at all in the first place. So that's very concerning.

Of course, the policy before us, the legislation before us does not, like Bill 24 had laid out, give the opportunity for students to use explicitly the words “gay” or “queer” in their associations. We see some schools decide to go with rainbow club or whatever it might be, which is fine if that's what the students want. But if the students come to their principal or to their school authority and say, “We want to call it a gay-straight alliance or a queer-straight alliance, to name it what it actually is,” well, there are no assurances. Through the loopholes in this legislation a principal might say, “Sorry; you can't call it a gay-straight alliance because that, you know, offends me” or whatever might be the case. That's very concerning.

Now, once again, the government has committed to presenting new regulations prior to September 1. I hope those come sooner than later because – you know, as far as we can tell, I imagine this will pass; of course, I can't see into the future – it's very concerning that when we talk about transportation issues and enrolment issues, we're going to have to wait for that to come through regulations. When we look at common age of entry, school transportation, school fees, which are very important to parents and guardians of students: well, we're going to wait till the last minute to let you know about school fees. That's very concerning, Mr. Chair.

Now, there are really too many issues within this legislation to even go over. I think that we really haven't had enough time to discuss this legislation, so I hope that we have ample time here to continue this discussion about the flaws and the loopholes that have been put forward by this Education minister. I'm just completely concerned about the lack of any certainty that has been put forward in this legislation, and I think it really goes to show that this government, you know, a group of people who called themselves a government in waiting for so many years, when it was their time to shine, didn't show up with any details. We saw this over the last four years. They couldn't prepare shadow budgets. Once again here we are, with a complete lack of details from this caucus, because when they should have been working, they were busy meeting with special-interest groups, I suppose.

Mr. Chair, I hope that we continue to have this important discussion. I really urge all members to not support this piece of legislation because it is completely lacking in important details for students, for teachers, for parents, and for anyone affected by the education system across our province. Once again, I hope that the members do not support it because it is doing a disservice to our education system and the people that are encompassed by it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members looking to speak to Bill 8? I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition and Member for Edmonton-Strathcona rising to speak.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you. Let me just thank the chair for his measured and nuanced cadence. It's very calming to all of us, I must say. I'll try to maintain the same spirit of conversation.

I'd like to take this opportunity, as we discuss Bill 8 in committee, to speak as well a little bit about other elements of this bill. I mean, I will of course finish, I suppose, to some degree on, again, the critical elements that have us here today, which are the removal of the protections for the LGBTQ2S-plus community that our government put in through Bill 24, but I also want to talk just a little bit about some of the other elements that are coming in through Bill 8.

I will grant you that on this, you know, there's no question that the intention to import the original Education Act was articulated by this UCP government in the election, so some of the elements that are in here are exactly things that they did discuss in the election. It's not exactly a point that we're going to be here forever on because, as many people have rightly pointed out, you indicated that you would do this in the election, so it makes sense that you would. We'll take this opportunity to point out why maybe it's not the most advisable thing, but if at the end of the day you still want to go ahead with it, have at 'er.

With that being the case, there are a couple of elements that we don't think are particularly wise that are being incorporated from the original Education Act, that are surviving the original Education Act through what is now Bill 8.

Of course, I need to back up a little bit and once again reinforce the very substantive points that our Member for Edmonton-Whitemud made – I think it was last week – where she pointed out how much of the original Education Act did not survive this government's introduction as per their promises in the last election and that the vast majority of what we're seeing in Bill 8 really is very much dedicated to rolling back the protections that our government introduced for the LGBTQ2S-plus community through Bill 24, and that is, of course, without question, the primary objective. But there are a couple of remnants, fragments, shall we say, from the old Education Act that did actually make it through into Bill 8 that I think that the members opposite should at least consider reconsidering.

One of them, of course, is this question of the matter of a trustee code of conduct. Now, all of us agree that there should be a code of conduct for school trustees – I think that's only reasonable – but in the original Education Act and now through Bill 8 there is a provision that would see trustees themselves be able to come together to sanction and indeed remove trustees from the board.

Now, we've already articulated, of course, that this is undemocratic because trustees are there by virtue of their elections, and certainly we would never ever see in this House a situation where members of this House could actually force someone to resign their seat. Parties can certainly force people to leave their caucus, but you can't force people to resign their seat. You know, public pressure can do that, but there's no law that allows it. That would be profoundly undemocratic and unparliamentary, and it would subvert the ultimate authority of voters. The same exists with respect to school trustees, who are also elected, yet this act allows for boards of trustees to remove individual trustees.

That was something that came up in the original consultation around the Education Act when it was done in 2012, and as we have stated many times here, there are many elements to that original act which ought to be reconsidered because, quite frankly, it was developed seven years ago. Things have changed, so it makes sense to consider what has changed, what new things have happened. Is what was developed seven, eight, nine years ago still the best thing? What I would argue is that we have had some incidents that have

occurred which would mean that the answer to that question is in the negative.

I give as an example the reality TV show that the people of Edmonton were compelled to watch with respect to the Edmonton Catholic school board a couple of years ago. It was quite something, I have to say. That was a board that came perilously close to having to be put into trusteeship because of the profound breakdown in relationships between the trustees. Honest to goodness, if those trustees at that time had had the ability to fire each other, it would have looked like an extended version of a *Survivor* episode, except there would have been nobody left on the island very, very quickly, and there would have been nobody running the Catholic school board. When I look back at how that school board was functioning, if I think about any of those folks having the ability to, on a majority basis, actually fire each other, good Lord, it just would have been a debacle.

12:10 p.m.

Let us remember that the Catholic school board of Edmonton, the Edmonton Catholic school board – of course, thankfully, these are not things that are going on anymore. They're doing a much better job. They pull together. They're refocused on providing a good, strong education to their students here in Edmonton. They're, I think, all doing the job that they've been elected to do, and that's good news for the students, for the families that those students are part of, for taxpayers, who put so much money into our system of education, for the people of Edmonton, and, of course, for the trustees and the people who work for the board.

So that's all good news, but there was a time where it was looking pretty dicey. I don't know. Maybe the former Minister of Education can tell me roughly what the budget of the Edmonton Catholic school board was at a certain point. I imagine it would have been awfully large.

**Mr. Eggen:** About \$600 million, \$700 million.

**Ms Notley:** About \$600 million, \$700 million.

If you imagine the kind of dysfunction that existed with the Edmonton Catholic school division a couple of years ago – there they are, responsible for managing maybe \$700 million of hard-earned Alberta taxpayer money. We then throw into that mix the ability for them to fire each other randomly, depending on who's talking to whom that morning and who's managed to cobble together a majority that particular day. It's just a complete recipe for disaster, and it's a recipe for disaster which implicates tens of thousands of kids and hundreds of millions of dollars.

The way you avoid that, then, is that you don't create more problems than you need to. I would argue that this provision, which now gives trustees the ability to take a run at each other and their position on the board, is actually going to create more problems than they could ever solve, and in so doing, it's going to put at risk the quality of education received by the kids who are educated in whatever board it is. I'm not saying – and it could be any board. It could be any board. I'm just thinking of the example that the people of Edmonton observed a couple of years ago or three years ago, I guess, now.

So I just don't think it's wise. It strikes me as an unwise provision. Now, by all means, carry on if you're going to do it, but I urge you to think about that example and think about how frustrated you will be with yourselves when you conclude that you've just given these boards the ability to further fight with each other in a way that has very high stakes. When you in government over there are trying to manage these issues, you will discover that you've actually created a problem that didn't exist before, and you

did that at the same time as undermining the value of the votes that were cast by the people of this province in the course of trustee elections. So I'm not sure where the win is here. I just, honestly, do not see the win. Anyways, that is one of the concerns.

Now, of course, one of the other concerns which you will have heard from us is, again, the encouragement to increase the number of charter schools that exist in both the original Education Act and now in Bill 8. You know, the original idea around charter schools was that they would be very, very rare and unique and be providing a very rare and unique form of education that just could not, for any practical reasons, be provided through the public school boards that already existed. We soon discovered that that's actually not a description that is easily corralled, so what happens very quickly is that you can have a proliferation of these schools. But what we've seen with charter schools, of course, is that once they're established, they then, quite rightly, start asking for more resources for this or for that. Suddenly what happens is that you're either having to respond to those requests for resources, or the priority of the resource requests are out of line with the other priorities, and it essentially results in a very decentralized, which is not necessarily bad, sort of very chaotic process for deciding where funds and resources go with respect to the distribution of education dollars.

You know, I've heard members opposite say over and over: oh, we spend way too much money on education in Alberta, and we don't get the results that we should get. Now, there are actually a lot of complex reasons for that. The solution is not to simply spend less money or to argue that, you know, we do everything badly and that teachers are at fault for all of this. There are a number of reasons. I mean, we have two parallel public school systems, which means that we have parallel bus systems, parallel boards, parallel staffing, all those kinds of things. There may be good reasons for those, but when you compare to the cost of education in other provinces, you have to take that into account, because every other province does not actually have that, so the cost attributed to that needs to be considered when we make these sorts of wild statements: oh, we spend too much on education because we spend more per capita than other people. Well, why do we?

Maybe it's a decision that Albertans want to take: yes, we will spend more per capita than others because we value having these two parallel public systems. That's totally fine. You know, I'm not here to make that an issue of huge discussion. I respect the history of this province and the choices that Albertans have made over many, many years. But let's not conflate costs that have historically been put in place, because that's what Albertans have chosen, with teachers' salaries or educational outcomes and then sort of say that the whole system deserves to be privatized because we can't do it more efficiently and not look at what are some of the real contributors to the higher level of costs.

All I'm saying here is that with the proliferation of charter schools the same kind of thing can begin to happen. Maybe we have to suddenly deal with, you know, the inefficient demands for transportation, the inefficient demands for capital, the inefficient demands for certain specialized resources in very small schools because we've decided to establish yet another charter school right next door to what was otherwise a public school that now has half the students. I mean, it just doesn't make sense.

Personally, I'm a huge fan of, you know, community schools, at least for K to 6. I think that, at the end of the day, with the value of having the community that has developed have kids in a geographic area going to the same school, with parents knowing each other, kids knowing each other after all those years, with the teachers knowing the kids, all that kind of stuff, it's one of the most fabulous examples of community that I've seen in my life, quite honestly. It's really quite lovely, and, you know, we should not throw it away

on a whim so that we can all get into our vehicles and drive 20 K to our select school. Frankly, the value of just that sense of community and the longevity that comes from that really cannot be overestimated. I know many, many parents believe that, too, and that's why they get so passionate about seeking new schools in new neighbourhoods that are overflowing with kids. Of course, those parents desperately want their kids to be able to go to new schools that are built in their community so that they can have that kind of community engagement and know the kids on the soccer field, know the parents on the soccer field, and have those many years together. Parents are passionate about that.

We know that many communities are challenged. We have communities that are growing at huge rates, and we have not over many, many years kept up with the demands for new schools in those new communities. Our government tried very hard to start to meet those demands. We built roughly 250 schools over our tenure. Quite frankly, it was something that had built up over a decade or so, so even those 250 schools, you know, have not yet met the demand or fixed the problem.

*12:20 p.m.*

The only reason I talk about that is because we know we have an unmet demand. It's a very universally accepted unmet demand, something that matters a great deal to young families in growing communities across this province. As we seek to meet that demand, we need to be efficient in the use of our resources. What I am saying is that if we are not very careful about the proliferation of additional charter schools, we are going to find ourselves using our resources in a less efficient way than we otherwise would. That is the point of that, and that is the concern that I have, in part, with Bill 8. We might find ourselves now with a proliferation of new charter schools, understanding that some of them do serve a purpose, but I think we need to be very careful. If we suddenly see them increase by 400 per cent, well, then, what we've just done is that we've pulled money off the public system, and invariably what we will have done is delayed the opening or the construction of new schools in communities that are overflowing with young families who desperately want their kids to be able to go to school in the community in which they reside.

Just as an aside, you know, sometimes this job – I'm sure everybody here, certainly everybody over the last 24 hours, has noticed that this job can be a little bit all-consuming. As a result, you don't get to do all the things you'd like to do. About a week and a half ago it was a joy in our neighbourhood. We had a whole bunch of parents who had all been together at the preschool, which lived in the elementary school, which was right beside the child care. All our kids had been in that preschool together from when they were about three. They've all now graduated and are on their way, in many cases, to university or whatever new stages in life. All the parents got together – whatever that would have been: more than 12 years. It would have been 14 years after we all met at our community school. Our kids have sort of followed in one form or another many trails together since that time. That's why people like community schools so much. It's because they just give a foundation and a home to kids and families for so many years.

Anyway, the charter school thing is something that I think we need to be careful about. So, too, should we be careful about the matter of the trustee code of conduct and recall.

I am looking at a few of the other issues here. Other than that, what remains our primary concern with respect to Bill 8, of course, goes back to the matter of what we are doing to undermine the rights of LGBTQ2S-plus students in our schools across the province. Once again, it is so clear that . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford standing to speak.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the main bill as I've had an opportunity to speak to a number of amendments today. It brings us back to some of the central points that we'll be debating, hopefully, over the next few hours.

I'd like to just start with a little conversation about kind of the nature of the difficulties that we have here. I understand that it is intrinsic to the nature of conservatism to want to conserve, to want to prevent change, and that the basic fallback stance within any kind of a conservative aspect of any movement or organization or so on is to not allow change and growth to occur but, rather, to retain that which exists at the present time. I think that on occasion it makes sense to do that.

I myself have been an advocate for retention of some of our historic buildings in the city of Edmonton, the desire to retain those buildings even though I know that if we were to take them down and build larger, more modern buildings, we might be able to include more people in them. We might have finer amenities. Sometimes when I was sitting in my minister's office in this building, however, I had a desire to see some change and maybe some upgrading of the nature of the offices. Some of the aspects or the condition of the office are more than 100 years old and therefore not very functional. But I still had a bit of a conservative bent, saying: yeah, but this building has been around for 100 years, and I guess it's okay if my fireplace doesn't actually allow fires anymore.

You know, that's sort of the nature of conservatism, that you sometimes want to retain things even though there are social influences and impulses that are moving us along and encouraging us to replace old with new. For example, we have invented modern, wonderful things like central heating, and central heating is fully capable of keeping this building warm without setting individual fires in every minister's office in the morning, as they once did in this building. So there's a conflict there sometimes between the impulse for conservatism to retain that which is, which I have because I admire the construction of the room and the history of the room and that which it offers to us and a sense of place and a sense of knowing who we are as we move forward, yet at the same time it's in conflict with: things could be improved, and things could be better.

I get that. I'm sympathetic to the government side of the House. They come from a place of conservatism that always tends to take the first step back and not wish to see changes happen. I know that that's kind of the history of conservatism in politics in general, that when new ideas come forward, the desire of conservatives is to not trust that it will be a positive change, to look into the change as a destruction of the good that we know now, today. I know that when, for example, in England the movement for public education began, some of the social reformers – in social work we often view them as some of the earliest social workers; even though they didn't always use that name, they began to use that name at that time – began to suggest that public education was a great opportunity to bring improvement to the conditions of life in Britain. It was, of course, a very complex movement that sought to change issues around poverty, sought to change issues around housing, sought to change issues around the distribution of wealth, sought to make changes in terms of education.

Technology was often a significant part of that in that there was a time when there were so many coal fires in the city of London that there was an actual fog in the city every day, regardless of the actual weather, for a significant period of time. This is, you know, simply



recorded history, and in fact some actual art forms were the result of that. They started to paint pictures with this fog inherent in the picture, and it actually led to a move, a shift, in England at the time from a kind of realist portraiture to something of a more abstract portraiture.

**12:30 p.m.**

You know, I think that when those kinds of things happen, we're in conflict. What happened was that some people wanted to move forward to this new electric light system and electric heating system. Others said: no; we'll lose all the coal jobs, so we don't want to move forward. There's a conflict there, and it was often referred to as the Luddite activity at the time, people saying that they did not want to move forward because they were scared about what would happen. If we began to bring in industry that didn't require people to dig coal or we brought in industry that didn't require people to walk treadmills in order to turn water mills and other things of that nature, then people would lose their jobs. So there was a conservative impulse to not allow those kinds of innovations into the industry of the time.

I think I have some sympathy for the Luddites because I'm not sure they were always just saying that they didn't want to move forward.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you. I am struggling to bring this line of debate to the topic at hand of Bill 8. If you could please just clarify that for me, that would be very much appreciated.

Thank you.

**Mr. Feehan:** Sure. I'm sure that you've experienced with me before that I have a bit of a bent toward putting the decisions we make now into a historical context and feel that it's important that we understand that the decisions that we're making today, in this case on Bill 8, are based in a history of progress and moving forward in society that has both the opponents and the advocates challenging each other in terms of what is actually better and what is not.

Bringing it to Bill 8 in a more specific and direct way, I think that we're often in that place with this kind of conversation. What has happened is that we have been moving forward, and that's caused a discomfort to some people, people who approach these kind of progressive movements from a place of conservatism; that is, to conserve. As a result, we have a challenge, and the government has to make a decision. Are they going to advocate for the change because they can see the benefits of that change, or are they going to listen to those people who at one time were described as Luddites, or people resisting the introduction of change in society, and prevent the change from moving forward?

Now, in this particular case, we looked at the history of human rights in the province of Alberta and, of course, in most western democracies and saw that since the 1960s we had made some significant changes in terms of labour legislation, the attitude toward labour, and also toward sexual orientation rights in society. That movement has moved forward, but not everybody has bought into that change, not everybody has said that this is a good change. When we incorporated gay rights into the Canadian Constitution in the 1970s and got the government out of the bedrooms of the people, as was often the expression in those days, there were some people who did not feel that that was a positive progress forward, and we still have that going on today.

If we look at the decision that was made in the last bill that was introduced by our government in 2019, we see that a number of changes that were made were resisted by segments of society. The

end result was that when there was a request for safe and caring school policies to be instituted across the province of Alberta, well, the vast majority of people took the step to move forward and to implement these new policies that were coming forward. There were some, I think, 28 schools that did not. What we see now is the government making the decision in this Bill 8 to step back with that group of conservators, people that are unhappy to see us move forward on this progress that we've been working on for many years. I'm concerned about that.

Let me tell you a little bit why I'm concerned about that. As I do for the Luddites, as I mentioned earlier, I have sympathy for people that are concerned and worried about the progress toward protecting rights in these ways. It has a very particular influence that I have addressed previously in this House but that has not been addressed by the government side in any way. No one has stood up and responded to me, so I'd like to go back to that concern, and that is that we are creating a situation here where three factors are happening simultaneously and are going to interact with each other and create a larger problem than they would individually, by themselves. In combination they are creating a specific problem that we need to be very concerned about as we look at Bill 8.

One of those is that we are encouraging more charter schools in this province. Now, I understand that that is something that would satisfy that small group of 28 schools that don't wish to implement the policies that everyone else has been able to meet, and I understand that the impulse not to do that comes from, you know, a group of people who are conservative in their nature and wish to conserve what they have now and not introduce what they view as progressive policies into their school systems. They are vehemently opposed to the progress. I mean, Mr. Carpay, for example, compared the pride flag to the Nazi swastika. That's a fairly strong comparison, one that, if it were made in this House, would get quite a reaction, I assure you.

As a result, we are dealing with a group of people who do not want to see that progress, and we are responding to them but in a way that says that they will be able to have control. While not having control over all of the schools in the province of Alberta, they will be able to have control over some schools in Alberta. We're going to increase the number of schools in Alberta that will fit into that sort of Luddite focus on the progress that we've been trying to make here with the implementation of our School Act, that is being reversed by Bill 8 here today. I'm concerned about that.

What also concerns me is that the nature of these charter schools is such that they're often reflective of a particular world view, and sometimes that's associated with a religious world view or some kind of a cultural world view. There is a reality that in many places, particularly in northern Alberta, the members of some of these world views are concentrated. In Edmonton, of course, you know, if one small religious group or social group or cultural group were to want to have a separate school so that they can continue in some of their conservator kind of ways, then it wouldn't have a dramatic effect on the rest of the population because there would be many, many other schools in the neighbourhood for people to choose from.

**12:40 p.m.**

However, with the increase of the number of charter schools in these communities where it is a cohesive group of people who are increasingly moving toward becoming a majority in small communities – in some small communities they clearly already are a majority – we will be in a position that the only schools that will become available are the charter schools because they simply have got the population to make the determination that they no longer wish to participate in the public schooling system and choose to

build a charter school. They don't even need to convince their local school board to participate in a local charter school.

The third arm of what concerns me here is that these charter schools can exist in places where there is not even a local school board to supervise those charter schools. As a result, we can have schools that are associated with not the local community but a community that extends farther out into the province so that a school in northern Alberta will be responding to the desires and needs of a school board or an entity in southern Alberta. Now, this is very disconcerting for people in small communities in northern Alberta and, as I mentioned, particularly for indigenous communities because they are concerned about the possibility that their public schools will become unviable given that they simply don't have the numbers or the wherewithal to prevent a charter school from being created in their own community. Then a significant number of the students in that small community will shift over to the charter school, and the public school will no longer be available because the numbers in the community do not warrant maintaining the school.

We know that in the cities, the big cities, when local schools shut down, there's a lot of concern from community members about the loss of their local school and how it's going to affect them. They are only having to make a shift of driving maybe 10 or 15 or 20 blocks to a new school alternative, yet they have come forward and anticipated that that is a problem. Now we are in a place where people won't be able to simply shift over 20 blocks to go to a new school but may have to drive an hour or more to find a new school if the one in their community turns into a charter school. So I think I'm very concerned about that possibility because they can't deal with that either, by, you know, voting in a new school board, because that's no longer relevant to the case of the charter schools. In fact, in most First Nations communities they can't even vote for the school board anyways if they happen to live on-reserve.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

We have a problem where people are very much disenfranchised from the control of the school system in which their own children go, and as I have mentioned before, this is a traumatic echo for many people in the indigenous community, who have had the experience of schools being brought into their community with a particular world view over which they had no control and which resulted in what they would describe as traumatic destruction of their own communities. So even if it's not the intent, my concern is that we are increasing . . .

**The Chair:** Are there other speakers wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford kind of put things into historical perspective and to bring it to the present day with regard to Bill 8 before us, the Education Amendment Act, 2019.

There are three things I want to touch on, Madam Chair, and I will do those quickly. The first one I want to talk to is trustees putting one of their own members off the board, as is identified in Bill 8 and was talked about by the Leader of the Opposition just a few minutes ago. You know, this is my seventh elected position, five on council and two here, and in that time I've gotten to know, certainly on council, a couple of dozen elected city councillors in Calgary. Some of them lasted. You know, one was recognized last week, former city councillor Dale Hodges, for 30 years on that city council. But typically it's a shorter time period. My own was 15 years, and that's about the average, nine to 15 years. I can tell you that we had effective ways of dealing with city councillors whose

participation on that city council started to fall outside the norm or was less than constructive or helpful, but we never had what we see here, which is potentially a way of trustees ganging up on somebody to put them off the board for, perhaps, their views or their orientation or other things.

Effective ways to deal with trustees or councillors whose views are not helpful to the group going forward for the work they're doing or have become something that lies outside of normal behaviour for that council, are not to support their motions and not to support their efforts to change things. They quickly understand that if they want to be effective in their job, in our case it was 14 city councillors and the mayor, you have to get eight votes, Madam Chair. Eight votes can only come by convincing others of your position, and your position has to be one that people understand, that people believe is in the greater good, in our case it was the city of Calgary. Ways to manage people who don't go down that line are to say, "No, you won't get seconded," so it doesn't get on the floor in the first place, or "No, you can't get my vote because of all of these other things that are starting to line up that you're doing."

I was fortunate to be on some really effective city councils in the past, but there were people on those councils whose views, whose intent was to throw sand in the wheels of government, to downsize the bureaucracy because they felt there shouldn't be a bureaucracy working on this, that, or the other thing. It was clear after a while. They weren't there for the good of the city and the organization addressing the needs of the city. They were there with an agenda that was, as I said, to throw sand in the wheels of the organization.

The way that I dealt with that person – actually, there was more than one person over the course of 15 years. The way that many on the councils I was part of dealt with that person was to say: "No. You can bring forward a notice of motion, but I will never support that notice of motion. Have at 'er." Madam Chair, they get up and they put their notice of motion forward, and it drops like a stone in the ocean. They realize that if they want to have an agenda, they want to create a legacy of work that moves things forward, it can't be something that is totally an antithesis to why everyone else is there.

Bill 8, Madam Chair, goes too far. It goes too far. It's not the right thing, the right, perhaps, weapon, the right action for trustees to take against one another. The way it was – and I can tell you that there have been boards of trustees in Calgary that were not workable. I think I heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about one in the Edmonton area. I can tell you that I know well one in Calgary. In fact, one of the members of that trustee group was an elected MLA for the PCs after a period of time.

*12:50 p.m.*

The Minister of Education at the time heard repeatedly that that board of trustees was not working, so he took, in my view, a pretty significant action and dismissed the entire board. I remember those days because while I didn't do it personally, I know many people who complained to the Minister of Education. They said: look, you've got to do something. Had that board of trustees had this power, I have no idea how things would have worked out. The way they did work it out was a transition from having a sole person in charge of the Calgary board of education for a period of time and then elections again, and a new board of trustees was put in. That seemed workable. It worked. It was pretty drastic, but it dealt with the issue at the root instead of a group of trustees ganging up on one or two or potentially more trustees and having them off the board. I think Bill 8 should be revised, should be changed in that regard. I hope it is recognized by the government that what they're putting forward is not something that's in the best interest of boards of education across the province.

The next thing I want to talk about is GSAs, QSAs and to tell you a little bit about my experience during the campaign that we all recently went through. One of the high schools in the riding that I was endeavouring to represent, Calgary-Buffalo, was Western Canada high school. They had an election forum, and their student council, government council, put it on, sponsored it. The forum, of course, was well attended by students during the school time, about 300 or 400 young people. All of the clubs were represented there. They had us up at the front. I was there. Of course, the UCP candidate was there, and the AP candidate was there. All of us were represented. They asked specifically about this issue. They said: what are your views with regard to QSAs, GSAs and continuing them the way we have them in Western Canada high school? We all answered in turn. My answer was, you know: the work that the government that I was part of did to support young people in schools would continue. That was my commitment. It was not to change QSAs, GSAs in any way, shape, or form; to continue with Bill 24.

The UCP candidate said, and I'm paraphrasing because I don't remember exactly what that person said: look, I'm socially progressive; I support you. He was stopped by the young people, and they said: yeah, it's good that we know your views, but if you get elected, what is your government going to do? He said, again paraphrasing: I will try to influence the government that I'm a part of to keep the protections in place. I thought that that was not the best answer because he was kind of saying: look, vote for me; I'm with you, but, you understand, it may not work out that way for you in the end.

I think it's incumbent upon all of us – all of us – in this Chamber to not roll back important rights that young people have now garnered.

I look at some of the correspondence that has been raised as a result of this issue, Bill 8, in particular. One stuck out to me. It's from a constituent in Calgary-Buffalo, copied to the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, and the Education minister. It talks about the immense sadness this person feels watching the road which our great province is beginning to walk down as it relates to LGBTQ2S-plus individuals. It says that the truth and fact is that by removing the language, by making it not okay to use "gay" or "queer," rolling back protections currently in place, we send a negative message. It goes on and on and on and on, and it's essentially this person pouring out their feelings around how important this one issue is for them. This one issue: if it has this much import for this person – and they don't identify themselves as being a queer person; they are just saying that this is how they feel about this issue – can you imagine how significant it is for a young person who is not knowing if they're queer or not and finding that their views are no longer tolerated or appreciated in the most important place they have during their young life, which is school? We'd like to think it's home, but at a certain point in time it is not home; it is with their peer group.

Another letter that I got is from the Holy Spirit Lutheran church, the reverend there. This person says clearly that the amendments brought forward in the Education Act also do not hold the same protections for youth, and the UCP government has removed the provision that would compel principals to immediately approve a GSA once a student has requested one. It goes on and on and on in that same vein.

I can tell you that the principals that I've met have been incredible individuals. The one that I met at – I forget his name, and I spent the whole morning with him at a graduation where 701 students crossed the stage that one day. I can tell you that that's a long day for not only the people who are celebrants on the stage but for the people in the crowd, but it was wonderful. Students had a love for

that principal that was clear and evident, and I know, because of visiting, that that person would never do anything to not support one of his students in whatever fashion they needed. So I can't support this bill on that basis as well: the trustees putting one of their own off the board; QSAs, GSAs not having the same protections as Bill 24.

I have a dear friend. He's known to many people in this city and was a city councillor for 15 years here, Michael Phair. Michael, in 1992, was elected for the first time to Edmonton city council and ran as an out, openly gay man . . .

**Ms Notley:** One of the first.

**Member Ceci:** Not one of the first. The first in Canada.

. . . and he changed things in this country as a result of his strength and power to come forward and his belief that he had every right to sit at a city council table and to put his views forward and to support the community that he was a part of. The actions that Bill 8 takes will make it more difficult for young people who are queer, who are gay to see their role in society, to believe that they have just as many rights, just as much right in this country, in this province to be anything they want.

*1:00 p.m.*

Michael came from the States, so he was a transplant, but he was involved in this city in incredible ways since he first arrived. Perhaps – perhaps – it was because of the acceptance of his family, his schooling, his community that he had the strength to put up with the homophobic reactions that he experienced running for council. He and I met early in my tenure – in 1995 I got elected – and we bonded because of his humour, his knowledge, and the ability for him to bring people together. Michael was always, is always a uniter, a builder, a communicator.

He and I have talked about Bill 8, and he was on the steps protesting a couple of weeks ago with 400 or 500 or 600 people – I can't remember the number – who believe that Bill 8 is a step back in this province. It's an affront to the important work that has been done, and I just wish members on the other side could understand that our role is not to put roadblocks in the way of anyone's experience. Our role is to help develop capacity, help give enough space so that Albertans can live and let live in ways that are good for them, their families, their communities, and this province.

When you put Bill 8 in front of people and say, "What do you think?" I would say that there are some parts of it, maybe the more – I don't know – mundane or nerdy parts like leadership, professional practice certification, updated standards of professional competence for teachers and educational administrators, that are really important, but do they generate a lot of fire in people's bellies? Not personally. There are parts of Bill 8 that I can live with that pretty much reflect or are the same as in Bill 24, which our government took part in, made, built, created after consultation, after work, work, work to get it there, after pulling it apart and trying to figure out if it's in the best interests of Albertans, after recognizing that it wasn't everybody in this province who agreed to it. It was an improvement over the previous government's School Act.

That's where we were, and we were moving on, Madam Chair, to other important issues. This return to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, I believe will not be in the best interests of this province and should not be supported.

The third thing I didn't talk about was charter schools.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to continue debate in the House today and have the chance to speak afresh to Bill 8. We've had the opportunity throughout this debate to share a number of stories from individuals, with various perspectives, on their experiences within the Alberta school system, specifically on the area around the formation of and participation in a GSA or a QSA at their school.

You know, recently we had the Alberta NDP Provincial Council in Red Deer. I had the opportunity there to speak with one of our party members and one of our supporters, who told me about her experience as a teacher here at a Catholic school in Edmonton, she herself being a member of the LGBTQ2S-plus community. Now, what she told me was that she had had students who approached her and said, "We would like to start a GSA in our school." She was excited. She was enthusiastic. She said: "Absolutely. Let's have a meeting this Friday." That was the way it worked for any other group in that school. If students wanted to start a group, they simply did it. If they wanted to have a chess club, they simply brought in a chess board and sat down in the cafeteria or a spare room on Wednesday afternoon and – boom – the chess club was born. In this teacher's view, this is simply another student club: "We will do the same. This Friday, absolutely, let's meet in this room. For anyone that's interested, we will start a GSA."

They saw a pretty good turnout for that first meeting, sort of testing the waters to see what the interest would be. They had about 10 students that came and expressed interest. As was appropriate at that point, then, when they saw that they had enough interest and that it was something that would be likely to continue, they went to talk to the school administration and said: "We've had an initial meeting. We've got 10 kids who are interested. We'd like to officially start this GSA." The first thing that the administration at that Catholic school said was, "Can we call it something else?" They weren't comfortable with them calling it a gay-straight alliance and tried to convince them that it should have a different name. When the teacher and the students did not want to budge on that particular point, they then began telling them how the meeting should be conducted and that it needed to open with a prayer. Again, this is administration attempting to impose on students the manner in which they should conduct their own student club meeting.

They were also not big fans of that. At that point, then, they were told, "Well, the head office" – so, again, now we're going beyond the actual school administration, further up the authoritative chain within the Catholic school system – "said that you would need to submit a proposal to be reviewed by the head office." Now, to be clear, Madam Chair, they did not require the chess club to submit a proposal to explain what they would be doing, which chess boards they would be using, what moves they would be discussing, which chess masters they would be studying. They did not require any of the other school clubs to submit a written proposal before they were allowed to begin their work. But this gay-straight alliance, which they would prefer not be called a gay-straight alliance, was asked to do so. That teacher again refused and said that that is not what is required for any other club in this school, so we will not be doing that either.

They went ahead with that gay-straight alliance, and interestingly this teacher told me that later on some of her teaching colleagues, as they were sitting in the staff lunchroom, would casually lean over and ask her: "I hear you've got this gay-straight alliance going. So who are the gay kids?" This was a topic of conversation, directly being asked by her colleagues, to out students who were participating in that GSA. This was the level of understanding, this was the level of sensitivity that was present there in that school. That teacher ended up later resigning from the Catholic school board, in part because of the experience she had with wanting to

start something as simple as a gay-straight alliance for students or to merely support the students who wanted to start it – to be clear, it was student requested, student led; she was there as support – but also because she herself, as a queer woman, wanted to have the opportunity to be a mother.

**1:10 p.m.**

She wanted to be a single mother, by choice, but she had seen a colleague of hers in the same situation who was put through disciplinary hearings and blacklisted by that school board and within that school system because she made a lifestyle choice of which they did not approve. She herself decided that she could no longer work within that school system, and she now works as a public school teacher. That is why the amendment that was brought forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was such an important one, and it's regrettable that it was not adopted.

I share that story to give context to what we are talking about and why we are so concerned with the changes this government is choosing to make by stealth, not choosing to make them in the light of day, not having chosen to be explicit in their platform about their intent in introducing this hollowed-out and gutted Education Act. These are the realities, these are the experiences of people within these systems. That is why it is so important that we have explicit statements of protection, that we make it one hundred per cent clear.

It's concerning to me that it seems to be the view of this government, based on, I think, what I would hope is a minority of their party membership, though a majority did vote for some troubling motions as part of their policy conference that they had back in 2018, to recognize that there seems to be a group of people who feel that what needs to be said to LGBTQ2S-plus students and teachers within our systems – within our public school system, within the Catholic school system, within private schools where they may be – is: "You're asking for too much. Settle down. Take a little water in your wine. We've given you something. Quit asking for more."

In a province where, for those who support them, they feel they must give the best – a lower youth minimum wage, the lowest corporate taxes, all these other things – at whatever cost that may come to other people, when it comes to the simple request to respect the human rights of members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community to be who they are, to honestly express themselves, to be allowed to get together with other people who share that identity or support that identity unencumbered, without obstacle, without interference, then this government turns and says: "That is too much. You're making us uncomfortable." That is troubling to me, Madam Chair, but that is precisely what we are seeing happen with this bill and precisely what we are seeing as members in this House choose to sit in silence and not provide any justification for why they want to take that step.

Speaking again of personal experiences, I have here a letter that was written by Laura Ross-Giroux of Taber, Alberta. She says:

I am not a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community, I am not the mother of an LGBTQ2S+ child but I am an ally and I will fight to the bone to provide a safe place for LGBTQ2S+ children.

She goes on to explain why. She says:

Many years ago, when I was in junior high school, a very close friend started to self-abuse. She began drinking quite heavily, and then started experimenting with many different types of drugs, not always pleasantly. My other girlfriends and I couldn't understand what had happened to her, she was such a wonderful, happy person, or so we thought. As we progressed into high school, her self-abuse became much worse and she ended up in several abusive relationships, she was falling apart before our eyes, self-destructing and there seems there was nothing we could do to help her. Thankfully she felt safe enough to confide in me

that she struggling with her sexuality, she thought that she might be a lesbian, she was hurting and . . . tragically, Madam Chair, she says that her friend felt ashamed.

All I could do was to sit with her and hold her while she cried on my shoulder. I felt so utterly helpless, there was nowhere and no one in the school that she could confide in other than me. She began to slowly drift away from our group and from school, it broke my heart when she dropped out and joined the armed forces. I saw her only once after that and I regret that I was not able to follow up with her. Recently, I found her online and sent her a message, but it is totally up to her whether she chooses to respond to me. I hope [that] someday . . . she will. I will just tell her that I love and miss her, and [that] I hope she found happiness.

Within my own extended family, some of my young LGBTQ2S+ cousins have struggled with coming out and have tried to take their own lives but my wonderful family, for the most part, have been loving and supportive and we have shown them that we love them just for who they are and we are educating our older generation and some of my generation, about today's realities, the pain and confusion that these kids go through. In the intervening years, I had hoped that things had gotten better for our queer youth but in so many ways, they have not. We all remember how hard it was to be a teenager, how we were finding our own ways, our identities, ourselves, we were so insecure, so vulnerable; now imagine having to pretend every day of your life, not being allowed to express yourself, having to hide your emotions, being afraid of letting others know who, you feel to the core of your being, you truly are, [out of] fear of being bullied or worse.

Repeatedly, I would hear of suicide attempts, of self-harming, of children being thrown out of their homes by unaccepting parents and having nowhere to go, no support. The one bright shining hope we have are Gay Straight Alliances . . . if our schools had [these] groups all those years ago, my friend and many others within my own family could have found [the] help, support and community that they so desperately needed, they would have had the comradeship and comradeship of their peers, they would not have had to be alone. Unfortunately, so many of our kids do not have that kind of support at home and that [is] the value of GSAs, safe places, supportive places, places where you can come out [at] your own pace, in your own way, no questions asked. These children deserve every advantage we can give them, as every child does, and finding safety within a GSA is something we should do everything within our means to provide. All our children warrant our love, our support, our best.

Words of personal experience, Madam Chair.

As I discussed earlier during this debate, what we are talking about, again, is a question of balance and whose power we need to balance here. Ultimately, Madam Chair, what this comes down to is the right of youth to feel safe in their school, the right of youth not to feel that they are being judged by those who are there, frankly, to serve them, who are there for the purpose of those students' education and betterment. Regardless of whether they are in a public school, a Catholic school, or a private school of any form, they should not have to look to their school charter and feel that it is judging them for who they are.

But it seems to be the view of this government that the right of an institution to express its values trumps the right of these students to be able to attend a school without a feeling of judgment or threat. It's interesting to me, as I said early on in this debate, that on this particular point that is the feeling of this government and that is the direction that it is choosing to go, that these students are asking for too much to be able to attend a school that does not have an explicit charter telling them that they are wrong, that they are bad, that who they are is unnatural because of the rights of that institution to hold those beliefs, to hold those values, and to express them publicly even to the detriment of the students it is there to serve.

1:20 p.m.

Yet as soon as that child graduates high school and moves from grade 12 to their first year of university, this government immediately does a 180-degree flip on its view, and all of a sudden the rights of that student to express themselves, their rights to express who they are and the values they believe in, one hundred per cent trump any postsecondary institution that they should choose to attend, because that is the intent of this government. The Minister of Advanced Education has indicated that he will be moving forward with requiring all postsecondary institutions within the province of Alberta to guarantee free speech on their campus, yet the only difference for a student who is 17 and in grade 12 is that they are in grade 12 and it's maybe a bare difference of four months between whether they have the right to that self-expression in their school or not.

This, to me, makes no sense, Madam Chair. Either the right of self-expression is inherent and should be there for youth regardless, or it resides solely with the institution and should stay there thereafter. But it's interesting to watch how this government twists itself in knots to try to justify giving institutions the power to question, to denigrate the identity of students and who they know themselves to be.

We'll continue to have this debate regardless of whether this government wishes to or not, regardless of whether they choose to greet the morning today with a series of memes complaining about the fact that the opposition is doing its job and holding them to account on legislation and representing the views of our constituents. On this particular issue, it is one, as I have said, that I believe is of such great and significant importance. These are the very lives and identities of these young people.

Let me tell you, Madam Chair, weighing again in the balance the slight offence that it causes a particular school administration to not be able to loudly proclaim their particular beliefs in terms of discrimination against the LGBTQ community versus the great damage that that can do to a young life, I would say that those institutions should perhaps instead, then, simply choose to grow a thicker skin, that they find a way to hold their beliefs in such a way that they can personally hold that belief and maintain their personal integrity but don't have to endanger the health, mental and physical, of young people in order to do it.

That is the simple proposition in front of us and one which this government is apparently unwilling to have the courage to stand up for. That is why I will continue throughout this debate to rise in this House and speak against this bill alongside all of my colleagues, and after this debate is done and whatever decision is made by this House, we will continue to stand up for those constituents.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my honour to rise today and continue our debate on Bill 8. Just to follow up on some of the words of my hon. colleague from Edmonton-City Centre, our opposition is asking the government to look at, really, three main pieces to this bill. These pieces are in place right now and have made a significant difference in the lives of LGBTQ students and, you know, greatly impacted the school system for the better, I must say.

Of course, one of them is about having to ensure that principals immediately do grant permission. By "immediate" we don't mean necessarily that that second it has to happen but, you know, within a window of about two weeks, a little bit of flexibility there. The concern, of course, is that principals may delay for quite a long period, perhaps an indefinite period, and that doesn't serve students

at all. Of course, also with that, we'd like them to designate a staff liaison, so fulfilling on this timeline to make sure that students have the support network that they need in a timely manner. We know that students don't need GSAs whenever; they need them now.

We know that students grappling with their sexuality often feel isolated. They feel unaccepted. They feel they don't belong, and indeed they're afraid to actually be open about who they are. It may not be safe for them to reveal their true selves. Of course, as I've spoken about before in this House, it is fundamental to human beings that we need to belong. We're social creatures. We need to be connected to other human beings. If you feel like you're strange, you're different, whatever words you want, if you feel afraid to speak about it at all and you know that the atmosphere at home is not conducive to you sharing this, then students often feel isolated and keep it inside. But if there is a GSA created in a timely fashion, like, within that two-week window, we know that students have an opportunity to belong to a community that is inclusive.

I spoke previously in this House just about some of the challenges my middle son had when he was in elementary school, actually. He was a bit of a shy boy, and, you know, he was vulnerable. Kids, well, one in particular, did pick on him, and he was bullied. His natural inclination was, sadly, to just keep that to himself, to not reach out to his teacher, to his dad, to myself. He experienced this for a couple of years in elementary, and I never ever heard about this until he was in junior high. This really broke my heart. When I heard about it, I of course accepted him and supported him, but he had just been too afraid to actually talk about any of his concerns and this bullying by this other student.

My son is certainly part of the dominant culture, a heterosexual male, white, Caucasian, doesn't have any disabilities, so he had a tremendous amount of privilege in that, and still he suffered. He had tremendous concerns. He didn't belong. He was isolated, and it did sort of take away a lot of his connections with people for a period of time. Just imagine if there are other layers of concern for a child, that they're not part of that dominant culture. Like, they're sort of exploring the LGBTQ community, feeling like that's more of their orientation. They even more have a feeling of difference, a feeling of separation. That's why it's so fundamental that students do have access to these GSAs.

I know personally, as a mom with my son, how much that's negatively impacted his life. I must say, you know, that he's 20 now, but he still has some challenges connecting, and I think it has a lot to do with those experiences of sort of connecting with someone and then having them be quite cruel and a bully to him. But I just want to acknowledge that the challenges, the discrimination, the harassment that these students feel or experience is much greater than what my son experienced. I guess another thing that's different from what my son experienced was that when he did disclose and did express concern, you know, his family was there for him, and they would support him. He, sadly, chose to let it lie for many years.

*1:30 p.m.*

But some kids don't have that kind of safety, so in their homes they can't express truly their true selves because they won't be accepted in that environment. Support is completely unavailable to them. In some families it is so disturbing and challenging that students can't express themselves, and if they do, they may be kicked out. Many of my colleagues have talked about this.

We know from work with vulnerable youth that about 50 per cent of homeless youth identify as being part of the LGBTQ community. Those students, indeed, were not safe and could not express themselves but were compelled to because they felt that they wanted to be authentic and honest about who they are. If they had

had a safe haven, a place to share that in an environment that was confidential, respectful, inclusive, then indeed it might not have led to their being homeless. There might have been a safety plan created, support for them.

It's really so tragic that our current UCP government has decided not to make a specific time frame within which a GSA can be created. Again, I just want to reiterate that we're talking about probably a two-week window. So it doesn't have to be immediate, though we've talked about that, but just give a bit of time for the administration, the principal in specific, to create this.

As I've also spoken about before, certainly, all parents do not have the best interests of their children at heart, sadly, and it's not because, you know, they are evil people or something like that. It's not that at all. Oftentimes people have their own struggles and difficulties, and because of that, they're not making the best choices probably for themselves either and indeed for their family. A dependent youth who is in a situation like that: the parent may make a decision that isn't supportive.

So where does the student have to turn? We know that schools can really be places for students to feel like they belong and be accepted as they are. It's very important that these GSAs continue to be available to students in order for them to be supported in that environment.

As I said, of course, you know, parents aren't causing problems for their children out of malintent. A lot of parents are just troubled themselves. We know that Alberta has some of the highest rates of addiction, both drug and alcohol addiction, so if you're not of sound mind, it can be very difficult for you to make good decisions about your children. Also, parents may have mental health issues, and with mental health issues oftentimes people aren't thinking clearly. Sometimes they get so overwhelmed with their own angst and upset that they aren't able to actually be present and available to their children, and that's a real tragedy.

We also have extremely high rates of family violence in our province. So many kids are going home to the chaos of that kind of situation, where, because of the difficulty perhaps in the parental relationship, there is no space for any of the vulnerabilities of that child, and the parent, because they're so overwhelmed with those situations, can't be present.

Certainly, there is, you know, family breakdown. We have high divorce rates also, so that can really cause a lot of difficulty for a family system. Parents can be overwhelmed with those issues.

Issues of poverty, where families are stressed because they are hardly making ends meet, they can't put food on the table: this is just a challenge for them that they can't really deal with.

The family could be newcomers, the family could be a refugee family, or the family could have sort of more fundamentalist Christian views, so their value base may indeed not accept at all people from the LGBTQ community. In those cases, then, there's just no space for a child to be able to be authentic, to be able to be honest about what's going on. But if that child has access to a GSA, then that child will have an inclusive environment, a place where they can go and, maybe just for a little bit of time each day or each week, have a place that's safe for them. I really would like to stress to the government how important it is for students to have these safe spaces, because indeed they are, sadly, not available in their homes.

I think I shared with you some time ago, shared with this House, about a friend of mine who is in his mid-20s. He's a university graduate. He has an undergraduate degree. He's got an Asian background. He was born in another country, came over when he was in elementary school. He has a responsible job. He takes care of himself, lives independently, had all sorts of great success as a young man, but he still has not come out to his parents, is so concerned about their rejection of him. A GSA in a school would

have been such a huge support for him. He didn't have that when he went to school, but he did have that at university, and he in turn supported so many others to be accepted. I know from hearing stories that he shared with me that many times he was listening to the challenges, the pain and suffering of someone who was contemplating actually taking their own life because they felt so alien. There was no place for them. Indeed, some friends of his did take their own lives.

It's so significant, the importance of this. It just cannot be minimized, and to just leave it open-ended, that these can be created at any time, with no restrictions on timeline, really is – what do they say? Justice delayed is justice denied. I just really want to stress to this government how important it is to have that timeline, that two-week window, so that a GSA can be created in a timely manner.

Just last week, you know, a local expert, Dr. Kristopher Wells – he's the Canada research chair for the public understanding of sexual and gender minority youth and an associate professor in the Faculty of Health and Community Studies at MacEwan University – wrote an opinion editorial in the *Edmonton Journal* on June 27. He, of course, is speaking strongly in support of our previous bill, Bill 24, in that GSAs need to be created in a timely manner, that two-week window that we spoke of earlier. I mean, his opinion editorial was excellent and talks about many facets of the challenges that students face and just some of the clear facts about the difference that GSAs make.

He talks about how research demonstrates that GSAs are an important intervention that . . . reduces risk and helps to build resilience, but can also save over . . .

And he estimates this, and this is per student.

. . . \$183,000 in future student-related health-care costs that result when discrimination and prejudice are allowed to flourish in schools.

Of course, Madam Chair, it is both sort of a human rights argument, that these children can congregate and be accepted for who they are, but it also has an economic argument that makes sense. Down the road, oftentimes there are more demands on the health system because of the challenges these students experience. Certainly, sometimes they experience trauma from the attacks they experience if they're not in a safe place or from not having that sense of belonging.

He also goes on to say:

Over 20 years of global peer-reviewed research indicates that LGBTQ youth are among the most vulnerable groups of students in schools today, with significantly higher rates of substance use, smoking rates, eating disorders, homelessness, depression, self-harm, and [suicidal ideation] when compared to their heterosexual peers.

These risk factors are not because of who LGBTQ are or how they identify.

It's not because of their authenticity. It's about

the compounding product of [the] discrimination, [the] harassment, and [the] prejudice, which all contribute to the development of unsafe school environments that impact the mental and physical health . . . and well-being of sexual and gender-minority youth.

1:40 p.m.

The Public Health Agency of Canada chimes in, too, and notes that schools are a critical site for targeted interventions to help reduce these risks, these significant risks that I just outlined, by supporting the development of protective factors. What are protective factors? Protective factors are inclusive policies and evidence-informed programs designed to help build resilience, increase safety, and improve mental health.

Most notably, research shows that GSAs are a vital public health intervention which not only create safer school climates for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth but also for heterosexual youth. We've referred to this study before. It was out of British Columbia, where they looked at almost 40,000 students in grades 7 to 12, and they found that the longer a student had a GSA, the greater its protective power was for all students, LGBTQ students but also heterosexual students.

Of course, one of the key pieces of this was the length of time that a GSA had actually been operating in that school. According to our legislation, Bill 24, a principal must immediately create a GSA; within a two-week window is what we're saying now. The longer that that GSA is available to students, the better the outcomes for all students, from one year to two years to three years, and that's because it shifts the perspective of the students, the teachers, other staff, everyone in the school, and the school becomes a much more inclusive environment.

This is significant, Madam Chair, that just a whole environment has shifted so that people of difference in many ways, like heterosexual boys who may feel like they're not – I don't know; what's an elite place? – on the football team or something like that, and they feel like they're not as good as someone else, well, actually feel more included in the school when there's a GSA. So it has a really cumulative positive impact on school climates and school safety.

Research unmistakably indicates that GSAs make schools safer, so it's hard to understand why this government is seeking to limit, weaken, or reduce their implementation. Rather than seeking to restrict GSAs, the UCP government should strive to increase support and amplify the impact in all schools. Unfortunately, Bill 8 does exactly the opposite of what the UCP claims it does. If Bill 8 is passed, schools will become less safe, policies more vague and ineffective, and both the LGBTQ and heterosexual students will suffer the long-term consequences. GSAs do not just change lives; they save lives, Madam Chair. Government legislation shows that at the very minimum, seeking to do no harm, Bill 8 will remove important protections and increase risk, impacting the health and well-being of all students.

It is legislation that is not supported by research or evidence, Madam Chair. That's a significant thing to ponder. Why are we moving to change this when actually the research and experience uphold the importance of what we did as the NDP government? Instead, it appears to be crafted out of wilful ignorance, ideological dogma, and perhaps prejudice.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I really appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to Bill 8 in Committee of the Whole, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, that has been termed Bill Hate throughout this debate. I'd like to really emphasize some of the points that many of my colleagues have made, and I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Riverview because a lot of the information she was just sharing – the statistics, the facts about some of the challenges and barriers that exist for our LGBTQ2S community – I think are an important place to start when we're talking about this debate and when we're talking about this bill. Fundamentally, Bill 8 is being used to essentially erase changes brought in by our government under Bill 24, changes that were working to close loopholes and problems that existed in the earlier Bill 10. I will note that Bill 24 was not supported by the UCP members of this House who were members of the 29th Legislature during the debate on that bill.

But it was supported by groups like the ATA, who strongly supported Bill 24's clarification in providing teachers the confidence to know that they would not be responsible for making the judgment call on whether or not to out a student. Let me be clear that our caucus believes very strongly that LGBTQ2S rights are human rights, that all Albertans deserve to be treated with respect, and that Albertans themselves need to be the ones to decide when and how to come out, if that is a decision they want to make. Those views fundamentally drive the debate that we're having in this Legislature because what Bill 8 is doing is using a vehicle to weaken GSAs, to weaken protections for vulnerable students.

Now, in previous debates on this issue, I have taken the opportunity to share some of the statistics, and I note that my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview was taking a very similar approach. The reason that I think this is important is because as we debate this legislation, I think it's important for each member to hold in their mind the idea of who we are talking about. We are talking about youth who very often are put into difficult situations because they are more frequently the brunt of bullying and discrimination. They may or may not be in a community that is inclusive, welcoming, and accepting.

As a result of the challenges that they face for who they are, we know that nearly 1 in 3 homeless youth in Canada identify as LGBTQ2S-plus. We know that those youth primarily identify the reason for their homelessness as family rejection due to gender identity or sexual orientation. These are facts that we know. When we talk about the homeless youth in our province, let's remember that nearly 1 in 3 are members of our LGBTQ2S-plus community.

We know that these youth face higher rates of discrimination, violence, and abuse, and we know that these youth are at higher risk of mental health concerns and self-harm and higher rates of suicidality than the general population, and as the Member for Edmonton-Riverview mentioned in her comments, we know that it's not because of something intrinsically wrong with these youth. It is because of the systemic bullying, harassment, and intolerance that create stress and create challenges for these youth. Anything that we can do, particularly as legislators, to improve the outcomes for these youth is incredibly important.

We have decades of evidence showing that having GSAs and having strong protections for these youth improve outcomes for them, improve school completion, and improve life expectancy because we are talking about a group of youth that have higher risks of suicide, Madam Chair. We can't underemphasize that.

Please, to everyone who is listening to this debate, let's remember that we are talking about vulnerable youth who very often do not feel empowered, do not feel supported. When there are schools that have well-supported GSAs, we find that these youth have better outcomes and healthier, more productive lives, and that's what we want for all our students. I certainly appreciate the comments that all my colleagues have made.

*1:50 p.m.*

When Bill 24 was originally passed, a particular CBC article really stood out to me because the CBC had tracked down a student who was in a GSA. I wanted to share with this Chamber the story of Jane MacNeil, who came out to her parents when she was in grade 6, which was a very stressful, challenging thing for her and even difficult when she knew that her parents were very likely going to be supportive. She said: they're probably going to be cool. But it's still not an easy choice to make, s

o I will reaffirm that we need to make sure that every Albertan is making that choice when they are ready, that nobody is outed before they are ready.

Now, this young woman, in the Catholic school that she was attending, did not have a gay-straight alliance, and she shared that she felt rejected and isolated to the extent that she transferred schools to a new school that had a GSA. At that point her life changed for the better. She called changing schools one of the greatest decisions she ever made in her life because she became more comfortable, happier, she was more supported. She even said that she had more friends.

When Bill 24 was passed, 23 MLAs voted against that bill passing. Now we have a UCP government that is introducing Bill 8 in a way that erases Bill 24. Bill 24 prevented teachers from outing students who joined a gay-straight alliance. The same CBC article talks about a teacher, Natasha Krec, a guidance counsellor and teacher in Wetaskiwin public schools, who said: Bill 24 added clarity to both the public and the teachers to make sure that students' confidentiality is respected and kept private; now teachers aren't put in that awkward position to out kids.

Another teacher who had been involved with GSAs said that GSAs save lives. That is a common thread throughout the debate. I'm sure you've heard this many times. But when you look into GSAs not only in Alberta but around the world, you see that GSAs save lives. You see that message over and over and over again. I would note to you, Madam Chair, that when you google GSAs, when you look into the discussions, the debate, the research around the world, Alberta seems to be fairly unique in its opposition to GSAs. In a lot of places you don't see the same kind of concerns and, well, legislation designed to undermine GSAs.

I would note that the student we originally started talking about, Jane MacNeil, did try to start a GSA at her Catholic school. At first the principal agreed – it was really important to Jane that she could be religious and express herself in the way that she did – but almost immediately she ran into a series of hurdles. The room where the meetings took place kept changing. The time kept changing. Teachers weren't allowed to attend, just the principal and vice-principal. "We voted," she says, "over six times on the name because they didn't want to have the word 'gay' or 'queer' in the name." Now, we've heard stories like this in this Chamber a number of times. My colleague from Edmonton-City Centre just told an almost identical story. This is something that was happening. We knew this was happening, which was why Bill 24 was necessary and why Bill 8 is a rollback on the rights of these students, why Bill 8 is a mistake on the part of this government.

MacNeil said that they voted over six times on the name because they didn't want to have the word "gay" or "queer" in the name. She also said: I don't know about you, but a chess club is called a chess club, and a gay-straight alliance should be called a gay-straight alliance. The good news for this student was that when she switched schools, everything changed. She felt safe in school. The GSA was almost school-wide because she felt safe everywhere, and we see this from the research, Madam Chair. Schools that have GSAs have fewer incidents of bullying, discrimination. Anti-LGBTQ language is used less frequently. It really changes the entire school, not just the students who attend the GSA. It does what we often say is important. It creates welcoming and inclusive spaces. It is effective, and it saves lives. For both the students and teachers that's exactly what they hope every school environment will be in the future, but for now they're glad that each school has a GSA that they can operate without worrying about outing kids. If Bill 8 passes, that will no longer be the case. That is why I and my colleagues are standing in this House to raise the issues in Bill 8, trying to make sure that everyone remembers who we're talking about. The kids in our communities, the kids we know: that's who we're talking about.



The student that I'm talking about goes on to say that being part of a GSA oftentimes is just about giving advice when we're going through something. It's often a safe place for youth to just come and be themselves. The community that it builds is supportive, and it's, of course, teacher supervised. Making sure that we hold in our mind what a GSA is, who attends it, and why it's important for them I think is really critical.

Now, what are my concerns specifically with Bill 8? I'm concerned that private schools will be exempt. We've heard some of my colleagues reading some of the founding documents of these private schools that essentially enforce heteronormative dress codes that impose views that, in my view, go against the basic human rights of our LGBTQ2S-plus youth.

Bill 8 also removes the immediacy when a student tries to create a GSA. We know that from the time when Bill 10 was enacted until our government enacted Bill 24, as we heard from Miss MacNeil, the student I was reading the story of, school administration would often delay or otherwise put barriers in front of students who wanted to form a GSA.

Please hold in your mind this picture. We're talking about vulnerable youth looking to start a school club, and the principal or the school administration that they are turning to for help is putting up barriers. That should not be allowed. That is why our caucus has put forward very clear amendments to reintroduce immediacy. That was not supported by the government, so we will be bringing forward more amendments to put more reasonable time frames around this. Why would it need to take three months for a GSA to be formed to support students? It makes no sense, and I have not heard a single member of the government caucus provide an explanation for why immediacy needs to be removed through Bill 8.

Of course, there are strong concerns that the employment protections for LGBTQ2S teachers are being removed through Bill 8, protections that were put in through Bill 24. Unfortunately, an amendment that would have reaffirmed those protections has already been defeated in this House. We heard through the debate, and I know all members listened intently, that, yes, there are human rights complaints avenues that a teacher could go through, but we're talking about – what? – 36 months for resolution when we could simply keep the protections we have today rather than undermining them through Bill 8.

These are some of my top concerns, and I certainly hope that through the debate members of the government caucus are not only hearing the words we're saying but are thinking about the members of their families and communities who may need GSA protections and that supportive school group in their lives. I would want that for the children in my life. I want that for the constituents in Mill Woods. If somebody needs a safe space, one that is proven to provide better outcomes for both the students and the school environment, why would we put any impediments to that? Bill 8 is an impediment. It's a bill to destroy gay-straight alliances. It's deliberately been penned to undermine the gay-straight alliances and their protections that have been put in place by previous governments. It will turn back the clock on the protections for LGBTQ2S youth who we know through the debate and through conversations with people in our communities are often vulnerable and are subject more often to homelessness, to mental health issues, to suicide, and to self-harm because of the environments they are in. I can't emphasize that enough. If you live in a world that rejects who you are, that's incredibly damaging.

2:00 p.m.

We can make sure that we have a world where all students are accepted, where we have safe and inclusive spaces. I'm pleased to

hear that members of the government caucus agree. To those members I would say: then why do we have a private school exemption in Bill 8? Why do you believe that students at private schools do not deserve the safe, inclusive spaces? Why have you removed immediacy? Why have you gone back to a system where we know, because we have the proof – we have the stories; we have the examples – that school administration has prevented vulnerable students from creating GSAs? If you say that you support safe and inclusive spaces, if you say that you support GSAs, why would you remove that immediacy clause? Why would you remove that clarity? Why would you remove employment protections for LGBTQ2S-plus teachers?

I have not heard an explanation from the government caucus. I want to believe them when I hear them say that they support GSAs, but actions are louder than words, and legislation is louder than words. This legislation undermines the protections for GSAs. It does that as clear as day. We continue to paint that picture to highlight the problems in this bill, and the government caucus, although they will quietly say things during debate from their seat, are not standing to respond in a clear way to the concerns. We hear very unsatisfying answers during question period when the minister is asked about these issues or when the Premier responds about these issues.

As with many other items up for debate, I feel this government has a real issue with misleading, misleading Albertans in making statements like: this will be the strongest protections. It won't. We currently have strong protections. Bill 8 undermines that. It weakens them. We know that in other provinces there are stronger protections. This has been proven through tablings – we've done certain media scrums to talk about this – and through the debate. I've seen that kind of a misleading tactic used on a number of different bills. We won't get into it, but we saw it with banked overtime, anyway.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Finances.

**Ms Gray:** With finances. Exactly. Finances are a great example as well.

The other piece that Bill 8 does is that it actually removes enforcement mechanisms. If we want public and private school boards to comply with GSA legislation, we will no longer have the enforcement mechanisms to make sure that they do. Bill 8, of course, is removing those protections from private schools. We just need to be clear about exactly what's happening here.

Now, I've talked primarily about my concerns with Bill 8 in the way that they impact our LGBTQ2S-plus students. There are a number of other changes in this bill. One of the interesting things is that originally the Education Act was written and consulted on, as I understand it – of course it happened years ago, and I was not in the Legislature at the time – with a focus on helping students to complete their education. A lot of those pieces are no longer a part of this Education Act that is before us today. Students being able to stay in school to an older age and be covered: that's been removed.

This bill also creates recall mechanisms for trustees, which a number of my colleagues have spoken out against because there are some serious concerns about publicly elected officials being able to be removed by other publicly elected officials. That certainly would be unheard of here, in this space.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Chaos.

**Ms Gray:** It could absolutely create chaos. I know I had the opportunity to listen to the Leader of the Official Opposition talk about some challenges that we had with school boards in just the last few years, where at one point they were even considering

trusteeship to come in. If at that time the school boards that were having challenges dealing with one another... [Ms Gray's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests watching us here today. I don't know who you are, but welcome to the Assembly. We appreciate the audience; that is for sure. For those of you who have been here for a little while, welcome to the Alberta Legislature. We are debating Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows is standing to speak.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again I'm rising in the House to speak against Bill 8. It's really, actually, disturbing for me to see the direction this bill is trying to take us in. I would say that by proposing, by tabling this bill, the government successfully, probably, has distracted us from what we should have been discussing in this House regarding the education system, schools, students instead of what we are debating on this.

I participate, you know, every day in question period sessions, and I see, from both sides of the House, the questions we have from the hon. members. They want to know about the education funding. They want to know how the education system will be funded for the next four years. They want to know if the new students coming to school this year will be funded, that they will have enough teachers to take care of them.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I have also even seen the questions from the other side of the House, where their members are concerned about, you know, the deteriorating structures of their schools, their buildings, their communities. Instead of focusing on those issues, instead of coming together, discussing those issues, and coming out and laying down our plan on how we are going to fund the education system, we are debating Bill 8. What the major aspect of this is trying to do is basically weakening the fundamental rights of the vulnerable communities and also weakening the public education system.

Even during the election, before the election, and in the UCP platform the UCP always said that they will not touch social policies, that they will not try to legislate social policies. Even many times in the House our Premier and the members of this government have claimed that this is one of the best, you know, protections for the GSAs/QSAs that we have in this province.

Members, my hon. colleagues from this side of the House, continuously keep bringing forward the weaknesses. The fact is that this bill will in no way, you know, do any good for the most vulnerable students in the schools, but I don't see any positive response. This is very saddening to see. During all this debate, days and days of debate, on this bill the other side of the House, the government members of this House, did not probably see one single legitimate discussion or point we have discussed here. This is very saddening to see, that this is how democracy in modern society is going to work.

When we are discussing the points, we're giving the facts on how they are going to bring the changes in. They are going to weaken something that was already there, and the government every time claimed and reiterated their statements that, no, they're the big defenders of GSAs, that they're the big defenders of minorities. But then, in fact, this bill, this proposal, shows that it's going to have an attack on that. It is going to weaken the protections already provided in the law. The government, you know, regardless of their statements during the election or their statements in the House, did not really try to see the facts the opposition is trying to bring. Every

time they come up to answer, they provide the constant election-style rhetoric in response to the questions on these GSAs/QSAs during this bill.

2:10 p.m.

Basically, it should have been only focusing on the fundamental right of those who we care about instead of: we're trying to see, we're trying to create some kind of stereotyping as a GSA/QSA being something not really acceptable. This is the message; this is the clear message. You know, by the changes being proposed in the House and also witnessing or participating as a member of this House in the debate for the last number of days or weeks, I can see that this just eliminates lots of protections that were already provided to the community.

Now, much actually will depend on the person or the principal in charge, his commitment, his understanding of those issues, how really he wants to move forward when there is a request to form a GSA/QSA in the school. It really fails to impose a timeline on that. If there's a request, we're not asking for it immediately, even. In the given circumstances we're asking for the most responsible approach so that we at least protect the most vulnerable in the schools.

Coming from a very conservative family, a conservative culture, we know that even being a member of a minority community in the city or in the state, in the province, or in the country, you know, it's not easy to share your experience, the humiliation that sometimes you feel. As a government, as a public representative that is our job. That's why we open an office in the constituency. That's why we attend public events. That's why we engage people, not only the people who voted for us but each and every one, people living in your riding or maybe sometimes people if they don't live in your riding. That is our job. We listen to them.

We know that it is not easy for people to access help when they need it, especially when you feel that you were personally humiliated based on your orientation, your ethnicity, your religion, your colour, your culture. We see this every day. When people are driving a car, when people are walking on the sidewalk, they will be discriminated against. They will be bullied because of how they look. Even sometimes – we're all human beings. We all make mistakes, sometimes honest mistakes. Sometimes people commit mistakes.

It's different when someone, you know, is from a community that is not really looked at or accepted as the mainstream community. Even when you see it covered in reporting, you will see the different perspective. You will see people talking about this from a different perspective. As soon as it becomes about a person from a visible minority, it will change the direction. It will be totally different.

I know how hard it is for those people, the people who face this kind of discrimination, to come out and seek help. It's not even easy for you to talk to your family. I'm not talking about, like, legal help and social help. My colleagues already shared their experiences. It's not easy even to talk to your family or your siblings, and people keep that within them. That, you know, hurts their potential, that hurts them in life, and that haunts them in life for a long time.

In this case specifically, there are a lot of examples of GSAs and QSAs. If this bill passes, it will provide the option to schools to out a kid. If that happens, it's not only that vulnerable kid, like, only one single person who will suffer, who will suffer the pain, who will suffer for life, but it's also the wrong lesson, the wrong precedent. It will be a message to the community at large. What we are saying through this bill is that the protection that was provided before – it allows the school to out the kid.

What the government is trying to say is that the strongest protection in this province is the legal assistance the minor can seek,

and you can imagine how easy that is, to access legal assistance, even for us, even for us as elected members, people of privilege. That is the kind of protection my friends from the other side, the government side, think of, and every time they got up in the House, they were trying to claim that and reiterate it again and again.

Surely, you know, when some of these arguments in the bill were discussed here, I was, like, positive as a new member of the House that I would see some humility in this House, from both sides, and that we would hear some issues and find some common ground when it comes to representing our people, when it comes to protecting our people, helping our people. But, unfortunately, I did not really see this in the three or four weeks we were in the House, and that's very disheartening. That is not something that I can be proud of. That is not something where I can go out and proudly explain the decorum or the way that we, the elected representatives, behave and believe each other or respect each other.

When I see the government in this House, you know, they're really – how would I say it? – convinced that they're going to have to pass this bill within this limited time frame, when we have tried to elaborate on some very, very important issues that are related to the fundamental rights of human beings, the basic right to live. That is being challenged by this bill. I did not see any humility from the government benches, so that is very hurtful and that is very saddening.

2:20 p.m.

As I said initially in my starting words, this House should have been for us to discuss more how we can strengthen our education system, how we can strengthen the protection of our loved ones, how we can provide protection or strengthen the protection to the community at large. There's a lot to discuss in my community, in my riding. In my riding we have 11 per cent more population than the average ridings in the city. You know, I have no high schools in this riding. I was thinking that I'm going to go to the House and I'm going to represent my people, and these are the kinds of issues we will be discussing in the House. I can see how the members of the government, you know, are amused to keep focusing on this bill. They're so convinced to pass this bill and sway the discussion away totally from the issues that we should have been discussing in this House.

I'm contacting my constituents on a regular basis, as much as I can. We know that we are in the House, since we got elected, most of the time. I try to arrange meetings with the stakeholders in my riding and the members of my community in the riding. There are more issues about what can happen with their schools. There's chaos already. The courses are being transferred in three different schools because the schools' capacities are already full. They cannot really afford more students in those schools. They cannot afford to provide services and courses in those schools anymore. Those are the issues that the school board trustees are struggling with. Those are the issues the teachers are struggling with. Those are the issues that the superintendent of schools in our riding is struggling with. There's huge chaos.

There have been meetings where 300, 400 parents, you know, gather. They're coming out to the schools. Now the schools are closed. They're worried. They want to know before the end of the season what is going to happen to the schools when their kids come back at the beginning of the next session, in September of this year. Will their kids have those programs still there? Will their kids need to go to different schools? I had a meeting with school board trustees in my riding, and they didn't have answers. They said: "You know, school boards are trying to budget based on anticipations. We don't know what's going to happen, what form of budget we're going to have, what we will not have, what

programs will be funded by the government, and what programs will not be funded by the government."

With all those issues concerning the people in our riding, we do not even have a chance to discuss those issues, to come together. I know that every time the government leaders stand up in the House, they talk about the financial crisis, the depression, the economy. But that's why we are here as responsible people. We all committed to protect our health care. We all committed to protect our education system. Every time I see, in response to questions, a member of the government stand up – even the Education minister says that they're committed to provide the . . .

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, Member.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise in the House today to speak to Bill Hate, something that we've been talking about for hours now, and I hope that members opposite are listening. I know I've shared in this House my stories, stories of constituents. As a social worker one of the ways that I found most effective to learn something and to maybe change someone's point of view on something was to hear someone's story. When you have people that are stepping up and are showing bravery, being able to meet them in a place of acceptance, just to simply listen to what they're sharing and to honour the strength that comes from that story is something that I take very seriously. I would hope that all members in this House take it very seriously when we have the privilege of listening to constituents, to Albertans who are sharing their stories with us, that we show them respect, and that we show them a little bit of gratitude in sharing their story.

I've been speaking with a constituent and someone that I call a friend about this bill. I'd asked him if I could share his story and if it could be something that wasn't in my words, because I would have an interpretation or a perception of his story, and if he would be open to allowing me to give voice to his story in the Legislature. It's something that I feel very honoured to be able to do this afternoon, Mr. Chair.

I would like to share the story of my friend Cody. He starts off by saying:

Feel free to use my name if you'd like. I've talked about a lot of this publicly before and want to share it for kids in similar situations to see.

I knew I was gay from a very young age, and for a lot of my childhood it was a very scary feeling. No one around me was like me, and I didn't know how to express that I was different. Without anyone else being gay that I knew, I came to the conclusion, at 12 years old, that I was not normal. That I had done something wrong or was having inappropriate feelings that I should be ashamed of.

I would wait until everyone else in my family was out of the house as a kid, turn on the TV and watch *Will and Grace*, making sure to sit close to the television so I could lunge for the change channel button if someone came home, like it was wrong for me to watch it. I loved that show because they were people like me and that's how I learned what being gay was like. Because you didn't learn about it in school. Because when I put my anonymous question about gay relationships into the bucket in sex ed class to be answered, the teacher pulled it out, said it was an inappropriate question, and threw it away without addressing it.

When I was younger, I would deliberately burn and freeze myself in the shower as punishment for having "gay thoughts". I

didn't know what else to do because I didn't have anywhere to go to express these feelings. It's easy to say I could have talked to a parent or therapist about it, but when you are a scared child who thinks he's not feeling the way he's supposed to and that he's done something wrong, you can't. You can't face that humiliation and you don't want your parents to be disappointed in you.

My high school gay-straight alliance is what saved my life. Being gay is something you can hide, so it is almost impossible to seek out other gay people to talk to about the hurt and the pain that we feel as youth, thinking we're not normal or worthy of love. Having a GSA made it possible to connect with other kids questioning their identities, and it was one of the first times I felt known and accepted in my life. I didn't feel like it was a dark secret or a shameful thing I had to hide and feel bad about.

2:30 p.m.

I came out to my classmates in September of Grade 10, but I wasn't ready to talk to my family about it yet. Not because I thought they were bad people, but because I didn't want to let them down. Having a space to go without my mom being told about it was the point of going. Can you imagine if I went to a GSA to figure out how to best come out to my mom, and the school told her first? Without me knowing they did? Your mom only gets that moment of honesty and truth once, and you deprived the child from being able to do it themselves? My mom is one of my best friends now, and one of the most supportive allies I have, but I needed [the] GSA to be able to come out to her in a way that was best for our relationship. She promised not to tell my dad when I told her, and she kept that promise. A relationship between spouses is one of the most powerful and enduring things on the planet, and even then my mom agreed that some secrets need to be kept, for a period of time. Why [couldn't] a school recognize that, and keep that secret for the health of a child being able to come out in their own way?

I can't imagine not having had a space like a GSA in my high school growing up. It's harder still to imagine being that student that has the courage to ask for one when one doesn't exist already. I was lucky; my school already had a GSA I could join. Not every school has that. And even if it's just for two children, having that space affirms their existence. It tells them that they [really] matter and what they're experiencing is real. That being gay is not a shameful secret to punish yourself for. That every student has a right to ask about their lives and every school has a responsibility to help them achieve self-love and acceptance. Having a GSA denied when a student has put their vulnerable life in the hands of the school is unconscionable. Lawmakers have a moral responsibility to make sure that schools have to support their students, and make them feel like their lives matter, that their identity is worth a club at school.

No child should have to go through the pain I did, but many still do. I'm glad I had a place to be myself and learn that I was loved, valued, and worth just as much as anyone else. I don't know if I [could] have survived if I didn't.

[Signed] Cody

Mr. Chair, I will table it.

**The Acting Chair:** Has that letter already been read into the record once? It was very, very . . .

**Ms Goehring:** It was partially read into the record once.

**The Acting Chair:** Oh. Thank you very much for that.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you. I had run out of time.

**The Acting Chair:** Please table at the appropriate time.

**Ms Goehring:** I will, absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms Goehring:** Hearing the words of a student who says that the GSA saved their life I hope is something that all members in this House are hearing; the importance of having GSAs. Bill Hate fractures what our government had established under Bill 24. We took legislation that had already existed under Bill 10 and enhanced it to support students and teachers to make sure that they truly had a safe place. We wanted to ensure that there was policy in place for anybody that was receiving public funding, Mr. Chair, that we knew that they could show that they would not only have a GSA but that they were safe in doing so, that those students would not be outed.

We heard in the words of Cody that it was his choice when he chose to talk to his family about it, and through the GSA he was able to find the language that he needed to be able to come out to his mom. I think it's really important to really understand the impact of the words he said, that his mom only got that opportunity once to be told about her son, and to have that taken away from the child is heartbreaking. It could be damaging, Mr. Chair. We know that LGBTQ youth are at a higher risk of homelessness, a higher risk of suicide, and to know that legislation is being brought forward that would take away the school's need to support a GSA is just wrong. It's 2019, and I simply can't understand how in this Legislature we're here talking about having to protect something that's already in place because the government wants to strip it of its teeth. It wants to take away some of the legislation that we've already put forward, because we know that GSAs save lives.

We know that the wording that we have used in Bill 24 needed to be strengthened from what Bill 10 had read because Bill 10 was a shell of a piece of legislation that really had no accountability on the school to actually implement a GSA when asked, and that's simply unacceptable, Mr. Chair. When we look at what government is proposing and the pleas that we're hearing from Albertans, people don't want the legislation to change. They're afraid of what's going to happen if this should pass. We're pleading on behalf of so many that have come to us to not go through with this, to leave it as it is. It's effective. It's working.

We've heard story after story from concerned people all across the province, not just members of the LGBTQ community but allies. We've heard from teachers, Mr. Chair, who have said that it is not in their job description to out children. In a school where perhaps one teacher is supporting the GSA, and this student has identified that this teacher could be an ally, a grown-up that this student could trust with their story, could trust with asking bravely for a GSA, this teacher is someone that is worthy of trust. This teacher might face barriers bringing it to the administration in this school and not have this child's wishes be supported. While the one adult is saying, "Absolutely, I support you. I see you. I value you," that might be where it stops.

There is no expectation, with the way that this bill is written, that there ever be a GSA implemented within a school. I think that that's something that's absolutely devastating to know, that a child or a youth has come forward and asked for this, asked for a safe place in their school, somewhere where they spend the majority of their time, and perhaps feels similar to the way Cody did, alone, not knowing that there were other youth that were feeling the same way as him, maybe feeling shameful. But to show bravery in coming forward and asking for help, having a grown-up say, "Yes. Absolutely, I will help you," and then have it being stopped at the administration level without a timeline in place for when this child can expect to have a GSA established is not okay, Mr. Chair.

We as people in this room that are making legislation, the intention should be to move forward with it, to make it better. Despite what we've heard a few members of government speaking

to this bill say, that it is the most inclusive piece of legislation, Albertans are saying: absolutely not. We're listening to that, Mr. Chair. We're hearing their pleas to leave it alone: "Don't interfere with this because it would make it worse. It would make it unsafe for our children and for our youth." I don't understand why a government would choose to do that knowing the importance of having a GSA in a school, hearing the pleas from so many right here on our Legislature steps pleading with government to leave the GSAs alone. I don't understand how in good conscience you can sit, hearing all of this, these personal stories, and still want to proceed with Bill 8 the way that it's written.

I know that I've been standing in this Chamber fighting for the rights of people. I know that I have engaged with a GSA that's in my community and I've enjoyed it, Mr. Chair. I've talked about having some wonderful conversations with these youth who feel safe, who feel supported, who have, fortunately, a school that is incredible at making sure that they have a safe place to gather. They're not about outing kids to their parents. They want to provide the safest place possible for these youth to come and express themselves and ask questions and learn things that have an impact on them.

**2:40 p.m.**

I spoke in the House about bringing the former MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park as a keynote speaker to come and talk to the youth, to share their story about what it was like growing up in the LGBTQ community and at that point being someone who is an elected official in the province, one of our very first openly LGBTQ elected officials. Seeing someone that they can look up to as a role model is essential, I think.

On this side of the House we are standing up for communities, for kids, for families, for teachers who are asking for Bill Hate to not proceed the way that it's written. Mr. Chair, we've brought forward amendments that are reasonable, amendments that would enhance what's being presented. It's not going to fix it by any means. It's scary how it's being presented and how it's going to proceed, but I think if all members in this House would hear what not only our voices are saying but our voices on behalf of so many constituents, so many Albertans, there is an opportunity to make this better. It cannot proceed the way that it is. It's, quite simply, wrong, knowing that GSAs save lives, and we're hearing directly from people that they don't want this, that it's dangerous to have this, that it's going backwards.

I've talked about the legislation as it was in Bill 10 and then when we brought forward Bill 24 to enhance the legislation. We know, if we look around Canada and some of the other jurisdictions and what they're doing to support GSAs within their provinces, that Nova Scotia has been leading Canada with GSA protections. Not only are the legal protections in Nova Scotia now stronger, but they've recently announced \$750,000 in funding to expand GSA supports to rural areas. Not only are they supportive of GSAs but they're listening to their province say: we need more. Instead of going backwards and taking away rights and making it more difficult for a GSA to be established, they're actually funding GSAs so that they can have the supports that maybe an urban centre would have. They're providing funding and supports to rural areas.

I just don't understand how this UCP government can hear what other provinces are doing and still want to go backwards. They're not wanting to progress this, which is what we were elected to do, to go forward and to take information, to look at studies, to take first-hand experience of Albertans and those that are open to sharing it around the world and move forward to make progress on something rather than strip away what's already in place. Nova Scotia gets it. It's concerning that we're here today talking about

this. The UCP clearly, by looking at this legislation, isn't listening to what Albertans are asking for, what Canadians are asking for.

In March 2017 the Premier told the *Calgary Herald* editorial board that he believes that parents should be told if their children join a GSA. We heard so many stories about the negative impacts of a child being outed to their families without the child's consent. Not all families are going to react in a negative way. I have a very dear friend of mine who was very nervous to come out to her family, playing worst-case scenario about what could happen, and as an adult found the courage to come out and was accepted.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 8? I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. No?

**Ms Sweet:** Edmonton-Manning.

**The Acting Chair:** There you go. Sorry.

**Ms Sweet:** It's okay. We look the same.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's, I guess, an opportunity now to speak to Bill 8 and have some comments put on the record. I stand, obviously, against this bill. I just wanted to maybe tell a little bit of the history of my family and my journey and about a mistake that I made in my life a few years ago.

As some of the members in this House are aware and for the new members, my family is from southern Alberta, the Pincher Creek area, and I grew up in a very strong Baptist family. My grandparents helped build the Baptist church in Pincher Creek. They ran the Baptist summer camp in Crowsnest Pass. On my uncle's side, their homestead currently has the Mennonite church on their land. So I've spent many amounts of time either in the Baptist church or in the Mennonite church, depending on who decided where we were going to service that day.

Because of that, I've had many conversations with my family growing up, with my grandparents and my dad's side of the family, about our faith and about the teachings that I was taught growing up around being a strong Christian and, you know, living to the teachings that I had and being a good, strong Christian person, I guess. So I understand the conversation that's happening around this bill, around both sides of the argument. Obviously, in my family I'm a little bit of an outlier when it comes to sort of where I've moved in my life, still believing that I'm a Christian person in that I believe in my Baptist upbringing but also having lots of lived experience through my professional life and through my personal life that has influenced how I live my life within my faith.

In saying that, I became a social worker when I was in my early 20s, did my first practicum at HIV Edmonton, where I was working with the LGBTQ-plus community, working in, obviously, a harm reduction philosophy but also coming from a place of coming from a very small town. When I moved to Edmonton when I was 16, it was, like, my first experience with multiculturalism, my first experience really meeting anybody within the queer community, of course, coming from a very strong Christian faith, not maybe being exposed to some of the things that I've been exposed to as I journeyed through my professional life, to the point where even when I was at HIV Edmonton, I think they sometimes would put me in awkward situations just to help me expand my views and learn how to communicate and, you know, talk about and work with the LGBTQ community.

When I became a social worker, I started working with high-risk youth later in my career, for about five years before I was elected, and my primary focus was working with youth. The youth that I worked with were straight youth, gang affiliated, sexual

exploitation, and were struggling in their lives with variants of dynamics and living in a world that I never had to experience growing up.

2:50 p.m.

Now, there was one youth that I met, that I was called to meet with by a school in Sherwood Park. It was a young 15-year-old youth who was doing really well in school, was on the track to be extremely successful, a straight-A student, but the school had started to notice that he wasn't frequently attending as often. When he was there, he was probably in the same clothes he'd been in for a few days in a row. His grades were starting to drop. His attention span was definitely not where it was before. His engagement in his classes and his extracurricular activities was starting to slip. They called and they said, you know, "Will you come out and speak to this youth?" I went to the school to meet with him, and he wasn't there. I was, like: "Okay. Well, when he shows up, give me a call. I'll come out, and we'll chat. We'll find out what's going on." He still wasn't there. A couple of weeks went by; he still wasn't there.

At that time I was still, obviously, working with the other youth on my caseload. There was a particular group home that I worked with that was amazing. This group home had the hardest kids that were in Edmonton that were under the care of Children's Services. It was very unique in how they worked with youth. It was open to different experiences and, like, trying to just engage and develop relationships with these kids. I just happened to be there one day working with one of my youth, and this young man was there. The staff pulled me aside and said: "You know, this youth keeps hanging around the group home. Like, we're not going to send him away, but he doesn't have a file with Children's Services, so we're not really able to have him stay overnight, but he just keeps hanging out here. Do you want to talk to him?" I said: "Okay. Sure." Of course, I went and sat down with him and started to talk to him about, like, what's going on.

It was the same youth that the school had called me for from Sherwood Park. What had happened is that he had stopped going to school in Sherwood Park and had started hanging out in Edmonton. The reason he had done that was because his parents – his mom had remarried and had a new husband, a new relationship, and they were building a new family. He was gay, and although his mother knew, her new husband didn't approve. There became tensions in the relationship between his mother and the husband, and at one point his mother said: "You can't stay here anymore. You have to leave. I am trying to build my family. My husband is not happy with this situation. You're fighting all the time. It's not okay. You have to find somewhere else to go."

Of course, he had nowhere else to go. There was nobody at the school at that point that he felt comfortable enough to be able to have this conversation with. He didn't have a peer support system that he could talk to. He came into the inner city. What happened with that is that this bright, resilient, amazing young man stopped going to school, stopped engaging in all of his extracurricular activities, and started hanging out with the kids on my caseload that were gang affiliated and involved in drugs and involved in a dynamic of other aspects.

Of course, the problem that came with that was that by the time I met him, he was already connected to that community. He was already connected with those youth. He was from a very well off family in Sherwood Park and had entered into a world that he had a very limited skill base for, if you want to call it that. He was continuously victimized by the community because he didn't know how to manoeuvre living in the inner city and how to manoeuvre gangs and how to manoeuvre, you know, people trying to pressure him into using drugs and people trying to pressure him into selling

drugs and all of those dynamics. His life fell apart very, very, very quickly because of that. I mean, I continued to work with him. Unfortunately, by the time I was no longer working with him, his life had changed significantly, and he was no longer on the path to being a really successful adult.

There is concern with that. I mean, this isn't just about looking at youth and saying that, well, you know, this could potentially – like, this can cause harm in so many different ways. But, also, without these supports in schools for kids like this young adult, this young man – if he'd had someone to talk to when he got kicked out of this house, if he had someone in a community in Sherwood Park versus having to come into the inner city, he may not have become a youth that had a worker like me. He may have still had a worker with Children's Services, but maybe that worker would have been working with him in Sherwood Park, where he wouldn't have been exposed to the same dynamic that he ended up being exposed to and then having to work with me, because the cases that I had were extreme.

The other piece of this, too, is that I wasn't prepared as a worker. I'll be honest about that. This is where I say that, you know, I made mistakes in my career, for sure, working with the youth that I worked with.

I worked with these amazing sisters. We called them amazing. They were amazingly great at driving me nuts. They were two young girls who were 15 and 16. They weren't very far apart. They were born into a family that was gang affiliated, that had generational issues. Every uncle, every aunt, every family member was affiliated with this particular gang, and that's what they grew up with. They grew up with constant chaos, constant domestic violence, exposure to drug trafficking, sexual exploitation, all the things that come with the gang affiliation.

By the time that I started working with them – I mean, they were 15 and 16 – they'd lived a good majority of their lives in this context. As a Children's Services worker I tried to do interventions: you know, looking at different placement options, different group homes, family members, kinship care, all of the dynamics that we try to do to keep youth away from those dynamics. They were very good at leaving those . . .

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Point of order noted.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise on a point of order under 23(b)(i). While I appreciate the sensitivities of gang violence and gang activity in our province, I don't see the relevance of that with this discussion and would ask that maybe the member get to the point.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you very much, Deputy Whip.  
Anybody else wish to speak to it?

**Ms Sweet:** Oh, please rule on that.

**The Acting Chair:** Please rule on that. Okay. Well, I did see the relevance of the discussion as it was going forward as to dealing with GSAs in the schools, so I will allow the member to continue. But as we go forward, please try and stay on the bill at hand.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Sweet:** Oh, it blows my mind. Okay. Wow. So let me go back to the two girls I was talking about. They were living with lots of

dynamics, really great at running away from placements. When they were on my caseload, the eldest, who was 16 at the time, was hanging out with a particular girl. I'd see them often together, and I would spend a lot of time with both of them. This goes back to my humility and my mistake in my career that I was referencing not even a few minutes ago, in the fact that I had worked with her for a long time, for years, and recognized her resiliency and recognized that she had a lot of dynamics going on in her life.

3:00 p.m.

But one of the proudest moments that I had was the fact that every time she ran away, I still could find her, and she would still call me, until the day that she told me that she was gay. I didn't know how to respond to that. I had grown up in a household where, when we talked about the LGBT community, it was uncomfortable. It wasn't a conversation that due to my faith, due to my background we talked about. I wasn't trained within Children's Services around how you talk about same-sex relationships. I knew how to, in my career, talk about safe sex, but I didn't know how to engage in a conversation with this youth around her relationship with this other girl. And I'd spent lots of time with both of them.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

So she disengaged from me for a while. She stopped talking to me because my reaction, in hindsight, was probably not the best reaction that I could have given her. And it wasn't because I thought there was anything wrong with it, but I knew in that moment that when I talked to her about it, I shamed her. I created shame in her because I was unprepared for the conversation. I think that that's what's important about this conversation around Bill 8. It's that as adults, when we put ourselves in situations or we are put in situations – I guess that would be a better framing – and we become uncomfortable with the conversation, we project our being uncomfortable onto the people that are making us uncomfortable, similar to the point of order.

I think that when we talk about these things and when we look at the fact that Bill 8 talks about having safe spaces in schools and the fact that we need to create those spaces so that when children and youth want to be able to come forward, when they're prepared to have these conversations, there are adults that are prepared to receive them – there is nothing worse than thinking you have a relationship with a youth or a child or whatever and having them come and talk to you and you not being prepared to be able to have that conversation.

I was fortunate, because I'd already had a relationship with this youth for a while, that she eventually was able to come back and meet with me, and we were able to talk about it. I was able to admit that I made a mistake. I was able to acknowledge that my experiences in my life and the way that I had grown up had impacted my ability to respond to her the way that I should have. That was huge for me. That was a significant learning experience in how I work with the LGBTQ-plus community, how I learned to communicate around these issues and to acknowledge that at that time in my life I was uncomfortable.

Now, knowing that and knowing how important these conversations are and knowing that youth need them, that they need safe spaces and safe adults to have those conversations with, that, to me, is extremely important. Had I not had that relationship with that particular youth, had I not been able to work with the youth that I referenced prior to that, who had been kicked out of his house because of the new relationships, I don't know what the outcome would have been.

So when we look at Bill 8 and we look at the fact that these spaces need to exist and that they need to exist in every school no matter

what school it is – like, let's be clear. I grew up in a faith-based family. I grew up as a Baptist. I grew up not having these conversations, therefore not being prepared as an adult to have those conversations with youth that I worked with. There are people within my faith that are part of the LGBT community. I know that. The church that I go to knows that.

There should not be a distinction, in my opinion, that removes a requirement to create these spaces for any individual no matter what the education, no matter what the system is, no matter if it's a faith-based education system or whether it's a public education system. The reality of it is that people from the LGBT community are in our communities. They are in every single one of our communities, and until we acknowledge that and until we're able to say that to ourselves, we have to be prepared to have these conversations, and we have to know how to talk about them so that we are not hurting the people around us, so that we're not hurting kids.

I mean, that's just fundamental teaching that we have. We take care of each other. I grew up believing that I love my neighbours no matter who they are. I also believe – and I'm totally open to having this conversation with the Minister of Children's Services . . .

**The Chair:** Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to stand and continue debate on Bill 8. I will do my best to meet the exacting standards of the Member for Cardston-Siksika in debating this bill. I appreciate his close attention to what we have to say.

As we've been proceeding with this debate, I've had the opportunity to share many different perspectives. I will say, Madam Chair, as I've said previously, that though I no longer consider myself a person of faith, I have always greatly appreciated the opportunity to learn from many different faith traditions. Indeed, the different mythologies, parables, proverbs that inform different spiritual belief systems can be very insightful. They can offer some very valuable metaphors and ways to consider different challenges that we face in the complexities of the human condition.

I was really pleased to be able to have the chance to reach out to and receive some correspondence from a rabbi with Temple Beth Ora, the Rabbi Gila Caine, who I had the chance to meet last year for the first time through the Edmonton Jewish Pride Shabbat. She was there again this year. I believe some government members had the opportunity to meet her. The Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, and the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain all had the opportunity to attend that event, of which Rabbi Caine was a part.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity I had to reach out to the rabbi and some thoughts that she has provided on the debate that we are having here today on the changes that this government is choosing to make to protections for LGBTQ2S-plus youth and their ability to form and participate safely in a GSA or a QSA. She begins by quoting from a recent article in the *Star* in which an individual says, "I like to believe that most parents in the province are supportive . . . but if Bill 24 saves the life of even one child, then it's done its job." Here's what the rabbi has to say.

My belief system knows on a deep spiritual level that most parents love their children, care for them and want them to grow and be healthy, happy and strong (and well fed . . .). My culture and spiritual world also demands that our children respect their parents and elders. This is the law. As a mother, a daughter, a rabbi – these are rules and customs which hold my life together.

But Jewish law, like any other legal system, is complex and understands that nothing can ever be straightforward. When

approaching the question of Gay-Straight alliances/Queer-Straight alliances in schools here in our province, I know we must delve deeper than just the basic guidelines of our religious law. This is an extremely complicated question, and what lies at its roots are not only issues of identity but also of belonging. It touches the exact point which asks, how much do we know about what's going on in our children's lives, souls, spirits? How much should they be allowed to hide from us? I think this also touches the painful question of how much each of us is an individual and in what way are we still connected to our root family and tribe/culture?

As I said, this is a serious conversation which should be allowed to unfold within respectful borders, but I would like to bring in one Jewish perspective that sees the urgency in creating these safe spaces for youth.

**3:10 p.m.**

In order to understand why we should encourage the existence of GSAs as a sacred space, I'm going to bring in the category of *Pikuach nefesh* (saving a life.) *Pikuach nefesh* is a Halachic category which states that in almost all situations when we encounter a person in danger of death – our obligation to help them, overrides any other religious law. For example, Jews are not allowed to light [a] fire on Shabbat (the Sabbath), but if by lighting a fire I would save the life of a person who is about to die of cold – then I'm commanded to do that. There are a few instances where this law doesn't work (In cases of Idolatry, incest or murder), but the general rule is that Life comes before anything else. Moreover, for millennia Jews have read this verse "You shall keep My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live: I am Adonai" (Leviticus 18:5) and understood it in the following way: These rules given to us by our God, are so that we live according to them.

They are not to be followed if they bring with them death.

I also want to point out that the word "Nefesh" means Spirit – and so, we understand *Pikuach nefesh* to be relevant in questions of emotional and spiritual, and not only physical danger.

And so, we go back to the question of allowing a safe space for young people to explore and talk about their identity and ask the question through the lens of *Pikuach nefesh*:

If a child's life is in danger following their parents' discovery of their membership in a GSA, are we still allowed to inform the parent? And even if we don't know, but only suspect? What then? Halachah would say that we should not tell them, [because] we are dealing here in *Dinei Nefashot* (the rules of life and death), and in these cases we always are on the side of caution.

Our schools are second homes for our children, and within their bounds they form crucially important relationships and experience physical, emotional and spiritual health. It is the place where they have the right and obligation to explore and grow beyond the boundaries of our own homes. We all hope they continue to feel connected and rooted within our family homes, but school is where they can visit other ideas. [Most] importantly, school at its best is where they can feel free to visit themselves.

Thank God that today Alberta is a place where the variety of gender identities is normalized, and which acknowledges the fluidity of gendered expressions within people's bodies and lives.

I understand this [may] be difficult for some people, and I respect that we all want our children to follow in our footsteps and within our belief system.

But if the conversation is currently at a point where some children and young people are scared for their lives (be it their physical or emotional life), then it is our obligation as a community to create safety for them.

Rabbi Gila Caine, July 4, 2019, Edmonton AB.

I really appreciate these thoughts from the rabbi. This concept of *pikuach nefesh* – the idea that the highest good overrides any other

belief that I might personally have, the greater good of that child, the safety of their physical person, their emotional, their spiritual health – comes first, before any individual or institutional religious belief.

That is the principle that basically lies at the heart of what we chose to do with Bill 24, recognizing the importance of allowing parents to have a particular religious belief, to communicate that religious belief within their home, to choose to send their children to a school where there are others who may share that religious belief but not at any point to allow the expression of that belief within a publicly funded institution to have a negative effect on the physical, emotional, mental health of those youth. That, Madam Chair, I think, is a reasonable compromise despite what 28 schools within the province of Alberta might feel on that point.

It is clear that there are people of faith who understand this principle. Indeed, that is what we saw as a government. There were many schools that operate from a place of religious belief, from a faith-based perspective, who were able to work within what are reasonable expectations, that you do not have explicit policies in place at your school which would tell youth that they themselves, for who they are and who they know themselves to be, for who they love, are wrong. There is a place for an individual to hold that belief. There is a place even for them, perhaps, to have that discussion in some philosophical context, to choose to live their life personally by that belief but not to make that a tenet of a public institution that is there to serve those youth.

The health of the youth, of the child, their safety, their ability to be in a safe and caring space comes first. Unfortunately, with this bill that we have today, it demonstrates that this Premier and, at his behest, it seems, members of this government are not willing to have the courage to take that step. Now, I understand that members of this government may feel that they are doing enough, that it is enough to have the basic tenets in place, that they believe enough in the goodwill of the institutions that we're talking about here that they can remove specific requirements and it will have no detriment to the youth that are involved. But as I have laid out, Madam Chair, and as my colleagues have continued to lay out, we know from experience and from fact that that is not the case. It just simply isn't.

We have, I think, goodwill through the majority of the system. As I said, the majority of schools within the Edmonton public school system, within the Edmonton Catholic system, actually within the Catholic school boards across the province and public school boards across the province, had no problem at all ensuring that those policies were in place and that they took those appropriate steps. Even a lot of the private schools, be they Christian, be they Muslim, charter schools, had no problem at all. It is a minority that have resisted at this point, but the fact is that that minority exists, and we have seen that they are willing to act in a discriminatory manner. They are willing to put their beliefs before the needs of the youth. They are not following the principle of *pikuach nefesh*. They're elevating their personal religious belief, that feeling that they need to hold that particular standard, that they have to draw that line in the sand, above the physical, emotional, and mental health of vulnerable young people within our province.

As I said, there are a number of faith communities that understand this principle and indeed are speaking out against this bill and in support of the principle of *pikuach nefesh*. I have a letter from the Reverend Karen Bridges, the minister of Robertson-Wesley United church, which is within my constituency of Edmonton-City Centre. She writes to say:

My name is Rev. Karen Bridges and I am the minister at Robertson-Wesley United Church... [which] is an Affirming church which means we are a part of a network of primarily United Church ministries that declare themselves to be fully



inclusive of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

As a faith community we advocate for the oppressed. We seek to provide a safe place for people to be, a space of support, belonging, acceptance, welcome and inclusion. We have a long history of living out the social gospel which compels Christians to reach out to the vulnerable; to provide hospitality when asked and needed; to be the Good Samaritan who helps the person who has been left on the side of the road with nothing. It is in that Spirit that we write to the government.

3:20 p.m.

We believe that GSAs are a vital and essential support system for the LGBTQ2S+ community. Youth should not be required to [have to] advocate for their right to start a support group, nor should they fear that this information would be given out without their consent. As a faith community, we firmly believe that youth have the same rights as adults in choosing to share their personal story and their identity with whomever they are comfortable with and in their own time. If teachers are required to “out” a student to their parents about joining a GSA, or if a principal has the right to decide whether or not to allow a GSA to be formed, we believe it would put many students lives at risk. The potential for self-harm, and mental health issues would continue to grow within this population. I have been a youth minister for over 20 years, and have worked with many students who have [been] bullied, isolated, rejected by friends and parents all because of their gender identity. This has led to depression, anxiety, eating disorders and suicide. It is essential that youth are provided with the resources they need and this includes peer support without the risk of being exposed.

We believe that God created us all equally, regardless of our sexual orientation or gender identity. We believe that Jesus calls us to love one another, as we would want to be loved. Unconditional love is about acceptance, and patience, and compassion. Jesus loved the people who were cast out by society. We need to remember that Jesus quoted from the Prophet Isaiah claiming that Jesus was sent “to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free . . .” We hope and pray that the Government of Alberta listens to the voice of the youth from the LGBTQ2S+ community and helps to create a learning environment that starts from a place of unconditional love and acceptance.

Sincerely,

Rev. Karen Bridges

Minister of Congregation and Community Development

Madam Chair, members of this government continue to profess that they believe in these principles, but they are choosing to remove specific provisions that guarantee these things take place. They are choosing to reopen loopholes that will allow, as we have seen in the past, principals, administrators, school boards, others to delay, to block, to prevent, to discourage youth from forming a GSA or QSA at their school, from calling that QSA or GSA the name that they wish to call it, from being able to know that their participation in that club will not be revealed unless they personally choose to reveal it.

It is an intentional decision that this government is making because they believe there needs to be more balance, that somehow allowing these youth the unencumbered opportunity to do this is an unacceptable offence to particular institutions’ beliefs, that the beliefs of those institutions should trump the health and the well-being and, indeed, the free expression of the students who they are there to serve and that they receive public funding to serve. The rabbi and the reverend have made clear their opinions on it, and I have to say that I agree. There is no need to put religious belief, however sincerely held, ahead of the health and safety – physical, emotional, mental, spiritual – of vulnerable young people.

The needs of these individuals who take offence to being required to accommodate these youth do not trump the needs of these youth. They are not greater. They are not more important. This is not an attack on them. This is not some sort of subterfuge or conspiracy by which outside parties are coming in to try to pre-empt or take away their faith. This is not an attack from a shadowy gay agenda. This is about protecting the health and the safety of vulnerable young people, period.

This government is choosing instead to roll that back, to say to these youth: “We will roll the dice, and hopefully you’re not going to run into any problems here. We’re going to take away the guarantees, so hopefully the folks at your school are going to support this. If not, well, we’ll have some ambiguous, unidentified process. Perhaps if you write to the minister, maybe she’ll sit down and have a chat with them – who knows? – because we aren’t going to put down those rules. We’re going to take away, in fact, the clarity that has been there, the clear expectation, because we are afraid of a particular segment of our base.” That is why, Madam Chair, myself and my colleagues will continue to stand in this House and debate this bill, to protect the health and safety of vulnerable young people.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. It’s my pleasure to once again rise and speak about Bill 8. Of course, you know, this side of the House knows the importance of GSAs and the importance of having a specific timeline in terms of when they are brought into force. I know we’re speaking on the main bill now, but an amendment that we put in earlier talked about immediacy, and by that we really mean that in a two-week window the principal would be compelled to create a GSA. If that’s not done, children are at risk, and they need the support.

You know, in the hopes of changing hearts and minds on the government side, I have done a bit of research and have pulled up a study from the *Journal of School Health*, and it was published in June 2017. Several authors – and I’m happy to table this at an appropriate time – have done this research in both Canada and the U.S. It was a North American study. They have various backgrounds. Some of the researchers are school administrators, some are social workers, some are psychologists, so there’s an extensive array of different academic backgrounds who worked on this study. The title of it is LGBTQ Youth’s Views on Gay-Straight Alliances: Building Community, Providing Gateways, and Representing Safety and Support. Their research is pretty clear, and I’m just going to sort of share it with the House here.

We know that

adolescents thrive in climates that foster healthy development; arguably the most important climates are those in school and family settings.

We’ve talked about that before. Certainly, sometimes, you know, a family isn’t a healthy system for kids. If it is, of course that’s the optimum, as is the school environment, and those can vary. Some can be more healthy than others.

While macro-level systems certainly influence societal climate (eg, marriage legislation, media messaging) . . .

sort of these overarching parts of being a society, looking at that through a macro lens, not so much at the specific family or school, which is more of the micro lens,

. . . it is [really, though,] the micro-[lens] of interpersonal and socioenvironmental factors that are the strongest predictors of whether a climate is more protective . . .

We talked about protective factors before.

... or [harmful] for an adolescent. The infrastructure of a school (eg, school policies, [school] programs, staffing ratios) can foster or inhibit a positive ...

environment that may promote a healthy climate.

We know that

gay-straight alliances (GSAs), as a part of a school's climate, are a key strategy designed to ensure safety, support, and respect for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth in schools. Yet little is [really] known about the mechanisms through which GSAs might lead to positive outcomes for [these] youth.

Therefore, this study is really looking at exploring the perceptions and benefits of GSAs through the voices of those young people who are part of them. It's really an exploratory study.

3:30 p.m.

One of the terms or the concepts that the researchers speak about is school climate. They really talk about school climate as being

the essence of school life that "reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures." A positive school [environment] promotes healthy youth development, learning, life satisfaction, civic engagement, feelings of safety ... [feelings of] respect, and student learning and is [correlated] with lower levels of mental health problems ([for example] anxiety, depression, loneliness) and [also] substance use

and abuse.

There are five interrelated sociological dimensions that comprise school climate. Safety is one of them. Relationships is another. Teaching and learning is a third. Institutional environment is a fourth. And the fifth is school improvement processes.

GSAs are [an] integral [part] to promoting a positive school climate for LGBTQ youth. More broadly, research indicates that "creating a supportive environment for [these] students improves educational outcomes for all students ..."

And, of course, we have talked about that extensively, how not only questioning students but others, heterosexual students, also benefit from the creation of a GSA.

Thus, it is essential to consider GSAs as being situated in [a] school climate and as influencing not only LGBTQ youth but ... all youth in [these] settings.

[Gay-straight alliances] are school-based clubs that aim to provide a safe environment for LGBTQ youth and their allies. GSAs are often student-led with a teacher or a school-related adult adviser.

Certainly, that is something that we want to make sure that the legislation does have in it. Not only do we want them to have that two-week window where a principal – it's incumbent on him to create a GSA, but he or she would also assign a staff support to that club.

Fifty per cent of LGBTQ students in the United States have a GSA or related student club available at their school, and two thirds of these students reported participating.

But GSAs are not uniform across all schools although most provide various types of support such as socialization and peer group support. Sometimes they have queer proms, movie nights, Facebook pages, counselling, group sessions with a GSA adviser or school counsellor, and advocacy. Examples of that are classroom presentations or a day of silence.

A growing body of predominantly quantitative research demonstrates that GSAs are an important resource for LGBTQ youth. The relationship between a GSA and school climate is complementary and mutually informative; for example, GSAs in schools where students perceive greater hostility regarding sexual orientation engage in more advocacy efforts in schools with less hostility. LGBTQ youth who attend a school with a GSA, in comparison to those without a GSA, report safer school

climates, more supportive teachers and school staff, better grades, and a lower likelihood of skipping school because of fear. GSAs most certainly impact and intersect with all the aforementioned school climate dimensions, either directly or indirectly, and warrant further investigations as a key contributor to [a] positive school climate.

[Also,] GSAs have been found to reduce mental health and substance abuse issues, including suicide, depression, alcohol use, and smoking. Importantly, GSAs have also been associated with students having an increased sense of safety and [a] lower likelihood of harassment experiences.

One researcher, Russell, and his colleagues noted:

GSAs can provide feelings of empowerment for young people as well, in the form of combating sexism and heterosexism and community/safe space formation. Other studies show that LGBTQ youth who report participating in a GSA have fewer problems related to bullying and anti-LGBTQ victimization.

A study by Toomey

found that LGBQ young adults who attended a school with a GSA were more likely to obtain a college education. [Additionally], GSAs are associated with ... lower odds of discrimination because of actual or perceived sexual orientation ... suicidal thoughts and attempts among [LGBTQ] youth, and also for heterosexual boys ...

So reductions in those.

... and reduced odds of recent binge drinking for LGB girls, and unexpectedly, also for heterosexual boys and girls.

This study, really, besides sort of gathering the literature to this point, does ask a question.

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the varied experiences of LGBTQ youth involved in GSAs, and, specifically, the functions they perceive that GSAs serve in their lives.

When these groups were actually formed, what is it that was the really mitigating factors that actually created a more healthy school climate that supported students to do so well?

Participants for this study were recruited from Canada and the United States, as I said previously, and they were between the ages of 14 and 19. Of course, they were invited to participate, and the methodology used: as I said, it was an explorative study, you know, quantitative research. It was an open-ended interview. There were six open-ended questions that the researchers used, and each interview was audio recorded and transcribed so they could look in detail at it, look at the coding and all of that. Some of the results that came out of this qualitative study – I think I said "quantitative" before; it's qualitative. My apologies. The youth described multiple facets of GSAs, which were organized into three main themes. You know, they did the coding of all the interviews, and these were the three themes that emerged from that data.

The first one is that GSAs provide and build community, the second one is that GSAs serve as gateways, and the third is that GSAs represent safety. I'll go into some detail about what exactly these three themes actually mean.

The most prevalent theme that emerged from youth's comments about GSAs was that GSAs provide a readily accessible community, with community-oriented benefits that largely coalesced around 3 aspects of community as defined by McMillan and George.

The three aspects of community are:

Community members share an emotional connection and social support ... communities provide a sense of membership, and ... communities fulfill needs of the members.

Sharing [that] emotional connection provides a foundation for membership in the GSA community and the support received from this community. Youth described the benefits of a GSA community in facilitating connection [in] common experiences.

This is a quote from one of the youths that was interviewed. You have something in common . . . you might go through some hardships in life and it's just nice to be around people that you can express your problems with.

Another student shared:

You think maybe they won't be [your] type of people. Maybe I won't fit in with them. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if they look like the type of people you'd hang out with or not. They're gay and you have something in common and you have that going for you.

That was another young student.

3:40 p.m.

One participant highlighted the appeal of having this GSA community after learning about a GSA from a student speaking in their class, so the student was telling them about this GSA that was available. It was a male. He says:

"I was pretty excited to join, and I noticed that the other kids didn't really care. It didn't really affect them, but for me it affected me a lot because I wanted to meet others like me. I wanted to meet others that would support me or that were supportive of this community."

Membership in [a] GSA conveys for many youth that someone is friendly and/or is someone with whom a youth has something in common, even if they did not appear to be upon first impression. Once membership in the GSA was known, impressions can change, as 1 youth shared: "We have people I would see from a distance in the cafeteria who I would think don't seem too friendly but then see at GSA and think, oh, I guess they are friendly."

It opened up avenues of connection.

Youth talked about the GSA not only as a source of emotional connection, but also as a source of personal support.

This is a quote again from one of the research subjects, one of the students.

"I like that they'll talk about problems and they'll try to help you. As like a community, basically, which I find . . . cool" . . . The same participant illustrated the importance of a sense of shared emotional connection by describing when he felt that emotional connection does not exist with [the] straight group leader: "She doesn't really have a connection to it. I think it's pointless that she [runs] it [the GSA]" . . . Other youth reflected broader appreciation for all involved in the GSA, as shared by this young male: "There's nobody in there that's going to say anything against me or anyone else there. And everybody in there is absolutely for sure accepting of the LGBTQA+ community, like, all those people. So I guess that's kind of [why] I feel at home."

This was from a 14-year-old gay male.

The youth's sense of membership in [this] GSA community was apparent in a number of ways. Many talked about membership in the GSA community as providing an open, comfortable space, and feeling, for some, like a family. For example, [one of the] youth said: "Everyone is just really understanding . . . always open arms for anyone who wants to come in. So, it's just really [a] kind [of] open [and a cool] space" . . . A recently graduated participant reflected: "We really just hung out and just talked and laughed and danced. It was a family, definitely" . . . For many, the social benefits of membership reached outside [of] the bounds of the GSA meetings; participants talked about hanging out with the same group outside of the school environment.

For some, a sense of membership in the GSA community was fostered by being invited to the GSA by existing friends; for others, the direction was reversed: "It was kind of tricky to find people that I would relate to, and then I joined [a] GSA, and I found my friend group."

That was a 14-year-old gal.

Membership in the GSA community caused youth not to feel isolated in their identity: "It was nice to know that there were other people like that, because I would never have suspected that [anybody] else was."

This speaks so loudly of the isolation many in the community feel and how transformative it is to have a GSA.

A few participants said they did not attend (or delayed attending) because they did not know anyone or did not like the people in the group.

Finally, youth membership in the GSA community was demonstrated by youths' expressions of personal investment. For many, personal investment was shown by taking on leadership or co-leadership roles in the GSA or GSA activities. It was also demonstrated in participation, as 1 youth expressed frustration at missing a planning meeting: "I forgot to go, and I'm, like, no I needed to go to that."

So they felt a lot of affinity to being part of that important group. Also,

the youth in [the] study highlighted ways the GSA community fulfills the needs of members within the group itself and outside of the GSA in the broader school community. Within the group, the GSA community can fulfill . . . educational, advocacy, and other personal needs of . . . group members. Youth highlighted their own education within the group, sometimes learning from each other and sometimes learning . . . from outside resources.

Here's a quote.

There's some kind of doctor who specializes in gender, so we're Skyping with him on Monday because we have a couple of students in our GSA who are like, "I don't know my gender," and they want to put a label on it, so we're going to Skype with him and see if he can help that and explain to people who don't understand the genders. Even me, I think I've got a better grasp on it.

That was helpful to those students. They got the connections and the understanding of a way they can get some clarity on some pretty confusing times.

A few youth highlighted the role of the GSA in helping members come out to [their] parents.

This is a quote.

My friend, she wanted to come out as bi, but she had no idea how to do it. . . . She came to [the] GSA, she asked a couple questions and [then] the week later she was out to both her parents.

This provided some support to this young 14-year-old, who then was able to express to her own family and had a positive result.

The GSA community also works to fulfill the shared needs of group members in the broader setting.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests joining us in the gallery today.

We'd just like to acknowledge your presence here and that you are welcome in the Alberta Legislative Assembly. We are on Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, in Committee of the Whole.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is rising to speak.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and welcome to the guests. I'm very pleased to rise to speak to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. I will begin my comments by making a confession to this Chamber. I am a policy wonk. I am someone who loves the technical details and who loves to get into issues, which has caused great stress for various advisers that I've had in my time as an MLA when we want to keep things high-level – "Let's hit the key messages; you have to say it until you're sick of it, and then other people will hear it," that type of thing – and I'm, like, "Let's talk the details."

But in today's Bill 8 debate we have the opportunity to talk about some of those details, so I'm really delighted to stand to talk about

Bill 8 and why I do not support it, the concerns I have with it, and to be a bit of a policy wonk and to bring in some of the supporting facts for why, because that's what I really love, so I appreciate the opportunity to do that.

To quickly summarize Bill 8 and why I do not support this bill, this Education Amendment Act is being brought in in a way that essentially removes protections that were implemented by our government, through Bill 24, for gay-straight alliances, student-led groups supported by teachers, created when a student requests them and often used to create a supportive environment. I'm going to speak in a little bit more length about why I support gay-straight alliances, supported by the facts and some of the policy details.

The biggest concerns I have with Bill 8 are that this introduction of Bill 8 is going to do a few things. It's going to exempt private schools from having gay-straight alliances, which I think is really a shame for the students who attend those private schools.

When a student requests a gay-straight alliance in their school, right now the legislation says that school administration needs to respond to that request immediately, but Bill 8 is going to take that away. This is damaging because we know from many first-hand student experiences that when they ask to start a student-led support group in their school, barriers and roadblocks were put in their way and delay tactics were used. The removal of that immediacy is a strong concern to me because justice delayed is justice denied. A GSA delayed is a GSA that those kids don't have. I have strong concerns about that.

As well, this bill removes employment protections for teachers who may be LGBTQ2S community members. The idea that we are removing those protections is shameful to me.

*3:50 p.m.*

I also disagree with the removal of some of the enforcement mechanisms by which the government can make sure that all schools are following the legislation and, when a student requests it, creating that GSA.

Fundamentally, I believe that LGBTQ2S rights are human rights, that all Albertans should be treated with respect, and that all Albertans should be afforded the opportunity to come out to friends, to family, to their community only at their choosing and when they are ready.

I base a lot of my support for GSAs on the amazing discussion and debate that my colleagues have put forward. Kudos to my colleagues with all of the personal stories, information, support from validators that they're bringing into this discussion. I really feel like we're getting a lot of value out of being able to explore these issues in depth, and I genuinely hope that the government members who are listening are hearing what I'm hearing, which are some compelling reasons not to support Bill 8; alternatively, compelling reasons to support some of the amendments that are going to be coming forward, that we've had the opportunity to kind of preview will be coming.

Now, getting back to my policy wonk terminology, in seeking to present as compelling an argument as possible for this Chamber and for any Albertan tuning in, interested in learning more about this, I have been seeking out some of the research as to why GSAs may be important, because I don't think there was a GSA when I went to high school. It was many years ago, Madam Chair. I will refrain from telling you when. My age is on Wikipedia if anyone is curious. But I don't think I had a GSA back in the day. In fact, I really felt a lot of what the Member for Edmonton-Manning was saying in that talking about these issues was not something that I was immediately comfortable with. This was something that, as I grew as a person and learned more about the LGBTQ2S community and learned

more about how to support friends and family, I grew a little bit more comfortable with.

In seeking out more information and more research, I have found some really good resources from an organization called GLSEN. Now, they are U.S. based, but we know there are lots of similarities between things happening in the U.S. and in Canada. This group was founded in 1990. It started off as just some teachers in Massachusetts who came together to improve the education system. In over 25 years that small group has now turned into a leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe and affirming schools for LGBTQ students. The interesting thing about them is that they conduct extensive original research to inform evidence-based solutions for K to 12 education.

As you can imagine, Madam Chair, their research touches on GSAs in many ways, and I think a lot of what they've got to say we can bring into this debate and really think about the benefits, the pros and cons, of gay-straight alliances. The first thing I'd like to quote from is GLSEN's research brief titled *Gay-straight Alliances: Creating Safer Schools for LGBT Students and Their Allies*. It begins by saying:

Schools are responsible for providing a safe learning environment for all students. However, for many students, especially students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), school is not a safe place. There is compelling evidence that the majority of students frequently hear homophobic remarks and other types of biased language at school, and that LGBT students experience bullying and harassment at school because of their sexual orientation and/or their gender expression. These experiences contribute to a hostile climate and some LGBT students choose to miss school in order to avoid negative experiences that threaten their safety.

Findings from a growing body of research demonstrate the positive impact that school-based resources, such as clubs that address LGBT student issues (commonly known as Gay-Straight Alliances) may have on school climate. [These] are student-led, school-based clubs open to all members of the student body regardless of sexual orientation. [They] often advocate for improved school climate, educate the larger school community about LGBT issues, and support LGBT students and their allies. This brief examines the current research on GSAs and highlights major findings regarding school safety, access to education, academic achievement for . . . students, and access to GSAs in schools.

Then there are just a few major findings. I'm going to pick and choose a few of the more interesting tidbits from this piece. The first major finding is "The presence of GSAs may help make schools safer for LGBT students by sending a message that biased language and harassment will not be tolerated." I have to tell you, Madam Chair, that from my own conversations in my home community of Edmonton-Mill Woods, when I talk to people around Alberta, and when I listen to colleagues in this Chamber, I know this to be true, that the presence of GSAs helps schools feel safer for LGBT students.

What the research brief goes on to say is:

Biased language, such as racist, sexist, and homophobic remarks, can make school a hostile place for all members of a school community. Homophobic remarks . . . used in a derogatory manner, are among the most frequently heard types of biased remarks . . .

Again, these are U.S. schools.

Students in schools with GSAs are less likely to hear homophobic remarks in school on a daily basis than students in schools without . . .

by a significant margin. The entire school environment is changed by the presence of a supportive school club for students to gather in.

GSAs are related to greater physical safety for LGBT students. LGBT students who attend schools with a GSA are less likely than those at schools without a GSA to report feeling unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation ... or because of the way ... they express their gender.

Safety is measurably improved when there is a GSA.

Educators believe in the value of GSAs – more than half ... of secondary school teachers nationally believe that having a GSA would help to create safer schools for LGBT students.

Major finding 2 from this research brief says:

Having a GSA may also make school more accessible to LGBT students by contributing to a more positive school environment.

LGBT students in schools with GSAs are less likely to miss school because they feel unsafe compared to other students: a quarter ... of students in schools with GSAs missed school in the past month because they felt unsafe compared to a third ... of students at schools without GSAs.

Here we see measurably that attendance is improved, which I think is a really important part of school because if students are not in school, then they are not learning, they're not growing towards becoming successful, productive adults.

Students in schools with GSAs or similar student clubs are two times more likely than students without such clubs to say they hear teachers at their school make supportive or positive remarks about lesbian and gay people ...

Again, the idea that a GSA is helping the entire school community in creating that more positive environment.

Major Finding 3. GSAs may help LGBT students to identify supportive school staff, which has been shown to have a positive impact on their academic achievement and experiences in schools.

Students in schools with a GSA are more likely to report that school faculty, staff and administrators are supportive of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students ...

LGBT students in schools with a GSA are significantly more likely than students in schools without a GSA to be aware of a supportive adult at school ...

This makes sense because, of course, there would at the very least be a teacher assigned to be the co-ordinator, the person supervising that GSA. Right there a student can find out that information and know that there is a safe and supportive school administrator or teacher and, even if a student didn't want to go to the GSA meetings, could seek out that teacher to get support, advice. I think this is so important.

LGBT students in schools with a GSA have a greater sense of belonging to their school community than students without a GSA.

They have a greater sense of belonging to the community because, of course, the community feels more welcoming to them.

I mean, it all follows, and it makes, for me, these kinds of stats – I'm not reading all of the percentages but more the high-level findings. It really reinforces to me the importance of GSAs and why I am so strongly objecting to Bill 8, which weakens those protections, will make it harder for GSAs to form in many cases, no longer requires support for them in private schools, and removes protections for LGBTQ2S teachers.

Now:

Major Finding 4. Most students lack access to GSAs or other student clubs that provide support and address issues specific to LGBT students and their allies.

In a national survey of secondary school students, less than one quarter ... of all LGBT and non-LGBT students report that their school has a GSA or another type of student club that addresses LGBT students' issues.

Although LGBT students may be more likely to be aware of a GSAs existence than other students, less than half of LGBT students ... report that their school has a GSA.

4:00 p.m.

Now, we also find, as we see in so many issues, that there are often intersectionality issues when we're looking at this. The report goes on to say:

Some LGBT students of color may have less access to a GSA at their school than their peers.

I think that's something we need to keep in mind, that the experience of all students is different based on their backgrounds and based on who they are.

LGBT students in the South and in small towns or rural areas are least likely to have a GSA in their school.

Knowing that

Schools are often not a safe place for students, particularly those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. GSAs can help to make schools safer for students and may play a role in mitigating the negative impacts of bullying and harassment experienced by some LGBT students. LGBT students in schools with GSAs are less likely to hear biased language ... homophobic remarks ... less likely to feel unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation and gender expression, and ... less likely to miss days of school because they are afraid to go. In addition, [they] may play an important role in helping students identify staff who may be supportive and to whom they can report any incidents of victimization.

I have some additional data, that I will talk to maybe later, now or later, later, that talks about how low the reporting rate is when an LGBT student is victimized. I think that's a really important factor.

The presence of a GSA may offer evidence of a school's commitment to LGBT students and their allies, creating a source of perceived support for students even if they're not actively engaged with the GSA themselves.

Just having a GSA in the school changes in positive ways the school community. It's supportive to students who identify as members of the LGBTQ community but also helps to build more tolerance and accepting attitudes in all students as well as staff. We start to see that through the data, through the stats, being policy wonks and looking at kind of the background.

How can we apply these positive impacts of GSAs to our debate on Bill 8? Well, I think that by acknowledging that the changes in Bill 24 to protect students, to make sure that when they request a GSA, it gets formed, to make sure that teachers who are members of the LGBTQ2S community cannot be fired and have that very explicit protection – all of those changes in Bill 24 were done for very reasoned purposes, supporting students and making measurable, positive impacts in Alberta students' lives, because these are students who will become more likely to graduate. These are students who will become more likely to be successful as they grow and learn. Having Bill 24 respond directly to feedback that we were hearing from Albertans was something that I strongly supported.

Now, I would note that there were 23 MLAs who voted against Bill 24, and many of those MLAs who voted against Bill 24 are now members of the new government caucus. The introduction of Bill 8 is essentially a way to remove Bill 24, to weaken those protections for gay-straight alliances. It's turning back the clock on the protections for those LGBTQ2S youth.

I really want to be very clear that supporting students and seeking the best possible outcomes for all Alberta students should be fundamental for any government. We see through the statistics that having a GSA benefits not only the students who are members but the entire school community, that having a GSA improves the outcomes for students. It improves their likelihood of success. It also improves attendance and all of those factors that buy into that, and by supporting students through GSAs, we know we're

supporting human rights and building that better Alberta future that we are looking for.

I would also note that when we were debating Bill 24, all those pieces that are going away because of Bill 8, the ATA strongly supported the work that was done in Bill 24. The ATA, who represents teachers and knows far better than I what teachers do and do not need, said that they wanted that clarity. Having that support, I thought, was incredibly significant during that debate, and I would like to remind all members of this House of that now, as we're talking about Bill 8.

I have heard members of this House speak in support of GSAs. That is always appreciated, but Bill 8 needs to be amended to return the immediacy, to undo the exemption for private schools. I would like to see employment protections for the teachers, but I understand that the government has already defeated that proposed amendment, which is incredibly unfortunate.

Through the debate on Bill 8 I want to say how much I've appreciated hearing the stories, the letters brought in, the very unique perspectives, like those from leaders in our religious communities – thank you to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre for sharing some of those stories – because what I'm hearing is a story that, layer upon layer, talks about the need to support our students, talks about the need to make sure that when students are requesting a school club to create a supportive environment for themselves and their peers, that need can be met quickly, that they can be supported for the betterment of not only the kids who go and attend the GSA but the entire school community and, ideally, the greater outside-of-school community as well. These are all important steps.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, any other members wishing to speak to Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again it's my pleasure to rise in the House to speak against Bill 8. I was so humbled to learn and listen to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and to listen to the experience of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview and the very personal experience of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. All of these stories: what they tell us is that life is, you know, a learning process; also, how those small things – not understanding, not having experience, not having been exposed to it, not having been raised by those values – can put someone's life really in danger.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

As I mentioned in previously speaking to this bill, you know, I belong to a very conservative family with conservative values. I do not have a personal experience. I do not belong directly to an LGBTQ2S community; neither does any member of my family or friends belong to the LGBTQ2S-plus community. But in talking about GSAs/QSAs, this is something that we can expect, one of the best behaviours of humankind, and we cannot expect anything less in the society if we are committed to make this world better for all, where everyone can live their life with dignity and, not only that, can have access to build, learn, and grow respectfully. I think that whenever we are talking about GSAs, when we're talking about QSAs, that is kind of the behaviour that these clubs are trying to build, trying to establish.

4:10 p.m.

Instead of encouraging them, instead of praising them, instead of helping them, instead of providing security for them, this bill really, really attacks them and – how would I say it? – weakens even their

existence. As legislators I think this is our responsibility. This is the place where people can expect that their representative can listen to them and come together, sit together, and discuss forming policies that can, you know, promote their fundamental rights. But looking into this bill, the argument and some of the proposals in this bill being discussed are really, really threatening the aspect of security that was provided by the GSAs/QSAs in schools.

I have an article I would like to refer to. This is how people can be affected without legitimate – by the lack of a policy, I would say. The reason I just wanted to refer to this article is because the proposals in this bill are lax in the schools' not having a specific policy regarding GSAs/QSAs. It is also lax in the rules, that the principals of the schools will not be bound to act in a timely manner if a student or students request to form a GSA or QSA. By moving forward this way, this bill would situate the students in very tricky situations, where they will be, you know, exposed and they will be bullied. Further, this bill already allows that those students can be outed, so whole lives can be jeopardized in the lack of legitimate policy providing the protection, the fundamental rights of the LGBTQ2S-plus community.

I'm just trying to refer to this article that was published in the journal called *Edutopia*, edited by Emelina Minero. The article heading says *Schools Struggle to Support LGBTQ Students*. This directly relates to what we are trying to discuss, that the schools will have a lack of policy, how they are going to address, how the government is going to deal with those schools that will not have policies, how this government will deal with the funding regarding those schools that will not have the policies in place. This article actually shares the story of Roddy Biggs. The article was published on April 19, 2018, last year. It says:

Pinning Roddy Biggs against a locker, a student whaled on him, giving him a black eye, fracturing his eye socket, and bruising his ribs. It wasn't a lone incident for Biggs, who came out as gay to his Tennessee high school when he was a freshman.

"I didn't really do the best in school because of it," recalls Biggs, now 23 . . .

Last year he was 23.

. . . who says homophobic slurs, death threats, and shoves were commonplace. "I had depression and panic attacks and all that stuff along the way."

Biggs can still remember the teachers who ignored the bullying or simply said, "That's not cool," and walked away. But there were also the educators who tried to help, like the science teacher who took him to the principal's office after he was beaten and sat with him for more than an hour during class time. Oftentimes, though, the best efforts of teachers were stymied by district or state regulations that stopped them from doing much more.

These are the practical examples, the real examples of the lack of a legitimate policy supporting the vulnerable member of the community or the community at large and the kind of, you know, danger that they can go through.

The article says further:

"Most of the educators wanted to help, but did not know how or were limited in what they could do," says Biggs, referring to Tennessee's lack of legislation preventing the bullying of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) students. Tennessee is one of 32 states [in the U.S.] that do not have such protections in place.

That's what we are really, really worrying about, then, on this side of the House, my colleagues for a number of weeks discussing this bill, bringing up all those articles, arguments, listening to our constituents in the ridings, listening to the LGBT community, looking at the LGBTQ kids. You know, two weeks before, the LGBTQ community, especially the students, came out hugely

during very rainy weather. That was a hope for them. That was a hope for us, those kinds of requests, I would say, the callings that will ensure that the members of government look into this seriously and put their attention to once again and see what can be done and what we can change in this bill.

But looking at the experience of the last two weeks, I would even say the last two days, even the numerous amendments to the bill did not really convince anyone on the government side to, you know, set aside or sit together and say: let's see if even one of those amendments can help strengthen the legislation or if they can help strengthen the protection. The government House has always claimed that they stand for protecting the LGBT community; not only protecting, but they always say that this is the province, they claim, where they're providing one of the best protections in Canadian jurisdictions, but then, in fact, when we are, you know, outlining some of those clauses, those are really weakening the GSAs, QSAs in schools.

4:20 p.m.

They are basically expunging the rights they have right now provided by the guidelines, the timelines that the legislation provides. This bill will eliminate those things. It in no way supports the government's claim that this is the best protection for the LGBTQ community that they're committed to provide in a Canadian jurisdiction.

Referring to the article, I would say that, clearly, this article outlines that with a lack of policy, even the people who were willing, even the people who were generous, even the people who wanted to be there, they could not because there were no procedures in place, there was no training. You know, the Member for Edmonton-Manning really shared her personal experience. There were no procedures in place. The people did not know what to do in that situation.

Given all those arguments, I will say the facts, but it seems like nothing is moving forward. The members on the other side are really convinced to move the way that they believe in, not really, you know, what the facts are telling but what they really believe in. They also claimed during the election that this is not something that they're looking into or that they are moving forward with. They were not looking to legislate social policies: how the people live, what the people believe in, what their faith is, what their religion is, or what their sexual orientation is. In this case, it seems like they're not walking their talk.

I just wanted to refer to the article, this very heart-wrenching article, full of the evidence of what happened to this young person. The researcher surveyed nearly 2,500 teachers and students across the country and found that teachers were less comfortable intervening with bullying due to sexual orientation and gender identity than with bullying based on race, ability, and religion. That is why it's very important to legislate a policy, so the schools can have guidelines, timelines, and the teachers can have training. You know, ethically we need to encourage all those people, so I would say that most wise people – that's what we can expect from, I would say, a prudent person in a given situation: to stand up for their friends, stand up for the vulnerable, the people who are suffering.

But the bill at hand right now, three or four proposals in this bill are really an attack on the legislation that already provides protections to the LGBTQ community. This article says:

And while 83 percent of educators felt that they should provide a safe environment for their LGBTQ students – by displaying visible symbols of support or disciplining students for using homophobic language, for example – only half had taken action to do so, according to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education

Network (GLSEN) ... an organization that helps K-12 schools create safe environments for LGBTQ students ...

... Some teachers reported feeling uncomfortable talking to their students about sexuality due to their beliefs or perceptions about what's appropriate – often conflating sexual orientation with sex – while others felt pressure from administrators or parents to keep tight-lipped. And a lack of professional development on how to address LGBTQ issues and bullying has left teachers ill-equipped to establish LGBTQ-inclusive cultures or to identify anti-LGBTQ behaviour and harassment. Meanwhile, the emergence of highly politicized issues like ...

**The Acting Chair:** Members, anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 8 on the main bill? The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise again today to speak to Bill 8, what we're hearing in the community as Bill Hate. I just want to note that I will be making reference to some correspondence, and, as per your direction, I will wait until an appropriate time to table the correspondence.

**The Acting Chair:** If I could, Member, just a reminder that the tabling can only take place during the next daily Routine, which will all depend on how far we progress.

**Ms Goehring:** Right. Or an alternative is an intersessional tabling. I do have the tablings. I just wanted you to know as the chair. Thank you.

Parts of my discussions so far on the debate have been making reference to people that have reached out to me to express concern over this legislation moving forward, Mr. Chair. I can say that people are watching right now as this debate is occurring, and people are continuing to send in e-mails and correspondence, reaching out, expressing concern over Bill 8 and what it outlines. I've shared stories throughout this debate, not just today but in past days of debate regarding this bill, that are troubling and are concerning.

What we're talking about in this piece of legislation that's being introduced is people and specifically LGBTQ community members, staff in schools that have expressed concern over and over about making any sort of amendments to this that would take it backwards, Mr. Chair. That's exactly what this piece of legislation is proposing to do. I could see if they were looking at enhancing it, making it better, like I'd talked about earlier about Nova Scotia putting a dollar amount to support GSAs across their province in rural communities. That, to me, would make sense. That is not what this piece of legislation is proposing to do.

I've expressed stories from constituents who lived in rural Alberta as children who are transgender and who struggled, who disclosed that they have practised self-harm and had said that if perhaps a GSA had been available to them in their youth, they would've been safe. They would've been able to accept who they are at an earlier phase in life and perhaps not had such a horrible experience in adolescence.

4:30 p.m.

We know that as adolescents we struggle. Being a young person is not easy. We have hormones. We have peer pressure. We have so many things impacting us in so many different ways. When you put onto that pressure a system that doesn't support them asking for a GSA, it doesn't make sense to me, Mr. Chair. Knowing that a student is asking for help, asking for support in the simplest of ways, by establishing a GSA, to me simply makes sense. It says from the adults in the school, it says to the peers that are in the school that their opinion matters and that they're valued and that they're loved and that they're supported and that they have a safe

place within their school where they can come together and discuss current topics, have questions identified in a safe and caring and nurturing way.

We heard from a constituent who had tried to reach out in their classroom by asking a simple question in a sex ed class. I know that as a student I had the experience of being given an opportunity to put a question in an anonymous box. Students could put those questions in the box, and then the teacher would read them and then answer the questions to the best of their ability. This gave students an opportunity to maybe ask something that they were a little bit embarrassed about. Well, today we heard the experience of a gay student who had asked a question and was told in front of the class that not only was it inappropriate but that they simply wouldn't be responding. So what message does that give to that young person? Well, that their questions aren't important, that this is something that they should perhaps be ashamed about because it didn't even warrant an answer. A GSA would provide an opportunity to ask those questions in that safe place, in an anonymous setting, where the child can identify with their peers and with some grown-ups that are there to support them through their questions.

As a mom I hope my children have supports in place, that if it's not me that they feel that they can come to, there are other grown-ups that are healthy in their life that they can ask those tough questions of that they might be too embarrassed to ask me as their mom or their dad or their older siblings. To me, I've always seen the school as that place for my children. It's somewhere that I entrust my children to go to everyday during the school year for multiple hours a day. I'm trusting these adults to help my child. I know that situations come up outside of the curriculum that we trust these professionals to talk to our students about. As a mom it's important to me that my child feels safe in that school environment.

When we look at what Bill Hate is proposing to do, it clearly creates a space that is not safe for all students. To me, I just don't understand what the motivation or the intention of moving forward with that is, Mr. Chair, especially when we've heard so many stories, so many pleas to not proceed with the legislation as it is in this way.

This afternoon during this debate I received another e-mail from a constituent. It says:

Hi Nicole,

I want to send my concerns over the UCP's introduction of Bill 8. As a parent I am ashamed that the UCP would introduce a bill that could endanger the well being of any child. GSAs are an important peer group that can be life saving during adolescence, which is difficult as it is. Outing a child to their parents could be detrimental and cause significant harm; for example, review the rates of teenage homelessness and an alarming percentage of those teens identify as gay, bisexual or transgender. These kids are homeless because their parents kicked them out because of their sexual orientation. I want the UCP to explain to me how this protects the kids since the party is so "pro life". The right for children to form peer groups is enshrined in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms (hopefully, since you form my provincial government, I won't have to explain that to you).

My daughter has expressed concerns over GSA's, and Bill 8 has added to the anxiety that kids are feeling. The concerns expressed by my daughter are ones of fear that her friends will be "outed" and get in trouble from their parents. With a GSA, if you don't like it then look away as so many members of the UCP look away from poverty, intellectualism, democratic rights and equality of condition for the voting population.

In closing, I want to quote the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child for you to ponder upon before you try to ram Bill 8 down Albertans' throats:

"The Right to be heard and participate in decisions that affect them – every child will have the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them."

Consider the UN declaration as a guiding document, as something an evolved democratic society should aspire to.

Sincerely,

TK

I think, Mr. Chair, that this not is an opinion that isn't common that we've been hearing. I can only assume that members of government have had these letters and these e-mails and these meeting requests from concerned Albertans, from members of the LGBTQ community, from teachers, from parents. I'm curious. How many have taken the time to sit down with their local GSA and talk to the kids about what that experience is like for them and talk to the teachers who are supporting them and who are there every day making sure that they are creating a safe, inclusive environment for the students that they are there to work with?

I would hope that when being asked for some sort of change with this bill, members of government are listening. I've heard it said that hope is important, but action is essential. We can sit and hope for good intentions, for good actions to come forward, but actions, Mr. Chair, speak much louder than words. So far what we've seen through this piece of legislation is that the actions of this government are to push it through despite the pleas from Albertans, despite hearing these heart-wrenching stories of self-harm, of suicidal ideation, of homelessness. It's very concerning to me why you would want to proceed with this legislation knowing the impacts.

We've heard references to several studies about high rates of suicide and self-harm and homelessness in the LGBTQ community, especially with youth, and still there is no acknowledgement that a GSA could reduce that. We've heard first-hand testimony of students who have started GSAs, who participate in GSAs, who have peers that perhaps aren't from the LGBTQ community themselves but are allies, like the daughter of the constituent's letter I just read, who is concerned for her friends. As a child she is expressing concern for her friends who she knows are at risk if this legislation goes through the way it is, Mr. Chair.

We know that the way to build a better society is being truly inclusive and listening to the concerns and the needs that have been brought forward over and over and over again from Albertans. I attended several of the pride events here in Edmonton during pride. Having those one-on-one conversations about the life-changing, life-saving impacts of a GSA is incredible, and the fear that is being expressed about what this legislation proposes is real. There is a definite concern from not just the LGBTQ-plus community but people from all across the province, worried about the impacts that this is going to have.

I just fail to understand how you can move forward with this legislation knowing all of this information and feeling good about the outcome of it. There have been claims that this is the most comprehensive legislation. We're hearing from Albertans that they like it the way it is, that it would be rolling backwards to implement what is being proposed here, and that just doesn't make sense to me, Mr. Chair, when we're looking at ways to improve our province and to make life better for our youth and our children and our teachers.

4:40 p.m.

We've heard from several members talking about the teachers' experiences. Some of them lost their jobs over being someone who identifies as gay and a fear of being outed amongst their peers because they know that they could lose their job. When you have a culture in the system that already exists, why would you want to



make it worse? Why would you want to introduce legislation at this point that is going to take some situations that are not great and make them worse across the province? That just doesn't seem to make sense to me, Mr. Chair.

I know we had proposed some amendments, and I'm sure that there are more to come. I would really hope that members opposite, before the time comes to vote on this piece of legislation, really listen to not just what we're saying but what we're saying on behalf of so many who've reached out to us to ask for their voice to be shared in this Chamber. I know that I take great pride in being able to represent Edmonton-Castle Downs, and I know that when constituents reach out and express concerns and questions, I can say that I shared those with the government, that I spoke to that, that I asked the questions that you're asking. I just hope that that's having an impact on what the decision is going to be when it comes time to vote for this or when it comes time to look at some of the other amendments that could be coming forward, and not just oppose them because they're coming from this side of the House.

We've talked about some of the history in this Legislature of different parties coming together to work through on what makes sense and what is truly in the best interest of legislation, and it can't be that everything that we have proposed, with research and with support from Albertans, is dismissed simply because it came from our side of the House. I would hope that that's not the case, and I would hope that we would hear from members opposite about their reasoning for why they're not supporting some of the information that's being provided and how they can dispute some of this data that is so glaringly clear. It just doesn't make sense. I haven't heard so far, Mr. Chair, anything that is in support of moving forward without considering the life-saving impact that a GSA has.

I know there's talk about students still being able to ask for a GSA, and that's something that we've heard over and over from members opposite. Sure, they absolutely can ask. When someone is courageous enough and brave enough to come forward to actually ask for a GSA, there's no timeline specified in this piece of legislation as to when that would occur. It could sit on that administrator's desk indefinitely. Now, we're not asking for it to be done immediately. But we know that having one established is at the request of a student and will have a positive impact, Mr. Chair.

It's going to not only impact the life of that child that is supporting it but perhaps the peers of that child that weren't brave enough to come forward to ask for it, so those children are going to benefit from having a GSA as well. We know that seeing that in your school gives the impression and gives messaging to students that they're cared for, that they're supported, whether or not they choose to go to the GSA. Not all kids feel comfortable enough to even do that once one is established, but knowing that it's there is so important. Knowing that they could access it if they wanted to is amazing when it comes to the self-esteem of our children.

Just having that safety mechanism in place in a school is going to change the lives of kids even if they don't access it. Knowing that it's important to the school: it sends a message, just like a message is sent when a child asks for it and it doesn't happen. That message is: you don't matter; your needs aren't important. Those are devastating messages to be giving to youth, especially in a time when they're asking for support.

We've heard members talk in the House about some of the activities that happen in a GSA and about some of the sinister beliefs that are being spread about what happens in a GSA. From first-hand experience it's a place where youth come together and they laugh and they talk about kind of pop culture and what's happening, and they have an opportunity to ask some of those tough questions that they might be struggling with, that they don't feel comfortable asking outside of that safe space.

As a mom, as a social worker I know how important it is for our children to feel connected and to feel like they matter and that they are valued. Having an adult that's helping with that makes it that much more important. Knowing that there's supervision that's happening and guidance that's happening in that space: it makes an impact. Knowing that they can do so freely, without... [Ms Goehring's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Other members wishing to speak to Bill 8? The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and continue on the intensive debate on Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. I'd like to start by moving to a slightly different topic for a moment, another aspect of Bill 8, that being the trustee code of conduct and recall process. Some of my other colleagues have already spoken to this, but I wanted to offer a few thoughts.

Now, as others have noted earlier, we've certainly seen some situations previously where we've had some challenges with school boards in the province of Alberta. Notably, folks have referenced the drama – there really isn't another word for it – that we had with the Edmonton Catholic school board here for a period, interestingly also involving in a number of situations LGBTQ2S-plus students and their request for accommodation within that system. But, that aside, we saw there what can happen when we have a very dysfunctional board. Indeed, I recognize that that can be a challenging situation and one that can be a real impediment to getting good things done on behalf of students and teachers and the other people that the school board is intended to serve and support and to be able to make some very important decisions for.

I can think of other occasions. I remember that for a while there was some controversy that came up around a school board trustee in Ontario – I believe it was in the Toronto region – who made some, frankly, extremely racist remarks. There was a good deal of pressure that was brought to bear by the community around feeling that, given that that school board trustee was not willing to resign or to apologize or step down having made those remarks – there was a lot of pressure from the folks in the public that the board find some way to remove that individual. To the best of my recollection, they were not able to do so. They did not have that power.

I can appreciate where this comes from in that respect, and I think it's reasonable that we would have some code of conduct in place. I think that makes sense. That should be true for all public officials. There should be expectations in place about the integrity with which we carry out our work. Given that we're entrusted with large sums of money and make significant decisions that can have real impact on the people that we represent, it makes sense that there be some expectations around that.

**4:50 p.m.**

Now, how those expectations are enforced can become another question. I could see how giving a board the ability to vote by a majority to remove a particular member – a duly elected individual, mind you – could cause some very chaotic circumstances. For example, as we referenced, with the difficulties that the Edmonton Catholic school board went through for a time, I can only imagine how that might have been exacerbated, how that could have been made so much worse if there had been the sort of jockeying that we'd see on, say, *Game of Thrones*, with people forming alliances and this person standing against that person and this group against that group as people fought to try to remove each other from that board.

I don't know, Mr. Chair, if you've ever been part of a condo board. That's another circumstance, and indeed, you know, within a condo board there is the ability, if you have a majority of unit factors, to actually then vote members off the board. I have certainly, admittedly, participated in that process and seen some of that drama take place. Again, those are duly elected positions, certainly on a smaller scale and perhaps not always with the same level of participation that we might see in a school board election.

But I think it is problematic in some respects to introduce that here. It's something that, basically, is saying that the majority of the board could choose to override the will of the people that elected that individual. I find that a little bit concerning. I don't feel that this is a piece that has been sort of adequately consulted on with the public, that people fully understand that this was the intent. Certainly, the government, in announcing its intentions to proclaim the Education Act, didn't get into particular details of this, so I don't really buy the argument at this point: well, we said in our election platform we'd proclaim it; therefore, that's okay. This is not something that I think the average Albertan was aware of and necessarily understood. It's something, I think, that could be problematic, and it ties in . . .

**An Hon. Member:** It's similar to the carbon tax.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Now, the Member for Calgary-Klein is mentioning that this is similar to the carbon tax.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Hey, don't put words in my mouth.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Or it was a member to my right. I thought it was the Member for Calgary-Klein. I apologize if it was not.

But there is a member from the government who is saying that this is like the carbon tax. I would say, Mr. Chair, that this legislation was already existent, it was already there, and certainly it was possible for the government to have provided further detail about what it intended to do here.

I'd say that that is somewhat different from having made a commitment at a time when there was no expectation that our party was going to form government. Nobody believed that that was going to be the case. So to assume that our party would have in that circumstance had a secret plan on the off chance that we were going to go from four members to a majority government in the province of Alberta at a time when all of the polling data going into that election suggested that that was a long shot at best is, frankly, laughable and ridiculous. It is a cheap and empty talking point on the part of this government that they like to continue to perpetuate, and they're certainly welcome to do so. If they'd like to heckle it in this House, then I'll respond to it in kind, and I will point out how ridiculous and shallow it is.

Continuing with the debate, recognizing the challenges inherent in bringing in this form of recall for trustees, I would suggest that, like so many other aspects of the Education Act which this government has chosen to set aside in their rush to remove protections for GSAs and LGBTQS-plus students in the province of Alberta, perhaps this would be a piece that they should have considered setting aside for a time, much as they did with most of the other substantial portions of the Education Act, including things like changing the age at which students will no longer receive coverage to continue to attend a public school along with numerous other pieces.

It's part of what I'm seeing this government choosing to do on a number of fronts in terms of increasing the politicization of many systems, whether it's with the Senate Election Act, that we see them bringing in now, which does far more than simply reinstitute the process that was here before – it injects large amounts of money,

large amounts of new partisanship into various political processes within the province of Alberta – or their announcement today of the new Alberta inquisition. Nobody expects the Alberta inquisition, Mr. Chair, though in this case it was promised, so I suppose we did expect it, and we'll see if there is punishment by comfy chair, for any Monty Python fans in the room. It seems to be a particular bent of this government to want to increase the level of politicization of a number of processes in the province of Alberta, and I don't think it's helpful in this case with school boards.

That said, I'd like to return to discussing the substantive portion of what this bill is. As I've noted several times, it's pretty clear why this was done, the intent of introducing this Education Act, given that the large majority of what was actually in place in the act, as has been ably laid out by my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud, who worked on the creation of that act, who worked with the hon. David Hancock on that process – the majority of the legacy that was put into that bill has been stripped out, left an empty shell, simply so that the government can replace the changes that we introduced through Bill 24 to the School Act, which were to provide insurance that students would be able to form a QSA or a GSA at their school without interference, without delay, providing the clarity that teachers and others sought as to appropriate conduct in terms of revealing a student's participation in a GSA or a QSA.

This introduction of the Education Act was simply meant to circumvent that and to attempt to remove those things in an attempt to pacify a small segment of Albertans, which this Premier intentionally inflamed, intentionally offered incorrect information about what the intent and focus and purpose of a GSA is, which some members of this government at the time, members of the opposition, also added misinformation to. Having done that, this Premier then wanted to find a way to pacify that section of the base by making these changes but doing it in a way where he would somewhat cowardly hide this from Albertans and try to do it in a surreptitious way.

That brings us to what we have here, this particular bill and this particular change and, in particular, the removal of the requirement to support these in private schools. Now, private schools, of course, Mr. Chair, as you're well aware and as all members of this House are aware, receive public funds. They receive those public funds because they are viewed as doing a public good: they are educating students. That is something that they are doing as a service on behalf of the people of Alberta, so they are provided with a certain percentage of public funds to carry out that work. Members of government have been very vocal in believing that that should continue to be the case.

Certainly, that was our practice as a government. We also believed that that should continue to be the case, and we continued. As we provided stable, predictable funding for school boards across the province of Alberta, that, of course, included private schools. Now, if these schools are indeed being funded by the Alberta public to carry out a public good, I see no reason why they should not be held to the same standards as every other school within the province of Alberta, particularly when it comes to the protection of vulnerable students, the physical, emotional, mental, and indeed spiritual health of these youth.

**5:00 p.m.**

I shared earlier from a letter from Rabbi Gila Caine, where she talked about how within the Judaic tradition they hold that a religious belief is important but that it is something that is set aside when it is a question of life and death, when it is a question of whether it would do damage to another human being, whether that would be physical, mental, or psychological, emotional. I think

that's a respectable and good tradition, and I think it's one that appropriately applies in this circumstance.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

There is no reason any private school in this province needs to be exempt from allowing students, if they so ask, to form a GSA or a QSA. There's no reason they should be exempt from having a clear and accessible safe and caring schools policy. There is no reason they should be exempt from respecting the basic human rights of their students and indeed of teachers. There is, in my view, no religious belief that is so significant that it should be allowed to override those things. There is no need. It does not impact anybody's personal beliefs, their abilities to hold those beliefs, their ability to communicate those beliefs to their children within their home, to be able to celebrate and hold those beliefs in their place of worship or amongst their community. But in a space which is receiving public funds, there is no reason they should not be held to the same expectations, then, as every other educational institution that is receiving public funds.

With that in mind, I have an amendment I would like to move. I'll wait for that to get to you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** I'm moving this on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**The Chair:** Okay. This will be amendment A4.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you. Basically, that member is moving that Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended in section 8 by striking out the proposed section 30(1.1) and substituting the following:

(1.1) Section 33(1)(d), (2) and (3), and section 35.1 apply to an accredited private school, and a board or a principal referred to in those sections are deemed to include a person responsible for the operation of an accredited private school.

As I said, Madam Chair, there is no reason for any institution which is receiving public funding to carry out a public good and deliver a public service, where the service is for the youth involved, to be allowed to discriminate against those youth in terms of their freedom of expression by the formation of a club, their freedom to gather together with people of like mind within their school, a space which, for them, is often like a second home. There is no reason that the particular beliefs of that institution should hold sway over or be able to trump or be considered more paramount than the safety and well-being of those students as they are able to assess for themselves. We know that there are institutions that have placed blockages in front of students that wished to have this within some of our fully publicly funded systems.

This is a requirement that's in place in our public schools. It's a requirement that's in place in our Catholic schools. It is reasonable that private schools, which are also receiving public funding, would be required to offer the same level of support, respect, and indeed human rights for the students they are there to serve, not students that they are there to tell what they should or should not believe, not students that they are there to tell who they are or are not but students that they are there to guide in education, to support in their own journey of exploration and learning, an opportunity to explore who they are.

I think it's reasonable that we would ask private schools receiving public funding to deliver that public good, to abide by the same rules that are in place for all other educational institutions within the province of Alberta, and I'll be interested to see, if we

have some discussion from government members, if they will offer any reasoning why they feel that should not be the case. I would encourage them to speak to this. I would be open to hearing their views.

This is our opportunity for discussion and debate, and indeed we're holding this floor and holding this space so that all Albertans have the opportunity to understand the government's reasons for the changes that they wish to make and why they wish to remove this provision and why they have chosen not to bring this over from the School Act while they did so many of the other changes that we instituted and updated. If there is a reason other than this Premier's intent to pacify his close friend and ally Mr. John Carpay and others who spread the sorts of misinformation and reprehensible views that we have heard from Mr. Carpay, then I look forward to hearing the Premier or members of this government explain what that reason is.

I look forward to the opportunity to continue in this discussion and this debate. As I noted, I think that in the majority of cases the 28 private schools that have been involved in this have largely been, to my understanding, private religious schools, but we have heard from many faith leaders that there is no need to prevent students from having access to this space for that reason.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak in favour of this amendment. We on this side of the House certainly believe that it's important for all children to have access to GSAs in a timely manner, and it doesn't matter if they're in a private school or a public school. These GSAs indeed save lives.

The last time I did speak, I was referencing research that did talk about the importance of GSAs and the transformational work that they do to make sure that children are safe and healthy, really. Whether they're in a private school or a public school, as this amendment stipulates, we need to make sure that children always have access.

I'll just say for the record again that I'm referring in my speech to a scholarly journal article published in the *Journal of School Health* in July 2017. The title of the research article is LGBTQ Youth's Views on Gay-Straight Alliances: Building Community, Providing Gateways, and Representing Safety and Support. As I also said previously but will say again, the research involved a PhD psychologist, PhD social workers, and some nurses, so it was sort of a crossacademic paper that looked at many aspects of the benefit of having a GSA in schools.

Of course, the purpose of the research was to study, for a deeper understanding, the varied experience of the LGBTQ community that are involved in GSAs, specifically the functions that they perceive the GSAs serve in their lives. This is qualitative research. Their research subjects were 14- to 19-year-olds who were interviewed in an open-ended interview. They shared what they believed was the benefit of having a GSA in their school, whether it was private or public – I'm not sure their research looked at that – and just an overall understanding of the importance of GSAs for the health and well-being of all students in the community and also the importance for heterosexual students.

5:10 p.m.

What the researchers found was that there were three main themes that were identified by these students who were interviewed in their sample. The first theme, and the most dominant, that

emerged from the data from these interviews that they transcribed and coded – if anybody has done qualitative research, you know that that's quite a rigorous process and that it takes a fair bit of time to help those emerging themes come forward – was that GSAs provide and build community. I've already begun some remarks about what that actually means.

The second is that GSAs serve as gateways. I'll be continuing to talk a little bit more about what that means and why it is so beneficial. Whether you're in a private school or a public school, GSAs really support people in the community to have some important access to other resources in their community.

The third emergent theme – the first was, of course, building community; the second was about gateways, serving as gateways – is that GSAs represent safety. Students feel safe and indeed are safer. The research does show that schools that have GSAs have a much more inclusive attitude and that all students feel safer. There's less bullying, less physical violence.

In just finishing up on the first theme, which is, of course, about building community, we know that the GSA community also works to fulfill the shared needs of group members in the broader setting, so not only in that school system, whether it be public or private, but in the broader setting. Those involved in their GSAs mentioned the multifaceted role of the GSA in raising awareness of LGBTQ issues in the school, providing LGBTQ education within the school, and working to address bullying, hosting school events, fighting for gender-neutral space.

A recently graduated participant reflected: "We really just hung out and just talked and laughed and danced. It was a family, definitely" ... For many, the social benefits of membership reached outside the bounds of the GSA meetings ...

so beyond the school,

[and] participants talked about hanging out with the same group outside of the school environment.

For some, a sense of membership in the GSA community was fostered by being invited to the GSA by existing friends; for others, the direction was reversed: "It was kind of tricky to find people that I would relate to, and then I joined GSA, and I found my friend group."

This person felt affinity, connection pretty well immediately when they joined that group. That was from a 14-year-old.

Membership in the GSA community caused youth not to feel isolated in their identity: "It was nice to know that there were other people like that, because I would never have suspected that anyone else was."

One participant

highlighted the appeal of having this GSA community after learning about the GSA from a student speaking in [their own] class,

and they talked about how excited they were to join.

Membership in GSAs provides so much support and connection for students so that they feel that they belong. We know that belonging is a fundamental part of being human, and if we are not feeling like we belong, that can be extremely difficult for students.

I just want to go on and talk about some of the other challenges that the GSA community felt because they didn't have a group to feel like they had an affinity with. One participant identified some of the issues their GSA was taking on. They did some advocacy work within their own school by

educating the rest of the school. And making things within the school and the community more queer-friendly. Like, we just got a gender-neutral washroom in our school

because of the advocacy work of this student group.

This young person also talked about planning events to raise awareness. "Once or twice a year we hold events. So, like, we're planning a trans awareness week right now. Where we'd put like

announcements in the morning saying, here's a fun fact about trans people" ... Some of youth who elected to not attend the GSA at their school said they felt the group does not accomplish anything, and mentioned that they belong to other groups that better fulfill ... needs.

So, again, it wasn't a panacea, but it had a transformative impact on people who did find affinity within the group.

In summary, GSAs offer an opportunity for LGBTQ youth to be members of a community – an extremely important perceived benefit. Youth voiced this benefit in several ways. They enjoyed sharing an emotional connection and similar perspective with their fellow GSA members, and therefore felt a sense of safety and belonging as part of this group in which they socialized and personally invested. Through this, many individual members had their personal needs fulfilled, and the group as a whole was able to meet their shared needs within the larger school environment through education and advocacy.

Whether it's a private or public school, certainly these GSAs were extremely beneficial to students.

The second theme that emerged from the data was that GSAs serve as a gateway. What does that mean exactly when we say that GSAs serve as a gateway? In addition to

providing a community in which youth [felt] connected and fulfilled, GSAs ... serve as a gateway to supportive adults with whom they may not have otherwise connected, community resources ...

So a gateway to adults, a gateway to community resources.

... and the larger LGBTQ community.

Most prevalent in our interviews were the adult relationships that youth described when discussing their GSA experiences, including GSA advisers, teachers, and school administrators. For example, 1 youth responded to a question about available LGBTQ resources not by mentioning specific material objects but rather, an adult, "there's not a structure that you can visualize when you think of a [resource]. Faces pop into your head, like our GSA adviser."

This student felt that this adult adviser was able to provide them the information they needed regarding whatever challenges they were facing. So that connection, those healthy connections with adults that were supporting them, was really transformational, and they put this under the theme of a gateway so that they could access even further resources.

Youth from across all 3 study sites discussed the specific types of support and guidance they received from these nonparental, important adults. Several youth spoke about connecting with adults who were members of the LGBTQ community, who then serve as role models and positive examples of being out in the community.

A pretty challenging thing for a young person is that they just really don't know how to navigate. There's no mentor for them that's available, so having access to these adults, who have the same lived experience but, you know, are further down the path, is really transformational for these students in that they can have some help in how to be in the world because it's all new to them and there are not people with like experience for them. These GSAs really give them access to that.

These adults provide them with the support in their own identity development and discovery of additional LGBTQ-specific resources. For example, 1 youth stated, "She's ... the nicest person. She helped me get out of a lot of funks."

This was referring to the school staff that supported the group. That made a big difference for her.

5:20 p.m.

Still, other youth spoke more generally about the pro-LGBTQ messages they received from adults they connected with through their involvement with the GSA. When speaking about

the process of working with school administrators in getting a gender-neutral bathroom approved, one youth stated:

"They worked together really well . . . they understood the importance of it. And they made it happen and usually there's a lot more, kind of administrative stuff that needs to happen with it. But they skimmed over that . . ."

That really supported them to get to what they needed to create this gender-neutral bathroom.

Another youth, when explaining the Ally Week that the GSA hosted at school, stated, ". . . all people do is say, 'Hey, I'm an ally,' and teachers were [doing] that and that was pretty cool."

Again, it is really just about having a sense of belonging and understanding and then knowing who is safe in your community. Without these GSAs students don't have access to that because oftentimes this is hidden and not spoken about. But in private schools, public schools where GSAs exist, then this is available to students.

In terms of this second emergent theme, this gateway that GSAs provide:

In addition to connecting youth to supportive adults, GSAs also serve as a gateway to community resources. Through their involvement with GSAs, youth spoke about discovering services such as health care clinics, hotlines, and support groups: "Because I was so involved in . . . [Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network] and GSA network, that's how I knew about all these resources."

Connecting with health care resources via their GSA involvement was mentioned by several youth in this study. The GSA adviser and the coadviser

both led a . . . seminar, and we had health people come in, and they had a whole pamphlet on health providers for LGBTQ people. I actually have that, because I'm uncomfortable with my doctor, so when I'm older I want to choose a different doctor. I'm going to go based off that and people who specialize in that.

This was a 16-year old female.

Another youth spoke poignantly about the importance of GSAs serving as a gateway to community resources, saying:

"My GSA has people who come in and they speak about these places, because a lot of the LGBTQ kids have problems at home, so maybe they'd run away, or problems where they don't want to go to a clinic where they have to pay . . ."

This was an American study, too, so they could have a fee with their paying health system down there.

. . . and they don't want to go to a clinic where everything is going to be leaked to their parents, in case they're not out yet."

You know, out to their parents and they're not safe in that community.

Another aspect of the gateway, the emergent theme from the research, is that

GSAs also connect youth with the larger LGBTQ community by providing connections to current policy or advocacy issues, pride events, and other LGBTQ peers. For example, 1 youth said that they . . . share articles on Twitter and Facebook, especially regarding policy initiatives. This youth stated, "During the transgender policy that was trying to be implemented . . . both [Twitter and Facebook] were used hardcore" . . . Another youth stated, "My GSA in my high school, they have flyers about a lot of locations where LGBT youth could hang out" . . . Some community organizations directly reached out to the GSA:

"[A community youth program] came to do outreach for our GSA, so they actually came into our school and did a workshop. So we got a bit of a taste of what it would be like and – yeah, I met the awesome facilitator and got a look into how it would be, and it was an immediate wow, yeah, I'm joining this . . . I'm not too busy to join this. I can make time for this. Probably was too busy for it, but I still went and I'm glad I did."

These larger resources in the community, especially for the most vulnerable LGBTQ kids, who, you know, may or may not be safe at home, may be kicked out – this GSA gave them that gateway access to community organizations that also provided other services. It could be affordable housing. You know, it could be some supports if they indeed got kicked out.

Through these experiences youth are able to meet other LGBTQ peers and feel part of a larger community. One youth said: "A lot of us actually do hang out at [the LGBTQ youth organization]. We do on our free time try to get into that type of LGBT movement" . . . Another youth, when talking about a float their GSA did for Pride stated: "It's – I guess it's a good way to show a sense of community . . . You can meet some really great networking people that way. It's a lot of fun. I think it's a good way to celebrate your differences definitely."

That was a 15-year-old female.

Several youth [also] spoke about meeting LGBTQ peers at GSA regional meetings or conferences.

So beyond just what's happening at the school. Maybe there could be a regional meeting, you know, a provincial meeting, that kind of thing.

One spoke about the GSA regional meetings that he attends:

Well, in [town], besides me and [my friend] and maybe three other people, I don't really know anyone that identifies as LGBT. I mean, there are a lot of supporters that we know in our whole friend group, but there's none that identify, so I guess in a way it's nice to know that there's other people.

This fellow came from a smaller community, so when he went to that larger meeting of a sort of regional GSA, he was able to meet with people who, you know, had his lived experience and in that received tremendous support.

In sum, an additional perceived benefit of GSAs is that they act as a gateway to many resources. GSAs assist LGBTQ youth in connecting to supportive adults, such as GSA advisors, teachers, and school administrators. GSAs offer a link to several community resources to meet individual needs outside of the group, such as healthcare clinics, hotlines, and support groups. They also provide youth an avenue in which to relate to the larger LGBTQ community via involvement in LGBTQ events, partnerships with community organizations, and social media news and advocacy postings.

So, again, very significant support for them.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, on amendment A4 the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is rising to speak.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I am delighted to rise to speak to Bill 8, amendment A4, I believe. This amendment, I think, is really important and touches on a lot of what the members on this side of the House have been saying across the debate for Bill 8 at all readings. Essentially, this amendment says that private schools should fall under the same rules, should have GSAs when students request them, and, ideally, if other amendments are also accepted, that GSAs should be granted immediately or soon after students request them, and that LGBTQ2S rights are human rights, which are essentially the things that I and my colleagues have been saying.

Now, in order to support this amendment, I am going to reiterate my policy wonk roots because I do want to read into the record why GSAs are so important to Alberta students, be they public, private, or other students in this great province. I am going to, in order to make my case, use another really important report by the organization GLSEN, that I was talking about earlier. They did a 2017 national school climate survey where they actually talked to 23,000 students between the ages of 13 and 21 from all around the United States. I think that it is a representative sample for what high

school and other students in Canada are likely to experience as well, and it really mirrors a lot of what my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview has been talking about as well as other research that I've directly seen.

5:30 p.m.

This was one of the largest sample sizes that I found in looking for good data to back up the discussion that we are having here around Bill 8 and the important necessity for students to be able to form, conduct a GSA, for them to be supported through the administration. I strongly object to private schools being exempted, so I support the amendment that we're currently discussing. I think it's really important that inclusive and supportive school policies continue to be required from both public and private schools. I thank the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, who moved this amendment on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

GLSEN, The 2017 National School Climate Survey, really reinforces some of the things we've already heard in this Chamber. I read this into the record and I share this with my colleagues in the Chamber because, again, I worry that in taking party lines on this issue and in going back to base talking points, we're forgetting who we're talking about, which is children, which is students in our province, which is constituents that we go and see at high school graduations. I think that on the surface we may not always realize or acknowledge the challenges that our LGBTQ2S students might be facing because they're not always visible. A lot of this will be internal turmoil or things that are quietly happening in schools that we might not be aware of.

This national survey of 23,000 students helps to give us a bit of a picture as to what life as an LGBTQ2S-plus student may be like. I really want to talk about some of the findings that they found, including the fact that

schools nationwide are hostile environments for a distressing number of LGBTQ students, the overwhelming majority of whom routinely hear anti-LGBTQ language and experience victimization and discrimination at school. As a result, many LGBTQ students avoid school activities or miss school entirely.

Specifically around safety, almost 60 per cent of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, 45 per cent because of their gender expression, and 35 per cent because of their gender. That's significant. We're talking about feeling unsafe at school, a place where all students should feel safe. School as a safe place: that is something that I think is very fundamental. If you're somewhere where you do not feel safe, learning is going to be much more of a challenge. If you're feeling hungry, if you aren't fed, if you don't feel safe, if you don't have those basics met, the Maslow hierarchy of needs – my psychology degree is coming back to me – if you don't have the basic needs met, it can be really hard to focus on learning about trigonometry or other important topics.

Thirty-five per cent of LGBTQ students missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, and 10 per cent missed four or more days in the past month. We know that attendance is a huge predictor of school success. Kids need to be able to attend. If school doesn't feel safe and they're not attending because it doesn't feel safe, school performance can and will suffer, and we've seen that in other studies that we've talked about.

Over 4 in 10 students avoided gender-segregated spaces in school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, for example bathrooms or locker rooms. Most reported avoiding school functions, at 75 per cent, and extracurricular activities because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. Seventy per cent of 23,000 students that took part

in this avoided extracurricular activities because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. That is very, very saddening. As many of us know, when you're in high school, it's a very challenging time for most of us. I'm still uncomfortable about my high school time. Being able to be on sports teams or to have the camaraderie and friendship through different groups and clubs I think is really important, and LGBTQ students in many spaces not feeling supported or safe is harmful.

Now, they also surveyed and asked these 23,000 students about anti-LGBTQ remarks at school, and it probably won't surprise you to know that almost all of them, 98.5 per cent, heard "gay" used in a negative way, like "that's so gay," at school, 70 per cent heard these remarks often or frequently, and 91.8 per cent reported that they felt distressed because of this language. Hearing these types of homophobic remarks or the word "gay" used in a negative way, harmful to LGBTQ students, does not work to create a safe and caring space for them. Ninety-four per cent heard negative remarks about gender expression, like not acting masculine enough or feminine enough, and 62 per cent heard those remarks often or frequently. Eighty-seven per cent of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people.

Of course, this is a very, very saddening stat: 56 per cent of these students reported hearing homophobic remarks from their teachers or other school staff. This brings me back to some of the earlier statistics we were talking about, Madam Chair, where we saw that the number of times students would hear homophobic remarks from students or teachers decreases with the presence of a GSA. I think we're seeing a real picture of the environment that LGBTQ2S-plus students can find themselves in, especially when there isn't a supportive GSA or a supportive culture for these students.

Now, the vast majority of LGBTQ students, 87.3 per cent, experienced harassment or assault based on personal characteristics, including sexual orientation, gender expression, gender, religion, actual or perceived race and ethnicity, and actual or perceived disability. Madam Chair, I just want to emphasize that 87 per cent experienced harassment or assaults. This is a normal part of the LGBTQ experience for many of these 23,000 students that were part of this study, and that's horrifying.

The fortunate news is that we know that by supporting GSAs and building those welcoming, safe, caring, inclusive schools, the reported incidents drop significantly as the school community improves: fewer homophobic remarks, less violence and harassment, more supportive environments for these students. That's why this amendment, which would extend the GSA requirements to private schools, is so important, because, of course, students from all walks of life find themselves as members of the LGBTQ community and should be supported.

Now, when I say that 87.3 per cent experienced harassment, that would include verbal harassment, which 70 per cent experienced; that would include physical harassment, which 28.9 per cent of LGBTQ students experienced – in the past year: that is what we're talking about – and unfortunately it also includes physical assaults, being punched or kicked, which 12.4 per cent of these students experienced. So we're talking about verbal and physical harassment and physical assault that students experience when they're attending school. I will remind you that this was a study done on 23,000 students between the ages of 13 and 21.

Madam Chair, I have nephews and a niece, and the idea that in a school environment they might experience homophobic remarks, verbal harassment, physical harassment is horrifying to me, but this is the true experience for many students. Again, the positive, we know, is in having safe, inclusive, supportive school policies and supporting GSAs. When students identify the need and want to start

them, supporting those students makes a real difference. That's the positive of this message.

The effect of a hostile school climate impacts students' academic success and mental health. When students experience victimization and discrimination at school, they have worse educational outcomes and poorer psychological well-being. This is something that we've talked about before in this Chamber. Making sure that there are those safe, inclusive schools, that all of our students feel safe and are able to attend fully and be present for classes is so important, and that includes both accredited private schools as well as our public schools throughout the province.

5:40 p.m.

LGBTQ students experienced higher levels of victimization because of their sexual orientation. When that happened, they were nearly three times as likely to have missed school in the past month. They had lower grade point averages. They were twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any postsecondary education. They were more likely to have been disciplined at school. They had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression.

When you paint the picture of students who often find themselves ostracized or victimized, you can see that they have worse educational outcomes and poorer psychological well-being. We don't want that for any Alberta students, including those who may be attending private schools. Having legislation that makes sense through this amendment to Bill 8 can have a real impact on these students in our province, students who live in each of our constituencies, students who may be members of our family. LGBTQ students who experienced LGBTQ-related discrimination at school were more than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month, had lower GPAs than their peers, were more likely to have been disciplined, and had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression. We're painting a very clear picture.

Now, again, here's the positive. Students who feel safe and supported at school have better educational outcomes. LGBTQ students who have LGBTQ-related school resources report better school experiences and academic success – for example, gay-straight alliances, Madam Chair – compared to LGBTQ students who did not have a GSA in their school. Students who had a GSA in their school were less likely to hear the word “gay” used in a negative way or frequently. They were less likely to hear homophobic remarks. They were less likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression. They were less likely to hear negative remarks about transgender people. There were more likely to report that school personnel intervened when hearing homophobic remarks compared to students without a GSA.

Staff are more likely to intervene when these negative behaviours are happening, when homophobic remarks are being made, when there's the presence of a GSA. This makes sense because likely, as a GSA is formed in any school, teachers will be talking among themselves. The teacher who is leading the GSA is likely to be sharing that information with colleagues in the school. The entire school community benefits from these gay-straight alliances that are initiated by students and supported by teachers. When there was a GSA, the students were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation than those without a GSA. They were less likely to miss school because of safety concerns.

Now, another important piece we've talked about around private schools is the requirement around inclusive and supportive school policies, and we've heard some pretty terrible school policies read into the record here in this House. What we know from this important survey was that when there was a comprehensive

antibullying and harassment policy – it needs to specifically enumerate both sexual orientation and gender identity and expression – when you had a policy that fit that definition of comprehensive, students were less likely to hear “gay” used in a negative way or frequently. There was a real, measurable impact in the school community when an appropriate and comprehensive policy was put into place, and I think that's a really important outcome to know about.

This, of course, is based on a very large, large study, 23,000 students nation-wide in the United States, and the outcomes, the results, seem to have been replicated in many other studies that I've had the opportunity to review. In listening to my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview, I'm hearing very similar results from the work that she is quoting. So when we think about the high school and junior high students in our constituencies, when we think about our nephews and our nieces, our children, our friends, and our family having the best, most inclusive, supportive, and safe space, it sounds to me like a GSA is a very positive thing for the entire school community, and that's why I support amendment A4, moved by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, to extend these protections to private schools.

Now, the conclusions and recommendations of this GLSEN report read as follows.

It is clear that there is an urgent need for action to create safe and affirming learning environments for LGBTQ students. Results from the 2017 National School Climate Survey demonstrate the ways in which school-based supports – such as supportive staff, inclusive and supportive school policies... GSAs – can positively affect LGBTQ students' school experiences. Yet findings on school climate over time suggest that more efforts are needed to reduce harassment and discrimination and increase affirmative supports. Based on these findings, we recommend...

There are a number of recommendations. I'm just going to highlight:

supporting student clubs, such as GSAs, that provide support for LGBTQ students and address LGBTQ issues in education.

That is a core recommendation from the findings gathered by this GLSEN national school climate survey. Secondly,

ensuring that school policies and practices, such as those related to dress codes and school dances, do not discriminate against LGBTQ students.

These are recommendations that I support and that I think make sense in our Alberta school environments.

Taken together, these measures and the other recommendations can move us towards a future in which all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. It improves the outcomes for these students, and it continues to allow Albertans to feel like we live in and to know that we live in an inclusive and safe society, where LGBTQ2S rights are human rights, where students are respected and not outed until they choose to disclose to friends, to family on their timeline in the way that they wish to come out.

These are the reasons why I want to commend my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre for this amendment, for including private schools in this Bill 8 and the GSA protections that, we've heard over and over, so impactfully help students, not just LGBTQ students but the entire school community, including the teaching staff. I will be supporting this very well-reasoned amendment, and I would encourage all members of this Assembly to support this amendment because it will make a real difference in the lives of the students in our province, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for allowing me to rise once again and share my support for this amendment.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure once again to stand up in the House and speak in favour of this amendment. Looking at this amendment, the amendment is to Bill 8, to section 8. Supporting this amendment, I would really like to actually get back to where I was trying to read and share the information from the article. The article I was reading from was *Edutopia*, the journal published by Emelina Minero. This article further actually states and notes the need for training in schools. That can only happen if there is a policy in place, if there are guidelines for the teachers and the school administration to lay down policy to implement the work that cannot be done without, you know, having strong legislation.

**5:50 p.m.**

The article says:

For Loretta Farrell Khayam, a high school math teacher in Northern Virginia, the hesitation to support LGBTQ students . . . so she talks about that. The article goes on:

"We've had no guidance from administration on how to handle students transitioning," said Khayam, who wants to help a transgender student at her school. "I'm not a young, hip teacher. I don't know what to say or do. It would be nice to hear from our administration – both school and district level – what we as a school and a school system will do to support these students."

What she's clearly talking about is the school having a proper policy dealing with the situations and issues regarding LGBTQ protection.

Students attend an LGBTQ summit for youth. LGBTQ students often have to go outside their schools to find support.

This is very shameful, and that doesn't really help, you know, the community of vulnerable youth and really puts them in danger.

The article states:

While there has been an increased interest in training educators on topics like inherent bias and equity and inclusion, these trainings often do not include LGBTQ issues because most school systems aren't requesting it, according to educators and advocacy groups. And when teachers have asked for training, some report that they've faced reluctance from administrators who said they need to focus on other priorities.

You know, the seriousness of the people who are suffering does not take place without having the legitimate policy in place, the proper guidance, proper guidelines. That is what this amendment to the bill is going to address.

There is, I would say, very progressive opposition to this government. We're trying to come to a solution. The government in this House has claimed many times, you know, that they stand to defend GSAs and QSAs, the LGBTQ2S community, and when we're discussing the loopholes, we are pointing out the proposals in the bill that weaken how to form a QSA or GSA in the schools. GSAs and QSAs save lives and save the future and also help change people's attitudes, change the culture, I would say, with how to behave toward others, how to keep your mind open to learn about the diversity of the community.

The article says:

Melissa Joy Bollow Tempel said she encountered pushback when she wanted to start including professional development on gender identity in the training she provided as a culturally responsive teacher-leader in the Milwaukee Public Schools district. Bollow Tempel had to go outside the district to receive training herself, and her offers to share what she had learned were repeatedly resisted.

Educators talked about:

students taught an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.

"Educators still have a tremendous amount of worry around LGBTQ inclusion – they fear parent or community pushback, and are uncertain if they'd be supported by school or district leadership . . .

and lack, you know, proper guidance. It says

. . . that their administration supports them and will have their back if a parent or community member with anti-LGBTQ views complains."

It also mentions that

when LGBTQ students feel the lack of staff support at school, the impact can be substantial.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual students are two to three times as likely [to suffer].

Starting with the individual's struggles and lack of support, they're more likely to miss school and almost five times as likely to attempt suicide . . . the number is even higher for transgender people . . . according to a major survey of 15,600 high school students by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Another study found that bullied lesbian, gay, and bisexual students . . . reported higher levels of substance abuse and risky behaviors than heterosexual students who were bullied.

It outlines the importance of, you know, having strong legislation in regard to protecting the LGBTQ students in schools and safe spaces for them in the schools. Once again, my colleagues, hon. members from different ridings, talked about the numerous articles stating that GSAs are about saving lives. GSAs and QSAs are social clubs that provide people with a platform, the environment where they can come together and share their stories, share their cultural diversity, share their views, and help each other, a platform that helps them to know each other, that helps them to come together as a strong community.

The article also says, referring to students hearing biased language at school:

"My middle school didn't have any procedures, and my teachers didn't know what to do," reflects Miles Sanchez, a ninth-grade bisexual and transgender student . . . Sanchez says he repeatedly went to administrators to ask them to establish policies to protect LGBTQ students from bullying. "I feel like a lot of my struggles could have been avoided if educators were trained in dealing with bullying for all types of students," he said.

That's exactly what we're trying to discuss under Bill 8.

The problem is not restricted to students.

Teachers like Hanan Huneidi, a 7th- through 12-grade teacher for at-risk students . . . says she feels that if she includes LGBTQ content in her lessons, staff and students assume she's trying to push a particular agenda because she's gay.

Last year, a frustrated Huneidi told colleagues they needed to "carry the torch too" in disciplining students for using homophobic hate language, which is against school rules.

**6:00 p.m.**

Dan Ryder, a teacher at Mount Blue school in Farmington, Maine states in this article:

"I'm doing my best to show them that even though I may be a straight, cis, married white male, we are all fairly complex beings that change over time and have experiences that may unite us more than we realize," he says of his own efforts to help students. "Often we just need someone to say, 'Hey, you are who you are. I get it. It's OK by me. And I want to be helpful to you in whatever way that means for you.'"

What this article is concluding by the statement of Dan Ryder is the issue that we are arguing in the House and that matters; that is, the lack of security this Bill 8 provides to the students, LGBTQ2S+ students and the students who want to be part of a GSA/QSA. Once again, referring back to the proposals in the bill, which do not really provide a time frame, if the students come to the teachers, principals, or to the administrators, it does not provide clear



guidelines or time frames for the GSA or QSA to be formed in the school.

On top of that, you know, it threatens the students to be outed outside of the school, and it provides very little protection to the vulnerable. When they kind of face this kind of an environment in the school and they can't go home, that actually puts much more pressure on them at home, even facing social stigma. A lot of families, a lot of cultures still are not really willing and open going forward. I don't know. I will say, in modern society, that the changes develop over time in society. So the fears grow in those students, and there's little help. They will be out of school. They will not be able to pursue their education. They will not be able to pursue their career. On top of that, they cannot go home probably in many cases. I'm not saying that each and every student is in the same situation, but many of them are. So they do not seek help, and in lack of all that support, they will be pressured to take the wrong step.

I've shared one article to support the argument, and we have shared the findings of how this bill going to have a negative impact on GSAs/QSAs. It expunges the protection that is already provided through the legislation right now. It's a step moving backward. There are numerous, numerous studies done by very reputable institutions in Canada and around the world that show how important it is to have proper legislation to provide security to the LGBTQ2S community here in Alberta and around the country. This is more important than this government has acknowledged. They are the biggest defenders, they claimed, of the rights of the LGBTQ2S community, so I don't know why there'd be challenges then to, you know, withdraw those proposals. They are weakening the rights of the LGBTQ community.

Also, once again I want to affirm that you could do more than that by tabling the amendment, showing the very progressive, co-operative opposition in the House. We wanted to make this House work. We wanted to make this House work for the people of Alberta. We wanted to make this House work for the people who need our help.

I actually have more studies in my hand. I can share the study done in our country by a very reputable institution called Egale Canada human rights trust. This survey is conducted with 3,700 students here in Canada, and it has a long executive summary report, and this was ... [Mr. Deol's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2 on Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Did you say amendment A2?

**The Chair:** Amendment A4.

**Ms Sweet:** Okay. Just clarifying. Thank you.

It's a pleasure to rise in support of amendment A4 in regard to ensuring that private schools also provide GSAs to youth. I'll continue maybe a little bit with what I was saying earlier today around finding the balance or ensuring that adults are able and feel confident to engage in conversations with youth that are part of the LGBT community.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

In saying that, something that I did want to mention and something that I think has been missing out of parts of this conversation is the commitment of the different ministries within the government around this issue. I recognize that we've been

talking primarily around education and the school systems and this amendment specifically around private schools, but I think that as we discuss it, we should also be looking at, you know, the Ministry of Children's Services. The reason I say that is that what we see – and some of the members on both sides of this House will be able to attest to that, I believe – is that when families are not able to communicate with each other, when there's dysfunction within the relationships between parents and their children, between partners in marriages or common law, at times Children's Services is also required to become involved.

6:10 p.m.

In part of that I believe there's a responsibility, then, within that ministry as well as the Ministry of Education to be dialoguing with each other around how it is that we support families in talking about the LGBT community and supporting youth as they come out to their parents or to their family or to their family members, to their religious communities. I think that's important. I think that, you know, it's one thing to say that this is something we acknowledge that there needs to be protections around and that we would like to have safe spaces for youth until they're prepared to be able to talk to their family about their sexuality, but I think it's also important that we recognize that there need to be supports for parents around how you talk about that and how you support your youth when they come out to their parents or to their family.

That's just kind of a summary of what I was trying to get at earlier today in relation to this amendment and to ensuring that private schools are also engaging in supporting GSAs within the legislation and the components that they have. I think that this is extremely important. Again, as I said earlier, youth within the LGBT community are not just within one select group of communities. They're in all of our communities.

Again, recognizing that the Premier himself actually said that he believes that this legislation is going to find a balance between parents and school authorities to provide the GSAs in the way that this government has interpreted that should be – well, they don't want to support GSAs. But in saying that, the issue being that if you're not mandating schools to have groups that are going to be supportive of the LGBT community, how does that find a balance between parents and school authority? It doesn't. If you're not saying to private schools that our government's philosophy – and the Premier has been very clear, and the minister has also been very clear – is that there must be a balance between parents and the school authority, then that must mean that the school authority must then provide these organizations, these groups, these GSAs. I mean, that is the fundamental argument that this government has presented to us, right?

If you're not mandating the private schools, and you're saying that they must also provide the same groups and GSAs as every other school does within the province, then you're actually not finding balance between parents and school authorities because now you're actually giving the school authorities the out to not have to do it at all, which is counterintuitive to your argument. Because of that, this amendment actually makes sense because it actually speaks to what this government has been telling us is their argument all along, which is balance. If that's the case, then this amendment is reasonable. This amendment should be supported by all members on both sides of the House because there's no reason not to.

I mean, I would love to hear from the government-side members why this isn't speaking to your message box of balance between parents and school authorities. Where isn't it? Why wouldn't it be? Of all the other school authorities that the government has spoken about and has said, "Well, it's a balance, and school authorities have the ability, and we will find the balance between the school

authority and the parents,” then why is this one group, this one small group of schools excluded from the balance, excluded from your argument? To say that they don’t have the same requirements as every other school that is being supported within Alberta doesn’t make sense.

Again, it’s reasonable to have this in every single school. [interjection] Again, I will go back to – point of order.

#### **Point of Order Decorum**

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a point of order. Please, I would love to hear.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to speak to section 23(j), “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.” Although it may not be language or insulting language to be sure, there have been repeated occasions over this afternoon that I have been sitting in this House that the Government House Leader has tried to be as disruptive as possible.

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt you. With regard to this specific point of order that you are referring to: what were the words?

**Ms Sweet:** The actual words? Is that what you’re clarifying with me?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yeah.

**Ms Sweet:** Like I said, it’s not specific words. However, it is loud sounds. That would be, I guess, appropriate. And, just to clarify with the chair, there have been incidents in the past where body language has been considered unparliamentary in this House.

**The Deputy Chair:** I would agree.

**Ms Sweet:** I again would just like to remind all members that when they enter and go out of the Chamber, to be respectful of the decorum of the House.

**The Deputy Chair:** I would be prepared to rule on this. I think that it was clearing of the throat. I see that there’s a nod in agreement. I think that that would possibly constitute something along the lines of a cough or something like that. I think that it’s fair to say that members from both sides have had coughing instances or things of that nature that have interrupted proceedings or have potentially done something like that. In this case, I don’t find a point of order.

I would ask that if you would be so kind as to continue your remarks that you are making in debate, I would very much appreciate that.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I’d love to continue.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Ms Sweet:** As I was saying, when we look at the definition of what this government has said even around charter schools, although I appreciate that the amendment is specific to private schools, it’s acknowledged that charter schools are autonomous, nonprofit, publicly funded schools with specialized mandates. Alberta is the only province in Canada that has charter schools. They’re more commonly found in the United States.

Now, charter schools were first introduced under Ralph Klein in 1994 due to his austerity measures. How are they different than public schools? Well, they’re not governed by a board elected by

the public; they are elected by their school community, similar to private schools. They do not own their own facilities. They do not have attendance boundaries, and they are not required to accept every student that applies, similar to our private schools. Their enrolment and mandates are governed by the charter. They do not always qualify for 100 per cent of public schools’ funding. They are required to hire certified teachers, but those teachers do not have to be members of the ATA, very similar to private schools.

Now, in saying that, they are still covered under this legislation and required to have the same protections for LGBTQ-plus youth, yet private schools do not. Again, I would be very curious if somebody from the government side would like to stand up and respond to why it is that this one subsection is being excluded, why the government doesn’t deem that these schools also need to have a balance between parents and the school authority, and what it is that makes them special enough that they don’t need to be under the same legislation as everybody else. Again, I would like to see the government side stand up and talk to us about some of this stuff. I think this is a reasonable amendment. It speaks to what the government has been speaking to around balance.

I will leave it at that for now and hope that someone on the government side decides to stand up and maybe answer some of those questions for me.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre rising to speak.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to continue debate in this House on Bill 8 and on the amendment that I had the honour of moving on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. That amendment, again, is to correct what I’m sure was a simple oversight on behalf of government in neglecting to include private schools in the same coverage as every other school in the province of Alberta, the expectation being that government members have been very clear throughout this debate that they support GSAs and QSAs, that they recognize the value they provide, that indeed they are essential tools to provide safety and security for LGBTQ2S-plus youth.

Given that they have such thorough support, I can’t see any reason why they would feel that such a good and beneficial thing should not be provided in every school in the province of Alberta. I’m definitely looking forward to hearing government members stand up and speak in support of this amendment and, of course, voting in support of this amendment since that has been what they have been avowing throughout the course of this debate.

**6:20 p.m.**

Now, I think my colleagues and I have been very clear on the importance of this. I’ve had the chance to discuss this quite a bit from a number of different perspectives, indeed on the general value of a GSA, a QSA, but on this particular question it sort of returns us to the reasons why this bill is being introduced and the reasons why we are having this debate on the particular topic of GSAs and QSAs in the province of Alberta.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

While government members may be weary at this point of my recapping this particular point, I think it’s an important one. This is a decision this government is making to change the manner in which these supports are provided, to change the protections that are available because they feel that the provisions we brought forward in Bill 24 were either too prescriptive or discriminatory

against faith-based schools or in some way infringed on the rights of parents in the province of Alberta.

Now, that comes from previous debate and discussion and remarks of the Premier in the media and indeed at various events behind closed doors or at the UCP policy conference and a number of other venues. Very little of that, unfortunately, comes from actual discussion or debate in this House, where the closest we have come is the discussion of an ambiguous balance, and we are left to have to interpret it, then, based on previous statements and the actions that this government is choosing to take. But it seems pretty clear, as I think I've laid out pretty thoroughly in my previous comments on the record and will continue to lay out as we continue into our 27th hour of debate in this particular day of the Legislature.

We have the situation here where the government is choosing specifically to exempt a small parcel of schools within the province of Alberta and essentially saying that students at those schools do not deserve the same rights, the same opportunities, the same protections as students at any other school in the province of Alberta; that, though members of the government purportedly acknowledge that GSAs, QSAs save lives, have a profound impact on the safety of a school not only for the LGBTQ students, not only for their allies but, in fact, for all students at that school, for some reason if a school should happen to be a private school, though it is receiving a significant amount of public funds to deliver a public service, those schools should be exempt from providing those same protections and those same supports for those youth; that because a youth's parents choose to send them to that particular school, they should not be afforded that same protection, that same opportunity, that same right of assembly, that same right of free expression; that that school should be able to dictate to them in what manner they should dress; that that school should be able to have policies in place telling them that who they love is wrong; that they should go to that school every day and that apparently it should be a place of learning for them, a place where they feel comfortable, a place where they are supposed to feel accepted when that very policy of that very school condemns them, that suggests to me that members of this government do not in fact have the support that they claim they have for the LGBTQ2S-plus community.

Now, with a letter that I had from Rabbi Gila Caine, I discussed earlier her principles that she sets forward from the Judaic tradition where in their belief if a religious belief conflicts with an opportunity to prevent harm to an individual, be that physical, emotional, spiritual, then that religious belief is set aside. That is an honourable tradition, Madam Chair. That is one I respect greatly, and I think that is the least we can expect from any organization that receives public funds to deliver a public service when it comes to the well-being of our youth in our schools, their physical, their emotional, their mental, their spiritual well-being.

There is no reason to provide this exception, to provide this loophole, and indeed I have yet to hear any member of this government stand up to defend it or provide any reason why the health and well-being of those youth should be put at risk, why in this particular circumstance, unlike any other, we should simply assume and depend on the goodwill of all involved in these schools. That is not to suggest that goodwill is not present in the majority of these cases, but it is our job as government to legislate and regulate for those circumstances where goodwill is not present.

We don't say that certain health and safety regulations aren't necessary because the majority of employers will likely abide by them. "We know that they have goodwill and that they wouldn't want to harm their employees; therefore, we can simply trust them on that point." No. We regulate it, and we make sure that that regulation applies in all circumstances, and if we make an

exception, we are able to stand in this House and articulate a good reason for doing so.

Yet this government is deliberately choosing to exempt private schools, which receive public money to deliver a public service and a public good on behalf of the people of Alberta, from very simple provisions which protect the health and well-being of youth in our schools, something on which all members in this Chamber have said they agree. Not a single member of this House has stood and said that they disagree that a GSA, a QSA is a good thing, that it should be allowed, that youth should have the opportunity to access it, yet on this particular point they are turning their backs and are saying precisely the opposite.

Now, I understand, I think, to some extent where some of these members of the government are coming from. Certainly, the Premier on occasion has talked about this being a question of parents' rights, and certainly that's been the basis of the arguments by the Premier's close friend and ally John Carpay, amongst several other, much more reprehensible arguments, the main principle being that he feels this is something that is contravening parents' rights, that parents are choosing to send their kids to these schools because they want their kids to grow up with the same values that their parents hold.

**Mr. Getson:** Is it Carpay with a "k" or a "c"?

**Mr. Shepherd:** Carpay is spelled with a "c," Member.

**Mr. Getson:** I'm looking, but I've never heard of this guy.

**Mr. Shepherd:** You're not very familiar with your leader's record in that case, Member.

**Mr. Getson:** Not about any of the guys you're talking about.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, through the chair.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Anyways, through the chair – through the chair – for any members that are not familiar with Mr. John Carpay, you can certainly find out a good deal about him and his involvement with the leader of your party, which stretches back for a good while.

**Mr. Getson:** Was he from Edmonton-City Centre?

**The Chair:** Hon. members, through the chair.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Continuing with the debate, Madam Chair, I recognize that the main complaint seems to be that if parents want to send their children to a school which will tell them that because of how they identify, who they are, or who they love, they themselves are wrong, are morally inferior, are intrinsically disordered, or whatever way you want to put it, that government should in no way interfere with that process.

Therefore, because, again, no member of this government will stand to explain why they're providing this glaring exception, I can only assume it's for the purpose that they believe that if a parent chooses, they should be able to send their child to a school that will tell that child what orientation they're allowed to have, what gender identity they're allowed to express, what clothing they're able to wear, and how acceptable they are morally for doing so or making that choice. But, frankly, Madam Chair, I think there is far more to it than this.

**6:30 p.m.**

I respect the need or the desire for parents to want to pass their values on to their children, and that is something we respect in every home. I do not believe governments should interfere with what

parents want to teach their children within their home or within their relationships with them, but if they are going to a school that is receiving public money to provide a public service, a school that is there for the purpose of educating youth, of preparing them to live in the world, the objective of a school being to encourage the health and well-being and the future success of that child, then that child should be afforded all the same opportunities they would be afforded at any other institution in the province receiving public funds to deliver that same public service and public good. And if we recognize that no child in a public school or a Catholic school should be told that because of who they are, how they identify, and who they love, they are a broken human being, that there is something wrong with them that needs to be fixed, then it also should not take place in any private institution which is receiving public funds.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

That is why we're bringing forward this amendment, to correct what, again, since no member of this government has stood up to defend or explain this exemption, must clearly just be an oversight. Again, every single member in this House agrees that a QSA or a GSA is a good thing that provides good protections for youth, and it should not matter where that GSA or that QSA is located. It does not lose its efficacy because it's in a private school, and neither does that school lose its ability to hold whatever values it wants to hold, nor do the parents of the child going to that school.

As I've noted, Mr. Chair, I grew up in a conservative, religious environment. There are some good things that I carry forward from that upbringing, and there are some not so good. But it was an interesting experience, and indeed I've often had the opportunity to connect with others who grew up in similar environments. One of those is a good friend of mine, a writer and a poet who just published a new column in the *Edmonton Journal* talking about how we, how parents – I shouldn't say "we" because I myself am not a parent. I have many nieces and nephews and have good relationships with them, but, no, I haven't had children of my own. But she talks about the challenge for parents in talking with their kids about complex issues and the desire of a parent to want to pass on their values, to communicate their values with their children. She's talking about, you know, having some of these conversations with her son.

She talks about how when she went to school, she was sent to a school where they taught her that dinosaurs were created by God about 6,000 years ago and that she believed what she was told at that time and that she indeed believed that those parents that sent their kids to that school, including her own, supported that because they truly believed in that educational model. "They [really] wanted their children to understand what they themselves had come to understand – what they believed . . . about the world."

But she also talks about recognizing the need to understand the needs of her children and recognizing that while she wants to communicate to them the values that she has, the way that she sees the world, she also wants them to be able to learn and experience and figure some of these things out for themselves, that indeed, in fact, she learns from them, just as they learn from her.

Now, she says, you know:

Three decades past the scene of my early paleontological miseducation, any four-year-old I [could] meet can still school me about dinosaurs and geological eras. There are persistent gaps in my understanding of the world. We all renegotiate the explanations we are given by our parents, if to varying degrees.

She says of children:

Maybe the important thing is just to honour this basic fact: they are forming their own understandings of the world. Theirs; not ours.

We will [at times], inevitably, get it wrong.

Our children will grow to correct us.

Can we encourage them as they grow to see even our most cherished explanations as what they are – our explanations, our best understandings?

I think, Mr. Chair, particularly as children grow older, as they enter into adolescence, within the space of a school, which is intended not only to teach and communicate values but to allow young people to exercise critical thinking, to decide ideas for themselves, to understand themselves better, to learn how to express themselves, that the highest value, then, should be to ensure that they have a safe space in which to do so. Every single member in this House so far that has spoken on the record has said that they value that in a GSA or a QSA, that that is something that should exist for all youth to be able to explore, yet we have this gap.

We're saying that in a private school, regardless of the fact that it receives public funds to deliver a public service, we should not hold that expectation. Those youth should simply be told what values they should hold. They should not be allowed a safe space in which they can ask questions or explore. They should not have the right to name that group what they wish. In fact, they should not even have the right to that assembly. It should be the prerogative of that school to be able to deny it and say: "You cannot do that here. You cannot be who you are in these walls. We will not allow it. We will tell you that it is wrong. Every day you will come to this school and you will face a charter or a set of values that tell you that you are wrong, because we feel it is more important that we assert that value than that we provide you with a place to feel safe emotionally, physically, spiritually."

I can see no other message here unless a member of this government wants to get up and enlighten me as to why they are overlooking this piece, why they are saying that the students that attend these schools do not deserve the same rights and protections and opportunities that we are all apparently in agreement with and saying that every student in a public or Catholic school should have.

Again, the only reason not to do this is because members are choosing to placate people who spread misinformation, conspiracy theories.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, on amendment A4, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to speak.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. A pleasure to rise once again in this House in another part of the day to talk once again about Bill 8 and the amendments thereto, this time amendment A4, which, for all intents and purposes, is specifically designed to bridge the gap that the legislation has in it right now, and that is the gap whereby the private schools are exempted from the requirements under the bill that other . . . [An electronic device sounded] Oops. Yeah. Well, even Jim Cuddy is against Bill 8, I tell you.

6:40 p.m.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, please continue. There may be a charitable donation in the future.

**Mr. Dach:** I heard that coming on, and I caught it in time, I think. Anyways, apologies for that to all members. I think I got the rest of this shut off, but that one element was still on.

That reminds me a little bit about the legislation here, where all schools except the private schools are required to follow the dictates that GSAs and QSAs have to be allowed, yet there's this giant loophole in the legislation that is quietly being given life under the

radar. I fail to understand, if indeed this is what the government wants to accomplish, why they don't just openly and honestly say what they're really up to. People here have been beating around the bush for two or three days on this legislation, even longer.

I'm not one to beat around the bush. It makes me want to light my hair on fire when I hear some of the arguments or hear the Minister of Education talk about how they are, "Yes, providing protection for every student in the classes that we have and every student in Alberta; whether it be in private, charter, or public schools, they've all got the strongest level of protections in Canada for their ability to come forward; yes, they can create a GSA or a QSA, and all schools are required to do so and follow through" while, in fact, a clear reading of the legislation shows this to be utterly not the scenario that is correct.

The loopholes that the legislation has in it, one of which is being addressed by this amendment, are large, and they're glaring. The reasoning for it has yet to be explained by the government. I think that if the government is really intent on bringing forward the legislation with these loopholes in it, with the private schools being exempted, there's an onus and a responsibility to explain why. What's the justification? What's the rationale? There is none as far as I can tell. So far the government has come up with none, and they're not willing to provide one.

The only one that I can come up with is that it's religious fundamentalism in power. It's a matter of basically recognizing on the part of the government that they have a large part of their supporters who want to shoot, shovel, and shut up. In other words, they want to under the radar, under the carpet allow what otherwise wouldn't be allowed in this legislation, by giving a loophole that they hope private schools can quietly use to allow principals to avoid establishing GSAs, to allow this population of individuals, of parents whose religious beliefs do not include the acceptance of a certain part of our population being LGBTQ2S-plus, to basically put their children in schools where they would not be forced to allow a QSA or a GSA to be established.

I'm just wondering what would happen in many of these families with parents who would support this type of bill. What would happen if indeed one of their children was to come to them and tell them that they were not heterosexual? I don't know the conversation that would ensue, but it scares the heck out of me. I know that many of the young people who are in the shelters, in what used to be known as youth emergency shelters, are coming from families where these conversations were had and the result was that the student, youngster, the family member was ostracized and kicked out of the family. They were living on the street. That ends up badly in most cases, Mr. Chair. The private schools that would be exempted under the legislation, unless this amendment is passed, would be able to withstand the requirement to actually have a GSA or a QSA established, and those students would be living in the same black hole that all students in this province lived in before our previous government established the requirement that GSAs and QSAs had to be established on demand, without delay, in all charter, public, and private schools.

There were some outliers who had yet to comply. Those individual private schools and charter schools who had yet to comply faced some pretty severe sanctions if indeed ultimately they refused to comply. What we do have here with this amendment, Mr. Chair, is an attempt to close a gate that the government has opened in the legislation, in Bill 8, to allow those schools who harbour resentment toward the requirement in our legislation to create GSAs and QSAs on demand, without delay, without exemption – it allows those private schools to have a safe harbour.

That troubles me a lot, to know that there exist a group of educators, a group of parents who, under the cloak of parental

choice and parental rights, suggest that the educational institutions that they want to send their children to somehow should be able to resist the requirement to provide a safe space for students who may wish to come forward and create a GSA or a QSA and, hopefully, reach some type of arrangement whereby they can discover the language and an environment to talk to their parents ultimately, to decide how to reveal to those parents that they are not heterosexual, that they are LGBTQ2S-plus, and thereby keep the family unit together.

I know that there are members opposite who have worked in the field where they've dealt with young people in these dark situations, and it befuddles me to understand how they can work in situations like that, where they're dealing with individual young people who are confounded and conflicted yet stand by and watch their legislation allow a huge loophole to evade the fundamental responsibility to keep children safe in their schools. I can only say that the answer for it is political. The only explanation I can get is that the government members, who were, of course, formerly in opposition, who opposed our legislation, are responding to a political call from a cadre of their supporters who just don't believe that gay rights should exist, and they deny the need for young people to have a safe space and an outlet.

They claim that the whole discussion should be, you know, left to parents and the children. Well, I'll tell you what, Mr. Chair. If indeed the students in this situation felt safe in doing so, if there was a good relationship there between those parents and those students, then that conversation would take place within the family without episode. But what we're dealing with here are students who don't feel safe, who understand the confines of the religious ideology that their family exists in. [An electronic device sounded] Oh, jeez. I apologize. There. [An electronic device sounded] Jim Cuddy refuses to go away. There we go. I'll shut this thing off.

**The Deputy Chair:** We are getting frightfully close to a fine or a charitable contribution.

**Mr. Dach:** There we go. We all operate within rules, and I'm nudging up against them here.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please continue.

6:50 p.m.

**Mr. Dach:** I think I've got it covered this time, and I'll get rid of it. There. It will not drone on.

In any case, Mr. Chair, these families who want the exemptions that the legislation allows befuddle me because I can't understand why anybody would want to put children's lives at risk, whether it's your own kid or your neighbour's. This is what we've been talking about all along. I mean, the whole reason that we placed the requirement for these GSAs and QSAs to be established in every school, regardless of whether they're private, charter, or public, was ultimately that they would save children's lives. Conversely, not having these safe spaces is going to cost children's lives, arguably.

I do believe that there's a way of actually accounting for the lives that will be lost, I contend, as a result of Bill 8 passing, if it does, without the amendment that we seek to get rid of the exclusions that are part of the current legislation. I think there's a way of tabulating the number of lives that are ultimately lost as a result of these children not having the safe spaces or not feeling that these spaces are enabling them to come forward, where they feel they are in such a dark hole and have no place to go, no safe place to go, that they do end up either outed by the school system that they happen to be in or just feel that there's no way, no mechanism, no safe space for them to learn how to come forward to their parents, and they

ultimately either get kicked out, or they leave the home seeking a space where they can live and be the people they are.

That quite often at a young age leads to couch surfing with older people and living on the street, living in and amongst drug addiction, depression, mental illness, and ultimately abuse by people who take advantage of those risk factors. The individual lives that do end up lost as a result of the government's reversion to a lack of safe spaces for these individual young people to go to is something that we, I think, have a responsibility at least to do as legislators, and that is to account for these individual lives lost to ensure that those lives that are lost as a result of this legislation are tallied properly and accurately.

I know I've wondered aloud before in this Legislature about having the Child and Youth Advocate enabled and instructed to look directly at this issue and determine which youth in Alberta have perished as a result of being outed, while in school, by a school administrator or have ended up on the street as a result of having no safe space to go to discuss their sexuality with their parents and who felt they had no place to go.

My point is that I think we have a responsibility to understand why young people are dying. The death of a young person is certainly a concern for everybody in our society. No matter how those deaths occur, I think we should be knowing the intricate details of why. I know that the Child and Youth Advocate has a responsibility to investigate the death of minors in this province, and I believe he's already issued a couple of reports on the death of people who have been under the age of 18 in the LGBTQ2S-plus community. I'd be very interested to know if current legislation allows the Child and Youth Advocate to make a better-detailed tally and report to the Legislature on the death of young people either as a result of their being outed or failing to find a safe space to communicate to their family and ending up on the streets and somehow losing their life.

I mean, the whole issue that we've been talking about and the reason the opposition, that I'm so proudly a member of, is talking about this and keeping the issue alive and trying to raise awareness isn't to score political points. I mean, this is fundamentally about saving children's lives. I don't know if the front bench of the government gets it. Certainly, the Education minister doesn't seem to. Certainly, the Premier doesn't seem to accept this. I appeal to every other member of the government to fully accept that children's lives are at risk. That's why we initiated the GSA and QSA requirements for all schools in our legislation, and that's why we're fighting so hard to maintain them in the legislation that the government is bringing forward right now, Bill 8. The amendment that we're talking about, Mr. Chair, is just one element of that fight. Fundamentally, we're talking about the lives of students and young people.

Exempting private schools is done for a reason. A member from the opposition, the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, I think, was maybe extending a courtesy to the government when he recently stated that he felt that maybe it was simply a slight oversight on the part of the government to exempt the private schools. He mentioned that charter schools and other schools are covered by the legislation, but the private schools are exempted from the requirement under the act. He was being more than charitable, I think, when he suggested that it was perhaps simply an oversight by the government.

In my mind, I don't see this government as having too many oversights when it comes to the social policy that is so fundamentally important to such a large section of their political supporters, not to mention a good cross-section of the freshly elected MLAs. I think this legislation, Bill 8, is a clear reflection of the types of nomination races that took place to end up with

candidates that ultimately got elected in the UCP government positions. There were many, many battles that were won by people who ended up taking office, ultimately imposing their fundamentalist views on government policy. That's what we're challenged with today.

But it still doesn't mean that we don't need to consider the human rights that underlie the very foundation of our society. Indeed, what we're missing sight of is that these young people have a human right to be who they are and to exist and to hopefully expect from the society that they live in that there be enough compassion amongst legislators.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen to speak to amendment A4.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to stand in support of the amendment that we're referring to as A4. I, of course, am in support of it. We know that one of the concerns that we had when we were government was that the private schools, 28 of them, to be specific, were unwilling to develop policies and create GSAs as the Minister of Education at that time wished them to. You know, we experienced, obviously, some difficulty, so children, youth, students in those schools did not have access to GSAs.

*7:00 p.m.*

As many of the hon. members on this side of the House have talked about extensively, we know that GSAs make a huge difference in the lives of students and are not only beneficial to young people struggling with their sexual orientation but also to heterosexual students as well. I think that this amendment is key to making sure that all students in Alberta have the support of a GSA. It's fundamental to their well-being, and I certainly have spoken, as many of the members on this side have, about the extensive benefits, not only to this community but to other students, of having GSAs in their school.

I was referring to some research in my earlier speech, and I still have some outstanding pieces of it. For people who may have just joined us or who left, I want to also do a quick summary to help them know what I'll be speaking about and the article I'm referencing. It's from a publication from July 2017, the *Journal of School Health*. LGBTQ Youth's Views on Gay-Straight Alliances: Building Community, Providing Gateways, and Representing Safety and Support: that's the title of the publication. As I said previously, the researchers of this: it's sort of multidisciplinary. It has PhD social workers, psychologists, nurses. It's a broad range of academic backgrounds that are, you know, working together to assess, really, the impact that GSAs have on a school system.

You know, just in brief:

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the varied experiences of LGBTQ youth involved in GSAs, and, specifically, the functions they perceive that GSAs serve in their lives.

It's qualitative research. The sample was 14- to 19-year-old youth in both Canada and the U.S., so it was a North American study. It was an open-ended interview process where students were asked six open-ended questions about GSAs, and they did then sort of transcribe those interviews and then coded them.

Out of the data emerged three substantial themes that really indicated the very significant transformative quality and ability of GSAs to impact schools. The first theme that they had – the most dominant theme, I guess, is what I'm trying to say – is that they provided an opportunity for a community to be built both for

students as part of that community and heterosexual allies. That was a significant, fundamental finding from the research.

The second was that GSAs serve as gateways. This gives students access to adult mentors, access to resources in the greater community. It could be a health clinic or things like that. That was the second emergent theme that came out of the research.

The third emerging theme was that GSAs represent safety. I had talked earlier about the first two but just had not finished up with the very last theme of the research, so I'm going to share that now with the House. The youth, the subjects of the research, again, these 14- to 19-year-olds

interpreted the presence of a GSA as a significant marker of safety [in their schools]. Highlighting this, one participant said: "It's mainly a safe space where we can talk about anything that we want to. Like, we don't even talk about queer things sometimes. We might just talk about movies, and it's just a [really great] place to hang out."

That was from a 16-year-old.

Several youth commented that the presence of a GSA in a school indicated that the school was both safe and desirable. Students wanted to attend schools with a GSA and expressed disappointment with schools that did not have a GSA. In one instance, the presence of a GSA was seen as a selling point, to make a school more attractive to [the] LGBTQ [community]: "The GSAs from different schools will come to the health fair and say, 'Hey, if you're thinking about switching schools, this school has a GSA.'"

So it was actually, you know, a way that students could be wooed from one school to another because this was a positive aspect, and specifically in this case we're talking about just a feeling of welcoming and safety in that school.

Moreover, when a GSA was present, youth interpreted the climate of the school as safe. It seemed that schools allowing a GSA to form and operate were assumed to be welcoming to LGBTQ students: "Google like what schools in [city] have GSAs, those places are usually safe."

So this is sort of a suggestion to other students. They're saying that you should google those schools, and then if they have a GSA, you know that's a good school for you to go to.

A youth used her affiliation with the GSA to convey safety when introducing herself to new students: "I was, like, 'hey, guys, I'm head of the GSA, like, what are your pronouns?'"

Come on over: it was really a welcoming and an accepting environment. Those students who didn't have a GSA were really encouraged to go to other schools, and some of them did change because of the safety.

The purpose of the study, of course, as I've talked about, is just wondering what those mechanisms are. Why is a GSA so great? Why does it make such a big difference for students? Of course, of the emergent themes, as I've already discussed, the big one is building community. Students who otherwise felt isolated, who were afraid to share their sexual orientation, who were afraid to be different and didn't see any spaces for them to be safe in did not share that, but when there was a GSA, that immediately created this haven for them.

As we've talked about extensively this afternoon and last evening and for some time, sometimes there are just not those safe spaces in their homes, so these students are really looking for a place, and a school can absolutely provide that. And when it isn't in their home, then it can make a huge difference for that child. I mean, that's a really significant impact.

Of course, that's the number one emergent theme that the students themselves identified, that they really, fundamentally wanted to be accepted for who they were as they discovered that themselves. I had talked earlier about just how fundamental that is

to, you know, us as human beings, our need to belong, and when we are feeling isolated and different, how detrimental that can be to our well-being.

Of course, the second theme is just about the gateway to other adults who have the same lived experience and can help guide these, you know, youth. The teens said that it was so important for them to be able to just maybe bounce an idea off someone, and their accepting nature and their support and their ability to sort of point them in the direction that they needed to go in were so important to, again, that youth's well-being. That was the second emergent theme.

Then, of course, the last one is safety. We know that when GSAs are in schools, they're more likely to be, you know, more inclusive environments. They are safer spaces not only for LGBTQ kids but also for heterosexual males. I mean, there was a study out of B.C. where they looked at about 40,000 students. A lot of times there can be a hierarchy in who's the best, who's on the football team, who's the coolest guy. Sometimes someone who may be more book smart or a gamer or something is kind of not part of that sort of accepted view, and they can be open to bullying.

I mean, I shared earlier about when my son was much younger. My middle son, when he was in elementary, was kind of a timid, quiet guy, wasn't sort of the most outgoing fellow. He was the subject of tremendous bullying when he was little, that really created some severe challenges for him and, I think, still does in his life. I just know that the safety aspect of the third . . .

7:10 p.m.

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member with regard to the comments that you're making, but I do just want to ensure that the House does stay cognizant of the fact that we are on amendment A4, which is primarily regarding private schooling and issues surrounding this bill. I was just wondering if the hon. member would please tie it to the amendment, and if so, then please continue.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, I did speak initially about the importance of it being in both the private and public systems. The benefits go across both those systems, and therefore it's very important that GSAs be available. The amendment does talk about the private school system and ensuring that there are GSAs in that system also. I feel that it's applicable. We're talking about the benefits and why it's so important. You know, Bill 8 and this amendment will help all students regardless of the school system they go to. Regardless of it being private or public, they do receive the access to a GSA. This is an amendment that I think is so important and that the government should seriously consider.

Despite some of the views and the values of the private school system – there may be perhaps a lack of understanding that sexuality is something that's innate in people. It's not something where people are deciding if they're this or that. I think that it's really important for us to respect that. Having a GSA for students who are trying to understand and grapple with that, in either the private or the public system, is certainly extremely important.

The beneficial results of having GSAs for students beyond the LGBTQ community have been well documented. I was referring to a study in B.C. where for heterosexual males, actually, if they had suicidal thoughts and were sort of feeling isolated and separated, that diminished by 50 per cent. It's a huge impact on the whole community because there is an understanding of the inclusiveness of people, who are all being accepted along the whole spectrum. That's why this is so important.

I just would like to say that I think we need to be very careful about the decisions we make in this House because how they impact the lives of youth in our province, whether they're at a private school or a public school, is significant. We want to make sure that we are doing the best we can for the youth. Certainly, it's supported by the research. This is why I'm referring to this study, that was published back in 2017. The youth in this sample did recognize that GSAs were important in ways that are consistent with the benefits that have previously been identified in the research.

This isn't the only research study that shows this. It is pretty important in many studies. I have quoted Dr. Kristopher Wells previously, who is an associate professor at MacEwan University. He has done extensive study and recently wrote an opinion editorial in the *Journal* talking about, really, the damage of not having that, of not making sure that there is a timely creation of a GSA when a principal is asked to create that. I just want to reiterate how important it is and that this is a serious matter.

Certainly, when I was, you know, young myself, which was many years ago, this was unheard of. There was no sense that people would be supported in this way, but I know that now, with three sons of my own, I see the difference it makes in schools and that people who are different in all sorts of ways are accepted, and there's much more understanding that way.

It's really sad that there is sort of this exception for private schools so that they're not just included in the general system. We want to make sure that all students, regardless of if they're going to the private school or the public school, have access to GSAs and that we make sure they have, you know, really, access to the transformational power of these organizations. Because people have the connection, that means the affinity, the acceptance, and they aren't socially isolated, which can be very challenging for especially young people and have some really negative ramifications for their mental health throughout their lives if they may be experiencing some trauma.

Certainly, I mean, that's one of the deepest pains that I think anybody can receive: if they're rejected at home, if they're rejected by their own parents. There's a deep bond and love in that parent-child relationship, and if a child starts to express that they have a certain sexual orientation that their parents don't agree with, that can be devastating to that child.

As we know, 50 per cent of homeless youth do identify with that community. We know that people don't tolerate it, and they kick them out of their homes. That's why it's so important, whether you're in the private or the public system, that you make sure there is a GSA created in a timely fashion for those students so that they can, you know, for some part of the day, have a bit of a haven, a place where they know there are other people that are like them, where there's an adult who can help guide them, be a gateway to programs or services that they may need.

This is just life-changing, and it saves lives. We know that there are, unfortunately, too many stories about young children taking their lives because they felt like they didn't belong and they didn't have that acceptance. Mr. Chair, I think that it's so vital that both private and public schools be sure to have GSAs in a timely fashion and that students be supported by this. I really urge the hon. members on the government side to know the decision that they're making in looking at this amendment and making sure that students are cared for and supported as they really struggle.

High school wasn't the best time of my life; that's for sure. It's hard for someone from a dominant culture, and I'd say that I'm from a dominant culture. I'm a Caucasian person, and I'm also heterosexual, so I'm sort of part of a privileged class. I can fit into society more than someone who is a lesbian or gay or a person of

colour or something like that. It's really important that they have places for kids to feel some affinity, because they are not feeling like they do belong in communities, and perhaps there are lots of messages that they're getting. It may be at home, in their church. It could be just, you know, talking with other kids.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West rising to speak on amendment A4.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it, and I'm very happy to see you as well. I'm very happy to, you know, just convey a few thoughts and words around amendment A4 on Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. This amendment I was very keen to see because, of course, it is compelling private schools to adhere to the same rules around GSAs and QSAs in general.

7:20 p.m.

Again, I know as a former Education minister myself that this was a very important component of ensuring that safe and caring schools did apply to all places and schools that were receiving public funds here in the province of Alberta for education. As I'm sure you know, Mr. Chair, the private schools here in the province of Alberta receive 70 per cent of the funding that other schools here in the province do receive. I mean, that is not an insubstantial amount. I'm pretty sure that's if not the highest percentage of funding for private schools here in the country, then it's certainly amongst those. I guess I was always of the adage that if you are receiving public funding, then you need to follow the rules, just like everybody else, right?. This idea that you would change the rules for private schools although they are receiving quite a substantial percentage of funding: I really don't think that that's in line or symmetrical with the whole idea of having safe and caring schools in general.

I know that the analogy is not entirely congruent, but I was very happy to see a private member's bill, I believe, passed here in this same Chamber this session around anaphylaxis medication – right? – and this was a private member's bill that ensured that all schools would have these medications available for emergencies. You know, again, I could be wrong, but I'm pretty sure that that law applied to all schools, period. So you can't exclude basic laws or basic guidelines that ensure the safety and health of students in any school regardless of the structure of that school.

You know, I as minister certainly always made sure that we were having equitable funding for all forms of education here in the province of Alberta, be it a public school or separate schools, Catholic schools, or charter schools or francophone schools or private schools or home-schooling as well. Even in the midst of an economic downturn we did ensure that all those different choices of school were adequately funded. I was quite proud of that, quite frankly, because I know that school choice is an important element of who we are and how we provide education here in the province of Alberta, and I was glad to make sure that those choices were funded and, you know, intact. Even during the economic downturn, even though we had to make sacrifices in other areas, we ensured that funding for all different forms of school choice was remaining.

I mean, that being said, you need to make sure that those same schools that are being publicly funded, all those different forms of choice, have to make sure they follow the rules, Mr. Chair, and making sure that they follow the curriculum – right? – to ensure that kids are getting that high quality of education that we expect and that we have some standard of expectation of, you know, regardless of the different form of schooling that people might choose to use.



Part of that is to make sure that there is a safe and caring environment in schools to promote all of the benefits that we've heard about from various members here over the last couple of days on the protections that a safe and caring environment does afford students, not just the students who choose to join a GSA or a QSA but the overall environment and the safe and caring environment that GSAs or QSAs do help to nurture, right?. Of course, we do know and we've seen emerging evidence that in schools that do have GSAs, QSAs and have that choice available to them, the students are feeling the benefit of that safe and caring environment even if they're not joining the GSA or the QSA. They can see that their most vulnerable student mates in the school are being looked after and are protected. When you do have rules to protect vulnerable students, then everybody recognizes that, and they say: "Hey, you know what? This is great, and I'm looked after as well, and those students are, too."

That's a great foundation to further positive outcomes for education and positive mental health outcomes as well. I mean, I know as a teacher that it's absolutely essential. A precondition to good education outcomes is that a student must first feel safe and secure and confident in the school environment in which they are learning. You know, that precondition before you start to learn your math and your language arts and science and so forth is a foundational element of good education.

You know, here we are in 2019, and we came so far, Mr. Chair, quite frankly, over these last number of years. I can tell you, not just as the minister but as a teacher of 20 years, that the evolution and the understanding of the benefits of creating a safe and caring environment for all students regardless of their sexual or gender orientation is self-evident, but it wasn't immediately self-evident, nor was it immediately universally accepted. I know from teaching, as I said, for 20 years previous that this was an evolution that was quite slow in coming, really.

Quite frankly, on a personal basis, I did benefit from the education that I learned around the positive effects of GSAs and QSAs just over the last number of years. I mean, I sort of picked up some version of that before as a teacher, but it became abundantly clear to me through both experiential and anecdotal evidence and actual gathered evidence that this is a self-evident thing, right?

Who are we, quite frankly – you know, we want school choice to be widely various in its derivations and its outcomes, I suppose, but I don't think it's negotiable, when you are issuing public monies, to suggest that some schools are exempt from the rules around GSAs and QSAs.

You know, as I think back to Bill 10, which I was in the House to debate and so forth a number of years ago, I think that there was sort of an unspoken or perhaps a quietly spoken idea of: well, do you really need to follow this rule? Again, it's hard to pinpoint or nail down, but I get some evidence from that because the Bill 10 version of safe and caring schools didn't have timelines for people to set up GSAs or QSAs. It didn't have provisions or strict provisions around the confidentiality of those meeting places for kids, just a whole litany of loopholes, quite frankly.

I only made Bill 24, the provisions of Bill 24, which are pretty simple, really, when it comes down to it, (a) that we maintain the confidentiality of students if they choose to join a GSA and choose to have that sense of confidentiality in joining, (b) that they can be called GSAs or QSAs if they so choose to use those names – some places have chosen other names, and that's great, but to be able to use those names – and (c) to make sure that there's timely creation of a GSA or a QSA if students choose to form one and having teacher supervision around that.

I mean, you know, they're very basic rules, and they're nothing different from anything that you would expect, but I made all of those rules based on actual things that were happening in schools around the province. I literally had, you know, people complaining about the untimely access to creating a GSA, that schools or school boards or principals or whatever maybe were just simply ragging the puck – right? – not forming that GSA in a timely way, hoping that maybe the students would just back down or graduate or change their mind or whatever.

*7:30 p.m.*

I had a number of schools and school boards that would refuse to call a GSA or a QSA by that very name, so we had to make rules about that. We had lots of serious concerns that stemmed from the leader of this government party suggesting that students that would join a GSA or a QSA would be outed and so on – right? – a lack of supervision or whatever.

I mean, those are all very practical rules that we've set in place based on how we saw things unfolding in the field. Those same things: I think they're very basic expectations. I don't think anybody would, you know, choose to take exception to those rules, right? I think that they are basic rules of thumb if students want to choose to form a GSA, call it as such, have the safety of the confidentiality, if they choose to do so, and to see the school compelled to create that safe and caring environment in a timely way.

You know, if we're doling out money to any form of school – I mean, besides home-schooling, obviously – then I think those same rules should apply. When I say these very simple words, I think they resonate with the vast majority of people. If you are taking public money for education, you have to follow the rules, just like everybody else. There's no exception for those basic rules.

Lo and behold, as the drama did unfold – right? – we ended up with all the public schools in the province of Alberta, all public school boards, doing a great job, adhering to those rules, creating safe and caring policies, and, I would dare say, Mr. Chair, doing a really great job of that. All of the Catholic schools in the province of Alberta, all Catholic school boards, follow those basic rules and created safe and caring policies that were pretty awesome, quite frankly, infusing articles of faith into those rules and, I think, doing a great job of managing the responsibilities that they have.

All of the charter schools follow the same policy – right? – 14 charter schools. Some of them have multiple branches and, you know, lots of kids, thousands of kids. They built safe and caring policies which were pretty awesome. They did a great job, and they followed the rules.

All of the francophone schools: same thing. You know, they did a great job, and I'm super proud of them. The vast majority of the private schools followed the same rules as well and did a good job, and I was very proud of the outcomes that they achieved as well.

It makes me wonder: why are we here changing what is demonstrably a success story around the development and understanding of and education on what GSAs are and what the benefits of them are as well? By excluding private schools from that same thing here in Bill 8, I wonder: what's the point? I think people follow rules. We make lots of rules and so forth here through this Chamber. I mean, that's our job, and we do it based on a demonstrable need for, you know, ensuring that things get done in a reasonable and equitable and just manner.

Amendment A4, I think, is an idea that is eminently reasonable. It's, again, going back to a place that we managed to achieve over the last few years here in the province and enshrining that in law. I don't really see a problem with that. In fact, I encourage it, very much so, and I'm really glad that the Member for Edmonton-

Highlands-Norwood moved this forward. I did help her to point this out, and I think our caucus is feeling very strongly about it as well, right?

Private schools are what they are, and as I said before, from the beginning of my comments, we support all different forms of choice in education here in the province of Alberta. I think it's something that can be demonstrably said to be true over the last number of years, through funding, and even before that. Our Alberta New Democrats have spoken around these things, and I think that this is a continuation of that. We do support different forms of choice in our schools, but we want to make sure that everybody follows the rules. You don't have the allocation of public funds without following the rules for schools attached to that. I mean, it's as simple as that, quite frankly. I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South understands this implicitly, and he probably has many things to add to that same concept.

I encourage everyone here in the Chamber this evening, this lovely evening, to join me in supporting amendment A4 with regard to Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see that the hon. Minister of Education has caught my eye to speak.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would absolutely agree with the hon. member that private schools should have to conform to the same rules and regulations. That's why it is in the act. I'll be happy to read it. It is in the act, the Education Act, on page 34.

*Application of Act to private schools*

30(1) The following provisions and any regulations made under them apply to a registered or accredited private school and its operation, and a reference in those provisions or those regulations to a board or a trustee is deemed to include a reference to the person responsible for the operation of a private school or a member of the governing body of the operator of a private school, as the case may be.

Then it goes to:

- (a) sections 1 and 2;
- (b) in Part 1, sections 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9(2) and (4);
- (c) in Part 2, sections 16, 17, 18, 29 and 30;
- (d) in Part 3, sections 31, 32 and 35.1, section 42, except subsection (3), in respect of appeals referred to in section 58.2, and Division 7.

This was taken directly out of the School Act and absolutely enforces the fact that we will have private schools adhering to the law of the Education Act. We have been saying all along that it's there in black and white. We continue to say it. It is there, and we will have our private schools adhering to the same rules and regulations that all other schools do. Whether they be public or francophone or charter or separate schools, all will adhere to the law. We will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for LGBTQ students, whether they choose an inclusion group or whether they choose a GSA or a QSA. We continue to say that.

This, again, is another indication of bringing forward an amendment that is already in the act, and it's redundant. I question: why are we continuing to bring forward amendments that are already there when we are looking for uniformity?

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, on amendment A4, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen to speak.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. What a pleasure it is to be here with everyone tonight debating this amendment. It's actually very encouraging to hear the Minister of Education get up and speak at length to this amendment and how perhaps, in her opinion, it is redundant. In her opinion, it speaks to clauses that are already

addressed in the Education Act. That's why I look forward to the Education minister actually voting in favour of this as well, because if, in fact, it already is addressed in the Education Act, then the Education minister has nothing to be afraid of by voting for this amendment.

**An Hon. Member:** It's already there.

**Mr. Dang:** It would provide greater clarity for private schools.

**The Deputy Chair:** Through the chair, everyone.

**Mr. Dang:** It would provide greater clarity for boards and principals...

7:40 p.m.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I am speaking.

I was just going to remind the House that there is ample opportunity to debate not only this specific amendment but also the bill as a whole. I would encourage any members that would like to, who have perhaps a debatable position – after one or any other member speaks or debates on this, they are welcome to stand up at the appropriate time.

Please, hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, certainly, if this is something that is so black and white and clear and already in the Education Act, then for greater clarity there is no harm in passing this amendment. If, in fact, the Education minister and her colleagues on the government bench decide that they don't wish to pass this amendment, then I have to assume that this introduces something they would not like to see in the Education Act. Whether that is just greater clarity or whether that is indeed making the private schools and those boards and principals comply with the Education Act and the provisions set out around GSAs and QSAs, then I think that that is something that we will be seeing very shortly as we vote on this amendment.

But I think it's very important that we address the core of why this amendment makes a bad bill better. We know that Bill Hate is a bad bill. We know it's a bill that goes after and attacks GSAs, we know it's a bill that attacks students, we know it's a bill that attacks our most vulnerable youth, and we know it was designed to do that and that it was really designed to destroy GSAs. But what we can see here is that the Minister of Education has gotten up and spoken at length about how she believes these provisions already exist and that these provisions are not necessary and that this amendment is a waste of time and that we should move on.

Well, I would then raise to the Education minister that if that is indeed the case and the Education minister would like members of the opposition to move on, for our sake and for greater clarity for this Assembly, for greater clarity for private schools, for greater clarity within the Education Act, there is absolutely no harm in passing this amendment. That is simple logic. If it's something that's already there and we add it again for clarity, then that's something that won't change anything in the act, but if we refuse to add that into the act, if we refuse to make those changes and actually identify that these GSA, QSA provisions must be applied to private schools, if the Education minister is actually opposed to that, then we will see very clearly that the Education minister and members of the government caucus here are actually perhaps not wanting to signal this to private schools, that they are not wanting to show in the Education Act, in black and white, with greater clarity, that these are important provisions, that these provisions are what will actually help save students' lives.

I think this is a very simple amendment. It's a very clear amendment. The minister knows very well that if indeed what she is saying is true, then there is no harm in passing this amendment. I challenge the minister to perhaps get up in this place, if what she just said was true and if she was not misleading this House and misleading Albertans, if what was just said was indeed true – I believe it was, Mr. Chair, because that is what she has presented to this House – and explain to this House what harm will come from passing this amendment and why passing this amendment is such an affront to the Education Act and such an affront to the government and such an affront to the minister's values.

That is something that all Albertans deserve to know. That is something that is very important as we move forward with this bill, that we debate issues in fulsomeness and in a fulsome way that allows us to actually address whether what the minister is saying is intended to just be signalling for Albertans or whether it's actually intended to work for gay students, gay-straight alliances, queer-straight alliances, and young vulnerable Albertans all across this province. It's something that is very important for us to be able to have clear in *Hansard*, here in the Assembly right now, Mr. Chair, because today we are spending our evening debating something that will affect the lives of thousands of students across this province.

Let me tell you, Mr. Chair, that the former Minister of Education, the Member for Edmonton-North West, spoke at length about how he learned a lot about Bill 10 both while it was being debated here in this House a few years ago and also while he was the minister. Let me tell you that when I was a student and Bill 10 was moving through this House, this was something that we absolutely heard about. This was something that as students we absolutely were concerned about. The current Minister of Education will remember that around the time of Bill 10 students were actually protesting in the streets. They were coming to the Legislature, and they were speaking at length about how important these GSA and QSA provisions were.

In fact, at that time – I actually remember, and I'll try to keep the details a little bit vague here for various reasons, Mr. Chair – there were students at private schools who came forward. They may not have come forward in the media, but they came forward at the rallies. They came forward to our friend groups. They came forward and spoke to people that were at the GSA at my high school. One of the things that I heard very clearly was that at these private schools these principals and boards in many cases would drag their feet, would make it impossible to start a GSA, effectively would make it impossible to call a GSA a GSA or a QSA and that, in fact, it led many of these students to having thoughts that perhaps would lead to depression, suicide, or other things like that.

What has become very clear is that this minister and this government either do not understand or do not care about what those ramifications will be. They either do not understand or do not care what those students are going through, and that is something that's a real shame. It's a real shame to see the associate minister of mental health sitting here and refusing to speak to this and to speak to how GSAs and QSAs, especially having them in accredited private schools, would improve the mental health of students. It's a shame to see the minister not stand up here and understand why having these provisions is important and why having these provisions actually protects students, making sure that we make it extremely clear that every single school, whether they are public, separate, charter, or accredited private, must have the same rules.

If the minister is correct and indeed this is something that already exists in the act, then the minister should be very happy to vote this through. The minister should be very happy to say, "Well, we should reaffirm what's already in the act," because if the minister's act is so good and the minister believes her act is the be-all and end-

all for education for the next hundred years here in Alberta, then we should reaffirm what's already in the act by passing this amendment. I look forward to seeing the minister speak to that and speak to how she'll be supporting this amendment and how her government colleagues will be supporting this amendment because it is something that is very simple. If it's true, if the minister was not misleading us here in this Assembly and was not misleading Albertans, then it would be simple to pass this amendment. It would be simple to accept this amendment. It would be simple to recognize that it provides greater clarity. That's something that I don't believe the minister is going to get up and do, Mr. Chair.

I'll say that again. If the minister is not misleading this House, then indeed she will get up and say that. I really do believe that if she is correct, then we need to move forward and accept that this greater clarity for private schools is required, is good, and is something that we should be signalling for Albertans. We should be trying to protect our youngest and most vulnerable Albertans. It's something we should recognize, that these inclusion groups, as the minister likes to call them, need the most clarity possible. We have seen time and time again, wherever there was an opening, that certain school districts and certain school boards or administrators perhaps did not believe in the value of inclusion groups, as the minister calls them, or GSAs or QSAs, perhaps did not understand. Perhaps they had ties to conversion therapy schools such as the school that the Minister of Finance was on the board for. Perhaps they just didn't understand that gay kids mattered, Mr. Chair, but that's not for us here in this Assembly to decide.

What is for us in this Assembly to decide is that if this is indeed an amendment that makes no tangible difference, then the minister should have no problem accepting that. That is something that all members of this Assembly should agree with. I would challenge members of the government caucus and members of the government front bench to perhaps ask the minister, because this is a really interesting question. If indeed it is already in the act, then what is the harm in making it more clear? What is the harm in ensuring that the act is followed to its fullest? Or is the intent for there to be a way for the act to not be followed? Is the intent of the act to be unclear in certain aspects, to be muddy in certain aspects so that administrators can drag their feet and perhaps not provide GSAs and QSAs?

If that is indeed the case, then the minister should get up in this House and say that. The minister should explain to Albertans, explain to this Assembly why she refuses to accept this amendment even though it allegedly does nothing new and allegedly already exists in the act. That's something that I think is very important because it's something that all Albertans are going to be interested in. It's going to be interesting to Albertans to be able to understand whether this government will actually walk the walk or whether they will only talk the talk.

This amendment, that makes accredited private schools comply with the same principles and the same rules as every other school that the minister has spoken to already, is simply common sense. It's simply common sense that when you publicly fund an institution, when students are under the care of the minister, when students are under the care of the government, that this Legislature was sent here to hold to account, they have the same rules across the entire province. It makes sense that they have the same protections across the entire province. It shouldn't matter whether you go to school in Lethbridge, in Drumheller, in Edmonton, in Calgary, or in High Level. It really shouldn't matter where you go to school, Mr. Chair. As long as you are in a publicly funded institution, you have the exact same rules.

7:50 p.m.

Greater clarity: this amendment would provide that. It would provide the clarity that all of our schools must comply with the Education Act, especially regarding GSAs, QSAs, and so-called inclusion groups, Mr. Chair. I think it's very clear that this is a simple amendment. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I know, understands how important this amendment is. That's why she moved it. She understands how critical it is that we send this out as a message to students across the province, that they will be protected even if they attend a private school, not only if they attend public or separate or charter schools.

We did see, Mr. Chair, that when the original Bill 24 was moved through, compliance was found with all public schools, all charter schools, all separate schools. We did see some private schools not comply with the act, and Bill 24 was quite clear already that all schools must comply. I believe, actually, that Bill 8 and the Education Act are less clear than Bill 24. Because Bill 8 and the Education Act are less clear, I think that this amendment makes it more clear for those schools that if they don't comply, they must face the consequences.

That is something that I would hope the minister would agree with. I would hope that the minister would agree that school boards should follow the law, that school boards should follow what is in her own Education Act, that she is charged to uphold. I would hope that the minister would do that, and I would think that this amendment would actually enable the minister to do that in a more unified and simple way. It's something that the minister should be happy to have as an extra tool in her tool box. The minister should be happy to have this as something that she will be able to hold up and say: private schools absolutely have to comply with the law as long as they are receiving public funds. As long as they receive that 70 per cent funding through the Education Act and the Alberta Education department, they absolutely must comply with the law.

That's something that I think is very simple. I think this amendment makes it more clear. The minister has said that she already believes that she has that authority. If she does indeed have that authority and if she does believe that, then I don't understand why she wouldn't support this amendment – this amendment would give her another tool in her tool box – unless the minister intends to not have school boards comply with the law, unless the minister is deliberately objecting to this amendment because she does not believe the law should be followed, unless she deliberately objects to this amendment because she believes it would hold her to upholding the law against all private schools.

That's something that I think this House deserves to understand, Mr. Chair. This House deserves to understand whether the minister intends to actually uphold the law as it's written, and this amendment would provide that clarity for Albertans. This amendment would allow Albertans to understand what this government is actually doing, whether they walk the walk or just talk the talk.

Mr. Chair, I know that the minister understands how important these GSAs and QSAs are. We have been in here for many hours over many days debating the importance of GSAs and QSAs. Members of the opposition have spoken at length . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but having given some thought for the last couple of moments, I just want to caution the member with regard to potentially imputing a false motive with regard to other members in the House. I would just ask him to be cautious with his language.

Having made that request, I would ask the hon. member to continue.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, I would never impute a motive to another member. All I would say is that members' actions and ministers' actions as they work here in the House and the government's actions show very clearly what Albertans should expect and how they should feel about what the government is doing. Of course, every single member of this Assembly has the opportunity to rise in this place and speak to what they believe. I believe that if they don't, then Albertans will have to make their own decisions on what the motives of these members are, and that is something that's very concerning.

When we look at accredited private schools, they receive 70 per cent funding. That is a very large amount of their funding. They should stand with the law. The government needs to understand and the government needs to tell Albertans whether they intend to uphold the law to the same standard for every single school and every single administrator across this entire province or whether they intend to let certain schools sort of slip by, Mr. Chair. I think this amendment prevents that.

If the government does not wish to pass this amendment, an amendment that they have already indicated is redundant and would only give them the same tools that they already have, then perhaps it signals that the government doesn't intend to uphold the law for every single school. Perhaps it signals that the government and certain ministers do not intend to do that, and that's something that I think would be very bad for this province. I think it would be very bad for our education system across this province. Most of all, Mr. Chair, I think that it would be bad for students across this province and, in particular, gay students and queer students. That is something that I think every single member of this Assembly should be concerned about. We should be concerned about how certain schools have been known to drag their feet in the past and indeed have had alumni come forward and students come forward and explain to the public how they were shamed for being gay, shamed for being lesbian, how they were almost forced to go to conversion therapy camps in some cases. In these schools we want to make sure that all of the provisions of the act are going to be followed.

If that is indeed the intent of this government, then it would be very simple for this government to accept this amendment. It would be very simple for this government to allow the amendment to provide greater clarity and guidance for the minister and for these schools. If indeed it does nothing that the minister isn't already intending to do, then the minister should absolutely accept the amendment and tell Albertans that she intends to do this and that she intends to hold these school boards and these private schools to the law. That's something that I think this minister should be proud to do. She should be proud to recognize that the Education Act can be made more clear and that she can be given more tools to do her job, Mr. Chair. I think that, very clearly, this is her job, to make sure that the Education Act is followed properly.

This is something that I think all Albertans should be able to support and that all members of this Assembly should be able to support. It's something that I think I'm very happy to support. I'm very happy to be able to see and understand the importance of it. I mean, it's a shame that the government doesn't understand how important these GSAs and QSAs are. It's a shame that they either don't understand or don't care about these GSAs and QSAs. I think that, certainly, if we're seeing compliance under Bill 24 for all public, separate, and charter schools, it is only a small change to ensure that the private accredited schools are also complying with the Education Act. It's a short amendment, Mr. Chair. I'd encourage

the members of the government caucus to read it and understand how simple it is to protect vulnerable youth. If they do indeed believe in protecting vulnerable youth, they would understand why it's so important and that it doesn't infringe on anyone's rights, doesn't infringe on anybody's beliefs. All it does is say that you must provide a safe space for these students who request it.

That's something where if we're funding these schools at 70 per cent, then absolutely these schools should be able to comply with the law. They should be able to comply with the amendment. If indeed they are already complying with the law, then they would also be complying with the amendment. I think the Education minister knows that, and the Education minister should be happy to be able to support that. It's something that I think is very clear here in this House.

The Education minister has been making faces and gestures as if saying: well, of course it's redundant. Well, if, of course, it's redundant, then of course we should be able to pass it. It's simple logic, Mr. Chair. It would do nothing that the minister isn't already doing. If indeed she does not wish to do her job, then she would not pass this amendment.

It is very clear what this government is intending. It's to allow certain schools and certain boards to skirt the rules, to not comply with the Education Act, and to not allow these GSAs, these QSAs, and for gay students to have a safe space to be in compliance with.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, to speak to A4, I believe I see that the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to rise and talk. I guess we are now well over 24 hours of what is still Wednesday inside this place. I believe we passed the record for the longest sitting day probably about 15 or so minutes ago. I think you have to ask yourself why. If I was an average Albertan watching on the Internet what has been taking place in this place for a very long time, I certainly would be asking myself: why? Heck, I've been in this place for a while, and I'm still asking myself why at this exact moment.

8:00 p.m.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Chair, nobody is watching us on the Internet except for maybe a couple of people in the building. We know that nobody is listening to the opposition in this Chamber except for us because that's our role on behalf of Albertans. Sometimes everybody has a cross to bear, so we're here listening to what they have to say. That's our responsibility, to come and listen as best we can though sometimes it's harder than others.

But I don't think you would be at fault, if you were a constituent watching tonight what their MLA was doing in the Chamber, what they were talking about, in being a little bit frustrated, at the very least, with the inability of the opposition to do any research when it comes to this legislation. Now, Mr. Chair, they may be struggling with staff as they transition to opposition. I know there are rumours going around about different volunteer positions and that type of stuff. I don't know if that is what's impacting the research ability of the opposition. You know, I won't make that assumption. Maybe it's possible. I don't know.

To come into the Chamber and then spend hours asking the Education minister to rise and address a question and then when the Education minister rises and addresses the exact question that you asked and points out that your amendment, what you're asking for in the amendment, already exists and that your amendment would be redundant, to have the nerve to then rise after the hon. the Education minister articulates that, makes it very clear, very politely takes you through what you've missed – and people miss

things. It's a big, big bill, and people miss things. After it being pointed out that what you have brought to this Chamber already exists, to then have the nerve and the gall to stand up in this place and attack the very same minister again and to ask the very same question again about your amendment is bizarre. It's bizarre, Mr. Chair, and that's what people, if they were watching this at the moment, are thinking: what the heck is going on with Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition?

Now, Mr. Chair, through you to those who may be watching, I wish I could answer that, but I have no idea what is going on with Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. I suspect that Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition has no idea what is going on with them. It's pretty clear that it's chaos over inside the opposition benches right now. I suspect that has a lot to do with the upcoming leadership race that is going to happen inside the NDP corridors as they spend their time trying to reposition to get ready for the leadership race. I don't know if there are, you know, already attempts to remove the interim leader of the NDP or what is going on inside the NDP caucus, but it's pretty clear that a lot of this is about posturing because it's certainly not about the bill.

If it was about the bill, they would actually come to this Chamber and talk about what's inside the bill, and they wouldn't bring ridiculous amendments that are already inside the legislation to the Chamber. Now, that also may be because they're running out of options, Mr. Chair, at this point. They continue to come to this Chamber and filibuster the progress that Albertans expect to happen inside this Chamber with ridiculous amendments that have already been put in the bill.

Now, Mr. Chair, talk about not being able to take yes as an answer. The hon. member rose and asked a question, got the answer, confirmed that what they wanted is already inside the legislation. Problem solved. What he should have done was gotten up and said: "Well, thank you, Minister. I'm sorry I got this one wrong. In fact, I'm going to go back and question whether or not my researchers are capable of handling what is coming on and maybe get them to adjust." I don't know. Maybe in their volunteer roles they're struggling at the moment – I don't know – just with time. We want to respect that fact with their role. But they got it wrong, and that's okay. Things like that happen.

I think it's important for the House to begin to start to ask as amendments like these come forward in this Chamber: "What is the Official Opposition trying to do with an amendment that already exists inside the very piece of legislation that the Education minister brought to the Chamber? Does that benefit Albertans?" There was a lot of talk by the hon. member, while he'd said that he was speaking to his amendment or his colleague's amendment, about the benefit for the province of Alberta. Is it really beneficial for the province of Alberta that the Official Opposition for hours and hours and hours inside this Chamber repeatedly gets up and talks about things that are already existing in the bill?

At the very least, Mr. Chair, could they be a little bit more creative than that and come up with another piece of legislation, not come up with an amendment that already exists inside the legislation? I mean, I know some of the hon. members across the way. They're capable of coming up with an amendment. One of them is the former Deputy Chair of Committees inside this place, very capable when it comes to things like this. I'm sure that she wouldn't want to see her colleagues continue to come and bring amendments to this Chamber that already exist in the legislation.

Mr. Chair, I was talking about this earlier with some of my colleagues. It costs a significant amount of taxpayer resources for this Chamber to operate. Now, it's important that this Chamber operates. It does an important role. It's important to our

parliamentary system in our country, and we need to make sure that that happens, but we need to respect the time that we have in the Chamber. The Official Opposition coming here into this House and bringing in amendments that already exist is certainly not – I would submit to you, Mr. Chair, that this is relevant to this amendment because it's not respecting this Chamber. When you find out that you already have it in there and you can't take yes for an answer, when you're so stuck in your partisan lens that you're not able to rise and go, "Oh, okay; cool; we got that one done; perfect; tick that box off" and then come with another amendment to continue to try to make the legislation stronger – the Official Opposition seems incapable of being able to do that.

It's one of the things that I find disappointing. Particularly with parties, you see it often when they're dealing with leadership crises, like the Official Opposition is dealing with. They struggle to do their role in here. One of the things I was proud of when we were the Official Opposition in this Chamber, both with the Wildrose Party, which I had the privilege being part of, and, second, in the United Conservative Party, as we went through our process of uniting the free-enterprise conservative movement in this province, a historical moment that I'm proud to be part of, going through the full unity vote to accomplish that, two leadership races that had to happen at the same time, we were still able to come to this place and do our job as the Official Opposition every day. If we could do that during all of that process to be able to get the free-enterprise side of Alberta's political spectrum united, certainly the Official Opposition could do that as they go through their leadership review of their one-term Premier as their members begin to posture to run for the leadership.

Now, I would also submit to you, Mr. Chair, that bringing amendments like this would not help with your leadership run. I mean, I don't have an NDP membership. That may come as a surprise to you, but if I was an NDP member and I was starting to look at the slate of possible candidates to replace the former Premier of Alberta when whatever happens with the chaos of leadership in the NDP is over, I don't think I'd want to vote for somebody who continues to bring amendments to the Chamber that already exist inside the legislation, that would waste that much time inside this Chamber, or would not understand the legislation that they were debating. That's not somebody that I would want to lead my party and to be the next Leader of the Official Opposition inside this Chamber.

I see the former Education minister heckling away. I very much suspect that he may run to be the next Leader of the Official Opposition. In fact, Mr. Chair, I believe that he may have run before in the past and was not successful, but maybe he will be successful this time, and maybe I could provide him some free advice through you, Mr. Chair. It's probably better if he spends his time actually sticking up for Albertans, defending what his constituents want, actually listening to what Albertans want, not coming here and spending his time trying to make an amendment to legislation that says exactly what the legislation already said. I don't think that would be very good for a leadership race.

Now, I've never run for leader of a party. My friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow ran once for leadership of the party. He did a great job, ran an excellent campaign. I was on a different campaign, but we were great friends. And I could tell you that he would, through you, Mr. Chair, provide advice to the former Education minister – and I'm saying that because I can't remember his constituency at the moment – that that's probably not the best way to begin to launch your leadership race.

**An Hon. Member:** What did the NDP members in Sundre say?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. The NDP members in Sundre – and I suspect that there are a couple of them – certainly would not like this. Now, maybe they would be interested in the former Education minister as a potential leader, but I think that they are losing interest when he spends his time inside this Legislature focusing on amendments like this that are already inside the existing legislation. It's just counterproductive.

**8:10 p.m.**

While it's fun to hang out here and I love it – you know why, Mr. Chair? I love to be here all the time because we have the greatest caucus, in my belief, in the history of this Legislature. I'm happy to hang out here all day with my colleagues, spend our time together, being able to sit inside the Legislature, be able to absorb the history of the moment of this Chamber, and I'm happy to do it all day. I will come and hang out with my caucus any day of the week inside this Chamber, 24 hours a day, 48 hours, whatever, straight. I'm excited to do that.

It's just really important, though, I think, for us to continue to encourage our colleagues – they are our colleagues, who have an important constitutional responsibility in this Chamber as the Official Opposition – to do better. Their job is to encourage us to get better legislation, and they're trying to do that. They're struggling. I suspect that a lot of that's about the leadership turmoil inside their party, but we have a job, too, as their colleagues, to encourage them. I'm just trying to encourage them, Mr. Chair, through you, to do better with their amendments, to take yes for an answer, to try to actually change legislation, to maybe take time to read the bill before you come to the Legislature. That's something I would suggest to do. Maybe then you would be able to rise inside this Chamber and actually talk about the bill.

Here's another thing. At the very least, if you don't have time, Mr. Chair, to speak about the bill, read the amendment that you brought to the Chamber. That would help. It's your amendment, and you continue to rise inside this House and talk about an amendment and, clearly, speech after speech, have no clue what's in the amendment. If you want to support your colleagues – at the very least, if you're the one that moves the amendment, you should take the time to read the amendment. That certainly hasn't happened inside this Chamber of late. It's pretty obvious, when you listen to the comments of the hon. members opposite, that they haven't even read their own amendments. They're just standing up, going off their talking points.

I don't know. Maybe it's the whip. The former Education minister is now the whip. I got the privilege of being the chief opposition whip in this place before, a tough job sometimes. I'm sure he's doing a good job, especially with the turmoil in leadership. It's really hard to be a whip when everybody in your caucus is positioning yourself to be the next Leader of the Opposition. So, you know, I sympathize with him, but he still has a responsibility to make sure his caucus actually brings amendments to this place that make sense, certainly that don't say the same thing that's already in the legislation.

Now, Mr. Chair, I've been in this Chamber. I've moved a lot of amendments myself inside this Chamber over the years, so it's possible that we may have come here before with an amendment that was already in the legislation and we missed it. Some of these bills are big, and they're coming fast and furious, but once it happens and the hon. Education minister shows you word for word that your amendment already exists in the legislation, I would have certainly got up on that side and said: "Government, great job. You got that one right. Let's move on, and let's get another amendment on the floor."

You know what's happened, Mr. Chair? They've run out of amendments. Now they're having to go in and actually pull pieces of our actual legislation and try to amend it word for word, the same as is already in the legislation. I have never heard of such a thing in all of my time in the Chamber. I don't know if some of my colleagues that were here in the Official Opposition with me ever recall us having to use that kind of a tactic, but then again we never sat inside this House for 24, 26, 27 hours at a time filibustering on the taxpayer's dime legislation that they voted for in overwhelming numbers to be passed.

It's a new approach to the leadership race. It's the way they've got to go. I know the Official Opposition leader at this point has to be thinking: wow; my entire caucus at this point appears to be getting ready to run for my job, that I haven't even vacated yet, and is spending their time, 24 hours a day, inside the Legislature positioning themselves for a run for the NDP leadership. Well, Mr. Chair, I don't know why you'd want to run for the leadership of that party if these are the tactics that this party is going to take. You know where that party is headed to with these tactics? They're headed right back to being the third party or maybe not even a party inside this Chamber, because Albertans are not going to accept this behaviour from this Official Opposition, nor should they.

They should expect better from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. I certainly expect better from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. I know my constituents do, Mr. Chair. I know their constituents do. Continuing to come to this place with amendments that are clearly already in legislation, continuing to give speeches that are clearly not about the legislation, and going through that process to delay what Albertans want is shameful, and each one of those members of that Official Opposition should hang their heads in shame. They should do better, and it's completely and utterly not acceptable.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen to speak.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Oh, what a pleasure it always is to hear from the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks here, and it's always great to see his energy here in this Chamber. It would just be nice if he was correct. Unfortunately, the minister has spent quite a bit of time here lecturing the opposition and other members about how it is so important to ensure that you read the amendment, read the bill, make sure everything you get is absolutely tip-top and that you are one hundred per cent right when you get up and talk to an amendment, that you are going to have your ducks in a row.

It's actually really unfortunate because I have the Education Act in front of me, Mr. Chair, and I'm sure the Education minister did earlier as well. Section 30(1)(d) of the Education Act:

In Part 3, sections 31, 32 and 35.1, section 42, except subsection (3), in respect of appeals referred to in section 58.2, and Division 7.

You'll actually note, Mr. Chair, that at no point in that excerpt I just read from the Education Act was section 33(1)(d), (2) and (3), referred to at all. Section 33 is actually not referred to in the application of the act to private schools in the Education Act. Now, I understand that the Minister of Environment and Parks and the Minister of Education both spoke at length in this Assembly as to how they believed that this was a redundant amendment, but it's right here in black and white. You can see it yourself in the act and in the amendment that there are clauses in this amendment that are not addressed in the Education Act. It's very simple.

I know the ministers were not intending to mislead this House, but they certainly were incorrect in their assessment. They were incorrect. I understand that in transitioning into government,

sometimes it's hard to bring staff in. Especially if they're coming in from Ottawa and don't understand all of the Alberta legislation, especially if they haven't seen the scene in Alberta for the last several years, they'll have a tough time reading the act, Mr. Chair. But I assure you that it's on page – I believe the minister said that it was page 37 of the act. It's page 35 in the numbered pages, page 37 on the PDF. If they're frantically looking this up in the gallery right now, I'm sure they can look that up using the search function on their phones or keyboards, control F, to help them out at home. It becomes very clear that the Minister of Education and the Minister of Environment and Parks are wrong. They simply did not read the amendment. They did not read the act. They trusted a briefing note that came from a staffer from Ottawa that was wrong, and that's a shame.

It's something where I think, as the Minister of Environment and Parks and Government House Leader has spoken eloquently to just now, we should expect better in this House. We should expect members to not go off on tangents and speak at length to things that they don't understand and that would be embarrassing for members, as the minister had said already. I mean, I would be embarrassed if I'd actually just missed the whole number on the page that was right in front of me in black and white. That would embarrass me, Mr. Chair. But, luckily, I'm able to pull it up online here and look at the actual Education Act and look at the actual amendment and do the research that a member of this House should do as their job and actually understand the depth of the amendment and how it affects the legislation and how it affects Bill 8 and the Education Act. I hope every member is now doing that research. I hope every government member is now taking the time to take a step away from the rhetoric and, as the Government House Leader would say, away from the talking points and perhaps actually read the amendment and the legislation.

I assure you that when I sat in the government caucus, I also received numerous briefing notes and numerous binders full of documents, Mr. Chair, and I'm sure you've seen those documents now as well. But sometimes you actually have to go and read the bill. Sometimes you actually have to do your job and look into the things you're voting on. Sometimes you discover that the briefing note omits, in this case, section 33(1)(d), (2) and (3). In fact, the briefing note has no mention of it at all, and in fact their talking points have no mention of it at all, but the bill, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, Bill 8, and this amendment do. This amendment does address those sections.

This amendment is not redundant no matter what the Minister of Education would have you believe. This amendment is not superfluous no matter what the Minister of Environment and Parks and Government House Leader would have you believe. Indeed, it would be embarrassing if I missed that in my note, and it would be embarrassing if I missed that in my overview of the Education Act. But, unfortunately, that is the case. We've seen it now. It's clear. The facts are before us if we read the bills ourselves.

I would encourage the minister, then, now that she has spoken to how she believes that all these clauses that are in this amendment are already protected and now that we've shown her in black and white that they're not – I'm looking forward to the minister voting in favour of this amendment. The minister already spoke to how she supported this amendment in principle, to how it's supported already in the Education Act, to how she already believed that all these clauses were both important and already existent. We've now shown and proven that they are not existent.

So I hope the minister will vote in favour of this. I look forward to hearing more rigorous debate from the government side.

Thank you.

8:20 p.m.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, the individual who caught my eye was the hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I would categorically disagree with the hon. member in his recent statements. If you look at Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, which we are introducing, on page 6 section 30 is amended by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) Section 33(1)(d,) (2) and (3) apply.

Those are the sections that we're adding to what I had previously read under section 30(1), which included all the other pieces. This actually strengthens the legislation concerning private schools, that was not in the previous School Act.

The pieces that now will apply to private schools also include:

- (d) ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by the board and each staff member employed by the board is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.

As well:

- (2) A board shall establish, implement and maintain a policy respecting the board's obligation under subsection (1)(d) to provide a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that includes the establishment of a code of conduct for students that addresses bullying behaviour.

And all of section (3):

- (3) A code of conduct established under subsection (2) must
  - (a) be made publicly available,
  - (b) be reviewed every year,
  - (c) be provided to all staff of the board, students of the board and parents of students of the board,
  - (d) contain the following elements:
    - (i) a statement of purpose that provides a rationale for the code of conduct, with a focus on welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments;
    - (ii) one or more statements that address the prohibited grounds of discrimination set out in the Alberta Human Rights Act;
    - (iii) one or more statements about what is acceptable behaviour and what is unacceptable behaviour, whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means;
    - (iv) one or more statements about the consequences of unacceptable behaviour, which must take account of the student's age, maturity and individual circumstances, and which must ensure that support is provided for students who are impacted by inappropriate behaviour, as well as for students who engage in inappropriate behaviour,
- and
- (e) be in accordance with any further requirements established by the Minister by order.

This actually strengthens. This was not in the School Act. This is something that we now have put into the Education Act, included as an amended piece. That is why it is under section 8, page 6, adding (1.1) to what was already there in (1), which I had previously read, which did include 35.1 under (d) of 30(1).

Again, I do believe we have covered all the bases. As I've indicated before, we will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for GSAs, QSAs, inclusion groups. We are looking after all students in all environments, including private schools.

I do feel that the hon. member misspoke just previously. I will leave it at that.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West rising to speak to amendment A4.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak on amendment A4. I mean, I'm happy to hear the Education minister's analysis. I guess the one part that I was a little bit unclear about was whether a private school was compelled to have a safe and caring schools policy in the window, so to speak – right? – up front for people to see. I think I heard that you said that that was so here now. In other words, through the chair, of course, the private school is compelled to have a safe and caring schools policy posted as such on their website or as part of their documentation, as part of their information. It sounded like you said that it did. Your head is going up and down, and your hand is going up. There you go. That's good. I mean, that's the one part that we were concerned about, quite frankly. You know, that seems sort of reasonable, and that's great.

You know, as part of the debate, I must say that that's my job. I think that in this Chamber and in life in general I am the person that brings things down a little bit, brings the temperature down. Our job is to provide constructive criticism, right? I think that we have been doing so, and we do through amendments as well. I think that what I heard from the hon. minister seems to satisfy the concern that I had in this regard, and that's great. We have to look for those things whenever we can. I mean, I know that the hon. minister and myself worked together very closely for quite a number of years, actually, and we always had a really good relationship. I certainly respect the integrity of her analysis, on this amendment anyway, so that's great.

I don't think we need to take it to a vote, then, as such. Do you want to do that?

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

**Ms Sweet:** We still have to vote on it.

**Mr. Eggen:** We still have to vote on it. Okay. Great. I will leave it at that.

Oh, my gosh, Mr. Chair. You look even better than you did a minute ago. There you go.

I will leave it at that. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Chair:** Anyone else to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I call the question.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** Any further discussion on the bill? The Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Excellent. For all the recently elected members, you know, that's democracy in action, and there's nothing wrong with it, quite frankly, right? I can't remember, really, having an amendment that kind of fizzled out before, but there you go. We can chock it up to experience.

However, Mr. Chair, certainly, that doesn't deter a diligent member from constructive criticism of an important bill. What I would like to do now is pass out an amendment that I have here that I think you all will find of great interest.

**The Acting Chair:** Okay. We can proceed if you like. This will be referred to as amendment A5.



**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Great. Maybe while we're passing them out, I can just, with the chair's permission, read the amendment. Is that okay?

**The Acting Chair:** You would be moving it on behalf of . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** . . . the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**The Acting Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes, indeed. I'll just read it while we're passing it out. Is that okay, Mr. Chair?

**The Acting Chair:** Go ahead.

*8:30 p.m.*

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. I'll read it. Moved that Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by striking out section 10 and substituting the following: section 33 is amended (a) in subsection (1)(e) by striking out "specialized"; (b) by adding the following after subsection (2):

(2.1) A policy established under subsection (2) must contain a requirement that any request made by a student pursuant to section 35.1(1) is granted no more than two weeks from the day the request is received.

I'll wait for that to get passed.

**The Acting Chair:** Anyone else to speak to amendment A5?

**Mr. Eggen:** I'm going to speak.

**The Acting Chair:** Sure. Go ahead.

**Mr. Eggen:** I was just going to wait to have it all passed out. Should I move ahead then?

**The Acting Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Great. Thank you. This amendment, I think, speaks directly to the timeliness of a school or school board instituting a GSA or QSA if requested by students in a school. Again, you know, I've said it before, but I'll say it very briefly again. This is one of the practical things that I ran across in the last few years, where if somehow a school was reluctant to start a GSA, then they would just kind of hold back or rag the puck on actually instituting it in a timely way.

Just to put it in context, remember that we're talking about kids that are, like, 15, 16, 17 years old, so they're dealing with adults. They're already in a compromised situation and feeling like if they're not getting a response from the administration, then it's awkward. You know, we did see examples where schools or school boards would just not respond and then just kind of wait for it to go away somehow. Again, that's, I think, behaviour that runs counter to the intention of creating a GSA and having a safe and caring environment and the confidence that a student can have to go to a school or a principal, which is not easy to do anyway – I know that takes some bravery or some presence of mind for a young kid to do so – and then to make sure that they're being answered in a timely way to create the GSA or the QSA.

This is one of the things that I did address in Bill 24, and this is something that I believe, you know, we can put into this Education Amendment Act. It's a very simple amendment, I think. It's pretty darn clear, and I would encourage everyone to absorb it, think about it, and hopefully consider supporting this amendment.

I believe that it's incumbent upon us in this Assembly to act on experience, to act on what we have seen to be true; in this case, like I say, the experiences that I did have as minister with a not timely

response to the request for a GSA or a QSA. I did address it by the bill that I had brought forward previously, and I think that it would really rest well in this current bill and would go a long way to helping kids know that this law and regulation are in place to help them and not hinder them.

I encourage everybody to think about this and support it. I'm sure we'll have some people to make some comment on it, and I appreciate, Mr. Chair, your time to bring this amendment forward.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank my hon. friend from Edmonton-North West. He absolutely delivered on his promise to bring the temperature down in the Legislature. He restored it to its otherwise soporific state, so thank you to the Member for Edmonton-North West for bringing the temperature down. I also want to thank my hon. colleague from Edmonton-South. He continues to impress me with the number of words per minute that he manages to make in his speeches. On an efficiency basis I think there is no other member of the Legislature who delivers more product to his constituents than the Member for Edmonton-South. I want to thank him for setting the bar so high.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order, Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** A point of order has been called.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you. I rise on 23(b)(i). "A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion [or the chair's], that Member speaks to [a matter] other than the question under discussion." I would also point out (c). Actually, I'll just stick with (b) for the time being.

While I'm very interested, I'm sure, in the hon. member's opinion of his colleague, I'm not sure what it has to do with the amendment that was just brought forward in this Chamber. I like lots of my colleagues. I like all of my colleagues, actually. All of them are here. Mr. Chair, I could spend some time talking about the hon. Minister of Health. For many years I've known him. He's a good friend. I could talk about how great he is. How about the hon. the Finance minister? Nice guy. I could talk about that in great detail. I don't know what that has to do with this amendment though. Pretty clear in the standing orders that he should be called to order and get focused back on this amendment.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I find this a little ironic when the member just started speaking, so there wasn't a lot of time to get to where he was starting to go. However, not only a few minutes ago the hon. House leader just stood up and waxed on for, like, 15 minutes about an amendment and how great his caucus is and all of the other things that he was loudly talking about during his comments around the previous amendment. I think that, you know, there's some – yes, we'll just say that it's ironic and maybe just say that it's not a point of order at this point.

**The Acting Chair:** To rule, I do not believe this is a point of order, but I do encourage all members to stay focused on the business at hand. We have amendment A5.

Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, if you wish to continue.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I will certainly endeavour to do my best to speak to the amendment before us. I understand that you didn't find that that was a point of order, but I certainly do want to make sure that we remain focused on what's going on. I'm pleased to stand and support my hon. friend from Edmonton-North West in bringing forward this amendment on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I think it's important for everybody to support this amendment because it sets up strict timelines for achieving the formation of GSAs.

Certainly, you know, I recall, Mr. Chair, as I'm sure you do, a number of occasions when the members opposite were in the Official Opposition and they were asking about timelines for delivering on things that we had promised. They would bring forward amendments that would require timelines for reporting on things that were enacted in legislation, certainly asked often for timelines on other things that weren't related to legislation but were important policy pieces that we had committed to deliver.

In fact, I would agree with the members opposite when they demand timelines for achieving objectives that people have promised to make because that's really the only way that we know that there is a commitment to that promise. You can set a measurable date, and if it's not achieved by that date, then you know that perhaps the promise was hollow in the beginning or you can identify what some of the reasons are that the promise wasn't fulfilled, but you can then use that deadline, if it hasn't been met, to recommit yourself to achieving the original objective.

**8:40 p.m.**

That's what we have here in this amendment. I appreciate the Member for Red Deer-North. She clarified for us in the debate around the last amendment that she believes that all public, charter, and private schools should have policies that include the formation of GSAs, so she has made a promise to the students of Alberta that if they come forward and request a GSA, they have the right to get one. It's only fair to then make sure that they set a deadline to make good on that promise, Mr. Chair. That's what we have here in this amendment, that once a GSA has been requested by any student at a public, charter, or private school, that school has a two-week deadline to go through the process and facilitate the formation of a GSA.

I certainly hope that all of the members opposite who have been in this Legislature for longer than the current session, longer than the current Legislature, reflect back on the times that they requested timelines from us on a number of policy and legislative matters and certainly recall the reasons that they had asked for those timelines and then see if those reasons for requesting those timelines apply in this case. I'm certain, Mr. Chair, that they would agree that it's fundamentally important to have a timeline in place for the formation of a GSA.

You know, it's a time-honoured tradition, speaking as a parent of a way – it's easy to placate children – to appear to give in to their demands but then never give them a deadline for meeting that demand. I have an eight-year-old son, Mr. Chair, and he often nags me to buy him video games, and oftentimes the requests become so troublesome and tiring that I will just tell him that I will get him a video game, but I never commit to actually delivering that video game on a specific date. I'm sure that many of the parents here in this Chamber have experienced something similar, that they have promised their children to give them something that they want in the moment in the hopes that, you know, once that moment has passed, the children will forget the request, and the parents can get

away with not delivering on that commitment, that they made just to placate their children.

I can say that without imposing firm timelines on delivering on the formation of GSAs, I think, then the government is saying that that's how we're going to placate the students in our schools, that, you know, they're just throwing a temper tantrum or they're being unreasonable. They really don't know what they want in the moment, so we'll placate them and say, "Yes, a GSA is coming," but without a specific date they can continue to say that the GSA is on its way, and that will always be true, but they actually have no intent to deliver. I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that the students won't buy it. They know, probably from having parents like me, that promising to deliver something without setting a specific deadline is just a way to placate them and move through the moment and hope that the request will disappear.

Certainly, a lot of students have been through this process. The former Minister of Education, my friend from Edmonton-North West, spoke of some examples, that he saw when he was Minister of Education, of schools giving students the runaround. They would make empty promises of delivering on the formation of GSAs, but the students would have to make a request, and then the request was, you know, in theory granted, but time would pass, and nothing would happen. Of course, once the kids realized that, hey, maybe this GSA isn't coming, they would make the request again and repeat the entire experience.

You know, I hope that the members opposite have the courage of their convictions, that they actually signal to school boards and charter schools and private schools that they're serious about making sure the kids have access to gay-straight alliances and impose this deadline, a perfectly reasonable deadline, I might add. Certainly, a two-week time frame is enough time, I would say, to allow for the formation of a GSA, and given the fact that school is short – the school year is only 10 months – and that kids move through that time very quickly, a two-week time frame is a reasonable time. It balances the needs of principals and administration to put the staff and resources in place to deliver on GSAs. It also balances the need for students to have relatively quick access to gay-straight alliances to make their schools safe and welcoming places.

I certainly hope that all of my colleagues here in the Legislature honour the commitment that they are making to the students of Alberta. They have made a promise in this legislation and certainly through all of the statements around GSAs that they've made in the House that students will have access to GSAs, but now it's time to put some clear parameters on when students can expect those GSAs to arrive once they've made the request.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favour of this amendment.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you.

I see the Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It gives me pleasure to rise to speak to this amendment as well, which I believe is a pretty straightforward amendment which recognizes a deficiency in the legislation brought forward by the government and which I hope the government accepts readily and implements. I don't believe it was an oversight on the part of the government to avoid putting a deadline in their proposal where a request is brought forward by a student to establish a GSA in the school. At the moment, if the current legislation passes without this amendment, that school administration would be under no compunction to act on that request with any speed, and there would be no recourse, either, for

the student to push the deadline forward. So I think it's something that the government should accept quite readily.

I'm not exactly sure why they decided it would be good to leave it open ended like this. Certainly, if a student is coming forward and they've come to a decision, if you really take a good, long think about it, a student who decides to come forward and ask for the establishment of a GSA has made a very, very long and difficult decision and has come forward at some risk to themselves and of perhaps being denied and in being unsure and – who knows? – in the world that they're in in their own school, given the circumstances of the changes to legislation that this government wants to make, maybe in fear of the possibility of being outed. It's a very difficult situation that they are finding themselves in, and they've come to the decision to ask for a GSA to be established in their school, yet there's no deadline that the school has to meet. That's certainly going to weigh on the minds of a student who's thinking about coming forward to make the request. I mean, it will have, I think, a pretty chilling effect on the number of students who decide to come forward, period.

I don't know if that was the government's intent. I don't think so. The Education minister has repeatedly said in this House that their goal is to encourage the establishment of GSAs at the request of students who come forward, and they have gone out of their way to attempt to convince the public and members of this Assembly that they in no way, shape, or form want to do anything that would get in the way of the establishment of a GSA, whether it be in a public school, a charter school, a private school. It's the ongoing argument of the government that, yes, indeed, if a GSA is requested, it will happen; the students will have that request granted. However, the legislation currently requires no timeline to be followed. To me that is a gaping hole in the legislation.

**8:50 p.m.**

I think it's reasonable that if indeed the Education minister and the rest of the members of the government caucus are serious about their desire to have a very open door and a very welcoming opportunity for students who wish to establish a GSA to feel comfortable enough to come forward, then the students should know that that request will be treated with respect and in a timely fashion, timely meaning without any undue delay and quickly. You know, it should be something that's dealt with quickly. For a student who's come to this very, very difficult decision to request a GSA, it means that they see no other options for them to make the connections they need to decide to come out to the world, to their family, to their friends. They need the assistance of a safe place in which to do so.

First of all, not knowing that that request will be dealt with quickly will probably cause a lot of those students not to bother. I don't think that's the goal of the government in leaving the timeline unwritten, but I think it's going to be the effect of leaving it open. Without having school administrators, school boards compelled to deal with the request within a two-week period, it leaves it open to perhaps let things die on the Order Paper, to hope that the student might just go away, that they may lose their nerve, that something will happen to cause the student to just not pursue the matter.

As I've said before, I hope that that is not the intent of the omission. It certainly could be argued that it might have been, but I take the minister at her word when she says that they are intent on making sure that the GSAs are legitimate instruments which are accessible to students and that they will be accessible in a timely fashion. Well, I think that we owe it to those students to put that in writing and to say to the students: yes, indeed, you can come forward with a request that is as serious as asking for a GSA to be established in your school so that you might have a safe place to

decide how and when to come out to your parents and family and friends in an effort to perhaps resolve the biggest, most pressing issue that you've ever faced in your life as a young person and hoping to keep your family together and to come out in a way that may allow your family, who has issues with having a gay child, to keep that family unit together.

Knowing that that administration may not have to deal with it right away, in my thinking process, if I try to put myself in the mind of an individual student, a young person who's wondering whether they should come forward and make the request for a GSA, I'd be very hesitant about coming forward if I thought they could drag their feet interminably. I mean, I'd be looking at the rules and regulations if I was a student. If you're in junior high or high school, you can read. That's one of the first things that would come to mind if I was looking at making such a request. I'd be wondering: "What rules are there? How do I make this happen? Can I make this happen, and if I make the request, when do they have to respond?" If I'm looking at the rules and saying, "My goodness, they don't have to respond; there's no timeline here," the effect is going to be pretty chilling. I may just decide not to go ahead with it because I don't want to leave it hanging. I've made the request, and who's going to be told about the request in the meantime? I mean, I want action on the request.

This amendment, Mr. Chair, demands that the action be taken. It's a time frame, I believe, that allows the administration to put in place the necessary personnel and organize the mechanism, the structure to get the GSA in place, but it's a timeline that also means that they can't dilly-dally on it. They've got to get on it, and it's the closest thing to immediate that you could have without causing it to be done that particular day. It's quick – you better believe it; two weeks is pretty quick – but indeed it's the type of timeline that a student in the situation of one who's asking for a GSA to be established should rightfully be able to expect of a school administration.

I know that the rubber will really hit the road with Bill 8 if the minister ever actually orders a school to go ahead with the establishment of a GSA and if they end up with a refusal, but what we have with this legislation is at least a timeline that the minister can, I think, use as a tool to insist upon the measures that she indicates in her legislation she is proudly establishing. A timeline really goes and legitimizes that. It tells the people of this province and those who are wanting to establish a GSA that the government is actually behind them and that they believe in them and that there's meaningful intent on the part of the government to fully honour the commitment that they say they're making to young people who want to establish a GSA. Without a timeline, that commitment rings hollow. It really takes the teeth out of the request or the power of a student to demand the establishment of a GSA.

I would hope the government sees the wisdom in adopting this amendment because I think it adds to the government's argument that they are truly the ally of the LGBTQ2S-plus community. If indeed that alliance is real, then the establishment of a two-week period within which a school administrator must establish the GSA upon the request of a student is perfectly reasonable. If the minister would like to be able to wave any type of a flag and say, "Look, we are the champions of the LGBTQ-plus community, we're on their side, we respect their need to have a safe space, and the GSAs are something that we believe in," then adding a timeline requirement is perfectly legitimate.

I'd love to hear the minister's response. I can't say that she would be anything other than supportive of this if indeed her claim to be supportive of the LGBTQ2S-plus community is actually legitimate. I believe that she's honestly supportive. We differ on her means of actually designing and putting in place these GSAs, but I think we

can together make this approach to establishing GSAs a little bit better, safer, more effective, and usable for students who might consider establishing a GSA if indeed we have a timeline in place. The two weeks, I think, is reasonable.

I ask all members opposite to consider the wisdom of doing this and to place themselves in the position of a young person who is considering coming forward to ask their school principal or administrator to establish a GSA. Whether they're in junior high or high school, just imagine yourself in that student's position, how difficult a decision that is to make, to come forward and ask for the establishment of a GSA yet knowing that right now the rules don't demand that that decision be made or that request be granted within any length of time, meaning that it could be dragged on forever.

**9:00 p.m.**

A two-week period, Mr. Chair, I think is a reasonable expectation. It certainly doesn't allow any time to drag one's feet. In school administration terms or any bureaucratic terms it's a fairly quick time frame, I agree, but we're talking about a very fragile point in time in the life of a young person who's made a very, very significant decision to come forward. I think we have to respect that fragility and take advantage of that window of opportunity where the student has decided to come forward and make that very serious request. That means they've decided to act on their need to keep their family unit together, on their need to become public about who they actually are. If that window passes and that young person decides that it's not safe to come out, that it's not safe to use the instrument of a GSA because it lacks any teeth, because a timeline isn't something that the school has to follow, then that student may never again decide to come forward, all for the sake of a lack of a timeline that the school has to follow.

I don't know how long that window is open for an individual student, how long they've been thinking about it before they come forward. I'm sure it's not a quick decision that they've come to when they decide to ask to establish a GSA. It's a pretty serious and potentially life-changing event. So once that student has decided to come forward, the time within which the administrator should be allowed to set it up and respond and actually establish the GSA should be pretty short.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

As the amendment states, Mr. Chair, two weeks is the time frame that we believe is reasonable. I think that, upon consideration, the minister and other members opposite will come to the same conclusion, that a timeline is something that should be adopted as part of this legislation. Most legislation, no matter what subject matter is at the core of it, has some type of timeline to it. If things are open-ended, then they're open to high levels of interpretation. When we're talking about the lives of Albertans – the highest order of responsibility that a government has is to protect the health and lives of their citizens – then I think it's important that consideration be given to the effect of not having a timeline in this legislation. It's a small piece. It's fairly simple, but the lack of the timeline has very complex consequences. I think I've outlined them pretty clearly here.

There are other aspects to this. I won't get into them right now, but of course if one has a timeline in a piece of legislation and then an administrator or a school principal fails to meet those timelines, that may be another ground for calling for an amendment right there. I just wonder, Mr. Chair: what might happen if indeed there was a school administrator who was faced with a timeline and failed to establish a GSA after all due processes had been followed and the administrator of such a school tells the minister to take a hike? That begs the question: what other consequences might there be?

When the minister has clearly stated that she supports the establishment of GSAs to protect students who wish to have one and that the government believes that the legislation that they're wishing to implement and have passed in this House is going to give the highest level of protection to LGBTQ2S-plus youth in the schools in this province, then indeed there's got to be some means of enforcing the implementation of GSAs. Part of that is insisting upon a timeline, but another part of it, I think, following from that, will be the ability of the minister to take action against a school administrator who refuses to implement a GSA even at the expiration of a timeline, which we hope will be implemented as a result of the acceptance of this amendment that we are proposing right now.

As I mentioned, it's not an unreasonable amendment. Most legislation of any kind has timelines right through it. A very common thread of any piece of legislation is that there are timelines attached, and this piece of legislation, strangely, has an omission, and that is that the administrators don't have to act. As I mentioned before, I'm concerned that students, as a result, will just decide to simply not come forward with a request to establish a GSA, and that will have significant consequences in the lives of those young people. If they indeed don't take the opportunity that they see in front of them to ask for the establishment of a GSA . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Do I see any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A5? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows rising to speak.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm delighted to rise to speak in favour of amendment A5. Before I start my comments on amendment A5, I really wanted to thank you, Minister of Education, for, you know, your encouragement and agreeing to the spirit of the amendment that we have been discussing this afternoon for some hours.

It was, I think, such a coincidence today when in my previous time I surprisingly mentioned: how could it happen in a House of 87 that we don't really find anything in common? Even though, you know, we have been elected on different political stripes, both sides of the House got elected on the commitment to serve the people of Alberta. Under the Constitution, once you're elected, it does not matter what stripe the member for your riding is, not only on economic issues but when it comes to social issues like this, specifically when the members of the government have many times reiterated that they strongly stand to defend the rights for the GSAs and QSAs. So it was kind of saddening and surprising to see that, that there was not something where we can come to a common place, when in fact both sides of the House are here to make the House work for the people of Alberta, to make this House work to serve the interests of the people of Alberta. This is the experience, I will say the hope of light I have seen today, that both sides of the House were on the same page, at least when we were discussing the issues regarding the most vulnerable people of Alberta.

**9:10 p.m.**

Also, when speaking to the previous amendment, it was my view – this is how I interpreted it – that this side of the House, by proposing those amendments, I would say, was trying to bring in a reasonable argument by proposing very positive opposition. I did not really see that the members of the opposition, my colleagues, were, you know, doing something for the sake of doing it, and I was so happy to see that both sides of the House were actually on the same page on that issue.

Speaking in favour of this amendment, amendment A5, once again I see that it's also, actually, supporting the spirit of the

proposal already in Bill 8, I will say, and the claim that the government also stated many times in their statements and have repeated many times, that there is a reason the students can request to form a GSA. I do think that without adding this timeline, it does not provide the accountability of the legislation. By proposing this amendment, what we are trying to do is add accountability to the provision that the government side is already proposing. So this will really help, you know – how would I say it? – the schools, the teachers, or the administrators to put someone in charge and develop the organization mechanism. If the students come forward and there is accountability to the legislation, there is transparency in the legislation that one can expect the outcome in a given time frame – this legislation is not only important because it's having accountability on this; it's also very, very important what this legislation is trying to address by proposing those provisions.

When we are discussing this Bill 8 and this amendment to add a timeline, we know that we are discussing or referring to something with regard to the most vulnerable community in our province. Our Premier and the Government House Leader have many times, you know, repeated their statements that they're committed to defending the rights of the GSA and, not only that, even their commitment to provide, like, the best security to that community in Canadian jurisdictions. Looking at this amendment, I think that there should not be any problem with the government caucus or the government members, the members of the UCP caucus. We are just adding the timeline. We have discussed this, and many of those people know that without the timeline, it will make the legislation so weak. It will depend on, you know, the individuals who are responsible to deal with the issues: how they want to interpret it, how much they are entrusted with on the request, how much they are convinced by the request being made. It will create more problems. It will probably create more problems for regulatory bodies, schools. It will create problems for the government as well, I think.

Looking at this amendment, I'm very hopeful. As I've said, I've seen some light of hope in this House. Giving serious thought to what we are discussing and what we are trying to propose to the provisions in Bill 8, it's just adding some accountability where the government already believes in something. This should be no problem, voting for this amendment.

First of all, I really request both sides of the House to give serious thought to this amendment. I'd say that this is a very legitimate amendment to the provisions and the solutions the government side is already trying to propose. This is actually strengthening those provisions, so nowhere is there a contradiction to what they are trying to move forward. It in no way conflicts with the views of those provisions, you know, in Bill 8. Rather, it strengthens those provisions and the views and the spirit of those provisions in the bill that the government has tabled. I'm very hopeful that the members of this House, by giving serious thought to this amendment, can support this amendment and should support this amendment.

Given how serious, you know, this issue is, how vulnerable that community is whose rights we are trying to protect through this bill, we are concerned that some of the provisions of this bill would expunge the legislation that provides security to the community. There is, I think, hope. Once again, we have spent hours continuously working in the House, as the Government House Leader has already said. This is a time where we can take a look at this. We are, both sides of the House, committed to doing something to protect the rights of the GSAs, QSAs in the schools and to provide security to the most vulnerable community. We once again can come together and work for the amendments that strengthen the provisions that are provided in the bill. They will grant the security

of those QSAs, GSAs. That will also help the schools to move forward to develop the mechanism in schools to address the issues, address the requests in a timely manner. There will be some – I'm just trying to find the word. I couldn't find the word I wanted to use. I'll say "accountability" right now.

**9:20 p.m.**

I wanted to be brief this time, but as I said earlier, there are numerous studies – they're conducted around the world; they're conducted in the province; they're conducted in the country – showing how vulnerable this community is, how complex this issue is, how important this issue is, how seriously we need to think about it. If we will not sit together now, if we will not come to wise solutions right now, it will make the problem worse sooner or later. We have seen that if we do not address these issues right now – you know, we and the people of Alberta have seen kids walking out of schools, we have seen kids demonstrating outside the Legislature, and we have seen kids across the province and we have seen people across the province sharing their concerns that they're not going to accept it – and if we don't sit together, then we will be debating this again.

This issue is not going to go away because this is something to do with the lives of the most vulnerable people, that we committed to work on behalf of when we committed to run for the political parties. It doesn't matter which side, which stripe of the parties. That's why during the campaign the leader of the government, the Premier, was very clear that he is not going to legislate or try to debate these social issues. They understand the importance of this. He said it many times on many platforms, and he said it in the House.

What I've been seeing here for the last two days is that we were trying to find the workable space in something the government is already proposing. The government believes that they're going to move forward with those changes, and they still say that moving with those changes is going to provide the required security to the community, I will say. Looking at that, we had our own perspective. We had differences; we have debated all those differences here. By proposing this amendment and the amendment that was before it – the Minister of Education has already said, acknowledged that it was something in the spirit of the bill. We were happy to see that.

There's no way we cannot support this amendment. This amendment is to strengthen the provisions, going forward, that will provide some accountability to the schools in the legislation. If the schools, if the persons responsible do not act in a timely manner, there will be consequences. Also, it provides guarantees to the students that if they come forward with their request for a GSA/QSA to be established and they have the confidence to do so, to come out and make a request, there is transparency in that. There's a timeline. There's accountability on this.

Even though adding this amendment is not really going to address all the concerns that the LGBTQ2S-plus community have raised – it's not going to address all the questions and concerns they raised – I still think this will be moving forward in the right direction, also creating the environment in the House that we are the people responsible. We are here to make this House work together, to make this House work to serve the people of this province when it comes to, you know, providing the security of their fundamental rights when we are discussing GSAs, QSAs.

I have 10 pages of this survey that was conducted by the recruiter organizations and with the partnership of the universities of this country. I did not go into the details I was going to read about this. These are the concerns we are trying to address and where we can send a message that when it comes to something like this, yes, we sit together, yes, we listen to each other, and, yes, we learn from it,

too. There's going to be a commonality many times in this House on a lot of issues when it comes to talking about the fundamental rights of any community.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Education rising to speak.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for recognizing me. I would like to address this amendment. I understand the intent of it, and we all can agree that when there's an inclusion group, whether it's a GSA, a QSA, or any of the other ones under section 35.1, we would want it to happen in a timely manner. When I was working and speaking and collaborating with the College of Alberta School Superintendents and many of the other boards that I was speaking to, I heard that they found that the way it was under Bill 24, with the word "immediately," was too prescriptive, that it didn't allow them the flexibility to have the conversations to put full thought into who the liaison would be. What I see here with the two-week period is, again, very prescriptive.

I would also remind the opposition that section 35.1 is more than just about a QSA, a GSA.

If one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall

- (a) permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and
- (b) designate a staff member . . .

and it goes on.

But what I really want to draw to your attention is that

an organization or activity includes an organization or activity that promotes equality and non-discrimination with respect to, without limitation, race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, including but not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs.

So at any given time a principal or a leader of a school may be faced with a number of organizations or a number of activities all coming at the same time. To facilitate the requirement that they be put together and granted within a two-week period is too prescriptive. That's what I heard from those that I was consulting with.

9:30 p.m.

Therefore, I would ask my fellow members to not be in support of this. What we have currently under section 35.1 of the Education Act does in fact imply and does state that the organizations will be allowed to form and that they will be formed in a timely manner but without the prescriptive piece to it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen to speak.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the comments from the hon. Minister of Education. I guess, you know, here we are with an opportunity to look for a practical way to solve this issue around timeliness, and we've talked a lot about it over the last while. I can mention another example that I dealt with, that came to my attention as minister, where a student, basically, was being obfuscated on starting a GSA in a Calgary school for almost a year, I think, or even more than a year. This was one of the reasons that

I came to realize that we need to have some kind of time restriction or some timeliness number built into legislation.

Through you, Mr. Chair, to the Education minister: let's pick a number. If it's not two weeks, then maybe we can make it four weeks. Like, honestly, if we could come up with an amending number for timeliness that's actually written down, I think we can see real success here in regard to Bill 8. I really believe that we could show, you know, demonstrable progress, and, through the chair to the Minister of Education, I think that that would be a really useful thing. I would say: if it's not two weeks, then let's pick a number, right? I'm perfectly willing to work with that. It should be in reasonable timeliness, but it has to be measured out. I can think of a particular case, for example, where, like I said, in Calgary Catholic it was more than a year, and that was unacceptable. I think that if we came out of the Chamber here tonight with a number that defined timeliness, we could have something that we could really show was a measurable and quantifiable sense of progress around this GSA business.

I can tell you as well, from my experience from Bill 10, that, you know, during the course of a couple of days we saw things change. We saw actual progress on the floor of this Chamber, and it was quite good. You could take that to the public. I mean, Bill 10 was a point in time, obviously – we've moved on from there – but people could see that there was multiparty co-operation and a genuine way by which we could show safe and caring schools for kids and something tangible around timeliness in the formation of a GSA.

Through the chair to the minister: if she could think of a number, right? I mean, you know, we came up with two weeks, and it was okay, I guess. But if she's got a number that is more amenable to her, then I'm certainly willing to work with that, a collaborative effort for the sake of the kids.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Do I see any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising to speak on amendment A5.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to be here and to debate amendment A5 with you. I think it's something that's very common sense. I mean, the Minister of Education spoke a bit about how she heard from superintendents and called her superintendents, that indeed she believes that "immediately," as was set under Bill 24, was too onerous for school administrators and was too prescriptive for school administrators. But I think the Member for Edmonton-North West has raised a very important point here: two weeks is certainly not immediately. Two weeks certainly gives the school time to find a teacher liaison, staff liaison, or have one appointed from outside the school district if that's necessary.

Frankly, if two weeks is not enough and the minister believes that she requires more than two weeks for some of these schools to be able to comply with the legislation, then I think the opposition would be very open to having that discussion and finding a day and a time that works for all schools across this province because we, as the opposition, understand how important it is to have GSAs and QSAs in schools when they are requested by students. That means setting a guideline in legislation here, setting a restriction in place so that schools and school administrators cannot use an indefinite amount of time to try and find a liaison as an excuse, really, not to establish a GSA, right?

We know, Mr. Chair, that that has happened in some schools in the past, in some districts and in some schools, and not a lot, but indeed some students were prevented from having GSAs and QSAs. Indeed, they were prevented because administrators claimed – and maybe they truly could not find a liaison to attend the GSA

on behalf of the school. That is going to be a real issue with some school boards. That's a thing that this House will have to address and that the Minister of Education will have to address. That's why there are provisions to ensure that students have the supports that they need. To have students receive the supports that they need, we know that they must not be forced to have to drag their feet on this, and they must not be able to be stopped through an administrative process.

Really, I remember, Mr. Chair, when I was in high school and Bill 10 was coming through this House. I mentioned this before already. When I was in high school and Bill 10 was coming through this House, basically this exact same thing came before this Assembly. It was determined that, actually, the government at the time, the Conservatives at the time, actually said: well, if the school refuses to allow a GSA and drags their feet on a GSA, then the student can appeal to the school board, and if the school board refuses to allow the GSA and the students are not able to get their GSA or QSA established by the school board, then, in fact, they can appeal to the courts. I believe that's something that basically is what the minister is sort of suggesting students do here if we don't have a timeliness clause. If we don't have this amendment that forces schools to actually do the right thing and establish these GSAs, we'll be seeing students be forced to go through quite lengthy experiences through appeal processes and then appealing perhaps to the Privacy Commissioner and appealing to the school board and appealing to the courts. That is something that I think is very unreasonable to ask of students.

It's very unreasonable to ask students to probably be outed if they are trying to start a GSA because they are a gay student. To have to go through a public appeal process, whether that's to the school board, to the courts, or to the Privacy Commissioner, you will absolutely be outing students, and that is something that nobody in this House wants. You will absolutely be dragging kids through the mud, and you'll be segregating these students into social situations that you cannot expect a 13-, 14-, 15-, 16-year-old to reasonably anticipate. Really, you cannot expect that a student that is, let's say, 16 years old and in grade 10 or 11, trying to establish a GSA, has to go through a court process because there's no timeliness clause like in this amendment, that they would actually have the resources to be able to fight an entire school district on this.

I think it's something that we need to look at and say that there is a reasonable amount of time that we should give administrators, absolutely. Administrators do need the ability to establish the GSA in a productive manner. As the minister had mentioned, the superintendents had said that they needed the ability and flexibility to negotiate with their schools and staff to figure out how the GSA would operate within the school. But, certainly, as the Member for Edmonton-North West suggested, there is a time that could be set. We know it won't take you six months as an administrator to establish a GSA. If it takes you two years to establish a GSA after students have requested one, you're obviously dragging your feet, Mr. Chair. In just one school year you can see substantial staffing changes. Within one school year you can see substantial staffing changes within a school.

When we look at how this amendment is laid out and what would be considered a reasonable test for administrators and school principals, districts, and so forth to have to go through, I think it is very reasonable to discuss having a timeliness clause. When these students request GSAs, QSAs, or, as the minister likes to call them, inclusion groups, these types of organizations, what they are doing is that they are trying to find a safe space for them because they may not feel safe in other areas. They may not feel safe, whether that's at home or whether that's in their community or whether that's in

their classroom, in their friend group. Whatever it is, Mr. Chair, these students are looking for an outlet where they can have friends that they can hang out with and discuss their life issues.

*9:40 p.m.*

That's something that I think has a significant benefit to mental health. We've seen that in numerous documents tabled here in this Assembly. That's something that we know has a significant reduction in things like youth suicide rates in this province and across the world, and we know that GSAs are able to accomplish that. Having a limitation on that, from the day the request is sent by a student to when the administrator must grant that request, is something that I think is very fair.

We see that in many different types of legislation. When you file many types of applications to the government and whatnot, Mr. Chair, oftentimes there is a time limit in which the government is expected to reply. In fact, when we do things like estimates here in this Assembly, we actually request that the government give written responses by a certain date, things like that. That's because, as responsible adults, we understand here in this Assembly that deadlines are effective.

I think that the teachers in this Assembly – I know that the Member for Edmonton-North West and other members here were former teachers – will understand that having deadlines is important, and deadlines help ensure that what you're requesting students do and what you're requesting be done by the administrators in this case actually gets accomplished. The administrators won't, for lack of a better term, Mr. Chair, procrastinate. We do want to ensure that these provisions aren't used as a way for administrators, school districts to drag their feet.

We want to ensure that school boards will comply with the law in a timely manner so that these students, when they make their requests, aren't left in the wind waiting, holding this bag, trying to figure out what will happen. They aren't left wondering if they need to start filing appeals, if they need to find a lawyer to represent them, Mr. Chair. I don't think you can expect any reasonable teenager to have to go out and try and find a lawyer to sue their own school board just because they want to start a student organization that provides a safe space for gay kids. I think that that's something that should be very straightforward. It's something that every single member of this Assembly should be able to agree with.

I think that the Member for Edmonton-North West said it most acutely, that if two weeks is not amenable to the minister and to the government, then we can find a day that works. We can find a length of time that works. If that's a month, if that's two months, if that's what the superintendents think that they need, then that's fine.

Mr. Chair, I personally think that a shorter time period is better. I think that two weeks is a relatively happy medium. It allows time for an administrator to go talk to all their staff and discuss if any of their staff are comfortable and, if not, to go and find somebody who is comfortable to host and organize a GSA on behalf of students. That's something where, if an administrator thinks that they need four weeks for that, then let's have that subamendment, and let's have that debate here on the floor today because that's what we're sent here to do. It's to make sure that these bills that we pass are the best they can be.

I think that Bill 8, Bill Hate, the act to destroy GSAs, is not a good bill, Mr. Chair, but I think that this amendment absolutely makes a bad bill better. I think we can definitely spray some Febreze on this bill and we can try and make it better. We can try to ensure that these students' protections – even though the protections are reduced under this bill, we can try and ensure that at least within two weeks of when they request those protections,

they're able to receive some of them, that those kids are able to have a safe and inclusive space in their schools within two weeks.

Mr. Chair, I'm sure that many members here will remember that when they were in school, two weeks seems to go by really quickly because a lot happens in a school year. A lot is going on, and you're spending time trying to understand what's going on in your classes, what's happening in your friend groups, all these things. But, really, when a request is made to start a student organization, I can assure you that the majority of schools won't take two weeks to start a debate society, let alone a GSA. It's a matter of finding the right people and putting them in a room together and finding a supervisor to monitor a lunchroom so that the kids that want to be in a GSA or a QSA, a gay-straight alliance or a queer-straight alliance, can meet. I think that two weeks is more than enough time for that.

Of course, the government may have a different time frame in mind, and we're happy to discuss having a longer time frame or a shorter time frame if the government thinks that that's important. I think it's something that will make this bad bill better. I think it's an amendment that every single member of the government bench here should take a solid look at and read word for word. It doesn't actually change anything in the bill other than the timeliness factor, other than saying: we believe that schools should be accountable to a certain frame of time. Schools should have a deadline. Just like teachers would give deadlines to students for assignments, Mr. Chair, when a student requests a GSA or a QSA or an inclusion group, then we absolutely should have a deadline for these schools.

We should have something that says that this was a reasonable amount of time, that the school has had enough time to do its due diligence. I think two weeks is a happy medium, but I'm happy to discuss a longer time. That's something that is very important. I know that the minister also understands that schools should not be using the excuse that they cannot find staff members or whatever it is as an excuse to not form GSAs because we all in this Chamber understand how important these GSAs and QSAs are and how effective they are in reducing things like teen suicide.

When we talk about these issues, we need to recognize that in an evolving classroom environment and in a complex classroom in these schools, yes, absolutely, superintendents will feel that in some cases the legislation is prescriptive and will feel that, yes, in cases the legislation is even restrictive. But what this will do is that it allows the ability for the superintendents to be flexible, as the minister would like them to be, while also holding them to account, because we know these school districts should be accountable as well and that they shouldn't be allowed to run free rein on these students if the students are requesting a GSA.

That's very simple because we know that some school boards, not a lot, Mr. Chair, and not a lot of school districts or administrators, will be dragging their feet, but we want to make sure we protect the students under the ones that are because we have an obligation to every single student in this province, whether they are lesbian, whether they are gay, whether they are bisexual, whether they are transgendered, whether they are two spirited, whether they are queer or anything else. We absolutely have a duty in this Chamber to ensure that they have their protections and that they have their protections in a timely manner, that they are able to establish those GSAs, that they are able to have those requests granted.

When we talk about the school districts that are perhaps less willing to have them, perhaps the Minister of Finance's school district would have dragged its feet a little bit. I can't speak to that, Mr. Chair, but certainly based on their policies, it seems possible. Perhaps those types of schools would have dragged their feet a little bit. I think that those types of schools should absolutely have a

reasonable amount of time to try and seek out a staff member or outside person to monitor a GSA because perhaps the Minister of Finance himself does not want to monitor the GSA. Perhaps the Minister of Finance's other board members or people that were on the staff of that school do not because of the policy that they've put in that says that being gay is a deep sin and should not be allowed in their school, but the protections in this act would say that that school should still be allowed to have a gay-straight alliance and should still be allowed to have a queer-straight alliance. So that school does need time, probably, to find somebody to monitor their GSA.

Perhaps the teacher that would monitor a GSA would be worried they'd get fired for doing things that were against their code of conduct, for being sinners, as it were, Mr. Chair, but indeed that board and that school now have the opportunity. With this amendment they would have two weeks to go find an alternative. That would allow them to comply with the legislation while giving them plenty of time to make sure that they found somebody who wouldn't be affected by their school code of conduct and wouldn't be in a difficult position within the school board.

That, I think, is very important, and that speaks to what the minister was talking about. It speaks to the minister's concerns that superintendents found "immediately" to be too prescriptive. This isn't immediately; it's two weeks. Perhaps we want to set the time a bit longer, and that's okay. If you are in a small private school like the one that the Minister of Finance was on the board of and you have made a point of identifying gay people as sinners, perhaps no gay people want to come and run your GSA because they're worried what that school will do to them. That's why a certain amount of time is being provided. That's why we can make that time longer if we have to. That's why we have to debate in this House, and that's why we have to look at the amendment and say: what is a reasonable amount of time? What do we consider in this Assembly to be too long?

There is going to be a point where every member of this Assembly will agree that this school is intentionally trying to drag its feet. That may be two weeks, that may be four weeks, that may be six weeks, eight weeks, but at a certain point I think that every single member of this Assembly will recognize what procrastination looks like. I'm sure the ones that have children will recognize it when their kids say, "Well, I'll get to it next Friday," and then when Friday comes along, they say, "I'll get to it next Monday," and when Monday comes along, they say, "I'll get to it the Monday after." Suddenly you realize that their room hasn't been cleaned in three months, and you wonder where the three months went and when the kid went from six years old to 12 years old.

**9:50 p.m.**

Mr. Chair, that's what we want to say is a reasonable restriction. We want to prevent that two weeks from becoming six years. We want to make sure these schools are held to a standard, a standard that says that we understand there are complex needs in every school district across the province. We understand there are complex classrooms and boards that have issues with certain ways of life and certain staff members that wouldn't want to do this. We recognize that, but what we do want to say is that there's a limit to what we understand is reasonable. The limit that passes from reasonable to unreasonable is when a school is intentionally trying to prevent a GSA by dragging its feet. That's what an amendment like this would change.

I welcome a subamendment from the government. I hope that we'll be able to see more debate on this because I think the minister understands and members of the government backbench and front bench understand how important it is that we set a deadline and a



timeline for schools and for superintendents. They understand how important it is that we work with our school boards to find a date that works for them. This is something that I think everybody can agree on, that you don't just let people run willy-nilly around the legislation and use excuses to avoid legislation and to not uphold that rule of law that's in the Education Act. We want to make sure that there's a tool in place and a restriction in place that allow us to say: "Well, you've had enough time to do your due diligence, and if you've failed to establish a GSA or QSA within this time frame" – and that time frame can be a number we set here in this Assembly today – "if you've failed to do it in that reasonable amount of time, then you obviously are not trying to actually uphold the legislation; you're trying to find a loophole."

That's something, Mr. Chair, that I don't believe the majority of school boards will do or that the majority of superintendents or school districts will do, but I believe it can happen. I think that anybody here who has ever taught in a classroom or anything like that will recognize that that does happen, right? Ninety per cent of the kids will get the assignment in on time, yet 10 per cent of students will go: well, can I get an extension? Then after the first extension, they ask for a second extension, then maybe a third extension, too, and then they say, "My dog ate my homework" or whatever it is. When that happens, at a certain point you realize that this student is trying to avoid the restrictions that are in place for every other student. That's what can happen in a very small number of school districts across this province, and that's what an amendment like this would prevent. That's what this amendment would allow us to have a reasonable limitation on.

I think it's something that we should work together on here. It's something we should work collaboratively on here because we have this opportunity to make this legislation better. We have this opportunity to find a date that works for everybody, that works for school boards across the province, and that we think is a reasonable amount of time and won't be overly onerous for school districts. We don't want to be onerous; we don't want to be too prescriptive.

We understand that we absolutely need to make sure the rule of law is upheld in this Assembly. We understand that this legislation is designed to save lives. If we want it to work, we actually do need to have these reasonable restrictions and we need to make sure that everyone understands that these reasonable restrictions are in place. That's something that I think we can have a debate on tonight. We can have the discussion, and we can figure out a time that works. It's something, a date, that we can set, and it's a timeline that we absolutely should set here in this Assembly tonight. It's something that I think we'll be able to come to an agreement on. I hope we'll be able to find that time.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar rising to speak to amendment A5.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I want to respond to some of the comments that the Member for Red Deer-North made in justifying encouraging her colleagues to vote down this amendment. This is the old canard that if we impose these kinds of deadlines, schools couldn't possibly deal with the expected flood of requests. We're not just going to have to deal with GSAs. Then we're going to have to deal with antiracism clubs and antibullying clubs and any other kind of club that students want to form to make their schools safe and inclusive, and that will just be an administrative nightmare.

I just took a tour, Mr. Chair, through some of the clubs and activities that are offered by junior highs and high schools in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. Certainly, this is something

that I'm paying a lot of attention to because my daughter will be going to junior high this fall. Of course, having a school that provides a rich extracurricular life was important to her, so I've spent a lot of time over the past few months researching what the various schools in the constituency have to offer. It's interesting.

We look at Ottewell school, for example, one of the junior highs in my riding. They offer archery, Chinese culture, Chinese dance, Citadel Theatre, computers, concert band, drama productions. They have a GSA; I'm very pleased that they advertise that on their website. They have a jazz band, a library club, provincial, national, and international trips, Reach for the Top trivia team, something that I encourage any student to get involved with. I'm proud to say that I was a provincial Reach for the Top champion in 1995. That was an experience that I valued, and I think that that would be a valuable experience for any student. They have regional and national math competitions, robotics team, science Olympics, skiing and snowboarding, spelling and writing competitions, spirit days, talent show, and Touch of Class Dance. They also offer a number of athletic programs. They have senior boys' volleyball, senior boys' basketball. They have coed curling. They have girls' soccer. They have a number of sports teams.

Now on to Kenilworth school. Of course, Kenilworth school offers a number of clubs to its students as well. It's a smaller school, a population of about 150 students less than Ottewell school, so their capacity is a little bit more limited than Ottewell school. They offer a travel club. They offer a ski and board club. They have Shakespeare Week. They offer a French exchange trip. They offer a drama club. They also have athletics, Mr. Chair. They offer soccer and basketball, and they also have a running club and volleyball. So a wide range of clubs and activities are available to students at Kenilworth school.

Hardisty school is another. It's actually combined kindergarten to junior high, so they have students from K to 9. They offer a number of clubs as well, Mr. Chair. They offer a chess club. They have a youth leadership club. They have both a jazz band and a concert band. They encourage their students to participate in AMA patrols. I know that the intersection on 106th Avenue right in front of that school gets very busy, so I appreciate all of the safety-conscious students and staff who work hard to make that patrol work and keep our students safe as they're crossing the street to go to school at Hardisty. They offer lunch movies. They have a program called the Digital Hornets. Now, I'm not sure what that would be, but it definitely sounds interesting, and I certainly look forward to inquiring at Hardisty school at my next visit what the Digital Hornets would be. They have Young Life, which is a Christian youth organization. They also offer a ski and board club. They have a handbell choir. Of course, all of the members of the Legislature appreciate handbell choirs when they come to share their Christmas cheer with us during the holiday season. They have a travel club.

They have soccer teams for both boys and girls. They have volleyball teams for both boys and girls and junior and senior teams. They have basketball for boys and girls, both junior and senior teams. They have a track and field team. They have an indoor soccer team that's coed. They have a cheer team. They have badminton teams, a wrestling team, and they also have intramurals for all grades.

**10:00 p.m.**

In addition to all of those activities, they offer some special activities throughout the year. They have assorted field trips. They have a mountain ski trip. They celebrate aboriginal day. They offer band camps. They have outdoor ed camps, school dances. They put

on a grade 9 farewell. They have guest speakers, Mr. Chair. I've been honoured to be a guest speaker at a number of events at the Hardisty school, and I look forward to visiting them again. They go swimming at the Hardisty pool. They offer Read In Week. They offer Christmas concerts. They have awards ceremonies as well.

Mr. Chair, also in my riding we are pleased to have the Vimy Ridge academy, which is both a junior high and a high school, and they offer a number of extracurricular activities as well: badminton, track and field, cross-country running, golf, basketball, volleyball, intramurals. They have a climbing team. They have a rugby team. They have a cycling team. They have a photography club. They have the Duke of Edinburgh young Canadian challenge. I certainly hope that, you know, the members of the Duke of Edinburgh young Canadian challenge live up to the spirit of the Duke of Edinburgh's public service and don't take his, let's say, tendency to shoot from the hip when he speaks to heart. They have a yearbook club. They offer a leadership club. They have a student council. They have the Vimy ambassadors program. They have a Europe trip.

I'm also pleased to represent the students at McNally school, which has a number of clubs and activities. They offer Best Buddies, Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program. They put on the Cappies, which is a critics and award program. They have a Citadel Theatre students' club. They have a Doctor Who Club, Mr. Chair, and the interesting thing about the Doctor Who Club, of course, is that the room that it's held in is bigger on the inside. They have a gay-straight alliance. They have a grad council. They have a hip hop collective. I'm sure that the word "collective" makes the UCP members' skin crawl, but I have to say that, you know, the young people these days appreciate collective action and collective responsibility. They have the McNally Assists Students Serving in Volunteer Experiences program, the McNally International Club, the McNally Student Governance Club. They have a multicultural club, a multimedia club, a music club, a robotics club, a running club. They offer a science Olympics program. They have a ski club. They have a students' union. They have the Triple C, which is the Chinese culture club, and – I don't know – I'm curious if the Chinese culture club just offers the song *Karma Chameleon* but sung in Chinese or perhaps something else entirely; I'm not sure. Of course, you'd have to be familiar with the group Culture Club to get that joke.

They also offer a number of other programs, including the Alberta High School Mathematics Competition, the APEGA science Olympics. They participate in the Canadian mathematics league, Canadian Open Mathematics Challenge. They also participate in the Cayley, Fermat and Euclid mathematics contests, the Create in 8 art partnership, the dx.org design competition, high school model United Nations, the Iverson Computing Science Competition, the national biology competition, the national chemistry exam, and they also participate in Skills Canada.

Mr. Chair, it's quite clear from just taking this rather cursory survey of a few of the junior high and high schools that are in just the riding of Edmonton-Gold Bar that the capacity for administration of these schools to facilitate a wide variety of clubs is quite high. So when the Member for Red Deer-North gets up and says that, "Oh, if we impose these strict deadlines upon principals and school administrators to form these GSAs, they couldn't possibly deal with all of these requests," that's quite demonstrably untrue. We have a number of cases here that I've just outlined. Schools have a tremendous capacity to facilitate clubs of all kinds, and they are very successful at doing so, in fact, committed to doing so to make sure that their schools are safe and inclusive and provide a rich academic and a cultural and an athletic experience for all of their students because, of course, that develops the whole person.

You know, schools recognize that a student isn't defined by just their academic experience alone, that it's all of those things that are included in the school experience – participating in those extracurricular activities, participating in those sports teams, having those opportunities to go on exchange trips – that really make the school experience valuable and memorable and such a critical piece of making sure that our students grow up to be good people.

You know, it begs the question, Mr. Chair. We demonstrate quite clearly just by looking at any – I would say it's not a random selection because I've chosen only schools in Edmonton-Gold Bar, but I'm sure that the case would be the same if you looked at any school in the province, that they offer a wide variety of extracurricular sports activities. They're very capable at handling those things. When the Member for Red Deer-North gets up and says that administration couldn't possibly deal with all of these potential requests, it's demonstrably untrue. We see quite clearly that junior high and high schools can capably handle requests for a wide variety of clubs, and they're quite successful in doing so.

It's also interesting, Mr. Chair, because, of course, the Member for Red Deer-North says that, you know, if we put in these timelines, then students are going to flood administration with requests for a whole host of antibullying clubs. Not one of these schools that I've gone through has had more than one club that has been dedicated to creating a safe and caring and inclusive environment. We don't see Ottewell school or Kenilworth school or Vimy Ridge school or McNally or Hardisty with more than one club dedicated to creating a gay-straight alliance or promoting antiracism initiatives or promoting antibullying initiatives or any of those kinds of things.

The Member for Red Deer-North is quite clearly creating a straw man argument, if you will, against voting for this amendment. I hope that the Member for Red Deer North reconsiders her words. She's a person with considerable experience in school administration. I understand that she has spent some time on the board of the Red Deer Catholic school district, so she knows full well what administrators are capable of. I hope the other members opposite at least can demonstrate that they have faith in our principals' and other school administrators' ability to deal with requests from students to form these kinds of clubs – gay-straight alliances, queer-straight alliances, whatever you want to call them – in a timely fashion.

As my friend from Edmonton-South said, lives hang in the balance. It's been quite clearly demonstrated that gay-straight alliances save lives, they prevent students from taking their own lives or, you know, falling into depression and anxiety and all of those other kinds of mental health issues that come along. If we know that a gay-straight alliance can prevent these things, it only makes sense that we implement a timeline for their implementation. To not do so would be to deny students access to something that would make their school lives, certainly, a lot better and may potentially save a life.

I hope the Member for Red Deer-North reconsiders her statement earlier about this amendment. She understands quite clearly, as I've demonstrated, that principals and administrators have significant capacity for facilitating a multitude of groups that students want to participate in. She can actually demonstrate that she has faith in school principals and administrators to do the good work of making their schools safe and inclusive and providing the kinds of clubs that students request in a timely fashion.

Like my friend from Edmonton-North West says, two weeks was just a suggestion. The original legislation, of course, said that they needed to be formed immediately. It's interesting that the members opposite voted for that legislation when we brought it forward, and

now they're walking back their commitment to implementing timelines, deadlines for the formation of GSAs.

*10:10 p.m.*

Maybe the language around the immediacy of the formation of a GSA was too strict. I doubt that that's really the case, but we're willing to work with all members of this House to come up with a deadline that works for principals and administration and balances the needs of administration to deal with requests like this but also recognizes the fact that students deserve to have a GSA in place in a timely fashion if they're requested to do so.

I look forward to all of my colleagues demonstrating their faith in administration, in principals and other school administrators, to be able to handle these kinds of requests in a timely fashion and also honour their commitment that they made a number of years ago when they voted in favour of legislation that promised to enforce immediacy in forming a GSA and come up with some way to make this amendment amenable to themselves, the schools, and administrators that they're concerned about but also make sure that they send a clear message to students that students can't be toyed with, that they can't be just shuffled off and told to wait forever for a GSA.

Knowing that all of my colleagues here in the House are sensible people who have a great deal of faith in principals and administrators to handle this kind of request and also because we know that they have quite clearly demonstrated a commitment to providing GSAs to students who ask for them, just do the right thing here. Be consistent with the way that they voted when we passed Bill 24, and take it upon themselves to implement these timelines so that students don't have to wait forever for an administrator to form a GSA.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Do I see anyone looking to speak to amendment A5? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung rising to speak.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Pleasure to rise again to address amendment A5. It's interesting to note that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar went back to talk about his constituency as he quite commonly does, and it is, I think, a very good practice for members of this Legislature to follow when discussing any piece of legislation: take it right home, take it to the local level, and take a look through the prism of one's constituency experience what the importance of the issue at hand is to our own individual constituents.

I was prompted by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. As I considered this amendment as he spoke about the clubs that were established already in all those different schools that he mentioned in his constituency, I was reminded about the schools in my constituency as well and what capacity all those school administrators have shown in establishing a myriad of various different school organizations, including GSAs, Mr. Chair. I know that the timeliness of responding to a student is an important feature of the whole concept of the success of a GSA, and bringing it back home to the constituency is a good reminder to us all when we're thinking about the process that a student would go through and what the dynamics are at the local level and at individual schools when a student actually decides to follow through on their thought process and make a request for a GSA in their local school.

It begs the question of why there is no deadline in the government legislation proposed today. I'm hoping that the amendment that we are bringing forward to establish a timeline is one that is adopted by the members opposite. After a full debate here I think it's

becoming very clear as members on this side of the House continue to bring forward arguments demonstrating the wisdom of having a timeline on the administrators who are requested to have a GSA put in place.

I've heard arguments from government MLAs and particularly from the Education minister, who has said, Mr. Chair, that she feels that the amendment, which proposes a two-week timeline within which a GSA must be established after it's initially requested, is, in her words, "too prescriptive." In response to that, of course, the MLA for Edmonton-North West, on the opposition side, asked and challenged the Education minister, then, to suggest a time frame that she thought might be workable in establishing a GSA within a school upon the request of a student.

I wondered about and tried to understand why the Education minister thought the two-week period was too prescriptive, and then, after having listened to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talking about the high level of capacity that schools have in establishing a multitude of various different clubs and organizations within each school, in fact, you know, there is no water to be held in the argument that schools aren't able to establish a GSA within a fairly tight time frame. They do establish groups of many kinds regularly.

It occurred to me that given that this legislation is being publicly discussed and that, of course, within the school realm teachers, school administrators are regularly aware of what happens in this Legislature, particularly when legislation that affects the operation of schools is being discussed, they will probably see fit in their staff meetings and in contemplation of what they might have to change in terms of practices in upcoming months and in the next school year to have already started to discuss contingency plans for getting ready to deal with the legislative changes that might come down.

In so doing, they are probably forming in their own minds and perhaps even at staff meetings the frameworks that are going to be necessary to establish the processes for putting in place a GSA or a QSA once the request has been made by students. I would argue that many of these discussions have already taken place in the school boards and in staff meetings over the last number of months and weeks, in particular, of course, since we've had a requirement as a result of legislation passed by our previous government that the GSAs/QSAs should be established on demand, and that these processes were established.

There were very, very few outliers that failed to meet the requirement, and it was widely accepted throughout the public school system, the Catholic school system. There were very few that didn't follow up and actually report to the Minister of Education and verify that they indeed had established a process to respond to a request for a GSA or a QSA within the time frame, basically immediately, and that they were prepared to undertake that responsibility. We're talking about a very small number of schools and school boards that are deciding that it's not within their responsibility or that they disagree with the requirement to form a GSA or a QSA in response to a request. That is something that, regardless of whether a timeline is imposed or not, may be an issue that the current Education minister will have to face in the not-too-distant future.

*10:20 p.m.*

However, Mr. Chair, with respect to the amendment at hand, as the Member for Edmonton-North West has asked and openly requested of the Education minister, let's come up with a number. Let's talk about what length of time the Education minister feels is reasonable to demand of the public administrators and school boards to establish a GSA, a QSA once requested. Having said in earlier remarks that she feels that the two-week period is too

prescriptive, I'm just wondering what sense the Education minister has of the urgency that exists in the mind of a young person, a student in junior high or high school, as far as their need to be responded to quickly.

I believe – and it's my opinion – and I strongly argue that we're not talking about a situation where, if we're in medical terms, you go to see your doctor to get a throat infection or a common cold looked at. This is an emergency situation, and I think it has to be treated as such. To claim that two weeks is too prescriptive I think shows a lack of grasp of the gravity of the decision that the student has made. I really believe that we should be treating this as an emergency ward visit. When a student decides to come forward with a request to ask for a GSA or a QSA in their school, this is an urgent situation. It's not something that we can slough off and say: well, goodness, the school can't deal with that administratively; you can't put that much pressure on a school to come forward and create a GSA or a QSA in two weeks or immediately. It misses the mark as far as understanding how serious the issue is and how consequential not getting a quick answer can be for a student who's made the decision to come forward and ask for the establishment of a GSA or a QSA in their school.

I truly believe that we are dealing with a student who is in a definite emergency situation. They have a limited golden hour, a golden period within which a response must be forthcoming from the administrator or the school principal, Mr. Chair, and that golden time frame may indeed be a life-changing event and perhaps a life-ending event, consequentially, if indeed the response isn't forthcoming quickly enough. For a student who comes forward, makes a request, and gets no answer or feels that they are being denied the right to establish a GSA or feels that the school administrator is dragging his or her feet in an effort to dissuade the student from continuing their pursuit of the establishment of a GSA, it will potentially result in that student giving up, becoming disillusioned, perhaps sinking down into depression, perhaps ending up not being able to carry on with their studies, leaving the school, maybe ending up, as a result of that, in a worse situation, on the street, maybe out of their own home.

It's an important, emergency situation, in my view, Mr. Chair, that schools, school administrators who are asked to establish a GSA do so quickly. I don't accept the argument that it creates an insurmountable administrative burden on the school that is faced with a request to establish a GSA. This is something that you clear the desk for. This is something that you absolutely take and prioritize as order number one on your schedule for the day as a school administrator.

If you get a student coming forward and saying, "Look, for the first time in the life of this school I want to establish a GSA or a QSA," that means that you take it seriously and you clear your desk. You get that request made in proper form, and you end up putting in place contingencies. As an administrator, knowing that the law has changed and that there are, hopefully, timelines in place if this amendment is accepted, you end up dealing respectfully with that request because you know and understand exactly what's going on with that student and that student's decision to come forward at that time to make that request and what the consequences are for that student if indeed they don't feel they've been respectfully treated and that the administrator is dragging his feet or ignoring the request or perhaps even actively trying to dissuade the student from pursuing it.

There has to be a deadline that recognizes that this student is in a crisis situation, and as in any crisis situation that the government faces, whether it be fire or flood or other kind of emergency, you basically drop everything else and you focus on that. It's not something that's going to be a daily occurrence for a school

administrator or a school board to deal with. When they have a request for a GSA to be implemented in their jurisdiction, this is something that they should come to expect and prepare for. In fact, I would go so far as to say that a school board or administrator should actually establish a GSA just as a matter of course, you know, notwithstanding the fact that one may not be requested. We should establish one anyway, but that's another story.

Once the request is officially made, though, you can't doddle about it. It's a golden-hour window of time that a student is in, and it's a crisis mode that they're in when they make that decision to come forward and ask for a GSA to be established. Not to respond effectively and right away with a positive response to that student to say, "Look, we're on it; we're moving forward with it; we have a process in place, and here it is; here's the timeline; this is what you can expect because we prepared for this" – we know that the probability is pretty high, as a school board or as an administrator, that we would face a request like this, and they should have done some preparation in advance for it, and the contingency should be in place.

In fact, as a ministry I hope that there are guidelines and templates that a school administrator can reach out to access in the event that they do have a request made early on in the passage of this legislation. I would expect that the ministry probably does have these preparations made to assist schools that do ask for help in quickly establishing a GSA in response to a request, but school administrators, too, have a responsibility to prepare in advance and expect or assume that they're going to be faced with a request for the establishment of a GSA or a QSA in their school. Not to do so I think is an abrogation of their responsibility as administrators in this day and age, knowing how probable it is that they will end up having a request in their school for the establishment of a QSA or a GSA.

I'm not off the top of my head able to quote what percentage of schools right now have established a GSA or a QSA in response to a student request, but I know it's a growing number of schools in the public school board and school boards across the province. It wouldn't surprise me at all to know that every school and school board across the province ends up with a request and therefore establishes a GSA or a QSA if indeed school boards and administrators are honestly responding to such requests.

*10:30 p.m.*

A school board, I think, that is seen to be dragging its feet, no matter whether there's a deadline or not, is probably going to be subjected to some very public demonstrations. I would imagine that the student who has made the request has planned to gauge the amount of resistance they feel that their particular school or school board might mount in opposition to the establishment of a GSA or a QSA. There are jurisdictions in Alberta which are less friendly, let's say, to the gay community than others. I'm thinking of municipal jurisdictions where we've seen refusals to allow the pride flag to fly, where we've seen the necessity of our former government ministers to in fact create an alternative flagpole or allow them to be flown on provincial flagpoles instead of the municipal flagpoles where they were denied, where pride crosswalks and pride colours have been defaced.

So there are jurisdictions where a student may feel much less comfortable coming forward to ask for the establishment of a GSA and where a school administrator, who is faced with the legislative responsibility to establish one, even may feel some local pressure to not comply as quickly as possible or to drag his or her feet on it because of local public pressure, and that's something I think the Education minister, Mr. Chair, has to be aware of and I'm sure is

quite aware of. That's another reason why I think the timeline is a requirement. It's not something that's an option or something that we can actually allow this legislation to move forward without.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, speaking to A5, I believe I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen to speak.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've been very privileged to hear some of what my hon. colleagues here in the opposition have been saying tonight. I'll note that the Government House Leader noted earlier tonight that he doesn't think any Albertans are watching us and that this is a waste of our time and Albertans' time and taxpayer money, but I'll note that there are at least three or four very dedicated Albertans in the galleries right now watching the government chatter away while we debate what's going to happen to kids' lives as we move forward. I know many of them actually in the gallery here messaged me earlier on social media and said that they were intent on watching us stand up for the rights of Albertans and stand up for the rights of our most vulnerable youth.

I mean, in this amendment, I think, is something that is so simple. It's something that says that we have to have a timeliness clause. We have to have the ability to discuss and have a limitation on what is a reasonable restriction.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung spoke a little bit about this, but when we look jurisdictions across this province and how resistant they've been after the last four and more years, Mr. Chair – we can look at Taber, for example. I know that the Member for Edmonton-McClung alluded to that. In Taber the municipal district actually refused to allow a pride flag to be raised. Our former Minister of Infrastructure had to raise a flag at the Infrastructure building. We can see that that is the type of people who would be willing to delay the implementation of a GSA or a QSA. Those are the types of organizations and people who would be the ones that would drag their feet on allowing a GSA or a QSA to be established.

Again, we can see that in all of the hundreds of municipal districts and municipalities covered under the MGA and the city charters here in Alberta, it is a very small number of municipalities that we are having those problems in. I believe that that's going to be the same with schools. It's going to be a very small number of schools that are going to want to drag their feet. I mean, maybe it's the Minister of Finance's school, maybe the school that he was on the board of, that thinks being gay is a sin. Maybe those are the ones that will be dragging their feet and those types of institutions that don't think you should either be gay or do yoga. I mean, those are the ones.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

But, really, we know that the vast majority will comply, and the vast majority – welcome back, Mr. Chair – have complied because under Bill 24, that the former NDP government brought in, every single public, separate, and charter school did comply by bringing in a safe and inclusive policy.

But we recognize that sometimes schools need that little extra push. Sometimes administrators need that little extra assistance to talk about how they need to be timely. Schools will use an excuse like "Well, we want to talk about finding a staff member" or "We want to talk about the name" or "We want to talk about whether there are enough kids for this organization," whatever it is, for the GSA or the QSA. Whatever it is that the school is going to do, some schools, a very small number of them, Mr. Chair, will drag their feet and will try to prevent the establishment of the gay-straight alliance or the queer-straight alliance.

That is something that this amendment would prevent. It would allow us to say that in a timely manner, within a reasonable amount of time – and that's two weeks in this amendment. I'm happy to see if the government would want to subamend that to a longer time frame or a different time frame – longer, shorter, whatever they think is reasonable – because we understand that you can't anticipate every single situation in this province. But we can anticipate that there is what we can consider a limit on how long you should be allowed to search, how long you should be allowed to make excuses or try to deliberate amongst yourselves about whether a gay-straight alliance or a queer-straight alliance should be allowed.

I mean, it's very clear when we talk to young students how important this is for them. It's very clear when we talk to people like Jane MacNeil, who was a proponent of Bill 24 just a few years ago, which the Member for Edmonton-North West, when he was Education minister, moved forward. She was probably a unique case. She had spoken at length in the media about how, when she had decided to come out to her parents, she knew that her parents were actually supportive and were supportive of the LGBTQ2S-plus community, but she still spent the time mentally preparing herself in case her parents evicted her. In grade 6, Mr. Chair, this girl was worried about whether her parents would kick her out. And that's what GSAs and QSAs would create: a safe space for students to have those discussions amongst their peers, amongst their friends, and to feel like they could be accepted even if they know that their parents will be supportive.

A quote from Jane MacNeil, when she says: but then the day I was planning to do it, I remembered that my parents would kick me out; they're probably going to be cruel. That's her quote. And she was somebody who understood and her parents understood and were very supportive, and she still was worried about it. That's what we want to make sure we have a timely process in place to prevent. To have these kids having that safe space, to understand that we don't want grade 6ers worrying about whether they're going to have a roof over their head the next night: Mr. Chair, that's something that's very important.

When we talk about it, we can see that in Jane's case, in her Catholic school, she didn't have a GSA at the time. In fact, she actually said that she felt rejected and isolated. Another quote is: when I was at my old school, all the stresses made me so sick that I had to transfer. End quote. Mr. Chair, that's something that's actually shocking to hear and terrifying because it's something that is what we don't want to happen to any student in this entire province. We don't want any student to feel so unsafe that they feel they actually have to leave their school, transfer to another school. They're worried about what their friends think of them, what their teachers think, and that's something that we should be able to prevent in this Assembly.

That's something that this amendment would prevent because it would create that environment which will allow these students to have those discussions amongst themselves and have those peer-led discussions that will allow them to learn about what a GSA is, what being gay is, what being lesbian is, what being queer is, and have those discussions and understand that gay people and lesbian people and bisexual people and transgendered people are just normal people, like you and me, Mr. Chair, ones that just want to live their lives and go about their daily lives.

Unfortunately, if we don't move forward with this amendment, we actually have a situation that is going to be unsafe for some of these kids. If we don't move forward with this amendment, what will happen is that we will have some schools, a very small number, that will be preventing the GSAs and QSAs from being formed, and kids like Jane won't be able to have that safe support space. They

won't be able to have that supportive environment, and they're going to be in a position where they're not sure if they're going to be safe coming out to their parents, whether they're going to be safe coming out at their school, whether they're going to be safe coming out to their friends.

**10:40 p.m.**

That's something that we should all be striving to avoid in this House. It's something that we should be striving to try and fight against in this House. I think it's something that we all can agree on, that students should have the safest possible environment, that students should have the safest possible learning environment. That's something that we should be very excited to support here in this Assembly.

I mean, of course, as the Member for Edmonton-North West and I spoke to a little bit earlier, we're happy to debate the merits of this particular timeline in this amendment. We understand that government sometimes has different opinions on what "reasonable" means. We all know that government doesn't move quickly often. We all know that sometimes things take a bit of time, and that's okay. We can accept that, we can work with that, and we can move forward with that as long as we can establish what a reasonable timeliness would be, as long as this amendment could then say: okay; administrators have four weeks or six weeks or eight weeks or half the school year or one semester or whatever it is but within a reasonable amount of time. I think that, certainly, within a semester a school should be able to find somebody to establish a GSA or a QSA.

I think that those are things that are very important. [interjection] I mean, we see the hon. Premier laughing away over here. It's unfortunate that he thinks the timely establishment of GSAs is a laughing matter, but that's the reality of what we're trying to debate here tonight. We're trying to make sure we have a responsible government that will move forward and have a system that will protect our students in a timely manner.

In this amendment it says: "two weeks." I'm happy to entertain a subamendment, and I'm sure my hon. colleagues here in the opposition would as well. I mean, it's something that we want to discuss. I think we can definitely look at the merits of any amendments that would come forward because we know that this is something that will make a difference in the lives of students. We know it's something that will make a difference in the lives of kids and will have impacts, including reducing the rate of student suicide, teen suicide. We want to move forward with these things that improve mental health for students across our province. We know that they're not laughing matters. We know that they're matters that are serious, and we need to have a timely granting of these requests. When kids make these requests, we need to be able to move forward with them. We need to be able to move forward and have an understanding of it.

I mean, Mr. Chair, I know the Premier understands some of these issues. I know the Premier has very strong opinions on some of these issues and especially on the formation of GSAs, QSAs and what happens to gay and lesbian people across this country and in others, actually. In fact, in San Francisco in 1988 the Premier said, and I quote: what happens if a gay or lesbian activist group wants to gain the accreditation of the association of students at a Catholic university? In 1988 the Premier was aware of gay and lesbian activist groups in Catholic institutions. That's something that I think is very interesting, that we would be able to stand here a good 20 years later, 21 years later, and we're still debating those same gay and lesbian issues that the Premier was bringing up in 1988.

The Premier also once in 1995 spoke about a group called Loud and Queer. He called it a ridiculous excuse for theatre. Mr. Chair,

that's something that's very interesting as well. I wouldn't think that any queer group is a ridiculous excuse for theatre. I find them often quite amusing myself. The Premier was aware of them as late as 1995, but it actually comes later than that. The Premier actually spoke about gay issues in 1998, the very famous Vriend case. He referred to the decision as a virus of judicial activism in January 1998. So we see this trend of the Premier being aware of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited issues. We see that the Premier really does understand these issues, and he has a history of activism about these issues. It's something that I think is very important because here today, if the Minister of Education and the government really do believe that GSAs save lives and that GSAs work and that we should support QSAs and GSAs, we should support them in a timely manner.

We can see that the Premier has also understood this for so many years. We can see that indeed in January 1998 Premier Kenney – sorry; the current Premier of Alberta; I withdraw the name, Mr. Chair – actually urged former Premier Ralph Klein to overturn the upcoming Vriend decision by invoking the notwithstanding clause of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms here in Canada. The history of activism of the Premier around LGBTQ2S-plus rights here in Alberta and around the world I think speaks to perhaps why this government is so offended to say: "Wow. Two weeks. We can't let them start a GSA in only two weeks." That's because the Premier has a long history of thinking that GSAs are something that needs to be debated and that gay people and lesbian people are people that we shouldn't support.

Unfortunately for the Premier, Mr. Chair, the opposition is here to bring light to these facts, to bring light to the quotes from the Premier, and to show Albertans that we are the ones standing up for gay students, that we are the ones standing up for everyday Albertans, who understand how important these rights are.

In fact, in May 1998 the Premier said: I think the reaction of the Vriend decision opens the window for a provincial grassroots populist party with conservative values. That's interesting, Mr. Chair, because that speaks to the very opposite of what this bill would propose, and I think that it speaks to the opposite of the values of this amendment as well. It's something that the Premier needs to explain, why he would be against an amendment like this or a bill like this. It's something that I think is very interesting.

When we look at the history of what this government does and says, when we look at the history of what this Premier does and says, it is important that we recognize that this bill and this amendment are supposed to help save lives. They're supposed to help recognize and support gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, queer, two-spirited, and other students. We understand the history of the Premier's obsession with gay people, the obsession of the Premier with gay and lesbian rights, the obsession that he had with fighting against these rights. Perhaps that speaks to why this amendment is going to be voted down by the government, perhaps that speaks to why this government cares so little about establishing timely GSAs, perhaps it speaks to why they really disregard how damaging this will be to students across this province, and perhaps that's why they want schools to be able to drag their feet, Mr. Chair.

I think that if they vote against this amendment, it will be very clear to Albertans that that is indeed the case, especially to the people watching in the galleries, especially to the people watching at home. They will understand how offended this government is by the very concept of having gay people in our classrooms and in our hallways and in our Legislatures. It's something that I think that Albertans will be very interested to hear.

We can see that in May 1999 the Premier called the M. versus H. ruling one of the most outrageous exercises of raw judicial power

in the history of modern democracy. That was a ruling about spousal rights after a lesbian separation. Mr. Chair, the Supreme Court actually ruled that gay couples are no different than heterosexual couples in their ability to share loving unions, but the Premier spoke heavily against that. That is what is so shocking, and that explains why the Premier wouldn't support timely establishment of GSAs. That explains why the Premier would be so offended by the idea that within two weeks of a student requesting it, you should have a gay-straight alliance in a school or a queer-straight alliance in a school. It explains why this amendment would be so appalling to the Premier of Alberta, a man who has a history, going back over 30 years, of attacking LGBTQ2S-plus rights, of attacking the rights and human rights of gay people across this country.

We can see that when Pride TV was brought up in April 2000, Mr. Chair, the Premier, then a Canadian Alliance Member of Parliament, said that it would be wrong to license Pride TV. He was opposed to having a gay television channel, because God forbid that we have gay people on TV. That would be appalling. I'll bet you that the Premier refused to watch *Star Trek* for the same reason.

But I think that something that is very important to us is when we look back at the history of why the Premier would vote against this amendment. We see that in 2002 – we're moving forward in the timeline here – the Premier actually said: when the Supreme Court invented a constitutional right to sexual orientation, a right based on sexual conduct, they opened the door for polygamists, advocates of incest, and others to claim the same status as homosexuals. Mr. Chair, that is absolutely outrageous. It's outrageous that the Premier would compare gay rights to a slippery slope to polygamy and incest.

It shows how little regard the Premier has, and this is a history of how little regard the Premier has for gay rights and gay people. That is something that I think all Albertans are interested in. They are interested in knowing why the Premier would vote against timely establishment of GSAs. We're establishing, Mr. Chair, that it's not something new, that it's something that has been ongoing for many, many years, that the Premier over a long, long time has been opposed to gay people, has been opposed to the concept of being gay. That's why . . .

10:50 p.m.

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** A point of order has been called.

#### Point of Order

#### Relevance

#### Allegations against a Member

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Chair, thank you. A point of order under 23(b) and, actually, also under 23(i), "imputes false or unavowed motives." This is bordering on the outrageous and, sadly, the ridiculous. When I read this amendment, that "a policy established under subsection (2) must contain a requirement that any request made by a student pursuant to section 35.1(1) is granted no more than two weeks from the day the request is received," I'm not sure how a historical account going back 20, 30 years on the Premier has any relevance to the amendment that is before us right now, not to mention that under 23(i) – I certainly don't have the benefit of the Blues at the moment, but certainly the accusations that are being made against the Premier are, quite frankly, outrageous and ridiculous.

I certainly am not going to put words in your mouth, Mr. Chair, but this member needs to stay on point, stay on topic. If he wants to talk about the amendment, we're certainly here to listen about that,

but the stories that he is talking about have nothing to do with the amendment before us.

**The Acting Chair:** The MLA for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that what the hon. member is trying to achieve is contextual, and I believe, you know, that the substantive part of the argument of the point of order is that it's a matter of opinion and not a statement of fact. I would suggest that while the hon. member should always continue to refer back to the amendment, I think that he's been working a larger context of framing the reference to the actual amendment.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you.

I am prepared to make a ruling.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Chair . . .

**The Acting Chair:** Is it going to add anything further?

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes, please.

**The Acting Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yeah. I just wanted to point out that under 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member," clearly those comments were directly towards the member. They were not towards the government. They were not towards policy. They were directly towards the member, and that's clearly a violation under 23(h). I think it's absolutely clear that the member needs to apologize, withdraw his remarks, and not continue to do that. That's very clear.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Okay. Thank you for that.

Anything further to add? Anything new?

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is new information. I don't have the benefit of the Blues in front of me, but I do believe that I was referring at length to how this is contextual information on the timeliness clause that this amendment actually refers to. I did mention that, in fact, I'm going to say, at least about eight or nine times after every single point I made, that it was contextual as to why this timeliness clause may not be supported by – and I did in fact say it – the government in many of those cases. I do believe I was referring to why the government may not support this amendment and to the timeliness of this amendment. I would endeavour, of course, through you, to try and keep it to the timeliness of the amendment, but I think that context is important, and I would encourage you to rule that way.

Thank you.

**Mr. McIver:** New information.

**The Acting Chair:** We will accept new information, Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Under 23(c) it says: "persists in needless repetition." I think the hon. member just stood up and said that he repeated the same thing eight or nine times – his words – not 30 seconds ago, Mr. Chair. He's out of order.

**The Acting Chair:** The Official Opposition whip.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, that is another, entirely different point of order. I would suggest that the hon. member is

moving laterally out of the original context in which this point of order was called by the government whip. I think we should keep that in mind as well.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, and thank you for your input.

I am prepared to rule on the point of order: relevance, allegations, and repetition. Throughout the debate we have been giving latitude to each member to speak to amendment A5. I will encourage all members to recognize that relevance is important and to stay focused on that.

I do not believe that allegations were made. I do believe that in trying to set context, the member has made assumptions on intent from other members, and I would caution the member from doing that going forward.

I do not believe that a point of order has been made here, but I do encourage members to stay focused on amendment A5 as we have it presented here. Thank you.

You may proceed, Edmonton-South.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, I think that something that is very important, as we understand, is that we don't make assumptions or allegations here in this Chamber but that we allow Albertans, especially those watching at home, to make their own conclusions on what the greater context applies to as to why a government may vote against timeliness, why a government may decide against supporting such a simple amendment.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I think it's important that we understand the context of what certain members of the government have done in the past. I mean, we can look at as recently as 2005, Mr. Chair. As recently as 2005 we saw the hon. Premier actually say: the fact is that homosexuals aren't barred from marrying under Canadian law; marriage is open to everybody as long as they're a man and a woman.

Mr. Chair, that is absolutely ludicrous. It's absolutely ludicrous that we would see this clear attack on the rights of gay people to marry between themselves. And we can see . . .

**Mr. Loewen:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** A point of order has been noted.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Loewen:** The member just said that the Premier attacked people. That's clearly a point of order: 23(h), (i), and (j). He clearly just said that. We need to finally stop these kinds of unavowed motives, these crazy allegations like that. There's no doubt that comments like that are likely to create disorder in this House. It's unparliamentary; it's unacceptable. We need a ruling against this member to keep him straight. This is unacceptable. If this continues, we'll continue calling points of order until this member is corrected. It's very simple: Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). Clearly, he said that.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that certainly in matters of debate we can speak to issues that are contextual and before this

House and debate how we believe amendments should be moved forward and what certain members have done in the past. However, we just did have a ruling from the former chair on this exact matter, and the chair did rule that as long as we maintain the context and we're moving forward, we would be able to move forward. We also have seen that the member across did say that this was likely to create disorder, but we clearly saw no disorder in this House, and in fact many of the members in this Chamber were not even fazed by the actions. I think it's very clear that I would endeavour to not create disorder in this House, but I would ask that you rule that I'm allowed to continue with my debate.

**The Deputy Chair:** I am prepared to rule. My initial thoughts on this are that the points of view on this do constitute a difference of opinions. I do want to caution the hon. member. If he continues to come as close as he can, potentially, towards moving to something that could be considered imputing unavowed motives to another member, my worry is that we could end up in a situation where points of order are continually called. If that is the case, that will directly detract from the effective debate in the House, which, I think we can all agree, is the goal of the House at this hour.

I would ask the hon. member to consider his words carefully and to continue with his comments. He has at this stage another minute and 12.

11:00 p.m.

**Mr. Ellis:** A point of clarification, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Ellis:** If you don't mind, Mr. Chair, I just want it to be clear for us on this side to completely understand. Whether it be in the Committee of the Whole or from the chair's perspective, we can make allegations against another member and talk about their history or talk about how they have attacked people? I just want to be clear that that is possible. So we can talk about other members and make allegations against them. That is what we're saying? Under 13(2), some clarification on that, please.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you. I just want to draw some attention to the difference between strictly attacking members and differences of opinion. With regard to differences of opinion there is the possibility of not actually imputing a motive to another hon. member. At this stage, again, I do not find that there's a point of order, but I do want to stress to the hon. member, in order to ensure that decorum continues, that he choose his words wisely.

Please, if the hon. Member for Edmonton-South would continue.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, yeah, I think it's important that we do discuss in this Assembly the opinions that are held by all members and how we view the issues that are before us and how we view historically the issues that are before us. It's important that we understand that the timeliness of having GSAs established and having queer-straight alliances established in the schools within a reasonable time frame is something that is going to help save lives. It's something that is going to help save students' lives and young people's lives and reduce the risk of suicide.

I mean, it's a little bit unfortunate that members of the government would try to stifle debate using points of order that you've ruled on two or three times, Mr. Chair, and that former chairs have ruled on as well, that aren't actually points of order. Indeed, I think it's certainly something that we think is important here in the opposition, and we're happy to debate no matter how



upset the government gets. The government is free to have their opinions as well and share those opinions here in this Assembly. But we will make sure we stand up for . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** A point of order has been called by the hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, I'll stand as often as I need to until you realize there is disorder caused in the House. The hon. member hasn't talked about the item at all since he's continued, and I'll be back on my feet in 20 seconds if he doesn't.

**The Deputy Chair:** I don't find a point of order as per the hon. Minister of Transportation.

As such, I would ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-South to continue.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just about to say, actually, that I think that the context around this amendment is so important, and I spoke to timeliness.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to A5? I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you recognizing me. I'm certainly listening intently to the debate. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-South for generating a bunch of points of order so that I don't stand out as the member who gets called on points of order all the time. It's nice to have the heat taken off me.

I want to build, if I may, Mr. Chair, on the comments that I made, the last remarks that I made with respect to this bill. I recognized shortly after I sat down, of course, that the schools that I talked about in my riding are quite large schools. That's one of the benefits, I think, of being in a city, a densely populated area. I think Edmonton public is the second-largest school board in the province. I can see the Member for Edmonton-North West confirming that for me. Thank you.

You know, the schools that I mentioned in my previous comments are quite large schools, with populations of hundreds of students at the junior high level, thousands of students at the high school level, with budgets and staff that are quite significant and, of course, lend a tremendous advantage when it comes to setting up any kind of extracurricular activity. I wanted to see what the capacity was for smaller schools in the province to set up extracurricular activities and sports activities, just to see if my original comments still hold. Of course, the Member for Red Deer-North was quite adamant that there's no way that principals and administration could meet this deadline of two weeks. Certainly, it's not true in the case of city schools in my riding, Mr. Chair, but I did want to do a little bit of research to see if the same was true in smaller schools.

I wasn't sure where to start, Mr. Chair. Of course, one of the benefits of growing up in Alberta is that we provide excellent schools in all parts of the province, both urban and rural, and I was a beneficiary of that. I graduated from J.C. Charyk Hanna school in Hanna, Alberta. So I took a look at some of the programs that are currently offered in the Prairie Land regional division, in which the J.C. Charyk Hanna school finds itself. Interestingly enough, I see that the Morrin school is going to be providing a specialized hockey option this fall that will teach students in grades 7 to 9 Hockey Canada skills as well as doing dryland training, fitness, nutrition,

and power skating. That's quite interesting, that a school the size of Morrin school can offer the Hockey Canada program.

You know, one of the things that the Prairie Land regional division excels at is athletics, Mr. Chair. Even though these schools are small in terms of student population, they are certainly large in terms of their enthusiasm for sports. I notice that the J.C. Charyk Hanna Hawks took home the provincial title for six-man high school football this year. Of course, as the Hanna school is not a big school, it takes a tremendous amount of time and resources for them to field a football team, and it pleases me to no end to see that they're able to field a team capable of winning a provincial championship. I notice with some interest that Rick Haines is still the coach of the Hanna Hawks football team. He was one of the coaches of the Hanna Hawks football team when I was in high school, 23 years ago. You know, it certainly seemed to me at that time that Rick Haines was an old man, but apparently he's timeless because he's still coaching and doing quite a good job at it 23 years later. So congratulations to Rick Haines and to all of his student athletes who won the provincial championship in six-man football this year.

Alberta High School Rodeo is alive and well, Mr. Chair. A student from Berry Creek won the junior division high-point cowgirl. We've also got Canadian junior high school rodeo champion Kendal Pierson from one of the schools in the Prairie Land regional division. Obviously, schools are able to support their students participating in high school rodeo, which is an important part of preserving our rural way of life and rural culture here in Alberta. I'm proud that school divisions like the Prairie Land regional division can support students by providing those kinds of activities.

I notice that a lot of the schools in the Prairie Land regional division have volleyball teams. They've got track teams, Mr. Chair. We also have a couple of champion archers who are attending schools in the Prairie Land regional division, which is remarkable. You know, if politicians were rewarded for accuracy, I think we would miss the mark, certainly something in stark contrast to champion archers, who tend to hit the bull's eye more often than we politicians do with our remarks. They've got basketball teams, like I said. They've got track teams, rugby teams at schools all across the Prairie Land regional division. The J.C. Charyk junior high students competed at the math and science Olympics this year, and from the looks of the latest newsletter that they provided, they took home a few trophies, Mr. Chair. So that's interesting as well.

**11:10 p.m.**

But what was really remarkable, Mr. Chair, when I looked at some of the programs and extracurricular activities that were offered in the smaller schools in the Prairie Land regional division: one project that really caught my eye was the inclusivity project at Morrin school. For those of you who may not be familiar with Morrin school, it's located a few kilometres north of Drumheller. It's not a very large school, like I said, but they manage to offer a wide range of programs for their students. This year their inclusivity project took Morrin students to Germany, and if I could read from the latest newsletter that detailed their trip:

Germany is a country rich in culture and history. It is an amazing place to visit and for three students from Morrin it was a trip of a lifetime. For two weeks, Madeline Cuncannon, Taylor Davidson, Thomas Chapin and [Prairie Land regional division] Curriculum Coordinator Ellen Vanderkolk were immersed in German culture as they attended school and travelled the country.

**Mr. Loewen:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Point of Order  
Relevance**

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, Mr. Chair, we're sitting here talking about this amendment. Now, if you don't mind, maybe I'll read the amendment.

A policy established under subsection (2) must contain a requirement that any request made by a student pursuant to section 35.1(1) is granted no more than two weeks from the day the request is received.

That is the amendment, right? Am I correct? Could you clarify that for me, please?

**The Deputy Chair:** That is part of the amendment, but it seems like you've correctly stated the meat of the amendment.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. Well, would you like me to read all of it?

**The Deputy Chair:** No. That's enough.

**Mr. Loewen:** We're clear on what the amendment is?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. Now, can somebody please explain to me how what the member was talking about had anything to do with this amendment, like, anywhere on this planet?

**The Deputy Chair:** You're rising under 23(b)?

**Mr. Loewen:** Standing Order 23:

- (b) speaks to matters other than
  - (i) the question under discussion,
  - (ii) a motion or amendment the Member intends to move.

So under a motion or an amendment . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** I'm prepared to rule. I think that this is partially a continuation of a previous statement by the same member, which was not ruled out of order at the time. That said, I do think that this would be a perfect opportunity for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to continue his statement but ensure that he does bring it back towards the relevance of A5, and if he would be so kind as to do so now, he may . . .

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Chair, 13(2).

**The Deputy Chair:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Loewen:** I'd like to have an explanation.

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes. So under 13(2).

**Mr. Loewen:** Clearly, the discussion had nothing to do with the . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Again, the most effective way to do this for a 13(2) would be – with regard to the debate in this House during committee there is a wide swath that has been afforded to all sides. Knowing that all sides have had the opportunity to have, as I said, a wide swath with regard to the comments that they've made on various amendments that we've had regarding Bill 8 – I think that the best way for you to receive an explanation under 13(2), through the chair, would be for the hon. member to bring it back toward amendment A5. Should I feel that that has not been effectively done, I will call the hon. member to order in that case.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Debate Continued**

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, and I certainly appreciate the opportunity to explain how this is connected to the amendment. Of course, the amendment that we're considering here is one that suggests that students should be granted a gay-straight alliance within two weeks of making the request to the administrators of their school. I'm simply replying to the Member for Red Deer-North's objection to the two-week deadline, when she said that principals and school administrators couldn't possibly deal with the number of requests that they would be anticipated to receive in a two-week deadline, that the two-week deadline was not feasible for them to manage because they couldn't possibly deal with all of these requests.

What I'm trying to demonstrate to all members of the House, Mr. Chair, is that schools all across the province have a tremendous capacity for establishing a wide variety of clubs and extracurricular activities, sports teams for their students within a timely manner, and I'm trying to refute the Member for Red Deer-North's assertion that principals and administrators couldn't possibly meet these kinds of deadlines within two weeks.

Now, earlier in my previous statement, of course, as I said, I listed a bunch of examples of student clubs, extracurricular activities, and student sports teams that were provided by schools in my riding of Edmonton-Gold Bar, but in my opening statement, Mr. Chair, I recognized that schools in Edmonton-Gold Bar are very large. They have large students – large student populations, rather. I'm sure some of their students are large, too. They have large student populations. They have large staff complements. They have significant budgets. I recognize that that's not true for all schools across the province, that we have a number of rural schools that don't have student populations that are as close to the student populations in my schools in Edmonton-Gold Bar, that don't have the kind of staff complements, and that don't have the budgets. Yet I'm trying to list some examples for members of the House of small schools doing big things with the resources that they have at hand. I think it's very interesting to find some of the examples that I listed already.

Of course, we've talked at length about the football teams, the volleyball teams, the basketball teams that are found in schools in the Prairie Land regional division. I was quite clear in my opening statement that I didn't pick the Prairie Land regional division because of any reason other than that I used to be a student in that school division, Mr. Chair, so I have some familiarity with the schools in that school division, and I think that they are probably excellent examples, if you will, of rural schools that can do tremendous things with the staff and the budgets and the school populations that they have within them.

Mr. Chair, I think this inclusivity project at the Morrin school is a particularly informative example because, you know, from the article that I was reading here to members of the Chamber, we have three students who are part of the project and one staff member, and they were able to go all the way to Germany and spend a couple of weeks learning the German language and the German culture and dealing with learning the lessons of overcoming a history of fascism and violence and genocide. So I think it's an interesting example to all members of the things that small schools can do with their small staff and small resources.

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** Point of order noted. The hon. Minister of Transportation.

### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. The hon. member is fascinating, but I think that the relevance to the amendment before us – probably 23(b). There seems to be no connection to the time limit to form a GSA in the amendment here. Since the hon. member was talking for several minutes and made no connection whatsoever to the amendment before us, I would request that you direct the member to make a connection or sit down.

11:20 p.m.

**The Deputy Chair:** At this stage the hon. member, should he choose, has the opportunity to debate the point of order.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I find it interesting that the member opposite would be raising this point of order because, certainly, in my recollection of the proceedings of the four years prior to this Legislature – it didn't matter what bill we were debating – the member opposite would talk about the minimum wage and the carbon tax. We didn't raise points of order in those cases.

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but just to ensure that you focus in on this point of order, I would ask you to just perhaps keep it within that realm, and then I will make a decision.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that guidance. I don't know how much more clear I can make the connection. The Member for Red Deer-North was quite explicit in saying that school administration couldn't possibly meet the two-week deadline in this amendment because they will have a flood of requests for clubs of all kinds. What I'm trying to demonstrate in my comments is that schools, regardless of their staff size, their budget, their student population, are able to accommodate a number of clubs for any number of students in a reasonable time frame, and I think it's completely relevant to the amendment that we're debating here tonight.

**The Deputy Chair:** I'm prepared to make a ruling. It is my understanding that the point of the argument that you're making with regard to this amendment at this time I find to be within the realm of relevance in Committee of the Whole.

I consider the matter closed, and I would ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to please continue.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that ruling, and thank you for allowing me to continue to speak. You know, one of the things that I wanted to continue on, with respect to the Morrin school inclusivity club, was very particularly interesting to me.

The Inclusivity Project provides high school students with an opportunity to take action against perceived injustices in our society – to combat prejudice and discrimination to make our world a better place for everyone regardless of their differences – to promote greater inclusion, because in the end, we all just want to belong.

That was a quote from the staff member who was tasked with running that program.

The group made headlines on social media when they invited former NFL player Esera Tuaolo – and I'm not sure if I'm pronouncing that correctly, Mr. Chair – to speak at their event. Tuaolo travelled to Morrin and delivered a heartfelt speech about the importance of including all LGBTQ-plus athletes in sports, and he reminded everyone that hate in any form is wrong.

You know, this is just, again, another example of a very small school. Like I said, the Morrin school has an academic staff of approximately 12 staff members, Mr. Chair. I don't know how many students it has currently. I can recall that when J.C. Charyk sports teams competed against the Morrin sports teams, most of the junior high grades were actually on the field or on the court at the time of the game because the classes were so small. I don't know if that's currently the case, but we're talking about a handful of students at the most graduating from Morrin school every year.

You know, when the Member for Red Deer-North tells us that from her discussions with superintendents and principals and other administrators at school boards all across the province, they couldn't possibly deal with these requests to form gay-straight alliances within a two-week time frame, Mr. Chair, it seems unlikely to me that that would be true. As we've seen from just a quick tour of some of the schools that are in Prairie Land regional division, in some of the smallest schools in the province, I would expect, the very capable staff and administration and students are able to do great things with the resources that are given to them.

So I think that even in a small school like the Morrin school or the Hanna school or the Youngstown school or the Delia school or the Veteran school it would be perfectly reasonable for an administrator in any of those schools to come forward and facilitate the formation of a gay-straight alliance within two weeks. That's a perfectly reasonable request. I think that by looking at some of these examples of smaller schools, we can see that perhaps the Member for Red Deer-North's concerns about administrative capacity to deal with these kinds of requests are a bit overblown.

You know, certainly, I would challenge the Member for Red Deer-North: if she knows of a school that has been flooded with these requests and actually has an administrative burden such that they can't meet a two-week timeline, rise in this House and give us an actual example of a school that has been so flooded with requests to form these kinds of clubs that support safe, caring, inclusive environments in schools. She assures the House that she has consulted widely with a number of stakeholders in the school system. Surely, she must have had at least one example of a school somewhere in the province where, because of a flood of requests for these kinds of extracurricular activities, the administration simply hasn't been able to deal with all the requests in a two-week timeline.

Of course, if that's the case, if she can come up with an actual, real example of a school that has struggled to meet these kinds of timelines, then I would encourage her to take up the Member for Edmonton-North West's offer to propose a reasonable timeline in response. If she can come up with an example of a school that has actually not been able to deal with these kinds of requests in a two-week time frame, then we can look at that example as a learning opportunity, Mr. Chair, and perhaps use that school's experience to come up with a reasonable timeline instead.

If the Member for Red Deer-North provides us an example of a school where they've been inundated with requests, then we can actually look at that and say: "Well, all right. A two-week window isn't reasonable in this case, but they probably could have been able to deal with all of these requests in a three-week window or a four-week window or, you know, look at the requests that they had on the books and come up with a plan right now to at least deal with that in a reasonable time frame."

You know, the Member for Edmonton-North West, when he introduced this motion, was quite clear that the two-week window wasn't a hard-and-fast timeline that we were married to, Mr. Chair. We want a deadline of some sort, right? In my previous comments I said that making a promise without committing to a deadline to meet that promise is essentially as good as not making a promise at

all. We want to be able to go back to students and say: yes, you are guaranteed to have a GSA set up in your school within this time frame. Like the Member for Edmonton-North West said, we're open to what that time frame is.

**11:30 p.m.**

We do understand that we need to balance the needs of principals and administrators to deal with these timelines without blowing up their work schedules, but we also need to make sure that students have the opportunity to have confidence in their school and their administration that they will actually get a GSA when they get one and that they won't get the runaround when they make these kinds of requests for GSAs. I hope that the Member for Red Deer-North...

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

On amendment A5 I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung standing. Please.

**Mr. Dach:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to once again rise and speak to amendment A5. I'm reminded of many stories from my high school experiences when I was listening to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. He spoke about numerous examples of schools in his constituency where there were lots and lots of different clubs established by school administrators, and they all functioned at the same time, and they were put in place by staff members for the benefit of students. He listed quite a number of various different organizations and clubs and sports groups, all of which would have taken a significant amount of time and school resources and staff commitment to put into place. I think he established very, very well that schools are quite capable and administrations are quite capable of undertaking the workload to establish various clubs and organizations and various extramural activities to assist students beyond their regular classroom duties.

It's interesting to note, though, that these are established responsibilities of schools already, to undertake the effort to organize and help students organize these clubs and sports activities. It's a network and a web of activity that is something that enriches the life of the student and is probably something that the student remembers way more than any of the mathematics or chemistry classes that they might ever take. It's important work that these schools do, and it's work that has been undertaken for decades in Alberta classrooms and Alberta school institutions. It's something that school boards across the province have an expectation will be carried out by staff and administrators in schools of every description right across the province.

To argue that it's an onerous, administrative burden, I think, has been discredited by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar quite effectively, so I can't think of a reason not to write a timeline into the legislation that would require the school administrator to act on a student request to establish a GSA/QSA within a certain time frame. As other speakers on this side of the House have suggested, a timeline may be longer than two weeks, but a timeline that we're open to consider as a suggestion from the government is worthy of consideration back and forth. That's how good legislation is arrived at, by listening to each other, and that's what we're trying to do here today, actually, seriously get a grasp on what timeline might be established to, I would say, legitimize the process of establishing GSAs.

Without a timeline it really invites administrators who disagree with the GSA policy to disregard it. It's essential, in my view, that there be a timeline, Mr. Chair, established so that there's confidence in the system of establishing GSAs by students who might consider

making a request for one. Without a timeline there's no value to the whole exercise. Students don't trust it. They're not going to come forward and engage in a request for a GSA knowing that they may be in a school where the local community, including the council of the community, maybe the reeves and mayors, expresses its opposition to the gay community by refusing to participate in gay pride activities or allow a gay pride flag to be flown or defacing a gay crosswalk. That ends up being an influence upon a school administrator, who would opt to drag his or her feet in response to a request from a student to establish a GSA or a QSA.

I'm not talking about hypothetical situations, Mr. Chair. This is my actual thinking when I try to put myself in the position of a student who would be making a request for a GSA or QSA to be established in a school. If I'm in a community in Alberta where I know that the opposition is open and expressed publicly, opposition to the gay community in particular, it's a risk that a person takes to publicly declare themselves as a member of the LGBTQ2S community, and it's something that is a fight every day. You have to suffer slings and arrows and slander and fight for your rights to actually exist in that community. Then to not have a timeline on a school administrator when that student decides to go ahead and ask for a GSA or QSA to be established leaves little confidence in the mind of that student that that administrator is actually going to go forward with it.

There are pressures in that community upon that administrator to do what he or she can to disregard such a request. There's ostracism that takes place even against the school administrators in a small community. I know this because I've known teachers who are teachers in small communities and even within communities in larger centres. Teachers are subjected to arguments made by parents and groups of parents and individual groups of people who would lobby schools to take certain positions. They are subject to being influenced by opinion leaders who may happen to disagree with the GSA implementation in a particular local school.

It's absolutely essential that a timeline be ascribed to the requirement of an administrator to establish a GSA if indeed the whole process is to have any legitimacy whatsoever. As I say, the only reason not to write a timeline into the legislation would be to swing the door open to administrators who disagree with the GSA policy, to give the option to not follow through on a request and to deny it by dragging one's feet, to delay, delay, delay.

As has been said, justice delayed is justice denied. In this case, a GSA request delayed is one that ultimately may get denied or simply one that doesn't come to fruition because the student gives up on the process, is demoralized by being ignored and delayed and obfuscated by an administrator who is being pressured by his local community not to get a GSA established in a particular school. That type of reaction is something that one might expect or certainly that one can see follow from leaving the door open, by having no timeline attached to the requirement for an administrator to establish a GSA. It begs the question: why? Why a government who is full of intelligent people think that this omission would go unnoticed is beyond me.

**11:40 p.m.**

We certainly have noticed it, and we're standing up to defend those individuals who the government purports to say have the right to establish a GSA and whose position they respect according to the Education minister, who suggests that the policy they hope to enshrine in Bill 8 is going to be the strongest defence of rights of LGBTQ2S-plus individuals in the country. Yet it's glaring weakness is demonstrated by the lack of a timeline in this very, very essential piece of the protection of young students in the crisis situation in their life, when they are asking for help from their

school. The one island of safety that is often offered to students is the sanction of their school, and in this particular case we are denying them that life preserver by not writing a timeline into the legislation that would require a school administrator to react in a very timely fashion to a request for the establishment of a GSA or a QSA.

I think that other speakers, Mr. Chair, have detailed quite clearly the risk of harm to young students who end up not having help offered through a GSA to come to terms with their own sexuality with their parents and the relationship within their family. The consequences are very, very severe and significant. That's the whole crux of the matter. That's what we're trying to avoid, harm to young people, by ensuring that they have a right to establish a GSA and by making sure that they can insist upon it by having rules that administrators have to follow, by not having it be an open-ended decision, by not giving discretion to administrators to just delay the reaction time to a response and therefore end up having the request die on the Order Paper, or the students get so frustrated that they just go away, perhaps not even deciding to go ahead with the request in the first place because they have no faith in the process.

What we're trying to establish here, Mr. Chair, is that the government recognizes that these student populations, those who they say that they are protecting, have faith in the process. Without this timeline there is no confidence; there is no faith. If I put myself in the position of a young person who was a member of the gay community looking to make a decision about coming forward to ask for a GSA, in my school I would hesitate – and that's putting it mildly – to come forward with the legislation in place that the government is proposing whereby the school administrator has no requirement to act swiftly to get the GSA, QSA established.

It has certainly been demonstrated, I think, quite well this evening by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar in particular, that the schools have capacity to establish numerous types of clubs and extracurricular activities beyond the core subject matter that teachers have a responsibility to teach, and it's something that's considered to be a matter of the responsibility for teachers to carry out beyond their role as educators, or as part of the role as educators. It is perfectly reasonable to expect that the establishment of GSAs and QSAs could be absorbed quite easily within the administrative capacity that already exists in Alberta schools, so I would hope that government members are increasingly convinced that the school boards and administrators must be required to act in timely manner. We in the Official Opposition are quite open to suggestions from the government as to what that time frame might be although, of course, we're looking for something that is measured in, I would say, weeks, not months.

As I alluded to earlier, the situation that a student faces where they are coming to a decision to go approach a school administrator to ask for the invocation of, an establishment of a GSA is a very, very serious time in their life. We're told by the Education minister that two weeks would be too prescriptive. However, I think that in the context of the seriousness of the decision that the student is making, we have to realize that this student is in crisis. They're hoping to avoid crisis. It's a serious, serious matter, and it's a matter of an emergency.

In the same way as one would treat an individual arriving at an emergency ward in an ambulance, one drops everything and treats that individual. I would say that it's a triage situation in a school that deserves the highest order of attention. It's not as though a student is coming to a teacher to get help in a certain subject matter, where they're failing science and they're afraid they might not get into university or where they think they need extra help to study in their algebra course, or they don't believe they're going to make the

basketball team, so they've got to go to the gym teacher to get extra practice time. This is a situation where the person's life hangs in the balance and their future hangs in the balance. Having faith in the system is absolutely essential.

I know that the Education minister has repeatedly said that this legislation would be the strongest in the country in protecting the rights of the student to come forward and demand that a GSA/QSA be established, that there wouldn't be a situation where that demand could be denied, yet there are no teeth in the legislation which would make it mandatory for that administrator to, in a timely fashion, establish a GSA/QSA. In fact, there are no timelines established in the legislation.

I haven't heard yet from the government or other members across, haven't heard anyone defend the government's omission of a timeline in a way that convinces me that the legislation is acceptable without one. I am not convinced – and I don't believe I can be convinced – that this legislation is safe, effective, or useful without a timeline. It forgets the whole reason behind establishing a GSA, and that's to provide a safe space for students who wish to come out under their own terms.

The students who are considering the option of establishing a GSA and coming forward and taking advantage of this so-called protection that the government thinks it's offering under the legislation are going to think twice before exercising that option because they know that there's a possibility that the administrator could just ignore it or just delay it. It could go on for weeks or years. It's been mentioned by other speakers that that history has been shown to be true, that students have asked for a GSA/QSA and that it's been not months but years of requests.

I can't imagine many students being able to pursue a request for the establishment of a GSA or a QSA over that timeline. It's got to be only the strongest and most convinced in their belief who would be able to withstand that type of an onslaught against their right to establish a GSA or a QSA, months and months and months of waiting. Boy, that individual who went ahead and still pursued the application and demanded that their rights be respected after months and months, more than a year – in some cases, I heard, up to six years where the student was trying to establish a GSA, a QSA: that's a dubious amount of time to expect a student who is in a crisis situation to actually wait. Most people, of course, will have dropped the pursuit, will have given up, will have been despondent over the reaction from their administrator or principal to not grant to them their right.

*11:50 p.m.*

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

We are on amendment A5 to Bill 8. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen to speak.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm delighted to stand up once again to speak in favour of the amendment. I really wanted to refer to this portion, actually, of the survey I mentioned a few times before when I rose to speak in favour of the amendment, but I refrained from reading the notes from this survey. I would really like to actually refer to some of the notes provided in the survey.

The survey was conducted by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust. This survey was conducted with over 3,700 students from across Canada. The study was commissioned by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust and funded by ECHRT, with additional support from the University of Winnipeg Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant competition and from sexual and gender diversity: vulnerability and resilience, a research team funded by Canadian Institutes of Health Research. This is a huge survey, a 21-page survey.

I just wanted to read what it says about GSAs. The survey notes: GSAs are official student clubs with LGBTQ and heterosexual student membership and typically one or two teachers who serve as faculty advisors. Students in a school with a GSA know that they have at least one or two adults they can talk to about LGBTQ matters. The purpose of GSAs is to provide a much-needed safe space in which LGBTQ students and allies can work together on making their schools more welcoming for sexual and gender [minorities] . . . However, using the acronym “GSA” to represent any student group concerned with LGBTQ matters has become commonplace.

There’s a lot to actually read to give references from this. I just wanted to refer to this survey and their findings and their definition of a GSA.

When we have spent two continuous days and a few hours on this amendment and the numerous examples and facts in support of this amendment from my colleagues the hon. members for Edmonton-Gold Bar and Edmonton-McClung and the experience shared by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, there was really a hope not long ago – not long ago – in this House when the Education minister rose and showed some, you know, compassion for or commitment to the concerns that they have in common.

As I said before, what we were trying to do – we have different views. We have conflicting views over Bill 8. What we are proposing in this amendment is not really going to address all the questions and concerns that the members of the opposition have been trying to raise on Bill 8 for the last three weeks. Also, they’re not going to address all the questions and concerns that were raised by the LGBTQ2S-plus community. All we’re trying to actually do with this amendment is to strengthen the provisions in the bill. The government believes, actually, that they’re proposing something in the bill to strengthen the security of the LGBTQ community in the schools.

Also, you know, we have been very adapting to listen to the Education minister on her findings or her consultations that she wanted to share. She shared with us that the people that she had the experience and, you know, the privilege to speak with found that something was very, very prescriptive, that something was hard to work with, and that the term that was used in the legislation, “immediately,” was something that the principals and the stakeholders that she spoke with found too prescriptive, too hard to work with.

Immediately after that, you know, the opposition whip and hon. Member for Edmonton-North West rose and made a reasonable offer, that what we are trying to do as a positive opposition is that we’re trying to provide a positive argument, that the amendment, the argument, could actually serve the spirit of the provision that the government is actually trying to table through the bill. They feel they’re providing the solution through those provisions that will provide the protection to the community.

I just wanted to refer to the experience of the Premier. The Premier has served in many different positions, political positions in the government, portfolios in the federal government. One of those I closely know was the portfolio of citizenship and immigration. During his tenure in the federal government he made numerous changes to immigration laws, whether you agree or disagree with those. He made changes to cancel applications and made new applications under different categories. You could have, you know, different opinions on that, you can agree with something or not, but what I wanted to stress on this: every single change that he was bringing in on those immigration laws was not without any timelines. Even when he proposed the cancellation of applications, there was a timeline. Even when he proposed new changes, new

categories, he always had a timeline actually stipulated in the legislation.

**12:00 a.m.**

Then the Education minister rose not long ago in the House and said that this is something that she heard from the school stakeholders, I will say, that it was too prescriptive for them, and the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, you know, very factually has given the examples of the different schools, from the large schools from his riding to the small schools across the province, and their ability to work on very different extracurricular activities and implement the plan in a given time frame.

We were even open to the government House members: what time frame do you want to offer on this? It seems like that was just another political retreat. This is starting to show that, and we ended up going this way. I believe there is still opportunity in this House to show the leadership, show the collective leadership as the government has many times retweeted and affirmed in this House that they believe in the LGBTQ community protection. And if the House really doesn’t feel that two weeks, the proposed time in this amendment, something is not to be – you know, they’re feeling committed to support something. The members on this side of this House have reasonably given an offer to the government House. What time frame do you want to offer on this amendment? We all believe that without stipulating a time frame, you cannot assure that the requests coming forward will really be relied upon.

Without stipulating the time limit, this legislation is too broad. It leaves it to the person, you know, to trust how they want to interpret it or how serious they want to be on this. The person might not have any interest to form the GSA or QSA in schools, so they can basically sit back for months, for years, and there will be no accountability and there will be no oversight.

All we are asking is to complete at least the provisions you have proposed in this bill. So if you don’t have any alternate to this, I think this is a reasonable offer. Then I ask all House members and I encourage all House members, if there is no – I just wanted to remind that the members of the government House do acknowledge that the time frame is important to this provision. So if they don’t have something reasonably in their minds, they’re most welcome to support this amendment. If something they feel, based on their consultation, their experience, conversations – if they can offer something alternate to this, then they can come forward, and we are willing to discuss this.

If they do not have anything to say on this, then I will once again be brief, without going into 21 pages of survey completed by the reputable institutions in Canada, and ask all the House members to support this amendment. Please support this amendment if you don’t have anything to say to this. If you don’t have anything to offer on this, then do come vote for this amendment.

I will be brief this time. That’s all I have to say. Once again, I’ll encourage members. As you already acknowledged the spirit of the amendment, then I will encourage you to support and vote for this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

On A5, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in favour of this amendment. As I reflect on the many GSAs that I have visited over these last number of years, I reflect on the enthusiasm that I saw in every corner of the province in talking about how GSAs started in different schools around the province, in different towns and cities, you know,

sometimes in unlikely places as well. I mean, I guess I shouldn't be suggesting what's likely or unlikely, but when I reflect on perhaps some of the strongest, best-attended GSAs that I've visited over the last number of years, a couple of them come to mind straight away.

The first one would be in Olds high school in Olds, Alberta. The Olds high school is a wonderful, wonderful facility that shares space and a roof with one of the buildings of the Olds College complex. You have this, I guess, synergy between the high school and Olds College right there. I love that partnership that they have made between the schools. The kids are already sort of physically on a college property, so the concept of moving on to postsecondary education is just literally – right? – staring them in the face every day. You know, it adds to sort of a campus kind of feel to the high school so that the kids are perhaps edified by that in their behaviour, and their focus is maybe assisted by the fact that they are literally on the Olds College campus.

In that school I saw a tremendous GSA formation that, you know, really brought in a lot of kids from lots of different backgrounds. Don't forget that, of course, a GSA is an alliance as well, so you have kids that are there because they want to be allied and show solidarity – right? – with the LGBTQ community and so forth. This GSA worked on lots – they still do, I'm sure – of different social justice issues: raising money for developing nations, selling different products to raise money for projects in different countries, learning and educating the general population, including the high school and the college on different social justice issues. It's not just LGBTQ-plus issues but also other things that they choose to discuss along the way.

You know, in regard to establishment, once the GSA started in Olds, it's like it gained a life of its own. Sometimes this is the way things can go for student activities in general and GSAs specifically. If you can nurture it and make it easy and normalized to establish and ask for a GSA and get it in a timely fashion, then the rest of it follows itself quite naturally. The one in Olds, in particular, I know had strong support from the administration of the college as well, and they were represented in the meeting that I went to at the Olds high school GSA.

*12:10 a.m.*

Again, it's like if everybody enters into the process in a positive way, then the establishment and the timely establishment takes care of itself, quite frankly. You know, it's not like you are twisting people's arms to start a GSA. Rather, the environment we created over the last few years has made it much easier to do so, and I think that's something we should all be proud of and something that we should nurture and buttress with good legislation to let people know that we care and that the provincial government is there to make sure they are supported in every way.

It was only a couple of years ago, I guess, not even that, when I first met up with Jane MacNeil from Calgary. She would probably be in high school now. But she was in a situation where she was trying to start a GSA in the school that she was in and having a tremendously difficult time and then moving over to a public school and finding suddenly, like a breath of fresh air, being completely supported every step of the way. What happened also, simultaneously or perhaps around the same time, was that we did pass Bill 24 here in this Assembly, and the doors just opened, quite frankly. I know that, for people like Jane, starting a GSA in a school suddenly just became so much exponentially easier.

I learned an important lesson in regard to Jane's story specifically. You know, I think that Jane was feeling tremendous pressure and anxiety, as all young people do from time to time, but then suddenly had the support of the school and had the support of

the school board and found it very easy and straightforward to start a GSA, show leadership – right? – and allow that to flourish, I believe, in Forest Lawn school. I think that's where it was that this took place.

Again, there are literally hundreds of stories like this around the province. I think about Wetaskiwin public school. Again, by being able to have a supportive school board and a safe and caring policy that disseminated from that board, the establishment of a GSA in Wetaskiwin school was straightforward and easy. They know what the rules are, they know what the parameters are, and then away you go: a timely establishment of a GSA. I know that the guidance counsellor in Wetaskiwin public school was very, very pleased to have provincial support, you know, and the clarity so that students' confidentiality is respected. Also, the clear parameters around the establishment of a GSA made it easy. Clearly, the guidance counsellor knew very well that there were lots of kids that could benefit from that. I believe that probably that GSA is continuing to move along and continuing to serve kids in a positive way.

I mean, GSAs from year to year at a school wax and wane according to the membership and who's coming in and who's graduating. I think we can see that as a normal thing, just like the basketball team might be so great in Hanna one year and then the next year, you know, they don't do so well, right? They get beaten by Delia even. It's possible. I think about Delia because, of course, we are building a school there, and it's going to be awesome. I'm excited about that. But my analogy is that once the GSA starts, it's not a matter of saying, "Oh, well, it looks like it's maybe starting to die out" because there are no kids for a particular year, but these things, once you start them, then become normalized, and it's easy to be picked up by other kids coming along the way.

When we're talking about establishment and timely establishment, I think we have to think about, you know, the legacy that we're creating and leaving in a school and the benefits that are derived from having a GSA in a school for all the kids, right? They can see that very vulnerable people are being looked after and very vulnerable young people have the support of the school, the school board, and the teachers and everybody, and everybody feels the benefit of that.

Another very interesting GSA that I had come to visit is in Lindsay Thurber school in Red Deer. This is a very interesting one because this was perhaps one of the first GSAs to be started in the whole province of Alberta. They had a very strong tradition of social justice in Lindsay Thurber high school, so they've led the way in lots of ways around GSAs and GSA organization and so forth and helping other schools to establish GSAs as well.

But, you know, again, the very first time, without coherent direction from this provincial government, the establishment of the very first GSAs, like in Lindsay Thurber, was not easy, right? You needed an extraordinary leadership. I know that there was extraordinary student leadership from a teacher at Lindsay Thurber that persevered, quite frankly, without provincial legislation to support, but he did a great job, and that is a real source of, I think, pride. If MLAs want to visit a place where kids discuss, again, all kinds of social justice issues and political issues and just the state of the community and school, then the Lindsay Thurber GSA is the place to go. I learned a lot by going there, both from the history of the alliance and the direction that students and teachers take from that school.

Another one that really sticks out for me, of course, I think, is Jasper Place high school. Jasper Place is probably perhaps the biggest high school in the province, right? It has, I think – Edmonton-South? – probably more than 3,000 students at least. I believe you were a graduate there, which is nice. We have two

Jasper Place graduates in our caucus. It's, again, a very dynamic GSA that I think helps to set a tone for the whole school so that you literally have this club that, you know, some people join, and it has more membership or less membership from year to year, but the very existence of that club, I think, helps to set a positive tone for all 3,000 students or more because they can see that this is a safe place and that you're creating a safe haven for students in the GSA.

I think that it helped to precipitate lots of other interesting clubs that do function in Jasper Place. If you go to their clubs day, I've never seen so many choices around, you know, things that you could join, from sports to different language clubs, different cultures, and then right in the thick of it all is perhaps one of the strongest GSAs that I know of in the province, again, just contributing to the fabric of a school and normalized over time. So the key is to have the timely formation of a GSA, and then the rest of it takes on a life of its own in a very organic and, I believe, positive way.

Perhaps one of the most unique GSA formations is what we find in the Spruce Grove community GSA, okay? This is almost like a super GSA that was created not from one particular school but from community members, encompassing many schools and many thousands of kids that live in the area from both Catholic and public and private schools and maybe a charter out there – I can't remember – in Spruce Grove, so a community GSA. It's very interesting. I mean, it falls outside of the Education Act, of course, but, again, you can see how there's an organic sort of creating a need that will find its way over time. Literally, they will find their way because people can see a demonstrable need and benefit from a GSA. Spruce Grove just spontaneously popped out with a community GSA. They participate in public events and a parade and so forth, and they meet at the community hall. It's a pretty dynamic thing that I think, Mr. Chair, we should acknowledge.

12:20 a.m.

Anyway, my point is, again, that this amendment helps us to have a timely number in place, and if there's a commitment and school boards and schools are backed by provincial law, then they will find a way. It's always what happens. I've never met a school board anywhere in the province that doesn't want to follow the law. I mean, that's a pretty basic tenet of schools and school boards anyway because they help to teach what laws are in the first place and help to establish the fabric of a community. Obviously, if we have this amendment where they are compelled to have the formation of a GSA within two weeks, Mr. Chair, I would suggest that we would have compliance and enthusiastic compliance right across the province. All of these wonderful examples that I just described in places like Olds, Red Deer, Edmonton, Wetaskiwin, and Spruce Grove we would see replicated in many other communities, and I believe we would all be the richer for it, quite frankly.

I can't remember if this is amendment A5 or amendment A6 now, but I think the amendment speaks for itself. It's strong, and I believe it serves its purpose very, very well, and I'm hoping that everyone will vote in support of the amendment. I know that I don't want to take up the time that I can pass on to another one of our members. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I know that he always likes it when I kind of open up and just, you know, tell a bit about GSAs and the timely establishment thereof.

You know, another place where I think I saw very interesting GSAs and the establishment of them in a very timely way was in southern Alberta as well, both in Lethbridge and in Medicine Hat. You see a lot of sort of regional collaboration that helps to support one school to another or even one town to another or city to another. I think that by having laws that compel the timely formation of a

GSA, you could really help to nurture that sense of community and co-operation.

You know, I was a teacher for 20 years, and I know that part of what you would see happening is that the culture of a given school year gets started very quickly in September – right? – or late August and so forth, so when you're building a student activity schedule, you want to generate that enthusiasm and get things going straight away at the beginning of the year. That kind of sets the tone for the whole year, and students start to build their schedules, habits, and friends, you know, what they choose to join right from that first couple of weeks of school. By having a two-week period as this amendment suggests, I think that fits in really well with how the atmosphere or the conditions of a high school are established right then in that late August, beginning of September, that first couple of weeks, right?

If there are kids that might want to start a GSA or QSA, then they need to be nurtured and to be accepted straight away. Just like when somebody starts the cross-country running club, right away after September you've got to get in there and start running, man, because you've got to be ready for the meets that take place at the end of September and the beginning of October. And it's the same thing with other clubs and student council and chess club and all that kind of thing, right? Again, having the GSAs being backstopped by a time-sensitive or timely establishment of a couple of weeks really fits in with that same dynamic, like I say, that you're trying to create at the beginning of a high school year.

Again, I encourage everyone to consider amendment A5. I think it speaks for itself, and I will hand over my time and place to another member perhaps from across the way, you know, that would like to let us know more about their feelings on the timely establishment of GSAs here in the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

On A5 I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to rise and speak to this very important amendment. I mean, it's something that I think is very important because we need an amendment that brings some stability for students – right? – and this amendment I think the Member for Edmonton-North West spoke quite a bit at length about, about how it does bring in some of that stability. It allows students to know that when they request it, it would give them that two-week timeline and that they would be able to have that two weeks to start beginning to have their GSA.

I mean, on the idea of stability I do want to maybe let some of the members across the way know, maybe the Member for Calgary-West, I believe it is, and the members for Calgary-Hays and Central Peace-Notley, that I've just looked at my calendar. Actually, I'm going to be here till the end of it. I've cleared my whole weekend. I'm happy to stay here and debate this amendment as long as we need to, Mr. Chair. So I'm looking forward to having that discussion for as long as we need to, and I'll be right here in my chair getting up every opportunity I have.

I mean, I'm looking forward to talking about how certain schools may need that little extra push to ensure that they have a GSA established and that a reasonable timeline should be enacted upon these schools. I'm looking forward to debating how important it is that these schools have those restrictions. When we looked at certain schools – and I spoke to it earlier – not every school but certain schools, that view GSAs as something that's a sin or that view GSAs as something that's the work of the devil, we know that nobody in this Chamber believes that. But we know that it's important that we have a GSA in all of those schools, especially the



ones where the school environment may make those students feel unsafe and may make those students feel excluded.

We know it is very important that when a student requests a GSA, it's on a reasonable timeline. I think the Member for Edmonton-North West spoke quite eloquently about how there is a bit of a cycle around how schools operate and that there's a bit of a timeline that things operate at. If you join the chess club in September, everybody joins at the same time, and you sort of get to the same place by the time you come to December or June or whatever it is, Mr. Chair. Certainly, I think that a GSA benefits from the same type of stability, and the students having the ability to request a GSA and know that that stability will be in place is very important. I hope members of the government understand that.

I hope they understand how important it is that we don't leave students with the impression that they aren't able to have a GSA if their administrators want to drag their feet. I mean, I know members opposite don't wish that to be the case. I know members opposite don't want that to be the end result of this bill, but I think that we need to make sure that we make a bad bill better. We need to spray a little bit of Febreeze on the bill, give it a little bit of a touch-up, and that's what I think this amendment does. It allows us to have a little bit of a change. It allows us to have a little bit more stability for those students, a little bit more certainty so that those students understand that when they request it, within two weeks they will have a responsible adult that will be inclusive, accepting, and accept that they are gay, accept that they are queer, accept that they are transgendered, or whatever it may be, Mr. Chair, that they are LGBTQ2S students and that they are supported. That's something that I think is very important. I think it's very important that we recognize this in this Assembly, and it's very important that we support this in this Assembly, and this amendment would allow us to do that.

I mean, it's something that when we look at the history of what the legacy parties of this government have gone on, it's been very interesting. The legacy parties in this Assembly voted in support of Bill 24 when it was first introduced, and now the Education minister claims that these updated regulations and legislation are the most comprehensive ever, except we see significant rollbacks from Bill 24.

**12:30 a.m.**

One of those was the timeliness, the timeliness of when a GSA must be established. We understand that the minister spoke about how some superintendents found it onerous or prescriptive to have an "immediately" clause, and that's why we've come with a "two weeks" clause, right? That's why we've said that two weeks is a reasonable amount of time. It gives you time to go out and find a parent or a liaison or a staff member, whatever it has to be, that'll be able to organize these students, able to have them have a safe space, and able to support them in a safe space. That two weeks, I think, isn't too long; it's not too short. It's sort of the Goldilocks zone, if you would. I mean, it's something that gives the superintendents or the principals or whoever it may be enough time to actually go and review that situation.

We know that if suddenly it's taking six weeks, eight weeks, 10 weeks, 12 weeks, and so forth, something has gone wrong, that these schools are now abusing a loophole in the system to try and damage the rights of these students. We know it's not a large number of these schools that are doing that – we know it's only a very, very small percentage of these schools – but we need to send a signal to these schools today, we need to send a signal to those students today that those students will be protected, that those students will be protected by this Legislature, that their lives are valuable. Their sexuality does not matter, and they are valuable:

that's what we need to tell them right now by supporting them and saying that if you want a GSA, a QSA, a safe and inclusive space, we will provide that. That's something that we should be easily able to accept in this House.

It's something that I think we'll be happy to keep debating and moving forward here. It doesn't make much sense when we look at the provisions of Bill 8. It speaks at length to ensuring that inclusion groups are accepted. I know that's the minister's preferred name for them. I know the minister doesn't like the names "GSA" or "QSA," but those are protected names in the legislation, Mr. Chair.

The timeliness of having them established is just as important as actually giving the permission. The timeliness is important. If an administrator chooses not to move forward expeditiously with the enactment of the club, you could have a request come in in September, when the school year starts – you may have a new gay student or whatever it may be, Mr. Chair – and if the club is not approved until June, well, the school year is actually over at that point. Students have now left school. We know that that is absolutely possible, that that is absolutely something that this legislation without this amendment would allow. It's something that we should work to fight against, it's something we should work to fix because it's absolutely a minor flaw in this legislation.

I mean, I'll be the first to admit that sometimes you don't get perfect legislation the first time, and we can fix it. That's what the process of these amendments is, that's what the process of Committee of the Whole is right here in this Assembly, and that's why we're able to debate this. I really have to wonder what the intention of the government is if they don't wish to fix this minor flaw.

This is something that we've spoken to at length now, about why it's important that students have that timeliness, whether it's stability, whether it's so that they feel safe, whether it's so that schools don't drag their feet. Whatever it may be, we understand that it's very important that these students actually have the means, not just the protocol written down on a piece of paper but that they actually have the means, to establish these GSAs and that these GSAs are actually allowed. We think that it's important that these GSAs are actually allowed to move forward.

I mean, I think it's important when we look at the GSAs and what they do. The Member for Edmonton-North West spoke a little bit about a GSA that I actually attended when I was in high school, the one at Jasper Place high school. Again, one of the best things I remember about that GSA is that every week they would have a movie night, Mr. Chair. They'd have a movie night, and they'd have cheap popcorn. I'd go after school to the film studies room and watch a movie with some friends and eat some popcorn. That's the type of safe space that we want to expedite and ensure that teachers and principals aren't able to drag their feet on, right? We want these kids to be able to have that community around them in at least two weeks.

Two weeks isn't a short period of time; it's not a long period of time. It's the right amount of time to allow these students to move forward. It's the right amount of time to ensure that these students are able to have the structures in place and that the administrators will have the structures in place. They'll be able to find a staff member that's willing to organize a GSA or a QSA. They're going to be able to find an outside person, if they have to, that's willing to organize a GSA or a QSA. That's an adequate amount of time, Mr. Chair, I believe, two weeks. It's something where, if an administrator needs to make a few phone calls, that gives them that opportunity.

I think it's very important that we look at the history of this and why the government members and the ones who were here in the 29th Legislature would have voted in favour of Bill 24 and

supported stronger protections than this, indeed, for GSAs and QSAs and gay kids across this province and why now they would vote to repeal those. I think that's a very contradictory action, Mr. Chair. I think that accepting this amendment would rectify some of that contradiction. Not all of it, but it certainly would rectify some of it. This amendment would allow us to bring back some of the protections that this government seems so intent on rolling back. It would allow us to bring back some of the GSA protections that this Bill Hate, the Act to Destroy GSAs, really goes after. I think that's something that all members should be happy to do, especially the ones that were here before, in the 29th Legislature, that supported the original Bill 24 and supported having stronger protections for gay kids.

Unfortunately, it seems that the government is intent on rolling back those protections and not having strong protections for gay kids and, really, leaving gay kids out in the wind, Mr. Chair. That's something that I think is a little bit unfortunate.

We can look at some of the history here and see that in March 2005 the hon. Premier actually opposed a children's book about having two dads. Actually, I'll quote it. He said: it's wrong to confuse children. Mr. Chair, I think that isn't something that members of this Assembly agree with.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Chair, point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. Minister of Transportation, I believe that you may want to change seats.

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. I'll do that.

Mr. Chair, the hon. member is trying to create disorder in the House. He's not talking about the topic at hand. Under 23(j) he's attempting to create disorder, and he's succeeding. I'll keep standing up as long as he carries on this way.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've already had a ruling from yourself and another chair as well on this point of order. I am creating context for the debate, and I wish to continue to do that. I'd ask you to rule the same again.

**The Deputy Chair:** Given that this amendment has a long history in this House, I think that it would be prudent, based on previous rulings, to ensure that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South choose the course of his debate in a way that may not follow the same path as has previously occurred within the context of the debate on A5. At this stage I don't find a point of order and consider the matter to be closed.

If the hon. member would please continue, having taken into account my expressed wishes, that would be a great way to move forward. Thank you.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm always happy to seek your guidance in this Assembly, especially when we are debating something that is so fundamental to our province, something that is so fundamental, with historical context, to being able to protect these students, to being able to protect these vulnerable youth, and to being able to see where people across party lines have pledged their support in the past and whether they have supported gay kids or acted to out them.

That's something that I think is very important, that we continue to move forward and fight for in this House. I think that it's something that our opposition here will continue to fight against in this House, against the agenda that being gay is somehow wrong or that being gay is somehow confusing. I think that it's something we are very excited to be able to stand here and debate. Something that we are very excited about is to be able to stand here and propose this amendment A5, that makes this bad bill better. The amendment: we've spoken at length about how this two weeks is adequate time for administrators to be able to have those changes.

We talk about the concern that we're hearing. I mean, I have a little bit of a story for you, Mr. Chair. It's somebody who I've known for many years now that this actually happened to. The type of school district that we're talking about when we're talking about dragging their feet and the importance of timeliness: that's the context I'm trying to bring to this debate here tonight.

One of the people I knew taught a grade 1 class. They were a teacher in a rural school district. I won't say which one, and I won't name any names, just to protect their privacy here. Really, they were a teacher in a rural school district, and they had a couple of years of experience, and they'd been teaching there and were looking to move up in their career and, hopefully, move into a more permanent contract and have some stability in their life and become a long-term teacher and move up that grid. As we know, they're part of a union, Mr. Chair.

*12:40 a.m.*

Now, what happened to this teacher was that she was teaching at a Catholic school, right? It was a Catholic school in a rural district that was I wouldn't say a small board, Mr. Chair, but a medium-sized board. One of the things that happened was that she was living with her boyfriend at the time. They had a little apartment downtown. They were a very normal couple. They both went to church every week and did all the things that a normal couple would do, went on dates and whatnot. But what happened was that somebody at the school discovered that she was living with her boyfriend, and they told the administration, one of the other teachers. They said, "Well, that's actually not a Catholic lifestyle; that's not within what the school considers a good, Catholic lifestyle," and she was actually summarily terminated.

I mean, I know it's not the exact same situation, Mr. Chair, but the reason I tell this story is that she was actually put back in her career quite a bit. She no longer had a job, very frankly, and she had to go and find another job and explain why she'd been fired before despite being a baptized Catholic. What this amendment does is that it prevents school boards like this small board, a relatively small board, from using the idea of not being in a good, religious lifestyle to drag their feet on establishing GSAs. It's organizations like this and administrators like this who are concerning for this legislation. It's concerning that they would try to terminate people who don't agree with their values.

We know that GSAs and QSAs and gay-straight alliances and being gay and being included as a gay person can sometimes contradict with administrators' values, and if those administrators are allowed to delay, if those administrators are allowed to drag their feet, just like in this case, just as in this case they were allowed to fire my friend the teacher, then we will see situations where kids aren't protected. We will see situations where kids are actually allowed to be outed. We'll see situations where kids are being forced to appeal to the Public Interest Commissioner or the Privacy Commissioner, being forced to appeal to the administration, being forced to appeal to the courts. Mr. Chair, that's something that I think is very unreasonable. I think it's unreasonable to expect our students to have to do that. I think our students should have the

reasonable expectation that if they make a request, then administration will honour it in good faith.

I'm not saying that any administrators wouldn't want to do that, but I'm saying that there are certainly a very small minority of cases where this has happened before in the past, and we have a duty here to act to prevent it. We have a duty here to act to prevent those types of ideas from moving forward. People who believe that having two dads is wrong and will confuse children: we don't want those types of people making decisions about whether GSAs should be formed in schools. People who believe that marriage is open to everybody as long as they are a man and a woman: we don't want those people making decisions about whether GSAs should be established. GSAs, we know, reduce the rate of teen suicide. We know they improve mental health for gay and straight students, and we know they help increase inclusivity in schools. We know that this is something we should be fighting to protect.

I've heard over and over again from members of the government caucus and from some members of the government front bench that they support GSAs, that they support the concept of GSAs and the idea of GSAs, but I don't understand why they wouldn't then support summarily implementing these GSAs in a timely manner, why they would then support saying: well, we support GSAs as long as it only takes two years to set up. That can't possibly be logical, Mr. Chair. It can't possibly be what the members opposite mean. I wouldn't pretend to understand or know what they are thinking or what their motives would be, but certainly I think that members should be able to say that if we do support GSAs on one hand, then on the other hand we must also support establishing them in a timely manner. Two weeks is more than enough time for a school district, an administration, a principal, whatever it may be, to do the due diligence required to establish that GSA.

It's very simple. You either understand how important this is and how important it is that the GSA is established quickly, or you don't care about what the risks are. You either understand how important this is for the kids, or you don't care. Mr. Chair, it's that simple. It's so simple that, in fact, this amendment should have been voted through hours ago, but unfortunately the government doesn't seem to want to move that way. They don't seem to be supportive of this amendment, and I can't understand why.

The minister has gotten up and said that she supports GSAs. The minister has gotten up and said that GSAs are important and that we have some of the strongest protections in the country but has left this glaring loophole that this amendment tries to fill, this glaring loophole that you can drive a truck through, that administrators could drag their feet on. This amendment would fill that loophole and prevent those problems. It would allow us to have meaningful GSAs in this province. It would allow us to have QSAs and GSAs that actually were established within reasonable timelines. That's something that I think we all should support in this Assembly, especially if we purport to support GSAs.

If we are willing to stand here and say that GSAs and QSAs save lives – we understand they save lives, we understand that they are important, and we support GSAs wholeheartedly, as I've heard in private conversations with some members of the government caucus who have told me that, that they really do believe in what GSAs are doing – if those members honestly do believe in what GSAs are doing, there is no reason to also not say that those GSAs should be established expeditiously and that those GSAs should be established in a reasonable time.

That is one of the most fundamental things, Mr. Chair. You don't go out and say: well, we're going to give you this ability, but you only have three years in high school, and it's going to take us two and a half years to approve it. That's not how you create a safe and

inclusive space for students. That's not how you create a space that works for students. That's not how you create a space that works for gay kids, for lesbian kids, for bisexual students, for transgender students, for two-spirited students, or any other identification. It is not how you go out and support those kids.

You seem to be indicating, if you leave this loophole open, through you, Mr. Chair, that you want people to take advantage of it. We've identified the exact problems that have happened in the past and will continue to happen in the future. If we now know that this problem exists, then we must endeavour to solve it. If the government does not wish to solve the problem, then the question is: why? Do they simply not understand the ramifications of the loophole, or do they not care about those students? That is a very important question because it speaks to what this government's act to destroy GSAs, Bill Hate, will do. It will absolutely attack young students. It will attack young, vulnerable Albertans, and that's something that I think is very important that we get on the record here tonight, that we actually talk about how important it is that timeliness is included in this bill.

When we talk about having the strongest protections in the country, as the minister would say – and the minister says that – I don't believe it, Mr. Chair, because we've significantly rolled back the protections. At the very least, those protections should be required to be implemented within a reasonable time frame. Without this amendment those requirements, that are supposedly the strongest in the country, don't have to be implemented. Now, that is what's ludicrous, this loophole that you could drive a truck through.

Without having the timeliness clause, we will absolutely see the bill not being implemented, the rule of law not being upheld. That is something that members of the government should be very concerned about because their jobs, indeed, in this Chamber, Mr. Chair, are to ensure that the rule of law is upheld and to ensure that we actually have our legislation followed. If they don't understand that, that's something that's very concerning, or if they just don't care, that's even more concerning.

I really think that it's important that they get it into their heads, Mr. Chair, that perhaps they listen for just a few seconds and understand that it will hurt students if they don't pass this amendment. If they don't understand that, then they need to listen to the stories that have been told by so many members of the opposition, that are being told all over social media, that were told by the students who walked out of their classrooms and were right here on the steps of the Legislature, both this time and when Bill 10 came around, about how important these timeliness clauses are to actually making students safer, to actually saving lives, to actually protecting our kids.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for St. Albert rising to speak.

**12:50 a.m.**

**Ms Renaud:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to be here and talk a little bit about amendment A5. It seems fairly straightforward, looking to add a timeline. You know, we had an earlier amendment that looked at adding the word "immediately." I guess that didn't fly, so we're going to try for "two weeks," which seems fairly reasonable. I think it's important to note that the reason that we did this in the first place was that there was some history and some reports of some schools where for whatever reason the administration or people that were in decision-making positions sort of dragged their feet, so if and when they were asked if they could form a GSA or a QSA or whatever they chose to call it, there was a delay.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

I can't say if that was on purpose or not, but there was a delay. Like my colleague said just a couple of minutes ago, when you recognize that there's a loophole in legislation and you can see the impact of not remedying that hole, you do something about it. That's why we're here. That's why I'm here, and that's why I'm actually happy to be here on the late shift.

Now, I'm a human being. I stopped doing shift work years ago. I used to do shift work as a front-line worker many, many years ago, and it does take a toll. I'm certain that people are tired and have families and constituencies and events. However, there are times in our lives, I think, when there is something that is important enough to say: okay, I'm just going to stand here, and I'm going to do what I need to do to join my colleagues to just talk about why this is important.

Let me just add one more thing. This is really about youth and children. I wholeheartedly believe that our youth and our children are our most precious resource, all of our children, not just mine or the kids I know or relatives' kids but all of our children, every single one of them: children that are part of the LGBTQ2S-plus community, kids that have disabilities, kids that are new to Canada, kids of whatever religion they practise. Every single child is important.

We know that there are loopholes in Bill 8, the legislation that this government wants to put through, and we know how easily we could fix those loopholes by just letting people in decision-making positions know that when a youth or a child, or maybe you want to call them a student, asks for this support, the person in charge should do something about it immediately – I imagine it takes quite a lot of courage to even ask; I've not done that myself, so I don't know, but I imagine it takes a lot of courage – and if not immediately, in two weeks. You know, stuff happens – I get that – and jobs are busy. But it seems like a really reasonable amendment that we do this, that we fix this.

I'm going to take a quick moment to talk about one of my constituents, and the reason that I'm going to do that is that I think we can all agree in this House that we can't possibly know everything about everything. We can't possibly know everything about every bill or piece of legislation or direction that we talk about in this place. It's impossible, so we rely on experts. Whether they're scientists, researchers, people with lived experience, whoever they are, we rely on experts. I just happen to have a really amazing expert that calls St. Albert home. I've had the privilege, actually, to get to know him over the years on different issues. His name is Dr. Kristopher Wells. I'm sure that people have heard of him. I think he is now an associate professor at MacEwan University. He's a newly appointed Canada research chair for the public understanding of sexual and gender minority youth. That's right: he's an associate professor at the Faculty of Health and Community Studies at MacEwan University and serves as co-editor of the international *Journal of LGBT Youth*.

He's actually a pretty amazing man, and he's a researcher. He's a scientist. He also has lived experience. When he speaks to us and when he talks to us about what we're doing and what we need to do, the direction that we need to go, I think we should listen because I don't believe that we here in this place would have more insight than Dr. Wells. I'd just like to talk about some of the things he said. This is fairly recent. He shared his thoughts on June 27, 2019, and he did an opinion piece. It's entitled *Bill 8 Will Make Schools Less Safe for All Students*, and I will table that at the next opportunity. I'm just going to summarize some of his points.

What he said was about proposed changes to the Education Act with the recent introduction of Bill 8 in this place.

The new minister of education continually proffers how Bill 8 will provide the strongest legislative protections for GSAs in Canada, while other political parties, educators, and students argue that Bill 8 represents a significant rollback on important protections and supports for both LGBTQ students and teachers. That's pretty straightforward.

Specifically, Bill 8 removes the requirement that principals immediately grant a student's request to start a GSA and appoint a staff member, in a timely fashion, to supervise the group.

I think that Dr. Wells' comments sort of underline the importance of approving this amendment or even of talking to us about the amendment. I'd certainly like to know if you're not even going to think about this. Maybe just tell me why. Do you know better than Dr. Wells? Is there something that we're missing? Is there some research I didn't catch? I think we're hearing from an expert, a scientist, a researcher who is telling us that these things need to happen.

Bill 8 also no longer guarantees that students will have the right to call their clubs a [GSA or QSA] . . .

I think we've all talked about that at length.

. . . without obstruction or undue influence, and removes written clarifications protecting the disclosure of GSA membership.

That's pretty important.

Well, it's been a long time since I've been in junior high or high school, but in this job I have actually had lots of opportunities to meet with junior high students and high school students. You know, to be quite honest, when I went to school, I'd never heard of a GSA or a QSA. That wasn't something that in my time I had ever heard of. Even when my son went to school, it wasn't something he talked about. He never mentioned that. My daughter is younger than him, obviously, and she did, and she had some understanding of why they were valuable.

When I think back to when I was in school, I went to a lot of different schools. My family moved around a lot. I don't have an exact count, but I think I went to, like, 13 different schools. I'm not even kidding. My parents weren't even in the military. They just moved a lot, so I went to a lot of different schools. You know, you're sort of the new kid every time you go to a new school, so you spend a lot of time observing, and what I did notice was that in a lot of the places, a lot of the schools that I went to, particularly one, you could tell when some of your classmates just acted differently. Maybe they looked different, dressed differently, spoke differently, and quite likely they were members of the LGBTQ community. Maybe they had not come out; maybe they had. Those were the students that you could just see struggled all the time. All the time. They were the ones that got made fun of or picked on or tripped, all of the horrible things that happen in schools. I don't want to focus on that because there are so many amazing things that happen in schools, but those were the kids that were the most vulnerable.

In this new job, when I started to meet students, younger students, and started to hear about GSAs, particularly one of the groups in St. Albert called Outloud – it's sort of a GSA in a sense; they have a group for younger students and a group for older students, and they meet in the evening – what I heard from them was just nothing special about the actual club. Like my colleague said, they probably watched a movie, had a bake sale, had a pizza, talked about maybe a teacher they liked or their boyfriend or girlfriend or friends or whatever. But it made them feel safe, and it made them feel like they weren't alone, and isn't that sort of what it's all about at the end of the day, that you don't feel alone?

So it's been sort of a learning experience for me. I didn't go to school when there were clubs like this. I do see the value of them now, and I see it when I talk to the students. I know I've said this

before – and I’ve tabled the letters – but in May I received 60 letters from students from a junior high in St. Albert, Lorne Akins.

**Mr. Bilous:** Sixty?

**Ms Renaud:** Sixty, yeah.

Most of them were addressed to our Premier. I don’t know if he read them. I hope so. They were addressed to him. Some of them were incredibly heartfelt. Some of the students sort of shared their own story about coming out or their fears about doing so when the time came. Some of them talked about wanting to support their friends. But they all talked about why it was so important to have a club, to know that it was a safe place and that no teacher, no adult would force them to do something before they were ready to do so. They implored the Premier to actually listen to their words. You know, these are junior high students, so it’s actually pretty interesting. A couple were a little bit swearsy and got off on the whole marking thing, but we’ll save that for another day.

**1:00 a.m.**

What I did learn, I guess, is that consultation sometimes doesn’t always look like what you think it looks like, like renting a hall, having coffee and snacks at the back and speakers and microphones and Post-it Notes. Sometimes consultation is just about listening to the people around you or reading the notes that get sent to you, or, you know, sometimes they’ll reach out. Sometimes it’s just at events. But I don’t think that they could have been any more clear at all about what they wanted and why they needed it and how it helps.

I’m going to go back a little bit to Dr. Wells, who takes it to, I think, a place that we need to focus on; that is, on knowledge and research and science. That’s what he is. He is a researcher.

**The Acting Chair:** We need to get focused here on amendment A5, essentially with regard to timeline establishing, and I would encourage you to do so. We will move to general debate on the bill after we’re done with amendment A5. So if you could proceed in such a manner.

Thank you.

**Ms Renaud:** I will absolutely focus on why this amendment is so important: to add protection for students, for LGBTQ students, so that if they request a GSA and a QSA, that is granted no more than two weeks from the day the request is received.

That is how Dr. Wells frames his argument. That was one of the very first things he said in this piece on his research, that one of the most important things is that immediately after that student is brave enough to ask, they’re supported and it happens immediately.

What he tells us, again to quantify the things he said earlier, is that

over 20 years of global peer-reviewed research indicates that LGBTQ youth are among the most vulnerable groups of students in schools today, with significantly higher rates of substance [abuse], smoking . . . depression, self-harm . . .

death by suicide, all of those things. We all know that. I hope we all know that. I hope we’ve all listened enough to these debates to understand that.

These risk factors are not because of who [these students] are or how they identify. They are the compounding product of discrimination, harassment, and prejudice, which all contribute to the development of unsafe school environments.

Again, I think that we’re incredibly blessed in this province that we have amazing schools and we have incredible educators and we have incredible administrators almost everywhere. But we all know – right? – that there are places where things don’t always happen

the way that they’re supposed to happen. Going back to the amendment, it’s important that when you recognize there’s a loophole or there’s a way for someone to potentially be harmed, you do something about it.

. . . research shows that GSAs are a vital public-health intervention, which not only creates safer school climates for lesbian, gay, and bisexual . . . youth, but also for heterosexual youth. One very recent study from the University of British Columbia, which included over 39,000 students in grades 7-12, found that the longer a school had a GSA the greater its protective power was for all students.

Well, it sort of makes sense, doesn’t it? I think that if a school is setting a tone and doing it within two weeks of being asked to set that tone, what it will do is that it seeps to the rest of the school and it seeps to the rest of the students in that school. They benefit.

I want to give you another example. One of the things that I know about why it’s so essential to facilitate the correct inclusion of students with disabilities is that not only do they have the right to learn and experience life just like anybody else, but it actually is a really positive thing for all of the other students. That is what’s so amazing about inclusion, integration, whatever you want to call it. When you do it properly in schools, whether it’s elementary school, preschool, even daycare, actually – there are some amazing daycares. Well, I digress. Let me focus on this. When you include a student properly in school, the other students benefit. They benefit in a lot of ways. I think they learn a lot about life, and they learn a lot about the differences between human beings, that we’re all very different. We all see the world through very different eyes. Real inclusion takes effort every single day. It’s rough, and it requires a commitment, a constant commitment to getting that done.

I think that for members opposite – I can remember being there, listening hour upon hour. I can’t remember exactly which bill it was when I was first introduced to the filibuster. That was an experience. Oh, hey. I lost my spot.

What I want to say is that I don’t know why members opposite wouldn’t just look at this amendment and say: “You know what? It’s not about winning or losing. It’s not about how we have the great big mandate and we’re going to just steamroll and go through and do this.” It’s about listening to what we’re saying. We’re saying that this has the potential to just remove a lot of stress and potential problems, potential harm. It has the ability to do some really good things. So what? You amend something that isn’t great. Nobody is perfect. Everybody makes mistakes.

We have researchers that are telling us that this would make it better. We have real students that are telling us that this would make it better. I don’t know what else you need to know that this is a good thing. Other than that, there’s something else going on that I just don’t understand. There is a reason that the government is committed to refusing to acknowledge that this particular amendment, A5, is actually something that could improve your legislation. I’m not saying that it’s perfect. There are some pieces that are pretty good. There are some pieces that I would support. There are certainly some things that I have issues with, and this is one of them.

I guess that it’s ultimately your choice to do that. It’s your vote, but I think it’s important to know that it is your vote and that you do represent an awful lot of people. So as you consider this amendment, a very simple amendment to encourage whoever the decision-maker is, the administrator, principal, whoever that is, when they get a request from a student – and I can’t imagine the guts that that takes. I keep saying that, but I really can’t imagine going to someone with that kind of authority and power when you’re uncertain to begin with and asking for something without being sure that you’ll get it. That takes a lot of guts. But when they

go ask, that they be granted this within two weeks: that seems reasonable.

It's just a club. It just supports people. It just supports students. That's all. I don't understand the reluctance to change something that people, Albertans, are asking you to change. I don't understand why the refusal to even consider it, actually. I don't get it. Research unmistakably indicates that GSAs make schools safer, so why would this government seek to limit, weaken, or reduce the implementation even if you're doing it sideways through legislation that's not really clear, even if you're doing it sideways by creating loopholes?

I believe that we should strive to increase support and amplify the impact in all of our schools and all of the lives of our students as opposed to diminishing at all. This isn't passed yet, but we currently have fairly strong legislation. The language is very, very clear. It's not up in the air. It's not open for debate. It's that if you are asked for this, here are the steps that you must take to support this student and the students who are supporting the student, their allies or their friends.

Unfortunately, this bill does exactly the opposite of what this government is proclaiming it will do. If passed, the schools will become less safe, policies more vague, ineffective. Both LGBTQ and heterosexual students will suffer long-term consequences.

**1:10 a.m.**

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Any other members wishing to comment on amendment A5? I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning to you, or good evening, I guess, depending on your point of view. It's a beautiful 1 a.m., and we are now talking about I believe you said amendment A5, just to make sure that I'm up to date on that. We have this amendment before us because we are looking to try to take weak language – there's a section in Bill 8 specifically around GSAs, QSAs. The language being proposed here is weak, and I think this language that we have here in this amendment will make it less weak. I say that because language is so, so important. I know the Member for St. Albert was touching on that a little bit, on why it's so important.

I know that our Education minister has talked about at times how important it is to make sure that our students are looked after, that they have everything that they need, and that every single child is important, but the problem that we have with that statement and what we have proposed in Bill 8 in the language around GSAs is language that is not as strong as what we have right now. What we're potentially looking at here is a step backwards, which I'm not sure protects students the way it's being claimed to.

Essentially requiring a GSA to be approved in a two-week period I think is incredibly reasonable – incredibly reasonable – so here we are trying to maybe meet them part of the way here. We think it should be established absolutely immediately. There's no reason that you can't say yes to one of these. But you know what? Here's an honest effort to reach across the aisle to members and to the Education minister and say: "Okay. Look, we'll meet you part of the way here. How about two weeks? We can get an approval within two weeks."

I know that when the Member for Edmonton-North West was the Education minister, he found that there were challenges with some of the schools around forming proper language encompassing GSAs, QSAs, which prompted him to have to improve the language. So if we had challenges around what we had before what would then become Bill 24, going back to this language that we

have right now here in Bill 8 will start to open up those floodgates to those challenges again. If we're so intent to make sure that we're going to protect our students, allowing language to go backwards is not productive.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I guess, Mr. Chair, I just struggle around this, you know, why we would want to make a conscious effort to backslide and create weaker language. I can't help but ask myself: if you're in charge of the education system here and you know full well that language is a major component of the education system – you know how important it is – when you change words, you change how that language reacts. To consciously make a decision to introduce Bill 8 with the current GSA, QSA language in there and purposely make it weaker, then I have to wonder if you really do understand how language works, which then leads me to the possible question of: if you don't understand how language works and how this amendment could improve it, then I, unfortunately, have to question your ability to oversee the education system.

If that indeed is not the case, then the next logical question I have to come to is: are you now purposely ignoring that the language being proposed here in Bill 8 is weaker? That, unfortunately, is a whole larger problem in itself, if you're making a conscious decision to ignore that. What I'm seeing here is, unfortunately, the government saying one thing and now doing yet another in Bill 8. This is our attempt to try to make weak language less weak, because our students are worth it.

Again, I have 26 schools in Edmonton-Decore. I think I have some of the most fantastic students in the entire province – I'm sure there are probably 86 other MLAs that might debate me on this a little bit – and they're all in Edmonton-Decore. I have a lot of them talking to me. I have students that participate in GSAs and I have students that don't participate in GSAs talking to me, I have teachers talking to me, and I have trustees talking to me about the proposed language in Bill 8 being, well, essentially flawed, full of loopholes, some so large that – I think I might have said this before – I could probably fly the space shuttle through them from the back seat.

Saying things like, "Well, the privacy laws will protect the students" is, like I'd said before, great. It's a nice safety net. The problem is that it kicks in after the fact. So a student who is not ready to come out to loved ones or friends or whatever the case may be has now just been put into a position of having to fight to correct the damage that's already done. To consciously make that decision to put those kids at risk: are we just taking some dice here and rolling them and hoping we don't come up on snake eyes? That doesn't make sense if we've made the commitment to protect every single child no matter where they come from, no matter what their economic background is, no matter what they identify as.

I'd be happy to know which one it is from my previous questions. Do we not understand how language works, or are we ignoring that language? As the opposition I think we have tried to make some very common-sense amendments here, just like we have here with A5, to establish a two-week limit in which to approve a GSA. I know, as I said, that I have some amazing staff within the schools of Edmonton-Decore – and here I go; probably another 86 MLAs are about to debate me on this – and probably some of the best principals in the system are in Edmonton-Decore. I know they're busy, and they do a fantastic job, so I think a two-week period to approve a GSA is reasonable. I know you get busy. Things happen. You might put it off to the side for a second. I understand that. I can live with that.

We have to take the weak language and make it less weak. I'm hoping that members in this House are giving very serious consideration to this amendment, because so far the pattern that I've seen, unfortunately, is that they're not. Again, do we not understand how language works, or are we purposely ignoring it? I think I might have talked about this earlier. I've got this nagging feeling: could we be pandering to a small group of special interests or donors? I don't know. I really, really wish I could shake this feeling. Accepting this amendment is certainly going to help me to do that, but at this point the pattern I'm seeing is not.

**1:20 a.m.**

It kind of falls back to that whole thing that I was talking about around history. We learn a lot from history: what's happened, how we can not duplicate mistakes. Very clearly, I think what history will find is that if we keep the language that's currently being proposed in Bill 8 around GSAs and QSAs, it's going to come back to bite us. How many unintended consequences? I think those were the favourite words I used to hear all the time: unintended consequences. The problem is that the unintended consequences are individuals.

You didn't seem to want to protect teachers, which is too bad. Again, we've got some of the most fantastic teachers, I think, anywhere in the world. They deserve protection just as much. But our students, our young emerging leaders, the ones that are going to take over after us: it's amazing what some of these kids do, Mr. Chair, when they are supported and promoted for who and what they are.

I have a very good friend from high school, back when I attended Jasper Place. He's, luckily, a very aspiring actor. He's been doing very, very well for himself, and one of his children is transgender. I've done my best to try to follow his daughter on Facebook and some of the things that she's been up to. She has become an incredible activist and speaker around these kinds of issues, but that was because he supported her from the very moment. Because of the openness that was available in his family, his daughter felt comfortable to come out, and it's just been an incredible life that I've seen growing in this young emerging leader.

Every single student that we have has the right to the same kind of a future, but what we're proposing here in Bill 8 is weak language that will put that at risk. You know, we've heard that it's going to be just like language in other jurisdictions. Why are we aiming to be average? If our kids are that important, we should aim to be the best, number one, ahead of the pack, leading the way. I think that this amendment, asking for "two weeks," is at least a step in that direction. A lot of people think that we're heading down the wrong path here. I'm sure that they'd like to see this amendment go through and add "two weeks."

But there's still the whole overarching concern. I mean, my gosh, I hear kids tell me: "Why do they hate me so much? What have I done to them?" A kid wondering why their legislators hate them for proposing this kind of language: how did we get to that spot, Mr. Chair, when supposedly we have their best interests at heart, when we are trying to create the environments for them to thrive, for them to lead on the world stage, not just here in Alberta, not just in Canada but on the world stage? It baffles me.

As I said, I can't help but wonder: do we not understand how language works, or are we just simply ignoring it? If we are ignoring it, then I think we have a whole larger problem than that. I certainly hope that we're not going down that road. Seeing the fact that some of the amendments previous to A5 have been shot down, I can't help but wonder if that's where we're going.

Let's make a conscious decision to provide all of our kids in this province the chance to thrive, that loving environment, that

accepting environment, so that they can grow and blossom into individuals like I'm seeing with my friend's daughter and the superstar that she is becoming. Absolutely amazing. Some of the kids that I know I've heard my colleagues talk about: I really think those are superstars just waiting to happen as long as we don't interfere with the environment that we've already managed to create for them.

We have right now the strongest language in the country to protect them, bar none. To put that at risk by bringing in weaker language is nothing else but a step backwards. We have people questioning the motives of some of our legislators in this House around what their intentions are towards GSAs and QSAs: their words, not mine. I'm essentially just the messenger here. But this is a common message that I'm hearing from colleague to colleague to colleague to colleague. It's a common message.

Hundreds standing out in front of the Legislature protesting, kids feeling the need to skip classes to go out on the street to protest: how much more evidence do we need before we tap on the brake, hold up what we're doing, and ask: why is this happening? This was well in motion before we started debating this, so it tells me that our young emerging leaders have a good handle on language and know the history behind why they felt they needed to fight for this. I, for one, Mr. Chair, am not going to let them down. I will keep standing here going over and over this.

Simple amendments like adding "two weeks" to approve a GSA or a QSA: this is not unreasonable language. It's not unreasonable at all. My sincere hope is that members of this House will accept this language and extend the olive branch to members of the community. Let them know you're actually thinking about them, because they feel that there's an ideological drive to push them down, you know, to stop them from becoming what they could be. I have seen some very amazing people over the last couple of months, the stories they have told me, the dreams that they have. We're going to interfere with that over "two weeks," over language saying: "is granted no more than two weeks from the day the request is received"? It makes absolutely no sense.

**1:30 a.m.**

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rising.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise this morning to speak to amendment A5 to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. This amendment is actually, I believe, another opportunity for the government to demonstrate what they have been saying is the case for some time now, and we're providing an opportunity for this government to essentially stand up and actually commit to a timeline for the establishment of GSAs in schools.

An amendment I put forward last week to the bill suggested that the government accept an amendment to the act to allow for the immediate establishment of GSAs upon request. As we all know, that amendment was voted down by the government. Thirty-two government members voted against that amendment. Unfortunately, we did not even hear any debate from the government about why, so I think this amendment should be seen as another opportunity for the government to speak to why they have concerns with the timely establishment of GSAs in schools.

I certainly am hopeful. I realize I'm coming in, and I know there's been some plentiful debate on this side of the House already on that issue. I'm hopeful that we'll hear from some government members as well as to why they – well, hopefully, they will actually support this amendment. That's what I'm optimistic about, because it is a very reasonable amendment, and it is intended to be consistent with

what we're hearing the government say is their intent, which is that they are not trying to block the establishment of GSAs and that they support it. I think this is an opportunity to demonstrate that to Albertans.

I'm hopeful that those MLAs on the government side will rise and speak to why they support it or, alternatively, why they do not, because I think that that is what Albertans need to hear. There's been some criticism, I know, from government members that they believe that the members on this side of the House are perhaps stoking fear, but I think that that fear stems from the fact that there is an absence of debate and discussion from the government, on the other side, to demonstrate why they would be opposed to such a not only common-sense amendment but a very compassionate amendment. There really is no basis for refusing this, and if there is a basis, I would offer the opportunity to the government members to articulate that, to let Albertans know why they would object to the timely establishment of a GSA instead of letting, you know, Albertans and members on this side of the House supply the explanation for them. They don't seem to like the explanation that we've provided, so I implore the government to give us an explanation.

I do note that, you know, the hon. Minister of Education introduced this act into the House. In committee she said in this House that she knows "that timelines have been mentioned several times when it comes to creating a GSA," and she said that she wanted it to be clear that "school authorities are expected to follow the law." I take her at her word on that. I believe that she does expect school authorities to follow the law. The challenge is when the law is weaker than it was before. That sends a clear signal to school authorities that there is a weaker expectation of them.

I stood up in this House a number of times and talked about how, legally, statutes are interpreted as well as how, even as lawyers, when we're trying to interpret the application of legislation, we will go back to debates in *Hansard* and debates of the Members of the Legislative Assembly to try to understand the intent behind legislation and why it was introduced. In this case, as the Member for Edmonton-North West eloquently described, it is important to note that we are moving, if we go forward and Bill 8 is passed, to weaker legislation, and that speaks to an intent by the government to weaken the legislation, to weaken the provisions and protections for GSAs. It's important to note that what is in the School Act right now is much stronger protection, and we know that to be the case.

In this House we've had a lot of discussion about the fact that there are other jurisdictions in this country that have other provisions, whether it be by policy or by legislation, that address GSAs, and for a while there the Minister of Education took the stance that what was in the Education Act are the strongest protections in the country for GSAs. She was proven to be incorrect when members on this side, particularly the Leader of the Official Opposition, demonstrated that there are many jurisdictions that have significantly stronger, more comprehensive protections around GSAs.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you. I just want to ensure that we are, at this point of the debate, sticking to amendment A5. There will be, obviously, ample time to debate the bill as a whole. I just want to make sure that we focus ourselves in towards the amendment at hand.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be doing that.

What's important here is that we shouldn't actually focus so much on comparing, in my view, our legislation to that of other jurisdictions, but we should be comparing ourselves to what we currently have, and what we currently have in legislation in the

School Act, which has been the law, is stronger than what is currently being proposed by this government. In particular, where it is stronger, it is stronger with respect to the requirement that school authorities immediately establish a GSA.

What's being put forward in Bill 8 removes that immediacy requirement, and that is a clear signal to school authorities shifting from – we can't talk about interpreting this legislation in the absence of what was currently in place. It will be compared. It will be compared, and it will be interpreted as being that, while we have stronger protections right now under the School Act, the signal from this government is that it is weakening it. School authorities are not required to immediately establish GSAs when requested by a student, and in fact school authorities can take their time and can stall, and that is exactly what we knew was happening and why Bill 24 was introduced.

This is an opportunity for the government to accept that they do support the establishment of GSAs by putting a timeline on it. Two weeks is a very reasonable timeline, especially when you think about what is required to actually establish a GSA. It requires a staff member and a space – that's it – something that all schools have already. In fact, I've spoken to some of the schools in my riding, and one of the junior highs in particular said that they don't have a GSA because one has not been requested yet, but they have staff members eagerly awaiting the request for one because they are ready to be their school support and their staff support for that GSA.

It's all that's required, one staff member to stand up or be directed by the school administrator, by the principal, and a space. It only requires one student to know that they have a supportive staff member. For that one student that can be life changing. We've talked about in this House, significant times, the importance of GSAs.

It doesn't take long to establish a GSA. Not much is required. Two weeks is actually probably much longer because, really, as soon as a student requests it, you could establish one the next day. But two weeks I think allows for some time to make sure that there's an appropriate staff member to do so, and it's a very reasonable accommodation to fulfill the intent that the Education minister has stated that she has, which is that she does support GSAs and that she does expect school authorities to abide by the law.

I would actually like to take this opportunity to read an e-mail that I received from a constituent specific to this timeline question. This is from a young man from my constituency who is now a young adult and is in university. He spoke to me about the importance of the timely establishment of a GSA.

*1:40 a.m.*

This is what he wrote to me in his e-mail. He said:

As you already know, the question of time frame is one that I feel is left unaddressed by the UCP Education Act. I did not really accept my own orientation until the end of Grade 12 and started coming out to friends. It is often said that the first person that you come out to is yourself, and certainly this was true for me. I've heard some LGBT people say on the radio that they knew they were gay when they were 5 or 6, but I think many youth share my experience of desperately wishing that they weren't gay due to societal and familial pressures. Things like LGBT representation in the media and – indeed – having gay-straight alliances help reduce this internalized homophobia and, as studies show, contribute to improved mental health outcomes. Even the presence of GSAs sends a message. I don't think I was comfortable enough with myself in high school to attend a GSA meeting, but seeing rainbow-colored posters in the halls was incredibly validating and helped me feel a sense of belonging in the place where I spent half my waking hours. Given that the end



of high school is really when many people begin to step into their identities, the question of timeframe is essential in letting GSAs have a real impact. If a Grade 12 student has to wait a year for red tape to clear within the school administration, it has become a moot point for them. These students are real people . . . who are already facing increased risks of familial rejection and social stigma.

I think that entirely sums up the issue right there. We can't predict when students will need the support of a GSA. Some may do it earlier. Some may feel comfortable. Some may seek the support. Some may be able to come out to their peers earlier than others. Some take a little bit of time. This constituent was indicating that he didn't come out until the end of grade 12, and he said that if there had been an approach by a student to a school administrator to establish that and the school administrator dragged their feet, he would not have been able to access a GSA. This is critical, and this is not a hypothetical problem.

The amendments that came forward from the NDP government in Bill 24 came forward because of a response to a very real problem. They came forward because students and administrators were telling the government that school administrators were dragging their feet on establishing GSAs. We know that to be the case. By signalling to school administrators that the requirements of GSAs are weaker, this government is letting them know that it's okay to drag their feet, that it's okay to stall, that it's okay to try to discourage kids, encourage them to take some more time to think about it or suggest counselling or even the very, very tragic suggestion of conversion therapy. We're telling school administrators: that's okay; you used to be required to do it immediately, and you don't now.

The implication there is: take your time and discourage children from requesting GSAs and from joining GSAs. I don't think that that's the message that this government – well, I hope that's not the message that this government is trying to send to school administrators, that it is okay to stall and to drag it out and to make it more difficult for kids to seek the life-saving support that they need.

I'd like to tell a story, too. Actually, it's a very recent one from the campaign. It just resonated with me. We've talked about how the kids who need GSAs may come from families that aren't supportive, but this was a story that I heard during the campaign where, actually, the family was incredibly supportive of LGBTQ issues and had conveyed that regularly to their children and indicated that they're allies and indicated that they support them and love them no matter what their identity or their sexual orientation is. This was on the radio. It was a story by Kathleen Smith, who is actually well known in Alberta as a commentator and an advocate for LGBTQ issues. She told the story about how her own child, even coming from a family that she knew was supportive, knew was open, knew would love her no matter what, still felt more comfortable first coming out to her peers before coming out to her family, first sought the support of a GSA before coming to her family only because that's how she came to her realization, that's how she came to her own personal journey of coming out.

This really resonated with me because I think it's important to note that the kids who seek out supports in GSAs don't do it only because they don't have support at home; they do it because that's how they're choosing to come out. That's how they're choosing to express their identity, and we have to support them to do that. I thought it was a very important story to listen to for all Albertans, to highlight the need, that GSAs are important for all kids no matter the religious background, no matter the support of their family.

If we want to support kids, as I know that this Minister of Education has stated repeatedly that she does, I think that it is the timely establishment of GSAs that shows that we actually want to carry through and give meaning to those words of support. We want to make sure that kids know that when they need support, when they want it, however they seek it, whomever they seek it from first, whether it be school staff, whether it be their peers, whether it be their family, they have to make that choice. The most important lesson that we've learned about supporting LGBTQ kids is that they need to make their choice about how to do this.

It's also important to note that these kids may choose to tell their parents and also still seek the support of a GSA because we all know – we were all teenagers once – that there are things that we will seek support from our peers for in a way that we won't be able to seek support from our families even if they're great, loving, supportive, welcoming, caring families, as I hope most of us had. But there will always be that need for peer support in a way that parents might not be able to provide. Why would we deny children the timely access to that level of peer support?

My husband is a high school teacher at an Edmonton high school – he's actually an assistant principal – and we talked a little bit about the GSAs in his school, and he talked about how much he valued not just the kids who identify as queer or trans who join the GSA but the kids who identify as straight, because it benefits all of them.

A GSA might not even be requested initially by a child who is identifying as LGBTQ; it could also be a straight student who is requesting the establishment of a GSA because they're trying to demonstrate to their peers that there is a welcoming and supportive environment in that school. Those are the kids who are allies that, again, I also want to support because: what a positive message that sends to all kids in that school, that there is a safe space for them even if they're not ready to come out yet. I categorize myself as an ally, and those kids who at that young age are able to identify as an ally and will advocate for their friends, for their peers: I commend them as well. I want them to be supported as well, to demonstrate to their friends that they are loved, that they are supported, and that they are safe. I think that is something that we should all be encouraging.

One of the things that I've mentioned before is that, you know, if we truly are committed to doing this and to establishing a GSA, there should be no reason not to accept this amendment. I really implore the government members, if they are going to be voting against this amendment, which I'm discouraged to believe that they likely will, to speak to why.

We've also talked in this House – and the Premier introduced a government motion, which has since passed – about the need for members in this House to vote along conscience and to be able to have those free votes, so this is your opportunity. I have not yet heard that the government is claiming this to be a vote on a matter of confidence. I look to my fellow colleagues to see if that has been established. I don't believe it has been, in which case it appears that Bill 8 and voting on Bill 8 is a free vote, is a conscience vote for members across the way.

If that's the case, I encourage and implore the members on the other side to look at their constituents, to look at their families, the people in their communities, and think about why they would object to the timely establishment of GSAs, within two weeks, when a student requests it, because here again this is not coming from the top down. This is not the government or school administrators saying to schools: you must establish a GSA. This is coming at the request of students. Whether it be a student who identifies as

straight or a student that identifies as LGBTQ, these are kids who are requesting it.

I look to all the members and implore you to consider your own conscience in this matter as the Premier has permitted free votes on matters of conscience. To me, this is precisely a bill and a matter that would fall within that category. Why would your conscience object to the timely establishment of a GSA? If you do have a conscientious objection to it, I implore you to stand up and say what that is because Albertans are asking, kids are asking, and we're asking. If we want to dispel the fearmongering and the scare that the government members are accusing members on this side of the House of, I implore you, then, to stand up, say why you do not believe it's necessary for GSAs to be established within two weeks of when a student requests it.

If there are school authorities that are supportive of GSAs, they'll have no problem fulfilling this requirement. It would be pretty simple. We know they do it. As I said, there are many schools – I know one in my riding – that are ready to go right away, as soon as they're requested. It doesn't take long. Schools that are onboard with this, with GSAs, and truly supportive will probably have a GSA established in less than two weeks if a student requests it. The schools that have a problem with this need to be encouraged to do it in a timely way for the children.

*1:50 a.m.*

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, are there any members looking to speak to A5? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rising to speak.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise again and speak to amendment A5. I mean, I think that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud brought some very important points up and some very important stories from people all around this province. Indeed, we've been hearing many important stories from all around this province from members of the opposition here. I mean, I hope we will hear some stories from the government side on how timeliness is not important to their constituents or to the students in their areas and the gay kids that go to schools in their areas. I think something that we deserve to hear is how timeliness does affect GSAs, QSAs across this province regardless of type of school.

I think it's an interesting question because we established earlier today, earlier this evening, this Wednesday evening, Mr. Chair, that certainly private schools also will have to comply, and we noted that last year 28 Alberta private schools did not meet the GSA requirements. I guess one of the big questions I'll have for the Education minister tonight is: without this timeliness clause, without the ability to say that these schools require two weeks to grant a request for a GSA, without the ability to go in and say that GSAs should be protected and should be granted to these gay students or any student that wishes to have a GSA, for that matter, will the minister indeed enforce against those 28 schools if they refuse to form a GSA? I think that's a very important question.

I think it's a question that speaks to the heart of this amendment because this amendment says that schools shouldn't be allowed to drag their feet. Administrators should have a reasonable amount of time, two weeks, to move forward with establishing a GSA or QSA or inclusion group, as the minister likes to call them.

But we know, Mr. Chair, based on the safe and caring policies that were passed by the former NDP government in Bill 24, that 28 schools are refusing to comply. If they were refusing to comply with safe and caring policies, they will likely also refuse to establish a GSA in a timely manner. If they refuse to establish this GSA in a timely manner, without this amendment, what will the minister do about it? Will the minister allow these schools to go on unchecked?

Will the minister allow these 28 schools, that refused to allow gay students to have protected rights in their schools, to refuse to form a GSA and drag their feet indefinitely if we don't pass this amendment? That's something that I think Albertans deserve to know the answer to.

More than that, Mr. Chair, that's something I think that those lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited, or queer students deserve to know the answer to. Those are the vulnerable Albertans that this amendment would protect, and those Albertans, those young people, those vulnerable young people are the ones that the minister is charged to protect, indeed, and this bill is supposed to protect them. If we don't pass this amendment, what would the minister do? Would the minister let those kids hang on in administrative purgatory, stuck in red tape land, unable to form a GSA, unable to have a safe space, unable to have an inclusive area where they can come out freely and know they won't be outed to unsafe homes or unsafe communities? That is something that the minister will have to answer for.

The minister will have to have that on the top of her mind when we move forward with this legislation because this legislation explicitly will not address those 28 schools, which have already told Albertans that they will drag their feet on GSAs. Perhaps the government can get up and explain what those schools will be forced to do when they drag their feet on GSAs, because we know it's going to happen. They've already said it in their policies, Mr. Chair. In fact, I believe one of the policies even includes language around the sense that they will only establish a GSA under duress. One of the schools did say that in their policy. In that case, what would the minister do about it? What would the government do about it? The government has a duty to uphold the law, and the law says that a GSA must be established.

Of course, without this amendment, it won't say that it has to be established in a timely manner. Will the minister allow those schools to just drag their feet and let these students suffer, let these young people suffer, and not provide them protections under the Education Act? Is that the intention of this government? I think that is a very important question because now that the government, as they should be aware – and the minister should have access to her department, who has access to all these policies, especially these 28 policies that don't make for the timely establishment of GSAs, especially the ones that say things like: GSAs will only be established under duress. The minister, of course, must be aware of those. Now, if the government wasn't aware before, I've just informed them, and they can find very simply the 28 schools that did not comply with the safe and caring inclusive policies, Mr. Chair.

Does the government intend to let those schools go on and not establish GSAs for students and not work to the letter of the law in Bill 8, or will they accept this amendment and have a system that protects those students? It's one or the other, Mr. Chair. You either understand the harm this will bring to students, or you really don't care, and that is something that is extremely concerning. They have to understand that these schools will drag their feet, and of course it's in their policies, that they say that they will drag their feet. If they don't understand that, then they need to look it up themselves and read and actually see what is in those policies because it's in black and white. Once they understand, I hope they will support this amendment and allow us to have the timely establishment of GSAs in these schools so that they have a tool to actually enforce against these schools.

The alternative is that they don't care about those students. They don't care that those students won't have a timely way to establish GSAs. They don't care that those students will have increased risk of teen suicide. They don't care that these students won't be able to

have QSAs or GSAs in their school and that they may be outed to their parents. They may be outed in the schools. That's something that I think is very concerning. It's very concerning for Albertans. It's very concerning for all members of this Assembly.

Something that I've heard time and time again from members, both in private and on the record here in the Assembly, is that the members of the government understand and support GSAs. So if they understand and they support GSAs, then they should absolutely also understand that the timely establishment, an actual logistical process of being allowed to establish a GSA, is essential. It is essential to having an effective act that works for the interests of all Albertans.

The minister has access to those policies and can see them herself. I encourage the minister to do so. She has many hours here before us. I know that I will be speaking here, over and over again, until the minister understands the ramifications of what not accepting this amendment would mean, Mr. Chair. Those policies absolutely mean that without this amendment these schools would drag their feet and not allow GSAs to be established. It would absolutely mean that these kids would not be protected under the Education Act. If that were the case, the government has to understand that this will increase the mental health issues among these students, and it will cause anguish for students.

The alternative would be, if they understand that but they're willing to vote this down anyways, that they don't care. It has to be one or the other. It has to be that the government either understands or that they don't care. That is something that is fundamental to what we are trying to debate tonight. It's fundamental that we are trying to understand why the government either doesn't know what their bill will do or doesn't care what it will do. It has to be one or the other, Mr. Chair, and both of those: I think Albertans deserve better. Albertans expect better. Albertans expect a government that actually reads the legislation and understands that there are school boards that have already explicitly stated that they will not implement GSAs in a timely manner.

I know that the minister has spoken at length about how superintendents thought the original "immediately" in Bill 24 was too prescriptive, and that's okay, and that's why we proposed two weeks. It's certainly not "immediately" anymore. It gives time to go out and find a staffperson who is willing to support the GSA, and if not a staffperson, then it can be somebody from the outside to do that as well. Two weeks is an ample amount of time, Mr. Chair. It allows students to have that stability and understand that it's important for them.

When we look at these situations where schools are saying that they will only establish GSAs under duress, then I think we have a duty to protect those students who will be forced to try and force duress on their schools to establish a GSA. What does that mean, Mr. Chair? I think the government would actually encourage them probably to go to court then. That's certainly something we don't want our kids to be doing. We want our kids to be in school, learning and feeling safe. If that were indeed the case, the government would, I hope, for the students under the Minister of Education's care – I hope that she would be encouraging them to stay in school and study hard and try and learn in school and not be trying to raise lawsuits to establish GSAs so that they can feel safe at school, so that they can have a timely GSA established, just like in this amendment we've proposed.

**2:00 a.m.**

It certainly becomes clear to us that we need to look at this amendment and that we need to pass this amendment so that we do not force students to try and create this form of duress so that schools can establish GSAs, so that these 28 schools which are not

compliant with the Bill 24 regulations around safe and inclusive schools won't drag their feet on GSAs. We know these schools are out there. We know that they exist. It's in black and white. In fact, it's been reported widely in the media, Mr. Chair, that these schools have said that they will not comply with the GSA/QSA policies.

The minister has to know that those schools exist, and if the minister doesn't know that those schools exist, that is extremely concerning because those are schools that are under her care, that she funds, and that she is responsible for. So she has to know that these schools exist. If she does know that these schools exist that will drag their feet, why will the minister not support an amendment that will force them to uphold the word of the law? That is a very simple question that I think Albertans and this Assembly deserve to know. This Assembly deserves to understand why the minister refuses to pass a simple amendment that would make the law easier to uphold. That is the intent of this Assembly, is it not?

I mean, Mr. Chair, through you, of course, it is our intent to try and have the best and most comprehensive protections for gay students in the country. That is something that the government has said many times, and I believe that the opposition believes the same thing. We do want some of the strongest protections across the whole country for GSAs. But if the minister is aware of these schools – and if she wasn't, she must be now, as I've stated it into the record many times here tonight. These schools exist that have already said that they will intentionally delay the approval of GSAs and that they will not allow QSAs into their schools. That is something these schools have said publicly in the media and in their policies, that the minister has access to.

If that is indeed the case, that the minister has access to them and has not read them, that's concerning. If the minister has read them, then why doesn't she think that they need to be enforced against? Why does she think that these schools should be able to get away with not following the law? That is something that should be very concerning to the minister, that they wouldn't follow the law that she is trying to pass right here in this Assembly, Mr. Chair. That is what is concerning, that the minister either would say that schools don't need to follow the law or that she doesn't know they're not following the law. Both of those would be unacceptable to Albertans.

Mr. Chair, it becomes abundantly clear that the minister either knows about these policies and doesn't care about them or doesn't know about these policies and needs to go do her job to ensure that these schools will have a GSA in a timely manner in accordance with this amendment. She needs to go do her job and tell those schools, through this amendment, that they have to establish GSAs.

If she does know and she's not willing to vote for this amendment, which she knows about now, Mr. Chair, then it means that she must not care that they're not going to follow the law. She must not care that these students will no longer have the protections that she has claimed are the best in the country. We know they are not the best in the country, but she has claimed that. Not only are they not the best in the country; they actually won't be followed anyways. What good is the bill if we don't have this amendment? She knows that schools will not be following the law. She knows that schools will not follow the law without this amendment. It's in the policies in black and white, and it's something that the minister, I'm sure, has been briefed on by this time. It's been almost 10 weeks into her term, maybe over 10 weeks now.

Certainly, there are only about a hundred school districts, I believe, in the entire province, Mr. Chair, and the policies, by and large, are only a couple of pages long each. It's shorter than a Harry Potter novel. Certainly, I hope that the minister would have been able to read the policies in this time and perhaps even just googled: 28 schools don't comply with safe and inclusive policies. I hope

that the minister would have been able to do that in the perhaps 15, 20 minutes I have been speaking tonight. If she hasn't, it's unfortunate that the minister doesn't know how to use her cellphone. But that's okay.

We know that those schools won't be complying with the policy, so the minister has to stand up in this House and explain to Albertans whether she will accept this amendment so that they will be forced to comply with the policy and comply with the law that she is trying to pass today. Or does she not care that they will not comply with the law? Does the minister not care that these schools will be allowed to skirt the rules? Does the minister not care that these schools, which are, by and large, funded at 70 per cent or higher, will not have to follow the same rules as every other school?

That's the real crux of this amendment, Mr. Chair. The crux is that we know there are schools that won't be in compliance. They've already said so. Their names are in the media, the boards are in the media, and we know those schools exist. So why doesn't the minister want to do anything about it? Why doesn't the minister want to accept a common-sense amendment that would fix this gaping loophole? Why does this minister decide that certain schools are above the law?

Mr. Chair, I know that sometimes members of the front bench have difficulty understanding how investigations work and all those things like that, but certainly I think that the minister needs to get out and say that either these schools need to comply or that these schools are above her own laws. That is what Albertans will deserve to know. That's what these young, vulnerable Albertans at these 28 schools who are trying to establish GSAs and QSAs want to know. They want to know why in their spaces they can't be safe. They want to know why in their schools they can't be safe in a timely manner.

This amendment would fix that loophole. This amendment would close the trap, Mr. Chair. Unfortunately, it seems like the government doesn't want to speak to it and doesn't want to support it. It's very unclear to me as to why. We've identified several significant issues with the bill, this being one of them, and on this particular issue not only does it allow certain schools to not follow the law, but it also puts kids at risk. It's not just a matter of: the government should be upholding the laws they pass. I think we can all agree that the rule of law is something that's very important to our society. Not only are we allowing schools to skirt the rule of law here, but the Conservatives, who tout being pro rule of law, also don't care about the kids who will be affected by it. I think that's something that should be very concerning to all members of this Assembly, and we should be asking the Minister of Education to get up in this House and explain to us why we are allowing these schools to go on like this, why we are not accepting this amendment so that they would have to grant a timely GSA/QSA. Those are the issues that really come into play.

It's not hypothetical. It's not: well, maybe an administrator would drag their feet. It's not: well, maybe a principal might decide they don't like the name or not want to go find a staff member. We have actual examples of schools right here in Alberta who have said that they will only do so under duress, Mr. Chair. Well, this is that duress. This is that government forcing them to allow GSAs, which the government has said that they one hundred per cent support.

I know that ministers on the front bench have said that they one hundred per cent support GSAs and one hundred per cent support gay kids. If that is indeed the case, why don't they support gay kids in these 28 schools? Why don't they support gay kids in the schools with policies that say that GSAs can only be formed under duress? Why don't they support the timely establishment of GSAs in those schools? That is something the government will have to answer for,

and that's something I hope they will get up and speak to here in this Assembly.

I mean, I think it's very clear that two weeks is a reasonable amount of time to give these schools that have said: well, we'll only do it under duress. Mr. Chair, perhaps if we give them two weeks, they can find somebody on the outside, that isn't part of their organization, that wouldn't have a values issue with opening a GSA or a QSA. That's a reasonable amount of time. That's a reasonable ask of schools, and it would make them able to and actually force them to comply with the law. It's the rule of law. It's something that the Conservatives have touted time and time again, that they believe that the rule of law is important to upholding our just society, yet they seem to be willing to let their friends and donors skirt the rules. They seem to be willing to let these people get around the rules, and that's something that we need to ask about.

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Ellis:** Under 23(h), (i), and (j), I will go with: "uses abusive or insulting language . . . likely to create disorder." This is not a matter of opinion. It's a situation where this member is making accusations against organizations, against people who are not in this Assembly, suggesting how they are going to interpret a piece of legislation, possibly, hypothetically. There's no basis for what he is saying right now. We've had to sit here and listen for, for sure, the second, maybe the third, maybe even the fourth time he's spoken on this same amendment. Where he at first insulted the Premier, now he is going after the minister.

**2:10 a.m.**

I think we have already had this discussion with you as I asked for clarification if we are allowed to go after other members. I vehemently disagree that you can personally attack members in this Chamber, and I would cite not only the standing orders but certainly, I'm sure, from *Beauchesne's*, if I was to look for it even a little bit more thoroughly, that you cannot insult other people within this Legislature. This is going beyond what is, I would say, reasonable, and I suggest that you have this member focus on the amendment in question.

I appreciate the time, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. I rise to comment on the fact that this is not a point of order. I appreciate that the member and members opposite may be growing tired of listening to the debate in this House, but it is well within a member's right to talk about the applicability of a bill and how it may or may not affect Albertans and different groups of Albertans.

I can tell you, you know, that we spent four years in government. Members opposite, including the member who stood up on the point of order, went after ministers on our front bench in a way calling for their jobs, going after them in personal attacks over and over again. The Member for Edmonton-South is merely questioning the applicability and the minister doing her job and incorporating this amendment into the bill.

I also believe that this amendment is talking about the timeline within which to allow schools to establish GSAs. When the member

is talking about the value of GSAs, how important they are, how they impact lives, that directly is speaking to the amendment.

As I mentioned, I appreciate that the members opposite may grow tired of debating this bill, but it is one of our fundamental rights in this House to debate as long as we see fit, so it is irrelevant how many times a member on this side of the House has gotten up to an amendment or to the bill.

Again, this is not a point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** I'm prepared to rule on this. I do appreciate both sides' comments. The government put forth an argument that included an idea that perhaps some of this had already been previously ruled on. I don't accept that part of it, and what I mean by that is that I actually do think that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has been using language that was intended to arguably decrease the decorum in the House.

I think that in the efforts of making sure that both parties move forward effectively on amendment A5, I would also take this opportunity to remind the member to please make sure that he uses language that he does not believe would incite members in the government, so members on the other side.

I think that, with that, I would remind all members of the House that, again, the goal here is to ensure a debate that moves forward effectively. On that front, then, we are on A5, which primarily does deal with the two-week timeline aspect, and I think that members have taken the opportunity to veer quite a far distance from that aspect of the amendment. If they were to decide that they wanted to debate the bill, then once the amendment has been decided, of course, that will be available to them at that time.

With that, I would ask the hon. member to please continue. You have a minute and 40 on this, but of course, as stated, there is ample opportunity to discuss later as well.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will take your guidance under advisement.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dang:** Certainly, I'm speaking to how, in the case of these 28 schools, they will have issues with timeliness as per this amendment. This amendment addresses the two-week period in which a request should be granted. Certainly, if a school has stated that they do not wish to do it at all, that would be in contradiction to this amendment, and there's your relevance, Mr. Chair.

Certainly, I think that if these schools are not going to be acting in a timely manner, then this bill should force them to because those are the protections that we are trying to enact through the Education Act as a whole, Mr. Chair. Those are the protections that I think are very important and that the government as a whole should be striving to uphold, to uphold that rule of law.

This amendment would allow us to do that. It would allow us to bring these 28 schools – I believe the Minister of Finance was a board member of one, Mr. Chair – under control and have them implement the GSA and QSA policies and safe and inclusive policies. I think that's something that's very important that we do within a two-week period, that's very important that we do in a timely manner. It's important that we don't let these schools skirt around the law, that we put in a timeline that closes this massive loophole. I think it's something that we need to consider as an Assembly and that we need to hear from the government on. We need to hear government members explain why these 28 schools won't have to, in a timely manner, as per this amendment, move forward with GSAs.

That's something that I think all members of the Assembly will be interested in, and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Government House Leader rising to speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to really quickly rise and recap some of the steps that actually would take place in regard to GSAs under the legislation that has been proposed by the hon. Education minister. I think it's important that we rise regularly, every few hours, to correct some of the misrepresentation of facts, if you will, that are presented by the NDP when it comes to GSAs.

Of note, before I get into the steps of what takes place with GSAs under this legislation, I think it's important just to recap, Mr. Chair, that this legislation, in fact, really has nothing to do with GSAs. It's interesting to see that the opposition continues to present that to the House, that this is about GSAs, continues, unfortunately, outside of the House to tell LGBTQ youth that GSAs will not be protected inside this province, to cause fear. You know, it's one thing when they spend most of their time focusing on the fear and smear of their political opponents, but it certainly is another thing when they spend their time causing fear for everyday Albertans, which I think is disappointing.

Again, Mr. Chair, what happens under this legislation when it comes to GSAs is a simple six-step process that already exists. What would happen right now: first of all, when a student or a group of students wishes to create a gay-straight alliance, there will be six steps that need to be taken, and there are currently six steps that would need to be taken. The first step is that the student or students will ask a staff member at the school to start a GSA. In step 2 the principal permits the GSA. In step 3 the principal designates a staff liaison to support the GSA. In step 4 the student – the student – selects a group name. In step 5, if the principal cannot find a staff liaison, the principal informs both the board and the minister, and then the minister appoints a responsible adult. In step 6, as a student-led group, the students, with support from their staff liaison, plan next steps such as meeting dates, times, and activities.

Now, Mr. Chair, under the existing process, that was put in place by Bill 10, which was supported by the legacy members of this governing party at the moment and was supported by the legacy members of the now opposition party, those are the six steps that would happen. When and if this Chamber sees fit to pass the bill that is before it now, that has been brought here by the Education minister, six steps, again, the exact same six steps, will go through it – and there'll be a GSA – which continues to have the strongest statutory protection in the entire country when it comes to GSAs.

Now, Mr. Chair, people at home would be forgiven, I would say, being confused to hear us go through those steps because if they'd been listening to the opposition for going on close to 35 or 40 hours now – they have spent their entire time while talking about this legislation implying that GSAs would no longer be allowed to exist, that students would be blocked by teachers from this process, and then, from there, spent the rest of their time focusing on personal attacks on members of the Legislature, personally implying that teachers don't care about kids, that schools would not take the steps to protect kids, and on and on and on, when – again the reality comes back – the exact same process will exist, if Bill 8 passes this Chamber, as right now.

2:20 a.m.

Why do members of the opposition continue to come to this Chamber and say the complete opposite? When is the opposition

going to spend some time actually talking about Bill 8? Again, Mr. Chair, it's so disappointing to see the opposition spending their time in this place talking about things that are just not factual. I suspect that their constituents would probably be extraordinarily disappointed to watch the behaviour that takes place by the Official Opposition in this Chamber when it comes to how they debate it. I see the hon. Opposition House Leader laughing about that, and he may find that humorous. I'm glad. I do like it when people find me humorous. I consider myself a funny guy.

But I don't think that this issue is funny. The Official Opposition, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, has an important responsibility. This government recognizes that important responsibility. Many of us who sit on this side of the House have had that responsibility, so we respect it. It's one of the reasons why we're still sitting in here, around the clock, providing the Official Opposition that opportunity to do their constitutional responsibility inside this Chamber. But, sadly, Mr. Chair, the opposition continues hour after hour after hour not to do that responsibility, not to talk about Bill 8, not to bring forward amendments that would actually have to do with the legislation that is before the House in an attempt to strengthen it or have a conversation with the Education minister, who has sat in this Chamber for hours and hours and even engaged in debate and tried to correct some of the misconceptions that the Official Opposition has been presenting to this Chamber. Instead, the Official Opposition continues to ignore what are the actual facts.

Now, Mr. Chair, the last time I rose to speak on this, I pointed out that I think, largely, this has to do with the fact that there's clearly some sort of leadership chaos going on inside the Official Opposition. I think that, you know, maybe the Official Opposition House Leader is preparing for his leadership race or other members . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** You are a funny guy.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . but they should not be . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Through the chair. I apologize for interrupting. I just want to remind all members to speak through the chair.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** My point, though, Mr. Chair, is that hon. members should not be spending their time posturing for their leadership ambitions or whatever is taking place when it comes to an important piece of legislation. There are other places where we can deal with those types of issues. In fact, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, when he was running for the leadership of two parties in the last several years, spent a lot of time using Facebook. That's a great tool to posture for your leadership race. He was really good at videos, Facebook Live. Those are good options for you to consider.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, you know, Mr. Chair, what I'd like to understand is how what the hon. House leader is talking about has anything to do with the amendment. When our members talk about GSAs and how they apply, they jump up on points of order over and over again. So I'd love to hear your ruling on how talking about a political party and about leadership has anything to do with amendment A5.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** It is interesting to hear the Official Opposition House Leader admit to his leadership ambitions. My intention is not to talk about the internal working of the NDP leadership chaos, that

you're witnessing. My intention is to point out, directly in response to both this amendment and this bill that we're discussing, that the points that the opposition are bringing forward to this House are clearly about something that is different. What my point is is that it's important that we talk about the actual legislation, not the Official Opposition House Leader's leadership ambition and maybe the launch of his leadership campaign. You know, that I'll be interested to see. As I told you before, Mr. Chair, I'm not an NDP member, so I don't think I'll be taking a side in the leadership race.

Sorry, Mr. Chair. We have to deal with the point of order first. I assume that's where you'd like to go with this. I think that it's pretty clear that the Official Opposition continues to bring forward these types of issues, particularly saying that this is about GSAs. That's the point, and it's relevant to the point of order. Every speech that you have witnessed from the Official Opposition is about GSAs. They've done this repeatedly, for well over 24 hours straight, on GSAs. I'm responding directly to my point or to their accusation that this is about GSAs to make it clear that it's not, and that is definitely relevant to the bill. That's the debate that they've chosen to have inside this Chamber, and we certainly have a right to participate in it.

**The Deputy Chair:** At this stage, obviously, we have been offering a wide swath with regard to debate on all sides of the House. I think that it would probably not be the most effective use or direction of debate for the chair, at each instance where perhaps there was one sentence that may not be necessarily directly relevant to the amendment that we're currently dealing with – for me to interject in all of those cases would probably, in turn, itself maybe lead towards disorder. Obviously, a duty of the chair is to ensure that that doesn't take place.

At this stage I don't find a point of order. I think that if the hon. member would continue, then that would be my decision on that. The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the ruling, but I'll also move away from discussing the NDP's upcoming leadership race to go back to what my original point of rising was, which is to make clear again for the record that the legislation brought forward by this government, by the hon. Education minister to this Chamber for consideration by this Chamber, does not change the protection for GSAs.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

This is despite the fact that the opposition continues to want to represent to Albertans that this will stop GSAs from being created, that this will drastically change the process for GSAs inside this province. That, in fact, is just not factual. I would use different words, but they would not be parliamentary. But I think you know my point, Mr. Chair, and that is that the opposition continues to waste Alberta's precious time inside this Legislature, talking about something that is not even relevant to the legislation that has been before this place for days.

Mr. Chair, again, I'm not the House leader for the Official Opposition. I've had the privilege of having that role before, but I'm not now, and we are not members of the Official Opposition. Our job on this side of the House is to take on the role of government. But they have an important job. They should start to take that seriously, stop these repeated games of misrepresenting facts, of causing fear inside communities, of saying things that are just not factual, and actually talk about the facts of this legislation, if that's important to them. For anybody who has taken the time to actually read Bill 8 and understand what is going on, the behaviour of the Official Opposition shows that they actually do not care about

this legislation. Instead, they're focusing on playing political games. That's unfortunate because it's their responsibility to make sure we get the best piece of legislation out of this House, and that's not what they're doing.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you.

Anybody else wanting to speak to A5? The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I feel behooved to stand and clarify many of the comments that the Government House Leader has made in relation to the debate. Where to begin? You know, it's pretty rich getting lectured about the role of the opposition in debate, yet at the same time the Government House Leader is trying to stifle such debate or at least complain about the fact that we've been on this amendment and on this bill for some time.

You know, I do think that what's interesting is that the amendment, first of all, relates to this bill, so one of the challenges I have with what the Government House Leader just said as far as what we're talking about when it comes to GSAs and Bill 8 and how they're not related – well, as the Government House Leader should know, if this amendment didn't speak to the bill and didn't directly amend the bill, then it would be out of order, and Parliamentary Counsel never would have signed off on it. So I'm not sure where he's getting his facts from. I think the Government House Leader should maybe refresh his reading of Bill 8 to see what exactly is in it and why we've amended it: to ensure that students who want a GSA can have one and have one in a timely fashion.

2:30 a.m.

You see, the loophole that currently exists in this bill is that there is no time allotted or time amount or commitment that needs to take place when a student asks for a GSA. I appreciate that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre talks about these six steps and I believe it was step 2, the principal permits the GSA. In an ideal world, yes, he or she does. We don't know when. We don't know how long it will take the principal. Quite frankly, the loophole, Mr. Chair, is that the principal could delay a decision in perpetuity, meaning that they either intentionally or unintentionally thwart or delay the creation of a GSA. I appreciate that the Government House Leader is going to say that we have the six steps. Well, the problem is that the six steps don't actually necessarily result in the creation of a GSA. Our caucus has been trying to highlight that.

Quite frankly, the reason that we are debating for so many hours on this bill is because we know that it saves lives. We know GSAs save lives. We know how critical they are to the well-being of our youth. I don't have the stats in front of me, but I can tell you that when it comes to youth suicide rates, those that identify in the LGBTQ2S community have and are among the highest rates of youth who take their own lives. That is a crisis, Mr. Chair, and that is something that needs to be addressed. This current bill doesn't address that appropriately.

You know, the government talks about truths versus mistruths. Well, I can tell you that it's in black and white that Alberta had, under our government, the strongest protections for LGBTQ2S youth in the country. Under Bill 8 we don't. Ontario has a much stronger policy than we do.

You know, Mr. Chair, this amendment is a reasonable amendment. All it's doing is putting a timeline around: when students ask for a GSA, they can't be delayed in perpetuity. They can't be put off for years and years and years, and the leadership in a school can't delay creating one until whichever youth is asking for one eventually graduates and: hey, hopefully, we can just get

them out of our hair, and we don't have to have the creation of them. I know that the Member for Edmonton-South had talked about the 28 private schools that, I believe, can still deny the creation of a GSA.

But what's important here is that this amendment – and I appreciate, having been on the government side, that government needs to see reasonable amendments, and we know that sometimes amendments are less reasonable than others, just like sometimes bills are drafted less reasonably than others. This amendment tries to improve a really inherently flawed bill. Again, putting a two-week answer on it really gives a clear timeline for students that are looking for these basic protections, Mr. Chair. In my opinion, this is reasonable.

Now, I will give the government credit to the extent that there have been ongoing conversations about a recognition, I think, that a timeline is reasonable. I think part of the challenge has been that we're asking for a definitive time of two weeks and not just in the near future because, as you can imagine, Mr. Chair, the only people who benefit from wording like that are lawyers because they can debate until the cows come home of what is in the near future or even the term "immediately." Okay. Well, immediately for one person may be in the next two minutes. For another person maybe in the next three months is immediate. Really, what we're trying to do here is to provide clarity to this bill, certainty for our young people.

You know, in the debate that we've had so far, what I think is disingenuous is when the Government House Leader gets up and accuses us of fear and smear when we're talking about the value of GSAs, which is in this bill, and the fact that in its current state, without this amendment and others that we've proposed and will propose, it doesn't do what the government claims it will do. What I find most offensive is when the government talks about how we are trying to induce fear into youth and others around this bill, which couldn't be further from the truth.

If you want to talk about fear and smear, Mr. Chair, you were part of the caucus that sat in this House between 2015 and 2019. When we introduced Bill 6, it was to protect farm workers, but if you actually look at *Hansard* for what came out of the opposition's mouth, it was "killing the family farm," which was patently false.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Acting Chair:** Point of order noted.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j), language to create disorder, Mr. Chair. We watched the Opposition House Leader rise and discuss Bill 6 – a decision has already been made by this Chamber, as you well know – but neglects to refer to the fact that there had to be an amendment that was passed that was forced through by the then Official Opposition, which the Official Opposition House Leader points out that you were a member of, so I know that you are aware of that. That amendment was brought through, and what it did was save the family farm. Just to be clear, for the record, that member was part of a government that directly tried to kill the family farm and family ranching inside our province and, in fact, prior to that was bringing forward a bill that would have killed 4-H and kids' involvement in agriculture inside our province.

Mr. Chair, I'm glad that you are part of a governing caucus who was able to get that amendment passed and save the family farm and family ranches inside this province. Absolutely proud of that. For the Official Opposition House Leader to rise inside this

Chamber and imply that in any way his government was not on track to kill the family farms is not factual. It'll create disorder when he rises and says that.

**The Acting Chair:** Would you like to react, sir?

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Chair, that is a joke. First of all, this is not a point of order. The opposition over and over in *Hansard* – and I encourage all Albertans to look at it – talked about how it would kill the family farm, which it would not and did not. I appreciate that the Government House Leader is very sensitive to when we call him on comments that were made by his caucus previously. My point here . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Mr. Bilous:** I'm in the middle of a point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you were done. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Bilous:** Now, what's interesting is how, I think, the Government House Leader is trying to use points of order to create disorder in this House, quite frankly. I'm in the middle of arguing a point of order, Mr. Chair.

This isn't a point of order. This is a matter of debate. My point in this and in that example, Mr. Chair, is that, again, the government accuses the opposition of fear and smear, and when we remind the government and Albertans of tactics that they used that were more closely aligned with fear and smear, then, of course, the government jumps up on points of order. In this case, it's not a point of order to be referencing a comment that was made earlier, but I will keep my comments to the amendment.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you.

I would just encourage all members to stick to the amendments, stick to this bill. It actually has been found to be a point of order to discuss votes previously held in the House and decisions made by the House, so I would just encourage all members to please stick with the bill at hand. It's been a long, long time, and I know that we're running out of things to say that are pertinent to the bill, but we have to stick to it.

2:40 a.m.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Bilous:** You know what, Mr. Chair? I have plenty to say on this bill. Believe me, I'm just getting started.

Now, what I will ask the chair: if you wouldn't mind letting me know how much time I have left, please.

**The Acting Chair:** Twelve minutes, 10 seconds.

**Mr. Bilous:** Twelve minutes left. Oh, wonderful. I can talk a lot longer than that. Okay. Well, great. Excellent.

Back to the amendment which, again, collars the time. I appreciate that the issue that we have with this is that the bill right now – again, recognizing that there are provisions in the bill currently for the establishment of GSAs, the real issue and the crux of why this timeline is so critical is because it ensures that they will actually be created when and if they're asked for.

Now, Mr. Chair, I want to talk about the fact that there are schools that, for a variety of reasons, some because of faith, others for other reasons, are not in favour of GSAs and even more so not in favour of calling these after school clubs what they are, gay-straight alliances. They'd rather call it an inclusion club or an inclusive club. Part of the challenge is that we need to name them appropriately

and allow students to name them, not legislators to decide what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. That goes to the very crux of a support group for young people who are trying and struggling with self-identification and then communicating that to people. I mean, I can only imagine the duress that young people are under trying to, you know, figure out how to come out, how to express themselves where they won't be judged, where they won't be criticized, where there won't be detrimental consequences. Members of our caucus have highlighted numerous examples of young people and how these clubs have saved lives.

I mean, Mr. Chair, back in I think it was 2013 the government of the day, when we were debating a motion that was brought forward by a member from the Liberal Party, it was unbelievable how we had spent so many hours debating whether or not students should be allowed to create these after school clubs. To an extent, we're still debating this, which is just mind boggling considering, you know, where we are. In some ways we've made progress, and in other ways I feel like we're in the twilight zone that this is about after school clubs.

You know, one aspect of GSAs that I've never been able to get my head around is the whole parental notification. When I ask people who say that, yes, teachers should be notifying parents: okay; how many phone calls are made when their child joins the chess club or track or soccer? I'm a teacher, Mr. Chair. I never called a parent to say: "Hey. By the way, Sally or Johnny have just joined this extracurricular club. I think you need to know." I think it's quite ridiculous, especially when we're talking about something that is not just sensitive, but the consequences are very, very real. As I noted earlier, what's appalling is the suicide rate amongst LGBTQ2S-plus youth. This is a way to help reduce the harm, reduce suicide rates, to help young people. You would think that there'd be unanimous consent in this House to be taking positive steps forward to ensuring that youth have the supports they need.

Now, I appreciate that the government will claim that the bill does what they're saying it to do. I mean, the reality is that it doesn't. Now, whether that's wilful ignorance or they're under a different impression than what's written and the legal opinions that we have procured on this bill, the reality is that it doesn't.

This amendment, which requires that timeline, ensures that there will be an establishment of these clubs, I mean to an extent. I don't know if one of our other amendments has come forward yet to ensure that there aren't other ways for schools to be able to restrict or deny the establishment of it. Now, this is one of our concerns. If a decision can be deferred forever, that is essentially a way of denying the establishment of a GSA. Now, maybe it's a different way of doing it. It's that the principal or the school leadership can just never get back to the student or the students that are looking for it. You know, for us, if we want to have legislation that truly does protect our youth, then I don't see the challenge in the government accepting this amendment. You know, what it does is provide certainty that when students ask for a club to be established, it will be.

I have an example here, Mr. Chair – this is a great example – from a school. It's a faith-based school, and I say that only because I think that's the position that they're coming from, not being comfortable with allowing GSAs. This was a letter, I believe, that was from 2016, when our government, our then Minister of Education, ensured that every school had policies, which is within the purview of the government of Alberta. In this letter – and if it hasn't been tabled, I'm happy to do that at the next available opportunity, Mr. Chair – the school states that, under duress, they would submit a constitutional challenge on this section of the School Act as far as allowing students to establish a GSA.



The reason I bring this up, Mr. Chair, is that if they have made very clear that they do not want GSAs in their school and that, if they were forced to, they would make a constitutional challenge, then the six steps that the Government House Leader continues to go back to mean nothing because there is nothing enforcing that one step then moves to the next. This is where this timeline ensures that at step 2 the principal permits the GSA. Yeah, they have two weeks to ensure that the GSA can be established.

You know, I may be incorrect on this, but I would love to get hold of the principal of this school and say: if you could defer or delay a decision forever, then, hey, there's your loophole to not having to actually allow students to establish a GSA. This is exactly why this amendment is not only timely, but it's necessary.

If the government is being forthright and truthful with Albertans in saying, "We want to protect young people," then accept the amendment. If you don't accept the amendment, then appreciate that Albertans are saying: "You say that this is what you want. This is an amendment that strengthens it, that ensures that it will be established. Then why are you voting against it when we have over and over again pointed out this major loophole?" I mean, this is significant enough that it basically nullifies the creation of a GSA if principals don't want it in their school. That's a major concern.

2:50 a.m.

I wish that members opposite would see this as a reasonable amendment and accept it. Therefore, we can then move on to other recommendations that we have, trying to improve this bill, to strengthen protections for some of our most vulnerable youth.

You know, for me, honestly, Mr. Chair, I think this is a no-brainer as far as an amendment goes. I wish the government would see it the same. We have clearly articulated the challenges with how it's currently written, and regardless of how many times the front bench gets up and says that they have the six steps, well, we've pointed out in black and white how those six steps will not necessarily lead to the creation of a GSA.

The solution is simple. Vote in favour of this amendment, and we can move the debate forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak again to this amendment. It's been a little bit frustrating. I think it's fair to say that we've been trying to make the argument that this amendment should be passed because we should be concerned about the well-being of gender and sexual minority students in our school system and that by timely enactment of these GSAs, we're protecting them.

But I want to try a bit of a different tack since it looks like we're not getting a lot of traction with the line of argument that we've been making so far. I want to focus my comments on jobs and the economy, which are things that are near and dear to the hearts of all of us and certainly were two of the three key platform planks of the United Conservative Party when they ran in the election. Mr. Chair, please, I hope that the members will grant me a little bit of latitude in developing this argument. Trust me; I will get to why this amendment is important when talking about jobs and the economy. It's just going to take me a little while to develop that argument.

Now, it's been interesting. You know, in question period and in some of the debates we've talked about the budget of the government of Alberta and what we can expect. We have said some things about the current chair of the blue-ribbon panel, Dr. Janice

MacKinnon, and because I'm interested to understand what Mrs. MacKinnon might propose in the report of the blue-ribbon panel in August, I've been reading her book *Minding the Public Purse*, which talks about her experience as the Finance minister of the province of Saskatchewan.

She wraps up the book with some concerns that she saw facing not only Saskatchewan but Canada as a whole in 2003, and one of the concerns that she saw on the horizon at that time was the need to better train our students for working in the knowledge economy. We needed to, according to Dr. MacKinnon, encourage more students to graduate high school and move on to postsecondary education and, once in postsecondary education, to go on to get graduate-level degrees – master's degrees, PhDs – and work in research and development to drive the Canadian economy forward. The countries that do best in innovation and succeed in research and development are going to be the countries that lead in the future, that have the strongest economies going into the future. She was concerned at that time – and keep in mind that this was 16 years ago – at the low levels of high school participation rates in Canada, the low levels of advanced education participation rates, and the really low levels of spending on research and development all across the country.

It's interesting, Mr. Chair. You know, at the time that she was writing, she referenced that Canada, on average, spent about 2 per cent of its GDP on research and development. It's declined since then. In the 16 years since then it's fallen to about 1 and a half per cent of GDP. Politicians haven't really heeded Dr. MacKinnon's warnings and kept up with spending on research and development or developing students and moving them through the system. Alberta really lags behind the rest of the country when it comes to spending on research and development, when it comes to high school graduating rates and participation in advanced education, in particular at the master's and PhD levels.

I notice that there was a report produced by the institute of Quebec that provided some statistics from 2015, and that was the most recent set of statistics that I could find, Mr. Chair. In that report Alberta placed third last in Canada in terms of high school completion rates. On average, 75 per cent of students in Alberta high schools complete a high school diploma within five years of starting, which, you know, is well below the Canadian average and is certainly lagging behind most of the country.

Of course, we know that that has a knock-on effect. We know that if we don't graduate sufficient students from high school, we have lower participation rates in postsecondary education, and certainly Alberta lags behind the rest of the country in postsecondary education participation rates. We certainly don't do very well in graduating master's degree and PhD students, who have gone through the Alberta education system and completed that level of education.

Now, Mr. Chair, I'm certain that you're wondering what this has to do with the amendment before us.

**The Acting Chair:** Starting to.

**Mr. Schmidt:** The interesting thing is that Alberta, as I've said, lags behind the rest of the country in developing the educational capacities of our students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and two-spirit students lag behind Alberta as a whole in terms of their educational attainment. Certainly, all the studies that I could find in researching this topic show that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students have much higher high school dropout rates than the average student. Some of the research that I've seen shows a 10 per cent difference. You know, if the average Alberta graduation rate is 75 per cent, well, for LGBTQ students we could

expect that to be 65 per cent of students who don't complete high school.

I know that educational outcomes are something that are top of mind for the Member for Red Deer-North. In question period time and again, when questioned about issues around the budget and those kinds of things, she has mentioned repeatedly that we spend more money per capita on our education system than any other province in the country, and we're getting educational outcomes that lag behind the rest of the country. Certainly, with respect to graduation rates in high school and participation rates in advanced education and that sort of thing, we can do better when it comes to this.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

Now, here we have a completely cost-free way of at least improving the outcomes for graduation rates, at least for one sector of students, the LGBTQ students. If students have access to a GSA upon request and that request is met within two weeks, then a gay-straight alliance will be formed in that school, and LGBTQ students will have a much more inclusive, safe, and caring atmosphere in their school. That will directly lead to more LGBTQ students graduating from high school, Madam Chair. That's something that all of us want. I don't think there's any member of this House who, if asked, would disagree with the need for Alberta to see an improvement in its high school completion rates.

3:00 a.m.

Moreover, Madam Chair, it's completely free. This doesn't require any kind of budget increase in any school board's budget. All they have to do is adopt this amendment, impose a two-week timeline upon the formation of a GSA when they're requested by the students, and then that GSA is formed, and we will see an uptick in the completion rates for LGBTQ students in the province of Alberta.

I certainly hope that, you know, the Member for Red Deer-North and her caucus colleagues give strong consideration to what kind of education system we want in the future and whether or not we want to improve high school completion rates, improve participation rates in advanced education, and pass this amendment in the hopes of improving the outcomes that we see in the education system.

Like I said, you know, it's been quite clearly expressed by members opposite that the fall budget is going to be a tough one, so we need to look. We need to be creative about ways that we can improve outcomes without spending additional money. This right here is a great way that we can improve educational outcomes for a subsection of students that will cost the treasury precisely zero dollars, so I don't understand why the members opposite wouldn't jump at this chance to improve educational outcomes and drive our economy forward, because when more students graduate from high school, they're more likely to go on to pursue advanced education. Then they're even more likely to go on and get those PhDs and work in that research and development field and create the innovations that will lead Alberta's economy into the future.

It seems to me that this is a pretty quick and painless way to improve the educational system and lead to economic development and improve economic diversification down the road for Alberta, so I certainly hope that the members opposite take these things into consideration when considering whether or not they will vote for or against this amendment and really take the opportunity to, I think, you know, improve the educational system and improve the outcomes that I know they're keen to improve.

With that, Madam Chair, I will bring an end to my comments and give some time to the hon. members opposite to reflect on this. If they disagree with my analysis of how to improve the system, I

would certainly love for a member opposite to stand up and tell me where I'm wrong and what ideas they have to improve education outcomes and graduation rates for our LGBTQ students because, clearly, there is a problem. All of the research indicates that negative school atmospheres cause higher dropout rates for LGBTQ students.

Like I said, Madam Chair, if not this, then what? What other proposals do they have to make sure that our LGBTQ students complete high school at rates similar to their straight peers? I'm looking forward to a response from members opposite on that and how they see improving educational outcomes for that group of students.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 13 and report progress on Bill 8.

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 13 and the motion that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 8 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:05 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Kenney	Sawhney
Copping	LaGrange	Schulz
Ellis	Loewen	Schweitzer
Fir	Long	Shandro
Glubish	McIver	Toews
Gotfried	Nally	Turton
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Williams
Hanson	Nixon, Jason	Wilson
Issik	Pon	Yaseen
Jones	Reid	

Against:

Bilous	Nielsen	Renaud
Dang	Pancholi	Schmidt

Totals: For – 29 Against – 6

[Request to report Bill 13 and motion that the committee rise and report Bill 8 carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

3:10 a.m.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 13. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 8. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this day for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

[The voice vote indicated that the committee report was concurred in]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:11 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For:

Allard	Kenney	Reid
Copping	LaGrange	Sawhney
Ellis	Long	Schulz
Fir	McIver	Schweitzer
Glubish	Nally	Shandro
Gotfried	Neudorf	Toews
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jason	Williams
Issik	Pitt	Wilson
Jones	Pon	Yaseen

Against:

Bilous	Nielsen	Renaud
Dang	Pancholi	Schmidt

Totals:	For – 30	Against – 6
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[The committee report was concurred in]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on third reading of Bill 2. Is there anyone wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to see you in this Chamber tonight and to be able to debate Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, or, really, as it should be called, the pick-your-pockets bill. We've debated this bill at quite a bit of length in this Assembly. We've discussed it at quite a bit of length, and the members of the opposition have spoken about why this bill is so bad for ordinary Albertans, why it attacks the hard-working families that work throughout our province, why after only a few short weeks in this Assembly this government has already decided to go in and attack holiday pay, attack overtime pay and, really, it's to pay for their big tax break to corporations.

That is something that is very, very appalling to members of the opposition. It's something that the members of the opposition are very concerned about. We really think that we need to take a further look and slow down this legislation and not pass it at this time. That's why I will be encouraging my colleagues in the opposition here to vote against this bill. I think that it's something that we need to look at and realize, that for some people in this province it's going to be worth over \$2,500 if they don't receive the overtime pay, if this government is allowed to cut their overtime pay in such an aggressive manner.

Mr. Speaker, I think that I was just hearing from some Albertans last weekend over the holidays how they were just realizing that at the next holiday this government will actually be taking away their time; they'll be taking away their holiday pay; they'll be cancelling

their very own Christmas. That's something, I think, many Albertans are now recognizing, that this government is working for wealthy donors and sponsors and their friends and not the interests of everyday, ordinary Albertans. They're not working for the ordinary oil and gas worker. They're not working for the ordinary trades worker. They're not working for the average person, who understands how important it is to get the time or the pay in lieu on a holiday.

**3:30 a.m.**

We also understand now that the government does not care about young people. Young or old, you deserve equal pay in this province, and we can see that the government is moving aggressively to roll back the minimum wage, which demonstrates not only a lack of compassion but a lack of respect for young workers. Really, we know that this is a lack of respect for the value of the work that young people put in. Here in the opposition we know that for young people their work and the effort and the skill should determine what you make, not what year you were born, not whether you were born in December or January. That shouldn't determine whether you make \$13 or \$15.

That's something, Mr. Speaker, I'm very concerned about myself because this actually incentivizes young teenagers who perhaps are a supplemental income for their family or in some cases the primary income in their family, and in fact it actually encourages those young teenagers to drop out of school to try and earn a higher wage. That's something I'm very concerned about, that I think the Minister of Education should be very concerned about, that I think the members opposite should be very concerned about because we should be trying everything we can to ensure these young people have the best possible education for their futures, to be able to have the strongest possible education.

What the youth differential wage does is that it takes the toonies out of the pockets of those young people, it attacks those young people, and it determines that those young people are not worth as much unless, Mr. Speaker – there is a but – those young people were to drop out of school and not become better educated and not work to improve their futures. Then they are worth that extra toonie. They can have that toonie back. That's something I think is absolutely outrageous. I think it's something that all members of this opposition will be happy to vote against, and I hope that members of the government will also see how ludicrous it is, the lunacy that is involved, taking toonies away from these young people. It's something that we know is a serious attack on some of our most vulnerable Albertans.

We also know that the government is trying to create not just a different tier for young people, but they're also trying to create a different tier for servers. Mr. Speaker, that's also something that I think is very shocking. We know that whether you work in a restaurant in Vegreville or a nightclub in Edmonton, there shouldn't be a difference in what you make. You should be able to make a living wage. You should be able to afford to feed your family at the end of the day. If you can't rely on an unstable source of income like tips, then how can we guarantee that families are going to be able to feed themselves at the end of the day, that they won't have to stop at a food bank on the way home?

This bill does nothing to address that. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this bill actually makes the situation worse. I think the minister of labour should know that, and if he doesn't know that, then I've just explained it to him. We've tried to explain this many times throughout the course of debate in this Assembly. I hope he understands, or at the very least I hope he cares for these people. I hope he will have some sympathy for the toonies he's taking away from all of these people and for the stability he'll be taking away

from all these people because that is what this bill will do. The minister will be directly going in to take away their rights and their stability.

We know that the government is really just trying to be – well, Mr. Speaker, it's my opinion that the government is trying to be a Grinch with this bill. I mean, we see that in things like this year, where I believe Christmas will fall on a Saturday, and hard-working parents won't get that extra pay to cover the presents – right? – if you're taking away their pay. Let's say that you live in Lloydminster and you live on the Saskatchewan side. You would receive the holiday pay. But if you live on the Alberta side, you wouldn't. That's something that's very shocking. You will actually be setting up divides within one municipality. You'll actually be setting up class differences and segregating classes within one varied municipality. That's something that I think this bill is shameful for, actually, that it's trying to divide ordinary people that are going about their lives and trying to enjoy their Christmas. It's something that I think all members of the Assembly will be enjoying this year.

Instead, when we look at the people that have to live around borders, they're going to see their friends get off better than them because the Conservative government in Saskatchewan didn't attack as hard as the Conservative government here in Alberta did. That's something that is very strange, and it's very unfair, I think, for ordinary working Albertans, because we see that in almost every other province holiday pay is owed to workers regardless of whether it falls on a regular scheduled day off. I mean, that includes our neighbours to the west, British Columbia, our neighbours to the east, Saskatchewan and, even further east, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec, Mr. Speaker.

Instead, what we see is this government directly going after the pocketbooks of everyday Albertans, ordinary Albertans, hard-working people that work in this province. The government is going after not just the pocketbooks of people who work overtime, not just the pocketbooks of people who are young workers or who work in the service industry. The government is really going after the pocketbooks of every single Albertan they can find. They're going after general holiday pay. They're going after the youth. They're going after all of these types of organizations, Mr. Speaker. It really simply shows how much disregard this government has for our labour force, for our advanced labour force here in Alberta, and how little the government cares that these people are the ones who work to keep Alberta strong, who are the ones that are working every single day to make sure our services are working together. It's something that I think is absolutely shameful.

It's something that I think is an absolute shame, that it attacks over 400,000 Albertans, right? It attacks so many people across this entire province. It picks the pockets of so many Albertans. It goes directly to people that will live in every single one of our ridings. Whether you live in Medicine Hat, whether you live in Drumheller, whether you live in High Level, High Prairie, Edmonton, or Fort McMurray, Mr. Speaker, it will attack people in every single sector in every single part of our province. Every single member in this Assembly will know somebody in their constituency who will lose their holiday pay, who will lose their Christmas this year.

Every single member in this Assembly will have to face somebody in their constituency and tell them: "I voted to take away your Christmas. I voted to take away your holiday pay and your overtime pay." That's something that I think members will have to take back to their communities. Members here, especially in the government, will have to go back to their communities and their constituencies and tell people that they don't think they deserve that toonie, that they don't think they deserve a living wage, that they don't think people in their constituencies deserve to be able to not

have to stop at a food bank. That's something that I think members will be very concerned about when they go back home.

I mean, when you hear about governments trying to take away holidays and erase Christmas, it really is something else, Mr. Speaker. It's something that is almost beyond the realm of reason. It's almost something that is unbelievable, but unfortunately, as much as I would like to send it off to fairyland, here we are, and in fact Tinker Bell is not here and we cannot clap for the magic. Instead, what will happen when this bill is passed is that we will absolutely see Christmas disappear. We will absolutely see people under direct attack in that their livelihoods will be affected, their families will be affected.

Mr. Speaker, I've got to tell you that never before have I seen people this worked up about this bill. I was actually in my community all day on Canada Day, as I'm sure many members of this Assembly were, and I had multiple people come up to me. Actually, lots and lots of people came up to me, and they said: thank you for standing up for my rights. They said: "Member," – they'd say my name, but I can't say that here, obviously – "thank you for standing up for my rights. Can you please tell the Conservatives that we want them to know that we're proud you're fighting for us?" That's something that I actually heard over and over again. I'll be really honest; I hear it more now in opposition than I ever did in government. I certainly hear people coming up to me and telling me how important the work we're doing is and how important it is that we stand up for their rights more than I ever heard in government because now they see that this Conservative government, the Premier and his government, are attacking ordinary Albertans, are coming after their pay.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). You have been clear in this Chamber many times, Mr. Speaker. It's one thing for the opposition or any member of this Assembly to refer to the government as attacking somebody, but to directly say that an hon. member of this place is attacking somebody – the hon. member just said that the Premier was attacking somebody – clearly that is language that would create disorder inside this Chamber, something you've been very clear on. The hon. member should stand up and apologize and withdraw his comments, and he should be ashamed that he continues to speak this way inside this Assembly.

**3:40 a.m.**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I will not take lessons from the Government House Leader on what is parliamentary or unparliamentary in this place. What I will say is that I personally didn't hear the member say: a member of government. But what I will say is that if he did say that a member and not the government is attacking workers, then on his behalf I will apologize and withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the apology. However, given the presence of the member, it would be very, very, very reasonable for him to apologize and withdraw his comments on his own.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the apology. I'll consider the point of order concluded.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I meant that the government, which is appointed by the Premier, is the one that is attacking Albertans here. You know very well that the government is appointed by the leader of the government caucus. That was the intention I was trying to make, that this government is attacking ordinary Albertans. It's attacking workers. This government has a disregard for these workers and a real disregard for the effects it will have on families when it comes time for Christmas and when it comes time for their holidays. This is something that I think is very important that the government understand and that the government listen to, not just stand here and perhaps lie with their mouths open but, instead, that they would actually come and speak to why they think it is fair that families shouldn't be able to afford the gifts for their children at the end of the year.

That's something that I think is very important for us to address here, because we're talking about over 400,000 Albertans that now may have to go to a food bank, over 400,000 Albertans that could have over \$2,500 taken away from them, Mr. Speaker. That's not an insignificant number. That's a large number of Albertans that this government knows will be adversely affected by this legislation. It's a large number of Albertans that deserve to have stability in their workplace. Instead of stability, this government is coming in and deciding to tear apart everything that they've been basing their budgets on, and that's something that I don't think is responsible of this government. I don't think this government is being fair to Albertans when they do this, and I think Albertans deserve better than this when their government moves like this.

Really, picking the pockets of ordinary Albertans is nothing that Albertans ever expect their government to do. They would never expect their government to reach into the pockets of young people and take \$2 away. They would never expect their government to reach into the pockets of regular working Albertans and take over \$2,500 away. They would never expect the government to reach into the pockets during the holiday season and take away the presents for their children. That's something that Albertans would never expect their government to do, but right here in black and white, Mr. Speaker, Bill 2 purports to do all of those things. It goes in; it directly attacks the young people. It goes in; it directly attacks overtime pay. It goes in; it directly attacks servers and directly attacks all of these types of fields, just like holidays.

That's something that I think the government should be very concerned about and that the government should have had second thoughts about during committee. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there were some very reasonable amendments which were not accepted. Unfortunately, the government decided not to accept an amendment that would have saved Christmas. I mean, we tried. We really did try. Sometimes you have to look at a bad bill and have to try and spray some Febreeze at it, but it doesn't always work.

Mr. Speaker, this bill continues to be a bad bill, and it continues to attack and go after the pockets of ordinary Albertans. It picks the pockets of ordinary working people, and that's something that I think is an absolute shame. It's a shame that we have to stand here and defend ordinary Albertans while the government, that purports to be about jobs, decides that those jobs can be worth more or less at the will of the government. That's something that I think all hon. members should vote against here in this Assembly and that I encourage all hon. members to vote against or at least get up and explain to us why they decided that Christmas wasn't as important for these hard-working Albertans.

With that, I think it's something that we need to make sure we continue to debate in this House and that we debate this in the fulsome. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Transportation has risen.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise under 29(2)(a) and address the remarks that were just made on An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the previous speaker realizes that when he's speaking against this bill, he's actually speaking against the best interest of the vast majority of businesses in Alberta that have asked for the changes that are in this bill. I wonder if he realizes that, rather than, as he says, taking away benefits from people, he's going to allow people to actually have overtime. I wonder if he realizes or has ever taken a second to actually talk to any Albertan that has not gotten overtime since the NDP changed these rules, where perhaps they did get overtime before and now the business is forced to either not give the overtime, sometimes turning away business, or hire another worker at regular time rather than giving the extended hours to the workers they already have.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member that was just speaking has thought about Alberta families who could use that extra income, that actually might be able to trade that income on a one-to-one basis so that they could actually have some extra days off around Christmas, which they will not get now because the employer can't give them a day and a half. I wonder if the hon. member has thought about whether what he's actually proposing is to take away an extended holiday, an extended Christmas for a lot of Albertans with the way he talks about this bill without understanding the ramifications of what he's saying, without actually understanding how it's taking away the livelihoods of a lot of Albertans now that would otherwise be offered.

I wonder if he's thought about the Premier's suggestion in question period the one day that if somebody worked 40 hours of overtime, they would get under the new rules a week off. Instead of a week off, in fact, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and the Leader of the Opposition should have realized that that worker will probably not get any time off because they won't be able to be offered any overtime to have more time to spend with their family, to have more time to extend their holidays and to do those things.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member has thought about the \$13 an hour that tens of thousands of particularly young Albertans aren't getting now, because, well, \$15 an hour if you're working is surely better than \$13, \$13 is surely better than zero, and zero is the number that tens of thousands of Albertans are getting now under the rules that the NDP put in place. I wonder if the hon. member has thought about how much damage the NDP policies have done to Alberta and how those policies that this bill is correcting have contributed to the 180,000-plus Albertans that are now out of work, up to 180,000 families. It could be fewer families because some families actually might be missing two paycheques right now, Mr. Speaker. That's the extent of the damage that the NDP policies have wrought upon the honest, hard-working people of Alberta and that this bill is designed to correct and will correct.

I wonder if the hon. member has thought about how, under the regulations before the NDP messed them up, there used to be low unemployment in Alberta, how just about everybody that wanted to be working was, Mr. Speaker. These are all good things that used to be true in Alberta before the NDP policies contributed to making Alberta a much less pleasant place to work, a much less profitable place to work, and by extension a much, much less family-friendly place to work, because when you take away those paycheques,

when you take away the banked overtime, when you take away the first jobs that people get, the first rung on the economic ladder, many Albertans can't get to the second rung on the economic ladder till they get onto the first rung, that first minimum wage job where they build up their skills, where they build up their reputation, and where they work their way up to a higher paying, more responsible job.

I wonder if the hon. member has thought about just how much damage the NDP policies have done over the last four years and how badly the corrections in Bill 2 are needed in order to correct the mess that the NDP has left in their wake.

3:50 a.m.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert has the call.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. I suppose that's a good place to start. I believe that we had an amendment about changing the title of the bill that didn't go over well, but, you know, it's funny that "open for business" means subsidies and tax cuts on the backs of workers. It doesn't really make sense. Wage cuts for workers, tax cuts for the wealthy and powerful and lobbyists: okay, well, let's talk about that.

The member just stood up and gave a mini lecture about why people whose wages are going to be cut \$2 should be thankful because it's better than zero. Okay. Okay. Well, it's clear how you feel about that. What I believe: I believe in equal pay for equal work. I'm glad they find this funny. I believe in equal pay for equal work. That means equal pay for young people, for youth. If they're doing the job of someone that is older than them, they deserve equal pay. I believe in equal pay for women. I believe in equal pay for employees that have disabilities. I believe in equal pay.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, I think, you told us late one night that our incredible pages were not going to have their wages reduced if they were under 18. That was really great news. I'm really happy for the pages, actually, because they deserve it. They work hard. They're incredible young people. But then, you know, why is that okay for our people here, but it's not okay for other folks? Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't have done that. I'm very grateful that we did, and I wish that we could extend that to every other young person. But why is it okay for the people that we have to look at when we're here every day? They're different. Okay, if that's the way you want to play.

First of all, people under 18 will get a \$2 pay cut, \$2 an hour, to \$13. Now, I don't know. The members opposite seem to think that that's more than enough, and young people should be happy with that; they could be getting zero. But here's the thing about youth, one of the things that's even more offensive about this youth minimum wage. During breaks and summer holidays the youth rate will apply to all hours worked. This is particularly insulting, I believe, to young people. Maybe it's not your life experience; it's certainly my life experience that in the summertime that was the time that we weren't in school. That was the time that we were working full-time, often a couple of different jobs so that we could save enough money to do what we needed to do in the new year or to start saving for school, saving for all kinds of things, and for the most part they aren't luxuries. Often it was saving for school. Cut youth wages in the summer, and students have an even harder time to save for school.

It's particularly interesting to think about rural students. The cost of postsecondary education in Alberta, in Canada, is fairly expensive. I think that if you calculate the cost, you include tuition, books, and, for people that are coming into urban centres – perhaps

they don't have postsecondary in their communities or close by – moving to Edmonton, moving to Calgary, moving to Red Deer, moving to Lethbridge, they have to save quite a bit more to be able to do that because very often they have to live in residence, they have to rent a place, there's a lot more driving. There are a lot of expense because, you know, maybe they can't live at home with their folks and have their folks help them out. In effect, we're making it a little bit tougher for students to save for school.

What's the alternative? Kids or youth are delaying going to school, they're not going to school at all, or they're taking out loans, and those are some pretty big loans. Here are some stats. These ranges were a little bit old when I did this research, but here are some average costs, and these are costs that are inclusive of tuition, books, and, in some cases, housing. To take two semesters in a college the range was between \$9,750 and \$26,500. Now, I imagine that there are some housing costs in there that are towards the higher end. A technical school can range from \$11,000 to \$18,750, and university, of course quite a bit higher, is \$11,780 to just over \$45,000. That's a lot of money, and that's a lot of savings. That's a lot of years. I imagine that high school students that know that their families don't have the capacity to pay for their postsecondary education start saving early on. They're going to have to work a little bit harder to save for postsecondary, especially rural students, who have actually quite a bit more to save. They don't have the luxury of living close by. Right away we're putting some roadblocks in front of them.

I think that it's interesting that when we were talking about Bill 8, one of my colleagues was taking a different route to talk about why we were supporting the amendment. Amendment A5 I think it was. He talked about jobs and the economy and why it was important to do everything that we could to support these vulnerable youth so that they would be encouraged to go to postsecondary. The same applies here. We want our kids to be educated. We want our youth to go on to postsecondary. We want them to do all of the things that we need them to do. They are the future. But here we are cutting their wage, making it a little tougher. Now, thankfully there are banks, of course, credit cards. They could borrow money, and then they end up paying it back. I think we all know what that's like. On average, stats from 2016-17 indicate that it takes approximately nine years for students right now to pay back their debt. That's a concern.

Obviously, I have some other concerns around overtime and holiday pay, and I wanted to shine a light again on another sector that maybe doesn't get talked about all too often. We talked about construction, oil and gas, what the change in overtime would mean for them. I listened to the debate. I can't remember which day it was now. I think more than a day ago. My colleague from Calgary-Mountain View was talking about overtime agreements and how they are supposed to be voluntary agreements. Certainly, on the surface they are voluntary agreements, but I think that when you have an inherent power differential in an employment situation, you have an employer and employee, you know, there are some questions about the voluntary nature of an overtime agreement.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the Alberta disability workers. They actually have an umbrella organization in Alberta, and it's, oddly enough, called the Alberta Disability Workers. There are about 10,000 disability workers in Alberta. They are actually a highly skilled workforce. They're not paid a whole lot, but they're a highly skilled workforce. These are people that support folks with disabilities in a number of different settings. Sometimes they are contracted to work with families to support people in their home, particularly when they're young. FSCD is that funding program that supports families to start some really important intervention with their children that have disabilities. There are disability workers

that support adults. Those are often funded through PDD. Then there are service providers that help manage that work. They support people with disabilities so they can live in their community. Somebody with a disability might only need an hour a week just to check in. "How's your budget? How's the banking going? Let's get a grocery list going. Let's book some trips with DATS if that's the case. How was work?" Community living. They might support someone in supported employment. That might be someone with a fairly profound disability that requires staff with them all the time that they're at the work site so that they're able to do the work. They also support people in terms of job coaching. Sometimes there are people that are fairly skilled. Maybe they're just changing jobs, doing something different, so job coaches will actually help update resumés, help get them to interviews, learn bus routes if they must, learn the culture of their new workplace – maybe they have to punch in; maybe there's a certain place to store their lunch – then learn the job. Sometimes it's just rote learning at first. Then they learn the job, and off they go. These are disability workers that do this work.

Now, the reason why I'm boring you with all of this detail is that it's important. These people are not paid very much, and they work long hours. They work shift work, actually, a lot of them, as you can imagine. People's lives don't go 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, so these folks are tasked with supporting people during the holidays, the summer, Christmas. They work night shifts. They do all kinds of shifts, and they are not paid very much. So to remove some really basic benefits, like possibly getting a paid vacation day that's not your normal workday, is outrageous, and that you would call the bill that does that Open for Business: open for business on whose back? This is a group of people that works really hard, that we rely on to do some really, really important work in this province.

4:00 a.m.

I think you'll find out, as you start to consult and as you start to hear from your constituents, that this particular community struggles a great deal with staffing, ongoing staff training as a result of really, really high turnover rates. I can remember back in, like, the early 2000s – maybe 2002, 2003, 2004 – one of the ... [interjection] Sorry. It's a little distracting when they're mumbling. One of the things that they had us do at the place that I worked is that we had to calculate stats on turnover rates. Other organizations did as well. It was just to take the temperature to see how bad it was, and in one year I believe it was an over 65 per cent turnover rate in this particular sector.

Now, if you look at that, it tells you a lot of things. There are turnover rates that are that high for a number of reasons. People don't just do the work for money. I think there are other reasons people do the work. They do the work for the satisfaction of the work they do, passion for what they believe in. Sometimes it's the little extras, maybe seeing people succeed, but it's also, you know, vacation. Maybe there are some other benefits that are involved in your job. But those turnover rates were so high, and what that does to this particular sector is that it requires constant retraining. In this particular group it has some pretty intensive training to be able to support people correctly in the community. So you are reducing the benefits to a group that is already not paid very much, and you're still requiring all these skills.

Let me tell you that some of the training for a community disability worker to be able to support somebody properly – and these are not just things I'm making up. There are accreditation standards that require this training. There's training around medication administration because you are responsible not only to do the electronic tracking of the medication, to receive the medication, record it, and all of that but to understand what happens when something goes wrong, to understand what a PRN is, to have

medication perhaps on-site that isn't a normal dose but sometimes you need it, first aid, CPR – I'm sure everybody knows that and has done that – abuse prevention and reporting. This is really intensive training that is required for these workers. This is something that this particular sector really struggles with, restrictive procedures. People that don't work in this sector don't understand what that is.

Again, this is a group that is required to work their normal shifts – these are long hours – and then they're required to constantly do this training and update and then recertify. Yet we're going to look at this particular group and go, "Well, you know, you have an arrangement with your employer about overtime; see how that goes," and "Well, yeah; you might not qualify for that holiday day" when, in fact, these are workers that actually rely on a day off with pay.

Some of the other training that's really intense that requires a lot of skill: nonviolent crisis intervention, mental health first aid. All of these things are required training for this particular group of employees, and this is a group, again, that isn't paid very much, but they're responsible for human beings every single day. They're responsible for aspects of their lives that are not normal in other jobs.

Let's pick another industry. Let's just pick construction. There's a lot to do around injury prevention, safety awareness training for that particular sector. But it's different from this sector because workers in this particular sector have the lives of the people that they're supporting in their hands every single day, whether they're driving them, whether they're giving them their medication, whether they're responding, let's say, to a seizure.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Wow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me. I was of course listening intently to the Member for St. Albert, especially with her extensive background in working with people with disabilities and challenges in the workplace to try to make sure they have gainful employment. I know that her experience takes her a lot farther than just her constituents in St. Albert. As she was explaining some of those challenges, I know she was wrapping up some of her comments. I was hoping she was going to do that, but I was also wondering if she might be able to enlighten us about maybe some of the people that have reached out to her from other corners of the province with some of the concerns that Bill 2 poses and how that can affect their lifestyle and their ability to be able to find meaningful employment.

**The Speaker:** The Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. Certainly, people have expressed concerns about this. I think that when you sit in a place like this and you do a job that has the flexibility, maybe, that ours has to be able to take a day off when you need it and be reimbursed at the rate that we are reimbursed at, it's easy to say: "Well, you know, it's just a day. It's just overtime. It's fine. It's just \$2 for youth." I think our perspective is a little bit off because \$2 an hour for somebody, a youth, or overtime being paid out at a different rate than you earned it – and keep in mind that time was taken away from other things. Those things are actually important. Those things have the ability to change what you're able to do in a day, particularly if you are supporting a family, not just yourself.

Sort of going back to this particular sector that I do know a fair amount about because I worked front line a very long time ago, I also supported a lot of staff, and what I know is that because of the wage that they were paid – and, you know, we certainly paid them as much as we could, but because of the earnings and the high cost

of housing and food and transportation and all of those things, very often employees would have two jobs, more than one job. That was the norm. So to take away the little extras when people are already really struggling . . . [interjections] I don't really know what's so funny about that, but okay. To take away those important things is not good.

I want to go back to the title of this bill. I get that you're trying to capitalize on the image of the little open-for-business sign. I get that. It's branding or whatever you want to call it. But to say that you're open for business based on implementing cuts and changes that came directly from a lobby group right before the election and to do it on the backs of people that don't have a voice – these are young people; they can't even vote yet – and people that are busy sometimes working one and two jobs, to take away things like a guarantee that if they do the overtime, they will be paid a little bit more or if they work and it's not their normal workday, they'll get a day off with pay, you know, is pretty rich.

I think, getting into the weeds – and we've heard again and again about the training wage and why it's not a good idea, never mind for payroll, data entry, and all of the work that you have to do for payroll – when you start to have different rates of pay, different earning levels, it's a lot of work. You talk about wanting to cut red tape, and then you create more. I don't really understand that part.

But when you start to get into training wages, here's where it gets a little dangerous. People that have been marginalized, or maybe they've been called people with modest levels of human capital: these are the people that have been traditionally given training wages because they're seen as less than. I believe in equal pay for equal work, and sadly it has been people with disabilities, people that have been marginalized because of their disability that have typically been given training wages because they're just not ready for real life, they're just not ready for full wages.

When we start talking about training wages, we're talking about people being worth less. If you've got somebody who's 17, somebody who's 19 doing the same job – you've arbitrarily decided they're worth less because of when they were born. I don't get that. That's not how you create a stronger society and a stronger economy, by cutting people that don't have a voice yet. That is not how you do it. There is a different path forward than this.

4:10 a.m.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 2? The hon. the Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to those who serve us in this Assembly: pages, table officers, security, and others, *Hansard*. I'd like to thank all of them on behalf of the government and, I'm sure, all members for their remarkable devotion.

I'd like in particular to commend members of the government caucus for their determination and discipline to keep their trust with Alberta voters. It was only 10 weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta voters spoke in the largest numbers in the history of Alberta to send a large majority government to this place with the most detailed and robust electoral mandate ever obtained by an incoming government, a positive plan to renew Alberta as a place that is strong and free, which delineated some 375 specific and detailed commitments to Albertans. Tonight we are here to ensure that we keep those commitments. This is about honouring our trust with Albertans.

Part of that trust is our central commitment to get Alberta back to work and to undo the massive economic damage inflicted on Albertans by the previous NDP government. In the speech that we just heard, in the NDP's opposition to Bill 2, in their efforts to obstruct the implementation of our democratically endorsed mandate, what we see is a party that is embittered, a party incapable

of acknowledging the damage it inflicted, a party unwilling to acknowledge the message that was sent to it by the majority of Albertans just weeks ago, who endorsed the platform which included, as Bill 2, the open for business act, the provisions which are before us at third reading at this moment.

Mr. Speaker, it's remarkable that the hon. the Leader of the Opposition was recently asked by an Ottawa journalist what mistakes her government might have made which led to its historic repudiation as the first one-term government in the history of Alberta, and she was unable to identify a single failing of her government. Talk about a catastrophic lack of humility. Talk about hubris. Well, pride cometh before the fall. When I mentioned this in a speech last week, the hon. the Leader of the Opposition stood up and said: no, Mr. Speaker; I've identified something that went wrong; the voters didn't agree with the carbon tax. That's what the NDP is doing. They're blaming Albertans for not understanding why they introduced job-killing policies.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the reason why I have the honour to stand here, the responsibility to stand here as Premier, the reason why members of the United Conservative caucus are here at 4:15 in the morning, after having sat for well over 30 hours in this place, is precisely because we were elected to come here to undo the damage imposed by a devastating economic experiment imposed on this province by an NDP government that came to office at a time when there were already deep challenges because of the reduction in commodity prices in late 2014. They were elected not before the collapse in commodity prices; they were elected approximately nine months after that began. And seeing that situation unfold, seeing the province dive into a deep recession, what did they decide to do? In policy after policy they decided to drag us deeper into recession, deeper and deeper, worsening a bad situation. That constellation of anti-growth policies had a very real human impact on people's lives.

Mr. Speaker, as they raised taxes on everything, they raised the highest personal tax rate by 50 per cent in the middle of a recession. Then they raised taxes on job creators, what they call big, evil corporations, the folks that actually put everything on the line, the small and medium-sized business people who mortgaged their homes to start the small business, who work 100-hour weeks, who have no minimum wage, no guaranteed benefits, no job security, no defined benefit pensions, no union to defend them, those people, the true unsung heroes of our economy. What did they do? They raised taxes on employers by 20 per cent in the middle of a recession.

Then they imposed the single-largest tax increase in Alberta history, one that they hid from voters in the previous election, the carbon tax, that made everything more expensive, made it more expensive for seniors to heat their homes and single moms to buy groceries and working guys to fill up their gas tank to get to work, made it more expensive for nonprofits and charities and small businesses and school boards and everybody to do darn near everything. Then they raised the provincial share of property taxes. Then they made a deal with their friend and ally Mr. Trudeau to raise payroll taxes. Imagine that. You're in the middle of a recession. Jobs are being shed by the tens of thousands, and what do you do as a government? You make it more expensive to hire people. NDP economics, Mr. Speaker.

Then came massive new regulations on everything that moved, including the job-killing regulations which we are repealing in An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, Bill 2. Mr. Speaker, I recently met a small-business person who runs a café in Inglewood in Calgary, who told me that the mandate imposed by the previous NDP government, which we seek here to undo, to pay for statutory holiday pay for days that they weren't even open as a business, days



when the workers were never working, constituted a 13th month of payroll for him. What did it mean? He had to lay people off.

Ten days ago in Calgary I met a furniture store owner, another one of the terrible businesspeople that the NDP thrives on demonizing in their politics of division and class warfare. They love demonizing people, Mr. Speaker. It's just about all they know how to do. After Conservatives come business owners, the people who have the temerity to take risks, to work hard to create jobs and opportunity. Well, I was speaking to one of them, one of those terrible business owners, who employs dozens of people and has barely made it through this NDP recession, who had to lay a whole bunch of them off. He and his wife have to work seven days a week to keep that furniture store going. You know what he told me? An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business will immediately, by the change in the overtime provision, save his business \$45,000. He said: "You know what we're going to do with that? We're going to hire a new staff so maybe my wife and I can take a part day off."

Now, I know that one job doesn't make much difference to the NDP. They don't really care, you know. I don't know how many of them run a business and understand the sacrifices those folks make, Mr. Speaker, while they stand up here and defend interest groups that are formal legal affiliates of the NDP suing Alberta taxpayers. But why are we doing this? Why did we make this commitment? Why did Albertans endorse that commitment in the recent election? They did so because of the human cost of the NDP's disastrous economic experiment. They sent us here because we've gone through four years of economic decline and stagnation, because our gross domestic product, the size of our economy, is 4 per cent lower than it was four years ago, because the average after-tax family income is down by 6 per cent.

**4:20 a.m.**

Now, Mr. Speaker, given that that didn't really happen in the public sector, imagine how much more that average after-tax income is down for people in the private sector. How about those small-business owners, a whole lot more than 6 per cent? Unemployment pushing 200,000 people: unprecedented in our economic history. Albertans laughed them out of office when they tried to tell people that happy times were here again as we saw unemployment go up in seven of the last nine months of the NDP's economic experiment. That does not account for the tens of thousands of people who gave up looking for work altogether, who left the labour market. For 36 months of the NDP's economic disaster net interprovincial out-migration from Alberta for the first time in our modern history: for three years more Canadians left Alberta than came to it. They took the land of opportunity and turned it into a brain drain.

I know that every member, certainly of the government side here, knows a constituent or somebody – I look at my friend from Fort McMurray, who has a constituent who he tells me about often who has gone to Iraq. I met somebody in Mundare recently, a mom with her three beautiful young boys, who broke down in tears telling me about how her husband had to leave the oil field in central Alberta to go to work in communist Cuba. We all know people like that. The stats don't pick them all up. What about the underemployment, those who are still technically employed under the NDP but whose incomes were reduced radically, whose families had to massively reduce their budgets?

That's why we were sent here, Mr. Speaker, with a bold agenda to turn that around, and I just cannot understand. I've been on the winning and losing side of elections before. I've got a little bit of experience in this, and I must tell you that I have never seen a party losing an election so convincingly so obviously refuse to come to terms with that. Here they are filibustering not just some bill that

the government's dreamt up, not some minor platform commitment to which we vaguely alluded, but the bill that was presented as Bill 2 and presented in stark detail to Albertans. This bill has the imprimatur, the approval, the democratic endorsement of the people of Alberta. The NDP is seeking to stop it because they are desperate to preserve their failed economic experiment, but with the determination of this caucus and the support of Albertans we will not let them continue to drag our economy down.

By the way, the last member who spoke over there just talked a lot about equal pay. There's a lot of Albertans, Mr. Speaker, making equal pay at zero dollars right now, about 180,000 Albertans. It reminds me of what Margaret Thatcher always said about the left. They're happy if everybody is equally poor. Well, we are not; that's not the Alberta ethic. That's why they were so convincingly repudiated by voters 10 weeks ago. Don't they understand? They drove a crisis in youth unemployment in a province that always had the highest labour force participation. I know that sounds like a wonky phrase. Let me spell it out. It basically means that you take the total number of people in a particular share of the population, let's say 15- to 25-year-olds. In this province that used to be 72 per cent labour force participation, by an order of magnitude the highest in Canada, and that was a great thing. It meant that those young people, those teenagers, those early-20-somethings, were getting that first job or that second job, that critical experience that, the economic data tell, sets people up for success for the rest of their lives. That was part of the secret sauce of the Alberta advantage, that high level of labour force participation, of employment, of work ethic amongst young people, and in the best years many of those young people were making very good money. All of that ended under the NDP. [interjection]

They're laughing about it, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you that Albertans laughed them right out of office when they saw what happened, when they drove us up to the highest level of youth unemployment in the history of the province of Alberta, and we saw a catastrophic decline in the number of young people even bothering to seek a job under the NDP's economic disaster. The labour force participation for youth fell from 72 per cent to 61 per cent, and even amongst that 61 per cent we were as high at one point as 16 per cent youth unemployment, 35,000 young people looking for work. Sure, those 35,000 had equal pay at zero dollars an hour. The youth job creation wage is about moving those young people from unemployment and having left the labour market to employment, from zero dollars an hour to at least \$13 an hour, which would be higher than the minimum wage in virtually every other province, higher than what adults were making at the minimum wage just two years ago. Everywhere I go, I'm being thanked by young people for what we're doing to bring opportunity back to this economy for them.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed changes to labour relations – by the way, let me pause to commend the hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration for his tremendous work on this and so many other projects that got our economy back to work.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's cut to the chase here. The real reason the NDP is filibustering this platform commitment, that has the democratic seal of approval, is because they cannot tolerate workplace democracy. They took it away. It used to be and what we returned to is where you have to go to workers in a secret ballot vote before you can put a union on them. Now, we believe in the constitutionally protected right of collective bargaining, but we believe that you should only be forced into a collective bargaining unit, Mr. Speaker, if there has been a majority secret ballot vote. But that doesn't work for some of the special-interest bosses who are formal legal affiliates of the NDP. They want to be able to force

people into unions even against their democratic wishes, which is why they brought in a system called automatic carding.

What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? Well, it means that an organizer can stand in the parking lot and say: sign the card. If you don't sign the card, what's the implication? Well, I can tell you what it was on one construction site in Calgary. Some vulnerable new Canadian workers with limited English language skills were told that they were going to be fined thousands of dollars by the union and potentially face deportation from the country if they didn't sign the card. They signed the cards, and then they found themselves stuck in a union they never supported. And guess what? They went to the Labour Relations Board and said: we want out; we never agreed to this. They said: I'm sorry; that's the law.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that we will overcome the obstruction of the NDP, which in its pridefulness refuses to acknowledge the democratic mandate to adopt An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. Through the passage of this bill, we will restore workplace democracy and a secret ballot vote for all workers in Alberta. That's really what it's all about. They get the phone calls from their special-interest bosses, who say: you can't let the Conservatives bring this. It doesn't matter that over a million Albertans voted for this. It doesn't matter that it tramples on democratic rights. All this is about is preserving a system that allows people to be bullied and intimidated into doing what their special-interest friends want. You know, they can stand here, defend their powerful special-interest friends that have a formal, legal affiliation, who ran vicious attack ads against Conservatives, spending millions of dollars of forced union dues. They can do their payback for those folks here now, but I'll tell you what: we are going to stand up for ordinary working women and men in this province to ensure that they never face intimidation when it comes to voting on certification in their workplace.

4:30 a.m.

Then, finally, they're trying to scare people, as they always do – it's always fear and smear, division and demonization – and scaring people that we're taking away overtime. How ridiculous. You know what? They tried the fear and smear in the campaign, and Albertans told them: get out of here; you're done; it's over. Mr. Speaker, Albertans didn't buy it. They didn't buy the fear and smear. Their friends spent millions of dollars on attack ads, and it didn't work. You know why? Because there's just too much common sense in this province. People could see through the fear and the smear. People know that all we propose to do in the open for business act is to empower workers, where they choose to do so, at their volition, with their will, to negotiate more flexible shifts so that they can have an extra day off in the summer or they can have extra hours if they're working and getting good tip income.

You know, the NDP just can't stand this. Their driving impulse is to control people's lives. It's to regulate them. It's to penalize businesses for the temerity of taking risks to create employment. What we seek to do here with this common-sense measure, which had a long-standing practice in Alberta, is to empower workers to negotiate with their employers, because what happened since the NDP brought this in is that people stopped getting those overtime opportunities. Employers said: "I'm sorry. Got to pay you 15 bucks now. We're barely making any money or we're not at all. I'm having to lay people off, and now you're coming to me asking for a certain structure of hours that will force me to pay time and a half. We can't do it." That means the worker doesn't get the time off, and they don't get the overtime. So you've got the NDP's, like, obsession with micromanaging the lives of people and those evil business owners in particular, who can never be trusted.

You know, one of the most – well, there are so many outrageous things that happened under the previous government. Just one that comes to mind was when the former minister of labour, I think, if I'm not mistaken, the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods, was invited to speak to the annual gathering of Restaurants Canada. Now, that is an industry, by the way, that employs I believe over 200,000 Albertans and is the largest employer of young people in this province. The typical restaurant is an owner-operator small business. They invited the minister of labour or anybody, any minister from the NDP cabinet, to come and speak to them. The minister of labour was designated to go, and the day before the conference she issued a statement saying that she had decided she was not going to attend, that she was going to boycott the meeting with the restaurant owners because she said that she realized that they had an ideological, antiworker agenda. Imagine, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to table the news release where she actually said this. Imagine the minister responsible for labour attacking one of the single largest creators of labour in Alberta.

That was the NDP's economic disaster. It wasn't bad enough that they killed tens of thousands of hospitality jobs through the 50 per cent increase in the minimum wage in the middle of a recession, through higher taxes, through lower take-home pay, through the economic crisis that they created, through this kind of red tape. It wasn't enough. But then they literally had to add insult to injury by insulting, you know, these or many of these folks, who literally clean the toilets in their businesses when the lights are being turned off at the end of an 18-hour day. Mr. Speaker, how dare they insult those women and men who do so much to create the first jobs for young Albertans.

We will never insult the job creators of this province, but we will do everything we can to liberate them to create more jobs and more opportunity in this province, and that is why I am proud to stand here at 4:35 in the morning in support of third reading of Bill 2, the open for business act. These are common-sense measures to bring balance back to Alberta labour legislation, to repeal some of the job-killing regulations imposed by the NDP. Everywhere I go, I meet employers – I know my colleagues hear it – who come up to say: "Thank you. Thank you for doing this. We have a new lease on life. We can hire people again. We know we can keep our doors open. There's hope on the horizon."

I'll just close by saying this, Mr. Speaker. We Albertans are natural optimists. That's what drew people to this province from every corner of this country and all around the world, a sense of a place where dreams could be achieved and potential realized through hard work and playing by the rules. That has been the character and culture of this province. We start this morning. I'll be leaving right from this speech to go and help to lead the Calgary Stampede, where we celebrate those frontier values, our rural roots, that work ethic, that sense of self-reliance but also strong communities. Undergirding all of that is a tremendous, deep sense of hopefulness and optimism.

But Albertans, even with their natural optimism, need a rational reason for their optimism. What I hear from Albertans everywhere I go is that this new government has given them that reason for renewed optimism, but we need to put real substance behind it, and that is why we are moving forward with such determination on this bold legislative reform agenda, including Bill 2, the open for business act. Let's stop the delay tactics. Let's stop the filibusters. Let's let Albertans see these changes they voted for put into law to get Alberta back to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen to ask a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have several comments for the Premier. I'd like to clarify some of his comments and pose questions to the hon. Premier. The first point that I'd like to raise is that somehow this Premier and this government think that they got 100 per cent of the votes during the election. They did not. They got about 55 per cent. Is that substantial? Absolutely. But a percentage of Albertans also voted for our opposition, for our party, for our members to be able to rise in this place and speak on behalf of our members and, as well, to hold this government to account. Now, the Premier seems to think that he can do whatever he wants, that somehow the rules of democracy as far as, you know, the opposition doing their job to hold the government to account don't apply because somehow, in his mind and in the government's mind, they really have a monopoly on this province.

You know, I find it interesting that the Premier talks about jobs. I'd love to know from him his comments on the 30,000 jobs that have been lost so far since this government took office through the cancellation of the climate leadership plan, the renewable electricity program, and now attacks on the tech sector and artificial intelligence, by throwing that sector into complete disarray, because the government refuses to fund and ensure that Alberta continues to remain number 3 in the world.

What I find really rich is the fact that the Premier talks about campaigning on this bill. I would love for him to stand up in this place or to tell Albertans through the media when he was asked repeatedly about campaigning to cut the wages of overtime workers. Now, either the government continues to mislead Albertans by saying that they had a mandate in the election for this bill – well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? Albertans, especially construction and oil and gas sector workers, were shocked that this Premier is cutting their overtime pay and did not campaign on that. So that's the first point of clarification that needs to happen. I can tell you that the media asked the Premier, over and over again, afterwards and actually during the campaign if that meant cutting overtime pay, and repeatedly the then leader of the UCP denied that that was going to happen.

**4:40 a.m.**

I'd like to know how cutting youth wages is actually going to work here in Alberta when other provinces have attempted cutting youth wages, which actually has not had the impact that this government claims.

You know, the other thing that's fascinating is that ensuring that workers are eligible for their time and a half is something that exists in every other province in this country, that we did change, and I'm curious to know why the Premier wants to attack the working people of this province.

I also find it completely fascinating that there are incredible, obviously, businesses and business owners in this province who do pay fair wages and treat their workers exceptionally well. Unfortunately, there are some that do not. But, you know, what I find rich is that when we, the opposition, stand up and talk about wanting to ensure that workers are also treated well, somehow we're in the pockets of unions. This government and this Premier speak very poorly of organized labour yet can attack them, and that's okay. But if we pull up an example of a business that has mistreated a worker, well, suddenly then we're attacking all businesses. You can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker.

You know, that was a great little election speech that we listened to there.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say that the last speaker there, the Premier, is a hard act to follow, but at the very least it was entertaining. Let's talk about Bill 2, the Act to Pick People's Pockets and Hopefully Make Alberta Open for Business. You know, I listened to some of the things that the Premier said and even some of the other members over the course of a little bit here in talking about this disaster that they were talking about and how the former NDP government led the province to ruin and everything like that because of our policies.

One of the things I wanted to quickly look at: when we look back at 2018, unfortunately unemployment in the province during that year averaged 6.6 per cent. Coincidentally, a barrel of oil at that time was \$58.15. The last time I looked . . . [interjections] I have the floor here, Mr. Speaker, so maybe I can continue my remarks uninterrupted.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt. However, I think you'll have found over a period of time that there has been some give-and-take and some heckling here. The Speaker is more than happy to determine who has and who doesn't have the floor.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that very much. When I was looking back, just quickly, as an example, in 2009 and 2010, respectively, oil prices at that time were \$53.48 and \$71.21, and coincidentally the unemployment rate at that time was 6.5 per cent for 2009 and 6.6 per cent for 2010.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I can't help but wonder, Madam Speaker, if it was bad economic policy during that time that created that unemployment rate. As we all know, during 2009 and 2010 the Conservatives were currently governing the province of Alberta, so I just thought I'd throw that out there since it was brought up.

One of the other things I wanted to quickly address, Madam Speaker, is that, again, we heard the hon. Premier talking about the mandate that was received and how many votes they got, that 1.04 million people in Alberta did vote for the UCP. But I also couldn't help but notice that 3.3 million Albertans did not vote for the UCP, talking about spin because we always hear spin from the other side of the floor. You know, a 2 per cent increase in the corporate tax rate turns into 20 per cent, and a raise in the minimum wage turns into 50 per cent, so it's all about spin. I just thought I'd throw my spin in there when we're talking about Bill 2 and how this is going to negatively impact Albertans. It negatively impacts them by affecting their general holiday pay. It affects the way that their overtime can be paid out. It affects changes to the Labour Relations Code. It affects changes to the youth rate. I want to quickly talk about some of those.

I've always told people through my time in the labour movement, even my own members in my workplace before I was an MLA: never ever build your life around overtime because the employer is never on the hook to have to give you overtime. There's no rule anywhere that says that an employer is required to give you overtime when the employee asks; it doesn't happen. Usually overtime occurs when the workload needs to be done. They don't have the staff coming in to do it, so they ask somebody to stay to accomplish that. But that is never a guaranteed right.

But when you do take your time away from your family, your friends, your free time to perform that overtime, you should be compensated appropriately, which is at time and a half, and that should be included when you're just banking your time. I've heard

time and again from members opposite: time is money, time is money, time is money. Well, if time is money, then your time equals up to time and a half when you bank it. The problem I've always seen around this banking of overtime hours is when it comes time to actually use them. Unfortunately, I've seen bad actors out there. There just never seems to be a convenient time to take time off. What ends up resulting, Madam Speaker, is that they end up saying: well, we know we can't give you the time off right now, but if you need the money, we could pay it out to you at straight time. I've seen it over and over again, and you are taking money away from employees that earned it legitimately for performing overtime work that was asked of them at that time.

As you can imagine, the roles that are laid out in here will allow these bad actors to take advantage of that and potentially force the good actors to have to react and respond. They can't compete because a bad actor is doing it wrong. Again, I've seen it just in plain old negotiations, the same company negotiating a contract that has a nonunion contract, and the first thing they say is: well, I can't compete with this business over here because they pay less. The same business. This is allowing those kinds of situations to be created, and that's not fair to hard-working Albertans, who, when they do work that overtime to bank it or use it later, should be compensated fairly for that work.

4:50 a.m.

Now, holiday pay. I would be interested to know from any member in this House: previous to being elected, when it came time to take holidays, did you go: "Oh, I'm sorry. I don't believe in getting holiday pay. You need to keep that"? I bet you I'd be hard-pressed to find anyone in here, Madam Speaker, that didn't very happily take that holiday pay to the bank. It's not like there's a holiday every single week of the year. These are statutory holidays. Over time we have said, "Yes, this is time to spend with our family," and if they take it and work, which is every employee's right to do, they get paid appropriately for that. Why would we want to roll that back for hard-working Albertans? Because they will take some of that pay and, I think, as the Member for Edmonton-South West said, buy Christmas presents because they managed to work a little bit of overtime. I know I certainly did that in my former workplace. I would work overtime to pay for some of the extra things that I wanted to have, be it a vacation, be it presents at Christmastime, whatever.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Another thing I would like to talk about around the Labour Relations Code is around this secret ballot. Mr. Speaker, this is a ridiculous conversation. I have heard time and time again from members opposite: the NDP government took away the secret ballot. No; it was always there. [interjections] Well, you all need to read the legislation because it was there. What we said was: if a union during an organizing drive was able to secure 65 per cent of the workplace with signed cards – and even members opposite have said that that's a majority; they seem to think 56 per cent is an overwhelming majority – then they were allowed to recognize the union as their bargaining unit. Okay? That provision still applied here in the House. If the union couldn't secure 65 per cent, if they could only secure 64 per cent, the secret ballot still applied. So we need to start being up front with Albertans with the language. I've said time and time again in this House about language and what it says and what it doesn't, and the language was very clear in the legislation. With 65 per cent, you formed a union; under 65 per cent you went to a secret ballot and saw what happened.

Now, I want to start talking a little bit about this youth minimum wage, claims that it's going to create jobs. The problem, from the

students that I've talked to, from employers that I've also talked to, is that if they have five people on shift to do the work at that time, whether one of them gets paid \$2 an hour less, two of them, three of them, it does not magically mean that all of a sudden that employer is going to require a sixth person to do the work that the five were already doing. They said: I'm not going to hire someone when I only require five people on shift. So, in my opinion, this is taking somebody who is 17 years old and penalizing them for being 17.

Then around some of the conditions. It applies to the first 28 hours worked. It depends on whether you're in school or not. If you're not in school, you'll make \$15. Now, it sounds like we're getting into a whole bunch of red tape, that I thought the associate minister of red tape had a mandate to look after. Promises: one in, one out; reduce it by one-third over the next four years. I've seen a whole bunch of red tape being created here, and I worry about the red tape that's now going to have to come out to try to catch up. I think the associate minister has his work cut out for him, and I wish him the best of luck because it sounds like he's got some catching up to do here. We're now expecting employers to try to keep track of birthdates, whether they're in or out of school. Did they work 28 hours or 29 hours? If they worked over 28 hours, how many did they work? Now there are multiple pay scales. Like I said, holy red tape, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start to conclude my remarks around this whole open for business. It would suggest, as I've said before, that Alberta was closed for business. Yet when I look at companies like Seven Generations Energy, investing \$1.2 billion in a natural gas processing facility; when I look at a company like Improbable, that moved their head office here to Alberta; when I see CN Rail wanting to expand and strengthen its infrastructure network to the tune of \$370 million; when I see Pembina building a petrochemical plant for \$4.5 billion; when I see Inter Pipeline's investment at \$2.1 billion – and those are just a few quick ones that I found. Mr. Speaker, \$8.2 billion of investment is closed for business? Really? So I struggle greatly with this bill.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see that the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration has risen.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to just take a few minutes to respond to some of the comments made by the hon. member across, and I feel that I need to set the record straight on a couple of issues in regard to Bill 2. I'd like to actually speak primarily to banked overtime, the youth minimum wage, and general holidays and then make some comments as well in regard to the NDP record concerning investment in the province of Alberta.

Now, the first comment is on banked overtime. The hon. member opposite indicated that banked overtime will impact the pay, and we've heard other members sort of go into the realm of hyperbole saying that. I think that one member indicated that 400,000 Albertans, because of banked overtime and the impact on overtime pay, will now need to go to the food bank. Mr. Speaker, that simply is hyperbole. In reality, this is not about impacting overtime pay. This is about providing opportunities for employees to reach an agreement with their employers to bank their overtime hours and then take those at a later date.

What the members opposite fail to recognize – and we've had this debate over a number of weeks on this issue – is that their change in the policy reduced opportunities for employees and employers alike. They didn't have the ability to get overtime pay, nor did they have the ability to bank overtime. I have heard from employers who indicated in thanking our government – and I

indicated this in an earlier speech. With the change in the rules, should this pass, which is a commitment that we made and that our government will support, then he will be able to hire someone else and be able to offer banked overtime to his employees. This was a furniture shop.

**5:00 a.m.**

I also want to talk about comments in regard to youth minimum wage and the general holiday pay. Again, this previous government's policies, which increased the minimum wage by nearly 50 per cent in the face of an economic recession, created burdens on job creators, which resulted in not only staff being laid off but fewer hours worked. The member opposite quite correctly says: well, if I only need five people, why would I hire more? What the member opposite fails to recognize is that they don't need five people; they need six people. The reason they don't have the six people is because the NDP policies, you know, particularly in the restaurant industry, where we've seen this general holiday change, which resulted in significant costs for employers, plus the increase in the minimum wage – saying: I would actually like to have six people, but I can't afford it; now I have five. By making this change, we can go back to six.

This is what we've heard from businesses, and particularly in the restaurant industry I've spoken with a number of Calgary businesses who thanked us for putting forward this change to say: I can hire more people now because I was running short because I couldn't afford them before. This is the reason why at this point in time with these changes we will create jobs for Albertans and particularly for Albertan youth.

Mr. Speaker, we have a youth job crisis. For under 18, 1 in 5 – actually, it's more than 1 in 5; it's 21.5 per cent. Roughly 1 in 5 students under 18 are unemployed. They can't earn anything to save for school and they can't earn anything to help their families because they can't find work. Even though it's 1 in 5 today, that would be higher if you actually counted all those who stopped looking for work because they couldn't find any. The youth job-creation wage will reduce the costs for employers so we can provide more work and more opportunities for Alberta's youth to get them working.

The last comment I would like to make is in regard to the billions of dollars mentioned by the members opposite who looked at a couple of projects and said that there's maybe a hundred million here, \$200 million there, \$1.5 billion there. What the member opposite doesn't mention is the tens to hundreds of billions of dollars of investment that fled this province under the NDP.

So I urge, for the third reading, the rest of the House and my colleagues to support . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to third reading? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to third reading of the pick-your-pockets bill, Bill 2, which, you know, again, there's been some interesting debate this evening on this bill. Of course, the government is going to continue to say that giving a two-tier wage or a youth differential is great for the economy. I think it's completely discriminatory based on age. We've had a number of examples that we've outlined. Depending on when a person's birthday falls, they make \$2 less than their colleague.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South talked about a person working in Lloydminster. Now, this isn't on the youth wage, but this is on, I believe, the holiday pay. That's what we were talking about. I will find this real quickly. Yeah. The general holiday pay

distinction. That's, for example, if Christmas falls on a Saturday, parents here won't get the extra pay, obviously, to cover off additional costs, but in Saskatchewan they do. So in a city like Lloydminster, where you have half and half – it actually puts Alberta out of step with every other province in Canada as far as making a distinction between regular versus nonregular workdays. I can tell you that holiday pay in every other province is owed to workers, whether it falls on their regularly scheduled day off. Again, that's, you know, B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. Alberta workers will no longer be eligible to receive that.

For me, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about, you know, pay for work hours put in, I believe that equal work deserves equal pay. It doesn't matter whether you're 15 or 55. If you're doing the exact same work, I don't understand the premise of the argument that, well, because you're younger, you deserve less money. Again, it's interesting that when you even look back in Alberta's history, it was former Premier Ralph Klein that I believe got rid of the two-tiered wage. He didn't believe that you should be paid less because of your age. Considering this government loves to throw his name around and talk about how in their opinion he was the greatest Premier, it's interesting that they'll cherry-pick which parts of it that he was so great at.

By the way, one of the greatest fallacies of the '90s was when he held up the sign that said: paid in full. It actually wasn't. What the government did was download a ridiculous amount onto municipalities, who don't have nearly the same number of tools to be able to bring in revenue. At the same time we saw an historic amount of infrastructure deferral on maintenance, which, I would argue, we're still paying for. I believe it's the Misericordia hospital in Edmonton where the roof collapsed on one of their ER rooms. This was a few years back but not that long ago, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are a number of things that he did which I completely disagreed with. I mean, he also rolled back the wages of teachers and others, but everybody talks about the good times when he was Premier.

Now, he was very fortunate to hold the reins of the province when natural gas was at an all-time high and there were record Crown land sales going on in the province, so money was pouring in. Again, for me I have this image in my mind when people talk about how he brought in the great times. I think, "Yeah; he was out around Fort McMurray putting the oil in the ground. He's the reason that the province was doing so well back then," which, of course, is not true, Mr. Speaker. Again, the times were very favourable, but I would argue that that wasn't because of him per se. He just happened to be there at the right time. Just like, again, the challenge over the last four years was with the historic collapse in the global price of oil, going from \$127 a barrel down to \$27 a barrel, which had a huge impact on everyone throughout this province.

You know, jumping back to the bill here, Mr. Speaker, this will impact roughly about 400,000 workers as far as overtime. For me, I think one of the most disingenuous things that has been said by the government in this place is that they campaigned on this. The truth of the matter is that the government did not campaign on this. They are being . . .

**Ms Renaud:** Thrifty with the truth.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yeah. Thrifty with the truth is an understatement because during the election nowhere in their platform did they say: we're going to roll back time and a half on overtime hours worked. You know, the government can paint the picture of: "No; this is better for workers. Now they can get an extra day off." Well, you know, I think that the majority of workers would rather take the pay

because, quite frankly, for many of them, especially those in the oil and gas sector or the construction sector, they factor that in to make ends meet every month, so suddenly removing that removes hundreds of dollars from their paycheques every month, which, again, is just completely unfair. I mean, this is something that was negotiated and part of why they may have went into a certain occupation that they did.

**5:10 a.m.**

I mean, you look at a lot of people who go and work in the oil and gas sector. When things are humming along, they work really long hours. They deserve to be compensated accordingly, Mr. Speaker. It's frustrating that the government says – especially when they throw attacks about how we didn't campaign on a carbon tax. Well, you didn't campaign on cutting overtime pay for workers, and I would love for the Premier and for his government to acknowledge that, but I think that's extremely unlikely..

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that I'd like to move an amendment to this reading of the bill. I will hold one copy and send the original with the requisite number of copies to the table, and I'll pause until you receive it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this will be referred to as amendment REC. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is more than welcome to proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following. “Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering section 4.”

Now, what this does, Mr. Speaker, is give the Assembly an opportunity to amend this piece of legislation in an attempt to improve it. I think, you know, quite honestly, the title of this bill is completely a misnomer as far as Alberta open for business. This bill does no such thing to make Alberta more open for business. It should be, really, renamed An Attack on Working People in Alberta or, as some of my colleagues refer to it, as the pick-your-pockets bill. This will at least give an opportunity for the Assembly to consider making changes to improve the bill.

I always find it fascinating when members rip up the amendment in a way to say: I don't even have to read this. Well, no, you don't, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I wish members had a little more respect for this place and the fact that it is the job of the opposition to put forward amendments in order to improve legislation. Legislation like this, quite frankly, needs significant improvement. Now, I'll be the first to admit that as government I did not accept every amendment that came, but I can tell you that I did not try to make a big display of ripping up an amendment in front of a member who is speaking to it. I'll leave it at that, but I would expect a little more, shall we say, class for this place.

Again, recommitting this bill provides an opportunity to be able to make further amendments. Now, I know that my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods brought forward a number of amendments over the past few weeks to try to improve this bill. Again, you know, I think, for myself, the section that I find the most frustrating, as I've highlighted, is the one that attacks overtime hours worked. Now, I will say that we did put forward an amendment that I was hoping would get over the finish line, which was just to ensure that from essentially today or whenever this bill is passed, workers who have worked overtime and banked it would be paid out the time and a half, the overtime. I thought that was a

reasonable amendment. I mean, they worked that overtime under the understanding or the agreement that it would be paid out as time and a half. That just ensured that contracts, whether a verbal contract or a written contract, would be upheld. So I was disappointed that government members decided not to accept that amendment, which, again, wouldn't have affected moving forward once the bill is . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order has been called.

#### **Point of Order Items Previously Decided**

**Mr. McIver:** The hon. member is contemplating a previous vote of the House, which I think he ought to know, especially as being the Opposition House Leader, is against the standing orders of this Assembly under 23(c): “raises matters that have been decided during the current session.”

**The Speaker:** I'm happy to rule, prior to your comments, as this is not a point of order because the hon. member, the Minister of Transportation, will know that also under Standing Order 23 it states: unless the member intends to have the motion recommitted or the previous decision to be reconsidered. He is currently in the process of asking for the bill to be recommitted to Committee of the Whole. As such, this is not a point of order and he will proceed.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will continue.

Again, I mean, this is part of the reason why this amendment is trying to recommit: so that there are further opportunities for opposition members and government members to bring forward amendments to try to strengthen this bill.

I'm not sure, quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, how many bills have successfully been recommitted to Committee of the Whole. I guess that's something to ask our friends that support every single member in this place, but that's for another time.

Mr. Speaker, part of other challenges that we have with this bill, again: I touched briefly on the general holiday pay eligibility, which was out of step with the rest of the country until a couple of years ago when we amended that. I appreciate that the government will say: well, it was that way until only recently; therefore, there's no problem going back to it. But what needs to be highlighted is the fact that Alberta was out of step and quite far behind every other province in this country, so what we did was to bring Alberta in line with the rest of the country, not making us move further to be a leader of the pack, but at least not to be a laggard when it comes to general holiday pay. It's unfortunate that this bill will once again make Alberta out of step with the rest of the country.

You know, Mr. Speaker, with that, I will urge all members to vote in favour of this amendment, which, again, sends it back to committee to provide all members, private members and opposition members, an opportunity to try to strengthen this bill before its passage or moving forward should the Assembly choose to vote it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**5:20 a.m.**

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a) to address my comments to the hon.

Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I appreciated his comments, in particular the suggestion of this amendment and going back to Committee of the Whole to address particularly section 4. I think the hon. member spoke to the impact that the cuts to overtime and the changes that are being proposed as part of Bill 2 would have on a number of workers in Alberta.

I'd appreciate his additional thoughts as to how this government has characterized the changes to overtime pay and perhaps that they were not forthcoming in their election campaign regarding what changes would be coming in and how what is here is actually going to impact Alberta workers and their overtime pay and his thoughts on whether or not that is actually fulfilling what they claim to be as a campaign promise but which I believe his statements have suggested weren't actually a campaign promise because there was a lot of misconception around how the cuts to overtime pay would be implemented. I'd appreciate his additional comments on that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for the question. I mean, you know, the frustration with the cuts to overtime is that the government continues to attempt to mislead the House in their characterization of the fact that this was in their platform during the election. Cutting overtime pay was not in the platform, at least not that I read. I'd love for members to tell me what page number it was on where it was explicitly stated that we will roll back overtime wages. The characterization that this is something workers want: I would love to know how many workers the government consulted with. When given the option of being paid out at straight time or paid out at time and a half, how many workers would say: "Yes, please, pay me less. That's what I prefer."

You know, again, what I find interesting is, I mean, does paying time and a half cost businesses more? Yes. Will this rollback save businesses money? Yes. But where I don't hear a lot of communication or a lot of comments from government members is: well, what about the workers, the workers that were counting on getting time and a half that no longer get time and a half? It's like, you know, the government loves to try to characterize us as being against business, which is patently false, yet through all of their words and actions it seems like the government is completely against the working people of this province, again, trying to pick their pockets, taking away hundreds of dollars per month from the men and women who work very, very hard to build this province.

Again, you know, the campaign promise was not a campaign promise. The government, during the election, did not come clean with Albertans as far as what they would propose in this piece of legislation and what it means to the working people of this province, again, especially those that rely on the time and a half. I mean, I encourage the members, especially those that represent areas like the Fort McMurray region, the Cold Lake region, Bonnyville, Grande Prairie, where the vast number of workers in the energy sector – the energy sector is probably the largest employer in those areas. How do workers feel about the fact that now they'll lose their banked overtime? Now, are there some workers that would trade their banked overtime for an extra day off? Sure. But making it broad, sweeping across the board is not something I think that workers asked for. It's not something that this government campaigned on, and I wish they would stop being fancy-free with the facts.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at third reading of Bill 2. I see the hon. Minister of Transportation rising.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I'm always sensitive to the feelings of the hon. Opposition House Leader, concerned that someone carefully disposed of the copy of the amendment that he made. To make the hon. Opposition House Leader feel just a little bit better, he will know very well that it's a recommittal motion and that anybody that has been around here for a little while, as the hon. Opposition House Leader has, will know that they only have to look at it for about two seconds to know what it says. He knows that I'm right about this, so he shouldn't be so offended that it was disposed of responsibly in the way that we do those things around here.

**Mr. Bilous:** Recycled.

**Mr. McIver:** Yes, indeed, it will be recycled, I'm sure, hon. Opposition House Leader, through the Speaker, of course.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that the hon. Opposition House Leader is a little bit free with his description of things. He talked about the changes being broad and sweeping when, in fact, he is actually not correct about that. The fact is that the banked hours being paid even is something that needs to be negotiated. There would be many cases where that would not be the case, where perhaps the employer may choose to give the employee banked time at one and a half or pay at one and a half or some other higher rate in some cases, whatever gets negotiated. In fact, the NDP legislation was broad and sweeping, in direct opposition to what Bill 2 is.

So I would say that, obviously, the government wouldn't be supporting a recommittal of this bill. This was very much in our election campaign. We very much said that we were going to correct the lack of the ability for employers to be able to make averaging agreements and agreements with their employees to bank time at even.

What we have here is the basic difference between our Conservative government and the NDP opposition, where we are actually willing to see their side of the argument, to say that there are some cases, there may be some cases, where someone will make, for example, \$13 instead of \$15 an hour – and we accept that – but they never seem to be able to accept the case that there are tens of thousands of cases of Albertans that will make \$13 an hour instead of zero dollars an hour. They can never see the whole picture, which is a big difference between how we look at the world and how they look at the world, Mr. Speaker.

Further, I found it interesting that member aside took the time in his speech to talk about how he was a union rep and saw people get paid at straight time instead of time and a half. I would just suggest to that hon. member that those people might question how good their union rep was if that indeed happened on his watch.

I also found quite comical in terms of spin the hon. member talking about the 3.3 million people that didn't vote for the UCP, which of course includes four-year-olds, five-year-olds, six-year-olds, seven-year-olds, eight-year-olds – you get the picture – people that didn't vote for anybody because they were ineligible to vote. Now, if there was ever a definition of spin, the hon. member demonstrated where the spin is coming from. Well, from time to time, Mr. Speaker, spin may come from all sides of this House, but, by golly, while the hon. member was complaining about spin, he surely gave us an example of the worst kind of spin in the very same sentence during which he was complaining about spin.

Also, I found it interesting that they talked about the creation of red tape, Mr. Speaker. Creating a paycheck is a form of red tape, I suppose, figuring out the deductions off of a paycheck, but our government is actually in favour of more paycheques. If there is one form of red tape that we're in favour of, it's more paycheques for more Albertans. Well, a lot of red tape we're not in favour of; more paycheques for more Albertans we are definitely in favour of. That

is why we are bringing forward Bill 2, the act to open business for Albertans, which is what it does, which was what was in our election campaign platform.

5:30 a.m.

Now, I understand that the NDP is offended because their policies were severely rejected by Albertans on April 16. If their feelings are hurt and they want to vote against Bill 2, I understand that. But when they are trying to actually actively go against what the majority of Albertans voted for on April 16, now that's where they should actually reconsider where they're going, trying to slow down the will of Albertans, the will of the majority of Albertans. Not a hundred per cent, Mr. Speaker, but a big plurality of Albertans actually voted for what is in Bill 2, which is why we won't be voting for this recommittal amendment, because to vote for that would be to vote against the demonstrated will of the big plurality of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few comments. Thank you so much to the member for his comments and to everybody for being here this morning. It was interesting. I had the privilege when in opposition to be a part of the Ministry of Children's Services, and one of the most profound things that happened during our consultations and meetings with a lot of those folks was meeting with people from child and family services. One of the things that they spoke to us about when they came in to chat was the carbon tax, but the second piece was actually about the need for the time off in lieu. It's a huge piece, especially for folks who are on the front lines, who are working so hard to make sure that our children are protected, that are in jobs that are extremely stressful and extremely traumatic a lot of the time. It was a very profound conversation, actually, that we had when we spoke about time in lieu versus the paying out of that time.

Quite often what ends up happening, Mr. Speaker, is that folks are trying to find other folks to cover for them, to be able to have the time off that they need, to have the vacation time that they need. It was actually child and family services that came forward and said how difficult it was for them to be able to make sure that folks had time in lieu, because it was a way better time, a way better ability for them to make sure that the folks that are on the front line actually had the time that they needed, sometimes, to recover and to recoup from very difficult files. But, more than that, it was the ability to be able to have flexibility, and that actually was taken away by the former government in their legislation that they brought forward.

It wasn't just child and family services that I spoke to; it was actually right across the public sector. The inability for them to take time in lieu is a huge piece of how it is that they run their very, very – they have budgets that they have to run within, so for them to be able to have the option of this time in lieu was huge. This isn't coming from me; this was coming from the public sector.

The other thing that I just wanted to mention quickly is that I'm a small-business owner, and we have a car wash. It is not fancy work. If you ever want a really humbling job, come and hang out with me in the sumps. It's a real fun job, being down in that muck, scooping out that water and everything else that falls off a vehicle in a car wash. It is messy, really, really gross work. Happy to do it. It was part of the business, especially when we first opened our business. It was part of the job to get in there with my husband and my kids, with our rubber boots, and scoop. God only knows what was in those sumps.

One of the things that happened, though, is that there were a lot of young people who came through our business and learned how to – it's absolutely horrible, grunty work, but there is a huge amount of ethic involved when you're a business owner standing side by side with a 16-year-old, with your hip waders on, in a sump full of really interesting, fun stuff, to try and scoop that out. You work together, side by side, and you're able to hire these young people that learn this work. It's hard work, it's absolutely gross work, but we did it together. We learned together, and they learned something from that. Every single young person who's come through our car wash has gone on to do fantastic jobs. They've gone on to school. They've learned how to do this job.

And it wasn't because of – we always paid above the minimum wage. I don't ever recall a time in my business where we've ever paid the minimum wage, or if we did, it was for a really small beginning of time because we wanted to make sure that those folks were committed to us. Once they were there for 60, 90 days and we knew that they were staying, it was easy to bump them up because, like I said, this work is not for everybody, and when they're willing to get into their hip waders and jump into the mess that is left behind in a car wash, you know you've got the right kid working for you and the right person. Kudos to all of them because it's really, really disgusting work.

Nevertheless, what they learned from that was that – for somebody like me, anyway, when you see somebody who works at that level, in that capacity, we want to keep them. I want to make sure that they stay as long as they can. Of course, this isn't a career choice. This is a jumping-off point. This is along the ladder of rungs to where you're going to go . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to amendment REC? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the amendment that was proposed by my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I got it right and at 5:37 in the morning as well, so I guess something is still working in the brain. I just want to take the opportunity to add some comments, some debate to this discussion. I do want to add, just off the top, that I actually wasn't that offended by seeing the members opposite ripping up the amendment, mostly because I have young children, so I'm quite used to that kind of behaviour, that attention-seeking behaviour. That actually didn't surprise me. It actually made me feel like I was at home, so thank you very much for that.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I also just want to briefly speak to some of the comments by the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women that she just gave, which I thought were very thoughtful comments. She mentioned that she spoke with a lot of the employees with Children's Services, who do fantastic and very difficult, as she highlighted, very challenging work in our province and work very hard, and how they very much indicated to her that they value the time in lieu, the banked overtime, that it's rewarding for them to be able to take that time off and a very necessary opportunity for them to recharge and regenerate, particularly after the challenging work that they do.

I guess my question would be: did any of those employees say, "But make sure we get valued less for that time in lieu than we did before"? That's the question that stuck out when she was talking. I'm very certain that employees do value banked overtime. Certainly, I don't think anybody on this side of the House is standing up and saying: take away banked overtime. In fact, what



we're saying is: value that banked overtime at the same rate at which their overtime pay is at.

I think that where we are getting into some challenges here is when we've had some discussion in this House about whether or not the changes that are being proposed under Bill 2 to the overtime pay were part of the UCP campaign, and I have two comments on that. The first is that I'm looking at the UCP platform, and it indicates that they were going to eliminate the straight-time banked hours arrangement, but they indicated in comments that this has no impact on overtime pay. Where we're getting into a bit of a challenge, I believe, is that while the overtime pay rate is still 1.5, you know, time and a half, the government members seem to take the position that time is not money, which I'm finding a little bit surprising coming from the members opposite, who often highlight their business background as small-business owners. To say that banked time is somehow different than overtime pay because it's not paid out is, I think, a false argument.

I think that's what they're relying upon to hinge upon and to say: oh, we told you that we were going to do this. But I don't think they were clear to Albertans and to workers that what that really meant, by cutting the banked overtime rate from one and a half to one, is that it does impact their pay, because if they were to take the pay, they would get paid more for their banked time. In some options they can choose to take their banked time, so they're actually getting less than what they would have if they'd taken the pay. I don't think that that was clear.

5:40 a.m.

In fact, I'm not the only who thinks that. You know, there was an article referenced. I believe it was from April 2, 2019. It's an *Edmonton Journal* article where it talked about labour experts who indicated – and there's a quote here from Angella MacEwen, who says: it's a head-scratcher; it would absolutely be a pay cut to cut banked overtime rate. The quote is: I'm really surprised given how many tradespeople are having a rough time right now; to tell them that you're taking away their overtime pay or cutting it is shocking to me; I don't think you've talked to enough people who would be affected by this. When we talked about, in this House, 400,000 workers: that's how many people are affected by the change that is being proposed by Bill 2.

The concern here is that, you know, the government might hinge upon the fact that section 22, I believe it is, of the Employment Standards Code, which talks about overtime pay, isn't being amended; therefore, they're not affecting overtime pay. I think that's inaccurate because they're actually changing section 23, which affects the rate of banked overtime. If those employees were to choose to take those or if they could, under their agreements, take a payout of their banked overtime, they actually are going to get less now. That's what we're talking about over here. That's the conversation that we don't think the government was forthcoming with Albertans about, to say that your banked overtime is your time. It is money. If you work over 44 hours in a week, you're entitled to get paid at time and a half. If you enter into an averaging agreement with your employer, you're going to get less than that. I don't think the government was forthcoming with Albertans about that, which is why I support this amendment. I think this needs to go back to Committee of the Whole for that discussion.

The other comment that I wanted to make with respect to the overtime pay is that, you know, the government members consistently stand up and say that they got this overwhelming majority, and therefore they seem shocked that we would continue to stand up and hold them to account and ask them to explain, before all the Albertans who did not vote for them and, frankly, even those who did, because this is – hey, I give credit to that platform. It's a

lengthy one. I'm not sure that everybody who voted UCP voted for every single item in that platform, and if we're going to go for four years on that premise, I think there are going to be a lot of Albertans who are going to be shocked and who are already shocked. That's why we're here, and that's why we're talking about it.

Apart from those UCP supporters who did vote, who may or may not have understood that they were actually having their overtime pay cut, there were still 600,000 Albertans, whom we represent on this side of the House, who did not support this, and our job is to talk about it. Our job is to stand up and hold the government to account despite the fact that they continue to be overwhelmingly shocked by the fact that we're doing that, despite the fact that many of the members on the other side were in opposition not too long ago and did the same thing that we're doing right now. They understand that this is our job. Our job is to stand up and hold the government to account, and that's what we're doing.

One of the things that I want to talk about in particular, actually, speaks to the youth wage cut. I'm not going to stand here and say that I am opposed to – I don't like the term "job creators" because I think it continues to categorize people improperly. There are people who are employers and employees and who are caregivers, and they do all kinds of other work. I'm not into that category, but I'm not here to denigrate the great work of people who own businesses and who employ people. There are employers of many different sizes and different kinds of work, and they're Albertans, and we want to support them.

But there are also a lot of people who are employees, who are workers, and our job, my job, is to also talk about those people. Of course we want to see businesses do well. Of course we want to see Albertans do well. We want to see employers do well, but we also want to see employees do well. We also want to see people who have been affected by the downturn in the oil prices be able to get paid a fair wage, be able to support their families, pay their mortgages, buy their groceries, send their kids to child care, send their kids to soccer class. I'm sort of refusing to get engaged in this us-versus-them idea because it's not all or nothing. We have to think about all Albertans: those who employ people, those who are employees, and those who are both. There are lots of people who are both, who do lots of that kind of work.

So when we talk about overtime pay, when I want to talk a little bit about the youth minimum wage, my job is to put a little bit of a human face on it because it's not a zero-sum equation in here. It's not that we're going to only focus on job creation and the employers but not also think about the Albertans who work those jobs. I believe it's our responsibility to consider all of them, if there are ways to find compromises. It shouldn't be that we only benefit one group of Albertans over another. We need to talk about ways to find middle ground.

One of the challenges that we face on this side of the House is that we believe that the government is bringing forward an agenda with their belief that it will stimulate the economy. As we know, there are ideological differences. There are differences that go back beyond our province, beyond just Canada. There are ideological differences about how to stimulate the economy. We can all agree on that, and we can all probably find research and studies to support our ideological perspective that will talk about: this is one way to stimulate the economy; this is another.

Clearly, the people on this side of the House do not believe in austerity economics. We do not believe in those policies. We believe in supporting and in investing in people at a time when there's a downturn, but that's not the ideological approach of some people on the other side. That's fine. The point is that there are different views on this, and there's different research to support it. If we can't be flexible and acknowledge that both perspectives have

some grounding in fact and studies and therefore it's a bit of a gamble either way, then we have to find some compromises. We have to talk about ways that we are looking at not just benefiting one group of Albertans and not the other.

When I stand up here, I want to talk about – and this is not to say that it's for certain what is going to happen, that the policies that are being put forward won't have some benefits. They may. But I am also here to talk about the impacts and potential deficits it may have, the potential negative impacts it may have on Albertans.

When we talk about young workers in particular, that's a subject that's near and dear to my heart. I appreciated the comment from the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. She talked about the young people that were in the muck doing the hard work and that they were working very hard and that she appreciated their work. Then where my mind goes is: then why do we pay them less for doing the same work? They're standing next to you doing the same work. Why are we paying them less? In my view, that story lends itself to say that these young people are working just as hard as the person standing next to them who might be just by virtue of the age, the month and the year they were born, maybe just a month younger than the person standing next to them. Why would we pay them differently? They're doing the same work. It's actually just to me a fundamental question of equality and fairness.

I was a young person. I worked, you know, before I turned 18. I was fortunate to have a supportive family, but in my family I didn't get allowances. The rule was that if you want spending money, you've got to work. If you want to buy a car, you've got to work. So I worked at a young age, but I was still privileged to have the support of my family and to not have to work to put food on the table, to not have to work to support myself. Certainly, I was lucky that I did not have to support my own family as a teenager, but we know that not all Albertans are that lucky. We know that not all Albertans are in a situation where they can work just for spending money, for a car, to save up for things like that.

My husband is an assistant principal at a north-side high school. He's been there for some time, and the kids at that school – I think it's roughly 1,700 kids now at that high school. Well over half of them, probably even more – I'd have to get confirmation of that – are newcomers to this country, to this province. They are kids who – I've mentioned him before, and I'm going to bring him up again because he's a very personal part of my life. My husband had a former student who was actually born and raised in a refugee camp in Kenya and came to Alberta at the age of 14, no formal schooling. He was the eldest of six kids. In fact, being the eldest, he had a bit of a disadvantage because he'd gone the longest without formal schooling. When he started high school at the high school my husband teaches at, he was really beginning from next to nothing. Yet beginning at the age of 16, he was under significant pressure from his family to work to contribute to the household. That was why he worked, and it challenged his ability to complete school. He didn't complete school. This young man then became sort of an informal part of my own family. He still is.

5:50 a.m.

He didn't work for spending money. He didn't work for buying a car or buying a phone. He didn't have a phone until a couple of years ago. He is now 23. But he worked because he had to support his family. He had five younger siblings, and all through high school there was significant cultural pressure on him and family pressure on him to work, and he was not alone. That was very standard. A number of those kids in that community were expected to go to school. In fact, unfortunately, sometimes the school was the less important part. The more important part, the pressure that was put on him was actually to work to contribute to the family

household because it was very challenging. Both of his parents struggled, did not speak English very well, had troubles securing jobs, and the jobs they did have were minimum wage jobs as well. So he did that. He worked, and it put his school in jeopardy. He only just completed high school last year because he was under pressure to work.

I highlight that this is one story. It's my personal story, somebody close to me in my life, but he is not alone. In fact, since being in the position that I'm in now as an MLA and being honoured to have the role of critic for Children's Services, you know, I've attended with the Minister of Children's Services . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me in my response under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud in her comments this evening on Bill 2, in this referral amendment. I find it a bit rich that the member opposite has decided to talk about children – talk about children – because what I'm seeing on the other side right now is the equivalent of a bunch of children holding their breath until they get their way. Now, let me be clear that the members opposite can hold their breath all they like because on this side of the House we will not blink.

We have been sitting in this Chamber for days now debating policy that was clearly outlined in our policy platform in the campaign. We on this side of the House made a commitment to Albertans that we would right this ship and get the province back to work. We made a commitment to the 180,000 Albertans who were out of work, standing in unemployment lines, and the thousands more who have just stopped looking for a job. My heart breaks for those Albertans. My heart breaks every time I knock on a door and someone tells me: I'm out of work and have been that way for a long time. Worse is when you knock on a door and someone says: my neighbour has been out of work, and I'm helping to support them. That's the Albertan way. That's what we do. We support each other. We help each other, and that's what this government is committed to doing, to supporting Albertans and creating an environment where people will come back here to start companies and create jobs and create wealth.

Now, I find this referral amendment to be a bit ironic because it represents the overall direction of the members opposite, going backwards. They want to go back to Committee of the Whole, where we just spent hours on debating this exact piece of legislation. Now we've moved forward. We're in third reading, and they want to go backwards. Well, Madam Speaker, it is the backwards thinking of the members opposite that got them there today. It's the backwards speaking of the members opposite that was repudiated on April 16 and is the backwards thinking that Albertans continue to reject on a daily basis.

When I read constituents' e-mails, they tell me: keep going; keep fighting for us. When we leave this Chamber, Madam Speaker, we go back to those extremely normal Albertans who want to feed their families, who want to help feed their neighbours if need be. You can't do it without a paycheque, you can't get a paycheck without a job, and, frankly, there weren't a lot of paycheques going around under the members opposite's government.

Now, the member opposite from Edmonton-Whitemud also talked about austerity. How do you get to austerity? How do we get there? I'll tell you. It starts with poor fiscal management, which ultimately leads to insolvency, and insolvency leads to austerity. Madam Speaker, we are on the precipice of great change in this province. We are moving forward. We will support Albertans so we do not have to face insolvency.

This is what we have talked about time and time again in this Chamber with the pieces of legislation we keep putting forward. We have an incredible cabinet here of talented individuals, and I support each and every one of them, led by our Premier, the hon. Premier and Member for Calgary-Lougheed. Madam Speaker, in this endeavour to get the province back on track, each and every member on this side of the House will stay here as long as we need to to ensure we fulfill the promise that we made to Albertans before the campaign, through the campaign, and we continue to make each and every day that we stand here. These are promises made, and they are promises kept.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, that timer is going to go. My apologies.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to REC? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for her thoughtful interventions on this matter. Of course, I thank the Member for Cardston-Siksika for his comments on the speeches from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, spoken with the confidence of somebody who would wear salmon pants in this Legislature. There's only ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes?

#### **Speaker's Ruling Insulting Language**

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will ask you, as you will know, not to insult other members of this House. I will ask that you apologize and withdraw your comment.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I apologize and withdraw, Madam Speaker.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Schmidt:** I want to talk about some of the false premises, I think, that this bill has been built around, Madam Speaker, and that were outlined in the speech that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed gave when we moved to third reading on this. You know, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed continues to make a number of arguments about why we need to pass this bill.

The first one was that the Alberta NDP left nothing but economic devastation in its wake. He continues to talk about some of the statistics to support that argument. Of course, it's interesting because one of the nice things about the government of Alberta is that it's incredibly transparent with economic statistics. In the calendar year of 2018 – so this is a year that was completely under our watch, Madam Speaker – the GDP for the province of Alberta was \$335 billion, which was the second-highest GDP in the history of the province. The only time it was higher was in 2014, and that was \$338 billion, so a difference of \$3 billion between the highest GDP, which was achieved under Premier Redford, and the second-highest GDP, which was achieved during our time in government.

Not to downplay the seriousness of the years in between, 2015 and 2016 and 2017 were challenging years. There's no doubt. There were certainly some significant headwinds that the economy faced, and there were certainly a number of people who lost their jobs in that time. [interjections] You know, Madam Speaker, the economic statistics show that ...

6:00 a.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Schmidt:** ... the unemployment rate is 6.6 per cent right now, which is about average over Alberta's history. And, you know, we also have right now in Alberta more Albertans than ever working. The end of 2018 had more Albertans than ever employed. [interjection] I can hear some skepticism from members opposite, and I encourage them to go to the open.alberta.ca website to look at the statistics that are collected by their own government, Madam Speaker, to confirm that what I'm saying is true.

I know that there are a significant number of unemployed people, and we want to make sure that those people get back to work as well, Madam Speaker, but to say that we were an economic disaster is patently false. We had, like I said, the second-highest GDP ever in the history of the province in 2018, and we had more Albertans working than ever before in 2018. By those two measures, of course, I could say that the economy was stronger than it would have been under a set of austerity measures that another government of another political persuasion may have chosen.

You know, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, of course, talks about the economy being so bad that Albertans left the province in droves. So I looked that number up as well, Madam Speaker, and it turns out that that's not true at all. It turns out that net migration into Alberta was positive for every year that we were in government and that, in fact, net migration out of the province of Alberta hasn't occurred since before 1995. I'm not sure where the Member for Calgary-Lougheed is getting his numbers, but he's not using his own government's numbers when he makes those claims.

You know, I freely admit and I think all of our caucus members would admit that the economic headwinds that Alberta has faced over the last few years have been quite strong and that many Albertans have struggled to make ends meet. We certainly did our best to make sure that we helped out all of those Albertans who were struggling to make ends meet by making sure that their public services were strong, that they could rely on the social safety net in their time of need.

You know, we often hear this line of argument that Alberta is on the precipice of insolvency. Of course, that's also patently false. We have the strongest balance sheet of any province in the country by a long shot, and our path to balance was working. As the fourth-quarter update at the end of June showed, we were actually beating even our own estimates to get back to balance. This idea that Alberta's fiscal situation is a disaster is not true if you compare Alberta's situation to other provinces in the country.

Then the Premier talked about some of the other so-called policies that we used to pile on that made businesses struggle. You know, we had the audacity to raise corporate taxes to the average corporate tax rate in the country. We had the audacity to lower the small-business tax rate from 3 to 2 per cent. The Member for Calgary-Lougheed continues to call this a payroll tax, but it's, in fact, the Canada pension plan, that we supported the federal government in improving because, oddly enough, Madam Speaker, members of our caucus believe that every Canadian should be able to retire in dignity. Having a strong Canada pension plan in place for every working Canadian and every working Albertan is a really important part of making sure that we have the ability for every Canadian to retire in dignity.

Let me just take the opportunity to remind all members of the House that, you know, if we don't give strong pensions to Canadians, then they have to fall on the social safety net to be able to look after themselves in retirement. If they can't afford to pay for their own houses, then they have to live in government-subsidized affordable housing for seniors. If they can't afford to pay for their own prescriptions and their own medical benefits, then they have to rely on Alberta seniors' benefits. If businesses don't pay those costs by making a small adjustment in the Canada pension plan to make

sure that Canadians can retire in dignity, then that falls onto the taxpayer. We don't think that that's a fair sharing of the burden. We thought that that was a burden that was more fairly shared by making sure that we supported some small improvements to the Canada pension plan.

You know, the economy isn't nearly as bad as the Member for Calgary-Lougheed likes to portray. This illustration, this supposed piling on of regulations that made businesses flee the province in droves never really happened. In fact, we made important changes that supported working Albertans to be able to look after themselves better.

Then, finally, he, you know, supposedly pulled back the curtain on our secret agenda, that – shock and consternation – the Alberta NDP is aligned with labour unions and that we're opposing this bill because we don't like the changes to the labour union certification system that's imposed.

**Mr. Hanson:** The AFL sits on your board.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I heard the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul say that the AFL sits on our board. That's absolutely true, and we're proud of our alignment with the labour union. In fact, I will walk down the member's hometown with a T-shirt that says as much, if he dares to invite me to come and visit him, because I'm proud to align myself with working people in Alberta. I hope that all members of this Legislature would be proud to show their support for working people in Alberta.

In fact, you know, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed suggested that we are somehow against workplace democracy because we're taking away the secret ballot vote on labour certification. Well, Madam Speaker, of course, as I've said before, we are social democrats. We, in fact, believe that workers should have more say in the economy, more power in the economy over their working lives and not less. That's why we support the labour movement, because it's only through the labour movement that people have the collective power to negotiate better wages and better working conditions for themselves and have more say in their working conditions and exercise their democratic right in the economy, the point being that there are a number of false premises.

Because of those false premises I think it's good that we vote in favour of this amendment to send this bill back to committee so that we can, you know, take a cold, hard look at the facts and realize that perhaps the objectives that the members opposite seek to achieve will not in fact be achieved by these measures and reconsider whether or not these things should come into force.

As I've said, Madam Speaker, you know, we are very concerned about the state of the economy. We want more Albertans to be working, and there's nothing in this bill that will actually achieve those things. There is not one economic forecaster out there who's saying: "You know what? We need to take overtime pay away from working Albertans to improve the economy."

**6:10 a.m.**

What economic forecasters are saying is that the big thing that's holding Alberta back is access to foreign markets for our energy resources and the low price of oil. Those are issues that we sought to address with a number of our interventions in the oil and gas sector, including crude oil production cuts and the oil-by-rail deal, Madam Speaker. Of course, the government doesn't see fit to give those things the time to play themselves out and is instead intent on ripping up contracts because of their ideological commitment to the private sector at all costs.

Madam Speaker, you know, of course, I'm an optimist. I hope that the members opposite take a good, hard look at what we really

need to do to get this economy moving and ask themselves if lowering wages for young people, lowering overtime pay for hard-working Albertans, and weakening labour unions are actually the way to get the economy moving. I think that if they put the time in to reflect on this question and look at the consequences of the measures in this bill, then they'll vote to send this bill back to Committee of the Whole so that we can go back and fix a lot of the things that are wrong with this bill and really tackle the issues that are facing the economy, that are facing unemployed Albertans and get people back to work and get this economy going again.

Madam Speaker, with that, I will conclude my remarks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I appreciate it. I've been pretty quiet over here for the last couple of weeks, and I have a really good vantage point of listening to what the opposition has to say, regardless of my tinnitus in my ear or otherwise. It's very difficult, honestly, to sit here, to listen to what's being said, and to be able to talk to the folks in my constituency about how this place works. It seems that our understanding of what a debate is is vastly different. My understanding: it's a dialogue. What I've heard here is a skewed monologue of what reality is. Perhaps it's because there is an insular point of view, sitting in the city of Edmonton, for some of the members. They don't quite get out to the borders.

I have the privilege of representing Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, which actually borders the city of Edmonton. I get to go home. I'm part of my community. I'm still part of my constituency, and I get to travel all of 45 minutes, one way, to get home every night or in the day or whichever hour it is. During my travels I get a chance to engage my constituents. What they are going through and what they've experienced over the last four years is completely different than what's being articulated in here from the members opposite.

Acheson industrial park literally is on the border of Edmonton. You have really good, well-established businesses there. You have new opportunities there, everything else. I was sent, by a constituent of mine – and the unfortunate part is that this isn't unique. The item that this gentleman sent to me is not unique. It's not an uncommon story. This is coming from gentlemen and ladies who build our highways and are part of that industry and have been entrenched for a number of years.

If I may, Madam Speaker, I'd like to read this, and I will table it afterwards. He's an owner of this company that's been around for a number of years.

I hope things are going well in the legislature and I hope [that] they, the opposition, are not keeping you guys up all night yet. Obviously, this was written back on the 26th, and we've all experienced a bit of a filibuster, I guess.

What I am emailing about is the sad state of our industry... which, again, is the road construction industry, which we utilize on all those highways and byways that we have across the province.

I just heard a rumour yesterday that [company X] Construction...

I'm not going to mention their name.

... is quite possibly going into receivership very soon. [The sad part:] ... they are a company that has been [around and] a big part of the Alberta construction industry since 1939, [over] eighty years. I have also heard they are just the tip of the iceberg in our industry. I know you're working hard to do what you can to help this sector of our province, but it may be and is too late for many of us. In the past couple of years there have been many construction companies that have gone out of business, and it appears there are many more to come.

I know you can't turn things around on a dime, and the last government just plainly didn't give a . . .

I'm not sure if I can say the word, but it's what a beaver makes. . . . but can you tell me when we can expect an improvement in our industry?

Again, because of the last government not really – this gentleman put it quite well, articulating that they just didn't care. We'll phrase it as that.

I really hate to tell you this, but our company may very well be one of those that can't survive. I have told my partners that I think we should just finish the work we have and shut it down, sell everything off before all the equity is gone and the bank takes over. Everything I have is in this company, and I could end up with nothing to show for all the years of long days and long nights of very hard work.

We need resolutions on claims [that they have out there] just to keep the lights on, and it is not happening.

That was being dragged out, again, on the other, the former government's, watch.

I am sorry to tell you this, but I think we may be another casualty of Trudeau's and [the former NDP Premier's] anti-business, anti-entrepreneurship policies. We are, as many others, on the brink.

I have always been an optimist and looked to a bright future, but I just can't see any brightness in the near future. Literally, the government has put us out of business or will in the near future.

Again referring to the last government's former policies.

I know you are doing everything you can to try and turn things around, and I know you are working very hard for Albertans. I know all that. I'm just telling you that it may be too late for a lot of people and companies.

Then I get a phone call from another constituent, and he's telling me about the industrial sector. This is not an uncommon story. We might want to talk about how many jobs we created, but flipping burgers isn't the same as . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment REC? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is truly my pleasure this morning to speak toward this motion to recommit Bill 2. I think it's something important that we get on the record and that we speak to how important going back to committee would be so that we can make this bad bill better.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I think there was something that is kind of interesting that we've seen play out over the course of the last few hours and indeed the last 23 days I believe it is now that we've been in this Assembly. I believe it's an interesting observation that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, the hon. Premier, and many members of the government have spoken at length in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, about how there was an election on April 16 and that because there was an election on April 16, the opposition isn't respecting democracy. Well, here's the wake-up call for the government: this is what democracy is. It is being in the Legislature debating bills. That's what you learn in grade 6, that there are the three readings and committee and Royal Assent. That is the process of how a bill becomes law. The wake-up call for the government today is actually that they are incorrect. Democracy is actually the process of debate, the process of passing our bills. One of those is Committee of the Whole, and one of those is where we are right now, third reading.

I believe that we should return to Committee of the Whole. That's why this amendment is so important. Democracy is accepting and having that debate in this Assembly and having that discussion and not just crumpling up our amendments, as the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland is doing right now, and actually literally throwing

away the very process of democracy, literally tossing in the garbage, not even figuratively, Mr. Speaker, but literally throwing away the democratic process into the trash. That's how the government views the democratic process. They think it's a waste of paper, they think it's a waste of time, and they have a complete disregard and great disrespect for this Assembly, for the people that sent elected officials here, 24 opposition MLAs, one of the largest oppositions in Alberta's history, the third-largest vote share ever received in Alberta's history.

That is the process of democracy, being here debating those bills. They can whine and complain about these late nights as much as they want, but that is what we were sent here to do, Mr. Speaker. We were sent here to have those debates, to ensure that bills were the best they possibly could be, and when they weren't, that we go into committee and that we would reconsider them, that we'd make the changes that make bills better. That is why we were sent here.

6:20 a.m.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier, before he was elected Premier, before he was sent here by his constituents as Premier and by Albertans as Premier, indeed told his caucus that. He said to his caucus that you will miss graduations and birthdays and anniversaries and that there will be long nights and long days where you are in Edmonton in the Legislature. Unfortunately, it seems that the government caucus has completely forgotten that their job is to actually be here debating these bills and understanding what goes into legislation and understanding the five stages that make a bill become a law and being part of democracy. It appears that the government believes that because they won the election on April 16, they can rule by proclamation and no longer need to come to this Assembly and do their jobs.

Unfortunately for the government, Mr. Speaker, the opposition will be here to hold them to account. The opposition will be here to do our jobs and ensure that legislation is thoroughly debated in this Assembly, and we will be here as long as is necessary to ensure that this legislation gets the light of day and gets the understanding that it requires, which is why I support so strongly that we send this back to committee.

As the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar spoke at length about earlier today, Mr. Speaker, it appears that the government seems to have a misunderstanding of basic truth, of basic fact. The very reports that the government is releasing and has just released last week: the fourth-quarter report, for example, shows that indeed the province was reducing its deficit at a greater rate than expected. Beyond that, the Premier today actually got up and spoke at length about how there was a net negative migration in this province, and that's simply untrue. The Premier was either incorrect and did not know the truth yet chose to speak in this House, or he decided to mislead Albertans. Either of those, I think, is unacceptable.

Certainly, I think that when we look at the truth and we look at the facts of the matter and we look at the information that's presented before us, we can see that this province was on track to recovery. It was on track to making sure that we had good-paying jobs. What Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, or really what it is, An Act to Pick the Pockets of Everyday Albertans – when we look at what this bill actually does, it does not put us on track to recovery. It does not put us on track to protecting jobs or improving the economy. It's something that's very interesting, that we can see this as a repeated action by the government. That's why I think it's so important for us to go back to committee and reconsider this bill, to have the debate and have that thorough discussion about why this bill needs to have more time.

We can look at other situations, Mr. Speaker, of how the government has absolutely failed to protect jobs. We can see, for

example, in crude by rail that they actually don't care about trying to get our product to market. They would willingly shut down a route for our oil to get to market. That's something that I think is very shameful because that is something that would have protected jobs. We would have actually been able to protect jobs if we could have moved more barrels, but instead the government chose not to. They didn't only choose not to; they boasted about not moving more barrels.

When we compare An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business to actual measures that could have created jobs or protected jobs, we can see very clearly whose side the government is on. The government is not on the side of ordinary Albertans, workers, people who actually work in Alberta. Instead, the government is on the side of wealthy donors. Instead, the government is on the side of their friends. Instead, the government would rather go out and pick the pockets of the workers who are young, who are working overtime, who are trying to pay for their holidays, for their Christmas presents, Mr. Speaker.

That's something that I think is very shocking. It's shocking that a government that purports to be caring about jobs, the economy, and pipelines would immediately both then turn around and reduce the number of barrels that get to market and also go out and say, actually, to all the people that are working in Alberta: "With Bill 2, we're going to pick your pockets. We're going to take away the toonies from the kids, and we're going to take away your holidays as well. We're going to ruin Christmas for you because now you're not going to be able to afford the presents." That's something that's actually shocking.

It's shocking that the government would be so arrogant, that they would be so arrogant to think that because they won an election, by proclamation they can go in and pick the pockets of every single Albertan, over 400,000 workers, that they would be so arrogant to think that young people deserve less for the same work, that they would be so arrogant to think that you shouldn't be allowed to have the time and pay and do holidays, Mr. Speaker, so that when Christmas comes around, you're not able to afford the Christmas presents for your kids.

The absolute arrogance of this government and complete disrespect for the democratic process – because this is something they should have learned in grade 6, Mr. Speaker. I know many grade 6s that I've spoken to over the last five years understand that democracy is coming to this Chamber and having that debate and listening to the debate and participating in the debate. They absolutely understand that. Unfortunately, it seems like the government benches don't understand that, and government backbenchers like the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland don't understand that his actual job is to be in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, you will note that in the standing orders the only thing we actually get paid for is being in this Assembly, and to receive a dock in pay is when you don't attend this Assembly. Our actual only job, as laid out in the standing orders, is to be here and debate bills and pass laws. That is why we were sent here by our constituents. We were sent here to ensure that we have the best possible law for all Albertans.

Unfortunately, it looks like the government doesn't believe that. The government believes that the laws they pass are perfect the first time through, that it doesn't need to go to committee, that we definitely don't need to recommit it to committee. Unfortunately, it seems the government thinks that because they won the election, they can go by proclamation. Luckily – luckily – for Albertans, the opposition is here to hold them to account. The opposition is here to show them and teach them. Perhaps they missed that day in grade 6. I know it was a long time ago for some of them. Perhaps they missed that day in class, and they forgot what democracy was. They

forgot what a parliament was, what a Westminster parliamentary system was, Mr. Speaker. Luckily, the opposition is here to teach them and to show them how democracy works, how we are going to try and move amendments and how we are going to try and make bad bills better, how we're going to try and Febreeze some of these bad bills. Luckily, we're going to be here to hold them to account every single step of the way, and we are willing to stay for as long as it takes.

Even though we hear government members complaining about the late hours and complaining that they have to miss school, anniversaries, graduations, whatever it is, even though their own leader had told them that would happen, we know that this right here is what we were sent here to do. We were sent here to ensure that we don't pass bad laws. This is a bad law, which is why it needs to go back to committee and needs to be fixed. It needs to go back to committee and be recommitted so that we can have proper amendments made, so that we can look into saying that perhaps young people for equal work should receive equal pay, that when you have a holiday, you should be able to afford Christmas, that when you work overtime, we shouldn't try to take your money away, that we shouldn't try to take over \$2,500 away from 400,000 Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

These are very simple things. These are things that are in place in the vast majority of other provinces. In fact, when we look at our neighbours both to the west and to the east and then to the east again, when we look at Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec, the vast majority of provinces, including the two provinces with the largest populations of this country, already have these protections in place. What this legislation does is that it puts us behind the pack in worker protections, worker rights.

It is absolutely shameful that the government thinks that's okay. It shows very clearly who the government is standing up for. They're standing up for their wealthy donors and friends. They are not on the side of ordinary working Albertans. The government can say, "Well, the opposition is in this insular dome, and they don't get the issues," but I challenge you, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps the government should actually go out and consult with people instead of just their membership and instead of just their friends and donors. Perhaps they should go out and understand that when you take away overtime pay, it will absolutely affect their paycheques. It will absolutely come out of their pocketbooks. When you go in and when you affect their holiday pay, that affects their pocketbooks. It actually goes after ordinary Albertans.

I know that's sometimes a difficult concept for the government to understand, but that's why we're here explaining it for them today. That's why we're here debating it in this Assembly. That's why we're showing them how democracy works. We're going to show them that they need to understand these issues. I know that many of the members of the government benches, who were perhaps here in the 29th Legislature and before, understand this because they spent quite a bit of time, yourself included, Mr. Speaker, speaking at length, when you sat on this side of the Chamber, as to why you believed our bills were insufficient in certain ways.

Clearly, we believe that this bill, Bill 2, An Act to Pick the Pockets of Everyday Albertans, is insufficient in many ways, which is why it needs to go back to committee and why it needs to be amended significantly, so that it doesn't pick the pockets of ordinary Albertans, so that it doesn't attack ordinary families and doesn't go after young people, doesn't go after ordinary workers and tradespeople and those who work overtime or perhaps have a holiday.

**6:30 a.m.**

Mr. Speaker, that's something that is very important. It's very important that we understand the ramifications of our bills. If the

government truly understood what the pick-your-pockets bill did, they would not pass it. They would be glad to go back to committee, and they would be glad to make the changes that wouldn't affect ordinary Albertans in such an adverse way. They would be glad to be able to understand that this actually attacks ordinary families. Unfortunately, the government either doesn't understand what their bill does, or they don't care what their bill does. It seems that they're listening to their wealthy donors and friends and not the pleas of ordinary Albertans. They don't understand what their bill is actually doing, or they don't care. Either of those is possible. I wouldn't pretend to know which one it was. But they either don't understand the ramifications, or they don't care.

When they go in and pick the pockets of ordinary Albertans, 400,000 Albertans will see that \$2,500 reduction in their pocketbook. Young people will see those toonies being taken right out of their pockets by this government, Mr. Speaker, and around Christmastime this year we'll see people suddenly realizing that they are not receiving the pay that they were expecting to pay for the new whatever the toy of the year is going to be. That's something that is very important here.

It's very important that the government understand the direct ramifications for families. This isn't only about their wealthy donors and it's not only about their friends; it's about ordinary Albertans. It's about standing up for working people. It's about fighting on behalf of working people. We have a government that purports to be fighting for jobs, but instead of fighting for jobs, what we see is a bill that directly goes after the pocketbooks of people who need it most, of the people who are working the hardest right here in our own province, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that's very shocking. It's something that is very surprising to me because this government spoke for four years, when they were in opposition, at length, yourself included, about how you were standing up for working Albertans, yet we see here working Albertans being attacked and having their pocketbooks picked by the government. That's something that is absolutely shocking.

We should go back to committee. We should talk about why it's not right that somebody who works an equal amount should receive a different amount of pay. We should talk about why a server differential that creates a two-tier class system is not appropriate here in Alberta. We should go and talk about why it's important . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 2. I have had the time now to listen to the debate on Bill 2, especially listening to some of the comments made by members opposite. As someone who has had a lifetime career dealing with employee-related issues in the labour and employment world, I have had the privilege of working as an employment standard officer. I've had the privilege of actually writing policies and reviewing legislation and employment and labour standards for this province, and I have had the privilege of having to represent employees in all levels of administrative tribunals, the Court of Queen's Bench and the Court of Appeal. You know, I have appeared before the Human Rights Commission, the employment standards and labour relations board, and, as I said, the Court of Queen's Bench and the Court of Appeal. I can tell you that precisely because of all of those things is the reason why I am so proud of my support for Bill 2.

The members opposite will always want you to believe that they are, you know, advocating for employees. Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The NDP are not advocating for the best interests of employees; they are here to protect the interests of their union

bosses. If you drill down to the philosophical and intellectual argument that I have had the opportunity to listen to from the members opposite, then you ask yourself: if it is true that they are here to defend the interests of the employees, why would they pursue policies that lead to job losses for the same employees they claim to be advocating for? It doesn't make sense.

On youth minimum wage they presided over an economy that saw more than 55,000 of our youth out of work because of the increase by nearly 50 per cent of the minimum wage. Our youth, that ought to be employed to have the experience to be able to build a successful future, are struggling to find that first-time employment. The majority of our youth are employed by those in the service industry, but I have sat here and listened to how they demonize the service industry, the same people that they expect to employ the same people they claim to be advocating for. It doesn't make sense.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about overtime pay. Let's be clear. As someone who lives and breathes not just from the policy world, from the legislation world, and from the litigation aspect of what they are talking about, Bill 2 preserves the right of employees to overtime pay. What they have failed to understand is that there is a distinction between that minimum provision for overtime pay and overtime agreements. Two different things. If you go to the Employment Standards Code and the regulations made pursuant to that particular code and what we've proposed, nothing is going to impact the right of employees to overtime pay.

Instead, as part of our platform efforts to kick-start our economy, to say that employees and employers need the flexibility in those few circumstances in which they decide to enter into an overtime agreement by consent, voluntary consent of both parties, not by force, as they would . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

Members wishing to speak to the amendment on Bill 2? The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me here to speak to the amendment to recommit to Committee of the Whole Bill 2, An Act to Pick Albertans' Pockets. I was interested in the comments from the Municipal Affairs minister here around the union stuff because, obviously, my background is there, so I know a little bit about that. When we look at restoring the mandatory secret ballot for union certification and the 90-day period for unions to provide evidence of employee support for certification, if you want to do a little bit of homework, you could look at all the labour relations challenges that have been launched because of employer intimidation of employees. This is something that occurs on a regular basis. I've seen it myself, where employees are trying to form a union and during that period of time, during that certification process, you know, you see the company firing the people that have tried to start this drive. I have. This is why this kind of language concerns me.

If, at the end of the day, employees don't want a union, they'll just simply say no. But when they're starting to form a union – I mean, my own president, when I was a part of UFCW local 401, was driven off the road by a group that was hired by an employer trying to fight a union. Are you telling me that that's appropriate? It was because these conditions had existed. To recommit to committee we get the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to re-examine some of these things.

**6:40 a.m.**

I used to hear this a lot: that we would move too fast, we weren't thinking things through with legislation, and we, you know, weren't

accepting common-sense amendments and all that stuff. So I can't help but notice that there's a little bit of a reoccurrence of that pattern. If you're going to claim that "this group is doing it wrong" and "that's not the way" and "you need to be doing it this way" and then you get that opportunity to actually act on that but then you go back and just do the same things, well, now I kind of question your credibility on what you were actually arguing about to begin with.

By going back to the Committee of the Whole, we get to look at things like the general holiday pay. I've always seen examples where the bad actors – I'm not saying it's everybody because it's not. There are some fantastic employers out there. I know that one of my closest friends is an amazing employer, and – surprise, surprise – I think he's got almost every single one of his original employees from when he first opened his business because they don't want to leave. He treats them great. He's the example that we need to follow.

Costco, I mean, I hold them up all the time because they have an under 2 per cent turnover rate. They pay their workers well. They give them benefits. They've got good working conditions. They treat them with dignity and respect. Surprise, surprise, nobody is going anywhere, and the company is flourishing big time because employees become your own free advertising. They talk about the workplace that they're in, how great they get treated.

They end up taking that money, and they spend it in the local economy. I know for a fact that there's a good, significant portion of my residents of Edmonton-Decore that do not take their money, squirrel it away in a Cayman Islands account somewhere, waiting for that next big investment opportunity that they hear about from Warren Buffett on the news. It doesn't happen. They spend it on the things they need, and when they have that money in their pocket, they also get the opportunity to spend it on the things they want: the big-screen TV, you know, the more updated vehicle, or maybe they want to buy an RV. I don't know. But then they have those opportunities to choose that. They're not stuck choosing: well, do I pay the rent this month, or do I maybe cut back on my groceries?

We've heard that story from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud with that kid trying so desperately to go through high school, but the pressure to go back to work to try to help the family – well, wouldn't it help the family more if that student was making \$15 an hour, not \$13 an hour? Then maybe because he's making those wages, that pressure reduces, and he'd make better decisions about trying to stay in school, finish it off, maybe even head on to postsecondary and make an even bigger impact in the economy when he's done. Going back to committee with this recommittal helps us to reanalyze things like that.

As I said, the whole changes around the Labour Relations Code: we really need to rethink that. I just finished giving just one example of what I think is a very inappropriate response from an employer, to drive somebody off the road just because they don't want a union in there.

I've always said that if you're a good employer – Costco here in Alberta is not unionized. Why? They're a good employer, pay people well, treat them well, good working conditions. If you provide those kinds of things – you're right – you don't need a union. But you do when you see things like employers bouncing paycheques to their employees. You do when you see things like: "Well, we're changing the dress code, you know, so we want that skirt to be a little bit higher. We want that top to be a little bit lower." You need a union because that's unacceptable. Making it harder for those employees to band together to say, "Hey, what you're doing is not right" – you want those people to have that access and not make it harder.

As I've stated before, I'm very concerned about this youth minimum wage. I feel that it's very, very discriminatory because of

your birthday. I mean, seeing somebody – and I think it was the minister responsible for the status of women – talking about these hard-working people, yet there they are in the muck, getting dirty, but: well, your birthday was in December, but this person's birthday was in January, making \$2 dollars an hour less doing the exact same job. Come on. We're better than that.

Let's not create a situation where that kid is deciding to either go to school or help pay the bills in the family while they're getting, especially for newcomer families – we want to be able to come in, uplift them, get them on their way to succeed, and when those people have that opportunity to succeed, oh, my gosh, they take off. It's awesome to see. They're so excited about going out and working hard for their employer because they're treated well, they're paid well, and they don't go anywhere, and that lowers costs for employers, again, probably one of the reasons why Costco is so successful. There are no retraining costs, virtually, for them. Employees know their job. They know how to deal with the customers. They know where everything is in the store. People come in, have a great experience. Surprise, surprise, they come back.

You know, again, I've seen the bad actors. I've had an employer in my office, in my constituency office, telling me: well, I think I shouldn't have to pay anybody anything for the first three months; I should just get to test drive them and see if they'll work out. Come on. Again, we're better than that. Like I said, it always just takes the one to start ruining it for the rest, and with the conditions that are being proposed in Bill 2, I think we're going to start allowing the bad actors more freedom to bad act, which then puts pressure on the employers who are trying so hard to do it right, to create such a fantastic workplace, but they're trying to compete. It starts coming down to that bottom line, and they start cutting corners.

By going back to Committee of the Whole and recommitting Bill 2, we'll get the opportunity to re-examine some of these things, come up with some better solutions. The opposition is not here just to make the life of the government-side MLAs miserable. It may seem like that, but it's really not. I used to hear all the time in the 29th Legislature: we're just here to help. Okay. Well, then we're just here to help. We're trying to bring forth common-sense amendments that I think, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud talked about, bring that balance so that everybody succeeds, everybody is successful, not only our newcomers but our youth as well and our businesses, all at the same time. Happy employees promote where they work.

I remember that when I first joined – back then it was Safeway. The only way you could get into Safeway was if you knew somebody. That was the only way. It was that sought-after a business to work for because you got paid well. Conditions were pretty reasonable. They tended to treat you with dignity and respect. The ice cream plant where I was was a little bit higher. We were a little bit of an anomaly. It seemed like we never had any problems there. But, surprise, surprise, there was also a union there because there were times where we did face problems.

**6:50 a.m.**

But when I look at places where people are trying to form a union because they want to get a bathroom break – for some of us that is just unthinkable. We're, like: well, that can't be. Well, that was the case. Surprisingly enough, it was the same employer that drove the union president off the road who wasn't even allowing bathroom breaks, and you wonder why they wanted – so why would we get in the way of trying to help those people organize so that they could go to the employer and say: "Hey, look, it's not just me. It's all of us"? But to make that more difficult, I think, is a disservice to the



hard-working Albertans that are working hard to make our businesses successful.

I still believe that we did not just give unions a free ride here with the current legislation. As I said, if they did not hit that 65 per cent, it was a vote automatically. But at 65 per cent we said: okay; I think we've managed to create that threshold where it's pretty straightforward that people want a union there.

It is my hope that members on all sides of this House will give this amendment serious consideration to send it back to Committee of the Whole, give us an opportunity to re-examine some of the parts that we have concerns about, that we think, in the long run, are going to hurt us as a province. It will hurt our hard-working Albertans, it will hurt our hard-working businesses, and that just drags everybody down.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-South West again.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just need a few moments to respond to some of the things that I've heard from the member opposite. I mean, on the democratic right of employees to form a union, again there is a disconnect between the member's understanding of what that requires – nobody on the government side, contrary to what the member would want this Chamber to believe, is against the right of employees to belong to a union. The question is: what is the process by which they get to that particular point?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I mean, their argument is that if the union gets 65 per cent of the vote of the employees in a particular work environment, it should be automatic. But they often talk about – I've had to listen to them talk about democracy, freedom, and rights, and all of those things. I don't understand why they haven't had time to understand that this has to do with the right to vote. It doesn't matter whether it is 35 per cent or 65 per cent. Get the 65 per cent, but commit that particular decision to a vote. That is a fundamental right. So the philosophical difference, Madam Speaker, is that on our side we are saying that the employees have got the right to determine whether or not they belong to a union. On their side their argument is that, no, it is not the employees; it is the union bosses. It's not the employees; it's the union bosses.

Number two, Madam Speaker, you know, they talk about the statutory holiday, otherwise called general holiday pay. Until the NDP changed the rule, the law required you to have worked for up to 30 days. After 30 days you are automatically entitled to general holiday pay. That was the law until they changed that. The same thing with the overtime agreement requirement. That was the law until they changed that very suddenly.

Madam Speaker, in 2008 to 2009 we had the worst global recession. On average, the United States was losing 180,000 jobs per month, but Canada, withstood that global recession because we had a federal government at the time that pursued, you know, strong conservative economic policies that insulated us to a certain extent from what was going on around the world – but in the last four years they pursued policies that devastated our economy. Rather than sit back, self-reflect on whether or not their policies are actually helping our economy and the same people they always profess to help, they dug deep into their ideologies.

That is why in the midst of a recession, in the midst of all of the problems that they acknowledged, they pursued policies that made it worse: 200,000 of our fellow citizens out of work; 35,000 of our youth out of work; more stopped looking. Rather than simply maintain the status quo that would allow people to return back to

work, they went the other way. A 50 per cent increase in minimum wage: in the midst of a recession, how is it possible that increasing costs on those who create employment would actually lead to more jobs? That's just the direct opposite.

At the end of the day, Bill 2 strikes the right balance. They talk about the right balance. I would submit, Madam Speaker, that the right balance actually is making sure that employers . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are speaking of Bill 2, specifically about youth, so I would like to take a moment to speak on something specifically local and ask for some latitude from the members opposite and the members in this Chamber. It is with deep sorrow that I rise in this Chamber at the moment, and I would like to thank all members present for granting me this latitude to speak on something that weighs heavily on me today. Yesterday morning the town of Cardston woke up to tragic news that two young lives had been taken from us prematurely.

As the details come in, I am only familiar with one of the two individuals involved, and I'd like to speak briefly on his passing. On Wednesday night, shortly after midnight 16-year-old Briggs Holland was travelling to Cardston on highway 5, hoping to make it home before curfew, when he was struck head-on and killed. When I learned of the news yesterday, I was in shock, and my heart broke. Briggs was the son of Steve and Tracie, the brother of Haylie, Micah, Summer, Skyline, and Kash, a member of the Cardston boys' basketball and volleyball teams, friend to many, and friend of mine. Briggs was the kind of kid that everybody liked. In a region of the province divided by high school lines, Briggs had a charm and a charisma that could transcend rivalries and break down invisible town borders.

When I first met Briggs, it was at a 6 a.m. pickup basketball game. I immediately liked him. I always liked him so long as he was on my team. In my objective opinion, he was a damn good basketball player. In traditional pickup fashion I tried to impose my size on Briggs wherever possible, but something I learned quickly was that he would not be pushed around, and he would not back down. That was Briggs: strong in mind, body, character, and spirit, traits I encourage all of us to embody, a worthy ambassador of the Holland family name.

7:00 a.m.

At some point in life we all ask the question: why do bad things happen to good people? I'm guilty of uttering these words myself, and today is no exception. The answer is best summed up in the words of Haylie Holland, Briggs's sister, who is serving a full-time mission in Salt Lake City, Utah, for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I'm going to try to get through this. She said:

Words can't even express the [great] heartache that I am feeling today. But words [also cannot] express the gratitude that I feel because of the great plan God has prepared for His children. This life was never supposed to be easy, but God's plan of happiness gives us light and hope through [all of it]. I know that families are for eternity and I am so incredibly thankful for that knowledge that I have.

I'll see ya . . . soon Briggs!

It's not our will but His.

I want to express my sincerest condolences to the Holland family, the town of Cardston as this tragedy has shaken us to the core. But the bonds of an eternal family cannot be broken. In that light, we will rally around the Holland family, the town of Cardston, and those involved in the only way that Albertans know how.

God be with you till we meet again, Briggs. [Standing ovation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment REC? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. That's a tragedy. I think it just reminds you how important every day is and how important the people that you love are. I'm very sorry for your friends and your constituents.

It's my pleasure to rise and speak not to Bill 2, actually, but to the amendment that it "be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering section 4." Like my colleague said earlier, our job as opposition – and I think we learned from the previous opposition, at least, I did, when first it was a combination of parties and then it was one party. You know, I watched them as opposition. I had never been an opposition MLA, so I learned. What they continuously told us: I believed them; I took them at their word. They said that their job was to do a couple of things. One was to try to make legislation better, to share a different point of view. The other one was to hold them to account, to ask the hard questions, and to keep asking them when they didn't get answers.

That's what I'm doing here. Just like I said earlier, when we were talking about Bill 8, it is something that I feel really strongly about. It is my pleasure to be the MLA for St. Albert, and it is my pleasure to be here being their voice and doing my best to be an opposition MLA. I'm just sort of supporting what my colleague said earlier, that it is important. It's unpleasant, but it is important.

Going back to this amendment, why I think it's important to begin this discussion and reset a little bit and start to talk about some issues is that we're just continuing to see this trend, really. That trend is that, you know, subsidies and tax cuts on the backs of workers are the answer, sort of this trickle-down mentality that if you focus your resources in one area, which tends to be the top area, all things will trickle down, the world will be right, jobs will be created, life will be better, communities will be resilient, and poverty will be impacted.

Then I'm suddenly reminded by this, you know, statement. I think it was just an anonymous account. No, it wasn't an anonymous account. It was an official Twitter account, actually, for the UCP a few years back that posted something that said something like: we can't be a compassionate province until we're prosperous. I actually reject that idea. It's possible to be compassionate and to do the work that you need to do to ensure that all the people you represent are included in the decisions that you make. There isn't only one way. I think the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud said it best, that we come to this place, we're sent here by different people in different parts of the province, and we have different points of view. It doesn't make one entirely wrong and the other entirely right, but sometimes it's about finding a middle ground. I don't believe that there is only one way, that you only invest in one area and then assume it will take care of itself.

The reason that I'm sort of focusing on that is that I see this trend of this legislation and not just this one, that we're just continuing to create the situation where the economic inequality in our province – ultimately in our country but in our province right now – just continues to grow.

Again we're seeing this government say that this bill – and that is why I think it's important that we go back and talk about it – essentially makes Alberta open for business. Well, I can guarantee you that before the election it was open for business already, and it has been for decades. It wasn't just us; it wasn't just the government before or the one before that. It's been open for business for a very long time. All of us stand on the shoulders of great people that have

come before us, that have represented constituents, the same constituents in this place. We may have been with different parties, but I think it's incredibly arrogant to say that you swooped in, the saviour, and that after the election you are here to fix it and turn it around, because it doesn't work that way. It's a continuous building.

You know, as much as I don't like to talk about and remember when we were in the throes of the recession, just how bad that was for everybody everywhere, just shedding jobs, with people just uncertain about their homes, communities – it was horrible. It was the worst recession in a generation. But that was in 2016. It was so difficult for everybody. All of us were hearing from our constituents about these things. For the government to continuously tell us that four years of an NDP government decimated Alberta's economy: I mean, I get that there's some rhetoric and there's some drama that goes on in this place, but it is important to try to focus on some fact. It was a recession. It was a huge recession.

I think what you saw was a government that came in and said: "There is another way. There has to be another way. We've continued to do it the same way for generations, and we're not getting any further ahead." We talked about Ralph Klein's days: "You know, the debt is paid, and we're at zero debt" or whatever his sign said. But we saw that in the wake of that, there was a massive infrastructure deficit that this government is still dealing with today. All Albertans are impacted by that because we all feel it in our communities. I gave this example before. One of the first announcements was that the Sturgeon hospital in St. Albert was getting some funding. How exciting that was, thinking: oh, maybe there will be a new project. No, it was a 25-year-old boiler that needed to be replaced that hadn't been for a very long time. Those are the kinds of infrastructure deficits that we were left with. This was the reality, and it was about concentrating wealth at the expense of people that really should not be expensed.

I'm going to keep saying this, that I do believe that there's another way, and wage cuts for workers so that we can create tax cuts or larger profit margins are not the way to go because we are only strong as a community, as a society, as a province, as a country when we look at and take into account the welfare of everybody, not just the people who have the most access to government or who have the most resources to invest. When you look at everybody, it's the people that don't have anything that need our help.

*7:10 a.m.*

We all know this. I think we're all smart people here. We understand that when we make an investment in school, in kindergarten, in affordable child care, in education of any kind, in housing for seniors, in income for people that are severely disabled that cannot work, we know that it's an investment in our future, financially and otherwise. It is less of a drain on our systems. It's just a good thing to do. I guess I was a little bit – the audacity to say that this bill is about being open for business when we're doing it on the backs of people that can't bear that weight: that's unfortunate. I wanted to go back, Madam Speaker. Why I'm talking about these things is that this is why we need a reset, to have this conversation, because I don't think that we've had it.

When the Premier stood up a few hours ago, one of the things he talked about was a lobby group called Restaurants Canada. By no means do I think ill of a lobby group. There are lots of lobby groups. I guess it's what you lobby for and how you do it. But he referenced this particular lobby group, and this one stuck with me because I can remember the day that I saw – I don't remember what channel it was – the interview or the people talking, and I remember thinking: this is what it looks like. You know, I don't see it all that often. Certainly, people will always come to our offices and lobby

for different things, but to see an organized lobby group do it on television – I watched it happen – and then to come here and to see the direct impact of that lobby group was a little bit stunning to me because I've never seen it up close. I've never seen what it looks like.

What it looks like is that they got precisely what they want. Whatever relationship went on, I don't know, but I see the direct result, and I see the people that are impacted. It is youth. It is workers. These are people that don't have a lot of resources, and they are not very well connected. He talked about: it's just small businesses lobbying together, Restaurants Canada. It doesn't matter to me who belongs. I mean, that's fine. It doesn't matter to me. But let's be clear. When you look on their site to see, you know, who the folks are that are providing leadership to this group, these are not, like, mom-and-pop shops. These are large multinational companies. These are professionals. These are smart people. These are good lobbyists. These are great lobbyists.

I was curious. I was thinking. You know, I looked up some stats because I didn't really have a sense of: what are we talking about here in terms of earnings and savings for them and things like that? One of the things that caught my eye is that the CEOs – again, these are not Canadians, and I apologize for that; this is from 2017 – of six top fast-food chains on average make 66 times the amount of some of their lowest paid employees. Some of those restaurants are Starbucks, McDonald's, KFC, Taco Bell, Wendy's. These are staples in all of our communities or most of our communities. That range is stunning. These are the large corporations, large profitable corporations, and yay for them for creating jobs and being innovative and entrepreneurial. It's great. But those ratios are huge, or those differences. You think about what lobbying is – and I guess that's why that was so stunning to me, to see what this group looked like, to see what the information and suggestions were, then to see it happen and to see the end result. That was just an example.

The other thing I wanted to say, Madam Speaker, is why it would be a good thing to get back to committee. Maybe I'm wrong. I haven't been on all the shifts, but I don't believe that the government has entertained any amendments from the opposition. I think some of the amendments that we brought forward . . .

**Member Irwin:** Just one.

**Ms Renaud:** Did they do one?

**Member Irwin:** I believe they took one.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. They got one. That's great.

**Member Irwin:** On the Senate.

**Ms Renaud:** On the Senate. Okay. That's great.

**Mr. Bilous:** Out of dozens of amendments.

**Ms Renaud:** Out of dozens of amendments. Okay. Not so great.

I think it's important to talk about that. There are some amendments that I don't think would completely do all of the things that we'd like to see, but some of the amendments were quite reasonable. It's about finding a middle ground. I think back to the last legislative session. I'm pretty sure that we worked with the opposition on a number of amendments, but one of the amendments really stuck with me because it was really a passionate debate. I think it was Bill 21. It was about penalties for physicians that were charged and convicted of sexual abuse of their patients. I think that initially we were following the college guidelines of steps that they would take, and we thought that those were, you know, reasonable

penalties to put in place. That would be after they were convicted and, I guess, served their sentence.

But one of the members of the opposition – it was with the Alberta Party, I believe – first suggested that it didn't go far enough, that it needed to be forever. If someone chose to engage in that kind of behaviour and they were found guilty, that would be it for them: no more licence. Of course, I remember feeling anguish, sitting back there, thinking, "That was a really good amendment, but I also understand this argument, and I understand because it's coming from the college that provides oversight and it's coming from a place of being really angry that that happened in the first place," trying to balance that.

In the end, we listened first to the Alberta Party, and I think the UCP sort of got onboard, and they continued. I'm not sure if they had an amendment or not, but it ended up, I think, that we used the amendment. Things were changed, and I know the then Minister of Health was great about it. What I really appreciated was that on something I thought we couldn't do, somebody suggested it, we thought about it, we talked about it, and it happened. That was an example of trying to find a middle ground.

We might be standing here, hour after hour, saying the same things to you or trying to impress on you that this is something that's important to us. It might feel like we're just a broken record saying the same thing, but . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I would love to just respond a little bit to St. Albert across the way there. I'm going to quote her on a couple things. She talks about, quote: the audacity to say that their government is open for business. Let's talk about the previous government. Let's talk about the 29th Legislature. You've mentioned that you think your government was open for business. Let's talk about the power of words.

Let's talk about the power of a royalty review that you decided to do, your previous government. Let's talk about the eight months it took you to do that royalty review. You could have done the simple thing and just read the last two that were written. You know, it would have given you the concept, the ideas that what is going on here is that we need infrastructure. But what you don't understand is that when you guys chose to do that royalty review, people were looking at you and looking at the people who wanted that royalty review. We have pictures of your entire government holding up picket signs saying: down with oil; no more pipelines. Absolutely. When you have people that are so anti-oil – and now they're in government – doing a royalty review, I'll tell you what my friends who work for the oil companies were thinking. The minute you started that royalty review, every single international company was looking at leaving this nation because . . . [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hey. Hon. members, it's getting a little bit loud. There are, like, multiple conversations going across the aisle. Let's listen to our speaker.

Hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, please continue.

**Mr. Yao:** . . . these are international companies. You'll notice that most of them left or have very small holdings in our nation now. That's because they're looking at the big picture, and they're looking at their operations in Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Russia, the U.S., the U.K., and Norway, Venezuela. You name it; they have investments.

The only one that had a red dot on it that said that this is a hostile environment that could affect them greatly was Canada. When

they're looking at the big picture, all they see is a hostile government, a socialist government, and they think to themselves: "You know what? This isn't the place." Sure enough, they were right. Even though they stood up with you guys, they did leave. There is a certain irony in the fact that you guys chased away probably the one employer that was the leader in workers' rights and compensation and other labour issues. That's just point one that I want to make there. When you say that we're not open for business, I challenge you to look in the mirror.

7:20 a.m.

You know, you talk about the shame in having kids have a lower wage of \$2. I belonged to a union, and I know lots of people that belong to unions. Can I ask you why unions like having a probationary wage in their contracts, why they ask that new employees that come in accept a lower wage? These are adults we're talking about. These are men and women who are raising families and everything else. Why is it acceptable that they have a lower wage than the average worker in an organization? It's because they recognize that they require some level of training, that their skills and qualities are not up to par, and that there is a time where an employer has to invest in an employee to bring them up to a certain level of quality. That is something to consider every time you criticize a \$2 wage drop for kids.

Working in a fire department, part of my job was to orientate these new guys, to train them, to assess them to see whether these firefighters and paramedics were good enough and of the quality to perform in our fire department. It is a sad thing when you have to tell someone that they don't have what it takes and that with all the time that they invested in getting the education for a certain job, they just don't have it. In the career that I was in, you have to have certain qualities that enable you to perform a job under great duress, and we had to recognize that not everyone could do it, so we had to ask them to leave. Again, those guys were – we accept the fact that we have to train them up and bring them up to a certain level. Even the union, in our negotiations and our labour agreements, recognizes that they might not be worth as much until they pass some certain processes.

Yeah. Like, I could really pick your speech apart as well as the rest of the speeches, but . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are on Bill 2, on the amendment REC. Are there any other speakers?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment REC lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my opportunity to speak to Bill 2 at third reading. I want to say thank you to all members who've engaged in debate on this particular piece of legislation. Because I have so many concerns within this act, I'd like to take my opportunity at third reading to reiterate the reasons why I will not be supporting this bill, respond to a few members of this Assembly in the points that they have raised regarding this bill, and remind the members of this House who this bill impacts.

I'll begin, because just as we were debating amendment REC, as I believe you referred to it, Madam Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-South West stood in this House and shared his point of view that the responsibility of the 29th Legislature, of our

government, should have been to maintain the status quo during the economic downturn. I want to strongly object to that because this is coming from a member who has told me that he understands employment standards better than anyone else in this House given that he has many years of experience with it.

The idea that status quo is what our province needed when it comes to the minimum employment standards for our workers shocks me because as someone who knew that legislation very well, he should have known and probably did know that it was over 30 years since it had last been updated because, obviously, previous Conservative governments believed, as he does, that status quo is the appropriate way to move forward: do not update legislation; do not protect and update the protections that are the minimum standards for Albertans.

The result of this, Madam Speaker, is that Alberta was wildly out of step with the rest of Canada in so many ways and in ways that significantly hurt Alberta families. Which Alberta families? The families that rely on minimum employment standards, vulnerable families, families that needed the protections that only good legislation passed by a caring government can give. But they did not have basic minimum employment standards that mirrored the rest of Canada's.

This member stands in this place and says that the NDP government should have maintained status quo, should not have changed things. Policies that were the result of women like Amanda Jensen, a very brave, strong single mother, who lost her job when her child had cancer – she went to use the employment insurance leaves that she had paid into, but because Alberta didn't have the basic leave protections matching the federal government's legislation, again, because our legislation was 30 years old, she lost her job. The idea that status quo was the responsible way forward shocks me, and I completely disagree. For someone who says that they are very familiar with the legislation to suggest that updating legislation and making sure that Alberta workers have the same minimum rights and protections as other Canadian workers – it is very unfortunate.

Let's speak to Bill 2 specifically because in Bill 2 they are returning Alberta to the position of being out of step on a number of fronts. First, on overtime banking, if Bill 2 passes third reading, Alberta will once again become the only place in Canada where the minimum standard for overtime banking will be at straight time, impacting 400,000 working Albertans, primarily in oil and gas, in construction, putting us in a position where we know that employees often feel that they do not have the agency to be able to negotiate better than straight time banking. Although this government's members have talked about how these overtime agreements are voluntary and employees need to sign on to them, they ignore the fact that often they are signed in an entire place of employment, and individual employees do not have that option. It's often been put forward to employees as: "This is how this place of employment works. You can have a job or no job. That is the choice that you are making."

I know this because through the extensive consultation that we did in updating the minimum employment standards in Alberta, that had been left to languish for decades, we heard from workers. Workers would be calling our employment standards contact centre concerned about these employment standards. So I'm very proud that our government updated that. I disagree with Bill 2, which is rolling back that minimum overtime banking of time and a half.

I'm also disappointed in this government for misleading Albertans, putting out memes and graphics showing no change to overtime pay. Madam Speaker, to be clear, we agree; Bill 2 does not change the paid overtime. But to ignore the financial impact of banking overtime, to ignore the impact of less time with family, less

money in your bank account, because that is what banked over time becomes – it is time you are paid for. You're cutting that by a third. To mislead Albertans by putting out memes and graphics about paid overtime was incredibly disappointing to me.

7:30 a.m.

I would like to see us engage in genuine policy debate wherever possible and to be upfront and to have the courage of our convictions to say, "This is what I believe," and to explain that position to our constituents, not to, through the election campaign and even afterwards, confuse Albertans about the difference between paid and banked overtime and to suggest that banked overtime has no value to workers. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, our 400,000 Albertans who work overtime feel that it has important value, whether it is banked or paid, and the change to overtime banking is going to hurt families in our province. We know that workers generally do not have the right to refuse overtime, and we know that often these overtime agreements are not set on a 1 to 1 basis with employees. I am very concerned about the overtime pay changes to overtime banking.

Secondly, statutory holidays. Once again, Alberta will be wildly out of step with the rest of Canada in that we will have workers, often vulnerable workers, who will now no longer get any benefits, whether it be time off or pay, for a statutory holiday. That greatly disappoints me, Madam Speaker. When we were updating employment standards and statutory holiday benefits, I did not imagine that that would be something that a new government would roll back.

This impacts workers who rely on the minimum standard. Many employers around our province pay better than the minimum, provide better benefits than the minimum, and for that I thank them. I know employees always appreciate that, but what is going to happen is that the workplaces that provide the minimum employment standards, which is their right – and for the record the employer who let Amanda Jensen go did nothing wrong according to the law. They were following the minimum employment standards, which is why it's so important for governments to make sure these minimum standards are kept up and, in my opinion, should be part of looking at other jurisdictions and making sure that Alberta workers get the same rights and benefits of other Canadian workers, which has not always been the case.

When Christmas falls on a weekend, workers who work Monday to Friday jobs, 9 to 5, may not get any additional pay or any additional time off under the changes to Bill 2. That may seem like a small thing. If Christmas was on a Saturday, why would someone need any additional time off? I would argue that all workers in Canada deserve the benefit of statutory holidays, the time with family, the time to celebrate Canada Day, the time to celebrate Christmas and the other statutory holidays. I would put to you, Madam Speaker, that all other provinces agree with that. Alberta will become once again the only province where that is the case, that an employee could not receive any potential benefit. Thinking about those minimum standards is very important to me.

Related to this Bill 2 is the change to the youth wage, paying youth \$2 less than adults to do the same work. I would like to reiterate that I believe strongly in equal pay for equal work regardless of any differences between those workers, be it age, be it gender. This is a misguided policy that will not create the jobs that the government is telling Albertans it will create. The government is premising this as: the reason our youth unemployment is high is because the NDP government raised the minimum wage. They continue to quote from studies while ignoring the very real data that we have, that I have looked at constantly as we evaluate the impact of the increasing minimum

wage in Alberta, and what we see is that the youth unemployment trends in Alberta mirror what was happening in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan did not change their minimum wage, Madam Speaker. They did not increase it, yet both provinces see very similar patterns in youth unemployment, perhaps because these employment trends are more greatly impacted by general economic trends, like the drop in the global price of oil.

This government ignores that evidence and says: youth unemployment is high because of a high minimum wage, so we're going to borrow a policy from a jurisdiction that has higher than average youth unemployment. That doesn't make sense to me, Madam Speaker. If you're going to borrow a policy from another jurisdiction, wouldn't it be good if you could prove that it was working there? But it isn't. In Ontario they have higher than the national average youth unemployment.

Now, not only are they looking to Ontario and borrowing that policy but they're actually taking that policy, where in Ontario it's an 85-cent difference, and bringing it to Alberta and turning it into a \$2 difference and saying that there will be no unintended consequences. Well, even at first glance, looking at it and knowing that a student will get \$2 less than a nonstudent of the same age, it concerns me that students will drop out of school because they need to . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Is that an intended consequence?

**Ms Gray:** I hope not.

. . . support families. Now, to be clear, well-supported students will not be dropping out of school to earn \$2 more. That's not who this is going to hurt. It will be vulnerable students. It will be teenagers who find themselves parents, teenagers who find themselves living on their own. We know that these kids are part of our communities, yet we're putting in a policy that is going to pay them less and encourage them to drop out of school. And as a corollary, for employers there's now an incentive to hire someone younger than 18. What is that going to do to our employees 18 to 24?

I would like to pause at this moment to give a shout-out to all of the businesses who have stood up and said: we will not follow discriminatory policies and pay young people lower than the minimum wage. We're seeing a lot of that. The few companies that have publicly said that they will be paying less than the minimum wage to young people or the new lower minimum wage to younger people: what I'm seeing is a lot of public concern with this policy and people talking about supporting businesses that support our youth. I'll be interested to see how this conversation continues should Bill 2 pass. I hope that the members of the government are hearing my concerns and will reconsider this piece of legislation.

I've talked so far about overtime banking putting us wildly out of step with the rest of the country – yes, Alberta used to be out of step; that's not a reason to go back to being out of step – statutory holiday policies that will put us out of step with the rest of the country, the new youth minimum wage being touted as a job creation minimum wage with absolutely no proof that it will create jobs, and many concerns about the workers that it will hurt.

This bill also looks to change certification processes, and this government continues to speak about collective bargaining and unionization in a negative way, which I find very disheartening. I know, from the consultation that I did with both sides, that through the certification process very often employers will . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. It's interesting because there's lots of information and studies on both sides. I actually think the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was speaking about that a little bit earlier. What I'd like speak about for a moment is the idea that when the new minimum wage came in, for those of us who actually – like, we employ a lot of young people in our business. It's a ladder. It's a space where youth will get a really good start in a business that is hands on, the training that comes along with that. Like I've said at least a hundred times in this House in this session and previously, we never paid minimum wage, ever. It was even at one point in time because the way that we had minimum wage before, everybody started off on the same footing. It was actually even once upon a time.

**7:40 a.m.**

In fact, I can speak to my business. If a youth came in with the discipline and the ability to show up on time, put in the effort, put in the work, came with an attitude of learning and growth and wanting to move forward, nobody more than me wanted to keep that person in that job, especially because a car wash is not a place where you're going to make a career. It's a jumping-off point to a gazillion other careers, and in fact I have to say that for the youth that have come through our businesses, we've seen them grow and accelerate and find other businesses. We've written references for them. These are young people that came in, came to us, and my husband personally trained them. As a result of that, every single time when we did well, they did well. That is 99.99 per cent of the businesses in this province, and to assume anything less than that – the reason why companies are sticking to the minimum wage right now without rolling it back is because none of them paid minimum wage in the first place. They already honoured the youth that were coming through there because they wanted them there.

A lot of the kids that are coming back, like, through the Stampede and stuff, these are kids that have been there four, five, six years. I know all of them. These are kids that have worked really hard and earned the respect of the job creators that are putting in those positions. Those Stampede jobs, those are the ones that you want because once you've had those jobs, to be able to put that on your resumé, it kick-starts you into a whole bunch of other jobs. It's a great position to be able to get into. We send a ton of kids into that space to try and get those jobs because it's so good on their resumé.

These companies are doing that because it's not about setting the minimum; we already were there, most of the businesses in this province. When we did well at Christmas, everybody got benefits. It had nothing to do with anything other than if we're doing well, if the folks that are working for us are working within an environment and are helping to bring people into our business – and a car wash is a person business. It's not glamorous, and you have to be there to be able to help, especially if you have people with young families coming in there that are having difficulties. We've had women holding on to babies trying to, you know, clean out their tires and stuff. Our staff will rush to their aid, help them with their cars, get them through. We have probably four or five door hits a week because, you know, whatever, you're distracted. Everybody's there to help each other out. These things happen.

But you have to understand, in a small business like mine I have all the risk, every little thing that goes into that. I take on every single bit of risk, and when I bring somebody into my business, it has to be because they want to be there, they show up on time, they come and work, and I'm going to make sure that if that person is doing a great job, I don't care what their age is. It has nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with environment, good work, participation, being good at customer service, being able to deal

with customers that are upset, frustrated, angry, whatever it is, whatever happened in their day before they showed up at my business. Those are all the things that contribute to a person working.

In terms of vulnerable youth that may be working, I do not know – and this is what frustrates me more than anything. It just breaks my heart. I don't know a single job creator in this province that would take advantage of that child. Not one. If a child is coming into work because they're having to support their family, I guarantee you Albertans will come to the . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, shall the minister close debate? So closed. All right.

The minister has moved third reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:45 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Rehn
Amery	Lovely	Rosin
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Luan	Rowswell
Dreeshen	Madu	Rutherford
Getson	McIver	Schow
Glasgo	Nally	Sigurdson, R.J.
Goodridge	Neudorf	Singh
Hanson	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Horner	Nixon, Jeremy	Walker
Hunter	Orr	Yao

**8:00 a.m.**

Against the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Renaud
Dach	Irwin	Shepherd
Dang	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Gray		

Totals:	For – 30	Against – 10
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[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a third time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

**The Acting Chair:** Members, we will call the committee to order.

### Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019 (continued)

**The Acting Chair:** The Committee of the Whole has under consideration Bill 8. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? We are on amendment A5. Are there any members that wish to speak? The Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the effort from members across the way, but that's not exactly how this place works.

I want to take a moment to read some comments that I read in *The Star*, Filibuster over Alberta Education Bill and GSA Protections Passes 24-hour Mark. There are a few lines from the Government House Leader that I think are worth us hearing in this House. He says: eventually, it'll go through the House. He says: you can't now all the sudden make Bill 8 about a different topic that it's not about, and then try to legislate and add pieces of legislation to an existing piece of legislation that have nothing to do with the issue.

Two things I want to say about that. One, the Government House Leader has got a predetermined outcome, I guess, for what he believes is going to happen, so some might say: why bother? I would say that I bother because it's my job to fight for kids. I believe that in my heart of hearts. I believe it's all of our jobs to fight for kids, every single person who is in this place. While people over 18 may have elected us, I think it's our responsibility to make sure that we create an Alberta where – we have borrowed this Alberta from the next generation. We haven't just inherited it from the last; we've borrowed it from the next. So I think it is becoming for all of us to reflect on how the changes we make impact the future generation and the current situation for young Albertans throughout this province.

The House leader goes on to say – I'll reread that: you can't now all the sudden make Bill 8 about a different topic that it's not about, and then try to legislate and add pieces of legislation to an existing piece of legislation that have nothing to do with the issue. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from reality.

The amendment is very simple. The amendment to (2.1) reads that:

(2.1) A policy established under subsection (2) must contain a requirement that any request made by a student pursuant to section 35.1(1) is granted no more than two weeks from the day the request is received.

I've been listening to the debate, and I recall the Minister of Education saying: "Well, two weeks just isn't reasonable. Two weeks is too fast. Two weeks is too burdensome." I have to say that to say to a child who is often in difficult psychological and sometimes physical harm, "Two weeks is just too tight a timeline; it's just not feasible; there'd be too many requests for clubs, and two weeks is just an unreasonable timeline": I think that that does a disservice to our children.

I think that if we look to other children who are at risk in society, we just passed a private member's bill or motion – I don't recall – increasing the penalties for people who don't report kids who are at risk to the authorities and expanding who they could report to from social workers to also include police officers. There was a sense of urgency when we passed that motion. Perhaps it was because people have an easier time, some members of this House have an easier time empathizing with physical harm or malnourishment than they do with emotional and physical harm that isn't always visible.

Let's try to make it a little more visible. We've heard many of the stats about homelessness and about self-harm and about suicidal ideation and successful deaths by suicide. We've heard about that in this House, so if two weeks isn't reasonable, if two weeks is too fast, I think that's a very, very damaging message that we're sending to our youth. We put the word "immediate" in because we thought that that was fair and reasonable. Honestly, most school jurisdictions have been implementing them immediately. The fact that kids still have to ask for a support group is challenging enough,

but when they do, the fact that it isn't created immediately is highly problematic.

So we thought: "Okay. Let's take the government at their word. They want to work with us. They want to try to find some middle ground. Let's say two weeks." I think two weeks is long. I think it's far too long, but let's put in a timeline, at least, because a direction without a timeline is no direction at all. It's like if you said to your child, you know, "This is your list of chores," and then said nothing further, had no follow-up, had no enforcement. Your kid would say: "Well, you didn't tell me a timeline." You'd say: "Well, I shouldn't have to give you a timeline. It should be now, right?" That's how I would feel if I were handing down a list of chores to the young people in my life. "If I have responsibilities that I need you to help fulfill, you should do it now. Or let's give a long timeline. Let's say two weeks. You have two weeks to clean your bedroom. You have two weeks to cut the grass." My grass gets pretty long in two weeks, but let's say two weeks. To say that two weeks isn't a reasonable timeline, that it should be an open-ended timeline, I think, says that you're not serious about what you're actually compelling somebody to do.

When we have debate in this House and we want to refer something, we have to refer it to a place and for a set amount of time. We can't refer things indefinitely because that implies that we aren't serious about the direction that we're giving. The same stands for this simple, I would say, beyond-an-olive-branch amendment saying two weeks to act in the interests of kids and keep them safe when they ask for help. I'd say that is far beyond an olive branch.

I want to take the time to read in – some of you might recall I said to folks in the middle of the night, not last night but the night before, that if they had things they wanted me to share in the record about their experiences with this legislation, I'd be happy to.

**8:10 a.m.**

Here's one that I received from an anonymous, amazing teacher, typed on their phone while on summer holidays because, of course, this is summer vacation time. This teacher said this to me, and I'm happy to provide a copy to *Hansard* as well.

As employees of [Edmonton public], we have the advantage of working for a district that has had a strong policy in place to protect the rights of LGBTQ2S students, staff and families. We have specific bullets about confidentiality, self-identification, supports and avenues of recourse. I can't say the same about other students, staff or families in [other parts of] our province.

I am a parent of three children who have gone through the public education system. Keeping Bill 24 as is does not in any way weaken the rights of parents. In no way does the present bill imply that parents are a danger to children nor is it a method to indoctrinate young minds. It's simply a piece of legislation that ensures a child maintains their control over their identity. Isn't that what we all want? To determine who we are without fear of a policy that could put children in an awkward position, at the very least, or out them in danger of physical and mental trauma.

Working directly with LGBTQ2S children, I know the adversities they face. Recent government of Alberta stats show that 53% of LGBTQ students feel unsafe in their school compared to 3% of heterosexual youth.

I'm just going to say that stat again because I think it's a powerful one: 53 per cent of LGBTQ students feel unsafe in their school compared to 3 per cent of heterosexual students. That's a government of Alberta stat. We survey students about their sense of safety in their own schools.

This is such a disproportionate statistic but we change that in a simple way by leaving the confidentiality and the immediacy aspect of Bill 24 alone.

We know that 30-50% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. Of course, the majority of parents are kind and loving

but this stat tells us that there is still work to be done in our society. Work around acceptance, belonging and knowledge. Weakening this legislation does not help any of our students. It simply gives parents a false sense of control and allows school district staff to act out of ignorance.

The science tells us that kids, even young kids, know who they are. If they live in fear for who they are it can lead to trauma. Fearing that a teacher could out them, could cause anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation [for an] already vulnerable child. If you've never had to hide your sexual orientation or gender identity, you really have no idea the mental energy that takes.

Mental energy that could otherwise be channelled into learning.

I want to thank that teacher and parent for taking the time to share those thoughts on this legislation.

I know that the Government House Leader has said that eventuality it will go through the House, but we can take a moment to say: all right, two weeks; two weeks is a reasonable timeline. Two weeks is more than reasonable. It's more than I would want to be in anguish or fear or sense of feeling unsafe. But two weeks at least puts a light at the end of the tunnel. When we tell kids who are vulnerable that it gets better but we won't tell them when or how or with who, they are right to not believe us. It's not okay to say: it will get better maybe sometimes at some point in the future, perhaps, because we're not actually going to put a timeline in. I think that this is a very fair and reasonable point to say two weeks. I think that two weeks is longer than we would want for any child.

When we passed that earlier motion – or perhaps it was a bill, actually – around reporting children that we know are at risk, we believed there that it needs to be immediate and that if it isn't immediate, there need to be consequences, financial and even loss of independence as potential consequences. We're not putting those kinds of consequences in this bill. We're simply putting in a time limit so that the kids who are at risk and are asking for help know that their government is serious, they do have their backs, and that at some point they will make sure that their right to form a GSA is enforced. By failing to put in a timeline, we're failing to give any backbone to the hollow statements that have been made in this place.

Again, for the MLAs who stepped up to run, who did so because they cared about things like the economy and jobs and, when the now Premier at the time was running for Premier, said that there would not be legislation on social issues: these are social issues. We're not asking you to leave everything we did in place. I get it; you ran on a different platform. But you definitely did not run on outing gay kids. You definitely didn't run on allowing their right to form a GSA to be diminished. You definitely didn't run on never giving them the kind of supports that they asked for. You ran on improving things like high school completion rates and a curriculum redesign, and while we will probably still have some different opinions on some of those pieces, I think that probably the majority of caucus didn't sign up to attack the vulnerable. Hopefully, nobody in this place signed up for that.

This amendment is an easy opportunity for that motion around conscience rights to be delivered. I know there will probably be thumbs pointing one way or the other, but I also know that – I think it was technically just two days ago but probably today, based on the sitting of the House – we passed a motion saying that we supported MLAs in making decisions based on their conscience. This is a motion based on conscience, giving kids a reasonable time limit to exercise their rights.

This is an opportunity for members of this House to show Albertans that they're not what the Minister of Transportation said about a year ago, when he said: don't let them say that we're the lake-of-fire party; they will say that we're in this to attack gay kids.

He said that at the policy convention, and he was right. People did say that. The minister of culture made very similar pleas to the general membership, saying: please don't move us backwards on the rights of LGBTQ youth. She was right. People said that this was an attack on LGBTQ youth, and here we are: Bill 8, Bill Hate, Bill Straight, the hateful Bill 8, whatever you want to call it. Here we are with one of the first bills that this government brings forward in its first sitting, and it does exactly what those two prominent cabinet ministers pleaded with the membership not to do.

I'm here to reinforce the words that they delivered to the membership. I'm here to say: "Don't paint Alberta as uncaring. Don't paint Alberta as disregarding the lives of these vulnerable young people. Show them that we are a caring and just society. Show them that we're serious when we say that kids have the right to form GSAs by putting in a limit, two weeks, a lengthy limit but a limit nonetheless, because direction without a timeline is meaningless."

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you for the opportunity to rise today on what is now well over a 48-hour Wednesday. They tell you to come and get elected as an MLA, and the thing you don't know about till you arrive here is that this place has the power to make one day go as long as we so choose. This is my first time experiencing a 48-hour day. Mr. Chair, I'm sure it is yours.

I do want to take an opportunity to have a little bit of a discussion about what the deputy leader of the NDP presented to the Chamber this morning. It is quite shocking to me – Mr. Chair, I know it is shocking to you as well, and I sense that it probably is for most of my government colleagues – to continue to watch the NDP leadership and the NDP caucus in general get up and misrepresent facts when it comes to Bill 8. We repeatedly went through the actual facts.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**The Acting Chair:** Point of order noted.

#### **Point of Order Referring to Members in Debate**

**Mr. Bilous:** Under section 23(h), (i), (j), this has been a ruling numerous times. The Government House Leader just referred to individual members, not to the caucus, which, of course, is a point of order. As far as "misleading," the Speaker has ruled on this a number of times. This is a point of order on which the Speaker has ruled that members cannot refer to other members or leaders in a party as misleading or to the deputy leader as misrepresenting the facts. It can apply to parties or to government or to opposition, not to individuals.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I think the Opposition House Leader is probably getting a little tired. First of all, we didn't say "mislead;" we said "misrepresent." We never referred to the members. We said: the leadership of that party. We clearly referred to the party, not specifically to the deputy leader. It's also a little bit rich coming from the Opposition House Leader, whose leader, the interim leader of the NDP Party, the former Premier of Alberta, has spent her time in this House coming up with new and different ways to be able to call members liars in the House, trying to get around the rules. It's been quite comical watching that. It's almost laughable to watch the Official Opposition House Leader try to get up to do that. Mr. Chair,



this is not a point of order. I know that you know that, and I'd like to get on with my speech as soon as I can, please.

8:20 a.m.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, both, for your input. I would just caution: let's recognize the parliamentary language and the barriers that it imposes. At this point I don't have the benefit of the Blues to see exactly what was said, so if we could just carry on with the debate, please.

Thank you.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's always great to hear from the Official Opposition House Leader, who very actively is amongst the leadership of that party. He has a major role within it though we do know, from what we've been able to see – I feel for him as a former Official Opposition House Leader as he lives through the chaos that is the NDP leadership at the moment. We saw just moments ago the Member for Edmonton-Glenora positioning herself again as she begins to position herself for a leadership run. You have to almost feel bad for the Leader of the Official Opposition as she has to continue to watch her front bench and her backbench and her middle bench and all of her benches continue to posture to try to take her job while she's still sitting in the seat.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Point of order noted.

### Point of Order

#### Imputing Motives

#### Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Under 23(h), (i), and (j), specifically (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." The Government House Leader is repeatedly rising and insisting that members on this side are looking to replace our leader, who has made her intentions very clear to remain as Leader of the Official Opposition. She has stated this on numerous occasions. For him to imply that she is intending to leave this position for whatever reason or that members on this side of the House are attempting to usurp our leader, whom we strongly support, is to, as stated in (i), impute "false or unavowed motives to another Member." Indeed, I would say that it also encompasses (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

Now, I could stand in this House and talk about our interim Premier and talk about the fact that we know he's only here on a temporary basis, looking on his way to take the leadership of the Conservative Party of Canada, and that he does not have much commitment to this province, but I respect the fact that I would not impute such false and unavowed motives to our Premier.

**The Acting Chair:** Please get back to the matter of amendment A5 to Bill 8.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes, Mr. Chair. The reason that it's important to point out the bizarre behaviour of the leadership of the NDP Party in regard to the amendment is that it makes it clear why the amendment has made it to the floor, and the importance of that is that it's important for the Chamber to understand that. You would be confused if you were to listen to what has taken place inside this

House over the last 48 hours if you're one of the few people who listen to Legislatures in the middle of the night.

I know that my 90-something-year-old grandmother texted me late last night to say: what the heck is going on with the NDP? I'd be happy to table the text. I know the hon. government whip got the same text, interestingly enough, from his 90-something-year-old grandmother, trying to figure out why the NDP was bringing forward amendments and talking about an issue that is not related to the legislation and implying, sadly – sadly – to LGBTQ youth that somehow GSAs would stop as a result of Bill 8. That is not factual.

Let me be clear so that we don't offend the Opposition House Leader. That, to be very clear, is the NDP misrepresenting facts. That is what the NDP is doing with this amendment. They continue to do it. They continue to fearmonger with this amendment. They continue to state things that are not factual, and what's sad about that, Mr. Chair, is that it causes fear for people who don't have time in their everyday lives to follow the details of the legislation that is being debated in this Chamber. They have continued, as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, for over 48 hours, rising inside this House, misrepresenting facts, and causing fear with amendments like this for the LGBTQ community. It is outrageous. It's outrageous that they would do it as they posture for their leadership runs. It is outrageous that they would act this way and do that to communities like that.

I have spoken at length about this, Mr. Chair, but specifically in regard to this amendment, again, the system and the process for GSAs remain in place under Bill 8, exactly how it would be right now if Bill 8 was not passed. Six steps: a GSA happens. We talk about it all the time.

Step 1: students will ask a staff member at the school to start a GSA. That's how it is now; that's how it will be if Bill 8 is passed by this Chamber. If you listen, Mr. Chair, to them talk about this amendment that they are asking for support on, it makes it sound as if that is not factual. Well, it's disappointing. Again, for a member to do that for political gain – that's the only reason why you would try to do that – is appalling. It's shameful.

Now the second step: the principal permits the GSA. That's step 2. It's the same now as it will be then.

Step 3: the principal designates a staff liaison to support the GSA. They stood inside this Chamber repeatedly and said that that wouldn't even happen. Not factual; misrepresenting fact; causing fear. We know that the NDP's approach to politics is fear and smear. They do it to their political opponents. It doesn't work very well, but that's their tactic. That's why they're the only one-term government in the history of this province.

**Ms Hoffman:** So far.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** You know, it's interesting to hear the deputy leader of the NDP heckling on that issue, but the reality is that she belongs to a party that is the only one-term government in the history of this province. It's shocking.

Step 4: the students select a group name. That is the complete opposite of what keeps getting presented by those hon. members as they continue to filibuster and stop the progress that Albertans voted for, posturing and trying to manoeuvre for their own political gain. You know, Mr. Chair, it's not appropriate. I understand that their political party is in turmoil, but they still have a responsibility as the Official Opposition in this Chamber to bring amendments that are associated with the bill and to try to make legislation stronger. That's their responsibility.

I've had the privilege of sitting in the Leader of the Official Opposition's chair in this Chamber with you, Mr. Chair, and I can

tell you that there were times when our parties, the two legacy parties that make up the now governing party, had to go through adjustments, but we still had to come to work. We still came to work each day and fought for our constituents and did our job as the Official Opposition.

Shame on the Official Opposition for doing this. Shame on the Official Opposition for continuing to misrepresent facts for their political gain as they drive towards this leadership race and whatever the internal turmoil is inside that situation. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre wanting to rise again. Well, last night the Opposition House Leader basically admitted to his leadership ambitions, from our perspective. You can check out *Hansard*, for those that are following at home. I actually called that out and said: thank you for admitting to your leadership ambitions. While I'm not a member of the NDP Party, I do wish him the very best with that process. But he should still come and focus on his job as a legislator in here and bring amendments that are associated with the bill. He should not be telling communities that GSAs will not exist when that is not factual. Instead, he should be using his time to productively try to work on legislation in this Chamber.

Now, Mr. Chair, through you to my colleagues, I can't remember what step I was on at the moment. [interjections] I'm hearing "step 4" and "step 5" from the crew here today, so I'll just go back to step 4 to make sure I didn't miss that. The students select a group name: I didn't miss that, but I think it's worth emphasizing twice.

Now step 5: if the principal cannot find a staff liaison – remember that we've heard over and over that their primary concern is that the principal won't do what I'm about to say – the principal informs both the board and the minister, and then the minister appoints a responsible adult. That's the process. That is the process now; that'll be the process if this Chamber decides to pass Bill 8.

Then we're on to the sixth and final step: as a student-led group the students, with the support from their staff liaison, plan the next steps such as meeting dates, times, and activities.

Six steps: six steps now, six steps if this Chamber decides to adopt Bill 8. You know why, Mr. Chair? Because this province will continue to have the strongest statutory protections when it comes to GSAs of any province in the country. This province will under this government continue to support Bill 10, which was decided on by the legacy parties that make up the United Conservative Party inside this Chamber and by the NDP. That's where we'll be at. That doesn't go away.

8:30 a.m.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora can stand up over and over and over and say that this bill does mandatory notification to parents; it doesn't do that. She can say that it will stop GSAs from happening – it doesn't do that – or say that kids won't be involved in GSAs; it doesn't do that. It doesn't matter how many times the Member for Edmonton-Glenora rises and says those types of things. It doesn't make it magically true. The only reason that she must be using that – again, it's the only thing that makes sense – is her political ambitions, and you see it.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Point of order noted.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Shepherd:** Again this member insists on abusing 23(i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." This member has never indicated that she intends to seek the leadership of this party. Indeed, there's no indication that there is a leadership

race for this party. This member insists on continuing to impute those motives to my respectable colleague here. I won't insult him by suggesting that his continuance in rising and indeed in trying to interrupt this point of order is because he himself seeks leadership ambitions within his party. That may be why he chooses to dominate debate and doesn't like to let his other members rise. I will not impute those motives to this member, but I will ask that he stop imputing motives to my colleagues.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Chair, in response to the point of order, the Official Opposition has been accusing the hon. the Premier of planning to run – it's bizarre, but it's very relevant now to the point of order – that he left his position in the federal system, left his position of leadership of the Conservative Party, came all the way back to Alberta, fought to win the leadership of the PC Party even while they blocked him, drove around in a blue truck all across this province from basement to basement to basement, from town hall to town hall to town hall talking to Albertans, won that leadership race, then managed to get the Wildrose Party and the PC Party to make a historical merger, that caused the end of the NDP ultimately in this Chamber, thank goodness, then ran for a second leadership race in, like, a two-year period, which he won in a landslide, and then went on to win the largest – largest – mandate in the history of this province. And they accuse him all the time of trying to run for Prime Minister. It's no different.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Thank you, Member, for bringing up the point of order. I would ask that we stick to the matter of the debate that we're discussing right now, which is Bill 8 and amendment A5. If we can stick to that, you have 10 minutes and 25 seconds left in your opportunity to speak to amendment A5 to Bill 8.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. It seems to be a very sensitive issue over there, this leadership issue, and I understand that.

Well, the reason, Mr. Chair, that it applies to A5 is because the amendment that has been brought to the Chamber and the arguments that are being made by the opposition, that the government is responding to, in regard to the amendment is that GSAs will not exist, that GSAs will not have the strongest statutory protections, that the hon. Education minister is bringing legislation forward that would change the process when it comes to GSAs. You've heard it. You've been in here for many of the 48 hours listening to the bizarre approach that the Official Opposition takes.

The reason the leadership race applies to that is because that's what it is, and that's a matter of debate. I understand that they disagree, that maybe the leadership turmoil in their own party is not what's causing all this posturing, but certainly, from our perspective, that's what it looks like. Again, Mr. Chair, I wish them all the best as they begin to run for leader. I'd suggest that they wait till their leader resigns, whatever. It's up to them. But when it comes to this amendment, you know, that's the approach I would take. I don't think it's very appropriate to do that to somebody who led your party to the only government you ever had. But when it comes to this amendment, you have to ask yourself, and this is the most important thing: "Why does the opposition continue to do this to the people of Alberta? When are they going to begin to take this process seriously? When are they going to stop filibustering bills?"

You know, what happened and, again, why it matters to this amendment is that you see the exact same thing, and members need to understand this when they make a decision on how to vote on

this particular amendment. You have a party who has spent their time in the last 48 hours filibustering royalty protection, that would give stability back to the energy industry, that they devastated when they were in government, or spent their time filibustering on giving Albertans an opportunity to elect their Senators because they want to continue to support their ally Justin Trudeau, who wants unelected Senators because, as you know, Mr. Chair, unelected Senators aren't sticking up for our province. It's the elected ones that are sticking up for our province.

That's what the Official Opposition has spent their time doing over the last 48 hours, and this is just another tactic, again, to continue to filibuster inside this Chamber. They're still fighting to stop Senator elections, and they're still fighting to prevent the things that Albertans voted for, to stop the progress that Albertans voted for, Mr. Chair, and that's shameful. It's shameful when you see them continuing to do it. It's shameful for them to tell the LGBTQ community misrepresented facts. It's shameful. Albertans should expect better from their Official Opposition. Albertans do expect better from their Official Opposition.

They have an important role. That's why they're here, to bring amendments. They should not be using the power of that important role, the power of being one of the 87 members of this Legislature, to come to the Legislature and use amendments like this to tell communities that they're going to lose something when they're not, Mr. Chair. That's shameful. That's a shameful approach, whether it's for a leadership race or just because they want it to be part of their regular politics of fear and smear. As I said, it's one thing when they fear and smear their political opponents. It's another thing when they cause fear to the general public. That is not the Official Opposition's job. That is not their responsibility. They should hang their heads in shame that they continue to do this, that they continue to block the progress that Albertans sent us here to get.

The deputy leader of the NDP quoted at length, while she was speaking about this amendment, from a newspaper article. I noticed that she didn't bother to also bring forward the other quotes about concerns about how much this was costing taxpayers, about the fact that – and this is relevant to the amendment because she made it relevant to the amendment, Mr. Chair. She made it relevant to the amendment. She has not brought up the fact that we have pointed out that they continue to over and over filibuster the largest platform that anybody has ever run on in this province, the largest platform.

**Mr. Dang:** Props.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Oh, don't worry. I'm not going to props. Man, they are sensitive this morning. You'd think they'd been in here for 48 hours, Mr. Chair.

Promise after promise after promise: that's what we're referring to in the article. We will put through the promises that we made to Albertans, Mr. Chair. We will keep the promises that we made to Albertans. It doesn't matter how hard the NDP fight to block them. We will do what Albertans hired us to do on April 16. I understand that the NDP are mad that they were fired. I understand that they're frustrated that they were fired. Their own leader basically admitted inside this Chamber – it took forever for her to be able to even identify a reason why she is the only Premier that oversaw a government that was a one-term government, the only Premier ever to do that in our province. She couldn't identify it. She did some interviews. She said: I can't come up with anything. Then finally she comes to this Chamber and says: well, it was because Albertans didn't like the carbon tax. So even as they're evaluating how they lost government, they're still blaming Albertans. They're still blaming Albertans. They're not looking at their actions.

Albertans hired the Premier of Alberta now and his caucus and his government to come here and to put in a set of promises, a very transparent set of promises, one of the most detailed platforms in the history of probably anywhere in Canadian politics, with a clear set of instructions on what we're to do in this Chamber. What does the NDP do after that, after being historically rejected by the people of Alberta, after losing to a party who then goes on to receive the largest mandate in the history of this province? What do they do? Do they go back and go: okay; should we examine our policies and the positions that we took and how we ended up in this spot? No. They go back to their same tactics: fear and smear, causing fear for the public, spreading misinformation to their party, causing stress for communities, wasting valuable legislative process time, and focusing on their own internal politics and how to posture themselves to their base rather than fighting for the people of Alberta.

Anybody who's watching this right now has to wonder – and we all know it's few, the people that would be tuning in at this point – what has happened to Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in this place. Mr. Chair, I respect the role. It's one of the reasons why we're still providing as much time, working hard to try to give the opposition as much time as we can to work on it. I've had the role. I understand that. But at some point we have to call it out.

**8:40 a.m.**

It is completely inappropriate, what is happening here. The Official Opposition needs to act better, and they need to respect the process and do their job. Otherwise, if they don't do their constitutional duty, then this place doesn't work the way it's supposed to work. Their job, when they bring amendments like this amendment, is to make sure that they're doing things in the best interests of Albertans, that they're working to make this legislation stronger, that they're working to provide opportunities to be able to make sure that we get this right before it leaves the Chamber. When they play political games and use people as political props and misrepresent information over and over and over, not just for a couple of hours, not just for a couple of speeches but for days and days and days and days, they're doing a disservice to Albertans. They're doing a disservice to Albertans, and that's completely inappropriate, Mr. Chair. This Official Opposition party should be ashamed of itself. They should all stand up and apologize to Albertans or, at the very least, sit over there and hang their heads in shame because it is completely inappropriate.

**The Acting Chair:** Before we continue, I'd just like to point out a couple of things. Despite what our opinions may be of the amendment, it was approved by Parliamentary Counsel, so it will be debated in the House. What I would ask is that if you are standing up to speak, you stick to the facts of the bill and the facts of the amendment, avoid repetition, repetition, repetition. Please bring something new to the debate.

I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House to do my job, to participate in the democratic process and indeed to represent my constituents here in Edmonton City-Centre, who, in an overwhelming majority, did not vote in favour of the policies of this government. It is out of respect for my constituents, it is out of respect for their voices, indeed out of respect for the LGBTQ2S-plus community, of which I probably have one of the largest contingencies in this province, that I will stand and speak to this particular amendment and in response to ridiculous accusations that in my speaking to this amendment, I'm here to waste time.

I'm here to speak to this amendment, providing a clear timeline in which a young person who requests a GSA or a QSA in their school would have a response to that within two weeks. Currently within the legislation it states that such a request, when it is made, will be granted immediately. That is the current law in the province of Alberta. For this member, the Government House Leader, to suggest that the changes he is bringing in make no changes is quite patently false because it removes any timeline, which is why we have this amendment here in front of us and which is one of the reasons why we have continued this debate over many hours and we have continued to come back to the legislation and continued to come back to things like this amendment, unlike in previous years, I recall, when these members sat in opposition and we had debates that went throughout the night in which that caucus misrepresented many facts about legislation that we had promised to bring in our platform.

I remember the debates around farm safety, around bringing in safety for farm workers in the province of Alberta, and I remember the great lengths to which many opposition members went to spread fear amongst their constituents about the intent of our government and about the impacts that that would have.

That is why I continue to debate this amendment, Mr. Chair, and why I am talking about wanting to have a clear timeline for students who want to form a GSA, not because I'm fearmongering, like we saw members of the government do when they were in opposition, not because I am misrepresenting the facts, like we saw members of this government do when they were in opposition around things like farm safety or the impact of the carbon tax, to the point that during the run-up to the election members of this government were overstating the costs of the carbon tax for institutions like, say, their church in their hometown by 10 times the amount, spreading fear, which is not what I'm doing by standing here and debating this amendment and talking about the fact that this government is removing any clear timeline for young people who want to request a GSA or a QSA.

I am not misrepresenting facts. It was clear that many media have called out the Premier recently for having made accusations that we fudged the books. Many media have called that out and pointed out the fact that the recent fourth quarter came out and showed that, in fact, the deficit was reduced by \$2 billion. That, I would say, Mr. Chair, is misrepresenting the facts. That is fearmongering.

That is not what we are doing here today by debating this amendment. That is not what we are doing by pointing out that this government is in fact removing and rolling back protections in regulation to ensure that when youth request a GSA or a QSA in their school, there is an opportunity for administration or school boards or other people or a principal or anyone else involved to delay that request, to place obstacles in their path. That is not misrepresenting the facts. That is not going on and on without end, as we saw members of this government do when they were in opposition, going into the intricacies of the history of the Chinese opium trade, musing on whether people in socialist countries eat dog meat. The quality of our debate on things like this amendment, I say, Mr. Chair, has been much higher than that.

We are here to do our job as the Official Opposition, to debate things like this amendment, providing a clear timeline for young people who want to form a QSA or a GSA when this government is seeking to remove it, when this government is seeking to remove it without providing any clear explanation why and is indeed, instead, standing here and trying to claim that they're in fact making no changes. That is not fearmongering. That is doing our job as an Official Opposition and pointing out to Albertans the changes this government is choosing to try to make because they do not have the courage themselves to come out and say it. If that means that I'm

required to do my job and to come to this place over the course of 48 hours or 72 hours or how many hours that will be, I will continue to represent my constituents and point out that this government, as we are pointing out through this amendment, is making changes by the introduction of this amended Education Act that reduce the protections that are in place for students that want to form a GSA.

To say that this makes no changes is not unlike, Mr. Chair, listing out a set of steps that is contained nowhere in this legislation, that is currently present nowhere in regulation, that this government has given no indication it actually intends to give any force of law, any teeth whatsoever. They can stand up and read that list as many times as they want, but if they are unwilling to put any teeth behind it, then they do not believe in it.

So I will continue to stand and debate this amendment and bring forward changes that would actually put some teeth in this law. Unlike members that have gotten up in this House and taken great personal offence that we would suggest that anybody in this province would ever have anything but the best of motives in any action they would ever take, Mr. Chair, I recognize that a majority of, say, employers or parents, indeed most principals, most administration have the best interests of those that they are there to serve. But the fact is that there is still a minority of people who do not – and we know that that is demonstrable – because people file employment standards complaints. Students have come to us and told of the obstacles that they face. We do not legislate for the best of people; we legislate for the people that we know are going to try to skirt the law.

We are not here today to debate the fact that the majority of teachers or principals or indeed schools will not place obstacles in the path of the students. We are here to debate the fact that we know that there is a minority that did. That is not fearmongering, Mr. Chair. If I get passionate on that point, it's because I am concerned for these youth, the stories that I hear directly from my constituents, who have sent me here to this place, who continue to send me e-mails and direct messages and Facebook direct messages of support, thanking me for continuing to stand and rise in this place. The shame lies with this Government House Leader in suggesting that I have any other motive in being here than to represent my constituents and to argue for the values they represent, that they sent me here to represent, and that I personally believe in. I will continue to do that.

**8:50 a.m.**

There is no argument. You cannot argue that once this legislation passes, there will be less protection for LGBTQ2S-plus youth who want to form a GSA or a QSA in their school. There will be less of a guarantee that the school they attend will have a safe and caring schools policy. Again, the steps that this government is so fond of standing and reading in this House are nowhere enforced. They have no force in law or regulation. If this government truly believes that that should be the case and that those steps should be followed and that there should be no attempt to subvert them, then why are they not in the legislation? Will they stand in this House and promise that they will put those steps in regulation, that they will outline precisely what is expected in each circumstance? We owe these young people nothing less.

I will stand here and I will praise those schools that step up, absolutely. I will recognize the many institutions within our province that have supported LGBTQ2S-plus youth. But I will also continue to note those that have not and indeed that it has been the track record of Conservative governments in this province that they would prefer to cater to those few that put their own personal sense of moral value above the safety of LGBTQ2S-plus youth, above the right of those youth to express themselves for who they are, to love

who they love, to be who they are. That is why we are here, and that is why we are having this debate. It is an insult that any member of this government would stand and suggest otherwise.

This amendment is appropriate. It is clear that this government provides absolutely no timeline. They refuse to allow the word “immediately.” They suggest that somehow that is unattainable although the vast majority of our educational institutions have had no problem with that. What’s the difficulty, Mr. Chair? A student comes and says, “I would like to form a GSA in my school.” “No problem. Request granted.” That’s immediately. That’s not a difficult thing. But if they feel that, no, they need some time to work that out and to assign the room where it’s going to take place and to ensure the teacher’s schedule, I think two weeks is a pretty reasonable length of time to allow that to happen.

As the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar noted last night, even some of the smallest schools in our province are able to provide some incredible opportunities for students, with limited resources. I think that within two weeks it is entirely possible for any school in this province to be able to find a space within a school, to be able to put a staff member in place who would be able to support those students, and to allow them a student-led group, where the students themselves are choosing what they are going to study, where the students themselves choose what they are going to discuss, to allow that to take place.

They suggest that we are fearmongering, Mr. Chair, when I heard members of this government fearmonger about what a GSA was when we brought in Bill 24, trying to suggest that it was a backdoor way for the government to provide sexual education that otherwise would not have been allowed, to suggest that they were some sort of ideological sex club. That is fearmongering, and it is on the record.

We are not fearmongering to stand and point out the track record of Conservative governments and what, indeed, members of this government and others within this province and those who have demonstrated they have some influence within this party have said and have done and to point out that this legislation, in fact, does remove clear provisions, that when and if this government chooses to pass this legislation, there will be less protection for LGBTQ2S students in this province.

Does that mean that GSAs will cease to exist? No. Thankfully, I’ve heard from many teachers who say that they will continue to defend their students and stand up for them regardless of what this government legislates. But it does mean that for some vulnerable students in this province in some educational institutions there very well may not be a GSA where there could have been one, because this government is carving out that loophole. They’re intentionally providing that opportunity to obstruct, and that is why we bring forward this amendment, because if this government’s intention is what it says it is, this helps them achieve the goal that they claim they have.

We are, respectfully, here as opposition offering them the opportunity to make this legislation better. If their intent is what they say it is, they can step up and they can make sure that no student in this province will be left vulnerable. But that does not seem to be the case. If they are not willing to support this amendment, I can only assume that they want to leave that door open.

We are not fearmongering by pointing that out, Mr. Chair. We are stating a fact that we have heard from the LGBTQ2S-plus community. We are not stoking fear; we are reflecting the genuine fear we hear from them. I am reflecting the voice and the discomfort that many from that community – youth, adults – have expressed to me about the steps this government is choosing to take. This government has the opportunity to remove that fear. If this

government wants to build goodwill with that community, they can accept something like this simple amendment, which demonstrates their intention. So far this government has chosen not to do so. That is not fearmongering. That is fact.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

They can choose to interpret their actions however they like, but I can tell you how those I speak to in the LGBTQ2S-plus community see it, how those who were here at the rally at the Legislature saw it, how those who were at the Stonewall 50th anniversary march see it. This government can stand here and try to tell the community what they should feel or what they should believe about their actions, or this government can look at the facts of the legislation that they are bringing forward and the actual changes they are introducing. They can look at this amendment, which we are bringing forward in our job as the Official Opposition, as a united caucus who continue to come to this place and stand together to represent the values that we are all here to represent under the banner of our leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

One can only assume that the Government House Leader must greatly fear her for all the time he needs to spend talking about her. But I can tell you this. Our caucus is proud to stand in this place. We are proud to continue to bring forward amendments to make this bill better. We are proud to try to help this government live up to the ambitions it claims to have. We are here to try to help this government demonstrate to the LGBTQ2S-plus community that its words are not hollow, that the few members that choose to show up at pride events are not there simply to check a box. We’re giving them the opportunity to show through action as well as words that they support all LGBTQ2S-plus youth, regardless of what school they attend, by providing an actual provision and actual timeline to back up the lovely steps that they like to stand and read in this House but which they provide no actual teeth to implement, to actually demonstrate that they will stand up against those who are known to be bad actors in this circumstance, much as we stand up to and we legislate for bad actors in employment. That in no way impugns all employers, but it recognizes the reality that they exist. That is not fearmongering, Madam Chair. That is realism. That is pragmatism. That is the world we live in.

9:00 a.m.

That is why we’ve brought forward this basic amendment, simply stating that within two weeks of a request by a student they would be granted the ability to form a GSA or QSA, something every member in this House has stood and said that they believe they should absolutely have the right to do. We are giving this government the opportunity to actually put it in the legislation, in their regulation, in a place where it can actually be enforced, that this must be allowed.

This government can choose to vote this amendment down and, in so doing, indicate that they feel it’s not necessary to actually require anybody to do this. They can choose to simply say . . .

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thanks, Madam Chair. You know what? The hon. member just talked about being pragmatic. I agree with the hon. member, and I would politely, I hope, suggest that the opposition be pragmatic. Let me explain what I mean by that. As our hon. Government House Leader has pointed out, we’re troubled by the fact that the NDP has tried to convince LGBTQ youth that we’re against them. Nothing could be further from the truth, and I

would like to say that today. In terms of being pragmatic, the hon. government Education Minister has said that we're going to protect them, and we've got strong legislation in place. The hon. Government House Leader has said that we will protect LGBTQ youth. Our government is saying that.

In terms of being pragmatic, sure, the opposition can vote against us on our legislation. We're on the record that we're going to support GSAs, QSAs, and whatever other groups the kids want to call it, and if we don't, they're in the wonderful position of being across the aisle to hold us accountable. My suggestion is that they do what the previous member just said and get pragmatic about that and hold us accountable for what we promised.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:04 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Renaud
Dach	Irwin	Shepherd
Dang	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.

9:20 a.m.

Against the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rowswell
Amery	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schow
Dreeschen	McIver	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Neudorf	Singh
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	Smith
Goodridge	Orr	Toor
Hanson	Rehn	Walker
Horner	Rosin	Yao
Hunter		

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 28
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[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill, Bill 8. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll cut straight to the chase. I have another amendment that I'm happy to provide.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A6.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll read the amendment into the record and then continue with my rationale. Section 10 is struck out, and the following is substituted:

10 Section 33 is amended

- (a) in subsection (1)(e) by striking out "specialized";
- (b) by adding the following after subsection (2):
  - (2.1) A policy established under subsection (2) must contain a distinct portion that addresses the board's responsibilities under

section 35.1, and the distinct portion of the policy

- (a) must not contain provisions that conflict with or are inconsistent with this section or section 35.1, and in particular must not contain provisions that would
  - (i) undermine the promotion of a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging,
  - (ii) require a principal to obtain the approval of the superintendent or board or to follow other administrative processes before carrying out functions under section 35.1, or
  - (iii) permit a principal to prohibit any of the names for a voluntary student organization identified under section 35.1(3),
- (b) must include the text of section 35.1(1), (3) and (4),
- and
- (c) must set out the name of the legislation that governs the disclosure of personal information by the board.

I'm trying to package it all here together in one nice amendment, the issues that we have with reverting to Bill 8 when it comes to GSAs. This is an opportunity for the government, if indeed they want to maintain the way things are today, to simply do it by passing this amendment.

Some of the rationale. Of course, one, we are moving backwards, if we pass the bill in its current form, on giving the assurance that students will not be outed without their consent, that they have the ability to choose to whom and how they come out.

Two, it is making sure that it is acted on in a timely fashion, making sure that there can't be more administrative barriers to students wishing to form GSAs. The reason why we brought forward Bill 24 in the first place was to address those experiences that students had told us they were living and experiencing.

It is requiring school board policies to include the ability for students – indeed, from what the Government House Leader said is the practice, it will become actual law through this amendment that students be able to name the groups names that they choose.

It is requiring that school boards include parts of the Education Act in reference to privacy laws in their policies to make sure school boards document clearly and communicate the rights to students who choose to form these groups.

I can't help but reflect on a Facebook video that resurfaced. It was a Facebook video that was made during the Education minister's seeking of the nomination in Red Deer to be the candidate. There was a forum in which the candidates seeking nomination were asked about their positions around LGBTQ issues for youth, and the minister talked about both Bill 10 and Bill 24. Bill 10, you'll recall, was passed during the Prentice period and Bill 24, of course, during the period under the leadership of our party and our then Premier, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. The now Education minister said that it was unnecessary, that they were flawed policies based on flawed reasoning because safe and caring schools policies are sufficient and that there was no need to go further. She said that going further through these bills, particularly Bill 24, was done to further an agenda.

To reiterate, there is absolutely a need. Just as a statistic from a government of Alberta survey that was done recently, 53 per cent of self-identified LGBTQ students – those are sexual orientation

minorities and gender identity minorities – feel unsafe in school. We have rules in this place governing our conduct and our behaviour to ensure all of us feel safe in doing our jobs and have the ability to speak up and represent our constituents without concerns of intimidation or harassment or bullying. I think that if 53 per cent of the members in this place felt unsafe, we would do something about it to change that condition. I would expect that we would, and I would support that. That is a difference where 3 per cent of identified heterosexual students say that they feel unsafe. At 53 versus 3, significantly more needs to be done.

Of course, the statistics around homelessness: while the percentage of youth overall who identify as LGBTQ is small, nearly half of homeless youth in this province identify as being LGBTQ.

The safe and caring schools policies are insufficient. They don't do the job. That clearly is the motivation behind this bill coming in. Most of the things that we did when we were in government, for example bringing in pay bands for superintendents, bringing in teaching quality standards and leadership quality standards: those pieces have been carried over. Bringing in the cap on what parents can be charged for school fees: that's being carried over. If the Premier says, "Well, we said that we were going to proclaim Bill 8," the Premier is planning on doing that through this amendment act with a number of the changes that we brought in when we were in government, and we think that that's a good thing. He saw a number of things that we did, and he said, "You know, we should carry those over," but he or the Education minister, or both, intentionally are not carrying over the pieces from Bill 24.

Why is that, and why is it that the government continues to say that even if this bill passes, they will be the strongest protections in Canada? Clearly, they won't be. We've mapped out the facts on other jurisdictions – B.C., Atlantic Canada – and, clearly, they have stronger protections. They have stronger protections. They have stronger ways of protecting youth.

Also, of course, there's the School Act, that is the current piece of legislation that is in place, and it is much stronger than what's being proposed under Bill 8. I'm sure my colleagues will very happily flesh that out. [interjections]

**The Chair:** Sorry. Hon. members, there's a conversation happening between the aisles. While our speaker is up, I will ask that we give our speaker the floor.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm reminded that downstairs, when you walk up the stairs from the lower level to the second floor, there is a bulletin board on the left, and it talks about fake news. It talks about how you identify what's fake in the news. This is something that kids have been talking about for a few years at least. When I go visit their classrooms, they say, you know, "What is fake news, and why is it that there are sometimes people saying one thing and other people saying the other thing?" I say, "Well, because sometimes people will read something, they won't like what it says, and they want to push a different message." I do call on all of us to read what's in black and white.

Our School Act is far more protecting for youth than what's being proposed by the government. They can espouse all sorts of talking points, they can say things that simply are fake news, and it's up to us as individuals – all of us ended up in this place because we sought a nomination, we put our name on a ballot, and people voted for us. They expect us to do our work. They expect us to read the bills. They expect us to make sure that when we stand in this place and speak, we are telling the truth. It is upon all of us, when we go home to our constituents and people say, "So, why did you vote for that?" to be able to have the confidence and conviction to say, "I did it

because I felt it was right, I did it because I did my homework, I did it because I listened to the arguments, and I made the decision that I believed was right." I can tell you that if you go home and you say, "I did what I was told to do," that's not going to pass, right?

9:30 a.m.

People didn't elect us to do what somebody else told us to do; they elected us to do our job, to come into this place and make sure, when we pass laws, that those laws are based on truth, that those laws are based on fact. The truth is that 53 per cent of LGBTQ youth in Alberta, according to the government of Alberta survey, feel unsafe. The truth is that research shows that in schools that have GSAs, the overall sense of satisfaction and belonging and sense of safety goes up for the overall population, significantly for LGBTQ youth, but it goes up for the overall population.

The truth is that we have more to do on high school completion rates. We absolutely invest in our youth and in them having the opportunity to succeed because we want them to achieve what they seek to achieve. We want them to achieve their full potential. When 53 per cent of one demographic of students feel unsafe at school, what's the likelihood that they're going to continue to go to school? What's the likelihood that they're going to achieve their highest level of potential? It's unlikely. This is the truth, and these are some of the facts.

I want to say one more thing before I cede the floor for comments from my colleagues. People stand in this House and talk about the risks, and we will hear in this place many times that one death is one death too many. We will hear that many times in this place, and they are right. Anything that can be done to save a life must be done. This is being designed to save the lives of many, and by failing to act on these protections that students told us needed to be acted on – students told us that they needed to have immediacy, that they needed to have privacy protection. They needed to ensure that they couldn't be pushed out of calling the group what they wanted it to be called. They needed that in law.

If this passes in its current form, without the amendments that we're proposing, we will be moving backwards. Read the legislation. Read the School Act today. Read the proposed Education Act. They are two very different pieces of legislation with different intended outcomes.

Now, the candidate seeking the candidacy at that time said that there were unintended consequences, that there ended up being court action. Well, the court action has been settled. The law was in place, was done in a way that the courts upheld it. I can tell you that there will be court action if it gets overturned. There absolutely will be.

Court action isn't my gravest concern. The sense of students feeling unsafe and unwelcome is my gravest concern. The sense that students will turn back to situations that are unsafe for them and for each other is my gravest concern, and the message that this sends to a whole demographic, including teachers in our schools today who are LGBTQ, is my grave concern.

We have an opportunity to fix this flawed legislation. This is flawed legislation, and it is done in a way that I would say is vindictive and cruel. But we have an opportunity as members, whose names will stand in *Hansard*, to stay on the right side of history on this one and to do what we know is right, not what we were told to do, because this is something that has grave and lasting consequences if we fail to get it right. Society is moving forward, including the people who voted for us across this province. I don't think that many would say that their number one hope for government is that they create the sense of increased unsafe environments for students who are sexual orientation minorities or gender identity minorities.

Again, many people spoke to the motion the other night on free votes and conscience votes. I would say that free speech is something that, I guess, maybe should have been amended into that motion itself because I know that a couple of nights ago when the hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge wanted to rise, it was very clear in this House that that member was denied that ability by that member's own colleagues. It seems like votes on conscience issues – again, I know that there are people in this House who care deeply about people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning, queer, allied, two-spirited, and the list goes on. I know there are people in this place, not just in our caucus, who know somebody who is a sexual orientation or gender identity minority. I know there are. I don't think the message they want to send is one of self-harm or disrespect or: "Go ahead. Work your way, jump your way through all the hoops, and at the end of the day, after you've jumped your way through all the hoops, if things aren't as good as they were under the NDP, then go ahead and go back to the NDP." You know, sure, electorally four years from now that might be helpful, but my grave concern is about these youth and about these staff at schools for the next four years.

It wasn't every day I walked the halls of schools and had students come over to me and say: hey, thanks for that policy. I remember there was one that I supported around reducing junk food in schools. I can tell you that I walked the halls of schools, and not many kids came over and said: thanks for that; thanks for giving us less junk food. But I can tell you that almost every high school I went to after we passed our safe, caring, inclusive LGBTQ policies had at least one kid come up to me and say thank you. The kids that came up didn't always identify to me as being students that were gay or lesbian. Often they'd say: I have a friend that that policy really helped. That's powerful.

Students might not come up to you when they see you in your riding and say, "What you did really hurt me," but what we are doing through this is actually furthering the shame and stigma against sexual orientation minorities and gender identity minorities. The likelihood that they'll come up and say, "What you did really hurt me" or "What you did really hurt my friend" is being diminished by failing to honour those voices, failing to honour the progress that we've made as a society. This isn't something that was done to hurt anyone. The parent and teacher whose letter I read earlier says very clearly that they feel that their parental rights have been well respected. This is about making sure that there's a safe place at school for all kids as, of course, it's inclusive. It's a GSA for all kids to come and feel loved and respected and supported and to help grow that love in their schools and their communities.

This amendment is done in a way that we can make sure that they keep the title that they choose, that they keep the confidentiality, and that they are done in a timely fashion. It's simple. A law without consequences, a law without times, a law without a timeline that it must be acted upon is no law at all. The question that remains to me and to many Albertans who've contacted me is: how can the government continue to say that these will be the strongest protections in Canada when that simply isn't true? It simply isn't true. There are stronger protections in B.C. and Ontario and Atlantic Canada and far stronger protections in Alberta today, far stronger protections. So how can the government continue to say things that don't align with reality, the black and white that's on the paper? That's what they keep saying. I think that they are right to ask. I think they are right to demand that Alberta continue to be a place where students feel respected and included as well as parents and allies.

One more quick anecdote I'll mention. I read a story the other night. There was another story that I thought about. It started a lot of this discussion across North America. It was about two penguins

at the zoo that decided to raise a penguin egg, a penguin hatchling, together. This book was banned in many, many schools and libraries because the two penguins – it was based on reality; I think it was a New York zoo – were of the same sex.

**Member Irwin:** Gay penguins.

**Ms Hoffman:** The gay penguins. They weren't loving each other. Well, I guess they were. They formed a family, and they loved that little penguin egg. This caused so much controversy, talking about love between three penguins, a baby penguin and two adult penguins. This is what we should be talking about more, about love more than about division. This is why it's so important that we create opportunities for students to feel safe in their schools.

One other thing I do want to mention is the disbanding of the conversion therapy working group because I think that it feeds into why this amendment is so needed. For a government that said during the campaign that what was being said about the history of the Premier and the party wasn't founded in reality and that those things wouldn't be governed on or those things wouldn't be acted on, they're doing exactly the opposite just a few short weeks after the election by disbanding the conversion therapy working group, one that had experts from a variety of perspectives and parts of the province, people with lived experience, religious leaders, academics, medical experts, and legal experts working together to find ways to end this harmful practice. The government threw up their hands and said: "Nothing to see here. We're just going to disband it. We're going to ignore all of that expert advice, and we're going to ignore the reality that conversion therapy causes real and damaging harm." Strike one.

Strike two: this is very damaging legislation that is attacking the progress that's been made in protecting vulnerable students over the last four years. I sure hope there isn't a third strike, not for the government's sake but for Alberta's sake.

**9:40 a.m.**

My goal is to see Alberta flourish. My goal is to see us continue to move forward and find ways to help all succeed. I fear that that is not the goal of everyone, that the divide between the haves and the have-nots economically and the divide between minorities and nonminorities is growing in this province. I believe that that is an injustice. The Member for Edmonton-City Centre talked about how laws aren't set up for the majority, that laws are set up to protect the minority. I'd say that's true. I'd say that the majority of people would probably drive at a reasonable speed on the highway, whether there were signs up or not, but for the safety of all we must put up speed limits because if one person drives beyond erratically, it endangers others. You might think with this bill that by taking away these protections . . .

**The Chair:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I've spoken multiple times in this House to Bill 8, Bill Hate, Bill Straight. I'm happy to rise to this amendment, and I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for introducing it. I've shared my own stories as a queer person, my own struggle with coming out, struggling with my own mental health, and with being a teacher in rural Alberta and seeing first-hand the struggle of students as well. I've shared the stories of others, including teachers, students, parents. I noted yesterday or whenever it was – time has become a bit of a confusing thing these days – that while this discussion, this debate hasn't always been easy as it is something that's so personal to me,



one of the very powerful things that has come out of this debate is that I've had so many people reach out to me, praising me, praising our team for our hard work, thanking us for being their voice and urging us to not stop fighting even though the government will say that this is a distraction.

For the Government House Leader to stand up earlier and say that we're not fighting for Albertans, a direct quote, and that we're spreading fear within the community is absurd. My Alberta includes the LGBTQ2S community. My colleagues and I are not going to stop fighting for them and for every Albertan. I believe I may be the only one from the LGBTQ community in this House, and I can tell you that this issue is a big deal. People care. Many people care.

As I said, I'm hearing from parents, teachers, and students, queer and straight. They're worried, and they're fearful. To try to invalidate these fears is shameful, and it proves exactly why this discussion, why this debate is needed. It proves why immediate access to GSAs for our vulnerable students is needed. As I've said many times in this House, GSAs are not just for students; they support teachers, staff, allies. They lift up the entire school community. This is why this amendment is so important as well. It provides additional clarity for schools, for boards, for teachers, and most importantly for students because they are the ones that are most affected: queer students, those who are seeking GSAs, but also, as I said, their straight allies as well.

I really want to take a few moments this morning to share the story of another young person. This is someone who asked me to share their story, and I think their story highlights exactly why this amendment is needed. I ask you to listen to their words. These are real words – these are true – and sometimes they are hard to hear. They've given me permission to share their name, and they may even be watching.

My name is Dillon Cosgrove. I am writing to oppose Bill 8. I attended Holyrood Elementary School from 1994 to 2001.

There was no GSA at the school or the corresponding after school care program at the time I was enrolled. I was popular and had a lot of longtime friends until the fourth grade. At this point when other girls were crushing on boys, I was pretty unphased by the idea of boys and [I] felt like I fit in with them more than . . . other girls my age. I cut my hair short and rocked the fashionable phenomenon of zip-away pants and Oilers T shirts but [I] continued to have sleepovers with the girls I had made friends with over the course of elementary. At [some] point, some vicious rumours started about my sexuality (They were true). I say vicious not because the title of lesbian is negative, but because it was used as a weapon and a tool to keep me quiet for not sticking with traditional gender roles or expectations. Unfortunately, I didn't have the words to describe my feelings at this point which is why it was so harmful. The kids at school called me a dyke, accused me of being sexual with other girls my age and spread other rumours about how I was gross and should be avoided. Before I even knew what the word lesbian or dyke truly meant, I was being ostracized because of it and my interpretation of my identity was negative. As a nine-year-old, the word to describe a part of who I was, was used against me violently and unfairly before I knew what it meant and before the kids who were calling me those words truly knew what they meant and the effect it could have on a child. All of these rumours culminated about a year and a half later when I was goofing around with a female friend of mine platonically and innocently play-fighting. After class, some of my bullies had witnessed me playing and had started a chain of paper notes about my lesbianism and how overtly I was showcasing it. I had hardly any friends and I was fed up with being bullied so I went to my Vice-Principal for help. I had explained the situation and the bullying that had been going on for months that had caused me to stay

home pretending to be sick because I didn't want to face going to school to be ridiculed. My Vice Principals advice was to stop acting like a lesbian if I didn't want to be called one. I got detention in a room alone with my bullies during lunch time and had to bring [a note home] to my Mom explaining why I got detention. My Vice-Principal wrote home a note that outed [for] me the rumours that were being said and my Mom brushed off the remarks as just things that bullies say. She said that one of my male friends had told his Mom that he didn't believe the remarks about me to be true and that was enough for my Mom to believe it wasn't as well. I found this completely disheartening. If one of my best friends couldn't believe that it was true, and everyone thought it was [an] awful thing I would push [away] any signs of being gay . . . because I couldn't believe that I was something that people so openly hated. I grew my hair out, I started to wear dresses again, I was miserable.

If my peers and I had access to a gay-straight alliance I would have had the positive language to describe who I was becoming and the feelings that I got other than the negative language that my peers were regurgitating [from] the limited education they had about sexual and gender identity. I would have had a safe place to go when even my Vice-Principal didn't have a healthy way to react to the situation and I would have felt more secure about who I was [as I entered] into Junior High and High School.

During Junior High and High School I suffered from major bouts of depression including self-harm and suicidal ideation and suicidal attempts. I had such a negative view of myself that had been developed through years of self-hatred and hatred by my classmates. I came out to my Mom when I was 12. I came out 5 more times to her before she stopped telling me my homosexuality was a phase. I would like to believe my mom would have let me become a part of a Gay-Straight Alliance [had I] asked for her permission, but a part of me knows she would have thought it would encourage my homosexuality with the mindset that it was a choice. I found communities where I could be myself during this time in theatre, or on sports teams (where the opposing team sometimes thought I was a boy and I really liked that). I continued to try to have relationships with men and boys into my 20s thinking that what my Mom had said was true, that being Gay was a phase and that I just hadn't found the right person yet. It wasn't until university when I started to attend Women and Gender Studies Classes that I was able to start processing my internalized homophobia. I lived separate lives often, dating men and introducing them to my family, but living a secret life as a gay woman. I was hurt and was trying to find resilience on a foundation of self-hatred. Hurt people, hurt people, and the relationships I tried to maintain during that time were rocky, full of secrets and fear. I was scared of people finding out who I truly was. I was scared of cutting my hair short and looking more masculine. I was scared of living outside of the gender binary, because in the 90's no one was out and I had no role models to tell me that who I am is okay. That I had value. When I was 25 about 13 years after the first time I came out to my Mom, I came out again for the last time. I told her that it had been 13 years, and I could positively say that loving women wasn't a phase. I cut my hair again when I was 28 and I still get bullied by people on the street, in bars and in my workplace especially [after our Premier] was elected and hatred toward homosexuals seems rampant. However, It's different [now]. Now, I have positive influences in the media and in my classrooms.

They mention myself, Jason Garcia, and Randi Nixon.

9:50 a.m.

I have my own Gay-Straight alliance [with] my friends and [my] chosen family and with that support, I have been able to express my identity as a compassionate, music-loving, Gender Non-Binary Queer. Without the support of understanding and

accepting people in my life I may still be closeted and full of self-loathing. I fiercely believe that without . . . GSAs in schools lives are in danger. My life was in danger because of their absence, and I wish for and will fight for the children and youth of Alberta so that it won't be the same for them.

Adamantly,  
Dillon Cosgrove

As I said, I thank Dillon so much for sharing that, and I told them – they use the pronouns “they/them” – that their story meant a lot to me. I shared with them as well that, you know, we’ve talked countless times in this House about the struggles. We’ve shared the stories and the struggles of young people and their issues with mental health. We’ve shared the statistics. We’ve shared the evidence. We haven’t just shared the lived experiences of young people; we’ve shared the evidence. We’ve shared the academic literature. We’ve shared the statistics. I don’t want people like Dillon to just become another statistic. We’re not being hyperbolic over here. We’re not. I’ve truly heard from countless people. I can’t stay on top of the messages that I’m receiving.

To echo the comments of my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, I want to again urge the members opposite to think about folks like Dillon as they’re mulling over this amendment, to think about the fact that you’ve been encouraged to vote according to your conscience. You’re also here to vote according to your constituents, and I don’t think any of your constituents sent you here to jeopardize vulnerable youth in our province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Wow. How can I follow that up? That was simply amazing. I hope members of the government were listening. It’s something that I think was very important. It was a story that was extremely moving for myself and I know for many members here in the opposition. I hope it’s something that we can get through to the government, how important these provisions and this amendment that we are trying to bring in protections for are for young people across this province.

Madam Chair, I want to give the government a chance here. We have an amendment that brings in a number of very important clauses. It requires principals to permit the names to be whatever the students want. It requires them to have safe and respected places. It requires them to grant the approval in a timely manner. I think that all of these things are simple. They’re clear. They ensure that we have the best protections. They’re actually what members of the Conservative Party voted for in the 29th Legislature for a large part, so I think that this is the opportunity for the government to do the right thing. It’s the opportunity for the government to listen to Albertans, to listen to young people, and to understand how important this is for vulnerable Albertans and LGBTQ2S-plus youth. Whether they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, whatever it is, it’s important that their voices are heard here in this Assembly. It’s important that their voices are understood here in this Assembly and that this amendment is understood.

When we understand the implications of what Bill Hate does, we understand how important these amendments are. We understand how important this amendment is because it moves forward to move these welcoming, caring, inclusive, and respectful spaces for GSAs and QSAs, Madam Chair. This is the opportunity. The government can act now and do the right thing. They can act now and listen to gay students. They can act now and listen to queer students. We know that the voices of those gay and queer students are the ones that matter the most. We know that they came in the hundreds just two weeks ago here on steps of this Legislature – and

they did it as well in Calgary – to tell this government that these provisions are important, that these protections are important, that Bill Hate attacks them. That’s what they told this government, Madam Chair.

It’s something that I think is very important that we recognize here in this Assembly. We’ve heard stories over and over again from many different perspectives here from the opposition. The government: unfortunately, it sounds like we haven’t heard any stories around their experiences either with the LGBTQ2S-plus community or, in fact, whether they’ve met with any members of the LGBTQ2S community at all. In fact, we haven’t even heard whether any of the ministers or government members have ever even attended a GSA or been a part of a GSA or spoken to students in GSAs.

In this Assembly I think it’s important that when we talk about protecting these voices and protecting these young people, we recognize that they showed up in the hundreds and told us the provisions in Bill Hate were not good enough. They told us that we need changes, and these amendments right here in front of us are those changes that would make this bill better. They would help improve those protections for gay kids. They would help improve those protections for the hundreds of Albertans and the young students who stood out on these steps to tell the government to leave the kids alone, to tell the Premier to leave the kids alone, because those kids understand how important having a safe space in their school is.

Madam Chair, this is their chance. This is their chance to prove that they’re listening to the voices of young Albertans, that they’re listening to the voices of the LGBTQ2S-plus community, that they’re listening to those perspectives. I really do think that the government has the right intention here, but they must do the actual actions. The government must actually go forward and protect those kids, and this amendment would do that. This amendment would have those voices represented here in this Legislature and would allow us to have strong protections for all students. That is something that I think all members of the Assembly will strive for.

I really do hope that we can hear from members of the government on, maybe, some of the experiences they had with GSAs and QSAs and whether they’ve spoken to any people in GSAs or QSAs because, Madam Chair, I was a member of a GSA when I was in high school. In fact, just a few weeks ago I spoke to hundreds of people who were in the LGBTQ2S community right here on the steps of this Legislature. It’s unfortunate that none of the members of the government caucus or government front bench were able to attend, but that is the reality of who we heard from and what they want to be brought in to protect these students.

Really, I urge all members to vote in favour of this amendment. I think it’s the right thing to do. This is the opportunity. We have a bundle of amendments here that will bring in the protections that are so desperately needed for our students. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I just wanted to – and maybe the member can clarify what he meant by “gay, lesbian . . . [or] whatever it is.” Maybe you could clarify “whatever it is” to the rest of us, an absolute disrespect that that sentence meant to the community. I think that maybe you might want to clarify and maybe spell out for us what “whatever it is” means.

**Some Hon. Members:** Through the chair, please.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Madam Chair, sorry. Through you, I think it may be imperative for that member to explain to the rest of the Chamber the statement: “whatever [that] is”. That doesn’t even refer to a person, as far as I understand. As a person, I’m quite offended by that comment and I believe at some point that member needs to stand up and apologize to the LGBTQ2S community, first of all.

Second of all, just to be clear, when we talk about having the strongest legislation that is because – and if I’m wrong, please correct me; I would be thrilled to be corrected – Alberta is the only province that has enacted law around GSAs, the only province in the country. We are the only ones that have legislated laws for protections for LGBTQ2S-plus youth in schools for GSAs. Newfoundland and Labrador have policies, but no enacted legislation. B.C., at one point in time, Madam Chair, was ahead of the curve. They have no enacted legislation. In fact, they haven’t passed any laws. They have codes of conduct. We are way ahead of the curve, and we’re ahead of Ontario, as well. Our legislations are enacted, have stronger protections.

We have made it absolutely imperative that there is no mandatory, absolutely no mandatory, telling of when a child is in a GSA. More importantly, we have made sure that those GSAs are required in schools and if a child asks for one, they get one. On top of that, Madam Chair, the Education Act, as soon as it is passed, the legislation that we have right now will be the legislation that is there. We are the only province in Canada that has enacted laws to protect LGBTQ2S-plus students, not “whatever it is,” not “whatever it is,” not “whatever it is,” Madam Chair, in this country.

**10:00 a.m.**

Now, as the Member for Calgary-Hays said earlier, we have an opportunity here as a government to be held accountable for this, and the duty of the opposition and anybody else will be to hold us accountable for that legislation. We are thrilled to be able to enact legislation that protects these beautiful human beings. Actually, to the point of the member that was talking about the stories of some of the children that have written to her, I’ve also stood up in this House with stories, stories about absolutely incredible, courageous – courageous – young people from the LGBTQ2S-plus community who have come forward with their stories, who have impacted all of us at a very deep and very, very profound level. In fact, some of the stories I told were highly personal.

You know what was interesting was that the attacks from the left for those stories were so profound that my son was personally attacked for weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks on end after coming forward with a story about his friend who he helped in a GSA when he was in school. It was fine with the NDP that that happened. It was fine that they attacked my son for eight weeks straight on Twitter, nonstop, questioning not only who he is but his sexuality – their friends. For people who supposedly don’t want to out kids, my son became a target because he chose to come forward with a very compelling story about how important GSAs are.

For those who asked the questions about whether or not we’ve been part of GSAs, maybe you’re not listening. The member sitting right beside you has put out a very, very compelling statement. Not only that, our House leader, who has worked directly with folks that are heavily impacted in this scenario and who have ended up in the worst possible situations; these two brothers have stood up every single day of their lives, Madam Chair, to help people in vulnerable situations to come and find their space to be who they are, to be champions – champions – for these incredible human beings who are so courageous, who have fought for their rights, for their human rights that are outlined in the Alberta human rights declaration.

So to even put forward the notion that anybody on this side would not care for any person who finds themselves in a vulnerable situation – again, if the opposition members want to continue to attack Albertans, that is what Albertans will see. If they want to build bridges and build capacity so that love is the very first word that comes when we talk about any child, no matter what their background, who they love, their gender diversity, who they are as a human being, then let’s talk about that. If somehow the legislation that we bring forward isn’t enough, they’re going to have the opportunity to tell us that. But Bill 10 was a fundamentally humungous change and shift in how it is that we recognize a very special minority group in this province, a group that contributes massively to the fabric, massively to the diversity of this province with love and compassion and understanding, who fought for human rights. None of us on this side disputes that for one millisecond. The question is: who legislates and who doesn’t? Alberta legislates. We have created law. We are protecting our youth. We will continue to protect our youth.

You know what? The NDP and their friends, you can attack me every day that you want. My son, just to say, you know what? He came through that. You know what he did? He went further. He went further, and he made sure he was out there with his friends from whatever background it was – not “whatever it is” – whatever background that these folks came from, however old, wherever he could help in order to make sure that he was available to any person who might need him no matter what the problem, no matter what they did to him, no matter how much they threw him under the bus, no matter what they said about him on Twitter. He stood up against that. My baby – my baby – stood up against that nonsense at the tender age of 18, having his sexuality questioned by those people, who supposedly want to protect children.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order, Madam Chair.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives False Allegations**

**Mr. Bilous:** Section 23(h), (i), (j). The member is clearly trying to impute false motives, incite disorder in this House by making accusations that our . . . [interjections]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I cannot hear who’s speaking. Please proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** . . . making accusations that we . . . [interjection]

**The Chair:** Hon. member, Edmonton-City Centre, the Opposition House Leader has the floor.

**Mr. Bilous:** Please.

. . . by making accusations, in her words, that “those people did this to my son.” That is a false statement made to cause disorder and imputing false motives. Members on this side of the House did not attack her son, which is what she is insinuating, implying [interjection]. Thank you very much. So, Madam Chair, I would appreciate it if the member withdrew those comments, accusing those people, us on this side of the House, of committing acts which we did not.

**Mrs. Aheer:** When I say those people, I mean people that support the former government, all of whom on that side never once stood up for my child, knowing full well what was going on on Twitter. Not one statement came from the government to protect to my child. If there was one and I missed it, I will happily pull back that

statement, but I know for a fact that statements were supported, retweeted by people that were in the government, on that side. I will happily, happily take back that statement any day, but until I receive an apology from the former NDP government on the attacks that happened on my own child for standing up to make sure that protections were here for children in GSAs and stood his ground at the tender age of 18 while a government on this side allowed that to happen – I will happily take back my remarks, Madam Chair, if there is some form or way that that can happen for my son. But in the meantime, while I know that this happened under the government that was previously here, the NDP government, I find it very, very difficult to pull back my comments.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, while realizing this is a sensitive area, I think, for all members in this House, a number of differences of opinion, a number of emotions, I think it is important that we most certainly speak through the chair. In broad terms “those” or “them” or “they” have been used in various circumstances against various sides of this House, but I would caution that the speakers please speak through the chair, make this less personal.

Hon. minister, please proceed.

### Debate Continued

**Mrs. Aheer:** On that note, my whole point is that to continue to legislate on behalf of any vulnerable population is absolutely the imperative of any government, and to even push a government further to do better is absolutely imperative of the opposition. I don't deny that for one moment, and I appreciate anything that happens to push me to be a better legislator at any point, whether that's on the side of the opposition or whether that's here.

I will hold true to where I stand on this in the sense that I believe that the legislation that we are passing here is the strongest protections in the country. We will make sure, in the words of our Education minister, to protect every child.

I would like to also mention, Madam Chair, that doesn't just mean children that are in vulnerable situations. If a government, a previous government, goes out to create a vulnerability in a child that's actually standing up for the kids, like mine, that created a vulnerability where there wasn't one. How does one stand up for that? How does one even stand in the House knowing that you've created vulnerabilities in others by trying to stand up for one? The whole point is to stand up for every child. Love is love; isn't that what we say?

10:10 a.m.

Standing up for every child is what matters here. You can't create one vulnerability and take away – you can't take away the strength and the love of one child in order to create strength in another and create a vulnerability where there was not one before. You end up losing the forest for the trees, Madam Chair. The whole point is to create a society where acceptance and true love and understanding is available. You don't do that by creating division. You don't do that by pitting kids against each other and, more importantly, to take a vulnerability and to use a child as a political football, whether that was my baby or anybody else's baby. He's 22 now; he's still my baby. He's 22 now; he's still traumatized by that situation. He's 22 and he will go out every single day and help out any human who needs help in any capacity because that's who he is and that's how he was raised.

The government on our side, we are desperately seeking to elevate the cause of the Alberta experience in whatever capacity that is, and we will continue to love people and to honour them and

to cherish them and to elevate them and to build momentum and to bring back into our province people of all diversities, of all backgrounds, all different kinds of people, because that's what Alberta is.

You know, I always use the metaphor of the camps at Fort Mac. You have a hundred thousand people crammed together in an area, people who don't know each other. The person beside you might have your life in their hands because they're holding a drill bit, and you depend on them to make sure that you survive your job that day because they have a heavy job and you depend on them. And you learned the night before that they come from a particular background, have a particular sexuality, eat different kinds of foods, so many different things that define them as a person. You learn about that person organically because you're put together in a situation where you get to be friends. You learn to care about each other, and you learn to honour each other for who you are.

You know, I come from a mixed background. My dad is Southeast Asian and my mom is Irish, English, Scottish, and Scandinavian. I remember as a little girl, when the Aryan Nations popped up in Caroline, Alberta, being referred to as an abomination because I was from a mixed background. I remember writing a letter to them, going: prove it. Then I went to my school, and my principal and I wrote a small paper on, you know, white supremacism and racism, and we presented it to my school, just to talk about what goes on. I was probably the first person of colour that lived out in that area although I think I resonated with the Italian families because I kind of looked like them and they sort of took me under their wing.

Actually, it was really interesting because when we had the conversation, it started something really beautiful. It started a wonderful conversation around acceptance and understanding a different culture. It didn't turn into this nasty thing. It turned into a wonderful conversation about who we are as human beings. Isn't that why we're all here?

The question you need to ask isn't whether people are trying to divide; it's whether or not we can bring people together. What is our job here? Our job here is to elevate. Our job here is to bring our personal stories, no matter how painful or how wonderful, to try and impact a difference so that we grow as a province and we become better.

There are so many people here with stories, incredible stories of resilience, incredible stories of where they come from, where they travelled to, how they even got into Canada, incredible stories of growing up on small farms. I know people in this House that grew up on farms that didn't have running water. When I was a little girl, we all had party lines. You'd have to wait for your turn to talk on the phone, you know, and sometimes you were listening in on other people's conversations, which wasn't a very good thing but it happened sometimes. But the thing is that as a society we've evolved so much. I remember people who lived out on farms that didn't have running water and proper telephones. People looked at them like they were different, like somehow they were subpar because they didn't have the regular necessities of life. It took time to bring those relationships forward and understand that these were actually resilient, strong, incredible human beings that deserved to be treated fairly and with kindness and the love that we know that Albertans are just full of. That's who we are.

I beg of the opposition: please stop – stop – with the divisiveness. Stop. Understand that every time that happens, you break us apart. You break our province. You break us into tiny, little pieces of shattered glass from this incredible opportunity to bring us together through inclusivity, multiculturalism, wonderful societies working together.

If we make mistakes, you're going to hold us accountable, and I'm glad that you will. Democracy is defined by a strong opposition, and I honour that every single day. But let's start on the same page

together. Let's work on this together. You will let us know if we're failing; that's fair, completely fair. None of us will ever take that away. I've been in opposition. I know how important that is.

But if you think for one minute that I will stand here, having known what my own child went through, having known that a particular side of the government didn't do anything to defend that young man – and many people in this room know my kid and know who he is. Let me explain something to you. That experience changed me forever. It changed the way I look at people. It changed the way that I approach people, for the good. It didn't make me any more angry or frustrated; it made me realize I have to do more and to try harder and to work more and to earn trust. I will do that every day, and there's nothing that the opposition can say to take that away.

Let me explain something to you. Every time you take away something from one kid – and you are talking about one kid. That happened to my child. And you know what? He bounced back better and stronger, more loving, and more incredible than ever. I've never been so proud.

We will continue on this side to be resilient. We will continue on this side to build. We will continue on this side to make sure that people have the love and compassion and the tools that they need to build this province back up to where it needs to be. I am so proud to be Albertan, and I'm so proud to be in this House. I'm so proud of my kid, and I am so proud that he stood up to the absolutely despicable things that were said about him and my family on social media. I'm so proud that he continues on no matter what and that he will not be held down.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, any more speakers to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to briefly stand to defend my colleague the Member for Edmonton-South. That member has been one of the fiercest allies. He was a member of a GSA when he was a student. He was there as an ally. He's been at countless rallies, marches. He's been here in this House, day after day, sharing the stories of students and offering impassioned speeches.

The member opposite noted that she was offended on behalf of the LGBTQ community. Well, I'm a member of the community, and I'm absolutely not offended by what the member said. The Member for Edmonton-South walks the talk. I, my colleagues, and his constituents have absolutely no doubts about his intentions, and to question that is, frankly, unacceptable. We'll stand with him and we'll stand with every queer student across this province every day, every dang day.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Chair:** I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Chair:** I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 8 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 8 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:20 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Aheer	Loewen	Rowswell
Amery	Lovely	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Luan	Schow
Dreeshen	Madu	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Neudorf	Singh
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Goodridge	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Hanson	Orr	van Dijken
Horner	Rehn	Walker
Hunter	Rosin	Yao
LaGrange		

Against:

Bilous	Gray	Pancholi
Dach	Hoffman	Renaud
Dang	Irwin	Shepherd
Goehring	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 12
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[Request to report Bill 8 carried]

**The Chair:** Do you want to rise and report?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, I apologize. We've been here a long time. I would like to move that we rise and report Bill 8.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill: Bill 8. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly. The committee reports Bill 8.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

(continued)

#### Bill 8

#### Education Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and move third and final reading of Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019, all 41 pages of it.

The Education Act, through the amendments proposed in Bill 8, will help to strengthen and modernize Alberta's education system. This legislation better supports local decision-making and puts school boards in the best position to determine the needs of the students they serve. It will help the talented teachers, principals, school support staff, and trustees to deliver a modern education system so that all Alberta children can reach their full potential. It will create an education system that is more collaborative, more flexible, and more focused on students' success.

We are building on years of consultation with Albertans and stakeholders by amending the Education Act, that was passed by the Legislature in 2012, of which there are 170 pages, actually 170-plus pages. As well, extensive consultation continued over the years, and amendments were made in 2015 with the anticipation of it coming into full force in 2016. Unfortunately, that did not happen due to the election; the previous election, that is. We are making sure our students receive the excellent education that all Albertans expect and deserve. This bill will make Alberta's education system even better, and improvements will not come at a cost to vulnerable students.

With our government's commitment to have the Education Act come into force for the 2019-2020 school year, we recognized that some updates were needed. This is why we brought forward Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. There were a few amendments that were needed to address things that have changed since 2012 and since 2015 and to provide stability to the education system. This includes keeping the current age of access, the age of compulsory attendance, and residency rules. We know the existing rules are working well for students and school boards at this time.

As well, the Education Act was drafted under different circumstances. In 2012 the province was booming, and more students were dropping out of high school early, intent on getting jobs and making money. Today students are not dropping out at the same rates, which is, of course, a very good thing, but changing the age of access now would bring more students into the system at a fiscally challenging time for the province. As well, other programs are currently providing this service to those students who need additional time to complete their studies.

We also know it is important that parents do not pay school fees for specific instructional materials needed in a classroom such as textbooks and paper. The Education Act, through regulations, will continue this current practice of restricting school boards from charging fees on these specific materials. We will also keep the current rules around superintendent compensation, which is in alignment with Alberta's expectations for public officials' pay. We will also propose to keep the current implementation plan for leadership certification and teaching quality standards. This plan has broad support from all stakeholders and makes sense to continue.

Other amendments in Bill 8 are minor technical updates to align the Education Act with other pieces of legislation or current practices. We will also maintain the current timeline of 2020 for

when changes to the common kindergarten age of entry comes into effect. We're also updating the language around establishing separate school districts to reflect the current practice.

During the course of the debate on this bill we heard a lot of misconceptions and misinformation about protections for students who participate in GSAs, QSAs, or other inclusion groups. Let me once again state that our government absolutely opposes mandatory parental notification of student involvement in inclusion groups. Alberta will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for GSAs in Canada, and creating a GSA is not optional once it has been requested by students.

**10:30 a.m.**

The privacy of students is protected under Alberta's strict privacy laws. It always has been; it always will be, as the members opposite are well aware. Schools cannot disclose a student's membership in any inclusion group as a matter of routine, and all school authorities are required to follow privacy legislation. As the Privacy Commissioner has made perfectly clear, public schools are required to follow the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and private schools must adhere to the Personal Information Protection Act, or PIPA. They had to abide by these regulations under the NDP's Bill 24 and will continue to do so under the Education Act. School authorities may only disclose personal information if authorized under these laws. Every child is unique, and parents, not politicians, know what is best for their children. The Education Act balances protecting children and their privacy with the rights of parents. Above all, we must make sure our children are getting the supports they need.

While we're on the topic of inclusion, we're also ensuring that all publicly funded schools, including accredited private schools, must adhere to welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments and student codes of conduct. Sorry. Welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment policies and student codes of conduct. I wanted to make sure I got "policies" in there. Our amendments clarify this board obligation, not remove it.

Another frequent topic raised during the debate had to do with trustees. Under the Education Act, boards will still be required to develop and implement codes of conduct for trustees, which will now have to include definitions of breaches and sanctions, up to and including disqualification of a trustee from the board. I want to be perfectly clear. The Education Act will not allow a group of trustees to gang up on other trustees at any time, for any reason, and fire them. That is just not going to happen. This is about professional conduct and clarity of expectations for trustees. It will enable each board to develop their own code of conduct that defines what type of trustee behaviour or breach would result in disqualification. Trustees will be expected to follow the code set by their school board and have clarity on proper conduct.

Moving on to the topic of charter schools, the Education Act ensures that charter schools will continue to have an important role in Alberta's education system by offering more choice for students and their parents. Our government remains committed to making sure that parents have options that best meet the educational needs of their children. The ability to add more charter schools in Alberta will have an overall positive effect on the system. Alberta has a long and successful tradition of supporting school choice, and we will continue to honour that tradition. After all, Albertans overwhelmingly elected us to honour that tradition.

Finally, for private schools this bill changes some terminology, from "an operator of a private school" to "a person responsible for the operation of a private school." If a person or a society is operating a private school and they don't have elected trustees but they have a governing board or society, rules in the Education Act

still apply. Just so everyone is clear, the meaning remains the same. This is simply a terminology adjustment.

In conclusion, Bill 8 will ensure that the Education Act, when in force, will more effectively serve the long-term needs of Alberta's students. I'm also very pleased to share that this has had very broad support from stakeholders, including parents, students, administrators, and trustees. Many, many of these individuals and groups have written, e-mailed, or called to my office to voice their support. With this legislation we are building on our province's foundation of excellence and creating an education environment that provides schools and educators with the tools necessary to improve student outcomes. I believe that amending the previously passed Education Act will allow it to serve as a blueprint for the education system for years to come while providing the most stability and certainty for today.

I hope you will all join me in supporting this important piece of legislation. It's been a long time coming. Albertans overwhelmingly elected this government to bring the Education Act into force, and as a House let's stand together and honour that commitment. I apologize for stumbling; it's been a very long number of days. But I really do feel that this is going to be the best piece of legislation to move our province and our K to 12 education system forward.

I thank you all.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, it has been a number of days, so much so that my mother is watching us online right now to see her daughter, as I'm sure all of your parents are and children as well.

Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 8 in third reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak against Bill 8 at third reading, and I want to specifically reiterate something my colleagues and I have been saying and proving through the debate throughout, that Bill 8 weakens existing protections for LGBTQ2S youth and the formation of GSAs in this province. This fundamentally weakens existing provisions.

I would also like to address a couple of comments from members on the government bench that, without the benefit of the Blues, I can unfortunately only paraphrase: essentially, if this legislation is not right, then the opposition will hold us to account, and that is how the situation in this Legislature should work. I would like to remind the government members of who we are dealing with in this legislation, and that is vulnerable youth. When this legislation fails youth who are trying to form a GSA, it is the youth who will be the ones to suffer because of that.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I would like to remind this House that we know and have discussed numerous times in this House that our LGBTQ2S youth face higher rates of discrimination, higher rates of violence and abuse, mental health concerns, self-harm, suicidality when they go to school in hostile environments. We know from the surveys of Alberta's LGBTQ2S youth that over 50 per cent of them perceive schools to be hostile, unsafe environments when there are no supports for GSAs. My comments to you, Mr. Speaker, are that this bill weakens existing protections for our students, for our youth, for GSAs in our schools, and the result of that is going to be felt by these students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has the call.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will keep my comments fairly brief. I think I've been fairly thorough throughout this entire debate. We have spent a lot of time comparing language to other jurisdictions. We've said that we will have some of the most comprehensive in the country but not the best, and we should be striving for the best. I've always said that language is everything. You change one word in a sentence, you change the entire sentence.

In Bill 8 we are dealing with language, some of it as old as seven to 10 years, depending on the consultation period and when it was proclaimed. I know that part of the mandate of the government around red tape is to look at old language and potentially remove it, so I'm kind of wondering now what's going on.

I'm still concerned around all the language around the trustees. I think it leaves things open for potential problems that I don't think needed to be created.

I am very concerned around the weak language proposed in Bill 8 around GSAs and QSAs. To say that privacy laws will protect the participants in these clubs: it is, unfortunately, after the fact when it happens. I've said this before. By the time we are looking at trying to pursue penalties for breaching the privacy, the privacy has already been breached. We should be creating language that stops it before it gets there, and Bill 8 doesn't allow that. There are holes in the language.

10:40 a.m.

To say that schools are expected to follow the policy is not good enough. We've seen that when we thought that schools were expected to follow the policy, the former Education minister had to go farther because they weren't followed. If it was so clear that they were to be expected to follow it, why didn't they? This is not good enough.

Mr. Speaker, I find myself unable to support Bill 8 here in third reading. I hope that members in this House at the last moment will realize the failings that Bill 8 has and will reconsider their position.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question or comment. Does anyone like to make a brief question or comment? The hon. Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the hon. member that just spoke in regards to language being very important. I have sat through months of debate and listening, and I found it very troubling, the implications that have been made against members on this side of the House, against government members. I do know that every single one of my colleagues in this House has the very best heart for all students, including our lesbian, gay, transgender, queer, LGBTQ2S, and two-spirited. I apologize if I miss any, because it has been a long time. It does cut to the heart when you get attacked on a day-to-day basis for things that are not true. Therefore, I really feel that language is important and we need to get it right. I do believe that we are finding the right language in the Education Amendment Act and in the Education Act as a whole. But for hon. members to imply otherwise, that this side of the House does not support LGBTQ students, is incorrect, and I would like that on the record.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if the member would like to respond or anyone else has a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has the call.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise once again to place on the record my views but also the views of my constituents, of students, of parents, of teachers, of allies who have contacted myself, my colleagues to express their concerns. I'm pleased to stand, potentially for the last time, to speak to those issues and place on them on the record with respect to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019.

As I've laid out in detail – and I won't go into that right now – in fact, despite the Minister of Education's best intentions around proclaiming a piece of legislation that is intended to modernize the school system, the Education Act does not do that. I have laid out in great detail that less than 10 per cent of the Education Act as it is put forward by this government is in any way substantially different from the current School Act, less than 10 per cent. Primarily where it has been amended by this government has been only to repeal those provisions in the original Education Act that would have modernized the system, that would have allowed for extending the age of access, mandatory education. Those provisions were taken out by this government.

The only other substantial changes they made were actually to impart the significant changes that the NDP government made to the School Act around separate school establishment and school fees and trustee codes of conduct. The only glaring absence from what they took from the NDP's amendments to the School Act is the provision around GSAs.

While I appreciate that the Minister of Education will continue and has continued to stand up and say that the intent of introducing Bill 8 is about modernizing the school system and doing something different, unfortunately that is not the case. That is just not the case.

In fact, interestingly enough, the 2012 Education Act, as amended in 2014, could have just been proclaimed by this government. It was already passed legislation. They could have proclaimed it as it was, and in fact that's what their platform said. Their platform said that the Education Act will be proclaimed. That's what they committed to, but they didn't actually do that. They could have done that without bringing that before this House, before this Assembly. It was passed legislation, and all it needed was proclamation, but they didn't do that. They brought it back before this Assembly for the sole purpose of gutting some of the key transformational provisions from that act.

When they made the decision to take out the key transformational provisions of the act but to take some of the things that the NDP government had done to the School Act, with the exception of the GSA provisions, it made it very clear to all what the intent behind Bill 8 really is. That is why the members on this side of the House have referred to this bill as Bill Hate or Bill Straight, because that is what it's about. It can be dressed up in many other ways, and the Minister of Education has spoken many times about what she believes the intent of the bill is, but the fact of the matter is that the only reason that this bill is being brought before the Assembly and why there are changes to the Education Act is to weaken the protections for LGBTQ2S-plus students and GSAs. That is the sole intent. That is what this is really about.

Now, I'm quite proud of the fact that we can look over the record of debate on this bill in this House and that numerous times my colleagues have risen to impart significant information for the benefit of the Assembly and for the benefit of those who watch us online – the three people out there – and for those people who read *Hansard*. They talked in great detail. They provided facts. They talked about the research, about the vulnerability around LGBTQ2S-plus students. That's a fact. We all know that. We all

know that they are some of our most vulnerable students, and I don't need to repeat it because there is a great record in *Hansard* right now, done by my colleagues, about the vulnerability of those students. We know that's why GSAs are so important. There's also a great record about the importance of GSAs to help those vulnerable kids.

Even more than that, we've had numerous personal accounts from students, from teachers. We've heard them speaking out on the steps of the Legislature. They've reached out to us by e-mail, through social media. They've come to our constituency offices. I know that my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and I have met with teachers, who expressed their support for the vulnerable kids in their school. They asked us to maintain the protections in the GSAs that were currently set out under Bill 24 and the School Act. We've heard those stories, very stirring for all of us, I hope. We've heard the very personal account from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, who is the only openly gay member of this Assembly. She stood up and gave her personal story, not only of coming out but also as a teacher. We've heard those stories. We know they are true. We can all have those stories. I'm sure we all know people in our constituencies, in our lives, in our communities who share those views, who value those members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community, who want to see them supported, who want to see them flourish, as we all want all Albertans to.

So we've gotten this great record. I'm really proud of it. I'm really proud of what's on the record in *Hansard* from my colleagues because they've really shared that, and I think it should really resonate with a lot of Albertans. It was because of those stories that Bill 24 was brought in by the NDP government. We heard about the deficiencies that existed in the current provisions that are now in the Education Act. There were deficiencies. We knew that. That was why Bill 24 was brought into place. In fact, as many of the members in this House may know, there was actually a legal challenge to Bill 24 brought by a significant number of private schools, by organizations such as Parents for Choice in Education and the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, whose members are also members of the governing party. They challenged Bill 24. They brought a legal challenge, and twice Alberta courts have upheld the provisions of Bill 24.

**10:50 a.m.**

In fact, not too long ago, right after the campaign, actually, April 29, 2019, the Alberta Court of Appeal rendered its decision in PT versus Alberta. The citation for that, in case *Hansard* is interested, is 2019 ABCA 158. In that decision the Court of Appeal expressly looked at Bill 24. They looked at those provisions, and they upheld them. This is what the court said. At paragraph 109 of the decision – and in this case they're referring to Bill 24 – the Alberta Court of Appeal stated:

The legislation has been enacted to protect the privacy interests of all children in Alberta schools, including all children in the appellant schools, by allowing for the formation and operation of GSAs in their schools. The legislation supporting GSAs is aimed at ensuring that all schools provide a safe and open space for all students, including LGBTQ+ children who may be especially vulnerable.

[110] Attendance at a GSA is not compulsory. Attendance is voluntary. Nothing prevents an individual student from disclosing and discussing their attendance with their parents, if and when they so choose. Nothing prevents a parent from engaging in an open dialogue about GSAs in their child's school. Nor is a parent precluded from inquiring as to the existence of a GSA, who acts as the student liaison and whether the GSA participates in activities off school property.



[111] In the meantime, the legislation puts the choice of disclosure of a child's attendance at a voluntary GSA in the child's hands, not in the control of their parents, their school or its school board. The public good presumed in protecting the safety and privacy interests of these individual children, as well as promoting an inclusive school environment generally, is extremely high...

[112] The evidence of the good achieved by GSAs in protecting the safety and privacy interests of individual children is more compelling than the new evidence of schools' termination of funding for non-compliance with the legislation...

Mr. Speaker, the NDP caucus has presented the government members with a number of reasonable amendments to Bill 8. We've heard them repeatedly state that they support LGBTQ2S-plus students. We've heard them say that repeatedly. We've heard them say repeatedly that they support GSAs. They hold up the existing provisions of the Education Act, and they walk through the steps of the formation of the GSAs and say: "There. See? We support it." But we've heard that that wasn't sufficient, and that's why Bill 24 and the School Act revisions went further.

What we've done is that we've made reasonable amendments to hold them to account, to say: "If you truly do support LGBTQ2S-plus students and GSAs, why would you not support these amendments? Why would you not support the immediate establishment of a GSA when a child, a student, requests it? Why would you not want to let the students decide the name for their GSA or their QSA? Why would you not want to protect the privacy of those students so that they can make the decision about coming out, if they so choose, in their own time?"

If that is generally the interest, the government has been provided with a number of opportunities to support amendments to this bill that truly would walk the talk. They would have an opportunity to actually support amendments that would do exactly what they claim to be doing, and it's been with great disappointment that every single amendment the opposition caucus has put forward has been voted down, with barely anybody on the other side even speaking to it. It's been incredibly disappointing.

I personally am at least proud that I've done what I could to give a voice to the most vulnerable kids, the students, those whom we are most entrusted to represent. I've done my part. I know my colleagues have done their part. There's one last opportunity here for the government members to step up and do their part.

We have in this House now the ability to vote with your conscience. You are now going to be held accountable by your constituents as to how you vote on this matter, on GSAs, on protecting LGBTQ2S-plus students, young people who are the most vulnerable in our system, in our communities. You're not compelled by a confidence vote to vote along party lines. You have an opportunity to vote with your conscience, and I urge you to take this last opportunity. Trust me; I'm not naive enough to think you'll take me up on it. But I urge you to take this opportunity to truly stand up for the most vulnerable students, who you are here to represent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available to make a brief question or comment. I see that the Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, once again, would like to state that I as a former trustee anticipated this Education Act for over 11 years. I took part in the extensive, extensive consultations that occurred over the years. I was part of the amendments that occurred and so on. I am holding the March 1,

2016, copy, that should have come into full force at that time. But due to the election and a new government, who chose not to bring it into force when boards were continuously asking for it, asking "When will that Education Act be fully in force so that we can use the natural person powers and some of the other very, very good pieces that are in this piece of legislation?" – I'm happy to say that we will be able to bring it into force and that the amendment act that we brought forward further aligns with what is the current reality and some of the things that we needed to address in terms of the kindergarten age of access and transportation issues, et cetera, et cetera.

Going back to what was just stated by the hon. member on the amendments that were brought forward, how was an amendment helpful that started with the words "that everything after the word 'that' should be eliminated"? That was not a helpful amendment.

On the other amendment that was brought forward, where we were able to show that it was already in the body of our amendment act and, not only that, that our amendment act went further to ensure that private schools will adhere to the law, we were able to show that, and they were able to then say of their amendment: oh, yes; it is in there.

I believe that we have given very thoughtful consideration to the amendments. I continue to hear that GSAs, QSAs will not be allowed, that we're putting children in danger. That is absolutely, categorically false. We've said it time and time again. It's in the act, it's in the amendment act, and I just don't know what else to say other than that I just wanted to put that on the record.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question and comment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** I just want to tease apart some of the things the minister just said. The act originally was passed in 2012. It wasn't proclaimed in 2012 or 2013 or 2014 or even the beginning of 2015 because there were significant issues with the act. It wasn't because there was an election called in 2015 that it didn't get proclaimed. It was because there were significant issues.

Then the minister went on to say: well, it should have been passed in 2016. But then the minister herself brought forward an amendment act because the bill wasn't good, Mr. Speaker. The act that was passed had significant issues. She admits that because she brought forward an amending act. The amendment act took most of the things that we did as a government to make education better, like capping school fees, bringing in leadership quality standards, making sure that the bands for superintendent compensation were brought over that we brought in. Most of the things that we did got brought over.

The thing that didn't get brought over was: have immediacy, have confidentiality, and have the name of the group for GSAs be transferred over. That's because the minister, in her own words when she was seeking the nomination for the party, said that she didn't support those bills. She thought that they were pushing a different agenda.

Well, Mr. Speaker, our agenda is keeping kids safe. That's why we brought forward those amendments. If the minister wanted to keep kids safe, she could have either not brought forward the amending act, she could have not pushed to proclaim the Education Act, or she could have just left things the way they were. The courts upheld the decision twice, because things did improve safety for students, and there's still more to be done. Even after those changes, the most recent data from government of Alberta surveys shows that 53 per cent of queer youth in schools don't feel safe.

What this government is doing is growing that gap, growing opportunities for inequality, Mr. Speaker. I wish that the words that are coming out of their mouths reflected reality, but the truth is that they are pushing this bill forward, which moves things backwards, not forwards. The truth is that they are intentionally doing this to move back in time, which is what the Premier said he would do.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

11:00 a.m.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I do just want to take only a brief moment here to put my final thoughts on the record. I think that my opinion on this bill, Bill 8, has been stated quite clearly through the debate that's taken place over the last few weeks. I do just want to first of all thank the members of the opposition that took the opportunity to share stories from their constituents, share stories about how this issue affects them personally, specifically the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood once again, being the only openly LGBTQ member of this Assembly. I think that we should pause and take her words quite seriously. I do, of course, also want to thank the members of the government, the few of them that took the opportunity to stand and speak briefly. I do appreciate their comments on the record, and I thank them for that. Of course, I also would like to thank my own community for sharing their stories with myself and other members of the House.

Of course, I am, well, very profoundly frustrated, frustrated with the fact that this government doesn't seem to be changing their opinion on the fact that this bill does not strengthen GSAs or QSAs in our province. It pushes to weaken them. They will of course not admit that fact, but that's the truth, and people in the LGBTQ community and the students and the teachers and the education system as a whole can see that.

My final point would just be that I would plead with this government to change their opinion of this bill. Do not support it. Private members, other than the front bench, please consider the implications of this legislation. You know, the ministers and members of the government talk about being allies, but today we are not seeing that. Over the next four years or however long they are members of the government, they could raise as many pride flags as they would like and say as many nice words about the LGBTQ community as they like, but the fact is that if they move forward with weakening the ability of students and schools to form GSAs, as is laid out in this Bill 8 legislation, they are in fact turning their backs on the LGBTQ community in our province, and that is profoundly disappointing, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, are there others wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I talked about earlier, it's been truly an honour to have had the stories of so many shared with me and with my colleagues and to have been able to present so many of those stories here in the House, stories from teachers, from students, from parents, people young and old, from rural and urban settings, queer folks, and allies. I wish that I could share all the stories that I've received because it means so much to have people reach out to us and to make themselves vulnerable in the hopes of bringing about change in our province.

Perhaps for the last time I want to share one of those stories. This one resonated with me as a teacher and as a member of the LGBTQ community. I cannot share her name, but, please, I ask you to hear her words.

I am a 27-year-old woman and I am a lesbian . . .

For the past five years, I have been a full-time teacher in rural central Alberta. I do my best to provide a safe and caring learning environment for all my students, which is the duty of all teachers and therefore the duty of the government that directs us. This means a safe and caring learning environment for children with learning disabilities, children who come from broken homes, children who are from minority backgrounds or religions, and children who are LGBTQ. It has become increasingly difficult to establish a safe and caring learning environment when I personally do not feel safe or cared for by the governing party in this province.

I have to hide a very large part of my identity on a daily basis. I worry about homophobic harassment and I worry about repercussions on my career. I live in a constant state of anxiety where I worry that someone from my school might see me out with my partner and ask questions. I don't worry about the students judging me, but I do worry about parents. What if they no longer want me teaching their child? What if they make a complaint? Am I going to lose my job? The fact that I even have to consider this is ridiculous, but the current legislation in Bill 8 makes it very clear to me that I am not worthy of the same protection against discrimination as my heterosexual colleagues.

Coming to terms with being queer is enough of a struggle without the fear of being outed, judged, or punished. Children deserve to come to school in a province that supports all of them equally, no matter the label. Without the amendments proposed by the NDP, children will suffer. I know this, because I've lived it. It was my childhood. In my small town, I could not come out due to severe bullying and the threat of being thrown out of my parents' house. My father once told me he thought they should "round up all the gays and hang them". My mother blamed their divorce on the fact that I was gay and they could not cope with it. My teachers in high school were the only adults I felt comfortable confiding in, and I truly believe their acceptance was the only thing that helped me [to] survive.

As a teacher, I've heard parents complain about discussing LGBTQ issues in the classroom because "it's wrong for them to be mentioned" . . . I've had parents make disparaging homophobic comments in front of me, and I could do nothing. I felt powerless, and I am an adult. Imagine how it must feel for a child who has nobody to turn to. A GSA might be the only safe space for these vulnerable youth . . . Being queer is not offensive or wrong, and our students deserve to know that.

Thank you to that teacher.

I urge you for one last time to heed her words and the words of all the other folks that we've shared in this House. To all those who've shared their stories with me and with my NDP colleagues: thank you. We see you, we value you, we love you, and no matter the outcome of this vote we will continue to stand with you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if someone would like to make a brief question or comment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to, briefly, very much stand in solidarity with the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, who's led this caucus together with great strength and wisdom on this issue. I think that, following the remarks of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I'd like to make it be known to all members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community that notwithstanding what happens with Bill 8, there is

a safe place in this province that they can go to, no matter where in this province you live. It is in the office of your NDP opposition MLA. Please always know that you can contact us, communicate your experiences with us. We want to know about your GSA applications. We respect your views. We have your backs. We always will.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to make an additional brief question or comment.

Seeing none, are there others wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Education to close debate, should she choose.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe we've had ample time to debate this amendment. I believe what I've said all along, that it is a very good amendment, that we look forward to the Education Act coming into full force with the amendment in place. I would encourage all the members to vote in favour of it. I close debate.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:09 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rowswell
Amery	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schow
Barnes	McIver	Schweitzer
Dreeshen	Milliken	Shandro
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Nicolaides	Singh
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Goodridge	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Hanson	Orr	van Dijken
Horner	Pitt	Walker
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson
LaGrange	Rosin	Yao
Loewen		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Pancholi
Carson	Hoffman	Renaud
Dach	Irwin	Shepherd
Dang	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Goehring		

Totals: For – 40 Against – 13

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a third time]

### Bill 13 Alberta Senate Election Act

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at Bill 13. The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move the third reading of Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act.

It seems like there's a little bit more of a jump in our steps here, so I'm going to be pretty brief in my remarks regarding Bill 13. I also just want to acknowledge all the hard-working people that have been up in the gallery here, all the work that they've done, all the staff, all the people here that make this happen. Mr. Speaker, to you and your team as well: we commend you for all the hard work that you've done here this spring. I appreciate all that hard work.

Albertans should be proud of the leadership role that Alberta has played in Senate reform here in Canada. We've been a leader on this front going back to 1987, when first legislation was passed to bring in Senate elections here in Alberta. Five out of 10 of the Senators that were nominated by this province went on to be appointed to the Senate. Some of those individuals have been probably the best Senators in Alberta history. We're proud of the work that they've done. This was just illustrated recently, Mr. Speaker, with the controversial bills C-69 and C-48, that just recently passed in Ottawa. The elected Senators Scott Tannas, Doug Black led the charge on behalf of Alberta against these bills, acting on Albertans' behalf, acting in their best interests.

That is why it is so critical at this point in time in our juncture that we bring back Senate elections, that we make sure that Albertans have their voice heard in Ottawa in the Senate. That is why we're making sure that we bring forward this legislation now. It's timely. We need to have this done. There's a Senate vacancy coming up in 2021. Going forward, we need to make sure that Albertans' voices are heard and that Albertans make sure that their priorities are there in Ottawa.

I had a few more notes here, Mr. Speaker, that I could go into, but I want to be a little bit brief here today. This speech was drafted a few days ago, and probably a little bit more timely thought may go into this, but I want to make sure that I thank everyone here in this House. We've had a vigorous debate. I believe that this bill is critical for the future of democratic reform in this province. I'm looking forward to those elections being held in our province. I want to thank everybody for their hard work on this.

I'm going to sit down and see if anybody else has anything to say.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member. Given that it's still Wednesday here in the Assembly, I imagine that the speech was actually prepared today.

Are there others wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 13? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the third and final reading of Bill 13, the act looking at senatorial elections here in the province of Alberta, the Alberta Senate Election Act. I'd like to echo the comments from the Minister of Justice. Indeed, we appreciate the support we've received from all of the fine legislative staff who've been here with us throughout the longest Wednesday in Alberta history. I imagine we're all thankful it was a Wednesday as opposed to a Monday. Generally, even Garfield didn't like Mondays. I apologize. My quality of humour declines with the length of the day, as much as we may all attempt.

11:30 a.m.

With that in mind, I'd like to put a few brief thoughts on the record regarding this bill before we have the opportunity – we shall see, I guess – to see what the will is of the House. I recognize where the government is coming from with this bill. You know, certainly, we've had some robust discussion as a country about the value of the Canadian Senate, how it should be approached. We've had promises from some federal parties, and certainly all parties have had some policy of some sort around Senate reform. We saw

attempts to move towards an elected Senate. We've seen the changes that have been brought forward under the current federal government. We've had other parties that have called for the utter abolishment of the Senate altogether.

But ultimately what we have here in choosing to return to this elected process here in the province of Alberta: it's still buying into a flawed system, buying into a system that is undemocratic in the sense that it is putting up people with appointments for life. There is that lack of accountability there. Even if an individual is elected to that position, there is no accountability once they are there. We are dependent on them, I guess, to make those decisions, and they are there until they should choose to step down, until they reach the age of 75, whichever comes first.

We recognize that Alberta continues to have an incredibly disproportionately low number of Senators compared to other jurisdictions in Canada given that we have only six Senators. Then, by comparison, Prince Edward Island has four. While we have a population of approximately 714,356 Albertans per Senator as of 2017, Prince Edward Island, then, had 38,005.

Again, it is still a flawed system that we are buying into, that we are choosing to give our endorsement, and, in the process of doing that, spending taxpayer money for that exercise. Generally I can understand that the government feels that this is an important gesture, that they feel this is something that improves this process. In my view, I'm not really sure that it adds any additional value to the situation.

I did want to observe, though, that I do appreciate the work that Alberta Senators have done. Certainly, I've seen some great thoughts that have come from Senator Doug Black. I've seen some great thoughts that have come from others. In particular, I just wanted to note one of the recent Senators that was appointed to the Senate. I've deeply appreciated the work of Senator Paula Simons. She has done an amazing job of engaging with Albertans, engaging with Canadians, indeed, through social media has thoughtfully laid out all of her steps, all of her process by which she has come to her decisions, the reasons that she has made them.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that that is an improvement on our democratic process. She has engaged thoughtfully and critically. She hasn't resorted to stale talking points. She hasn't bought into cheap narratives. At times she has been attacked and misrepresented, but I just wanted to state on the record that whether or not we agree with decisions that she may have made, I think that she demonstrates what a thoughtful legislator is intended to do, and that is to engage with constituents. I want to recognize also that she took the step of ensuring that Alberta had a voice on the committee in the Senate which deals with energy and natural resources. Alberta had no voice at that committee. When Senator Simons was appointed, she fought to get on that committee to ensure that Alberta's voice would be heard.

As much as we may be frustrated with the decisions that the majority of Senators make, I think we can take pride that we have Alberta Senators who are working to ensure that we have the best representation we can and that as this government continues to stand up for Alberta and we as an opposition continue to do the same, we can work with those folks that are there in the Senate to make sure that we continue to advance things as best we can for our province.

With that, I conclude my remarks on this bill.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 13 at third reading? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I appreciate the opportunity to rise on third reading, Mr. Speaker, and provide a few brief remarks. It's been a

long Wednesday, and I'm looking forward to getting on with Friday. Somehow along the way we lost Thursday. I don't know what happened there, but that's the way the Legislature works.

I do want to provide a couple quick comments. First off, I'd like to respond to the hon. member from the opposition's arguments and presentation in this Chamber on Senate elections. To spend his portion of time in third reading trying to defend Senator Simons actions as an unelected Senator inside the Senate, I think, is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. It also points out the problem that we face as a province, and I do appreciate that the Minister of Justice is attempting to at least provide us some sort of say in that process. I know Senator Simons, and I get along with her. I have had many a nice conversation with her, but the reality is that she stood inside the Senate just a few short weeks ago and voted against the province of Alberta, voted against Albertans, and voted against our energy industry.

While some of her intentions along the way may have been right, to vote against the people of her own province is completely ridiculous and what Albertans have rejected and is why we propose to go back to electing Senators in this province and trying to have the Prime Minister appoint them to the Senate, because the reality is that, as the Minister of Justice pointed out, our two elected Senators inside the Senate right now: that's who stood up for the province of Alberta from day one. They stood up for the province of Alberta the entire way, and they stood up when it really mattered, Mr. Speaker, when they stood up and they voted for Alberta. They stood and they voted for Alberta, which is what we expect when it comes to our Senators, so I thank the Minister of Justice for bringing this forward.

I think it's also important to point out that as we come near to what I think is probably the end of session – we'll see what the Chamber decides shortly – the reality is, though, that this is another promise made and another promise kept. We have talked along the last eight weeks inside this Chamber, well into the night, about the fact that the United Conservative Party was elected on a historical mandate, the largest mandate in the history of this province, to come and to implement the largest platform that was ever run on in the history of this province, a clear platform. I know you've read it, Mr. Speaker. I know you've read it back and forth many times while you were campaigning in your own constituency.

One of the promises in there was to renew the Senatorial Selection Act, to hold elections for senatorial nominees by 2021. Today, Mr. Speaker, if the Chamber votes to get third reading passed, that will be another promise made and another promise kept by the hon. Premier and his government. That's what this is about. The reality of why we are still here on a Wednesday, well into 48 hours on a Wednesday inside this Chamber: at its core, this started with the opposition filibustering senatorial elections, and it's ended there. Hopefully, that's over, the actions that they have taken to ultimately filibuster this legislation. Hopefully, we're able to pass what Albertans voted for and get past that, because that's what Albertans expect.

For the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre to rise on his last comments on this issue and try to defend an unelected Senator who voted against this province shows exactly what the problem is with the Senate at the moment but also what the problem is with the NDP in general. They continue to side with anybody but Albertans. They continue along the way to side with their close ally Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He certainly does not want to see elected Senators because Senator Tannas and Senator Black were his worst nightmare during bills C-69 and C-48, and we want to send some more people up there that will defend this province.

Mr. Speaker, I will close with this, and hopefully we can test the room to see if they're ready to let the Legislature decide what is

going on with Bill 13 and make a decision. [interjection] Sorry. I thought the Opposition House Leader was talking to me, but he's clearly talking about something else, which is totally fine. But we'll let them make a decision on what is taking place inside this Chamber going forward.

I want to close by reminding everybody that this session started with bills like Bill 13, that were promised to the people of Alberta, who voted for it in overwhelming numbers on April 16. This government caucus, under the leadership of the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the hon. Premier of this province, is following through on those promises, and I want to assure Albertans, through you, that we will continue to when we come back to this place. When we make promises, we're going to keep them even if that side of the House wants to filibuster and try to prevent things like senatorial elections.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader might have a request of the Assembly, perhaps?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I sense that you're asking that I may want to seek the unanimous consent of this Chamber for one-minute bells for this division.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to close debate should he choose.

11:40 a.m.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I move to close debate.

**The Speaker:** Well said.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:41 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rutherford
Amery	Luan	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schow
Barnes	McIver	Schweitzer
Copping	Milliken	Shandro
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nicolaides	Singh
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	Stephan
Goodridge	Orr	Toews
Hanson	Pitt	Toor
Horner	Rehn	van Dijken
Hunter	Reid	Walker
LaGrange	Rosin	Wilson
Loewen	Rowswell	Yao

Against the motion:

Bilous	Eggen	Nielsen
Carson	Goehring	Pancholi
Dach	Irwin	Sigurdson, L.

Totals: For – 45 Against – 9

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a third time]

[some applause]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a notice that I would like to provide the House, but first of all, just briefly, I'd like to thank you and all your deputies for your hard work over the last few days; the Clerk and her team; the teams, of course, at *Hansard*; all the LAO staff; our pages, who have been incredible through some of the longest days inside this Chamber; the Sergeant-at-Arms' office as well as all caucus staff on all sides of the aisle and the government staff who have participated in this process. Lastly, I'd like to close off by thanking members in all parties inside the Chamber. It's been a long road, and I know we have disagreed lots along the way, but certainly it's been tough work, and we've been able to get that progress done. I wish you safe travels. Anybody who has not slept well, please take the time before they hit the road today.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise you and all members that pursuant to Government Motion 26 the business for the 2019 spring sitting is concluded.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I thank the hon. Government House Leader, and prior to the proclamation of the session concluding, I too would like to echo some of the comments that the Government House Leader has made. On July 3 at 1:29 p.m., Wednesday began. That was approximately 46 hours and 20 minutes ago. This is the longest Wednesday or the longest single sitting day in Alberta's history.

I'd like to very briefly thank the staff of both caucuses. I'd also like to thank particularly the staff in the Speaker's office, who have also put in some additional hours. At no point in time in Alberta's history has committee sat as long as it has in duration in one sitting as it did over the past three days. I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Airdrie-East as well as the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie for their particularly lengthy and dedicated service to the Assembly. I'd also like to thank the broadcast services. If we are here, there are members at the control tower that are tending to the needs of our Assembly. Sheriffs, pages, legislative security staff, the table have done an absolutely incredible job. As you know, the table staff is not that large, and they have put in some very, very, very lengthy hours. While the opposition may have had shifts of six and the government may have shifts in the 25s or 30s, there were only six members of the table, so they have done an incredible job.

I'd also like to echo the comments that were made by the Government House Leader. Please, please, please, please, I know that you all have a very busy weekend scheduled, but there is nothing that's more important than you arriving safely, so please drive to arrive and ensure that you take whatever necessary steps to make sure you get to your next meeting and we have no concerns.

Lastly, I would like to invite all of the new members to join us at the front of the building for the time-honoured end-of-session traditions that I'm sure you've all been made very well aware of.

Having said that, pursuant to Government Motion 26 on July 2, 2019, the House now stands adjourned until October 2019.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:50 a.m. on Friday pursuant to Government Motion 26]



## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Wednesday, July 3, 2019**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1313-26 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1329-31 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1347-57 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve.*), 1357-62 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c5 ]

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cR-8.2 ]

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c4 ]

**Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$ (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c3 ]

**Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1375-83 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 , passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cP-41.7 ]

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c2 ]

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cF-1.5 ]

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1393-94 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

**Bill 13\* — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1345-47 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1383-93 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)



**Bill 201\* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 825-38 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 cP-30.6]

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 838-40 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft.*), 1115-22 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, October 8, 2019

Day 24

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
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Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
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Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
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Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
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Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
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Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
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Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration



## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, October 8, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Lord, God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Law Clerk Teri Cherkewich

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we proceed to Orders of the Day, I would like to take a moment to introduce a new table officer to the Assembly, the new Law Clerk, Teri Cherkewich. Teri joins the Alberta table with over 16 years of legal experience in the Yukon government, nine of those most recent years as Legislative Counsel in Yukon's Legislative Counsel office. Teri holds a bachelor of law from the University of Saskatchewan, and her professional experience includes extensive involvement in professional associations, notably the Canadian Study of Parliament Group and the Uniform Law Commission of Canada. Please join me in welcoming Teri to our province and to the table this morning.

Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader has the call.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to all members of the House, welcome back to the House.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start off by moving Government Motion 29, which is on the Order Paper. We'll be moving two government motions this morning. I'll seek your direction if you would like me to read it off the Order Paper or if you're fine with me just moving it as Government Motion 29.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Government House Leader. I think that in this instance reading Government Motion 29 would be reasonable. I can imagine that the Speaker may have some leniency with respect to additional government motions this morning.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that said, then, I propose the following motion.

#### Committee Membership Changes

29. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:  
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:
- A. on the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund that Mr. Orr replace Mr. Gotfried as chair, Mr. Getson replace Mr. Orr as deputy chair,

- Member Loyola replace Member Irwin, and Mr. Singh replace Mr. Gotfried;
- B. on the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills that Ms Glasgo replace Mr. Gotfried;
- C. on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that Mr. Jeremy Nixon replace Mr. Amery;
- D. on the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services that Mr. Neudorf replace Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk;
- E. on the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future that Member Irwin replace Mr. Dach;
- F. on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities that Mr. Shepherd replace Member Irwin;
- G. on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship that Mr. Dach replace Member Loyola and Mr. Loewen replace Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under Standing Order 18(1)(h) this is a debatable motion. Anyone wishing to add to the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the onset I'd like to request a separate vote for Government Motion 29 part A, with the following motions to be voted on as a block but that first motion to be separate, and with your indulgence I will speak to why I'm making this request.

Mr. Speaker, I have great concerns with the appointment of the Member for Calgary-East to Heritage Savings Trust Fund. The committee approves the annual report and quarterly reports on the fund, including public meetings with Albertans on its investments, investment activities, and performance. Now, my concerns: last we heard, the Election Commissioner was investigating the MLA for Calgary-East, and we've yet to hear if these investigations have been concluded. Further, his business was raided by the RCMP. We've yet to hear the conclusion of that. As well, for a member who is being investigated for allegations of fraud, forgery, and bribery to be put on a committee for overseeing Alberta's future is a slap in the face to Albertans. We believe another member should be put on this committee instead or the existing Member for Calgary-Fish Creek should remain on that committee. That's up to the government. We're calling on the UCP government to take these allegations seriously and abstain from rewarding members who are the focus of very serious allegations.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in this instance this motion can be divided for multiple votes, recorded or not, so I'll be happy to proceed in such a manner, where part A will be voted on separately from the additional portions of the motion.

Having said that, are there any other members wishing to add to the debate this morning with respect to Government Motion 29? Seeing none.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 29 part A carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:06 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer

Lovely

Rosin

Allard	Madu	Rowswell
Amery	McIver	Rutherford
Barnes	Milliken	Sawhney
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Schow
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Schulz
Fir	Nixon, Jeremy	Schweitzer
Glasgo	Orr	Sigurdson, R.J.
Gotfried	Panda	Singh
Guthrie	Pitt	Stephan
Hanson	Rehn	Walker
Horner	Reid	Yao
Hunter		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Phillips
Carson	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Irwin	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Deol	Pancholi	Sweet
Feehan		

Totals: For – 37 Against – 19

[Government Motion 29 part A carried]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at Government Motion 29 parts B through G.

[Government Motion 29 parts B through G carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader has the call.

#### Amendments to Standing Orders

30. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

- A. Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective May 30, 2019, be amended as follows:
  1. Standing Order 3(4) is amended by striking out “Unless otherwise ordered” and substituting “Unless otherwise ordered or varied under suborder (5), (5.1), (8) or (9)”.
  2. Standing Order 7(4) is amended by striking out “6 Members” and substituting “9 Members”.
  3. Standing Order 8(7)(c) is amended by striking out “8 sitting days” wherever it occurs and substituting “4 sitting days”.
  4. Standing Order 41(1) is struck out and the following is substituted:
 

41(1) The sequence of motions other than Government motions shall be determined by a random draw of the names of all Members except for

    - (a) the Speaker,
    - (b) members of the Executive Council, and
    - (c) any Member who has submitted written notice to the Clerk no later than 3 days prior to the date of the draw of the Member’s intention to be excluded from the draw.
  5. Standing Order 56(2.4) is struck out and the following is substituted:
 

(2.4) A temporary substitution may be terminated at any time by the original Member of the committee and shall not be in effect during any portion of a committee meeting that the original Member attends.
  6. The following is added after Standing Order 61:

#### Voting – interim and supplementary estimates

61.1(1) At the end of consideration of interim or supplementary estimates there shall be one vote in Committee of Supply on the estimates of the Legislative Assembly and the officers of the Legislature followed by one vote on the estimates of the Government unless

- (a) additional votes are required on amendments pursuant to suborder (3) prior to calling the vote on the interim or supplementary estimates, or
  - (b) on at least one day’s notice a Member has provided written notification to the Chair and the Clerk of the Member’s desire that the estimates of a particular ministry be voted upon separately, in which case that ministry’s estimates shall be voted separately and the final vote for the interim or supplementary estimates shall consist of the estimates of any ministries not yet voted upon.
- (2) The votes under suborder (1) shall be taken without debate or amendment except as provided in suborder (3).
- (3) When an amendment to the interim or supplementary estimates is moved in Committee of Supply, the vote on the amendment stands deferred until the end of consideration of the interim or supplementary estimates.
7. Standing Order 65(1)(b) is amended by striking out “in committees of the whole Assembly” and substituting “subject to Standing Order 29(3)(b) and (c), in committees of the whole Assembly”.
  8. Standing Order 72(1) is struck out and the following is substituted:
 

72(1) The sequence of Public Bills and Orders other than Government Bills and Orders shall be determined by a random draw of the names of all Members except for

    - (a) the Speaker,
    - (b) members of the Executive Council, and
    - (c) any Member who has submitted written notice to Parliamentary Counsel no later than 3 days prior to the date of the draw of the Member’s intention to be excluded from the draw.
  9. Standing Order 108 is struck out and the following is substituted:

#### Duties of Clerk Assistant

108 The Clerk Assistant of the Assembly shall

- (a) assist the Clerk of the Assembly in fulfilling the Clerk’s duties in the Assembly, in divisions, and in the general administration of the Legislative Assembly, and
- (b) in the absence of the Clerk, substitute for the Clerk and exercise the authority and discharge the responsibilities normally vested in the Clerk

subject to such orders that may be received from the Speaker or the Clerk.

#### Duties of Clerk of Committees

108.1 The Clerk of Committees

- (a) is responsible for administrative support to all committees of the Assembly and the

- safekeeping of all committee papers and records, and
- (b) in the absence of the Clerk and the Clerk Assistant, substitute for the Clerk and exercise the authority and discharge the responsibilities normally vested in the Clerk subject to such orders that may be received from the Speaker or the Clerk.
10. The heading to Standing Order 109 is amended by striking out “Parliamentary Counsel” and substituting “the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel”.
11. Standing Order 109 is amended
- (a) by renumbering Standing Order 109 as Standing Order 109(1),
- (b) in suborder (1)(c) by striking out “Clerk and the Clerk Assistant” and substituting “Clerk, Clerk Assistant, and Clerk of Committees”, and
- (c) by adding the following after suborder (1):
- (2) The Law Clerk shall serve as head of the office of Parliamentary Counsel.
- B. And be it further resolved that the amendments in this motion shall come into force on passage.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of these standing order changes are housekeeping and help to standardize current practice. One of the changes I’m very pleased to propose is an increase in the number of members’ statements from six to nine. These additional statements were something I committed to deliver in the spring in order to increase the opportunities for private members, including the opposition, to highlight topics of concern for their constituents. It’s my hope to pass this before lunch so that we can give members that opportunity today during question period. As such, I ask for support from the Chamber for that motion, and I will seek your direction if you would like me to read it. It’s rather lengthy.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, given that I am always in support of an effective and smooth-running Legislative Assembly – I know that all of you have had the opportunity to review the Order Paper that has been circulated. I also notice that it may have been tweeted this morning as well to provide Albertans the opportunity to review the Order Paper. As such, I think we will allow the Government House Leader the opportunity to not read the lengthy change to the standing orders.

This is a debatable motion, and any member wishing to add to the debate would be welcome to do so now. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, appreciate finding ways to be a little more efficient with our time, so I won’t take up too, too much time. Just a few comments on this. I mean, first of all, I do want to thank the government in their efforts to work with the opposition to identify some standing order changes that we feel are acceptable. I’ll say at the onset that I will be supporting this change or suite of changes to our standing orders. But just a few comments for Albertans to know specifically what’s in here and what it does mean for members of the Assembly.

We know that Standing Order 3(4) really codifies how the government has the right to change the different sitting dates and the different tools that they have at their disposal. We recognize that these were always available to government. This is nothing new but just putting it into the standing orders.

I’m going to jump over 7(4).

As far as 8(7)(c), this is referring to reducing the sitting days from eight to four. It’s a curious one, to which we still haven’t receive an adequate response from the government as to why they’re making this change. Currently the government can bring private members’ bills back from second reading to committee within four days. I mean, it currently reads: within eight days. Four days is within eight days, so they have the same ability. What it does is to reduce the time that they could take, so they’re losing an additional four days. Now, if the reason for this is to be a little more expeditious with private members’ bills, to try to bring them back to the Assembly quicker, then that is something that I and we can get behind. We know that private members have limited time for debate. Our Monday afternoons are the only day of the week that are devoted to private members. We know that there are a significant number of members on both sides of the House. Obviously, this applies to government private members as well. If it is with the intention to expedite bills, bring them back for quicker turnarounds for debate, then that is something that we can support.

My favourite standing order change in this package, Mr. Speaker, is Standing Order 41(1), and that is where all private members are automatically – their names are placed in for draws on bills and motions. It’d be interesting to look at the history of this place as to why it was an opt-in instead of an opt-out, which is challenging, I think, for members that have to, you know, get it in before a certain date. I’m happy to see that now all private members will be in the draws unless they choose to opt out. That one gets a gold star, in our opinion, our humble opinion.

The next one, I think, is also a very sensible one, Standing Order 56(2.4), that allows members, if you have committee meetings, if a member is unavailable for a portion of the meeting and lines up a substitute, if they are available to come in halfway through the meeting, to in fact take their chair and take over voting. I think that absolutely makes sense. That, in fact, encourages members, if they only have to miss a portion of a meeting, to get to a committee meeting, which makes absolute sense. Very happy with that change, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to talk a little bit about the change to Standing Order 61.1(1). This is talking about votes for interim and sup supply. In the past, Mr. Speaker, every line item for every ministry was pulled out and voted on separately. Now, I appreciate that this can be a little tedious, it can be lengthy, but we know that it’s important for Albertans to see exactly what the budgeted amounts for interim and sup supply are. So I think this was a great example of a compromise between the government and the opposition in that we will have the ability to identify which ministries we’d like voted on separately. Those that we are okay with voting on as a block will be voted on as a block. A great example of finding a system that enhances efficiency but gives us the ability at the same time to highlight certain ministries and their spending.

**10:30**

The next one is Standing Order 65(1)(b), and that is really codifying how much time members would agree to during Committee of the Whole debate for private members’ bills. We’re codifying this for 10 minutes per member. Really, the reason behind this – this always was worked out through House leaders’ agreements – is because, again, there is limited time to debate private members’ bills. Members of all the parties would agree that they would shorten their time so that more people could get up and speak. Now we are codifying this, and now it’ll be up to 10 minutes. That’s good, too.

The only other one that I jumped over and I’ll come back to is Standing Order 7(4). This is increasing the number of members’ statements per day. Now, at the onset, of course, I’m in favour of

members having more opportunities and of more members to get up and give a two-minute address to the Assembly to talk about issues and topics and subjects that are important to them as members, important to their constituents and constituencies. But for me, Mr. Speaker, the sore spot on this one is the fact that the reason we have so much more time at the start of our Routine at 1:30 is because the government decided to eliminate introductions. I think that was wrong. I think that decision was wrong. The opportunity for Albertans to come to this place, to be recognized, to have their names written in *Hansard*, to be in Alberta's history books forever is now an opportunity that has been taken away from them. I think that there was a middle-of-the-road solution.

I appreciate conversations that we had with the government. Some introductions went on at length, and that interfered with other members being able to do their introductions or members' statements. I appreciate that. We were open to negotiating a limit on how long introductions could be to ensure we expedite the process. Instead, this government is deciding to, really, pull the carpet out from under not just Albertans but, you know, the tradition of introductions in this building that has gone on for many, many, many years. For me, Ottawa doesn't do everything better, and I appreciate that in the House of Commons they don't have introductions. I think that's sad. I think they've missed out on an opportunity for Canadians or visitors to be introduced in this place.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I've had the privilege and honour of being a member since 2012, and there's still not a single day that I've walked through these doors and I'm not feeling humbled and in awe of being a member, being elected to this Chamber, and how special it is. There are, I believe, fewer than a thousand Albertans in the history of this province who have been a member. It is an extreme honour, and I know that I have constituents, as do my colleagues, who are disappointed that they can't come into the Legislature: many, many seniors who loved to come here to be introduced. It develops a personal connection.

If you look especially at young people coming in – we want them to get interested. We want them to be future candidates and members representing our great province. Although I support the fact that we now have more members' statements to make good use of our time in this place, I can't help but be reminded how disappointing it is that introductions are now taken away.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the sound of your voice and know that you do introductions on behalf of the school groups, but I do think that what's lacking and what's missing now is the connection between members and their own guests to give a little bit of backstory. The other thing, quite frankly, that I've enjoyed over the last seven years is learning more about the members in this Assembly when they come and introduce their families, when they introduce friends of theirs, when they introduce their constituents. This is how we get to know each other.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, point of order.

#### **Point of Order Repetition Items Previously Decided**

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called. I'll recognize the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Everybody is on 23(c): persistent and "needless repetition or raises matters that have been decided during the current session." This has absolutely nothing to do with the standing order package that we're debating. The hon.

Opposition House Leader has admitted that in his own remarks and should get back to the task that is at hand.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader, if he chooses to add to this very important point of order.

**Mr. Bilous:** Oh, I'm always happy to.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. I've made it very clear how my point relates back to why we have additional members' statements. In this place past Speakers have given members the swath and ability to be able to express their point. I think what the Government House Leader is attempting to do – and we've seen this before – is to try to stifle debate and limit what members can say when they are talking to express their point. Quite frankly, my point applies to every member in this House. This is not a point of order. I appreciate that the Government House Leader is already tired of hearing my voice after 15 minutes, but, again, this is not a point of order. I'd love to continue to talk.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your interjections. I would tend to agree with the Opposition House Leader that this isn't, in fact, a point of order, and we will continue with his remarks.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was kind of hoping that maybe we'd get by one day without a point of order, but that's okay. My hopes are dashed.

**Ms Phillips:** Your presence is a point of order.

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay. Well, that was witty. I need to say that for *Hansard*. The Member for Lethbridge-West said that my presence creates points of order.

I will wrap up my comments. This package – I will say, Mr. Speaker, that we know that there are more changes to the standing orders that the government is proposing, and I'll hold my comments for those changes at that time. This suite of changes, again, codifies a number of different practices that we already have in place.

As well, the one that I didn't talk about but that I appreciate is very much a housekeeping item is that the positions for the table officers are codified along with their responsibilities. I appreciate all of the work that they do, and now it'll be codified forever in the standing orders.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think I made my point. In fact, thank you to the Government House Leader for jumping up on a point of order. That means that I have made my point on the additional members' statements.

With this, I will be supporting these standing order changes. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we all know that we all have a favourite standing order, so I appreciate you sharing yours.

Are there others wishing to speak to Government Motion 30? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Is that right? It's my first day.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I suspect you will have it memorized again very quickly.

I want to thank the Opposition House Leader for highlighting some important points, and I appreciate what the Government House Leader added to the debate as well. I do want to say that the question of introductions is absolutely connected to a decision that was made in the last session to rush through other standing order changes, and while I think that these probably, by and large, are

improvements to today's standing orders, I think the reason why we have to consider them is because the government rushed so quickly last session to bring forward standing order changes that seriously stifled the ability of private members on both sides of the House to engage fully in the business of this place. This place is, of course, one that deals with a significant amount of government business, but it also is a place that is intended to deal with private members' business.

I do want to touch on one piece that relates to something that the Opposition House Leader mentioned previously, and that was when he was talking about introductions. I remember the day that you, Mr. Speaker, introduced your grandmother in this place. I think it was a moment that touched many of us and helped us get to know you on a slightly deeper level and see your grandmother's pride in having you say her name in this place. I remember the day that I introduced a constituent, Vera Saunders, who at the time was 105 – now she's 107 – sitting in this place. You know, she worked to help me get here, and seeing me say her name was something that she helped accomplish. That was one of her successes beyond her 100 years, that she was still able to contribute to having somebody elected and having that elected person be in their place speaking about something that mattered to her, her 105th birthday. What a nice thing to be able to have, a moment to honour with her and her family.

I think that when we rush things through this place instead of taking the time to go through the proper processes and procedures, like sending them to a committee that actually has the mandate to develop standing orders, we end up having to play catch-up.

**10:40**

I know that there were some members of the then Wildrose caucus who used to say that there are unintended consequences when you don't take things through full and appropriate process. One of the unintended consequences – or maybe it was intended; maybe people love hearing the opposition speak in the mornings in the House to things like standing orders. But by rushing things through in the last session, we were left in a situation where, now, here we are debating further standing order amendments. Again, don't love the process, don't love that it didn't go to the committee to be worked on that actually has a mandate to address this.

If the government front bench is going to make decisions about what is actually the mandate of a committee, I wonder what the role is of private members on those committees. I wonder if it's just to rubber-stamp something that's being sent through folks, through Executive Council. I don't think that that is the best way to show respect to private members on either side of the House, and I don't think it's the best way to show respect to Albertans who democratically elect all of us to come to this place and do our job.

I think that the bulk of these amendments are fine, but I am, again, deeply concerned about how much power and control seems to be consolidated on the front bench and how much the rest of us are left to react. I appreciate that the Order Paper was tweeted out. I appreciate that, you know, we got some notice in the morning. That's lovely. I definitely watch Twitter. I guess I have to watch it even more to find out what government business will be in coming days. I think that's not the intended role of this place, nor the intended role of Twitter, but I guess we adapt in ways that we must. But I do want to, again, restate that there are committees. There is one that specifically has a mandate of examining standing orders. And there are ways that we can show respect to the people of Alberta and to one another by actually allowing those committees to do their jobs.

Again, that being said, in large part I think that these are fine today, but what about other standing orders that might be coming in the future? What about other bills that might be coming forward in the future? What about the work of other committees that should be done in a democratic way that enables all private members to have their voices heard, Mr. Speaker? These are the questions that I'm left to grapple with this morning.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to speak to this motion. I just wanted to actually thank my colleagues the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and especially the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview because what we saw this morning was really that – I, as well, like the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, do watch Twitter, but I did not see the Order Paper tweeted out. I don't look to Twitter for my indication of what the government is going to be doing and presenting in the House.

I note that because the Government House Leader did not have to rise and even actually read out the motion before us today, we actually had absolutely no explanation from this government – Albertans had no explanation from this government – about what the purpose of this motion is. In fact, that clarity and that detail came from the members of the opposition, in particular the Opposition House Leader.

So I'd just like to thank my colleagues for standing up and explaining the government's own motion to Albertans. I think it's a shame that nobody on the government side had to even read out what it says in the motion. I have no particular concerns other than those expressed by my colleagues with respect to the content, but I do think that if the government is going to be introducing motions and legislation, they should be accountable for speaking to Albertans about what the content of that motion or that bill is and explaining the purpose behind it. We're happy to do that job for the government, but I really think that that is their role. I'm a little disappointed that this is how we started, that we're now doing the government's job to explain their own motion to Albertans, but we'll be happy to continue to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or a comment for the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I see the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has risen on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say that our Government House Leader did say that he would be willing to read it out, but you said that it would be not necessary. So I think that the member needs to realize that this was actually a Speaker's decision. It was not a decision that was made by the government side.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks for that clarity. That's really helpful.

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else? Sounds like the Member for Edmonton-Glenora might like to add to 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, for clarity's sake just for all members, I know that many of you are new here. With respect to the Order Paper, the Order Paper is actually posted online in advance of the session. In this case it was an early Order Paper, so it was posted yesterday and was available for all members to peruse.

The regular process that takes place – the Speaker has chosen to try to engage more Albertans in our process here by tweeting it, but

it certainly isn't a requirement of the Speaker or any member to inform themselves of where the Order Paper can be found.

With that said, is there anyone else that would like to engage in this very important matter around standing orders?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question. The Deputy Government House Leader could close debate if he would like to do so on behalf of the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I move to close debate on this and call the vote.

[Government Motion 30 carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General and the Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** I've got a few titles, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. We've made some immense progress here this morning. It feels like June all over again in some contexts, but I'm looking forward to engaging further. I move that we adjourn debate until 1:30 this afternoon.

**The Speaker:** I'll clarify from the Deputy Government House Leader that he's adjourning the House until 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:47 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 8, 2019

Day 24

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
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Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henda (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
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Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
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Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 8, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Ivy Mills. We would invite all members of the Assembly to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it is my absolute honour and pleasure to introduce to all of you this fine afternoon – from the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods please welcome l'école Frère Antoine Catholic school.

Hon. members, I know that many of you will be aware that from time to time I mention the hundreds and hundreds of people following along at home. Today it's my absolute pleasure to introduce to you virtually the staff and grade 6 students, some 500 of them, joining us live online from the C.W. Perry middle school in Airdrie. Thank you very much for tuning in.

Hon. members, as many of you are aware, over this past summer I put out a call to Albertans to contact my office if they would be willing to lead the Assembly in the singing of our national anthem. This afternoon I was so pleased to welcome our very first anthem singer this sitting, a 13-year-old from Morinville public school – she's a student there – Ms Ivy Mills. She is accompanied by her parents, Kimberley and Warrant Officer Nathaniel Mills. Singing is a huge part of Ivy's life. She has a keen interest in politics. It will only be a few years now until she has my job. Having served as the school president, she has sung at various talent shows, school assemblies, events, Remembrance Day ceremonies. Hon. members, please join me in thanking Ivy for singing for us today.

Also in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon: it's my absolute honour and pleasure to introduce the wife of the Minister of Indigenous Relations, Rose Wilson; their daughter June Boyda; and granddaughters Ariana and Megan Boyda. Welcome.

Also, guests of the Minister of Indigenous Relations: they will be joining us as they arrive here this afternoon, but I wanted to take the opportunity and welcome Grand Chief Arthur Noskey, Chief William Morin, Stephen Buffalo, Calvin Helin, and Herb Lehr to the Assembly as they arrive a little bit later.

Also, it's my pleasure to introduce to all members of the Assembly guests of the Minister of Advanced Education: Jon Mastel, Jon Bilodeau, and Emmanuel Barker.

## Statement by the Speaker

### Members' Statements Rotation

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before Members' Statements begins, I would like to remind all members that the amendments to the standing orders that were approved by the Assembly with the passage of Government Motion 30 this morning include an amendment regarding members' statements. As members are aware, there will now be the opportunity to make an additional three members' statements each sitting day for a total of nine members' statements each day. The duration of each statement continues to be a maximum of two minutes.

My office will provide you all with a document from the House leaders confirming the agreement on the new Members' Statements rotation to reflect this change, which I will table later today at the appropriate time in the daily Routine. An updated projected sitting days calendar will be e-mailed to all members later today, which includes the new Members' Statements rotation. For members' information, this afternoon private members of the government caucus will be entitled to six members' statements, and members of the Official Opposition will be entitled to three members' statements.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a statement to make.

### Health Care System

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last three months I've had the opportunity to speak with health care workers across Alberta, and wherever I go – Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Calgary, or Lethbridge – I've heard the same thing: resources are stretched thin, and workers are afraid.

What are they afraid of? This government and their plans for our health care system. Nurses, paramedics, lab technicians, ER doctors, health care aides: they're all deeply concerned about how the UCP's plan to introduce more American-style health care while cutting funding for key supports is going to affect their ability to do their jobs and provide quality patient care. Workers have told me how their departments and facilities are already reducing staff on shift and leaving positions unfilled as they anticipate cuts because when demand is rising and funding remains the same, that is a cut. They've told me how when staff call in sick, their shifts go uncovered, how they're burning out and morale is dropping as they're forced to make painful decisions about which patient's care is most urgent from one moment to the next.

This, Mr. Speaker, is the legacy of years of Conservative tinkering with and underinvestment in health services. Our government reversed plans for further cuts and maintained stable, predictable funding while keeping a reasonable cap on growth. As a result, as columnist Keith Gerein noted, "Alberta's health system... enjoyed one of its most uninterrupted periods of stability." We were starting to turn the corner after years of ideologically driven chaos, uncertainty, and roller coaster funding from Conservatives. The UCP seems intent on driving us right back, suggesting front-line workers are lazy, entitled, and overpaid while breaking their contracts and threatening to roll back their salaries, making short-sighted cuts to funding for preventative supports and cancelling badly needed infrastructure without consultation.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve better than simply resurrecting tired plans for American-style health care that have been rejected time and again, and all of my colleagues with the Alberta NDP are committed to standing by workers in our health care system to fight for that better.

### Yom Kippur

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have the opportunity to rise before you to speak on one of the holiest days of the Jewish faith, Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is certainly one of the most culturally significant holidays of the Jewish faith. Many secular Jewish people attend synagogue on Yom Kippur, even those who do not observe other religious holidays.

Despite being a day of rest, Yom Kippur is equally a day of atonement and sacrifice. Although this is one of the holiest days in the Jewish religion, it is not a time for celebration but a time for restraint and repentance. Yom Kippur imposes necessary restrictions on practitioners which include refraining from eating or drinking, refusing to wear leather shoes, avoiding bathing or washing oneself, not anointing self with one's fragrances or perfumes, and abstaining from marital relations. In fact, when the Hebrew name Yom Kippur is translated into English, it reveals the true purpose of this observance as a day of atonement.

1:40

Yom Kippur marks the conclusion of the 10 High Holy Days of Judaism, which commence with the observance of Rosh Hashanah. According to tradition God inscribes each person's fate for the coming year in a book titled the Book of Life, on Rosh Hashanah. However, this verdict is not finally sealed until the advent of Yom Kippur. Throughout the High Holy Days between, members of the Jewish faithful are given the chance to repent and to amend their divine or mortal wrongdoings, to seek redemption in the eyes of God. These High Holy Days are the only time of the year that many secular Jewish people will choose to attend synagogue, which is a testament to their importance.

For Jewish people within Alberta and across the world today is a time for rest, prayer, fasting, and atonement. In honour of this holy day our administration would like to extend our best wishes to everyone observing Yom Kippur. [Remarks in Hebrew]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie would like to make a statement.

### Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Women make up just over 50 per cent of the population, and they currently represent the highest enrolment in Canadian universities. However, women are underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, also known as STEM. One way to increase female enrolment in STEM studies is to encourage the women who are currently employed in the field to mentor and inspire young women like my daughter Isabelle to follow in their footsteps. Scholarships for women in these areas have also been proven to be effective in increasing interest in enrolment, but representation for women in engineering and computer science remains very low.

While low enrolment for women in STEM is a concern, so is the career path after graduation as only one-third of STEM graduates employed currently are women. To our government those numbers are unacceptable. The issue of female graduates not getting hired into the STEM workforce, although qualified for these roles, perpetuates the cycle of low engagement for women in STEM. This

leaves women that have STEM degrees to pursue careers in jobs which they are often overqualified for. These women work in jobs irrelevant to their specialty and many times lower paying.

Mr. Speaker, October is Women's History Month in Canada, and historically women have been underrepresented in STEM-related fields. It is time to change that. I am proud to say that our government, along with the Ontario provincial government, in July committed to enhance opportunities for women in STEM. Together we can encourage women to excel in STEM careers and get women working in the fields for which they have been previously overlooked.

Our government continues to work to grow Alberta's economy. As our economy expands, we have an opportunity to provide rewarding STEM career paths to more women. We will continue encouraging more women and girls to be involved in STEM fields and give them the support they need to be successful and secure meaningful employment within the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

This month I encourage all members to support women and girls in STEM and to support our government's initiative to encourage women in these critical areas of study. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Queue-jumping, backroom deals, pay-to-play: these terms evoke a visceral reaction because Albertans hate unfairness. We believe in level playing fields. The UCP is trying to tell us that everyone is in the same position, having to wait for the budget, but that isn't the case. First graders who need supports wait, police trying to maintain service levels wait, and diversification has to wait. These are the Albertans the UCP has told to wait. "Just wait," they say. They haven't decided yet if these Albertans are worth investing in.

Meanwhile they had \$4.5 billion to give away to profitable corporations immediately. The Walmarts of the world didn't have to wait. They didn't need to get in line with everyone else. The UCP got them their money right away, and they sent it straight out of the country. What's worse, not one job was created. So while rich friends and insiders already got their 4 and a half billion dollar gift months ago, everyone else has to wait. Schoolchildren have to wait, first responders have wait, and diversification has to wait. We wait to see who is deemed unworthy, which Albertans will pay the price for the UCP's gift to already profitable corporations.

But it didn't have to be this way. This is a result of a deliberate choice, a choice by the UCP to put the Walmarts of the world ahead of everyone else. If corporations were made to wait, the UCP would have been forced to explain their choices. So they got to go first while Albertans continue to wait. That doesn't sound like a level playing field to me.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Federal Energy Policies

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is under siege. Radical interest groups continue to work against Alberta's hard-working families in an effort to land-lock our resources. Environmentalists, funded with millions of dollars by foreign interest groups, continue to protest and block pipeline development with allies in the NDP government in British Columbia. But it doesn't end there. The federal Liberal government, under Justin Trudeau, has done nothing but aid in this assault.

To put this into perspective, I would like to quote the MP for Lakeland, Shannon Stubbs, in her response to Justin Trudeau's comments at a town hall: when Justin Trudeau "said that he wants to phase out the oil sands . . . Canadians should believe him." I couldn't agree more. Liberal governments have always targeted our energy industry and used that money to buy votes in eastern Canada. This election is no different. Regardless of all of this, Alberta continues to contribute greatly to our Confederation. We continue to support other provinces because we believe that all Canadians should prosper. The east continues to take billions of dollars from our province while supporting a government that has worked against us.

We need strong leadership in Ottawa that will fight for Alberta's interests, for our prosperity because a strong Alberta makes a strong Canada. We need a federal government that doesn't impose harmful policies like the tanker ban and a government that fights to expand access to markets so we can get fair value for our resources, the resources that all Canadians benefit from. We need a federal government that doesn't collapse under the pressure of radical interest groups and fake outrage culture, a government that is working for all Canadians, not just the ones that will vote for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has a statement.

### Indigenous Relations

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back to the Legislature, everyone. I want you to acknowledge the chiefs and leaders of the Métis community who have joined us here today and also my niece Isabel Feehan, who is with her class from l'école Frère Antoine. I begin by acknowledging that we're here on Treaty 6 land and the home of the Métis people.

Recently, while reviewing the Ministry of Indigenous Relations website, I discovered that the document Alberta's path to reconciliation, dated February 2019, has been removed. Given that this government has previously abandoned treaty land acknowledgements as a consistent practice and that this government abandoned funding for the indigenous climate leadership program, which had been accessed by all 48 First Nations and all eight Métis settlements, I was concerned that this government was intent on abandoning reconciliation as well.

I'd like to take a minute to highlight some of the programs that were identified in the removed document so that I can encourage the government not to abandon them. One removed section was the piece about including indigenous perspectives and concerns in government policy and practices. This includes reflecting indigenous contributions and history, including residential schools and the '60s scoop. I encourage the government not to abandon this. This section also included monies for clean water on First Nations, and I encourage the government not to abandon this.

Other sections include funding for women's shelters on reserves, funding for native friendship centres, framework agreements for treaties 7 and 8 and with the Métis Nation of Alberta, co-operative management agreements for new protected areas in Alberta such as the Castle parks, the establishment of an Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel, the creation of Indigenous Tourism Alberta, the inclusion of ceremonial spaces in courthouses in Red Earth Creek and Fort Vermilion, a program for the indigenous-owned and -operated housing in urban centres, and the training of 27,000 public service employees in indigenous history, traditions, and knowledge.

These are, of course, only a small sample of the hundreds of improved programs and services for indigenous people put in place

by the NDP government, and I encourage this government not to abandon these programs and the indigenous people of this province.

1:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we get to your favourite part of the day, I'd just like to take a very brief moment and acknowledge that we have eight new pages joining us here in the Assembly today. You may see a few additional pages as they'll take the next couple of days to mentor some of the new pages, so I trust that you will invite them to the Assembly and treat them with the respect that each and every one of them deserves.

With that said, we are at Oral Question Period.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Corporate Taxes and the Provincial Fiscal Position

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back, everybody.

The Premier claimed that his \$4.5 billion gift to big corporations would create jobs. Turns out that was all talk. Last month ATB Financial cut its GDP growth projections by half: construction down, consumer spending down, capital investment down. To the Premier: won't you just admit that your plan is not about creating jobs; it is about starving the budget and making regular Albertans pay for it?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, our plan is the one that was endorsed by the largest number of voters in Alberta history. That plan was the one rejected as the first and only one-term government in Alberta history. According to Professor Leach, a former adviser to the Premier, the job-creation tax cut is "good economic policy." According to Professor Dahlby cutting the tax "is a smart move that will prove highly beneficial to Alberta's economy, including employment prospects, over the next decade." We're not even one-quarter of the way towards delivering that job-creating tax cut. We're going to keep our word with Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ATB also reports that there is actually one thing that is up in Alberta under the Premier's big corporate handout: unemployment. Thirteen thousand jobs had been lost at the very time this Premier was promising Albertans to create new ones. Albertans were promised jobs by this Premier now, not 10 years from now. They shouldn't have to wait. When will the Premier admit that his plan was only ever about lining the pockets of wealthy shareholders?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, is it any wonder that with antibusiness, class-warfare, socialist rhetoric like that the NDP drove tens of billions of dollars of business investment out of this province and with it created a jobs crisis unprecedented since the 1930s? The reality is this: it's going to take us a long time to undo the damage of the NDP. But there's good news happening. Two weeks ago the largest investment announcement in Alberta history, \$16 billion from Telus that will create 5,000 jobs, a billion and a half dollar cogen facility from Suncor that will create hundreds of jobs, and many more such announcements on the . . .

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier knows that Telus actually made that announcement about 12 months earlier as well, but nonetheless the Premier does need to stop pretending. Manufacturing is down. Building permits are down. Small business



confidence, down. ATB Financial says the economy is, I quote, stuck. To the Premier. Your plan to take things from regular Albertans and give buckets of money to big corporations just isn't working. Why won't you stop picking on Albertans, go back to the drawing board, and come up with a real plan to create the jobs that are needed today not a decade from now?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that she continues to mislead Albertans about the revenue . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** . . . implications of the job-creation tax cut. It's not even a quarter of what she is suggesting, all of it embedded in our platform of commitments. Mr. Speaker, here's the reality. The NDP raised taxes on employers, and revenues went down from the business tax. Why? Because they scared billions of dollars of investment out of this province. They drove us into the jobs crisis. It'll take us some time to undo the damage imposed on our economy by the failure of socialist economics.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

### Energy Policies and Job Creation

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Energy minister said she was, quote, disappointed that this Premier's corporate handout wasn't creating jobs in oil and gas. It's clear these companies aren't using a single dollar of that gift to invest in Alberta or, more importantly, to hire more Albertans. Like the Energy minister, I too am disappointed. Unlike her, I'm not at all surprised. To the Premier. While your minister is moping, 13,000 people have lost their jobs in oil and gas. Why won't you scrap this failed experiment?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as the opposition leader knows and as was confirmed for me by major global investors in New York three weeks ago, one of the primary reasons for a continued lack of investment in this province is the lack of pipelines, driven by her friend and ally Justin Trudeau and her NDP partners in Ottawa. October 21 will be very important for the economic future of Alberta, so let me ask the leader of the NDP: who is she voting for in that election, her antipipeline ally Justin Trudeau or her antipipeline leader Jagmeet Singh?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm focused on Alberta, and I suggest the Premier ought to be, too.

Now, the Energy minister aptly described the Premier's corporate handout as a windfall for these companies, and then she went on to say that she's not concerned that oil and gas companies still aren't creating jobs or investing. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned, and Albertans are concerned. As the minister sits on her hands, 13,000 people have lost their jobs in the last two months in the oil and gas sector. So to the Premier: does your minister's indifference to creating jobs cause you concern, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the single greatest barrier to future economic and job growth in this province is federal policies that land-lock our energy, pin down and eventually kill our energy industry, both of which are the policies of the federal Liberal Party and the federal NDP. So when the opposition leader says she's standing up for Albertans, why doesn't she rise in her place and

stand up for Albertans by denouncing the plans of the Liberals and the NDP to land-lock and kill Alberta's energy industry?

**Ms Notley:** The other thing we've learned, Mr. Speaker, from the Premier is that yelling a lot clearly doesn't create jobs. We've actually lost jobs. Things are absolutely no better in the oil field. Oil drilling is down by over a third. Companies like Cenovus are scaling back investment, and RBC securities projects a cut to rig activity and well counts this year and next year. In short, there is certainly no corporate windfall for the actual workers in the oil patch. Job after job is being lost. To the Premier: when will you admit that you have a job, not somebody else who is not doing a job but you, and then do it?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we have been acting at lightning speed to recreate investor confidence in this province with the boldest moves on the job-creation tax cut, the red tape reduction action plan, and so much more. Fundamentally, to bring investment and jobs back to the energy sector requires market access, pipelines, energy corridors, which is why we need a change of government on October 21. Now, when asked who she's supporting on that day, she said that she wouldn't support the NDP because they've thrown workers under the bus, and then she corrected herself, saying that that wasn't quite right. So is it true, then, that she'll be supporting the Leap Manifesto, the keep-it-in-the-ground, the shut-down-Alberta strategy of the NDP?

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Corporate Taxes and the Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is working at lightning speed to distract from his failure to do a job. Let's recap: no GDP boost, no jobs, no new investment in oil and gas. Meanwhile Albertans are bracing for big cuts to services that they rely on while they pay more: more in insurance, more in tuition, more in school fees, and now more in child care. Premier, why won't you admit that your gift to your wealthy friends is only going to hurt regular Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** We continue to hear, Mr. Speaker, the politics of resentment, the class-warfare, soak-the-job-creators rhetoric from the NDP that helped to drive this province into an unprecedented recession, from which we are still fighting to recover. Does the NDP leader really believe that the recipe for job and economic growth is to continue raising taxes on businesses? Tax hikes actually reduced revenues. Will she ever have the honesty to stand up and admit that her tax hike on employers reduced government revenues?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will do is say that the Premier's handout to corporations is hurting Albertans, including seniors, in the quality of their care. Just yesterday one of those great job creators, which I'm sure – I'm sure – benefited from the corporate tax cut, turned around and handed out 50 pink slips to nurses. They told them they could then have their jobs back if they took an \$8-an-hour pay cut. Our parents and our loved ones are cared for by these 50 women. How does the Premier explain to them that they should be grateful for a corporate tax cut to the bosses who just fired them?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, in terms of the fiscal situation of the province, we're contending with what Dr. Janice MacKinnon, former NDP finance minister, characterized as a fiscal crisis. The

NDP drove this province into a sea of red ink, of debt, from \$13 billion to \$60 billion of debt. They left us on track for over \$100 billion in debt. [interjection] Oh, I hear the most unsuccessful, the most failed finance minister in Alberta history heckling, Mr. Speaker. There's a reason he's heckling. Albertans fired him and his government for driving us toward \$100 billion in debt, from which we must recover.

**Ms Notley:** The crisis, Mr. Speaker, has been created by the \$4.5 billion tax gift to big corporations. Do you know who's paying for it? Do you know who's paying for it? It's kids: classrooms with over 40 students, kids learning in the hallway, support staff already kicked to the curb, parents fundraising for lunch programs, and of course a curriculum from the 1980s. I can see why the Premier is ashamed to call our school system public. To the Premier: why is this government more interested in boosting foreign shareholder dividends than protecting the education of our kids?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the reason why this government has been left with the challenging task of bringing balance back to our finances is because the NDP was the most irresponsible government in handling our province's finances in our history. They left us on track to spending \$4 billion a year in interest payments on the debt to enrich bankers and bondholders instead of supporting schools, hospitals, and public services. We will not allow the NDP deficit and debt to jeopardize the future of public services in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is rising with a question.

#### **Vegreville Century Park Supportive Living Facility**

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, last year the previous Minister of Health directed AHS to withhold consent for major staffing changes at the Optima Living Century Park facility in Vegreville until such time as the operator had corrected several serious issues in their standard of care. I and many other Albertans were shocked to learn this week that more than 50 employees working at that facility have now been laid off. Can the current Minister of Health tell this House if this facility is delivering care to his satisfaction and why the staff who endured through those terrible working conditions now find themselves out of work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health is rising.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I share the concern that residents get the care that they need. That's my priority. I'm watching the situation closely, and I'm assured that there will be no interruption in care. Unlike the NDP, I don't believe in manipulating contracts for political purposes. Continuing care for decades has been publicly funded but delivered through a mix of public, not-for-profit, and, yes, private partners. The NDP just can't accept that because they can't handle the fact that there is any private partner in the system. I believe in making decisions which are based on the best interests of patients, not ideology.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This minister does believe in legislating to void contracts with workers.

Now, given that Optima Living has laid off these staff in Vegreville in order to replace them with out-of-province workers and the company has said that this heartless move, quote, offers the prospect of greater return to our shareholders, end quote, and as our

leader has already established, this government cares more, apparently, about those shareholders and protecting corporate interests than hard-working Albertans, to the minister: will you admit that you have no intention of sticking up for Alberta health care workers in Vegreville or, apparently, anywhere else in the province?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, there is a report that staff are being replaced with people from out of province, and it's simply false. It's sad that it's being perpetuated by the hon. member in this House. I understand from AHS that the new operator intends to hire most of the current staff. I also understand from AHS that there are vacancies in Vegreville and area, so there should be jobs for most or all of the staff. I'm not going to take lectures from the NDP about continuing care. They left us with a system where 16 per cent of our hospital beds are occupied by patients waiting for continuing care, and now we as a government have to fix it.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Now, Mr. Speaker, given that the layoff of these Vegreville staff is raising concerns of further American-style health care in this province and given that while Optima says that the staff that have been laid off can reapply, it is expected that they will be asked to take a pay cut of up to \$10 an hour – this is not right, but it is more of what we've seen from this government – to this minister: would you admit that, much like with your 4-and-a-half-billion-dollar giveaway to big corporations, you're prioritizing corporate profits over protecting workers and over the quality of patient care?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, AHS and my department are monitoring the transition closely to ensure that all residents are given the care that they need. That's my priority, not grandstanding about private providers in the system. The NDP ignored the real issues in the system for four years. They imposed their bias against private providers from one area to the other, from continuing care to labs to laundry. Our government has campaigned on the real issues in health care, starting with improving access to the system, including continuing care. That's my priority as minister.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock is rising with a question.

#### **Animal Rights Activist Protests at Farms**

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, September 2, a group of protestors invaded the privacy and interrupted the operations of a turkey farm near Fort Macleod in southern Alberta. The protestors would not leave and demanded a tour of the facility. In the end the farmer was forced to co-operate with the protestors, even to the point of giving them five turkeys. To the Minister of Justice: what is this government doing to protect farm families from these interruptions on their private property?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for this question. It was my honour last week, with the Premier and the minister of agriculture, to announce that we're going to be cracking down on illegal protestors that trespass on our farmers. This party on the government side here clearly stands with our farmers. We're not giving away five turkeys; we're sending a clear signal to environmental extremists that you do not trespass on farm property in Alberta. Our farmers are off limits. The NDP have been silent on this. We want to know: do they stand with farmers in Alberta?

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given that this turkey farm situation is not an isolated incident, with the Excelsior hog farm in B.C. having over 200 protestors interrupt operations on April 28 and hog farms in Ontario broken into and stolen from in March 2018, and these actions constitute crimes such as break and enter, criminal mischief, and theft, to name a few, to the same minister: how will this government be handling these offenders, and will this government consider imposing stricter punishments for these acts of eco-terrorism to protect our farmers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Yes, we will. Individuals that trespass on property will be facing up to \$25,000 in fines with the bill that we're going to be bringing forward this session. In addition to that, the organizations that help facilitate these crimes will face fines of up to \$200,000. Individuals also will face up to six months in jail. Our side of the Legislature is clear. We're standing with our farming communities. We're standing up for property rights. Why is the NDP so silent on this issue?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the safety and well-being of our farmers, farms, and livestock should be a top priority of this government and given that these offences not only harm the farmers but they also compromise the integrity of the affected livestock, to the minister of agriculture: what is the government doing to look out for the safety and well-being of our farms, farmers, and livestock?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to amending the Animal Health Act and introducing fines of up to \$15,000 for a first offence, \$30,000 for a second offence, and actually a year of jail time. The announcement that we were referencing earlier was a great announcement that happened outside of Lethbridge. Actually, it was the same day that we had a seven-years-in-the-making Cavendish announcement: hundreds of millions of dollars, hundreds of jobs that are actually coming to the Lethbridge area. It was actually great to be joined by the MLA for Lethbridge-East. It was unfortunate and noticed that the Member for Lethbridge-West was not there, but I'm assuming she was on her leadership tour. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, order.

2:10

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, students have been back to school for over a month now, many in overcrowded classrooms without enough support. Still, the UCP government won't make kids a priority. What is their priority? A \$4.5 billion giveaway to highly profitable corporations. That's right. The Premier, the Finance minister, and even the Education minister couldn't rush fast enough to push out a massive payday to their big business friends, and now kids are paying the price. How can the minister come back to this place without a budget and say that she's doing her job?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government remains committed to providing a world-class, high-quality education for all Alberta students. We owe it to parents and to children to get better outcomes for the money that is being spent on education. As we make funding decisions, we will be

looking through the lens of what is best for our children and what will actually improve student learning.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, while this minister waits, Mr. Speaker, there are 45 kids in a grade 5 French immersion class in a Calgary Catholic school. Given that the UCP government has chosen to hand out \$4.5 billion to already highly profitable corporations, what does the minister have to say to students, teachers, parents dealing with this overcrowding throughout Alberta schools because this minister chooses to wear a pin that says one thing but her actions clearly say that corporations come first?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Given that the previous . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Member LaGrange:** Given that the previous government brought their budget in on October 22 when they were elected, as we await our budget, which will come forward in a very few short weeks, school divisions are in the best position to comment on their individual budgets. This is just another example of the NDP's fear tactics. They were wrong on enrolment growth, they were wrong on nutrition, and they're wrong again. We're going to bring in a great budget.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the point of order is noted at approximately 2:13.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, giving random talking points and telling people to wait until Christmas before they actually find out how much money they get from their government is wrong. Given that the UCP blew a \$4.5 billion hole in their budget with corporate giveaways and given that this experiment hasn't resulted in a single new job but it has resulted in overcrowded classrooms, teachers getting laid off, longer bus rides, and kids with special needs having to pay the price for this minister's backwards priorities, why is the minister continuing to choose to put corporations over kids?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I might just caution all members that the use of preambles after question 4 isn't allowed.

The hon. Minister of Education has the call.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, we owe it to parents of children to get better outcomes for the money that we're spending. Alberta spends more on its education system than most provinces, but the results just aren't there. Again, I say this is just another example of your smear and fear. We are continuing to put children first. I am continuing to put children first and doing what's important and making things right for education.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen with a question.

### Municipal Funding

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the recent AUMA convention the Minister of Municipal Affairs warned local leaders of deep cuts to MSI and other provincial grants for local government in the budget. As one councillor put it, quote, it's not going to be pretty. End quote. That's what our municipalities get,

but big corporations get a \$4.5 billion gift from this Premier. To the minister: just how much money are you cutting from municipalities?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I just had to rise in response to remark on the phenomenal chutzpah of that member having the temerity to ask a question about spending restraint, all of it required to clean up the huge fiscal mess, the enormous hole that he dug this province into, racking up the biggest per capita deficit in the country, moving Alberta's debt from \$13 billion to \$60 billion, headed to \$100 billion. Every single dime of spending restraint by this government is ultimately the responsibility of that member and his gross fiscal irresponsibility.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My parents told me to stand up to bullies, and I will.

Given that recommendation 15 in the Premier's blue-ribbon panel report calls for the provincial government to "require municipalities to share more in the costs of major projects" and given that I don't see corporations paying their share for anything and instead are getting a handout from this Premier, to the minister: how high will municipal taxes have to be hiked to complete badly needed infrastructure projects?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the record of that member on corporate taxes was to drive down by billions of dollars the corporate tax revenues that were collected. How did he do it? He did it by raising the tax rates, by . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will have order. We heard the question; we'll hear the answer.

**Mr. Kenney:** He did it, Mr. Speaker, by giving effect to exactly the kind of antibusiness, job-killing rhetoric that he has just articulated all over again.

Mr. Speaker, I've met with mayors all across the province. They understand that we're all in this together. We are Team Alberta. Together we need to clean up the fiscal mess left behind by that member and his failed socialist policies.

**Member Ceci:** You know, corporations aren't all in this together. They're getting a \$4.5 billion gift from that Premier over there, Mr. Speaker.

Given that municipalities were close to signing a long-term financial deal with us when we were in government, Mr. Speaker, and given that this Premier rushed out to cut a deal with big corporations, to the minister: have you now cancelled discussions on a long-term financial deal with municipalities because of your corporate handout?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, they were close to signing an agreement. After four years they were just that close.

But you know why they didn't get a chance to keep running the clock? Because Albertans fired them. They fired them in part because they recognized that the record of that member was the record of the worst Finance minister in Alberta history. He drove down business tax revenues. His policies, his tax hikes killed tens of thousands of jobs. I can tell you that I've met with our mayors and many of our councillors, Mr. Speaker. They understand it. They understand that we cannot keep kicking the can down the road, that we have to pay our bills. We can't live off our credit card. We've got to make up for the NDP fiscal mess.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East has a question.

### Heritage Savings Trust Fund

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The heritage savings trust fund was meant to save for the future, to strengthen or diversify the economy, and to improve the quality of life of Albertans. Returns from this fund are intended to fund valuable programs and services, including health care, education, and research. Unfortunately, lack of contributions and consistent withdrawals have stifled the growth of the fund. To the Minister of Finance: is there a plan to resume investing in this fund so we can be proud of what we are passing on to future Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The best thing we can do for the next generation is to deliver a debt-free province. This government will be rolling out a budget that will have a clear fiscal path to balance the budget within our first term, and that is the best thing we can do for the next generation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that we now have a large amount of debt that must be dealt with, which was recklessly accumulated by the previous NDP government, and given that it is prudent to invest only so long as the return on your investment exceeds the cost of your debt, can the minister please inform the Assembly on the performance of the heritage trust fund in recent years and also comment on the cost of carrying our current debt?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The heritage fund is contributing positively to our province's future and last year earned an 8 per cent return. Our debt at the end of last year, however, was \$60 billion, caused by the excessive spending of the members opposite. Last year Alberta spent \$1.9 billion in debt-service costs. That's \$5 million a day. Continuing down this path is unsustainable. Our government will chart a new course, a course of sound, responsible fiscal management.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Given that Alberta is a province and part of the federation of Canada and that Norway has a different capacity as it is a country and given that the Alberta heritage savings trust fund is approximately \$18 billion while Norway's oil fund now has over a trillion dollars in assets, can the minister explain for the benefit of Albertans why it is that Alberta is unable to save at the same rate as Norway despite our natural resources and the fact that we are a larger country? [interjection]

2:20

**The Speaker:** Order.  
The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, again, thank you to the member for the question. The key difference between Alberta and Norway is that Albertans contribute to a larger federation. In fact, Alberta's net contribution to the federal treasury in the last decade was \$210 billion. Now, we're proud to be the economic engine of the nation, but our federal government absolutely has to

get their act together to improve energy market access for this province and the nation if we're going to continue to generate the wealth and make the contributions that we have to the federation as well as to the next generation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Rural Crime Prevention and Policing

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've recently seen documents showing that this UCP government is considering cuts to rural police funding of up to 70 per cent. This is pretty hypocritical from a government that campaigned on being tough on rural crime. But now it seems that priorities have changed. Big corporations get a massive handout, and the communities are left to fend for themselves. To the Minister of Justice: can you please explain when exactly your government decided that fighting crime was no longer a priority?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. We are dedicated to more funding for police officers. I've had the opportunity over the last month to meet with over 1,000 Albertans, all the way up from Fairview to Drayton Valley, all the way down to Coaldale and Cheadle. We have been very, very clear. We are going to fully implement our campaign commitments to address rural crime. Also, I'd like to ask the other member over here: why are they against 500 new police officers for rural Alberta? Why are they against 500 police officers? We need a clear answer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that it seems this government will download the cost of rural policing onto taxpayers at a cost of up to \$400 a year and given that we know that their \$4.5 billion giveaway has not created jobs for hard-working Albertans, to the minister: how exactly are Albertans living in rural communities supposed to be able to afford to pay for the police he was supposed to give to make their rural communities safe?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we have been crystal clear in our commitment to have more policing. We committed to having a discussion, in consultation with rural municipalities, around police costing. I'd like to share with the hon. member what justice right now is like in rural Alberta. I had an individual. He'd been broken into four times in the last three months, stopped reporting the incidents. I've met in every single town hall that I go to people that have stopped reporting the crimes. We're in a crisis mode right now in rural Alberta. We don't need more politics. We need support for 500 more police officers.

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, rural Albertans want action, not talk. Given that our government invested \$10 million to combat rural crime and that the RCMP credited this investment with an average 9 per cent drop in rural crime and given that the UCP voted against this strategy, to the minister: can you please explain to Albertans why there's plenty of cash for big corporations but not a single dollar to keep our communities safe?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we said: more for policing. We're going to be investing more to address rural crime. The one thing that I'd like to highlight for this hon. member is that in going to every single one of these communities, that she did not visit, they said clearly in every single town hall that after calling for four years, asking for justice in Alberta, asking for their issues to be taken seriously, they finally have a Justice minister that's come out to talk

to them. We're taking their ideas forward. Jumbo Valley didn't happen by chance. It happened because this government is listening. More to come.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has a question.

### Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry Final Report

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been 18 weeks since the release of the final report from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. More than 2,380 people participated in the inquiry, with more than 270 survivors and family members sharing their stories in sessions, and hundreds more provided written or artistic statements to the inquiry. Has the Minister of Indigenous Relations read this report, and what is his reaction?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that question. This is a very important issue to me, and I have read the report in its entirety, along with our minister of culture. We're working together on this. It was an honour to represent the province at the closing ceremony of the final report into the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I can tell you that I have reviewed that report, and we're working on developing calls to justice. Our government is committed to moving towards true reconciliation. True reconciliation . . .

**An Hon. Member:** What does that mean?

**Mr. Wilson:** You'll see.

It will empower indigenous Albertans to take charge of their own destiny. We have and we will continue to engage with indigenous communities and leaders across Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the inquiry's report does include 231 calls for justice – and many of these are directed specifically at government or government agencies such as health care, education, and police – which of these calls for justice will the minister be prioritizing, and when will he present the plan for this House to implement?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, thank you for that question because this is such an important issue. I had the privilege of attending the Sisters in Spirit day and accepting a red dress from the Awo Taan Healing Lodge. It's an important first step in working with key, on-the-ground services that help indigenous women. There are many practical calls to justice, and I'll be starting with the ones in section 15. It's the part that can be done immediately such as developing a knowledge and a base, speaking out against violence, and I encourage all Albertans to do their part in combating violence against all women.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the inquiry's report made prominent use of the word "genocide" to describe how colonial structures lead directly to increased rates of violence, death, and suicide in indigenous populations, does the minister

support the use of the word “genocide”? Minister, this is simply a yes or no question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was grateful and honoured by the families and communities and organizations that participated during the inquiry. I met and I connected with several of the families who presented in Ottawa. I sat down with a woman who had lost her family, and she asked me what I would do. I told her that I would work on this, and I have started working on this. You’ve probably seen some of the events I’ve been attending along with a lot of our members here. We take this matter very seriously, and we’re going to continue to work on this. Myself and the minister of culture and status of women are working on it right now.

### Choice in Education

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Calgary-Falconridge parents are especially concerned about children’s education. Charter schools have proven a very successful model for improving student achievement and catering to individual students’ needs. Because there are none nearby, parents in my riding are willing to send their kids across town to gain access to charter schools. To the Minister of Education: can you please explain to this House how our government intends to protect choice in education, including the ability to access charter school education in Alberta?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, hon. member, for that question. Alberta has a very long and successful tradition of supporting school choice, and our government is committed to preserving and protecting educational choice. Our government is committed to introducing the choice in education act, which will affirm that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for her comments. Given that charter schools provide customized options to children with specific needs and learning styles and given that most parents in my riding cannot afford private options, especially when their children may have special needs, can the minister commit to allowing more charter schools in Calgary specifically to address the desires of parents in northeast Calgary?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you again for that question. Charter schools play an important role in Alberta’s educational system by offering more choice to students and to their parents. When it was brought into force, the Education Act lifted the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in this province. Charter school applications will continue to be assessed using the same criteria. Need must be demonstrated by the community for a charter school to be considered, and we are looking at that for you.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that our government committed to restoring choice in education and given that our government maintains that parents are a child’s first teachers, not the government bureaucrats, can the minister please explain how our government is allowing parents to be involved in their children’s education?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the MLA for that question. When introduced, the choice in education act will propose that the preamble of the Education Act include recognition of section 26(3) of the universal declaration of human rights, which states that “parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.” Our government values the role parents play as the primary educator of their children and intends to protect that relationship. I heard it loud throughout the province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a question.

### Member for Calgary-East’s Committee Appointment

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta heritage savings trust fund manages more than \$18 billion worth of assets on behalf of Albertans. AIMCo provides the day-to-day management, and final responsibility for the fund sits with the Minister of Finance. The standing committee of the Legislature also provides oversight for the management of this money on behalf of Albertans. This House was asked to approve the Member for Calgary-East as a member of this committee. Does the Minister of Finance believe that this member is qualified for this role, and if so, why?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it is outrageous to see that the NDP still has not learned the lesson that Albertans taught them back in April in that they do not accept the fear-and-smear politics that this opposition continues to do in this Chamber. The hon. member they refer to is a member in good standing in this Chamber and has every right to sit on a standing committee. It’s unfortunate that the opposition wants to use this in their time in question period, which is valuable, rather than focusing on issues that are important to Albertans. It’s ridiculous behaviour, and let me be clear: we will not be bullied by the NDP.

**Ms Sweet:** Given that the MLA for Calgary-East had his office raided by the RCMP just days before the spring election and given that the MLA has been linked to an ongoing voter fraud scandal involving the UCP leadership campaign of this current Premier, to the minister: are you aware that the Member for Calgary-East is currently facing an Election Commissioner investigation for bribery and forgery and a separate criminal investigation for fraud? If you are aware, why do you see it fit to put him in charge of the province’s trust fund?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, when that party was in power just a short while ago, some of the members, who may even sit in the benches right now – I don’t know – were accused of serious sexual allegations. Their leader at the time hid that from Albertans and protected those individuals rather than coming clean and making it clear to Albertans where those individuals stood. In fact, they hid it from them even during the election so that people could not make a decision inside their constituencies.

In regard to the Member for Calgary-East, his constituents spoke loud and clear. That makes him qualified to sit in this place, and he will sit on the standing committee as per the fact that they sent him here to serve.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Government House Leader just said a few minutes ago that he thought this was below the decorum, it's amazing that he decided to bring that up.

Anyway, given that the investigation into fraud during the UCP leadership campaign is far from over and given that the Member for Calgary-East has refused to talk to the media or come clean about his role in this scandal, will the minister please commit today to keeping the MLA for Calgary-East away from the province's coffers, or does the corruption run so deep in the UCP that there's simply no one else that can sit on this committee?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, will the members across the way, will the leader of the NDP stand up and tell us which one of her members that are currently inside this House has been accused of serious sexual misconduct? Will she stand up and explain that once and for all instead of trying to play this game inside this Chamber? The opposition wants to make accusations about other people there but don't like it when it's thrown back at them. That's the point. It's disappointing to see the way that they act in their capacity as the Official Opposition. It's unbecoming of the Official Opposition. So stand up and tell us which one of you guys has been accused of sexual misconduct.

### Tax Credit Programs

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, this summer Alberta businesses learned that the government had, without notice, frozen funding for the Alberta investor tax credit and the interactive digital media tax credit. This freeze came as a shock to many in the industry because they were helping Alberta businesses grow and create jobs here in Alberta. Now the government has pulled the rug out from under many businesses in the tech sector just as they were starting to gain momentum. To the minister of economic development and trade: are these programs being cut to help pay for your government's massive \$4.5 billion corporate giveaway? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development and trade.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you for the question. You know, Mr. Speaker, prior to the NDP bringing in these tax credits, Alberta competed. In fact, we didn't just compete; we thrived. But then the NDP increased taxes on business, they brought in the carbon tax, they drove investment out of Alberta, and then they had to bring in these tax credits. All tax credits are under review as we're going to be heading into a challenging budget. We are reviewing the Alberta investor tax credit along with all tax credits to ensure they align with our bold vision for renewing Alberta's economy.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, given that this minister is supposed to be responsible for supporting Alberta job creators and given that the tax credit programs introduced by our government were generating an economic return for our province, helping companies grow in scale and compete, and given that other provinces have similar tax credits, which have helped them diversify their economies, to the minister: will you apologize to the tech companies for leaving them in the lurch and forcing them out of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development and trade.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We take no lessons in growing the economy from the party that increased taxes on job creators and, again, drove investment out of our province, all the while putting

us on track for \$100 billion in debt. The previous government was fiscally irresponsible and left tens of billions of dollars for future generations to pay back. Our government will not leave a bill for our children and grandchildren. We will create the best microeconomic conditions for businesses to thrive.

**Mr. Bilous:** Given that your microeconomic conditions have created zero jobs, given that I met with the minister of economic development and trade and urged her to reinstate these programs but she didn't budge, and given that all signs of economic growth in this province have completely stalled, to the minister: We need these tax credit programs to help spur investment and put Albertans to work. Don't take my word for it; take the businesses'. Will you stand up today in this House and commit to reinstating these tax credits, and if not, why not?

**Ms Fir:** Mr. Speaker, our government's first priority is getting Albertans back to work and renewing Alberta's economy. We have already taken measures to ensure that Alberta is the best place in Canada to invest or start a business with our introduction of the job-creation tax cut, which gives Alberta the lowest tax rate on job creators in Canada and will eventually give Alberta a lower corporate tax rate than 44 U.S. states. [interjections] I understand that the members opposite are still bitter that Albertans fired them, but trying to drown out what we have to say with their jeers and heckling is not going to work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has risen with a question.

### Natural Gas Industry Competitiveness

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Leduc-Beaumont has a very young and fast-growing population that relies on our oil and gas sector for employment and opportunity as much as anywhere else in the province. A number of natural gas companies have been doing business in my constituency for years through boom-and-bust cycles of the energy economy and through the highs and lows of volatile pricing. To the minister: how do you plan to address the volatile prices in Alberta in order to create certainty for investors and producers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has been working collaboratively with the industry to find solutions that will address the systematic issues facing our natural gas sector. Unlike the previous government, that ignored this important sector, our government is going to stand up and represent natural gas producers. This fall the Canada Energy Regulator approved TC Energy to revise its natural gas storage protocol, which is going to allow more gas into storage, will help with balance in the system, and deal with volatile prices on AECO.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Natural gas royalties can be one of the largest sources of royalty revenue for the government of Alberta, but given that in order for this to be a source of wealth and prosperity for our province, we need to get a fair value and given that Alberta continues to practically give away our natural resources, with the lack of market access as one of the main contributors to low prices, how does the minister plan on expanding the number of markets we have access to so that we can continue to sustainably invest in the services that both the constituents of Leduc-Beaumont and Albertans need?

2:40

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, Alberta is blessed to have an abundance of natural gas, and our government is working on an actionable plan that is going to unblock natural gas shipments and support LNG exports. Over the summer my office has met with international stakeholders in Houston, and next month we're going to be meeting with more international investors so we can discuss how we can get Alberta's natural gas to international markets.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has seen investments in our energy sector plummet over the last four years due to low prices and poor policy decisions. Given that the Natural Gas Advisory Panel report outlined 48 recommendations aimed at reducing the challenges facing the natural gas sector and given that these recommendations could greatly improve the viability and competitiveness of our natural gas sector, to the minister: when will we be getting an update on the status of these recommendations, and when will the natural gas sector begin seeing the positive impacts of its implementation?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, I view myself as Alberta's natural gas salesman. Our government was elected on an overwhelming mandate to stand up and represent all Albertans, and that includes the natural gas producers. That's exactly what we intend to do. This government has made tremendous efforts over the last several months to take action that is already making a difference to our natural gas producers. We've implemented recommendation 7 of the Natural Gas Advisory Panel report, that's going to work on balance on the pipeline and improve the volatility of the AECO. We will continue to update the House as we make progress.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements. If you have other meetings or appointments, I encourage you to exit the Chamber expeditiously.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a statement to make.

### Teachers

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As another school year is upon us, it's my privilege to rise today and recognize our teachers here in our great province of Alberta. The teachers in our schools are more than just educators. They pass along their knowledge and wisdom, becoming mentors to our kids and young people as they grow and develop.

While I believe that families are key to a child's upbringing, it does, after all, take a village to raise a child. Teachers often become friends to the students they teach and role models for them to look up to. I'm sure that we all can look back and think of several teachers that made a positive and memorable impact on our lives. Personally, I had Mr. Thompson, Mr. Murray, Mr. Myslicki, and Ms McLellen. They taught, coached, and took time out of their personal days to help me out along the way.

Many parents get exhausted in organizing a kid's birthday party with even just eight to 12 kids for a few hours. From what I'm told, it's kind of like being a teacher except that they do it for around 30 kids in their classrooms seven hours a day, five days a week, and throughout the school year.

And, of course, life as a teacher does not end with the bell at the end of the day. Many of our teachers find themselves at home in the evenings marking school work and preparing for upcoming classes. In addition to their positions as educators, our teachers take time to act as liaisons in extracurricular activities and supervisors for those types of clubs. These things enhance a student's experience at school and make schools a more enjoyable place for many.

It's my privilege to stand and recognize these great educators for their hard work and their dedication to the learning of future generations. To those that taught me, who teach students now, and who dedicated their lives to teaching, a heartfelt thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane is rising.

### Federal Carbon Tax

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're in the middle of a federal election, and this is one of the most important elections for Alberta and western Canada in recent memory. I want to remind you why I believe it's prudent we continue to fight the federal government's attempt to implement the disastrous carbon tax system on Albertans, which is devastating to Alberta's economy.

Proponents of a carbon tax suggest the purpose is to change behaviours to reduce dependence on GHG-emitting fossil fuel sources. Well, this is not even close to the truth. The carbon tax is not about the environment. It is merely a way for the federal Liberals to mask their incompetence and fiscal mismanagement. If you disagree with the Liberal view of the carbon tax, you're dismissed, deemed uneducated, a lesser person, or a denier. The carbon tax was created to fill the gaping budget hole they created by refusing to bring their own fiscal house in order, a fiscal problem that would have been avoided if they hadn't ruined western Canada's prosperity with their energy-killing policies. Thirty dollars per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> is only the beginning; \$50, \$100, \$200, and beyond is on the horizon.

The carbon tax does nothing but hurt society without offering any concrete solutions for real emissions reductions. The UCP government of Alberta will implement our TIER plan, which is focused on technology and measurable emissions reductions in industrial sectors. It is a plan that will actually help the environment rather than tax everyday working people, that simply encourages more fiscal mismanagement by the Liberals.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We will not be pushed around by disconnected elites who can afford to buy carbon credits for their planes while average citizens struggle to afford basic needs. We will stand up for Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### National Catholic Health Care Week

**Mr. Williams:** Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize Catholic health week. Catholic health care's origins in North America date back four centuries, with the arrival of the nuns and sisters to the New World. For many decades the church was the only health care provider tending to the sick and needy. One hundred and fifty-six years ago, in November 1863, the Sisters of Charity, also known as the Grey Nuns, for whom the hospital in Edmonton is named, cared for the first patients in St. Albert, many of whom were First Nation peoples. Today is marked by the start of Catholic health week in Alberta, back in 1863, and that's a full 42 years before we became a province.

[The Speaker in the chair]



In our province Catholic health care continues to flourish today, and there's no debate that Catholic women of faith laid the foundation of a modern health care system. Catholic health care starts with a spiritual purpose, a calling to serve each and every person with the afforded dignity that they have, being created in the image and likeness of God.

This year we are celebrating the first-ever National Catholic Health Care Week with 124 national health care providers across Canada, October 6 to 12. In Alberta we are recognizing and celebrating the value and impact of Catholic health care as well as the legacy and the visionary courage of the founding sisters who cared for the most destitute among us for many years. Today over 15,000 Covenant Health care staff, physicians, and nurses, together with volunteers and other Catholic health care providers across the province, are privileged to carry on this legacy as key partners in our health system, serving people of all different backgrounds, faiths, and circumstances.

I pray humbly that all members of this House will join me in recognizing the tremendous contributions of the church to our modern health care system and recognize Catholic health care's legacy for all Albertans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act it is my honour as the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to table the appropriate number of copies of the committee's report on the 2017 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate. Copies of the report are available through the committee office and online.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

#### Bill 14 Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

It's truly an honour to present this bill before the guests we have in the gallery here today, and I want to say in their presence that our government understands that for far too long the first peoples of this province have been pushed to the margins of Alberta's economic prosperity. By enabling the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation as a steward of the Crown, we are announcing our intent to remedy this wrong.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a tabling.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of the tabling of a document from the RCMP of Alberta. "The Alberta RCMP are continuing to investigate in relation to the 2017 UCP

leadership campaign, specifically as it relates to identity fraud," as of August 15, 2019.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members with tablings? The Member for St. Albert has risen with a tabling.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two. The first one is from *Chatelaine*, and it's entitled What You Need to Know about the New Canadian Climate Change Report: In Short, There's Never Been a More Crucial Time to Take Action.

The second one is a *Globe and Mail* editorial entitled Jason Kenney Has a Climate Plan – It Just Isn't a Very Good One.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members will all be aware that no matter what the context is, we are not to use the names of other members inside the Assembly.

Are there other tablings today?

Well, the good news is that I have a number of tablings to make. Pursuant to the Child and Youth Advocate Act I am tabling six copies of the Mandatory Reviews into Child Deaths report for the period of October 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

I am also tabling six copies of the House leaders' agreement regarding members' statements rotation, dated October 7, 2019.

In my capacity as the committee chair, pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act, I would like to table with the Assembly six copies of the following orders approved at the August 6, 2019, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: one, Members' Allowances Amendment Order 35, being Order MSC 04/19; Executive Council Salaries and Members' Services Committee Amendment Order 1, being Order MSC 05/19; Members Committee Allowances Amendment Order 14, being MSC 06/19; Transportation Amendment Order 15, being Order MSC 07/19. Copies of all the orders were distributed to members on August 9, 2019.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of Hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, responses to questions raised by Ms Renaud, hon. Member for St. Albert; Ms Hoffman, hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora; Mr. Eggen, hon. Member for Edmonton-North West; Ms Phillips, hon. Member for Lethbridge-West; and Ms Pancholi, hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, on June 18, 2019, Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance 2019-20 interim supply estimates debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and the Opposition House Leader has risen.

### Point of Order Allegations against a Member

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), (j). I'd like to read the standing order into *Hansard*: "(h) makes allegations against another Member; (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member; (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." At approximately 1:56 today the Premier, in his response to the Leader of the Official Opposition, accused the Leader of the Official Opposition of misleading Albertans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you will recall – and if not, I have pulled a ruling from June 12, 2019, where at that time: "What we saw today

was the Leader of the Official Opposition very clearly imply that the Government House Leader was saying untrue things, which, in fact, is unparliamentary.” You then, Mr. Speaker, went on to ensure that – and I believe it was myself that apologized on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition. Interestingly, not five minutes later the Government House Leader behaved in a manner not becoming of a member when he specifically used the word we all know is unparliamentary and wasn’t just skirting the rules but, in fact, broke the rules when he said, “That member, who lied about the biggest tax increase.”

The Premier did not refer to the opposition as misleading the House. Your rulings over the last six months have been very, very clear that that word, although, I’m sure, not a preferred choice in your mind, Mr. Speaker, is not ruled unparliamentary and passes the smell test, but when a member accuses another member of misleading the House, it is, in fact, unparliamentary. The Premier did refer to the Leader of the Official Opposition as misleading Albertans, and for that reason, I’m requesting that the Premier or the Government House Leader apologize and withdraw that comment.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I do so without reservation. As a way of explanation but not excuse, I had 20 years of practice in a different Legislature, where the use of that phrase was accepted, so I must unlearn 20 years of that practice and will do so. I withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

Hon. members, we consider the point of order dealt with and concluded.

Members, we are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader is rising, perhaps for a request for unanimous consent.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to request unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 77(1) in order to proceed to second reading of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 14

#### Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations has risen.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to move second reading of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

It’s a great honour to begin the fall season of this Legislature with this bill to create a new organization that will help indigenous communities own and invest in major natural resource development projects.

I’m grateful for the hard work and thoughtfulness that has brought us from a campaign commitment to legislation in just a few short months. To the nearly 200 indigenous small, medium-, and large-sized businesses and financial leaders who met with me this summer to discuss the direction the AIOC should take, please know: I heard you, and I thank you. Thank you also to those experts across government who have come together to form the AIOC secretariat. It would have been impossible to be here today without your input. It has been a true collaboration and a pleasure to work

with you all. Your knowledge has helped to define what the initial idea of an indigenous opportunity corporation could be. It has also been my pleasure to hear the visions of groups from all over Alberta for this one-of-a-kind initiative. Finally, I’m thankful for my government colleagues and staff, who’ve offered sound advice along the way.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Our collective effort has a critical purpose. Together we are realizing a long-needed commitment to make life better for indigenous peoples of Alberta. Throughout the summer I visited indigenous communities all across the province. This is familiar ground for me, Mr. Speaker, having lived most of my life near the First Nations of Maskwacis. I grew up alongside indigenous friends, played with them, sometimes fought alongside of them, and I came to realize that people saw us differently and expected different things of us.

Now, summer, as you know, is the powwow season, which brings together families, friends, and communities in celebration. Mr. Speaker, it was such a privilege to join communities during their celebrations, to see the joy of people reuniting, expressing their cultures and language. I also learned that powwow is a time for healing. Song and dance help people to alleviate sorrows and deal with grief, and they’re also meant to send healing to people throughout the world.

It’s hard to believe there was a time when the powwow, this act of companionship and generosity, was outlawed in Canada, but there is a long legacy in this country of disenfranchising indigenous people from their identities and from opportunities to benefit, just as the rest of Alberta has. I wish I could say that this is a thing of the past and that systems and policies and practices are fair. We can only get there deliberately.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that there is a better future for indigenous people, and that future depends on us choosing to take real action. Real action started early in this mandate. We have made it clear from the very start that we would abandon symbolic gestures and get right to the practical solutions of indigenous peoples, from the First Nations summit Premier Kenney hosted in June, the first meeting of provincial and First Nations seniors and leaders in years; to my Calgary Stampede as Indigenous Relations minister, where I visited some of the legacy families who had been part of the Indian village for over 80 years; to my visit to Paddle Prairie, a Métis settlement recovering after the wildfires this summer; and finally, a little more than two weeks ago, signing the protocol agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy at the incredible Blackfoot Crossing historic park.

We have been present, Mr. Speaker. We have listened, and we do things differently. We commit to be partners in prosperity. Being partners is a balance, or an equation. If you think about a scale, you can imagine each side being level with the other. The reality is that too many indigenous communities are just not there yet. They are dealing with more obstacles than a lot of Canadians face. I’ll get to that in a moment. I want you to think again for a moment about that image of the scale. This time, imagine that one side has all the weight stacked on it and even has some extras on the table. My point is that we have more options for a balance available to us than we are currently using in our government-to-government relationships. It’s up to us, that side with the extra weights, to think differently about what fairness looks like so people realize the potential of indigenous peoples. We need to listen, and we need to act. We need to be willing to help remove some of those obstacles that indigenous communities face.

Our outreach is only part of the equation. In every community, in every meeting I have heard the will and the desire for progress. Some communities have benefited from the resources around them. Those communities are on their way. They have what they need to succeed. Others fare less well. Mr. Speaker, the tour of 23 communities and numerous engagements I have participated in this summer showed me that economic disparity is way too real. Every year communities face funding threats that put them at serious risk. Too often government solutions have been about pumping money into communities instead of working with them to develop capacity in business, business acumen, and to remove the obstacles that put them at risk in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, communities have young, talented workforces. What they need is the capital to get started. I would like to give an example. I've been lucky enough to be able to pursue major business interests throughout my career, taking on opportunities that I couldn't have imagined, and I fared well. I've been able to apply for loans and enter into partnerships that allowed me to create opportunities for other people through employment or training. When I travel down the highways to get home to my family, a family of people who are thriving and able to pursue their dreams with ease, I can trust that the government will act when I let them know that something needs to be better. As a citizen of an exceptional country like this, I expect nothing less.

Yet the first people to call this land home live in a different reality. Unfortunately, many struggle to find safe ways to get home from their lands. We travelled on First Nations roads this year. There were washouts this spring. I saw crumbling schools, fire halls with decades-old equipment, and in some cases First Nations with zero social support and infrastructure. What I heard over and over is that if First Nations could generate local revenue, they would begin to return those dollars into social infrastructure for the descendants of the First Peoples, who settled this area eons ago. To this day they struggle through the layers of government to get the basics they need, let alone major business opportunities. In some cases social infrastructure like access to health care and quality education is held together by layers of red tape.

It is here, in substandard expectations for indigenous people, that one of the most glaring faults in our treatment of indigenous populations is most exposed. Mr. Speaker, it's too common and too easy to think of the challenges many indigenous communities face as someone else's problem. We have a moral obligation to do better, to use the resources and abilities we have at hand to remove the barriers that have kept indigenous communities from achieving better outcomes. We can balance that equation. We need to start by righting some wrongs because that legacy of mistreatment I talked about earlier is still alive and well.

Mr. Speaker, indigenous communities don't own the land they live on, and because they lack ownership, they're not able to put up collateral for major loans. Policies like that keep communities dependent on government money instead of exercising their entrepreneurial spirit and their will to thrive. Indeed, these communities were made up of Alberta's first entrepreneurs, who built strong communities within which to guide future generations, and we want to reignite that spirit. We want to see what comes with people having the means to act on their own aspirations. Sure, you'll see financing options for small loans for small business available across the country, but you will not see options for indigenous communities to gain the capital they need to buy into major projects.

What we are proposing in Alberta is a first-of-its-kind solution in Canada. The AIOC will backstop up to \$1 billion in loan guarantees, and if passed, this will allow the AIOC to work with other financial tools like equity loans. This is a game changer, Mr.

Speaker. With options like these, more indigenous communities will be able to invest in projects that can create a new revenue stream. It's fundamental for communities to be able to set up the projects, the programs, and the services they need without having to depend on federal dollars to do it.

I was talking about evening out the sides so we can become partners in prosperity. Indigenous communities bring a light to another factor that matters a lot in Alberta, land use. Now, let's be sure to give industry players in Alberta their due. They have stepped up to encourage, support, and employ world-leading technologies and practices that reduce the effects of drilling on Alberta's landscape. This is the land we share and all the air we breathe. When we talk about natural resource development, we talk about being responsible stewards of those resources, and when industry talks with indigenous communities about projects, they will also discuss traditional uses of the land. By increasing indigenous ownership of natural resource projects or supporting equity investments in natural resource projects, we are vouching for an even better, cleaner, safer future for more people and a future that allows people to practise their traditional uses on the land.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked about the access to capital as being a singularly challenging barrier for indigenous communities. It is far from the only threat to community well-being. The reality is that indigenous communities often face multiple social and economic issues, and they are complex issues. We all know that complex issues need to be addressed at many levels, and there is no magic to this. There is no single solution. The complexity of problems some indigenous communities experience is tied to a variety of issues, and many of them are generational, but to ignore something as fundamental as access to revenue is to turn a blind eye to a problem that we can address in a respectful way.

There is another thing I learned. Indigenous communities are deeply interested in responsibly developing the resources around them, and we need to start somewhere. They want to build businesses and technical capacity around them, and because unemployment is at a staggering rate, on some First Nations up to 99 per cent, employment is critical to building stronger communities.

Let me just share a story with you from this summer. I was up at Whitefish (Goodfish) Lake First Nation, and if you want an example of business acumen, entrepreneurship, and local employability, look no further. Their industrial dry cleaning business is the largest in North America. In fact, the only one that's even close to it is by the Disney corporation. The First Nation also operates a very impressive safety coverall manufacturing facility. It was so busy. I was there on a Sunday, and they were busy working away. Some of these people have worked there from the very start of this operation. It was just a joy, and they were all so proud of what they were doing. This is just one of the many opportunities recognized by indigenous communities.

To those who say that indigenous people don't want oil and gas extract operations on their lands, I ask them to talk to the First Nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy, which have been involved in the oil patch for seven decades, or to talk to Suncor Energy, whose businesses deal with the Fort McKay First Nation and the Mikisew Cree First Nation. It's a study in indigenous collaboration. By forging these partnerships, Fort McKay and Mikisew have more stable revenue to support community needs, and they are thriving.

**3:10**

I do not need to talk about the incredible success of the Enoch Cree Nation. Just drive a few minutes west of Edmonton to see the business hub that is popping up there. Chief Morin and his council are to be commended for an amazing vision. The Frog Lake First Nation has its own oil producing company, the Frog Lake Energy

Resources Corporation, a heavy oil producer that sees thousands of barrels produced every day. The Primco Dene group of companies is a wholly owned company of the Cold Lake First Nation with 16 companies under its umbrella, employing 700 employees in the region, a stunning 80 per cent indigenous employment rate.

Those are just a few examples of some of the success cases that can be found amongst indigenous communities in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, as you can understand, they want to enjoy a higher standard of living than they have been largely able to do. They want future generations to enjoy the bounty this land brings and the option to make good decisions on how to manage it. Most of all, they want dignity.

We have benefited from their stewardship and will continue to honour the past by working together. The AIOC is part of the solution, that balanced equation that will bring the provincial and indigenous governments together as partners in prosperity. Another part of that solution is business and investors here in Alberta and elsewhere. I urge them to look to indigenous communities as partners as well. By working together, I'm confident of the mutual benefits that come of learning from each other and of finding in indigenous communities people with skills, talent, and motivation to work hard to invest in their futures.

This is an untapped market. Let me illustrate. In 2013 indigenous businesses accessed .2 per cent of the total available capital in Canada. The national aboriginal economic development board estimates that if indigenous business accessed capital at the same rate as other Canadian businesses, their share would stand at 10 per cent of the total available capital. Unless we do something to work around arcane legislation, this situation will not change, and indigenous communities will continue to live on the sidelines of prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough. Our government was elected to get Alberta working again, and we mean all of Alberta. As Minister of Indigenous Relations I commit every single day to work to secure adequate supports and pursue opportunity with indigenous people. That is why this government has already set up a \$10 million indigenous litigation fund so indigenous voices fighting for their right to responsibly develop resources will be heard in courts when others are trying to stop them, and that's why we've been meeting government to government to foster and formalize our relationships going forward. Signing the protocol agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy was a step to guarantee regular meetings together about concerns of interest and to give those First Nations governments the kind of attention the rest of us expect. That reduces yet another barrier. Enabling the AIOC in legislation is our next step in partnership to address the long-standing economic gaps between communities in Alberta.

It's time, Mr. Speaker, to do the right thing, to show indigenous communities respect instead of patronizing their path to prosperity. In that spirit of reconciliation we can and we will achieve a lot together.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this time to address the House about the AIOC. I look forward to unanimous agreement to enact the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister, for your words. I would just like to check. You are moving Bill 14 for second reading, correct?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yes.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much.

Are there any other members looking to speak to Bill 14? I see that the hon. Member for Peace River has risen.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. I'm so honoured today to rise and speak on this very important piece of legislation, which I've read cover to cover. I'm very impressed with it in many ways, not least of which – to echo the minister's statement: this isn't fluff; this isn't just symbolic. We're getting right to it. You won't find one statement in there – it begins with definitions, and it ends in regulations – of fluff or symbolic gesture. It really is trying to lift up the First Nation peoples and Métis and the indigenous of Alberta. I'm so pleased to speak to it for exactly that reason: our government's commitment to the economy, particularly addressing why too often in our province's history indigenous Albertans have not always been a full partner sharing in our prosperity as a province and a country.

Just this morning I was speaking to Chief Trevor Mercredi of the Beaver First Nation, and he put it very well. He told me that when the First Nations of Alberta prosper, all of Alberta prospers. I think this simple message gets right to the heart of what this legislation seeks to achieve: getting First Nations, Métis, and all of Alberta's indigenous working up from that 95 to 99 per cent, as we heard from the minister, unemployment rate and giving them the dignity of work. Dignity is found in work, and giving them the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families and their communities is why we want to partner with these communities like we haven't seen before with this groundbreaking legislation, a first-in-Canada solution.

This must be a top priority of any government, and it's certainly a top priority of the United Conservative government, giving people everywhere a hand up. Yesterday I was chatting with the Beaver First Nation, my constituents, along with the Minister of Agriculture, and I've met with every other chief and council in my riding. We met with these communities. We speak to them, and we look to them for their leadership. They provide leadership to us in government on these issues, looking to expand the forestry industry in our constituency and on their territory, looking to expand agriculture, which they had been invested in for hundreds of years in the province in the far north – and I'll speak more to that later – and looking, of course, to expand Alberta's proud tradition of developing our natural gas resources. They want to be full partners in this development.

They face a number of challenges, though, that many Albertans may not. They don't enjoy the same property rights in the reserves that other Canadians take for granted. They often end up in many situations fighting against a very thick bureaucracy, both provincially and federally, and for this they have my heart. I am with them. I want to cut the red tape that stops these communities from thriving and prospering in our province. Too often this leaves them dependent on programs and settling for lower standards of living conditions layered on with more bureaucracy rather than being a part of this economic development that we see in the province and we see in Alberta like we've seen nowhere else in the world. The culture of dependency has to end, and the First Nations Albertans must be the first ones to harness creativity, and we want to work with them to that end and embrace the entrepreneurial spirit. As the minister and the Premier say often, they were the first entrepreneurs of this province and on this land. We want them to be able to chart their own destinies of where they want to go in developing these resources, of which they have a share.

It will not happen just when any government says so. It will happen when we work in partnership with indigenous Albertans and ask them, as we are doing in this government – and that is what this legislation is a product of – how they most want to participate in the shared economy, ensuring that indigenous Albertans have access to capital to finance their projects and ensuring that First Nations are full partners in projects that profoundly impact their livelihoods and

territories and, most importantly, ensuring that every First Nation and Métis family has jobs to put food on the table and a roof overhead. That is what this bill is about.

I want to speak briefly now to some of the First Nation communities that I deal with on a first-hand basis in my constituency to give you context for why this bill matters to them directly. Now, every one of these groups not only have I met with, but so has the minister, and I want to first thank the minister deeply for coming to my constituency, to the most northern reaches of this province, to Meander River. The only place farther than that is a place called Indian Cabins, inhabited by two people, right on the border. There has never been a minister attending anything in this community before. The smiles on the faces of these men and women could not have been larger. The pride that they had in their communities as they showed it to the minister and myself could not have been bigger.

I want to speak a bit about those First Nations and what they have. The Dene Tha' First Nation is actually not Cree. They are from a very different cultural and ethnic and linguistic group from the north, and they have a very unique and driven culture, largely driven by the love of their land. They have a very deep love of the faith that was first brought to them by the Oblate Fathers that came to visit them, and they were very proud to have shown us this when they came up. In fact, it occupied much of the time of what they were showing.

The territory that they sit on is vast and might seem desperate and empty to many, but to the Dene Tha', they found it bountiful, and they love it very, very deeply. They want to be partners with us in how they find the resources in that land, in forestry and agriculture, and open it up to be prosperous. They saw that this is what happened for many of the earlier generations of Alberta, and they see no reason why they cannot today also take part in the development of these resources in a responsible way for their prosperity as well.

3:20

I mentioned that the Beaver First Nation, which is a very proud group, came to visit the minister of agriculture and myself just yesterday. They have a mixed heritage between Dene and Cree, and they have roots across the largest geographic area I've ever seen, going all the way down to southern Alberta, and have settled right on the bounds of the Boyer River. Between the Boyer and the Child Lake reserve is what makes up their territory. They have actually been farming the land in northern Alberta hundreds of years before any others thought it was actually in any way viable, long predating the settlers that came north. They today still want to continue opening up this land, and they want to, as we learned yesterday with the minister of agriculture, be a part of any kind of land opening up that this government would do, because they find it is an important part of their economy and an important part of their heritage. Something that is often missed when they talk about First Nation communities is that they have a deep love of agriculture and a ranching tradition.

I want to speak also about the Tallcree First Nation. Chief Rupert Meneen also settles in the far north and also visited with the minister and myself. They have so many entrepreneurial means of moving ahead. They have taken so many efforts, a very sophisticated group, where they want to take part in the forestry, agriculture, and particularly the oil and gas industry, much of which they couldn't even tell us about because of the works that they were currently working on. They can't wait to take part in this Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation because they saw right from the start the opportunities that they are opened to when they have that kind of capital backing them. They are not a group that is waiting for a handout; they want a hand up, and they are taking it

even before this opportunity. This will only strengthen them and embolden them to go further.

They also have a deep, deep love of the land on which they live, and it's very heartwarming to see the way that they care for and look for a balance in how they develop their natural resources and how they continue to make sure that they put back into the land what they feel they get out of it. They're working very well with multiple different groups in the area, including Mackenzie county, the MD of Opportunity, and the federal government. They're opening up a new school, which I hope the minister can help me open up this fall. It's a beautiful community set right on the Wabasca River between the Tallcree north and south reserves.

I also want to speak about Little Red. Chief Conroy is probably one of the most enigmatic gentlemen I have ever met. He's a character, and he has the kind of mind that you want to enter into business with because he will find a way to make a dollar for you and himself and everyone who is working with him. He has a shrewd sense of business and a deep love of his people. He is the most engaged chief, I'm told, that that community has had in a very long time. Fox Lake, which is a fly-in, fly-out community, probably, I would say, the most remote community that I know of in the province: he has a deep love for it along with John D'Or and Garden River. These areas have some of the largest populations of First Nations in my constituency, and they're highly independent. They're fly-in, fly-out, and they have found all sorts of ways – through manufacturing, through opening up oil and gas at times, buying into projects across the province – to support their communities, and they're looking for more. In our meeting with them they made sure they let us know the priorities that they had. They want to make sure that they have transport in and out of the communities so that they're not just fly-in, fly-out, and they want to make sure that they're taking part in this new, growing economy that Alberta is about to go through with the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation.

I also want to speak to the Paddle Prairie Métis community. As the minister mentioned: heartfelt. What happened there broke the province's heart, with 16 homes burning down. They struggled deeply in the time of the fire, but they have come back together in a very big way, and they are stronger for having gone through that. They have a deep love of their land. The Métis people, along with the First Nations, aren't unlike many Albertans, where we aren't people who just like Alberta as an abstract idea. It's the land under our feet. It's the land we plow, that our cattle graze, the streets that we drive, the homes in which we live. It is the physical territory that matters to them. It's a true patriotism and love of that land that they have. It's deeply connected to them, and we saw that in Paddle Prairie as the men and women during that fire fought, many of which were risking life and limb, along with many volunteer firefighters from across the province and High Level to protect homes. Sixteen burned, but innumerable were saved because of the work of those men and women.

They are incredibly excited. I believe that certain members of that community even put their name forward to be on this board, and I highly recommend that the minister does choose some of these men and women because they have a deep sense of economic insight. They have been working nonstop since their entire creation. As a people mixed of both western and indigenous heritage, they see how to straddle both sides of that and work both cultures in a way where they can find the best way forward culturally, economically in being prosperous. They want to work with Alberta. They want to work with their neighbours to find prosperity in Paddle Prairie.

I guess I should also mention – let's see – Beaver, Tallcree, Dene Tha', Little Red, and Paddle Prairie. These are the major Métis settlements and reserves in my constituency. There are many First

Nations living in Fort Vermilion and across the constituency which also are related to these First Nation communities, and they will benefit as well through this increased economic opportunity that will be created.

It is so important that we as a province make it a priority, and I want to make sure that this investment by the government truly is seen as a vibrant stimulation of our northern communities. We have nearly 3,000 Métis individuals living in my constituency and over 8,000 First Nation peoples in my riding. That is the diversity of my constituency. Between the French, the English, the German of the Mennonites, the Dene, and the Tallcree, we have a true Wild West in the north. We love working together despite rubbing up against each other at times. We find it is an opportunity for us to work with each other when the economy is growing, and that's why I am thrilled this bill will improve the lives of all of my constituents and not just the First Nations.

On that, I want to thank the Premier for his initiative deeply. I want to, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity, but more than that, I want to thank, truly, the Minister of Indigenous Relations for the leadership he has shown and for the work he has done.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to speak to this matter.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 14, the first introduced in our present sitting. I'd like to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations for introducing this bill. It's nice to start the session off with a bill where I think we can get wide support in this House for what I think is a positive initiative and one which I hope, as the time goes on in our discussions here in the House, we have an opportunity to debate from a perspective of both believing in the ultimate intent of the bill and debating more about how we work together to achieve a really positive outcome for the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in this province as opposed to the other kinds of fights we sometimes have in this House. So it is with real pleasure that I stand up on behalf of the Official Opposition in this House and talk about the fact that we have intention to support this bill as we understand it at this particular time and that we look forward for an opportunity to learn a bit more.

I'll take a few minutes just to talk about some of the experiences I've had with the indigenous communities in this province and then speak a little bit more directly to the bill, just as the previous speaker did. I will take an opportunity to do the same because, of course, every single one of the communities mentioned both by the minister in his speech and the Member for Peace River in his speech I have been at, including Meander River, by the way. I am very pleased to have been the first and, in fact, only Minister of Indigenous Relations to have visited all 48 of the First Nations in this province and, of course, all eight of the Métis settlements, where I had an opportunity to sit down and have those really important discussions that happen when you sit down face to face and say to people: I am here to listen, and I really want to know what it is that's very important to you.

All of those chiefs and Métis settlement leaders that have been previously mentioned here are people that I have sat down with on multiple occasions. In fact, all of the reserves mentioned such as the Dene Tha' and Little Red and Tallcree and Beaver and Cold Lake, Whitefish (Goodfish): all of those communities I've been to not only once but on multiple occasions and visited with them here in the city of Edmonton, at the Legislature typically, to have these kinds of discussions, so I know that this is a community that is very interested in working with the government for the benefit of all

peoples in the indigenous community. You know, when you sit down and have conversations with them, they tell you about the needs, and it is very clear that the needs in the indigenous communities right now are very high. The reason why they're very high, we know, is because there have been a significant number of structural barriers that prevented indigenous communities from being successful in the past.

3:30

When I do speak to people who, you know, haven't had as much of an opportunity as I have to speak with members of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in this province about the difficulties – the lack of employment, the lack of housing, and so on – in many of these communities, they often ask me: why? Why is it that they have not been part of the success of this fabulous province of Alberta? I have to remind them that there are very many reasons why that is true, but one of the things we have to be really clear about is that the reasons do not lie with the indigenous communities primarily but, rather, lie with us; that is, the government of Alberta and the people who have constructed the social dynamics under which they have had to live for the last hundred-plus years in this province.

When we take a look at things such as residential schools, the '60s scoop, we have to understand that we have done things in this province that have caused those desperate circumstances in those indigenous communities, and we need to take responsibility for all of those things. In fact, when reserves were first created here in this province and the First Nations people were taken off the land which they had been using quite effectively for thousands of years and multiple generations, many hundreds, thousands of generations, we created a circumstance where they were unable to participate in the economic well-being of this province by virtue of being physically excluded from participation, put into a place where they were not able to engage in the things that were happening in this province.

On top of that, we made all kinds of rules that prevented them from even beginning to participate such as being forced to not leave the reserve lands unless they had the written consent of the Indian agent. Now, of course, subsequently it was demonstrated that that was an illegal law or rule that was put in in this province, that they had no right to restrict them to the First Nations communities, the reserve lands. But we did it anyways, even against our own national laws. Then we made it illegal for these First Nations to even be able to have a lawyer to challenge the federal government on these kinds of issues. So when we ask, "Why are indigenous people not participating in the economy?" it's because we told them they could not, and we put in significant barriers to prevent them from participating. It's, you know, important for all of us now to take responsibility for that fact.

I see the bill put forward by the Minister of Indigenous Relations as having the possibility of opening up a door that has not been opened up before, and that is why I'm standing to support it. That's why I'm happy to be here and say that anything we can do to take our foot off the backs of indigenous people so they can become full participants in the economic viability of this province I am absolutely thrilled to support.

We know, as Chief Trevor Mercredi at Beaver First Nation said, that when First Nations do well, all people do well. We know that not only will we see a benefit on the reserves when economic development begins to grow and expand, but we will see all the communities around those reserves begin to benefit because, of course, they will be able to have more shops to go to. They will be able to have more people coming to their shops to buy things because there will be more money available in the communities. So I am very happy that this is happening.

In fact, I was very concerned, when this government first came in, that they were taking actions which I thought were exactly contrary to the intent of this bill. I was very concerned that while in Bill 14 they are seeking to enhance economic opportunities for indigenous people, when they first came in, they started to do things to remove economic opportunities from indigenous people.

For example, we had the best climate leadership plan in North America at the time that this government came into power, and one of the very first things they did was that they eliminated that plan. Now, they eliminated it for whatever ideological reasons they had, but one of the things that they need to take responsibility for is the fact that a significant part of that climate leadership plan involved the participation of First Nations from across this province.

In fact, I'm very proud to say that in the development of our indigenous climate leadership plan, we invited all 48 First Nations and all eight Métis settlements plus the Métis Settlements General Council plus the Métis Nation of Alberta to come together to help develop the indigenous climate leadership plan. They told me at that meeting that that was the first time that the Métis and the First Nations people sat at the same table since the late '60s, early '70s, when they sat at a table together fighting the White Paper in order to protect the rights of indigenous people. It had been over 40 years since all of those people had gathered together to have a conversation together to help create a better world in the province of Alberta, and I'm very proud that our NDP government created the circumstance under which that had happened after many years of void.

I am very concerned as well that there have been economic opportunities that have been taken out of the indigenous community because they killed that plan, because they killed the indigenous climate leadership plan. I just want to comment on many of the communities that have been mentioned by the two previous speakers. For example, we talked about Little Red, where I went up to help cut the ribbon for the opening of the massive set of solar panels they put up on all their public buildings. I was very pleased to have been there to do that.

I was very pleased to hear Tallcree being spoken about, because when Tallcree designed the school that they're hoping to attend the opening of sometime later this fall, I sat down with them and said, "What kind of environmental program and structures have you put into the design of the school?" They said, "Well, we haven't had a chance to do that." I said, "Well, let's use the indigenous climate leadership program to do that very thing." We provided \$3 million for them to build the school in such a way that they will have less cost in running that school for the life of that school. Not just for the benefit today but for the life of that school, they will be doing two things at the same time. They'll be taking care of the environment, and they will be teaching their kids at a lower cost. That's the kind of positive development that was possible under the indigenous climate leadership plan, and I'm very sorry that the government has decided to take that kind of money out of indigenous communities.

I also, of course, want to talk about the fact that the minister mentioned going up to Whitefish (Goodfish), where I also had an opportunity to visit and visit the laundry facilities as well. I also want to note that in our government we provided \$100 million to bring water to reserves. Lo and behold, one of the primary programs was the program to bring water to Whitefish (Goodfish) so that they can continue that laundry facility. Yet this government has not promised any new money for water to reserves, so I've just been very concerned about what's happening with Bill 14.

I'm very pleased that this government is continuing many of the programs. I'm very pleased that the Blackfoot Confederacy protocol agreement, that we established through lots of significant hard work and close relationships with the Blackfoot community, was re-

signed recently by this government. So I'm very happy to know that you're continuing some of the good work that the NDP government did. I'm very happy to know that the work that we have been doing to enhance the lives of indigenous people may continue under this government, and I will be holding them to account on all of those other things.

I do have a few questions about Bill 14 because when we went to the prebrief, they were unable to answer a lot of the questions. For example, you'll notice that in Bill 14 there's no mention about how much money is being set aside – the bill itself does not identify the number of dollars – to actually build this particular program nor how much money will be available to people in the indigenous community afterwards. So we have some questions. We need to know what's happening.

The bill also doesn't identify how many indigenous people will actually be on the board that is running this corporation, so again we have some questions. I'm glad it's there, but they haven't identified that. The bill has good intent, but it seems a little bit hollow, so we are really, actually, looking forward to the opportunity to answer some of these specific questions.

3:40

One of the big questions that I have is: why is it that when they are creating economic opportunities for indigenous people, they are telling indigenous people what their economic opportunities have to be? Why is it that they have determined on their own, without consultation with indigenous people, what they're allowed to borrow money toward? That's very problematic.

I heard from the minister a number of statements about how important it was to talk to indigenous people and not to impose policy on them, and then immediately I see a bill that says: you may only borrow this money for resource development. I find that a little confusing, and I really look forward to the chance in further debate to ask some further questions about: why is it that indigenous people are okay to be economically successful in the resource sector but that in other areas of economic development the government has no interest in being supportive? I just have some confusion and have some concerns. For example, under the previous NDP government we were able to help create the Alberta indigenous tourism association. I don't see the possibility for the tourism association to create new indigenous jobs and a new indigenous economy through this particular bill. Why not?

I know that the Beaver people were mentioned, and so were the Little Red people and all of their communities, and I see that there is opportunity for them to be involved in forestry and oil and gas development but not other things.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very much enjoying hearing my colleague's comments regarding Bill 14, Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. I just wondered if the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford would be able to continue.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to just say a little bit more. While I am very much looking forward to supporting this bill and intend, absolutely, at this point to vote in favour and encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favour of this bill, we simply have a number of questions that we would like to ask.

The questions that we do want to ask are ones about: why is it limited in the way that it's limited? Why is it only okay for

indigenous people to reinforce a particular initiative on the part of the provincial government as opposed to providing them the ability to make choices for themselves about that? I mean, there are a number of ways that they could have done this. We have, for example, the aboriginal business investment fund, the aboriginal economic partnership program, and, of course, the First Nations development fund, which comes from casino revenues. Monies could have been provided through all of those programs in order to provide opportunities for businesses other than resource extraction. It could be retail. They could be businesses in terms of manufacturing. There could be businesses in terms of tourism. Yet none of these are being supported by this bill, so I am just curious.

I have lots of questions, so what I'll do is that I'll actually make a suggestion here. We were very happy on this side of the House to support the government in the unanimous decision to go immediately, on the same day as the bill was introduced, into second reading. We were very pleased to be able to do that because I think it was very important. We had guests from the indigenous community. We want them to know their government really does care for them, whether it's the government, the official side of the House, or on the opposition side of the House. That makes me very proud.

I would suggest now that we should go immediately into voting on second reading at this particular time to solidify that demonstration of our support. As I sit down, I would make a request to the House that we move immediately to a vote on Bill 14 so that we can then proceed to the opportunity to ask questions later on in committee.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, are there any other members looking to speak on this matter? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has risen.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to rise and speak today in support of Bill 14, Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. With the horrors of residential schools and through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, all of Canada has been called to walk the path of reconciliation with the indigenous people, on whose land we have built this federation. Specifically, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on Canadians to "ensure that [indigenous] peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that [indigenous] communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects." This is a challenge to Canadians to ensure that indigenous communities are partners in the prosperity of our federation. Our Conservative government has accepted that challenge. Our Conservative government has committed to walk the path of reconciliation side by side with our indigenous peoples as partners, partners in prosperity.

With this bill our government responds to that call to action by ensuring that indigenous communities have the opportunity to participate in economic development projects across our province. This bill, through the creation of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, will facilitate indigenous participation in the development of our natural resources. With the creation of this corporation we are reserving \$1 billion for indigenous communities to become full partners in prosperity. This \$1 billion will be allocated to loan guarantees and other mechanisms to support indigenous ownership in major resource development projects. This ownership is important because it ties our economic fate together, so when these large resource developments are built, we prosper together. That is the same way we will reconcile the past: together. And together we will walk forward to provide a higher standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, the indigenous communities that I've spoken to want to provide a higher standard of living. Indigenous communities in our province want to achieve this with wealth generated from our natural resources, because these communities realize the vast wealth that comes from their land that their ancestors walked for generations. Indigenous peoples have the desire, workforce, and motivation to become partners in our resource prosperity.

Moreover, indigenous communities have the desire to move forward to a better and brighter future. I've seen it first-hand, Mr. Speaker. I've lived my entire life within a 15-minute walk of the Tsuut'ina Nation, and I've seen first-hand that they're a nation of rich culture, tradition, with a proud history of community leadership, successful commerce, and entrepreneurial spirit. The Tsuut'ina have shown their commitment to partnering in resource development, and this was exemplified by their hosting of the 2019 indigenous resource council energy summit. This energy summit was a massive step toward First Nation ownership in energy projects and included discussion of models of First Nation ownership in pipelines like the Trans Mountain pipeline.

The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation provides the opportunity for further partnership and the opportunity for economic reconciliation. It links our prosperity together so that when indigenous people thrive, all Alberta thrives.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to act on reconciliation, not just talk about it. It's time to uphold our commitments on reconciliation. In fact, this morning at the announcement one of the chiefs spoke of reconciliation. That is what this represents to me: reconciliation. Today, by supporting this bill for the establishment of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, I uphold one of my earliest commitments as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Earlier this year, on May 29, I rose in the Assembly, and in my maiden speech I said:

I am committed to meet the moral obligation that we have to empower First Nations to be full partners in the development of the resources that lie below their lands, which their ancestors first inhabited, and to become full partners in prosperity.

I am still committed to that ideal, to reconciliation. My commitment to reconciliation so that indigenous partners can partner in a new wave of Alberta natural resource prosperity is the basis for my support of this bill.

This bill will bridge the gap for indigenous groups to secure adequate capital from financial institutions to increase their capacity to become true owners in resource development. This bill will make us national leaders in action on economic reconciliation, and I want to personally thank the minister for his leadership on this.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that members of this Assembly commit themselves to walking the path of reconciliation by forging a relationship, a partnership in prosperity, by giving their support for this bill and supporting the development of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available, and the individual who caught my eye was the hon. Member for Peace River.

3:50

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore for that speech. I'm interested in the contrast between your speech and the member previous, from Edmonton-Rutherford. There was a line that you repeated over and over again about how First Nations, Métis, indigenous Albertans: when they thrive, Alberta thrives. It's in stark contrast to the language used by the member opposite as he said that it is our fault,



some sense of self-blame in some way for the reason that we have gotten to this place and why First Nation communities have struggled. The difference is, from where I'm sitting in the United Conservative caucus and where I sit in northern Alberta with my First Nations and Métis friends and neighbours, that they tell me they're not victims, and I agree. I think that difference in attitude is seen very large. Where I come from, the First Nation and Métis people don't want identity politics to be played anymore. They don't know what it is. They don't have time for it. What they want is a part in prosperity, to work towards a balanced economy where both they thrive, the environment thrives, the economy thrives, and therefore the province thrives.

I also heard the member earlier, in contrast to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore, say that we took money out of the hands of indigenous communities. What took money out of the hands of indigenous communities – and I'm sure the Member for Calgary-Glenmore would agree – was, yes, exactly that, the climate leadership plan with the carbon tax. It was all economic pain, no environmental gain, and it did nothing but tax the poor residents of northern Alberta, indigenous or not, because of the geography of where we live. This is true for so many of our First Nation peoples.

I would just like your comment on the difference between the tack that you've taken and the tack that we've seen members opposite take.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you to the Member for Peace River. I will speak of my neighbours next to my riding, the Tsuut'ina Nation. You know, our history is sad. Our history is sad, and there is a reason that we must reconcile, but we must work on that together. We must have a positive view for the future. I have seen the Tsuut'ina Nation, who throughout my lifetime have been amazing business people. They have done incredible works on their land. They have created great prosperity for their people, but there is so much more that can be done. Currently they are working on an amazing development along the ring road.

I can tell you that when we look at development and we look at resource development, the gap that is being addressed by the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation is one that is vast. This access to large capital for these nations to be able to fully develop the resources below their land or to develop a downstream or a midstream operation has never ever been available, and now it will be with the backstop of the Crown. I think that presents enormous opportunity and great prosperity in partnership.

I think partnership and working through reconciliation together is important. Doing this together is important. All of Alberta will thrive as our indigenous people thrive. I want people to recognize how important reconciliation is as we move forward and truly think about reconciliation of the past and how we can move towards the future together.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, there are still a few seconds left on 29(2)(a) should anybody be looking to speak to that. Do I see any other members? I see the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has risen to speak.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today in this House to speak to this incredibly important piece of legislation. Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, is an integral component of our government's mandate. It is an important step in our journey towards reconciliation with the indigenous peoples of Alberta and will keep us on the path towards prosperity for all Albertans. By helping indigenous groups to proceed with ownership of natural resources and resource-related infrastructure and investment in resource projects like pipelines,

they will be empowered to pursue financial security and economic prosperity for their communities now and for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, across Canada governments at every level as well as everyday Canadians from all walks of life are recognizing and reaffirming the need to pursue reconciliation with indigenous peoples. As a province and as a country we have set off on this journey on the road towards reconciliation, but you can't build a road without a solid foundation. In my encounters with indigenous Albertans over the years – and I hope the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations and my colleagues from both parties will agree with me when I say this – I keep hearing that one of the foundational components of reconciliation is partnership. It sounds pretty simple when you first hear it. We all have some understanding of what partnership means because partnership exists in many forms. There are partners in sport. There are business partners and life partners, all of which are important in their own unique way. But in hearing just how much emphasis was placed on the importance of partnership and reconciliation, I felt the need to revisit and reflect upon what makes Alberta's partnership with indigenous peoples so unique.

Mr. Speaker, when Europeans first arrived here, they were greeted by indigenous peoples who helped the settlers arrive. Eventually partnerships were formed in the form of trading relationships and even military alliances, and these relationships were based on mutual respect and co-operation. Generations later, after Confederation, the government embarked on a journey to forge new partnerships through the numbered treaties. As you know, Alberta is home to three of the numbered treaties, treaties 6, 7, and 8. These treaties are not significant to just indigenous communities; they're significant to all Albertans.

As a non-indigenous person it's very easy to feel removed from these treaties, but that is simply not the case. Even if you don't live on a reserve, Mr. Speaker, you still live on treaty land. I have the greatest privilege of representing the riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, which is situated on Treaty 6 land, the traditional territory of the Plains and Wood Cree and, in particular, the Enoch Cree peoples. I have a duty not only as a member of this Assembly but as an Albertan and as a Canadian to respect these treaties and acknowledge their significance.

You know, I'm not a historian, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the events leading up to the treaties and those that followed their signing are numerous and complex, but it's commonly accepted that the treaties were signed with the purpose of a renewed partnership, one that would ensure peace and prosperity for all parties involved. We now acknowledge, however, that the spirit of these treaties was not always upheld. Commitments have not always been honoured by previous governments, and certain policies had harmful effects that are still felt to this day. We see this in the outlawing of traditional practices and ceremonies, residential schools, the '60s scoop, and the forced sterilization of certain indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women and the mentally ill or disabled. We acknowledge that this damage sustained over generations has eroded the trust that was central to the partnerships that the treaties were meant to uphold. Acknowledging these historical wrongs and telling the truth about them is the first step towards reconciliation.

The next steps are about commitment to action, commitment to do better. The Premier and the Minister of Indigenous Relations often speak of working with indigenous Albertans in the spirit of the treaties. To me, this means creating a renewed partnership between indigenous peoples and their communities and the provincial government, a partnership that embodies what the treaties, signed well over a century ago, originally sought to accomplish: peace, mutual respect, and a shared prosperity.

That kind of meaningful partnership, Mr. Speaker, is the kind that this bill seeks to renew and revitalize. Bill 14 builds upon this partnership by making meaningful contributions that will assist indigenous communities in pursuing prosperity for their communities. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation will allocate \$1 billion in loan guarantees, which will help support indigenous groups in their pursuit of co-ownership and financial participation in natural resource development. I believe that this bill demonstrates our commitment to partnership with indigenous peoples by offering support. This bill will help indigenous communities realize projects that they previously didn't have the financial capacity for.

Mr. Speaker, we are blessed with a beautiful province that is rich in natural resources like oil and gas, and while we commonly think of these resources as being fuel for modern technology like our cars and home heating, their uses go back over a millennium. In 1788 explorer Alexander Mackenzie noted that the indigenous groups in the Athabasca region used bitumen mixed with gum from spruce trees to seal their canoes. So while opponents of Alberta oil and gas often claim that fossil fuels have never been used by indigenous peoples, we know that's simply not true.

4:00

Albertans care deeply for our province's environment, and this is especially true for indigenous peoples, who have been stewards of this land for well over a millennium. They understand how to take care of the land. They understand the necessity of taking care of the land. So when I hear the leaders and members of First Nations across this province supporting responsible resource development, I mean, it's invigorating to see. On the land that their ancestors once lived on, on the land that they share a deep connection with, and on the land they dutifully care for, they care about natural resource development.

Mr. Speaker, there have already been countless examples of successful ventures in natural resources that we have seen right here in Alberta. One example is the Frog Lake Energy Resources Corporation in Treaty 6. Frog Lake First Nation is a small Cree community of roughly about 1,200 people. The band desperately wanted to reduce poverty in their community, so they looked to the resources beneath their land and launched their own oil and gas exploration company, the first of its kind. Struggling to secure Canadian capital, it was Chinese investors who backed their exploration project. Today Frog Lake Energy Resources Corporation extracts over 3,000 barrels of oil every single day and has over \$30 million in cash flow. This is money that has gone to improving infrastructure, reducing poverty, and improving the overall quality of life for members of the community and their families. It's gone to helping indigenous children and let them have a shot at a better future.

Joe Dion, the chair of the board, has said, quote: together we have to make reconciliation a priority given the economic risks and gridlock that continue to impede the resource sector nationally and Alberta's energy sector in particular; I believe that reconciliation can be realized right here in Alberta's energy sector; it's time to take bold action; Alberta is not at the crossroads; it's in the ditch.

Mr. Speaker, indigenous groups should not have to look across the ocean to find those willing to help finance their projects. Our government believes in the resourcefulness, resiliency, and tenacity of indigenous peoples, and that is why this bill will help allocate the financial resources necessary to help indigenous peoples across our province pursue ownership of natural resource projects. There are already so many indigenous leaders looking to buy into these projects, like the Trans Mountain pipeline and the Eagle Spirit pipeline, which, if built, will bring prosperity to those communities for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, reconciliation doesn't have a finish line. The work to repair these relationships will be ongoing for years to come. Nothing can erase the historical wrongs and tragedies that indigenous people in this province and this country as a whole have endured. Nothing can replace lost cultural connections, a lost childhood, or even lost loved ones. There's no magic bullet to a solution, but we can try to stop the cycle of poverty and desperation that has been born out of these traumas.

Mr. Speaker, most Albertans and most Canadians, for that matter, have seen their quality of life improve over the course of many decades as we have increased our production and exports of natural resources, yet many indigenous communities continually have been left behind. It is clear that they haven't historically benefited from our natural resources and historical economic growth in ways that they should. That's why we keep seeing calls for change, calls from indigenous leaders to be included in these projects so that they, too, can reap the benefits for their communities, so that First Nations can enjoy the social and economic infrastructure that is needed for indigenous Albertans to succeed.

I hope that by honouring the fundamental principles of our treaties, by maintaining a strong and meaningful partnership between the provincial government and First Nations, and by empowering indigenous communities to take control of their economic futures, Alberta will set an example for the rest of Canada and the rest of the world, for that matter, of what reconciliation looks like in action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a). I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for acknowledging me and for this opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a). We've heard and will continue to hear, I'm certain, from everyone in this Chamber, or at least those who are going to speak on this bill, of their experience with regard to their interactions with indigenous communities, and it's heartening to me given that I have two large indigenous communities in my constituency. What is a bit discouraging is what appears to be the level of interest in this piece of legislation from the members opposite, given their attendance. I guess I can't say that word, can I?

You know, I would like to hear a little more from the member who just spoke about the education he's received and the interactions he's had with members of the indigenous communities through the campaign, through his time as an elected official now, and how enriching that has been for him as a representative.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for asking that question. While my current provincial riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain does not have a First Nations community located within the riding – the two closest would be Paul band First Nation, which is located in the riding of Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and Enoch Cree Nation, which is actually located in the riding of Drayton Valley-Devon – I've had extensive dealings with indigenous peoples over the years. One of the clearest examples of relationships and actually how some previous legislation by the members opposite when they were in government affected Paul band First Nation was my experience working at K3 power plant. When the expansion happened in 2007 and 2006, this was one of the largest construction projects at that time. TransAlta was actually one of the largest employers of indigenous people from Paul band First Nation, and they looked upon Sundance power plant and

Keephills power plant in Wabamun to provide stable economic and employment opportunities for many members of that First Nation.

It's unfortunate, however, just with my experience, that the accelerated coal phase-out, which was really caused by the members opposite in the last government, has affected well over a thousand people in my area, and it affected numerous people from Paul band First Nation that looked upon future construction projects with coal generation at the Keephills power plant and Sundance power plant as a way to provide for their families. I mean, there isn't a lot of economic opportunity when you're looking that far west of Edmonton. You know, TransAlta and Capital Power are seen as key economic drivers. There were many families that I talked to, that I worked with in the trenches on the construction sites, that were devastated to know that the future economic opportunities that they had were now drying up, and they didn't know where else to turn.

In my previous capacity as a city councillor in the city of Spruce Grove, I had an extensive number of meetings at Paul band First Nation looking at ways to be able to increase integration and within a spirit of co-operation find ways that Paul band First Nation can interact with the city of Spruce Grove to help provide transit opportunities, to be able to provide community services. You know, the chief at the time said that I was actually the very first city councillor from the city of Spruce Grove in the history of Paul band First Nation that actually took the time to visit the Paul band to have that conversation on their land. I was very lucky and privileged to have been given that opportunity.

You know, over the years, like I said, friends and family have interacted with First Nations both at Enoch and Paul band, and I look forward to seeing the opportunities that this bill is really going to give First Nations communities west of Edmonton for a chance for economic prosperity.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members to finish off under 29(2)(a)? There's about a minute left on that.

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by first thanking the Minister of Indigenous Relations for providing me an opportunity to rise and the first chance to speak in the House in this fall session, to speak to something that I really do support. I want to thank him for his hard work on it, and I want to thank, through him, his officials and all of the folks who handled, I'm sure, what were important consultations, conversations over the summer.

I think this is a good bill. I'm going to provide some suggestions to the minister, and I'm hoping that the minister will take it in the spirit in which it is intended, which is that I'm going to ask some specific clarification questions, those kinds of things. We'll probably do this at the amendment stage as well, just to give him a heads-up. When I raise these things, I think it's worth while to actually have an answer. Oftentimes we actually do make things better in this House. That's the point of the legislative branch. Not everything is run through Executive Council, nor ought it be.

4:10

I want to begin by saying that, obviously, access to both capital but also equity participation of various kinds is a laudable goal and an important goal given the history of access to capital for indigenous peoples across the province. I'm not just talking here about First Nations on-reserve with specific territory, but I'm also talking about Métis settlements and the Métis Nation of Alberta and

other associated, so-called "indigenous groups," as they are referred to in the act.

We have a number of urban indigenous members as well. I know that between 10 and 15 per cent of my own riding is folks who are members of one of the Blackfoot Nations, be it Kainai, Piikani, or Siksika. Folks come into town for all kinds of reasons, even if they are coming from Stand Off or out at Brocket or whatever the case may be. In fact, a large part of our restaurant, hospitality, and service sector in Lethbridge is supported by those many rural and outlying communities, and it's important not to forget the economic development from adjacent First Nations communities that comes into Lethbridge and keeps businesses moving.

One of those communities is the Blood Tribe, of course, the largest reserve by land base in the country, who were one of the recipients during the competitive auctions of the renewal energy program of the ability to have equity participation within a project. What we learned through that process was – you know, at first, when we were designing the process, I remember we said: oh, should it be 10 per cent equity participation or more? I remember the larger nations like Blood Tribe saying to us: oh, no; we can handle 25. They were really gung-ho to get in there, a pretty business-friendly chief and council there. They did outcompete a number. In fact, they outcompeted the no indigenous equity participation. That's how excited they were about pulling together equity participation for energy projects. Right? It's a renewable energy project, but it's an energy project, and we're an energy province in every sense of that word.

Another one of the recipients for the Stirling project that partnered with Potentia was Paul band, in fact. Paul band was just chatted about. Paul band also had a number of other projects around the province.

We saw that every First Nation in some way, shape, or form participated in indigenous climate leadership initiatives, whether that was through investments in training, which is a really key, important part, not just sort of trades training, although that's important too, but accounting, legal training, all of those sorts of things so that people can actually participate meaningfully in projects. Energy efficiency and clean tech programs, retrofitting programs, and so on: those are also energy projects.

I think that through the course of this debate what we should be doing is making it clear to the nations the future of those programs, in addition to the aboriginal business investment fund, the aboriginal economic partnerships programs, and the First Nations development fund, just so that we're really clear with the nations. Like I said, we have so much enthusiasm for these projects, and there are going to be a lot of folks now looking at this bill, looking at what it means, looking at the reg-making process. They're going to want to know how this fits into their overall business development strategy. I think that's the first thing. That piece of clarity from the minister's office would be helpful.

Another piece of clarity that would be good is that we had \$400 million worth of loan guarantee programs around clean tech, that had to do with Emissions Reduction Alberta, our clean tech fund. They weren't, obviously, just for indigenous resource companies or other indigenous initiatives, but they were participating in some of that. What is the overlap there? What is the future of those programs, and how does it interact or articulate with what's being proposed in this bill? I think it's an important question to answer. I mean, answering it back to me is fine, but the more important audience here, obviously, is all of the indigenous communities that are really excited about this bill. They just want to know how it kind of interacts with all of the other things they've got going on.

I think another piece that we can probably clear up when it comes time to amend things is around section 2(12)(a) and (b). In (12) it says that the minister may make regs

- (a) respecting the natural resource projects and related infrastructure...

Fine. We understand that. And then:

- (b) expanding the mandate of the Corporation to facilitate investment by indigenous groups in other types of projects.

We know that renewable energy is defined within the act. It's defined within the renewable energy act, that was passed a couple of years back. It's a pretty simple definition. In this section we could amend this act to allow for other kinds, not just natural resource projects. You may even find that definitionally you have some issue because the sun is also a natural resource. But renewables are in fact defined – right? – so you have captured within that the various forms of wind, solar, biomass, and hydro, basically.

The reason I raise this is that, one, we've got a lot of sort of big solar projects moving forward out there on the landscape, and I know of First Nations who are interested in taking equity or are in active conversations. This might help them bring some of those projects over the line. I know that there were some First Nations that were really disappointed that they just didn't make it into the REP auctions, so this might allow them to move forward with some of those projects that have already gone through a development or permitting stage.

Finally, there are a number of interesting projects out there around hydro, and there have been, at least to my awareness, preliminary conversations, probably in some places more than preliminary, that I may not have ever been made aware of, but there's a tremendous opportunity there, too. We should make sure that First Nations and Métis have access to those opportunities as well. It would be a shame to miss them simply because it's either not captured by the original act or because the reg-making process takes a little longer than it otherwise might. You never know with reg-making processes. At least, some of the people on this side know that sometimes that can take a while.

The other piece, on page 3, section 3(1) – sorry. That previous section that I made reference to, Minister and Mr. Speaker, was under Establishment of Corporation, section 2(12). In section 3, in understanding what is meant by indigenous groups, we have section 3(1)(c), where it says: "Metis groups as defined by the regulations." In this piece I would simply ask a question, which is: do we have places where Métis groups are defined by the regulations? I think we do, either through the Métis harvesting agreement or other associated hunting regulations or other spaces. I'm thinking here that through Indigenous Relations, for the purposes of other programs we may have that already defined, in which case I would just want to know that the MNA or others had been spoken to – probably the majority of the stakeholder group under 3(1)(c) here would be the MNA because the Métis settlements are defined – so that we're not going offside of any established jurisprudence around Métis membership. It would seem to me that we already have that, so why not put it in the act? It might be an easy thing for this act to be amended in such a way.

The final piece that I will flag for the minister that I believe might be problematic – and here's me, you know, trying to be helpful, Mr. Speaker – is that under the regulation-making authority under 14(b) we have that the regs may be made at the cabinet table "respecting appointments to the board, including the number of board members, eligibility and qualifications for appointment." This is pretty standard in establishing government agencies. However, it may be that the government may want to consider indigenous representation being explicitly enumerated within the act.

#### 4:20

We have done this in other contexts. Certainly, you may also have an advisory council in some way. The minister may want to consider that as input. We have an Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel, enumerated in statute in the oil sands monitoring act, that must be appointed by the minister and may report to the public. That is one way that you can make sure that you have indigenous input into how your organization is being run.

That's just an example, Minister, but we have other areas where we see that we've specifically enumerated in the act that there will be indigenous representation on that board and that it won't just be a bunch of – I don't know – bankers from Bay Street although I am noticing that the head office has to be in Alberta, so that's helpful. But I would want to see people on that board who are in there and that are indigenous Albertans from the ground up, because that piece of perspective and relevance to the community is going to mean that this organization is overall successful and is overall relevant to people's lives and is overall relevant to making people's lives better.

Those are the things that just jumped out at me in a sort of first read of this bill. I think I just want to flag for the minister a couple of other points. I think that when I bring up this idea of expanding the type of projects that might be supported by such a financing mechanism, I'm saying it because, in my experience, we will be stuck in old ways if we are making choices through this act, if the opportunities corporation is making choices for indigenous peoples in terms of economic development and so enumerating the kinds of projects.

I mean, obviously, when you're giving out loan guarantees, there needs to be a certain amount of commercial viability. There needs to be a certain amount of due diligence and all of those things that go into the folks around the board table and ultimately the CEO and the executive leadership team of this organism, and those pieces are obvious. But what we don't want to do is cut off certain avenues of economic development for First Nations whose elders want them to invest in renewable energy, whose young members are saying: hey, there are all those opportunities here. We don't want people to not be able to pursue those opportunities. First Nations, indigenous communities, and our Métis communities are democracies, too, and their young people are asking for all kinds of different economic opportunities, and I wouldn't want us to miss those opportunities.

I think that ultimately what we need to understand is that this is a piece of community development that particularly, I think, can be helpful on-reserve and in rural and remote areas and can feed into a better education system, where the province is doing its part where the federal government has failed, where the province is upholding its responsibilities on delivery of health care, where the province is upholding its responsibilities around the justice system and access to justice.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Lethbridge-West for her comments and, particularly, tying in the very positive aspects of Bill 14 with some of the experiences through the indigenous climate leadership program. The member was also speaking about the REP program and the very high levels of participation. I'd be interested to hear maybe even just a little bit more about how many communities had participated and submitted proposals through that program and additional thoughts along those lines.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think some of the lessons that we learned through the renewable energy program are really going to be instructive for how we move forward with the Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. It can well be that this mechanism allows for that type of equity participation in further development, obviously not around a competitive procurement process for renewables into the grid, because that's not a thing that we're doing anymore, but in other ways. There are other renewables projects that are now out there on the landscape. We had, you know – what? – 7,000 megawatts in the regulatory queue. Many of these projects are being developed either with First Nations equity participation already, or there is some, or folks are looking at their opportunities on the actual indigenous land base. We know that those things are happening as well.

I mean, what the REPs did was that they performed a really valuable price discovery function for the electricity market generally in terms of the affordability of renewables and their low cost and their ability to compete in the long term and in the long term outcompete, you know, thermal coal and other forms of generation. What they also did was that they proved that when you have indigenous participation in a project, it doesn't get more expensive, right? That part was a really important function. It proved (a) the interest and (b) the fact that First Nations were ready for this.

That's another reason why I commend this bill, because it's clear that so many – you know, you always get the chatter of: "Oh, how many bids will there be? Will it be competitive?" All of the chatter was wrong, and the REP procurement on the indigenous round was at a lower cost than the one that was just price only. So it does show that when you combine government initiatives with what's already going on in the private sector with an appetite for economic development by First Nations, a lot of the old rules are not at all relevant, and you can achieve something that is really meaningful for communities.

In the Paul band they will now have a steady stream of income, you know, for the next 20 years or so. The same goes for the Blood Tribe. The same goes for – there was a third one. I want to say that it was Saddle – I will ask *Hansard* to correct my record because it's slipped out of my mind now. That's why I think this indigenous opportunities corporation really does build on that work, because the proof of concept is sort of already there in many ways.

But – here comes the big but; it can't be all *Kumbaya*; that's not on-brand for me – ultimately, if you don't have education, health care, water, justice, early learning and child care, an emergency opioid response strategy, all of those other pieces, if the roads get washed out every single time there's a rain storm, if all of those things aren't happening, then we are not actually doing our job for the kids, that are so cute, that we run into at powwows or that I run into in the Opokaa'sin early learning centre. I always think of them whenever we have these conversations, right? I think about the world that – it is our responsibility as what I call the little Crown to make sure that we are upholding our level of responsibility. Certainly, if we were waiting for the federal government, we'd be waiting a long time in some instances. We have so much responsibility as a provincial government to deliver that, and if we're not doing all of those other things, this will be nice, but it will only be a part of it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for West Yellowhead has risen to speak.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Sweet:** Point of order. Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

**Ms Gray:** Oh, there was.

**The Acting Speaker:** There was, yeah.

**Ms Sweet:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Please continue.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today to speak on behalf of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. The UCP government is working hard for all Albertans because that is what Albertans elected us to do. We are working to provide opportunities for Albertans, for the indigenous people that occupy the land and their communities, and Bill 14 is a strong act by the government to partner with indigenous communities. I'm proud of the work done with indigenous leaders and communities and of all our members who've consulted with indigenous members.

4:30

Alberta is a province that takes pride in its indigenous roots and continues to promote indigenous culture provincially and across Canada. We consult with leaders, we engage with communities, and we listen to the concerns of all Albertans. Indigenous communities have been at various times in our past voiceless and ignored. History proves that we cannot leave our indigenous communities behind. It is time that our government stands up and works together with indigenous leaders.

Bill 14 is a bridge to connect government and indigenous leaders to build stronger economic and social well-being. We know indigenous communities benefit from responsible government, and we believe strong partnerships are better than neglect. Bill 14 introduces a new organization, the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, the AIOC, that will position Alberta to be a leader and steward of financial support for indigenous communities so they can seek more investments in natural resource projects. The indigenous are stewards of the land. They have fought for their land, for their right to keep their land, and for the cultural connection they have with the land. They learned to live with the land, to protect the land and its natural resources, and to prosper from it. From medicine, food, and clothing, indigenous peoples have shown us how valuable the land is, and this government will continue to give them the opportunities to continue to prosper.

The AIOC gives indigenous communities in Alberta security of their resources and their financial assets to find more opportunities to invest in resource projects that help many indigenous communities. It is a positive step in engaging the indigenous people and creating economic prosperity for Alberta. I think we can agree that we want the best for all Albertans. We come to work every day, like all working-class Albertans, to move an agenda to get things done. Mr. Speaker, this UCP government is doing just that. We continue to work with individuals, consult with community leaders, and listen to those who want to make Alberta stronger for a better future for all. It starts with Bill 14 and the work we have done in the short time we have been in government. We are creating a voice for indigenous peoples. We are encouraging communities to be stewards of the great land, and we are supporting all indigenous peoples so they have the foundation for a strong and stable future.

Mr. Speaker, I've said how many of my colleagues, myself included, have met with members of the multiple indigenous nations found in Alberta. Alberta is situated in three treaty designations: treaties 6, 7, and 8. My constituency of West Yellowhead is situated on Treaty 6. That's the land of Alexis First

Nation. I also have the opportunity to serve the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation, who are an amazing nation with incredible heart and unmatched passion. We have invited community leaders, business leaders, and industry representatives to engage in these discussions with us.

We know that Alberta has a strong natural resource industry, primarily in the oil and gas sector. We are committing through the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation \$1 billion in loan guarantees to support indigenous communities to invest in our economy and support Alberta's economic future. Alberta's indigenous community wants a government that will stand up for them and stand with them, and that is exactly what we are doing with Bill 14. We are working alongside to ensure our indigenous leaders and community members are heard, are represented, and are informed. We are engaging in their culture and promoting the spirit of their ancestors and the sacred heritage they are so proud of. There's no way to turn back time and correct the wrongdoings in our history, but we can move forward, and we can move forward together. We can create a new path towards a strong partnership with our indigenous communities to further economic growth and prosperity and empower indigenous communities to become stronger business partners in investment.

We were elected to get things done. We were trusted to strengthen these partnerships and listen to all Albertans. Mr. Speaker, this government is doing exactly that. A hundred and ninety people attended engagement sessions with this government. That is 190 indigenous community members that wanted to engage with this government and hear how the government is working hard to represent them. We have listened to indigenous leaders, to community members, to industry representatives from Alberta's largest economic contributors, to businessmen and -women. We have listened to Albertans, and we will not stop listening to Albertans because at the end of the day, I want my constituents to know that I am standing up for them every day.

Alberta is full of growth, of prosperity, of valuable resources that push our economic agenda and get our province back on track to being a leader in economic growth. Now indigenous communities want to be involved. You see through this bill that we are promoting that indigenous community investment. Alberta's indigenous communities need a voice. This government is giving them that voice to contribute to Alberta's economy so our province continues to grow economically and their communities benefit from the resources that are found on lands that their ancestors found thousands of years ago.

I am proud to stand here on behalf of Bill 14 and support this bill. I'm proud to be a member of this government that works for improving the lives of all Albertans and cares about our economic future. I believe Bill 14 sets a tone for our interaction with indigenous communities and strengthens the partnership between indigenous communities and government more than it has in previous governments. I hope that you will all join me in supporting this bill.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Prior to affording members with 29(2)(a), I'll just clear up for the record that there was a point of order called at approximately 4:30, and I am ruling that there was no point of order as there was 29(2)(a) afforded during the last speaker.

Going forward, are there any other members looking for the opportunity under 29(2)(a) for questions and comments? I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie has risen to speak on 29(2)(a).

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I found it very interesting to hear the hon. member's comments with respect to the Alberta

indigenous opportunities corporation, and I would love to hear how he feels it will impact his community and the communities surrounding his constituency.

**Mr. Long:** I think that it has the potential to impact in such a major way. I had a recent opportunity, actually, to be at a round dance in Grande Cache with the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation, and they are ecstatic to have a government that looks at them as equal partners, as people that we want to see succeed, and to see that look of anticipation, that in and of itself is going to impact that community in a major way. I think that's where we're coming to. We're letting all communities, all people in our communities just see that we want everyone to succeed and play a part in that success. So yeah, I see it benefiting our communities in a major, major way.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, three and a half minutes left on 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you have to remember where I'm at, you can always reach to your left hand, because we usually sit pretty close over here.

I'm very pleased that our government will be starting the session with Bill 14, a bill that will do wonders for the economic hardships found in the indigenous communities. I think every member of this Assembly would agree that the government of Alberta should be doing more to help with opportunities of the indigenous peoples. Personally, myself as a budding politician or new to this, when I heard about the potential for this bill, I was absolutely ecstatic. Being a former person from the energy sector and dealing with consultation both in Canada and the U.S. across different provinces, this one was going to be a game-changer, and I couldn't wait to share that message with the folks in our communities.

According to a recent study by the Assembly of First Nations, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, indigenous children face the highest rate of poverty in the country, with almost 1 in every 2 First Nations children living in households with low income. That statistic is undeniably abhorrent, and while examining indigenous poverty in Canada as a whole, our province has nothing to brag about. While most Canadians have seen improvement in their quality of life in the last few decades, the same can't be said for the indigenous communities. Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, that's unacceptable. As the Premier has said, the most significant step that we can take to improve this economic disparity is to extend the same opportunities to the indigenous communities. This bill allocates \$1 billion, as we heard, in loan guarantees supporting indigenous communities in their efforts to participate financially in our natural resources by pursuing co-owner development, which has made Alberta so prosperous.

The government was consulting with indigenous businesses and financial leaders throughout the summer, meeting with over nearly 200 people, as we've heard. These consultations are essential to making this an effective piece of legislation and will be an important step in building strong partnerships. I hope that these consultations will continue and that the government will continue to heed the suggestions that came from them.

**4:40**

Poverty is an extremely complex issue, and no one piece of legislation will come close to addressing all the causes. The stats, however, don't lie, and poverty is commonplace on many reserves. It is true that different communities do not necessarily face the same challenges. By investing in indigenous business leaders, the hope is that jobs can be created across whatever industry is most viable in

a particular community. This bill is a direct investment to the indigenous communities that empower those who wish to participate.

Access to credit and loans is a major issue facing indigenous peoples living on-reserve. Individuals living in indigenous communities do not own the lands they live on. Because of this lack of ownership they're not able to put up collateral for major loans. This creates a major impediment to entrepreneurship and small business in general. Indigenous businesses represent only a tiny fraction of Canadian capital investment, and this must be rectified. We are a government that champions the spirit of small business that allows Albertans to thrive, and this bill will help cut unnecessary red tape. It is essential that we help indigenous communities to empower themselves by listening and proposing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, indigenous communities are deeply interested in their own development and well-being. They deserve the ability to responsibly develop for themselves and to have the mechanisms in place to do so. Unemployment on some reserves has reached staggering levels, as we've heard from some of the members in this Legislature. Employment is essential for the building of one's skills as well as a sense of self-worth. Having known many people who at some point of their lives were unemployed, I know that these people are not content being unemployed; they simply have not found the opportunity or been given the chance. It's time that we provide the ability to build strong communities rather than accepting that the unemployment rate on-reserve is significantly higher for indigenous people than off-reserve. That is simply because there are not the same jobs present.

I can already hear the opposition. They're talking about that we're not really caring that much for the communities, and we have this slant towards favouring the oil companies. This couldn't be further from the truth. The legislation empowers indigenous communities to promote industry in whatever way they see fit. It empowers them to become partners in resource development, where historically they have had little leverage. To those that do not support this bill, I would remind them that as a citizen of Canada and one of the most prosperous provinces, one should not be unable to find work. I think we owe our indigenous brothers and sisters better. A balance of building economic prosperity at home is the best way to do so. Indigenous groups should have the ability to develop for themselves. They want future generations to enjoy the bounty of the land and also want the ability to make their own choices. It makes sense that they would want to enjoy a higher standard of living than they do today.

This legislation seeks to break down barriers that indigenous businesses have faced for years and, hopefully, to help spread the spirit of prosperity that we have enjoyed, at least to some of the least well off Albertans. With that there has been dialogue about some of the bands and reservations within the area, and a lot of us are bordering jurisdictions. Within my constituency I have the Paul band, the Alexis, and also the Alexander. I've met with the chiefs and I've met with the councils, and the unanimous consent on this: it isn't asking for help or a hand up or any of those types of things; it's simply asking to be fellow participating Albertans. One former chief had put it to me. He says: you know, if you were here 20 years ago, I'd probably have the war paint on, you'd be in a business suit, and we'd be fighting out in the hallway. But those aren't the days that we're facing today. We're looking toward these partnerships, and we're looking to be active participants. We're also looking at budding energy companies that are looking to actually partner and do the right thing to have those opportunities to build it.

I had those opportunities before in the pipeline industry of sitting at those tables with those individuals, and in my new role as a

politician I'm able to join a couple of these like-minded folks together. The Paul band, for example: it's going to be a great release. We'll have a really good story on it. I'm so pleased to say that a new budding company called good energy and Paul band managed to get together, and I was so proud. I couldn't have been more proud if I was the actual matchmaker because in essence, Mr. Speaker, I kind of was who brought these folks together in that community. They came up, and they saw what the issues and challenges were. The new company wanted to have unfettered access to resources, having good, skilled tradespeople to be there so that in the next wave we're not having to seek outside of our provincial borders for that. The Paul band themselves had a bunch of folks that have skilled trades, but with the rapid phase-out of the coal-fired plants out at Keephills, they're no longer doing the shutdowns. They're no longer working on the capital projects, so they were in some need and distress of having that as well.

The conditions of the roads in the First Nations are substandard. I've seen a lot of bush roads when we were punching in leases that have actually been better than that. As I'm riding in the truck with one of the councillors, Faron Bull, and one of his advisers and former chief, I'm asking him, "What's going on with your roads?" "Well we don't have the money to maintain the roads. We have over 55 kilometres and \$150,000 a year to do it." We started talking about rural crime and some of the issues taking place. They said that a judge had actually paid attention to that, too, because 30 per cent of his caseload is coming from that one reservation. When I ask the councillors very openly: "What is the issue? What's the problem?" "Well, we used to have good roads. We used to have better access for ambulances. We used to have a constable here on the reserve, and he helped keep the bad guys out. They helped deal with the crime."

They know they have issues. So what good energy and the Paul band managed to do was to come up with a model where Paul band owns 5 per cent of this new company. Good energy is going to put a new trade resource centre right on that facility, right taking place, so they'll have unfettered access to train these people up, and they have part ownership. They should have an opportunity to see an income flux of about \$3 million to \$4 million dollars per year within the first year. That will pay for the roads. That will pay for some of the services. That will help fight the crime, and it will keep those bright-eyed, bushy-tailed little kids that are coming out of that schooling system – they're so hopeful and wanting for life. They're going to have an opportunity. They're going to have that pride of ownership that it's going to be their company, something that they've done. This isn't about thinking that they're ready for it and giving out little programs. This is about genuine consultation, genuine partnerships, and setting aside all of those bad legislative items that have been put in the past to keep us at odds. As that one former chief said: with him with the warpaint on and me with the business suit fighting in the hallway.

Bill 14 does that. Minister, thank you so much for your initiative, for your folks for doing that. I know that it's going to help the other communities out there in the province. I know that the Alexis band, for example, has done wonderful things with that business-minded community. The chief there is very forward thinking. Backwoods Energy is a fine, shining example of how they can be involved and engaged in industry and bring those benefits back to the community. This is going to give them that next step, and it's going to help industry be able to have fruitful consultation and to not have impediments in the project. From the bottom of my heart and our constituents', sir, thank you so much.

Our government was elected on the promises that we would get all Albertans working again, and we mean all Albertans. When we're sitting there and we're having these conversations about

Treaty 6 – in my neck of the woods Treaty 6, the emblem on that has two people shaking hands. That's what we have with this bill. That's going back to basics, back to where we started, a genuine handshake. It means a hell of a – a heck of a lot to me. Sorry; I was almost unparliamentary. It means a heck of a lot to me, and I know it means the same for those folks. We can make this handshake, we can make these deals work, and everyone gets with it.

Thank you, sir.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Seeing the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain standing.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland for giving such a heartfelt speech about the impact that, you know, Bill 14 can have, especially in the three indigenous nations that currently exist in his riding: Alexander, Alexis, and Paul band. I know the member has extensive experience managing large industrial construction projects, and he has a widespread amount of experience that really took him all over Canada, looking at different environments. I was hoping, perhaps, that he could elaborate a little bit about, based upon his experience, what he thinks Bill 14 can do when it comes to making an impact on indigenous communities right across Canada and specifically on the three groups that are located within his riding, specifically Paul band First Nation which was, obviously, as everyone knows in this House, drastically affected by the accelerated coal phase-out.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you for your question on that. Yeah. I do have that experience of sitting there. One of the fundamental changes here is that normally when we're doing consultations, it's within a given traditional territory. What happens is, essentially, you put people on a leash. You can only go so far around your proximities or your circles, and you can only stay within your given areas or traditional lands. What this bill does: it unshackles that. It essentially allows, from my understanding of it, and through, you know, the dialogues with these other groups, that they can do any work within the province.

4:50

For the Paul band, for example, they're not waiting or they're not stuck in their own backyard just for that job at Keephills. They literally are going to be part owners, and under this program they might be one of the first few that get through the hopper to be able to partake in this. They can actually go up to Fort McMurray or they can have some other joint-venture partners with other First Nations in those areas. They can actively participate with one or more different companies. It actually gives them the chance that we've all had. It gives them that financial backstop and wherewithal to be taken seriously. As industry we're going to gobble this up. This is wonderful because before we had been boxed in as well.

There's always the true consultation that you need within those territories, and that will never go away. The known traditional lands, that will not go away. But the ability to facilitate business, the ability to have revenue generated off your traditional lands, the ability to work collaboratively with other groups off your lands: this is huge. This is absolutely huge. Once you get that buy-in and that understanding, you can basically tailor-make each one of these little projects, if you would, and you can look at what the needs are within that one community. As an example for Paul band, then, good energy is going to look at their emergent needs because that's how they're going to facilitate this one model. By the same token, they could have another company off to the side, another silo, if you would, with another one of the First Nations groups. Dependent on what their needs are, you can tailor-make that project again, have

them participating, and the company they come up with, that they form, is subtly different. Again, we're allowing that flexibility, like we said, to allow them the opportunities and have that ingenuity to come up with the new models.

This is huge, and that's why I was so ecstatic about it before, Member Turton, because this literally gives the opportunity for all those folks to have that unbridled freedom, that entrepreneurship to get ahead. It's not a hand up. This is definitely levelling the playing field like we've talked about. This is an opportunity for all Albertans, and this is our chance to make it right. That's why I'm so excited about it.

Thank you for that question.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'll just remind members to ensure that they do not use the specific names of members in their comments.

There are still about 60 seconds left on this 29(2)(a) if anybody would like to speak to that.

Seeing none, are there any other members looking to speak to the bill proper?

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House of an incredibly important piece of legislation that is currently before us. Bill 14 is an integral part of our agenda.

Since this government was elected, we have been busy fulfilling our commitment to Albertans of getting this province back on track to economic recovery. We want to see as many people as possible in this province with a good job that allows them to support their families and give back to their communities. Part of this commitment is to improve the lives of indigenous people in Alberta. Our indigenous brothers and sisters have suffered in the past and continue to see intergenerational struggles as a result of this today. We do not stray away from the difficult conversations about the mistreatment that has previously occurred, and we believe as a province that we have a moral obligation to do better as we strive for reconciliation.

Unemployment among some First Nations is at a high rate. The natural resource industry has provided rewarding and consistent work for many people in this province. We believe that there is a more significant role that indigenous people in Alberta can play in the development of natural resources, with a benefit that will last for generations. The indigenous people of Alberta have been stewards of the land for millennia. They learned to live with, protect, and use this province's abundant natural resources to ensure that their communities would prosper, from food to clothing to medicine. We believe that this knowledge should be utilized. That is why we set out to listen to indigenous Albertans about how they could be partnered with and supported in profiting from our natural resources. Our government has consulted with indigenous groups and business leaders far and wide across the province. We hosted eight engagement sessions with about 200 participants that helped craft this legislation. I want to thank those who took part in the meetings which informed the development of this bill.

Previous governments have taken an approach to indigenous Albertans. We're thinking differently. We want to put some of that power back into their hands. Today we are welcoming indigenous Albertans to the table as stakeholders in future natural resource exploration and development.

Bill 14 proposes the creation of an Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, which is called AIOC. The AIOC will bridge the gap between indigenous groups wanting to be commercial partners in the natural resource sector. This will include up to \$1 billion in loan guarantees. It will also allow the AIOC to leverage other financial tools such as equity loans. This is so important because First Nation people living on reserves do not



have property rights like other Canadians. For far too long they have been unable to accumulate capital or mortgage their properties to start up new businesses.

It is time to harness the entrepreneurial spirit of Alberta's First Peoples and ensure that they have the means to put food on their tables and a roof over their heads. We do not just want to gain the money needed to buy into significant projects. We always hear in consultation with indigenous communities that they wish to be more self-sufficient. What we are proposing through the AIOC is a partnership that will allow communities to find new revenue streams which can enable them to be independent and to not have to rely on federal money.

Mr. Speaker, this government believes in moving past symbolic gestures. They do have their place, but the time for action is now. During the last election Chief Billy Morin alongside Premier Kenney said that the plan for the Alberta aboriginal opportunities corporation was a step in the right direction and that nobody has ever stepped up to the plate and put their money where their mouth is. Today we are committing to putting our money where our mouth is. What you see before you is a demonstration of a government that keeps its promise. This proposal is the first of its kind in Canada and further establishes our province as a leader in this country when it comes to natural resource development. I am proud to say that I believe when indigenous people benefit, all Albertans benefit.

Bill 14 sets the standard and tone for this government's interaction with indigenous communities. This is a tone of consultation and respect which recognizes the rich cultural practices and traditions which are practised to this day while looking forward with a commitment to creating a more positive future. As a government we talk about reducing red tape, and we champion the importance of small business and entrepreneurship. This bill puts indigenous Albertans and their hopes and aspirations at the forefront of our economic agenda. Our proposal is neither left nor right wing. It is about doing the right thing where in the past there has been wrong.

Our province has a very bright future ahead. In the spirit of equity we wish to see all Albertans benefit. This means indigenous Albertans. I share the excitement of many Albertans and indigenous communities in supporting this bill. I understand that from time to time we will have disagreement in this House on how we achieve what we believe is best for this province. Today I hope that my colleagues across this Chamber will see this opportunity that we have before us in Bill 14 and will also share their support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:00

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak on this bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has the floor.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have worked hard recently in this House to get Alberta back on track to economic recovery. That is the goal of everyone in this House, I believe. We've made sure that this country and the world know that we are proudly open for business. As remarkable as the strides we have made since forming government are, what is even more remarkable are the opportunities inherent in better fiscal stewardship and ongoing economic development, full and broadly spoken. These opportunities need to be available to every Albertan. Every Albertan.

As much as we want to be able to say that one approach works for all or that one policy or one decision can solve the majority of

difficulties we face in getting this province back on track and Albertans back to work, we also know that this isn't the reality that everyone unilaterally experiences. We know that there are different barriers, considerations, practices, and perspectives that we need to consider when we talk about economic development and economic advancement. Our economic strategy, as a government that believes in the value of everyone who calls Alberta home, must consider the broad range of experiences that make us all who we are. Though we are bound together by grit, sweat, and a whole lot of get 'er done spirit, we cannot regret to ask about or advance the important qualities that make us unique and different or place us on different paths on our journeys to success in this great province.

More importantly, we cannot ignore discussions regarding individual or group participation and involvement in our energy industry, specifically, that may be difficult to face or address such as reconciling with indigenous individuals and groups across Alberta. It would be easy to say that everyone has had access to the same doors of economic opportunity in this province and in this province's energy sector. However, what's easy to say isn't often the truth, and it certainly isn't when we consider our past relationships with indigenous groups and the ongoing work of reconciliation that is necessary in, amongst, and as a part of our developing relationships between indigenous and nonindigenous Albertans.

This is why I believe the necessity of Bill 14, proudly brought forward by our Minister of Indigenous Relations, and the establishment of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation are so essential. I cannot think of another bill that would be as important or as significant to the beginning of this session and the beginning of another chapter in this government's history and, of course, the future of our province. We are setting the tone of how we see Alberta and how we value the indigenous participation and partnerships through making this bill our top priority in this session and in this sitting. Indigenous peoples across this province deserve a government – their government – that will work to make reconciliation more than a buzzword repeated through government documents. I know that certainly this government will be one that keeps our promises and our word to our indigenous partners. Promises made and promises kept apply to all in this great province.

This bill does not focus on what divides us, but it acknowledges the incredible opportunity and incredibly important cultural, traditional, and intergenerational factors that our indigenous communities carry with them when we discuss economic opportunities in our natural resource sector. We are no longer paying lip service to the importance of indigenous involvement in Alberta's outstanding natural resources sector, Mr. Speaker. This is important to all of us, and this bill gives us a concrete road map to furthering indigenous involvement and bolstering indigenous interests in our natural resource economy. That is the goal of this bill.

We are not only opening the door to natural resource development for indigenous groups in this province but giving concrete reasons and paths and supports as to why they should take a chance and walk with us on a path back to the Alberta advantage. The value of engaging indigenous Albertans in our natural resource sector cannot be understated. As stewards and partners in developing our natural resource, we owe it to them to consider how they may have been unable to access economic development opportunities in the past. This bill addresses some of those challenges. We do so in order to better provide opportunities for them to build a brighter future for all.

Mr. Speaker, empowerment doesn't begin at success, nor does success come without failure. We've all tested it, we've all tasted it, and we will undoubtedly face it in the future, but that is not a

reason to not pursue it. In the past we may have failed to fully consider and anticipate the needs of our indigenous partners. We may have failed to bolster an environment where inclusion is just as important as development success, and we may have failed to make it known to interested indigenous groups that their investment and participation are both wanted and sincerely valued. As difficult as this past might be for some of us to recall, we cannot hide our history out of shame. We must face the challenges of the past and change the future.

There have been many times when indigenous groups wanting to participate in our booming resource sector have been shut out or excluded from the table. That is not good enough. The only way we can rectify these past misdeeds and mismanagement, this past oversight is to address it in the open and take positive steps together to rectify this relationship and develop it further for the future. Mr. Speaker, I thank our minister for taking these steps for us. Today we are boldly declaring that we are welcoming indigenous partners to the table and further establishing Alberta as a leader in cultivating investments from indigenous groups in our natural resource sector. This is the shared economy which we envision.

I would like to thank those that took part in the various engagement sessions, as have been referenced by some of my colleagues, regarding the establishment of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. It was a busy summer, I know, for our minister. Without hearing the very real and lived experiences of aspiring indigenous energy sector partners and entrepreneurs, this bill would not have been able to come to fruition, and the establishment of this revolutionary and, dare I say, evolutionary initiative wouldn't be possible.

It's difficult to accept that indigenous partners have in some cases been left in the dark for so long regarding their capacities and capabilities and eagerness to contribute to the sustainable and innovative development of our energy sector, but this bill provides a clear path forward and a clear method by which we can engage our indigenous partners to the greatest extent of their involvement. It gives them the tools to participate. We have an obligation and a duty to the indigenous peoples who have called this land home for hundreds of years before many of us arrived, the so-called pioneers in this province. Well, let me tell you that those pioneers were here already.

We have a responsibility as legislators to ensure that we're giving each and every individual and group in this province the greatest opportunity and the greatest opportunity available to succeed, Mr. Speaker. We have said that we will help everybody to reach their full potential. This bill empowers indigenous communities to reach their full potential as a committed partner in this venture, not just as a committed partner but with a commitment from our government to make this something that is important to all Albertans. Through decisively supporting indigenous co-ownership and codevelopment of natural resource development projects, we are fulfilling our obligation to collaborate with and assist those who came here before us. We are also developing capacities for intergenerational success, to change the conversation going forward. This is unmistakable and will have an impact on generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, when every single person in our province is able to succeed, to reach that full potential, we will have a stronger and more vibrant province for all. This includes righting past wrongs and ensuring that Albertans, including the many indigenous peoples who've called this land home, are able to fully participate and enjoy the economic advantages – yes, that Alberta advantage, which we are rebuilding – that we can offer them as part of this vision.

Mr. Speaker, I had the great opportunity over the last couple of years – and I know that he stood with the minister today – to spend some time with Calvin Helin and to learn more about the Eagle Spirit energy corridor, which I believe is a great opportunity for us

finally to break the logjam and to get our products, our resources to market. It's no longer good enough for us to have corporations develop ideas and plans and projects and investments and then consult with the First Nations people, the indigenous peoples of this land. What impressed me the most with the vision that I saw from Calvin was that they wanted a true partnership. They wanted to be co-proponents – with Canadians, with Albertans, with people in British Columbia – of developing a plan and a vision for economic prosperity.

5:10

I truly believe that that co-propoundment, that partnership, is the only way that we can actually get these projects done. We've tried and we've tried, and we've been stymied by various levels of government and environmental groups, but to stand shoulder to shoulder with the indigenous peoples of this country and not just the Eagle Spirit energy corridor but the national energy corridor, which we also hear conversations about, which is essential – to me, the pipelines that will be part of this initiative are the railway of the new millennium. Where would Canada be if we did not have that railway? Well, I'd say that 100 years from now they will be saying: where would Canada be if we did not get these pipelines built and the other projects attached to the Alberta indigenous opportunities company? Mr. Speaker, make no mistake; this is not about doing something for someone. It's about doing something with someone, with the indigenous peoples of this great province, and we will get it done.

This bill has been a long time coming, Mr. Speaker. I encourage everyone in this House unanimously to be part of history through supporting this groundbreaking piece of legislation, supporting our minister in his hard work, supporting our government and the people of this Legislature in actually making this happen, passing this bill quickly, and getting to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has risen.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was just enjoying this discussion here on Bill 14. I guess I just wanted to encourage the member to maybe continue on a little bit along the vein of the opportunity and how this bill creates so much more opportunity for the First Nations in this province. He talked also about the minister and how much work he's put in and how many miles he's put on, consulting on this and making sure that this is what First Nations people want and what Albertans want and what the industry wants in Alberta. He talked also about the partnership that this makes with the people of Alberta and the First Nations.

You know, our commitment in the last election had a lot to do with jobs, economy, and getting investment back in Alberta. I guess he could also maybe comment on that, too, how this bill fulfills that vision and our commitment to Albertans that we brought forward in our campaign. I think this opportunity is again – I guess that's what it's all about. This is an opportunity for growth and an opportunity for jobs and employment and bringing people up in their standard of living. I'd just like to hear the member's comments along those veins.

Thanks.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question, the opportunity to speak a bit more on this

great opportunity. There are a few things that I'd like to share. Number one, I think, is that, again – and I think it was mentioned by some of the other hon. members in the House – this is not about a handout; this is about a hand up. This is about working together to ensure that we provide the resources and the supports, sometimes in a world that is not always balanced, not always equitable, not always equal or fair, but we can create that opportunity. That opportunity is only that: it's an opportunity to run with this and to be full participants in rebuilding the Alberta advantage. I know that everybody in this House actually is focused on that opportunity, to bring back the Alberta advantage.

I often say that the Alberta advantage means something different. It means something to most Albertans I speak to, almost every Albertan I speak to. When you say the words "Alberta advantage," something is conjured up in their mind, in their memory, or just in their emotions about what that means. It might be the health care that they were assisted in. It might be the education they received. It might be the opportunities, the entrepreneurial opportunities, that were presented to them. It might be something that happened to their family where there were supports in place because of the resources that were generated through the economy that we were so proud to have built in this province and which we are driving forward on.

When we embrace our indigenous people through the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation and provide that pathway – that's all it is; it's a pathway, a path which can be chosen – we open up the opportunity for that path to be addressed, to be taken. That path has not existed in the way it should have, and today we have an opportunity – and the sooner we can pass this bill, I would say, the better – to move that, to create that path ahead of us with this as the green light at the end of that path, the way that they can walk that path strongly, bravely, with an opportunity and with a vision not just for the future of this province but for themselves, for their families, and for generations to come.

Again, thank you to the member for the opportunity to speak to this. I think that this bill is more than what it appears to be on the surface. It is an Alberta indigenous opportunities company, but it is a vision for inclusion, a vision for participation, a vision for us to work together as Team Alberta as we move forward, all of us in this room and beyond this room, those that we represent in the 87 constituencies across this great province. This is a pathway for Team Alberta to fire on all cylinders as we move forward and to bring everybody into an opportunity. This is not the end of it. This is the beginning of it. Let's hope this is the beginning of this great path which opens far and wide and re-creates and renews the Alberta advantage.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Thirty seconds left on 29(2)(a).

Seeing no one, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie has the floor.

**Mrs. Allard:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to rise and speak today in support of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called all Canadians to action. We have, each and every one of us, been called to walk the path of reconciliation with all the indigenous peoples in our great country. Specifically, Canadians are called to fulfill our moral obligation to walk the path of economic reconciliation and to ensure that indigenous peoples have access to jobs, training, and educational opportunities and that indigenous communities participate in the prosperity derived from economic development projects.

Too often our indigenous people have been disenfranchised and left out of the prosperity pie. That must change. It is a challenge to fulfill our moral obligations to ensure that indigenous communities are partners in the prosperity of our federation. But, as the saying goes, if it was easy, everyone would do it. It is easy for governments to pay lip service to their moral duties. It requires a concerted effort to reconcile the past and move forward as partners with indigenous peoples. Bill 14 is one tangible step in that direction. I am proud to say that that is the action our government has introduced, and no other government, not territorial, not provincial, nor federal, has matched our government's commitment to real reconciliation.

Our Conservative government has accepted this responsibility. We have accepted the challenge to move beyond symbolic gestures and into real action towards reconciliation and change for the future. As we promised during the election, our Conservative government has put forward a plan towards economic reconciliation. This plan does not involve government stepping in to achieve reconciliation because reconciliation cannot be achieved by government alone. It cannot be achieved with a partnership of just the government and indigenous peoples. Reconciliation requires indigenous peoples, Canadians, and government to come together and partner in moving forward.

This bill before us today cements an economic partnership with government and with the indigenous peoples of our province so that each of us and each indigenous person and community can become full partners in prosperity, truly realizing the Alberta advantage. As partners in the prosperity of our province and our federation indigenous peoples will have the support they need to develop their local economies and their local communities.

We will ensure that our indigenous communities have the opportunity to participate in the natural resource development all across our province. Alberta has vast natural resources, from the oil sands in Fort McMurray and the Montney formation near my constituency of Grande Prairie to the vast forests which stretch across the north of our province. We in Alberta have an abundance of natural resources. Natural resource development affords our communities the ability to thrive even with the higher cost of living, and it is time we extend this opportunity and encourage indigenous partnership in our natural resource development.

Through the creation of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation we will facilitate indigenous participation in the development of our natural resources going forward. With this corporation we are reserving \$1 billion for indigenous communities to become partners in prosperity, a support that opens the door to capital projects and prosperity that would never have been feasible without this backstop.

5:20

Many indigenous communities experience interruptions in the most basic of services and sometimes lack those basic services altogether. Most Albertans, like myself, take these basic services like reliable electricity and safe drinking water for granted. Indigenous communities in our province must enjoy the same standards as the rest of the province, and the development that will be facilitated through this corporation will provide a baseline level of economic activity for our indigenous communities to develop the services other areas take for granted. These communities will be able to participate in the development of the vast wealth that comes from the land their ancestors walked for generations.

The indigenous peoples of Alberta have the desire, the workforce, and the motivation to become partners in our resource prosperity, and the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation provides the opportunity to realize that partnership and provides a chance at economic reconciliation. It links our prosperity together

so that when Alberta wins, we all win together. Indeed, the indigenous peoples were Alberta's first entrepreneurs and built strong communities that guided future generations. That spirit lingers still within the indigenous people of Alberta, and if we give them the opportunity, they will manifest it again.

Many indigenous communities are already beginning to take that spirit and apply it to resource development. That is why we have already acted to help bridge the gap and provide an opportunity to reignite that entrepreneurial spirit. Our government has set up \$10 million in an indigenous litigation fund so that the voices of indigenous people fighting for their right to develop and profit from natural resources will be heard in court when others are trying to shut them down.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to act on reconciliation, not just to talk about it. It is time to uphold our moral duty to move toward reconciliation fully. Today, by supporting this bill for the establishment of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, I support our platform commitment to truly make life better for all Albertans. I wanted to thank the minister now for his leadership on this important initiative and for leading the way for our caucus to reach out and really, truly consult with the indigenous peoples of our province. Now I ask the members of this Assembly to commit themselves to walking the path of economic reconciliation by cementing a partnership in prosperity with our province's indigenous peoples by voting in support of this bill and supporting the development of this corporation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I see under 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has risen.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her heartfelt statement. I'm really interested, you know, as I talk to my colleagues from both sides of the House, across this province. It always amazes me: their own personal connections with the indigenous communities across this province, the personal stories that they have to tell, some of the opportunities they've had to live and work in the communities with the indigenous populations of their area, to work with them in partnership, to work with them in fun and adventure and education, all the different things. When I hear these stories, it really, to me, brings an opportunity to learn about this province. As I hear the stories from the minister with respect to the number of meetings he held in the summer, which I'm jealous about – I wish I was there to join him for those meetings and the opportunities to learn and to share culture and history and the joy of living in this great province.

When I see that opportunity, I'm always reminded to ask the questions and to find out more, so I'd like to ask the member if she has any personal stories, some anecdotal stories about some opportunities she's had in her community to really feel that sense of partnership, which maybe had been stymied but where she can see that that might be an opportunity as we move forward for the Alberta indigenous opportunities company to create those kinds of opportunities right in her own community.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I do have multiple personal stories. I grew up in Whitehorse, Yukon, adjacent to a number of indigenous communities, but I think the story that I'll focus on today is a business-related story from our early days in the franchise system that my husband and I worked in. One of our first employees was a member of an indigenous community – we lived on the west coast

of British Columbia – and he rose quickly through the ranks. He was our star baker, and then he became our manager and our senior leader outside of my husband and myself within our small organization at that time. He showed such incredible skill and desire to move up in the world. He had so many aspirations.

I would say that the one thing that held him back was his lack of opportunity, his lack of capacity to go back to school, his lack of funding to invest in something. But he had truly an entrepreneurial spirit, and he was exactly the kind of person that would have been perfect to invest in the business that we were participating in. I believe that if he'd had access to something like this opportunity corporation, he would be his own entrepreneur today. Unfortunately, that opportunity was not available to him at the time, but I believe that with this opportunity, going forward there'll be many people, as you said before and as many others have said in this House, that will get a hand up instead of a handout. It will really and truly change the trajectory for generations to come, not only in Alberta but in Canada. I'm very, very excited about it.

Thank you for the question.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a little over a minute and a half left on 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill proper? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and pleasure to speak here on Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. This government is proud to be working with indigenous leaders on the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, and it is about time that the Alberta government took concrete steps to improve the well-being of indigenous Albertans and to consult with indigenous Albertans on a regular basis. Unlike the previous government, who did nothing to integrate Alberta's oil and gas prosperity with indigenous communities, this government will work hand in hand with indigenous groups to restore dignity and opportunity to indigenous Albertans and the thousands of communities they live in. Our government is dedicated to partnering with Alberta indigenous communities and building economic and social well-being.

The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation allocates a billion dollars in loan guarantees to support aboriginal coal operation and financial participation in major resource development because it is a moral obligation to help our First Nations benefit from the resources that lie below the ground that their ancestors inhabited thousands of years ago.

While we're looking forward to this partnership, the previous NDP government took every step it could to undercut and destroy this province's oil and gas sector. We are a resource-based economy, and the previous government did not embrace that fact. You know, there are a lot of questions about the previous government. Why did they kick puppies? Why do they hate children? Why do they snatch walking canes away from old people? So many questions, but we can only just talk about ourselves, and we know that things like the job-killing carbon tax was a reckless ideological policy that set this province on track for \$100 billion in debt. Fortunately, Albertans chose right. They chose the United Conservative Party.

Mr. Speaker, putting this province in debt only hurts the communities that the previous government claimed to support. Let me assure this Chamber and all Albertans that cleaning up our balance sheet while partnering with indigenous groups will be a huge step in the right direction for Alberta and our essential oil and gas industry.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I come from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. If we go strictly by my constituency lines, I truly have all

the major players in the oil sands industry, and not only that, with your Syncrudes and your Suncors and your CNRLs, Teck is looking at a huge operation up there as well as all of their expansions. I also have within my region the Fort McKay First Nation, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. I have the Mikisew Cree First Nation. I also have the Fort McKay Métis, the Fort Chipewyan Métis, and the Fort McMurray Métis.

Let me tell you something about these indigenous groups in my region. They all have a fairly good life right now. They have a decent amount of prosperity. In my previous life working in emergency services, I worked in places like Ponoka and Peace River, where I was exposed to indigenous communities that weren't so fortunate, that didn't have that involvement with industry, that by all means of assessing a community would be considered quite poverty stricken. When I look at the communities in my region, they are quite prosperous, quite frankly, and it's because they work with our oil industry. They have the ability to talk and get support in education and skills, trades and are able to work and run businesses in conjunction with these oil companies.

You know, for a group like, say, Fort McKay First Nation, it all started out with Syncrude needing some transportation like a taxi service on their sites. They worked with the Fort McKay First Nation to actually own that and take that over and manage it. That was a first step, the foot in the door for Fort McKay First Nation to really be embraced by the oil companies, and that prosperity led to the people in that community having more financial stability so that they could send their children to universities and colleges and schools as well as build a proper house with all the amenities.

5:30

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I was working in Ponoka and I had to go to Maskwacis, the houses that I went into, quite honestly, were torn up, okay? They tore out the floorboards, they would tear off their oak cupboards, and they were burning those in the fireplace so that they would have heat, okay? I don't see any of that up north. I don't see that desperation in them. They have adequate access to all sorts of good things that we have, that we love in our first-world nation that most of us are lucky enough to have.

These groups are really enjoying the fact that we have a new government in place, a government that is looking at them and taking them seriously. I've been fortunate. I've had some ministers – the Minister of Indigenous Relations, the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Transportation – that were all kind enough to go all the way up to Fort Chipewyan. Let me tell you about those groups up there. They were so pleased to see these individuals. They recognized the great work that they were doing, that they're willing to work with them, and that the future was going to be bright. I want to thank those three individuals for coming up and engaging them and embracing them, and we all look forward to that engagement. It's going to be excellent.

They said as much to me, and they're very, very proud. To that, they also started bragging to me afterwards about some of their potential investments that they have available to them with new groups like Teck Resources coming with their new mine and some expansions that are going on with CNRL and others. When we were talking about this Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, they were very ecstatic and very enthusiastic. They saw this as another opportunity to leverage their know-how and their skills and share that with not only other First Nations across the province but also to help themselves as well continue to get that hand up. Again, it's a hand up and not a handout.

These are the things that this government is trying to do, that this government is trying to accomplish, that by teaching people how to fish, we don't have to just give them the fish anymore, that they can

do these things on their own. When you talk to the individuals, that is very much what they want. I've had people over the years come to me, friends who live in town, who are quite proud that they are working at the oil companies and not getting a federal grant for a house. There's pride in that and pride in refusing federal money for such things as a home because they had the ability to build their own home and manage that home, and they had the ability, because they're working at these oil companies, to send their children to universities and colleges and get that other education so that they don't have to go back to lower, more manual labour, if you will. They're trying to escape that cycle of poverty that we sometimes see in indigenous communities.

The communities in my region are excelling. They're aggressive. They want to grow more, they want to become more independent, and this government – and they recognize this – is the government that can do it for them. Don't even ask me about what they think of the previous government. Major disappointment there, but that's a whole other story. I digress.

As I was saying, Albertans did elect us to fix the previous government's mess one policy at a time. Again, this government, our government, was pleased to host eight engagement sessions between July 10 and August 8 this year, which engaged almost 200 participants. Developing this plan is just the first step in rebuilding a damaged relationship between the government of Alberta and indigenous groups that, again, the previous government just perpetuated and worsened.

The ability of indigenous groups to provide adequate security to financial lenders is a significant barrier in their ability to access capital and the capacity to develop or invest in major resource projects, and it really does vary widely across all the indigenous communities. Again, the communities in my region are very fortunate in that they were at the beginning of all this, and many First Nations I think see the benefits of working with industry, of working with the government, and we have the right people in place, with these great ministers, to push that forward. For that, I thank them again so much.

This government will work out the challenges between the energy sector and the indigenous stakeholders, again, to ensure that everyone benefits from our energy potential. All stakeholders, including our indigenous groups, are being given an opportunity to voice their opinions, their concerns, and questions. Again, that was epitomized by the fact that I had three fantastic ministers show up in Fort Chipewyan and embrace and talk and engage with these community leaders.

Again, participants are going to be far and wide. They all want to join in and work with our indigenous groups. Syncrude, Suncor, ATCO, and EPCOR also have been joining these engagement sessions. All industry wants to work with our indigenous groups because we all have the same thing as goal: we want Canada to prosper and for that prosperity to be for everyone, not just certain left-wing elitists, certainly.

Alberta is the land of opportunity for everyone, and this government is looking forward to fulfilling that promise and building an Alberta for everyone. That, again, includes our indigenous communities. We're excited to be working with coalitions: representatives from Eagle Spirit Energy, the First Nations Major Projects Coalition, Project Reconciliation, the Iron Coalition, the Western Indigenous Pipeline Group, and the Fort McKay Mikisew Cree tank farm project. Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that there are many, many more projects on the horizon, but that said, this fall's election here federally will really impact a lot of that, what goes on here. But, again, that's another discussion.

These groups have all offered extremely valuable insight during our engagement sessions and will continue to be valuable partners

with this government in the coming years. We will not stand idly by and let these Albertans fall through the cracks. We have the responsibility as legislators to advance the prospects of all Albertans. We were elected with a huge mandate to get Albertans back to work. Working with our indigenous communities is a part of this mandate. And righting the wrongs of the previous government: well, we're trying to do that for everything, really, so it's a step at a time, and this is just one file in so many.

Mr. Speaker, it is about developing a safer future for indigenous communities as well, because when these communities prosper, when they all have money, when they can afford the basics like in Maslow's hierarchy of shelter, food, and then getting the basics of education and everything else, it just brings them all up and enables them not to get into certain situations where they find themselves getting dragged down, back into poverty. Again, this benefits everyone. This really benefits a group who have not been able to necessarily benefit from such resources, but by working with this government, we can certainly do so.

There are a lot of things that we have to develop in these communities, Mr. Speaker, and they've been doing it on their own. As an example, again, in my community the First Nations work with the oil sands companies to build things like – believe it or not – facilities for their seniors. They have a brand new facility that they built in conjunction with oil companies so that they can have their seniors stay in Fort McKay and not have to travel all the way to Fort McMurray. Having those elders in their community teaching their young ones is a fantastic thing. The knowledge gets passed on. These are great things. These are the things that we want to see in our indigenous communities. We want to see that embracing of our youth with our seniors. It's fantastic to see how they've taken these challenges and work with the oil companies and get the amenities that we all really, truly desire.

5:40

We do recognize that there are structural challenges that many communities face, and again we're going to help them with this indigenous opportunities corporation. This will provide some great supports for our indigenous people. This is about teaching people how to fish and not just giving them the fish. It is about a hand up and not a handout, and it is a reflection of what a good government is all about, a good government that creates the policies and the environment that promotes and encourages business and the citizens to work together for the benefit of all. It's not about imposing rules and regulations on people, making them follow them to the T, and "Oh, this rule and regulation impairs this, so let's add more rules and regulations." That's why we have the minister of red tape, to reduce these kinds of things.

Again, there's still so much work to be done, and I believe that we have the right people in charge to get this working. We have 63 amazing people on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that are all working hard and all strongly believe in this. I believe that if there's any government that can do this and work with our indigenous people, it is this government that can do it. [Mr. Yao's speaking time expired] Oh, perfect.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has risen.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to tell us what the future holds. Again, part of it is the contrast that you can see with some of the communities that haven't been able to participate such as the Fort McKay groups. I've had the ability to be up there, interact with those folks, have the time to see how far they've

progressed on those. One example was a gentleman who was actually developing drone technology for flying out and looking at the surveillance in Syncrude and Suncor. Those are some of the stories that I think other folks might want to hear about, to see how far they can go once they have that opportunity, and that are inspiring, quite frankly, for the folks in my community. If you could, please.

**Mr. Yao:** My good friend, that is a very good question, and unfortunately I don't have enough time to go into real detail as to these things that you asked about. Certainly, things like this will help us, hopefully, to get things like pipelines built and allow more of our indigenous communities to the south to also be engaged in these processes and get this needed infrastructure built so that we have a local source of energy and not import products from Iraq and Iran and the Middle East and Venezuela and, heaven forbid, the United States. Again, these are all opportunities that our indigenous communities will gladly, I think, embrace. I think they see the light. I think they have the understanding. Again, all they have to do is look up north to the amazing constituency of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and just see the prosperity there.

Again, so many things that you asked there truly depend on this next election, this federal election that's coming up in two weeks. I should probably not say too many details of what my friends up north have told me. Certainly, whoever gets into government will create enough confidence for companies to invest and build and progress in a lot of these expansions and new plants, but if the wrong government gets in, I'm very, very afraid when I see oil executives prepared to sell their homes in my community. It's a precarious line that we face right now. I hope that Canadians across our nation are going to recognize the benefits and the fact that we are a resource-based economy and that we have to use these things so that we can get everyone out of poverty and help lead the world in prosperity.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, two more minutes under 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill proper? I see the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to be back in the House. Welcome back to everybody. You know, this bill, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, is one of those times when I'm really glad that we're back in the House. There is much good that we can do in this House, and sometimes there's much that we can do that just seems like we're spinning our wheels and maybe in the process not always getting along with each other. But I am very pleased to be back and to be able to stand here and speak to this bill, the very first bill of this session, and I want to thank the minister for bringing it forward.

When I first ran and was elected to the Alberta Legislature, in 2015, like I believe just about everybody in this House, all the MLAs in this House, I ran because I wanted a Legislature that would listen and would act in what I perceived to be the best interests of just your average, everyday Albertan. It was my privilege to be elected to this Assembly. Over the past five years that I've been here as a part of this institution, it's been my privilege to be a voice for my constituents and to address each of the bills that have been brought before this House and to help fashion a way forward for the people of Alberta through this Legislature.

Hopefully, we've done that. We've been able to go back to our constituents, and we've been able to seek out their vision for the kind of Alberta that they would like to have and been able to act on

that. Now, as a Christian – in the Bible, in Proverbs 29:18, it says, “Where there is no vision, the people [will] perish.” I believe that it’s one of the primary jobs of leadership, one of the primary jobs of our Premier, one of the primary jobs of our cabinet and for ourselves as Members of this Legislative Assembly to provide vision and leadership for the people of Alberta.

I remember the first time that I heard about this idea. It was just an idea then, this idea that would eventually become Bill 14. It was one of those rare times in my life when the suggested idea, the vision that’s expressed in Bill 14 for moving forward, just clicked, and I just went: “Oh, yeah. That’s right. That’s how we do it. That’s how we go forward.”

I could instantly see where the idea of creating an indigenous opportunity fund would answer so many of the problems and questions that I believe that we as Albertans were struggling with. How do we ensure that Alberta’s First Nations were actually full partners in this Alberta that we want to share and live together in? How could we provide a hand up for people that have too often struggled to overcome the many historical obstacles that have been placed in their path? How do we ensure that we as a wider Alberta society are partners in prosperity with all of the diversity of the people that make up this great province? How do we ensure that Alberta’s First Nations people are active participants and choice-makers in the decisions that are going to affect them as they move forward into the future of this province? How do we get past the rhetoric and the symbolic gestures to meaningfully impact the very real problems that the First Nations Albertans in my constituency and across this province face on a daily basis?

In addressing these very real needs and the needs of this province, how do we make sure that we have access, for instance, to tidewater for our oil and gas? How do we bring First Nations onboard so that they are fully supportive and the beneficiaries of these important resources in Alberta? How do we as a group of legislators provide the meaningful, well-paying jobs for all Albertans, upon which family stability and housing and health and government programs all depend? When I first heard about this idea, all of those things just went boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, and I could see how this could be of benefit to all Albertans but especially to First Nations Albertans.

5:50

When Premier Kenney and the Minister of Indigenous Relations went into my constituency today to the Canadian Energy Museum, which commemorates the growth of Alberta’s energy industry on the site – we met on the very site where Leduc No. 1 was first drilled – my conviction that Bill 14 would help move us forward in answering many of these questions was absolutely confirmed. I listened to both the Premier and to Minister Wilson but especially to the many chiefs that were present this morning as they testified to the soundness of the vision of Bill 14.

Bill 14 gets it right. Bill 14 will create the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. Bill 14 envisions an Alberta where our indigenous First Nations will have the capacity to access the capital that is necessary for them to be able to invest in our natural resources projects. This Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation will be able to directly or indirectly make a loan or acquire an existing loan. It can issue a loan guarantee or purchase shares or other forms of equity, or it can enter into a joint venture or a partnership.

I heard First Nation leaders today state clearly that Bill 14 is a historic bill, that it will have a meaningful impact on the lives of their people. I can’t think of anything better that we could be doing in this Legislature than providing a meaningful impact that will help the people of this province. That’s our job. That’s what we were

elected to do, and I am so proud of the fact that we can stand here today and talk about Bill 14 and how it’s going to improve the lives of the people of this province.

I heard that never have these communities had an opportunity like this, to access \$1 billion in loan guarantees to support aboriginal co-ownership and financial participation in the major resource development projects of this province. Never before. As a matter of fact, some were saying that never in any other place in the world has this been done. This is indeed a historic piece of legislation that deserves the support of every one of the people in this Legislature.

Bill 14 will create a Crown corporation with a board of directors to manage and supervise the management of the AIOC’s business and affairs, but this board of directors will have meaningful First Nations representation. While the AIOC is at an arm’s-length distance from the government, the government will maintain an appropriate level of oversight. We do have a responsibility to all of the citizens of this province and to the taxpayer dollars that they entrust to us, so it is a right thing, a good thing, to create a corporation that has a board of directors with meaningful First Nations input and participation that will have the oversight of this government to ensure that these dollars are spent in the best interests of all Albertans. We know that a deputy minister will have observer status on the board of directors and that the Minister of Indigenous Relations will have the authority to issue directives to the AIOC, and this is a wise check and balance.

The vision of Bill 14 to create a pathway to prosperity for Alberta’s First Nations will create a provincial economy that works for all Albertans. In my constituency I have the privilege to represent the Enoch First Nation band in the Legislature. This morning Chief Billy Morin of the Enoch reserve spoke to Bill 14 at the Canadian Energy Museum. In that speech he talked about his grandfather’s vision in the 1960s for how the oil and gas industry could help address the many obstacles that blocked the way forward for his people. It is the hope of our government and, I believe, this Legislature that Bill 14 will help to make Chief Morin’s grandfather’s vision a reality.

I know that many of Alberta’s First Nations people have overcome the obstacles of history and have prospered in spite of the government of the day and the law of the day. It is with great satisfaction that I stand here today and speak in support of a bill that will not only help my First Nations constituents access the Alberta economy, but it will help move all Alberta citizens to have access to a prosperous future where all of our citizens have the capacity to benefit from our resource-based projects.

Bill 14 ends the economic model of a culture of dependency, and it replaces it with a vision of individual freedom and capacity-building, which will allow indigenous Albertans to participate as a full partner in this civil society that we call Alberta. Reconciliation can and must take many forms. Economic reconciliation through Bill 14 is just one step forward, but it is an important step forward, and I am proud that it is our government that in partnership with Alberta’s original citizens has taken this step towards a more prosperous future for all Albertans.

Thank you, Minister.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill proper?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations to close debate should he so choose.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Yes. As deputy House leader, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn until tomorrow, October 9, at 9 a.m.

**The Acting Speaker:** Just to clarify, your intention is to adjourn debate – correct? – not the House.

**Mrs. Savage:** Yes. My intention is to adjourn debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** Adjourn debate. Okay.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy and Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mrs. Savage:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn until tomorrow, October 9, at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, October 9, 2019

Day 25

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration



## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, October 9, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, everyone.

Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. May Your kingdom come, and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 14

#### Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

[Adjourned debate October 8: Mrs. Savage]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 14? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

Before I get into my remarks, I would like to first take this opportunity to thank you, Madam Speaker, your office, and this entire Legislature, from whom a beautiful arrangement of flowers was delivered to my house after my son Ulysses was born, on July 30. Thank you. Now, if you all knew me well, you would have pitched in and bought me a sports car, but my wife and I were genuinely touched by this gesture. Two months later, my son continues to grow at a frightening pace. He is his daddy's boy.

But back to Bill 14. A boiling pit: many of you may not know what this is. By name it may sound fairly self-explanatory, but in the Blackfoot culture it was a means of survival. A boiling pit was a way of cooking where a round hole was dug into the earth. Once the hole was complete, a piece of rawhide was placed into the hole and then filled with water. A fire was then lit nearby, and a number of stones were placed in the fire until they became red hot. When the stones were hot enough, they were placed in the water, which would then raise the temperature to a boiling point, suitable for cooking. In some cases a skin bag filled with meat and vegetables was placed into the boiling pit to make a rich, delicious soup. Madam Speaker, if you think about this for a moment in modern terms, it doesn't seem all that impressive. You grab a shovel, you dig a hole, lay a tarp in it, grab a lighter and some wood, make a fire, throw some rocks in there, and Bob's your uncle. But before contact, boiling pits were a means of survival and took all day to execute.

This was one of the many things I learned while I visited the Blackfoot Crossing historical park in Siksika on September 23 with the Premier, the minister, chiefs from the Blackfoot Confederacy, and a gaggle of other ministers and MLAs for the historic signing of the protocol agreement between Alberta and the Blackfoot Confederacy.

Now, the boiling pit was nothing short of inventive, Madam Speaker, historical proof of the industrious and creative culture that has existed among the first inhabitants of this very land for generations. When the Europeans first began to trade in North America, their goods made their way through the Plains to other tribes, most notably guns, ammunition, knives, tools, household utensils, and, of course, pots, which rendered the boiling pits almost obsolete. Although boiling pits became a thing of the past, the same innovative spirit remains ever present today though predominantly dormant from lack of opportunity, something this government intends to change with this piece of legislation, Bill 14.

Since the start of the term our government has made consultations and partnerships with indigenous groups across Alberta a priority. We listened to nearly 200 leaders, stakeholders, and community members talk about what issues they face. This was done over the course of eight sessions, and we will continue to make an effort to improve their lives by giving them agency in economic development. This bill is a crucial step towards reconciliation with indigenous communities in our province, communities that have been mistreated and overlooked for far too long, Madam Speaker.

Unfortunately, a lot of the issues facing Alberta's indigenous communities are within federal jurisdiction, and we must ensure that we do not duplicate the work being done by our federal partners. But we must also make sure that we are working collaboratively with them. This bill is not without precedent. As a prime example, we'll look at the federal government's increase in the number of opportunities available to indigenous people in our province.

For example, the Indian Act was intended to protect indigenous holders. However, the act also placed ownership of the land with the Crown, which placed limitations on residents' obtaining financing. According to the Indian Act, section 89(1), reserve lands may not be seized legally, nor is the personal property of the band or band member living on reserve "subject to charge, pledge, mortgage, attachment, levy, seizure, distress or execution in favour or at the instance of any person other than an Indian or a band." Such provisions created a barrier for on-reserve projects such as home development, construction, or renovation. In response, programs and loans for residents on-reserve were guaranteed by the federal government to help assist in such projects.

Furthermore, southern Alberta is a vast landscape of rolling plains, a large part of which is grazing leases. These leases are parcels of Crown land, owned by the government, that are rented to cow-calf producers at a reduced rate so new ranchers can afford to buy and raise cattle as they build their legacy and secure their place in one of Alberta's most vital industries, agriculture.

Similar to on-reserve home renovations, the limitations placed on indigenous groups limit their ability to realize their economic potential in today's competitive resource market. Bill 14 aims to knock down some of these barriers and commits our government to being a partner in building economic and social well-being and provides the tools needed for indigenous communities to invest in our natural resource sector. With these investments they can achieve a stable revenue stream for their communities that can be used to invest in vital infrastructure such as education and health care.

My constituency of Cardston-Siksika is home to two of the largest landmass reserves in Canada. Both face social challenges, yet they work hard to make an effort to improve their communities. The Siksika Nation administers locally run health and wellness facilities and is considered a leader for First Nations in Alberta for services, partnerships, and working directly with the federal government. Social programs aim to improve and promote Siksika quality of life through accountable and efficient delivery that is

community based and caters to the needs of Siksika Nation members.

The Old Sun Community College is also accredited and in 2018 had its first graduating class for the indigenous business administration management diploma. The world-renowned Blackfoot Crossing historical park, which we visited not so long ago, was built for the promotion and preservation of the Siksika Nation's people, language, culture, traditions and is host to thousands of tourists each year and employs numerous members.

Siksika Resource Developments and group of companies are committed to establishing long-term prosperity for Siksika Nation by maximizing revenues generated from the management and development of renewable and nonrenewable resources and by providing Siksika Nation shareholders with a viable return on future investments.

Siksika Nation is also a 50-50 ownership partner of world-class hotels and a conference centre within the city of Calgary and right here in Edmonton. Their \$54 million investment gave them the opportunity to own the Westin Calgary Airport, Element Edmonton West by Westin, and Four Points by Sheraton Edmonton West.

9:10

Many Siksika Nation members thrive in various capacities. There are cow-calf operations, farmers, truckers, and members who operate small businesses on the reserve. By way of example, Darryl McDonald and Mona Royal are the owners and operators of Boy Chief Trading Post, a one hundred per cent First Nation owned business that has been situated in the southwest corner of the Siksika First Nation since it opened, in December 2002. As their business grows, so does the opportunity it has given to them and their family. They now design and produce woolen mill blankets that are of high quality and affordable compared to their competitors. With over 30 years of business experience, Darryl and Mona give back to Siksika. They share their business administration, financial, and management expertise with youth, inspiring the next generation of Siksika entrepreneurs.

The Blood Tribe is also giving youth the opportunity to explore careers in entrepreneurship and giving them the tools and an early start to learn some tricks of the trade. Blood Tribe economic development partners offer business plan review and revising for those who apply for small-business grants. They take the time to give their members a fighting chance, Madam Speaker, when it comes to operating their own businesses, something that is missed for those pursuing entrepreneurship off-reserve. From the financial management boot camps to presentations on emerging technologies, they believe they hold the power to change their circumstances in the wake of hardships that come with living on-reserve.

Our government made sure that Siksika, the Blood Tribe along with other indigenous groups in Alberta were full partners in prosperity. The indigenous opportunities corporation also gives our indigenous Albertans access to sustainable development while staying true to their values as protectors of the land. It will give them a seat at the table to invest in TMX and other oil and gas ventures as well as to explore their own interests in unique resource development projects.

The wind and solar resources over the Blood Tribe are similarly attractive to the renewable energy industry, and it's time they participated actively in their own development. The Blood Tribe partnered with the EDF Renewables on a 200-megawatt Cypress wind project and is based in Cypress county in southern Alberta. They look to double the project by pursuing another wind farm with roughly the same size.

But not all indigenous communities have been able to secure the capital needed for these investments. There are significant barriers for some indigenous communities, but with the help of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, or AIOC, indigenous communities will have access to \$1 billion in loan guarantees. These loans support indigenous co-ownership and financial participation in major resource development. For years indigenous communities have said that they want to be at the table, and the formation of the AIOC will finally give them a seat that they deserve.

We are going to abandon symbolic gestures and develop real strategies to lift our indigenous brothers and sisters to new heights of prosperity. They will be able to invest in the natural resource sector that has provided and will continue to provide for all Albertans. It will allow our indigenous communities to invest in protecting their language and culture while also giving them opportunities to invest in serving their communities as needed. To the indigenous communities around the province: you asked for this. It is my hope that Bill 14 is proof that we heard you and we continue to hear you now.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I guess I enjoyed some of the background information that the member presented about First Nations and their history and how they operated, you know, hundreds and thousands of years ago in this area. I was just wondering if he could maybe expand on that a little bit as far as how that relates to how things are going present day and, of course, how this bill itself will represent some of the ambitions and dreams that First Nations people have in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I have always been amazed, as I have developed relationships with the two indigenous communities in my constituency, the Kainai and the Siksika reserves, by how industrious they are and the ideas that they have. When I first met with the Siksika chief and council during the campaign, they talked to me about opportunities that they have in mind that they would like to see the government help them partner with. They also spoke, as I mentioned in my speech, about some of the investments the community has already made in terms of hotels and conference centres. It's that spirit. It's that entrepreneurial spirit that has been a part of their culture since time immemorial. It's something that I've learned as I build these relationships, and I'm excited to continue to work with these communities and learn about their culture and their history.

As we visited the Blackfoot Crossing historical park, I was just amazed by this site. I really do encourage everyone, if you have time, to go down there. It's a little off the beaten path, but this place is just chock full of historical artifacts and information about the Blackfoot people and their history. There's so much to learn from them and realize that long before contact there were people in Alberta who were thriving and had a wonderful way of living. They certainly made the most of the circumstances that they had. I think the boiling pit was just one example of that, and that spirit continues to live on with them and their culture. It's one I love to learn more about and will continue to learn about. I thank the member for asking that question.

To the members of the indigenous communities in Cardston-Siksika I do want to say thank you for all that they've taught me to this point, and I'm excited to keep working with them moving forward.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 14? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, Bill 14 is such an important piece of legislation. I'm so proud that our government has brought it forward, but I'm also very proud of the minister that brought this forward. He has made a sincere and concerted effort for reconciliation here in Alberta, and I think it's really obvious just how he has shown that through his actions in attending various events and hosting events and having meetings with indigenous people, just showing them that they are partners in prosperity. I just wanted to start off today by acknowledging just how important this work is that the minister is doing and how it touches me as a new member to see members in our Executive Council making such an effort to work with these people.

As we know, Bill 14 maintains critical election promises that we made during this election to bring back jobs, revitalize the economy, and get our natural resource projects built. It also aligns with our government's commitment to reconciliation with indigenous peoples here in Alberta. Our Premier and my government colleagues have acknowledged the shortcomings and wrongs that indigenous peoples have faced for generations. We realize that we need to work hard to build a trusting, lasting relationship between indigenous communities and our government, but reconciliation requires action, action like bringing forward this important piece of legislation. Bill 14 will fulfill our platform commitments through creating the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. This corporation will allocate \$1 billion of loan guarantees to indigenous groups looking to partake in natural resource development projects.

In 2016 there were over 120,000 First Nations people and over 97,000 Métis people living in Alberta. In 2016 the median age of indigenous people in Alberta was 25 compared to Alberta's median age of 42. That discrepancy is due to a multitude of factors: the mental health crisis, addiction, suicide, lack of education, poor outcomes and health, all of which are exacerbated by poverty.

Thirteen per cent of Canada's total indigenous population live right here in Alberta, and there are 48 First Nations. Now, can you imagine the potential that we could unlock, the prosperity that could be generated if we empowered those communities to develop their resources and pursue ownership stakes in various resource projects? It could be a game changer.

Throughout history indigenous communities, particularly First Nations, have received compensation for allowing resource developments or a pipeline to go through their lands. It's usually a lump sum that is paid out over a set number of years. But after the money has been allocated and spent, then what do these communities do?

Now, we know that Justin Trudeau bought the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, and there's no doubt about that, but many indigenous groups are now saying that they want an equity stake in that pipeline. Before the pipeline was bought out, there were 43 mutual benefit agreements signed with First Nations totalling roughly \$400 million. On average that's less than \$10 million per community. When you're trying to address systemic issues and make life better for an entire community, that money can only go

so far. Equity and ownership would give these communities the opportunity to reap benefits for years and generations to come.

**9:20**

That's why the indigenous-backed project reconciliation has submitted a bid to purchase the Trans Mountain pipeline. It's why over 35 First Nations have stepped up to propose the indigenous-owned Eagle Spirit pipeline. It's why the Fort McKay and Mikisew Cree bands have invested over \$545 million to buy almost half the shares in one of Suncor's storage facilities. The benefits that will result from indigenous ownership of natural resources won't just be felt in their communities but will have positive effects across Alberta.

Look. I'm from an oil and gas family. My dad has helped and maintains pipelines all across this province. But with tough economic conditions, that have been exacerbated by federal policies as well as the former provincial government, I've seen the impact of these policies in my community. Restaurants, hotels, and other small businesses have had to cut staff or close down completely. This has implications for workers in my riding and across the province, including the thousands of indigenous people who work in Alberta's energy sector.

I started by talking about reconciliation. This weekend I was honoured to go to an event on behalf of the minister of status of women and multiculturalism. It was an event for the Girl Guides of Canada. You're probably saying: how the heck does this relate to Bill 14? I'll get there. They started off the event with a land acknowledgement, but it wasn't just a couple of words and some well-meaning politician saying something. It was a real reconciliation action, I thought, that was taken. This young woman, a librarian in Calgary, came up and gave this land acknowledgement. She and her daughter actually gave two different kinds. They gave a children's version and they gave an adult version, I guess. The children's version had actions. It was heartfelt. It was beautiful. There was almost like a little song that went with it. I wish I knew it because it was fantastic.

The woman who was giving the presentation gave an explanation of why land acknowledgments are so important and why reconciliation is so important to her and her community. At the end of the day the biggest takeaway from that was that she said that there needs to be action. There needs to be something motivating those words that you're saying when you begin a speech or an announcement, and I think that this Bill 14 is a step towards real reconciliation and real partners in prosperity for our indigenous people.

In closing, I think that this is a meaningful, forward-thinking piece of legislation that will not only bring prosperity to indigenous communities across this province, but it will set an example for the rest of Canada of what economic reconciliation looks like.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the chance to speak today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat for that lovely speech. One thing that the member said really took my attention. You mentioned different projects, talking about Trans Mountain, particularly Eagle Spirit. Eagle Spirit as a project is one of the most forward-thinking that we have seen in this province for a long time. The way that it uses private dollars coming from First Nation communities and individuals and interests so that they can move forward their interests as a community is fascinating.

I was speaking to the director and CEO just yesterday at an event that was held at the Legislature before the bill was read aloud yesterday and introduced. He spoke particularly of the need for us to make sure that we have access to markets outside of America for our oil and gas because it will benefit the First Nation communities of northern and all across Alberta more than any other project could. It was hands-down the single most important. This isn't just something being asked by average Albertans in southern Alberta or folks in office towers in Calgary who work in the industry.

This is every single community in the province, every single demographic, particularly those very proud First Nation communities that work on that land, have lived off the land, and found that balance between a growing economy and a sheltered ecology at the same time. They are the ones that have the best experience in threading that needle and walking that line to make sure that we have a province that is prosperous and one that is protected, with the highest standards of environmental labour and human rights. This is why I'm so excited about what the member said when speaking about Eagle Spirit. It is a fascinating project.

If we look at the other projects around, even in my own constituency we can see First Nation communities partnering with mills, looking for equity shares in the mills themselves in the forestry industry. They understand that a healthy forest, one that is harvested regularly, actually stores more carbon than if you let it grow to old age and is more susceptible to bugs, infestation, more susceptible to forest fires, as we saw in my constituency to a devastating effect.

It is the care of the forest that drives these First Nation communities to these projects, first and foremost, and they're the ones urging the industry along to have it done responsibly. There's actually an economic and environmental interest in having First Nation communities partner with us because they're often the ones with the most insight and the most interest and the most experience and knowledge in making sure that these projects are done in an environmental manner. Rather than trying to force it down Albertans' throats in ways where it's all economic pain and no environmental gain, as we saw in the previous government, what we'll have instead is a partnership with First Nations, who care deeply for the land, and that partnership will drive economic and environmental protection in a way that is not done in some forced or fabricated way but is organic and is done from the grassroots up, from those constituents that live there most, with the First Nation peoples.

That's why this is such an important piece of legislation. Its effects are not just economic. This is what you're going to see as a theme through all of these different speeches, and we saw it today with the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat. This is a social policy. It is an uplifting policy, not just economically. It's uplifting to our environment. It's uplifting to our entire province as a whole. It's for that reason that I'm so very proud to be standing with the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat in support of this bill. We are not the only ones doing it. What we stand for here, we have thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of Albertans standing behind us all the time when we make these arguments in this House. It's for that reason that we must be so forceful in defending this kind of legislation when it comes up and touting all of its benefits and all of its different facets of how it benefits Alberta. We cannot stay restrained to just that narrow scope of economics. When we end up doing that, we end up failing Albertans. We are here to serve them and our First Nation communities.

That is why I was so proud to stand with the chiefs yesterday when this was announced. Speaking to Grand Chief Arthur Noskey of Treaty 8, which is where most of my constituency lies and where much of Eagle Spirit goes through, he also is a big fan of the project.

He sees it as something that his constituents, the people that he represents as grand chief, benefit from not just abstractly but directly with jobs in that industry.

I couldn't be more proud to stand with these First Nation chiefs, to stand here with the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, with the Minister of Indigenous Relations, with the Premier, and all of our colleagues. We see that there are multifaceted benefits for all of Alberta because, like my good friend the chief from Beaver Nation said to me, when First Nations are strong and prosper, the province is strong and prosperous. That's the heart of what this is about.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There are five seconds left under 29(2)(a), so I think it's safe to ask for the next speaker. Is anyone wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 14? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Good. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise in this Chamber and speak on a bill that I'm very proud to support, Bill 14. As the members of this Chamber know, this bill will create the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. This bill will ensure that First Nations groups have access to \$1 billion in loans and loan guarantees over the next four years in order to start their own resource projects.

This corporation is the first of its kind and a landmark in this government's commitment to empower indigenous and Métis groups to help meet their goals. Not only is this initiative the first of its kind in Alberta, but it is the only organization of its kind in all of Canada. The United Conservative Party, the UCP, recognizes that it is beyond time to move past shallow gestures and empty words in order to help our First Nations communities. This government knows that our indigenous communities can benefit from developing our natural resources in a responsible manner, and when our indigenous communities prosper, all Albertans prosper.

This initiative bridges the gap in historical investor disinterest in indigenous communities by allowing our First Nations people to directly access funds, to be proactive in making their lives and the lives of their communities better. This will allow our indigenous communities to attain a sense of control and value. This is a crucial aspect in helping our First Nations people to a better economic future. It is not only our fiscal responsibility to help indigenous Albertans, but it's also our moral duty to help them towards self-determination.

**9:30**

I reflect on my previous four years as MLA and the opportunity I had to serve the community of Morinville. The chamber of commerce there has partnered with the Alexander First Nation group in their business awards – and it's an excellent partnership – to help identify the indigenous entrepreneurs within the Alexander First Nation and to give them recognition for their work as individuals and as groups, to help them understand and get a sense of pride in the work that they do.

I'm reading from the *St. Albert Gazette*, where it identified the three awards and the three recipients of the awards that were at the Morinville chamber of commerce gala. The first award was given to Gutta Muzik. He's an entertainer, Lawrence Paul.

When... [he] heard his name announced for the Artisans Recognition award, he said he was in "disbelief."

"I didn't see this coming at all," he said.

"I know that there are many businesses in the Morinville area that are outstanding – for us to win, I felt really proud of our accomplishments."

This is the first time Paul has been nominated for the chamber award. Gutta Muzik began in 2008 when the musician

decided to get into the hip-hop scene. He said that at the time a few of his friends at Alexander First Nation decided to join the music group.

When he announced the news to his band mates, he said they were proud.

This is part of the recognition of the work that individuals can do and how it can give them a sense of individual pride and self-respect. We need to help and partner with them to encourage them and find ways that they can further along in their entrepreneurial achievements.

There were two other awards given that night – and these awards were given to a couple of young men – the spirit of business awards: Astikasa Metal Works and Pism Contracting. Both of these individuals, fairly young men relative to me, I guess, you know, in their 30s, 40s, have their own metal-working businesses. In conversations with them and with the leadership of the Alexander First Nation it became very evident to me that they exist in a world with a few extra challenges that many of us don't experience, where their access to financing was definitely inhibited and a hurdle that needs to be addressed so that they can find the opportunities that the rest of us in Alberta are able to find also. It's those two things, the ownership of business and the pride that that brings for these individuals and to overcome hurdles, that Bill 14 is hoping to address.

This Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation was formed after careful deliberation with 190 different people and groups, including indigenous leaders and business leaders – a few of these groups include ATCO, EPCOR, Syncrude, Suncor, Eagle Spirit Energy, Project Reconciliation, Western Indigenous Pipeline Group, and the First Nations Major Projects Coalition; of course, this is a small snapshot of the total participation to form this revolutionary organization – and positions Alberta to be a major leader in providing support and financial stability for indigenous groups in Canada.

The Fort McKay Nation is an excellent example of the potential benefit a project like this could have for indigenous communities across this province. Today, Madam Speaker, the Fort McKay Nation is heavily involved in oil development, but this was not always the case. Over many years the people of the Fort McKay Nation have worked at their resource development and are now no longer dependent upon the federal government for support. In fact, the Fort McKay Nation has done so well that only 5 per cent of their revenues have come from federal transfers, and its residents' average after-tax income is even higher than that of other Albertans. To put this in perspective for you, the average after-tax income for Fort McKay residents was \$73,571 compared to the average in Alberta, which was at \$50,683, and the average in Canada, at \$38,977. This is an outstanding accomplishment for the Fort McKay Nation.

The end result is an indigenous community that is full of pride and extremely economically successful after acquiring, partnered with another nation, majority ownership of oil infrastructure on its territory, which is worth around half a billion dollars. All of Fort McKay's success was the result of their own hard work beginning in 1983. But imagine if they'd had access to the funding proposed by Bill 14. They could have potentially jump-started their progress, and they could have been even further ahead than they are now. This initiative has the potential to benefit a vast number of Albertan indigenous communities by giving them back the power they need to develop their own lands and reach for their own economic success and all the freedoms that come with that success. Just as Fort McKay has done, we must address and seek to right the wrongs and failures of previous governments, to recognize that our indigenous and Métis communities are more than capable of

developing and monetizing their own resources for their own benefit.

It is a shame that the previous NDP government did not see the same potential in our indigenous peoples that this UCP government does. In 2016 Eriel Deranger, communications manager of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, said this regarding the desire for comanagement of resource development: comanagement is not asking for everything; it's asking to be partners; our ancestors signed our treaty agreements believing that we were signing nation-to-nation agreements to be given equal say in the development of our lands and territories. She also went on to say, about the previous NDP government, that there has been no public indication that conversations of this nature are on the radar.

To contrast Ms Deranger's statements, this year Herb Lehr, president of the Metis Settlements General Council, said that settlements want to develop oil and resources but lack funds and that this new proposed bill is, and I quote: perfect for us. Those are the words of Herb Lehr, president of the Metis Settlements General Council. Well, Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that Bill 14 evidently seems to be a step in the right direction for indigenous resource development relationships and just one more way that this UCP government is addressing the failures of the previous government.

Government has the potential to be a messy, bureaucratic nightmare, Madam Speaker, and the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation has the potential to come through for our First Nation communities where past governments have failed. By giving control back to our indigenous citizens, we can empower them to realize the changes they want to see in their communities without relying on governments that have failed them in the past. Indigenous communities are tired of talk. They want action, and this bill provides exactly that.

Madam Speaker, I sincerely hope that all of my colleagues here in this Chamber can recognize the value of Bill 14 and the value that it can provide to our indigenous communities. It has the potential to shape their future for the better and the potential to shape all First Nations peoples to allow them to regain some control over their resources and their future. I plan to fully support this bill and mark it down as yet another promise made, promise kept.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**9:40**

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. While I appreciate the member's comments and I appreciated the story – he talked about some of the folks who are very much thriving in his riding – I'm quite disturbed by his comments about our government's record. While I was not a member elected in our previous government, I'm so proud of the work that our government did to build relationships with indigenous folks and to really move towards reconciliation.

I'm so proud of our former Minister of Indigenous Relations. I have the honour of having a significant urban indigenous population in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, so I've been at many, many events over the years, including the stolen sisters, sisters in spirit marches and vigils that have happened for the last number of years. I was just at it on Friday. In fact, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was there as well, and you could see the relationships that he's formed with so many members from the community. Again, I'm just appalled by that because I've seen the relationship-building that he's done, that our members have put in, and it's something we can be quite proud of. You know, we also developed a climate leadership plan that included indigenous

communities as partners, and I just think there's a lot to be proud of there, so let's not rewrite history.

And I just want to make a note, because this is something that a lot of folks from the various indigenous communities have pointed out. You know, this government is talking about giving control back and talking about making – some of the language that's been used today is “independence” and whatnot. One way we can move towards that is to stop using paternalistic language. So I would just like to point out to some of the members who have already spoken to try to avoid saying “our indigenous peoples,” “our indigenous communities,” and even “Canada's indigenous communities.” Those aren't my words; those are the words of a number of indigenous folks. Avoiding “indigenous Canadians”: you can talk about indigenous peoples in Canada, but that possessive, that ownership, is paternalistic, colonial language, and I would urge the members to step away from that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to address the comments made by the previous member. She's appalled by the comments made, but the comments made in my speech were directly from members of the indigenous community. I repeat. Eriel Deranger, communications manager of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation: comanagement is not asking for everything; it's asking to be partners. The indigenous communities are looking to be partners in the ability for self-determination as they move forward in developing their communities, bringing themselves into a position of pride in their community, in the work that they are doing. She also calls “appalling” the comments from Herb Lehr, president of the Metis Settlements General Council, who said, and I quote from Herb Lehr: this is perfect for us; Bill 14 is perfect for us.

These are the types of things that the indigenous groups have come to us with, concerns from previous governments that seem to be speaking words without following up with actions that help them to move from a place of dependence to a place of self-determination and a future, that they can recognize themselves, that brings them a sense of pride in their abilities to fulfill their dreams.

The opportunities that this bill has and will have for the indigenous communities are huge, and I believe it's just a start. It's a small start in a direction that will help us, working in a spirit of reconciliation, to have the ability to become partners together in future development of natural resources and in future development of these communities.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 14? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley. Have you not already spoken to this in second reading?

**Mr. Loewen:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No? Okay. Please proceed.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yes. I'm honoured to speak today on Bill 14, this very important bill. I think that when I look at Bill 14 and I see what it does, I see the effects that Bill 14 will have for not only this generation but coming generations. I think what we see is this continued commitment that we have as a government and a commitment that we made to Albertans in our campaign to the economy, to jobs, and to bringing back investment to Alberta and growing our economy. I think,

when we look at these things, that these are so important to the overall well-being of Albertans and, of course, the services that the government provides to Albertans. Again, when I look at Bill 14, I just see so much future and so much opportunity for not only First Nations but for Albertans in general.

Now, the minister in charge here of indigenous affairs has worked so hard to date. He's been travelling Alberta. He's been visiting with First Nations. I understand he's visited, I think, over two-thirds of the First Nations in Alberta, and I think that's a great credit to him and to his work and what he has been doing with not only Bill 14 but building relations between government and First Nations in Alberta. Of course, he's even spent time in Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, which is the closest First Nation to where I live, so they're my neighbours, my friends, the people I see regularly. It was great to have him in that community showing his concern and listening to their concerns.

Now, of course, myself and Central Peace-Notley have a few First Nations groups. I've met with them. Just to kind of go through it a little bit, Duncan's First Nation, which is in the Fairview area: when I met with them, I know a lot of their concerns were over economic activity and trying to grow economic activity in their community. Obviously, they want to see things improve for their people.

Again, Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, which, like I mentioned, is the closest to me – I live just outside of Valleyview, and they live on the west side of Valleyview there. Obviously, I've spent some time with Chief Goodswimmer and many of the council members over the last six months and actually over the last four years, really. When I talked to them and when I listened to them, I know they're looking to improve the well-being of their band members, too, and to improve things in their band and their band land and, of course, within their band members and the economy within their community.

With Sturgeon Lake, of course, I attend their powwow every year, and it's a great event. It's great to see the pride they have in their traditional activities. I attend their round dances, too, when I have a chance. It's always great to be there for them, too, and to see the community get together, young and old alike, with the round dances. In fact, at one round dance I actually won a hand drum. That's one of my prized possessions. It sits prominently in my home, and I love to see that in my home, too. I think it's great, that tradition that is being continued to this day.

The other First Nation in my constituency is Alexander First Nation. They have some land just south of Fox Creek. Just recently they brought many business and industry leaders together because they want to do a development there. They want to develop that land, they want to bring business in there, and they want to have an opportunity to grow the economic benefit of that land. That land sits right on highway 43. Of course, it's a main traffic corridor to northwestern Alberta and to the Peace Country. They want to develop there. They want to be able to lease property to different companies. There's a lot of oil field activity and gas, of course, in that area. They want to develop that land, maybe put up a gas station and maybe even have some residences there and then have opportunity for businesses to set up on that land. They also brought elected leaders in the community together at that same time. They had a great presentation there and had it well set up and well organized.

9:50

I did want to mention, too, that the Minister of Infrastructure was there and spoke at that gathering, and they allowed me to speak, too. It was great to have that opportunity and see First Nations that want to develop industry and develop companies within their areas

and have that opportunity to grow the economy. Of course, that kind of growth is not only good for the First Nations, but it's also good for all Albertans.

I think the most important part of this bill – and often I think that when we see bills that have been brought forward in the past by previous governments, we look at the names, and sometimes the names don't represent what the bill actually does, but I think this one is absolutely perfect. It has the word "opportunities" in it, and that's what this is all about. This is about opportunity for First Nations, and it's an opportunity for First Nations to be involved in the economy, be involved in developing the natural resources on their lands. This will help develop those opportunities and help them have that growth that they would like. I think that's what is required. We need to give opportunity to First Nations to grow. Of course, we want to give opportunities to all Albertans, but this bill focuses on our First Nations.

It's about creating jobs and economic benefit. When we look at the First Nations, like I mentioned, when I meet with them, they talk about how they can improve their communities, how they can improve the lives of their members, and this is one of the best ways that we can do that, by giving them this opportunity to have that kind of economic benefit and economic growth.

Of course, First Nations people can't, you know, take a mortgage on their home or anything like that to start a business. They don't have opportunities like that that others do. That's in legislation. I mean, that's the way it is at this point. They can't do that, so we need to have other ways for them to take advantage of the opportunities that others have because they deserve to be able to provide for their families like anyone else. By having these opportunities to develop businesses and companies and develop their natural resources, that's what will help them provide for their families and continue to grow.

Now, of course, First Nations have a lot of natural resources on their lands and on their traditional lands. When we see all these resources that are there for them, I guess you could kind of see that they're within their reach, but they just need that opportunity to be able to reach out and fully benefit from those resources that they have right at their fingertips. This will give that opportunity for them to benefit from these resources that are right there.

Now, you know, we all know how hard it could be to negotiate the bureaucracy and the red tape and the different things that are involved in getting businesses going and to develop resources. Of course, that's one thing our government is focused on, trying to reduce these restrictions, these barriers to developing natural resources and to progressing as a society as we try to go forward and get things done. These barriers are just as hard for First Nations to overcome as they are for the rest of us and maybe even more so. Again, that's one of the things that we are focused on, trying to remove barriers, trying to allow opportunity, allow these things to grow, allow communities to grow.

We have the same challenges, and they have those challenges, too, and we need to be able to work together to bring down those barriers and make sure we have the opportunity we have to grow the economy in Alberta, get investment here. We need that investment to create the jobs. In the past four years we've seen tens of billions of dollars of lost investment opportunity in Alberta, and that's been because of poor government policies. That's why we need to change these government policies. We need to do things like bring in Bill 14, which provides the opportunities for our First Nations people to grow and to continue with their lives.

Now, this is a historic bill. This is the first of its kind not only in Alberta but in Canada, maybe even across the world, where a government has decided: "Okay. Instead of just giving lip service to First Nations people, we need to do something substantial. We

need to do something that'll be a game changer, that'll bring these communities forward and give them the opportunities that they deserve." It's all about giving indigenous people a higher quality of life and giving them the opportunity to grow in their own communities.

Now, we know that the consultation has been far and wide. We know that our minister has travelled across Alberta visiting First Nations from north to south, east to west. He's covered a lot of ground. We know he's consulted with nearly 200 business and indigenous leaders in regard to Bill 14 and how it's going to be implemented and what its effects could be. I think that's a great credit to this government and to the minister as far as being able to work with these people across Alberta, the industry leaders and First Nations, and being able to bring them together and to come up with this Bill 14 to create this opportunity.

Again, this will allow more communities to be able to own and invest in natural resource development. I think that when we look across Alberta, we know that for many of our smaller communities, in particular across rural Alberta, most of their economic opportunities are with natural resources. Of course, by increasing the number of communities that can benefit from these natural resources, that only helps all Albertans and all of Alberta in our growth and our desire to grow our economy, to, you know, balance the budget and get our economy back on track, get the jobs going so that people can have those jobs that they use to support their families.

I think indigenous leaders – I mean, I think what they want is to become true commercial partners in the energy industry and not just view it from the outside and maybe take some periphery jobs or some periphery economic benefit. I think they want to be true partners. They want to have that opportunity that others have to be involved with the resources and the energy industry that happen right there on their lands and on their traditional lands.

I think we've been poor at selling our responsible resource development here in Alberta. I think that's changing, but something that we need to continue to change is to change the narrative on our resource development. We know that we are the most responsible developer of our resources in the world. There's no doubt about that. We know that the best thing we can do for the environment is to produce more of our resources right here in Alberta because we know we have the highest standards right here.

Another thing we know is that our First Nations people, as they develop resources, will do it with equal or more environmental concern than has been done. We know we've been doing great. We know we can improve and we will improve, but I think it's important to know that we are the best now. We'll continue to be better, and we know that as First Nations become involved, that responsible development will only grow and become better. I think that's something that, hopefully, the world can take note of and actually understand how responsible we are in the development of our resources here in Alberta. Like I say, I think having First Nations involved will only help that position that we have as the most responsible developer of natural resources in the world.

Now, these loan guarantees that Bill 14 talks about: they've never been available before. These are new opportunities that First Nations will be able to have going forward.

I think what is important to realize is this government's actions on this file and other files within government: first of all, we consult, we listen, and then we act. Those are, I think, the most important things that we can do as a government: consult, and not just ask people their opinion and then go and do what we want to do anyways; have meaningful consultation, which means that you listen and you take into consideration what people are saying; and then, of course, follow it with action. Consult, listen, action: I think



that's an important take for this government's actions as we've gone forward. We have to remember we're only just a few months into the ...

10:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is applicable. The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to ask the Member for Central Peace-Notley to expand on something that really touched me, his deep love of his constituency, of his First Nation communities – I've had some interaction with Duncan's First Nation, for example, in his constituency – and your shared love, if I may go personal here, your shared love of hunting. If there's one way to get a smile off a First Nation person, it's to ask him how hunting is going this year. Every time: crack the biggest grin you're ever going to see. They love the land. If there's any similarity between the member just speaking and First Nation people that is stronger than any other, it's that same response. When you ask him about hunting, you see a big smile happen, and he could talk for hours.

I know that under 29(2)(a) he's only going to have about four minutes and 20 seconds left, but I'm going to ask him to confine his remarks to their shared love of the land and the animals that they hunt on it. If he could expand on that a little bit, I think it's a great opportunity for his constituents to hear that and see that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, thank you very much. I appreciate the comments. Of course, yes, I have a great love for the outdoors, and that's something that's shared with the First Nations people in my area. When we get together, we can always talk about moose hunting and elk hunting and being out on the land.

You know, I talked about the environment and how responsible resource development is important for the environment. When I look at the environment, of course, I look at the quality of the landscape, the quality of the water. I look at the abundance of wildlife and the diversity of wildlife. In the Peace Country I think we're extra blessed there with having so many species of wildlife and that kind of diversity. I know that the First Nations rely on that wildlife for subsistence, and I know in my travels in the woods and in the backroads and everything I run into them quite often. We're after the same thing. Of course, we'd like to fill the freezer and have that opportunity to eat some good Alberta wild game.

Again, I just think it's so important to think about that responsible development and how that affects the landscape. You know, we really want to see those opportunities continue for First Nations not only on the development end of things – of course, that's what this bill focuses on – but also on the environment and protecting the environment and protecting that opportunity that we both have to go out on the landscape and hunt and trap and fish as we do.

Now, we expect that the effects of this bill could be seen as early as spring 2020, and I think we'll be looking forward to that. I know First Nations will be looking forward to that, too. You know, I think that one of the things we need to realize is that with these opportunities for investment and these opportunities that'll come from these projects, the revenue can be used to reinvest in the community, to priorities within the community. When I visit with the First Nations in my community, they all have things they would like to see, and I think that the revenues from these projects could be reinvested to make their priorities possible. We look at things like, say, the Eagle Spirit project and how important that would be to get our resources to market. When we get our resources to

market, Albertans' resources to market, that obviously will include the First Nations resources. That's why it's so important and why it's so frustrating to see people opposing things like pipelines. This isn't just that, you know, they could say: well, we don't care about Alberta. But when they're saying that, they don't care about First Nations people and their ability to get their products to market, too.

I think that's what's shameful about the people that are opposing pipelines. We know pipelines are the safest, the most economic way to transport our oil to market. I think that, again, we want to give First Nations the opportunity to be true partners in resource development, we want to make sure that people understand how important it is to have responsible development and the opportunity for First Nations to improve their communities, and we know that this will help all Albertans. Again, as we look forward down the road, when we see these barriers coming up with pipeline protests, we hope that this will stop and that people will realize that there are benefits to all Albertans with this.

Thanks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading on Bill 14? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 14, Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. I think I want to start by saying that we will be supporting this bill and any effort towards reconciliation. In fact, as my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood said, we should avoid using that kind of language, that we are giving them opportunities. In fact, indigenous people have a right to be part of the economic, social, and cultural life of the province. They were here before any of us. We do know that for a number of reasons they were left behind, and we can, I guess, see that from their economic participation. We can see that from their high school completion rates, their school graduation rates. We can see that from the number of children, you know, in our system. We can see that in their overrepresentation in our justice system. We can see that from the living conditions, housing conditions on the reserve, the water situation on the reserve and, in general, in their participation in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of this province.

Certainly, it's a step in the right direction, but there is a lot more work that needs to be done. I think we will speak to the bill and its provisions in detail in Committee of the Whole, but generally speaking, when I was looking at it, it wasn't clear whether this bill will do anything other than just letting them borrow or facilitating their borrowing and, when I was looking at the board composition, whether a majority of these members will be from indigenous communities. I think it was indicated that cash was coming from cancelling of oil-by-rail contracts.

I think I can speak to quite a bit of that because prior to becoming a Member of the Legislative Assembly, I was also practising with an indigenous boutique law firm, which was focusing on Indian residential schools, treaty land claims, indigenous rights. I do not want to go into the history of all that, but I will suggest this much, that based on my own experience, based on my interactions with my different clients, various bands, I know that whatever we do, we need to do it in consultation with the indigenous communities and in a respectful manner. People are better judges of their problems, and just having a corporation set up may not address many of the issues that our indigenous communities are facing.

I heard earlier from the member opposite that they were attacking the record of the previous government. One, I think reconciliation shouldn't be a partisan issue. When we were in government, we took a number of steps to further that reconciliation, to further that

process. Yes, we haven't fixed everything, but we did things that were meaningful to the indigenous communities. For instance, we were the first government who took steps to implement the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. We signed framework agreements with many treaty organizations, many First Nations. In fact, the former minister and my colleague, the MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford, was the first minister this province ever had who visited all 48 First Nations. That goes to show that we were putting in time and effort to work with these communities.

**10:10**

Also, we were the first government who took steps towards creating a meaningful apology for '60s scoop survivors, and we worked with indigenous communities and organizations advocating for that apology for a long time. We were the government who took steps to implement Jordan's principle, which First Nations have been calling for for decades. We were the government who took steps to facilitate training of 27,000 public service employees about the indigenous people. As my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford yesterday mentioned, on the indigenous ministry's website there was a document called Alberta's Path to Reconciliation that disappeared over the summer, which actually reflected all these initiatives that we were doing to recognize the history and contribution of indigenous communities, including the history of residential schools and the '60s scoop. I think we took steps in providing them with or making sure that indigenous communities have clean water, and we made historical investment in that area. Also, we were funding women's shelters. We were funding native friendship shelters. We were working with them on issues that mattered to them.

Last week, I believe, I was in a town hall in Calgary where a large number of Calgarians came to share their views about the upcoming budget and their issues and concerns in general. There was one young indigenous woman lawyer who was there, and she spoke about a couple of things. She first spoke about the missing and murdered women inquiry. The report has been out for a while now. She indicated that Alberta is the only province which has not done anything in that regard. In fact, when asked in question period yesterday of the Minister of Indigenous Relations whether he supports those recommendations, he didn't commit one way or the other whether he supports those recommendations. That was the case when he was asked prior whether he supported the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and he wasn't sure that he supports those. In fact, when asked whether recognizing treaty lands is necessary for public officials, he commented that that was just a choice, and they, in fact, have abandoned treaty recognition in public speaking and public places. These are the things that do not promote, do not help us with reconciliation, and we need to do better on these fronts as well.

I think, as I was saying, that when the indigenous communities are consulted with, when we work with them, we have seen many communities who have successfully created partnerships and invested large scale in our resource sector as well. For example, Mikisew Cree First Nation and Fort McKay First Nation invested almost half a billion dollars in 2017 for a share in Suncor oil storage out of Fort Mac. Almost 35 per cent, 34 per cent, is owned by Fort McKay and 15 per cent by Mikisew Cree First Nations.

It's my sincere hope that through this corporation we will open up economic opportunities for indigenous people and will facilitate their participation. That has not been the case for a while. We will also work with them on other issues that matter to them.

I think that in this case, sure, it's a good step, but under the indigenous climate leadership plan there was almost \$90 million in investment in various projects all across this province that they

were benefiting from. Now I think that with the cancellation of the climate leadership plan they have been stripped of all of those opportunities, and I guess they are given hope that this corporation will create opportunities. It's my sincere hope that this corporation will.

With that, I think I will be supporting this bill, and we will have further discussion and comments at the committee stage of this bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is applicable. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the support and opportunity for input from the hon. member preceding me. I would like to give the member an opportunity to elaborate a little bit on how he believes this Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation has an opportunity to uplift the dignity of the individuals with new work in those communities. For example, in my constituency the Dene Tha', between Meander and Chateh and Bushe reserves, have a very high level of unemployment, and it's been a chronic problem, as you outlined, as many others have in their speeches on the other side of the Chamber. I was wondering if you could elaborate on how your hope and, in my understanding, your support of this bill will bring employment to these individuals. The unemployment is as high as 90 per cent in some of these communities, and if you remove the work that is offered by the band itself, it goes even higher. Any way that you could articulate the way that your hope that this legislation, that you support, will bring work to these communities and bring dignity to those individuals: I'd be very interested in hearing that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let's take this opportunity to remind all members to speak through the chair.

The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think, as I mentioned, that there are quite a few details that we still need to learn about and hear from the government side, and I would rather hear from the government how they think this indigenous opportunities corporation will facilitate their objectives, how it will help address unemployment. Certainly, I think that whenever indigenous communities are given opportunities, they have successfully created business ventures, partnerships, and made investment where they have created employment for their community. For instance, employment may not be as high as in Mikisew or Fort McKay First Nations, where they have partnered with Suncor and created wealth and opportunities for their members.

What I can tell you is that that is the case across the province for the most part, that unemployment is way higher than Alberta's average in our indigenous communities, and that was the reason that we were working with indigenous communities on many different issues. For instance, I referenced the indigenous climate leadership plan. Under the climate leadership plan they were provided with the funds, they were provided with the opportunities and almost \$90 million in interest-free grants so that they can work on issues that matter to them. They can work on things that will help them with economic development, that will help them in creating jobs and addressing issues that are facing their communities. For instance, when we were in government, we invested in clean water on-reserve. With that investment, not only comes clean water but comes economic opportunity, comes employment and all those benefits.

10:20

I think that with this corporation there are a number of details that we still need to hear, whether this will be just a loan guarantee kind of corporation or whether government will be actively investing in it, that still needs to be seen, but one thing I can for sure tell you is that instead of giving \$4.5 billion to the wealthiest corporations, had we invested that \$4.5 billion in this corporation, this indigenous opportunities corporation, we would have fixed many things. We would have addressed graduation rates. We would have addressed unemployment issues. We would have addressed clean water. We would have addressed issues they're facing with respect to the justice system. I think that investment, that handout that was given earlier, the \$4.5 billion handout to the wealthiest corporations: we could have given that to this corporation. I'm sure that this corporation would have thrived, created opportunities, would have solved unemployment issues in Dene Tha' and the reserves you were referring to and many other reserves across this province, and Alberta at large would have benefited from that investment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are on second reading of Bill 14. Are there any other speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, or AIOC, is an example to me of real partnership and real action. Our government committed to partnering with Alberta's indigenous communities in building economic and social well-being. The AIOC allocates \$1 billion in loan guarantees to support aboriginal co-ownership and financial participation in major resource development. First Nations and indeed all Albertans should fully benefit from the vast resources that lie beneath us.

Before I was elected, I worked in finance as an investment banker. For about 10 years I helped companies and entrepreneurs raise capital for growth or expansion or acquisitions. I think people assume that good projects naturally attract capital, that if a project makes sense on a spreadsheet, someone will fund it, but that simply isn't the case. There are millions of positive net present value projects that are never funded or brought to fruition.

But why does this happen? In general the demand for capital exceeds the supply of capital. Capital providers often review hundreds of opportunities before shortlisting a group for due diligence. After conducting due diligence, very few of these opportunities are funded, sometimes none, yet each of these opportunities can and often does have merit. The perceived difficulty of executing an investment can also turn off investors, or they may lack the in-house expertise required to execute it.

In Alberta, nowhere is the difficulty to access capital more evident to me than with our First Nations. The ability of indigenous groups to provide adequate security to financial lenders has and continues to be a significant barrier in their ability to access capital. The capacity to develop or invest in major resource projects varies widely across indigenous communities.

Alberta finally has a government that understands that when indigenous communities benefit from the responsible development of our natural resources, the entire province benefits. The AIOC will bridge the gap between indigenous groups wanting to be commercial partners in the natural resource sector and will position Alberta as a leader in providing financial capacity and building support for indigenous groups seeking to invest in natural resource development projects. This backstop is important because it will enable and facilitate economic development, which is desperately needed in our province and will prosper our First Nations and, once again, all Albertans.

I also think the AIOC will signal to industry that Alberta is open for business, that Alberta is seeking to develop its resources responsibly, and that our First Nations are partnering with our government and, hopefully, investors and industry to get it done. I don't know about you, but that would encourage me to invest.

To get from our platform to this bill and the proposed AIOC, our government hosted eight engagement sessions from July to August of this year. Nearly 200 people participated in these sessions, providing their input, their concerns, their suggestions, and we listened. Participants included indigenous and business leaders. Corporate participants included industry leaders like Syncrude, Suncor, ATCO, EPCOR. Industry associations and coalition representatives from Eagle Spirit Energy, First Nations Major Projects Coalition, and the Western Indigenous Pipeline Group also attended.

I can tell you that while I believe each of our ministers is fully dedicated and invested in their ministries, nowhere are emotional investment and sincerity more apparent than with the Minister of Indigenous Relations. I think that's important because when you genuinely care about something or someone, you will act in their best interests. I emphasize the word "act" because I believe our First Nations have suffered from inaction, not from a lack of words. Words and acknowledgements, while important, do not feed families. They do not build homes or roads or schools or other required infrastructure. They do not clean water.

I'm looking forward to supporting this bill and the action that will follow it, and I would encourage everyone in this Chamber to do so as well. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to second reading on Bill 14? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. For far too long reconciliation with Alberta's and Canada's aboriginal communities has been put off and ignored. We have seen politicians at all levels of government pretend to care about the issue but, when push comes to shove, lots of talk and little action. Reconciliation is defined as the act of restoring to friendship or harmony, and that takes time, effort, and will. I am proud of our Premier, our cabinet, and our Minister of Indigenous Relations for the example in leadership they have shown in these efforts. I know first-hand, both from door-knocking in my constituency and meeting with stakeholders in my capacity as MLA for Lethbridge-East, that Alberta's indigenous population wants to see our resources developed. Out of more than 600 First Nations bands in this country, many are strong supporters of this kind of development.

I want to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations for coming to Lethbridge to meet with the First Nations leaders during the Friendship Society's AGM. His compassion, clearly evident during his presentation yesterday, was on clear display that day as well. The fact that he has travelled all over this province, not just on some obligatory trip but truly building relationships with First Nations peoples, is a testament to his compassion and care. Thank you to that minister.

The indigenous community in Alberta has been stewards of this land for centuries, and our government understands the necessity of responsible resource development. The bill before the House today allows our valued indigenous communities to be equal partners in resource development so that all Albertans can take advantage of the abundance of resources that this province is so blessed to have. This bill by no means is a government handout. It provides an opportunity for the First Nations groups in this province to help

themselves. It incorporates innovation, captivating new policy that will be utilized across Canada.

While I understand the necessity of responsible development, I also believe it is crucial that we consult and engage with our stakeholders, especially when projects overlap with traditional indigenous territory. This is something that former governments refused to do, instead wanting to lecture, fearmonger communities, whether indigenous or not, on the need to reduce their alleged oversized carbon footprint. Madam Speaker, this country produces well under 2 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and for the GHGs that we do produce, they are the most environmentally and ethically sourced fossil fuels in the world.

Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that this issue surpasses economic concerns. This is humanitarian – humanitarian – this resource development and opportunity for indigenous partners, benefiting them, especially when these are some of the most vulnerable communities in the province.

The fact of the matter is that the world will continue to produce oil and gas throughout this century. Most projections show global demand for fossil fuels continuing to grow until at least 2050. The federal Liberals have been holding back the potential of this province in developing our resources, all to the detriment of Albertans and only to the benefit of dictatorships and others who have no regard for human rights or the environment.

I am proud to stand here today in this House to discuss this vital issue. It is of crucial importance that we continue to develop the abundance of resources that all Albertans are fortunate to take ownership of. While those that attempt to land-lock our resources and support foreign-funded campaigns with misinformation and deception – our provincial government will always be standing up for hard-working Albertans that produce our resources and the countless Canadians that benefit from our industry.

At the end of the day, the intent of this bill, I believe, is to promote responsible development and environmental stewardship in a way that gives our economy a much-needed boost. I think it is incredibly admirable that the Premier and the Minister of Indigenous Relations have worked on this bill with the aim of bringing our indigenous partners into the fold.

**10:30**

In my own constituency this summer I was invited to attend a teepee camp organized and put forward by a local First Nations police officer, Les Vonkman. This was an incredible experience, where we were invited to stand a teepee – set up the poles, wrap it with a canvas – understanding the cultural respect for the land, the forest, the river, and even the poles themselves as they represented life to the people and the nature that we are a part of. We heard from elders and knowledge keepers. We took a hike through the natural resources and the natural land along the river to see the history of their people on the land.

We also participated in a sweat lodge. We heard their prayers. We listened to their songs. We felt the heat of the time in that sweat lodge. It was a spiritual experience for them and for myself as we reached a confluence of not just the Catholic history and their people but also their spiritual beliefs as First Nations people.

This government is standing up for those kinds of communities, for those people and those traditions, and for all Albertans, giving them the support to help them grow, sustain economic prosperity, utilize their natural resources ethically, and, hopefully, set the stage with a policy set forth in Bill 14 for the rest of Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Lethbridge-East for his wonderful remarks.

As I've learned and grown from the indigenous communities in this province, there have been a lot of ideas coming to mind, and one of them is respect for the environment, respect for the lands. There is just tremendous respect for the lands that we live on, and I've learned so much from them. Something that I love about this specific bill, Bill 14, the AIOC, is how it actually hopes to give a hand up to indigenous communities in this province. But also I believe this ensures that as they penetrate the natural resource market, we will also see continued respect for the environment, something that some people in this province and this country may think that this government doesn't care about, but I can tell you that we care deeply about it. We do believe that we can grow the economy and protect the environment at the same time.

As I walked through the climate rally that took place in front of this building a couple of days ago with my Support Energy shirt on, insults were hurled at me, but like this government, I remain steadfast in supporting our energy sector and supporting this government in the direction we're taking, particularly with this Bill 14.

I'm hoping that the Member for Lethbridge-East can maybe talk a little bit about his experience working with First Nations, particularly as they respect the environment, some of the lessons he's learned, and also maybe he could talk about how he believes Bill 14 will both ensure that we develop our resources in a responsible way but also protect the environment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you. Thank you for the question from the Member for Cardston-Siksika.

That experience with the teepee camp really did help teach me about the First Nations connection to the land. It was amazing to leave the rush of the city. Lethbridge being the third-largest city, it's still fairly small. It only took a few minutes to get past rush hour, but even there there's an energy and a busyness that as soon as we got into the reserve and onto the private land of this individual that shared his land with us, you could feel the peace begin to settle.

We parked our cars, we took the time to sit down, and we didn't just rush to work as we settlers often do. They sat down. They did introductions. We took time to learn each other's names, our backgrounds, and hear our stories, where we came from, what we were hoping to learn and engage in, all in the setting of a canopy of trees and wildlife and nature around us with the sound of the river in the background. It was only after that time was taken to be in touch with one another and to be in touch with nature that we began to find the site for setting up a teepee.

Then they took the time – again, they didn't just rush into the work – to explain the significance of the poles, which poles did what, how they stood them up, and that you weren't to walk over the poles because the poles came from trees and they have their own spirit. To step over them was actually a disrespect to the spirit within the poles themselves. So once you set that teepee up, it became like a living place for them, and that's part of their culture. To take that time to learn their perspective, to learn their beliefs, to listen to how they interact with nature and the environment: it becomes far more evident why being environmentally conscious, like Bill 14 would set forward, is so important as we invite the First Nations into those business ventures with us.

It takes time to do that building. It takes time to build those friendships. This didn't happen over the course of an hour or two. We took most of the day as we set up that teepee and learned all about the culture: the smoke flaps at the top, the skirting inside the

teepee, how the wind would come from the outside and not go right into the teepee but up the outside and take the smoke out. Then you build the firepit in the middle so that they can sit there and visit. Many times through that day we sat down again, and they brought in elders to come and speak to us.

I learned that part of our challenge as government, even though the First Nations have chiefs and council, is that their people often are more connected to their elders and their knowledge keepers in their societies. They already see two levels of government within their own peoples and nations. We need to understand that if we're going to work with them in respect, work with them in the development of resources, and work with them to protect their environment, part of getting to know them and work with them is acknowledging the hurts of the past because you cannot change or heal what you don't acknowledge. Taking that time to do that with them and then having the firepits . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 14? The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's been a real privilege to sit in here and listen to some of the incredible stories. I know that a humongous amount of what we learn, even just being an elected official, is actually being able to travel around and speak with people and have really significant and incredible conversations with people of various cultures and backgrounds. Some of the really amazing opportunities that we have when you get invited into those spaces. To the point of the Member for Lethbridge-East: it's just such a privilege, isn't it?

Madam Speaker, I just wanted to speak a little bit about some of the experiences that I've had and why this bill is so important. I was recently invited to participate in a sharing circle at an event commemorating the 142nd anniversary of the Treaty 7. It was overwhelming for a lot of different reasons but partially because of the vista where we were, if you can imagine an incredibly beautiful flat space where some of the very first Europeans actually came over the mountains and where the Stoney Nakoda actually met them and brought them over the mountains and settled in this area together because the Stoney Nakoda had such a great ability to raise buffalo. It was actually a relationship that started some of the very first ranches in the province.

Just absolutely incredible vistas are there, but more than that, as you looked out, it dropped down to this turquoise water that was right behind. As you walked up, there are remains of the McDougall family which was the first family that settled out there along with the Stoney Nakoda. There are also all sorts of acknowledgements to teepee circles and various other things that were there because of the relationships that were built building that land and farming that land and living together. When you heard the stories of the settlers and the stories of the First Nations, the First Peoples that were there, and how they collaborated together and worked together and traded together, it was overwhelming the spirit of generosity and the way that things had worked at that time.

There was a fellow there; his name is Tony Snow. He's a descendant of the Treaty 7 signatories, and he's actually studying his father. Snow Sr. was the first ordained indigenous minister of the United church of Alberta. Tony has gone on to bring together that ministry as well as indigenous history and spirit to be able to work alongside his people in reconciliation to help bring folks together but also to be able to work within the church to bring those folks together. He spoke at this site about how it is that we need to work together, and really it's a matter of listening. Respect comes from sitting back and listening, breathing in a person's words,

listening to what they actually mean, and then you break down how it is that we work on that together. That does take time, an immense amount of time, but it's privileged time, especially at a time right now where we're all looking at how it is that we move beyond symbolic gestures.

**10:40**

They're good starting points. I think all of us acknowledge that that's a very important place to start. But there's a difference between a gesture, and then you go to building the relationship, and then we go to figuring out that we work together to make sure that all of us not only live together but understand each other, have compassion and great respect for each other's cultures. But how do we become prosperous and make sure that those folks have access to everything that we all believe is such a great gift in this province, being our natural resources? We have the best, the very best, resources in the world. Not only that, our stewardship is amongst the best in the world. A lot of that is because, if you look historically at a lot of the larger groups and corporations, they have worked collaboratively with indigenous peoples to understand how it is that we move through those lands.

The interesting thing is that as this piece came together, and speaking very closely with my very dear friend the Minister of Indigenous Relations, we started to find out, and he started to understand as he was going through this process, the amount of respect and really great friendships that had already been built amongst a lot of the groups and with our indigenous peoples. This piece of legislation elevates that. It takes it to the next level, where we actually acknowledge our moral obligation to an incredible group of people who have every right to benefit the same way that the rest of us do. That collaboration, that acknowledgement of that, is way beyond a symbol. It's way beyond a gesture.

This is something that from my perspective is, like I said, one of the biggest privileges that we have being here, that you get to meet people that you would never meet. I often say this. I speak at a lot of schools. Who gets to do this? Not only are you invited to come and meet with people, but you're invited into their homes and their spaces and to take a meal and sometimes to pray or sometimes to acknowledge spirit or the Creator, whatever that is, whatever is important to that person. We are invited into that inner circle to participate. Why? Not because it's symbolic to people but because it's meaningful because they want to share. We want to share. This takes us to a whole other level of acknowledging the need for prosperity.

One of the members in opposition had mentioned that about issues around water and poverty. These have been chronic issues that we have faced. We've heard these cries from our indigenous peoples for such a long, long time, and all governments have failed immensely in being able to make sure that we take care of all of our people in this beautiful country. This is a legitimate act, a step to move forward, to making sure that we don't continue on allowing these things to happen.

In order to change fundamentally how it is that First Nation peoples have money and prosperity from this, we've already seen it. We've talked about Eagle Spirit. We've talked about many, many different nations that are very prosperous and have done phenomenal work on their own because these are self-determining nations. However, there are places where we need to make sure that that prosperity is also elevated so that they can take care of their own people. This is a nation-to-nation discussion, which is significantly different. This is an acknowledgement of the self-determining people and what the needs are of those people because we listen to them and understand what our part is. How do we do this? How do we consult?

When I was reading through the consultations that the minister had done, that he had met with 98 members of various First Nations and First Peoples across the province, that's in itself a very, very interesting thing to understand and know. But if you know anything about this minister, you'll understand that each one of those meetings had a meaningful, loving, and very, very compassionate discussion behind it that not only started the building of a relationship but went further to discuss how it is that we work together in collaboration to create prosperity. That's what this bill is about. An opportunity is something that we fling open the doors and we say: here's what we're going to do to help.

It's wonderful that in the past the governments have given grants and other opportunities and things like that to grow and acknowledge First Peoples and First Nations. Again, we're stepping beyond that. We're looking past helping to build pieces of infrastructure and things like that that are, again, our obligation as a government. This is actually a partnership, a partnership where all of us prosper together. That shows a significant shift in a discussion. This has been needed for such a long time, but beyond that, it incorporates all of the important things about how it is that a self-determining nation can create equity on that nation.

This is another piece of the puzzle. As nice as other things are, it didn't help to create equity and an ability for people to grow their own money, sustainability, and ability to take care of their own people. This is what this bill does. It goes beyond where we have been. We all have major gratitude in this House for what has happened in the past, but we go beyond that a step to understand: what is our responsibility and our obligation towards each other, nation to nation, to create that prosperity so that their children – and the other thing is, too, that if we look at this, that is what we talk about in reconciliation. How do we bridge those gaps? How do we look at using oil and gas or whatever resources we have available to us to bridge the gap in reconciliation? We build relationships. We understand the need for prosperity, for taking care of our children, for our future, how it is that we look at each other, the partnerships that we create, how we evolve, where we've been, and where we're going to.

This bill has the opportunity to say: "This is where we are. This is where we're going. Here is the opportunity, and how can we help you to create that prosperity?" Every single person in this House knows and understands the importance of what it means to look forward and say: well, what's going to happen to my grandchildren? We talk about that all the time, how increased debt and the issues that we have with debt and deficit are mortgaging our children's future. This is about looking at that issue and that problem and solving it collaboratively with an incredible group of people who are unbelievably resilient.

All of us, I think, have had the pleasure of sitting in a First Nations gathering. There were many of us at the spirit sisters gathering in Calgary. What I think most touched me – there was so many things, but what was very profound for me was the ability of these people to stand up and tell their story, as painful as it was, of everything that they had gone through, but we were looking for that path forward. There was a physical sense of understanding where we had failed, what had gone on, but what was the path forward? This has been that cry. This bill is an answer to that. How do we move forward?

There are so many things that I could share with you about the incredible opportunities I've had with our First Nations and First Peoples. The one thing I want to be very clear about is that in our relationship we have to talk about things that are mutually beneficial for all people. That's largely in part what those discussions and what happened when the minister went around the province to travel and to talk with leaders of nations and various

people were about, that mutual benefit and that relationship, but we also wanted to make sure that the bill sets out clear expectations. Again, it's okay to pat yourself on the back for doing some nice things for people. It's a wonderful part of what we all get to do in here. But when you look at mutual benefit and you look at the relationship and clear expectations that are laid out in this bill, we can actually see that path forward.

When we talk about engagement with First Peoples, that's not just sitting down and having the relationship. We need to move beyond that and understand, listen to, and find solutions for how it is that we – what's the next step? Next steps are a very serious piece of what this bill does. It takes fundamental issues of poverty, social issues, isolation, many, many other things and makes sure that not only are we looking at that social piece but that we understand that prosperity and building within those nations will help solve so many of the other problems that all of us have within our nation and within their nation.

**10:50**

Quite often we hear within those social perspectives about how it is that we enter into that with a competency of understanding that nation. You can't talk about one nation on all nations. This is one point that I wanted to make very clear, too. These are thumbprints. These are unique, individual human beings and different nations, all with different perspectives and politics of their own. To make the assumption – especially with land acknowledgements, I have found in my short time here that it's my responsibility to find an elder at one of these events and actually ask them what they would prefer. Not all elders like to have land acknowledgements and the treaties because the treaties were painful for them. Not all people that are at these events want to be acknowledged in a particular way, so I always ask. Isn't that what we're supposed to do? We're supposed to ask. They are self-determining, independent nations.

You can have all the land acknowledgements that you want – and I firmly believe that that's an important part of what we do – but why don't we ask, especially if an elder is there? That's the elder's prerogative to do that land acknowledgement, not mine, and if they do that, then I will acknowledge based on having spoken to that elder and finding out how they would like me to acknowledge their people because I'm on their land.

This is a shared opportunity. We share the land, we share relationships, we build families together right across this beautiful province and across the nation, and we can build prosperity together.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the minister for your comments on Bill 14. It's great to see the ministers up and speaking to the bill. I have a couple of questions for clarity, and you may not be able to answer them now, maybe during Committee of the Whole or as we move forward through the debate. I was just looking at the definition of indigenous groups in the act. For those following along, page 3, section 3, subsection (1), under the definition it says:

3(1) For greater certainty, for the purposes of this Act, "indigenous groups" means

and then it goes

- (a) Indian bands as defined by the Indian Act . . .
- (b) Metis settlements established by the Metis Settlements Act,
- (c) Metis groups as defined by the regulations,

and then under (d) it says:

- other entities approved by the Minister by order as falling within the mandate of the Corporation, and
- (e) entities that are fully owned by the entities identified in clause ...

I guess my question is that when we're looking at definitions of indigenous groups, that this act is defining, if we could get clarity from the government as to how you would then say that there are other abilities of identifying indigenous groups outside of what would typically be in the Indian Act and the Metis Settlements Act, therefore outside of First Nations communities and Métis people. When I see "other entities," I get a little concerned about how you're starting to define "other entities" and how that goes outside of the typical definition of a First Nations person and a Métis person. My understanding is that this is about supporting indigenous communities, First Nations and Métis people, to be able to have opportunities within corporations. So to have an opportunity for the minister to redefine the definition of what a First Nations person is and what a Métis person is for the guise of falling under a mandate of a corporation – I guess I'm just a little concerned that this is creating maybe a potential loophole to not necessarily have indigenous people represented in these corporations.

Again, I recognize that may not be something you can answer right now. In Committee of the Whole I have no problem bringing it up again. But if you have the opportunity to respond, that would be great.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will answer it a little bit more fully later, but, just to give you some examples, not all bands are recognized. There's nonstatus as well, especially if we are looking at some – there are quite a few people that have lost their status and may be trying to work back into these corporations. We just want to make sure that all of those opportunities – we don't want to miss out on people, especially for women. We have a lot of nonstatus women that have lost humongous opportunities as a result of many issues. We are trying to open those doors as much as possible. That's part of the answer, but we'll get more for you.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members on 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just to elaborate on the minister's comments, there are also provisions there so that we can make sure that the groups that are currently doing the business within the First Nation communities that are owned by those communities in part or in whole can participate. My understanding, when I read this act, is that there is no intention to redefine indigenous groups wholly. It is really for the purposes of this act so it can fulfill its mandate and make sure that those guarantees of funds and backing – that's its purpose – can be used by the business groups of the First Nation communities that are owned by those communities. If we didn't have this provision, we'd have a real tough time making sure that they do business because it's through these business corporations that they participate in our economy. So it's of utmost importance, the way that I read it, that we keep these clauses in there and we allow flexibility so that the minister and the board can make what they need happen so that those loan guarantees can be used fruitfully.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes. I just wanted to add that in order to gain and garner securities and to leverage those dollars, to the point of that, we have to make sure that the bands who are actually already in businesses with other corporations that may not be First Nations businesses can leverage dollars with securities. That's been a huge barrier to them being able to get equity. That's part of the reason that that's in there.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Anyone else under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to Bill 14 in second reading? The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This UCP government is proud to be working with indigenous leaders on the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. It's about time that the Alberta government takes concrete steps to improve the well-being of indigenous Albertans and consult with indigenous people on a regular basis. This UCP government will work hand in hand with indigenous groups to restore equity and opportunity to the indigenous Albertans and the thousands of communities they live in. Our UCP government is dedicated to partnering with Alberta's indigenous communities in building economic and social well-being.

The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation allocates \$1 billion in loan guarantees to support aboriginal co-ownership and financial participation in major resource development because it is a moral obligation to help our First Nations benefit from the resources that lie beneath the ground that their ancestors inhabited thousands of years ago. We as a government are looking forward to this partnership. Madam Speaker, let me assure this Chamber and all Albertans that clearing up our balance sheet and partnering with indigenous groups will be a huge step in the right direction for Alberta and essential to the oil and gas industry.

This UCP government was pleased to host eight engagement sessions between July 10 and August 8, with engagement from almost 200 participants. Developing this plan is just the first step in rebuilding a relationship between the government of Alberta and indigenous groups throughout the province. The ability of indigenous groups to provide adequate security to financial lenders is a significant barrier in their ability to access capital and the capacity to develop or invest in major resource projects. It varies widely, greatly across indigenous communities. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation will bridge the gap between indigenous groups wanting to be commercial partners in the natural resource sector. This UCP government will work out the challenges between Alberta's energy sector and indigenous stakeholders to ensure everyone benefits from Alberta's energy potential. All stakeholders are being given an equal opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns, and questions. In addition to almost 200 indigenous, business, and financial leaders, corporate participants from major energy groups such as Syncrude, Suncor, ATCO, and EPCOR also joined the engagement sessions.

Alberta is a land of opportunity. This UCP government is looking forward to fulfilling that promise and building an Alberta for everyone, including indigenous communities. We are excited to be working with coalition representatives from Eagle Spirit Energy, First Nations Major Projects Coalition, Project Reconciliation, Iron Coalition, Western Indigenous Pipeline Group, and Fort McKay Mikisew Cree tank farm project. All of these groups have offered extremely valuable insight during our engagement sessions and will continue to be valued partners in the coming years.

Generating economic growth for indigenous communities gives more opportunity to buy into energy projects that can provide thousands of new, well-paying jobs to indigenous workers. Madam Speaker, this is about developing a safer future for indigenous communities. Engaging indigenous Albertans into our future while limiting intrusive laws and rules and regulations is important to this government.

11:00

All Albertans deserve to be a part of shaping the future of this province and sharing in its prosperity. We recognize the structural challenges that many indigenous communities face, and this UCP government is committed to help alleviate some of the challenges with the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. Madam Speaker, while there is still a lot more work to be done, I am happy to stand with all members of this Chamber to help bring indigenous people into this province's economic engine and continue working together with them for years to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for his comments. One of the lines he used early on that struck me was about the moral obligation we have, and I was wondering if I could ask the member to expand a bit with some context on that moral obligation and the moral case that we have for this bill, for the dignity of work in these First Nation communities. It's really important for individuals to have work. It's through work that many people find so much purpose and direction in their lives.

I'm going to quote from *Laborem Exercens* by Pope John Paul II to expand on this point. It's applicable to everyone, and many of the First Nation communities I spoke with often brought up the dignity of work and their desire for it. It goes as follows:

And yet, in spite of all this toil – perhaps, in a sense, because of it – work is a good thing for man. Even though it bears the mark of a bonum arduum [or difficult joy], in the terminology of Saint Thomas, this does not take away the fact that, as such, it is a good thing for man. It is not only good in the sense that it is useful or something to enjoy; it is also good as being something worthy, that is to say, something that corresponds to man's dignity, that expresses this dignity and increases it. If one wishes to define more clearly the ethical meaning of work, it is this truth that one must particularly keep in mind. Work is a good thing for man – a good thing for his humanity – because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes “more [of] a human being.”

This quote identifies for me and I think is very informative for this Chamber how the work that is lacking in these communities and the moral obligation we have to participate in providing that gives direction to an individual and also to a family. It ties an individual and family to a community, to a plot of land, the land that these First Nation communities are so proud to defend as being the first inhabitants and having that territorial responsibility of sustainably developing it, as the member mentioned.

I could also go on, quoting Martin Luther King and others to the same effect, on how all labour uplifts humanity and has dignity and is important and thus should be undertaken with painstaking excellence. I find this theme being repeated over and over again by all members, on both sides of the House: the importance of work and the importance of bringing dignity to individuals. I could just as easily quote from many of our friends on the opposite side of the

aisle, who support socialist mantras, who see the importance of work.

From our perspective on this bill, could the member comment on how work brings dignity to these communities so that they can be uplifted and how work gives them a hand up instead of a handout?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Well, I think you've actually said it all there. You answered the question pretty much right after, which, you know, I certainly do appreciate. One of the things maybe to speak to is that from the capital side I think there are so many opportunities out there for indigenous people, and there are great ideas. There's so much work that goes into starting a business. Just from taking the idea, you move that along, you come up with your business plan, and you do the pro forma. This doesn't just take months of planning; this can take years of planning. Then it comes to having and obtaining the capital to get into business and to finding investors and securing loans. That's probably one of the biggest hurdles in getting into business, and I think that it can be very discouraging when people have these ideas and they're unable to move them forward.

I know, for myself, I got a tremendous amount of satisfaction from being in business, farming and ranching as well as owning a franchise business, and I know the work that goes into both of those jobs. I know farming and ranching. I was in east-central Alberta riding around in my four-wheeler and moving cattle, and there were tent rings and firepits out in the hills. When I was moving cattle and I was using this four-wheeler, I often thought about the people that used to come to this area. This was a hunting . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to second reading of Bill 14? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 14. Just to clarify, I will be supporting this bill. I do think that any economic opportunities are definitely beneficial. I think that as I start, though, I should recognize and self-identify that I am a Métis person. I think it would be a little bit disingenuous for me not to stand to speak in support of the indigenous communities and the potential for this and talk in response to some of the stories.

Of course, growing up, coming from or living in the Crownsnest Pass and then on Vancouver Island for a while, our family didn't really talk about our history. I only recently found out, well, in my early twenties, that I was actually Métis and that I have Mohawk in my family heritage. I think part of that is because of the fact that on my father's side, when he was growing up, it was easier to not identify as Métis, to not recognize our history because, as with many Métis people, visually I can go through life looking very Caucasian, my father as well, so it was much easier for him to live in a world where he looked more Caucasian than First Nations.

In saying that, it wasn't a conversation. My heritage and my background and my experiences growing up were not in the traditional sense of learning about my heritage and my Mohawk history. It wasn't until I became a social worker and understood that it was important to me and started working at Métis Child and Family Services and working within Children's Services with First Nations groups, specifically Bigstone Cree Nation and a couple of different First Nations communities, that I really became confident in wanting to get to know my family history better.

In saying that, I appreciate all the conversations that I'm hearing from both sides of the House in regard to: how are we supporting and working with our brothers and sisters in our First Nations and Métis communities? There are struggles, and I think, you know, we all acknowledge that historically we could have done better. I



believe that from my own personal experience, trying to identify myself and learn about who I am as an individual based on my family history. I recognize the struggle that many people within the First Nations and Métis community have around identifying who they are because of the lack of culture and the loss of our history. I think that any opportunities that governments can do and have around recognizing that there have been failures in the past and how we can move forward to work together are extremely important.

In saying that, what I would like to talk about a little bit, when you're looking at the development of these corporations and these boards, is recognizing that if we're going to be truthful and we're going to work on reconciliation and we're going to move forward and ensure that this is truly about indigenous opportunities and that this is about indigenous opportunities and corporations, then the people that are going to be sitting on this board, that are going to be working with the minister actually represent First Nations and Métis people, that the representation on those boards is by Métis and First Nation individuals.

I recognize again: I self-identify. I am not a registered Métis person because of the fact that we don't have the ability to do the history and do the genogram that I need to do to be able to be registered. So that may be a question that comes up as well around representation on boards and how that works. But, in saying that, if this is truly about making sure that indigenous communities have opportunities, then it makes sense that people that sit on those boards are indigenous people. You know, again, as we talk about symbolism, it can't just be a symbol to say that we've created this board to work with the minister to create these opportunities. Our First Nations people need to be on it.

#### 11:10

What I also want to talk about is that I've heard a lot about the struggles within the First Nations and Métis community. Again, coming from Children's Services, I recognize many of the dynamics that the culture and the community experience, but I also want to recognize that the indigenous community is extremely strong. They are entrepreneurs in their own way, and there have been many, many positive things come within the First Nations and Métis community, and it's not just about the culture. The culture is amazing. I mean, I feel at home the most when I'm with people within the Métis community, for sure. But I also want to talk about the fact that there have been investment funds created in the past to provide capital to indigenous communities that specifically work with the forestry industry, that specifically work with the service industry, with the financial sectors, with the agricultural industry. We have people who work in the trapping industry and the hunting industry. We have opportunities with people that are business owners, that are working in nonprofit organizations, that are leaders within the community.

I believe that as we talk about community and we talk about the First Nations community, the indigenous community, the Métis community, we also recognize that there are self-drivers, that there are many people who have done and are doing amazing things within the economic world, within the First Nations communities. You know, Bigstone Cree Nation is a very, very well-established community that does amazing things with their community supports, their social supports, and their economic benefits. We see that within Siksika. There are many other First Nations communities in Alberta that are extremely successful and are also addressing the socioeconomic impact issues within their community.

I just wanted to say that, again, I am a strong believer in any opportunities that we can look at. Working with the community is a benefit. Anything that we can do to strengthen the economy of Alberta is a benefit, so I will be supporting this bill, but I just wanted

to make sure that it was acknowledged that I think I am the only Métis person in the Legislature.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It will be an interesting research project for the Speaker later.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to stand and speak to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, the creation of that corporation. Partners in prosperity is the way that we've tried to look at this. As I thought about that phrase, "partners in prosperity," I had to go back to understand and think about my experiences with my indigenous friends.

My first experience that I'd like to tell you about was decades ago. When I first started out in my career, I actually started out as a teacher. The first teaching opportunity and position I received was from a school called Little Pony Private Institute. This was in Fort Macleod. My teaching responsibility was to teach all of the subjects in grades 9, 10, and 11, so bright-eyed and bushy-tailed I got at this teaching assignment. Who we were teaching were the kids that were either kicked off the reserve, the Blood reserve, or the kids that there was just no place for within the system. So there were a lot of challenges. I remember one time being completely overwhelmed by the amount of preparation I had to do for all of the different subjects in all the different grades and going to my principal and talking to him. He was the kind of person that really got it. He really understood what we were trying to accomplish in this school. As he spoke to me, he said: "Look, it doesn't matter who you blame. It matters where you're going. It matters where these kids are going to go. Whose fault is it that they got kicked off the reserve or out of the schools? Whose fault is it that they don't have a good family life? It doesn't matter. What matters is where we're going with this."

When we talk about partners in prosperity, I think about that experience and that conversation with him. But I also think about another experience when I was teaching. It was springtime, and a lot of the kids had decided that they weren't going to start coming to school. This was my first year teaching, and the principal said to me: you need to go out there and you need to round up the kids. So we got on the bus. We went out, and we found the first one, and as soon as we found the first one, they'd tattle on the other ones, and we'd be able to find the rest. There was one final guy that I needed to find, and they told me where he was. So I went and knocked on the door of the house, and the mom came and said: "Yup. Absolutely. You need to get that guy to school." She told me where his room was. I went back and I thought: you know, I'm going to scare this guy so he's serious about coming back to school. I knocked not too hard but pretty hard on that door, and the door fell in. This guy jumps up and he says: "Okay. You got me. I will come back to school." From that time on, they said that if you don't come to school, I'm going to actually come out and knock down the doors.

I experienced first-hand the living conditions that some of these First Nations have to live in. It was a real eye-opener for me as a young teacher, to see that they lived in one of the most prosperous countries in this world, yet they were still not partners in that prosperity. This was something that really concerned me at a young age, and I just thought: well, what is the solution to this?

Now, one of the things that I've been impressed with is that the last government took a lot of effort to be able to try to figure this out. But one thing that I wasn't impressed with was that they were not willing to finish the equation. If you cannot provide a vehicle or

a tool for our First Nations brothers and sisters to be able to be partners in that prosperity, then you haven't finished the equation. We can talk about reconciliation. We can try to understand it. We can try to be able to move forward from the '60s scoop. But unless we provide them with a tool to be able to have a bright future, which is what we thought Alberta and Canada were all about, then we haven't finished the equation.

This is why I have to congratulate my friend and colleague the Minister of Indigenous Relations for the work that he has done on this bill and on this vehicle to be able to help create this partners-in-prosperity approach. As I sat down and talked with him and understood where he's trying to go with this, I really got on board. I really started to realize that, you know, this could actually be the finishing of that equation, that decades ago I questioned about: where is that equation going? I actually want to congratulate him on bringing this bill forward.

Now, another conversation I had, Madam Speaker, was with a friend of mine. I've lived in Cardston for 13 years. It used to actually be Cardston-Taber-Warner, and then, unfortunately, the boundaries got split and I lost that section or that portion of my riding, and it's now Cardston-Siksika. But for the four years prior to this, the Blood reserve, which is the largest reserve in Canada, was part of my riding.

11:20

I had a neighbour who was First Nations, and we had some fairly good conversations, usually over a barbecue and a steak, and we would sit down and chat. One of the things that he told me was a real barrier for him – he was very entrepreneurial, but one of the biggest barriers that he said he had struggled with growing up was that he had no property rights on the reserve. He had no ability to do what many of us do who start up small businesses, which is to take your property and use that as equity against a business. He had no ability to do that. He said that unfortunately this actually tied his hands behind his back to be able to start a business.

He actually did find an ability to do that, but his ability to start a business was going and working in a regular job and then trying to save up as much as he could. Finally, after a long time he was able to put a down payment on a business and buy a business. You know, I took my hat off to this guy. He was actually able to get over something that a lot of people on the reserve aren't. This issue of not being able to own property is a real barrier to our First Nations that are business oriented, that want to be able to get ahead through that vehicle.

This is a solution to that problem. Obviously, I am going to support this bill. I'm very much in support of this bill because it addresses one of the major problems that the people on First Nations reserves are facing, which is that they don't have their own property. The ability to have property, to be able to leverage that property in order to be able to start a business is something that many people on this side of the House have done. I know I've done it.

This is something that I am actually extremely excited about, being able to provide that opportunity. Not to own property, because this is something that is not on the table for our First Nations brothers and sisters, but what it does do is it provides them an opportunity to be able to share in that prosperity and be partners in it with a different kind of vehicle. We haven't solved the problem yet of private property ownership. I hope we do, because I think that that will actually provide more opportunities for them, but that isn't on the table. What is on the table is the ability to have this Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, and I think that there are going to be some fantastic things that will come from that.

Now, one of the things that I was also very happy to see, Madam Speaker, was the consultation that took place. Because of what I've seen in the last four years in terms of consultation, I was pleased to see that the minister was willing to go out and not just talk to corporations but also talk to indigenous and Métis organizations and groups so that they could give him the kind of information that he needs to be able to make a really good bill and a good opportunity and vehicle.

He's been able to talk with Eagle Spirit energy, the First Nations Major Projects Coalition, Project Reconciliation, Iron Coalition, Western Indigenous Pipeline Group, and many, many more. He also was able to speak with Syncrude, Suncor, ATCO, EPCOR. In speaking with these organizations, they have been able to tap into lots of employment opportunities for First Nations in those areas. They are some of the largest employers of First Nations up in those areas, so it was actually a natural fit for them to talk to these companies.

I wanted to finish up what I started on, and that is the importance of finishing the equation. If we are going to help and make sure that there are opportunities for all people in this province, then we have got to provide those tools. We've got to provide those vehicles that will allow that prosperity for all sectors. Whoever you are, wherever you come from, whatever your past has been, we need to be able to provide them with those opportunities. This is a brilliant representation of being able to provide that type of a vehicle for a people that have really struggled. I've seen it first-hand. I've lived in Cardston, as I said, for 13 years, and I've watched some of the very difficult scenarios for many families on the Blood reserve.

So this is exciting. I look forward to being able to see how this rolls out. I look forward to seeing not just the corporation – “corporation” is a cold term – but the individual stories that are going to come from this, where this actually does help individuals and individual families to be able to reach those goals that they have.

With that, Madam Speaker, again, I am in support and hope that all members of the House will be in support of this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any more speakers to the bill? The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. We made some excellent progress here today. I've also just been quite moved, actually, by people from both sides of the aisle speaking in favour of this bill. I really do appreciate the steps that have been taken here and the really thoughtful commentary.

On behalf of the Minister of Indigenous Relations I'd like to close debate. I do believe that we have general consensus that will be in favour. I don't believe that a division will be required, but we'll see what happens here. Hopefully, everyone is in favour.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would never guess what members of this Assembly would do.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a second time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** You did it.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I think we've made some excellent progress here. I'd move to adjourn until 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:28 a.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, October 9, 2019

Day 25

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 9, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this morning I had the absolute honour and pleasure to represent all members of the Assembly at a citizenship ceremony in the Federal Building just a couple of hours ago. Her Honour Lois Mitchell, the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, presided over the Canadian citizenship ceremony. It was my pleasure to welcome some of Edmonton's newest, in fact, some of Canada's newest citizens, and 31 of them have joined us in the gallery this afternoon. I invite you to rise and receive the welcome to your new life as Canadian citizens.

Thank you, hon. members.

Also visiting us today, guests of the Minister of Service Alberta: D'Arcy Donald, David Brown, Brad Mitchell, and Heather Coleman.

Guests of the Minister of Health here for Catholic health week are Cliff Enfield, Conny Avila, Eleanor Stewart, Glenda Coleman-Miller, Leah Janzen, MaryAnn Beer, Shelly Decker, and Candice Keddie. Welcome. Hon. members, please welcome them to the Assembly.

Before we continue with the rest of the Routine today, I just would like to point out that all members received copies of amendments to the standing orders that were approved by the Assembly yesterday, October 8, 2019. They can be found on green printed paper, placed on the members' desks for ease. We will be printing new and refreshed standing orders at a later date, when you will receive the entire package.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein is rising to make a statement.

### Addiction Treatment

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's yet to be a jurisdiction in Canada that has succeeded in developing a reliable addiction recovery continuum. Imagine making the decision to enter recovery, reaching out for help, and having nobody there to help you. The detox mats are full, the local treatment centres have a three-month waiting list, and there are no treatment beds for teens nor supports for family.

In his book *The Selfish Brain* psychiatrist Dr. Robert L. DuPont states that there are five steps to recovery: identification, intervention, treatment, aftercare, and then a life of recovery. We must pursue a path forward that connects all of these steps in a seamless way so that we make sure that nobody falls through the cracks.

So many of us have been touched by addiction. Too many times I've heard stories from families who have lost loved ones because treatment and recovery options just weren't available. I want to be part of a government that's going to fix this so that I can hear from families celebrating getting their loved ones back because of recovery.

Addiction is a disease like no other, and when someone is struggling with a disease, there is a moral obligation to help them

seek treatment. I am proud that our Premier and this government are committed to making recovery more accessible across this province. We have an obligation as legislators and as human beings to look out for our most vulnerable and to support them in their times of struggle. I fully intend on continuing to support this government in its efforts to address the pressing issue of addiction, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. Recovery works; recovery is possible. I have seen it, and I'm so glad our government will be there for those who need it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows would like to make a statement.

### Yom Kippur

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night at sunset Jewish Albertans began their observance of Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar and the conclusion of the High Holy Days. Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, is a solemn time for reflection on one's own life over the past year, examination of personal shortcomings, and the seeking of forgiveness. According to tradition this is the time when God will seal the inscription of each person's fate for the coming year in the Book of Life. Many of our Jewish friends, neighbours, colleagues, and relatives will observe Yom Kippur through fasting and refraining from work and worldly tasks. Many will spend much of today in synagogue and participate in intensive prayer.

On behalf of the NDP Official Opposition I wish all Jewish people in Alberta and around the world an easy and meaningful fast. [Remarks in Hebrew]. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

### Thanksgiving and Alberta Agriculture

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 14 Canadians in Alberta and across the country will celebrate Thanksgiving. This holiday is so much more than simply eating excessive amounts of great food with family and friends. Thanksgiving is about being thankful for all the blessings one has received throughout the year, whether those blessings are having a healthy family, a job, economic prosperity, another wedding anniversary. There are so many things to be thankful for.

One of the more important and often forgotten aspects of Thanksgiving is that we give thanks for a bountiful harvest and all the farmers that help produce it. From grain farmers to ranchers, all Alberta farmers play a crucially important role in providing meals for people through Canada and the world, not only for Thanksgiving but for everyday life as well.

Alberta has approximately 70,000 farmers that are actively farming 21 million hectares of land, which equates to approximately 31 per cent of Canada's total farmland. Alberta wheat farmers produced 10 million tonnes of wheat in 2018. This wheat found its way into the bread, turkey stuffing, and desserts shared by millions of Albertan and Canadian families. In addition to wheat, Alberta farmers produced 5.9 million tonnes of canola. While wheat and canola may be our primary grain products, Alberta is also responsible for producing large amounts of barley, oats, and corn. Alberta cattle ranchers were responsible for 41 per cent of Canada's total beef production, and Alberta hog farmers are responsible for 10 per cent of Canada's total pork production. In addition to beef and pork, Alberta is responsible for a significant portion of the chicken, turkey, sheep, and bison market.

Thanksgiving is a remarkable opportunity to catch up with family and friends and to take a break from politics to enjoy a meal in good

spirits. So this year when you are gathered with your loved ones, sharing potatoes, gravy, turkey, ham, stuffing, and pie, remember to be thankful to all the Alberta farmers who made your Thanksgiving feast possible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### Technology Industry Programs

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Diversifying the economy needs commitment and a broad-based effort. Our government did that. That's why we created 3,000 tech spaces across Alberta in our 2018 budget. The data shows that that was the right thing to do. The University of Calgary established new programs in computer engineering as part of our effort. Already, 80 per cent of students in this brand new program have found work, and the graduates are highly desired in Calgary's digital sector. That is why it's a shame that this UCP government is looking at making cuts to postsecondary education, making tuition more expensive. Making it harder for Albertans to get the education they need will neither help Alberta's technology companies nor Albertans looking to find jobs in this sector.

But it seems like the UCP government doesn't want Albertans to work in the tech sector nor to grow this sector here in Alberta. In the summer this UCP government cancelled our artificial intelligence program and froze the investor tax credit and digital media tax credit without warning, which caused great uncertainty and made it harder for Alberta companies to attract investment. The government is quick to point to its 4 and a half billion dollar corporate giveaway, but the corporate tax does nothing, not one thing, for start-ups or companies looking to scale. The Premier is either wilfully ignorant or simply doesn't care. Thanks to this short-sighted decision by this UCP government, technology companies are now struggling to find the capital they need to grow, and investors are now looking elsewhere.

I'm calling on this government to unfreeze these tax credits immediately because that is what the business community is asking for and these tax credits are actually creating jobs and diversifying the economy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

1:40

### Fire Prevention Week

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Starting Sunday and continuing until Saturday, Canada marks Fire Prevention Week. Fire kills eight people each week in Canada, with 73 per cent of those deaths coming from residential fires. Now, this is the 23rd year Canada will mark Fire Prevention Week, and this year's campaign is Not Every Hero Wears a Cape; Plan and Practice Your Escape!

The national fire prevention association hopes that this week will educate everyone about the small but important actions that they can do to help keep those around them safe. These include making sure every child can recognize two exits from each room, knowing how to open windows, and remembering to keep low to the ground if there's smoke in the air. In a typical home fire you may have as little as one to two minutes to escape your house, so I want to encourage all Albertans to take steps to make sure your whole family is prepared in the event of a worst-case scenario. At the very least, please remember to test your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detector. The national fire prevention association has a number of resources available on its website to assist families who want to prepare their kids for a house fire situation. In addition, the government of Alberta's website provides a number of tips on how

to prevent house fires and how to make sure your alarms are functional.

I also want to take this time to specifically thank Spruce Grove fire services and the Stony Plain fire department as well as the rest of our firefighters around the province for their daily acts of bravery and heroism.

I hope that this week is a great success and that the initiatives and ideas put forward by either the government of Alberta or local fire departments help Albertans to make their homes safer. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Decore would like to make a statement.

### Friends of St. Michael's Society of Edmonton

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 1 I had the opportunity to attend the 2019 minister's seniors' service awards presentation at Government House, where I had the privilege of copresenting an award to the Friends of St. Michael's Society of Edmonton. These awards recognize the dedication and contributions of seniors who work to improve the lives of the people in their communities.

The Friends of St. Michael's Society of Edmonton is a charitable organization operating in Edmonton-Decore that primarily supports the work of St. Michael's Health Group, a long-term seniors' care organization. Members of the society volunteer in a variety of capacities. Many individuals spend time in long-term care facilities serving meals, assisting with transportation, and spending quality time with the residents. The energy and enthusiasm of the volunteers helps to build relationships and a sense of community for the residents, which is so important to their quality of life.

In addition to facilitating volunteer work at the long-term care centres, the Friends of St. Michael's Society also works tirelessly to fundraise through bingo nights and charitable casino events in order to purchase necessary items for long-term care residents. Equipment like ceiling lifts and slings is not always covered by social assistance programs, so they are provided to residents who need them at no charge, thanks to the work of the society. Additionally, funds raised by the Friends of St. Michael's are used to cover the costs of all community access and recreation activities for long-term care residents.

It has been my privilege to work and represent the incredible volunteers of the Friends of St. Michael's Society in my capacity as MLA for Edmonton-Decore, and I want to truly congratulate every individual member on a well-deserved award. Your work has touched the lives of so many seniors and their families, and it inspires others to become involved in their community. Thank you to all of them and, once again, congratulations.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Animal Rights Activists' Turkey Farm Protest

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm from cattle country, so it was a little startling to have our phones blow up over turkeys. Now, I realize that many in this House may not be particularly interested in turkeys, until this upcoming weekend anyway, and frankly the same can be said for most of the constituents that have been contacting my office. What they are interested in is farming, property rights, and the ability for law-abiding farmers to work in peace.

On Monday, September 2 approximately 60 protesters took it upon themselves to trespass onto a turkey farm near Fort Macleod with the express intention of disrupting work. These protesters trespassed onto the property and set up their demonstration in the

barn which housed many of the birds. These protesters, when asked to leave, put forward three demands: one, release some of the turkeys to a sanctuary; two, media coverage of the barn's interior; and three, to walk away without charges.

This unlucky farmer called the police, and the trespassers called also, allegedly to keep the peace. In order to get the protesters to move on, the farmer allowed Global News into the barn as asked, gave five turkeys to the group, and allowed them to walk away in peace. The headline for this should be Ideological Extremists Occupy Rural Business and Hold Farmer Hostage until Demands Were Met, if you ask me.

My constituents have made it very clear in the past weeks that they feel this farmer was treated unfairly. They worry what they would do if put in a similar situation. They know they are not breaking any agricultural laws, but they are concerned that their particular livestock may be the target of these criminals' next attack.

It's high time that these trespassers face the full extent of the law. This farmer was singled out, besmirched, and humiliated despite the fact that Global News did not film one instance of animal cruelty as the protesters alleged. Since when do we allow groups to extort individuals in their own homes?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Community Foundation of Lethbridge Vital Signs Report

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the agriculture minister lobbed a personal insult at me during question period. He said that it was bad that I didn't attend a ribbon cutting for the new Cavendish potato processing facility, and it's true. At the same time, the Lethbridge community foundation launched their Vital Signs report, a series of indicators about economic, social, and environmental well-being. Given that I already knew about the hundreds of new jobs that were coming to Lethbridge because I was at the table when we funded and supported the city of Lethbridge to attract the Cavendish investment, I chose to support the staff and board of the community foundation by learning more about the annual Vital Signs report.

The Member for Lethbridge-East was not at the Vital Signs launch. Let me share what he didn't learn. He didn't learn that 27,000 people in southwest Alberta have access to public transportation now for the first time due to the highway 3 connector or that 58 people a week attend our Parkrun at Henderson Lake, organized by Jim and Ellen Carter, or that 68 people per day on average are served at the homeless shelter and hundreds more facts and figures that describe our region. The Member for Lethbridge-East didn't get to recognize executive director Charleen Davidson or Rob Dowell, the superhero data nerd behind Vital Signs, or board member Ronda Reach and the Vital Signs steering committee. He didn't get to talk to his own Lethbridge-East constituents on the board, like Renee Richards.

Mr. Speaker, when the minister of agriculture lobs personal attacks at me for the apparent crime of learning more about Lethbridge, it says more about him than it does about me. The Member for Lethbridge-East may want to ask his colleagues to lay off. I know that he actually wants to focus on common priorities, and I also know that he, too, like me, can't be everywhere either.

People in Lethbridge have been confused when UCP members and the Premier himself have come to town to hurl insults at the city, the police chief, progressive voters, the university, and me personally. It's just not how we do things, and it's not how we will continue to improve Lethbridge's vital signs.

### Canadian Finals Rodeo

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, this October the annual Canadian Finals Rodeo, most commonly known as the CFR, will be held in Red Deer, Alberta. It is widely acknowledged as one of the world's most prestigious rodeos, showcasing the very best in the sport that the world has to offer. From barrel racing and bull riding to steer wrestling and saddle bronc, the competition is sure to be tough this year. The CFR brings with it the end of the Canadian rodeo season, determining this year's Canadian champions in each of the rodeo sports.

Thousands of people from across Canada will attend to watch this year's competition, with the most important viewers being the young kids who watch with wide eyes and big dreams, hoping one day that they could be representing their small town in the arena. At every small-town rodeo, I see children growing up surrounded by the culture of community spirit and strong work ethic that embodies what it means to be an Albertan. As these children age, they move on from mutton busting to high school rodeo, becoming involved in an environment that fosters more than just rodeo but exemplary conduct and sportsmanship. Opportunities for scholarships emerge as dedication and skill are proved.

This year we had many young Albertans head down to Wyoming in July for the 2019 National High School Finals Rodeo, a defining milestone in one's rodeo career. A huge congratulations to all of those who made our province so proud while representing us on an international stage.

The next step in a rodeo career is to make it onto a college rodeo team and then to pro rodeo. Each year a select handful of Albertans qualify for the CFR after years of hard work and dedication. To our local cowboys and cowgirls who will represent us at the CFR in Red Deer: my colleagues and I want to wish you all the very best of luck.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the Premier's \$4.5 billion corporate handout is not growing the economy, and it's not growing jobs. But it has blown a massive hole in the budget, and now the Premier is breaking countless promises. Today we're going to talk about a whopper. The Premier promised to get tough on rural crime, but instead he's forcing rural Albertans to either pay new taxes or accept cuts to policing. Why is the Premier breaking his promises just to fund money to wealthy corporations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know we're on the right track when the NDP has to resort to the old tactics of deception, of fear and smear. First of all, there is no \$4.5 billion corporate tax cut. This year the revenue offset will be \$100 million. But there was a \$2.3 billion loss in revenue from businesses after the NDP raised those taxes. On the question of rural crime, this government will be investing more, not less, in rural crime to fight the wave of property crime that began under NDP mismanagement.

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier knows full well that the budget numbers were the same before the election as they were after, but what has changed are the lines he is feeding to Albertans. He ran on cutting taxes for Albertans, but what he's

actually doing is forcing municipalities to raise taxes for him. He's robbing Peter to pay Paul's shareholders. Why do only CEOs and shareholders get the payoff while the rest of Albertans have to pay for the Premier's broken promises?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, now we can see on full display the gross fiscal incompetence of the NDP. When she says that the budget numbers were the same before and after the election: complete rubbish. In fact, as will become evident in the budget presented two weeks from now, the NDP tried to deceive the Alberta public by presenting completely fake budget numbers, which was the basis of their platform. In fact, revenues are dramatically down. Why? Because of the NDP recession, driven in part by their higher taxes on everything.

**Ms Notley:** Well, I'm disappointed that the Premier is actually throwing public officials who worked on the annual report that was released on a Friday – I do appreciate that the Premier didn't want to have Albertans see it. It was put together by public officials and very much confirmed everything that Albertans were presented by us before the budget, unlike the Premier, who has simply broken promises. He is now asking municipalities to download taxes onto the very people he promised to cut taxes for. Why, Mr. Speaker? Why?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, within days of the last election I sat down for my first transition briefing with senior public servants, including those from Treasury Board and Finance. They presented to me, in cold hard numbers, how far off the NDP had been in its irresponsible and misleading fiscal projections. They also, interestingly, presented to me the fact that their projected revenue shortfall from the job-creation tax cut was actually less than what we had estimated in our platform. In other words, we were erring on the side of caution. The NDP was trying to wish its way out of the deficit.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Well, I will simply refer the Premier to the fiscal annual report that was released while they were in government, on a Friday at the end of a day deep in June, that actually confirms the numbers we used.

#### **Municipal Funding Rural Police Service Funding**

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier also tried to claim that all municipalities were onside and they were all part of Team Alberta. The fact is that there are two teams: your corporate friends and everyone else. Wetaskiwin, Barrhead, Sundre, Foothills county all say that what your government is doing is forcing them to raise taxes. Why won't you tell the truth and admit that they're not onside because you're breaking the very promises you made in the election?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, public servants presented me with an objective analysis of the state of the province's finances within days of the last election, and they demonstrated that the province's fiscal situation had deteriorated by some \$6 billion over the fourth year of this mandate from what the NDP ran on, what they presented to Albertans in their third-quarter update. A \$6 billion gap: that's 15 per cent of the provincial budget.

On the question of taxes, it's the NDP that raised taxes on incomes, on everything, on energy, on businesses. It's the NDP that took money out of Albertans' pockets. We're putting . . .

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the election. During the election the Premier promised rural Albertans that he would fix rural crime, but when he had the chance, his number one action wasn't more police in communities. No. It was a \$4.5 billion handout to rich corporations. The county of Wetaskiwin has said that they have immense concern that policing will no longer be guaranteed and that costs to residents will go up significantly in taxes. Why did this Premier put corporate handouts ahead of funding for rural police?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, \$4.5 billion: not true. Secondly, support for rural police will be going up, not down. Thirdly, the leader of the NDP mentions the last election. I recall that was an election in which they accused our party and even the Minister of Municipal Affairs of associating with white supremacists. Now we have her friend and ally Justin Trudeau having been demonstrated to have a penchant for racial mockery through the practice of blackface, and she has yet to condemn the racial insensitivity of the Prime Minister, which Liberal MPs now say is embraced by the black community. I challenge her to denounce it today.

**Ms Notley:** Well, I'm going to focus on Wetaskiwin, Mr. Speaker. The county of Wetaskiwin took leadership when they hired an enhanced RCMP officer, a crime analyst, and three more peace officers, all of whom increased public safety in that part of rural Alberta. Now they're warning that the crime-fighting plan they had in place will almost certainly be diminished – their words – and overall policing will significantly decrease under the UCP plan, which is in writing, which they have given, which they have shared with people and the Premier will not acknowledge. Why is the Premier breaking promises to rural Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we know who broke promises to rural Albertans: the NDP, that hammered rural Alberta, which is why they lost every single rural seat in this province. We will be enhancing, not reducing, support for criminal justice in rural Alberta. But why did she evade that essential question? Why did she attack the Minister of Municipal Affairs for being a white supremacist in the last campaign? Her candidate did that, and now we've got her ally Justin Trudeau, who has insulted the office of Prime Minister, in blackface. Why can't she stand up and denounce the racial mockery of her ally Justin Trudeau?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Notley:** I have one more question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** I had one more question, the second supplemental.

**The Speaker:** No. You've already asked six questions total.

**Ms Notley:** My apologies if that's the case.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

#### **Rural Police Service Funding**

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to note that one of the things the UCP campaigned on is that they would introduce no new taxes, but that's essentially what they're doing. That's not me speaking but, rather, the CAO of Barrhead county in reference to the Minister of Justice planning to download policing costs onto rural municipalities, a decision that will cost the county

nearly \$800,000 annually. To the minister: why won't you stand in this House and admit that you're cutting police funding for places like Barrhead county?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Because we're not, Mr. Speaker. It's pretty simple. We are not cutting funding for rural policing. We are not. Can I say this one more time in this Legislature? We are increasing funding for policing. We are making sure that we consult with rural municipalities about police costing. We committed to doing that in the last campaign. We've also clearly stated, going back to the AUMA, a crowd of 1,000 people, to make sure that any additional dollars generated through police costing would go right back into more boots on the ground. Why is the NDP against 500 police officers?

2:00

**Ms Ganley:** The CAO of Barrhead county went further and agreed with what we've been saying for weeks. She said, quote, here we would be putting money in with no value add. That's right. Taxes go up, and police services don't improve. What is improving in this province? The bank accounts of big corporations benefiting from the Premier's \$4.5 billion giveaway. To the minister: is Barrhead county lying, or will you just admit that you've handcuffed Barrhead county and are forcing them to hike taxes?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I have travelled up to Fairview, I've been to Drayton Valley, I've been to Athabasca, and we have a rural crime crisis on our hands right now in the province of Alberta. The previous minister was absent from rural Alberta. She had to be just dragged to actually respond to rural crime. This Legislature was full of people time after time after time bringing forward their concerns. Right now in Alberta people have stopped calling. NDP justice: no justice for rural Alberta.

**Ms Ganley:** The question was whether the counties are lying or the minister is.

The CAO of Barrhead county told her council that the minister's planned cuts to rural policing would increase rural crime response times, and it should be noted that this minister and his UCP colleagues already voted against our government's rural crime strategy not once but twice. Now, as big corporations count the dollars they've been handed by this government, I really have to ask the minister: shouldn't you be more concerned about the safety of the very people that put you in that office?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I've met with over 1,000 Albertans in the last month talking about this exact issue of rural crime. We received over 3,000 submissions to our online survey and paper surveys at these town halls. This is the number one priority of my office, to make sure all Albertans feel safe, in particular rural Albertans right now, who do not feel safe. That's the legacy of the NDP. The legacy of that member as Justice minister is rural Alberta not feeling safe. We're doing everything we can to implement our strategy to tackle rural crime. We're going to make sure we get that done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo is rising with a question.

### Municipal Funding

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal leaders that attended the AUMA convention are back in their local communities and reporting that the government intends to cut municipal funding by 15 per cent or more. The mayors of both Carstairs and Didsbury

have confirmed these cuts in their local papers just this week. In Didsbury they said that the cuts will come to funding for FCSS, the capital budget, even library funding. To the Premier: can you at least spare FCSS from bearing the brunt of covering your \$4.5 billion in corporate handouts?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has risen.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government will be very proud to deliver a budget on October 24 that will set the record straight, that will clean the mess up that we've inherited from the previous government, and that will respect taxpayers' dollars in this province. The previous government left a fiscal mess. They left us on track for a hundred billion dollars of accumulated debt. That's unacceptable to Albertans, and it's unacceptable to this government.

**Member Ceci:** You know, the Finance minister forgets that our fiscal management led to the Alberta child tax benefit, which dropped child poverty in this province 50 per cent, or by 40,000. You talk to those 40,000 children.

Now, these municipalities are concerned about the reduction in funding, and it seems all but certain that many will turn to property taxes to maintain services. To the Premier. You promised you wouldn't raise taxes. Why won't you admit here today that you're forcing municipal leaders to do your dirty work?

**Mr. Kenney:** We just heard the worst Finance minister in Alberta history tell us what his fiscal plan did. I'll tell you what his fiscal plan did. It raised taxes on everything. It raised taxes on energy through the carbon tax, on employers, on incomes, on everything. It quadrupled the province's debt. It had us on track for a hundred billion dollars in debt. It went through five credit downgrades, and it drove us into the longest and deepest recession in modern Alberta history and a jobs crisis. Mr. Speaker, he'll never be able to get away from that record.

**Member Ceci:** You know, my record includes funding major capital projects like the green line, increasing affordable child care in this province, and supporting municipalities.

This Premier is already shorting municipalities. The town of Bashaw has abandoned plans for a new wheelchair area in their local rink and is considering cuts due to their MSI reduction. One councillor said that he really wished that the province had told him about the cuts earlier. To the Premier: is this the type of partnership you crowed so much about yesterday?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, you know, it's curious to hear the failed Finance minister talking about property tax increases given that he voted for every single property tax increase that came before Calgary city council when he was a councillor. This member has never met a tax hike he doesn't love.

### Energy War Room

**Mr. Neudorf:** For over a decade our energy industry has been targeted by organizations who are trying to land-lock Alberta's natural resources. They continue to campaign against our world-class energy sector and the men and women who are proud of the work they do in this industry. These Albertans, whose livelihoods are the subject of smears like the tar sands campaign or labelled that they work for dirty oil, are tired of these baseless attacks, and so am I. We need a way to ensure that mistruths are countered by facts and that the real stories of a responsible industry are told and promoted.

To the Minister of Energy: can she tell us how this will be accomplished?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy is rising.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we have taken the important first steps of launching and creating the Canadian energy centre, a corporation with the mandate to fight for our energy sector and to fulfill our commitment to Albertans to set up an energy war room and to take a much more assertive approach to defending our energy sector and protecting the value of our natural resources. I'm looking forward to the official launch of the Canadian energy centre as it gets up and running. The economic future of our province depends upon it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's and Canada's future and economic prosperity are at stake and given that Albertans want and need a voice that will separate fact from fiction to tell the truth about Alberta's energy industry, to the minister: can she tell us what the core function of the Canadian energy centre will be?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian energy centre will defend our energy sector. It will collaborate with industry, academics, indigenous peoples, and others and will be a leading and authoritative voice on Alberta's energy resources. It will focus on improving the perceptions about our oil and gas industry.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta has a world-class reputation when it comes to environmental, labour, and human rights standards and that we are immensely proud of our industry and workers, how can the minister reassure Albertans that the government will succeed in highlighting these important facts, that are consistently being misrepresented?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian energy centre has employed Tom Olsen, a long-time Alberta journalist and former legislative bureau chief, as its managing director. There will be three units. A rapid response unit will be responsible for issuing swift responses to misinformation. An energy literacy unit will create original content and elevate the general understanding of our energy sector. Finally, a data and research unit will be in charge of centralizing and analyzing data to reinforce this story for investors, researchers, and policy-makers.

### Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards

**Member Loyola:** In April 2018 an inexperienced driver drove a truck through a stop sign and struck the bus carrying the Humboldt Broncos hockey team, killing 16 people and injuring 13 more. The previous Alberta government took steps to ensure that all truck drivers have enough training to operate safely. It's outrageous that this government has now removed these safety standards and allowed undertrained rookie truck drivers back on Alberta's highways. How does the Minister of Transportation sleep at night knowing he has put so many Albertans at risk?

2:10

**Mr. McIver:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, let me express my condolences to the victims of the Humboldt tragedy and then correct the record. The hon. member is wrong in what he just said. They didn't take steps. They planned to put a driver testing change in place, and then they crippled the government's ability to actually deliver it by having the number of driver examiners available to do that cut in half on March 1. The same day that they announced that, they crippled the government's ability to deliver that new standard. We're busy cleaning up the mess.

**Member Loyola:** It sounds like the minister is not listening, but perhaps he'll listen to Shelby Hunter of St. Albert, who lost her brother Logan in the crash. She said: it breaks my heart to know how many people's lives are at risk on these roads. Or to Tom Straschnitzki of Airdrie, whose son Ryan was seriously injured. He wrote, quote, come visit all 29 of us and explain why you would do this; hope it never happens to any of their kids or spouses or relatives. Minister, will you meet with these grieving Albertans, look them in the eye, and explain why you're willing to risk another tragedy like the one that they've already endured?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I spoke to Mr. Boulet from Lethbridge and had a nice chat with him, and I would talk to any other family members that wanted to. What I would tell them is that we are going to keep and raise the standards on driving. What the NDP government claims they did, they actually didn't do. They said that they would do it, and then on March 1 they cut the number of driver examiners available in half so that the new standards that they are bragging about couldn't be delivered. We will deliver those standards as soon as we clean up the mess that makes it impossible, left behind by the previous NDP government.

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, I want to try this again out of respect for the families. Given that Toby Boulet of Lethbridge, whose son Logan died in the crash, said that the minister's decision is wrong and that, quote, economics have gotten in the way of lives, to the minister: is that really what's going on here? Is your government so in the pocket of big corporations that you're willing to risk another Humboldt tragedy?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I would say to the families involved with the Humboldt tragedy: our government's record will be better than the previous government's. It won't be hard to do, but we're going to work hard at it. The new, tougher MELT standards will be put in place. We have been busy hiring the trainers and the examiners so that we can do that. They left us in a heck of a hole, but we're going to dig out, and out of respect for all Albertans but especially for the victims of the Humboldt tragedy, whether they're from Alberta or another place, we will get it done. The previous government did not, full stop.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

### Vegreville Century Park Supportive Living Facility

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Health minister was asked if he's okay with 50 female employees being fired from their jobs at a long-term care facility in Vegreville. His response was that these women could reapply for their jobs, providing they take a pay cut of up to \$10 an hour. To the minister responsible for the status of women. One of your key responsibilities is to narrow the gender pay gap. Are you okay with these hard-working women being paid less?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much for the question. I would have to respond in this way. The importance right now in this province in terms of getting women back to work, if that's the question you're actually asking me, is going to be fulfilled by many different things. I actually want to highlight the Minister of Advanced Education, who is looking right now to the trades, where there is a humongous amount of opportunity. Did you know that we have 20,000 folks that are going to be retiring in the next little while? What a massive opportunity for women to really break into this field and be at the table. We're really excited about that. Thank you to him and also to the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for leading . . .

**Member Irwin:** Given that these women were caring for our seniors in less than ideal working conditions and given that they were awaiting the outcome of negotiations on a new contract before being suddenly kicked to the curb and given that this government handed over a \$4.5 billion gift to corporations, to the minister: do you really value corporate CEOs over hard-working front-line female health care workers?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, this is a great question, and I'll tell you what I do value. I value the fact that we have an immense opportunity to make sure that women are in the workforce in high-paying jobs. One of the things that we won't do is cut 180,000 jobs from the province because we attack the sector where 24 per cent of the people who work in that sector are women. In fact, many of those high-paying jobs are now not in existence as a result of the previous government's policies on oil and gas.

**Member Irwin:** Given that the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, a woman, has been silent in this House about 53 of her constituents being fired and given that while this government's corporate handout isn't creating jobs and now in Vegreville jobs for those female front-line workers are actually being lost, to the minister of status of women: did you not bring this up at cabinet, or did none of these dudes listen to you?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'd like to reiterate that I find it rich coming from a government, a previous government that attacked an industry where a massive number of incredible women were at the cutting edge of high-paying jobs, contributing to their families, and making sure that they were able to participate in such a meaningful way. On top of that, our government has already brought forward policies to make sure that those women are brought into industries where those high-end jobs will be available to them again. We are obsessed with job creation. We will continue to be obsessed with job creation. I'm very honoured to be part of a government who sees that as a top priority.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has risen with a question.

#### Canadian Armed Forces Health Care Funding

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Trudeau Liberals have unilaterally cut funding for health care provided by Alberta's health system to members of the Canadian Armed Forces. This will leave the system with a significant shortfall to provide for their care, and I find this hard to believe. To the Minister of Health: can you please clarify if this is really the case, and what will the impact be on the women and men serving in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, this is indeed the case. I'm dismayed by the decision of the Justin Trudeau government and Justin Trudeau's attempts to defend it. It's disrespectful to the provinces. It's hypocritical given Trudeau's recent campaign commitments to expand medicare when the reality is that his government cut health care funding. Most of all, it's disrespectful towards the forces' personnel, Mr. Speaker. I want to say directly to every CAF member in Alberta: our government honours your service, and this decision will make no difference in your access to health care in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm reassured by the minister's answer on Alberta's support for Canadian Forces members. Given how Albertans are concerned about this decision by the Liberals and given that it's incomprehensible how a decision like this could be made, to the Minister of Health: what input did our UCP government have in this change?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the answer is none. I was simply informed by DND that they had unilaterally amended their policy. In fact, officials from several provinces have contacted the federal government and been told that DND will not even share their rationale for these new rates. DND is a separate payer for forces' personnel, outside the Canada Health Act, so they have the authority to make the change, but we are incredibly dismayed by the way that they did it and by the way that Mr. Trudeau has stood by that decision.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I speak for all members in saying that I agree with the minister that this is disappointing and a disrespectful decision. To the minister: will he call on Justin Trudeau's Liberal government to reverse it?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is yes. In fact, I announced earlier today that I am doing just that. On behalf of our government I'm calling on the Trudeau government to reverse this decision. I will be following up later today with a letter to the minister of defence to that effect. Our officials in the Health ministry have been in touch with their counterparts in other provinces as well, and I understand that some of the provinces are planning to follow up on their own, as we are, and that there is work under way for a joint response as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

#### Education Budget 2019-2020

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Education minister said that the government is funding enrolment growth, but two days ago we heard the Finance minister say that Education funding might be the same as last year. That's not the same thing. Albertans still don't know the future of funding supports for classroom complexity in the form of educational assistants, counsellors, and others. To the Finance minister: will you commit to funding needed classroom supports and resources to



support our students, or are they on the chopping block to pay for your corporate tax giveaway?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, I want to suggest this. In fact, I want to state this. Our job-creation tax cut is a measure that will attract investment, create job opportunities, and eventually lead to increased government revenues.

Mr. Speaker, we ran a campaign and Albertans elected this government to create jobs and opportunities for all Albertans and to turn the economy around, an economy that was in stagnation because of the policies of the previous government.

2:20

**Ms Phillips:** To the Finance minister: why can't the Finance minister do what every other government in the history of the province has done and tell boards in the fall what their budgets are? If the Finance minister is going to back-seat drive the Education file, why doesn't he just take the wheel and give the board some clarity?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During our campaign and in our platform we were abundantly clear on education and health care that we would commit to maintain funding and/or increase funding. We're committed to fund enrolment growth. We're committed to deliver more efficiently, remove redundancies, and deliver based on 21st-century delivery models. We will deliver better and save taxpayers of this province their dollars, having full respect for the taxpayers' dollars in this province.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that the 45 kids in a grade 5 class are going to be surprised to learn that they are redundant, Mr. Speaker, and given that we heard at our budget town halls that the Calgary board of education has never before not had a budget from the province by September, will the Finance minister just continue to do the Education minister's job for her and tell the boards whether they can expect classroom improvement funds, transportation grants, or other supports, or has he already done away with them to pay for his \$4.5 billion giveaway to already profitable corporations?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, when the NDP took office, they actually rolled a budget out three days later than we will, so the reality is that we're delivering before they delivered during their first term. Secondly, when the NDP government raised corporate taxes by 20 per cent, they actually collected \$2.3 billion less revenue in the following three years. They were an example of fiscal irresponsibility on behalf of Albertans. We're committed to delivering a budget that will return responsibility to Alberta's finances.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Cenovus announced it had "excellent financial performance," a "25% dividend increase," and plans for even more dividend growth and plans for share repurchases. All good. There was one thing missing: jobs. Not a single new job. To the Minister of Energy: won't you admit that your \$4.5 billion corporate handout does nothing for regular Albertans who are looking for jobs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What disappoints me most is that the former NDP government did nothing in four years to defend the energy sector. Where were they when Justin Trudeau spoke about phasing out the oil sands? Where were they when Justin Trudeau vetoed the Northern Gateway pipeline? Because of their actions it's led to pipeline capacity constraints, widening of differentials, curtailments, and the senseless NDP government crude-by-rail program. That's what I'm most disappointed in.

**Mr. Sabir:** Not a single new job.

Given that Suncor reports that "strong cash flow generation and our commitment to capital discipline allowed us to return value to our shareholders through \$658 million in dividends and \$552 million in share repurchases" – but again there is one thing missing, not a single new job – to the minister: why are billions of dollars going to corporations while the rest of us are told to brace for cuts to services?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government inherited an oil and gas sector that was in a crisis. They were in a crisis because of the actions of a socialist government, that was thrown out in the last election. For far too long we saw a government that was not willing to defend our energy sector. We're doing just that. We've taken a lot of steps to defend our energy sector. We've launched the Canadian energy centre, we've launched a public inquiry into the foreign sources of funding, we've brought in the royalty tax guarantee. We are working for our energy sector. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. We have heard questions; we'll hear answers. You might not like them, but we'll hear them.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that we have lost 13,000 jobs in the resource sector alone in the last two months and given that there is no end in sight to the economic pain that has only been made worse by this Premier and this government in their massive gifts to big corporations, to the minister: will you commit today to scrapping this \$4.5 billion failed experiment and do something to actually create jobs and not kill them?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I will take absolutely no lessons from the members opposite on what the industry needs to be successful. They spectacularly failed our oil and gas sector and created a jobs crisis of over 200,000 Albertans out of work. We were elected to clean up their messes, and that's exactly what we are doing. Their policies caused damage to this province. We are cleaning it up, and we will get Albertans back to work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

### Rural Police Service and Crime Prevention

**Mr. Rowsell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The residents of my area continually hear about rural break-ins and thefts. These issues are arising due to a multitude of factors, including inadequate police coverage, poor economic conditions, and issues of addiction. Many of the crimes are being committed by repeat offenders. To the Minister of Justice: what steps are being taken to improve the communication, efficiency, and coverage of police departments to stop this epidemic?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural crime is a top priority of my office right now to make sure that we stem the growth of rural crime across our province. I'm meeting regularly with the chiefs of police from across Alberta to make sure that we have clear lines of communication to track individuals that are repeat offenders in our communities. A quote that was driven home to me from our Grande Prairie town hall: my biggest concern of repeat offenders is escalating with very little consequence; I personally feel unsafe knowing that these people are easily released and living down the street, offending and reoffending. We're taking all the steps that we can to make sure that we crack down on rural crime.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that western provinces see the highest rural crime per capita in all of Canada and given that numerous rural property owners have had so many thefts that they now are being denied theft insurance and given that the crime rate has been continually trending upwards over the last few years, to the Minister of Justice: what steps are being made to help these residents who are now unable to get coverage for continued theft and break-ins?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** One of the most eye-opening things in the town halls that we've held across Alberta is the number of people that have stopped reporting crimes over the last four years. They're simply tired of reporting. One of the things that was brought up to me in Airdrie: nonreporting is common; if I have a theft of less than \$10,000, it's not worth reporting because my deductible is \$5,000 and I'll lose my status.

Mr. Speaker, we have a real crime issue in our province. We're tackling this head-on. We're looking at solutions to also cut off the monetization of stolen property. Look for more details from us soon.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Given that the province of Alberta has seen an increase in rural crime under the NDP and given that I've heard many concerns from local residents about inadequate training for law enforcement professionals and given that Albertans want and deserve to feel safe and secure in their homes, to the minister: what is the government's plan to ensure that our local, front-line service workers have the proper training in order to keep the province safe and prosperous?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, one of the highlights of my recent tour of the province was meeting with Alberta Citizens on Patrol and Rural Crime Watch members from across our province. These people are the heart and soul of rural Alberta, and they are coming up with really innovative ways to support our police in tackling crime. They've got apps; they've got technology. They have wide networks that are helping us solve crime across Alberta. We're making sure that we work collaboratively with them and with the RCMP on establishing best practices and making sure as well that as these apps are developed, they're spread across Alberta.

### 2:30 Family and Community Support Services Funding

**Ms Renaud:** A city councillor from my St. Albert constituency asked the Minister of Community and Social Services at the AUMA convention to deny rumours she'd been hearing that the family and community support services program, also known as FCSS, would be cut by 50 per cent. Instead of confirming that she wouldn't cut this critical program in half, the minister only said that she was, quote, fighting tooth and nail, unquote, with her cabinet colleagues. To the minister. Here's another chance. Is your government really considering cutting FCSS in half?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans know the state of our government's finances and that we are in the process of developing our budget. We value the important role of the FCSS program in the fact that it does create strong communities. We're working very diligently at this time to review all the programs and services within the ministry to ensure that we're supporting the most vulnerable and those who are most in need.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that at AUMA this minister was reminded that any cuts to FCSS would have a negative effect on efforts to combat homelessness, domestic violence, and many other issues and given that while programs funded by FCSS are left in limbo and fearing the worst, yet this government took no time to cut a \$4.5 billion cheque to big corporations, to the minister: is it hard to represent programs that your government clearly doesn't prioritize?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to speak with many stakeholders, councillors, and reeves across the province, and I understand the importance of this program. We've had discussions on how important this program is, and I'm comforted by the fact that we're mutually aligned in the understanding that we need to take care of the most vulnerable in our province. Our goal is to ensure that hard-earned taxpayer dollars are going to those who need it the most.

**Ms Renaud:** It's not what you say; it's what you do.

Given that the minister claimed at AUMA to understand the benefit FCSS has on Alberta communities, to the minister: will you stand in this House and actually fight tooth and nail for FCSS, which you have had no problem doing for the Premier's \$4.5 billion gift to corporations?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the FCSS program impacts over 300 municipalities across the province, and we are cognizant of the importance of this program. Again, I'll reiterate that we're evaluating all programs and services while we prepare for the next budget, but what's core to our approach is that the vulnerable are indeed supported. A strong economy, a balanced budget: these will all ensure that programs such as FCSS can remain successful and sustainable in the long term. That's what we're fighting for.

### Climate Change Strategy

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, in late September thousands upon thousands of Albertans gathered in front of this Legislature to drive home the message that it's urgent for our province to take action on climate change. They left their schools, their universities, their jobs and businesses to come and deliver that message to this government. Will the minister of environment pursue action on climate change with the same enthusiasm that he pursued a \$4.5 billion giveaway to big corporations?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we are pursuing action on climate change. We're excited to unveil the TIER program in a few weeks. We'll have more to say about that at the time, but what I can tell you is that our approach in this government when it comes to climate change will be very different than that hon. member's approach when he was part of the government formerly. We will not focus on taxing hard-working hockey moms, hockey dads, and Albertans with no results, admitted to by their own leader. The NDP leader admitted that their program had no impact on climate change. We'll focus on the TIER program, technology and innovation, and working hand in hand with the great innovators across our entire province to actually tackle this problem.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, the member opposite of course knows what it's like to give away \$4.5 billion and achieve no results.

Given that the only response from this government to this large gathering of Albertans was a display of some signs in office windows intended to troll the protestors and given that the role of government is to lead and listen to Albertans, to the minister of the environment: was this a government-sanctioned message, or was it just the work of some juvenile staffers?

**The Speaker:** I might just remind all members of the Assembly that after question 4 there is no requirement for preambles.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we're proud to be part of a government that supports our oil and gas industry. I know that the hon. member is part of a party that does not, but we do. What I would really like to ask the hon. member is why he was part of a government that brought in the carbon tax and then sat on his hands while it hurt everyday Albertans. Right in my own constituency a place you know well, the West Country seniors' centre, almost had to shut while these hon. members sat inside this Legislature. Every time that we brought it up in opposition, they would laugh. They didn't care. They would continue with the job-killing carbon tax. Let me be clear. That's not our approach. We're looking forward to bringing in TIER, and we will work to actually tackle this problem.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that many of the people who gathered outside the Legislature were schoolchildren, university students, and other young Albertans and given that we know that this government makes plenty of time to break bread with big corporations benefiting from their corporate handout but couldn't bother to send a single representative outside to the steps of the Legislature to meet with the people who wanted action on climate change, to the minister: how can these young people get your attention? Should they incorporate themselves?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the rally he's talking about that he and others attended was organized by Emma Jackson, who was involved in the illegal blockade of tankers transporting energy out of the port of Vancouver. The rally he's referring to had hammer and sickle flags. I would never attend a rally with a hammer and sickle flag any more than a swastika. The real question is: why was the NDP there?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies (continued)

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In early September the MacKinnon panel showed that our province had a spending problem. Our province would have \$10.4 billion more if we matched the average spending of Canada's three largest provinces. In the last four years, since the previous NDP socialist government got elected in 2015, Alberta's debt kept soaring from \$13 billion to an astonishing \$60 billion. To the Minister of Finance: how is our government going to reduce the overspending problem our province has, caused by the previous NDP socialist government? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** We will have order.  
The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We did inherit an out-of-control spending regime when we took office on this side of the House. We will chart a new

course. We will introduce a budget that restrains spending. We will introduce a budget that brings us to balance within our first term. We will stop wasting taxpayers' dollars, and we will continue to deliver high-quality services.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government got our province deeply into debt and given that Albertans still want good-quality services such as education and health care and given that our government needs to find ways to change the way we spend, to the same minister: how will you prioritize the budget to give Albertans good-quality services while still managing the previous government's spending problem?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that good question. We were clear in our platform that we're committed to delivering high-quality services for Albertans. The MacKinnon panel report conclusion that this province spends \$10.4 billion more than the other three large provinces in this nation was a compelling statistic. That tells me that we have room to find efficiencies, remove redundancies, and find new ways to deliver better to Albertans, at the same time bringing fiscal responsibility to the budget.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the MacKinnon panel said that our provincial outcomes from our spending are worse than the outcomes of other provinces and given that they also said that raising taxes is not the answer to controlling the previous government's overspending problem and given that they also advised us to act quickly and decisively to reduce our spending, to the same minister: how will your ministry act quickly and decisively to reduce spending while improving outcomes for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has the call.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The MacKinnon panel was very clear: we need to get our spending under control. The fact that we're spending \$10.4 billion more annually than the other provinces is actually a compelling statistic. Dr. Janice MacKinnon, the chair of the blue-ribbon panel, was very clear. Dr. MacKinnon's advice to me was this: you as a province have options right now to make some very clear decisions on your path forward; make those decisions today and do not delay because within four years, if you delay, you will have very few options. We will deliver.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross has risen.

2:40

### Registry Services

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Part of the summer tour by the Minister of Service Alberta was focused on the Alberta registry system and the issues facing Alberta registry agents. I have heard the minister say that almost all Albertans deal with registries, whether it's to register a birth or death, apply for a driver's licence, register a business, or obtain some other important service. My constituency, like many in the province, contains registry offices. Can the minister tell us what assurance he has provided to the registry agents concerning their issues?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and new father.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you that my wife did all the hard work, but I'm very happy to welcome my son on September 5.

I just want to say thank you to the member for bringing this up. I want to just say that what I told on my tour, what I told the registry offices is that we appreciate the hard work that they provide delivering very vital government services to Albertans all across this province and that this government will work collaboratively with them and not in competition with them, unlike the members on the other side of this aisle. Instead of taking services away from them and competing with them, we will work with them on a path forward to delivering vital services to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Congratulations on all the hard work.

Given that I have heard a lot of chatter around modernizing services that registries provide and given that in many cases both Albertans and registry agents alike have been waiting to see some modernization of those services, can the Minister of Service Alberta tell us what type of modernization registry agents and Albertans can expect in the future?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for the question. One of the things that surprised me the most when I inherited this file earlier this year was to learn that Alberta is last in the country in terms of online service delivery and modern service delivery for registry services. That is unacceptable, and it is a failing of the members on the other side of this aisle for how they handled the registry file and how they competed with private registries and took services away from them, thereby turning those registries into an unviable business model so they would not invest in modernizing their services. That stops now. We will work in collaboration with registries.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that rural registries and urban registries provide the same services but play very different roles in their communities and given that Albertans are looking for more ways to get things done online as opposed to waiting in endless lineups and given that rural communities rely far more heavily on the registry offices as opposed to their urban counterparts, how can the minister be sure that modernizing registry services won't result in the closure of rural offices?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you that on my tour I visited 36 communities in nine days, driving over 4,000 kilometres to meet with folks in their home communities to talk about these issues and to listen to their challenges and concerns and to discuss opportunities on how we can move forward on ensuring that Albertans get the best services possible from their registry network. I want to assure those rural registries that we value their services, and we certainly will work in collaboration with them as we work to modernize service delivery models, and that their bricks and mortar locations will not disappear as a result of our actions on the modernization file.

Thank you.

## Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we proceed to the presenting of petitions, I just beg your indulgence for one brief moment, and please accept my apologies. Earlier I missed an introduction of the Jakeway family, who are guests of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. My apologies, and thank you for your indulgence.

In 30 seconds or less we will move on with the rest of the daily Routine.

## Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of Government Motion 33.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce the federal government's decision to reduce the rates at which it reimburses the costs of providing health care services to the Canadian Armed Forces members, call on the federal government to immediately reverse this decision and provide the highest level of treatment for these members, and recognize the contribution of these members, who bravely and willingly risk their lives for our country.

## Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta has risen.

### Bill 15

#### Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce Bill 15, the Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019.

The Real Estate Council of Alberta has failed to provide effective governance and oversight of the real estate industry. This bill includes amendments to dismiss the current members of council and enable the appointment of an administrator to govern RECA on an interim basis. Our focus with this bill is to protect the overall operations of the council and its critically important role and to restore Albertans' trust in the real estate regulator.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a first time]

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, which I quoted earlier today in the discussion on Bill 14.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of an article from the *Independent*, Climate Crisis: CO<sub>2</sub> Levels Rise to Highest Point Since Evolution of Humans.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a document entitled "How Dare You?" Read

Greta Thunberg's Emotional Climate Change Speech to UN and World Leaders.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other tablings today?

Hon. members, there are no points of order today, which I'm sure is a shame for all of you. As such, we are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader has caught my eye.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) in order to proceed immediately to debate on Government Motion 33.

[Unanimous consent denied]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order

2:50

#### Bill 14

#### Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Today I rise in support of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. This UCP government knows that the indigenous people of Alberta and across Canada are important and have played a critical role in Canadian history. While we cannot change the wrongdoings of our past, we can embark upon a path of reconciliation with indigenous communities through opportunities and partnership.

This UCP government set a mandate that we intend to follow through on, and, Madam Chair, I think that we have done a good job since Albertans elected us a short five months ago. We were tasked with creating opportunities for the men and women in our industry sectors, proving that Alberta is open for business, and welcoming new stakeholders to the table to invest in our great province.

This bill underscores the absolute need to include indigenous communities in that development. For too long our indigenous leaders and communities have been neglected. Madam Chair, this UCP government says that enough is enough. We want to empower indigenous groups to engage in our industry sectors, to invest in our resources, and to partner with this government. Alberta creates opportunity for so many through jobs and innovation. Bill 14 helps to ensure that those same opportunities are extended to indigenous groups, who simply want and deserve to be given the same opportunities as everyone else. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation will give indigenous communities more power over the resources found on their land.

This government wants to partner with indigenous communities to build on their economic and social well-being. It is clear that indigenous leaders in Alberta are ready for responsible government and partnership, and the UCP government is committing to partnering with our First Nations through this bill. We have learned from our past. We know that history should never repeat itself, and the indigenous people of Alberta need a voice. Bill 14 is that voice.

Alberta is a trailblazer with this piece of legislation, and by ensuring that indigenous communities are equal partners at the table when we talk about our economy and our industry sectors, we give the impression that this is not simply a handout but that they are equal partners.

Unemployment in indigenous communities is high, and we have an opportunity to create stable and well-earned jobs for all members in our natural resource sector. At the same time, we are growing our economy and helping all Albertans contribute to our strong economic future. This government was elected to get Alberta back on track and get things done. We are standing up for our energy sectors, we are standing with indigenous communities, and we are standing up for Alberta.

Indigenous people are stewards of the land. Alberta is full of natural resources. That all Albertans benefit from an economic and social construct – indigenous communities were the first to live off our land, to protect the land and its natural resources, and to benefit from the resources it provides. With Bill 14 indigenous communities will have the ability to develop those natural resources, and this government is partnering with those communities to make this happen.

This government is doing that in a number of ways. We're allocating \$1 billion in loan guarantees for indigenous communities. This funding for indigenous communities will help raise the desperately needed capital to develop and profit from the resources extracted that lie below the land of their ancestors.

We see the impact of the wrongdoings in history on our reserves, and we have listened to the needs of indigenous communities. Minister Wilson and his department and members of this government have consulted with close to 200 indigenous community leaders, industry leaders, and businessmen and -women, who were consulted to engage with our government on involvement in our industry sectors. Bill 14 is not only creating financial stability for indigenous communities, but we are strengthening relationships with indigenous leaders and communities, something that has long been neglected.

Albertans want jobs, Albertans want responsible government, and Albertans want a government that builds relationships instead of tearing them apart. They want a government that'll listen to them, and, Madam Chair, I will continue to listen to my constituents and the great people of this province and support those initiatives that do just that.

Madam Chair, our indigenous peoples have suffered as a result of the neglect and mistreatment of the governments in this country. Residential schools, the '60s scoop, and most recently the ongoing tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women are all examples of the neglect and mistreatment that the indigenous people of this province have suffered. We can begin to reconcile and mend in one small way some of the damage caused, by standing behind and supporting this bill. I am proud to stand in support of this bill, which I believe is one clear step in the right direction to mending the damaged caused in the indigenous communities of this province.

This bill will create a strong future for indigenous men, women, and children, and it will do so by ensuring that they're included in our resource industry, that access to capital is available, and that every opportunity to prosperity is opened. This UCP government will continue to stand up for their right to participate in resource development. I have met with my constituents, listened to their concerns, and I believe that this government is acting on their concerns with the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. We are not overlooking the indigenous brothers and sisters in this province; we are standing with them and creating a strong partnership that will lead to prosperity for current and future generations, for all Albertans. We must look to the future, and this UCP government wants Alberta to continue to thrive for generations to come.

With this initiative indigenous youth and children will have more opportunities to invest in their province, in the natural resources that their ancestors protected, lived off, and cared for. I stand here supporting this legislation, and I am honoured to be representing my constituents in a government that is fighting for all Albertans. We will continue to promote indigenous economic opportunities in Alberta and respect the voice of indigenous leaders. We have engaged them in our natural resource sectors, and we will continue to engage them. We will not stop.

Bill 14 was introduced at the beginning of the fall session because, I believe, we are prioritizing our indigenous communities. The UCP government is working for all Albertans and defending the promises we made to voters in the last election. We are improving the lives of all Albertans and stabilizing our economic future. Indigenous communities have an opportunity to invest in major resource developments, projects that are constructed on indigenous land. Historically, the indigenous people of Alberta have had to fight for their voice, their rights, and their land. Bill 14 and the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation set the stage for a positive partnership with indigenous groups and government in this province, one that will last for many years to come.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? Comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. The goal of this act, really, is to work in a very positive and truly empowering way with our indigenous peoples in this province, really by means of providing increased capital and tech support so that there can be investment and ownership of natural resources and projects related to the infrastructure with that in a shared partnership with our province.

3:00

The act does a number of things. Section 2(1): it actually creates the indigenous opportunities corporation as an arm's-length Crown corporation. It also lays out a mandate for that corporation in 2(2), which is to "facilitate investment by indigenous groups in natural resource projects and related infrastructure, subject to the regulations" that are there. It both creates and lays out the direction. It will appoint a board of directors to manage it. It will define who might participate in all of that, indigenous groups. I'm pleased to see that it's a broad definition that includes traditional indigenous people but also Métis people and, beyond that, even the organizations that they own and control so that there can be no limits on their ability to participate.

It will also define some of the financial mechanisms that the Crown corporation may use in order to benefit them and provide the kinds of financial resources that will be useful and helpful. I think it's a great act, and I truly encourage all members to support the intent of it and to work through the details of it, because I think it is important that we go in this direction.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Stephen Buffalo. He's actually originally from Maskwacis, which borders on the north side of my riding, and I had a good visit with him. He is currently the president and CEO of the Indian Resource Council of Canada. His father, actually, used to be chief of his band in Maskwacis. He's well connected there. He knows the people, he knows their situation, and he's very frustrated, actually, with the endless politics in Canada with regard to aboriginal engagement in the economy and ability to participate and the fact that there's endless politics but no action. Nothing ever happens. Nothing ever changes.

We talked a little bit about that and some of the frustration with it. He's working together with some of the other chiefs that were there in a joint effort to draw together much support for this bill. He is in support of the bill and very clear about that. He actually said to me – and this was a phrase that really caught my ear when he spoke to me. He said that some of us have profited a lot from this industry. You know, the thing that matters there is that he wants and I want and our government want to see that kind of reality, that kind of ability to say that he's prospered, and for all the rest of his people as well, not just him. He wants to see his people also benefit from the resources of this land, from the resources that they live on and are part of.

Personally, I've never really understood why the feds keep bands in what I call a matrix of legislated poverty. I think it's time that we pressure the federal government to change some of that, and the reality is that our government hopes to actually change some of that, within the limits of our ability here at the provincial level, to truly make a difference for our aboriginal people.

I also had a bit of a visit yesterday with Calvin Helin. He's chairman and president of Eagle Spirit Energy Holdings, the group that seeks to build the Eagle Spirit pipeline across northern Alberta and B.C. to – what is it? – Grassy Point, B.C., in order to export natural resources product so that the aboriginal peoples of our province, really of all of western Canada, will be able to profit from that, will be able to prosper from it as well. One of the comments he made to me about this was that they have actually already been engaging with the state of Alaska. He said to me: you know, the state of Alaska has rolled out the red carpet for us. They would actually be very happy and very supportive of us regulatorywise, even with some funding potentially, if they would change the route of their pipeline a little bit and bring it to Alaska instead of to British Columbia.

If we continue with the federal policies that we currently have, what we're going to see here, again, is more of our wealth, more of our prosperity going to the U.S. because the federal government blockades and prevents Canadians from developing our western resources. Here Mr. Calvin Helin is clear that the Americans in Alaska are more than willing to welcome them and help them and provide it. He says that if we can't get it in British Columbia, we're going to Alaska with it.

I think we need to be aware of these kinds of opportunities and the fact that our indigenous people really do want to be able to participate in the industry, participate in the benefits from it, participate in the prosperity. By this act we really do hope to enhance the prosperity by means of access to participation in the economy in real partnership, in a new future for our indigenous peoples and our relationship together with them. I think this is important because, quite frankly, when indigenous peoples are strong, Alberta is strong, and together as partners we can continue to make Alberta the economic engine of the country. We can continue to make the indigenous peoples in Alberta the most prosperous in Canada and, hopefully, set a pattern and an example for other provinces and for the federal government as well.

With partnership and ownership come jobs, freedom of destiny, education, skills, social well-being, self-respect, and honour. I think that's something we would want to see for all Albertans. Our government, with this bill, is moving beyond vacuous symbolic gestures to real action, to actually engaging and creating the kinds of structures that will change the future and change the relationship and make it better. As has already been said, we have a moral obligation to put money on the barrelhead, and this bill is a step in the right direction. We truly do need to support this bill.

I'm pleased to see in the details of the bill, as I sort of already mentioned, a broad definition of indigenous groups so that we

include everyone and not just some of them, so that there's no discrimination there. Everyone is entitled to be part of this. I think this is a bill of real importance. Indigenous groups have in the past been disqualified from participation in the economy because of legal structures that prevent indigenous groups from providing the financial guarantees needed to satisfy lending institutions. Therefore, it ends up in a refusal of funding for viable projects that could support their bands, that could prosper their people, that could benefit them in so many social kinds of ways. This bill is a strong step in resolving some of that. By this bill, we actually backstop indigenous groups, and I think it's a small step to fix that structural problem, that is such a barrier. In that regard, this bill really is an act of social justice, so I think it's extremely important that we fix it.

I think I would appreciate hearing the minister's comments, since in Committee of the Whole we can have some of this back and forth, with regard to that aspect of the financial backstop and the social justice element that it may carry with it.

The second thing I think I would like to hear from the minister on, if possible, is if he would be able to share with this House some of the comments from consultations that have happened. I know that he was involved in significant consultations, and I think that's important, so I would appreciate it if he would be able to share some of those comments with the House that have evolved out of those consultations.

Clearly, just in closing, I'd like to say that indigenous nations are deeply committed to the land, the air, and the water. They have always prospered by harvesting the natural resources of the land, whether it's game for meat or furs and clothing, whether it's plants for food or medicines or even to build their homes, even the tars of the Athabasca region. All of these things were part of their economy and trade from way back. The fact that the majority of the bands are actually in support of our resources is a strong statement about how clean and how sustainable our natural resource energy is. The reality is that they just want in. They want to be able to participate. They want to be part of the prosperity. They want real work. They want honour.

3:10

I think the issue here is that we really do need to understand that resources can be environmentally safe. That's what some of the indigenous leaders are telling us, that they can be without harm to the environment. They want to make sure that that, in fact, is the case, and I think it's just extremely concerning that some groups have come into Canada and tried to sway that, sometimes even by payment of money, to basically continue to leave our indigenous groups out of the circle of prosperity in this province. This bill allows the opportunity for them to engage in ways that have never been possible before. It is historic, it is a landmark bill, and I encourage all members to support it. I look forward to any comments the minister might be able to make in response to my couple of questions.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I think the basic problem – and I've been here and listened to all 10 or so of the members of the UCP government talk about this bill, and I've taken some notes in terms of their words and what they're saying. My view is that this bill is short on detail, and I think it's led to many of the members of the UCP government talking about this bill in not-specific language.

I'm going to support what we have before us because I think it's a good initial start, but really the devil will be in the details. You

can see that under section 2(12) "the Minister may make regulations," and then it goes on to identify all of the things that the minister can do.

I've listened to many UCP members talk about how important this is to give opportunity to First Nation peoples and Métis peoples. I've heard some talk about the awards in their community and how a First Nation individual got an award and that they never did before, and I heard people talk about how 190 individuals and groups – and some have talked about what those were – were involved in the formation of this initiative. You know, that should be standard, and it was standard operating procedure for the government that I was part of. Engagement is happening. That's great. Engagement happened with us.

I heard one person talk at length about the dignity of work and then ask another member back there: what do you think? And he said: well, you answered it, so I don't have to say anything. My point is that not a lot was focused on this bill.

Another person mentioned that the Fort McKay individual average after-tax income was \$73,000, and I'm very happy to hear that. It was double the Canadian average and \$17,000 higher than the average Albertan's. It really speaks to the presence of the natural resources and the involvement of the Fort McKay band in the Suncor oil sands storage north of Fort McMurray, their involvement as an owner in that project, that investment.

I heard lots of people talk about, you know, partnerships. No one disagrees with partnerships. That's a good thing.

There were some veiled kinds of discussions about a hand up and a handout, but no one ever talked about what the handout was or, you know, the implication of who was giving the handouts.

Then there was a statement just a second ago about vacuous symbolic gestures to First Nations and Métis peoples but no identification of what those gestures were.

I'd certainly agree that when all Albertans are strong, this province is stronger. I certainly believe in that. But, you know, I heard a lot of backslapping and congratulating the minister and the Premier and every other person in the province for this bill. Don't gloss over the significant challenges there are in the economic and social disparities in this province that affect First Nations communities and Métis peoples, and that was recognized by our government. We worked very hard to bring clean drinking water to reserves, the boundary reserves, we worked very hard to ensure child care was more readily available, and we worked very hard to support people off-reserve with income supports and other things, education, and to index those. Is there more to do? There's always more to do, Madam Speaker, but don't denigrate what's been done before to provide the supports that people have needed. Think of our work as providing a foundation and your work as building on that foundation.

I think the idea of loan guarantees is a really good one. I think my colleague from Calgary-McCall did a wonderful job outlining the monumental disparities and how we first tried to address those. I think everyone in this Chamber wants the same thing for all Albertans. We want Albertans to do well always. Our approach included an economic focus as well as a social focus. It'd be incredibly unfortunate if the UCP unwound the important social gains that were made in this province, as I said – water to reserves, income supports, green energy initiatives – and I'm concerned that that's going to happen because of your focus on this bill and believing that nothing else has to be done. I think we can do both. I think we can ensure that individuals and families in First Nations communities and Métis communities have the necessities they need to survive and do well, so the social framework needs to be in place for them and the economic framework you're proposing about

guaranteeing loans to First Nation and Métis businesses to be involved in the natural resource sector. That's a good thing.

We were focused on taking direct action to reduce poverty, improve education, improve the mental health and physical health outcomes of First Nations and Métis peoples, and that can't be unwound in the service of Bill 14. It can complement Bill 14.

Madam Speaker, I don't need to take up a great deal of time to go on, but I do believe that we have some amendments coming, that the corporation that we're talking about is a good step that builds on previous steps of the NDP government. The fact that there's not a lot in this bill is something that I think we need to be very cautious about, that the regulation-setting process will be important. I'll be watching for those.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Now for something positive. I'd just like to take this opportunity and thank the minister for bringing Bill 14 forward and for reacting so quickly to a much-needed need in our Alberta society. It would have been very easy to, you know, as previous governments, just form another committee and kick the can down the road for another year or two years, but it is very, very important.

As you may know – some of you may know – while we were in opposition, I had many opportunities to visit a lot of the First Nations and Métis settlements around the province, and I did get a very consistent message from everyone. That was that they did want opportunities. They wanted to work with the government to lift themselves out of poverty and into prosperity. Many of the First Nations groups that I've talked to were surrounded by forestry and oil and gas. One of the chiefs actually asked me: "Well, why would I sign on to a pipeline? There's no benefit to my community." This is why Bill 14 is so important. We get opportunities to those folks because they cannot – you know, one of the major messages that I got from them constantly was lack of access to capital.

I talked to an entrepreneur that was a businessman that lived on one of the Métis settlements and had a beautiful home. Anywhere else in the province you would have been able to leverage that home for half a million dollars to bolster a business or start up a business, but he says: this house is actually worth zero in the eyes of any bank. That's why this is also very important. But we go back a long way, and you know what? I'm going to talk about some of the success stories from my region because we do have a lot of them. We've been surrounded by oil and gas for, you know, 50, 60 years up there. Some of the folks up there have taken advantage of that, seen the opportunity, and rather than fight the oil and gas exploration and development, they saw it as an opportunity to develop and expand their own.

3:20

I'm going to read for you from Goodfish Lake business corporation. If you go to their website, right on there it says: "Aboriginal owned, proudly Canadian." I think that's a very, very strong statement from those folks. I'm going to read to you their mission statement. It goes like this. It says, "Living the vision set by Chief Sam Bull and Council in 1977 to build a strong economic foundation that creates prosperity, employment for aboriginal people and protects the environment." Back as early as 1977 these folks saw the need for their communities, they saw the advantages that were available through the oil and gas industry, and they acted on it. That company started with a dry cleaning business to clean oil field clothing. I believe that just a few years ago they built a new 17,000-square-foot facility. They're actually producing these

garments, fire-retardant coveralls, for Suncor and Syncrude and also continuing with the repairs of the coveralls and the dry cleaning process. That's a big success story that's been going on up in my area for very many years.

Also, the frustration. I can give you another example of that, where an entrepreneur at I believe it was Cold Lake First Nation formed a company to insulate piping products. She applied and was successful at bidding on a project, won the bid, and unfortunately had to come back to the oil company and say: "You know what? I'm not going to be able to do this because I can't get the financing to buy the product. Like, we have the people lined up. Everybody is trained. We've gone through all the training, but we just can't seem to finance this thing." The oil company stepped in and actually financed that project for them and got them off the ground. They've become quite successful in that.

You know, you get up into that Bonnyville area, and you've got companies like Primco Dene that have been operating for many years up there employing – I believe it's about 70 per cent of their employees that are their own First Nations and Métis people from up in that area. Seven Lakes Oilfield is another one. They provide all kinds of services to the construction industry, to the oil and gas industry up there.

Bill 14 is just another step. A lot of those companies have access to funds through the First Nations development fund, which has provided some of that backing, but we really need to step in and help out. There are a lot of entrepreneurs out there. They've got some great ideas, and it's just the lack of access to capital that's really holding them back. I really thank the minister for acting so quickly on this. It was something that we heard over the last few years. I'm very happy to see that it came forward so quickly. Like I said, you know, entrepreneurs out in that area are being held back just simply by lack of funding. Bill 14: if they come forward with some properly good business plans and do the right applications, I think we can really help out. I look forward to seeing some very successful indigenous projects in the future up in my area.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to thank all hon. members for all of your positive comments. It's been a pleasure for me to speak again to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. It's been a rare occasion to hear so much agreement in this Chamber, which gives me a lot of hope for the future. I truly believe we all come from a place of acknowledging that the current path for indigenous economic development needs to be steered onto safer ground. I also believe that we share a commitment to be people who take on the responsibility and privilege of working with indigenous communities to clear that path because it's within our means to do so.

Since tabling the legislation on Tuesday, I've received incredible support from within this Chamber – I thank you for that – and from indigenous communities, industry, and government officials. More importantly, the reaction from ordinary, average Albertans has been overwhelmingly positive, and to see such incredible, positive feedback on this legislation from the people that got us here is a great benchmark for us. To the people of Alberta: I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

It seems we all have agreement on this bill, and it will move the province forward. Enabling legislation will create the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation as a Crown corporation of Alberta, or public agency, as we all call them in this province. Through the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation we will



increase indigenous communities' access to capital and technical support to invest in natural resource projects and related infrastructure.

I would have liked to have had all of the leaders at our press conference because there is so much support, but of the ones that were there, the words spoken yesterday by Chief Joseph Weasel Child from the Siksika Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy were, and I quote: I've never seen this type of commitment by a government anywhere, particularly within the province of Alberta.

Stephen Buffalo, as was mentioned earlier, the president and CEO of the Indian Resource Council, said: we now have a government that is willing to work with the First Nations and has created this opportunity for us.

The president of the Métis settlements association, Herb Lehr – and I hear this from him all the time – said: we want a hand up, not a handout. That's where it comes from. I sit and talk with him. He often talks of the pride that comes with having a good job. He says: that's all we're looking for; we want to have pride in what we do.

I want to finish by thanking everyone in the House for their support of this game-changing bill and especially acknowledge the Premier for his unwavering leadership on this file. To my colleagues, all of you: thank you for your statements of support. To the opposition members: I welcome your suggestions and support as well since we all realize that this is a good-news bill that benefits all of Alberta.

It's been a wonderful, crazy, stressful, and rewarding 24 hours, and it's been great. The work that we're accomplishing has been very rewarding, every second of it, and I thank you all.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak about this. I do have a few different things, so I'm sure I'll be rising a number of times during our committee time together.

I think that the first thing I'd like to do is just offer support for this bill, in that in my tours of the province of Alberta for the three years that I had the privilege to be Minister of Indigenous Relations, I did hear many of the same things about people wanting an opportunity to succeed and, of course, heard about the many structural barriers that prevented indigenous communities from being successful, as the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka indicated. In many ways the laws and structures of Canada and Alberta have been in the way of successful economic development in indigenous communities, so I'm glad to see that we share that philosophy.

I was a little concerned yesterday when the Member for Peace River stood up to indicate that somehow talking about the structural barriers that have occurred and the oppression that has occurred in the province over the last year somehow is identity politics and that somehow we victimize the indigenous community by acknowledging the truth. I'm just glad to know that he is isolated even within the UCP party, that all the rest of the speakers I have heard have talked about the fact that indeed there are structural barriers, and perhaps they can take a little bit of time to bring the Member for Peace River up to speed. I'd appreciate him doing that.

I do get concerned when I hear some of the members refer to the things that have been done in the past as somehow being less important than the work that's being done today. I want to validate the work that's being done today because I think that it is very important. You know, we often hear them say things like, "Well, things that have been done in the past have been handouts to the indigenous community," which I think is a fairly insulting term. If you actually say, "We're going to be providing you actual resources in order to improve your life," that somehow that's a handout, as if,

"You don't really deserve it, but from the goodness of our hearts we're going to give you a small, little pittance" – it's pretty insulting language, so I'd ask you to be a bit more respectful about talking about that in the House if you truly do want to see success in the indigenous community.

I notice that they also often make comments that somehow the work of previous governments – ours, of course, being the only non-Conservative government in the history of the province of Alberta – and the things that we did were symbolic gestures. Again, I'm not quite sure why, when you're introducing a bill with a positive intent like this, you would refer to the work that the indigenous community has done to educate us and to ask us to do various things in order to improve the lives of indigenous people, why you would refer to those requests by the indigenous community as somehow shallow or hollow symbolic gestures. I'm not quite sure why you feel the need to denigrate the work that the indigenous community has done up until this time. I just want to ask you to reconsider some of the language that you're using if indeed you are seeking to work with the indigenous community.

3:30

Just to accentuate that point just a little bit, I'd like to talk about some of the things that were actually created in co-operation with the indigenous community over the last four years. Many of you will know that when we first came into government, we took the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and adopted that, the first provincial government in the country of Canada, including the federal and provincial governments, to actually adopt the United Nations declaration and say that we accept it and that we will work very hard to enact it. We took that document and provided it to every single ministry that these ministers represent and said to them: would you please look at this document and then look at the rules and regulations and practices of your ministry and tell us where we are not in line with that? We also gave that same document to the community partners: Treaty 6, Treaty 7, Treaty 8, Métis Nation of Alberta, the Metis Settlements General Council, the friendship centre society of Alberta, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. All of these partners also read that same document and came to us with incredibly important suggestions, which I really don't want denigrated by this government as it talks about the good work it's about to do because that work was good, too. That work was done with deep consultation with the indigenous communities, who provided us with hundreds of pages of documents and suggestions about how to move forward.

As a result, some very important, incredible things happened in the last four years, which I deeply hope that this Minister of Indigenous Relations and, of course, all of the members of the United Conservative Party will continue to support. I think the most obvious one, mentioned previously by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, was that we were the very first and to date, I understand, the only provincial government to actually take specific action on the lack of clean water on First Nations. We were the only provincial government that said: "We're not just going to talk about it. We're going to actually build pipes to the reserves. Even though we can't build on the reserves – the federal government has to do that – we are going to build the pipes to the reserves." We informed the federal government that we were going to be doing that, and that forced their hand. As a result, every time we built a pipe – for example, to the Alexis reserve, to Paul band, to Cold Lake, to Whitefish (Goodfish), all of these reserves – the federal government has stepped up and provided extra money.

Because we took positive, real action, not empty gestures but real action, we were actually able to leverage more money out of the

federal government for the people of Alberta. That came out of suggestions that were given to us when we took the United Nations declaration and used it as a common dialogue focus between the government and indigenous people across this province. That's not a hollow gesture. That is practical change in real life. As a result of having clean drinking water, the likelihood of people being more successful economically rises. They can do things like, as mentioned by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, laundry facilities for the oil and gas areas.

I also want to mention just a few of the other things that we've done because they're not empty gestures. They're important things that were specifically asked for by indigenous communities. I'm very proud to say that of the things that came together, we identified a number of things, and we took immediate action. In the three years that I was minister, we were able to fulfill more than 14 of them, and they're not small, trivial things. They're big things.

I would just like to mention some of the things that we've done. As well as the talking things like, of course, the protocol agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy, which we originally designed and signed and is now being reinforced by the present minister, we also did one with the Métis Nation of Alberta and one with Treaty 8. Those talking things we did because they're very important, because it was a response to the request by members of the indigenous community to begin to recognize them as nations, nations which have the ability and the desire to define and control the implementation of governance in their own communities. That is more than a hollow gesture. That's a practical acknowledgement of the reality that the people we're talking about are indeed people who have a right to that level of self-governance, just as you and I do. I think that to denigrate that is a mistake, so I think you should be cautious about that.

Beyond those kind of talking things there were also very specific choices that we made. We were one of the first provinces, for example, to adopt Jordan's principle, in which we define the right for people to have access to adequate health care and that we will proceed with a provision of appropriate health care without resorting to interjurisdictional quibbling about who pays for that health care, a very important principle that has resulted in First Nations communities actually improving their lives through direct and uninhibited access to health care. That's an important thing that we did.

We've also done hundreds, literally hundreds, and I could stand here all day and will, if necessary, to convince you that there are hundreds of very specific programs that have changed people's lives. I can talk about, for example, the creation of maternal health care programs. Maskwacis has been mentioned a number of times, and we've designed a maternal health care program that's actually helping to train and to provide services in the Maskwacis community with a particular priority on midwifery. That's a practical change that's going to help us to deal with the fact that indigenous people are overrepresented in terms of infant mortality, and we're going to deal with that. That's keeping people alive. That's not a gesture. That's a practical, important change.

We can talk about the fact that we've also created opportunities for indigenous communities to have a very specific and direct say over the land in this province. For example, we increased the amount of money available for First Nations communities with regard to oil and gas and other kinds of resource development from \$7 million to \$27 million, because when I went around, they said: we want to be able to speak to those kind of programs, those kind of businesses that are going to be doing something to our land so that we can talk about how that's going to affect us and we can actually make decisions about the appropriate style and nature of the development of those resources. We gave them practical, real

money and opportunity. We spent two years in consultation with businesses, with municipalities, and with First Nations to talk about changes to the consultation arrangements under the ACO, Alberta's organization for consultation.

I think it's very important that this bill be seen as an adjunct to that, as adding to the work that we already did to give more voice to indigenous people in this province, something that I think we all can agree on. I just don't think that you should be taking away from the work that the indigenous community has already done in order to create those kinds of opportunities for consultation and so on.

I also want to point out, for example, that we created the very first Métis settlement consultation plan and the off-settlement consultation plan, which never existed in this province before. We created those opportunities to talk about resource development and to speak about how they're affecting the lands on which the indigenous people are living. I'm hoping that you're going to continue that work. I'm hoping that you're going to expand that work and improve on the first piece that we were able to put together in the time that we were in office.

3:40

I'm also pleased to talk about the fact that we worked with indigenous communities to create control over the land in terms of our development of parks such as the Castle park, where we sat down with the Piikani First Nation and said, "We are going to put you in a place of comanagement, and you're going to help us in this co-operative management style to actually decide what's going to be happening in this newly preserved, protected, piece of land," which is something, again, that the First Nations people have asked us. We created five new parks in the northern part of Alberta close to the oil sands development because we worked co-operatively with oil sands developers and First Nations such as Tallcree, which had a piece of land in the area, and we got agreement among all of the parties – the government, the industry, and the First Nations – to switch some land around so that we could create these five parks and to develop a co-operative management process in which the First Nations were able to speak to healthy, positive development of our natural resources.

These are the kinds of things that I think that we have to be careful not to say were not done in the past. Indeed they were done, and if I continue to hear people saying that nothing has been done in the past, I'm going to continue to stand up and read off more of these. I literally have a list of over 300 of them, and I'm more than prepared to teach you all about all these things. I do understand that, you know, many of you are new in this House and don't have that depth of knowledge of the work that's been done with the indigenous community. I appreciate the struggles of being a neophyte in an area and needing a little bit of instruction. I certainly received much instruction myself as I became Minister of Indigenous Relations. I look forward to providing you more lessons about the work that has been done in the past.

Now, I want to move on a little bit more to some of the particular choices that have been made in this bill. As we have said, we absolutely want to support this bill, but we think there is room for some improvement. One of the things that provides me with some concern is the number of times in the bill that there is reference to the fact that decisions will be made subject to regulations. I can tell you that in terms of the establishment of a corporation, the mandate of the corporation is subject to regulation, that the carrying out of the mandate or making grants or contributions is subject to regulation, section 2(6), that the establishment of a board is subject to regulation, that the minister can make regulations respecting natural resource projects; that is, the type of projects. Not the indigenous people but the minister will decide whether a project fits or doesn't fit, whether it's in or not.

Now, you started by saying that you actually talked to indigenous people and you wanted to give them a voice, and then you write into the bill that they don't have a choice in what kind of a project fits your contributions or not. I'm very concerned. You know, I've spent a lot of time working with people across the province, talking about the types of things that they'd liked to do, and certainly resource development is one of them, but it's not the only thing. So, as a result, I think that we need to take a little bit of time to have a conversation about why it is limited only to resource development here.

I would like to propose an amendment at this time, and then I will speak to that. I will provide an original and copies for everyone. I'll wait.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1. Hon. member, you have about two minutes and 50 seconds left.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I will read the body of the amendment here: that Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, be amended in section 2(2) by striking out "in natural resource projects and related infrastructure."

I will just introduce this as a concept at this point because I think there are a number of MLAs who would like to speak to why we would like to see indigenous people be able to be successful in areas besides resource development. I'll just give one quick example before I allow other people an opportunity to speak to this, and then, of course, I will stand up and speak to it later in great length.

One example I'd just like to mention is that I've had the opportunity through our Métis and First Nations women's advisory council to speak to many entrepreneurial women. We have made sure that they have a voice in government by bringing them onto this council, by having them create proposals for government action and taking specific actions on that.

Through that, I also had the real privilege of meeting some incredible human beings who have done marvellous things in their own communities. I mean, people that have been active every single day to bring value and positive joy into their communities. One of those people is a woman by the name of Carrie Langevin, who started a company called Mother Earth Essentials. It's just an example but one that I'm just really proud to have seen. I went out to her shop, and I got the tour around, and we, in fact, held a press conference in her shop, trying to provide her with some support and our offer on the part of the government to actually support this kind of entrepreneurship. She was extremely successful.

In fact, you could look her up because she went to *Dragons' Den*, the television show, and she asked for their support to expand her services, and she received an offer to do that from a dragon. That tells you how successful this business was, that those very money-minded people were able to see that this was a well-run business with extreme potential. But I also want you to know that she turned them down. She said no at the end of the show. Do you want to know why? She told me later when I talked to her: because they wanted to control her business by taking too much of the shares. As a result, she went off on her own, and she's continued to be a successful entrepreneur. That's the kind of business I want to see more of.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this amendment to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. I am quite pleased to hear that there is universal support within this House not only for the concept behind this bill but for indigenous peoples and supporting them and

making sure that they have every opportunity and even greater opportunities than they already have in this province.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I actually was very privileged to hear the former Minister of Indigenous Relations the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford speak about his experience travelling out to every First Nation and Métis settlement in this province, being the first minister to do so, but also speak about his experiences and what he's learned and what he tried to integrate into the work that he did when he was Minister of Indigenous Relations. I would actually be honoured to hear a little bit more about that. I especially took to heart his comments about the fact that when we're new to the House, as I am, we are neophytes and we are learning quite a bit.

Actually, I spent a little bit of time in my former life, before I became an MLA, working in Alberta Education, and I did a significant amount of work in First Nations education. That was working with the treaty areas, treaties 6, 7, and 8, the federal government, and working as a representative on behalf of the provincial government to improve opportunities for success for First Nation students in education. We know there are significant barriers to students, particularly those living on-reserve, because they don't have access to the same level of funding, professional development, the educational structures that we have, school boards. Things we take for granted didn't exist. Of course, the geographic disparity, being in small communities, northern communities, where it was often difficult to access a lot of those things, posed additional challenges.

That experience of working on those issues was an incredible learning experience, but more than anything it taught me how much more we all have to learn. It really is a respectful exercise in being quiet and listening to what indigenous communities and members and elders have to say about the needs of their community.

3:50

I very much take to heart this amendment because I think this amendment is really about saying: it is not the job of government to determine or predetermine how indigenous communities want to seek their economic development. It's a great idea. I, too, like my colleagues and everybody in this House, support the concept of the bill. I see this as an opportunity to improve it, to say: let's listen to the indigenous communities and let them determine how they would like to direct their economic development, provide the loan guarantees, provide those supports and those opportunities for capital investment for things that they need to do. But let's let them determine where they want to seek those opportunities and not limit them. We've seen that there are a lot of other supports that have been in place through government in the past and continue to be in place, and this is another great opportunity. But let's let them be the decision-makers of their economic future.

I really appreciate this amendment coming forward, and I appreciate the experience of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I look forward to hearing a little bit more about perhaps the projects and the work that he has done and why he thinks this would be a valuable amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I really do welcome the opportunity to speak about the phenomenal successes that already exist in the indigenous communities throughout this province and the incredible work that has been done to try to achieve success, against what I think are some phenomenal barriers.

For example, one of the stories that I heard, that I like to repeat when I talk to people in the community, is a little bit about the success of the Sawridge band, who, many of you would know, has created a series of hotels across the province of Alberta. Now I understand they're also in British Columbia, perhaps farther. I wouldn't be surprised. They're very successful.

I would like to tell you a little bit about the history of that and Walter Twinn, who went on to become a Senator in the country at the federal level, and what he had to do in order to create that business. At the time that he was wanting to establish a hotel in Slave Lake, a small hotel had come up for sale. I believe it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20 rooms at the time. He wanted to buy it, but because of the laws of Canada, as a First Nations person he was not allowed to buy that hotel. This is not that long ago, by the way. This was, you know, in the 1970s.

What he had to do was take the money from the band and go to one of his nonindigenous friends and say: I'd like to give you this money, and I'd like you to buy that hotel, and then I will trust you to funnel that money back to the indigenous community. He had to absolutely, just on faith, find someone who would step in to do the legal, practical aspects so that he could run the hotel. Now, fortunately, he did find a very, incredibly decent human being who did exactly that and helped him to build an incredible set of hotels. Eventually, of course, the federal laws changed, and the band was able to more directly own those hotels.

I tell you that because I want to remind you that there have been serious structural barriers. It's not a lack of willingness on the part of indigenous people to participate in our economy; it's the fact that they have been prevented from participating in our economy. But one thing that's happening in this bill is that we're again creating a structural barrier for indigenous participation.

Now, it's different. Back in those days you weren't allowed to have a lawyer, so how could you possibly incorporate? So you can't run a business. These days it's: well, we're really interested in development of natural resources, which we actually define very narrowly as oil and gas, so we're not really interested in you building hotels. Senator Walter Twinn could not come to this government and ask for the resources to begin to build what has become a very successful enterprise across western Canada because in this bill you've decided that the work of Senator Walter Twinn does not have value. I'm very concerned about that.

I've mentioned, you know, the retail level of work such as Mother Earth Essentials, mentioned the commercial level of hotels, and I want to talk about a few other areas where indigenous people would be rejected by your structural barrier, that prevents them from coming and seeking the kind of economic development. Now, we've heard members, we've heard the Minister of Indigenous Relations, heard members from St. Paul, for example, who have talked about businesses such as laundry facilities. Laundry facilities would not fit in here. They would not be able to do that.

We've talked about the fact that under the NDP government we created the Indigenous Tourism Association in the province of Alberta. The tourism association could not come and get money in order to develop incredible tourism opportunities in the province of Alberta, and we know that tourism is going to be one of our best employment opportunities in the future.

One of the really nice things about tourism is that you can have tourism experiences spread all across the province. Even if you are on a far-off reserve, even if you live in Fox Lake, you can design a tourist experience where people could come and experience what it's like to live in northern Alberta: perhaps some canoeing, perhaps some horseback riding, perhaps living in some cabins or some teepees, all of those kinds of things. I can tell you, having spent some time speaking with people in the German and Czech

communities in the province in Alberta, how much potential there is for tourism from those parts of central Europe and how much money that would bring in and spread around not just to Edmonton and Calgary but to the smaller communities, where we certainly could use a lot more employment. You're limiting a vast number of job potentials by limiting this particular bill to only resource development.

Another area that I think is important is the fact that communities are not only looking for business development because they want the profits that come out of it, but sometimes they want it because the business itself provides a service which they ultimately need. The Blood Tribe, for example Kainai, did an evaluation study about the economic leakage from Kainai First Nation into the surrounding community and found that well over 90, 95 per cent perhaps – I can't remember the exact number – of the money that people had in the community actually left the community to go out into the surrounding communities. Whenever anybody wanted to buy groceries, whenever anybody wanted to buy a car, whenever anybody wanted to do the things that we all want to do – buy clothes, buy things to make our houses nice and desirable – they had to leave the community.

So they made a decision that not only did they want to enter into economic development, but they wanted it to be an economic development that provided the services that people were now being forced to leave the community for. They created a grocery store, and they were able to do that with support from our aboriginal business investment fund. Because we have that fund – and you still have that fund available to you – they were able to not only have economic development, but they were actually able to have fresh groceries available within walking distance from most of the homes in Stand Off.

That was also done by the O'Chiese community, who built a gas station and a small grocery store in that community on the basis of their desire for economic development. Neither of those communities could come to this fund to actually do those things.

4:00

The third one I want to talk about is the grocery store that was built in Fort Chip by the ACFN and the fact that they were doing three things at once that I think are really important and would not be able to do. First of all, they were saying that, yes, they wanted to have economic development. They wanted to be able to benefit from generating income. But secondly, the cost of food in Fort Chip is extremely prohibitive to well-being of community members. For example, a four-litre jug of milk costs somewhere around \$25, and if something costs that much, you're not going to avail yourself of it very often. As a result, nutrition was bad in their community.

As is typical in the First Nations community, they weren't singularly minded. It wasn't just profit that was driving them. It was the desire for the well-being of all the community members in terms of nutrition that also led to them doing the grocery store. Because we had the indigenous climate leadership program at the time, we were able to sit down with them and say: "How do we make this even better yet? How do we actually help you, through the indigenous climate leadership program, to bring in a more sophisticated level of freezers and coolers that will use less oil, gas, or other resources in terms of keeping your food safe for the community?" Because we had that program, which unfortunately you've decided to not fund again, we were able to ensure that they took care of the environment, they took care of the nutrition of the community, and they made a profit altogether at the same time.

Unfortunately, your bill would not have allowed that to happen. They could not have come to you and said: we want to build this incredible resource in our community; reduce our costs in terms of

running our business; reduce the amount of oil that has to be shipped up to this small, northern community, which makes it, of course, very expensive and also dangerous to the environment; and we want to make sure our people are well fed. They can't do that. You've excluded that possibility here.

The purpose of this amendment is simply to take what you have decided is a good thing to do and to say to you: "Yes. We agree, but do not limit yourselves. Do not impose upon others your idea of what is right for them." The indigenous community didn't come to you and say: "We want support in resource development only. Please ignore our grocery stores. Please ignore our retail stores. Please ignore our hotels." They want life to be better in every aspect, and they're asking you to help them to be partners in that process. I think you've started to hear them, and I celebrate that, honestly. I mean, I'm just real thrilled to be here being able to support a government bill. But I ask you to make it work for them, to stop imposing the colonialist structure that says: you can develop but only in ways that we want you to develop or only in ways that somehow reinforce our intentions in terms of development of the province of Alberta.

Get out of the way. This is your chance to get out of the way and to say to the indigenous people: "You know what? You're smart enough. You're hard working enough. You care enough about this to decide for yourselves what kind of economic development really works and what you'd like to see happen in the future. We have faith in you, we believe in you, and we have respect for your sense of self-determination." That's what we're asking you to do. We're asking you to get out of the way and show some respect to the indigenous community by allowing them to have economic development where they determine economic development would best be directed.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the comments. A lot of those issues, we put a lot of thought into it because we did do a lot of travelling and consultation across the province, and we heard lots of ideas come up, everything from tourism – if you go down to southern Alberta, they tell me they've got wind and water but they don't have oil and gas, so there are lots of options available.

Right now we're really focused on jobs and economy. That's what we're all about, and the amendment – the scope of the projects eligible, they're going to be defined in regulations, and the projects that are eligible will include natural resource projects and related infrastructure that fall within the mandate of the corporation. But in section 2(12) it also allows for the expansion of the mandate of the corporation to include other types of projects and related infrastructure.

We plan to lay out the definition of natural resource in regulation as opposed to legislation as it will keep the corporation flexible in the projects that it can participate in. Our intent is for the AIOC to initially focus on natural resource projects, which may be defined to include renewable energy such as hydro, solar, or wind. That's going to be laid out in the regulations. We're going to have a very competency-focused board so that projects that do come forward can't just be fluffy projects. They've got to be business-viable projects because we want them to succeed. We don't want them to fail. We want them to make money at this. That's why we're being very focused at first on the natural resources that are out there, which could include mining, forestry, all those good things that we have in Alberta.

Like I say, you did mention other tools in the toolbox, and we do have other tools in the toolbox for helping out with smaller projects.

We've also got a ministerial advisory committee, and on that committee I've got the president and chief executive officer of the First Nations Bank of Canada. Incredible man, full of knowledge, and I've been really respecting his input. He's working with us to help us with First Nations that may have other smaller projects that they could finance that way. There are other tools available for them to be involved. We're working very closely. We've listened to the First Nations, indigenous people. Like I say, at our stakeholders meetings there was an incredible amount of ideas that were coming forward, and we're looking forward to seeing them come forward to the board once it's put in place.

That's my bit for now. Thanks.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you.

The Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much. I just have a few quick comments. I just wanted to again thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations. You've done so much wonderful work. Thank you for taking us all along with you. This has been truly an absolutely amazing opportunity to come along with you on your journeys where you meet people and find out what is in the best interest of those nations because they are independent nations.

I know that there's been a few comments about language and the way that we speak about these things. I would like to also call out – you had mentioned that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford had mentioned that you said that you had put dollars in to ensure that they took care of their environment. Again, I don't think that that is an issue. We're talking about First Nations people. They are the stewards of the environment. That's who we're learning from, so please, if you're going to question language, I think that has to start from within, especially having been a former minister yourself of this. Probably that's not that language that they would use. I would suggest that we learn from them in terms of taking lessons and understanding what happens in First Nations. I think I will take that from the First Nations elders and the people themselves. I'm very interested in going along and continuing on this journey with you. Thank you so much for doing that.

I also wanted to mention: the minister had already mentioned about other opportunities that are available within this legislation for flexibility with regard to small business, but as another member had mentioned to me, you do realize that since 2006 there is the First Nations development fund, which will work in conjunction with other work that's already being done by our government and work that has been done by previous governments, many previous governments, that have worked in conjunction, in friendship with First Nations in order to start building. This is all about leveraging equity. This is all about looking at what they have available to them. Right now if you have a house or anything, like the member had mentioned earlier, they cannot leverage that for dollars in order to put into businesses. Let's look at what we do have. Our natural resources are something that brings prosperity to absolutely everybody in this province.

If you're looking at having a solid economy within a First Nations, we have to look at how we build that equity first and actually be able to support things like culture, the sale of culture, tourism, all of those things that the minister and yourself and other members have talked about. We completely agree with that. But let's be very, very understanding about the fact that we have this beautiful resource here in our province that is actually going to help build the equity that the First Nations and our partners in this have asked for. This isn't something that our government has imposed upon anybody. This came as a result of First Nations chiefs, families, people, women within the diversity council, all of those,

who came to us with the idea of how to move forward because they're not benefiting from that prosperity in this province the way that other people are. That's the entire point, to make sure that we have a partnership here.

4:10

I'd also like to mention, because it has been mentioned by other people, that one of the members had mentioned something about backslapping or something like that. I actually think that if you've done something great – like, the former minister has stood up and said some of the wonderful things that the previous government had done. That's wonderful. We do appreciate and understand and know that we work in collaboration with work that has been done. You should be able to stand up and say those things.

I have another moment where I'd like to acknowledge one of the members on our side who in opposition was the reason why we even acknowledge the '60s scoop at all, because of the work that he did in opposition, going from nation to nation and bringing that information to the minister at the time and making sure that he had access to that information. The previous government may want to take credit for that, but actually we worked together in collaboration with that. I would like to personally thank the member from St. Paul for his incredible work. I had the benefit of actually going along with him at that time to meet with the First Nations groups to make sure that that was acknowledged within this House. I want to thank you for that.

I want to thank the previous government for their work.

I sincerely want to thank our Minister of Indigenous Relations at this point in time for moving forward and actually taking into consideration the intense ability to have prosperity at this time and to work together in collaboration.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? I will recognize the Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to rise in this place and speak on these important issues.

I do want to thank a few people today. I want to thank the minister for bringing forward this bill. I think overall it's a bill that does move towards meaningful work towards reconciliation, and it's an important investment. I think that's why, for a large part I believe, our caucus is largely in support of this bill.

I also want to speak specifically here about the amendment that my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford has brought in. I want to speak to why it's so important that we do move forward with this amendment. When we look at some of the things that the minister was saying and how he was referring to the corporation being used in the future and how they have already scoped it out, this plan for what they want the corporation to focus on at the beginning and how it's these natural resources and projects and related infrastructure that's so important to them, and the minister had spoken about how the government is only so focused on jobs right now, well, Mr. Chair, I hate to break it to the minister, but there are jobs in other sectors than natural resources and related infrastructure. There are jobs in many different ranges of facilities, and those types of projects also deserve a chance to move forward. Those types of projects are important in communities. Those types of projects are something that are going to be able to move forward if we were to be less restrictive in this bill.

We speak often in this place about how government chooses to govern by regulation. In fact, Mr. Chair, I think this is one of those cases where kicking some things out of legislation might actually benefit the bill. That doesn't happen very often. Quite often it's

better to be more restrictive in our legislation and keep things very tight and compact so that it must come back to this House every single time. But no, I actually believe that right now our goal, if we want to invoke economic prosperity, as the government members like to speak at such length about, if we want to actually get this bill and this corporation doing what it was designed to do, would be to let indigenous people choose what they want to build. Let indigenous people choose the projects they want to support and they want to move forward with.

I think it's not something that we should have the minister – and I have much respect for the minister and his office, but he's only been in this role for a few months here, not even yet a year. Really, to try and give him the obligation to tell indigenous people what they have to build and what types of projects they should support: I think that's something that this House should not support. I think that this amendment would allow us to have more meaningful work. It would allow us to have more meaningful access. I think that when we talk about this bill and how this amendment would make it better, we can look and see that, really, this isn't the end. I'm concerned about things like what the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka was speaking about earlier and the type of language that was being used around how basically the only thing we need to do is give indigenous people economic prosperity.

As we all know in this Chamber, there are many calls to action, and not all of them are only about the economy. There are many calls to action that we have to move on to have meaningful reconciliation between the government and indigenous people, indigenous people across not just Alberta but all of Canada.

That is something that I want to make sure we drive home here today, that this is something that we need to commit to, but it is not the end. It is a first step. It is something this government is moving forward with, but there is much more to do, and I want that to be very clear for every member here, for every single person that speaks. We understand that this corporation will help in some of those cases, but it is not the only thing that we have to do.

Really, Mr. Chair, when we look at how this bill is set up, how this act is established, and at the things that this amendment tries to address, I think it's really interesting that this government on one hand is going to be giving 4 and a half billion dollars away to the wealthiest corporations and on the other hand is going to be limiting the type of investments that indigenous people can do with the money that they're coming forward with with this corporation. I think that's something that's very interesting. It's something that I don't think is the right move forward, that if we're going to be establishing Crown corporations, we should be restricting the types of investments they can do while on the other hand giving money away to the wealthiest and most profitable corporations in this entire province and the multinationals as well. I think that's something that we should be concerned about.

I'm going to be supporting this amendment. I think it's important that we don't leave all of this work up to regulation. We just let the corporation of indigenous people choose what they want to move forward with. I think it's important that we give them full transparency in this act, and I think that this amendment would help us do that better.

Mr. Chair, I'd urge all members to support this amendment. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, we will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** Back to the main bill. Any members wishing to speak to Bill 14? The Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to start by thanking the Minister of Indigenous Relations for his work and his commitment to developing this legislation. I understand that he has spent a lot of time meeting with indigenous communities and business leaders in order to form an understanding of what this legislation should look like in order to best serve Alberta's indigenous population. His commitment and the time he has spent on this incredibly admirable endeavour are amazing.

There is no reason that Alberta should continue to only make symbolic gestures to our First Nations people when we have the tools and the opportunity to make life better for a significant portion of our First Nations people. I'm glad that this government understands that when indigenous communities benefit from our resources, that impact is felt all across Alberta, whether from helping to ensure greater economic opportunity to the creation of more avenues with which to promote and pursue reconciliation. I sincerely hope this is seen as a massive step forward for reconciliation.

I tell you, Mr. Chair, that I was particularly touched in the summer in my own riding when I was meeting with an indigenous community leader who was so excited about this bill, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. He struck a meeting with me in Sherwood Park back in July. His name is Bill, and Bill's story, just like the story of so many indigenous people and communities, is one of incredible perseverance and inspiration.

4:20

Just sharing his story, he came from a difficult background, separated from his family as a youth, and had quite a life journey but eventually found his way back into his community, in this case in British Columbia, as a young man. He eventually honed his skills as a community leader in indigenous communities in British Columbia and got involved in helping with economic development in these communities, to great success across many First Nations communities in British Columbia. Now we're so happy to have Bill here in Alberta and in Sherwood Park. He was telling me he was so happy with this act, where, finally, an order of government, in this case the provincial government, is engaged in meaningful, substantive partnership with indigenous communities, including as well the Métis. He is very excited about that. Bill is a great community leader. His whole family, about 20 people, live within Sherwood Park, and they attend Sherwood Park Alliance church. I'm just so proud to mention his story here today.

One of the main issues that we see facing First Nations groups in Canada is a lack of economic prospects. That's not right. Those who were first on this land shouldn't be left without the economic opportunity to increase their quality of life. I'm glad this government recognizes that this is an area where previous governments have fallen short. I'm so glad to see our government recognizing not just the economic value that this investment brings but also the opportunities for reconciliation that the creation of this corporation enables.

This bill addresses recommendation 92(ii) of the truth and reconciliation report in a very unique way and one that I think opens up a number of opportunities for success. Recommendation 92(ii) reads:

Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

This bill doesn't just ensure equitable access or that communities will gain long-term sustainable benefits. It actually puts the keys in the hands of our indigenous communities. It gives control and vested interest in the future of Alberta's economy and natural resource sector. It grants massive opportunity for employment for indigenous groups, and I think this shift from forcing First Nations to be dependent on government to a policy of supporting our indigenous peoples and creating an economic path for them to chart their own path forward is a massive step forward on the road to reconciliation.

But let's also talk about what, beyond the reconciliatory benefits, this bill could mean for our First Nations communities here in Alberta. To do this, I'm going to focus on just one of the success stories of First Nations involvement in Alberta's energy sector. Let's talk about what has been accomplished by the creation of the Frog Lake Energy Resources Corp., or FLERC. FLERC was founded in 2000 and is owned by the Frog Lake First Nation. It was launched without any assets, production, cash flow, or staff but quickly found success by partnering with oil companies that wanted to use the territory of the Frog Lake First Nation. As a result, FLERC developed an aggressive drilling program that meant that the Frog Lake Nation was involved in every project undertaken on the reserve. This includes over 600 wells, and when oil was booming, Frog Lake was producing more than 3,500 barrels a day.

This isn't just a company run like most either, and its approach shows a great opportunity for practical application of reconciliation. FLERC's teepee principles ensure that they are committed to core values and a work-life culture that elevates their employees. Their key values of respect, hope, humility, kinship, sharing, and thankfulness haven't just helped them in the boom times but have helped their communities as they have had to lay a few people off following the recent volatility in the oil industry.

Frog Lake Oilfield Services is another company owned by Frog Lake First Nation, and it conducts the project management at FLERC at their facilities around the reserve. Both of these companies create a large number of jobs on the reserve, creating economic prosperity for more of the nation as the increased income allows others to invest into their community.

But another thing sets Frog Lake apart from most energy companies: the profits of Frog Lake Energy Resources Corp. are reinvested into the community, building homes and improving the standard of living for all on the reserve. Recently FLERC spent \$35 million in buying Pengrowth's cogen plant in northeastern Alberta. Despite the downturn in Alberta's oil market in 2015, Frog Lake didn't stop investing, and they hope that they and their 3,000 members can become self-sustaining as a nation. They plan to continue investing in projects such as cogen facilities to bring further wealth to their members.

Now, I want you all to imagine that this incredible success story could be replicated across every First Nations group in Alberta. This bill helps to see that possibility become a reality. We've seen how impactful this can be for our First Nations, the possibility of employment, investment, and economic opportunity for every First Nation in Alberta. This vision is why I am so thankful to Minister Wilson for all of his work on this legislation . . .

**The Acting Chair:** Names.

**Mr. Walker:** Yes. I see that. Thank you.

. . . and his consultation in meeting so many First Nations across Alberta. I would encourage all members of this House to support this bill and to encourage the First Nations in many of our ridings to take advantage of it.

I just want to reiterate, finally, Mr. Chair, just how excited I am about this bill and how, for example, my constituent Bill is also excited about this. You know, there are such great opportunities. We have the third-largest indigenous population in Canada and the only land-based Métis settlement in Canada as well.

I hope all members will support this bill. Thank you, all, for your time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? I will recognize the associate minister of mental health.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks for the opportunity to share my thoughts in support of this bill. I wanted to support this bill on a couple of fronts. As a social worker I have had the privilege of working in aboriginal communities throughout my career, and most recently as Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions I toured the province. I had the opportunity to visit the Blood reserve. I also had the opportunity, when I went to Poundmaker's, to celebrate their powwow with the Premier and the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Let me tell you this. When we partner with indigenous communities, I discover that there are so many unique, creative ways that they approach the issues and challenges. Let me give you an example. In the opioid crisis we're talking about, the Blood reserve definitely is one of the areas that has been impacted very severely. But in looking at their creative solutions, when they did respond to this, they worked with EMS and created a culturally sensitive approach to manage the detox centre. That, I've got to say, is one of the very few different ones in the province taking that approach.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

When I visited Poundmaker's, the same thing: they incorporated the healing process, using the aboriginal culture and elders in creating very unique programs there. I vividly see the impact, that people are inspired and taking different paths to address the mental health and addictions crisis.

4:30

When we think of this act, that is giving the opportunity for our indigenous communities to directly partner with our resource development sector and work in partnership and in co-ownership in developing this sector, to me, that's cutting edge, again exhibiting a very unique, different approach to this. To me, we are very fortunate to have a government that finds a very tangible, specific, and long-lasting, cutting-edge approach for helping aboriginal folks.

I had listened to lots of members talking about, you know, what the previous government did and what others did, whether it was a gesture. This is more an action. Let me tell you this. Through my career I've seen so many efforts tried in the past to help our indigenous communities. More often than not it is money that's given to them, it is a program designed for them, it is services provided to them, and for the longest part many of those efforts didn't really yield significant changes in the community. In large part, I believe it is not a true partnership that builds on the strengths and the uniqueness of the aboriginal community.

But when I saw our government propose this one – so specific, so tangible – creating the money that is available for the aboriginal community, giving them an opportunity where they have a guaranteed loan, giving them the opportunity where they can directly participate in the business development, in shares, in how to manage the resource development, I was so delighted. This gives

me the fresh air of a very different approach in developing our indigenous communities.

Actually, during my campaign time I had the opportunity to dialogue with the community leader who is developing Eagle Spirit Energy, Calvin Helin, and when he spoke of his proposal at that time, he talked about addressing poverty. When we do ownership with the resource development, that will fundamentally change the game, and he calls that kind of a proposal transformational. I was so touched by that idea at the time. That was prior to our party developing a platform on this. When I saw later on that that kind of idea was brought into our party platform, that now as a new government we are implementing that, this is a remarkable – remarkable – example, in my view, of a government that is so committed to doing something real for the people.

For those of you who know me, I was born and raised in communist China. I'm so fortunate that I came to western Canada and have my master's and experienced the latter part of my life, or the other half of my life, in such a wonderful democracy. I came to a conclusion on my own that it doesn't matter how you label your government, that it doesn't matter what you say you want to do for people. What really matters is if an order of government can focus on the real needs of people and create opportunities to make a long-lasting change for people. That is a great government. I watched even in communist China how when the leaders focused on the economy – and over the last 20-some years a drastic change in people's quality of life in China. Actually, I just returned from a vacation there recently; it further enhanced my belief that even with a communist government, when they focus on the right issue for the people, people's livelihoods actually increase.

I see so much similarity to the current UCP government when we put economy, jobs, pipelines as the top priority, and when I see a proposal like this to tangibly, specifically bring our indigenous community on par with this piece, this is truly transformational. This is why I feel so passionate. I want to stand up to speak from my heart. I want to support this, and I urge our government and the rest of the members of this Assembly: let's put aside those political differences for the people of Alberta, for the people of our indigenous communities in our province. Let's put aside those little silly political games that you do, the meaningless amendment after amendment to delay for no purpose. Let's put your heart in the right place.

This is a great bill, and I'm so thankful to our minister for championing this, so thankful to our Premier for taking very specific steps to make tangible, realistic change. I'm looking forward to the long-lasting impact this one will produce for our province and for our indigenous communities.

Thank you, and thanks for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm honoured to rise here today and speak to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. The past couple of days I have witnessed my colleagues speak to this bill, and I'm proud to add my name to that list.

To start off the fall session, our government has introduced Bill 14, which allows indigenous communities to be stakeholders and invest in major natural resource projects across the province. I want to take a moment to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations and his staff for their hard work on this bill. This is yet another campaign commitment that has come to legislation. This is another example of promise made, promise kept.

A commitment is long overdue for indigenous people. We are making life better for indigenous people. I couldn't think of a better



way to begin the fall session of 2019 than by introducing Bill 14, the AIOC Act. I think it shows what a priority it is for this government and our minister.

Madam Chair, in April of this year our government was given the largest mandate in Alberta's electoral history to make life better for all Albertans. Bill 14 will set us down the path to economic reconciliation, allowing indigenous communities to own and invest in major capital projects. Bill 14 is the first of its kind in the country. If passed, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act will allocate \$1 billion in loan guarantees to help indigenous communities. This will allow indigenous co-ownership and create a working relationship on major resource development projects. First Nation communities will now benefit from the resources that have brought such tremendous prosperity to our province.

Madam Chair, for the longest time indigenous people in this province were mistreated. Our UCP government believes a better future lies ahead for indigenous people in Alberta. Real, concrete action is needed to make life better for all indigenous communities. This government believes that Bill 14 is a step in the right direction.

Over the summer our Premier and the Minister of Indigenous Relations met with numerous indigenous leaders. We have been present. We have listened. We want to do things differently from past governments. We want to take action in making lives better for indigenous individuals and communities.

Before introducing this bill, our United Conservative government consulted with over 200 stakeholders in indigenous communities. I'm proud to be part of a government that takes pride in consulting with Albertans before introducing legislation. This critical step was lacking in previous administrations. We want to create a strong partnership with everyone.

Many indigenous communities have the tools and resources to succeed, and we want to help them reach prosperity. Bill 14 will do a tremendous amount to bring indigenous communities into the fold to enjoy the same prosperity we find across this great province. Those who are willing to invest in themselves and participate will find that Bill 14 is a tremendous opportunity for indigenous people.

As the MLA for Drumheller-Stettler I have travelled long distances. I've witnessed many individuals create good lives for themselves, yet for many indigenous people that call this province home, poverty is real, and access to good jobs is lacking. They're held up by red tape and bureaucracy that limit their ability to share in the prosperity Alberta is renowned for.

**4:40**

Madam Chair, indigenous people face many struggles in life. They face numerous life challenges and structural barriers, including layer upon layer of government bureaucracy. I would like to point out that in our election platform we stated, "A United Conservative government will partner with Alberta's indigenous peoples in pursuit of reconciliation, inclusion, and opportunity." If this piece of legislation passes, the revenue streams from these natural resource projects can be put back into indigenous communities. This government understands that indigenous people want a piece and a say in the development of Alberta's natural resources. One of the many obligations of a government is to put the voters first.

Madam Chair, I knocked on many doors during the campaign. The biggest issues I heard from voters were jobs, economy, and pipelines. I made the promise to my constituents during the campaign that a United Conservative government will put Albertans back to work. In our first session we focused on getting Albertans back to work. The legislation passed during that time highlighted that fact. We introduced the Carbon Tax Repeal Act, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, and the job creators'

tax cuts, to name a few. It only seems right that we pick up this session where we left off. Bill 14 will help put Albertans back to work. My colleagues and I understand that our natural resource industry employs many Albertans. Bill 14 will help revive our natural resource sector.

As Conservatives we understand how important it is to have our natural resource sector thriving again. When our economy and natural resource sector do well, we all see the benefits as a result. Our communities and families will thrive. This government will continue to stand up for our natural resource sector. We won't apologize for this industry, that employs thousands of Albertans. We will fight back against those who are vying to land-lock Alberta's oil.

Madam Chair, we saw our past Premier and this previous NDP government oppose and actively protest the Northern Gateway pipeline, a pipeline that was unanimously supported by over 30 First Nations along its route. Indigenous people along with many other Albertans understand that we need to support our natural resource sector. Bill 14 will help provide financial and capacity-building support for First Nations looking to invest in the natural resource sector.

I had the pleasure over the summer of touring with Chief Joseph Weasel Child of Siksika Nation. We were in the Drumheller valley doing First Nations consultations on Drumheller's flood mitigation plan. He told me the exact same thing that our Minister of Indigenous Relations quoted him as saying. He said: this is real; this is the first government that's reached out with something real that can make a difference. Those were his words, not mine.

Thank you to everyone that was involved in making this platform promise become a reality. None of this would have been possible without your hard work. I'm supremely proud to support this bill.

Thank you for your time, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I welcome the opportunity to speak a little bit more to this bill. I find myself needing to comment on some of the words of the Member for Calgary-Foothills because it identifies exactly the problem that I'm trying to address in terms of the issue of government telling indigenous people what it is they're allowed to invest in and what they're not.

I just want it on the record that it was a UCP member that compared the present government to the communist China government, not anybody on this side of the House. I just want to be very clear about that. His comments were that when the government, this communist government, really focused on the economy, it benefited all people, and he somehow seemed to imply that the government rather than people deciding what should happen in the economy is a positive thing. A bit curious coming from the UCP side of the House. But I accept that that's indeed what they're thinking when they create a bill that says that the government will decide and that the people will not decide what investments are necessary. So I think you kind of proved my point in a slightly odd way.

I think, you know, we've addressed that amendment trying to broaden out the types of things that people can seek funding on, but we still have the question of who it is that makes the decisions here in this bill, and it's one that I'm very concerned about. I know that the Minister of Indigenous Relations said that one of the reasons he opposed the last amendment was that they wanted to ensure that these were viable business projects that were moving ahead. Again, I'm very concerned to hear that, that the government are the only people who can decide what are viable business projects. I just want to remind the minister – he already knows this, but for the record we'll remind him – that indigenous people have been making

excellent decisions about viable business projects in many ways in this province for many years, including at least five corporations specifically designed to make good business decisions.

I'll just read some of them into the record here because I notice that these corporations are not in the act. There's no decision to provide increased revenues or resources to these corporations, who have demonstrated that they can work with the indigenous community because they are indigenous themselves and can be successful. We have the Indian Business Corporation. We have the Alberta Indian Investment Corporation. We have Apeetogosan (Métis) Development corporation, which, by the way, received an award two years ago as the best investment corporation in Canada in their category. We also have the Settlement Investment Corporation for Métis settlements, and we have the Community Futures Treaty Seven, all organizations which have demonstrated the ability to work within the indigenous community, to bring indigenous voices to the decision-making because indeed they are all staffed by indigenous people and have helped to create a number of indigenous businesses. In fact, if you actually believe that success should be rewarded, you should be taking this billion dollars and dividing it up between these five corporations because they have demonstrated it.

I just want to also point out that I'm a bit concerned that the Member for Calgary-Foothills has said in this House, after praising Communist China, that having an opposition that proposes amendments to a bill somehow is game playing. It tells me that he doesn't understand the nature of Westminster democracy, and I'm very concerned about that. You know, he actually got up and said that government should decide and opposition shouldn't propose. I can't believe that that's what I'm hearing from the other side of the House in a democracy of this nature. It is my job to actually propose amendments, and I would hope that the government would actually listen to the amendments and make good decisions based on the merits of that and not simply dismiss them as games because they would like government to have ultimate power like they have in Communist China. [interjections] I didn't bring this up. Let me be really clear. It was not this side of the House that made those comparisons, and I just really want to point out how appalling that is in, you know, essentially the centre of Westminster democracy in this part of the world.

I've identified a number of corporations that could have been financed through this bill in order to ensure that the actual decision-making in this bill is in the hands of indigenous people. These are people who have demonstrated through years of work the ability to successfully fund indigenous businesses and could have continued to do so if you really wanted indigenous voices to be at the forefront of making decisions in terms of economic development in indigenous communities.

On that theme, I am very concerned about another section of the bill, and that is the establishment of a board to make decisions about all of these matters. I've already pointed out and, actually, indeed the Minister of Indigenous Relations pointed out the fact that in section 2(12) it says that "the Minister may make regulations." Of course, in this case the minister identified this as a positive because he said that under that section the minister would be able to include other kinds of investment should they choose to do that, which is why he was bringing it up. But I want to point out that it doesn't say that the board can make decisions; that is, that the indigenous people can make decisions to expand this. It says that the minister can, so we're back to Communist China here again.

4:50

I'm very concerned about this. I'm concerned that while you're saying that you have had extensive consultation with the indigenous

community in the creation of this bill, which actually I accept – I have enough contacts in the indigenous community to know that the minister, I think, engaged in some good due diligence and was around the province and, I know, brought some of the other ministers to some of the meetings. So I accept that the intent was clear, that the minister did wish to seek out the voice of indigenous people and give them an opportunity to speak to something that would be very positive for them. That's why I'm supporting this bill. Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that.

But now I'm concerned that you take the bill and then you stick a knife in the back of it. The knife in the back of it is that suddenly we're back to the minister making decisions, section 2(12). Then when it says that we will create a board, it's already undermined the ability of the board to make decisions because it's given those decisions to the minister.

Furthermore, in the description of the board it says, section 5(1), that the creation of the board will be "subject to the regulations." They're not telling us who's on the board or how those decisions will be made. They're not even telling us how many people are going to be on the board. One thing that they are absolutely doing is that they are not telling us how many indigenous people are on the board.

I think that if you are truly committed to hearing indigenous voices, then you must make sure that indigenous people are on the board. As a result, I have an amendment I'd like to introduce to the House on that section right now.

Thank you. I'll wait.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A2. Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I will read the amendment. I move that Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, be amended in section 5 by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) A majority of the directors appointed under subsection (1) must be members of an indigenous group identified in section 3(1)(a), (b) or (c).

It's pretty simple and straightforward. I like to keep my amendments really clean because it isn't a game. It isn't a game for me. I'm actually telling you what I think will make the bill better. I'm not trying to attack your bill; I'm trying to support your bill.

I am looking at the intent of that bill as described by many of you here in this House, you know, previously under second reading and now, subsequently, in committee, where you described what it is that you believed would be positive and wonderful about this bill. Almost to a person you identified that it was time that indigenous people had opportunities and decision-making power in their own lives, and often you identified structural barriers that prevented indigenous people from having those kind of decision-making abilities within the systems that we had constructed and forced them to live within. Yet when it comes time for the actual decision-making, who is going to decide what is a viable business project? Who's going to sign on the dotted line that, yes, we will backstop X number of dollars for this particular interest? There is not one single word in this bill that identifies that it should be indigenous people.

After hearing many of you say that ideas and values and programs should not be imposed on indigenous people but should be done in partnership with indigenous people, I haven't seen you take action on that, and that very deeply concerns me. If you fundamentally do believe that this is a bill that respects indigenous people and provides them the opportunity to act on their own behalf in ways we know they're fully competent to do because, of course, we've identified at least five corporations already existing in the

province of Alberta that are owned and operated by indigenous people – we know they're perfectly capable – then I would question why you haven't asked these five corporations to step in and form the board. Why haven't you gone to the people who have demonstrated their success, fulfilled your own mandate that you have identified, and ensured that the construction of the board is indeed indigenous people? Now, I would think that you probably should go to 100 per cent of the board members being indigenous people, but I accept that you've decided this is a partnership and that you would like to have indigenous people working with nonindigenous people to ensure the well-being of all the indigenous communities through the success of these various loans and programs.

I've been reasonable and careful in my submission of an amendment and have suggested that we take the simple rule, which is widely accepted in government in Canada, that 50 per cent plus one is a reasonable level of representation in the determination of success. As a result, we would like to see this government simply accept an amendment that does not change the intent of their act – in fact, I think it enhances the intent of their act; it is completely in line with what I have heard people speak to for the last two days – and enshrine in the act itself the guarantee that indigenous people will have the control necessary, and that is the majority control necessary, not just a voice, 1 in 10 or 1 in 12, but a majority ability to make decisions about what happens in the indigenous community so that it is indigenous people that are saying yes or no with the enhancement of their relationship with nonindigenous people, seeking advice, perhaps, where necessary, encouraging their participation and their vote, but ultimately it is indigenous people that will be able to cast the majority vote, 50 per cent plus one.

I ask you to support this amendment not because it's some kind of trifling game but because we truly believe in what we say, putting our action forward where our mouth is and ensuring that indigenous people have the voice and that they can't be undermined by nonindigenous people. Fifty per cent plus one.

Thank you.

**Mr. Wilson:** I want to thank the hon. member for his input and for being so engaged on the topic. I do appreciate your input, and I do value it. Thank you.

Just to speak to our engagement a little bit, we did spend most of the summer on the road engaging with eight different organizations and over 200 indigenous business and political leaders from throughout industry. I did take their feedback into account when we developed this bill. Our bill is meant to fulfill our mandate of priorities of being partners in prosperity with indigenous communities and also to get people back to work and get our economy back on track. The Alberta natural resource sector, a large part of the Alberta energy sector, is a huge driver of our economic output, and the AIOC has a strategic mandate to support our indigenous communities in participating in the natural resource economy, of which they are extremely supportive. Many of the chiefs and community members that I've engaged with have expressed their eagerness in applying for this fund. We heard from the indigenous community that there are barriers to participating in equity ownership in major projects, and that is why it's important to set up a fund focused on addressing this barrier.

In terms of the other entrepreneurial opportunities that the opposition Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has raised such as tourism and retail entrepreneurship, we will continue to support that through other tools. The Alberta aboriginal business investment fund continues to be available to support these initiatives. We'll also work with other ministries such as our ministry of economic development and tourism to support these initiatives.

5:00

As to indigenous representation on the board, our plan is to include indigenous representation but to be flexible as to how it happens instead of laying it out in a specific number or a ratio in legislation. The board is meant to be a competency-based board, not a political board. It's going to focus on making sure that the projects that are chosen are commercially viable. Indigenous representation on the board will be laid out in policy and reflect the many talented and competent indigenous people that we have in this province. We want to make sure that the board is arm's length so they'll be making the decisions. It won't be political decisions.

As I've spoken to indigenous leaders throughout the summer, I've made it very clear that there will be a lot of indigenous people on the board. We have Treaty 6, 7, and 8 and the Métis people; I want to include all of them in it. It may end up being all indigenous people. There are, like you say, a lot of very competent business-people out there that are working in the industry. On my ministerial advisory committee that's helping me steer this along, I have one of the best philanthropists in Alberta, Nicole Bourque-Bouchier. She has over 1,000 employees in her company, and she's on my ministerial advisory committee, helping us steer this along. Like I said, I've got the president and chief executive officer of the First Nations Bank of Canada helping us steer this along. We've got a lot of indigenous input as to how we're putting this together.

It is such an important issue. In my area where I grew up, there was a huge oil boom. There was a huge gas plant there, hundreds of employees. How many indigenous employees? I can count them on one hand. I knew him; I can literally count him on one finger. That's why it's so important. Unfortunately, he's passed, but that's why it's so important. We have to have that input. It's for them, and that's why we're doing this.

I'm assuring you that we will be making sure that we do have indigenous input on that. Like I said, we will look at that, and it will be in the regulations. We'll ensure that there is representation there, but it has to be a competency board. We want to make sure that there's the opportunity for other people to sit on the board as well.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Until a couple minutes ago, I had some real hope in this place that the very corporation that is being designed with indigenous peoples would have indigenous people on the board. Now, no offence, Minister, but I'm not going to take you at your word and believe, when you say: trust me; we'll have a number of indigenous people.

There's an opportunity right now, today, to put it in the legislation to ensure that there is at least half or a majority, a little over half, of indigenous representatives on the board. You would think that they would be entrusted to take care of the very corporation – because the challenge, government: not putting a majority of indigenous people responsible for their own corporation looks like another way that the government knows better and we can't trust indigenous people to be able to manage their own corporation. It's disturbing, because if I am to take the minister at his word that potentially, as he just said, the whole board could be indigenous people, then this should be simple. Enshrining this in legislation ensures that there isn't a game of politics, that there isn't a bunch of nonindigenous people telling the indigenous people how to run their corporation.

Let's remember that between 2012 and 2015 there was a piece of legislation that the former PCs brought in on aboriginal consultation. The irony of that one was that they didn't consult with a single indigenous community on the very bill that had the title in

the name, which once again was top-down, government-imposed, “we’re going to tell you how to function within a system; we’re going to tell you how you can participate.”

I think, you know, the fact of the matter is that I thought that we as an opposition party presented a reasonable amendment. We’re not saying that the whole board has to be made up of indigenous participation but that, as we’ve heard from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, there are incredibly talented, well-respected members of the business community who are indigenous, who I’m sure would love an opportunity to be at the table, to be able to help make decisions on the direction, the focus, the approval of the projects. This is empowering them, because right now, the way the legislation reads, it doesn’t empower them.

I mean, my concern with a well-intentioned bill is that much of the decision-making remains in regulations. The government can talk about how it means they can be more nimble. No. What it means is that your cabinet gets to make the decisions, and they don’t actually get debated in this place. I can tell you that you folks used that argument a few times in the last four years – and there’s merit to that argument – that when legislation is completely bare bones, it make it very difficult because we all know that the devil is in the details.

But this ensures that there is going to be adequate representation and participation, which, you know, for me, is critical. In fact, I think it’s paramount to ensure that the very people who this is going to affect have a say, that they are sitting at the table. Otherwise, this very much could be a bunch of nonindigenous people telling indigenous people how the very corporation that is set up in partnership is not really in partnership, or maybe it is in principle but not in fact. So I really wish that the government reconsiders adopting this amendment because I also think, quite frankly, it sends a really, really wrong message to indigenous communities: “We don’t trust you. We don’t trust you enough to put you on a board. We don’t want you in charge of your own destiny. We will decide who’s on this board because we know better, because government knows better.” That’s the message that it sends to indigenous communities.

Again, I hope that there will be a strong number of board members made up of the indigenous community. But this provides a guarantee not just for all 87 members in this House; this sends a really strong message to the indigenous communities: you will make up the majority of this board; we trust you, we trust your judgment, your business acumen, and we want to do it in true partnership. Without putting this into the legislation, there is no guarantee that that will happen.

You know what? I want to take the minister at his word. I know that he is an honest man, but he may not always be the Minister of Indigenous Relations, and future ministers may decide: “You know what? I am going to use this as a political football, and we are going to appoint who we want.” I mean, that is the challenge when it’s not enshrined in legislation. It makes it more difficult for a future minister, a future government to come along and say: “You know what? We’re not going to respect the fact that this should be a board comprised at least 50 per cent plus one of indigenous people.”

I do hope that in the course of the debate – I’m sure that there are many people that are going to be interested in speaking to this, and I encourage that – there will be a reconsideration on behalf of the government that this amendment is meant and coming forward in the true spirit of ensuring that there is indigenous participation. This is not a political game. This is saying that the board should be made up, at least half or 50 per cent plus one, of indigenous participation.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Because my name was mentioned earlier, from the early comment, I’d like to have an opportunity to clarify what I said. I wish to clarify. I want to be very clear in the mention about China that the focus on the economy and the magnitude that hundreds of millions of people have been lifted from poverty because of the focus on the economy and jobs: that’s the point I was trying to say.

Let me be clear. I will never compare Alberta to anything like Communist China nor a UCP government to the Chinese government. That is totally not the conversation I was trying to say. I would never want to suggest that we’re acting like Communist China at all. My point in saying that even a Communist China, nondemocratic, when they focus on the right cause, can lift people out of poverty is a purpose that, you know, for this act – it gives the opportunity to develop, flourish the entrepreneurship of our indigenous community. That’s the real beauty of this bill.

That’s why I’m opposed to having any kind of a meaningless, insignificant amendment here and there just delaying the bill. That’s what I want to clarify, that I want to leave for the record.

Thank you very much.

5:10

**Mr. Wilson:** Thanks for clearing that up.

I just want to ask all members of the House – right now the board selection is open. If you reach out to your networks and if you have good people that you think would serve on the board – there are so many talented indigenous people out there; we’ve got them in all of our communities; they’re in the cities – reach out to them and tell them to go onto the government website for public board selection and put their name forward. I’d enjoy seeing as many names put forward as we can find because there are so many good people out there. I would ask you to reach out to your networks. I’m sure you all know a lot of good people that could sit on this board, so tell them to reach out.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I want to start by saying that I accept the apology by the Member for Calgary-Foothills, and we’ll leave it at that and move on.

I also wanted to address a couple of other issues. As the previous speaker from the opposition side has indicated, we really would like to see it enshrined in the legislation that indigenous people are on the board and in a majority position, not just, you know, token representation as some minor part of the board. I concur and reinforce the comments made by that member who said that actually we have good faith in the present Minister of Indigenous Relations that he will be true to his word. You know, it gives us some comfort, but we do know that ministers change. It’s the very nature of the work in Westminster democracies that we change our ministers for a variety of reasons and we don’t know about the next minister.

I can tell you that there have been concerns. I mean, in the last Legislature I worked very hard to get indigenous representation on the board of the AGLC because, you know, I’d had indigenous chiefs and other leaders come to me and say: we have all this money coming from our casinos going into the First Nations development fund, but we have nobody on the board to make decisions around this. So I went to our Minister of Finance at the time, who was responsible, and said: “Can we do something about this? Can we create perhaps another board or something?” We struggled with the answer. These are complicated questions. But one of the things we did do is that we did appoint a previous chief from Tsuut’ina First Nation to that board. We thought: okay; maybe this isn’t perfect,

but certainly we have created something new that had not existed before. We had indigenous representation on the board making decisions about the monies coming from the casinos.

Unfortunately, shortly after this government took office, they removed that person from the board. They eliminated the only indigenous voice on the AGLC. Because we have seen that happen by this very government, unprotected by the Minister of Indigenous Relations apparently, we're asking that that not be allowed to occur in future, that if representation of indigenous people is to be guaranteed, we ensure it by putting it into the legislation.

In no way does putting the language of majority participation on this board change one iota what has just been promised in this House by this minister. This minister has said that that is the intention; they'll do it. If that's the intention, if that's where they're going, if they are going to ensure indigenous representation on this board, why not actually put it in writing? It always makes me worried when somebody says: yes, I promise to do something, but let's not write that down. If I went to a car salesman, and he said, "Oh, yeah, absolutely; this car has never been in an accident," it wouldn't stop me from asking for the history of that car because you want to see it in writing that there hasn't been an accident. It's the same way here. We're simply asking you to put your name where you put your voice, and that is to guarantee majority participation by the indigenous community on this particular board.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford again for moving this second amendment here. I think it's something that's very important we talk about, and it's disappointing, what we've heard from the government on this as well. It's disappointing that the government doesn't understand that just saying that they will do something isn't good enough. It doesn't go far enough. I remember quite vividly members of the now government bench, when they were in opposition, telling us the exact same thing. I remember quite vividly the current Minister of Transportation saying this to us, actually: well, we won't just trust you.

Through you, Madam Chair, to the minister: I would love to trust you, but the reality is that we should be enshrining this in legislation. The legislation can be made better, and I know the minister understands that because the minister spoke at length about how important it will be to have indigenous representation on this board. So the minister himself, I know, understands how important it is to have this representation on the board and understands that having them be a majority of the directors on the board will allow the indigenous people to have that ownership and to be able to make decisions about their own futures. That is something that I know is important to the minister. It's something that I know is important to all members of the opposition here.

That's why I think it's so disappointing – it's so disappointing – that the front bench has been told to sit down and that they can't make any changes. It's so disappointing that they're being told that they have to give out a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway on one hand and on the other they can't even let indigenous people be the choosers of their own future, the deciders of their own destinies. That's something that's very disappointing, Madam Chair. It's something that every single member of the government benches should be concerned about. It's something that every single member of the government bench should be thinking very deeply about.

This is a simple amendment. It's something that is very commonly accepted, as my colleague had mentioned, across many

jurisdictions and in many different contexts, that 50 per cent plus one is all it takes to say that there is adequate representation and that these indigenous groups will have the ability to control their own destinies. That's something that I think is very important, and it's why we are going to fight to ensure that their voices are heard in this space. Even though the minister has spoken about how he understands that these voices are important and the minister has spoken about how the corporation definitely needs indigenous perspectives on the board, the minister is not willing to actually do the work and not willing to actually show indigenous people that this government is committed. It's not actually willing to show indigenous people that this government actually understands the issues, and that's disappointing, Madam Chair.

I do take the minister at face value when he says that he understands its importance, but what I don't give the minister credit for, Madam Chair, is that he will then go out and actually fulfill that understanding, fulfill that promise. That's something that people will remember and that people understand does not show meaningful consultation, does not show meaningful reconciliation, and does not show that this government actually cares about what happens with this corporation. It shows that this government thinks they know best and thinks they can go tell indigenous peoples how to run their corporations and how to invest and how to do all these things.

The minister said, "Well, if you know anybody, please ask them to apply," and that's great. There are, of course, open application processes in this province, Madam Chair. But the reality is that this is a system that is designed to not necessarily have that voice. It's designed for this government to be able to exclude that voice if they so choose, and that's something that every single person in this House should be concerned about. It's something that every single person in this House needs to look at and say: how come we were so quick to ram through a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to already profitable corporations, but when we're trying to support indigenous corporations, we won't stop and just vote for them to have their own representation?

That's the most simple thing in our Westminster parliamentary democracy system, Madam Chair, that people should be represented. This corporation, which is designed – it's in the name, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. It's in the name, Madam Chair, that the indigenous people should be guaranteed representation in their own corporation, in the corporation that's intended to help them. That we wouldn't enshrine that representation in it: I think that's something that we should be very concerned about. I think it's something that perhaps members of the government are ashamed of right now.

5:20

I want to say that this is our chance to make this piece of legislation better. This is our chance to accept a simple amendment. My colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, I know, won't shy away from saying that he's not usually a man of few words, much like myself, but this amendment is. This amendment does not have any games, as the government has concerns about. This amendment is not trying to play politics or partisanship. This amendment is actually trying to make the bill better. It's actually trying to make the corporation more functional and more representative, and that's something I want every single person to think about.

I'm going to be supporting this amendment, I know all of my colleagues here in the opposition will be supporting this amendment, and I hope members of the government will have a long discussion about this and understand the importance of it.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to comment on the despicable display I just heard there. The hon. minister has worked very hard. I think he made it clear that he's talked to over 200 people, many, many aboriginal business and community leaders. If there's anybody in this Chamber that's done their work on a bill, it's this minister on this bill that we're talking about right here. When the members across start talking about who's done the work on it, you should actually be a little bit more fact based with your comments, because the hon. member that made those comments was very poorly informed. I'm going to assume he was telling the truth. That only leaves very, very poorly informed. He had not listened to the debate in this House, had not considered what's in front of him, and ought to actually stand and apologize to the minister although I do not expect that will happen.

I can assure you, as all members of this House now know – and I think the last one is maybe getting the message right now – that this minister has put a lot of work into this bill. He has considered it carefully, and he has considered the advice of indigenous people across Alberta with great care, respect, and treated them with care and respect and dignity. The hon. member really ought to actually give even at least half a thought before he gets on his feet the next time, because the last time was most unsatisfactory, and the hon. member really ought to be ashamed.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you. A lot of bluff and bluster from the other side again when that minister stands up.

I don't know if the Minister of Indigenous Relations has actually posed the question – he hasn't answered the question – to all 190 or 200 groups and individuals and organizations that he has talked to about 50 per cent plus one on the board of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. And did they say, "No; we're not interested; please don't put 50 per cent plus one on the board"?

That's what this Minister of Transportation is suggesting, you know, that he's done the homework – that's great; I'm glad – and that the homework proved that just exactly what's in this bill is what members of indigenous organizations and individuals who are indigenous and Métis have exactly wanted. Or would they see it as an improvement to what's here if, in fact, it was 50 per cent plus one of the board members, as my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford has suggested in his amendment, which is eminently supportable, I hope, that "a majority of the directors appointed under subsection (1) must be members of an indigenous group identified in section 3(1)(a), (b) or (c)"?

Has the Minister of Indigenous Relations put that to every individual and group he's talked to? I would suggest he hasn't. I would suggest he's said, "There's a billion dollars in loan guarantees; we're going to make it happen; get onboard and," maybe in more structured language, "for a longer period of time." But I just don't understand what all the backslapping is about. This will help, but, you know, there are improvements that can be made to it, too, and once the bill is in for a period of time, maybe there'll be additional improvements that come through regulation to improve it. That's great. I'm glad.

We put forward an amendment that was eminently positive and said that the scope maybe should be investments that indigenous people already have in tourism, in commercial, in retail, but that was shot down by members of the other side because the oil and gas sector – and I think it says "natural resource" sector here – is the

only one that will create the jobs. It's what we ran on: I hear that repeatedly.

You know, I'm not going to belabour it. I just will say that this amendment is a good one. I think indigenous peoples, Métis peoples, identified in your bill as 3(1)(a), (b), and (c), would be fine stewards of this board, and it will force – it will force – your administration to meet a goal that is appropriate and important in the self-direction of this corporation.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A2.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:27 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Ganley	Pancholi
Ceci	Irwin	Renaud
Dang		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Sawhney
Barnes	McIver	Schow
Dreeshen	Nixon, Jeremy	Schulz
Ellis	Orr	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Rehn	Singh
Glasgo	Reid	Turton
Glubish	Rosin	Walker
Hanson	Rowswell	Wilson
Horner	Rutherford	Yao
Issik		

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 28
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We are in Committee of the Whole on Bill 14. The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move that the Committee of the Whole rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 14. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.  
The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think we've made pretty good progress and had some good debate today on the bill

before us. I'd like to thank members on all sides of the House for participating in that, and I move that we adjourn until tomorrow, October 10, at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:45 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, October 10, 2019

Day 26

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, October 10, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning, hon. members. I'd like to recognize that there is a wide range and varied amounts of faith and cultural backgrounds, so please feel free to pray or reflect in your own way.

Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Orders of the day. Ordres du jour. You may be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice, Solicitor General, and Deputy Government House Leader has caught my eye this morning.

#### Canadian Armed Forces Health Care Funding

33. Mr. Schweitzer moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce the federal government's decision to reduce the rates at which it reimburses the costs of providing health care services to Canadian Armed Forces members, call on the federal government to immediately reverse this decision and provide the highest level of treatment for these members, and recognize the contribution of these members, who bravely and willingly risk their lives for our country.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise to move Government Motion 33 on behalf of our Government House Leader.

This is completely unacceptable. Our government stands with our military families. This is again another outrageous attempt by the Trudeau Liberals to push costs down. This is unacceptable. Our military folks put their lives on the line every single day with what they do for us. They deserve our respect. They deserve proper funding. They deserve proper care. It's unacceptable, and Trudeau needs to take this back.

**The Speaker:** This is a debatable motion according to Standing Order 18(1)(a), and all members have the opportunity to speak. Would anyone like to join in the debate this morning? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the deputy House leader from the government side bringing forward this motion to denounce the federal government's decision to reduce rates at which it reimburses the costs of providing health care services to the Canadian Armed Forces members and call on the government to reverse this decision.

Now, certainly, our caucus, the New Democrat Official Opposition caucus, does recognize the right for all individuals to have access to top-quality public health care, not just in this province but right across the country. Indeed, this is a cornerstone

of who we are as Albertans and Canadians. We recognize that public universal health care, which is afforded to military families and to all families here in the province of Alberta and the country, is an important way by which we can ensure the safety and the health, physical and mental health, of all people but also the financial integrity of all people and families here in the province of Alberta and across the country to ensure that all Canadian residents are protected from two-tier, American-style private health care. Our veterans deserve the respect, and they deserve proper health care. They should be cared for in the right way.

We know that the previous Conservative federal government under Stephen Harper eliminated pensions for the Canadian Armed Forces, which we found to be deplorable, unacceptable considering the important work that our Canadian Armed Forces do to protect our borders, to protect the integrity of our country. Now it appears that the federal Liberals are rolling back the health care supports for our Canadian Armed Forces. Indeed, we know and I think everyone knows, within both their hearts and minds, that this is wrong. This decision goes against the basic principle of protections for all citizens but particularly for Canadian Armed Forces, who are often in very dangerous circumstances. It is our position as well that this funding should be immediately restored.

From what we have read from media sources and indeed from talking to people and drawing on our own well of common sense – right? – we are disturbed that the federal government would seek to cut corners when it comes to health care for our Armed Forces personnel in this country. We should be looking for ways by which we can increase the scope of health care for Canadian armed service members and indeed all citizens in the country to ensure that we have in place, for example, a national pharmacare program that ensures that we are all protected as citizens along with Canadian Armed Forces from private profiteering on pharmacy here in the province of Alberta and across the country as well.

We know that Canadian Armed Forces members and indeed all citizens of Canada need and require an increased scope of mental health supports as well. We have looked through the original intention of the universal health care protections and know that it should be an evolutionary process, and that includes what we know now that we perhaps didn't know when we first brought in medicare, that mental health supports are indeed at least as important as the physical supports that medicare does afford us.

I think we believe strongly as well and I think that scientific evidence does support that universal dental care is an absolute necessity over time to ensure the overall physical health of all citizens, including Canadian Armed Forces. We know that the connection between good dental care and affordable protected public dental care should be under the umbrella of medicare programming and other supports as well to ensure that we're not just stuck in a static mode around the benefits of public health care but indeed we are moving forward to ensure the health and safety of all citizens in the province and in the country. Particularly, this flashpoint for our military veterans is a good place for us to remind ourselves of how important it is to invest in health care.

You know, I can't help but think, Mr. Speaker, that there is an element of irony with the government bringing forward a motion such as this because, of course, yes, we should ensure that our Armed Forces are protected in all ways for comprehensive medical supports, but then it's coming from the same government right now that has their eyes firmly targeted on reducing health care, universal and public health care, here in this province of Alberta. I don't look any further than the newspaper and the very disturbing reports out of Vegreville, Alberta, over these last few days, where a long-term care assisted living facility has made a choice to fire their entire staff at an assisted living facility and allow the severe reduction in

services and pay for an essential assisted living facility that looks after our seniors, both their physical and mental needs, in the town of Vegreville. I can't help to think that this somehow is a precursor from a signal that this government has sent to say, you know, that all bets are off; go ahead and start this process of privatization of the compromise in health care that I think almost all Albertans would find both unacceptable and abhorrent as well.

I look, again, to this government's decision to cancel the lab services contract that indeed was building, in fact, a very, very comprehensive, important facility, which is a cornerstone of good public health care, and cancelling that, thus delaying the proper and timely execution of lab services here in the province of Alberta, which again is very sadly and importantly needed here at this time. Instead we see quite the opposite, which is a series of cuts.

Why is this all happening, Mr. Speaker? Well, I can't help but say that, you know, it all comes down to the budget, and we see a budget coming down on October 24, which is none too soon. I can't help to see that there is at least a \$4.5 billion hole in that budget that this government chose to make in order to give big corporate tax cuts to corporations at the expense of health care, at the expense of education and other public social services and infrastructure that this government is responsible for.

**9:10**

I think it's very important to ensure that our military is looked after and that military families are looked after. I think it's a prescient and very timely opportunity to talk about the importance of public health care for all citizens and all people that live in the province of Alberta and in Canada as well and to see how those services are in peril and put in peril by the same government who brought forward the same motion here today.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing has risen to add to the debate.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Seniors and Housing the responsibility of the military liaison portfolio falls under my ministry. When I was made aware of Justin Trudeau and the federal government's decision to reduce the rate at which they reimburse the cost of providing health care services to the Canadian Armed Forces members, I was thoroughly disappointed. This decision is disrespectful and deceitful given that Trudeau has campaigned on his commitment to expand medicare.

You may remember that in February 2018 injured veteran Brock Blaszczyk asked a question to Justin Trudeau at a town hall hosted at Grant MacEwan. Mr. Blaszczyk had served in Afghanistan for less than a year when he was injured in an explosion and lost his leg. Mr. Blaszczyk addressed his concern with Ottawa's plan to reform some veterans' programs, including changes to disability pensions, and asked Mr. Trudeau: why are we still fighting against certain veterans groups in court? Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Trudeau responded: because they're asking for more than we are able to give right now.

The insolence toward our Canadian Armed Forces that the federal government is placing upon the men and women who serve to protect our country is not how they should be treated. Our government will honour the access to care in Alberta and not respond the way that Mr. Trudeau has. We will protect our Canadian Armed Forces members.

I commend our Minister of Health for writing a letter to the Minister of National Defence to call for a reversal of the decision to unilaterally cut reimbursement rates for delivering health care to our members in the Canadian Armed Forces in Alberta and across

Canada. The new rates will lead to a shortfall of \$2 million. That \$2 million will affect the fundraising source that our province relies on to provide the best care for our Canadian Armed Forces. The Department of National Defence will not share their rationale for the new rate, and the rate was imposed without any consultation.

As the Minister of Health stated, our government will step up and fully cover the costs of health care for our Canadian Armed Forces so that all members in our province receive the care that they need. We will not leave those who fight and fought so bravely for our country in purgatory.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone that would like to make a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday caught my eye.

**Mr. Ellis:** Under 29(2)(a), sir.

**The Speaker:** Oh, sorry. I didn't see you there.

**Mr. Ellis:** I'm sorry. I apologize for being late.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West has risen under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I just want to under 29(2)(a) take a moment here to thank the minister for standing up on behalf of certainly the government and the portfolio which she represents, Seniors and Housing. I'd just like to ask her, since the military liaison officer, which is, I believe, the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, falls under her ministry, falls essentially in her portfolio, what kind of impact the officer has had on the community which he's been engaging the last several months.

This decision that was made by the federal government: maybe expand a little bit on we'll call it the impact on our military members who are stationed here in Alberta and what the military liaison officer has been doing to talk to our military veterans and friends to let them know that we as a government are here for them, that we as a government are going to continue to support them even when the perception is coming from the federal government that that might not be the case.

Since this is a very important portfolio that falls under her ministry, if she can just expand on some of the conversations that she might have had with the military liaison officer and, certainly, some of the veterans and current service members who have been impacted by this decision. Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday on the main motion.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to this motion. Of course, I'll just read it over here one more time. "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce the federal government's decision to reduce the rates at which it reimburses the costs of providing health care services to Canadian Armed Forces members." I'll leave it at that.

Now, I of course will be supporting this motion as well as the rest of my colleagues, I believe. Our NDP caucus, when we were in government, took the issue of supporting our veterans very seriously, and I do also want to recognize the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for her work as the military liaison. Through consultations with veterans and with the Armed Forces in this province, we were able to move forward on a housing and

service centre for veterans, funding \$3 million towards that, which was very important in terms of recognizing the importance of making sure we're respecting and supporting mental health concerns and homelessness concerns that often do happen with our veterans.

I do also want to recognize the fact that there is irony in this motion, as was mentioned by the Member for Edmonton-North West. The fact is that this Premier, when he was a federal minister – for a time he was the minister of defence – failed our veterans, simply failed them horribly. I want to recognize – it was mentioned – the fact that under Stephen Harper and this Premier, when he was in the federal government and was a minister, killed pensions, eliminated pensions for our veterans. We're talking about, you know, a downloading of services from the federal government. When we look back at the history of the federal Conservative government and the attacks that they've placed on our veterans by removing the rights to those pensions for injured and disabled veterans, those veterans lost between 30 and 90 per cent of their entitlements, which is very concerning. Once again, it's quite ironic, if not completely hypocritical, for this government to try and stand up and say that they are the champions of veteran supports while their history and their legacy says something quite different.

Also, looking back on the history of the federal Conservative government when they were in power: closing nine Veterans Affairs offices; another big concern. Those shutdowns laid off 89 employees, leaving eight workers to cover 17,000 veterans, once again showing a complete disrespect and lack of understanding about the supports that these veterans need. My question is: you know, it's wonderful that you're standing up for veterans now, but where was this Premier when he was in the federal government representing these veterans? It's very concerning.

9:20

Now, I also want to recognize the fact that while this government is complaining or concerned, rightfully so, that the federal government is talking about downloading services to the provincial government – and I'm happy to recognize that the minister of seniors said that they would cover these costs, which is good. It's important that we take care of our veterans. But they stand before us in this Legislature talking about a \$4.5 billion handout to large corporations. What does that mean for regular Albertans? That means that they are going to have their services cut. Now, when we talk about supporting the families of veterans and veterans themselves, what is going to happen when funding for education gets cut? What happens when funding for FCSS gets cut, when we start denying more applications for these families that desperately need this funding?

Once again, on the other hand, we talk about the \$4.5 billion handout to large corporations. That is going to mean – and we've seen it through the discussions with this Justice minister about the downloading of policing costs, in just one instance, on municipalities. On one hand, we have this UCP government saying: we're very concerned that the federal government is talking about downloading costs to the provinces. Then, on the other hand, we have this provincial government talking about downloading many services onto municipalities, which is very concerning. They're talking out of both sides of their mouths, Mr. Speaker. I think it's very unfortunate. I think that they should do the right thing on that matter and fully fund these municipalities.

Once again, I do plan on supporting this motion. I think it's important to show our support to these veterans. I think that when this Premier was in the federal government, he should have done a better job because, at the end of the day, he failed veterans

miserably, and now he's trying to make up for it through a motion. Well, it's just not enough, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone else that has a question or a comment? I see the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat would like to ask a question or make a brief comment.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to point out how important this motion is. I mean, this is a motion where we are calling on the federal government, coming together in camaraderie to call out the action of the federal government and their failure to stand up for our veterans when it comes to access to health care. Instead of doing that, the opposition has taken this time to play politics with this motion. I think that's actually quite despicable considering that we're talking about people who are not asking for more than we can give. We are talking about people who put their lives on the line every single day for our country. Instead of doing that, we're going off on a tangent about irrelevant topics, I would argue, and we are not actually talking about the issue at hand here, which is access to health care for these veterans.

I would implore the members of the opposition, when speaking to this motion, to speak about this as an issue that affects everyone in every constituency. This is not a partisan motion. It happens to be brought forward by the government, but this is an issue that I think we can all get behind just because it is so important and it is so relevant. I know that the members of the opposition care about this topic, and I would not want these previous comments to cloud that, because I do think that this is an extremely important topic. I'm going to give the Member for Edmonton-West Henday the benefit of the doubt here when I know that he wasn't trying to play politics with this issue. I know that he wasn't trying to make a partisan issue out of something that really should be nonpartisan, because that would be, I think, a little bit beyond the pale on this issue. I would give the Member for Edmonton-West Henday, I guess, a second to respond, maybe apologize to the House for playing politics with this issue, and speak on behalf of his constituents when he's coming at the government for something that should really be a nonpartisan motion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday, should he choose to respond.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I do want to respect the fact and respond to the fact that I am going to be supporting this motion. I think it's an important motion. I made it quite clear that I am in full support of our Canadian Armed Forces. You know, the work that they do really should be thanked more than it does get thanked by every level of government.

One more time, I mean, the member just raised the fact that I'm making this a partisan issue. This motion itself: of course, we're all going to be supporting it. But it is a partisan issue when the federal government, the federal Conservatives over the last several years before this Liberal government, failed veterans. It is a partisan issue when Stephen Harper failed them so miserably, took away their pensions, closed Veterans Affairs offices, kept them in court. Now, it's the exact reason why in 2015 veterans across Canada raised a campaign and lobbied against the federal Conservatives, recognizing that they failed them miserably. You can't, you know, as a government, as a federal government, a Conservative government completely fail veterans across the province for decades and then say: oh, how could you hold that against us?

All I'm saying is that I'm supporting this. I think that we definitely can do more, especially the federal government could do



more. I just have to recognize the fact that the federal Conservatives failed. It's as simple as that. I think the Member for Edmonton-North West raised good points about the fact that we need to move forward on universal health care, whether it's dental or other matters. I think that the Conservatives failed on that, too. I hope that a federal government in the future will look at fixing that issue, whether it's for veterans or for all Canadians.

But the fact is that any time we enter this room, it is politics. It is an issue of whether the Conservatives are going to stand up for veterans at the federal level and frankly they didn't. I'll leave it at that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there's approximately a minute and eight seconds left under 29(2)(a).

Unfortunately, you've already spoken once, so it would be inappropriate for me to ask you again.

If there's anyone else – oh, check that. Feel free.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for giving me a minute and eight seconds to finish my thoughts. You know, we do come into this place from a political lens, of course, and that is important to remember. But I do remember hearing from the opposition side on a variety of issues, especially the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, about how we need to rise above politics, that we need to rise above partisanship. This is one of those sections where we can rise above. It really amazes me that the opposition is just like the federal Liberals in this regard, where they're actually campaigning against Stephen Harper instead of standing up for Albertans right here, and I think it's despicable. I would just implore the opposition to advocate for Albertans. I would implore the opposition to advocate for their constituents instead of coming at us on issues that really should be nonpartisan.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Now there are eight seconds remaining. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, if he'd like to join in the debate.

**Mr. Eggen:** No, thank you.

**The Speaker:** I'm so happy for your keen observation of the timer.

Hon. members, I have just recently noticed the presence of military veteran Brock Blaszczyk in the gallery this morning.

I'd like to welcome you here. Thank you for your service and your attendance this morning. [Standing ovation]

Hon. members, is there anyone else that would like to speak to the motion? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a few short weeks Canadians from coast to coast to coast will pin poppies to their chests for 11 days in November. Some of us will attend our local Remembrance Day ceremonies. Some of us will lay a wreath at our community memorial. Some of us will talk to a veteran, shake their hand, pose for a picture. But what will happen on November 12? We remember our veterans and active service members for 11 days in November. We recite the lines of *In Flanders Fields*. We let silence ring instead of gunshots. We pledge that we will hold the torch for those who threw it from falling hands. Will we fail them again on November 12?

I raise this question and stand in this House today because it is so easy for all of us to remember our veterans and their service and our active service members in November. We gather together in their memory and honour their service across the country. For that moment of silence on November 11 the active service members and

veterans in this country are all that we care about. However important our ceremonies and our decorations and our acknowledgements are on November 11, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking everyone to think about November 12. It is easy to pay attention to the issues veterans raise with us when they are at the forefront of our minds, but if we don't continue to value the contributions of our service members on November 12 and every day after that, our words and our actions on November 11 ring hollow.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today because our veterans and active service members deserve a government that remembers their sacrifice and everything that they do, not just on Remembrance Day but on every single day that we remain a strong and free nation, almost entirely because of the sacrifices that Armed Forces members made for generations before us. We cannot fail to consider their sacrifices in everything that we do and every policy that we make. That is why I'm shocked that our federal government would so blatantly disregard their actions in context with their consequences to everyone who wears this country's uniform and why I am standing in the House to advocate for them and demand that our federal government make our veterans and serving members a priority.

**9:30**

The stories and experiences of our veterans and serving members go far beyond Remembrance Day, Mr. Speaker. There are people who have served in the reserve force in this very room, as we just acknowledged, and people who have served in the regular forces who walk our halls here at the Legislature. The sacrifices they have made and the experiences they have gone through stay with them for longer than just the first 11 days in November. They live with the burden of memories, both nostalgic and difficult, that we could help them carry if only we chose to make their burdens easier or share them.

We talk a lot about how thankful and proud we are of our serving members. I have no doubt that there is sincerity and truth in those words when they are spoken in this House. However, how can we continue to pile on the platitudes if they are served by a federal government that doesn't remember their service for the other 354 days of the year? I have heard first-hand some of the struggles that our veterans face.

These brave men and women who make the choice to sacrifice everything for the rest of us frequently struggle with matters that they shouldn't be worried about. Far too often our military members face difficulties transitioning back to civilian life or coming back from a long and challenging deployment. While their service means everything when they wear the uniform, it means less on their resumé when they try to find a civilian job. When they come home after serving domestically or overseas, we greet them with hugs, cheers, and flashy signs, but the pomp and circumstance fade from day to day.

Symptoms of job-related risk often don't appear until far after the incidents that happen at work, Mr. Speaker, and many of us can testify to that. Our military members work marathon hours under high stress and are often working with dangerous materials. I recently heard the story of someone who has served and has been exposed to various chemicals throughout his career. A standard risk to the job, he told me, and his hands shake uncontrollably at random. He can't pin it back to an exact event during his military career, but he thinks the repeated chemical exposure to heavy diesel and other industrial fluids could have something to do with it. He worries about what caused it and what it might mean for his future family. There are many stories like this. They aren't uncommon.

These are young people in our Armed Forces, and they are breaking down their bodies for this country and asking not much in

return, nothing except for consideration and for us to make sure their families are cared for. Now the federal government has given them one more reason to feel overlooked rather than giving them reasons to feel respected and heard.

We cannot stand idly by while our military members and veterans are treated as second-class citizens. We must stand together in recognizing and honouring their contributions. Most importantly, we must stand up for them and their futures. We must refuse to accept that cutting away more of their thin benefits is acceptable in any way.

I would ask that everyone in this House not only join me in standing up for our service members and veterans today but join me in standing up for them every day. A legacy and a career isn't lived in 11 days in November, Mr. Speaker. We have 354 more days that we must use to continue to honour their sacrifices.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a question or comment for the Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Mr. Neudorf:** East.

**The Speaker:** East.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak to this important motion. I would just like to start off by saying that I will be supporting the motion, and then I just want to give a little bit of background.

I was a military partner for many years. I lived in Griesbach. I worked in Lancaster Park. My partner at that time was part of the PPCLI as a sig op and was in Afghanistan, so I appreciate the importance of this issue. I've lived as a supportive partner with my partner being overseas, and I recognize the military family and the importance of the military family. We had a community when we were living in Griesbach, before it became the Griesbach that it is now, where there were many of us that all lived in the row houses together, and when our partners were overseas, all of us would get together and support each other and talk about the stresses of having our partners in combat zones. During the time when my partner was in Afghanistan was when we had our major loss of our members from PPCLI that passed away in 2006. That had a significant impact on our community. Obviously, we were all around the same age at that time, and we all knew each other.

When I hear the members say, "Well, take the politics out of it," I hear what you're saying. The reality of it is that, you know, there are people in this House that are substantially impacted by this issue, that have strong beliefs. I have strong beliefs about the fact that our military families deserve support by all levels of government. I'm not just talking federal, provincial, but municipal as well.

When I worked in Lancaster Park, my focus was on working with families that had children with disabilities. I worked at FSCD, and all the families that were on my caseload deliberately moved from other provinces to Edmonton and to Lancaster Park or wherever because of the fact that the provincial government at that time had made an effort to recognize that there are additional stressors for military families outside of just service. There are children involved. There are spouses involved. My caseload was quite high because many families came from Ontario and other provinces to get the supports for their children that were struggling with developmental disabilities, physical disabilities.

Health care is extremely important to the military families. It's important to all Albertans. Mental health supports. I mean, when

we lost our members in Afghanistan, it hit the community extremely hard, and it wasn't just about the individuals that had retired and the veterans. It was about members that were actively engaged in combat. It was family members that were part of those conversations. I mean, I'm sure we all remember when we filled Rexall for the ceremonies. It was hard. This conversation around health care supports: ultimately we all have a responsibility to take care of our military families, to recognize the service that veterans have contributed to Canada and internationally around this world.

But the reality of it is also that this motion was put forward to have this dialogue, and it was put forward for a political reason. I just caution everyone that throwing stones back and forth around one side making this more political than the other – well, we're having this conversation for political reasons or else we wouldn't have the motion on the floor. Honestly, the Alberta government, the minister could just fix it right now without us having to have this conversation.

I think that we all need to take a moment and recognize that there is a game being played right now. We all know we're in a federal election, and that is why this motion is even being put forward. The reality of it is that we can all do better. We can all serve our military families better. The fact that the military families in this country live in different provinces and travel around the world, travel to different places – I still have many friends that have moved every two years to a different posting, and every single time they move, they are impacted by the health care that is provided in different provinces, by the services, by the fact that there are struggles with retraining, that their spouses have to relocate and find new careers.

Those issues are real, so absolutely we should support this motion, but the reality of it is that we should just be able to do this without a motion. It should just happen. We shouldn't be standing up here and having this debate and going back and forth about whether or not it should be done. Yes, the federal government is downloading costs onto the provinces to cover military health care, but the reality of it is that the minister could just fix it right now, right? Like, why are we even having the conversation? If you don't want to hear the fact that there are other things that can be changed, that historically we have failed the military federally, that historically decisions were made by federal Conservatives, and things are being made by federal Liberals right now that impact military families – that is true. But the government decided to put a motion forward to discuss it, and we can't just discuss the one thing that the government wants to talk about, which is what the federal Liberals are doing, if they're not going to acknowledge what happened in the past with the federal Conservatives. If this really wasn't about politics, if this is really about caring about our military families, caring about the people that are serving our country, caring about the family members that have been impacted by the sacrifices that these families make, then this conversation shouldn't even happen, and this government shouldn't have put this motion forward, because it does impact people.

**9:40**

I'm sorry that I'm getting a little worked up about this, but, like, I've lost people that served. My ex-partner is impacted with mental health issues because of what he experienced while he was in Afghanistan. He had one of the hardest jobs. He's a sig op. It's a pretty sketchy job to have; all of them are. But the reality of it is that I am impacted to this day by his service because I still care about him and all of my friends and all of the experiences that they've had and the mental health issues and the PTSD and all of the other dynamics that have come because of what they've seen in Afghanistan and all of the other places where they've served.

So I'd just ask that instead of throwing stones back and forth, you acknowledge the fact that you put the motion forward. Therefore, talking about the whole gamut of what federal governments have done for our military, whether it be Conservative or Liberal, is part of the dialogue because you chose to put the motion forward. I thank our members that have served. I remember them every day. It's not about Remembrance Day for me. I will support this motion, but I ask that in the future, if we really want to do what's right, then we don't bring it to this House and the ministers just do what they should do.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen to ask a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sincerely thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning for bringing up a couple of very important points. It was actually something I was thinking about, too, because my constituency, Edmonton-North West, has many military families living there. People were transferred from different parts of the country – New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario – and often in conversation it's not uncommon for people to point out specifically that they were seeking a posting in the province of Alberta because of the enhanced medical benefits and social service benefits that they could access for themselves and for their families. You know, it always stuck with me over the years.

I'm sorry I didn't ask the hon. member before. I know you have some more information about that. Again, I know that her comments were very poignant and so forth, and I wanted to ask her about – well, first of all, I think that this motion is relevant because it brings up an important point about how we have built comprehensive public health care and social services that are recognized and sought out by Canadians in other parts of the country in the military service, and they might even choose to try to get a posting here in Alberta to access those services. If she could perhaps tell us about some of those services that people did want and desired and found to be excellent here in the province of Alberta and how those same services might be in jeopardy here now with the prospect of cuts to social services and health care. If she would choose to answer that, I would appreciate it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. I mean, we know, again going back to my experience working in family support for children with disabilities, FSCD, the military families that I was working with in Lancaster Park – of course, lots of people live in northeast Edmonton. I have lots of military families that I represent in my riding now. I mean, there is a great benefit that we have in the fact that we do have supports for children with disabilities in this province. FSCD is one of the best programs, I think, across the country when it comes to supporting children that have additional medical needs, that need additional interventions or community aids or daycare aid.

The one thing that I would like to acknowledge is the MFRC, the military family resource centre, in Lancaster Park. The work that they do is amazing. They have an on-site daycare. They're always open to working with FSCD and making sure that there are aids in place for the children that go there. They offer additional supports. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs and I go to their fundraiser every year. There's always a great community turnout to support the resources that are being provided. They also provide mental health supports and then, of course, community referrals for those that don't want to access services on-base.

Again, going back to my comments around ministers just needing to do the right thing – making sure the military resource centres, making sure that the supports in FSCD continue to be funded, making sure the daycare aids are in place, \$25 daycare is in place, all of the things that support healthy communities and healthy families – if we're going to talk about military families and their health care needs, they also deserve all of the community supports that they have a right to access. When you look at your budgets and you're having conversations around how we are going to do cost savings, I implore you that if you're going to say that this is an issue and that we need to have funding for military families, then you have to fund everything else, too.

You can't pick one issue with military families and say, "This is the issue," because then you're politicizing it. Acknowledge the MFRCs. Acknowledge the fact that resources on-base need to be funded and supported. If you're going to advocate for that, then you have to advocate for on-base resources and off, and that includes making sure that families on-base have all the supports that they need. And even if they live off the base: I mean, the access to child care, the access to training and being able to look at that when transitioning from a military career, that those skills are transferable to employment.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health has risen to join the debate.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a consideration in this House, an amendment to Government Motion 33.

**The Speaker:** The pages will grab it. Just have a seat for two seconds if you wouldn't mind, Minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Okay.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the amendment will be considered to be amendment A1.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The amendment that I'm asking the House to consider right now is striking out "call on the federal government to immediately reverse this decision and provide the highest level of treatment for these members" and substituting "call on the federal government to immediately and fully reverse this decision, commit to no future changes, and provide the highest level of treatment for these members." Is it all right if I then speak to this amendment?

I just want to say a few words generally. You know, I think that before this became an issue, most people probably didn't realize that the federal government pays for the health care services of our forces' personnel who are here in Alberta, mostly because when you are personnel for our Armed Forces, you don't get to choose where in this country you serve. You're told where you're going to be living. You're told where you're going to serve, and you're sent there.

Outside of the Canada Health Act, the federal government, the Department of National Defence have paid the provinces for those health care services. Typically, like here in Alberta, the Department of National Defence has a primary care network themselves to provide primary care from those physicians, but this is really dealing with the acute care and scheduled surgeries that are required to be provided to our forces' personnel here in Alberta through Alberta Health Services in the same way as if there was somebody from another jurisdiction, like B.C., who got acute-care services here in Alberta. AHS would be able to essentially send an invoice to the Department of National Defence for the acute-care services

or the scheduled surgery for those personnel. Historically, what was paid to the provinces were amounts which covered those costs.

9:50

Without any consultation and still to this day without any answer about the rationale for this decision, unilaterally the Department of National Defence cut the amounts that they're going to be paying for those services. Sure, in the grand scheme of things it may not amount to what sounds like a lot of money. I think the total hit to AHS would be about \$2 million per year. But first, Mr. Speaker, it's disrespectful towards the provinces that this happened without any consultation. It's disrespectful to the provinces that we still do not have an answer for the rationale. It's also hypocritical that the Trudeau government wants to talk about expanding medicare, yet unilaterally they make a decision like this to cut the funding to Alberta Health Services for this.

It's also disrespectful to the forces' personnel. I think the most important thing for us to be able to say in this House is, first, to everybody who can hear these words: if you are forces' personnel serving here in Alberta, understand that your care will not be altered in any way. You will still get the care that you need from Alberta Health Services and from Alberta Health. You will still be able to get the care that you need, and in no way should you have ever, ever heard any of these words and have had to question whether you are going to receive these services. I apologize to any forces' personnel who have had to make that inquiry. Please understand that you will still get the services that you require.

It is disrespectful to them, Mr. Speaker, and I think that this is the time for the Trudeau government to not double down on their decisions but to be able to reverse those decisions and make sure that it's clear to our forces' personnel and to our provinces that decisions will not be made unilaterally in deciding how health services are going to be paid for in this country but, as well, that the amounts that are going to be paid for the health care services that are required are going to be fully paid, that the costs are going to be fully covered by the federal government for forces' personnel here in Alberta.

What we're asking for in this amendment, Mr. Speaker, is a reversal, immediately and fully, of this decision and committing to no future changes. I would ask for the Assembly to support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment for the Minister of Health.

Seeing none, is there anyone else that would like to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to this amendment. Obviously, as my colleagues have said and having looked at the amendment that was just presented to us, you know, I will vote in support of this motion. Certainly, we want to make sure that our military families have the support that they need. If anything, of course, we would like it to be even broader than this motion before us today. Our party believes very much in making sure all Albertans are supported and that we don't just make priorities of a select group of people, for example.

Immediately after being elected, the government chose to give a \$4.5 billion handout to corporations, and this is having an impact on the rest of the services. Certainly, as the Minister of Seniors and Housing previously, I met many times with organizations, seniors' centres across this province, who are now very afraid of the cuts.

While we support and I support supports for health services – and the minister herself did just say that if the federal government doesn't reverse this decision, the Alberta government will, you know, backfill on that. We're happy about that. But that shouldn't be the only thing. There is an array of services that are needed, and we have seen, very sadly, that supporting the elite, supporting the big corporations doesn't trickle down. Those theories have been debunked for years and years. It doesn't support all people. We have the greatest inequality in our province in Canada, so many people don't benefit from that, and of course we already know that there haven't been any jobs created from that.

I mean, there are so many things to be done. For example, when we were government, with the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs – she was our military liaison, and she worked with my ministry – early on in the mandate I met a veteran who was working with homeless veterans. Sometimes because of the stress of the work, the very, you know, demanding issues that they face – sometimes they have physical injuries, but a lot of times it's more mental health issues – unfortunately, veterans will turn to addictions, and that can lead to a very negative trajectory, ultimately to homelessness.

This veteran was working very hard to support veterans experiencing homelessness. He wanted to meet with me, and I was happy to do that. That was sort of earlier in my mandate in that role. Very quickly, very expeditiously we actually opened a veterans' homeless facility here in Edmonton with next-door wraparound services to support veterans with mental health issues. Our government stepped up very quickly, responded to a concern in the community.

Of course, we know that housing isn't enough. We must make sure that there are those wraparound services. So while we support the government's move to make sure that veterans have the health care they need and that it's, you know, made sure that they get enough funding to cover those costs and it shouldn't be cut back, we know that there is so much more to do in this area and many others. We just want to stand in support of making sure that Alberta is an inclusive province, where all are included and some aren't privileged more than others.

Having said that, I'll thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question or comment. The Minister of Health has risen.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that it is witless, it is shameless, and it's ridiculous. If somebody wants to perpetuate the misinformation to Albertans that there is \$4 billion or \$4.5 billion or whatever the fake number that they want to come up with for what the job-creation tax cut is, talk about it. Talk about it. It is your right to make that misinformation to Albertans, but doing it while we are debating this amendment and this motion regarding health care services for our forces' personnel is ridiculous, and it is shameful, and our friends opposite should cut it out. Let's talk about the amendment; let's talk about this motion. Do that on your own time. This is ridiculous. Let's talk about health care services for our forces' personnel.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the comments and observations and insights that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has brought forward in regard to this motion. I think that it's abundantly clear that our side joined together with the government to call on the federal government to ensure that our Armed Forces are being given proper due in regard to health care

and supports in the broadest possible way. You know, now more than ever is a prescient time to talk about the importance of ensuring that the public health care infrastructure and social service infrastructure are in place for our Canadian members of the Armed Forces here in the province of Alberta.

Health care is the responsibility of each of the provinces and territories in this country, and one thing does not stand in isolation with the other, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly. If the quality and the breadth and the scope of public health care are compromised in any jurisdiction, including this one, then the health care and the quality of social services for Canadian Armed Forces members and, indeed, all residents of this province or other provinces are compromised as well.

**10:00**

These things do not stand in isolation, quite frankly. You know, as you pull the string along the way, you have to face the responsibility that comes with that. If you are cutting and compromising health care here in this province, then it does follow that you are compromising the integrity of health care to not just Armed Forces personnel but to all residents here in the province of Alberta.

You know, I'm not here to give lessons in logic or governance, by any means, to the members opposite, but it's important to take that full responsibility. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning and I myself as well pointed out, often Canadian Armed Forces personnel would look to get a position here in the province of Alberta because of the quality of health care and social services that are provided to all citizens of this province as compared to maybe postings in other places in Canada. For us to ensure the integrity of our public health system and to fight and to fend against cuts to the budget of this government is, I think, in keeping with our responsibility as the members of the Official Opposition and indeed our responsibilities to all residents of Alberta, including members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there is approximately a minute remaining under 29(2)(a) if anyone has a very brief question or comment.

Seeing none, are there others wishing to join the debate? The hon. the Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in debate on the motion before the House.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce the federal government's decision to reduce the rates at which it reimburses the costs of providing health care services to Canadian Armed Forces members, call on the federal government to immediately and fully reverse this decision, commit to no future changes, and provide the highest level of treatment for these members, and recognize the contribution of these members, who bravely and willingly risk their lives for our country.

More specifically, of course, I'm speaking to the hon. Minister of Health's amendment, which calls for a full reversal of the decision insofar as, I gather, the federal government has announced a partial reversal. How did that come about, Mr. Speaker? Well, only because their surreptitious, middle-of-the-night, secret effort to cut health care for members of the Canadian Armed Forces was revealed by whistle-blowers in the Canadian Armed Forces and reported by Global television two nights ago.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here not only as Premier but also as a former Minister of National Defence and as the son of a former Royal Canadian Air Force fighter pilot and the descendant of people who have stood in our uniform going back, frankly, to the defence of

British North America before Confederation. I stand here as somebody who is immensely proud of the sacrifices and risks taken by our men and women in uniform. I know that we Albertans have always had an enormous respect and great support for our soldiers, sailors, and aviators, and that has often been expressed by a disproportionately high level of military enrolment by residents of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, given that context I was shocked to hear the news earlier this week about the federal government's secret effort to cut basic health benefits for acute care for members of the military. As the hon. the Minister of Health has underscored, our soldiers, sailors, and aviators do not get to choose where they are deployed. It is a condition of their service that they can be deployed anywhere across Canada or, for that matter, around the world. It is therefore essential that they have the certainty of seamless health care coverage that follows them wherever they may find themselves. Before the Chrétien government effectively shut down and radically reduced the military hospital network in the mid to late 1990s, there was a system of military hospitals, and most of the clinical services provided to military personnel in Canada were provided at those military hospitals.

However, as a cost-cutting exercise, in order to reduce expenditures, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Department of National Defence, decided about 20-some years ago that it was more efficient to effectively contract out that domestic care for military personnel to provincial health systems, which essentially means that the Department of National Defence enters into service contracts with the 10 provinces through which the federal government is responsible for reimbursing the provinces at their normal rates for the services that are provided.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, just on that point alone, we do know that there sometimes are gaps that our transferred personnel fall between. For example, for a soldier at Gagetown, New Brunswick, who may be on a wait-list for surgery – or perhaps his or her spouse is – when they move to Alberta, they have to get to the back of another queue to access the same service. I know that I and the government's liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces, the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, have been in discussions with both the Armed Forces and the Department of Health to see if we can somehow resolve or mitigate challenges such as that. But, fundamentally, the system has worked reasonably well for the past two decades for servicemen and -women, where they've been able to access provincial health systems.

Now, I gather that the premise of the unannounced, secret cut by the federal government was that the provinces are supposedly charging DND too much for these clinical services. The truth is that their rates are the same as they are for any out-of-province individual or anybody not insured by Alberta medicare. They're the same rates that we would be charging, for example, the Workers' Compensation Board when it buys health services from AHS. They're the same rates that a foreign visitor coming to Alberta that goes into a hospital or clinic would pay or, for that matter, a Saskatchewan resident who has not yet established residency here, and then we would bill that back to Saskatchewan through the interprovincial reciprocal health care billing agreements. Mr. Speaker, the rates are quite fair. They're not set to generate some kind of notional profit for the Alberta Crown. They're set to essentially be cost recovery for Alberta taxpayers.

The effect of the changes that were made by the federal Liberals was effectively to impose those costs on Alberta taxpayers. Now, we estimate that that was a cost of \$2 million, which may not seem like an enormous amount of money in the context of a \$49 billion budget, but across the country it's quite a significant shift of costs from the Department of National Defence to provincial taxpayers.

In the case of Ontario I understand it's \$10 million, so likely about \$25 million to \$30 million nationally.

Mr. Speaker, more deeply than that, this really shows a profound disrespect for the greatest Canadians, those who are prepared to, frankly, give up their lives in the defence of this country, our values and interests. Surely, it is incumbent upon any government of any partisan stripe to prioritize beyond everything the support required by our women and men in uniform. That's why the government has brought forward this motion, because we are so profoundly disappointed in the disrespect implicit in this secret decision by the Trudeau Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, although I only served briefly as Minister of National Defence, for, I think, 10 or 11 months during a time of fiscal constraint, a time when the federal government was actually, unlike the current one, focused on fiscal probity and balancing the budget, we had to watch every dollar that was spent. And even in that context, let me tell you that nobody in the Department of National Defence or the Canadian Armed Forces approached me as minister to say: we need to cut the rates for health services for military personnel. Had they approached me about that, the conversation would have ended in a New York minute. It would have ended right there and then had they proposed such a thing to me as minister.

I find this, quite frankly, shocking. This was not, when I was minister in 2015, coming up from the system. Even after rigorous spending and program reviews, even after spending had been reduced in certain low-priority areas, nobody had proposed what was just done by the federal government. So I wonder: where did this come from, and why was this done, an act of great insensitivity that also has the collateral effect of downloading costs to the taxpayers of Alberta?

**10:10**

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to salute the hon. the Minister of Health for assuring our military personnel that regardless of the irresponsibility and cold-heartedness of the federal government on this matter, the government of Alberta can assure all military personnel serving in this province that we have their backs, that if there's any diminution in federal insurance or rates for health benefits, that will not affect their access to clinical services in Alberta through Alberta Health Services.

Mr. Speaker, I will just conclude by thanking members for their interest and support. I think it's regrettable the Official Opposition did not allow this matter to come before the House urgently yesterday. I urge all members to support this motion so that united we may send a message to this federal government, a government that has done so much to inflict such deep damage on this province. This is just yet one other example of, I submit, why we need a new federal government on October 21.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, we are on amendment A1. Are there those wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has risen.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is not focused on making life better for Canadians. He increases our taxes, constrains our industries, and embarrasses us on the world stage. This week he's unilaterally decided that our members of the military no longer deserve proper health care coverage. Under the Canada Health Act and provincial health acts the federal government provides coverage for military members. Provincial hospitals provide services such as surgery, MRIs, and

other acute care to military members, and then the military provides reimbursement to the provinces based on a set-fee model. Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government have decided that across the country these fees were too high, so he has cut them.

Let me say again: the government has decided to tell hospitals and provinces across the country that they are charging too much for health care and have picked the price they're going to pay. This arrogant act shows our Prime Minister truly believes he knows it all. He's abandoned our Canadian Armed Forces members, leaving the expense of their health care to the generosity of hospitals while the provinces take up the slack. That is a cowardly way to avoid this extremely important federal responsibility. These changes were made without consultation and remain without justification, without any respect for the sacrifices that our military members make. They've chosen one of the most challenging and dangerous careers in service to our country, and the thanks they get is being tossed to the margins by Justin Trudeau and his government.

Some hospitals in Ontario have drawn the hard line that they cannot afford it. Alberta hospitals will remain open and accepting of military members, and they certainly will not be turned away because they cannot pay for their treatment themselves. It is extremely disappointing, to say the least.

Just as disappointing, our colleagues in the NDP apparently kind of agree with this motion. We should not be here debating whether or not we will defend our military members from a cut to their health care. The NDP is more dedicated to standing behind Justin Trudeau than they are to standing up for our forces. This is a man that does not take his own actions seriously. He says that he's made it very clear there will be no cuts to services yet provides no justification for where the money will come from. It's as if he thinks our provincial hospitals are getting rich.

Mr. Speaker, every dollar that comes out of these reimbursements must come from somewhere. It is an absolute disgrace that behind closed doors our authoritarian Prime Minister attacks our military members, but as soon as a microphone is in front of him, he does just the opposite. Until our federal government shows some reason and humility and fully reverses this horrible decision, our province will make sure that they are properly covered. I'm happy to support this amendment, and I hope the rest of this House does as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any others wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Speaker:** We are back on the motion, Government Motion 33. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to this government motion, resolving that the Legislative Assembly denounce this decision by the federal government to reduce the rates at which it reimburses the costs of providing health care services to the Canadian Armed Forces members, with the new amendment calling for that to be fully reversed and that they commit to no future changes and indeed "provide the highest level of treatment for these members". In particular, I appreciate this opportunity, being my first opportunity to rise during this fall session of the Legislature. I can't think of a better topic to have the opportunity to speak to in the position as the Official Opposition critic for the health care file.

I apologize that I wasn't able to be here a little earlier this morning for this debate. I was reading to students at Oliver school,

and students always have lots of questions. One of theirs for me was: was I born here in Edmonton, and where was my family from? I was pleased to be able to tell them that my father came here from Trinidad in 1967 and that my mother's family came here from the Netherlands in 1948. One of the students immediately remarked and said: hey, your mom's family were in Holland before 1948; that means they went through World War II. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, my grandparents did, and they lost the majority of their possessions. They lost their farm and most of what they had, and that is largely what directly led to them coming to Canada.

So, indeed, I recognize the great role that Canadian soldiers played in the defence, in the freeing of many across Europe during World War II and, in particular, at home, a place where Canadians are still well respected and celebrated because of the brave and heroic work of our military members who served there. I recognize that since that time Canada has continued to have military members that have provided great service around the world in many different regions. Indeed, we owe the greatest of respect and support to those members who have chosen to step up to serve in our military, in the reserves, in whatever capacity and, indeed, the many sacrifices we know that they make in that work, up to and including at times their own lives.

That is why our federal government has largely throughout history been committed to looking after those individuals that do choose to serve, to make sure that we provide all of the appropriate supports and services and things that are needed for them and their families and, indeed, as we have learned more about the impacts of that type of service and work, to begin to improve the services we provide afterwards to help them deal with some of the other issues, thinking in particular about mental health, PTSD, and some of these other areas, where, admittedly, many governments of many political stripes have failed members in the past but have begun to learn, and we have begun to change and evolve.

On this particular issue I am one hundred per cent behind this motion that has been brought forward, calling on the federal government to reverse and commit to never again implementing this decision because of the effects that this could have on our military members. I appreciate the Premier's words in noting the challenges that members already face in moving between our different provincial health care systems, recognizing we have a complexity of services across Canada and ways that we interact as jurisdictions. We need to at all times, as the Premier has noted, on issues like free trade and others, indeed, also in health care, look for ways that we can reduce barriers, not create further ones for Canadians that are moving from province to province and, indeed, recognizing for our military members, as the Premier noted, who do not themselves get to choose where they live but are instead told and ordered to go to a particular place.

It is incredibly important that we maintain from the federal government the appropriate level of funding and do not try to download onto other jurisdictions the costs that are involved of looking after our military members and ensuring that they receive the health care that they deserve and that they earned through their service, for both themselves and their families.

**10:20**

Now, the Premier was reflecting a bit on how this decision might have come about. I can't say. Obviously, I was not there in that room. I was not part of that department. The Premier himself, having served in the role, has some idea of how these processes work, and indeed having been part of a government that pursued some issues of austerity and looking for ways that money could be saved, he is well familiar, I suppose, with how these sorts of things move through the system and these decisions are made. I appreciate

that in his testimony he was thoughtful and reflective in that role to try to ensure that when cuts were made, they would not be made in such a way that they would affect those who we are most committed to supporting, those being our military members.

But I think it is an important lesson for us to consider, indeed, as we as a province are looking at making some real changes in how we apportion our spending and as we have a government that is strongly committed towards cutting the budget and to saving dollars, that we give due consideration, that we do not take steps like this federal government has done that are going to impact vulnerable populations and people to whom we owe a debt as a government and as a society; all those, in fact, that we want to support and assist.

When we simply make a resolution that cuts must be made without due care and attention, I think this is the sort of result we may get. The Premier used terms like "tone-deaf," and I think that's entirely appropriate. It is tone-deaf, but sometimes I think within the upper echelons of power or perhaps within bureaucracies or other areas where we are considering these issues, we do not always reflect on the effect it may have on the ground. And, indeed, we've seen that previously with federal governments in Canada of all political stripes. We saw it under the government of Prime Minister Harper, when there were changes that were made to kill the lifetime pensions for veterans – again, looking to save money – when there was the closing of at least nine veterans' offices across Canada, which, again, had effects on services for members and was definitely protested by many members of the military, or when we found even some of the jobs that were cut or other things that were affected. Indeed, there was a court case at one point, where the court was required to order the government to pay \$887 million to veterans for dollars that had been clawed back from 4,000 disabled veterans and their families across Canada.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I don't think this is something that's coming from any particular political stripe. I recognize that members have been concerned about partisanship, and since my arrival in the House this morning, I have certainly heard that on both sides of this aisle. But to be clear, Madam Speaker, this is not an issue of a particular government. This is an issue that happens when governments fail to consider how their actions are going to roll out when they are perhaps a bit too driven by a particular purpose or, one might say, ideology. That does concern me as we come into this period now as a province of increasing austerity.

Again, setting aside the reasons for why this government may feel that's the road they need to pursue and certainly the mandate which they have to pursue it, what I would say is that as we stand here today in support of our veterans and as we recognize that we are all united in calling on the federal government to reverse this decision, we think very carefully about the decisions we are about to make as elected members on behalf of our constituents, on behalf of all the people of Alberta, that we are not downloading costs onto other jurisdictions, say, our municipal governments, as we look at making changes to RCMP and police funding, or as we may look at changes to how we fund FCSS or how we may choose to fund other parts, indeed, that the decisions we make on how we fund our health care system do not place anyone in jeopardy in terms of their ability to access care. We all recognize governments are required to provide and should provide for all their members. As we all here this morning to agree, the federal government needs to step up and do appropriately and fund appropriately for our military veterans. I think it's important that we make sure that as we stand and support this motion today, we do not ourselves then turn and forget the lesson that has been so amply demonstrated.

I appreciate that the minister brought this forward. I appreciate that the minister is raising this. I think it's important for us to consider, as indeed we are considering the cost of our health care system here in Alberta. I think it is reasonable that we would stand up and resist an attempt to place further costs on our system, and I would hope that we would be careful in considering that we do not do the same to others.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I recognize the great debt that we owe to those that serve in our military service and provide that protection. Indeed, I recognize many that serve in many different areas of the government or the public service and provide help and benefit in so many ways, but I recognize that when we look at our veterans, when we look at our military and those who serve there, that is a particular line of service that is worthy of an additional level of respect for their willingness, indeed, to sacrifice, if required, their lives but also to make great sacrifices in their own lives and those of their families as they move to different parts of the country, as they experience chaos and disruption, as they spend that time in service overseas away from their families.

It is incumbent on us to ensure that we hold our government to account, that we provide the best of services, appropriately funded, to ensure that those members will never find themselves wanting, that when they turn for help, it is available for them and their families so that they may continue to do the incredibly important and good work that they do and that others may be inspired to follow in their footsteps.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the motion as amended? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The selfless and brave individuals who compose our Armed Forces deserve more than lip service from the government that is sworn to honour and care for them. They deserve more than platitudes, and as important as saying thank you to our service members may be, they deserve more than that; they deserve a government that will fight for them.

I will remind this House of a critical failure that took place on February 8 of last year, not too far from this very room. A veteran who had been wounded by an improvised explosive device while on deployment in Afghanistan wanted to know why the federal government continues to fight veterans groups in court. You would think that the response he received would honour his service and his sacrifice – after all, he did lose one of his legs because of the attack he suffered while deployed – but instead he was told that the federal government would continue to fight veterans groups in court because, and I quote, they're asking for more than the federal government is able to give right now. The gross disrespect present in a response like that, Madam Speaker, is frankly nothing but shameful.

This pattern of established behaviour is why I'm not surprised to hear that the federal government is letting our veterans and our active service members down once again. I'm not surprised. I'm standing in this House today to support this motion because we need to send a clear message of support to our veterans and our active service members, that this side of the House – and it sounds like the other side of the House as well – refuses to fail them. How are we supposed to attract the best and the brightest to our Armed Forces when the federal government continues to cut cheques for them that are cancelled before they're even cashed? How are we supposed to reassure the spouses, children, and friends of military members that their loved one will be taken care of in the event of a damaging

crisis if the federal government is pulling the rug out from underneath our active service members through their heartless decision-making.

I've heard specifically from spouses and family members about how they've been disregarded in this matter. The spouse of a full-time service member has told me on numerous occasions about the dangers of her husband's job. She says that there's a constant crushing thought in the back of her mind and in the minds of many family members that when her spouse leaves for another exercise or deployment or emergency response assignment, she may never see him again, or if he does come home, he'll need a calibre of physical or mental care that she isn't ready or able to provide on her own.

I can't relate to this. This isn't an experience that is common to me or my relationships with my loved ones. I wake up and I worry about fender-benders, black ice, and tripping up stairs; I don't have to worry about lost limbs, electronic warfare, biochemical weapons, or bullets when my loved ones go off to work.

**10:30**

As a member of this Assembly I do know what it's like to spend gross amounts of time away from my family; however, I don't know what it's like to go to work one morning expecting to see your husband at the end of the day only to have him be deployed last minute to combat a natural disaster with no notice and be gone for weeks with no indication of when or if he's coming home.

I also don't know what it's like to have to have conversations about what happens when a loved one is deployed or what could happen if they are injured while on deployment or on a training exercise, but what I do know is the way that our federal government has been treating our service members is wrong. It doesn't take a uniform or a family member enlisted to call out indecency or disrespect when you see it.

Madam Speaker, I for one vehemently disagree that veterans are asking for more than their government is able to give; they're just asking for the basics. They're asking to be remembered, respected, and considered. They're asking for the most basic level of human compassion that we can give them as governments. This basic dignity of a government that will take care of them when they've given everything they can to keep our country safe shouldn't be an ask; it should be a baseline attitude we approach policy-making from.

The job that our Armed Forces do is thankless, exhausting, and frequently dangerous. When members of our Armed Forces sign their contracts, they're committing themselves to our country. Their spouses, children, family, and friends come second to their service and commitment to their country, to Canada. Their very selves and those who they love the most come second to their commitment to our nation.

I love this country, but I know that so many of the reasons that make me love it are built on the sacrifices of hundreds and thousands of Canadian Armed Forces members that came before me. Why are we honouring them with a government that can't be bothered to commit to them despite their thankless and selfless commitment to us?

Before I close, I do want to honour one specific Armed Forces member, who I believe deserves an extra special thank you today. This is a wonderful lady named Maryanne McGrath. Maryanne is a second lieutenant and works as a reservist administering the Royal Canadian Air Cadets program to our rural youth. She commits several days a week to work with and empower our next generation. Her service for our country doesn't end there, Madam Speaker. Maryanne also serves the provincial government in her role as my legislative co-ordinator. Maryanne spends every day of her life



tirelessly serving the people of our province and our country with a smile, and I consider myself so honoured to know her and have her in my life.

Madam Speaker, every Armed Forces member I have ever met has no hesitation when it comes to laying themselves on the line for the sake of this country and its people. The very least we can do is ensure this country will do the same for them when they need us.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the motion as amended? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise, and I'm going to say that it's my duty, I think, to speak to this motion today as amended. You might find it a little bit odd that I say "duty." It's not just because I represent a northeast Edmonton riding that is home to many of our military families, but mostly it's because of my personal connection and my support for the military.

Both of my parents served in the air force, but, very luckily, not in a theatre of war. I think about that. You know, they were lucky. They were both honourably discharged and were able to go on with their lives. Not only did they serve in the military, Madam Speaker, so did my grandfather. He served in both world wars: one of the major landings during World War I and as a prison guard for prisoners of war in World War II. Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to formally meet my grandfather. During World War I he was a casualty of the mustard gas poisoning, which gave him significant health challenges going forward, and it was because of those health challenges that, while my mother was pregnant with me, he unfortunately passed away due to some of those things.

So when I look at this motion today, I feel a bit of a personal connection around this and how important it is, and I can't help but think about why it is we're here today bringing this motion forward. I'd like to call it this, Madam Speaker: we're here having to bring this motion because somebody did, what I like to refer to as bottom-line decision-making, where we're looking at the bottom line and we're making decisions based solely on that, and that usually leads to outcomes that are not desirable.

I've heard over and over again around our military families who have served in theatres of war, where the supports for them are not there. Of course, during the debate I've also heard, again, as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre said, some political exchange from both sides. I think we might want to consider the overarching thing about this, and it is that when we ask our women and men to go into harm's way, into a theatre of war, it is because of a political decision that was made by a handful of people just like us in a room just like this. It is a bit of a political spin on this, and we need to remember that.

When we do make those political decisions to send our military personnel into harm's way, we should be more than ready to have their backs when they need it. We're here with this motion because that has failed to happen, and it has failed to happen over a very significant period of time, Madam Speaker. We have not had the backs of our military personnel. I think about: would I have had the chance to meet my grandfather had the government of the day had my grandfather's back in terms of providing proper levels of health care, publicly delivered, no questions, show up and get the treatment you need? But a group of individuals made a political decision, a bottom-line decision to not do that.

I must say that I was certainly encouraged by the Minister of Seniors and Housing, that should the federal government fail to step

up, you're ready to do that. I'm very, very grateful that you're willing to do that, as it should be, just make the decision, not even debate about it. Thank you for doing that. I really appreciate that.

When I think about some of the things that have been offered, again, I'm hoping to influence our ability to get away from bottom-line decision-making. My time in labour has seen many different union contracts being negotiated. One of the things that I've always seen during those times is where a company will say: "Well, we'll give you a lump-sum payment. That will make up for everything." No. It doesn't.

We've seen that kind of disrespect being given to our military families where a lump-sum payment – if you would indulge me here. There was a quote from Pat Stogran, who was the veteran ombudsperson, who was quoted saying: deputy ministers make more on average in one year than a person who lost two legs in Afghanistan can be expected to be paid out for the rest of their lives. We asked somebody to go and suffer that kind of an injury. It is insulting to offer a lump-sum payment. We should be there to provide for their medical needs, no questions asked, whatever it takes. I have to say I've seen some decisions made by this current government around bottom-line decision-making. We're here today because that was made.

10:40

I know that veterans are very strongly opposed to this. My hope is that this motion as amended, brought forward, will hopefully convince whatever federal government, whether it's the current government, whether it was the past government. They both failed to get away from this sort of bottom-line decision-making and provide our veterans with what we need to help ensure that they have a quality of life that is equal or better than the sacrifice we made as a political decision in a room like this.

Some interesting statistics that I've seen and that the OAG report found, that returning soldiers with mental health issues have increased sixfold between 2002 and 2014. One statistic that jumped from the report was a 24 per cent refusal rate for veterans applying for disability benefits. You have got to be kidding me. I've even heard stories – and maybe some of you have from your own military veterans in your ridings – where an individual on a regular ongoing basis has to prove their leg is still missing from when it was blown off in Afghanistan. We need to do better as political decision-makers.

What did that mean? That meant that 3,684 soldiers who believed they needed benefits to deal with things like mental health issues were refused on first application. Madam Speaker, I don't know about you. I've had disturbing dreams just from going to see a horror flick, let alone what our women and men may have seen in a theatre of war. And why we can't provide for their needs when they come back: it shouldn't even be a question.

After appeals, 2,841 veterans have been cast adrift, which means that they are no longer tracked by Veterans Affairs, and nobody knows whether they are endangering themselves or maybe even somebody else. Political decision-making based on bottom lines does not work for our veterans. From a very personal standpoint I very strongly agree with this motion as amended. I am not dithering or half-heartedly supporting as may have been suggested by one member. I would hope that other members will support this, but, more importantly, as we move forward in this 30th Legislature, that we start thinking more than just about the bottom line, because it affects people. It affects their families. When it comes to our veterans, we shouldn't even be having this discussion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to also thank the Member for Edmonton-Decore for his remarks, particularly outlining his connection, his family connection, to the military. Like him, I too share a family connection to the military. I'd just like to kind of respond to that, saying that I am the grandson of Jack Harker and Paul Schow. Both men served in World War II, something that I am very proud of and I am very passionate to speak about because without these gentlemen, without the service that they provided and gave to this country, we may not have the opportunity to stand in this Chamber today and even have this conversation.

But when I think about the military and when I think about those who serve our country, I often think about my grandparents and what they were asked to do at such a young age. At 18 years old my grandfather, Jack Harker, went off to war to become a bomber pilot. He flew a Halifax bomber in the Second World War. At 18, when I was lacing up basketball shoes, he was lacing up combat boots. When I was putting on a jersey, he was putting on a thick leather insulated coat to fly this bomber on bomber missions. When I was doing team huddles in basketball, he was doing a flight precheck with men who may not return to their families. That's the kind of service that I think about, and I wonder if youth today growing up understand that. While many of them are playing video games, my grandparents were not playing. They were at war.

Sometimes I think the impact and the gravity of the service of our military is lost on some people. I hope that isn't the case, but I find that that might be true. I've even heard some people go as far as saying that people who join the military do it by choice, so it's no different than any other job. That could not be further from the truth. Name me one other job that you go to every day that you may not return home from, with the exception of our first responders. Yes, it is a choice to join the military, but that choice takes significantly more deliberation than, say: do I take this job at this ad agency or this ad agency? What is at stake? For that, for that sacrifice, I'm so grateful to gentlemen like Brock Blaszczyk, who made that decision to go and fight for our country.

The question I've heard asked today is: if we agree on this motion, then why are we even having the discussion? In my opinion, Madam Speaker, the answer is simple: because we won't stand idly by and let the federal government do something as cowardly as cutting funding for our military veterans. It is patently unreasonable that this Prime Minister would have the audacity to pay out \$10.5 million to a convicted terrorist and turn around and tell our military veterans that they're asking too much. It's disgraceful. It's despicable. I'm surprised the Prime Minister had the audacity to say that to Mr. Blaszczyk's face, and then he stands behind it.

Madam Speaker, I don't want to take too long on these remarks, but I needed it to be on the record, to be part of this conversation, that I support this motion wholeheartedly for a number of reasons, for Jack Harker, for Paul Schow, for Brock Blaszczyk, and for every other member of the military who has served and is serving now, to show respect for them and for the things that they do so that we can be here in this Chamber and speak freely on behalf of our constituents.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion as amended?

**Mr. Nielsen:** No. Do I get to respond?

**The Deputy Speaker:** You have 20 seconds. Did you want to speak, hon. member?

**Mr. Nielsen:** Is there time?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yeah.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thanks. I want to thank you for your comments, especially the family connection that you share. Interesting perspective, considering, you know, that we both like to play the game of basketball and whatnot, so I definitely connected with that. You know what? I would even take the one comment you said about choosing to serve: it's a calling.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We'll get you next time.

Any members wishing to speak to the motion as amended? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. We've heard some really good debate on this issue. We all have family connections, and I'd like to share a few of mine as well. There is a lineage that goes back, especially with Albertans in this province doing what's right and standing up in their times of need. My great-grandpa Kemp was actually British Expeditionary Force, so he was out of Pincher Creek. He served in both wars. Both of my grandfathers – Grandpa Ophus, Grandpa Getson – served. I have a lot of friends and family that have served.

As one colleague put it, the pipeline industry is the French foreign legion of construction, so with that, we get tons of other folks that come in. We're talking about transferable skill sets. Construction sites: they're wonderful for allowing these folks to utilize their team efforts, their planning skill sets, the ability to motivate, the ability to execute. You'll see that showing up in spades when anyone wants to give those folks a chance.

**10:50**

I've had, you know, the honour of working with a gentleman by the name of J.F. Trembley, who was the former base commander out of Calgary. He ran all of our camp side of it. A friend of mine, Glen Brooks, is former Australian airborne. A gentleman that volunteered during my campaign, former Sergeant Major Tom Cox, had served well and gone on to be a director at ATCO. My father-in-law, who's a retired physician, was a captain in the Canadian military for the airborne group. Greg McIsaac, another gentleman that came back and had served in taking care of all the logistics in Afghanistan, had worked with us as well. Ben Klick, master sniper and a pathfinder, is a gentleman that I do training with for long range. If we're to be proud of our sniper group, they are the ones with the most confirmed kills in the theatres in our current realm. The training and the commitment that these folks put in are second to none. I've also trained with him and current active-duty snipers in that group, going through some different weapons training in those groups. Bruce Pickford: I'm going to mention his sons, Ferron and Steven. I'm not going to mention them specifically because they're both under deployment right now.

When we're speaking about this and we're talking about cutting health care to these kinds of folks, it sits with me pretty hard on a personal note as it is. I'm glad to hear that it resonates with all members in this Chamber.

Obviously, I'm in support of this motion, but actually I'm appalled that we're even having this conversation in the first place. You know, some people say that Justin Trudeau has done much while in office. Well, I disagree. He's done quite a bit in terms of scandals, damage to our national identity, damage to our energy industry, lots of apologizing, lots of spending, and now we see that he's been doing lots of cuts, too, to health care nonetheless, and not just to health care for anyone, Madam Speaker, but to the servicemen and -women that we've been talking about.

How is it that our federal government can treat our military men and women with such disrespect? The Armed Forces, as we've heard, put their lives on the line all the time, but the Liberal government can't even be bothered to put the funds required to take care of them after they've come back and done their service and sacrificed so much for us. I find the Prime Minister's assertions that the federal Conservatives will make cuts, like, to health care completely ridiculous and hypocritical when he himself has just cut all these health care benefits for our veterans. It's complete nonsense.

I suppose this is another thing he has to do to account for his spending mismanagement over the last four years. I already knew higher taxes were his plan, but honestly I didn't even think he'd stoop this low. I understand that the Prime Minister has lots of money of his own. Obviously, he has this to deal with and to take care of the bills. He has that nicely padded trust fund, that would be more than enough to get him the health care he could ever need. He could probably even go to the States and order a suite and have all the health care he wanted. But many of our service veterans are definitely not as privileged as he is. I think he's due for a reality check, but unfortunately it's not in my power to grant that. That lies with the voters here in a couple of weeks.

For larger provinces like Ontario, the hospitals would be on the hook for at least \$10 million. Here in Alberta we're on the hook for at least \$2 million, and I'm glad to hear that it was said today that we will cover those costs and that these veterans won't be left out in the cold because of what the federal government has done. With that, it's almost a cut to all of us because taxpayers in Alberta are having to pick it up now as well. Again, we will and I know the folks in my constituency will back that as well for the service that these folks do.

Even more disgraceful, Madam Speaker, is that this was done quietly during the election period. Apparently, he doesn't want Canadians to know what he's been up to. And his history shows us that after most if not all of the Prime Minister's scandals come to light, he ends up going on vacation. I've got a suggestion for him. Maybe he should consider taking a permanent vacation from the Prime Minister's office and give us all a break from his circus.

This cut was done without warning or without consultation with the provinces. Some of these service coverages have been cut as much as 96 per cent. In addition, the military says that they will no longer pay for the MRI and the CT scans for our military members. This has led to one hospital in Ontario with little choice but to deny military members MRIs since they have no coverage and they need to maintain revenue to maintain operations. Now, the defence minister writes to the Prime Minister and his aides saying that these fee schedules were in line with what provinces pay for everyone else. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that the provinces pay under health care plans for the MRI and CT scans. Who's going to cover our military members now? Those scans can cost anywhere from \$700 to \$800 each. Maybe the Prime Minister can take personal responsibility and tap a little bit out of his trust fund to help out. But that isn't going to be doable because it seems like he's only worried about himself.

The department of defence has spent years saying that its people are priority number one. With these cuts, apparently not. Our men and women in uniform will tell you that it is an honour to serve their country. It should be our honour to take care of them when they need it, and I'm not seeing the respect that is necessary for these military members, who have given so much to all of us. I'm asking for proper health care benefits, which is more than the Prime Minister has given our service members in the Armed Forces. Perhaps Canadians should stand up to the Prime Minister and tell

him that that vote that they have is too much to give. These men and women deserve more.

I'm glad to hear that we're all in agreement. I strongly support this motion, and we should send that clear message down east.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. government whip.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for his comments. You know, as has already been stated several times in this House, this is a very important issue. It's a very important motion. I would myself, I think, be remiss in not talking about my family's history as long as others have done in this House. I think back to my father-in-law, actually, who was in the air force for 20 years. He was injured. He actually had to be discharged from the military due to a hernia incident that he received. He was, sadly, no longer able to serve. He was deployed to certain areas around the world through the Canadian Forces. He's a very proud veteran – a very proud veteran – who was medically discharged.

It's very concerning for me when I hear him talk, whether it be recently or just over the years, of at least the feeling that many of our veterans have regarding the way their country has treated them. Something that this Prime Minister has done recently just really sticks a knife into the way he feels about many of the – well, certainly, this current government. You know, I will say this. He is a proud Canadian. He will defend this country and its values and principles like no other. I'm proud of the service that he has done. Certainly, a person like him, along with others and the gentleman that was in our gallery, who has served this country and been injured in the line of duty – certainly, my father-in-law wasn't injured in the line of duty, but his injury was a result of his job, that he was doing while in the military.

These are the types of people that need to be taken care of. These are the types of people that have sacrificed so much. You know, we always talk about our first responders, we always talk about our military folks, but the fact is that over the years people have talked a lot but not necessarily followed through with some of the words that have come out of their mouths.

I want to thank that member for the words that he has said. I want to thank everybody in this Chamber for the kind words that have been said. I think that we all need to really focus on the servicemen and -women who literally put their lives on the line each day – again, I think it was previously mentioned by one of my colleagues – which allows us to have this voice in this Chamber to represent the constituents whom we have been very honoured to represent. I want to, you know, take this moment to stand here and say, sir, that I will be supporting this motion wholeheartedly, and I want to personally thank all the men and women who have served this country, who have done what a lot of people – we'll just say this. It's a choice that they have made, a sacrifice that they have made, and I thank them wholeheartedly.

You know, I could go on and on about other members of my family as well, but my father-in-law, who certainly is currently alive and does have a medical condition as a result of his job while working in the military: it's people like him that we really need to think about and make sure that they have the proper access to medical care and that we're treating them with the respect and dignity that these people certainly deserve. Thank you, Member, for your comments.

I yield the floor. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

11:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** There's about 18 seconds under 29(2)(a).

Seeing no one, any speakers to the motion as amended? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I proudly rise today to acknowledge the brave Canadians who stand up and risk their lives every single day to keep our country and our province strong and free. I am actually saddened to the core with the disrespect that the current federal government has for the members of our Armed Forces. It's sad to see that kind of an approach to those that serve and those that protect us.

It's not only about looking after our own in the time of need. It's the injured and those that have sacrificed not only themselves but their entire families both physically and mentally and not just in the past but in the future as their families will suffer the impacts of PTSD and other things such as physical injuries, mental health issues, and those unfortunate circumstances and pressures that face members of our Armed Forces. The Liberal government has a unique way of saying thank you – don't they? – to those who risk their lives for our country each and every day.

Madam Speaker, I often say to people at the doors – and you sometimes knock on the doors and somebody says: well, I'm not really into politics. It might be a little bit aggressive of me, but I remind those same people that say they're not really into politics that we had generations before us that fought for our democracy, fought for our freedom and did it selflessly. They were not really into war. They stood up for this country. They did the right thing. They did their duty to this country. We have now a generation of Canadians who take that same sacrifice, that same sense of honour and respect and duty and serve this country so that we can enjoy the democracy and the freedom that we have in this Legislature, in this province, in this country, which, we have to remind ourselves, are unique in the world and something that should be honoured and respected. It is a sacrifice for us, to maintain that in this great country.

Madam Speaker, that unique way that the federal government has actually thanked those hard workers and those dedicated people is to really kick the Armed Forces when they're down. Kicking them when they're down and injured and suffering, again, those physical and mental injuries that they may have, is a disgrace. For the leader of the federal government, the Prime Minister, to say that our Armed Forces are asking for more than the federal government can afford is beyond a disgrace. We've heard that, and that's been reported widely across this country in the past.

This is just another severe attack on those that have served. For the Liberal government to reduce the rates at which it reimburses the cost of providing health care services is completely unacceptable and should be completely unacceptable to all members of this Legislature. I loudly and proudly endorse our government's motion to denounce this decision by the federal government. It is morally wrong, and this motion should be supported by all in this Legislature.

Quite frankly, it's a disgrace to conduct this type of policy decision on behalf of an entire country on the global stage. It's a disgrace for us to have people outside of Canada, let alone inside Canada, see that this is how we treat our Armed Forces. It really shows that that government is not prepared to take care of our own on that global stage. It speaks to the respect that we try and generate for this country. We have from generations not only incredible sacrifice but incredible performance made in two world wars and after that across the world and around this globe, not only in defending that freedom and democracy but also in ensuring peace.

I want it to be heard loud and clear that this United Conservative caucus, our government, and certainly my peers in the Legislature strongly support our Armed Forces. We need to send that signal from this House that we are not only here to work with them but that we are here to defend them in their times of need. We will be their voice and will stand up to this federal government on this decision. We will make that message clear and unequivocal as we deliver it from this House, from Albertans, to this federal government.

Madam Speaker, to me, we need to embrace this. We need to talk about this issue, not conflate it with other issues, as we've heard from the other side of the House here, not conflate it and use it as an opportunity for partisan rhetoric. We need to take this as an opportunity to speak loudly, proudly, and with strong words and strong actions on this irresponsible approach by the federal government.

Madam Speaker, time and time again Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government have wronged hard-working Canadians, and on many occasions, frankly, I've been embarrassed by the loss of reputation that this country has faced over the past four years, fancy wardrobes aside. To the best of my memory, the current federal government gave 10 and a half million dollars on behalf of that government to a known convicted terrorist, and now we see brilliancy, of course, in deciding to take away funding from Canada's very own who are defending this country from that terrorism. That is shameful.

Under the Canada Health Act and provincial health acts across this country, military members are ineligible for various forms of public health care coverage, and that is why the federal compensation is so important to these members, Madam Speaker, so that we can continue in this province to honour and respect and deliver the health care that they so richly deserve.

Time and time again Justin Trudeau has made questionable decisions. The federal government is constitutionally responsible for providing medical care to the members of our military and those retired members of our military, and our Prime Minister has continued to prove that he is dismissive and unbound by the Constitution and has no moral authority when making such decisions that affect so many respected and honoured citizens of our country, denying military members the health care that they deserve and they need not just to survive but to thrive in our communities. I never thought that a federal leader could disrespect those front-line defenders of our democracy and our great country in the way that he has done to date.

Alberta is committed to being here for our Armed Forces. We heard that from our Minister of Health, and I'm proud to stand with him in those commitments. Regardless of what the outcome is of this reckless decision from the federal government, we will stand strong and free in Alberta in providing Alberta's military members with the health care that they have earned and which they so richly deserve. We shall stand strong and united against Justin Trudeau – I hope that we can do this in this House unanimously – and his misguided policies and stand up for our Armed Forces as they stand up for us.

Again, as the Minister of Health stated just yesterday on the front steps of this very Legislature: the Alberta government will not withhold services from military personnel, end quote. He also stated that the reality is that this is a unilateral cut in health care funding from Trudeau's government to the provinces, but, most of all, it's disrespectful towards the forces. End of quote.

Madam Speaker, again, those words that I've shared on many doorsteps have awakened some people to their responsibility, not just their right but, I think, their responsibility, to honour the democracy which has been hard fought for and hard earned and

hard won in this country by generation after generation after generation. Many members of this House know people that have served, have family members that have served, and I would guess that we would find a list of those that have been lost just by talking to the 87 members of this Chamber. It touches all of our lives every time we hear of a loss. We go to Remembrance Day, we see the cenotaphs, and we see the names.

**11:10**

At my high school, Western Canada high school – and we didn't do this when I was there – what they have done is paired students with members of the Armed Forces that were lost. They have a project there; it's called the wall of fame. What they do is that they pair a student with someone who was lost, and it could be from World War I or World War II. They track down family members, and they get photos. They are responsible for telling the story of that individual, that former student of Western Canada high school who did not come back from the war. In doing so, they honour them, those young people, the youth 18 and over, some of them younger than that, who went and fought for the freedom that we so richly enjoy in this province, that we enjoy in this House, that everyone who has the opportunity to vote, to get involved with the politics that we know about, has an opportunity to honour by doing so. Again, I challenge those people: when you say that you're not into politics, think about those that fought for us that were not really into war.

Madam Speaker, I will be supporting this motion wholeheartedly and with great passion, and I encourage everyone in this House to follow suit. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the motion as amended? The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you know, the Thanksgiving season approaches, and amidst all the conversation happening in light of the upcoming federal election, I'm reminded of how lucky I am, how lucky we all are to be Canadian, to live in a country that is free from war and political violence, a country where we can worship as we want, where we can engage in the free exchange of ideas and voice our opinions freely, like we do here in this Assembly.

We can do all of these things, Madam Speaker, because those rights and freedoms have been fought for and continue to be defended by the brave men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces. These courageous heroes made tremendous sacrifices so that you and I could enjoy these freedoms. If you walk out into the rotunda in the Legislature, you'll see on the wall the names of Albertans who fought in World Wars I and II, and that's because we recognize that our democracy is able to exist today because of the sacrifices that our men and women in uniform have made and continue to make to protect our freedoms. We are eternally indebted to them as Canadians. That's why, Madam Speaker, my colleagues and I were shocked and, quite frankly, sickened to see on Tuesday that the federal government under Justin Trudeau's watch had made major changes to how it plans our veterans' health care.

Madam Speaker, the Canada Health Act as well as the provincial Health Act state that members of the Armed Forces are ineligible for health coverage under provincial plans. Instead, these expenses are supposed to be paid for by the federal government. However, the federal government has dramatically scaled back the amount that it is spending on veterans' health care.

The press secretary to the Minister of Health stated that the ministry received new rates for payment by the Department of

National Defence for hospital services provided to eligible Canadian Armed Forces members. What the federal government is saying, what Justin Trudeau is saying, is that our veterans are not a priority for him, that their health is not a priority for him. Imagine, Madam Speaker, being one of the 40,000 CAF members to have served in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014 or one of the more than 4,000 CAF members who served overseas during the Gulf war or one of the dozens of combat, training, or peacekeeping missions Canadian Armed Forces have engaged in over the years. Imagine being one of the roughly 61,000 living veterans who served in World War II. Imagine having sacrificed so much, having been willing to die for your country only for your government to turn its back on you. It would be an utter slap in the face.

Madam Speaker, as of 2018 there are an estimated 649,300 veterans in Canada: 48,300 war service veterans and 601,000 Canadian Armed Forces veterans. Covering the health care costs of these veterans is not a big ask when compared to what these veterans have done for Canada. When one has served our Armed Forces, it can be expected that they might need extra care when it comes to their health and well-being. There may be physical ailments that can be expected due to the physically demanding nature of being a member of the CAF. There may be an added need for mental health supports given the high prevalence of depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and other mental health concerns among veterans, particularly those who have served in conflict zones. In fact, in 2018 it was reported that over 6,700 military members who served in Afghanistan received benefits for mental health conditions, with PTSD being the top mental health concern.

The federal government should also be there to support our veterans as they age and potentially require additional care. Our veterans deserve to have the support that they need to enjoy a high quality of life. Our veterans never abandoned Canada, even in the most trying times, so why in the world does Justin Trudeau think it's okay to abandon them? Madam Speaker, for Justin Trudeau and his government to cut funding in this way is appalling.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak on the motion as amended? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowsell:** Thank you for giving me an opportunity to stand in front of the House today, Madam Speaker. I'm appalled and disappointed by the actions the federal government has taken against our veterans. They are heroes of this country and deserve to be treated that way, not tossed to the side and left on the street. The steps that the Trudeau government has taken in regard to this matter are appalling and hypocritical. Praising their heroism and bravery while simultaneously stabbing them in the back is beyond disgusting. They deserve a government that will fight for them and recognize their incredible contributions to our country, a government that has their backs like they have had ours, a government that will not leave them alone or any one of them behind, just as they would while on the front lines.

Under the Canada Health Act members of the military are not covered by provincial public health plans but are instead covered by the federal government. The government is constitutionally responsible for providing care to all members. Service members that need medical care go through a similar process as out-of-province patients. The military will reimburse the hospital for all services provided. However, these fees can be as much as three times more than the rates that are allowed to be charged by most

provincial plans. When put in tandem with the massive cuts to funding, this puts hospitals on the hook for millions of dollars.

In layman's terms, these changes essentially mean that the military will be covering less of the fees physicians charge, leaving the hospital to cover the rest. These changes set a dangerous precedent for our veterans and will change the way hospitals view them. For example, Pembroke regional hospital projects a shortfall of \$3.4 million, and Kingston health services centre estimates a loss of \$2.3 million, all due to funding cuts. At least one hospital completely stopped accepting military patients for selected services. The hit for Ontario alone is estimated to be at \$10 million. These drastic cuts were done without consultation of our province and will cost Alberta about \$2 million in lost revenue to Alberta Health Services as well as income loss for physicians in our province.

Just because the federal Liberals choose to disrespect our veterans does not mean our party will do the same. Our UCP government has stated that we will not withhold services from any military personnel and that these changes are essentially just a unilateral cut in health care funding to the provinces and are disrespectful to the forces. The department of defence is just as two-faced as Trudeau himself. For years they have gone about flaunting and touting how their people are its priority while playing Judas. Apparently, the Liberal government has the money to give convicted terrorist Omar Khadr a \$10 million payout but doesn't have the money to compensate our brave men and women who fought to serve and protect our country.

We need to stand together as a province and as elected officials and denounce the atrocious, despicable actions of our federal government. An immediate reversal of this policy should be implemented. Our service members deserve the utmost respect, and the least the federal government can do is recognize their contribution to our country and give them the treatment they deserve.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**11:20**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the motion as amended? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, it's with a certain degree of sadness and anger that I rise in the Chamber today to discuss the issue of the Trudeau Liberals cutting health care for our military veterans. As you know, a big component of my constituency is 4 Wing Cold Lake, which is home to one of the largest military bases in Canada. Frankly, I find it very disappointing, and the federal Liberals ought to be ashamed of themselves. Cutting our veterans' health care funding while Trudeau and his elite allies posture about caring for all Canadians is beyond the pale.

Under the Canada Health Act members of our Armed Forces are not normally able to access public health coverage under provincial plans. What happens instead is that the federal government is constitutionally responsible for providing comparable medical care to all members of the Armed Forces. Then the military reimburses the hospitals the cost of providing those services.

The Trudeau government has cut the amount the military can pay out to hospitals under this system, therefore rendering hospitals on the hook for caring for military members and waiting for the payout. The end result of this is large portions of Armed Forces members without health care as the hospitals are unable to pay for care, and

the Canada Health Act prevents them from getting care as a civilian would.

Madam Speaker, our veterans and currently active military servicemen and -women deserve so much more than this, and so do their families. You know, I hear stories from folks about the stress that is put on kids when mom or dad are deployed overseas, with always that fear of them not coming home. We also have to think about the families of those servicepeople. These brave men and women fight for our lives and our freedom by sacrificing their lives willingly and often without a second thought. That's because they love our country, and they want to see it protected. They want to see it flourish for them, us, and their families. What do these Armed Forces members get for their service and sacrifice? They get a slap in the face once again from the Prime Minister as he blows off our veterans and active military personnel.

We have to recognize Mr. Brock Blaszczyk, a war veteran who was in the Chamber here earlier this morning, who lost his leg in an explosion in Afghanistan as part of his duty. Mr. Trudeau in a town hall meeting in 2018 was asked by Brock why the government was not providing funding to help veterans. Brock said: I was prepared to be killed in action; what I wasn't prepared for, Mr. Prime Minister, was Canada turning its back on me when I got home. Trudeau's response to this was: the veterans are asking for more than we're willing to give. Amazing. The Prime Minister said that our Armed Forces veterans were asking too much but was all too willing to give convicted terrorist Omar Khadr, a convicted terrorist, \$10.5 million.

Is it any surprise, then, that this government is once again sloughing off our military members? Not really, unfortunately. Trudeau and his Liberals have led a legacy of cutting funding and support to veterans and Armed Forces groups. This is simply another logical step along that path, Madam Speaker.

I know how important our military is. As I mentioned, 4 Wing Cold Lake is one of the 14 wings of the Canadian Armed Forces and is a very big component of the Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul constituency. According to the Royal Canadian Air Force, Cold Lake is the busiest fighter base in Canada. It hosts a multitude of training programs such as being home for the Canadian fighter pilot training, but 4 Wing Cold Lake also attracts top gun crews from all over the world for the annual aerial combat Exercise Maple Flag. We also welcome pilots from all over the world to come and train because we have some of the most accessible airspace in the world for new pilots to get that training that they would never be able to get in their home countries.

In addition to this, Cold Lake has one of the largest aerial weapons test facilities in all of Canada. These air force members have been nothing but a boon since 1954 to the community of Cold Lake, and to think that any of them may not be able to access health care is completely unacceptable, in my eyes. I think I speak for everyone on my side of the House when I say that it is a despicable act and that our veterans deserve the highest level of care available to them. We must not compromise on the quality of service we provide to our military members and veterans because they do not compromise on their willingness to serve and sacrifice for us.

Once again, Madam Speaker, I want to unequivocally denounce these health spending cuts imposed by Justin Trudeau and the Liberals and urge the federal government to reverse these changes immediately. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the motion as amended? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've already spoken under 29(2)(a) on this, but I just wanted to get my name on the record and everything else supporting this motion, put forward by the Minister of Health, as amended. I think it's important that our government takes action on this, standing up to the federal government and really coming together in this Legislature to support our veterans.

Our veterans: we know that they've given it all. They continue to give it all. They make sacrifices. My great-grandfather was one of those veterans. He passed away a few years ago. He was more affectionately known as Bops. He fought in World War II. He was a gunner on the back of an airplane, and he had hearing loss, obviously, from that war. He fought against one of the most brutal regimes the world has ever known. He had integrity and grit, and he was a fantastic human being, and I'm very proud to be from the same family as Orville Studer.

When we're talking about this issue, this is not about him asking for more than he could give. He gave everything. He gave his hearing. His wife gave her husband and his ability to hear her properly. They were married, and then he was off to war. I think that when we're talking about this, context is so important. So, for me, this issue is personal.

Also, in my riding this issue is very important. On I believe it was Sunday I spent some time with the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat out in Redcliff, and we were meeting with veterans at the Redcliff Legion. This is a yearly event where we celebrate some years of service from these veterans. One of the veterans came up to me. His name was Wayne, and Wayne told me about his story and how he's recovering from posttraumatic stress disorder related to his time in the service. He told me story after story about just how important it is to have proper health care and to have these supports because the supports have lent him the ability to sleep at night. The supports have made it easier for him to continue doing what he does and to support his family. I'm happy to be able to speak on his behalf because I think that, for Wayne, this issue is extremely important.

In addition, Brooks-Medicine Hat has the Canadian Forces base in Suffield, Alberta. The Premier, myself, and the Member for Leduc-Beaumont went out to Suffield along with the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and we toured the base, as it's known in southern Alberta. These people are innovators. They are strategists. They are excellent, and they give it all every day, too. Some of these soldiers and their families have uprooted and moved to little Medicine Hat and Suffield and Ralston to be able to train there. You know, they give so much, and I think the Member for Edmonton-Manning discussed this as well. These people are moving all over the place to take care of our country in the ultimate act of patriotism and laying their lives and their families' lives on the line every day to make sure that our freedoms are taken care of.

At the end of the day, us providing for them and making sure that they have proper access to health care and health care services is the absolute – I believe it's incumbent upon us as government to stand up for these people because they've given so much. These people are not asking for more than they can give. Like I've said before, this is not a political issue. This is an issue that we should be taking to heart and seeing that this is integral to our functioning as government, to be able to advocate for these people, because at the end of the day I don't know who deserves it more. I am happy and proud to be able to stand here as the great-granddaughter of a veteran and the MLA for some of the greatest people that I've ever met, the veterans in Brooks-Medicine Hat.

I proudly support this motion, and I would encourage all members to do the same. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any members wishing to speak to the motion as amended? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

11:30

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I, too, will be supporting the motion before us. I think the latest actions by the federal government are just the last in a long line of federal initiatives by governments of all stripes to act in an egregious way towards our Armed Forces' men, women, and others who have given of themselves to protect our country.

I was reminded, by listening to many of the people around the table, of a speech I gave in this House a while ago with regard to the importance of veterans and supporting them. My father served in the Second World War, and he only really found out about his various benefits very, very, very late in life and took advantage of some of the health-related ones. But I can remember that there was never any talk around our table about what the government of the day – he, of course, returned home in '46 – would do for veterans. He was not privy to that information, and he just went on and married, raised his family, and then only late in life understood that there were some benefits that he could get, and he took advantage of those, as I said. I think that a better job, obviously, could have been done for him, for many, many, many veterans over the years, starting after the First World War and onward, but the governments of the day did not take that solemn responsibility to protect and support their people who had served for them, served for Canada as best they could.

I appreciate that the government of Alberta is stepping up and has the backs of veterans in this province who need that support. I think that's the right thing to do. It makes me proud that we're taking that action, and it makes me proud that there is no disagreement around this table around the need to do that. We are standing as one for our veterans with regard to this Motion 33 as amended, and that's a good day for Alberta.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the motion as amended? The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The recent announcement by the federal Liberal government came as a shock to me, like I think it did for most Canadians. It's completely against the Liberal campaign strategy of trying to buy votes. They have pledged to spend billions of dollars before the campaign and billions of dollars during the campaign, and they claim to be the only party that is standing up to support middle-class Canadians, yet they are slashing funding for the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and veterans. Our members and veterans are middle-class Canadians like so many others, and they do not deserve to be treated with such disregard.

I am pleased to see that after all the public outrage the government is willing to consult with the provinces, but how can Justin Trudeau justify these cuts? These men and women selflessly serve our country to keep us safe. They leave their families for months to protect our freedom and the freedom of others around the world. It is astonishing that the federal government has chosen to slash health care funding for members and veterans in the name of trimming the budget while wasting money on photo ops and other opportunities that they have to save money as well.

Justin Trudeau really does believe that our veterans are, and I quote: asking for more than we can give. End quote. This complete

and utter disdain for our troops cannot be tolerated. We must not stand by while this Prime Minister slashes the benefits of our troops. We must not stand by as the Prime Minister actively disgraces Canada time and time again. As a member of the UCP caucus I stand here proudly to say that we support our troops, we support their access to timely and effective health care, and we will work hard to ensure that they continue to get the service that they deserve. Our troops give their lives for us, so for the Prime Minister to say that their health care is too expensive is appalling to me.

Our government has pledged to make sure that our members and veterans will receive the health care that they need regardless of the \$2 million that the Liberals are cutting, \$2 million that was being invested in providing members and veterans with front-line services. But what could the Prime Minister possibly be spending this money on? What else is the federal government doing with this money that would have been better than providing a service of health care to our front-line troops? The bottom line is that the funding of health care for the military members is clearly under the jurisdiction of the federal government and the Canada Health Act. This Prime Minister is attempting to pass his responsibilities on to provinces while also reaching into the jurisdictions that suit him. The level of disrespect for our forces is truly troubling. Our members and veterans deserve the highest standard of care, and they face numerous challenges already.

In my own experiences, Madam Speaker, in travelling across the province as the military liaison, I've had the honour to be able to go to military bases across the province, military family resource centres as well, and really hear from the front-line members the incredible work that they're doing. It's really an honour for me when they actually give me a tour of their base because I'm just an MLA from Leduc-Beaumont, and I really look up to these members and what they're doing. If they put me on a tour, it makes me feel like they're putting me on a pedestal, which they should not. I'm honoured to be able to see what they do, and I'm always in awe of what their capabilities are. To all of them: thank you for your service.

To hear from our Health minister and from the Premier that the support will continue is extremely important. We have a number of troops in Alberta who are deploying overseas or are waiting to deploy. That's enough stress on their families already and on themselves, and to add in that they're going to trim back their health care is – I just don't understand why they would think that this is the place to save money, the health care of our veterans.

My own grandfather served in the Royal Canadian Air Force. He joined in 1943 as a gunner. He did numerous sorties and bombing

runs, finishing his career as a military police officer in 1965, in fact, finishing in Cold Lake. I've always been proud of his service and loved hearing about the stories and seeing his medals when I was a kid. He was always somebody that I looked up to. Although I got to know Richard Brewer, honestly, through stories from my family – he died young. He sacrificed so much, and so did my grandmother. Some of the injuries he sustained may have caused, later on, his untimely death, and I really wish that I'd got to know him more personally rather than just through the stories that I was told. I'm proud to be able to stand in the Legislature today to defend the health care that our veterans deserve and that our serving members deserve because he would have wanted me to be able to do that for him. I'm proud to be able to do that on his behalf as his grandson.

For all the serving members across the province, again, thank you for your service; the provincial government has your back. We'll do everything we can on the provincial side within our jurisdiction to make sure that they and their families are supported.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, any more speakers on the motion as amended? The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to say thank you for that moving speech.

Also, I move that we adjourn debate until 1:30 this afternoon. Oh, sorry. Do I move to close debate first? I'll gladly do it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, if you are to speak again, you will be closing debate on this motion.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Oh. I see.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there anyone else that would like to speak to the motion as amended?

The hon. government whip.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much. You know, there's been a lot of progress here, and I know that this is something both sides of the House can agree on, that we support this motion. I know that everybody would like to be a part of this vote after question period, so I would like to move that we adjourn the House and return at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:40 a.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, October 10, 2019

Day 26

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 10, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, visiting today from the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford: grade 6 students from George P. Nicholson school. Also, from Edmonton-Riverview we have grade 9 students from Hillcrest junior high. Welcome to all of the students.

Hon. members, seated in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon is a guest of the government military liaison and MLA for Leduc-Beaumont. It's my pleasure to welcome former military serviceman and Canadian military veteran Mr. Brock Blaszczyk.

Also in the Speaker's gallery today is a very familiar face to many, perhaps the visitor and guest most often in this Assembly, Mr. Pat Nixon.

Hon. members, a guest of the Minister of Energy, Mr. Mark Scholz, president and CEO of the Canadian association for oil well drillers, and students from the Students' Association of NorQuest College: Shylo Morin, Daniel Kazambu, Jamila Davis, Joshua Chiazza, Albert Nsapu, John Skene, Hutchoy Moris, Mohammad Rajab, and Peyton Monahan. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a statement to make.

#### Vegreville Century Park Supportive Living Facility

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for introducing the hard-working Albertans who are joining us in the gallery here today. Indeed, there are a few visitors that we have who are hard-working Albertans and, at least for a few more days, employees of the Century Park seniors' facility in Vegreville. A few days ago these Albertans and their colleagues, 53 people, were all dismissed by Century Park's operator, Optima Living, a private company based in Vancouver. Our guests do difficult, demanding work. They bathe, toilet, dress, feed, and support the seniors in their care day and night.

These guests deserve the thanks and the respect of every member in this House, yet the letter that Optima handed them said that the reason they were all being thrown out of work was because it, quote, offers the prospect of greater return to our shareholders. This decision wasn't about providing the best care; it was about getting the most cash. Is the Minister of Health's vision of seniors' care for the Century Park building to provide a return to shareholders in Vancouver or a home to seniors in Vegreville? Well, we'll find out because these Albertans are here in this room today to learn whether their government cares about them and the seniors that they care for.

Make no mistake; wholesale staffing changes by operators contracted by AHS require AHS approval, and the Minister of Health has the authority to give direction to AHS. This government is clearly not shy about inserting itself into labour relations when it wants to. I'm sure that the Health minister is well aware of his government's actions through Bill 9. These Albertans are here to learn whether the Minister of Health will use his authority to protect 53 Alberta families from the ravages of unemployment and 40

Alberta seniors, family members, from losing their primary caregivers. I know that seniors and families, workers, and operators are watching today. It will be a defining moment for this Minister of Health.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Calgary-Klein has a statement to make.

### Mental Illness Awareness

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to mental illness, stigma and discrimination cause people living with symptoms to feel alone and often to not seek treatment. In 1992 Mental Illness Awareness Week was established as October 7 to October 11 by the Canadian Psychiatric Association. This week is dedicated towards opening the eyes of Canadians to the serious realities of mental illness so that we can change our behaviours towards acceptance and respect for people.

One in 5 Canadians is directly affected by mental illness, but we know that indirectly millions more across this country are also impacted. Despite efforts to reduce stigma and raise awareness, many Canadians still live in fear of being stigmatized and of what seeking help could mean. Others do not know that they need help or sometimes are not able to identify or explain what they are experiencing.

The goal of Mental Illness Awareness Week is to break down barriers by increasing awareness of the symptoms and the resources available for people that need help. The biggest goal is to let people know that they do not have to face this alone. We can help those with mental illness by being available to talk and being available to listen. The good news is that there's hope. There are many examples of recovery and many examples of community-driven programs to support individuals and families to live satisfying and hopeful and purposeful lives.

Our government is hopeful that our investment into more nurse practitioners will be a proactive step into mental health support across this province, but it will take continued investment, and we will all have a role to play. We need to realize that we are all in this. This isn't an us-and-them question but something that we all suffer with, and we all have a role in supporting each other.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Read In Week

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise in this House today to recognize 30 years of Read In Week. Earlier this week I had the opportunity to read to classes of students at l'école Campbelltown elementary school in Sherwood Park. It was an awesome experience. This week is a time to celebrate the joy of reading and come together as a community to enrich the lives of our children by reading aloud in our classrooms, our homes, and around our province.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Read In Week. This initiative began when Edmonton public schools, Edmonton Catholic schools, and NorQuest College decided to come together to encourage the development of literacy and language skills amongst students. It has since expanded, and many school divisions outside of Edmonton have started to participate or conduct similar events. Reading is a key exercise to help students develop the skills they need to succeed. It inspires children to have a vivid imagination and to be curious learners and creative thinkers.

I would like to recognize all the community partners in Edmonton, my own community of Sherwood Park, and across Alberta for their

hard work to raise awareness for the importance of literacy and spreading the love of reading. During this important week I would encourage all my colleagues in this Chamber to get out into their communities and read to a class. I am certain that schools would be happy to have you, and you would be helping promote the importance of literacy to the next generation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising to make a statement.

### Mental Health Awareness

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in recognition of mental health awareness day. Mental health impacts all of us in different ways and at different times. Sometimes this is with personal experience when the stressors of life can create moments of anxiety or depression. As individuals we may not always speak of the personal struggles that we experience. For some of us, we are not impacted as individuals, but instead we may have loved ones that have mental health struggles. Some of us may have even lost a person due to suicide. This is why this day is so important, a day that is dedicated to encourage all of us to talk to each other about how we are doing.

Every 40 seconds a person dies due to suicide, a staggering number of people, people who do not feel they were loved. Today why not do 40 seconds of action? If you are struggling, talk about those struggles. If you know that someone is struggling, let them know that they are not alone, that there are people that are thinking about them, that care about them and love them. We need to continue to talk about mental health, about suicide, to improve the knowledge of how to identify when someone is struggling, to be able to be supportive and remove the stigma around mental health so that people feel they can talk about their struggles. Simply put, we need to show people that we care.

1:40

As Albertans we are caring people. We want to help. That is why it is so important that we ensure that supports that people need are available to them. Mental health services need to be funded and supported. Access to counselling and treatment without financial barriers needs to be available to all.

So let's spend the time to talk to one another, to listen, and to be supportive. Tell those in your life that they are important. Take care of one another. Above all, take the time to take care of yourself. If you are struggling, tell someone. We're all here to help.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has the call.

### International Day of the Girl

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Friday, October 11, is International Day of the Girl, a day to promote girls' empowerment and advocate for their human rights. It is a day to recognize and celebrate how far we have come in the advancement of the rights of women and girls, both at home and abroad. But it's also important that we recognize the challenges that girls all over the world face. We see advertisements and even world leaders saying that girls can do anything, but the reality is that girls still face many barriers that hold them back from fulfilling their potential and realizing their dreams.

Mr. Speaker, on the day of the girl we reiterate the fact that girls can do anything. Given this, I think it's only fitting to touch on the important efforts that our government has undertaken to empower

women in trades. Women are dramatically underrepresented in the skilled trades. Our government is changing that. Being a journeyman and the chair of the skilled trades caucus, I know many women who made great contributions to their families, communities, and our economy as a tradesperson. If we truly want girls to pursue their goals and follow their dreams, we need to make sure they have access to a wide range of opportunities, including pursuing a career in the trades. I'm glad our government is taking concrete action to support women. We are providing Women Building Futures with \$10 million in funding over the next four years. By investing in training for women in the skilled trades, we're investing in Alberta's future.

It is incumbent upon all of us in this Assembly to show girls in Alberta and beyond that they can become whatever they want. Let's all take a moment today and every day to teach, inspire, and learn from our girls and help carve a path for them to realize their dreams, whatever they may be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Old Alberta Farmer by Davie Barnes

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, Davie Barnes was an Alberta farmer from Thorhild, a Canadian soldier, a lifelong family friend, and a poet who recently passed away at age 94. The following poem he wrote was recited at his memorial service by one of his granddaughters. I promised her that I would read it in the Legislature to honour his memory. His daughter Linda Pack and grandson Neil Pack are seated as my guests in the public gallery to hear my address. It is titled *Old Alberta Farmer*.

He stands beside his tractor, in the evening of his life,  
A strong successful farmer who has weathered storm and strife.  
He stares into the sunset as the evening shadows fall,  
And thinks about his family with a father's fond recall.

He is going to give up farming, so this spring will be his last,  
And his mind is on the future, but his heart is in the past.  
He day-dreams of the children who once played where he now stands  
And the happiness and comfort once provided by his hands . . .

He looks slowly 'round the farmstead – each familiar field he sees –  
Remembers each one's weaknesses and idiosyncrasies.  
He remembers all the planning that goes into each new crop,  
And the practices that pay the most, and practices to drop.

He glances at his tractor, waiting patiently at hand,  
For his touch to start and guide it far across the rolling land.  
He has serviced the injectors, checked the fuel and the oil,  
And now it stands there waiting to begin its yearly toil.

He will run it one more season; then the parting of the ways  
From his faithful iron monster and those sixteen-hour days . . .  
With a start he realizes that it is no longer day –  
He takes a last long look around, then sighs and walks away.

Hail to you, Alberta Farmer – (and your understanding wife –  
For she shares you with a mistress that has claimed your soul for life!  
Woe betide the marriage partner who says: "Choose! The land or me!"  
For a true Alberta farmer just might set the lady free!)

You have suffered toil and hardship, dared the weather's fiercest blows,  
Had your share of joys and sorrows, summers' heat and winters' snows.  
Now the time is fast approaching when, for you, the race is run,  
And you cease your operations at the setting of your sun.

When your days on earth are numbered, come you home at last to lie  
In the bright Alberta sunshine, 'neath the blue Alberta sky;  
In the arms of Mother Nature you shall have your final rest,  
And tell your loving Father: "Lord, You know I did my best."

Davie, we miss you.

### Small Business and Thanksgiving

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, Thanksgiving should be a time of reflection and goodwill between friends, families, and our communities. While some of us will be enjoying good laughs and turkey naps this weekend, I want to bring the attention of everyone in the House to those who won't be gathering in good spirits with the rest of us.

We can talk about economic downturns and slumps and sluggish growth for hours, Mr. Speaker, but what goes unheard is the true cost of the poor policies of the previous government. As much as we like using fancy fiscal terms to illustrate how hard past policies kicked Albertans when they were down, nothing says it quite like seeing yet another for-lease sign crop up in another storefront in Airdrie's core. I have to commend the strength and will of our small-business owners as they fought to stay afloat under bad policies like the carbon tax, but I can absolutely not blame them for being cornered into closing their doors due to legislation that couldn't support their vision and their dreams.

Thankfully, Albertans made it resoundingly clear this year that they were done with the carbon tax, they were done with the poorly thought out minimum wage increase, and they were done with policies that won't support them. Our government has set a clear path towards economic recovery, and we are on track for economic prosperity. Our policies give hope to the small-business owners who weathered the storm of the economic downturn and will signal to those who shut their doors that now is the time to reinvest and try again.

What we need to see from this House and from every Albertan is a resounding message of support to small businesses in this province. I believe in giving a hand up instead of a handout, Mr. Speaker. The best way to do that is through supporting local businesses, that are the backbone of our communities. Policies only go so far. The rest is up to us and who we decide to give our business to.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

### Tenille Townes

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise in this House today to speak about Grande Prairie's own rising country music star, Tenille Townes. Anyone who knows me knows that I take tremendous delight in any opportunity to speak about my friend Tenille as she is a close personal friend but also truly one of the nicest and most genuine people I have ever met.

This year at the 2019 Canadian Country Music Association awards in Calgary Tenille swept the podium, claiming all four awards for which she had been nominated, including songwriter of the year, female artist of the year, single of the year, and music video of the year for her song *Somebody's Daughter*.

Besides her work ethic and incredible talent as a country music artist, Tenille is a true humanitarian. At age 18 she was the youngest ever recipient of the Slaughter humanitarian award from the CCMA in 2012. This recognition came as she has been a champion for Sunrise House, which is the northernmost youth emergency shelter in Alberta, which is located, of course, in Grande Prairie.

In September 2019, just one week after her big win at the CCMA awards, she celebrated the 10th anniversary of her annual fundraiser event, Big Hearts for Big Kids, raising over \$415,000 in just one evening and bringing her grand total raised to over \$1.9 million. The first Big Hearts event she hosted raised just \$30,000 and happened to be held on the very night that the shelter closed due to lack of funds. It is largely due to Tenille and her dedication that the shelter reopened and serves youth to this very day. She embodies

the drive of Albertans and what they can do when they decide to make a difference.

Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that I am very proud to be from Grande Prairie, and I don't hesitate when I see an opportunity to brag about my community or the wonderful people who call it home. I am quite certain the folks in Calgary could hear my cheering all the way from my living room in Grande Prairie the night she got called up over and over again. I am so proud to be able to show Canada and the rest of the world the talent that resides right here in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Calgary LRT Green Line Funding

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Calgary continues to expand, it also continues to seek to increase its LRT coverage. LRTs enable large cities to move people in an efficient, safe, and environmentally friendly manner, especially for work and large events. As many in this Assembly are aware, construction on the first phase of the green line is set to begin in 2020 and will result in a line from the north of Calgary to the south. To date this is a \$4.65 billion project with funding from all three levels of government. Unfortunately, the project funding falls short of what is necessary to complete the project fully. While I appreciate the work that has been done thus far and the funding from all three levels of government, I have concerns about this project, concerns shared by my constituents.

1:50

The first is that the southern portion of the line is only presently funded to reach 126th Avenue, or Shepard station. The residents of Calgary-South East are disappointed that the green line will not reach as far as their southern constituency. This is a section of the city which is rapidly expanding and includes the South Health Campus hospital.

We also have concerns about the growing budget uncertainty and also the lengthening timeline. I recognize that future phases of the plan for the green line extend to the community of Seton, but there is debate on whether this will be included on the second or third phase. The first phase is scheduled to be completed in 2026. This means that even if Seton is included in the second phase, we will not see an LRT in my constituency until at least 2030.

It is my sincere hope that the city of Calgary, our government, and the federal government can come together to find a cost-effective and fiscally responsible path forward for this project and that it will include a station in Seton as soon as possible.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies and Job Creation

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All week our members have risen to ask this Premier about the various cuts he's planning as he scrambles to pay for his 4 and a half billion dollar corporate giveaway, a giveaway, I might add, that hasn't created a single job to date. The Premier has ducked, dodged, and weaved our questions, and I expect him to do the same today. But I have to ask the Premier: are you scared to introduce your budget because you know the harm it'll cause Albertans and the anxiety it will also cause your very caucus?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we'll be introducing our budget even earlier than the NDP did back in 2015. Of course, we had to take onboard the expert advice of a former NDP Finance minister, Dr. MacKinnon, and her nonpartisan panel in framing this plan to get Alberta back to work and to bring our finances back to balance. What the NDP is scared of talking about are the real issues facing Albertans in the election to happen two weeks from now. The question I have for that member is: will the members of the NDP be voting for their antipipeline leader, Jagmeet Singh, or their antipipeline ally, Justin Trudeau?

**Mr. Bilous:** That's a very nice duck, dodge, and failure to answer the question.

Let me give the Premier a bit of a rundown on what's already happening because of his failure to deliver the budget. Rural police funding is being cut. School fees are going up. Insurance rates are up. Child care pilots are stuck in limbo. So, too, is classroom funding. I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker. Every day the Premier refuses to answer our questions and accuses us of fear and smear. By refusing to table your budget, you are hurting Albertans. Perhaps it's something to do with the federal election. To the Premier: do you fear that your budget is so bad that it'll hurt the election chances of . . .

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans gave this government the largest democratic mandate in our province's history in part in order to create jobs and bring balance back to our province's finances after the fiscal catastrophe of the NDP. [interjections] I hear the former failed Finance minister continuing to heckle. I understand why he feels so bruised. You know what they're calling him out there in Alberta these days? The \$60 billion man. That's the debt that he left this province in, on the way to \$100 billion, with five credit downgrades. We're going to get Alberta out of the hole that the NDP put us in.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Premier, Albertans want action today, not two years from now. Here's the thing: the Premier hasn't created a single job. Not one. Albertans elected you to create jobs, but so far 13,000 jobs have been lost in the energy sector alone under your watch, Mr. Premier. All the while the Energy minister sits on her hands, and the economic development minister uses the same tired talking points daily. To the Premier: will you scrap this failed experiment, listen to the business community, reinstate the successful tax credit that the NDP introduced, and perhaps consider a cabinet shuffle while you're at it?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's the first week after five months away, and that's the best that they can come up with? That's a pretty strong confirmation that we're on the right track. Imagine the socialists saying that we should listen to the business community when all week they've been attacking the job-creation tax cut and the businesses that create employment in our province. I'll tell you what: that government raised taxes on businesses and on Albertans and on everything with the carbon tax, and they drove us into a historic recession. That's why they're the first one-term government in Alberta political history.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

### School Bus Routes in Calgary

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's becoming abundantly clear where school boards are cutting to pay for this Premier's \$4.5

billion corporate giveaway. Students with complex needs in Calgary have seen their ride times double, and they've been crammed onto buses that are much more crowded than in years past. Many of these kids can't cope with the additional stress of noise and longer commutes. Given all of these facts, I have to ask, Mr. Premier: do you still think your \$4.5 billion corporate gift is worth it? Is it more important than kids with complex needs or severe autism?

**Member LaGrange:** Well, first of all, I want to say how sorry I was to hear what had happened to those individuals, those children and their families. But the NDP knows full well that this is an internal decision by the Calgary board of education. School divisions are in the best position to make their bus routes, and they have done so. I think that if NDP MLAs are wanting to micromanage school routes, they should be looking to run for school boards in the next election.

**Ms Renaud:** Literally throwing school boards under the bus.

This government obviously won't listen to me, so I'm going to try bringing forward the concerns of parents, just like we promised to do. One mother who wrote to us about the busing funding said that the stress of these bus rides is causing her child to vomit daily. This Premier won't even consult with parents like this before making drastic cuts that harm our students. To the Premier: what do you have to say to this mother and so many others who fear for their kids every single morning that they send them out the door, put them on the bus to school?

**Member LaGrange:** We have been very, very upfront and committed to providing a world-class, high-quality education for all students. We owe it to parents and children to get better outcomes for the money that is being spent on education, including the bus rides and transportation. I find that it's just another example of the NDP fear tactics. I've travelled across this province, and what I heard more and more was that they are continuing to create fear in the education community. It's deplorable.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to ask this question one more time. Other than the talking points, listen to what the parents are saying. These bus rides are not working. These kids cannot function in these buses that are packed. These bus rides are too long. They can't do it. These kids are vomiting. This isn't about your talking points, your lack of budget, your delay. Answer these parents. They have serious questions or concerns for these children. Stand up. Speak to them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I have to put it back to the fact that we do not micromanage school boards. We have heard loud and clear that school boards want their own authority to put together the bus routes. Unlike the previous Minister of Education, who was missing in action, this summer and this fall I have been touring the province, meeting with school authorities, teachers, students, and parents. What I've heard is that the system is tired of the NDP scare tactics. The narrative that they've been spreading to further their agenda is causing the anxiety in our education.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Vegreville Century Park Supportive Living Facility

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the Premier is able to take a moment to look up from his desk and see the guests gathered in this House who've travelled in from Vegreville, health care professionals who provide front-line personal care for Alberta seniors. They work hard. They work long hours. They take on tasks like bathing, toileting, dressing, and feeding our seniors day and night. Their employer has dismissed them and insulted them with an offer to be rehired for \$10 less an hour. To the Premier: plain and simple, do you believe this decision to fire these workers was fair?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I understand that a transition like this can be stressful for employees and families. Our priority is going to continue to be making sure that the residents are going to continue to have the care that they need at Century Park. Now the NDP is asking me: am I going to interfere in these contracts at this site? The answer is no. We believe that the system . . . [interjections] And they heckle me. We believe that the system that we have in continuing care in Alberta, with a mix of private partners as well as government . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Transition, Mr. Speaker.

This Minister of Health has the legal authority and responsibility to intervene to uphold the standard of care for these seniors, as the previous Minister of Health did, but this government seems far more focused on helping rich corporate friends with a 4 and a half billion dollar handout than providing any form of support to these workers. To the Premier: will you commit right now to directing the Minister of Health to prevent 53 Vegreville families' unemployment and protect 40 Alberta seniors from losing their familiar primary caregiver, or do you only interfere when you're breaking contracts to lower their wages?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP has a long history of interfering with businesses, interfering with their contracts. The bias against the private partners that we have in continuing care, in the system is quite obvious. Over four years they tried to squeeze our nonprofit partners, our private partners in continuing care. We see them again, now that they're no longer in government, continuing to attack those partners, our nonprofit partners and our private partners. We support the decades that we've had of continuing care in Alberta with the mixture of government, nonprofit, and private providers in the system.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that answer is as tone deaf as the statement yesterday from the minister for women's issues. When our critic asked her yesterday about how this government would support these workers and if she supported this cut in their wage, the minister seemed to simply imply that they should all just go and look for jobs in the trades. This is shameful. The jobs they do have dignity. We need quality health care workers like the ones that are gathered here today. They deserve the respect of this government and a decent wage. To the Minister of Health: will you commit to meeting with these health care workers and myself immediately after question period today, so we can find a resolution to get . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** The answer is yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to meet with them. I'm happy that they have come to the Legislature today to be able to meet not only with the hon. member and his colleagues, but if they would like to meet me, I'm very happy to meet with them. Also, just to say this as well for any Albertan who's listening today, for the residents at Century Park, our department and AHS are monitoring this transition very closely. We'll provide any supports that are needed during this transition.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen.

### Rural Police Service Funding

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has told this House many times that a response to rural crime is a top priority of this government. The UCP government has promised 500 new officers and 50 new prosecutors. Well, it's been six months since the election, and this House has passed 13 bills. Rural communities are still waiting for the Premier to get around to his so-called top priority. If the Premier believes there is a rural crime crisis, why couldn't he find a single dime for rural policing this spring when he handed out \$4.5 billion to corporations.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I've answered questions on this the last few days. We are being very clear with Albertans. We're talking about more money for policing. More money for policing.

Now, last night I was in Camrose, and 150 Albertans came out and expressed their concern regarding the justice system, Mr. Speaker. I heard a lot about the NDP legacy in the justice system. I'm going to be in Rocky Mountain House in a couple of weeks with another town hall. I invite that member to come to Rocky Mountain House and hear about their NDP legacy on rural crime.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has the call.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we were in government, we took action on rural crime, and the UCP notoriously voted against that rural crime strategy while in opposition. In government, after they got their \$4.5 billion corporate handout done this spring, they all went on vacation and forgot about rural crime. Here we are in October, and it's still another two weeks before we'll get a budget. Police officers take time to hire, train, and deploy. To the Premier: will we see a single new officer on the streets within the first year of this government's term?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, again, silence. Yes or no, will you come to Rocky Mountain House to hear about your legacy? This is the utmost in frustration. Let me share with you some of the stories I've heard on my tour: people living in fear across Alberta, people that are scared now when somebody drives down their dirt road. They're no longer happy to think: maybe a neighbour is here. They're now wondering: who is here to harm me? Why won't that member come hear about their legacy on rural crime? Open invitation: come to Rocky Mountain House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and the Justice minister have repeatedly announced 50 new prosecutors, but the minister recently admitted that they have yet to hire a single one. The minister tried to blame these vacancies created by the UCP's hiring freeze on me. To the Premier: since the minister seems

confused about who's in charge of the Justice department, can you tell us if there will be a single new prosecutor hired this year?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we're hiring the 25 unfilled positions that we inherited from that member. We're hiring right now. We have job opportunities right now. Yes. We will be also funding 50 new prosecutors. But that member hasn't even answered the question. Will you come to Rocky Mountain House? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Members, we will have order.  
The Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has a question.

### Investment Incentives and Job Creation

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have already seen positive results from the job-creation tax cut, with major investment announcements made in September by Telus, Suncor, and Polycarp, and this activity has come just after the first of four cuts to the corporate tax . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Hon. members, we will have order.  
Hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, please feel free to restart your question.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have already seen positive results from the job-creation tax cut, with major investment announcements made in September by Telus, Suncor, and Polycarp, and this activity has come after just the first of four cuts to the corporate tax rate. It is my understanding that our government has made other tax changes that have helped increase Alberta's attractiveness as a place to invest. To the Minister of Finance: what are these changes, and how will they help drive investment back to Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. In addition to announcing the job-creation tax cut, the carbon tax repeal, our government is going forward with the accelerated capital cost allowance provision adopted by the federal government. This measure allows businesses to invest in equipment with accelerated writeoffs, which will support investment and, ultimately, job creation. This measure will be felt very directly by our small businesses, which we know are essential employers in the province. We're continuing to re-establish Alberta as the most competitive business environment in this country.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that specifically the announcement from Telus of a \$16 billion investment will have great benefits for my constituents in Brooks-Medicine Hat and given that this announcement alone will improve rural connectivity while creating 5,000 jobs, can the Minister of Finance elaborate on what other impacts this broad-based tax incentive will have for our province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of impact, let's hear from an Albertan. I quote Mick Dilger, president and CEO of Pembina Pipeline Corporation, with respect to the accelerated capital cost allowance measure: these investment incentives are critical to the development of creating value-added goods, which in

turn create employment, tax space, and help our global competitiveness in industries across the country; for our company, this will help stabilize our recent investment decision into the development of a world-scale polypropylene facility.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that the previous government seemed determined to drive business and investment out of the province and had no regard for job creators and their unique challenges, that they themselves created, can the Minister of Finance provide more detail about how these investment incentives work to support Alberta's job creators?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the questions. These changes allow Alberta businesses to write off 100 per cent of their manufacture and processing equipment and clean energy equipment in year 1. They also mean that for most classes of capital assets, in year 1 they get three times the otherwise deductible amount. Alberta is attracting much-needed investment back into this province. Again, this measure will especially support small businesses, and we're very pleased to make a decision to go forward with it.

### 2:10 Rural Police Service Funding (continued)

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, councillors, in a Lac Ste. Anne county press release yesterday, are warning that this Premier's plan to cut funding for rural police will "place a considerable financial burden on resource-strapped municipalities." They also warn that they may have to raise taxes to keep communities safe. Now, both the Premier and the Justice minister have stood in this House this week and claimed that they are not cutting police funding. To the minister: if that's the case, then why do town councillors keep saying the opposite? Are you really trying to claim that local leaders in Lac Ste. Anne are completely wrong?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that question. I have spent the entire summer travelling across our province listening to the concerns and priorities of our municipalities, but I think the question ought to be to that member. When he was the Finance minister when they were in government, what did they do? Here are the records. They left us with more than \$60 billion in debt, and they chased away investments out of our province. They led a government that led us to have more than 200,000 of our fellow citizens out of employment. We are working to solve all of these problems.

**Member Ceci:** You're well on the way to losing more jobs.

Given that Lac Ste. Anne county councillors described the response of the provincial government to their questions and concerns as "noncommittal and ever-shifting" and given that this flies directly in the face of the minister's claim on Tuesday that he has been "crystal clear" in his commitments, to the Minister of Justice: will you end your noncommittal and ever-shifting approach to communicating with rural municipalities and finally be straight with them about your plan to cut their funding for police?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we have been communicating clearly with municipalities across Alberta regarding our plan. We're seeking their feedback right now. They have a few more days

now to get their feedback in regarding our proposals regarding police costing. We're listening to Albertans. We want to make sure that we have their feedback. We were at the AUMA. We had 1,000 people there. We answered their questions in detail on this. We are committed to spending more money on policing. This is about more pie.

**Member Ceci:** Then why did you vote twice against increases to rural police funding?

Given that Lac Ste. Anne councillors also said the government's plan to cut police funding by up to 70 per cent is "an ill-conceived and poorly-communicated initiative" and given that we know that this cut is being done to help pay for the \$4.5 billion you're giving away to big corporations, to the Premier. Your minister has screwed this up. My question to you today is: will you cancel this cut and work in true partnership with RMA and AUMA to craft a way forward?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Again, I don't know how many times I've got to repeat this in this House. We are dedicated to more funding for policing. We have been crystal clear on that from day one. I also want to quote for that member. We got some feedback as well. Terry Ungarian, reeve of the county of Northern Lights: if we have to pay a little bit extra but see money reinvested to bring rural crime under control, then that's a win. From Lance Colby, mayor of Carstairs: I believe everybody should pay a little, that anything we pay should be reinvested. And from Cheryl Eikeland, mayor of Marwayne: the idea behind this proposal is very good; we need more police on the ground. Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to listen to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a question.

#### Canadian Energy Centre Managing Director

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday this government announced that they have appointed failed UCP candidate Tom Olsen as the head of their so-called energy war room. At last check, this individual was a lobbyist for payday loan companies and now is being paid a massive \$195,000 a year salary, and all this war room seems to do is post on Twitter. To the Premier: how much money is Mr. Olsen being paid per tweet?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the real story here is that the United Conservative Party, Alberta's government, has followed through on yet another promise, creating an organization that will work to defend our oil and gas industry. That's where we're going. We will spare no cost. We will work hard to defend the hard-working men and women that work inside the oil and gas industry, something that those members did not do when they were in government just a few short months ago, when they were working against our energy industry. I can tell you, through you to Albertans, we will continue to fight each and every day to protect our largest industry.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the appointment of Tom Olsen to head the energy war room is puzzling and given that *Maclean's* writer Jason Markusoff said about the Olsen appointment that, quote, if this war room is to be judged by its general, this isn't an encouraging sign, to the Premier: can you please explain to all the qualified people in Alberta's communication and energy industries why you think Olsen was better for this job than they were?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this side of the House will not be lectured by that side of the House when it comes to appointments in regard to our energy industry. That's the side of the House who,

you will recall, appointed Tzepporah Berman to their panel to defend the oil sands. Talk about putting the fox in the henhouse. This side of the House is dedicated to getting jobs and the economy and pipelines going in our province. We will always stand with our oil and gas industry, the complete opposite of the NDP in this province. Their former Education minister stood on the very steps of this Legislature chanting: no more pipelines. Through you to him: shame. Albertans, you can trust us when it comes to the energy industry.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that 60 per cent of the voters in the Calgary-Buffalo constituency rejected Mr. Olsen in the last election and given that he now stands to earn more than all the members of your caucus who had winning campaigns, to the Premier: will you commit to releasing the hiring criteria that you used to hire Mr. Olsen and the rationale for rejecting more qualified Albertans? Or was this just a patronage appointment with no rationale?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, there are members of the NDP caucus who are sitting in this House even though 60 per cent of the voters in their own ridings rejected them. I don't dispute their right to be able to sit inside this Chamber.

What I can confirm to you on behalf of the Premier is that we will continue with the platform promises that we have made to protect our oil and gas industry. We will stand up for our oil and gas industry. We are proud of our oil and gas industry. We have the best environmental standards in the entire world, the best social standards in the entire world. We will continue to stand with them. Again, to them, the real question that's been asked the entire time: are they voting for their close ally Justin Trudeau and his antipipeline policies, or are they voting for their NDP leader and his antipipeline policies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

#### Vegreville Century Park Supportive Living Facility (continued)

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of stories circulating about changes occurring at the Century Park continuing care facility in Vegreville, including a suggestion that all staff are being thrown out of work and being replaced by people brought in from outside the province. These claims are causing tremendous anxiety to seniors and families in Vegreville. Can the Minister of Health please explain to me and my constituents the situation in Vegreville?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm advised that the transition will take effect on November 1. I know it's stressful for the residents and their families as well as for staff at the facility. I'm concerned about the impact on staff and employment in Vegreville, so I'm glad to hear that the new operator intends to hire most of the current staff. The claim that staff are being replaced with people from out of the province, I'm told, is simply false. I also understand that AHS has vacancies in the Vegreville area, so there should be jobs for most or all of the staff.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for sharing this information with us. Given that there is also a suggestion that pay rates at the facility are going to be cut under the new operator, to the same minister: do you plan on



intervening to prevent pay reductions or cancel the transfer of the facility altogether?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. I support the rights of the staff under the law and their collective agreements. My department and AHS are monitoring the transition closely, and they'll provide any supports that are needed, as I said before. You know, unlike the NDP, I don't believe in manipulating individual contracts for political purposes. [interjections] Continuing care for decades has been publicly funded and delivered by a mixture of government, nonprofit partners, as well as private partners. The NDP just can't accept that. That's why they're heckling me. They can't accept . . .

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Given that there are also questions being raised about the whole issue of contracting continuing care and the potential that changes like the current one in Vegreville may happen again elsewhere, again to the Minister of Health: do you plan to change the process for funding continuing care facilities to avoid the potential for any future subcontracting situations like this?

**Mr. Shandro:** The answer, Mr. Speaker, is no. We believe the system is based on the right approach. We fund the operators – public, government, private, and nonprofit – all on the same basis. The NDP ignored the real issues in the continuing care system for four years and imposed their bias against private providers in one area after another, from continuing care to labs to laundry. Our government campaigned on the real issue: improving access to care, not who provides it. That's my priority as Health minister.

### Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard the Transportation minister fail to justify why he had abandoned critical highway safety measures and turned his back on the victims and families and survivors of the Humboldt Broncos bus disaster. It was shameful, but let's give him another chance. Will the minister do the right thing today and commit to maintaining the standards brought in by the previous government to keep Albertans safe on our highways?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will remind the hon. member again that the standards that he claims they brought in – it was the MELT standards – come out of the United States. No truck driver will be able to go from Canada into the U.S. with a class 1 or 2 after February without MELT training. But they didn't actually bring them in. They announced them. They say that they operationalized them on March 1, about two weeks before the election, but on the same day they nationalized the driver examiners and lost half of them, crippling the government's ability to deliver what the hon. member now claims they delivered. So it's not true.

**Member Loyola:** Given that an independent, third-party review of Alberta's PC-era driver examination model found seven significant safety gaps, 17 important safety gaps, and eight critical safety gaps, has the Minister of Transportation actually read the Tantus report, and how can he justify returning to this deeply flawed and fundamentally unsafe model of driver training?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently we're still using the method of driver examination that the previous government left behind. It finally gave me something to agree with. There was a test that said there were problems with the system. I agree with the hon. member that there were problems with the system. We will continue trying to sort that out. I think we're on the right track, and I think we have quite a few fail-safes in place that will solve, we hope, all those problems.

**Member Loyola:** Given that this government only seems to open its doors to big corporations and given that the Premier rushed to hand over \$4.5 billion to these corporations in a failed experiment to create jobs – not one – and given that we now know that this Minister of Transportation is putting the interests of big trucking companies over those of families who lost their loved ones in a tragic accident, to the minister: who convinced you to make these awful changes, and why didn't the families of the Humboldt bus tragedy have a say in the matter?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member and the House to know that I spoke with Mr. Boulet a second time today, just not long before question period. The MELT is here to stay. The previous government actually never got MELT delivered. We will get MELT delivered – and it is here to stay – which is the higher standards. The previous government failed to do it. This government will not fail.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the organization led by anti-LGBTQ2S-plus campaigner John Carpay wrote to the Edmonton public school board urging them to repeal their locally developed policies that protect students from being outed against their will. The letter states that this repeal is needed thanks to this UCP government's shameful Bill 8, the first rollback of human rights in Alberta's history. Will the Minister of Education admit that this attack on LGBTQ2S-plus children was her goal all along?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The truth of the matter is that Mr. Carpay and his group do not speak for the government of Alberta, nor do they speak for the Department of Education. The fact of the matter is that our government has the most comprehensive statutory protections for LGBTQ2S-plus students in Canada. Students can be assured that they will continue to be protected and cared for in our schools.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Given that this letter also contains a threat of legal action against Edmonton public schools unless they expose these vulnerable youth to being outed against their wishes and given that lawsuits drain money from school board budgets that really would be better spent in the classroom supporting students, will the minister commit today to paying the legal bills of any school district that resists the homophobic bullying of John Carpay?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Privacy Commissioner stated in June, membership in any student organization, including GSAs, is protected under Alberta's robust privacy legislation. I will not comment on hypothetical litigation. Students absolutely can be assured that we are looking after them. We will protect them. We always have. We always will.

**Member Irwin:** Hypothetical. This is exactly what we predicted would happen under Bill 8. We're seeing fewer students joining GSAs as a result of your harmful policies.

Given that Mr. Carpay also brought a lawsuit against this province to try and out LGBTQ2S-plus kids and given that he dropped this lawsuit immediately after the passage of Bill 8, what message does it send that this Minister of Education accepted generous campaign donations from two supporters of this homophobic bully's lawsuit?

**Member LaGrange:** I reiterate: the fact of the matter is that our government, Alberta Education, has the most comprehensive statutory protections for LGBTQ2S-plus students in Canada. Our students can be assured that they will continue to be protected by provincial legislation.

**An Hon. Member:** Shameful.

**Member LaGrange:** What is shameful is that the NDP continue to play politics with this issue, and they cause fear amongst our LGBTQ students. That's reprehensible. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South has risen with a question.

#### Needle Debris and Addiction Treatment

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following NDP mandates, social agencies distribute on an annual basis millions of needles for taking illegal drugs, including upwards of 100 needles at a time to individual drug users. There are little or no internal controls preventing the growing number of discarded needles in public parks or other spaces, causing public safety risks. To the minister: will this government require distributing agencies to be more diligent and responsible to reduce needle debris?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for a very good question. Our government takes the issue of needle debris very seriously. Albertans deserve safe communities that are free from needle debris. Our government will continue to work with municipalities and local law enforcement to find new ways to keep our communities safe and reduce needle debris.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that at the recent AUMA convention municipalities passed a resolution requesting that government develop a province-wide strategy for cleaning up used needle debris and given that flawed NDP policies have exacerbated the proliferation of needle debris, to the minister: will this government develop a province-wide strategy to reduce the millions in taxpayer costs to clean up needle debris in Alberta's parks and other spaces?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is yes. I have already directed my staff to report to me with options to reduce needle debris. I'm looking forward to a comprehensive plan that will reduce needle debris in our province. Until then we will continue to fund needle debris services throughout the province in the communities that were impacted. That is something we can do to make sure that we keep our communities safe.

2:30

**Mr. Stephan:** Given this government's commitment to invest in supporting individuals seeking to become free from addictions and given the prior NDP government's focus on supporting those remaining in their addictions, including in Red Deer, with a drug overdose prevention site that omits services for addiction recovery, and given that the end goal for drug addiction should be freedom from drug addiction, to the minister: will this government begin with the end in mind, with a focus on supporting those seeking to become free from addictions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is right. Our government believes in a full continuum of care to support Albertans with multiple choices when they need help. We believe harm reduction alone cannot be the answer for the problem. That's why we have committed unprecedented funds, \$140 million, to help Albertans to develop a comprehensive strategy, and we also announced recently that we will create 4,000 treatment and recovery spaces to help Albertans who need support services get the support.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

#### Early Learning and Child Care Centres

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Children's Services has been described by the media as a minister of mystery, and to be honest, the title fits. She didn't rise once in the last session to speak on behalf of vulnerable children, when her government slashed minimum wages for young people and protections for LGBTQ youth. Now it's been months since the minister has said that she would be conducting a thoughtful and careful review of the NDP government's \$25-per-day child care program. We're aware this government is fond of its reviews and panels, but the lack of transparency here is deeply concerning. To the Minister of Children's Services: what is the status of your so-called review, and do you support affordable child care or not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans struggled for the past four years under an NDP government, and I can tell you that while members opposite had a platform, so too did we. We are going to continue to create jobs so that parents have the opportunity to provide for their families, we're going to continue to work on growing the economy so that we can provide supports for those who need them, and we are going to ensure that the parents who need supports have access to them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the previous government, child poverty was cut in half, and that was partly because of affordable child care. Given that the minister has received many, many letters of support for the ELCC program from child care providers and families across Alberta and given that the minister knows that parents are concerned about the future of the program

and given that this government has raced to cut a \$4.5 billion cheque to big corporations but has left families looking for affordable child care in the lurch, to the minister: is affordable child care even on your radar?

**The Speaker:** I'd just like to take this opportunity to remind all members that preambles after question 4 are not acceptable.

The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last six months I've been travelling across the province to all different types of licensed daycares, speaking to Albertans about their priorities in child care, and in that time I have heard from concerned daycare operators, child care workers, and parents that the \$25-a-day pilot was concerning because, unfortunately, your pilot did not track need, it did not track income, it did not track employment, and it did not track wait-lists. I know this because while the member opposite spent her summer with radical antipipeline activists and fear-mongering on Twitter, I spent mine talking to parents and child care operators across the province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.  
Order.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I also spoke to a number of child care centres and families over the summer, who told me repeatedly about the impacts that this was having on their children's accessibility and readiness for school and that they were having increased professional development and cost of living for early childhood educators – I'm sure that information will also be included in the review – and given that this government is causing . . .

**The Speaker:** I think I provided a caution about the use of preambles mere moments ago. I would encourage you to get immediately to the question now.

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, given that while this government claims to be in favour of creating jobs but has refused to acknowledge the evidence that affordable child care helps get parents back to work and boosts the economy, to the minister: do you think it was wise to spend . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Well, that was some fast talking, so I'm going to slow it down here. We will review the results of the pilot. We understand that there were some major gaps in that pilot, and there is some data that we just won't be able to gather. That's why I spent the summer speaking to child care operators, front-line child care workers, parents across the province. We are advocates for quality child care. We are advocates for affordable child care and, certainly, for helping parents who need help to take part in the workforce.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

#### Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions' Remarks

**Ms Sweet:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday during the debate on Bill 14, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions compared the UCP government to the communist government by saying: "It further enhanced my belief that even with a communist government, when they focus on the right issue for the people, people's livelihoods actually increase. I see so [many similarities] to the current UCP government." To the associate

minister: could you please share with this House what similarities you see between the UCP government and a communist one?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. associate minister clarified those comments in the House yesterday.

What's interesting to me is what has not been clarified by the Official Opposition in this Chamber, the question the Premier asked the Official Opposition yesterday, and that is that many of their members participated in a protest on the steps of the Legislature that included communist flags within the crowd, and they still have not condemned that. So will they stand up in this House right now and condemn that type of activity?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the associate minister compared the priorities of his government to communist ones and given that the current Premier has condemned the Prime Minister for similar remarks, to the Premier: will you also condemn the comments of the associate minister, or will he admit that he shares his views that a nondemocratic communist government is positive for people's livelihoods?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, the associate minister clarified his comments in the Assembly yesterday, and those comments speak for themselves. The members is welcome to refer to *Hansard* if she did not notice them at the time.

Again, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier's question to the opposition: do they support protests that include communist flags? Four of their members at least, that I know of, participated in a protest on the steps of the Legislature that was organized by a well-known antipipeline and anti oil and gas activist who in other places had blocked bridges and conducted themselves with civil disobedience that caused significant disturbance of the peace. Do they support that behaviour?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the associate minister twice expressed his admiration for the positive effects that a communist government can have on people's livelihoods and given that when trying to explain his remarks to the House, the associate minister went on to compare the government's Bill 14 to the priorities of nondemocratic communist governments, to the associate minister: will you apologize to your cabinet colleagues and UCP party members for comparing them and their priorities to those of nondemocratic communist governments?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, the associate minister clarified his comments in the Assembly yesterday. His clarification comments speak for themselves.

Here's another question that hasn't been answered by the NDP that has been brought up by myself earlier this week. The NDP, we do know, conducted an investigation into some of their members, some of the members who may remain in the benches today, for serious sexual misconduct. The leader of the NDP confirmed that there was a problem with some members when it came to sexual misconduct and that she had to take constructive action. She still has not acknowledged who those individuals are. Mr. Speaker, through you to them: do they currently sit in the NDP benches, yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Adoption, Foster Care, and Kinship Care

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans dream of one day having a family to call their own. Tragically, and often due to circumstances out of their own control, these dreams are unrealized. Some families may turn to adoption or fostering initiatives; however, these processes can be lengthy and expensive. To the Minister of Children's Services: how will this government create efficiencies in these processes that allow Albertans who are ready to adopt to build a family of their own?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister for Children's Services has the call.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It was such an incredible pleasure to spend time with my colleague in Lethbridge-East this summer and see what an exceptional advocate he is for his constituents.

Adoption is an issue that many members of our caucus care deeply about, and I am grateful for their advocacy in this area. Like my cabinet colleagues, I'm taking a thorough look at what red tape families encounter as they look to adopt to see how we might be able to streamline those processes while ensuring that children are safe and supported. We're also continuing discussions around the bill proposed by the minister of culture that was unanimously . . .

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that children in care often face unique challenges when placed in foster homes, including challenges such as integrating into a new foster home and adjusting to a new community, and further given that foster families must be adequately prepared to overcome these challenges and support the children in their care, can the minister please explain how this government is supporting families in caring for foster children?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister for Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Fostering and kinship caregivers across the province do incredibly remarkable work. They step up in a child's hour of need to offer safe and caring homes to the most vulnerable children in our province. Because this work is intensive and can be incredibly challenging, my ministry offers a variety of supports, including mandatory training, dedicated caseworkers to provide guidance and assistance, and things like respite care to give caregivers time to care for themselves. Later this month is Fostering and Kinship Caregiver Week, which will give us an opportunity to recognize these remarkable Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that children in foster care also require comprehensive support and follow-ups in order to ensure their success in foster care and beyond and given that these children must not fall through the cracks of this complicated system, to the same minister: what will this government do to ensure foster children are placed in homes or in kinship care arrangements that best suit the needs of the child in question?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our priority is to ensure that vulnerable children are safe and supported. We are committed to keeping indigenous families together whenever safely possible. Because of the nature of these fostering roles, rigorous screening is done for both kinship and foster homes, which includes annual reviews, ongoing contact, and assessment of any care concerns that might be identified. My ministry also recently launched new training for caregivers. The training now better reflects an understanding of child development, trauma and historic trauma, and highlights the importance of maintaining connection with family, community, culture, and language to a child's safety and well-being.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if I can have your attention for one brief moment. I would just like to bring to your attention the presence of the consul general of the country of Japan. He has joined us in the Speaker's gallery. I invite you to welcome him to the Assembly.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less the Deputy Speaker will proceed with the rest of the daily Routine.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 21(4) of the Election Act I'd like to table six copies of the following report, A Report of the Chief Electoral Officer: 2018 Enumeration. An electronic copy of this report will also be provided to all members.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. I have an article from the *Guardian*, and it's a question. Bad Ancestors: Does the Climate Crisis Violate the Rights of Those Yet to Be Born?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Okay. We're going to do it this way. Does anybody else have a tabling?

**Mr. Feehan:** I have an article entitled A Data-based Dismantling of Jason Kenney's Foreign-funding Conspiracy Theory by Sandy Garossino in analysis, energy, and politics.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have two tablings today. First, a tabling on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, a Joint Media Release in Response to Alberta Justice and Solicitor General's Draft Police Funding Model: Municipal Leaders Express Collective Concern Over Costs and Effects of Contemplated Change. I have five copies for tabling.

Also, on my own behalf I have the privilege of tabling a poem that I read today entitled Old Alberta Farmer, written by Mr. Davie Barnes, a Canadian soldier, farmer, and Thorhild resident, whose family is here to witness the tabling as well.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think we all enjoyed that poem.

## Orders of the Day Government Motions

### Canadian Armed Forces Health Care Funding

33. Mr. Schweitzer moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon, as amended:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce the federal government's decision to reduce the rates at which it reimburses the costs of providing health care services to Canadian Armed Forces members, call on the federal government to immediately and fully reverse this decision, commit to no future changes, and provide the highest level of treatment for these members, and recognize the contribution of these members, who bravely and willingly risk their lives for our country.

[Debate adjourned October 10]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any speakers to the amended Motion 33?

Should I put the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Government Motion 33 as amended carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 15 Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise and move second reading of Bill 15.

The Real Estate Council of Alberta, also referred to as RECA, was established under the Real Estate Act as the regulator for the real estate industry with a mandate to protect customers, establish and enforce professional standards, and provide services to the real estate industry. Unfortunately, over the past couple of years that council has failed to deliver on its mandate. RECA's current and most recent governing councils have been unable to exercise proper governance and oversight over the organization. It is clear that actions need to be taken in order to protect the overall operations of the council and its critically important role by refocusing and stabilizing the regulator for the immediate term and then ensuring efficiency and confidence in the future.

For those of my colleagues and for Albertans who don't know the backstory, this afternoon I'll walk you through what brought us to this point. In 2016 my department received the highest number of complaints about RECA that it had ever received, and since then that complaint number has continued to be consistent. That means that for at least three years there have been significant issues identified by Albertans, industry, council, and administration. This government is addressing those issues.

Early in my mandate I received a review from KPMG about the governance structure of the Real Estate Council of Alberta. The review had begun earlier in the year, after KPMG was tasked not just with reviewing but also with putting forward recommendations to address any concerns as well. Considering the complaints that had been raised against the council, complaints that included conflict within the council, a lack of trust, allegations of misconduct, and an inability of the council to work with the administration, I was curious what the independent reviewer's

reaction would be. It didn't take me long to find out. I needed only to read the first page to find out that the complaints my department had received over the past three years were warranted.

To be frank, Madam Speaker, it was very disappointing. It was disappointing that the council had deteriorated to this level. It was disappointing that the full scope of complaints was confirmed, and it was disappointing that nobody had addressed the complaints earlier. It's important to note that these complaints were significant.

2:50

The review is very clear in laying out all five major findings: first, "significant interpersonal conflict amongst Council and Administration"; second, that the "Council is not focused on strategic issues"; third, "Council does not have constructive relationships with industry associations;" fourth, that "Council is not exercising adequate oversight of RECA"; and fifth, that there is "minimal public representation on Council, and one industry association's ability to control the majority of Council member appointments contribute to these challenges."

Madam Speaker, by every measure RECA received a failing grade. That is why this legislation is so important. It will allow us to dismiss the current council and to appoint an administrator and to restore stability to the regulator while we work with industry partners to tackle the issue of broader governance reform in the coming months. Any further governance amendments will come later, but first we will engage with members of the real estate industry before we can chart a new path forward.

Madam Speaker, I've talked a little bit about what we're doing; now I'd like to go into why. Despite council having a positive history as an effective regulator prior to 2016, since that time the number of complaints made against them has escalated substantially. As the KPMG report has indicated, the level of dysfunction is undeniable. Since becoming minister, I've had numerous Albertans approach me about this dysfunction, and they've been asking for my intervention. Clearly, the council has lost the confidence of the real estate industry, of Albertans, and I have to say that I, too, have lost confidence in the regulator's ability to protect Albertans. It may be surprising to you to hear that the council itself recognized and was concerned with how it was operating. It may also surprise you to hear that the council was asking for the minister's office to intervene.

At the bottom of the first page of the KPMG review it states:

All Council members and senior staff interviewed during the review described the current state of Council as being challenged. There is a lack of trust among Council Members and between Council and Administration, as evidenced by several complaints and allegations amongst and between Council members and Administration, and requests to the Minister to intervene in Council affairs from Council members and Administration.

I'll point out to you, Madam Speaker, and to the other members of this House that it was not a singular request for ministerial intervention. There were multiple.

With that in mind, the action proposed in this bill is long overdue. There may be some who say that dismissing the entire council takes things a step too far. To them I would say that the KPMG review directly addresses that concern. The authors of the review state that it is necessary to remove all members of council because "dismissing only a subset of Council could contribute to a further deterioration in trust amongst Council, Administration and industry."

Madam Speaker, there may be some who ask: why is legislation needed to dismiss council? To them I would say, through you, that over the past number of months I have had to intervene with ministerial orders to stop the dysfunction of the council. One

particular ministerial order I issued addressed the overreach of the council when they were proposing to implement a font-size change for real estate agents on their promotional materials. Preliminary estimates indicate that this would have cost between \$35 million and \$50 million to the industry to implement and would have accomplished nothing to protect Albertans. This just illustrates how out of touch the council has become. But these ministerial orders have not been enough, and the dysfunction persists. As the KPMG report suggests, we agree with the need to replace council, full stop. That is why this legislation is necessary.

Madam Speaker, some might ask: why is the appointment of an administrator necessary? To them, through you, I would say that for Albertans to have faith in the real estate industry, they have to have faith in the regulator. For them to have faith in the regulator, the regulator has to do their job and do it well. The council has not been doing its job, and that is why this legislation will dismiss them. But we need to ensure that the regulator function is performed, and that is why this legislation will allow me to appoint an administrator. This is a necessary step on the path to restoring Albertans' faith in the industry and its regulator. A properly functioning regulator is incredibly important for any industry and especially for one that oversees billions of dollars of transactions. Alberta's real estate industry, specifically the resale housing market, saw approximately \$21 billion worth of sales in 2018. Fortunately, this dysfunction we've talked about today has not affected everyday Albertans who are simply trying to buy or sell a home. Albertans can still trust the real estate professionals they are working with.

Investment in real estate is a significant decision for many Albertans, who should benefit from a well-governed regulator that ensures their industry professionals are licensed, have professional education, and can be held to account for any wrongdoing. Albertans deserve to be confident that their investments are protected.

Effective oversight is also critical to protecting the livelihoods and reputations of real estate professionals. Madam Speaker, I have been clear with you that the dysfunction of this council is significant and is clearly disclosed in the independent review conducted by KPMG. With this legislation I am putting an end to the dysfunction and putting us back on a path to proper governance and a path to restoring Albertans' trust in the regulator.

For these reasons, I am pleased to bring this bill forward and move that it be read a second time. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 15? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 15. I would also like to thank the minister for continuing our government's work to address the concerning situation that has developed within the Real Estate Council of Alberta.

While I think both sides can agree that it's important for arm's-length organizations to remain that way, there are times where government must intervene to safeguard the interests of all Albertans. In this case it is necessary, which is why I will be voting in favour to support this act.

Thousands of Albertans access the services regulated through the Real Estate Act every year, and while the vast majority of those transactions are happy occasions – new homeowners buying for the first time or moving to a new community to access job and education opportunities for their family – sometimes the process does not go as smoothly as it should.

Now, the Real Estate Council of Alberta plays a critical role in ensuring that Albertans buying and selling property can rely on a well-regulated profession and a strong appeals process when those

issues do arise. This work is important, and it must be done to a high standard to protect Alberta consumers and property owners.

I would just like to take a moment to share with this House some background on the actions – I know the minister did, but I would also like to touch on them – already taken by the government to address this important issue. In 2018 the then Minister of Service Alberta received a number of complaints from the profession and the public that the work of RECA had essentially ground to a halt. Our government took the responsible step of investigating these concerns. That preliminary assessment was completed in October 2018 by George B. Cuff & Associates.

The assessment led the minister of the day to commission a review under section 76 of the act to provide real, practical solutions to the problems being faced by RECA. KPMG took the time they needed to get their review right. Their 60-page review, which is available on the government's open-data page – and I would urge all of my colleagues to review their findings – was released at the end of June.

Now, normally a review under the act would result in the minister issuing an order to RECA to follow, but as an arm's-length organization the act anticipates that RECA would be given the opportunity to put their own house back in order before more drastic measures are taken. But in this case KPMG saw a need for more timely action to address the issues facing RECA, which is why we are here today to discuss the merits of giving the minister new powers to fire the board before issuing orders.

I would also like to take a moment to thank KPMG and all of the stakeholder organizations who have worked on the recommendations that have ultimately brought this bill before the House. Their hard work and diligence are to be commended.

While I will be supporting this bill, I do have a few concerns. This bill gives the Minister of Service Alberta a lot of power. He will have the unilateral ability to appoint an administrator to oversee the work of RECA while the council is re-established. Now, it's very important that the minister gets this right. The Real Estate Council of Alberta deserves a fair, transparent, and smooth transition into what its new governing structure and membership will look like. Albertans deserve that transparency and will benefit from a transition back to a council that includes industry experts and public oversight as soon as possible.

Real estate agents, mortgage brokers, appraisers, and property managers are an integral part of our province's economy, and they deserve a good governance process.

Stakeholders of this bill should have a say in who the administrator is and should work with the administrator in deciding what the new governing structure of RECA will look like. I have spoken with stakeholders impacted by this bill, and they agree that these steps are necessary but also hope that the resulting process of restructuring RECA is fair and transparent.

3:00

The minister, of course, gets to select his own administrator. This administrator is appointed for a one-year term, which is renewable. The renewable terms give flexibility for the administrator to be there for specifically just as long as they need to be. Now, if done properly, this is a good plan. The administrator should be someone who will work closely and collaboratively with the stakeholders involved.

However, I do have some concerns with this government's recent appointments, and I hope this is not the case this time. I hope the minister does not take this opportunity to appoint an administrator as a chance to pay a favour to a UCP donor or candidates that did not win in the recent provincial election such as Len Rhodes being appointed to the AGLC or Tom Olsen being appointed to the energy war room or whatever it's being called today. The judgment this

government exercises in appointments has been particularly bad lately with selecting the Member for Calgary-East to be on the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund despite the active investigations into his conduct. RECA's current turbulent situation should not be used as a time for UCP cronyism. The real estate industry is too important and foundational in Alberta to be neglected for a political ploy. Albertans deserve better than that. Unfortunately, we in this House have no assurances that that will be the case.

I'm not criticizing KPMG's findings. They are experts, and, as I said, they took the time they needed to get it right during their review. I do not, however, necessarily agree that this bill is the only way to enact those recommendations. Too much of how this is going to go after this bill passes will be left to regulation, and that's turning into a bit of a pattern under this government.

Remember the changes to the Education Act? This government assured Albertans that those details would be looked after in the regulations. Fast-forward to the Friday before the Labour Day long weekend, literally the last business day before school starts, and late in that day it came to light that the Minister of Education had repealed rules that protected Alberta parents from paying school fees. They used that same bill as an excuse to change the name of public school boards by taking the word "public" out without any consultation or notice to the affected boards. And months later we're still waiting for details that were supposed to come in regulation about whether the government's Red Tape Reduction Act is actually going to make life better for any Albertans or whether it's an administrative boondoggle that accomplishes nothing other than adding an associate minister's expenses. I would hope that this government would be more transparent.

Now, given the wide-ranging powers the minister is asking this House to accord him and how much of this work is left to regulation, I think it's fair to be concerned. We will hold the government to account to ensure that the power of RECA is given back to Albertans and not used in a way for the UCP to appoint more of their insider party members to boards. I look forward to further discussion in this House. I hope the minister will take the opportunity, as he has already, to shed some light on how he plans to get RECA back on track. I will of course have more questions as we reach committee, but I do appreciate the minister taking action on this file, and I look forward to discussing it more very soon.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 15 in second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise with pleasure to speak to Bill 15, Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019. As a former industry member for 30 years, a real estate sales agent, it's important to me to see the industry regulator, the Real Estate Council of Alberta, operating properly. I know there have been long-standing issues with the real estate council, and our former government, under Minister Malkinson, took action to instigate this review as a result of complaints that were received. This review was, I think, welcome news by the industry members, which are administered under RECA's watch. I think that KPMG did a fairly thorough analysis and came up with recommendations that the current government is basically following through on. I agree and I think industry members also agree that simply tinkering with the membership of RECA, given the numerous evidences and findings of the KPMG report of the dysfunction of the council, wouldn't have worked, so basically starting fresh with completely new members and starting with an administrator is the appropriate way to go in this situation.

I always am concerned when we find that a self-regulating body such as the real estate industry has found itself in governance trouble. That, to me, says that there may be something we should be looking at across the board in terms of the self-governance operations of some of the boards and councils that we have in the province. That may be taking a look at how and what and the terms of reference that we use to appoint individuals, particularly to not only the council memberships but also to the executive director or board chair positions. What can happen in those situations is that those executive directors or board chairs can form associations because of their longer standing than most of the council members, who will rotate in and out of the positions on a more frequent basis. The executive director can wield a significant amount of power and influence, which may lend itself to the creation of teams of council members.

I think that's something that we need to take a look at in terms of ensuring that executive directors of such councils perhaps have term limits and also ensure that the annual performance reviews are done and have some means of enforcing that these performance reviews are carried out. I know that the KPMG report that was commissioned by our former government indicated that these performance reviews were not necessarily done as required. They may have revealed earlier some of the deficiencies in governance that were happening at the Real Estate Council of Alberta. I know that many stakeholders have been concerned for a long time about the operation of the real estate council. They, I believe, are happy to see that some action has been taken as a result of the review that our former government initiated. There are concerns, of course, about the process by which the new council will be appointed and how that transition will go.

Also, I'm concerned about the timeline. We know that it's a one-year renewable contract that the administrator has been proposed to have. I don't know if it's going to go beyond a year or not, but industry members deserve to have a functioning body, a functioning council, which deals with the issues and matters of the real estate and Alberta mortgage brokerage industry and other industries that are under RECA's purview. Rather than focusing on governance problems and getting bogged down in those issues, the industry members are all wanting to get back to normal business and functioning. I along with them are hoping that the appointments are – that that process gets undertaken fairly soon, that the administrator has as a top priority getting back to normal business and getting back to a properly functioning real estate council that is focused on the interests of industry members and the general public in terms of protecting both of their interests in the operation of the industries that are under the purview of the council.

Many stakeholders are concerned about the long-term industry impact or the impact of having an administrator rather than an effectively operating council over the longer term. There is a genuine desire to ensure that the process of appointments gets into place fairly soon and that it be an open and transparent process so that we avoid the pitfalls of the past and we don't end up getting into a quagmire that the RECA council ended up getting into over the course of its last number of years. It's something that I and the critic for Service Alberta on our opposition side, the Member for Edmonton-West Henday, will be closely watching and monitoring. We will, of course, in further readings of this bill have further questions and bring up other concerns that we're looking forward to addressing as this legislation moves forward through the different stages of debate in this House.

3:10

I'm wondering if, of course, a power of RECA is to actually be placed in the hands of councillors, once again, beyond the

administrator's time frame. What I wonder and what I hope is that we end up with an adherence to true principles of a governance model that any government, board, commission, or council or even, for that matter, a private corporate board might be expected to follow. It's my view that it's high time that the review got undertaken. I'm very, very glad that we initiated it when we were government ourselves under the former minister and, now that the review has been released, government is acting upon it. I'm looking forward to getting the process started but also making sure that the same result doesn't happen. It would be shameful if we ended up having the process of appointments allowed to result in a quagmire of personality conflicts and an executive director that fuelled the fire.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is now available. Would anyone like to speak?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a second time]

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### **Bill 14 Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act**

**The Chair:** We have under consideration Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. Are there any speakers or amendments to the bill?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Madam Chair, we made good progress this week, and I know that some of our members have a long ways to go to get home to their families for Thanksgiving. Even those that don't have far to go, I'm sure, are looking forward to spending some time with their loved ones, so I would, if the House agrees, move to rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration some bills and would like to report progress on the following bill: Bill 14.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, say no. So carried.

**Mr. McIver:** Madam Speaker, as I've said, we've done some good work this week, and I'd like to wish everybody a happy Thanksgiving and move that we adjourn the House until the appointed time on Tuesday morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:15 p.m.]





## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, October 10, 2019**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1313-26 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1329-31 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1347-57 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve.*), 1357-62 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c8 ]

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c5 ]

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cR-8.2 ]

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c4 ]

**Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c3 ]

**Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1375-83 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c7 ]

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 , passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cP-41.7 ]

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c2 ]

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cF-1.5 ]

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1393-94 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c9 ]

**Bill 13\* — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1345-47 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1383-93 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 cA-33.5 ]

**Bill 14 — Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act (Wilson)**

First Reading — 1654 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1655-77 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft.*), 1679-95 (*Oct. 9, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1708-25 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft.*), 1761 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 15 — Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019 (Glubish)**

First Reading — 1707 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1758-61 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201\* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 825-38 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 cP-30.6 ]

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 838-40 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft.*), 1115-22 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, October 15, 2019

Day 27

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, October 15, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, everyone. I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving weekend.

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. So may Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 14

##### Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** Edmonton-North West.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

. . . the great riding of Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, Bill 14. Certainly, our party, the Official Opposition, does support this very meaningful work towards reconciliation. We also believe, of course, that each of these things that we do here in the Legislature must contribute to the larger work of supporting reconciliation towards Alberta's indigenous communities.

We know that economic opportunities for indigenous communities in Alberta are absolutely essential. To make that investment now and in the future is a very important part of creating growth and meaningful economic opportunity in rural areas, and it's a good idea, I think, especially with, particularly, the energy industry.

We know that it's important to make sure that we have transparency, when we build this bill to become law, every step along the way, and it's important to remind ourselves every step of the way that we must make sure that we are dealing with this on a nation-to-nation basis and that indigenous leaders and membership, indeed all community members, must have real and demonstrable power in the oversight of whatever economic opportunities the corporation might create.

I think we know that with the current tools that we have available to us, we must not discount those, by any means. The aboriginal business investment fund, I think, for example, provides capital to indigenous and community-owned businesses, and this has done

good work in regard to the forestry sector, the service industry, the financial and agriculture sectors as well. We also have the Alberta aboriginal economic partnerships program – right? – which, again, needs to be buttressed and strengthened every step of the way. There is the First Nations development fund, which is a way by which you can develop economically as well, and, you know, there are other mechanisms as well.

I think that, you know, we need to remind ourselves of where capital does come from every step of the way here in this Legislature, and it's important to remind ourselves of the importance of ensuring we have sufficient funding for these sorts of initiatives. Again, I think it's not lost on anyone here in the House or across Alberta that by making a significant, \$4.5 billion corporate tax cut to our bottom line here in the budget, each initiative that we might move forward here, be it in regard to the Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act or to education, health care, and so forth, is undermined or jeopardized by a lack of adequate funds from the provincial budget to support that.

You know, always we're here to be constructively critical, Madam Chair, and ultimately, if you don't have sufficient cash flow into the government in terms of the budget, then each of these initiatives, including this one, could be left in jeopardy.

You know, I think that there are lots of First Nations that are very interested in developing opportunities around, especially, the energy sector. We know that we had a great uptake, our government, in regard to First Nations renewable energy initiatives. I just hope that this doesn't get lost in the transition to this new government. I think we found that just naturally and, I suppose, with a sense of conscience around developing sustainable energy industries here in the province of Alberta that many First Nations and Métis leaders were drawn to and were very interested in renewable energy initiatives – right? – which I think we saw bear fruit in solar programs across the province as well as other potential.

We don't want to lose any of those things. We must look at this as a whole. Certainly, our energy industry is the backbone of our economy here in the province of Alberta, and we as the Official Opposition look to keep it that way – right? – to make sure that we have the funds and the initiative for everyone to prosper here in the province of Alberta.

The Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, Bill 14, is certainly something I do support. It's an important way by which to help to work with First Nations on a nation-to-nation basis to ensure prosperity for the future, and I look forward to seeing the details of this bill as it becomes an act and the regulations that will support it.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very happy to hear that the opposition is going to support Bill 14 and that we can move forward on the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, a very important act. As I said in my previous speech, I believe during second reading, there's a common theme that I heard all across the province over the last four years. A lot of opportunities out there, a lot of commitment to communities that wanted to get involved: regardless of whether it was forestry or the oil and gas industry, the common theme I heard out there was just a lack of access to capital.

You know, I look at the example of the Primco Dene group up in Cold Lake First Nation and what they've done with access through the First Nations development fund and the casinos up there. We can see that they've gotten into the oil and gas industry. They're

very, very well situated up there in that. Hotels: of course, they've got the casino up there. Since then they've also gotten a gas station right up there at the casino as well as some service bays in Cold Lake, restaurants in Cold Lake. They've really diversified and given opportunities to their community just by having that access to capital, so I'm really looking forward to what we can see coming forward in the years to come.

Again, I'd like to thank the minister for acting on this so quickly. I mean, we're only about five months into our mandate, and this is something that was very important. I think it was brought up when we were having discussions before with the campaign, and I'm really glad to see another positive promise made and a promise kept as well. Again, thank you, Minister, for that.

All the indigenous leaders that I've talked to are very, very committed to their communities and looking for opportunities. I think that this Bill 14 will provide access to funds for those communities, especially the remote ones that don't, you know, have access to the bingos or a community that could even support that. I really look forward to what we can bring forward in the future, and I hope that we see some really positive access to this and some fantastic companies. I know that there are some really good entrepreneurs out there that are waiting for this, and, like I said, I look forward to seeing it. Again I thank the minister for that.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. minister of economic development and trade.

**10:10**

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a true pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. I want to commend my colleague the Minister of Indigenous Relations for his profound and unceasing advocacy for economic development in indigenous communities and for his tireless work in his portfolio. The constituents of Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin are lucky to have him representing them not just in this Chamber but also at the cabinet table. He's a stalwart proponent of the indigenous peoples in our province.

Alberta finally has a government that understands that when indigenous communities benefit from the responsible development of our natural resources, the entire province benefits. I had the privilege just a few weeks ago to attend, with several of my colleagues and the Minister of Indigenous Relations, an event where he and the Premier signed a protocol agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy. The Blackfoot Confederacy includes three First Nations in southern Alberta that together have more than 22,000 members. As the Premier said at the signing of the protocol agreement: our government is focused on building a true partnership with indigenous peoples through shared prosperity; this agreement will formalize how we build success together.

This historic agreement had many topics of co-operation listed, and one of them was economic development. Those two words are of tremendous importance to me, not merely because they make up half of my ministry title but because they are of huge importance to our government's mandate and, in this case, to the creation of shared prosperity between our government and indigenous communities across the province.

Through economic development Albertans can see prosperity, yes, but it is also through growing the economy that we fund our government's programs. Without economic development – and we see this in many jurisdictions, not just in Canada or North America but across the world – without the natural growth of an economy, our beloved health care, education, and social programs are not possible. The roads that we drive on, the hospitals we attend, the

fountains outside the Legislature: they are all powered by economic growth. Through economic development we can bring prosperity to all Albertans. Economic development for indigenous communities means that we will be equal partners in prosperity, where the growth that comes from Alberta's economy is enjoyed by all of those who live there.

Before I speak directly on the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, I want to speak of the crucial importance of economic development in indigenous communities. At the signing of the Blackfoot protocol agreement I spoke to a young man excited about his plans and his vision for a tourism business in his community. In my meetings with business leaders across the province I have been told of the tremendous potential in indigenous communities and how government can, through co-operation and partnerships, play a part in building prosperity for indigenous Albertans.

There is tremendous potential for tourism in indigenous communities. Many communities are eager to share their culture and their history with the world. These communities are unique within the realm of human experience and indeed in the history of our planet, and we need to partner with communities who wish to share their experience with the rest of humanity. There are profound and inspirational stories that will spread the tremendous history of indigenous Albertans and showcase their truly exceptional culture to visitors from around the globe if we can only harness the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit that is already present in indigenous communities. Those partnerships are just waiting to be formed, and we today are discussing legislation that will lead to partnerships of a similar potential, the harnessing of natural resources for the benefit of all.

The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation will make it easier for indigenous communities and organizations that want to participate in natural resources development to access funding. That is a critical part of economic development. Accessing funding is often a barrier for indigenous communities, and through this legislation we are providing a pathway to do that.

As the Minister of Indigenous Relations said in first reading of this legislation, this government has committed to walk a path of economic reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Many indigenous communities have inhabited their lands for thousands of years, and they want to benefit from the wealth generated from that land. Indigenous peoples have long been innovators and entrepreneurs in their communities. Their culture and their communities have been a part of the very fabric of Alberta for millennia. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation is a profound demonstration of how dedicated our government is to partnering with them. The reserving of \$1 billion, promised in our election platform, to partner with indigenous communities is a derivation of the natural resources across our province.

Our government has put a great deal of preparation into this legislation. There were 89 indigenous participants in the engagement sessions. Business leaders such as Syncrude, Suncor, ATCO, and EPCOR and industry associations such as the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Canadian Heavy Oil Association took part. Coalition representatives from Eagle Spirit Energy, First Nations Major Projects Coalition, Project Reconciliation, Iron Coalition, Western Indigenous Pipeline Group, and the Fort McKay Mikisew Cree tank farm project all participated. This is a prestigious list, and it shows that our government is serious in making the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation an effective undertaking. But even that was not the extent of the consultation. Minister Wilson met with nearly 200 indigenous business and finance leaders on the establishment of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation.

Time and time again indigenous communities have been unable to share in the prosperity of Alberta's natural resource economy. It is time to move past words and move into action. That is why we are moving boldly and decisively to bring forward this legislation within mere months of forming government. The legislation is emblematic of our government's vision: bold, common-sense, and with a laser focus on creating prosperity for all Albertans. What has historically been an inability for indigenous groups to provide adequate security to financial lenders has been a significant barrier to their ability to access capital and, therefore, develop the capacity to develop or invest in major resource projects. Some communities have been able to do so, but others have not. The indigenous opportunities corporation will bridge that gap.

For too long all of the debate around the energy industry and indigenous communities has focused on the negativity and the conflict, yet that is only a tiny minority of the true conversation. So many different indigenous communities want to be partners in responsible resource development, and some have already done so. We have the Frog Lake Energy Resources Corporation, which produces 2,000 barrels a day of crude oil. The Fort McKay First Nation purchased a 34 per cent stake in a major Suncor oil tank farm.

Those are just a few examples, but they highlight that there is tremendous potential for further partnerships, and we can build and increase the momentum to a new height, where indigenous communities can become the real owners of major energy projects. We will not get pipelines built or our energy to market if we do not have strong relationships with our indigenous peoples.

After our government hosted the first cabinet-indigenous meeting in five years, Treaty 6 Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild said, and I quote, it is possible to have sustainable development and promote respect for Mother Earth at the same time. I think from our experience the answer is yes. Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey said: working relationships and this billion-dollar fund to backstop investments for First Nations to have their foot in the door and the economic benefits of Alberta, that was ideal thinking for us.

Madam Chair, there is clearly a desire for strong support for this initiative among indigenous leadership, and our government is certainly putting action to words with this legislation. Sustainable development and respect for our planet: this is a message that indigenous Albertans have been speaking about since time immemorial, but it is also the biggest part of the national debate happening right now. We see opposing forces clashing over those two concepts on a monthly, daily, and even hourly basis, but it can be done. Indigenous peoples have done so throughout their history. We should not only listen to them but also reach out and form new relationships in the name of doing just that. When indigenous peoples thrive, Alberta thrives. Through mutual respect, through strong relationships we can create a lasting and cohesive Alberta that will enshrine prosperity for all in the spirit of entrepreneurship that has been emblematic of the inhabitants of this land for thousands of years.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd just like to take what may be one of the final opportunities to speak to this while it's in committee. In the past we have talked about our desire to be co-operative and supportive of the government in their plan to move forward on economic development with the indigenous communities as, indeed, we did in many different ways when we were sitting on the other side of the House. We were very pleased

to be working with economic development in terms of green energy projects; for example, \$50 million a year under our indigenous climate leadership plan, that was accessed by all 48 First Nations and all eight Métis settlements and provided jobs, well, in fact, in every single one of those communities, at least a job or two, and then, of course, many other jobs as they developed incredibly strong solar panel companies and house assessment companies and those kinds of things.

**10:20**

We were very pleased to work with the indigenous community in economic development, and we're very discouraged to see that this present government has decided to cancel those kinds of economic development pieces for the indigenous community. We were also very pleased to be working with the indigenous community in terms of our renewable energy electricity programs, wherein in the second round of the REP there was a requirement that indigenous communities have a minimal capital investment of 25 per cent of the project. As a result, we had three First Nations communities in the province of Alberta who were able to get invested in significant renewable energy projects – the Blood Tribe in southern Alberta in Treaty 7; the Paul band in Treaty 6; and, of course, Sawridge in Treaty 8 – where they were able to contribute to the electricity market here in the province of Alberta, where they were able to expand our renewable energy programs in the province of Alberta. Again, I'm a bit discouraged to see that there is no commitment on the part of the government at this particular time to help indigenous communities in that avenue of economic development.

I guess I just want to speak to some of the things that we heard just now from the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. While we agree with the intent here of helping the indigenous community, the actions of the government so far, up until this bill came into the House, have been exactly the opposite of the intention of this bill, removing economic opportunities for indigenous communities. We actually had a demonstrated positive effect in terms of creating jobs and creating economic development in indigenous communities. So when we have a successful program that is fulfilling the intent of this particular bill, why would you undermine all of that?

I know that the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism mentioned a number of things that made her very proud. I was curious to hear that she was very proud of them as almost all of the things that she mentioned are things that were accomplished during the previous government. I'd like to take just a moment to reiterate some of those things for the record, to demonstrate, indeed, that the government of the NDP was, in fact, very successful in creating economic development in indigenous communities. But we were not limited in where the economic development could be created, as this present government is. We indeed had a broader, more expansive definition of success, not a narrow one that forced indigenous communities to get in line with a narrow objective of the current government.

Let me mention a few of the things that she did speak about. For example, she talked about the Blackfoot protocol agreement, which she was very pleased to attend with the Minister of Indigenous Relations, and how profound that was for her. I want to remind her that it was, in fact, our government that created the Blackfoot protocol agreement. We're very pleased to see that this is one piece that you're continuing. I'd like to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations for seeing the good work that had been done by the previous government and continuing that.

I notice that in referring to her conversation with a gentleman at the Blackfoot protocol agreement signing that occurred earlier in the year, she indicated in that discussion that there were great



opportunities for tourism, of course something she'd be interested in as that's part of her mandate in her portfolio. However, I also want to note that last week this government defeated a motion that would allow indigenous communities that are interested in tourism to use these dollars. So here she is standing up and saying how great this particular bill is, and then she actively votes against the possibility of creating the economic development projects that she was specifically asked to champion in the House by someone at the protocol agreement she attended with such pleasure. You know, it just seems contradictory to me – I'm sort of caught off guard – that this government would act to defeat their own intention, that the minister would stand up and talk about her excitement at the potential and then act to defeat it by voting against it. Those kinds of things confuse me in terms of their thinking around these things.

I would really like this government to reconsider, before we go into the final third reading on this bill, the potential of having indigenous communities themselves have the ability to define how this bill would most help them. If you go to the indigenous communities and say to them, without constricted controls such as "you can only invest in resource development," but rather say to them, "How is it that you would like your communities to develop?" you will find that they're very interested in a very wide range of economic development opportunities.

There are people within the indigenous communities that are capable in every single field that is available to every other Albertan, people that would love to see some expansion in terms of manufacturing, people that would love to see retail sales, people that would love to see projects that not only help with economic development but help with the internal development of their nations such as grocery stores where food is readily available and prices are kept under control, as we were able to help fund in the Blood Tribe and O'Chiese and Fort Chip under our previous government's work.

Those are the kinds of things that came forward and they were asking for. Now suddenly none of that matters. That concerns me deeply, and I don't know why the government would work around them.

The other thing that hasn't been mentioned here is the second half of responsible development in the oil and gas industry. Now, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism just said that she heard Grand Chief Willie Littlechild say that the appropriate development of our natural resources is completely possible, and it can be done in an environmentally respectful and appropriate manner. All I hear in this bill is about the development, nothing about the other half of that: the development in an appropriate and environmentally respectful manner. Nothing in here helps the indigenous communities who want to make sure that as these projects develop, they will be appropriately consulted and have the opportunity to speak to those pieces of development in a way that reflects their values, not just simply the value of developing the resource but doing so in a way that is good for the environment and good for their communities.

A lot of work has been done previously in terms of enhancing the consultation policies for First Nations people. In fact, we increased the amount of monies available for First Nations from \$7 million to \$27 million in the last year. I am hoping that when the budget comes out, we'll of course see that money continue. But I also know that there were about 14 recommendations about other mechanisms that could be used to enhance First Nations' ability to speak to resource development through the consultation process, yet we haven't heard a word from this government about the renewal of the consultation policies. I'd like to see that because if, as Grand Chief Willie Littlechild says, two things can happen at once, resource development and protection of the environment, why is this

government only speaking to resource development and not speaking to protection of the environment?

It seems to me that what we're seeing in this bill is a good intention but made narrow by a very narrow vision of society and a very narrow vision of the future; that is that the First Nations people can participate only if they jump onboard with the gung-ho development of oil and gas resources. Now, we know this to be true, and not only have they brought in this bill, but they've also designed a fund of \$10 million for litigation, which will allow First Nations who are developing resources to sue First Nations who are trying to protect the environment.

**10:30**

Now, I've had a number of phone calls from indigenous people in the community who are saying that it is quite clear what is happening here. This government is trying to pit First Nations against First Nations, indigenous communities against other indigenous communities. They're doing that by enhancing the ability to develop and build the economic potential in the resource sector and doing everything possible to quash the very important value, as mentioned moments ago by the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, of protection of the environment. She heard half of what Grand Chief Willie Littlechild had said and acted on half of what he said and completely ignored the other half.

This is my last chance to seek from the government the consideration of actually changing this bill before we go into third reading to allow different kinds of development and to bring forward a bill that would enhance consultation and the protection of the environment. If indeed you believe what it is that you're being told by the indigenous community, which I kind of hope you do, I would like to see action by this government in pursuit of that set of values. Right now we're not seeing that. We're seeing a government who is trying to co-opt indigenous participation in their own agenda and limiting indigenous voices whenever the indigenous voice does not suit their agenda. That's something that's simply not acceptable.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It gives me great pleasure to be able to stand today. You know, we just finished having a weekend of Thanksgiving, and I hope that all of you had a good Thanksgiving weekend. It sort of got me thinking a little bit that one of the things that we can be giving thanks for is Bill 14. I want to thank the minister personally for his vision and for his willingness to move forward in action on that vision. This bill is in many ways unprecedented in the history of Canada and Alberta, and because of its bold vision, I think that we can say that we are grateful and thankful for the opportunity. That's what Albertans really want, I believe, in life: the opportunity to try and succeed, the opportunity to use our skills and our capacities and our abilities to move forward and to create a better life for Albertans and for our families. I believe that this bill helps us to do that.

Indigenous communities will be able to own and invest in natural resource development, and that has the capacity to change lives. That has the capacity to change communities. It's something that has my wholehearted support and that I believe will move us forward as a province and as a community. Madam Chair, this allows our First Nations peoples and Albertans in general to be able to become true commercial partners in the industry that is perhaps the foundation, to this point in our history, of this province. The

United Conservative Party stands up, as we have every single time, for the responsible development of our natural resources, and this allows us to continue to do that. These loan guarantees and other financial tools will allow us to continue to responsibly develop the natural resources and create the vibrant communities that are capable of providing for their families and for the community in general. This is going to be up and running by around the spring of 2020. I just know that in my communications with the First Nations that are in my constituency, they're very excited about Bill 14.

Mr. Minister, there's nothing better in life than having the capacity to dream and to vision and to provide hope as you can see a path forward, and that's what I think is the heart of this bill. It provides a vision and a hope for a path forward. I'm just going to give you one quick example, and then I'm going to sit down. We've had conversations with a company in my constituency about partnering and using this program to have the first program of its kind in the world, which is a deep-well, continuous-loop geothermal electrical project. When we outline the potential and the vision for some of the First Nations to buy into something like this, to sit down with the board that's going to be struck and that's going to be looking at the business propositions, they get excited about this, a company that they could own that's going to provide carbon-free electricity that they can either sell onto the grid or that they could use, as we're going to suggest that they use, for a greenhouse operation on their own lands using abandoned wells and making them produce again, this time with electricity.

Now, we'll see if that vision and that hope go through, and we'll see if we can put that business plan together and work with them, but it provides a conversation. It provides hope. It provides a vision. It provides a way forward for them to be able to provide the jobs they need for their community, to provide the hope that they need for their community. They're excited, we're excited, and I just want to say thank you to the minister for bringing this bill forward.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to rise and speak in favour of Bill 14 today. I think the Member for Edmonton-North West was right on point starting off, when we're talking about moving towards reconciliation, that we need to do everything we can to rebuild that relationship, including things like simply recognizing treaties, something that I've seen, unfortunately, fall off here since the new government has come in. So the opportunity to rise right here in the heart of Treaty 6 to discuss this bill is, I think, very, very important.

When I'm looking at this bill, there are a couple of items that I'm a little bit, I guess, disappointed around. I don't want to get into a lot of the details. I think the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford got into them quite well. When we're talking about a bit of the narrow focus of the opportunities that are being provided to our indigenous peoples in terms of investment, I think we should be able to promote a wide range of ideas, of thoughts, and of opportunities rather than simply a rather limited scope in terms of what we're looking at. I think the member said that it's most important for them to decide what is going to work best in each of their communities, and we have to be able to enable those opportunities. I think, unfortunately, we're missing that piece out of this bill to enable them to look at many different opportunities, not just in the natural resources, not just in our oil and gas but anywhere from renewable energies, manufacturing, anything along those lines. I really wish we could have seen some language around that, but as I said, I am in support.

I guess, you know, thinking back on my time in the labour world, one of the things we used to say was: sometimes some language is

better than no language. So I'm looking at this as an opportunity to, at the very least, use this as a springboard to move on to bigger and better opportunities for our indigenous peoples. I'm also a little disappointed around a lack of language around the board membership. I highly think that we should have had that board consisting of a membership of, at the bare minimum, at least half because they're the ones that live in these communities. Our indigenous peoples are the ones that know what will work best for them, and we have to seek that knowledge, that input at every opportunity. That's what reconciliation is all about, something that I think the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and former Indigenous Relations minister took to heart, I think, not only each and every day but every second of those days that he was minister.

When I look at things like a \$4.5 billion corporate handout yet we're only getting a mere \$24 million for our indigenous peoples, I think that's a bit of a disservice. We should be looking to invest those dollars right here at home within our own communities and, again, providing those opportunities that they feel are best suited for them.

**10:40**

Like I said, I think the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford said it very well. I do support Bill 14. I hope this will be a springboard for, you know, greater opportunities for indigenous peoples. I will thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations for bringing this forward. I hope that in that spirit of reconciliation you will continue to allow those opportunities to grow from what we hear from the communities, not just what we think that we're hearing.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity, Madam Chair, to be able to speak to this.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 14 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

### Bill 15

#### Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers to the bill?

Shall I call the question?

[The clauses of Bill 15 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** I move to rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 14 and Bill 15.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard the motion, does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 14

#### Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move third reading of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

We have moved swiftly through debate on this bill, in part because we're all elected officials and we know what it means to want the best for the communities that we represent. It is for this reason we ran for office in the first place. We don't take jobs like this just for the hours. I, like many of my colleagues, saw too many of our friends and neighbours struggling to get by. Alberta's economic downturn put a lot of hard-working people out of work and out of luck. For me, their stories became my rallying cry to get involved in government so I could try to change the outcome for them. Everyone wants a chance at a happily ever after, Madam Speaker, and I believe that being a good steward of the public trust means working hard for every Albertan to have their chance.

Through debate in this Chamber we have heard many passionate stories about indigenous people and their struggles for their economic security. However, it's best to hear directly from some of the most respected First Nations and Métis leadership in the province. Like Chief Billy Morin of the Enoch said during our AIOC Act announcement last week: this is needed for First Nations, for treaty people, but we're also Albertans; this is Alberta, and Alberta is known for its oil and gas, and that's what's going to keep us going forward. Or the words from Chief Joseph Weasel Child of Siksika Nation: we've always been told, since the time of treaty, that we're going to be given the tools to make us more self-sufficient, and that has never happened, but now, after this election, we're really excited.

Madam Speaker, we need to remember that indigenous communities are our neighbours. Their success is our success, and the jobs they create boost Alberta's economy. The projects they invest in bring new revenue to their communities so that they can take care of the socioeconomic projects that they need, and they want to be part of the industries that can bring them prosperity.

I mentioned briefly in my earlier speech, last week, the incredible success story of the Whitefish (Goodfish) First Nation and their dry cleaning business, and we saw the prosperity and revenue driving the local economy and lifting up the community supports. What I didn't talk about was the sense of community spirit and the laughter and comradery we witnessed when we dropped in that Saturday. The ladies in the main sewing and stitching room all had smiles, and they were telling jokes, and you could sense the love and the friendship in the room. I'll never forget the welcoming feelings I received that day. While I feel that resource revenue is critical to the life of our First Nations and Métis communities, it is the sense of community spirit and love that's just as important.

Members of this House have been really supportive of Bill 14 and have provided thoughtful debate. Yet I've heard from people who question why Alberta would invest in indigenous communities, and I have to say, Madam Speaker, that this is not up for debate. Indigenous communities have long been held down by laws, policies, and practices that impoverished them and kept them dependent on government funds. These are the kinds of stories we expect from the long past, not today, not from our friends, our neighbours, and our loved ones.

We're in a position to support indigenous governments and communities to work around this funding crisis. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation is a strong, positive step toward a future of self-determination, a future in which indigenous communities can partner in prosperity instead of watching as their neighbours benefit from the lands around them.

Madam Speaker, this is a start, and starting points are usually focused. Starting with the eligible natural resource development projects, we achieve two things. First, a narrower project scope will help us more easily get into a process and evaluate progress. It's good business sense. We start the organization, let the board and staff find their footing, and explore more breadth if that's what it makes sense to do. I assure you that we have ambition for growth. As Premier Kenney has shared, this organization will become a model for other provinces to promote indigenous economic development.

Second, this focus will renew an industry that's the bedrock of Alberta's economy. Recent years have been far too hard. Even though Alberta is known for responsible and innovative natural resource development, with more indigenous participation in the industry I expect we'll be catching more global attention for environmental excellence, and that could spur more investment in Alberta.

Now, I've heard the argument that the government is imposing a direction on indigenous people. That direction, Madam Speaker, has come directly from indigenous people.

Others are questioning the indigenous makeup of the board, and to that I say: this is about maximum flexibility, ensuring that nothing will disrupt the corporation from achieving success. It's the same reason we gave ourselves the flexibility to appoint up to nine members, to ensure maximum flexibility for the board and to not risk anything standing in the way of this corporation carrying out its work. As I've said over and over and as the Premier has said, we intend to have strong indigenous representation on our board because the government understands what this opportunity means for indigenous peoples and what is required for its success. I can assure you that that will be another promise made and another promise kept. Again, actions speak louder than words, and our actions have spoken.

**10:50**

Let me go back to the words of Chief Morin, who shared with us a good perspective about the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation and resource development. He said: it's clean energy, it's technology, it's opportunity for our future, and now is the time to capitalize on that.

Grand Chief Arthur Noskey of the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta spoke on the ancient role of the guardians of the land of our First Peoples, that they've taken on over the eons, and these are his words: many of our nations are in support of the energy sector, but as stewards of the land and waters we also have obligations; we must look at sustainable resource development and balance the production of our natural resources; our natural resources depend on us.

The word “and” is so important. Like indigenous people, this government believes in developing the economy and doing it responsibly. We can do both. We should be proud of striving to be responsible developers, Madam Speaker, and acknowledge that we will always have room to learn more and to do better. Living in a complex world, we cannot afford to wish for happy endings for our stories. We need to write those endings for ourselves and each other, and those endings should be written boldly, with focus and determination to be better and the will to take a stand against wrongdoing.

I want to again thank you, Madam Speaker, members of caucus, members across the way, and all who have contributed to the debate and the vigorous discussion on this most important piece of legislation. It's critical that we get it right, get it finished, and get it working to benefit all Albertans, who call this great province home.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I just would like to remind everyone that we are not to use names of members in this Assembly, a good caution for everyone moving forward.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This government has drawn a line in the sand, and we have made it clear that we will be allies of First Nations people. We saw that right away. One of the first things that this government did was that cabinet met with all 48 First Nation chiefs within the first couple of weeks of taking government. You know, that was the first thing that we saw. I have to tell you that, thanks to the Premier and the minister of indigenous affairs, I've actually become quite good at my dancing at powwows, because this is just what our government does, and this is just one more example of how we will be allies of First Nations communities.

Now, let me, first, begin by thanking the Minister of Indigenous Relations for his commitment to partnering with indigenous communities in building their economic and social well-being. I'm proud to be part of a government that is choosing to move beyond symbolic gestures, and I'm honoured today to speak in favour of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. Alberta finally has a government that understands that when First Nations and Métis communities thrive from the responsible development of our natural resources, our entire province thrives.

This is a topic that is close to my heart, and if you don't mind, I would like to share something with you. I think we all have different reasons for why we're so excited about this act, but mine is from when I was much younger. I grew up in a small town called Lac du Bonnet – you wouldn't have heard of it – and there was a First Nations boy that joined us halfway through my grade 6 year. You know, I certainly didn't at the time really know that he was indigenous. What I knew right away was that he was a big kid, and I liked that because it meant he was good at sports. I was sort of drawn to him, and we had this immediate friendship. He also had this quietness about him. At the time I mistook his reserved nature as a quiet confidence, but as an adult I look back, and I think there was lots more going on that I didn't have access to. He was a good kid. I really liked him, Madam Speaker.

Unfortunately, he came from a lower socioeconomic background, and he didn't have access to hockey. This was something that was very important to me. My mom, who was a great, wonderful mother, sort of took a shine to him as well, so she went around town and gathered as much used hockey equipment as she could find so that this boy could play hockey. He was fitted up with all the requisite gear. She even paid his hockey fees so that he could play hockey. That was all very well and good, but he still

couldn't get to practices or games, so then she took it upon herself to go pick him up and drop him off after all these games and practices.

You know, there were little clues there that I should have seen, but I didn't have access to that experience, so I didn't recognize the clues, Madam Speaker. One of them was that he was always frozen solid when we picked him up. He was frozen solid because he would be waiting outside for almost, like, an eternity, it seemed, for us to pick him up. This was, of course, before digital clocks. I realize now that the real issue was that he couldn't tell time, couldn't read an analog clock. Rather than make my mother wait, he just got out there so early to make sure that he was there when she showed up.

He was such a good kid. He was a good friend of mine. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, we sort of drifted apart as things happened. This was a small town, and I ended up going off to a private school, you know, in the city, a boarding school. In high school I got a call from my mom. She asked me if I'd heard what happened to Chris. I said no, because we had drifted apart. Well, he had been arrested. He'd had too much to drink, and he shot his mom. I mean, it really, really hit me hard because this was something that I just didn't see coming.

What I learned from that, Madam Speaker, is that you just can't put Band-Aids on some things. I learned that, you know, lip service is not enough. When it comes to breaking the poverty cycle, to ending things like the cycle of abuse, lip service is not enough. You need meaningful action. That's why I like this act, because this is meaningful action. This will make a difference in the lives of First Nations communities. It's why I'm proud to support it. What I take away from Chris's story is that sometimes it's not enough to just simply offer help. You need to do more, and this is that “more” that this government is going to do.

We have a long and, frankly, sad history in Canada of disenfranchising indigenous people from their communities, their culture, and their ability to prosper, but we have an opportunity now, thanks to the deliberate efforts of this minister, to right a systemic wrong and to support these communities in accessing much-needed capital. We as a society that has prospered from our country's vast natural resources have a moral obligation to be better, to do better, and to remove the barriers that have kept indigenous communities from achieving better outcomes.

That's exactly what the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation will do. Instead of relying on federal money, indigenous communities will have access to \$1 billion in loan guarantees that will support First Nation and Métis co-ownership and financial participation in major resource developments. I ask you, Madam Speaker, what's better, lip service or meaningful action? Instead of handing money to communities with little to no strategic oversight, we will now be able to work with indigenous peoples to help develop their business acumen, build up their workforce, and remove the obstacles that have prevented them from being commercial partners in our natural resource sector.

First Nations and Métis people, particularly youth, benefit greatly when given the opportunity to learn skills and access capital, but we have learned that unemployment on some First Nations is an alarming 99 per cent. We must do more to build stronger communities by providing means for employment and self-sustainability. I can only wonder how my friend Chris would have benefited if he had had access to these opportunities, if his parents before him had had access to these types of economic drivers, how things could have been different. The AIOC will allow indigenous communities to experience a higher standard of living not for themselves but, more importantly, for the generations that will follow them.

First Nations' ancestors inhabited these lands thousands of years ago, long before we began extracting our natural resources. They know and understand the land, earth, water, and air, so what better people to aid us in our efforts to develop our resources in an environmentally responsible manner than the original stewards of these lands? By reaching out and offering a truly equal hand in partnership, the AIOC will bridge the gap between indigenous groups who wish to be commercial partners in our natural resource sector. The efforts of this government, in my opinion, are what true reconciliation is all about.

Thank you for the time to address the House.

Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11 a.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 15, 2019

Day 27

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 15, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Romy McMorrow. I would invite all members to participate in the language of their choice.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

**Roger Brewer**

December 26, 1946, to July 27, 2019

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we proceed to introductions today, it is with great sadness, felt by the Legislative Assembly Office and all of you, that I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to a significant figure in this Chamber.

Roger Brewer, the long-time console operator of the Legislative Assembly, passed away on July 27 after a brief battle with cancer. Roger started working at the Legislative Assembly Office in February 2004 after retiring from working at the CBC. Roger was hanging around home but his wife, Pauline, who joins us in the gallery today, was also working from home. Roger would come into the room where she was working and say: what you doing? It wasn't long before Pauline said, "You need a job," and she found the ad for the console operator position. Roger applied, was interviewed, and immediately was offered the job.

As console operator Roger sat up in the crow's nest, just above the big clock. Today Lacy is sitting there. The console operator does a few things. They press "record" so that what we say can be broadcast to the people we serve, and as I'm sure you've noticed, they turn the microphones on and off for us as we speak. As Roger turned on a microphone, he would quietly say the name of the person into the headset which he wore. Back at the *Hansard* office, editors could listen and double-check to see who was speaking. Roger would also tell those editors what was happening inside the Chamber. For example, he'd let them know if there was a change in the chair or a standing ovation. Sometimes he would chuckle along with a joke that the members had timely provided. Most importantly, Roger passed along to *Hansard* staff what they called pizza alerts. If Roger whispered that pizza was on its way, *Hansard* knew it would be a very late night.

It was clear to everyone around him that Roger loved his job. He was very dependable, always on time, and always available for work, planning his vacations around the legislative calendar. Roger was tireless. Once, when the Legislative Assembly sat for an afternoon, an evening, overnight, and through the next afternoon, he worked 36 hours straight. Sometimes he said that it was a bit

boring, but he never complained that a shift was too long. As Speaker Wanner said in 2018: "He is always there. He never leaves." And just this spring, at the end of a record-breaking sitting I personally thanked everyone who had contributed and called Roger the hardest working man in politics.

It was a shock to many when, halfway through this spring session, Roger had to resign because he'd been diagnosed with cancer. Since then, more than a dozen people have been trained on operating the console to replace him. Of course, Roger Brewer is irreplaceable, and he will be greatly missed by all.

Today we are joined by Roger's family: Roger's wife, Pauline Brewer, their daughter and son-in-law, Shelley Brewer and Shaun Semple, and grandsons Dominic and Taye Semple. Please join in welcoming them here to this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, joining us this afternoon from Edmonton-City Centre are grade 5 and 6 students from l'école Grandin and, from Edmonton-Mill Woods, grade 6 students from Ekota elementary. Also, Edmonton-Decore: welcome grade 6 students from St. Anne Catholic elementary. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, we were treated to a stirring rendition of *O Canada* today from the constituency of Edmonton-West Henday. I mentioned Romy McMorrow, who led us in the singing of the national anthem today. She's sung in various choirs since the age of 10, in elementary school and the Knights of Columbus choirs, then the University of Alberta mixed choir. She's currently at the St. Thomas More music ministry. She has also sung the national anthem for Edmonton's own baseball team, the Edmonton Prospects, and I'm particularly happy to welcome her here today as a first generation Canadian. It's such a wonderful pleasure to see folks engaging in our new plan, but more importantly than all of that, today is also her birthday. The most happiest of birthdays to you.

**An Hon. Member:** Happy birthday . . .

**The Speaker:** Oh, man. You almost started *Happy Birthday* there. That got very dangerous. Unfortunately, we don't have anyone to lead us, so we'll have to leave that for another day.

On behalf of all 87 members, happy birthday to you.

Please join me in welcoming Romy and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Chakkalakal. Welcome to the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has a statement to make.

### Early Learning and Child Care Centres

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what will become of my job if this pilot program ends. What's the point of working? How can families get ahead? This grant has created jobs and has allowed parents to re-enter the workforce. Please don't take this away from us. I am pleading that this funding be taken seriously; it is so desperately needed by many people. This program has been many things to our family: a lifeline, a saving grace. These are quotes from letters and e-mails sent to the Minister of Children's Services from Albertans who are desperate that the early learning child care centre program be extended and expanded.

Today this Assembly is privileged to have in the gallery members of the AFL Fair Start committee, educators, child care providers, parents, and children – I see you, baby Carl – who have benefited

from the ELCC and are pleading with the minister to listen to their voices.

Last week, when asked about the review of the ELCC pilot program, the minister criticized it because it “did not track need . . . income . . . [or] employment.” This is troubling because it demonstrates that the minister does not understand the very program she claims to be reviewing. If she did, she’d know that the ELCC program is a pilot program for universal child care. It’s intent was to serve the majority of Albertans who do not qualify for subsidized child care but who can’t afford over \$1,000 dollars a month for it.

If the minister does not understand how the program works, then I’m worried about her ability to review it fairly and thoughtfully. I’m worried she doesn’t understand the significant impact ELCCs have on early learning, readiness for school, staff retention and professional development, accessibility, and, perhaps most importantly, getting Albertans back to work. Considering how quickly this government rushed to give away \$4.5 billion to wealthy corporations, I think the minister owes it to average Albertans to listen to them, too.

I’m passionate about this issue. I only wish that the minister was as passionate about making life more affordable for Albertans, improving early learning for children, and getting Albertans back to work. I’ll be speaking on this issue a lot, so I hope the minister can keep up.

#### 1:40 Early Learning and Child Care Centres

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, I recently received a letter from a concerned parent in my constituency of Highwood. In this letter this constituent speaks at great length about the impact of the NDP’s \$25-a-day child care pilot program. When this pilot program was introduced, privately owned daycare centres across the province and even nonprofits that weren’t selected felt the pain.

Now, due to the previous government’s meddling in the marketplace, two daycare centres in my riding have had to close their doors. Kid’s Stop in Black Diamond and Children’s Place in Turner Valley were both forced to close down because they could not compete with the government-funded \$25-a-day daycare. Mr. Speaker, these are two well-loved daycare programs that provided an essential service and are no longer options for parents in my riding. This has caused upheaval for children and parents alike, and many child care workers are now out of jobs.

The previous government’s pilot program has caused a shortage of available child care in my riding, and families are now turning to private day homes. As my constituent said: “Day homes just don’t work for every family. And we used to have [a] choice in our town . . . Parents should be making [child care] selections based on who can provide the highest quality of care that works for them and their situation.” Government interference in the marketplace, running private child care providers out of business, and limiting choice for parents that need child care to return to the workforce are not making life better for the constituents in my community.

Given that the pilot program did not track income level or whether the parents are actually employed and given that this means we have no way of tracking if this program supports low-income families in need, I can only conclude that this is an ideologically driven and fiscally irresponsible program from the previous government. The constituents in my riding stated, in their words, “The government should not be [in the business of] picking the winners and losers in the childcare industry.” I couldn’t agree more.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has risen to make a statement.

#### Rural Crime and Police Service

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to update this Assembly on something truly despicable that happened in my riding this weekend. In the dead of night, two armed men with their faces covered by balaclavas broke into the home of Art and Bev Bergman near the town of Craigmyle. They proceeded to sneak into this elderly couple’s bedroom and hold them at gunpoint. These two men then bound Art and Bev with duct tape in painful positions and demanded money. The couple pointed them to a safe in the bedroom with some old savings in it, which the two men then emptied. Once they had the money, these men left a knife at the end of the bed and said: you can use this knife to cut yourself free; by then, we’ll be long gone. That was true. By the time they were able to call the police, these criminals were gone.

Yesterday I went to visit Art and Bev to hear their story first-hand and offer any support I could. It was heart-wrenching to hear their account of the events, and I’m sorry they had to go through this traumatic experience. Events like these have a ripple effect in the community, and people are scared. I heard about one of their neighbours who has stopped working past sundown so he can be home to protect his family.

Incidents of this severity are incredibly uncommon, but property crime remains rampant. No criminal starts off with home invasion, forcible confinement, and robbery. These guys have seen that they can get away with stealing quads and whatever else they can get easy. By eliminating the culture of apathy towards property crime, hopefully we can stop future offenders from getting as bold as these two.

I’ve heard a lot about the new police funding model proposal this last week, and despite the fact that the opposition does not have a single MLA representing a rural riding, they seem to believe they represent rural Albertans. Your NDP policies gutted rural Alberta for four years. I’m proud to stand with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Municipal Affairs while we work with rural communities to get more boots on the ground.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

#### Millbourne Laundromat Thanksgiving Dinner

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the Leefield Community League hall a special Mill Woods tradition took place once again. It was the 27th annual serving of the Millbourne Laundromat Thanksgiving dinner, an event that was first held in 1993, and one that has continued to grow with each passing year. In 1993 the original owners of the Millbourne Laundromat, Shirley and Don Tripp, served their first free Thanksgiving meal to 42 people. Since then the event has grown considerably, and it now feeds over 1,300 each year. After the Tripps sold the laundromat, the new owners continued this wonderful tradition.

The increasing size of the event brought new challenges. Those were met with new partnerships. In recent years the Leefield Community League has hosted the event in their warm and well-cared-for community hall, the Rotary Club of Edmonton Southeast has also been a co-host now for many years, and Victoria Ewert, a Rotary Club member, has helped organize the event for most of the past decade. Volunteer chefs start cooking turkeys on the Friday and work through the weekend to ensure the feast is ready when the doors open on Thanksgiving Monday. Everyone is welcome, and those who can are encouraged to bring donations of warm winter clothing for those in need.

The Millbourne Laundromat Thanksgiving dinner is an excellent tradition, one that brings together people from across the community to enjoy each other's company along with a holiday meal. It's my distinct honour to have helped serve this meal at this wonderful event since coming into office, and I look forward to it every year. I want to thank everyone who's volunteered over the years to keep this incredible tradition alive. Mill Woods is a special place, where community is built through caring, compassion, and togetherness, and the Millbourne Laundromat Thanksgiving dinner is an exemplary example of that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Federal Policies and Economic Development

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer my MP, Earl Dreeshen, and I spoke at a public rally in Red Deer organized by Rally 4 Resources and the Canadian tax federation. As demonstrated by bills C-48 and C-69, socialist policies hostile to economic competitiveness, and reckless indifference to billions in deficits, the greatest threat to Alberta's and indeed Canada's economic prosperity right now is the Trudeau Liberal government. The Trudeau Liberal government is an unprincipled government who by its actions cares more about political calculus than doing what is right. It is time to hold unprincipled governments to account.

The Canadian tax federation has offered one form of accountability. The Quebec Premier says that there is no social acceptability for oil pipelines. He also says that one of his favourite things about being in Canada is the \$13 billion his province receives in equalization. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation's response to this hypocrisy is launching the No Pipelines? No Equalization! campaign. Alberta has contributed more than \$600 billion net into equalization since 1961. This is what equalization has become, a structural, permanent welfare payment from Alberta to provinces which seek to undermine Alberta's interest. This is dysfunctional and in the real world is unacceptable. In the public interest I would invite Albertans to hold failed governments to account and, in particular, vote to fire the Trudeau Liberal government on October 21.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Canadian Energy Centre

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier unveiled his \$30 million campaign vehicle. It's run by a failed UCP candidate with no experience in oil and gas who's paid far more than the rules dictate. This campaign slush fund is also exempted from basic public disclosure rules, public tendering rules, whistle-blower protection rules, ethics rules, and conflict-of-interest rules, to name a few. To the Premier: how arrogant and entitled does he have to be to believe that it's okay to exempt himself from all of these long-standing rules for accountability?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of measures in place to ensure financial transparency.

As for the strategy undertaken by the Canadian Energy Centre, we will not be revealing that to the opponents of our oil and gas sector, who have for the last decade launched a campaign to land-lock our oil and gas sector. We will not be revealing that because Albertans do not want us to be doing that.

1:50

**Ms Notley:** Well, I disagree, Mr. Speaker. The Premier actually thinks taxpayers are happy to just hand over \$30 million every single year to his secret sandbox and that somehow we should just trust them. The problem is that the trust is already broken. Instead of hiring a credible nonpartisan with experience in energy and demonstrated campaign success, he's handed the job to a failed UCP candidate who is best known as a lobbyist for the payday loan companies. The first act this corporation has taken reeks of partisan game playing. How can Albertans possibly trust them?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans elected us to fight for them, to stand up for our oil and gas sector. With regard to the Canadian Energy Centre, it's a provincial corporation, which means that its financials are consolidated into ours. Under the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, section 10, their expenditures will be transparent. Under that piece of legislation they will be filing all of their budget, and that will be disclosed. It is transparent.

**Ms Notley:** In contrast, Mr. Speaker, this is the most secretive corporation created in the history of the government of Alberta. Now, this Premier broke a promise to disclose his secret leadership campaign donors. In his next leadership race his kamikaze campaign broke the law to the tune of over \$180,000 in fines. Most recently both the Premier and his Attorney General have been questioned by the RCMP in an ongoing investigation into fraud. Is the Premier really so tone deaf that he doesn't understand why his government should not be trusted with \$30 million to go off in secret and buy advertising and collect data about Albertans?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Energy Centre will be subject to the Auditor General review. That will be very publicly disclosed. Under the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act all of its budget and its financials will be disclosed. It's subject to a code of conduct, similar to all other government, where they have to abide by whistle-blower legislation. It's very transparent. It's all there in the legislation if the NDP would simply choose to read it.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Well, I do congratulate the Energy minister on about the fourth version of what this legislation means, so we'll wait to see what comes next.

### Rural Police Service

**Ms Notley:** On a different topic, the Premier gives 4 and a half billion dollar handouts to big corporations, and rural Albertans are paying for it. He can deny it all he wants, but the communities of Brooks, Wetaskiwin, Barrhead, Sundre, Foothills, Lacombe all oppose his plan to cut rural police funding. In fact, the CEO of Crossfield warned that some municipalities will, quote, very likely dissolve due to financial insolvency. Can the Premier please direct Albertans to where in his platform they can find "destroy small communities in rural Alberta?"

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General has been clear. We are not cutting any police funding. In fact, we will be increasing police funding. It's unfortunate that the Official Opposition continues along this line of questioning when they know they're being unfactual.

I was back home in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, to meet with my constituents and yours, right along our constituency line, about rural crime the other day. Let me tell you that they were still



horrified by the fact that this opposition while in government completely abandoned them, as they did all rural Albertans. Let me be clear, through you to them: we will not be lectured by them on how to represent rural Alberta. They abandoned rural Alberta, which is why they don't even have a member from rural Alberta.

**Ms Notley:** Well, don't take my word for it, Mr. Speaker; ask the more than 10 or 15 representatives from rural Alberta who apparently are being unfactual. Every day we hear new concerns from people in those communities. The mayor of Red Deer county called the changes unfair, and he's now openly asking: what else do we cut to make this happen? To the Premier: if you won't answer me, will you at least answer the mayor of Red Deer county? What services should they be cutting to pay for your 4 and a half billion dollar handover to corporations?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the Official Opposition continues to misrepresent the facts. Let me be clear, as the Solicitor General has: we are not cutting rural policing. In fact, we are going to be investing in rural policing, something that that party should have done while they were in power. But, again, through you to them, I will not be and nobody in this government caucus will be lectured by them when it comes to representing rural Albertans. Thousands of rural Albertans, my constituents and your constituents, sat on the stairs of the Legislature protesting against that former government. The NDP forgot rural Alberta, particularly when it comes to rural crime. That member even laughed at them when I asked questions about them in this Chamber.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that officials for this government as well as copious representatives from municipalities are not misrepresenting the facts, as the member opposite suggests. They are simply reading the documents that have been provided. Now, the reeve of Lacombe county asked the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka and didn't get the answer, so maybe someone here could answer it for the reeve. She asked: how do you look Albertans in the eye and say, "You've been broken into eight times, and there are absolutely no plans for increased police service in rural Alberta"?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Let me be clear. I'm not saying that any municipality is misrepresenting the facts. I'm saying that the Official Opposition is misrepresenting the facts. The Solicitor General has been clear: we are not cutting funding when it comes to rural policing; we are increasing it. But the question still stands. The hon. member, the leader of the NDP, while she sat in this very seat right beside me, sat in this Chamber while I was Leader of the Opposition and asking about rural crime, and she laughed at rural Albertans while the galleries were full. Mr. Speaker, through you to her, will she finally stand up and apologize for how she treated rural Alberta? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Friday of last week new jobs numbers came out. There was not much to celebrate. Almost 12,000 people left the workforce. That's 12,000 people who gave up waiting for the UCP's 4 and a half billion dollar handout to big corporations. They gave up waiting for that handout to create them a job. To the Premier: what do you have to say to the almost 12,000 people who have given up hope for this government's corporate tax giveaway?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has the call.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reality was that in September there were another 4,900 new jobs created in the province. While that's not a lot, it's an increase, and we're appreciative of that. Here's the reality. The previous NDP government, when they took office, inherited a challenging economic file, but they exacerbated that by raising corporate taxes by 20 per cent. With it, we witnessed the flight of capital by the billions and the loss of jobs by the tens of thousands. This government will chart a new course. We will create the most competitive business environment and attract new investment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, some new course, Mr. Speaker. Since this government's corporate tax giveaway came into effect, almost 27,000 full-time jobs have been lost; 15,000 of those jobs have been lost in the oil and gas sector. Corporations benefiting from this Premier's handout have decided to boost shareholder dividends rather than create jobs. Many of these shareholders live outside of Alberta. To the Premier: is your government okay with the profits from the 4 and a half billion dollar tax gift going to Bay Street bankers out east while 15,000 oil and gas workers get pink slips?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, when the previous NDP government raised corporate taxes by 20 per cent, the following three years they actually collected \$2.3 billion less in revenues. That's the reality. When you create an uncompetitive business environment, you see investment fly out of the province, and you see job creation lost, ultimately leading to lower government revenues. We will reverse that course. We will attract investment into this province and create jobs and opportunities, which will lead to increased government revenue.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, this government cancelled programs that diversified our economy and added jobs and value to our natural resources and our renewable resources. They won't even support 50 women health care workers that were fired in Vegreville for no reason and only offered them their jobs back if they took a \$10-an-hour pay decrease. To the Premier: will you admit that when your Finance minister lackadaisically says that there might be jobs eventually from your corporate handout experiment, what he really meant was that his friends would get buckets of cash first and working-class people would come last?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a result of our job-creation tax cut, we've already seen significant announcements about anticipated investment in this province. Telus announced that they are going to be investing \$16 billion in the province, creating 5,000 additional jobs. Suncor announced that they will be investing \$1.4 billion, creating 600 additional jobs. Economist after economist has supported our view that reducing corporate taxes, creating the most competitive business environment, will create jobs and opportunities for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### 2:00 Early Learning and Child Care Centres

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta families are faced with child care costs equivalent to a mortgage payment, and working families are being forced to choose between their jobs and their families. That's why we created the \$25-per-day child care pilot

program, that helped Albertans re-enter the workforce and saved families \$425 a month. This Premier, by comparison, rushed to give \$4.5 billion to big corporations, but Alberta parents have to wait. To the Premier: give us an update. Are working parents and their kids the next group to pay for your tax handout to big corporations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services has risen.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to point out once again that the rhetoric around the job-creation tax cut is simply false. Speaking of jobs, we know that people want jobs. They want the economy back on track because it allows people to provide for their families, and a strong economy allows us to support those who need it most.

The terms of the pilot have not changed, and we will review the report when it's complete. The NDP set up the pilot so that it did not track need. It did not track income nor employment nor wait-lists. We've heard from many parents and daycare operators who say that the program isn't working for them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the evidence is actually overwhelming in support of quality and affordable child care, especially when it's universal, as intended to be. This pilot project alone created 450 new jobs in the first few years in early childhood education, and estimates show that expanding it would further increase women in the workforce, adding nearly \$6 billion a year to Alberta's economy. What's more, 22 of the child care programs that we started are scheduled to end in less than six months without any action or comment from this government or the minister. To the Premier: if you're serious about supporting jobs in this province, why do you continue to remain silent on the future of \$25-per-day child care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I spent the summer with a variety of child care operators and Albertans. We will be transparent, and we will ensure that people know so that they have predictable care as we move forward. Do people value affordability? Absolutely, especially for low-income families. Do \$25-a-day centres provide quality child care? Yes, but so, too, do the centres who weren't in the pilot who have been providing quality child care for decades. After the runaway spending, making life more difficult for families under the former government, we're going to stay focused on getting our province back on track, getting people back to work, and supporting those who need it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that there are a number of centres that weren't part of the ELCC program that would love to be part of it. If the Premier won't answer me, maybe he will answer the parents and advocates and child care centres that are here right now, today. They want to know where this government is going with child care. They say that this program has been a lifeline and a saving grace that has benefited their child's development and helped them drive our economy. You owe these families an answer. To the Premier: can you commit today to expanding this affordable child care project?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, just because the member opposite doesn't agree does not mean I haven't answered her questions.

In April Albertans gave us a mandate to deliver on our campaign promises, not theirs. I appreciate some of the considerations made

in the pilot to address affordability, but I also know, as a working parent and someone who values fiscal responsibility, that I've never once questioned whether my neighbours, struggling to find work over the last four years, should be paying for my child care. On this side of the house, Mr. Speaker, we will remain responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars and stay focused on the needs of parents who really need support to enter the workforce. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members. [interjections] Hon. members, we will have order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein is rising with a question.

### Provincial Lawsuit against Opioid Manufacturers

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Opioid addiction is a deadly issue that our province and our country are facing. Last year alone we lost close to 800 lives because of opioid overdose and addiction. Many of these deaths were caused by prescription opioids. In addition to the loss of life that we have endured as a province, the total economic cost of opioid addiction on our province is estimated to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. To the associate minister: what is our government doing to recover the losses to our province?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the great question. It is true. Our province has endured many costs as a result of opioid addiction. This is why this morning I announced, alongside my colleagues Minister Shandro and Minister Schweitzer, that our government will be supporting the actions of British Columbia and other provinces in a lawsuit against opioid manufacturers and distributors. We will never be able to recover all the human costs associated with this, but we are standing up for Albertans. We're going to do our work to recover the costs associated with health care and the justice system.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind all members in the Chamber that the use of names of other members in the Chamber under any circumstances is not permitted.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has a question.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the loss of life, including a little over a year ago the tragic loss of my close friend, former colleague, and constituent and given that opioid addiction has such a dramatic and lasting effect on our province, our families, and our economy and given that these companies seemed to have known that they were acting in bad faith, to the associate minister: just how far is the Alberta government willing to go to ensure that these companies are held to account?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans can rest assured that our government will not stand idly by while any company seeks to take advantage of families and individuals who are suffering from mental health addictions. Any company engaged in these practices should know that our government will pursue them to the fullest extent of our authority. Our government was elected to stand up for Albertans. We're going to do just that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. I'm deeply encouraged to hear that answer

and to hear what this government is willing to do to protect Albertans and to stand up for Albertans.

Given that opioid use and addiction is a deadly scourge that our province is facing and given that this government has committed \$40 million specifically to deal with the opioid crisis, to the associate minister: how does supporting this lawsuit fit into the overall addiction recovery strategy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for making a very great point here. Ultimately, what we believe in is an approach that is fair, firm, and compassionate. Our government's participation in this lawsuit sends a clear signal to Albertans and the companies that we are committed to ensure that Albertans are treated exactly like that. That is also why we're funding an additional 4,000 treatment spaces, to ensure that those with addictions have access to the life-saving treatment and recovery services that they so deserve.

### Climate Change Strategy

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, young people all over the world, including in Alberta, are looking for leadership on the most pressing issue of our time, climate change. This leadership is embodied in Greta Thunberg, who will be visiting Alberta. Now, I don't agree with everything that she says, but I do agree that we need to take this issue seriously and that we need to listen to youth, not mock them. To the minister. Young people don't want to pay for your \$4.5 billion handout to big corporations. They want action on climate change. When are you going to listen to them?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we are taking this issue seriously. I'm looking forward to tabling TIER in this very place in the next few weeks, focusing on the UCP's approach, the Alberta government's approach, to the climate change file. We're proud of that. Now, I can tell you that what we won't do is continue the NDP's process, which was to put their head in the sand, tax hockey moms and hockey dads, have no visible impact on emissions at all, and instead go forward with a situation that was all economic pain and no environmental gain. That's a different approach from the one this government is going to take. We're excited to table TIER, and we look forward to seeing how the opposition reacts to it.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that the member opposite is making hockey moms and hockey dads pay for their \$4.5 billion handout to big corporations and given that this visit will undoubtedly draw a massive amount of publicity and given that this government mocked the youth rallying outside the Legislature earlier this year, to the minister: if you treat this visit anything like you treated the young people who rallied outside the Legislature, how many millions do you think it will take Tom Olsen's attack machine to fix Alberta's reputation?

2:10

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, there's the difference between Alberta's government and Alberta's former government, between this side of the aisle and that side of the aisle. They say that sticking up for our oil and gas industry, talking about our great environmental record, talking about the innovation that we have inside this province is somehow mocking people. That's not mocking people. We're proud to stand with the oil and gas industry. We're proud of our largest industry, and we're proud of the work that they're doing on emissions.

The real question for those members is: in this upcoming election are they going to vote for their antipipeline leader or their antipipeline close friend and ally Justin Trudeau? It's a question I've been asking for a while. We're running out of days. Which way are they voting?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government tore up Alberta's only climate change plan and replaced it with exactly nothing and given that our plan cut 50 megatonnes of emissions, created over 7,000 jobs, and funded green infrastructure investments all over Alberta, to the minister: if you really do care about tackling climate change like you say you do, will you commit to more renewable electricity, commit to phasing out coal-fired power, commit to reducing methane, commit to energy efficiency? Actually, will you commit to doing anything to tackle climate change?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I've already been clear. We have a plan coming forward on climate change, that I'm excited to table in this very place.

Let's talk about what the former government did on climate change. They brought in the largest tax increase in the history of this province. It was all economic pain, no environmental gain. The leader of their own party in an interview near Christmastime couldn't even point to any emission reductions as a result of that plan. We will not be lectured by the NDP when it comes to this issue. Let's be clear. That is a party that oversaw the largest job loss in the history of the province, that took our economy on track to a hundred billion dollars in debt. Shame on them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I asked the Minister of Transportation last week why he was repealing truck safety measures rather than listening to the families and survivors of the Humboldt Broncos bus tragedy, the minister told us he had spoken with Toby Boulet. Well, Toby Boulet spoke to reporters about that phone call and said, quote: the government of Alberta has completely forgotten about the Broncos; this is about politics and economics, and obviously the minister skipped that part in our phone conversation. End quote. Minister, why did you misrepresent your conversation with a grieving parent?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation is rising.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had a couple of conversations with Mr. Boulet. They were both quite respectful. Speaking of misleading, the NDP had the Humboldt parents believe that they brought in MELT as a result of the Humboldt bus crash. Nothing could be further from the truth. That was brought in because the United States of America won't let a truck cross the border after February 2020 without MELT. Why don't you tell them the truth? This is something that you did that I agree with, but you exaggerated why you did it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Mr. Boulet went on to say that the Minister of Transportation, quote, only told me what I wanted to hear, and I was led to believe that the consultation process was still in place, that it was going on; well, it's obvious that many parts of the consultation process have already been decided, end quote, again to the minister: do you think

it's appropriate to deceive and play political games with people who lost loved ones in the Humboldt tragedy, like Toby Boulet?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, as I just pointed out, it's the NDP that misled those people. In fact, the consultation will begin shortly. It hasn't begun yet. The hon. member says, yes, we make some decisions as we go along. We do that. But certain parts of the population asked for a consultation, and they'll get one. No decisions have been made on the results of that consultation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has compromised on safety and doesn't have the stomach to tell a grieving parent the truth and given that he's now resorted to misrepresenting a few conversations he's had with those who lost loved ones in the Humboldt bus tragedy, will the minister now commit to cancelling his repeal of truck safety measures and start an actual consultation with the Boulet family and so many others that were impacted by this tragedy?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member fails to say that they actually didn't bring MELT in. They announced it. They announced it and put it in place officially, I suppose, on March 1, less than about two weeks before the election. On the same day they nationalized driver training, cut the number of driver examiners in half, and crippled the government's ability to deliver MELT, the higher standard. We will deliver the higher standard as we undo the damage that the NDP did that made it impossible. We're going to fix it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

#### Connect Care Clinical Information System Review

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With the launch of the new provincial clinical information system, connect care, Albertans will have their health information consolidated under one system. This will ensure that Albertans have access to their health care information and actively participate in their care with their physicians. This system can reduce gaps, enhance efficiency, and improve communication between health care providers. The current scope under the NDP government was only rolled out to AHS-affiliated facilities. This means that health care providers, clinics, and PCNs not affiliated with AHS will not be included. To the Minister of Health: what is the status of the connect care review this government promised in the platform?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health is rising.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. The member is correct. We committed in our campaign platform to review the health information systems in the province. I announced a review in June, including three systems: connect care, Netcare, as well as the MyHealth Records platform. The purpose was to avoid duplication of services and to make sure that we use digital health information to make the system work better for patients. In August I announced that Ernst & Young was selected to conduct the review. The work began in September, and I expect to see a final report in January.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that physicians working with AHS and also running private clinics will be required to maintain two systems that may not allow flow of information

between the systems – this is not only costly and inefficient but may offer opportunities for abuse by patients seeking multiple prescriptions, possibly to opioids – to the same minister: will Albertans and their physicians have the ability to access their information from all sources in an integrated manner?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health has the call.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, they will. There will be one entry point for patients to access their medical records through the existing MyHealth Records portal and the new connect care patient portal, my AHS connect. The entry will be seamless. Patients, as I said, will be able to access their AHS medical records through this connect care patient portal, and they will also be able to securely communicate with their health care provider as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the answer. Given that the entire point of the connect care system is to reduce oversight and abuse and promote greater communication between health care providers in Alberta and Albertans and given that an efficient system will ultimately reduce health costs and prevent abuse and given that connect care is only currently available to AHS, to the same minister: how is this government planning on integrating other health care providers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue, and I'm happy to assure my colleague that we're working with AHS to make sure that that integration does happen. Community health care providers outside of AHS will be offered access to a connect care health care provider portal so that they can securely access information about their patients. That includes physicians, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, and other allied service providers. It's complex work, so it will happen in phases, not all at once. But it's essential, and I'm committed to seeing it through.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is rising with a question.

#### Education Funding for Enrolment Growth

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Education said that the opposition was wrong about enrolment growth in our schools this fall. This was another classic attempt that she had at misdirection, because she has failed yet to provide schools and school boards with any kind of funding certainty about what's happening in their schools. Meanwhile Edmonton Catholic schools has 1,200 new students that have come to their schools this year. To the minister: how exactly were we wrong about enrolment growth, and will Edmonton Catholic schools see any new money for these 1,200 new students?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. There has absolutely been enrolment growth, but we've accounted for enrolment growth. We have been very clear that we will be accounting for it in the upcoming budget, which will come out next week, and we look forward to sharing that with everyone.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the question that we and parents and school boards have been asking for six months is, "Will 'accounting for' actually mean 'funding'?" – will there be any new money for

new students? That's the question that these parents keep asking me. Given that Edmonton public schools has an increase of more than 3,000 students this year and that that means they need about 100 more teachers and about 100 more classrooms, many more schools, and dozens of EAs to support students with complex needs, to the minister: will the budget have the funds – not the accounting; will it have the funds, the money, the dollars – for these teachers, schools, and educational assistants, or should we ask the Finance ...

2:20

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education has the call.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government remains committed to providing a world-class, high-quality education for all Alberta students. What the MacKinnon report highlighted was that Alberta spends more on its education system than most provinces, but the results just aren't there. Our government is committed to providing school divisions with the sustainable, predictable funding that they require and that they need. That's what I'm hearing. That's what we're going to do.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that in the recent telephone town hall conversation with the Finance minister, he said that funding for education would be on par with the last school year – that doesn't account for 1,200 new Edmonton Catholic students or 3,000 new Edmonton public students – and given that many schools right across the province are reporting enrolment growth like Fort McMurray's, about 6 per cent growth in both of their Catholic and public districts, to the Premier: how come you had \$4.5 billion for corporate handouts but you don't have a penny for thousands of new Alberta students?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again I reiterate to the parents and to the children that we are committed to funding education. We're committed to building schools. We have already said that we are not cutting funding to education. We owe it to parents and children to get better outcomes for the money that we're spending. It's just another example of the NDP's fear tactics that continue weekly. Next week we will bring forward a budget, which will reveal everything to everyone.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is rising with a question.

#### Seniors' Benefit Program and Long-term Care

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta seniors fear they'll pay the price for the UCP's regressive policies, including the \$4.5 billion giveaway to corporations. The UCP commissioned a report that only looked at expenditures and thus recommends a 20 per cent cut to health care funding commensurate with B.C. Notably, B.C. has no government-funded drug plan for seniors. Here in Alberta we have such a plan. To the minister of seniors: are you really going to make Alberta seniors spend more on their prescriptions to pay for your corporate tax giveaway?

**Mr. Shandro:** I think, Mr. Speaker, that's for me if it's about the seniors' drug plan. We spend \$2 billion on our 21 different drug plans within the province. We're very proud of the drug plans we have for all Albertans, including our nongroup plan, as well as the \$600 million that we spend on our seniors' drug plan. Very happy to answer any other questions the member has about this.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that a few weeks ago our leader and I stood with seniors worried about the UCP government's plans to cut funding for seniors and given that Alanna Hargan, director and Calgary chair for Seniors United Now, called on the Premier to follow through on his promise to maintain or increase support for seniors, to the minister: why isn't your government shelving its failed corporate handout and focusing on care for seniors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to supporting seniors and Albertans with low incomes, but we also need to address the debt, spending problem from the one-term NDP government.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, given that the Canadian Medical Association reports that twice as many B.C. seniors living in long-term care report experiencing more pain than do those living in Alberta facilities and given that 50 per cent more B.C. seniors in long-term care are victims of inappropriate antipsychotic medication treatment, to the minister of seniors. We do a better job of taking care of seniors in this province. Indeed, seniors built this province. Why do you want to cause them more pain?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has an overspending problem thanks to the NDP government, who chose us to be on track to exceed \$100 billion and paying \$5 million per day in interest payments. We cannot unfairly burden this generation and the generations ahead. We must act now, and we must take care of Albertans and all seniors.

#### Federal Energy Policies and Taxation

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are generous people. We pride ourselves on helping our fellow Canadians, especially when times are bad elsewhere. All we ask in return is for the right to develop our resources and sell them at a fair price, but right now Alberta has received the short end of the stick. Minister, how will this government ensure that Albertans get a fair deal in the Canadian federation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy is rising.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Political leaders from across the country continue to inflict economic harm on our oil and gas industry. These are the friends and allies of the NDP. Whether it's Justin Trudeau musing about phasing out the oil sands, the carbon tax, bills C-69 and C-48, clean fuel standards – all of these things harm our industry – the federal election right now seems to be a race of which political party, the friends and allies of the NDP, can inflict the most harm on our oil and gas sector. We will fight for our oil and gas sector.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans have contributed a net amount of \$200 billion in the last decade alone to federal taxes and given that Justin Trudeau continues to attack Albertan prosperity with no more pipelines, Bill C-69, and the tanker ban, Bill C-48, will the minister please outline our government's plan to fight this legislation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy has the call.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill C-69 is opposed by 9 out of 10 provinces, almost every major industry association in Canada, as well as dozens of First Nations. Bill C-69 is a flagrant

violation of our exclusive constitutional jurisdiction to manage and develop our natural resources, so we've already launched a constitutional reference, a challenge against Bill C-69. Saskatchewan has joined this challenge, and we're in discussions with other provinces who are like-minded about defending our exclusive constitutional jurisdiction.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans voted strongly against the carbon tax on April 16 and given that our government has a plan to ensure that emissions remain low through our TIER program and given that Justin Trudeau intends to impose a provincial carbon tax on our province, can the minister please outline how our government is working to fight this unconstitutional tax?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, Mr. Speaker, some days it seems like our primary method of defending our right to develop our oil and gas is through litigation and through the courts. Again, we have another one, the constitutional reference against the carbon tax. We launched that constitutional reference on June 20. We are expecting that to be heard in the court sometime in December. We have joined the Saskatchewan and Ontario reference, which is set to be heard in the Supreme Court of Canada in the early part of 2020. Manitoba is launching a constitutional reference, and almost all the provinces across the country have joined in this constitutional . . .

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Meadows is rising.

#### Community Grant Programs

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I joined our leader and my colleague from Calgary-McCall for a meeting with the new executive at the Dashmesh Culture Centre in Calgary. Members of the Sikh community told us about their vibrant and growing community. Specifically, they shared their concerns about the community facility enhancement program, known as CFEP, or the community initiatives program, known as CIP, that help support their community. To the minister: are communities are going to suffer as a result of your pandering \$4.5 billion to big corporations?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I'd like to say is that we're very, very honoured to have the very first ministry of multiculturalism in this province in 25 years. The direct result of that is to make sure that we're able to work with these communities to build Alberta up, to bring people together. That's actually why we were elected. They were tired of division. They were tired of people asking questions like this. Of course, we're going to be looking at making sure that those grants are available.

Thank you for the question.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that when the NDP was in government, we consistently supported the CFEP and CIP programs and given that we committed more than \$62 million to those programs in Budget 2018 alone – and that money went to community centres, hockey rinks, social clubs, and countless other groups – to the minister: where are these community groups supposed to turn now if there's only money in your budget for big corporations?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much. Well, this is exactly what I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker. This level of division and throwing people against each other is exactly why these guys are in opposition now. We are of course going to look at CFEP grants and CIP grants and all of those things that are available, even more so. In fact, this government has pledged money, \$2.5 million, to make sure that newcomers that are coming to Alberta have the ability to make sure that their professions are recognized, that they have those designations, that we make sure that we actually pull them out of survivor jobs so that they're able to pay taxes in this province to actually provide dollars for community centres.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that communities and organizations are concerned with government grants that help community members – in fact, the Finance minister even said during his recent telephone town hall that, and I quote, we are all going to have to learn to do more with less, end quote, even though big corporations have literally been handed billions of dollars, which aren't even creating jobs – to the minister of culture: are you disappointed that your Premier's corporate experiment isn't working, and will you commit here and now to maintaining or increasing funding for CFEP and CIP?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, when they were in government, taxed everything that moved. They spent like gangsters, and they had this province on track for a hundred billion dollars of accumulated debt.

**Ms Ganley:** Point of order.

**Mr. Toews:** We were elected to change course, to manage our finances responsibly, and we will do that. We will deliver a budget next week that does it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order has been called at approximately 2:32.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a question.

#### Medical Laboratory Services

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, this weekend, while the Minister of Health and his colleagues were enjoying their Thanksgiving with friends and family, medical laboratories here in our city had hundreds of samples sitting untested because they were forced to use medical equipment that has either failed or is about to fail. In many cases this equipment that they're forced to use is nearly two times older than its life expectancy, and lab staff have resorted to repairing malfunctioning machines by cannibalizing parts from broken ones. To this Minister of Health: were you aware that Alberta's medical testing equipment was in such a crisis?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's a shame that once again we see from the NDP that they're spreading fear throughout the province by spreading misinformation. I was aware of the press conference that the hon. member had last week, and I can say this: these purchases have not been cancelled; they are being reviewed. It's a very ordinary review process within AHS, and I understand from AHS that most or all of them are going to be proceeding. Our government has given no direction regarding these purchases. There's been no reduction of funding for lab services in this province. We stand by our health care guarantee.

**Mr. Shepherd:** That's precisely the problem, Mr. Speaker: this government has no direction.

Given that our government not only committed to building the Edmonton lab hub and also created a \$3 million bridge fund so that these labs could immediately replace this urgently needed equipment and given that last week Alberta's lab technologists were told that money was no longer available and that they had 24 hours to provide a crisis case for equipment they had already begun purchase orders for, will the minister commit today to ensuring that that \$3 million bridge fund is available for that equipment?

**Mr. Shandro:** What I can say right now, Mr. Speaker, is that this information that's being provided by the hon. member is completely false. It's incorrect. It's a misunderstanding of the ordinary budget procedures within AHS. Let me be clear that I was concerned when I first heard the initial report, so I had my staff get more information from AHS. I understand that the APL identified that they did not have funds for these equipment purchases within their own budget, so they forwarded them for consideration to be part of the overall AHS equipment budget. AHS is clear that these are urgent priority items, and as such, they would be normally funded once they are evaluated through the ordinary AHS process.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this minister, on the orders of his Premier, just simply jumped without a parachute earlier this summer when he chose to cancel the building of the Edmonton clinical lab hub, which would have brought new and cutting-edge equipment, and given that this minister has yet to indicate that he has any plan on how to fix the crisis state of Alberta's medical testing facilities, will this minister admit that this is simply part of their plan to let equipment fail so that they can use it as an excuse to justify introducing further American-style health care in our province?

**Mr. Shandro:** I will say this, Mr. Speaker. I am well aware of the need to invest in lab equipment in the province, and I'm working with lab providers to be able to determine these priorities. But I am not going to apologize for taking a different course from the NDP. Their plan was to spend \$50 million of taxpayer money to buy out a successful private lab provider in this province and remove 700 jobs in the constituency of Edmonton-City Centre.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose is rising. [interjections] Order.

### Driver's Licence Road Tests

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The previous government made significant changes to the scheduling of road tests, to the detriment of the entire system. Rural communities such as mine in the Camrose constituency were particularly negatively impacted as the backlog resulted in a lengthy wait time for road tests. We are finding that it is still many months before a scheduled time for a road test can be made available. Can the Minister of Transportation please give this House an update on the status of the road test system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation is rising.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not pretty. What happened is that the former government got a test on driver examiners that said that it wasn't good enough, and I agree with that. I've reviewed that test, but part of what it said was that the number of tests needed in the summer is the highest. That government responded, on March 1 of this year, by cutting the

number of driver examiners in half, less than half. That's how they responded to a report that said that the highest need for driver examiners is during the summer. Not only that, they added the MELT requirements on at the same time. They essentially crippled . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer.

Given that Albertans are not able to take scheduled road tests in a reasonable period of time and given that it is a drastic change from the situation before the NDP formed government, in which those hoping to take the road test would only have to wait a week or so, will the minister consider returning to the previous system whereby local testers are scheduled and, by doing so, returning to a more effective privatized system?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we haven't decided what we're going to do yet. We are going to look at it, but the NDP left a heck of a mess. They added on the MELT requirements, which we're going to deliver because MELT is here to stay. I know this system is not good enough, but we are cleaning up that mess that they left.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer.

My final question is to the same minister. Given that residents who live in my constituency of Camrose continue to express concern regarding the backlog of road tests and given that the people of Camrose see no resolution coming in the near future, can you please explain to this House what Albertans can expect from this recently elected government as pertains to the scheduling of road tests and clearing out the backlog?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've doubled the number of driver examiners. We've added people under licence to provide more drivers' tests. If need be, we'll add more people under licence to provide driving tests. I'm sorry we haven't got it done yet. The mess they left was that big. We couldn't possibly get it done because they dug quite a hole, that we are working very hard to dig out of.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements. If you have other meetings or appointments, please exit expeditiously.

2:40

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen to make a statement.

### Rural Schools

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, and Happy Thanksgiving, Mr. Speaker. This last weekend families and friends gathered to share a meal and express their gratitude throughout our province, and it probably won't surprise you, but the little ones who sat around my table talked about their school and their teachers. School is a big part of children's lives, and a lot of Albertans come together to ensure that kids have a positive school experience: teachers, support staff, custodial staff, bus drivers, principals, maintenance teams, curriculum and assessment experts, and the list goes on. Schools are

community hubs, and this is especially the case in many rural communities, like the one I grew up in, where the school library is the town library and the school gym and the ag hall are the two large public spaces that people come together in to gather.

Rural school staff go above and beyond their regular school day to support the community. Many rural educators teach multiple subjects to multiple grade levels. They help students explore new career paths. They sign up to coach a team that they know will take them on the highway for long trips on many weekends. Rural educators should be respected and honoured, but this UCP government couldn't rush fast enough to give away \$4.5 billion to profitable corporations, and now the MacKinnon report makes it clear that rural schools and those who work in them are on the chopping block to pay for this \$4.5 billion giveaway.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say thank you to the folks who work to provide learning opportunities for all Alberta students. My NDP colleagues and I will fight for you to have the tools that you need, and we certainly won't stand by while this UCP government makes you and your students pay the price for a \$4.5 billion corporate giveaway. We're going to have your backs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis is rising.

### Canadian Nationalism

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the Oxford dictionary a nationalist is, quote, a person who strongly identifies with their own nation and vigorously supports its interests. Yet this poor word has seemingly found itself so negative and controversial lately. By that definition I am a Canadian nationalist. I always have been, and I always will be. As a proud Canadian who truly believes that Canada is the most incredible country in the world, is that definition not exactly what I should wholeheartedly aspire to exhibit in everything that I do?

I think it's time we stop treating "nationalism" as a dirty word and start being unapologetically proud of this great nation that we call home. Loving and taking pride in our country should not be controversial. We are living through arguably the most divided times in our country's history, but rather than focusing on our differences, it's time we refocused on the commonalities and that which we love about our country. We are leading the world in environmental stewardship efforts as we continue to develop our natural resources. We are active in and committed to our democracy, our freedom of thought and expression, and our freedom of association, and we are known world-wide for our exorbitant friendliness. These are all reasons that should unite us in our love for our country.

All this hatred and division that's seeded itself across our federation lately is not the Canada that I know. I believe in a united Canada, and I believe in a Canada that empowers all of us to realize our dreams and our futures. We westerners are rightfully frustrated with much of the treatment we receive within the federation, but that does not mean we should outright give up on our federation. We have so much to be proud of as Canadians, and we will only continue to develop these reasons if we choose to work together rather than splintering apart. We need to put an end to this hatred and the division that is turning neighbour against neighbour.

On the eve of October 21st's pivotal election I beg of everyone in this House and everyone across the country: vote appropriately and refuse to give up on our Canada. Tough times don't last, but tough countries do.

Thank you.

### Crime in Northeast Calgary

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about the devastating crime wave that has been inflicted on my constituency and other parts of northeast Calgary. Like my colleague before me, I too have a story to share. Late last week Calgary police were called following reports of a sighting of armed men roaming the streets of the Calgary-Cross community of Monterey Park. Police quickly arrived and located the suspects, but the story does not end peacefully there. These armed men tried to flee the scene by shooting their way through, and police were forced to return fire. Two suspects were promptly arrested, but one managed to escape. Sadly, this is becoming more common in places like northeast Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, starting in 1999 Calgary's crime severity index score sat well below the national and provincial scores. The economic recession of 2014, combined with an already upward trending crime rate, caused Calgary's score to spike from 61 to 79 points, a nearly 30 per cent increase in a matter of months. As of 2017 Calgary's crime severity index is sitting at 82 and has been drifting upwards while the inverse is happening to the rest of the country. These statistics look troubling on paper, but to my constituents they are not just numbers but a part of their daily lives. The crimes being committed are not simple summary offences like vandalism or speeding; they range from violent crimes to large-scale drug operations.

Northeast Calgary is an epicentre for gang-related activity and a central hub for the distribution and trafficking of drugs for the rest of the city. Resolving the issues that this community and my constituents face will not only be a major benefit to that community but to the city and the province as a whole. The Calgary police have been working hard to put a stop to the rampant crime, but it is a challenging process. Halting the production and distribution of deadly drugs is a key first step in improving the quality of life in the area.

Of course, there are many barriers preventing a drop in crime . . . [Mr. Amery's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

### Navratri

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, recently many Albertans of South Asian background celebrated Navratri, which is a Hindu community festival. In the north part of India plus Nepal the festival is celebrated as Dussehra and Dashain. In the eastern part of India plus Bangladesh it is celebrated as Durga Puja. In the south part of India it is celebrated as Vijayadashami, and in the western part of India, especially Gujarat, it is celebrated as Navratri.

Mr. Speaker, the Gujarati community celebrates this festival with the traditional folk dance of Garba and Dandiya globally during the nine nights of Navratri festival. Navratri's meaning is "nine nights," and traditional folk dances take place by performers during the nighttime. The Navratri festival has the utmost significance in the Gujarati community as they have records of more than 100,000 people in the same place performing their traditional dance.

On behalf of the Premier and the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women I had the honour of attending three Navratri celebrations put on by our Gujarati community recently at the Butterdome in Edmonton and at Millennium Place in Sherwood Park. These events were hosted by the Alberta Gujarati Association and the Garvi Gujarat Association of Canada. Each event had around 3,000 to 4,000 people who performed their folk dance of Garba with colourful dresses.

At recent Butterdome events I enjoyed the company of my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of



Infrastructure, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, too. I know that the Minister of Community and Social Services also attended a Navratri event in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, Navratri is truly a beautiful festival that I especially enjoyed with our Gujarati community in Sherwood Park. On behalf of the Premier and our government I sincerely wish our Hindu, Gujarati, and South Asian communities a very happy Navratri.

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present to the Assembly the Save Our Childcare petition, which has been signed by over 1,700 Albertans from ridings all across this province, including ridings represented by the members from the other side. The petition urges the government to continue the early learning and child care program, known as \$25-per-day child care, at all participating child care centres beyond the 2020 or 2021 pilot project end date and to expand the ELCC program to more sites across Alberta.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader has a notice of a motion?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I have two, Mr. Speaker. First, I wish to advise the Assembly pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) that there shall be no morning sitting for the following day: Wednesday, October 16, 2019.

I also request leave to introduce a bill at the appropriate time being the Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Bill 16 is already on notice, so there's no need to provide oral notice of that, but thank you for your additional comments.

2:50

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

#### Bill 16

#### Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to introduce first reading of Bill 16, the Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019.

As you know, the ranching and cattle industry plays an important role in our province. This bill will ensure that Alberta's hard-working ranchers can continue to protect our environment and help support our economy for generations to come.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has caught my eye.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of over 800 signatures collected in person and

online from the AFL Fair Start committee, that petitions the government and the Assembly to

- Recognize the positive impact access to child care has on women and gender equity;
- Expand access to high-quality, centre-based child care;
- and create a concrete plan with clear timelines to build a universal system of early childhood education and care.

This is in addition to the 1,700 signatures that I filed earlier on the petition.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta has risen.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the KPMG Governance Review of the Real Estate Council of Alberta, which clearly lays out the extent of the dysfunction at the council and which I referenced several times in my comments about Bill 15 on Thursday afternoon last week.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings today? It looks like the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This is an article from St. Albert Today, part of the *St. Albert Gazette*, and it's entitled 30 Per Cent Drop in Bird Numbers Since 1970, Finds Report, by writer Kevin Ma.

**The Speaker:** Anyone else who would like to table a document today?

Seeing none, hon. members, we are at points of order. The hon. deputy Official Opposition House leader.

### Point of Order

#### Insulting Language

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order under 23(j), using "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." This point of order is in response to a statement made by the Minister of Finance in regard to a member of the Official Opposition saying that the Official Opposition, while in government, "spent like gangsters." Again, I am sure that all members of this House understand that, you know, framing people as gangsters is not necessarily a parliamentary term that we should be using when speaking to each other. I would just caution the government side that when you're speaking about things like that, you might want to consider which side of the House is currently under investigation with the RCMP.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise on this point of order. I want to start off by pointing out very clearly that the hon. Finance minister did not refer to any members as gangsters in his comments. He was extraordinarily clear that they spent like gangsters. We are talking and he was referring to the fact that they brought us to \$60 billion in debt, on track to \$100 billion in debt, and oversaw a government that usually had well over \$10 billion in deficits. If that's not spending like a gangster, I don't know what is. With that said, though, I do understand that the opposition probably doesn't want to have it pointed out that they had the worst financial record in the history of this province. As such, I'd be happy to withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** While I appreciate the member's comments, I hope that in the future, if he chooses to withdraw, he'll do so in a more expeditious manner to save us all the time and trouble. Having said that, I consider the matter dealt with.

We are at Orders of the Day. Ordres du jour.

**Orders of the Day**  
**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Third Reading**

**Bill 15**  
**Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019**

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and move third reading of Bill 15.

As I have said before, this bill is an important first step to restoring Albertans' trust in the real estate regulator. I'm also very pleased that all members in this House seem to approve of the action our government is taking and see the importance of this bill. We cannot allow the real estate regulator or any regulator to wallow in dysfunction. The problems at the Real Estate Council of Alberta should never have been allowed to last this long or to get this bad.

Mr. Speaker, some of the members opposite have tried to take credit for the KPMG review that I just tabled moments ago, but I'd like to clarify something. For years members of the real estate industry, members of the council, and members of the public had brought substantial concerns forward to the previous ministers. Those concerns fell on deaf ears for at least two years despite the fact that complaints escalated in number and requests for ministerial intervention were received. It took at least two years before the previous government finally initiated a review into the council. Regardless of the rising complaints and the growing problems and concerns and requests for ministerial intervention, the former government sat and did nothing until the end of their mandate.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

In our government we will not sit on our hands and wait for problems to deteriorate, Mr. Speaker. This is a government of action, and that is why we acted so swiftly to address the jobs crisis we inherited from the NDP with our job-creation tax cut. This move was supported by leading economists as a strong step in the right direction to get Albertans back to work. That's why we passed Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act, as our first order of business, putting more money into Albertans' pockets and ending a failed NDP policy that resulted in all economic pain and no environmental gain. That is why we have been working so hard to reduce the red tape and to unleash the productive capacity of Albertans and Alberta businesses. Over 1 million Albertans voted for this government, asking us to carry out our ambitious platform, the most detailed platform in Alberta's history.

I'm proud of the actions that we have taken in these first six months, but sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we find matters of critical importance that aren't in our platform that do require immediate action. That is why we acted so quickly on the industry complaints and the KPMG review that we received about the Real Estate Council of Alberta. Albertans did not vote for a government that would listen to complaints but not hear them, that would review issues but not understand them, that would talk but not act. Albertans voted for a government that would do what they were elected to do, to take charge.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous speeches on this topic I very clearly laid out some of the issues at the Real Estate Council of Alberta. I encourage the members of this House and, in fact, all Albertans to read the KPMG review, that our government posted online. This report illustrates why Bill 15 is such an important piece of legislation. It was necessary for me to be so blunt about the problems at RECA because Albertans needed to know the extent of what was happening behind the scenes at the industry regulator.

They needed to understand that the action that our government is taking is critically necessary to stabilize the regulator and to get it back on track. I want to say that our priority is protecting Albertans, and our focus is on ensuring confidence in a real estate regulator that is functional and effective, not just in the immediate term but in the long term as well.

I cannot count the number of positive messages I have received from members of the real estate industry, not just since I tabled this bill but also since my second ministerial order to RECA in August. This feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with a recurring theme of: thank you; it's about time. Mr. Speaker, the pain felt by this industry was very real.

You may remember that in early August I issued a ministerial order and a statement about new advertising guidelines that RECA intended to impose that did nothing but add red tape and cost tens of billions of dollars to implement. Following that order and statement and carrying on through the summer, I received phone calls, e-mails, Facebook and Twitter messages from real estate professionals across the province, who were so grateful that I was seeing the problems at RECA and I was intervening. I was taking action. I received comments about bullying that was taking place and about gross oversteps by the council. I had one professional call my office in tears to thank me for the action I was taking. I received information about other problems that existed, and I got pleas to dig deeper. Many of those professionals emphasized the fact that it was refreshing to have a government that was listening and taking action.

With the tabling of this bill last week, Mr. Speaker, I continue to receive thankful and encouraging messages. Real estate professionals were and continue to be grateful that at last someone in government has really listened to their concerns, has heard them, has understood them, and is taking action. I've been clear that the council lost the confidence of their fellow members, of the industry, of Albertans, and of me. Judging by the feedback I've received over the past week and also over the past number of months, that confidence is already being restored by this government's actions on this file. Real estate professionals are already more confident not just in their regulator and in their industry, but they're also more confident in their government.

3:00

It's a slow process, Mr. Speaker, building confidence. We know that we have our work cut out for us in many areas as we work, for example, to undo the damage done by the previous government to our economy. This is work that cannot be completed overnight; it will take time. This government is focused on restoring confidence in all industries in Alberta.

When it comes to restoring confidence in the real estate industry, that work began with the clear action I took through a series of ministerial orders to address urgent issues and oversteps over the summer and is followed up by this bill, which will dismiss council and get the regulator back on track. That work will continue as we move forward alongside industry professionals to propose further amendments early next year. I intend to build on the confidence that the real estate industry is regaining by ensuring that we have a skilled and competent administrator in place to serve as the real estate regulator in the short term.

On the subject of appointments I'd like to talk for a minute about the Auditor General's findings on the NDP's appointment process when they were in government, which were included in a report published only six weeks ago. Some of the findings included that evidence was lacking on how board members had the skill and experience that the boards were seeking. Much as RECA received

a failing grade from KPMG, so too did the NDP receive a failing grade from the Auditor General.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that there will be no such report from the Auditor General's office about the appointment of an administrator for RECA. In order to effectively stabilize and focus the real estate regulator, it is imperative that an administrator is chosen who can come into the position, hit the ground running, identify gaps, problems, and solutions, and move forward to bring about positive change. This is no small task, and not just anyone will do. This is also an appointment that will need to move forward with some urgency because Albertans and professionals within the real estate industry must have clarity and stability as we move forward. Whoever is appointed to the role of administrator will have the qualities to assure Albertans and, specifically, real estate professionals that there is stability moving forward.

As I mentioned in earlier comments, Bill 15 is only a stepping stone, Mr. Speaker, and further work needs to be done. Once again I'll reiterate that I am committed to working with members of the real estate industry to ensure that further work and amendments are carefully considered so that we can develop recommendations for broader governance reforms to ensure that this dysfunction cannot ever happen again. Let me assure all members of this House and all Albertans that our plan is to transition to a functional council that will serve as regulator and that everyone can have confidence in. We will take the time to do this right, and the end result will be one achieved through collaboration.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank KPMG for their work on the review that they conducted on the council. I'd like to thank members of the real estate industry for their supportive comments and for the trust they have placed in me as I work to clean up this mess. I would like to encourage them to continue to share their thoughts and opinions as we move forward together. We will not let them down.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen to speak to this matter.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is something on which we were in agreement on both sides of the House here, and I was about to rise and comment on the importance of governance and how it crosses partisan lines and how we can work together in instances when it's important. It's a little bit tone deaf to say those things after such a blatant and unnecessary display of collateral attack and partisanship. Nonetheless, here we go.

We are, of course, in support of this bill though not, obviously, all of the comments that were made. I think it's probably worth pointing out that I am in fact looking at the ministerial order that set up this particular review. It is, in fact, signed by the previous Minister of Service Alberta, so it was in fact started under our government.

I think it's also worth noting in this case that, you know, when we're talking about governance, it's not just about individuals; it's about systems. Yes, there was dysfunction on this board, but some of that dysfunction arose from the way the board itself was structured. That structure, I hasten to point out, significantly predates 2015 and is, in fact, a Conservative legacy. So I applaud this step. I absolutely think it is a necessary step, but I think it's worth pointing out that laying the entire blame for this on individuals when, in fact, in the report there are governance concerns fairly clearly identified – I think it's insufficient to simply do this. There need to be significant steps taken to address those governance challenges.

I also think it's worth pointing out that in this system that was challenged and that had some disfunction, there were good people, people who worked with AREA, people who came forward to complain about the council from within the council, who genuinely felt committed to creating better governance for the industry and to creating a better situation. I understand the reasons why it has to be done like this, and I don't disagree with them, but I do think that it's worth pointing out that some of these individuals were trying their best to fix what is a challenging and dysfunctional system.

I also think it's worth pointing out that the precursor to this report was another report, which the current government is refusing to release.

I think we're in agreement on both sides that this step needs to be taken. We're certainly supporting this. I'm certainly supporting this bill, and I'm urging all members to support this bill, but I do hope that additional steps are taken to fix the overall governance challenges. I'm someone who cares very deeply about governance and about the way we set things up and about creating a system of fairness. I think, you know, that having challenges this large arising from someone who asked some very valid questions about why people who were ill or who had children were disadvantaged as a result of that – I think that those questions were legitimate, and I think that they were properly placed, and I think that having people advocate for what they see as good governance and having people advocate for what they see as good regulators is very, very important. I do know that a number of folks from AREA had concerns about this going well back into the past.

I'm glad to see that this report has come forward, I'm glad to see that the government is acting on this report, and I'm glad to see that things will move forward, but I just hope that this doesn't get written off as being a problem with this board only or as being a problem with every member of this board. I hope that as we move forward, additional steps are taken to ensure that power doesn't concentrate in certain members of the administration, giving them the ability to control elections on council in a way that is not really appropriate. The minister did indicate that he would take further steps, so I hope this is one of them.

I do hope that they bring in a mediation process because I think we all know – you know, the court system is a fantastic system. It does a lot of things very well; it does not do all things well. Certainly, one of the major problems with the court system is that well-funded parties can sometimes use litigation to, shall we say – I don't want to say "take advantage of less well funded," but they can shift the balance. So I think that having mediation in place not only is a recommendation of the report, but I think that it's an important step forward so that in future, when issues arise – it's often the case that a governance body will have a disagreement amongst themselves. There are many regulators out there where the individuals have such disagreements. The point is that you need to have a method to remedy that disagreement that doesn't sort of deadlock everything. So I think that that mediation is really, really important, and I hope that it will be applied to ongoing matters arising out of the previous issues.

I guess, to sum up, my points here are that this is the right move. We are fully in support of this bill. I hope that this isn't the only thing we see. I hope that going forward, we see a change to the structure and a change to the governance so that issues like this don't reoccur and so that if good people do step forward and are willing to volunteer their time and their effort and their hearts to do something that they care about, to try to make the world a better place, and to create a better system of governance, this isn't the result of that. I do hope that we'll see a structural change that will result in a council that's able to govern itself going forward. I do

thank all the individuals that were involved in the writing of this report and the minister for being willing to take the necessary steps.

3:10

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to this matter? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has the call.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you to the hon. member behind me. You know, I find myself rising and wanting to correct the record because what I heard from the minister really is just part of the story. The story about RECA is one that started before the NDP government that I was a part of. It was set up by the Conservative government, of which there are members who are Conservatives over there, the former party, and they were part of the people who were sitting on their hands with regard to RECA. They were doing that because they didn't bring anything forward at all, Mr. Speaker. It was the government that I was part of that initiated the work that led to the actions that the minister is talking about today. There was a KPMG report. Had we been in government, we would have acted on that report. There was a previous report that was commissioned that is not being released, I understand, by the current government.

The minister took an opportunity to talk about the appointment process, and I want to talk about the appointment process as well. When we were government, we set up a public appointment process. As I understand it, that's been thrown out by the UCP government, and they are back to appointing their friends and insiders to boards and commissions all across this province. I say that because I know people who were taken off boards and commissions on a Thursday evening. They were given a phone call at 7 o'clock at night that said, even though they're volunteers: "Your services will no longer be needed. We are putting new people in place." In many cases they had a couple of months to serve out before they would finish their time on that board.

I asked that person: do you know anything about how the replacement for you got put in place? The person told me that they understand that the person who was put in place as the chair of the board did not even know they were being put forward. I take from that that there was no public appointment process. People were tapped on the shoulder, essentially, and put in place, Mr. Speaker. If the minister talks about the Auditor General and their feelings about the appointment process that was put in place by us, I can tell you that the Auditor General will have a field day when that person looks at the appointment process put in place by the UCP government, which is back to who you know and not what you know and how you can help the organization.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to just correct the record to say that RECA was set up by Conservative governments. For years those governments turned a deaf ear to the egregious governance issues that were in place. The actions taken to get us to today, which is Bill 15, were started by our government. If the minister knows something different, perhaps he'll share that, but I can tell you that I, too, support the work of getting to the bottom of RECA and getting a better governance process in place. That has not happened under previous Conservative governments. It started with us, and it would have finished with us.

The minister may want to get up and be partisan again about this issue. I feel like he's going to take every opportunity to say that the previous NDP government messed things up. That's not true, Mr. Speaker. I will stand up and defend our appointment process at every opportunity and let him know that we started the work that he is taking credit for today. That is the truth of the matter. That is what

we did. Recognizing that there were egregious problems with regard to governance, we started the actions.

People may argue about, "You know, it didn't go quick enough" and all that, but the reports were under way, Mr. Speaker. They weren't under way prior to the NDP government. They were being ignored by previous Conservative governments, who set up RECA in the way they set it up, and they put the people in place in many cases who were there – I think the person at the top stepped down after 25 or so years in place.

Mr. Speaker, we took the actions that led to the actions today, and I'm very proud of the work of my colleagues and I in that regard and of the former minister as well. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Prior to any further speakers, 29(2)(a) is available for anybody wishing to speak or make a quick five-minute question or comment.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill proper?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Service Alberta to close debate?

**Mr. Glubish:** Yeah. Before we close debate, I should just say, for clarification, you know, that timing is everything. While the former government did initiate the KPMG review, I still maintain that this should never have been allowed to last as long as it did. The complaints began to escalate substantially in 2016, and it took until 2019 for the KPMG review to be initiated. With that said, I'm pleased to be able to move forward with this as a solution to a problem.

With respect to the comments about future reform, I mean, I think I've been very clear in my comments in this Chamber that we acknowledge, as the KPMG report indicates, that further governance reforms would be recommended. We will move forward in exploring that with the real estate industry, and we recognize that that is a necessary next step for the long-term health of this industry. We will make sure that we get this right so that this level of dysfunction is never allowed to happen again.

With that, I close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a third time]

#### Bill 14

#### Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

[Adjourned debate October 15: Mr. Nally]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members looking to speak to Bill 14? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think this is a bill that will provide a lot of assistance, and I think it will do a lot of good things for our indigenous friends within our community. I know that the minister has worked very hard and consulted with many stakeholders to ensure that he put the best bill forward that he can.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a third time]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move that we adjourn until tomorrow, October 16, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:20 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, October 16, 2019

Day 28

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's my esteemed pleasure today to introduce to you a group of visiting parliamentarians from Hokkaido, Japan. Hokkaido and Alberta share a very special and long-standing, 39-year friendship agreement. I invite all members to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, if you might indulge me for just one brief moment. If all members could rise and just take a very brief moment of silence in recognition of the many who have lost their lives in the typhoon in Japan, I know that I and many others would be greatly appreciative of your co-operation.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Members, the galleries have many distinguished guests today, including guests of the Minister of Indigenous Relations: Elder Marggo Pariseau, Elder Jackie Bromley, Josie Nepinak, Emily Taylor, Victoria Sedgwick, Muriel Stanley Venne, Rachelle Venne, Marlene Poitras, Lisa Higgerty, and Chevi Rabbit. Please rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

Guest of the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland: Mr. Denis Meier.

Guests of the Minister of Ag and Forestry: a Premier's 4-H award recipient, Ms Amanda Hardman; her family, Barb and Keith; as well as Pamela Fald and Stacy Murray.

Guests of the Minister of Community and Social Services: Andrea Silverstone, executive director of Sagesse violence prevention society.

Joining us from Drumheller-Stettler: Holli Smith and Lindsay Bond of the Prairie Land school division.

Guests of the Member for St. Albert: Patti Fair, Chris Joseph, Andrea Joseph, Laurel Patter, Pam Cameron, Shauna Nordstrom, Peter Snaterse, Shaylyn Hunter, and Shelby Hunter.

Please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations is rising to make a statement.

Prior to him rising, I would just like to point out to the members of the Assembly that the minister has sought special permission to display a red dress in the Assembly.

### Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for your consideration on this important matter. On October 4 Canadians from coast to coast gathered at community events and vigils to honour and commemorate the lives of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. In 2004 the Native Women's Association of Canada launched the sisters in spirit initiative. Why? Indigenous women and girls represent 4 per cent of the Canadian population but make up 25 per cent of all female homicides in this country. According to a 2015 report by the RCMP indigenous women are more likely than nonindigenous women in the Canadian provinces to experience violent victimization. The same study also shows that our province's homicide rate for indigenous women was more than seven times that of nonindigenous women between 2001 and 2015.

Mr. Speaker, those are unacceptable and horrific numbers. Too many families have had to bury their loved ones, and many still don't have the answers. I cannot fathom the pain that comes from losing a loved one in this manner.

I attended vigils in Calgary and Edmonton on October 4, and as we gathered in support of one another and paid our respects through song and prayer, I was overwhelmed by the strength and resilience of the families of the missing and murdered loved ones. On our way to the march on Stephen Avenue Mall I met one young mother whose best friend's body was found in the North Saskatchewan River just last year. Her young friend had travelled to the vigil with her young child all the way from Saddle Lake to honour her friend Lindsay Marie Jackson and to tell her that she's not forgotten and still very much loved.

The high numbers of indigenous females who have been victimized by violent crime is a tragedy that we must all recognize and address if we're truly on the path to reconciliation. We must acknowledge the injustices that have been committed against indigenous people.

In June I attended the national inquiry's closing ceremony in Ottawa, where I received the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It was there that I connected with several families who had the courage and strength to appear in person, and I became acquainted with one mother who sat near me. I told her that Alberta would take the report, all 1,200 pages of it, and our government would work to address the calls for justice. That's why I'm honoured to be part of the government that is committed to renewing its partnership with indigenous people in the pursuit of reconciliation and to address gender-based violence. We recognize that this is no small feat, and we must approach reconciliation with humility and understanding. I call on all Albertans to stand against violence towards indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA people.

In that spirit, I present this beautiful handcrafted red dress, which honours those loved ones who no longer walk among us but whose energy and spirit come to guide us. Emily Taylor, if you could please rise. She's the artist who made this dress for us here today. Let's welcome her. Thank you, Emily.

I'm pleased to tell her and all the honoured guests that the public will be able to view this dress and read about the meaning behind it in a display at the Federal Building, just north of here on the grounds of the Legislature. The countless indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people who have been lost will never be forgotten. Their memories will be honoured and help drive us as we work towards creating an Alberta where all indigenous lives are valued and safe.

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, fellow ministers, esteemed colleagues, and all our honoured guests for allowing me to do this today and to rise in the Chamber on this very important topic.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to reply.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister for his words and for accepting the gift of a red dress from the Awo Taan Healing Lodge in Calgary, the creation of artist Emily Taylor. I know all members of this House support the arrival and display of a red dress at the Alberta Legislature. It's a powerful symbol of the indigenous women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing across this country. The original red dress project began as an art project by Métis artist Jamie Black, a remembrance of the murdered and missing. But soon the symbol turned to protest. Organically, indigenous people across the country adopted the red dress as a cry for justice and a call for a national inquiry.

A major element of this tragedy has been the indifference and inaction of Canadian and provincial governments, even as evidence of an unfolding genocide mounted. Indeed, the federal government that our current Premier was a member of displayed no interest in pursuing the truth of this national tragedy. But here we are today, and I'm grateful that we have come such a distance as to display a red dress in our Legislature.

1:40

In my time as Minister of Indigenous Relations I was graced with the opportunity to meet many family members of murdered and missing women and girls and, indeed, of missing men and boys as well. The pain and trauma that has been experienced by these families is unbearable and impossible to fully imagine. What we can only do is stand with these families and ensure that this genocide stops now, today, ensure that words turn to action. The threat to these families now is that they will not be listened to. I've often seen women wearing the red dress also apply a red hand to their face to symbolize the silence that indigenous women heard as their sisters and mothers and daughters and nieces and cousins and friends died violently or simply vanished.

Today is a milestone. It's a time to remember the thousands of people who were lost in this genocide. It's a moment to remember that it is still happening and there's a great deal of work ahead and a great number of painful truths to confront.

### Members' Statements

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis is rising to make a statement.

### Advocacy for Alberta's Energy Industry

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are pleased to welcome anyone to our province. My riding of Banff-Kananaskis welcomes over 4 million tourists every year who come to see our breathtaking landscapes. For those folks that travel around the world to visit, we are happy to showcase our beauty and introduce them to our world-class energy industry, but oftentimes there seems to be some miscommunication.

Alberta produces its energy to the highest global standards of labour rights and environmental oversight while investing huge sums of money into technology that will help reduce the 1.6 per cent of global carbon emissions that Canada is responsible for. LNG produced by the Canadian energy sector will help developing nations such as India and China reduce their dependencies on coal and replace it with cleaner energy, which will help the world meet the Paris targets. Alberta is achieving all of this real progress while

working alongside our indigenous partners and creating new opportunities for their communities to create lasting jobs.

Albertans welcome all of those who are passionate about our future, but we ask that they look at the whole picture and approach us with an open mind. Alberta is not part of the problem, but it is one of the only energy-producing jurisdictions that is part of the solution. We must recognize that as long the world demands energy, it will be supplied. Alberta is second to none on the responsibility of our energy production. We must displace energy produced by other nations who have deplorable environmental and human rights records with responsible energy from Alberta. The Iranian, Saudi, and Venezuelan petrostates will continue to supply the global energy network if we do not get our oil to market. With the right leadership, Albertan can and will continue to meet the needs of the global economy while utilizing environmental standards that will make a real difference on the global stage, and we're proud to do it.

As we continue to welcome all people to our province with open arms and the hospitality that we are known for, we must also be proud to tell our story. We will do so with respect, and we will speak with one voice to condemn anyone who descends into harassment or threats of violence as this is never acceptable. But I hope that today we can all stand together to tell the story of Alberta's innovative, responsible, and world-leading energy.

### Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards

**Ms Renaud:** The tragedy of the Humboldt Broncos bus crash continues to be felt across Canada, and it hits especially close to home in St. Albert. Four young men who lost their lives in that crash grew up and played hockey in our community. Their names were Logan Hunter, Jaxon Joseph, Conner Lukan, and Stephen Wack. In the wake of tragedy, St. Albert came together to support their families and honour their memories. St. Albert has raised over \$450,000 to set up scholarships in the names of these four players.

That's why I and many of my constituents were profoundly disappointed to learn about the UCP's deliberate decision to exempt thousands of semi-truck and bus drivers from long-overdue safety standards introduced by the province in the wake of this crash. Because of the UCP's choice to cater to special interests rather than enforce the measures needed to prevent another tragedy like Humboldt, up to 6,800 truck and bus drivers could dodge these safety requirements. This decision places Albertans at risk and is disrespectful to families who lost their loved ones in that crash.

I've been contacted by the St. Albert families of the Humboldt players regarding this decision, and I'll share some of their words in this House.

I never thought he would die on a rural road in Saskatchewan, on a safe bus with his brothers . . . [The] reason for [this] exemption is about the money! . . . the road is the road . . . no one should be entitled to exemptions.

I am writing to [ask you to ensure] that the provincial government DOES NOT relax any rules for Class 1 Drivers . . . Please don't let our son, and many others die for nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I know that consultation is not top of mind for this government, but I ask my UCP colleagues to please listen to the St. Albert families and immediately reverse their decision to roll back safety standards. Some red tape exists for good reasons.

Thank you.

### Eddie Maurice and Rural Crime

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's a stretch to say that when you mention the words "rural crime," in many cases the name Eddie Maurice immediately comes up in the same conversation.

On Saturday, February 24, 2018, at around 5 o'clock in the morning two criminals trespassed onto Eddie's farm and were in the process of burglarizing his property. As any father and husband would reasonably do, Eddie stood his ground to protect his property and his family. He shouted for the men to leave, but ultimately it took not one but two warning shots fired into the ground to force them to flee his property. Subsequently, after waiting for two hours for the RCMP to respond, the first thing that happened when they arrived: Eddie was arrested and charged with multiple firearms-related charges. Eventually he was acquitted, but the fact that he was charged at all has had major consequences.

I will explain why I feel this is so important. The reality of the situation in rural Alberta is that people have lost faith in the system and they're now stopping and not phoning 911. So when the members opposite want to talk about statistics that suggest a decrease in rural crime, I'll be quite clear. Rural crime is still on the rise. Our rural residents need more support. Now, to make matters even worse, Eddie Maurice is now being sued for \$100,000 by the criminal who burglarized his property. It's absurd to think that this innocent, honest, hard-working, tax-paying resident is now being revictimized by the same criminal. But Eddie has made it clear that he will not back down to criminals on his property or in the courtroom.

It's time for everyone in this House to realize that rural crime is at a critical point. We need to provide real support to our rural communities so that we can gain back the confidence necessary. So while the members opposite want to waste time spreading misinformation about this government's plan to provide more support for our rural communities, I'll be on this side of the House working with my colleagues to support rural Alberta, Eddie Maurice, and his family.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has a statement to make.

#### **Logan Boulet, Organ Donation, and Traffic Safety**

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say a few words about two great Albertans, the Boulet family. Toby and Bernadine Boulet are constituents of Lethbridge-West. They are decent, honest, plain-spoken Albertans who have endured a heartbreaking tragedy. Their son Logan was a fine young man. As many Albertans know, Logan was catastrophically injured in the Humboldt Broncos bus disaster.

The Boulets were following the bus that night in their car, and they searched through the wreckage at the crash site before learning that their son had been rushed to hospital, where he would later pass away. Logan had filled out his donor card. Six people benefited from Logan's understanding, even as a young man, of the life-changing, positive effects he could have on his fellow Canadians. Logan's sense of individual responsibility for our collective well-being prompted what's been called the Logan Boulet effect, with more than 100,000 Canadians signing up to be organ donors. I know that not a day passes without Toby and Bernadine feeling Logan's absence. The Boulets have worked incredibly hard to create hope in the midst of their loss. Many Albertans now recognize April 7 as Green Shirt Day to honour organ donation. I was honoured to take some time away from the spring election campaign to wear my green shirt and salute the Boulet family.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen the powerful effect of organ donation, even in people very close to me. My own partner was a living donor to his brother, and I saw someone's life change for the better literally overnight as a result of an organ transplant. The Boulet family has set an extraordinary example in advocating for organ

donation. But now, unfortunately, they have to advocate for trucking safety standards and stand up to a government that seems more interested in powerful lobbyists and people who want to turn a buck off lax safety standards. So I have to say this to the Premier and his Minister of Transportation: the Boulet family of Lethbridge and Logan Boulet's memory deserve better.

1:50

#### **Oral Question Period**

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### **Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards**

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, all Albertans and, indeed, Canadians from coast to coast were devastated by the Humboldt Broncos crash. Kids who had their whole lives ahead of them, families turned upside down in a flash. When we learned that the driver of the truck had no business being behind the wheel, Albertans were angry, so we made the highest standard safety training mandatory to make sure this could never happen again. These families are here today. To the Premier: can he explain why his government doesn't think every single truck driver or bus driver on our roads should be safe?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, of course with all Albertans and Canadians we grieve the loss of those young men and those who were injured in that terrible, tragic accident. Of course this government and all Albertans believe that anybody driving a truck on our roads should be properly qualified according to the highest standards, which is why our government will continue with the implementation of the mandatory entry-level training for class 1 and 2 drivers. However, unfortunately the previous government cut in half the number of driver examiners available, creating an enormous backlog. That's why they provided an extension for farmers and school bus drivers, which we'll hopefully be able to close as soon as the backlog . . .

**Ms Notley:** Well, in fact, this Premier's government has said that it will not require 6,800 drivers who obtained their licence in the period between October and March to complete the new MELT test; 6,800, and it only takes one to destroy a family. Right now this government is allowing 6,800 new truck drivers on the roads with no enhanced safety training or testing at all. Please, through you, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier reconsider his decision and direct his minister to ensure all drivers have MELT training or testing?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in point of fact, the previous government exempted from the MELT requirement over 150,000 class 1 and class 2 truck drivers on our roads. Is she proposing that we retroactively apply that new standard to drivers who have been driving for decades with a perfect safety record, including the 150,000 that they exempted?

I'll tell you what we are also taking action on. I've asked the minister of immigration to investigate the troubling revelations from last week's *Globe and Mail* story about the apparent abuse of the temporary foreign worker program with respect to class 1 drivers. We intend to crack down on any such abuse, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Notley:** Well, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is not being appropriately briefed because those 6,800 truck drivers I referred to don't have the experience that he referenced.

In addition, this government is also planning to fully exempt heavy-load farm truck drivers and, if you can believe it, Mr. Speaker, school bus drivers. Somehow the safety of schoolchildren is too expensive to ensure. To the Premier: will you commit to supporting an emergency debate today on all aspects of this issue



so we can ensure the best plans are in place to ensure public safety and to prevent another tragedy like the one in Humboldt?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's regrettable to continue to see a pattern of misrepresentation from the other side of the House. I have today a letter from several mayors objecting to the Leader of the Opposition's "dishonest and unbecoming," misleading comments about their position on a different matter.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, what the leader of the NDP just said is completely false. In fact, as I've said, the mandatory entry-level training requirement will be mandatory going forward. The NDP decided to exempt over 150,000 drivers from that, but we're also going to deal with something they didn't, which is the apparent abuse of the temporary foreign worker program that has put unsafe drivers on our roads.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

### School Bus Driver Training and Testing Standards

**Ms Hoffman:** When parents put their kids on the bus in the morning, they shouldn't have to worry if their kids will be safe when they get to school or not. Nothing is more important than the safety of our children, yet the UCP government rushes to roll back safety standards for school buses. Did the Premier know and approve of his minister's decision?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member, I believe, knows, the previous government had given an extended period of time for school bus drivers to get their MELT requirements so that the school boards could get the kids to school, because they wouldn't have been able to get school bus drivers hired and in place on time. Now, the NDP government actually gave an extension. We extended that extension, too, at the request of the school boards, and many of them were happy. I'm not sure how the kids would have got to school in September had we not done that.

**Ms Hoffman:** I remember where I was when the Humboldt crash happened, and I know that the parents in the gallery remember where they were, too. I attended the funeral in the Humboldt arena alongside families across the country. Our country lost its breath. We don't want this to happen again, and we must take steps to ensure that. Why won't the Premier take steps to make sure that our kids are safe on the bus?

**Mr. McIver:** You know what, Mr. Speaker? I've never thought of safety as a partisan issue, and I still don't think of it as that today. Everybody in this country cares about the families and victims of the Humboldt tragedy. That has not changed. It will never change. We all care about safety. The previous government, rather than throwing stones, should perhaps think about being a little bit helpful in this endeavour. On this side we will move forward to try to make the roads as safe as possible because that's what really matters.

**Ms Hoffman:** The UCP government originally said that they'd pay for the necessary school bus driver training, but now they won't, so inexperienced and unqualified operators can take a bus full of children on the highway. To the Premier: what is the value to you of a bus filled with children and their driver?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, there's nothing more valuable than a life, whether it's a child or an adult or anybody else, and certainly the lives lost and injured in the Broncos tragedy are no exception.

We take safety very seriously. The previous government had school buses in 61 divisions, with the same training, taking kids to school for four years in a row, and that was the right thing to do because they were trained for the licences they had. That hasn't changed. Over time the MELT standard will be put in place and kept in place because we care about safety as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen.

### Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. Mr. Premier, when you were in Ottawa, multiple requests were made for your government to initiate an inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. The response from your Prime Minister on behalf of your government was, quote, um, it isn't really on our radar, to be honest, unquote. Consequently, it waited until your government was fired by Canadians before an inquiry was instituted, after calls from the Alberta NDP and others. Mr. Premier, can you please explain to the House why you failed to respond with an inquiry for so long?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to have the ladies from Awo Taan here today, showing that we are working hard on this very important subject. Our government is committed to moving towards true reconciliation, that will empower indigenous Albertans to take charge of their own destiny. Part of those calls for justice is the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the call for self-determination in the pursuit of economic and social development, and that is exactly what we're pursuing. I presented Bill 14 – and the House has approved third reading – the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, through which indigenous communities are able to purchase an equity stake in natural resource projects.

**Mr. Feehan:** Mr. Premier, I wouldn't stand to defend my record if mine was the same as yours.

Tanya Kappo, a leader of the Idle No More movement and a member of the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, said about the Premier's past government, quote, the Conservative government does not believe First Nations people have rights and make their profound lack of respect painfully clear. End quote. To the Premier. There's a lot of mistrust with how you have handled these important matters in the past. How can our First Nations people really trust you at this point?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations has the call.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, this is a very important issue to us. You can see that today. I've personally spent time meeting with the organizations from Alberta that had standing in the final report, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women and the Awo Taan healing society. I've also sat down with the hon. minister of status of women to read the report in its entirety and discuss our plan to begin to focus on the calls for justice that will have the greatest impact on ensuring that indigenous women are treated with dignity, humanity, and respect, that may be taken for granted by others. Our government has been very active in reviewing this report and creating plans for real action on protecting indigenous ...

2:00

**Mr. Feehan:** I think the Premier's silence on this is deafening.

The Conservative federal government failed hard, but there is a chance for this Premier to make it right. There are 231 recommendations in the final report on the National Inquiry into Missing

and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. These are to be followed through on by provincial and federal governments. To the Premier: have you read the entire report, and if so, can you please detail which recommendations you will follow through on first and when that work will be completed? Please be specific.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Myself and the minister of status of women have thoroughly read the report, thoroughly read every page, and are working hard on this to come up with a plan. I can tell you that that's why the ladies are here today. I took action on this plan. I said that I would. On page 199, if you look at sections 15.1 through 15.8, you will see that part of it is just making recognition and standing up for murdered and missing indigenous women, and that's what we're doing.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Electric Power System

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Price spikes and rolling blackouts: that's the legacy of Conservative governments in this province when it comes to our electricity system. We know that this Premier is moving to kill the capacity market introduced by our government and supported by the Alberta Electric System Operator. This decision will create uncertainty for consumers and put them at risk of further price spikes. To the Premier: why are people's power bills the latest casualty in your bid to make friends with big corporations?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, we announced earlier in the summer that we are staying with the energy-only market after extensive consultation with numerous stakeholders, including the renewables stakeholders, who unanimously supported our desire to stay with the energy-only market. That will ensure the most reliable, the most stable, and the most affordable electricity in the province.

**Mr. Sabir:** We know that this Premier rushed to give a \$4.5 billion handout to corporations, and they are not creating jobs. They have stalled on all other efforts to support working Albertans and their families. To the Premier: will you stand in this House right now and pledge that power bills will not go up as a result of your actions?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, that side of the House, that government, drove the electricity policy into a situation where we had a \$1.4 billion boondoggle with the return of power purchase agreements. That boondoggle is going to be paid for for a very long time by consumers and taxpayers in Alberta. If anything is driving up the cost of electricity, it's the actions of the previous government.

**Mr. Sabir:** I'm also hearing that hundreds of people are being laid off at the Alberta Electric System Operator as this government rushes to kill the capacity market and abolish any attempts to move to renewable sources of energy. To the Premier: how many people are being fired at Alberta Electric System Operator, and is the only justification you have found to fire them that they don't agree with your government's policies?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, that's a completely ridiculous statement. That's a completely ridiculous statement. We have stayed with the energy-only market after extensive consultation with stakeholders across the province who have said that the capacity market was not going to attract investment, was not going to produce reliable and affordable electricity. We have taken steps to keep electricity rates

down for consumers in the province and to keep taxpayer rates down, too.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

### Calgary Ring Road

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The southwest Calgary ring road is a significant project for my constituents in Calgary-West. The Calgary ring road is part of a larger east-west trade passage that will enhance access to markets, of course, out of Alberta. Now, given that the previous government committed to financing 60 per cent of the construction, can the Minister of Transportation please update the House on whether the project will remain on budget?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My officials tell me that we are currently on budget with this project. An agreement was signed with Mountain View Partners, who will finance 45 per cent, or approximately \$625 million; 55 per cent will be funded through a P3, or about \$725 million. I believe we're on track.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the construction of the southwest Calgary ring road involved the transfer of land from Tsuut'ina Nation and given that the agreement requires construction to be completed by next year or the land will be transferred back to the First Nation, can the minister please update the House on the current status of the ring road and if it will be completed on schedule?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, my staff tells me that we are on schedule. We will have the road open on time. Of course, those listening might want to know that the part of the project not on the Tsuut'ina land is scheduled to be completed for a full ring road in May 2022, and so far so good.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the project is a significant investment for the province, involving the negotiation of land transfer and several public-private partnerships, can the minister please update the House on how the Calgary ring road fits into the broader goal of economic development for the province?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The project currently supports more than 3,700 jobs. There are 49 bridges, 14 interchanges. It will create 101 kilometres of free-flow traffic when it's done and help provide market access in and out of the Calgary area to the world, essentially. It's part of our commitment during the election to support jobs, the economy, pipelines and to make life better for Albertans, and we intend to deliver on all of those promises.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has a question.

### Postsecondary Tuition and Scholarships

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recommendation 8 of the Premier's blue-ribbon panel report calls for the Minister of

Advanced Education to “achieve a revenue mix comparable to that in British Columbia and Ontario” for Alberta’s postsecondary schools. Alberta’s schools currently get about 18 per cent of their revenue from tuition, so I have a simple question for the minister. Can you please tell the House what share of their budget postsecondary institutions in B.C. and Ontario get from tuition?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of postsecondary education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, over the last few months I’ve spent a lot of time engaging with students and speaking to students when it comes to their needs and priorities regarding tuition, and it’s clear that the one thing that students are really looking for, which has been lacking over the last several years, is predictability. The NDP’s policy provided no predictability. Their ad hoc approach, a fly-by-night approach, deciding to freeze tuition on one day and then making decisions about what to do the next day didn’t provide that predictability, and we’ve heard that loud and clear from our students. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will have order during the answering of questions.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, wrong answer, right? The correct answer is almost double the tuition, twice as much.

Given that the blue-ribbon panel specifically says “less reliance on government grants, more funding from tuition” and given that we all know that the tuition hike is being planned by this government to help cover off this Premier’s \$4.5 billion corporate handout, to the minister: just how close to double are you going to hike tuition to force our postsecondary students to pay for your big fat corporate giveaway?

**The Speaker:** I might caution the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West on the use of preambles. I think we can all agree that was an example of one.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, the claim that there’ll be a doubling of tuition is just more of the same from that side of the House, as we’ve seen time and time again over the last few months. No surprise. More fearmongering. We’ve been spending our time and I’ve been spending my time speaking with students and talking to students about what their priorities are. When it comes to the tuition freeze that the former government imposed, you know what students told me? They told me they didn’t want the tuition freeze and they didn’t ask for it, so I don’t know where the NDP decided to get the ideas for their . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. We will have order.

The hon. member.

2:10

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that students often turn to scholarships as well to pay for their education and given that this minister attempted to scuttle programs like the Rutherford scholarship and only changed his mind when he got caught, to the minister. There are still many scholarships stuck in limbo right now because of you. Will you admit that there are more cuts coming to scholarships in this budget this year, or can you fix the problem?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, let’s be absolutely clear. The problem that we inherited with scholarships was because of that side of the House. Under their watch they began a scholarship transformation project that was mismanaged, extensive time periods of delay, no decisions being given to the department as to what to do. We inherited a broken system. We fixed it. Furthermore, we’re

committed to providing opportunities for our students to access postsecondary education, which is why I was proud in September to announce a new scholarship for high school students to enter the trades. That’s our record.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has a question.

### Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier’s so-called blue-ribbon panel report recommends that the Ministry of Infrastructure should, quote, make better use of the investing in Canada infrastructure program, or ICIP. Apparently, the decision of the Infrastructure minister is to make no use of ICIP, and he sent a letter to municipalities to that effect on September 24. Many of these local projects have their cost share in place, they are ready to proceed, and they would actually create badly needed jobs, unlike this government’s 4 and a half billion dollar corporate handout, but the Infrastructure minister sits idle. My question is simple. To the minister: why?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure is rising to answer.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The Member for Edmonton-South: what he said was incorrect. Actually, there are many ICIP projects we have already approved, which were shovel ready and which would create economic activity and help the local municipalities. We approved those projects, and we’ll continue to work with the federal government. When the new government is in place, we will work with them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the minister, that’s not what his own letter said.

Given that ICIP is a bilateral legal agreement signed between Alberta and Canada and is used to fund critical infrastructure projects and given that while this government has rushed to give billions away in corporate handouts, they seem completely willing to let ICIP wait, to the minister: can you please inform this House of which critical infrastructure projects are being shelved or completely abandoned as a result of his poor management?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, the intake for ICIP applications was closed as of July 31, and it was oversubscribed. We had about 712 expressions of interest. We’re going to review all of them in due course and approve the projects based on the merit, not based on the ideology like the previous government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m sure municipalities will be glad to hear they have to wait in due course.

Now, given that former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge reminds us that the government should build infrastructure when economic demand is weak, both to create jobs and get good value for tax dollars, and given that the government’s 4 and a half billion dollar corporate giveaway hasn’t boosted economic demand at all, is it the intention of the minister to go back to the old PC ways of waiting to build when demand is strong and repeat their legacy of delayed and overpriced projects?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, in our campaign commitment platform we clearly stated that we’re going to build key infrastructure

projects that will deliver prosperity for all Albertans, and our government is on track to do that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Vaping

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are raising concerns over the health risks of vaping. It's been identified in short-term respiratory difficulties and complications in a few cases, actually growing numbers of cases, leading to death in the United States, and it's unknown what the long-term effects of vaping really are. To the Minister of Health: given the reports of people getting seriously sick from vaping and some even dying from it, do we need to act more urgently and ban vaping?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, to date we have had no identified cases in Alberta, but we are monitoring the situation closely. If the chief medical officer of health of Alberta identifies an urgent risk, I will support her in taking any action which is required. That could be a public health advisory. It could be a product recall. It could be working with law enforcement to address illicit products. But I emphasize that as of today we do not know what is causing the cases. We simply have no basis to intervene today.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that other provinces are actively monitoring and continuously discovering cases of serious vaping-related lung injury and disease and given that youth seem to be the largest demographic beginning to vape so youth may be most at risk of vaping-induced respiratory health risks, Minister, what is this government doing to reduce the number of vaping products sold to youth?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the question was: what are we doing to reduce the number of products? We've started a review of what's known as the Tobacco and Smoking Reduction Act. The Member for Calgary-Klein is leading that review. We're very happy to have that member engage with interest groups to be able to get information on what gaps we have in the current legislation and what can be done going forward to fill in those gaps. We're looking forward to that engagement being completed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for his second supplemental.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer and for having recently announced a review of the tobacco legislation. That's what I want to ask about next, in a way. Given that Alberta is one of the last provinces in the country to introduce legislation on vaping and given that other provinces have taken measures to do so, for example banning flavoured nicotine products, can the Minister of Health commit to enacting similar measures here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, yes, Mr. Speaker. Actually, those are already taking place here in Alberta. On September 5 . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** You're welcome.

**Mr. Shandro:** I believe that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was not the minister on September 5.

On September 5 Alberta's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Hinshaw, made suspected, serious, vaping-related illness a notifiable condition, as it's known under the Public Health Act, Mr. Speaker. That means that any physician who sees a patient who meets that definition must report the case.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### Early Learning and Child Care Centres

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Children's Services why her government won't commit support for the affordable child care pilot program. Given the minister's response I can now see why the Member for Highwood doesn't understand that our \$25 per day child care pilot program isn't about picking winners and losers. In fact, his own government is picking winners and losers by refusing to expand the program to all providers and all Albertans. To the Minister of Children's Services: access to quality, affordable child care shouldn't be a lottery. It should be something that families in Alberta can depend on. Will you commit to expanding this important program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services to answer.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can understand that it must be frustrating, when you ran on a platform focused on \$25 a day child care, that Albertans chose to prioritize jobs, getting our economy back on track, making sure people could provide for their families and that our economy was strong enough to support those who need it most. We will review the pilot project, and I will continue to listen to Albertans' priorities when it comes to quality child care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister might need to be reminded about what her responsibility as the Minister of Children's Services is.

Given that quality and affordable child care is a win-win situation for children, working Albertans, and our economy and that the Conference Board of Canada has said that every dollar invested in child care earns at least a \$2 return, again to the same minister: have you considered the data in your review of the program? I can provide a copy if you want to learn about the responsibilities of your ministry.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said a number of times in this House, we are awaiting the report on the pilot project, but Albertans told me this summer that their concerns with the pilot are that it did not track income, it did not track need, it did not track employment, and it did not track wait-lists. What we are going to focus on is quality child care, affordable child care for those who need it, and accessibility to child care across Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for her second supplemental with no preamble.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the evidence is clear and that parents are pleading with the minister to provide certainty for the program so they know if they need to quit their jobs to care for their child and given the research shows that this program not only helps parents, improves child development, and is the key to unlocking Alberta's economic potential, again to the minister:

are you aware that by failing to support affordable child care for all Albertans, the only people losing here are Alberta families? Are you happy that while corporations are raking in your government's handouts, families are struggling to pay the bills?

2:20

**Ms Schulz:** Speaking of working families, Mr. Speaker, the NDP legacy is 170,000 people impacted by job loss and \$100 billion in debt that isn't going to support the families who need it. The member opposite has also been fearmongering and telling the public that the \$25 a day centres are closing, so I want to be clear because I know that no one in this House would want to mislead the public. The vast majority of these centres were providing high-quality child care long before the pilot began. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member . . . [interjections] Order, hon. members. The Leader of the Official Opposition will come to order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows would like to ask a question.

### School Head Covering Policies

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week we learned that an 11-year-old boy, Emmelle, was told by his teachers at Christ the King elementary school in Edmonton to remove his do-rag. This piece of clothing is culturally significant to Emmelle and his family. When Emmelle's mother raised her concerns in the principal's office, she was banned from the school for the rest of the year. Is the Minister of Education aware of this incident, and has she reached out to Emmelle's family to make this situation right?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Anyone feeling discriminated against based on their race: it is absolutely unacceptable, and I have asked for a full report from Edmonton Catholic schools on this issue.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that Emmelle's mother, Una, was told that her 11-year-old boy's headgear was gang-related and given that she was told that we don't wear anything on our heads in this school, does the Minister of Education support this school's assertion that no head coverings should be worn in classrooms regardless of their cultural or religious significance?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I have to reiterate that any discrimination based on race is totally unacceptable. I'm asking for a full report, and I await that report.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Una believes that she and her son were the victims of racial profiling and given this minister's terrible record of support for minorities in Alberta schools, will this minister launch an investigation into what exactly occurred at Christ the King elementary and report the findings back to the House?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer would be yes, I will be asking for a full report. I have said so three times now, and I will be happy to share the results when I get them.

Thank you.

### Natural Gas Industry Concerns

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, for decades Medicine Hat, or the Gas City, as it was so aptly termed, has extracted and produced natural gas, amassing over \$600 million in revenue straight to the city. Our city has built a community around resource production. However, last month it was announced that 2,000 natural gas wells will begin the process of shutting down. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas: what is this government doing to ensure that the city of Medicine Hat will not have to shutter its remaining 500 to 700 natural gas wells?

**An Hon. Member:** Order MSI.

**Mr. Dang:** Corporate giveaways.

**The Speaker:** Order. Members, including the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, will come to order.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yeah, South West. Take that.

**The Speaker:** Or Edmonton-South.

The Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are aware of the city of Medicine Hat's decision to shut some of their wells. This is one more nail in the coffin on the previous government's mishandling of this critical file. Now, as you know, on April 16 we were elected on an overwhelming mandate to stand up and fight for the energy industry. That's what we're doing.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that the city of Medicine Hat cited extremely low prices as a reason for the 2,000 of its natural gas wells being deemed uneconomic and given that Alberta has had consistent price volatility over recent years with minimal relief and, incredibly, the spot price of natural gas has actually been negative at times, again to the associate minister: could the recent changes to gas storage on the NGTL system help alleviate some of these issues felt by the good people in Medicine Hat?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't be more pleased to announce that the changes to TC's protocol to storage has in fact started to alleviate some of the pressure being felt by our natural gas producers. In fact, since this was implemented on October 1, natural gas has been trading above \$2, which is something that hasn't happened in a long time. We committed to reducing price volatility. That's exactly what we're going to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many young families residing in Medicine Hat rely heavily on the jobs and the income created through its historic natural gas sector and given that Medicine Hat has access to resources and over a century of experience and given that this government was elected on an overwhelming mandate to bring investment back to the province, again to the associate minister: what else is your government doing to attract and assure investors that Alberta's natural gas sector is the best place to invest?

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is an energy-driven province. Quite frankly, it's nothing short of embarrassing how much investment has left our province thanks to the members

across the aisle. Now, in the six months since forming government, our office has taken action on 26 of the 48 recommendations of the Kvisle report. Our government has done more in six months on this file than the previous administration did in four years.

### Canadian Energy Centre

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, did the Minister of Finance or any of his officials, prior to establishing the energy war room, talk with the Auditor General about his role with respect to oversight of this corporation, and did anyone consult with the Ethics Commissioner on how conflicts of interest must be managed in this highly unusual instance when ministers are directors of government corporations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can certainly declare to this House that I have declared all of my interests with the Ethics Commissioner, and I've been cleared to serve in the role that I do today. The opposition would like to distract us from their record of failing Albertans, creating a business environment where investment has fled this province by the billions, racking up a debt that's over \$60 billion, and leaving us in a situation where tens of thousands of Albertans are looking for work.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that conflict of interest legislation exists to ensure that ministers do not exercise inappropriate influence to line their own pockets, will the minister state for the record that all contracts executed by this corporation, including sole-source contracts, will be disclosed, and if not, should Albertans assume that this is because these contracts will be given to the friends of the UCP or to firms gathering data and using government resources for partisan gain?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, there are multiple, multiple measures to ensure full financial transparency in the Canadian Energy Centre. For instance, the centre is a provincial corporation; it will be funded by provincial grants. Under the terms of those grants, a budget to the ministry is required in 30 days, a business plan in 60 days, and there will be monthly – monthly – expenditure reports. All of those will be subject to public knowledge.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that the stated aim of this corporation is to make war on political enemies, can we assume that part of the reason that it has been so difficult to get answers to the questions about transparency and disclosure is that the ministers don't want to tell Albertans who they are giving \$30 million to because the plan they are hiding from Albertans involves giving taxpayer money to Russian troll farms, far-right meme factories, and offspring of Cambridge Analytica?

2:30

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, what is shocking is that the Official Opposition continues to play these games. Even after mayors have sent in letters asking them – and I quote the mayors, not myself, calling them “dishonest.” It's ridiculous.

The Minister of Energy has been very, very clear in answering the transparency questions. The member has asked about the Conflicts of Interest Act, which is overseen by an independent officer of this Legislature, the Ethics Commissioner. As the Finance minister has said and as the Energy minister has said and as I am telling you now, Mr. Speaker, and this House, this was cleared by the Ethics Commissioner, who is in charge of the Conflicts of Interest Act, not who the current member is referring to.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Coal Workforce Transition Program

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been recently reported that workers who should be eligible for the coal workforce transition program are experiencing endless delays and runarounds while trying to access these important benefits. Some workers impacted by Stephen Harper's coal phase-out first applied in April, and many suspect that these delays mean the government is planning to cut these programs. To the minister of labour: can you explain why processing times for this vital initiative have skyrocketed, and will you promise that this critical program won't be cut as you work to pay for your \$4.5 billion handout to big corporations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I answer the specific question, I have to call out the members on the other side about their continued misrepresentation on the \$4.5 billion claim. Respected University of Calgary economist Trevor Tombe has said that this claim is “not accurate.” In fact, when the previous government was in power, they increased corporate taxes by 20 per cent, and revenues went down. On this issue this claim, the \$4.5 billion, is not accurate, and the NDP have no credibility on this issue.

**Ms Gray:** Given that coal workers will be reading these answers in *Hansard* and watching this government and given that the point of the coal workforce transition program is to avoid unfairly burdening Alberta's hard-working energy workers, who have tirelessly provided our province with vital energy, can the minister explain why he's okay with his government rushing to hand billions to corporations but is sitting on his hands when it comes to providing coal workers with the financial supports they need to keep the heat running and the lights on in their own homes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to clarify that the coal worker transition program applications continue to be processed. Anyone who has been approved for support will continue to receive it. I'd also like to point out that this program was established as a result of the disastrous policies of the previous government phasing out coal despite the industry moving to natural gas.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this Premier was a minister in Stephen Harper's federal cabinet, which was known for increasingly opaque and inscrutable budgets and for hiding important financial details and transparency from the people of Canada, can the minister assure us that when the government's budget is released on October 24, the full fate of the coal workforce transition program will be made clear, or will the UCP continue to delay providing services and information to Albertans?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as indicated, we continue to process applications under the coal worker transition program. Everything will be made clear when the budget is presented. But I need to focus on what our government was elected here to do. It was to create jobs. On the other side, when they were in government, they oversaw over 170,000 job losses. We are focused on putting policies in place

to attract investment back into this province and create jobs for Albertans. That's what we were elected to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

#### **Affordable Housing for Seniors**

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Meridian foundation is a large third-party organization in my riding that provides funding for housing for seniors all over Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. Before leaving power, the NDP announced a \$6 million grant to build this new facility, called 17 Folkstone Place. Now, this was to be in co-ordination with funding from both communities in the tri region as well as the federal government. However, at the same time, the Meridian foundation was forced to pay a large part of this cost out of their own pocket. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: will this project continue to be funded?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. The Folkstone manor project will continue to be funded. I'm very pleased to share that the groundbreaking is taking place this Friday in Stony Plain. This project will support more modern, affordable housing for seniors with low incomes living in and around the Stony Plain area.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the answer. Given that in the last 13 years of its operation the Meridian foundation has never had a vacancy and given that the executive director of the Meridian foundation has stated that there is a large and growing need for housing for those aged 50 or older, can the Minister of Seniors and Housing commit to the people of Stony Plain to a firm timeline for this project, and if so, will new residents of the housing unit be able to move in in 2020?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member. The operator of Folkstone manor would determine the timeline in which the residents are able to move in. Our government is proud to support this new affordable housing project. The groundbreaking at Folkstone manor is a step in providing safe and affordable housing for Albertans, especially for those who live in the area of Stony Plain and Spruce Grove. It will enable them to continue to live safely and independently.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that organizations like the Meridian foundation continue to do incredible work in ensuring that seniors' housing is widely available and given that seniors' housing organizations are often major employers in their ridings and given that tax and regulatory changes deeply affect these organizations, can the minister speak to what kind of assistance private organizations can expect from this government as they seek to provide sustainable and affordable care options for seniors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Folkstone manor is an excellent example of a partnership, the provincial government and the local civil society organization working together on behalf of

Albertans. This kind of partnership makes life better for Albertans and makes our province a better place to live, to work, and to retire. Our government will continue to explore the expanded use of a P3 partnership that enables individuals and families, including seniors, to reside in their chosen communities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has a question.

#### **Skilled Trades Labour Supply**

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are over 3,000 skilled workers in the trades and related occupations retiring each year. These are highly rewarding, high-tech, in-demand occupations that can provide endless opportunities. The UCP made many promises in the campaign that aimed at increasing the number of students entering the trades in an effort to curb this decline. To the Minister of Advanced Education. You recently announced \$10 million in funding for Women Building Futures. How will this investment help curb the decline in skilled trades workers in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of postsecondary education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. She is indeed correct. We made a number of very specific and detailed commitments to Albertans during the course of the last election, and we are intent on delivering on those commitments. The member is correct that we are facing the challenge right now in our province – the dual challenge, I should say – of a retiring and aging skilled workforce and the highest youth unemployment rate in decades. We recognize that it's important for us to be ahead of these trends and to be proactive, which is why our government has a very robust skills-for-jobs agenda.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Our current education system does not place enough value on the trades as it prioritizes university or college degrees. Given that this overemphasis on university education results in racking up tens of thousands of dollars of student debt and given that most students do not learn about the potential of a job in the trades from schools but, rather, from family and friends, how does the minister plan on spreading awareness about the value of a career in the trades and the lifestyle that this career path can provide?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of postsecondary education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again the member is correct. There's a challenge in terms of spreading awareness about the value of a career in the skilled trades, which is why I was proud a few weeks back to announce the creation of a skills-for-jobs task force that will help to inform government priorities about next steps and about helping to develop strategies to increase awareness regarding careers in the skilled trades.

**2:40**

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Canada skilled trades credentials do not always transfer from province to province. Given that Alberta has historically seen a great number of working professionals move in from out of province and given that Alberta is currently losing 3,000 tradespeople a year to retirement and given that with the pro-business policies being implemented,

we will see an increase in investments and therefore need a larger labour force, how does the minister plan to harmonize the mobility of skilled tradespeople into our province and to fill the increasing need for skilled trades workers?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, indeed, it's quite a challenge. You know, there's no reason why an individual from British Columbia or another province can't come to Alberta and continue to work in the same skilled trade, which is why Alberta is a full participant in the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship, who are responsible for training and certification. To date we have aligned with the council's harmonization priorities in 21 red seal trades. Labour mobility is a key priority of mine and of this government, and we'll continue to work with our provincial and federal counterparts to scrap barriers to mobility and make it easier for people to get back to work.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will move to Members' Statements. Please exit the Chamber expeditiously if you have other engagements.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

#### Underground Infrastructure Disturbances

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here in Alberta we have a great deal of underground infrastructure, most in use and some abandoned. Our underground infrastructure distributes services such as electricity, oil, natural gas, clean drinking water, stormwater, waste water, communications via fibre optics and still some old copper. In March of this year the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommended that Bill 211, the Alberta Underground Infrastructure Notification System Consultation Act, proceed to the next stages. Unfortunately, this bill was not able to finish its legislative journey. The direction of this bill would have forced the exploration of requirements to reduce damages to underground infrastructure. This work must continue.

When a line strike or an infrastructure strike occurs, the impact is huge. It can lead to property damage, project delays, traffic congestion, extensive repairs, mitigation, and remediation. These incidents needlessly cause a strain on emergency services and often require home and business evacuations, but most importantly, Mr. Speaker, these incidents can cause loss of life. The estimated societal cost of a single ground disturbance strike to underground lines or infrastructure is \$80,000, with an annual cost totalling at least \$350 million. In a time when we're trying to bring costs down and to address rural Internet and bandwidth issues, now is the time to act. If we are serious about attracting increased commerce to this province, we must pick up where this bill left off and press forward.

With the information at our disposal of where buried infrastructure is located, it will provide us a clear footprint of where existing structures are and how we can avoid them or capitalize on those assets in a measured plan for future builds. We need to know where these lines are so that they can be safely worked on without costing so much money and causing delay in projects in future years. Further still, in my opinion, we must make it mandatory for those undertaking construction work with underground ground disturbance to request the location of underground infrastructure before they excavate, with stiff penalties attached for ignoring that responsibility that at least will equal the damage and costs

associated with remediating lines that are hit. We must move quickly to ensure the safety of workers, homeowners, businesses, and the infrastructure itself.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

#### Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I sat down with Laurel Patter and her son Derek in my office in Mill Woods. Derek was one of the 13 players injured in the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, that also killed 16 others. Laurel and Derek had reached out to my office because they have serious concerns that this government may be creating loopholes when it comes to safety on our roads and highways. Laurel and Derek were very clear during our conversation. They want to make sure our roads are safe for everyone. They feel strongly that improved training and safety measures should be mandated Canada-wide. But until that happens, Alberta needs to implement improved standards and protect the families that travel our province's roads and highways.

Laurel shared that after delivering their victim impact statements, as they travelled from Saskatoon to Melfort, they were cut off by a semi-truck driving dangerously. It's hard to imagine the terror that must have gone through their minds and the bitter irony of that timing. Many of us experience bad driving on the highways, but few appreciate the potential danger that exists.

Laurel and Derek asked me if anyone had calculated the total cost of the Humboldt tragedy. How much did Saskatchewan spend on the first responders, the air ambulance, the medical staff, and all of the other services that were needed in the aftermath? They can't help but think that funding adequate standards and proper enforcement would be considerably cheaper than having another horrific accident such as the one they lived through. We can save lives, avoid trauma, and do so while also avoiding the heavy cost that such an incident involves.

Laurel and Derek are not interested in the partisan bickering that has crept into this issue. They didn't come to see me because of my political party; they came to see me because I am their local MLA. They expect all 87 MLAs in this place to listen to them, to recognize the tremendous impact that the Humboldt tragedy had on them, and for all of us to ensure that the proper rules are immediately put in place. I hope each member in here will take the time to speak with Laurel and the families impacted and do the right thing.

#### Brock Blaszczyk

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, I want to formally recognize an incredible individual who recently visited our Legislature, Brock Blaszczyk. While not born there, Brock was raised in the most beautiful constituency in the province, West Yellowhead, in the hidden gem of Grande Cache. A couple of years ago Brock found himself with the opportunity to ask Prime Minister Trudeau some very pointed questions about his military service benefits while Mr. Trudeau toured Alberta. His questions garnered national attention, brought to light critical issues currently facing veteran service members, and highlighted that the Prime Minister wasn't living up to his campaign promises for our military personnel.

Brock served in Afghanistan, returning to Canada only after he encountered an improvised explosive device, an IED, losing one leg and majorly injuring his other. Not only is Brock a decorated veteran, he has committed his efforts since returning to Alberta to helping other veterans overcome traumatic experiences of their past and seek the treatment they require. Brock has a vision to see our province lead the way in how we ensure that first responders,



corrections employees, and veterans are able to properly function after their years of dedicated service. He wants to ensure that we do away with the stigma associated with posttraumatic stress disorder so we can save lives and families moving forward.

People like Brock and our service personnel exemplify true heroism in that they are not only willing to lay down their lives for a friend; they will lay down their lives for complete strangers in the name of justice. Today, in light of this past Thanksgiving Monday and with Remembrance Day on the horizon, I want to remember Brock for his sacrifice and thank him for standing up to injustice far from home and right here in Canada. I also want to acknowledge his continued advocacy to ensure that our military personnel and our first responders and their well-being are never forgotten.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

### Calgary LRT Green Line

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The green line in Calgary is a vital transit project that will support jobs and economic activity in the city. Stage 1 of the green line will create more than 12,000 direct jobs and over 8,000 additional jobs in supporting industries during construction. Once completed, it is expected to create hundreds of long-term transit operations and maintenance jobs. The first stage will transport 60,000 Calgarians daily, and once the full line is completed, there will be an estimated quarter million trips per day.

Calgarians support this project because they understand the importance of it, and they want all levels of government to support it as well. According to a recent survey 83 per cent of Calgarians think the federal government should provide funding for future stages of the green line. In the city of Calgary's YYC Matters election survey every federal party except the Conservatives promised additional funding to expand the green line, and just this fall the Premier and his caucus have been campaigning for the federal Conservatives. Why is this Premier campaigning against such an important project that supports jobs and a modern diversified economy? The Premier needs to finally explain where he stands on this project. Either he supports it or he doesn't. Because I have news for him. This project will be built whether he likes it or not, so he needs to get behind it or get out of the way of the moving train.

2:50

### Investment in Alberta

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about something that has been at the core of our government's mandate since we were elected into office, bringing job-creating investment back to Alberta. Not only did the previous government implement policies that hurt our economy, the former government also raised taxes during one of the most challenging economic times in our province's history. Now, these job-killing policies and higher taxes made Alberta less competitive nationally and globally. Our investors have told us that they want nothing more than a free market, and our government fully supports the implementation of policies which bring investors back into Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, our plan is working. Suncor recently announced a \$1.4 billion investment that will create 600 jobs to build a gas cogen facility. This announcement demonstrates increased investor confidence in Alberta. Suncor is not the only organization to demonstrate their confidence in our economy. Telus recently announced a \$16 billion investment in technology and operations. This investment promises to create 5,000 jobs over the next five years.

Now, our government is working tirelessly to bring investment back into Alberta, and, Mr. Speaker, these recent announcements are proof that our efforts are indeed paying off. Our government is determined to show our investors that we can dream big and that we can get big things done. We will continue to work and restore investor confidence in Alberta and to show the world that Alberta is indeed open for business.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Notices of Motions

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, first, pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) I would let the House know that I will extend daily Routine.

I also have a notice of motion, if I could do it now, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of Government Motion 34.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce all federal political parties that would enable a provincial government to unilaterally prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines.

**The Speaker:** Are there other notices of motions? The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time the Member for St. Albert will move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 42.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to maintain safety requirements for newly licensed commercial vehicle drivers, including school bus and agricultural drivers, to ensure rigorous training and testing standards implemented by the previous government continue to protect the safety of all drivers throughout the province and prevent incidents such as the Humboldt Broncos tragedy from occurring again.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Official Opposition House Leader, I trust that you have copies for all members, that you can provide them for us now. Appreciate that.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 17

#### Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce and move first reading of Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act.

Mr. Speaker, domestic violence endangers the survival, security, and well-being of another person. This legislation, if passed, could help save the lives of those at risk of domestic violence. It would allow people at risk in defined circumstances to find out if their romantic partners have a violent or abusive past. This legislation is a tool that could help prevent domestic violence in Alberta. This legislation is also a significant campaign promise and will empower those at risk of domestic violence so that they can make informed decisions about potentially harmful relationships.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a first time]

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has caught my eye.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table requisite number of copies of three articles from the *Globe and Mail*. The first is entitled How an Immigration Scheme Steers Newcomers into Canadian Trucking Jobs – and Puts Lives at Risk. The second is titled Western Canada: Why the Trucking Industry Has Come under the Spotlight. The third is titled Alberta Eases Safety Rules Issued in the Wake of Humboldt Bus Crash.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert is rising.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling an article from the *Atlantic*. It's entitled No Climate Event in 2,000 Years Compares to What's Happening Now.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings of returns and reports?

Hon. members, we are at points of order. The Official Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h),(i),(j). At approximately 1:55 today the Premier was responding to a question by the Leader of the Official Opposition where he accused her of misleading Albertans. Now, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I am pretty confident that in a moment the Government House Leader will rise and try to defend the Premier's words because he was reading a letter. I'll direct your attention to the fact that on numerous occasions in this House you, yourself, have ruled that there is, in fact, a point of order, and members opposite have had to apologize and withdraw when there is an accusation made against a member, as is this case. The Premier was accusing the Leader of the Official Opposition of misleading Albertans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you're well aware, a similar instance, if a member rises to read a letter or an official document that contains the name of the member in the House, that is out of order. Reading a document or quoting an external source does not give a member carte blanche to be able to make accusations, to use unparliamentary language. In your own words: accusing another member in this House of misleading anyone, whether it's Albertans or others, is unparliamentary. For those reasons, I ask that the Premier or someone on his behalf apologize and withdraw those comments.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader is rising to add to the debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you for the opportunity to rise on this point of order, Mr. Speaker. First, I'd refer to *Beauchesne's* 491, which makes it clear that context is important. Former Speaker Wanner would often talk about context – you would know yourself in your time as Opposition House Leader of this Chamber – while he was the Speaker.

First off, to be clear, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, like the Official Opposition House Leader. I do not believe the Premier said misrepresent. In fact, Mr. Speaker, what I believe he referred to was the direct quote in a letter, which is what the Official Opposition House Leader has referred to, in which several mayors say to the Leader of the Official Opposition in this letter complaining about her

misrepresenting [their] views for political theatre is dishonest and unbecoming for any member of the provincial legislative assembly.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly do agree that if a member of the Legislative Assembly is misrepresenting mayors' views in this Chamber, that is unbecoming of any member of the Chamber. I'm not saying that's what the Leader of the Official Opposition was doing, nor did the Premier. The Premier referred to a letter in regard to the context of a question that he had received and the Leader of the Official Opposition had received from many mayors, including some mayors that I represent in this Chamber, that made it clear that things the Official Opposition has been saying inside question period, they felt, misrepresented what they said and were dishonest. That would be a matter of debate on whether they're right or wrong, but the word "dishonest" is not unparliamentary, which the Official Opposition House Leader seems to be indicating. That is not the case, from my understanding.

Calling a member dishonest, basically saying that a member is a liar, we all would agree is unparliamentary and not appropriate for this place, but the Premier did not do that. The Premier referred, again, to the context of this letter, Mr. Speaker, that said that the Leader of the Official Opposition was misrepresenting the views of these mayors for political theatre, that it was dishonest when she did that, and it was unbecoming of a member of the provincial Legislature. If that is true, I would agree with those members, but I'm not saying it's true one way or another. What I am saying is that context matters. The Premier was not calling any member of this place dishonest and referred very specifically to the letter in his answer to the question.

3:00

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you for your submissions, hon. members. I might just add some brief comments. Holy cannoli. I hope that you have something new to add, but I look forward to hearing your comments.

**Ms Notley:** I will merely say that on the matter of context, which is, indeed, something that former Speakers have spoken to, the context was a set of questions about traffic safety in relation to the concerns raised by several families who are still in this Legislature hoping to see and hear a debate on this issue. The Premier was referring to a letter that was sent about an entirely different matter, so if we want to talk context, I think that is the context which should govern this particular decision on your part.

**The Speaker:** Are there others that would like to add to the debate?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to rule. Hon. members, I know that you have all polished up on your *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, when it comes to members trying to do indirectly what they can't do directly.

Now, I do have the benefit of the Blues, and the hon. Premier said:

It's regrettable to continue to see a pattern of misrepresentation from the other side of the House. I have today a letter from several mayors objecting to the Leader of the Opposition's, quote, dishonest and unbecoming, misleading comments about their position on a different matter.

The Official Opposition House Leader called a point of order at that time.

I think it's fairly clear to see that the Premier was referring to the other side of the House and not specifically one member. We have a long-standing tradition – and by long-standing I mean over the past number of months – around this issue of a specific member or groups of members. I have cautioned at some length about the use of the word "misleading" or doing things indirectly which you can't

do directly. I will specifically say from page 614 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

Generally, the reading of articles from newspapers, books or other documents by a Member during debate has become an accepted practice and is not ruled out of order provided that such quotations do not reflect on past proceedings in the House, do not refer to, comment on or deny anything said by a Member, and do not use language which would [otherwise] be out of order if spoken by a Member.

Now, I recognize that the Official Opposition feels like this should be a point of order, but I have clearly stated that the Premier referred to a group of individuals. In this case I will not find a point of order, but I will remind all members that, from *Procedure and Practice*, we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly.

I consider this matter dealt with. We are proceeding to the oral motion under Standing Order 42.

## Motions under Standing Order 42

### Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards

Ms Renaud:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to maintain safety requirements for newly licensed commercial vehicle drivers, including school bus and agricultural drivers, to ensure rigorous training and testing standards implemented by the previous government continue to protect the safety of all drivers throughout the province and prevent incidents such as the Humboldt Broncos tragedy from occurring again.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to read it again, and then I'll chat further about it: be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to reverse the decision to relax safety requirements for newly licensed semi-truck drivers and bus operators, a move that will allow hundreds of drivers to bypass rigorous training and testing standards that were implemented by the previous government to increase the safety of all drivers throughout the province and the country and prevent incidents such as the Humboldt tragedy in the future.

Mr. Speaker, again, I would like to thank all of the family members that stayed through question period and points of order. I know it's stimulating. I really do appreciate them being here, and I'm sad that this is the reason that they're here.

As you know, this is a serious matter. As my colleagues have also said, the entire nation was shaken by the events of April 2018, the Humboldt bus crash, that took 16 lives, many of them young hockey players really just starting out their lives, at the cusp of their future, full of dreams and hopes. I can't even imagine the loss that these families experienced.

However, we later found out that the driver responsible was lacking adequate training, so the previous government took steps to fix it. As my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods said, this really isn't a partisan issue. This is something that all 87 of us should be really concerned about, that if there's anything at all that we can do to prevent the loss of life or the tragedy that we had to all witness and that these families had to endure in 2018, then we should take those steps instead of, as my colleague so eloquently said, the partisan bickering about, "You did this; you did that," you know, for the Transportation minister and the Premier to just stand up and say: "You know what? Maybe we made an incorrect decision. Let's fix this. Let's make sure no other life is lost or cut short."

What I've heard in this place has been difficult to follow over the last few days. We've asked a number of really good questions. There's been quite a bit of reporting on this, and it has been quite

difficult to follow, but here's what I know. This government currently believes that some people should be exempt from critical training, training that teaches them how to check and secure loads, how to properly brake for heavy loads, how to handle the responsibility they have to both themselves and those they share the road with.

To my colleagues in the House: this is deserving of a debate of the House, and it's urgent. It is very urgent. I can recall that when the government sat on this side, a number of times they made compelling cases for us to stop what we were doing and to have important debates about what they felt was important, and we indulged that. We may not always have agreed a hundred per cent, but we listened, we participated, and we allowed that debate to happen. I would encourage all of my colleagues on the other side and on this side as well to do the same.

The Minister of Transportation tells us that he's comfortable – this is a direct quote – with the change, stated . . .

### Speaker's Ruling Speaking to Urgency

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, thank you for your intervention. Just to provide some context of how a Standing Order 42 works, with all due respect to all members in the gallery and otherwise I am merely a humble servant of the rules that are applied before us. The only opportunity that you have to speak to the motion under Standing Order 42 is to express your desire around urgency. You cannot, unfortunately, debate the motion that is before the Assembly. So if you can do your very best to ensure that you are discussing the urgency of the matter and not what members may or may not have said during the past, I think that would be a much more useful use of our time.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. Why is this urgent? Because we could have an accident tomorrow or later today. I think back to seat belts, how important it was to pass those rules, regulations, legislation, anything that we can do to prevent this horrific tragedy from ever happening again. Put partisan thoughts aside, put allegiances aside, and just listen to these families, who stood together and said: this is unacceptable. We need to do this today to prevent anything from happening tomorrow or later today.

I encourage all of my colleagues to allow us to go forward with this. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 42(1):

A motion may, in case of urgent and pressing necessity previously explained by the mover, be made by unanimous consent of the Assembly without notice having been given under Standing Order 39.

As such, unanimous consent is required for this Standing Order 42 to proceed.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for St. Albert, prior to proceeding with the motion, the words that you read into the record were slightly different than the words that were distributed on the paper. So I want to confirm that the motion that we are now debating is as such:

Urge the government to maintain safety requirements for newly licensed commercial vehicle drivers, including school bus and agricultural drivers, to ensure rigorous training and testing standards implemented by the previous government continue to protect the safety of all drivers throughout the province and prevent incidents such as the Humboldt Broncos tragedy from occurring again.

The hon. Member for St. Albert has the call on debate. There are 20 minutes allotted to you.

3:10

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sincerely, I'm very thankful to all of my colleagues for allowing this debate to go forward. Once again thank you to all of the families that have stayed to witness this.

Why is it important to do this? I think I was fairly clear earlier that of anything we can do in this place as legislators to represent our communities, to do what's right, the most important thing is to protect and preserve the lives of the people in this province. This is one way that we can do that. Sadly, I think that we all had to see what happens when there are gaps in safety standards or the safety standards don't meet the requirements of the job.

I started to say a little earlier – I got a little bit off track, but I wanted to go back. We've had a fair amount of debate just in the form of questions and answers over the last few days, but I did want to say a couple of things. One of the things is that the Minister of Transportation has told us that he is comfortable with the change, stating – and this is a direct quote – that they had been operating mostly safely for the last 30 or 40 years. Now, I think it's easy sometimes to get wrapped up in the issue of the day and to allow things to continue, but this is really unacceptable. I think that now we've arrived at a place – we arrived at the place in 2018 – where we saw that there was a gap. There was a need to close a loophole, to do more stringent training, to have better requirements for drivers, for bus drivers, for semi-truck drivers. What was good 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30, 40 years ago is not good enough today. Whether a short distance or a long distance, safety minimums exist for a reason.

Bus drivers carry our children. They are our most precious cargo. As our leader said earlier today: who hasn't been on those roads driving our kids to tournaments or to games or to practices? I'm sure most of us have, and if you haven't, I'm sure you will in the near future. They are our most precious cargo. It should never be about that it's inconvenient for the company or that it costs too much or that there are too many hours of training or there's too much red tape. That's unacceptable. This is our most precious cargo, so this is an investment.

In the not-too-distant past, as I referred to a little bit earlier, seat belts were not mandatory. It's hard to believe that there was a time when that was the case, but I think I'm old enough to remember even some arguments against seat belt safety. We won't even get into seat belts on buses. I'm sure that is coming. But the government of the day, and to their credit, made their use mandatory for the good of the people of the province. Years later we know exactly how many lives have been saved.

The government of the day stood by their decision, and the members of this Assembly should look at that. It's hard to believe that at the time that wasn't a popular decision, that that was something that people were actually arguing against as – I don't know – limiting their freedom to put on a seat belt. But it's a really good example for this House. When you look back, it seems like it's pretty easy. It's a no-brainer, right? Why wouldn't you demand a seat belt in a vehicle? This makes sense. Why would you not put in the safety standards that we talked about? Whether it's training, whether it's hours on the road supervised, whatever it is, why would you not put those things into place if you knew that there was a potential for it to save lives? We owe it to Albertans, all of us. It's our job to do this. It's our job to ensure that the vehicles on the road are as safe as possible.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Again, I just want to say that it's horrible that it took the enormity of the tragedy that occurred in Saskatchewan. It's sad that it took that for us to have made the changes then and now to be having this discussion again. As my colleague so eloquently said, this isn't a partisan issue. Let's make the changes that we need to make to ensure that this never happens again and we know that we have done everything possible to prevent this from happening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has the call.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so glad that we have unanimous consent in order to discuss this very important issue, and I want to thank the families of those who tragically lost their lives in the Humboldt bus crash and that are here today advocating. Unfortunately, it's too late for their loved ones, but as was expressed to many and they have been expressing to so many people, they do not want this to happen again on our highways, on our roads. That's what this issue is really about. They've emphatically expressed that they do not want exemptions for anybody here in Alberta when it comes to this issue, when it comes the safety of people on our highways. This is what these family members are here to communicate specifically to each and every one of us.

Now, as a representative it is my job to communicate what people are advocating for. I'm so happy to be able to get up in this House and be able to speak that truth here to all of my colleagues. I think that it's important we recognize that here in Alberta our regulations were so out of date when compared to other jurisdictions across this land, and the previous government simply was trying to get us on par with other jurisdictions here in Canada. This is about the safety on our highways.

When the Minister of Transportation comes into this House and says that they're going to be rolling back on these particular regulations and not only that, Mr. Speaker, but then the exemptions – and it's true that the previous government was providing exemptions for class 1 drivers so that they could all get rolled into the program and the same for class 2, those bus drivers. They were going to be able to get an exemption until the next school year. But now we're finding out from this minister, not in this House but through the media, when this minister is speaking to the media, that at first the exemption was going to go on even longer. Now the exemption is probably going to be indefinite. I would like to hear from the minister if that indeed is the case, and he should put it on the record inside of this House and not just simply state what he's thinking to the media. He should be expressing it here so that it is on the record.

I want to highlight the fact that according to the Tantus report there were so many problems with the system here in the province of Alberta, so many upgrades that had to be made to the regulations to make sure that our highways could be safe. It's sad that it took the Humboldt bus tragedy for us to really get focused on this and make the changes that had to be done in order to put us, bare minimum, on par with other jurisdictions.

3:20

I really want to appeal to the Minister of Transportation and to all the colleagues in this House so that they really think about what it is that they're doing when they're rolling back these regulations. What is it that is calling you to do so? Is it a special-interest group? Is that who you're here to govern for, or are you here to govern for all Albertans and specifically for the safety of all Albertans?

You know, we just passed Read In Week, and whenever I have the opportunity to go to schools and read to the children, of course,

we always do a preface on what my job is as an MLA. I explain to them that it's basically, in a nutshell, to come up with the rules of the province along with all 86 other members of this House. I always ask them: what do you think are the most important factors that we need to consider when we're coming up with the law and the rules for the province? These children always get the hammer right on the head of the nail, and they say: fairness and safety. If children can understand that safety is such an important part of coming up with new legislation, then why does the Minister of Transportation not understand that? Instead of making it safer on Alberta highways, he's rolling back on these regulations to make it less safe.

Mr. Speaker, I want to call on all the members of this House to really think about what it is that we're doing here today or what's happening with the rolling back of the regulations. As I stated, the minister has already said that these exemptions are going to go on indefinitely, so I hope that we can hear from the minister on specifically if that is going to be the case.

I don't want to get into a he said, she said kind of scenario, but it breaks my heart that the minister is reaching out to the Humboldt families – he gets up in this House and he says that he's reached out – but then he's not completely transparent about what those conversations were about. If anybody is interested, I've specifically asked the minister about this in question period, about his conversations with Mr. Boulet and what Mr. Boulet actually thinks about the conversation that the minister had with him. I hope that he can address that as well because I think it's unfair to the members of this House for the hon. minister to get up in this House and say things that are perhaps not the most accurate. I'll put it that way.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the colleagues of the House for permitting this debate to go on today. Again I want to respectfully thank all of the members of the families that are here of the Humboldt bus tragedy. Thank you for advocating and continuing to work hard on this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Transportation has risen.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand and speak on this motion. Let me just say this. This is another opportunity for the Official Opposition to take yes for an answer. They've been getting yes for an answer for several days now, and they just don't seem to want to accept yes for an answer. We agree with them. Safety is the most important thing. It always has been the most important thing. It always will be the most important thing. It is.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also take time to thank the families and loved ones from the Humboldt tragedy for being here and for the respectful conversation that we had earlier today, where they, I thought, were very gracious in giving me their time and very helpful in laying out what they thought was important.

Mr. Speaker, while we're having this talk, let's talk a little bit. The hon. member across I think just suggested, if he didn't outright state it, that the former NDP government came up with MELT as a result of the terrible Humboldt tragedy. No one could deny that it was a terrible, terrible tragedy. But the truth is that MELT came from the United States. It didn't come from somebody in Canada. It didn't come from an NDP. It didn't come from a Conservative. It didn't come from a Liberal. It didn't come from Canada. It came from the United States of America. The fact is that as of February of next year somebody driving with a class 1 or 2 licence and driving a vehicle in that category won't be able to take that vehicle across into the United States without MELT qualifications. That's

where this came from. But what's really important is that it gives us an opportunity to increase the driving qualifications and the safety standards, and that importance is magnified 1,000-fold at least, maybe more, because of the tragedy that happened with the Humboldt families. Let's clear the record on that. That's where MELT came from, the United States of America. But that's not to diminish how important it is. Safety always was, is, and always will be the most important thing.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the motion put on the table. Though we have said yes before and I expect we will say yes again today, the fact is that where the opposition – in my opinion, we're going to go further than what's in here because what it says in the motion is “standards implemented by the previous government” when, in fact, MELT was not implemented by the previous government. Sure, it was announced and then they said it was the rule of the land, but the same day that they said that it was the rule of the land, March 1, was also the day they actually crippled the government to deliver that policy by essentially firing all of the past driver examiners, at which time, by my understanding, there were 151, and then we ended up with 73 driver examiners. As I say, with half as many people to give tests on class 4, 5, 1, 2, MELT at the busiest part of the year, it essentially set the government way behind on the traditional road tests, let alone the more stringent MELT tests.

The government said that they implemented it, but I say they did not. I say they announced it, and then they called an election and left the government. Had they won the election, they would have been having the same problem that we're having now, having to correct the terrible mistake they made on March 1 by cutting the driver examiners in half.

Now, I don't have a problem with how the government reacted to the Tantis report, but they might have missed a line or two. Here's a piece out of the Tantis report. At some point it says in the Tantis report that summer is the busiest season of the year for road tests. Now, they've gone on at length about how they read the Tantis report and how important it is, but they didn't read it carefully enough because if they had read it carefully enough, they would not have cut the number of driver examiners in half at the beginning of the busiest part of the year while trying to implement a new and important safety standard. Perhaps they need to go back and read it again and pick up the parts that they missed the first time because clearly, if they read it, they ignored it. Mr. Speaker, on October 11 last year they said that MELT was coming, and on March 1 this year they said that MELT was here, which was, I will repeat, the same day that they cut the number of driver examiners in half or less.

Again, I agree with them that they thought that MELT was a good standard, and it is. MELT is here to stay. Again, MELT was not invented by the NDP; it was invented in the United States of America and imposed upon us. So we were left with a situation of having to impose these higher standards while falling behind severely with road tests every single month because of the mess that the previous government created by putting us way behind on the number of driver examiners here. But we set about to complete the task, and we're still working on it now.

3:30

Frankly, I wish we were further ahead than we are. I would be happier if we were because we're somewhere north of 30,000 tests behind. I don't have the most recent numbers, but it's high. That's because we're falling behind probably 6,000 to 8,000 tests per month from March 1, essentially, until the end of August or maybe even the end of September because of the decision of the previous government.

In the meantime, I would like people to know that we've been working hard to catch up. We hired a lot more drivers. You know what? That took a while because, as I think the opposition would agree, you shouldn't take shortcuts on safety. So we didn't put driver examiners out there to give these road tests that we're behind on until they had what we thought was proper and full training to do so.

We also announced that we've added licensed people to do drivers' exams to try to catch up. We announced that, I think, three or four weeks ago, and we're adding 20 more. I think there are four up and running now, and the other ones are in training. We're fortunate enough to have four previously experienced driver examiners, which is why we were able to get them on the road a little bit faster. They'd already had some of the training that was required, and the other ones we're busy putting through the training. We made a decision not to limit it to 20 licensees to deliver driver exams because we know how important it is to deliver the drivers' licences, including the MELT certification, which is a higher standard. We get that.

I find it a little bit insincere when the opposition complains that we give an extended period of time for some agricultural drivers and school bus drivers to get their drivers' licences when they indeed caused the problem and, further, when they indeed themselves, when they were government, gave an extension to those same groups of people. Yet today they would have you believe that it's a terrible crime though they did exactly that when they were in government. Frankly, I agree with their decision because school boards across the province told us that they needed to get the kids to school and they couldn't do it unless they could train drivers to do that. Agricultural people told us that they wouldn't be able to get their crops out of the field.

The fact is that the day of reckoning has to come when MELT has to be put in place, and the day has come. I agree with what the opposition has said here recently, that too many hours of training is not an excuse, too much red tape is not an excuse, too much expense is not an excuse. I agree with all of those things because we agree with safety. Again, this shouldn't be a partisan issue. I sense that the other side says in one breath that it's not a partisan issue; on the other side, they're sure working hard to make it one. Mr. Speaker, we agree with these things. It's interesting also that they complained about the regs being out of date, but they didn't change them themselves until MELT came along from the United States. For their government to say that they're adopting MELT: I agree with them. We need it. They're not wrong. Somehow when we say it, we're wrong, but I'm going to say it out loud. The opposition was right when they did that because safety matters.

Now, I will tell you about the one thing that we did. There were about 6,500 to 6,800 people that had their driver exams between October 11 last year, when the NDP announced that they were going to do this, and March 1 of this year, when they said it was the rule. These are transition drivers that passed the same class 1 or class 2 test as the other 150,000 or more drivers around Alberta driving class 1 or class 2 vehicles. I don't mind telling you that we would have preferred to say, "You've got to have the MELT requirement," except, again, we were kind of crippled in our ability to deliver that with not enough driver examiners available to us because of the decision the previous government made on March 1 of this year. But we set about to get it done.

Yes, we did say that these people with a good driving record would have their full class 1 or 2. We did say that, and I've pretty much confirmed this in the House, though the member who just spoke said I hadn't. I've said this before. This is well known.

I have to tell you that the good, good people from the Humboldt families told me that they're not happy about that. They made that

very clear to me. I didn't promise them what I would do differently other than I told them that because they asked, we will consider what we have decided, because no one that I can think of has paid a bigger price for a lack of safety in this province than the families of the victims of the Humboldt tragedy. Because of them we will consider that. I'm not sure what we're going to do, and I'm not making a promise or announcement right now, but I'm telling the House what I told them: we're going to look at it. I know that they want a hard promise today. I'm sorry; we can't give them that today, but we're going to look at it. If they're not happy with me, not happy with us, I understand that, but they've convinced me to take a second look.

Let me just say this. Again, it's funny that the opposite side talked about school boards getting kids to schools as a special-interest group. Yeah, maybe, but it's a pretty darn important special-interest group. I received a bunch of letters from different school boards thanking us for the extensions on those drivers getting their MELT standard because they tell me, not my words but theirs, that they wouldn't have gotten the kids to school, that they wouldn't have had the bus drivers to get the kids to school. They did. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the opposition doing that, and I agree with us extending it. I think that it was the right thing to do when they did it, and I think it was the right thing to do when we did it.

Similarly, some of our agricultural friends expressed that because they have a high turnover in their drivers some years, they weren't sure they could get the crops out of the fields without a time extension. The NDP gave them a time extension, and we extended that a little bit more. Frankly, I think that they were right, and I think that we were right, too. There are probably people who disagree with us. However, it comes down to: we have to make the roads as safe as we can, we have to make the drivers as safe as we can, and we have to make the vehicles as safe as we can.

The Premier announced today that we are making efforts to look at some of the cases that may and probably do exist where people are bringing in people from other countries and putting them on the road without being fully qualified and trained. That has happened, I believe. That may be happening today. I certainly hope not, but if it is, we are going to make a big effort to put a stop to it. Again I agree with the opposition on that. If they say that that's a problem, I agree with them because safety is not a partisan issue; safety is a human issue. It's an Albertan issue. It's one that I'd like to think every member of this House cares about as much as I do, and I'd like to think that I care about as much as all other members of this House do. I don't really see an exception in this room of people that care about that.

So here we are, Mr. Speaker. I'm asking the opposition to take yes for an answer. We do believe that safety is needed for all drivers throughout the province to prevent incidents like the Humboldt Broncos tragedy and all other tragedies, and we need to stop those from occurring again. Yes. The answer is yes.

Again I want to thank the Humboldt families for being here. They have agreed to advise the Ministry of Transportation on safety issues going forward, and we're going to listen to their advice. We didn't promise them that we were going to do every single thing that they said, but we promised them that we were going to consider it all carefully because we know it comes from an honest, sincere, and, unfortunately, in a very negative way, educated place, educated by tragedy.

So that's where we are. I'm in favour of what's in front of us. I would say to the opposition, and it's not the first time I've said it: take yes for an answer. We've essentially been saying yes in this House for weeks, days at least. Hopefully, this time they will actually hear the yes that we're saying loud and, I surely hope, clear.

3:40

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen to speak.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak in favour of this motion that is before us as MLAs. I want to first start by recognizing the families in the gallery, and I also want to read into the record the note that I got from Toby Boulet, who could not be with us here in the gallery. Toby and Bernie Boulet are constituents of Lethbridge-West, and here's what they wrote:

Please apologize on both Bernadine's and my behalf for not being in attendance as we are presenting at the Canadian Transplant Summit in Banff on Wednesday. Please use this quote on my behalf. I am continually shocked that some in Canadian society are placing the value of a truck full of grain over my son's or any life.

Let's talk a little bit about how we got here. The minister has given a certain interpretation of events. I'm pleased to fill in some of the details for members assembled in the House this afternoon. Certainly, the previous government made several commitments and changes, including reviewing training for truck drivers, requirements for new commercial carriers, and intersectional safety on Alberta highways. There were previously no regulations around training requirements before obtaining the licences, and I might note that the current Minister of Transportation also served in the Redford government as Minister of Transportation, in which there were no training requirements before obtaining these licences.

So, yes, we did introduce a mandatory entry-level training program for class 1, which are semi-trucks, and class 2, bus drivers' licences. There was also a pre-entry requirement for new commercial carriers to ensure that their trucks met safety standards and that all of the drivers had received MELT training. Also, in order to clean up some of the shadiness that had prevailed in previous years, we made it more difficult for carriers that were suspended to resume operations as a chameleon company using a new company and safety fitness certificate. Previously truck companies shut down for noncompliance would simply migrate to a new company brand and restart operations. Again, this was a system that was in place prior to our government and certainly under this minister's watch.

Now, the current minister has taken issue with some of the actions taken around driver examiners, so let's talk about why those decisions were made. I think it's important for the Humboldt families, for the folks watching, and for the whole House to understand just what this Minister of Transportation has called a terrible mistake on behalf of the previous government. This minister has said that half of the driver examiners were no longer able to conduct driver testing and that this was, quote, a terrible mistake. That is what he just said.

There was an internal review of the driver examination model and 40 investigations of impropriety in just three years. Here's what it found: road tests were conducted without proper permits, there were incorrectly scored road tests, examiners had more than seven demerits on their licences, examiners offering a pass on a road test in exchange for money, and inappropriate touching during a road test. Now, I don't think that anyone in this House thinks that those folks should be put back to work. It was not a terrible mistake to take away their ability to do driver exams. That was the right thing to do for decency, for the rule of law.

Of course, we are now finding ourselves in this position where there is a review of bringing driver testing in-house as well as the MELT program, and now we have indefinite extensions for some of the exemptions. Now, the exemptions are going to be, we think –

and this is why we're having this emergency debate. We don't have clarity on whether those exemptions are going to be indefinite for drivers wanting a class 1 licence for the operation of a heavy-load farm vehicle or for class 2 licences for those operating school buses. We don't know, and we deserve to know, and the families deserve to know.

Are these exemptions going to be there or not? Are we going to bring our standards up in the face of all of this evidence that we need to or not? It's actually a pretty simple answer for the minister to give. There are, in fact, some pretty easy fixes here if he wants to manage this issue appropriately and also do the right thing. You know, the easy fix isn't: we're making efforts to look at our options. That's what the minister just committed to, making efforts to look. That's pretty cold comfort for something that is essentially a yes or no answer. Will there be exemptions or not?

Let's just give the minister a five-step program to make this issue so that we can move on, so that we can do the right thing, so that we can look those Humboldt families in the eye and say that we did the right thing for Albertans and for Canadians. Here it is. One, establish a timeline of no exemptions. Work with the Alberta Motor Transport Association and others who are interested stakeholders in this file. The AMTA has already said that they fully support the new regulations and the new system. Work with those stakeholders, the good actors in the trucking industry, who don't want to see bad actors unfairly subsidizing their operations. Just work with them and establish that timeline. Commit to it right now.

Two, stop making excuses for a broken system that was in part his responsibility as minister. That's an easy one.

Three, fund the training for school boards. How hard is this? Kids deserve to drive to school in a safe environment with a bus driver that has the appropriate training. If it's expensive, fund it. Just do it. Stand up in the House right now and commit to it.

Four, stand up to the hard-core lobbying, and send a clear message that it won't work here, that this is too important for Albertans. We know that those lobbyists were the first ones in the door when this government was sworn in. Just stand up to them. Make a public statement right now: "Not going to work. Safety is first."

Five, this minister and this government could take this opportunity to take national leadership on this file, to establish common cause with other provinces for road safety. We know that folks cross borders. These families' kids crossed a border. We know that these standards should be in place for the entire country, so go to the next federal-provincial-territorial meeting and put it on the agenda that everyone is going to have the same standards, that there won't be any exemptions. Take national leadership, and just get it done. Don't cave to lobbying, and put pressure on the feds if you need to with respect to seat belts on school buses and all the rest of the things that the families have been asking for.

Take some leadership on this. At the end of the day, we are all Canadians, and we all deserve to be safe on the roads. We all deserve to know that the people behind the wheel of whatever large vehicle have had an exam that is within the public interest, that was not bought and paid for, that was not the result of some shady transaction, money changing hands inappropriately. We all deserve that. We deserve to know that the school bus drivers that are picking up our kids have the appropriate training and that the government has taken responsibility for that training and the safety of those kids and that the Education minister and the transport minister and every other minister of Executive Council have taken responsibility for that safety. They can easily make that commitment. Do a prebudget announcement. Make it right this afternoon. No problem. It's not that much money. Just get 'er done.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, we are standing in this House because we have a lack of clarity. We have a minister who has committed only to make efforts to look at the situation, and we have Albertans and people across Canada who are saying that that is not good enough. Let's do better as Albertans and as Canadians. Let's be clear with our constituents – mine, the Member for St. Albert's, the Member for Edmonton-Mill-Woods', and everyone else's – those grieving families, and give them some clear answers and some clear assurances. Let's let them get back to the business of rebuilding their lives instead of having to advocate for trucking safety standards.

Toby Boulet is trying to get ready for the opening of the Logan Boulet Arena in Lethbridge. He's trying to focus his life. Toby and Bernadine are trying to move on, yet they have to engage in strategic planning and government relations and lobbying to make this government do the right thing? That's not right. That's not respectful, especially when I just outlined that it would actually be pretty straightforward to fix this problem.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we are having this emergency debate this afternoon. I believe that I have made my views in favour of this motion clear, and I want to urge all members of the Assembly to do the right thing this afternoon.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise this afternoon and speak on what's a fairly important topic that's been discussed in this Chamber at length over the last few weeks. I'd like to start off by reiterating the comments of the hon. the Transportation minister earlier in his discussion and make it, first off, clear that all Canadians share the pain of the families whose young people lost their lives in the tragedy that was the Humboldt Broncos bus crash and that safety on our roads is the number one priority of our government. The hon. Transportation minister has been clear about that today. I thank him for that. He's also been clear about it repeatedly in question period for the last week and a half.

He's been clear on this fact: the new training requirements, MELT, introduced for new heavy-truck drivers and bus drivers, class 1 and 2 licences, as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, are here to stay. He's been clear about that today. He's been clear about that in question period. He's been clear about that. As he said to the hon. members, "Take yes for an answer."

He's also been clear that the previous NDP government exempted over 150,000 existing drivers while also providing an extension for the requirement for farmers and school bus drivers, which is a fact, as I understand it. That was under the previous government. He's also been clear that we regret that at the same time that that government was imposing those new requirements, the previous NDP government made compliance practically impossible by cutting the number of driver examiners in half at the very same time that they were bringing in the new rules. The hon. Minister of Transportation has also been clear that he on behalf of our government is moving quickly to fix the problem by hiring more examiners. He was talking about that before this was even raised in question period, in fact before this sitting of the Legislature started.

In addition, today the Premier has been clear about the facts that I just presented but also that he's instructed his Minister of Labour and Immigration to begin to reach out to his federal colleagues regarding possible exploitation in regard to temporary foreign workers' programs in regard to heavy trucking and particularly around the context that was reported in the *Globe and Mail* recently.

Mr. Speaker, those facts have been made clear. It's important that they're made clear, and I thank the hon. Transportation minister for making those facts clear. I am proud to call the hon. Transportation minister my friend. I'm proud to have served with him in this Chamber side by side for many years. In fact, I even had a lot of fun when we served in opposite parties for a little bit of time. He's always been approachable. He's always answered questions fairly, both in his time as a minister now and his time before. He's been easy to work with when he was in opposition, and he has been clear on that.

While the tragedy that was the Humboldt bus crash is a tragedy, it's important to recognize what the Official Opposition continues to do in this Chamber, not just on this issue but on many issues, Mr. Speaker. It's shocking. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West spoke at length about what Albertans and Canadians want. I certainly agree that Albertans and Canadians want to make sure that truck safety is handled right, that the lessons that have been learned from the Humboldt bus crash are acted upon so that a tragedy like that can never occur again, and hopefully no other family will ever have to experience that tragedy. None of us in this Chamber can even understand what that tragedy has done to the families. That's important.

But what's important also is to recognize the track record, Mr. Speaker, that the Official Opposition continues to use in this place, and I would submit to you that it's why they're the Official Opposition. It's why they were the only one-term government in the history of this province. It's why they have been sent to that side of the House. [interjections] They think that coming here and acting like this and misrepresenting facts benefits Albertans. It doesn't.

The hon. Transportation minister has been clear on this for a very long time. It's why . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but I actually think that this is a good opportunity for me to just mention that all members do have under Standing Order 42, if they should so choose, 20 minutes. There's no 29(2)(a). So if there are other comments and arguments that are potentially going to be made, I invite all members, perhaps after we hear from a member, to then stand and be recognized.

Thank you.

Please continue. There are still 15 minutes and 37 seconds.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that. I do hope hon. members take the opportunity to participate in debate, not to spend their time heckling but to actually talk about this important issue.

Why I refer to the opposition's behaviour in the context of this motion is that it's important for Albertans to understand what continues to take place in this Chamber. It's appalling for most Albertans that see how the NDP continue to go about their business as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition inside this Chamber, and today is another example. When you have the hon. Transportation minister, who has been clear for weeks on his position and then continues to see the opposition rise in this place and say the exact opposite of what he has said, that does not serve Albertans, Mr. Speaker. It does nothing to benefit Albertans nor the debate on what is an important issue.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition has done this several times. They did this often when they were in government, and it was disappointing to Albertans at the time, which is why I suspect that they were voted out in record numbers. But it's even more disappointing now to watch as they've done it in opposition, as they've continued to rise over and over and over and misrepresent facts inside this very Chamber. They've done it on rural crime, and that is a great example



that is very similar to this situation. They repeatedly for several weeks have stood in this Chamber, misrepresented the facts on where the Solicitor General was going to on rural crime, repeatedly misrepresented the facts at the very same time as the Minister of Justice has gotten up over and over and over and said that those are not the facts.

Mr. Speaker, of late they've taken to then standing up in this Chamber and quoting town councils or county councils, mayors, and saying that they are expressing their views and that the mayors are concerned, to the point that we see a letter now come from the mayor of Brooks, the mayor of Wetaskiwin, the mayor of Lacombe – I can tell you that I suspect there will be more of these letters in the coming days – addressed to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that say: “We read with dismay the *Hansard* of October 15, 2019, in which you said in the legislature,” and I quote: ‘He can deny it all he wants but the communities of Brooks, Wetaskiwin, Barrhead, Sundre, Foothills and Lacombe [will] oppose his plan . . .’ when, in fact” – this is the mayors now; we're out of the quote – “that is not the case.”

The mayors go on to say:

The position of the cities of Lacombe, Wetaskiwin and Brooks has been, and continues to be, that all municipalities (including municipal districts and counties) should bear a portion of the cost for police services they receive. We also support the principles that any new models should include . . .

Then they list some of the principles.

Then they close with this:

Misrepresenting our views for political theatre is dishonest and unbecoming for any member of the provincial legislative assembly.

We respectfully ask you to correct your statement for the record immediately.

Mr. Speaker, I note that that still has not happened on behalf of the mayors of those three communities. I note it hasn't happened on behalf of several of the other communities that have been listed within that context, and I know those letters are coming shortly. Many of those communities I have the privilege of representing, and I can assure you they are quite disheartened to continue to watch the NDP misrepresent facts inside this Chamber for their own political gain. That is not the role of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. It's not the role.

4:00

I was proud to serve as a Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in this Chamber with many of the members that are still on the benches with me now, who sat on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. It was not the role when we were there, and it's still not the role now that they are there. They can do better than this. They should do better than this. Albertans deserve better than this. This Chamber is a place for open and truthful debate, not where you come and misrepresent facts.

**Ms Ganley:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** I recognize that a point of order has been called. I can deal with that right now.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hesitate to rise for fear of setting this off all over again, but we're here discussing an incredibly serious matter. We're talking about families who lost their children, and we're talking about the safety of all road users. To see the hon. Government House Leader get up and sort of take us on a wander through a number of collateral attacks I think is a bit inappropriate. If he wishes to disagree with us on this matter and have a conversation about this issue, I'm happy to hear from him. I

think it's important to hear from all members of the House regardless of whether they disagree, but I think that out of respect for the families, we ought to contain our debate to this subject. If we disagree with each other on other matters, we ought to disagree about those other matters at other times.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** On the point of order or just moving on?

**The Acting Speaker:** On the point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Clearly a matter of debate, Mr. Speaker. While I do understand that the Official Opposition does not want to have pointed out the political and partisan games that they play with these issues, it is clearly relevant to the motion that we are talking about. The fact that they brought it forward made it very clear in the context of the motion. Again, I should be allowed to continue with my speech.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. In this specific case, I will take the opportunity to say, first off, that I do not find a point of order specifically or at least in part because there was no mention of any standing order that was broken. Secondly, though, I will also take this opportunity to just remind the whole House that we are debating a specific motion at this time, so if all members could just continually move towards ensuring that they discuss the topic at hand, that would be very appreciated.

The hon. Government House Leader, with 11 minutes and 29 seconds left.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for recognizing me again. Why I bring this up is that it's important for Albertans to understand what is going on inside this Chamber and what their Official Opposition is up to.

Now, with that, I will go back to the motion that is at hand, Mr. Speaker, and make it clear again on behalf of the government, as the hon. the Transportation minister already has repeatedly, that MELT is here to stay. That is a fact, a fact that has been made clear in this Chamber. The hon. Transportation minister is working through one heck of a mess that, unfortunately, the NDP have left them. Sadly, it's not the only mess that the government has to work through, as you know, that the NDP have left, but he is working through it. He's committed to the direction that he is headed in.

It is not helpful for the NDP to continue to stand inside this place and misrepresent facts, Mr. Speaker, and, through you to them, I encourage them to stop that behaviour because that is not becoming of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. They're better than that. If they're not, they should certainly act better than that. They've received a great privilege to be a member in this place, and repeatedly coming here every day misrepresenting facts . . . [interjection] I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall heckling away about speaking to the motion. This is about the motion because it's related to why the NDP are playing these games. It's not appropriate.

This is a very important issue, Mr. Speaker, and I'll be excited to vote for this motion shortly if the NDP send it to a vote, but we will continue to call them out on their behaviour. It's why they're in the spot that they're in, and Albertans do not like what the NDP continue to do here. Their job is not to fear and smear people. Their job is not to come here and misrepresent facts. Their job is to come here and debate, to make sure that we end up with good legislation, not to continually listen to a minister stand up and make it clear about very clear, specific facts and then stand up and misrepresent the facts not only in this Chamber but then across the province. It's shameful, it's not appropriate, and I do hope they stop.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen to speak.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for St. Albert for moving this important motion this afternoon and for giving an opportunity to all members to support unanimously and to debate this motion. It's unfortunate that the Government House Leader has spent so much of his time not focused on the matter at hand.

I have to say that better safety standards – I'm going to agree with something that the Infrastructure minister said. MELT was absolutely invented south of the border. Sometimes things that are invented south of the border can have benefits here. Sometimes things that are invented even across the ocean can have benefits here; for example, the three-point seat belt, that was mentioned by the Member for St. Albert. That wasn't invented in Alberta. It wasn't invented by one political party or another. It was invented in Sweden. But when a good safety device was invented in Sweden in 1958, it was about 30 years later that we adopted the same practice here in Alberta because it had saved about 50 per cent of the lives from those accidents. The research was clear. I wish it wouldn't have taken 30 years, Mr. Speaker. I really hope that the government acts far more quickly than the Infrastructure minister has been hinting at through recent public interviews, because MELT absolutely wasn't invented here, but it has the opportunity to save lives.

For that, I think our kids on school buses, our teams travelling around the province, individual families or individuals on the highway, our agricultural workers, and our transport workers deserve to have a government pay due attention and give due consideration, and that was done, Mr. Speaker. That was done previously. The decision was made that we were going to move forward by having enhanced safety training. I can tell you that there was an accident in Lamont when my mom – I think she was a first-year teacher at the time. There was a school bus that was hit by a train, and every time we drive by Lamont or go to Lamont for a family function, my mom tells me about that accident. She wasn't on the bus, but she knew some of the kids who were, and she definitely knew all the families, and it has had a lasting impact on somebody who was, you know, not directly impacted. But it impacted the community. It impacted our province. I know that the same is true for Humboldt.

I have to say how disheartened I was to have learned recently through media reports about the government's intention to delay and dismiss important measures that can act to heighten safety. I think that 6,800 trucks and bus drivers having less than what I would say is appropriate safety training is not in the public interest, and it shouldn't be in the government's interest either. I know that's been confirmed, that there is potentially an indefinite delay. That's been confirmed with the Alberta Motor Transport Association. That is deeply concerning. I think a delay in acting to save lives is an injustice in this place.

I'm going to mention two other things: the intersection of highways 35 and 335. That is an intersection where there is constant agricultural traffic. Of course, when we saw the footage, it wasn't an agricultural vehicle. It was another vehicle that was involved in striking the bus, but if it would have been a load of grain, I don't think anyone would have felt any better about it. Delaying safety standards for folks who are driving those vehicles puts them at risk as well as those on the road who aren't driving those vehicles.

The minister absolutely has the opportunity to stick with what he said in June. In June he said that they were going to be funding this important initiative to make sure that there was this heightened

safety. Definitely, it appears through other media reports that funding is not going to be a priority for this government, something that could have been committed to – it was committed to in June – and could have been followed through on.

I want to say that I've been in your shoes. I've been sitting on the front bench where somebody made a decision before me, and it was up to me to make a decision whether or not we wanted to follow through on a decision that was made previously. This decision I'm speaking specifically to was when I was Minister of Health, and a former minister of seniors had announced that they were going to put sprinklers in seniors' homes, but there wasn't money in the budget. There was no money put aside for it, but the announcement had been made by the previous government, and I was in a position where I had to make a decision about what we were going to do. I wasn't going to live with the risk that seniors were going to be in seniors' lodges that weren't safe. I wasn't willing, knowing how many seniors use walkers, use wheelchairs, and aren't able to flee from a burning building, to take that risk for those seniors.

4:10

So I went to my Premier, and I said, "I'm going to make this announcement, and it's not yet in the budget, so I need you to have my back and say that we're going to make sure that we put this funding forward," and my Premier had my back because she cared about those seniors and about the families who were worried about their well-being. This minister can do the same. This minister absolutely can go to his Premier and say: this is the right thing to do.

I've talked to the families. The families have demonstrated that they feel this is important, and certainly a significant number of Albertans and Canadians feel that this is important. Yes, it will cost some money, but it's not worth the risk. Please don't make other families go through the devastation that they have already experienced. Please don't make other community members, every time they drive by that intersection or the next intersection, have that same knot in their stomach when they tell their families the story about what happened.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I know that it takes some courage, and I know that sometimes it can be challenging when you don't feel that you've got the money in your budget, but these kids' lives and all of our lives are worth the investment in increasing our safety on our roads. I don't just want to hear, "Yes, I'm going to look at it; I'm going to consider it down the road." I want to hear, "Yes, this is a priority; yes, it will be funded; and, yes, we will act to make our roads safer." I know that sometimes it can be challenging, but I think that today is the day.

We all ran, I hope, to make this province a better place and to make our communities safer and more successful for all, and this is an opportunity to do that today. That seniors' lodge example, I hope, is something for folks to reflect on. I definitely see the parallels myself.

With that, I'll cede my time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to begin my remarks, of course, by acknowledging and thanking the family members of not only the Humboldt tragedy but the tragedy that occurred in B.C. for being here and for advocating so hard and so thoughtfully and so earnestly for a change in law that would take the otherwise meaninglessness of their tragedy and mitigate it ever

so slightly by saving the lives of many other Albertans and, ultimately, Canadians through your efforts. I want to thank you so much for your courageous presence here because I can't imagine that it is easy at the best of times, and I can't imagine that it's easy sometimes to watch the back and forth in this Legislature and feel tremendous faith, necessarily, in our ability to focus on the matter at hand. So I want to thank you for that.

I do also want to thank most of the members opposite for agreeing with us to have this debate and certainly the minister, who has indicated that he is willing to give this a little bit more consideration. I think, at the end of the day, that's what this House should do when it works the way it is intended, which is something that, you know, happens about once every 365 days, but maybe today will be that day.

What I really want to focus on, then, is to talk about the matter that we are hoping to achieve through this conversation today, to talk about the goal that the families and probably hundreds of thousands of other families across Alberta want to see us achieve, which is simply to make our roads safer, to make the people who travel on our roads safer, to make our kids who travel from point A to point B with school, with soccer, with hockey, with dance, with whatever safer, to make the people who work for us safer, the people that drive those vehicles safer. That's what we are here to talk about today.

And how do we do that? That is, really, the focus that I want to try to maintain and to back away as much as possible from the "he said, she said; he's worse, she's worse" kind of conversation that we can be tempted to fall into.

Thus far in this conversation the concerns that have been expressed are that we are unsure of what is happening with respect to the roughly 6,800 new drivers – and that's a number that we got from the government, we think, through reports in the media – who would have been licensed between October '18 and March of 2019. That's one group of people that we want to talk about for a minute.

The other group of people we want to talk about are those folks who work in the agriculture sector who drive heavy-load vehicles and who we believe may not be currently meeting the standards through MELT, either the training or the testing, and for whom there has been an extension and for whom there has been another extension for quite a bit longer and for whom there is now some concern that there might be an indefinite extension. Through that concern with that group we are also worried that if that extension were allowed to continue for any length of time, whether that will become a loophole through which other companies will travel in order to extract drivers who otherwise will not have to take the testing and earn the associated costs but will otherwise be able to be on the road doing a much broader form of driving of semis and moving other products.

Then the third group we are concerned about, of course, is school bus drivers and the training that they would be expected to follow.

Those are the things that we are worried about. If there is confusion, it's because there's been confusion in how it's been communicated. Different people in different settings have suggested that there are different outcomes. If there is confusion, it is not contrary to what the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre would suggest. It's not some big conspiracy; it is simply that there is confusion. At the same time there is confusion about an issue about which many, many Albertans are concerned. But I think those are the three areas that we're mostly addressing, dealing with right now.

Now, one of the things that the Minister of Transportation has suggested is that, "Well, we had to, you know, write off these 6,800 people, and we had to extend for at least two years and maybe indefinitely for these other folks because there are half the number

of driver examiners available" because our government took steps to change the way people in Alberta had their licence issued. So let me just talk about that for a moment. I was actually around the table, contrary to some of the assertions that have been made that this was all something that was brought on by something that was going to happen in the U.S. two years from now. That's not what happened. We were around the table when this happened.

The reason the change was made to the examiners and how they were paid and how they were overseen and who employed them and whether they were independent contractors or not was primarily related to a number of the concerns that were delineated, I think, by the Member for Lethbridge-West but generally speaking, concerns that, in some cases, there was abuse by those private operators, certainly not all. Some of them were great people doing a great job and working very hard. By no means are we suggesting that that wasn't the majority, but there was a large enough minority of that group that it was incumbent upon us to step in, not only because consumers were having their rights jeopardized, not only because in some cases people were overpaying through the nose for these services in certain parts of the province but also because, at the end of the day, it came down to the issue of safety. If you couldn't trust the people that were giving people licences to be on the road, then, obviously, that becomes a matter of safety.

So that's why we stepped in. But, of course, it was happening at the same time that we were also trying to improve significantly the level of training that these drivers would receive before they went onto the road with these very big vehicles that could be dangerous if people didn't know how to drive them. That was a problem, no question.

What needs to be understood, though, is that when the members opposite say, "Oh, they were down to half the number of examiners, and therefore we had to blow up the whole situation," most of those examiners worked part-time. When we hired a whole bunch of new ones, they were working full-time. In fact, our sources tell us that certainly not by March 1 – that's absolutely true – but by the end of April our capacity with respect to the ability to train and to examine was almost back to where it was at the outset. Now, even if it wasn't quite there, the question is: is it delayed by another month or two? I don't know. Maybe. But is it delayed by two years or indefinitely or to never? No.

4:20

I don't think that it is a fair characterization of this debate or that it is the most straightforward way to engage in this debate by trying to say that we had to exempt the 6,800 and exempt the school drivers and exempt the farm people because of the change in the way drivers' examiners were paid and employed. I think it was a problem, for sure. I take full responsibility. It was a problem, but it's also a fixable problem, and it was well on the way to being fixed, so let's focus on fixing the problem. Let's move away from who was in charge for how long and didn't do this and who tried to fix it and maybe it wasn't fixed the right way or whether it was fixed before or after the election. Let's move away from that. This is a process that was in transition that we can fix or we cannot fix. Let's just focus on fixing it because safety is really what's at the heart of the issue. If we move beyond that and imagine that we should have, if we haven't already, gotten ourselves back up to and beyond capacity when it comes to training and examining, we should be able to, and there should be no barrier to that because we were awfully close as of April. That's the first thing.

So then what do we do about these other three groups? There are these 6,800 folks. We announced it in October, and then we brought it into effect in March. Now, we delayed it until March because we were told by ministry officials that we wouldn't have the capacity

to start the work until then. As it turned out, it was a bit later, but that's what we were told. We also announced that it was going to happen because we wanted to give those in the industry time to adjust and to seek out other forms of training if it was possible and to start the work of being safer.

The concern we had, though, was that if we didn't make everybody between October and March subject to these rules, some of the not good players in the industry – and let me be clear. There are many good players in the industry, great, responsible players within the trucking industry, but there were some who were trying to slip underneath and who were making shortcuts, and that's where they saw that they were making money. They were the ones – the bad actors, we'll call them. We were worried that those folks were going to try to get thousands and thousands of people licensed in that window in order to game the system and get there before the new rules were in place. That's why we said: "No. You won't take the training until March, but you need to know that you're going to be compelled to take the training even if you get your licence in December, so don't rush it. Don't think you can game the situation because we're closing that loophole." That was the point of creating that.

But then what's happened now, by saying that 6,800 are exempt, is that we've essentially rewarded those bad actors, and I don't know why we would do that. If it takes a bit more time to get those folks trained, to get them examined, why don't we just do it? You know, we don't have to just say willy-nilly that those 6,800 brand new drivers are okely-dokely to drive on the highway. We can still compel them to be trained. We can still compel them to take the test as they would have in March if we'd had enough people, as they would have in April because we probably had enough people at that point. There's no need to just let them stay out there driving and earning their experience at the expense of our safety. That's not the right way to go, and that's what these families are fighting very hard against.

Now, the next group that we need to talk about, of course, is heavy-load truckers in the agriculture industry. Again, we know and the member opposite, I think, acknowledged that there are some small sectors within that industry where this is an area that could be abused and has been abused. It's a relatively small area of the agricultural industry, but if that exemption remains in place, whether it be one year, two years, or indefinitely, then that will become a pipeline, if you will, for a huge swath of drivers who work their way through that, don't incur the cost of training and licensing, and then suddenly are able to use that experience there to get themselves onto the road driving these big rigs, which was exactly the problem that led to the Humboldt tragedy in the first place, having people that were not properly trained.

I would urge the government to shut that down, to say no to the rather compelling, pervasive, loud-voiced lobbyists to whom they have been exposed. We know who they are. We met with them. We know what you're hearing, and we know what you can say no to. It can be done. Say no to them on that and just insist that everybody be subject to the training. If the issue is funding for particularly precarious operators within the agriculture industry, well, then fine. Consider whether there might be an opportunity to set up grants or whatever so those folks can get the support they need to ensure the safety that we all need on our roads. That's a different way of fixing the problem without generating the kinds of safety risks that not fixing the problem generates.

The final thing I want to talk about is the school buses. You're right; for years and years and years the school bus drivers were not properly trained. I rode on a school bus. There are days when I am shocked that I'm still here. You know, it was quite the operation: no seat belts, overcrowded with kids, sliding all over the icy roads.

Yes, we had some times in the ditch, lovely times when it was minus 40 out and we went into the ditch and waited for two hours for somebody to come and drag us out. Good times. Not safe. Therefore, the fact that we did it before is not an argument for why we should continue to do it. When we were told that we should be raising the standards, we said: yes, we should be raising the standards.

Now, the minister is correct. In both of those examples we did give an extension. Because the thing came into force in March, we said, "You know what? Right on the eve of seeding, maybe that's too fast. They won't have time to get these folks up to speed" if it was the farming sector. For schooling we said: "You know what? The boards will not necessarily have the money. They won't have the time to get all these folks up to speed that quickly, and many of them struggle to find bus drivers in certain areas, so what we'll do is that we will delay it until September and let both of those groups take the summer to get the training done." That was the only reason we delayed it. We didn't delay it because of any expected shortfall of trainers or licensors. We didn't delay it for money reasons. We didn't delay it for lobbying. We simply delayed it to ensure that it did not disrupt the services that they were providing. We thought: "No. We'll give them lots of notice, and they can get it done in the summer and be ready for September 1." That was the only extension, so I don't understand now why we would be extending for a year or two years or three years.

With the schools I suspect the reason that we're extending is because it is costly to school boards to train all their school bus drivers, but I say: who cares? I honestly can't imagine that a single one of the members opposite or at least the rural members opposite would want to look at their constituents and say: we don't have enough money to make sure that school bus drivers are adequately trained to keep your kids safe. You know what? Give them a grant so they get the training.

**Ms Hoffman:** Pay for it.

**Ms Notley:** Pay for it. Get your school boards to pay for it. Don't say: "Well, it's all up to the school boards. School boards can make their own decisions. They're really superindependent." You're not independent if you don't have your own revenue-generating option. It has to be a question of ensuring everybody has safety and everybody can afford safety. So yeah, pay for it. Safety is worth it. I would argue that safety is worth it.

In the overall scheme of things the cost is not by any means undoable. We're talking about, you know, I think, at most 100 hours of training. It's a two-week course or a two and a half week course. It's probably less than that for school bus drivers. I absolutely believe that this is an investment that we should be making in our kids, in our workers, in our citizens who are on the roads, whether they're on the roads as passengers or drivers. Whether they're on the roads as residents or business leaders, doing economic travelling or vacation travelling or schooling travelling, it doesn't matter. The reality is that we know it's not as safe as it should be. We can fix this.

The solution is not that expensive, it's not that complicated, and there is no need to be considering extensions of one year, two years, or indefinite. There is no need to be allowing those 6,800 people to remain on the road right now. You need to draw a line in the sand somewhere. That's exactly what we did in October. By not following that, you run the risk of having even more poorly trained people than normal because those folks rushed in after the announcement was made, before the training started, so you cannot let them get away with that gaming.

4:30

They're simple solutions. I would urge the minister to ask his officials to be significantly more transparent and clear on what is happening. I would urge them to set up a website and show who is being trained, when the training is available, how many people have been trained, how much it's costing, you know, what the criteria are. The best way to avoid confusion is to be clear and consistent on what exactly is going on. Be clear and consistent about what is going on, and then raise your standards. Take it back to where it was, because we were on the path to being the safest jurisdiction as opposed to a destination jurisdiction for bad actors, which we were before. We should get back to that, and then we should keep our minds open to anything else we need to do to promote safety.

We can do all that to honour the memories of the victims of the Humboldt tragedy and to honour the memories of many, many, many other victims of a failure to keep our roads safe that has been created over many, many, many years in the past. We can do better, and this government can do better. I think that our debate should be focused solely on those issues, not about who caused what and, you know, who did what well and who said what in a completely different conversation on a different topic that's completely unrelated but, rather, about how we just get to a pragmatic, practical solution that keeps our people safe. That's what these folks up in the gallery are asking for, and that is, I think, what this government has to deliver.

I look forward to hearing and seeing the kind of transparency and clarity that I believe the families and all Albertans are looking for in terms of safety standards in this province. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, shall I call the question?

[Motion carried]

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 16

#### Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, for recognizing me this evening. I rise today to introduce for second reading the Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019.

Madam Speaker, as you know, the ranching and cattle industry provides a vital role in our province, contributing to the environmental, economic, and social landscapes of Alberta. In order to ensure Alberta's hard-working ranchers can continue to protect the environment and help support our economy into the future, we need to take some action.

Now, the cattle rancher is a powerful symbol in Alberta of what it means to be Albertan: rugged, salt of the earth, and self-sustaining. Madam Speaker, as you know, I'm proud to come from Sundre, from the riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, to live west of the 22, as we call it there. Some of you would call it west of the 5th. Where I come from, we would refer to that as west of the 22, which is west of the Cowboy Trail. In Sundre we consider ourselves the crown jewel of the Cowboy Trail, the beating heart of

the Cowboy Trail. It is definitely a cattle community that has existed in this province for a very, very long time.

The ranching industry, though, is modernizing, and government should take its lead from them because Albertans deserve fair value for our shared resources and ranchers deserve a predictable and innovative approach. As such, our government is moving to modernize the grazing fee framework so that it's transparent and fair for ranchers and disposition holders. Updating this framework will reflect current economic realities and will ensure that Alberta is receiving market value for its public land resources. Since grazing disposition rental rates have been frozen for so long, changes will be introduced through a five-year phase-in to ensure that there are no sudden changes to costs to ranchers and disposition holders.

The bill enjoys support from all of the province's major grazing stakeholders, a testament to this government's commitment to engagement and transparency through this process. I think it's important to re-emphasize that point. This bill enjoys support from every major grazing stakeholder in the province. That is a sharp contrast to the last pieces of agriculture legislation that we saw the former NDP government bring to this Chamber. Yesterday we stood on the stairs of the Chamber. Behind us was the support of every grazing association in the province. When that government brought forward agriculture legislation in this place – Madam Speaker, I don't have to tell you – there were a lot of farmers and ranchers standing on the stairs of the Legislature, but they certainly weren't there in support of that government's legislation. They were there against it, primarily because that government, the NDP government at the time, did not even take the time to consult with those very members. We have a different approach. This piece of legislation shows that.

It also shows our dedication to the ranching and farming communities inside our province, how much we respect and appreciate their contribution to our economy. The NDP – and this probably is why they don't have any rural members inside their caucus. They don't have any members that represent large agriculture communities because when they spoke and brought in legislation in regard to farming and ranching inside this Legislature, right here in this very spot, they spoke about comments like the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, at the time when he was the Finance minister, who rose inside this House and implied that farmers and ranchers in Alberta needed Bill 6, that they hadn't consulted with them about, because farmers and ranchers were trying to hurt their employees. You can go and check *Hansard* about that, Madam Speaker. It happened live in this Chamber. I know you were sitting there at the time, watching, likely with the same reaction that I had, quite appalled on behalf of my constituents that a then minister of the NDP would imply that the farming and ranching communities that I am proud to represent would in some way deliberately try to hurt their employees.

Now, if they had taken time to consult, as we had, they would know that those are not the farm and ranching communities that I come from; they're not the farming and ranching communities any of my colleagues come from. I'm proud to call ranchers my neighbours and my friends.

Importantly, though, as well, the bill will also help us avoid possible trade countervails from the United States under NAFTA. Now, Madam Speaker, you may not be aware that in 1999 a United States Department of Commerce countervailing duty investigation identified grazing rental rates as a significant contributor to the subsidization of the Canadian cattle industry. If a countervail investigation was launched today, there is a risk of a subsidy and a duty being imposed on the Canadian cattle industry, not just the

Canadian cattle industry that uses grazing leases inside our province but on the entire Canadian cattle industry.

This is an issue and a risk that the cattle industry has faced for a long time, that they have raised both with this government and with the previous government. In fact, I was shocked to know that the previous government did not act on this despite the fact that grazing associations and the cattle industry were very clear with them, is my understanding, as to the risk to the cattle industry, again, I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, showing the complete disconnect that is the NDP with rural Alberta, with agriculture communities in particular. If passed, Bill 16 will help to mitigate that threat.

Simply put, the current grazing rental rates have been frozen for 25 years, Madam Speaker, and they are drastically in need of updating. Many of these changes will bring us into harmony with other jurisdictions, including the province of Saskatchewan, to the east of us. They will also remove barriers to succession or entry of young people into the industry, an important step in order to keep the industry thriving for generations to come.

There are several additional changes outlined in the bill, all aimed at benefiting the ranching community and Albertans as a whole. In order to streamline our government system, we are proposing changes which allow for updates to rental rate formulas to recognize a two-zone grazing system, with boundaries that recognize the true cost of maintaining a grazing disposition and the differences faced by ranchers in northern and southern Alberta. As you know, Madam Speaker, ranching up in High Level, with its climate and shorter growing seasons, brings challenges that they don't see in Lethbridge or even in my home of Sundre, and our new rental rate formula takes that into account. Two zones employ a different minimal rental rate charge when profits are low to reflect differences in capital cost. As profits rise, the rental rates will increase, and the formula will capture a progressively greater share.

4:40

If this bill is passed into law – and I do hope all members of the Chamber will support this important piece of legislation – we plan to annually allocate 30 per cent of grazing disposition rental revenue above \$2.9 million in rangeland sustainability initiatives. To be clear on that, Madam Speaker, we intend to take 30 per cent of the increase in grazing disposition fees and invest it back in rangeland sustainability initiatives. This will ensure that Alberta receives a fair share for the use of our resources and that, when market conditions are good, a substantial amount of money is dedicated to supporting rangeland sustainability through proactive partnerships.

While more details of the exact programs being funded will be determined once the legislation is passed, we do believe that this could include improvements to existing research and better rangeland management. We already have stuff, Madam Speaker, inside our platform around this. Our platform promised to invest over \$1 million in a program called cows and fish, that works with the agriculture community on important waterways in grazing areas to be able to protect fish habitat. It also means support for programs that will benefit our shared environment, namely the wetlands and grasslands Albertans treasure so much. This is also one of many legislative changes that demonstrates our government's commitment to create a fair and balanced system that supports the environment and helps grow the economy.

Madam Speaker, passing Bill 16 will support our ranchers now and for the years to come while ensuring that Albertans remain leaders in the ranching industry, an industry that has deep ties to our past and to our future. I truly believe that ranching and our agriculture community are integral to the future of our province. They are our second-largest industry. We depend on them. In many ways they've helped keep us going over the last few years.

While the former government continued their prolonged attack on our largest industry, the oil and gas industry, our farming and ranching community has stood up and fought for this province despite the fact that they had to work with a government that thought – it's appalling to me that the last time we saw a major piece of legislation associated with ranching or agriculture in this House, the former Finance minister, the worst Finance minister in the history of this province, the Member for Calgary-Fort stood in this very Chamber and implied that my neighbours and my friends and the people of the hard-working ranching and farming community inside this province were somehow deliberately trying to hurt their employees.

Madam Speaker, through you to them . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** That's not true.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora saying that it's not true. You could check it on Facebook. It's on my Facebook page, has been for years because I confronted him about it that day.

That's the history of this former government when it comes to agriculture. We have a different approach. We will continue to partner with our second-largest industry, make sure that they can benefit the province for future generations to come, and stand with them because that's what matters. We are about jobs, the economy, and pipelines, Madam Speaker, but we recognize on this side of the House that it's not just the energy industry, though that's important, that we have other industries, including forestry and agriculture and others inside this province. Through you to them, to the agriculture and ranching community, I want them to know that their new Alberta government stands with the ranching and agriculture community side by side.

We value their benefit to both the economic development of our province but also to the environmental protection of our province. The importance of ranching and grazing, the importance of that industry to our environmental protection inside this province cannot be overstated, Madam Speaker.

We will continue to stand with them. We will continue to work to always get the best deal that we can for the farming and ranching communities and the best deal for Albertans, a sharp contrast to the former government. I'm excited about that, and I do look forward – and I do hope that all members of the Legislature support this important piece of legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, to be clear, you're moving second reading?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** That's what I said.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to this important piece of legislation, which will affect the farmers and ranchers of our province on an issue that we began to work on when we were government as well. We support the bill that the current government is continuing with. We applaud their good work in moving forward with this. It's part of a way of demonstrating that the economy and the environment can go hand in hand.

I think that stewardship of our grazing lands is something that Alberta farmers and ranchers take very seriously. They've demonstrated this by their advocacy to have this piece of legislation brought forward. I know that there was a concern over the risk of a potential countervailing action taking place by the United States if, indeed, these measures weren't taken, and I'm glad to see that we

are moving forward with them. They will have my support. That's for sure.

I know that many Albertans don't realize, I think, that the figure is that 14 per cent of all our forage that our cattle consume actually comes from these grazing leases, so it's an important part of the makeup of the nourishment that our cattle herd actually receives. Protection of these lands is important, and ensuring that they're fairly distributed and that fair payment for those grazing leases is achieved is something that we're pleased to see implemented in this proposed legislation. The new formula for grazing leases is oriented toward market conditions and fluctuates with the price of cattle, and that, I think, is a reasonable way to go. Phasing it in over four or five years, of course, as the minister indicated, will soften the blow.

When in conversation with the people who came to the Legislature yesterday, I sat down and ate my lunch and talked with them. Some of them, of course, reacted knowledgeably to my comment about how the added costs of this would have to be borne by them because it is certainly something that's going to increase in cost. It's not often that you'll hear an advocacy group suggest, you know, that "it's time to increase the cost on us," but indeed they realized the risk of not doing this, and they were willing to pay their fair share for the privilege of grazing their cattle on these leases and entering into these leases. The opportunity to finally finalize a new modernization of this grazing lease legislation is something that they may welcome. We welcome it as well, and we look forward to supporting the bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our world is constantly changing every day. Twenty-five years ago not everyone had a computer at home. It was only about three years after that that the World Wide Web became public, and four years after that we had Google, every university student's favourite friend. Now we have computers in our pockets. We can live stream things online, including the proceedings in this beautiful Chamber, and we can search anything on Google and talk to someone across the world instantly. Twenty-five years ago even some of the members in this Chamber weren't even born or were toddlers, and I would love to consider myself part of that group, but that would be false. Now we look to what our constituents want, and we're advocating for them.

Madam Speaker, I'm not saying any of this to make anyone feel old, but I'm trying to make a point that in 25 years, a quarter of a century, our world has rapidly modernized, and it doesn't take much to look around to notice it. That's why our government is determined to pass this Bill 16, and I hope that members of this Chamber will vote in favour of it, the public lands modernization act. This is based on our commitment to keep Alberta's ranching industry thriving now and in the future, an industry that, particularly in Cardston-Siksika, is near and dear to my heart and essential and vital. It only makes sense that our government create the conditions so that one of our most historic practices, that which shaped our province's history, can continue to thrive in the modern economy.

Madam Speaker, of all of these things that have changed over the years, from music to culture and technology, one thing has remained completely consistent: people have to eat. We depend on our ranchers and farmers to produce the food that ends up on our tables, and sometimes I find there's a disconnect between where people think their food comes from and where it actually comes from. The fact of the matter is that it doesn't come from a grocery store. Someone gets up early in the morning every day year-round to make sure we have food that we can purchase and create meals

and feed our families and ourselves. That's why our government wants to ensure that our ranchers and beef producers are set up for continued success as they play an important part in our provincial economy and the environment.

4:50

Bill 16 will continue with our province's high environmental standards, that we have worked so hard to build and maintain throughout our province's history. This legislation will modernize the public land grazing disposition fee framework, which is to decide the amount of rent and fees that are paid by ranchers for the use of public lands. It will also lead to the establishment of dedicated revenue that will support rangeland sustainability initiatives to ensure the long-term success of the industry and the environmental health and sustainability of Alberta's rangelands. This bill also updates Alberta's current grazing zones and removes outdated regulatory requirements, something the government has been committed to for a while now. The changes implemented will allow for the creation of a rent framework that is fair and transparent, Madam Speaker, and reflects current economic realities faced by our province. We want to ensure that Alberta receives a fair return for our natural resources.

Our current grazing rental framework is outdated. It was implemented in 1960, and the rates have been frozen since '94. Alberta has had the same rates now for 25 years. Madam Speaker, when you get a notification on your phone or your computer saying, "Hey, it's time to update your operating system," you know how most of us react; it's "Remind me later." Well, successive governments have been hitting the Remind Me Later button on our grazing framework for 25 years now. It is time for us to go ahead and press the update button. By using market-based rental rates rather than outdated arbitrary rates, it reduces the risk of trade actions. Our government realizes that we cannot continue to operate this way. That is why we're taking action. Our government has worked very closely with industry and stakeholders to get their feedback and listen to their concerns so that we can create a comprehensive solution.

Madam Speaker, this is something that I wish the previous government had done on the famous antifarm legislation, something that I talked to grazing lease holders, farmers, and ranchers about across my constituency of Cardston-Siksika, and none of them were consulted. Rather, they didn't feel consulted, and they definitely didn't feel like they were heard. But I can tell you that in the short time since the election in April I have been contacted by numerous agricultural producers, telling them the dramatic shift between the current government stance on agriculture and how we've been consulting them versus the previous government. One even went as far as saying that he tried for four years to get a meeting with the former minister of agriculture, who is no longer in this House, but since the election he's had three meetings with the minister of agriculture. That is the difference. It's a stark contrast, and it's exactly why the previous government was voted out with historic numbers.

We've gotten widespread support from the ministry with these proposed changes. One of the new initiatives that we're proposing is a dedicated revenue stream to proactively invest in rangeland sustainability initiatives. Not only will this dedicated revenue stream support and improve existing initiatives within our role as government and as landowners and resource managers; it will also ensure the long-term sustainability of rangeland areas. If this bill becomes law, we plan to annually allocate 30 per cent of grazing disposition rental revenue, which is over \$2.9 million, Madam Speaker, to rangeland sustainability initiatives. Wow. That's a big number, and that's something I'm really excited about. It will

ensure that Albertans receive a fair share for use of their resources. When market conditions are good, a substantial amount of money is dedicated to support rangeland sustainability through proactive partnerships.

There are some more details in this legislation that can come into effect if it is passed such as improvements in existing research and in rangeland management practices. This would maintain Alberta's position as a leader in rangeland management.

Our government is also proposing changes that will allow for updates to the rental rate formula to recognize a two-zone grazing system with a boundary that recognizes the true costs of maintaining a grazing disposition and the different geographies and contexts in which ranchers in northern and southern Alberta operate. Different areas of Alberta experience varying weather conditions that impact their seasons of farming and growing crops. It doesn't take a genius or a geologist to know that. You just have to simply go outside, wait 15 minutes, and the weather is likely to change. For example, ranching in High Level, with its colder climate and shorter growing season, brings more challenges than when normally started earlier in the season in southern Alberta. Our new rental rate formula takes this into account.

Our government's proposed changes also include a switch to a flat-rate assignment fee, which is to say the amount paid to transfer a disposition to another individual. This will help remove barriers to entry into the industry and align with assignment fees charged for all other public land dispositions.

These changes will transition Alberta's beef industry to a future that is sustainable and based on sound environmental practices. Our ranchers and farmers are vital to our economy and livelihood in our province. Without farmers and ranchers, we would have to rely heavily on imports of all of our food, which would be costly for all Albertans, similar to the way that eastern Canada relies heavily on conflict oil from Venezuela and Saudi Arabia, something that we could change with a pipeline to the east. But I digress.

Alberta is known for amazing beef, and it would be a shame if our ranchers were forced to stop raising Alberta beef because they cannot afford the outdated fees. Our ranchers and farmers are not getting the best or a modern deal for allowing their animals to graze. Our government is committed to creating a fair and balanced system that not only grows the economy but also protects the environment. This is one of the many legislative changes that demonstrates that.

Our government is committed to also reducing red tape that burdens our hard-working Albertans. We are shocked that it took 25 years for a government to update their rental rates. It just shows where our loyalty lies. This government is committed to our agriculture sector.

While the previous NDP government implemented bills and taxes that hurt Alberta ranchers and farmers, our government has been working with them to ensure that they get a fair deal. This is because our government understands the needs and the concerns of ranchers. All you have to do, Madam Speaker, is talk to them, something that, unfortunately, the previous government failed to do over and over and over.

We have many United Conservative MLAs and a minister who are and have been ranchers. They know how difficult these fees can be when the weather gets too cold or snow is unexpected in the province. We were elected to be advocates for the people who are not getting a fair deal due to unfair legislation that was implemented by our previous governments, not only unfair legislation but incredibly outdated. All of us may live in a modern world, Madam Speaker, but our farmers are still getting the same fees from 25 years ago, and they are stuck in the past.

When I was visiting the Lethbridge tractor show not long ago, I took a walk around the expo facility. It doesn't take long to see the

modernization of farm work and farm capabilities in this province and across the country, so if we're modernizing our equipment and modernizing our practices, we most certainly should be modernizing our legislation. It's our job as representatives of all Albertans, including farmers, that we propose amendments to outdated legislation. I'm surprised that it took three different governments to implement a change and update this legislation. We were elected to bring jobs to Alberta, to make sure that the economy is doing better than it was under the previous NDP government, and to ensure that unnecessary red tape does not hinder Albertans. Modernizing this act will do just that.

It will also ensure that Alberta ranchers and farmers are able to continue their work providing food for Albertans. By providing rental rates that are responsive to market conditions and reducing financial barriers to new producers entering the cattle industry, we are thus creating more jobs. It will be responsive to market conditions to ensure that all Albertans, producers and consumers, are getting a fair deal, and it will reduce red tape and create a system that is transparent and fair for all. Transparency: something a little bit foreign to the previous government.

5:00

Our government is working hard to maintain our campaign promises that we were elected for, and we also want to do this in an environmentally sustainable way. This bill will use a portion of the rental revenue to support rangeland sustainability initiatives to ensure a long-term sustainability in Alberta's rangeland through proactive investment. We have put a lot of effort into ensuring that our ranchers are getting a modern and fair deal. It's 2019, Madam Speaker. It's about time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Under 29(2)(a).

**The Deputy Speaker:** You should stand a little quicker, hon. member. I will allow you, though, this time and this time only to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was just struck, again, when the Member for Cardston-Siksika was speaking, about the importance that the industry has on the day-to-day lives of his constituents and the economy and about the really personal impact, how it affects the lives of those constituents. I was wondering if he could speak a bit more as to how this bill will help improve the lives of constituents in or out of the cattle industry.

**Mr. Schow:** Well, Madam Speaker, I'd be happy to respond to that question. I think, actually, the better answer is just given by talking about the general direction this government is going, which starts with consultation. When I was campaigning for this provincial election, I heard time and time again from agriculture producers how upset they were with the way they were treated by the previous government, how Bill 6 affected their livelihoods and their ability to operate family farms and do what they do best. You know, they create jobs, and they grow our food, and they raise our food. They make it so we can buy our food at the grocery store.

But the reality is that I think it really came down to this level of respect that we do have and a respect for the people that we work for. It's unfortunate that I heard all these stories, because you'd think that a government elected by the people, one that at the time represented a number of rural areas, would be in touch with their



constituents in rural Alberta. But it's apparent to me and became very apparent with every bill they passed that agriculture and oil and gas, for that matter, were at the bottom of the priority list. You know, we can serve up Albertans platitudes on a silver plate all day long, but the actions speak far louder than the words. The previous government made it apparent to us that agriculture really was not a priority for them.

It was interesting when the Leader of the Opposition said recently that she was surprised that she's still here. Well, frankly, so am I. You know, the reality is that Alberta repudiated the previous government with record numbers. Well over a million votes were cast in favour of this United Conservative government because we put forward a clear and transparent campaign platform that put the needs of Alberta on the front page: jobs, economy, pipelines. What creates jobs? Albertans create jobs, and a big part of that is our agriculture sector. Our producers are grateful – they're grateful – for the direction this government is taking in the relationship that we are building with our agriculture producers.

Madam Speaker, you know, I'm grateful to stand here today to talk about this bill because we are modernizing legislation in our agriculture sector, something the previous government failed to do, something that we're committed to doing. It's the first of what will be, I'm certain, many more pieces of legislation that show our commitment to Albertans, to our oil and gas sector, to our job creators, to the small businesses, and, of course, agriculture.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will conclude my remarks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, first, I just want to start off by saying that I love Alberta beef. I mean, who doesn't? In my opinion, it is the best-quality and absolutely the best-tasting beef in the world bar none. But we would not be able to have such amazing beef without our ranchers. They work day and night year-round to provide not only for their families but also for Albertans and Canadians.

Many take for granted the work that is put into ranching. As a society we are often removed from the source where our food comes from. It doesn't come from Safeway, Madam Speaker; it comes from our farmers and ranchers. There are many steps involved in bringing beef to market and before we can enjoy it at our dinner tables. Ranchers must ensure that they have suitable land that is not only ample in size but is also fertile to allow the animals to graze. Ranchers have to feed and water their cattle daily, especially in winter, when there is not visible food for the herd to graze.

Ranchers must also ensure that their cattle are safe and healthy throughout the year. When animals are healthy and well, all is well. But sometimes animals get sick or grow old. Not only do ranchers have to worry about their animals and their health but also about constant concerns over weather and food supply for their animals, not to mention all the details that contribute to the life of a rancher. Waking up before the sun is up and working way past sundown, a lot goes into this job. I have such respect for our farmers and ranchers such as my friends the Balisky family, friends who farm near my constituency of Grande Prairie. I have been out to the Balisky farm during calving, and it is definitely a 24/7 responsibility, not for the faint of heart, for sure.

Our government realizes the struggles of ranchers. Many of our United Conservative members are ranchers or farmers themselves. They have shared stories and advocated for ranchers across this

province. That is why our government is introducing Bill 16, the public lands modernization amendment act. We have a commitment to keep Alberta's ranching industry thriving not only now but far into the future, Madam Speaker. We understand that Alberta's ranchers and beef producers play an important and pivotal role in our provincial economy and in the care of our environment as well.

We know the concerns and issues that ranchers face with this outdated act. That is why our government wants to ensure that our cattle industry is set up for continued success. We will do this by modernizing the public lands grazing disposition fee framework. This outlines the amount of rent and fees paid by ranchers for the use of public lands. It will also update Alberta's current grazing zones and will remove outdated regulatory requirements.

Our government is determined to maintain the highest environmental standards, that our province has worked so hard to implement over the years. This act will lead to the establishment of a dedicated revenue stream that will support rangeland sustainability initiatives. This will ensure the long-term success of the industry and the environmental health and sustainability of Alberta's rangelands.

The changes that this bill will make include allowing for the creation of a rent framework that is both fair and transparent and better reflects the current economic realities faced by our province by ensuring that Alberta receives a fair return for its natural resources. Our economic realities are very different than in 1994. We are recovering currently from the former NDP government, who through their policies caused significant economic challenges for our province.

Currently Alberta's grazing rental framework is outdated and not responsive to today's realities in ranching. It was first implemented in 1960 – in 1960, Madam Speaker – almost 60 years ago, and we have had the same rates for the past quarter of a century. I can certainly attest to the fact that a lot has changed in the past 25 years, yet for 25 years we've been using the same arbitrary rates, and it is definitely time for an update. By using market-based rental rates, we are reducing the risk for trade actions.

We are not going to stand back and allow outdated bills to determine the viability of our ranchers and their ongoing ability to produce food for Albertans and for Canadians, for that matter. But it does not surprise me that the previous NDP government did not take action to modernize this bill. They definitely have a track record of not caring about our farmers and ranchers and not demonstrating that meaningfully to the farmers and ranchers.

In contrast, this government has been working very closely with industry stakeholders in order to create a comprehensive solution. We value the feedback and concerns they have expressed. The proposed changes are getting widespread support from industry and, in fact, have come largely from the industry's suggestions. One of the new initiatives we are proposing is a dedicated revenue stream to proactively invest in rangeland sustainability initiatives. This dedicated stream of revenue will support and improve existing initiatives within the government's role as both landowner and resource manager and will ensure the long-term sustainability of rangelands and riparian areas.

We plan to annually allocate 30 per cent of grazing disposition rental revenue, which is over \$2.9 million, to rangeland sustainability initiatives if this bill is passed into law. This will ensure that Albertans receive a fair share for use of their resources. When market conditions are good, a substantial amount of money will be dedicated to support rangeland sustainability through proactive partnerships. We will have specific programs that we are funding that include improvements in existing research and rangeland management practices, which would maintain Alberta's position as a leader in rangeland management.

5:10

Our government is also proposing changes that will allow for updates to the rental rate formula. It will recognize a two-zone grazing system, with a boundary that recognizes the true costs of maintaining a grazing disposition and the different geographies and contexts in which ranchers in northern and southern Alberta operate. The climate and growing season for crops is very different, obviously, between the north and the south in our province. Farmers may face seasonal challenges, depending on where they live; for example, a severely dry summer or perhaps a cold and early fall. The new rental rate formula would take these factors into account.

Our government's proposed changes also include a switch to a flat-rate assignment fee, which is the amount paid to transfer a disposition to another individual. One of our goals for this bill is to remove barriers to entry into the industry and align with assignment fees charged for all other public land dispositions at this time. These changes will transition Alberta's beef industry to a future that is both sustainable and based on sound environmental practices. This is only one of the many legislative changes that demonstrate our government's commitment to create a fair and balanced system that both protects the environment and grows the economy.

Our government is committed to ensuring that Albertans are getting a fair deal. That is why we have already passed legislation that reduces the unnecessary red tape and regulatory burden by at least a third for Albertans. Our government understands the needs of everyday Albertans. We understand the needs of our ranchers. We understand that it takes a lot of work to bring high-quality beef to Alberta's dinner tables. We understand the burdens and hardships that ranchers have faced over the years. We also have a connected investment into the land and want to ensure that the best sustainable practices and environmental measures are undertaken and continued.

Our government cares about jobs and our economy. We want to ensure that we will continue the high environmental standards we currently uphold. That is why an important part of this bill is not only modernizing the past land rental fees but also investing in sustainable measures for rangelands. It is time that our province adapts and modernizes the grazing fee framework. We need to ensure that our farmers will have continued success so that they will be able to afford to produce the world-class, quality beef that Alberta is famous for world-wide.

I hope that all members of this Assembly understand the importance of this bill with respect to sustainability measures and to our hard-working ranchers. We live in a modern world, Madam Speaker, and we must adapt our legislation accordingly. I will certainly be supporting this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the bill in second reading? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Today I have the privilege of speaking to Bill 16, the Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019. Ranchers and farmers have been integral to our economy for generations. Settlers came to Alberta from eastern Canada, the United States, and Europe to farm here. Between 1914 and 1921 there was an influx of farmers and settlers coming into northwestern Alberta, where I live. At that time Alberta's population grew from 73,000 to over 584,000. Farming and ranching: it's what we know.

We often don't think about it when we're at the grocery store, but without farmers and ranchers we would have to rely heavily on imports for all of our food, which would be ridiculously expensive. Alberta farmers help supply a substantial proportion of the food you and I eat every day.

Like many Albertans and probably like yourself, Madam Speaker, I enjoy a good steak every now and then, and there's no better steak than Alberta beef. I've had a chance to eat some steak in different parts of the world, and I can attest to that fact wholeheartedly. There's nothing better than Alberta beef. In fact, I've had clients come from around the world, and that's one thing they always comment on, the quality of our beef and our steak here. In fact, I had one group come from Florida, and they ended up wanting to eat steak every single day, so they actually bought their own little barbecue and barbecued steak every single day they were here. They tried to figure out how they could take steak home with them. It's obviously high quality, it's got a great taste, and of course it's important to our economy.

Our ranchers need stability and fairness in the grazing lease fee schedule. This doesn't mean fees dropping; it means stable and fair. That is why I'm excited to see that the minister of environment has introduced Bill 16. This is in line with our commitment to keep Alberta's ranching industry thriving now and into the future. We recognize the need to ensure that our ranchers and beef producers are set up for continued success as they play an important part in our provincial economy and the environment. Bill 16 will see that our province's high environmental standards remain intact, standards that we have worked so hard to build and maintain throughout our province's history.

This bill will modernize the public land grazing disposition fee framework, which is to decide the amount of rent and fees paid by ranchers for the use of public lands. It will also direct a portion of revenues towards rangeland sustainability initiatives to ensure the long-term success of the industry and the environmental health and sustainability of Alberta's rangelands, and we know that our farmers and ranchers feel that is very important.

This bill also updates Alberta's current grazing zones and removes outdated regulation requirements. The changes implemented will allow for the creation of a rent framework that is fair and transparent and gives a better reflection of the current economic realities faced by our province. We want to ensure that Alberta receives a fair return for our natural resources. Our current grazing rental framework is outdated. It was implemented in 1960, and the rates have been frozen since 1994. Alberta has had the same rates for 25 years.

Madam Speaker, it is time for an update. By using market-based rental rates rather than outdated and arbitrary rates, it reduces the risk of trade actions by our trading partners around the world. Our government realizes that we cannot continue to operate this way. That is why we are taking action. Our government has worked very closely with industry and stakeholders to get their feedback and listen to their concerns so that we can create a comprehensive solution. We have gotten widespread support from industry when we proposed our changes.

One of the new initiatives we are proposing is a dedicated revenue stream to proactively invest in rangeland sustainability initiatives. Not only will this dedicated revenue stream support and improve existing initiatives within our role as government, as a landowner and resource manager; it will also ensure the long-term sustainability of rangelands and riparian areas. If this bill becomes law, we plan to annually allocate 30 per cent of grazing disposition rental revenue, which is over \$2.9 million, to rangeland sustainability initiatives. It will ensure that Albertans receive a fair share for the use of their resources. That's because we need balance.

Balance includes the viability of the ranchers and a return for Albertans, and when market conditions are good, a substantial amount of money is dedicated to support rangeland sustainability through proactive partnerships.

This bill also contains provisions that would see enhanced research and rangeland management practices. This would maintain Alberta's position as a leader in rangeland management.

Our government is also proposing changes that will allow for updates to the rental rate formula to recognize a two-zone grazing system, with a boundary that recognizes the true costs of maintaining a grazing disposition and the different geographies and contexts in which ranchers in northern and southern Alberta operate. Different areas of Alberta experience varying weather conditions, that impact their season to farm and grow crops. For example, ranching in High Level or in the north Peace Country, with its colder climate and shorter growing season, brings more challenges that are not normal in southern Alberta in an area such as Lethbridge. Our new rental rate formula takes all of this into account.

Our government's proposed changes also include a switch into a flat-rate assignment fee, which is to say the amount of money paid to transfer a disposition to another individual. This will help remove barriers to enter into industry and align with assignment fees charged for all other public land dispositions. In essence, it'll help new young farmers get into the business without having those barriers of high costs of transfer fees.

These changes will transition Alberta's beef industry to a future that is sustainable and based on sound environmental practices. Our government is committed to creating a fair and balanced system that not only grows the economy but also protects the environment. This is one of the many legislative changes our government is bringing forward that dedicates our commitment to fulfilling our promises to Albertans.

Madam Speaker, if the members of this Assembly support our ranchers and fair legislation, they will support this bill. Not only does it modernize the fee framework, that will reduce unnecessary red tape for ranchers; it will also create a system that is transparent and fair. Not all ranchers in Alberta experience the same weather, soil, and other conditions that will affect their crops and animals. Northern Alberta not only experiences overall lower temperatures in fall and winter but also has experienced forest fires that will impact farming. Northern Alberta grazing lease holders also have to deal with trees growing up through their fence and also falling on the fence, adding costs to their operations.

5:20

We need to not only create a system that responds to weather changes but also to a fluctuating market. It has been 25 years since the rental rates have been updated, and a lot has changed in the past 25 years, including our economy. This caused most people to suffer. What's happened with our economy in the last four years is that with the NDP government they have driven out so much investment that it has caused a lot of suffering to Albertans. This suffering has been felt by our farmers and ranchers, too. We need our rental rates to reflect the market issues in the ranching industry by providing rental rates that are responsive to market conditions.

Our government is committed to reducing red tape that burdens our hard-working Albertans. While the previous NDP government implemented bills and taxes that hurt Alberta's ranchers and farmers, our government has been working with them to ensure that they get a fair deal. We love our ranchers and the world-renowned beef that they produce. Madam Speaker, I'm grateful for our ranchers and all the work that they put into providing food for Albertans. When we go home at the end of the day to eat supper, they are still out in the fields working. We know that with the weather conditions

that are happening this fall, many farmers are in a tough situation as far as getting their crops off right now.

I know our own minister of agriculture and many UCP MLAs can speak to the farming life as they, too, are either presently or have in the past experienced the farming life. They know first-hand how difficult it is and that the outdated rental rates have been tough on farmers. That is why our government has been working so hard on this bill. They've not only heard from Alberta's ranchers but their own MLAs who know how difficult it is to be a rancher. Ensuring that Albertan ranchers' and farmers' voices are heard is one of the many reasons why these MLAs have committed to representing their constituents in the Legislature.

Madam Speaker, we live in a modern world, and over the last 25 years a lot has changed, and it's time for an update and change. We all live in this modern world, so why should our farmers be stuck in the past? It is time for a change and a fair deal for our farmers and ranchers. Our weather conditions in Canada and the varying conditions throughout the province provide different farming experiences for farmers. We need to have rental rates that reflect those differences. We have the ability and technology to be able to do these types of changes, so in 2019 it's time for a change.

Maybe just to kind of summarize some of these changes that will happen because of Bill 16, what we know is that the new fees will better align with land values and make sure that ranchers benefit from any market fluctuations. When markets are down, so are the fees. We know that we worked closely with farmers and ranchers to develop this new fee structure, and this has broad support among the major associations. Modernizing the framework will reduce red tape for ranchers and will create a system that is transparent and fair.

Government is now ready to implement this new framework, which will update the public land grazing disposition fees and ensure trade stability. Of course, when we look at our agriculture industry, we know that we have an export market there, too. We provide for Albertans, of course, but we also export a lot of our products. In order to be able to export, we need to be viewed as having fair-trade practices with other countries around the world. This will help build that stability and that trade stability. We know that we have to have long-term economic viability for ranchers, and this will help do that also. Of course, we need a fair return for Albertans on their resources, and of course this bill is focused on that, too.

I think it's also important – and we need to remember that we dedicated funding, using a portion of the rental revenue, to support rangeland sustainability initiatives and to ensure long-term sustainability of Alberta's rangelands through proactive investment.

Of course, this bill reflects the geographic differences that I mentioned earlier and their impacts on the beef production across this province, and of course it helps address demographic issues in the ranching industry by providing rental rates that are responsive to market conditions and reducing financial barriers to new producers entering the cattle industry. The thing that'll have the effect there is the flat-rate assignment fee. We know that this will create management efficiencies and align the act with regulation to current business practices and operations. It will help maintain market access and social licence and provide dependable funding for rangeland sustainability initiatives. We know that the rental rate and the assignment fee are currently embedded in the Public Lands Act and the public lands administration regulation. Therefore, amendments were required to change these things.

Madam Speaker, I think it's fair to say regarding Bill 16 that there's been widespread consultation. This consultation has been going on for years. I know that when I was first elected, grazing lease holders came to me, and we had several meetings over the last

few years. This is something that has been key to their requests. The previous government, of course, didn't seem to get it done in the four years they were here. Obviously, we're just a few months in, and we're taking care of our farmers and ranchers. We know it's important to them, and we know it's important to Albertans.

I encourage everybody to support Bill 16 when we vote on this. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was very interested in listening to the hon. member speak. You know, as a Smith that's from Saskatchewan, at least born in Saskatchewan, there's a little bit of a debate in my family as to whether my cousin's ranching operations in Saskatchewan provide better beef to Canada than do Alberta ranchers. I have sometimes found myself in a little bit of trouble in my family when I have come to the defence of Alberta ranchers and tried to convince them that indeed the beef that we process in Alberta seems to be number one in my books.

However, it was also a rather interesting thing that happened when we had a caucus meeting down in Lethbridge. I happened to go down to the hot tub that night in the hotel that I was staying in, and who do I see in the hot tub but my cousin and his family. They were there for an auction of beef. They were auctioning off the beef in that hotel, and I had the opportunity to witness first-hand some of the modernization that has occurred in the modern ranching industry. They are now auctioning off cattle through the Internet, where they are posting the videos of these cattle, and the bids are coming in from far and wide.

In listening to the member speak about geography and about the modernization that this Bill 16 will bring, I was wondering if he could talk a little bit about the differences between how a northern rancher in his area is going to be able to see themselves in this piece of legislation and somebody that may be from down in the Lethbridge area, how this new Bill 16 will allow us to be able to accommodate the differences between the north and the south as well as, perhaps, address some of the issues with regard to modernization that we see in this bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, and thanks for the questions and comments there. I think maybe what was most important about the comments that the member made was that his family from Saskatchewan had actually come to Alberta to buy beef. I guess that just proves who has better beef, obviously. They wouldn't have been coming to Alberta to buy poorer beef, so obviously they're trying to improve their stock in Saskatchewan by coming to Alberta. I think that's probably the most important part of that story.

I guess I should mention that I grew up on a cow-calf operation. My dad was a farmer and a rancher, so we grew cattle on our farm, but we didn't do the finishing. We just had the cow-calf operation. We sold the calves every year. Growing up in that operation and seeing, I guess, kind of the changes – like, obviously, I grew up with it. We had cows since I could walk, kind of thing. When I see the changes between how operations run now and how efficient they are, I think I can see also how the concern for the environment has grown and grown over the years. I think that years ago when we were doing farm practices, we'd probably seen things that we thought we could improve, and I think that over time we did improve those things. I think that's why we're such a leader in the world when it comes to our environmental record in our resources

industries and also in our agriculture and farming and ranching industries. Those kinds of improvements, I think, are why our resources and our beef should be so desirable around the world.

5:30

When it comes to the question itself about northern ranchers versus southern ranchers, as I mentioned in my speech, we're talking a bit about the little differences, of course, with the trees and how the forest affects fences and that sort of thing. Also, I think the shorter growing season in the north, of course, affects things, too, and there's a shorter amount of time that you can have cattle on grazing leases in the north versus the south. So I think there are some differences there.

I think we need to realize how important the ranching industry is to Alberta, to its economy and to our production of food. Like I say, when we talk about the quality of beef, our quality is second to none around the world. I think that's important, and what we need to realize here.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 16?

Seeing none, shall I call the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a second time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 16 Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak?  
Shall I call the question on Bill 16?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 16 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report the bill.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 16.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard the motion, do the members concur in this report? All those agreed, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.  
The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate, all hon. members, lots of progress today, and as such I will move that we adjourn until tomorrow, October 17, at 9 a.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Given all this talk about Alberta beef and steak, do the members agree with the motion to adjourn the House until tomorrow at 9 a.m.?

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:34 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, October 17, 2019

Day 29

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, October 17, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, everyone.

Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. May Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 17

#### Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act.

Madam Speaker, Bill 17 supports our government's core belief that we need to prevent domestic violence from happening in our province. If passed, Alberta's version of Clare's law would give people at risk of domestic violence the information they need to make informed decisions about potentially harmful relationships.

Today I would also like to share a quote I received from my dear friend Tamara Monilaws last night as she poignantly expressed her support for this bill. She wrote: if this law was implemented 21 years ago, it would have saved my son and I from many counts of violence, sexual assault, criminal harassment, unlawful confinement, broken bones, almost losing our lives; this is simply huge; what a positive day for so many. Madam Speaker, Tamara's terrible ordeal made national headlines, and she readily shares her experience to spread awareness. The reality, however, is that in so many cases these stories remain untold. We believe people at risk have a right to know if their partners have a history of violence and abuse, and we believe this preventative measure could help save lives.

Madam Speaker, last week we celebrated the international day of the girl. We celebrated a day that recognizes that girls have vast potential, promise, and every right to be heard, to be free, and to be empowered to reach the pinnacles of that potential. Next month we will acknowledge Family Violence Prevention Month. In the same breath, mere weeks apart, as we celebrate girls, we also spread awareness about family violence, knowing that these same girls and women continue to be victims of domestic violence and victims of physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse.

As a society we have fallen far short of the mark in protecting our own. Domestic violence doesn't discriminate. It affects people of every age, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, and it endangers the survival, security, and well-being of its victims. We know that

women and girls are the main victims of intimate partner and spousal violence, and this act is focused on preventing domestic violence between romantic or dating partners. Let me share with you just a few disturbing facts. Females are victimized in 82 per cent of police-reported cases involving opposite-sex partners. In fact, more than half of women who are murdered across Canada lose their lives at the hands of an intimate partner. Indigenous women are disproportionately represented in these numbers. Alberta's domestic violence rates are third-highest amongst the Canadian provinces, and in 2017 alone police in Alberta reported more than 10,000 victims of intimate partner violence.

Madam Speaker, we believe these statistics are unacceptable and are a sad reflection of how far we still need to go. We need to address the prevalence of domestic violence here in our province. The value of prevention is undeniable, but there are no definitive ways to quantify what prevention looks like with any precision. That's a statistic that is difficult to track, but nonetheless it's an outcome we must pursue. We know that if people have information to make an informed decision, particularly as it relates to a potentially harmful situation, they might choose a different path, and we need to give them that opportunity.

Our government made several important promises to Albertans to combat domestic and family violence, including legislation and increasing support to specialized agencies. These promises include committing \$2 million to expand the use of specialized electronic monitoring technology to prevent individuals serving sentences from having contact with those they were convicted of victimizing. It includes committing \$5 million in new funding directed to sexual assault service centres that provide counselling, support, and advocacy. It includes maintaining the 24-hour crisis line that monitors a sexual assault nurse examiner. It includes immediately reviewing what improvements to medical and forensic evidence gathering is needed in rural communities. It includes developing and implementing a specific repeat-offender policy with both provincial and federal components.

Madam Speaker, our government is taking action on domestic violence in several ways, but this legislation is a milestone step in helping the women and girls in this province. We offer supports and services for victims of domestic violence, but tools like this piece of legislation will help us deal with the issue before it begins. We committed to the prevention of domestic violence not only through services and supports but through legislation. By putting forward this crucial piece of legislation, we are keeping our promise.

The story of Dianne Denovan's experience was brought to our attention in recent weeks through the media. Our office has had the pleasure of speaking with her, and we look forward to including her in the consultations for this legislation. Her friend Krista put forward a petition to bring Clare's law to Alberta based on Dianne's experience. Dianne was in a relationship with a man she met online for seven months before he attacked her after a concert they had attended together. The man assaulted her for nearly four hours, leaving her hospitalized for three weeks and finding refuge in a shelter until the man was arrested nearly five weeks later. Dianne had no idea that this man had a criminal history dating back to 1987 with several convictions for assault, uttering threats, assault causing bodily harm, and other domestic incidents. Had she been able to request information, this experience in her life could have been prevented. We're very grateful to Ms Denovan for having the courage to share her story in the media and for being such a strong advocate for domestic violence and supports in this province.

She is not the only real-life story we've heard of. Jasmine Lovett and her daughter Aliyah Sanderson were killed in a domestic homicide by Ms Lovett's romantic partner, and it was later released that her partner had previously been married, with a restraining

order against him granted to his ex-wife, who feared for her and her child's safety.

Madam Speaker, these are tragic cases, and we must learn from these to ensure that we do whatever we can within our power to ensure that we protect others from a similar fate. I've personally spoken to many women over the years in my volunteer capacity that have suffered from domestic violence. Like these women mentioned today, some didn't even realize that they were in an abusive relationship until the abuse had already occurred. There are the very real cases of newcomers who have arrived in our province who often don't know where to turn when they experience domestic violence because of cultural barriers, language barriers, and customs and traditions that make it taboo to ask for help. I would venture to say that my experience is not unique, that we all know somebody who has experienced domestic violence, and this is an untenable reality. It's a reflection of how prevalent domestic violence is in our society.

The women I've mentioned today have experienced the tragedies that we are working to prevent. I am certain that their families wonder every day if the abuse or, in some cases, their deaths could have been prevented if they had access to more information. We are proposing a way to help prevent domestic violence from happening. Alberta's version of Clare's law is about making sure that people are informed. It's about enabling the right to ask and the right to know for people at risk, making sure that those at risk have the information they need to make a decision that is right for them. Our version of domestic violence disclosure legislation was modelled after Clare's law in the U.K., also known as a domestic violence disclosure scheme. It was named after Clare Wood, a young woman who was killed by her intimate partner, who had a history of violence towards women. Had Clare had the opportunity to find out about her partner's past, she might be alive today.

9:10

Clare's law was first introduced in England and Wales in 2014, and it allows people to check if partners pose a risk or have a history of domestic violence. The first year Clare's law came into force in the U.K., police received over 4,700 applications, which led to almost 2,000 disclosures. That's 2,000 instances where people at risk of domestic violence had information that they could have used to protect themselves. The government of Saskatchewan passed similar enabling legislation in May 2019, and while it hasn't yet been proclaimed, they're working hard to define the regulations. Newfoundland and Labrador are also working on a version of Clare's law.

Madam Speaker, we have the opportunity to join these few jurisdictions and make Alberta a leader in the prevention of domestic violence rather than a leader in the number of cases. We have been assessing each of these approaches to domestic violence disclosure and have been using them to inform our own approach to the law. We want to make sure this law can be as effective as possible. We're committed to making sure it works for Alberta. Looking at its application world-wide has helped us to define our current proposed legislation, and it'll continue to help us as we define the regulations.

Once Bill 17 passes, we'll have the opportunity to begin our second phase of stakeholder consultations. It's critical to get this legislation right, and we have an incredible lineup of expert partners and stakeholders who will provide input every step of the way. That's why in July we hosted two significant stakeholder consultations, one in Calgary and one in Edmonton. Together with the ministers of Justice and Solicitor General and Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women we met with key stakeholders in domestic violence prevention, and we asked them

to share their views and perspectives. The stakeholder participants included those with experience delivering services to victims and offenders of domestic violence, Alberta police agencies, and the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We also included LGBTQ and multicultural organizations, indigenous communities, and academics. We've included the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner during stakeholder engagement to make sure we understand the privacy implications of the proposed legislation. Likewise, all Alberta police agencies provided written feedback to the questions posed in the consultations.

Specific consideration was also given to concerns about potential liability and resourcing issues. These consultations allowed us to gather a variety of diverse perspectives on things like who can request information, how much information should be shared, and how to protect privacy. The feedback we gathered was helpful to our understanding of what Albertans want to see in this legislation. All of the perspectives shared at the consultation sessions will inform our strategic and regulatory development of this legislation. It is worth mentioning that the purpose of the consultations was not to establish consensus but, rather, to gain as many perspectives as possible to gain a comprehensive view of what this law might look like as we apply it here in Alberta.

If this bill is passed, we will continue our stakeholder engagement at phase 2 early next year. The second phase of stakeholder engagement will include a broader range of participants, including people with lived experience. We want to make sure the law's development takes into consideration the perspectives of those who have experienced domestic abuse, whose lives could have been changed by a law like this. The second phase stakeholder engagement sessions will help inform the law's day-to-day application, and this will include how someone can apply, what situations are eligible for disclosure, whether someone can apply on behalf of another, and more. These kinds of specific details will be built out in the act's regulations.

For now the proposed bill in front of you today is enabling legislation. It will enable the right to ask in Alberta. This will allow people at risk of domestic violence to submit applications for information on an intimate partner's history of domestic violence or related acts, and it will also enable the right to know. This will allow police to proactively disclose relevant information to those at risk of domestic violence without an application.

The act will also prohibit the sharing of information for purposes outside of the act. We know that there will be concerns about what this act would mean for personal privacy and what implications would follow a disclosure, but we are committed to making privacy a priority as much as possible while still protecting the victims of domestic violence. We have been taking privacy matters into consideration every step of the way, and we will continue to do so as this legislation passes. The legislation will work in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which allows for disclosure if another act authorizes it, and we will continue consulting with partners like the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to make sure that our approach takes privacy concerns into account.

We also plan to co-ordinate wraparound supports to go alongside disclosure. We believe that these are necessary for those who receive a disclosure and might not know where to turn for help. These supports will be an important part of the implementation and may include supports for domestic and sexual assault, housing and homelessness, health, mental health, and justice. Further details on supports will be identified in the regulations and plans for implementation once we complete the consultation phase. There are many situations to consider, and we want to continue consulting

with experts to make sure that the regulations are as inclusive as they need to be for the purposes of this act.

I'm very thankful to have support from our ministry co-lead, Justice and Solicitor General, and the teams in Indigenous Relations as well as Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. I would also again like to thank the stakeholders who participated in the first phase of consultations. We're all working together to make sure this legislation will be effective in preventing domestic violence. This legislation will provide us with a new tool to help in preventing domestic violence and making services available for vulnerable Albertans. It's also important that this legislation works not only for Albertans who are at risk but also for the staff who would be involved in implementing and managing the application process.

I'm very proud to support this legislation and its ability to empower Albertans at risk of domestic violence. Madam Speaker, we have the opportunity to save lives, to help make life better for some of our most vulnerable people. This is what our version of Clare's law is all about: giving people the chance, the opportunity, to stay safe; the chance to protect themselves from harm; the chance to choose a different path. We're hopeful, intentional, and determined to reduce the rates of domestic violence in our province, and that is why the support of this House is essential in moving this bill forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Minister of Community and Social Services has moved second reading of Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act. Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill in second reading? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising in the House today to declare my complete and total support for the bill before us. I'm proud to stand with the Minister of Community and Social Services as she endeavours to make Alberta better and safer. Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act, directly addresses an issue that we must bring out of the shadows and into the light. Domestic violence is an issue that is uncomfortable to discuss and difficult to legislate. It is undoubtedly hard for many to speak about and even more challenging to address to its fullest extent as legislators. The effects and impacts of domestic violence and intimate partner violence are often long lasting, intergenerational, and hidden by unjustified shame.

However, Bill 17 provides a direct pathway to addressing this heinous issue through taking common-sense steps towards creating a safer Alberta for all. Modelled after Great Britain's Clare's law, this new piece of legislation will better protect individuals from domestic violence in a way never seen before in this province.

9:20

The original Clare's law is named after Clare Wood, whose life was cut short by a disturbing act of violence inflicted by a partner who had hidden from her a six-year jail term he had served. The term he'd served was for holding a woman captive at knifepoint for 12 hours, an absolutely inexcusable and unjustifiable act. Experiences like these are difficult to recollect but are crucial to ensuring that incidents like these never happen again. This bill will reinforce this government's commitment to creating a province where domestic violence has no home or place to hide. Had Clare Wood been able to know the truth about her partner's violent past, her life could have been saved.

When it comes to domestic violence, one incident is too many. However, we also know that these incidents happen all too frequently throughout our province. We cannot ignore them or their

impacts on families and our communities. As ugly as these crimes are, we must not fail the survivors and victims of these crimes by keeping their stories hidden or downplayed due to their disturbing nature. We know that, on average, a dozen Alberta women are murdered every year in domestic disputes. Each of these individuals harmed is a pillar missing from our communities. They are not just mothers, sisters, and wives; they are educators, artists, entrepreneurs, and so much more. They are their own persons with hopes and dreams and aspirations, which can go unrealized due to heartless violence. Stalking, intimidation, abuse, and other forms of violence are never acceptable and never excusable. These acts cut lives and futures short, before they can even begin.

Our government will set a clear path towards reducing these incidents through measures to increase funding for law enforcement agencies focused on stalking, child exploitation, and intimate partner violence as well as initiatives intended to deal with the unique circumstances of rural women, all introduced through this bill. Further to this, Bill 17 will provide a mechanism for a person at risk or their family members to apply for information regarding an individual's history in domestic disputes. This crucial information can and will save lives, Madam Speaker. This is not an instance of Big Brother government impeding a person's or individual's personal freedoms. This is a mechanism that will be used to prevent abusers from hiding behind smoke, mirrors, and lies. No one should be allowed to continue to hurt others without consequence due to the failings of the law to fully expose their repulsive actions. We cannot stand idly by while harm is being done to one of the most vulnerable sectors of our society.

I am proud of this government for introducing this groundbreaking piece of legislation, and I am firm in my belief of its necessity. We have an obligation as legislators to act in the best interests of all Albertans. This includes Albertans who are the most at risk for this specific kind of violence. Our province is only strong when every person that makes up its population is both free and safe. Through introducing bills such as this one, we are sending a clear message to criminals and perpetrators that their actions are not welcome here. Their behaviour and their violence are not welcome here ever, Madam Speaker. The conversation we are having today is likely difficult for some to listen to, but the weight of this discomfort is important for us all to notice and respect. To those of us who know a survivor or are one ourselves, this government will not fail you, not when bills such as this one are supported, passed, and enforced.

I invite all members of this House to send a resounding message to those who are survivors and in the name of victims such as Clare Wood through unanimously supporting this legislation. We will not allow these crimes to go on without consequence, not here, not now, not ever.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 17? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the minister for moving such an important bill. I know that when I saw this in the platform, I was very happy to see such important and, I think, needed legislation coming forward from our government.

Today I speak to Bill 17, also known as Clare's law. Before I dive into why I support this bill and why it's a much-needed piece of legislation, I want to provide some background as to why we are speaking about it today, not just the reason why we're here, Madam Speaker, but who is the reason why we're here. That person is Clare



Wood. A little forewarning here to those who are in the Chamber and those who are listening online that we will be discussing domestic violence, which might be emotional for some, and if you need to recuse yourself, I would understand why. This story is troubling and disturbing, but it did happen. I think we have to talk about the reality of domestic violence because it is a reality for far too many people in this province.

In 2007 Clare Wood met a man on a dating site, a man whose name I won't say because, quite frankly, it does not deserve to be said. After a year of dating and discovering that her partner had been unfaithful, Clare ended this relationship in 2008. Almost immediately following the breakup, Clare's now ex-boyfriend began harassing and threatening her. Clare went to the police. They took note of her complaints and escorted her back home to make sure she got there safely. The man was twice arrested for harassing Clare and posted bail each time. After one arrest Clare thought the man had changed and that he had become less aggressive since he allegedly stopped doing drugs, and she actually spoke in favour of his release. Two months after he was released, Clare called the police claiming that her ex-boyfriend had sexually assaulted her. Following this, Clare's ex-boyfriend was repeatedly arrested for harassing Clare but was released either on bail or due to insufficient evidence. On February 2, less than a month after Clare reported having been sexually assaulted, Clare was brutally murdered by her ex-boyfriend. Her body wouldn't be found for four days.

What Clare didn't know, Madam Speaker, is that the man she had dated, the man who stalked, harassed, assaulted, and murdered her, had a history of violence, violence against women. He had previously served a six-year prison sentence for holding a woman at knifepoint for 12 hours, but Clare didn't know that. Clare's parents believe that had she known, Clare likely would not have suggested that her abuser be released on bail. Perhaps law enforcement would have done something differently or taken bolder or more decisive action to make sure that Clare's ex couldn't hurt her and ultimately take her life. We are here because of Clare and because of the way that the system failed to protect her. While this incident happened thousands of miles away, we have seen similar examples of systemic shortcomings right here in Canada.

I think of a case in Ontario in September 2015 when Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk, and Nathalie Warmerdam were murdered by a man that all three had dated at different points in their lives. The man in this case had been repeatedly charged for domestic violence, but he had repeatedly managed to evade conviction. This man's history of domestic violence should have been a red flag, and I believe it would have been had these women known their abuser's history. Something should have been done before things escalated to this point, however, the point where three innocent women lost their lives at the hands of a monster.

There are stories that don't make the headlines, stories of women who this bill could also be named after. Many women do not report domestic violence or abusive relationships due to fear of not being believed, lack of enforcement, or even societal stigmatization. This is wrong. As legislators we need to right this wrong. It is incumbent upon us to act when there is an obvious problem ahead of us, Madam Speaker. With such an obvious solution, there is no reasonable decision other than to act, in my opinion, and that's what our government is doing right here with Clare's law. Our government recognizes that domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence is a persistent issue in our province and across the country. Some organizations say that there is an epidemic. When there is an epidemic due to illness or disease, governments are quick to act in order to save lives. It only makes sense that the same approach be applied when it comes to domestic violence.

As a society we don't give enough attention to signs of abuse. In fact, we usually turn a blind eye. The old saying, "What goes on behind closed doors," tragically, holds true. We don't see the same level of action from lawmakers and community organizations targeted at issues like addressing domestic violence, but we do have amazing advocates across the province who do incredible work providing supports to victims of domestic violence, organizations like WIN House here in Edmonton, which has a long history of supporting women fleeing from abuse right here. Closer to home I have the Medicine Hat Women's Shelter, which I was proud to visit just a few short weeks ago. I stand in awe of those who give their time and resources to aid these women and some men, too. The Women's Shelter is an inclusive space that welcomes all who need refuge from abuse and from those who have hurt them and their families. I'm so proud to have them in my community. But these organizations can't end domestic violence alone. More needs to be done to prevent this violence before it happens.

9:30

Another incredible story is the Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society. Their mission is to empower individuals, organizations, and communities to break the cycle of domestic violence. Their director, Andrea Silverstone, has voiced support for Clare's law. Yesterday she said, quote: this law will be an important tool in breaking the cycle of domestic violence here in Alberta; it gives people a greater chance of safety from violence by providing access to resources and supports they might not know about.

Another incredible woman and a strong survivor and actually a friend of mine, Kristin Raworth, said, quote: safety is paramount; this law could save lives; it could make a difference for so many vulnerable people; these people have a right to know what the risks are.

Madam Speaker, domestic violence is cyclical, and the issue isn't new. It's been happening for years. We know that domestic violence impacts everyone. It disproportionately impacts women in heterosexual partnerships, but it also impacts men, who are often left out of the conversation about intimate partner violence. Domestic violence occurs amongst all people, races, religions, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

You know, the start of a relationship is often referred to as a honeymoon phase – you feel like your partner can do no wrong – but as time goes on, things can change, and you might start to see a side of them that you didn't even know existed. This is exactly what happened to Clare Wood. The man she thought she loved had a whole other side to him that she didn't know about until it was far too late. That, Madam Speaker, is why we need this legislation. We need to empower people to take control over these situations by arming them with the knowledge of who their partners are so they can take the necessary steps to protect themselves.

I want to stress, Madam Speaker, that this legislation, while incredibly important, is not a magic bullet when it comes to domestic, family, or gender-based violence. Domestic violence is a deeply complex and convoluted issue, and we understand that there's more that has to be done. There are so many other factors at play that desperately need to be addressed. Our government made addressing sexual, domestic, and gender-based violence a priority during the election and in this House today. It's time for action, and quite frankly the time for action was long ago. We know, now that we're in government, that we are not going to waste the opportunity to implement reasonable, effective policies that will have a real, positive impact.

This bill is a step in the right direction. We know this legislation would have helped Clare. It would have helped thousands of other people, and we know that it'll be instrumental in helping those in

the future to protect themselves. If Clare's law can help one person get out of an abusive situation, if it saves even one life in this province, then that is the reason why I need to support it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 17? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 17, disclosure to protect against domestic violence act, also known as Clare's law. I want to begin by thanking the government, the Minister of Community and Social Services for bringing forward this piece of legislation. Certainly, we support this legislation and this bill and its intentions in principle.

We do know that gender-based violence, domestic violence is an issue in our province, in our country, and, quite frankly, everywhere. If we talk specifically about our province, I think that in Canada Alberta ranks fourth highest when it comes to gender-based violence, domestic violence. The Family Violence Death Review Committee: according to their numbers, from 2008 to 2017 there were 166 incidents where women were murdered by their partners. There is also enough evidence to suggest that, for the most part, in these incidents the perpetrators in general have a history of domestic violence or they have some convictions beforehand. Certainly, having that disclosure available will be a good step in the right direction, and it will make sure that that information is available to individuals about potential dangerous partners.

As was described, this act was introduced in the U.K. after the woman named Clare, and that was discussed in detail, so I won't go into much of that detail. What we see here, as the minister also mentioned, is that it's enabling legislation. More information will fill the regulation after the consultation.

I think what's also important is that whatever we do, we also fund these services, fund these actions so that the police have the resources to provide that service, so that social service agencies, nonprofits, and the organizations who are working in this area have the resources to provide that support. Otherwise, just legislation alone won't cut it.

If I talk about when we were in government, certainly this was a top priority for us as well, and I think I can point to a number of different actions that we took in this regard. I can start with a private member's bill from one of my colleagues, the MLA for Calgary-Bow, Deborah Drever, who brought forward a piece of legislation, the safer spaces legislation, that allowed the victims of domestic violence to break leases in situations where their safety was at risk. The Ministry of Community and Social Services was responsible for the implementation of that legislation and in the first year helped almost 400 Albertans to end their leases. That action certainly was backed with the proper funding, and almost, I think, \$4 million or something was added towards that.

Then we also knew that there was a huge need for an increase in services through women's shelters, so we increased funding by \$15 million. That alone in 2017 helped 17,000 women and 14,000 children across this province. Also, in 2018 nearly \$6 million was provided in emergency financial support for 5,400 Albertans who were fleeing domestic violence and abuse. Then we also introduced changes to our limitation period regime, where the limitation was removed for those who are the survivors of sexual assault so that they can bring forward their claims whenever they feel that they're ready to bring that forward.

There were other things. Like, we also added and supported communities through FCSS programs. Like, in Edmonton and Calgary FCSS may work differently, but in rural Alberta FCSS supports all kinds of grassroots initiatives, which include healthy relationships, which include services to women and children, including services relating to domestic violence and gender-based violence. In four years, through the Ministry of Community and Social Services we also added \$38 million through family and community support programs grants, which were focused on building healthy relationships, which were focused on addressing gender-based violence, which were focused on providing supports to the survivors of domestic violence and family violence. Through that program I think we were able to support many grassroots initiatives everywhere, including in my own riding. We made sure through those grants that these services are available all across Alberta and also in a manner that people can receive those services in a culturally appropriate manner.

9:40

Certainly, when we were in charge, this file was a priority for us. We believe that no one – no one – should ever face violence in any shape, form, or manner, and when that happens, I think it's the obligation of the government, it's our obligation as society to make sure that all the supports are available to them so they can rebuild their lives. That was the reason that we worked with women's shelters and supported their programming. This was the reason that we worked with many community-based organizations and supported their initiatives around gender-based violence, domestic violence, and sexual violence. That was the reason that we worked with the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Services and funded them. They made a case for \$8.1 million, and their entire ask was funded in 2018 to address the wait time issues, to make sure that counselling services are available to the survivors.

All I'm saying is that, yes, it's a good piece of legislation. It's needed, and if it's properly funded, if this legislation is backed with money, the needed funds, the needed resources, that will certainly help us make this province a better place. It will help us address and curb and eliminate domestic violence. But I think it's short on details, and there will be further questions that we can ask and discuss during the committee stage, when the government intends to share further details: what regulations they intend to bring forward, what will be the timelines, and what resources they are committing to support this legislation. Also, I think that earlier the minister mentioned that this legislation will work kind of like the freedom of information and protection act, so we would want more details around that, how it will interact with the FOIP legislation.

If the consultations are ongoing – I think domestic violence, gender-based violence is by no means a partisan issue for any of us on this side of the House – if there is any room for us to provide feedback on those consultations and on the various aspects of this piece of legislation, I think we are here to help make this legislation better, and we are here to work with you on this piece of legislation and the regulations that will follow this to make sure that our province is a safe place for everyone.

Again, thank you to the government. Thank you to the Minister of Community and Social Services for bringing forward this important piece of legislation. I look forward to the further discussions at the different stages of this debate.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 17? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, it's my pleasure to get up today and speak to Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act. I think that somewhat the title of the bill says it all. It's about protecting against domestic violence. When we look at what Bill 17 does, Bill 17 allows people at risk of domestic violence to obtain information on an intimate partner's previous history of domestic violence or other relevant acts. I think it's important to realize just how encompassing that can be and how important that can be to people getting into new relationships and meeting new people and having that opportunity to see if the person that they're with is the person that they believe they are.

Domestic violence disclosure, also known as Clare's law, was first passed in the United Kingdom in response to the death of Clare Wood, who was killed in 2009 by her boyfriend. Her boyfriend had a pre-existing history of violence against women, of which Ms Wood was, of course, unaware. In the first year there were over 4,700 applications under Clare's Law in England and Wales. I guess that nationally this led to nearly 2,000 disclosures. That's 2,000 women that had an opportunity to know what their partner's past history had been, you know, in dealing with the law and, of course, domestic violence.

There are some important facts, and I guess they're somewhat disturbing facts. Half of all young women and girls who were victims of domestic violence homicide in Canada were murdered by someone with a prior conviction. Of course, this is exactly what this legislation is to combat. Most often this conviction was for another violent offence such as sexual or physical assault. Those were young women and girls who, had this legislation been in place, would have had the opportunity to know what their partner had done in the past and would have been able to make a decision based on that information.

Another disturbing fact is that Alberta has the third-highest rate of police-reported intimate partner violence of all the Canadian provinces. It's sad to say that, of course, in Alberta we have this situation, and it's not a good situation. Another disturbing fact: from 2008 to 2017 there were 166 deaths in Alberta due to family violence. That's an alarming statistic and a statistic that just doesn't need to be. There's no reason for these situations. There's no reason for this kind of violence. There's no reason for those young women and girls to have died.

Now, we know Saskatchewan passed a similar law in May 2019, and we know Newfoundland and Labrador are currently developing their version of Clare's law. This bill will allow people at risk of domestic violence to obtain information on an intimate partner's previous history of domestic violence or other relevant acts. This could save lives. This law would allow people at risk to make an informed choice about potentially harmful relationships. This is another tool that could help prevent domestic violence in Alberta and empower people who may be at risk.

This legislation will act as a preventative measure for those at risk. I think that's the important part of it, that this is a preventative measure. People can, again, make informed decisions as they go through their lives. The consultations that the government has undergone here have included privacy considerations, including input from the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Obviously, we've taken privacy matters into consideration every step of the way. We want to make sure that we are safeguarding personal information.

Now, it is a priority for our government to address domestic violence and provide preventative measures where possible.

Domestic violence refers to abuse against spouses and dating partners in current and former relationships. Spouses are current or former legally married, separated, divorced, and common-law partners. Dating relationships involve current or former boyfriends, girlfriends, or other intimate relationships.

**9:50**

Other acts in Alberta have defined relationship violence such as the Protection Against Family Violence Act and the Residential Tenancies Act. We are using these to inform a definition for the Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act. We want to validate a definition with stakeholders to ensure it is the most appropriate one for the purposes of this act. We will continue involving stakeholders to define the regulations for this legislation. It's important to know that the work is ongoing. We need to make sure that we get this right, both to protect the people that it is designed to protect and also to protect the privacy of those people, too.

If we look back to the definition of family violence in the Protection Against Family Violence Act, it does not include dating relationships, which is the primary focus of this proposed legislation. The PAFVA and the disclosure to protect against domestic violence act will be complementary tools to address domestic violence. The disclosure to protect against domestic violence act will help prevent violence within a dating relationship whereas the other will address violence within the context of a family relationship.

When it comes to who can apply for a disclosure, people in defined circumstances who are at risk of domestic violence can apply for disclosure. Further details as to eligibility will be defined in the act's regulations. There are many different situations to consider, and we will consult with stakeholders further on this to make sure that the regulations are as inclusive as needed for the purpose of this act. Applications will be reviewed by a panel to determine whether the risk warrants the disclosure. We have some safeguards and, you know, things that we are working with to make sure that the disclosure is warranted and to make sure that the disclosure, if warranted, happens.

This legislation is being developed with considerations for privacy and the FOIP Act. The legislation will work in accordance with FOIP, which allows for disclosures if another act authorizes it. We have been consulting with the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to make sure our approach to the legislation takes privacy concerns into account. Now, FOIP enables the disclosure of personal information under certain situations. Bill 17 will define the circumstances by which personal information can be disclosed, in this case to prevent domestic violence. The legislation will also prohibit the sharing of any disclosed information and will ensure this information is safeguarded and cannot be used outside of the scope of the act.

When we think about the young lady that is somewhat the namesake of this act, Clare, and when we look at her situation, had she known about her partner's violent past, her murder could have been prevented. It is utterly tragic. Our goal is to prevent similar tragedies here. I think it's sad that we need legislation like this. When I've been to openings of women's shelters or visited women's shelters, I often think about how great that we have those places, places of refuge for people in dire circumstances, but it's even sadder to think that we actually need it in a society that we have right here, a free society where we have laws, where we have protections, yet we still need these safeguards.

But, again, where we need them, we have to have them. That's why we're here today. We're here to make sure that more situations like the one that Clare suffered don't happen and don't happen in

Alberta. We will do our best, as we continue on, to make sure that these acts don't happen and that we protect the vulnerable in our society.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I guess that for anyone who's listening at home, of which I don't have high hopes, I will begin by saying that this is one of the rare things on which we agree. We absolutely think that in principle this bill is an incredibly good thing. But in order to be an incredibly good thing, it needs to work, and I think we're a little bit short on details.

Now, when in government, I endured countless lectures from the opposition on bills with significantly more substance than this in them about the number of things that were going to regulation. I'm not going to give such a lecture because I actually think that it's often the case that things are correctly placed in regulation although I would have liked to have seen just a little bit more of the substance in the bill just because it makes it more difficult to change and it makes it a little bit more transparent for the public. I think that in principle, still, this is an absolutely good thing to move forward on. I think that it's absolutely necessary. Both parties committed to it in the election, one of the very few things, I think, that we agreed on, so that's really good.

I think that in order to work, some of the critical things that this bill needs is to deal with who holds the information and how we ensure it flows between people adequately. It could be the case that the police service holds it. It could be the case that a ministry within the government holds it. In that case, how is information flowing either between police services or, potentially, between provinces in the country? That's one big question.

It's also important to know who it is that can make an application, including who it is that an applicant can give consent to to make an application on their behalf. I think it's also important to understand how risk is being assessed, which, again, will be left to regulations. Because, obviously, someone somewhere is going to be seeing this information, they're going to be making an assessment on whether it ought or ought not be disclosed to the individual in the circumstances. So those details are really, really important. It's also important to talk about who handles the information, who they give it to, how quickly it moves, and what the assessment on how that's done is based on.

Now, all this talk about the movement of information – and this is a bill that primarily talks about the right to know, so primarily what we're talking about is a right to access information. This stuff is important. It doesn't seem like it's important, but in order to achieve the result of actually making women safer, we need to ensure that it happens effectively.

When I first came into government, one of the first reports that landed on my desk was a report having to do with the tragic death of Constable Wynn. He was a police officer who was murdered by a person who was out on bail. The reasons for that were many and complex, but one of the biggest reasons was that the information about the accused individual wasn't placed before the decision-maker. As a result of that information not being placed before the decision-maker, the wrong decision was made because it was made without information, in the absence of information, and that had a tragic result. I don't want to see that happen here. That's why I think it's really important that we're able to move forward with this.

I also think that it's important that we see what kind of supports come with this. You know, obviously, I think that investment in

these sorts of things is very important. When our side came into government, we made a historic investment in domestic violence shelters. I was so proud to see the former Member for Calgary-Bow – not the current member – introduce a bill that helped women break their leases. There's a lot of this that's very, very important. At the end of the day, some of this is going to cost money. What I'm hoping is that we will see in this upcoming budget that someone will be able to point us to directly where that money is because there'll need to be money for supports. There'll need to be money for counselling services. There'll need to be money, potentially, for the implementation of the necessary information systems.

One of the other big things I'd like to see is a timeline on how this is going to be developed. This can't be implemented, it can't be proclaimed, it can't do anything until such time as the regulations come into force, so I'd love to see sort of a working timeline of when we're going to get that information.

**10:00**

That being said, and before anyone thinks that I'm trying to drown the poor minister in questions, there actually are a whole bunch of delightful humans who work in departments, who are listening to this or will later read it, who will write a series of questions down that have come from the opposition, seek out answers to those questions, and then provide the minister with speaking notes for the subsequent reading. They're very hard-working, lovely humans. Hello.

I have a couple of different questions about this. Specifically, there are situations in which police are going to be permitted to disclose when no application is made. I would be interested in how we're sort of going to develop, you know, who's going to make that determination. If there's no application, but there's someone in the police service that for some reason feels they should disclose proactively, the question is: how did they get that information? Is there someone who is sort of constantly gathering that information, or is it based on the knowledge of the individual officers because they know of certain chronic offenders, shall we say, and they, therefore, go out to make that disclosure? I'd be interested to know how that's going to work.

I'd be interested to know the timelines for setting up the disclosure protocol and whether or not we think we're going to be working through, say, something in the ministry, like JOIN, justice online, or whether we're going to be working through CPIC or something in the police services. That would be really interesting to know.

Also of concern, I think, is that there are provisions in here that deal with the fact that an applicant – that's someone who thinks that they may become the victim of domestic violence who's applying to receive this information, probably a woman in most cases – makes an application, and the name of that applicant is privileged. I think that that's important although I'm trying to remember a time in which I've seen legislation just deem something privileged without an analysis occurring, but hopefully that works okay.

That information is privileged, but at the same time there's a provision, section 6, which says that this doesn't detract from anything that the Information and Privacy Commissioner does. One of the things that the Information and Privacy Commissioner can do is essentially disclose what personal information the government has about you, so even though the name of the person who made the application is privileged, I'd like to ensure that the fact of an application is also privileged because potentially, depending on the timing of the application, that individual could figure out who made the application. I'm sure that these things are being considered. I'd just like to see these answers for greater clarity, if you will, for purposes of debate in this House.

I'm a tiny bit concerned. I understand the reasons for the immunity provision. The provision essentially says that if anyone who's sort of operating in this disclosure protocol, whether in government or whether with the police service, if any of those individuals make an error, they're immune from any liability for the consequences of those actions. I get the reasons for this, especially if they're acting in good faith. I'm a tiny bit concerned about the message that that sends in terms of their need to do things carefully, because if someone makes an error here, it could have really grave consequences.

The other provision I had a question about was section 10. Section 10 refers to the nonapplicability of the act. What it says is that, essentially, the Lieutenant Governor in Council, who's cabinet, can designate a person or a class of persons or circumstances in which this act won't apply. I'd be interested to know why that's necessary because nothing springs immediately to mind in terms of a person, a class of people, or circumstances in which this act ought not to apply. So I'd be interested to know what the theory behind that is.

Most of the rest of this actually looks pretty good. Yes. I think most of my questions continue to be around, as I mentioned, in what circumstances an individual can grant consent to a third party to make an application on their behalf. I can think of instances in which this would make sense. Yeah. I'd just be interested to see how that's going to move forward.

I guess with that, I'll probably save the rest of my questions for the next reading of this bill, but I think it's worth summing up by saying again that I applaud the minister for this. I think that this is a great move. I think it's absolutely a necessary move forward.

In order to be in full support, I would like to see a little bit more detail around, specifically, what the timelines are going to be – when they intend to meet, when they think regulations are going to be published, when we're expecting this act to be proclaimed so that it can actually start doing the wonderful work that it's intended to do – and in terms of money for the supports that we'll need to surround this act, and most specifically again in terms of what the information systems are going to look like and how that's going to flow. Of course, the U.K. is a very different circumstance legally with respect to a number of factors than it is here in Canada. My understanding is that Saskatchewan passed legislation similar to this, but that legislation, too, is awaiting regulations. It hasn't been proclaimed yet, so we haven't actually seen what any of those outcomes are or where it is that the rubber meets the road, so to speak.

So with that long and somewhat intense, I suppose, foray into the legislation, I will take my seat and again just thank the minister for bringing this forward. I think this has the potential to be amazing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to Bill 17 in second reading? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to echo what my colleague said. This is encouraging, actually, to see legislation like this, but of course our job as opposition is to make suggestions and ask questions. I certainly have some questions to ask, so I'm going to spend a little bit of time doing that.

I do, first of all, on Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act, understand that it is enabling legislation, but I think that everyone in this House can appreciate the fact that in this short time that we've had this government, there have been a few pieces of legislation that appear to be somewhat enabling because they're short on detail and they're short on

answers to our questions. So, you know, I'm a little bit skeptical that – actually, let me rephrase that. I'm going to be hopeful that all of the questions that we'll ask will be answered fairly so that we can all work together to make sure that this is the best piece of legislation possible, because I don't want this piece of legislation or this work to end up with the kind of questions we see around some of the decisions that the government has made; for example, the piece of legislation called job creation, which is really a large corporate tax credit. You know, we're told to just have faith that it'll all work out, people will benefit, everything will be wonderful, and so far we've not seen that. So, of course, you can understand some of my cynicism.

Anyway, I do have some questions about this legislation. I understand that there'll be another phase of consultation, and of course I'm really curious about who the stakeholders will be and what that consultation will look like. We've seen a few things online that have popped up, where people can weigh in and add their comments. You know, there were face-to-face meetings, which is great, but it would be really great if this government would really look at ensuring that all stakeholders are invited to the table, to maybe make that process in itself a little bit more public so that we can share our ideas about it. There are perhaps groups of people that haven't been included that would bring some really great information or ask some good questions.

You know, some of the documents, one of the supporting documents that I read: obviously, we have questions around the process that will be used once the request is made for things like a risk assessment to determine whose information will be shared and when. Obviously, I have a great deal of faith in our law enforcement and the tools that they use, that they'll make the best informed decisions, but perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea to look at that risk assessment process in itself.

#### 10:10

I think some of the other jurisdictions that the government talked about in some of their supporting documents, you know, really leave a lot of questions about the number of requests that were fulfilled. For example, in Saskatchewan The Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol (Clare's Law) Act: I note here in the report that about 80 applications for information were made each year once the legislation was implemented, with disclosures happening in less than half the cases. I'm assuming that had something to do with their risk assessment process. In British Columbia the bill was only introduced in May 2019. Again, looking farther away, in New Zealand, the information in this document shows about 75 per cent of the cases where the disclosures were approved or passed on.

So, obviously, there are some different tools for assessing. Again, as I said earlier, I have complete faith in Alberta's law enforcement, that the tools that they use are current, up to date, and thorough. But perhaps in an effort to always make things better – that's something that we talk about because things are always changing – maybe there are some things we can add to that.

I know that in a quick meeting that we had yesterday about this, one of the things that I was thinking about was that any time you're adding more responsibilities to any kind of department, you know, it requires humans to do that work. It requires effort, and sadly that effort always translates into resources, so I think it's really important to talk about the workloads that will be impacted by this legislation and the processes that are involved to make this happen. But in a time where municipalities are not sure about funding – well, of course, we are all not sure about funding because we don't have a budget – where smaller municipalities are worried about some of the costs being deferred to them or them having to take on more responsibility to pay for policing, this is a concern for them.

We certainly don't want people that are impacted by this in larger areas, that are better funded, to be more safe than in rural communities because of lack of resources. So I think it's important to talk about that.

The other thing that I did want to talk about is that – and, you know, maybe it's just something to think about. When legislation is crafted, you're always using the most recent examples that we might have or whatever research that we might have, but maybe we can look at: is there a way to expand this even further? I appreciate that this legislation focuses on letting people know in certain cases in intimate relationships – whether they're married, separated, divorced, other kinds of intimate relationships – but in my previous work I worked with people with disabilities, and very often people with profound disabilities are in intimate relationships that you wouldn't think are the typical definition of intimate relationships. Very often they're reliant on just a couple of people to provide the very necessities of life, whether that's feeding them, bathing them, whatever that might be, helping them with banking, all of those things that although it's a work relationship are very similar.

I can tell you that with the hundreds of people that I had overseen their hiring and sometimes firing, we did, you know, request criminal record checks and as much information as we could. We did our best to check references, all of those things, but sometimes the really important information like the information we're talking about isn't easily accessible depending on where they are in the system or where they are through that process. I think, you know, maybe it's worth having the discussion that we expand the definition of intimate relationship and expand the definition of who we can further protect. I just wanted to talk about that a little bit.

But most important – and, again, this is a great step. If I'm sounding awfully negative about this, I don't mean to be. I'm actually trying to make suggestions that would make this better or to add some questions to what I'm sure is a growing list of questions. But the thing that struck me the most is that this legislation is great, but what will always be more important than this is prevention from this ever happening.

I can only use the examples in my constituency and my community of St. Albert. We have some community groups that are funded by FCSS. I'm sure you've heard us talk about this before. One of those groups does some really amazing work. The acronym is SAIF Society, and it stands for Stop Abuse in Families. This group does a number of things. They offer free counselling to people who sometimes are still in those relationships and trying to make a plan to leave. Sometimes people have left, and you can imagine all of the things that go on there. But, more importantly, they go into schools and talk to students and do presentations. They really have a sharp focus on prevention because they understand that that's key. They also do quite a bit of counselling with the children of people that are impacted by domestic violence who have left a violent situation. They really do a lot of support work with those kids, and it's all free. They do this because they understand the cycle of violence, and they understand that without the proper intervention, this problem can manifest itself and most likely will manifest itself in some way.

The reason I'm talking about the SAIF Society is because they are reliant on FCSS funding. I'm sure you know that FCSS funding is an 80-20 split with the province and the municipality. What was interesting, while we were in government, is that every year I think we added an additional \$24 million to that fund, and municipalities started to step up and actually add more funding to those programs as well. Now I am hearing from municipal leaders in my community that they're seriously concerned that this government is going to cut some of that funding. I understand the talking points that the government is saying, that "We have hard choices to make,"

because, you know – I won't even go there. I had a really hard time with watching legislation pass that would give a huge corporate tax break to profitable corporations, and now we're having this discussion that's framed around: you know, we have hard decisions to make. Well, we should have made those hard decisions before. In any case, one of the decisions that I'll be looking at is the FCSS funding.

If we're going to stand up and say, "Hey; we're supporting this legislation because we want people to be safe," and of course we do – of course we do – you have to do the other work, and the other work is prevention and supporting people that are leaving situations, or supporting people so that they can leave situations. Sadly, I'm sure every single one of us in this place knows of somebody who has had to deal with this, who has had to deal with a violent domestic situation, and it's horrible. The impact is so far-reaching and so devastating. The supports have to be there for the people to be able to leave and then pick up the pieces and start life. That means affordable housing. That means safe housing. Believe it or not, that means affordable child care.

When you have, for example, a family that is splitting up or you have a spouse that is leaving, often with the children, often without a lot of notice, often without a lot of money or possessions, they're struggling. They're really struggling and struggling to move. I'm sure some of you have had to recently look for child care. The wait-lists are enormous for child care. It's very sad that I hear people talking about getting on wait-lists for quality child care soon after their baby is born. We've heard again and again that the cost of child care is equivalent to a mortgage. So affordable child care, believe it or not, is an essential support.

#### 10:20

In this document released by the government, they talked about the essential wraparound services. I believe that. I read that and thought that absolutely – absolutely – wraparound services are essential. While this legislation is great – it's great because information is power, and information in the correct hands is power for people to make good decisions for themselves and their families – you have to have the other pieces. You have to have the prevention, and you have to have the follow-up.

Just to summarize, I, like my colleague, have a number of questions about how the next phase will proceed. Who will be invited to those tables to offer suggestions and ideas? Is there a way to expand this scope when we define what an intimate relationship is? In 2019 we have some very complex intimate relationships that perhaps we've overlooked, so let's make sure that we get it right and invite everybody to the table. You know, let's also look at: what are the tools that we're using to make those assessments? Is there a way at all that we can support law enforcement or the officers that will be making the decisions around disclosure? Is there a way to look at assessment tools? Like any tool, sometimes they need to be sharpened. Is there a way that we can look at the assessment to make sure that we've not missed anything?

Most importantly, more important than anything else, is that we need to invest in the wraparound supports for people that are impacted by this kind of violence. We need to invest in prevention, and we need to invest in wraparound supports. Just like the documents says, we need to invest in wraparound supports, and that means housing, that means income support, that means child care, and that means affordable transportation. That means all of those things.

I look forward to seeing this government's budget. I look forward to seeing how much you're going to invest in wraparound supports to support this piece of important legislation that you've brought forward.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 17?

Seeing none, would the hon. minister like to close debate? The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to start off by saying, first of all, that I'm really heartened to see that there is consensus on both sides of the House on the importance of this piece of legislation and the impact it could have on potentially preventing harmful relationships from taking place and actually reducing the rates of domestic violence in our province.

I also want to talk a little bit about some of the horrible statistics that we've shared today. We've talked about the fact that 82 per cent of women are the victims of domestic violence in all police-reported instances, and we've talked about a number of other statistics. I think it's really important that we don't become desensitized to these numbers. As part of my background before I became an MLA and minister, I worked as an economist, so I dealt quite a bit with numbers and data. What does get lost in this whole conversation is that there are so many instances of domestic violence and abusive relationships that never get reported, so those numbers that we talk about, as horrible as they are, don't reflect the true reality and the true picture of what the problem really is within our province.

I also know that there are a number of questions around how this legislation is ultimately going to work. There are questions around who is defined as an applicant. There are questions, obviously, around wraparound supports, risk assessment, and timelines. The intention is to implement this legislation fully with fully fleshed out regulations by the spring of 2020. We are committed to ensuring that we have diverse stakeholder engagement as we move through operationalizing the regulations to make sure that we capture all the voices that need to be at the table and to ensure that as we operationalize the regulations, we've heard all of the different perspectives that need to be heard.

I do appreciate all of the input that I've received so far, particularly in the first stage of stakeholder engagement. I will emphasize again that this is an important commitment from our government, and it's an important promise to Albertans that we are taking action on domestic violence. I personally don't think it's aspirational to say that we should aim to eliminate domestic violence in our province. I do look forward to including everybody's comments and concerns and suggestions in the next phase of consultations as we build out the regulations. As everybody has heard today, this legislation will empower those at risk of domestic violence with the right to know and the right to ask so they can make informed decisions about potentially harmful relationships. We have to work together to get this right, and I'm committed and this government is committed to making sure that we get this legislation right.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move to close today's debate. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a second time]

## Government Motions

### Interprovincial Infrastructure Projects

34. Mrs. Savage moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce all federal political parties that would enable a provincial government to unilaterally prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in the House today in support of this motion to denounce all federal political parties that would enable a provincial government to unilaterally prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines.

While my constituency of Grande Prairie is fortunate to benefit from a diversified economy, the area relies heavily on the oil and gas sector for our viability. We recognize the significance of pipelines and interprovincial trade, co-operation, and economic development. Without co-ordination among provinces Alberta would not have an efficient and effective way to transport our oil and gas to market.

Allowing a province, Madam Speaker, any province, the unilateral decision to prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure – for us here in Alberta at this time in particular, pipelines – would be devastating to our province and also to our country. Our oil and gas industry stands on a remarkable record of clean, ethical, and efficient production. Alberta has long served as the economic engine of Canada, and we must not be crippled economically by unbalanced and ill-informed policies that land-lock our resource-rich province. Alberta and Canada have an abundant endowment of resources, and our nation has built its standard of living on the ethical extraction of these same resources within our provinces. Our national economy is dependent on creating value by delivering key resources to the world. The rising demand globally for fossil fuels is an opportunity for Alberta and for Canada, in fact, to continue to lead the way in ethical and sustainable resource extraction and technological advances, which very much include Alberta oil and gas.

Resource export economies rely on efficient transportation to reach markets between provinces, to the U.S., and overseas. Canada's energy industry has been built on supplying Canadians, Americans, and the overseas markets with reliable, ethical, and affordable energy. We need to continue to build new transportation facilities, pipelines, and other production facilities to serve those markets in an open and competitive way. Madam Speaker, this includes all provinces, not just Alberta. At this time the pipeline issues are paramount to Alberta's economy and growth, but other provinces will foreseeably require interprovincial infrastructure in the future for their growth and development. This goes both ways. We are a federation, a nation, and we must work together and not against ourselves by permitting any province the power to block critical infrastructure projects going forward. Beyond North America the strongest growth market in the world is Asia, where Canada and Alberta can play an important role in providing responsibly developed natural gas and oil.

10:30

We need to be ever vigilant to ensure that we have free trade across provincial and international boundaries and ensure that Albertans and Canadians continue to benefit from our resource base. This is true today, and we have a responsibility to ensure market access and economic viability for future generations as well. This was a significant driver for me personally in my decision to step into the political arena, to ensure that we leave our province in good shape, poised for growth for future generations. I believe we have a responsibility to get our fiscal house in order and not live today by mortgaging the future of our kids and grandkids. That is why I wanted to speak to this motion, Madam Speaker. I believe

that it is incumbent on this Legislature at this very time in history to stand up for Alberta and for Canada.

The egregious bills C-48 and C-69, both imposed by the federal Liberal government, have proven to be devastating to Alberta. Tanker bans and no more pipelines: really? Is that what we have come to in this country? It is a sad day to have to stand up and move what should be a given, that we must support each other in Canada for the greater good of our country and its people. The track record of the federal Liberals under Justin Trudeau shows the flagrant disregard for the men and women who work in oil and gas and for their families and, frankly, for those men and women in Saskatchewan and those men and women in British Columbia. I could go on, Madam Speaker.

The Trudeau Liberals have revealed their lack of leadership in this flagrant disregard and their gross misunderstanding of the reality of oil and gas production in Canada. It is time to relieve them of their duties and send them a clear message, not just to them but to all federal political parties, that we will not stand idly by while we are economically crippled and ideologically attacked. We will get Alberta and Canada back to work. Bill C-69 and Bill C-48 and their ideological underpinning cripple our industry and the free and efficient movement of goods and services across Canada, also with our international trading partners. If provinces continue to have the ability to unilaterally prevent the construction of pipelines, Alberta would be at a standstill. Alberta at a standstill means Canada is in economic crisis.

I have sat in this House, Madam Speaker, and I have heard questions and debate over other policies; for example, pilot projects around \$25-a-day daycare. This sounds helpful for families. I'm not intending to debate the merits of this particular pilot either way, and I don't purport to have studied it enough to have an informed assessment of this pilot. However, I do want to say that we here in Alberta are forced to make challenging decisions regarding our upcoming budget, and we may not have the luxury to offer programs like this or expand them. I'm not sure what will happen in that regard, but while we debate this one policy, it is my understanding that Quebec continues to offer \$7-a-day daycare across the entire province. I just have to wonder: where is the money coming from to support \$7-a-day daycare in Quebec? I find the hypocrisy shocking, that our oil and gas revenues are welcome in other provinces but our pipelines are not.

We need to continue to build these new pipelines in order to bring our oil and gas to the global market. As I already mentioned, our federal Liberal government has taken multiple steps in order to try to prevent this from happening. This Monday is a clear opportunity to make a change, and I implore every Albertan and every Canadian, for that matter, to really consider this when you make your choice at the ballot box. Alberta and Canada need to create the conditions to efficiently and safely build pipelines for the future, LNG plants, and ports to ship to overseas markets. By supplying responsible energy to Asia, Canada can grow its economy, create prosperity in our communities where energy is produced and along transportation routes. This development will also greatly help indigenous communities build the capacity of their youth as valuable contributors to society and as potential owners in Canada's energy production. Delivering responsibly produced Canadian energy to Asia can also help lower global emissions. By displacing coal for electricity in Asia with Alberta's natural gas, we can cut carbon emissions in half and reduce the well-known health hazards that result from coal-fired power production.

I also just want to say that these projects of national importance, infrastructure that's required interprovincially, allow for industry and economic development. I think that sometimes in our communities we forget that when we have economic development,

it benefits everyone. It benefits people outside of that sector. It supports schools, roads, hospitals, bridges, other critical infrastructure that we need to live in a first-world economy, and I think that we need to remember that when we look at this.

I definitely support this motion, and I thank you for your time today, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to speak to this motion. This motion is crucially important for our government and our relationship with our federal counterparts going forward. While our relationship of late with Trudeau's Liberals has been less than ideal, we must strive to condemn any political party allowing provinces, on their own, to prevent infrastructure projects that are of national importance. This could be anything, but the most recent example would be British Columbia filibustering Alberta and the federal government on getting our pipelines through.

This motion is less about preventing provinces from bullying or blockading other provinces and the federation. What this motion is about, though, is ultimately promoting unity and allowing for a cohesive and comprehensive vision of what Canada should be to shine through. The importance of the federal government being able to collaborate in a seamless and constructive manner with the provinces in order to have goals met is very important. It is important for advancing our national interests, ensuring economic success for the country, bringing investor confidence back to Canada, ensuring all provinces are successful and profitable, and generally increasing the quality of life for Canadians.

It is very easy to allow ourselves to be divided by regional differences. All of our provinces have unique flavours, with vastly different economies, whether they be resource based like Alberta or manufacturing based like Ontario. With so many differences, it's no wonder that provinces bicker with themselves and the federal government to further their own interests. We have seen these differences in government.

We've seen these differences manifest with difficulties Alberta has had in getting our oil to market and pipelines built. Some provinces have taken issue with our oil and taken issue with allowing pipelines that transport our oil to be built through their province. They fail to realize, though, that our oil and pipelines do not just benefit Alberta or Ottawa; these infrastructure projects benefit all of Canada. This is because oil constitutes 10 per cent of our total GDP as a country and is used in virtually every industry in some respect.

In addition to the benefit oil gives, it also attracts investor confidence to bring money into the country. This also provides us with greater capacity to provide goods and services to all Canadians.

The reality, Madam Speaker, is that we can accomplish so much more when we work together. A shining example of this, of course, is the Trans-Canada highway. This highway was approved back in 1949 and dubbed highway 1. It required the support and the effort of all provinces to eventually get it built. Construction commenced in 1950, and it was officially opened in 1962. The construction would finally be complete in 1971. This 21-year effort is the greatest highway in all of Canada, running coast-to-coast and being used by millions of Canadians each year. The Trans-Canada highway is a testament to what the provinces can do when they work together with the federal government to accomplish a task for the betterment of this country.

Being part of a federation means working together to ensure all Canadians, regardless of which province or region they hail from,



have a superior quality of life and access to excellent goods and services. As Albertans we feel the sting of this unwillingness to co-operate the most right now with our oil industry, but soon it could be any other province. It could be Quebec with their lumber, agriculture in Saskatchewan, fishing in the Maritimes, mining in the north, steel and auto manufacturing in Ontario. Any of these industries could be next to face blockades similar to what we are facing now.

This is why we are bringing forth this motion. As Albertans we have historically been trendsetters and leaders in Canada's energy business. So, too, must we rise up and be leaders on this front as well. We must show that Alberta, despite our current economic turmoil, is willing to take the first step towards conflict resolution and moving forward together as a cohesive unit to the benefit of all Canadians.

10:40

Albertans have always had the mentality that when the going gets tough, we pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, disregard what makes us different, and knuckle down and get the job done. We are calling on all provinces and the federal government to recognize that this is a necessary step and for them to do the same.

If this motion is undertaken and becomes successful, the potential gain is massive for our country. Bringing investor confidence back would cause the value of our dollar to rise, giving Canadians more international travel and buying power. A well-thought-out and implemented plan would also bring many jobs back not only to Alberta but also to other places where jobs are so sorely needed such as the east coast. Bringing these jobs back would alleviate many of the struggles faced by a great number of Canadians. This would improve the economic well-being of every Canadian, which would be a huge boon to our economy. This would mean Canadians buying homes, investing, starting small businesses. The entrepreneurial spirit that made this province and this country great would flare up once again.

This is why I'm proud to stand and support this motion. The benefit far outweighs the cost. It is time to move past our differences and put our heads together like we did in the past. This motion will foster stronger bonds between the provinces and greater camaraderie with our federal counterparts. Our interprovincial infrastructure must be allowed to go forward. This is how Canada will move forward and compete in our ever-growing, ever-changing marketplace. I would ask that all members, on both sides of the aisle, join me in recognizing the importance of this challenge.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is applicable. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to this motion on the floor, which I believe is a ridiculous political stunt that makes a mockery of this legislation, and I will explain why. The government called us back early because they apparently had such a robust legislative agenda that they couldn't wait to get back to work here, but what we have seen in the past two weeks is that they are filibustering their own bills, filibustering their own motions, and essentially bringing forward legislation that has been unanimously supported by this House. Now, when they have nothing left, what they are doing is bringing this motion to discuss federal politics in this House.

I think that this Thursday, instead of discussing federal politics, I would rather be discussing the budget, that Albertans have been

asking for for a while now, waiting for for a while now. We know that our school boards across this province are waiting for that budget. They don't know what numbers they should be working with. In Calgary there are reports that schools have put students in hallways. There are reports that kids have been put on buses for two hours. Those are the things that Albertans elected us, that Albertans elected me to discuss and represent on their behalf here. Instead, we are using this House again as a launching pad for the Premier's bid into federal politics and the Premier's bid to support his friend.

I think this government has completely lost focus. If, I guess, they want to do federal politics – I think the Premier has campaigned in Ontario – he's more than welcome to go again. But this House, I think, should focus on the needs of Albertans, on the challenges Albertans are facing. In the last two months we have seen that as soon as they became government, they rushed to give a \$4.5 billion handout to big corporations, and Albertans were promised that that will create jobs. In the last two months in the resource sector alone we have lost 14,000 jobs. Albertans are looking for action from this government so they can get back to work, so they can get jobs, and here we are seeing these political stunts in this House, which are wasting our time, this Legislature's time.

In what they have done so far, with that \$4.5 billion handout, even their own front-bench ministers are acknowledging, are saying in the media that they are disappointed that it didn't work the way they wanted it to work, because corporations have used those to buy back their shares, to give more dividends, and they have no plan of investing that into the economy. The reason for that is that they have done nothing on market access. Instead, what was already in place – for instance, oil-by-rail contracts that would have moved 120,000 barrels a day to the market, would have created returns for Albertans, for the companies – they cancelled. As a result, we are seeing a huge job loss in the resource sector. Economic activity in that sector is at its lowest.

Instead of focusing on that and taking steps that are needed and necessary to create jobs, to support that sector, they're wasting this Legislature's time. On the issues that should be, that are debated around and across this province, across this country: instead of participating in that, they're using this Legislature's time to debate federal politics and federal issues while Albertans are losing jobs, while our economy is stuck, while we are not progressing on pipelines.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

While we believe that the federal government has and should retain the authority to build national building projects and be free of any kind of veto, this applies to pipelines running across provinces.

But we have worked on a pipeline, and when we were in government, we went coast to coast to coast to build a case for a pipeline. When we started, only 4 in 10 Canadians were in favour of that project, and as a result of the efforts of the former Premier and now Leader of the Opposition, 7 in 10 Canadians are supporting that project.

Here we are seeing that over time this Legislature's time is being used in political gamesmanship and nothing else. Yesterday in this House we had families from all over Alberta who were concerned about the safety of our roads in this province, survivors of the Humboldt crash. They didn't even listen to them; they ignored their concern and failed to assure them that they will take steps that are needed and necessary. They didn't engage in that debate. Instead of looking at what matters to Albertans, instead of looking at the provincial budget this morning, we are asked to weigh in on federal political issues.

Our schools are still looking for funding certainty. They don't know what numbers they need to work with. They still need to hear whether enrolment growth will be fully funded or not, because the answer we get is that they will either maintain or increase, which doesn't help at all. After an outcry from the opposition and Albertans they're, I guess, barely committing to the child nutrition program. We still don't know anything about class improvement funds. These are the priorities in my riding. These are the issues that I hear when I talk to my constituents. They are concerned about kids getting jammed into classrooms, 40 to 45 kids in one classroom. They're concerned about their bus rides, in particular students with complex needs. Their bus ride times have tripled.

10:50

We have postsecondary students fearing for the tuition to even go double because they want to match the funds collected from students in B.C. and Ontario, where they collect almost 30 per cent as compared to Alberta's 18 per cent. We didn't hear anything on that.

At the same time, we have seniors who are concerned about their out-of-pocket prescription drugs.

Instead of debating those issues, here we are with this motion while Albertans are waiting, and they're stressed about their future. They still have to wait for another week before the budget could be introduced lest it has any adverse impacts, negative impacts on how the federal Conservative campaign goes and how that budget plays out in their campaign, just like how the Ford budget is playing out in the federal campaign.

I think Albertans want this government to focus on their priorities. Albertans want this Legislature's time to be focused on the issues that matter to Albertans, and if we are to govern for Albertans, then we should be debating the budget this morning. This Legislature shouldn't be a playground for partisan games, for this kind of gamesmanship. Instead, we should introduce a budget. If we could, I think we should be debating the budget here this morning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe that the hon. Minister of Energy has my eye.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite has said that he is disappointed that we are bringing a motion. He called it ridiculous, and he called it a political stunt. What is disappointing is their position when we have a jobs crisis in Alberta. We have tens of thousands of people out of work. We have a jobs crisis. It's disappointing to the thousands of men and women that work very hard in our oil and gas sector and are proud of the work that they do. They want to continue working in our oil and gas sector. We are in a jobs crisis.

We don't have capacity to move our product to market. We have had every single pipeline project in the last four years, under a federal Liberal government in Ottawa, either cancelled, vetoed, or stalled, either on this side of the border or that side of the border. Energy East: cancelled. Northern Gateway: vetoed by Justin Trudeau. We've had line 3 stalled. We've had Trans Mountain stalled. We have line 5 in Michigan now under threat. Yet the member opposite said that he's disappointed to see us standing up and fighting for pipelines, fighting for our energy sector.

Mr. Speaker, what we've seen out of Ottawa in the last four years is nothing short of insulting to Albertans. We've seen a federal government, we've seen a Prime Minister who mused about phasing out the oil sands, and he's serious when he talks about

phasing out the oil sands. His method to do it is Bill C-69. We've seen Bill C-48 pass through the House, a tanker ban. We've seen him bring in a carbon tax, a carbon backstop, methane emission regulations that our industry said can't be met, clean fuel standards that add onto the carbon tax. These policies out of Ottawa are harmful to our province.

This election is one of the most important elections in our lifetime, perhaps in this century. This is an existential question for Albertans and for Albertans working in the oil and gas sector, yet the opposite side of the House says that they're disappointed. We were elected on a platform to stand up for our energy sector, to fight for jobs, and to have them say that they're disappointed that we're doing that, exactly that, what we were elected to, shows why they lost. We are going to continue to pursue the priorities that Albertans elected us to do.

Mr. Speaker, during this election we can see that it's a race of three of the federal parties to see who can damage Alberta most, who says that Alberta can be off oil and gas the quickest. We've had the Liberal leader muse about phasing out the oil sands. We've had the federal leader of the NDP promising to help oil sands workers find new jobs. Find new jobs. Our oil and gas workers are proud to work in the oil and gas industry. These are the types of policies that we are going to stand up and fight for. That's the job that Albertans elected us to do, that's the job that we are going to do, and that's what this motion is about.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has said that we should be focusing on priorities like the budget. Well, we are. We're bringing in a budget earlier in our term than the NDP did when they were first elected. Our budget is challenging because we've had pipeline constraints, because we've had harmful policies out of Ottawa. We are dealing with a challenging time for exactly the reasons why we are now standing up and fighting for our energy sector.

Mr. Speaker, while the members opposite can call this a political stunt and say that they're disappointed, we're doing what Albertans elected us to do, and we're going to continue to do that each and every single day.

**The Acting Speaker:** With 50 seconds left under 29(2)(a), I'm not seeing anyone.

Are there any members willing to speak to the motion proper? The hon. Premier has caught my eye.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and debate the following motion before us:

That the Legislative Assembly denounce all federal political parties that would enable a provincial government to unilaterally prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines.

Mr. Speaker, what caused the government to bring this motion before us is a matter of great urgency that touches on our vital economic interests, jobs, the economy, and the future of Alberta. That is the debate being conducted currently in the federal election, where we have, well, not just three but, in fact, four parties – the Liberal Party of Canada, the New Democratic Party, the Green Party, and the Bloc Québécois – all of them openly attacking the industry that has been the lifeblood of Alberta's modern economy and much of Canada's modern prosperity, our responsible energy industry.

One of the ways in which they have launched these attacks, Mr. Speaker, attacks that will be on the ballot next Monday, is by arguing that we should effectively ignore and suspend the letter of the Canadian Constitution in order to allow provincial governments to block federally approved interprovincial infrastructure, including oil and gas pipelines. Should that coalition of parties who want to

shut down our energy industry succeed in so doing, the impact on this province would be long lasting and devastating.

I just heard one of the members of the NDP opposite, who was one of the members of the only one-term government in Alberta electoral history, whose government was defeated in a massive electoral trampling because of their refusal to stand up for and defend this province, talking about the priority of his constituents. Well, we canvassed Albertans last April, Mr. Speaker, and do you know what they said their priority is? Jobs, the economy, and pipelines. That's exactly why we brought this motion here before us. Albertans understand that issues like funding education, health care, and other social programs is largely dependent on our ability to get this economy rolling, and that is in large part dependent on our ability to get pipelines built.

11:00

So the speeches that we've heard from the NDP today demonstrate that they've learned absolutely nothing from the drubbing that was handed to them by Albertans just six months ago, but we haven't forgotten the lesson, Mr. Speaker. Albertans demand leadership that will, without relent and without apology, defend our vital economic interests, and that's why we brought this motion forward, to give Alberta's elected representatives an opportunity to respond to the ongoing campaign of defamation being led by several federal parties that are using this province and its workers as punching bags, convenient political punching bags, in this federal election.

Within minutes of the beginning of the French leaders' debate, the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Speaker, attacked me as the Premier of Alberta for defending the oil and gas industry. He said that Canada needed a federal government that would, to translate into English, stand up to the government of Alberta and the big oil companies. If the Prime Minister and his friend the NDP leader and his friends the Green and Bloc leaders want to stand up to the big oil companies, as they put it, in this province, then when are they going to stop taking the revenues generated by those companies, that have produced, that produce every year tens of billions of dollars of federal revenue which are shared with Canadians across the country through fiscal federalism, through equalization, and other transfers?

No, Mr. Speaker, we are not going, as the NDP advises us – we will not sit here passively, quietly ignoring these political attacks daily in this federal election by people whose charge, whose mandate and responsibility it is to unite the country.

Three days after I had the honour of being sworn in as our Premier, Mr. Speaker, I was meeting with the Prime Minister in his office in Ottawa. The hon. Minister of Energy was in attendance, and she can confirm that I reminded the Prime Minister that the primary responsibility of a Canadian Prime Minister is to ensure, protect, and strengthen national unity. But picking on one province for short-term political gain, defaming the industry that has been the greatest creator of jobs, wealth, opportunity, and prosperity across the country is not national leadership. It does not strengthen but, rather, undermines national unity.

So, no, to the members opposite, we will not be silenced. We will not be silent when this province and its workers are being attacked by national leaders, including their leader, Mr. Singh. The NDP: there's not a separate provincial and federal NDP. They are legally, constitutionally one and the same party. Their leader, Mr. Speaker – it is just shocking that we have members of the Alberta Legislature who are sitting here passively, silently accepting their leader, their party, their candidates, their platform seeking to shut down the largest industry in this province and put hundreds of thousands of Albertans out of work.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon them to stand up and defend their constituents, defend this province, disassociate themselves publicly from the politics of their leader, Mr. Singh, who has said, and I quote: I would not impose a project on any province, and that means there has to be social acceptability with respect to oil pipelines; I mean, it should be the fact that if we want to move forward with a pipeline project, there has to be buy-in from all people involved. He said that the NDP's platform states that pipelines "cannot bypass Quebec's . . . laws and cannot proceed without the agreement of the Government and people of Quebec." When asked recently about what he'll do to TMX in a minority government position, he said the following: I am opposed to the project, the Trans Mountain expansion, absolutely and fully opposed to it; whatever government the people of Canada choose, I will be doing my best to continue to fight this project; I will work with whatever position I'm in to continue to oppose this project. Mr. Speaker, quote, unquote. That is their leader, and not one of them has had the gumption, the courage, or the integrity to stand up to their leader and say that he is wrong.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the first Premier to be defeated in an election after one term, the former Premier, was asked recently by the media who she was supporting in this federal election. She implied that she wasn't going to support the NDP, and then when the media reported that, she came out with an urgent clarification. She said: I'm not not voting for the NDP. Imagine this. They're ashamed to admit – they're ashamed to admit – that they are New Democrats, yet they are also afraid to stand up and denounce the anti-Alberta policies that are dividing our country and seeking to balkanize it.

Now, Mr. Trudeau is not much better, Mr. Speaker. He said, when my friend the Premier of New Brunswick sought to get federal support for an effort to revive the failed Energy East pipeline concept, that would have taken Alberta energy to our east coast, displaced OPEC energy imports, stopped some of those dictator oil tankers from coming into the Bay of Fundy and the Port of Saint John, would have helped us to achieve the dream of energy independence, would have moved hundreds of thousands of barrels of responsibly produced Alberta energy to be upgraded and refined by Canadians on our east coast – it made so much sense that the NDP's close friend and ally Justin Trudeau killed it. He did so by imposing new regulatory mandates to require that TC Energy take account in its application for the pipeline of up- and downstream emissions notionally associated with that pipeline, even though the regulation of the upstream production of energy is, under section 92A(1) of the Constitution, a matter of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, that Prime Minister and that government killed Energy East, so Premier Higgs, desperate to create jobs for his people in New Brunswick, sought federal support. He said: listen, if you guys are willing to buy a pipeline to the west coast in desperation because you drove a global company, Kinder Morgan, out of Canada, how about helping us to get an east coast pipeline built? You know what the Prime Minister's response was? He said to New Brunswickers: you need to get the government of Quebec onside because we will not support Energy East unless the government of Quebec is onside. He handed – he handed – an unconstitutional political veto over that project, that would unite the country and increase its prosperity, to one government.

And, Mr. Speaker, of course, the Green Party leader, who is now vying to support a prospective Trudeau-led coalition, is even more extreme on these matters. She says, "I say to Quebecers: I will stand with you, we will fight against any pipeline project . . . and we will defend Quebec's right to refuse pipelines." What right? We have a quiescent, silent NDP here, refusing not only to defend our

province's vital economic interests against their own party and its allies but refusing to defend the Constitution of Canada.

What are these party leaders – Mr. Trudeau, Mr. Singh, Ms May, and le leader du Bloc Québécois – seeking to do? They are seeking to kill the dream of Canadian Confederation as an economic union. That is what brought the colonies and territories together into one great northern dominion in 1867 and in the decades that followed. It was the audacious dream, which we now easily take for granted, of uniting the northern half of North America into one great union. Mr. Speaker, that is why, from July 1, 1867, this document, the Constitution of Canada, originally the British North America Act, gave to the national government the exclusive authority to regulate projects that run between provinces, because the whole point of Canada was to knock down barriers, was to create unity, to share prosperity, to be partners in that prosperity.

11:10

That is why, in their wisdom, the Canadian founders wrote the following into section 92(10)(a) of the Constitution Act, which says that it will be the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal Parliament over

other Works and Undertakings connecting the Province with any other or others of the Provinces, or extending beyond the Limits of the Province . . .

And further, in section 92(10)(c),

Such Works as, although wholly situate within the Province, are before or after their Execution declared by the Parliament of Canada to be for the general Advantage of Canada or for the Advantage of Two or more of the Provinces.

This says that any project that runs between provinces is the exclusive regulatory jurisdiction of the dominion Parliament and government and that even projects that lie solely within provinces that are deemed to have national economic benefit are the exclusive domain of the federal authority.

Mr. Speaker, in other words, the position – like, this is shocking. This is why we brought this motion forward. I know the NDP doesn't want to talk about it because they cannot bring themselves – they cannot bring themselves – to disagree with their own. That's how socialists always are. They call it solidarity. They are in solidarity with Jagmeet Singh and the NDP in throwing Alberta workers under the bus, just as Justin Trudeau has thrown this province and its workers under his campaign bus and just as Ms May is doing the same thing. If they won't stand up for our workers against these attacks on Alberta's energy sector, then can we please bestir them to stand up for the rule of law and the Canadian Constitution and national unity against these efforts to balkanize this country?

That's what this is, Mr. Speaker. I know that for some of the Laurentian elites, you know, for some of the chattering classes who write columns in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*, for their leader, Mr. Singh – they regard us as little Canadians. They regard us as parochial and too focused on our own economic interests. They could not be more wrong. It is Albertans who are the great champions of national unity and of Confederation, of constitutional federalism as originally conceived by the founders of Canada and not just originally conceived: only six months ago the British Columbia Court of Appeal upheld unanimously, in a five to nothing decision, federal paramountcy over interprovincial pipelines per section 92A of the British North America Act. So this is not some sort of dead letter of the law. This is not some antique constitutional principle. This is live constitutional law that is being ignored.

Mr. Speaker, we need to regain the sense occasionally to have a bit of outrage. We have leaders seeking the highest office in the land who are saying that they will wilfully violate the Constitution

of the land by handing to individual provinces the ability to block interprovincial projects, including oil and gas pipelines, notwithstanding the Constitution's absolutely clear assertion of federal paramountcy on these projects. That's why we're bringing this forward for a vote. We're trying to put on notice those parties. We're trying to gain the public's attention not just here in Alberta but across Canada. This is not just about the hundreds of billions of dollars of wealth and the resources that the left wants us to keep in the ground. We're not just talking about hundreds of thousands of jobs. We're not just talking about our ability to pay for schools and hospitals in Alberta and, through equalization, across the rest of the country. We are talking about whether we will become 10 balkanized little provinces, undermining the dream of Confederation.

No, Mr. Speaker. We Albertans are big Canadians. We are champions of national unity. We are the defenders of the Constitution. We call on all federal parties to stop the Alberta bashing, to stop bashing the women and men who have come here from every corner of the country and every corner of the world to responsibly develop the patrimony of our natural resources. Mr. Speaker, we call on the federal parties to stop the division, to stop separating one province from another, to stop setting up interests against one another, to think big, to dream big, to build big things, yes, including energy pipelines.

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the House that this past summer when I chaired the Western Premiers' Conference here in Edmonton, I was immensely proud to see all seven of those Premiers, four western and three northern Premiers – British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and Yukon – all agree unanimously in our joint communiqué with the principle and the goal of building energy and resource corridors, including, and I quote explicitly, oil and gas pipelines. To take that further, a month later we gathered in Saskatoon at the Council of the Federation with the 10 provincial and three territorial Premiers, and 12 of those heads of government on behalf of their provinces and territories agreed to a language that I proposed in a joint communiqué to support energy and resource corridors, including oil and gas pipelines. One province resiled from the words "oil and gas"; otherwise, unanimous agreement with the concept of energy and resource corridors.

Now, that's really what we're asking for here, Mr. Speaker: respect for the letter of the Constitution so that those corridors can be built, the modern version of the CPR that linked the Dominion together in the 1870s and '80s. What kind of a weird, upside-down, topsy-turvy world do we live in where we have 12 of 13 provincial and territorial governments from all different partisan backgrounds, including the New Democrats in British Columbia, for goodness' sake, and Liberal governments on the east coast, all of these governments aligned, understanding federal paramountcy on interprovincial pipelines, supporting resource and energy corridors, including oil and gas pipelines, 12 of 13 provincial and territorial governments in favour of those job-creating, country-uniting projects, yet we have four of five federal parties against that principle.

Let me just restate that in case it's lost on anyone. We have all but one of the 13 provincial and territorial governments saying that the federal government has unquestioned constitutional responsibility to build these big projects or to see that they are built, but we have four of five federal parties against the federal power, against the Constitution, against our share of prosperity. What is going on in this country, Mr. Speaker, and why is Alberta's NDP silent about this? Well, we all know why. Because – you know what? – they're all just New Democrats. They're in solidarity – they're in solidarity – with the folks trying to land-lock this

province. We will be able to see that depending on how they vote on this motion.

You know, let me go a step further on this. Not only do we have 12 of 13 provincial governments aligned with the spirit of the motion before this House right now – and by the way, I must pause to congratulate the one federal party that is actually seeking to respect and defend the Constitution. I want to thank Mr. Scheer for supporting the principle of energy and resource corridors. Mr. Speaker, the NDP is heckling me. Here we go. Yes, absolutely, here we go. Why don't they stand up and put their partisanship aside and thank – and they're laughing at this – and thank the one party, even if they may not vote Conservative or agree with the Conservatives on other issues. How about they have the integrity and the independence to stand up and at least thank one party for embracing energy and resource corridors, including federal paramountcy on interprovincial pipelines? Why don't they? Because I guess they don't agree with that principle. I just want to thank Mr. Scheer for endorsing a concept embraced by 12 provincial and territorial governments and, I believe, by virtually everyone in Alberta except some folks on the left.

11:20

Mr. Speaker, we are through the looking glass on this. We're living in an Alice-in-Wonderland world right now in our national politics: national leaders arguing against the national Constitution and the national authority, national leaders – okay, with the exception of the Bloc leader – whose responsibility it is to affirm national unity, dividing this country, attacking the province that has been the key engine of prosperity and growth. But at the same time, the same national leaders, four of the five, supporting unilateral federal interference in an area of exclusive provincial constitutional jurisdiction, namely the regulation of upstream production of our resources. What am I talking about? I'm sure the NDP doesn't understand because they never opposed the no more pipelines law, Bill C-69's assertion that they can regulate, that the federal government can Bigfoot into our territory and regulate the production of resources.

I refer the House, Mr. Speaker, to section 92A(1) of the Constitution Act. Allow me to read this into the record:

In each province the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to

- (a) exploration for non-renewable natural resources in the province;
- (b) development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural resources and forestry resources in the province, including laws in relation to the rate of primary production therefrom; and
- (c) development, conservation and management of sites and facilities in the province for the generation and production of electrical energy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the founders of Confederation didn't have the wisdom to include that in 1867 because these issues were not current at the time. What I just read is the single most important constitutional victory and, arguably, political victory of the government of Alberta in the last century. This section – this section – was fought for and won by the late, great Premier Peter Lougheed during the patriation of the Constitution in 1981 because he was never going to again allow a federal government – let's be pointed about this – a Trudeau government, to destroy the economy of this province through a replay of the national energy program.

The consent for Alberta to the Constitution of Canada was conditioned on that section I just read. Had Peter Lougheed not succeeded in getting that written into the Constitution, we never would have signed the Constitution. We still would be outside formal consent for the Constitution as has the province of Quebec

since 1982. What I just read was a conditioned precedent of Alberta's signature to the Constitution Act. This is serious business, Mr. Speaker. This section, which I just read, gives to this Assembly alone, let me re-cite: "In each province the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to . . . exploration for non-renewable natural resources in the province; [and] development, conservation and management of [those resources]."

Mr. Speaker, that is the law of the land, yet we have a federal government that just brought into force a bill they passed through Parliament against the advice of the Senate of Canada, with opposition from, I believe, eight provinces and two territories. They brought in the no more pipelines law, which asserts a federal power to regulate the exploration for nonrenewable natural resources in the province and the development, conservation and management of nonrenewable natural resources and the rate of primary production therefrom.

Mr. Speaker, C-69, the no more pipelines law, a complete *prima facie*, gross violation of the Constitution, not just any provision but the provision of the Constitution which was the condition precedent of Alberta signing on – the federal government is running on that in this campaign, the Trudeau Liberals supported in that bill by the NDP and the Green Party. I must add that on this point at least the Bloc Québécois agrees with us, Mr. Speaker. As Premier François Legault confirmed to me in my meetings with him, Quebec is against this – why? – because they've always been allies of Alberta in defending provincial jurisdiction under the Constitution.

We had, I think, every province supporting us in opposition to Bill C-69, with the exception of British Columbia and I think the exception of Yukon territory. I think the Energy minister will confirm that. Why am I talking about C-69? Mr. Speaker, let me just be clear. You've got four of five federal parties saying that they are giving federal power over pipelines to the provinces and then they are taking provincial power over the upstream regulation of a resource and taking it to the federal government. This is a complete inversion of the Constitution. They are turning the Constitution upside down, on its head.

Now, I guess, I know that to many people constitutional issues are abstractions, but these principles were enshrined here for a reason, Mr. Speaker. The reason: so that we could have a right to develop our resources and have a national government that would get those resources to market. When it comes to the continuing jobs crisis in this province, that's what we need. All we need is that the Constitution be respected, but in order for that to happen, we need federal leadership that will respect the Constitution along with us. That is why we brought forward this motion.

I know the NDP in their hyperpartisanship want to dismiss this. They want to talk about anything else but this. They were quipping earlier that they wanted the budget earlier, even though in 2015 they brought their first budget in later. But you know, Mr. Speaker, consistency has never been an NDP virtue. The real question for them is: why have they been so silent in a federal campaign where this province has become a political punching bag? Why won't they speak up? Why is their own party campaigning actively against this province? Why are they going to go and vote for that party? Why are they going to go and vote for the leader who is now, according to the polls, potentially in contention to be a future Prime Minister, who wants to shut down the energy sector in this province? If we think we have a jobs crisis right now, could you imagine – could you imagine – the crisis in our economy under a federal NDP government? I don't know what's worse, that or a Liberal-NDP-Green coalition.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for them to stand up and defend their constituents and their jobs. It's time for them to stand up and defend national unity and the Constitution of Canada. It's time for them to

stand up and defend the future of this province. Well, this government certainly will, and that is why I commend this motion to the House. I make it clear to the leaders of the federal Liberal, NDP, Green, and Bloc parties that in this province we have a government that will defend our vital economic interest, that will defend our patriotic attachment to Canada, that will advocate for the spirit of Confederation to do and build big things once again. We will defend national prosperity. We will defend the letter of the Constitution of Canada. We will defend national unity against the forces of division and balkanization. That's what Albertans have hired us to do, and that's exactly what we will do.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anybody be wishing to take that opportunity.

Seeing none, I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

11:30

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on the motion up for consideration. I want to be very clear that nobody is asking the Premier to be silent. Nobody. What we are asking for him to do is his job, and a big part of his job is making sure that he puts forward a plan that outlines the budget for the province of Alberta. I know he will say: well, we're going to get it in two days earlier. Well, that's actually a very creative, flexible way of revisiting history, because the history is that his cabinet was sworn in in April. His cabinet has had more than six months to get together and work on their plan for our province. That's actually their job.

For those six months there has been a lot of political grandstanding, a lot of weighing in on federal issues, and a lot of spending time engaging in things that actually aren't getting pipelines built, aren't creating more jobs, and aren't giving clarity to the people of our province about what the plan is for health care and education and social services. Members of the government caucus have said things like: we don't know if we'll be able to afford the luxury of affordable child care. It's problematic to me that six months after the election we're hearing language like that, but we're also not here debating the things that are actually core mandate to the province of Alberta, including the Ministry of Children's Services.

I think that this motion is making a mockery of this place and of our provincial responsibility, Mr. Speaker. I think that this government called us back early, and in this caucus, the NDP, we were very excited to come back early because we have been saying for months that it's really important to get a budget out, and even if you don't have the full and final budget, give the targets to schools so that they know what the funding formula will be. When they know how many kids they have, they can do the math, and they can figure out how much money they're going to have. That didn't happen. We said: bring forward a budget so that we can have that certainty.

As a result, we've seen things like kids in Calgary on buses for their ride times. I met with a family last week. Their ride time had nearly tripled. It was about 20 minutes previously, and it was over an hour. This is students who have severe challenges – severe challenges – that in the morning wake up with such anxiety that they are bent over a bucket in anxiety and stress. These are the things that we are asking the Premier to speak up on, for the Premier and his cabinet to be leaders on. Under provincial jurisdiction is the funding of education. The funding of education is so fundamental to making sure that we have a strong society and a strong economy for this and the next generation as well.

But what we've seen for the last two weeks, as was mentioned by my colleague the Member for Calgary-McCall, is filibustering on government bills, bringing in bills that we obviously are going to unanimously support. I imagine that when members of government caucus were called back, they were also hopeful that we'd be here debating substantive, major pieces of public policy. Instead, we are being asked to stall and delay on the actual substantive work of this Legislature and engage in highly partisan attacks against the Official Opposition, Her Majesty's Official Opposition, in Alberta.

I will tell you that the Premier made it clear in his opening remarks that he wants this debate to be an item of national news, and what I have to say is that I am concerned about his focus on national news over the focus on his core mandate. I'd say that the government is lost at this time. They're not creating jobs as they promised. They brought in a \$4.5 billion, no-jobs corporate handout that has certainly not helped them live up to the mandate that they were actually given by Albertans, and they continue to engage in items of federal interest, which I am also interested in. I am interested in knowing why the Premier, when he was sitting around the cabinet table and representing Alberta in the House of Commons, only said the word "pipeline" twice in the House of Commons. The Premier only said the word "pipeline" twice in the House of Commons. It seems pretty interesting to me that he's taking this opportunity in the middle of a federal election to try to aggrandize what his – to rewrite history, one might say.

He's also cancelled oil by rail. The Energy minister, when introducing this, talked about capacity, and certainly the Energy minister acted in the exact opposite way from what she was espousing by actually reversing those decisions to increase capacity and get to new markets.

Those are some of the main points I wanted to begin with. At this time I will take a moment to introduce an amendment that I have to the motion, please.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Just so that you understand, I'm just taking a quick moment to ensure that it gets a chance to be passed around the House. Then, once that's done, I'll call on you, and you will have the remainder of the time to speak on this amendment.

Thank you, hon. member. To ensure that we can continue moving forward, would you be so kind as to read it into the record, and then please continue with your remarks.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be my honour. I'm moving this amendment on behalf of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, who proposes that we amend Government Motion 34 by adding the words "and that would roll back progress on efforts to reach Canada's current greenhouse gas emissions targets, including the abysmal federal TIER plan" after the words "prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines."

What we're proposing here is not to take anything out of the government motion but to actually add to the government motion. What we are saying is that you can't have one without the other, which I think many have made very clear throughout the debate on this. The economy and pipelines as well as the environment need to go hand in hand. So what we are proposing is the addition of this wording to say that we actually take the environment seriously and that we add to the motion by saying that anything that would roll back progress efforts to reach Canada's current greenhouse gas emission targets, including the abysmal federal TIER plan, would be something that this House would be opposed to.

Those are my remarks with regard to this this morning. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to consider other feedback we have with regard to this amendment and to the main motion.

I want to say again that there is important work of this Assembly. The important work of this Assembly includes bringing forward a provincial budget. That is the direct responsibility of the province. It's actually one of the recommendations that was also made in the MacKinnon report, that there be certainty around budgeting. Certainly, I have to say that the crisis that is being created in our schools and in our hospitals – we're hearing people this morning on the Internet talking about things like radiologists being told that they can't refer patients for more tests at this time because there just isn't enough certainty about the budget and that there's a deep level of concern that the budget isn't sufficient to cover increased testing requirements.

These are the types of things that I really would propose the Premier and his cabinet spend some of their time addressing. I know that he is enjoying the opportunity to engage in federal politics again, which he regularly does, but in this House we also have a responsibility to actually focus on the mandate that was given to the province, and to bring forward a budget, of course, is a big piece of that.

If the Premier was really focused on what I would argue is the most important part of his job, he would take those responsibilities very seriously. So I request that he please stop stalling and playing games and that he introduce the budget already. This is something that many, many Albertans are deeply concerned about the government failing to do, and for good reason.

That is my amendment and my remarks as such. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to this amendment? [interjection] Oh. Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available first. My apologies. Five minutes for questions and comments. I see that the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen to speak.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to take up a lot of time in my response, but I did have a quick thought to share with the Legislature here. The member opposite had said at the beginning of her remarks that she's disappointed we're standing here talking about this motion and not about the core mandates of the government. Well, frankly, if jobs, the economy, and pipelines aren't the core mandate of this government, I don't know what is. I don't.

11:40

We campaigned on this for months, you know, well over a year before the election was officially called. Albertans across the province knew what the core mandate of this government would be if elected: jobs, the economy, pipelines. This motion speaks directly to that, so I find it irritating that the members opposite would suggest that we're wasting our time debating this motion when defending the province is our main priority, and that's what this motion does.

With that, I just had to respond to that ridiculous remark.

**The Acting Speaker:** With three minutes and 50 seconds remaining, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member, for giving me an opportunity to reinforce what I was saying. In terms of jobs, one of the first bills that was brought forward by the government in the spring session, many, many months ago, was around a massive corporate giveaway, what has been referred to as a \$4.5 billion, no-jobs corporate handout. Even

the Minister of Energy has said how disappointed she and many of her colleagues, I imagine, are about the fact that there are no jobs that are coming from this massive, massive giveaway.

I have to say that when the member says that chiming in about trying to argue about certain political parties in this House is core to his mandate, I would say that core to his mandate is actually developing policies that will result in jobs. That is one of the key pieces rather than giving a massive \$4.5 billion, no-jobs corporate handout – say that three times fast – to certain friends and insiders.

I also have to say that when it comes to creating a budget, that is one hundred per cent core to the work of government. Every government should be bringing forward a budget, and they shouldn't have to take more than six months to create one. The government was sworn in in April.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Like you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Oh, thank you for the comment, Government House Leader. The 2015 government was sworn in in May, but I appreciate you chiming in through your heckling. It's always fun when you belittle this side of the House for chiming in during other people's debate, and now the Government House Leader is heckling me, which is, you know, standard practice, I guess.

But let's get back to what's actually core to government's role, and that is actually bringing forward a budget, a budget that gives clarity to hospitals in the Government House Leader's riding about what their future will be. I know that when he was in opposition and I was the minister, I was very pleased to work across party lines to make sure that we fought hard to save hospitals in his own riding. Are those his priorities now that he's sitting around a cabinet table creating a budget?

We've certainly got a lot of health care workers deeply concerned about the future of the health care system in this province, and for good reason. When we hear government members say things like a luxury to have affordable child care that is safe and accessible, what else is next? Is it a luxury to have affordable health care that is universally available? Is this inevitably the next step along this path? Is it a luxury to have a fire department that is available if you're in times of crisis? Is it a luxury to be able to send your kids to postsecondary institutions so that they can achieve the most from our opportunities in this province? Is it a luxury to be able to go to school without having to lean over a bucket in the morning because you're in such agony about your transition time and what your experiencing on that bus when you're a student who has severe special needs? I see the Government House Leader continue to laugh and mock these things that Alberta parents are saying are so important to them to have addressed.

They stall and delay and weigh in on federal matters, Mr. Speaker. Again, I will not apologize for holding the government to account about the government's core work. If they actually wanted to focus on their mandate, one of the things that they would be doing is bringing in a budget.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, on amendment A1 I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen to speak.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to hear the deputy leader of the NDP refer to apologizing. I think that's a good spot to start in regard to the amendment that the NDP has brought forward to a motion brought to this House by the government to stand up for our largest industry and for our province's rights in a nonpartisan way, to defend the people of Alberta, which, I would submit to you, is why everybody got sent

to this House. It does not matter which side of the House they are on.

But if we're talking about apologies, Mr. Speaker, when is the NDP going to apologize for their behaviour in government? Albertans fired them because of their behaviour, because of that hon. member, who was part of a government who oversaw the largest job loss in the history of the province, who sat in this Chamber supporting a Premier who would laugh at Albertans when they would come and talk about rural crime, supported a Premier who called Albertans Chicken Little, told them to take a bus, and belittled them at every point, refused to consult with the agriculture community, creating some of the largest protests in the history of this province on the steps of the Legislature, mocked them even. Even in this Chamber their own Finance minister said to them, to the agriculture community, that they were deliberately trying to hurt their workers.

That side of the House has no business lecturing this side of the House at all. They are the only one-term government in the history of this province, the worst fiscal government in the history of this province, who did more damage to this province in four years than any government combined over the rest of the other 100 years, of the time that Alberta has been here, Mr. Speaker.

They have not apologized for the most important issue, and it's very relevant to their amendment. They have not apologized for their coalition with their close personal friend Justin Trudeau. They sat on this side of the House when they were in government and went out of their way to sell out Albertans over and over and over, to support a Liberal Prime Minister who attacks this province daily, whose stated policies devastate our communities. Not just the stated policies, Mr. Speaker; the policies that he brought forth like Bill C-69: that hon. member, the deputy leader of the NDP, once mocked us in this House because we asked during question period why she wouldn't get on an airplane or why her cabinet had not gotten an airplane down there to go fight about Bill C-69.

It took them hundreds of days even to respond on behalf of the people of Alberta while constituencies like mine were being devastated because of NDP policies that were then being shored up by an NDP government that that hon. member was the Deputy Premier of. Shame on them. On behalf of Albertans, shame on them. You want to talk about apologizing? When are you going to apologize for what you did to this province? They still don't realize what they did to this province. It's one of the problems that they have. They seem to think that they can continue with their bizarre approach to managing our province or to talk about our province in that context and not understand that the reason they got voted out in record numbers, the reason that they are the only one-term government in the history of this province, is because of the things that they did, particularly when it comes to how they interacted with the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

All of the members in the government caucus who had the privilege of serving in the Official Opposition will remember sitting up in the Federal Building preparing for question period on the day that that hon. member, the former Deputy Premier, stood by her leader, who was then the Premier of Alberta, and they had a party and spiked the football on a pipeline, stood outside – it was shocking, Mr. Speaker – and celebrated it as a victory. They never got a pipeline built. They never got a pipeline built. They sold us out to Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberal Party. Over and over they did that.

Now here we are yet again with a simple motion for this House to call upon federal parties to take our constitutional rights as a province seriously, to recognize our right to produce our resources, to recognize the damaging policies of their close personal friend Justin Trudeau and their party.

Mr. Speaker, remember that their provincial party and their federal party are the same. They're the same party. They're connected, the same legally, through the structure. It's been well established in this House. That's how it is, and they have never stood in this House and condemned their leader, their federal leader, who has been very clear that he's anti oil and gas, antipipelines. They want to talk about apologizing. Come to Rocky Mountain House and apologize to the people for the damage that your policies have done. Come to Drayton Valley, that has been devastated under the NDP's watch. Shame on them. Shame on them for bringing this to this House. They still have not stood up. They still have not stood in this place and condemned their leader. Their leader. Their leader. Their party and the federal party are the exact same party legally, structurally, everything. They've never stood up and condemned him.

11:50

What they have done over and over in this House is stood up and defended Justin Trudeau, Mr. Speaker, stood up and defended a Prime Minister who went out of his way to devastate this province. Over and over and over and over they've defended him. Here we are yet again, in the eleventh hour before one of the most important federal elections in the history of this province, and they still cannot stand up for this province. They still choose Justin Trudeau each and every day over top of Albertans. It's shameful. It's shocking. It's why Albertans are so frustrated with the NDP.

It's why the NDP are in Official Opposition and – we'll see what Albertans decide – I suspect, at the next election will go to the third, fourth, and may not even be a party in this place, because you do not get to represent Albertans and then sell them out to the Prime Minister, a federal Prime Minister that does not care about this province. You do not get to say that you get to come here and represent your constituents and then go out of your way to stand side by side with the Prime Minister who would bring in Bill C-69. You do not get to represent Albertans and claim that you stand with Albertans when you will not point out the hypocrisy that Justin Trudeau has brought forth. You will not do it. They will not stand here and condemn him. They went out of their way.

Mr. Speaker, in some ways you see how politically they fought, that was expedient for them when they were in government. It's unfortunate that they chose what they thought would be to their political advantage over top of Albertans, but you can see how they did that.

How they think, now that they're back in the Official Opposition benches, that it makes sense for them to go out of their way to shore up and to tie themselves to a Prime Minister and a federal Liberal Party that are absolutely despised in this province, how they think that the right political strategy and the right decision as the Official Opposition is to stand side by side – side by side – with the Prime Minister that is causing devastation to this province, that is hurting the very people that I represent and that they represent: it is so shocking over the years to watch how the NDP abandoned their own constituents when it comes to this issue, how they've chosen a federal Liberal Prime Minister who is anti our largest industry, who is anti our province, who has done nothing to help the people of this province, how they chose to stand with him instead of the very people that they represent.

As the Premier said earlier, this should not be a partisan issue. This is about Alberta. This Chamber here is Alberta's Chamber. It's our job to represent Albertans, to stand up for Albertans. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the majority of Albertans are absolutely infuriated with what is happening in the federal election. They do not agree with the federal Liberals, they do not agree, certainly, with their leader in the federal NDP, and they certainly don't agree with



the Greens. Will they stand up? No. They stand up and continue their partisan games.

Now they want to add some language to the motion instead of standing up for the industry, and I will encourage all of my colleagues to vote against the amendment, Mr. Speaker, because, again, this is a motion to stand up for our province, to stand up for our constitutional rights. You want to talk about how parties manage climate change policy and policy around greenhouse gas emissions, an important issue, and it's something that we've taken seriously in our platform, and we'll legislate on it shortly.

But when you compare it to the record of the Official Opposition when they were in government, when their own leader, who brought in the largest tax increase in the history of this province at the very time that Albertans, everyday Albertans, were hurting, that ended up, by her own admission on a TV interview at Christmastime – by her own admission, the leader of NDP said that it had no impact on emissions. She could not point to one concrete example of an impact on emissions. That's a fact. At the same time that they made things worse – Mr. Speaker, it is ridiculous. Their leader was on TV – they know it – and could not point to any emission reductions on her signature policy issue.

Do you know what it was, Mr. Speaker? It was those members putting the largest tax increase in the history of this province on the people of Alberta at the very time that they were down, at the very time that they needed the most help. It was all economic pain, no environmental gain, and it lost them the government. It was not even a smart political move. They're in the wilderness of opposition now with no hope of coming back to government any time soon, because you don't treat Albertans like that.

At the same time that they were treating Albertans like that, they would stand in this House, and the hon. deputy leader of the NDP was the main culprit, would stand up as Deputy Premier each and every day and say, "We got two pipelines built" – they didn't, Mr. Speaker – say, "We're with Justin Trudeau to the end: Justin Trudeau, Justin Trudeau, Justin Trudeau." Albertans are not with Justin Trudeau.

This Chamber should make it very, very clear, with a clear statement with this motion, that we stand up for our provincial rights, our constitutional rights, as the Premier did a good job articulating today, that we stand for Albertans, that we stand with our small towns that are struggling to keep people employed, that we stand with the people that have lost their jobs in the oil and gas industry and are struggling to pay their bills.

What message does the opposition send when they continue to do this game? They continue to come here and shore up their friend Justin Trudeau. It's shocking that anybody who says that they represent their constituents in this province could do that with a straight face and then come here and say that they still support Justin Trudeau, that they still support their federal leader. Their federal leader: they can't run away from that. They're the same party, literally the same structural party. It's not just that they're NDP or the same ideological views; they're the same party, the same legal entity. Their leader has travelled across this country attacking pipelines, attacking this province, saying things that are not true about our largest industry. By them standing over and over

with their leader when he does that, they're supporting what he says about the hard-working men and women that work in the oil and gas industry in this province. Even more disturbing, they're supporting an attack on the economic engine not only of this province but of this country, over and over and over, and they can do that with a straight face, Mr. Speaker. I don't think the opposition has any credibility left on this issue at all.

Certainly, Albertans spoke loud and clear. They don't trust them to represent them. They made that very, very clear in the last election in record numbers. Certainly, their actions over and over and over show that they will sell out this province for their close allies in the national landscape. Certainly, they have shown over and over that their priority is not Alberta, that their priority is not Albertans. We've asked them repeatedly to stand up and condemn their leader's actions and words, to condemn their close personal friend and ally Justin Trudeau. I mean, they chose that alliance, not me. They still have not stood in this Chamber and condemned what he's done with our province, condemned the policies he's bringing forward, Mr. Speaker, and, shockingly enough, they're not even condemning now the even more outrageous statements of policy that are coming from a potential coalition between the NDP and the federal Liberals. Not once have they stood up there.

Again, Mr. Speaker, they smile because they know that they side with their ideological NDP friends before they do with their constituents. They side with their ideological friends. I see the hon. deputy House leader. She, by supporting Justin Trudeau, is siding with the federal government, with the federal Liberals and Justin Trudeau over the good people of Edmonton-Manning. It's shocking.

Now they want to talk about the budget. I barely have any time left, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you this. It is ridiculous for the NDP, who has already been called out for the NDP's dishonesty, according to the mayors, has already been called out once for that – I suspect more will come soon – to talk about budgets. Well, let's talk about the NDP. They came into power a few days later than us, in early May 2015, and they tabled their first budget on October 27. This government is getting ready to table their budget on October 24.

The reality is that we inherited a heck of a fiscal mess because they spent their time trying to support Justin Trudeau, Mr. Speaker, and now they're still here trying to do it and trying to make up things, misrepresent facts about the budget. I look forward to seeing the budget next week, the same time as almost any other government in history during the same type of time frame. I can tell you this. The difference between us and them is that we won't side with Justin Trudeau, we won't sell out this province, and we will commit to our promise to be able to get our fiscal house in order.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I strongly suggest that we vote down this amendment.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

Seeing the time, under Standing Order 4(2.1) this House stands adjourned until 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:59 a.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, October 17, 2019

Day 29

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
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Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 17, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good afternoon, hon. members. Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Persons Day

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, tomorrow, October 18, 2019, marks 90 years since the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council recognized women as persons under the law, a major victory for women's rights. While women had attained the right to vote in 1918 and were able to sit in the House of Commons as Members of Parliament, until 1929 they were denied appointment to Canada's Senate. The Persons Case ruling was the culmination of a legal challenge launched in 1927 by five women living in Alberta, now known as the Famous Five. I am proud to say that three of these women, these strong women – Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, and Nellie McClung – were elected hon. members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in years prior to this monumental case. I am also honoured to acknowledge that for the first time in this Legislature we have an all-female table and a woman as chair.

Please join me, and thank you for joining me, in recognizing Persons Day and the significance of this landmark decision which redefined the legal status of women, promising greater equality for women upheld by legislative rights and protections.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, as some of you are aware, this week the Legislative Assembly has been hosting a delegation of MPs from Kenya's National Assembly's Select Committee on Members Services & Facilities. I am honoured to welcome our guests seated in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon. Please rise as I call your name: Hon. Ezekiel Machogu Ombaki, Hon. Janet Nangabo Wanyama, Hon. Christopher Aseka Wangaya, Hon. Elisha Ochieng Odhiambo, Hon. Florence Chepngetich Koskey, Hon. Thuddeus Kithua Nzambia, Hon. Charity Kathambi Chepkwony, and the principal clerk assistant, Mr. John N. Mutega. Welcome, and thank you for joining us here today.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have a school group joining us here today from the constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. Please join me in a warm welcome to the grade 6 students from Mundare school. Welcome.

Hon. members, it's an honour to introduce to you guests seated in the Speaker's gallery from my own constituency of Airdrie-East – some might say the best – Erin and Corey Kope. Welcome.

And today in the galleries are guests of the Minister of Health, five hard-working LPNs: Valerie Paice, Linda Stanger, Jeanne Weis, Tamara Richter, and Teresa Bateman. Welcome.

Also in the galleries this afternoon are guests of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and 2019 4-H Alberta Premier's award recipient and grade 11 student at Spruce Grove Composite high school, Ms Amanda Hardman. She is joined by her parents, Barb and Keith; her grandmother Frieda Hardman; 4-H club leader Pamela Fald; and 4-H regional specialist Stacy Murray. Welcome.

We also have guests of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Welcome to Erin Armstrong and Blair and Eli Armstrong Tucker. Welcome.

### Introduction of Visitors

(continued)

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have one more guest to introduce: the director of committees, Florence Atenyo-Abonyo, from the Kenya delegation. My apologies.

### Members' Statements

#### Climate Change Strategy

**Member Irwin:** A few weeks ago I joined thousands of others gathered here in Amiskwaciwâskahikan on Treaty 6 territory to demand climate action. It was a moving experience; thousands marching down Jasper Ave. and then gathering right here outside the Legislature.

One of the most beautiful moments was when my constituent seven-year-old Blair Armstrong Tucker stood at the mic. Blair spoke about climate change and how important it is that everyone act, and not just young people. Kids like Blair are worried about this climate crisis and are demanding that governments act, but in the absence of adult leadership and responsiveness, young people are taking this on.

We see the local work of Blair and climate justice activists. We see indigenous water warrior Autumn Peltier. We see Greta Thunberg mobilizing millions to demand action. Greta is in Alberta now, and she'll be in Edmonton tomorrow.

The kids are leading while many adults do very little. Some minimize the importance of the issue, some full out deny the existence of climate change and that we are indeed facing a climate crisis, and some even mock. While this government might not care to act on climate change, might not think the demands of thousands of Albertans matter, might not believe that young people should have a voice, young people like Blair and Greta are going to keep pushing on this issue.

As Greta said:

Adults keep saying that "we owe it to the young people to give them hope." But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you act.

I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if [your] house is on fire. Because it is.

I couldn't be prouder of Blair and of every young person out there who's standing bravely to say that we cannot wait to act on climate change. We're running out of time. Our houses are on fire. So let's have the maturity and the foresight to think about the world we're leaving for our kids' kids because I know Blair does, and if a seven-year-old gets it, what's stopping the rest of us?

### Official Opposition Members' Remarks

**Ms Glasgo:** Madam Speaker, on Tuesday in question period the Leader of the Opposition said with gusto that "[the Premier] can deny it all he wants, but the communities of Brooks, Wetaskiwin, Barrhead, Sundre, Foothills, [and] Lacombe all oppose his plan."

Well, Madam Speaker, I've spent my summer and time away from the Assembly consulting with stakeholders in my constituency, including the city of Brooks. The Leader of the Opposition's comments just didn't sit right with me, so I reached out to Mr. Morishita, mayor of Brooks, myself. Turns out, what has become a pattern of behaviour from that side of the House was on full display

on Tuesday. This pattern of misleading Albertans, putting words in their mouth that they, in fact, did not say, has happened before.

I'm reminded of a time when the former Minister of Environment and Parks told this House about her extensive consultation on the Bighorn. Not to worry, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre corrected that. I'm reminded of a time when the former Minister of Children's Services, who was rightly fired by Albertans in April, stated that the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police did not support Serenity's law. Well, thank goodness, that mistruth was corrected by the Member for Calgary-West and the rest of the UCP caucus when they voted for this bill despite a lack of support from the NDP. And I'm reminded of just a few short months ago when the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was corrected in this House after sharing a conversation that she claims to have had with the superintendent of the Canadian Rockies school board. This was corrected by my friend from Banff-Kananaskis. You see, Madam Speaker, there's a distinct pattern here. The opposition misrepresents the facts, and this side of the House corrects them.

In a letter to the Leader of the Opposition the mayors of Brooks, Lacombe, and Wetaskiwin have urged the former Premier to take the time to rise above all that and correct those statements here. The mayor said:

Misrepresenting our views for political theatre is dishonest and unbecoming for any member of the provincial legislative assembly.

We respectfully ask you to correct your statement[s] for the record immediately.

If the Leader of the Opposition and her colleagues would like to have their record be one of deceit and an adversarial approach to humble Albertans, I have one request: leave my constituents out of it.

1:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Kashmir

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to condemn the ongoing violations of human rights in Kashmir, which is a huge cause for concern for many Albertans in my riding and across this province. Kashmir is the subject of dispute between three nuclear-armed countries, but primarily this issue is about the future of 15 million people of Kashmir and their rights.

Last year the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported on human rights violations in Kashmir and directed the UN Human Rights Council to conduct an independent international investigation. A year later things have gotten worse. On August 5, 2019, Prime Minister Modi's government revoked the special status of Kashmir under article 370 of the Constitution and proceeded with the creation of two union territories under direct Indian rule. These actions were preceded by the imposition of Governor's rule, the suspension of state Assembly, massive troop deployments, an unprecedented lockdown, mass arrests, suspension of telephone and Internet services, and media blackouts. Since then the situation remains tense.

Madam Speaker, I recognize this issue is complex and politically charged. However, at stake here are basic human dignity and rights, democracy, people's right to self-determination, and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of conscience, belief, opinion, and expression, all of which are values that we all share and cherish. On behalf of all those concerned, I call on the Premier to use his decades-long friendship with PM Modi to influence this situation and urge the federal government to ensure basic human rights are protected for the people of Kashmir.

To all my colleagues in the House: let's speak up for those who have no voice and for all who are dispossessed of their rights both at home and abroad. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

### Persons Day

**Mrs. Allard:** Well, thank you. As previously mentioned, Friday, October 18 is Persons Day. This date marks 90 years since the Canadian government included women in the legal definition of persons. Five bold women, the Famous Five from Alberta – Judge Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise Crummy McKinney, and Irene Parlby – took the Canadian government to court so that they could be considered legal persons.

In 1929 the Privy Council of England, which at the time was Canada's highest court, ruled in favour of these women in a constitutional ruling that decided that women were, in fact, persons. This meant that women could no longer be denied rights based on a narrow interpretation of the law, and also ruled that women were eligible for appointment to the Senate. In 1867, the year of our Confederation, Canadian women were not allowed to hold nor run for public office, but on February 15, 1930, Cairine Wilson was sworn in as Canada's first female Senator, and in 2000 Justice Beverley McLachlin was appointed Canada's first Chief Justice.

It's hard to believe that 90 years ago tomorrow I and the other 25 women in this Chamber would not have been considered legal persons. The Persons Case was monumental, but it didn't fix everything for women. Until 1951 indigenous women were not allowed to vote without giving up the rights allotted to them under the Indian Act. The right to live free of discrimination on the basis of one's sex was not in Canada's constitution until 1981.

We've certainly come very far in the last 90 years, but there is still much that needs to be done. We need to keep working to see more women in traditionally male-dominated fields like STEM, the skilled trades, and, of course, politics. I am confident that we can address these issues, Madam Speaker, because there are thousands of women across this province who are working to get things done, 26 of whom are in this House.

To all the women listening, let's empower each other as we move forward. We owe it to the Famous Five and the female advocates who came after them to do just that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

### MCSnet Rural Internet Provider

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Alberta was built on innovation, the entrepreneurial spirit. Some of the most successful Alberta companies started from humble beginnings. Recently I attended a reception in St. Paul for a local company whose success quite literally started with a Pringles can.

Company owner, Leo VanBrabant, was experimenting with wireless delivery to augment his company's digital service line. Their very first successful connection, using homemade antennas, was a few kilometres at their home place. I quote: we'd make our own antennas, like using a Pringles can, put some little washers to create the exact frequency that we would need.

That was the beginning. Today the company Leo started in 1995, MCSnet, is Alberta's largest fixed wireless Internet provider, and it's based in St. Paul. MCSnet currently provides wireless and fibre optic services to 24,000 customers in an area that stretches from Westlock to Paradise Hill, Saskatchewan, as well as from Wandering

River in the north to Provost in the south, covering my entire constituency and beyond. They recently connected the entire community of Cherry Grove to fibre optics. They pride themselves on providing equal or better service than what is available in cities like Edmonton or Calgary.

Leo is now retired, and the company is run by his three sons and two sons-in-law. They strive to continue to seek out the latest innovation to bring more reliable service to more people and places in rural Alberta. MCSnet is proudly a family-owned and -operated high-speed Internet provider. MCSnet is a true Alberta success story that is serving the needs of rural Alberta, 24,000 customers, and it all started with a Pringles can. That is true innovation. That's what Alberta is all about.

### Climate Change and Poverty

**Ms Renaud:** Today over 2 billion people, one-third of the global population, are poor or near poor. Two billion people world-wide have limited access to basics such as nutrition, water, shelter, and clothing as well as education, health care, sanitation, and electricity. The poor face consistent and growing threats to their livelihoods and survival because of climate change. Pope Francis summed up these alarming facts when he declared a global climate emergency and warned that failure to take urgent action would be a brutal act of injustice towards the poor and future generations.

To be clear, the last five years have been the hottest in the modern record. The consequences we see around the world today, that are attested to by the record temperatures, are rapidly melting ice caps, unprecedented wildfires, frequent so-called thousand-year floods, as well as devastating and more frequent hurricanes. Millions face malnutrition due to devastating drought, and many more will have to choose between starvation and migration.

The billions who live in poverty around the world, including right here at home in Alberta, will be disproportionately impacted by climate change. People who live in poverty are more susceptible to climate change. They're less resilient because they don't have the resources to mitigate the losses associated with climate change. They're more vulnerable to natural disasters that bring disease, crop failure, spikes in food prices, death, and disability. It's happening all around us. It's been suggested that we are witnessing the beginning of a climate change apartheid.

Madam Speaker, today is the day that we mark the United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. We don't need fancy speeches; we need action. We need leadership, not self-serving partisan politics. We cannot tolerate austerity budgets and a \$4.5 billion giveaway that is delaying essential services that are vital to the people of this province. We need investment in poverty eradication. We need action now.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

### Oil and Gas Transportation

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Are the federal Trudeau Liberals actually targeting and purposely trying to harm Alberta? To answer this question, let's look at a piece of legislation the Liberals passed which I believe is aimed directly at Alberta. Bill C-48, the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act, is specifically targeted to damage our economy. The bill only relates to the transportation of Alberta oil sands products off the northern coast of B.C. It outlaws the ability of Alberta oil sands producers and builders to create infrastructure to a deepwater port in northern B.C., which obstructs our ability to achieve market access.

TMX is a line being built into Burnaby, which is a shallow water port. The product headed down that line is not destined for evolving

markets in Asia but, rather, the heavy refineries in San Francisco. While TMX provides much-needed takeaway capacity and will help alleviate our buildup of storage, it is not meant for full market access. TMX is absolutely vital to Alberta's economy, and the urgency of that line cannot be overstated.

But the Liberals have purposely targeted Alberta and limited our ability to grow our economy by stalling market access and then passing Bill C-48, ensuring that we can never gain market access to Asia. It is unclear to me why the Liberals have targeted our beloved province. Our products are the most ethically produced, with world-leading environmental standards, and Alberta companies are instrumental partners in helping to solve the climate change challenge.

To answer the question I opened with, the evidence is clear: Alberta is a target. I ask all members of this House to stand and fight against these nonsense policies that are driving Alberta towards a deep anger and frustration.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

### Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Premier ran a campaign full of big talk, claiming that his plan to hand \$4.5 billion to big corporations would fix the economy. But there are no new jobs, and there are actually 15,000 fewer jobs in the oil and gas sector. Things aren't getting better in the patch. Rig counts show an average of 91 active rigs per week, down more than a third from this time last year. Last year Alberta was bouncing back. How long before this Premier realizes that his corporate gift hasn't increased drilling and hasn't created jobs? When will he wake up?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Madam Speaker, there were 5,000 net new jobs created in September of this year. But let's talk about last year, because it was one of the five years of economic decline under the NDP's administration. Five years of economic stagnation and decline, the longest and deepest recession in our history since the Great Depression under the NDP's policies: obviously, no government is going to be able to turn around that disaster overnight, but we're doing everything we can. What's their alternative? To raise taxes on job creators, raise taxes on employers, and drive us to \$100 billion in reckless debt, mortgaging our future. Thank goodness Albertans fired them last April.

**Ms Hoffman:** Madam Speaker, the fact is that we are in one of the worst drilling seasons in Alberta's history. According to the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors each active rig represents about 145 direct and indirect jobs. This means that rigs are supporting around 7,000 fewer workers than they were this time last year: 7,000 fewer workers, Premier. His answer this summer was to kill shipping by rail and extend curtailment in the patch. Can the jobs-economy-and-pipelines Premier please explain why he's failing on all three fronts?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, I'm glad that the NDP has finally discovered the Alberta jobs crisis over which they presided and which they deepened in their four years in office. The reality is that we're doing everything that we can, pushing against the NDP, their Liberal allies in Ottawa, who cheered on the killing of the Northern Gateway and the Energy East pipelines, who bungled Trans Mountain, who surrendered to a veto on Keystone XL. If any one of those projects had been built – I'll tell you what – we'd be in a

totally different situation. Instead, we saw tens of billions of dollars of investment flee from our energy sector to that of the United States. We're working hard to bring it back.

**Ms Hoffman:** Madam Speaker, this Premier's \$4.5 billion no-jobs corporate handout is a failure, and he's looking to anyone to blame but himself. He promised increased rig activity, and in his platform he had some ideas that might have worked. But what did he do instead? Before the drilling season he rushed to give a \$4.5 billion corporate handout to shareholders, not to actually help people in the patch. Why did the Premier put shareholders and dividends ahead of Alberta workers?

**Mr. Kenney:** First of all, Madam Speaker, the \$4.5 billion figure is a complete figment of the NDP's imagination, as will be evident from the Finance minister's budget. Secondly, virtually every reputable economist in this province who has commented on it says that it will be a significant creator of employment and will help over time to actually increase government revenues. Professor Mintz says: 55,000 new jobs, Professor Dahlby says: 58,000 new jobs. But what's the NDP's alternative? Increase the tax burden on employers, killing jobs. They did it; that's why they were fired in April of this year.

**The Deputy Speaker:** On her second set of questions, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, none of those people are in the Premier's cabinet, and his own Energy minister has admitted that the \$4.5 billion corporate handout has not worked to create one single job.

#### UCP Fundraising Breakfast Budget 2019 Consultation

**Ms Hoffman:** It turns out that the talk of the UCP – when it comes to the upcoming budget, you only have to have a chequebook at hand. If you want to talk about the budget, that's the only way you're going to get face time with this Finance minister, because he's holding a UCP fundraiser breakfast for \$125 per plate the day after the budget is dropped. To the Minister of Finance: how do you justify forcing people to pay for face time with you on your terrible budget planning?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Madam Speaker, Albertans are not going to take any lectures from the acting leader of the NDP over the question of creating jobs. Professor Trevor Tombe said that the job-creation tax cut that we've introduced does indeed translate into about a 50,000 increase in employment. He further said that the long-run effect of the corporate tax cut, from 12 to 8 per cent, will be an increase in wages of 1.6 per cent. Professor Mintz said: a 55,000-person increase in employment. They were the all-time champions in killing jobs. This government is focused without relent on creating jobs in Alberta.

**Ms Hoffman:** The government's so-called budget consultation extended to two telephone town halls and one one-question survey posted online for about two weeks. On one of those telephone town halls the Minister of Finance told a nonprofit worker from Grande Prairie who was worried about the future of CIP and CFEP that Albertans will have to, quote, do more with less. To the Premier: does it really take thousands of dollars in UCP donations to get nonprofits a seat at the table? Is that the only way they can get face time and actually have a little respect from this government?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, we had the biggest public consultation possible last April, when a record number of Albertans voted on competing plans for the future, and they embraced a plan to create jobs, grow our economy, and bring our province's finances back to balance, partly through fiscal restraint and the job-creation tax cut. I understand why the NDP is angry with Albertans for firing them after four years, but we will keep the commitment that we made to Albertans in that historic consultation.

**Ms Hoffman:** Except that this Premier is failing on all three fronts. The fundraiser that's coming up is yet another example of the UCP using their government positions and titles to raise money for their party. This is something that the Government House Leader has twice promised in this House that the UCP would stop doing. To the Premier: will you immediately direct your Finance minister to cancel his fundraiser, something that your House leader actually committed to, and instead start consulting with Albertans on the budget? And I don't mean just the ones who have big chequebooks and credit limits on their credit cards.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Speaker, it is just outrageous to watch the NDP continue with these bizarre tactics. It's not working for them. Let's be clear. The hon. Finance minister is attending a breakfast that is a tradition, that Finance ministers have attended for a long time, is my understanding. What I have committed to in this House is that we would not use our official Executive Council titles in fundraising letters and those types of things. My understanding is that that's not happening. That's what we committed to. But what's really important is that the NDP continue to just want to distract from their dismal record when it comes to the way that they managed the finances of this province. I will take our current Finance minister over their former Finance minister, who was the worst Finance minister in the history of this province, any day. I think Albertans agree with us, which is why they sent us here to govern this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Climate Change Strategy Advocacy for Alberta's Energy Industry

**Ms Hoffman:** Tomorrow, Albertans will once again gather in numbers outside of this Legislature, and their message is on climate change. It's clear that it exists, that it's an existential threat to our way of life. Climate change is real. Our way of life in Alberta is threatened if we don't address it, even if the UCP wishes it wasn't. The gathering will be addressed by Greta Thunberg, whose advocacy for young people commands the world's attention. The eyes of the world will be on our Legislature tomorrow. To the Premier: will you be on the steps?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Speaker, as I've said several times in this House, we will not be lectured by the NDP when it comes to managing emissions and climate change in this province. The NDP brought in the largest tax increase in the history of the province and then admitted – their own leader admitted – that it had no impact on emissions and just punished Albertans. It was all economic pain and no environmental gain. On this side of the House Alberta's government is actually focused on solutions. I'm looking forward to tabling TIER in this very place in the coming weeks, which is an innovative solution moving forward on a very important file. The difference between us and the NDP is that we focus on solutions. The NDP focuses on taxing Albertans.

**Ms Hoffman:** If there were ever an opportunity to make a case for Alberta energy, this is it. Tomorrow people will be gathering in person, on social media, through traditional media in huge numbers. Greta Thunberg is giving the Premier an unprecedented opportunity to speak up for Albertans and for the energy industry to a global audience. The lights are on, the cameras are rolling. Why is the Premier running away?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, I'm very, very happy to inform the acting leader of the NDP that I will be, tomorrow, attending the opening of a new natural gas pipeline that will allow the displacement of coal-fired power with natural gas power, one of the practical measures that Albertans are taking to reduce emissions.

Instead of calling for the shutdown of the entire modern economy, instead of calling for all the airplanes to stop flying and all the cars to stop driving, instead of calling on Albertans to stop heating their homes in the winter, we instead will be leading with practical measures to reduce emissions while continuing to fuel our future prosperity.

2:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Last question, Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** It's a sad sight to see a Premier with no courage for his convictions. The Premier is spending \$30 million of taxpayer money on a dimly lit war room, where lobbyists can hide behind keyboards and post memes to one another. Meanwhile in the real world nobody in the UCP government is making a case for Alberta energy and Alberta's right to export our products. The Premier only talks to people who agree with him. Will the Premier please take this free opportunity – it's not \$30 million. You don't need to hire failed UCP candidates to do this work for you. The Premier can show up or send one of the members of his front bench to actually have a conversation with Greta. Why won't he do it?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, on the subject of standing up for Alberta . . . [interjections] You know, heckling doesn't do it, but I'll tell you what does: leadership. That's why this government is challenging today in the Legislature through a motion the federal NDP, the Liberals, the Greens, and the Bloc Québécois, all of whom are using Alberta as a punching bag in this campaign, who are trying to defame this province and the people who work in our energy industry, who are trying to land-lock our energy, including the NDP, the very NDP to which they belong. Will they have the courage to stand up and denounce the NDP and their friend Justin Trudeau for throwing Alberta under their campaign bus in this federal campaign?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Following their meeting with the Transportation minister yesterday, one of our visiting Broncos family members, Shauna Nordstrom, wrote the minister a letter. I hope he's ready, and I hope he answers today some of her questions. Ms Nordstrom asks, quote, minister, since when do trucking companies get to put the price on my son's life and the lives of our loved ones driving on our roads? Minister, will you answer Shauna?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was pleased to meet with several of the Humboldt families yesterday, and they were very articulate and said how they feel. Of course, we all should

respect the pain that they've gone through. We are going to increase safety on the roads. We are going to put the MELT standard in place. The previous government failed to do that. We will not fail. We will get that job done.

**Member Loyola:** Ms Nordstrom writes, quote, our Premier was on Global News and said that he heard from a number of trucking companies who said the new training regulations will be too expensive. If money is the only barrier, well, we have a big problem. You are our government. You have the power to make this right, and you said that you would work with us, end quote. Minister, will you put aside your cost arguments and commit to road safety as your first priority?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Madam Speaker, the hon. member got part of it right. I did say that I would work with the members. I actually spoke with one of their representatives about an hour ago. Madam Speaker, the fact is that cost has never been an excuse. It's a complaint that some people have, but it won't be accepted by our government as an excuse. What we actually need to do is talk about more cost-effective ways of delivering the MELT training; that's mandatory entry-level training, a higher level safety standard for truck drivers. We will have that engagement and that conversation with the industry so that we can help them deliver this important and urgent safety standard.

**Member Loyola:** Ms Shauna Nordstrom continues in her letter and writes, quote, I heard a lot of words yesterday. It's time for action. Please stand up and be clear on what you are doing, end quote. The question speaks for itself, minister. Will you stand up and be clear on exactly what you are going to do?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've been clear. I've been clear in this House. MELT is here to stay. It's a United States requirement for truckers to go into the States from Alberta or anyplace else in Canada. It's a safety enhancement that we agree with and are implementing, regardless of the fact that the folks across the aisle had at least the second half of the four years to implement it and didn't do so. Even though they put roadblocks in front of us to get it done, we will get past those roadblocks, and we will implement MELT. It's happening right now.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

### Clare's Law

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Alberta has the third-highest level of reported domestic and intimate partner violence. We also know that a dozen Alberta women are killed every year in domestic disputes. It is clear that Alberta needs a concrete pathway to addressing and lessening these incidents. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: can you please tell us what the government is doing to help survivors of domestic violence?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. Madam Speaker, Alberta has one of the highest rates of domestic violence amongst Canadian provinces. In fact, Alberta had 10,000 victims of domestic violence in 2017 alone. Disturbing as this number is, it is understated because it does not account for those instances of domestic violence that were never reported. Yesterday we introduced legislation that will give people the ability to request information about an intimate partner's violent past.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that we can rely on the experiences of other jurisdictions in establishing this legislation and that the United Kingdom has already had years to track the success of this legislation and given that Saskatchewan values this legislation to the extent of introduction and further given the importance of enacting best practices when such practices can save lives, can the minister tell us how implementing similar legislation will protect individuals from domestic violence?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Madam Speaker, in Canada half of all young women and girls who were victims of domestic violence homicide were murdered by someone with a prior conviction. These are needless deaths. Allowing people at risk of domestic violence to obtain information on a romantic partner's previous history of domestic violence or other relevant acts will save lives. This legislation will give people the right to know whether their intimate partner has a violent past.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you. Given that Saskatchewan introduced its version of Clare's law this spring but has yet to proclaim it and further given the urgent nature of implementing legislation that addresses issues as critically important as combatting future incidents of domestic violence and protecting those vulnerable to these incidents, can the minister tell us when we can expect domestic violence disclosure legislation to be fully implemented and in place here at home?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Madam Speaker, we introduced this legislation in the House yesterday and passed second reading today. Should the proposed bill pass third reading, we will then begin the second phase of stakeholder engagement to help inform the laws and regulations for day-to-day application. We anticipate that this legislation will be implemented by spring of 2020.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

#### **Automobile Insurance Rate Cap**

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. One late Friday this summer this UCP government quietly announced it was going to remove the 5 per cent insurance rate cap that our government brought in, just another example of this government favouring big companies over working Albertans who rely on their vehicles to get to and from their job. To the Minister of Finance: can you please inform this House who you consulted with before making this decision and how much it costs to get a seat at the table?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. We inherited, quite frankly, a mess in terms of automobile insurance from the previous government, who didn't have the courage to deal with it but instead put a Band-Aid on it, that ultimately failed, led to actually increased insurance rates for many motorists, and was incredibly unsustainable into the future. We will deal with this problem. We will be consulting with consumers and industry stakeholders to provide a long-term, sustainable solution for Albertans.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much. Unfortunately, consumers needed an answer yesterday, not in the future.

Now, given that Albertans immediately began feeling the pinch after this government pandered to insurance lobbyists and given that Edmonton resident A.D. Langvand wrote a letter to the editor describing how, as a result of this decision, his insurance premiums rose over \$400 despite never having an accident in 21 years, to the minister: can you explain to Mr. Langvand and countless others who are now paying more to keep their cars on the road exactly how this price gouging fits into your plan for Albertans?

**2:10**

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would like to remind all members of the use of preambles after Question 4. The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again we recognize that there are challenges with automobile insurance in Alberta, and we're committed to fixing the problem that the previous government didn't have the courage to take on. The Band-Aid solution that they put on, which was a rate cap, was not sustainable in the long term, was ultimately going to result in less choice for consumers, and had the effect of actually creating a situation where some automobile insurers couldn't even find the insurance they needed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental. The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that this government rushed to hand over \$4.5 billion to large corporations and given that they've also clearly chosen to side with insurance lobbyists over working people and given that Mr. Langvand and others deserve to know who drove the minister to make this heartless decision, to the minister: will you commit to tabling a list in this House of all of the meetings where government members have discussed the insurance file?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, this government will take on this file. We will consult with consumers, industry stakeholders to develop an automobile insurance plan that will be sustainable and that will provide consumers with low-cost, affordable, effective insurance in the long term. What the members opposite left us was an unworkable mess. They simply didn't have the courage to fix it. We will fix it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

#### **Postsecondary Education Policies**

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Advanced Education if he plans to take the advice of the Premier's so-called blue-ribbon panel report and double tuition costs for Alberta's postsecondary students. Albertans definitely did not hear a clear answer from the minister, but what I did hear was so ridiculous that I want to give him a chance to clear it up. Is the minister really claiming that Alberta's postsecondary students actually want to pay more tuition?

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Madam Speaker, I don't know how clear I can be. The NDP is continuing to engage in their usual tactics of fearmongering and misrepresenting the facts. No one is talking about doubling tuition. Our priority is to help ensure that students

have accessible options which is why in September we created a new scholarship to give students who excel in the trades more opportunities to access postsecondary education.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, given that the member yesterday said that he met with students who wanted their tuition to increase – I found that difficult to believe, but he didn't clear that up – and given that this government is not even creating jobs for young people – in fact, we've lost 27,000 jobs since this government came to power – and given that this is all hurting the ability for our students to earn a postsecondary education, to the minister: just how much is every student in this province going to end up having to pay to help to cover for your bogus \$4.5 billion handout to big corporations?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Madam Speaker, how rich, really, it is to hear that member and the members from that side of the aisle talk about jobs, when they presided over the largest decrease in jobs and the largest economic decline in the history of this province. I won't and we won't be taking any lessons from them. One of the concerns that our students have is high-paying jobs at the conclusion of their programs. We are committed, of course, to jobs, economy, and pipelines to help ensure that they have rewarding careers at the end of their studies.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given that firing postsecondary board members and replacing them with UCP boosters and donors does nothing to help student learning and given that this same minister has even gone so far as to defend anti-Semitic speech on our campuses, my final question to the minister is very simple: don't you think that our students and staff deserve better?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Madam Speaker, I agree that our students do deserve better and do need better, and we will create a stronger and more sustainable postsecondary system, not the one that we inherited from the NDP, a rudderless system that is driving costs through the roof, that is not increasing accessibility. We are going to fix it. Our students do deserve better, and they will get better.

#### **Immigrants' and Minorities' Access to Health Care**

**Mr. Amery:** Madam Speaker, new immigrants often have distinct needs and face linguistic and cultural barriers when it comes to accessing health care. Our government has committed to supporting new Albertans through initiatives like the fairness for newcomers plan, but we also need to ensure that Albertans are properly supported when it comes to accessing health care in this province. Can the Minister of Health please explain what he is doing to support new Albertans and their health care needs as they integrate into our province?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes. Alberta has a proud history of welcoming newcomers from around the world. We're not just open for business; we're open to people looking to build a better life for themselves and for their families. New Albertans do face barriers of language and barriers of culture in accessing health care, and they need supports. The health system does put a lot of effort into helping them. For example, AHS works with primary care networks, social outreach agencies, and organizations which serve immigrants and refugees.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the minister for that reply. Given that Albertans deserve quality, accessible health care and given that this includes all new Albertans who have immigrated here, can the minister please elaborate on whether there are specific outreach services that target newcomers and other minority communities aimed at reducing barriers to accessing these services?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Yes, Madam Speaker. There is a wide range of programs. To take one example, there is a multicultural health program at the Grey Nuns hospital here in Edmonton. The program connects patients with services, including community multicultural brokers. That helps them access services like the healthy beginnings program for new mothers. It's not about the services themselves; it's about navigating, or wayfinding, and it's about knowing that the services are there and how to find them in a new place and in a new language.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you once again, Madam Speaker. Given that one of the most substantial challenges that immigrants face when coming to Canada is learning the English language and given that there is a demonstrated need for linguistically diverse health services in this province and given that many of these newcomers settle in my constituency of Calgary-Cross and in other areas nearby, can the minister please explain what information is available on how to access health services and other health-related information in languages other than English?

**Mr. Shandro:** Yes. There are currently, and we're going to provide more, Madam Speaker. AHS provides 24/7 interpretation and translation services for more than 300 languages free of charge. You can call Health Link and say the language you speak and be connected with an interpreter. At a facility as well, you can walk into any of them and do the same: say the language, and you'll be put in touch with their interpretation service. They're also planning at AHS to increase their advertising in ethnic media and are finalizing a project which will make content on their website available in eight languages.

#### **High School Construction Capital Plan for Calgary**

**Mr. Sabir:** Residents of northeast Calgary have been desperate for a high school for years, and the previous Conservative government talked about building the school for years but never did. In 2018 our government committed funds to see this project through, but now parents are worried that the UCP will not follow through on this project. To the Minister of Infrastructure: can you please inform this House on whether you are funding this high school? Yes or no?

**Mr. McIver:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member, I think, knows very well that the budget is set to be released next week, so the hon. member knows very well that that answer can't be given in this House today because it would break the rules. I know that it's not his first term in office, so perhaps by his third term he won't ask questions that he knows very well cannot possibly be answered.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the UCP platform committed to build new schools and given that this government rushed to cut a \$4.5 billion cheque to big corporations before the budget but have not said a



word about building the new school, to the minister: can you confirm that north Calgary will get a high school? Yes or no?

2:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We were elected with a very clear mandate to continue to build schools across this province. While we are still finalizing our capital plan for the upcoming year, I can assure this House that we intend to honour that platform commitment. More details will be brought forward when we table the budget on October 24.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that this government's promises in this very House about education funding have not been followed through on and given that this government is warning of capital spending reductions of 15 to 20 per cent and given that these types of cuts are being signalled by the Premier's so-called blue-ribbon report, to the minister, right here for all the Calgary MLAs with constituents depending on the construction of this high school: will it be built? Yes or no?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I believe I've just answered the question, that we are continuing. We're committed to building schools. We will continue to build schools. Wait till we announce on October 24 what our budget is. More details to come.

### Beekeeping Industry Concerns

**Mr. Dach:** Madam Speaker, 2019 has been a difficult year for Alberta's honey producers. Alberta's beekeepers are reporting a higher than average winter die-off as a result of the weather this season. Many producers are concerned about a partial to total failure of the 2019 honey crop and the imminent collapse of some beekeeper operations. During a meeting on October 7, the Alberta Beekeepers Commission proposed that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry find money within the government of Alberta or apply to utilize federal ag recovery framework disaster funding to provide a financial lifeline to industry members struggling to survive. To the minister: which of these steps have you taken to provide urgent financial support to Alberta's important honey industry?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreesen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. I do appreciate that. The beekeepers, yes, have met with me. Like many farm groups, they are having a very difficult year. Their crops are low. It was a very cold, rainy year this year. We are working with AFSC and with the existing suite of programs that they have available to make sure that funding will be available to them.

Thank you.

**Mr. Dach:** Madam Speaker, given that honeybees play a major role not only in our honey industry but also a critical role in our \$25 billion canola industry and given that the canola industry relies on managed bee pollination to pollinate the 20 million acres of canola grown annually in Canada and given that, also, \$4.5 billion was handed out already by this government to profitable corporations yet nothing to rural Alberta beekeepers and honey producers, Minister, were you aware of the critical role that bees play in our agricultural sector, and if you were, why haven't you stepped in to

help this industry already to save thousands of Alberta jobs and our most important crop?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreesen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I am aware of the importance of pollinators. As a farmer that's grown billions of plants, I do understand that they are very important, and it's something that this government is proud of, all the hard work that farmers do. We will stand with them every step along the way throughout this very difficult harvest.

There is one more question coming, I do know, and I hope that the member opposite can answer who he'll be voting for on Monday in the upcoming federal election.

**Mr. Dach:** Madam Speaker, given that there is an average 20 per cent sustainable winter die-off of honeybees and given that this year the Alberta Beekeepers Commission has estimated that the winter die-off was 28.8 per cent, much higher than the 20 per cent sustainable average, and given that we are forced to rely on foreign suppliers, primarily New Zealand and Australia, to replenish our hives each year with bees bred there, is the minister planning to develop a provincial honeybee breeding program so that Alberta can reproduce our own local bee populations and even export them, creating jobs and growing our economy? If not, why not?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreesen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's unfortunate that the member opposite didn't take the opportunity to answer that question that I had for him.

We are looking at red tape reduction measures on bees coming over from British Columbia and their blueberry harvest to be able to come over to Alberta at different times throughout the year. We are looking at other bees that come across the borders to make sure that we can actually have a stronger beehive population here in Alberta. Pollinators are very important to the agriculture sector, and it's something that this side, the government, with all our rural caucus members, understands the importance of. And we're making sure that our farmers are well taken care of by a government that supports them every step along the way.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

### Natural Gas Export

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the majority of us in this room are aware, carbon taxes serve only to reduce the competitive edge by taxing industry when our neighbours to the south are not. With the abundant supply of natural gas we have here in our province, we instead have an opportunity to have a real and positive impact on global emissions while improving our economy at the same time. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas: does our government have plans to increase the amount of natural gas that our province can export in order to aid in reducing global emissions?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I can answer that question with a resounding yes. As you are aware, Albertans have an overwhelming hangover from four years of NDP mismanagement, and nobody has experienced a bigger headache than the natural gas

producers. I'm proud to tell you that Alberta's natural gas producers provide clean, affordable energy, and we're working hard to get it to international markets.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Associate Minister.

Given that Canada contributes only 1.6 per cent to global emissions compared to countries like China, that contributes over 25 per cent, and given that countries like China who currently use coal to generate power are looking to switch to natural gas fired electricity plants to produce up to 60 per cent fewer emissions and given that ramping up exports of natural gas would greatly benefit not only the global environment but our economy as well, can the associate minister tell this House: how soon can we be ready to ship natural gas to those international markets?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Albertans elected our government on an overwhelming mandate of jobs, the economy, the pipeline, and nothing fits that bill better than LNG. Canada's most promising opportunity right now is with LNG Canada, and we expect to start shipping natural gas in 2025.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Associate Minister.

Given that liquefying natural gas is the best way to ship this product and given that Alberta has an abundance of this product to liquefy and given the number of constituents in my area as well as Albertans across the province who have experience in the energy industry and who are ready to get to work, can the associate minister please tell us and this House what opportunities Alberta has to get our LNG to other jurisdictions?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Woodfibre LNG, LNG Canada, and Énergie Saguenay are just three of the opportunities that we're currently looking at. But I'm pleased to say that Pieridae announced today that it just recently secured a 20-year deal to provide Alberta natural gas to its Goldboro LNG facility in Nova Scotia. Alberta is going to be the primary supplier of that natural gas, and it's going to result in hundreds of jobs for Albertans.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In 2013 the city of Calgary was devastated by flooding. Sadly, lives were lost, and it caused \$6 billion worth of damage across southern Alberta. Flooding disrupted businesses, damaged critical infrastructure, and had a devastating emotional toll. We must protect Calgary for the future, but this Premier has continued to waver on his support for the Springbank dam. To the Premier: will you finish construction on the Springbank dam, or will this be another victim of your \$4.5 billion giveaway?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The reality is that we've been clear as a government with the process that we're working through when it comes to the Springbank dam. Let me also be clear that we recognize the importance of flood mitigation when it comes to the city of Calgary. With that said, what the hon. member is not bothering to bring up in this House, I do notice, is that she was part of a cabinet that we now know messed up in submitting documents associated with the Springbank dam, which is causing all sorts of trouble within the process and lands with them. Like so many other things, this government is focused now on, unfortunately, having to clean up the NDP mess, but Albertans can rest assured that they sent the right government here to get the job done, and we will clean up the NDP's mess.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that recently the Premier stated that this government will look at other flood protection options for Calgary but that any other option will take longer to build and will cost more money and given that this government rushed to support corporations with a handout that ultimately failed to create any jobs and has largely waffled on flood protection in Calgary, to the Premier: what is the timeline for the Springbank dam, and are you fully committed to this project?

2:30

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Speaker, I'm sure the hon. member – or at least I would hope – would know, as an MLA for Calgary and a former minister of the Crown inside the province of Alberta, that there are going to need to be multiple mechanisms for flood mitigation to the city of Calgary. There are multiple rivers that flow into the city of Calgary. Bringing up the need to have a discussion for different avenues for flood mitigation for Calgary shouldn't be something that shocks people. It would be completely appropriate. But, again, I do notice that the hon. member has dodged the question. The reason that you're in any sort of delay in a conversation around Springbank is because their government messed up on filing paperwork and presenting paperwork. Again, the NDP created a mess. It's their fault. We'll get it fixed.

**Ms Ganley:** The members across the way can misrepresent the past, but they're in government now, so given that the Premier campaigned on jobs, economy, pipelines and given that Calgary's downtown core is critical to the economic hub of the province and given that the Premier's corporate handout isn't creating any jobs and any future flooding in downtown Calgary would only serve to make the economic woes of this province worse, to the Premier: can you actually tell the people living and working in downtown Calgary what you have done to protect their homes and places of work? It's been six months. Can you please tell them where you stand?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Madam Speaker, I think what the Premier would probably say in regard to that question is the following: Albertans fixed the problem. They replaced the NDP with the United Conservative Party, who's now Alberta's government. We are waiting on approval processes and other conversations that involve the federal government. Again, the NDP government that was just in office six months ago messed up filing the paperwork. That's what that comes down to. The hon. member: can she explain why she was part of a cabinet on an issue that was so important to the city that she represents and that cabinet couldn't even get paperwork filed properly? Calgarians spoke loud and clear on election day on who they trust to get this fixed, and they sent us here to do it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

### Social Assistance Program Funding

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last week we learned from Statistics Canada that close to 12,000 Albertans had simply given up looking for work. Now new data from the University of Calgary shows that the number of households on social assistance in Alberta is rising. We are now approaching the highest use of social assistance programs in the country. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: what support will you be providing for social assistance in the coming budget, or did all the money go to big corporations?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you for that question, Madam Speaker. Right now the best thing we could do in terms of providing more social assistance to vulnerable Albertans is to make sure that we revitalize our economy. We need to make sure that we put into place a very favourable fiscal environment that brings investment back into this province so we can get more people back to work. More people we have back to work means more revenue that we have to actually fund these very vital social services.

**Ms Renaud:** Wow.

Given that this minister's own government reimposed school fees, slashed funding for nonprofits, cancelled the insurance rate cap, and has left many small businesses fearing what's next as they work to impose the recommendations from their harmful MacKinnon report, to the minister: will you be ready, and will you provide more funding for these assistance programs instead of continuing to leach money from household budgets?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Madam Speaker, I've said many times in this House that this government and my ministry is committed to serving the vulnerable in our province and those who are most in need. Absolutely, we will take care of those folks who need social assistance, but again, I think our focus has to be in understanding that we need to make sure that we create jobs. Creating jobs for vulnerable Albertans will help them get back to work, will offer them equality of opportunity, and a life of dignity.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that the previous government's record is clear – we cut child poverty in half – is this minister prepared to be the one who pushes thousands of children back into poverty?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Madam Speaker, on the contrary. This government is working very, very hard to make sure that those in need are taken care of. We are taking a crossministerial approach, working with our departments to make sure that those who are most in need are getting the supports that they need and deserve.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Investment in Alberta

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The last four years have seen Canada's competitiveness take a serious hit. Inflows of foreign direct investment into Canada fell by two-thirds from 2015 to 2017, particularly due to investors fleeing Canada's uncertain and hostile regulatory environment created by the former NDP government and the federal Liberals working in tandem. Can the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism please update this

House on what our government is doing to assure foreign investors that Alberta is a safe place to invest?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Our government is taking action to show investors that Alberta has the best conditions for investment and job creation. First we repealed the job-killing carbon tax, and then we introduced our job-creation tax cut, which will give Alberta the lowest taxes on job creators in Canada. The Premier also recently travelled to the United States, where he met with investors that have more than \$9 trillion under management.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Canada is a major producer of oil and gas globally and given increased competitiveness in the international markets, can the Minister of Energy please explain how our government will help create an economic environment whereby Alberta energy producers can remain competitive and attract additional investment?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you for that question. It's been no secret for the past several years that our oil and gas sector has been struggling under the previous NDP government. To attract investment in the oil and gas sector, we need a competitive tax structure, we need a competitive regulatory environment, and we need a stable political environment with political leaders in Ottawa who support, not attack, our oil and gas sector. Just this morning, Madam Speaker, our government tabled Motion 34 to stand up to political attacks coming from Ottawa from three parties: from the NDP, from the Liberals, and from the Green Party. I would ask the members on the other side of the House which of those three parties they're voting for on Monday.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that the investment in Alberta's oil sands declined under the previous NDP government and given that significant efforts are being made to signal to investors that Alberta is open for business, can the Minister of Energy please update the House on the progress this government has made to let investors know that they are again welcome in Alberta?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since taking government, our government has been relentless in standing up for pipelines, fighting for jobs and the economy. As my hon. colleague noted, we have taken steps to lower the corporate tax rate to remain competitive with other jurisdictions. We're speeding up the regulatory approval process and cutting red tape to remain competitive with other jurisdictions, and we have launched constitutional challenges against a hostile federal government under Justin Trudeau to defend our exclusive constitutional jurisdiction. We're taking steps to defend our energy sector, unlike the previous government.

### Educational Curriculum Review and Student Assessment

**Mr. Toor:** Madam Speaker, parents in my riding have voiced overwhelming support for grade 3 standardized testing. They provide

accountability for teachers and are an objective measure of success for students and parents. Our government has committed to reintroducing these tests. Can the Minister of Education inform this House as to whether students will write grade 3 provincial achievement tests this year?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and the hon. member for the question. We were elected with a clear mandate to reform student assessment and improve outcomes for our students. To provide stability to the education system, we are making SLAs optional this year, and we will make them mandatory for the 2020-21 school year. New grade 3 assessments will be developed alongside the new curriculum.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that our government has committed to revamping the school curriculum to ensure that Alberta students have foundational skills and given that over the summer the Minister of Education appointed a panel to review this curriculum, can the minister please outline what opportunities parents and educators will have to voice their opinions to this panel?

2:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you again for the question. We value and appreciate the role parents play as the primary educators of their children. The Curriculum Advisory Panel has been tasked with drafting an updated ministerial order on student learning, which will modernize and strengthen how students are taught in the classroom. The panel's work will serve as the starting point for public engagement in the new year. I would heavily encourage any parent to participate in that engagement once it happens.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Alberta has slipped dramatically in its ranking in a world-wide program for international student assessment scores and given that students need to be prepared with English and math skills that will prepare more students to compete for jobs in STEM fields, can the minister inform this House why our government is committed to ensuring that students learn foundational skills in subjects like math and English?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you again for the question. Education is a key priority for our government, and literacy and numeracy lay at the foundation for lifelong learning and future success. The new curriculum will have a stronger focus on literacy and numeracy, and student assessment tools will clearly identify how students are doing, not only for their teachers but for the student and for the parents as well.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, you have less than 30 seconds to do what you need to do before we carry on.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Louise McKinney Exhibit in Claresholm

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm proud to rise today in this House to share with you about the opening of a new museum exhibit at the Claresholm & District Museum. Claresholm resident Louise Crummy McKinney made history when in 1917 she was elected as the first woman to a Legislature in the entire British Empire, barely a year after women earned the right to vote and run for office. While historically significant in her own right, most of us are more familiar with her in her association as part of the Famous Five, five women who went all the way to the Privy Council in Britain to establish the right of women to be recognized as persons and therefore be eligible to be appointed as Senators.

The British North America Act of 1867, which set out the powers and responsibilities of the provincial and federal governments in Canada, stipulated that only a man could be a person and only qualified persons could be appointed to the Canadian Senate. The Persons Case began in 1927 when Judge Emily Murphy, an Edmonton women's court magistrate, upon realizing that women were not fully defined as persons under the BNA Act, called on four other Albertan women for support. McKinney was the second woman asked to sign Murphy's petition for personhood. The others, who would make up the Famous Five, include Irene Parlbay, Henrietta Muir Edwards, and Nellie McClung.

On October 18, 1929, came the landmark decision that Canadian women were indeed persons and eligible for appointment to the Senate and participation in the final stages of enacting federal laws in Canada. On July 10, 1931, the remarkable Louse McKinney was laid to rest in Claresholm, Alberta.

With the support of the United Farmers Historical Society, 88 years later the Claresholm & District Museum opened their own exhibit dedicated to the important work and inspirational life of Louise McKinney and her truly Albertan tenacity. I know our community will benefit from her exhibit and her very great example for years to come.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Coal Transition Payments to Corporations

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for that statement.

Today I'm going to make a statement on behalf of Alberta taxpayers. In 2015 the NDP imposed new costs on coal-powered plants producing electricity for Alberta consumers. As a result of their unilateral cost increases, these power providers were able to terminate contracts that had been in place for over a decade. Fast-forward to 2019. This week the Ministry of Energy attended the Public Accounts Committee to answer questions, including in respect of their last annual report. Page 78 of the report discusses the real-world consequences of these NDP actions and states: "The Ministry of Energy will make payments totalling \$97 million . . . to the three generators." These payments started in 2017 and "will continue for the next 12 years."

The NDP were fired but not before leaving Alberta holding the bag for more than \$1 billion. Alberta taxpayers may ask the following questions. What steps, if any, can our government now take to mitigate this NDP harm inflicted upon Alberta taxpayers?

Last of all, how could this have happened? This \$1 billion cost to Alberta taxpayers was completely avoidable. Was the prior NDP government negligent in respect of their contracts, or were they just indifferent about harm to Alberta taxpayers?

Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

#### Bill 18 Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to introduce Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019.

Madam Speaker, our government promised to review the planned transition to a capacity market for electricity. We did that this summer, consulting with industry experts, including consumer groups, to determine the best path forward for Alberta's electricity market system. We heard loudly and clearly that investors and Albertans want what works, and that is Alberta's tried-and-true energy-only market, not the complex planned capacity market.

Madam Speaker, if passed, the electricity statutes amendment act will enable return to the energy-only market, a market which for more than 20 years has provided a reliable and affordable supply of electricity to investors with certainty.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have here the requisite number of copies of a letter sent to the Leader of the Official Opposition from the mayors of Brooks, Wetaskiwin, and Lacombe. In this letter I read a quote, and why not read it into the record one more time?

Misrepresenting our views for political theatre is dishonest and unbecoming for any member of the provincial legislative assembly. We respectfully ask you . . .

the Leader of the Opposition,

. . . to correct your statement for the record . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, we'll just table that. Thank you.

Are there any other members with tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have the requisite copies of a tabling, a fundraising letter for the UCP for the fundraiser of October 25, \$125 or \$1,000 tables, with the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board including his name.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to table the requisite number of copies of an article from Science & Environment magazine dated September 22, 2019. The article is titled Climate Change: Impacts 'Accelerating' as Leaders Gather for UN Talks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members with tablings? Oh. So many of you. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of an article from the *Guardian* titled The Climate Crisis Explained in 10 Charts: from the Rise and Rise of Carbon Dioxide in the Atmosphere to Possible Solutions.

2:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today with the requisite number of copies of a report from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights titled Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir: Developments in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir from June 2016 to April 2018, and General Human Rights Concerns in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a couple of pages from the Baker Hughes report, which shows that Alberta's drilling rig count is at its all-time low in the province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have here the requisite number of copies of an article I referenced yesterday in question period written by Tanya Kappo entitled Stephen Harper's Comments on Missing, Murdered Aboriginal Women Show 'Lack of Respect': Prime Minister Says National Inquiry Not High on Government's Radar.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to table this afternoon the appropriate number of copies of an article from *Vox* magazine. The article is very interesting and timely, talking about: Greta Thunberg Is Right: It's Time to Haul [Butt] on Climate Change. It actually doesn't say "butt," but I don't think that the word is appropriate parliamentary language. It's from October 4, 2019, by David Roberts.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There are so many tablings today. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This is related to questions that I asked the minister of labour yesterday. I have five copies of an article from the *Star* titled There's a Lot of Uncertainty: Coal Workers Unsure of Support Program's Fate as Alberta Budget Approaches, just sharing the concerns of workers in these affected communities who rely on these programs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have five copies of an article entitled After Oil and Gas: Meet Alberta Workers Making the Switch to Solar. It's dated October 2, 2019, and it's from the *Narwhal*.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members with tablings? Seeing none, we are at Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Motions

#### Evening Sitzings

31. Mr. McIver moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) commencing upon passage of this motion the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the First Session of the 30th Legislature 2019 fall sitting unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Government Motion 31 is not debatable.

[Government Motion 31 carried]

#### Interprovincial Infrastructure Projects

34. Mrs. Savage moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce all federal political parties that would enable a provincial government to unilaterally prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines.

Ms Hoffman moved on behalf of Mr. Bilous that the motion be amended by adding “and that would roll back progress on efforts to reach Canada’s current greenhouse gas emissions targets, including the abysmal federal TIER plan” after the words “prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines.”

[Debate adjourned on the amendment October 17]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment on the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege to stand and speak to the motion put forward by the government, led by this Premier, and the amendment as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I’ve been reflecting on the circumstances that have led us to this very difficult time in federal-provincial relations. We are in a very unique and unfortunate circumstance. Canadian federalism, the formal and informal rules that govern our country, is under assault, and there is at this point in time no clear path forward. Albertans have a right to be frustrated. We are challenged to get our products to market, we are challenged to get a fair price for our resources, we’re challenged on the action on climate change, and we are challenged to think of ourselves as Canadians first as opposed to Albertans or British Columbians or Quebecers.

Mr. Speaker, I’ve been reflecting on the proximate cause of our national division. I’ve been asking myself: what sparked this? What was the spark that ultimately lit the flame of division? What decision was made that led to this roaring fire that has pitted region against region, province against province, and led to the fracture of our great Canadian federal state?

Mr. Speaker, before I get into that discussion, let me say a few words about the issue that led to this very unfortunate series of events, the fire that is putting Canada at risk. That issue was pipelines. For those of us in the west and in Alberta, no issue in federal-provincial relations has been more divisive than pipelines. On the pipeline file, we have been facing moving goalposts, provincial infighting, and an abdication of federal leadership. Now, the issue of pipelines and federalism shouldn’t be that complicated. Our Constitution lays out the responsibilities of provincial governments and of federal governments. If the orders of government adhered to their responsibilities and if the orders of government stayed within their lanes, we wouldn’t be faced with this messy, divisive, and unproductive period in federal-provincial relations.

So, Mr. Speaker, how did we get here? It’s an important question, and I think it deserves an answer. The government motion before us speaks to the issue of jurisdiction; in other words, what are the responsibilities of the provinces, and what is the responsibility of Ottawa? Or, to put it another way, who is responsible for what in our federal system of government, and much more importantly, what happens when one order of government abdicates its responsibility to make decisions?

Mr. Speaker, let me say a few words about the key discussion that ultimately led to the situation we find ourselves in today, the spark that lit the flame and burned our modern system of federalism to the ground. We don’t have to go back too far, because the year was 2012. The issue was pipeline approvals and, in particular, the famous five key conditions from B.C. The key players in these issues are well known. They included Premier Christy Clark from B.C.; Premier Alison Redford from Alberta; Prime Minister Stephen Harper, operating from Ottawa; and two pipeline proponents, Kinder Morgan and Enbridge. Of course, we had the current Premier of Alberta, the former senior federal minister and, more importantly, the political Alberta lieutenant in the Harper government.

So what happened in 2012? What was the decision that led us to this mess we face today? Well, in 2012 Premier Clark laid out five conditions to win B.C.’s support for the future pipeline expansion. It was an odd set of demands, to say the least. Interprovincial pipelines, of course, are a matter of federal jurisdiction, so naturally B.C. had no issue dictating to Alberta the conditions that would lead to their support for additional pipelines. B.C.’s demands shouldn’t have mattered. B.C. had no jurisdiction here. B.C.’s demands only mattered if the federal government failed to step up and assert their sovereignty over interprovincial pipelines.

But B.C., in an effort to reshape modern federalism, took a chance and laid out demands to see if they could surpass the federal authority over interprovincial pipelines. B.C. employed threats and coercion. B.C. wanted to get paid. It was B.C.’s way or the highway. This led to the decision or, rather, the lack of decision by the Harper government and his chief lieutenant, the political minister of Alberta and the current Premier. When B.C. made its demands, the federal government failed to assert its jurisdiction. It washed its hands of any responsibility. To put it another way, it abdicated its responsibility, and it left Alberta to fend for itself.

Now, this decision may have seemed small at the time, but it had an enormous impact on Canadian federalism, and the impact has been terrible for the economic health of our country. The failure of this Premier to intervene in 2012 and assert federal jurisdiction led to the idea that horse-trading among provinces was okay to get pipelines built, that legal manoeuvring by provinces in federal areas of jurisdiction was okay, that stopping permitting processes over pipelines at the provincial level was okay, that all of this was okay. That decision in 2012, that failure to act and stand up for the federal

government's exclusive jurisdiction over interprovincial pipelines, has led us directly to the terrible situation we face today.

3:00

Now, back in 2012 the federal government could have put a stop to all of this. They could have said no to the B.C. Premier before things got out of hand. They could have in no uncertain circumstances said no. They could have said that interprovincial pipelines were the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. But back in 2012 this Premier failed to act when he had the legal and moral authority to make the decision. This Premier failed to stand up and fight for the issues of jurisdiction, an issue that goes to the heart of our Canadian system of federalism.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my remarks, I want to offer the Premier of this province a chance to apologize, to apologize to Albertans for the mess that his lack of action created and to apologize to Canadians for the havoc his lack of leadership created in tearing down our institution of federalism. I'd also like to ask this Premier: why? Why as the senior federal minister responsible for Alberta did he not stand up and fight for pipelines? Why did he open the door for B.C. to threaten our economy and our key industry? Why did he allow us to be taken hostage? Why did he fail to assert federal jurisdiction over B.C. when they were first testing these waters, and why did Alberta have to wait for the previous Premier, the current Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, to make the case on behalf of Alberta that it is the federal government that has the exclusive authority over international and provincial pipelines?

Today our Premier blames the current federal government for failing to step up, but he was the one who opened the door. He was the one who failed to show leadership, and he was the one who lit the spark that created the fire that now engrosses our politics. The problem is that now he's trying to fix a problem that he created. We'll debate the government motion, but let's not forget in this Legislature how we got into this problem of jurisdiction. That is the key issue facing this Assembly, the key issue facing this country.

With that, I will conclude my remarks.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), I believe it is the hon. member for Edmonton-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview: you can't forget the south end of the riding; they don't like that.

Thank you very much. I'm just rising to ask the member – I appreciate her comments, especially looking at the historical context and the role that our current Premier played when he was part of a federal government that very much had jurisdiction over other pipelines and the role that he played or failed to play in ensuring that Alberta and Canada increased its market access. I just wanted to ask the Member for Edmonton-Manning in regard to the amendment, I guess, her thoughts on balancing the economy and the environment, so taking meaningful action and still demonstrating to the world that, yes, Alberta is a world-class producer of our resources but acknowledging that we can bump that bar even higher.

If the Member for Edmonton-Manning can just talk a little bit about how the amendment would maybe be perceived across Canada by Canadians that are demanding that governments take more meaningful action on our environment. I mean, you know, our most precious resource is our Earth: our land, air, and water that we need to survive. Recognizing that, obviously, is absolutely critical not only for the Trans Mountain pipeline but for pipelines in all directions to get that market access, which is causing so much pain

to Albertans and Canadians and to our economy. This is about the livelihood of people. What role can the environment or those that are at the federal table have to ensure that we will see movement on things like pipelines and more support for the Canadian energy sector?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has the floor.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I think it's important that we recognize that, you know, when we were in government, we proposed the climate leadership plan. We implemented it, and we were looking at how we can make sure that when our product goes to market, everybody across the country and internationally sees that we are also addressing the climate crisis that many people are concerned about. The key thing that I think is a concern here is that we've now seen that that plan is now being put aside by this current government. There really is no plan by this government to address the issues around carbon emissions and what they're going to do around the climate crisis that we have right now.

The other piece about it as well is that we also looked at diversifying our economy, so we were talking about the fact that, you know, we can't just only depend on the oil and gas sector to drive the Alberta economy. We're seeing that now in the job loss numbers that have come out in the last few days. Depending on oil and gas and looking at that is not the only way to drive Alberta forward, so we implemented looking at green energy – solar panels, wind energy – recognizing that there are other things that can be done in Alberta that will drive our economy moving forward. We haven't seen from this government – in fact, we've seen some of the green grants that were being offered to help companies diversify to look at solar, to look at wind cancelled. The question really is – and this is why this amendment is so important – that you can advocate for the oil and gas industry without completely ignoring the fact that we have to address climate change. That is the reality of this.

What we are saying to this government is that if you're going to have this conversation and you're going to put this motion forward, you also look at how you're going to address climate change. What we're seeing right now is that this government very clearly wants to take us backwards and not forward and doesn't want to address any issues when it comes to climate change. We've seen that with the refusal to even go out and talk to people who are outside this Legislature protesting and will be here tomorrow. If this government would like to demonstrate how they are going to address climate change and take it seriously, I welcome you all to come out and have a chat with people who will be at the Legislature tomorrow and maybe sit down with Greta and have a conversation with her and learn and share the information about Alberta.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, with 30 seconds left under 29(2)(a), any takers?

Seeing none, any members looking to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to enter the discussion around Government Motion 34 and the amendment brought forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on Motion 34. His addition is:

"and that would roll back progress on efforts to reach Canada's current greenhouse gas emissions targets, including the abysmal federal TIER plan" after "prevent the construction of inter-provincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines".

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is an essential addition to this motion. We know that there's a tremendous amount of controversy in all of the four compass directions around our province in regard to building pipelines to move Alberta energy products to market. This has been a source of frustration to our economy here now for quite a number of years. Certainly, it's been incumbent upon the previous to last government, I guess, the PC government and then our government and now this current, new government to look for ways by which we can build market access for our energy products to the United States, to eastern Canada, and to the Pacific coast as well.

I think that, you know, it's been all hands on deck in regard to attempting to secure these pipelines, I would say, from each of the three governments. You know, one thing that we learned over the last four years is that it's better to use a sense of diplomacy and conversation and argument to convince people of the importance of moving our energy products here in Alberta, the importance of the value of moving those products not just to the economy of our province but the whole country as well. We know that as the price of energy slips and the purchase of our oil and gas products is reduced here in Alberta, so, too, does the GDP of our nation, of Canada. So, you know, as our government embarked on a significant program to help to educate Canadians across the country about the value and the importance of our energy here in Alberta, of moving it to market, with a lot of efforts we managed to change hearts and minds, quite frankly.

3:10

We engaged in a national advertising campaign that was very successful. I'm just thinking of British Columbia, where we crossed the point where the majority of British Columbians changed their minds and recognized the value of the pipeline to the Pacific coast. We know that a similar movement was afoot to the east of us, and I think that it's important for a government in Alberta to responsibly help to educate Canadians and indeed North Americans and the world about the value and the importance of our energy industry here in the province of Alberta. We hear it often, but it bears saying again that we have, as we can demonstrably show, the highest standard for our conventional energy industry and demonstrate that highest standard of safety and mitigation of both carbon and pollution in the widest possible way. Then we can convince people.

You know, people are not convinced just with words and rhetoric. You have to actually show these things to be true. That's why, you know, we worked so hard with the climate action plan to be demonstrable leaders in building a direction to reduce our carbon footprints through the energy industry and as individuals as well. Those are the kinds of things which you can attach to an argument to convince Canadians and, in fact, the world about the importance for us to be able to have market access for Alberta energy products, because people can see that, you know, we're not just pumping oil and gas but that we are actually working to apply that highest standard not just to our use of energy and our production of energy here in the province but to set an example that we can export and use across the country and indeed around the world.

The key to this amendment that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview did bring forward is to have that aspect of the argument, of the debate, across the country in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and having targets and having a carbon trading market to point to and have people understand that we are serious about ensuring our place as economic drivers for this country but also ensuring our place as economic and environmental leaders for this country, too. Those two things must go together. I mean, people will judge us on our actions, and it's absolutely essential to have both of those arguments functioning in place at the same time.

I know that it's not easy to bestride the two arguments together and to square them in people's minds. You know, we see a whole new generation of people in our province, across the country, and around the world that are looking at the detrimental effects of climate change as, you know, some very raw and not pleasant inheritance which they will have to deal with for the rest of their lives. To show leadership to that next generation is absolutely essential, not just to show that we care – right? – in some sort of heartfelt sort of way but to lead by example to ensure that the next generation of leaders indeed continue down the path of carbon reduction and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions into the future so that we can achieve sustainability here on the planet.

I think that we have a very unique opportunity here in the province of Alberta. But it's terribly time sensitive because I think the vision for our energy industry and indeed the direction for our economy must be that we make best use of the conventional energy resources that we have available to us here now and use that as a means by which to demonstrate a transition and a leadership to a more sustainable energy economy both here in the province and exporting those innovations around the world, to use that conventional energy industry, that is the backbone of our economy, to help diversify the economy in the broadest possible way as well, to build value-added resources in our petrochemical industry, and to invest significantly in alternative forms of energy and become energy leaders in those areas as well.

The expertise that our working population here in Alberta has is significant. We are world leaders in conventional energy extraction and energy development, and those same skills we can use both for the diversification and the value-added development of, for example, the polypropylene industry, that we helped to stimulate here through tax credits over the last term of our government, and, to carry on with that theme, with that sentiment, to demonstrate that our plumbers and our pipefitters, our welders and engineers and infrastructure expertise can be utilized to build value-added product and industry here in the province of Alberta.

Those individual projects, the polypropylene plants that are being built in the Industrial Heartland, in the Redwater corridor, represent thousands of construction jobs – right? – and then also represent a value-added price that you can add to those base energy inputs from natural gas and oil, that you make money from, quite frankly. These are ways by which we can help to mitigate our reliance on the extraction of primary energy resources and then to make sure that we're not just capturing that value-added product but capturing some of the profit from the traditional resources to invest in renewable infrastructure as well, in solar energy, geothermal energy, wind energy, and transit, among other areas.

It's very important. Like I say, it's time sensitive, Mr. Speaker, because, you know, while we have those resources and while they have a value-added economic value, that's the time to act, right? We don't sit and rely on what has driven our economy in the past. Countries and jurisdictions that have done so throughout history were bound to fail. I don't think that Albertans are really in that situation, nor do we have that attitude of resignation, quite frankly. I believe that being the youngest population in Canada, the best educated population, at least for now, in the country leads us to a very, again, prime opportunity to capitalize, to diversify, and to lead the new energy industry and continue to lead the economy of this country through the innovation and the can-do spirit that has built this province over the first 100 years.

I believe that by making sure that we reach out through diplomatic efforts, we can solve a lot of these problems. I know that as we look, in the final few days of this federal election, you know, we see some interesting movement of vote and intention. I guess you can't count it till Monday, when they actually have the election. But one of the



things that we see is a phenomenon in places like Quebec – right? – where we need to make sure that we have conversations with the people, the population of Quebec to talk about energy sustainability and their place in Confederation. You make sure that those channels are open, because we can sell and exchange energy expertise and energy products between our provinces, and that we don't put up barriers, either physical or trade or psychological, that would otherwise impede the forward progress of our economy and how we trade between provinces here in the confederation of the nation.

3:20

I mean, that's my two bits on this. I think that the amendment that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview brought forward is prescient. I think it's helpful. You know, always in the spirit of firmness but through diplomacy do you move forward, right? This idea of putting up fences or otherwise drawing lines in the metaphorical sand and so forth: I mean, it's necessary sometimes, but ultimately I believe that we have more in common with the other provinces and territories of this nation than we do differences.

Alberta has led the energy industry in this province, in this country and will continue to do so but only with a clear vision of what needs to be done. I trust that this Legislature will be able to deliver on those things. I have seen lots of variations of legislative procedure and action in this, but I think that in 2019 we know that the best way to ensure that we continue to be leaders, both economically and in terms of energy and in terms of direction, here in this province and this country is that we act together.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has the call.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was so enthralled by what the Member for Edmonton-North West had to say, and I was hoping that he could talk a little bit more about specifically what he's heard on the doorsteps of his own constituency in relation to this matter.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. You know, Edmonton-North West represents a diversity of both socioeconomic groups and population. It's very young. I think it well represents the face of Alberta in terms of both diversity and in terms of a cross-section of employment, right? Lots of people do work in the oil and gas industry and were very concerned. Lots of people, in this last election, had one or more members of their family that had been either unemployed or underemployed for a number of years.

I know that if we cut through the rhetoric of the House here, we all know that the energy industry went through a significant economic downturn that was global in nature. The price of oil, for example, was precariously unstable. The price of natural gas was definitely through the basement of the floor price, very low. You know, everybody wanted to make sure that there were ways by which we could move forward. We saw that if you lived here for more than, say, one or two of these economic cycles of boom and bust, you knew both that the bust was catastrophic in terms of unemployment and job loss and financial losses but that the booms could be quite stressful as well in regard to people working away from home for long periods of time, basic commodities such as mortgages and property and food and so forth being very expensive, right? So people were looking for a way by which they could have a more stable future for themselves and for their families as well.

You know, one of the things: I think we're at that sort of crossroads with the oil and gas industry where they're starting to take a serious second look at efficiencies in regard to money, input-output. That's a very difficult thing to do, but I think that the energy industry has realized that in order to be sustainable and competitive, they have to move and diversify, well, first, find efficiencies to ensure that they are making a dollar off the oil and gas that they're extracting but also look for ways by which you can mitigate, diversify the economy and the balance sheet of the oil companies that function here in the province of Alberta.

I learned a lot over the last four years as part of government, seeing just how Alberta oil and gas companies were seeking to diversify and to ensure that they were putting a modern, forward-looking face on their future here in this province. We saw, you know, most energy companies seeing the importance of carbon pricing. I think that became a new reality that everyone understood, and everyone also understood, I think, the importance of diversification and of upgrading product here in the province of Alberta to ensure that there's a value-added element to the bitumen and the gas that people have been extracting in the province.

You know, people living in Edmonton-North West: I think it's not any different from any other part of the province. People are nervous, but they want to make sure that they know that our economy is stable and that the social services that they require for themselves and their families are there when they need them, right? One thing that we learned very quickly is that when you have an economic downturn, you certainly don't double down and exacerbate the problem by making massive cuts to the essential public services that people need for their families: K to 12 education, social services, health care, and infrastructure.

In fact, I definitely learned that it's not a bad time to build some key, much-needed infrastructure during an economic downturn because it's...

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, thank you.

Any other members looking to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure today to rise and speak to the amendment here. I do want to thank my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for bringing this forward. I think it's so important, when we're looking at this motion, to also have perspective, the perspective that you don't have to choose between the environment and the economy. It's not one or the other. It's not something that's a dichotomy. I think that's something that we have to keep in mind, that we have to be aware of, and we have to make the concerted effort as an Assembly, if we're going to be making large statements, to understand because that is what a responsible government would do, that's what responsible parliamentarians would do, and that's what I believe our job is here in this House.

When we want to speak to federal political parties and the federal government, what we need is to look for a real plan for our future, one that not only supports our energy industry and the industry of all Albertans and our economic prosperity but one that also has environmental stewardship in mind, one that also understands that we are living in perhaps one of the most influential times in human history, Mr. Speaker, not just Alberta history, not just Canadian history, but, really, all of human history. This is one of the most influential times, when we have the opportunity to make a difference on the global stage. We have the opportunity to make a difference and change the world for the better.

This amendment, I think, is just a reflection and just a furthering of what we've been saying all along, that we have to not have this

dichotomy of ideas, that we have to understand that you can have both a strong environment and a strong economy. It's something that's so important.

I think it's very telling that we can see that members of the government caucus here, the Conservatives, that have been sitting with their heads down, on their phones, don't believe that's true. They don't believe that we need to take real action on climate change. They don't believe that we can take action on climate change while also creating good jobs and diversifying our economy. I think that's something that is a little bit shameful, Mr. Speaker. It's something that I'd be very concerned about because it's something that we must strive to do and we must strive to do better.

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member failed to mention that his leader is not in the House this afternoon. You want to play like that?

**The Acting Speaker:** Just to be clear, a point of order under which standing order?

**Mr. McIver:** Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), making comments designed to create disorder in the House, commenting on other people doing their work while failing to comment that his leader is not in the House.

3:30

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think very clearly there was no disorder, so therefore it's not a point of order. However, you cannot raise a point of order during a point of order, but the hon. member should withdraw and apologize for referring to the absence or presence of a member in the House, which is a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** As of right now I do not have the benefit of the Blues, and I am not convinced as to what exactly was stated. Therefore, given that I think we are operating under a single point of order initiated by the Minister of Transportation – looking around the House, it looks like people seem to be somewhat in agreement with that – going forward, I will have to reserve judgment.

My assumption, though, is that if the hon. Member for Edmonton-South did comment on whether or not some individual or hon. member from our House not being in the House may not be doing his or her job . . . [interjections] Okay. I think that was the original source of the point of order. Therefore, if that's the case, whether your thoughts are that or not, we will have the benefit of the Blues. If that is the case, then I would ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-South to retract that statement. If he decides that that is not his viewpoint, then we will refer to the Blues at a later date, and come Monday or perhaps the next time that this House is adjourned until, we will deal with that point of order then. However, at this point what I will do is offer the floor to the hon. Member for Edmonton-South to continue, and he shall do so as he sees fit, given my comments.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you. I'll speak for him. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Or Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Speaking on behalf of this point of order.

**Mr. Eggen:** That's correct. Yeah. You betcha. I think that it's a very wise choice for you to make in order for us to see the actual Blues, the actual transcript of what the individual from Edmonton-South did say before passing judgment. I think that we all could probably

use that clarification, but I also do, you know, want to point out at this time that even if he did mention the absence of someone in the House, which I don't think he did, then it certainly does not provide license for the hon. member opposite to point out the absence of someone else in the House, right? It's the proverbial thing of two wrongs do not make a right, and this idea of thinking that that gives some license somehow to start indulging in indiscretions: I think that's entirely incorrect as well.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I think I'm prepared to completely rule on this matter now. In this I do not find a point of order on the initial point of order or even in the explanations of the point of order. What I would do is that I would ask the hon. members at this point if they believe that perhaps they may have looked towards causing disorder, which was the original point of order, and in that case, whether that is the case, I would also offer the opportunity for the hon. minister, if he does not believe that there was a point of order in this case, to simply retract the point of order.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I think we need to get back on to the business of the day. I'll withdraw the point of order. I think the other side knows that commenting on what members are doing in the House when they're doing their work is just what we don't do here. I think I've made my point, and I'll withdraw the point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Seeing that I will consider the point of order to be dealt with at this stage, I would ask that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South continue with his statements.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it is important that we do continue to consider how important it is that we have a government that is focused on not only the economy but also the environment, that we understand that we can do both, that we understand that it is not one or the other. We look at what the government is doing, and we look at what, indeed, the Premier is doing in the last days and weeks and months, even, and what he is doing is going out and using divisive, separatist language campaigning for a federal party that continues to use divisive, separatist language and, indeed, actually is campaigning with a party that is entertaining entering a coalition with the separatist Bloc Québécois. That is something that I think we should be very concerned about in this House. Those are the types of things that we're trying to understand when we talk about these issues.

We talk about how the Premier needs to understand that this country needs to work together. We need to work together on issues that affect the economy and the environment, Mr. Speaker. It's a waste of time, really, to be trolling federal politicians in this House, and really I wish the government could use the time of this Assembly better. I wish that instead of trying to use this as a political talking point, they can understand that we actually have business to do here, things like investing in the economy, investing in the environment here in Alberta.

I hope they'll be able to accept this amendment because that would show maturity on their part. It would show that they would understand that there are multiple issues the government should focus on at once, and indeed perhaps it is actually their job, Mr. Speaker. I hope to see perhaps the Minister of Environment and Parks speak to why he doesn't believe that emissions standards are important or why the Minister of Environment and Parks doesn't believe that federal greenhouse gas targets are important, especially in relation to a motion like this. That's something that I think is very important. I think that we need to look at realistic solutions. We need to move forward with plans that actually work.

We need to look at what this government is actually doing when they present this motion. We need to look at how they're actually proposing probably – actually, it is, Mr. Speaker – the worst climate plan out of any of the federal parties, and that is something that's very concerning because it shows a lack of understanding, a lack of maturity from this government, a lack of realization of the critical nature and the critical, pointed history that we are at. It's something that I think this amendment would rectify, I think that the government voting in favour of this amendment would rectify. It would allow us to have more certainty to that matter. It would allow us to understand whether this government really does care about all facets, like they claim they do. I think it's something that's very important.

By amending this motion, we're going to be pointing out that the type of ideas that the parties that this Premier is campaigning for, the federal Conservative Party, are ideas that are going to drive this country apart, that are attempting to drive this country apart, and instead we should be focused on building a plan that pursues Canadian, Albertan economic interests and also combats climate change. It's something that I think is very important. It's something that I think is real action that we need to take today, Mr. Speaker, because it's a plan that, when we proposed our nation-leading climate plan, was one that also invested in our economic future. It's one that also understood how important that was.

These types of conversations that we're having in this Assembly are essential to a strong Alberta, are essential to a strong Canada, and the government members: I hope they understand that. I hope they can see and hear and understand how critical it is that we understand we have both the economy and the environment. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we see that instead of focusing on actual issues that will affect Albertan jobs like investing in the economy, like investing in climate change, like moving forward with our nation-leading climate plan, that we had brought forward when we were in government, instead of doing that, the government is spending their time giving the largest 4 and a half billion dollar corporate handout that's ever been seen, experiments that we've seen fail time and time again in the United States, experiments we've seen fail time and time again here in Canada.

Really, what I wish we could see the government do when we look at this amendment, what I wish they would understand is that instead of wasting their time on huge corporate giveaways, instead of wasting their time on giving money away to their friends and donors, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we focus on the issues like climate change. I think it's important that we focus on understanding how fighting climate change works with the economy. I think those are the things that we need to be talking about in this House. It's the things that we need to look at in this House and say that we understand that there is the opportunity to have both. There is the opportunity not to pander to federal Conservatives. There's the opportunity not to talk to federal parties that don't understand the importance of climate change, federal parties that are striking divisiveness through this country.

3:40

If the Premier intends to also move forward with that divisiveness and if this government intends to also move forward with that divisiveness, that is something that is shameful and should be on the record here today. It's something that we should understand here in this Assembly today, Mr. Speaker. It's something that is essential that we get into *Hansard* because we need to know when we're looking at this in the future. I've heard time and time again from members opposite. I've heard time and time again older members here in this Assembly say things like: we're doing this for our children or our grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. When I talk to young people in this province – and just last week I attended many schools in my province – I am actually closer in age to those young people than I am to the oldest person and then the majority of people in this Assembly, so I think I have some authority on this matter in the sense that I'm able to understand what the effects of this will be moving forward. I'm able to understand that I am the one along with my generation, and the ones that come after me are the ones that are going to have to live with these decisions. We are the ones, the young people, that will have to have a voice to come right now because these are decisions that will be affecting my future for years and decades to come and generations to come.

Perhaps the other members don't understand that. Perhaps they don't care. Whatever it is, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't speculate. But I think that they must understand that young people care that we have both a strong environment and a strong economy because it doesn't matter if we're able to create corporate handouts, if we're able to create all these corporate handouts but that young people aren't able to have air they can breathe in 20 years. That is something that we're going to have to be concerned about. We can talk about these issues all we want, but the reality is that we must do both. We can do both. We can do better. We can do better than the government wants to propose to us. We can do better than the pandering and the fearmongering that the government wants to propose. We can do that.

We had a plan. We had the best climate plan in the entire country. We had a nation-leading plan that had some of the best targets for things like methane emissions. It kept all of the money here in Alberta, and instead of giving a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate handout and wasting taxpayers' money on lawsuits, we could have had a plan that kept the investments right here in the economy, in the green economy, Mr. Speaker, here in Alberta. We had that opportunity, and the government can now take a step back and realize that we had that opportunity by voting for this amendment.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, it looks like the government simply either doesn't understand the impacts of giving 4 and a half billion dollars away to corporations, or they don't care about those impacts. But that's something that I'll leave to government members to get up and speak to because I think it's very important that we all speak on behalf of our constituents here and we explain why instead of focusing on things like tangible greenhouse gas emissions alongside of our economy, instead of focusing on that, they're going to be focusing on giving 4 and a half billion dollars away to their friends and donors. I think that's something that we do need to talk about. I think it's something that government members should be pleased to speak to here in this House because they make it such a critical point of all their talking points, how they've given 4 and a half billion dollars away to corporations.

That's something I'm very interested to hear about. I'm interested to hear about how that's so important and that they're not going to be voting for a climate plan, they're not going to be voting to speak about a climate plan, and that they don't think federal parties should have a climate plan. I think that that's something that we're going to have to see, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be very interesting.

I think that what we really do need, though, when we talk about this amendment and we talk about greenhouse gas emissions and we talk about things like the federal TIER plan, all these things, Mr. Speaker, is to understand that these are policies that are coming in place around the world, right? Greenhouse gas emission targets – and perhaps it's intensity-based targets; perhaps it's not – absolute caps, whatever it is, when we talk about issues like this, we have to understand these are coming in all over the world. They're coming in above the national level in many cases in the sense that there are unions of nations that are bringing in these types of targets.

We talk about these issues, and if the government doesn't understand the financial impacts of that, if the government doesn't understand the ecological impacts of that, if they don't understand the economic impacts of that, then I am sure there are many members here of the opposition who would be willing to explain that to them. I'm looking forward to some of the other speeches we'll be hearing from opposition members here today.

I hope we'll hear from government members why they think it's okay to give 4 and a half billion dollars away to wealthy corporations but then not even want to talk about climate change and how fighting climate change can help improve our economy as well and diversify our economy. I'd be interested in seeing that as well and hearing that from government members. I hope some of them will be able to speak to that.

I hope they'll be able to speak to why their Premier is currently out there, the leader of the United Conservative Party here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker – I hope they'll be able to speak to why his government has brought forward this motion that doesn't even touch on climate change. In fact, it's so clearly political pandering, it's so clearly grandstanding, and it's so clearly an attack on parties that care about the environment. Again, I believe we can and we should do both. We absolutely can and should do both. We have to have a credible plan, and we did have a credible plan before the Conservatives threw it away. They threw away the nation-leading climate plan, and instead they've brought back this motion that does nothing but strike divisiveness across this country. They intentionally are trying to strike divisiveness across this country.

If that's not the case – and it may not be – then perhaps government members can get up and speak to that. They can speak to why they think it's important to not talk about climate at all in this amendment. They can speak to why they think it's important that we start attacking federal political parties, Mr. Speaker, and the federal government and wasting taxpayer money on lawsuits and doing things of the sort. If they have time to give 4 and a half billion dollars away to wealthy corporations, then I'm sure members will have time to get up here and speak to why climate change isn't important, why we shouldn't have greenhouse gas targets, and why we only need to focus on one side of the equation.

I'm sure you took math courses the same as I, Mr. Speaker. When you have an equation, you have to make sure they're balanced on both sides. The economy and the environment are just like that. You have to be able to manage both of those issues. You have to understand that you don't solve the problem by trying to erase one half. Let me tell you, I know there are a number of teachers in my caucus here, and I would bet they would not give you a passing grade if you just decided to erase the environment.

It's something that is very important. We have an understanding here. It's very important that government members understand this, Mr. Speaker. It's very important they speak to this and they speak on behalf of their constituents on why they think it's okay to be divisive, why they think it's okay . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I believe the individual who caught my eye was the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity under 29(2)(a), I believe. Thank you. Well, I don't think anybody has been fooled over the last four years by the NDP's sudden support for the oil and gas industry. I don't think it's any shock, listening to this member that, you know, it was a very public support for oil and gas but not a real support. He brought up a couple of things about how much business we have to do. It's a little

bit surprising coming from that member, who very rarely talks to the business at hand when he's up here speaking.

One thing he did bring up and that did kind of come back to the motion and the amendment that we're speaking about is to do with the federal election. While I'd never, ever ask anybody how they're going to vote in the federal election, what I would like to know from the member is which party he actually thinks has Alberta's best interest, his constituents' best interest, Edmonton's best interest, and the interests of the families that work and live here in Alberta? Is it the NDP party, his federal leader? When you buy an NDP membership, you actually buy a membership to the federal and to the provincial parties. Mr. Jagmeet Singh is actually his leader. You can't hide from that fact. You also can't hide from the fact that the NDP federally supported the Leap Manifesto, which is basically an anti-industry, antipipeline, antioil, anti oil and gas, anti fossil fuels piece of paper.

3:50

He's either going to say that the NDP is the best route to go federally for the province of Alberta, or possibly it's the Liberal Party, with bills C-69 and C-48, the tanker ban on the west coast that only affects Alberta-produced oil. Or perhaps he thinks it's the Green Party, Mr. Speaker, the Green Party that has made very, very clear that all they want to do is shut down oil and gas completely and fossil fuels. I'm sure that possibly tomorrow he will be taking selfies out on the front steps with the protesters that are here to protest our oil and gas industry. That wouldn't surprise me at all. I'll be looking forward to looking at the pictures on Monday.

**The Acting Speaker:** While I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, I would just say that if hon. members in the House believe that there is a point of order to be called, they should call that point of order. If not, then I would invite them to have the opportunities to speak when they choose to do so, whether it's on the amendment, the motion proper, or perhaps in a 29(2)(a) of their own.

Hon. member, please continue.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'm almost at my question. Please, if you could, is it is NDP Leap Manifesto party, the Liberal bills C-69 and C-48 party, the Green crash-everything party? Or perhaps you're going to jump out and support the only party that supports the oil and gas industry in Alberta, the Conservative Party.

**The Acting Speaker:** With about two minutes left under 20(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen to speak.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's such a shame that the member that just rose here, instead of spending the time to actually speak to matters of importance, like what type of plan we have to balance the environment and the economy, went on to grandstand and take shots at the federal government. Instead of having the opportunity to explain, perhaps – because it was the opportunity for comments as well – why he thinks it's so valuable to give 4 and a half billion dollars away to wealthy corporations. He chose to grandstand instead. And that's okay. That's what the government does. It's what government members do. I don't think it's particularly mature, but that is the case that we just saw here. Those cheap shots and cheap attacks are what they choose to take their time with, and that's okay.

But let me make it very clear. I don't believe in any party, the federal Conservatives or the provincial Conservatives included, that would strike divisiveness across this country. I don't believe in any party that would go out and try to attack the foundation of our Confederation. I think that's something that I can make very clear. I think it's something that the member that just rose should make

clear, whether he supports the divisive comments his Premier is making, the divisive actions and moves that his Premier is making, and the federal leader of that party that he is leading. I think that is something that he should be ashamed about if he does indeed support that divisiveness because it's something that we as Canadians and as Albertans need to understand, that this country works better together.

We need to focus on fighting for our environment and fighting for our economy because those are things that we can do better, we can do together, and we have the opportunity to do here. But instead of trying to actually take tangible action that will support our economy, the government decides to give 4 and a half billion dollars away to the wealthiest corporations and does nothing to invest in diversification, does nothing to invest in the economy, does nothing to invest in the environment, and that's absolutely a shame. It's a shame that the member has nothing to say.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you for your comments.

On amendment A1, are there members looking to speak? I believe the individual who caught my eye was the hon. Member for Edmonton-East. Sorry. Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** As long as you're happy, Mr. Speaker.

The member spoke a lot about balance. Perhaps he should have put his name forward for Finance minister the last time. Something tells me it would have ended the same.

It is a sad day for Alberta and indeed Canada when a motion such as this is required and when the opposition continues to confuse their role to oppose government with opposing Alberta. How did we get here? I believe that we are here because of a crisis of leadership and rampant hypocrisy. Fortunately, we no longer have a crisis of leadership here in Alberta, but federally is a different matter.

We have a Prime Minister that talks about the environment while undermining the most environmentally responsible oil and gas production and transportation. We have a Prime Minister that talks about national unity while campaigning on division. We have a Prime Minister that talks about supporting women and visible minorities while cutting them down and furthering violent, offensive stereotypes. We have a Prime Minister that believes our military members are asking for more than we can give. We have a Prime Minister that will pay terrorists while making cuts to the health benefits of those that fight terrorists. We have a Prime Minister that would violate ethics laws to further his own interests, but he would not use the law, indeed the Constitution, to support an industry, a province, our country: an industry and a province that is the leader in environmental and ethical oil and gas production, an industry that has picked up the tab for his government's gross mismanagement of our country's finances.

Now, I'm a parent, and I have four children. I teach them not to lie, to do what they say they will do, to keep their hands to themselves, to respect authority, to not bully, to watch out for others, and to accept consequences for their actions. It occurred to me the other day, with great sadness, that I expect a higher level of conduct from my children than is expected of the Prime Minister of Canada.

So today I stand in favour of this motion and against this amendment, "to denounce all federal political parties that would enable a provincial government to unilaterally prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines." It is, in my view, unconstitutional and goes against what a federal party in this country should be doing, which is working to unite the provinces and towards national prosperity.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for anyone who should wish to take the opportunity. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate you recognizing me. You know, I was listening to the last speaker's comments, and I unfortunately keep hearing a recurring theme going on around divisive politics. We seem to be focused – I think the Member for Edmonton-South might have mentioned this – around trolling federal politicians in this House. I think about how we have somebody in this House who used to represent a Calgary riding during his time in federal politics and how we seem to have missed the boat around the things that he could have brought to the table as a senior cabinet minister and how we could have prevented some of this divisive politics.

I guess my question to the member – I would like to ask him if it really is appropriate. One minute we have our Premier saying that we need to work together, we need to come together as one, but in the next minute we're asking people to choose sides, to say that we have to build the economy at all costs. Then we have others that are forced to say that we have to protect the environment at all costs. We keep stoking this sentiment. So I was wondering if maybe the member might share his thoughts around: is that the appropriate way for us to be able to show the world – you know, I've had the opportunity to meet, for instance, with U.S. legislators, to talk about the great things that Alberta does not only in producing energy but in manufacturing and in agriculture and in tech, even in our health care system. I always hear from U.S. legislators about how envious they are about that.

If we are to show the world that we're, essentially, competent, responsible adults in the room, that we want to be stoking such divisiveness within this country around how we should proceed, what kind of message, what kind of picture does that send to others outside of Alberta, not even just in Canada but in the world? If we are ready to essentially sink to these types of levels – you know, let's look on their side, stand in their shoes for a minute – would they want to do business with us? Would they want to invest in our province if we're sitting here basically trying to divide our country and stoke separatist policies? We're showing the world that, well, maybe we don't really want to necessarily look at our environment because it's going to cost our economy. When are we going to start showing that you can do both at the same time? Maybe the member might be willing to share some thoughts around that and whether that is really, truly productive in terms of raising our profile not only within Canada but across the rest of the world.

4:00

**Mr. Jones:** I realize that my comments about the Member for Edmonton-Decore's close ally Justin Trudeau may have bothered him, but he was not able to identify anything that I said that wasn't true, which I find sad and disturbing, again. What I can share is who I voted for because I'm not ashamed. I'm supporting the federal Conservatives. If you can't tell someone who you're voting for, then maybe – maybe – you shouldn't be voting for them.

**The Acting Speaker:** With 30 seconds left, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has stood to speak.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this amendment and to . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I will just hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. You were still under 29(2)(a), the last 30 seconds. You can fill it out.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. Well, then, speaking under 29(2)(a), I'd be happy to take a few moments to talk about some of the concern that I have about the divisive politics that I hear being used here in the House talking about the federal . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Speaking to this amendment, the hon. member who has caught my attention was the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always love to catch your attention, because it gives me a chance to speak about this amendment that we have before us today. On this amendment, we've heard a few conversations, one particularly about the next generation, about climate change, about making sure that the economy and the environment are balanced. Well, I know for a fact that the people who actually have a plan to balance the economy and the environment are the Conservatives, because, at the end of the day, we're actually the only ones who went and spoke to stakeholders who are in business. It's pretty rich for the opposition to be talking about balancing the economy with anything when they're the party that presided over a government with the highest downtown office vacancies in Calgary. It's also pretty rich for them to be talking about balancing these things for average working Albertans when they're the government that presided over the carbon tax, which taxed hockey moms and hockey dads.

You know, it's really interesting to me. Also, the Member for Edmonton-South talked about, basically, the next generation and how he was close to that age, and, I mean, as a member, a younger member in this Legislature, I thought I'd get up. I don't claim to be more woke than he is, but I will say that one thing that's important to the next generation is having a job and having these things that can actually fuel our economy and make sure they can get back to work. I know that the Minister of Advanced Education has spoke about this at length, which is his plan to make sure that all students have a place to go when they graduate, which is extremely important, as we all know.

I know that there's also a great group of people. I'm thinking of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation here in Alberta, led by a young Albertan who is going around the province talking about debt and deficit and just how much that does to damage our economy and damage our competitiveness world-wide and also our credit rating, which – I mean, once again, the members opposite would know all about damaging credit ratings because they presided over six credit downgrades. But I digress. We have an incumbency and, really, a responsibility on this side of the House to make sure that we're standing up for Alberta taxpayers, to make sure we're standing up for Albertans.

You know, I've had the pleasure of door-knocking for some federal Conservative candidates, including my own in Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner, and I will be door-knocking with my friend in Bow River as well. The thing that comes up time and time again is that people need a job. They need the opportunity to be able to work. They need the opportunity to put food on their table, and they can't do that if you have a government on the opposite side of the House who is more determined to please the ivory towers in Zurich and New York and all these other places instead of actually fighting for Albertans here at home. This is a pattern that's been demonstrated again with the Prime Minister. I mean, you have a Prime Minister who has done many questionable things like having two planes to lower his carbon footprint.

It's just amazing to me that this is the same government. This former government won't stand up to him on that. You know, they have no problem pointing out what they feel to be hypocrisy on this side of the House, but when it comes time, like I spoke about in my

member's statement today, to actually put their, you know, boots on the ground, they won't call out the hypocrisy of the Prime Minister. They won't call out the hypocrisy of Jagmeet Singh. They won't call out the hypocrisy of Elizabeth May. They'll sit there on that side of the House and lecture us about economic development, about investment in Alberta, about lowering taxes, about being responsible for the people that we represent. They sit on that side of the House, look at the ceiling, heckle, do absolutely nothing to represent the people that elected them in the first place.

What I would say, Mr. Speaker, is how important it is that we are on this side of the House today, that we have a government that's actually standing up for taxpayers and standing up for the people who work in the energy industry. I was talking to Cody Battershill. He's written quite a few articles lately, especially one talking about how important it is for us to get our natural resources to market. Now, this motion speaks to that. This amendment, however, undermines that by taking a shot at the federal Conservatives, which really makes no sense to me, and also taking a shot at something that actually a resounding number of Albertans voted for in April. We actually put forward the TIER plan in our platform, as the members opposite would know because half of their former members aren't sitting with them right now. We put forward the TIER plan. The TIER plan, obviously, would actually do something to reduce emissions.

When the former Premier was asked, you know, "What has your carbon tax done to reduce emissions?" she actually didn't know. I know, and I'm confident in our Premier and our side of the House, our Environment and Parks minister, our ministers, our whole front bench. They know what's going on in their own ministries. They know that their plans will actually work, and they're actually willing to stand up for that whereas that Premier had an opportunity to be on the radio and actually defend her climate leadership plan, or what she called it, and she didn't do that. She had no idea how many emissions, what kind of emissions she actually reduced.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say to the opposition: "If you're really so proud of that plan, stand up for it. If you're really so proud of that plan, go to Albertans again with it. I can guarantee they won't vote for you in the next election because of it, because they didn't vote for you this time." At the end of the day, Albertans know that when you want to get ahead, when you want to put more money in people's pockets, the best way to do that isn't to take it from one pocket and put it in the other. That doesn't work. At the end of the day, I mean, that's a flawed socialist ideology, which is exemplified on that side of the House anyway, so what can you do?

I would just like to state for the record, too, I mean, I'm 26. I'm not going to lie about it. There's no point in hiding it. I'm pretty young, young to be in this House. I think, at the end of the day, we have a very important job to do, and that job is to represent all people in this Legislature, including those who do not want a carbon tax, including those who don't think that the way to prosperity is by taxation. That's why I'm standing up here on this side of the House today, because I was elected under a platform to make sure that that doesn't happen.

When we hear things about, you know, adding an amendment that talks about the abysmal federal TIER program – I think "the abysmal federal TIER plan" is written here – it's just kind of sad because, at the end of the day, that's what Albertans voted for. You just stand in direct defiance of that. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Through you, the members opposite stand in direct defiance of that. I just really don't understand how they think that that is going to help them win the next election. I know it's three years away, but they've already started campaigning. I mean, the deputy leader of the Official Opposition has called herself the acting leader. We have many people on that side changing their tone. We see that there's a

push to get ahead on that side. It's pretty obvious what's going to happen for the next election.

I'd be interested to know when the other side of the House is going to be releasing their leadership platforms. If so, I'd be kind of scared because, based on the conversation today, their plan will be to tax, tax, tax, tax, tax, do nothing, then tax some more. I'm just curious to know when they're going to be releasing those plans.

In addition, you know, my dad is one of the people who builds pipelines that take our resources to tidewater. He's worked extensively here in Alberta, and he's also worked in Saskatchewan in recent years. The reason why he's worked in Saskatchewan isn't because of a Conservative government; it's because of the NDP government. He's had to find work in Saskatchewan because our competitiveness was so shot by that former government that he couldn't find jobs here in Alberta. When he actually was working – I mean, a lot of his friends weren't, and there were times when he wasn't as well – he was going to Saskatchewan. Now, wouldn't my mom like to have my dad at home? Absolutely. I would love to have my dad at home, too. My whole life I wished that my dad could work closer to home, but that's not the way things are sometimes.

These men and women: they work so hard in atrocious conditions. In minus 40, plus 40, rain, hail, or shine, those guys are out there and those women are out there as well building these natural resource infrastructure projects. At the end of the day, that other side of the House has the gall to fail to represent those people. That amazes me, Mr. Speaker.

I guess, in closing, I would just like to say, you know, that this isn't a contest of who's the most woke. This isn't a contest of who can say the right thing and virtue signal to some ivory tower eco radical sitting in Zurich. This is actually a contest of who can represent Albertans the best, and that contest was actually won on April 16. So if they have a problem with the TIER program, I would ask them to consult the overwhelming majority of Albertans, that actually voted for us to implement the TIER program.

4:10

At the end of the day, this isn't about the TIER program; this is about making sure that we have a government that stands up for critical infrastructure projects that are in the national interest, just like our projects that we have here at home and that we're fighting for but Justin Trudeau is delaying.

I guess that, with that, I will relinquish the rest of my time, Mr. Speaker. I would just be interested to hear if that side of the House will tell us who they're voting for. I know I'm going to follow the Member for Calgary-South East. I voted for Glen Motz in Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner because I'm not ashamed of that. I voted for him because I know that they have a plan to get my family ahead, to get me ahead. I know that they have a plan and a leader who is dedicated to unity in this country and dedicated to making sure that we are not balkanizing and that we are making sure that we have people who will stand up for Alberta and stand up for western Canada and stand up for our interests as well.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I'll relinquish the rest of my time.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe that it was the hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciated the hon. member's remarks, and I appreciate her forthrightness in that she will support the federal Conservative Party in the election, as will I. It seems that the folks on the other side of the House seem less proud of who they're going to support. In fact, they're hiding from it. I would like the hon. member's opinion on, you know, the debate here today and the government motion

that the Legislative Assembly denounce all federal political parties that would enable a provincial government to unilaterally prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines.

The opposition won't support that the way it is, Mr. Speaker. I'd like the hon. member to talk about the fact that our government side of the House is prepared to stand up for Alberta and make that known to the whole nation before the whole nation goes to vote in this national election. I'd like her to comment on the fact that the opposition will not stand up for Alberta and will not stand up for the ability for us to get our natural resources to market, the very thing that allows men and women in Alberta to have jobs, to look after themselves, to look after their families, to pay taxes, to share some of that through their taxes and perhaps through their take-home pay with other people.

We've got members on this side of the House willing to stand up and support that and members from the NDP on the other side of the House that will not stand up for Alberta and have demonstrated through this entire debate that they will not stand up for Alberta, to the point where they're debating things that are completely different to try to distract from the fact that they will not stand up and support Alberta in this federal election at a time when Alberta needs their support more than ever. They're equally responsible to support Alberta, as members of this House are, but they're not doing it, and members on this side of the House are standing up during this debate and saying that we will support a motion that's good for Alberta. The NDP will not. How disappointed is the hon. member in the opposition in refusing constantly through this debate to say that they'll support Alberta?

**The Acting Speaker:** I would just remind members of this hon. House to ask their questions through the chair.

**Ms Glasgo:** Mr. Speaker, may I please ask how much time is left under 29(2)(a)?

**The Acting Speaker:** Currently there are about two minutes and 20 seconds.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you very much. The question was asked if I would elaborate on how disappointed I am that the opposition won't support our motion and, actually, any motion to support Albertans. Fundamentally, I mean, I take this personally because, like I've said, this is my dad that we're talking about. These are people who rely on these jobs to put food on their table. Not only that, but there are people like my uncle; he's a welder. I have cousins who are in different areas of the pipeline industry and the oil industry as well as people who are close to me that are engineers who rely on this stuff. There are pipe fitters. There are tradesmen and tradeswomen of all stripes. It's important to stand up for them.

I know there's heckling from the other side of the House because they are so infuriated that someone would have the tenacity to stand up for Alberta workers, but I actually don't have a problem with that, because they can heckle all they want. At the end of the day, my constituents have given me a mandate, which is to talk about and advocate for Alberta's ethical energy sector as well as the people who work within it. At the end of the day, I mean, it's just really sad that that side of the House can't humble themselves in this House in order to be able to stand here and tell Albertans what they really feel about them.

I mean, it's kind of like there's a contempt for Albertans from that side of the House. We saw it in the last Legislature with, you know, comments like sewer rat, embarrassing cousin, et cetera, and we continue to see it, with people on that side of the House heckling

when somebody has, like I said, the tenacity to talk about Alberta workers and their jobs.

I mean, I would be curious to know how they're voting in the federal election. It's all over Twitter. It's on Facebook. There are people asking in every corner of this province how the NDP will be voting. You know, if they're really so proud of being a New Democrat, then stand up and say it. I'm proud to be a Conservative, which is why I'm standing here right now. The Member for Calgary-South East: he's proud of that, too; he said where he's voting. The Member for Calgary-Hays: he's proud of that as well. I can bet you pretty good money here that every member in this House would stand up and say the name of the MP they're voting for and how proud they are to do that. Unfortunately, that side of the House won't do that. That's despicable, Mr. Speaker.

I know I have about eight seconds left, so I'll just close by saying that I'm very proud to be supporting Andrew Scheer, I'm proud to be supporting a united Canada, and I'm very proud to be supporting Alberta energy.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Speaking to the amendment, the individual who caught my eye was the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I missed the . . . [interjection] Sorry? No. I think I got the call, sir.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member here has the call.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had the chance, well, like some of the folks in the room – on our side of the floor, that is – to actually work in this wonderful industry. I've had a chance to meet tons of folks, both on the Canadian side and the U.S. side. I've had a chance to actually manage these major projects, and I've had a chance to oftentimes, when you're on the road and in hotel rooms or back in the camp, see the members opposite protest vehemently against our industry, vehemently against the men and women that actually put these things together, and against how we ethically produce our product and get it to market.

Honestly, at the time when you're seeing these people on the stage and you're seeing them up there, you make them more than what they are. You look up to them, and you think that they understand what's going on. You obviously want to listen to their perspectives, but, Mr. Speaker, being in the House, seeing these people represent what their interests are, I don't believe they're in our best interests.

Quite frankly, my kids have a reference for that. It's called paper dragons. Everything is scary to a point until you realize that it's just a little cardboard cutout that's been made to be scary. They get divisive politics. Yeah, they really get divisive politics. It's either one absolute or another.

Let me tell you what happened in my area, being a new candidate running against the former agriculture minister, who carried that mandate into a town hall. He got laughed out and heckled out. This is a man who gave four years of his life to represent his constituents and to carry that ideology forward of what the social New Democrats were bringing forward. This man was expounding the same thing about the carbon tax, he was expounding the same thing about environmental protectionism, and he was expounding everything that was anti-Alberta. He got voted out.

The people of this province have spoken time and time and time again. Our Premier is walking across this country and down in the States knitting our provinces back together. Under the guise of the Trudeau government and the former NDP government, they subversively have broken apart this country. I'm a pretty simple

farm boy. I don't often get this loud, Mr. Speaker, but this one – my gosh. My simple message to my constituents in my area was: "Let's take our province back. Let's take it back." And we did. I'm here to represent them.

The second message I gave them was: let's take our country back. There are absolutes. Absolutely, if you go against the pipelines, if you go against this motion that was brought forward – this addendum here: my gosh. My gosh. Can you be more decisive on where you're going to vote and where you actually stand? If you ain't with us, you're against us: how about that for an old western quote? It's pretty simple at this point, at this juncture. Either you're voting for Canada, to keep us in the Confederation, either you're voting for the people in this province to stand up with them, not get their back – how about stepping out in front and taking the bullet for them for a change? Everyone can stand behind and say: "I got your back. I got your back. I got your back." My gosh.

Apparently, none of these folks have actually been in a duster in their life, ever had to sit across the table from those folks, ever had to make those negotiations, ever had to make those sacrifices, ever. You have never met these people. You have never met these men and women. You have never supported this industry, and you'll continue to do that. You'll continue to expound this rhetoric of how you've got the province's back. The province has spoken.

**An Hon. Member:** For now.

4:20

**Mr. Getson:** For now. Forever, my friend. Strong and free forever: there you go. Right up there. Strong and free: that's what this province is.

I just came from a nice little business meeting here this morning. It was the actual folks from the Acheson business community. I had a little canned speech to talk to them about, but – you know what? – in feeling the measure and the temper of that room, it was simple as this: we're standing up. They want someone to push back. They want the province to be proud again. They want to stop hanging their heads in shame. They want this misinformation to be over and done with. It's time to cowboy up, be proud of who we are, what we stand for, and what this province means to the rest of the Confederation. We are Alberta, strong and free.

If you aren't willing as a person to stand in this Legislature and to support this – what we're proposing is a motion to say no. Giving the veto rights to break apart the Confederation is not what we would support. To allow the country to be – I don't know – disheveled and sent apart, scattering and bickering over minor items: it's not allowed. Pick one – pick one – stand up proud, and say it. Stand up in front of Albertans for a change instead of behind their backs. Doing everything behind their backs isn't quite the good thing you should be doing. Getting on their back, standing on it, jumping up and down, freaking out little kids, seniors – the health scare issues, this scare, that scare. We talk about fear and smear. Yeah, I've dealt with bullies my entire life.

You got me off the projects, as a major-projects guy, and you got me into politics. I hope you like your decision, because I'm here to stay, and Albertans are here to stay, too.

There was a gentleman that told me once early in my career: when you get into your 40s, things are as they appear. Well, it appears that any time you go against the Trudeau regime, well, then, you're just not loving the environment. Well, if you go against the concept of doing something with technology and actually using our efforts on our industries and all the people that do the good things, well, then, you don't like the environment.

**Mr. Bilous:** Artificial intelligence: why didn't you fund it?



**Mr. Getson:** Artificial intelligence: I've seen a lot of it in this Chamber recently.

You can have a diverse economy, you can do all these things, but you have to make a choice. This divisiveness has to end.

The amount of environmental protectionism that we go through on a project is astounding. For the average homeowner, it would drive them crazy. We separate the soils. We do the bugs and bunnies reports. We do all the background information. We do siltation and sedimentation control. We offset simply everything that we do. We build an entire road structure out there during the course of construction. We have a moving assembly line by which we're dropping this pipe in the ground at 1.5 clicks a day. We're spending millions of dollars a day. When you're building these big projects from – I don't know – Edmonton down to Chicago, we had 12 spreads going at once, \$12 million a day that we're spending, \$3.5 billion. I've been on those projects. I've managed that.

A lot of the prior experience of the members opposite: I don't know; they sold real estate; they did these other things. Maybe they were social workers. I'm not saying anything against that, but don't stand up here and tell me what it's like, and don't tell me about the coal workers. They're in my area.

One member professed in here earlier that Stephen Harper shut down the coal mines. Oh, my gosh. I felt like it was *Dallas* again, that Pam is waking up and Bobby is in the shower. This is completely a revelation. What happened was that they accelerated the shutdown of a viable asset drastically. Now, these folks put thousands of people out of work because of it.

One of the members had the audacity to dare me to go talk to them personally. I did. I went to the union hall, talked to these guys, and told them exactly what was going on. Mr. Speaker, 15 people in that room, all card-carrying union members, all part of that proud working group out there. We had the hard dialogue: "What's happening with these payments at the end? What's happening with it?" We had the hard dialogue that we have to get back to them, exactly what the minister of labour relations had said earlier. We have to have those hard dialogues: "If you're in the hopper right now, we're dealing with it. We'll tell you on budget day what comes next."

Those people in that room accepted that. At the end of that meeting I asked a simple question: out of you guys, 15 in the room, how many of you voted for me? Twelve, Mr. Speaker. Two didn't. Well, actually, three didn't because they were in different constituencies, but they did vote UCP. One from Edmonton didn't. I think that's pretty reflective of what happens in my community, my area. I'll speak for those men and women out there, and I take exception to somebody else speaking for them, because they elected me. I have never spoken for the Member for Edmonton-Decore ever, but I can't say the same when you start speaking up about my people and my area, rural Alberta, our issues that we're dealing with, the energy sector.

This is a simple one. This amendment: I'm not sure how much parliamentary language I can use to say what I would do with it, but I'd hazard to say that the bottom of a birdcage would be well served by using it. This is not the time to flinch. This is the time, right now, to make sure that we stand strong and that we send a clear message to the rest of Canada and to the investment communities that we are

open for business, that we do mean what we say, and that we're going to stand up and do what's right.

We've been criticized about everything that we've done to go against it. I couldn't believe the dialogues we had here about the carbon tax. What they were concerned about is that Trudeau's carbon tax was going to come in. You know what happened? We got rid of it. The price of gas went down. We got people shaking our hands. They've got a couple of extra bucks in their pockets every month. Then what did they do? "Well, let's just back Trudeau. Maybe if we just, you know, gave more concessions."

I think Winston Churchill spoke up at one point in history about giving concessions to a dictator, giving concessions to someone who just takes more. It didn't work. You have to fight the battles. You don't send somebody else to do it for you, you sure as heck don't stand behind them, and you don't try to negotiate your way out of it. You stand your point. You hold your ground. If you have to negotiate, you do it from a position of strength, not of weakness. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we've been put in a precarious, weak position. The reason why Albertans voted for us: they want some strength; they want some leadership. They don't want the rhetoric. They want the hard decisions to be made, and they want people to do it with honour and integrity, people who can stand up in here and say what their positions are and not be worried about it.

I'm voting Conservative. It might come as a surprise, but I am. I strongly support the candidate in my area, strongly support the message that's coming out there. There's only one party, in my opinion, that wants to be knitting this country back together again and giving that presence and giving that piece of mind to the rest of the investment community and the global stage. What we currently have is a laughingstock. Look at any media outlet that isn't controlled and kept within that little regime. External to this, the world is laughing at us, and they can't trust us. They can't trust what we say. They don't know how to predict what's going to happen next because it's unpredictable.

We're doing it to ourselves. The enemy has been identified, and it's us, so either we fix it . . .

**Mr. Dang:** Who's the enemy?

**Mr. Getson:** Well, would you like me to speak directly to you? It might be unparliamentary, but I'd be more than happy to do it outside.

**Mr. Dang:** Who's the enemy?

**Mr. Getson:** The enemy has been identified, and it's us. If we don't choose to do the right things, we are the enemy, so either you stand up for the people that put you here, you stand up for those mandates, you protect those flags, those colours, our province to keep it part of that nation – it's that simple.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** My gosh, seeing the time, it looks to me to be, unfortunately, 4:30, meaning that under Standing Order 4(2) I believe the House is adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:29 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, October 17, 2019**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1313-26 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1329-31 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1347-57 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve.*), 1357-62 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c8 ]

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c5 ]

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cR-8.2 ]

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c4 ]

**Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c3 ]

**Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1375-83 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c7 ]

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 , passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cP-41.7 ]

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c2 ]

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cF-1.5 ]

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1393-94 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c9 ]

**Bill 13\* — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1345-47 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1383-93 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 cA-33.5 ]

**Bill 14 — Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act (Wilson)**

First Reading — 1654 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1655-77 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft.*), 1679-95 (*Oct. 9, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1708-25 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft.*), 1761 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft.*), 1763-67 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1768-70 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn.*), 1785 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 15 — Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019 (Glubish)**

First Reading — 1707 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1758-61 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1767-68 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1783-85 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 16 — Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 1782 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1810-17 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1817-18 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 17 — Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act (Sawhney)**

First Reading — 1798 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1819-28 (*Oct. 17, 2019 morn., passed*)

**Bill 18 — Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019 (Savage)**

First Reading — 1850 (*Oct. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201\* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 825-38 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 cP-30.6 ]

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 838-40 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft.*), 1115-22 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, October 21, 2019

Day 30

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henda (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

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Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

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Eggen  
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Jones  
Loyola  
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Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

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Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
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Reid  
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Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Feehan  
Guthrie  
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Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

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Loewen  
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Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, October 21, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by the Maryview elementary school choir, and I would invite all members to participate in the language of their choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this afternoon, from the constituency of Red Deer-South – I am so pleased to welcome our very first school choir to sing *O Canada* and to do it on such an important day in Canada – it is my absolute pleasure to welcome Miss Tammy Davis from Maryview elementary. Thank you so, so very much for bringing your class to join us today. You did an absolutely terrific job.

Visiting guests of the Leader of the Official Opposition, Katherine Engel and Ricky McCoshen, please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

Also in the galleries today are guests of the Minister of Transportation visiting from the motherland of many of you, I am sure, the province of Saskatchewan. Marilyn and Wayne Elhard, please rise.

And last but certainly not least: the better half of the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, Ms Donna Hanson.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has a statement to make.

### Election Day

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

'Twas the day of the election, and all through the Leg.  
Politicians were stirring, their people's futures unhedged.  
Party platforms were etched in their minds with great care  
And hopes the next morn wouldn't wake to a nightmare.

Our government was restless, not snug in our seats,  
With dreams of built pipelines, balanced budgets,  
support for our beef.  
Our opposition still hadn't voted  
As none of their options were quite what they'd hoped.

But suddenly on Twitter there arose such a clatter,  
I rose to my feet to see what was the matter.  
I turned on my Windows, hit refresh, refresh:  
Another scandal for Justin Trudeau, perhaps?

Albertans skipped work to get out and vote.  
To all Liberals on the ballot they promptly checked "nope."  
Jobs are depleting, the country at war,  
And all they wanted was something to live for.

So goodbye Goodale, McKenna, Sohi, and Morneau.  
Let's elect Cummings, Lilly, Blake Richards, John Barlow  
To the highest of cabinets, to the top of the chain.  
Today Albertans pray Conservatives will reign.

The clock strikes 6. Politicians go home  
But really to a place where much beer is poured.  
The fate of the country they love and serve dear  
Awaits its verdict for the next four years.

Will identity politics, global embarrassment, and  
mismanagement win, too,  
Or will a leader with competence, compassion, and  
principles pull through?  
Four more years of Justin Trudeau the grim:  
Will Andrew Scheer win these voters with his dimply grin?

Also, cuts to corporate welfare, overspending, foreign aid,  
Energy corridors, and tax breaks sure all sound great.  
Conservatives speak the language of the west.  
I just hope the east sees a united Canada best.

So today I stand here to proudly state clear  
That I will be voting for the Andrew Scheer.  
Our country needs leadership, ethics, and care  
And to ensure this election is won by much more than a hair.

So dress in your woolies from head to toe,  
There are only six more hours to go hit the polls.  
Go start your trucks, give your friends a whistle,  
And elect a federal government that isn't such a thistle.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has the call.

### Public Health Care

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When Albertans are consulted, they frequently cite public health care as a defining characteristic of Canada and a primary factor in their pride in being Canadian. But it seems that this pride is waning on the other side of the House. Health care guarantees are not worth the cardboard they're printed on, and instead of investments in health care we keep hearing about cuts to finance a \$4.5 billion giveaway and more American-style health care in Alberta.

On this side of the House we're proud to be Albertan Canadians and proud that public health care was initiated by NDP leader and greatest Canadian Tommy Douglas. We were also proud, during our time in office, to have shown significant support for Albertans' well-being by hiring 4,000 nurses, building the Calgary cancer centre, committing to the south Edmonton hospital, and ending parking lot medicine in rural Alberta.

What we see coming from this government, however, is an insidious agenda to deprive Albertans of what they want the most, strong, affordable, universally accessible health services. With the

cancellation of the Edmonton lab services building construction and the failure to support Bill 203 in committee, we can see that the UCP is bent on bringing down the excellent public services available to Albertans and bringing in American-style, two-tiered health care, with boutique services for the wealthy and diminished services for the rest of us.

Here is yet another time when we see the UCP ignoring the research in order to impose their rigid ideology on the province. Canadian and international research tells us that increasing private systems reduces resources to the public system, results in long wait times for people without money, and does not provide better results. Private services lack accountability as Alberta Health Services cannot obtain universal health records. The commodification of medical care benefits only the few, ignoring the everyday, hard-working Albertans who, with the trauma of illness, are burdened enough without the added strain of financial barriers to their well-being. Albertans deserve better, and I'm calling on this government to reconsider and not go down this dangerous route.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

### Small Business Week

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is Small Business Week, when we celebrate the small businesses across our province. My own riding of Camrose has many wonderful small businesses, whether you're walking down the historical main street of Camrose or in many of the communities that I'm proud to represent. You can truly see that they are the economic engine of our province.

Last week I had the opportunity to attend the Camrose chamber of commerce excellence in business awards. These awards celebrated businesses, with awards ranging from small business of the year to young entrepreneur of the year. These businesses contribute heavily to my community, whether it be by offering employment, selling goods, or even sponsoring the local youth sports team.

It was great to see them being celebrated because, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's small businesses deserve recognition and celebration. Small-business owners are dreamers. They have a vision, and they work tirelessly to carry it out. Small businesses hire local employees. They invest in their communities, they find innovative ways to meet a need in their community, and they contribute in countless ways. Small businesses in our province make up 98 per cent of all businesses and are responsible for 45 per cent of private-sector employment. Together they form the foundation of Alberta's economy. Each of us here in this Chamber knows of a small business that has made an indelible impact on their neighbourhood or their community, whether it's a family member, friend, or just someone you see as they tirelessly open their business every morning and close it every night.

1:40

After four years of unpredictability under the NDP – the carbon tax, countless other barriers to starting or growing a business – our government is making Alberta the best place to start a business or raise a family. I'm proud to be part of a government that will make it easier for small-business owners.

As we celebrate Small Business Week, I encourage all Albertans to take some time to recognize and support local business.

### Climate Change Strategy

**Mr. Schmidt:** On Friday I joined thousands upon thousands of Albertans concerned about climate change at the climate strike here on the steps of the Legislature. We were joined by the founder of the climate strike movement, Greta Thunberg, who addressed the

rally. She reminded us of what the best science on climate change tells us, that to avoid catastrophic global warming, we have only eight years left to get our carbon emissions under control. She urged all of us to treat this like the emergency that it is, to set aside the partisan bickering, and to unite behind the science and get the job done. While the UCP chairman and the rest of his crew wanted to smear this little girl's reputation, portraying her as a communist and sending his former staff members to harass and intimidate her, she rose above and sought to unite us all in action. Our main enemy is not our partisan political opponents, she reminded us; our main enemy is physics.

Albertans need to start planning now for a low-carbon future. The good news is that the tools we need for creating this future are at hand. Investments in energy efficiency; renewable energy; clean, affordable public transportation; and reducing methane emissions will produce real, immediate results. Used correctly, these tools can also be used to make sure that every Albertan has a job that can support their families, allow them to live in prosperity, and retire with dignity.

Planning for a low-carbon future may be the greatest task that Albertans have ever had to undertake, but Albertans have never been scared to take on tough jobs. We don't make excuses. We don't wait for others to do the job for us. We just roll up our sleeves and use our skills and ingenuity to get the job done. We've only got eight years left, Alberta. Let's get to work.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane has risen.

### Chester Mjolsness

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a man that epitomizes the heart of my constituency, Chester Mjolsness. Chester is one of the founders of Spray Lake Sawmills in the town of Cochrane. Last year the mill celebrated its 75th anniversary, and this year, in fact last week, on October 14 Chester celebrated his 100th birthday. Chester was born in Didsbury and grew up on a family farm west of Sundre, and he resides in the area today. At a young age he lost his father and began cutting wood to help his mother make ends meet. In 1943 he founded the sawmill and was joined by his brother Lloyd a few years later. With determination and dedication to his dream he laid the foundation for what became an industry-leading sustainable forest management operation which now employs about 400 people. In 1980 Chester stepped away from the sawmill and passed the reins on to his son Barry, but – make no mistake – his presence is felt throughout the company, and his legacy is strong.

Chester and his family, along with many generous donors, in 2001 funded the construction of Spray Lake Sawmills Family Sports Centre in Cochrane. This centre is used by thousands and is a focal point for families, sports enthusiasts, seniors, and the entire community. Chester's positive impact reaches beyond our constituency. To recognize and honour Chester's lifelong commitment to hard work, leadership, and his faith, Ambrose University introduced Mjolsness Hall, an area that houses the library and academic offices.

Chester's philosophy is simple: live with integrity, keep your word, build relationships, give back, and trust God. There are many examples that demonstrate Mr. Mjolsness' commitment to his family, friends, and community, but I'm only afforded two minutes here, so thank you for all that you've done. Happy 100th birthday, Chester.

**The Speaker:** Chester, indeed, is a good man.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you. Over the past few months I have been meeting with students and staff across Alberta, and one message has come through crystal clear: now more than ever we must invest in education and postsecondary education in particular. We have an important and time-sensitive moment to act on immediately. Alberta has the fastest growing youth population in Canada. Students currently in grade school will require thousands more postsecondary spaces than what is currently available here in Alberta's colleges, universities, and trade colleges. We need to invest, not make cuts.

Furthermore, we cannot afford to delay progress on diversifying Alberta's economy. Our colleges and universities are the most powerful tool that we have to nurture and support industry and the knowledge economy. Each dollar we invest in research and development and the education and training of our population will pay us back exponentially in terms of good-paying jobs, economic development, and financial security.

The alternative is grim: thousands of students will be denied postsecondary training because there are no spaces available or they simply won't be able to afford to go to school; instructors and support staff laid off, resulting in lower quality education; a lack of investment in capital projects, resulting in crumbling classrooms and research facilities; graduation and completion rates will decline. All of this will combine to reduce the competitiveness of our province, resulting in a further decline in investment and job creation.

Students need affordable tuition and access to programs. Colleges, universities, and training programs of all types need to be supported and expanded, not cut. For the sake of Albertans today and tomorrow, we must invest in and support postsecondary education. Our future depends on it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Front-line Public Service Workers

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm standing in this House to recognize the exhausting and often thankless work of teachers, nurses, and other front-line public service workers in this province, many of whom live and work in my constituency. These people are unsung heroes among us. They may never get accolades, awards, or even a simple thank you, but everyone in this room should think of a front-line worker they know who deserves all of that and more.

This is why I'm committed to our government's mandate of ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. We must be confident in taxpayer investments equalling improved services that are accessible to all. Finding the balance between fiscal prudence and delivery of world-class public services is no easy task but one that is absolutely necessary to ensuring that Albertans receive the best possible value for investment in their public services.

You see, Mr. Speaker, as we move into a position where we must make difficult fiscal decisions, I have no doubt that my colleagues on this side of the House recognize the value brought by our public service workers. The opposition often misdirects the focus from this absolute responsibility of budgetary realities, but in my view it is this requirement that shows true respect to teachers and nurses across our province and ensures the best outcomes for our children and patients.

Currently we are spending \$2.5 million an hour on our health care in this province. That's not \$2.5 million a week or even a day; that is \$2.5 million per hour. Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying that our expenditure isn't worth it or that it doesn't help people, but should

it not be one of our most urgent responsibilities to make sure that every single cent of that \$2.5 million is spent in the most effective, transparent, and responsible way possible? We owe it to our valued public-sector workers to make the right financial decisions that will lead to the effective provision of world-class services for all.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### South Sudanese Community Round-table

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend in Calgary members of Calgary's South Sudanese community held a youth emergency crisis round-table on Saturday. The round-table was to discuss recent tragedies among the members of the community and included mental health experts and government leaders, with the goal to encourage the discussion of mental health wellness and addiction recovery within families.

Mr. Speaker, this community is suffering and needs supports. As many as six young people in the community have died due to overdose or suicide since September. That is more than one a week. The mothers in this community are desperate to find solutions to this crisis, to save their children. They ran away from their war-torn countries to find a better, safe life for their families and children, only to face a different enemy. The mothers at the round-table made it very clear that they know that the desperately needed supports are out there, and they want to see action taken to help them.

The associate minister of mental health said that his presence at the round-table demonstrated how seriously they are addressing the issue, that his government supports a full continuum, from prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery. But, Mr. Speaker, these aren't answers for these mothers. They need concrete action, not empty words. The minister needs to step up and support the mental health issues being faced in this community and communities across this province by ensuring that the funding necessary is in place to meet the needs of Albertans. To fail to do so will put lives at risk. When this happens, he should explain to mothers across this province why their children will have to pay for the \$4.5 billion giveaway to corporations instead of the supports that they need.

Thank you.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, in the last election the Premier promised over and over again that he wouldn't cut education and that students wouldn't have to pay for his 4 and a half billion dollar corporate handout. In January he said that he didn't need to cut 20 per cent or even 10 per cent to balance the books against his corporate giveaway, but now we have internal memos from Mount Royal University showing that every department is planning for a 25 per cent cut over three years. To the Premier: why did folks over there choose to mislead students and their families in the last election?

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Mr. Speaker, of course, at the moment we're working through the details of the MacKinnon panel report and taking a close look at our finances. An important point to note: when it comes to spending in postsecondary education, over the past decade there's been over a 106 per cent increase, far outpacing inflationary growths and enrolment growths. We're working very closely with our institutions to ensure that we can get the most bang for our buck when it comes to postsecondary delivery.



**Ms Notley:** Well, the misrepresentation does not stop there. The UCP platform said that he would “maintain operating spending at current levels . . . to balance the [books] . . . without compromising core services.” Now, Mr. Speaker, I don’t know about you, but a 25 per cent cut does not sound like maintaining spending, but it does sound like severely compromised core services to me. To the Premier. It’s election day. Should Canadians from coast to coast expect the same demonstration of dishonesty from your pal Andrew Scheer in Ottawa?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, it’s well known that we will be rolling a budget out this coming week, this Thursday, and we will be rolling a budget out that Albertans elected us to deliver on. It will work to clean up the irresponsibility that we inherited from the previous government around financial management in this province.

**Ms Notley:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, the problem with misrepresentation is that Albertans voted for them to maintain operational spending and not cut core services, so that’s not what they voted for. This Premier’s Advanced Education minister had the nerve to tell this House that students didn’t want the tuition freeze, but the Council of Alberta University Students disagrees. Instead, they say that the freeze continues to save students and their families thousands and has made their education more affordable. To the Premier. Explain this to students: why should their tuition go up just to pay for your 4 and a half billion dollar corporate handout?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, what Albertans voted for was a government that would stand up for them. This hon. member, the leader of the NDP, admitted over the weekend that in advance polls she voted for the NDP, who are led by a leader who said, and I quote: when it came to TMX, I am firmly opposed to the pipeline; I’ve been opposed to it; I will continue to fight against it, and that is absolutely one of my priorities. So the question is this: how many times is the NDP, whether in opposition or in government, going to sell out Albertans to their eastern socialist overlords?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** At least, I know that when I vote for Heather McPherson, she’s going to fight for Alberta, and she is not going to go to Alberta and make a bunch of cuts that she misrepresented to the people of Alberta or Canada.

### Alberta Energy Regulator Funding

**Ms Notley:** Now, the Premier promised Albertans he would review the AER to speed up approvals. What he didn’t say is that he would be gutting the regulator, sacrificing crucial oversight and quality. The AER’s president says that they’re anticipating making cuts of 18 per cent in just one year. The Premier can’t have it both ways. He can’t speed up approvals and slash funding by almost 20 per cent. To the Premier. Your platform promised responsible energy development. Why did you mislead Albertans?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, that hon. member belongs to a party who – she confirmed that she voted for a leader who said, when referring to the TMX: I definitely don’t believe in expanding it; I’m clear on that; I don’t believe in expanding TMX. The hon. leader of the NDP has just confirmed yet again that she will not condemn her leader federally in his attack on this province and,

instead, went and voted for him. She voted for him again. So again my question to them is: how many times is the NDP going to sell out Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to protecting the energy industry, this Premier’s promises always seem to be at odds with his actions. With massive cuts of 18 per cent, he’s practically begging the regulator to cut corners, roll the dice in our largest industry, and brutalize our international reputation. This means sacrificing landowners, letting workers do unsafe work, and letting down all those who depend on higher environmental standards. Again to the Premier: why did the people over there misrepresent their plans to Albertans?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, why does the NDP continue to misrepresent themselves to Albertans? They say one moment that they’re for pipelines, and then the leader of the NDP admits she voted for a leader who said of a project like Trans Mountain: I’ve been very clear that that’s a project I don’t think should go ahead. That is a quote from their very leader. So are they for Trans Mountain, or are they standing with their leader and they’re against it? It’s a very simple question: are they for Trans Mountain, or are they against it? The fact that the hon. member admitted that she voted for a leader who is anti Trans Mountain, anti-Alberta is shameful. Again to them: how many times are they going to sell out Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Nine years of a Conservative government in Ottawa, a Conservative government in Edmonton, a Conservative government in Victoria, and no pipeline under construction. Four years under our leadership, and the pipeline is under way. I know what I stand for. I know what I worked for this whole time. I know I got shovels in the ground. Those folks over there sat around dithering for nine years with nothing standing in the way. But now what they’re going to do is undercut our international representation by gutting the AER. Why, Mr. Speaker? Why?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy has risen.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For four years the NDP did not defend our energy sector. Instead, they spent four years in pursuit of a so-called social licence. But their social licence turned out to be nothing more than a one-and-done deal with Justin Trudeau, a deal that saw one pipeline approved but not built and, in return, a deal that saw Energy East killed, Northern Gateway killed, a carbon tax, Bill C-69, Bill C-48. That is the NDP legacy, a failed social licence and a one-and-done deal with Justin Trudeau. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen with a question.

### Commercial Driver Training and Testing Standards

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Transportation changes course every day when it comes to whether or not he’s committing to listening to the parents of the Humboldt bus tragedy and taking real action to make our roads safe. His office told the *Globe and Mail* they would no longer exempt 6,800 school bus drivers and truck drivers that earned a class 1 or class 2 licence while new testing standards were being introduced, but the minister said the exact opposite in a letter to the *Edmonton Journal*. To the Premier. Maybe you can sort out your minister’s mess. Are you exempting drivers or not?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've told the hon. member several times – but I'll say it again because he's not getting the message – MELT is here to stay. Of course, we're giving a little more time to qualify for MELT to the agriculture industry and a little more time to the school bus drivers, actually an exemption that that member's government put in place and that we extended because of the mess that they left with driver examiners. But the higher standards are here to stay for safety.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have continued to talk to the families of the Humboldt bus tragedy in recent days, and they have said that they won't stop until all school bus and truck drivers undergo the more strict testing that comes with the new, mandatory entry-level training program. But this Premier and this minister continue to hedge. To the Premier. We know you love giving billions in political favours to big corporations, but are you really willing to listen to lobbyists over the families of people that were lost in the Humboldt bus tragedy?

2:00

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, unlike the past NDP government, we actually listen to all Albertans. We have a special spot in our heart for the families of the Humboldt tragedy, and we did listen to them. Some of the decisions that we made were as a direct result of conversations that I had with them, and I'm happy about that. I'm actually pleased that they took the time to talk to our government, and I would say to them that our government listened carefully. We pointed out where we made changes.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister did meet with the Humboldt families that travelled to this Legislature last Wednesday, and I thank him for that. But Shauna Nordstrom, who lost her son Logan in the tragedy, left the meeting feeling even more frustrated. On Friday she sent us the following: "We are not stopping this battle. Today is my day to cry and wish my son was here and not gone because of this corruption." Minister, you need to answer this grieving mother. Are you going to immediately end the corruption in the trucking industry with stricter training and testing? Yes or no?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's sad that the hon. member won't acknowledge that the tragedy that happened was under their government, but the fact is that it's more important that these were systemic problems that needed to be solved. One of the solutions is to institute the MELT program, mandatory entry-level training, that came out of the United States of America. What I told the Humboldt families, which is what I've told this member in this House many times, is that, yes, those standards will be implemented. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call and no one else.

### Education Funding

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, among the hundreds of Albertans I had the opportunity to meet during our opposition's budget town halls this fall was 12-year-old Ricky McCoshen. He came to our budget town hall in Grande Prairie amid fears that this UCP government would make, I quote, the same Conservative cuts, end quote, to education as those imposed by the

Doug Ford government in Ontario. To the Premier: Ricky is here today with his mother, Katherine. Will you promise him and all Alberta youth that you will not make cuts like Doug Ford did in Ontario in this Thursday's budget?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has risen.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were very transparent in our platform during the election that we were not going to cut K to 12 education funding. We will be rolling out a budget this Thursday that honours that commitment to Albertans. More importantly, it will be a budget that is responsible and a budget that will bring this province back to balance within four years.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, Ricky is right to be worried. The Financial Accountability Officer in Ontario estimates that that province will lose about 10,000 teachers over the next five years due to the cuts from Doug Ford. School councils in Ontario have also taken a cut, and it was announced yesterday that their Catholic teachers will vote on a province-wide strike action next month. To the Premier: is this really the type of chaos that you want to bring to Alberta and to classrooms where students like Ricky are trying to learn?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for that. Again, I've been clear with Albertans that we will honour our commitment to maintain education funding. My question would be, through you to the member across the way: does the member have any ambitions to run for office in Ontario as those Ontario issues seem to be of great concern to that member?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I dare say that members of government have spent a great deal more time in Ontario in the last while than I have. Thank you.

Now, Ricky attended our budget town hall, 1 of 8 that we held across this province while repeatedly calling on this government to consult with Albertans, too. Their response: a 90-minute, heavily controlled telephone town hall and a UCP postbudget fundraiser that's exclusive to their donors. Now, I imagine they will say again that the election was their consultation, but to the Premier: will you point me to when during that election you explained to Albertans why a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate handout is more important than teachers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a privilege to actually reach out to Albertans not only during those two telephone town halls but also throughout this whole summer as I travelled around to communities.

In terms of the job-creation tax cut, which we are absolutely confident will return investment to this province, while the opposition does not believe us, perhaps they'll believe economists who say this. I quote Kevin Milligan, *Maclean's*. "All taxes harm the economy in some way, so the job of raising taxes involves a choice among bad options. Most economists agree that corporate taxes are the most harmful . . ." [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will have order. You might not like the answer, but he does have the opportunity to provide it.

You have 10 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I'll say it again. From Kevin Milligan in *Maclean's*: "Most economists agree that corporate taxes are the most harmful among [all] choices" in the tax category.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

### Municipal Funding and Autonomy

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many municipalities, large and small, serving the people of the constituency of Central Peace-Notley, which I serve. I've heard from numerous municipal officials about the previous feast-or-famine nature of municipal funding and their lack of ability to plan ahead in their budgets. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs please tell this House how our government intends to provide efficient and sustainable infrastructure funding to municipalities so that they can make long-term budgets and plan for the services and projects they provide the people in their jurisdictions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government is committed to ensuring that all municipalities have predictable, long-term funding. The NDP had time to get a long-term funding deal done with the two big cities, but it left everybody else in the dark. They picked winners and losers. We are not going to do that. We spent the entire summer consulting with municipalities. We have done the hard work. I will look forward to updating this House on how we are going to bring stability to municipal funding when we table our budget later this week.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that this government wishes to work with municipalities in reducing red tape and to streamline regulatory approvals and decision-making so they can officially accomplish the work they do on behalf of their residents and given that this government has amended the Municipal Government Act to allow municipalities to offer property tax incentives to attract investment and development, can the minister please comment on how these changes to provincial regulation and paperwork for Alberta's municipalities will allow them to pass on those savings to taxpayers?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, we have made tremendous efforts to cut red tape and reduce regulatory bottlenecks, that will save our municipal officials time and money. In fact, we are one of the leading departments on this front. I was proud to announce the following changes at the AUMA conference. I was also proud to defend Bill 7, which will empower our municipalities to offer property tax incentives and create jobs. We ran on a platform that puts jobs and the economy first, and we are keeping our promises.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the answer. Given that positive partnerships between municipalities and the provincial government allow for long-range planning of community priorities and given that municipal governments are on the front lines for the people they serve for the needs of their communities, can the minister explain how this government will

provide municipalities with more autonomy while ensuring transparency and accountability to all Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and once again to the member for the question. Municipalities are indeed the closest level of government to all people. We are continuing to work on the municipal measurement index, which will provide transparency for everyday Albertans and municipal officials. We also are strengthening municipal autonomy by listening and taking action to reduce red tape, advancing MSI funds, and working with Treasury Board on a long-term, predictable funding model.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Rural Police Service

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Justice minister may claim that rural municipalities aren't concerned about his plan to change the funding formula for rural policing, but I'm going to quote directly from a submission of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta: if anything, it will reduce the level of policing in rural areas if municipalities must reallocate funds used for enhanced policing or other public safety services to pay their share of front-line police costs. End quote. To the minister: are you really trying to claim that RMA is onside with your rural police cut?

2:10

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, last week we wrapped up our consultation with municipalities across Alberta. We've been listening, and we've been very, very clear that we're talking about more policing. If we do review the model, it will result in additional money coming into policing.

Also, concerns have been raised by the mayors of Brooks, Wetaskiwin, and Lacombe about the comments of the leader of that party over there and the misrepresentation of the facts for political theatre. When are they going to apologize to Albertans for their misrepresentation about rural policing?

**Ms Ganley:** When is the minister going to apologize for misrepresenting RMA's position?

Given that RMA's submission is being backed up by a number of rural counties and given that a Northern Sunrise county councillor said that the proposal from the minister is just, quote, a clear downloading, point-blank, and given that the government rushed to hand over \$4.5 billion to big corporations but Northern Sunrise county is getting nothing but a tax burden for its residents, to the minister: won't you admit that rural counties will have to raise taxes on their residents to maintain police services, or do you not understand your own proposal?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members will know that preambles aren't allowed after question 4, and that was a perfect example of what is not allowed.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, it's like we're in an alternate reality here where the NDP is passionate about rural crime after being silent for four years. Weeks ago I invited that exact member to come to a rural crime town hall and hear from Albertans about their NDP legacy on rural crime. Come to Rocky Mountain House. I'll even pay the transportation costs personally for that member to come to Rocky Mountain House and hear about their legacy on rural crime and their absolute failure to deal with this issue.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that the minister continues to deflect instead of answering questions about rural policing and given that the reeve of the municipal district of Smoky River was quoted in the local paper as stating that the province's plan to download policing costs could eat up "15 to 20 per cent" of the district's budget and that those numbers were "crazy," to the minister: will you finally answer the question? Are taxes in places like Smoky River going to go up to pay for your rural policing cut?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we're still waiting to hear if that member is willing to come and hear about their legacy on rural crime. Again, I'm willing to personally pay for her transportation costs to get to Rocky Mountain House. Come and hear about your legacy. Albertans are living in fear. One thing that I've heard – we've met with over a thousand people in our town halls. We've had over 5,000 submissions about rural crime. We're at a crisis point on rural crime. That is that member's legacy. That is the former government's legacy on rural crime. We are listening. We are making sure that we are dedicated to fully implementing our campaign commitments on rural crime. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** One thing I can hear is the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Perhaps when he doesn't have the call, he would prefer to remain silent.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Education Funding (continued)

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many MLAs participated in Read In Week, including the Minister of Education. I think that's great. The teachers and principals that the minister met shared their most pressing needs for their schools and students. Will the minister please share with this Assembly what they told her she could do to help them?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. What I hear constantly from our students and from our staff is that they want a world-class education system, and that's what we're going to deliver.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that perhaps more specifically the minister was told that they need more resources, more educational assistants, and more teachers and given that the minister has been priming us for cuts to education, saying don't worry, that she'll fix the formula, will the minister please tell this House who she believes is overfunded and why she couldn't vote fast enough for a \$4.5 billion no-jobs corporate handout but has nothing to give to teachers and students?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. When I spoke with students and staff, they continually shared their dreams for what education is. What they said was that they want a world-class, high-quality education, and that is what we're going to deliver on. If I can go on to say, it's just another example of the constant NDP fear tactics, and they're continually wrong. We said we're going to maintain funding for education. There are no cuts to education. That's where it's going to be at.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that when I asked the minister what she heard and she starts reading from a binder, I don't think that shows a very

deep level of understanding of that conversation that was happening, Mr. Speaker, and given that students like Ricky shouldn't have to be in a class of 40 students and that the ATA president believes that 42 will become the norm and given that the Minister of Education and Minister of Finance can't keep their stories straight, claiming that they will fund enrolment out of one side of their mouth and then claiming that they'll freeze funding out the other, will the minister admit that while she may fund enrolment in this Thursday's budget – I emphasize the word "may"; she may fund enrolment – she will be taking deep cuts from other areas of the budget to pay for it?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, complaining about the minister looking at her binder at the same time as the hon. member is looking at a piece of paper to ask the question is very, very rich.

But, again, I have a question for the hon. member. Her leader of her party says that he is firmly opposed to the TMX pipeline. He says he's been opposed to it. He will continue to fight against it; it's absolutely one of his priorities. Then her leader . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Hon. members, we will have order.  
The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Then her leader . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member from Edmonton-Glenora, immediately post me asking for order, you chose to create disorder. It is not appreciated by the House, including not appreciated by Ricky, likely.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Then her leader admitted that she voted for her federal leader even though he is against TMX. Mr. Speaker, we know how the leader of the NDP in this House voted. I'm curious. How did the acting leader of the NDP vote? Did she vote against pipelines? Did she sell out Albertans yet again?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

#### Rural Health Care

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural Alberta has unique challenges in the delivery of health care. Due to the costliness of delivering medical services, many have to travel hundreds of kilometres to find a hospital or to see a specialist. These challenges were and are currently exacerbated by the previous government's desire to centralize services and structure, preventing appropriate and timely local care from developing. To the minister: is our government working to enable local service providers such as HALO air ambulance in my riding so that solutions can be developed for local matters?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, our government believes very strongly in working with our community partners. Certainly, it's an issue for the AHS review, how to balance the efficiency of province-wide services with the ability to make the right kinds of decisions locally. As I've said before, HALO is a great community partnership, and I expect it to continue. AHS is going to review all of the helicopter partners to make sure that they're funded fairly based on their distinct roles.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the reply. Given that emergency department wait times have increased and given that in rural Alberta there is already often a lengthy drive, over an hour in some parts of my riding, just to get

to a hospital and given that these distances force people to wait even longer for important treatment, what is our government doing to get on track in order to improve ER wait times and accessibility for rural Albertans?

**Mr. Shandro:** I share the member's concern, Mr. Speaker. We campaigned on improving access to the health system, and that means the system as a whole. To reduce delays in emergency, we need to free up hospital beds for patients who are waiting to be admitted. To do that, we're bringing back the successful ASLI partnership to build more continuing care beds. This is the program, of course, that was cancelled by the NDP. We also need to do more care outside of emergency through approaches like telehealth so that patients can get more care without going to the hospital, including advance services like stroke care and rehab.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that rural constituents must often travel long distances to the nearest doctor or hospital and given our government's commitment to expanding the role of nurse practitioners in Alberta so that they can take on more jobs that used to require a doctor and given that in September our government made a commitment to spend \$3 million on nurse practitioners in rural Alberta, can the minister comment on how this investment will improve access to rural health care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great question. Thank you to the hon. member for it. I want to emphasize that we designed the nurse practitioner initiative to increase access in rural areas, and it will make a real difference. The 30 new nurse practitioners are targeted to primary care, an area where they haven't been working traditionally, in places that are currently underserved, almost all outside of Calgary and Edmonton. We're also looking at other ways to increase access to primary care. For example, we're planning to increase midwifery services, and we're looking at alternative payment plans for physicians to build on the team approach for our primary care networks.

2:20

### Climate Change Strategy

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, we all remember when the Premier handed out earplugs in this House to drown out the concerns of Albertans, and we remember when this government put posters in the windows of the Legislature offices to troll people at a rally calling for action on climate change. Then on Friday, with the largest rally in history here on the steps of the Legislature, this government's staff refused to attend and shut their blinds. To whichever minister is allowed to answer this question: do you feel that the actions you and your staff have taken to drown out Albertans are appropriate, and will you apologize to the thousands gathered Friday on the steps of the Legislature?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I see the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar continues to want to distract from what the real question of the day is, and that is the federal election and the fact that his leader has admitted that she voted for a federal leader who is antipipeline and anti-Alberta oil and gas, who has a platform that only mentioned this province once, so we know that the provincial NDP leader sold out Albertans yet again. My question to that hon. member: is he standing with Alberta in this election, or is he selling out to his overlords in eastern Canada?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we continually get lectured on backing winners and losers and given that they're clearly backing the loser, Andrew Scheer, and given that this Premier was quoted as saying that the Legislature was the people's house, can he answer the question? Which people was he referring to, those asking for a \$4.5 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** This side of the House stands up for Alberta oil and gas, stands up for our province, stands up for our constitutional rights. That member and his former government sold out Albertans at every corner. In fact, their leader said: we would also specifically assure Quebec that there would be no pipelines imposed on Quebec. That's who their leader voted for. That's who their party leader stands for. She stands with Quebec, not with this province. So answer the question. Mr. Speaker, through you to him: is he voting for Alberta, or is he voting for his eastern overlords?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, given that the member opposite couldn't build a pipeline with a welding torch and a flashlight in his own hand and given that this Finance minister is going to have a budget town hall with only party fundraisers, to the Premier: how much do the protesters demanding action on climate change have to donate to his political party in order to be heard?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this side of the House is taking concrete action when it comes to climate change. I look forward to tabling TIER in just a few days, unlike the former government . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** Tell that to the crowds of indigenous people leading that protest.\*

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . who was all economic pain and no environmental gain with their tax. But here is what's even more appalling. Their federal leader described Alberta as a bargaining chip in a potential coalition federally.

**Mr. Feehan:** You don't care about the indigenous people or . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we will have order.

**Mr. Hunter:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted.

The Government House Leader still has the call.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Their leader described Alberta as a bargaining chip in a potential federal negotiation, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is much more than a bargaining chip. It is offensive that they've done that. Will they apologize for voting for him and apologize for selling out Albertans once again?

### Greta Thunberg's Visit to Alberta

**Ms Renaud:** Albertans are friendly, welcoming, and courteous. We are excited when visitors come to our beautiful and vibrant province. Thousands of Albertans came to the Legislature to meet 16-year-old Greta Thunberg and to join her in the call for action on climate change. But the night before an employee of Rebel media harassed Greta and followed her to her hotel room. To the Minister of Status of Women, do you think it was okay for a man to harass Greta, and will you condemn this terrible action here and now?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much for the question. As always, and I would agree with the member that Alberta is welcoming and Alberta is very gracious. We have such a wonderful opportunity to show what we're made of here, that we are the best producers of the

\*\*See page 1908, right column, paragraph 7

most ethical oil and the most wonderful opportunity to be able to get those products to pipeline and to make sure that we stand up for Albertans in this province. We welcome all people. We would welcome anybody who has the opportunity to come and speak to us about our incredible opportunities here.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that in this House we should take steps to ensure that everyone, whether residing or visiting, feels safe in Alberta and given that the Minister of Community and Social Services introduced a bill just last week that she says will provide more support and protection to women, to the minister: will you please take action today and make sure that Rebel media is barred from all government press conferences and government interviews until they apologize for their employee's disgusting harassment of Greta Thunberg?

**Mrs. Aheer:** I would like to again state for the record, Mr. Speaker, that this province has welcomed various people from all over the world to be able to share the message of what it is that we do in this province, the most ethical oil. The fact is that we are standing up for our province and for human rights issues while there are members in this House who actively work every single day against every single Albertan in this province to make sure that not only our products don't make it to tidewater, but on top of that, making sure that we get our ethical products to other countries to help them out.

**Ms Renaud:** You can't condemn Rebel media.

Given that we also saw a mural of Thunberg painted near this Legislature defaced over the weekend and given that I haven't seen anyone from the government of Alberta condemn this act and given that the world is watching as she toured our province, to the Minister of Community and Social Services: do you worry that the tone that your government set about Thunberg's visit is encouraging these disgusting acts?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the opposition would use this despicable act to link in any way to government is absolutely ridiculous. The fact that . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Hon. members, I understand that this is a very passionate issue, but we've heard the question; we must be able to hear the answer.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Of course, we condemn that act. Of course, everybody in this House should condemn that act, but the fact that the opposition would use that opportunity, especially a 16-year-old little girl, use that little girl to make it somehow linked to government or everyday Albertans in this House is absolutely ludicrous. We condemn the act, absolutely.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has risen to ask a question.

### Red Tape Reduction

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the previous government Alberta was given a failing grade from the CFIB on their red tape report card. Our government has made it clear that reduction of red tape is priority. As part of this initiative we created the Associate Ministry of Red Tape Reduction and appointed his honour, the associate minister, to this role; however, there is still much yet to be accomplished. My question to the associate minister: with January approaching, how can we be certain that we will be able to obtain more than a failing grade on our red tape report card next time around?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we are actually doing something about it, unlike the NDP did in the past four years. Our job creators have been feeling for the past years that they are being crushed by what they call death by a thousand cuts. The NDP added a 20 per cent increase to corporate taxes, they added over a hundred pages of legislation to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and numerous other measures that sent a strong message to our job creators and innovators that Alberta was not open for business. Within the first six months of our mandate we sent a new message to those hard-working men and women that put it all on the line: we are open for business.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Associate Minister. Given that the associate minister can confirm that important red tape reductions are indeed taking place, particularly for the many small, independent businesses that drive the economies of ridings like Livingstone-Macleod, to the same minister: when will we be able to see evidence that the Associate Ministry of Red Tape Reduction is making a difference for every Albertan?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, we're already seeing lots of evidence, but the first thing we did was start by counting all of the red tape in government. By measuring and identifying where those regulatory pinch points are, we can fix legislation and regulations so that our job creators can do what they do best, create jobs and jump-start the economy. It is with them that our job crisis will be fixed, so we need to get out of their way. The next thing we did was that we set up a website. To date we have received over 3,800 submissions to [cutredtape.alberta.ca](http://cutredtape.alberta.ca). If anyone has an idea, we invite them to submit it.

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the associate minister stays firm in his commitment to reduce red tape in Alberta and given that constituencies such as Livingstone-Macleod would significantly benefit from such a reduction, once again to the same minister: is the goal to reduce red tape by one-third realistic, and what measures and steps are being taken to ensure that Albertans won't see any further increases going forward?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, it's a very realistic approach. We need to change the culture of our government. Businesses aren't the problem; they are the solution. And we need to start treating them like the partners in prosperity that they are. Red tape disproportionately affects small businesses as they don't have the economies of scale to hire compliance officers like larger businesses do. Our red tape reduction strategy is really about fighting for the little guy. Two out of every 3 new jobs come from small businesses, so it only makes sense that any strategy to get Albertans back to work has to be that of red tape reduction.

### Canadian Energy Centre Oversight

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are quite worried about what the government is doing with \$30 million for the so-called energy war room. This weekend I was out and about quite a bit, and I was approached by several constituents who were unhappy with the level of answers that they were getting from the government. To the Minister of Finance. Just a piece of friendly advice: drop the

politics; just give my constituents who stopped me in the grocery store this weekend a straight answer. Will the minister commit that the name of every single war room contract vendor will be publicly disclosed by the government?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I was very clear last week about the transparency level of the Canadian Energy Centre, and it all is subject to transparency. But what I'm not done speaking about is the one-and-done pipeline deal from that side of the House, a deal that saw one pipeline approved in return for every other one cancelled. That's extremely important today because tonight in the election that one pipeline is at peril, and that side of the House voted for the one party and Jagmeet Singh who's putting it at peril. That's why we have the energy war room.

**Ms Phillips:** So I'm hearing that the names of each vendor will not be disclosed.

Given that we have rules governing sole-sourcing to deal with Conservatives giving sole-source contracts to their friends and insiders, which is what happened before our government took over, will this government commit that their \$30 million war room, designed to make war on political enemies, will be in compliance with the government of Alberta's sole-source contracting rules? It's a simple question. I need a simple answer.

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, there are multiple measures to ensure accountability in the Canadian Energy Centre, including the Auditor General. It's subject to Auditor General reports. We have the Canadian Energy Centre precisely because the other side of the House did not stand up and defend our energy sector for four years. That led to a narrative being developed by those opposed to our oil and gas sector, that they did not dispute. We are in the situation that we are in this province right now because of the one-and-done deal that the former . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Did the Minister of Finance or any other minister discuss with the Auditor General the role that his office would play in the audit of the \$30 million and the contracts being given out by the energy war room prior to establishing this very unusual situation of three ministers being the directors of a corporation? Yes or no? Spare us the partisanship.

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, as with any other provincial corporation, it is subject to audit by the Auditor General. Of course, it's a matter of legislation. It's in the rules. It's transparent. It's subject to audit by the Auditor General.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has a question.

#### **Rural Police Service** (continued)

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities from across Alberta are warning this government about their failed policy to download police costs onto them. Reports from presentations made by the government of Alberta to rural municipalities estimate that the changes they are pushing could result in property tax increases by as much as \$400 per year for residents. To the associate minister of red tape: what steps are you taking to combat the mass accumulation of municipal red tape being driven by this Justice minister?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, again, maybe I'll extend the invite to that member as well. Come on down to Rocky Mountain House to hear about the NDP legacy on rural crime. You know what? I'll make the same offer; I'll even pay for the transportation. They can both come together. We've been clear. We're going to implement our rural crime commitments to Albertans. We're consulting right now with municipalities. Every additional dollar, if we proceed, will go back into more policing right now. More policing.

**Mr. Nielsen:** They don't need more politicians there; they need more police.

Given the associate minister's apparent mandate to reduce red tape and given his pledge to eliminate old regulations for new regulations created but given this UCP government's growing interest in downloading red tape and costs onto municipalities, to the associate minister: what issues of red tape have you eliminated to cope with the massive new costs being dumped on municipalities by the Justice minister? Please be specific about the government's intentions rather than misleading.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, you know, we've actually posted the stuff that we've done on our website, and all the member has to do is go on our website to get that information. What is interesting is that that member sat in the government for four years and did absolutely nothing on this file. In fact, what they actually took all their time to do was to give a whole bunch of taxes to Albertans, a 20 per cent increase in corporate taxes. This is the sort of thing that they have a legacy for. Our legacy is going to be able to get Albertans back to work.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, given, I guess, that municipalities can't expect this associate minister to rescue them from the red tape that the Justice minister is insisting on downloading on them and given that the end result of this policy could be rising property taxes, utility rates, and reduced services, to the associate minister: do you think forcing Alberta residents to deal with higher property taxes, higher utility rates, and more red tape is a fair trade for a \$4.5 billion corporate giveaway that hasn't created a single job yet?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is rich coming from the members opposite. This is the political party that, when they were in office, imposed the biggest tax hike in Alberta's history, multibillion dollars in taxes and the carbon tax. These are the members opposite that, you know, were led to pursue policies that devastated all of our communities. These are the same members opposite that went, I mean, around the country campaigning against our oil and gas sector. We will not be lectured by that side of the aisle.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### **Agricultural Concerns**

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's agricultural sector has plummeted under the previous government. It's unacceptable that employment in the field has dropped 19 per cent in four years; 11,300 jobs have been lost. Under the previous administration Alberta farmers were put through tough times dealing with skyrocketing government-driven costs simply to make a living. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how is this government working to revitalize this important staple of Alberta's economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture has risen.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka for the question. Actually, I'd like to start off by saying that I was pleasantly surprised to hear that the deputy NDP leader is actually spending time in her riding of Lethbridge-West. That is a great thing to hear.

Under Alberta's one-and-done NDP government there were 11,000 job losses in agriculture, investment plummeted by 7 per cent, and the ag sector felt attacked or ignored at best. But, Mr. Speaker, we are working with farmers. We had consultations that went out across the summer at 25 different stops for the repeal and replacement of Bill 6.

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, given that the previous government made it mandatory to have farm worker WCB coverage for their employees and given that WCB insurance premiums are rising and costing more money annually for employers, to the same minister. Over the summer you had the opportunity to talk with many farmers and ranchers. What did you hear from the consultations regarding employee insurance, and what will you be attempting to implement with upcoming legislation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We did hear that mandatory choice in insurance was something that farmers wanted. It's something that we're committed to. Our farmers compete on a global stage. We need to be able to have regulations and rules in place so they can actually get their products to market, which are primarily export-oriented in nature.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that small farms are often hit hard by regulatory and tax changes and given that small farms do not have the same financial flexibility as larger agricultural operations, so the annual cash flow management challenges are often huge, to the minister: how will this government work with our federal counterparts to reduce regulatory and tax burdens on small farms?

2:40

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very hopeful that tonight Canadians across the country will elect a strong, stable, national majority Conservative government which this government will be able to work with to help our farmers compete on a global stage.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has a question.

#### **Tourism Development in Banff-Kananaskis**

**Ms Rosin:** Yes, I do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tourism is vital to the success of this province. It is one of the largest employers in Banff-Kananaskis and is accountable for 89 per cent of Banff's GDP. This industry significantly contributes to the province's economy and vibrant well-being. We need to continue to put our province on the map by attracting visitors from around the world, so can the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism please tell us what she's doing to encourage tourism growth in my riding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We will be developing a 10-year tourism strategy,

where we will be consulting closely with many stakeholders in your riding, led by Travel Alberta. The strategy will have a bold and ambitious target for tourism investment in our province, and the member's riding of Banff-Kananaskis will be a big part of that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that many tourism companies cite their inability to secure long-term funding as a barrier to their ability to build new tourism ventures and, further, given that we must assure potential investors that Alberta is a place to invest in tourism development, can the minister please outline what she has already done to address this concern?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development and tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. It is true that the tourism industry has been mired in regulatory burden and red tape that has stifled growth. My colleague the hon. Government House Leader actually took action on this very issue, and our government has increased the maximum tenure on public lands for tourism operators from 25 to 60 years, which will allow the securing of long-term financing.

**The Speaker:** I'll provide the Member for Banff-Kananaskis the opportunity to ask her second supplemental.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that red tape regulations around investment and entrepreneurship are a serious burden on our economy and given that this burden is particularly onerous when trying to invest in our tourism industry, our beautiful provincial parks and our world-renowned attractions, what is the ministry doing to ensure that the concerns of red tape raised by tourism operators at the round-tables held in my riding are heard?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister is answering.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. As I mentioned, we have already taken action to reduce some red tape for tourism, and we are continuing to do so. My colleague the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has also already held a round-table for the tourism and hospitality sectors. I also attended a red tape consultation hosted by the Member for Banff-Kananaskis, where we heard great discussions about the future of tourism.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

Hon. members, please leave quickly.

#### **Members' Statements**

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie is rising to make a statement.

#### **Election Day**

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across the country Canadians are casting their votes to influence the future of our country. In my riding, Calgary-Currie, many of my constituents come from war-torn countries where any vote is already fraudulently predetermined. Not here, though. Not in Canada.



In recent days I've spoken to several new Canadian constituents, and this is their first opportunity to vote, and they value that right. Every Canadian who can vote should; therefore, it stands to reason that every voter should educate themselves on the issues.

For me, I voted for the only party that is standing up in support of the Alberta economy.

I voted for the only party that recognizes that we are a global leader in environmental stewardship, labour standards, and ethical and social principles in the production of oil and gas.

I voted for the only party that wants Canada to stop importing oil and gas from dictators and totalitarian regimes like Venezuela and Russia. In those countries regular citizens are scared to come out and simply be themselves for fear of imprisonment or death.

I voted for the only party that knows that supporting our energy industry means keeping our standard of living and being able to build new roads, new schools, and new hospitals, not only here in Alberta but across all of Canada, because we give the rest of Canada tens of billions of dollars each year through equalization payments. Without our economy that all goes away.

Therefore, I had one choice. I voted for Andrew Scheer and the Conservative Party of Canada.

In conclusion, to every voter living in a province that has benefited from our equalization payments to you, such as the Atlantic provinces, historically Ontario, et puis aussi le Québec: these equalization payments contributed to your roads, your kids' education, and your health care. Therefore, if you haven't voted yet and if you value your standards of living, then vote the way that I did because you have one viable choice, and that choice is Conservative.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) there shall be no morning sittings on the following dates: Tuesday, October 22, 2019, and Thursday, October 24, 2019.

I further wish to advise that pursuant to Government Motion 31 there shall be no evening sitting tonight.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has caught my eye.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a report by the Conference Board of Canada, which I referred to in my question last week, titled Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care. This report concludes that given the substantial potential benefits to society and the economy, there's a strong case for universal child care and early childhood education.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has caught my eye.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite five copies of a document from the *South Peace News* entitled If You Want Us to Pay, We Should Have a Say, that I referenced in my question earlier today.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A new session, so I thought I would not miss the opportunity to table five copies of the NDP's anti-oil Leap Manifesto. Clearly, the opposition has voted against Alberta again.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite copies of a document called Abortion Bans Strip People of Their Human Rights: Here's Why We Must Stand in Solidarity against Them. There you go.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first one is from *Women's Studies International Forum*, Spatial Disparities and Travel to Freestanding Abortion Clinics in Canada, by Christabelle Sethna and Marion Doull.

The second one is "Job Intensive": Study Says Clean Energy Fast Track to Employment Growth, by Canadian Press.

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table five copies of a report. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** To the Minister of Service Alberta: typically speaking, you would provide some context of what the report is.

**Mr. Glubish:** It's the 2018 report on the act to protect against predatory lending.

**The Speaker:** Very well tabled. Thank you.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Schweitzer, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, pursuant to the Legal Profession Act the Law Society of Alberta 2018 annual report; on behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Securities Act the Alberta Securities Commission 2019 annual report; on behalf of hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Disciplines Act the Health Disciplines Board 2018 annual report.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. I see the government whip has risen.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much. I am very proud to stand up here on behalf of the point of order that was noted by the associate minister of red tape at approximately 2:24 this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, as you are fully aware, there was a very robust question period, full of debate and back and forth. I think there were a number of times where you certainly had to calm the House down, and I know that it is very much appreciated, I believe, on both sides of this House.

However, during one of the exchanges a question was posed that our Government House Leader was attempting to answer, and what could be heard from across the room from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was, quote: that member doesn't care about indigenous people. Unquote. Really, under 23(h), (i), and (j) – of

course, “makes allegations against another Member” and “imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member” or even “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder” – I would argue that, in fact, it did create disorder. Hence, you actually had to single out that particular member to get him from not speaking not only in a tone – but, obviously, from what we heard on this side of the House through the associate minister, what he had actually heard, I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that this is indeed a point of order. I would ask that that member or somebody on his behalf apologize to the Government House Leader.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader has risen to defend a point of order.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, this is not a point of order. I did not hear clearly the same thing that the member opposite thought he heard. You know, for that reason, this is really a difference of opinion. I’m sitting on this side, mere feet away from the member who was accused of uttering comments that possibly would have been or could have been a point of order, but that’s not what I heard. There is clearly a difference of opinion between the government whip and our side, and for that reason, there is no point of order.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to join the debate?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, due to the volume at which the member was speaking quite often throughout this debate, you didn’t have to sit mere feet away to be able to hear what he said. There was no doubt in my mind that that is exactly what he said, and this should be definitely a point of order.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to recognize the member, particularly if he is only going to add his viewpoint on what we’ve already heard, but if he has something new to add, I’ll hear it.

**Mr. Hanson:** Just to confirm, Mr. Speaker, that I actually heard the same thing, too. It was quite clear in the House.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** I hesitated to recognize you unless you had something new to add, and unfortunately you didn’t add anything new.

Does the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford have any desire to add to the statement today?

Perfect. Hon. members, I do recognize that today the House was particularly rambunctious. The Speaker certainly did hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford quite loudly, and he was called out. I certainly did hear him make comments around indigenous people. Whether or not, in fact, he said, “You don’t care about indigenous people,” which, if he did do, certainly would be a point of order and he would be required to apologize for and withdraw – having said that, without the benefit of the Blues or knowing exactly what he did say, it would not be appropriate for me to ask him to apologize for something that I am not a hundred per cent certain that he did say.

What I would remind all members of the Assembly: we are responsible for the tone and tenor of the debate, and certainly . . . [A cellphone rang] I’m sure he wants to apologize for his cellphone ringing now. Certainly, yelling out in such a manner that the Speaker can hear a member over all other members’ raucous debate would not be appreciated by the Speaker.

But on this point, I am not certain that that is, in fact, what he said. As such, there is no point of order, and I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Hon. members, we are at Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

### Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills

#### Bill 203

#### An Act to Protect Public Health Care

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on June 27, 2019, the chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills presented the report of that committee on Bill 203, An Act to Protect Public Health Care, and requested concurrence of the Assembly in the report, which recommended that the bill not proceed.

As this is the first time a motion to concur in the report of the committee has been debated during this Legislature, I’ll briefly outline the procedure that we’ll follow. Under Standing Order 7(5.1)(c) if a member other than the mover rises to speak during daily Routine to a motion to concur in the report of a committee on public bills other than government bills, debate on that motion is called under Orders of the Day on the Monday after. The speaking times: Standing Order 29(3) provides for the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition to have 20 minutes speaking time and all other members to have 10 minutes. Under Standing Order 8(7)(a.1) up to 55 minutes are allotted for debate on the motion. The mover of the concurrence motion, in this case the Member for Calgary-West, has an additional five minutes to close debate. As a member other than the mover rose to speak on June 27, 2019, debate on the motion will proceed today, which is the first Monday on which the Assembly has sat since that date.

As the motion to concur in the committee report on Bill 203 has already been moved, I now wish to recognize any additional members who wish to speak. Are there members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity. Just to confirm with the table, as the representative for the leader, do I have 20 minutes to speak at this time or 10?

**The Acting Speaker:** It’s my understanding that you have 10 minutes to speak.

**Mr. Feehan:** Ten. Okay. Just wanted to be absolutely clear. Then I’ll divide my time roughly in half because there are two issues here. One of them, of course, is the issue that’s inherent in Bill 203, which is the protection of public health care services in this province. Of course, the other one is the deep concern about the antidemocratic stance of this government and their demagoguery in designing this system to ensure that only their bills arrive in the House. I’ll speak to both of these pieces as we go along, I gather, giving about five minutes to each.

The first one is that it is ultimately critical that we spend time in this House talking about the importance of protecting public health care services in this country. As I mentioned earlier today in my member’s statement, it is one of the identifying characteristics of people’s pride in Canada that we have such a public system and that any person in this House can go to receive medical care not having to worry about whether or not they can afford to pay for that care when they’re in the midst of crisis, family trauma, and perhaps even the grieving of a death in a family. Yet what I’m finding is that members opposite have simply begun to engage in a practice of snubbing the protections that are necessary for public health care in this province.

Now, in the committee at hand, that we addressed on this issue, I brought forward numerous incidents of studies that have been done

about the existence of public health care and what happens when you start to introduce private health care.

3:00

I can tell you that studies done across Canada by people such as Tuohy, which I will introduce in the House later for the record, and others across Britain and Australia and New Zealand have all indicated that when you introduce private medical care into the public health care system, you begin to undermine the effectiveness of the public health care system and you begin to create a system where only people with substantial money can receive the benefits of the larger system.

In fact, in Tuohy's report they suggest that systems allowing for parallel publicly- and privately-financed sectors raise the question of whether a parallel private system can reduce pressure on the public system. Our review suggests that it does not: public-sector waiting lists and times are longer in nations with parallel private sectors, such as Britain and New Zealand, than in nations that draw the public-private boundary in other ways.

That's the primary issue. The government does not want to protect the citizens of the province of Alberta from longer wait times because there seems to be some benefit for this government, which I suggest has something to do with their coffers at election time.

Moving past the evidence, because I know I presented evidence from research studies – as you know, prior to arriving in this House, I was an academic, so I often go to research literature to develop my opinion. I presented evidence on a variety of things like that trickle-down economics doesn't work, and of course the government ignored me. I provided evidence on issues such as climate change, and of course the government ignored me. It seems to be a very clear trend that any time academia spends thousands of dollars and thousands of years of man-hours to determine some greater understanding of our world, this government is sure to ignore it on behalf of something their buddy said to them in the coffee shop last week. Given that I think that that's the nature of their decision-making, there's not much point in speaking about that.

What I do want to say today is that this decision by this committee, if this government were to accept this decision, would be an assault on democracy. This is an attempt to quiet the voice on the other side simply because you disagree with them. Nobody is saying that the committee had to ask the government to accept the bill. We are just asking them to debate the bill, and they won't even do that. They won't even have the fortitude to stand up and defend their own position in the House because they know it's indefensible. They know that their only hope of getting their way is to actually undercut democracy and make sure that the opposition does not have a voice, the same way they've done by reducing our time in the House, by reducing our chance to introduce our constituents when they come in here, and now they're reducing our chance to bring bills into this House.

I notice that a hundred per cent of the bills presented by government members who are not part of the cabinet have been presented into this House, and now a hundred per cent of the bills presented by opposition members have been denied. I can tell you what this is all about. This is about putting earplugs in permanently in this House and preventing people in this House, who were elected to represent their citizens, from actually speaking to the issues that they were elected on.

That is a disgrace in a Westminster democracy. The very point of our having this nature of a democratic government is to hear from the people. If you don't like it, you vote it down, but if you come in with your jackboots on and step on the necks of the opposition so that you don't even have to hear them or you put earplugs into your

ears, then you have learned nothing from 300 years of democratic growth in western democracies. It's a shame that you find yourself here in this House saying that you want to represent people in a democratic way and then use every trick you possibly can to deny us the right to engage you in that democracy. This is the most shameful act that I've seen this government conduct since they got in six months ago, and that's after quite a list of shameful acts.

I would like to be able to say, "Let's look at the evidence, and let's look at whether or not it's important to protect health care," but I know they don't care about evidence. Instead, I would ask this House to take the moment to realize how important it is that we actually have the opportunity to stand in this House and talk to the issues.

If you won't even give us that, if you put the earplugs in permanently in terms of the structures of the House, then we have a serious problem of moving toward a nondemocratic state in the province of Alberta, and that's something that I will stand in this House and fight against. When my kids get older and look at what's happened in this House, I want them to know that I stood against them, that I stood against their attempts to shut everyone down who doesn't agree with them and prevent them from having a voice in this House, that when they tried to move in the direction of dictatorial policy-making on the part of the government, I was here to say that that is unacceptable.

I'm proud to be a person who is not afraid to look the government and the government members in the eye and say: what you are doing is wrong. All you have to do is accept this bill into the House to talk about it and then vote it out. You have a majority. So what is it that you don't even want to hear from the opposition? The level of cowardice in that, not even wanting to sit and be part of a normal democratic process when you know you have the ultimate power to defeat the bill, tells me that you're afraid of something. What it tells me you're afraid of is that you are on the fast march to destroying public health care, that you're going to make sure that in the next few years the average person in society is going to have less access to public health care because your wealthy donor friends want private, elite access to health care. And that is unacceptable.

You can't even stand up and defend yourself on this, and that tells me something. You could have said, "Sure, we'll have a conversation about it, and I'll stand up and I'll defend my point of view," but you've chosen not to do that through this committee, and you've set up this structure to ensure that whenever the opposition brings an idea forward, you will be able to squelch it before it arrives in this House. That's the kind of demagoguery that is completely unacceptable in a Westminster democracy and one that should make you feel ashamed for what you're doing.

Go back to your constituents and tell them: yeah, the opposition tried to bring something forward and tried to suggest a bill that we could work on.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Looking to see other individuals looking to speak to Bill 203, I saw the hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion of concurrence. Like, wow, that was a rambling mess of anger and misplaced thoughts, most certainly, but that seems to be consistent with messaging coming from the NDP this day and age.

First off, I appreciate having this opportunity to speak to this bill called An Act to Protect Public Health Care. I'm not actually speaking to the bill. I know that we're on the motion of concurrence. I think one of the reasons why it was never successful going through a committee is because it's actually a bill to stifle innovation in our

health care system. What we are doing with health care right now is not working. What the NDP did with health care for the last four years by throwing money at it is not working. In fact, we are seeing that we have worse health care outcomes at the end of the day, yet the NDP are committed to protecting that kind of system. Good job. That's great. That's what Albertans voted for.

No. Albertans actually voted for the opposite of that. Albertans voted for hope in the health care system. They voted to bring down wait times, and that's exactly what this government is doing. I'm so proud to be moving forward on that with my colleagues alongside Albertans, who are so hopeful for the changes and the hope that is before them.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford stood up and said that public health care is under attack. I haven't really heard that. Oh, no. Wait. I have heard that. I've heard that, again, from the messaging machine of the NDP. The NDP are using this fear and smear campaign amongst Albertans. They're using our health care system. They're creating fear in families, in parents.

The UCP is not attacking the health care system. We are doing everything that we possibly can to do the exact opposite of what the NDP did and failed in our health care system. I'm so proud to be moving forward with our government.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, the member who brought this ill-thought-out bill forward in the first place said that there are so many studies on public health care, and they presented all of these studies: it's been done; you know, the science is settled on public health care, and we can't change a stinking thing. What they should have been presenting are studies on how to make our health care system better, how to make it work, how to make it work for families that are stuck in the waiting rooms in hospitals, riddled with fear because their child is sick, studies on how to make it better for families in our communities. We should be spending time on innovation, not studies that keep producing the same failed results over and over again.

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people that I represent in the riding of Airdrie-East, who are as a community working on policies and thoughts and ideas to make healthier communities and to make the health care system work better, we are ashamed that the NDP would even think that this is something that Albertans are excited about or looking forward to. Again I just say big kudos to the platform commitments, which our government will be carrying through with, enhancing and strengthening our health care system. We are so proud.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will certainly be voting this down.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, that was entertaining.

Work hard, stay humble, and earn every vote: that was apparently the credo of this government, Mr. Speaker, that they have claimed again and again and then turned around in this House and basically wiped their feet on. They claim one thing in words, but their actions are clearly very different. Whatever diatribe the members of this government want to get up and make in this House in protestation about their mandate from Albertans and how they got the support of all Albertans for every last little thing that they're going to plan to do, they at no point during their campaign ran on reducing the voice of opposition.

They at no point ran on increasing a dictatorial mandate for the government of Alberta, on shutting down debate in this House, or

indeed on making the kind of changes they made in the standing orders to do what they would have screamed about if our government had ever tried to do when they sat in these seats in this House, and they know that full well, Mr. Speaker, because they took every opportunity, when they felt that our government was not allowing one of their private members' bills to move forward, to make a good deal of noise about it.

I do not see in the behaviour of this government, Mr. Speaker, that they are living up to those words that were put forward by their Premier. Indeed, that Premier does not live up to his own words. Humility is the furthest thing from this government, as we saw again and again during question period today, as we just heard from the Member for Airdrie-East, as we see demonstrated by the members of this government that sat and laughed and yawned and heckled my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford as he spoke about his bill being stifled by this government, which does not have the courage to even stand and debate it in this House. They make every effort to hide it behind closed doors, to keep it at committee, and then refuse to actually let it come forward, where Albertans could actually have the opportunity to hear about and learn about the particular issue. That is not working hard; that's the utmost in laziness. That is not staying humble; that is the utmost in arrogance. That is not earning Albertans' votes; that is spitting on them.

Things have gotten rather quiet in the House now, I notice. Members don't see fit to laugh at me like they did my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford.

Respectfully, Mr. Speaker, this government has made a number of changes – and these members well know it; they've each voted in favour of it – to reduce the opportunity for members of the opposition to raise concerns and legitimate points in this House.

They actively participated, a number of them, in accepting earplugs from the Premier and placing them in their ears during a debate in this House, exercising the precise same tools that their own colleagues exercised when they sat in this position in this House. Democracy, Mr. Speaker, is not meant to be convenient. It is not meant to put members of government at ease. It is intended to allow for debate. It is intended to be uncomfortable. It is intended at times to slow down the work of government to ensure we have proper checks and balances and consideration of all ideas that members wish to bring forward.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that at times I've listened to some incredibly vacuous and unintelligent debate in this House, absolutely ridiculous conspiracy theory, but I sat and listened because that is the right of members in this House, to bring forward whatever thoughts they wish to in this place. We, when we were in government, did not attempt to take steps to stifle that debate. Even when it might have been advisedly wiser for some of those members to perhaps not make some of the comments they chose to make on the record, we allowed them to do it.

What we have here, Mr. Speaker, is once again this government demonstrating arrogance, the type of arrogance that they claim they displaced from former Conservative governments in this province. Let's be clear. They did not get to Alison Redford in a year or even in four years. That was the accumulation of 40 years of decisions like this, backed by members who felt that they had to back up a Premier or a government. In order to get some things done, they were willing to fudge the lines a little bit, willing to allow that little extra step over the line of decency or ethics or democracy, and that builds up like mud on your shoes. I can only imagine how much this government is going to be carrying around and, with it, each one of these private members and ministers who continue to support this kind of behaviour and decision by the end of their four years and, indeed, what that may cost them with Albertans.

Indeed, that's what we have in this bill, Mr. Speaker. We have a bill looking at how this has been allowed to continue in our health care system, how certain health organizations are fudging the rules and are blurring the lines between what is a publicly covered service and what is a privately covered service, through things like block billing, so you can't tell where one dollar starts and where it ends as to which services it's being applied to. And if this government does not want to debate that in this House, if they feel that they have to go to these kinds of extreme measures, I can only assume that they're okay with that. Indeed, we've seen that in many cases.

This is a Premier, after all, whose own leadership campaign is under investigation for precisely that, blurring the lines of ethics, fudging the rules, skirting around the boundaries, shady money moving back and forth, members sitting in this House that were part of those actions and part of those conspiracies. So, indeed, it's no surprise, Mr. Speaker, that members of this government do not want to debate a bill on the record that talks about that kind of behaviour occurring in parts of our health care system.

They can stand, and they can express their outrage. They can stand and try to make claims that they are doing this for the betterment of Albertans. We know they are doing this to cover their own selves because they want to streamline their ability to ram through whatever legislation they wish, to silence the voice of opposition, and to reduce democracy in this House. They feel that that is what the electoral mandate they received back in April allows them to do. Mr. Speaker, that is not what they told Albertans they were going to bring to this House. But by their actions here today it is precisely what they are demonstrating they are going to do.

3:20

Why, Mr. Speaker, should we trust them on any other part of their platform and, indeed, on their plans for health care in this province when it's clear they are willing to bend and change and break the rules whenever it is convenient for them to maintain power and to do what they wish for themselves and their friends? That is what this government does, and that is the legacy of each of the members in this House that chooses to vote against allowing this bill to be debated in the House, who voted in favour of the standing orders that made the changes that allowed this to occur, who took part in that committee that chose to recommend that this bill not have the opportunity to move forward.

That's not why I was sent to this House, Mr. Speaker. I was sent to this House originally in 2015. I ran because I wanted to see better, because I saw the arrogance of previous Conservative governments, and I wanted to work to change that. I have worked in my community to uphold that standard, and that is what I was re-elected for back in April, and that is why I stand in this House and decry this action by this government today. This is not what my constituents voted for in 2015 or in 2019.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I believe that I saw the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't very long ago that this side of the House was given a resounding mandate by the people of Alberta. The people of Alberta chose a government that would get our province back on track, including putting its people back to work and getting our fiscal house in order. Completing this mandate requires hard decisions and difficult conversations, but none of these conversations should be a surprise or a slight to anyone. We were elected on clear and explicit platform promises to

this province and its people. Today I'm standing in this House to remind everyone of the commitments we have made and the promises we will be keeping. These promises are clear and emphatic, and they are the reason why I am unable to support this bill.

As a member of the private members' bills committee – we were asked for a recommendation, and we brought one to the House, democratically debating the bill right now. We also allowed for every moment of debate and expert presentation available during that committee time, and we allowed the opposition to bring forward their arguments.

It is in this government's platform, however, to maintain or increase health spending and maintain a universally accessible, publicly funded health care system. Increasing access and decreasing wait times are paramount in that plan. This commitment is undeniable. We know that we must take care of one another, including through providing an accessible public health care system. There is no doubt in my mind that we agree with this statement on this side of the House. What we cannot agree on, Mr. Speaker, is the accusation of the other side, that the opportunity for innovation equals cuts to availability and equal access.

After much personal research I have found that I agree with the position of the Alberta Medical Association. In their letter, as submitted on June 24, 2019, to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills, the Alberta Medical Association states:

Bill 203 does not make substantive changes to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act . . . [and] The adoption of Bill 203 would not, for example, change what the AMA already advises its members in terms of their provision . . . and payment of uninsured medical services.

In fact, according to the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta's letter, also submitted on June 24, 2019, to the standing committee, paraphrased: insured medical services are clearly identified in the schedule of medical benefits as outlined in the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. Physicians may charge privately for health services that are not included in the schedule. For example, they may charge for travel advice, immunizations, precare, nutrition, and when patients are uninsured. When charging privately, physicians must follow CPSA's standard of practice on charging for uninsured services. The standard of practice is based on their core principles, including clear principles such as a patient's ability to pay, adequate notice and transparency, equal access for all, professional obligation to provide urgently required services regardless of whether or not payment is possible.

Through reading these two letters and hearing from the professionals themselves, who are experts in their industries, we are left with only one conclusion, that this bill, in essence, does not achieve the key objectives of increasing access to services or decreasing wait times. I find it perplexing that this wasn't brought forward in the four years that that member sat as part of the government, instead bringing it forward now. It addresses fee structures related to block billing and membership fees to boutique clinics, of which there seem to be only 10 operating in Alberta, based on the presentation of the Parkland Institute representative. This represents an overwhelmingly small minority of services in our health care system. It is not, then, able to increase access to services or effectively combat wait times. Rather, this bill is a prime example of ideologically driven policy-pushing that does little to effectively address the issues that Albertans care about. This government has already made the standing commitment to public health care that Albertans needed to see in order to elect us seven months ago.

Bill 203 seems to be an excessive response in an attempt to address a problem that, again in the words of the Parkland Institute

representative – I quote directly – may or may not even be a problem; we just don't know. Unquote. Therefore, we now have a bill that ostensibly introduces additional red tape to the health care system. Red tape, by definition, is the excessive bureaucracy or adherence to rules and formalities, especially in public business, with no added benefit. From what we've heard today and read today, I think we've found a new project for the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction should this bill be passed.

What we do know is that Alberta's population is changing, the demographics are changing, medical technology is changing, and the demand for access and availability of new treatments is changing. Given this dynamic and shifting expectation, we need legislation that increases the flexibility and responsiveness of our public system so that more people get seen sooner. These are everyday Albertans' top objectives, and they must be ours. We cannot be deterred from that primary aim. We have kept our commitments to Albertans first and continue to serve their very best interests rather than pushing ideological issues in this House that may or may not exist.

Further than that, we must respect and acknowledge the input of professionals who work directly in Alberta's health care field. Their recommendations, suggestions, and experiences need to be the driving force behind our policies, not theoretical situations and what-if scenarios built around a different perception of the reality we face in this province as Albertans. The main thing here is to keep the main thing the main thing, and this requires our absolute discipline and focus in any health care legislation brought forward in this House. That is why it is my recommendation and will be my vote not to proceed with Bill 203.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has the call.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to go back to the reason why we are in the House right now. On a motion for concurrence, which allows the bill to go forward – for the benefit of the dozens of people watching at home, I'm just going to explain a little bit about how this process is supposed to work. That is to say, private members can put forward their priority outside of the normal workings of Executive Council, Mr. Speaker. What's Executive Council? It's the cabinet. Generally speaking, the cabinet priorities are set by the cabinet Agenda and Priorities Committee or some semblance of that in concert with the Premier's office. What private members' business allows people to do is that people who are not in cabinet on both sides of the House can put forward their priorities and their ideas. We do this through both motions and through actual bills.

Now, back in the day – and get ready for, you know, an old-timey lecture because I've been around this place a long time – Ralph Klein did a lot of things that a lot of people decried as undemocratic. He cancelled one year, in 1997, the fall sitting, and a lot of people lost their minds. I remember being pretty young and attending a protest about that. But he always let private members' business go forward. Always. Why? Because Klein was always managing his caucus. Not everyone can be in cabinet. He had a number of pretty powerful, especially rural, MLAs that were not necessarily in cabinet, and he had to manage their priorities, too. Certainly, we saw private members' business come forward, and that was one of the ways that he sort of let the air out of the balloon and allowed caucus to express itself and allowed caucus some power instead of concentrating everything in the Premier's office.

But, you know, this new Premier comes from a very different management style, learned at the feet of Stephen Harper, where the

boys in short pants in the centre control everything. That's where we're at right now, and I think it's an interesting point, that taking away that voice of private members takes away a valuable political tool for the Premier's office. If I were a private member on the other side, I would be worried that I was not able to put forward my own priorities and the priorities of my constituents.

3:30

You know, sometimes, Mr. Speaker, back in the day the parties used to even sometimes agree on private members' business. I know that's a wild assertion, but I remember once the New Democrat opposition bringing forward a private member's bill on flaring. At that time there were a bunch of technological changes that had taken place, and the companies and the ERCB at the time also in the main concurred that we could have new regulatory limits on flaring. The government actually adopted that, the New Democrat opposition private member's bill, as a government business bill. That is also the kind of stuff that can happen, and we can actually do what oftentimes our constituents want us to do, which is not yell at each other all the time. But that is also being taken away.

I think what's interesting about this manoeuvre – and we're talking about the motion for concurrence here; we're not talking about the substance of the bill, so I think it's really interesting that the members of the government caucus have focused on the substance of the bill. That's why they're not voting on the motion for concurrence. If they don't like the bill, they should let it come to the floor of this House and vote it down like PC governments since time immemorial did with the opposition business. This is a very straightforward process, and it happens on Monday afternoons. Welcome to the Legislature. This isn't difficult.

They could do that, but this isn't about, actually – and here I will even just add to what my colleagues from Edmonton-Centre and Edmonton-Rutherford talked about. This actually isn't necessarily about managing the opposition. This isn't necessarily, in the first instance, about stifling this side of the House. It has that practical effect. But in the first instance – here's the thing. On public health care I will still leave this Chamber and at every available opportunity express my support for a single-payer medicare system that is consistent with the principles of the Canada Health Act. The same cannot be said for many of the backbenchers in this House on the government side. I will still, after I leave this debate, at every available opportunity stand up for a woman's right to choose. At every available opportunity I will stand up for reproductive freedom, for individual liberty, and for women across this province and indeed across this country. I have no problem doing that. I'll do it here. I'll do it there. I'll go everywhere that anyone will have me. I will make that pro-choice argument.

It is not so on the government side of the House that necessarily that is an opinion that is even in the majority held. Certainly, their opinions, which are offside of mainstream opinion in this province: the Premier's office probably does not want those sorts of views aired via private members' business, and that is why they have made the changes that they have so that all private members' business gets stifled. This particular process and the point at which in the process we find ourselves now is not about controlling the opposition; it's about controlling the government side of the caucus and the Premier's office controlling their own MLAs. If I were a private member, I would be worried about this. I would worry about the arrogance, the hubris that this implies because, in fact, it is stunning. It is breathtaking. Even the massive majorities enjoyed by Ralph Klein did not have to undertake this level of control of the backbench.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, this is in the long line of other changes that we've made to this House that essentially are used to

control members. It has the practical effect of, of course, controlling the opposition, but it is in the main about controlling their own caucus. It will be up to private members on the other side of the House to consider over time whether their own privilege as a member is being curtailed by power being controlled in such a centralized fashion by the Premier's office.

These sorts of things have a way of cracking over time, and I will make the prediction today that that level of control will not always be enjoyed by this Premier's office and not always be enjoyed by a small group of staffers and insiders who are directing the government's agenda. At some point backbenchers, private members, in this government caucus will want to stand up because their local priorities will not be met through such an approach and the local voices that they were sent here to reflect will not have expression in this House.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has risen to speak.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief here. First of all, let me say that I will be supporting the motion for concurrence. This bill has been sent to committee. It was researched. It was studied. This motion to somehow take health care to somewhere else that the NDP wanted is not something that the committee recommended that we support.

Quite frankly, I find it tiring that the NDP continually wrap themselves in some kind of mantle as if they're the champions of health care. They aren't, and history proves that. They really don't tell the full truth when it comes to this story. They were not the first to bring comprehensive health care to this province or to this country, for that matter, and although they want to claim that all the time, the truth is that they weren't. Like everything else that socialists – the left never lets the truth matter in reconstructing history or twisting a story for their own purpose. The UFA introduced comprehensive health care to Alberta long before Saskatchewan did, long before the NDP were in existence.

I'd just like to quote a bit of a paragraph from the Legislative Assembly produced *The Centennial Series, The Mantle of Leadership*, page 392.

... The Alberta Health Insurance Act, which established a Health Insurance Commission.

This, by the way, was under the premiership of Premier Reid of the United Farmers of Alberta.

The Commission established local medical districts and collected health-insurance funding from municipalities, employers and private citizens in order to cover the costs of medical, dental and prescription services for Albertans. Notably, this Act represented the first government-legislated insurance program devoted exclusively to health [care] and entitled every resident of a medical district to "receive without charge" necessary health-service benefits, including hospitalization, nursing services, surgery, dental treatment, laboratory services and medicines.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the NDP act as if they're the only ones who care about health care in this province. They act as if they were the originators and the creators of it. The truth of the matter is that they copied what the United Farmers of Alberta already had in place many years before they actually got onboard to do it. Just like they claim to be supporters of pipelines and, in fact, they aren't, they claim to be the champions of health care. The truth of the matter is that Albertans actually had this vision a long time before they arrived, before they started showing up, and Albertans don't really need the NDP claiming some sort of superior righteousness just because they copied a good idea that Albertans introduced way

before them. I suspect that the NDP actually got the idea from the United Farmers of Alberta.

Here's a party, the United Farmers of Alberta, that was opposed to the colonial, liberal powers of Ottawa continually trying to take from our province and give nothing back. The biggest challenge of the day was to get our resources under Alberta's control, which the same Premier did, Premier Reid. He's the one who also introduced health care in a comprehensive sense to Canada. The United Farmers of Alberta stood up for this, stood up for Albertans. They cared for the health care of their people. They cared for Albertans. The United Conservatives of today also represent united Albertans, and we're going to do the same regardless of what these members say.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

3:40

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to indicate why I will not be supporting this motion that this bill, private member's Bill 203, not be debated in the House. I want to go back to what Bill 203, introduced by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, actually says because we've heard some comments from the members on the government side that seem to reflect that they have not read the bill and are not actually familiar with what the content of the bill is about. The bill was intended to prohibit the charging of block fees, and the reason for this is because there are a number of I believe they're referred to as concierge clinics that are currently operating in Alberta that charge block membership fees to individuals seeking service from that clinic. Now, these clinics offer a combination of both insured and uninsured services. The concern, of course, is that it is a violation of our health care act as well as the Canada Health Act for physicians to charge for insured services. The concern is that these block fees run in different amounts, usually multiple thousands of dollars, for an individual to be charged a membership fee to even access services from the clinic.

The concern is that in obtaining those services from that clinic, that individual may receive both uninsured and insured services. By charging a block fee, it's difficult, actually impossible, to tell whether or not what's being charged for is insured or uninsured services. Of course, one is a violation of our legislation, and the other is not. It was actually raised quite well by the stakeholders that were invited to speak to the committee on this matter. In fact, one of those stakeholders, who was representing the Parkland Institute, the executive director of the Parkland Institute, gave a very good explanation as to why this is a concern, because there actually is very little information that is accessible and is transparent about how those fees are being charged and who is charging for them.

Now, we did also have a member from the ministry, the legal counsel for the ministry, speak to the fact that, yes, there is – I note that the Member for Lethbridge-East did raise this – a standard that the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta has which says they cannot charge for insured services. The problem is that there's no information as to whether or not any physician has been held accountable under those standards for actually charging for insured services. In fact, what actually came out during our discussion in the committee was that it's very clear that not only can they not be told who is charging them, but really who is charging those fees is often the accounting departments of those concierge clinics. The concern, of course, is that those people are not held accountable to the standards set by the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta for charging for insured services.

The reason I bring all of this up is because Bill 203 is meant to address an actual problem. There is an actual problem that is being addressed by this bill, which is that by setting up an upfront membership fee for individuals who are seeking access from the clinic, they are – and it's right now not transparent. It can't be determined whether or not those clinics are actually charging for insured services, which we don't support in this province. Now, we can get into rhetoric about whether they should or should not, but when, for example, the Member for Airdrie-East stands up and talks about how this is stifling innovation, it shows to me that she actually hasn't read the bill because the bill has nothing to do with innovation. It has to do about when these fees can be charged. Really, the intent of the bill is to say that charging for uninsured services should only happen after the fact, should only happen after it has been determined that the individual who has sought service from the clinic has received an uninsured service and therefore should be and can be charged for it. This bill was actually intended to address a very real problem, and we had information from the stakeholders who presented to the committee about that problem.

Now, certainly, we could have a debate about whether or not this bill adequately addresses that issue, if more information is necessary, but the point is that that should be a debate before this Assembly. The merits of the bill should be open for debate by the members. By not even allowing for a debate on the merits of the bill to take place in this Assembly, essentially what my colleagues on this side of the House have been saying is true: we are stifling democracy.

Now, I actually just came from attending a three-day seminar in Victoria with a couple of my colleagues here from the House. The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville was there as well as the Speaker, and we had an excellent conversation about debate in the House and how we can improve the quality, decorum, and civility of debate in the House. One of the things we discussed was how that works differently in situations where there might be a minority government, a majority government, however the case may be. One of the comments I made while I was there, which was that when we're in a situation – and it was actually quite interesting to hear the experiences of parliamentarians from other jurisdictions talk about how the situation is different when it's a minority versus majority government and how that somehow affects the quality of the debate. One of the comments that I made was that we are in a situation in Alberta where there is a clear majority, and we see that. It's obvious in the numbers that there are many more members on the government side than there are on the opposition side.

What that means is that we know that on matters of votes, we are going to lose. We know that. The members on the opposition are aware of that. But we also still have an obligation to the constituents that we represent because each of us members here do reflect the majority of the constituents in our ridings, and we have an obligation to still stand up and express those views. Because we live in a democracy where majority gets to form government, it does not mean that the minority is silenced and does not mean that those who have differing views do not have a right to have those views expressed. That is our obligation, and that is the obligation of every member: to express the views of their constituents. So when we get into this House, yes, we are very aware that the government members have a majority and will either vote down whatever the opposition brings forward or will vote in support of what they bring forward, but that is not the sole purpose of our Assembly. It is not simply to outnumber each other and have winners and losers; it is also actually to debate the merits of things and to express those ideas.

We have no doubt on this side of the House that when the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford brought forward this very valid

and legitimate bill, it would likely be voted down because we don't have the numbers. Absolutely, that's true. Nobody is disputing that. But that doesn't mean that there's no validity to bringing those views forward. In fact, if we think of democracy as beyond just a winner-take-all situation – which is what we should be doing, which is why we have the Westminster system of democracy – to have that exchange of ideas and to find out opportunities to improve the legislation and improve our policies, we should be taking that. That is also the purpose of this Assembly, to have that fulsome debate about the ideas and about the issues. Would we win? Of course we wouldn't. We don't have the numbers. But that doesn't mean that we can't still have that debate, and we should still feel obligated when we're in this House to have that debate.

When we were in committee on this matter in the summer session, I recall that there were a number of comments from the government members around the fact that Bill 203 as proposed by my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford wouldn't solve all the woes in our health care system, wouldn't solve the wait times situation, wouldn't solve queue-jumping. But we also were aware that our health care system has a lot of challenges. No government to date has been able to fix all of those challenges. But to say that we won't make efforts to improve it simply because it won't erase all problems with it would be an exercise in futility in our government. For example, we see a lot of bills that we actually support on this opposition side that are being brought forward by government that won't fix the problems, but they will certainly address some of the weaknesses or noted gaps in our system.

I will give an example of even a couple of bills that have been brought up in this session. I mean, we have private member's Bill 202 around the changes to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, allowing individuals to report to police if there is a situation of child abuse. That's not going to end child abuse in this province, but we support it. We believe that that is a measure that could improve the situation, so we support it. We still consider that, and we still give light to it. We still debate it. We still discuss it because it will hopefully make the system better. Similarly, this government has recently introduced what's known as Clare's law, Bill 17, I believe. That's going to allow survivors of violence to be able to get information about their partner's criminal history, perhaps to help inform them. It might help them make decisions about whether or not they need to take some action in their personal relationship. Is that going to solve the problem of domestic violence? No, unfortunately, it's not. I wish there was one piece of legislation that could do that. But it still is a valid and important action to take, to take some improvement measures on the very serious issue of domestic violence.

I was disheartened when I was in committee to hear government members say that we shouldn't go forward with Bill 203 simply because it wouldn't resolve all problems with our health care system. It is intended to and would resolve one obvious problem which has been identified by stakeholders.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

I see the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler with about three minutes to go.

3:50

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to have this opportunity to rise and speak today to Bill 203, An Act to Protect Public Health Care. I think the name of this bill itself would seem to suggest that public health care is somewhat in jeopardy in Alberta, and I just would say that's certainly not the case. We're bound by the Canada Health Act: universal, accessible, and publicly funded.



I guess we're kind of running out of time, Mr. Speaker. I would say that what Albertans told us at the doors when we were campaigning is that we need to do better. Wait times have gone up for cataracts, for knees, for hip replacements under the opposition's watch the last four years, and we need to focus on outcomes.

I'd leave the members here with a quote from the Auditor General from 2017.

Albertans already pay for the most expensive health system of any province in Canada . . . Yet they receive results that lag the results being achieved by the best-performing health systems in other jurisdictions.

Albertans are paying for the best. Why would they not demand the best?

It's time for this House to focus on real-world health care outcomes. That's what Albertans expect and deserve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? There is about a minute left. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's interesting here. I know there's not a lot of time left, but it's interesting how obsessed the government members are with not listening to Albertans, not listening to the opposition, not debating the issues, and defending American-style health care. They could have that opportunity.

In a couple of minutes here they could have the opportunity to defend American-style health care all they want. They could get up and debate that. All they have to do is vote against concurrence. Let us do our jobs and talk about why we want or don't want American-style health care here in this province.

The government members have done quite a bit of talking about American-style health care already today, so I know they have opinions about it. I know that they have thoughts about it and thoughts about how using these American-style systems and American-style health care is going to benefit Alberta, so they have that opportunity to get up and speak to those right now. They can vote with the opposition. They can vote to debate these issues, and we could have what we were sent here to do: debate under the parliamentary system.

We can have what our jobs are to actually do, to stand here and talk about why the government believes in American-style health care. That's what we're sent here to do. That's why we're all sitting in this Chamber right now. That's why thousands of Albertans in every single one of our ridings, tens of thousands of Albertans voted for every single one of us, so we can talk about why this government loves American-style health care, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that the members are going to be bold enough, brave enough, strong and free enough, Mr. Speaker, to get up and talk about the American-style health care that they love so much, the American-style health care that they are trying to bring here to this province, because they won't even get up and stand and let the opposition speak about the issues. That's something that I'm hopeful government members will be willing to get up and defend, because it is their baby. It is their intent.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-South, but under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i), which provides for up to five minutes for the mover to close debate, I would invite the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Bills and Private Members' Public Bills, the hon. Member for Calgary-West, to close debate on the motion to concur on the committee report on Bill 203.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, certainly, I would say, with robust debate between the opposition members and the government members, it certainly was great to see how some of the members on the government side, who were members of that standing committee, were able to certainly provide their perspective as to why they voted in the way that they did.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank everyone for their participation in this discussion and move forward to the vote. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for concurrence carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:55 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Jones	Rowswell
Amery	Lovely	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Luan	Schow
Barnes	Madu	Schulz
Dreeschen	Nally	Schweitzer
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Getson	Nixon, Jeremy	Smith
Glasgo	Orr	Stephan
Hanson	Pitt	Walker
Horner	Rehn	Williams
Hunter	Rosin	Wilson
Issik		

4:10

Against the motion:

Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Dang	Nielsen	Shepherd
Deol	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Feehan	Phillips	Sweet

Totals:	For – 37	Against – 12
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[Motion for concurrence carried]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 202

#### Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Minister of Justice and Deputy Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Chair, I move that we rise and report.

**The Deputy Chair:** Prior to that – going forward, perhaps.

Are there any members, though, who do wish to debate at this time?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 202 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader and Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Now I'd like to move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 202. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Well, Mr. Speaker, somebody can always throw a shoe at me if I mess up some of the procedural stuff on this. It wouldn't be the first time. I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed to immediate consideration of third reading for Bill 202.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 202

#### Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak on this?

I'm looking to the hon. Member for Calgary-West to move third reading of Bill 202.

**Mr. Ellis:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I guess you start third reading; is that correct, sir?

**The Acting Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yes. Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly has been an honour and a privilege. This has been a long – it certainly feels like a couple of years, to be honest with you, that I've been working on this. I mean, this particular case is, you know, what sort of started this whole process in regard to Bill 202: poor young Serenity. Sadly, her life was taken from us.

Just to, I guess, talk a little bit historically, Mr. Speaker, I certainly sat in this Chamber, and I think everybody here would agree that when we're talking about children, it would be considered nonpartisan. Certainly, the allegations, shall we say, the medical report that came out of this particular case: I don't think anybody can argue that they weren't horrific, and they're certainly something that we wouldn't wish upon anyone, let alone a small child.

I know that there was a committee that was formed and recommendations that came out of the committee. I consider that – we'll call it a positive step forward. I look at Bill 202 as something that is tangible, that can have an actual, immediate impact. We talk about a bill that – you've got to forgive me, Mr. Speaker; I'm somewhat paraphrasing. When we're talking about a child whose life might possibly be at risk, we're not talking about a child that might be in the backyard or something like that of some home. We're talking about cases where these children are on, literally, the verge of death. I think it's important to know that the current process was that you're to report the situation to a director. I think that we've been able to articulate that. Certainly, for me, in the past – and I think many of the members in here in second reading were also able to articulate that – that's not as simple as it sounds, the question of: "How do I contact the director? Who is the director? How could that be enforced if you didn't call a director?"

4:20

Obviously, with my consultation with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police at the time and certainly stakeholders – I've talked to defence attorneys, as an example, and, of course, the family that was involved in the Serenity case, meaning the mom and her family members, about that if we do of course pass this through third reading, it will let everyone in Alberta know, or every adult, should I say, that no longer can anyone turn a blind eye to a child that might possibly be at risk, that indeed you have a fiduciary responsibility to let the police know about that child at risk. It may come across to many as a small change, but it's actually a fundamentally huge change, and it allows a level of accountability that, sadly, was never there before. I think it was somewhat implied in the legislation, but, like I said, the ability to certainly apply the reasonable and probable grounds, let alone prove beyond a reasonable doubt, was certainly challenging and, I would say, very unlikely, hence why no charge had ever been laid under that particular act in circumstances that most of the public would think would be warranted. This, again, allows a whole level of accountability and, again, lets everyone, every adult in Alberta, know that no longer can you turn a blind eye to a child at risk.

Mr. Speaker, this journey has gone on for, again, quite some time, and I don't think it's important to rehash the highs and the lows and the left turns and the right turns, but for me it's important to – where are we today? I'm very optimistic where we are today. I thank everyone in the House, including the opposition, for allowing the unanimous consent to even go to third reading on this. I sincerely do thank you, and it's certainly not my intent to point fingers. To me, that's not what politics is about. I mean, I look at when I got involved in this five years ago, if not longer. I looked at: how is it that we can make positive changes for our community and actually have an impact on the community? I was very fortunate to be able to do that with Bill 205.

Certainly, talking to my friends and my former colleagues in the Calgary Police Service, talking to doctors, they've indicated that possibly Bill 205, certainly using it to take opioids off the streets and get the pill presses off the streets has actually likely saved a lot of lives, probably lives that we may never know about. Here we are again with this particular bill to let everyone in Alberta know that you cannot turn a blind eye to a child at risk. Again, maybe it allows that voice, we'll say, in the back of someone's mind to say: "You know what? I'm going to have to let the authorities know about a particular case." I'll make the same argument that I made under Bill 205 several years ago, which was that if we can save even just one life – right? – I mean, it makes it worth it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that many of my colleagues that I'm very fortunate to have worked with have some very kind words

that they would like to say. I know that Serenity's family – you know, I've had an opportunity to even talk to them not that long ago, actually, out front on the steps of this Legislature as we were supporting children in care in these types of situations. Whether they get the justice that they would like – I mean, that obviously is debatable, and that's certainly something that's going to be up to the justice system in the courts. But through the conversations that I've had with them, I would argue that what isn't debatable is the fact that this family doesn't want to see anything like this happen again to another child in a similar type of circumstance. I think that was a message that they were very, very clear to me about. We'll call it a bit of a legacy that they would like to leave. I'm very proud that Bill 202 is commonly referred to as Serenity's law because I think that this is something that Serenity's mother can look at and be proud of.

In my conversations with her, Mr. Speaker, she's the first one to admit that she's not perfect – I don't think there's anybody that's in this Chamber that is perfect; I don't think that there's anybody that I've ever met that is perfect – but I can tell you that this is a lady who's very smart. She had overcome addictions and other, I would say, posttraumatic issues that she faced in her life. That's part of the reason why Serenity and her two siblings were taken from her. But I can tell you that in the conversations that I've had with her, whether it be on the phone or in person, I've seen nothing but a loving, caring mother who has other children, more than three. She actually has several children. She wants nothing but the best for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Just a small procedural note. I believe I missed it, so I apologize for that. I just wanted to confirm that you're moving third reading of Bill 202.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yes.

**The Acting Speaker:** Yes. Okay.

Are there any members wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 202? I see that the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has risen.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm honoured to rise in the House and speak on Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. Children are the leaders of tomorrow. They should be loved, cared for, and given a safe home to grow up in. I believe children are the greatest gift that life can provide. They bring us innocence and joy to our daily lives. Today our tragic reality is that many children end up in a situation that exposes them to being abused, being taken advantage of, or affected by violence. This is a situation that I would hope no child would experience. However, this seems to be, unfortunately, the reality that some vulnerable children in Alberta are faced with.

Bill 202 will make necessary changes to existing legislation in order to protect children and youth who are affected by abuse and acts of violence. It will make adults more accountable to the children who desperately need help. A world where individuals would prefer to be bystanders instead of standing up for a child in distress is disappointing. I cannot understand as to why someone would not jump in and stand up for a child who could not stand up for themselves. This legislation will penalize those bystanders who witness a child's distress and choose to turn a blind eye. Further, this bill will add that adults are required to contact police and will create more substantial penalties for failing to report. This will make a difference in children's and youths' lives. Having a requirement to report these situations can give a child a chance before it's too late.

It will amend legislation in order to promote our best efforts to protect Alberta's children and youth thoroughly, effectively addressing the prosecution of those who commit these unthinkable acts. By having stronger penalties, it will further our stance that this is not a crime that will be taken lightly and that there are consequences. Bill 202 will be a large step forward in keeping adults accountable for their actions.

To stand up for vulnerable youth is a tremendous task. I stand here today being the voice of those who have fallen victim to acts of violence and abuse, to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, who are scared and young. We can promise children and youth of this province that we are taking steps to be their voice and that we care about them. They do not deserve these cruel acts committed upon them. Worse, they especially do not deserve anyone not standing up for them afterwards. Our young people need to be encouraged and to feel valued, not neglected and abused.

Legislation like this is important in promoting a stronger and safer Alberta. It is dear to me that the young people of Alberta are treated fairly and respectfully. No child should be a victim of abuse and violence. We as a government need to be accountable to the children who have been exposed to these hideous acts. We need to stand strong to show Albertans that these acts of violence towards our young people will not be tolerated. It is unacceptable for anyone to turn a blind eye to children in danger.

4:30

This bill will ensure children do not get left behind and neglected in their desperate times of need. It will be clear to Albertans that there are considerable consequences for their abuse towards children. This legislation has the potential to save children's lives. Together we can give them a safer today so that they can prosper tomorrow. After all, extending a helping hand to those who cannot help themselves is what adults should be doing for children all the time.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has risen.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to be able to rise today and speak to Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-West for bringing this to the attention of this Legislature. Child protection has been a core commitment of all Canadian governments, including our federal government, for a great deal of time. I think that we can see historically that this has been a bipartisan effort to improve child protection. It does not know a left wing or a right wing. We all understand the need to protect our children.

We have passed legislation and signed agreements both provincially and internationally. We signed the United Nations convention on the rights of the child in 1990, and with the ratification of this convention by our Parliament in 1991 and by almost the rest of the entire world, child safety has been brought into the public awareness and has become a major issue. This is a good thing. Article 19 of that convention requires that parties take appropriate legislative action to protect children from abuse, neglect, violence, and other dangerous situations. Article 19 specifically includes protective measures which should be implemented to ensure the necessary protection of children in dangerous situations.

Mr. Speaker, specifically, this convention requires countries to adopt measures that will support the identification and the reporting and the referral of children in cases of mistreatment and abuse.

Although Canada certainly has more stringent standards than are found in some places around the world, we should and are continuing to strive to improve and to fill the gaps in our current legal framework and to ensure that our legislation reflects real-world circumstances and instances.

There have been several high-profile cases, which have been brought up by many of our colleagues as we've debated this bill, which show that the reporting requirements within our current legislation could use some enhancement. We need to send the message that failing to report child abuse is unacceptable in Alberta. If there is a child who needs help, it must be reported, and we need to ensure that it is clear to Albertans to whom they can report these cases.

Mr. Speaker, as a teacher I learned very early in my career that nothing – absolutely nothing – was more important than the safety and the security of the children that we taught. This piece of legislation dovetails very nicely with what we were taught as professionals, as educators. Curriculum was important. Doing all the things, the myriad of jobs, that I as an educator had to do every day was important, but nothing was more important than the safety and the security of the children. If it ever came to my attention that a child was at risk, I had no choice, rightfully so, but to make sure that the appropriate authorities were informed.

This bill simply adds clarity to the existing reporting process that Albertans can use to ensure that children are safe within our province. It clarifies the process by allowing Albertans to report children who are in danger to police and by requiring those police officers to report the case to a director, and it will toughen the existing punitive measures for those individuals who are aware of a child in danger and who choose not to report that situation. The importance of reporting when children are in a dangerous situation cannot be overstated. It truly cannot.

Albert Einstein once said: the world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil but because of those who look on and do nothing. Mr. Speaker, I can remember being in my classroom and looking at the rise of the Holocaust and looking at some absolutely terrible historical examples of how people have had their rights taken away from them and where they have ultimately paid the ultimate price, their lives, and I had a quote very similar to this on my wall. You know, it's one thing for people who are evil to do evil; it's another thing for good people to stand on the sidelines and say nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to be able to speak to this bill today, that makes it very clear – it sets a standard for Albertans – that when we are confronted with children that are in danger, we do not have a choice. We must intervene, and there is a clear process for doing so. If we do not know who a director is, then we simply need to pick up the phone and call the local police. By doing that, we can get the process kicked into gear. When Albertans see children in dangerous situations and when they report these situations, they save lives.

Mr. Speaker, I can remember reading in the newspaper about a babysitter in 2017 who did exactly that. She was asked to babysit, and when she went into the home, she realized that the children that were there were living in a dangerous situation, that they faced neglect, and that they were abused. This babysitter had the courage to inform the authorities about this situation. This babysitter reported the conditions that led to five children receiving treatment at the Stollery children's hospital. The accused pleaded guilty to two counts of aggravated assault and to a count of forcible confinement. Without the report from this babysitter, these children may have been left in that situation.

It's simple. Reporting saves lives, saves the lives of our children, and this bill makes it easier for Albertans to report. With the

standards in this bill, more people will look on and will take action instead of remaining bystanders, and that will make Alberta a less dangerous place for our children.

Mr. Speaker, today we work to change the existing legislation. It's one of the privileges that we have in this House. There are 87 of us in this House, 87 people that have been enshrined by our constituents with the privilege of being able to speak to the laws of this province and to be able to make changes to the laws of this province. This is a bill today that deserves the support of this Legislature. We have the capacity today by our votes and by our talk to be able to make lives better for the children of this province. With the standards in this bill, people will be able to identify how to take action.

4:40

Today we change the existing legislation, or at least we have that opportunity to, so that when Albertans are aware that children are in danger, they know exactly where they can report them. They can go directly to the police. This bill doesn't take away the option to report to the director, but it adds a very clear alternative, and that alternative is reporting to the police. Every Albertan knows how to contact the police. I believe that it's a reasonable thing to say that not every Albertan would necessarily know how to contact a director, whoever that happens to be.

Thank you.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, it is a complete honour to rise in this House today to speak to Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-West for bringing this very important piece of legislation forward. In the past I've had a very unique opportunity to have many discussions with the Member for Calgary-West about this piece of legislation, and I'm very happy to stand up and support this bill. I also want to say that his passion for protecting our province's most vulnerable is really humbling, and I'm really happy to be able to contribute to this very important debate.

This bill really should mean something to each and every one of us. We've all seen the consequences of inaction, and we've all seen some of the most vulnerable in our communities fall through the cracks. I think that with this bill, inherently it's our responsibility to do everything we can to make sure that we don't have our most vulnerable falling through those cracks.

It never gets easier to witness new cases come forward or to remember old cases like Serenity's, that shook, in a lot of ways, the very foundation of our communities. It's our job as Albertans to take care of each other. We are generous, we are kind, and we're here to fight for our most vulnerable, and I believe that Bill 202 does exactly that. It helps us fight for our vulnerable.

It will never get easier seeing vulnerable children abused or mistreated, and I feel that we must act now if we wish to stop it. Acting now means knowing what abuse looks like. I think we're all aware of the most extreme forms of abuse and what it looks like. I think most everyone here would intervene immediately if they witnessed any such abuse, but in a lot of cases abuse rarely takes place in public. Children are taken advantage of and assaulted by those closest to them and in private, and it's a compounded tragedy that those who are trusted the most by children are sometimes the most likely to take advantage of that trust.

We need to be more aware of how abused children appear and behave as a result of that abuse. Beyond the obvious signs of physical abuse, children can become withdrawn, anxious, fearful. Physically abused children can change the way they dress to hide their injuries. They can be overdressed for the weather. Neglected

children will have clothing that is ripped or torn or doesn't fit right or is dirty.

This bill is really important because it can stop and help stop the pattern of abusive behaviour for so many children. It empowers all Albertans to be able to say something. It empowers us to take responsibility for children who may be at risk, and that is a responsibility we all need to take very, very seriously.

It is heart-wrenching to think that families have had to experience this, that they put their trust into the system and in some cases for it to fail. We need to stand here today and do everything to make this right. We need to make sure that everyone is responsible for the care of the most vulnerable in our society. People need to act when they see children in danger.

I am pleased to see that this bill focuses on making it perfectly clear that we all have a responsibility to report this behaviour by increasing the penalty from \$2,000 to \$10,000 and with up to six months in prison, or both. I think this sends a very clear message. All Albertans need to know how serious this is and that we all have a part to take in this. They need to know that we have a duty to protect those who cannot protect themselves, and that is exactly what this bill aims to do. It says that we will not look away when we see these atrocities. It means that we will no longer be able to shrug off the responsibility to someone else.

Now, I would like to think that nobody would neglect to report if a child was in danger, so maybe there's something that we need to consider a little bit more, and I think that the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon kind of touched on that. We need to look at the system and why possibly in the past individuals wouldn't report or had difficulties reporting if a child was in need of intervention. Could the hesitation to report be due to a lack of knowledge on just how to do this?

When speaking to constituents from my area – I went home and actually had this conversation – and when I was talking to the Member for Calgary-West, we went through it and talked about who the director is. It wasn't really clear. Just talking to everybody in my area – friends, family, teachers, doctors – I asked them: do you know who the director is here? Most of them were confused. They were lost. They didn't know who the director was. They didn't realize that when it came to intervention, they had to report to a director.

If they're unaware of who a director is or how to get in touch with one, we're kind of putting barriers up on how to report. It kind of is restricting and slowing down the system. In a lot of ways, when a child is in need of intervention, they're in immediate danger, and I think that that is where the strength in this bill really is. It's making the information and the accessibility of reporting so much easier by clarification. It allows Albertans to report to those that they are already aware of and trust: police officers. That's simple. This legislation is allowing for another option to report to those that society already relies on in a time of danger.

I also think that by allowing people to report to police officers, we're really underlining the importance and the gravity of the situation itself as well. Police are here to protect us from danger. They're here through the most dangerous and life-threatening situations, which is exactly the point. These children are in hard situations. This is a situation of emergency for those children. Their lives could essentially be in danger, and we must treat it as such. It is an emergency.

This legislation has the potential to save lives. It has the potential to stop the trauma that rips through families, friends, and our communities when we fail to protect the most vulnerable in our province. This bill sends a powerful message to all Albertans that we are in this together, that we must rely on each other to protect

the children in our communities, because it takes a community to raise a child.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Airdrie-East has risen to speak.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise here today in third reading on Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. I don't have a lot to add to this conversation, but I just wanted to be on the record in third reading. I'm certain I've spoken in favour of this in second, and I would like to commend my hon. colleague from Calgary-West for pushing so hard on this issue over the last almost four and a half years that we've been in this Legislature. It's commendable, the amount of effort that the member continually puts into protecting children in this province.

4:50

One of the most unfortunate things about being in this position for the last number of years is hearing some of the worst cases of neglect, that most people never hear about, but we do in this Chamber, and we do in our constituency offices. They're sometimes so hopeless. Sometimes it's hard to be in a position where people think that you're able to actually make a difference and change the way that child abuse is viewed in this province and how we can go about sending a message for people to continue to report these things.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that everyone – everyone – if you ever asked them, "Hey, if you knew about a child being abused, would you report it?" they would say yes. But the reality is that that's not actually the case. I watched a video the other day. I was in this antibullying program that our swim club puts on for parents, and one of the videos that they put on was the Burger King commercial. Some of you might have seen it. There's a bunch of kids that are bullying this one kid in the Burger King, and nobody, no adult steps in to stand up for this child that's being bullied. Near the end there was one adult – one adult – I think, out of 10 that actually intervened and said, "Hey, are you okay, and can I help you?" and sort of scared away the bullying kids.

[The Speaker in the chair]

That's the reality that we're in, so it's so essential to make sure that you have to report. It's now a crime – if you've seen that, if you've witnessed that, you have to report this. It's so important to have this piece of legislation and to compel those to do the right thing. Sometimes you're just not sure: like, maybe you didn't see that, or maybe you're looking at this the wrong way. Well, guess what? That's not for you to decide anymore. That's for the authorities to do.

Mr. Speaker, that's all I have to add to this debate. I thank you for the opportunity to participate and to all my colleagues that have lent their voice to this cause and, hopefully, will write about this in their local papers to their constituents and send this out in their newsletters and just let people know that what we're doing in here are sometimes really great things. We're not just, you know, yelling at each other and disagreeing with one another. I think that all members in this House think this is an important piece of legislation that we're all going to be in favour of for our kids. It's one small piece, but it's one really, really big piece for a child who is in a situation that they have no control over.

With that, I will take my seat. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I see the hon. minister for the status of women rising to speak.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to again thank everyone who has spoken on this amendment and on the legislation, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. I especially, again, would like to thank the Member for Calgary-West for his incredible work on this. All of us lived and breathed in this House during some of the hardest days when we heard some of the material that was happening when it came to Serenity. As a mom I found the discussions at that time to be life altering. I found that I looked at things differently very, very quickly. But, more than that, I found that it's very difficult, as we all know, when we're in crisis, when anybody you know is in crisis, in that situation. You could have literally the entire gamut of what you're supposed to do, who you're supposed to phone and who you're supposed to talk to, laid out directly in front of you, but because of the moment and the crisis and the situation it's very hard to even see straight at that moment.

When we talk about children especially, we have to have some very, very strong lines in the sand when it comes to prevention. I really think that this bill lays out a very, very strong sense of prevention, and the clarification with this amendment goes further to make sure that – because normally the first phone call will be to Children's Services, but we also have the opportunity to engage our police and our whole front line.

One of the things that I think is probably most profound in this legislation – and the member has actually already said this – is that this is a call of duty. All adults in the province and anybody who is a mentor or an advocate or anybody who works with children is on notice that we have a larger responsibility in the grand scheme of things.

You know, I've been very blessed in my lifetime. I've worked with a lot of children. I've been teaching music for probably 25, 26 years. You have all sorts of munchkins come to your studio, all sorts of different age groups, from different socioeconomic backgrounds, various families and everything, and after a little while you start to be able to see the way that kids develop. Music is one of those really personal things that's a beautiful way to be able to interact with young people, but it also is a very personal experience in a lesson. You're really, really entrusting your teacher to show your voice and to sing and to breathe. One of the most nerve-wracking things for a young person to do is to sing in front of somebody else. If any of you have ever tried to do that in front of people, or if you were asked to stand up and sing right now in front of somebody, you'd probably say no – right? – unless you're the Speaker of the House. He sings for us all the time. It's actually really nerve-wracking, and it's very, very personal.

A lot of emotions come out during those discussions. I know you wouldn't think that that's where it happens, but it does. A lot of what kids are going through and what they're feeling in that 45 minutes to an hour that I had the privilege of having them in my studio – you learn a lot about a kid. You learn a lot about a teenager. You learn a lot about what's going on in their families, and quite often they're very, very willing to share that information.

Fortunately, in the many years that I've been teaching, there have only been a couple of incidents where I've had to report, and I have had to report. It's a terrifying experience. It's terrifying to think that you are interpreting what it is that you think you're interpreting, and I think that for most of us, when we're in that situation, we want to believe the best in people and the best in parents and the caregivers and the people that are in charge of these kids, but in the few situations where I found myself in that situation, I really had to think about it. I had to think, like: "Am I doing the right thing? Am I intervening in a family situation where I don't belong?" All of those questions, even though I know better, were there. This clarification will explain.

As the Member for Airdrie-East has said, not only are we putting the adults in the province on notice that we have this responsibility, but actually as legislators we have this responsibility. We have the responsibility of sharing what we learn in here, how we legislate. We've done this all together in here, in opposition and in government, to make this legislation come to life, but more than that is that we're reporting on a regular basis not only the great work that we're doing but the immense responsibility that comes with a piece of legislation like this.

We have the opportunity to say to a perpetrator, to say to a person: "This is not going to happen. We see you. We see the kids. We see what's going on here. There will be consequences, and we will follow through." For a child that is in a situation of crisis like that, for a child that cannot speak up for himself or herself, this is a game changer, knowing, for families, that we are paying attention and that there will be consequences.

There's just no place for this abuse, for this level of cruelty, for neglect, for emotional abuse. There is no place for it. We cannot deviate from the fact that what we learned in some of the cases that we heard – and many of us are impacted by this in our constituency offices. To the Member for Airdrie-East I just wanted to say that I know how hard it is for her. She has a beautiful heart, and I know it's really hard for her to talk about these things. I know, for many of us in our areas, especially some of us who have some pretty remote rural areas, how difficult it is for people to come and report on these things. They need to know that we have the ability to make sure that we're making differences in people's lives.

To every parent and every adult: we are all on notice. We are all being given the opportunity to do right by the children of this province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the time for consideration of this matter has concluded.

## 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

### Abortion and Reproductive Health Services

506. Ms Renaud moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to conduct a thorough review of access to abortion services and reproductive health services in Alberta, take action to remove barriers to these services, and ensure access to safe, timely, and equitable services in all communities across the province.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and to talk about Motion 506. It's hardly a surprise that sales of Margaret Atwood's 1985 dystopian book, *The Handmaid's Tale*, have spiked in recent years. In an interview she recently said that she believes the re-emergence and success of her novel is due to the bubbling up of regressive attitudes towards women, further adding that control of women and children has been a feature of every repressive political regime on the planet and throughout history.

The right of every human being to control their body is the most basic of human rights, yet we're surrounded by wealthy special-interest groups intent on removing and restricting those rights. By my count we have 28 UCP antichoice MLAs that have been elected. Let me rephrase that: 28 anti human rights MLAs. I'm sure that each of your offices has been bombarded by targeted e-mail campaigns from organized groups right across the country because that's what they do. Although we're not Alabama yet, the focus is

clear. We now have a rabid antichoice Minister of Education and a Premier who's been fighting to remove and restrict the right of women to exercise freedom and control over their bodies and lives for decades. This new reality in Alberta is why I'm introducing this private member's motion.

In 1988 the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that a woman's right to continue or terminate a pregnancy is protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Let me be very clear here. Abortion is legally treated like any other medical procedure. Under the Canada Health Act health care must be accessible, portable, comprehensive, and publicly administered nation-wide, the key here being accessible and public. However, access to reproductive health care or abortion is restricted in Alberta due to extralegal factors, which are institutional policies – I'll talk about that a little bit later – the imposition of gestational limits; most importantly for me antichoice harassment and violence; the location of services.

I think we can all agree that there are cases in which our provincial government provides financial assistance to patients who must travel outside of their communities to access medical services. It's not that uncommon. I'm sure that if you looked around your own constituencies, you would find examples of that. Yet similar support does not exist for women forced to travel a great distance for reproductive health care. When I talk about reproductive health care, I'm not simply talking about abortion services or the prescription of Mifegymiso. Women are being forced to travel great distances, so unless they live in large urban centres like Edmonton or Calgary, their reality is very different. I would suggest that the support is not readily available to women because religious ideology, which has no place in our health care system or service delivery system, has been allowed to override that very same delivery system.

Here are some other disturbing facts. We know that access to reproductive health services such as abortion or birth control has declined in recent years because of harassment of practitioners. One example that was recently shared with me was a physician practising in the Grande Prairie area, and this particular physician had difficulty getting her patients time in the local hospital. Doctors are actually experiencing difficulty prescribing the medication because they need to have a backup plan – should that medication not work, they would need to go into the hospital – and they are not being given free, clear access. Unfortunately, sometimes women are showing up at these facilities and just lying and saying that they had a miscarriage. The lack of access to needed resources such as operating spaces is very problematic.

As of 2013 under 16 per cent of publicly funded hospitals provide procedures directly related to reproductive health care. That's dismal. In Alberta access to abortion is largely restricted to Calgary and Edmonton. In Edmonton we have Woman's Health Options, which is on 124th Street. What is really disturbing about that particular clinic is that kitty-corner to it on the very same street there is another clinic, and the signage out front is very much put there to trick people. People will literally go into that clinic. It is not a clinic that supports a woman's right to choose. In fact, it's a religiously driven, ideologically driven clinic that, in my opinion, shares information that is incorrect with women and urges them in one particular direction as opposed to offering them choices. In Calgary there are two providers: the Kensington clinic, and services are offered at the Peter Lougheed Centre.

Surgical abortion as a regular service is not offered at any other location in this province. That should worry us, all 87 of us in this place. Health care facilities in Cold Lake, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, High Level, Hinton, Peace River, Slave Lake, and

Whitecourt have the ob-gyn capacity to offer abortion services but choose not to.

In 2017 the NDP government took action to cover the cost of a Mifegymiso, a two-stage drug combination that induces medical abortion, but currently only two providers are listed by Alberta Health Services, and those are the Edmonton and Calgary clinics. Access to this drug is not universal, again underlining the failure of our delivery system. You might be interested to know that in 2018 Mifegymiso has been used, or was prescribed and used, 1,528 times.

Access to reproductive health services in rural and remote communities in Alberta is dismal, with virtually zero access in rural north. The limitations of access to reproductive health services has a greater and potentially much more harmful impact on women in rural and remote communities. Interestingly, in 2015 polling data from Lethbridge College suggested that there is a supermajority of support across all demographic groups in Alberta for abortion as a personal choice, with 80.5 per cent overall support and 56.3 per cent among religious Albertans.

So why am I bringing forward this motion? I'm bringing it forward because I believe in human rights, and I believe the right of a woman to control her body and her future is the most fundamental and important right that she has. It doesn't matter why women make those choices, and women should never be forced to share those stories, those very personal stories about why they did. Whether it was about their health, whether it was about economics, whether it was about their age, it really doesn't matter. Chances are you know somebody that has had an abortion: your mom, your sister, your daughter, your wife, your grandmother.

I am urging this government to put their religious ideology aside and examine how we can all ensure that women have equal access to the broad range of reproductive health services. As lawmakers we need to look at the facts and the laws within which we operate. The Canada Health Act states that health care must be accessible, portable, comprehensive, and publicly administered. Each one of us represents thousands of constituents. Their safety and access must trump your personal religious beliefs. It's your responsibility to protect the most basic human rights of your constituents. I look forward to the debate, and I look forward to hearing what everyone has to say.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak against the motion proposed by the Member for St. Albert, not only due to my own personal convictions but also because the motion is unnecessary and only seeks to create division. I am not here today to debate the merits or morality of abortion. That would involve a very lengthy, convoluted, and emotional discussion. It is my personal conviction that all human life is sacred and should be protected. I am unapologetically and unreservedly pro life and my constituents were aware of this when they sent me to this place.

I imagine that everyone here has their own opinion on abortion and for their own unique reasons, but I'm not here to criticize the opinions of others. In fact, I'm proud to be a member of a caucus that recognizes the myriad of ways that one can approach this topic. We are all entitled to our own beliefs. I respect the Member for St. Albert's right to her opinion, and in return I hope that she and her colleagues would respect mine. That is democracy after all. But my hopes that the hon. member will do that, Mr. Speaker, are quite low because time and time again I have seen her and her colleagues take aim at me and my other colleagues for not falling in lockstep with their ideology.

5:10

Over the course of the provincial election I was made a target time and time again by the NDP and their proxy groups simply for associating with individuals who are openly pro life. They took aim at my Christian faith and tried to imply that I would be an unfit legislator because of it. NDP candidates actively took shots at me on Twitter for my own personal views on this matter, and after we leave this Chamber, they'll likely continue their campaign of fear and smear. If they do, that would just be par for the course, I'm afraid. In fact, they'll probably advocate that I can't be an advocate for women because I refuse to subscribe to their ideology.

This past weekend we proudly celebrated Persons Day and a woman's right to vote for who represents her in this House. Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but there's no caveat in there about what kind of women ought to be allowed to run based on their personal moral convictions. It is simply recognized that women have a voice that is needed in public discourse and consequently deserves to be heard. To assume that a woman elected to this House cannot act in the best interest of the public and at arm's length of their own personal convictions is reductionist, and it actually runs counter to the feminist narrative that they so aptly will claim as their own. It undermines the mandate that Albertans granted this government, and it calls into question the competence of women who have fought very hard to be here today.

I stand here today to not only give a voice to the voiceless, the unborn, but also to the many Albertans and Albertan women who do not fall in lockstep with that former government's ideology. During the election and in my nomination I met with countless young families, women, girls, men, and everyone in between. Many of them hold similar views like the ones that I do. These Albertans are compassionate. They give generously to agencies for mothers experiencing a crisis pregnancy. They support families. They objectively and without judgment counsel young women, praying for them and giving them shelter and other necessities. They set up programs and centres that help young mothers get back on their feet no matter their choice. They work to make life better for women and families in times of great need. These Albertans do not deserve to be vilified, Mr. Speaker; they deserve to be heard.

I'm a young woman, and as such I do take women's health very seriously. Many women struggle with real reproductive health-related issues, many of which go undiagnosed or are dismissed by medical practitioners entirely. Endometriosis, for example, impacts 10 to 15 per cent of women of reproductive age, yet it is one of the most commonly misdiagnosed or underdiagnosed gynecological conditions. The same is true for polycystic ovary syndrome. In fact, 6 to 10 per cent of women are expected to suffer from this disease, and one of those women is me.

The symptoms of PCOS are somewhat of a mystery, which lends itself to underdiagnosis, and many doctors don't know how to treat it. Some of the symptoms are physical and visible, but many of them are not. Many of these symptoms in combination can actually end up resulting in infertility. For someone like me, who has always dreamed of becoming a mother of a not yet determined but hopefully very large gaggle of kids, the thought of infertility is absolutely crippling. There have been instances where my concerns weren't taken seriously, where I've been told to tough out my pain or that I was making things sound worse than they actually were.

Mr. Speaker, I want women to access health care. I want them to be taken seriously. I believe that women's health is paramount to the longevity of a thriving Alberta. Imagine a couple who is trying to conceive but are having no luck, so they decide to pursue the costly procedure of IVF, except it takes months to get an appointment with a specialist. In 2018 the Royal Alexandra hospital

right here in Edmonton decided to stop providing IVF services, causing hundreds of patients to seek new referrals to specialists at other clinics. To imply that I or any other member on this side of the House does not care about women or their health, that would be a grave mistake.

This motion also calls for safe, timely, and equitable services across all communities in the province. You know, Mr. Speaker, I would relish the opportunity to talk about equity and health care services. As the MLA for Brooks-Medicine Hat I understand the struggles that exist when it comes to accessing these services. Rural Albertans often experience long wait times for surgeries. They often have limited access to specialists. In the south zone doctors asked the previous government repeatedly for a cardiac catheterization lab, but they chose to centre their funding on urban centres. This left roughly 3,000 patients each year to be transferred to Calgary when they had a serious cardiac incident.

Another example of inequity in health care is ambulance services. In my riding ambulance services are scarce. Thankfully, we have HALO air ambulance, but not every area in the province has such a wonderful service available to them.

It's quite rich for the NDP to talk about wanting to ensure equitable access to a certain service across this province, when they directed most of the funds for their capital plan towards urban centres, neglecting the health care of rural Albertans and my constituents entirely. For example, in 2017 they closed the Medicine Hat diagnostic laboratory, a privately owned lab that served the towns of Brooks and Foremost and Medicine Hat as well. The issues of health equity across this province are about all forms of care, but the NDP just want to make it about a single topic, thereby ignoring all of the other pressing issues with health care that rural Albertans have raised, just like when they were in government. We shouldn't be playing games with people's health, Mr. Speaker. That's why our government is already examining the issue of health equity through the review of AHS.

Mr. Speaker, this motion isn't about making sure that women's health services are taken seriously or anyone's health, for that matter. It's about dividing Albertans, reopening a debate that our government committed to keeping closed, and silencing Albertans who do not agree with their agenda. You know how I know that's true? Because if the NDP wanted to achieve the aims outlined in this motion, they would have done so while they were in government, but they didn't. The Member for St. Albert tried to pass a similar motion last year, but it was never even debated. She was obviously vocal about this issue when her party was in power, so why didn't they act on it then? They had the entire government and all of its bureaucracy at their disposal, and they did nothing.

So is this about women's health, Mr. Speaker? No. It's about stoking the fire and fanning the flames of division in this province. Still palpably bitter about their party's defeat in the last election, the NDP are trying to find something, literally anything, to create more baseless controversy. They're trying to buy more time in the news cycle in an attempt to distract Albertans from their government's disastrous record and from how hard this side of the House is working to make life better for all Albertans. They've used this tactic over and over again while they were in government and again during the election. Neither time did it prove to be successful, and it appears they have not learned.

The NDP also loves to tout that it's the party of Tommy Douglas and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, but what many Canadians might not know is that Tommy Douglas was a proponent of eugenics and believed in forced sterilization of those with what he called subnormal intelligence and morality. That should be appalling no matter what side of the House you sit on.



Mr. Speaker, I am pro life because I believe that all life is precious and worthy of dignity and respect. It is not something that I am ashamed of. It is a conviction that I and countless Albertans hold deeply and defend fervently. We are not a marginal portion of the population. The members opposite have been scowling at me this whole time, and if history is any indicator, the nastiness has only begun, but quite frankly I don't care. I have been open and transparent about my views from day one. My constituents know where my conscience is on this, and many voted for me because of it. While the NDP turn inside out and feign outrage any time the words "free" and "speech" are used in the same sentence, I am proud to be in a party that celebrates and encourages diversity, a party that allows me to speak and vote my conscience on matters such as these. Regardless of my own personal beliefs, which I believe I made pretty clear, the motion solely seeks to stir up more fear and division rather than allowing for productive discussions about how we can make life better for Albertans.

At the end of the day, I represent all constituents, not just those who hold the same personal beliefs as I do, so my rationale for voting against this extends far beyond my own personal views on morality. Mr. Speaker, I am done playing the NDP's games, and I won't allow their attacks to silence me. I will be voting against this motion not only because I am pro life. I am voting against this motion because it is divisive, and we need to move on and do the work that we were elected to do; that is, unite Albertans and advocate for what matters to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has the call.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the critic for status of women I've heard from countless Albertans about the importance of access to safe, affordable health care for all. This motion from my colleague the Member for St. Albert is so critical. I must also just take this moment to mention that as the critic as well for LGBTQ2S-plus issues, it's important to remind folks that reproductive health access is not just for women. We must be mindful of our language as trans and gender-diverse folks, who do not identify as women, often face barriers to health care access as well.

This is a human rights issue, and it's also an economic issue, which I'll speak about shortly. Fundamentally, any person seeking reproductive health services in Alberta should be able to do so in a safe and timely manner. For those saying that this is about dividing Albertans, like the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has just noted, it's not. This is more than a discussion about abortion. If you read the motion, "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to conduct a thorough review of access to abortion services and reproductive health services in Alberta," reproductive health services include access to birth control, in vitro fertilization, fertility treatments, midwifery, and other services. This is not just about abortion.

5:20

I'm so proud that my NDP colleagues, when they were in government, fought hard to ensure access to abortion and reproductive health services. However, as we can see from the comments already today, that work is in jeopardy of being rolled back. That work must be continued as we are talking about health care supports for so many of our neighbours. We still hear reports from all over this province from folks who cannot access Mifegymiso prescriptions in their communities, health providers who are harassed for providing any sorts of services, and earlier today we heard from that

same Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat as she asked about access to rural health services. I appreciated that question because that's exactly what this motion seeks to ensure: health services for all Albertans – all Albertans.

I grew up in rural Alberta. I spent much of my life in rural Alberta. I was a teacher, and I saw first-hand from some of my high school students the struggles that they experienced trying to access health services such as these. It's likely no surprise to folks in this House that reproductive health services are concentrated quite heavily in cities. In fact, the folks from pro choice Edmonton tell me that there's virtually no access for people outside Edmonton and Calgary, especially if "they're young, poor, they can't take time off of work or school." Alberta Pro-Choice tells me that even in cities with major hospitals there's no access outside of those two big major cities. People in rural Alberta deserve the same access to these necessary health services, and that's why I'm so proud to support my colleague from St. Albert's motion. Regardless of personal opinions, every member should support every Albertan having access to safe, affordable health care, just as the member asked about earlier.

As I said, it's not just a social issue, not just a human rights issue; it's an economic issue as well. There are significant costs associated with forcing folks to travel long distances to receive the health care that they so desperately need, and the wait times are long. I heard from one person today who noted that a friend of hers was trying to access such services, and the wait-list was over three weeks for an Edmonton clinic. She pointed out: listen; we need to consider those folks who don't have the capacity to even travel.

This shouldn't be controversial because, again, it's about more than just abortion, but I ask you to not take just my word for it. I have actually a number of statements from folks, various stakeholders who work directly in the field, and I'll table some of these statements tomorrow. The first person that I'd like to point out is Joyce Arthur. She's the executive director of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada. She says:

The timing of the vote on this motion is significant, coming in the same week as the federal election. Advocates across Canada have been asking the federal party leaders, that if elected, will they commit to working with the provinces to improve access to abortion and other reproductive health services?

Unsurprisingly, not all the federal leaders are clear in their support of such a motion.

Alberta's services do not meet Canada Health Act standards because there are so few access points. The Alberta government needs to pass this motion as a first step to meeting its obligations under federal law.

Melanie Anderson, who's a board member with the Alberta Pro-Choice Coalition, says:

The lack of abortion access is in the spotlight across Canada and this motion is very important for Albertans. Access to reproductive health and abortion services has been very limited in Alberta for many years with people living outside Calgary and Edmonton being denied these services in their own communities. Surgical abortion services, in particular, are restricted to clinics in Edmonton and Calgary and although any doctor who prescribes contraception can also prescribe Mifegymiso [which is] medical abortion, this medication is all but inaccessible to many living outside these two [major] centres, [Edmonton and Calgary].

And she says:

We look forward to our elected representatives addressing the reproductive health needs of women and gender diverse people by supporting this important initiative.

I think it's important that we hear from somebody who is in one of those major centres that's not Edmonton and Calgary. Lauren Lagoutte is with Red Deer & Area Pro Choice. She says:

We are in need of more access in Red Deer, not only do we not have places within our hospitals, but currently we have no doctors who are willing to prescribe [Mifegymiso]. We aren't even rural, we have over 150,000 people who use our hospital and services, and I spend my time as an abortion doula referring to Calgary. We are forgotten. Our pregnant people are forgotten. This can't happen anymore.

I've heard from her before. She's got some very heart-wrenching stories of folks who've not been able to access services in communities across Alberta, and she's travelled hundreds and hundreds of kilometres trying to support those women and gender-diverse folks who need those services.

Fort McMurray, a huge city. This is from Melissa McIntyre from Fort McMurray pro choice.

Fort McMurray being a remote city means that abortion being inaccessible is detrimentally the same as being illegal. We can't utilize services out of our reach.

We're talking about a huge population of folks who don't have access to those basic reproductive services.

Lethbridge, another huge city in our province. The Pro-choice Society of Lethbridge & Southern Alberta notes that

access to reproductive health and the erosion of hard-fought for rights to bodily autonomy and choice is a major concern for many Albertans. We would like to see [political parties] be clear on where they stand on these issues, and we support efforts to bring problems of access to services and information to the forefront.

I like this point.

This issue is entwined with so many others, with social supports, transportation, addictions, education, and basic health care to name a few. These challenges are not going away and need to be addressed.

Again, such a multifaceted issue. I can't say it enough. It's not just about access to abortion. It's the connections. It's how it's inextricably linked to so many other issues that we need to be addressing.

Deb Tomlinson, the CEO of the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, notes the following.

Central to [our] mandate is to enhance access to services and supports for all Albertans impacted by sexual violence. When someone sexually assaults another person, they are abusing power and taking bodily control away from the person they are assaulting. Therefore every effort to return choice and control through access to reproductive health care is of the utmost importance. Given the connection between sexual assault, unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, easy access to reproductive health services (including abortion) is a key factor for survivors in coping with the many negative after effects of experiencing sexual assault. Sexual assault centres in Alberta would also like to stress that when access to reproductive health services is restricted, this most adversely affects those who are marginalized in our communities, particularly racialized and trans folks, as well as those from our rural communities.

I'm going to end on that statement from Deb because, again, I think this points out something so crucial. We're talking about access for folks who are often the most vulnerable, someone who's just been sexually violated in a rural or remote community in Alberta and needing access to services and having nowhere to go. She talks about access for racialized and trans folks as well. Again, we're talking about some of the most vulnerable folks in our communities.

I'd like to just end by urging the members opposite to think about some of those folks – I mean, a number of people in this Legislature represent rural and remote communities – and to broaden your perspective to really recognize that this is not just about abortion. This is about critically important reproductive health services for all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Motion 506, put forward by the hon. Member for St. Albert. I'd like to begin this conversation with what we can all agree on. That is what is most important, and that is a conversation about women's health in this province. It's a conversation about access to services. This conversation is extremely emotional for many Albertans, and when we engage in this, we must do it with the utmost respect and sensitivity. This is a discussion that is deeply personal for many and often one of the most difficult things that a woman can experience.

Let's have these conversations and do so in a way that is respectful of the differing views that exist. We have conversations in this Chamber that impact the lives of many, many Albertans, and I think we all know as members that debates in this House can go beyond the issues and can become political theatre. I hope, especially today, this debate can be one that does not just merely descend into that political theatre. Politicizing this issue does a huge disservice to the very real people that are impacted by it. We must look at the facts that impact this issue to ensure that our decisions are based upon details and information as opposed to supporting a politically motivated narrative. It's way too important.

5:30

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to serve here alongside 25 incredible women from both parties, and I was so excited to see a record number of women run for office in the last election, women of all political stripes, points of view, and backgrounds. As the minister that is responsible for multiculturalism I've met many, many Albertans who come from a multitude of diverse backgrounds and faiths. My job as minister is to learn about all of these cultures and beliefs and ways of life without judgment or preconceived notions.

This is a very, very sensitive conversation, and we must remember that. I am personally pro choice and, moreover, extremely grateful and proud to be a part of a caucus that welcomes and celebrates a diversity of opinions, including those of my very dear friends in our caucus who are pro life. We have caucus MLAs, party members, and everyday supporters with a wide variety of views on various subjects, including this issue that is at the centre of this motion, of the opposition motion, that being abortion. I welcome and respect all of these views, even those I may personally disagree with, and I hope that every member of this Assembly applies that same approach, particularly, Mr. Speaker, when we are debating such sensitive topics like that which is presented in this opposition motion.

In 1969 the Criminal Law Amendment Act legalized abortion. This was based upon the approval of a committee of doctors, and it was required that they sign off that it was necessary for the physical and mental well-being of the mother. In the 50 years, Mr. Speaker, since that time we've made immense advancements in women's health services. Fifty years ago this decision would not have been in the hands of the woman, and now it is a woman's right to make this decision that is protected by federal law.

This motion calls on the government to review access to abortion services and remove barriers to those services. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to touch on what I understand to be the current landscape for access to abortion services. In Alberta, women can access abortion services up to the 24-week mark, which is longer than most provinces. Abortion services, both at hospitals and clinics, are covered by the provincial health care plan. There are three nonhospital abortion clinics in Alberta, and they provide surgical abortions. Two are in Calgary, and one is in Edmonton, as has been previously mentioned. However, surgical obstetricians are able to perform these services.

The access to Mifegymiso: Mifegymiso is a pill that can be taken at home which actually can medically induce an abortion up to nine weeks' gestation and has been expanded. It also can be used past the nine-week point but also does require further medical supervision. The pill can actually be prescribed by any doctor or any nurse practitioner registered in the province and dispensed at pharmacies. A possible outcome of this option is that it may decrease the number of surgical procedures required. The medication already has been and will continue to be critically important in making sure, hopefully, that women have to undergo fewer invasive surgical procedures. This is along with being able to access services.

Expanding access to the option to independently go through this process to abort a pregnancy at home has given many women, especially those who are in rural areas, the opportunity to decide what the best option is for them. They can choose to remain at home, perhaps to be surrounded by their support systems or the space that they feel most comfortable in. They can also choose to utilize the services, Mr. Speaker, offered by women's health centres that provide services.

Women across the province can access numerous options when it comes to services. Mr. Speaker, I do believe that it's imperative that women have access to safe abortion services. It is due to options that I've actually just shared today that I simply – I don't see a scarcity of the access that is implied in this motion, in this opposition motion. In fact, we had the opportunity to speak with the Ministry of Health. I was informed that Alberta Health Services, which is actually responsible for the delivery of abortion services, has not seen an increase in demand, and that would be required in order to initiate increased access to services.

In the four years – and I think this is probably the most problematic – that the NDP was in government, they had every opportunity to expand services and create more bricks-and-mortar centres across the province. I guess the question all of us have is why they didn't do that. My guess is that they were advised, as our government has been, by Alberta Health Services that further expansion is not required at this time.

Furthermore, our government – and I'm so proud to say this – is making a huge priority in health care. The Minister of Health has recently announced, of course, the expansion of the scope of practice of the 16,000 licensed practical nurses, which will alleviate pressure on other caregivers, obviously, Mr. Speaker, like registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and doctors. The addition of 30 new nurse practitioners in rural and remote areas is actually what we're talking about here, is making sure that access to services is available. If you recall earlier in my statement, they're also able to prescribe Mifegymiso.

Further, our government is prioritizing health care access in general. Alberta Health Services is conducting a review, and our government is taking steps to ensure that wait times for surgical procedures decrease. We take, Mr. Speaker, the commitments that we have made to Albertans very seriously, and our record, in our very short time in government, speaks for itself. We will continue.

We will continue to honour our commitments to Albertans, including our commitment – as was said by the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, we are committed to not reopening this issue. I think we've said it at least 150 times. We'll continue to repeat this message over and over and over again.

Furthermore, I think what is most glaring is that it's become apparent that this issue is being weaponized in a partisan way. We are dealing with vulnerable populations, as the member said. This is not how we focus on people in this province. We do not weaponize issues like this for our own political gain. It's a profound disservice to the women who have and may require these particular

services, to the care providers, and actually, Mr. Speaker, to the unity of our province as a whole.

I do support a woman's right to choose in what happens to her body, and having these conversations is very important. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore should time allow.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today in support of the motion brought forward by my colleague the Member for St. Albert, which seeks a review of access to abortion services and reproductive health services in Alberta and to take action to remove barriers to access to those services.

I've been listening very carefully to the comments from both my colleagues but also from the members from the other side. There are a few things I'd like to just mention. The first is that I really want to highlight that this motion is about access to reproductive health services as well as abortion services. In fact, I believe that on this point we are actually in agreement because what I was hearing from both the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women as well as the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat is that all Albertans should have access to health services that they require. The Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat gave great examples of the kinds of reproductive health services that women and anybody who identifies as a woman and trans people require.

The issue here is that abortion has been decided in terms of federal law, as the minister for status of women said. It is a right, but nobody is here to dispute that. We're simply saying that in order for a right to have meaning, it must be accessible. Again, the members from the other side have highlighted that; in fact, the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, even today in question period, raised the issue of access in rural areas to medical services. In this province women have rights to access reproductive health services, including abortion services. But if those services are not accessible and are not available and are not safe, then it's a hollow right. There is no right to it.

5:40

We're simply stating with this motion that we conduct that review to see whether that right is fully accessible by all Albertans who require it and, if there are barriers, to remove those barriers, because that is actually the fulfillment of our obligation, under the charter of human rights, to the safety and security that all people have, to make sure that there is access to those rights.

Certainly, the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women stood and alluded to perhaps some information from Alberta Health Services which may indicate that there is not a problem with access to reproductive health rights. I don't know if that's the case. I have not been privy to that information. I have not seen that. If that's the case, then it should be no problem to fulfill this motion, which is that – maybe the review has already been conducted. That may be the case. But I think we can all stand in agreement – we've repeatedly talked about it – that access to health care services in rural areas is a problem. I would be interested to see if there is actually a report that indicates that there is not a problem with access to reproductive health services and abortion services in rural areas because I don't think that that has been the experience or understanding of most people. If that's the case, by all means bring that information forward, and we'll be able to fulfill what's set out in this motion.

I also want to highlight again – we did talk about it – reproductive health services. My colleague the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and myself had an opportunity over the summer to meet with a doctor in Calgary, Dr. Rupinder Toor, who operates an IUD

clinic there. She serves vulnerable newcomer communities, and we would talk very much about access to safe contraception, access to safe reproductive health rights, and how the most vulnerable and, particularly, newcomers, I would say, indigenous communities – certainly, if we're talking about there not being great access in northern Alberta, that has to include a lot of our indigenous communities. Access to those reproductive health services – contraception is not available. We know that if that is available, that affects the quality of life of Albertans in so many ways.

I agree that we should not be weaponizing this discussion. I actually take great issue with that characterization of this motion because it's not just about abortion services. We've been very careful and, I think, clear in our discussions on this side of the House that this is about access to what all women are entitled to have in this province, which is reproductive health services.

I also want to mention that I'm not in disagreement with the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat about all of us having our personal views. We all do have our personal views. Whether they be religious, ideological, whatever the reasons are, our opinions and our personal beliefs about access to abortion: we are all entitled to those beliefs. Certainly, if somebody has an ideological or religious belief that would prohibit them from seeking abortion services, whether it be a surgical abortion or Mifegymiso, that is completely appropriate. If an individual does not believe in that, do not access that. Do not seek that access.

The problem is when not all people have access to those services because of where they live. They're not having an opportunity to exercise their own personal beliefs or to exercise the right to safe and accessible health care to which they are entitled as part of their security of the person, protected under the charter of human rights and freedoms. Certainly, we are not in disagreement. If an individual has personal views against it, by all means, nobody is forcing anybody to use those services.

But if an individual, whether by personal belief or by need, because there are many situations where a woman perhaps would never conceive of a situation where they would want to access it, but they may find themselves in a situation where they need to access either reproductive services or abortion services – and they are entitled to have access to that. I think that that's really important to mention. I think it's very important that we say: this is not about imposing one set of beliefs on another. The law has already decided that issue. The law has already decided that there is access to abortion rights. That is what every woman in this country and in this province is entitled to access, but that access must be meaningful. If you don't have access because of where you live or how far away you are from a centre or a service or a clinic that provides it, then you don't have access.

Again, the facts of this situation are that in Alberta we have centralized reproductive services and abortion services. Compared to our population and if you look at what's happening in other provinces, in B.C., for example, they have a very interconnected network of services and recommendations for people in remote areas to have access to those services.

That's simply what we're talking about here. We're talking about reviewing our existing system, identifying where there are opportunities – and there should be meaningful access – for women who need those reproductive and abortion services and making sure that they have them and, if there are barriers, to make sure that those barriers are taken down so that they can access their rights.

I am standing here saying that, of course, I have my personal views. I have very strongly held personal views. But this isn't about my views, and it isn't about individual views. It is about the law. It is about that there is a legal entitlement to those services in this country. If you don't believe in it, don't access it, but you should

not be prohibited from accessing it because it's not available to you, because it's not accessible.

That is simply what this motion is about. I am proud to stand up and say that I believe that everybody should have the opportunity to fulfill their own personal beliefs and to seek medical supports that they need. I have a number of constituents in my community – and I'm sure they exist all over – for whom infertility is a problem, and it's something where people deserve the services needed to address it all over the province. That is not an Edmonton and a Calgary need. That is a need of families and individuals across this province. They are entitled to get those services wherever they live, and that's what this motion is about. I am proud to stand up and support it because I believe it entitles everybody to fully exercise the rights and views that they all hold and that are constitutionally protected in this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Calgary-Glenmore has the call and will be followed by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre should time allow.

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Motion 506. I want this debate to be respectful. Reproductive health is important. It's an important topic. So is the issue of access to health services in rural and remote parts of the province. I want to make sure that these issues are treated with the importance and the respect they deserve, and I really hope that this motion and the debate around it are not actually an attempt to weaponize the issue of abortion for partisan purposes. I really hope that we are not here to discuss abortion services only because the members opposite wish to score political points, especially after the dog-whistle politics that pro-choice women like myself had to endure in the last campaign. I will pass on another attempt at wedge politics. I, for one, am sick and tired of women's rights being treated as a political football.

Outside of this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, Albertans have told me that on this subject they are tired of polarization. They do not appreciate all-or-nothing propositions. Like me, most of my constituents support the proposition of a woman's right to choose. The government should not make that decision. They also believe that women should have access to safe termination services. I do not think anyone is in favour of the desperate, life-threatening measures that women undertook so many years ago. Most of my constituents, like me, respect the views of those who consider themselves to be pro life. These are deeply held, personal convictions, and they should be respected. In fact, many, many people hold personal pro-life beliefs and also support a woman's right to choose.

So, Mr. Speaker, I really hope that this motion is not another attempt at wedge politics, raising a hot-button issue to get headlines, because what happens is that when the extremes on both sides take their one hundred per cent for or one hundred per cent against positions, the majority in the middle are essentially silenced, left out of the discussion altogether. Research actually shows that this is particularly true for women, especially women under the age of 35.

That brings me to the motion itself, which reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to conduct a thorough review of access to abortion services and reproductive health services in Alberta, take action to remove barriers to these services, and ensure access to safe, timely, and equitable services in all communities across the province.

Mr. Speaker, the motion tabled by the Member for St. Albert talks about women's reproductive health, which I do believe is an important topic for discussion, but I think that the narrow scope of

the text in this motion limits the broader conversation that we need to have about women's health as a whole. While abortion is largely discussed as a women's health issue, it is not the only women's health issue.

5:50

There are 26 women elected in this Chamber, including myself. Statistically three of us will get breast cancer, and I'm sure that everybody in this Chamber knows someone who's been impacted by breast cancer at some point in their life, and their families have also been impacted. We need to have that conversation, Mr. Speaker, about how we can support those who have received a breast cancer diagnosis and help them also support their families.

There are other gynecological conditions that don't get a lot of attention, Mr. Speaker, conditions like endometriosis, which is a painful, sometimes debilitating condition and one of the most commonly misdiagnosed gynecological conditions. And guess what? Roughly four of us in this Assembly will suffer from it.

Another 10 per cent of us will struggle with fertility issues. In 2017 the previous government closed a fertility clinic right here in Edmonton which was operated by Alberta Health Services, forcing couples to go and seek care at private clinics. The clinic served families from all over northern Alberta. Many families waited months to see a specialist, only to be told that they had to start the process all over again. Some couples now go to other provinces to see a specialist. The opposition repeatedly claims that our government is going to limit access to reproductive health care, including the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who during her tenure did not act on the content of anything in this motion.

That brings us to the issue of access to health care in rural and remote areas. There is a vast disparity in access to health care that exists between rural communities and urban centres. The previous government did little to help bridge these gaps in care. They diverted funds from their capital plan, actually, away from rural communities and back towards urban centres. Honestly, Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite really wanted to rectify health inequity, they would have addressed that which is already existent between rural and urban Alberta.

Just a quick example of another women's health issue. The average wait time for a hysterectomy in July 2019 in Fort McMurray was 14.9 weeks compared to a provincial average of 12.7 weeks, which is a very long time. In that same month in the Edmonton zone the wait time was 11.3 weeks. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the previous government had four years to address the very issues that are discussed in this motion.

I understand and appreciate that this is an issue that the Member for St. Albert cares about. It's an incredibly emotional issue for many in this Chamber. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I fear that regardless of how I or my colleagues end up voting on this motion, there's very little hope that the opposition will ever be satisfied. I really hope that this is not just an example, another example, of the opposition seeking to weaponize a sensitive topic for political purposes. Women's health is an incredibly important topic, one that we should all be willing to talk about, but this motion doesn't allow for the broad, holistic discussion that needs to be had.

So, Mr. Speaker, I simply can't vote for this motion today. I'm focused on addressing issues through meaningful action, not through platitudes. Should the member opposite choose to come back with a motion that will allow for co-operation, discussion, and mutual understanding, then perhaps I'll reconsider.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, and there are approximately two minutes remaining in debate.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that my time is brief, so first I'll start by just correcting a bit of information that I'm sure was just accidentally overlooked by the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, since she did declare that she was not here to create any sort of division. She simply forgot to mention – and I'm quoting from the *Canadian Encyclopedia* – that “by the time [Tommy] Douglas became Premier of Saskatchewan in 1944 . . . he had abandoned his support for eugenic policies,” and when he received two reports that recommended legalizing sexual sterilization in that province, he rejected the idea, having progressed in his moral views, Mr. Speaker, as many people do.

As the opposition critic for Health it's my pleasure to rise in support of this motion. As many have noted, we continue to have issues of access to health care in rural Alberta, some of which our government sought to meet, providing improved dialysis services in rural Alberta – a Conservative government had chosen to leave people receiving dialysis on a bus, Mr. Speaker – and other investments which our government made. On this, we recognize that women across the province have the right to access health services.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, but under Standing Order 8(3) it provides for the mover of the motion to have five minutes to close debate at 5:55.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to clear up a couple of things. There are some basic facts.

One, we understand that the Supreme Court of Canada recognized a woman's right to continue or terminate a pregnancy. This is a protected right under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That's already been determined.

Now, under the Canada Health Act health care must be accessible, portable, comprehensive, and publicly administered nation-wide. That's really what this is about. This is about access. What we know is that access to reproductive health services is primarily available in large urban centres: two in Calgary, one in Edmonton. That leaves people that live in rural and remote communities without access, particularly in the north. That is a problem.

This isn't just about abortion services. This is about reproductive health services, so it's also an economic issue for women that live in rural, remote communities if they are unable to take time off work, if they can't afford it, if they can't find child care, if transportation is sketchy. All of these things are important to consider. This is a motion that encourages the government to look at removing barriers. This isn't about weaponizing anything.

I'd also like to clear the record for some of the organized groups that are sending e-mails about this all over the place. This is my third time doing this, and the reason I got to do it again is because it's a lottery. You all know this. Private members, all of us: our names get put into a lottery, and we have a chance. Certainly, would I like to bring it up again and maybe change the wording so that people would vote on it? Sure. Is that likely to happen? Probably not.

I'm doing this today because I'm asking the people in this House to consider the reproductive health care of women and trans people in this province to be a priority, particularly people that live in rural and remote communities who are forced to travel to urban centres for things like having an intrauterine device put inside of them. They shouldn't have to take time off work to come to a clinic here in Edmonton or Calgary to get that done. Doctors have told us that they are having trouble even prescribing this because there are problems in their community based on some kind of religious ideology.

This isn't about religion. I don't care about your religion. I don't even care about your stance on this particular issue. This is about the law. This is a protected human right – a protected human right – and this is about health care: health care for women and access to health care for women, safe health care. If it's not safe, it's still going to happen. It's just going to be dangerous, as it was before. This is about urging the government to look at: what can we do to increase access for people in Alberta that don't readily have those clinics or doctors available to them? There are many thousands that do not, that don't have the ability to pay for child care, transportation, hotels, time off work to go to Edmonton or Calgary to receive the services that they need. I'm encouraging each member: put aside your ideology, and look at access to health care services in this province.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 506 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:59 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dach	Irwin	Shepherd
Dang	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Deol	Phillips	Sweet
Feehan	Renaud	

Against the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Rosin
Amery	Loewen	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Long	Sawhney
Barnes	Lovely	Schow
Fir	Madu	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	McIver	Singh
Glasgo	Neudorf	Smith
Glubish	Nicolaides	Stephan
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Horner	Orr	van Dijken
Hunter	Pitt	Walker
Issik	Rehn	Williams
Jones	Reid	Wilson
Kenney		

Totals: For – 11 Against – 43

[Motion Other than Government Motion 506 lost]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 6:17 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 22, 2019

Day 31

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
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Government Whip  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
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Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
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Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
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Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 22, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, recognizing that there are many faith or not-faith backgrounds, I invite all of you to join me in a moment of quiet reflection or prayer should you choose to do so.

The prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are pleased to have two schools joining us this afternoon. I'd like to welcome St. Benedict Catholic school from Edmonton-West Henday and Vanier community Catholic school from the constituency of West Yellowhead.

Also joining us this afternoon in the galleries are guests of the Minister of Seniors and Housing: Dave and Joan Kimmel.

Also joining us in the gallery, members, are guests of the Minister of Advanced Education from the University of Calgary Students' Union: Marcus Patel, Jessica Revington, and Sadiya Nazir.

Please welcome all these members to the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-McCall has a statement to make.

#### Doug O'Halloran

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to rise today and pay tribute to a great man and Albertan, Doug O'Halloran. Sadly, Doug passed away on the Thanksgiving weekend after a long and intense battle with cancer. As his family, friends, and my colleagues gather to remember him in Calgary, I wanted to take this opportunity for this House to pay their respects.

Mr. Speaker, as president of the United Food and Commercial Workers union 401 Doug was a furious defender of working people's rights across Alberta and beyond. He represented 32,000 members, the largest private union in Alberta. Doug was the real deal, a leader who started on the shop floor and rose through the rank and file on the strength of his sheer tenacity and commitment. Doug simply never backed down from a fight. His most famous fight might be Lakeside Packers in 2005. After a decade of struggle and three weeks of intense job action, 2,400 meat packers had a union that would stand up for them.

Whether it was on the shop floor, at the barbecue, or on the picket lines, Doug was always there. He knew everyone, and everyone knew him. Indeed, Doug fought for the people whose fight is the hardest. He lifted up working people by fighting for a fair wage, the right to bargain, and a society that values caring for one another. In his 30 years as president he touched the lives of thousands of working families, who enjoy a higher quality of life today, and his memory lives on in the positive change he brought to their lives.

I ask the House to join me in honouring the life of this great Albertan and to take up the challenge he left for us: "I challenge you all to keep making the changes, and fighting the fights, that make the world better."

Thank you.

### Health Care in Central Alberta

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, a 75-year-old constituent was admitted to Red Deer hospital for bowel surgery having not eaten for 24 hours. Staff inserted a tube to keep her stomach pumped. She could eat a little ice. For four days she waited. The hospital was in overcapacity protocol. She lost 10 pounds and much more strength and energy, already weak from previous leukemia. Recovery at 75 is slow. Overcapacity, one, puts patients in halls and tub rooms; two, sends patients home; three, sends them to other hospitals. This is the routine reality at Red Deer hospital.

For years capital spending has been egregiously underfunded, at only 20 per cent of the capital funding of other regions. For 2008 the central region received \$227 per capita while every other region received over \$1,100. Numerous AHS plans highlight the need, but nothing happens. Central AHS leaders affirm the need, but these are political decisions. For years government has taken our taxes and sent them elsewhere.

Central region patients are second-class citizens for real health care. They are 60 per cent more likely to die from heart attacks. Standards of care are, in real time, not the same as urban areas'. The number of surgeries postponed in all Alberta hospitals is .45 per cent, but Red Deer is 10 times that much, at 4 and a half plus per cent. Seventy-five per cent of Red Deer's surgeries are out of window, longer than the window of best results. This also decreases the capacity of medical professionals without the equipment or teams to function at optimal levels.

Telling central Albertans that they can get care in Edmonton when they have a heart attack or any other health issue is just wrong. Previous governments ignored the crisis of central region health care; this government must do better.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has a statement to make.

### Balancing the Budget

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was at the Mustard Seed, I remember a young girl no older than my own daughters coming in and emptying her piggy bank out. She was giving all her money to the poor. At that moment it struck me as to the gravity of our responsibility to her as a donor and to our mission.

This same philosophy has to be applied to our provincial government as we dive into budget season and discuss a plan for getting back to balance. We must also consider that we need to get value for the taxpayer and, more than that, how to value the taxpayer, how to value all citizens, recognizing that we are the stewards of their contribution. Albertans contribute so much to this province, all of them, not just the rich but everyday people, some living day to day to make ends meet. Still, at the end of the year they all fill out their tax returns and they give to the prosperity of Alberta, to be used in the best interest of Alberta.

The reality is that we need to do things differently. We want to provide quality front-line services. Simply cutting along the periphery will land us back in the same spot 10 years down the road.

Albertans from all walks of life have given so much to this province. Why? So it can be used to make sure that this is the best

place to live, raise a family, and give their neighbour a chance to live life well. We need to make sure that as we approach this budget, we consider every corner of this province – rural, urban, wealthy, poor – but more than that, we need to remember that this budget needs to be a collaboration with everyday Albertans to fulfill their dream and respect all of their contributions.

Let us be committed to an open dialogue and genuine commitment to getting Alberta back to balance, eliminating this debt, and safeguarding our children's future. And let us be the good steward that Albertans are asking us to be.

### Diwali

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to mark this year's festivities for Diwali, Bandi Chhor Divas, Deepavali, and Ashok Vijaya Dashami. On October 27, 2019, families of Hindu, Sikh, Jain, and Buddhist communities in Canada, India, and all across the globe will celebrate the festivals of lights.

This day is celebrated by Hindus as Diwali, which coincides with the Hindu new year, and is celebrated to honour Lord Ramachandra, the seventh avatar. It is believed that on this day Lord Ramachandra returned to his kingdom after 14 years of exile, during which he fought and won battles against the demons and the demons' king, Ravana.

Mr. Speaker, this day is also celebrated as Bandi Chhor Divas by Sikhs across the globe, which signifies the release of Sixth Guru Hargobind Singh from prison along with another 52 Hindu kings.

On the very same day, the Jain community around the world celebrates the attainment of Moksha by Mahavira.

1:40

This day is also celebrated as Ashok Vijaya Dashami by the Buddhist community as it is considered that, on this day, Emperor Ashoka was converted to Buddhism.

These celebrations symbolize the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and hope over despair. During this time of reflection marked by compassion and love for the world around us, family and friends gather to light diyas, attend religious ceremonies, share meals, and exchange gifts.

In my riding of Edmonton-Meadows I will be joining many of our constituents in various temples and gurdwaras to be part of these celebrations along with my fellow caucus members. Occasions like these showcase our shared values of freedom, inclusion, equality. As Canadians we all can take a moment to celebrate.

On behalf of all New Democrats I wish everyone a joyous Diwali, Bandi Chhor Divas, Deepavali and Ashok Vijaya Dashami. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** A happy Diwali to you, sir, and may the light always reign.

The hon. Member for Camrose.

### Daycare Subsidies

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the summer I embarked on a door-knocking campaign through the towns of my constituency of Camrose. This allowed me to thank my constituents for sending me to Edmonton and ensure that they had contact information for my office should they have need to be in touch with me.

As I door-knocked, I had many interesting conversations and met many people that I hadn't met through the previous year's campaigning. In particular, I met one gentleman who told me that he and his wife had enrolled in the \$25-per-day daycare in our community. He shared that it was a good thing for their family,

allowing them to save money. He also shared that given his profession, his family really did not need the discounted daycare, and he was sure that others in the community could have benefited much more from the subsidized daycare program. He felt guilty for taking something that his family didn't need when there were so many Albertans struggling to make ends meet in a tough economy.

Further down the street I met another constituent, who told me that their family was struggling financially. The father had lost his job in the oil field, and the family was barely getting by on just the mother's income. The pain on this woman's face was obvious, and I saw that their family was experiencing true hardship, like so many Albertans over the last four years.

I would think that if anyone should receive subsidized daycare, it should be those in true financial need. The NDP's pilot program didn't track parents' incomes or employment status and can't tell us who may really need this program. It's people who are down on their luck, struggling to pay their basic bills and need a hand up: those are the ones that need it. Unfortunately, many of these people in my riding are not able to access the \$25-per-day daycare due to the way that the pilot was set up.

I know that with careful study and consideration our Minister of Children's Services and our UCP government will ensure that our most vulnerable citizens receive the support that they deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

### Technology Industry Development

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the A100, a nonprofit group of investors and entrepreneurs who support the next generation of tech in our province, offered their views on what tech companies need to succeed here.

Currently over 13,000 tech companies in our province employ more than 110,000 Albertans and generate \$15.6 billion in revenue. These companies, along with developing their own products and services, are helping to create and drive efficiencies in other core industries like energy, petrochemicals, agriculture, transportation, manufacturing, and public services like health care, and they're just getting started.

What do they need to grow? Well, as the A100 notes, what makes Alberta a competitive environment for tech is different than what's required for other industries. A100 argues that we need an environment that is not only supportive but competitive with other markets, especially those in Quebec, Ontario, and B.C., to attract investors and other companies to Alberta. However, and I quote, low corporate taxes aren't sufficient. Investment tax credits are a more powerful tool to spur growth, like the Alberta investor and interactive digital media tax credits that, before being frozen by this government, leveraged \$94 million in investment in Alberta businesses. And tech needs talent: engineers, software developers, data scientists, experts in AI and machine learning, like those that could be trained in the 3,000 additional postsecondary spaces our government committed to funding.

That's what tech entrepreneurs and investors both in and outside of Alberta will be watching for in this government's first budget on Thursday. Will this government show the leadership of Peter Lougheed, who invested billions of public dollars to develop the technology to pull oil out of sand and launch our province's biggest industry, or will they simply double down on giving 4 and a half billion dollars away to big corporations and turn their backs on this opportunity to capitalize on our new raw resources and lay the foundations for another economic juggernaut, that can carry us into

a carbon-constrained future? The choice is theirs, and Albertans will be watching.

### Foster and Kinship Caregiver Week

**Mrs. Allard:** It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to say thank you. Thank you to families that care for vulnerable children in their time of need. I rise to mark Foster and Kinship Caregiver Week and to offer my thanks to those generous Albertans across the province who provide stable and loving homes to vulnerable children and youth in care.

Mr. Speaker, as we look to the future of this province, we know that so much of it depends on supporting children, youth, and families to be strong and resilient. We want to give children the best start in life, and I am grateful for loving families that step up and say yes to caring for children and providing them with a safe home when needed, even if only for a short time. Foster and kinship caregivers in Alberta play a key role in building strong communities. They welcome children into their home and give them everything they can to help prepare them for a successful future. We know that stability is critical to a child's development, and I want to recognize these caregivers that offer stability to vulnerable children. Much is asked of them. Foster parents welcome children they've never met, and kinship caregivers welcome children they may not have known they would care for, all while working to keep children connected to their home communities and cultures.

My sister Carolyn is a teacher. Early in her career she chose to foster a young student who was in crisis. At the time, her colleagues said that she couldn't change the world, so why try? Mr. Speaker, my sister may not have changed the whole world, but she certainly changed the world for that student.

That is the power of foster and kinship caregivers, to step in and provide love, stability, support, and safety for children at a time when they need it the very most. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more important than ensuring that children are safe and nurtured so that they can develop to their full potential and lead happy, meaningful lives.

To mark this special week and on behalf of my colleagues in this House, it is my great pleasure to express my gratitude to these kind and caring people who serve as Alberta's foster and kinship caregivers and to acknowledge the critical contribution they make to our society and especially to the children they care for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the House will hear from the Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Elevate Aviation

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend I have the honour of attending a fundraiser put on by Elevate Aviation, an inspiring organization that works tirelessly to involve women in Canada's aviation industry by igniting passion and opening a world of possibilities. Their goal is to create a shift in the aviation industry that "promotes gender balance by connecting women with a network of support."

They have recently started a learning centre that provides unique opportunities for high school students and women to explore diverse careers in the aviation industry, from flight attendants and pilots to engineers and a career with the Canadian Armed Forces. They also provide opportunities for students and women to get behind the scenes with the Edmonton International Airport, Nav Canada, the Edmonton Flying Club, Canadian North, North Cariboo Air, and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

On top of the educational opportunities they provide, Elevate Aviation also provides four bursaries aimed at reducing barriers for women to join the aviation industry. The extensive training needed for a career in aviation takes a tremendous amount of effort and can be costly. Elevate Aviation has identified this barrier and has taken steps to make it more affordable. They have focused their resources on women that need it and therefore rely predominately on the support of volunteers to provide these services.

I would also like to give a special thank you to the incredible woman that has worked so hard to inspire so many women to join the aviation industry. Kendra Kincade, the founder of Elevate Aviation, is an inspiring community leader that continues to provide support and her experience to other women. She has made it her mission to show others the potential of a career within Canada's aviation industry and to give them a way to achieve their dreams. I look forward to continuing to support my friend and this very important organization, that work tirelessly to empower women and to educate our youth on a world of opportunity.

Thank you.

### Advocacy for Alberta's Energy Industries

**Mr. Loewen:** Alberta has been supporting the energy needs of Canada and many other countries for generations. Canada has become a more prosperous country on the whole because of this. Because our humble, hard-working nature is part of the culture here in Alberta, we have asked for no accolades, just an opportunity to do what we do best. That's why I'm thrilled that our Premier and Minister of Energy have been working to form constructive, collaborative relationships with other Premiers as well as some of our American counterparts. These efforts, combined with our government's fight-back strategy, will help set the record straight on why Alberta oil and gas is not only integral for economic growth but also for social progress.

1:50

I want to mention another ambassador for our message, Chris Kitchen, a student from Queen's University in Ontario. Recently Queen's undergraduate student government decided to divest all of its holdings in any company that produces, transports, or dispenses fossil fuels. In response to this move Chris wrote a piece in the student newspaper about why we should instead be celebrating and encouraging oil and gas development here in Canada. He notes:

The oil and gas industry is the largest national spender in Canada on environmental protection. Many of Canada's successful clean tech projects – including research and development around solar, wind, geothermal or carbon capture technologies – are supported by oil and gas players like Enbridge, Suncor, and CNRL.

The idea that we can fix climate change by abandoning oil and gas simply isn't logically sound. Our oil and gas producers are the innovators that are going to help us address climate change, end energy poverty, and improve the quality of life for Canadians as well as others across the globe. People like Chris have the ideas and passion to implement meaningful solutions to the environmental challenges we face in concert with our oil and gas industry, not in spite of it. The first step is setting the record straight.

If federal parties, who are supposed to represent all Canadians, allow one province to veto projects crossing their territory, we descend into attitudes that hamstringing the economy at the local, provincial, and federal levels. Calm, level-headed discussion will be tossed out the window if provinces, backed by federal parties, have a veto on interprovincial projects.

Thank you.



### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has the first question.

#### Husky Energy Layoffs

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government rushed to give a \$4.5 billion handout to the largest and most profitable corporations in Alberta. The Premier promised that this huge giveaway would create jobs, particularly in the energy sector. Today we learned that Husky Energy is laying off Albertans. Some reports say that hundreds are out of work. Can the Premier please confirm how many people lost their jobs today and explain why your so-called plan failed them?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we sympathize with anybody who has lost their job in this province. I'm sure that this side of the House and that side of the House would agree on that. The problem is that, unfortunately, we have inherited a terrible situation from the NDP, the NDP who have worked against the oil and gas industry their entire time in office and have continued to do it in opposition. This is what we've been talking about, how important this is to the people of Alberta. Last night, when the NDP sided with their federal leader, the antipipeline, anti oil and gas NDP federal party, they sided against Albertans. It's shameful. I'm sure that the people of Husky agree. This side of the House will continue to fight for them.

**Mr. Sabir:** It's about people and their jobs. Husky made a quarter of a billion dollars from the Premier's handout, but it's cutting jobs, not creating them. The Premier ran on a promise to create jobs. It's been six months. There have been no jobs. In fact, the resource sector lost 13,000 jobs; that was before today's announcement. To the Premier: before you gave companies like Husky a multibillion-dollar gift, why didn't you make sure that they would use the money to actually create the jobs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy has the call.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What this demonstrates is a critical need for pipelines and market access. The NDP legacy on pipelines over four years was a dismal failure, that saw zero kilometres of pipelines built. What we saw under the NDP was a failed social licence and a one-and-done deal with Justin Trudeau that saw one pipeline approved, approved but not built. In return, every other pipeline was sacrificed – sacrificed – and one pipeline that was approved, the one-and-done deal, was not built. We are at a jobs crisis because of failure for four years by the NDP.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We warned this government that their corporate handout wouldn't work, but they didn't listen. They are not listening now, and Albertans in the energy sector are paying the price. Premier, Alberta workers, most of them based in my hometown of Calgary, went home from Husky today to tell their families that they lost their jobs. They are in pain. Do you have anything to offer them other than looking for scapegoats to blame for your failed corporate giveaway?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I reject the entire premise of that question. We will not be lectured by the NDP. That member was part of an NDP government in this province that oversaw the largest job loss in the history of this province, that brought us on track to \$100 billion in debt, that brought deficit after deficit after deficit, and, shockingly, that over and over sided with people that were anti

our largest industry, which is why we see the problems that we face inside this province today. This side of the House will side with Albertans just like we did yesterday, just like we will do every day going forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has the second set of questions.

#### Premier's Travel

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The sad news from Husky we are seeing today confirms that Albertans need a full-time government with its attention focused on Alberta. Albertans will not be served by a Premier with one eye in Edmonton and one eye in Ottawa. To the Premier: will you commit to this House that you will stay here in Alberta and actually serve as a Premier for your full term?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it is so rich coming from a member whose leader, for hundreds of days, despite the opposition begging her and her cabinet to get on a plane and go down and fight the federal government on Bill C-69, sat in this Chamber and never fought for us. I'm proud to have a leader, I'm proud to have a Premier who fights each and every day for this province, whether it's in Ontario or here, fighting every day for Alberta. Their leader voted for an antipipeline leader last night in the election, voted against Albertans, stood with her socialist overlords, and stood against Alberta. Shame on them.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess that would be: no, he's not planning on staying for his full term.

There is a lot of work to do in Alberta, a lot. As Husky prepared to lay off hundreds of workers this week, the Premier jetted off on a campaign trip to Winnipeg to stump for his federal hopefuls. We need someone here taking the wheel. This Premier promised to create jobs for Albertans, and instead we lost 27,000 and counting. To the Premier: will you commit today that you will no longer campaign in other provinces while serving as Premier regardless of what happens with our new minority government in Ottawa?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, that side of the House has a leader who voted for her leader, the NDP federal leader, who said: I am firmly opposed to the pipeline; I have been opposed to it; I will continue to fight against it, and it's absolutely one of my priorities to stop the pipeline. This side of the House will not be lectured by that side of the House, who has sided against Albertans. They sided against Albertans. They've made it clear. Shame on them. It's appalling to Albertans. It's ridiculous, their behaviour. Albertans can rest assured that this side of the House will stand with them each and every day.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I guess that would be: no, he's not going to leave Alberta.

Albertans, again, have lost 27,000 jobs and counting. The Premier needs to acknowledge that he cannot build support for our economy and our energy sector across this country by ignoring problems and waging war across Canada. Will the Premier dial back the rhetoric, stop gazing longingly at the Prime Minister's chair, and finally focus on getting real solutions for Albertans?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, you want to talk about parties and how they've acted with federal parties? That side of the House, when they were in government, made an alliance with Justin

Trudeau, an anti-Alberta alliance, one that has resulted in hundreds of thousands of Albertans losing their jobs under their watch, one that has seen our largest industry on the ropes under their watch. Those members have stood on the steps of this Legislature and protested against our largest industry, have protested against pipelines. This side of the House will not be lectured by the NDP when it comes to the oil and gas industry.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has the third set of questions.

### Climate Change Strategy

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the member opposite that members of the Alberta public will be lecturing them on climate change because last night's election results clearly show that climate change is a top issue for a majority of Canadians. Alberta will be pushed to do more. Yet our Premier has done nothing but ignore the problem and put Alberta in a position of being told what to do by Ottawa. To the member opposite: why has it been more than six months and we still haven't seen any action on climate change?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, looking forward to tabling TIER here in a few days, as I've said inside this House – but I think that hon. member misses the point. His federal party received less votes in this federal election in this province than Justin Trudeau's party did in this province. Conservatives in this province received the highest mandate in the history of this country in this province last night. Do you know why that is? Because Conservatives have stood up for Albertans. That side of the House, the NDP, have stood against Albertans. They've worked against Albertans. They've laughed at Albertans. They've called them Chicken Little. They told them to take the bus, and they called them embarrassing cousins. Shame on them.

2:00

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta is running out of time to deal on climate change, and we can't waste it listening to the rhetoric from the member opposite. The fact is that our Premier has slashed Alberta's plan to fight climate change, and now we're going to get Justin Trudeau's plan. We've been waiting over six months for action on climate change. We only had to wait a few days for a 4 and a half billion dollar handout to the most profitable corporations in this province. Wouldn't it have been better to use that \$4.5 billion to actually fight climate change?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we now know that the NDP's climate plan only raised taxes and had no impact on climate. I look forward to releasing our plan in a couple of weeks.

But back to jobs, that hon. member was a cabinet minister in a government whose Energy minister told Albertans who were out of jobs that maybe they should move to B.C. for the time being to look for jobs. Again, this side of the House will not be lectured by the NDP. They've been outright rejected by Albertans. They were rejected again last night. Albertans want a party that will stand up for them. Their government will stand up for this province each and every day. The NDP, the Official Opposition, will sell 'em out every time they get.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, it's only been six months, and they've already lost 27,000 jobs. The member opposite couldn't create a job if he were given a job-creation kit for Christmas. Our government's plan cut carbon emissions by 50 megatonnes, created thousands of jobs, and funded green infrastructure investments all across the

province. It was the leading plan in Canada. This government's action so far is only to troll those who want action on climate change. When will you release your plan, and will it come even close to the emissions targets Alberta has to meet?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, their leader already admitted that they did nothing on emission targets. It's ridiculous. Again, we will not be lectured by that member, who was a cabinet minister in the worst government in the history of this province, that oversaw the largest job loss . . .

**Mr. Schmidt:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . in the history of this province, that brought us on track to a hundred billion dollars in debt in this province, that chased away billions of dollars of investment under their watch, Mr. Speaker. It's rich for them to continue to lecture us inside this House, particularly when we know they continue to side with their eastern socialist overlords. They side with them against Albertans. When are they going to side with Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has the last set of leader questions.

### Municipal Funding

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has written a column in today's *Calgary Herald* and *Edmonton Journal* deeming spending in Alberta's big cities unsustainable. It would appear this column is an attempt by the minister to carry out his plan to cut funding for municipal infrastructure. The Premier's own blue-ribbon report calls for up to 20 per cent in cuts. To the Premier: how exactly is cutting infrastructure for Edmonton and Calgary going to help residents of those cities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs is rising to answer.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Let me be clear. You know, in this province we saw for the last four years the devastation that the members opposite brought to our province. On this side at the provincial level we are working so hard to undo the extreme damage they have done to our communities, not-for-profits, businesses, and families. That is exactly what we are focused on, and that's what we are going to deliver later this week.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you. The city of Calgary still has serious infrastructure needs, including the Springbank dam and the green line. When we ask about these projects, the Premier dodges the question. That's probably because the climate leadership plan that he ended was going to pay for these major projects. To the Premier: can you promise here and now to Calgarians that the green line and the Springbank dam will be built on the timeline set out by our government and that you won't force the cities to hike taxes to pay for these projects?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, we've already been through this with that hon. member. That hon. member knows it because she was part of a cabinet who messed up filing documents with the federal regulator when it comes to Springbank. The reality is that we're in this situation and conversation when it comes to Springbank because the NDP failed yet again when they were in power. This is a mistake that they made. Our government continues to move forward for solutions that will work

for Albertans. Again, it's rich coming from the NDP, who make mistake after mistake after mistake and then come and ask questions about what's taking so long to fix their mistakes.

**Ms Ganley:** Yet another dodge. I wonder if Calgarians will ever hear an answer.

The Premier continues to talk out of both sides of his mouth, and he's not alone. The Minister of Justice claims that he will add 500 more police to Alberta municipalities, counties, districts, and villages, but he's offered no specifics on how to do that. Meanwhile his own officials are distributing documents that talk about a 70 per cent cut for rural police funding. To the Minister of Justice: rather than asking me to do your job, as you've done for days, can you please own your role as minister and explain how you will pay for these 500 police officers?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we've had these lines of questions here. My record on that is clear. What we have here is a member opposite who wouldn't accept an invitation to come to Rocky Mountain House to hear about their legacy on rural crime, wouldn't accept when I offered to pay their transportation costs. Here is an offer for all the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. I am proposing to rent a bus. It's going to have on the side of that bus: NDP legacy tour on rural crime. I invite them to come on down. I've met with thousands of Albertans. I've had 5,000 responses online. Why won't they own up to their record on rural crime?

#### Condominium Owner Consumer Protection

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Fort McMurray are dealing with significant issues regarding condominiums. For example, last fall I told the story of a man who purchased a condo in Fort McMurray in the Penhorwood complex. Due to discovery of faulty construction he, alongside 167 other units, was evacuated in 2011. Mortgages are still being paid on these units even though they were demolished several years ago. Every time these issues crop up, investor confidence in the housing industry drops. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what is your ministry doing to prevent these issues from occurring again?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As the Penhorwood complex issues came to light, the government developed and implemented a new-home warranty protection act, which was later expanded to require that residential builders, including condominium builders, be licensed. We are also working with national code bodies and industry to ensure that Alberta's codes are up to date and reflect best practices. My heart goes out to these residents, and I am working to ensure that we don't see a repeat of this situation.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past a few condos, both in Fort McMurray and across the province, have had serious construction concerns. Most condo boards do good work, but they're not used to overseeing large rebuilds, which they're not prepared for nor designed to manage. Now my constituents are telling me about a condo complex which has no condo board but is managed by the builder even though multiple people own units within this complex. These issues have occurred even as previous governments updated the associated legislation and regulations. To the Minister of Service Alberta: how will this government ensure adequate legal protection for the buyers of condominiums?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I cannot comment on any specifics, I am happy to provide some information to the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. First of all, let me just say that as a former condo resident and as a former condo board member I understand the pressures that boards face, and I cannot imagine what it would be like to oversee a rebuild. Second, I would like to clarify that according to current legislation, a board must be set up within 90 days once 50 per cent of the titles have been delivered to owners. Finally, I would encourage all condo owners and those who are looking at buying a condo to check out some of the materials we have online, including a tipsheet called *Owning a Condominium*.

Thank you.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, private consumer protection companies have stepped up to protect Fort McMurray residents where previous governments left my constituents unappeased. These same companies have told me that they are, quote, uncovering the largest failure in consumer protection that they have ever heard of; the scale is almost not believable. End quote. This is a multibillion-dollar industry in our province alone. To the Minister of Service Alberta: what will your ministry do to ensure that Albertans, especially those dealing with the largest purchasing decision of their lives, are sufficiently protected?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for continuing to raise these concerns with me and with my department. He's doing great advocacy on behalf of his constituents. You know, our government provides numerous resources to help Albertans protect themselves as best they can and to provide them information on things they should be looking for before buying a product or hiring a service. I previously mentioned a condo owner tipsheet that we have available online, and in addition to that we also have other consumer protection resources that offer information to consumers before they buy or hire. If consumers have a specific complaint, they can file that complaint online, and our consumer investigation unit will look into the matter further.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

2:10

#### Diagnostic Imaging Wait Times

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, recently I've been approached by many Albertans whose doctors have determined they need diagnostic imaging but find themselves facing wait times of up to seven to nine months even for cases marked urgent. CT scans and MRIs are essential tools to diagnose life-threatening illnesses like cancer. The longer a patient has to wait for that scan, the less likely they are to survive. These delays started recently, as in this past summer, so what did this Minister of Health do or what did he fail to do that created this backlog that is putting Albertans' lives at risk?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, for four years we saw wait times get longer and longer under the NDP government, and they did nothing. It's one of the many reasons that Albertans voted them out of office in the last election. Our CT and MRI wait times are longer than the national average along with many surgery waits as well. We have to do better given how much we spend here in Alberta on our health care. The previous minister claimed that she had intervened last year to fix wait times for CT scans and cataract

surgery as well. The result was that the wait for CT scans went up, and the wait for cataract surgery soared from 39 weeks to 48.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that an Alberta Health Services spokesman told me just last week that this backlog is the direct result of this minister allowing imaging funding from the previous government to expire and given that this government somehow was able to move with lightning speed to give 4 and a half billion dollars away in a corporate handout, to this minister: are you content to leave Alberta families living with cancer to simply wait and worry as long as they get their diagnosis in due course?

**Mr. Shandro:** I see a theme in a lot of the questions that I get in this House, Mr. Speaker: why in five months have you not fixed what we couldn't do in four years? It's a ridiculous question. I reject the premise. We are going to fix the problems that the NDP left us in health care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this choice of corporate handouts over health care comes alongside this minister's ongoing gross mismanagement of Alberta's lab testing systems and given that I've met with Albertans whose lives are truly at stake as this government allows medical scans and tests to fall behind, to this Minister of Health: why did you pick your no-jobs corporate handout over the safety and health of Albertans with cancer?

**Mr. Shandro:** What an irresponsible thing to continue to be said in this House, Mr. Speaker, these imaginary numbers that keep on being given out by our friends opposite, imaginary numbers about 4.5 this, or 4.5 that. The fact is that 95 per cent of the corporations where I come from in Calgary are small businesses. These are families who have invested their family money in those businesses. This job-creation tax cut will help them, help them be able to hire back their neighbours and help them reinvest in those businesses.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

### Health Care Funding

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has spent this fall session avoiding giving any details about their closed-door budget, Albertans are growing increasingly concerned about what services will get cut to pay for their 4 and a half billion dollar corporate giveaway. We know that the chair of the blue-ribbon panel shut down over 50 rural hospitals in Saskatchewan in 1993 as a cost-saving measure. Apparently, saving lives in Saskatchewan wasn't worth the money. To the Minister of Infrastructure: will your budget put a dollar sign on the lives of Albertans, and if so, how many dollars will each life save?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, we're rolling out a budget the day after tomorrow, so I'm not going to reveal details today. What I can reveal and this House knows is that the previous government left us on an unsustainable trajectory in the way they managed the finances of this province. The members opposite ran the province's finances into the ground, and ultimately we were elected to deliver a budget that responds responsibly for the financial management of the province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm looking forward to seeing how much every single life is worth on Thursday, then.

Now, given that in 2009 when reflecting on the closure of those over 50 rural hospitals, the chair of the blue-ribbon panel acknowledged that the savings from closing these hospitals was, quote, far less than what was expected and given, Mr. Speaker, that I would hope that all members of this House would agree that compromising health care for rural Albertans for a pittance in savings isn't worth it, again to the Minister of Infrastructure: since there is no business or moral case to closing hospitals, will you commit to keeping every single rural Alberta hospital open after the budget?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that the previous government's financial management would have resulted in the next generation having no hospitals at all. They were putting us on a trajectory where we simply could not operate sustainably. Expenses were rising; revenues were flat. In spite of the fact that they were raising taxes, they were collecting less. Why? Because investment fled the province, jobs with it, and, ultimately, government revenues. We will turn that around.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess Albertans will just have to wait and see how many hospitals will be closed.

Now, given that this Health minister has yet to lay out a clear plan for maintaining quality and accessible health care for all Albertans and given that the UCP are taking advice from someone who closed 52 rural hospitals for very little savings and given that protecting health care access for Albertans should be a no-brainer for every member of this House, to the Minister of Health: since the Minister of Finance will not give a clear answer or the Minister of Infrastructure, will you commit that not a single rural hospital will close while you are the minister?

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-South, I concur; I'm sure that Albertans are looking forward to the budget on Thursday. However, that was a preamble, and they're not to be used.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, our campaign commitment to Albertans was to maintain or increase health care funding. That was our health care guarantee to Albertans. We're looking forward to being able to fulfill that commitment. We do have a plan. We're going to be providing the details for this plan on how we're going to bring down wait times for surgeries through our surgical initiative. We're incredibly proud of the many initiatives that we're already unleashing. The nurse practitioner initiative as well is expanding the scope of LPNs in this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Tourism Strategy

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the 2019 election platform the UCP committed to developing a 10-year tourism strategy due to the high potential for economic diversification within the already burgeoning tourism sector. It ambitiously targeted doubling tourism spending in our province by 2030. To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: can you share with us your government's progress and reference the co-operation and collaboration you are developing between your ministry and industry partners in pursuit of this goal?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Tourism is an industry that we are going to be working very hard to unchain in order to reach its full potential. We have already taken measures to free up red tape in the tourism sector through my colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks. As was in our platform, our government will be developing a 10-year tourism strategy in order to fully unleash our tourism potential.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you to the minister. It's good to see progress on yet another platform commitment as we have on so many others.

Given the minister's insights on growth potential in the tourism sector beyond the traditional attraction of our magnificent Rockies and given the boundless experiential tourism assets across our great province, will the minister share with Albertans some of the specific goals and diverse offerings that reflect growth opportunities within the 10-year strategy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. It is true that many areas of Alberta have great potential for tourism, including the Rockies, but also areas such as the badlands. The 10-year tourism strategy will be a comprehensive and innovative framework that will contain recommendations and strategies that will help communities to grow tourism. The strategy will furthermore have a very robust and ambitious target for tourism investment.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Minister. Given the importance of the 10-year strategy in growing tourism in Alberta and given that it will require not only ideas but a depth of sectoral and marketing experience and given that it is also clear that our province has both the talent and entrepreneurial mindset in the field of tourism that can be engaged in developing this strategy, including some within our own government, can the minister please share with us who will be leading this all-important initiative for growth in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. A bold strategy like the one we're developing requires an experienced and innovative leader. Travel Alberta, among others, will be one of the driving forces in the development of the 10-year tourism strategy, and we will be consulting far and wide across the province on ways to reduce red tape, grow the tourism sector, and bring private-sector tourism investment to our province.

## 2:20 Reproductive Health Care Access

**Ms Renaud:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the UCP caucus voted unanimously against a motion that would have urged the government to take steps to ensure equal access to reproductive health care services in the province of Alberta. Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge the government members for staying in the Chamber while the motion was debated, which is a refreshing change from the mass exodus last time the topic was discussed. To the Minister of Health: can you please explain to this House why you didn't support this motion? After all, it is your job to provide accessible health care to all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, of course, it's sometimes difficult for members to comment on the decisions that have already been made

by the Assembly, but if the minister of status of women would like to do so, she may.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Actually, our government has done some incredible work, and thank you very much to the Minister of Health for improving rural access. That includes adding 30 new nurse practitioners, expanding the scope of practice of 16,000 LPNs. This is a very important issue, and we just can't understand why the NDP is using this to create divisiveness in this House. That plan failed. We refuse to use these issues, women's issues especially, as a political football in this House.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that instead of sincerely engaging in the debate, the government chose to diminish the concerns of women and health care professionals and given that this government has no problem funding \$4.5 billion for its no-jobs corporate handout but can't commit to supporting women's access to health care, to the Minister of Health: can you explain to the concerned women and health care providers what it takes for the government to respect their issues?

**The Speaker:** The minister for the status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it very interesting that this member would mention that when they had four years to bring this forward if this was a necessity, especially when you're talking about rural care, rural health care, and women's issues in rural health care. We had the opportunity to discuss this. My door is always open. If you want to have a legitimate discussion about this and a bipartisan discussion, please come to me. This is very important to this caucus.

Thank you.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that the government and all members have an obligation to ensure that all Albertans have equal access to reproductive health care under the law and given that we've heard stories of the difficulties faced by Albertans, especially those living in rural, remote areas when it comes to being able to access abortion and reproductive health care services, to the Minister of Health: can you please explain to all of us in this House why people living in rural, remote communities get less when it comes to reproductive health care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister for the status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a question that she needs to ask her caucus and the Leader of the Opposition because if it actually mattered, maybe all of their members would have shown up to vote last night. On top of that, more than that, there is an opportunity to discuss – again I bring up that the Minister of Health has done an excellent job looking into rural care, looking into those matters, and making sure that there is access for these services wherever they are needed.

I bring up again that if the previous government was interested in these issues, they would have brought them up earlier and would have made this legislation a priority while they were in government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister for the status of women will know that we rarely refer to the absence or the presence of members. While you didn't do that specifically, I might just add caution when speaking about who may or may not have voted in the House.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

## Bill 203

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's priorities are showing. They took immediate action to give away \$4.5 billion

to corporations and created zero jobs in the process. But when faced with debating the bill and the importance of protecting the public health care system, this government won't even allow it to come into the Legislature. To the Minister of Health: do you reject public health care, are you scared of it, or can you just not afford it after the Premier kicked billions of dollars to big corporations?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, again we hear these imaginary numbers from our friends opposite. They make stuff up. They're trying to create fear among Albertans.

We have a public health care guarantee. We are guaranteeing Albertans that we will maintain or increase our funding in this public health care system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Your guarantees aren't worth the cardboard they're written on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government voted against even debating a bill that stakeholders told the committee would ban extra-billing for insured services in our health care system and given that this minister, with all of his non answers today, appears dead set on moving to an American-style health care model, where people will pay for service and those that can't afford it get the shaft, to the Minister of Health: just how high will you let people's health care bills go as you scramble to pay for your corporate giveaway?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, American-style this, American-style that: we keep hearing that from our friends opposite. We spend world-class amounts of money in our health care system in Alberta, and Albertans expect world-class outcomes. That means comparing us to Scotland, Sweden, England, and Australia and not, as our friends opposite would have us do, comparing us to Cuba.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Bill 203 would have also taken action to ban queue-jumping in our health care system and given that Bill 203 would also have banned the introduction of two-tiered medicine, to the Minister of Health: won't you admit that the corporate CEOs you're kicking handouts to will also get pushed to the front of the line?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, again more fear and more smear among our friends opposite in trying to scare people. We have a guarantee to Albertans that we will continue to maintain or increase our funding of the publicly funded health care system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a question.

### Rural Housing and High-speed Internet

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our rural areas, particularly in my constituency, are looking for support. Rent is becoming unaffordable for many, and our Internet connectivity and coverage needs some serious work. Many mobile-home communities in my area have landlords that are not being reasonable. They are increasing lot rents while not delivering services that are required such as snow removal. To the Minister of Service Alberta: can you please inform this House of your plans to make residential tenancy dispute resolution systems also available for residents of mobile-home communities so that they, too, can have this service?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. I want to also thank him for organizing the opportunity for me to come and visit with some of his constituents in a mobile-home community in Parkland. It was very helpful for me to hear directly from the mobile-home community residents and just to listen to their concerns and meet with them in their homes. That's why the tour that I did as Minister of Service Alberta this summer was so important. I toured across 36 communities in nine days, 4,200 kilometres, and I met with residents all across this province to discuss these kinds of issues.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that rural Internet is lagging behind, quite literally, in comparison to what many cities in Alberta enjoy and given that the Internet is a major form of communication not only for households but for businesses as well and given that the quality of Internet access is essential for businesses when considering where to invest, can the minister please update this House on the plans to facilitate high-quality Internet service in rural areas?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to my colleague here. To talk about the tour I did this summer and the discussions I had with his constituents and many others across this province, the fact is that the previous government promised a broadband strategy several times but failed to deliver. We know this is important, and that's why I spent so much time this summer speaking with so many municipalities and regional economic development associations as well as private industry and telecommunications companies to get a good, firm understanding of what the status of this industry is and how we can work with them to go over some results for rural Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that this minister has previously stated that we cannot afford to overbuild the infrastructure when it comes to ensuring high-speed Internet access and given that he has spoken regularly about the need to engage with other levels of government as well as large and small businesses and stakeholders in order to find solutions, can the minister please explain to us the work that he is undertaking to ensure that there is a co-ordination of efforts to solve this problem in the sharing of information between municipalities and others around the infrastructure that already exists?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. You know, the most important thing here is that we need to take the time to do this right. We need to make sure that we're all pulling in the same direction and we're all working from the same information. That's, again, why the summer tour was so important. That's why the meetings I've been having since with telecommunications companies as well as with municipalities and with regional economic development associations are so important. It's important that we understand the issues on the ground in these rural communities because not all of them are facing the same challenges and constraints and it can't be a one-size-fits-all solution. I'm pleased to say that I had a great meeting with Telus just this week, and I'm looking forward to having some more meetings in the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a question.

2:30

### Support for Seniors

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've spent this summer and fall meeting with seniors and seniors' groups across Alberta. I can inform this House that the minister of seniors has created a high level of fear and uncertainty by failing to provide assurances that vital services will be protected from cuts. To the minister: can you promise Alberta seniors that they won't be forced to pay for your government's \$4.5 billion corporate handout?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government's election platform included a commitment to make life better for seniors and their families, maintaining the existing seniors' benefits, and we take that commitment seriously. However, our government must also get spending under control, or we will endanger future programs and services for those who need it the most such as our seniors.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these agencies co-ordinate a large number of volunteers that provide high-quality care and support at a modest price to the provincial government and given that this support allows Alberta seniors to remain in their homes and communities and to live in dignity, to the minister again: will you put these seniors' minds at ease right now and say clearly that their supports will not be cut?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government must get spending under control. Seniors have made our province into what it is today, but they also understand that we need to live within our means. The MacKinnon report indicated that if we continue down this path of spending, we will soon be more than a hundred billion dollars in debt. We are spending \$5 million a day on interest instead. Five million dollars is enough to buy 30 ambulances each day.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like seniors are going to be left behind by this government.

Given that seniors' agencies provide preventative services that help keep Alberta seniors from needing costly ambulance trips and stays in the emergency room and given that we know seniors' health declines rapidly when they're forced to leave their homes and communities for care, to the minister. Your job is to stand up for seniors in cabinet. Why can't you put their fears to rest now and support funding for seniors' programs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government got us into this trouble. The NDP has repeatedly failed our seniors. For four unsuccessful years the NDP did not address the needs of our seniors. By 2035 one in five Albertans will be over the age of 65. Our government will ensure that our most cherished residents have the support they need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has another question.

### Seclusion Rooms in Schools

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this Legislature today I attended a rally with parents that are very concerned about the use of seclusion rooms in Alberta schools. Our government banned these rooms, and we were going to work with school boards on proper funding and supports to see the ban through. But this current Minister of Education ended that ban, and now the use of seclusion rooms is rising. To the minister: do you really think it's okay to lock away a student with complex needs rather than helping them succeed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Nobody wants to use these seclusion rooms, but we also recognize that exceptional circumstances need to be considered from time to time. Numerous education partners, including the ATA, have called on us to rethink the NDP's ban, and we owe it to our staff and to students to ensure that schools remain safe work and productive learning environments.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that over 700 uses by Edmonton public isn't time to time and given that one person at a budget town hall held in St. Albert was asked to build an additional 200 seclusion rooms and given that this minister appears fully willing to sit on her hands while kids are locked up in seclusion rooms, to this minister: how do you justify putting teachers and students in harm's way by condoning seclusion rooms? Simple question. Now we need an answer.

**Member LaGrange:** I totally reject the premise of that comment. The example that she gave is a clear example of why we require strict standards and reporting processes, that the previous government failed to implement. We have brought together all these key partners, including the ATA and Inclusion Alberta, to the table to help finalize these standards, and they will be coming forward very, very soon.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that the parents I spoke to at today's rally were not consulted on the upcoming budget, which is no surprise given that you have to be a UCP donor to have a say, and given that the Finance minister has indicated that there will be no increase in education funding despite the student population growing, to either minister. You didn't attend the rally, so here's your chance. Please explain to these parents why you think that having a student locked away in a seclusion room is okay, is justifiable, and that corporate handouts are okay. I will table the proof so that you can have a look at it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I reiterate the fact that nobody wants these seclusion rooms used. They are there to be used for the safety of the students and the staff. At the end of the day, school divisions are the ones in the best position to make these decisions. I will not micromanage school boards as the previous ministry did.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has a question.

### Alberta Energy Regulator

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a recent report from the Auditor General we see that it cites inappropriate use of

public money by the Alberta Energy Regulator. It also states that the AER was operating “outside of its mandate.” We’ve received additional reports from the Ethics Commissioner and the Public Interest Commissioner offering a scathing indictment of the activities of leaders within the Alberta Energy Regulator over the past few years. To the minister of environment: what is being done to change the tone from the top within our regulator?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I was shocked to see the boondoggle that was the NDP’s mismanagement of the Alberta Energy Regulator when I was appointed as environment minister. It was described by the *Edmonton Journal*, after reading those investigations that the hon. member refers to, as Damning Investigations into AER Show NDP Was Asleep at the Pump Jack. I can assure you that is what it looks like. The NDP were asleep at the wheel at the very time that the energy industry needed them most, which is why the hon. Energy minister and I have taken action right away. We replaced the Alberta Energy Regulator board, and we started a review into the mandate, the governance, and the overall process within the Alberta Energy Regulator.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer and your leadership on this. I’m very happy to see accountability for taxpayers there. Given that it has emerged that some within the AER were more concerned with side projects like ICORE and enhancing their own profiles than they were with the core function of the regulator, to the minister: how did this happen, and how is this government working to ensure that the Alberta Energy Regulator is adhering to their core mandate?

**The Speaker:** I know that there may be a certain amount of admiration between the two of you, but I would still consider that to be a preamble.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it was shocking to look through the reports and find out what a mess was taking place under the NDP’s watch when it came to the Alberta Energy Regulator. It’s very serious, an abuse of taxpayer dollars, and completely inappropriate behaviour, that this side of the House condemns. As such, we first replaced the board of the Alberta Energy Regulator. We also started a review both into the mandate and the governance of the Alberta Energy Regulator, which is taking place now, as well as a review into the overall operations of the Alberta Energy Regulator, with the goal of making sure that we have the best regulator in the world that maintains our oil and gas industry.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that in the last few years we have seen the regulator’s well approval time increase to among one of the longest in North America, which is shameful, to the minister: what is this government doing to improve efficiency to enhance this province’s competitive advantage in terms of our oil and gas industry?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, sadly, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP we know now what was taking place at the Alberta Energy Regulator. They were not taking our energy industry seriously, and they were focused on everything but the energy industry and making sure that it was working. As we go through this review process, the overall goal, as we pointed out in our platform, is to make sure that we have the best regulator, that is efficient and able to do the work that we

need to do with the oil and gas industry, while still maintaining the best environmental standards in the world. The Minister of Energy and I are confident that we’re going to be able to achieve that through the review process.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has caught my eye.

2:40

### Red Tape Reduction

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the last two years Alberta’s NDP was given an F, a failing grade, in red tape from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. We are the only province to get that failing grade in Canada, the same failing grade I give to the Leader of the Opposition for betraying Alberta and voting for Jagmeet Singh.

**Ms Sweet:** Point of order.

**Mr. Schow:** To the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: how will this government address the heavy presence of red tape in all sectors of Alberta’s economy?

**The Speaker:** The point of order is noted at 2:40.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, that is a great question, and the truth is that the CFIB did actually give this government an F, but in reality who gave them the F is the businesses, the job creators, the innovators of Alberta. Those are the ones who spoke loud and clear on April 16 and said: “No more. We want to have a better, more efficient way to be able to go forward.” This is why this government has approached this red tape reduction initiative in a way that we will be able to make sure we get Albertans back to work and jumpstart our economy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the CFIB stated that regulations cost the average business \$6,700 per employee and given that the NDP voting decisions from their leader could cost us national unity and given that the cost of red tape is especially burdensome for small businesses across Alberta, can the associate minister please explain how this government will meet its red tape reduction targets of one-third to reduce unnecessary red tape causing burdens on Alberta businesses?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, President Reagan once said while describing socialist governments: “If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it.” Well, that pretty much sums up the NDP’s four years in government. However, on this side of the House what we’re going to do is that we’re going to do something different. We recognize that businesses are actually the solution to the problem. We do not want to demonize them and make them feel like they’re not an important part of the solution, so we’re going to make sure that we free up their wings to be able to do what they do best, soar, and make sure that they get up there and do the jobs that they need to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the public sector is notorious for higher levels of red tape in areas such as municipalities, schools, universities, and other public-sector organizations and given that the NDP is notorious for not defending Alberta, can the associate minister please explain how this government will reach its red tape reduction targets, thereby allowing



public sectors to focus on service delivery rather than cumbersome administration?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very important point. What I would say is that within the public sector we have high-performing people that want to be able to actually get our job creators and free up our job creators and our innovators to do what they do best: create jobs. We know that it's not the role and responsibility of the government to do that, so we need to make sure that our public sector, the people who actually provide those application forms in a timely fashion, can do that in an efficient and effective way. What we're going to do is make sure that they have the best tools to be able to do this in the most effective and responsible way.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed with the rest of the daily Routine.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has a tabling.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make two tablings today. I have the requisite number of copies of letters submitted to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills, one from the Alberta Medical Association and the other from the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings today? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have the five copies. From the Smithsonian it's a blast from the past under the Harper government: Canadian Scientists Explain Exactly How Their Government Silenced Science.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other tablings today?

Hon. members, we are at points of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### Point of Order

#### Parliamentary Language

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand on a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j), making false allegations against a member, imputing false or unavowed motives to another member, using abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder. In the last question we just heard the hon. member mention that the Leader of the Official Opposition did a betrayal to Albertans by voting in the federal election.

I would just like to remind all members of the House that although the members may not be very happy with the outcome of the federal election, there was an actual NDP member that was elected to the caucus within the federal jurisdiction in Alberta. So before you start saying that the leader betrayed Albertans by voting, I think you should take some reflection back on the fact that you're actually talking to a good percentage of Albertans within that constituency.

Again, using the language that she is a betrayer of Albertans is completely unparliamentary, and it is not a dispute of the facts. So I would ask the member to please withdraw and maybe rethink what language we use in this House.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, first, a point of clarification. I believe the hon. deputy House leader rose on two points of order. I think this is the later one. Maybe there's something else going on which you have under control. That seems to be what you're

indicating to me, as always. Thank you. I just wanted to make sure I was on the right point of order.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to the issue raised by the hon. member, I want to be clear that I do not have the Blues – I know that you do – but I do have the hon. member's notes, and he says: the same failing grade I give to the Leader of the Opposition for betraying Albertans for giving Singh her vote. The reality is that the hon. deputy House leader wants to refer to the 11 per cent of Albertans who voted for the NPD, and they're welcome to do that, but today in the House that hon. member is rising on the over 70 per cent of Albertans who voted for a pro-energy party and are still shocked that the Leader of the Official Opposition would support somebody who's trying to block energy development, trying to block pipelines inside our province, and has repeatedly stood with people that are attacking our province. If that's not a betrayal of this province, I don't know what is. But at the end of the day, what this is, clearly, is a matter of debate on whether or not that is a betrayal of the province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members, for your interjections and your submissions. I think what we have here is a difference of opinion on what may or may not have happened as it relates to the federal election and how individuals may or may not have cast their ballots. I think that's best left up to Albertans. As such, this is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

On the point of order that was indicated at 2:02, that point of order has been withdrawn, so we are at the end of points of order.

Having said that, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford would like to make a statement.

### Imputing Motives

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know you ruled on a comment I made yesterday,\* but having had a chance to review *Hansard*, I feel it's important to correct the record. They've indicated that I did say something that was unparliamentary. I ask that it be withdrawn, and I apologize to the House.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

We are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

##### Interprovincial Infrastructure Projects

34. Mrs. Savage moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon: Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce all federal political parties that would enable a provincial government to unilaterally prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines.

Ms Hoffman moved on behalf of Mr. Bilous that the motion be amended by adding "and that would roll back progress on efforts to reach Canada's current greenhouse gas emissions targets, including the abysmal federal TIER plan" after the words "prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines."

[Debate adjourned on the amendment October 17]

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to continue debate on this motion, with particular reference to the profound implications of yesterday's federal general election. Earlier today I spoke with the

\*See page 1870, right column, paragraph 5

Prime Minister and congratulated him on his government's re-election. Albertans are democrats, and I have always said that we will work with any federal government to advance the interests of this great province. I was also clear with the Prime Minister that yesterday we saw the largest democratic mandate in the history of Alberta for a federal party, with nearly 70 per cent of Albertans voting for the Conservative Party of Canada, the same party that won a plurality of votes across the country in yesterday's election. I told the Prime Minister that behind those numbers lies a profound sense of alienation that must be taken very seriously.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, many Albertans feel betrayed. We have been proud Canadians throughout our history, always willing to defend our country and its values. For decades we have been the great engine of jobs and prosperity for the entire country, contributing over \$600 billion more to the rest of Canada than we have received back from Ottawa over the past six decades. Even in tough times, with Albertans losing their jobs in recent years, with many losing their homes, and many having lost their hope, we have still contributed \$20 billion a year more to Ottawa than we have received back. That wealth, generated by the blessings of our natural resources and the innovation and hard work of Albertans, has helped to build schools and hospitals from coast to coast.

We have been an economic refuge for Canadians struggling with poverty and unemployment, who for decades have moved to this land of opportunity to enjoy the dignity of work. We have been the great engine of middle-class job growth, of upward social mobility, of social progress. It is here that indigenous Canadians have experienced by far the highest levels of employment and income across Canada. The pensions and savings of Canadians from coast to coast have depended in large part on the resources that we develop here responsibly.

Yet despite all of that, Albertans feel like everywhere we turn, we are being blocked in, pinned down, and even attacked within our own country for what we do to contribute to it. We are tired – we are tired – of politicians demanding that Albertans pay the bills while at the same time undermining our ability to generate the wealth that we share across the country.

It was this federal government, Mr. Speaker, that killed the Northern Gateway and Energy East pipelines, that surrendered to a veto on the Keystone XL pipeline, and that has brought in the no-more-pipelines law and the tanker ban that attacks a product produced in only one of Canada's 10 provinces, Alberta. In this campaign Mr. Trudeau openly campaigned in Quebec against what he called *les grands pétroliers* Albertains, the big Alberta oil companies.

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine a Prime Minister or a leader of any Canadian political party openly attacking Ontario's auto sector or Quebec's aviation industry? The idea itself is unthinkable and rightfully so. In fact, to the contrary, the federal government is eager to subsidize both industries, that produce major CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Mr. Speaker, in this new Parliament the Prime Minister will likely depend on the support of minor parties that were even more openly hostile to the workers and resources that have heated our homes, energized our economy, created hundreds of thousands of jobs, and raised living standards from coast to coast. In fact, 4 of the 5 main federal parties campaigned on allowing provincial governments to violate the clear letter of the Constitution under section 92 by seeking to give provinces the ability to block interprovincial pipelines, which are, under section 92 of the Constitution Act, the exclusive authority of the national government, even though 12 of the 13 provincial and territorial

Premiers have expressed their support at the Council of the Federation for energy and resource corridors across the federation.

As I said recently, what a strange world in which we live, where we had 4 of 5 federal parties seeking to give up federal power over major nation-building, job-creating interprovincial infrastructure but 12 of the 13 provinces saying they recognize that that is federal authority.

At least 3 of the 5 federal parties, including the Trudeau Liberals, supported Bill C-69's gross federal intrusion into our own exclusive provincial jurisdiction to regulate the production of our energy. Let me pause to restate what I said on this last week, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta's consent to the 1982 Constitution Act was predicated on the adoption of section 92A of the Constitution, which assigns to this Legislature and the other provincial Legislatures exclusively the power to regulate the production of natural resources, including our oil and gas. So what we saw in this federal campaign that ended last night from most of the federal parties, including that which won, was a complete inversion of the letter, the vision, and the spirit of the Canadian Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, what Albertans said in unprecedented numbers with their ballots yesterday is that they want to respect the Constitution of Canada. They want an economic union where provinces have the right, as Peter Lougheed fought for, to develop their own resources and the federal government has the responsibility to get those resources to markets. That is why Albertans in record numbers, joined by our friends in Saskatchewan and most of western Canada, spoke with one loud voice of defiance last night. Albertans in all of their diversity spoke out, urban and rural, young and old. Indigenous Albertans, the descendants of pioneers, and the newest Albertans spoke with their votes yesterday to say to the Prime Minister and to our fellow Canadians that we demand fairness, we demand respect, we demand the right to responsibly develop the resources and the wealth on which our whole country depends, and we demand that the Constitution of Canada be respected with its original vision of this federation as an economic union.

Mr. Speaker, last night the Prime Minister said to Canadians in Alberta and Saskatchewan, quote: I've heard your frustration, and I want to be there to support you. Unquote. Well, those are fine words, but if we are to avoid real, lasting damage to the unity and prosperity of this federation, they must be more than words. They must be followed by real action that demonstrates a commitment to fairness in this federation.

Mr. Speaker, to the Prime Minister, with whom I spoke earlier today, in congratulating him on his re-election, I made this plain. If you want to support us, then you must support us to get our oil and gas to international markets, support us as we reduce our emissions as well so that we can have the cleanest oil and gas industry in the world. Alberta's number one strategic economic imperative must be getting our energy to global markets, and there is nothing more important for that than the successful, rapid completion of the Trans Mountain expansion project.

It is important to remember, Mr. Speaker, that over two-thirds of Canadians voted yesterday for parties that support the expansion of Trans Mountain and that collectively those parties hold, I understand, 278 seats in the House of Commons. Therefore, I call now publicly on Prime Minister Trudeau, as I did earlier today in person. I call upon him not to make any deals or arrangements with either the NDP, the separatist Bloc Québécois, or the explicitly anti-Alberta Green Party that would endanger progress on the Trans Mountain pipeline, a project that Canadians support consistently in public opinion polls by a margin of 2 to 1, as do our friends in British Columbia. This is the first measure of good faith from this federal government.

I have sent a five-page letter to the Prime Minister this afternoon, which I will table for members to review, outlining other concrete steps that this federal government could take to demonstrate goodwill to the people of Alberta, who spoke with such a loud voice yesterday. Many of these ideas were included in this government's election platform, our blueprint for positive change for Albertans, including the many ideas we articulated for a fair deal for Alberta in the Canadian federation, including embracing resource corridors.

I underscore, Mr. Speaker, that this is a concept that is not a parochial interest of this province but, rather, has been endorsed, in fact, in principle by all 13 provincial and territorial governments, and 12 of those governments explicitly support the notion that resource and energy corridors ought to include oil and gas pipelines. I repeat: this is not a unique or special request of the government or people of Alberta. This is about nation building. This is about being partners in prosperity. This concept is about achieving the dream of the economic union embedded in the Constitution.

3:00

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, our fight for fairness demands fundamental reform to the equalization program embedded in section 36 of the Constitution. It is fundamentally unfair to expect the working women and men of Alberta, even at a time of prolonged economic decline and stagnation, to be the overwhelming contributors to the entire system of fiscal federalism with a net annual contribution of \$20 billion a year.

That is why the federation created something called the fiscal stabilization program, which is supposed to provide a fiscal offset from the central government when a have province like Alberta faces a sudden and unexpected decline in its revenues, as we did in 2015 and beyond. Now, had that program operated without caps, Alberta would have received \$1.6 billion in 2015 to recognize the precipitous decline in our revenues. Instead, it has been capped at \$60 per person, meaning that we only received \$250 million, which was a fraction of the multibillion-dollar revenue decline which in part drove this province into a deep deficit. So we also demand reform of the fiscal stabilization program.

Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable to Albertans that they see provinces who refuse to develop their own natural resources, as we do so well here in the province, effectively being subsidized for that poor policy choice by increases in equalization payments. That is why we will press vigorously for fundamental equalization reform.

Let me restate our election commitment. If we do not see substantial progress towards or completion of the Trans Mountain expansion and if we do not see laws that prejudicially attack our vital economic interests repealed or substantially amended, such as Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines law, this Alberta government will put on the ballot, in the form of a constitutional referendum, the principle of equalization by seeking the approval of the people of Alberta to delete section 36, equalization, from the Canadian Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, we do not say that lightly, nor do we say it with a lack of generosity. We Albertans have demonstrated our deep generosity to our fellow Canadians. We are proud to have been able to contribute over \$600 billion to the rest of the federation in recent decades. But what we will no longer abide are governments, politicians in other parts of the country, including Ottawa, demanding that we pay the freight while refusing to allow us to develop the wealth that we then transfer through those equalization and other transfer programs. All we ask for here is fairness, the fairness to be able to develop those resources, the wealth from which we can then share with the rest of the country.

That is what I called for the night that we were elected as a government, which was for us to be partners in prosperity. That is

all Albertans are asking for. The frustration that we hear from our constituents, the voice with which they spoke last night, is a plea fundamentally for fairness, and that is what we will fight for without relent.

Mr. Speaker, further in our fight for a fair deal I've renewed in this letter to the Prime Minister our call for the national government to exempt Alberta from the damaging impact of the stress test, imposed on homebuyers by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, designed specifically to address overheated realty markets in Toronto and Vancouver but which has had, as Ottawa policies too often do, the consequence of damaging this province during a prolonged period of economic stagnation. It's not fair, and we demand its repeal. I raised this with the Prime Minister in person three days after having been sworn in, and we will be seeking like-minded provinces, such as Saskatchewan, to join us in this renewed demand.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to press for the federal government to listen to 9 of the 10 provinces and the vast majority of members of the Canadian Senate in reconsidering the devastating consequences of the no-more-pipelines law, Bill C-69. I can tell you, having spoken to major global investors, that this bill, recently proclaimed, has created massive investor uncertainty. A strong Canada needs a strong Alberta, and a strong Alberta needs a strong resource sector, and that requires investor confidence. This bill has shaken that confidence, in addition to so many other policies. Again, in this letter and in the measures that we will be taking in the months to come, we will demand a fundamental rethink of that legislation. If the Prime Minister is sincere in what he said last night about understanding the frustration of the western provinces, then one way that he could demonstrate that in good faith is to listen not just to Alberta but 9 of the 10 provinces in suspending or delaying the application of Bill C-69 and going back and reconsidering amendments that were even proposed by the former New Democrat government here in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the measures outlined in the platform upon which this government ran, but we do not think that they are sufficient – they may be necessary in our fight for fairness, but they are not sufficient – so for that reason, in the days to come, I will be announcing the creation of a panel of eminent Albertans tasked with the job of consulting broadly amongst Albertans on other ways in which we can secure our role and fairness in the Canadian federation. There are many ideas that have been offered by grassroots Albertans, by policy experts, by academics, and others, and this government will pursue and give serious consideration to every one of those ideas in a consultation process between now and the end of this calendar year and come back to Albertans early in 2020 with an expanded plan to fight for fairness in the federation.

Mr. Speaker, let me close by saying that for those Albertans who feel frustrated and angry as a result of last night's election, I and, I know, the members of this government share and feel that frustration. For those who have lost so much of their incomes, of their life savings, in many cases their homes, in some cases their families, we understand the adversity through which they have gone and, in many cases, continue to go. I want those Albertans to understand that they have, in this provincial government, leadership that is determined to do everything within our power to secure a fair deal for them so that once again they can play a role as leaders in this federation and enjoy the promise of opportunity that Alberta has always represented. I want to encourage those Albertans to understand that they have friends and allies across this country, that on most of the issues to which I have just spoken, the vast majority of Canadian provincial governments side with Alberta.

3:10

Indeed, on the critical strategic issue of building a coastal pipeline, last night 278 Members of Parliament were elected on platforms to build the Trans Mountain pipeline. We intend to hold this federal government to its word in that respect as we seek, Mr. Speaker, in the months and years to come, to do everything within our power to defend the vital interests of this province, which has played such a magnificent role as builders, as doers, as dreamers, as creators of opportunity and shared prosperity. That is the Alberta of which we are all proud, and together, united, we Albertans must fight for that Alberta in the future.

Thank you.

I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 16

#### Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and talk on third reading of bill C-16. Sorry; not C-16. The Premier's comments got me thinking of federal bills just a moment ago. I'll go with Bill 16, in regard to grazing leases. We have talked about this important piece of legislation in this House at length over the last few days. I am excited to see it in third reading, and I do hope that we have an opportunity to pass it off to Her Honour to be able to give it royal assent here as early as this week.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The reality is that this is a historical piece of legislation on which we've been able to get unanimous consent from every grazing association and ranching association inside this province to be able to modernize our grazing rates inside this province, something that has been in place, Mr. Speaker, shockingly, since the late 1950s, when the formula was created, and implemented in the 1960s and then was frozen in the 1990s.

It has been in that position for a long time, creating problems for the industry. You would think that holding the grazing rates at a low level would not create problems for the industry, but it has in a couple of ways. The first and the most important way is that it's put them at risk of a countervail suit, trade sanctions, against what is an important industry. I do understand, Mr. Speaker, that sometimes the members opposite don't fully understand the importance of agriculture to our community, to our province, but when you see the realities that we're facing right now with our largest industry, I think it should always continue to remind us how much we depend on our second-largest industry, which is the agriculture industry.

The second is that it's actually created a situation financewise within the province of Alberta where we haven't been able to get Albertans fair rates for renting grass, which in turn has resulted in the government not being able, sometimes, to fulfill their commitments when it comes to grazing leases, Mr. Speaker. That's the other component of this important piece of legislation. It ends up with a dedicated revenue source of 30 per cent of the increase in revenue from raising rentals, that ends up going into a dedicated revenue fund that will help us meet our objectives when it comes to our environmental responsibilities with grazing leases.

Then the third and most important part, in some ways, of this legislation is that it deals with the transfer fees when you transfer

grazing leases amongst people. Often those are families transferring them to the next generation of the agriculture community, who are then going to go and use those grazing leases to produce cattle in the Canadian cattle market, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes those transfer fees have been as high as \$25,000 or higher, just to transfer a grazing lease from one generation to another. This will enshrine in legislation that the fee will be \$3,150 going forward, which is a significant saving, as we begin to encourage the next generation to be able to participate in the agriculture community in raising cattle. I think that's exciting. One of the biggest things that we need to do is to continue to encourage the next generation to participate in the agriculture industry, and this will help deal with that.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, this piece of legislation shows that there is a new approach, when it comes to the agriculture industry, from Alberta's current government. There is an approach where we will work collaboratively to find solutions to problems. This is a problem that has existed for a while. Granted, it goes back to the former Progressive Conservative government and further back, but it was a problem that the NDP had ample opportunity to be able to try to address. In fact, stakeholder groups went to them and often asked, but the NDP ignored them, like they did with agriculture so much.

Our Premier and our government, Alberta's government, have a different approach when it comes to that, and this is a great illustration of it. We're willing to go in a room, find solutions together for a problem that was impacting an industry, which will ultimately protect that industry and allow them to be able to create jobs and economic growth inside our province.

I'm excited about that, Mr. Speaker, and I do hope that all hon. members support that going forward and that we recognize today, with this legislation, the importance of our cattle industry not just to Alberta but to this country and that we show solidarity with them in being able to implement this legislation into law in the province of Alberta to secure that important industry going forward for generations to come.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, prior to moving forward with any other members looking to speak, with the changeover of Speakers I just wanted to confirm with the hon. Government House Leader that he's moving third reading.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a bit chaotic there for a moment, but I'm most definitely moving third reading.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, looking for anyone else looking to speak, I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise to speak to this important piece of legislation that will be a very positive effect for our grazing lease operators. The minister is correct. Indeed, this is an issue that's been talked about through so many different governments, going back to, I would say, even the Social Credit days. However, this is a continuation of work that our government had started, and we appreciate the government continuing the work we were doing. It shows, definitely, that our government and this government can work hand in hand to determine that the economic development that we wish to proceed with and the environmental stewardship that we wish to guide our work with can go hand in hand.

We hope that the government continues to monitor the situation, but we know that the grazing lease operators are in support of this. We're happy to lend our support, and I encourage all members in the House to support this important legislation. It changes the grazing lease rental rates for cattle grazing throughout the province.

They were based on a market formula. Now, they had been low, and that was part of the concern of the grazing lease operators, that they were at risk of trade sanctions as a result of action that might be taken by U.S. competitors. It moves the formula and other parts out of the legislation, that can be changed by ministerial order. The additional flexibility, hopefully, will make it easier to keep the legislation up to date.

As many members will know, about 14 per cent of Alberta forage is from land with grazing leases, and it's an important part of our cattle industry. Bringing it up to date and moving it out of the realm of the risk of trade sanctions was an important piece of work that we were beginning to do in our term as government, and we're pleased to see the government continuing with this piece of legislation today.

We're in a position, I believe, to support it. When the government is doing something positive, especially when it concerns our second-largest industry in Alberta, we certainly want to get behind it. We encourage all members to support this legislation to make sure that our cattle are chewing grass in a healthy way for decades to come.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to third reading? I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it's my pleasure to speak to Bill 16. The importance of this bill is that it relates to the farmers and ranchers in Alberta and, of course, deals with the grazing reserves that they have and the care that they take for that land. I know one thing for sure is that those people take a lot of pride in their grazing leases, and they manage them well. They take care of them well because it's in their best interest, but of course it's in the best interest of Albertans to have this land taken care of in such a manner.

I think one thing we need to do is that we need to know that these fees will balance the need to be globally competitive and, of course, the need of Albertans to get their fair share for the use of public land. I think the key to this, Mr. Speaker, is to have that kind of balance. Of course, this is public land, and Albertans deserve to get their fair share from the use of that land, and we do need to make sure that our farming and ranching industries are protected, that they can be competitive on a global scale.

3:20

Now, I think these new fees will better align with land values and make sure that ranchers benefit from any market fluctuations. I think that what we've seen, especially recently, are market fluctuations and how things outside of our control affect the markets in our agriculture industry. We've seen issues with China and canola, of course. That's something that's kind of at the forefront in our minds right now in the agriculture industry, how national and international situations affect the market for our agricultural producers right here in Alberta. In fact, situations like that can be devastating to our agriculture industry. I think that what's key for this bill is being able to take those things into consideration as they go forward so that we know that our farmers and ranchers are protected and we have an opportunity to adjust things so that we can make sure that they can stay in business and be competitive also on the global scale.

Now, of course, the government has worked closely with farmers and ranchers to develop this new fee structure. One thing that's for certain is that it has broad support from the grazing associations. In fact, over the past four and a half to five years I've met with the grazing associations multiple times, and this was their number one

concern, to get this situation fixed. You know, these rates haven't been changed since 1994, and I think there was a lot of angst amongst them as far as getting this straightened out to make sure that we didn't have any problems with trade because of rates that maybe some might view as unfair. I know that they expressed some frustration with the last four years, where they really wanted to have this taken care of and it hadn't happened. Of course, within five months here now we're delivering this to them, and I think that's something that they're happy to have. Like I say, there's been widespread support for this from the grazing associations.

Now, by modernizing the fee framework, this will also help reduce red tape. Of course, when I speak to farmers and ranchers, a lot of times the only thing they ask for is to get government out of their way so they can just do what they do best, which is raise crops and raise cattle and other livestock. It seems like a lot of times government regulation is interfering in what they want to do and how they want to do it. Of course, we always have to have some regulation – some regulation is needed – but there's a lot of regulation that basically interferes with farmers and ranchers in their ability to move forward and do what they do. The other thing is that that red tape takes away from their competitiveness. Of course, we're an export industry when it comes to ag products and ranching products, so we need to reduce that red tape, reduce that burden from regulation that doesn't help the ag producer but, in fact, hinders the ag producer from being able to be competitive on a global scale.

As I've mentioned, these current rental rates have been frozen since 1994. Of course, I think that, in fact, probably around 1994, you know, the farming and ranching industry was having a hard time, so at that time they were thinking: well, okay; we won't adjust the rates now. But what happens is that the longer you go on, the worse the situation gets as far as making sure that it looks fair for Albertans as far as a return on the benefit of public land and also as far as a competitiveness situation when it comes to trade stability so that other jurisdictions can't accuse us of unfairly subsidizing our ag products.

The government is now ready to implement this new framework. Again, this will ensure that trade stability that the farmers and ranchers desire and that they also need. They need this in order to move forward. There are always organizations that would love to take some of our market share away from us. They're always looking for an excuse, and we don't need to give these organizations any excuses to take away from our market share, because we know that we have the best products right here in Alberta. Obviously, we're known world-wide for our beef, and when it comes to grazing leases, that's what we're doing on those grazing leases, raising cattle, raising beef.

Of course, around the world we're known for high-quality beef. I know that in my business previous to this a lot of my clients have come here, and they love our Alberta beef. They really do. You know, a lot of times when travelling, you'll have a steak somewhere, and you'll say: "That's a steak. Fine. Whatever." But when they come here and taste our Alberta beef, they make special note of that, of the quality and the taste. Of course, I think that's something that we can be proud of, and we want to be able to keep that pride. We need to be able to keep that opportunity to export our beef around the world and help benefit our economy both in Alberta and across Canada, too.

I think that this will help create dedicated funding because a portion of this rental revenue will be used to support rangeland sustainability initiatives. Of course, obviously, the cattle industry and the beef industry want to see this. They want to see their rangeland sustained over long periods of time. They don't want to do anything to damage this rangeland and these grazing leases.

They want to be proactive with this investment so that they can be assured that there will be a long-term benefit from their being able to use these grazing leases.

Now, another thing this bill does is that it reflects the geographic differences and their impacts on the beef production across the province. Of course, Alberta is very diverse as far as its geography when you look from the north to the south. In the south it's mostly prairie land. I've spent some time in the last week or so down there, on some of the grazing leases in southern Alberta. It's beautiful country down there, of course, but they don't have, like, the trees that we have in northern Alberta growing up through the fences and that kind of maintenance that it takes to keep the trees cut down. As soon as you clear any land in northern Alberta, if you're not constantly actively farming it and tilling the soil and everything, then immediately the trees just start growing up again. Those trees grow fast. The willows come first, then the poplars, and that hurts the fence quality, the ability for fences to keep cattle in. Along with that are the mature trees that are around. You have a big wind come through, and all of a sudden all of these trees are blowing down on the fences.

In fact, last weekend, when I had a chance to get out into the woods a little bit, I travelled around a grazing lease, and on the fenceline there were literally hundreds of trees that had fallen right across the fence. They were hard to manoeuvre around. I know that the rancher for that grazing lease is going to have to take a four-wheeler out there and physically use a chainsaw and literally cut all of those large trees off that fence in order to have his cows stay inside that fence. When we look at things like that, it's obvious that these geographic differences are important to consider when it comes to grazing leases.

Another thing, of course, between the north and the south is the length of the season that you're allowed to have your cattle on the grazing lease. It's longer in the south because it's warmer and there's a longer growing season. It's a little shorter in the north. These are things that need to be reflected in regulation, and that bill will do this, too.

Now, this bill also helps address demographic issues in the ranching industry by providing rental rates that are responsive to market conditions and reducing financial barriers to new producers entering the cattle industry by implementing a flat-rate assignment fee. Mr. Speaker, what happens is that when you buy and sell a grazing lease, there's an assignment fee that's associated with transferring that grazing lease from one person to another. Of course, we need to make sure that these assignment fees are reasonable and don't hinder the opportunity for somebody to sell their grazing lease to another rancher that needs it. We also don't want to hinder the rancher from buying by having excessive fees that will hinder that sale and that opportunity for that grazing lease to be used efficiently and effectively by the people that want to.

Of course, there's also an issue with transfer fees when it comes to passing on a grazing lease from one generation to another, when transferring a grazing lease from one person to the next generation within the same family. That's why it's so important to be looking at these assignment fees and making sure that they're reasonable and acceptable and don't hinder the opportunity for grazing lease holders to pass them on.

3:30

Now, we also wanted to create management efficiencies and align the act and regulations to current business practices and operations. When we look at the management of the grazing leases, of course, I think one thing that's been frustrating in the past is the length of time it takes to transfer a grazing lease from one person to another. I just talked about the fees associated with transferring a

grazing lease, but there's also a timeline. Of course, when you buy a grazing lease, there's the legal paperwork and the bank paperwork to transfer title and transfer the finances back and forth between the buyer and seller, but the government has a part, too, to play to transfer that grazing lease from one person to the next. That situation itself has been, I think, somewhat frustrating for some grazing lease holders as they've had to wait an excessive amount of time for that transfer of ownership.

What happens is that once it's sold and the decision is made and the money is transferred to the lawyers, then all of a sudden there's a time of limbo waiting for the government to actually do that work to transfer those grazing leases over. That alone can create, I guess, a lot of angst, too, within the industry as far as what happens to that grazing lease while it's in limbo between the buyer and the seller. Who's responsible for it? Who's responsible for the fees? Can the person that's going to buy it put cattle on it yet, or is it still the other person's to use even though they wanted to sell it? There are situations like that that have come out, and I think that this bill and this kind of realization that something needed to be done about grazing leases in Alberta will be very helpful to the ranchers in Alberta as far as being able to do their business in a manner that's both effective and efficient and makes sense on a business scale.

We've got to realize, too, that as much as ranching and farming is a way of life and what some Albertans do generation after generation — families that farm and ranch just tend to continue doing that — it's also a business, and we need to treat it as such. When they're involved in this operation and they're working hours and hours and hours with this business of ranching and farming, in the end they need to have a profit. It needs to make sense. Any kind of encumbrances that the government throws in the way are something that hinder that development and their ability to do business and support their families in the way that they choose.

Of course, this bill will help maintain market access. I guess I've talked about that a bit already, how there are groups outside of Alberta that would love to see the market share of Alberta farmers and ranchers diminished so that they could take advantage of it. They will often use the smallest little things to be able to break into the market, so we need to keep those out. We need to keep those people at bay so that we can maintain the market access for our agriculture products which, of course, we know are the best in the world. Again, we talk about the dependable funding for rangeland sustainability initiatives. All these things are important for this bill and why this bill is so important.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

We are now at the stage where 29(2)(a) is available should any members wish to make any quick questions or comments.

Seeing none, are there any members looking to speak? I see the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has caught my eye.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to be able to rise today to speak to Bill 16, Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019. You don't have to live in Alberta very long to realize that farmers and ranchers are a vital part of the Alberta economy and of Alberta life in general. I can say that my roots come from a ranching and farming background and that it was and is still almost a part of the birthright of the Smith family. I live in a constituency that proudly has the Cowboy Trail run through it, and I have grown up hearing stories of many of the families in Alberta as they have come in and they have immigrated into this province, have homesteaded, and have started their farms and their ranches. I can remember talking

with John Bronson, who talked about a great-uncle that came up in the mid 1800s, driving cattle all the way from Texas all the way into northern Alberta, and he still had the bullwhip that his great uncle used as he was driving those cattle up into Alberta.

Well, that may be our history, but it is also time to address and to modernize and to update the framework for our grazing dispositions in Alberta. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to see that we're part of a government that has done the consultation and has the support of all of the major grazing stakeholders, that we have done the job properly, that these people have come to us and have said, "This is what we need. This is what we desire," and we have been able to fulfill the needs of this very important industry in the province of Alberta. Not to put too fine a point on it, but there is a certain amount of pride, when we bring Bill 16 before this House, that it has the support of those stakeholders, unlike the previous government when it seemed to bring forward bills like Bill 6.

Mr. Speaker, ranchers and neighbours are our friends, and ranchers and agricultural workers and farmers are our friends and they are our neighbours. This bill is a reflection of the life that they bring into this province. Bill 16 reflects the important difference in ranching and agriculture by geography, that what happens in grazing leases in the north is very different than what is necessarily needed in the south. There are, absolutely, two grazing zones in this province, and this bill is reflective of the north and the south. We know that ranching in High Level is very different from ranching in Lethbridge, so this Bill 16 is a reflection of those differences and addresses them.

We know that portions of the revenue that is generated from this bill are going to be used for environmental sustainability and stewardship. We know and ranchers know across this province that this is an industry that must last for generations, that we have a responsibility to the land and to manage that land and to do so in such a fashion that it will produce not only food but wealth as we move forward into the future of this province. This will provide funds for research and for land management. It will provide and invest in wetlands and grassland ecosystems to ensure that we have a growing ranching economy moving into the future. This will help to create an industry that is environmentally sustainable, and we are proud to be able to partner with this industry, our second-largest industry in this province.

Mr. Speaker, our world is rapidly modernizing. You know, I can remember. I had a great-grandmother that I got to know very well. She was born in the 1890s. She lived to be well over 100, and when she moved to western Canada, she moved into a province that didn't have roads. She lived in a world where the Wright brothers had not flown the first airplane. She did not have a telephone on the farm. We have changed. We are modernized. Unfortunately, much of our grazing leases and how we obtain revenue from it has not modernized. Today we have farmers that are air seeding, and I went to a sale of cattle for a cousin last year, and it was being done through the Internet and through video. Ranching has modernized. We see that much of the feedstock, many of the cattle that we have today – we've cut and reduced the methane emissions significantly simply by addressing the feed that we give our cattle.

3:40

So we need to modernize the fee framework for our public lands and for our grazing lands. We need to update these regulatory frameworks, and we need to make sure that they reflect the current economic reality of the industry that we depend upon here in Alberta. These rates were frozen and have been frozen for over 25 years, Mr. Speaker, and it's time to update. It's time to use market-based rental rates that will reduce the chances of trade retaliation from the United States. We depend on export in this market. We

depend on having the capacity to export our beef into the United States, so it's important that we make sure that our grazing rates and leases are not going to be open to a challenge from the United States, which could damage this industry.

Our government has been able to move on this because our government has actually met and listened to the stakeholders in this industry. We're happy to be able to see in those conversations and in meeting with these people that we have met the needs that they have given to us, and I know that they're very happy with the openness of this government. I know that, for instance, when the minister of agriculture came to my constituency, my constituents were very impressed with his capacity to understand the issues that they were bringing to his attention and his willingness to listen and to move on those issues. I know and we can see again that the major stakeholders here are supporting this modernizing of the grazing leases because of the leadership of the Minister of Environment and Parks. We're very pleased to be able to see and to be able to move forward on this piece of legislation.

Our farmers and ranchers are critical to the Alberta economy. This industry helps to feed not only Alberta but Canada and indeed the rest of the world, and this industry has the capacity to continue to grow and to continue to feed Alberta and Canada and the rest of the world. This bill will increase the capacity for us to trade and to feed the nations of the world and to do it, Mr. Speaker, in a sustainable way.

We have had many ranchers and farmers in our caucus that have been able to make sure that, as we bring forward these pieces of legislation, they give their feedback to this. We know and I know that in this caucus we have advocated for these constituents, for our ranchers and our farmers, and we will continue to do so as the United Conservative government.

This act, Mr. Speaker, will provide the stability and the predictability that is going to be needed for our ranching economy. It's going to ensure that we are not faced with unreasonable trade sanctions, it's going to address red tape, and it's going to provide a profitability that will allow our farmers to move forward, confident that they can address the needs of society and create a sound business platform.

I am very pleased to be able to speak today to Bill 16 and to give it my wholehearted support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anybody wish to take that opportunity.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West – Lethbridge-East. My apologies. Go ahead.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll have to get a pin that says that possibly.

It is my pleasure to rise in the House today and speak to Bill 16, Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019. I want to thank the Minister of Environment and Parks for responding to the needs of ranchers across this province and for taking this positive step forward. Alberta's ranchers and beef producers play an important part in Alberta's economy and environment. Our government wants to ensure that this portion of our cattle industry is set up for continued success. The proposed changes in this bill would create a system that better reflects the current economic reality. It is transparent and fair for ranchers, and it ensures that Albertans get fair market value for the use of the province's land resources.

In addition, modernizing grazing rental rates will be another positive step forward in our commitment to reduce the red tape by

one-third to make life better for Albertans. The goal of red tape reduction is to modernize, update, fix areas that are burdened so that we can create jobs, get Albertans back to work, make it easier for Albertans to access important services they need.

I know that this bill isn't about red tape, but it is great to see that this will reduce red tape for Alberta ranchers. It will simplify and modernize an outdated and complicated system. In fact, it was implemented in 1960. That means Alberta has had the same rates for over 25 years. This change will also provide certainty for our potential and ongoing trade partners like our neighbours to the south, who also happen to be our biggest trading partner. By using market-based rental rates rather than outdated and arbitrary rates, we reduce the risk for trade action. We can't afford to continue to operate this way, so our government is taking action.

The hon. minister of the environment on behalf of our government has worked very closely with industry stakeholders to get their feedback and listen to their concerns. This is important for ranchers in southern Alberta, and they are an important economic driver in my constituency. I've had the opportunity to meet and speak with several ranchers with the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the Member for Cardston-Siksika, and it is meaningful legislation for them.

The hon. minister of the environment has ensured this legislative change is balanced, fair, and will transition Alberta's beef industry to a sustainable future, and it is based on sound environmental practices – not an easy job to do. He has confirmed that our government will work closely with farmers and ranchers to develop this new fee structure. It was evident when he spoke to the attendees of a media announcement for this bill that they were excited and optimistic for these changes.

If we can get things right in Alberta for Albertans, we've done what we've intended to do. We were hired by Albertans for Albertans, and by responding to their needs, by reducing this red tape, we can make life better in Alberta. This bill is a good example of a government that listens to its citizens, and I am happy to rise to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Standing order 29(2)(a) is available should anybody be looking to take that opportunity.

Seeing none, I see the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock has risen to speak.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of Bill 16, the Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019, largely dealing with grazing leases throughout the province and dealing with producers, ranchers, farmers that are partnering with our government, with Albertans essentially, to maintain and properly be stewards of the grazing leases, the Crown land that they choose to take care of.

What's so refreshing with regard to Bill 16 is how it's been largely driven by the industry. In our previous term, as the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock in the previous four years, we had meetings with the Western Stock Growers', Alberta Beef Producers, and a number of the organizations that represent the beef producers in Alberta. This was an item that they were advocating for, recognizing the risks that were in place with regard to trade agreements with other countries. They needed to ensure that they were green, essentially green, for trade with other countries and did not want to have a situation where they would be challenged by improper subsidization of their industry. It was very refreshing to

see an industry step forward, recognize a potential threat to their industry, and advocate to government on behalf of their producers to ensure that their industry could stay strong going forward.

3:50

I talk about the farmers and ranchers with regard to being stewards of the land, and one thing that this bill also will help to recognize – and it was identified by the chairman of the Alberta Beef Producers that they were quite pleased to see – is that a portion of the revenue from the grazing rates will be used for environmental stewardship and range improvement, which ensures the land will continue to be healthy and sustainable for future generations. It's an important part of understanding the need to take care of the lands that we are charged with being stewards of. All farmers and ranchers recognize that they are in a position to hand property down the generations in a state that is going to allow it to continue to produce.

One of the things that I did learn also – I don't have beef cattle, livestock at this time – is that the industry came forward with different needs for different regions within the province. There's increased cost to maintaining a grazing lease in the northern part of the province, so they recognized within the group that there were going to be increased costs for those producers, and that had to be recognized in the formulas going forward. They also recognized the need to have rates that would continue to fluctuate going forward based on market conditions, based on the things that are typically out of control of the producer but that they have to live with in a competitive environment with regard to being able to produce a commodity and produce it in a way that would allow them to stay in business. Coming forward with the idea of having those changes in rates based on market conditions was an important part of the consultation also.

I speak in favour of Bill 16, recognizing the good collaboration and the good consultation that has taken place to ensure that we have a bill before us that is acceptable to producers, acceptable to government, who are essentially partnering together to maintain these Crown lands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill, third reading of Bill 16?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to put the question to the House.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 17 Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, it's been an honour to introduce and speak to Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act, and to see such strong support across the province and from both sides of this House. It's important to ensure that we get this legislation right, which I've mentioned several



times before already, because, ultimately, our goal is to prevent situations from reaching a stage where there is a risk of significant or imminent harm. There are victims and survivors in this province that understand the importance of this legislation as a mechanism to protect Albertans from the risk of domestic violence.

As I mentioned before, domestic violence doesn't discriminate. On that note, I am certain that there are many of you in this House that have friends and acquaintances or know someone that has been impacted by domestic violence. I would like to say that I value the feedback that I've received thus far, and I'm committed to working with my officials and colleagues to address any concerns and answer questions raised during this committee meeting. It will take the collective insight on both sides of this House and the feedback and lived experiences from our stakeholders to inform our next steps. As we are all aware, there are many details to be worked out in the regulations, and through stakeholder engagement and consultation we will ensure the regulations are as robust and as effective as possible.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and answering your questions today. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 17, Clare's law, and thank you to the minister as well for her brief comments.

I'm so proud of the commitments the NDP government made when it came to the issue of domestic violence and supports for folks, and one example of what I was so proud of as, of course, not a member of the NDP government, but I was so proud to watch MLA Deborah Drever introduce the Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, and that made it possible for victims of domestic violence to end their tenancy agreements without any risk of financial penalty. This was a clear move to stand up for Albertans by making it easier for them to leave an unsafe home and maintain their independence as well. What was so powerful about this was that safety could now be a key consideration instead of any sort of financial and other barriers that folks faced.

It's one example of the many steps that this NDP government took to help break the cycle of domestic violence. I'm also happy to see that this government is continuing that and taking this issue seriously as well. You know, I don't believe it's a partisan issue, and it shows that we can see eye to eye on certain critical topics. Because, as the minister noted, it is clear that domestic violence does not discriminate, and those affected need to have supports in place.

I do think it is important to raise a few questions and ask a few things to clarify. In principle we've been clear that we support this bill, we support its intentions, but one of the main things that we need to get across is that without a commitment to provide the funding and the resources necessary to support victims and the services that they rely on, this bill will unfortunately not be able to be as effective as it could be. It is a positive step, for sure, but a legal tool such as this one will only be successful if it's supported by the well-funded social services and programs to keep people truly safe in our communities.

In my role as critic for status of women I spent the last number of months speaking with many stakeholders who work on the front lines of domestic violence, providing supports for women in particular. One of the things that I heard loudly and clearly through those conversations is that steps like this one, Clare's law, are undoubtedly important, but they need to be supported by funding

and by resources. In fact, one stakeholder, who I respect greatly and has worked in this field for over 30 years, noted that, you know, without resources it actually has a potential to be harmful, and I take her at her word on this.

So I'd ask the government to ensure that with this bill there be clear resources and clear supports in place. It's light on details. As the Minister said, it is enabling legislation. It's quite skeletal at this point, so I'm very hopeful that the government will be quite specific in the support that will be provided. The law needs to be part of a larger suite of measures and supports. For instance, will there be supports in place for the potential victim who discloses? We know this can be a hugely traumatizing experience, so those supports need to be readily available. That victim needs to know where to go, where to turn to.

Another huge piece is looking at next steps. We know that victims often lack proper resources to safely leave dangerous relationships and have to overcome a whole lot of barriers, one of which is housing. There are examples of this being a clear issue in other jurisdictions.

4:00

In Saskatchewan, where Clare's law was implemented earlier this year, some advocates have pointed out that, particularly for folks in rural and remote parts of that province, the law is rendered ineffective because there aren't the resources available for those women needing to access them. One woman is on the record stating that the law is not helpful because, as she pointed out, not only did her husband have no prior criminal record, but she said that resources are what's needed, and they weren't available for her in rural Saskatchewan.

I represent an area where there are severe housing concerns, and nearly daily my staff and I hear from folks in neighbourhoods throughout my riding who are struggling to find safe, affordable housing. I just want to hammer home the point that it is so essential that these supports like housing be in place. I urge this government to lay out in their upcoming budget how they will offer housing supports not only to victims of domestic violence but to all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West has risen to speak.

**Mr. Ellis:** Why, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm very proud to stand up here and, of course, support this law as brought forward by the hon. minister. I have listened intently both to my colleagues within the House and on the other side, and I believe that they as well have been supportive of this, so it's great.

You know, as I listened intently to the words of the previous speaker, it kind of made me reflect a little bit about the crisis that we face with the opioids, as an example, in that, yeah, I mean, this is a multilayered, complex problem. I don't believe that this particular piece of legislation is the solution, we'll call it, to all domestic violence or domestic situations; however, I do certainly believe that this is a tool in a tool box that would be able to help people.

Of course, you know, when I look here at the question of domestic violence disclosure legislation, will it protect people at risk of domestic violence? It looks like it allows people in domestic violence to obtain information on intimate partners and previous history of domestic violence and other relevant acts and could save lives.

You know, Mr. Chair, I think, as you're fully aware – and I'm very proud of this fact – that I spent well over a decade, certainly, policing on the streets of Calgary. It's very sad. I notice that there

are some statistics that I've seen specifically where it says that Alberta has the third-highest rate of police-reported intimate partner violence of the Canadian provinces. I think it even had a date here, somewhere around 2008 to '17, which for a bulk of that time, actually, I was on the streets working as a police officer. Sadly, I got to be either a first responder as a constable and even in certain cases as a supervisor in those particular situations. They're very volatile. Really, to understand the complexity of domestics in itself is, again – I mean, there are a multitude of factors. Sometimes it's a financial issue, sometimes it's drugs or alcohol, or sometimes, sadly, in certain cases some people just stop getting along.

However, when I look at this, you know, key piece of legislation, which allows an intimate partner to really learn the history – I was thinking about this and I was reflecting upon this, and again I'm reflecting on my experiences when I was working on the streets. I think it's to really kind of understand the history, we'll say, of domestic offenders, right? I certainly don't want to categorize it as a gender; however, predominantly in my experience most males had tended to be the offenders in these particular situations, at least the ones that I attended.

My experience was that it was gradual, right? We saw this. At least, when I was investigating we'll call it the history of what led up to the moment where the police were ultimately called, you know, what I found that was very consistent, especially in really complex domestic situations, was that the history was, of course, that the people meet, and it's a very positive relationship, and then all of a sudden something happens. Usually the intimate partner is: "Okay. Well, I mean, that's not cool, but – you know what? – I can accept that. I really love that person." Okay. Then it becomes almost like a situation where you keep on moving the goalposts. Sadly, it leads to the point, almost the crisis point, where ultimately the police are called, and sometimes it's violent, and sometimes it's situations where, certainly, there's a lot of verbal abuse that goes on.

But having a piece of legislation like this, which kind of allows the awareness – you've heard me talk before in the House, Mr. Chair, about education, prevention, and intervention, of course. Letting everyone in Alberta know that this sort of tool is available in the tool box for people that may find themselves in these types of domestic situations is actually very vitally important, right? You know, that would give that person the opportunity to find out, maybe, that somebody has a pattern of behaviour, a history, we'll call it.

Many a time, other than when kids are, you know, we'll say, starting off, whenever they're starting to date – and I don't want to use any actual ages because I know that everybody starts dating at various ages. As a police officer, when you're starting to investigate folks in their 20s and 30s or even older, typically the offender may have a pattern of abuse that maybe predates the relationship which they are in. Sometimes they go back even further.

Mr. Chair, there were about two and a half years when I was a judicial interim release hearing officer, and we dealt with a lot of domestics, of course. I was the one that would do the bail hearings on these particular domestics. You've got to forgive me here, but there was a decision that was made – I think it was a Court of Queen's Bench decision – that essentially allowed that when I was giving my presentation, even though this may be an offender that has no previous criminal convictions, as an example, we could bring in the history of allegations because it was well documented in the courts that sometimes in domestic situations these offenders might have a history that, again, predates the relationship which they're in.

As you're aware, when we're going to detain somebody, possibly in custody, we use what are called primary, secondary, and tertiary

grounds. Of course, the secondary grounds would have to do with likelihood of reoffending. When we go back and we look and we see that this guy, again predominantly men but can be a man or a woman, typically has a pattern of behaviour, sometimes where the person isn't even convicted – again, these become, ultimately, public documents, especially in the cases where you have a prosecutor and a defence. Sometimes, I can tell you, the victims in these particular cases are actually quite shocked. They had no idea that the intimate partner with which they had had a relationship for however long had a history of domestic abuse even though they may not have ever been convicted.

Having that tool when the possible victim of domestic violence or abuse suspects that, "Wait a second; I think I might not be the only one here" and then they're able to have this tool to find out that, "Hey, you know what? I was right," maybe – I say maybe, and I say this in a very positive way – that helps them in assisting with their choice not to be with that particular individual. Again, when we talk about saving lives, could that save a life? Yes. I think that you've heard me in this House before. I mean, if we can save even just one life, then it makes that piece of legislation worth it.

**4:10**

I mean, I think that with these situations, you know, especially when I see, again, some of the statistics that I've seen regarding the amount of domestic violence in Alberta and, sadly, even in Canada – from 2008 to '17 there were 166 deaths in Alberta due to domestic violence – yeah, everybody should be concerned about that.

Again, a tool in the tool box. I think there are a lot more things that can be done to help, certainly, victims in those sorts of domestic situations. Again, this is a multifaceted problem. It is very, very complex. There is no one solution to solving it, but I certainly commend the minister for bringing this forward. I think this is a positive tool in the tool box. I think this is going to be one that, especially with the awareness component, when we talk about just making sure that the people in Alberta are aware – right? – that this tool is available for them, can only have a positive repercussion on this.

I want to thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak on this. I want to thank the minister for bringing it up. You know, I want to thank all the members who are supporting this, and I'll thank the opposition as well. I thank you, and I yield my time.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise today in support of Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act. I'd like to begin as well by thanking the Minister of Community and Social Services for bringing forward this legislation. I apologize if I'm going to say things that perhaps many people have already said. It's just that this is an issue that is quite near and dear to my heart, and I wanted to be on the record to speak to it. I do recognize, of course, that the minister has already outlined, even in her opening comments today in Committee of the Whole, that there are some details that are missing from the legislation. I just wanted to take the opportunity to speak to that a little bit.

As well, I'd also like to begin by saying that I may be frequently referring to women who are survivors or victims of domestic violence. I recognize, of course, that not all victims of domestic violence are women. We know that any individual can be a victim of domestic violence, but we also know that predominantly it is women. I just want to say that while I will be probably speaking

mostly about women, I recognize that men, of course, can also be victims of domestic violence.

As actually already mentioned by the Member for Calgary-West and as well by the minister herself, I do want to highlight that this is a very useful tool, as the Member for Calgary-West said, a tool in a tool box. I don't think it is the role of legislation to always fix all problems completely. We know that that's pretty much impossible in complex situations. I recognize that this is not being put forward as a solution to the issue of domestic violence. Rather, it is a tool in the tool box to address it, and I appreciate that.

I do want to mention that – again, I recognize that this might have been commented on before – while the bill is a good step forward, and I appreciate it is also enabling legislation, there is a lot of information and details that will have to be worked out in the regulations, and it's going to be very important how those things are fleshed out in those regulations.

Some of the things that I know I will be looking for in terms of what will come in those regulations: the bill does refer to, of course, an individual who may make a request but also that there may be other individuals who may make a request on behalf of an applicant. You know, just fleshing out who that could be, we understand that maybe it will be social workers – maybe it will be family doctors, counsellors, police – looking to see sort of who will be able to make those applications and if there will be any kind of requirements as to what needs to be met before an individual other than a person who is potentially directly affected by domestic violence is making that application. If it's a third party, what are the standards or who are the categories of people that will be captured by that? What is their position of trust or relationship with the person upon which they are making that request?

I think that will be very important to know because, of course, the reason that we care about this – we all care about this – is that the information we're talking about, not only is it very sensitive and potentially inflammatory information, but the person upon whom it's being requested for is likely in a very dangerous situation. We just need to be very cautious to know when those applications will be made and which third parties will be able to make it on their behalf. That goes to that question of that right to ask, right? Who does have the right to ask, particularly if it is a third party? I'm looking forward to some clarification. I know that in the Saskatchewan version of this bill they did set out within the act those individuals who may make application, and perhaps that's going to be a guideline for the regulation.

One of the challenges we have with respect to this kind of legislation is that it is relatively new, and there aren't a lot of jurisdictions that have had a great deal of time with its actual implementation. We know that it has been implemented in other countries, the U.K. in particular, but still relatively recently, so we don't have the benefit of a lot of evidence or experience. That certainly should not prevent us from taking those steps forward. It just means that we may need to be a little bit more cautious and thoughtful as to what we're doing because we don't have the benefit of others' experiences.

With respect to decision-making about when a disclosure will be made to an applicant or a third party making an application, you know, I think we have to think about – and I note from the bill that it is a police service that will be making that decision as to disclosing that information. I know that police services across the country, across Alberta have been doing a great deal of work to understand and to train with respect to domestic violence, but of course this is an additional responsibility. I do recognize that police will often make disclosures where it is seen to be important to do so already, but if we are going to be setting up a system or a process by which a police service is managing these applications and is

making a decision about disclosing this information, we want to make sure that those police officers have the appropriate training to exercise that discretion carefully and thoughtfully, which I know they will. But just to make sure those supports are there for the police service to do that.

I think the other issue with respect to making a decision to disclose information to an applicant with respect to domestic violence is the timeliness of the disclosure. I note that there is sort of a wide variety sometimes in timeliness. In the limited experiences that we've seen from the U.K., sometimes a disclosure can be made quite quickly. Sometimes it takes a lot longer. This is critical, of course, in this area because, you know, when a woman is at a point where she might be seeking this information, it may be at a point where she's already considering leaving her partner or leaving that situation, which we also know by the evidence is the most dangerous time for those women. When they're at that point, we know that the numbers, the intensity, the violence associated with those situations increases exponentially when the woman is actually looking to leave the situation. It's a high-risk situation, so timeliness is important. We need to make sure that those requests can be handled in a timely way so that that information can be disclosed quickly.

However, there also needs to be a little bit of caution, and this speaks a little bit to how the decision will be made to disclose. Perhaps there should be input. When a decision is made to disclose, there should be appropriate input from perhaps other people who are in that individual's life. I don't know if it will just be the police service who will be making that decision, but there might be a need to seek a variety of information sources before making that decision to disclose because sometimes the police may not have all the information they need to make that decision. That could, of course, affect timeliness because bringing in other individuals to weigh in on that decision may take more time. It is a very delicate balance between needing to be timely but making sure that the decision is very thoughtful because the disclosure can be quite significant.

I also want to speak to the issue of what is disclosed to an individual, what information, the content of the information that is disclosed to an applicant. I understand that in other jurisdictions sometimes all that's disclosed is that the individual about whom the information is sought, the perpetrator in this case, all that might be disclosed is whether there's a high risk or a low risk of that person being a danger to the applicant. Sometimes, of course, more detailed information is presented, and it might be specifics about actual convictions. Again, those are just questions because I don't know what would go into making those determinations about whether or not somebody is high risk or low risk and how the recipient who's getting that information will interpret that or how they will understand that without more detail.

4:20

But if we do get to more detailed information such as convictions, which I think – I would imagine we can all agree that if there is a prior conviction with respect to domestic violence, that would seem to fit right within the scope of this legislation. My concern, of course, is that we know that domestic violence is tragically underreported. Not only is it underreported, but we know that for domestic violence, sexual violence, it's very challenging for a victim or a survivor to actually get a conviction. The fact is that there are so many instances where it would not be reported, and then even if it is reported, the chances of a conviction are slim as well. That's just supported by the statistics.

Again, if we're limiting the information that an applicant might receive to simply a conviction, I'm worried that it might give a false sense of security in some situations, where, you know, a woman

might say, “Well, there’s no conviction,” but that might not mean that there hasn’t been a complaint made. Certainly, it would be limited to a complaint made to the police versus complaints made to other individuals. Now, I’m not saying – I don’t know how we would possibly capture all those other complaints, and there is an issue of fairness that we have to consider. I worry that if we are limiting the information that is disclosed to simply convictions, we’re actually not capturing a lot of potentially high-risk situations, and it may give a victim or a survivor of violence a false sense of security if they get a report saying that there are no prior convictions.

The other issue I’d like to raise – again, I’m sure that it’s been raised a number of times – is about privacy. On this case what I’m concerned about is: if a woman has received this information, how is that protected? We do not want it to be obviously known to the perpetrator that the woman has now received information about his prior conviction. Again, I realize that I’m using gendered terms here, and I apologize for that. I’m making some generalizations here. That is a concern because again I go back to – the point at which a woman might be making a decision about needing that information about her partner is usually a very volatile and high-risk moment, so if there is a risk that somehow the perpetrator of the violence will be notified or will become aware somehow that she has sought that information, that exponentially increases her risk. With respect to privacy I think that just speaks to the delicacy of the situation, and I’m hoping that, as part of the development of the regulations, conversations are had with, for example, the Privacy Commissioner to see if there is some advice with respect to how to manage that.

I note that Bill 17 does capture what’s known as the right to know, which means that there will be situations where a woman is advised of her partner’s prior convictions without seeking that information herself: she didn’t ask for it, but perhaps the police have become aware of a situation. They know that perhaps a perpetrator or somebody who’s been convicted of this offence is now in an intimate relationship. Perhaps that person is at a high risk, so they disclose it without the applicant asking. Again, I think that probably already happens to some extent with police services, but we want to make sure that there are additional resources because it’s now placing a somewhat proactive obligation on police to disclose. There needs to be the appropriate resources with respect to that.

Again, I want to reiterate that I do support this bill and the intent behind the bill. I think it is very important that we do move forward with this, but I do want to highlight that any time we talk about legislation, we do have to think, of course, about unintended consequences.

I note that there was an article published by the University of Calgary Faculty of Law’s blog. The authors are Jennifer Koshan and Wanda Wieggers. It’s specifically on Bill 17, and the article was published October 18, 2019. I will table this in the House as well if there’s an interest in that. The article is *Clare’s Law: Unintended Consequences for Domestic Violence Victims?* One of the things that the article points out is that a potential unintended consequence of this legislation is that victim blaming could become an issue. Actually, I should say that victim blaming is already an issue when it comes to domestic violence. We know that, you know, we have ideas, and we’ve seen the courts reinforce them although they have been moving forward to take those stereotypes down, but we expect victims of domestic violence to act in a particular way. If they don’t, we sometimes hold them accountable for that. In particular, we certainly tend to hold victims accountable to leave their perpetrators and perhaps situations where it’s not easy to do so. There are complex reasons why many women stay in violent relationships, and we don’t want to be doing anything to encourage that.

I do worry that by creating this one potential unintended consequence that, you know, if a woman either does not make an application for this disclosure or does make an application and it is disclosed to her that her partner has a prior conviction and she does not leave, she will then be blamed for that, for not leaving. It’s not just blamed in the court of public opinion, but what we see is that women can often be held accountable by having their children apprehended.

I’m going to quote now from this article that I referred to. The authors state:

A vast literature shows that women who do not leave abusive partners are at risk of having their children apprehended, because exposure to domestic violence has been legally defined as placing children in need of protection. Rather than providing supports to abused women in these situations so that they can remain in their homes and communities with their children, we often bring the full force of state intervention upon them – and it is well known that Indigenous women are disproportionately susceptible to this risk, explaining in some cases their reluctance to engage with the police.

I just wanted to raise this because we have to ask ourselves the question of whether victims who do obtain this information will be blamed if they don’t leave and they later sustain abuse. Does it put them at higher risk of having their children removed? This is not to say that we want children to remain in situations where there is domestic violence; rather, we want to create a situation where we can get involved and provide supports and resources to assist that family.

I think the question that these authors ask – and again I will quote – is:

How will Clare’s Law play out in cases involving women who have been criminally charged where they were defending themselves or their children from violence, or where they were wrongfully accused of abuse by their partners?

That’s something else I know. In my conversations with some organizations that are heavily involved in working with women who are survivors of violence have raised, they raise that often, you know, a violent partner will accuse the woman of being abusive. It creates a very tangled web, and what it does is that it creates a situation where both the woman who’s the victim of the violence feels both that she is now being blamed and that she might be held accountable. It also breaks the trust with law enforcement.

I raise those issues not to say that this is not a good bill. It is a good bill, but we just need to be conscious that there might be those implications. Those implications are probably higher for women who are indigenous, racialized, or poor. I just wanted to raise those issues for food for thought.

I appreciate that the minister has been very clear that she is going to be engaging in very thoughtful consultation with stakeholders. I know that there are a number of stakeholders that have already been engaged, and I appreciate that very much. I’m hoping that they will continue to be heavily involved in the development of the regulations, organizations like the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters – there are a number of them – but also involving the police because, as we described, the police will now have a very big role with respect to handling these applications and making sure that they are resourced properly. Also, I mentioned the Privacy Commissioner as a potential, who might have some thoughts on how to navigate the privacy issues around this.

Overall, the comment has been echoed, I think, by a number of people here. The law is a really great tool, but resources need to be there. Resources need to be there when a woman gets information about her partner or a third party seeks that information and she’s at a potentially very high-risk, dangerous situation. Are there supports available to ensure that she can leave that situation in a safe way

and in a safe way that protects her family as well? Those resources have to be available province-wide as well and in remote areas and rural areas, and we need to make sure that this isn't a situation where there are already strong institutions – those women might get supports – but we need to ensure that that's available throughout the province.

I do thank the minister again for bringing forward the legislation. I'll throw this out there if there's any appetite for this. I'm sure that members of the opposition are very much in support of this legislation. If we could be involved in any way in supporting the development of the regulations, I know we would be eager to do so.

Thank you again to the minister. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4:30

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie has risen.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, it is also my honour to rise in the House and support this bill, the Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act. I, too, wanted to take this opportunity to thank the minister for her hard work on this particular piece of legislation and just to talk a little bit about some of my experiences.

First of all, this bill is going to allow people at risk of domestic violence to obtain information on their partner about a potential history of domestic violence or relevant acts. I believe that this has the potential to save lives.

I also think it's refreshing when we encounter a bill and both sides of the House can stand in support of that bill. I think that's a lovely, refreshing experience for us in this House. I thank the members opposite for your continued support and also for some of the things that you've brought forward around ways to even make it better or improve it. I appreciate the thoughtfulness with which you've engaged in this discussion. Thank you to the members opposite for that.

I also want to thank the minister again for her work to ensure that there are funding and resources available for Alberta's most vulnerable, not just with respect to this bill but all of the Albertans that are impacted by her ministry. Thank you to the minister for that and for her diligence in advocating on behalf of Albertans.

I just wanted to give a little bit of background. I believe that it has already been read into this House, but I wanted to stand and rise again for those, you know, many, many Albertans who will be listening to me right now. I really appreciate their attention. I just wanted to say, in all seriousness, that it's very scary to me that half of all young women and girls who are victims of domestic violence homicide in Canada were murdered by someone with a prior conviction. I think that is a staggering statistic, and I actually did not realize that it was that high until this bill became available for us to discuss in this House. This conviction often is sort of relevant but not direct.

I just think that, in my personal experience – I'll step back a little bit. I've been an employer for 26 years, have employed literally thousands of people in the province of Alberta, and have had the unfortunate opportunity – I guess it was fortunate that I could be there for these staff, but it was unfortunate – to be a witness as an employer to some of the people embroiled in domestic violence in their own homes. How to support them as an employer was very, very challenging. You know, you want to be there for these people, but you also don't want to enable them. There's a fine line there.

I think legislation like this would have been very helpful for some of those staff to have some perspective. I think that sometimes when

you're in these situations, perspective gets skewed, and you're in it for so long that what would have been unacceptable at the start of your relationship with your intimate partner – your defences get worn down, and you start to accept behaviour that would not have been acceptable at the start of your relationship. I think it just escalates, and it's a very slow and subtle escalation, but I also believe that what ultimately happens is that these victims of domestic violence don't have perspective anymore. To have access to third-party information, I think, would have been very empowering for some of the people, some of the women, in this case, that I supported through those challenges.

Unfortunately, the statistics are also that most of the people in these situations tend to go back again and again. I think, as the members opposite pointed out, there can be a stigma around that sometimes. We who haven't walked that road can judge how that happens or why somebody would go back, but I also know that, as many members in this House have risen to speak on this issue, it's very complicated and interconnected. Sometimes there are children involved or extended family. Sometimes the employment is impacted. Often there are cases where these people don't feel like they have another alternative but to go back. You know, my grandpa used to always say that love is blind, and I think that sometimes that's really the case: we love the person, but we don't know how to separate those feelings from the facts of what we're encountering in our relationship.

I'm very happy to rise in support of this bill today. I do believe that it will help prevent domestic violence, and I do believe that it will empower, hopefully, these victims. Again, as has been said in this House, if it saves even one life, it certainly was worth the time and the effort to stand and debate it.

It's also shocking to me that our domestic violence rate here in Alberta is the third highest in Canada. It's really sad to me, and I think that we have a responsibility to improve these statistics and also to educate the public on what this looks like and what this means for people.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the idea behind FOIP and the freedom of information and how this act will be sort of impacted in that way. I don't believe that the intention is to allow anyone to weaponize the act. That's certainly something that we were briefed on with the minister as well, that we have to balance the opportunity to empower these people who are in this situation and give them the knowledge that they need to make a more informed decision and a more unbiased decision in their relationships, but I also believe that we have to balance that with people's right to privacy. Certainly, the legislation: my understanding is that it is being developed with consideration for privacy and for the FOIP Act.

I believe that, you know, we're going to have a lot of work to do in the event that this passes or when this passes the House with respect to the regulations, that we do work to get it right. I'm grateful that we have a model from the U.K., Clare's law, to look to to see how it's been enacted there and what has worked well there. I also know that other jurisdictions in Canada are working right now, and I hope that we can work collaboratively to do the very best on behalf of Albertans and particularly these most vulnerable that are impacted currently.

I also wanted to say that there's been a lot of meaningful engagement – I can see that from the briefings and from the discussions in this House – with the stakeholders involved, and I appreciate that work that's been done already in advance, certainly around things like wraparound supports. Those have been anticipated. There will be needs for that.

You know, one of the things that happens – and I can certainly say again, as an employer who supported, unfortunately, multiple people in this situation over my 26 years in my work life, that each

situation is unique, so we don't have a one-size-fits-all response or support that would work. In some cases it was just the emotional support required. In other cases there was financial support required. In other cases there were multiple supports required.

I find that without understanding, it's very challenging to step in in a meaningful and in a helpful way, so I appreciate the depth of stakeholder engagement that's been undertaken to draft this and to address each individual circumstance, hopefully. I know that we can't anticipate every single circumstance that could possibly occur, but I certainly think there have been serious efforts undertaken to look at the most common ones, anyway, services potentially for justice, sexual assault, housing, and homelessness.

You know, one of the stories I can hearken back to: I was a 22-year-old owner of a business, which is kind of amazing when I think about that now, and this young woman worked for us on the night shift. For her privacy I won't disclose her name. But she would come to work late or with sort of odd behaviour. She wouldn't meet our gaze. She was very shy, and it took us months and months of working side by side to realize that she was in a very, very damaging relationship. Unfortunately, in that case there were two very small children involved, so it's not as simple as saying: hey, we'll help you leave. There were two little babies at home, so the supports that she needed were extensive, and in her case in particular, homelessness would have been a very significant reality had she just walked out the door. It wouldn't have worked. That was a very challenging experience for a young entrepreneur, 22 years old, to try and figure out: how do I best help this woman?

Further to that, you know, mental health is just absolutely huge with respect to this. I think that when you've been in a relationship long enough – and I walked this road with, as I said, a number of people over the years in my business life and also in my personal life. To see the deterioration in mental health and the increase in the capacity to question oneself is really interesting to me, too. It's very, very sad to see women who are strong and, often, educated – not that it's just women; it could be anyone, but in my case it was women that I supported, these women who would be viewed in society as strong and independent, and no one would ever suspect that they were walking in a situation of domestic violence – and to see them not be able to discern what was appropriate behaviour anymore in their intimate partner relationship and also to see them struggle with perspective with respect to encounters with their intimate partner.

4:40

One house in particular I'm thinking of. I would go over to visit for coffee, and the spouse would come home. I would be shocked at the tone and the behaviour in the home and would ask, like: what's going on here? She would say: well, you know, that was fine. Again – I think I've said this already – what wouldn't have been fine at the beginning of the relationship had become fine over the time that they'd been together. Without the capacity to remove oneself from the situation, I think it really does take a toll on the mental health, and I think it becomes more and more challenging for these individuals to see the behaviour for what it is. To access information that would help these people, women and men, who are struggling with this, to see what's really happening and to see a history: I hope it would be sobering enough information for many of them to choose differently.

I also hope that these people wouldn't end up in the situation to begin with because they would have enough of a red flag to go, "Maybe I need to get more information," particularly now in our society. I'm talking 26 years ago. Now it's much more common to meet people online. People may not be from your town or even from your country, so to be able to investigate and find out, you know, what their background is and to do a more thorough search and find

that out before you engage in something that you may not be able to get yourself out of afterwards: certainly, we would want to do everything we could to protect our society and protect people that are entering into these intimate relationships.

Another thing my grandpa used to say is that the person you marry is the making or the breaking of you. I think that quite often what happens is that people enter in with the best of intentions. It can make your life so wonderful, and it can make your life so devastating. In Clare Wood's case it cost her her life, so certainly there are high stakes here.

I also just wanted to touch briefly on indigenous and cultural communities. I've been proud to stand in this House many times with many of the ministers – I'm thinking of the minister of indigenous affairs – and support indigenous issues and support indigenous peoples' rights. I just think it's really great that this is another opportunity. I know it's not directly connected to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, but I also believe that had this law been here, it certainly may have assisted and stemmed some of that tragedy.

I don't have much more to add. I just, really, again wanted to thank the members opposite for their support, thank this House for discussing this, and thank the minister for bringing it forward.

With that, I will thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see that the hon. Minister of Community and Social Services has risen to speak.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just thought I'd take a couple of moments to reflect and talk about some of the feedback that I've heard today. Certainly, I'm very grateful. It's been valuable. It's been very insightful. Maybe I'll just start with the comments that were made by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. It is critical that we do have wraparound supports available. Certainly, during our stakeholder engagement, which was quite extensive – we had two sessions that included a number of participants from multidisciplinary backgrounds – there was near unanimous consensus that we needed to make sure that we had robust wraparound supports available. That's something that I as the minister, obviously, take very seriously. Some of those supports could include obvious things like crisis or medical support, perpetrator intervention and programs, which is not quite as obvious, cultural support services, children's services, and community outreach wraparound supports.

There was also a comment made around housing supports. I think that that's a very relevant comment as well because I did hear that as well during our stakeholder engagement. I think this really does provide a good opportunity for some crossministerial engagement as well with Seniors and Housing and Children's Services. That is something that is also going to be investigated further as we work towards defining the regulations.

In regard to the comments made by the Member for Calgary-West, absolutely, this is another tool in the tool box that we can use in a preventative fashion to make sure that potential victims of domestic violence have something that they could use to be more informed about potentially entering a harmful relationship. One of the things that we want to operationalize in the regulations is robust risk assessment. That will incorporate qualitative and quantitative data that will help inform the decision as to whether to disclose information or not. That was a very important comment, and I think there is consensus in this House that this is a tool. It's not the solution, it's not the answer, but it is something that, in my hope, will definitely bring down the rates of domestic violence in this province.

I was listening very carefully to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud because she brought up a number of questions, actually, around this legislation and how those questions will potentially be answered in the regulations. In regard to applicant eligibility, I know that in the Saskatchewan act third parties are named, but the actual eligibility hasn't been defined in that act as well. We're following Saskatchewan's example very closely, but as we make that decision to define eligibility, obviously it has to be informed by stakeholders. We want to make sure that we incorporate folks who have lived experience, who have gone through this terrible journey, to give us their feedback, to tell us what makes sense as we define eligibility for applicants in the regulations.

In terms of the decision to disclose, it's not necessarily the case that police services are going to make that decision. We are, again, obviously, engaging with stakeholders to determine who will be the best body to actually make that decision to disclose. It could potentially be a multidisciplinary panel that incorporates different areas of expertise that will come together and incorporate the risk assessment as well to ultimately make that decision to disclose. The actual disclosure most likely will be undertaken by police services.

There were a number of comments made about privacy, and I can't emphasize enough that we're very, very sensitive to privacy considerations. We're working very closely with the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to make sure that we can anticipate what potential pitfalls might be and also to ensure that we have mitigating responses put in place that will address privacy considerations.

The one thing that really caught my attention was the comment on unintended consequences, because this is something that I take very seriously, and we've talked about it at length both in the ministry and the department, that with everything we do, with every initiative that we put forward, we have to be extremely mindful of the unintended consequences. The article that was addressed by the member opposite: I'll read that; I'll take a look at it. Certainly, we also have to be very cognizant that we are taking into consideration all cultural sensitivities, particularly as they relate to indigenous women and indigenous communities. That came through loud and clear through our stakeholder engagement.

The Member for Grande Prairie brought up a number of issues as well, and I've already spoken about privacy and how mindful we are to ensure that privacy considerations are taken extremely seriously.

The reasons as to why women or men, any victim of domestic violence, stays in these relationships: I mean, the reasons are so complex and nuanced and sensitive and multifaceted. It's really hard to say or to speak to why these situations perpetuate, but I think it's also important to say that we should never judge. We never know what's happening in a person's life or what their individual circumstances are, what their family circumstances are, whether they've experienced intergenerational trauma. There are so many reasons as to why people stay in relationships. But, again, I'm so confident and hopeful in all of the above that this particular legislation will be preventative in nature and will give people options to stay away from potentially harmful relationships.

4:50

The statistic of Alberta having the third-highest rate of domestic violence in Canada: I mean, it's not just sad; it's devastating. How is it even possible in this province that we have such a terrible statistic? I go back to what I said earlier, when I did my second reading, that this stat is understated, because there are so many cases of violence where people just don't report, again for a variety of different reasons.

I know that there are more concerns yet to be articulated, and I'm very open to feedback and insight, lived experience, anything else

that anybody might be able to offer as we go forward to define these regulations.

Thank you, everyone, once again for your support.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to stand up and speak to this a second time, to speak to Bill 17. I certainly appreciated all of the comments here today. I focused, the first time that I spoke to this piece of legislation, on the importance of wraparound supports. I understand that this legislation is what the government is calling enabling legislation in that most of the details will be determined at a future date. Most of the details will be in the regulations. Again, I just wanted to urge the government, as my colleague suggested, that I know that there are people on this side that would be more than happy to participate in that phase to help out wherever we can.

I did want to focus on the importance of wraparound supports but also on the importance of prevention. It is one thing to give, to provide another tool or to put another tool in the so-called tool box. The rates of violence and abuse in Alberta and Canada are far too high, and anything that we can do to address that or to bring that down is absolutely important. I think what we really need to talk about is: it is one thing to put in a document that, you know, we'll also have wraparound supports, but it's quite another to spend time and energy and invest resources in those supports. So I am going to focus my comments there.

A number of the members have talked about some of the people that are at risk, and some of the personal stories or examples they've shared have really highlighted that. But I wanted to go a little bit further to describing the populations that are at risk and then sort of linking it to supports, wraparound supports or preventative supports, and why those are so important and why it's such an important investment.

One of the groups that maybe we haven't spent a whole lot of time talking about are new Canadians. I know that in the community that I represent, St. Albert, there isn't a huge population of newer Canadians. However, there are a number of families that have recently moved to St. Albert and have been supported. We got to meet them a little bit, and we have heard stories, maybe not necessarily from those families but from other families, talking about sort of the pressures of moving to a new place, the isolation, the lack of relationships, whether it's family or friends, that leaves certain people particularly vulnerable. In those particular instances it was even more difficult for people to leave abusive relationships.

I imagine – I don't know this for sure – that the background information would not be accessible, whether it was to law enforcement or whoever, because there isn't a long history there. These are folks that are new to this community, let alone new to this country, yet maybe they have come with some issues that are problematic or with some violence and with a history of violence. I imagine being in a new community, with a new job or unemployed, with new stresses with the language, new schools: all of those things can continue to add to the stress.

This is a group, actually, that relies quite heavily on community service providers in the community. These are the kinds of wraparound supports that we need to continuously invest in, whether that is a subsidy for affordable housing, whether that's assistance with transportation or assistance learning how to drive. Sometimes it's even the food bank. These are the kinds of supports that we need to invest in.

There is another group that is particularly reliant on community service providers or wraparound supports, as this document talks

about, and that is people with disabilities. I know I mentioned this the first time I spoke to this. I imagine it's true with men also, but I'm going to focus on women with disabilities. We do know that women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable, sometimes twice as vulnerable as women without disabilities, in terms of being victims of violence, whether it's domestic violence, familial violence of some kind. These are the kinds of women and men, I suppose, that are reliant on services in the community.

The reason I'm sort of harping on the need to invest in these services is that these community services rely very heavily on support from government. In some of the cases of the services that I'm describing, they rely heavily on FCSS funding. I mentioned that earlier. FCSS funding is dollars that the province gives to municipalities. The municipalities are also investing. I think it's about an 80-20 split. I know that when we were in government, we invested I think about \$25 million each and every year because this is a growing need. It is one thing to say that we're adding a tool in the tool box to keep people safe and, you know, that we'll also look at wraparound supports, but it is quite another to actually make that investment, to make that financial commitment to continue supporting these programs.

You know, it's sort of a timely discussion. There are so many risk factors, I suppose, that lead people to the place where this becomes a reality and this legislation could potentially touch their lives, but there is so much that we can do to prevent it. I want to tie this back to a motion that came up yesterday. It was the motion about looking at: what are the barriers to reproductive health care for women in rural and remote Alberta in particular? The reason that I'm bringing this up – and I know that those opposite sort of thought that this issue was being brought up to weaponize some kind of issue. Actually, it was being brought up because there was a lack of support, a lack of access to these services in certain communities. Very often for women, in particular, that are isolated or that are in communities that are far away from services, it is more difficult for them to leave situations if they are unable to make the decisions that they need to make about their lives, their bodies, and their futures. I'm not saying that the lack of ability to access these services causes domestic violence. I'm just saying that it's one more risk factor. So this is one more thing that we can actually do to prevent, because I think prevention is the key.

I'm going to talk about, specifically, my community, the community that I represent, St. Albert. There are two services or two organizations that are doing some really amazing work around prevention and support, and that's where I think a big investment needs to be. While I do support this legislation and I trust that the details will be worked out in regulation, I trust that the government will do their due diligence to address all of the concerns that we brought up all through this debate and that we will also focus on prevention and support, the wraparound support. In my community we have two that I want to talk about. One is the Jessica Martel Memorial Foundation. I'm sure that people have heard about this organization. They're actually set to open emergency, first-stage housing in I think 2020. I think they're probably at around 60 per cent of their fundraising goal. They are set to serve the Sturgeon region, Morinville, and St. Albert.

5:00

For those of you who haven't heard about Jessica Martel, sadly, a bill or a piece of legislation that we're talking about here today could easily be named after her. This was a woman who was in a relationship with a man who was clearly violent, with two young children. Obviously, all of the red flags along the way. She actually had family close by, but she died. She was murdered. Her family and community rallied around, got together and decided that this

was something that they wanted to do because she was murdered at the time that they were looking at creating a plan and bringing in the community supports and family supports to allow her to move. Would this piece of legislation have helped? I'm not sure. I hope so. Maybe it would have. It would have given her additional information that she didn't have.

The point of me bringing up Jessica Martel and the work that's been done around creating this housing is that this is a group that had to begin on their own. They had to do fundraising. They had to meet as volunteers, do all of the fundraising activities that so many groups have to do in order to create emergency shelter spaces in St. Albert, Morinville, Sturgeon county, because there's nothing. There really is nothing. We've been told that, you know, women wanting to leave will need to actually go to Edmonton, and that's not always possible. Although Morinville and Edmonton aren't that far apart, it can be very long. It can be, like, an insurmountable distance when you're in a situation like this. This is the kind of program or this is the kind of housing investment that we need to make. If we say that more than anything we want to prevent this and we want to support people after the disclosure, these are the kinds of programs that we need to support.

Also, one of the most effective ways of preventing this is investing in organizations like SAIF society in St. Albert. Again, they rely heavily – heavily – on FCSS, and of course we're nervous. We're bracing for a budget where we don't know where the investment level will be, and any kind of reductions there will directly impact their ability to prevent this kind of tragedy and this kind of violence. I don't know if people know about this: one of the programs that they invest in is called Cut it Out. Probably people have heard of that, and it's actually education with people that are involved in – I'll probably get the sector wrong. They work in salons. These are hairstylists, things like that, because very often there is that point of contact with women that are in violent relationships or are looking for assistance. That can be maybe the one place where they're not being supervised or there isn't somebody watching. It's about educating people that work in that sector to know what to identify – maybe there are patches of hair missing – and how to provide support and how to provide ideas to make a plan to get out.

That's just one of the types of programs that the SAIF society in St. Albert supports. Obviously, they do quite a bit of education in elementary schools, junior high level, and high schools. That's where it needs to happen, whether it's, you know, opening the door for a possible disclosure there or just teaching kids how to identify it themselves, how to identify that this is a problem. Very often, sadly, for kids that grow up in families like that, that's all they know, and unless they've been taught sort of what to recognize and how to report and to know that it's a problem, they don't know.

Again, you know, I don't mean to beat a dead horse here, but it is one thing to have legislation that empowers people with information, and it's quite another not to back it up with investment in prevention and wraparound supports. I just want to encourage everyone – I certainly appreciate any time any work is done around prevention, but I just want to point out that without these other investments, this will not impact the number of people that we need to impact.

I've heard members, again, say over and over again that the level of violence, the number of people that are forced to deal with this kind of violence in our province, is unacceptable. We need to do this. We need to pass legislation like this. We need to get the regulations right, but we need to invest in prevention and wraparound supports – and my colleagues touch on that – which are affordable housing and assistance finding work and getting work that people can support their families with. It's about affordable child care. It's



about accessible child care. It's about outreach and wraparound supports to communities that are particularly vulnerable: people with disabilities, people in our indigenous communities, new Canadians.

There are so many groups that rely so heavily on community service providers that we can't let them down. If we are making a commitment to do everything that we can to keep people safe, then we need to do this piece, Bill 17, but we need to do more than that.

With that, I will end. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 17. I would like to thank the minister for bringing forward the bill, and of course I'm rising to speak in favour of it. I will take a few moments just to talk about my own background because I think it's important to what it is I'm going to say to the bill. Of course, as many of the members of this side of the House have done, there are some cautions, but we would not want those cautions to stop us from moving forward in the steps that we can take at this particular time.

Many of you may know that prior to being elected, I had a 33-year career as a social worker, with a specialization in the area of family violence. I had the great pleasure to work with many, many families struggling through this area. I say "pleasure" not because of what brought them to me but because I really, truly learned to value the truth that families brought to their experience and the incredible work that they do to resolve complex, traumatic situations in their lives in order to create a better world for themselves and their children.

I had an opportunity to work in this area initially as a child welfare worker for the Alberta government for a number of years, and subsequently I was in private practice for about a dozen years, working in the area of child sexual abuse. The last 11 years, of course, I was teaching in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, where I taught a number of courses specifically on or related to family violence. At the same time I was doing some consultation work with some agencies, including, for example, the Association of Communities Against Abuse, which is a family violence organization in Stettler, Alberta. I had an opportunity to drive down there and, of course, provided consultation at that time to many northern communities, including many First Nations communities. I began to see these situations from a variety of perspectives, from both rural and urban perspectives. I had a sense of some of the patterns that develop in these situations but also of some of the ways in which the system – both myself as a child welfare worker and subsequently as a therapist and subsequently as a consultant – had a differential approach to a variety of situations, depending on characteristics of the moment.

I wish I could say that I did the right thing at all times, but, you know, none of us realistically can say that. I certainly always enter in my work with the best of intentions, but I'm quite aware that there are a variety of systemic pulls that make us move in a direction that sometimes we're unaware of for a while, and even once we've become aware of them, sometimes they're very difficult to get beyond. So even though you have the best of intentions, you can sometimes have some negative consequences to your behaviours. We talk about that in the House all the time. Well, it's true in the human services field as much as it is in legislation in the House or as it is in any other field that we work in.

## 5:10

The concern that I have in this particular case is the nature of defining a list that somehow begins to suggest that there is some power in that list to differentiate people who are offenders from people who are not offenders, and if it does, I accept that then there's some value. If it does help, you know, as we often say, even one person to avoid a situation where they potentially might become a victim, then I think there's some value in it.

The thing that concerns me as a former therapist, though, is that when we have a situation like that – and I know because I worked with people who were often in these kinds of situations – they begin to rely on that list as somehow an external indicator or marker of the veracity of what they're being told by the perpetrator. So if you have someone who is not on the list, then it becomes very easy for them to say: well, if I had done something wrong, then of course I'd be on the list; I'm not on the list; therefore, I'm safe. Now, some of us wouldn't buy that kind of an argument, but of course you have to understand that in a situation of violence and oppression there is a very systemic grooming behaviour that goes on that seeks to violate the self-awareness of the victim and undermine the victim's ability to respond appropriately to a situation. What happens is that they come to a place where they can't trust their own judgment. They begin to seek the list as an external measure of what is right and what is wrong and whether or not somebody is safe or is not.

That has two issues that I think we need to talk about. One of them is that it's very dangerous somehow to say that we have this list and that therefore people on the list are bad folks and then imply that if they're not on the list, they're not bad folks. That gives a very dangerous message. I just want to be very cautious about how this is presented into the community, that we don't start to identify this as the list that will help to separate out those who are dangerous from those who are not, because I think that puts vulnerable people who are seeking external guidance, given the dynamic of their relationships, into a place where they trust information that isn't trustworthy, because we cannot guarantee that the list in any way reflects systematically people who are dangerous versus people who are not.

We ran into that kind of situation often when we were looking at treatment as well. People would come to us and say: has this person gone through treatment? And we'd have to say yes or no. Yes, they've gone to that treatment. But that didn't necessarily indicate whether or not they were safe now that they had gone through treatment.

We found that in some research, particularly done in the jail system in Manitoba, women were looking at the jails to see whether or not the person that they were involved with had gone through the offender treatment in the jail setting as a determination as to whether or not they would get back together again with them. The research indicated in the end that having gone through the treatment didn't necessarily make you any safer. It was a big disappointment to therapists, people like me who said: well, that's pretty rotten; we were hoping that we'd be able to demonstrate that our work is effective. But in this particular case it wasn't. However, the list of who had gone through that treatment was being used by women to identify their own safety in terms of whether or not they should get back together again with somebody that actually left the judicial system. So I just worry about the power of the list in terms of identifying safety or nonsafety.

The other part that I think is of concern is who gets onto the list. Now, again, back to my comment that our best of intentions is that we put people on the list because they deserve to be on that list, but we know systemically that that isn't actually what happens. There are a variety of reasons why people get put on the list and a variety

of reasons why people don't get put on the list that have nothing to do with their safety or not. Now, you may say: well, hold it; in this case we have the subjective measure that they've been charged with something and that that's what puts them on the list. But we know in the research about who gets charged that there's a differential rate of charging of people, depending on which ethnic community and which socioeconomic community they come from.

The research across North America would indicate that if you are a rich, white man, someone like me, the chances of me getting charged for this kind of misbehaviour in society is significantly less than people who do not come from that category that I have the privilege of accidentally falling into. What we have is a situation where, I know from speaking to the members of the indigenous community, very often their charges are quick to occur in situations where officers arrive and the apparent culprit is someone who is of the indigenous community, much quicker than it would be if they arrived in a situation where they were not part of the indigenous community.

The research also tends to indicate that this is generally true with regard to socioeconomic status as well, that if you arrive at a household that is a million-dollar house and has two cars in the garage, you tend to be a little bit more cautious, perhaps judicious in your decision to move forward and to impose charges. As a result, people in that category don't tend to get on the list as often.

I think, then, we have to be very cautious about how much power we give to a list when we know that getting on the list or not on the list is not a wholly appropriate mechanism, but there are structural reasons why some groups are overrepresented over other groups that are not specifically related to the actual issue of whether or not they are in danger of committing violence.

In my work with some of the indigenous communities in my life as a social worker, people would often tell me that vast numbers of members of the community were on the lists, whatever those lists were in those situations, of people who were dangerous, that that was really a reflection of white societal attitudes towards indigenous peoples rather than what actually happened in families, and that families saw the intrusion by the white justice system as problematic. Then it led to a situation of women needing to sort of move into this cognitive place where they say, "Well, if a guy is on the list, then it really is a reflection of racial intolerance rather than his dangerousness," therefore moving into a place of denial of the danger that was inherent.

We have a real problem if that begins to occur, if we start to have people say, "The list itself is problematic, and therefore I need to ignore the list." Why it becomes problematic is because there's a second part to this, that women then find themselves being asked, "Why would you get back together with this guy when you were told that he was on the list?" Now, the answer is: "Because I came to believe that the list was prejudicially constructed." But in the courts it may be viewed rather as a problem of: "You actually had some information that you should have used to protect your children, and because you didn't use that information, then we deem you to be less competent in terms of the protection of your own child and therefore more susceptible to having your children removed."

So you can see the double bind that a woman that is the victim of violence would be in. On the one hand, if she believes the list, then she is contributing to racial intolerance against her own people. If, on the other hand, she does not believe in the list, she is threatening her own ability to provide continuing care for her own children because she's being told by others that she's an inadequate parent.

5:20

It's just those kinds of double binds that are problematic. Double binds exist in many places in society, and we can't avoid them all,

but we can do a number of things to ensure that these problems are resolved. I think that the Member for St. Albert spoke very well about the fact that just simply putting out a list could be dangerous if you don't also wrap that list with a variety of services and techniques of ensuring that the use of that list, both by professionals and nonprofessionals, is guided by the wisdom that we have gleaned over the years about the nature of violence in families.

That would mean putting this bill, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act, out there into the world without also ensuring adequate training for professionals so that they don't make statements like, "Well, did you check the list?" or "Why didn't you respond when you saw his name on the list?" — that would be revictimizing the person who was initially victimized — and also without significant support and training for women to understand how the list may be helpful but also may be limited in terms of their decision-making, both when somebody is on the list and when somebody is off the list.

If we had some commitment by the government to ensure that the wraparound services and the appropriate training of professionals were all in place and that this wasn't simply a tool that's thrown into the air hoping that people will catch it properly and use it properly, then I'd feel a bit more secure here. You know, I have said from the beginning that I'm going to support this legislation, but what I will do is that I will follow that up in our budget discussions, starting on Thursday of this week and next week, by saying: "Thank you. You've said that you want this act in the House. I agree with this act in the House. I want to now ask you what you have done to ensure that this act is not going to become a danger in the community. What have you done in terms of your budget?"

It isn't good enough to make a small move without understanding that that move is part of a larger, more complex need in the community and that only doing part of something can sometimes be more detrimental than doing nothing at all. Hopefully, that's not true. I'm giving you my faith that it's not true, but I certainly would like to see and have some assurance from the government, starting on Thursday and throughout next week, that they are going to do the right kinds of things, that they're going to actually take what we have learned in terms of the nature of family violence and act on that in order to ensure people's safety.

It isn't good enough just to say, "I'm against family violence" if your behaviours and your money don't follow that up. I think that's very important. I think that that's going to be a universal caution for the government side of the House, that it's not good enough that you say that you support some particular thing, but then you actually have to do something about it. I'll say the same thing when it comes to saying that they care about child poverty. I say: "So what are you doing about it? Are you providing services for children? Are you providing daycare spaces? Are you providing school lunch programs? Are you doing all those things that we did in our time and were able to reduce child poverty by 50 per cent?"

Those are the kinds of things that I will expect to happen. It isn't just a matter of declaring your moral stance on something. It's about taking brave and courageous behaviour to ensure that the outcome is the outcome that you desire and is satisfactory and not simply something to show good intent without actually trying to achieve the ultimate reward that one would hope to achieve from these kinds of bills.

I put my cautions out there. I appreciate the chance to speak to the minister and to the House on this issue. I would suggest that I'm even happy to have further conversations outside of the House if that's at all helpful at any time. I bring a certain expertise to these kinds of discussions.

But, most importantly, I guess I want to caution and cajole the government into making sure that they don't do the least possible

to resolve violence but that they do the most possible to resolve violence. That includes putting the act out there and then ensuring that the implementation of the act is robust and focused on the ultimate outcome and the demonstration of achievement of success.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Do I see any other members wishing to speak to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act?

[The clauses of Bill 17 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Chair, I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 17.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, say no. So ordered.

[The Speaker in the chair]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 18

#### Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to move second reading of Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019.

Although the previous government's planned capacity market is not yet operating, the current legislation and regulations direct that Alberta's electricity agencies are to continue implementing the capacity system until it is fully operational in 2021. This proposed bill will stop all that work associated with implementing a capacity market for electricity.

This, Mr. Speaker, will help restore investor certainty in Alberta's electricity system by returning the province to an energy-only market. This is a market system that has been operating in Alberta for more than 20 years. This is a market system that investors know and trust and want to work with. We know this because investors told us so.

Mr. Speaker, I met with stakeholders over the summer seeking their feedback on which market system can best power Alberta's

future. Stakeholders, industry, and consumer groups were almost unanimous in their support for an energy-only market. So we asked ourselves: why do we even have legislation to implement a capacity market, that Alberta's electricity stakeholders and consumers didn't want? The sector didn't ask for it. They weren't even consulted until it was time to develop the legislation for it. Well, it was because the previous government policy at the time imposed the change.

Mr. Speaker, a number of economic and policy changes have occurred since that happened in 2016, when the capacity market was first announced. For example, government policy at the time supported a rapid growth in renewable generation, and while our government supports renewable generation, we will not subsidize it. We welcome market-driven renewables that compete with other forms of power production.

5:30

Our decision to retain an energy-only market for electricity was a deliberate part of our market-driven approach to renewables, and this decision is already paying off. In just the last two months four companies have invested more than \$2.3 billion in electricity projects. These projects include Suncor's cogeneration unit at its oil sands base plant facility, Perimeter Solar and TC Energy's new solar power purchase agreement just south of Calgary – that's a \$200 million project – Greengate Power's solar project in Vulcan, and BHE Canada Rattlesnake's wind project in southeastern Alberta, which has the potential to be the largest wind power project in Canada. These projects would not be happening without the investor certainty that returning to the energy-only marketplace provides.

Mr. Speaker, at the time the capacity market was announced, it was also assumed that Alberta would experience a coal cliff caused by retiring coal-fuelled electricity generation and no coal-to-gas conversions. Well, federal regulations now allow coal-to-gas conversions. It was also assumed, back in 2016, that Alberta would see a prolonged period of low wholesale electricity prices, but electricity spot prices have recovered.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's energy-only market works. It has provided reliable and affordable electricity to Albertans and has attracted investment for more than 20 years. I know that the opposition wants Albertans to think otherwise, with their fearmongering about blackouts and price spikes, but the truth is that Alberta's energy-only market has successfully delivered favourable outcomes for Albertans.

Currently our electricity grid has a reserve margin of over 25 per cent. That's 10 percentage points higher than the target reserve margin recommended by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation. While it is true that price spikes are associated with an energy-only market, they are a necessary and desirable feature as they aid in generator cost recovery and they actually incent new investment, helping to ensure long-term adequacy of supply. Additionally, the energy-only market encourages investment decisions, where investors, not consumers, not taxpayers, bear the risk.

When I spoke to stakeholders and specifically asked them what market system they wanted to invest in, they couldn't have been more clear. They stated loudly and clearly that they want the certainty of an energy-only market. They don't want to gamble with an experiment, an untested capacity market system, that would take a long period of time to get right. Investors understand Alberta's well-established market, which offers them greater certainty regarding its future performance. It offers structural and administrative simplicity and regulatory clarity.

Mr. Speaker, as I previously mentioned, Bill 18 would halt the creation of the capacity market. The proposed act enables

amendments to three different pieces of legislation that govern the electricity system in Alberta: the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, the Electric Utilities Act, and the Hydro and Electric Energy Act. The majority of the proposed changes in Bill 18 are repeals. They're housekeeping matters that remove all references to the capacity market. All capacity-market-specific policy objectives are being removed, and authorities enabling the electricity agencies to establish and operate a capacity market are being reversed.

Legislative and regulatory amendments that were enacted in 2018 to enable the creation of a capacity market included a few modernizations that were not directly related to the capacity market. The majority of those relate to how the AESO consults on and makes its rules. These provisions are being retained in the proposed bill. These changes better align Alberta's rule-making processes with best practices in other jurisdictions.

Additionally, there's some cleanup that has been done in other acts. Some of the terminology has been streamlined, and provisions that are no longer relevant have been repealed. Complementary changes will also be made to electricity regulations.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans and investors need certainty in their electricity market, not an experiment. If passed, Bill 18 will end the creation of the capacity market for electricity and return Alberta to the well-established, tried-and-true energy-only market, a market system that will continue to provide a reliable supply of electricity at affordable prices, a market system that investors understand and one in which they have confidence and want to invest and one that provides them with policy certainty. This proposed legislation will restore investor confidence in Alberta's electricity system and, when combined with other recent government initiatives such as reducing red tape and reducing Alberta's corporate tax rate, will ensure that Alberta investors know that Alberta is open for business.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has the call.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 18, Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019. Let me begin by saying that this is just more of the same: a big \$4.5 billion giveaway to big corporations while Albertans pay the price. This move will cost Albertans. This move will cost consumers more on electricity bills and will take us back to rolling blackouts and price spikes. Certainly, this bill will impact many Albertans across this province, in my riding as well, and more concern.

I mentioned my riding because my riding has lower income than most of Calgary; for instance, in the Taradale neighbourhood. The Calgary average individual income is \$43,000, and in Taradale the average income is \$28,000. A huge difference there. Similarly, in Saddle Ridge the average median income for an individual is \$30,000 as compared to Calgary's average of \$43,000. In Martindale it's \$29,000. In all these neighbourhoods almost 30 per cent of the people spend more than 30 per cent on their shelter needs. Certainly, this bill will result in a rise in their bills and will make life more difficult for Albertans.

The minister in her comments said that the sector didn't ask for it. I think that when we moved towards the capacity market, experts, analysts, and the Alberta Electric System Operator were all on our side. That transition was welcomed by the TransAlta Corporation, Capital Power Corporation, AltaLink, Western Interstate Energy Board, and many others. So saying that nobody was asking for it, nobody was behind it: I don't think that's true. In 2016 AESO was recommending that we move towards the capacity market, and among many reasons the reason was that the capacity market will

ensure that Albertans have safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity. Clearly, our decision was based on advice from experts, on advice from AESO, and we worked with our producers, we worked with the sector to move towards the capacity market.

5:40

I think I will talk a little bit about how these two markets work, for the benefit of those who are listening. In an energy-only market I think those who generate electricity bid into the market pool the price that they want to sell the electricity at and the quantity that they can produce, and the system operator dispatches those units and merit orders based on the price until the generation matches the load of needed electricity. We know that the last unit of power that is dispatched, at whatever rate that unit is dispatched, sets the price that will be paid to all those who have bid into that market pool. That is determined on a per-hour basis.

Let's talk about administrative simplicity. Every hour that price will be determined, and that is the reason we see spikes. That is the reason we see fluctuation in our month-to-month electricity bill. It's the same product, but the price is determined every hour, not based on what it cost to generate electricity but based on what it can be sold at with the demand at any given hour.

As opposed to that, in a capacity market the producers are getting for what they are actually producing and delivering in the system. Also, in a capacity market, if needed, they can produce some. I think that Alberta is the only jurisdiction other than Texas, some states in Australia, and New Zealand, who uses this energy-only market. Everybody else has moved to some other form of market. For the most part the reason jurisdictions are moving away from an energy-only market is that the price is not stable. It doesn't give stability. It doesn't provide any stability for consumers, and they are subject to spikes because the price is determined every hour.

There are other things as well. I think that I would like to hear from the minister on those as well. The offer behaviour enforcement guidelines I think exist to ensure that a fair and efficient market exists, but those guidelines don't cover economic withholding. What that is and what that means is that sometimes generation is not offered at the price that it costs them to generate. Rather, they will bid on a sufficiently higher price and hope that they won't be called to run. What that does to the system is that then we see an offer price of \$999 per megawatt hour, pretty much the price cap that exists in the market. That also gives rise to spikes in the electricity prices.

Again, that economic withholding has been used to jack up the price and ensure that everybody else will be paid at the same price, but at the end of the day it will be the consumers who will end up paying for that, who will end up paying for those spikes. If I leave blackouts, even those who were in Calgary – we have seen those blackouts, and we have seen them even during the Stampede.

The second thing that I want to talk about is the price cap of a thousand dollars per megawatt hour. That's the cap that you can get right now in the system, in the pool. There are reports, there were discussions that in an energy-only market we will have to remove that cap, and some even suggest that that may go up to even \$5,000 and still may not guarantee that the lights will remain on.

So the question I have is: with the cancelling of this transition to a capacity market, will they be removing that cap and leaving Alberta consumers to the market forces and the per-hour price determination and spikes that were the case before this transition and are still the case? I think that if they remove that cap, Albertans may see their bills spike 10-fold.

The third thing. For consumers during the transition period we capped the electricity at 6.8 cents. When the minister announced the termination of the capacity market, she was asked multiple times

whether they will keep that cap for Albertans, and they were not sure whether that 6.8-cent cap will go on to make sure that Albertans have some certainty that they will not pay more than this. Again, if that cap is removed, Albertans will end up paying way more in electricity bills than they are paying right now.

Just in her remarks the minister said that we are fearmongering when we talk about spikes and blackouts, but then at the same time she mentioned that it's true that price spikes occur and that it's the function of energy-only markets. It means that we are not fearmongering. Rather, with her own admission, these spikes are the function of energy-only markets. That was the reason that we moved toward capacity markets. That decision was taken on the advice of experts, on the advice of AESO – that report, the 2016 report, is still out there – for the benefit of all Albertans so that they don't have to see spikes in their monthly bills. Most consumers will spend a certain amount of electricity every month. It's the same electricity, same producers, but they pay a different bill every month. These are called price spikes, and that's the function of an energy-only market. That was the reason that we were moving away from this energy-only market. I started by saying that this is more of the same. Some may benefit from moving back to an energy-only market, but we know that Albertans will pay, will be on the hook for their decision to revert to an energy-only market.

They said that they have consulted. They initially announced that they would consult for 90 days, but after 30 days those consultations were closed. The reason? Somehow they got an overwhelming response. We have asked who they consulted. I didn't hear from any constituent in Calgary-McCall that somehow the Minister of Energy or the Ministry of Energy reached out to them to ask if they wanted an energy-only market or a capacity market. I didn't hear from a single person in my riding, even during that time, that they were reached out to by the government. I didn't see those consultations with Albertans.

**5:50**

Had they been consulted and it had been explained that that's what a capacity market would do and that's what we were doing and that now you're reverting to the same old days when they saw the price spikes and rolling brownouts and blackouts, I think they would tell you that they are better off with a capacity market, that would have ensured safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity for them and some certainty for their energy bills every month. I think this decision, again, is one of those decisions because they said in the campaign that because it was done by the previous government and without any consideration whatsoever for Albertans, for everyday consumers, they are moving back to an energy-only market. At the end of the day that will make life more unaffordable for Albertans by adding to their monthly bills.

As far as the investment goes, I think that in 2018 for our renewable electricity program auctions there were no subsidies offered or anything, but the price at times was as low as 4.5 cents. They attracted the lowest priced electricity in our market. With that, because there was a clear indication that we wanted to move towards small, greener sources of electricity, there were tens of billions in private investment in the renewable sector. With this decision to move back to an energy-only market, I think that we are shutting doors on that investment that was coming through, seeing that the previous government was open to investing in and promoting renewable electricity. Sure, I do recognize that there are challenges with the capacity market in terms of forecasting for a year and longer durations, but those challenges do exist in the energy-only market as well because we are doing that forecasting on an hourly basis. With all that economic withholding and all those things I think prices can go up and have gone up in the past

considerably. We still remember price spikes in 2011-2012 in Calgary.

Again, I think we need to know whether that cap of 1,000 megawatt hours will remain or whether that will be removed as well, whether this government will protect consumers by keeping that 6.8-cent cap or not. These are the things that are important. These are the things that will impact everyday Albertans' bills. These are the things that will impact people in my constituency, and I think people need to know these answers. We need to know all these answers as well. At the end of the day we do know that we may not get any answers because this move is more ideological; this move is not based on any consultation or any research. Otherwise, the world is moving away from energy-only markets, and there are only three jurisdictions across the globe who follow this.

At the end I will say that this decision will impact consumers, and this move will move us away from getting more affordable and sustainable electricity through a capacity market. I will not be supporting this legislation.

**Ms Issik:** I notice that we are short on time, so I'm not going to give the speech that I intended to. However, I will address some of the issues that were just raised by the member across. First of all, Alberta has a good history of 20-plus years in the energy-only market. It has worked very, very well for us. Now, we may be one of few jurisdictions that operate under this system, but I can tell you that it has a good history. Others did not move away from an energy-only system; if they did go to a capacity system, it was usually from an only-contract system, which is very, very costly.

The capacity market relies entirely on crystal ball forecasting. I think that it's important for us to realize that when we take market forces out of play and rely on a crystal ball for demand forecasting, we often get it wrong, and that ends up costing consumers an awful lot more than what you're going to see in an energy-only market. At the end of the day, when we talk about consumers paying the price, I'd like to point out that the previous government, when they took office, put in the carbon levy without consulting Albertans, which set off the PPA crisis, costing us, I think, about \$1.8 billion. Who's going to pay that? That will be Albertans.

Then they decided to accelerate the coal-fired generation shutdown, that they now won't even admit to. They want to blame it on Stephen Harper, but they actually accelerated it and caused yet another crisis. That's when the capacity market became a brilliant idea so that they could bring on more renewable energy faster. What do you think? Guess who's going to pay for that? Ratepayers.

At the end of the day, as they tried to make up for the shortage in supply that they created by shutting down coal at an accelerated rate, what did they do? Cap the price. We subsidized it with loans from the government of Alberta. Guess who's paying for that? Who's going to end up paying for it? Ratepayers. I don't think the members opposite should be lecturing anybody on protecting ratepayers because they did more damage to ratepayers than anyone could possibly imagine.

We consulted widely, and it was amazing the amount of agreement that was put forth in terms of moving and keeping the energy-only market. It was almost unanimous. At the end of the day ratepayers who are worried about price spikes will be able, as they are now, to buy into contracts that will protect them from that. There is protection for ratepayers there already.

I'm going to point out, though, that right now we are operating with a 30 per cent surplus margin. We're not going to run out of supply any time soon. What we did by keeping the energy-only market and not moving to a capacity market is that we created certainty for investors, and that has been an absolute boon for the renewables industry. There are more wind producers and solar

producers wanting to come here now than there ever were. That green power is going to do amazing things for our economy. It's going to help us diversify our economy. In fact, I predict that renewables will actually bring diversified businesses to Alberta. They're coming here because of the energy-only market.

The market force does work. Government does not have to do everything. Consumers will benefit. Our economy will be diversified, and our grid will be greener than it's ever been. I'm really happy that we've been able to keep the energy-only market. I'm happy that our

consultations resulted in the consent from the industry and consumers and distributors and retailers that we required, that we wanted to see. It was there. Consumers will benefit.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, but the time is now 6 o'clock. As such, debate has concluded for this afternoon, and the House stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, October 22, 2019

Day 31

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henda (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreesen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
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Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
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Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
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Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
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Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
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Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
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Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

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Carson  
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Long  
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Yao

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Goodridge  
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Lovely  
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Sweet

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Horner  
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Nixon, Jeremy  
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Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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Rehn  
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Renaud  
Turton  
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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Schmidt  
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Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 22, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 18

#### Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019

[Debate adjourned October 22: Ms Issik speaking]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has 10 minutes remaining.

**Ms Issik:** I'm not quite sure where I left off, but I will continue to speak about our electricity system overall, why the capacity market needed to not go ahead and we needed to remain in the energy-only market.

Our electricity generation system under the previous government was fraught with uncertainty, and part of the reason for that is because the previous government broke it many times over, started out with bringing in the carbon tax. Breaking the PPA system cost us \$1.8 billion to pay for that plus court costs, millions in court costs, because they didn't want to admit that they had broken the system.

Then the policy was brought in to accelerate coal generation retirement. Now, the opposition constantly wants to bring up that this was a Stephen Harper policy, and somehow they don't want to take any credit at all for accelerating coal retirement. Why is that? Is it because they spent \$1.5 billion of taxpayers' money to pay off the coal generators in order to proceed with the acceleration, or is it that they don't want to call to attention the fact that there were hundreds of coal workers who were accelerated out of their jobs?

Then this was going to cause a shortage and bring the price up, so what do we do? The opposition, the government at that point in time, decided that they were going to basically try to cover it up by subsidizing consumers with borrowed money. That's another \$800 million.

An invoice to the taxpayers of Alberta of about \$5 billion for a system that they broke, that was working reasonably well to begin with: it's no surprise that we're returning to an energy-only market. It's predictable. It provides stability for investors going forward, knowing where their investment dollars are going to land and that they'll produce a profit for them and their shareholders. I know that the NDP government previously didn't trust corporations. Private enterprise couldn't be trusted to produce reliable, affordable energy even though they had done it for over 20 years already.

We need to understand that we are now changing some legislation to clean up some acts in order to put the energy-only market back into play in a responsible way, that's going to allow for increased investment in the electricity generation field, that will allow additional renewable energy without having to go through the REP process, that required RFPs and RFQs and bureaucrats to figure out whether they could even allow people, corporations to bid. At the end of the day, we've probably had more renewable energy proposals come forward since we made this announcement in July than were brought forward – more megas have been put into proposals now than were brought in under the REP, so I'm going to say that the energy-only market is an incredibly good investment

attractor. It's also allowing players into the market that previously weren't there. We've got indigenous corporations now that are putting forward proposals for clean energy that didn't exist before.

We have a 30 per cent margin of oversupply right now – 30 per cent – so I'm really kind of curious why anybody would think it would be a good idea in a capacity market to pay producers of energy for energy that they never produce. The capacity market is built on nameplate, which is basically how much a project can actually produce. If they ran at 100 per cent, this is how much they could produce. The reality is that with wind it's going to produce 30, maybe 40 per cent at best of nameplate, yet we were going to pay for the other 60 per cent on top of it all. It doesn't make any sense. It never did. Wind producers have told us time and again that they're absolutely competitive in the energy-only space.

That's why I'm supporting these changes. That's why I support the energy-only market. It worked well for 20 years. I'm not sure why we needed to spend an additional \$5 billion to break it, only to realize that it's actually the market we should have been in in the first place.

The member across was speaking earlier and mentioned that one of the big problems with a capacity market is forecasting, sort of brushed it off as if it's not a big problem, that somehow forecasting was just as big a problem in a 24-hour period as it would be in a three- to five-year period. Well, that's just not true. Human beings predicting the size of the economy, the rate of the economy, the need for electricity five years out is not very likely to be very accurate. You're going to be a lot more accurate in a 24-hour period.

It really boils down to this: whether or not you believe that market forces, that free enterprise and the free market are actually capable of supplying demand. We've shown time and again that the market works. The market works. Supply and demand: the laws of supply and demand work. Free enterprise works, and this is all about bringing free enterprise to this province, supporting the free enterprisers in this province. Free enterprise was what this province was built on. At the end of the day, this legislation is cleaning up some language to allow the energy-only market to proceed, to allow free enterprise and the free market to produce energy at an affordable rate, that's reliable. It's worked for 20 years. It's going to continue to work, and it will bring investment to this province because of predictability. It will have us in a very good place to diversify our economy as well as sustain and build prosperity for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to join in the debate this evening. I see the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has risen.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening with really bated breath as I was trying to figure out a little bit more about this really difficult understanding of the electricity market. I know that when we were in opposition and the NDP had talked about going into the capacity market, I did as much research as I could, but it was really almost Greek. I know that it's a very complex subject. I was actually very impressed with what the member knows about this industry.

When I was doing the research, I actually recognized that there were three parts to it. There was the retail, the distribution, and the transmission. Back when they actually moved into the system we have right now for the retail side, they didn't actually go into this free market on the transmission and the distribution side. What's interesting about the research I did was that I found that there are only a couple of markets in North America that actually have the system we have right now. Those are Texas and Alberta. Those two jurisdictions have the lowest retail price of electricity in North

America, yet the parts that actually didn't move to that kind of a free market, transmission and distribution: we have seen substantial increases in that same period of time. If there was ever an argument about what you should be fixing – I don't think you should have been trying to fix the part that was already working very, very well as we can see the price of retail was down. What we need to really start taking a look at is whether transmission and distribution are actually working effectively for Albertans and for the price of electricity.

I'm very interested to hear from the member if she'd be willing to talk about this experiment that we started 20 years ago with deregulating because I'm actually very interested in the concept of deregulation.

7:40

**Ms Issik:** Well, back in the day, when we were deregulating, the government owned all of the infrastructure, so when we deregulated, the infrastructure was taken over by private enterprise, and they've been responsible for building the transmission and, of course, the distribution system. Transmission is, obviously, taking it from generation to the distribution system, and distribution is to take it to the end-users. I will tell you that at this point there is work to be done on the transmission and distribution side. I know that there are some inequities that rural folks are feeling in terms of the distribution system. I do believe much work is necessary in this field. I think that it affects users' prices, for sure, and that we need to do further work. I would suggest that the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction might have a great new piece of work there.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there's approximately a minute and a half left in 29(2)(a) if anyone has any additional questions or comments.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview would like to join the debate.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak about Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, as we've heard from previous speakers, this government's legislation to revert to the energy-only market from the move to the capacity market. I just want people to know that it's going to hurt Albertans, and it's going to hurt Albertans in more than one way. It's going to hurt them, actually, in several ways.

I'd just like to identify first of all, number one, that citizens are going to be hurt adversely by the financial cost of this. Some research shows that actually these price spikes, that the minister herself spoke about, that are real in this energy-only system, could be almost 10 times more than what the price has been previously, so this is a significant issue. This is really putting a lot of burden on citizens of our province and creating some hardship. I know very well from sitting in this Chamber for many weeks now that this UCP government cares very much about making sure people have money in their pockets, so I'm a bit confused that this indeed is going to be doing the absolute opposite. I don't quite follow that, but I just absolutely wanted to make sure that people knew that the consumer, the citizen of this province, will be on the hook for those price spikes when they happen, and they do happen in this energy-only market.

Perhaps I shouldn't be so surprised because sometimes what is said and what is done aren't congruent; they're not actually consistent. Certainly, we learned this summer that – you know, another example of not putting money in citizens' pockets is the cap that we put on auto insurance rates. It came off. Many Albertans are experiencing an increase in their auto insurance rates because this

UCP government decided that that cap shouldn't be on that. Certainly, I know this personally because I receive many e-mails and phone calls in my constituency office about these things, and people are definitely very concerned about that. Again, this is kind of incongruent with, certainly, the philosophy that I understand the UCP government espouses. Again, I'm a bit confused by it.

But, of course, these are legitimate concerns, certainly, of the voters in my constituency. I know that, unfortunately, even though we do live in a democratic state, there is a sense sometimes in this House that just because we are representatives of constituents in opposition ridings, somehow our voice isn't legitimate. Indeed, it is. Our voice is legitimate, and even if we are not the government, we have the right to speak and represent those people. Certainly, I'm very proud to stand and be the representative for Edmonton-Riverview, and I gladly, proudly will speak up for them because – you know what? – this is a very large province with millions of people who have diverse views, and we have a government and an opposition that have diverse views. That's what's healthy about democracy. It's that we do have political discourses that, hopefully, are robust, that one side doesn't only speak and the other is just quiet or vice versa, that all of us can speak. So I'm very proud to be able to represent those constituents of Edmonton-Riverview.

So besides the financial cost that is borne by the citizens of Alberta because of this change to the energy-only market, there's also an issue of accessibility with this type of market. We know that brownouts and blackouts are more likely to occur in this kind of energy-only market. They're more volatile and less reliable than capacity markets. Certainly, the research has shown that capacity markets are more safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable. This isn't just, you know, someone's opinion. Experts in the field have talked about this. The Alberta Electric System Operator, AESO, is made up of corporations that actually provide the electricity in our province. They say this. This isn't only voices of our opinion. This is actually a fact and research that's been done.

We know that most markets in North America have moved or are moving to a capacity market, although there are a few jurisdictions where they do have an energy-only market, and one of those is Texas. From their experience we do understand, because they've had that kind of a market for a while, that they have a lot of challenges, and one of them is these brownouts and blackouts so that citizens don't have access to electricity at times or they're told not to use as much electricity because, you know, the grid could go into a brownout or blackout situation, so then no one would have the electricity they need.

Again, you know, the Minister of Energy herself said earlier this afternoon that, yeah, price spikes are part of that. So that means that the citizens of those jurisdictions – the citizens of Texas, the citizens of Alberta – will have to pay for that. The financial burden is there, and this example of Texas shows that that is going on. Citizens are vulnerable. Not only is access to electricity unreliable; it also can be extremely expensive. I know the hon. members in government certainly express deep concern for citizens to have to, you know, take on that burden.

Another area, besides the financial and the accessibility issues with the energy-only market, is that the capacity market was meant to transition an electricity market that would meet the goals of our climate leadership plan, so really moving to more green energy because we know that climate change is real and we are running out of time to take action on climate change. I mean, lately it's been identified as eight years that we really need to do something. Sadly, one of the first things that this UCP government did was get rid of our climate leadership plan, and we're still waiting to see what their plan will be, but it's necessary, and it's important. Of course, the capacity market was a structure that increases the share of

renewable energy in the energy mix, so that's good. That's good for the environment. That's creating more green energy for Albertans to use, creating less carbon.

In fact, the shift to the capacity market encourages more capital investment due to the inclusion of renewable energy, and again this flies in the face of what the minister said earlier. She seemed to suggest that they want an energy-only market because what she had heard was that there'd be more commitment to investment. Yet this is information, certainly, from the Alberta Electric System Operator, so these are some important facts. I don't know if the minister has heard them or not, but I think it's important she does. In fact, energy investors show less willingness to invest in energy-only markets due to the risk of that.

Again, these are other concerns that we have, certainly, on this side of the House in terms of reverting to an energy-only market. We see the capacity market as the way to move forward, and it is the way to move forward in most jurisdictions in North America. This work is helping to decarbonize the electricity grid, attract green energy and investment, and provide reasonable prices on electricity. These are key issues, certainly, for citizens of our province, and it is important for us to know all the facts on this issue.

7:50

I have a document here that was published by the Alberta Electric System Operator. It talks about why it was important that they recommend to our government – they recommended it; they said that this is the best course of action – to move to a capacity market. This is why they recommended it.

One of the key objectives of any power market is to incent enough generation to meet demand today and in the future.

This capacity market does that.

The AESO recommended that Alberta's electricity market structure needs to transition following research that indicates the existing energy market structure will not ensure the necessary investment in new generation that Alberta requires.

That's something I referenced a moment ago, that having more of a mix and having more renewables in that mix means that investors actually come and want to invest in that market, again in contrast to the information that the minister presented earlier today, which was honestly a bit confusing for me, having been involved in consultations as a minister.

She presented information that everyone was in agreement – everyone. I mean, that seems almost, you know, unrealistic. I can't imagine that everyone is in agreement on any issue. People have diverse opinions and have questions, but she assured this House that everyone agreed. Here I'm standing before you with a published document that isn't in agreement, yet the people that she consulted with all agreed. I just can't really have faith in the system. Certainly, people have dissenting opinions, so for me it seems like it wasn't a clear or robust process because it's just a normal function: ask a question, and you may get many, many different answers. It seems a bit naive to think that there is no one who has a different opinion. I guess I'm standing before you today to say that I have a different opinion. Our caucus has a different opinion.

Certainly, the Alberta Electric System Operator has a different opinion.

The AESO studied a number of structures and found that a capacity market best fit Alberta's characteristics and objectives with the least amount of risk.

Okay. So this all again flies in the face of what we've been presented with previously.

A capacity market ensures continued reliability of the system in a cost effective manner while enabling the transition to a cleaner, lower-carbon electricity system over the coming years.

These are the reasons that AESO recommended to our government at the time to actually go with a capacity market. They really rejected the energy-only market and said that it was so important to go to a capacity market.

They went on and talked further about the key benefits of the capacity market.

A capacity market provides the following combination of benefits which no other single market structure can:

That means that the energy-only market would be one of those structures.

- Ensures reliability as Alberta's electricity system evolves
- Increases stability of prices

Again, that is something that the citizens of Alberta will be very interested in because those price shocks, which are inherent in an energy-only system, will be an issue for consumers and citizens.

- Provides greater revenue certainty for generators

So the people who are providing it actually will have a greater revenue because of all the mix of energy.

- Maintains competitive market forces and drives innovation and cost discipline

Well, that sounds like something about the free market that I think my hon. colleagues in the government would certainly feel very, very proud of. I mean, the AESO, which is made up of industry leaders, has published a document citing the merits of the capacity market as opposed to the energy-only market, and I'd just really urge my colleagues to reflect on some of the things that I've just shared and really look at how some of them are congruent with some of their values as UCP representatives.

Certainly, on this side of the aisle we care that citizens aren't burdened out of pocket by having to pay for these price shocks that come we're not sure when – it is kind of an erratic system – or by having issues with accessibility, like if there are brownouts or blackouts and we have to be very careful about the usage. I mean, that's one of the fundamental things, hopefully, about our electricity system, that we are confident that when we go into a room and turn the lights on, they come on; that the electricity is available for us, for our fridges and our freezers. I mean, we know we could waste so much. Those kind of things are so important to Albertans.

Of course, we care about having a green economy, and this will move us closer to that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to ask a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, is there anyone else that would like to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise here at any time of day or night and speak on behalf of my constituents and with my opposition colleagues here about Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019. That's quite a mouthful. Certainly, I think that my colleagues have made a lot of very good comments on the technical aspects, and hearing what government members have been saying, members like the Member for Calgary-Glenmore, who has just been so factually wrong on the issue, has left me at a bit of a pause. It really has shown that the government hasn't done their homework here. They don't understand the implications of the capacity market versus the energy-only market. They don't understand. Perhaps they needed more time in their briefings. Really, it shows how complex this issue is, that it's something that we need to get right. The government isn't spending the time to do that.

They're rushing through without proper consultation, without proper understanding, without understanding things like how this fails in Texas, without understanding how things like rolling brownouts and blackouts were a reality and will be a reality again



here in Alberta, without understanding how the price spikes are going to affect consumers here in Alberta, without understanding all of these issues, Mr. Speaker, and really not even fundamentally understanding. The Member for Calgary-Glenmore spoke quite at length about how the purchasing agreements would be better than in a capacity market. Let me tell you – and some of my colleagues will speak to it later – that she fundamentally did not even understand how that worked. That was something that was very shocking to me.

What I will speak about instead, Mr. Speaker, of the technical aspects, because I know that in many cases Albertans won't have some of the expertise in some of these issues – that's okay; it is a very complex file. I want to talk about values. I want to talk about the values that the government is bringing forward with this bill, the values that they're failing to bring forward with this bill, and how important it is that we don't move forward with this bill. When we look at the bill that they're bringing forward here and how they've framed this, they've framed this as this idea that we have to go back to the good old days. That speaks to the government's planning, and that speaks to the government's depth of understanding. It speaks to how they don't understand or don't care. It has to be one or the other. They either don't understand or they don't care how this is going to impact consumers.

Those are the values we're talking about. We're talking about a party that would give a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate giveaway to the wealthiest corporations and then, on the other side, raise the rates of electricity for every single consumer and reduce the stability of the market for every single consumer. Those are the types of values we're talking about. We're talking about a party, a government that is willing to move towards American-style systems and not accept the great made-in-Canada, made-in-Alberta solutions that we're trying to bring forward here, that doesn't understand that nearly every single jurisdiction in the world except for a few select ones are on a capacity market because it is the one that works. It's the market that works the best and inspires innovation, inspires investment, and does all these great things, Mr. Speaker.

8:00

We're talking about values. We're talking about a government whose values are that they're going to give a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to wealthy corporations and then, on the other side, make life more expensive for Albertans. Those are the types of values that we're talking about, Mr. Speaker. It's something that's unfortunate, it's something that's reckless, it's something that's short-sighted, but it's what we're seeing from this government.

We're seeing that this government is leaving Albertans to pay the price. We're leaving the average consumer to have a less stable system, a less fair system, a system that is discredited by the experts that operate the Alberta electrical system here, and that's something that's very unfortunate. It's unfortunate that the government and government members would not listen to their own experts on why a capacity market is important.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's about values, and they don't value that type of input. They don't value any Albertans who don't fall in line and get behind their 4 and a half billion dollar corporate giveaway, their Americanization of the Alberta system. They don't value any of that. The values that they have are to give 4 and a half billion dollars to their wealthiest friends and donors, the wealthiest corporations in this province, multinationals, and then leave in this case the energy-only market, which will then have increases for Alberta families and reduce affordability for Alberta families.

It's something that's really shameful, Mr. Speaker. It's something that's really unfortunate because it speaks to either how

this government does not understand or does not care. They either don't understand or they don't care. They have to realize that when they look at the research, when they look at the Texas case study, that my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview spoke about. The price peaks that skyrocket all over the place and the brownouts that happen and all the types of scenarios that are really only possible because of the energy-only market: if they don't understand how fundamental that is to the energy-only market, then they don't understand the energy market at all.

That speaks to their values, Mr. Speaker. It speaks to that they don't actually care about how the energy market works. They care that they can move on and Americanize the system. They want to Americanize the system, and they want to give 4 and a half billion dollars away to the wealthiest corporations. Those are their values, and that's okay. Our values are trying to increase affordability for Albertans, trying to defend Alberta families, and trying to improve the lives of every single Albertan in this province. If the values differ, that's okay. We can look at the evidence, we can look at the facts, we can look at how the energy markets actually work, and we can realize that this government just doesn't care or doesn't understand. Both of those are something that government members should be very concerned about.

It's something where they should realize there is an unacceptable risk to that. They should realize that when they move forward with legislation like this, there is an unacceptable risk. We are making changes that will have impacts for decades to come, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about how this is going to affect investment in Alberta for decades to come, how this is going to affect innovation in Alberta for decades to come, how this is going to affect the growth of things like renewable energy in Alberta for decades to come and indeed the growth of conventional energy.

We know that these corporations that do conventional generation have spoken at length about why a capacity market is better. We know that, Mr. Speaker, because we can look at every other jurisdiction in the entire world except for a select maybe four or five, basically, and all of them have capacity markets. If the government doesn't understand that, let me tell you that four or five is the number of fingers most of you will have on your left hand. That's the reality. What the government doesn't understand or doesn't care about is that they think they've got it better than everybody else. Those are their values. They think that they're smarter than everybody else. That's what they believe. Unfortunately, that's not what the Alberta Electric System Operator believes, that's not what the majority of these corporations believe, and that's not what the majority of the other jurisdictions in the entire world believe.

So maybe either this bill has it wrong, maybe the government's implementation of this bill has it wrong, or maybe how everybody else does it is wrong, Mr. Speaker. I'm not usually a betting man, but I would probably wager that if everybody else is doing it, the capacity market, then maybe it's got something going for it. Maybe it is a bit more stable. Maybe it will improve affordability for consumers. Maybe it will have a more fair system for the average consumer.

But we're talking about values, and we're talking about a government whose values are to give 4 and a half billion dollars away to the wealthiest corporations, who are willing to give money away to their friends and donors, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that is not in my values. I think we should try to improve affordability for Albertans. I think we should try to make a more stable, more fair energy market. I think that we should have a system that encourages innovation.

I think we should have a system that encourages more renewables to come online, Mr. Speaker, that encourages projects like large

wind and large solar to be brought here to Alberta, because we can diversify our economy, and we can have more streams of revenue and more jobs and more good jobs here in Alberta. We know that. We saw evidence and we see evidence that capacity markets do that. It creates things like good-paying jobs. Instead, we see a government who gives 4 and a half billion dollars away to wealthy corporations without creating a single new job and then goes and tries to cancel and terminate the capacity market, which is going to cost jobs in the future.

But we're talking about values, and those are the types of values the government wants to bring to the table. Those are the types of values the government wants to bring to this Legislature. And that's their prerogative, Mr. Speaker. It's their prerogative to try to destabilize the market, to try to Americanize the market, to try to make it less fair and less affordable for Albertans. That is the prerogative of the government, but those are not the values of this opposition. This opposition will fight to make sure the economy is more stable. The capacity market would have been more stable, and that's why we brought it in. We will fight to make sure it's more fair for the average consumer. We'll fight to make sure there aren't rolling blackouts and rolling brownouts. We'll fight to make sure there aren't drastic price spikes. We'll fight to make sure that when you go to turn on that light switch, the lights turn on. That's what we're fighting for here in the opposition.

The government maybe doesn't understand why that's so important. The government maybe doesn't understand why this is such a drastic change to the market, and that's okay. It's a very complicated market, Mr. Speaker. It is. The energy market takes a very long time and a lot of research to understand, but they must understand that when we talk about market forces, we talk about how, basically, the whole of all the wagers and thoughts will be able to make a better decision than one, right?

The government likes to talk about not picking winners and losers, and they like to talk about not interfering in the markets and whatnot. Well, if we're talking about that collective knowledge – and essentially what we're trying to boil it down to is collective knowledge – I'll use another sports betting analogy here, Mr. Speaker. They say that most betting systems are pretty good if you can get to what the Vegas odds have. The Vegas odds are basically the amalgamation of all the knowledge of everybody who is betting. That's what it is. Every single other jurisdiction in the world, basically, has bet that the capacity market is better than the energy-only market. Either the government knows something that we don't and they think that they've solved the entire world's energy market problems, or they're wrong.

I'm willing to bet they're wrong. I'm willing to say that it's very likely they are trying to Americanize the system. They're trying to Americanize the system while giving 4 and a half billion dollars away to the wealthiest corporations on one hand, and they don't have the values of trying to defend affordability for electricity markets here in Alberta. They don't have the values of trying to allow us to decide our own price of energy on any given day. They want to let foreign markets decide the prices. And those may be the values of the government. I wouldn't speak for any other member, but they have to understand that this is how the facts lay out, and they either understand that or they don't care about that.

That's okay. I mean, that's why we're here. That's why we're debating it here right now, Mr. Speaker. We're here to help educate the government. We're here to help them understand that this is going to bring us to an unstable system, an unfair system, one that makes life less affordable for Alberta families. They're willing to give 4 and a half billion dollars away to the wealthiest corporations while life becomes less affordable for the average Alberta family. That's something that I think is not good. If members of the

government think it's okay to increase the expenses of a family, that is their prerogative, and they should get up and speak to that, on why they think it's okay to make life more expensive.

But that's not what the values of this opposition will be. It's not what we are going to be fighting for. It's not what we believe in. We believe in trying to have a fair system. We believe in a system that works for everybody. We believe in a system that means that when you go home and you try to turn on that air conditioner because it's the middle of July, you know that you're not going to be affected by a rolling brownout.

**8:10**

The reality, Mr. Speaker – you'll remember this, and I believe most of my colleagues remember this – is that just a few years ago we were seeing drastic numbers of rolling blackouts. I remember fondly – I don't know if “fondly” is the right word – that especially back then it was Klondike Days here in Edmonton, K-Days. The rolling blackouts would come, and we'd go into the kitchen and light our candles because the price spikes and the instability of the energy-only market didn't allow us to have electricity that day. We couldn't turn on any of our lights, so we had candles, and we'd sit around and read our books by candlelight like it was the 1800s or something. That's the type of system – I wouldn't speak to how far back the Conservatives are trying to bring us here – that they brought in. It was something that was very concerning for me, to see that they want to go back to the system that has these rolling brownouts. Albertans know that it was a system that didn't work. Albertans remember that it was a system that didn't work.

Mr. Speaker, we're talking about values. We're talking about how we want to have the values of fighting for Albertans, fighting for people's affordability, fighting for families. Instead of doing that, this government has decided that they're going to go out and Americanize the system, give 4 and a half billion dollars away to the wealthiest corporations and their wealthy friends and donors. They're going to bring in reckless and short-sighted changes that are going to make life more expensive. They're going to make the electricity system less stable. They're going to make the electricity system worse overall here in Alberta. I think it's because – they can stand and speak to this – they don't understand the system. I don't think it's because they don't care. That's something that we'll have to see. Really, it's all about our values and whether they believe in making life more affordable.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen. Oh, I'm kidding. Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nellie will be mortified. Nonetheless, I thank you for that correction. Edmonton-McClung is indeed the glorious west-end constituency that I happen to have the privilege of representing.

Sir, as you may note, what we're having today probably in this House is not a debate of points of order, as you sometimes refer to, but a difference of opinion based on a varying interpretation of the facts, as I've heard you often say in this Legislature. We're looking to the Member for Edmonton-South, whose eloquence always evolves into a number of teaching moments whenever he opines on a subject. I'm wondering if he would care to mention in his upcoming response to my questions what he thinks or who he thinks this former system, the energy-only system that was in place for 20 years, as is so often referred to by members of the government opposite, was working for for 20 years. To the Member for

Edmonton-South: for whom? For whom was this system working for 20 years? That, Mr. Speaker, is the question that I think begs to be asked.

Also, another thing that members of the government quite often refer to – and I think it might even be in the prologue to their legislation – is that things have recently changed. Well, they have changed, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to hear the Member for Edmonton-South's opinion on it as well. They've changed from a system where the former government, PC or whatever rendition it was, now UCP, has gone from a system of asking the people of Alberta simply just to trust us to a system where that's no longer acceptable, a system where, yeah, things have changed.

The government is being challenged by a very strong and determined and competitive and, I would say, very astute opposition, that is embodied in the comments of the Member for Edmonton-South every time he gets up. It is a teachable moment. One of the lessons that I think he teaches is to make sure that we look generationally at not only my generation but also forward to his and to the people who will follow him and determine whether these price spikes and blackouts are, you know, a Halloween phenomenon or if they're something that we're going to be seeing regularly on an ongoing basis once this government seeks its mandate to determine that they will return to an energy-only market.

I'll wait. I've got much more to say, but I'd sure like to hear a bit more from the Member for Edmonton-South.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I, for one, certainly have missed evening sittings.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's always a pleasure to be here in the late hours of the night with you, actually. It is one of my favourite times that we get to spend together.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-McClung for some of his comments. I look forward to hearing more of his comments later. I know they're going to be quite insightful.

But I think that, indeed, it is a concern when we talk about for whom an energy-only market is working, and when we talk about who the energy-only market is working for, we can go back to our values. We can talk about what we care about as people, as parliamentarians, as MLAs, as Albertans, Mr. Speaker. We can talk about our values and whether our values are standing up for working Albertans, everyday Albertans, or whether our values are standing up for corporations and giving them a 4 and a half billion dollar handout. I think that will tell you who the energy-only market was working for before, because we can talk about whether we believe in fighting for stability, fighting for fairness, fighting for fair prices, and making sure that when an Albertan goes to turn on their light switch, it works. We can talk about that.

We can also talk about why this government is ignoring the facts, ignoring the research, ignoring the evidence, ignoring the overwhelming consensus internationally, Mr. Speaker. We can talk about their values. We can talk about how they're giving 4 and a half billion dollars away to the wealthiest corporations while Americanizing our energy market right here in Alberta. They're trying to Americanize our systems right here in Alberta, and that's something that I think speaks to the values and speaks to who this market is trying to be working for. It's not for Albertans. It's not for consumers. It's not for ratepayers. I think that's becoming abundantly clear. It's becoming abundantly clear that this government isn't trying to stand up for working people.

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else that would like to join in the debate this evening? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It would be a pleasure to rise and speak directly to Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019. I wish we weren't here at this point, but, yes, indeed some things have changed. We're sitting on this side of the House, the government is on the other. They're reversing something that we thought was high time, actually did change, and that was to bring Alberta to a capacity market for electricity.

The energy-only market is something that the government members correctly point out that we had in place for 20 years, but simply because we were there for 20 years doesn't necessarily mean it was serving us well. As I mentioned, government members suggested that it was working. I question: working for whom? Who was benefiting from the energy-only market? There are lots of questions that can be asked. I think you probably could go to the literature and find varying opinions depending upon what your motivations were when you're talking about the cost benefits of either system.

I do say that I'm enjoying this exchange between the government and the opposition because we are actually having a contest to determine the hearts and minds of Albertans on this issue. We firmly believe on this side of the House that a capacity market better serves the province, better serves the consumers, is a long-run cheaper method for provision of electricity in the province, and is one which also in the long run serves to incent generation capacity for industry as well as for residential consumers in the province. It's a debate that is a healthy one to have in a democracy, and this is the type of respectful debate that we should have more often. I think it is a complex issue and one that Albertans want us to share openly with them so that they can get a better grasp and make up their own minds about what type of electricity market serves them best.

**8:20**

Now, the NDP government that I was a part of the caucus of changed the way that Alberta pays for energy providers so it's more stable and fair, in our view, for the average consumer. That decision was evidence-based from experts on how to protect consumers and modernize our electricity market. Now the UCP wants to reverse this change, letting foreign markets decide the price of energy on any given day; in the words of one member opposite in the government, to have faith in the free enterprise market.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not one who simply wants to have faith that something's going to work. I want to know the evidence. I want to make sure it actually works. Just because something is operating under free market rules doesn't necessarily mean it's in the best interest of the consumers or the citizens of the province. There are rules and regulations around every system that's put into place, and those rules and regulations have results that benefit individuals or parties in different ways, and in our view the capacity market is the type of electrical generation system that most appropriately serves Albertans now and into the long-term future.

I note one thing that I think Albertans can easily grasp, and that happens to be the number of jurisdictions in North America who actually operate under an energy-only market, and they are limited. Now, in North America, if you look at the number of provinces in Canada and the number of states in the United States, there may be some jurisdictions where the market is shared by a few states or other jurisdictions. But assuming, let's say, that that's taken into account and you have perhaps 40 different jurisdictions where the electricity markets are in place, that would mean, when you know that only two have energy-only markets, that the vast, vast majority of those jurisdictions have chosen, using the wisdom of their own capacities to make decisions, to have a capacity market.

That should be telling us something here in this province as Albertans, that when we have a government saying, "It's good for you. Trust us. It's been operating for 20 years. It's been working well," yet almost every other jurisdiction in North America has abandoned the energy-only market in favour of a capacity-only market or in some cases a slightly hybrid market. That should tell us, Mr. Speaker, that there's merit in reconsidering and having a capacity-only market in place in Alberta.

I'm not one who's willing to pledge allegiance to a faith in the free market. I want to make sure that that free market has got rules and regulations that are in place to benefit the jurisdiction and the people in that jurisdiction that it is intended to serve. Always it's the people of this province that will be uppermost in my mind, whether they be in Edmonton-McClung or any other constituency in the province, government or opposition. The long-term benefit for whatever system that we decide to put in place has to be for the individuals in the province, the owners of the resources of this province.

The mindset of the government seems to be that it's the individual corporations, who happen to be contracted to either extract or produce or manufacture in this province the resources that we own as the citizens of this province. They seem to be the ones that they want to aim the benefits of their legislation at whereas, ultimately, if you really look at what we should be doing in this province, it's focusing entirely at the bottom line, and that means: how do the people of this province benefit? What is ultimately going to be in their pocketbook at the end of the day? Certainly, you have to have a functioning economy. You have to have incentives that are going to be attractive to have businesses come and invest in the province, but by no means should we be putting our own citizens in second place to those that might come to exploit the resources versus those that actually own the resources.

Many Albertans, Mr. Speaker, really don't quite have a grasp on what the differences are between an energy-only market and a capacity market, and I found a fairly simple yet very useful couple-of-paragraphs definition that I'll recite to you now and then table at first opportunity. It's from an article that is easily accessible on the Internet from [energyrates.ca](http://energyrates.ca). It talks simply about the Alberta energy-only market versus the capacity market. It asks the question in one paragraph:

What is an energy-only market?

It goes on to say:

First of all, it would be helpful to know the difference between these electricity markets. According to the Alberta Government . . .

That was the previous Alberta government.

. . . an energy-only market is where generators are paid just for the electricity that they produce, and this price is based upon the fluctuating wholesale price of electricity. In an energy-only market, companies are free to choose the type of generation they produce (for example, wind energy, solar energy, geothermal, etc.) and where their facilities are located.

It goes on to say in the next paragraph:

What is a capacity market?

According to the Pembina Institute, in a capacity market, electricity generators are "paid on both the ability to produce electricity, as well as electricity produced." In other words, unlike an energy-only market, electricity generators are also compensated having generation capacity available at all times.

I think Albertans can hopefully grasp these two explanations with some ease. It plays out pretty clearly that the energy-only market has some inherent risks in it in that it only produces electricity when demand calls for it. Yet that's not an immediate response, and the price hikes are caused by that energy-only demand requirement. Opposition to the capacity market on the government side has said

that the capacity market is paying for people to produce standby electricity. Well, in fact, that's absolutely right. But that turns out to be cheaper in the long run, and you don't end up with these volatile price spikes.

In fact, the energy-only market relies upon the volatility, the price spikes that are created by the insufficient supply, by the shortage that's inherent in an energy-only market. They rely upon that volatility to produce an economic return for investors. That ends up being the incentive to reinvest in the energy-only market. The beneficiaries are the owners of the energy producers and the utilities. The ones who get spiked are the consumers. That's the energy-only market. That's one of the things that people in this province should be very aware of and rail against. We don't deserve to be exposed to that type of volatility, to that kind of a price hike as well as the potential brownouts and blackouts that have already occurred in previous times in this province and other jurisdictions which enjoy an energy-only market. Those types of things are things that a province, a jurisdiction, a government should be protecting its consumers, its citizens from rather than exposing them to it and saying: "Hey, the system is working fine. It's working great. It's been doing great things for 20 years." But for whom, Mr. Speaker? For whom, I ask? I think that I've covered the ground when I say once more that the "whom" is not the consumers of this province, not the citizens of this province, not now and not in the future.

An energy-only market will cost people big time, and it won't end up doing anything to incent a better, long-term investment in the electricity market in our province and also will not go anywhere near the lengths at which we need to draw investment in order to upgrade our grid, our infrastructure over the course of the next couple of decades. The whole of North America, in fact most of the world, knowing that we are getting off of fossil fuels and going to a lower carbon footprint, is going to end up having to adjust its electrical distribution infrastructure totally because we're totally insufficient in terms of being able to handle the load, the electrical load that we will be required to handle in all jurisdictions and basically globally as a result of the transition away from fossil fuels to more electrified vehicles and electrical energy that's used to power our world. That system is one that we will depend upon, and in short order we're going to be in trouble if we don't start renewing our grid. That's going to happen as a result of the long-term stability of a capacity market rather than the risky price spikes of an energy-only market.

**8:30**

I'll leave it there for now. There's lots more to say on it. I do encourage a healthy debate, as one would say: a difference of opinion based on varying interpretation of the facts and differing values, one might say as well, as the Member for Edmonton-South alluded to earlier today. I think we should always be asking who a certain system we wish to adopt is actually working for. Who benefits? Follow the money, and in this case, Mr. Speaker, if you do that, then I think you will clearly find that an energy-only market is not the system that should be adopted for this province. A capacity market is far more beneficial to the citizens, ratepayers, and in fact industry in this province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to make a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to stand up and include my voice in this discussion of

capacity versus energy-only markets. It's nice to be in this House to have a discussion on the merits of two ideologies and how they actually play out in terms of providing services to the citizens of the province of Alberta. Sometimes the debate in this House is not on such substantial factors, and this time it is, so I appreciate that.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I want to take some time at the beginning of my speaking this evening to talk a little bit about some of the things that have been said by previous speakers on the government side of the House and to talk about the fact that they have a tendency to throw out ideas as if they are substantiated fact. In fact, I think they often create false narratives. I just want to take a little bit of time to see if we can pierce the veil on those false narratives a bit to demonstrate that the fact that it comes from the government side of the House doesn't make it truth. In fact, it's quite likely that it needs to be challenged if it comes from that side of the House, and here I am to do that very job. How fortunate.

I noticed that when the minister introduced the bill earlier in the day, she made a comment that she was opposed to the idea of government resourcing and acting in any way to facilitate renewables, and that if they want to enter into the market, they should do so on their own merits. Then, subsequently, the Member for Calgary-Glenmore made the declaration that market forces do work and that we should just get out of the way. She had an opportunity to express her belief around that substantively. But one of the things that I thought was interesting is that in both of these cases the statement made by the member on the government side of the House implied that somehow the desire for members on this side of the House to have government substantially work with industry in order to create the change that we wish to see in the market – that is, the increase of renewable energies – is a violation of free-market principles and therefore is intrinsically wrong and that the outcome of achieving green energy and helping to move our economy along in the direction that the whole world appears to be going in is somehow mistaken.

The implication in saying that is that the very industry which they seek to defend most of the time, which is the oil sands and bitumen, which is a very significant and successful part of our industry in the province of Alberta, had somehow been created through market forces and that those market forces were left alone to do their own good and, as a result, we've achieved some great and wonderful outcome in the end. I think that any quick review of history will tell us that that is not in fact a supportable position. It was not market forces that got us to this place. It was in fact deep government intervention and continuing government intervention that has allowed us to have a strong oil and gas industry in the province of Alberta.

If we can prove that point, then we should also be aware, we should also take the position that the same should be true for other industries that wish to produce energy, and that includes renewable energy. When we seek to move the electricity market to a capacity market, in part the desire is to move us to a more stable, environmentally clean form of energy production, and government intervention is not only necessary but desirable in doing that, just as it was necessary and desirable in creating the oil and gas industry in this province.

Let me just do a small review, just a quick one. You know, as I've said before, I like to go to the research literature and look up a little bit about it. I spent a little bit of time here in the House looking up about this question: did free enterprise build the oil sands and the oil industry in this province? The answer, of course, is going to be in part yes. That's quite true, and it's also true for the renewables.

But it is a false narrative to suggest that somehow they did so without substantive government intervention and support. That continues to this day.

Originally the oil sands were developed by the Great Canadian Oil Sands company, which later became known as Suncor, one of our big and very successful companies in this province. But I want to remind people that even at the beginning of this enterprise Suncor didn't just go out and get started in digging up things in the in situ situations up in the Fort McMurray area. They had to raise some money. One of the things that happened at that time was that 25 per cent of the dollars that went into the development of the original company was from the government of Ontario. That's government money. I'm glad it happened. It's been very successful. I'm sure that the return for the government of Ontario has been positive. But it was the government that actually helped to put up some of the dollars to make that happen.

Subsequently, the federal government, after it was no longer the Great Canadian Oils Sands but rather Suncor, bought a 15 per cent equity investment in Suncor. The Alberta government bought a 10 per cent investment in Suncor, and the Ontario government held a 5 per cent investment in Suncor. Again, three different governments making sure that this corporation, apparently acting in a free-enterprise way, would be successful because they put dollars into it, with of course – I'm going to be told by the other side – an expectation of return. And that's reasonable. I appreciate that. But the same thing could be said about renewables as well, that if we put the dollars in, if we have government intervention and we expect a return, that's a reasonable mechanism of government intervention into the marketplace.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Then in 1974, I want to remind the House, the esteemed Premier Lougheed here in this very House set up the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority, which I refer to as AOSTRA, to do the work of making in situ bitumen deposits commercially profitable. It was actually a government agency that looked at the existence of in situ bitumen and developed the strategies and techniques to turn it from a non-profitable enterprise into a profitable enterprise. That was government intervention. That didn't happen because the oil companies did that all on their own. In fact, that organization led to the very successful development of what we all refer to as SAGD, or steam-assisted gravity drainage, which is still in use today with some improvements, of course, some changes aided by the various forms of research and development not only within the industry but within government and within universities that are also paid for by government.

8:40

Then the National Task Force on Oil Sands Strategies, a creation of the industry and government, established a new royalty regime. Now, it's very interesting to see what happened with this royalty regime: only 1 per cent of revenues would be charged until capital costs were recovered. So the province of Alberta, the owners of the resource, said: "We are going to let you live free in our land, using our resources, until you have paid your own bills, and it doesn't matter how long you take to pay those bills. We're going to allow you to live rent free here."

Now, I can tell you, if that happened to any other industry, people would be thrilled. Can you imagine saying to the government: "Well, you know what? I'd like to open a restaurant, but until I pay for everything in the restaurant, I don't want to pay any taxes." How would you like it if you were able to say: I'm going to build a house, but until I'm finished building that house, I don't want to pay any civic taxes?

It would be wonderful if we had those kinds of things in terms of the ability to grow, but you have to recognize that that actually is a public service and a public contribution to the oil sands. It isn't getting out of the way, as the government may say. It's actually giving them our resources without expecting an actual return. Can you imagine if I went to Suncor and said: "Excuse me. I'd like to borrow all of your computers and other things that may be useful for us here to do research on this side of the House. But don't worry; when I finish getting full value out of all of those computers, then you can have them back." I mean, it's a ridiculous proposition when you put it that way, but that's exactly what we did with the oil royalties.

We have continuously given away our share of the benefits so that we can ensure the success of the companies. That's not the free market that is spouted on the other side of the House. I certainly wish that other industries could take advantage of such generosity on the part of government.

Then, later, the AOSTRA subsequently transformed into the Alberta Energy Research Institute, and later became Alberta Innovates, which has been, in fact, a source of significant amounts of investment in research and development in the oil industry, all paid for by government. So it isn't the free market that developed all the new technologies. It isn't the free market that has ensured that we have the highly educated by public funds scientists working on projects that are really important to us. It's government that's been doing that.

As a result, subsequent research has been largely financed by public dollars through agencies such as CanmetEnergy, the University of Alberta institute for oil sands innovation, and Emissions Reduction Alberta. All of those things are contributions by the public to the well-being of this particular industry.

Now, you may say that that was worthwhile, because we've certainly got some money back out of it. It's a good investment, you may say, and I'd agree with you. That's not a problem, but it's not the point. The point is that it didn't happen because free enterprise got on their lone horse and rode off into the sunset doing things alone and created all this generous wealth for us. It happened because government was there every step of the way, from the time of Ernest Manning until now, ensuring the success both financially and with supports and with technology enhancements.

Other government investments along the way have included things like the \$440 million in December 2017 to help cut emissions. When we say to them, "look, we've got a problem here and we really need to be able to help clean this up," we didn't just say, "well, I think that free enterprise should take care of it." We said, "we're going to contribute." I can assure you that the industry came forward and received that money without throwing it back at us and took it well. Or how about the billion dollars for the partial upgrading facilities?

All of these kinds of things are government investments, not free enterprise. In fact, I want to just say that the International Monetary Fund – not a left-wing think tank, I can assure you – has said in their report that Canada subsidizes the fossil fuel industry to the tune of \$60 billion a year. That's \$1,650 per Canadian that's invested in and subsidizing the industry. Now, I'm not against it, by the way. I think that's good. I want government to subsidize successful industries because I know the benefits that come out of it. But I just don't want us to pretend that government didn't have a very significant role in developing this, which is exactly what we're talking about in this bill, the role of government to ensure that we have the resources that we need in this province for the people who need them.

Governments also provided a number of breaks to industry to encourage growth, such as the federal government, who often is told

to be, in this House, somehow the evil enemy here. The federal government has actually created a number of things, such as the federal government's accelerated depreciation rate for equipment, and, of course, recently has spent \$5 billion buying a pipeline.

**The Speaker:** I always appreciate it when the hon. member ties his comments to the bill, so thank you for doing that. It was a little unclear for a few minutes there.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford's rundown of the history of government action to promote the oil sands industry here in the province. After hearing that, I'm sure that our socialist overlords are smiling somewhere, knowing that Alberta has a long socialist history of using government intervention to spur industry.

But he started off his comments, Mr. Speaker, by referring to the benefits of structuring an electricity market that would incent the addition of renewable energy. I'm wondering if the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford could expand on his thoughts about the value of creating an electricity market that would incent the addition of renewable energy capacity in the province of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** I, too, would be happy to hear those comments provided they're related to the bill. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I think that the member has drawn me back closer to the bill, but I felt that it was important that, you know, if the government has a chance to throw these things out there, once they've opened that door, I think we need to be able to go through it to contradict the assertions that they make that clearly are not supported by reality.

But I do take the question from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar quite well in that I think it is very important that we understand that we in this province are extremely likely to be moving into a world in which renewable energy takes a much larger place in the provision of energy not only within the province of Alberta but across the world. I don't think that's disputed, but, I mean, of course, I always welcome hearing contradictory evidence from other people in the House.

One of the questions we need to ask ourselves, then, is if we do have some insight into the future. Nobody has perfect, but, you know, every business makes projections and does analyses to determine where things are going in the marketplace so that they can be best positioned to take advantage of those conditions and return a profit to their shareholders. Well, the same thing is true with us here in the province of Alberta. We know that around the world we are seeing significant movement to reduce certain types of energy production, such as, for example, coal: India most recently just announcing the closure of dozens of coal plants, subsequently China doing the same thing recently, Germany having done so over the last number of years. We know that it's moving in that direction, so it means that we need to make sure that if that is the market reality that is going to exist in our future, we should be in the best possible place to take advantage of that.

8:50

One of the things that we can do is that we can create a market in which renewable energies, various renewable energies, not just wind – I know that the Member for Calgary-Glenmore has said that wind tells us that they are competitive. Thank goodness they are because they've received so much support from both the federal and provincial governments to get to that place where they are successful. We know that we want all of those renewable-type

energies to be available for us. One way to do that is to create a place of stability in which they can predictably sell their energies.

When I was working with the Blackfoot Confederacy, for example, one of the things that they were very clear about with me was that they were hoping that when we did our renewable energy proposals, which the Blood Tribe were successful in getting, we would actually give them a guaranteed rate of return on the energy that they produced. What they were saying is, "We are most likely to get international investment in our project if we can be assured, somewhat, that we are going to get a return," which is exactly what a capacity market does in part.

I look forward to hearing the government speak a little bit more about these issues.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Is there anyone else that would like to join in the debate this evening? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 18, that's before the House this evening. In my four and a half years of serving the good people of Edmonton-Gold Bar, it's been made clear to me by my constituents that what they're looking for from this government is to provide Alberta with a strong economy, to provide Albertans with a lifestyle that they can afford, and to provide Albertans with meaningful action on climate change.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

In fact, the electricity system and how it operates have significant impacts on all three of those things, and for those reasons, Madam Speaker, I will be opposing Bill 18, the movement to repeal the capacity market in the electricity system. I'm opposing these changes because reverting to the energy-only market will increase prices of electricity for consumers, it will pose serious economic risks to Albertans, and it will significantly reduce the ability of Alberta to reduce emissions from our electricity sector.

Now, in the previous four years, our government made the change to the capacity market based on the independent advice of the Alberta Electric System Operator. It's important, I think, for everybody to understand why we based our advice so heavily on the Electric System Operator, and that's because they are an independent organization that has significant expertise. Well, they're tasked, of course, with running the electricity market, but they are an independent organization. They don't have a stake in the electricity market. We know that their advice is objective and not based on any personal interests that they may have, which puts them in a different category of stakeholders than other stakeholders. Everybody else who's involved with the electricity market has a financial interest in some way. Consumers, of course, want reliable electricity prices and affordable electricity prices. Generators of electricity want to maximize their profit. That's why we put so much weight on the advice of the Electric System Operator, because they were independent.

In their 2016 report they said that the energy-only market was essentially broken. They said that the capacity market was the best way to ensure affordability and predictability in electricity prices for consumers, it was the best way to provide investment certainty for producers, and it was also the best way to restructure the electricity market in Alberta to attract investment into the electricity market. The previous energy-only market was structured so that it actually discouraged investment into that market. When looking at the things that a capacity market provides – stable, reliable prices for consumers, certainty for producers, and the ability to attract investment, where the previous market couldn't do that – this is what people in Harvard Business School, I think, would call a win-

win proposition. This provides the best outcome for all of the stakeholders in the electricity market, and that's why we decided to implement the AESO's advice and introduce the capacity market.

Now, I also want to review some of the other changes that we made to the electricity sector while we were in government. We phased out coal-fired power, as you know. More correctly, Madam Speaker, we accelerated the phase-out of coal-fired power. It should be made clear, time and again, that it was the Stephen Harper Conservative government in Ottawa that initially made the decision to phase out coal-fired power in this province. Everyone knows that I am not willing to praise Stephen Harper very much, but he, I think, demonstrated significant foresight in moving Canada's climate change agenda forward with that decision.

Now, what he didn't do was put in place a plan to aid the transition of the people working in that sector to other jobs, so it was up to us to put that plan in place. We worked very diligently with all of the stakeholders to not only achieve the phase-out of coal-fired power but also to achieve a just transition for those coal workers.

As a side note, Madam Speaker, I'm very concerned to hear reports from coal worker representatives in communities around Wabamun that they've heard nothing from this government about the plans that we had put in place to help them transition into new work, particularly considering that this government claims to be in favour of creating and protecting jobs when, in fact, they seem to have scrapped a program that was designed to protect jobs, on top of their record of losing 26,000 jobs over the last couple of months. But that's an aside.

I'm very proud of Alberta's record of phasing out coal-fired power because not only will that reduce our carbon emissions and help us tackle the existential crisis of climate change; it will have immediate positive health impacts on the people of Alberta. Now, Madam Speaker, my partner was born and raised in the city of Red Deer, and she grew up with significant asthma issues, as did many of her friends and neighbours. The reason that many people in Red Deer suffer from asthma and other respiratory conditions is because they are downwind from the coal-fired power plants around Wabamun. To think that 30 years from now the children who are born and raised in Red Deer won't have to suffer from the same kind of asthmatic and respiratory conditions that my partner and her friends and neighbours had to suffer with through their lives brings me a significant amount of joy, to know that we are working so diligently to make so many lives better through that motion.

We also set a goal of 30 per cent renewable energy by 2030. In doing so, Madam Speaker, we tasked the Electric System Operator with setting up a procurement process that would incent low-price bids for providing renewable electricity. It was tremendously successful. In our first round of the renewable electricity procurement we set record low prices for wind energy in North America. In fact, they were so low that at an event that I was at shortly after the announcement, an electrical engineer who had spent his entire life working in renewable energy came up to me and said that he couldn't believe the price that we were able to procure wind energy at. He said that in all his time working in renewable energy, he never saw wind prices that low. We were able to secure those low wind prices because of the way we restructured the energy market and the procurement processes around renewable energy, another electricity-sector change that I'm particularly proud of.

9:00

We also capped electricity rates at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. Madam Speaker, it will be interesting to see what the government does with that electricity rate cap, because, of course, that electricity

rate cap was funded entirely with funds generated from the carbon tax. I had a look at the previous two or three months of my electricity bill. My electricity bill was capped at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour for the last two or three months, saving me and my family a significant amount of money on my electricity bills thanks to the electricity rate cap. I'm curious to see when the government will make its plans for the electricity rate cap known given that the source of funding for that electricity rate cap has been scrapped. I am interested to see how members opposite's constituents will react when they're forced to pay suddenly higher priced bills if they scrap the electricity rate cap.

I think one of the most popular things we did with respect to electricity, though, was scrapping the pushy sales tactics related to electricity contracts. I think all of us have probably had experience with somebody from Direct Energy or Just Energy or some similar electricity contract provider who physically forced their way into your home and tricked you into signing a contract against your will and without your knowledge of what you were signing on to. We scrapped those. We made those kinds of shady sales tactics illegal in the province of Alberta, and in doing so, I had people literally crossing the street in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar to come up to me and thank me for doing that, Madam Speaker. People were so sick and tired of having these shady salesmen come to their door and try to hoodwink them into signing a contract against their will that they were literally crossing the street to thank me for getting rid of that shady sales tactic. So I'm particularly proud of that as well.

We also structured regulations to support community generation, Madam Speaker. In my home community of Cloverdale the Cloverdale Community League, of course, received some incentives to put solar panels on its community hall. Now, it can only provide enough electricity to power the hall, but if the Cloverdale Community League wanted to expand its solar array to provide electricity through solar power to members of the Cloverdale Community League, they would now have the ability to structure a community power generation group, which was nearly impossible to do before we brought in those kinds of regulations. We made significant positive impacts on the electricity sector in addition to transitioning to the capacity market.

Now, going back to the energy-only market, as I said, will raise prices for consumers. On the day that the minister announced that she would be scrapping the capacity-only market, she sent the Electric System Operator a letter telling them that during her extensive – and I use that word loosely – consultations with stakeholders, she had heard concerns about some aspects of the energy-only market that needed to be changed. One of them was the existing price cap. Right now the maximum amount that we can pay generators of electricity is \$1,000 per megawatt hour. That cap was determined to be so low that it discouraged investment into new energy-generating capacity in the province of Alberta. The Electric System Operator has suggested that if we were to keep the electricity-only market, a cap of at least \$5,000 a megawatt hour would be required to attract the necessary investment to provide reliable, sustainable electricity, and it may be even more.

Now, the other issue around prices, of course, is not just the existing electricity cap but also the issue of market power. The minister outlined this issue in her letter to the AESO that she sent in July as well. She didn't go into details, but what I assume she was meaning was that the large electricity generators in this province have significant capacity to game the system for their own profit and put consumers at risk, and we know that this has happened in the past. In fact, we all remember that TransAlta was fined more than \$50 million in 2015 because they were found to be withholding electricity for the purposes of raising the prices of

electricity. Madam Speaker, it's important to note that even though TransAlta was fined for that activity, there are lots of players in the industry who do that, and the current guidelines around the electricity system operation do not actually prohibit economic withholding of electricity into the power pool.

By maintaining the electricity-only market, we will subject consumers to these excessive price spikes that are a feature of the system. By rushing into this scrapping of the capacity market without hearing back from the Electric System Operator what their recommendations are for a price cap and how to deal with market power, we are scrapping a system that is designed to reduce those risks to consumers, to protect them from that price instability, and we are instead tilting the scales again in favour of the electricity energy generators, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Madam Speaker, 29(2)(a)? Yes. Indeed, I know that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar had plenty more to say, and I certainly wanted to hear him finish his comments, particularly around what the various consequences were of scrapping the current capacity market for a revisionary return to the energy-only market. I think he was just getting wound up on letting us know what risks Albertans face by the government undertaking that decision.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank my hon. colleague for that question. The point that I am trying to make is that not only does scrapping the capacity market put those significant volatility risks onto the backs of consumers, tilting the playing field in favour of electricity generators, but it will also force consumers again into potentially buying these long-term electricity contracts, where they don't know what they're signing on to. That's my primary concern with what's going on here.

Now, it was a stated goal, when the province of Alberta switched from the old, regulated electricity system to the deregulated system, that consumers would move off the regulated rate option and onto long-term contracts. Now, economists have studied these, and it's been shown frequently that the regulated rate option is the more affordable rate option for most consumers and that in only very rare cases will long-term contracts be of financial benefit to consumers.

Madam Speaker, of course, most people don't have the wherewithal to understand fully the terms and conditions of these contracts and, in fact, find out only after the fact what the terms and conditions actually mean for how much they're going to pay for electricity, how they can get out of the contract. They find that they have signed a contract that they don't believe benefits them financially, but they can't get out of it, and by maintaining the electricity-only market, we are creating a strong incentive for electricity providers to continue to try to provide these contracts to the people of Alberta, which will not benefit them except in very rare cases.

9:10

Madam Speaker, I can't in good conscience support a bill that will subject the good constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar to the kinds of pushy sales tactics that we eliminated when we eliminated door-to-door sales of energy contracts, because even though we eliminated the door-to-door sales, the energy salesmen are still out there. You don't have to walk very far down the street, through a



mall, or through a big box store to find somebody from one of these electricity companies trying to push a long-time contract onto consumers. I don't think that a market that creates those kinds of incentives to take advantage of unknowing consumers and force them or convince them unknowingly to take on these kinds of contracts, that are not good for them financially to take on – so for that reason, for the protection of the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar against these kinds of terrible contracts, I have to vote against this move to scrap the capacity market.

I want to thank the hon. member for his question. I hope I answered it to his satisfaction.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 18? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise this evening to speak to Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019. As has been laid out by members on both sides, it is quite a complex file but important to the people of Edmonton-West Henday and all Albertans equally.

Simply put, looking back at the capacity market, which we were moving towards, in this type of market generators are compensated for electricity available to supply as well as the electricity provided to the grid. This is usually administered through institutions and contracts, making prices more stable. What this UCP government is proposing is that we revert to an energy market, which has failed Albertans for so many years, a type of electricity market where generators are only paid for the power that is actually produced, which results in massive swings in electricity bills day to day and hour to hour.

Now, of course, as has been explained quite well by the opposition here this evening and throughout the day, we moved towards this market in response to the climate leadership plan, transitioning off coal power and increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix. Beginning in October, AESO revised its forecast for Alberta's renewables, stating that Alberta is now expected to fall short of its renewable targets, mainly based on what this government is putting forward, reverting to the energy market, which is of grave concern to myself and should be very concerning to all members of the public.

Now, looking back at why we made this change, we changed the energy market because we saw that there was not the predictability that Albertans require when it comes to electricity pricing. We saw less stability, we saw less predictability, and we saw higher electricity bills across the province. These reckless and short-sighted changes that are being put forward by this UCP government are going to hurt Albertans. There's no other way to put it. The fact is that moving to a less predictable market is going to hurt them.

We've seen, really, this downloading of services in other pieces of legislation, in conversations that this government has brought forward. We look at the increasing school fees that parents are paying now as a result of this government being unwilling to bring forward a budget, leaving families guessing. We see it in the insurance industry as insurance caps have been lifted, the 5 per cent insurance cap that our NDP government put in. This government has moved forward and said: "You guys can do whatever you want. Hopefully, that works out. We'll let the free market handle it." We're seeing stories every single day rolling in about how that is harming consumers and everyone across this province.

Once again, I mean, our government moved forward on a dental fee schedule because we saw the importance of the government saying: "Look, we understand that your organization or your

corporation or your place of business needs to make money. That's your prerogative. But we need to make sure that at the same time we are also protecting the people that require these services."

Now, once again, as we look at this legislation and this UCP government talks about reverting to the energy market, what they're saying is that they want to clean their hands of the responsibility of this. You know, these energy companies are going to come forward in the near future, I imagine, and we will see increased costs to consumers, and the government is going to say that it's not their responsibility to take action. Our government recognized the volatility of the energy-only market. As we were moving to the capacity market, we recognized the volatility, and we moved forward on a cap on electricity fees.

Now, this new UCP government has not offered any kind of opportunity to protect consumers from that volatility, so it's going to hurt Albertans doubly. On one hand, they're saying, "There's going to be less stability, there's going to be less price predictability, and when the inevitable happens and those rates go up, we are also not going to protect you from those costs," which is very concerning to me, really, moving to a market that, at the end of the day, is less transparent to Albertans. Once again, they're cleaning their hands of any responsibility to take action on behalf of Albertans.

Once again, we've seen this before. We've seen this, like I said, on the downloading of responsibilities. When we look at the \$4.5 billion giveaway that this government has offered to corporations, well, that is a tax on Albertans. The fact is that you're giving away every Albertan's money, and you are going to download services onto municipalities to try and make up the extra costs. Well, what are those municipalities going to do? They are going to either cut services, as you are going to do as well, or they are going to increase taxes. But that's not this government's problem, because that's a different level of government. We see that this government is quite self-serving in their responsibility and not necessarily caring how municipalities deal with the damage that they are going to do to them.

Now, when we look back at how we got here, the Alberta energy system operator calculated that under the energy-only market the price cap in Alberta would have to be increased to around \$5,000 per megawatt hour under the old system but would not be enough even at that \$5,000 cap to ensure that Albertans aren't at risk. Once again, that \$5,000 per megawatt hour also would not be a high enough cap to attract new investment to the province in the energy industry.

I just also want to point out a few things that have been brought up by my colleagues on this side of the House. The minister said in her initial comments on Bill 18 that in the discussions about moving to an energy-only market, there has been more interest from corporations and from the market since announcing this bill than there was in our initial announcement of moving to the capacity market. Now, I would really urge the minister that, with a comment like that, she should table those conversations that she's been having, that there has actually been more interest in investments in renewable energy and investments in energy overall in the province since announcing this with very little, if any, consultation. I would be very interested to see those conversations, so I encourage the minister to bring that forward.

The minister in her opening remarks earlier today also said that corporations are excited to move back to the system. Really, on that point my question is: why? Why are corporations excited to move back to this system? Going back to my earlier point, the fact is that corporations do business to make money for their shareholders and for their stockholders, so if there is a stampede of corporations saying, "Yes, yes; let's move back to the energy market," why are

they saying that? Is it to the benefit of taxpayers? Is it to the benefit of regular Albertans?

As the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar also mentioned, we have seen in recent years that market manipulation under the energy-only system has happened. Now, I want to know how this government is going to hold these organizations accountable if that were to happen again. I really hope that it doesn't, but unfortunately, with this government's mantra of let the market decide, we may very well see that again. What is this government going to do if or when that happens? What accountability will we see from those organizations? Moving to the capacity market eliminated a lot of the concerns under the new system. Now we're going to move back once again to a less stable, a less predictable, and, at the end of the day, a higher costing system for taxpayers.

9:20

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar also raised a good point about how moving to this energy-only market system in conjunction with carbon pricing funds is going to affect generation across our province. When it comes to community generation, I know of many community leagues and community organizations that were interested in getting involved in the capacity market on a smaller scale. I want to know how these changes, once again in conjunction with the removal of funds from the climate leadership plan, are going to negatively, most definitely, affect these communities that want to generate their own electricity and especially so in indigenous communities, where we had already seen under the previous NDP government incredible talks of energy generation because of the funds that our Minister of Indigenous Relations was able to offer these communities under the climate leadership plan. Now, under this new government that money has entirely disappeared.

You know, the fact is that with the federal government that we have now, a price on carbon is going to be forced on us, and we are going to have less flexibility about how that money is spent. Now, I have an idea that this provincial government will let it go into the general coffers to pad their \$4.5 billion handout to large corporations and that we will see very little given back to these communities who were promised this funding for community generation, which is very concerning. Once again, Albertans are not only losing on the fact that there's less predictability, that there most definitely will be higher costs, but they also have fewer resources and less ability to actually do something about it in their own communities.

Now, I just want to focus for one moment on some of the validators that came forward during our move to the capacity market, just pointing out that Dawn Farrell, the CEO of TransAlta, said that the move to the capacity market opens up our opportunities to invest both in our existing assets and in new assets as we move forward. The CEO of Capital Power said that a capacity market would not only encourage his company to resume investing in Alberta but probably get interest from larger North American and European producers. So my question to this government is: are you saying that the CEOs of large corporations got it wrong when they're saying that a move to the capacity market is the right thing to do, that it will increase investment in our communities, especially in renewable energy, bringing on more renewable programs throughout our province? Is this UCP government saying that these CEOs got it wrong or that they were lying, that they changed their minds?

Now, looking at another comment, the executive vice-president of PJM interconnection said that investors have shown a growing reluctance to invest in the riskier energy-only market, the market that this government is trying to push us back to, around the world,

preferring the price stability and revenue certainty provided by a capacity market structure. Once again, who did this UCP government consult with to come to the conclusion that moving to a less stable, less predictable energy program was actually going to benefit the people of Alberta? Really, this seems to boil down to ideology. The fact is that the government does not want to take responsibility for the higher costs that will be coming to Albertans not only from this change but from the \$4.5 billion that they've given away to large corporations on the backs of everyday Albertans and on the backs of municipalities. It's very concerning.

Now, when we look at cases like in Texas, in 2011, 2014, and 2015 they had brownouts, and in 2011 they also had rolling blackouts. Once again, as members on this side of the House have stated quite eloquently, we've seen in our province what the energy-only market has meant for consumers. We saw during the Stampede that power was just cut with no explanation and, really, no action that consumers or that Albertans were able to take against these corporations. Unfortunately, that's what this new UCP government is trying to take us back to, which is very, very concerning for me.

We have many questions for this minister. I would like to know who the minister consulted with to get to this point. Once again, the minister said that there's been more interest in investing in this energy market since announcing reverting to energy-only. I would appreciate it if the minister could table some of those conversations, because I don't necessarily see how that's possible. Maybe she could clarify that.

Once again, why are corporations so excited to move back to this system, and is it really to the benefit of everyday Albertans when it comes to their pocketbooks?

Also, how this is going to work against community generation and renewable generation across our province and how we are going to hold this government accountable for the manipulation that we may see into the future are very concerning.

Now, once again, I would just reiterate that capacity markets are better at ensuring reasonable costs to consumers. We see less price volatility. We see less incentive to hedge prices due to more certainty. We see that capacity markets are market-based structures; hence, they incentivize price competitiveness. This is why so many analysts told us during our consultations on moving away from the energy-only market that moving to the capacity market would reduce overall costs to the system.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm quite interested in the comments of the member across. I wonder if he has read some of these items from wind power engineers. CanWEA, which is the Canadian Wind Energy Association, applauds Alberta's return to an energy-only market.

The Canadian Wind Energy Association... applauds the decision of... the Government of Alberta to return to an energy-only market. [This] market structure provides a critical revenue stream for wind energy facilities, allocating all revenues collected to generators based on the electricity they produce.

Near the end of the article it says that the structure is particularly important

given the strength of Alberta's wind energy resource.

Wind is a resource.

The energy-only market... will continue to deliver significant investment in wind energy, in addition to ongoing landowner and property tax payments.

Perhaps we could talk about that if the member would like to comment on that.

Another piece. Solar Power is the Red-hot Growth Area in Oil-rich Alberta. This was published on October 7, 2019, in the *Financial Post*.

Solar power is beating expectations in oil and gas rich Alberta, where the renewable energy source is poised to expand dramatically in the coming years as international power companies invest in the province.

I just wonder if, after the comments that the member across has just made, he could maybe comment on some of what's addressed here in these two articles.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate the comments from the member, and I think they are important points to the conversation. Of course I myself raised some quotes from some of our energy companies here in the province. I think it's important to hear a diverse range of proposals and opinions of these energy companies. It's very important.

The fact is that under our climate leadership plan and under our move to the capacity market we were able to procure some of the lowest if not the lowest wind and solar power contracts across Canada, unlike what we saw in Ontario, thankfully, because this NDP government took the responsibility of the energy market and the responsibility to taxpayers as very important, and we took it to heart. That's why we moved forward with moving to the capacity market, and we saw those contracts come in at such a low price. Those contracts would have served Albertans extremely well.

To the member's point, I don't disagree that there are going to be companies out there that do support the move to the energy market, but my question is: why? What does it mean to those corporations? What does it mean to the taxpayer? I appreciate those comments. The fact is that this government, once again, has taken \$4.5 billion and given it over to corporations without any accountability.

Now, when we talk about the money that we were taking from the climate leadership plan and investing into indigenous communities, investing into community generation projects, we were able to see the results from that funding going forward. We were able to see if it was being spent well, and we were able to evaluate that funding. Now we look at what this government has done with \$4.5 billion given away, and there is no accountability. The fact is that we have seen no return to Albertans in job results. We have seen a loss of jobs month to month, which is very concerning to myself, to my constituents and should be very concerning to all Albertans.

9:30

The move to the capacity market meant more stability, more predictability, and lower electricity bills. In the case that there always are going to be times when electricity costs are up, that's why our government took action to cap those electricity fees. Once again, this new UCP government has done nothing of the sort to protect Albertans, and they are doing the exact opposite by reverting to the energy-only market. That is very concerning to me. I appreciate the member's thoughts, and I also appreciate corporations, companies that are willing to come forward and state that they support the energy-only market. The fact is that we can find 10 more that say that they prefer the capacity market and that it actually better protects Albertans from the volatile price spikes and the fact that some days we'll have rolling blackouts and rolling brownouts.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 18? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in the House and speak to Bill 18, Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, on behalf of my constituents in Edmonton-Meadows. The NDP government brought some changes in for energy in a way that all of Alberta pays for energy providers so that the government could address the stability issues and bring more stability and fairness for the average customer in Alberta. This decision was based on, you know, feedback from industry experts with numerous experiences, the electricity system operators. The move was made to take into consideration that this bill will protect consumers, modernize our electricity market, and ensure that Albertans have safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity.

Also, another reason to make these changes was that the capacity market would enable the transition to an electricity market that could meet goals set in our climate leadership plan, such as transitioning coal and increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix. The capacity market was recommended by the electricity system operators independent of the climate leadership plan and early coal phase-out to ensure long-term reliability.

It was a move also made to basically protect our consumers from the, I would say, price shocks they had been experiencing. It was also acknowledged by many of the government-side members when they were proposing this Bill 18, the changes that they were going to make to the electricity statutes. They accept and admit that some of the disadvantages or weaknesses of the bill would be the price shocks that consumers will have.

So when we are discussing these two paths, the capacity market and the energy market, I'm looking at this, and I will say that they're two different visions. When I'm talking about those two visions, I would just want to reflect on: what are the basic, fundamental differences between those two visions? All I was hearing from the government members in support of this bill was that the words "protection," "consumer protections," "sustainability," and "reliability" were simply replaced by the words "investment attraction." Simply, this is what I have been witnessing since the beginning of the House in May of this year, when the government decided to move forward with their belief to give away \$4.5 billion to the corporations in the hope of trickle-down effects, that these investments will create more jobs and bring more revenue for the government. In fact, it has been proven that this is not the case. But it seems like the government is very determined in their ideological moves, and I'm seeing this step as part of their systemic moves, that government wanted to move forward in the same direction that has been proven so far, for the last six months, not to work for the average Albertans at all.

It is obvious on Bill 18 that I see the government members are talking about the investment attraction. On the contrary, the House and the people of Alberta are continuously waiting for the budget from the government of Alberta. The school boards are waiting for their budgets. They're two months into school already, and they still don't know what's going to happen with their budget. The members from both sides of the House, you know, continuously until today keep bringing up their issues of the deteriorating infrastructure of their school buildings, hospitals, roads, bridges, and the government simply does not have answers on this because the government is really wanting to keep moving into what they believe, giving more funding to the big corporations, profit that might go out of the borders and does not really generate anything for Albertans. The government does not have the answer.

Instead of this, debating Bill 18 today, it would have been much better if the government would have, you know, a clear approach, the numbers, how they are going to fund their promises that they made during the election: that they will maintain the funding in health care, that they will not cut and will maintain or increase the funding in education. We are seeing this. The letters have been distributed in a number of different fields that the different services, different sectors are already confirmed that they're going to see cuts to their budgets going forward.

9:40

This is the basic difference. I rise in the House to oppose this bill because this bill does not promise, not only in the bill but also up to and until now – so far when all the members on the government side have spoken on the bill, they did not use a single word, even once, on bringing stability and protection to consumers by introducing this bill and supporting this bill. That is very obvious. That is the fundamental role that we as parliamentarians, we as the elected officials have in this House, to serve the public at our best, and this is what this bill is not really showing.

All this is talking about is more control to large corporations. It's talking about the investments that it did already, you know. It brought forward the argument six months ago that the \$4.5 billion giveaway to the big corporations will bring thousands of jobs. Then, on the contrary, Alberta has lost 27,000 jobs up to now, and those effects are not really there.

I think this is the time to review your move and start off moving forward. This is the time to sit back and see what has been going on. It is very obvious today, this very day, that the workers at Husky Energy got to the job only to receive layoff letters when, in fact, that energy company has benefited from hundreds of millions of dollars in the name of creating jobs.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, please, can we focus on the bill at hand? There has been veering off track throughout this speech, but with the remaining four minutes of your time I trust it will be related to Bill 18.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Coming back to the point, what I'm trying to elaborate on and make the argument through this discussion is this: the role of the government and the members of this House is to serve the public, to protect consumers, to provide stability to Albertans. This bill does not in any way, you know,

provide those protections to Albertans at all. The government members and the members during their speeches in support of this bill have failed to demonstrate how, in fact, this bill is going to better serve consumers in Alberta.

The brief of the bill is just based on – I'm just trying to find the word – the lack of supporting facts, how it's going to contribute to our province and how it will be beneficial to Albertans, contrary to the move that the NDP government made to protect the consumer by bringing in transitioning a change to a capacity market.

So, not saying a lot, I would spend some more time to speak on this if I'm given the opportunity. What I wanted to elaborate on this was that, very clearly, this bill does not even have the intent, you know, does not even say that single word, that the intent of this bill is in any way to have a purpose to serve the consumers at large in Alberta but, in fact, the phony belief that this will bring investment in. In fact, it's clear so far, in the past six month that it does not do it. Due to this, on behalf of my constituents of Edmonton-Meadows and fellow Albertans I'm probably, actually, going to oppose this bill, and I do strongly oppose the bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, will the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry please sit in his own chair.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none – I'll let the minister grab his seat – the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's been a very rigorous debate that we've had over the last several hours, and I would certainly like permission from you to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much. Again, this has been a very rigorous debate. I know that everybody watching on television has been intently watching this, watching the back-and-forth action. With that, I can tell you that we're going to just take a break at this particular time, and I would like to adjourn the House until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:47 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, October 23, 2019

Day 32

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, hon. members.

Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. So may Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 18

#### Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate October 22: Mr. Ellis]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 18 in second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We're certainly looking forward to hearing the government's rationale on this because I can tell you that when I sat around the table making decisions around the market and how we would be able to ensure a reliable, cost-effective, and sustainable energy system, Alberta was certainly an outlier. Alberta and Texas were the only two systems that had the market model that we had at the time, and as a result we saw massive variations in price, massive variations in supply.

Who paid the price were ordinary consumers, often small businesses and individual households, who, of course, have a harder time hedging the market given that – I know I run my dishwasher when it's full, maybe a few hours after it's full, but the ability for me to be able to game the market and to anticipate my energy usage in a way that others might say, "Well, you can just play the market and make sure that you're using it at different times," doesn't really reflect the needs of ordinary families and ordinary Albertans when it comes to their need for energy.

The decision was made to move to a capacity market based on advice from experts, both within government and third parties, around protecting consumers and modernizing our market so that it would give greater stability, certainty, and reasonable prices for consumers.

Seeing that this is being scrapped makes me wonder: where is the advice coming from? If it's not coming from within the public service, where is it coming from? What are the motives behind the desire to move to a system that, certainly, other jurisdictions across North America have shown, through their policy-making and through their own analysis as well as locally here in Alberta, has too much variability and too much risk for ordinary consumers, that certainly would see the price of energy on any given day see huge fluctuations even for a variety of different types of consumers? We

know that the greatest risk is that Albertans will end up paying more for less, that there's going to be less stability, less predictability, and that at the end of the day there will be higher electricity bills that will be passed on to ordinary families.

I remember a time not that long ago – probably a decade-ish ago; in my memory of time not that long ago – where day after day after day electricity bills were being tabled in this House, electricity bills that showed massive variance from year to year in terms of the costs that were coming to local consumers. I know that they were being tabled in this House because grandparents, seniors, and young families were writing in saying: this is what we're dealing with, and you need to make sure the government of the day, then the PC government, is aware of what they're causing in terms of this hardship. At that time the then opposition tabled all of these and pledged to make sure that they brought greater certainty and affordability to Alberta families.

Here we are today seeing the government of today, the UCP government, move swiftly to return to a model that saw these ordinary families in great anxiety and disarray. I certainly hope that we don't end up back to the day when we're tabling the evidence that this failed experiment has yet again failed.

Actually, I probably shouldn't even call it an experiment because what we're going back to is something that was proven to be ineffective. If I was teaching a science fair and a student wanted to redo the same exact experiment that they'd done the year before and the results, we knew, were going to be the same as the year before, I'd say: "You know what? I get that you did this last year and that you had a good time with it and it was fun, and maybe some of your friends thought, 'Wow. That explosion was so exciting, so entertaining. Do that explosion again'." I don't think it would be the responsible thing to say: yeah, let's go ahead and re-engage in something that was an experiment that already failed and had very serious negative impacts for ordinary families.

So I don't even feel right calling it an experiment, because it's not. We know what the outcome is. We know that it leads to probably the same folks who benefited from the \$4.5 billion no-jobs corporate handout benefiting from this type of direct attack on ordinary consumers. If \$4.5 billion wasn't enough, here's a chance to gouge ordinary families yet again.

I have to say that the transition to the capacity market was something that was done in consultation with generators. Certainly, we worked with experts, as I said, within and outside of government to make sure that the supply would be stable as well as the electricity on the grid more affordable than seeing the variants that we see under a solely market-based model.

Again, I believe it was only Texas and Alberta that had such a model. If it was an effective model, I think one could wonder: why aren't other jurisdictions taking on this model? The answer is: because it wasn't effective, because it did have very serious negative impacts for consumers. In a market model, the type where electricity generators are only paid for the power that is actually produced, the price is based on changing wholesale prices, which can swing very significantly and can be very challenging for consumers as well.

I know that Alberta is relatively small and an isolated market in comparison to other jurisdictions, but again in terms of an energy-only or solely market-based model, Texas was the only area that had this model. There were some hybrid markets. Some might say: okay; well, maybe we'll adapt a hybrid market. There are not a lot. There are some of those in the United States, but again not a lot, and then there are a few jurisdictions, New Zealand and Australia, that have engaged in this. By and large, governments and electricity providers have reached a consensus that this model doesn't work.

Again, it begs the question: why are we rushing towards it when we know that other jurisdictions aren't?

When we look at other policies, one of the first things I always ask for is interjurisdictional comparisons. I think it's important for us to be able to see where we are in relation to the rest of the world. I guess my question to the minister and to anyone who can speak on the government's behalf would be: what was the driver here? What was the evidence? What was the motivator? When I asked for all that, it certainly did not point towards a market-based model. It pointed towards a capacity model. At the least I would have expected that there might be some type of hybrid system, but to go solely to – again, it's not even risk, because we know what the consequences are. We know that the consequences are greater instability and higher prices. What's the motivation? Those are certainly some deep concerns that I have.

In terms of the one model that we did talk about, the one jurisdiction, Texas has experienced a few different models. In Texas they had regulated and unregulated areas that were below the national average, and differences between them have lessened over the years. However, their market is highly volatile, and it's significantly larger than our market as well. Texas experienced brownouts, which I think are very concerning, in 2011, '14, and '15 as well as rolling blackouts in 2011.

I know that when I rely on my power and it's down even briefly, it can cause a lot of uncertainty. I know that the Facebook groups for the neighbourhood that I live in light up with people checking on what's happening, and of course the EPCOR lines light up as well. Asking providers to deal with this kind of uncertainty, I think, would be very detrimental to the people of Alberta.

In recent summers Texas had price spikes for electricity that were very significant. Of course, that's a jurisdiction where they rely a lot on cooling energy, so not being able to have certainty on prices when you're dealing with very high heat is maybe just as problematic or could be as problematic as dealing with peaks when we're in the middle of our winter season and the risks that come with those extreme temperatures as well.

#### 9:10

Back to Texas, the price peak they saw on June 25 was \$438 per megawatt hour, but on June 26, just one day later, that price variance was \$3,000 per megawatt hour. Moving from \$438 to \$3,000 in one day is highly variable, highly problematic. It's more than 600 per cent above the average of the day before, certainly not giving stability or certainty or affordability to the families of Texas.

I know that government likes to say that they were elected with their mandate because they focused a lot around affordability, one specific issue that they said was about affordability but one specific issue nonetheless. Since they repealed the price on carbon, what we've seen are increases, certainly, to the cost that Albertans will be paying for electricity, increases to insurance, very overt flirtation with increasing postsecondary tuition, already the increases to school fees, including transportation, and now also a very clear, pointed – I can't really say "direction" because they are a separate, distinct order of government, but one that relies heavily on government funding is local governments, municipal governments – almost overt direction in the MacKinnon report to see rates of municipalities go up as well.

These are a number of the different areas. I know that I focused my comments with regard to electricity costs on individual households and individual consumers in that regard, but again some large consumers of electricity include municipalities. So we are very likely cutting the funding that they rely on for MSI and other areas, including policing, and at the same time downloading,

through this move to a market model, more electricity costs onto those municipalities as well.

At the end of the day, members on both sides of the House will say that there's one taxpayer, and that is true. Continuing to meddle in the models that we have, models that are proven to be more cost-effective, supportive, sustainable, and reliable, and pushing to greater uncertainty and greater swings and greater opportunities for producers to hedge the market, with consumers being solely on the hook, I think, is unfair and doesn't speak well of where this government might be moving with other decisions down the road, because this one, again, has been studied extensively. This is one that the research across North America and around the world shows that the direction this government is moving in is not something that will be beneficial from a cost-benefit analysis for the people of Alberta.

I know that there is a significant history of government engagement in the electricity market here in Alberta over many, many years, and I imagine that all members of this House had some experiences, while they were door-knocking, with people talking to them about the cost of their power bills and how much is tied to areas on their bill that are aside from their actual consumption. I think there's a lot of concern around how much individuals are paying for grid access and fees that are outside of some of the areas that government had controlled. So if they wanted to tinker with things in the electricity market, I know that my constituents and, I imagine, many of theirs would have really appreciated it if they'd focused on some of those tie-ons that electricity companies often add to individual consumers' bills.

I remember one household where a woman showed me her bill from the month before and her bill from that month. Her consumption was down by about half, but her bill was almost exactly on par with where it was the month prior. Again, that was because of a lot of the other factors on the bill for tying into the grid and building additional infrastructure, things that have been downloaded onto consumers by Conservative government after Conservative government. I know that that constituent would have really appreciated it, if the government wanted to do some tinkering with electricity, if they focused on those areas where seniors on fixed income certainly have articulated to me their sense of being gouged more than once.

AESO began doing its work evaluating the sustainability of the electricity market back in 2013 – there was a Conservative government at that time – and they determined that the model was ineffective and that it wasn't able to provide the type of stability and affordability that they were tasked to examine. AESO recommended implementing the capacity market, and that was independent from the climate leadership plan. Members on the other side of the House may not be aware of that, so I really want to reinforce that. This isn't something that needs to be done because there was a mandate to eliminate the climate leadership plan, because this was done independent of that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has been around as a staffer and so on for many years around this Legislature. I'm wondering if she can talk a little bit more about what she has heard from people over the years around transmission and distribution and other charges, even back in the days immediately following deregulation, those years in the early 2000s, if she can talk a little bit about what she's heard on the doorsteps over the years and what's really bothered people about

the deregulation experiment, particularly in those early Klein years but then even during the economic boom, how much it often put families' monthly bills under stress.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks to the member for the question. Yeah, she absolutely hits it. There was certainly a great deal of reluctance to move to a new model, but in those early days it had a chance to prove that it was effective. What happened instead is that it proved that there were greater opportunities for tie-in fees and other types of tariffs that, certainly, a lot of folks on fixed incomes were deeply concerned about their inability, if they really wanted to act like consumers in a market, their inability to be able to dictate how much they were actually paying because of how many of those additional fees were tied in through the new models and the new measures that were being imposed through the deregulation, at that time, experiment. I do have to say that for a market to be effective, in my experience you need to have the ability to control supply and demand, and you need to have an ability for consumers to control some of their own destiny through their consumption. Certainly, we hear members in the UCP talk about the need for energy and electricity, and I agree with that. There is certainly a need, especially in a province with such variable climates but also in a developed society where we all rely on technology in the same ways that we do now, to be able to have reliable, predictable, affordable electricity. By having so many of those additional tie-ins and, essentially, tariffs, it certainly eroded the ability of the market to actually be something that consumers had any ability to control in any way.

Thank you to the member for asking about that. Yeah. I imagine I'll probably be back with a stack of power bills, as will many of my colleagues, in the coming months and years. That certainly doesn't bring me glee. That isn't something that I look forward to. I think that some of the people who voted UCP, many, many, many, many people who voted UCP thought they were doing so because it was going to impact affordability. I know that there was a lot of messaging that: "Don't worry. Once we repeal the climate leadership plan, the cost of everything is going to go down." I have had many people say: you know, haven't felt it, haven't felt it. I worry that not only is this not going to make things better but that this decision is going to make things actually far worse. Thank you to the member for the encouragement to continue down memory lane.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 18?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Madam Speaker, I move to close debate on Bill 18.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Adjourn debate?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## 9:20 Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 17

#### Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act.

As many in this House are aware, this act was originally intended to be introduced in the next session. However, in late September we heard the story of Dianne Denovan, and it was yet another account of horrific abuse that could potentially have been prevented. This confirmed that we could not wait any longer, that we needed to move as quickly as possible to put this preventative measure in place.

I'd like to thank the Premier for championing this legislation and accelerating it, and I'd like to thank my government colleagues for their support. I'd also like to extend a very earnest and sincere thank you to my CSS department staff, who worked many hours on this bill with great professionalism, expertise, and competence.

I've spent the last few days thinking about all the ways that I have personally been touched or impacted by stories of domestic violence. As I had mentioned earlier, it is quite likely that almost everybody in this Chamber today knows someone who has been a victim of abuse. As I reflected on the numerous situations that I have come across in my capacity as a volunteer or personally, a common thread became evident, and I'll expand on that in a moment.

But first I'd like to share with you three specific stories. I have a friend that I grew up with. We went to school together. We went to university together. Shortly after graduating, she was introduced to a man, and after a whirlwind courtship she married him. Over the years we heard stories of turmoil in her marriage due to his abusive ways, but ultimately she did find the courage to leave.

Over a phone call many years ago, she recounted to me an episode where, in a fit of inexplicable rage, in the middle of the night her husband grabbed her by the hair, pulled her out of bed and down the stairs, where he continued the assault. Madam Speaker, my friend is a physician. She spent her whole life helping other people, helping people with their medical needs and supporting patients through mental, physical, and emotional clinical care. This is what her life had been reduced to in those years, just trying to get through the night unscathed while experiencing undeserved and irrational shame for being a victim of abuse. I can't express in words how difficult it was for me to hear that story over the phone several years ago, but ultimately I can't even imagine how unbearable those years were for her.

I have another story that I'd like to share with you. About 20 years ago – I was a 20-something then – I was a part of a group of friends who welcomed a young couple from India, a young bride who had left the country of her origin under very difficult circumstances. I was happy for her that she was here in Canada and that she had opportunities to further her education, her career and that ultimately she was with the love of her life. About a month later I received a call from her asking me to come to her apartment. When I arrived – and I still remember this vividly – I couldn't find her anywhere in her apartment. Eventually I found her in her room, in the corner, sitting on the floor. She showed me her scratched and bruised arms, and in her left hand she had a clump of hair that had been pulled out of her scalp.

Madam Speaker, I remember asking myself at that time: how is it possible that a couple that's highly educated, both of them from good families – like, how could this happen to them? At the time I didn't know about the situational complexities and cultural constraints that can keep a victim trapped in an abusive situation. I now know better – and I've said this before – that no one is immune from being a victim of domestic violence. The woman I'm speaking of is fine now. She's moved on, and she's also in a career where she helps others.



My final story is about a young woman I met at a social gathering. I'd never met her before, and shortly after meeting her, for some reason she confided in me. Her story was awful. I vividly remember telling her that it was not normal that her boyfriend called her names, that it was not normal that he checked up on her while she was at work, and it was not normal that he shoved her and threatened her physically. I don't know how she's doing because I never saw her again, and my hope is that she found her way out of that situation.

Madam Speaker, the common thread in all of these stories is that none of these incidents were ever reported, and I've talked about this earlier. This is a reality behind the statistics of domestic violence, that the numbers are understated and that the prevalence of this issue is way more common than we think it is. I do know, however, that in at least one of these situations, had the preventative measure outlined by Bill 17 been available, the victim would have made a different choice in her relationship. These victims also may have made a different choice about reporting this abuse if they knew it could save another woman's life after them.

This is why Bill 17 is so important. It is a preventative tool that can change the trajectory of a person's life and not only that person's life but potentially the trajectories of the lives of children that may be involved and the lives of other family members and friends that may be involved. The social costs of domestic violence are immense in terms of lost potential, lost time, and lost esteem. This bill can have far-reaching impacts that we can't even begin to quantify.

Madam Speaker, this past week I've received support and encouragement from my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly for the intent of Bill 17. We've received excellent feedback, and there's been a high level of interest in the legislation. I've heard overwhelming agreement that this law is needed to protect Albertans from domestic violence.

At this point, I would like to share the highlights of what I've heard in this House from my colleagues. My colleague the MLA for Central Peace-Notley said it best when he said:

When we think about the young lady that is somewhat the namesake of this act, Clare, and when we look at her situation, had she known about her partner's violent past, her murder could have been prevented. It is utterly tragic. Our goal is to prevent similar tragedies here [in our province].

My colleague the MLA for Lethbridge-East stated during second reading:

This is a mechanism that will be used to prevent abusers from hiding behind smoke, mirrors, and lies. No one should be allowed to continue to hurt others without consequence due to the failings of the law to fully expose their repulsive actions. We cannot stand idly by while harm is being done to one of the most vulnerable sectors of our society.

My colleague the MLA for Brooks-Medicine Hat eloquently stated:

Our government recognizes that domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence is a persistent issue in our province and across the country. Some organizations say that there is an epidemic. When there is an epidemic due to illness or disease, governments are quick to act in order to save lives. It only makes sense that the same approach be applied when it comes to domestic violence.

My colleague across the aisle the MLA for Calgary-McCall stated:

We believe that no one – no one – should ever face violence in any shape, form, or manner, and when that happens, I think it's the obligation of the government, it's our obligation as society to make sure that all the supports are available to them so they can rebuild their lives.

This legislation will help us address and curb and eliminate domestic violence. I know there have been many questions about what regulations will be required to implement this act and make it work in the Alberta context. Continuing to work with stakeholders and glean additional feedback in the implementation of this bill is a key and critical component to the next phases of engagement. This phase of consultation will build upon our first round of stakeholder consultations, where themes and ideas were identified, and we'll expand upon those in the second phase.

9:30

If passed, we will continue to use the next phase of stakeholder engagement to inform the law's day-to-day implementation. These elements will include things like defining the approach to the application process, decision-making, disclosure of information, definition of terms, protection of privacy, wraparound supports, and more. We're looking forward to continuing to involve stakeholders in our next round of engagement, to build on the plentiful, useful information during the first phase.

My colleague across the aisle the MLA for St. Albert highlighted the importance of ensuring that all stakeholders are invited to the table. I echo that sentiment. We've consulted with members from community organizations such as victim advocate groups, offender advocates, LGBTQ and multicultural organizations, indigenous communities, academics, Alberta police agencies, and the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. In the second phase of engagement we will involve a broader range of stakeholders from the community, including those with lived experiences, to inform the law's day-to-day implementation.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the other jurisdictions who have been so open with us about their experiences in enacting Clare's law. Representatives from the U.K. have provided us with key information, including challenges they faced, to help us begin the process of developing a Clare's law suitable for Alberta. Our colleagues in Saskatchewan paved the way for Clare's law to be introduced in a Canadian context. We have gleaned a lot of insight from others' experiences, and we truly appreciate their openness to providing us with such useful feedback and advice. With this knowledge and through the next phase of consultations I'm extremely confident that we will be able to enact a law suited to the needs of Albertans at risk of domestic violence and to support potential victims to make informed choices.

I would like to conclude by saying that my colleague from Calgary-West said it best: "If we can save even just one life, then it makes [this] legislation worth it." Madam Speaker, I'll go a bit further and say that it is my hope, desire, and intention that this bill will not just save one life but many lives. It's been an honour to introduce and speak to Alberta's version of Clare's law.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again, on third reading of Bill 17, to indicate my clear support for this bill. I'd like to once again thank the Minister of Community and Social Services for bringing this legislation forward. It has been a great discussion in this House between both sides of the House, and I think we've been clear that we do absolutely support the intent of this legislation. However – and I don't want to actually start with a "however." I do support the intent. We did have a great conversation in the House, and I do credit that it was a conversation, because it was an opportunity where members of the opposition asked some questions, and I was very pleased to see that the

Minister of Community and Social Services responded to those questions and provided some comments back. I do appreciate that.

You know, in Committee of the Whole yesterday I spoke to this bill, and I said that I was pleased to rise and speak to it because, although perhaps many of the comments that I made might have already been stated by some of my colleagues, I believe there are many people in this House who have a personal connection to this issue and care a lot about it. That's perhaps why we've seen a lot of people choosing to rise to speak to it. It's not to criticize it or to indicate any opposition to it but, rather, because we are honoured to speak to this issue.

For myself, you know, I spent a significant amount of time in my early years at law school working in a clinic that was dedicated to supporting survivors of violence, domestic violence and sexual violence, and I got to work very directly with a lot of women who were in the process of trying to determine their next steps and trying to rebuild their lives and trying to wrap their heads around how they can go forward. Also, they have children to worry about and housing and their jobs. It was a privilege to work with those women, but I realize that it was just the beginning of a lifetime of work, and my piece was very small.

I do want to indicate again that we do support the bill, but there are some concerns and questions we've raised just with respect to the details, which the minister has assured us will be coming in the regulations. I do feel very confident that she has done some great work working with stakeholders to consult on the development of the act thus far. I do think that the bulk of the work in terms of consultation will be on the regulations because we do see a bill that is – and the minister has acknowledged this – a bit of a shell. It's an outline, enabling legislation. It doesn't have the meat of the details yet, and those details are going to be very significant.

One of the things that I just want to reiterate is that I am very concerned about any sense of false security that this legislation might have for women who receive a report that their abuser does not have a history of a prior criminal conviction for domestic violence related charges. My concern, of course, is because of even the information that the minister has given us, which is that it is significantly underreported. Domestic violence is significantly underreported, and as I mentioned yesterday, not only is it underreported, but it is very challenging to get a conviction in our system. Because of that, the question that arises is: what kind of information will be shared with an applicant or a third-party applicant? For this information, what happens if they get a report that indicates that there is no prior history of criminal conviction? Does that necessarily mean that their partner is safe or is not a risk to them? We know that that's not the case. I am concerned about what the content of that disclosure will be so that we don't give women a false sense of security.

I also referenced an article written by the University of Calgary Faculty of Law. I was pleased to hear the minister express some interest in receiving a copy of this article, which I did send to her yesterday, and I will be tabling it as well in the House today. It is an article from October 18, 2019, and it's by a couple of law professors from the University of Calgary, Jennifer Koshan and Wanda Wiegers. The title of the article is *Clare's Law: Unintended Consequences for Domestic Violence Victims*. I only pointed those out because we always have to be cautious. Of course, it's a rule of thumb when we're in the House and when we're passing legislation that we're thinking about unintended consequences. One of the concerns that the authors of this article, I believe, rightly raise is the risk that this bill could increase the likelihood that a woman would be blamed for not leaving a violent situation when they have received information about their partner's prior convictions or that they even could have and chose not to access it. We know that that

could lead to the potential – and it's a very real potential – that women will be blamed for not leaving a situation when they could have accessed or did get information indicating that their partner had a violent criminal past and chose not to leave.

That could lead to what we know already happens, which is that often in situations of domestic violence we see that, obviously, the woman is struggling to take care of herself and her family, and often what happens is that the arm of the law sort of comes down and the state intervenes, and the children are apprehended. I'm not saying that we want any child left in a violent situation at all, but it doesn't necessarily move us further in terms of dealing with the situation to support that family with resources and supports if the response is simply that we are apprehending children. It doesn't actually move the family further ahead.

So it's a complicated situation. I don't raise these issues to be critical of the intent of the bill, only to highlight that there is a lot more to do. While I very much appreciate this bill being brought forward, I am a little cautious about the minister's optimism with respect to the potential impacts of this bill. I would love to see that it does eliminate domestic violence, but I think we know that that is unlikely to be the case. It's hard for us to say with any certainty what a woman who is in a violent domestic situation would have done had she known the information about her partner's criminal past. We do know that there is a complex set of reasons why women stay in violent situations. Sometimes even knowing that their partner has a conviction would not necessarily mean that that woman would leave that situation.

9:40

We hope it would, but of course there are very tangled, complicated psychological reasons why they may not. They may not have anywhere else to go. They may not have family supports. They may have children that they're worried about. So we can't say for certain and we don't have the evidence, because this is fairly new legislation here and in other jurisdictions, to indicate that this would actually lead to more women leaving those violent situations. We hope it would, of course, but we also should not blame those women who choose not to, because it is a very complicated situation.

While I do admire the intent of this bill, my optimism is a little bit more tempered than, I believe, the minister's is. We have no shortage of examples even within our own province. You know, the bill is titled *Clare's law*. That is how it's known, and it is of course referencing the situation from the U.K., but unfortunately we have so many of our own examples here in Alberta of situations where women are in violent domestic situations and have lost their lives. My colleague the Member for St. Albert mentioned yesterday the situation of Jessica Martel, who was right here in Alberta, who lost her life to a violent abuser. She had been in that relationship for 11 years, and that is a significant period of time. She had two young children. I think it's hard to know. I don't know if in that situation her partner actually had prior criminal convictions, and if she had been made aware, I don't know and we don't know with certainty what would have happened. But I do appreciate that women should have the right to know that information and to seek that information because it is very important.

I want to give a couple of examples, too, of the work that we still need to do around domestic violence. We also know that there are a significant number of domestic violence situations that, unfortunately, have led to violent death where the partners have been married for decades. They are partners that have been together for a very, very, very long time. Again, I don't know if there is a history of criminal conviction on either side, but it's hard to imagine a couple that has been married for 40 years where the woman finds

out about a prior conviction from before she was even with her partner, if that would have changed the situation. Again, not to say that this doesn't mean it's not meaningful, but there are many, many domestic violence situations where this would not necessarily be relevant to that situation, so we have to still consider that.

In fact, in Edmonton alone, actually just last year, right around the corner from my children's daycare in a home there was a domestic violence situation where a woman was killed and her partner committed suicide. They had been together for 20 years. You know, we can talk about as well how those kinds of situations are reported in the news. I know there has been a fulsome debate in this province and probably across Canada about naming the victims of domestic violence, but in that situation there were no names, and the police used the code, which we all kind of know, that the woman died of homicide and the man died of noncriminal causes and that there will be no charges laid. We all know what that means. That means that that is a murder-suicide and that there was a domestic violence situation.

Just a year prior to that, in my riding of Edmonton-Whitemud the male partner of a couple that were in their 70s murdered his wife. They'd been married for over 40 years. I just raise this as there are some long-term domestic violence situations that perhaps this bill would not address. Again, there are lots of situations where this would be meaningful and where we hope it would be meaningful, but we need to be conscious that there is still so much more work to do around domestic violence.

To that end, I appreciate the minister's commitment. She has expressed it over and over – and I appreciate it very much – that she will be continuing to consult extensively with stakeholders, going forward, on the regulations. I do hope that this is just the beginning of a more complex strategy to address domestic violence. We know that there need to be resources behind training police services who will be handling those requests for disclosure, supporting those organizations that can support women to either get out of those situations or to survive them, essentially. We need a lot of work on that. While I appreciate the intent of the legislation, so much more is needed.

The other piece of this that I just want to lastly mention about the bill is that if we want women to have access to the rights that are going to be set out in this bill, they need to know they have them. I just want to highlight that it is going to be very important how we educate and how that message is sent out to women who are particularly isolated often, who are racialized, who are poor, who are in remote communities. How are they going to be made aware that this right is available to them and encouraged in a safe way to use it? Again, as we talked about yesterday, it is often at the point where a woman is thinking of leaving a violent domestic situation where things get the most dangerous for her. That is where we see the most likely occurrence of death and extreme injury to women, at the point where they are thinking of leaving. So when we're talking about them receiving this information, it's likely that the woman is along the way of thinking that this might be the point where she might be leaving. That's why she's seeking the information. That is a very critical time. Women need to know that this right is available to them if it's going to be meaningful.

It does raise the risk that partners will also know. Violent partners will also know that their partner has a right to receive this information, which leads to complexities as well.

This is obviously – and I appreciate that the minister acknowledges it – a complicated situation. There are lots of factors that go in, and we can't ignore the need for significant resourcing. I just want to again extend to the minister the offer from the members of the opposition, who've been very clear in our support, and we want to work to make this as meaningful as possible, to

continue to work with you where we can. I appreciate the discussion that we've had in this House today around this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

**An Hon. Member:** Section 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** There's no 29(2)(a) available. There will be after the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. As with everyone on this side of the House, I take pleasure in working with the government to support this bill and bring it forward. I have, you know, expressed concerns in previous stages of the bill to help the government hear some of the problematic areas that may arise as the bill is moved forward, but I don't believe that that should be a reason to stop this bill or other kinds of bills in which good things are happening. I just think that we need to ensure that the complexity of our response matches the complexity of the problem.

In hearing the minister move third reading of this particular bill, I notice she took the time to speak to some, well, frankly, horrific stories of three women that she had had some personal contact with or knowledge of and bring those into the House, which I think has some very clear value. I think, first of all, it honours those women and says that someone was listening to them. She's also honoured them by talking about how they have moved beyond that stage of violence in their life, at least the ones that she happened to know, so I think there's good value in bringing those stories forward. It also, of course, presses upon the listeners to those stories the deep emotional trauma that we're trying to prevent here in moving this kind of bill forward, again, a real value in terms of helping to bridge that experience out beyond the people who experienced it to the rest of Albertans, that we need to support this bill.

Of course, I also think that it's important that it be on the record as the motivation for this bill so that we have a really clear idea of what it is that we are trying to prevent and move forward. So there's lots of value in hearing those stories. I know as someone working as a social worker in the area of family violence for much of my 33-year career, I heard literally thousands of similar kinds of stories. Unfortunately, because my career was often focused on child sexual abuse, they often were coming from six- and seven- and eight-year-olds, so, I mean, another level of horrendousness, I guess, is what we'd say, but equally disconcerting.

One of the things that we found in our practice was that we could get drawn into a slightly erroneous place where we begin to deal with each individual person who comes into the practice as if it's an individual unique story. Of course, you know, in terms of therapeutic intervention it's very important that you do that. You stay present to the person that's in front of you.

9:50

But we also have a responsibility beyond that, and that responsibility is to recognize that this isn't a unique story. Unfortunately, the reality in the world is that violence of various natures is common. I mean, you almost hate to say that, but it's a relatively routine reality in our society. I noticed that the minister quoted the MLA for Brooks-Medicine Hat as saying that domestic-based violence is a persistent issue. I'm glad that she was able to draw that out of that member's speech because it really does speak to exactly what it is that I think is important for us to think about as we move this bill forward, and that is that domestic violence is a persistent issue. It is across cultures. It is across regions. It is across

socioeconomic status. The reality is that we can't view this as a couple of bad apples. Domestic violence is, in fact, a characteristic of our society just as, you know, many other things even though, thank God, it's not a dominant characteristic. It's not representative of most of us, but it certainly is not one that we can say is one in a million or a one-off occurrence.

Because of that, I begin to get worried that we have this systemic problem, but our responses to the systemic problem are often not systemic as well. What we might say in terms of building structures is that they're not structural, that we don't actually look at not just a single, individual case but rather what's happening across society. How do we structure society in such a way that we can reduce the likelihood of these kinds of things happening in the first place and that we can respond to them effectively and efficiently when they do happen after the fact? Very much in the same way that, you know, we look around a city and realize that people need water in their house, we could go drill a well in everybody's backyard or do it one at a time, when somebody comes to us and says: I need water. But at some point you begin to realize it's a silly response. The city of Edmonton, almost a million people if you include the surrounding area, or the city of Calgary, which has a million people I believe: if you went around and tried to deal with each case individually, to drill a well in their backyard, people would say that, well, that's not a very systemic or structural response to the problem here.

What we do instead is that we build a societal-level response, and that societal – level response in the case of water is that we have a centralized water system with piping paid for by society, not by the individuals but by society, to make sure that water is equally distributed throughout the community, whether or not you happen to live in the tony areas of town or the areas of town that need more attention. Everyone would say: well, that's quite reasonable; that's exactly what we should be doing. We use the same kind of pipes when we build in the rich areas of town as we do in the poor areas of town because it's not about the individual case; it's about having the systemic structural response to the need for water in every house in our society.

That is also true in the area of domestic violence. We need strong, structural interventions that look not just at each individual case as they come forward but rather at what we do as a society to transform the things that we need to transform to ensure that domestic violence is, first of all, of course, prevented and, secondly, dealt with in an efficient and effective manner when it does occur. I guess that's the piece I want to bring to us in our discussion of the third reading of this bill.

I will stand and support this bill. I will vote in favour of it, but I will also remind the minister and the members of the government side of the House that there are a number of systemic problems that need to be addressed. You can't say, "I did something about family violence" by doing something as slim and as narrow as this particular piece, even with the inherent problems, which I addressed last night. It is only one step of many steps you must take because your response to a complex problem must be as complex as the problem itself. In this case we have, you know, a number of issues.

For example, we know that in this case women can find out about whether or not the potential partner had a history of domestic violence, but we know that's not the only kind of violence that's a predictor or a preindicator of domestic violence. For example, we know that people that have been cruel to animals, people that have done other kinds of violent acts in the community, that have conflict with work sites and so on also have indicators of potential for domestic violence, none of which will be recorded on this.

I realize it can't be in this situation, but it reminds us that we're really only taking a very small, slim piece of information and

moving it forward, when there's so much more that could be and should be dealt with. I look forward to the government looking at: how do we better inform women about other indicators of potential for violence? Of course, you know from my conversation in the House last night my concerns about creating the list at all. That's an issue.

The second systemic issue is that we often have programs like this or other programs we put in that are intended to reduce domestic violence or to save people's lives, but we have a structural problem with severe underfunding. We put in the program, its intent is good, maybe even its design is good, and we know it may be effective in terms of research evidence, but then if we actually don't put the resources behind those kinds of interventions, they're just as useless as not being there in the first place.

I think it's really important that we not stand up and say, "We've done something about domestic violence," and then not immediately follow it up with, "Here's how we're going to ensure that the dollars and resources that are necessary for the full implementation of this program and the adjunct programs that will support this program are present in our society." That's what I'll be holding the minister to account for, not this bill. This bill I'm supporting. I'll stand up here, but I'm going to ask the same question Thursday afternoon and say, "Did you put money into domestic violence?" because if you didn't put money into it on Thursday, then what do I think about what you were saying to us in the House on Tuesday? I think that's very important that we remember that kind of thing.

We have to remember that the complexity of the problem, especially the complexity of women attempting to leave domestic violence situations, is that there needs to be a variety of other services available to them. We know, for example, that women that have children are more likely to stay because there's fear about what will happen to the children if they do not have an adequate place to go. Does that mean: do we have daycares that are available so that they can have their children cared for while they seek work so that they can provide for themselves because they can no longer depend on the partner who may have been providing for them up until that point? Daycares are extremely important in terms of this type of intervention.

What about women's shelters? Are they widely available? Are they available around the whole province? Are they available on First Nations and Métis communities as well as off? Those kinds of questions. Are they available in rural areas or only in downtown Edmonton, downtown Calgary? Those are the kinds of questions we need to ask. Are they adequately funded? That's very important.

Of course, women leaving a situation of violence also need actual, physical resources such as cash. What kind of transition allowances do we have available for women as they leave domestic violence situations? Are we actually providing supports for them so that they can sustain themselves, or do they return home because they find themselves living on the street with their kids? If we don't have those kinds of resources, we're not really doing what we say we intend to do when we put a bill like this forward.

#### 10:00

A friend of mine, Tim Battle, who worked with Alberta SPCA for many years until his recent retirement, also talked to me about the fact that animals can be one of the reasons why women do not leave violent relationships because they are afraid to leave their animal behind with the violent offender. So what are we doing to ensure that organizations like the SPCA that do extremely good work in our society are receiving the supports that they need in order to facilitate women who are leaving violent relationships but need to make sure that their animals are well taken care of so that

when they set themselves up, they can bring their animal back and help their children feel comforted by the reconstruction of their family, at least with their animal? Those kinds of things are very important.

Of course, the big issue is about social isolation; that is, how are we ensuring that we are reaching into those places and communities where people are confined by social structures? Now, I worry about that in terms of reserve communities, for example. They're often far from central areas and, as a result, don't always have access to the information and supports and immediate resources that might be available in a place like Calgary or Edmonton. Also, there are ethnic communities in which that's true. My experience in working with some of the communities is that people have come to me in my MLA office and said: "I am confined to my home. I cannot leave my home without the absolute and complete control of my husband." How are we going to make sure that that woman has the resources necessary, that she's got the information necessary in order to be able to leave this kind of situation? You know, language may be a barrier, availability in the community may be a barrier, and of course the strict structures of a social system within a particular culture or religion or so on may also be a barrier.

All of these things are things that I ask this government and this minister to consider as they move this bill forward. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is now available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for his comments. We were sitting there in awe at just his knowledge and his experience and so many really thoughtful points there. I need to note the point on animals. That's one that I hadn't even thought of, but you're exactly right. This is where he pointed to the fact that without the support, without looking at the systemic issues, we do worry about the efficacy of this bill.

As I talked about yesterday, we know – you know, the minister has been quite clear, and I appreciate that – that this is very much enabling legislation. One of the things that I really want to just hammer home again is the importance of victims knowing about what supports are available. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford talked about some of those supports, and one of the ones I want to mention and have him speak a little bit more about as well is housing supports.

I know I represent an area, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, where we currently have a lot, the bulk I would say, of affordable housing in Edmonton in our riding, but I hear every day, my staff hear every day the need for safe, affordable housing. That's probably the most common concern I actually get, folks who are unable to access safe and affordable housing in our neighbourhoods. I worry about, you know, these potential victims, especially those coming from rural and remote communities, how they're going to be able to access supports like housing. As the member noted, without funding in place, what's going to happen? We can point to examples like Saskatchewan, where Clare's law was implemented earlier this year. There are some folks who've shared their own stories saying that they were in remote parts of that province and unable to access the supports, including housing, that they needed.

This law clearly needs to be part of a suite of measures, and I really appreciate the member's point around that we need to see those measures in place on Thursday. I would just like to ask the member to talk a little bit more about that obvious concern we have about victims lacking proper resources when they are wanting to safely leave dangerous relationships and how else this government can ensure that they feel fully supported when they do take that step.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the resources that are necessary. I think that the underlying theme here is that we need to do multiple things at once if we're really going to address a problem. The nervousness you hear on this side of the House – we support the bill; I'll be really clear about that – is that the complex response that is required is not going to be following this particular initiative, and that becomes dangerous. It becomes dangerous because we start to believe we have done something when we haven't. That leads to complacency and leads to an exacerbation of the problem. Not only do we have the problem in its first right, but we have the problem being ignored secondarily because we say: "Well, we already did something about that. We can move on." That is of deep concern to us here.

We know that these things are not easily resolved. There's not a jurisdiction in the world that can effectively tell us that they have ultimately resolved the problem of domestic violence. That tells us there is no quick, one-off solution, or else governments all around the world would have done it. It is very expensive to allow that to happen. That's not the reason why I think we should do it, of course, but I realize that governments worry about those things.

I think, then, we have to ensure that if we are going to actually resolve this problem as best as we possibly can, we tackle it as a real problem. We know that there are times in our society when we do tackle problems in very focused and complex ways, and we have resolved some incredible problems as we move forward in our society. I mean, when I just look at the accomplishments we've had with the development of the social democracies in the western world with the universal health care, with the universal education, with the universal water and food production and so on . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to stand today and speak on Bill 17, Clare's law. I've listened intently to a lot of the speeches as we discuss this bill, and I'm really grateful for the opportunity to actually have this conversation. I'm grateful to the minister for bringing this forward and seeing the need here, and I'm grateful to the members of the opposition for their input. Certainly, a lot of great points were made by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford about that domestic violence isn't isolated to one socioeconomic group or one part of the world. I also appreciate similar comments from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I can say her last name properly, too.

In particular, you know, there are two ways I can come at this, and I want to come at this. One is the emotional side and strictly says – I know that domestic violence isn't isolated to men or women. It's certainly both. But as a man what kind of sad sack or sorry individual would ever feel comfortable looking at themselves in the mirror after hitting, laying a hand on another individual, instigating any kind of violence, or even intimidating someone else? I mean, it just really goes to show what kind of a weak person they would be. Speaking more on the other side, it would be more the merits. I have witnessed domestic violence on two occasions in my life. When I saw it both times, it was like I was watching the movie *Jaws* before the shark attacks. That music just builds up in the back of your mind before you have to step in and do something immediately.

What I like the most about this bill is the preventative measures that it takes. You know, I was in Costco the other day, and I saw that you could buy 48 Duracell batteries for 27 bucks, and I'm thinking: that's a lot of money for some batteries. But it's a lot of

batteries. You talk to any firefighter, and they'll tell you that the cost of a home is significantly more than the cost to replace smoke detector batteries. These preventative measures can cost you significantly less – significantly less – if you take them early on.

I think it's important that we are updating our laws in this province to meet the needs of those who live here, especially those getting involved in relationships. If you look at the evolving way that people are meeting each other online, what kind of response would you give if you saw a picture of someone online in one of these dating apps and above the picture it said: 2017, convicted of domestic abuse. Would you even be interested in talking with that person? The answer is no. There is no way to fully eradicate domestic violence, I don't think, with this law, but if anything, any measures that we can take to reduce it even by one case I'm in full support of.

**10:10**

Anecdotally, we hear some of the excuses as to why this happens and why people stay in these relationships that are, in fact, abusive. Again, I have never personally in my life been involved or been the subject of any domestic abuse, so I can't put myself in that situation, but I've heard stories of people saying things like, you know: "You don't know him like I know him" or "It was my fault" or "I instigated it. It was my problem. I made him mad. I made her mad." I often ask myself: how far down the relationship track do you have to get before that kind of an excuse that you tell yourself is acceptable? It's not. We have to find a way to help people get out of the relationship or avoid it altogether before it gets to that point.

As we talked about earlier, from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, these issues are not isolated to certain groups. You know, if you look at one of the most famous cases of domestic abuse, Ike and Tina Turner, over the course of 16 years of marriage Ike Turner raped, humiliated, abused, was unfaithful to Tina, and this is one of the most famous cases of domestic abuse that we know of. Sixteen years, Madam Speaker, this went on, this cycle of abuse. We have to find a way to end the cycle. It's also not isolated to men. Recently I was reading a news article just the other day, and I saw that in 2017, in May, there was a woman named Kandee Collind, who stabbed her husband to death in front of her children in the driveway of their home after her ex-husband Scott Weyland was awarded custody of their children. It just speaks volumes that this is not isolated to men only, that women can perpetrate domestic abuse as well. As legislators we have a responsibility to do something about it.

Now, I mentioned earlier that I have witnessed domestic disputes in two cases. One time when I was living in Russia, I came out of the grocery store, and across the street I saw a guy who at the time was clutching and grabbing on his partner's jacket. He was yelling at her, having a big argument in the middle of the sidewalk, so I crossed the street to get closer. What shocked me, as I was getting closer, was that everybody was just walking by. I was shocked. They were just walking by. As I got closer, it began to escalate to the point where he was going to raise a hand to her. By that point I got close enough to step in and break it up. I was really angry at this point. I told the one guy to take a hike, and he reluctantly did so. He walked away. But what was the most discouraging and sad moment of that encounter was that I said, "Are you okay?" She said, "No." I said, "Do you have anywhere to go?" She said, "No." She had nowhere to go. Madam Speaker, it just broke my heart because I could only do so much to break up this altercation in the middle of the sidewalk and send this guy somewhere, but I suspect that they live together, or if they don't, they know where each other lives. If she has nowhere to go away from him, what is there to do? Sometimes you can't get there in time to just break it up.

The second time that I saw a domestic dispute, I was actually coming out of a computer store in Calgary. As my wife and I were driving in the car, we saw across the street – there was a median in the way, so we couldn't go directly across – this man was following this woman and yelling at her and having an argument. I wanted to make sure they were okay, so we went around and got into the parking lot. By the time I got into the parking lot across the street, he was again clutching and grabbing her. I was probably a good hundred yards away from this because I couldn't drive my car on the grass. I get out of my car to start walking towards it, and he starts pushing her and hitting her. I just start full speed going. I start running at full speed, and by the time I got there, he's about to hit her again. I just laid in to this guy, my shoulder, put him on the ground because I wasn't able to step in. Like, this was a full on fight at this point.

So we get this guy on the ground – I wasn't going to try a wrap-him-up tackle, but I laid him out – and as soon as I did that, the woman just took off running. I was glad I was able to break it up. But, again, the discouraging part of the story was that one of their friends came over because he saw what happened. I said, "Do you know these two?" He said, "Yeah." I said: "What's going on? Call the police." He's like: "No. I'm not going to call the police." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because this happens every other day. It happens every other day with this couple." I couldn't find out if there was a place that I could help this woman get to because she had run away. By the time the police got there to deal with this, you know, I had learned a little more: that it happens all the time, that they're a couple, and that they're together. That's it. That was the story.

I thought: would this woman, in both instances, ever want to be involved with that man if right at the moment they met, there was, like, a thought bubble above the guy's head that said, "I'm a domestic abuser"? Would they be in that kind of relationship? I think the answer is no, but how do you find that out? I think that this bill is a great measure to get to that point where at least there is some means, some mechanism where those entering into a domestic partnership can get information about their partner's history. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that if I knew or if anyone else knew the first time they met someone at a restaurant or a bar or on the street and said hi and shook hands or what have you, maybe at the beginning of a courtship, if right at that moment they knew that the person they're talking to would abuse them in three years, they would walk away. At least, I'd hope they'd walk away.

This is a preventative measure, and that's why I love this bill so much. It will help people avoid domestic abuse cases long before they ever happen. It will also avoid the need for people like me to step in. I'm happy to step in any time I ever see this kind of thing happening, but what if that altercation didn't have to happen? What if those two women that I mentioned earlier didn't need intervention because they had the information at hand at the beginning of the relationship to walk away?

Sometimes it's too late to walk away, as in the case of Scott Weyland. Scott Weyland died in his own driveway after being stabbed by his ex-wife. He didn't have the chance to walk away. Maybe she didn't have a prior case or a previous history of violence, but if we can prevent even one domestic assault, if we can prevent even one death, if we can prevent even one case of intimidation, I think that we've seen some level of success.

With some of the concerns from the members opposite – I'll let the minister respond to those – I wanted to stand up and personally voice my support for this bill because I think it's an important measure to support those entering into domestic partnerships, and I think it's a great way for us to show that we are taking concrete steps towards reducing the number of cases of domestic violence in this province. This is a promise we made, it's a promise that we are

keeping, and I'm honoured to be part of this government that is in fact doing that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to rise in support of Bill 17, the Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence Act, or what is also sometimes known as Clare's law. As we know, this language was created after a young woman in the United Kingdom was killed by her ex-boyfriend, who had a history of domestic violence. You know, as I've noticed and as the last few speakers have pointed out, this is something that's been ongoing for some time. We all have stories that we're able to connect with. I guess the big thing I want to be able to communicate is that it can happen in absolutely any community. It doesn't matter where it is. Edmonton-Decore has also seen, unfortunately, its fair share as well. Just a mere couple or three blocks from my home a young woman was shot and killed by her spouse through domestic violence.

10:20

I think one of the things that legislators can inadvertently get caught up in is that we bring forth legislation, and sometimes I think we might go: "Well, look what we've laid out. We've put in place the ability to prevent some of these things." Then we kind of just maybe step back and say, "Well, we've done our job" and we wash our hands. It's not enough. You know, we have to be able to follow up on that. Certainly, I'm very pleased that the minister has continued those steps forward.

I think the conversation around domestic violence isn't big enough. It needs to grow. It needs to be something that we're not afraid to talk about. I think we look at some of the steps that were made in the 29th Legislature, where former MLA Deborah Drever brought in private member's Bill 204, which allowed victims to be able to break their leases to be able to flee domestic violence situations. I know the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford had made reference around animals being one of the reasons why a spouse won't leave, because they're afraid that their fur baby will then bear the brunt of that violence. I remember some very good conversations with former MLA Richard Starke, who is a veterinarian, around this subject. It was definitely something that I had never really even considered before that moment. We've seen things like increasing funding for women's shelters by \$15 million, which has supported more than 17,000 women and 14,000 children in 2017 alone.

Some of these statistics are staggering, Madam Speaker. From 2008 to 2017 there were 166 deaths in Alberta due to domestic and family violence according to the Family Violence Death Review Committee. I'm very confidently going to go out on a bit of a limb here: I think that that's only what we know about. When we think about missing and murdered indigenous women, how many of them have been victims of family violence through their partners and we don't know about it? So I think this statistic is a little bit low. You know, across Canada half of all young women and girls who are victims of domestic violence homicide were murdered by someone with a prior conviction. I don't think this conversation is big enough, but certainly Bill 17 is a really good way to get this conversation going.

We look at where Clare's law originated, in the U.K. It was introduced in 2014, and it's just a policy still at this moment. It's

not law. But a new bill was introduced in January of this year with 120 commitments, including legalizing the law. Unfortunately, on October 2 it was held over. One of the other things I want to point out about that is that the national average for England and Wales had 3,612 requests granted from 8,490 requests for information. They also know that the right-to-know aspect is underutilized, and police are still working to improve knowledge and understanding within their own service to increase the use provided for early intervention. According to Sandra Walklate the jury is still out on whether the law that allows police to disclose a personal violent history actually prevents the violence.

One of the things that I guess I also want to know – it's great that we're going to pass this, and I'm in full support of this because every single step that we take forward is something. I'd rather have something than nothing. But I think the members for Edmonton-Rutherford and Edmonton-Whitemud were very, very clear that it's not enough to just stop there. We have to keep going. We have to provide those background supports and the education so that women know about all the supports that are available to them. You know, I think the Member for Cardston-Siksika had talked about: she didn't have anywhere to go. We have to change that. They have to know where to go, but that means backing up the supports in the background to be able to provide that education, to be able to provide the training for police to be able to be part of that equation, to make sure that they know where to go, where they have those supports.

Again, I too am hoping that in the budget tomorrow we will see those kinds of commitments to provide those types of supports to those individuals that are fleeing violence ahead of time, including things like maybe supports to the SPCA or animal groups so that they can take that family pet, put them somewhere safe as well. My gosh. I mean, to stay around because you fear for the family pet: a little thing like that should not hold somebody back. I think that as we move forward, I'm hoping that those supports will be in place in the budget to be able to move this conversation forward, continue that education, make sure that women know there is a lot around, things to help them.

I mean, being able to break a lease: I've still seen a couple of cases come into my office since that was brought in where they actually didn't know, so we need to do better on the education front. We need to make sure that we have the proper police training. We need to make sure that they have the support staff in place to be able to provide those types of services so that when somebody says, "I need to go," they can. I know someone very, very close to me who ended up finding out that their partner was a little bit controlling. Thankfully, she had the ability to grab the cat and say: see you later. She didn't even hesitate. But, again, we don't always see that, so let's provide those supports. Let's make sure that we have everything in place.

I'm happy to support this going forward, but, please, Minister, make sure that, you know, we have that background support, that we have the funding in place so that we can make sure that everything provides women a safe place to go.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, good morning, and thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to speak in support of Bill 17. As we know and as we've heard, domestic violence affects us all, and there are no simple solutions to this complex problem. As we've heard, indeed, from some of the

examples already, it can happen to anyone of any age, of any culture, of any socioeconomic status or background or gender. Domestic violence is not just a social issue, a criminal issue, or a public health issue, but it's also a human rights issue. As well, it's important to know that the financial consequences of domestic violence include heavy demands on our health care system, education, social services, the justice system and law enforcement. But, most important of all, the human costs and impacts are absolutely immeasurable.

I want to talk a little bit more about domestic violence and, of course, why it's so important, but I want to talk a little bit more about what we mean when we talk about domestic violence. What we call and record as domestic violence is at the heart of the question about how it is made visible, how it is understood and treated not only by individual service providers but also by society as a whole.

**10:30**

The Calgary Domestic Violence Collective defines domestic violence as the following:

[The] attempt, act or intent of someone within a relationship where the relationship is characterized by intimacy, dependency or trust, to intimidate either by threat or by the use of physical force on another person or property. The purpose of the abuse is to control... [and to] exploit through neglect, intimidation, inducement of fear or by inflicting pain. Abusive behavior can take many forms including; verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, spiritual, economic, and the violation of other rights. All forms of abusive behavior are ways in which one human being is [ultimately] trying to [assert and] have control... over another [individual and exploit that individual].

This definition of domestic violence has been widely accepted within the community, and it recognizes the lifespan perspective of domestic violence.

Domestic violence includes the abuse of the youngest to some of the most senior in our society, in relationships including dating, cohabiting, marital, grandparent, grandchild, caregiver, and other persons requiring care as well.

Mr. Speaker – excuse me. Madam Speaker – you can tell I haven't finished my coffee yet – Alberta has the third-highest rate of domestic violence in the country. In 2018 the Calgary women's emergency 24-hour family violence helpline fielded 10,300 calls. The total number of clients that the Calgary women's shelter served was 15,400. In 2018 the Calgary Police Service reported that there had been a 13 per cent increase in domestic violence conflict calls. On average the Calgary Police Service receives 19,000 domestic conflict related calls per year; 1 in 5 of those calls involves some form of violence.

A study conducted by the Canadian Women's Foundation reported that 74 per cent – 74 per cent – of Albertans knew a woman who had experienced physical or sexual abuse, and the report similarly also found that domestic violence costs Canadians an estimated \$7.4 billion a year.

In that same year, 2018, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters released a comprehensive report entitled *Strength in Numbers: A Ten-year Trend Analysis of Women*, which looked at and utilized data from annual reports, including 24 emergency shelters, seven second-stage shelters, and other organizations. With respect to shelter admissions it found that 33 per cent of all shelter admissions took place in Edmonton and in Calgary. This report also found that the overall population of women of indigenous and other backgrounds utilizing Alberta's shelters rose from 64 per cent in 2003 to 71 per cent in 2012. It's important to know that indigenous women made up more than half of the shelter population in 2010, at 60 per cent, and this proportion continues to rise substantially,

particularly in Alberta's northern shelters, where in 2013 it was reported to be at 70 per cent.

Each year in Canada it's estimated that approximately 362,000 children witness or experience domestic violence, and when we look at some of the information and data related to dating violence, it's highest among the 15-to-24 age group. Most troubling of all, in Canada a woman is killed by her intimate partner every five days. That's in Canada alone.

Madam Speaker, the statistics are absolutely staggering, and it's important to recognize as well that those are only the cases and the situations that we know about. It's quite difficult for us to obtain a clear picture of the extent of domestic violence in Alberta because it often remains hidden. Individuals who are impacted by domestic violence often experience isolation, shame, embarrassment, and humiliation. Individuals may remain in abusive relationships for fear of the violence escalating if they were to leave. They may not have the financial resources to leave, as we heard from the member earlier. The individual told them that she didn't have anywhere else to go, didn't have any other means, other resources or other places to go.

Madam Speaker, it's clear that we all have a role to play in ending domestic violence and ensuring that all Albertans are able to live safe, healthy lives, free from abuse. Clare's law is an important step forward in the movement to prevent and ultimately end the epidemic of domestic violence. Clare's law is a formal mechanism that can be used to break down barriers that victims or potential victims face when making informed choices about their safety. The law ensures that services and systems communicate with each other about a victim's risk and an individual's past abusive behaviours, which allows for appropriate supports and services to be put in place. There's no question that this law will be an effective tool to empower individuals, communities, and other organizations in the province of Alberta to work together to end domestic violence.

Madam Speaker, violence in our communities and within our families is never justified, and no one deserves to be abused. Clare's law will indeed save lives. It is a priority of this government to make life better for all Albertans, and I am incredibly honoured to be part of a team who is willing and ready to tackle domestic violence in such a meaningful way.

On that note, I want to conclude my remarks and thank the Premier for his leadership and, as well, my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services for her leadership and dedication to the work that she's done to see this important piece of legislation through. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak to this bill, Bill 17, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act. I will be supporting the bill. This will actually be my first opportunity to speak, so hopefully I won't go too long, but there were a couple of things that I just wanted to touch a little bit on around the importance of this bill and then, of course, the implementation of it.

Working in child protection, I obviously worked with a variety of different families, and many times, part of the reason why we would be called and go to work with different families was due to domestic violence. Now, what we know about domestic violence, as the hon. member across indicated, is that it can be demonstrated in many different ways. Of course, we see it through physical violence and sexual violence, but there's also the economic impact



piece, which is not the violence but the financial piece that comes with that, where women or individuals in partnerships aren't able to actually access their finances, so of course they're not able to leave situations to find new housing, to move on with their lives because financially they have no access to any of the funds that they would have.

I think the important piece that we need to also acknowledge is that domestic violence is in all relationships, whether they be married, common-law, dating, same-sex relationships. Those relationships: when we're looking at the LGBTQ community, we tend to not talk about those communities, we don't acknowledge those pieces. It's a community that tends to get forgotten and also a community that, due to resource issues, doesn't always have the same ability to access the supports in place that should be available to all Albertans.

**10:40**

As we look at this and we talk about whether or not people should have access to information around criminal history and specifically around domestic violence, there are some questions and some concerns that, obviously, I have around how this information will be used. I mean, I would be interested to hear, actually, from the Minister of Children's Services around how she sees this legislation being implemented within Children's Services. Obviously, when investigations occur, Children's Services workers do have access to information to ensure the safety of children, but this is a new piece. This is a new tool that staff will have access to. I think it's the question around: for Children's Services workers, is this a tool that they would be then using, or is this a tool that they would be trained on so they can support family members, individuals that they're working with in being able to access this information?

Another question and a thought that's come to mind – and of course, as we see this legislation roll out, I think we'll be able to get better clarity around it – is also supporting Children's Services workers when there may be a call made by a family member that may have accessed this information that may or may not be trying to influence an outcome of an investigation.

An example of this – and I'm not saying that this happens often, and I'm not trying to insinuate any false motives of anybody when they do a report to Children's Services – as a worker there were times where I would be called out to do an investigation where a relationship was falling apart. People were separating, there may be a divorce happening, and custody was becoming part of the problem and part of the discussion, and people would sometimes try to use Children's Services as a tool to influence, maybe, the outcome of a custody dispute, to say: well, Children's Services went out, and they had to investigate this family member. Again, I'm not saying that that's common, nor do we minimize those calls. We always go out when there's a call made around potential safety concerns around a child. But when emotions are high – and sometimes different family members get involved in custody disputes; it could be grandparents, it could be a sibling, it could be a variety of different people – they will sometimes try to influence the court process when it comes to divorce proceedings and custody disputes.

My concern around this – and again I think it just goes back to: how will the bill be implemented, and then how does the minister work with her team around making sure that staff are trained and aware of how to address the issue? – is making sure that this isn't being used as a tool to start influencing custody components, because knowledge is power. We know that. It would be ensuring that this tool isn't being used to try to find out if there's information and just to be somewhat malicious, whether there's validity to it or not.

Again, I'm not saying that if someone has a history of domestic violence, they should have access to their children. What I'm saying is that I would hate to see this tool being used inappropriately for motivation around that piece. So I think that that's just a matter of making sure that, you know, police services are aware of how to use this legislation appropriately, that we're not breaching people's privacy components, and that Children's Services, whether or not they would have access to using this or if this would be a tool that we would be advocating that family members access – I think that that's a fine line, when you look at a Children's Services worker, when it comes to encouraging the use of access to information, what that looks like, because I think, going back to when I worked in Children's Services, I don't know how comfortable I would be sitting down with a parent and saying: well, maybe you should be applying for this information. I don't know if that is the role of a Children's Services worker or not. Again, that would be up to the minister and, of course, her department, to determine how this legislation would be used in those roles.

The other piece, I think, as well is that, you know, if this information does come back to an individual and they find out that someone has a history of domestic violence, the question also becomes – and again this goes back to training and a question that I have for the Minister of Children's Services – does that then perpetuate or does that become a child protection safety issue? Do we start saying that every time a mother – sorry; I shouldn't just indicate gender – or any partner, an individual, is aware that somebody in their relationship has a history of domestic violence, that automatically means that Children's Services becomes involved? Are we saying that because this information has now been provided, this person is automatically putting their children at risk? Does that become a problem? Is that something that the ministry is looking at to try to figure out at what point we say that this becomes harm and a protection issue versus acknowledgement of knowledge, like: you knew; therefore, you chose. I guess that would be the piece that I would ask.

You know, again, I'm not saying that people that have a history of domestic violence will not reoffend. I mean, I'm not saying that. There are indicators that violence can happen over and over, but I also want to make sure that we're not saying that every single person that has participated in domestic violence does not have the ability to rehabilitate and to make better choices around those issues. I would hate to see this being used as a tool to start being more intrusive in families' lives just because of the fact that it now exists. Again, I'm not saying that that's what's happening. I just would really appreciate the minister maybe clarifying sort of what preliminary discussions she's already been having with her ministry, recognizing that this was coming, and just sort of some of the policy development that might be coming because of it.

The other piece – and then I'll close – is just looking that we recognize that it usually takes about 10 attempts before someone is actually successful in leaving a domestic violence situation. You know, people are always, like: why didn't they leave the first time? Well, many people try to leave repeatedly, and due to different scenarios there are reasons why they end up returning to their relationships.

A lot of that has to do with resources and lack of ability to access shelter spaces or new apartments, financial impacts. Like my colleague from Edmonton-Decore indicated, pets are actually a huge factor. People don't want to leave their dogs because they're worried that the abuser may take it out on the animals. They've got children. Maybe they've got lots of children, and they're not able to find housing for all of their children. There are barriers with some of our shelter systems around if you have a 16-year-old child. Some

shelters won't take 16-year-olds, 17-year-olds because of gender issues.

There are lots of different dynamics at play, and I think that as we look at this, we also have to look at: what additional supports can be provided? How can we be creative in ensuring that people leaving a domestic violence situation have access to the information and to the resources that they need?

Again, I'm not saying that I won't support the bill. I absolutely will. I just think that as we go forward, there will probably need to be some regulations or policy discussions within different ministries to ensure that this is being used appropriately and that staff are trained and able to address the issues.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Manning for her comments. One of the things that I just wanted to – I might be putting her a little bit on the spot here in terms of trying to quantify. She had great experience in her former position before becoming an MLA. I, of course, have spoken to this, and she just finished speaking on the supports in the background. I'm wondering if she might be able to make a quick comment around the cases that she has dealt with over the years. You know, if there were supports in place at those times, were they enough? How many cases may have possibly fallen through because those background supports, the funding, weren't there to essentially get those families out?

10:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. There definitely were situations where trying to access a shelter bed for someone was definitely a struggle, even in Edmonton. Sometimes they're full. We would look at other neighbouring communities to see if we could find somewhere for someone to go, and sometimes those would be full. That was part of the reason why the legislation was introduced around being able to find apartments and get emergency funds for leaving domestic violence situations. It was because getting someone into an apartment so that their kids could come if they had, you know, teenage children, or different things like that, was always a struggle.

I think the other piece, though – and I know I've said this numerous times in the House – is that when we're talking about families, the complexity of these files, it's never black and white. There are many times when the discussion around intervention services and what supports should be in place: like, those conversations take a long time to figure out. You're looking at the safety of children, but you're also looking at trying to be the least intrusive and all the dynamics that go with that. You know, nobody wants to bring a child into foster care. I mean, ideally we would look at trying to find a family member or someone that the children can stay with so that they're with their family.

Domestic violence is extremely complicated partly because of the judgment that's attached to it, you know, the assumption about: well, why don't people just leave? It's not that easy. The relationships that people have with each other are complex, and you're dealing with a lot of emotions. People in domestic violence situations love their partners, whether they are in healthy relationships or not. So you're not only dealing with and talking about safety issues; you're also dealing with human emotions. The struggle with this is that even with this piece of legislation, even though information is there, it doesn't necessarily mean that that

relationship will be terminated or that relationship will end. If that was the case, we wouldn't have children in care, we wouldn't have domestic violence, and we wouldn't have substance abuse issues. We wouldn't have all of the different things that we talk about in this House when it comes to social issues if we could just fix everything and wave a magic wand.

This is a good step. There are lots of different things that we can be doing. Again, it's just a matter of expanding services, making sure that people have supports – income supports, housing, shelter beds – addressing, maybe, the issue when it comes to teenage children. Like, where do these families go? Can they access shelters? The variety of different services that are supported still need to be there. If not, they need to be expanded so that we can address even more issues. It's definitely complex, and there will never be an easy solution to any of these conversations that we have.

Again, I will support the bill with the caveat of some questions that I'd love to hear about from the Minister of Children's Services. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There are 20 seconds left under 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Shall I call the question? Would the hon. Minister of Community and Social Services like to close debate?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've had the opportunity today to listen to members in this House, and I've been able to listen to their diverse perspectives and the positive feedback. It's clear that there's tremendous support for this bill. I've heard the comments about there being too many bystanders and not enough people willing to intervene in situations when it's required. I've heard the comments indicating that the complexity of the response needs to meet the complexity of the problem, and I've heard the recommendations of engaging other ministries as we navigate the journey of operationalizing the regulations. That's a very important comment to be made, and I just want to assure everybody that we're cognizant of that and working very closely with related ministries to make sure that we address all of the complexities that need to be looked at.

I've heard the comment that the conversation around domestic violence isn't big enough, and I echo that sentiment wholeheartedly. I've also listened very clearly to the comments about the staggering social costs of domestic violence, the social costs to society, particularly to children and particularly to indigenous women, who are disproportionately represented in these statistics that we've been hearing. I've taken all of these comments and all of this feedback to heart, and I will definitely incorporate the learning and the feedback that I've received today as we engage in phase 2 of the stakeholder engagement. It's clear that more work needs to be done to ensure that this legislation meets the needs of Albertans. Of course, I commit to doing exactly that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I offer my gratitude and thanks to everyone in this House again for their feedback.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 18 Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019 (continued)

[Adjourned debate October 23: Mrs. Sawhney]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill?

Shall I call the question? All right. [interjections] Oh.

Hon. members, it's a good time to remind those wishing to speak to perhaps be a little bit quicker, before the question has been called. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak against Bill 18, the electricity statutes amendment act. I think it's important to remember how we got here, what a capacity market actually is, why it was introduced in the first place, why it was recommended by the AESO in the first place, and what the priority is in my speaking against the termination of the development of a capacity market.

I'm ideologically agnostic on the structure of a deregulated electricity market. We see a variety of them across North America and even in other jurisdictions. They have pluses and minuses in terms of how one structures a deregulated market. There are few useful comparisons to nonderegulated markets such as Ontario or other jurisdictions, B.C., between the structure of our electricity market and theirs because the existence of deregulation since – well, the original conversation was started in 1996, and then 2001 was when most of the major changes were made. It just sets Alberta apart in many, many important respects.

Let's just go back a little bit in terms of what happened when electricity was deregulated in this province. It means that, essentially, consumers were paying real-time prices for the bulk of their electricity demand, and that can have really difficult effects for consumers. One of the reasons why you end up in that situation is because you have different entities exercising different levels of market power within the system. There are a variety of ways that other jurisdictions have dealt with this in the energy market side of a deregulated market. It became really clear to us over the course of some time. There was some volatility in 2015, in particular, that made us take a second look at the structure of the market.

11:00

We had run on a promise to Albertans that we would have a look at the volatility that was beginning to take hold within the energy-only market and some of the really serious concerns that the system operator, consumer advocacy groups, and others had about the structure of the system. That's why the AESO began looking at a parallel capacity market functioning alongside the energy-only market and began that work in 2013. This is, again, why I sort of go back to how, you know, this is a pretty ideologically agnostic thing. If you're going to be in a deregulated electricity market, then you're going to just have to make particular choices within that rubric that best protect consumers and that best reflect the other circumstances in which we find ourselves. One of those circumstances was the phase-out of coal-fired electricity, that was passed at the federal level in 2012, and the sunset of PPAs in the early 2020s as well. I believe they're all done by 2021.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I'll just go back to some of my own interactions with this file. I remember being given a list, probably in the early summer of 2015, of all the coal plants that were being shut down as a result of Stephen Harper's coal regs in 2012 and a number of other factors, PPAs and so on. I remember saying to people, to officials and others: "So what's the plan? What's the plan for replacing this generation? What's the plan for dealing with the market volatility? What's the plan for the communities that are going to be affected by this?" Bear in mind that we had brought in no coal regulations whatsoever. This is a conversation that's happening in the summer

of 2015 for regulations that had been consulted on and finally passed by 2012, but, I mean, the federal government began consulting on coal-fired regulations probably in around I would say 2009, 2010. Bear in mind, too, that the environment minister that handled the file around the federal cabinet table was none other than Jim Prentice, who then became the Premier here.

You know, everybody was well aware of what was happening in terms of Alberta's electricity sector and in terms of what was going to be happening to facilities like Keephills 1 and 2, but they still hadn't gazetted any regs around natural gas conversions, for example. Like, none of that work had been done, and people just looked at me blankly. I said: "So what's the plan? What's the plan for the communities? What's the plan for the volatility? What's the plan for the new generation? What's the plan for using all of the oversupply, the abundance of low-priced feedstock that is natural gas in Alberta?" The natural gas sector was even at that point hurting. People just looked at me blankly. There was no plan.

Inasmuch as this has any bearing on the introduction of renewables and the overall climate leadership plan – it doesn't, really. It's more about taking volatility out of the system, and not just for the reasons of consumer protection but also to ensure that we're creating the right market conditions to bring in new generation capacity. With the price of electricity at that time and in the subsequent months and years being so low, the economic case for bringing on new generation was quite weak. There needed to be much more of a sort of firm set of circumstances in which companies could make their investment decisions in order to have the stability of supply. But with stability of supply comes stability of price, to a certain extent, and transitioning the electricity market to respond to a number of public policy decisions that predated our government, in some cases by two decades and in some cases by a decade. That was what this was about.

This was also about taking advice from experts. You know, there are a number of expert papers that I could commend to the House. We could all, you know, take several days of our time to read about market design. You could go onto the AESO website and get your first tutorial about how the electricity system works. Then you can dive right into a number of econometric analyses that have been put out to weigh the pros and cons of an electricity-only market versus a capacity market. We can all do that. It's all very complex stuff.

But, really, what this was about was taking that advice from experts, that was given to us on an enormously complex file, to accomplish what was essentially the priority. The priority was a cleaner grid in response to the 2012 Harper regulations, stability of supply, achieving some of our lowest cost greenhouse gas emissions reductions by dealing with the plants that were to be in operation between 2030 and 2060, and dealing with the volatility that we had heard about from consumers. You know, I would challenge anyone to go out there and do a focus group on finding any kind of love for the early years of deregulation. You will find very few Albertans who were much enamoured of those early years of price spikes. They weren't interested at all.

I mean, some of that stuff happened because you had an overconcentration of market power, essentially, in the energy-only market. You know, if we are to move forward with capacity market termination, it would seem to me that there are a number of questions that must be answered while or if we do that. Now, I'm not sure that this government is prepared to answer those questions, because as far as I can tell, they haven't even received the proper advice yet. Their deadline for advice on issues related to energy-only and ancillary services markets in order to address concerns over price volatility and degree of market power: that advice is due from the AESO to the Department of Alberta Energy's review on November 29, 2019. That's not now. This government doesn't even

have the right advice in place to know how to structure this bill. If there are any other pieces that they can deal with within this legislation to provide certainty around the energy-only market, they don't have the answers to those questions, so we're well and truly, Mr. Speaker, "Seat of pants, meet flight" on this one.

The other piece that I've heard this government talk a lot about is protection – I haven't heard them talk about protection of consumers, actually. That was the point I was trying to make. You know, a properly functioning market, Mr. Speaker, in some way, shape, or form should have long-term contracts between commercial entities that are doing forward contracting. This has not previously happened in Alberta, and we could enable that within this legislation. What would ensure that consumers are not exposed to real-time price risk is mandating forward contracting to happen for both load-serving entities and large consumers, that they procure some portion of their load forward on a continuous basis.

Then generators can use that long-term contract to secure financing to construct new generation. The big thing, Mr. Speaker, that people need to realize is that that was the main driver behind the creation of the capacity market. Nobody was able to get financing for a new natural gas plant based on historically low electricity prices and even with a lot of the volatility. That was one of the reasons why many in the sector came to us and said that we need to examine this. That was why the AESO was concerned, too, around new generation. Why? Because, again – let's trace it back – you have a number of coal plants reaching their end of life under 2012 coal-fired regulations.

You know, that contracting, that forward contracting that will then remove some of the risk for investors in new generation as opposed to putting that risk on the public – and consumers can be protected without having to enter into 20-year contracts on their own, which is obviously not practical for most of us – will not happen without a mandate for utilities to procure on behalf of consumers. We need to look out for them. This is one way that the government could write some language into this bill at this point to deal with what will inevitably be part, I believe, of the advice that the AESO gives the Department of Energy.

**11:10**

There are a number of other pieces that this government could put forward in this bill, thoughtful amendments or at least ways to open up the possibility of protecting consumers rather than throwing them to the wolves of volatility. They haven't done that. This is just simply: "NDP bad. This was a bad idea. We're going to repeal this because we listened to a couple of our billionaire friends or millionaires or whatever." A very small handful of companies can then continue to ride the market and ride those price spikes. Price spikes are nice for them. Maybe they can buy a new car after playing around on the market a little bit and generating some nice quarterly returns for shareholders. The rest of us, actually, are paying for that on our monthly bills. That was exactly what the capacity market was designed to take away, in addition, like I said, to ensuring that we had an orderly introduction of new generating capacity and that we had a competitive environment for new generation, too.

I think that's the other really important piece, that one of the ways that you end up with decent electricity prices on the other end is that you have companies that are actually competing against one another to ensure that the lowest cost generation is able to secure financing and come onto the market and bid into the pool at the lowest price possible. You don't want people building large or inefficient plants. You don't want people bidding in at high prices because they paid too much to build their plants. That's not what you want. You want

to use the market to be able to achieve the outcome, which is good prices for consumers.

The way that this is structured right now, where it appears that we're listening to a small group of folks who really, really want to make a lot of money . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments from my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-West. In particular, I think she is shedding a lot of light on the decisions, the consultations, and the research that went into the decision to move over to a capacity market. I appreciate her experience, having been part of those discussions as a cabinet member and really understanding what went behind the decisions and the thoughtfulness about that and how the intent was really about looking out for Alberta consumers and having a long-term interest in stability in our electricity market. I'm wondering if the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West would continue to share her thoughts based on her experience having been involved with this matter.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, with about four minutes left.

**Ms Phillips:** Sure. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think that when you have a number of different pieces moving, the first thing you need to do is kind of understand what the priority is in terms of structuring your electricity market. For us, the priority was phasing in new generation in a way that made it more stable and fair for average consumers.

I'm worried about what my constituents tell me on a daily basis, and not just my constituents who are now hedging against future volatility by putting solar panels up on their roofs, which many are, but also larger, industrial-power consumers who remember very well the days of deregulation and riding that roller coaster and how incredibly difficult that made life for business.

One of the stories that Mayor Spearman tells a lot is from when he was manager of the Black Velvet plant over in the industrial area of Lethbridge. He was one of the really early outspoken opponents of deregulation because of how difficult it made managing the expenditures out of that plant. He will tell anyone who will listen how difficult that was and how difficult it made life for business in the early 2000s.

You know, I think the last piece that I'll talk about here is that electricity grids are decarbonizing around the world because these are our lowest cost emissions reductions. If you believe in climate change – well, I'm sorry. If you understand the science of climate change, because science doesn't care if you believe in it or not, if you understand physics, basic, super basic, like my 10-year-old understands it, then you're going to look at where your lowest cost emissions reductions are, right? Regulatory solutions such as what was put forward by Mr. Scheer and rejected ultimately by the electorate are generally high cost per tonne abatement solutions. You're going to want to look for your lowest cost GHG reductions.

Across the world and certainly in Canada your lowest cost GHG reductions – and to be clear, this was appreciated by the Harper cabinet, who brought in the first, 2012 coal-reduction rules – are going to be, generally speaking, in the electricity grid, not just in the phasing out of coal but also in new technologies with natural gas, new and emerging technologies having to do with storage. I would encourage anyone here to go and tour some of the Enmax facilities downtown and some of the interesting things that they're doing there. Then also give your systems operator a mandate for

efficiency and managing your increased load growth through efficiency, because energy efficiency is actually an energy source. It should be thought of as an energy source.

It's important to remember that this is happening around the world. The lowered cost of renewables and storage technologies and smart grid technologies means that there is a lot of investment interest in this area. There's a lot of opportunity for economic diversification and for companies to de-risk a lot of their future costs by investing in those technologies now. Certainly, we've seen this with a number of companies procuring on a private basis long-term contract renewals. We've seen Google, Amazon do this south the border, and you're seeing some of these arrangements happening up here now, too.

What you want is an electricity system that can respond to these new realities. Electrification, essentially, along with energy efficiency are the two solutions that are both the cheapest and the most readily available for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, because climate is real.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to this matter? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just following up on some of the comments that the hon. member mentioned, I wanted to speak a little bit about the history of the capacity market in Alberta and why we felt that this was something important that we did under our government and why we've got some questions for the current government about why they would want to move backwards on this issue.

I mean, the reason that we changed to the capacity market was, obviously, to enable the transition to an electricity market that met the goals set in our climate leadership plan, which was to transition off coal and increase renewable energy in the energy mix. I think that's something that we can all agree is important. It's important for reducing our carbon emissions. It's also moving towards a greener future for Alberta, recognizing that solar and wind are something that can be done, that is being done in this province, and that there's actual investment that is currently looking to be invested in Alberta around these things.

Of course, we wanted to make sure that we had the ability to make renewable energy cost-effective and to stimulate the investment in the province. In the beginning of October AESO revisited its forecast for Alberta for renewables, stating that Alberta is now expected to fall short of its renewable targets because of the changes in the electricity market. AESO began its work on evaluating the sustainability of the electricity market in 2013, and they determined that they would recommend a capacity market.

I find it interesting that, you know, now we see this government is asking AESO to go back and re-evaluate and give different advice on a deadline of November 29, 2019. We're only giving them six weeks to come back. Although they've already given advice to this government – and they gave advice to the previous governments around what they felt was an appropriate electricity market – the government is now asking for a different opinion, which I guess should have some concerns for Albertans.

**11:20**

The issue that we have here is that part of the conversation is about protecting consumers. It's about protecting Albertans and making sure that Albertans aren't paying outrageous amounts of money for their basic needs. You know, the government currently likes to talk about the carbon tax and how they feel that people had to pay more. Well, my question would then be: why would you look

at reviewing an electricity market that is going to put and download the cost onto Albertans? This will create a market that can charge whatever rate they so choose to consumers.

Instead of having a cap and Albertans being able to know what their month-to-month costs are going to be, this will now create instability in the market. It will create fluxes. It could create outages. It could create a variety of different things. It doesn't work us towards a greener economy and look at wind and solar and the variety of hydro options that we could be looking at within the province because it doesn't support the investment to come into the province.

AESO also recommended that the reason we would implement a capacity market was to be able to deal with the global growth rates of renewables. Again, this is about Alberta moving forward and not backwards. Looking at the fact that there are other jurisdictions in Canada, there are international jurisdictions that are moving to more renewable resources when it comes to developing their energy and their electricity – yet we see again that this government wants to move us backwards and take away the option and the stimulus for investment when it comes to green energy.

When we were in government, we worked with the Alberta Electric System Operator, who showed us that the capacity market is the best choice to deliver reliable energy, green environmental performance, reasonable cost to electricity consumers, economic development, and the lowest transition risk, so they recommended that we adopt the capacity market.

Before our reforms, the market had less consumer protections and had economic withholdings. The capacity market was a good tool to ensure that the coal phase-out worked smoothly, and it's already saved three times the emissions of Vancouver. The energy-only markets are more volatile and less reliable than capacity markets, and we've seen brownouts in Alberta before.

[Mr. Jones in the chair]

Around 2016 investors were rather negative towards investing in the Alberta electricity market. A capacity market has been seen by some as a market design that would look at the long-term contracts such as Ontario has made, and they were more attracted to them. In 2012 they were very optimistic about the energy-only market, but it seemed to very strongly depend on the short-term market conditions and the long-term forecasts.

Alberta has also hit their retail price caps several times, in April 2018, July and September 2018, December 2018, February 2019, as well as October 2018, according to the Alberta Utilities Commission.

Ontario is using a long-term contract energy market. The model that we had introduced was going to be different than that one, and it wasn't going to have the same negative impacts as we've seen in Ontario.

Now, the government side has made comments about, you know, consultation and how it's important, and they talk to Albertans, and they hear from Albertans. Well, I guess the question that I have is: where is the evidence around the consultation around this issue? You've given AESO a deadline of November 29 to provide advice, which means that the consultation has been probably quite limited. I'm sure that Albertans would love to have some feedback on whether or not they want a price cap and what they would like to see their electricity market look like.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

In saying that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move an amendment. I move on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View that the motion for second reading of Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes

(Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 18, Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

We will take a few moments while we pass all the copies around to the House and, of course, bring some to the table immediately.

Thank you, hon. members. Going forward, this amendment will be referred to as REF1.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, should you choose to continue, you have eight minutes, 45 left. Please continue.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that I read it into the record before it was handed out. Do you want me to read it again, or are you fine?

**The Acting Speaker:** I actually would, if that’s okay.

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah. I move on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View that the motion for second reading of Bill 18, Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 18, Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I just want to speak to the importance of consultation. Of course, we’ve seen a movement in this Legislature since this new government has taken over around changing our standing orders to speak to referring things to committee for consultation, for review. We recently saw that with private members’ business and the fact that, you know, they wanted to make sure that there was clear analysis and consultation done. Well, this is a good example of the government walking the walk when they’re talking the talk, and sending this back to committee, and having a very good and concrete consultation on an issue that will impact everyday Albertans, every single Albertan, will impact future investment in this province, will impact economic diversification in this province, will impact jobs in this province, which is something that I believe this government likes to talk quite often about. It might actually even increase some jobs in this province, which I know the government would like to see happen at some point.

I do believe that consultation is extremely important. I think it’s important that Albertans be allowed to come and tell the committee about what they feel is in their best interest as we move forward on this legislation. But I also think it’s important when we look at the industry in itself and hear from the industry, because the government side will say: “Well, the industry has been talking to us. They’re looking at this. This is what they want.” Yet when we were in government, we had validators from the industry saying the opposite.

I will read a couple of different quotes to support the capacity market, in a sense. Dawn Farrell, the Calgary-based chief executive officer of power producer TransAlta Corporation, hailed the overhaul as a courageous decision by the previous government: this opens up our opportunities to invest both in our existing assets and new assets as we move forward. That might be someone that you

think should come to the committee and chat with us about whether or not we look at changing this bill and moving away from capacity markets.

**11:30**

Another one that I have is:

We welcome the clear roadmap emerging with [the previous Premier’s] announcement today of Alberta’s commitment to support the conversion of coal-fired plants to gas.

It is a timely signal to the market that financial [clarity] and stability are necessary to attract new investment, and will help generators ensure competitive electricity costs for businesses and customers as Alberta’s economy begins to recover.

TransAlta has already completed a significant amount of work on the logistics and timing of plant conversions. Accelerating TransAlta’s coal transition, while ramping up our renewables, including hydro, wind and solar, are critical to [helping] Alberta [be] competitive. We look forward to being active participants in the transition.

Capital Power said that a capacity market would encourage not only his company to resume investment in Alberta but probably get interest from larger North American and European producers. I would highly recommend that, you know, Capital Power be invited to be consulted with at the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

Another one would be AltaLink.

New capacity will be needed to back up renewables in Alberta as it transitions to a cleaner energy future. We have seen the [previous] government take steps to ensure low costs for Albertans by requiring new generation be sited near existing transmission, by offering long-term contracts and by focusing on universal, or grid-scale, projects. We are confident the [previous] government will continue on this path and find the lowest cost way to add new capacity for Albertans.

Maybe AltaLink would like to come to Resource Stewardship and discuss what they see the future of the electricity market looking like in this province.

**Western Interstate Energy Board:**

The Western Interstate Energy Board applauds the [previous] Government of Alberta’s decision to transition to an electricity capacity market framework. This transition is consistent with the North American trend to decarbonize the electricity grid, attract needed generation investment and jobs, and provide reasonably priced power, all while maintaining electric grid reliability that individuals, families and businesses [can] depend on. Alberta is an important part of the western interconnected electricity system, and the co-operative efforts to enhance the economy and well-being of western states and provinces. Moving to a capacity market will further these aims.

Maybe we should invite Western Interstate Energy Board to come to Resource Stewardship and talk about how they feel about this bill.

I think that I’ve given a couple of examples where it’s very clear that the industry has supported looking at capacity markets in the past. This speaks to why it’s so important that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship actually be allowed to consult on this legislation with Albertans, with businesses, and with the investors that are going to come to Alberta.

If you want to be able to demonstrate that you’ve done good critical thinking on this legislation, that you actually have thought through the process instead of asking for new recommendations for November 29 – well, you said November 29, 2019. How about you have a meeting next week and talk about Resource Stewardship and get some consultation started? You’ve given a deadline of November 29. It’s in the legislation, so consult. You can’t just be consulting with one group of people and being, like: well, they told

us this; therefore, it must be done. You have to consult with everybody: Albertans, businesses, investors. I've given you three examples of organizations that maybe should come and be on the record and be clear on what they're telling this government around how they actually feel about the capacity market.

Again, you represent your constituents. Your constituents should have a voice around whether or not they should have price hikes in their electricity market, whether or not they should have to pay for a decision that is truly being based on the fact that the previous government started it, and therefore we must move backwards because anything that the previous government did, in this current government's opinion, must be undone, apparently. Instead of being ideological about this, maybe do some research and show Albertans that you are willing to listen, that you're willing to consult, and have this sent to committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anybody choose to take that opportunity.

Going forward, then, are there any hon. members looking to speak to REF1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this referral motion, because I'm very concerned about this bill. As I say, it simply does not pass the smell test. The government has a silk bag with gold written on the outside and the essence of manure radiating from the inside. I'm very concerned about that because on the outside it appears that they are attempting to respond to evidence or conversations they've had in the community, yet not that long ago I was sitting in the cabinet with many other people receiving exactly the opposite recommendations from completely impartial people. It wasn't like we came and asked for a move to the capacity market; it was directed, largely from the AESO to us, that we should do this.

In fact, in their October 2016 report, Alberta's Wholesale Electricity Market Transition Recommendation, the AESO said:

The combination of increased renewables and a general global trend of investors and capital away from investing in markets with significant revenue uncertainty meant that the EOM [the energy-only market] is unlikely to deliver an acceptable level of reliability going forward. Even changes to the EOM are unlikely to deliver on the objectives.

I think it's very suspicious that in 2016 the AESO was giving us very specific recommendations to move toward a capacity market. Are we saying, on the government side of the House, that AESO was acting in some devious, nefarious manner to deceive the government of the day as to information that they should use to move forward? That's a pretty bold claim by the government about a respected provincial organization.

I'm very concerned that now, since they've taken government, all of these reports and many other statements made by industry leaders, not only in Alberta but across North America, suddenly have all disappeared. They all changed their minds one day. I'm very concerned that we ended up in this place, that we're getting recommendations from the professionals who do the assessments one day that say that we should move to a capacity market to ensure stability for our community, and I am now being led to understand somehow that the previous government was either being misled or perhaps even specifically lied to by hundreds of executives around the province of Alberta. This does not pass the smell test on any level whatsoever.

It's very important that we send this back to committee in order to have a chance to ask these very people: why is it that you have

made a recommendation one day and suddenly appear to be, you know, not supporting your own recommendation shortly thereafter? I can tell you that I certainly arrived at a place of suspicion about whether or not this is a bill intended to provide appropriate services to the province of Alberta or whether it's simply a bill to manifest a rigid, fundamentalist ideology regarding free markets.

I spent a little bit of time last night piercing that false narrative that had been created by the opposite side of the House, that somehow the free market has been allowed to and been successful in developing the energy industry in this province. I demonstrated last night that there have been dozens of interventions by government that not only made it successful but probably were the only reasons why our energy market became so successful in the province of Alberta.

In this case, I believe, again, that this is an important area where government needs to take responsibility for what is being provided to Albertans, and the only way to do that is for us to properly meet with people who have the information that's necessary. There's clearly confusion here. They're clearly not acting on all of the publicly available information that has been provided by our respected agencies like AESO and the CEOs of major energy producers in this province.

**11:40**

We know that this government believes in referral to committees, by the way, because they introduced a bill in the spring session to force all private members' bills to go to committee before they come into the House. Ideologically, they fundamentally think it's the right thing to do. Why are they not acting on their own belief system at this particular time? Again, there's a smell question about what the intent is here although, you know, the intent of moving all private members' bills to committee obviously was a direct attempt to fundamentally subvert democracy. So I guess we know that there may be darker reasons why they choose to do that at some times and to not be willing to do it at other times. I'm very concerned about this.

Now, the reason why we want to move to having a further consultation around this is that the capacity market clearly does some things that the energy-only market does not do, and I heard yesterday both the minister and the Member for Calgary-Glenmore talk about some of the reasons why they were choosing to move in this direction. The free market they mentioned, but I pierced that one yesterday, so today I want to talk about a different piece that's of concern, and that is that there was concern that we would be paying people for their infrastructure, not for the delivery of energy but, rather, for the development of the structures that would provide capacity at the time that was necessary. They said that they didn't think that was the right thing to do: we should only be paying for actual, delivered goods – that is, in this case, electricity – and not for the infrastructure.

Yet I find a certain duplicity in that argument. The reason why I say that is because it was actually a Conservative government in this province that proposed that we separate out in our electrical bills the use of gas or electricity, separate from the transmission and distribution services in our electrical bill. That was a Conservative move, originally under Premier Klein, and the argument at that time was that even though you may not use a lot of electricity at a particular time, you still needed that infrastructure, that transportation and distribution system, in order to be able to use it at the few times you might be in need of using it. Therefore, you should pay a fair share of that infrastructure in order to receive the goods that you want to receive at the end.

I have an example. A good friend of mine, Jim, once brought me a bill to show it to me. Jim is one of those guys you really admire

because he lives his life deeply in terms of his values, and he showed me that he had reduced his gas use in this particular month down to one dollar's worth of use of gas, yet the bill itself was over \$25. I looked at it and said: why is that? He was paying the cost of the creation of the capacity to deliver his one dollar. He had to pay the transportation and distribution costs to have that electricity arrive at his house, and there's no way he could reduce that. He couldn't say: well, how can I only pay a portion of the transportation because I only use a portion of the gas? If there was a unified bill, if you could pay one price for electricity and reduce your use down to a little, then you would be paying only a little bit toward that infrastructure.

But the Conservative government was the one who said that that does not work for them in terms of their ideology. If you're on the system, you pay. It doesn't matter how much you use it. So the big users are paying exactly the same kind of transportation costs as the small users because you said that you believed that we should develop capacity in this province to ensure that the capacity is there whenever it is necessary for everyone. That's a Conservative philosophical stance. Here you are doing exactly the opposite. After having introduced this system into the province of Alberta that requires only consumers to pay for capacity, now that we're suddenly saying, "Okay; let's make sure that the capacity actually helps consumers by ensuring stability in pricing," all of a sudden you abandon your principles, and you say: "No; people shouldn't be paying for the establishment of infrastructure in this province. We should only be paying for the energy that they submit. That is an energy-only market."

That kind of contradiction is something which I think reeks of a secondary intent, and that's what I'm concerned about. The reason why we need to go to committee is because we need a chance to bring some sunlight to this odorous bill. We need to be able to shine upon it the vision of all of Alberta to ensure that there isn't some reason other than the good well-being of the citizens of the province of Alberta in establishing this choice. I don't see it right now. I don't see that it makes sense for us to move in this particular direction. It contradicts everything else the Conservatives have done in this province in terms of ensuring that the infrastructure is built by citizens and paid for by citizens. Now suddenly, when we say that citizens should then get some benefit out of that by having stability in terms of pricing – oh, no – our old values disappear, and we have a new set of values. I'm suspicious as to who that is that you are serving by moving in this particular direction.

As I said earlier, the October 2016 report from the AESO, Alberta's Wholesale Electricity Market Transition Recommendation, was not a partisan suggestion by an NDP government. It was the experts in the field telling us, as they did their analysis and looked forward, that we needed to move in a particular direction. If you're not receiving evidence from the experts in the field in terms of your decision-making, who are you receiving evidence from? That's what we need to find out in referring this to committee. We need to know who you're in bed with because it isn't with the evidence; it isn't with the experts in the field. It isn't with the structures of policy-making in the government such as the AESO, so it must be with somebody else.

The fact that you have actually introduced a bill into this House to force other people's bills into committee but do not wish to have your own bill go to committee is something that reveals again a hostility toward other members of this House, a hostility toward the traditions of democracy in this House. That has to be brought to light. Again, we need to put sunshine on that to reveal what is going on in the community. I'm very disappointed to see us in this place.

I had a notice that Terry Boston, the former executive vice-president of the Tennessee Valley Authority and former CEO of

PJM interconnection, who knows a lot about this, had a lot to say about it. I'll report it later because I've run out of time.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has risen to speak under 29(2)(a).

11:50

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually do plan to speak as well although I hesitate to ever follow the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford because his high energy – pardon the pun – is tough to follow, for sure, on this topic. I really appreciated his insight, especially his historical overview because I was younger when some of these moves to deregulation happened under Klein, in particular. I would love for the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to just continue to share what he was about to say there, and if he could again just remind the House why it is so troubling that we're moving forward with this and why we need to urge the House to move this to referral because, again, consultation is so critically needed.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I was just saying that Terry Boston, the vice-president of PJM interconnection, said:

I spent the last eight years of my career as the CEO of PJM Interconnection, which has a mature capacity market structure. Private investors from around the world have built over 30,000 megawatts of new generation in PJM under this market structure, which kept the lights on at stable prices. Investors have shown a growing reluctance to invest in the riskier energy-only market designs around the world, preferring the price stability and revenue certainty provided by a capacity market structure. I am confident this model will work well in Alberta too, ensuring future stability in your admirable and smooth transition to a lower carbon electricity system.

It seems to me that here again we have somebody with deep levels of expertise making very clear statements about pieces that are important to Albertans: stability of prices, investment and, therefore, the creation of jobs, and talking about how important it is that we have a smooth transition to a lower carbon electricity system, which would be enhanced by this capacity market. All of these things are given to us by people who clearly know more than anybody in this House about the nature of the delivery of energy at a provincial level.

This is why I am suspicious of the intent of this bill and why I believe that we need to move to committee. I think that if we invite people with this level of expertise and with this level of knowledge not only about how to effectively run but also to build energy markets, we will find that the recommendations by this government lack some of the knowledge and virtue that they would like to pretend they have. This is why I believe that essentially we have here a silk purse inscribed with the word "gold" but reeking of manure. I think that when that happens, all of us need to be suspicious and not accept the pig in a poke and instead choose to be responsible with the expectations of the citizens of the province of Alberta and ensure that we do the right thing because it is the right thing to do, not because we have some fundamentalist, ideological reason for moving ahead, which blinds us to the evidence that is available to us and blinds us to good decision-making.

I'd like to thank the member for the question. I will now cede the floor for her opportunity to speak to this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Forty seconds left under 29(2)(a).

Seeing no one, are there any members who would like to speak to the referral? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.



**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to rise and speak to this amendment for referral to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. Again I very much thank the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for his comments. If only I could invoke the animal metaphors and the imagery that he is able to invoke, I would be honoured.

I'm really proud of the fact – and I know I don't have a lot of time here – that the NDP government changed the way that Alberta pays for energy providers to make it more fair and to make it more stable for the average consumer in our province. They made that decision based on advice from the experts, based on consultation, hearing from them on how to protect consumers and how to move forward with the modernization of our electricity market. As we know, this UCP government wants to reverse this change.

You know, this is a huge concern for me for a number of reasons. As the Member for Edmonton-Glenora noted, we all heard a lot at the doors about affordability countless times. I know I've shared it here. A lot of folks in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood do struggle with affordability. We have some of the highest rates of child poverty in the province in my neighbourhoods. I worry very much what this will mean, what the impact will be on my neighbours. It's a move back to deregulation. It's a risky experiment that has been proven in countless jurisdictions to cause challenges. As I said, these are the days that I remember as a youngster under the Klein era, which my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford talked about so aptly. This is a shift to those neoliberal models in which the most vulnerable are hurt and hit the hardest. I worry very much about the impact that it will have on Albertans.

I know I heard the other day one of the members opposite saying that we are fearmongering. I will say in this House that I'm quite certain that we will see these impacts and that this isn't fearmongering at all. Of course, we've got some evidence from other jurisdictions to back that up as well. Capacity markets are better at ensuring reasonable costs to consumers. They've been proven to offer less price volatility.

Our government's move to an electricity market based on capacity would have ensured that Albertans have access to safe, reliable, sustainable, affordable electricity. This was something that I could be proud of as a candidate running and now obviously as an elected official to offer my constituents that certainty. We're quite certain that this move by the UCP could cost some of my constituents 10 times more on their electricity bills. Yet we've got a government here that's willing to give away \$4.5 billion to big corporations while, again, the most vulnerable and the folks who

are, you know, average Albertans just struggling to make ends meet will be hit the hardest.

It's not just the financial impacts, as has been discussed a little bit today. I worry greatly about the larger environmental impacts as well. I can actually think about some of those same folks in my neighbourhood who benefited from the carbon levy rebate. They're, again, going to be hit harder by this, and with the end of the climate leadership plan, obviously they're not getting that rebate, and we've got a government here that's now destroying any of that progress that we made on economic diversification.

Many of us do remember brownouts and blackouts, you know, even just a few years ago, and it's quite fair to predict that these same brownouts and blackouts will happen without a capacity market in place. When there's heavy demand under an energy-only market, particularly when it's the summer and there's hot, humid weather, the power grid is stressed. Again, we're not just making this up. We can point to Texas as a clear case study in what happens when you've got this sort of market in place. For instance, Texas experienced brownouts for a number of years, as well as rolling blackouts in 2011. Prices just maxed out at \$3,000 per megawatt hour, which is huge. Again, I'm concerned about the broader impacts here.

Think about the impact on renewables as well. Again, I'm so proud. I heard so much at the doors from my constituents in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood about their support of our investments in renewables: 800 per cent growth in solar, for instance. Those are things to be very proud of. I very much worry about what will happen to investment in renewables under a number of measures by this government but as well by moving to an energy-only market.

One thing that I would like to do is just reiterate the importance of moving this to the standing committee for further consultation. It's almost a warning to this government to recognize that as other members on this side of the House have spoken about today, you didn't clearly campaign on this, and I do worry . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Seeing the time, under Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, October 23, 2019

Day 32

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration



## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Bilous  
Dang  
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Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

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Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
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Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
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Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
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Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
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Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
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### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
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Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this afternoon, visiting from the constituency of Camrose, welcome grade 6 and grade 9 students from Bashaw school.

Other school groups joining us: from the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods, l'école Frère Antoine Catholic school; and from Leduc-Beaumont, please welcome l'école Notre Dame grade 6 students. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also joining us in the galleries this afternoon, guests of the Minister of Seniors and Housing, are Danielle Zok and her father, Mr. Tony Zok, visiting from London, Ontario. Welcome. Please join in welcoming them.

Also, just a special note that a little bit later – they haven't joined us quite yet – there will be a number of folks from the public service, members of the public service, who are guests of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

### Members' Statements

#### Diwali

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, on October 27 we will join members of Hindu, Sikh, Jain, and Buddhist communities in Alberta, across Canada, and around the world to celebrate Diwali, Deepavali, and Bandi Chhor Divas. The holiday, known as the festival of lights, symbolizes the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance. Families and friends will gather to pray, exchange gifts, share meals, and light diyas in a spirit of hope.

Diwali is also a chance to honour the many communities that celebrate this occasion. Albertans of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist as well as the large South Asian diaspora shape our province better every day. There are a number of traditions associated with Diwali. Many people wear new clothing to thank Mahalakshmi for providing prosperity and good fortune, and firecrackers are set off in the evening. Traditional sweets such as diya-shaped sugar cookies and savory, light mini-samosas and puris are eaten as well as full meals. In the Sikh tradition, we celebrate this day as Bandi Chhor Divas, the day of liberation. The story of Bandi Chhor Divas is a reminder to look beyond oneself and to use the privilege that has been conferred by the Creator to aid those who are less fortunate.

Diwali reminds us to keep the lights in our lives and communities by dedicating ourselves to service and kindness to others. We all want peace and prosperity for our families and communities. Diwali is a time to reflect and act on how we can reach those goals. This message and the meaning behind Diwali reach beyond the Indian community.

#### Budget 2019

**Ms Ganley:** I can't believe what you say because I see what you do: in these days of increasing rhetoric this statement has become more important than ever. It's easy to be in support of something when all you have to do is say a few words or post a meme, but tomorrow we see the proof. Tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, is budget day, the day when the government will show us what their priorities

really are, the day when all the talking points fall away, and they must actually demonstrate what they think is and isn't important.

So far the government has shown only one priority. They rushed to give \$4.5 billion away to profitable corporations, money they admit has not created one single job. Sure wouldn't have been my first priority.

Here are some priorities I have for Calgary, just a small way for the UCP to demonstrate they have finally gotten their priorities straight and want to put Albertans ahead of profitable corporations: the green line and the Springbank dam, on the original timelines; an actual continuum of care for mental health and addictions instead of tired rhetoric and an abstinence-only model that's not supported by evidence; funding for enrolment growth for students, because investing in our children is an investment in our future; investment in economic diversification, because trickle-down doesn't work and certainly doesn't diversify; investment in affordable housing – it save lives, it prevents crime, and it saves money – court clerks, staff for the Calgary cancer centre, and, while we're at it, the \$16 million missing from Calgary's police grant; and finally, a continuation of the child tax benefit, because we cut child poverty in half. That's our legacy, and I would take it over a \$4.5 billion giveaway to profitable corporations any day.

#### South Sudanese Community Concerns

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** We all want our children to be healthy, happy, know that they are loved, and have every opportunity to thrive. It is why I was eager to join the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and the minister of social services as South Sudanese families gathered to demand better for their kids. They made the courageous journey of leaving their country of birth and everything they knew to seek a brighter future for their families, but now their community has been shocked by the loss of so many young lives. It was devastating to hear the stories of families that have lost their children to overdose and violence. One mother proudly wore a shirt with her son's graduation photo on it. He was a fellow Bishop McNally alumni.

However, in a room full of grief I felt the sense of determination and hope. This community is demanding better. It is why they have risen up as advocates for their children. I heard from the community that isolation is a major factor. How do we combat isolation? We get them involved, and we ourselves get involved. Parents, faith leaders, community members, youth-serving organizations, the Calgary police, local representatives, and youth gathered to start a conversation on how we do better. We all have a responsibility to reach out and care for young people. Government has a role to get behind initiatives like that. We also need leadership at the family level. We as adults need to have open conversations with our kids today.

There is a line in the movie *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*: he may have been your father, boy, but he wasn't your daddy. We can't be parents in name only. We need to be there with our kids, in the highs and the lows, to expose the lie of isolation that drives so many of our kids into self-destructive paths. This is why I ran. I wanted to see better for young people in our community, and I look forward to continuing this conversation.

Thank you.

#### Islamic Heritage Month

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, my son Alonso is in the public gallery, so to him, through you: I love you, son.

It gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today on behalf of my caucus colleagues to celebrate Islamic Heritage Month in our

province. Last year our government proclaimed October as Islamic Heritage Month in recognition of the significant contributions the Muslim community has made to Alberta since 1900. Muslims from across our province enrich our lives and contribute to the prosperity and heritage of our province through their outstanding achievements in many fields, including literature, mathematics, science, sports, and the arts.

This month offers all Albertans a wonderful opportunity to reflect on and learn more about the history of Islam in Alberta and Canada and the cultural diversity of Alberta's large Muslim community. I would also like to thank the directors and members of the many Muslim organizations that work in Alberta to counter racism and Islamophobia. Your dedication and hard work are sincerely and greatly appreciated.

Together let's celebrate the people that make our communities so unique and dynamic. To all my brothers and sisters in Islam as well as all Albertans: happy Islamic Heritage Month to all.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, perhaps we could all offer our special welcome to the hon. member's son.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West – East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to get a pin.

1:40

### Agriculture

**Mr. Neudorf:** Every Albertan knows the value that our farmers bring to our province and our economy. Farmers work extreme hours from planting to harvest to ensure that we are fortunate enough to have access to the highest quality food in the world. The benefits of a strong agricultural sector are well-known facts to most people who call our province home.

What some folks may not be aware of, however, is how vital Lethbridge is to ensuring our agricultural sector remains strong and vibrant. The area surrounding Lethbridge supports over 900 farms, generating farm receipts of approximately \$1.1 billion per year, building on assets of \$3.2 billion. Our fields yield potatoes, sugar beets, canola, corn, and pulse crops while also providing ample space to raise livestock and contribute significantly to our dairy and beef production. Lethbridge is also a clear innovator and hub in the agrifood processing sector. Most recently we celebrated Cavendish Farms' significant investment in a \$430 million frozen potato processing plant. This direct investment into our agrifood processing sector is the largest private investment in Lethbridge's history.

Mr. Speaker, the importance of our agriculture sector cannot be understated but especially cannot be understated in Lethbridge. We are open for business, and we are ready to lead in this industry. That is why we need governments that will stand up for industries on the global stage. To say that our agricultural sector has had a challenging time over the past few years is an understatement. The ban placed on Canadian meat imports by China this past summer directly harmed hundreds of Alberta meat producers, as have similar restrictions to our canola products. Here in Alberta we support our agricultural industries and work hard to ensure that we will not fail them. However, we need to demand more from our federal government, especially when Alberta's agricultural interests are under threat due to unresolved international diplomatic disputes.

Part of my reason for standing in this House today is to recognize the importance of our agricultural industry and our farmers, but I'm also standing to recognize how important it is that we challenge those who don't into action. Our farmers deserve governments that will stand up for them, Mr. Speaker, and I hope to do so.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has the call.

### Westend Seniors Activity Centre

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today to recognize the important contributions of the Westend Seniors Activity Centre in my community. I've had the honour of representing the centre and many of its members for the last four and a half years, and I've seen first-hand how important this community hub is to seniors and their families. Whether you are looking to stay active through their daily programming or just want to drop in for lunch, the centre is always bustling, and you are always among friends.

I was incredibly proud to join members of the board as they received the 2019 minister's seniors service award. Among over 50 nominations province-wide, WESAC was one of two organizations recognized with this award, and I truly couldn't think of a more deserving group of volunteers. Executive Director Haidong Liang, President Jay Pritchard, Vice-president Barbara Gibson, Treasurer Spurgeon Gammon, and all of the directors go above and beyond to serve the centre's over 2,000 members. With a wealth of knowledge and experience in the fields of gerontology, education, nursing, and more, the board understands the needs of seniors in our community when it comes to healthy aging, active living, and combatting the isolation that many seniors feel.

West Edmonton is incredibly lucky to have such an important community hub like WESAC. I have made many new friends at the centre and have learned so much from its members. I encourage all members of our community to visit the centre for one of their many holiday and cultural celebrations or on November 11 as we reflect and pay respect to those who have served our country.

Once again, I would like to thank the executive director, Haidong Liang, the board, and all of the centre's volunteers for making west Edmonton the best place to live for seniors and families alike, and congratulations on your well-deserved minister's seniors service award.

Thank you.

### Energy Industry

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I am deeply troubled by the villainization of Alberta's oil and gas industry. Under Trudeau's government we saw Alberta's energy industry attacked time and time again with bills C-69, the no more pipelines bill, and C-48, the export tanker ban, which blocks Alberta from exporting our resources but does nothing to stop tankers filled with oil from oppressive regimes sailing down the St. Lawrence or from Alaska down the west coast.

Our energy industry has been crippled by hostile activism, so today I want to highlight some facts that they missed. Albertan oil sands contribute only .15 per cent of global emissions. Last year total emissions from China and India were about 12,000 megatonnes, equivalent to about 150 Canadian oil sands. How is it reasonable for one to argue that Canada's oil sands are somehow a leading factor in contributing to climate change? This false narrative is extremely dangerous to Canada's economic and social well-being. We need a new form of humanitarian activism that is based on drawing these countries into a global response to climate change.

China, India, and developing countries continue to build coal plants. Canadian natural gas has the potential to displace coal as a primary source of power generation in these countries and lower global emissions. Canadian natural gas is some of the cheapest in the world, and when we block the export of this resource, we are

telling developing countries that they must transition without our help.

I am also extremely concerned that three parties in the federal election openly discussed phasing out the oil sands in Alberta. This means phasing out one of Canada's most valuable assets, which pays for pensions, roads, health care, and education and employs hundreds of thousands across Canada. It is time we stopped treating our resources as a burden and started opening our markets. I am proud that our Premier is standing up for Alberta's oil and gas industry, and I am proud to stand there right beside him.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I met with the hard-working, compassionate, and smart women of southern Alberta's FASD network. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder affects 36,000 Albertans who suffer from this preventable injury that results from prenatal exposure to alcohol and is a lifelong condition with no cure. It can have a wide range of effects, from memory and learning difficulties to impulse control and complex social difficulties.

The women of southern Alberta's FASD network shared two things with me. First, FASD is entirely preventable, and much work still needs to be done to communicate and educate Albertans that it's simply safest not to drink alcohol during pregnancy. The southern Alberta FASD network is actively engaged in this work.

Second, these women shared their concerns about the UCP's approach to providing services to those living with FASD. Specifically, they are concerned that this government will amalgamate their organizations under PDD, leaving clients without specifically targeted and co-ordinated services that improve their lives. The UCP election platform on pages 77 and 78 promises to do just that. The advocates that I spoke with fear that this means fewer services, less co-ordination, and a lower quality of life for those living with FASD and the families that help care for them.

The Lethbridge constituents I met with expressed their confusion as to why the UCP would meddle in a series of programs and funding that already work, are already stretched thin, and demonstrate increasing need.

On behalf of the southern Alberta FASD network and all those they serve, I call on this government and this minister to resist the urge to cut these valuable services or otherwise introduce chaos into the FASD programs and supports. Please, Mr. Speaker, don't let it be persons with developmental disabilities or the FASD networks that bear the brunt of UCP arrogance and lack of empathy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon would like to make a statement.

### Genesee Gas Pipeline Construction Contracts

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta provincial motto is "strong and free," and it reflects our desire as a people to be independent, capable of making our own choices. Albertans understand that strong societies are built by people who have the freedom to pursue their own economic self-interest. They understand that the goal is not economic equality but the freedom to pursue economic opportunity and to benefit from their hard work and wise choices.

Today in the constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon a large multinational company is building a natural gas pipeline to the Genesee power plant. This announcement was welcome news to the many service companies in my community that have barely survived the last five years. This project could mean the difference between

keeping their doors open, keeping people employed, and paying mortgages. They looked forward to bidding on third-party contracts, but their dreams were dashed when it became evident that there was not going to be a free and open bidding process. This billion-dollar company had hired a unionized Ontario-based company to build the pipeline for them. Now the many non-unionized local companies would be excluded from the bidding process. Many local companies came to my office frustrated that union politics appeared to be restricting their freedom to bid on third-party work.

Let me be clear. These companies only wanted a shot at placing their experience and capacity into the bidding process, and that was not happening. It appeared that out-of-province workers were signing up at local union halls and were being hired while experienced local workers were having to rent out their homes to the influx of outside workers and move in with relatives in order to make their own mortgage payments.

Where was the freedom to compete? Why could they not be given the opportunity to prosper off the resources that are being harvested and transported in their backyards and that would be used to light their homes? This is not some esoteric university economics exercise.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Federal-provincial Relations

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This Premier has raised the equalization formula as a matter he'll invite Albertans to weigh in on. Now, this is a complicated issue, and facts matter. Here are some of them. In 2007 the Harper government, of which this Premier was a part, changed the formula to give the province of Quebec more from equalization. In 2009 the Harper government, that this Premier was part of, made another change that cost Albertans well over a billion dollars every year. Will the Premier commit today that when he starts his public hearings, will they begin with an apology for his role in making the equalization formula even more unfair to Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, complete rubbish. In fact, the Harper government increased health transfers to Alberta by a billion dollars a year, and when the last equalization formula was set, we didn't have other provincial governments or Ottawa blocking and killing pipelines. But the Leader of the NDP just voted for a pipeline killer. She just voted for the party that campaigned against Alberta workers. She voted for the party that she said had thrown workers under the bus. She voted for the Leap Manifesto party. She voted for the leader who said: I'm firmly opposed to Trans Mountain, I've always been opposed to it, and I'll continue to fight against it. She was wrong to support that.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this Premier claims to love Canada in one breath and then stokes notions of separating in another. He has announced a panel of Albertans to look further into our role in Confederation, but even Conservative Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister said that he doesn't like listening to talk of separation from western Canadian friends of his. To the Premier: why won't you listen to your colleague and refocus on uniting Canadians instead of driving them apart?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's precisely in order to listen to Albertans that we will ask some prominent members of Alberta society to listen to Albertans and their rightful frustration about having gone through a federal campaign where this province became a punching bag for federal parties, including the NDP. Now, all

Albertans are asking for – and the NDP will never understand this – is a fair deal. What we're saying to the rest of the federation is: if you want to benefit from the resources that we develop in this province, then help us to get those resources to global markets instead of supporting parties like the NDP that are fighting to shut down pipelines.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, to be perfectly clear, the equalization formula that the Premier is screaming about is one that he wrote. If Albertans are angry, they should be angry at this Premier.

Now, another thing that will not bring this country together is this Premier's continued efforts to deflect the very real threat of climate change. In the federal election two-thirds of Canadians voted for a meaningful plan. This Premier and indeed his own staff have done nothing but mock Alberta citizens concerned about climate change. To the Premier: why won't you admit that your polarization plan is a dead end that's letting down Albertans and letting down Alberta's oil and gas?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, what we're hearing from the NDP today, what we're seeing in their vote for the federal NDP, what we saw by them participating in the so-called climate strike is that they decided to go back to being a fringe rump party in this province. That's why they got 11 per cent of the vote this week. You know, the climate strike they're talking about is committed to the immediate shutdown of the entire oil and gas industry, leaving all of our resources in the ground, opposition to every single pipeline, that would create economic devastation in this province. The mask has slipped. Now we can see that they have always been against Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, today I was joined by Albertans who will be paying the price in tomorrow's budget. I was joined by students, health care workers, parents, and persons with disabilities who are worried that the services they rely on have been put on the chopping block to pay for the Premier's zero-job, 4 and half billion dollar corporate tax giveaway. To the Premier: please explain to the people who came to the Legislature today – they're right up there in the gallery – why big corporations get billions and they get nothing.

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, they don't, Mr. Speaker. It's just a continuation of the NDP campaign to try to deceive Albertans. They tried it in the last campaign. You know what happened? They were first one-term government to be fired by Albertans. There is no, quote, \$4.5 billion giveaway. There is the job-creation tax cut. Why? Because we are in a jobs crisis bestowed on this province by the NDP. Economists, multiple credible economists, indicate that will create 55,000 new full-time private-sector jobs. [interjections] Instead of heckling job creation, they should be part of a plan to actually create new jobs in this province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Hon. members, we will have order.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Premier's little arrogant trip down memory lane is cold comfort to the health care aide in Vegreville that was laid off earlier this month and that joins us in the gallery. The Minister of Health has refused to do anything to help her or the 51 other workers laid off. The minister for status of women told her to go back to school even though the Advanced

Education minister is planning to hike tuition and cut postsecondary funding by 25 per cent. To the Premier: they're right up here; explain to the workers in Vegreville and right across this province why you aren't keeping them working and also are cutting off their access to further education.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to have the opportunity to meet with the workers from Century Park from Vegreville when they were able to come a few weeks ago to the Legislature. I thought it was a productive meeting. They had many questions for me. Just today we were able to reply to their questions through correspondence, and I thank them again for meeting with me and expressing their concerns throughout the process.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, this government moved to rush through a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway claiming that it would create jobs, but yesterday we saw the results. Husky made almost a quarter of a billion dollars from the corporate giveaway and then laid off a large number of Calgary workers. This corporate handout is not a jobs giveaway. Premier, can we expect no more no-jobs policies in tomorrow's budgets, or are you too busy stoking the fires of separation and undermining the principles of a united Canada to think of any?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, you know what stokes the fires of separation? It's federal parties who campaign against this province and its workers. It's federal parties trying to shut down this economy and push Albertans out of work, federal parties like the NDP, supported by that member, a party that was rejected in a historic electoral mandate. They got 11 per cent of the vote because they spent weeks campaigning against this province and Alberta jobs. When will they listen to Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has a question.

### Budget 2019 Consultation

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, stay tuned: that's all Albertans get from this Finance minister as they brace for this government's budget tomorrow, one we know will cut health care, education, and other services Albertans rely on. A hundred and eighty minutes was all this minister could spare to talk to Albertans about this budget during a tightly controlled telephone town hall that was full of, frankly, nothing, no details, no confirmation of funding for schools or hospitals. To the Premier: for the record, on the eve of this budget do you think this was an appropriate amount of consultation?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we spent five weeks consulting with Albertans nonstop during the last election campaign, and they gave this government the largest democratic mandate in our province's history to undo the massive damage to our economy, to jobs, and our province's finances inflicted by the NDP. We've spent the last six months listening to Albertans, and they've continued to tell us that it's time to stop kicking the can down the road, that we can no longer live off our credit card, that we can't spend money that we don't have, and that we need to make challenging decisions to get our fiscal house back in order.

**Mr. Bilous:** Clearly the Premier says one thing in this House and something else outside.

Now, Albertans can pay \$125 to the UCP campaign war chest for a seat at a fundraising breakfast being hosted by the Minister of

Finance this Friday, where it appears an actual conversation about provincial finances will occur. To the Premier: do all budget consultations hosted by this government require Albertans to sign up for a UCP membership and donate to your political party?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know where that member or his colleagues were on Alberta election day in April, but Albertans gave a very clear response to the consultation on the fiscal and economic direction of this party by over a million of them, for the first time in history, voting for a government that committed to balance the budget by growing the economy and restraining spending. That party left behind – they quadrupled the size of our debt. They had us on track to a hundred billion dollar debt, wasting \$4 billion a year in interest payments. We are not going to let the future of this province be jeopardized by reckless NDP fiscal policies.

**Mr. Bilous:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, one thing in this Chamber, another thing on the campaign trail.

The budget will be introduced tomorrow, and I have no doubt it's a done deal, in this government's mind. They'll attempt to ram it through this House and claim that the election was real consultation. If that's so, to the Premier: can you please point me to announcements you made in the campaign about cutting postsecondary by 25 per cent, moving to an American-style health care model, or throwing a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate handout that hasn't generated any jobs to date? Premier, the clock is ticking.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, this government will keep its platform commitments, on which we were elected. We will keep our word with Albertans, as will be evident in tomorrow's budget. But, you know, the member can take a look at the polling done by the government of Alberta on this budget. You know what Albertans are telling us overwhelmingly? To get our spending under control so that we stop mortgaging our future. They certainly agree. Albertans in those polls massively disagree with the NDP's alternative, which is to raise taxes on Albertans. No. We won't do that. We won't dig our hands deeper into Albertans' pockets. Instead, we'll get our spending under control.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

#### Calgary and Edmonton Finances

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In an op-ed published yesterday, the Minister of Municipal Affairs accused our two largest cities of spending recklessly without being able to provide any examples. When asked outside the Legislature on Tuesday to name an example of reckless spending, he couldn't. Perhaps the Premier can do the minister's job for him now. To the Premier: can you name one example of a project that the city council in Calgary wasted money on? Please be specific.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it is clear from the minister's opinion article that based on data, the two largest cities have increased both spending and taxes faster than inflation, economic growth, or population. That's the point he made, and that is statistically true. You know one of the reasons for that? Well, one of the reasons is the guy who just asked the question . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kenney:** . . . Alberta's worst ever Finance minister, who voted for massive spending increases and, year after year, tax increases. Albertans can't afford that kind of tax hike anymore. That's why that government was defeated in the last election.

**Member Ceci:** Distract, deflect, distract. You're coming after me because you can't do a thing for Calgary.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, clearly this Premier and this minister are trying to demonize the city councils in Edmonton and Calgary as they search for scapegoats to justify cutting infrastructure funding for municipalities. While I don't agree with every decision those councillors have made, I fear greatly that the Premier will do damage to our cities. To the Premier: which project will be on the chopping block for Calgary tomorrow? Will it be the green line, the Springbank dam, or is it both?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's worst ever Finance minister still doesn't get it. What does damage to our cities, to our public services, and to our future is a massive debt hole that we can't get out of. If we continue with the NDP's fiscal direction, with over \$100 billion of debt, you know what that means? Didn't the finance bureaucrats explain this to him? It means spending billions of tax dollars on interest payments to bankers and bondholders instead of building infrastructure, schools, and hospitals. We won't do that. We will not allow this province to be sunk in a . . .

**Member Ceci:** Pay-as-you-go gets you nowhere and builds nothing, Mr. Speaker.

I find it disturbing that this minister and this Premier would accuse our cities of wasting money, when this government has handed over a \$4.5 billion, no-jobs gift to big corporations. Their plan hasn't created a job. It's lost 27,000 since they came aboard. To the Premier: let me ask you this; do you really think you can take the moral high ground here on waste when you have failed us in Alberta and given money to corporations for a scheme that hasn't created any jobs?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons he's going to go down in history as the worst Finance minister since 1905 is because he increased taxes on everything, including on incomes and businesses, and revenues went down. He tried to play old-school socialist, soak-the-rich, class-warfare politics . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, order. Order. We will not have yelling from the back row.

**Mr. Kenney:** It's yelling from the entire Official Opposition because they can't defend their failed record. Mr. Speaker, he raised taxes on businesses. Less revenue came into the treasury. We, instead, are sending a message that Alberta is open for business to create jobs.

#### Support for Persons with Disabilities

**Mr. Yaseen:** Mr. Speaker, across Alberta people with disabilities face unique challenges, from finding employment to accessible housing. This group often faces barriers when it comes to accessing the services they need. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: can you please tell us how the government is removing barriers to these essential services?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the Member for Calgary-North for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to an open, transparent dialogue with the disability community. Through my new disability advisory forum I'm working with the community to gain insight and perspective on specific topics impacting people with disabilities. Input from the forum helps us identify how our programs can more effectively support Albertans. Alberta Supports

offices across the province also help people with disabilities every day to access the services they need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that roughly 400,000 Albertans are living with a disability and given that this group tends to have much lower incomes and higher unemployment, can the minister outline what our government is doing to help persons with disabilities find gainful employment?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, our government supports Albertans with disabilities to live full lives and have access to equal opportunities. We are taking action on several fronts for inclusive employment, including building on successful programs like Abilities at Work and the Rotary employment partnerships. We are also providing funding to support these partnerships to facilitate job opportunities for people with disabilities.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Given that Alberta was left in a fiscal mess by the NDP's disastrous overspending and reckless policies, as verified in the MacKinnon report, and given that our government has committed to supporting those with disabilities, can the minister outline how our government will continue to support persons with disabilities while also staying on track to balance the budget?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, a significant platform commitment was that we would enhance employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities. We know that the unemployment rates in the disability community are unacceptably high, and we're committed to making job opportunities for all Albertans. We also understand the fiscal constraints and financial realities that we're dealing with. This is why we need to ensure that our programs are sustainable for the long term, sustainable for generations to come.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to read yesterday that the Minister of Education has decided to expand the NDP school nutrition program by 20 per cent in this upcoming budget. That certainly is good news, and I want to express our gratitude and appreciation for that. What I was surprised by, though, was the last comment in the media yesterday, when the minister said, quote: I wish I had enough money to feed everyone. News flash: you did. There was \$4.5 billion that, instead of being given to focus on things like health care and education and poverty, has been invested by giving it away in a no-jobs corporate handout, so to the minister: you did. You made your priority . . .

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We're very happy to be increasing the budget for the nutrition program. We are absolutely committed to education. We've said that. You only have one more sleep to find out how much we are committed to it.

**Ms Hoffman:** Only one more wake-up, Mr. Speaker. If only this government would wake up.

Given that the minister could have tripled the nutrition program for the price of the Energy minister's war room alone and given that she could have fed even more hungry kids with the money that the Attorney General is spending on his witch hunt public inquiry, how

many times did the Minister of Education fail to speak up for children, or is it that none of her colleagues listened to her? Why aren't you feeding all the kids you're so eager to feed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We've been very clear that there are no cuts to education. We are looking through the lens of what is best for children and what will improve student learning. Stay tuned tomorrow. You will see the budget.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that shareholders are celebrating while Calgary workers are being laid off this week, Mr. Speaker, and given that we've also met with parents in Calgary whose kids are crammed into classrooms with more than 40 students and others who have complex needs seeing their students' bus times triple, to the minister: thanks for realizing that the school nutrition program has value. It really does. Will you now work to correct the other problems that you've caused in education through your dithering, delays, and cuts?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, this is just more fearmongering. The NDP have been wrong on enrolment growth. They're wrong on the nutrition program. They're wrong again.

### Energy Efficiency Alberta

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yesterday I spoke with the Deputy Minister of Environment and Parks at Public Accounts. Unlike this minister, she actually gave me some real answers. She told us that Energy Efficiency Alberta had invested \$200 million, which will save Albertans about \$700 million in energy costs, not to mention reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 6 million tonnes. The minister's own data shows that Energy Efficiency Alberta is a success. Is the minister still planning to cancel it and return Alberta to being the only province without an energy efficiency agency?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is going to have to wait to see a couple of things; first, the budget tomorrow, which he knows I can't talk about today. Second, as I've said, I'm looking forward to tabling TIER inside this Assembly to talk about our plan when it come to climate inside this province. I can tell you – and I've told this House many times – it won't be like that hon. member's plan, which was all economic pain and no environmental gain. We will not go out of our way to tax hard-working Albertans with no environmental benefit. Instead, we'll focus on technology, innovation, and working together with our great energy sector in this province to work our way through this problem.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that that was the closest thing to a real answer we've heard from that minister in weeks and given that Deputy Minister Yee went on to tell us that Energy Efficiency Alberta is driving \$850 million in economic activity and given that that's \$850 million more in economic activity than this government's no-jobs corporate handout has created, why is the minister so opposed to a successful energy efficiency program and yet so supportive of a \$4.5 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we're not not supportive of energy efficiency and things along those lines. What we are not supportive of – let me very, very clear – is the NDP's approach of taking hard-working Albertans' money out of their pockets and then spending

it on companies, like from Ontario, on light bulbs and shower heads. This side of the House has a very different approach to climate change, one that will actually work and that focuses on technology and innovation. It's a big contrast, and Albertans made it clear in April which one they wanted. They don't want the tax NDP, they want the solution-based current Alberta government.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that our program bought shower heads for average Albertans while their \$4.5 billion handout gives ivory back-scratchers to corporate CEOs and given that Energy Efficiency Alberta created 4,300 private-sector jobs, why won't the minister face the facts from his own deputy minister that Energy Efficiency Alberta is a success and his corporate giveaway is a big failure?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. That party, that member, and that member's leader of that party sold out Albertans by her own admission just a few days ago by voting for a party whose leader said: I am firmly opposed to the pipeline; I've been opposed to it, I will continue to fight against it, and I will absolutely continue to fight against it. This side of the House won't be lectured on how to stand up for Albertans because that side of the House has sold them out at every single opportunity. Albertans can rest assured that their current government will stand with them every day and continue to fight for our largest industry. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. We will have order.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has the call.

#### **Animal Rights Activist Protests at Farms and Ranches**

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's agriculture producers need to feel like this government has their back, and we do. Today we learned that four people had been arrested in connection with the dangerous and illegal invasion of the Jumbo Valley turkey farm, an issue that is particularly concerning to me as an MLA who represents 29 Hutterite colonies and over \$2 billion in farm gate sales. Can the minister tell this House how this aligns with his new policy to protect farmers and ranchers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member for the question. The RCMP did arrest four adults and one youth that did invade the Jumbo Valley turkey farm. During the farm freedom and safety act tour that I did over this summer, there was a huge demand and a cry from rural Alberta to make sure that there was restored faith in our justice system. I think this is a big first step to be able to address that. RCMP are actually laying charges against individuals that were trespassing and effectively stopping farmers from being able to do what they do best.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta farmers and ranchers treat their animals well by adhering to world-class quality standards and given that they have the right to manage their operations without the threat of illegal harassment from militant trespassers acting like weak, petulant children and given that this government is committed to supporting our farmers and ranchers, how is this minister going to prevent future biosecurity breaches and deter individuals and organizations from putting Alberta farmers and ranchers at risk?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again I'd like to thank the Member for Cardston-Siksika for that great question. Radical activists who do this type of illegal activity, who actually go into barns, whether they be turkey or dairy or any barns that have biosecurity hazards protocols – it's a danger to the protestors, if you want to call them protestors, as well as to the animals. I'm committed to amending the Animal Health Act to be able to have for a first offence a \$15,000 fine and for subsequent offences, \$30,000 plus one year in jail. That's something that our farming community expects from this government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that Alberta farmers and ranchers want action on this issue and given that the fine people of Cardston-Siksika are tired of watching these misguided trespassers run roughshod over the rule of law and given that we saw concrete action today by the RCMP, can the minister tell the House if this is the end of the story, or is there further action to be taken to deter this irresponsible and ridiculous behaviour?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is reassuring to rural Albertans that there is a culture of enforcement. There seems to be a culture of enforcement from our police services. To me, it's important as a minister and also as an Albertan and as a farmer to see that rural Albertans' concerns are being addressed. There is something that the Justice minister is working on as well as amendments to the Animal Health Act, the Provincial Offences Procedure Act, so that compensation awarded by a court would go from \$25,000 up to \$100,000. Again, the Justice minister has been working diligently to make amendments to the trespassing act, again increasing fines and jail time for these radical activists, that have no place in our agriculture community.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is rising to ask a question.

#### **Vegreville Century Park Supportive Living Facility**

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, Albertans should be worried about the health care they receive as this government continues to choose corporate handouts over funding quality public care. This Minister of Health turned his back on seniors in Vegreville when a B.C. corporation, Optima Living, fired all of their primary caregivers. "But don't worry," he says; he's monitoring the situation closely. Is this minister aware that the Optima Living facility in Vegreville has failed three consecutive Alberta Health inspections while he has been minister, including as recently as October 3?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, that is true. We are monitoring the situation closely. We are working with AHS, who is continuing to oversee the transition to the new provider. We're going to continue to get updates from AHS as they let us know what is going to continue to happen with Century Park.

2:20

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this minister knew that and still has taken no action, it's equally disturbing and given that this Minister of Health has just apparently recently learned what a chemical restraint is and given that this inappropriate overuse of medication is common in these sorts of private facilities



with underpaid, undertrained, and unfamiliar staff, will this minister explain why he's apparently okay with medicating Vegreville seniors into submission as long as it maximizes value for Optima's shareholders?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry; I don't understand the hon. member's question. I don't intervene in the operations of AHS or our nonprofit partners or our private partners in continuing care or our public partners in continuing care. I have no idea – I'm happy to answer any questions that the member might have for me offline. I'm not intervening in the operations of this facility.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, given that if the minister is watching closely, he's apparently not seeing much and given that the Vegreville workers are currently at the Labour board to make a last ditch appeal for these seniors and for themselves and given that this minister has refused to lift a finger to help them, is it any surprise that the lawyer that's been hired by Optima Living, the man arguing against Alberta workers and Alberta seniors, is a big money donor to the UCP? To the minister: how much do the workers of Vegreville need to donate to your party for you to lift your finger to do your job?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we're talking about continuing care and while we're talking about dollar amounts, let's talk about the debt that we were left with by the NDP. Let's talk about the amount of money that we spend every year on servicing that debt and the amount of money that we are sending to bondholders and to bankers. With that money we could spend on over a thousand new beds in continuing care per quarter, 4,000 beds per year. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Shandro:** Instead, because of their debt we are not able to do that, Mr. Speaker. It's a problem that we're going to fix in this government because it's a problem that we were left by the NDP government.

### Child Mental Health Services in Edmonton

**Member Irwin:** Last week I met with a constituent who is deeply concerned about her child's mental health. Her child has been waiting for months for access to mental health supports at the Royal Alexandra hospital. She was relieved to hear about the commitment by our previous NDP government earlier this year to fund and build a new \$226 million children's mental health centre right here in Edmonton. To the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: have you advocated for the construction of this new centre, and if so, what have you done to make it a reality?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions or the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has committed to caring for Albertans, and we have made an unprecedented commitment to mental health and addictions in the scale of \$140 million to provide a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy. While the members opposite recklessly spent government money and created this huge debt, that put the services for Albertans at risk, we are going to do it right.

**Member Irwin:** Given that my caucus colleagues have heard from constituents about the importance of funding supports for mental health and given that the supports such as those that will be offered

at this centre are desperately needed and given that wait-lists are long for many families across Alberta, will this minister commit to supporting the mental health centre, or will these young people be more victims of his government's \$4.5 billion giveaway to large corporations?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, obviously we can't speak about what is going to be in the budget tomorrow. I think that the hon. member actually does not understand what was going to be built at CAMH. I don't think that the hon. member understands the amount of new spaces. It was actually only going to provide an additional five new beds. It is a project that was going to centralize a lot of the beds into the one facility. There is no crisis in child mental health right now, and our government actually . . . [interjections]

**Member Irwin:** Unbelievable.

Given that there is a crisis and given that kids are hurting as they wait for supports, whether it be through self-harm, suicide attempts, and, sadly, in some cases, lives are being lost and given that these supports have far-reaching impacts related to many other issues systemic to mental health, like homelessness and poverty, will this minister stand in the House today and pledge that he will choose children over corporations and commit his support to vulnerable youth and move this project forward?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, what I meant to say – we were talking about the spaces for child mental health. That's what we were talking about. Obviously, our government is spending a hundred million dollars on a mental health and addictions strategy. This has been a focus and a priority for this government. It's going to continue to be. This is a focus. Quite honestly, if this is such an important issue for the hon. member, why is it taking us only five months to fix a problem that they couldn't do in four years?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### Support for Alberta Artists

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All of us have been moved by art and culture at least once in our lives. We have all experienced the power of a favourite song or witnessed the beauty of a remarkable work of art. In my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain art is visible everywhere. Stony Plain even offers a special tour of just the murals that dot the landscape of our downtown. To the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: what is this government doing to support made-in-Alberta arts, and what are we doing to encourage the next generation of Albertan artists?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for this question. Our government, obviously, values world-class art and the artists that call Alberta home. Our government currently – we're really excited about this – is working to support Alberta arts and artists through the development of the arts professions act.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Given that artists work very hard at their craft and many artists have told us that receiving proper payment for their work is one of the largest issues for everyone in the sector and given, Mr. Speaker, that many of these artists are further asked to deliver work at a discount or even for free, what will this government be doing to ensure that artists are being fairly compensated for their work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of culture and multiculturalism.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The government's platform commitment is to grow the arts and cultural industries by \$1.5 billion, or 25 per cent, over the next decade. As an artist and as anybody else who is an artist in this space knows, we dedicate and donate a lot of our time to causes that are very important to us. As a person who's involved in this work, we know that art is work. It's a very important piece. The adoption of the arts professions act will ensure that artists are given formal recognition. It will protect their freedom of expression, their freedom of economic and contractual . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that we have hundreds of talented artisans all across the province and given that we should be shining a spotlight on homegrown talent within our communities and given that we so often see communities paying artists who live outside of the country for their work rather than supporting our local artists, can the same minister please explain how this government is encouraging our communities throughout the province to utilize our local artists?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, we are very excited to keep this platform commitment. Part of it, of course, Mr. Speaker, is building partnerships between the arts and the philanthropic and business sectors. These partnerships will provide more local opportunities for artists who work at home. Also, I think a larger piece of this puzzle is consulting with the artists – they are the experts in their field – to make sure that we understand how best to support arts and culture. Every one of these industries has an immense ability to grow. We're really excited to help get that job done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods would like to ask a question.

#### **Employee Labour Relations Support Program Law Firm Contracts**

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government recently launched the employee labour relations support program. This new program is apparently meant to provide Albertans with information about working in unionized environments and about the certification and decertification process. It's been discovered that in certain cases this program will be providing inquiring Albertans with access to free legal advice, the cost of which will be covered by the government. Can the minister of labour share with us the full list of law firms that were part of the so-called limited request for proposal to do this work and how those firms were decided?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of labour.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member across knows, Bill 2 established a program to provide support and assistance to unionized employees or employees that may become part of a union in order for them to better understand and exercise their rights. This was launched on October 1. It was part of our commitment that we made in our platform, and it was part of Bill 2. I was very excited that we actually were able to launch this and provide advice to employees so they can actually get the answers that they need when they sometimes don't understand the code.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in the labour relations community it is very well known that some law firms are considered employer-side, some others are considered employee-side firms, it will be very interesting to see which firms this government is paying to provide free legal advice to those Albertans interested in union-related matters. Can the minister guarantee that there will be an equal mix of employer-side and employee-side law firms providing this government-paid-for advice to inquiring Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration has the call.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The intent of this line is to provide neutral advice and provide advice in relation to the code, nothing more, nothing less. It's not going to be from either side. Really, the intent behind it was to allow employees – potential unionized employees and those who are already unionized employees – to get neutral advice, not from the union, not from management, but from the government and a government source.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that covering the cost of legal counsel could potentially quickly add up and given that the government claims to be making tough choices when it comes to spending in so many other areas to pay for the \$4.5 billion hole they created with their corporate tax giveaway, to the minister. There are serious concerns that this will become a biased hotline offering free antiunion legal advice. Is that a good use of taxpayer resources?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, the suggestion that this program is biased in any way is simply incorrect. We are committed to providing Albertans with information so they can make informed decisions. The maximum amount that we will provide in terms of legal counsel is one hour for a question. It's primarily designed to deal with procedural issues.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

#### **Early Learning and Child Care Centres**

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I tabled two petitions from over 2,500 Albertans from across the province urging this government to continue the ELCC \$25-per-day child care pilot program and expand it to be universal. Twenty-two child care centres were part of phase 1 of that pilot program. The \$25-per-day support from the ELCC program will end in these centres in March 2020, just five months from now. The Minister of Children's Services has said that no decisions will be made about the continuation of the program until she has completed a review. To the minister: when will your review be complete?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The terms of the pilot have not changed since they were put in place by the former government. The review will be complete also on the timeline set out by the former government. We're looking forward to receiving that data. But what I can tell you about the pilot is that it was set up in a way that tracked one ideological approach to child care, universality. It did not track need, it did not track income, it did not track employment, and it did not track wait-lists. I'll continue to work to listen to Albertans and ensure that parents have access to . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try again. Given that these 22 child care centres have indicated that they have to make decisions by January, two months from now, about how much they will be able to pay their staff and how much child care fees will have to increase for parents without the continuation of the ELCC grant, to the minister: will your review be complete by January?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing to work towards a system of child care to support Alberta families, not by picking winners and losers, not by choosing have and have-not child care centres and have-not parents. That is not going to be our approach. You want to talk about the record of the NDP: \$5 million a day in interest, \$2 billion a year; \$100 billion dollars in debt. We will remain fiscally responsible, and we will support Alberta working parents and families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not asking questions about ideology or records; I'm asking a straightforward question about timelines, that the minister should be able to answer.

**Some Hon. Members:** Preamble.

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that these 22 phase 1 child care centres are saying that many of their current families would not be able to afford the child care fees if the \$25-per-day program ends and given that these families will have to make decisions soon about whether they can find alternate low-cost child care or whether a parent will have to quit their job because they can't afford child care, to the minister: will you be able to give these parents an answer by January about whether they will continue to have affordable child care?

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the hon. members' support in determining what is or isn't a preamble, but I think that I'm capable of doing that.

The hon. minister.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've reached out to child care centres across the province, the 22 who were involved in the first phase of the pilot, to let them know that we understand their need for predictability. We will let them know as soon as the decision is made. I do want to point out, though, that the vast majority of child care centres in the pilot have been operating in Alberta and serving Alberta children and families long before this pilot was put in place. We will work with those child care centres no matter what we choose going forward, and there are also subsidy programs in place to support working Alberta families who need it.

#### Indigenous Opportunities Corporation

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, Justin Trudeau's time in office has been marked by a lot of platitudes and broken promises, particularly on indigenous issues. The indigenous people that I have discussions with are tired of empty gestures and flowery rhetoric. They're encouraged that our government is committed to making Alberta First Nations and Métis full partners in prosperity. Can the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations tell this House what progress has been made in launching the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question. I can tell you that we've been moving forward rapidly. When I was first elected, I met with the grand chief of Treaty 6, and he told me that there's been a lot of talk about reconciliation. He said: what we really need is reconcili-action. I just love that term, "reconcili-action." That's what this government is all about, action. We've moved forward quickly on this. We've put Bill 14 forward, and we've got third reading on it, and we're just awaiting proclamation and royal assent to put that into place. We've been working on the board. We've got members coming forward, and it's all coming together quite nicely.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

Given that indigenous peoples are one of the fastest growing populations in Canada but continue to be the least well-off demographic and given that despite billions of dollars having been spent at a variety of levels of government to improve living conditions for indigenous peoples, we have not seen the desired outcomes, can the hon. minister explain why this Crown corporation could prove a sustainable model for First Nations prosperity?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you, hon. member. This summer we went out, and we heard from stakeholders across the province, and what we heard clearly was that they're looking for a hand up, not a handout. They're proud people, and that's what they're looking for. So we worked hard on putting the program together. We're looking at putting the board together right now. We've got some great applicants in there. We've got a lot of good indigenous people that have come forward and put their names up, and I'm really looking forward to getting the board in place and getting the whole program up and running. Like I say, there are some really good people that we're going to be putting on the board.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister.

Given that indigenous issues remain largely under the purview of the federal government and given that the legal framework surrounding subjects like consultation is complex and ever-changing, can the hon. minister assure this House that the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation can overcome its legal hurdles?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member. Our staff has been working very hard putting this whole program together and reviewing it to make sure that it has no legal implications, to make sure that the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation is being set up properly. I can assure you of that. Our government's consultation process is committed to making sure that indigenous concerns are heard and addressed and that industry has certainty out there. We need to make sure that everyone has been heard, and we've been working hard to get that all put into place.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has risen.

#### Petrochemical Industry Development

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are blessed to have a skilled workforce that has revolutionized the way we

develop natural gas here in Alberta. We know that a lack of pipeline access has created an abundance of natural gas in Alberta, driving the price of this commodity down. Albertans deserve to get fair value for their resources. We also know that the low price of natural gas has created an opportunity for Alberta to attract major private-sector investment in petrochemical diversification and upgrading. To the minister: what is the government doing to attract investment to our province in the petrochemical industry?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is Canada's largest petrochemical producer, and we have a real opportunity to attract major private investment to our petrochemical sector by leveraging our abundant supply of inexpensive natural gas liquids. Our government committed to showing the world that Alberta is once again open for business, and we are doing this through things like our reduced corporate tax rate and speeding up the regulatory review process.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the petrochemicals diversification program was actually originally established by the PC government in 2014 to encourage companies to invest in Alberta through the construction of large-scale petrochemical facilities and given that members opposite ideologically thought that handing out millions of dollars in grants and loan guarantees would bolster our province's economy through programs like partial upgrading and petrochemicals feedstock infrastructure, to the minister: what has this government done to limit the financial risk that the former NDP government was quite willing to put on Albertans?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, it's become abundantly clear that the members opposite took absolutely no issue with saddling Albertans with billions of dollars in debt as they pursued their socialist utopia. That's why earlier today I along with Alberta's Energy minister announced that our government has discontinued the NDP's partial upgrading program as well as the petrochemical feedstock infrastructure program. These programs relied heavily on grants and loan guarantees, and it puts far too much risk on the Alberta taxpayer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that tens of thousands of Albertans work in the natural gas sector, including related industries like the petrochemical sector, and given that a real estate company in Houston, Texas, is actively trying to recruit Alberta companies to relocate to the United States, to the minister: what are you doing to encourage petrochemical companies to come to Alberta and remain here?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government is working hard to restore our reputation with investors as a great place to do business. We've lowered taxes, reduced red tape, and we're easing the burdensome regulations on our natural gas industry. We've also given municipalities the power to offer tax holidays. Thanks to the actions of our government, we're putting our province back on track and making Alberta a more attractive place to invest.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will continue with the daily Routine.

## Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Bill 204 Election Recall Act

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being private Bill 204, Election Recall Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a first time]

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has a tabling.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have here the requisite number of copies of an article that I referenced in my debate on Bill 17. The article is titled *Clare's Law: Unintended Consequences for Domestic Violence Victims?* by Jennifer Koshan and Wanda Wieggers, written October 18, 2019. It was issued on the University of Calgary law blog.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Okay. Thank you. I have a tabling that is from the Alberta Electric System Operator. It is, of course, concerning Bill 18. I referenced it in my remarks last evening, where they're recommending, of course, a capacity market. I have the requisite number of copies.

**The Speaker:** Now Edmonton-McClung if you'd like to table your document.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to table documents I referenced yesterday in debate on Bill 18 regarding the benefits of a capacity market versus an energy-only market. These documents were generated by EnergyRates.ca, and I have the requisite number of copies.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, supportive statements she read out during the debate on Motion 506.

I also have an article I referenced yesterday in question period, by the CBC, *Seclusion Rooms Used Over 700 Times in 1 Month at Edmonton Public Schools: Report*.

Finally, another article by CBC, *Suncor CEO Slams Climate Change Deniers, Politicians Who Cater to Them*.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make some tablings today. I have the requisite number of copies of each of these. The first is a news release entitled *New BHE Canada Wind Farm Expected to Start Construction in 2020*.

Second is a news article by Michelle Froese, published on August 1, *CanWEA Applauds Alberta's Return to an Energy-only Market*. CanWEA is the Canadian Wind Energy Association.

The third is from the *National Post* on October 7, entitled *Solar Power is the Red-hot Growth Area in Oil-rich Alberta*.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there other tablings?

## Statement by the Speaker

### Tabling Cited Documents

**The Speaker:** I would just like to offer a very brief comment with respect to tablings for the benefit of all members. If an article or a document has been previously tabled inside a session and then is referred to a subsequent time, it is not required for the article to be retabled, say, today or any other day. Just as a point of clarification for all members. Now, I recognize we may not keep track of every document that's been tabled, but if you are aware, there is no requirement for it to be done.

Now, hon. members, we are at points of order. I see the hon. Government House Leader shall rise.

### Point of Order

#### Addressing the Chair

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise on this point of order. I refer you to page 610 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, for those following along at home, yourself, of course, in the chair. In the Remarks Addressed to the Chair section:

Any Member participating in debate, whether during a sitting of the House or a Committee of the Whole, must address the Chair.

It goes on to say that they must not address

the House, a particular Minister or Member, the galleries, the television audience, or any other entity.

Now, I chose to wait quite a way into question period though there are several examples of this issue. I rose in regard to the hon. member for — his constituency changed, Mr. Speaker, but whoever was asking the question at the moment that I rose on that point of order. The former Finance minister of Alberta was speaking. I will give you the example of what I referred to. I have the benefit of the exact quotes that were used during that time. I don't know if you have the Blues yet yourself. He says, "To the Premier: can you name one example of a project that the city council in Calgary wasted money on?" He goes on to say, "Do you really think you can take the moral high ground here?"

Now, Mr. Speaker, earlier in the order the hon. Opposition House Leader also said, "Do you think this was an appropriate amount of consultation?" He goes on to say, "Can you please point me to announcements you made in the campaign?"

And earlier than that, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West goes on to say in a question that she provided the House, "why you aren't . . . Are you too busy stoking the fires?"

There are many examples of that, Mr. Speaker. These three members who I referred to are experienced members of this Chamber, former ministers of the Crown, members of Executive Council, who do understand parliamentary procedure and understand that they need to speak through the chair inside this place. I do understand that they are all posturing for future leadership races and what is going on and the turmoil in the NDP at the moment, but it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we follow the procedure in this House, that we speak through you for many reasons that you understand, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask that the House try their best to follow that rule in the future.

**The Speaker:** I think it's probably advantageous if we take it under advisement and move on.

As a result, we are at Orders of the Day. If the Government House Leader would like to be the Speaker, I'm sure at a later time he'll be able to do that.

Ordres du jour.

2:50

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 18

#### Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019

Ms Sweet moved on behalf of Ms Ganley that the motion for second reading of Bill 18, Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 18, Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment October 23: Member Irwin speaking]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West would like to join the debate.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes, I would, very much so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to speaking on the amendment in regard to Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, that I believe the Member for Calgary-Buffalo did bring forward, I believe that she brought forward a referral amendment, that this be moved forward to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I think that, you know, considering the scope and the importance of the regulation of our electricity markets here in the province of Alberta and really the scope that Bill 18 is trying to encompass in regard to terminating a capacity market here in the province of Alberta, I believe that it's sometimes wise to take time to ensure that this essential service is supported through regulation, supported through legislation, and that Albertans are protected from wild variations in electricity prices both for family consumption and industrial consumption as well.

Our electricity markets have gone through quite a number of changes over the last number of years, and what I think we all don't want to go back to is the bad old days, where we had wild fluctuations in the market rate for electricity and we were not keeping up on a consistent basis to build capacity to meet the needs of our growing domestic consumption and industrial consumption as well.

I mean, it doesn't take very long to think back to, let's say, five or six or seven years ago, where you could almost predict when there was going to be a brownout, or an electricity shortfall, here in the province, and, you know, it caused a lot of disruption and confusion for people with both our domestic rates and in regard to industrial certainty as well.

I remember probably, maybe I'm thinking 2005 or 2006, when as the Energy critic for the New Democrat opposition I, again, perhaps jokingly with a journalist from the *Calgary Herald* said: you know, there's going to be a brownout tomorrow. Sure enough, like, boom, the end of June with a heat wave and extra pressure on the grid with people using air conditioners and so forth, there it was. He phoned me up and said, "Yeah. The brownout's on," and I said, "Yeah, for sure. I'm stuck in my garage right now because my electric door opener doesn't work." You know, it was funny, but it

was also quite concerning because, of course, this was an annual occurrence at that time.

Having, I think, a stable market – right? – and a capacity market is absolutely essential. Reversing this change to allow fluctuations: I think, you know, there's a lot of concern. There's a lot of concern from the regulator here in the province of Alberta. There's a lot of concern from those who are depending on industrial certainty for electricity, both for prices and supply. I believe that there are other ways by which we can deal with this.

We know that the potential for exposure to considerably higher prices for electricity for both regular consumers and for industrial consumers is a big concern. I believe that, you know, while we don't want to be static in our approach to producing electricity here in the province, I think that taking further careful second deliberation on this is the appropriate thing to do at this time.

I think that, for example, one emerging area of development that we should be pursuing in the province here is having both domestic and individual consumer capacity and then industrial capacity to produce more renewable energy. We know that allowing a differential in price, let's say, for electricity that might be generated through solar panels, for example, to pump back into the grid has tremendous potential, that is being realized in other jurisdictions around the world. By always trying to diversify your electricity production, you are creating a built-in security and safety element to that same system as well.

Traditionally, when we have had only maybe six or seven main sources of electricity generation here in the province of Alberta, if one or more of those big generators goes under, let's say, for regularly scheduled maintenance or it goes down for any reason, then suddenly we're stuck. We're caught out. I know that different electricity companies such as Enmax realized early on, quite a number of years ago, that by having smaller generators in different locations around the province, you actually increase efficiency – right? – through the reduced line loss of electricity. But you also build in an element of certainty and security by having so many more generators available. If you lose one of the big ones or you lose a number of the small ones, you still have sufficient backup and capacity to serve the needs of Albertans.

I mean, all of these are factors that make it complicated – right? – to be able to ensure the safety and security of our electricity grid here in the province of Alberta. I'm certainly interested in ensuring that we do not go down the road of other jurisdictions that you can see quite literally, very clearly, had unregulated areas of their electricity market and ended up with a very volatile, expensive situation.

Again, I think back to when I was Energy critic, to a very classic case study in Texas, one of the states of the United States, where they experienced significant brownouts for a number of years and even rolling blackouts which had to be mitigated by rationing electricity and so forth. The extreme price swings also left Texas consumers exposed. You know, again, you leave yourself open, with a lack of regulation, to unscrupulous speculators in electricity. We certainly don't need to revisit that kind of situation, as they saw in Texas. We saw some small versions of that here in Alberta when we did not have a regulated market.

Again, thinking of other jurisdictions around the world in regard to unregulated electricity markets, we know that New Zealand was having quite a time with price spikes and so forth. You know, the price spikes do not just hit people in the pocketbook, right? They also create sort of an element of uncertainty that discourages economic investment to your jurisdiction. If the electricity supply is unstable – right? – or subject to surges and/or brownouts or even rolling blackouts, then, again, you know, that's one of the things that investment will tick off in the negative column. If you have

electricity supply markets that are unstable, then I think that everyone loses as a result.

3:00

Really, again, I see this amendment – right? – that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View is bringing forward as just, you know, a friendly, constructive, I think, addition to this debate. It's not to suggest that our electricity markets still do not need to evolve. I firmly believe that they do need to continue to evolve, as I said, to allow for more recognition and encouragement of renewable energy here in the province of Alberta by having domestic arrays of solar panels for domestic consumption and then to sell back into the grid. This is the next, I believe, way by which we can both produce electricity in a sustainable manner and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also create more stability and security in our electricity system.

Yeah. I mean, I think that we see lots of potential here for growth in the province of Alberta and indeed greater co-operation with other energy grids here in Canada. I know that we're a big country, but, you know, it's a great way to help to share and build a spirit of co-operation and unity by having increased trade in energy.

We all know the tremendous difficulties that we've had with regard to moving our pipeline energy capacity through other jurisdictions and provinces around the country. Again, another way by which we can help entice, perhaps, other jurisdictions to allow us to build the pipelines that we need for the Canadian national economy and Alberta's domestic economy is to look for ways by which we can invite trade between our different energy systems, perhaps looking to encourage more hydroelectricity that we can buy and share with those provinces who produce more hydro – right? – Manitoba and British Columbia and so forth.

There are lots of different ways to approach this. I believe that there's a strength in building a diverse grid that extends not just throughout our province but across western Canada. There are lots of ways to approach this.

A way to make sure that we're doing it right is to have sufficient regulation built into the system. You can't just throw it back open, you know, terminating the capacity market in its entirety. I believe that this doesn't serve anybody's interests in a positive way necessarily. I think it's a bit reactionary, quite frankly, and there are other ways to approach this in a much more reasoned sort of way. Of course, one of the best mechanisms we have available to us in this Chamber and in the Legislature generally is to make reference to a bill to the appropriate standing committee, that might be able to cast better light and perhaps some different options available to us to ensure that the electricity market is stable and affordable and sustainable here in the province of Alberta.

I'll leave it at that. I'm certainly supporting this amendment, and I encourage other members of this House to do so. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anyone wish to make quick comments or questions.

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to REF1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much. I am happy to again stand up and talk about Bill 18 and just the change this government wants to do regarding moving from our plan of the proposed capacity market and going to the energy-only market. You know, I have found it very helpful to refer to an independent body, the Alberta Electric System Operator, to understand, really, what this bill is about and what it will do and what it will change.

Certainly, our government previously had proposed to move towards a capacity market. To understand that, I just want to quote a bit from the AESO website. They explain:

A capacity market is actually two markets in one: a market for providing capacity, or the ability to produce energy, and a market for the actual production and delivery of energy. A capacity market pays electricity generators for having the ability to reliably make power available regardless of how often they sell energy onto the grid. The purpose of the capacity market is to ensure there will be an adequate supply of electricity to meet the province's demand.

So, you know, a capacity market, according to the AESO, is something that will create reliability and make sure that Albertans have the electricity they need when they need it.

This change by the current government to move towards an energy-only system is actually of concern. Really, there are three major concerns that I have regarding it, and the citizens of Alberta will be burdened with this shift. It's really them that will be paying for the cost of this shift. It's a step backwards, I would say. There are three issues. One is financial, the other is accessibility, and the third is just about climate leadership, which are, you know, three pretty significant concerns.

One of the things that's built into the energy-only market is that there are price spikes that happen. The minister herself spoke about this yesterday, that this is just something that happens. She actually referred to it in a more positive way and felt that this was good for the generators because they would receive more, you know, revenue from that. Not once did she mention the concern of: who's going to pay for that extra revenue that they're getting in these price spikes, that are erratic? It's the citizens of Alberta. It's maybe good for the big corps but not so great for citizens. That's a concern.

There has been some analysis done that says it could cost Albertans up to 10 times more on their electricity bills when these price spikes go. I would think that this would be something that the minister is very concerned about – certainly I am as a representative of constituents – that we can't create more stability. We know that people budget month to month, trying to make sure that they have enough funds to pay for all their bills, but when something is erratic, which is this, these price spikes, and you don't know, and really it's way beyond your control as a citizen, then you are absolutely vulnerable to that.

That could create great hardship for the citizens of Alberta. That's why the capacity market, which is the market that we were moving towards, was a much better, much more stable, much more fair type of process than these energy-only markets. Certainly it will hurt consumers, and that's something that I'm certainly very concerned about.

The second piece, of course, is accessibility. My hon. colleague was just talking about, you know, being sort of in his garage and not able to get out because there was a blackout. There was no access to electricity. He couldn't actually get out, drive his car out. That will create great havoc for Albertans, if they can't have access to something. Certainly, we're all plugged in. I have three sons. I can't imagine what would happen if they couldn't access electricity and just the chaos that would create in our family.

I know I'm not unique in that. We all rely heavily on electricity, and if we do not have stability, if we don't have a system that will make it certain that we have electricity, and the capacity market has been very clearly demonstrated to produce more than an energy market, then we will have this very volatile and less reliable situation with the energy-only market.

3:10

We know that a capacity market is safer, more reliable, and it's sustainable and affordable. These are just qualities of this type of

market. That, of course, is why AESO, this independent body, did recommend to our government to actually, you know, move in that direction. I'm saddened that this government is taking steps backwards with this Bill 18. Certainly, the amendment that is before us: you know, I recommend that the House does support it because we do need to make sure that we have a capacity market.

Then, the third aspect of my concern – I've already talked about the financial; I've already talked about the accessibility, you know, the stability of having a system that is reliable for everyone – is climate leadership. We know that the capacity market was meant to transition to an electricity market that would meet the goals set out in our climate leadership plan. Of course, we know that climate leadership is real. We are a province that needs to have a plan. I know that we did have a plan, but, unfortunately, one of the first things that this government did was to eliminate that plan.

We don't have much time. The clock is ticking. There is apparently, you know, some say, eight years that we have to actually really make a difference so that we do have a proper climate leadership plan that's going to protect us all. I certainly hope to be living on this planet for a very, very long time and my children and potentially my grandchildren. It's something that is just a responsibility of the governing party, the government, the UCP in this case, to make sure that they're standing up and not really avoiding or putting their heads in the sand on this issue.

The benefit of the capacity market is that its structure increases the share of renewable energy in the energy mix. That means there's more green energy, and that of course is good. It's important for us to be responsible about our environment. In fact, this shift to the capacity market encourages more capital investment due to the inclusion of renewable energy. It's becoming less and less popular – you know, I know that some of the international investors in the oil sands are pulling out because they feel like it's not an investment that is green enough. They're looking for green investments. They're looking for alternative energy sources like solar and wind, so it really would actually increase the amount of investment.

Another thing the minister indicated is that the energy-only market was something that the investors wanted. It was more stable. But it seems a bit, you know, opposite, I suppose, of what she said and what, certainly, other experts in the field have shared, that investors are showing less willingness to invest in energy-only markets due to the risks of that, and they want this capacity market because it does have a greater mix of renewable energy.

Again, this is not something that is, you know, unique to Alberta. AESO suggested, recommended that we move in this direction. They didn't do this sort of in isolation. They looked around North America, internationally. The United Kingdom has this type of a market capacity. Many jurisdictions in North America have that. I mean, the majority of them do, so it is sort of a tried-and-true method in other places. In places where it isn't in place wholeheartedly, like Texas – I know I spoke about this last night, and my colleagues have, too – there are concerns with the things that we've already identified: the reliability, accessibility of electricity for all the citizens. There are rolling brownouts and blackouts much, much more commonly.

That price-spiking nature of the energy-only market means that citizens, consumers have to pay for that. That, again, is very difficult, you know, and it's something way beyond what an individual can control. Actually, it's incumbent on governments to sort of soften those spikes and set up a system that is more manageable and fair. Certainly, I think that that's the role of government. Moving to a capacity market would do absolutely that, but this energy-only market would not.

The other point about moving to this kind of a system, moving to the capacity market, is that it does support the decarbonization of

the electricity grid. It attracts green energy and investment and provides reasonable prices on electricity. There are many, many positive aspects to this capacity market. This amendment, I really encourage my colleagues to look at it and see that this would actually create more stability for their constituents. It would create more accessibility of electricity. It would be a move to support our environment.

Of course, it would have less volatile price spikes, which I also know that citizens and consumers would really appreciate because that's tough when you're on a budget, and then all of a sudden you have a much higher bill that comes and you can't predict it. You can't predict it. It's a much more complicated system than an individual can control or understand, so it can be very hard. Let's face it. Certainly, for myself as a single mom and years ago when I was younger, I mean, it was very close. Sometimes I couldn't pay for all my bills. So when we're downloading this onto the individual Albertans, I think it's really, you know, disrespectful and not very responsible of our government to move to this energy-only market, and a big reason is just the financial burden on individuals.

I'm just going to go through, again, the Alberta Electric System Operator's very thoughtful, well-articulated reason for their recommendations. You know, these are experts in the field, and they have come forward and said to us: this is why we are recommending this.

The key objectives of any power market is to ensure enough generation to meet demand today and in the future.

The AESO recommended that Alberta's electricity market needs to transition following research that indicates the existing energy market structure will not ensure the necessary investment in new generation that Alberta requires.

It's to support, actually, more investment, and this is the best method that AESO felt would actually do that, not the energy-only market but the capacity market.

The AESO studied a number of structures and found that a capacity market best fit Alberta's characteristics and objectives with the least amount of risk.

Certainly, governments should care about that. They're looking specifically at what the characteristics of Alberta are and decreasing risk. I mean, these are all very positive qualities.

A capacity market ensures continued reliability of the system in a cost effective manner while enabling the transition to a cleaner, lower-carbon electricity system over the coming years.

Again, these are all important reasons to move to a capacity market. It's through the research, evidence-based work that this organization did that they've come to these conclusions and had recommended to our government at the time. I just call on the current government to also see and review what AESO has put forward and reconsider this bill. We would really appreciate them looking at this amendment.

They go on further about the key benefits of a capacity market.

[It] provides the following combination of benefits which no other single . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

**Member Ceci:** I just wonder if the hon. member can finish her thought. Of course, she's talked a lot about the renewables and the benefits to society of a greener electricity grid. Could she perhaps expand on that?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. 3:20

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Riverview. I totally apologize.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Riverview, yes. Thank you.

Certainly, you know, as the hon. member just asked, focusing on making sure that we use more and more renewable energy, energy that will support our planet – we are running out of time to really make a difference. We need to be responsible stewards of the environment, and all the steps that we take in that direction can make a significant difference in our lives, our children's lives, and our grandchildren's lives. This market very clearly says that this helps move to a more green system, a system with much more renewables.

You know, besides just the sustainability of our planet, which is, of course, paramount, there is an economic argument for this. Investors want to be investing in more green projects and more green capacity markets because they're wise. They see the importance of making sure that we're responsible stewards of our environment. People are moving away from an energy-only market, so it's just such – I can't overstate how important it is and how the time is ticking and how much I really want to stress to the government to really take all these things into consideration when they're making decisions for Albertans.

I certainly know in my own riding of Edmonton-Riverview that I meet regularly with folks who are concerned about climate change and are working oftentimes in nonprofits themselves or advocating, volunteering, really raising awareness and making sure that we are being responsible stewards of our environment.

Just going on to the other question that the hon. member asked, it was just for me to sort of finish my thought. I was going through some of the key benefits of the capacity market that AESO did identify. One of them was:

- Ensures reliability as Alberta's electricity system evolves
- Increases stability of prices
- Provides greater revenue and certainty for generators [and]
- Maintains competitive market forces and drives innovation and cost discipline.

These are pretty significant benefits of a capacity market. I think that anyone who looked at this would see that this is, you know, obviously, a pretty strong argument to move toward a capacity market and not move backwards into an energy-only market.

I know some of my hon. colleagues on the other side of the aisle have said: well, we've had this for 20 years or so, and it's worked fine since then. Well, we do have a different conversation. I think 20 years ago we weren't so aware and knowledgeable, didn't understand the science about climate change. I mean, that in itself is a big reason for change, a huge reason that we should be moving to make sure that that mix of more renewable energy is part of the equation. Again, the capacity market, like this amendment suggests, is the best way to go about that.

But, I mean, then there are just the other fundamental things that I have expressed already, just the fairness to citizens of this province, not expecting them just to, you know, be able to manage something that really isn't manageable by an individual. That needs to be managed by government, so these price spikes that are endemic to this type of market need to be addressed. Again, the capacity market doesn't have that quality and therefore is much more fair for the citizens of Alberta.

Again, I just really encourage my colleagues across the aisle to see that and, you know, make sure that they are strong advocates for their own constituents because . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members looking to join debate on REF1? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to debate on this and speak to it for the first time. I'm going to not go



over the same ground that has been well researched and explained by my two previous colleagues who got up to speak to this. My colleague from Calgary-Mountain View has put a referral motion before us that would of course move this, if it were supported, to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2. I am the vice-chair of that committee. I have the pleasure of working with the chair and the other members of the committee. We have done good work of late, and I think there's no reason to think that we wouldn't capably take on this referral and work with it at that committee.

I do want to say that, of course, I support the work that we did as a government around the capacity market, and when I think about that work, I know at the time that there was extensive outreach to experts in the field. I don't consider myself an expert, and I of course take a great deal of counsel from people who work directly in the business, who have risen in many cases to the top of their organization. I want to be able to give a few thoughts about what those experts in energy have said, too, publicly on the record in places like the *Globe and Mail* and the *Calgary Herald* and different business circulars of theirs as well as news releases and those kinds of areas where this information has been gathered from.

It goes to the points that my colleague was just making. Many of these points go to renewables and the stability of prices. For instance, the CEO of TransAlta Corp. hailed the movement towards a capacity market or the overhaul, as she called it, as a courageous decision by the government. It opens up opportunities to invest both in our existing assets and new assets as we move forward. As my colleague was just saying, the attractiveness to companies that make energy from renewable sources is what this CEO is talking about, that this opens up opportunities to invest both in our existing assets and new assets as we move forward.

Further, in a release from the government of Alberta that CEO goes on to say: "We welcome a shift to the capacity market in Alberta. It will enhance our ability to make investments in existing and new generation to the benefit of [our] customers and other stakeholders in the services we provide."

There's one expert who goes on to say that it's a very clear roadmap emerging with the previous Premier's announcement with regard to Alberta's commitment to support the conversion of coal-fired plants to gas. As we know, many of those companies have taken the signal to start that work, and ultimately we of course have significant gas supplies in this province, which are being used close to source, and when that is done, there's a benefit to the economic production of cheaper electricity.

She goes on to say: TransAlta has already completed a significant amount of work on the logistics and timing of plant conversions; accelerating TransAlta's coal transition while ramping up our renewables, including hydro, wind, and solar, is critical to keeping Alberta competitive, and we look forward to being active participants in the transition. That, from an expert, all sounds like a significant endorsement of a capacity market, which this bill is going to be terminating or proposes to terminate.

3:30

That same person goes on to be quoted in the *Calgary Herald*. The quote is: if you don't have enough of a price signal in an energy-only market to attract new capital, you won't get new capital, and you'll run up against a wall. The number one change – this is not a quote – that the government has to think about is in pricing. Then it follows with that quote from the CEO: if you don't have enough of a price signal in the energy-only market to attract new capital, you won't get new capital, and you'll run up against the wall. We, of course, know that this current government's efforts to attract new capital across many sectors are not happening. We do

know that the giveaways across the sectors to corporations are significant and haven't resulted in any new employment.

I'll go on to share what the Capital Power CEO said at the time. He said that a capacity market would encourage not only his company, which is Capital Power, to resume investing in Alberta but probably get interest from larger North American and European producers. All good news, to be sure, and that's what the CEO of Capital Power said.

He goes on to say:

We look forward to engaging with the Government of Alberta on the evolution of Alberta's [energy] market design, including participation in stakeholder consultations regarding the design and introduction of a capacity market. A well-designed ...

And, of course, that's important.

... and fairly implemented capacity market can deliver an affordable power supply for Albertans, reduce market price volatility, and provide certainty that generation capacity will be there when needed.

One of my colleagues talked about price spikes and how damaging they are to the affordability of a family's pocketbook. Of course, it was reported by that former member that there are all sorts of spikes that have happened in an energy-only market just to our south, which we compare ourselves to frequently, that being Texas.

There is another former executive vice-president of the Tennessee Valley Authority and PJM interconnection. That person at the time, when this quote was taken, said:

I spent the last eight years of my career as the CEO of PJM Interconnection, which has a mature capacity market structure.

Something we were trying to work towards in this province: a mature capacity market structure.

He goes on to say:

Private investors from around the world have built over 30,000 megawatts of new generation in PJM under this market structure, which kept the lights on at stable prices.

Stable prices are what we all look to to ensure that we can plan for our family's future and know what our costs are going to be.

He goes on to say:

Investors have shown a growing reluctance to invest in the riskier energy-only market designs around the world, preferring the price stability and revenue certainty provided by a capacity market structure. I am confident this model will work well in Alberta too, ensuring future stability in your admirable and smooth transition to a lower carbon electricity system.

Of course, the lower carbon electricity system is fuelled in part by the shutting down of coal-fired generators from 2050 to 2030. The move that this former government made was in the direction of ensuring that those coal-fired generators had a smooth transition, as is said here, and supporting their employees, their workers in that transition was an important aspect of the work we did as a government.

This collection of quotes goes on to include the president and CEO of AltaLink. At the time Mr. Thon said:

New capacity will be needed to back up renewables in Alberta as it transitions to a cleaner energy future. We have seen the government take steps to ensure low costs for Albertans by requiring new generation be sited near existing transmission, by offering long-term contracts and by focusing on universal, or grid-scale, projects. We are confident the government will continue on this path and find the lowest cost way to add new capacity for Albertans.

I know that there are many admirable things in that last quote that the president and CEO of AltaLink was speaking to, the sense of this effort made by the previous government. Of course, that's not the direction that this government is going in, but we believe that there are advantages, and they are highlighted by my colleague just before me, in terms of addressing them.

The managing director of Morrison Park Advisors goes on to speak to:

In our discussions with lenders, equity providers and electricity facility owners and developers, we found positive interest in a potential capacity market in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits of a capacity market include, as one person said, getting your . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** My apologies for interrupting the hon. member. Though there has been no disorder caused or anything of the nature, I do, however, just want to take this opportunity to remind all members that according to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, page 614:

There is no Standing Order which governs the citation of documents . . .

A speech [however] should not consist of a single long quotation or a series of quotations joined together by only a few original sentences.

My intention for doing this at this moment is not to single out any individual member, because I don't think that that is the intention of anybody here. There are always opportunities to table documents, et cetera, but I would just like to take this opportunity to remind the House of those stipulations according to, again, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which I'm sure you all have readily available at your desks at this time.

If the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo could please continue on this. You have another two minutes and 30 seconds. Thank you.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you. I will just point out that many individuals very high up or at the top of the chain of these organizations all applauded the government of Alberta for its activities in developing a capacity market, moving in that direction, the decision to transition from an energy-only market to a capacity market. We, of course, know that the current government is going to terminate that, but it doesn't address the support that was given at the time, when we made the decision to move in that direction.

We will of course have the opportunity, potentially, of debating these things in further detail at the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. You know, we have the ability at that committee, I believe, as we just showed through the examination of the sunshine list and the discussion about how we wanted to recommend to this House that the sunshine list should be amended or changed or improved. We had the ability to hear from people. Hearing from presenters, from witnesses, as it were, really helped all members of the committee better understand the issues with regard to the sunshine list.

That same sort of outreach to potential experts around the capacity market and the electricity-only market I think would be useful in regard to making sure that we take the right steps at the right time and not do anything that would be harmful to pricing for electricity for the citizens of Alberta.

Thank you.

3:40

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anybody wish to take advantage of that.

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to referral amendment REF1? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West has risen.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, certainly, I think we have some robust discussions that are going to go on today. I would like to ask unanimous consent of the House to go to one-minute bells so we can get through, hopefully, our agenda this afternoon.

Thank you.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West, should he continue speaking to REF1.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I understand that this is my time to speak to this particular part of the bill, and I thank you and everyone for indulging me the opportunity, but I have no further comments at this time.

Thank you very much, sir.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo for really bringing the thunder in that last speech. It's intimidating to follow such a barnburner, but I will do my best.

I'm rising to speak, of course, in favour of the amendment that we have before us. I think it would be wise for this House to send Bill 18 to be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2, because what's become apparent to me and I think become apparent to all members of the House is that we all have significant questions around what reverting to the energy-only market will do for Alberta's electricity system.

Certainly, I think one of the benefits that sending this bill to committee would provide would be to allow the members on that committee to have a detailed briefing about what the current energy-only market is like, how it's structured, to get the appropriate briefing from department officials, perhaps other people, other stakeholders, I mean, in the electrical system operation so that all members have a clear understanding of what we're talking about when we talk about whether or not Alberta should stay with the electricity-only market or convert to the capacity market.

The electrical system operation is not simple, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I know that our government was briefed for hours and hours on this issue before we made any decisions about any changes that we made to the electrical system here in Alberta, and I think it would be a benefit to all members of this Assembly to receive that same detailed briefing so that we can have a much more informed debate about the changes or – sorry – the reversion to the energy-only market that this bill proposes.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, there have been some questions that hon. members from both sides of the House have raised in this question about whether or not we should keep the electricity-only market. Last night in my remarks I expressed some concerns, that were echoed by my colleagues here on this side, about the potential for increased prices of electricity. Certainly, the minister shares some of those concerns because when she provided a letter to the Electric System Operator on July 25 informing them of her decision to stay with the electricity-only market, the energy-only market, she did raise some concerns that she had heard through the consultation process that she conducted through the summer.

In fact, I'll just quote briefly from the letter. She said that "the AESO must provide [her] with analyses and recommendations on whether changes are needed to the price floor/ceiling and shortage pricing in Alberta's energy-only market." And she asks that a status update on this work be provided to her on or before February 1, 2020.

Now, Mr. Speaker, obviously, the minister herself has some questions around whether or not the energy-only market puts consumers at significant risk of untenable price volatility. I think it's only fair that if she has questions, the rest of the members of this Assembly also get the chance to learn from the people that she

is consulting with and have those questions answered as well because she's not the only one who has those questions. We've raised it on this side of the House. Other members from the government caucus have raised this issue around price stability. I think that it would be wise to send this bill to committee to share in the learning that the minister is willing to do so that we all have a clear understanding of what we're talking about before we make a decision on whether or not Alberta should stay with the energy-only market or convert to the capacity market, as we proposed.

In the same letter, Mr. Speaker, she also said that she heard repeated references to concerns with market power and market power mitigation. Last night in my comments I did refer to the issue of market power as having a significant negative impact on the price of electricity for consumers. Economic withholding is something that is currently allowed by the Electric System Operator. In fact, TransAlta, as we know, was prosecuted successfully in 2015 and fined more than \$50 million for their activities, withholding electricity from the grid in order to drive up prices.

Clearly, the minister has seen that this is a problem that needs to be addressed as well, and I don't think it's fair, Mr. Speaker, that only she be informed about what changes the Electric System Operator is recommending to the energy-only market, and I specifically don't think that it's fair that we have to wait until after this legislation is passed to hear those answers. I think the prudent thing for this House to do would be to send this bill to committee so that we, too, can ask this question around market power and market power mitigation and what the AESO would recommend in terms of changes to the existing electrical system to prevent the exercise of market power to drive up prices and punish consumers for the ability of certain players in the electrical system to game the prices that consumers are charged for electricity.

Those are a couple of the issues that the minister herself has asked the AESO to chime in on, and I think, as I've said many times already, that it's only fair that members of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship be provided with the opportunity to explore these issues around price ceilings and floors, market power, and market power mitigation before we make a decision on whether or not we should revert to the energy-only market or remain with a capacity market. These are critical questions that need to be answered.

Now, I understand that the minister has introduced the bill. I don't think that she's answered these questions to the satisfaction of the members of this House. Perhaps during debate on this legislation the minister will provide us her insight into what she thinks will need to be the recommended changes made to the energy-only market to address these issues that she herself has raised. I would like to hear her thoughts on what she thinks needs to be done to the energy-only market to prevent these significant risks of price uncertainty for consumers.

3:50

The other significant question that we've heard over and over again in this debate is the question of whether or not lowering greenhouse gas emissions is best done through the capacity market or through the existing energy-only market. Now, when we were briefed on this by the AESO, they told us that the capacity-only market was probably the best way to facilitate the phase-out of coal-fired power and convert to natural gas and it was also the best way to incent the development of renewable energy in the province of Alberta. We've heard conflicting reports from members on both sides of the House as to whether or not the capacity market is the best way to do this.

Certainly, it's our assertion that switching to the capacity market would be the best way to facilitate that conversion of coal-fired

power plants to natural gas plants. That's a significant question that I think the constituents in Edmonton-Gold Bar are asking me because climate change is a very important question to them, and they want the government to take meaningful action on climate change. Shifting from coal-fired power to natural gas is one of the significant moves that this government could do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, allowing existing coal-fired power to switch over to natural gas is an important matter for the communities where those coal-fired power plants exist. The ability of those power plants to switch over to natural gas and keep some of their power plant employees on staff is a critical issue to many members in this House. Certainly, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland both have a number of jobs at stake. I think it's really important that they understand as well as I do what not shifting to the capacity market will do to the jobs at risk in their constituencies so that if they vote in favour of this bill, they know the impact that it will have on the jobs in their ridings. Certainly, you know, the government does not have an admirable track record of job creation. They've lost 27,000 jobs in the last two months. I'm sure that those members aren't keen to go back to their constituencies and say: we're adding to the job losses by creating an electrical system that will not allow you to keep your jobs at the power plants here at home.

Now, on to the matter of renewable energy. Of course, through our renewable electricity program we set a target of 30 per cent of Alberta's electrical energy to be generated by renewable energy sources by 2030. Now, in the latest long-term outlook provided by the AESO, they've downgraded that target so that by 2030 less than 20 per cent of Alberta's electricity will be generated from renewable energy sources, which is remarkable, Mr. Speaker, given that the 30 per cent target is a legislated target. I know that the members opposite are keen to make sure that Albertans comply with the law. It is interesting to me that the minister and the government are so keen to not be in compliance with their own legislation to provide 30 per cent electrical energy from renewable energy sources here in the province of Alberta. I hope that the minister or somebody from the government can explain to us how staying with the energy-only market will allow us to meet the legislated target of 30 per cent renewable energy by 2030. If not, then I think it's only prudent that we send this bill to committee so that we can ask that question: what will the impact of staying with the energy-only market have on the legislated target of 30 per cent renewable electricity by 2030?

The Member for Calgary-Glenmore, of course, disputes our assertion that staying with the energy-only market will inhibit Alberta's ability to meet that legislated target. She tabled a couple of documents earlier today indicating that there is still strength in the renewable energy market here in Alberta. I've read those documents that she referred to, and certainly I'm glad that there is still enthusiasm for renewable energy. The problem is that there is no target anymore, Mr. Speaker. The government has, as I said, apparently quietly abandoned their 30 per cent target. They've certainly abandoned the renewable energy purchasing program that we started, so I'm wondering what the basis for this enthusiasm for renewable energy is, given the fact that the government is renegeing on its legislated commitment, as I said, to provide 30 per cent of Alberta's electricity from renewable energy sources.

I think that by sending this bill to committee, we would have an excellent opportunity to hear from renewable electricity providers their views on whether the current energy-only market is satisfactory for meeting that commitment or if changes to the capacity market are needed or if, perhaps, some modifications to

the planned capacity market or modifications to the current energy-only market are needed.

But it's critically important, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta meet its legislated commitment for renewable energy because there are a number of jobs on the line. We know that renewable energy creates more jobs per dollar invested than many other industries here in Alberta. Certainly, every member in this Chamber is interested in creating jobs. Certainly, you know, if I'd been elected on a platform that included jobs, economy, and the pipeline and I'd lost 26,000 jobs since I was elected, I would be keen to do everything I could do to create some jobs in Alberta. Perhaps taking \$4.5 billion and investing it in renewable energy would be a good way.

Anyway, we should send this bill to committee so that we can ask those questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anybody wish to make comments or questions. I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, that was just riveting, and I'm wondering if the member would care to continue and expand on his line of thinking.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for St. Albert for her question. As I said, the potential for the development of renewable energy and jobs that come from the development of renewable energy is something that everybody is excited about in the province of Alberta, but we need to have a market that's properly structured in order to create those jobs. So I think it's only appropriate that we send this bill to committee so that we can ask the question of how the electricity system can be structured so that we can properly provide the incentives for the creation of renewable energy here in the province of Alberta. There's a lot of investment on the line. There are a number of jobs on the line, and I think the responsible thing to do would be for this House to look at this question by sending it to committee.

Now, I see that the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul is pointing to the Election Recall Act, so I'm sure that he's concerned about what his constituents will do when he goes back to them and says: not only have we lost 27,000 jobs since I've been elected, but we're keen to keep piling on the job losses by not properly incenting renewable energy development here in the province; oh, by the way, we're going to give \$4.5 billion in corporate handouts that don't actually go to anybody in Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul but actually go to foreign shareholders, Hong Kong billionaires like the owner of Husky.

Anyway, I want to thank the hon. Member for St. Albert for asking that question. I urge all members here in this House to vote for this amendment and send this bill to committee so that we can get the information that we need to make the best decision based on the evidence available.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:00

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) for another two minutes and 20 seconds should anybody choose to have comments or any more questions for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the referral amendment, REF1? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has risen.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise on this important motion asking that the subject matter of this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with 74.2 of the standing orders. The reason I say that it's important is because the subject matter of this bill will impact Albertans across the province. It will impact constituents in our constituencies. It will impact their bottom line, their monthly bills, so it's important that we take time to discuss the subject matter of this bill thoroughly and how it will impact Albertans. There are a number of reasons why we should do that, but one is that it will impact Albertans, it will make their life more expensive, it will make their electricity bills more expensive. So it's important that we refer this bill to the Resource Stewardship Committee, where it can be studied thoroughly.

There are a number of other reasons why we should study this bill in more detail. I think I can start with consultations. The UCP announced consultations on this bill, that they will consult for 90 days, and they cancelled those consultations after just 30 days. They didn't even consult for what they promised. Promise made, promise broken. I think that referring this to committee will be an opportunity for Albertans, for all those who are concerned, and for us MLAs to discuss this bill, discuss its impact more thoroughly. That's the number one reason: the UCP has failed to consult on this bill properly. They didn't even consult for the time period they promised they would. They cancelled their consultation after 30 days. That's simply wrong. This motion will make sure that Albertans have the opportunity to weigh in on this change. This will make sure that we as MLAs have the opportunity to weigh in on how it will impact our constituents and their bottom lines.

The second thing I would say: again, it was also claimed by the UCP that nobody in the sector was asking for it. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that there can be nothing further from the truth, that nobody was asking for it. When we moved towards the capacity market, I think we had experts, analysts, and, more importantly, AESO, the Alberta Electric System Operator, who were suggesting that we should move towards the capacity market. There is a written report from AESO that's on record. So saying this, that nobody was asking for it, can't be true when the Alberta Electric System Operator was clearly asking the government to move towards the capacity-only market.

Not just that, but they analyzed the energy-only market, and they outlined their reasons why they wanted the Alberta government to move towards a capacity-only market. Those reasons were that that move will ensure that Albertans have safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity. These are the things that Albertans wanted. These are the things that were recommended by AESO. Claiming that the sector was not asking for it and that nobody was asking for it: that's not true. When we moved towards the capacity market, at that time TransAlta Corporation, Capital Power, AltaLink, Western Interstate Energy Board – and there many other stakeholders who were in favour of this move, who supported this move, and who we worked with towards implementing the capacity market.

The third thing was that this government is claiming that an Alberta energy-only market works. It doesn't matter how many times you say that in the House – it works, it works, it works – the evidence is that it doesn't work. We have seen that from rolling blackouts. We have seen that from spikes. The fact is that under an energy-only market the price of energy is determined 8,640 times a year. The price of electricity is determined approximately 8,640 times a year in an energy-only market. It means that it's determined every hour. When you're determining that price every hour, I think the result is that you will see spikes because you're determining that price every hour. So it's the function of an energy-only market that you will see these price spikes.

Saying that that's the best market: that's not enough. It doesn't matter how many times you say in the House that it works; the fact is that it doesn't work. Except for Alberta, Texas, and some states in Australia and New Zealand, everybody has adopted some other form of market. Again, evidence was there that Alberta needed to move towards some other form of market that works better, that doesn't run into price spikes and rolling blackouts, brownouts, and those kinds of things.

Referring this bill to the committee will also make sure that we have that opportunity to verify those claims, whether it works or not, and why AESO was recommending just three years ago that Alberta needed to move towards a capacity market. What went wrong with their assessment that they did just three years ago? That's another reason why it's important that we send this bill to the committee, so that we can study the bill, its impacts, more thoroughly.

There were other things that were also outlined by my colleagues. When we moved towards a capacity market, the renewables auctions, we were able to procure electricity at really a very reasonable price, and I think that that was the lowest price that we ever got. There is also evidence that there are other forms of electricity that we can procure that are way cheaper and that will help lower the electricity bills for everyday Albertans.

Also, when you procure for a longer duration, let's say for a year, you know what the price is, you're able to budget for that, you're able to predict what your bills will be, and it's a lot easier to do so in a capacity market as opposed to an energy-only market, where the price is determined 8,640 times a year. That was another reason that we moved towards a capacity market, and that's another reason that we'd send the subject matter of this bill to the committee, to look into it further and to verify also the claims that the government is making.

Among other issues that were outlined, I think, when we were moving, one concern was economic withholding within the energy-only market. You can bid the generation at a sufficiently higher price, hoping that you would not be asked to run it. An example is that you can bid it at \$999 per megawatt hour. When you are able to do that – and we haven't heard from this government what they are going to do about it – that spikes your price. That jacks up your price. That impacts everyday Albertans' bills. That changes their bill every month for the same product that they are using every day. They are paying every hour a different price.

4:10

The capacity market has that function to it that because of long-term contracts, because of yearly procurement, because of longer duration procurements, there is stability to it, and Albertans can have more reliable and sustainable and affordable electricity. It's important, from that standpoint as well, that we refer this bill to the committee and talk about economic withholding, discuss economic withholding: how it impacts the companies who are providing the generation, how it impacts Albertans, their bottom line, their bills on a monthly basis.

Another thing was that when we transitioned, we put in a cap that guaranteed Albertans that their bill won't spike more than 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. That was, again, there to protect Albertans, to protect their bottom line, to protect their monthly bills, and at the same time they can have reliable, sustainable electricity while making sure that it's affordable as well. We haven't heard a word from this government, even when asked, on what they're going to do with the 6.8-cent cap. If they are going to remove it, certainly that will hit the bottom line of Albertans. That will hit Albertans' pockets, and they will be on the hook to pay for the spikes and whatever comes with the energy-only market.

Then there is another price cap, where nobody who is generating is able to bid more than \$1,000 per megawatt hour. We have asked before and we will ask again: are we keeping that cap? Is it going to stay there? Are we changing it? In an energy-only market I think there are suggestions that we may need to raise the cap to attract investment whereas in the capacity market we already attracted a lot of investment, almost \$10 billion in investment, for renewables. Again, these are the things where the Resource Stewardship Committee will be in a better position to invite experts, invite stakeholders, invite AESO and all those who are concerned and, more importantly, invite Albertans to weigh in on this important bill that will impact their bottom lines.

One other thing that I would like to highlight is that within the existing guidelines, the offer behaviour enforcement guidelines, economic withholding is allowed. If they are moving towards the energy-only market, reverting to the status quo, will they let companies continue with economic withholding, and if they will do so, how will it impact Albertans' bills going forward? These are all important issues that the public has a vested interest in, and they deserve an opportunity where they can discuss these things in more detail.

I do know that when asked about any consultation, any input from the public, they will start swinging their mandate and say that in the election there was a clear mandate, so they can do whatever they want. But I don't think that any Albertan voted for a higher electricity bill, that any Albertan voted for price spikes or brownouts and blackouts. They want a sustainable and affordable supply of electricity. We have seen from previous experience in Alberta that there were problems with the energy-only market, and that was the reason AESO and all other experts were asking the government to move towards . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions, comments.

Seeing none, anyone looking to join debate on REF1?

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** Moving back to the bill proper, are there any members looking to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak to the main bill in second reading, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019. You know, the main issue that I think that we all need to look at here is looking for reliability and looking for capacity and the incentive to build capacity in our electricity grid system and to reach across to build different ways by which we could generate electricity so to increase the security of the overall grid system.

As we had spoken briefly about before, with the way that our electricity generation has evolved, we had a reliance on a handful of very large generating facilities, coal-fired generating facilities, that, you know, left us exposed in quite a number of different ways in terms of both energy pricing and energy security. I had mentioned before that if we did have one or more of those plants go down for regular, scheduled maintenance or for a problem, then we were in a tight spot in terms of generating electricity, and if that happened to coincide with high-use, high-demand times such as in the summer during a heat wave, then you end up with brownouts or even rolling blackouts. We don't want to go back to the bad old days, when that was an issue.

We want to encourage generation from smaller producers in many different places across the province so that security can be achieved and that you can achieve higher efficiencies through

reduced line loss between, you know, the source of generation and where the electricity is being used. Considering that, again, I think that we need to build incentives through regulation to expand the grid interaction between jurisdictions here in the province of Alberta and other provinces, including British Columbia and Manitoba, where there are lots of potential supplies of hydroelectricity. Again, all of those are ways by which we can help to strengthen the affordability of electricity here in the province of Alberta and reliability as well.

[Mr. Jones in the chair]

I'm not suggesting that the situation that we're in here now is static, that we should be using this current circumstance that we're in for generation of electricity. We know that we have the evolution, the phase-out of coal power, for example, moving to more natural gas electricity generation, which is a process in motion now, a process that I hope that this new government will continue to accelerate. I think that the benefits of the phase-out of coal power generation are not just to reduce carbon emissions but also particulate pollution in immediate areas around where coal plants are being used, right? We can see a demonstrable increase in health benefits by reducing coal-fired power, and we know that, you know, this is a path that we need to continue to move down and not have the interests of science and good health be delayed or compromised by political action.

4:20

I believe as well that, you know, we only have to be students of history to see that the market-only electricity systems have been notoriously unreliable in regard to security against speculation, right? You see electricity price spikes on an energy-only market that will curl your hair, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, and will again expose Albertans to very expensive price spikes during different times of the year. I believe that we have learned to move past that.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

You know, I know that this new government is interested in their summer and fall of repeal and terminating this and that, but common sense must prevail. I believe that there is a better way by which we can do this and there's a better way that we can look for both security and affordability in the market. I believe that as an opposition we will look to other ways by which we can strengthen the market through regulation and through perhaps the introduction of some amendments to this bill. You know, we certainly in the spirit of constructive criticism will offer those alternatives here in this Chamber in due course, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Section 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 18, Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019. I'd just like to sum up a couple of things that my colleagues have said this afternoon and also last night. I think it's important for Albertans to know and to remember that this decision was based on advice from experts about how to protect consumers while modernizing our electricity market. You know, obviously, the UCP want to reverse this change, again letting foreign markets decide the price of energy on any given day, where the bottom line will be that Albertans will have to pay more for less, resulting in less stability, less predictability, higher electricity bills,

and some of the other related issues that my colleagues have talked about.

Although, you know, for a lot of Albertans affordability is, I guess, not a really big deal, for far too many Albertans not having the reliability and the predictability of monthly bills is actually a problem, particularly for people that are struggling, whether they're struggling on AISH, whether they're folks that are unemployed. We've heard repeatedly, sadly, how many people recently have lost their jobs, and there will be more and more Alberta families really struggling.

The electricity market, the one that we made alterations to, would have ensured that Albertans have safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity. This current move could potentially cost Albertans 10 times more in electricity bills and take us back to the time of rolling blackouts. I've heard some of my colleagues talk about some of their memories about rolling blackouts or brownouts, and I didn't actually recall those. I'm not entirely sure why. So I did a quick little search.

**An Hon. Member:** Maybe you didn't have your lights on.

**Ms Renaud:** Maybe I didn't have my lights on.

I did a little search and just reading some of the articles from that time, I guess it really caused me to think. I looked at some of the images that were available, and it really caused me to think of, you know, the harm that a blackout can do when something like that is entirely preventable with the creation of a new market.

It's interesting. One of the articles I looked at had a photograph of some traffic being backed up on I think it was 124th and 102nd Avenue because the signals were out, and we certainly rely on that. Think about the harm that that causes, and not just folks maybe being late for work or late for school or meeting a friend, but emergency vehicles not being able to get to where they need to go. Then I started thinking about, you know, certainly that our hospitals and clinics would have backup generators, but not everybody is being treated in a facility like that. So you think about an unplanned outage like that and the damage that that can cause to people's health. Again, it was caused because of heavy demand on the power grid, and it was caused by the first heat wave of the summer.

Now, I'm going to use this a little bit to swing into the very sad reality that – and I know that not everybody in this place believes it to be a crisis – climate change is indeed a crisis. When you have consensus of over 95 per cent of global scientists that study climate telling us that we have a global crisis, I believe them. Canada released Canada's Changing Climate Report, the CCR, on April 1 – I'm trying to think: was that last year? – and some of the things that I just wanted to highlight are why it's so important to have a reliable market so that rolling blackouts and brownouts aren't something that becomes normal for us. Again, I'm not saying that climate change causes summer heat waves or any of the other storms that we're seeing around us, but it certainly exacerbates things. Some of the highlights from Canada's Changing Climate Report: it is projected that Canada overall will warm at twice the global average regardless of what we do to fight it. This is what scientists are telling us. Now, certainly that doesn't mean that we can't mitigate these changes – there is a lot that we can do – but there are a lot of ways to reduce future global warming.

More than 40 scientists who worked on that particular report for Canada also presented evidence that humans have caused irreparable damage to the climate, primarily through our use of fossil fuels – of course, we know that – to the point that the Earth will continue to warm to some degree even if we stop all emissions now, which we all know. I think one of the things that I was really proud of in the climate leadership plan was the early phase-out of

coal-fired electricity, recognizing that burning of coal does create a lot of pollution, but it also takes a heavy toll on people's health.

One of the things that I wanted to talk about and just to remind people – I'm sure that people understand that reducing coal-fired electricity significantly allows us to lower greenhouse gas emissions. I think it was Ontario that made a fairly quick transition from coal-fired electricity in 2014, and as a result you're seeing that their greenhouse gases have come down significantly. One of the things that the market changes that we introduced when we were government allowed us to focus on was climate leadership and some of the things that would help us to do that.

We know that coal-fired electricity is a very significant source of carbon pollution. Coal electricity is actually the largest source of air pollution in Canada. These pollutants cause significant impact on small children and the elderly, as I'm sure you can imagine, and really are a burden to our health care system. Once again – I think I talk a lot about the importance of prevention in terms of health – this is essentially something that we can do as a cost savings to our health care system. We understand and we realize that this causes problems.

4:30

On a more global approach or global scan, about 40 per cent of the world's electricity comes from burning coal, which significantly contributes to climate change. It harms the health of Canadians in a very significant way. It produces, actually, more than just carbon dioxide that contributes to global warming. Burning coal releases particulate matter such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and mercury, so the air pollution in burning coal produces particles that actually lodge in our lungs and are associated with worse respiratory and cardiovascular health, higher death rates for those near or around coal-burning plants. We also know that, actually, the burning of coal causes water and soil pollution, so we are contaminating the ground and the nearby surface water.

I talk a lot about climate change in this House. Almost on any topic I think that we can focus the discussion on climate change or on the climate crisis we have because it actually is a crisis and it does impact every aspect of our lives. When we looked at making the changes that we did, we did that because it allowed us to take some bold action, I thought, around climate leadership. The reasons for the changes to a capacity market were to enable the transition to an electricity market that could meet goals set in our climate leadership plan, such as the transition off coal, and increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix.

Beginning in October, as my colleague mentioned earlier today, AESO revised its forecast for Alberta renewables, stating that Alberta is now expected to fall short of its renewable targets, the changes in the electricity market being an important factor. AESO began its work on evaluating the sustainability of the electricity market in 2013 and recommended implementing a capacity market independent of the climate leadership plan and early coal phase-out to ensure long-term reliability. As a government we worked with the Alberta Electric System Operator, who showed us that the capacity market is the best choice to deliver reliable energy, good environmental performance, reasonable cost to electricity consumers, economic development, and the lowest transition risk. They recommended to us to adopt a capacity market.

It's unfortunate that the members across decided to vote down the amendment to refer this to committee to allow more time for consultation or review because I think this is another lost opportunity. I mean, when I think of a theme for a lot of the legislation or changes that have been happening lately, it seems to be about going backwards, so going back to the old ways of doing things when, really, the challenges are in front of us, as are the

opportunities. I think this is a lot of lost opportunity, passing on to Albertans a lot of unnecessary risk, and really missing the chance to take some bold leadership steps around this climate crisis.

I just want to remind people again why I continue to focus on this. It's that Canada is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world. [interjections] It's kind of weird that people think that's funny, but okay.

In northern Canada temperatures have risen by 2.3 degrees annually since 1948, and Canada's annual average has gone up by around 1.7 degrees Celsius. Now, that may not sound like a lot, but on a mean climate scale it is quite dramatic. Again, I don't think any of the scientists who, you know, publish their science – and it is peer-reviewed science – are telling us that it isn't climate change that is causing some of the very damaging weather events that we're seeing and not just weather events – we have flooding, we have horrific forest fires and drought – but that it will continue to exacerbate. You can't have this kind of warming happening in our country, particularly in the north, and not feel the impacts of it. We might not see it every day, but things will continue to get worse.

I'd just like to express my concern that once again this piece of legislation looks at taking us backwards and really is a missed opportunity while passing on a lot of unnecessary risk to consumers in Alberta. With that, I will end my comments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member for St. Albert.

There is 29(2)(a) available should anybody be looking to take advantage of that.

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? I see that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak to this particular bill. I know it's something that's comparatively complex, but I actually think it's an incredibly important file. I want to begin my comments by actually complimenting a number of the staff that used to reside within . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. However, given the fact that REF1 was moved on your behalf by Ms Sweet, it is my understanding that you therefore, according to that, have already spoken to the bill proper.

**Ms Ganley:** Okay.

**The Acting Speaker:** There are other members in the House who could join the debate. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen to speak.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I would like to start off along the same vein as the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View because I believe that the hon. member was going to start by complimenting the staff who work in the ministries supporting the decision-making and doing the work on what is a very, very complicated system.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

As I begin my remarks on Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, I really appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak to this bill. One of the things I'd like to say right off the bat is that in some of the communication that government has put out on this, they've stated outright or suggested using different language that the capacity market is complex and that going back to the energy-only market would be more simple and straightforward. I would like to dispute that

because our electricity system is incredibly complex, and the people who work within and manage the policy around this – the work the AESO does is incredibly important. To suggest that the capacity market is complex and the energy-only market is simple would be incorrect. I certainly want to point out that we are dealing with something that not only is critically important to Albertans but is really complicated, something that I learned in my time being briefed on the files that relate to this.

As some of my colleagues have mentioned in their response to this bill, there were a lot of very, very detailed, very, very technical briefings made to us when the original decision was made to move to a capacity market, a lot of complex information that we needed to understand and evaluate as we considered how to move forward on this very important file. Moving forward in a way that would work best for Albertans, that would provide a strong, stable, predictable energy market was really important because we want Albertans to have that predictability. We want investors to have that predictability. All indications suggest that thanks to low-cost renewables, low-cost natural gas, and the capacity-market development that was under way, price stability and system stability were what we were achieving.

Now, when there is price volatility, instability – a number of my colleagues have talked about some of the impacts we know, a lot of potential impacts to consumers, individual Albertans. I would like to stress the impact that it has on businesses because in Alberta we have a lot of energy-intensive manufacturing. We have a lot of energy-intensive businesses. When we talk about the price spikes that happened between 2001 and 2014, not only was it individual consumers that were impacted, but business and investment were significantly impacted. There were incredible . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. Hon. members, the hon. member is speaking. If we could just keep the noise down, that would be great. Please proceed.

4:40

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, price spikes impacting businesses as well as individual Albertans had become frequent in that period between 2001 and 2014. In 2007 the price for electricity spiked up to 11.5 cents. In 2018 it went as high as 12 cents and spiked again to 11 cents. In 2011 it spiked to 12 cents. Then it spiked to 12.5. Then it spiked to 13. Each time those spikes were happening, please reflect not only on the individual consumers and how that can put stress on the family budget but on agricultural operations, on energy-intensive manufacturing. Cement in our province is very energy-intensive. Different industries had real struggles dealing with the price spikes. In 2012 it went as high as 15 cents, and if we're talking about that time period between 2001 and 2014, I believe that's as high as the spikes got. That puts incredible pressure on both household budgets and business budgets.

This was all happening under that energy-only market that the government is returning us to. The reason that the conversations were being had to move to a capacity market was informed a great deal by the recommendations of the AESO, including some very in-depth, ongoing grid sustainability analyses that they started back in 2011. That's when they started to notice shifts in the willingness of investors to develop new generation in Alberta. Combined with the global shift towards markets with more stable revenues and the trend toward increased renewable generation as well as coal retirement schedules, all of this caused the AESO to conduct a very in-depth market assessment.

In 2016 they presented the government of Alberta with four market structure options and a recommendation to introduce a

capacity market for the added benefits of reliability as the electricity system evolved, encouraging competition in driving innovation, providing greater revenue certainty for suppliers, increasing price stability, and increasing investment confidence. That investment confidence is incredibly important because we're not talking just about investment in the electricity system. I believe that there is a real impact on business around the province when price spikes and price volatility can impact that business.

Now, the AESO is a really important player in our electricity system. We need to strongly consider their input because, of course, they're responsible for implementing changes to the electricity system. They're also responsible for ensuring sufficient investment in system reliability in whatever system is in place, so their perspective is critically important. They identified real issues with the energy market. Through the debate I have not heard of my satisfaction how confidence has been achieved that an energy-only market will provide adequate amounts as well as price stability within our province.

Now, we have heard that different industry players have a strong desire to move back to an energy-only market. I can certainly understand that that perspective is important and needs to be considered, but we also need to remember that industry also has a desire for market profits. Price volatility often improves profits. My colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar spoke about different actions that had been taken to maximize those profits, and oftentimes that's done in a way that is not helpful to the consumers or to the businesses that need that electricity to run and to operate. So there are two competing drives: the market profit drive that industry has and then the consumers' desire to have lower electricity prices and to have that price stability.

When we're looking at and evaluating this, we need to make sure that we've got the modelling behind it and the certainty to know that there will be the investment necessary. In 2016, when the AESO was making its recommendations to government, it was incredibly clear. They created, in fact, an entire report with recommendations suggesting that in an energy-only market it would not be sustainable, that there were significant risks, that there would be inadequate supply, that there would be inadequate investment in the creation of additional electricity sources, that there wouldn't be a willingness and financial capacity of investors to build new generation in Alberta.

For these reasons I'm very concerned about what Bill 18 proposes to do in reversing that change to capacity market termination. I think that making sure we have an electricity market that ensures Albertans have safe, reliable, sustainable, affordable electricity not just when we're thinking about somebody's home but when we're thinking about the cement manufacturing that happens in our province or when we're thinking about chemical manufacturing that happens in our province or a number of other energy-intensive manufacturing that happens in our province, this is an important perspective that we need to take into account. The work that was done to move to a capacity market was done specifically to address concerns raised to us by the AESO.

I mentioned near the start of my comments my concern that the government is treating capacity market as if it was complex and energy only as simple. I strongly disagree with that characterization. The entire system is very complex, and we need to address that at face value when we're looking at these complicated issues. We know the history of the energy-only market in our province. We have the historical context. My colleague from St. Albert was reading about some of the impacts that previous price spikes and brownouts have had. There were regular price spikes happening between that period. I listed a few of them going as high as 15 cents. That causes uncertainty and that causes financial



hardship. This isn't an imaginary bogeyman that the opposition is raising. Price volatility is a direct concern, and making sure that government is addressing that for both citizens and business is incredibly important.

Now, in their original report, including the analysis that they did, the AESO also spoke about how they would need to modify the current energy-only market if it were to be maintained. The modifications that they recommended to encourage the investment, make sure that there was enough power to run the province and all of the industry, included doing things like raising the price cap, that was currently at \$1,000 per megawatt hour, up to \$5,000 per megawatt hour. To simplify that or to explain what that means, it just means that there's way more room for volatile price spikes. The spikes that we saw in the past could get even bigger.

I look forward to the debate at Committee of the Whole, where we will have a little bit more back and forth with the minister and we can talk about how these things will be managed. Resulting in even bigger spikes than we saw in that period from 2001 to 2014 is of serious concern to me, and if the energy-only market modification, changing the price cap, is the only strategy put forward, then we have a real issue, knowing that volatility and what can happen looking into other jurisdictions like Texas and where similar market forces have performed.

In my comments in response to Bill 18 I strongly wanted to talk about the impact on Albertans, both homeowners and businesses, the risk to those consumers. I understand that there are industry voices with a desire to maximize their market profits. Those need to be weighed and balanced with the needs of consumers and the stability of the overall market, and I'm strongly concerned about this decision given the varying depth, briefings, and work that we really dug into and did on this file. The decision being made to move to capacity market was based on the advice of experts about how to protect consumers and modernize the electricity market.

4:50

Other colleagues of mine have talked about that need to get to 30 per cent renewable energy and the capacity market's ability to help facilitate those goals, to make sure that we have low-cost, reliable energy sources from renewable industries. Other colleagues have spoken at length about the interest in Alberta citizens, particularly our youth, in making sure that we have those renewable energy projects and that that's part of our system makeup.

Allowing Albertans to pay more for less, to get back to that time of volatile price spikes is of concern to me because higher electricity bills, I think, will come from Bill 18, and I'm concerned about the consumers in the province given all the information and all of the analysis that went into the original move to a capacity market termination. Through this process of bill debate I have not seen sufficient analysis or information that would assure me or other consumers that that's not going to be the result because the best predictor for future behaviour is past behaviour. The energy market in the past has had volatile price spikes as high as 15 cents, and with the modifications to the energy-only market those price spikes could go even higher.

What we need in our province is that reliable, predictable, sustainable, safe, and effective electricity system, and in my mind Bill 18 and the debate that we've engaged in so far does not give me confidence that moving back to an energy-only market will provide that for our businesses and our households.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? Oh. My apologies. That's what happens when you come in halfway through.

Anybody else wanting to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, shall I call the question? Hon. Minister of Energy, would you like to close debate?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. At this point I would just like to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 18 Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move an amendment, and I have the requisite number of copies.

**The Chair:** Just wait until I have a copy, hon. member.

This will be known as amendment A1. Hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, please proceed.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you. The amendment, I have to read that into the record, right?

**The Chair:** We'll make an exception this time, hon. member. I think it will be acceptable to not have to read it into the record.

**Mr. Sabir:** Okay. I will explain this amendment. In short, this will make it clear that the electricity market will have rules against economic withholding. That's the crux of this amendment. Economic withholding is . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry, hon. member, to interrupt you. I hesitate to interrupt. Just so everyone is aware, this amendment is two pages. As it is being distributed, please make sure that you have two.

Sorry, Member. Please proceed. Go ahead.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment is to make clear that the electricity market will have some rules against economic withholding. Economic withholding is illegal in many jurisdictions. It leads to higher costs to consumers, and it is questionable if this is a fair practice. It was explicitly allowed in Alberta under the offer behaviour enforcement guidelines, which were revoked by the Market Surveillance Administrator, MSA, in 2017. Economic withholding was allowed to incentivize investment, but the MSA stated that due to the capacity market, it was no longer needed. This means that our reform eliminated the need for intentional price spikes, and it is unclear if economic withholding is coming back with the changes that this UCP government brought forward.

Based on the MSA ruling, Bill 18 might be a way to reintroduce it back into the Alberta electricity market. This bill leaves it open, so this may be a way to reintroduce it through the back door, and if the government doesn't take action against it, it shows that they are

just too happy to raise the cost of living of Albertans, just like their car insurance rates. Simply, this amendment is asking all members to think about whether they are in favour of economic withholding or not. It's that simple. If the government wants to continue with economic withholding and shift the burden to Albertans, they can certainly choose to vote it down, but we believe that economic withholding results in price spikes and affects consumers' bottom lines.

I will urge all my colleagues to vote in favour of this amendment, vote in favour of reasonable, fair, sustainable, and affordable electricity for all Albertans and your constituents.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, the intent of the amendment – we certainly want to ensure that electricity is affordable and that there aren't spikes, and that's exactly why, when we announced that we would be sticking with the energy-only market, we asked AESO to come back to us with some proposals on how to improve the energy-only market. These are the types of things that we believe and we think that they will come back to us with, but I think that it's premature to put this in this piece of legislation because we know that we're going to get a suite of proposals coming back from AESO on how to improve the energy-only market. In that case, we would be proposing that we not agree with this amendment. We certainly do not have a problem with the spirit of it and certainly do not have a problem with something that supports the fair and efficient and openly competitive operation of the electricity market, and these are exactly the things that we've asked the AESO to come back to us with and tell us where we can find some improvements.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Always a pleasure to get up in the House and speak and specifically to this amendment. Of course, in representing the people of Edmonton-Ellerslie, I've had a number of opportunities to speak with constituents, from even before being elected to office, that were concerned about this particular issue in terms of price spikes, in terms of electricity and how difficult it was for a lot of families trying to make ends meet from month to month. In terms of costs when it comes to not just their electricity bill – but we're speaking specifically about that right now – it was mentioned by several constituents.

5:00

This is something that we really need to be concerned about because, of course, what the capacity market was intending to do was to really be able to address this issue for many Albertans, who were having issues making ends meet from month to month. The capacity market was a structure that would ensure reliability as the electrical system evolves. It also increases the stability of prices, as has been mentioned by several of my colleagues here. So we as the NDP government changed the way that Alberta pays for their energy providers so that it's more stable and fair to the average consumer. That decision was based on advice from experts, of course, on how to protect consumers and modernize our electricity system.

Here we find ourselves yet again, where we have this new government that wants to take us backwards rather than

modernizing our province and really being able to address issues and concerns of Albertans that, quite frankly, are having to make ends meet month to month. The UCP wants to reverse this change, letting foreign markets decide the price of energy on any given day, and Albertans will have to pay more for less, of course. Less stability, less predictability, and higher electricity bills are what this bill will cause if it's passed. These reckless and short-sighted changes will cause uncertainty and instability, and Albertans are going to have to pay the price for that. Our electricity market would have ensured Albertans have safe, reliable, sustainable, affordable electricity. This move by the UCP could cost Albertans about 10 times more on their electricity bills and take us back to the time of rolling blackouts, as has been mentioned by a few of my colleagues already.

As I stated before, the government is turning back the clock and is destroying progress on economic diversification, and this is just more of the same. It's, you know, a big \$4.5 billion giveaway to big corporations while Albertans are having to pay the price yet again.

One of the reasons for the changes to the capacity market was to enable a transition to an electricity market that could meet goals set, of course, in the climate leadership plan such as the transition off coal and increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix. At the beginning of October the AESO revised its forecast for Alberta renewables, stating that Alberta is now expected to fall short of its renewable targets and that the changes in the electricity market are an important factor. The AESO began its work on evaluating the sustainability of the electricity market in 2013, and the AESO recommended implementing a capacity market independent of the climate leadership plan and early coal phase-out to ensure long-term reliability, again, for the specific needs of Albertans.

As a government we worked with the Alberta Electric System Operator, who showed us that the capacity market is the best choice to deliver reliable energy, good environmental performance, reasonable cost to electricity customers, economic development, and the lowest transition risk. Of course, it was them that recommended the move towards the capacity market. Before our reforms the market had less consumer protection such as economic withholdings. The capacity market is a good tool to ensure that the coal phase-out will work smoothly. The coal phase-out already saved three times Vancouver's emissions, for example.

Energy-only markets are more volatile and they're less reliable than capacity markets, and of course this is what this is really about. As we turn back the clock towards a less reliable system, it's Albertans that are going to have to pay the price on this, and many of those are constituents of ours, people that we're supposed to be here to represent. It's really unfathomable that we have people from across the aisle who are here representing all Albertans – we understand that it's important that everybody's views are represented here, but we need to make sure that all views are represented. It's for this reason that I will be supporting this amendment, and I strongly encourage all members of the House to do so.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that. I'm really happy to see this amendment on the floor here this afternoon. One of my biggest concerns when there are changes being proposed to the energy market is that it creates a window of instability – right? – a window of transition that can result in an insecure electricity supply and potential insecurity around the determination of reliability of pricing. Both of these are essential consumer

concerns, for individuals and for industry. I'm glad to see that these changes, as brought forward by the Member for Calgary-McCall, seem to address this issue.

You know, the AESO is very essential in making sure that we discourage scarcity pricing in the electric markets during tight supply conditions, and we need to make sure that that is enshrined and protected by law. We don't worry so much about the electricity when we flip the switch and there it is, but when you have a scarcity of supply due to a major generation system maybe being taken off for maintenance or whatever or you have some loss during some storms maybe or something like that, I mean, that's the time when you have to have fail-safe measures in place to protect the individual consumer and the industrial consumers as well.

I don't applaud just the spirit of this amendment to Bill 18 but its substance as well. I am completely behind this idea of strengthening Bill 18 to ensure that Albertans are protected, that our electricity supply is protected. This is an essential service that cannot be compromised at any juncture.

I certainly support this amendment, and I encourage others to do so. I will hand it over to someone who might be able to offer some more insight in that regard.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise and to speak to this amendment today. I think it's an incredibly important amendment. Obviously I, like my colleagues, am not generally in favour of this bill. I think the reasons I'm not in favour of the bill and the reason I am in favour of the amendment tend to tie together in this instance.

The concern, obviously, with the bill is instability. I think we've seen evidence in the past that this sort of energy-only market creates price instability. The evidence we had at the time we were making the decisions and the evidence that was put before us by the officials in this instance, who were incredibly good, who did an amazing job of providing summary and information on this, was that that instability would increase as time went on. That's a big concern.

5:10

It's one thing if you're a very large corporation that understands how these things work and can model it and can shut down your production to ensure that you're not hitting the peak rate. But if you're an average consumer, you don't know that. What that creates is a situation of unfairness, where people who are average consumers, who can't be expected to be watching this sort of thing, are the ones who are ultimately bearing the cost of the system. I think that's what bothers me about this bill. Ultimately, this is a decision about who will bear what cost in the system. I mean, really, every economic decision is basically about that, about how we're distributing costs and who will bear which cost. In this case what we're deciding is that consumers and average Albertans are going to bear the cost in terms of this massive, radical sort of price instability that we're likely to see, and I think that that's a huge issue.

One of the reasons that I ran for office originally was my concern about income inequality. We hear a lot about this. It's increasing. It's harder and harder for those sort of middle class and below to be able to get by. One of the things that's challenging about that is budgeting – right? – doing your household budget. I think that this sort of price instability makes it very, very challenging for people who are really doing their best in trying circumstances to keep their head above water, to put food on the table, to put a roof over their

head, and to provide for their children. I think that that's unfair, and that's my sort of general objection.

What's important about this amendment is that it prevents what they call economic withholding, basically the ability of a company to withhold power generation at a critical moment to drive the price of power up in order to maximize profits. I mean, that's a huge concern. Again, it's large corporations with wealthy shareholders profiting while everyday Albertans pay the price. Obviously, that's not something that I am in support of.

I think it's worth sort of backing up and looking at what this bill is doing overall. They have for many years, and I suspect still do, you know, sort of taught in the first-year economics course – when you go there, they talk about natural monopolies. The example that tends to be given is power system infrastructure because the upfront cost to invest is so high that you don't generally get lots of participants in the market. That's actually the case here in Alberta as well. What that means is that when we originally changed to this market many moons ago, they had to sort of create what I would call the illusion of competition. It isn't actual competition. We have all the sort of, like, retailers, if you will, the Enmaxes and the EPCORs of the world, but actually they're not generating their own power to sell. They're not competing in that sort of way. They're purchasing that power, and then they appear to be competing even though they're really all competing with identical products with slightly different marketing.

Because of that extra layer, what is created is that there's a contract to sell to those retailers, and that contract has automatic interest of 8 per cent. You and I can't buy into that contract. We can't go out into the market and purchase that 8 per cent because we have to have a huge amount of capital to be able to buy into that. That's a pretty big concern for me, when you're creating a situation where those who have an enormous amount of capital, who were born with money, have the ability to go and invest that money and get an 8 per cent return because they are large investors or large funds. They're able to do that whereas small people don't have the access necessarily to the same opportunities. That's – I don't know – I guess one of the things about the world that has always sort of bothered me, right? Again, this is what we're talking about here.

This economic withholding, that we're trying to prevent: this is, in my view, incredibly bad behaviour. If we don't rule out bad behaviour, the obligation that falls on these companies is to maximize the profits of their shareholders. It doesn't say to maximize profits of their shareholders ethically. It doesn't say to maximize profits of their shareholders having regard to what the average person would think is fair. It's just to maximize profits. So the concern becomes that they can use this, essentially, to do exactly that, to drive a price spike intentionally to make you and me and everyday Albertans pay those costs, and then the companies get huge profits.

This amendment will remedy that. Obviously, it isn't a remedy to everything. My preference would be simply to move to the capacity market. There is a reason that the vast majority of jurisdictions in the world have gone in this direction, and that reason is that it works more efficiently. Now, that isn't to say that there aren't differences from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Geography will actually have an impact on this. But, interestingly, geography is one of the factors that drives the decision towards a capacity market in Alberta. Our geography, especially in the northern parts of the province, where you have a small population spread out over a large area, is one of the things that drives this.

I think it's probably been said by many of my colleagues that Texas is the only jurisdiction that does it this way in North America, and with due respect to Texas I don't think they're necessarily right although they may have different geographic and population

considerations than we do. All I can say with certainty is that the advice that we received from the experts in Alberta was that the capacity market was the way to go.

This bill will essentially mean that Albertans pay more. It will mean that there is less stability and less predictability, and it will mean higher electricity bills. I think it's a bit reckless, because even beyond the higher electricity bills, that uncertainty is very challenging for people who are living on a specific budget or on a very fixed income to deal with. I think, you know, of seniors, who have a certain fixed income. Students who are in university often have, like, a certain number of hours that they are able to work, and they have a lot of costs, and it can be super, super challenging if your power bill shows up with an extra hundred dollars on it that month. That's a real problem for some people, and I think this government should consider the fact that that's a real problem for those people and take that problem seriously because it's our duty to do that.

This amendment, while it won't fix that entire problem, will fix at least some of it. It will at least prevent deliberate bad acting. It won't do away with the volatility and, from what our advice was, what would be increased volatility over time. It won't completely prevent people from having sort of price shock on their bill, you know, one month or for a couple of months, but what it will do is at least prevent deliberate bad acting from causing a spike in the price or aggravating a spike in the price to essentially be able to move money from average Albertans to the wealthy. One wonders if perhaps that was the intention of this bill.

I think, yes, this is a complicated system, and, yes, it's very difficult to explain to people. I remember this. When they initially made this change, I was a younger person, and at the time my father, actually, had an enormous amount to say about this because he was very, very troubled by this move. I think for some of the reasons I've stated, that this tends to be unstable and because, I suspect, if you look at it in depth, it isn't really competition. It's only the illusion of competition. It's competition at the retail end, but if you're taking the vast majority out of the business, out of the competition stream, I mean, is it even competition anymore? I'm not sure.

5:20

I think that, overall, this bill is a huge concern. My preference, obviously, would be not to move forward with it at all. But I think that it is our job as opposition not simply to oppose what comes forward but to propose ways to make that better. Even though this doesn't solve all of the problems that this bill is creating, it will solve at least one problem, and that, at the end of the day, will help at least some Albertans out there who will have challenges paying their bills as a result of this piece of legislation. I think that if we can help those Albertans even a little, we ought to do it. I don't think there's any reason not to.

This, again, very clearly prohibits nothing but bad acting. You know, when the members of the UCP talk endlessly about markets and the wonderfulness, I don't think that what any of them are talking about is bad actors. I believe genuinely that when the members opposite talk about the market, I don't think they're talking about bad actors. I think it's my view that I would imagine that everyone in this House will be supportive of something which doesn't prevent what the aim of the bill is but simply prevents bad actors from, essentially, intentionally abusing that market to drive up the spot price and to gain profits at the cost of Albertans.

So, with that, I will say that I am definitely in support of this amendment. I would urge all members to vote in favour of this amendment, and I would urge members of the government to seriously consider what it is this amendment is doing, because I actually think that it's something that we can all agree on.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and support the amendment as proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall. I mean, this is an important conversation to be having when we speak specifically to this bill. I recognize that the minister did say, you know, that in the legislation it speaks to the fact that AESO has been asked to write a recommendation and that they have till November 29 to do that, to recommend what the capacity market would look like, what we would do moving forward. Maybe economic withholding will be part of that recommendation. We know that in other jurisdictions across the country economic withholding is prohibited.

Alberta is one of the few jurisdictions that doesn't do that. I think this is a way that we protect Albertans from being impacted by the volatility of the market and not having to pay when, as my hon. colleague said, there may be or may not be bad actors within the industry. Economic withholding, as we know, allows to incentivize some industries and some people within the industry to look at having a way to drive the market up. But what it also does is that when we look at our smaller producers, so our green energy producers – our solar, our wind – the ones that aren't able to produce the same capacity into the market as some of our bigger generators, it actually pushes them out of the market. The struggle with that is that there becomes a question around the ability to invest from small producers into the market to diversify and look at green energy.

Now, the reason I brought up the comment by the hon. minister was that when it comes to the recommendations – and I'm very confident that she is aware of this – on January 26, 2018, a report did come out about the Alberta capacity market and the comprehensive market design. It was drafted by AESO. It is public, online. You can read it. You can see what the different options are when it comes to looking at how capacity markets versus the current system would work, why this recommendation was made. In fact, the report speaks to the transition to the end of 2019 and how, in looking at this report and these recommendations, we would be able to do this with limited impact on the industry, minimizing the regulatory requirements, and about the fact that many of the industry partners that have been working with AESO were able to actually speak to the fact that they had been working towards this transition already.

They were prepared for 2019, which is right now. Because they are preparing and because they recognized what the price model was going to look like, they recognized the fact that there were conversations and commitments around the contact impact tests, all of the energy market monitoring and the mitigation requirements that would be required under the new system, and dispatching scheduling summaries. All of the questions that the industry was asking were written in a report to the minister.

I guess my question and what I don't understand – and I do appreciate this amendment – is when the minister stands and speaks to the amendment and says: well, we're waiting for the report. The report is done. It was done on January 26, 2018. It's not that old; it's a year and a bit. All the questions that we're talking about here have been answered, I think, in the report. So my question to the minister would be: what's missing that doesn't answer the question around why we would move to a capacity market? Why wouldn't we take the recommendations that already exist within this report that speak to the fact that economic withholding would actually be addressed within this? It wouldn't be allowed to continue. There is a comprehensive market design created to support the industry.

Why is the government now saying, “Well, we want a report for November 29, 2019, so that we can make a decision”? It’s been done.

My question, again, goes back to: who is this really designed for? Is this about protecting Albertans and making sure that they have a regulated, consistent energy and electrical market where they know what their bills are going to be every month, or is this about looking at giving another opportunity to big corporations on the backs of Albertans? That’s what it looks like, because the argument from the government right now that we need a report to tell us what to do when it already exists from a year ago doesn’t make any sense, except for the fact that it doesn’t actually say what the minister wants it to say, which is: let’s give money to big corporations while Albertans pay for it. That is what’s going to happen.

In saying that, I think that the consideration needs to be made and the honesty needs to happen around the direction that we’re trying to go when looking at not moving towards this capacity market given the fact that the industry is ready. It says right in this report that they transitioned. They knew it was coming. They had the map. They had the plan of what they needed to do for the market. They were prepared to go, and now all of a sudden we’re going backwards, and we’re telling the industry that we’re going backwards. I would be more than happy to table this report tomorrow for all members to be able to review it and to respect the fact that I’ve now referenced it.

I would encourage all members: when you’re standing here representing your constituents and talking about the fact that you want to make life more affordable for Albertans and that you don’t want them to have to pay any more than they’re already paying, when you’ve already increased their insurance costs and now you’re looking at removing the electricity market so that they’re going to have volatile bills every month to pay for their heating and for all the other things, you’re not really making life more affordable. So stand up for your constituents. Make sure that the economic withholding amendment is passed. Then at least your constituents will know that they have a consistent energy bill every single month because they won’t have to deal with the volatility of the market.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

**Mrs. Savage:** I move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

5:30

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 18. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

## Government Motions

### Interprovincial Infrastructure Projects

34. **Mrs. Savage** moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon: Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly denounce all federal political parties that would enable a provincial government to unilaterally prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines.

**Ms Hoffman** moved on behalf of Mr. Bilous that the motion be amended by adding “and that would roll back progress on efforts to reach Canada’s current greenhouse gas emissions targets, including the abysmal federal TIER plan” after the words “prevent the construction of interprovincial infrastructure projects of national importance, including natural resource pipelines.”

[Adjourned debate on the amendment October 22: Mr. Kenney]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are back on the motion. Are there members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you. I rise to move an amendment on behalf of my hon. colleague Heather Sweet. I will – oh. Sorry. On behalf of my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Manning. I will let you distribute that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Give it a moment, hon. member. It may be a good time to point out how hard it is to remember riding names every now and then, like myself.

This will be known as amendment A2. Hon. member, please proceed.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. What this amendment is attempting to do is to change the motion just a little, because I think that our leader and many of us have been very, very clear about our disagreements in certain areas with the federal party. I could go on at length with respect to my own personal disagreement. I think the position of opposing pipelines is generally incorrect, obviously, and I think it’s not well thought out for a number of reasons. So we disagree with that policy; we disagree quite strongly. We disagree with a lot of policies.

We also disagree with parties who refuse to take seriously approaches to tackling climate change. I think that that’s pretty important. I think it’s important to note that those two goals are not mutually exclusive, and as long as we see them as mutually exclusive, we’re going to continue to have this hyperpolarization, where people just sort of stomp their feet in an attempt to convince one another. Madam Speaker, I think this is a Legislature full of people with varied experiences, but all of us have been in rooms with someone we’re disagreeing with, that we have to negotiate with. I think that anyone who’s been involved in law, anyone who’s been involved in business, anyone who’s been involved in most anything can tell you that stomping your feet and shouting almost never results in progress, and it’s not really how most grown-ups behave, and it ought not to be, either.

I think that we are able to say that those things can work together. I think that we are able to say: “Yes. You can take climate change seriously. You can believe that it is human-caused. You can believe that we ought to do something about it, and that doesn’t mean that

you have to be against all oil and gas development.” I think that those two things, economic development and the environment, can absolutely go hand in hand. In fact, I think I could cite a number of examples where investments that were made by the NDP when we were in government had huge effects, positive effects on economic development and positive effects on the environment. I think that making that a dichotomy choice is wrong-headed. It leads to divisiveness, and I just don’t think it’s appropriate. We disagree with those things.

We also disagree with parties who tolerate divisive, antichoice, homophobic, or xenophobic views in their parties. I think that that’s a totally legitimate position to take as well.

I think that what this motion should not be about is mudslinging at federal parties and mudslinging at individuals. I think it should be about standing up for Albertans, and I think that you can do one thing without doing the other. I think, Madam Speaker, that it is absolutely and completely possible to stand up for yourself, to stand up for your neighbours, to stand up for your province, and to do that without the name-calling or being petty or slinging mud. I think it’s possible to do it without misrepresenting deliberately the policies of other individuals.

I think we should absolutely continue to fight to secure market access for our energy. There’s very little, I think, that is more important to Albertans. I think that we absolutely can and should do that, but I think that we now find ourselves in a position where we know what the outcome of the election was, and a minority government brings us the possibility of co-operation, which can advance the interests of Albertans. At the end of the day, I think that should be our goal. If our goal is to advance the interests of Albertans – and I think we all agree in this room that that goal is significantly furthered by increased market access – then I think we should consider: what is the most reasonable way to achieve that goal? Then we should execute on that basis. We shouldn’t act on the basis of rage or fear or pettiness.

We should act on the basis that we are serious people here in this room who care about our province, who care about market access, who care about the environment, and who want to take reasonable steps to move forward, so we are going to do our best to achieve our goals. We’re not going to stand and scream because that doesn’t achieve our goals. Instead, we’re going to talk about policies and why they are right or why they are wrong because we don’t need to stand and scream, Madam Speaker. We’re right. I think that’s a significant advantage. The members on this side want Albertans to be heard and supported by the federal government, and I genuinely believe that the members on that side also want Albertans to be heard and supported by the federal government.

Again, I think this is about: what can we do to make progress? We believe that there is room for progress on a national pharmacare program, a national dental care program, and, at long last, real progress on establishing a national child care program. I think all of those things are fantastic goals. I think they’re incredibly important to Albertans. They’re important to me, and I think they’re important to a lot of people.

We urge the provincial government to accept this amendment. If the amendment fails, I think it’s worth getting one more thing on the record. If this amendment fails, I believe that the motion which is left isn’t about fighting for Albertans. I think that what it is is another disappointing attempt by this government to try to play partisan games ahead of focusing on what Albertans elected them to do, and what Albertans elected them to do is create jobs. I mean, every time this current Premier stood up, that’s what he said: jobs, economy, pipeline. I think that that is what people voted for. I think that we should focus on that and we should set about achieving those goals. I think that we’re all agreed on those goals. To play

these sorts of games when instead we could be trying to move forward in the interests of all Albertans, I think, is inappropriate and beneath the dignity of this place.

5:40

I think, at the end of the day, what we need is a government that cares about Alberta jobs and families, and I think that many of the members around me in this room on both sides do care deeply about that. I urge them to very strongly consider this amendment because, at the end of the day, what the amendment is doing is altering the motion to talk about policies instead of people. I think it’s incredibly important to speak about policies instead of people because, again, we all have the same objectives. We want to further the interests of Albertans. We have the same objectives. We want market access for our products because that furthers the interests of Albertans. At the end of the day, it is absolutely and completely possible to do that in a way that doesn’t involve mudslinging. It is absolutely and completely possible to take that as our common goal and to all move forward together and to achieve that by the most likely means, which, like I’ve said – I think anyone who’s been involved in the business world probably knows – isn’t screaming and stomping your feet.

I urge members to seriously consider accepting this amendment, to seriously consider that we should be talking about policies and not people and that we should do our best to move forward for the people of Alberta. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to this amendment? The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. This amendment does not adequately reflect what happened in the federal election. In the recent federal election we had three – at least three – federal parties who ran a platform on anti oil and gas, antipipeline, and anti-Alberta. We had three federal parties who failed to understand that Alberta has the exclusive constitutional right to manage and develop our natural resources, including oil and gas and electricity. Clearly, they don’t understand the Constitution. Likewise, those same three federal parties don’t understand the Constitution and that it is a federal constitutional right to manage the interprovincial pipelines and projects of major national importance, and they’re prepared to give a veto to provinces.

Madam Speaker, this is what the resolution is about. This is about standing up for Alberta’s oil and gas industry and telling the federal parties to respect the Constitution. It’s not about single policies and saying we disagree with policies of some of those parties. It’s much beyond that. It’s a failure to understand the Constitution. Diluting this motion to say that we disagree with policies just doesn’t cut it because those parties ran on a platform that was unconstitutional, clearly did not understand the Constitution, was anti oil and gas, antipipeline, anti-Alberta.

We can’t support the amendment to this motion. It dilutes the whole, entire purpose of what we’re trying to achieve: to tell the federal government, the federal political parties to respect the Constitution. It dilutes it too much. I’m opposed to this amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to this amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in regard to the amendment that was brought forward on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. Yeah. I mean, I think that it’s an important differentiation, to talk about policy, because, of course, the policies of any given political party or movement or so forth are diverse in their totality

and have different meanings or different effects in different places. Certainly, we have been unequivocal in regard to the opposition of the federal New Democrats and their position on the TMX pipeline. You know, it's been a very difficult circumstance, and we have not wavered in regard to our opposition to this position.

We know as well, with the benefit of the outcome of this election that we saw in the last 24 hours, that now it is a minority government with a much-weakened governing party, the Liberals, and, I think, lots of opportunity, I believe, to – although, you know, it's unfortunate that there's no representation from either our province or Saskatchewan in that Liberal caucus. I think that they have a lot of motivation to make sure that they stand up for the best interests of both Alberta and Saskatchewan. Quite frankly, part of the engine of what has made Canada successful over this last 10 or 15 years is the success of the economy here on the prairies.

You know, we should look at this, and we certainly must redouble our resolve to ensure that Alberta's interests are reflected in the national interests. We must redouble our resolve to ensure that we have access to export markets through pipelines for our energy industry.

But I think as well that we must redouble our resolve to work through constructive ways by which we can achieve those goals because, you know, whenever we start to see polarization, either between provinces or between the provincial and federal levels of governance here in this country, more often than not that bears no productive result or the bitter fruits of division, that have a tendency to linger in people's minds, not in a rational way but an emotive. I believe that it's important always to keep the door open and to clearly express the logic and the passion by which we all, I believe, in this House will fight and continue to fight for our interests and our energy industry, access to markets and so forth, but to be able to differentiate between those policies and categorically building these divisions that can sometimes reach over and have unintended consequences, to the detriment of both our interests here in the province and the building of this nation of Canada.

I strongly believe in our place in Confederation. I strongly believe that Alberta's star is still on the rise, and for us to, you know, otherwise just look at the national situation and the circumstances of individual provinces as being different from our own and being opposed to our own – I think we have to be realistic, but at the same time we must stand to build bridges and to build a strengthened economy and a sense of understanding between the provinces and between Alberta and Canada.

With that, I certainly do support this amendment, and I encourage all members of this House to consider that as well. Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the amendment on the motion? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was obviously very intently listening to the Member for Edmonton-North West and as well the Member for Calgary-Mountain View before that. You know, they talked a lot about how this motion needs to be amended to account for co-operation and advance of Alberta's interests. Well, it would be news to me that Alberta's interests would include chanting, and I quote: no new approvals, no new approvals, no new approvals. It seems a little bit of a strange take on what the interests of Albertans really are, but I digress.

We have here a former Education minister, who politicized Alberta's curriculum. It's kind of interesting to think what exactly he might have put in there, but I think that "no new approvals, no new approvals, no new approvals" might be an indicator of, you know, what some parents might be concerned about.

I was also privy to a video that came onto a Facebook page just a few minutes ago, and in that video it showed multiple members of the NDP caucus supporting the Extinction Rebellion. Now, for the record, what is the Extinction Rebellion? Well, the Extinction Rebellion is the radical group that protested outside of the Legislature, and they had some really interesting things to say, including discounting fossil fuels and talking about how horrible our energy industry is, and then – my personal favourite, which was just ignorant, in my opinion, Madam Speaker – it was talking about the extinction of beef as well. I'm a proud Albertan, and I'm a proud Canadian, but there are very few things that I'm more proud of than our beef and our oil industry.

5:50

Then we also hear about them talking about us doing what we were elected to do. Well, the last time I checked – and it was drilled into my head as well. I believe it was one of our candidates in the election, her daughter. She said so eloquently: "What are our priorities? Jobs, the economy, and pipelines." Those priorities are very clearly articulated in Alberta's interest.

Jobs. We implemented a job-creation tax cut, that will see more jobs created. We see that with Telus's investments. We see that with investor confidence coming back to Alberta. As well, jobs: how do we stand up for Albertan jobs? By getting Alberta's resources to tidewater, Madam Speaker. We need to absolutely do that because people like my dad rely on those jobs, and what's happening right now is that you see Alberta's workers: they're uneasy, they're scared, they don't know what's going to happen next because of Justin Trudeau and his policies, his proclivity for radical groups and, let's just say, interesting behaviour outside of the House of Commons.

Now, our economy. As we know, our economy is – we need a strong Alberta to have a strong Canada. I heard that, you know, a minority government is a really good thing, according to the members opposite, for things like progress on pharmacare. Well, I think I would ask the members opposite: how do you plan to pay for that?

I would ask Jagmeet Singh the same thing, and he'd probably say: from the abundance of wealth that our country creates. Now, the next question I'd have for him, if that was, in fact, his response – I'm not even sure he'd know how to respond to that, but he would say probably something along those lines, and then I would say to him: "Well, you're probably going to need Alberta's help with that because you're going to need money from our oil and gas sector. You're going to need money from our resource sector and the hard-working men and women that contribute to Canada's equalization as well as the fiscal capacity of other provinces." When we're talking about that, it really doesn't make sense to me. I'm just trying to – you know, one plus one equals two, Madam Speaker. When it comes to these kinds of things, pipelines plus tidewater equals market access.

I'm just confused at how that side of the House can't seem to see that, and instead of actually voting in favour of our economy and voting in the best of Albertans' interests – and when they want to talk about being multipartisan: well, then show us that. Why didn't you vote for the Conservatives in the federal election? That was your opportunity to be multipartisan, and you didn't do that. I know, for me – like, I don't get up here and stand on some, you know, sanctimonious perch about co-operation, but I know for a fact that what we can do is that we can co-operate with all leaders in the federation, but what we can't do is to stand here and pretend to be acting in the best interests of Albertans when we're voting for an antipipeline leader.

On the topic of pipelines, you know, I've said many times that I'm very proud of my dad. He's one of the, I think, smartest guys I know. He often refers to himself as Joe Voter. He's saying that he's just an average Joe. He's just a guy. When he came to the Legislature, one of his first comments was just: how grand it is. He said: I never thought I'd be here, and I definitely never thought my daughter would be here sitting in this chair. He's very proud of Alberta. He's proud of the resources that we create because he's one of the guys who literally builds those pipelines. I'm proud of him. I don't need my dad to be in the ivory towers of Zurich. I don't need him to be some big fancy guy. I'm happy with him just the way he is. The way that he is is that he's a man of integrity who works extremely hard to put food on the table for his family and has for years, and so do my uncles, so do my cousins. People all around me are constantly working to make sure that Alberta is a better place and our country is a better place because they believe in Alberta.

I think it's really important here that we just take into consideration how important this motion is in standing up for our country and standing up for our province. But, you know, this amendment, Madam Speaker, doesn't do that at all. In fact, it stands in direct defiance of what we're trying to do here. We need to make sure that we are standing up for Alberta. This motion does that, but this amendment: all it does is that it puts us one step behind for getting this passed and showing Albertans how much we care about our energy industry.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll resign my time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak on Motion 34?

Seeing none, shall we call the question?

Would the hon. minister like to close debate on behalf of the Government House Leader?

**Mrs. Savage:** I would simply say that we support this motion. It's about supporting our oil and gas sector. It's about standing up for our Constitution. It's about asking and imploring the federal government to respect our constitutional right to develop our

resources and to act on and actually fulfill their constitutional obligation to get our resources to market. It's a very simple motion, it's a very timely motion, and I would just encourage everyone to vote for it.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 34 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:56 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Long	Rutherford
Amery	Lovely	Savage
Barnes	Luan	Sawhney
Ellis	Nally	Schow
Getson	Neudorf	Schulz
Glasgo	Orr	Sigurdson, R.J.
Hanson	Panda	Singh
Horner	Rehn	Stephan
Issik	Rosin	Wilson
Jones	Rowswell	Yao
Kenney		

Against the motion:

Ceci	Gray	Sabir
Eggen	Loyola	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley	Renaud	Sweet

Totals: For – 31 Against – 9

[Government Motion 34 carried]

**6:00**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We have no evening sitting this evening. I think we had some excellent progress throughout this afternoon, and I would like to adjourn the House until 1:30 tomorrow.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 6:01 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, October 24, 2019

Day 33

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
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Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
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Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
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Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

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Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

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Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

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Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

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Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Deol  
Ganley  
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Rehn  
Reid  
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Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Feehan  
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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 24, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on such a historic occasion you can imagine that we have a number of visitors and guests today. Joining us in the Speaker's gallery are guests of the Minister of Community and Social Services: the newly elected Member of Parliament Mr. James Cumming. Also joining Mr. Cumming is the councillor for ward 2, Bev Esslinger.

Also in the Speaker's gallery today: a councillor from the community of Didsbury, Mr. Erhard Poggemiller, and his daughter Charlene Bowman; the mayor of the town of Lacombe, His Worship Grant Creasey; the mayor of the town of Blackfalds, His Worship Richard Poole.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Members, visiting schools today. I had the absolute pleasure of visiting with some students from the constituency of Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, St. Louis community school. They are its grade 6 and grade 9 students. There are also, from the constituency of Chestermere-Strathmore, grade 6 students from Westmount elementary. Please welcome students to the Assembly today.

I have some additional visitors and guests in the Speaker's gallery today. I'm honoured to have Jordan Cleland, Tammy Forbes, Sundai and Terry Cody, school board trustees Holly Bilton and Melissa Copley.

I would also like to welcome to the public gallery guests of the Member for Grande Prairie: Terri Ellen Sudnik, Mark Tonner, Chris Pullen, and Gerald Feschuk.

Also, guests of the Member for Calgary-Falconridge: Mr. Kent Manning and Trevor Marr.

A guest of the Member for Livingstone-Macleod: Mr. Conrad Van Hierden.

As well, a guest of the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat: Lorne Swalm.

Guests of the Minister of Infrastructure: Stephen and Karen Davis.

Hon. members, please welcome all of our guests to the Assembly today.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and Official Opposition House Leader has a statement to make.

## Small Business

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to recognize Small Business Week in Alberta and to celebrate and thank the entrepreneurs of this province, who have helped build their respective communities through their businesses.

Under the NDP government we cut the small-business tax rate by a third, introduced three different tax credits to help modernize the economic landscape in Alberta, and supported community and regional economic development. Many businesses, especially tech and artificial intelligence start-ups around the province, will not benefit from a 4 and a half billion dollar corporate handout because they reinvest every penny back into their business. These companies were growing and scaling faster because of the tax credits we introduced, but this UCP government is about to kill these tax credits and make Alberta companies less competitive while stifling innovation and diversification. The Premier is either wilfully ignorant or simply doesn't care. These tax credits have a 3 to 1 return on investment. They enabled Albertans to invest in companies in their own backyard, keeping the investments and jobs here in Alberta. The UCP's corporate handout still hasn't produced a single job to date and does nothing for these businesses.

In my riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview there are dozens of locally owned businesses that serve the needs of our community with their hard work and dedication. From restaurants to cafés, flower shops to hairdressers, breweries to auto garages, small businesses are the backbone of our economy.

On Saturday I'll be visiting many of these small businesses in my riding that have contributed so much to the local economy, and I encourage all members to visit your local businesses as well and thank them for their hard work and personal sacrifice for the betterment of our society. Alberta would not be the economic engine of Canada without our small businesses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-East would like to make a statement.

### Diwali

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me an opportunity to speak to the House today. Diwali is a fantastic five-day festival that is celebrated by millions of people around the world. It encases Hindu and Sikh culture through traditional shows, dances, music, food, and much more. During the festival small lamps filled with oil are lit and placed in rows along the parapets of temples and houses and set adrift on rivers and streams. The fourth day marks the beginning of the new year according to the Vikram calendar. It is generally a time for visiting, exchanging gifts, feasting, praying, fireworks, and celebration. The main theme of Diwali is the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness.

As a proud and practising Hindu I am honoured to be able to celebrate with my fellow constituents and Albertans. Tens of thousands of Hindus are proud to call Alberta home, and our government welcomes them with open arms. Festivals like Diwali are vital in promoting a better shared understanding of our shared culture, history, and civilization. Seeing the practices and traditions of other Albertans helps ensure strong social cohesion and fosters acceptance in our society. We are very fortunate to be living in a country that promotes diversity and multiculturalism and that allows us the freedom to publicly celebrate it. As a Hindu Albertan I'm extraordinarily proud to be able to call this beautiful province my home.

Happy Diwali to all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Alberta in Canada

**Mr. Schow:** “A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty”: Winston Churchill.

This past Monday tensions in Alberta were high as election results flooded in from coast to coast to coast. The news we anxiously awaited, a Conservative victory, never came. In its place: the declaration of a Liberal minority, which for most Albertans was the peak of western alienation.

Like many of my colleagues, my phone, my e-mail, and my social media feed blew up with messages from constituents: some cautiously optimistic about the future, others far more colourful with their language and calls to action, all of them justified in feelings that I share. Like many of you, I’ve heard cries for separation at near-deafening levels, and my response is simple: not today, because Alberta has survived boom times and recessions, feast and famine. We were here long before Pierre Trudeau gave Alberta the middle finger from his train car, and we will be here long after his son is voted out of office. So, no, not today, because Albertans have never walked away from a challenge, and justice for Alberta in a united Canada is worth fighting for.

Mr. Speaker, I choose to fight, but I can’t do it alone. When going to battle, it’s the person willing to risk it all, exhaust every option, give everything to win that comes out on top. I look around this Chamber, and I see a group of people willing to go that extra mile, make that sacrifice to get a fair deal for Alberta in Confederation. I pray that history will remember us fondly for making the right choice, standing united instead of falling apart as individuals. Like Churchill said: never, never, never give up.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### 1:40 Taxation and Public Programs

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things we know for sure is that Adam Smith’s invisible hand does not create a just society. This invisible hand was supposed to create a society where the best interests of citizens would be fulfilled. The truth is that this did not happen. In fact, the free market created much injustice, pooled riches into the hands of a few, and the majority struggled to survive. We know that the market is not focused on stakeholders. Thus, it fell to the welfare state to ensure fairness. Redistribution of funds through collecting taxes and implementing public programs has created a robust middle class and a vibrant, healthy society.

However, this UCP government wants to turn the clock back and create more polarization of funds in the hands of a few. What we know for sure is that creating a progressive taxation system creates a society where those with less pay less and those with more pay more. In every jurisdiction in Canada this progressive system was in place except our province until 2015, when it was created by the NDP government. Progressive taxation is widely accepted as a just system of taxation.

We also know that profitable corporations are taxed significantly less than in other provinces, and only under the NDP government were they paying taxes commensurate with other provinces. This UCP government has eliminated this with their \$4.5 billion corporate handout.

In addition, we know that when investments are made in public programs, our citizens are supported to live with dignity and fulfill their dreams. Our NDP government’s programs made a significant difference in the lives of Albertans, creating more fairness and justice throughout the province. This is in jeopardy under the UCP’s watch.

The invisible hand does not care. Politicians need to care. Politicians must create a just society for all Albertans.

### Nauticol Methanol Plant Project

**Mrs. Allard:** Today I speak about a project that represents \$2.7 billion of investment in Alberta. It is my pleasure to host representatives from both Nauticol and PCL Construction in the gallery today.

Nauticol is a privately held Alberta petrochemical company planning to produce value-added products from natural gas. They have chosen a build site in the county of Grande Prairie. This facility will include three identical methanol units capable of producing 3 million metric tonnes per year of methanol destined for Asian markets. The opportunity for Alberta is phenomenal, with global methanol demand expected to rise. Alberta’s access to Asian markets and reliable, low-cost natural gas feedstock provide a competitive advantage to secure this investment over jurisdictions such as the U.S. Gulf coast.

In partnership with PCL and with the support of this government through the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation and the petrochemicals diversification program, Nauticol is proposing to build out their facility on an accelerated timeline and hopes to build all three units simultaneously, accelerating the project build by up to three years and creating an additional 5,000 jobs in the province of Alberta, including construction jobs right here in Edmonton at PCL. This project at full completion is estimated to contribute over \$2.1 billion in tax revenue to our province. Nauticol is an industry leader in partnering with indigenous groups. On this project Nauticol is working closely with Duncan’s First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation, and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation.

I am pleased to share that this government is working to expedite the approval and regulatory climate for investors like Nauticol. As we continue our efforts to reduce red tape and regulatory burden, companies are enabled to accelerate their investment decisions, creating jobs and bolstering our economy now. Nauticol is hard at work and has completed an agreement with TC Energy to connect its facility with the TC natural gas pipeline network, and geotechnical work is under way even this week. As the MLA for Grande Prairie I am working diligently to ensure permits will be issued before the end of the year to get this project under way in 2020 and get more Albertans back to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

### Budget 2019

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we will finally see the results of this Premier’s closed-door, secret budget, that will attack Alberta families and make life more expensive. Last night he addressed Albertans in a televised address, where he told us that he will cut back and attack our public services in a misleading attempt to balance the budget. He’s doing this while, on the other hand, giving 4 and a half billion dollars away to the wealthiest corporations. Since then, his efforts have resulted in nothing but 27,000 job losses. These are the facts. He cancelled crude by rail, which will cost Albertans another \$5.1 billion, totalling, with his 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway to wealthy corporations, a \$9.6 billion hole in the provincial budget.

Families are scared, and the government calls it fear and smear. Families are scared that this government will attack schools so that class sizes will balloon. Families are scared that this government will attack our health care and bring in a dangerous and reckless

American-style health care system. I've heard this from families in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. I've heard how the cuts to AISH are cruel and offensive, when the Premier talks about it not being onerous for families. I've heard how children, already in large, complex classes, and parents are worried that this Premier will only make it worse.

This Premier told Albertans he has to make cuts. He hid those cuts from Albertans this summer, but we are about to see the truth. We are about to see how cruel and heartless this Premier's attack on Albertans will be. I will never stop fighting these attacks on our communities.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Energy-only Electricity Market

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently Bill 18 is before this House, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019. If successful, it will end the pursuit of a capacity market initiated by the previous government. It's been stated by members opposite that the capacity market is necessary to encourage renewables and ensure affordable power. According to *Hansard* the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar even went as far as to say that ridings like mine, Drumheller-Stettler, have many jobs at stake and that not shifting to a capacity market will put many at risk. I'm not sure how any member of the opposition can pretend to care about jobs anywhere, least of all in my riding, but I'll play along.

I have Battle River and Sheerness coal-fired power stations in the riding. Both are already in gas conversions; 70 per cent of the jobs will be lost, but at least they will keep making power. You see, when the emission taxes you pay go from \$7.4 million to \$100 million, you either shut your doors or start burning gas. At least the plants will keep generating power. In fact, they've been purchased by Heartland Generation since the provincial election, and they are fine with an energy-only market.

The opposition seems to believe that renewable energy can only exist in a capacity market. Really wrong there. I have 17 renewable energy projects in my riding before the AUC. I've met with most of them. Not one has advocated for a capacity market. I've been clear that this government was not prepared to subsidize wind and solar. They said: "That's fine. We can compete and look forward to it. Technology has levelled the field so you don't have to."

As far as affordable energy for consumers: two points. Number one, Alberta enjoyed the cheapest electricity in North America before the NDP started this mess. Number two, only a socialist would believe that operating two markets, one for capacity and the other for generation, could possibly be cheaper to the ratepayer.

From the power purchase agreement debacle to the complete disregard for the workers in coal communities, the previous government has cost the people of Alberta in my riding so much. The only time the members opposite should mention Hanna or my riding is to beg forgiveness and apologize.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

### Caregivers

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "There are only four kinds of people in the world – those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers." These are the words of Rosalynn Carter, who spoke ever so elegantly about caregivers: unforgotten, unpaid heroes in Alberta communities. A caregiver can be anyone: a brother, a sister, an aunt, or a grandparent. These unsung Albertans

assist vulnerable individuals suffering from illness, disability, or aging and play an integral role in supporting our health care system.

Throughout Alberta there are approximately 1 million caregivers. They provide support in many ways. Most caregivers are responsible for navigating the health care system, driving loved ones to medical appointments, ensuring that medications are taken and refilled appropriately, and providing care within the community, facilitating aging in place. Without caregivers who would support Albertans in need? In absence of these individuals the strain on our publicly funded services would grow. The U of A estimates that this voluntary, unpaid workforce saves the provincial health care system approximately \$5.8 billion annually. Their value cannot be understated, and it is imperative that we do all we can to support these individuals.

Caregivers Alberta is a not-for-profit organization that does a masterful job in achieving this by providing patient navigational supports and other services. This cost-effective, efficient civil society provides important services to approximately tens of thousands of caregivers annually, and I'm so proud to stand up for the work they do.

1:50

I'm also proud of our government's campaign commitment to develop caregiver supports to support patients in their homes and communities. These heroes deserve our recognition, our praise, and our effort in helping them achieve their goals, Mr. Speaker.

### Point of Order

#### Addressing the Chair

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before Oral Question Period begins, I would like to provide a clarification on a point of order that was raised yesterday by the hon. Government House Leader. Having referred to and reviewed *Hansard* – and if you would like to follow along at home, I'm referring to page 1971 of the October 23 issue. I see that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo did in fact refer to the Premier as "you" on a number of occasions during his series of questions. As all hon. members know, it is correct parliamentary practice to speak through the chair and therefore refer to members in the third person. My apologies for the confusion in the point of order yesterday to the hon. Government House Leader. I encourage all hon. members to refer to ministers in the third person.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has the call.

#### Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

**Ms Renaud:** Mr. Speaker, this Premier should be ashamed of himself. The first details of the UCP budget have trickled out, and what's first on the chopping block? Albertans who have disabilities. The Premier has eliminated the AISH program indexing introduced by our government and attempted to tell a columnist yesterday that the cuts wouldn't be onerous. To the Premier: please explain to disabled Albertans, living on \$1,600 a month, why you're forcing them to pay for your no-jobs handout to big corporations?

**Mr. Kenney:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, we're doing no such thing. This afternoon the Minister of Finance will present a historic budget, a balanced budget, not only balanced in terms of stopping this province's reckless dive into debt that jeopardizes social programs and our support for the vulnerable but also socially balanced by protecting support for the most vulnerable, including maintaining AISH benefits at the most generous level in Canada,

including incorporating in those AISH benefits the large increase adopted by this Legislature last year.

**Ms Renaud:** The Premier went further. He claimed that his plan to cut supports for disabled Albertans was, quote, a very careful way to trim hundreds of millions from the provincial budget. Premier, I have a better way for you: don't give out a multibillion dollar no-jobs handout to big corporations. My question is to the entire government cabinet: do any single one of you have the ability to stand up to this Premier and reverse these heartless cuts?

**Mr. Kenney:** It didn't take long, Mr. Speaker. The balanced budget that will be presented by this government this afternoon keeps our word with Albertans to stop the reckless dive into debt that was begun by the NDP. Under their plan we'd be spending \$4 billion a year in interest payments to bankers and bondholders. That's money that doesn't go to the disabled or to schools and hospitals. Why does the NDP so desperately want to enrich bankers in Toronto, New York, and Zurich instead of investing in public services here in Alberta?

**Ms Renaud:** Clearly, you've never lived on \$1,600 a month.

Our government was proud to bring in legislation to index AISH and the Alberta seniors' benefit. During debate the Government House Leader himself rose to support the bill, stating, and I quote: I'm happy to see a piece of legislation of this kind here in the Assembly; I actually think it should have been here a long time ago. End quote. To the Government House Leader: will you explain why you no longer support Albertans with disabilities?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Albertans better get used to the fear and smear. It never really stopped since the last campaign. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that this balanced budget to be presented today prioritizes protection for the most vulnerable, including and particularly people with disabilities, including maintaining AISH benefits, which are 30 per cent more generous than the next most generous Canadian province. In terms of indexation, they love to get on their high horse, but in 2015, 2016, 2017, and well into 2018 under the NDP there was no indexation of AISH.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is rising with a question.

### Budget 2019

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we warned about this Premier's plans for deep cuts and layoffs, he howled. He told Albertans that he wouldn't cut. He said that he would maintain or increase funding for services, for support programs, and for capital projects. Today we learn that none of it is true. The Finance minister is preparing to table the biggest bait-and-switch budget in Alberta history. To the Premier: when Albertans look up the word "dishonest" in Wikipedia, does your government have a reference there?

**The Speaker:** I'm certain that the hon. member wouldn't be implying that any member is dishonest, but the hon. Premier has the call.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that that member was part of the only first-term government in Alberta history to be rejected by voters was because of the profound dishonesty of the last NDP government that, for example, hid from Albertans the largest tax increase in our history, the multibillion dollar carbon tax. They ran on a platform to balance the budget. Instead they racked up our debt from \$13 billion to \$62 billion, headed to \$100 billion.

In terms of honesty that's exactly what this budget is about, keeping our commitment with Albertans to come back to balance.

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, this Premier says that Albertans with complex needs need to get by with less. Meanwhile big corporations get their \$4.5 billion handout. This Premier said: no cuts. Today we have nothing but cuts to programs, cuts to services, cuts to staff. To the Premier: when you said maintain or increase, in what universe does that mean a 2.8 per cent actual cut to the budget?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is correct that our platform is predicated on no reductions in spending because they were based in part on the revenue projections tabled by the NDP. When we came to office, we were informed by our independent public service that the NDP had overprojected government revenues by \$6 billion a year. Talk about honesty. On this \$4.5 billion massive fib, here's Professor Trevor Tombe. "Why the 4.5 billion [dollar] claim continues is a real puzzle. It is demonstrably . . ."

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, this government is bringing down the biggest bad-news budget this province has ever seen. This Premier has spent weeks campaigning in Ontario, clearly learning from his friend Doug Ford. It's clear that he would rather be in Ottawa. Is this Premier's plan, then, to cut and run, literally, federally?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I spent two and a half days campaigning in Ontario, not weeks, but I was proud to do so, to stand with the 70 per cent of Albertans who said no to the federal NDP's leave-it-in-the-ground Leap Manifesto, to say no to the pipeline cancellations of the Trudeau administration. While I and members of this caucus were standing up for Alberta's vital economic interests, that member was attending a protest in front of this Legislature calling for the immediate shutdown of our energy industry, which would put hundreds of thousands of Albertans out of work. Shame on them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

### Budget 2019 and Provincial Revenue

**Mr. Bilous:** This Premier did not campaign on cutting the services Albertans rely on, unless he's forgotten. Today he's going to claim we all have to do our part to balance the budget. That is unless, of course, you're an international shareholder, and instead you get a piece of the 4 and a half billion dollar no-jobs handout. Through you to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: you've clearly been briefed on the ins and outs of your budget, so please enlighten us. If he hadn't have pushed forward with his failed experiment, what else could he have funded for 4 and a half billion dollars?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, Professor Tombe of the University of Calgary, who is widely regarded as independent and nonpartisan, said the following today. "Why the 4.5 billion [dollar] claim continues is a real puzzle. It is demonstrably misleading (I'd say false). But, I guess, [it's] politically convenient." Here's the truth. As today's budget will reveal, the forgone revenues for the job-creation tax cut this year: \$100 million, 98 per cent less than the NDP is claiming. But when they were in office, they drove down corporate tax revenues after they raised the rates. We're going to create jobs.

**Mr. Bilous:** The Premier has denied our province \$5 billion in revenue due to his ideological decision to rip up the crude-by-rail contract signed by our government. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: we would have moved millions of barrels of crude to

market by now. Will you apologize to the energy industry and admit that beyond ranting on Twitter, you have no plan to get our product to market?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I feel sorry for that member of the NDP. That's called leading with your chin. That is a party that blew out 4 and a half billion dollars to do something the private sector not only would do but has done. We've gone from 120,000 barrels per day of crude by rail at the beginning of this year to over 300,000 barrels per day, all of it at the cost and risk of the private sector. But they are responsible for costing taxpayers, we estimate, a billion and a half dollars. We're going to get taxpayers out of that deal that stunk for the interests of this province.

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, the Premier has not actually looked at the file because \$2 billion in revenue is what would have come into the government.

Two ideological decisions from this Premier have cost \$9.6 billion all told. That's nearly \$2,200 per person, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: how long until you admit that your plan is a complete failure? And on behalf of Albertans, can we please get our money back?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what. We have not ruled out getting our money back. We have put on the table, from day one, the possible cancellation of those irresponsible contracts, but what the member does not understand is that the incremental crude is moving by rail. Any incremental revenues associated with that are happening without risking billions of tax dollars.

I want to go back to the corporate tax cut, though. Mr. Speaker, they raised taxes on businesses by 20 per cent, and you know what happened? Revenues went down by \$8.8 billion below what they projected. That's NDP economic policy for you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Manning has a question.

#### Child Mental Health Services

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Health minister made the absurd claim that "there is no crisis in child mental health." It's imaginary. Just like the UCP's \$4.5 billion corporate giveaway. It's all made up, apparently. I think the minister needs an education on children's mental health in Canada. The Mental Health Commission of Canada reports that 1.2 million Canadian children suffer from mental illness. To the minister: are you saying that we don't need to help those kids?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health is rising.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, in the supplemental answer that I provided yesterday, I made it very clear that what I was talking about was bed spaces in public hospitals. Obviously, mental health, especially mental health for our children and adolescents here in Alberta, is of the utmost importance to this government. It's one of the reasons why this government has already committed and will be spending a further \$140 million on mental health and addictions. It's because mental health, especially mental health for our children and adolescents, is of the utmost importance to us.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister said it yesterday.

I have some more shocking statistics to help educate this Health minister. According to a 2018 report from the University of Calgary more than 1 in 10 Canadian teens suffer from depression and anxiety, 1 in 5 kids aged 13 to 18 consider suicide, and suicide is the second-highest cause of child death in this country. So I have to ask the minister: how many children have to suffer or die from mental health issues before you consider this a crisis?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I think I made it very clear that that was the reason why our government has committed to and is going to be spending a further \$140 million on mental health and addictions. It's one of the reasons why we are working with the Stollery foundation as well as many community partners throughout Alberta, including and especially in Edmonton, to make sure that we're going to increase access to mental health services, including for our children and adolescents. For four years we saw access under the previous government decline, one of the reasons we have to spend this further \$140 million.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not surprised this Health minister is ignorant about those numbers, but I can tell you that hundreds of Albertan parents were shocked and appalled by his insulting claims, parents whose children self-harm, who consider or commit suicide, who suffer from depression, who face mental health crises that make it difficult to form relationships and enjoy a rich and fulfilling life. To the Health minister: will you stand up in this House right now and apologize to those parents and their children for your hurtful claims?

**Mr. Shandro:** I made it clear many times, Mr. Speaker. I was in the middle of giving an answer yesterday and was being heckled by the other side and wasn't able to give the finish of what I was trying to say, and I made it very clear in the supplemental that I was talking about bed spaces in public hospitals.

While that question has already been answered for the other side, I want to be able to have the opportunity to quickly address something that was said mistakenly by the other side yesterday in one of their questions. It was a question that claimed that Century Park in Vegreville failed three health inspections. That, Mr. Speaker, was patently false. I ask the other side to start being honest with Albertans. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Camrose.

#### Rural High-speed Internet

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta SuperNet is something Albertans should be proud of. Since the Alberta government first started investing in it, rural communities have benefited from access to high-speed Internet in their school, hospitals, and libraries, which has increased the flow of ideas and assisted in the running of these communities. But questions and frustrations around access to the Internet for the general public still remain. To the Minister of Service Alberta: can you provide us an update about what specifically you're working on to help more Albertans obtain access to minimum speeds?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. You know, this is something I've been working on for the last number of months. I toured across the province to meet with a number of rural communities all across this province to make sure that I understood the challenges that they face in trying to improve

connectivity for rural and remote Albertans. This is very important. One of the things that we're working on doing is to make sure that we harness the existing fibre that is in the ground to its fullest capacity. We need to work with telecommunication companies to understand how best to reach these underserved communities using that infrastructure.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

Given that access to high-speed Internet is vital, to make sure that rural Alberta communities remain viable and give Albertans – rural communities often see many of their citizens, especially younger ones, leave these communities for larger centres, where they can easily access the world through Internet connections, and given that within the past year the federal government has allocated some funds towards a national broadband strategy, to the minister: how will you collaborate with your federal counterparts to ensure all Albertans have access to minimum speeds?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. While it is true that the federal government has announced a small amount of funds to tackle this very large problem on a national scale, I will say that it is a disappointing, small amount of funds. It's a drop in the bucket compared to what is required. That said, you know, Alberta has been a leader in this space for a long time. Over the last 18 years we have spent a billion dollars in building out the SuperNet, which has connected over 3,300 schools, hospitals, libraries, and municipal buildings all across this province to ensure that there is access to high-speed connectivity. By comparison, the federal government's strategy is only to reach 1,100 of these institutions country-wide.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

Given that in 2019 a community in my constituency of Camrose got tired of waiting for the government to help expand community Internet access and given that the residents of Viking waited too long for an expansion to their Internet availability and given that they have found their own private solution, will the minister consider Viking's solution to problems in other communities, and will the minister work with other communities to ensure access can be expanded upon?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. I will say that we support local decision-making, and we understand that a lot of these communities know best how to spend their resources to deliver the services that their residents want the most. That's the case of what happened in Viking. It's also the case of what happened in your community of Olds, as you well know. I will just say this. One of the things I want to be sure of is that where there are other municipalities and communities that can benefit from the knowledge that Olds has developed or Viking has developed, we want to make sure that those communities have access to the same information so they can learn from that and implement the solutions that work best for them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has a question.

## Child Mental Health Services

(continued)

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I told the Health minister about a mother in my riding whose child has waited for months for mental health supports here in Edmonton. His response was to unbelievably claim that there is no crisis in child mental health. Since then we've received hundreds of responses from parents and young people all across Alberta who were insulted and so disheartened by his claim. To the minister: please offer any suggestions on how to help these parents and kids since, according to you, they're not in crisis.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've made it clear already in this House about what the comments were really about, but I do have a suggestion. Actually, the suggestion is for our friends opposite, that if they believe so strongly, as we do as a government, about what needs to be done with mental health and addictions, they vote for our budget and the \$140 million that we are going to be adding for mental health and addictions

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that one parent told me that their child hasn't been able to find mental health supports for eight years and considers suicide on a nightly basis and given that another parent says that their suicidal 10-year-old has to pay privately to see a psychologist, which costs \$200 an hour, and given that one young person told me that in one year 13 teenagers committed suicide in their rural Alberta county, to the minister. Here's another chance. Please just do the right thing and apologize for your comments, that were so completely devoid of compassion.

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times in this House, that's why mental health and addictions, especially mental health and addictions for children and adolescents, is so important for this government. I'm happy to hear that it's also a concern for our friends opposite. I look forward to them being able to vote with us on our budget, that we will be tabling this afternoon.

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, given that I'm sorry to all the folks out there and given that I've heard from many mental health practitioners and teachers who say that there are serious gaps in the system that leave Alberta's children without proper mental health supports and given that doctors and nurses in emergency departments have said that they've seen a massive jump in mental health issues – front-line workers are clear; it's a crisis – to the minister: we ask you to commit here and now to funding the much-needed children's mental health centre.

**Mr. Shandro:** I think that's why, Mr. Speaker, for four years under the previous government, it was disappointing to see access to mental health and addictions decrease, especially for our children and adolescents. It's one of the reasons why we are going to continue to work with the Stollery foundation here in Edmonton as well as other community partners to do our best in making sure that our \$140 million further increase in spending on mental health and addictions is going to help our children and adolescents.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall would like to ask a question.

### Bitumen Upgrading

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The \$4.5 billion handout is a complete failure. Drilling is down. Investment is down. Over 13,000 jobs have been lost in the oil and gas sector. Alberta had a real plan to support energy investments and refine our products right here in Alberta. To the minister. You said that you were disappointed that your corporate handout was failing. How do you explain cancelling another 4,000 real jobs and \$5 billion in private investment to disappointed Albertans?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you for the question. I'm not sure if the member is referring to the PDP plan, that we extended yesterday. Yesterday I was very pleased to announce with my colleague Minister Nally that we were extending the PDP program, petrochemicals diversification program. We were elected on a platform to stand up for our energy sector and attract investment while at the same time being fiscally prudent. That's what we're doing with that program.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I would remind all members that the use of names in the Assembly for whatever reason would not be deemed appropriate.

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, given that Calgary-based Value Creation Inc. received support from this program and given that their refining project would create upgrading of 77,000 barrels of bitumen each day and create 2,000 construction jobs, to the minister: why are you cancelling these jobs, and why are you against working Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we decided to continue the PDP program, we at the same time decided to cancel the PUP program and the PFIP program. That's because those programs would run at a significant risk to Alberta taxpayers. They were based on loan guarantees and government grants, so we're not moving on with those. We're continuing with the petrochemicals diversification program because, as I said, it will attract investment to Alberta.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that when it comes to supporting oil and gas, this government is all talk and given that we have no jobs, no investment, and no support for companies taking a risk to create jobs, to the minister: can Tom Olsen's attack machine upgrade 77,000 barrels per day? If not, why are you wasting taxpayer money on him and not supporting Calgary?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP legacy on pipelines is one of four years of a failed social licence and a one-and-done deal with Justin Trudeau. Let me tell you a bit about their legacy on pipelines. In fact, at the beginning of 2015 the pipeline takeaway capacity out of Alberta was about 3.4 million barrels a day. Guess what? At the beginning of January 2019, after four years of NDP government, the pipeline capacity out of Alberta was about 3.4 million barrels. Their legacy on pipelines is zero kilometres. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. [interjections] Order. Hon. members, we will have order.

Cypress-Medicine Hat has the call.

### Hospital-based Health Care Costs

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year a report was released on the state of acute-care funding in Alberta. Notably, hospitals in the province that are run by Alberta Health Services have been chronically overbudget and overspending, accumulating a deficit of nearly a billion dollars in just eight years. To the Minister of Health: what are you doing to ensure that AHS holds hospitals accountable to taxpayers by staying on budget and that hospitals are focused on putting patients first?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member points out, there are some issues about how AHS determines the funding for hospitals. The larger issue, though, that the hon. member is pointing out is the overall cost of care. Our cost per hospital admission here in Alberta is 30 per cent higher than the national average. Thirty per cent. We need to get our costs down and reinvest those savings to do more and to increase access. That's what we campaigned on, and that's exactly what this government is going to do.

**Mr. Barnes:** Given that the NDP dramatically increased health care spending, especially in regard to acute care, resulting in Alberta hospitals taking up 45 per cent of our health care budget, paid for by hard-working Albertans, and given that we spend more money on health care than the national average while still having some of the worst results, to the minister: what is your plan for getting acute-care spending under control while ensuring Albertans receive the very best outcomes?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the NDP ignored the problem of cost of care, like they ignored all the evidence about how the system was performing, the reality is that we have a cost problem, not a revenue problem. We don't need new taxes so that we can keep paying \$8,000 per case when the national average is \$6,000. I would also note, though, that during their tenure, the previous government, the number of patients in acute-care beds who were actually deserving of continuing care increased to 18 per cent, another reason why we are going to be reviewing continuing care legislation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. In the report, that was released last year, 69 out of 86 hospitals in Alberta were unable to stay within their budget over an eight-year period, and two-thirds of these hospitals were chronically overbudget. That is not sustainable. Given that our government pledged to complete a full review of Alberta Health Services in an attempt to find efficiencies that could be redirected to the front lines, can the minister please identify any cost-saving measures that have been found and outcomes that must be improved?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the hon. member, thank you for mentioning this key commitment in our platform, the AHS review. We'll receive the final report by December 31 of this year, and we'll be releasing it after we've had an opportunity to review it. We campaigned on getting the costs under control and using those savings to fund increases in services.



That's the point of the AHS review, and it's our commitment to Albertans, that we're going to deliver on.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods would like to ask a question.

### Budget 2019 and Public Services

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've already seen, this government's \$4.5 billion corporate handout has failed to create even a single job in the private sector. Now, to pay for it, public-sector workers are getting the axe. Layoffs are coming in just a few hours, as reported by Postmedia. Can the minister of labour tell us how many workers are being given pink slips by this government today, and which Albertans will be impacted by the loss of their service?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and Immigration is rising to answer.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I have to speak to the \$4.5 billion claim, that the hon. members on the other side continue to misrepresent. As indicated by our Premier previously, this simply is not true. I think we should talk about some other numbers. Perhaps we should talk about the \$62 billion deficit that the previous government left this government to deal with, or perhaps we should talk about the \$2 billion in interest payments associated. That's \$5 million a day that we are paying, and this impacts our ability to provide services that Albertans want and need.

2:20

**Ms Gray:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that I hear a complete lack of compassion for the people that support this minister's work and the anxiety that has been caused in them and given that we only know about these layoffs because the Premier bragged about it in the media and given that these public servants work hard to serve Albertans and that they found out that they may be fired from reading the *Calgary Sun*, to the minister: don't you think you owe your own workers more respect than that?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, we respect the great work that our public service does for us. I'm sure that in the next coming hours, when we release the budget, we'll have more information in terms of what our government plan is to get our budget back on track and reverse the huge amount of debt that was created and the potential impact on our services. Up to a hundred billion dollars was the track that the previous government was on course for and \$4 billion in interest payments on the debt. Those are the numbers we should be focused on and ensuring that we can reduce that and provide services that Albertans need.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that it's clear this government's only plan for unemployment is more unemployment and given that Alberta has lost 27,000 jobs under this so-called jobs Premier so far – and that is going to climb even higher this week – to the minister: why does your so-called jobs Premier think firing people will create jobs?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, again, this is fear and smear that we're hearing from the members opposite. In a few short hours we will release our budget and have a better understanding of the path forward. But the hon. member opposite shouldn't be talking about jobs. Their legacy is 170,000 jobs lost. Our government was elected on a platform: jobs, pipeline, and the economy. We put in place a number of legislations: the job-creation tax cut, the elimination of

the carbon tax, the open for business act, red tape reduction. We will get Albertans back to work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Licensed Practical Nurses' Scope of Practice

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the UCP Health minister recently announced an expansion to the scope of practice for LPNs, allowing them to perform a handful of procedures that were previously performed by RNs. Now, this could very well be a good thing if the minister wasn't also in court trying to tear up the contract for LPNs as a prelude to rolling back their wages. To this Minister of Health: will you be asking LPNs to do more for lower wages to help pay for your 4 and a half billion dollar, no-jobs corporate handout?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, what an initiative. I am so excited and happy and proud to talk about it in this House. This expansion of scope for LPNs should have been done years and years ago. It started in 2003. All of the other health professions encouraged these five changes to the expansion of scope for these LPNs. This is not a zero-sum situation. This is an expansion of the scope of these qualified and talented professionals to be able to do what they've already been trained to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that they are indeed talented and resourceful and being fired in Vegreville because this minister won't act and given that a single human being can only do so much work in a given day and given that anyone working in health care will tell you that the resources available matter, whether it's at the nursing station or at the patient's bedside, my question, then, to this minister is: how many LPNs does he intend to hire, if any, and will this be done at any cost of existing RNs in the workforce?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, the largest employer of LPNs in the province is AHS. I'm happy to work with AHS and to encourage them through their operational best practices program to encourage LPNs to be able to work to the full extent of their clinical knowledge and skills. As well, the most important thing is to be able to reduce the number of transitions in care, because that's where patients get hurt the most. The fact that the member opposite would not support this and not encourage this expansion of scope is quite confounding to me.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given that this minister, as usual, is not listening and not hearing that I, in fact, support more LPNs and given the fact that when we add work onto employees and we give them additional duties without providing additional resources to assist, it leads to crunches, like I've heard about at the Holy Cross hospital in Calgary, where they say that staff attrition under AHS due to chaos from this government's budget has led to them having patients waiting days to access their cancer medication, and given that this government is willing to give out 4 and a half billion dollars to corporations, how much more is he willing to put patient safety at risk?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, only a day after the hon. member was in this House making ridiculous and quite shocking claims about Century Park in Vegreville, about them failing health inspections, when it was patently – patently – false, again we see today further fear trying to be spread by the hon. member. We see another day of

the NDP in this Chamber, another day of them acting like complete fabulists, trying to tell each other fairy tales and scare Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane would like to ask a question.

### **Methane Emission Regulations**

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In late August the U.S. announced that it was joining Mexico and pulling out of the triparty agreement to reduce methane emissions, leaving Canada as the only remaining signatory. These federal regulations not only target Alberta but have potential constitutional challenges given the creep into our jurisdiction. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: the federal regulations come into effect January 1, so what is Alberta's plan, considering that this will lead to further industry competitiveness issues and considering that we already had strong regulations in place?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We are leading discussions to achieve an agreement that works for the province of Alberta. No agreement has been reached at this time. But let me be clear to this House. We are working with Alberta's best interests in mind and will continue to work that way while working towards, ultimately, a solution that banks on the innovative potential of this great province. We'll have more to say when we get there.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Banff.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Cochrane.

**The Speaker:** Whatever you're called.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Minister. Given that Alberta has had tough economic conditions over the last five years, especially in the resource sectors, and given that Alberta has lost tens of thousands of jobs over that same time frame and given that our economy is still in a fragile state, to the minister of labour: if the federal government sticks to this failed agreement, what are the potential consequences of these regulations in regard to financial impacts on industry and their ability to create jobs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Too many jobs have been lost in Alberta, especially in our resource sector, and too many Albertans are struggling to find work. We were elected on a mandate to boost the economy and create jobs for Albertans. We have been working to ease burdens on job creators with the job-creation tax cut, our red tape reduction initiative, eliminating the carbon tax, and the open for business act, which reduced costs for employers and restored democracy to the workplace. We will continue to stand up for our industries and to fight for Alberta jobs, and we will not rest until we have restored prosperity to our province.

**The Speaker:** Apologies; the hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you. Thank you, Minister. Given that methane regulations are not being applied nationally and given that these regulations are only targeted at oil and gas jurisdictions and given that the people of Alberta are the rightful owners of these resources, can the Minister of Justice comment on whether he is looking at

potential constitutional or other legal options to protect Alberta from this jurisdictional overreach in federal regulations?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we right now have two challenges going on with the federal government, one to fight the carbon tax and one to fight the no more pipelines bill. We will not hesitate to defend Alberta. This is our home. Western alienation is at an all-time high. This government will not hesitate to defend our province. This is our home. We're proud to be Albertans. We'll defend our provincial jurisdiction.

### **Mobile-home Owner Consumer Protection**

**Mr. Schmidt:** The residents of Twin Parks, a mobile-home community in my constituency, have repeatedly met with me to tell me about their frustrations with their landlord, Parkbridge. The landlord refuses to properly maintain roads and common areas, which causes intense flooding. Roads are impassable, and the foundations of homes are rotting out. On top of all that, residents are being slapped with outrageous rent increases. I know that the Service Alberta minister has already had an earful from these residents, too. When will he change the law so that they can have affordable ways to challenge their landlords instead of being forced to take them to court?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. Actually, the member opposite might be interested to know that those constituents actually came to the grand opening of my constituency office yesterday to thank me for all of the hard work that I've been putting in on this file and to say that they have a lot of faith in me. You know, I want the member opposite to know that this is something I take very seriously, and I'm working very hard on it, but it's a complex problem. It's one that they failed to deal with in their four years in government, and it's one that I am going to be very thoughtful and careful in how I approach it.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that we haven't seen any action in this House and given that many of my constituents already can't afford the lot rent increases and given that those constituents, many of them, are on AISH and seniors' benefits, that this Finance minister is going to cruelly cut this afternoon, and given that Parkbridge has already received part of the \$4.5 billion corporate handout that this government has given, will the minister intervene further and ensure that constituents of mine aren't among the many, many victims of this Premier's 4 and a half billion dollar corporate handout?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just let the member opposite know that just because he doesn't like my answer to his question, it doesn't mean I didn't answer it, and it also doesn't mean that his constituents aren't happy with how I'm handling this file. This is something that I am putting a lot of time into. It's very important to me. They failed to deal with this in their four years in government. I have done more on this in the last six months than they did in four years, so I will not take lectures from him or any of the members opposite on how we handle the file of mobile-home communities. It's a tough one. It's important. There are a lot of vulnerable Albertans who live there. We care deeply about them. We're going to take the time to do this properly, thoughtfully, and

continue to earn the respect of the members who live in those communities.

Thank you.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, given that this change will cost the province next to nothing to make and given that everybody involved wants those changes made immediately and given that the legislation is already written and that all the minister has to do is take it down from the shelf and bring it into this House, can the minister tell me why my residents still have to wait for help? Is it because they're not profitable corporations?

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if it was that simple, then why did the member opposite and his team, when they were in government for four years, not just simply do what he's telling me to do right now? The answer to that question is that he's wrong. It's a little bit more complicated than that, and that's why I've been working so hard on touring all across this province to meet with members from mobile-home communities across this province to fully understand the challenges that they are dealing with in their communities to make sure that we are thoughtful in how we address this and that we get this right. It is a lot more complex than what he's talking about. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. We will have order.

If the hon. minister has anything left in his answer, he's welcome to deliver it.

**Mr. Glubish:** As I said, Mr. Speaker, it's a lot more complex than the member opposite is alleging, but we are going to take the time to get this right. It's a bit rich for him to lecture me when they didn't do anything on this file for four years. Shame on them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

#### **Municipal Infrastructure Funding**

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last November our NDP government announced \$1 billion in funding to build the valley line west LRT in partnership with the municipal and federal governments. This is a project that would create thousands of jobs, lower emissions, and serve all residents in west Edmonton. To the Minister of Transportation: will the minister honour that funding commitment to build the valley line west LRT? Yes or no?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is well aware that the budget will be released before the sun goes down today, and he will have an answer to that question in more specific terms. But in general terms, we made a promise to honour the commitments for LRT funding to the two major cities. As in all things, I would like to think we intend to meet that promise that we made in our platform.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you. Given the deep cuts expected in today's budget to pay for the government's \$4.5 billion corporate giveaway and given that the Minister of Municipal Affairs accused Edmonton of spending recklessly without being able to name a single example of spending that he'd like to see reduced and given that any changes to the MSI funding would put the fate of the Lewis Farms rec centre in jeopardy, will the Minister of Municipal Affairs commit that MSI funding will not change, or will he stand in front of my constituents and explain why a \$4.5 billion corporate gift is more important than their rec centre?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We have been working so hard with our municipal partners to make sure that we preserve the fundamental need for all infrastructure across our province. I think that what is important to point out at this point in time is that in less than a couple of hours we will be presenting our province with a balanced budget, a budget that seeks to rein in the recklessness that was left for us by those members opposite. We will rebuild our province so that we don't have to deal with the multibillion dollars of debt that the NDP left our province.

**Mr. Carson:** That does not sound promising, Mr. Speaker.

Given that this government rushed to give a \$4.5 billion gift to profitable corporations and given that only days before the budget the Minister of Municipal Affairs chose to attack municipalities, using outdated figures to justify what we can only assume will be cuts to MSI funding, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how much less will Edmonton receive in MSI in order to pay for this government's \$4.5 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear, you know, that we will continue to work with our municipal partners. At the provincial level we are working so hard to manage the mess that those members opposite left for us. This summer I travelled across our province listening to our municipal partners on their core priorities, and this afternoon that budget, our budget, will deliver on those priorities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

#### **Rural Crime and Justice Administration**

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. This week we learned that the devastating McMillan wildfire near Slave Lake was intentionally set. The fire grew rapidly and threatened several communities, leading to the evacuation of Wabasca and Peerless Trout First Nation. What is the government doing to ensure there is justice for those who put Albertans and their communities at risk?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreesen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Member for Lesser Slave Lake for this very important question. This spring the Member for Lesser Slave Lake, the Premier, and I went to the McMillan fire to support the Alberta wildfire personnel first-hand. That fire ravaged 273,000 hectares, about three times the size of the city of Edmonton, and Alberta wildfire investigators, the RCMP Forestry Crimes Unit did find that this fire was actually set by arson. To the families evacuated and to the forestry companies that experienced losses, I assure you that we will find the person responsible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the hon. Minister of Justice. It is great to hear that the RCMP is working to catch the person or persons behind this act. This is an example of the kind of response Albertans expect. Many of my constituents have expressed concern about the response to rural crime, and they say that they want to see faith restored in our justice system. What have you been hearing from Albertans, and what is your plan to ensure that justice will be served when their families and communities are put at risk?

**The Speaker:** I think all hon. members know by now what a preamble is, and that's certainly a very lengthy example of one.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I talk a lot about our rural crime tour, and I've invited people to Rocky Mountain House to come to a town hall. Last night I had one of the hardest phone calls I've ever had to do in my life. I talked to a father, a husband whose wife this last week was beaten by four individuals that broke onto their property. Two of them were caught. One of them had a record that was longer than you could list. It was the second time in that week that their property was broken into. That's why I invited people to come to Rocky Mountain House to hear about the rural crime crisis that we have, because it's real. We'll be decisive in how we respond.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. Given that this devastating fire, caused by arson, burned more than 273,000 hectares of land and led to the evacuation of communities in my riding and others and given that this created undue financial, physical, and emotional hardships on Albertans, many of whom are still in the process of recovering, what has your department done to bring relief to these Albertans in their time of need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

2:40

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member. This summer I had the privilege of joining the Member for Lesser Slave Lake to meet many of the wildfire evacuees. Like the hon. member, I am furious to know that this fire was caused by arson. While it relieves me to know that many of the evacuees qualify for emergency evacuation payments, with additional direct support for those with dependants, this fire took an undeniable human toll on our people. I urge anyone with information to contact 1.833.999.FIRE.

### Rural Emergency Medical Services

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, I'm constantly hearing questions from constituents about the disparities of access to emergency care between our major urban centres and rural communities. While urban centres have an average response time of roughly eight minutes, rural communities' average wait time can be well over 40 minutes for an ambulance. Rural Albertans understand that due to geography our response times may never be as fast as urban centres, regardless. To the Minister of Health: is it feasible to increase rural emergency response rates from the current standard?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health has the call.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member has it exactly right. I think Albertans understand that access can't be exactly the same, but we do have to have standards. We've actually done quite a bit of work already to set evidence-based standards for ambulance response times. AHS reviews EMS performance regularly. They and I are very much aware of the concerns around response times, especially in rural areas. We can always do better, and I would welcome the input of any member of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that many rural parts of the province are served by only a small number of ambulances and given that we can agree that rural emergency response rates can improve, are

there any creative options on the table such as a nonambulance dedicated patient transfer service that the minister is considering right now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, there are. AHS is using a number of new approaches, and we're hoping that the EY report for the AHS review will also help us do more when they give us their final report at the end of the year. AHS does use nonambulance transfers, but there may be room to do more there. To take just one example, they also have a community paramedic program, the first of its kind in Canada. Paramedics work with a care team to do more care in the patients' homes and avoid a trip to the emergency department. It's the kind of innovation that we need in the system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the minister. Given that the previous government neglected rural Albertans' health care needs and given that the previous government somehow managed to simultaneously bury our province in debt without addressing this crucial issue at all, is there any possible way for the minister to save costs while increasing rural emergency response rates?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Yeah. Absolutely, there is, Mr. Speaker, and it goes to the core of the problem in the system that we have to solve. The biggest reason we run short of ambulances here in Alberta is that the other crews are waiting in the emergency rooms to transfer their patients. We need to free up the beds for those patients to then be decanted to by adding continuing care as well for patients to get out of the hospitals faster. We're doing that by bringing back the successful ASLI partnership. It's one of the many partnerships the NDP actually walked away from because of their bias against private partners in the system.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, given the Budget Address today, we will proceed immediately to Members' Statements, but we will have a recess prior to the Budget Address. Please remain in your seats wherever possible.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has a statement to make.

### Oil and Gas Prices and Pipeline Development

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Personally, I see a victory for one Canadian as a victory for all Canadians. For example, if a car rolls off the assembly line in Ontario and is exported at top dollar, I'm happy. If a fishing vessel pulls into St. John's and can sell its catch internationally for top dollar, I will cheer as loud as any Newfoundlander. If hydro power is purchased by American states and the resultant profits enrich Quebecers, I'm all for it, and if timber from British Columbia is shipped to Asian markets, I see that as a win for Canada in emerging markets. Therefore, with the same rationale, I know that Alberta selling its resources world-wide at top dollar is also a win for Canada.

Alberta is a major contributor to the Canadian economy. People come from every corner of the country to work in the oil and gas

sector. Not only does the money earned in the oil and gas sector enter into Alberta's economy, but it also buoys up the economies of all provinces. This is why we need pipelines. Otherwise, we sell our product at discount prices, reducing the benefit to all Canadians.

During the election and since, Prime Minister Trudeau promised that the \$4.5 billion his government invested in buying the Kinder Morgan pipeline would not be wasted, that the pipeline would be built. I applaud that commitment, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of this Chamber to join me in exhorting the Prime Minister to immediately fulfill his promise and address the concerns of people across Confederation to ensure our oil and gas sector gets a fair shake.

Separation sentiment is at its highest point in Alberta history. People are mad, and that's understandable. As I've said earlier, I'm a firm believer that we should be promoting what we do well and we should be seeking top dollar for our products. Let cars from Ontario and Albertan oil be market standards for quality in foreign markets. Let Albertan gas and Maritimes fisheries be sources of prosperity for everyone across this country. We are stereotyped for being polite, but I believe our true character lies in a natural sense of justice and fairness that we know lifts our communities regardless of which province we reside in or what product we sell.

Thank you.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table today the appropriate number of copies of the 2019-20 main estimates schedule for the First Session of the 30th Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert caught my eye.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have an article from the famous *Quirks & Quarks* at CBC. It's entitled Understanding Extinction – Humanity Has Destroyed Half the Life on Earth. This is from October 18, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings this afternoon?  
Seeing none.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act, the College of Alberta Psychologists 2018-19 Annual Report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. I'd like to inform the House that the point of order that was called at 2:30 has been withdrawn.

Hon. members, in order to allow adequate time to prepare for the Budget Address by the hon. President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance this afternoon, the House is recessed until 3:15.

[The Assembly adjourned from 2:46 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Transmittal of Estimates

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I've received certain messages from Her Honour the Administrator, which I now transmit to you.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! All stand, please.

**The Speaker:** The Administrator transmits estimates of certain sums required by the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Administrator transmits estimates of certain sums required by the government for the service of the province of Alberta for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 2019-20 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates as well as the 2019-20 government estimates. In addition, I also wish to table the 2019-23 government of Alberta strategic plan and the Budget 2019 ministry business plans.

### Government Motions

#### Budget Address

32. Mr. Toews moved:  
Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance to present his first provincial budget.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I now wish to table the government's Budget 2019-23 fiscal plan and move Government Motion 32.

Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise today and deliver the inaugural budget of the first United Conservative government of Alberta. This budget is the result of the comprehensive platform our party ran on in this year's election and consultations with Albertans over the last few months. That program, titled getting Alberta back to work, was endorsed by over a million voters, representing 55 per cent of electors, in the highest single-party vote tally in provincial history. This was an overwhelming public endorsement of our three main priorities: getting Albertans back to work, making life better for Albertans, and standing up for Alberta.

This budget is a fulfillment of that promise made to Albertans. This is a budget that is ambitious in its drive for economic growth. This is a budget that is courageous, tackling the out-of-control spending of previous administrations. This is a budget that is compassionate, taking care of the most vulnerable and providing more resources to families and children. This is a budget that is thoughtful, reasonable, and precise in its execution. This is a budget that puts Alberta and Albertans first at a time when we're contending against a global campaign of misinformation and a federal government that has campaigned against our province's vital interests. It is in this context that this budget has been crafted.

Let me start, Mr. Speaker, with the ambition of Budget 2019. Budget 2019 takes action on our first priority: getting Albertans back to work. Albertans overwhelmingly endorsed our government's free-enterprise principles. Those principles support the entrepreneurial attitude and can-do spirit that made Alberta prosperous in the past and will restore our role as the economic engine of Canada. Budget 2019 will get Albertans back to work by restoring our competitiveness, reviving private investment, cutting red tape, and supporting training in the skills that will be needed in the future.

3:20

To make Alberta a magnet for investment, Budget 2019 is taking bold action to reduce taxes and regulation. Our goal is to make

Alberta the most competitive jurisdiction to do business in in North America. Our first act after forming government was the elimination of the carbon tax. That job-killing tax created a significant drag on economic growth and disproportionately penalized us for living in a geographically massive region in a cold climate with a resource-driven economy. At \$1.4 billion this was the largest tax cut in Alberta's history. It reversed the skewed policies of the previous government, that raised the cost on everything from home heating to groceries for families and small businesses already coping with unemployment and less income.

I was incredibly proud to present legislation that implemented the job-creation tax cut. This legislation assures the reduction of corporate income tax rates from 12 to 8 per cent. Mr. Speaker, by 2022 Alberta will have the lowest business tax rate in Canada, and that rate will be lower than 44 of 50 U.S. states. The weight of historical evidence overwhelmingly shows that when we improve our corporate tax strategy, our provincial GDP goes up and our share of national GDP increases. So do jobs, and so do government revenues. Economists Jack Mintz and Bev Dahlby estimate that the job-creation tax cut will add up to 55,000 jobs by 2023. My own ministry estimates that the job-creation tax cut will boost real investment by approximately \$4 billion per year by 2023.

We have ample evidence of what doesn't work, Mr. Speaker. After the former government increased the corporate income tax rate, tax revenue fell by billions of dollars. It is one element of their legacy that has been reversed in order to shift Alberta to a broad-based, low-tax structure that puts investment decisions in the hands of the private sector and not government. Success is the intersection between preparation and opportunity. This side of the House believes that opportunity in Alberta remains boundless. It is the preparation that has been lacking, and we will fix that.

We have also adopted the accelerated capital cost allowance provisions. This will encourage businesses to make capital investments, resulting in growth and improved productivity. Mr. Speaker, the job-creation tax cut along with the accelerated capital cost allowance provisions provide Alberta with a broad-based, low-rate corporate tax system that will be competitive with any jurisdiction in North America. These two initiatives are designed for optimal economic impacts.

They are a break with the habit of many modern governments to complicate fiscal policy with targeted tax credits. These invariably come with red tape, which makes them inefficient, and they undermine the efficiency of market-based capital allocation in order to achieve political or ideological objectives. Therefore, we will be taking steps to eliminate five tax credits: the Alberta investor tax credit, the community economic development corporation tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, the interactive digital media tax credit, the scientific research and experimental tax credit. We will honour our existing commitments under these programs. Going forward, companies that received these credits will now instead benefit from the broad-based, low-tax environment provided to all those who choose to do business in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, since day one we've been working to transform Alberta's economy from one of the slowest and most overregulated in Canada to the fastest and freest in the nation. My colleague the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction is making excellent progress working with Albertans to identify roadblocks to job creation and economic development. Serious efforts to reduce red tape across the entire spectrum of government are projected to save taxpayers at least \$140 million per year. Unlike the previous government, this government is not driven by dogma. We are pragmatic about economic intervention, not doctrinaire.

Indigenous communities, groups, and businesses face significant challenges when accessing capital to invest in natural resource

projects. This impedes their economic growth and well-being. That's why our government is creating the \$1 billion Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, to help indigenous-owned enterprises become partners in energy and resource development. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation makes Alberta a leader in Canada on the path to reconciliation. I am proud to present a budget that supports this practical investment to create meaningful, lasting change and a brighter future for indigenous Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans want our government to take a realistic approach to the challenge of climate change. Our government's technology innovation and emissions reduction, or TIER, program is an ambitious and realistic plan to incent investment in new emission reduction research and technologies. It invests in the tremendous progress we are already seeing in the oil sands. Between 2000 and 2017 the emission intensity of oil sands operations has dropped by 28 per cent. This is the result of made-in-Alberta technologies and is a real outcome in the effort to reduce global emissions.

TIER builds on this success and keeps the focus on large industrial emitters responsible for half the emissions in Alberta. Regulated facilities can reduce or offset their emissions or pay directly into the TIER fund. Over the next four years TIER revenues are estimated to be \$1.9 billion. This will be used to fund further development of emissions reduction technologies, ensuring that Alberta companies, who are already among the most environmentally responsible in the world, continue to innovate and improve by investing in clean technologies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2019 also invests in developing the work skills that are and will be needed to move our province forward. To develop the next generation of skilled tradesmen and -women, Budget 2019 expands on the apprenticeship model, with over \$11 million for schools to work with Careers: The Next Generation, an organization connecting students with apprenticeships and skills that will lead to high-paying jobs and rewarding careers. It provides \$10 million for Women Building Futures to encourage women to enter the trades and \$2 million over four years for Skills Canada Alberta to help young Albertans build their technology skills and make connections on the national and world stage. Actions to attract and keep skilled workers include developing the Alberta advantage immigration strategy, with \$2.5 million to recognize foreign qualifications so newcomers can accelerate their entry into the job market.

Mr. Speaker, we will also build on our strength in technology, data, and telecommunications and our leadership in artificial intelligence. We will spend more than \$200 million on research, innovation, and commercialization to develop talent and attract global investment. This funding will commercialize technologies that will improve the productivity and competitiveness of our traditional industries and build the ones we've not yet envisioned. This funding will support a highly skilled labour force, world-class university programs, and a competitive business environment that will make lasting contributions to economic growth.

All of these measures, Mr. Speaker, will help the province recover from the past four years. With business investment picking up, real GDP growth is forecast to improve from .6 per cent in 2019 to 2.7 per cent in 2020 and then to 3 per cent in the final two years of our mandate. Our ambitious strategy for job creation will lead to marked improved in investment and economic growth. While we are confident in our policies, we are also aware of increasing risks to the global economy. In the event of a negative external impact beyond our control, additional spending restraint will be required.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak of courage. To rein in the excessive spending of Alberta governments dating back 25 years will take courage and resolve, not just by this government but by all Albertans. We all have an obligation to live within our means. It is unfair to saddle future generations of Albertans with debt, to effectively steal their opportunities and force them to pay our bills. We must be responsible today to ensure that the next generation can continue to access the high-quality public services we enjoy and can have opportunities for healthy, fulfilling, and prosperous lives.

As the MacKinnon panel noted, Alberta's annual expenditures would be \$10.4 billion less if our per capita spending simply matched the average spending in Canada's three largest provinces – British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec – and we wouldn't have a deficit. In health we spent almost \$1,000 more per person in 2018 than in Ontario. This means that we would be spending over \$4 billion less on health care if we matched Ontario's spending.

3:30

But all that money isn't buying us better results. The panel pointed to a number of metrics that demonstrate our health care service delivery is no better than comparable provinces and in some cases worse. For example, Alberta has the highest percentage of people cared for in hospitals who should be in a more appropriate setting, and we wait longer to see a specialist after getting a referral. It's clear that other provinces are doing more with less in health care. This is why our Minister of Health has initiated an Alberta Health Services review to identify a course of action that will ensure Albertans receive better value from our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, we are also spending more than other provinces on education. In K to 12 education, school board funding increased by 3 and a half per cent over the last decade, more than double the increase in student enrolment. In advanced education, funding to postsecondary institutions has grown by 40 per cent since 2009, about three times the growth of enrolment. To live within our means, government spending must adjust to a new reality. Oil prices will be lower for longer. We can't count on another boom to bail us out.

The MacKinnon panel concluded that a spending freeze would not be enough to balance the budget in 2023. Alberta must now bring spending to more affordable levels in line with other provinces. When Dr. Janice MacKinnon delivered her panel's report to me, she said something that has remained top of mind. It was: Alberta still has options, but you must take action now to restrain spending; do not delay; if you don't take action now, there will be far fewer options for Alberta in the future. Mr. Speaker, I will not be responsible for removing opportunities for Albertans in the generations to come.

The challenge of this restraint is the spending trajectory the previous government left us. In the last four years Alberta's operating expenses have been increasing at close to 4 per cent every year while revenues have remained flat. This budget is a first step in changing that trajectory as it rolls back operating spending. Ministries have put in countless hours finding efficiencies and are now beginning the work that will lead to transformative change. Redesigning and modernizing the way we deliver services has the potential to unlock savings and provide better outcomes. We are taking a thoughtful and surgical approach to spending restraint.

To ensure their sustainability, we are evaluating programs that were put in place and left to grow at an unrestrained pace. We're considering ways in which programs can be restructured so that they truly support the most vulnerable. We are taking efforts to simplify the supports that Albertans receive to cut down on administration costs. Where we believe Albertans could afford to

cover more supports, we will ask them to do so. But I want to be clear. This is Budget 2019, not budget 1993.

Budget 2019 is making a 2.8 per cent measured spending reduction over four years. That's less than 3 cents on the dollar. This is not an 18 per cent across-the-board cut. In Budget 2019 front-line services are protected. We will maintain our platform commitment to fully fund education. Health care spending will rise. Funding will also increase for Children's Services, Community and Social Services, and Seniors and Housing. That is all possible because our plan to balance the budget is focused, thoughtful, and practical.

Mr. Speaker, what we can't ignore is the crippling legacy of unrestrained spending. Government's operating expense is now \$1.2 billion higher than if it matched its population growth and inflation in the last four years. At the end of 2009 Alberta's debt was \$1.2 billion. This number has grown exponentially, and on March 31, 2019, provincial taxpayer-supported debt totalled \$63 billion. Interest payments on that debt consumed 3 and a half per cent of the budget. That's \$2 billion a year, or \$5 million a day, going to bankers and bondholders instead of paying for 30,000 teachers or 35,000 long-term care beds or a new school every week. Had the previous government continued with their plan, we would have generated over 100 billion dollars of debt by 2024, with annual interest payments of \$3.4 billion.

Living within our means and getting spending down to comparative levels with peer provinces is the only way we will balance the budget, get out of debt, and strengthen public services for Albertans. Something we will not do, Mr. Speaker, is continue with the reckless crude-by-rail program that the previous government created on the eve of its demise. The program would have paid out \$10.6 billion in expenses to get back \$8.8 billion in oil revenues. Rail contracts alone were \$3.7 billion, almost as much as the federal government paid for the Trans Mountain pipeline. The private sector can ship this oil far more cost-effectively than government without risking the tax dollars of hard-working Albertans. Budget 2019 includes a \$1.5 billion provision to get government and taxpayers out of the crude-by-rail business.

Mr. Speaker, this budget honours previous commitments to build and maintain key infrastructure projects, but it also takes into account what we learned from the MacKinnon report, that infrastructure in Alberta is generally newer than in other jurisdictions. Capital spending in Alberta averaged \$7 billion a year over the past decade. In this capital plan it will average just over \$6 billion. The 2019 capital plan provides \$24.2 billion over four years.

The MacKinnon report made it clear that municipalities must shoulder more of the responsibility for major projects. The panel found that Alberta provides over 20 per cent more grant support to municipalities than other provinces and recommended that we bring municipal spending in line accordingly. The four-year fiscal plan in Budget 2019 will put us on that recommended path.

Mr. Speaker, an important partner on the journey to a new and better fiscal future for Albertans will be our public-sector workers. Each and every Albertan who works to deliver government services, whether they're a doctor, a janitor, an administrator, a teacher, or a nurse, is an important partner in our work.

Labour costs represent 55 per cent, more than half, of the total operating budget, and in 2018 Alberta's total wage and salary expenses were \$880 million higher than in British Columbia and \$1.2 billion higher than in Ontario on a per capita basis. In keeping with the MacKinnon report recommendations, our goal is to bring Alberta government wages in line with other provinces.

Alberta MLAs demonstrated leadership by taking a 5 per cent salary reduction, and the Premier himself took a 10 per cent pay cut. We will be looking to the public service for restraint. Let me be

clear. This budget does not contain any provision for wage increases, and over the next four years the size of Alberta's public service will be reduced and management-to-staff ratios will fall. This will be accomplished mainly as employees retire coupled with hiring restraint in the broader public sector. Next year almost every contract we have with union will expire. As we approach a new agreement, we must keep in step with today's fiscal reality, with other provincial remuneration levels, and with other Albertans who saw their wages decrease or disappear altogether due to our province's recent economic travails. So I speak directly to Alberta's public service – to the nurses, to the teachers, and to the committed professionals – who deliver to Albertans every day: work with us to bring Alberta's spending in line. This will protect jobs now and in the future, and it will show fairness and respect for Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars.

While Albertans are hard-working and self-reliant, they are also compassionate. They care about their neighbours and those who are less fortunate. Our government promised to maintain quality health care and education and social supports for the most vulnerable. Budget 2019 honours that promise while achieving the MacKinnon panel recommendation to bring Alberta's spending in line with the average of other provinces. True to our commitment and Alberta's priorities, Health gets a \$200 million increase in this budget. Over four years Health will receive \$100 million for a mental health and addictions strategy, \$40 million to address the opioids crisis, and \$20 million for palliative care.

3:40

That said, we must recognize that health care is the single largest government expense. We must stabilize health care spending to balance the budget by 2023, and it can't be accomplished in one year alone. Last year Alberta spent \$20.4 billion on health care. That's 42 per cent of the entire operating budget. Between 2009 and 2019 health care spending has increased 60 per cent while government revenue has only increased by 26 per cent. Our goal is to establish a health care system that achieves better outcomes, provides more appropriate care for Albertans, and comes closer to the funding levels in B.C., Ontario, and Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government spends \$8 billion every year to educate children from kindergarten through grade 12. Budget 2019 maintains this funding. We are allocating funding for the school nutrition program, as promised, with \$15.5 million for schools and \$3 million for not-for-profits. We are accommodating student growth with \$1.8 billion in new capital funding for new and upgraded schools and 250 new modular classrooms. We will build and upgrade playgrounds for Alberta's children by contributing \$11 million over two years. We will also act on a MacKinnon panel recommendation for Alberta's K to 12 system. Government will review and revise the education formula to address enrolment growth and provide incentives for sharing services and achieving better student outcomes.

We also want to ensure better outcomes for our postsecondary students. Postsecondary education accounts for nearly 11 per cent of our budget. Spending on postsecondary education has grown at a rate of 4 per cent per year, three times the rate of enrolment growth. We spend \$36,500 per student per year. That's \$5,000 more than British Columbia, \$10,000 more than Quebec, and \$15,000 more than Ontario. The Minister of Advanced Education is consulting with postsecondary institutions to set a new course that focuses on performance, accountability, and cost management.

Mr. Speaker, we will end the five-year tuition freeze and decrease institutional dependence on taxpayer dollars while maintaining a high level of student support through scholarships and endowments. Our postsecondary institutions will help hone the next generation

of great leaders, and education is one of the best personal financial investments you can make. Removing the cap on tuition will incent our universities and colleges to compete for enrolment by focusing on the delivery of programs that directly meet student needs.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has some of the most generous social programs in the country. The assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH, is \$400 more per month than the next most generous province. Supports for the disabled are also among the most substantial. Budget 2019 makes no cuts to social programs. In fact, it increases spending. This aligns with our government's commitment to protect the most vulnerable while living within our means.

Community and Social Services receives a 7.6 per cent increase to address human trafficking and sexual exploitation, caseload pressure, and a comprehensive review of programming to ensure value for money.

We are maintaining the low-income transit support pilot program for vulnerable Albertans so they can get to appointments, job interviews, and workplaces.

Seniors and Housing will receive an increase of \$8 million to maintain overall seniors' benefits, and Children's Services receives a 15 per cent increase over four years.

The Alberta child and family benefit will replace the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit. This single program will provide more benefits to lower income families while reducing administration costs.

Mr. Speaker, the third priority for our government and for Budget 2019 is standing up for Alberta, standing up for a fair deal in Confederation, and standing up against foreign-funded activists trying to land-lock our oil. Alberta is a proud and significant contributor to the national economy. We have 12 per cent of Canada's population but contribute more than 16 per cent to national GDP. We attract 25 per cent of all capital investment and are responsible for nearly a quarter of all Canadian exports. When our economy is strong, all of Canada benefits. Alberta's net fiscal contribution to the rest of Canada averaged over \$23 billion a year in the past five years and \$211 billion over the last decade. Alberta taxpayers make an extraordinarily outsized contribution to the federation, largely due to the energy sector.

When Ottawa enacts discriminatory legislation like the tanker ban or creates excessive, opaque, and unconstitutional government programs like the new environmental assessment regime of Bill C-69, they are not just attacking the Alberta economy; they are undermining the future growth and prosperity of the entire nation.

Last year Canada imported more than \$18 billion worth of crude from foreign countries, including \$1 billion from Saudi Arabia alone. At the same time, Alberta's reputation as the most environmentally friendly and socially responsible energy producer in the world has been unfairly maligned. We are fighting back against these defamations and disinformation with the truth with a proactive and relentless effort that will bring back international investment. Budget 2019 includes \$30 million a year for the Canadian Energy Centre to do just that, and \$2.5 million is budgeted for the public inquiry into foreign funding of anti-energy campaigns.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Energy Centre is just the start of our campaign to stand up for Alberta. In light of the election results earlier this week, it is clear that we cannot rely on federal support to rebuild our province. It is absolutely essential that we put our fiscal house in order and take charge of our economic future. In the coming months we will be focusing our efforts on bringing fiscal fairness back to Alberta. We will be looking at each and every federal fiscal transfer program and demanding that our concerns are



addressed. We will use all the tools at our disposal to get a fair deal for Alberta.

In closing, friends, fellow Albertans, I'm proud of this budget and the people who have helped put it together. It is a plan that, above all, will balance the budget in four years, but it is much more than that. It is a turning point in Alberta's history. It is a budget that will grow the economy and create jobs through an ambitious strategy to attract investment to Alberta. It is a budget that will chart a prudent and thoughtful new course, that breaks away from the excessive spending of past governments. It is a budget that provides certainty and stability, and it is a budget that demonstrates compassion for people and protects the most vulnerable.

We promised to get Albertans back to work in a growing economy. We promised to deliver quality health care and education. We promised to support the most vulnerable among us, and we promised to balance the budget in four years. Budget 2019 keeps those promises. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of my colleagues in government I would like to thank the people of Alberta for giving us this opportunity to return our province to prosperity. We will not let you down.

Friends and fellow Albertans, I want to conclude with this message. While we have no shortage of challenges today, I believe Alberta has a bright future. I'm hopeful today not only because we've been blessed with a truly beautiful province, abundant in resources, but because Albertans are resilient and responsible men and women who cherish and defend their freedom and know that reward does not come without risk or effort. This is the spirit of the men and women who built this province, and it remains today. It is for this reason that I'm incredibly hopeful for our future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader has the call.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, that was a whopper. In the coming weeks I imagine that Albertans are going to have a lot to say about this, and there's much debate, I think, to what we heard.

But for the time being I suggest that we adjourn debate and move that we do so.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

3:50

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, through you to him, congratulations to the hon. the Finance minister and President of Treasury Board on an excellent speech. I have to say that it's much more refreshing than the last four that I've seen inside this Chamber. With that, as the Opposition House Leader did say, I do expect weeks of robust debate, that I'm looking forward to participating in.

But as it has been a long legislative week – and I do see the hour is drawing near to the end of the week – Mr. Speaker, I will, through you to all members of the House, thank them for their hard work this week, wish them safe travels back to their constituencies, and move that we adjourn the House until Monday, October 28, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:51 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, October 24, 2019**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1313-26 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1329-31 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1347-57 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve.*), 1357-62 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c8 ]

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c5 ]

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cR-8.2 ]

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c4 ]

**Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c3 ]

**Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1375-83 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c7 ]

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 , passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cP-41.7 ]

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c2 ]

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cF-1.5 ]

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1393-94 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c9 ]

**Bill 13\* — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1345-47 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1383-93 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 cA-33.5 ]

**Bill 14 — Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act (Wilson)**

First Reading — 1654 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1655-77 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft.*), 1679-95 (*Oct. 9, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1708-25 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft.*), 1761 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft.*), 1763-67 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1768-70 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn.*), 1785 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 15 — Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019 (Glubish)**

First Reading — 1707 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1758-61 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1767-68 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1783-85 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 16 — Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 1782 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1810-17 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1817-18 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1911-15 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 17 — Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act (Sawhney)**

First Reading — 1798 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1819-28 (*Oct. 17, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1915-26 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1949-59 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn., passed*)

**Bill 18 — Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019 (Savage)**

First Reading — 1850 (*Oct. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1926-29 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft.*), 1931-45 (*Oct. 22, 2019 eve.*), 1947-49 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1959-66 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1978-90 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1990-94 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 201\* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 825-38 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 cP-30.6]

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 838-40 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft.*), 1115-22 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft.*), 1882 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1883-87 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*), 1875-82 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft., not proceeded with on division*)

**Bill 204 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, October 28, 2019

Day 34

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, October 28, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated. Hon. members, we will proceed to *O Canada* in approximately 30 seconds.

Hon. members, I believe that we are ready. I know it may be hard to believe, but I was visiting with the school children from Eldorado school who will be leading us in *O Canada* just prior to question period, and we got running just a couple of moments late there. I see they have joined us in the gallery, so if you would please rise and join the students from Eldorado school in Drayton Valley in the singing of our national anthem. I invite you to sing in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Hon. members, thank you for your patience. It was certainly well worth the wait.

Prior to the introduction of visitors and guests this afternoon, I would like to acknowledge the fifth anniversary of the election of a member to this Assembly. I would like to ask the government whip to join me here at the dais as we celebrate his fifth election anniversary. I'll grab a seat so you guys can quickly come while he joins us here.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, joining us this afternoon from our eastern neighbours, former Saskatchewan Party MLA for Kindersley from 2002 to 2007, Mr. Jason Dearborn, and his colleague Peter Voldeng.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, joining us today from the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora are students from St. Vincent. Also in the gallery are hard-working public employees from the Ministry of Service Alberta, and we've already had the opportunity to meet our wonderful anthem singers all the way from Drayton Valley, the grade 4 students from Eldorado school. Thank you to their teachers: Tammy Flett, Jennifer Landers, and Joyce Huska for doing such a

wonderful job. If those who I have mentioned would please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

In the Speaker's gallery this afternoon are family members of the Minister of Environment and Parks and the Member for Calgary-Klein. Welcome to the Assembly their brother Shane, his wife, Karen, and possibly the cutest in all of the galleries today, Amelia. Definitely a Nixon.

Also in the gallery this afternoon in recognition of Air Cadet Week, I'm very pleased to welcome air cadets from the greater Edmonton area. Please welcome the air cadets in the gallery.

I'd like to introduce guests of the NDP caucus in the Legislature today. They are: Heather Smith, Karen Craik, Danielle Larivee, Cam Westhead, Jane Sustrik, Daphne Wallace. Also, guests of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, from the United Nurses union: Erin Pankratz, Fajar Khan, and Charlotte Bragg. Please welcome them to the Assembly.

Last, but certainly not least, are guests of the Minister of Advanced Education in celebration of Greek independence, or Ochi Day. I am very pleased to welcome guests of the minister. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

### Ochi Day

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to mark and commemorate October 28. This day is remembered right here in Alberta and around the world as the day in 1940 when the Republic of Greece stood up against fascist domination. Earlier today I was honoured to stand alongside our Premier and dozens of members of Alberta's Greek community on the steps of the Legislature to mark this important day. Many of them, as you just mentioned, join us here in the gallery alongside my own family.

On the eve of October 28 Mussolini's ambassador to Greece handed the Greek Prime Minister an ultimatum demanding that Greece capitulate to Italian rule. Prime Minister Metaxas replied with a single word: no. This, of course, plunged Greece into the Second World War, and a new front was opened against the fascist march across Europe. Outgunned and outnumbered, Greek forces stood their ground in defence of the democratic principles that we now take for granted, including freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and conscience. Greek forces staved off the Italian invasion, which would come to be regarded as the first victory against the Axis forces. German forces would ultimately come to the aid of their Italian allies, and on April 18 the Greek Prime Minister chose to take his own life rather than see German forces enter Athens. Nine days later German forces stormed the Acropolis, and one of the greatest symbols of democratic ideals fell into darkness.

But, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, democracy, freedom, and liberty can never be subjugated, and Greece and all of Europe would eventually be freed from oppression. This is why on October 28 we remember those who paid the ultimate price in defence of freedom. They fought to preserve many of the fundamental rights and freedoms that we enjoy today. So let us pay tribute to the sons that never returned home. Let us pay tribute to the homes that were never rebuilt, and let us pay tribute to all whose lives were shattered by the devastation of war. When we commemorate this day, we are reminded of the brave men and women who gave their lives to defend the foundational values and principles we enjoy today. With

a defiant “No,” it was made clear that freedom and liberty would triumph over hate, tyranny, and oppression.

Mr. Speaker, as Alberta’s first MLA of Greek descent, it is my distinct honour and privilege to commemorate October 28 in this Legislature for the very first time. Thank you.

### Members’ Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has a statement to make.

#### Air Cadets

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Seniors and Housing minister declared Air Cadet Week in Alberta. As our government’s military liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces I am happy to have the opportunity to speak about the importance of the Royal Canadian Air Cadet program. For young people interested in aviation, it is indeed an opportunity to learn about navigation, meteorology, and even have the opportunity to fly. Young cadets start out in a classroom and end up leaders in the program, teaching fitness classes and survival skills to new recruits, and piloting gliders. Air cadets support the veterans’ community, selling poppies and accompanying veterans to Remembrance Day events and other occasions. It is stirring to see these young people supporting the men and women of an earlier generation who also served in uniform. Throughout it all these cadets learn teamwork, self-discipline, leadership, and citizenship, lessons they will carry their entire lives.

Chris Hadfield grew up on a farm in Milton, Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and remembers dreaming of space flight. He joined the air cadets in Milton in the early ’70s, and he says that he kind of grew up with the organization, first learning to fly with the cadets. Hadfield says that the lessons he learned about self-discipline, teamwork, and flying, among other things, inform his life to this day. Mr. Hadfield, as we all know, went on to command the International Space Station and was the first Canadian to walk in space. Who knows if these young cadets will fly that high, but I would not bet against them.

I recently had the opportunity to visit with the 287 Beaumont Spitfire Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron and help to present awards to some very talented cadets and got the chance to learn about the great programs that are offered and the excellent work that they do in the community. There are more than 3,100 air cadets in Alberta, and I know all members will join me in saluting these outstanding young people and their leadership during Air Cadet Week in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

#### Budget 2019

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, now that the federal election is over, we finally got to see what this new government has in store for Alberta with their first budget, and, my goodness, it isn’t pretty. No wonder they hid their plans until after the federal ballots were cast, because the members opposite have taken many of the worst ideas that turned Ontario to quickly go against its Conservative government. These folks decided that rather than learn from Premier Ford’s mistakes, they’d double down on them.

Indexing of benefits for AISH recipients, something the UCP members spoke in favour of and voted for last term: gone now. What’s a little about-face and broken promises when you’ve got big

corporate friends in need of a \$4.7 billion handout? Indexing of benefits for low-income seniors, which ensures that those who worked their entire lives to help build Alberta don’t fall further behind: gone now. This Premier and the UCP felt it was more important to spend \$30 million on a secretive and unaccountable one-industry war room dedicated to chasing ghosts on the Internet. It is almost Halloween, after all. Tax incentives for petrochemical diversification, for Alberta’s burgeoning film industry, for the important high-tech industries, that so many future jobs will depend on: all gone. Proper funding for educational enrolment growth: gone. Proper funding for high-quality postsecondary education: gone. Proper funding for Edmonton’s first hospital in over 30 years: gone.

After all these sacrifices, what will Albertans have gained? Certainly nothing approximating a debt-free province. Just like the Harper government did in Ottawa, this failed Conservative agenda will rack up record amounts of new debt while destroying vital services, because despite what they say about concern for Alberta’s books, this government is really only about one thing, protecting and providing more for their wealthy friends. Shame on them, Mr. Speaker.

#### Gathering of the Clans Festival in Sedgewick

**Ms Lovely:** Mr. Speaker, it was my distinct honour to participate in the second Gathering of the Clans Highland Festival in Sedgewick this August. The event was organized by the Flagstaff Scottish society. The chieftain for the event was Rosemary Imlah. Kevin Sorenson, the former MP for Battle River-Crowfoot, and Perry Robinson, the mayor of Sedgewick, and I had the pleasure of marching behind the Battle River Pipes and Drums.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

There is something magical about the sound of the bagpipe, and one day it’s my dream to learn how to play this fascinating instrument. As expected, there was a talented musician; storytellers, who told tales of dragons; Scottish dancers; bagpipe and kilt demos; and, of course, the most marvellous music one could ever imagine. The skill of the dogs and masters was shown in sheepherding and the strength of the participants in tug-of-war. Among the vendors you could locate your clan as the Macphersons, Grahams, Wallaces, Hays, and MacNicol’s had their family tartans and history available regarding many of their prominent family members. To determine if you have even a wee bit of Scottish ancestry, the Alberta Genealogical Society was present.

At the celebration I had my first opportunity to see Highland cows. These are lovely animals with long hair and horns, which they use to dig up plants as food during the winter months. Their stature ranges from about three to four feet, much shorter than cattle we normally see here in Alberta. The breed is known for being extremely hardy, and due to the decreased amount of cholesterol in their meat, the breed is becoming more popular and thriving in our climate.

A distinguishing portion of the event was the Scottish Highland games. There were many fascinating events such as putting the stone, heavy weight for height, hammer, sheaf toss, and caber toss. Watching the contestants participate in these events was fascinating. I was impressed by the number of people who attended the event. Although heritage ranged from all parts of the world, that day we were all a wee bit Scottish.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. [interjections]

Hon. members, the statement was for Lethbridge-West, which I did call. However, seeing the Member for St. Albert rise, I will allow the member to make a statement.

Please proceed.

#### 1:50 Personal Income Tax Indexation Cessation

**Ms Renaud:** Albertans are outraged that this Premier is jacking up their personal income taxes, and he's trying to do it on the sly. Now, I know we're going to hear the Premier and his minister say things like, "If your income stays the same, your taxes stay the same," "Our rates aren't going up," or some other smokescreen. So let's talk facts. If an Albertan income goes up with inflation and so does the tax bracket – that's the system we have now – they pay the same. But if the bottom of the bracket doesn't go up with inflation, a bigger share of their income is exposed to taxation. They pay more. That's the UCP plan. If another Albertan's income stays exactly the same, an indexed tax bracket, like the one we have now, will rise and protect more of their income from taxation, and they pay slightly less tax every year. The UCP is abolishing this so that Albertans will pay more tax than they would have if the Premier would have kept his hands off personal income taxes.

The proof, the bottom line, is right there in black and white, right in the middle of page 149 of this government's fiscal plan. This scheme will produce \$600 million in additional income tax revenue for the government. That money doesn't come out of thin air. That is \$600 million pulled out of the pockets of everyone who pays personal income tax. Let's be clear: every single Albertan taxpayer in every single riding represented in this House will pay more income tax under this UCP budget.

It's shameful that this Premier broke his campaign promise – again – to Albertans, and it's very arrogant that he thought he could do so without anyone noticing. Albertans noticed, Madam Speaker. Now every government member will have to go home and explain why every single person that voted for them got stuck with a tax hike to pay for this Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

#### Government Motion 34

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stood in this House on the 17th of October and offered my support to Motion 34, which really resonated with Albertans. I discussed our provincial motto, Strong and Free, how leaders should be out front to lead, and made clear my allegiance to our province and our country. I'm deeply touched by the response from across Canada. I made a post entitled *Poke the Bear* with the video of that speech and received nonstop support for it. People from across Canada support our province, our country, and our government. I've been told that that video has been viewed almost 500,000 times.

I would like to read a few key parts of an e-mail received from a couple of my constituents, Marion and Chad, after seeing that post.

Last night we watched you in action on your video at the Alberta Legislature regarding motion 34. We are... impressed with your... passionate message fighting for your constituents and representing your views [that] align with ours. Both myself and my husband worked at Suncor Energy and the Imperial Oil Kearn project for over twenty-five years.

This amazing industry has been part of our lives as Albertans for many years. We understand the importance of our resources and how the oil and gas industry has benefited all of Canada.

This past election has caused a great deal of anger from all of us here in Alberta. We are strong supporters of [the current government's commitments] and want cooler heads to prevail.

... I felt compelled to reach out to you and state that I really feel optimistic for our future... We support your efforts one hundred per cent!

[The Speaker in the chair]

Another note I received was from a gentleman by the name of Glen Brooks, a former Australia airborne member. He and his wife recently became Canadian citizens, living on Vancouver Island.

I've watched that [video] twice, and it's not politics you are talking about. It's about the life blood of belief. Belief that we can do better, belief that we can struggle and succeed, belief that the very smallest part of our society no matter what your religious or political beliefs... We are all Albertan... Canadian.

I am like you, my brother, a believer. A believer in the fragile system we see every day in Canada. In saying that, we are also dreamers... We dream of a better Alberta, a better Canada, and by solid belief in our constitutional process... we shall have it.

These are the Canadians that are standing together, speaking up about the kind of Canada that they believe in, one that's strong and free.

Thank you.

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Personal Income Tax Indexation Cessation

**Ms Notley:** Vicious, pernicious, "an enormous, insidious tax grab": Mr. Speaker, that's this Premier describing bracket creep. Yes, his bad-news budget contains just that grab, picking \$600 million out of the pockets of hard-working Albertans, all so that he can pay for this \$4.7 billion giveaway to big corporations. To the Premier. He promised not to raise taxes, but he is. Why did folks over there lie to Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Oh, Mr. Speaker, it is getting pathetic over there in socialist land, I'll tell you. That's the party that imposed the largest tax hike in Alberta history, the carbon tax, that punished seniors for heating their homes. The largest tax hike in history was from the NDP; the largest tax cut was the UCP's elimination of the carbon tax. We are cleaning up the NDP's terrible fiscal mess while also bringing jobs back to this province. We're going to keep our word with Albertans.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is more than a backpedal; it's a total backflip. He called bracket creep a serious systemic flaw in our tax system, a heartless and insidious tax. When the Liberals refused to index tax brackets, he accused them of, quote: screwing the taxpayer. So I'll ask the same question this Premier asked when he was in Ottawa. From the MP for Calgary Southeast, the current Premier: "Why is this government telling Canadians they will tax relief when in fact they will end up with less money in their wallets at the end of the day?"

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I know I lost a couple of pounds on the keto, but I couldn't do a backflip if my life depended on it.

Mr. Speaker, what this government can do, though, what this government will do is clean up the fiscal crisis left behind by the NDP. They promised a balanced budget. Instead, they quadrupled our debt: six credit downgrades, a track to \$100 billion in debt, billions in interest payments. Albertans could not afford an NDP



government mortgaging our future. That's why we're bringing our budget back under control.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is about taxes, but it's also about integrity. In 2015 we told Albertans that those who could afford to pay a little more would, because I believe that when times are tough, people who can afford to pay more should pay their fair share. But what this Premier said in the last election was: no new income tax changes. Six months later every taxpayer in Alberta is forking over a combined \$600 million in new income taxes. To the Premier: why did folks over there mislead Albertans in the last election?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, she just said that every taxpayer is going to pay \$600 million more and that there's a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway. They're making it all up. There are zero increases to income taxes in this budget. There is a tax increase; it's \$5 on a carton of cigarettes, so we average the other western provinces. That's going to bring in \$50 million to help deal with health-related concerns that come from smoking. This is a tax-cutting government. We delivered the largest tax cut in our history, a \$1.4 billion tax reduction through the carbon tax. They voted against it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

### Budget 2019

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I lost count, after about seven, of the number of misstatements of fact by the Premier just there.

In addition to income tax, Albertans will pay in a whole bunch of other ways as well. For example, the Premier's budget jacks up property taxes. Calgary's mayor says: Calgarians will end up paying more or face massive service cuts. Edmonton's mayor called an emergency meeting: the options are – wait for it – big tax increases or abandoning major infrastructure. That's because of this Premier. Why is this Premier making municipalities do his dirty work for him?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as the MacKinnon panel underscored, grants to municipalities in Alberta are significantly higher than in any other province. Under this budget we are going from having the largest infrastructure budget in Canada and the largest municipal capital grants prebudget to having the largest infrastructure spending and the largest municipal capital grants in Canada after the budget. It's a responsible 15 per cent reduction. The alternative is running up a hundred billion dollar debt, and we won't do that to Albertans.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, this budget also slashes programs that make life more affordable for those who need it the most: a cut in child and family benefits to 165,000 low- and middle-income families, including 55,000 who lose them entirely; 46,000 people getting kicked off our drug plan; \$44 million in rental assistance gone. Tell me: is this Premier so tone deaf that he believes out-of-province shareholders need help with affordability more than Alberta families who are struggling to pay their rent?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** I have to correct myself, Mr. Speaker. The reduction of municipal infrastructure grants is 9 per cent, not 15 per cent, and the overall reduction in operating spending in this budget is 2.8 per cent, three pennies on the dollar. What you hear with the NDP's fear and smear is the inability of a party to even identify three

pennies of savings on every dollar of the biggest spending government in Canada. Albertans know that they're wrong. That's why they hired this government, in part, to bring order back to our province's finances.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's look at it the other way as this budget picks people's pockets. Take the family to the museum, five bucks more; register a vehicle, five bucks more; hauling a camper, 50 bucks more; need a benefits statement, 50 bucks more; land title fees, double them. And don't get me started on the bitter irony of a former immigration minister adding a brand new \$500 fee for citizenship applications. Premier, will Albertans ever stop paying for your great, big, fat, no-jobs \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Kenney:** There is no such thing, Mr. Speaker. As Professor Tombe said, "Why the 4.5 billion [dollar] claim continues is a real puzzle. It is demonstrably misleading . . . but, I guess, politically convenient." She just talked about citizenship fees. The government of Alberta does not process citizenship applications; the government of Canada does. Everything that she's saying, she's making up. But what's the alternative? A hundred billion dollars in debt that would jeopardize the future of public services. They want to send money to bondholders. We want to invest it in public services. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** I would certainly urge the Premier to maybe read his budget.

### Education and Postsecondary Funding

**Ms Notley:** Anyway, in addition, it does hit kids, parents, and university students the absolute hardest. There are 15,000 more students coming into our schools this year alone, and this budget calls for larger classes, fewer supports, and cuts to programs. The Premier claims that he's funded enrolment, but school boards will get \$200 less per student, a 2 per cent cut. The ATA calls it a shell game, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why are kids in school getting less while big corporations get more, \$4.7 billion more to be exact? Look at his budget.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, you know, I've got about 25 years of parliamentary experience. I've never seen a parliamentarian with the tendency to make things up so blatantly as the failed leader of the NDP. In this year's budget the forgone revenue from the job-creation tax cut, she says it's \$4.7 billion. It's, in fact, \$100 million. She's off by over 98 per cent. Here's the reality. If we don't act now, according to former NDP Finance minister Dr. MacKinnon, then we actually would have to cut deeply in the future. We won't do that. We're being responsible.

**Mr. Bilous:** Raising taxes on . . .

**The Speaker:** Order. The Opposition House Leader will come to order.

**Ms Notley:** Well, for an education I would certainly urge the Premier to rewatch his own clips in question period.

Nonetheless, the folks over there also lied about funding enrolment growth. Over the next four years 60,000 new students will come into our schools, and this UCP government won't hire a single teacher to greet them at the door, but for roughly the same amount of money this Premier has chosen instead to subsidize Husky oil's investments in Newfoundland and the U.S. To the Premier: is he

really so tone-deaf that he thinks that kind of choice is what Albertans voted for?

**Mr. Kenney:** No, Mr. Speaker. What is she talking about? You know, this is why. They live in this socialist fantasyland. It all kind of hangs together based on making stuff up. The leader of the NDP has never come to terms with the fact that all of this that she is claiming was rejected by Albertans just six months ago. They gave this government a mandate to bring order back to our finances, and that's exactly what we're doing: maintaining the highest level of education funding anywhere in Canada.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this Premier's budget also slams college and university students. As one student put it on the radio this morning: they're shooting us in the knees but telling us to run faster. A 21 per cent hike to tuition, college and university funding slashed, cancelled tax credits, high interest on student loans, Premier, explain this to me: our province's economic future depends on these students getting a world-class education, so why are you making them subsidize Husky's investments south of the border?

**Mr. Kenney:** No such thing, Mr. Speaker. But as former NDP Finance minister Janice MacKinnon underscored in her expert report, Alberta has by far the least efficient universities in Canada. We spend about \$10,000 more per student than Ontario does, for example, although we get lower enrolment and lower completion rates than in the rest of the country. You see, this is the problem with the NDP. They thought it was a mark of success that we ran the most expensive and least efficient provincial government in Canada with substandard results. Albertans demand better, they expect better, and with this government they're going to get better.

#### AISH Indexation

**Ms Notley:** What Albertans have gotten, Mr. Speaker, is an unprecedented bait and switch. Unconscionable, mean-spirited: that's what Albertans are calling this Premier's decision to deindex support for disabled Albertans on AISH, and the Premier appears proud of it. He says: it isn't onerous. It's not onerous for disabled Albertans to get less so corporations can get more. Yet this spring his campaign clearly stated they would continue to index AISH. When did the Premier decide to break his promise to severely disabled Albertans, and also, where is your heart?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, even though the NDP left behind a fiscal crisis, this government worked very hard to ensure that we protect the vulnerable in this budget. The budgets for community, family, and child services are all going up in this budget. The budget for Health is going up: \$150 million in additional investments for persons with mental health challenges and addiction crises. We've accepted the significant increase in AISH into this budget, which is by far the highest level of income assistance for the severely disabled in Canada. [interjections] We're proud of that. We will maintain that generosity.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert will not make statements that say: why did you lie?

**Ms Renaud:** I'll try not to.

**The Speaker:** No. You won't try not to. You will not make statements that say . . .

**Ms Renaud:** I'll do my best.

**The Speaker:** No. You won't do your best. You will not make statements like: why did you lie? It's wildly unparliamentary and unacceptable.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, either they decided to break their promise very recently, or the CSS minister intentionally said things that were not true. Just last month on the issue of AISH indexing she told the media, quote, I think it's fair; it's compassionate. I think it's sensible. Inflation has made life much more expensive for all Albertans, all Canadians. I'm fully supportive. End quote. Yet today Albertans are seeing a government that's unfair, uncaring, and decidedly unsupportive. Why were folks over there so comfortable with lying to Albertans with disabilities?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the previous NDP government in 2015, 2016, 2017, and through the end of 2018 had no indexation for AISH benefits. The previous government did increase AISH benefits. Our party voted for that; our government is maintaining that. It is \$400 more generous than the next most generous province in Canada. We're proud, even while correcting the fiscal crisis of the NDP, to be supporting people who are most vulnerable in our society.

#### Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition, I have made many comments around people indicating that members on one side of the House or the other are misleading the House. I haven't yet provided comments on saying, "Folks over there are lying," but the leader might want to consider her words as we move forward.

#### AISH Indexation (continued)

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker. All of this is shameful. They voted in favour of AISH indexing. They spoke in support in this House. They promised to keep it during the election. They promised to keep it a month ago. This is more than a broken promise. This is despicable penny-pinching, and it's going to hurt the people who can afford it the very least. Every member over there should be ashamed. How does this Premier give corporations a \$4.7 billion handout and then look these Albertans in the eye? Who does that?

2:10

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, once again, this is a budget that finds 2.8 per cent savings in the most inefficient provincial government in Canada, which spends more on everything – 20 per cent more than our fellow provinces. What we're hearing from the NDP is that they are completely incapable of even contemplating us operating as efficiently as other provinces. What is the alternative? Over \$100 billion in debt and billions of dollars going to bankers and bondholders. We will not follow the fiscal disaster of the NDP. We will get our finances in order to protect our public services.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has the call.

#### Surgery Wait Times

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the former government our health care system here in Alberta delivered longer and longer wait-lists for surgeries to Albertans. A 2018 report by the Fraser Institute found that Albertans on average spend over 26 weeks waiting to go from a general practitioner to a specialist to

receiving treatment, compared to a national average of 19.8 weeks. To the Minister of Health: how will this government address surgical wait times and ensure that patients will have timely access to care and not just access to a wait-list?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health is rising.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the previous government spent four years watching our wait times in Alberta get longer and doing nothing about it. It's something that's now left to us to try to fix. For example, the wait for a hip replacement rose from 29 weeks to 38 weeks under their watch. Our wait times went, from before that government, from being mostly shorter than the national average to being mostly longer, and for those four years doing nothing about it. It's being left to us to try and fix it. We campaigned on fixing it. I'm looking forward this fall to being able to announce what our surgical initiative is going to be.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that surgical wait times for medically necessary procedures continued to soar under the previous government despite their having spent an additional \$3 billion in health care and given that since elected I have heard from multiple constituents in Grande Prairie waiting in pain for their surgeries to be scheduled and given that a current review of Alberta Health Services is under way to pinpoint critical changes needed in our system, can the Minister of Health please explain how our government will ensure that Albertans are getting the care they're waiting for and specifically how this backlog will be cleared?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many aspects to it. First, we need to increase system capacity. We're going to do that by adding continuing care beds in Alberta and by bringing back the successful ASLI partnership. We also need to work with clinicians to make sure that the right patients get listed for surgery so that we have the best outcomes, and of course we need to do more surgeries. We have about 70,000 Albertans now waiting on the wait-list. It now falls to us to fix that wait-list by adding more surgeries that will be getting done in the next four years.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that other provinces like Saskatchewan and British Columbia have benefited from allowing specialized private day-surgical clinics to bid for contracts with their provincial governments and given that these benefits include reduced wait times and less strain on government resources and given that there are people currently working while injured in this province as their benefits run out long before their surgeries are scheduled, to the same minister: is this government considering expanding the number of contracts available to private surgical clinics to reduce the current wait times for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Minister of Health has the call.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. But first, I would just like to talk about these clinics and point out that here in Alberta we call them nonhospital surgical facilities or NHSFs. It's a difficult, horrible phrase that we use for these things. They've been around for decades. There are 42 of them. The surgeries that they're providing, though, are 100 per cent publicly funded. But, yes, we will be working with those partners, these 42 clinics that now are

providing 15 per cent of those surgeries out of the 300,000 surgeries that we have done in Alberta in any given year. We will be working with them, yes.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a question.

### Husky Energy Layoffs and Corporate Taxation

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Husky Energy stands to receive a nearly quarter-billion dollar gift from this Premier, yet they moved quickly last week to lay off dozens, potentially hundreds of workers from its headquarters in Calgary. To the minister of labour: any termination of 50 employees or more requires you to be notified, by law. Will you finally tell this House how many people lost their jobs last week at Husky?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that the root cause for lower drilling, the decline in investments, and job losses is the lack of pipeline capacity. This has led to curtailment and loss of jobs. The NDP legacy on pipelines is abysmal. [interjections] The jeer and heckling on that side of the House will not solve the problems they created. If we had pipelines, we would not have had the job losses.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that Husky's CEO told reporters last week that while layoffs are occurring in Calgary, the company is still making capital investments in Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, and the United States and given that this Premier's \$4.7 billion giveaway is creating no jobs here – in fact, we have lost 27,000 jobs – to the Premier: when you ran on your corporate giveaway and said that it would create jobs, did you mean jobs in other provinces? It's certainly not creating any here.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we're confident that our policies will attract investment, create job opportunities, and additional government revenues in the long term. Job growth in this province has been flat since May. We acknowledge that. It will do better in the future. We're confident, again, that as we implement these policies that create a very competitive business environment, we will attract the investment flows that the policies of the previous government sent south of the border. We will reverse that trend.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that Albertans didn't vote for job creation in Newfoundland or the U.S. and given that this Premier's corporate handout is an epic failure and given that that \$4.7 billion could be used to keep the Calgary cancer centre and Calgary green line and keep Calgary nurses and teachers in their jobs rather than cutting them all, like this Premier is proposing, to the Premier. My question is simple. If you're not creating jobs, can Albertans at least have their money back so that we can spend it on something useful?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the opposition continues to play fast and loose with the facts. The reality is that in this current year our job-creation tax cut will only reduce government revenues by \$100 million. The numbers the opposition is using are completely fictitious. Moreover, this budget is a budget of responsibility, a budget that Albertans elected this government to deliver to bring this province back to balance. We have accomplished our mission with budget number 1. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. members of the Official Opposition will come to order.

### Tax Credit Program Cancellation

**Mr. Bilous:** I feel betrayed: that, Mr. Speaker, is how the CEO of Beamdog described the UCP's decision to eliminate the digital

media tax credit. Beamdog employs 50 Albertans and had plans to double its operations before this government took office. Other companies are threatening to leave the province outright. Does the minister of economic development and trade think that it's a fair trade-off to see job creators leaving Alberta just to pay for her Premier's jobless \$4.7 billion handout?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, this government is taking the approach to broadly improve the competitiveness of our business environment. We're confident that the private sector can make the best decisions in terms of allocating capital to businesses and sectors that in the long term will be sustainable. We are also incredibly supportive of our tech industry. [interjections] We recognize that innovation and commercialization of leading research will be critical to improving the competitiveness of the economy broadly. We're working with that sector to ensure that they're sustainable in the future.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it is useful for the Speaker to be able to hear the answer. I appreciate a good heckle from time to time, but if I could hear the answer, that would also be appreciated.

2:20

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the government's nose is growing. Given that the general manager of Improbable stated that the tax credit program contributed directly to their expansion from four to 70 employees in Alberta and given that the same company stated that this government's actions are causing them to look elsewhere to spend their money to grow – sound familiar? – is the minister of economic development and trade concerned about the harm she's inflicting on the Alberta tech sector, or is it only companies that profit from the zero-jobs corporate giveaway that get her attention?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we recognize the importance of the tech sector in this province. We also recognize that we're a world leader in AI and machine learning. We're working with participants in that sector to determine how we can assist them to ensure that we continue to grow and, more importantly, so that we can assist that sector in commercializing their technology into the broader economy to improve the competitiveness of every aspect of our economy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's abundantly clear that the Finance minister and the other ministers need to meet with these companies. Given that this minister has only produced spin and talking points for legitimate private-sector questions and given that this minister's choices are causing real harm, job losses, and companies moving investments out of Alberta, will the minister listen to these companies and reinstate these crucial tax credit programs, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to invest in artificial intelligence and machine-learning technology. We are investing \$40 million in AI and machine learning. We are investing \$200 million through Alberta Innovates to encourage and enhance that sector to ensure that we continue to be world leaders. More importantly, we are going to work with the industry to commercialize those innovative concepts to ensure that, broadly speaking, Alberta has a more competitive economy on the global stage.

### Supervised Drug Consumption Sites

**Mr. Neudorf:** Mr. Speaker, supervised consumption sites are a critical issue to many people who make Lethbridge their home. My

constituents need to receive clear direction from this government regarding the continued utilization of Lethbridge's supervised consumption site and how this site is tackling the issue of addictions management in Lethbridge. To the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: can you clarify what this government's direction on the usage of supervised consumption sites will be?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for pointing out a very important question. Yes, he is correct. We heard it loud and clear at the doorsteps of Albertans that community and business have been impacted by these services. This is why we appointed a panel to conduct a robust socioeconomic review of the supervised consumption sites.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Minister.

Given that we need to invest in programs and services that will help lift individuals out of addiction and into positions of self-empowerment and economic betterment, to the same minister: how is this government ensuring that the dollars invested in supervised consumption programs in Lethbridge and across this province are making a real and measurable impact on those struggling with addictions?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the previous government, who seemed to be focused entirely on the one-pillar approach and failed to consult business, we're going to do it differently. Our approach is going to be focused on a fair, firm, and compassionate approach. We're committed to getting Albertans into recovery, but we will not sacrifice the rest of the community while we're doing this to help others.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Knowing that overcoming an addiction is a lifelong journey for those who have faced it and given that we must consider a holistic approach to assisting those who struggle with addictions in order to truly provide the help that they deserve, to the same minister: what specific supports and programs is this government investing in that will bridge the gap between supervised consumption and recovery from addictions?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. It is time for Alberta to move from managing the crisis to helping Albertans, pointing a way to recovery. Our government in the next four years is going to work very hard at making life better for Albertans by increasing access to treatment and recovery spaces by 4,000 spaces. This means access to treatment beds, detox beds, outpatient spaces, opioid dependency programs, and long-term recovery support. We are focused on getting Alberta well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a question.

### Seniors' Drug Coverage

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Alberta seniors have dependent spouses who haven't reached their 65th birthday yet. These older Albertans were able to access the seniors' drug

benefit program, but now the UCP government is throwing these older Albertans off the drug plan. This means these households, often on fixed incomes, will have to pay to manage chronic conditions and serious disease. To the minister of seniors: how many households are you pushing into poverty to pay for your \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**The Speaker:** I see the Minister of Health is rising.

**Mr. Shandro:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to speak about the seniors' drug plan. The seniors' drug plan is, in its name, meant for seniors. We are going to make sure that it is going to be available, the \$600 million that we spend on the seniors' drug plan, for seniors who are over the age of 65 to make sure it's sustainable and always available for our seniors. We're going to make sure it's sustainable by making sure that it is seniors who are on the seniors' drug plan.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Also, Mr. Speaker, given that children born into struggling families are frequently raised by their grandparents and given that these dependent children used to be able to access their grandparents' drug coverage until the UCP kicked them off the plan in this budget, again to the minister: how many children are you pushing into poverty to pay for your \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as we know and we've seen today, we live in a postfact world with the NDP. They keep on throwing imaginary numbers at us. We are making sure that our seniors' drug plan is going to be available for our seniors for years to come by being responsible and by making sure that it's sustainable, making sure that the \$600 million that we continue to spend for our seniors is always going to be there for their seniors' drug plan.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that government officials estimated on budget day that 46,000 Albertans will lose their drug coverage as a result of this budget and given that Budget 2019 warns that income testing will be imposed on the seniors' drug benefit program soon, to the minister: how many seniors have told you they wanted to lose their life-saving drug coverage to pay for your \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said, this is a \$600 million drug plan that we provide to our seniors who are over the age of 65. We're going to make sure that this is always going to be there for generations to come and that this drug plan is sustainable by being responsible, unlike the previous government. We are going to make sure that it's going to be available for our most vulnerable seniors in this province.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-City Centre would like to ask a question.

#### Registered and Licensed Practical Nurses

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've known for a while now that the UCP government had every intention to endanger the jobs of thousands of nurses to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate handout, and for months this Minister of Health has scoffed and dismissed that this was fearmongering. Well, now their plan to attack registered nurses is available for all to see on page 84 of their fiscal plan, "lower the number of . . . (RN) funded hours" being the euphemism. Why is the Minister of Health so eager to strip our health care system of hard-working, highly trained professionals?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I think what the question was was one gigantic euphemism for pitting one health profession against

another, pitting our licensed practical nurses against our registered nurses. It's quite shameful. We are quite happy to see the expansion of the scope of practice for our LPNs in this province. The fact that the NPD want to continue to attack the expansion of that scope and want to actually see more transitions in care throughout this province, which, quite frankly, is against the best interests of patient safety, is reprehensible and shameful.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the only person that has attacked LPNs is this minister and his government as he illegally tore up their contracts with AHS through legislation and given that he and his big-money UCP donors are fighting those same LPNs which he claims to respect in court and at the labour board as we speak, to this minister: are you asking LPNs, because you respect them so much, to do more? If you're going to do that, will you commit that you will not then try to pay them less as long as you remain the Minister of Health?

2:30

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, we have 16,000 LPNs in this province. I'm very happy to have worked with the college. Their regulation had not been touched since it first passed in 2003. They have been asking, this college has been asking for this expansion of scope probably since 2003. It was something that should have happened under the previous government. They ignored it for whatever reason, probably because, as we see today and as we've seen over the weekend, they're trying to pit one health profession against the other. It's shameful. I'm very happy to work with the LPNs to make sure that they are working to the full capacity of their scope of practice.

**Mr. Shepherd:** I'll take it, then, Mr. Speaker, that the minister intends to cut all of their wages equally.

Given that this minister is raising their taxes while cutting the wages of nurses of all designations and given that more than 56,000 Alberta households are supported by the hard-earned income of an RN or an LPN and noting that these nurses are overwhelmingly women, to the minister: why are you targeting female wage earners to pay for your government's failed \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that is responsible and balanced and supporting our front-line workers. I'll pick out a number from our budget. We were able to spend less on the amount of fuel that we spend on our ambulances because we killed the job-killing carbon tax so we could have that money going to our front-line workers rather than the NDP's carbon tax. That's the kind of balance and thoughtfulness that we were voted in to be able to bring to Alberta.

#### Animal Rights Activist Farm and Ranch Protests Automobile Insurance

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, earlier this year one of my friends, his family, and their livestock were threatened. Criminals wearing ski masks trespassed on to their private property and feedlot with the intention of opening the gates and letting the livestock run free. With the help of neighbours the criminals were detained. The RCMP were called, arrived, but no charges were laid. To the Minister of Justice: will the government commit to ensuring that these eco radicals face justice in order to restore some sense of order in rural Alberta?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, this exact situation came up in town hall after town hall after town hall across rural Alberta. That's why

we announced clear measures to send a signal to these folks that are illegal trespassers on our farmers' properties that no longer in Alberta will that be tolerated. We're going to be making sure that for first offences they could face a fine of \$10,000 and subsequent offences \$25,000. If you're involved in an organization that's organizing this, you could face a fine of up to \$200,000. We stand with our farmers. They're the best in the world. We're proud of them, and we've got their back.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Given that the victims of the aforementioned crime did not need any more difficulties in their lives and given that my friend had his farm insurance dropped by his insurance company because he was, quote, too great a risk for eco-terrorism, to the Minister of Finance. My friend feels stuck. Criminals walk away without facing consequences, and insurance companies will not support him. Insurance companies need to know that we are taking rural crime seriously to prevent losses. Can the government commit to working with insurance companies to ensure that farms will be protected?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. As a rancher myself this kind of activity is completely unacceptable, unacceptable to agriculture in this province. These perpetrators need to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and while insurance is delivered privately in this province, I'd offer to the member that he can deliver the details of this case, and we can certainly follow up.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the auto insurance industry is also dropping clients because auto insurance is no longer profitable and given that this is largely due to the previous NDP government's 5 per cent cap on insurance companies, to the Minister of Finance. This government recognizes that the 5 per cent cap is harmful and will not be renewing it. Does the government anticipate this will be enough to ensure that people will have access to auto insurance, and will the government provide any other support for these companies and consumers? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I hear members of the Official Opposition interjecting, asking how this might be a supplemental. Very clearly, the question is about insurance and its availability to Albertans, so the hon. Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board can answer the question.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, there are challenges in the automobile insurance industry, and they're challenges that were greatly increased because of the failed policies of the previous government. The previous government put a Band-Aid fix on a problem that needed much more substance than that. This government is doing a review of automobile insurance. We will have the courage to take this problem head-on and ensure that Albertans have access to competitively priced automobile insurance. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Hon members of the Official Opposition, you will know that when the Speaker is on his feet, you will come to order. You're a very excitable bunch today.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a question.

### Support for Postsecondary Students

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The UCP's first budget has bad news for almost every Albertan, but one group that has been particularly picked on is Alberta's young adults. With

Budget 2019 allowing massive hikes to postsecondary tuition and even an increase to the interest rate charged on student loans, my question is for the minister of labour. Now that your government has chosen to make it so expensive to pursue higher education, will you commit to reversing your needless and unhelpful cut to the minimum wage for working students? Clearly, they're going to need that money to survive in your Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education has risen.

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education is who I will recognize.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to hear some of the comments from the members opposite. You know, obviously, in my role I spend a lot of my time having very in-depth conversations with students and with young Albertans, and the single biggest concern is jobs and careers at the end of their program. They want to know that their program is going to connect them into the labour market and give them adequate jobs. It's clear. We know that with the NDP we've seen the highest youth unemployment in decades, and we're working to correct it.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that Budget 2019 eliminates the summer temporary employment program, or STEP, as it was known, an excellent government wage subsidy program that helped matched youth with high-quality employment opportunities, and given that this minister professes to care so deeply about youth employment, although he did cut the wages for all working students, will this minister commit to immediately reversing the cancellation of the STEP program, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. We sympathize with employers and students who were hoping to receive funding from the STEP program next summer. That said, Albertans elected us overwhelmingly to get the province's financial house in order. Difficult decisions are required when you are the recipient of a \$60 billion debt. In this case other resources are available to support employers and youth. STEP was an inefficient use of government funds. It did not target those who actually needed the funds, and it didn't create long-term employment.

**Ms Gray:** Given that this minister's staff referred to it as free money for companies, I suspect his respect is not actually earned.

Given that on CBC Radio at lunchtime the Minister of Finance laughably said that the STEP program wasn't fully subscribed and given that every single year more municipalities, public libraries, nonprofits, and particularly small businesses applied for funding, way more than could be approved for \$10 million, will the labour minister please correct the record, confirm that this was an incredibly popular and beneficial program, or is misleading Albertans the only way the UCP moves their agenda forward?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, this program was an inefficient use of government funds. We're committed to students, and we've taken action to make hiring students easier for job creators. We put policies in place, which include the job-creation student wage, and we also reduced unnecessary red tape for employers. In addition, the Minister of Advanced Education made an announcement just this morning that we will quadruple the number of students who can participate in programming through Careers: the Next Generation. We have a limited amount of funds. We need to put those funds to

work in an efficient manner, and we're doing this through our programs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### 2:40                    **Municipal Infrastructure Funding**

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Friday I attended the emergency meeting for the Edmonton city council held here in response to the UCP government's massive cuts to municipalities; for example, the \$150 million stolen from Edmonton infrastructure projects that had already been approved. Councillors and the chief economist for the city said that the cuts could push Edmonton into a recession like we saw in the 1990s. Why is the Minister of Municipal Affairs willing to risk a recession in his own city, our own city, to pay for a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway?

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is rising.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we took office, we learned that the NDP had miscalculated Alberta's finances by more than \$7 billion. Despite this, we are giving municipalities of all sizes the predictable funding they need to meet their long-time capital grant. This plan lies in accordance with the recommendations of the MacKinnon report. It will help to get municipal funding closer to the national average. We've received many endorsements for our plan, including from members of Edmonton and Calgary city councils.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the city charter agreement we landed with the big cities would have given revenue certainty to Edmonton and Calgary and given that the minister has now ripped this agreement up, cut the base funding by at least \$45 million, and taken to openly chastising city councillors for wasting money, Mr. Speaker, we've asked several times – and I know the minister has had some time to consider it – can the minister rise in this House and name one project that he believes was a waste of money in Edmonton or Calgary?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have explained how our funding plan will meet the needs of our municipalities while getting municipal funding closer to the national average. But I won't be lectured by that member, whose government imposed the largest tax increase in Alberta's history in the middle of a recession, a government who gutted one-third of downtown Calgary and oversaw six credit downgrades in Alberta's history with the highest unemployment rate in the country. We are working to clean up their mess, the mess that that incompetent member and her friends created.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that Mayor Iveson said at the city council meeting and afterwards in interviews that what was most frustrating was that it was in the UCP platform to respect the big-city charter, the legal agreement that was struck with Edmonton and Calgary, and given that the mayor feels that he's been lied to by this government, how can the minister stand in this House and continue to make excuses for a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway? What did he say to the mayor in their meeting on Friday? How did he explain how the government lied about their campaign promise?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP should be asking themselves all of these questions. The NDP presented the most ridiculous fiscal projections to Albertans before and during the last election. They overprojected revenues by more than \$6 billion. That's the fiscal surprise they inflicted on this government and on taxpayers. Every

single challenging decision in this budget is a response to and is a result of the catastrophic fiscal irresponsibility of the NDP.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for [interjections] – order – Calgary-West.

#### **Education Policies**

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Parents, rightfully so, are very concerned about the education that their children receive each and every day when they send their children off to school. Alberta was formerly one of the highest performing regions in terms of student performance in North America; however, recent years have shown a declining trend in test scores for Alberta students between the ages of five and 18. Can the Minister of Education please elaborate on what steps our government is taking to reverse this trend?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and hon. member for the question. Yes, we were elected with a clear mandate to reform student assessment and improve outcomes for our students. New grade reassessments will be developed in conjunction with the new curriculum. In the meantime school authorities are expected to share student learning assessment results with parents to ensure that parents understand how their child is progressing. We owe it to our students and their parents to get education right.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government recently passed the Education Act and given that the act ensures that school-aged children in grades K to 12 will be able to access education, can the minister please explain to this House how the government values the educational opportunities of all children?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you again for the question. Alberta has a long and successful tradition of supporting choice in education opportunities for children, and our government is committed to preserving and protecting educational choice. In the future we will introduce the choice in education act, which will affirm that parents have primary responsibility for the education of their children. We value all the strong educational opportunities our system provides to students and their parents, and we'll continue to protect our strong and diverse education system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government spent several years on a curriculum review and given that our government has created a panel to review the proposed changes of the former government, with the plans to finish the review in December, can the minister please elaborate on a timeline for these changes to be implemented?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and hon. member. Yes, my Curriculum Advisory Panel consists of individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences that will enhance the vision and direction for student learning in Alberta. The panel members will draft an updated ministerial order on student learning, which will modernize and strengthen how students are taught in the

classroom. The panel's work will be serving as a starting point for public engagement in the new year. I look forward to it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

#### Educational Curriculum

**Member Irwin:** The year was 1984. Stevie Wonder, Prince, and Tina Turner topped the charts, the original Apple Macintosh computer hit the markets, and Alberta introduced its new junior high art curriculum.

Now fast-forward 35 years, and while music trends have changed and technology has shifted dramatically, that new curriculum is – wait for it – still in place. I'm not ageist. In fact, I too was introduced in 1984, but it's shameful that we've still got curriculum documents as old as I am. It's just that our kids deserve a modern curriculum, one that acknowledges the realities of our time and equips our students to take on issues like climate change, reconciliation, comprehensive sexual health, consent education, and more.

We've heard from countless folks – long-time educators, brand new teachers – who were so excited about the work our NDP government embarked on to move curriculum forward across six subject areas. What a significant undertaking, not just because of the age of the curriculum but for moving towards a more interdisciplinary approach, a concept-based curriculum that encourages students to engage in deep analysis of big issues.

But what will become of this work, of the thousands of hours of teachers, students, parents, and other experts, of the millions of dollars spent? This government speaks a big game about fiscal responsibility and government waste, but when it comes to curriculum, they're certainly not playing by their own rules. This Education minister claims that the work isn't being scrapped, but there's very little indication that it's truly moving forward.

I was there this summer when she announced her Curriculum Advisory Panel, a hodgepodge group missing a key factor: currently practising teachers. This panel adds unnecessary layers. This government is literally asking students and their teachers to pay to delay moving the curriculum into this century. Students don't need more panels. Students don't need more consultation. Students need a modern, relevant, evidence-based curriculum.

While 1984 was a great year – and this government seems to love living in the past – it's high time that we acknowledge that our kids and even our grandkids shouldn't be learning from the same curriculum that we did.

2:50

#### Ochi Day

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate October 28 as Ochi Day, which is commonly known as the anniversary of the no. This holiday celebrates the resilience, pride, and bravery of the Greek people in the face of imminent Fascist danger. This is a special day celebrated throughout Greece, Cyprus, and in Greek communities globally. It celebrates the complete rejection of Mussolini's ultimatum to the Greek people.

That ultimatum, Mr. Speaker, demanded that Greece allow Axis forces into Greek territory and occupy certain strategic locations or face imminent war. The Greek Prime Minister was rumoured to have pondered the statement briefly and then replied with a single word, "ochi": no. In response to that refusal, Mussolini's soldiers

poured across the Greek border on October 28, 1940. This attack marked the beginning of Greece's participation in the Second World War. That morning members of the Greek resistance took to the streets shouting: ochi, ochi. In less than a year Greek and Allied forces drove their Fascist invaders out of Greece forever. From 1942 onwards, October 28 has been celebrated as Ochi Day and has become a public holiday in Greece, Cyprus, and in communities all across the world.

Mr. Speaker, Greek immigrants have been moving to our great province since at least 1903. Within 10 years of their arrival they had formed tightly knit communities in Calgary and Edmonton, and by the late 1950s and '60s Greek immigration to Alberta increased significantly due to our province's booming economy and job prospects. Greek immigrants have played a major role in their contributions to Alberta's culture, heritage, and economic growth through their hard work and dedication.

I rise on behalf of my colleagues to wish all Greek Albertans a joyous Ochi Day. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a statement to make.

#### Personal Income Tax Indexation Cessation

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. De-indexing of tax brackets, or bracket creep, is the Premier's scheme to break his central campaign promise and raise personal income taxes on every single Albertan.

Here are some thoughts on bracket creep from some prominent Albertans.

Bracket creep ... results in higher income-tax payments as inflation erodes the real value of personal exemptions and forces the payment of higher marginal income-tax rates ... Personal exemptions and brackets in the personal income tax should be fully [indexed].

That was Preston Manning writing in 1998.

Writing over the weekend, Professor Trevor Tombe of the University of Calgary, who the Premier often quotes, says:

Some are claiming that there are no tax increases. That is incorrect. De-indexing and removing some credits will increase income tax payments: roughly ~ \$330m in additional revenue ... per year. That comes from taxpayers. What else shall we call it?

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Premier himself has had a lot to say about tax policy. What has he said about the bracket-creep scheme contained in his own budget? He has called it: a hidden tax grab, an enormous, insidious tax grab, a tax grab, a backdoor tax grab, and the list goes on. So when the Premier presented this budget, he knew he was doing something hidden and insidious and backdoor to Albertans. Trying to jack up everyone's taxes and hoping they won't notice is not conservatism; it's hypocrisy of the highest order.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

#### Skilled Trades Training

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is facing the challenge of retirement among skilled workers with not enough new workers to replace them. Our government is committed to finding a solution to that problem. As the chair of the skilled trades caucus I am pleased to see that Budget 2019 invests in attracting the workers we need and developing the work skills necessary to move our province forward.

Budget 2019 expands the apprenticeship model with investment in Careers: the Next Generation, an organization connecting students



with apprenticeships and skills that will lead to high-paying jobs and rewarding careers. The over \$11 million in funding will double the number of schools that work with Careers: the Next Generation, from 500 to 1,000. It will quadruple the number of students and full-time apprentices, from 1,500 to 6,000, by 2023.

The budget also expands the apprenticeship model in its \$10 million investment in Women Building Futures, an organization that prepares women for careers, leading to economic prosperity through awareness, training, and opportunity.

Budget 2019 expands the apprenticeship model by investment in Skills Canada Alberta, a provincial nonprofit organization that actively promotes careers in skilled trades and technologies to Alberta youth. By allocating \$2 million over four years, we will help young Albertans build their technology skills and make connections on the national and world stages.

In an uncertain world where we can't count on the federal government, Alberta needs to be self-reliant so we're prepared for whatever the future might bring. Budget 2019 implements 24 of our platform commitments and was developed after extensive consultations with Albertans and with expert advice from the MacKinnon panel. Our government will live up to its promises, that we were elected on, to get Alberta back to work, to make life better for Albertans, and to stand up for Alberta. With Budget 2019 we are making life better for Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) the daily Routine shall continue past 3 p.m.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

#### Bill 20

#### Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce first reading of Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019.

Our government campaigned on a promise to address Alberta's crumbling financial situation and to achieve real savings for Albertans. That's why I'm so pleased to introduce this legislation, that will help get Alberta's finances back on track. This bill makes changes to a number of dedicated funds and tax credits to better focus resources. It includes pausing indexation of the personal income tax system so that we can be responsive to changing economic and fiscal conditions. I will be clear. This does not increase personal taxes; it maintains the current rate and current exemptions.

We're proposing to merge the Alberta family employment tax credit and the Alberta child tax benefit into one tax credit, which will save on administration and increase benefits to support those who need them most. I will be happy to go into further detail on this legislation when I rise here in the House to speak to the act at a later date.

This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

#### Bill 21

#### Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019.

Last spring we promised Albertans that we would balance the budget within our current mandate, and that is a promise that we intend to keep. The proposed bill will help us keep that promise by making important changes to several pieces of existing legislation and create new legislation where appropriate. These changes will help government control growth and program spending, eliminate duplication and make government more efficient, effectively oversee and co-ordinate all public-sector collective bargaining, and update current fiscal rules and reporting. Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation to future generations to restore Alberta's fiscal health, and the proposed legislation is an important step we must take.

This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly. It is with a great sense of pride and purpose that I move first reading of Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two submissions today. One is a letter from a constituent, subject line "Afraid in Lethbridge," referring to the SCS. I have the requisite number of copies.

The second is a newspaper article from the *Lethbridge Herald*, Police Chief, Mayor Allay Fears to Recent Uptick of Crime in City, again addressing these issues.

Thank you.

3:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has a tabling.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have an article entitled If Alberta Is the Front Line of Climate Change, Young People Are in the Trenches, and this is dated the 24th of this month from the *Huffington Post*.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other tablings? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you. Yes. I'd like to table an article that's titled Kenney Budget Not Perfect, But at Least It's a Plan. It quotes:

Bravo! Coming after four years in which the NDP ramped up spending, hiring and borrowing in the public sector while the private sector languished in recession, Finance Minister Travis Toews blueprint is a very welcome change.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings?

Seeing none, I do have two tablings today. The first tabling is in accordance with section 28(1) of the Ombudsman Act. I have six of the requisite copies of the Alberta Ombudsman 52nd annual report.

Also, in accordance with section 33(1) of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act I am tabling the requisite six copies of the Public Interest Commissioner's sixth annual report.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

##### Bill 202

#### Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019

[Debate adjourned October 21: Mrs. Aheer speaking]

**The Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to join the debate on Bill 202? I see the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in this House today in support of Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It is a measure of how busy the past session was in this piece of legislation, formerly known as Bill 216, because it was not passed by session's end. But I am confident that with the full support of this entire House we can make Bill 202 law as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker, all of us are here to serve our constituents, a responsibility to all Albertans, young and old. As legislators we develop the laws that serve and protect the families of all Albertans to provide a safe, secure present and a safe, secure future. This is why my colleague the Member for Calgary-West has worked so diligently in preparing this bill. I invite my colleagues from all parties to join me in support of these efforts.

What we seek to do through this bill is to aid the protection and rescue of Alberta's children, its very future. This bill works upon the foundation set by the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act by clarifying and enhancing the protections currently enshrined in that law. Currently the law requires adults to contact a director, as defined by section 122(2) of the act, if they are aware of a child that is in need of intervention. Bill 202 would instead direct Albertans to contact a police officer, as not only was the method of contacting a director left vague, but the very definition of a director was ambiguous. This government was elected on a promise to make common-sense decisions, and what makes more sense than to report a suspected crime to a police officer? Just this simple clarification has the potential to save children's lives and to avoid preventable deaths from abuse while a blind eye is turned. Let us all open those eyes.

Sadly, child abuse takes many forms. It can be neglect. It can be emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. It can happen to a child from any background. There are many reasons that abuse can happen in a home, but there are signs that anyone can see. Neglect of a child can be seen. Neglected children often have poor hygiene; their clothes are ripped or torn and look dirty. Neglected children are hungry. They are often underweight and dehydrated because of poor nutrition. The tragedy in this is how strong these kids are because they must struggle. Neglected children often step up around the home, trying to take on the responsibilities of the adults.

Emotional abuse is another common form of child abuse. Children's personalities are deeply impacted by this emotional abuse and the legacy that can carry on through their entire lives. They can develop anxiety and depression. They can be too eager to please, constantly apologizing without reason. They are scared, and they are fearful. They certainly deserve better. Emotionally abusive

parents are cruel. They humiliate their children and expose them to behaviour that no one should have to experience.

I've mentioned emotional abuse and neglect. There are signs and behaviours that the children exhibit that we can all see. They can be less obvious for other forms of abuse, like physical and sexual abuse, but we don't need to dwell on them. We all know the difference between a child that scrapes their knee on the playground versus something much more sinister.

Bill 202 is intended to send a clear, unequivocal sign to everyone that there is no place for indifference when children are in danger and that there are consequences that will be enforced on those who stand aside as children suffer. This bill increases the maximum penalty for failing to report an instance of abuse from \$2,000 to \$10,000 and up to six months in prison. To allow abuse to go unreported is to be complicit in the abuse in and of itself, and we cannot let this occur. Some have wondered if perhaps this goes too far, that a false report does as much damage as an unreported case, but I urge the members to err on the side of responding to every call rather than self-censoring and missing those we need to help.

Let us not think that the provisions of Bill 202 are happening in a vacuum. Day and night there are countless nonprofits and other organizations that work tirelessly to support our children. This government will work just as tirelessly in co-operation with these organizations to ensure that the most vulnerable among us, especially those who form our future, are given the protection and tools they need to succeed.

I urge all of my colleagues in this House, on either side of the aisle, to come together and make this bill law. Do what is right for our province's youth. I thank the member for his tireless work in returning this bill to the Order Paper. I hope that everyone will join me in standing with him and this bill, that adds teeth to our existing legislation.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 202? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising in this House today to speak in support of Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. I wish I could also rise in this House to share with you that we do not need legislation like this bill. I hope for a world where the incidents that this bill aims to protect children from are few and far between, but for the children affected by all forms of violence and abuse, this is not the reality.

The difficult truth we must face is that while these crimes against the most vulnerable members of our society are absolutely abhorrent, they are also some of the most undetectable. These crimes are against those that may not have a voice to advocate for themselves. Often the victims of these crimes are not able to put into words what is happening to them. In the cruelest way they are frequently unable to recognize and alert responsible parties to what is happening to them. In this way, justice for these survivors and their situations may never be seen.

Here is where we must step in as a voice for those affected by violence and abuse. As legislators, parents, and mentors to the valued youth and families we interact with across the province, we must do our part in standing up against child abuse, child exploitation, and violence within our families. We must all bear the responsibility of stewarding and protecting the next generation of Albertans, who will fill these halls, walk our streets, raise their own families, and live in our wonderful province. Beyond these obligations, we have the simple human ask of taking care of one another and looking out for one another.

This bill will bolster the importance of our duty to ensuring that children in our province remain safe and cared for. In situations where children are being abused or taken advantage of, a caring and informed adult may be the difference between safety and immediate danger for the child in question. We are all responsible for acting as the eyes and ears and voices for those who cannot advocate for themselves.

Bill 202 makes significant adjustments to standing legislation which will allow us to protect the vulnerable in a more tangible and effective way; namely, through reprimanding bystanders who witness these signs and atrocities. The addition of the requirements for adults to contact police officers and the increased penalties for failing to do so will save lives. We must be driven and determined in our commitment to inspiring actions where we witness signs and symptoms of abuse in the youth and families we interact with on a daily basis. We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to children at risk of abuse.

In recent years there have been repeated instances of children suffering preventable deaths despite warning signs that should have been accounted for by responsible adults. Beyond what is reported by the news media and the horrible stories we hear year after year after year, we have to pay attention to the children that so frequently go under the radar. We have to be here and be aware of their stories and circumstances. Bill 202 will drive adults who witness these warning signs to action and place the importance of reporting and addressing these issues at the forefront of our collective responsibilities.

3:10

Some worry about the validity of going to authorities with what they have witnessed. Others have concern about overthinking what they have observed or are hesitant at reporting less than a full picture to police or child welfare agents. I urge members in the House to report what they see and what they bear witness to. In cases of harm against children one act is too many, and it's better to err on the side of overreaction than fail to react at all.

Bill 202 addresses the needs and concerns that many nonprofits and advocacy organizations that work with vulnerable youth have identified to our government. Further to this, Bill 202 will aid in the prosecution and resolution of those who commit these heinous crimes against our youth, better ensuring action for youth who have been impacted by these crimes. There is no question that stands as to the importance of this legislation.

According to the Zebra Child Protection Centre approximately 36 per cent of adults have experienced some form of abuse in their life. Of those supported by the Zebra centre, 90 per cent of children and youth under their care know their offenders. If Bill 202 is effective in saving even one life or makes a difference in permanently changing the course of an at-risk youth's life, then it has fulfilled its mission and purpose. We need to be stepping in and stepping up for one another as being the one adult who cares enough to notice when something is amiss in the life of a child.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the tireless work of nonprofits and other organizations across every corner of our province that support our children on their darkest days. The work of supporting and advocating for our youth is undoubtedly exhausting but wholly noble and important. Moving forward, Bill 202 will ensure that this work is not completed in vain and that both action and inaction have meaningful consequences.

You know, I urge everyone in this House to set differences of opinion and difference of perspective aside to do what is right for our youth. The future of these vulnerable young people rests in our hands today. I invite you to take a moment to recognize the weight and importance of the decision we have in front of us, but beyond

that, I encourage you to consider the responsibilities we have identified and discussed throughout the presentation of this bill. While I hope for a world where there is no need for a bill of this nature, I fully recognize its necessity and encourage that we stand in this House . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(iii), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's bill to close debate, I would like to invite the hon. Member for Calgary-West to close debate on Bill 202.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's humbling. It's been a journey. It's been a several-year journey, you know, to a bill that I believed to be common sense.

You know, I just want to take a moment and thank the young girl who this bill is named for, who was, sadly, murdered. I want to thank her family and the opportunity to get to know her family. I made a promise to Serenity's mom, especially when we were faced with barriers, when she was sitting in the gallery along with family members and the previous government said no to this bill. I told her: I will get this passed. I made a promise to her. I didn't know how, and I didn't know when, but I told her: even if I don't get re-elected, I make this promise to you that in some way I will get this bill passed. I'm proud to sit here today and say that this is a bill that, from my understanding, has the consent of everyone in this House. I look forward to voting on this.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I am proud of all involved. I'm proud of my friends from the previous opposition party when we were there and we fought: my friend from Calgary-Hays, who fought for this, and my friend from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and all those of us who were in opposition who knew that this was a bill that was just the right thing to do.

You know, I have so many anecdotal stories about my time as a police officer and the children that I've seen. I've seen things, sadly, that for sure would make a lot of people feel very, very uncomfortable. If I may do so, Mr. Speaker – I know I have a little bit of time here – I do remember a time where I had conducted this traffic stop at about 3 o'clock in the morning. It was a vehicle that matched the description of the person driving, and I remember phoning the RO and talking to this grandmother, and she said that her granddaughter was missing. I remember going to the guy who had the vehicle. I just wanted to know where the little girl was; that was my sole focus. I don't want to get into the nuances of the traffic stop, let's say, but, you know, he told me where the little girl was. She was in a crack house.

I remember saying to my sergeant at the time that I wasn't waiting for the tactical team. I really wasn't waiting for backup. It was just me and my partner. To me, it was a child at risk. I kicked in that door, and sure enough there was a little two-year-old girl surrounded by drugs and alcohol and everything that you imagine a crack house to be. She was there. Her diaper was full. I remember grabbing her, pulling her from that house, and we saved her. There were people in that house. There were users in that house. Of course, the drug dealer knew that she was there. It's unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Every adult Albertan is now on notice. No longer will you be able to turn a blind eye to a child who is at risk. No longer will you be able to sit there and say: well, that wasn't my problem. There are consequences. There are consequences for ignoring child abuse. There are consequences for ignoring a person like that little two-year-old girl, who was in such a vulnerable state.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank everyone here for the support and kindness you have shown. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:19 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Issik	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Savage
Bilous	LaGrange	Schulz
Carson	Loewen	Schweitzer
Copping	Loyola	Shandro
Ellis	McIver	Sigurdson, L.
Feehan	Nally	Toor
Getson	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Glubish	Pancholi	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	Walker
Guthrie	Pitt	Williams
Hoffman	Reid	Yao
Horner	Renaud	Yaseen
Irwin		

Totals: For – 40 Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 202 read a third time]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

#### Indigenous Consultation on Crown Land Sales

507. Mr. Feehan moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly, in recognition of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the traditional territory of indigenous peoples, urge the government to undertake robust consultation with indigenous communities prior to the sale of Crown land in northern Alberta and adopt a comprehensive consultation process as a standard for all future proposed Crown land sales.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to be here in the House this afternoon to speak to this motion. I know that people have had it in documents for some time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that we'll be talking a fair amount about the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples here over the next hour. I think that many people will know that under the previous government we had adopted the United Nations declaration and that we had given copies of the declaration to every single ministry as well as to all of our partners in the community – Treaty 6, Treaty 7, Treaty 8, the Métis Settlements General Council, the Métis Nation of Alberta, the friendship centres, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, and other groups – and asked all of those people to please look at government rules, regulations, legislation, policies, and practices in order to determine where we were not in line with the United Nations declaration.

As a result of that important work that we did, we were able to create many significant initiatives to enhance the well-being of indigenous people in this province, and it led to things, for example, like being the only province in the country who had put money into

bringing clean water to reserves, and also changing the school curriculum; offering training to all 27,000 members of the public service on indigenous histories, traditions, and cultures; and putting money into indigenous language retention in the community, amongst many others. People in the House have heard me mention a number of these things on many occasions. In fact, the list of things that we did to ensure that we were working more closely with the indigenous community was well over a hundred. I'm always happy for people to ask me about that. I certainly would take the time to read a list into the House if people were interested about the many things that we did.

On the other hand, on May 23 I rose in this House to ask the Minister of Indigenous Relations:

Does this government acknowledge the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the articles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous people, which outline the right of indigenous people to free, prior, and informed consent with matters regarding their treaty rights outlined in treaties 6, 7, and 8?

At that time the Minister rose in the House, and after some hesitation and perhaps confusion the Minister replied:

Thank you for the question. I'll get back to you.

Here we are now, Mr. Speaker, some 150-plus days since that time he said that he'd get back to us, and we haven't heard a thing.

3:40

I think this is a great opportunity for members of the government side of the House to address this neglect of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I'm very concerned, however, that what I see coming from the government is not a respect for the United Nations declaration but, rather, a movement away from real and true reconciliation with the indigenous people and a change in policies that would enhance their well-being.

Here I have brought a motion into the House as an attempt to give them very specific action to take on the United Nations declaration. All they have to do is in one hour from now stand up and vote in favour of doing this. I have some concern as to whether or not that will happen given what I saw with the budget on Thursday, in which the Ministry of Indigenous Relations was effectively reduced by about 36 per cent, and of course, you know, my concern that overall the use of the word "reconciliation" by the government side of the House really is only used when they're seeking to co-opt the indigenous community in supporting their plans to provide handouts to their paymasters in Texas and Oklahoma.

But here's an opportunity for us to actually take specific action in this House to do something right, to read the articles of the United Nations declaration and to take very specific action that flows from specific requests by chiefs and councils in northern Alberta to have this kind of legislation in the House. I know, as I was the Minister of Indigenous Relations, both the intent and the specific idea of the motion before us in the House came directly from those chiefs and councils, so I feel somewhat comfortable in suggesting to the House that we should do that.

In order to give us some context here, I wish to read out a couple of the articles of the United Nations declaration so people will understand what it is that we are attempting to do here and what it is that the chiefs and councils are telling us is their expectation in terms of the nature of reconciliation in this province. Article 26 of the United Nations declaration reads that:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or

other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.

3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.

Article 27, the next one, is also very important and is readily available in the United Nations declaration. I'd be happy to provide members of the government with copies of the declaration if they'd like. Article 27 reads:

States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

I think that's very clear, Mr. Speaker, that around the world, as this document has been accepted by nations around the world, this is the expectation of relationships between settler nations and indigenous peoples. I'm very proud to remind the House that those words were largely written here in Alberta by many people, of course, and one of the primary movers being Grand Chief Willie Littlechild, who has been cited as a friend of the Minister of Indigenous Relations on more than one occasion.

So I would hope that there'd be pride in the words written by the very people who are now asking you to support this kind of motion. This is what you've been asked. This has been accepted around the world, and you would be in union with the most progressive, advanced governments around the world if you were to do this. It means that there is a requirement that the government consult with indigenous people prior to making decisions about Crown land sales in treaties 6, 7, and 8.

Unfortunately, I have another piece to address because I've recently received a copy of a letter from Grand Chief Arthur Noskey of Treaty 8, dated October 18, 2019, that expresses serious concern that this government has failed to adhere to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, which I will of course submit to the House in due time. The letter reads in part:

We expect that no resources will be extracted from Treaty 8 without our free, prior and informed consent and that our Nations will directly benefit from and remain involved in the management and protection of our territories. We also expect the Crown to act in accordance with the spirit and intent of our Treaty relationship, and to fulfill its obligations pursuant to section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. This includes attempting to justify infringements of our Treaty rights, and consulting with us prior to decisions which could affect both our Treaty rights and our unextinguished inherent Aboriginal rights.

The reason for this letter was the discovery by the nations of a request for proposals regarding deciduous timber allocations in the north, which have been ignored by this government.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to join the debate today on Motion 507? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to get up and speak to this motion here today. I guess, first of all, I want to say that I appreciate the intent of what the hon. member is bringing forward here.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about the processes going on right now with indigenous consultation. Indigenous consultation is a

distinctive and ongoing process that is initiated in the preplanning stage and continues through the regional plan development process. The government of Alberta recognizes and respects that those indigenous communities that hold constitutionally protected rights are uniquely positioned to inform land-use planning.

The Land Use Secretariat maintains ongoing consultation engagement forums with First Nations and Métis organizations in the South Saskatchewan, North Saskatchewan, lower Athabasca, and north Peace regions. These forums are designed to facilitate early and ongoing consultation on the development and implementation of regional plans as well as land and environmental issues. In accordance with the government of Alberta's First Nations and Métis settlements consultation policy the government consults with First Nations and Métis settlements on decisions that may potentially affect their ability to practise their treaty rights and aboriginal rights.

Mr. Speaker, we also think back here to just a short time ago when this government brought in the indigenous opportunities corporation to provide real opportunity for First Nations to have involvement in resource development. It also, I think, brought real change to the relationship between the Alberta government and First Nations.

Now, I guess, at this time I would like to bring forward an amendment. I want to make sure that the hon. member understands that in bringing forward this amendment, we'd like to ensure that this amendment is representative of the intent of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley, if you'd just hold your comments – we'll stop your clock here – so I can grab a copy of the amendment, then I'll ask you to proceed in just a couple of moments.

Please proceed, Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you. I move that Motion Other than Government Motion 507 be amended by striking out “, in recognition of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the traditional territory of indigenous peoples, urge the government to undertake robust consultation” and substituting “urge the government to continue robust consultation” and by striking out “Crown land in northern Alberta and adopt a comprehensive consultation process” and substituting “Crown land in Alberta and maintain a comprehensive consultation process.”

3:50

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that what we'd like to do here today is to actually strengthen this motion, and I think we can agree that by making these changes, we have an opportunity to make this motion even better and stronger. Now, never have I doubted the sincerity in the hon. member's care and concern for First Nations – he speaks passionately about them every time he speaks about First Nations in this House – but I think there's an opportunity to make sure that we in Alberta here have control and responsibility of the consultation process and that we don't hand that off to any other organization, that we take ownership of it right here in Alberta. I think we can all agree that consultation should be done across Alberta when we're dealing with public lands, not just northern Alberta, and I think that, obviously, the hon. member would agree with that.

Now, I just want to read article 37(2) from the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. It says, “Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as diminishing or eliminating the rights of indigenous peoples contained in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.” I think we would have to agree that we here have agreements. We have constructive

arrangements and treaties with the First Nations people. So I think we are quite in line with the intent of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I think that if there are any changes we need to do with consultation with First Nations, then we can do that right here in Alberta and in this Legislature.

I would encourage all members and encourage the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to consider this amendment as a friendly amendment, as something that we hope will help strengthen this motion and help make it more acceptable – I shouldn't say "more acceptable" but, I guess, stronger – and help it as far as helping our processes with indigenous peoples in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford rising, presumably to speak to the amendment as he's already spoken to the main motion.

### Speaker's Ruling Admissibility of Amendments

**The Speaker:** Hon. members will know that we are in the middle of private members' business, and amendments on private members' business are not as common as otherwise amended motions inside the Assembly. I am reluctant to proceed with debate on an amendment prior to having a sense – in 2007 Speaker Kowalski identified the need for private members' business to, in fact, just be that, so amending a private member's motion is somewhat of a unique circumstance. Some of you may recall, in 2016, when the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays had moved a motion on I believe it was choice in education at the time, and there was some significant discussion around that amendment.

I have reviewed the amendment. Certainly, Parliamentary Counsel would rule that this amendment is, in fact, technically in order as it is not a direct negative. It doesn't change the opposite of the motion. Having said that, it certainly makes some significant changes to what perhaps the member intended when he moved the motion.

All members, including government members, will know that it is the Speaker's job to defend the private members inside this Assembly. All members will also know that private members' motions only come around every number of years. There have been a number of rulings specifically on cases just like this, and I appreciate the hon. member's comments with respect to the intent of the motion and certainly the intent around – I appreciate his comments. Of course, the Speaker is indifferent on the content of the motion, merely the process of the motion today.

I'd like to point out just a couple of ways that this type of situation has been handled in the past, including in March '99, which can be found on page 273 of *Alberta Hansard* from that day, when the Deputy Speaker actually ruled that an amendment that was inconsistent with the limited amount of time that we have to debate the motion was, in fact, out of order and was not proceeded upon.

I also recognize that the authority to move this type of amendment can be found at 567 of *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition. To amend a private member's motion must be carefully considered by the chair in terms of content and purpose.

Speaker Kowalski in 2007 ruled on an amendment to a private member's motion, and you can find this ruling on page 351 of *Hansard* for that day. In considering whether or not to allow that amendment to go forward, Speaker Kowalski went on at some length, as is your Speaker today, it would seem. This is quoting from page 351 of *Hansard*.

The chair has looked at that, heard the words, and basically is of the view that the amendment does change the intent of the motion.

In keeping with tradition, particularly since 1997, while I've had the privilege of [serving as] your Speaker, a great deal of deference is shown by the chair to the position of private members and the business of private members.

I would like to reiterate Speaker Kowalski's comments that, frankly, I am indifferent to the motion that has been moved here today. In keeping with tradition, particularly since 1997, when he had the privilege of serving as the Speaker, this indifference is important with respect to private members' business.

There's limited opportunity for members to have their motions considered by the Assembly. Even prior to the arrival of [him] . . . in 1993, when major amendments were made to the Standing Orders, there was a spirit of those amendments that the work and the advocacy of [their] private members was to be paramount in the Assembly. Successive Speakers have limited the scope of acceptable amendments to private members' motions so that their intent is not substantially [changed].

He went on to mention the ruling, that I already mentioned, in 1999. At that time, in 2007, the Speaker of the day said:

The solution that the chair would suggest would be that the chair would ask the member for St. Albert, the sponsor of the motion . . .

In this case, obviously, it's the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

. . . to advise whether he is of the view that the amendment is in keeping with the intent of his motion. If he agrees and advises the chair that the amendment is in keeping with [his] intent . . . then the chair would be inclined to allow the amendment to be moved [as presented] and it would be subject to debate and subject to a vote on the floor.

I think that in keeping with the traditions of the Assembly and upholding a private member's ability to move a motion in which they believe in the intent, it would be reasonable for the Assembly to consider the position of Speaker Kowalski when he asked if the private member believed that the amendment would then, in fact, keep with the intent of the motion.

So I put the question to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford: are you of the opinion that the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley keeps with the intent of the motion as you, a private member, have provided here in the Assembly today? I am not interested in debate on the amendment, merely on whether or not you believe it keeps with your intent.

4:00

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to address the question that you put before me. I can simply say that I do not believe that this reflects my intent as there are two pieces to the motion, both of which have been eliminated by the amendment. I think that the recognition of the United Nations declaration is inherent in the nature of the motion, which has been eliminated by this amendment. Secondly, it suggests that no ongoing, consistent, collaborative framework be established for work in the future but simply maintains the historical record, which, frankly, in this province has not been very strong.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm prepared to rule as to whether the amendment is in order or not. Members, it is imperative for your Speaker that we protect the intention of private members' business. While I also appreciate and respect the position that the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has taken, he too as a private member has every opportunity to move amendments as they impact private members' business. I think it is also imperative that we keep with the long-standing tradition of not allowing private members' motions to significantly be changed through amendment, for us to be able to debate the intention of each member, and it's my hope that future Speakers will continue to defend this principle and allow motions

that have been presented by private members to be debated in the great tradition of our parliamentary democracy.

While I am certain not all members will agree with my decision today, it is my decision to rule the amendment out of order, and we will continue to proceed with the motion as it was presented before the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has seven minutes and 35 seconds remaining in his debate. Is that not correct? Correction: the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has four minutes remaining in his debate.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I respect your decision there, of course. I am a little disappointed that the hon. member didn't feel that this was in keeping with his motion as far as the intention, because I think what we're talking about here is consultation. When we talk about indigenous consultation and that process that we go through, again, I think that if there was anything that we were lacking, I guess, in Alberta as far as consultation with First Nations, we could have dealt with that just on its own, without a motion like this one here. Now, obviously, if there was anything lacking in consultation, I would have thought that the members opposite would have probably taken care of that in the last four years, when they were in government.

Again, I think it's important to note that there's no lack of desire on this side of the House as far as consultation. We know that consultation with First Nations is important. We know it has to be done appropriately. The process that we have in place now: obviously, the previous government used it, too.

It's important, too, that we in Alberta have unique circumstances here that I think we can recognize, and by having these unique circumstances, I think we can develop and work with over time our consultation process to make sure it's acceptable to all parties. I think we have that opportunity here. We know that it's an ongoing process, and it's done right from the preplanning stage. You know, when it comes to a regional plan development process, it's done in a preplanning stage and continues on.

We know that indigenous communities hold constitutionally protected rights, and we know also that they have unique positions to bring forward when it comes to the consultation and, of course, to land use in their traditional areas. We know we have to respect that. We know we have to have the opportunity for them to be listened to and to have that opportunity to speak freely on what they feel about the processes as they go along and, of course, as the land use is decided.

I'd just kind of go back to what it says in the motion about northern Alberta. I guess that when I look at that, you know, I'm not sure what the intent is here in this motion, where it's going to exclude southern Alberta, western Alberta, eastern Alberta. I don't even know, maybe, what the definition of northern Alberta is. I guess I'm a little concerned that this motion is actually limiting the process of consultation and the importance of consultation as we move forward.

You know, I think we can all agree here today that consultation is important. I think we can all agree that by the amendments that were brought forward, we would be able to have that consultation going forward and actually strengthen that.

Now, if we look at even the Land Use Secretariat, they maintain ongoing consultation and engagement forums with First Nations and Métis organizations, so I think there's a lot of, you know, good consultation going on right now. Do we need to work on it? We need to work on it going forward also.

Thank you.

#### Speaker's Ruling Admissibility of Amendments

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if I could just provide a little bit of clarity with respect to the process moving forward. The amendment that has been circulated, obviously, has been ruled out of order and so, as such, will not be debated on or voted on. We will be voting on Motion 507 as it was read into the record by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, obviously assuming that no other amendments are moved with respect to that motion that may be slightly different.

With that said, we will proceed on debate, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today in support of Motion 507, brought forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford. I certainly express my wholehearted support for this motion, and I do urge all members in the Assembly to do so as well. I actually think this is an opportunity for the government in particular to demonstrate their true commitment to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

As my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford indicated, that question was put forward to the Minister of Indigenous Relations. Unfortunately, we have yet to receive a response on that question although I do note that within the platform for the governing party they did express a commitment to UNDRIP, as it's called. Yet we did not hear unequivocal support for that from the Minister of Indigenous Relations. What we are seeing is unequivocal support for the principles set out in UNDRIP as put forward in this motion by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

In particular, my colleague put forward a very clear example – and it's a very immediate and current example – of why this is necessary. Why this is necessary is in the letter – I'm just going to carry on from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford's comments – from Arthur Noskey, who is the chief of Treaty 8. He spoke to the very issue which is the heart of this motion, which is that to date the government has not shown a commitment to reconciliation and to UNDRIP with respect to how it is seeking to dispose of Crown lands in northern Alberta.

In particular, this relates to an RFP that was issued regarding deciduous timber allocations within the territories of the Lubicon Lake and Loon River First Nations. These are not our words; these are actually the words of Chief Noskey from Treaty 8, who sent out this letter, sent it to the government, indicating:

The fact that the RFP includes, in its criteria, consideration of proposals which include Indigenous partnerships, exacerbates this issue. In the absence of respectful consultation, decisions to accept proposals based on the support of individual Indigenous communities is divisive and dishonourable.

That's because, in that context, Chief Noskey is putting forward that there was no consultation done with those First Nations with respect to the RFP that was issued on this land.

4:10

So this government has a little bit of work, some work, to do already although only being six months into their term. We've seen the Minister of Indigenous Relations stand up and, you know, express his support and have indigenous members in our gallery and indicate that this government is committed to reconciliation. Yet while they make these grand statements in the House, what we're seeing is that that is not carried through in their actions with

respect to disposition of lands and Crown lands and how they are consulting with First Nations.

It would have been preferable to not have to bring this motion forward. The Crown, as it is expected to when dealing in consultation, is expected to act honourably. Had the Crown acted honourably on this issue, the motion would be unnecessary. But I think we are seeing that there is a very clear example of the fact that the First Nations, particularly in northern Alberta, are not feeling like they are being properly consulted with when it comes to the disposition of their lands. I'd put forward again that this government has stated in their platform that they support UNDRIP, but we have not yet had a clear statement of support from the minister.

I can say that with respect to even the budget that we saw rolled out last Thursday, again, it's really easy – and I think governments have done this for centuries in this country and in this province – to give lip service to reconciliation and lip service to treating First Nations and indigenous communities with respect but then doing something else when it comes to actually making decisions. We see that in the budget that was brought forward from this government just last Thursday, a significant rollback with respect to Indigenous Relations. I believe the budget was cut by 10.8 per cent, and at the end of the term of the budget it will be reduced by 17.4 per cent.

Many programs that other ministries offered and that indigenous people were profiting from were also cut. In fact, I'll give an example from my own critic area, which is Children's Services. You know, I note that as part of the business plan for Children's Services under the previous government a commitment to UNDRIP and to reconciliation and to working with indigenous communities was right in the business plan. I think it is quite remarkable that the first business plan issued for Children's Services from this minister is silent. In fact, UNDRIP is removed. In fact, there are very few clear strategies targeted at reconciliation or working with indigenous communities.

Again, I say that it's been very moving to see the Minister of Indigenous Relations come into this House and welcome members from indigenous communities here and raise a red dress in the lobby of the Federal Building, but those are just symbolic actions. What we need to see, what indigenous communities deserve and, in fact, have an entitlement to is true reconciliation and true consultation. We know that that is already not happening.

I think this should be an opportunity, that I hope the government will take, to demonstrate their true commitment to the principles set out in UNDRIP and to establish a comprehensive process. We know that the consultation process that has been carried out thus far with respect to this particular RFP has not been a true consultation process. To suggest that we just need to continue what we're already doing: well, you know, we've got this letter from Chief Noskey saying that, no, you're actually not consulting. So we should not be doing what you've been doing. We should actually enter into true reconciliation and true consultation, which under UNDRIP requires that there is robust consultation with indigenous communities prior to the sale of Crown land and that there needs to be a comprehensive process.

You know, my experience to date with respect to indigenous issues has been when I worked within the Ministry of Education, Alberta Education. I worked with treaty areas 6, 7, and 8 and the federal government on developing a memorandum of understanding with respect to First Nations education in Alberta. I was brand new to that area of work. I can tell you that the very first lesson I learned and the most important lesson I learned was to listen. We all have an obligation to do that, particularly if we're truly talking about reconciliation. We know that that is what indigenous peoples in this province, in this country have been saying for centuries, that it is our obligation to listen, and to listen means true consultation and truly engaging with those communities.

We're hearing that this government is not embarking on true consultation and is not listening to the communities when they're talking about disposing of Crown land. This is an opportunity for the government to recommit itself – they've said it in their platform; they haven't said much since – in a concrete way to reconciliation and to actually listening to indigenous communities and to committing itself to the principles set out in the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

I am proud to support this motion brought forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford. I think it is demonstrative of a continuation of the commitment he has demonstrated for years to indigenous peoples in our province and how he fulfilled his obligations as Minister of Indigenous Relations when he was part of cabinet. This is just the continuation of that commitment. I think it would be beneficial for this entire Assembly to commit to those principles set out in UNDRIP in a clear and unequivocal way. I'm proud to vote in support of this motion today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Motion 507 this afternoon. Thank you to the member opposite for his concern on this issue. The hon. member has crafted a motion that speaks specifically to the government's commitment to consult on Crown land for agricultural land. I've had this conversation with indigenous leaders who are also concerned about how Crown lands could be used, especially as it concerns treaty rights or traditional use of lands, and I can appreciate that concern.

Our government has been clear about our priorities: jobs, economy, and pipelines. Budget 2019 confirms those priorities, but it does another thing, too, Madam Speaker. It manifests a commitment to indigenous peoples as partners in Alberta's prosperity through initiatives like the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation and our litigation fund. We're solidifying a commitment to reconciliation by paving the path with real actions that will help more indigenous communities benefit from Alberta's renewed economy. The reality is that the policies and legislation by successive governments have kept these communities dependent by restricting their opportunities for economic security. I would like to explore this motion from the perspective of partnerships and prosperity with indigenous communities.

Madam Speaker, Alberta is good at many things, and one of them is upholding the duty to consult. My ministry, as the hon. member knows, has the aboriginal consultation office, which is dedicated to working with land-based indigenous communities and industry members to be sure there is appropriate consultation on development projects that could disturb the land in ways that affect treaty settlement rights. We go further by also considering traditional uses and Métis settlement members' harvesting or traditional use activities. We consult with First Nations and Métis settlements before making decisions on land and natural resource management. This is vital, especially when community members depend on hunting, fishing, and trapping in order to survive. Yes, this is a constitutional right, and it is a matter of dignity and of worth.

I and my staff have worked hard and continue to work hard to earn and hold the trust of indigenous leaders even while having the courage to make difficult decisions for the future of everyone in this province. Reviewing or creating protocol agreements was one of the first actions we embarked on, Madam Speaker, and we are upholding our framework agreements with the Métis people as well. Why did we organize a full government-to-government meeting with First Nation chiefs in June, not even 50 days into this government's mandate? It's because our commitment is strong.



We are moving forward as partners. When the Premier announced Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, he was surrounded by indigenous government and business leaders. Do you know why that was, Madam Speaker? Because they want to be partners with this government, because they know we are willing to move beyond the rhetoric to take real action so that indigenous people can truly be partners in prosperity.

With respect to the hon. member and his motion, this government's practice is robust consultation with indigenous communities when their rights and uses could be harmed. Every land sale and exchange transaction does include an assessment about whether consultation needs to happen before decisions are made. Madam Speaker, the Supreme Court made a decision in the Mikisew Cree First Nation versus Canada case clarifying a requirement for consultation where there is taking up of Crown land upon which First Nations have access to exercise treaty rights. Being able to exercise these rights is a part of a community's prosperity, and we want to be sure that they have a chance to take it even further through opportunities to participate as owners and investors of major natural resource development projects.

4:20

My colleague the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks is responsible for administering Crown land for sales for agriculture. His ministry has established processes to assess and determine consultation requirements about this kind of land sale. His staff work with my staff, and they seek advice from the constitutional and aboriginal law team with the Ministry of Justice and the Solicitor General. Madam Speaker, we have processes in place. This government is committed to honouring our constitutional obligations, which include the duty to consult, and we will always ensure that Alberta fulfills its duties under the honour of the Crown to consult with First Nations and Métis settlements. Moreover, our government is strongly advocating for a consultation process that provides clear timelines and legal certainty for project proponents to promote economic development. We are working to strengthen the consultation process to consider support from indigenous communities for projects that affect them.

We respect First Nations' efforts to urge the federal government to work collaboratively on matters that concern them. One of our platform commitments is to advocate for the federal government to pursue a consultation framework and policy that aligns with Alberta's nation-leading consultation policy. In this way, Canada will be encouraged to continue its path towards economic reconciliation while fostering investor confidence and legal certainty.

This motion is another attempt by the opposition to bring forward an issue that they promised but failed to address in the previous government. The NDP campaigned on implementing the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples in 2015 but failed to implement it because of the inherent concerns on how it would impact Alberta's economy.

The fact is that our policies and practices already align with UNDRIP insofar as we seek input from indigenous communities prior to making any decisions on land and natural resource management. We are deeply committed to our relationship with the indigenous people of this province. We continue to uphold our government's constitutional obligation to consult with indigenous peoples, and we are committed to the mutual prosperity of indigenous peoples alongside all Albertans. Although I agree with the intent of the motion, we do consult with all indigenous peoples, not just in northern Alberta, so that's why I'll be voting against this.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the mover, my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford, for bringing forward this important debate for consideration today. I'm going to try to step back a little bit from where we are and just tell a little bit about – first of all, I think that most people know northern Alberta when they're in it. I think that if anyone is concerned about how to define northern Alberta, certainly the Northern Alberta Development Council has a region that it's responsible for. That's a government agency that's been created. There are definitely folks that receive a northern living allowance. I think that we have many times where we've defined the north.

I actually don't think we need to worry about defining the north or about whether or not the north is enough. I think that what we're debating today is whether or not to pass this motion, which speaks specifically to one region, northern Alberta. Certainly, it would be becoming of the government if they chose to expand it even further than that, as the Member for Central Peace-Notley spoke to earlier. It would certainly not be in breach of this motion to exercise the same practice in other parts of the province. But I don't think that we need to debate what is northern Alberta and what isn't northern Alberta. I think there are lots of folks that have defined that in the past.

Again, I want to go back to what brought this about, and that was in December 2018 the great concern and frustration felt by many folks in northern Alberta around blanket statements about selling Crown land without acknowledging the treaties that that land is a part of and without acknowledging the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. For those points, I think that the wording of the motion is certainly appropriate for us to be considering here today.

I grew up – many of you have probably heard, but I'll tell you one more time – in Kinuso in northern Alberta, about 50 kilometres west of Slave Lake, just south of the southern shore of Lesser Slave Lake. The neighbouring First Nation is Swan River First Nation. I literally could see Swan River from my house. We spent a lot of time between Kinuso and Swan River as students engaging with one another. Part of the history of Kinuso, as I understand it – and if I'm wrong, I'd be happy to have Alberta historians set the record straight for me – is that the railway line was supposed to run along the north shore of Lesser Slave Lake. It was going to stop at Grouard. Grouard was actually set to become the provincial capital, so rather than Edmonton being the provincial capital, Grouard was supposed to be the provincial capital.

But when the railway came through – there are a bunch of stories about what the political motivations were, what the personal and economic motivations were. They decided instead to go along the south flank of the lake, not exactly along the lake but south along much of the lake. As a result, Swan River had a railway come through the middle of the First Nation, and Kinuso later was established as a provincial settlement to serve that region. This is one example back in history of why consultation is so important. The fact that there failed to be consultation, from, again, the reports that I received growing up in the community over those many years, is exactly why the geography of that part of the province came into existence. Whether or not it was the right decision, it was a decision that was made. But I think there are opportunities for us to reflect on how we make decisions and how best to live up to an international standard, that being the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, something that was an international standard that's been set and that indigenous people in leadership positions across Alberta

have told us is important for us to achieve here in the province of Alberta.

I also want to say that the traditional right to harvest and to engage with Crown land is something that I don't take lightly and that I know the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford doesn't take lightly, and that's why he brought forward this motion. The fact that he has wording in it that specifically speaks to achieving the standard of the declaration and having fair and thorough consultation I think is absolutely critical.

I think that if the government wants to achieve what they put on the cover of many documents around jobs, economy, and pipelines, if they do it in conflict with indigenous communities and with indigenous people, it won't get us to the finish line. I think that the only way that we achieve those outcomes is by following the letter of the law, following the intent of declarations like UNDRIP, and making sure that we work in full partnership. I think that the more we see governments choose to make announcements without actually considering the legal and very real consequences of breaking treaties or breaking the UN declaration or breaking other established pieces of law, we will put ourselves in a more vulnerable position on those three pieces, that seem to be part of the focus of this government at this time.

For those reasons, I'm really proud to support the motion brought forward by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Perfect. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm proud as well to rise to speak to this motion. I just have to point out as well that I'm so proud to support the work of my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford. You know, I wasn't, obviously, in government in the last term, but I was able to see his work as our Indigenous Relations minister and just how passionate he was about it, and he continues to be passionate in his current role.

One of the things that I want to talk about is just the importance of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I worked for years with Alberta Education, and I was really, really proud of the NDP government's work at the time to ensure that UNDRIP was fully implemented across ministries. I know there was a lot – a lot – of work that went into that, a very clear analysis. In Alberta Education we looked at the role of UNDRIP as well as the commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the areas of curriculum, for instance, and of course in the areas of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education. My world was curriculum, and I was really proud to just see the movement that we were making on this.

As we saw from the amendment that was introduced, I'm a little bit worried that some of that work is very much in jeopardy. As my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud pointed out, we're seeing references to UNDRIP being dropped in various ministries. I haven't done a full analysis across ministries, but knowing that it's already been dropped in Children's Services is alarming. A quick scan of the Indigenous Relations business plan pointed out that it's in there once, which I think is a shift as well from previous business plans. I'm quite concerned about that.

4:30

I want to as well refer to the letter that my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford pointed out. This was from Chief Arthur Noskey, the grand chief of Treaty 8. He points out: we expect that no resources will be extracted from Treaty 8 without our free, prior,

and informed consent. He goes on to talk about the importance of, you know, a nation-to-nation relationship. We've heard this government talking a lot about the importance of consultation and relationships and really building a commitment together, yet we're already seeing – this letter is dated October 18, by the way. We know that the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation was announced just prior to this letter, so just days – just days, mere days – after the conversations around the AIOC, the Treaty 8 grand chief and some of the other nations are feeling rejected, feeling neglected by this government. This should be quite concerning to all members of this House.

I'm not going to speak too much longer on this, but I really want to just hammer home the point that this government speaks a big game about consultation; it's time to prove it. This government speaks a big game about reconciliation; it's time to prove it. They've said multiple times recently in this House that they're focused on indigenous economic opportunities and true partnerships; it's time to prove it.

One of the things as we go into budget consultations here: we have seen a significant reduction in the Indigenous Relations ministry's budget. My colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford can speak a lot more about this, but so many of the programs that the NDP government was so proud to put forward, including everything under the indigenous climate leadership plan, are now either cancelled or in jeopardy. I find it curious that, you know, again, this government opposite speaks this big game, yet all the actions they've taken since this minister rose in the House and spoke about reconciliation and his commitments have proven otherwise.

I think that by supporting this motion, they'll be able to mend some of those relationships and show that they really are committed to reconciliation and consultation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to applaud the work of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford because, of course, he's been so incredibly dedicated to issues involving indigenous people in the province of Alberta when he was Minister of Indigenous Relations and now continues to work on exactly that, being in opposition.

I want to applaud him for that because he's very dedicated to a very important principle, and that is maintaining relationships with indigenous people. The reason why I bring that up specifically is because for far too long historically, not only here in the province of Alberta but across this great land, the relationship with indigenous people has been a paternalistic one. Even the imposition of governance of chiefs and councils was one imposed by the nation of Canada or, better stated, by the Crown on indigenous people even before Canada was a nation. This is something that's so important to understand because, within that whole historical perspective, the relationship that existed not only was a paternalistic one, but it was also one that marginalized people.

I would be remiss to remind this entire House that the whole reservation system imposed here in Canada was one that was attempted to be redone in South Africa under the apartheid system. I want us all to think about that for a second.

Now, of course, historically speaking, when the treaties were signed – and I'll put a parenthesis in there. I've spoken to so many indigenous members of different communities. When you bring up the treaty, it's kind of a love-hate relationship with the treaty. Of course, the treaty that was signed on to by so many indigenous communities and by the Crown has so many great things written

inside of it. But at the same time, those same members of the community will tell you that those treaties were never upheld or respected.

That's what UNDRIP is really all about. UNDRIP attempts to rectify the fact that these treaties, although idealistic in nature in what is written within them and what was agreed upon by representatives of these communities, were never actually upheld. Because of that, indigenous people had to organize on a world scale, and I'm not just talking about here in Canada or even the United States. Indigenous people organized all over the world, went to the United Nations and decided, worked feverishly to really understand and really establish how their rights could be respected and, through the body that is known as the United Nations, developed what we now know as the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

It just seems so awkward and strange to me that this government and, historically speaking, traditionally Conservative governments regularly do not want to recognize declarations made by the United Nations. I don't know why. We're talking about individuals that have worked all over the world to really understand how the rights of individuals could be respected and not only the rights of individuals but the rights of communities, of groups. Now, I understand that within the Conservative framework and mindset and perspective they stand up wholeheartedly when it comes to the rights of the individual, and that's to be applauded. It's great. It's wonderful. But also within human rights are the collective rights of communities.

Indigenous people have a different perspective than those who carry a more Eurocentric perspective of rights, and that has to do with the rights of communities, and it starts with the right of the land. Now, indigenous communities – maybe you've heard it before; maybe you haven't – don't think of ownership of the land held by people because the relationship that exists spiritually, a cosmological understanding of the relationship that exists between people and the land, is actually one that has nothing to do with ownership. It's a reciprocal relationship, one where we don't own the land, but in fact it's Mother Earth that has more control over us as people than we have over her. This kind of really turns the whole Eurocentric perspective upon its head, head over heels. Now, we may not agree with it, but that doesn't mean that we cannot choose to at least listen to indigenous people and choose to understand the perspective from which they are coming. I personally really like the perspective of indigenous people of not really owning the land.

You know, we've seen this come through lately, more and more, through communities here, not only in the province of Alberta but all over North America, this whole understanding of stewardship, that we have a responsibility to take care of the land. This is something that I believe has come through that indigenous cosmology and understanding and perspective and has been shared with so many communities around the world. Now we can all share in this perspective: okay; if you want to say that you own that piece of land, you own it, but more important than owning that piece of land, you have the responsibility of taking care of it and making sure that people will be able to continue to live on it for generations.

Again I want to applaud the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for his continued work and advocacy on all of this. I would just like to finish by saying to all members of this House: please support this motion. Let's continue to look more deep into this and what we can do to actually work with indigenous communities as has been described in the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Please support this motion.

Thank you.

4:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. government whip.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to propose a motion to move to one-minute bells not only for this vote but for the remainder of the afternoon as well.

[Motion carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise to speak to Motion Other than Government Motion 507, of course, proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I just want to quickly go over this again.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly, in recognition of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the traditional territory of indigenous peoples, urge the government to undertake robust consultation with indigenous communities prior to the sale of Crown land . . . and adopt a comprehensive consultation process as a standard for all future proposed Crown land [sites].

I think that is a very reasonable motion, a motion that I plan to support.

I would also just like to take a moment to thank the Speaker for ruling the previous amendment to this motion out of order because I do believe that it completely changed the intent of this motion before us. Thank you for that.

I did also just want to point out, not specifically concerns with that amendment but something that was said by the Member for Central Peace-Notley and the fact that just looking at the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act and that member's statement that – I don't have the Blues in front of me, but it was essentially that things have gotten a lot better since this new government has come in because of the program like the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. I take great concern with that because we have not actually seen how that program has rolled out, first of all.

Second of all, we have not seen any money within the 2019 budget committed to that program, and that was a concern that was brought up by the Beaver First Nation chief in conversations with the media recently as this budget rolled out, I believe. In the *Toronto Sun* it quoted that chief saying: we knew it was coming, the budget was coming; just like the universities were ready, we're ready, and that's why we can never have a true relationship with the province . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than government motion to close debate, I would like to invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to close debate on Motion 507.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to close debate. I really, truly appreciate the opportunity to have private members' bills brought forward, and I would like to thank the Speaker for protecting that great tradition here in the House from assault by the government side. I'm glad that we're here actually debating the motion as put forward.

I did have an opportunity to listen to some of the comments from the other side of the House. I'm afraid that the minister said a number of things that I thought could be misinterpreted by listeners who are acquainted with the facts, so I think that we need to spend a little bit of time being really clear that consultation as it is

happening in the province today with regard to land sales is not adequate. We have letters from the chief here indicating what their concerns were because, for example, in this case, this one particular incident which he refers to, there was no consultation at all. I think that to suggest that we have a robust process as it exists right now is inaccurate, as demonstrated by the comments made by the chiefs in the northern communities.

I just want to, you know, talk about the fact that they have a reason to be concerned. There have been previous land sales in the north under the Conservative government where there was no consultation whatsoever, which is why I'm bringing this forward. I am reflecting the things that I was told repeatedly as Minister of Indigenous Relations. Essentially, the history of the Conservative government has been to break the trust of the indigenous peoples.

The previous land sales that occurred did occur in the area surrounding the Dene, the Beaver, the Tallcree, the Little Red First Nations without any consultation at all, and they had a lot of effect on those communities because the loss of the land was significant in their ability to engage in the practices which they've been doing since time immemorial. It was significant for hunting, for the gathering of medicines, for engaging in teaching and ceremony. The land is now turned into farmland, which denies the indigenous people the right of entry and significantly intrudes on the landscape not only for the indigenous people, of course, but for the wildlife that use that land: the deer, the moose, the caribou, and other animals.

It's very much a concern here because if this land is taken out of Crown land, then we have a problem where not only are we not consulting appropriately with indigenous people – they are telling us that we are not consulting appropriately – but it also affects their ability to fulfill their treaty land entitlements, and we know that there are some that are presently being pursued in northern Alberta.

Under the natural resources transfer acts you can only transfer lands for treaty land entitlement that are unencumbered, and this province is about to encumber a bunch of land. That means that land that should be considered first and primarily for First Nations to fulfill our obligations under the NRTA are being taken out of consideration, making it impossible for them to fulfill their rights here in this province, and I'm very concerned about that.

I know that the minister mentioned that we do have the ACO, the aboriginal consultation office, but he did not remind the audience, the people that are listening, that the ACO does not consult on land sales. Now, the fact that he brought up the ACO I think is important because what we're saying here is that we should have a robust process for consultation on land sales when we already know we have a consultation process with regard to resource development. It was mentioned by the minister himself for that exact purpose, so we know what a proper consultation process is. We know that indigenous people are given an opportunity to respond to concerns and to have their voices heard in a very particular, defined protocol. We know that does not occur for land sales, so to suggest that somehow land sales are covered by the ACO or by a process even close to the ACO process is perhaps a bit of playing with the truth as we know it.

I would like to suggest to this government that it is important that they take this to heart, that they adopt the United Nations declaration and that they develop a robust process.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 507 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:50 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Loyola	Renaud
Feehan	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley		

Against the motion:

Allard	Lovely	Toews
Copping	Nally	Toor
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Glubish	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	Walker
Guthrie	Reid	Williams
Issik	Rutherford	Wilson
Jones	Savage	Yao
LaGrange	Shandro	Yaseen
Loewen	Smith	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 29
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 507 lost]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 18 Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any more speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and have another opportunity to speak to Bill 18. I think I last spoke to this bill in an amendment. With respect to my position on the bill, I think I laid it out there, but I'll lay it out here again. I am definitely not in favour.

I think, again, the reasons I've laid out for not being in favour of this bill are that this creates a market that is significantly more volatile, and that's problematic for people. It's not just that it's going to cost people more overall to move back to the energy-only market. It's that it also increases unpredictability. If you're a family struggling to make it by, which a lot of people right up to the middle class are these days, it can be a real challenge to have that kind of volatility because it makes it very challenging to budget when you don't know what you're going to expect in terms of your electricity costs. In the past, with the energy-only market, we've seen some fairly wild fluctuations. Certainly, the advice that we received – again, the department officials were very, very good, and I'm sure the same goes here in terms of briefing folks on this – is that that volatility was only going to increase as time went on. So I think that that's a real concern.

I know that energy markets seem like a thing that's incredibly complicated, but that's why we're here to do this work. That's why we're to do this work as government, in part to communicate to the public about what it is that's occurring in this place. This bill takes us from a capacity market, which is the standard in North America. It's really only Texas that has this energy-only market remaining in terms of North American jurisdictions, of which there are, obviously,

a significant number. There's a reason for that. It's because it costs more, and it's because of the volatility.

I think that what frustrates me about this is that it's attempting to be sold as competition, but it isn't actually a competition. It's the illusion of competition because, as is taught still to this day, I imagine, in most introductory economic courses, electricity tends to be a natural monopoly because of the incredibly high cost of investing in the infrastructure. That tends to create amalgamations; it doesn't tend to create competition, which is what it's taught as an example of. The electricity market is taught as an example of a natural monopoly because it's sort of a market failure because the cost to get into the market is so very high.

In fact, that is the case in Alberta, or at least it was previously in the energy-only market. Essentially, the folks that retail it are buying from – we've added another level, so we don't actually have that much competition amongst those who generate. The competition is sort of illusory in the sense that it's just the retailers that are permitted to sell the power that are buying it from exactly the same source, so their sort of ability to impact the price is pretty limited. I think that that's a big concern.

You know, if we're selling this as, "Hooray. Competition," well, that's not really what it is. Like I've said, one of the things that concerns me about this is the way the contracts were signed, the fact that they were hidden, and the fact that they contain a guaranteed rate of interest which is accessible only to some and not to others, which is always something that frustrates me about the world. When certain folks who have access to more capital or who have more access to more money or had the right connections happen to have access to a higher rate of interest or a special deal compared to other people, that bothers me. It always has bothered me. It's one of the reasons I got into this. That is the frustration. The frustration is that this is illusory competition. There's a reason it's not like this in any other North American jurisdiction except Texas, and this will hurt the bottom line for families.

I think that the people who are doing their best with the income they have to get by, which is increasingly difficult because of increasing income inequality, shouldn't be punished with fluctuating electricity rates. They shouldn't be punished with situations in which their electricity bill may go up a couple of hundred dollars in a month because people aren't prepared to plan for that. I feel like we should reward people for planning in that way and not punish them with higher electricity rates.

Of course, one of the other challenges with this – I've focused sort of mostly on the financial implications in terms of volatility. Certainly, we had an amendment on the floor, that we were hoping the government would support, which at least prevented individuals from doing that intentionally. Unfortunately, I don't think that survived. One of the other challenges is that we get rolling brownouts and blackouts, which is a huge concern in terms of deregulation. So not only is it the case that people will have unpredictable power bills; they'll also have unpredictable power. I think that, you know, in this day and age electricity is no longer a luxury. I don't think that it has been for quite a long time. Our lives and almost everything about them rely on the presence of electricity. It is important to us to be able to turn on the light and know that it will go on.

5:00

You know, there have been a couple of case studies on Texas, obviously. They experienced brownouts in 2011, 2014, and 2015, as well as rolling blackouts in 2011. This resulted in consumers not necessarily having power every day on a bunch of different days. They had a price of \$438 on June 25, and the next day, on June 26, it maxed out at \$3,000 a megawatt hour. It's pretty big. When I'm

talking about volatility, this is pretty intense volatility that we're dealing with, so I think that that is a huge concern.

I mean, overall, people need the ability to be able to plan their lives. They need to know that their electricity will be there. They need to know what price they're going to pay for it, or at least within a reasonable range what price they're going to pay for it. I think that that's really important. I think that this bill is taking us in the wrong direction, and I would urge all members to vote against it.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I proudly represent the riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview but as well equally appreciate the position that has been bestowed upon me to act as House leader on behalf of the opposition.

I rise to speak to Bill 18. As no surprise to members in this House, there are quite a few concerns that I have in changing the course that our government laid out, moving Alberta from a capacity market back to an energy-only market. For context – and I'm sure that much of what I'm going to say members have already heard – I think it's important to reiterate. Alberta is only one of two jurisdictions in North America that have an energy-only market: Alberta and Texas. Every other state and province in this country has a capacity market, and that's for a number of reasons, Madam Chair. We know that a capacity market actually provides consumers with more stability as far as prices for their electricity.

Part of what we did when our government started the transition of Alberta going off an energy-only market to a capacity market is that we brought in legislation to put a price cap on electricity rates. Really, what we're trying to avoid here are price spikes but also rolling brownouts. Anyone who's lived in this province for more than a handful of years will have experienced the rolling brownouts that have occurred throughout the province. That's something that I know frustrates not only, you know, Alberta individuals and their families, but it also has a significant impact on business and on the economy. One of the ways to ensure that there is sustainable electricity and that it's reliable is through a capacity market.

Now, I know, again, that some of my colleagues, I'm sure, have talked at length about the value of a capacity market, recognizing that this is where it came from. You know, on the record, obviously, Madam Chair, the decision to move to a capacity market from an energy-only market wasn't a decision that was made as a political decision. It wasn't a decision made by the NDP caucus. This was after consulting with many different industry experts from the AESO to others, including industry themselves saying: we definitely need more stability in our electricity system. Ensuring that there's a reasonable cost to customers is something, the AESO said, that the capacity market is better at delivering, that consistency, less volatility. There's less incentive to hedge prices, which, of course, can happen in an energy-only market. Capacity markets are based on market-based structures, so their incentives are for price competitiveness, which, again, is important, that those savings get passed on to Albertans.

I'm going to speak a little more at length here, Madam Chair, but I would like to propose an amendment. I have the appropriate number of copies. Of course, the top copy is the original. That will come to you shortly.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Just give us a moment to get the amendment.

Okay. This will be known as amendment A2. Just for all hon. members' sake, there are two pages to this amendment.

**Mr. Bilous:** Correct. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll read it into the record to give our pages a chance to ensure that members can get this into their hands to look at. Correct; it is two pages. I'll read the amendment, and then I'll make my comments.

I'm moving this amendment on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall. This amendment states that he moves that Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, be amended in section 2

(a) in subsection (3) by striking out clause (b) and substituting the following:

(b) by repealing clause (c.1) and substituting the following:  
(c.1) to ensure that a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to customers.

(b) in subsection (5) by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following:

(a) by repealing subsection (1) and substituting the following:

Duty to act responsibly

16(1) the Independent Systems Operator must exercise its powers and carry out its duties, responsibilities and functions in a timely manner that is fair and responsible to provide for

(a) the safe, reliable and economic operation of the interconnected electric system,

(b) the promotion of a fair, efficient and openly competitive electricity market, and

(c) the reliable supply of electricity available at reasonable cost to customers.

(c) in subsection (8)(a) by striking out subclause (i) and substituting the following:

(i) by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following:

(a) that the ISO rule

(i) is not technically deficient,

(ii) supports the fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the electricity market,

(iii) ensures a reliable supply of electricity is available at a reasonable cost to customers, and

(iv) is in the public interest.

(d) in subsection (17)

(i) in clause (a)(iii), in the proposed section 25(1)(b) by adding the following after subclause (ii):

(ii.1) that the ISO rule does not support ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to customers;

(ii) in clause (b) in the proposed section 25(1.1) by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) that the ISO rule does not support ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to consumers;

(iii) in clause (d) in the proposed section 25(4.1) by striking out "or" at the end of clause (b) and by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) that the ISO rule does not support ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at a reasonable cost to customers, or

(iv) in clause (e) in the proposed section 25(4.11) by striking out "or" at the end of the clause (b) and by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) that the ISO rule does not support ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at a reasonable cost to customers.

Now, Madam Chair, if you're wondering – and I appreciate that members are looking at this amendment for the first time. It can be challenging to flip through the bill, so I'm happy to speak to this.

Essentially, what we're doing is that Bill 18 in its current form would strike out that our electricity market has the goal of a reliable supply of electricity and that it's available at a reasonable cost. So we want to ensure that that gets put in. It's been a part of legislation that has governed Alberta's electricity system. It was in the past, quite frankly, even under the energy-only market. We incorporated it into our transition to a capacity market, and my hope is that the government meant to include this and didn't.

Again, you know, I've been on the other side. I appreciate that sometimes things get missed. Quite frankly, this is why we are in this place and why it's important to have a healthy, robust debate, and one of the roles of the opposition is to say: hey, folks; you missed this one part which, again, is critical because this helps direct the ISO to ensure that there is a reliable supply of electricity for Albertans and that it's available at a reasonable cost. We know that, obviously, we need electricity in all corners of the province. It's relied on for everything from our schools and hospitals to our businesses, to our communities, and, obviously, our homes and families. That gives the AESO the ability that, should prices spike, they can intervene, which I think is quite critical, Madam Chair. It's consistent with government changes. It is not changing the direction of this bill.

5:10

We know, as other members have spoken, that energy-only markets can lead to price spikes and to rolling blackouts, and we just want to make sure that the market can guarantee a reliable supply of electricity and that it's available at a reasonable cost. Again, this fits with the spirit, I believe, of what this bill is proposing. It's a simple amendment to ensure that we are protecting Albertans, that we are asking the government to consider. At the end of the day, I appreciate that the government believes that an energy-only market is the best form of an electricity system for consumers, for businesses, so what this does, sticking with that spirit – again, we may disagree on that, where I'm a fan of a capacity market, but recognizing that they want to move to an energy-only market, this codifies the reason behind legislating or moving back to an energy-only market, ensuring that there is reliable electricity for Albertans available at a reasonable cost.

For those reasons, I encourage all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, and thank you for the amendment. We just are receiving it now. When we conducted the review of the capacity market, we asked stakeholders for three things: to tell us which system gives us the most affordable electricity market, the most reliable, and the one that would attract investment the most. Our proposal and our bill is weighing and balancing all three of those things.

We have also asked the AESO to report back to us with a series of improvements to the energy-only market, things that will actually make the energy market perform better. I think that's what this amendment is seeking to do, telling us how the energy-only market could perform better. We've asked for a thorough review with thorough recommendations coming from the AESO, so at this point I wouldn't support this amendment. I don't recall the stakeholders asking for these specific changes at this time. At this point we've got a whole comprehensive set of proposals to come back from the AESO on how to improve that market, and I'd like to see that process unfold with some policy changes and some

policy direction and some advice on how to make it perform the best possible.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Might I put for your consideration, through to the minister, because it sounds like she's not opposed to what's being proposed here – she just doesn't know that it would be helpful in the long run – that rather than voting against it, perhaps there would be an opportunity to consider this with more time, certainly moving to adjourn and going to another piece or something else. It didn't sound like the minister thought that this would be counter to what she's hoping to achieve. I just want to put that out for reflection while I give my other comments on this.

My notes have been taken from me, but I will get them back. I want to say how – certainly, the electricity team that came to brief us at cabinet over and over and over again spent a considerable amount of time walking us through the pros and cons of the various markets and the importance of having stable, predictable power, affordable rates, and reliability.

As was mentioned by colleagues, only Edmonton and Texas have the market system that is being proposed through this bill and is being considered again. I have a number of concerns about whether or not that will result in significant increases to costs. It seems almost certain that it will be based on all of the briefings that we had from folks both within the public sector and outside stakeholders. There also are concerns about whether or not we'll see brownout conditions, that we saw previously and that other jurisdictions, including Texas, see in extreme weather, which is certainly a safety risk.

Rushing to blow up what was a very thorough consultation and research around this to move forward with a new model, without knowing whether or not we will have those implications, I think, doesn't benefit Alberta consumers. I think it certainly would behoove us to take the time to do the consideration of the proposed amendment and to ensure that we are indeed – if the minister and her entire cabinet, the caucus, and all members of this House indeed do believe that this is the best model moving forward, I think it would behoove us to have the time to consider whether or not these amendments are indeed counter to the intention of the bill. I think that they certainly could benefit that goal of stability and affordability.

I have to say that the amendment puts this language in to make sure that Albertans know that their electricity market should provide “a reliable supply of electricity [that's] available at reasonable cost.” I know that for many folks that I did talk to about electricity costs, those were the two things that they were hoping to achieve. While sometimes those conversations focused around a price on carbon and its impact on electricity rates, certainly throwing the system into disarray would also result in higher costs. Making sure that we have the addition of a reliable supply of electricity at a reasonable cost, I think, is important.

The amendment also changes the language from “capacity market” to “electricity market” around these sections, so it's consistent with the government's changes, something, again, that I think probably was their intention and that just didn't make it in through the amendments. I'm happy to provide that through our proposed amendment. We know energy-only markets can lead to those price spikes that we mentioned.

Again, I get it. This is a massive piece of legislation with a lot of changes, so taking the time to be able to consider this amendment, particularly around some of the wording not being consistent with

the actual wording and intention of the government's own bill, I think, would be warranted for consideration. We certainly want to make sure that we have a market that guarantees a reliable supply for all Albertans.

We know that we've heard about a lot of things happening through the budget that will drive up costs on ordinary families in a number of areas. We've talked about insurance rates on vehicles. We've talked about land transfers when you're registering a land title, those costs doubling. We've talked about the fact – or maybe we haven't talked about it yet – that there's a line item in the business plan about \$100 million more in school fees, essentially. I think that the language is: “Revenue from sources other than government.” So school fees are going up. We know that there are going to be increased fees for folks who are on drug plans and in other areas.

I think one of the ways that we could certainly give some greater certainty to Albertans at this time would be to take this amendment into consideration, act on it, and make sure that we actually do move forward with the focus of a reliable supply at a reasonable cost. That's the rationale for this, and that's the motivation for bringing forward these amendments. If the government has had time to consider how they might be able to move on this, because certainly they aren't counter to what I believe their intention was, particularly in the language of saying “energy-only market” as opposed to – sorry; my brain is having a hard time catching up to me at this time – the other market model . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Capacity.

**Ms Hoffman:** Capacity. Thank you, my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Certainly, getting the language right in the government's own bill, I think, would be of benefit to improving this legislation and the way it is.

Those are some of the key points that I wanted to raise in regard to this debate. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:20 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.

Against the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Shandro
Copping	Loewen	Toews
Ellis	Lovely	Toor
Getson	Nally	Turton
Glubish	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	Walker
Guthrie	Reid	Williams
Issik	Rutherford	Yao
Jones	Savage	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 27
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We are now back on the main bill in committee. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 18 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 18 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:25 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	LaGrange	Shandro
Copping	Loewen	Toews
Ellis	Lovely	Toor
Getson	Nally	Turton
Glubish	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	Walker
Guthrie	Reid	Williams
Issik	Rutherford	Yao
Jones	Savage	Yaseen

Against:

Bilous	Hoffman	Phillips
--------	---------	----------

Carson

Ganley

Totals:

Loyola

Pancholi

For – 27

Renaud

Sigurdson, L.

Against – 9

[Request to report Bill 18 carried]

**Mrs. Savage:** I would move to rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. van Dijken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 18. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, does the Assembly concur in the report? Those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to advise that pursuant to Government Motion 31 there shall be no evening sitting tonight, and I therefore move to adjourn the House until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 29, 2019

Day 35

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
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Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

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Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
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Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

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Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

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Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

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Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
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Long  
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Sweet  
Williams

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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Ganley  
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Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
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Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

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Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 29, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, joining us today in the Speaker's gallery are guests of the hon. Minister of Health: Manitoba's Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living, the Hon. Cameron Friesen; accompanied today by Tara Jago; and Nathan Clark. Welcome to our fair province.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** This afternoon in the galleries we have two school groups. Joining us today from Morinville-St. Albert, guests of the Associate Minister of Natural Gas, are students in grades 6 and 9 from the Legal school. Also with us today from Edmonton-Mill Woods are grade 9 students from the Millwoods Christian school. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Welcome to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Arts and Culture Industries

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to stand up for the arts and culture community. In my role as the culture critic I've had the opportunity to reach out to stakeholders across the province in varying industries. Their stories are incredible. In those meetings I heard concerns and fears about the potential cuts affecting the culture ministry from this UCP government. After last week's budget address my office has been inundated with questions, concerns, and fears regarding the now imminent cuts to the ministry of culture.

Despite these doom-and-gloom days I want to highlight the incredible work being done across this province. In our communities many families and individuals are embracing and learning about culture, heritage, and diversity in many different venues and mediums. So many in the industry are on the front line of providing safe spaces for Albertans and visitors to learn about the arts, culture, and our history. The work is so important and so impactful. Working to tell the stories of Alberta involves time, research, and a human touch to make it relevant to today's audiences. I want everyone in the arts and culture community to know that their work is positively impacting Albertans, specifically the next generation. Hearing how our little ones are learning about art and culture and having a safe place to ask these questions is incredible.

In closing, I want to extend an invitation to everyone in the arts and culture community that I am here as your advocate for culture. My door is always open, and I will stand with you to fight to preserve and empower the arts and culture community here in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park has the call.

### Budget 2019

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Albertans were presented with something novel, a reasonable and credible plan to balance Alberta's budget. It's refreshing to see our government take fiscal responsibility seriously and present a realistic plan to get our fiscal house in order.

Years of fiscal mismanagement have led us to a serious financial situation. The mountain of government debt accumulated in the last few years means that we now spend almost \$2 billion annually on our debts. The signs were there, Mr. Speaker: deficit after deficit, credit downgrade after credit downgrade, tax hikes that collected fewer taxes. Nothing went according to the so-called plan. Investors were scared away and jobs disappeared, making life worse for Albertans. The old, tired, tax-and-spend ways of the past just don't work anymore. We needed a more realistic approach to budgeting.

Budget 2019 is a budget we can all be proud of. It lives within our means while caring for those who need our support. It reflects the true desire of this government to stand up for Alberta. It uses investment in the true sense of the word, targeting realistic opportunities with a measurable return on investment. We will have better and smarter public services that deliver for Albertans after years of overspending, with mixed results in return.

The budget tabled last week is a reasonable, measured approach, Mr. Speaker. It protects our cherished health care and education systems. Essential social services are also supported. While my opponents across the way make over-the-top claims about the budget, I've heard from many of my constituents, saying how reasonable it is. What government can't afford 3 cents on the dollar?

Mr. Speaker, unlike others, this government is up to the challenge.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat would like to make a statement.

### Education and Health Care Funding

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following the introduction of our first budget the Twitter trolls rapidly spread misinformation in an effort to create divisiveness in our province. I am not at all surprised that they have been echoed by the members opposite. It is true that this budget is not anything like that of the former NDP government. We actually understand the importance of living within our means while simultaneously improving results.

Now, the Twitter trolls and the NDP would have you thinking that we have removed funding from the public school system to support religious schools. That is not the case, Mr. Speaker. The former NDP government spent \$396 million to support students in private, private ECS, charter, home-schooling, and alternative education. Our government has maintained that level of funding and has boosted it by investing another \$4 million in order to support enrolment growth while holding public school funding steady. Our campaign platform promised Albertans that we would not cut public or private education, and this budget commits to just that. Let me be clear. Our government did not increase spending for private schools by \$400 million. We increased the amount spent by \$4 million to support enrolment growth.

But it doesn't end there, Mr. Speaker. The NDP and Twitter trolls would also have you believe that we cut health care. The fact of the matter is that investments in public health care went up by \$200 million. But we also promised Albertans that we would find efficiencies in how we deliver our public health care services while improving outcomes. Any reductions in certain departments were because of efficiencies, and that money has been reallocated to focus on patients, not managers that manage managers. We promised to maintain or increase spending in health care, and that is exactly what we are doing. We promised to find efficiencies in how we deliver health care so that we can better serve Albertans, and this budget reflects that.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

### Agriculture and Forestry Funding

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As critic for Agriculture and Forestry I was very disappointed to see the budget on Thursday and learn what the government was planning for our agriculture and forestry industry. But from the unending-cuts-and-pain party this is what we have come to expect: unending cuts and unending pain; all pain, no economic gain; a 9.1 per cent cut in one year and 15 per cent over four years for one of our biggest industries. That is a big hit and totally unnecessary. Agriculture and Forestry, like every other ministry, is being pillaged to finance the UCP government's \$4.7 billion corporate tax giveaway.

We have seen austerity economics fail repeatedly. A recent example was Saskatchewan, which decided to cut while Alberta decided to invest. The result was clear. In 2017 Saskatchewan grew only half as fast as Alberta.

Something that concerns me a lot is the cut to scientists in Agriculture and Forestry and the lack of commitment to take action on climate change. The budget cuts the government's ability to produce its own research on important issues to our agricultural industries. This opposition to science we see throughout the budget and is very concerning. Science should not be the victim of the government's \$4.7 billion tax giveaway to profitable corporations. Then, again, we should not be surprised. It is what we have seen from the Harper Conservatives, who strategically muzzled scientists, causing all of Canada to fall behind on important research fronts. Unlimited cuts and pain once again, Mr. Speaker.

1:40

This decision will have negative impacts on our agricultural communities and producers in the years to come. I hope that the government reverses course and supports science, but unfortunately, from what we have seen from this government, they will likely just keep their ears plugged to concerned Albertans and continue to downgrade the role of science in their decision-making processes. A sad period in Alberta's history indeed: unlimited cuts and pain, no economic gain.

### Mother Earth's Children's Charter School

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, in late June I visited the Mother Earth's Children's Charter School, which opened its doors in 2003 and serves the children of the Paul First Nation and other communities. As Canada's only indigenous charter school it has a unique cultural approach to teaching and learning. Founded on traditional indigenous teachings, it creates strong, confident indigenous learners. It features a robust academic program tailored to individual student needs, offering student enrichment opportunities to explore art, music, archery, karate, golf, and many more. Mother Earth's

Children's Charter School provides substantial opportunity to its student body, which averages around 85 students all the way from kindergarten to grade 9.

While there I heard stories of students participating in these activities and also growing closer to their cultural roots through participation in cultural ceremonies and events. The school is not only unique for its foundation on indigenous teachings, which instills an appreciation for Mother Earth and the Creator, but also for the innovative funding model supporting the school. The Mother Earth's Children's Charter School is supported by both federal and provincial governments and also by corporations, who support the school's nutrition program and transportation for students. Through this partnership model Mother Earth's Children's Charter School is able to transport students to school and provide an important nutrition program without charging additional fees.

School choice allows parents to choose the educational setting that will best support their children and give them the best opportunity for success. For many indigenous families that school is Mother Earth's Children's Charter School. In the spring I spoke about the amazing example of Connect Charter School and how they demonstrate the success of school choice. Now I hope, with the excellent example of the success of Mother Earth's Children's Charter School, that other members of this Assembly can see that school choice is essential to Alberta and essential to our children.

### Seniors and Budget 2019

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, I have always made it a priority to connect with all of my constituents and hear their concerns, regardless of how old they are, where they come from, how much money they make, or who they love. I believe it's especially important that I listen to our seniors, who worked so hard to build this great province and who deserve to live in dignity and respect.

Last night I had the opportunity to attend a resident and family council meeting at the Eaux Claires seniors' facility in Edmonton-Decore. I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this government's bait-and-switch budget has a lot of people, especially our most vulnerable, feeling scared and betrayed. I heard from residents who are worried about how deindexing AISH would cut into their financial independence, leaving them isolated. I spoke with residents who are deeply concerned that high turnover rates among front-line staff will get worse and worse, hurting their quality of care. I heard from folks who are scared that changes to the Alberta seniors' benefit program may force them to have to choose between getting the prescriptions they need and getting enough food to eat. I talked to family members who don't know how they'll be able to support their parents now that personal income taxes will rise with deindexing. We are still weeks away from debating this government's budget plan, and the very people that built this province are terrified at how much it could hurt them.

This government campaigned on making life easier for Albertans, but then released a budget that will make life more expensive for the most vulnerable of Albertans. This government campaigned on jobs and the economy, but has seen more than 27,000 jobs disappear since they took office. This is a government that promised to reduce government waste and red tape, but has allocated \$10 million to a brand new ministry dedicated to cutting red tape. Tragically ironic, isn't it?

This is a government that needs to explain to Albertans why they continue to break the promises they were so boastful of over the summer. Our seniors and all Albertans deserve that at the very least.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Syncrude Milestone

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I think about Syncrude celebrating the production of 3 billion barrels of oil from one of the world's largest energy deposits, I think about what that has meant for my nation. Because, you see, it doesn't just benefit my constituency. Within my constituency lines alone, though, there are over 2 million barrels of oil a day being produced. This equates to approximately \$40 million a day, or \$14.6 billion annually.

If we look at the jobs that the energy sector in my community creates, well, there are a lot. During peak turnaround there are over 30,000 workers flying in and out of my region. That's over 20,000 jobs here in Alberta alone, and the other third comes from the rest of Canada.

Of those over 10,000 workers that fly in from our confederation, about 4,300 are from British Columbia. Eleven hundred are from Ontario. Newfoundland has about 1,200. Nova Scotia has over 800 workers flying in, and New Brunswick has over 600 commuters coming back and forth. For an industry that is being shunned by other provinces of our nation, it sure benefits those very same provinces.

At an average salary of \$100,000, and, Mr. Speaker, I do lowball that number, Ontario is making \$110 million in salary claims when these folks are reporting to Revenue Canada. B.C. residents are claiming \$430 million. This is money that, after taxes are paid, is being spent on mortgages, on food, on education, and on common and luxury items.

Don't forget the spillover jobs, Mr. Speaker, those peripheral jobs created, because these folks are spending that money in their local stores and on services. We must not forget the taxes that Albertans pay that are being rerouted to the rest of the nation under our current equalization formulas.

Thank you, Syncrude, for your investment in our resource, in our people, and in our nation. Let's hope you can continue to succeed to benefit all Canadians despite our federal Liberal government.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West has a statement to make.

### Serenity's Law

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and address this Chamber.

As you know, my private member's bill, Bill 202, was passed in this House yesterday afternoon. Bill 202 is an amendment to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. It is also known as Serenity's law. This bill is named after the young girl, Serenity, whose life was taken from us far too soon.

Bill 202 represents a promise I made to her mother, and it is a promise I am proud to keep. The bill makes two key changes to existing legislation. First, it clarifies that anyone who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of intervention must report it to a director or a police officer. By adding the option of a police officer, this fundamental change will enshrine an existing practice into law. Second, this bill increases the consequences for those who fail to report. Serenity's law will provide clarity on who to report to and the consequences of not reporting.

This bill sends a clear message to all Albertans that we cannot turn a blind eye if we suspect that a child is in need of intervention. It will also ensure that Albertans are held accountable for the protection of our most vulnerable children. I have said it before, and I will say it again, Mr. Speaker, if this amendment saves the life of even one child in this province, then surely it was worth it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of this House for supporting this bill. This has been a long journey, and when I spoke with Serenity's mom last night to tell her about the passing of this law, she was filled with emotion and gratitude.

The passage of Serenity's law is indeed bittersweet. This family may never get the justice that they deserve, but I am proud to say that Serenity's legacy will be one of hope for the vulnerable children in our province. The children of Alberta are safer today, Mr. Speaker, than they were yesterday, and that can only be viewed as a step in the right direction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Budget 2019 and Federal Policies

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Finance minister for tabling our United Conservative government's first budget last Thursday. The budget outlined our priorities for getting Alberta's fiscal house back in order while maintaining the service Albertans rely upon.

Unfortunately, in the same week as the Finance minister released his prudent fiscal plan, Canadians in the other regions decided to re-elect the Trudeau Liberals in Ottawa. The Liberal fiscal plan can be summed up in a single word: spend – running multibillion-dollar deficits when they promised to balance the books, robbing future generations to pay for the reckless spending of today.

Bill Morneau and Justin Trudeau provide a lesson in fiscal mismanagement. Albertans are keenly aware of the lack of support for the hard-working men and women of the oil patch. Their pipeline laws make it impossible to build new pipelines.

Mr. Speaker, there couldn't be a bigger difference between our government and the federal Liberal government of Justin Trudeau. While we make responsible decisions to protect our vital public services and grow the economy, I am afraid that they will simply continue to spend our children's future. While we cut red tape and try to bring investment back to our energy sector, I am afraid that they will continue to drive it away. And while we fight for our country and our critical economic interests, I am afraid that they will continue to divide by setting regions against regions and provinces against provinces.

1:50

So I want to thank the Finance minister and the Premier for their leadership. I know that despite a hostile federal government in Ottawa, Alberta's best days still lie ahead. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Tax Policy

**Ms Notley:** Yesterday the Premier did not seem aware of the statements made by Husky Energy, so allow me to brief him. On July 25 they told their shareholders that the corporate tax cut meant more than \$230 million in their coffers. Last week Husky's CEO said: we really appreciate it. But instead of investing here, they said that they would be investing in Newfoundland and Wisconsin because taxes are not the issue. To the Premier: why did he give \$233 million away to subsidize investment to Newfoundland and Wisconsin?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, this government has given no subsidies to Husky or any other oil company or any other company, for that matter. What the NDP did was that they raised business taxes by 20 per cent, and guess what? We got billions less in revenue, in fact,

\$8 billion less in revenue than they had projected following their corporate tax hike, clear evidence that their class-warfare economics hurt Alberta jobs. Economists project that the job-creation tax cut when fully implemented will create 55,000 full-time, private-sector jobs. That's our focus: creating jobs for Albertans.

**Ms Notley:** Well, according to Husky they got \$230 million from this Premier, so they should probably get their stories in order.

The reckless \$4.7 billion corporate handout is a failure, and Albertans are paying for it. No jobs; in fact, at Husky hundreds fewer. No investment. Just higher income taxes for everybody. Mr. Speaker, again: why are we handing over \$230 million to be invested elsewhere, and why are Albertans paying for it as, what the Premier calls, an insidious higher personal income tax?

**Mr. Kenney:** You know, Mr. Speaker, whenever the NDP talks about tax relief constituting a giveaway, what does that really say? It says a lot about their socialist ideology. They think the government has a prior claim on every dollar earned by somebody and every dollar generated by an employer. Now, they continue to make up numbers. As Professor Tombe at the U of C has said, "the \$4.5 billion claim . . . is a real puzzle. It is demonstrably misleading. (I'd say false)." Even on national television the NDP leader was humiliated and corrected with that falsehood. She should just stop.

**Ms Notley:** Well, this Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout is not working. Right now we should be shipping oil by rail; we should be ending production cuts; we should be seeing higher royalties. Instead, we have a budget that cuts funding for school buses just so companies like Husky can spend it in the U.S., which, coincidentally, helps to pay for school buses there. To the Premier: how much longer are you going to make Albertans subsidize investments outside of Alberta?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the economic illiteracy that is implicit in that question demonstrates why that Premier is the first Premier in the history of this province to have been fired by voters after just one term because of the economic and jobs crisis that she helped to create in part by raising taxes on employers. Now, we're not able to undo all of their damage overnight. In fact, today the business tax rate is still higher than when the NDP came to office. But over time, prudently but with determination, we will demonstrate that this is the best place in North America in which to invest and create new jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

#### **Calgary Police Service Funding**

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, not so prudently, he will make Alberta's kids pay for a major corporate handout to wealthy corporations. That's what he's going to do. But he is also doing the exact opposite of what he promised in other areas. He promised lower taxes. He promised more police. But guess what? Everyone's income taxes are going up. Calgary's property taxes are going up, and get this: Calgary is about to lose the equivalent of 130 police officers because of this government's ticket clawback. To the Premier: why are you forcing Calgarians to pay more property taxes?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, wrong, wrong, wrong. There is no reduction in provincial transfers to municipalities for police. I certainly hope there are no property tax increases because, I can say as a Calgarian, I know that Calgarians expect their city council and mayor to live within the means of taxpayers. For years both municipal and provincial spending has grown faster than our

population, faster than inflation, and faster than economic growth. Families and small businesses have had to find savings. It's time that governments at all levels did the same.

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, this government's budget is in writing. When they say things that are not included in the budget, people can tell that they are saying things that are not true. They promised 500 more police, but we're getting 130 less. At the same time they're now charging the police for forensic testing, a user fee for doing their jobs and catching criminals. Good Lord. When push comes to shove, the Law and Order Party is more interested in big handouts to big corporations than actually protecting citizens. To the Premier: why did you table a budget that cuts police in Calgary?

**Mr. Kenney:** We did not, Mr. Speaker. There are no handouts to any corporations. What there is is a fiscal crisis, according to NDP former Finance minister Dr. MacKinnon – a fiscal crisis. It is incumbent on the leader of the NDP to tell us: what is the alternative? How much higher would she allow the debt to go? How many billions would she be prepared to waste on interest payments? Whose taxes would she be prepared to raise? How many jobs would she be prepared to kill with those tax increases? They were supposed to table an alternate budget, but they haven't. They chickened out because they're not prepared to be honest in answering those questions.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what we won't do is claw back \$13 million from Calgary's police when we promised them more police. Now, the Member for Calgary-Cross has actually spoken this month about the devastating crime wave in northeast Calgary, but this Premier's answer is to cut 130 officers. This comes after CPS has already done its part to cut costs by reducing training and trimming its fleet. These officers put their lives on the line every day to protect us. Will the Premier reverse the cuts? Read the budget, figure out what you did, get your guy to tell you what he did, and actually change these decisions.

**Mr. Kenney:** Sounds like a playground over there again, Mr. Speaker: no respect for this place, no respect for taxpayers, no respect for the fiscal future of this province. I just challenged the NDP to tell us: what would they do in the midst of this fiscal crisis? By how much more would they raise the debt? How much more are they prepared to borrow to pay the interest on the debt? How many billions are they prepared to take from schools, hospitals, police, and infrastructure to send to bondholders in Zurich, Toronto, and New York? I can tell you what the answer for this government is. We are going to bring our finances back under order with a modest and smart plan this budget. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The Leader of the Official Opposition will come to order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

#### **Calgary LRT Green Line Funding**

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Building Calgary's green line will create 20,000 badly needed construction jobs in that city, yet the Premier has raided the budget for this crucial Calgary project to pay for the \$4.7 billion corporate handout that has created no jobs. Mayor Nenshi now says that the project is in jeopardy. To the Premier: do you realize how damaging it is to Calgary's construction sector to cut this project?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's not being cut. The funds from the province are being reprofiled into future years. The province

maintains its commitment. But if Alberta's worst Finance minister in history wants to know who is responsible for the 2.8 per cent reduction in this budget then, to coin a phrase, he should look in the mirror.

2:00

**Member Ceci:** I actually supported Calgary and its infrastructure. This Premier is forcing the city to delay the green line, which will create millions of dollars in unnecessary costs for Calgary taxpayers and delay employment for tens of thousands of Calgary workers. The Premier has touted himself as a champion of the green line in the past but has done nothing to back up his claim since taking office. To the Premier. This is crucial economic infrastructure, and we need to be building the green line now. Why can't you understand that?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, classic NDP: he started by saying, in question 1, that it was being cancelled; then he changed it to "delayed." Neither is true. The federal cash will allow the city to proceed with its current construction schedule, and our reprofiling in future years will allow us to achieve a balanced budget, which is urgently needed because that member quadrupled Alberta's debt, from \$13 billion to \$62 billion. He oversaw six credit downgrades. He jacked up our interest payments by 1 and a half billion dollars. He had us on track for \$100 billion in debt. He ran the largest per capita deficit in the country. He's responsible.

**Member Ceci:** There are emergency council meetings in municipalities all over the province because of that government, Mr. Speaker.

Stage 1 of the green line would carry more than 60,000 Calgarians per day, rising to about a quarter million trips per day when complete. It is a critical project, and now it's in jeopardy. This government has also raided money that was meant for highway upgrades in Calgary for its failed no-jobs corporate handout. Premier, what do you have to say to Calgarians who've been left stuck in traffic for hours instead of spending quality time at home with their families?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what I have to say to Calgarians is that I as a federal minister committed a billion and a half dollars to the green line in 2015, that was supposed to run 46 kilometres from the far north to the far southeast. It took the NDP government four years to finally make an equivalent fiscal commitment of a billion and a half dollars for half as much rail, half as many people served. They cut the green line in half. That's classic NDP economics. We're going to make sure the transit is there in a way that's affordable for taxpayers.

### Budget 2019

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, on track to \$100 billion in debt, \$93 billion to be exact; the deficit is up \$2 billion over last year; the budget is not balanced for years into the future; 2 million Albertans will pay more in personal income taxes than they did last year: why won't the Premier fire the worst Finance minister in Alberta history? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The opposition will come to order.

**Mr. Kenney:** Because we already did last April, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] Biggest deficit in Canada, \$60 billion in new debt, six credit downgrades, on track for \$100 billion in debt, higher taxes on everything – the carbon tax, higher income taxes, higher taxes on employers, higher property taxes – a jobs crisis, the worst

economic record since the Great Depression: that's why we fired him in April. [interjections]

### Speaker's Ruling Oral Question Period Practices

**The Speaker:** Order. I can assure the Official Opposition that I'll be more than happy to call the government to order at the end of their 35 seconds, which is exactly what happened to the Official Opposition mere moments ago. I don't need your help. Thank you very much. I am very capable of doing the job on my own.

### Budget 2019 (continued)

**Ms Phillips:** A Finance minister that hiked personal income tax for every single taxpaying Albertan, a Finance minister that brings in his deficit \$2 billion higher than the NDP, yet all these backbenchers are going to have to explain cuts to food banks, arenas, pools, cops, roads, bridges. They will have to explain to each of their constituents why their taxes went up. He's racking up debt and deficits so he can pay for the billions in giveaways to the already wealthy that are detailed on page 144 of the budget. When is the cabinet shuffle, Mr. Premier?

**Mr. Kenney:** Our deficit, Mr. Speaker? When I was briefed the day after the last election, when that guy was fired by Alberta voters, guess what? I was told by our public service that he and they had overprojected revenues by \$6 billion. They left taxpayers holding the bag. This government is cleaning up their mess, including their disastrous deal on crude by rail. The private sector has doubled its shipments without a dollar of public money at risk. This government is committed to getting our finances in order so that we can preserve our public services in the long run.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, the average family will pay \$150 more per year in taxes, and the Premier said yesterday that he is a, quote, tax-cutting government, so is the Finance minister prepared to resign – he has undermined his own Premier – or are the folks over there going to continue to lie to Albertans about their high-debt, high-deficit, high-taxes, zero-services budget travesty?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** I recognize that a point of order has been called at 2:06 in the afternoon.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, this Finance minister has inherited the worst fiscal crisis in this province since the Great Depression. This Finance minister, even in that context, took great care, working with his colleagues, to develop a modest, thoughtful, and prudent approach that finds 3 cents on the dollar of savings. This is unbelievable. The histrionics from the NDP tell us that they don't even think it's possible to find 3 pennies of savings on the dollar. That's why they had the worst fiscal record in our history. We're cleaning up their mess with determination.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-South East.

### Investment in Alberta

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For too long oil investment has been leaving our province in favour of other jurisdictions that have become increasingly competitive with taxes and regulation. In 2014 Alberta was ranked 14th out of 156 jurisdictions in terms of investment climate, first being the best. Unfortunately, Alberta

dropped to below 40th on this ranking under the previous NDP government. To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: are we beginning to see more confidence and interest in investing in Alberta with the change to a government that actually supports the energy sector?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It is true that there was a great flight of capital from our province under the NDP and that our competitiveness took a blow thanks to their job-killing policies. Our government has taken action to increase our province's competitiveness by repealing the NDP's job-killing carbon tax and through our job-creation tax cut, which will benefit over 100,000 companies, and our red tape reduction measures.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

Given that billions of dollars have left our province's oil and gas sector – in 2018 it was reported that investment had fallen by 12 per cent in 2017 alone, equivalent to over \$20 billion – and given that it is our government's priority to see Albertans return to work by reattracting economic investment to our energy sector and given that executives of companies that left Alberta pointed to previous government policies and tax increases as one of the main obstacles to staying, can the minister please explain to this House what our government is doing to bring investment and jobs back to Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member. As I previously mentioned, our government has already taken several measures to attract investment back to Alberta, and we see results already, with Telus making the largest investment announcement in our province's history, \$16 billion, which will create 5,000 jobs. A few other measures include changes that will allow municipalities to attract investment through tax incentives, and we stabilized the royalty regime for natural gas companies.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Given that Alberta is more than just energy and given that it is prudent to work towards a sustainable and diversified economy and given that private investment is critical to helping Alberta come out of this serious economic downturn, that the previous NDP government's disastrous policies intensified, can the minister please report on what is being done by this government to attract investments and what other industries we are looking to attract? [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. minister.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for their interest. Our government is taking action to grow investment in all sectors of the economy. That is what our tax reduction and red tape removal measures have been designed to do. My department will also be investing \$75 million over three years in attracting investment to Alberta, growing our economy, and protecting the taxpayer. The NDP drove investment out of our province, and we were hired by Albertans to clean up their mess.

## 2:10 Edmonton Infrastructure Funding

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, this Premier declared that his Minister of Municipal Affairs would be a voice for Edmonton at the cabinet table. He is the lone member of the government in this city. But now, in my and his constituencies, residents are shocked and devastated that this minister put a halt to plans for Terwillegar Drive expansions, has cut more than \$150 million annually from city infrastructure funding. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the MLA for Edmonton-South West: why have you failed the residents of our constituencies and the city of Edmonton?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, working with the Minister of Finance, managed to develop a budget plan that solves the fiscal crisis that we inherited from the NDP while continuing to maintain the highest level of capital spending and provincial transfers to municipalities of any province in Canada, while maintaining \$686 million of capital grants to Edmonton. With the gas tax transfer, that's \$1 billion to the city of Edmonton. We're going from the highest support for municipalities in the country to the highest level of support . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It looks like, just like in cabinet, the minister is being benched again.

Given that it would appear that not only does the Minister of Municipal Affairs not have the ear of the Premier, he also has no sway over his fellow ministers – the Minister of Infrastructure has delayed the opening of the south Edmonton hospital; the Minister of Education won't commit to a new and badly needed south Edmonton high school – to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and MLA for Edmonton-South West: is it that you aren't speaking up for Edmonton and for your constituents, or is it that your colleagues aren't listening?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs will answer in just a moment, but the hon. member will know that we're past question 4, and that is a very clear use of a preamble. If he chooses to do it again, we'll move immediately to the answer.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West and Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Let me enlighten this Member for Edmonton-South: \$3.25 billion in overall capital funding commitment to the city from our government. We are supporting projects at the U of A, the Stollery, the Jubilee, the Royal Alberta Museum. We are building the Norwood long-term care facility, moving forward on Big Island provincial park, and so much more. We are delivering for Edmonton, and while I understand that this member is currently chasing shadows, we will stand up for Edmonton.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But that's not what municipalities say.

Given that members of Edmonton city . . .

**The Speaker:** I'm pretty certain that I, immediately prior to the question, gave you a very clear explanation that a preamble would not be accepted. You are testing to find out if that's the case. A question begins with "given." You can create a question following the rules. Let's see if you can do that now.

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, given that members of Edmonton city council are warning that cuts to operating and capital spending could spur another recession and given that the lone Edmonton minister in the government cabinet is the Minister of Municipal Affairs, to the same minister: why is it that you have completely failed to deal with these affairs and represent your own constituency?

**The Speaker:** Well done.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I will not be lectured by this member, who was part of a government that led economic policies that devastated our entire province. If any member in this particular House ought to be ashamed, I think it should be that particular member, who helped, when they were in government, pursue policies that saw more than 200,000 of our fellow citizens out of work. It was the same members opposite, you know, that pursued policies that left us on a path to \$100 billion in debt. This side of the House will not be lectured by that member.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

#### Timber Allocations within First Nations Territories

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 18 the grand chief of Treaty 8 wrote to the Agriculture and Forestry minister to express surprise and great concern that the ministry had issued an RFP for the sale of timber allocation within the territories of Lubicon Lake and Loon River First Nations. The grand chief writes, "We will not stand by while your government takes steps to give away the resources in our territories without our involvement or consent." The grand chief calls on the minister to suspend the RFP. Will the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry do this? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has the call.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member opposite. We have an open, competitive process when it comes to forest management areas in the province of Alberta, and we're open to all different types of investment opportunities that are forthcoming. I've mentioned to them and to others the great leadership and work that the minister of aboriginal affairs has done as leading to the aboriginal opportunities fund. It is something that's a great opportunity for indigenous people here in the province of Alberta, to be able to be partners in prosperity and develop our great resources that we have here in the province of Alberta.

**Mr. Feehan:** I have a copy of the United Nations declaration that I'll send to your office.

Given that the Minister of Indigenous Relations recently said in the House, "It's time . . . to do the right thing, to show indigenous communities respect instead of patronizing their path to prosperity," and given that these First Nations are demanding respect and control over their own economic resources, will the Minister of Indigenous Relations actually do the right thing and urge his cabinet colleagues to immediately call off this RFP, or were all his fine speeches in this place just patronizing words?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again I'd just like to reiterate the partnerships, the leadership that this government is actually taking, actions to partner with our aboriginal partners here in the province of Alberta versus the fake rhetoric that came from the previous government. We're not just speaking in hollow words

or terminology; we're actually taking concrete economic actions to be able to partner with aboriginal groups here in the province of Alberta with our forestry sector. It's great. The economic opportunities that we have in our forestry sector are amazing. There are tens of thousands of Albertans employed by this industry, and we're going to continue that great work.

**Mr. Feehan:** They'll do anything for the community except for listen to them, apparently.

Given that this government only yesterday voted down a motion that I introduced that would have called for First Nations to be consulted before the sale of Crown land and given that this government is disregarding the wishes of the Lubicon Lake and Loon River First Nations regarding their own resources, again to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: is this complete disregard for nations' treaty rights what reconciliation looks like to you?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. It already is the process for the Alberta government to consult when it comes to any Crown land sales, including with indigenous communities. We have committed to that as a government to continue that process. We are continuing to do that consulting with our First Nations partners across this province. It's unfortunate that the NDP government continues to make things up when it comes to that. What's also, I think, significant is the action this government has taken to build partnerships with indigenous communities all across this province. That party, when they were in power, would not even bring indigenous communities up to Government House to have meetings with them. That's how we started our relationship as a government.

#### Tax Policy (continued)

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, following the introduction of the budget last week we started to hear yet more of the typical fear and smear from the NDP. Then again, I suppose it's not surprising that the party that dedicated its failed one-term government to spending Alberta into a \$60 billion debt hole with \$2 billion in interest per year would be opposed to a measured and fiscally responsible path to balance. That said, I heard one particularly outlandish accusation on personal taxes that I wanted to ask the Finance minister about. Minister, can you tell us if personal income taxes will be going up?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government committed to Albertans that we would balance the budget in our first term without raising taxes, and that's exactly what we're doing. We paused indexation of personal income tax brackets and exemption, but this will not result in additional taxes for Albertans. This is not a tax hike. If you earn the same amount next year as you have this year, you will pay the same amount of income tax as you do this year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley. [interjections] Order.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that that's what I understood, too, and given that the NDP have been doing their best to spread fear and misinformation on personal taxes and given that they feel that if they say the same lie over and over again, it becomes true, therefore I have a clarifying question just to remove all opportunity for the NDP to misunderstand the facts. If I have a constituent who made \$75,000 last year and paid \$2,655 in provincial income tax



last year and that constituent is set to make \$75,000 again this year, how much will they pay in taxes this coming year?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have not raised taxes, so the member's constituent would pay the same amount, \$2,655, in personal taxes next year. Not only that, but Albertans continue to pay the lowest income taxes in the country.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that we are on the topic of the NDP and taxes and given that it was these NDP members who were the architects of the single largest tax hike that has ever been forced upon Albertans by any government in our 114-year history and given that our government repealed that job-killing carbon tax that they never campaigned on, that punished Albertans for driving to work and heating their homes, to the minister: how much will our government save Albertans next year thanks to the repeal of the job-killing carbon tax?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that by repealing the carbon tax, the tax the previous government put on Albertans, Albertans will save over \$1.2 billion a year. Moreover, the previous government also jacked up income taxes on corporations and sent billions of dollars of investment south of the border and with it jobs and opportunities, and with it lower government revenues. We have delivered a budget that will change the trajectory, that will change the course, that will attract investment, create jobs and opportunities, and increase revenues.

#### Community Grant Programs

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, when asked on a recent telephone town hall if CFEP and CIP were being maintained, the Minister of Finance could only answer, quote: stay tuned. Well, they stayed tuned and saw a devastating 35 per cent cut to CFEP and a \$5 million cut to CIP in last week's budget. These programs are essential to nonprofits, and those cuts will be devastating to them, all to pay for a \$4.7 billion giveaway that hasn't created a single job. What will the minister of culture say to the nonprofits and other groups gutted by her cuts to CFEP and CIP?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, CIP grants will continue to be available to Albertans going forward. Most importantly, we have presented a budget that will undo the wrongdoing of the previous government. We've introduced a budget that will bring this province back to balance, that will lay a foundation for future Albertans, a foundation of economic growth, responsibility, and prosperity.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that when asked about the impact that slashing CFEP and CIP would have, the Minister of Finance responded by saying that community groups will be required to do more with less and given that this minister has worked in the arts community in the past and she should know that they are often on extremely lean budgets and don't have a dollar to spare, to the minister of culture: have you done an analysis of how many arts groups will cease to exist or significantly reduce operations as a result of your cruel cuts?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women we are continuing to invest in the arts during this tough fiscal situation, and grant

programs are being streamlined to ensure dollars are going to communities, not bureaucrats. When Alberta's economy was booming, funding for the arts grew to more than 40 per cent higher than the national average. I just wanted to share that with you.

Thank you.

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government expects arts groups and nonprofits to do more with less after giving away \$4.7 billion to profitable corporations and given the minister of culture should know the impact that a 35 per cent cut to CFEP and a \$5 million cut to CIP will have on arts groups and nonprofits, can the minister of culture please inform this House how many job losses in the arts community and nonprofit sector will occur because of her cuts?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our arts funding keeps Alberta in line with the national average for provincial arts funders. To support this mandate, we are developing strategies to preserve and enhance the unique heritage and traditions of all Albertans. This is the first ministry dedicated to supporting multiculturalism in Alberta in over 25 years.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

#### Summer Temporary Employment Program

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the summer temporary employment program, the minister is all over the place. Online he said that these businesses who supported STEP as a way of hiring young Albertans to give them training and experience were just looking for, quote, free money. Yesterday he called STEP an inefficient use of money. To the minister. You supported a \$4.7 billion corporate handout that has so far only created jobs in Wisconsin and Newfoundland. Are you really arguing STEP is more inefficient than your Premier's failed no-jobs corporate giveaway?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we sympathize with employers and students who were hoping to receive funding under this program next summer, but STEP was an inefficient use of government funds. At the cost of \$10 million it created on average 2,500 to 3,000 summer jobs, and that's only temporary employment and not even in their fields. We are investing in other programs that will deliver, and just yesterday we announced a \$6 million investment in Careers: the Next Generation. This will lead to more than 6,000 paid internships that lead to full-time employment, and it also brings private sector to the table. We have limited funds. We need to invest them wisely.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Dana Cramer, a University of Calgary student said, quote, without STEP I would not have received some of my internships during undergrad; in one STEP placement my work led to the creation of two new Calgary-based tech jobs; this was a government program that created local jobs; it should not have been cut, end quote, and given that that this minister keeps rising to defend a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway that has so far only created jobs outside of Alberta, to the minister of labour: why won't you take action to create jobs in Alberta?

**Mr. Copping:** As indicated, Mr. Speaker, this was an inefficient use of government funds, and we are focusing on programs and policies that will make a difference and create jobs. For example, some of the policies and the action we've taken is introducing the job-creation student wage and reducing unnecessary red tape. We are being responsible for our youth. We are not going to leave them with hundreds of billions of dollars of debt. This government was on track to do that. We are going to get our spending under control and create jobs here in Alberta for youth.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that the job-creation youth wage leaves university students out in the cold and given that the STEP program placed over 10,000 students in good jobs since we reinstated it, providing them with essential training experience and supporting their employers during tough economic times, can the minister please tell young Albertans why his jobs plan is more focused on generating corporate profits than quality work experience for young Albertans?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, our government will not be lectured by a government that pursued policies that not only put us in significant debt but also resulted in the destruction of anywhere between 170,000 to 200,000 jobs. We ran on and we were elected on a platform of jobs, the economy, and getting pipelines built. That is what we are going to do, and that is our focus, ensuring that we have policies in place for quality jobs for our youth and all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River is rising to ask a question.

#### Human Trafficking

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Between 2009 and 2016 across the country there were 1,100 incidences of human trafficking reported. Human trafficking has been on the rise across the country since 2010. Ninety-five per cent of those victims have been women, and 70 per cent of those women have been under the age of 25. Human trafficking is a growing evil in our society and one this government promised to take seriously during our election campaign. To the Minister of Justice: what is this government doing to combat human trafficking in Alberta and defend these young women?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll be acting by launching the Alberta action plan to combat human trafficking, a nine-point plan that will take immediate steps to establish a task force that will ensure government and partners work collaboratively, increase education for at-risk individuals and public awareness, and create legislation consistent with the Saving the Girl Next Door Act.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for answering. Given that human trafficking disproportionately affects the vulnerable population of young girls and given that our party made a campaign promise to protect these young girls and given that these commitments include adoption of the Palermo protocol for the definition of human trafficking and an eventual task force to deal with human trafficking, to the Minister of Justice: what steps are being taken today to crack down on those convicted of this heinous crime?

2:30

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we're dedicated to making sure that we lobby the federal government to amend the sentencing

guidelines related to exploitation to add the offence of trafficking in persons to the list of offences to which the forfeiture of proceeds of crime apply. We're also going to advocate to provide consecutive sentences for offences related to trafficking in persons and also create a legislative tort so victims can sue their abusers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: given that human trafficking victims face horrible conditions and suffer often from mental, physical, and sexual abuse and concerns and given that human trafficking is a scourge that degrades women and young girls far too frequently in our society across the country and given this government's multiple campaign promises to support the victims of human trafficking, what is this government doing to ensure that these vulnerable victims and not the criminals themselves have the support that they need?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, thank you to the hon. member for that thoughtful question. Victims and survivors need to know that their government stands with them, hears them, and will provide the tools and resources necessary to support them. In the budget we committed \$6 million to fund a 24-hour hotline to support survivors of sexual assault and sexual violence. We're also committed to providing additional resources to sexual assault service centres, that provide counselling, support, and advocacy for those in need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows is rising to ask a question.

#### Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program Fees

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, when we asked the Premier about new fees for the people immigrating to Canada, he insisted, "There is no such thing," but a quick scan of the budget shows on page 191 of the government's fiscal plan that the Premier was wrong and that there is a new \$500 fee for the Alberta immigrant nominee program. To the Premier: will you apologize to Albertans for the inaccurate statement made to the House yesterday?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I made no such inaccurate statement. The leader of the NDP said that we were raising fees for citizenship applications. I said that the government of Alberta does not process citizenship applications. I think I should know because I was the minister of citizenship for five years. The government of Canada processes citizenship applications. But you know what this reflects . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, I'm sure the people paying \$500 for AINP appreciate that.

**Mr. Kenney:** I'm sorry. The heckling and anger from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora won't make this right for the NDP.

What it reflects is that the NDP leader, after four years as Premier, knows nothing about Canada's immigration and citizenship programs. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. When the Speaker is on his feet, members will come to order.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that while the Premier was making inaccurate claims in the House yesterday, he failed to answer the very serious question raised by the opposition leader yesterday and given that we have cleared up that the Premier did in fact create a \$500 fee for the Alberta immigrant nominee program, can the Premier or the minister of labour please explain why they are imposing a brand new \$500 fee on new immigrant applications?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the Alberta immigrant nominee program is not the citizenship program. They have nothing to do with one another. You know what? The confusion on the other side: it finally explains something to me that I've been puzzling over. Why is it that the NDP for four years so grossly neglected and mismanaged Alberta's immigrant nominee program? Now I know why. The former Premier doesn't even understand anything about it. This government is doing consultations on the new Alberta advantage immigration strategy. This province has brought in the fair practices act. This government is bringing in the action plan for fair . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is another example of how the UCP budget will be hurting Albertans and given that this \$500 fee didn't appear once in the UCP platform and given that the Premier and the labour minister have claimed that they want to encourage more people to immigrate to Alberta, to the Minister of Labour and Immigration: will the minister remove this harmful policy, or is subsidizing a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway the new requirement for moving to Alberta?

**Mr. Kenney:** Every province in Canada charges an application fee for their provincial nominee program applications. The government of Canada has always, of course, charged application fees for permanent residency applications. This government is investing an additional 2 and a half million dollars in our action plan for fairness for newcomers. The NDP did the square root of nothing in four years to knock down barriers for newcomers trying to get work at their skill level, to get their credentials recognized. This government is implementing the action plan for fairness for newcomers and bringing onboard the Alberta advantage immigration strategy.

#### Environmental Monitoring Funding

**Mr. Schmidt:** The residents of Edmonton-Gold Bar live right next door to two refineries, a waste-water treatment plant, and a whole host of other sources of industrial air pollutants. While many rely on these industries for their jobs, they also rely on the provincial government to make sure that their emissions don't pollute the clean air that we all need to breathe. Thursday's budget includes a \$1.5 million cut to environment's air quality monitoring and management programs as part of this government's attempt to pay for its \$4.7 billion corporate handout. Can the minister tell my constituents why it's more important to make sure that corporations get a handout than that they have clean air to breathe?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta Environment and Parks will continue to monitor air and water. It's a very important part of our mandate and our file. We are confident, to the hon. member's constituents, that we will be able to continue to do that job, finding some efficiencies within the department and doing our part to be able to help get Alberta on a path to balance, but it will still remain a priority to monitor the water and the air. At the end of the day, what this comes down to is that that member was part of a government who absolutely destroyed our economy, and this government is going to do its part to get it back on balance.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that the minister seems to be intent on increasing pollution with his answers and given that a number of air pollutants, including particulate matter and ground-level ozone, in the Edmonton area are already high enough that the ministry is implementing a management plan and given that the \$1.5 million cut to environment's air management budget will only make it

harder to implement that plan, to the minister. My constituents are already choking on a \$4.7 billion corporate handout. Why do they have to choke on polluted air, too?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this is the difference between the NDP and Alberta's current government. Alberta's current government recognizes important obligations that we have, like monitoring air and water. We will continue to monitor the air and water in this province to the same standard that we always have. At the same time, we will work to be able to get our budgets on balance, to be able to make sure that we can get this province to a place of balance so that we stop wasting millions and billions of dollars on interest payments to bondholders that that member's government did.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that the minister is intent on wasting money on corporate handouts and given that increases in these air pollutants will mean that my constituents will have more visits to emergency rooms to treat asthma and other respiratory illnesses and given that this budget includes cuts to health care, meaning that those emergency room wait times are only going to go up, and given that CEOs and shareholders who receive that \$4.7 billion handout get to breathe the clean air of Switzerland, the Cayman Islands, or other luxurious locales, why is the minister making my constituents sit longer in emergency rooms while corporations get to sit on \$4.7 billion?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, that is a ridiculous question. First of all, it's already been proven by experts and the media that the assertion of 4 point whatever billion dollars the NDP keep talking about is not true. But if you want to talk about questions that constituents have, my constituents have been asking that hon. member, his former government questions for a long time. Why did you tax our seniors with a carbon tax? Why did you tax our health care system with a carbon tax? Why did you tax our school system with a carbon tax? Why did you punish everyday Albertans with a carbon tax? When is that hon. member going to stand up and apologize for his ridiculous environment policies that hurt this province?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Why are you poisoning my constituents?

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:39.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

#### Hospital Laundry and Medical Laboratory Services

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents have been pleased to see our government keep many of our platform promises since the election. In our platform we committed to cancelling the NDP's planned nationalization of laundry services as well as their ideologically motivated plan to spend \$50 million of taxpayers' money to buy out lab partner DynaLife. To the Minister of Health: is our government still planning to deliver on the commitment to allow laundry services to be delivered by the private sector?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, absolutely, we are. This is a perfect example, actually, of the difference between our government and the NDP. Three years ago the NDP proudly announced that they were blocking AHS's plan to contract out laundry services. It meant spending up to \$200 million to buy new

equipment, and most of the country already contracts out laundry services as well. To the NDP all that matters is public ownership, not value to patients, not value for money. It's ideological nonsense, and we're reversing it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are contracts in place and given that the NDP pursued these contracts as part of their ideological agenda and given that we are not interested in breaking our word and given that we were elected to uphold our promises, to the Minister of Health: how and when will our government's plan to undo the NDP's reckless pursuit of the nationalization of health care services be implemented?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. AHS has contracts in place already for about 70 per cent of their laundry services. The contract for Calgary expires this coming February, and the one in Edmonton runs to March 31, 2023. We have confirmed to AHS that they are free to issue a request for a proposal aligned with those dates, as they intended to do before the NDP stopped them. Depending on the response to the RFPs, we will avoid up to \$130 million in capital costs and up to \$2 million in annual operating costs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister.

Given that the NDP pursued a consistent political agenda that was biased against private partners and in favour of public ownership of all assets in the health system, no matter the cost to the taxpayers, and given that Alberta taxpayers want a government that focuses on patients, not on ideology, can the minister assure the House and Albertans that he will put the interests of patients above ideology?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we ran on a commitment to strengthen our publicly funded health care system. We need to focus on patients, not on ideology and not on who owns a building. That means working with nonhospital surgical facilities to get waiting lists down. That means bringing back the successful ASLI partnership with all partners in continuing care. That means working with DynaLife to avoid a \$50 million buyout. We will keep 700 jobs in downtown Edmonton.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) I wish to advise that the Assembly must meet beyond the daily Routine tomorrow, Wednesday, October 30, for Royal Assent. Although the standing order provides for estimates meetings to be rescheduled if necessary, we anticipate that the ceremony will be concluded prior to the commencement of the committee meetings tomorrow afternoon.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader and Minister of Environment and Parks.

### Bill 19

#### Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to beg leave of the Assembly to introduce Bill 19, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

This bill fulfills the commitments of our campaign platform by setting the TIER system in motion. We're proposing changes to fulfill the government's commitment to protect Albertans in our valuable, large industries from federal intrusions while continuing Alberta's 20-year history of taking meaningful action on emissions management.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any tablings today? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling page 144 of the fiscal plan 2019 – I would recommend its reading to all members of the Assembly – where it states clearly that all the government's \$4.7 billion no-job corporate giveaway costs exactly \$4.7 billion.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mrs. Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, pursuant to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act the Alberta Foundation for the Arts 2018-19 annual report; pursuant to the Alberta Sport Connection Act the Alberta Sport Connection 2018-19 annual report; pursuant to the Historical Resources Act the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation 2018-19 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:06 the hon. Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I have some indication from the other side of the Assembly that they would already like to withdraw and apologize for this. I don't know if that made it up there. If that's the case, I'm happy to yield the floor to them to do that and not waste your time this afternoon.

**The Speaker:** That's awfully kind and noble of you, hon. Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would in fact like to withdraw and apologize on behalf of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West for her comments during that question.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, at 2:39 the hon. Member for Calgary-West rose on a point of order, and the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika also rose.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you. I rise on a point of order under section 23(h), (i) and (j), specifically (i), which states: "imputes false or

unavowed motives to another Member.” At the time, mentioned by you, Mr. Speaker, while the hon. House leader . . .

**Mr. Ellis:** Just yield the floor. They’re going to apologize.

**Mr. Schow:** Can I continue or not? Okay. Well, I’m going to continue if I can.

Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre was answering a question, and the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar stated, “Why are you poisoning my constituents?” Now, I’m certain that the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and their favourite son has no such intention. The only poisoning that I can see here is the poisoning of the decorum in this Chamber by the members opposite. I hope the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar will apologize for his comments.

**The Speaker:** I might just provide a cautionary tale. This might be your first point of order, but we rarely use points of order to create language that might also create an additional point of order, so I would just caution the Member for Cardston-Siksika.

I’m not sure if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar would like to rise.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, taking your advice that you just gave us, I will also not use my arguing of

the point of order to use language that will create another point of order although it’s very tempting.

I do apologize and withdraw. The heat of the moment got the better of me, and I wish to withdraw the statement that I made.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I consider that point of order dealt with and concluded.

Hon. members, the daily Routine has now concluded. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays during consideration of the main estimates the Assembly stands adjourned upon the completion of the daily Routine and any matters arising in conjunction with the Routine to allow for committee consideration of the main estimates. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon for the consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon, the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future will consider the estimates for Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women in the Parkland Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Transportation in the Rocky Mountain Room.

The House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:50 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, October 29, 2019

Day 35

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
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Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 29, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

##### Bill 18

#### Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to move third reading of Bill 18.

The proposed legislation will halt the implementation of a capacity market for electricity and return Alberta to an energy-only market. Alberta's energy-only market has been operating for more than 20 years. It's well established, tried and true. Investors have confidence in the energy-only system, and their willingness to continue to invest in it underlies our decision to stop implementing a capacity market. It's telling that despite their involvement in designing the capacity market that would be operational in 2021, industry overwhelmingly supports retaining Alberta's current market structure. They want the structural and administrative simplicity. They want the regulatory clarity. They want the certainty that the energy-only market provides them. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's energy-only market works. It encourages efficient investment decisions where investors, not consumers or taxpayers, bear the risk, and it has and will continue to deliver an adequate supply of electricity at affordable prices.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans and investors need certainty in their electricity market. If passed, Bill 18 will restore that certainty by ending the creating of a capacity market.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate on Bill 18 tonight? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019. You know, I think I made these comments a little bit at second reading, but I'll expand on them a little bit. I think it's fair to say that both the energy-only and the capacity market have pluses and minuses.

When one reviews the work done by the AESO in having a look at reliability and supply, which is their mandate, over the next while, it's clear why the AESO recommended at the time that we undertook the decision, in '15, '16, '17, to transition to a capacity market. The analysis is right there. It's been made public by the AESO.

As recently as about a year ago, at Public Accounts AESO underlined again their strong support for the development of a capacity market for the two reasons of reliability of supply and affordability. Of course, those things rely on new investment in the sector. New investment is required as many coal plants have reached their end of economic life, and indeed 2012 regulations passed by the Harper government phased out a number of facilities.

That generation supply will have to be replaced in some way, shape, or form, and attracting that investment is important to having security of supply and also an adequate supply so that we avoid price spikes. That was what underpinned the transition to a capacity market.

Now, as I've said, both publicly and privately, many times, within the context of a deregulated electricity market there's no ideological reason to support one over the other. They're both deregulated market mechanisms. That means that a whole bunch of private-sector players, not state-owned companies like in Saskatchewan or elsewhere, are making the decisions about how the lights get turned on and what you're going to pay for it when you do that. In that way, the guiding decision-making, then, in terms of government's approach has to be: what is the best regulatory environment that will ensure that we don't see price spikes and we don't see a threat to security of supply? That was why we got the strong advice that we did from the AESO, and that is why we moved ahead with the development of a capacity market.

Now, as I understand it, this was rejected by the current government for a number of reasons. A number of folks would make a lot of money off price volatility, right? We know this from people who are stockbrokers and make a lot of money off volatility in the stock market. The same sort of thing prevails in electricity.

We also know that one of the reasons why the AESO was recommending the implementation of a capacity market and a few other market reforms at the time was that people were observing – folks who were writing for the U of C School of Public Policy, the AESO, and others were observing; the MSA certainly observed this over the sort of 2010 to 2012-13 period – companies using market power in order to extract excessive rent out of the system. That's another way of saying: gaming the system and the rest of us pay for it, to the extent where the MSA issued new directives prior to our government's time, in '13 or '14. I can't remember when. A number of structural difficulties came from the existence of an energy-only market in a market the size of Alberta's.

Now, the only other place where we see a deregulated market prevailing in an energy-only form without a parallel capacity market functioning is, of course, in Texas, which is a much larger grid with a much different kind of complexity to its electricity system. There are reasons for that. Smaller places with fewer interties and some of the other characteristics of Alberta's electricity system certainly have that capacity market for some of those reasons, curtailing the exercise of market power and for reasons of ensuring better control over price.

Now that we are not moving forward in any way, shape, or form with a capacity market – and I know that some generators have said, "Okay; we don't want this," and that's fine. Others did and likely, depending on its structure, still would, but when the government, this new government, only consulted on a very narrow set of proposals, it was, I think, easier for a number of different interested stakeholders to just go back to the energy-only market structure because the different capacity options that were put before people weren't terrifically good.

I think what we'll have to watch for now are any subsequent reforms to the energy-only market. One of these things that we could do is write straight into the act that affordability is key to the system, but that was something that was rejected by this government, and that is too bad. That amendment along with the removal of the regulated rate option, the so-called electricity cap, are two reforms in the electricity sector that I don't believe will have positive consequences for the vast majority of ratepayers.

That's really what we've got to kind of come back to out of this, Mr. Speaker, which is: what is in the best interests of Albertans? It's not just those of us who pay a utility bill to keep the lights on in

our homes. It is also about our smaller industrial operators. It is also about folks who are doing things like value-added upgrading, whether that's in the oil and gas sector or in the agricultural sector. Electricity is a massive input cost or can be. It has been kept under control for the last few years, and certainly we've seen historically very low prices currently, but with the complete rejection of all capacity market options and, it appears, a number of rejections already of systems to ensure affordability by this government in order to satisfy a very small group, I would argue, of self-interested lobbyists to the exclusion of everyone else who has a stake in the electricity system, it doesn't bode well.

7:40

I think a number of things need to be done in order for us to properly support a bill of this nature, which is why we are not voting in favour of it. For example, the Department of Energy has not yet received its advice from the AESO on reforms to the energy-only market. That advice is due on November 1, after this bill passes, so we certainly have a situation where, you know, it appears, anyway, that the government is just doing what will satisfy a certain small group of self-interested lobbyists at the expense of everyone else and at the expense of all of the fulsome advice that they could be getting around other reforms that could potentially be in this legislation, or they will have to come back to this place if they want to actually address some of the volatility issues and some of the issues around exercise of market power that we talked about.

You know, I think it's important to talk about some of the reasons why a capacity market would incent new investment if appropriately structured and if there was, on the part of the province and the Department of Energy, I think, a good-faith effort at actually taking a 360-degree view of the problems inherent in an energy-only market, some of the problems inherent in a capacity market – we have many examples everywhere to learn from – and then moving forward on that basis for a plan that works for Alberta if they were actually making that good-faith effort.

It's not just about the AESO. There are places where we have seen good advice; for example, Terry Boston. Terry Boston was the former executive vice-president of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Of course, the TVA was an FDR initiative to build about 16 dams and give people good work after the war. Terry Boston also negotiated our agreements to phase out coal, which is, of course, the lowest cost – post-2030, because, of course, coal was being phased out already. But anything between 2030 and 2062: Terry handled that file and did a great job.

Here's what he said about a capacity market.

I spent the last eight years of my career . . .

I will not do Terry Boston's accent although it is delightful.

. . . as the CEO of PJM . . . which has a mature capacity market structure. Private investors from around the world have built over 30,000 megawatts of new generation in PJM under this market structure, which kept the lights on at stable prices. Investors have shown a growing reluctance to invest in the riskier energy-only market designs around the world, preferring the price stability and revenue certainty provided by a capacity market structure. I am confident this model will work well in Alberta too, ensuring future stability in your admirable and smooth transition to a lower carbon electricity system.

There's a guy from the south, very much the south. What I remember most fondly of him is his propensity to add syllables in words and say them extremely slowly. It's a delight to listen to. But not exactly a card-carrying socialist, Mr. Terry Boston. Far from it. I don't think that he was feeling the Bern – put it that way – in the United States. Very much a businessman and very much a lot of experience with very mature, well-developed electricity markets in the eastern United States and in the south.

You know, I think that, really, what this shows is that it was a long time coming, our decision to move forward with the capacity market. Like I said, those decisions were not made quickly. They were made over a period of some months and even, essentially, a year of deliberating on the matter. They weren't made without consultation, and those decisions weren't made without expert advice. It would appear to me that there is a bit of a philistine streak in terms of listening to experts and understanding expert advice and understanding what might be motivating expert advice. That is certainly something where I would caution this government in terms of taking on that sort of posture. It does not reflect well. It does not attract investment, and it does not mean the best kind of well-deliberated-upon public policy.

I will look forward to reforms in the energy-only market, and I will be watching for them because what I care about at the end of the day are people whose doors I knocked on who said: "What are you doing about the transmission and distribution charges? What's going to happen to my bills?" At the end of the day, the people who sent us here, every single one of us – nobody ever asked me about the capacity market versus a well-designed energy-only market on the doorstep, my friends, and I don't know if they ever will. I don't live in any CEO neighbourhoods, but I do live in neighbourhoods where people worry about the cost of living. And removing the cap and putting them back on a roller coaster, in addition to all of the other cost-of-living increases that are contained within other pieces of legislation that we will be deliberating upon tonight, have left me concluding that this Bill 18 does not merit my support at this time.

Having said that, I will reserve my full-throated criticism because I think there are some places where we could indeed undertake some reforms around the energy-only market. Hopefully – cross our fingers – the capacity market would have been a more certain path towards the AESO being able to fulfill its mandate for affordable power, a reliable supply, and a grid that is built to accommodate new investment and growth in the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is anyone else wishing to join in the debate this evening?

Seeing no one, I'm prepared to allow the hon. Minister of Energy to close debate should she choose to do so.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you. I just have nothing further to say.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tonight I would like to move second reading of Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019.

This important bill addresses our overspending problem, improves how we manage our cash resources, promotes fiscal accountability, and helps bring Alberta back to balance. Specifically, Bill 20 focuses on a number of tax-related issues, including pausing indexation of the personal income tax system, eliminating specific tax credits, and the restructuring of important tax-funded services that Albertans rely on. It also closes a number of regulated funds that are no longer required and shifts specific

funding dollars to directly come out of the general revenue fund. This will save on administrative costs, reduce borrowing requirements by about \$650 million, and improve accountability of our spending. In total, it proposes 17 changes across seven ministries.

7:50

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to provide an overview of these changes and explain how they contribute to the positive fiscal health of Alberta now and into the future. I'll begin with changes from my own ministry, Treasury Board and Finance. First, we are pausing indexation of the personal income tax system. This includes credit amounts and tax bracket thresholds. This is a temporary measure until the fiscal situation improves. If passed, Albertans will continue to pay far lower taxes than people living in other provinces. In fact, if it passes, Albertans will pay the same amount of income tax next year as they did this year. We would also pause indexation of other programs, which will be touched on in another bill to come.

Next we're amending dividend tax credits to enact new rates for the '20-21 tax year and onward. The change is in recognition that corporate income is now subject to a lower tax rate, and this measure ensures proper integration of dividend income.

Moving on to tax credits that support the most vulnerable Albertans, we're proposing to restructure child tax benefits in Alberta to be more efficient and better focused on the families who need the support most. Two current programs, the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit, would be consolidated into one program, the Alberta child and family benefit. Under this new benefit approximately 70,000 families would receive increased benefits, and an updated phase-in approach sees benefits increasing as household income increases. This encourages parents as they return to employment while still providing meaningful supports during this transitional period. Merging these two programs is expected to save government up to \$55 million annually when fully implemented while supporting those who need the funding most.

This legislation would also eliminate Alberta's education and tuition tax credit amounts. This change aligns with other provinces like Ontario and Saskatchewan, who have eliminated these credits in their respective jurisdictions. Individuals with bank credits from previous years will still be able to claim them in subsequent tax years, but additional new incremental credits will be eliminated from 2020 onward. This change is poised to save more than \$85 million in 2020-2021 alone. We will continue to help thousands of students receive postsecondary education through scholarships, awards, and student loans.

We would also eliminate the scientific research and experimental development tax credit in favour of a broad-based, low-rate corporate tax system. This is one of a few boutique tax credits we would eliminate in order to improve our cash management. I'll speak more on those in a moment. The job-creation tax cut, combined with the recently adopted accelerated capital cost allowance provision, will benefit Alberta businesses much more than targeted tax credits.

Next we would eliminate the lottery fund and redirect gaming revenue to the general revenue fund. The programs that the lottery fund supported would continue to be funded but through the general revenue fund. This change lowers administrative costs and reduces red tape by simplifying reporting and improving accountability.

Lastly for Treasury Board and Finance changes, we've increased tobacco tax rates by \$5, to \$55 per carton, and will be applying an equivalent increase to other tobacco products. This was effective at 12:01 a.m. on October 25. This change accomplishes three

important things. It aligns us with other western provinces, increases government revenue by approximately \$50 million annually, and furthers our efforts to reduce tobacco usage among Albertans. That last point is key as it also has a positive impact on our health care system.

Next I'll run through the changes to legislation for Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. The majority of these changes are focused on existing tax credits. Like the aforementioned scientific research and experimental development tax credit, we are focusing on moving away from boutique tax credits. First up is the elimination of the interactive digital media tax credit. This tax credit is narrowly focused and limited in scope. This tax credit has not had the broad impact on this sector as was intended. Instead, again we will be focusing on broad corporate tax cuts and supporting all Alberta businesses.

We're eliminating three other tax credits for similar reasons: the capital investment tax credit, the community economic development corporation tax credit, and the Alberta investor tax credit. We know that we can better build on Alberta's competitive strengths through broad supports for all sectors, creating the best economic conditions for businesses to thrive.

However, we aren't solely cutting tax credits. We are creating them where appropriate and where we believe they will have significant impact. That's why this bill creates the film and television tax credit, consistent with our platform, which will replace the existing screen-based production grant program. This is more in line with offerings in other provinces and will support and grow an industry that adds up to \$250 million to our economy and supports more than 3,200 jobs annually.

Moving on to Advanced Education, we would dissolve the access to the future fund. This dedicated fund was established within the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, and in 2014-15 the government suspended cash transfers to it. At this point it is effectively unused legislation, and this will allow us to better use the approximately \$58 million that has sat idle for several years as these funds will be moved into general revenue.

We would also dissolve the environmental protection and enhancement fund. This fund provided support for environmental emergencies, and its sources included forfeited reclamation security, tax forfeiture, and timber royalties. However, a new mechanism has been developed to appropriate funds for environmental emergencies. This is largely about improving our cash management, and we will continue to ensure that funding is available to protect communities from emergencies.

Another dedicated fund that we would dissolve is the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund. Let me be clear. Funding for cancer research or treatment would continue to come through the general revenue fund. Our government believes deeply in supporting the important work in preventing cancer and other chronic diseases. However, this change, again, would improve our cash management and would allow us greater flexibility to invest in initiatives aimed at preventing cancer and other chronic diseases that share similar root causes.

The bill would also amend our funding agreements with municipalities. We are committed to delivering predictable, long-term municipal capital funding so that Albertans have the local infrastructure and services they depend on. The new fiscal framework is affordable and responsible. It balances the needs of municipalities with our provincial priorities and fiscal capacity and aligns with recommendations from the MacKinnon panel. Municipalities have asked for more predictable funding in order to develop their annual budgets and five-year capital plans. This legislation delivers this. Together, under the new Local Government Fiscal Framework Act and Budget 2019, Alberta



would provide similar per capita funding levels compared to other provinces. This legislation includes a funding allocation formula for Edmonton and Calgary.

Lastly, we are introducing new legislation that would provide flexibility in funding for Calgary's green line and Edmonton's LRT. We remain committed to supporting light rail development in both cities, with funding remaining at \$3 billion over nine years. However, we would revise the funding cash flows to help us meet our funding commitment in the current fiscal climate of restraint.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you and the rest of the House for the time and patience to outline each of these changes. I understand that Bill 20 is complex and touches on a number of facets of government operations. There is a lot for members in the House to digest. However, I do believe that all of these changes represent a positive step forward for Alberta and our financial situation. These changes are about transparently transforming how we operate, with a deep focus on fiscal accountability.

Again I'd like to thank members for their time and attention, and I look forward to a healthy debate moving forward. Thank you.

8:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to go through each section of the bill. I appreciate the minister walking through some of the highlights as he sees them, and I will do the same.

I am going to begin with one that he mentioned towards the end, which is the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, and say how dismayed I am that this is one of the areas for I think it was referred to as "streamlining" or "helping the balance sheet." It's had a number of different phrases around it. I think that when it comes to both sides of this House, I've seen members on both sides of this House make very moving personal statements and talk about their families' involvement in cancer prevention as well as surviving cancer or dying of cancer. I think that there isn't an Albertan who hasn't felt a direct connection to cancer or an Albertan who wouldn't want us to prevent cancer. Having funds dedicated to the prevention of cancer – a dedicated fund, the ACPLF – is something that I thought would have been sacred in this province.

I should stop being shocked. I guess I'm not shocked. I'm very disappointed that this is one of the areas that is seen as an easy cash grab in this current fiscal and political climate. There isn't a lot I look south of the border to for inspiration, but one thing I've noticed among one of the leadership candidates seeking the Democratic nomination is the lofty goal of eliminating cancer. I believe it was former Vice-president Biden who said that finding a cure for cancer was something that he was really going to focus government on should he become president. I think those are the kinds of discussions of cancer that I certainly would much rather be having in this place than eliminating the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund.

I'm going to talk about a couple of other pieces. One is around the end of the education and tuition tax credits. This is something that's been in place – I'm sure the Finance minister could say the date that it came into place. I can tell you that, being a kid growing up in the north, in a riding not too far from where the Finance minister represents today, the idea of coming away to university was a scary enough idea, moving from a village of 300 to a city of probably at that time a little more than half a million. But my parents said to me: "We know that this is going to be a big financial burden for you, but we will help. We will pay your tuition. We get the tax credits, but we'll pay your tuition, and then you just need to

worry about your cost of living." And, to be honest, they probably helped with that quite a bit, too. But one of the ways that they were able to do that is because they knew that they would get that tax credit, so I was able to come to Edmonton and not worry about tuition. Most kids in the north don't have that luxury, but I certainly felt very fortunate to be in a position where my parents were able to make that a priority, and in turn they got a tax credit.

Often it's students themselves who claim those tax credits while they're going to school if they're doing something like an apprenticeship and they have an income as well and they're paying taxes. Of course, their income has dipped a bit while they're doing their postsecondary, further studies, and they're able to use those tax credits to help offset some of the significant costs that are associated. Sometimes it's spouses. Sometimes your combined family income when somebody is going back to school takes a significant dip, and it would be even more significant once we deal with some of the other pieces of legislation that seem forthcoming. But at least having that tax credit was something that sort of ordinary, middle-class folks could take advantage of in this province.

This student I spoke with yesterday, Fajar: she's amazing. I'll get the spelling of her name to *Hansard* because it's complicated. She is a fantastic example, I think, of somebody who is seeing the compounding downloading onto her. She talked about the difference with the increase to tuition, which, of course, is not in this bill; with the elimination of the tax credit, which is in this bill; with the elimination of the STEP program and increases to student loan repayment, that is moving from prime to prime plus 1. When we add it up – some of it was nickel and diming, but most of it was rather big – it was about \$600 at least that her tax credit would have been for this upcoming year. For, you know, a 19- or 20-year-old in her second year of university and probably for most Albertans, \$600 is a lot of money.

I know we heard a lot of stories in a previous sitting of this Legislature about people talking about downloading costs around the price on carbon. I remember there being stories from members in central Alberta about \$300 bills and how devastating those were. I think a \$600 bill is something that I didn't expect to see. Again, I should get better at predicting the future given what we've seen as some of the priorities in this place, but it was still very disappointing.

Another one I want to talk about is the tax brackets. We certainly heard quite a bit about that in question period both yesterday and today. I know that the Finance minister and, I think, the Premier as well stood and said that taxes aren't going up, but they are by \$600 million by the end of the 2022-23 fiscal year – \$600 million – simply by suspending the indexation of tax brackets, which is absolutely a move to increase personal income tax.

One that I think will probably be the biggest, actually – well, who knows? These are all big. They all have it seems like at least three zeros behind them. But one that's coming up as well is repealing the city charters. These, again, were legal agreements struck between the cities of Edmonton and Calgary and the provincial government to put a local government fiscal framework in place, starting with Edmonton and Calgary. Of course, the desire was to expand to other municipalities. We've seen across this province, in response to the budget on Thursday and now this bill here today, that municipalities are in a state of significant angst trying to anticipate exactly how they will respond to these significant changes and downloading onto municipalities. For example, the city of Edmonton had I believe it was over \$150 million in dedicated infrastructure projects that were planned based on the agreements that were in place both for MSI and for the big-city charters.

The big-city charters actually didn't even come into effect yet. They were something that was negotiated, that was put in legislation, that the governing party of the day put in the platform to maintain. The then aspiring government, the now government, said in their platform: don't worry; we're going to leave the big-city charters alone; we're going to respect the legal agreements that were struck with Edmonton and Calgary. That has since been broken. I was going to say derailed. I was going to say deviated from, but it's completely being broken.

I believe one of the ministers said: well, we're still going to respect the intent; we're just not going to respect the actual agreement. Well, that's like saying: I'm going to respect the intent of a speed limit; I'm just going to go double the speed limit. Well, that doesn't actually respect the speed limit, doesn't respect the actual law. It's completely breaking it. If an individual were to do that, it would be seen as reckless, dangerous, risky, and there would be consequences for that individual. There could be consequences for other individuals who were involved as well, but there certainly would be legal and punitive consequences for somebody, quote, respecting the intent but completely breaking the actual law. Those are a couple of the ones that I wanted to start with.

One that I'm going to touch on a little bit more is the lottery fund. I certainly welcome members of the government stepping up and providing clarity, because the lottery fund is something that I know has helped every community in the riding I represent, every community league in the riding I represent, and probably every community, social agency, charity, and nonprofit in ridings right across this province. It's something that I get asked, to help find volunteers to work casinos, on a regular basis. Community organizations rely on those funds from the lottery fund to do important things.

8:10

My own community league last week talked about the fact that between some of the lotto funds they had plus the climate leadership fund, "We've put solar panels on the roof, we're further insulating our building, and we'll be net zero by the end of the year," something that they're really proud of. This is a community hub, adjacent to the school, that provides dinners to members of the community. It provides yoga classes, it provides soccer clubs, it provides a simple drop-in space for parents and tots, and it is a place in the building that has been able to access some of the money through the price on carbon as well as money through the lottery fund.

I don't think anyone – well, maybe; I hope not – would say that we should be encouraging gambling or that we should be encouraging pollution, but these programs were put in place to help community organizations meet the needs of the many without having to charge exorbitant fees. Some community associations probably charge a lot of money to be members, but because we had access to programs like this, we charge nothing to be a part of the community league in Inglewood, for example.

I know that there are others that have done major renovations to their hall, renovations that haven't been done in 40 or 50 years that now have been able to be done, and as a result the facilities are used far more than they were before. Woodcroft Community League, for example, just did a major renovation, and again that was possible because of good long-term planning, accessing the lottery fund, and the community pulling together to do those initiatives to make sure that that funding was there to support that.

There are others that use funds for ongoing basic operations, operations of things like seniors' programs. Again, I recall the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre talking about, you know: how dare you download costs onto seniors. But that's exactly what this bill and this budget are doing, downloading costs

onto organizations like seniors' organizations that do social activities and do different things. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Riverview often talks about elder abuse programs that are available through the province. They do get some grants directly from government, but I think that those have been reduced, again, this year. I know that they were discussing it this morning. If I was wrong, I'm happy to be corrected by my colleagues on either side of the House.

They get some grant funding specifically for that, but these seniors' organizations also access lottery funds so that they can do important work in our communities. Ending the lottery fund and moving money into general revenue I think is something that has been done in a significant way to, quote, streamline costs or reduce expenses. Well, those reduced expenses have significant impacts on our communities and on the programs and work that's done in our communities to support one another.

Again, I'll recap sort of the five points I've mentioned: the elimination of the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, heartless and backwards and, I think, shameful; the lottery fund, something that I think has benefited probably any community organization that you can think of in your own ridings and in others; suspending the tax brackets for income tax. Again, that's \$600 million. I'm sure that people have probably asked: are we really, really seriously doing this? Isn't this something that our leader pushed back hard on in Ottawa before coming back here? It was. Repealing the city charters for Edmonton and Calgary: I know that a lot of folks are probably going to feel that. These cities are two of the largest cities in western Canada. They provide important services for the people who live in them, and also they're hubs for people who don't.

I know that when I was at an Oil Kings game not that long ago, I was talking to a family that was here because they were accessing the Stollery children's hospital, and they were taking in a game while they were here. They were from out of town, significantly out of town. These are hubs, and an attack on Edmonton and Calgary is an attack on Albertans and all Albertans who use these cities and live or work or come here to recreate here as well.

And then, of course, the end of the education and tuition tax credits, something that I know helped me get to where I am today. Probably many members in this House have claimed them themselves, either for themselves going to postsecondary or for somebody they love going to postsecondary. There's something that made that big bill, that's only going to be bigger because of this budget, a little bit easier to digest come tax time, at least, something that I think was put in place because we had a vision in this province of helping people who wanted to access higher education be able to attain that, and we wanted to encourage that as a society. Unfortunately, in the first two sittings of this Legislature we've seen a two-tiered minimum wage, one for students and one for non students. If you're not a student, you get paid more. Now we're seeing attacks on postsecondary through the elimination of things like the STEP, increases in tuition, cutting grants to postsecondary institutions, and repealing the benefits that people who are paying those additional fees saw over many, many years. If one of my colleagues has a chance to find out when Alberta brought in that tuition tax credit, I think that that would be something worth considering. I know that at least for one generation it's been in place and, I imagine, even longer.

When I visit with school groups, I talk to them about how some of my priorities include a really strong public education system, which, to me, means that every kid is in, every kid is welcome, and every kid can succeed. I talk about how we're investing in them, how we choose as a province to give them opportunities through their education to ensure that they can attain their fullest.

This bill is saying to postsecondary students or aspiring postsecondary students – I also am concerned what message this sends to them, to students who are thinking, “One day I want to go back to school,” whether it’s somebody who’s already been out for a number of years or somebody who isn’t yet done high school and is thinking about their future. What message does it send to them that we are eliminating – this reminds me a lot of when, on the eve of the 2015 election, charitable tax credits were being attacked, and I think that many of us, especially those who ran in that election, remember how angry the public was that government was eliminating tax credits for charities or reducing at that time tax credits for charities. Here we are proposing the complete elimination of a tax credit for those who are going to postsecondary, and I think that that is not something that anyone in this place should be proud of.

Again, the cancer prevention legacy fund: I don’t think that was in the platform; I don’t think that’s something that your constituents asked you to do. I doubt they said: “You know what we need less of? Less prevention of cancer. Let’s spend less time and less money preventing cancer.” I imagine you probably had some stories of people who are living with cancer and how much they desperately needed increased supports and access. I know that, especially in rural communities, there are a lot of rural hospitals that are advocating to have more access to cancer treatments. I know that when I was in Hinton for the opening of the new wing there for cancer treatments, a beautiful facility where chemotherapy happens, that was something that the community was incredibly proud of, not just because it was a beautiful facility with a view of the mountains – it certainly is – but because it meant that people didn’t have to spend time on the highway and they didn’t have to ask their loved ones to take a day off to drive them for their treatments. It was about actually working to make life better, which I know is a slogan on the government documents these days.

I think one of the ways that that could be done is if, instead of cancelling or cutting Alberta cancer prevention, instead of cancelling or cutting tuition tax credits, instead cancelling or cutting the deals that were reached with Edmonton and Calgary, instead of cancelling or cutting the indexation of personal income tax, we could all be in this place actually fighting for things that will make life better. Again, as has been mentioned, the stark contrast between giving \$4.7 billion in a no-jobs corporate handout and being able to maintain some of these programs and at the end of the day actually having a \$2 billion bigger deficit than there would have been otherwise, I think, is deeply disappointing. I imagine that members on both sides of the House paused to ask themselves: is this really what we were elected to do? I don’t think it was, Mr. Speaker.

That being said, I think I’ll cede the remainder of my time to my colleagues and ask that members on both sides of this House pause to consider why we were sent here and if these are really the kinds of cuts that we were proud to campaign for.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join debate?

Unfortunately, the minister has already spoken, and 29(2)(a) isn’t available until after the third speech. I’m sure that if you would like to join the debate, 29(2)(a) will be available following the next speaker, assuming that there is one.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the bill this evening? The hon. Minister of Transportation has the call.

8:20

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn’t going to speak, but because the hon. Finance minister can’t speak twice on this reading, I just need to point out that there will be no less cancer prevention

that goes on. A bank account closed. All the activities of that bank account to prevent cancer will continue. It will continue from a different bank account. It will just be a less expensive overhead for the taxpayers.

What the hon. member said, whether it was intentional or not intentional, was not accurate. There will be no less cancer prevention as a result of what the hon. Finance minister has included in this bill.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see that the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board would like to add a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member who responded. I’d just like to add to that. By dissolving these funds, specifically the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, we will not be reducing funds spent on cancer prevention, research, or treatment. I concur that there’s not one of us in this House that has not been touched personally by cancer in one way, shape, or form, and this government will continue to fund cancer research, cancer prevention, and cancer treatment at the same levels even though this fund will be dissolved.

Similarly, with the lottery fund, Mr. Speaker, we will not change the use of those funds. Community groups and charities will continue to be able to access those funds in the same way and at the same level that they did before. The fundamental difference is that Albertans elected us to manage the province’s resources responsibly, and this is part of a measure that will streamline the operation of government, save Albertans \$13 million annually, and save on administration costs so that more money can go to front-line service delivery such as cancer prevention, research, and treatment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** There are three minutes and 30 seconds left under 29(2)(a) if anyone else would like to add a brief question or a comment. I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. I guess that the tough thing is that there used to be a dedicated area where we knew every year how much was going towards cancer prevention, the cancer prevention legacy fund, and it had dedicated financing focused towards it every single year. So we knew overtly through this place and through the presentation of financials what the government’s priorities were when it came to cancer prevention.

What we are seeing is the elimination of the fund. The minister says that the funding won’t actually be cut. I would love a reference to where that is and what confidences can be given. Certainly, I know that when we were dedicating money specifically to a fund and we had staff specifically cast with conducting research and supporting postsecondary research, often in cancer prevention, we knew that that was a focused, dedicated mission of that organization.

Of course, general revenues have a variety of focused, dedicated missions, including things like setting corporate rates for taxation and other things. I would love it if the minister would like to show us exactly where and how we can have that public confidence through this place in receiving public documents about the budget and about how much is actually being allocated towards cancer prevention because certainly under the elimination of the fund I don’t have that confidence, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** There’s approximately a minute and 40 left under 29(2)(a) if anyone would like to add a brief question or comment. I see the hon. Minister of Finance has risen again to do so.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to respond to the member opposite. We will be continuing to support cancer prevention, treatment, and research to the same levels that we would have had we maintained the fund. We're able to do this through the budgeting process, and the Minister of Health will be able to manage his budget in his department to accommodate this type of spending. Cancer prevention, research, and treatment remains a very high priority for this government, as it is for all Albertans.

The same can be said again for the lottery fund. We know that community groups and charities benefit significantly from these funds. I hear about this regularly in my constituency as various groups conduct their operations this way. Mr. Speaker, this funding will remain in place. It will not change for those groups that rely on it.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for brief questions or comments.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has caught my eye. He would like to join the debate this evening.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly would enjoy speaking on the item of the day, Bill 20. I must say, not with any delight, that the Unlimited Cuts and Pain Party is living up to its name once again this evening. All pain, no economic gain once again.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The governing party does not acknowledge and refuses to acknowledge that the royalty windfall era, from which we've been rescued from economic disaster numerous times and which we've relied upon to fund our government and public services mistakenly over 44 years of Conservative rule – that era of relying on fossil fuel windfall revenues is winding down. The time now is for transitional investment, Mr. Speaker, not retrenchment, not shrinkage, not magically hoping that trickle-down economics will once again cause the oil and gas sector to rebound to what its former glory was. They are fundamentally and for all Albertans, present and future, tragically wrong in their assumptions about the Alberta economy and what they're doing to prepare this province and its citizens and its economy for the transition that we are facing. It's a transition away from reliance on fossil fuels for 30 per cent of our budget, and it's a transition to a new economy, which features things like artificial intelligence and a much smaller reliance upon labour in many resulting cases because of the application of artificial intelligence.

What we need now is, fundamentally, a shift to retraining and preparing our population for that new economy that's coming upon us, whether the government wishes to acknowledge and accept it or not. We need to transition away from risk that is not only – I wouldn't say in slow motion; it's a fairly rapid approach that we are having over the next two to three decades. It's commonly talked about globally, but this government seems to want to resist the reality of climate change and the transition away from fossil fuels and refuses to do things to take advantage of our opportunity that we have to develop a strategy to make the best use of our natural resources, our oil and gas resources, over the time frame of the next couple of decades and transition to a use of them that would be more oriented to plastics and perhaps other products we don't even know about yet.

That requires an investment, Mr. Speaker, an investment in education, an investment in our younger generations. In order to improve your financial picture because of the loss of this revenue, it doesn't mean that you go ahead and take the knees out from underneath the rest of your society. Because one element of your

workforce is hurting, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to go ahead and say: "Well, good grief. We're going to make everybody else hurt equally, and that's going to make things better." That doesn't address the fundamental problems that we're facing.

Those things are things that this government seems to be blind to. It's going to be very hurtful for the province over the long run to do things such as the measures that are envisioned and proposed under Bill 20. It touches on ending some of the tax credits and capital investment tax credits, the digital media tax credits that were in place, some from our government and others that even preceded our government, that were incenting new activity and really recognizing the change and transition to a new, intelligent economy that took advantage of the young generation that we have here. It took advantage of the investments that have been made in the past in our universities and our colleges, and it would continue those wise investments while we are in need of taking all the opportunity we have from this short window in order to transition our intelligentsia, our young people, our brain trust to getting onboard with the new economies, that are forthcoming quickly.

8:30

Unfortunately, we're getting lots of people now in this province who are saying: "What the heck are we getting out of this government? We're not getting prepared for the future. We basically keep sticking our heads in the sand like someone who is afraid of the future." You have to recognize what's going on in this province, Mr. Speaker, and look forward without fear and without trepidation. The government is looking, in Bill 20, at ways of grabbing bits of money here and there and attempting to, in many ways, stealthily create a budget that looks like it's not going to hurt anybody, but indeed the pain that's going to be caused unnecessarily is astronomical. The tax bracket suspension, the deindexing of the tax brackets, is going to cost taxpayers about \$600 million by the end of the '22-23 fiscal year. Yet the minister this afternoon stood in the House and talked about how, if your income didn't go up beyond \$75,000, your taxation wouldn't change, so where's the hurt? Well, I'll tell you what. The measure will end up taking in \$600 million by the end of '22-23, so somebody is paying it.

It's called bracket creep, and it's something that the current Premier, while he was with the Canadian taxpayers' association and also an MP in Ottawa, spoke about numerous times. In fact, I think that if you search [openparliament.ca](http://openparliament.ca) for the words "bracket creep," you'll find that the current Premier of this province comes in second place to Monte Solberg: 36 search hits for Monte Solberg and for our current Premier 26 mentions of bracket creep on the parliamentary record in Ottawa. He railed against it constantly, yet in fact here he is implementing the same type of tax policy here, one that he criticized repeatedly and vociferously in the House of Commons when he was a Member of Parliament there.

So be careful about what you said in the past, but also watch out for those that are very quick to criticize, because they may indeed know more about the implementation of measures to impose bracket creep than anybody else, and indeed that seems to be what's happening here. The Premier's experience in Ottawa has told him that there's maybe one way that he could increase tax revenue by \$600 million, an increase in taxes, which he never promised anybody in his platform, yet \$600 million, at the end of the day, is going to be taken out of the pockets of Albertans of every tax bracket. It's going to be a tax increase that wasn't promised.

Yet, of course, we're getting a song and dance from the government that, in fact, it's not a tax increase. Well, I'll tell you what. That \$600 million is going to be in the coffers of the provincial government at the end of '22-23. It came from

somebody's pocket, and the only pocket, we're constantly reminded about, that is available to pay taxes in this province is the taxpayer. So if it quacks like a duck and walks like a duck, it's a duck. That's a tax increase of \$600 million that this government has promised to implement as part of this omnibus Bill 20.

I can't wait to hear the cacophony of stories and, I would say, anger and upset and probably surprise from many, many long-time former Conservative supporters, maybe current Conservative supporters, about the proposed ending of the lottery fund and moving the money into general revenue. Now, we may hear yet the government suggesting that the programs and so forth under the lottery fund will be maintained. I am not certain of the details on that, and I'm certainly eager to hear. But there's a lot of uncertainty out there among many, many people in communities, rural and urban, right throughout the province who really relied upon the funding that came out of the lottery fund as community initiatives that would otherwise never get the funding or receive money to launch a community initiative. So whether it's a small community like Thorhild, that I originally came from, or your own local community league, there were lottery funds that were at work. They could be matching funds. They generated a huge lot of community infrastructure and events that otherwise wouldn't have happened. It's become something that the province has relied upon and has been a great community-building fund of money that people expected to see into the future.

I'm thinking that perhaps with the Premier's distance from the communities he purportedly served when he was serving in Ottawa, perhaps he has not really realized the depth to which the lottery fund has been appreciated in this province. I'm staying tuned to listen to the supporters, the former supporters at least, of the current government and past Conservative supporters from the time when this lottery fund was initiated to the present. You're going to have a lot of people wondering out loud at community meetings, at perhaps even ag societies, at local skating rinks, Boy Scouts, 4-H clubs, and all kinds of organizations that look forward to receiving some form of grant or assistance or matching fund from this lottery fund. I don't think it'll take long before the voices are loud and clear that this is a wrong-headed move and perhaps one that this current government will live to regret.

The number of things that they're contemplating doing under one bill always begs the question: why an omnibus bill, and why the move to block things together? Well, typically it's because a government wants to bury things by volume. One of the things that they had perhaps hoped to mute somewhat was the repealing of the city charters for Edmonton and Calgary and putting a new local fiscal framework act in its place.

We had the Minister of Justice today shrieking at reporters about how the mayor of Calgary should get his own house in order and then hightailing it back in behind closed doors, perhaps in embarrassment over what he said. But I can tell you that that interview will be one that's going to be replayed many, many times, perhaps not as many times as the cookie interview, but it certainly was a memorable piece of television news this afternoon, that I think the Minister of Justice probably regrets already but that I think epitomized the attitude of this government as we move forward through its mandate, how it's solidifying and retrenching and circling to hold fast to a mistaken belief that if they simply maintain loyalty to trickle-down economics, somehow the austerity budget will get us through to the other side and, lo and behold, the resurrection will take place and oil prices will rise again.

8:40

That, in fact, isn't something that most researchers support in terms of predictions, and I think that we'll come to see pretty soon

how easily it's told that the economic predictions of boom or this UCP-predicted boom because of their \$4.7 billion tax giveaway turns into a busted theory. It has been proven time and time again that giving a tax cut to major corporations, expecting them to incent the economy, is not something that economically works out.

Why we had to go through this failed experiment again is beyond me, but, you know, this is the bet they're making. They're making a big bet, and – I'll tell you what – they're taking Alberta's economy along for the ride on that bet. The bet is one that, unfortunately, this government appears willing to risk everything on, and that means our economic future, that of our children, and it so didn't have to be this way, Mr. Speaker. The problem is . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the comments from the Member for Edmonton-McClung. One of the things I was hoping he might just spend maybe a moment on is around the deindexing, the student tuition tax credits being removed. Throughout his travels within his constituency – I know that in Edmonton-Decore I have all three of the high schools in north Edmonton, so I get a chance to chat with my high school students on a regular basis – I'm wondering how excited, maybe, some of the students in his riding or maybe their parents, that are going to be helping out those students heading off to university, are around losing out on these tax credits. Also, maybe just in general thoughts around his constituents and the deindexing of the brackets and how, you know, his constituents are looking forward to, hopefully, not getting a raise just so that they won't pay any more. I was hoping you might be able to share some thoughts around that.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, with about four minutes remaining under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Glad to respond. Thanks to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for his questions and concerns about his constituency. Of course, we're all here to serve our constituents, and that's what's at the bottom of my comments when I express my concerns about this government's proposed Bill 20 to end so many of the things that were put in place to get us through and bridge us through a downturn in the economy, so many things that we relied upon on a community basis such as the lottery fund grants and so forth and also things such as the tuition tax credits.

Now, this government seems intent on targeting students and young workers in many measures that have been implemented or that are proposed to be implemented under Bill 20. We've already seen a \$2 decrease in the minimum wage based on age for young workers. That's a huge hit. That's 3,400 bucks on an annual basis that a young student is going to be forced to come up with or that their parents are going to be forced to come up with to put them through school because of that \$2-an-hour wage cut.

On top of that, now with Bill 20 we're seeing an attitude towards young people that, in fact, they're kind of dispensable. We don't realize, through this government, the value of our young people, and it's disheartening to see that as a result of some of the tax credits and tuition tax credit changes, parents are going to end up having to pay more to put their young people through school. Mr. Speaker, it's a time frame when we need to be taking advantage of the window we have to get our young people educated in areas that they are going to take advantage of and that allow them to enter into the new, intelligence-based economy, that is rapidly upon us. It's coming very quickly, and it's in many cases already here.

So many of the things that our past government was doing to incent activity in the new economy are being swept aside by this government in a short-sighted effort to reach a balanced budget. The result is long-term damage to our population, to our young people, to the intellectual capacity that we have as a population. It's more than short-sighted; it's irresponsible. I'm deeply, deeply concerned that we will become not only barren ground for young people, who are going to be going elsewhere to do things with their degrees, if indeed they even decide to take their degrees here. There are lots of reasons why we might find that the people who are looking to invest may just decide to invest elsewhere, and part of that is because they've got a workforce that can't afford to go to university here.

I'm thinking not only about this generation, Mr. Speaker; I'm thinking about, you know, 20, 30, 40 years from now. That's the type of effect and impact that the measures of this government are having upon future generations by implementing omnibus bills like Bill 20 and the elements within it that will have a long-lasting, damaging impact. The Premier would have us think that the goal of reaching a balanced budget as a result of his measures is a worthy one, but it's really damaging.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to join debate.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 20 and bring my concerns to the table on a bill which probably should be renamed *The Bill to Centralize Power and Money in the Hands of a Small Oligarchy in the Province of Alberta*, because when we look at what the intention is here in this bill, it's clearly to remove control from community groups, from individuals and money from those people and centralize it into the power of the government to make decisions and, of course, as we know, to reward their paymasters in the political realm and in a small section of our economy, to ignore everyone else who doesn't fit into their vision of the universe.

You know, I'm very concerned even that this bill exists in this nature, that we see this happening increasingly in Canada and around the world, where an omnibus bill is put together, in this case bringing together 15 different actions and putting them all into the same act, because it has the very clear purpose of limiting the ability to address them in a clear and independent way so that we can respond to them one by one. The cloud that is created from an omnibus bill makes it very difficult to communicate to the public.

Of course, we know that that's exactly the intent of this government. We know that they put earplugs in because they don't really want to hear what anyone who isn't part of their elite corporate group has to say, and now they try to find repeated ways to take the voice away from people so that not only do they not have to hear but that, in fact, people do not have an ability to speak to issues. This is just another way in which they are doing this, just as they have here in the House by limiting, you know, the voice of the opposition through a number of changes to House rules. Of course, they have done so by changing rules around unions and changing rules in a variety of other areas.

What we see, you know, is a government that's intent on a path that is so antidemocratic, as are so many other things that they have done since they got into government a mere six months ago. We see them essentially acting in a way which betrays that which we have learned as a western democracy in terms of ensuring the voice of the people in the governance of the province. I know that I can say that kind of thing in this House and it won't get very far, and they know that as well because it's very difficult for people in the

community to have a deep understanding of how it is that their rights are slowly being taken away from them, how the sands that hold up democracy in western parliaments are being slipped away by people whose only intent is to centralize power to themselves and a small group of people.

8:50

Now, having said that, I think I will make some attempt to talk to some of the articles of the bill because I think they're very concerning. Of course, what they all have thematically the same amongst them is the idea that the things that give opportunity and advantage to a variety of people are taken away from them. Each and every action within this bill is intended to reduce the ability of people to live a good life in their own way and to make decisions in their own lives that are positive.

I want to start with a statement by the minister who presented the bill. In the House earlier this evening he was addressing the question of the pausing of the indexation, and he said something much along the lines of: you will pay the same amount this year as next year. We can check that in the Blues later, but I'm fairly sure that I caught that right.

What I think is really important about this is that this is clearly a statement that's intended to mislead the House, because we know that there actually is money to be gained from this. The minister himself said that there is money to be gained from this; \$600 million will be gained from this. What he is saying is that if you have \$25,000, the tax rate for \$25,000 will stay the same this year as it does next year. So technically he's saying that the number is the same. What he's not telling you is that this is ignoring the reality that this has a differential effect on people when you don't index things and that, in fact, you will be paying more even if the numbers on the chart in the tax bill remain exactly the same. Now, he knows that, but more importantly, we know that the Premier, his boss, also knows that because he's addressed this as an issue, this behaviour which we refer to as bracket creep.

I just happened to have an opportunity to look up *Hansard* from the Canadian Parliament, on March 2, 1999, when the Premier was a member of the national Reform Party, and he actually had something to say about this very issue. I will quote a little bit from *Hansard* because I don't want to put words in the Premier's mouth. I want the Premier to tell you what he thinks about this sort of behaviour that his own Finance minister is engaged in. What he says is:

Again, as I pointed out in question period, with the new Liberal math they forget to tell us the whole story. Part of the story is that since 1993, 1.2 million low income Canadians, those who can least afford it, many of whom are under the poverty line, single mothers and single parents struggling to get by or seniors on fixed incomes, have seen themselves pushed on to the tax rolls by the government's pernicious back door tax grab called bracket creep, by the pernicious tax on inflation.

**Ms Hoffman:** Who said that?

**Mr. Feehan:** That was Premier Kenney at a time when he was a Member of Parliament in Ottawa.

**Ms Hoffman:** The current Premier.

**Mr. Feehan:** That's right. The current Premier.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt at this juncture; however, I just want to remind the House that names of individuals in the House won't be used even when responding to questions between each other. Going forward, just make sure that we refer to each other in the third person, through the Speaker.

Thank you.

**Mr. Feehan:** I believe I did say Premier Kenney, but I will keep it limited to Premier if that's the correct procedure. Thank you.

I think that's very important, that this very thing that is being introduced by the Minister of Finance here today was described in that one sentence twice by the Premier as "pernicious" behaviour. I think that's very disconcerting, that he would be saying that about what, effectively, is behaviour by his own minister. And I think it's important that we speak about the fact that this is what he refers to as a "tax on inflation"; that is, inflation, which naturally happens, will push people into a place where they are paying more taxes. We know how much it is because the minister himself has said that it's \$600 million. That is particularly assaultive. Listen to the group of people that the Premier was concerned about at the time, that is "many of whom are under the poverty line, single mothers and single parents struggling to get by or seniors on fixed incomes."

So what we have is a government who knows that they are attacking the most vulnerable people in society. We know because these are the words of the Premier himself, and he says that this is "pernicious." You know, what do you say about a government that has those kinds of judgments about a behaviour that they in fact are engaged in?

He goes on to say, by the way:

If these people get a cost of living adjustment in their pension cheques or their minimum wage income from working in the labour force, if they get an automatic COLA, a cost of living adjustment, they end up paying taxes not because they are making more in real terms – they are making the same in real terms – but because the government decides to generate more revenue to finance its insatiable appetite for spending in a way that is not transparent, in a way that Canadians cannot see it and in a way that parliament cannot approve it.

That's a very serious condemnation of this behaviour on the part of the very government that he is now in charge of. You know, there are words we can't use in this House to describe people's behaviour, but when someone publicly makes a statement decrying a behaviour and then engages in that behaviour, we all know what words apply. And I think it's very upsetting that here we are in the province of Alberta doing that exact thing.

This is just one of 15 ways in which the government has extended its reach, extended its power, and pulled away resources from members of the community in a way that is the least transparent possible, by sticking it into an omnibus bill so it cannot be debated individually on its own merits, each individual piece.

Now, I know that the minister has stood up and suggested that these things don't really matter, that the elimination of the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund will not mean less money for cancer research, that the elimination of the lottery fund will not mean less money for community groups. But what he's not saying, as the Premier said in Ottawa – the language that the Premier used was that it was "not transparent" and that it was done "in a way that Canadians cannot see it and ... that parliament cannot approve it."

What is happening here is that they're taking all of these dollars and they're bringing them in under their control, where there will no longer be legislation that controls how much money is being sent out into the community. They can say to us now: don't worry; we'll take in those lottery dollars, but we will send the same number of dollars out into the community as happened under the lottery fund. But the difference is that under the lottery fund there is an act that controls how much that money will be, what percentage of the lottery funds come in, how that money is allotted to various community groups and then goes out again. There's an act that controls that decision-making, and in order to change that, you would have to change the act.

What they've done is they have subverted the act. They've subverted that by taking the dollars out of a transparent, accountable process and slipping it into the government's back pocket, where they can begin to distribute money in any way they choose to do so without accountability to an act. Before, when the lottery dollars came in, they would have to demonstrate to the public that they actually did with the money what the lottery act said that they should do with the money.

9:00

Now, instead, they could decide on any average day to reduce the amount of money put out in the lottery fund by, let's say, 50 per cent and would not have to be accountable to any kind of an act. That's the perniciousness of this whole bill. That's what they're doing. That inherent level of dishonesty in the creation and construction of this bill is appalling to me.

We look at the number of things that they're doing. They are eliminating the interactive digital media tax credit. We know that gaming companies that were taking advantage of this are saying that there was absolutely no consultation on this and that it's devastating to them and that it's going to have them reconsider whether or not they really want to be investing in the province of Alberta.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has risen under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Getson:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of things here that I've been quiet on, and the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford made reference to it again, about the earplugs being worn in the Chamber. The member that he keeps referring to from the UCP: well, that was me. For those that were here that night, I measured the level of decibels that were being expended by the member that sits over here. It was over 98 decibels, towards 101 that evening, where the noise-induced hearing loss issues are at 85 decibels or higher. I had shared with the Chamber at that time that I had tinnitus, as it is. At that time I also had some allergy issues or some other issues that were taking place, and I had actual pressure on the inside of my ear. So, yes, indeed, for the record – and it's been stated before – I am the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, that wore one single earplug in my left ear – one single earplug in my ear – that, yes, the Premier put in. [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has the call. I will listen to his question or comment for four more minutes. That's what you have left in time.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, yes, in fact, I did put one single earplug in that was made available to me because my head was splitting out wide.

Now, I find it very hard to believe that the folks over there, who want to stand up for the little guy all the time, are actually picking on me, a little six-foot-two guy who had a hearing issue. What I am going to be doing for the record and since they want to keep going on this: I did have an audiology report that took place once we were out of session because I sucked it up – as my dad used to say, "Suck it up, Buttercup, when you're working" – and I put up with that issue for a while. This summer I had an audiology report, and indeed I do have problems in my left ear. The tinnitus was an item, but I had unequal pressure in my left ear, for which now I have a meeting with an ear, nose, and throat specialist on November 8, again, which I would be more than happy to table.

I find it very insulting to be picked on, quite honestly, again by the bully crowd that wants to point out a medical condition. If I had a hearing issue, well, I guess that's just not good enough to be taken at its word. It continues to come up nonstop, and I don't appreciate

it. So if the members could please refrain from talking about my issues and making light of it or anything else, it would be much appreciated.

Even with my left ear, that still hurts a bit, depending on the environment, I still heard the minister quite clearly say that coming down to the lottery fund, it was going into general revenue. It was going into one bucket that could be drawn from. There wouldn't be any shortfalls. Even with my left ear, that still doesn't work as well, in listening to that, I can hear clearly that it was said, again, when it comes to the cancer type of items, that it wasn't going to be reduced in funding. It's simply a matter of efficiencies.

To save the Alberta taxpayers about \$13 million through efficiencies: to make that out to be something else is actually a disservice to what we're doing. So quit scaring, quite honestly, the members, the province. Quit scaring the people that have those different conditions. Quit scaring the people in my area, that rely on those lottery funds, and listen to the points. Instead of speaking to the camera for the 10-second sound bite that they're going to throw up on their Facebook feed, perhaps let's do some service to the Alberta population and listen to the questions and listen to the answers that are provided.

With that, I would like to see if the member would actually like to retract it or maybe restate his position on the hearing issues and the earplugs. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Two minutes left under 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely no one is mocking the member for his hearing issues. That's absolutely sad to hear about. We're all with you on that.

I was in the House when the Premier handed out earplugs, laughed. We all witnessed it. A number of us witnessed it. What the member was referring to was nothing to do with you, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. The member was referring to the continued attacks on democracy, the shutting down of debate, as we've seen many times, and he linked that quite adeptly, I would say, to this bill ahead of us, Bill 20, this omnibus bill. It's an omnibus bill, the same tactic that Harper used, combining multiple pieces of legislation, each of which could be independently reviewed and debated, but this government is choosing to do otherwise.

I'm going to sit down so the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford can also respond, but he is absolutely in no need of apologizing. That's a fact.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen with about 30 seconds left.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thirty seconds. Thank you. I thank the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland for his comments, and I assure you, if I ever refer to earplugs, I explicitly will tell him now that it is not a reference to him individually but, rather, to the general behaviour of the government and of the Premier, who generally handed out earplugs to people who did not have a problem with their left ear. I for the record exclude you from all such comments in the future.

**Mr. Williams:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Having heard a point of order called, I see the hon. Member for Peace River is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Williams:** You'll forgive me, Mr. Speaker, if this is the wrong point, but the hon. members across the way referred to "you"

multiple times in reference to my colleague, and as the Chamber knows, the only "you" in this Chamber is the Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I don't find a point of order with regard to that at this stage. Using certain terms in this House can be dealt with circumstantially. In the case that we've heard so far this evening, I haven't found something that crosses over. I assure you that when I do, I will be the first to stand up and call the House to order.

Considering that to be dealt with and looking to any other members who wish to speak to the bill proper, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen to speak on this.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to add some of my thoughts around Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, which – I don't know – has been pointed out by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford as a bit of an omnibus bill. You know, I can't help but find some of the irony a little bit around this. We have a couple of members that were around during the 29th Legislature who went on, shall we say, ad nauseam around what they thought were some omnibus bills that were presented by the former NDP government. It's always interesting when you hear objections to those kinds of things and when somebody is finally put into the position of being able to do it differently: here we are, second verse, same as the first. But I won't dwell on this.

I want to get into some of this bill that's being proposed. Initially, during the opening of second reading here, some of the comments that I heard from the Minister of Finance, you know, some little things that we are talking about here around, say, for instance, reducing red tape – and as the red tape critic, I've always said that I'm very much onboard. You know, do we need to make 15 copies when only 10 copies will do, things like that? But when I look at potentially moving this lottery fund into general revenue under the claims of reducing red tape, I wonder if perhaps we might be creating some red tape around how we monitor these funds. How do we ensure that what is actually coming in is going back out just like it used to do? So we've eliminated some red tape, yet we've created some.

You know, I find that comments around making changes so that those that need the funding the most get it – and here I'm looking at things like deindexing – don't necessarily work for getting the funding to those that need it most.

**9:10**

The other one that I couldn't help but kind of cue in on was around aligning us with other provinces. It's interesting when we talk about that phrase. One minute we're aligning with other provinces and that's a great thing because, you know, that brings us up, yet we have legislation that is getting rolled back, is being moved backwards, that did align us with other provinces. But now, all of a sudden, that's a bad thing because, well, we don't want to be aligned with other provinces. So I couldn't help but cue in on a few of those things.

I guess one of the first things I want to talk about around Bill 20 is the elimination of the five tax credits that were available: the interactive digital media tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, the community and economic tax credit, the Alberta investor tax credit, the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. Obviously, my time is limited. I can only speak for so long here, so what I think I'll do to make my point, Mr. Speaker, is that I'll cue in on the digital media tax credit.

Now, I'm pretty certain that I've mentioned in this House before that one of the things that I do in my free time, what very little of it I get – it's usually very, very late at night or maybe very late at night



on a weekend – is that I do like to participate in computer video games. When I was first elected, in 2015, and got a chance to chat with some of the stakeholders in that industry, one of the things I remember very, very clearly them saying to me: you know, there's this fantastic industry out in Quebec and out in B.C., and one of the things about the gaming industry is that it's only limited by the imagination and a little bit of money. One of the things I very, very clearly heard was that if we could somehow balance us out – we didn't even have to get it exactly but just kind of get close – around supporting that industry, they said very, very clearly that the businesses will come here.

What would eventually become the digital media tax credit was very, very quickly taken advantage of. You know, we saw businesses coming here because they had the expertise that was being trained right at our very excellent postsecondary institutions. We had the infrastructure in terms of public services that are attractive to businesses as well as one of the lowest tax structures in the entire country, with no payroll tax and no sales tax here within the province.

So when I see the elimination of this digital media tax credit, I can't help but wonder: why? You know, I've heard very clearly from some of the members here about their experience in business, so I can't help but ask: what kind of potential is available to Alberta within the gaming industry?

I've always managed to try to explain to people that I get to talk to within my communities that we need to think a little bit like a grocery store, Mr. Speaker. We need to have many products on the shelves. We need to have many different prices for those products. People will come in, they'll take what they need, they'll leave the rest, and that's exactly the way it's supposed to work. By bringing this industry here to Alberta, that was one of those products that we get to put on the shelf.

When I look in 2017 at what the gaming industry was bringing in, you know, Mr. Speaker, you might be quite surprised to learn that that industry was bringing in almost \$109 billion. So why doesn't Alberta get a piece of that action? When I look in 2018, the industry grew by almost 11 per cent over 2017 and was now almost a \$135 billion industry. Predictions are that in 2019 the industry is going to grow by almost another 10 per cent, 9.6, and they're predicting just over \$152 billion. That's quite the industry, Mr. Speaker, and I think we should be getting a piece of that action. I think we should be getting our thumbs in that pie as a province, and the digital media tax credit was providing that avenue, and those companies were coming here. They were relocating here because here is where we could get a piece of that action.

Obviously, I'm incredibly disappointed to see a tool that this government had to create jobs – I always use BioWare as the example. I mean, it's an absolutely amazing company: located, born right here in the city of Edmonton, over 25 years old, and at any given time it would employ anywhere between 300 and 400 people with an average salary of between \$70,000 and \$75,000 a year. Those are really good, mortgage-paying jobs. Here we are telling the industry: "Nah. We're not interested in that." I thought this government was elected to create jobs. That's what was in the election platform.

So here we are. We're about to set things up so that we're going to miss our own boat, Mr. Speaker, and that's really, really disappointing. You know, I know the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview can speak at length about this around things like the capital investment tax credit and the Alberta investor tax credit and how those have helped smaller businesses to really get a foothold and start to grow their business. I know all this data is out here where we've heard, you know: well, you've just got to lower the corporate rate. The smaller companies are saying: "I'm sorry.

It's not working for me. I don't get to take advantage of that." Here were programs that that business community asked for, and now we're saying: "Nah. We'd rather give that money to big, massive companies like Walmart." The last time I looked, Walmart wasn't making these kinds of gains like the digital media industry is doing.

Getting back, I guess, a little bit to the red tape discussion here, the repeal of the city charters from Edmonton and Calgary: if this is their idea of red tape reduction, Mr. Speaker, then it's no surprise why the mayors of both Edmonton and Calgary are so upset with this government. This very clearly is not red tape reduction. I know it's proposed that the ministry is going to have a \$10 million budget over the next three and a half years, but I think some of our members have said before that, you know, maybe we could potentially ask for our money back. Maybe this red tape reduction could be money better spent. Maybe we could back the STEP program for \$10 million and actually get some jobs going. So far we're at 27,000 minus and counting.

I guess that now starts to lead me – I've had the chance to ask some of the other members around their students and parents and how excited they are to find out that, you know, students will pay more to go to school. It's funny. I have yet to find a single student in my riding that says: "I am completely excited to be paying more on my loans to be able to go to school. I can't wait." I haven't found one.

9:20

I also haven't found any of their parents that are excited about not getting that tax credit. Some parents are in the position to be able to help their students go to school, but it was that tax credit that just kind of pushed it over the edge. I haven't found one yet that's excited that they're losing that. I also haven't found one single taxpayer yet that's excited about hoping their boss doesn't give them a raise so that they will make the same amount of money so their income tax won't go up. I'm still waiting to have somebody call me or write me around that.

With some of the moves that are being made here in Bill 20, besides the fact that it's just an omnibus bill, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that this serves Albertans. I guess that maybe if we were able to separate it out, there could be some things that we could debate on their merits and get those through, but, you know, clearly there are other things that are just not productive. It doesn't grow our businesses here in the province. We've heard that very, very clearly, as I'd mentioned, through the digital media tax credit. Giving big \$4.7 billion corporate handouts to places like Walmart does not move our economy forward.

I'm finding myself not in a position to be able to support this. Certainly, I guess that if the government side wants to maybe break things up a little bit, we can discuss those things. Otherwise, I'm just not seeing how this is going to move us forward.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 21

### Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move second reading of Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019.

Like Bill 20, this important bill addresses our overspending problem, promotes fiscal accountability, and helps bring Alberta back to balance. Bill 21 focuses on promoting fiscal sustainability for Alberta today and in the future. It addresses public-sector

compensation, the largest expense in the Alberta budget. It also pauses indexation for a number of programs and makes amendments that ensure we are prudent with taxpayers' money. All told, it proposes 18 changes across eight departments. I'd like to provide an overview of these changes and explain how they contribute to the good fiscal health of Alberta.

As I did with Bill 20, I'll begin with changes in my own ministry, Treasury Board and Finance. First and foremost, we are taking two important steps to ensure the sustainability of the public-sector workforce. The public-sector employers act would provide legislation to be in place for the forthcoming round of collective bargaining in 2020. At \$26.9 billion annually, public-sector compensation accounts for more than half of all government expenses. As stewards of taxpayers' dollars, the legislation helps to ensure that the costs of all collective agreements bargained by government and its public-sector employer partners are aligned with the province's fiscal realities.

It would do so by formalizing existing government oversight levers, including fiscal bargaining mandates already informally in place over a large percentage of agreements bargained by public-sector employers. This includes both the Alberta public service and Alberta Health Services. It will also extend greater accountability to government-funded employers such as postsecondary institutions, education support services, and agencies, boards, and commissions. Albertans expect government to be fully accountable for how their tax dollars are spent on public-sector wages.

Second, we would amend the Public Service Act limits on reasonable notice of termination and severance pay for non bargaining unit employees appointed under the act. Amendments would provide notice and severance requirements for these employees, from four weeks per year of continuous service to a maximum of 78 weeks.

Next we would improve the government's fiscal accountability and transparency by updating our budget processes and reporting. Amendments to the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act would replace spending limits with a transferable supply vote, eliminate the contingency account, improve fiscal reporting, align business planning and financial reporting, and add an annual infrastructure report to provide details on the progress of major projects and programs relative to the budget.

Lastly, for Treasury Board and Finance this legislation would amend the Financial Administration Act to improve transparency. This includes creating a transferable supply vote for contingencies and emergencies such as responding to natural disasters, which are clearly in the public interest and cannot be delayed. Any transfers from the supply vote will be required to be explained via an order in council, which are public documents, thereby ensuring accountability.

Other minor changes include adopting a cohesive approach to approving Crown loans, indemnities, and guarantees, allowing Treasury Board to delegate some policy-making functions, removing government control of two health and welfare trusts, creating a right of offset to reduce payments to Crown debtors, and removing references to repealed legislation.

Moving on to changes in the Ministry of Labour and Immigration, we're taking more steps to better manage public-sector compensation. This bill proposes to reverse the replacement worker ban in the public sector. This would ensure essential services that Albertans need are not impacted by strikes or lockouts. We would reinstate the exclusion of specific public-sector jobs from bargaining units where it makes sense to do so. This includes auditors, systems analysts, and budget officers. Historically these roles were excluded from bargaining units, and for good reason. In

many cases, individuals in these roles are privy to information that would put them in a conflict of interest.

Lastly, for Labour and Immigration we would establish the authority to make retroactive regulations and define "employee" in the employment standards regulation. This change primarily clarifies that amateur athletes are not employees of the athletic associations that they belong to and allows them to follow existing agreements for providing benefits to athletes. This also better aligns our employment standards with other provinces.

Continuing on to the Ministry of Health, we are proposing changes to better ensure all Albertans have access to qualified doctors. First, we need to ensure that the \$5 billion the government spends on physicians every year is spent in a way that best serves Albertans' needs. To help achieve this goal, we're proposing amendments to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act and regulation to give the Minister of Health the authority to place conditions on obtaining a practitioner identification number. The intent of this change is to improve access to physician services for rural and remote areas and to manage the physician services budget.

Next Bill 21 introduces provisions to change the doctors' master agreement in the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. While we're committed to good-faith consultation and negotiation with the Alberta Medical Association, we need to be able to achieve the goals of budget certainty and good governance. Under the current agreement with doctors the growth in physician spending will only continue in the years ahead. This change would simply provide the minister and cabinet more authority regarding the physical contract.

Next the bill addresses how we fund policing in our province, with a focus on addressing rural crime. We're proposing amendments to the Police Act to update the police costing model for rural municipalities. A new, sustainable police funding model would address long-standing inequities in how police services are funded in our province, particularly between rural and urban areas. A new funding model would not only address this inequity; it would help direct needed resources to policing and justice services in rural Alberta.

Bill 21 would also increase the fine retention percentage for the province. Fines and penalties paid to municipalities are enforced through the Provincial Court, and the province keeps a percentage to offset expenses of administration. This additional revenue will help pay for programs and services that benefit all Albertans.

#### 9:30

On the postsecondary education front Alberta currently spends significantly more for a full-time student equivalent than B.C., Ontario, and Quebec and without achieving better results. We would begin to address this inequality through a few measures. First, we would lift the tuition cap for three academic years in order to set an alternative cap in regulation. The current cap has been in place for the last five years. Untying the hands of institutions would reduce their dependency on government funding and would mitigate the impacts of funding reductions. Second, we would implement an interest rate increase on student loans by 1 per cent for all borrowers. This change would increase government revenue and would also save taxpayers on loan provisions. The impact on students with loans would be relatively small. For example, a student with a \$30,000 provincial loan amortized over a decade would see an increase of approximately \$15 a month.

As mentioned earlier and alluded to when speaking to Bill 20, we're pausing indexation for a number of programs. For this bill, the first of these is the assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH. This is a program that supports some of the most vulnerable in our society. Alberta's spending in this area is currently the highest in Canada, and I'm happy to report that current

benefit rates for AISH will be maintained. This is only a temporary pause. Once Alberta's finances improve, we can look at reinstating indexing.

We would also be pausing indexation of the employment and income support benefits. This includes programs such as the learners' and employment training program at Advanced Education and the expected to work and barriers to full-time employment programs offered by Community and Social Services. Two additional programs would also have their indexation paused; the Alberta seniors' benefit and the seniors' lodge program would both have their funding maintained at current levels. Again, we would not cut any funding to these programs. Recipients will not see a reduction in their benefits. We will maintain existing levels while we get our finances back on track.

Lastly, in Bill 21 we would be eliminating the cap for the regulated rate option for electricity prices. To date the cap has cost the province more than \$90 million. If the program were to run until its legislated end date of May 31, 2021, it would cost government an estimated \$388 million. By ending the previous government's regulated electricity price cap, we are saving taxpayers millions and maintaining consumer choice.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I'd like to thank you and the House for the time and attention to outline this important bill. Like Bill 20, there are many pieces involved in Bill 21. It is complex, but then again our financial situation is complex. We need these changes to address our fiscal reality and get Alberta back on track.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 21? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has risen to speak, with 20 minutes.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say that I'm honoured to rise to speak to this, but I'm actually quite concerned about what I see in Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. Wow. What an interesting name for an act that takes so much away from hard-working Albertans and attacks the most vulnerable. We'll have to think of a better name for this act because that's certainly not – ensuring fiscal sustainability on the backs of a whole lot of Albertans is quite shameful. We know this is just another example of the budget taking money out of the pockets of our neighbours just so that they can pay for their \$4.7 billion handout to big corporations.

As my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford spoke about earlier, this Bill 21 is a huge omnibus bill that combines a whole heck of a lot of things that should all, truly, be handled independently. I mean, I'll point to a lot of those measures here in my comments. These are huge. There are some huge pieces to this bill. It's hard for me, actually, to not get emotional because some of these hit really close to home in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

But just to get back to conclude my comments about the omnibus bill, as I noted earlier, this was a technique that PM Harper used a lot as well. It's a sneaky attack of really just combining a whole lot of things and not allowing the fulsome debate that they should each have separately. There's so much in here, and I have a little bit of time to analyze Bill 21. The impact that each of these pieces will have on people across the province is going to be huge, and I don't think we'll know that full impact immediately either.

One of the things I want to speak about first of all and one of the ones, like I said, that hits very close to home in my own neighbourhood – of course, I live in the riding that I represent, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and I've got a lot of friends,

neighbours, people that I would call close friends, actually, who are on AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped. Let me tell you: I've heard from a lot of them over the last few days. A lot of them didn't believe it. They said: "No. There's no way this government is actually going to be attacking AISH. They're not actually going to do that."

**Ms Hoffman:** Fear and smear.

**Member Irwin:** Right. Exactly. That's the fear and smear sort of, you know, technique that they would say of us.

You know, prior to seeing this in writing, I would have said, "You know what; you're probably right," because truly it's a mere pittance in budgets that are billions of dollars. Yet here we are. It's happening. The indexing of AISH is being postponed.

Now, I was so proud when our government indexed AISH. I know my colleague from Calgary-McCall did a lot of great work. I actually had the honour of being able to work a little bit on that and connect with a lot of stakeholders who were so happy I was at that announcement. It was at Boyle Street Plaza in my riding. Right by Boyle Street Plaza there are actually a number of affordable housing complexes, and I've had the pleasure of visiting and knocking on doors there. Many of those folks are dependent on AISH.

When this government and when this Premier say things like, "You know, it's not onerous; it's small; it's a drop in the bucket," I can tell you – and I'll be the first to admit it; I don't know how much I should say – that we definitely should have done more. We know that. We started to do good work to support low-income Albertans, and I will say, because I don't mind being fully transparent, that I think there was more that needed to be done, absolutely. But for the members opposite to say, "You waited this long, and it's just going to be a delay, and it's not going to be onerous," it's absolutely false. A few dollars a month makes a significant impact for folks who are struggling.

In fact, I had someone message me just yesterday, someone who is on AISH, someone who is severely disabled, and she's worried. She said: I'm already struggling day in, day out. I'm not someone who wastes money. She said that she manages her budget as closely as she can, and she's worried. I'm sure many of my colleagues in this House have heard similar stories. I know some of the ministers have the habit of saying to us to come visit their ridings and hear from people in their ridings. Well, you know what? I would like to extend that offer to the Finance minister. I could probably set him up with 20, 30, 50 meetings with folks who are going to be severely impacted by the choices that this government is making, and they'd love to be able to talk to him about that face to face. Please, the offer is out there, Minister. Consider taking it up.

9:40

Now, with this omnibus bill, in addition to AISH, I mentioned that affordable housing is impacted, because the indexing of benefits also impacts income support, the seniors' lodge program. I, too, have the benefit of having a number of seniors' lodges in my riding, many of which are for seniors on fixed incomes. Now, let's look at some of the attacks. This is another attack on seniors. We've seen that their drug plans for dependants have been stripped back. Again, I can point to a whole heck of a lot of seniors in my own riding who would say that the cuts to the seniors' lodge program are going to impact them quite severely.

Where else? So far we've talked about attacks on folks with disabilities, AISH recipients, attacks on folks living in affordable housing. Postsecondary students: this was another one that the minister just tried to again minimize. I just heard him say – I'm not sure if I captured all of what he said there – that, you know, the

student loan increase is hardly going to make an impact on our postsecondary students. I think he said something like: oh, it's only \$15 a month. Again, if you're a postsecondary student who's facing a whole heck of a lot of expenses right now, any increases are not just minimal. I find it offensive that this government continues to minimize things. I don't know if they've just never been in that situation – I know I certainly have been there, and I think a lot of my colleagues have as well – when you are trying to get by at the end of the month and you're not sure how you're going to pay for things and how stressful, how unbelievably stressful, that is. So I find it quite offensive that this government continues to minimize these thousands of cuts that keep coming.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Bill 21 includes – again, I know folks are just starting to learn about some of the impacts of Bill 21 – increasing student loan interest rates by 1 per cent. Okay? It also ends the tuition freeze. You know, we heard the Minister of Advanced Education saying something along the lines that he heard students saying that they wanted this. Well, what a farce. We've got families trying to make ends meet, families sometimes that are trying to support their children who are in postsecondary education, and we've got students who are having to support themselves entirely, again, attacks on many students who are already struggling.

You know, I met, actually, with two folks, with students' union executives just a couple of days ago, and they were recapping some of the impacts of this government's budget. This was prior to seeing all the details of Bill 21, in fact, so I'm quite interested to hear what they have to say now.

In addition to the end of the tuition freeze, they also spoke about the tax credits – right? – which is in the other bill, Bill 20, the point being that this is, I think, a three-pronged attack on postsecondary students right there: the tuition freeze, a student loan increase, and the tax credits. I'm sure I'm missing things. My colleagues can certainly . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** STEP.

**Member Irwin:** STEP. Thank you. Yeah, so a lack of employment opportunities.

Not only are they getting – I've got to watch my language – hooped when it comes to affordability . . . [interjections] Yes, hooped. That's right. They are also getting equally hooped when they're trying to access employment opportunities. So it's, in fact, a four-pronged attack on postsecondary students. Again, I'm sure I'm missing some elements there as well.

So I can't imagine being in postsecondary. It was hard enough being a postsecondary student years ago. You know, even when I was a university student in the early 2000s, it was hard, but tuition was even a little bit more affordable back then. So I'm quite worried.

This argument, you know, that the minister mentioned, that it's because we're spending more than other provinces – we're spending more than other provinces; thus, let's gouge kids and their families – like, why is this the argument? Why is it: other provinces do it – or don't do it, depending on the case – so we should, too? Right? Why can't we just be world-class leaders in postsecondary education? Why can't we just be good for the sake of being good? Why do we have to lower our standards to match other provinces? I mean, taking the lead from provinces that have been named already this evening like Ontario and Saskatchewan: I'm not sure if we should be taking a whole lot of lessons from those jurisdictions. Again, this argument that, well, other provinces did it: I don't buy

that, and I certainly don't think postsecondary students should have to suffer because of this very low bar.

Okay. So where are we at now? We've talked about attacks on – I'm just going to keep recapping because this is a giant omnibus bill and we need to be reminded of all the elements within it – postsecondary students, AISH recipients, those living in affordable housing. Let's move on.

**Ms Hoffman:** Seniors.

**Member Irwin:** Seniors. Thank you. I missed seniors in that recap.

Workers. Now, one of the interesting things – “interesting” is probably not the right word. One of the elements of this large Bill 21 is allowing the government essentially to have greater oversight over collective bargaining. We've seen today the Finance minister talk about the need to restrict the salaries of civil servants, and as I noted on social media, mark my words: this is not simply an attack on a few civil servants. This is a sign of what's to come. This is an attack on the wages of the teacher that's teaching your kids, of the nurse who's caring for your loved ones, of the social worker who's protecting the most vulnerable, and a whole heck of a lot of other hard-working Albertans. We've already seen these attacks in a number of ways, and I very much worry that there's going to be further intervention over collective bargaining agreements and further attacks on the constitutional rights of Alberta's workers.

I could go on about a number of other things. I'd rather have some of my colleagues who are far more knowledgeable on a few of the other pieces like, for instance, the attacks on medical professionals and so on – I'm quite concerned about that. I know we've heard from some medical professionals who are already concerned about the government in Bill 21 having the ability to unilaterally terminate the doctor compensation agreement. I point out that example without a lot of specifics just to say that, again, we can add medical professionals, we can add doctors to the list of hard-working Albertans who are being attacked by this government under this budget and, in this case, Bill 21.

What I would like to do is end my comments by just again noting that Bill 21 is very much an attack on Albertans. It's an attack on my neighbours. It's an attack on many folks who I call friends, and I'm going to challenge this government to think about how much in this bill was actually in their platform. Judging by the feedback I'm getting from commenting on this government's budget, I would bet that many of the members opposite are hearing a lot as well, that they're hearing from those public service workers who are feeling that their rights are being stripped away, hearing from AISH recipients, hearing from seniors, and hearing from postsecondary students.

I would urge the members opposite to consider not supporting this bill. I mean, you were all told – we had this discussion earlier in the year – that you had a right to sort of vote by conscience. My conscience is definitely telling me that there are a lot of morally indefensible elements in Bill 21.

On that note, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join in the debate this evening? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the members for the opportunity to engage in debate on Bill 21. I definitely have a number of concerns that align with those raised by my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, who so accurately identified the AISH cuts and how problematic those are for many Albertans living on fixed income.

I want to tell you about door-knocking in 2015, actually. One of the buildings I went to was entirely occupied by people who are living on AISH income alone. They'd never had anyone door-knock on their building, they told me. They were very excited to have an opportunity to engage about political issues. They weren't exactly sure how and what to say, and one of their support workers who was there said: tell them about what it's like to live on AISH.

9:50

They told me that they don't have enough money to take a taxi to go see their mom on Sundays and that if they could take a taxi across town to go see their mom on Sundays, that would make a big difference in their lives. About 30 bucks. They can take DATS, and DATS can do their best to get there at the right time, but DATS is funded through provincial funding to municipalities. That's now being cut as well. So DATS, which was already very difficult and not as reliable as being able to take a taxi on a Sunday to go see your mom, has now gotten even more downloaded on them, and we'll see what the municipality does to determine how they will address their budget pressures that are being handed down to them by the province.

In 2015, when they told me that it would make a big difference to have just a little bit of extra money to do things like take a taxi, I brought that forward to the then Premier and the minister responsible for community and social services. It was clear that if we wanted to show respect, rather than nickelling and diming folks, we would find a way to make sure that their already quite tight cost of living would at least be indexed so that when the Conference Board of Canada says that there's 2 per cent inflation, they'd at least get 2 per cent more to be able to meet their needs, not a huge luxury but something that would make a tangible difference and not in a way that was demeaning or disrespectful to people about making their own decisions about their own money. We often hear folks say, you know, that a dollar in the pocket is more empowering for somebody to make their own choices if it's their own dollar. That's being taken away from people who are living on the necessity of AISH, which, again, is assured income for the severely handicapped. These are a lot of folks who don't have the ability to work a little bit more or to access another program, so I am very disheartened by that.

Also, the seniors' lodge program, income support and the seniors' lodge program. Again, these are things that I often hear members talk about, the importance of having seniors' lodges in their ridings. This is being eroded through this failure to index these programs this year. I think that it's quite cowardly to go after folks who require the benefits of the government to be able to live, quite frankly.

Excluding budget officers, system analysts, auditors, and employees who perform similar functions from the bargaining units: just another way of sort of hacking away at some of the folks who are part of a bargaining unit, have the ability to actually work collectively and be able to do their work as part of a larger team. Okay. Maybe not quite as vindictive, but again I wouldn't call that exactly something that was a big campaign promise or that somebody put in a platform.

Reversing the replacement worker ban on public sectors: I don't believe this is constitutional. There was a Supreme Court ruling. The government of the day acted in accordance with the Supreme Court ruling to bring in this replacement worker ban in the public sector. You know, I said it in the last session a number of times, and I don't want to have to keep saying it in this session, but this bill seems incredibly ripe for legal challenge, legal challenge that we will almost certainly fail in. I don't know why the government

seems so focused on spending so much money hiring lawyers to argue things that the Supreme Court has already determined.

That just seems like irresponsible fiscal management. When you're making an investment in a business, you would look at your business's viability. You would look at the market conditions. If I'm opening a small business, I'd look at similar small businesses and what they've experienced in the market and if there's enough room for them to succeed and, therefore, for me to succeed. If there's a small business that tried to open that had a similar model to mine and they were proven to have failed in that market, it would be irresponsible of me to take money, especially taxpayer money, and invest it in something that was exactly the same that had already proven to be a failure.

That's what we're doing here through this bill because jurisdictions already tried this, and the Supreme Court already made their ruling. All we were doing was complying with the ruling, complying with the order of the law, the letter of the law. Now we're going to change it, fight it, go back to court, spend a bunch of money on legal challenges, and almost certainly lose. That, to me, doesn't seem fiscally responsible or morally responsible. It certainly isn't fiscally responsible.

Ending the tuition freeze for three years. This I find, again, quite rich given that many members of this House – the Speaker of this Assembly was elected as a member of the government caucus. The Speaker of the Assembly, I know, was a member of this House when we brought in this freeze, and I believe it was voted on by all parties represented in this House – the members for Calgary-Fish Creek, Central Peace-Notley, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, and the hon. Speaker. When these things were voted on, if it was never the intention to actually follow through on them, why did they vote in that way?

I can tell you that if they said, "Well, we have a different fiscal situation now," the difference is the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. The difference isn't the market conditions because I think anyone who can read projections knew the kind of downturn that we were in and that it wasn't something that Alberta was isolated from. In fact, Alberta was rebounding more quickly than other jurisdictions. You know, when the conditions were very similar, in fact a little bit better – there were 27,000 more people working at that point than now – why was it okay to vote for a freeze at that time and now, today, tear up that freeze? Is it because that wouldn't be popular? Is it because that wouldn't be seen as something that voters would probably be keen to support?

Well, what about increasing student loan interest payments by 1 per cent? One per cent doesn't sound like a lot, right? Again, it was, I think, over \$600 per year when we sat down with Fajar and did the math. Right? Pretty significant when you're actually coming to the time when you have to repay, which is, essentially, right after you graduate, whether you have a high-paying job or not. Again, something that seems to be going after people who are choosing to invest in their own futures by going to postsecondary.

Ending the regulated rate option cap for electricity. Again, not something that any of the seniors in my riding or any of the families in my riding said: "You know what we need to do? We need to get rid of the cap on electricity prices. That would really fix things." Most of them say: I want my electricity to be more affordable; I want it to be lower. This bill is allowing the exact opposite to happen.

Here's the one I want to talk about for a little while, though, because I've spent a lot of time thinking about it from a number of different angles. That again is one that I think is setting us up for a legal challenge that we will lose. That's the allocation of prac IDs, or practitioner IDs, for new practitioners of medicine to be restricted in the province of Alberta. I know that all of us, I hope all

of us, want patients to be able to access a doctor or a nurse practitioner when and where they're needed. The right care in the right place at the right time, somebody once said.

To go through with this bill, which puts limits on that and actually says – let's imagine. Let's imagine that I am a young person living in the city of Calgary. Let's imagine that I work hard my entire schooling, that I'm successful and get into university, that I get an undergraduate degree, that I eventually become a doctor and that I want to practise medicine in my hometown, my home city of Calgary, Alberta. If the Minister of Health, which seems very likely, based on all of the back and forth there's been about this in the last few days, determines that Calgary isn't a place where the minister, he or she, may want me to practise, then I don't have the legal right to practise medicine in my home city. Insert the name of community here. It could be Athabasca; it could be Barrhead. Barrhead: lovely hometown. The lovely hometown of Barrhead.

I think one of the things that the Health minister is hoping is that by grandfathering existing practitioners, they won't push back. I want to say that I looked at the court challenges from other jurisdictions. I think it was B.C. where they almost didn't push back, but you know who did? The residents, the med students, and they convinced their association to go to court. When they went to court, the court said: "Absolutely, it's unconstitutional. You can't tell people where to live and where to work. If they want to live and work in their province in a variety of places, they have the right to do that."

**10:00**

Why wouldn't we look at these court challenges that seem very parallel – Quebec had a very similar one even more recently – and think: "What's our probability of winning? Before I hire a bunch of lawyers, before I create a bunch of chaos, before I cause a bunch of disarray, what's my probability of winning if I do this thing that so many have said is unconstitutional? Let's actually look and see if it is?" I strongly, strongly believe that it is. I think that this is ripe for lots of lawyers to be very busy for maybe a short time, maybe a long time, but I think that at the end of the day the government will lose.

I don't think it's just about Edmonton and Calgary. I know that some people are saying: well, this is about making sure that folks end up in rural Alberta. I think that there will be many positions – again, the minister has talked about wanting to control the bundle, control the compensation. I think there could be many conditions where *prac ids* wouldn't be given in communities outside of Edmonton and Calgary as well. If I were that long-standing physician who the minister says will be grandparented into this system and I wanted to sell my practice in Barrhead, Alberta – let's say that I'm nearing retirement, I've been saving my whole life, I have a private practice, and the Minister of Health chooses not to allow a *prac ID* for a physician who chooses to come and buy my practice, then that actually impacts the physician of today in a very meaningful financial way as well as the community because the community would in turn lose their physician.

For a government that has so often said, you know, "Supply and demand, and let the market play out," in this situation to really constrain – I believe that is unconstitutional – where people work and how they work in this way I think is ripe for a legal challenge, and I think it's also ripe for disarray in our communities and distrust. I know that it can be tough. The buck does stop with the minister. This is putting even more on the minister, saying that we are going to determine where people work and if they can work. I don't think it will stand up. I think that there will be a lot of push-back both from the medical community as well as from communities right across this province. I imagine the minister has heard from some towns already that really want more physicians to be working in their communities, so putting on further limitations,

I think, is going to be highly problematic. Again, to that kid who's living in your riding, who aspires to become a doctor and work in their hometown, this is completely counter to their hopes and dreams. I think that that is highly problematic. I think also that allowing conditions on those new practitioners is something that, again, won't stand up.

I want to say that one of the other things is that it allows changes to the master agreement with the Alberta Medical Association, allowing changes, essentially, around unilateral implementation of an agreement. I want to say that I know it's hard and I know that this is a powerful collective that the government is negotiating with, but one of the reasons why they are so powerful is because they are so needed in our society. I have to say how concerned I am that these changes are being brought forward, and I don't think that the ramifications have been considered.

**The Speaker:** Well, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I just might note that I thought we were very close to playing a game of question period *Jeopardy!* there with the right place and the right time and the right care, for those who have been around for a little while.

We're at 29(2)(a), and I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore caught my eye.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that very much. You know, I always appreciate the insights from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I especially appreciate her insights around education not only as a former school board trustee but as a school board chair as well. As folks know, Edmonton-Decore is home to 26 schools, three of them being high schools, and all of the high schools north of the Yellowhead freeway. When I look at Bill 21 and ending the tuition freeze and increasing student loans by 1 per cent, I'm just wondering what kind of conversations the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has had with the students that she's come in contact with, not only just over the last few months but over the last several years and including her time as board chair. I'm wondering how excited students are. Do they come running up to her, excited about paying extra for their student loans, having to pay extra in order to attend university after 12 years of school? I was wondering if she could share again some of those insights around that from some of the students in her area.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, a number of students have talked to me about their hopes and dreams for the future, and that's a good thing. Thinking about a career path and how one might be able to embark upon that is something that I was really proud to make part of our focus at Edmonton public when I was on the board and that they continue with to this day. I was in a grade 6 class recently where a student put up their hand and said: "What university should I go to? What should I do now to build my resumé to become an MLA?" I thought that was a really exciting question for them to be thinking about already in grade 6. "If I want to be on this career path, how can I set myself up for success?" I had a lot to say in response to that, and maybe that will come up another day, but today I will say that I told them we have the best public institutions in this province.

I had the honour of attending both a private university here, Concordia University – at the time it was Concordia University College of Alberta; I think now it's Concordia University of Edmonton – as well as the University of Alberta. I said: "You know, we have great institutions here. I don't think you need to move away to pursue a career in politics or, really, any other career." I think that we have worked to expand career options in the province. For

example, we recently brought in the vet program at the University of Calgary. You don't have to move out of province anymore to become a vet. A lot of kids want to be vets – right? – so that was something that they were very excited to hear.

Now, I will still talk with hope and optimism, but I have to say that the despair that I feel around the significant increase to tuition that is being unpacked through this budget, about 7 per cent a year for the next three years at least, is substantial. When you compound that, that's about 24 per cent in such a short period of time. When I think about the increase to tuition, when I think about the elimination of the tax credit, when I think about the differential rate in what students and nonstudents are paid at their jobs now, when I think about the elimination of the STEP program, which gave summer temporary employment opportunities to so many Albertans, something that is very rich in the fibre of this province – I imagine many of us in this House worked as STEP students.

I'll take a moment to tell you about my first STEP placement. It was the only STEP placement because it turned into long-term employment for me. It was with the Alberta Community Crime Prevention Association. I wasn't studying criminology. I wasn't studying to be a police officer, but I was in education. They said: this is something that we think would be an asset for somebody with an educational background to be a summer student here, and we also think it would be beneficial for you as a future teacher to understand the realities of crime and crime prevention in our province. I was really glad that they took that opportunity to invest in me. They were able to, as a nonprofit operating with a very, very tight budget, because they had a government grant through STEP to be able to do that. Down the road it was able to be parlayed into part-time employment that lasted for a few years, indeed. Actually, I was employed by the sister of the principal of one of the high schools you just mentioned, hon. member. Sue Bell's sister ended up being my employer at that time.

It's amazing how all of these come back together and how when we take away from the opportunities that students have, I think it really hurts us as a society. I'm deeply concerned about this budget in that regard.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join in the debate today? I see the hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, yes, Mr. Speaker. Just to bring some clarification about the amendments that would propose to allow the Minister of Health to issue prac IDs, or practitioner IDs, to physicians after April 2022. Just to bring some clarity to that, I appreciate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora's concerns about Quebec, but this is something that has happened in other jurisdictions, most notably in New Brunswick, where it has been rolled out with some success. I suggest that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora research what is happening in New Brunswick with the prac IDs there and the success there so that a future Minister of Health here in Alberta could have the opportunity for us to ensure that as we see continued increases in physician supply, we can make sure that after 2022 the physicians that we have, depending on geography, depending on specialty, depending on any other condition that the Minister of Health or its designate may see, can allow us to ensure that physician supply is distributed throughout the province in the most efficient way and in the best interests of patients in the province.

10:10

**The Speaker:** Standing order 29(2)(a). If anyone has a brief question or a comment, you're welcome to make one if you'd so desire. The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to follow up on the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, just on one narrow issue in regard to the removal of the replacement worker ban. The hon. member suggested that this was unconstitutional. I just want to state that, you know, this is incorrect. The hon. member is correct, however, in stating that in response to a Supreme Court decision on the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, the previous government changed the legislation here in Alberta. In that change, where at one point in time government employees did not have the right to strike, they gave them the right to strike, but at the same time they ensured that essential services needed to be provided, and they put in place essential services provisions. That is all correct, and that was in response to the SFL.

What they also did was that they put a ban on replacement workers, and that was not noted in the Supreme Court decision. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of jurisdictions in Canada that have essential services legislation, which include Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick. These are all constitutional, and they do not include a ban on replacement workers.

In this legislation we are removing the ban on replacement workers. This was a campaign commitment that our government made, and we are following through with that campaign commitment. Promise made, promise kept.

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else that would like to make a brief question or comment under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the ministers for clarifying for the members opposite. I, too, had an interesting door-knocking experience, like the member opposite who spoke before the minister. I was door-knocking in real life – it's about as far away from Twitter as possible – and the person that opened the door reminded me of a quote from the previous and worst Finance minister in Alberta's history. His comment went something like: we will not balance the budget on the backs of Albertans. This person asked me a great question. He said: do you think the NDP will ever realize that the source of the fiscal restraint measures they're protesting is them? I just wanted to leave that with them to think about.

**The Speaker:** Anyone else have a brief question or comment?

**Ms Hoffman:** Just to get this straight, I think what I just heard the member say is that the reason why they're taking \$30 away from somebody living in their own riding who's surviving on AISH is because the last government gave an increase to that same AISH recipient in the final year of its term. If that really is what the hon. member is advocating for, I have to say that I hope that the next time he knocks on the door of somebody who's surviving on AISH, who can't afford to take a taxi to go see mom on Sunday, he says that to their face, because I don't think it would pass. I don't think they would say: yeah; you're right; the reason why I don't deserve increases here is because I got one last year.

I think that that is quite disrespectful both to Albertans who are living on such a fixed income as well as to Her Majesty's Official Opposition. I think it is our job to stand in this House and fight for ordinary families. I think it's the job of everyone in this House to stand in this House and fight for ordinary families, not make excuses for a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway, that is listed on page 144 of the fiscal plan, that outlines specifically that the returns are not being seen in jobs or income.

So, you know, I appreciate that folks try to say, "Well, fear and smear; we're not going to cut AISH," but then AISH gets cut.

“Well, fear and smear; we’re not going to attack students,” but then students get cut. “Well, fear and smear; we’re not going to go after seniors,” yet we’re kicking 46,000 of them off the drug plan. Like, the list goes on. I will very proudly stand up in this place for people who deserve to have a government have their back in times of fiscal challenge as well as fiscal surplus.

Again, if this was done and the budget was going to be balanced any sooner, maybe those arguments would have some validity. But the budget is not going to be balanced any sooner. In fact, this year’s deficit is \$2 billion more than the projections were for it to be. I think that is a sad reality, that sometimes people try to misconstrue or divert blame or responsibility. The government today has made the choice to take \$30 away from somebody who is living on AISH, and I think that that’s disrespectful and shameful.

#### **Speaker’s Ruling Question-and-comment Period**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I’d just like to provide some clarification about the use of 29(2)(a), and to be very clear, this comment is not directed at the Member for Edmonton-Glenora but is more of a broader discussion around the use of 29(2)(a). The purpose of 29(2)(a) is a brief question or comment for the previous speaker. In this case that was the Minister of Health. This particular Speaker has taken a very wide swath on the use of 29(2)(a). If the House will roll into question period, where any member will ask any question, then perhaps the swath may have to be narrowed in order to maintain order inside the Assembly.

#### **Debate Continued**

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to join the debate this evening? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to join debate on the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. In general, I think that over the last four years in particular, when you see the title of an act, you would guess that it would somewhat remotely be touching on what the title is. In this case it’s an omnibus bill that touches on many different pieces of legislation, policies, and services and fundamentally changes many things for many Albertans. All those changes could have been easily debated as stand-alone pieces in this House.

It reminds me of a bill that we brought forward in the Third Session, Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans. Essentially, the bill was dealing with two areas. One was the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and the other was the Workers’ Compensation Act. Many of the members who I see on that side now, when they were on this side, basically found every argument from the book *Beauchesne* and all those procedural books to argue how omnibus our legislation was and how we needed to split that legislation. Essentially, there were motions to that effect.

Generally speaking, I guess a bill will be termed as omnibus if it consists of a number of related but separate parts, but generally there will be some common theme when you add all of those in one piece of legislation. But when I look at this Bill 21, I think the only common theme in this bill is that through these changes, through all these amendments to these pieces of legislation, this UCP government is taking money away from Albertans and using it to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate handout.

10:20

Let’s look at the list of acts that it’s changing, amending. It deals with the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. It deals with the Alberta Housing Act. It deals with the Alberta Utilities Commission

Act. It deals with the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act, and I will talk briefly about that.

When we were in government, we worked with Albertans, many advocates, many individuals who were living with disabilities on how their supports have not kept pace with inflation. Even when there were increases like \$400, even after those increases, the value of their benefits would erode with the passage of time because of inflation, and they would have to beg government after government, in particular Progressive Conservative, PC, governments, for an increase in their benefits. All they were asking was that we should index these benefits to the CPI so that over time the value of their benefits doesn’t erode and they don’t have to ask for these increases, beg for these increases every year or every election cycle.

Essentially, with the changes we brought forward through Bill 26 – that was the number of that bill – they were precisely doing that. They were indexing AISH benefits, they were indexing employment and income support benefits, they were indexing seniors’ benefits, and taking politics out of these benefits so that for these individuals, who are often among the most vulnerable ones, their benefits are protected from inflation.

During the campaign, when we were saying that this UCP would cut these benefits, again it was said that that was fear and smear. I even remember this Premier, then the leader of the UCP, making a video and essentially saying that whatever I had said about the UCP cutting benefits, that was not true, that that was not in their platform.

**Ms Hoffman:** It sure wasn’t.

**Mr. Sabir:** It wasn’t there.

I think the video ended with: shame on you, Minister, and whatnot; we will always stand with disabled people. What we are seeing here is that if these changes were not made, AISH would have seen a \$32 increase – this may not be huge, but for a person living on \$1,688, it’s a huge increase – on January 1. This pause, so far, is indefinite. There is no time limit. They are saying that it’s temporary, but there is no sunset clause in it on when it will end. So you are taking \$32 out of the pockets of these most vulnerable individuals. When I was saying that back then, I guess I was right, and shame on all of you for taking \$32 out of the pockets of disabled Albertans.

This act will also change An Act to Cap Regulated Electricity Rates. Under this piece of legislation the regulated rate for electricity was capped until mid-2021. This change will change that date to November 30, 2019. As early as in December Albertans can expect that their bills will be higher than what they ought to be because today the rate is capped at 6.8 cents to protect consumers. If we look at the August rates, they were somewhere at 10.17 cents or something. Even on that rate every Albertan household will be paying an average of \$20 to \$25 more. As early as November people can expect, Albertans can expect, that their bill will be higher by \$20 to \$25. That’s what this change is doing, again, taking money out of the pockets of Albertans, out of the pockets of families.

Then it also changes the Employment Standards Code, the financial services act, the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, and the Income and Employment Supports Act. I will speak to that Income and Employment Supports Act. The Income and Employment Supports Act will also deindex those benefits. Those benefits were kept low by successive Progressive Conservative governments for 44 years. When we became government, they were somewhere around \$640 for an individual. We increased them and we indexed them so that people, who from no fault of their own if they are not able to find employment or if they are in the category of barriers to full employment, where they have multiple other



issues, get the supports they need to live with dignity and be able to put food on the table, a roof over their head.

Even with that increase, I think that still those benefits were quite low, and it was still very difficult to get by with those benefits. But what this UCP government is doing, with those minimal increases, maybe \$10 or \$15 that they were supposed to get on January 1, they are taking that \$10 away from them so that they can pay \$4.7 billion in corporate handouts.

Then they're making changes to the Labour Relations Code, to the Police Act. My other colleagues have talked about it and, I guess, are better equipped to talk about it, so I will leave that, but I will speak to the Post-secondary Learning Act. In this province I think the Minister of Advanced Education was the only person who was told by students that they want their fees to go high, and they didn't like the tuition freeze. That's why they're removing that cap, so that tuition can skyrocket. Not only that, but they are making changes to the interest rate that is payable on student loans, making it more expensive for students to pay off their loans.

They're changing tax credits, how students were able to claim those taxes, and they're changing grants and all those things, thus making postsecondary education a luxury for few. That cap, when it was there, was there to make sure that postsecondary education remains affordable for all Albertans. It was saving students somewhere from \$2,000 to \$3,000 over the course of their education. Again, this government is attacking students and their parents, their families to pay for their irresponsible no-jobs \$4.7 billion corporate handout.

**Ms Hoffman:** No jobs.

**Mr. Sabir:** Yeah. Instead, we lost 27,000 jobs after that.

Then they're changing the Provincial Offences Procedure Act. Again, the fines, the larger portion of fines, will be kept by the province. They are changing the public-sector employment act. They are changing the Public Service Act. They are changing the

Public Service Employee Relations Act. They are changing the Seniors Benefit Act.

**10:30**

What the Seniors Benefit Act was doing was that it was indexing their benefits – that benefit is somewhere from \$150 to \$275 – and that senior would see an increase of \$6 to \$7. And they still refuse to pay that \$6 to \$7. On the \$315, that other benefit, another \$6 to \$7 increase, they are taking away that money from seniors. That's on top of other things that are in this budget where seniors will see their services cut, like seniors' drug plans. Wherever I look in all these changes, I think only one thing is common: through this piece of legislation this government is taking money from seniors, from their seniors' benefit, they are taking money from employees, taking money from municipalities, taking money from students, taking money from AISH recipients, taking money from income support and employment support recipients, and they are giving it to the wealthiest in the shape of a \$4.7 billion corporate handout.

One last thing, and then I will conclude. This year . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Would anyone like to add a brief question or a comment under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, is there anyone else that would like to join in the debate? I see the hon. deputy government whip.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the deputy government whip.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me again. I move that we adjourn the Assembly until tomorrow, October 30, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:33 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, October 30, 2019

Day 36

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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New Democrat: 24

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Toor

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 30, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Royal Canadian Legion Poppy Campaign

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before introductions today I would like to just make a quick note. I know that I sent an e-mail to all of you yesterday morning regarding Legion poppies. Thank you, all, very much for making your donations. My office will continue to collect those donations for the duration of the annual poppy drive. It has also been brought to my attention that should you forget a poppy and you're seeking one from a page and you are unable to provide them with a donation for your poppy, you are able to text the Royal Canadian Legion, obviously not from the Legislative Assembly Chamber floor but immediately following question period or otherwise, at 20222 to make a \$5 donation.

I thank you for your continued support of this important cause.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I had the opportunity to meet with a very special visitor, and this afternoon it is my great pleasure to welcome him here to the Assembly. In the Speaker's gallery is the minister of national security, police, and correctional services for the government of the Solomon Islands. You'll note that the government of Solomon Islands offered a gift to the Legislative Assembly today, and I thought it would be nice for us to be able to display it in the Chamber while they are visiting. The Hon. Anthony Veke is an accomplished minister of the federal government there as well as the former Premier of the province which he represents. I invite him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also, accompanying the minister today is the honorary consul general for the Solomon Islands, Mr. Ashwant Dwivedi. Accompanying him today is Mr. Deepak Hari. Thank you so much for joining us. Please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, visiting us today from Calgary-Beddington are grade 6 students from the Simons Valley school. Thank you so much for joining us, grade 6 students.

Also joining us today are guests of the Minister of Health from Diabetes Canada. Welcome Randeep Birdi, Barb Warechuk, Rhonda Stevens, Melanie Hibbard, Lynne and Lilly-Anna LeClerc, Tammy Wilson, Qandeel Shafqat, and Isabelle Emery. Welcome.

Hon. members, please welcome all of our guests to the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Provincial Fiscal Position and Government Policies

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, my late father spent over 30 years with MGM, so in his memory I embrace the cinematic theme of *Back to the Future*. Yes, I'm talking about my favourite blockbuster, the Alberta advantage, a Panavision of a bright, widescreen future as each and every Albertan yearns for the sequel. The star: a thriving energy sector honouring our blessing of rich natural resources, with a backdrop of pipelines that we continue to fight for as our right within Confederation.

The scene unfolds of the railway of the new millennium and a remake of the scenes of *The Last Spike* as the first of many pipes. The screenplay reflects our spirit of environmental stewardship and energy innovation with a cast of globally recognized superheroes. Supporting players deliver Academy Award winning performances as world-class health care zooming in on nation-leading patient outcomes. Education takes centre stage as future generations embrace limitless choice and blur the lines between academia and trades in setting the scene for ambitious lifelong learners.

A thriving cast emerges in the building, development, and nonprofit sectors, ensuring that housing choice and affordability truly are pillars of the Alberta advantage. Cameos from our emerging stars of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit will continue to drive our province forward as a beacon of free enterprise in Canada, North America, and the world. From the wings emerge transportation and air services essential to our province and connectivity to the region, nation, and world markets. The spotlight shines on agriculture, forestry, and tourism as our rising stars in investment diversification and employment growth.

As the credits roll, applause breaks out for our incredible nonprofit, charitable, and faith-based sectors carrying the day and ensuring that the Alberta advantage is not just a box office hit but a classic to be enjoyed by all generations in the future to come.

Mr. Speaker, let's all work together as we embrace the concept of Team Alberta: prosperous, strong, and free in our fierce battle for a return to the Alberta advantage.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### Fort Edmonton Park

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud I have the distinct pleasure of representing the constituency that houses Edmonton's premier cultural attraction, Fort Edmonton Park, the largest living-history museum in Canada. In the 45 years since the Fort opened, it has served countless kids, seniors, families, and field trips, descendants learning about their past, and new Canadians learning the history of their new home. From the fur trade era to the time of early settlement and the development of Edmonton as a city, the fort houses over 200 years of our history. Through interactive exhibits, historical structures, and excellent staff and volunteers, Fort Edmonton entertains and educates any Albertans that cross through its gates. I have many fond memories of my time at Fort Edmonton Park over the years, memories that I'm now creating with my young children.

The Fort Edmonton Foundation has undertaken a landmark initiative to expand and improve the fort and the experience of its visitors. Dollars invested by the NDP government along with funding from the city of Edmonton and extraordinary fundraising by the foundation are being used to expand the attractions we love and to make important additions. I'm particularly excited for the

planned interactive indigenous peoples experience to better understand and immerse in the lived experiences of First Nations and Métis ancestors.

Fort Edmonton Park is a shining example of how investment in history, art, and culture grows the tourism industry, stimulates the economy, and creates meaningful employment, yet this UCP government refuses to see the multitude of benefits that these investments bring to Albertans from every walk of life. They have instead chosen to cut our history and culture in favour of corporate friends, prioritizing \$4.7 billion in giveaways to wealthy corporations over the needs of Albertans and communities. Preserving our foundations and our past are not inefficiencies, but this government is treating them this way.

I'm proud to continue to support the great work of the Fort Edmonton Foundation, both personally and as a member of a party that values our history and understands that knowing where we come from will guide where we're going. On behalf of my children and so many families and Albertans I want to thank the Fort Edmonton Foundation for their work to enrich our lives and preserve the history we should all value.

### Diabetes Awareness

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured today to speak about an issue that is important to me and to many Albertans. November is Diabetes Awareness Month, and global diabetes awareness day is on November 14. Diabetes is a serious disease that affects Albertans every single day. Today in question period we have advocates from Diabetes Canada visiting us here in the Legislature. These representatives are not just advocates. Many of them are either living with type 1 or type 2 diabetes, are parents of children with the disease, or health care professionals, and they are here to emphasize the seriousness of diabetes in Alberta and in Canada.

On diabetes awareness day Canadians across the country will wear blue in recognition of the millions of Canadians living with diabetes. Today I wear blue to recognize the 1.1 million Albertans that are living with diabetes or prediabetes and to recognize the work of organizations like Diabetes Canada, who bring awareness of and provide education on the disease.

Each year World Diabetes Day has a theme. This year's theme is the family. It is important for us to recognize that this disease also impacts the family. With one-quarter of our population affected, diabetes is a serious health concern for our province. Not only does diabetes affect a sizable portion of our population, but some very serious complications can also result, including heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, and nerve damage.

Mr. Speaker, this can strain our health care system, but that's not why we strive to bring awareness. We bring awareness to this disease so that Albertans can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and ensure that the very serious health complications of both types of diabetes are avoided. Quality of life and the health of Albertans: that is why we bring awareness to diabetes, and that is why I'm so thankful for groups like Diabetes Canada and the work that they do.

**The Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

1:40

### Indigenous Relations

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few weeks I've been listening to members of the government side of the House talk about their approach to reconciliation with indigenous people. As often as not they like to suggest that no true path to reconciliation has been engaged in until recently. The idea seems to be that never

have indigenous people been given the chance to truly participate in Alberta's economic blessings, stating that everything that has occurred in the past was merely a handout and not a hand up.

So let's plumb the depths of ridiculousness intrinsic to this UCP narrative. First, it is telling that the members opposite suggest that any actual monetary resource-sharing with indigenous communities is a handout. This shows an ignorance of treaties 6, 7, and 8, in which we agreed to share the land and the benefits of the land. When dollars flow to indigenous communities, it isn't some form of charity; it is the payment of a bill owed, just as when Albertans receive royalty payments from resource development, it is our right to receive the benefits of our resources. It is further telling that when programs are announced by this government that are directed at nonindigenous people, none of the government announcements refer to the monies involved as handouts.

Now let's take a look at the indigenous opportunities corporation. In the budget presented in this House, money only exists for the creation of the bureaucracy, not for any actual backstop of dollars. This is because the government is betting on never actually having to provide a single dime in actual resources to indigenous communities. If things work out the way government intends, the loans will be received and paid back without the government ever providing any actual assistance. We know this because the government has not booked a single dime in liability for the corporation in the budget.

Our government, on the other hand, worked with nations in all three treaty areas for large-scale wind projects that will mean long-term income for the nations. We worked to create solar projects in over 30 communities, and we worked with indigenous communities on over 100 projects related to the fulfillment of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. That is the path to reconciliation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

### Support for Persons with Disabilities

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was much younger, I managed the Millican Ogden outdoor pool in Calgary, and every summer we were joined by Steve, who was a gentleman with Down syndrome in the community.

Steve would help run the store, check in the swimmers, fold the towels, and hang out with the patrons, but what made him such an important part of our team was the attitude that he brought every day. You couldn't help but smile and be in a good mood when Steve was on shift. The mark of a great society is our ability to lift up those around us, and I can tell you this: Steve lifted us up every day.

I have the good fortune of representing Calgary-Klein, which is home to hundreds of not-for-profits and civil society organizations. SCOPE and URSA are two of these amazing organizations, and over the last seven months I've had the good fortune of being able to hang out with them and spend a lot of time with their clients. Both of them work to create community and opportunities for persons with disabilities in our community, providing support and training for individuals and families. SCOPE and URSA work with hundreds of clients in dozens of programs with hundreds of volunteers, businesses, and staff throughout the local community.

Government's job is not to take over from the amazing work that's being done in our community by NGOs and community members, but it is to get behind these initiatives. Our civil society partners improve the livelihoods of Albertans because they provide something that is very difficult for government to provide. They provide community, a place of belonging, and opportunities for individuals of all walks of life to come together and be together and contribute.

Pam, the executive director of URSA, described the relationship like a cake. Government provides the flour and the milk, NGOs provide the sugar and the icing, and community brings the plates and the cutlery. I can tell you this: cake is a lot better with icing and even better when you have someone to share it with like my friend Steve.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Health Care Workforce

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, back in June I asked the Minister of Health a question. Did he recognize that breaking contracts with health care workers, talking about them like a problem to be solved or a cost to reduce instead of a valued partner in providing care, insults them, lowers their morale, and makes his job delivering quality and cost-effective health care for Albertans much harder to do? Well, with their recent actions, he and his colleagues have made it abundantly clear that they don't.

To be completely honest, though, it's not a big surprise. After all, this is a Premier who's on the record suggesting that health care workers are entitled and lazy, putting their feet up for coffee between surgeries. This Minister of Finance led his colleagues in disrespecting and breaking their contracts through force of law and had the audacity to claim that that was putting Albertans first. This Minister of Health threw out hundreds of hours of consultation with workers on developing much-needed lab services infrastructure, with no alternate plan, and at every turn this government works to disparage and shut out the union representatives that workers democratically elect to advocate for their interests.

Now, Mr. Speaker, after the sustained attack on workers' morale, this government, as we knew they would, is coming after the wages they earn and depend on to support their families. Despite the claims of the Minister of Finance these are Albertans – our neighbours, our families, our friends, partners of oil and gas workers – whose hard work supported their families, communities, and local businesses through difficult times. They are not entitled. They are not lazy. They are not overpaid. They're everyday people who've worked hard and sacrificed to hold our health care system together through years of chaos under Conservative governments because they're committed to providing the best care they can for each and every Albertan.

We will not achieve a stronger, more stable, and efficient health care system by attacking the workers who make it possible. We will not find success by telling them to do more with less for lower pay to fund a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway. I call on this minister and this government to drop their heavy-handed tactics and start treating our front-line health care workers with the respect they deserve.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

### Lakeland Centre for FASD

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in the Chamber to bring attention to the Lakeland centre for fetal alcohol syndrome, based in my riding of Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul. FASD is an underestimated disability in this province. It affects roughly 4 per cent of the population of Alberta, or 172,000 people. However, these numbers may not fully reflect the depth of the problem as it is considered an invisible disability. Statistics show that there are more people with FASD than with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and autism combined.

The Lakeland FASD has a tremendous number of accomplishments under their belt. They are a leader in Alberta and Canada and are known for their work in developing innovative and effective

ways to provide prevention, diagnostic, and intervention supports. The FASD centre in Cold Lake is the first of 12 service networks in Alberta, with the entire network system being modelled after it. The Lakeland centre plays an integral role in setting up new treatment facilities. Lakeland FASD was the first to offer diagnosis in Alberta. They established the first adult diagnostic clinic in the world. They've developed the first rural parent-child advocacy program, the first women-only live-in treatment program, and they have summer camps for children with FASD and the only FASD-specific summer employment service program. All of these programs and services serve 600 individuals each year, and they have diagnosed around 750 individuals since the year 2000. Over 75 women each year are served in the outreach support program to be alcohol free during pregnancy, and 237 women have attended the women's recovery program since 2012.

This organization is doing an extraordinary amount of good for a large and unseen problem many Albertans face. They serve more clients each year per capita than any other FASD clinic in the world. That is why I am proud to stand in this House to recognize and commend them for all of their hard work sincerely.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Budget 2019 and Public Service Front-line Workers

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, in the election this Premier said that he would, quote, find some savings without affecting front-line services. Instead, this budget slashes services, lays off front-line workers, and now he's pushing for a 5 per cent wage cut, all to pay for his \$4.7 billion handout to wealthy corporations. To the Premier: when he said that he would cut wasteful spending to maintain the front line, was he referring to the paycheques belonging to the nurses who care for our loved ones, and if so, why didn't he come clean during the election?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the \$4.7 billion figure, the leader of the NDP now knows repeatedly that that is a complete falsehood. You know, my mom used to say that repeating a lie doesn't make something true. With respect to the fiscal situation, the reason why we have to reduce spending is because the NDP left us in a huge hole by overprojecting revenues by \$6 billion and leaving us holding the bag on their multibillion-dollar crude-by-rail fiasco, but we're going to do the responsible thing and get our finances in order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 1:51.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has the call.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Maintain or increase: that was this Premier's mantra just a few months ago. But his budget increases are actually bad news: increases to class sizes, increases to stress on persons with disabilities, increases to the amount every Albertan pays in personal income tax. When the Premier said "maintain or increase," was he actually referring to the amount of money he wants to take out of a child protection worker's wallet, and if so, why didn't he tell people that during the election?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, our commitment was to maintain or increase health care funding: promise made, promise kept. Our commitment was to maintain or increase education funding: promise

made, promise kept. The promises that we did not make were to maintain or increase funding for Children's Services and for Community and Social Services, but we actually are increasing the budgets in those departments. For persons with disabilities: \$150 million in additional investments to support people with mental health challenges and with addictions. We have prioritized the most vulnerable while getting our finances back in order.

**Ms Notley:** This Premier has prioritized the most vulnerable for their attacks, Mr. Speaker, and he has no respect for the nurses and caregivers who look after our loved ones. He has no respect for the officers and sheriffs who keep us safe. He has no respect for the paramedics and social workers who do so much for the vulnerable he was just trying to dine out on. Seems that if you're not a big corporation, this Premier has no respect for you. This government claims to be about law and order, but when it comes to working people, they can't break the law fast enough. Why are you engaging in bad-faith bargaining and breaking the law in the process?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, another hysterical NDP whopper. Nobody is breaking the law. The NDP leader is just making all of this up. There is an arbitration coming up. The unions have put forward their position, which is for a 6 and 7 per cent increase in the midst of this time of economic decline, when most Albertans are still making less than they did five years ago. Our response to their request for a 6 or 7 per cent one-year increase is a modest reduction. It will go to the arbiter, and the arbiter will make a decision.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

#### Calgary Police Service and LRT Green Line Funding

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday a member of the alleged most respectful and decorous cabinet in Alberta history was reduced to a petty Twitter fight with the mayor of Calgary. How embarrassing. But the truth is that this Premier's budget takes a greater chunk of ticket revenue from cities than ever before: less money for policing, more money for his corporate handout, and over 100 officers gone. To the Premier: when the stakes are high and police call for backup, will the newly enriched shareholders ride in to save the day, or should we maybe just fund the police they promised in the election?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, we are funding the police, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Justice will be keeping our platform commitment, in the days to come, to increase by 50 the number of Crown prosecutors to help combat crime in this society. There are no reductions in provincial grants to municipalities for police services. We expect all governments, including the municipal governments, to live within taxpayers' means, something the NDP knows nothing about because they were driving us towards over \$100 billion in debt. Instead of paying for police officers and nurses, they wanted to pay for bondholders and bankers.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this Premier can rewrite history and the facts all he wants, but the numbers are the numbers. The Premier's budget cut \$12 million in police funding to Calgary by way of a \$10 million change in ticket revenues and \$2 million for forensic testing. Let's talk about that second one for a moment. Is the Premier really telling Albertans that from now on, when the police have to test for blood or for DNA to solve a murder or a rape, they have to pay him first?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we're saying that there is a cost to delivering public services, and we must ensure that every level of government is doing its part to pay for those costs. Now, the real question is: what is the NDP's alternative? Is it to run the province forever on our credit card? Is it to borrow money to pay the interest on a growing debt? Is it to wait and kick this can down the road so that instead of 2.8 per cent spending savings, we have to cut by 20 per cent, like happened in the past? That is what they're recommending, the path to fiscal recklessness. We won't let that happen to this province.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the cities, the broken promises by this government from the last election just keep coming. This Premier promised the people of Calgary that he would fund the green line, but now we're seeing that he has hidden a clause in his omnibus legislation that enables the cancellation of the green line with only 90 days' notice. To the Premier: why are you giving yourself permission to break a promise to the people of Calgary? Will you commit today that you will fully fund the agreement that is currently in place, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we've been clear that we are committed to the green line. It will continue to be funded, initially through the federal transfers, then the provincial transfers, in a way that allows us to get to balance within four years. The NDP promised that they were going to offer a shadow budget, and they haven't. They gave up. Why? Because they know that they would be presenting Albertans with a massive blowout in the deficit that they already left behind. These guys couldn't manage a popsicle stand. One of the reasons they were fired is because they quadrupled our debt and Albertans knew that we couldn't afford four more years of the NDP.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we promised a shadow budget. We will deliver a shadow budget. The Premier is making things up when he suggests that that is not coming.

#### Calgary LRT Green Line Funding

**Ms Notley:** However, what the Premier did was promise Calgary a green line, and he has now put a 90-day cancellation clause, for no reason, into a piece of legislation, that is causing huge anxiety in the city of Calgary. Why, if he wasn't planning on using that clause, is that in his legislation? Now, come clean, Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what's causing huge anxiety for Calgarians: a jobs crisis created by their tax hikes, by their driving tens of billions of dollars of investment out of this province, and a fiscal disaster. What's creating anxiety are tax increases on property, tax increases on incomes and on businesses and on payrolls by the NDP. We're reversing course on the green line. They cut the green line in half, with half as many people served for the same amount of money. Not only did they hammer us with higher taxes; they cut our green line in half.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, one minute he supports the green line exactly as we approved it, and the next minute he criticizes the green line exactly as we approved it. So we just don't know what's up, what's down, what's true, what's false with this Premier. I have never seen anything like this.

Now, Jeff Binks, who's with LRT on the Green, says: if they are truly committed to this project, why does this language need to exist at all? That is a really good question, Mr. Speaker. To the minister:

will you please answer Jeff and the tens of thousands of Calgarians eagerly awaiting construction of the green line?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, what I would tell Jeff is that in the spring of 2015 I committed on behalf of the government of Canada \$1.5 billion to build a 46-kilometre-long green line that would serve the far north to the far southeast. What I would tell Jeff is that the NDP cut that in half. It took them four years to come up with the same amount of money for half as much rail. And I would tell Jeff that that's why he and his neighbours were right to fire the NDP last April.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I just can't keep track of all of the broken promises. This Premier promised to cut taxes, and he's raised personal income taxes on every single taxpayer in Alberta, all of that to pay for his corporate handout. He also promised to fund the green line as approved, and what we hear from him now is that he's critiquing it. But he's not saying what Calgarians need him to say. Will he or will he not honour the current agreement?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, a pro tip to the NDP: shouting louder is not going to regain them the confidence of Albertans. Making stuff up is not going to enhance the total destruction of their fiscal credibility. We've been clear that we will fund the green line on a cash basis that allows this government to get to balance, but what we will not do is continue with the NDP's drive to over \$100 billion in debt that would have us spending billions in interest payments to bondholders instead of infrastructure and social programs. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have enjoyed hearing the question. I would also like to be able to hear the answer, so if I could get a little assistance on that this afternoon, I sure would appreciate that.

But at this point in time the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has a question.

### Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday PrairieSky Royalty released their third-quarter report. They banked \$24.4 million from the Premier's corporate handout, which they did not use to create jobs. Instead, they bought back 200,000 of their own shares. Good news for the traders in Toronto; another loss for Alberta workers. How many times does the Premier need to see this pattern repeat before he admits that his \$4.7 billion corporate handout has been a complete failure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board has risen.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government inherited an absolute economic disaster that was in part driven by lower commodity prices and greater global challenges but greatly magnified by the failed policies of the members opposite as they increased corporate taxes by 20 per cent, added layers of regulation, added a \$1.4 billion carbon tax. Our policies will lead to improved investment, increased job opportunities. It will simply take some time.

**Mr. Bilous:** This minister is so arrogant and full of himself that he can't admit his plan is a failure: 27,000 job losses and counting. PrairieSky reports drilling on their properties is down 21 per cent compared to the same quarter last year, and I'm sure the Premier will suggest in a moment that the real issue is pipeline delays; however, he hasn't done a thing to speed up pipelines. To the

Premier: if you knew that pipelines are the real reason jobs aren't being created, why did you waste \$4.7 billion on a corporate handout?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP continue to mislead Albertans with their made-up claim of a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway. There is no such thing. Maybe they're following the advice of the federal environment . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, I'm hearing you very clearly this afternoon. The Minister of Energy has the call, however.

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I have to think that maybe they're following the advice of the federal environment minister, who recently said: if you say it louder, if you repeat it, if that's your talking point, then people will totally believe it. They're following the advice of the federal environment minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Minister, it's on page 144 of your plan.

It's been months since the Energy minister first shrugged off the failure of the \$4.7 billion corporate handout, saying she was, quote, disappointed, but little else. Drilling is at an all-time low. Husky Energy has laid off people and is taking their corporate gift and spending it in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, not in Alberta, and under this UCP government 27,000 jobs have been lost. To the Premier. Explain to 27,000 out-of-work Albertans why all you can do is shrug.

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, we would have had 525,000 barrels a day of additional capacity to move Alberta oil to markets, we would not be in this job crisis, we would not be under curtailment, and we would have full value for the resources if Northern Gateway had not been cancelled. Now, the former Premier was sitting in the office of Justin Trudeau the day he killed that project. She was smiling. She was taking a photo op. She was celebrating the day that Northern Gateway was killed. That will go down as the biggest mistake in this country.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for the great constituency of Calgary-Cross.

### Crown Prosecution Service

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since Alberta went through an economic recession in 2014, crime rates in our province have risen dramatically. Crime in both rural and urban municipalities has skyrocketed, and although improving slightly since 2017, the crime rate is still nowhere near its prerecession levels. Can the Minister of Justice please tell this Assembly how he will allocate the new prosecutors promised in the UCP platform amongst our provincial jurisdictions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Prosecutors will be allocated across the province based on the caseload. I was just in St. Paul last night, and the immense amount of casework that is going through that courthouse there is too high for the prosecutor level that we have there, but that pressure isn't simply in rural Alberta. It's also in Calgary and Edmonton. We're going to make sure we provide the resources where they're needed. That's why we're dedicated to hiring 50 new prosecutors here in the province of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. Given that many criminals are not being held accountable for their actions due to backlogs in the court system and given that our police service can only be effective when criminals they catch face consequences for their actions and given that members of the Calgary Crown prosecutor's office have specifically approached me with this question, can the Minister of Justice give this Assembly a timeline of when Albertans can expect the 50 new prosecutors to be hired?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, when we came into office here, I was shocked at the number of unfilled positions that we inherited from the previous government, over 25 unfilled positions in the prosecution service here in the province of Alberta. We are hiring those positions now. We actually have a number of our civil lawyers coming in to fill prosecutor positions as well. We'll be rolling out our plan as to how we're going to hire 50 more prosecutors once we get those 25 in place.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that our province is facing a massive deficit due to years of poor financial planning from previous governments and given that our UCP government takes a staunchly pragmatic and fiscally responsible approach on deficit management, can the minister please tell this Chamber where the funding for the Crown prosecutors is coming from?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, the funding is in our budget to hire 50 new prosecutors in the province of Alberta. We also want to make sure that our justice system is efficient, and it's time for a little tour down NDP legacy lane. Right now in the justice system we still use MS-DOS. I was two years old when MS-DOS was first invented. That's the level of investment that the previous government neglected in the justice system. We're fixing that with an investment to make sure we can have e-courts in our system.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

### Education Budget 2019-2020

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many months the Education minister has been passing the buck about education questions, questions about overcrowded classrooms, longer bus ride times, vanishing supports for students with special needs. This morning when I asked the minister in estimates how much money school districts were getting, individual school districts, big ones like Calgary Catholic, the minister refused to answer. To the Premier: is that acceptable, for an Education minister to fail to give a response about something so basic in her own budget, and if not, what are you going to do about it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. What I was able to share this morning in estimates is that, as promised during the election, we have maintained education funding for our K to 12 system. We have accounted for enrolment growth. Every single student that walks through our doors will have the same basic funding that they had in previous years. That's what I was able to share with the hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that education stakeholders seem to have a much better grasp of the Education budget than the Education minister and given that the Alberta Teachers' Association

says that flat funding and growth with regard to students amounts to at least \$200 less per student and given that educational assistants are telling us that they're being laid off, effective notices going out last Thursday, the day of the budget, to the Premier: is it acceptable to him for his minister to be so wrong about the budget and to pass the buck? Seriously, this is embarrassing. We're asking reasonable questions about the budget. We deserve reasonable answers, not roundabout talking points that are so delusional from reality.

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The truth about the reality is that we collect \$2.5 billion in educational tax dollars, but we are spending \$8.223 billion. We spent \$8.223 billion last year. We are going to spend \$8.223 billion this year. We are maintaining funding to education, and we reallocated restrictive grant funding and eliminated reporting requirements. That has reduced red tape, provided boards with additional flexibility to meet local priorities, flexibility they told me they wanted.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that one thing we did learn this morning in estimates is that the Minister of Education is giving permission to school boards to jack up school fees in the middle of the school year and given that our government invested \$60 million annually to take the burden off school fees and now the minister is actually increasing school fees potentially in the middle of the school year, how does the Premier feel about this? Does he think it's fair for parents to get a bill in September and another one in November? When's it going to stop? This is absolutely an abomination of the responsibility of the Education minister.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education has the call.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Through the Education Act we restricted school authorities from charging fees for instructional materials and supplies. We respect that school boards are in the best position to set the fees for their local boards.

I would otherwise like to highlight that when the hon. member was in a leadership position as board chair of a major school board, they collected almost \$127 million of school fees. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Indigenous Housing Capital Program

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, after a significant and extensive consultation our government introduced the indigenous housing capital program, which provided \$120 million in funding to increase the supply of affordable housing to Alberta's indigenous communities. Sadly, this program doesn't appear anywhere in the budget and has seemingly been cancelled. Can the Minister of Seniors and Housing explain why her government will give corporations \$4.7 billion but won't give a single dollar to indigenous housing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing is rising to answer.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indigenous people in Alberta often face an additional challenge finding welcoming, appropriate, affordable housing. We will partner with indigenous people and communities to build more affordable housing that meets their unique needs. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, given that our government consulted extensively to create that program that would work best with indigenous communities and given that when I asked the minister yesterday in estimates about the program's cancellation, she could only point to \$35 million in funding for general affordable housing, to the minister: is it that you don't understand the serious housing needs of the indigenous communities, or is it simply that you don't care about these communities, only about corporate profits?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations has risen.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A key part of our government's mandate includes lifting Alberta's population out of poverty, getting people back to work, and improving the lives of all Albertans. Our government recognizes the continuing need for adequate housing both on- and off-reserve for indigenous Albertans, and we're committed to ensuring vulnerable Albertans have access to safe, suitable, and affordable housing options.

**Ms Sigurdson:** This is a program from Seniors and Housing. Given that the minister can't adequately explain why she removed the indigenous housing program from the budget and given that the minister claimed that it was being reviewed for "alignment with our platform commitments" but that does nothing to support indigenous communities, can the Minister of Seniors and Housing please cut the nonsense and commit to this House right now to restoring the indigenous housing program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the member's question. It's a very important question. If you look in the financial statements in the estimates, it's important to show that we spend \$30 million in the capital grant for the next three years. The previous NDP government failed indigenous people in Alberta needing affordable housing. Under the indigenous housing capital program not one new unit of housing was built under the NDP. Our government is committed to being a true partner with Alberta's indigenous people.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

#### **Petrochemicals Diversification Program**

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Sherwood Park I can tell you that my constituents were thrilled to hear the government keep its promise by implementing recommendations from the Natural Gas Advisory Panel such as encouraging economically viable projects with royalty credits. Instead of placing millions of dollars of financial risk on Alberta taxpayers, this government has rightfully looked to the private sector to encourage new infrastructure in our province. Can the Associate Minister of Natural Gas please explain why royalty credits are a more financially sound approach to petrochemical development than grants and loan guarantees?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Associate Minister of Natural Gas is rising.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members across the aisle seem to think that they got away with saddling Albertans with billions of dollars of debt as they pursued their socialist fantasies. Well, we're going to be doing things differently on this side of the

House. We're going to be using royalty credits and royalty credits alone to attract petrochemical jobs. It provides less risk to the taxpayer than grants and loan guarantees.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the associate minister: given the importance of the petrochemical sector to Strathcona county and the Industrial Heartland and given that Alberta is home to Canada's largest petrochemical manufacturing industry and petrochemicals are, in fact, Alberta's largest manufacturing industry and given that there is significant potential for petrochemical manufacturing in the Strathcona county area, can the associate minister please explain how round 2 of the petrochemicals diversification program will create private-sector, market-driven jobs here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is blessed to have a highly skilled workforce and access to international markets for its petrochemical industry. Round 2 of the PDP will not only make Alberta competitive with Louisiana and Texas, but it will also encourage the construction of additional petrochemical facilities in our province. The NDP waged an all-out assault against job creators in this province. We're going to stand up, and we're going to fight to get good-paying jobs back to this province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the previous government's policies like the carbon tax, tax hikes, increased red tape, and royalty uncertainty undermined investor confidence and drove capital away from our province to the tune of billions and billions of dollars and given that our government committed in April to make life better for Albertans and stand up for Alberta's economic interests, can the associate minister please tell the House how this government will continue to fight to restore investor confidence right here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago the NDP caucus stood on the steps of the Legislature shoulder to shoulder with Extinction Rebellion, and they protested the energy industry. Now, perhaps they were looking for photo ops for their leadership run. I don't know. All I know is that the Leader of the Opposition comes in this House during question period with the cameras rolling, and she says all the right things, but her caucus was protesting energy. Albertans want to know: what's it going to be? Are they for energy, or are they against it? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

#### **Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction**

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, I hope you gave our visitors from the Solomon Islands some scuba gear as it's going to be under water because Alberta is doing nothing to deal with climate change. Under our government we were on track to reduce 50 megatonnes of harmful emissions over the next 10 years, and now that's down to about 30. That's a drop of almost 50 per cent. To the minister of environment: is 50 per cent less your idea of success?



**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm excited to say that the hon. member is wrong, actually. We're projecting 57 megatonnes in reduction by 2030, significantly more than the NDP were projecting, while at the same time lowering costs on industry by hundreds of millions of dollars and not taxing everyday Albertans like the NDP wanted to. What this side of the House is doing is real, concrete action when it comes to emissions. That side of the House, when they were in government, were taxing your constituents and my constituents, hockey moms and hockey dads, seniors, kids, on and on.

2:20

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, given that it's rather rich for the minister opposite to accuse us of making up numbers and given that Alberta has had a price on carbon since 2007 and in all that time all of the revenues collected from that price on carbon have been dedicated to innovation and green initiatives, until now, will the minister admit that he's using this money collected from his price on carbon to fund his \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, as my dad used to say, that dog won't hunt. This side of the House knows, without a doubt, that the NDP had a slush fund. This side of the House is clear and transparent on how we are going to spend the money in TIER. We've been transparent. We campaigned on that. We're proud of it, and we stand by our commitment to that. That side of the House, we now know, used their carbon tax as a slush fund. They took away from everyday Albertans, reached into their pockets and took it, and spent it on their pet projects, often by employing people from Ontario, which is just ridiculous.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the minister should be awfully careful when he talks about hunting and given that I'm glad to see that some of the best parts of our plan remain in place, particularly when it comes to the electricity sector, but given, however, that when it comes to the oil sands, this government is letting facilities choose to measure themselves against their own personal best rather than an industry standard, rewarding the worst actors and punishing the best in class, to the minister: if being the best is now the worst and the worst is now the best, would you agree that we have a race to the bottom?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, you see what the NDP think about our energy industry and about our large industrial partners, that drive our economy and are the job creators inside our province. That's why, when they were in power, they went out of their way to cause them so much trouble, to hit Albertans when they were down. Our approach is different. We're partnering with industries. We're actually getting real, concrete action done on emissions. What the NDP did was that they took money from Albertans, and then they went and spent it in Ontario, installing light bulbs and shower heads across this province. Our approach is completely different.

### Lottery Fund Dissolution

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, it takes a special kind of talent to raise taxes for everyone, raise the deficit by \$2 billion, run up \$93 billion in debt, and also cause panic among charities and nonprofits across the province. This Minister of Finance has caused all this with his terrible budget, so let's try to clear up some of this chaos. To the minister: can he confirm that the closure of the lottery fund still means that all of the programs that the fund gave money to will still exist, that all of the funds that went to those programs will still flow

to those programs, every dime, and that all of the same AGLC rules for charities will still apply? People are confused.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question because this deserves clarification. We will be dissolving the lottery fund, amongst a few other funds, to streamline government processes and save taxpayers' money. All of the functions of the lottery fund, all of the benefits that go to charities and nonprofits will be completely maintained. It will function as it has in the past. Charities and nonprofits can continue to benefit from these funds in the same way going forward.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, given that CFEP, CIP, Status of Women, and antiracism grants are all taking multimillion-dollar cuts every year, to the minister: please explain to the nonprofits that while the lottery fund change may not be something to immediately panic about, the raiding of that fund and diverting it to a massive no-jobs giveaway to his corporate friends and getting nothing but a higher deficit and higher taxes in return actually is something to panic about.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, panic seems to be the operative word across the aisle these days. This is a government that delivered a thoughtful, prudent, responsible budget on behalf of all Albertans, for this generation and the next. We are taking steps to streamline government, dissolving funds where it makes no sense to continue with them, and continuing to ensure those functions are delivered to Albertans. I don't expect the members opposite to know what good financial management means. That's what we're delivering to Albertans.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, given that when parents work an overnight shift at a casino for their kids' soccer team, they want to know where the money is actually going and whether it's going to benefit their kids and given that that's the case especially now given that this minister has raised taxes for all of those parents and given that this minister has no problem communicating with his rich friends in the form of a \$4.7 billion cheque, which is contained on page 144 of the budget, to the minister: will he clear up some of the terrible communications rollout of this budget and commit here and now to hosting a telephone town hall with charities and nonprofits to clean up the mess he has caused?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we have delivered, again, a thoughtful, prudent, responsible budget on behalf of all Albertans. The lottery fund function will continue as it has. Charities and civic groups, that provide such value to Albertans every day, will continue to be able to access these funds on a go-forward basis. Moreover, Albertans will save \$13 million every year by our good fiscal management, by cleaning up and dissolving funds that no longer serve a purpose, something, again, that I don't expect the members opposite to understand.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has the call.

### Fire-retardant Polymer Gels

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The impacts of the forest fires that hit our province this spring and summer have affected us all. In all likelihood we either know someone directly or indirectly that has been impacted by forest fires. It's my understanding that

the direct costs of this were about \$600 million for this year, the indirect impacts to families being more difficult to quantify. Earlier this year I suggested the use of polymer firefighting gels, which are more effective in action and cost. We were advised of additional trials to show the efficiency of this product and its delivery. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: can you please provide us with the status of those trials?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland for all his great work and the studies that he's provided to the department. I am happy to update him that there are a variety of fire suppression products out there, and we are actually reviewing the science – the great men and women at Alberta Wildfire are reviewing them – to see if the use of gel and polymers can work with our conventional ways of fighting fires. We are committed to a lessons-learned report, reviewing how all forest fires across Alberta were actually being fought this year. If there are better ways to fight these fires, we're all ears.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. You almost stole the thunder from my second part, but I'll go on anyway. Given that the forest pine beetle issues are real and given that the valley surrounding Jasper is now a sickly red due to the pine beetle killing trees and creating a tinderbox and given that the chemical retardant deployed from water bombers and free-standing structures would flatten them but that polymer gels do not have this effect and they work well in protecting structures, extinguishing the fire where retardants could not, and given that the use of these chemical retardants are ineffective or less effective in this application, is the minister able to reinstate the pre-existing contract, as a pilot perhaps, to help protect places surrounded by dead trees?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are committed on the fight against the mountain pine beetle – it's something that we did campaign on – to increase it by \$5 million, from \$25 million up to \$30 million, something that reversed the four-year trend that the previous government had of almost a \$10 million decrease in the fight against the mountain pine beetle, although it is a national issue and something that we're lobbying the federal government to be able to step up to the plate on. It was great that a couple of weeks ago we even signed an MOU with the Saskatchewan government for a million dollars in our fight against the mountain pine beetle.

**Mr. Getson:** Given that Alberta recently experienced one of the largest wildfire seasons to date and given that fighting fires here in the province takes a lot of human capital as well as monetary and given that Alberta is currently looking to spend taxpayer dollars as wisely and as efficiently as possible, will the minister allow this product and this applicator a chance to be put to work here in Alberta, the same as they have in Australia, giving our brave firefighters a better chance and better tools for the job? It's more cost-effective to both us and Alberta taxpayers.

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, when you look at the fires that we had here in Alberta – 60 per cent were man-made, and one was actually an arson issue that happened in Slave

Lake – it is clear that wildfires are here to stay. It's a natural phenomenon that happens with our high and dry forests that we have here in the province. It's about an 80- to 100-year life cycle that they actually have, and it's forest fires that eventually ends them and regrows the forest. When you look at logging and the sustainable management practices that we have, it's something that actually saves carbon dioxide. It's actually being used for . . .

2:30

## Postsecondary Education Costs

**Mr. Eggen:** There will be no net difference for Alberta students: Mr. Speaker, that was the Premier defending his government's harmful decision to increase interest on student loans, but as Don Braid of the *Calgary Herald* rightly points out, this increase will cost students \$1,800 more on a \$30,000 loan amortized over 10 years. To the Premier: are you really trying to tell students that they won't notice that you're stacking hundreds of dollars in interest payments onto their budgets?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier, of course, was indeed correct in that, and I think it's important to understand some of the dynamics. Although there'll be an increase in student loans for Alberta student loan holders, the federal government will be reducing their interest rate from prime plus 2.5 per cent, down two points. The vast majority of student loan holders in Alberta hold both an Alberta student loan and a federal student loan. Most students will not actually see any increase or a very negligible increase in their payments.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, given that math doesn't lie, on \$30,000 it's \$1,800 more in interest payments based on this new policy. Shameful.

Given that this government went further in what Don Braid described as a "bizarre pounce" on students in their budget and given that they cut tuition credits and given that this minister said that they would increase apprenticeship by \$4 million – but really they're taking \$110 million out of the postsecondary student grant system – to the minister. Please explain yourself. Why are postsecondary student supports being sacrificed to pay . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to explain and provide some more clarity. The member is correct. We have provided \$4 million. In terms of other funding as well we just, on Monday, made an announcement with Careers: the Next Generation to quadruple the number of students that participate in the registered apprenticeship program. At the moment that program has about 1,500 students that participate in it. With our investment we'll see about 6,000 students be able to participate in that program, which is critical to helping our students get access to postsecondary education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that perhaps this government's most heinous act against students is the lifting of the tuition freeze, allowing those rates to increase by as much as 21 per cent over these next three years, and given that this government has tried to insist that students actually want to pay for more tuition – crazy – to the minister: explain how tuition increases, no tax credits, added student loan interest are supposed to make life better for our postsecondary students.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The MacKinnon panel report was quite clear that despite the fact that we're investing more in our postsecondary system, our outcomes don't appear to be quite comparable with other jurisdictions. Nine out of 26 of our postsecondary institutions have below average completion rates. Moreover, the MacKinnon panel talked about the importance of allowing our institutions and working with our institutions to achieve a broader revenue mix. In the last few months I've been talking with a lot of our institutions, and they want the handcuffs that the former government placed on them removed.

#### **Agriculture and Forestry Budget 2019-2020**

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, on page 27 of the UCP platform the party boasts about how it apparently understands that the agricultural sector is vital to Alberta's economy, yet the Unlimited Cuts and Pain government has slashed the Agriculture and Forestry budget by 38 per cent over the next four years. That's decimation: 38 per cent. Now, he failed to do so in estimates on Tuesday. Can the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry now please explain how his understanding of the importance of farmers and ranchers led him to support cuts for our agricultural sector by \$545 million? How can farmers thank you, sir, for presiding over this historical gutting of your . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought we had a very civil exchange in estimates yesterday. But, no, the biggest issue that happened – and every minister of this entire government has had to go through a process. We're spending \$2 billion every year on interest payments. We are in a financial mess, and we need to clean up the mess, the intergenerational debt that the NDP government has burdened future generations here in the province of Alberta with. We are doing everything we can to get our fiscal house in order because that is not only the prudent and responsible thing to do today; it will be for future generations of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's be clear: 44 years of Conservative rule is at the root of all these problems.

Given that among the long list of items on the minister's chopping block is a \$34 million reduction to the world-class research done within the ministry and given that I'm hearing that that could harm our ability to innovate and develop leading agricultural practices and given that this Unlimited Cuts and Pain government rushed to give a \$4.7 billion handout to corporations but can't apparently afford agricultural scientists, can the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry explain what impacts slashing research and scientists will have on his ministry's intellectual capacity?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to reiterate: \$36 million of research that we are actually committed to in this budget and also \$43 million of additional research through the CAP, Canadian agricultural partnership, program. Again, as I said yesterday in estimates, we are committed to consultations with the entire breadth of the research industry in agriculture, whether it be academia, within our own government researchers, private researchers, commodity groups. We are committed to starting those consultations in December to ultimately find out the best way we can actually achieve the research results that best benefit farmers here in the province of Alberta.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, we rely on science in this province increasingly, but given that 11 days ago I asked this minister about what he was going to do to support Alberta's beekeeping and honey industries, which have had a difficult year, and given that while the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry claimed that he was working to find support for them, there's not a single line item of support for emergency help for Alberta beekeepers in this budget, can the minister of agriculture please explain why beekeepers in Alberta will get sweet nothing from this budget while profitable corporations get a \$4.7 billion gift from the Unlimited Cuts and Pain Party?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. About five or six hours ago I was actually in Lacombe talking with AFSC, the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, to discuss not just with honey producers here in the province of Alberta but every farmer that there is estimated to be about \$700 million of crop failures that AFSC is looking at currently. There is 20 per cent of the crop currently that is unharvested. It is something that this government takes very seriously. We do have a suite of programs that is being offered by the province, but we are looking at ways that we can improve them, and at the end of the day we're going to be there for farmers in this difficult year.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville would like to ask a question.

#### **Workplace Health and Safety**

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that our industrial workers, including tradespeople and those who support them, work long hours in difficult conditions, frequently away from their families. We know that these individuals often do not receive a thank you for their work and can be physically removed from resources that they may need to keep them healthy. To the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: what will this government do to make mental health supports accessible to industry workers across our province?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's essential that we support our industry and workforces in accessing mental health and recovery supports. Economically, addiction alone costs us \$5.5 billion a year in Alberta. A large portion of that is in the loss of productivity. That's why last week I was in Fort McMurray working with industry leaders, service providers, and union reps, trying to look at creative ways for how we can make made-in-Alberta solutions to help our workers remain healthy and productive.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we know the high amount of risk in many of these trades and occupations and given that workplace safety programming must be responsive to and comprehensive of risks present in modern workplaces, to the Minister of Labour and Immigration: how is this government ensuring that workers are prepared with the knowledge they need to be safe on the job site and that that knowledge is relevant to current workplace practices and technologies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Under our occupational health and safety laws workers have the right to know about workplace hazards and also the right to know that their employers are eliminating or controlling the hazards. Employers also have the duty to ensure that workers are competent in the tasks that they are performing. Through WCB a number of safety associations throughout the province are funded to offer training for workers and employees, and on top of that, our ministry has many online OHS resources, including publications, webinars, and templates. I encourage employers and all workers to use these resources to help ensure a healthy and safe workplace.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that balance must be struck between workplace regulation and worker safety and given that workers must be able to do their jobs in an environment that best supports the tasks at hand while not overburdening workers with regulatory restrictions, to the Minister of Labour and Immigration: how will our government ensure that regulations imposed on workers and workplaces are what industry needs and do not hold back employers or employees?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is very important that Alberta has healthy and safe workplaces, that workers can come home safely at the end of their shift and at the end of their day. One of our goals is to have fair and balanced labour legislation that protects the rights of workers while reducing unnecessary administrative burdens on employers and job creators. We have made a number of changes already in terms of labour relations and employment standards, and we'll be doing further reviews of labour laws in the near future to see what else can be done to support job creators and protect workers without inhibiting innovation and flexibility. We will remove what doesn't make sense and keep what makes sense.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in light of the Royal Assent ceremony happening in just a few minutes, we will proceed immediately to Members' Statements.

## Members' Statements

*(continued)*

### Budget 2019 and Edmonton's Economy

**Mr. Schmidt:** The Premier is fanning the flames of Alberta separatism. It's a dangerous game because it runs the risk of breaking Alberta itself apart. One could well imagine a hypothetical separatist mayor of Edmonton giving the following address. "Fellow Edmontonians, we're living through very challenging economic times. This time of adversity will be prolonged by bad UCP policies that will chase away billions in investment, will kill economic diversification, will kill the south Edmonton hospital and the west LRT, and will raise the cost on just about everything: tuition, cigarettes, car insurance, prescription drugs for seniors, and property taxes. On top of all that, the storm clouds of a global recession are on the horizon and we have a provincial government that has actively campaigned against our city's vital economic interests.

"The challenges are real, but you know what? We're Edmontonians. Through our whole history we've proven that we are the can-do city. We're resilient, hard-working, and innovative, and together we can and will overcome these challenges. Simply put, in an uncertain world where we can't count on support from this provincial government, we must be self-reliant so that we are prepared for whatever the future may bring.

"Edmonton is a proud and significant contributor to Alberta. We have a quarter of the population but contribute over a third of the provincial GDP. Our net fiscal contribution to the province is billions of dollars a year, but when the UCP enacts discriminatory legislation like ripping up the city charter, it's not just attacking the Edmonton economy; it's undermining the future growth and prosperity of the entire province. I'll be focusing my efforts on bringing fiscal fairness back to Edmonton. By getting a fair deal for Edmonton, we will emerge through this time of adversity stronger than ever. Edmonton: strong and free."

Separatism talk must stop. As Canadians we don't always have to be friends, but we will always be family, the true north strong and free.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta heritage savings trust fund was created in 1976 with savings from Alberta's nonrenewable resources. For over 40 years the fund has been invested with the aim to deliver the greatest financial returns possible for Albertans. While its capital has always been earmarked for the future, the fund has been used to diversify the economy and meet the needs of our growing province. Since its inception the fund has contributed a staggering \$43 billion to support spending in areas such as health care, education, infrastructure, and social programs.

The fund is professionally managed by the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, also known as AIMCo, to provide the greatest returns over the long term. Its diversified portfolio of investments includes bonds, mortgages, public and private equities, real estate, infrastructure investments, timberland, and even hedge funds. The fund's portfolio is also global, with investments in Canada, the United States, Europe, Australia, Asia, and other emerging markets.

Last week I had the pleasure of attending and participating in the annual public meeting for the fund. I am pleased to report that the fund earned an 8 per cent rate of return, net of fees, for the period ended March 31, 2019. This exceeded the benchmark for the same period. This represented a net income of \$937 million, and the fund had net assets of \$18.2 billion at fair market value on this date. The fund has consistently outperformed and has an impressive 10-year average net-of-fees return of over 10 per cent. The public meeting included an informative Q and A session between Albertans, AIMCo, and Treasury Board and Finance.

We truly do have a world-class organization managing our savings, and I would like to thank the staff at AIMCo and Treasury Board and Finance for another strong year for the benefit of Albertans.

### Presenting Petitions

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of over 1,600 constituents of Highwood area requesting that the government relieve the ongoing financial burden of obtaining costly water licences and consider providing funding and services for the representatives and the municipalities to ensure that the

Sheep River and deepwater wells are no longer the only source of water available.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any tablings today? I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a document that was tweeted out by Colin Craig of secondstreet.org detailing the intent by some public-sector unions to seek pay increases of over 7 per cent courtesy of Alberta taxpayers.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling an article in *The Tyee* that's entitled Alberta Can Transition from Oil and Gas and Have a Strong Economy: Here's How, dated July 2019.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other tablings today? Oh, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling a document today entitled Energy Efficiency Alberta Gets National Accolades for \$850M in Growth.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, hon. members, we are at points of order. At 1:51 the hon. Official Opposition House Leader raised a point of order.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), (j). This was when the Premier was responding to the Official Opposition leader. The Premier said: repeating the lie. I can pull out *Erskine* and *Beauchesne's* and cite all of the different examples of when Speakers have ruled the word "lie" out of order, including yourself, sir, from, I believe, earlier this week. Again, there are certain words that are completely unparliamentary. I know that the Government House Leader has had to apologize for members on his side using that term.

Because the Premier was referring to the Leader of the Official Opposition and, actually, even if he was referring to members on this side – as you have ruled, as have many other Speakers, including Speaker Kowalski, the use of the word "lie" in this House is unparliamentary. Therefore, the Premier or the Government House Leader on his behalf should apologize and withdraw.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Certainly, it is unparliamentary to refer to somebody as lying or to imply that they were lying, but the argument that the Opposition House Leader seems to be presenting to you is that the word "lie" can't be used inside the Chamber, which, in fact, I would submit to you, is not true. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you have the Blues. I do have an advantage of having the exact quote that the hon. Premier said in question period, which is: "Mr. Speaker, with respect to the \$4.7 billion figure, the leader of the NDP now knows repeatedly that that is a complete falsehood. You know, my mom used to say that repeating a lie doesn't make something true." Well, I do agree with the hon. Premier. My mom used to say the same thing: repeating a lie does not make it true.

The hon. Premier did not at any point refer to any member. He did not refer to an MLA. He did not imply that the Leader of the Official Opposition was lying. He stated a very important fact, that

repeating a lie does not make it true. Now, I will submit to you that whether or not certain statements were a lie, in fact, or not would be a matter of debate. That would be a fair point, maybe, for the Opposition House Leader to raise, but to imply that the Premier implied that anybody in this Assembly was lying is, in fact, false. I do not see any reason for the Premier to withdraw his remarks.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to join in the debate? I think the hon. Official Opposition House Leader has already provided his comments with respect to the point of order, so unless he has something completely new to provide and not just a rebuttal of what the Government House Leader has . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** I do, Mr. Speaker. The new piece of information is that the use of the word "lie" is not subject to context. It is not whether it is put against a member or members. The word, regardless of how it is used, is unparliamentary.

**The Speaker:** You're incorrect in your assessment of the word "lie." There are lots of contexts in which someone could say the word "lie" inside the Legislative Assembly and it wouldn't be unparliamentary, particularly if they weren't referring to another member of the Assembly. I could say, "My brother used to lie to me" at any point in time, and that wouldn't be unparliamentary at all, but I appreciate your submission.

With that said, in this case, *Beauchesne's* paragraph 494 does speak about: "It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members . . . contrary to the facts," but it may not impute the intentional falsehood in that being permissible.

I'm not sure that I agree with the Government House Leader when he says that the Premier didn't refer to a member of the Assembly because very clearly he did when he said, "The leader of the NDP . . . knows repeatedly that that is a complete falsehood." All the way up until that point, certainly not unparliamentary. But when he goes on to say, "You know, my mom used to say that repeating a lie," implying that the falsehood was then a lie, it certainly gets us very, very, very close to unparliamentary language given the context in which it's used. I think it would be reasonable in this case for the Premier to apologize and withdraw the statement.

**Mr. Kenney:** I would be happy to do so, always to comply with your orders, Mr. Speaker. My own parliamentary experience's context is that it's unparliamentary to imply that another member deliberately misled the House. It was not my intention to do so; therefore, I'd be happy to comply with your order by withdrawing.

**The Speaker:** Well done, and thank you. A spectacular apology, and I hope to see many more like that when other members are apologizing inside the Assembly.

Hon. members, the daily Routine has now concluded, but pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) and the notice that was provided by the hon. Government House Leader, the Assembly will now proceed to Royal Assent. Hon. members, as is the practice in this Assembly during ceremonial occasions, I would ask that you close all computers, ensure that all electronic devices are stowed in any way, shape or form out of the respect that we will show for Her Honour. We are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Royal Assent

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[The Premier and the Acting Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

[The Acting Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Acting Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

**The Acting Sergeant-at-Arms:** All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

**The Speaker:** Sergeant-at-Arms, admit Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[Preceded by the Acting Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, and the Premier entered the Chamber. Her Honour took her place upon the throne]

**Her Honour:** Please be seated.

**The Speaker:** May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has at its present sitting passed certain bills to which and in the name of the Legislative Assembly I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

**The Clerk:** Your Honour, the following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed.

- 14 Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act
- 15 Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019
- 16 Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019

17 Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act

18 Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019

202 Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated her assent]

**The Clerk:** In Her Majesty's name Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

3:00

**The Acting Sergeant-at-Arms:** All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Acting Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor and the Premier left the Chamber]

[The Mace was uncovered]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon for the consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Education in the Rocky Mountain Room and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education in the Parkland Room.

The House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:02 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, October 30, 2019

Day 36

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

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Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Dach  
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Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 30, 2019

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate October 29: Mr. Nielsen]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen with about a minute left.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, one minute is not a whole lot of time, but I guess one of the things that I do want to comment about this bill is around the fact that it's incredibly an omnibus bill. I mean, things like deindexing of the income tax brackets: for some of our guests that are in the gallery here this evening, our hard-working public-sector workers, they're going to see some of their income coming back to the government just because simply, maybe they get a raise, things like that.

Also, you know, I think that when we look at the different tax credits that are being eliminated – I had mentioned this the last time we had debated – just simply from one simple industry like the gaming sector, which is poised to make over \$150 billion this year alone: there's been some incredible growth there. With the decisions that this government is going to be making around that, we are going to proverbially be missing our own boat, Mr. Speaker, and they're good, high-paying jobs.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

We are immediately into 29(2)(a) should anyone wish to take five minutes for quick questions and comments. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 29(2)(a). I wasn't able to hear the first part of the Member for Edmonton-Decore's speech. I know he's very passionate about some of the initiatives our government brought forward to help diversify the economy and spur investment – one of those was, of course, one of the tax credits – in fact, all three of the tax credit programs. But the interactive digital media tax credit: the member just acknowledged that that industry world-wide is significant. We're talking trillions of dollars. I'm wondering if the Member for Edmonton-Decore can talk about some of the dollars that would be coming to Alberta but are likely going to be diverted to places like British Columbia and Quebec and Ontario that have interactive digital media tax credits.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to that. Yeah, he's quite correct. You know, the funny thing is that when you look at the comparative districts, say, Quebec and B.C., the tax credits that they actually offer are significantly higher than what was being offered here in Alberta. When we kind of take that approach of, "We seem to be wasting our money on these tax credits," like I said, I highly, highly disagree because Alberta was starting to become a very significant competitor with those provinces that were offering much, much more so that we see

companies like Improbable that have moved their head office here and started to create jobs in that industry.

You know, as I probably mentioned before, when I spoke with people at BioWare, we're talking about salaries ranging somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$70,000 to \$75,000 a year. Those are very good, mortgage-paying jobs, so when you can offer what is apparently significantly smaller incentives than what's being offered in the other jurisdictions, Alberta was poised, quite honestly, to cash in.

Again, a \$150 billion plus industry just within the gaming itself. That's not even talking about all the underindustries that Alberta would have been able to take advantage of. It kind of makes me feel that – you know, sometimes the way I've explained it to some of my constituents: it's like there's been this bowl of money with Alberta's name on it, and here we are going back to the same old same old like we used to do way in the past. We just kind of pushed that bowl of money away and said: "No, no, no. That's okay. We don't need that. We've got this sector over here. We're doing just fine." I would say that strictly from a capitalist point of view you'd want to be getting your thumb into that pie, grabbing some of that money. We're missing out here. It's an incredible opportunity that we are going to let slip through us.

Now, I remember even back I believe it might have been in the '80s. Of course, I'm probably dating myself here a little bit, Mr. Speaker, when I'm talking about that. Edmonton and Alberta had an opportunity to start, some even touted, a bit of its own Silicon Valley right here in Alberta, in Edmonton on the south side, no doubt. Again, you know, decisions that were made back at that time ended up making those industry players decide to not invest here in Alberta.

With things like the digital media tax credit, it clearly was an incentive for these businesses to come set up shop here in Alberta, to take advantage of the very highly trained people that were being trained and educated here in the province plus all of the other social infrastructure that was there like our very, very strong public-sector workers delivering our services to Albertans. Those are also the kinds of things that companies look at when they are investing in a jurisdiction. It's not simply about a big \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway. That might help the Walton family, okay? Walmart: that may help them, absolutely. But, you know, these growing tech industries, AI, things like that: they are not able to take advantage of that.

It was these things, these tax credits that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview had mentioned, that had really spurred some significant growth within those industries, that would have allowed Albertans to gain access to very good-paying jobs, which, again, gets them to be able to pay mortgages, pay income tax, things like that, and we wouldn't have even had to introduce deindexing of bracket creep. It's unfortunate that we're seeing those things leave.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to speak on Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. This just came forward after the budget, and it's a remarkable piece of legislation. I've certainly seen a lot, and just the breadth and the scope of this omnibus bill is quite uncommon. I find it concerning because, of course, there are quite a lot of significant changes in regard to anything ranging from the tuition tax credits to the digital media tax credits, that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore was just talking about. It has the consolidation of many different funds

that have existed in different parts of the budget and the government of Alberta.

You know, there are definite things that we could add up here along the way that will cost individuals, families money: the deindexation of tax brackets – right? – some of the tax credits that help to stimulate the economy, which would have benefited individuals and families, and the rollback of the Alberta child benefit and Alberta family employment tax credit. Again, I was just listening to the radio this morning, and an individual was talking about how people would lose money from that choice as well.

I mean, obviously, globally we know that this government is making a choice here around making cuts to the public service, making cuts, most of which we really weren't aware of during either the electoral period or even up to almost budget day. You know, we kept getting reassurances from this government that they would maintain funding and they would make sure that people would be able to get ahead and all these kinds of things. Then this budget has come, and we see quite a different story.

There are a couple of areas here that I want to talk about in particular. I think that the education and tuition tax credit issue: we were just discussing this in the estimates this afternoon, and a lot of people really depended on these tax credits. These are deductions that you can make for tuition and so forth in both your provincial and your federal income tax returns.

7:40

Considering how expensive postsecondary education is to begin with, most families have to plan for years in advance to make sure that they can provide that opportunity for their young students or someone who might be an adult who wants to go back to school or what have you. I mean, you don't just do it on a whim; you make plans, through saving and choices and sacrifice, to pay for postsecondary education because, of course, it does provide a tremendous benefit in regard to potential employment. It demonstrably helps an individual's income to be considerably more if you do have a postsecondary education. You know, quite frankly, it's part of our own personal growth as individuals and citizens to engage in postsecondary education, to learn about the world and learn a trade and get on with your life.

So when you change the rules around a very expensive and considerable moment to make a choice to go to postsecondary school and then suddenly, you know, the financial rules change midstream or just at the beginning or even before you even started, this is a problem. Lots of people say, "Oh, well, you know, you can take that tuition tax credit; people's parents are just getting it anyway," and so forth. Well, for a lot of people, it's the students themselves who are paying – paying through student loans and paying through working in the summer and all of that kind of thing – and looking for that extra bit of money back next April when you file your income tax.

This end to the tuition tax credit: I made myself available this afternoon and this morning, actually – we had six hours of debates on Advanced Education – to people from across the province to submit questions and so forth to the Advanced Education ministry. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that this was one of the most common themes that I saw during the day and over the last week or so since this choice was made to cancel tuition and education tax credits. It's a thing; it's real. When you combine it with the increase to tuition that the government has in their own budget, a 23 per cent increase to tuition over the next number of years, you know, it hits you coming and going, basically, where you literally are paying more for tuition. You get the elimination of the tax credit, and you end up paying more and getting less. I really take exception to this choice that is being made.

You know, it's interesting. A number of student advocacy groups did talk about making changes to the tuition tax credit, but that was to build a fund, a granting fund, to offer more low-income students an opportunity to go to school. I mean, that was a creative idea. That was, I think, a useful idea. I think that's sort of a society- and community-building idea. But the only part of that concept that the government seemed to take was just to cancel the tax credit and leave the rest to the wind. Again, that's part of this Bill 20. I certainly don't agree with the choice that is being made here, and I think that the government would be wise to reconsider that.

Moving on to the interactive digital media tax credit, I think that we heard a lot of talk about this in the last few days, since the budget was introduced last week. We saw quite a number of individuals and companies that were making investments around this digital tax credit to build a gaming industry here in Edmonton and other places, in Calgary as well, and suddenly the rug got pulled out from under them – right? – people who were making significant investment.

Let's not forget that the digital media industry is a very fluid and transferable industry. It can move from city to city, jurisdiction to jurisdiction, even to different countries, quite quickly. For these digital media companies to choose to invest and build here in Alberta was a credit, I think, to this tax credit. I think it was a credit to our education system that we have so many talented computer programmers and so forth that would want to choose to live, stay, and raise a family in Alberta, because probably that's where they're from. But now, again, with the ending of this digital media tax credit, they ended up hitting an abrupt brick wall in regard to that investment.

You know, it's interesting to dig a bit deeper into digital media entrepreneurs. I know that the government said: well, they'll benefit from the reduced corporate tax rate. But, no. When they're building a business like this from scratch, they invest every dollar, plus probably some, back into the business, quite frankly. So this notion that a reduction in the corporate tax rate would be the equivalent of the digital media tax credit, I mean, that's entirely erroneous. The people who were actually building these businesses will tell you that, and they have been doing so emphatically in the media and on social media. I've been following that quite closely, and I just really find it quite disturbing.

It's a very high value-added industry, right? The hundreds of billions of dollars, really, that are being generated from the gaming industry, from games and so forth, is a global phenomenon, and thus it is a very transferable and fluid phenomenon that can move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, as we probably will see here in the province of Alberta as these companies choose to not stay here as a result of this tax credit being eliminated in this budget with Bill 20.

Another tax credit that came to my attention that is being removed with Bill 20 is the capital investment tax credit, which is a way by which businesses can claim some of the machinery or start-up costs, physical machinery, and perhaps even digital computer parts of their business as a way to enhance and help with start-ups in the industry. You know, this has been a very successful program. We've seen that an investment, probably in the form of a tax credit, in the region of \$200 million has thus leveraged more than \$2 billion worth of economic activity that's directly attributable to the capital investment tax credit. I mean, that's an astounding return that I think is a credit to the innovation that the capital investment tax credit does allow and afford us. It allows lots of flexibility, and it has paid great dividends to businesses across the province.

You know, losing that, again, I think is very short-sighted, and I believe that we could definitely do better. There's a basket of other community and economic tax credits. The Alberta investor tax

credit, the scientific research and experimental development tax credit: again, gone. I guess I would perhaps ask the members opposite: why would you do something like that? It was a demonstrable success that helped to build and diversify our economy here in the province of Alberta. [interjection] I always feel good when the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview gives me affirmation on those things.

I mean, again, like, the scope of this Bill 20 is just breathtaking. This also is enabling legislation to repeal the city charters for Edmonton and Calgary and put a new local government fiscal framework act in its place. Again, an astounding about-face from negotiated agreements with our largest cities that were years in the making, quite frankly. You know, sometimes I think that this government is motivated by their summer of repeal, now stretched into the fall and winter of repeal, for the sake of repealing. But, again, this has represented years of work, these city charters, that could help to really bolster the economic development of our larger cities. You know, we need to remember that our energy industry certainly forms the backbone of the infrastructure of our economy and will continue to do so for a long, long time, but we must recognize the key assets of how we can help to diversify our economy and where the most economic activity is actually taking place. You know, it's our cities that provide that infrastructure for a knowledge economy, for diversity in the widest possible way, and to repeal the city charter, which was quite, I think, very far-reaching and visionary, to replace that with something more regressive I think is a huge mistake.

7:50

The next one – it feels like I'm travelling around the world here with repeal – is the suspension of the indexation of tax brackets for the income tax system. Now, this is a significant change. I found it astounding to be speaking on the same side as the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. I saw Colby Cosh going on about this the other day in the *National Post*, but, I mean, you can see what a broad sort of swath of anger and disbelief the suspension of these tax brackets did engender here in the province of Alberta and, indeed, right across the country, I think, as well. You know, it is probably projected in the government's own figures to produce at least \$600 million by the end of the 2022-23 fiscal year. Well, guess where that money is coming from, Mr. Speaker. That's \$600 million over the next few years that comes out of everybody's pocket, quite frankly.

You know, this notion – I saw it as a meme and it was repeated in here yesterday – if you earn exactly the amount of the money that you did . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to hear from my colleague from Edmonton-North West on omnibus bills like this. Sometimes it feels like we're going back in time. I know he spoke to a number of omnibus bills years ago. I guess this type of regression is bringing us back in time in a couple of ways. But I know the member spoke at quite a bit of length about how this is damaging for the economy, it's damaging for Albertans, it's damaging for workers. We're joined by I think it's over 25, 30 workers now in the gallery here who are really interested in seeing how important these bills, these two omnibus bills we're debating tonight, are going to be for them.

So perhaps the member could talk a little bit about how the \$4.7 billion, no-jobs handout is hurting these families, hurting these

workers. Perhaps the member can talk a little bit about how, really, these types of drastic cuts to the economy and these types of drastic attacks on the economy really will hurt families. It's something that is so important that when we're in this place, we focus on making sure that communities and Albertans are who we're looking out for.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you. I appreciate that very much. You know, my main concern is that when you make a series of quite significant changes to the economic structure, the tax structure, fiscal structure, you can create a spiral of events that can exceed each of the individual things that you've put into place, right? It's like the cumulative effect of, as you say, having a significant reduction in our capacity to raise revenue through this corporate tax giveaway and other mechanisms as well. I mean, we know that a government needs money to run. It's not money to run to pass it off into the winds. It's money to pay for schools, to pay for hospitals, to pay for roads, and so forth and build the infrastructure and the social structure that a modern society needs.

By creating that significant fiscal restraint or inability to raise money, then that's what has precipitated all of these other things that we saw in education and health care and these fiscal changes as well. I mean, these are choices that a government makes. It's not like: "Oh, no. You know, we have no choice. This is what we've got to do." We do see Alberta's economic situation in a precarious place, but we show lots of signs of hope. What I find particularly to be troublesome is that, you know, some of these ways by which we did stimulate hope and optimism for the future, like the capital investment tax credit, the digital media tax credit: again, each unto themselves individually they might seem not huge – mind you, the capital investment tax credit could be demonstrably attributing at least \$2 billion worth of economic growth – but when you start adding all these things up together, that's when you can have a problem.

These are choices that this government is making. It's not as though it's as inevitable as the winter coming to Edmonton every fall; these are choices. We talk about ways by which we can strengthen and diversify our economy. Well, the best way, the most fundamental and time-proven way, is to invest in your people – right? – to make sure you have money in people's pockets. They don't have to be loaded with cash. It's just to make sure that people are spending in the economy, that they're using the local facilities inside of our province and participating in the economy. Each thing that you take away, like this other aspect to Bill 20 with the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit, again, I heard pretty compelling arguments this morning on the radio that people will lose money. It will literally take money out of your pocket. The suspension of indexation of tax brackets: it's good for \$600 million over the next three or four years. That's money that comes right out of people's pockets, just like that.

Again, we want to make sure that we're prudent and careful in how we make choices in this Legislature. I would strongly suggest that Bill 20 and Bill 21, that we'll take a look at here shortly as well, are strong signs that there's a problem.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any others? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and Official Opposition House Leader has risen to speak.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise and speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. Before I get into that – because as many members in this Assembly will know, brevity is not my strong suit – this bill is



awful. Quite frankly, it's terrible, and I'll tell you why it is. And you don't have to believe me. You can listen to the private sector: the folks that you claimed to listen to, but who clearly you didn't listen to. You can say what you want and spin it how you want, but I will explain how dismantling the tax credits will severely hurt many Alberta businesses, including their ability to diversify the economy.

You can point to your corporate tax giveaway: it does nothing for them, and if you believe that it does, then you clearly haven't spoken to the industry, nor do you understand that small businesses reinvest every penny that goes into their company. They do not pull it out, therefore they don't pay corporate tax rates. Therefore, you could put the corporate tax rate to zero, and how many of these tech companies would you support? None, Mr. Speaker. Not a one because, again, they reinvest every penny. What they need help in is growing and scaling faster, which means they can hire more people, which means we will create more jobs. The tax credits that you folks are dismantling did that very thing.

Before I get to that, Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge the incredible men and women that have joined us in the gallery tonight. I know they're quite upset, and they wouldn't be here if they weren't. For Bill 21, that we're going to get to in a moment or in about an hour or maybe an hour and a half, I appreciate that – sometime tonight – where that bill is an attack on working people. Again, we've seen now in the short six months that this government has formed office that they have gone back on their word a number of times. The government has misled Albertans – we're losing track of the number of times. But we'll talk about that in a little bit. I just want to bid you all welcome. Thank you for being here tonight and representing. There may be 20 or 30 people in the gallery, but I promise you that they represent tens of thousands of Alberta workers. They are here to make it known and send a message to this government that the working people of this province are the backbone of this province. You are attacking the very fibre of our society through Bill 21.

8:00

Now moving to Bill 20, this bill dismantling the different tax credits. I appreciate the comments that my colleague from Edmonton-North West made. The statistics are there. I challenge every member in this House. Don't take my word for it, okay? You can accuse me of being political or partisan, and that's fine. These tax credits, first of all, came from the private sector. It wasn't a New Democrat political strategist somewhere that thought of these. This came from regular consultations with Alberta businesses, with chambers of commerce. I encourage the minister to go and speak with the Calgary Chamber of commerce, because they essentially designed two of the four tax credits, to tell them: "You know what? You were wrong. We know better. We're government. We know better. We know that this corporate tax giveaway is the silver bullet to get the Alberta economy back on track."

Well, if we're looking at facts, Mr. Speaker, so far what we've seen – and today in question period I talked about PrairieSky – is that these companies are saying: "Yes. Thank you for reducing our tax rate. We're going to take this money and either, you know, make it work on our balance sheet or we're going to do share buybacks or we're going to invest it in other provinces." On this gift from this UCP government, Husky Energy said: "Thank you very much. We're going to spend the money not in Alberta; we're going to Saskatchewan or Newfoundland to spend the money." So if that's not an indicator that this corporate tax giveaway is not working – or I should say that it's not working for Albertans; it's working great for the people in other parts of the country – then I don't know what is.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that what was working to help diversify our economy and grow our economy here in Alberta were the multiple tax credits that we introduced. I appreciate the fact that the other side hates the fact that the NDs introduced it. I would ask them to set their partisan ideological glasses aside, take them off for a second, and look at return on investment. The investor tax credit is a 30 per cent tax credit. An additional 5 per cent we added as a diversity portion. And this is what I love. I encourage members to look at the stats of the number of women and of minorities that make up boards of companies – right? – either board positions or CEOs. You will see that there is a really, really bad inverse of the number of women and people of diverse backgrounds that go to university and postsecondaries to become programmers, et cetera, but you look – now I'm criss-crossing with the digital media tax credit. You look at the number that make up the boards, and there is a huge deficit.

I was quite proud of the fact that we wanted to encourage companies not only to have more diverse boards, but here's the thing – and I encourage you to look at this. Companies that are more diverse are more innovative and have stronger balance sheets and do better financially. So never mind the feel-good reason or the reason of equality. Look at even the bottom line. Companies that have diverse boards do better. So let's encourage that, which is what this investor tax credit did: \$30 million conditionally approved by government leveraged \$100 million of investment. That's over a 3 to 1 return on investment, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the members: what's your ROI on your current corporate tax giveaway? You're actually negative. It's not creating jobs. I believe that the government is down 27,000 jobs – not the government. Pardon me. That's a whole other issue. The province is down 27,000 jobs.

So this was one of the tools to help diversify the economy. Other provinces have had tax credits for many, many years. In fact, the province of British Columbia, since 1985, has through this one vehicle – and I appreciate that this is just one tool, but it's a tool that's working. It's a tool that the numbers speak for themselves. We introduced a tax credit. It was sector-wide, so there are applications to oil and gas, there are applications to agriculture, and there are applications to our health care sector. I mean, the benefits go on and on, Mr. Speaker. But the 3 to 1 return on investment is significant.

I think that it's shameful that this government – and I know that the Premier knows better. I know that he might be claiming that the corporate tax reduction helps every company. I think he's well enough informed that he knows that that is not the case because it's the companies – I mean, I encourage the minister to go talk to companies like Improbable or other companies that wanted to use the investor tax credit, that were going to investors to say: we can offer you a 30 per cent tax credit. Then this government yanked the rug from under them, and suddenly now these companies are in limbo trying to raise money to grow, to hire more people, to scale, create jobs, to do better, to compete globally, and this tool was taken from them. I mean, that's just the first tax credit.

The other one, the recent one – and I hope that the minister of economic development and trade sits down with the long and ever-growing list of interactive digital media companies that are livid about a support that was helping to level the playing field. You folks claim that you want to level the playing field. You didn't. You actually just brought in the Alberta disadvantage when it comes to digital media companies. You know why, Mr. Speaker? Because companies can go to B.C., Ontario, or Quebec and receive a very handsome tax credit for their biggest cost, which is the cost of labour because these are programmers and designers, very well-educated people who are good at their job, who are paid well, fantastic.

A company like BioWare, founded in Edmonton, started here in Alberta. They're still in Alberta. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? They had at one point 800 employees in the province of Alberta; 500 of those have moved to Quebec. Why, you ask? Great question. Because they have an interactive digital media tax credit, and it doesn't make sense to stay in a province that doesn't have that. Again, you know, I'm sure you're thinking: what about the corporate tax cut? Well, you know what? These companies are not looking for a corporate tax rate reduction. They're looking for supports like through the digital media tax credit.

Those companies were growing and scaling here. I encourage the minister to meet with Beamdog and a list of other companies, Improbable, who came to Alberta and convinced their shareholders and their boards: "Alberta, they get it. They're levelling the playing field. Let's go to Alberta now. We're competitive." Not anymore we're not, not in the interactive digital media space. There's a disconnect between what the government is saying and what they are doing.

You look at the capital investment tax credit. My colleague from Edmonton-North West talked about this. This is a 10 per cent, nonrefundable tax credit up to \$5 million. All fancy speak to say, "Hey, company X, if you're going to build a new facility, expand, or invest in new machinery and equipment, you can qualify for up to \$5 million worth of tax credits if you spend the money now. You pull the trigger, you make the investment. You were thinking about it. This was that incentive to take your money from the sidelines and inject it into the economy." Two hundred million dollars over the last three years has leveraged \$2.2 billion of new investment in this province. That tax credit now, under Bill 20: gone.

I would love for a member of the other side to get up and – let's look at the return on investment, let's look at the jobs created, let's look at the positive impact and argue: no; this was the right decision. I think that even in the Budget Address, Mr. Speaker, it shows that the Finance minister is either out of touch, doesn't get it, or doesn't care because it refers to these tax credits as boutique and complicated. I'm going to venture a guess that the Minister of Finance has never actually looked at the application process for these tax credits because one of the things that industry said to us was: "Make it as simple as possible. We don't have time to be filling out reams of paperwork." But you want the money to get into the hands of these businesses to be able to make those decisions.

What we do know, Mr. Speaker, is that the world is shrinking, everyone is going global, and we're competing. We're competing with every other country and jurisdiction on this planet, and where the folks over there don't get it – and I encourage them to go down to Silicone Valley – is that companies will tell you that one of the things that they want, in fact their number one wish list item, is talent. What we just heard from estimates today: the Minister of Advanced Education and this government are making significant cuts. The 3,000 tech spaces that we proposed, which are needed to help produce the talent for companies like Amazon, Facebook, Google, and Apple to come to Alberta, these guys have just gutted it, saying: "No, no, no. Clearly, we don't need those investments here."

A company called Google – you may have heard of it, Mr. Speaker – decided to invest in Alberta, their first-ever DeepMind lab outside of the U.K., and they came to little old Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Why? Because of investments that our government – and I will give credit to previous PC governments – made, investments in artificial intelligence and technology.

8:10

Now, this government talks a good game about how they're committing some new money to AI. I learned from the Advanced

Education minister today that despite the fact that in the budget documents it actually says postsecondaries, zero dollars of that is going toward postsecondaries. You know what, Mr. Speaker? We need to invest in the people of this province to ensure they have the skills so that we can attract those companies to come to Alberta. Not even that. I mean, there are companies like MobSquad out of Calgary that are doing incredible work, that are looking to other jurisdictions because they don't have the talent here in the province.

Again, I know the Leader of the Official Opposition has said this many times, but it's worth repeating. You know, what made Wayne Gretzky a brilliant hockey player is that he never went to where the puck was; he went to where the puck was going. These guys don't see where the world is going and the value of technology and supporting our tech industry through things like tax credits. You know, it's just disappointing.

I encourage the minister and all the folks over there to listen to the private sector. They're the ones who are the most outraged about these decisions, as they should be. They were creating jobs. It's – you know, frustrating is an understatement. I think that it's offensive – that's more of an appropriate word – to hear: well, that only helped a few hundred companies, and our corporate tax gift is going to help, whatever, many, many more. Well, okay. So far it's helped none. Actually, that's not true. It has helped them. It helped them free up money to invest in other jurisdictions, so kudos for helping Newfoundlanders and folks in Saskatchewan with their job numbers, but as far as here in Alberta, it's not. But these tax credits, albeit maybe smaller: a newer program that was starting to pick up momentum.

My point is this, Mr. Speaker. I mean, every company starts off really, really small. So these tax credits may have helped a small company that could be the next Google or Apple or Facebook. You know what? Uber was started in Calgary.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I believe I see the hon. Member for Red Deer-South has risen.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you. I'd just like to respond to my friend in terms of some of the comments he made. I really do appreciate, though, hearing my friends on the other side speak about their concern for the economy and for Alberta competitiveness. I know that when I was campaigning and knocking on doors of my neighbours and friends, they too were concerned about the economic damage and trials that they were encountering.

You know, I remember observing the tax policies of my friends opposite. Of course, the NDP campaigned on raising corporate income taxes by 20 per cent. They were quite hostile and quite pleased when they did raise corporate taxes. I expected that they felt that they would get a large amount of revenue to pay for some of their socialist programs that they wanted to pursue. But what really happened when we raised the corporate taxes by 20 per cent? Well, Mr. Speaker, corporate tax revenue actually fell. The corporate tax revenue in 2015, prior to them taking office, never recovered during the four years that they were in government to what it actually got to. I think they panicked. I think they saw the failed policy that they had, so they brought in these investor tax credits, the Alberta investor tax credit and the CITC.

I want to read a comment. They talked about how this was so simple and so good. One of the top tax law firms in the country, focused in Alberta, is a firm called Moodys Gartner. They're a firm that has locations in Calgary and Edmonton. They, you know, are really deep thinkers and analyze – they live and breathe tax policy. They looked at these new Alberta tax credits. This is an article in

2017, because, of course, these tax credits came about in 2017, after the NDP experienced how terribly they failed, essentially, in generating economic growth. The title of this article is New Alberta Investment Tax Credits – Great for Business or Bureaucrats? The article goes on and says:

The procedures for receiving these credits were released in January 2017. The real winners appear to [be] the bureaucrats who will be hired to administer these programs . . .

The AITC credits will work as follows. I'll put a frown . . . next to every step that involves interaction with a government employee:

1. Create a user account through the online application portal . . .
2. Register as a Venture Capital Corporation . . . or Eligible Business Corporation.

There's an interaction.

The government will evaluate your application and, if approved, [they] will let you know within 30 days of approval. The instructions even say that "program staff will thoroughly evaluate applications to ensure they meet eligibility requirements" . . .

3. Apply for approval to raise additional equity capital . . .

Again, a little frowny face.

Once you have been approved in Step 2, you are required to submit an application to the government to ask for permission to raise additional equity capital.

4. Raise [additional] equity capital.

5. Apply for Tax Credit Certificates . . . Once you raise the equity capital, you are required to go back to the government by completing and submitting a "Share Purchase Information Form" to apply for Tax Credit Certificates on behalf of investors.

Lots of red tape here.

6. Delivery of Tax Credit Certificates.

I almost said red tape certificates.

The Tax Credit Certificates will be issued starting in January 2018. Once received, you'll be responsible for distributing them to your investors.

This is what Moodys Gartner kind of summarized. He said:

By now, the weaknesses of this program for Alberta business should be painfully obvious.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen to speak.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and talk about Bill 20 – it's a pretty hefty bill – the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I guess they call this an omnibus bill. Many years ago, when I was doing my master's degree in social work, I took a social policy course. In that course there was a key question. When you look at any kind of policy, you ask that question, and that question is: who benefits? Who doesn't? This bill – I thought: hey, I'm just going, you know, to go back to that class and do that analysis of who benefits and who doesn't by these proposed changes in legislation because I think that that can be very informative, and I think that that would support Albertans to understand this bill a bit more.

As my hon. colleagues have already shared, this bill ends the interactive digital media tax credit. It ends the capital investment tax credit. It ends the community economic tax credit. It ends the Alberta investor tax credit. It ends the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. So who benefits, who doesn't from that? Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the people who are risking, people who are creative, people who are putting themselves out there are being hurt by this. Okay. The government is choosing to not benefit these people.

End education and tuition tax credits: oh, okay; well, that's students. Students getting their postsecondary degrees are going to be burdened even more heavily by the funds that they'll have to pay through students loans, maybe, or having to work extra jobs that may take away some of their ability to focus on their studies. Okay. So you're going to hurt young people who are trying to better themselves. Got it. That's who does not benefit.

8:20

The third is to repeal the city charters for Edmonton and Calgary and put a new local government fiscal framework act in place. Well, I mean, I think we've heard loud and clear from the two big-city mayors that they're not happy. They see this as not benefiting their cities at all, and in fact they feel betrayed. It's really a profound broken promise. The UCP, when they were campaigning, said that they would respect the agreement that our government created. No, they haven't. So the big cities aren't going to be benefiting.

Another thing this bill, this omnibus bill, does is suspend indexation of tax brackets for the income tax system. That means that everyone will be paying more in taxes. I know that the UCP does like to say that taxes aren't going up under their watch, but this very clearly shows that they are. They can try to split hairs, use special words to describe it, but for the average family the reality is that their taxes are going up. Again, you know, regular Albertans aren't going to benefit from this change in legislation.

They're going to end the lottery fund so that, you know, groups – I mean, I've volunteered at many a casino when my kids were playing soccer or other sports so that those teams could have support. Community groups: the lottery fund helped a lot of groups be viable. Child care centres: it helped them be able to give those extras. Community groups, kids' sports groups: they're not going to benefit.

End the access to the future fund and the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund and the environmental protection and enhancement fund: ah, okay. So people who are trying to make Alberta a better place, people who are trying to help people, you know, if they have an early cancer diagnosis, for example, live in healthy environments: oh, okay. That's going to be taken away. They're not going to benefit from that.

Oh, yes, our environment: well, you know, that's not important to this government, so that, too, will be taken away. People who care, want to be conscious about how they live on the planet to make sure that we can be here for a long time, so our children, our grandchildren are really responsible stewards of our province: no, those people aren't going to benefit.

This one is really of special interest to me. The Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit are going to be rolled into one, and what that means is that fewer families will be supported. I'll talk about that a little bit more. But, again, who benefits from that? Well, I know who doesn't, and that is families with children.

The increase in tobacco tax: I guess smokers don't get any benefit from that, so they're not going to benefit because they'll have to pay more.

Finally, they'll amend the funding agreements for the LRT in Edmonton and Calgary. That means that those projects aren't going to go ahead as quickly, so that does not benefit people who take public transportation, people who do care about the environment, because we know that public transportation pollutes less than everyone in their individual cars. Again, that's another group.

And guess who does benefit from these kinds of programs? I think we know very clearly that with this UCP government it's about people who run wealthy corporations, with their \$4.7 billion giveaway to corporations. I mean, the elite stay elite. That's one of

the things, that's one of the reasons I got involved in politics, because Alberta – and it continues to this day – has the largest income inequality of any province in Canada. You know, there are certainly people who are at the very top, but there are also a lot of people at the bottom. We have that biggest discrepancy. We know a healthy society has a robust middle class, where there is tremendous equality and people have access to public programs and supports. Of course, this omnibus bill seems to be wanting to make all of that worse, make more inequality in our province. Of course, this concerns me greatly.

I want to talk about sort of the combination of the child tax benefit with – what's it called now? It's got a bit of a longer name – the Alberta family employment tax benefit or credit. What's happening is that it's going to be combined so that actually fewer Albertans are eligible. Actually, about 155,000 will receive less from that combination, and 55,000 won't actually receive anything at all. The thresholds have changed so that their incomes will be too high, so those families will not have the benefit of that program at all.

This is a concern to me, especially because of – you know, I must say that it was something that I was so proud of when we were government, that we cut child poverty rates in half. You know why? Largely because of the work that we did on the Alberta child benefit. It made a huge difference. This government's regressive policy now to combine it, increase the threshold is creating more families that will be in distress because they won't be able to access that program or they won't be able to receive that equivalent amount of money. It really was extraordinary what our government did.

You know, I think that on both sides of the House – I can't imagine that the UCP wouldn't want children to not live in poverty. We know that children are our future. We want to have them supported so that they can grow up to be healthy, engaged citizens so that they can contribute to their communities, their families. I mean, any politician would want those things. Children don't live in poverty by themselves. They live in poverty with their families, and their families need support. This combination is kicking a whole bunch of families off this program, and it's going to increase child poverty.

What's really important is that we had a dramatic plunge in child poverty rates, driven largely by both the provincial and the federal government benefits targeted at low-income families. Figures released in February of this year, 2019, show that Alberta's rate was cut in half between 2015 and 2017, falling from 10 per cent of children living in poverty to only 5 per cent. Economist Trevor Tombe, who the other side likes to quote quite a bit, says that the decline is largely due to the Canada child benefit introduced by the federal Liberal government and also the Alberta child benefit, a policy proposal first introduced by Premier Jim Prentice and later enacted under our NDP government. These two policies made a huge difference for families in Alberta.

So it's distressing to see that the UCP government is deciding that families, families with children will receive fewer services. This is part of this omnibus bill, and this is something that will create more inequality in our province and, certainly, more injustice and a lot of, I think, suffering for families who are struggling.

Myself, I'm a single mom. I have three sons. I mean, when I was younger, I struggled a lot, and I did depend on some supports from government. I know that I was in university during the Klein era, and there were grants for grad students that were seen as disadvantaged. That made the world of difference for me so that I could go on, because, you know, I was strapped financially. As we know from history, Premier Klein cut public programs in half, and those grants were taken halfway through my education. So I had an

extremely heavy burden, and it was very difficult for me to raise my children not under the poverty line.

I think this is really misguided, it's a mistake, and I really urge this UCP government to see who they're hurting, who's benefiting from their programs and who's not. They're telling us that, you know, kids should not live out of poverty. They seem to be pushing them further into poverty, and that certainly distresses me.

8:30

Something that I want to focus on, too, is the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund. I certainly have, you know, again, personal experience with this. I mean, I was diagnosed with leukemia, I guess it's over a year ago. I was treated and, happily, things seem to be going well for me. But I still have a bit of a road to go before I'm cured. I'm not sure. They just sort of follow you; they won't say that you're cured. But it is a type of leukemia that is curable, so I'm very grateful for that.

So I have some sensitivity, you know, when programs like this, the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, are cut because it makes a dramatic difference in people's lives and can help people know – I mean, one of the big challenges about cancer is diagnosis. People may not be feeling well. I didn't feel well for a long time, but I just thought: oh, it's because I'm the Minister of Seniors and Housing and I'm super busy all the time. I just thought I was burnt out, so I kept minimizing it all the time. I'm so fortunate that I did have some people close to me that could see that something was wrong beyond burnout.

If we have healthy communities, healthy environments, if we have practitioners – like, I had been to my doctor, my GP, three times during that time but never got a diagnosis. Well, this cancer prevention legacy fund works with primary health care and helps physicians, nurses, people in the community know what some of the warning signs are. It creates more awareness about the things that could be done to diagnose properly. I mean, I'm fortunate that I was diagnosed, but I think some people aren't diagnosed because people don't have enough information. This fund actually created more awareness in the community and helped people, you know, live healthier lives.

Some cancers, of course, are caused by lifestyle issues. Leukemia is kind of just, you know, a mutation of the cells. It's not so much about how you live your life. But if you have skin cancer or, you know, depending on if you drink or what you eat, there are some lifestyle issues. Again, this fund helps people to understand that, helps medical professionals with knowing what to do, and actually helps by encouraging positive lifestyle choices in the community.

They're made up of a team of innovative leaders, scientists, and public health experts who specialize in cancer prevention.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The individual who caught my eye was Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very engaged by the speaker from Edmonton-Riverview in terms of her analysis of the question of who benefits from a policy versus who does not benefit from a policy, which I think is a very good question to be asking. It's a good, basic question in terms of intent and direction of a policy.

I just want to speak about the fact that one aspect of this bill is the deindexing of the taxes in the province of Alberta, something that's often referred to as bracket creep. Last night I had an opportunity in this House to read some of the speeches by the Premier when he was actually in the House of Commons

commenting on the nature of these kinds of deindexing policies, particularly ones that happened when he was in opposition, and the fact that he was very concerned about those most vulnerable people who do not benefit from these tax breaks. In his speeches he mentioned single parents and people who are of low income and so on, and he referred to this type of tax break as “insidious.” So his own description of the behaviour of his own minister, I gather, is that it’s insidious behaviour.

I wonder if the former speaker might take a moment to reflect on a quote that I’d come across in which the Member for Central Peace-Notley asked the Finance minister yesterday about those tax creeps. At the time the minister was quoted as saying that this will not result in additional taxes, that if you earn the same amount this year as next, you will pay the same amount. However, Professor Trevor Tombe from the University of Calgary responded to that statement made by the minister in this House with this answer:

Misleading answer, for (at least) three reasons:

1. Anyone [with education] credits will pay more tax, even if their income remains the same;
2. Most people’s income will rise [because of] inflation; they’ll pay more tax;
3. Everyone will pay more than they were going to under prior rules.

He goes on then to clarify that

inflation wouldn’t have previously increased anyone’s . . . tax burden. Now it does. So if your “real” income doesn’t change, your taxes now go up.

So an esteemed professor, who is often in fact quoted by the Premier and other members opposite, is suggesting that the Minister of Finance made a misleading statement in the House the other day, and the point of his misleading statement was to suggest that there are no people who will be negatively affected by this bill.

It brings us back to the question that the member just reflected on: who is benefiting, and who is not? The esteemed professor is saying that the minister is not speaking in a way which we may refer to as truthful in this House. He is saying that his speech yesterday in answer to questions in question period was misleading because indeed there are people who are going to suffer from this bill. Clearly, this government is picking winners and losers. Of course, as they always do, they seek out the most vulnerable people and attack those vulnerable people and, in this case, take money away from those most vulnerable people.

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, the Minister of Transportation on a point of order.

#### Point of Order Imputing False Motives

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Under 23(h), (i), and (j), imputing false motives to another member of the House. Now, there were about 10, 12, 20 examples that I could have used in the speech that was going on. I tried to be tolerant because the member is performing, though, clearly, accuracy wasn’t the biggest part of his performance. He just actually said that a member of this House seeks out weak Albertans in order to cause them harm. That might not have been the exact words, but that was pretty close to what I just heard, and I think that falls exactly under the definition of imputing false motives to another member of the House. I would ask, respectfully, that you have him apologize and withdraw those remarks.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford in rebuttal on the point of order.

**Mr. Feehan:** Mr. Speaker, I don’t believe that we have a point of order here. I think it’s a reasonable debate as to whether or not the most vulnerable are attacked by policies presented by this government. I think it is quite within my right to declare that the government acts intentionally. Although I will concede, if the member opposite is willing to stand up and say that the government does not act intentionally. Then I will apologize. But given that I believe that they do, I don’t believe that there is a point of order in this case.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. With regard to this point of order I would like to take a moment and just remind the House that I do believe – actually, I’m going to just take the opportunity and say this. I think we are beginning to come close with regard to the line, not necessarily just on this issue per se but also with regard to moving from third person to a more direct discussion of individual members. I would say, though, that I would like to take this opportunity to caution the House.

With regard to this specific point of order, I think that everyone in the House should of course avoid implying that a member is intentionally trying to harm or is causing harm to Albertans. I think that that is a fair assessment of my recollection of what was stated, not having the benefit of the Blues. I still do think that perhaps the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford may want to just, if anything, go back and restructure the language that he was trying to make with regard to the point that he was discussing.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I accept the judgment of the chair. I ask that my comments be withdrawn, and I apologize to the House.

8:40

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Feehan:** I’d still like to hear the member who was speaking speak about how the vulnerable are being hurt by this bill, which I think is the point of the discussion at hand, so if I could defer to the speaker to respond.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, hon. colleague, for this. Of course, you know, both he and I are social workers. Both of us have our master’s in social work. I think both of us got involved in politics because we care about people in the community. We care about the most vulnerable, and certainly we stand very deeply in our shoes to make sure that their voices are heard. I think in the political arena . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to join the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise here in this place and speak at this hour. I’ve got to say that it occurs to me that we have over 30 people joining us tonight in the gallery, which, honestly, is more than we sometimes get during question period, so I think it really speaks to how important these two omnibus pieces of legislation are, how important and how impactful this is going to be for so many Albertans, so many workers right across this entire province.

It’s something that I think is going to be very important because we see with Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, that it’s a bait-and-switch plan. It’s a plan that is going to make Albertans pay more and get less. It’s a plan that attacks the most vulnerable

Albertans. It's a plan that makes life more expensive. It's something that is, I think, Mr. Speaker, not very well thought out, frankly.

I mean, we see it go after multiple tax credits that were creating good jobs. We see the digital media tax credit disappear, we see the Alberta investor tax credit disappear, we see the capital investment tax credit disappear, the scientific research and development tax credits disappear, all tax credits that were targeted, creating jobs. Instead what we get is a \$4.7 billion handout to the wealthiest corporations. Mr. Speaker, instead of actually using and continuing programs that the NDP government brought in that were out there making jobs, helping workers get back to work, the government has decided that it is their prerogative and a higher priority for them to give money away to their friends and donors and the wealthiest corporations. I think that's something that's too bad. I think that we were doing a good job of trying to diversify the economy, but it appears as though this may not be a priority of the new Conservative government.

We also see that a number of funds were eliminated, Mr. Speaker. We see the access to the future fund, which is worth approximately \$58 million, the environmental protection and enhancement fund, worth approximately \$150 million, the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, worth about \$451 million, and the Alberta lottery fund, worth about \$52 million. The shocking thing: all of these funds have been eliminated and brought into general revenue.

I know that the government is going to get up and say, if they do get up tonight: well, we're still funding a number of these commitments through general revenue. Well, what they've opened the door to doing is raiding these funds – well, they won't exist anymore – raiding the assets that were there, raiding the investments we were making for the future of Alberta. We saw the Conservatives do this decades ago with the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, and we're seeing them do it again with the Alberta lottery fund, where they're going after communities, communities like playground organizations, parent organizations, community leagues, Mr. Speaker. They're going after these types of groups, and those are the families, those are the groups that are going to suffer from this.

We see the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, which now contributes \$25 million a year to cancer research and cancer awareness – those are the types of organizations that we are now opening the door to being raided by general revenue, to no longer being funded properly by the government, to no longer having this ongoing support, no longer having responsible investments so that the funds can continue to grow and can continue to sustain these investments in important projects in our communities like the access to the future fund, which enabled Albertans to get higher education, or the environmental protection and enhancement fund, which protects the air we breathe. These are the types of projects the Conservatives do not think are important. It's clear they don't think they're important, Mr. Speaker, because they've eliminated them and raided them and put them into general revenue. They've opened the door so that they could take that money away, out of the pockets of Albertans, and that's something that I think is shameful.

We're seeing them raise taxes on every single Albertan. The average Alberta family, Mr. Speaker, every single worker's family that's in the gallery today: all of them will see an increase of \$600 a year just in personal income taxes. This government ran on no new taxes. This government ran on jobs, economy, and pipeline. Instead, what they've done is they've gone and given \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations, and they've reached into the pockets of Alberta families and taken \$600 out of those wallets. That's what's shameful about this bill. That's what's shameful about what this government is doing.

They don't understand how they are hurting families. They don't understand how workers are seeing the brunt of this attack. They don't understand how this is something that is not supported by Albertans. It's not what Albertans voted for. It wasn't even in their platform, Mr. Speaker. When conservative organizations are calling it a sneaky tax and a sneaky raise in income taxes, that's how you know you've messed up as conservative. That's how you know you've done a bad job, when people on both the left and the right think you messed up. That's simply the case when they're taking \$600 away from every single family right here in this bill, right here in black and white.

It's such a shame because we see time and time again the Conservatives talking about how they have this huge mandate, how they have this platform that they're going through with, and we're seeing so many things that just weren't in the platform, so many things that they just simply did not talk about and now have sprung on Albertans, now have decided to attack Albertans with, and not shown to anybody. They didn't talk about it through their so-called consultation, Mr. Speaker. They didn't talk about it through their campaign. They didn't talk about these issues at all. Instead, what they decided to do was that they're now going to bring them forward. They're now going to make families hurt. They're now going to make their constituents pay more, and that's a shame.

We see the Municipal Affairs changes, Mr. Speaker. We see them ripping up agreements with cities. We see them legislating away long-term funding agreements. We see agreements like the green line for the LRT in Calgary here today. We see that they actually have a clause that they can tear up the agreement if they want. I know the Premier has been up a number of times in this House saying that, well, he funded this line, and he's so proud of the work that he did in the federal government funding this line. But, then, why did he put in this bill and why did he allow his ministers to put in this bill a clause that lets them tear up this same deal?

That's the question Calgarians will be asking today. That's the question that Albertans will be asking. Why are they unilaterally setting decisions on how the conditions of an Edmonton LRT agreement will be made without even going to the negotiating table yet? Why are they telling municipalities how the funding is going to work? Why are they telling them how they're going to pay for the transit system, what the framework has to look like, Mr. Speaker?

That's not how you negotiate in good faith. That's not how you have a discussion about what we want to invest in. That's not how you have a discussion about what's best for our province. What that is is a heavy-handed government that does not care about the best interests of Albertans, Mr. Speaker. They may get up, and I hope they do and speak to that. But it shows very clearly that these ministers and this government don't understand the needs of Albertans. They don't care.

What they're doing is that they're trying to make life more expensive. They're trying to make life more expensive while giving \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations and creating no new jobs, Mr. Speaker, not a single new job. In fact, this government has actually lost jobs since they brought in the \$4.7 billion handout. They've lost 27,000 jobs. That's what's so shocking.

What's so shocking is that they claim they are the fiscal masterminds, they claim that they are going to balance the budget and all these things, Mr. Speaker, but in fact when we look at this bill and when we look at their fiscal documents in black and white, they're on track to over \$90 billion in debt. Their deficit is larger than ours ever would have been this year.

And we're seeing shocking things. We're seeing that they really don't understand how this will hurt families. They really don't understand. They've gotten up in this House and spoken to it, Mr.

Speaker. They themselves are talking about how this isn't actually an increase in personal income taxes. That's right here in this omnibus bill, the increases to personal income taxes.

When every single economist in this province agrees that this is an increase to personal income taxes because they deindexed it, they're going to say: well, no, no, no; we're just pausing the indexation. Well, every single economist, the ones they've been quoting included, agree that this is actually a raise to taxes because it costs families \$600 more a year – \$600 more per family – \$600 million over four years for the province, Mr. Speaker. It's what's so shocking.

What's so shocking is that this government insists on misleading, that this government insists on not telling the whole truth to Albertans because they are afraid of what will come, they are afraid of being able to speak openly about this. That's something that's really unfortunate. That's something that's really sad, I think.

8:50

We're here as the opposition. We're here, and there are Albertans. I think there are more Albertans than when I looked up the first time, Mr. Speaker. There must be 35 or more Albertans in the gallery here today that are hearing and understanding how this affects them, how this affects their pocketbooks, how this affects their rights, how this affects their families, because we understand that you don't create jobs by giving \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations. We saw this government try, and in fact what happened is that Husky put the money overseas and then laid off workers right in Calgary.

That's not what Albertans voted for. Albertans voted for jobs, and this government has failed to deliver, Mr. Speaker. This government is failing on their promises. They're failing on what they promised Albertans, and families are realizing it. Families are seeing the costs, they're seeing the problems, and they're seeing that these ministers and this government are tearing up agreements, are delaying funding, and are moving rapidly ahead with projects that will hurt this province, hurt our communities.

We see all of these things, like how they're ending the screen-based production grant in culture, Mr. Speaker. That's right here in the economic development and trade portions of Bill 20. What we're going to watch and what we've already been watching over the last several months is film companies and operations move out of Alberta. They've been fleeing to other provinces. They've been fleeing to other jurisdictions. And those are good jobs. Those are good jobs that are diversified.

But instead of having them right here in Alberta, instead of having different income streams for Albertans, instead of having different income streams for the provincial government, and instead of having all of these different programs and different services that we would be able to invest in and be proud of, what this government has done is that they've given \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations and then driven investment right out of this province. They've driven investment right out, and that's going to cost every single worker, Mr. Speaker. That's going to cost every single family.

It's what happens when you simply don't understand what this means for families and what happens when you don't understand what a tax actually is. Everybody else agrees that this government is raising taxes except for this government. So who should we believe: every single economist, every single columnist, every single reporter? Or should we believe the government, which has a history of misleading Albertans, Mr. Speaker? Should we believe the government, which has a history of tearing up agreements with the city of Edmonton, with the city of Calgary? Should we agree with a government that has a history of legislating away the rights

of its own employees, legislating away the rights of its own workers? Is that who we should believe?

I don't think Albertans believe so. I don't think Albertans will fall for the same tricks over and over again, Mr. Speaker. I think they know better. I think we know better. Government members, I hope, are hearing some of this and are starting to understand what the implications of this are. I hope the government members understand why it's so damaging to try and go in and legislate agreements and not negotiate in good faith, why it's so damaging for government members go to in and try and act unilaterally without listening to both sides of the table.

I think those are very important things because what this Premier didn't tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that every single Albertan will pay more for the services they count on, every single Albertan will suffer more for the services they count on, while this government will give \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations. It's something that is so shocking. It's something that is so shameful, that we can see them just simply not understanding the ramifications, not understanding how critical this is, and not understanding how important this is for families because, again, they're going after every facet.

That's the best part, I guess, if you can call it that, of an omnibus bill like this. The best part of an omnibus bill like this, Mr. Speaker, is that they literally go after almost every pocket and every community. When you look at things like – I really can't believe they dissolved the cancer prevention legacy fund. That is shocking, that they don't think that cancer prevention is something that they need to invest in, that they think they can raid that and take it into general revenue. Albertans will be watching. Albertans will realize and they will understand the implications of that.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We can see the Alberta lottery fund being ripped away and torn apart and, instead, brought into general revenue so that those investments that go into communities, those investments that go to families, those investments that go into community leagues and playgrounds, those are the investments that will no longer be made after this Conservative government is done tearing them apart. We've seen them do this before with other funds, Mr. Speaker. We've seen them do this before with the heritage fund just a few decades ago. We know that this is the type of thing that the Conservatives are capable of. It's the type of thing that they're willing to move forward with.

I think it speaks to values. It speaks to the types of values that we want to bring forward. We want to have a government that fights for affordability. We want to have a government that fights for jobs. We want to have a government that keeps their promises, Mr. Speaker. Instead, what we see, in my opinion, is a government that has done none of those things. They have broken their promises on taxes; they have raised taxes. They have broken their promises on jobs; they have created no new jobs. They have broken their promises on investing in communities by giving \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations.

That's what's so shocking. It's almost shameful, Mr. Speaker, because instead of families getting what they voted for, they're going to see a \$600 per year increase in their personal income taxes. That's what's so shocking, because families did not vote for that. Families thought they were going to be voting for new jobs. Instead, they lost 27,000 jobs. Families thought they were voting for more affordability. Instead, what they're seeing right here in black and white in this bill is more expensive products, making their lives more expensive.

I mean, certainly, I think we need to vote against this. We need to see the importance of this.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I believe the hon. Member for Red Deer-South rose first.

**Mr. Stephan:** It's one of the advantages, Mr. Speaker, of being able to see the countdown.

The irony of what was said is not lost on me. I want to just kind of repeat a few phrases that the member opposite said. He talked about businesses fleeing Alberta. Certainly, when I was practising law, I knew of many business activities that unfortunately fled Alberta during the tenure of the government over there attacking workers. They actually indicated that this government was attacking workers, yet during their tenure there were tens of thousands fewer private-sector jobs when they finished their term than when they started. That is a profound failure. It's a profound failure, but it's also a tragedy because this represents individuals and families and real hardship. I know I was able to, you know, meet some of those families during the campaign where Albertans overwhelmingly rejected the ideology of the prior government.

I want to just continue reading a few comments that I didn't quite get the opportunity to finish from Moodys Gartner, which, again, is one of the top tax law firms in the country, their evaluation of the NDP tax credits, that really they brought in as a response to try and stem businesses fleeing our province. This is what he says in summary of the Alberta investor tax credit:

Heavy bureaucratic involvement in the process, government discretion to refund or not, government selection of eligible businesses and industries, and short sunset of the program. All of these issues lead to a program that is unlikely to attract any new business to Alberta.

They go through a number of the red tape steps with the corporate investment tax credit, and this is kind of what the summary says at the end:

Similar to the [Alberta tax credit] the [corporate investment tax credit] program is fraught with bureaucracy, is short term in nature, is not refundable... is overly prescriptive and full of unnecessary reporting steps.

This is kind of the concluding paragraph. I think it's really good.

The real winners under these two tax credit programs appear to be the government employees who will be hired to administer the programs. While the use of investment tax credits can often be good to stimulate economic investment, the AITC and CITC programs developed by the Alberta government are a textbook example of the creation of a program that is overly bureaucratic, ridiculously uncertain... and condescending. Apparently the Alberta government,

being the NDP government,

knows better than the marketplace which investments are worthy of a credit and which ones are not. Very disappointing.

9:00

There was a follow-up article, and it's titled Alberta Investor Tax Credit Program: Even More Bad News. This is a really disturbing element of the Alberta investor tax credit. It says that there was ministerial discretion, based on public policy, as to whether or not you got the credit. This is the concern: "At face value, it would appear that any technology company that might not share the same views on public policy as the reigning government could be disqualified from eligibility for the AITC program." Disappointing. I find it very disappointing, actually, and concerning that the NDP government would inject into an investor tax credit program a necessity to comply with their world view, you know, their socialist world view. We know that in their constitution their goal is to establish and maintain a democratic socialist government in Alberta. We saw the awful, awful failure that that NDP government inflicted on the rest of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) has expired.

We are back on the main bill. I might just add, to the hon. Member for Red Deer-South, if he hasn't already suggested that he might do so, that it would be reasonable for him to table the documents he referred to.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen to join the debate tonight.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure all the members in the gallery that the dream of social democracy is still alive. We're only in a four-year pause – well, possibly even less – but we are still working to make sure that we achieve our dreams of social democracy here in Alberta. I'm sure that we will get there, the shining city on the hill, as Tommy Douglas used to talk about it. It will be built here in Alberta one day. I have complete confidence in that fact.

There are many things in this bill that I wanted to talk about. Unfortunately, I only have 15 minutes, Mr. Speaker, so I want to focus those things on what I'm personally interested in, and that's video games and the interactive digital media tax credit. Now, I was really excited when we brought in this interactive digital media tax credit. At the time, when we argued in favour of that tax credit, when we brought that legislation before the House, I admitted my penchant for playing video games. Given the statistics approximately two-thirds of all Canadians play video games. Chances are that some of the members here in the House right now are probably playing video games on their laptops or phones as we speak.

The interesting fact, Mr. Speaker, is that Canada has the third-largest video game industry in the world, behind only the United States and Japan. The reason that video games have exploded in Canada is because our major competitors – Ontario, Quebec, and B.C. – all have interactive digital media tax credits in those provinces. Those programs have been incredibly successful. The latest data that I was able to get from the Entertainment Software Association, which is the industry association that represents video game makers here in Canada, is that there are over 20,000 people across the country employed in the creation of video games. The majority of them are in the province of Quebec. The bulk of the remainder are divided up evenly between Ontario and British Columbia. A very, very small number of video game creators are in the other provinces in the country.

We tried to address that fact with the creation of the interactive digital media tax credit. There's no reason that a video game company couldn't set up shop here in Alberta as opposed to British Columbia or Ontario or Quebec. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things that would recommend Alberta for the creation of video games. Certainly, we have a low cost of living, a highly skilled workforce, and weather that can't be beat. It just makes sense to set up a video game company here in Alberta if we levelled the playing field, which the interactive digital media tax credit did. It levelled the playing field. It created similar conditions for video game companies here in Alberta that exist in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec.

As soon as we introduced that interactive digital media tax credit, a number of companies set up shop here in Edmonton. I know that one of the former members of BioWare, which is a very well known – world-wide known – video game company, created many successful video games. This person set up his own shop here in Edmonton. A number of other companies set up shop shortly after that, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we were well on our way to fostering a successful video game industry here in Alberta, and the members opposite seem to think that those aren't real jobs and decided to scrap this



digital media tax credit and send all of those jobs to Quebec, which is really strange, Mr. Speaker, because we've certainly heard from the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the party chairman, how concerned he is about resources fleeing Alberta and going to Quebec. He thinks it's grossly unfair how the country is structured so that so many resources are taken out of Alberta and given to Quebec, and here he is with the interactive digital media tax credit repeal doing exactly that.

He's telling companies that they're not welcome to set up shop here in Alberta and that it only makes sense to move to Quebec and set up shop there, which is a real shame because I know that there are many young people in the province – I certainly speak to them in my constituency all the time – who are enthusiastic gamers and certainly would love the opportunity to grow up and create games for other people to love as much as they've been able to play the games that they've loved as children. It really breaks my heart, Mr. Speaker, and it's disappointing to the young people that I talk to that they won't get that opportunity under this regime to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to debunk some of the myths that continue to be perpetrated by the members opposite around taxation and the impact on economic development because, you know, we've heard from the Finance minister and we continue to hear from the front bench that all you have to do is lower the general tax rate and that will spur businesses. My colleague the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has been quite clear that you could have a tax rate of zero, a corporate tax rate of zero, heaven forbid, and that wouldn't do anything to promote start-ups in this province, right? You need to have a tax credit structure to incent start-up of new companies, and the general tax rate does nothing to promote the start-up of new companies.

We can see that when we look at the evidence from our competing provinces. British Columbia has a corporate tax rate of 12 per cent. Ontario has a corporate tax rate of 11 and a half per cent. Quebec has a corporate tax rate of 11.7 per cent, Mr. Speaker. The video game industry is thriving in those three provinces and suffering in Alberta not because of the general corporate tax rate but because this government is repealing the interactive digital media tax credit and slamming the door on the creation and growth of an exciting industry.

I also want to talk about personal income taxes because, of course, we continue to hear from the members opposite that personal income taxes incent people to move around wherever the tax rate is most favourable. Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, we know that that's not true because all of these video game companies are very successful at attracting some of the most talented and productive members of the video game industry from all around the world, and the income tax rates in British Columbia and Ontario are higher than ours. Most interestingly, the lowest tax bracket in Quebec is actually higher than our highest tax bracket, and that's where most of the jobs in the video game industry are being created.

So to continue to hear these myths perpetrated by the members opposite that corporate tax rates and personal tax rates are somehow the magic wand that needs to be waved in order to create new industries here in the province is very concerning to me. It fundamentally disregards all of the evidence that's plain to see here in Canada.

9:10

I now want to talk about what's at stake for Alberta. We've talked about the number of jobs that currently exist in the video game industry, 20,000 jobs. You know, the members opposite have killed 27,000 jobs in only six months in government, which is a track record that I certainly wouldn't be proud of. They are intent on killing even more by scrapping this interactive digital media tax

credit. The video game industry is worth about \$6 billion to the entire country of Canada. The members opposite are looking at this \$6 billion pie and saying: "Ah, we don't want a piece of that. Why don't we let Ontario and Quebec have that money? We'll continue to put all of our bets on lowering corporate taxes and hoping for the best." We know that that won't be successful.

Mr. Speaker, I have to emphasize that these jobs that are in the video game industry are good jobs. The average salary in the video game industry is approximately \$75,000 a year, which is well above the average salary that Albertans make. Certainly, right now in Alberta, with the economic conditions that we're experiencing, there are lots of people who would love to have a job that paid them \$75,000 a year. Members opposite are saying: "No. We are going to deny them that opportunity because we just don't believe in tax credits." They're opposed to anything that the NDP has ever done. "So we're going to scrap the tax credit, and we don't care about the consequences to the people of Alberta." It's disappointing to me.

Now, you know, we've got a lot of labour representatives in the gallery watching tonight. I do have to couch my praise of the video game industry with concerns about the poor unionization rates in the video game industry. Certainly, we've seen a number of cases, particularly in the United States, of poor treatment of video game employees. They work really, really long hours for extended periods of time, they can be fired at a moment's notice, and they're not able to get the kinds of benefits – pensions, those kinds of job protections – that come from being in a union. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's heartening to me to see the move towards unionization that's taking hold in the video game industry in the United States. It's my hope that the video game industry here in Canada follows suit. Of course, we won't have to worry about that in Alberta because with the scrapping of the digital media tax credit, we won't have a video game industry.

I wonder if perhaps the threat of having more unionized workers in Alberta, regardless of what industry it is, is one of the reasons that's driving them to scrap this tax credit. We know that the members opposite are ideologically opposed to unions, and certainly we've seen a number of pieces of legislation since the April election that have been designed to destroy the power that unions could have. Regardless of the problems with the labour conditions in the video game industry, these are highly skilled, highly paid, valuable jobs that a lot of people would seek, and I'm very disappointed that this government sees fit to slam the door on the future economic development of Alberta. I will mourn all of the potential video games that will not be born because this government has chosen to scrap the digital media tax credit.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate on Bill 20.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 21

### Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate October 29: Mr. Schow]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is anyone wishing to join the debate on Bill 21? I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, once again a very ironically named bill considering the scope and the breadth by which it revokes and claws back both the rights of workers here in the province of Alberta and the ability to properly fund people with severely disabled, handicapped supports. It's just

another gigantic omnibus bill, the likes of which I have not seen in the considerable time that I've spent here in this Legislature.

I would like to just spend some time to talk about what this bill seeks to do in terms of giving sweeping powers to the government in regard to collective bargaining here in the province of Alberta. You know, I'm not a lawyer, but I give fair warning that many of the aspects of this bill and the powers that it gives the government to roll back collective bargaining, to exclude individuals from being part of a collective bargaining unit, to bring in replacement workers during strikes and so forth are unconstitutional provisions that this government is trying to bring forward. They've been struck down in other jurisdictions across the country, so not only are these elements of this bill in terms of collective bargaining vexatious, but we also know that you end up in a legal situation that has been proven in many other jurisdictions to be against the law, to be unconstitutional, and to move against and to move backwards the right to collectively bargain here in the province of Alberta.

You know, we have these rules in place for a reason. By allowing workers to negotiate their working conditions, to negotiate wages and benefits, this is part of the fabric of what makes a society stable, that ensures that essential services will be provided to the population and ensures peace and security, quite frankly. We've learned over many, many years, the more than 100 years of collective bargaining action here in the province of Alberta and across the country, that this has evolved into a way by which you can resolve and move forward in a constructive manner. These provisions in this bill are very much the opposite. They're regressive, and I believe that, as I say, they will be sought as illegal and unconstitutional as well.

Some of the individual aspects to this bill that I think are particularly vexatious: first of all, allowing the government to have greater oversight over collective bargaining with public-sector employees, including the length of the agreements, the use of salary surveys, and to determine who gets to collectively bargain or not as well. It allows certain individuals like budget officers, systems analysts, auditors, and so forth to be removed from collective bargaining units. I mean, again, I'm not an expert in history, but this is particularly, I think, a historic move backwards in regard to collective bargaining and to unions. To exclude individuals from being able to join those units, to provide for their families, to make sure that they have the wages and the benefits that they deserve, and to be able to bargain for those things, I think that is particularly onerous and very disappointing as well.

What this provides is the framework for this government to engage in wage rollbacks. We saw the Premier of Alberta yesterday saying quite emphatically and clearly that this government here in the province of Alberta wants to roll back public-sector wages and benefits across a broad swath of our public service, including nurses, teachers, public service workers, social workers, and the like, right? More than 180,000 people that are represented under a collective bargaining process are having those rights, which are constitutionally guaranteed, put at risk by this bill.

9:20

Again, we know that over the last number of years fair and open tables for bargaining is a precondition to ensure the safety and the integrity of the essential services that nurses provide, that teachers provide, that social workers provide, that the police, correctional officers – you name it – provide, by far the largest working force represented here in the province of Alberta.

You hear some language about division, talking about who is Albertan or who is less Albertan or whatever. The sheer volume of the number of people that they're talking about here with these wage rollbacks – illegal wage rollbacks – represents the largest

working population in the whole province. I mean, who is more or less of an Albertan than the teacher that works in the local grade 2 classroom or the nurse that's on the night shift here tonight in one of our hospitals or the correctional officer that works weekends under very difficult circumstances, right? We know that the basic fabric of who we are as a society depends on these essential services. They're there for a reason. They're not a liability to the budget. They are an investment to who we are as Albertans, an investment to ensure that we move forward as a modern industrial society that pays fair living wages and contributes to the economy in all ways.

Each of these individuals lives in our communities. These 180,000 or more individuals live in our communities, they have mortgages, and they buy food in the local shops and contribute to the economy. The economy is not just a single industry or a single corporation or a handful of those things. It is the collection of all of us, 4 million plus individuals contributing to the economy in a fair and reasonable way.

I know that in education, for example, I would say that in the majority of the municipal counties in this province the education system is the number one employer, Mr. Speaker, for not just teachers but support staff and custodial workers and bus drivers and so forth. So when you had, for example, an economic downturn here in this province due to the energy prices across the globe, many of those were jobs that helped to sustain a family when someone in the family might have lost a job or had reduced hours from working in the energy industry. You don't choose to double down on those aspects of our economy. A teacher's job is no less a contributing factor to the strength and the health of our economy than someone who works in a natural gas plant. That person is contributing just as much. They're contributing to education, they're contributing to that aspect of investing in our children, and they spend money in our shops just like any other member in our society.

This whole idea of making choices around making cuts to the public service: that's exactly what they are. They're choices that are being made by this government, and they are choices that are being driven by a significant reduction in this government's capacity to generate revenue. They've made choices about reducing corporate tax by \$4.7 billion. They've made other reductions to make it so that it's difficult to pay for all the public services that we know and expect and need to run our province.

When you hear the arguments – you'll hear them on both sides. I've heard them ad nauseam from the members opposite, that this is the only route that we have left to us, that we're in an economic crisis and that we all have to tighten our belts and so forth. Well, you know, we can make choices around those things. Certainly, our government had a path to balance, and we had a path to reduce deficit. I mean, don't forget that this same budget that has produced this offspring of Bill 21, which is so onerous, also produced a significant deficit, I think \$8.7 billion in deficit, right?

**Mr. Nielsen:** Two billion dollars higher.

**Mr. Eggen:** Two billion dollars higher than the last one that we posted, right?

You know, there are ways by which we can achieve balance over time but not compromise the social and economic fabric of who we are as Albertans. Part of who we are is that we look after each other, so we build institutions like public health care. Public health care is a symbol and a manifestation of the values that we together hold as Albertans, as people, that we look after each other and we're willing to contribute collectively in order to ensure the health and the security and the safety of ourselves, our neighbours, and our families, right? These are expenses – yes, they are – but they're

investments as well, Mr. Speaker. To look at them as anything but a way by which we move forward as a society I think is reductive, and it goes against not just logic and reasoning but against the values of who we are as Albertans as well.

Like I said before, I find it difficult to, you know, get behind any legislation that comes forward that is clearly illegal and unconstitutional. But in this case, considering all of the other ways by which it makes a direct attack on the collective bargaining process and all of the essential services that those 180,000-plus workers do represent, I find this bill being brought forward here this evening to be particularly troublesome.

Other aspects of Bill 21, just to list them, to assure Albertans that certainly these other aspects are just as difficult and onerous as well: the suspension of the indexation of benefits to assured income for the severely handicapped, income supports, and the seniors' lodge program. I mean, it feels like I'm reading something out of a 19th-century Dickens novel, you know, with cutting the assured income for the severely handicapped and cuts to seniors, right?

Again, reducing or ending the tuition freeze, that we put in place to ensure that going to school for postsecondary education is affordable for our population; increasing the student loan interest by a percentage – as we calculated earlier this afternoon, this represents at least an \$1,800 extra expense on a typical student loan being paid over 10 years based on a \$30,000 loan – ending the regulated rate option for electricity here in the province of Alberta: I mean, the scope of this. [interjection] Yeah. Prices go up, you get less, and you end up paying significantly more as well.

Allowing the minister to change regulations for how municipalities pay for policing. Again, you know, the minister has been jumping up and down, saying that it ain't so about this whole issue, but it seems pervasive. Here's another clue that paying for policing is going to get a whole lot more expensive for municipalities. Where do municipalities get their money from? Municipal taxes. Where do municipal taxes come from? Your pocket, right?

I mean, there's a whole range of things here. I wanted to particularly focus on the direct attack that this Bill 21 has in store for workers here in the province of Alberta. You know, we all need to get our heads past this idea of adversaries between workers and so forth and this government. It's important to just go back to the first principles of why we have a public education system, why we have a public health care system, why we provide social services for people at various stages in their lives – to ensure security and good health for yourselves and your families when you need it – and remind ourselves that that is a sacred responsibility that is generated from this very Chamber. For any of us to compromise that – I mean, certainly, you can negotiate, right? It's good. I was part of that as a government over the last four years. But the key to negotiating at the table is to bargain in good faith. You do that, and all things will follow, every step of the way.

I think about something, again, that was eliminated by this government – we were debating it today – the classroom improvement fund, which was generated purely at the bargaining table in good faith, to ensure that teachers and school boards could have a say in how to improve classroom conditions for students and for workers, right? That was a good thing.

9:30

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in this place. Of course, again, it's a pleasure to hear from my colleague from Edmonton-North West. He's been here for a very

long time, so he's seen a few of these types of attacks on workers. He's seen a few of these types of attacks by Conservatives on Albertans. I think it's something that's really important that we hear about. I think it's a very important perspective we had. I know he talked a little bit at the end about how it's so interesting that we see families paying more, communities paying more right out of their pocketbook and, at the same time, we're seeing attacks and the creation of American-style health care right across this province. That's the type of thing that I think is so shocking when we look at these omnibus bills, especially this one when we look at this omnibus bill, how pervasive it is, that it attacks so many different programs. It attacks so many different people while, at the same time, not only attacking workers, it also attacks people on AISH, also attacks people on limited income supports, on the Alberta seniors' benefit, and the seniors' lodge program.

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague spoke to all of those, but I think, perhaps, my colleague can speak a bit towards how this isn't unusual for Conservative governments. It's not strange that Conservative governments would go in and try and make life more expensive while giving \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations. That's something that I think we've seen before. We've seen Conservative governments right here in Alberta try to do it before and try to do similar things where they Americanize health care, where they go after the most vulnerable of Albertans, where they reduce supports for communities and families, and then where they attack workers and do things like bring in replacement workers during a strike or even lockouts in areas.

Mr. Speaker, I think those are the things that are really shocking, but I do want to hear from my colleague, and I want to give him a bit of time to talk about how this isn't something that's new. Conservatives have been doing this for decades, and they're going to continue doing this unless we keep fighting back.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Edmonton-North West has the call.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for asking me that question. Yes, I mean, you know, certainly we've seen some problematic legislation over the last 10 years or so, but the scope of this one and the audacity of this one is what I find to be particularly troubling. It's almost like they went for the big throw to just go for everything; for example, this whole idea of formalizing bargaining oversight by laying out that the minister can issue confidential directives to employers "before, during and after... collective bargaining" respecting the mandate, terms of agreement, and so forth. In other words, change the rules every step of the way as you're negotiating: before, during, and after. I mean, that is absolutely audacious and unprecedented in this Chamber or probably almost any other one in this country.

Another one is talking about the replacement workers, to allow replacement workers to be put in to a striking situation, right? I mean, the level of animosity and division and trouble that's associated with this is historic. I really don't think that anyone wants that sort of hostility and that sort of animosity in any workplace.

I didn't mention this one. It prescribes limits on termination and severance pay as well. Here you are reducing peoples wages, potentially laying off people – that was not put out of the realm of possibility from the previous comments yesterday that there would be layoffs – and then limiting their termination and severance pay as they're shown the door. All of these things add together, and they form a pattern. I think that what we've heard pretty loudly and clearly is that it is this government's desire to reduce wages here in

the province of Alberta for nurses, teachers, public service workers, social workers, police, and the like, to reduce wages and to do it with the strong arm of the law – right? – not to negotiate, not to talk about working conditions. I mean, like I said before, the element of negotiating in good faith is that you can negotiate not just for wages and pensions and so forth, but you can negotiate about the quality of the services that you are producing for Albertans. If you give people that respect, if you give them the time of day and you listen to the people who actually deliver those things, you will learn something.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is anyone else wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore is rising.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish I could say that it's a pleasure to rise to be able to speak to Bill 21, but it certainly is not.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

You know, to begin with, the scale of this, the omnibus bill, Bill 21 here. I know that when you were on the opposition benches, you had argued very, very passionately around what was believed. Some of the members from the 29th Legislature that sit across the way also argued quite passionately around what they felt was an omnibus bill around labour legislation. Quite honestly, I remember them almost setting their hair on fire in this Chamber around that. Yet here we are. We have a government that has come here, claiming to have the backs of hard-working Albertans. Some of those hard-working Albertans are right up there in the gallery here this evening. They're the ones that sit here and deliver all of the services that Albertans rely on each and every single day, and you're telling them that you have their backs by introducing a piece of legislation like this. Are you kidding me?

Why don't we dig into this here just a little bit? Bill 21. There's a temporary suspension of indexation of benefits for assured income for the severely handicapped, or, of course, what we also happen to refer to as AISH, and income support for the seniors' lodge program. According to some of the budget numbers that we've seen tabled in this House, we will see that this will generate for the government coffers by the 2022-23 year to the tune of about \$300 million. I'm curious, Mr. Speaker. I wonder what people receiving AISH – I think on average they receive about \$1,600 to \$1,700 a month, something like that. What would they do with \$300 million? I bet you they would not say: why don't we give a \$4.7 billion corporate handout to the Walton family? I'm willing to bet that wouldn't happen. I would say: hey, why don't you give me some of that money so that I can improve my lifestyle, so I can live in dignity and respect, so I could maybe even go into some of my local businesses and support them and buy the stuff that I want? Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker.

Then we want to see things like ends to tuition freezes, student loan interest increased by 1 per cent. You know, I was actually hoping I would have had the opportunity to quickly ask the Member for Edmonton-North West, who is a former teacher and a former Education minister in this province, as someone, as I've mentioned, who is, you know, very passionate about all the schools that I have in Edmonton-Decore – I have 26 of them. Three of them, all three high schools north of the Yellowhead in Edmonton, reside in Edmonton-Decore. You know, I would have asked him how many of his students, how many of his parents, maybe parents that are sitting up there in the galleries this evening at this late hour of 9:30 at night, would have come running to us to say: "Hey, can my students pay more on their loans? Hey, can you raise my tuition

over the next three years by 21 per cent?" I'm wondering how many of them would have come running to us asking for that.

When we make those kinds of moves, Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of things that affect the quality of education that the people of Alberta have, which will then affect the ability for Alberta to be prosperous, because we won't have the highly skilled, highly technical people to be able to put in the jobs of the tech industry. Oh, that's right. We're going to be eliminating a whole bunch of tax credits and eliminating that. I guess it doesn't matter, does it?

9:40

We're going to see the Health minister place conditions on new practitioner identification numbers. Essentially, we're going to say to some of these doctors, that spent a lot of time in school and probably a lot of money: "Oh, hey, congratulations. Your loans are going to be going up, too." Then we're going to say, "No; I'm sorry; I know you live down in Calgary, but you're going to have to go work over here," and maybe to somebody who lives up in Fort McMurray, "Ah, sorry; you're going to have to go practice down in Medicine Hat," when maybe really they wanted to practice in their hometown. I'm wondering what kind of consultation occurred on that. I wonder if the doctors or potential doctors came running up to you and said: hey, please tell me where I can work.

We've heard a lot about policing over this session of the Legislature, yet here we are making changes through regulation, no doubt, to tell municipalities how they're going to pay for policing. We've already clearly seen some of the reaction from Calgary on this and what the mayor thought about this. I'd be willing to bet that Edmonton's mayor is not too excited about that, and we've heard very clearly from some of our rural mayors and councillors that they are definitely not excited about this.

That brings me to things around the labour movement. As everybody knows, I'm very proudly from the labour movement. I was a very proud UFCW local 401 member. I was very happy each and every day to be able to advocate for my members not only in my own workplace but across the different bargaining units the 401 looked after. I was even happy to advocate for hard-working Albertans all over this entire province. Some of those people are up there in this gallery each and every day, and they have been trying to tell this government very, very clearly that if you want to create labour unrest, all you have to do is – oh, I don't know – legislate wages, pass Bill 21. Yeah. Or maybe we'll impose things like the length of agreements, or maybe we can just opt out of arbitrations. Wait; we did that, and we're surprised that our folks in the hard-working labour movement and our public sector, the ones that deliver services to everyone in this province, are a little upset. We're surprised, Mr. Speaker.

But here we are reversing the replacement worker ban in the public sector. Nobody ever wants a strike. I can say that. I was in the labour movement. In a strike the honest truth is that nobody wins. The employer doesn't win. The employee doesn't win. Nobody wins in a strike, but strikes usually occur because of a failure to listen. The reality is that when they do, the one and only thing – companies are never really bound by this – an employee has is their ability to withdraw their labour, to be able to tell the employer: what you're doing is wrong, and you need to come to the table and bargain in good faith. I wish I had the faith to believe that this government is going to do that, but what I've seen so far is not looking good. As a matter of fact, I would say that it is bargaining in bad faith, Mr. Speaker.

Why would this government insist on creating labour unrest? Do you want to reduce the length and divisiveness of a strike or lockout? Do you want to know one of the best ways you could do that? Ban replacement workers. Companies will come to the table.

They will bargain in good faith. You'll get a deal done. Life goes on, and everybody prospers out of it. The use of replacement workers by employers during a strike or lockout has been deemed "a serious violation of freedom of association" by the United Nations International Labour Organization. When employers can use replacement workers, negotiations are undermined, work stoppages are prolonged, conflict is heightened, and, yes, Mr. Speaker, even the risk of picket line violence rises. Nobody wants to go in that direction, but I'm telling you that by taking this language out in Bill 21, that's the exact thing that this government is trying to set up. Quite honestly, it is shameful.

We can do better, and the funny thing is that under the previous NDP government we did do better. I'm not saying that the former government certainly didn't see its share of protests, but I have not seen protests in the number and the size in such a short period of time as when this government took over. It just seems to be growing. I wonder why, Mr. Speaker. Well, if we're going to start setting term limits on the length of the agreement – hey, I know a great idea. I wonder. If we ask these hard-working people up here tonight, if they brought out a salary survey, would you say: lower my salary, please? [interjections] I'm already seeing heads shaking.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but I believe what I heard was a member of the gallery attempting to influence debate, which would not be a privilege afforded to an individual in the gallery. Without knowing who that individual was, I would just issue a caution to the gallery to ensure that they do not act as such.

Hon. member, please continue.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that, and I'm sure that our folks in the gallery will be able to exercise some restraint.

When we see things like excluding budget officers, system analysts, auditors, and employees who perform similar functions from bargaining units – we want to exclude those – I think we are violating people's rights to association. What we're telling those people is: "Yeah. Sorry. We don't think you're allowed to do that." I believe there's a Supreme Court decision around that, just like there's a Supreme Court decision around striking workers.

What I fear, Mr. Speaker, is that with the passing of Bill 21, in which we're seeing things like reversing replacement worker bans, including length-of-agreement language around the oversight of collective bargaining, being able to issue directives outside of the bargaining process, I think that's going to start to set up this government for lawsuits although from what I've seen since this government took over, they're certainly maybe trying to create jobs for lawyers. I'm hoping that at least those lawyers are Albertans and not out of province.

9:50

We seem to be just absolutely on this quest to fight with everybody. We're fighting with other provinces. We're fighting with the federal government. We're fighting with our own workers. If you want labour rest, if you want workers to come to work every day happy to be there, happy to serve, pay them fairly, treat them with dignity and respect, give them some benefits, and don't come up with hare-brained ideas like this for labour laws. And don't be surprised; maybe there will be a protest about how great the government is. Wouldn't that be a change?

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly not in favour of Bill 21. I am urging all members to not support this legislation. We cannot go backwards. We have to move forward, and Bill 21 won't do that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am just caught by some of the remarks made by the Member for Edmonton-Decore and would like to hear a little bit more given that he has, I think, extensive experience in the labour movement and has had the opportunity to speak to many people in the labour movement about the reasoning for their participation in the labour movement and why it is essential to them.

I noticed in his speech that he particularly mentioned about the right of an employee to have control over their own labour. I think that's an interesting concept, that an individual not only has a right to the integrity of their body but for the ability of that body to engage in activities, such as labour, which are a benefit to themselves and their families, really speaking to why people would want to gather together in a union environment to provide each other support for that very essential need to have control over oneself and one's own body. Of course, the alternative is one that we in this House would all find quite devastating, you know, leading to some concerns that we have now, that that essential core value of humanity is being attacked. I wonder if the Member for Edmonton-Decore might speak to the importance of being able to have control over yourself in your labour and the fruits of that labour.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is quite right. Most times when you see people that are involved within the labour movement and trying to move that forward, it's about raising conditions for all. It's not just people in the labour movement that we're thinking about. It's the people that aren't in the labour movement that we're thinking about as well. We want to see the lifestyles of everyone brought up. We want to see everyone making more money so they can go and spend it in their local businesses, making the economy go around. We want everyone to be treated with dignity and with respect.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I remember one time having to file a grievance because a manager who didn't get proper training to be a manager, which is too bad in itself, ended up yelling at another employee right on the shop floor in front of customers. That's just not a way to conduct yourself. There's a better way to do it. When people come together in a collective bargaining union, they're able to say to their employers that maybe aren't treating them as well as they could – and I can think of a couple of employers right off the top of my head that do that. We get the opportunity to bargain as a collective for better conditions, to be able to work in safer environments.

And those safety standards go up for everyone, Mr. Speaker, not just for ones in the union. For everyone. I would hazard a guess, you know, that I don't think there's a single MLA who holds a position in this House that would say that nobody deserves a safe work environment. I'm pretty sure they don't think that somebody out there doesn't deserve to come home safely each and every night to their family.

What I worry about, though, with this bill, Mr. Speaker, is that we are making the steps that will create an environment that will be a race to the bottom. We will start to see pay lower, we will start to see working conditions lower, we will start to see dignity and respect lower, and then we will see the people that don't have a labour union looking after them suffer these same consequences. This is about improving conditions for all, but the best way to do that – to answer the question from the Member for Edmonton-

Rutherford – is to be able to come together as a collective and to be able to set those precedents, to be able to set those conditions, to be able to set the bar for everyone.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to speak.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to Bill 21. As I myself often find in this House, I think it's very important that we take this opportunity for the record to oppose legislation being brought into this House which we think demonstrates a complete lack of learning from the history of democracy in the western world and the establishment of people's rights. I think that will be the point of my short time available to me in this conversation this evening, that while there are many things being done in this bill, all of which are despicable in one way or another, the theme of undermining the rights of people in a western democracy is one which I personally take umbrage at. I am very concerned that it's being done in such a cavalier manner, by tossing a variety of different negative actions into a single bill as a way of covering them up and hiding them in an omnibus bill, which has in its very nature the intent to hide from the sunshine that should be cast on all bills by clouding the issue with putting in too many things it wants to address.

Because they cannot all be addressed, I'll take my opportunity now to address the underlying concern about the denial of human rights. I want to point out that the piece of this bill that is changing or reversing the replacement worker ban that had been put place is one which will be challenged legally and has been previously tested in the courts to the highest level, at the Supreme Court. In fact, when we brought in the Alberta essential services legislation, it was entitled An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. The very name of the bill told you that this had already been brought to the Supreme Court, had already been tested, and had been found to be not only legitimate but a desirable part of a free, democratic society.

That's what it is that concerns me here today. The Supreme Court has said, with regard to the issue of collective bargaining rights, that the right to strike is an essential part of a meaningful collective bargaining system. That has been tested. We found that it is absolutely critical that if we wish to acknowledge that individuals have rights, they also have the right to gather together to protect those rights. You can't have rights and then not have the mechanism by which you protect them. So collective bargaining is established to ensure that no employer or, in this case, no government can pierce the rights of individuals by piercing their right to work together with other individuals to collectively bargain on behalf of all of those involved. The Supreme Court has been absolutely clear on this.

10:00

What does that say about a government that would bring forward a bill that they know has already been tested in its intent at the highest levels of judicial concern in this province and still bring it forward knowing that it couldn't possibly stand should it be brought again before the Supreme Court of Canada? Well, I can tell you the reason why they do it: because it gives them time. It gives them an amount of time to do that which they know is wrong, that which the Supreme Court of Canada has said is wrong, before they are forced to go back to appropriate and legitimate legislation. That's what they're doing. They're clearing for themselves a space which will allow them to do that which they know they should not do and which others have told them they should not do because they can

get away with it long enough to achieve the nefarious outcomes that they wish to achieve.

We are all here, elected in a Westminster democracy, because we believe in the nature of people to speak to their own rights and to have their voices represented in the construction of the society in which we live. Everyone in this House has participated in that process, believing that that is an essential, fundamental right. Then, essentially, when they achieve victory using the rights that have been hard fought for by union members and democratic society members throughout the western world, they want to pull up the ladder behind them and deny those rights to other people. This is completely unacceptable. This is such an underhanded way of achieving what it is they wish to achieve, knowing that they will be caught one day, but by then they will already have done the damage which they had intended to inflict. This is not acceptable.

Everyone in our society should be very concerned about this, should be very concerned when a government steps forward to begin to impinge upon the rights of its citizens. We have hundreds of years of history where we learned how important those rights are and why we should protect those rights. Learning from that history has been lost on this government. I'm surprised that they continue to fail to learn from history, because they certainly seem to want to live in some historical time before these rights were established, before we arrived at the place where we understand how important it is that we protect human rights. We know that the courts have said that collective bargaining is an essential part of our democracy. They have essentially acted in a way to make kind of a blanket ban on denying the right to strike and have established that denying the right to strike is unconstitutional.

Now, we know that this legislation is not specifically directed at that, but there's something else that the Supreme Court has done, another principle of the Constitution and human rights that the Supreme Court has been very clear about, and that is the doctrine of hollow rights. Once we have determined that a people have a right, then it is also important that we not undermine those rights or minimize or diminish those rights such that they become hollow rights. It is no good to say that an individual has a right but then to act in a way that prevents them from enacting that right in a way that they wish to do. You can't say, "Yes, you have a right to a free election" and then deny everybody access to a voting booth, because denying them access to a voting booth would create a hollow right of the right to live in a free and democratic society.

Yet that's essentially what they're doing in this bill. While they can't actually take away the right to collective bargaining, in the spring they delayed collective bargaining against this idea of the doctrine of hollow rights. Today they have acted in two different ways to begin to undermine that right yet again. They seek to reduce the number of people that can participate in unions. They've identified a group or a class of people that they don't want to be participating in the union, people such as budget officers, systems analysts, auditors, and employees who perform similar functions. They can't actually take the union away, they can't take the right to strike away, so what they'll do is that they'll actually diminish the ability for people to participate in those unions and to participate in those strikes.

That is in defiance of what the Supreme Court of Canada says that you must not do. Once a right is established constitutionally, you must give it a broad and liberal interpretation. That is the language. But here, instead of a broad and liberal interpretation, we have a narrow and conservative interpretation, and it's completely unacceptable.

The intention to ensure that people have the right to control not only their own body, their bodily integrity, but the fruits of the labour of their body is intrinsic to the desire in our democracy for

people to express themselves and to receive the benefits of taking action on their own behalf. If we begin to say to people that when you engage in a behaviour to take care of yourself, to take care of your family, and to take care of others in your community, we are going to begin to remove from you the ability to have control over that, then we move to a place where we have to be very concerned about the imbalance between the power of a dominant government and the citizens that should be represented by that government. That's what we're concerned about here.

This isn't a small, little piece of legislation. This is a deceitful piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that pretends to just be a bunch of small administrative changes being thrown together and slid underneath the door so that people don't become suspicious about what's happening.

But I can tell you that this is not by accident. This is a government that is choosing to find ways to subvert the Constitution of Canada and the statements by the Supreme Court on the rights of people to collectively bargain, to join unions, and to engage in strikes when necessary. They know they can't do it all at once, so what they do is that they engage in a process of slowly undermining and diminishing and eroding those rights, because if they did a direct assault on the rights, people would be more likely to notice and to react with rage. But when they do it in this particular way, people quite legitimately would not necessarily see it as a problem, would not necessarily understand the implications of what's happening here. So they achieve in the end the negative outcome which they have always wished to have without being transparent in their desires or transparent in educating the people about the actions they're taking and the outcomes of those actions.

[The Speaker in the chair]

This is something that we have to worry about. We have to worry about it in society because as we begin to take rights away from people, we diminish our society as a whole. It's been said that the course of history is such that the rights of people are being written in a more expansive way as time goes on and that we each year understand more about how we ensure the well-being of all citizens by defining those rights.

**10:10**

The last 40 years or 50 years have been very clear on that. The women's rights organizations that started in a renewed way in the '60s and '70s and '80s identified ways in which women's rights were being diminished, and as a result we began to change legislation. This was equally true in the LGBTQ community, where we understood in a clear way in the last 30 years how the rights of members of that community had been diminished by the rules that we had established in society, so we expanded our rights. In the indigenous community it wasn't that long ago that the rights of the indigenous people were dramatically restricted compared to the rights of other members of society.

That is what's happening here, an attempt to diminish the rights of members of unions who are part of our essential, core services in this province.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to hear from my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford here. I think that he has a few more things to say. I mean, he is quite eloquent in his speech here in informing this House – and, hopefully, the government members are listening – on how these things historically have been problematic and historically have been

unconstitutional and historically have caused harm to workers. Perhaps my colleague here can provide a few more comments.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford if he'd like to respond.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to say a little bit more about this because I think it's fundamentally important. Members on this side of the House know that history will prove us to be right. We have seen the lessons of the history of human rights over the last, well, hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. From that, we look not just at the simplistic, concrete rules of what right a person does have, but we understand the underlying principles, that having those rights is important to the creation and the ultimate maintenance of a successful society, just as we have learned that the establishment of good structures in society provides for the greatest well-being of the greatest number of people.

We've learned that when we decided, for example, that public water systems should be available for everyone. The greatest health intervention in the history of humanity is the provision of clean water, not the drilling of an individual well by an individual person but the provision of clean water throughout the public. From that, we've learned that the structures of society are such that if we carefully hone them and design them, then we will be able to provide well-being not just for the fortunate few who can afford to do that on their own but for all of society, not just the wealthy but those who are more impoverished, not just the most powerful but those who are most vulnerable.

That is what we are talking about today. We're talking about establishing and building a society and protecting the lessons we have learned over the centuries about how we create a society that will benefit all peoples, that will give them opportunity through access to resources, to education, that will give them good health through a publicly funded and presented health care system, where members of the public service provide the resources necessary to ensure that all people can take advantage of the goodness that the province of Alberta gives us and can contribute to that goodness on behalf of themselves, their families, and the future generations.

Here we have a beginning edge of a wedge attempting to take all of that away from us, an attempt to diminish rights that have been articulated by the Supreme Court of Canada and have been defended by the hard work of union members across this country and across many countries in the western world to ensure that the next generation will not have to deal with suppression by those with more power, will not have to deal with poverty as they once did, will not have to deal with the destruction of their bodies through labour that is unsafe or unacceptable in some other way. Having learned those lessons, it is now requisite upon everyone in this House to stand up and defend those lessons and to be on the record, to be on the right side of history when we say that people by their nature possess human rights and that those human rights are fragile in the face of power which is uncaring and used for the purposes of one individual over another. We stand today to defend those human rights, as we always have and always will.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) has expired.

Is anyone else wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and speak to Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. I think, as my colleague from Edmonton-North West already pointed out, it's a bit of an ironic name. It does none of those things. I think I'm going to go briefly over some of the things this bill does

do and how it does hurt families, and then perhaps I'll speak a bit more on some of the specific issues that I take particular offence to.

I mean, we can see that it's suspending, as the government likes to say, the tuition cap for postsecondary students. Perhaps, they say, the tuition cap could be set again in the future at some point. But what we know, Mr. Speaker, is that this will cause tuition and enable tuition to go up by as much as 23 per cent for postsecondary students. It's going to make life less affordable for families. It's going to make education inaccessible for some families. That's something that I think is very shameful.

It pauses indexing for a number of really important programs. It pauses indexing for AISH, which is the assured income for the severely handicapped. It pauses indexing for employment and income supports benefits. It pauses indexing for the Alberta seniors' benefit and the seniors' lodge program, Mr. Speaker.

They use these terms that are very technical and complicated, "pauses indexing," but let's be very clear: it's a cut. It's a cut to these families. It's a cut to these communities, Mr. Speaker, and these families – that are already being asked, on AISH for example, to get by on only \$1,600 a month – who are being asked to make do with less. That's shameful. It's something that's very difficult already, and this government is making it more expensive for those families.

They're eliminating the regulated rate cap for electricity. They're making electricity more expensive while also moving to Americanize the electricity system. I think that's something that's very troubling as well.

We're seeing in some of the health legislation, Mr. Speaker, that they're trying to limit practitioner IDs. They're trying to force doctors to go to certain areas in the province, something that's actually been found unconstitutional in at least two other jurisdictions that I'm aware of here in Canada. So I think that's something that's very concerning. If their own lawyers can't figure that out, then perhaps we need to take a look again at this legislation.

We also see that the government is giving itself the ability to unilaterally tear up doctor compensation agreements. They time and time again are going to attack the public service, the services that Albertans rely on. Time and time again they're giving themselves the unilateral ability to tear up agreements with our professionals, tear up agreements with our health care workers and the services that Albertans depend on every single day, Mr. Speaker.

This government is also moving forward to claw back monies from municipalities. They're giving themselves the ability to take over a number of the fines that municipalities collect.

They're also doing things like giving the minister the ability to change the police costing model. This is something we've been talking about for weeks, and the government has said time and time again that it's not true. Now we see it in black and white. Indeed, it is true. This government is changing the police costing model. They're giving themselves that ability, and they tried to do it by sweeping it under the rug with this omnibus bill. But, Mr. Speaker, the opposition is here. We are going to shine the light on this bill. It doesn't matter whether it's 10:30 at night or 10:30 in the morning; we're going to talk, we're going to understand this bill, and Albertans are going to be watching this bill, as we can see tonight in the gallery.

**10:20**

We're also seeing some other changes that I think are particularly egregious. We're seeing quite a significant number of labour changes, Mr. Speaker, and I think this is where we can start talking about values. This is where we can start talking about: "What values do we care about in a government? Who are we fighting for when

we talk about government?" We can see it in past legislation that this government has been bringing forward already; in Bill 9, for example, where they brought in a big hold or delay in arbitration, in negotiations with workers, and we saw that get challenged in the courts. It's still in the courts because this government doesn't have respect for that process. And just like when they brought in Bill 9, we're seeing the same things, the same types of issues being brought forward here. We're seeing a complete lack of respect for Alberta workers. We're seeing a complete lack of compassion. We're seeing a complete lack of understanding of the types of issues that Alberta workers face every single day, the people that are in the gallery watching us right now.

We're seeing them bringing in repealing the essential services replacement worker ban, which means, Mr. Speaker, that this government will actually have the ability to not only, first, lock out those workers that are in the gallery but then bring in replacement workers to replace them at their jobs. That's something that is shameful. That speaks to the values and the value that they put on these workers, because we know that workers in Alberta, the people that provide us with the services every single day and indeed especially the essential services, deserve our respect and deserve our gratitude. Instead, what this government has said is that they are willing to go in and replace them the moment they disagree, and that's something that is particularly concerning to me. I think it speaks to how this government views the very people that keep this province running, the very people that contribute every single day to the services that run this province. That's something that is very concerning to me.

We also see the government bringing in exemptions for bargaining units for budget officers, systems analysts, and auditors, and I think that's very concerning as well. This government is systemically trying to degrade the authority and power of our labour in this province, Mr. Speaker. They're trying to break up the solidarity of workers. That is very concerning because those are the types of organizations, and having that solidarity is what ensures that we have fair and even negotiation on both sides of the table.

But, again, we know that this government isn't concerned with that. We've seen that the government isn't concerned with being fair, because they've been willing to legislate away those rights. They've been willing to attack those rights with legislation. They've been willing to delay. They've been willing to, in this case, bring in replacement workers. Now they're trying to actually break up the organizations themselves. That's what's so shocking about this bill. It's that this government is moving so quickly, that this government is moving so aggressively to break up the very organizations that represent the workers that keep this province running, that keep our services operating every single day. It's something that is absolutely shocking.

It also does things like formalize bargaining oversight, where the minister can lay out different things around term agreements and fiscal limits and requesting information from employers. That means, basically, that this minister is trying to go out and tell organizations and tell our workers what they need to know. What they want: to take the information from the workers, Mr. Speaker. That, I think, is very concerning, too, because we don't see this respect for a two-way negotiation. We don't see this respect for bargaining. We don't see this respect for our workers,

Again I want to bring this back to values because the real question, when we talk about legislation like this, when we talk about basically anything we do in this House, is always about values. It's about: who are we fighting for? Are we fighting for affordability for every single Albertan? Are we fighting to protect the rights of every single worker, or are we fighting to give \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations, Mr. Speaker? I think



it's pretty clear who this government is fighting for. This government is fighting for the wealthy corporations and leaving every single Albertan behind. They're leaving workers behind.

What they're also doing, as I already mentioned, is that they're giving themselves the ability to tear up things like doctors' contracts. It shows you, Mr. Speaker, that while they attack the workers on one hand, they also try to Americanize the system on the other. Health care is a perfect example. When you're talking to nurses, whether they're LPNs or RNs, or if you're talking to doctors, what it is is a systemic attack on these workers. It's a systemic attack on not just the workers but the entire system. It's an attempt to Americanize our health care right here in Alberta. It's an attempt to try and bring in failed policies that are risky and ideologically and will only cause harm to Albertans.

The workers in the gallery know that, and that's why they're here at 10:30 at night on a Wednesday night. They could be at home with their families, but they know how important this is. They know how important it is that we stand up for the rights of workers, that we stand up for the services that need to be provided to every single Albertan. Whether they're a correctional officer, Mr. Speaker, whether you work in correctional services, whether you work in a school, whether you work in a hospital or a medicentre or whatever it is, it is essential that we support these workers, and we owe them our gratitude. It is essential that we work with these workers in good faith.

This is the type of value that this government is not showing when they bring forward things like Bill 21 or when they bring forward things like Bill 9, Mr. Speaker. We've been seeing a very large amount of mobilization of labour in terms of the concerns around what this government is bringing forward, and I think, again, that speaks to the values. It says that this government has not shown and is not showing that they have the interests of workers in mind, that they do not have the interests of Alberta families in mind, because they are willing to give \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations and then Americanize health care, all while leaving our workers behind, legislating away their rights, taking away their rights, saying that they can be replaced during negotiations, and that's what speaks to values.

It's a government that is showing workers, it is showing Albertans, it is showing families, it is showing communities that they are not standing up for them. In fact, they are standing up for those wealthy corporations that just received \$4.7 billion, corporations like Husky, who took hundreds of millions of dollars in profits, Mr. Speaker, and then laid off hundreds of people right here in Calgary – right here in Calgary – in Alberta.

These are the types of values we're talking about. We're talking about a government that is showing Albertans that they are standing up for the richest few and leaving workers behind. They're trying to make life more expensive, Mr. Speaker, while also trying to bring in wage rollbacks for the people that keep this province running. We just saw in the last few days that this government is going to be requesting wage rollbacks of 2 to 5 per cent, contrary to what they actually said in their own budget speech – that's what was shocking – contrary to what workers were told and what our public service, the people who keep this province running, were told. They're now going to be going and asking for 2 to 5 per cent, and that's shocking because it's unfair. It's unfair because you should not be negotiating in the media; you should not be negotiating in the public. What you should be doing is moving in good faith.

Now, if the government had the values to understand what that meant, if the government understood how bargaining actually works and perhaps took the time to do the research and did not just try to legislate away those rights, Mr. Speaker, perhaps they would have gone to the bargaining table and tried to negotiate some of

those concessions. Perhaps they would have been able to go to the bargaining table and talk about what needed to happen for their fiscal plan. It's not the fiscal plan I would have proposed and indeed is not the one that we proposed, but it is the one that they are proposing. They could have gone with it, but instead they chose to disrespect our public service.

They chose to disrespect those workers and make bold statements in the media that show they fundamentally do not understand how families and how workers and how our public service should be treated. It shows they fundamentally do not understand who they are supposed to be fighting for. Instead of fighting for those workers, instead of fighting for our public services, instead of fighting to ensure we have strong communities and families, Mr. Speaker, they gave \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations, watched 27,000 jobs disappear right here in this province, and then asked the people that provide us with health care, with security, with education for 2 to 5 per cent rollbacks, and they didn't even do it at a bargaining table. They did it in the media. That's the shocking thing. It's shocking how much this government does not understand. It's shocking how they don't understand how that could be offensive to the workers that keep this province running.

### 10:30

Mr. Speaker, we can see that because they simply will not recognize even that repealing the ban on replacement workers – they don't understand why that would be offensive. They say: well, if we lock them out, then we should have the right to hire other people. That's what this government is going to say, I believe. That's what's so shocking, that they don't understand how that devalues the people that keep this province running, our public servants, the people that run our province, that provide us with our health care, provide us with our education. That is what's so fundamentally shocking and broken about this government's process, that their values do not align with what they were put here for.

Instead of trying to make life more affordable, instead of trying to protect our services, instead of trying to actually give Albertans a better province, Mr. Speaker, what we see is \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations, Americanization of our health care. We see drastic cuts across all fields. We see a tax on our workers, the very workers that are in the gallery right now, the very workers that work for, indeed, actually all of these ministers, likely, that are here today. The ministers themselves are likely responsible for some of these workers, and instead of respecting the work they do, this government has decided to attack them, has decided to negotiate in the media instead of in good faith. I think that is absolutely shocking and shameful.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone wants to add a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, is there anyone else that would like to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and it's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. Again, similar to Bill 20, this is an omnibus bill. It's kind of a little bit hard to know why exactly all of the elements have been brought together in this constellation of Bill 21, but the question I asked earlier when I was talking about Bill 20 was that whenever you look at legislation, it's good to ask that question: who benefits and who doesn't? I would say that this bill, similar to Bill 20, means that the average Albertan doesn't benefit from this bill. Perhaps that's why they put them all together. I can't really see any logic in other reasons.

I'd like to begin by just, you know, thanking the folks in the gallery for staying here at this late hour. I wanted to share that certainly early in my career as a social worker I was a proud member of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, and then later I was a mental health therapist and was a part of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. I know very first-hand about the important work that the public service does in our province and what they do to support all Albertans.

Some of the disturbing facts in our province are that we do have the lowest unionization rates in the country, and we did, when we were government, implement policies that did support workers to join unions with the legislation that we brought. But today, you know, we're really seeing an attack on workers, and I have no doubt they feel under attack. I'm concerned about that, and certainly the whole New Democrat caucus will stand with the union workers because we know that this is unfair and is creating greater inequality in our province.

One of the things about unions: any province, say, in Canada that has high unionization, it not only benefits those workers, it benefits all workers. It's kind of known as the lighthouse effect. When you have robust union involvement, then all employers actually must be vigilant and make sure that they have good policies and supports because if they don't, people will leave their employment because they know that in a unionized position those kinds of benefits and supports and wages are available to workers. That's called the lighthouse effect, and unfortunately in Alberta we don't really have that because, you know, for the 44 years before our government was elected, certainly the Conservatives were not in support of the average worker, union workers. That's always been an issue in Alberta.

Another issue that I've spoken about before is income inequality, where Alberta has the greatest income inequality of any province in Canada. Again, in areas where there's greater unionization, there's more equality. We know a healthy society has a very robust middle class, and usually in a province with high unionization rates that is true. Alberta doesn't have that.

Just to bring this point home a little bit more, many of you may be aware of that study that looks at the top CEOs in Canada and how much money they make. It's laughable, if it wasn't so disturbing, but by 11:30 a.m. on sort of the first day of work of any new year – in this year, 2019, it was 11:30 – the top CEOs had made the average worker's annual salary. Even though, you know, we're not in the turn of the century, in the late 1800s, early 1900s, the Industrial Revolution, apparently we had unionization and much fairer labour employment laws, we still have this kind of phenomenon happening in our society, where somehow it's ridiculous that some people can make extraordinary wages and many are just scraping to get by.

I just want to bring that out, and I just want to thank my friends in the union movement for their diligence and hard work really standing up for regular Albertans. It's beyond their own workers. They have a vision for the province. They care about social justice. They do many things to support women to be in leadership, to support families, to support the vulnerable. They have many activities and ways that they contribute to the communities. Having a robust union environment is a benefit to all citizens. I just really want to thank my colleagues for all that they do.

As I said earlier, you know, I don't blame them for feeling under siege because since this UCP government has come in, they've done a lot of things to directly attack these workers who are providing public services to Albertans. We know that the UCP plans to cut at least 8 per cent from public services, probably more. The UCP says that service workers, correctional peace officers, policy analysts, physicians, nurses, and teachers are all overpaid. They get way too much money. They're overpaid. I mean, if I was

one of those workers, I'd feel like: oh, they're gunning for me. We know that the scope of practice has just changed for licensed practical nurses, so that means the government intends to get the same work at a lower cost while risking their registered nurses' jobs. Also, there's a move just in general to privatize public services. We know that. They call it nice words like "alternative service delivery" or "outsourcing." We know that's privatization.

Yesterday the Minister of Finance had the audacity to talk about what he expects from the public service workers. They should be taking a 2 to 5 per cent cut. He's negotiating in the media. That's just completely inappropriate, so I just can appreciate how the public servants must feel under siege. Certainly, there is the evidence of that.

In this bill specifically it does talk about doing things, changing things to make it more difficult. One of them is formalizing bargaining oversight. What does that mean? It means the minister can issue confidential directives to employers before, during, and after collective bargaining respecting the mandate, for example, the fiscal limits that they're willing to do – I guess he's already doing that in the public forum, in the media, so okay – and requesting info from employers about employees and things. I mean, things seems like, again, the deck is stacked against the workers, and that's a concern. That's part of this Bill 21.

10:40

I know that some of my colleagues have talked about, you know, just the regressive policy of banning replacement workers. Of course, now the UCP wants to bring that back in with this Bill 21. Certainly, it's well known that this kind of action prolongs disputes, could harm the trust and confidence of people in the workplace, and it could even stoke a lot of anger and, potentially, violence on the picket lines because of allowing these workers to go in and take the jobs of these people who are standing up for their rights. They have the right to do this. That's a significant attack. I can appreciate that union workers are feeling under attack in Alberta. Again, I just want to say that, certainly, our NPD caucus will stand up and speak against these really backward changes to create more fairness and justice in society.

In a totally unrelated area – it's still the same bill but it's not to do with union workers anymore – now we're going to talk about people on AISH, people on assured income for the severely handicapped. Those are people who oftentimes cannot work at a full-time job. They may work a bit, but they have some developmental challenges that don't make it possible sometimes to provide for themselves. Of course, in a just society we do have programs that support people that have these challenges. We have the AISH program in Alberta.

Unfortunately, this UCP government has decided now to not index the AISH benefits. These are not benefits that are – I think the MacKinnon report said something like: they're generous benefits. That just kind of, you know, made me shake my head because I wonder if she understands or has spoken to someone on AISH. Would they say that their benefits are generous? I think they'd say that they're just scraping by, hardly making it.

Our government, when we were in power, actually indexed those benefits to the rate of inflation, so in a small way but an important way, you know, each year, because we do have increases in the cost of living, giving them that little bit more so that they could maintain their lifestyle and not struggle so much. But this government thinks that that's not important. Again, it's just an attack on regular Albertans, Albertans who are more vulnerable even than many others.

Albertans really have to qualify for the AISH program. You know, you have to go through medical tests. It depends on what

kind of developmental disability or whatever it is, I mean, not something that can just go away. It's not something that is even easy to get. I think probably every MLA will know that they have people calling their constituency office to help them because they feel like they should qualify for AISH benefits but have been denied. There's an extensive appeal process. Sometimes even the people who should be getting those benefits don't because of a very strict gatekeeping function of that program. If people qualify, they have demonstrated that there is a significant issue. The word "severely" is in the name, so they can't do what perhaps I could do because of this impediment.

To take away the funding, that is fairly minimal – you know, most of us would expect our salaries to go up each year – is cruel. It is cruel, Mr. Speaker. If it wasn't so disturbing, it would be funny. Some of you may have seen the *Edmonton Journal* political cartoon that showed the Premier throwing a rock and hitting the head of a man in a wheelchair, and it said: an AISH recipient. So he's attacking the most vulnerable. As we've said loud and clear in this House: on the backs of AISH recipients, on the backs of the vulnerable the UCP is preferencing wealthy corporations with their \$4.7 billion tax break. And guess who's paying for it? That just seems inhumane. It seems so unfair.

Besides the AISH recipients who are being deindexed, there are seniors who are being deindexed also. There are a few pieces to it. The Alberta seniors' benefit is an income support program. It's not a lot of money. It's sort of a top-up to the old age security and the guaranteed income supplement for seniors. Those are all federal programs. Some seniors have such small incomes that they're still significantly below the poverty line, so Alberta has an Alberta seniors' benefit and it just sort of tops them up. I think the most is, like, \$285 or something that someone can receive on a monthly basis. That program had also been indexed by our government, again to make sure that people had the money they needed. It was not that they kept getting poorer and poorer, but they actually maintained their lifestyle.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anybody wishing to make a brief question or comment?

Seeing no one, we are back on the main bill. I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika and deputy government whip rising.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for recognizing me. I move that we adjourn debate on this bill this evening.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate your motion; however, you have actually already spoken to second reading.

Is there anyone else that might be willing to move to adjourn debate? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has risen.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate for the evening.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Just to provide some clarity for the House, the hon. member is pleased to move the adjournment of debate on Bill 21, and then we'll move the House in just a minute. Is that what you've moved?

**Mr. Orr:** Yes. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we've had a lot of progress tonight, and I move that we adjourn the Assembly until tomorrow, Thursday, October 31, Halloween, at 1:30 p.m.

**The Speaker:** I hope you'll all be dressed like politicians tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:49 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, October 31, 2019

Day 37

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 31, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Hon. members, before we proceed to Introduction of Guests, I just thought I would make a special note. I see you have all chosen the same costume for Halloween this year. It's a large group of politicians that we have here.

**Some Hon. Members:** Boo.

**The Speaker:** If you can't be good, be punny. That's my motto.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have three school groups this afternoon. As I read the name of your school group, please rise: from Edmonton-Strathcona, grades 5 and 6 students from the Garneau school; from Edmonton-Riverview, grade 9 students from Parkview school; and from Edmonton-City Centre, intermediate 1 English language learners from Solomon College.

Welcome, all.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning would like to make a statement.

### Budget 2019

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Happy Halloween, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for recognizing me. This is one of the scariest Halloweens Albertans have seen in years. The witches and warlocks are out trying to cast their spells with the poison of this new budget. While the UCP hands out \$4.7 billion treats to their friends and insiders, children go door to door asking their neighbours to protect their education. Zombies are appearing on the streets after this government's trick of implementing American-style health care as the staff bob for apples to keep their wages. As Albertans watch, ghosts slowly steal away the pumpkins' jobs, hiding their future harvest.

In the haunted house the trolls are quick at work trying to convince Albertans that foreign-funded goblins hide under their bed as the fog rolls over the \$30 million hidden in the dungeon with all the secret details. All the while past demons dressed in their kamikaze costumes haunt the Premier and his ministers by lifting every tombstone to find the bodies buried below, investigating every squeaky locked door and rattling chains, seeking the eerie truth.

But Albertans are resilient, and this opposition has no fear. They don their capes and stand for justice, fighting the horrors of this nightmare budget and policies. The dawn is coming, and the NDP will lead the way.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Energy Industry Competitiveness

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll talk about jobs and the economy now. I'm afraid it's another sad day for the Canadian oil and gas industry. You see, the most recent gut punch to this sector is the decision by EnCana Corp. to move its headquarters to the United States and drop the reference to Canada from its name. This is not some rinky-dink player; this is EnCana, now Ovintiv Inc.

In 2002 Alberta Energy and PanCanadian became one through a merger of equals, and the result was at the time the world's largest publicly traded oil and gas producer. The merger happened because of founding CEO Gwyn Morgan and others' belief in Canadian-controlled companies. They proudly named this new company EnCana from the words "energy" and "Canada."

In the last three years EnCana has shifted its multibillion-dollar capital program to the States, the CEO has moved from Calgary to Denver, and they've purchased Newfield Exploration, an American producer, for \$7.7 billion. Now it has 60 per cent of production, almost all of its capital plan, and half of its board based in the United States. To summarize the words of Gwyn Morgan: who would have thought that in a few short years the Canadian flagship, the marquee Canadian energy company, would export itself? Thinking back a few short months, TransCanada felt inclined to remove "Canada" from their name and settle on the more innocuous, less offensive TC Energy.

These stories are sad, Mr. Speaker. They speak to the real-world outcomes of poor policy and damaging, fact-free rhetoric. These stories show how capital will flee, taking jobs and prosperity with it, how emissions aren't avoided, only shifted to other jurisdictions. I'm sick of seeing friends and neighbours pack up and leave for better prospects in Saskatchewan or Texas.

It's Halloween today, and it has me thinking about costumes. It feels like Halloween most days in this House: dressed up to fit in. I sincerely hope, Mr. Speaker, that when the members opposite take off their Halloween masks, underneath they aren't a bunch of pipeline protesters playing dress-up and working secretly to keep Canadian oil in the ground. [A cellphone rang]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it sounded distinctly like a cellphone perhaps went off during that. I'm sure that it couldn't have been given that it would be wildly inappropriate to have that here in the Chamber and certainly turned on.

The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

### Political and Public Discourse and Women's Political Participation

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bullying: it's a topic that's been discussed in this Chamber and affects the lives of many Albertans, young and old. The Canadian Mental Health Association reports that being a victim of bullying increases risks of depression, low self-esteem, and trauma. Sadly, 85 per cent of bullying takes place in front of others. Such is the case with cyberbullying.

Now, opposition and critique are expected. The opposition's job is to oppose. We expect members opposite to continue their campaign against us, both inside and outside of these walls. That's politics. But throughout all of that, I hope that we can agree on the need for basic human decency despite our political disagreements.

We see character assassinations being levelled at competent and thoughtful members of cabinet. We see staff being dragged through the trenches of fear, smear, and defamation just for doing their jobs.

We see private citizens being told that they are less than, uneducated, or subservient because they dare to hold a view outside of what is acceptable to the members opposite. We see survivors of sexual assault lambasted and shamed.

What do all of these people have in common, Mr. Speaker? They're all Conservative women. We know that women are under-represented in politics at every level, and I would assume that every single person in this House would like to see a more representative Legislature. But when malediction and derogatory attacks become the norm, this discourages intelligent, capable, talented women from running or even being involved. It paints a sad picture to the public and future generations about what politics is and ought to be. These attacks, all around, are despicable and indefensible.

We all have our own views and perspectives, Mr. Speaker. That's our right. At the same time, I hope that the members opposite will join with us in denouncing these heinous attacks on Conservative women. Will the NDP join this side of the House in condemning these attacks? Will they stand up and repudiate the disgusting campaign of defamation targeting Alberta women, including survivors? I hope that they can find it in their hearts to stand with brave Alberta women, but I guess I'll find out.

### Chile

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, on October 18, 2019, a protest was initiated by Chilean students regarding rising public transit fares in Santiago, Chile. This act of defiance generated broad support from young people as well as broad support from the rest of the population. On October 19 millions of Chileans took to the streets all across the country in support of the students but also adamantly tired of the many problems due to the continuous austerity budgets of the current right-wing government, including low pensions, precarious health care, low wages, and a lack of a quality and affordable education.

The ongoing economic policy being implemented in the country has made Chile one of the most expensive countries to live in in Latin America according to the OECD. Since October 19 the mobilizations and protests of Chileans has not stopped but, in fact, has increased, reaching the most remote corners of the country. All this has led to a declaration of a state of emergency, with curfews in most of the country's major cities. Chile, again, is an example of constant human rights violations and the criminalization of peaceful protest.

Until yesterday the situation of violation of human rights according to the Institute of Human Rights is as follows: 3,535 detainees, 120 legal actions against the government, 1,132 wounded, and, most horrible of all, 25 deaths as a result of military and police aggression on peaceful protesters. Not since the military regime that gave rise to the horrible events of September 11, 1973, have the Chilean people seen such repression.

I stand in this House along with all members of the Alberta NDP caucus to call on the Chilean government to stop this repression, and I also call on Albertans to support the Chilean people in denouncing the human rights violations taking place in Chile. I also call on this Premier, his cabinet, and his party to do the same and to stand in solidarity with the Chilean people and the many Chilean-Canadians that now call Alberta their home.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South would like to make a statement.

1:40

### NDP Climate Leadership Plan

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Alberta seeks to make Ottawa more accountable, our government must lead by example. Government is not accountable when it imposes a billion-dollar tax

on its citizens prior to first having a plan for the tax, internal controls, and feedback mechanisms for the tax. Unfortunately, the NDP climate leadership plan and its carbon tax is such an example.

Last week the Ministry of Environment and Parks attended the Public Accounts Committee. In February 2018, more than a year after the NDP imposed its billion-dollar carbon tax on Alberta businesses and families, the Auditor General looked at the NDP climate leadership plan and found the following three foundational deficiencies. First, the NDP had failed to have implementation plans for the plan and its programs. This is ironic. The plan had no plan. Second, the NDP failed to have adequate processes to protect against inaccurate or incomplete data. Without internal controls, bad data leads to bad conclusions. Lastly, the plan did not provide proper reporting on costs.

Stewardship of taxpayer dollars was not a priority of the NDP government and its plan. This is alarming. Notwithstanding that the NDP climate leadership plan and tax was more than a year old, had already taken over a billion dollars from Alberta businesses and families, it still lacked plans, internal controls, and fiscal accountability. This is a poor example. Let's do better.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-South.

### Municipal Affairs Budget 2019-2020

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Member for Edmonton-South West was appointed as the Minister of Municipal Affairs, this government and the hon. member promised that he would be a, quote, strong voice in cabinet, advocating for what is best for Edmonton, unquote. Well, let's look at what this so-called strong voice has done for Edmonton: \$150 million in funding reductions for the city and tearing up the city charters in his ministry; cancellations and delays for upgrades to Terwillegar Drive, the Stadium LRT rehabilitation, and the west valley LRT; delaying the badly needed south Edmonton hospital until 2030; pushing back the mental health facility for children and youth at the Royal Alexandra hospital; no word on a much-needed high school in south Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, what is even the worst part? These cuts and delays will most severely affect residents that are right in his own constituency of Edmonton-South West, the riding that he represents directly, all to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate handout that just this morning we learned is financing the exit of companies right to the United States.

And individual benefits for Edmontonians? Budget 2019 hikes income taxes, eliminates tax credits for entrepreneurs, and nickels and dimes Edmontonians by hiking fees for vehicle registration, land titles, and even museum entry. Just yesterday we learned that cuts to education funding are going to result in increased school fees.

Mr. Speaker, every single day we learn more about the attacks on families and the attacks on Edmontonians in this budget, and this so-called voice is silent. He owes his constituents an explanation, an explanation for why he isn't standing up for them, an explanation for why his constituents are not a priority for him or his government, and an explanation for just how much more punishment this city can expect under his leadership. The constituents of Edmonton-South West deserve better.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

### Travel Alberta Awards

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take every opportunity I can to stand in this House and talk about how proud I am of our

tourism sector and all the entrepreneurs and businesspeople who support it. The tourism sector is massively important to our province, putting us on the map both nationally and globally for our world-renowned sites, attractions, and industries, and Banff-Kananaskis is leading the way. A quick Google image search of Canada turns up nearly unanimous results of my beautiful constituency. To some communities tourism is difficult to sustain, but for Canmore, Banff, and Kananaskis, thanks to the sheer magnificence of our surroundings, tourism comes naturally. Over 4 million visitors travel to Banff national park every year, and tourism accounts for 89 per cent of their GDP.

But this success does not come without the hard work and dedication of many. That's why I was honoured to attend the 2019 Travel Alberta Alto awards on Monday, appropriately held right in Banff. The Alto awards recognize the unsung heroes of the tourism industry, whose work and investment are enjoyed by millions around the world and who make Alberta a world-renowned destination but who often don't get so much as a thank you from those they entertain. These people are experienced inventors, memory creators, and goosebump providers. I am proud to say that businesspeople from Banff-Kananaskis were nominated as finalists for awards in eight out of 10 categories at this year's Alto awards. I'm extra proud to say that Parks Canada's bison reintroduction webinar series and Sunshine Village's annual Slush Cup both took home first place in their categories and that Bob Williams, the general manager of Calaway Park in Springbank, was named the 2019 Alto ambassador.

Banff-Kananaskis is tourism, and I'm so lucky to represent these people in the Legislature. The work of the individuals in Banff-Kananaskis is invaluable to the success of Alberta's tourism industry and our economy as a whole, and I look forward to continue working alongside these incredible people as our government endeavours to double Alberta's tourism spending by 2030.

### Rural Crime

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I attended a Red Deer-Lacombe rural crime watch meeting. RCMP, municipal officials, peace officers, and Crime Watch directors attended. The mood of the meeting was not good. When municipal officials are virtually in tears and warn, with desperation, that things are out of control and that someone is going to die, when one detachment appears to be in a state of crisis, it's not good.

A local crime watch e-mail says:

No More Mister Nice Guy

The days of welcoming strangers onto our property are long gone. When the ladies in our families are being beaten up and having their lives threatened, it is way past time to change what we are doing. Prepare to defend your loved ones; it is just a matter of time. You will end up going to jail at minimum until you can prove yourself innocent. You will have to deal with the guilt and the PTSD and retribution from the gang or offender. You will have to spend huge amounts of money on lawyers. You will have to deal with lost time on your job. You and your family will be exposed to the media. Right now we are all playing a game of Russian roulette, hoping that it is the next guy or neighbor who is going to have to handle the issue. Well, it could be you.

Another lady writes:

My friends were recently attacked at their home by Eckville, the women assaulted October 23 and vehicles stolen. She is just like me, with children and a newborn at home. She didn't see a cop till an hour and a quarter later from the time she called. If I try to defend my home and my children, am I going to be in more trouble than the people trespassing? So I ask you: what can I do?

I cannot sugar-coat this. Rural crime is the most serious issue facing residents in central Alberta. Individuals don't feel safe because they are not safe in their homes or on their property. I, too, live in a rural county. I and our government also struggle with the anxiety and the trauma. We are working to change the system and find solutions to these complex issues and failures of civil security.

Thank you.

### Budget 2019

**Mr. Loewen:** With the recent budget being brought forward and today being Halloween, it is a perfect time to bring them together with Macbeth's witches' poem.

Thrice and once the NDP budget.  
Thrice and once it fails to please.  
Albertans cry 'tis time, 'tis time.

Round about the election would go.  
Poisoned speeches they would throw.  
And when the platforms turned to stone,  
Albertans were convinced to the bone.  
At the end the votes were sought.  
A Conservative government they got.

Double, double toil and trouble;  
Tables turn, and budget bubble.

And as the Premier ponders,  
Who shall he add, he wonders.  
To his cabinet list he goes.  
First budget adds minister's Toews.  
The opposition adds the fears  
And continue their awful smears.

As the facts they do come out,  
People see there is little pout.

Double, double toil and trouble;  
We learn there's little budget trouble.

Health care, there is no cut,  
And classes are left in no rut.  
Monies that are to be spent  
Will go exactly where they're meant.  
To protect our front-line service,  
Our budget's mark it did not miss.  
Mental health and addictions served,  
All the while debt trajectory curved.

Increases to Children's Services  
And also Community and Social Services.  
Increases in seniors' housing: you can bet  
Those community builders we won't forget.

As we focus to remove red tape,  
Our associate minister he wears a cape.  
Job-creation tax cut will do its work  
Though opposition continues to smirk.

They fail to remember the enormous cost:  
Their tax increases equalled \$6 billion lost.

Balanced budget, we will not rest,  
As the MacKinnon panel did suggest.

O well done! I commend your pains,  
And every one shall share the gains.  
And now about the budget sing  
Workers and families in a ring,  
Supporting all that you put in.

And this tale, though sounding scary,  
In the end the fear is nary.  
This government is committed to  
How our future it will do.

For as we get people back to work,  
Making life better we will not shirk.  
Pushing forward a full cup,  
For Alberta proud, we stand up.

1:50

**The Speaker:** I might provide two cautionary tales to the statements today.

One, the hon. member has been around for a very long time, and he'll know that the use of names, even if he blends them to not really sound like a name, might not actually be appropriate.

The other hon. members will know that any member's statement is to be done free of any form of interjection, and I did have the opportunity to hear one this afternoon.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Budget 2019

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Premier told business leaders that the province was broke and that he had to make tough choices. He forgot to mention that his first priority was a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. Today we hear the devastating news that EnCana announced that they pocketed \$55 million from the Premier's handout, and now they're leaving us for the United States. Why did the Premier throw money at a company that isn't creating a single job for Albertans?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we're sad to see the news from EnCana today, and I want to be clear. The job-creation tax cut is designed to create work, create jobs inside our province. It's one component of a multicomponent plan. But if the hon. member wants to know why EnCana has left this province and who to blame, she should look in the mirror. That hon. member even just recently stood on the steps of this Legislature with protesters against our energy industry, with communist flags flying, has never apologized to the people of Alberta, was part of a government that helped push EnCana out of this province.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, that's a heck of a way to talk about the people who are facing unemployment today because of this government.

Every single Alberta taxpayer is being asked to pay the price for this Premier's wrong priorities. They'll be paying more in income tax and, soon, property tax. Parents will be paying more in school fees, too. In Calgary this Premier has cut money for 130 police officers. Police officers, parents: everyone is paying more in taxes. That's whose money is going towards lining the pockets of shareholders instead of supporting jobs here in Alberta. Why is the Premier forcing Albertans to pay for his \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, that \$4.7 billion number the NDP keeps making up has already been proven to be wrong many times. But back to what point matters. Losing EnCana and losing any investment inside this province is troubling, and we feel for anybody who has lost their job, certainly. But what it comes down to, at the end of the day, is that that hon. member was part of a government that chased away billions of dollars in investment, stomped on

Alberta's largest industry while it was down, and, even while she was in opposition with her colleagues, stood on the steps of the Legislature with communist flags flying and protested against our energy industry. When is she going to apologize for that?

**Ms Hoffman:** The Premier blames us. The Premier blames Ottawa. The Premier blames schoolchildren for fighting against climate change, Mr. Speaker. The Premier even tries to deny his own corporate handout exists, and so does his House here. It's on page 144 of the budget they wrote. If anything in Alberta is broke, it's this Premier's moral compass. Why won't the Premier admit that he didn't make a tough choice – he made the wrong choice – and give us back our \$4.7 billion?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wants to talk about a moral compass. I'll stand with our Premier, who's working hard to get people back to work, who's standing beside our largest industry and is helping fight for our province. That hon. member sided with Justin Trudeau, possibly the worst Prime Minister in the history of this country, somebody who has attacked Albertans on a daily basis, and made him their close ally while she was in government. Then their leader and their party admitted that they then voted for their federal leader, the NDP leader, who is against pipelines. That's ridiculous. That hon. member should apologize to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Education Budget 2019-2020

**Ms Hoffman:** Paying out hundreds of dollars in school fees is a major financial stress for families, and that's why our government decided to invest \$60 million in reducing that fee burden. The Premier cancelled that support for families to pay for his \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout, and yesterday we learned that school fees will likely go up again: one bill in September and another one maybe at Christmas. Why does the Premier choose to rob from families to give billions of dollars to corporations who aren't even creating jobs here in Alberta?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker: rob from families? That hon. member was the Deputy Premier of a government that brought in the largest tax increase in the history of this province. I'm proud that this government got rid of it. That hon. member: while I sat in opposition, I had to unfortunately watch her go after my constituents on a daily basis not only with the carbon tax but kicking our energy industry while it was down, watch the people that I represent go through a heck of a hard time because they kept making it worse. Again to her: apologize to Albertans. You don't even have a right, in my mind, to stand up in this House and even ask a question like that.

**The Speaker:** Of course, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a right to stand and ask questions here in the House, and she has another right right now to do so.

**Ms Hoffman:** Back to school in September is often a hard time financially for families, but at least it was only once a year. Families used to be able to be protected from mid-year increases by law, but now this Premier is changing the law so that families can be hit by school fees more than once a year. On top of that, families are paying more in income tax, more in property tax, more in insurance, more in vehicle registration fees. Why does this Premier think it's okay to pick the pockets of everyday families to pad the profit margins for shareholders?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The NDP acting leader continues the habit of her party; their party in this House continues to misrepresent the facts. That is not an accurate statement, but what is accurate is that she was the Deputy Premier of a government that brought in a carbon tax, the largest tax in the history of our province, that hurt my constituents and your constituents, Mr. Speaker. She was part of a government that you know told my constituents at the West Country seniors' centre to fund raise to pay for her carbon tax. She has no credibility on this issue. Her party has no credibility on this issue. We will stand up for Albertans.

**Ms Hoffman:** Is that why they're kicking 46,000 people off the seniors' drug plan, Mr. Speaker?

Yesterday I met with parents who are already pushed to the brink by government hiking up their school fees. Some educational assistants received layoff notices on budget day. I met with a student who understands better than the Education minister or anyone in the government the damage that's being done by defunding the school system. Why is the Premier stealing from children and educational assistants, who . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** . . . on average make \$32,000 a year, to give \$4.7 billion to profitable corporations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member knows that saying that the Premier is stealing from children would be wildly unparliamentary. She can apologize at the next opportunity.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the acting leader of the NDP wants to talk about tax policy. It's ridiculous. She was part of a government, again, that brought in a carbon tax that reached into every Albertan's pocket, taking money out of hard-working Albertans' pockets, and then put it into her slush fund, that never even had an impact on the environment. It was all economic pain and no environmental gain. That's what they did at the very time that Albertans needed their government to stand up for them. They came in and knocked them down again while they were already down. That's their legacy.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, if you'd like to talk about it at the end of question period, I'm happy to do that if you'd prefer.

For now, then, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Public and Catholic schools in Red Deer are reeling after finding out that the government misled them about their budget. Red Deer public says that they're getting \$3.7 million less than the minister led them to believe, and Red Deer Catholic says that they're getting \$2 million less than they were promised. To the Premier: why did your Education minister fail to tell the truth to the people of Red Deer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. As promised during the election, we have maintained education funding for our K to 12 system. We have also accounted for enrolment growth. Every single student who walks through that door in one of our schools will be funded at the exact same base rate they were funded at last year.

**Ms Hoffman:** Red Deer public: \$3.7 million less than they were led to believe. Red Deer Catholic: \$2 million less than they were promised. The superintendent of Red Deer public, Stu Henry, says

that this budget, quote, will have a significant impact on staff and ultimately on students. He went on to say that it will mean looking at school fees to offset costs due to the shortfall in provincial funding. Why is this Premier taking money away from families in Red Deer to pay for his \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout while EnCana is moving south of the border?

2:00

**Member LaGrange:** Well, as we've said many times, our government is absolutely committed to quality education for our students. The Education Act restricts school authorities from charging fees for instructional supplies and materials. We do respect the autonomy of local boards to make decisions for their local jurisdictions.

**Ms Hoffman:** The reality of this budget is far from the fantasy that the UCP government tried to peddle during the election and the government still tries to peddle in this House, but the truth is in black and white, Mr. Speaker. Last week the budget was tabled: hundreds of millions of dollars less for schools, fewer teachers, more kids in classrooms, fewer educational assistants, more time on buses, less individual support for kids with special needs, and more fees for parents. Why does the government choose to assault education just to give \$4.7 billion in a no-jobs corporate handout to companies that are moving away from Alberta?

**Member LaGrange:** Let's talk about school fees, Mr. Speaker. Under her leadership in 2011-2012 Edmonton public collected \$28 million in fees; in 2012-13, \$29 million; in 2013-14, \$31 million; in 2014-15, over \$37 million. If the acting leader truly objected to school fees, she would have demonstrated that as chair of Edmonton public. Instead, she is using the issue to try and score points for her NDP leadership campaign.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

#### Postsecondary Education Budget 2019-2020

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Advanced Education says that he wants universities to cut overhead costs. Now we know that he meant that quite literally. There's no more money to fix the roof. The University of Alberta lost its entire infrastructure maintenance grant in this current budget. That's \$35 million worth of roofs, plumbing, and mechanical systems maintenance not completed. Why is this minister allowing valuable provincial assets like university buildings to deteriorate so that he can pay for his \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The capital maintenance and renewal budget and program is an important part, of course, of funding to our institutions, but, regrettably, because of the very challenging and difficult financial situation that we're in, we've had to make some very difficult decisions, including that. However, we have told our institutions that we will simply be pausing the capital maintenance and renewal program, and we'll be in a position to have it back online in future years.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given that the real victims of this terrible budget and their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout are the people of Alberta and given that the University of Alberta president, David Turpin, said yesterday that staff cuts are definitely on the table, how many postsecondary educators need to lose their jobs to pay for the no-jobs handout to companies like EnCana and Husky?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been indeed talking with the University of Alberta and, of course, all of our institutions. We want to make sure that as our institutions look to find savings, they do so in a way that minimizes any impact to students. I've requested from all of our institutions that they submit to my department a budget implementation plan by December 2 so we can have a closer understanding of how they seek to operate over the next few months and ensure that front-line services and high-quality education continues to be delivered.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, President Turpin, who I think knows what he's doing, believes that the corporate handout will cost his university about \$2,000 per full-time student and given that each of these students is also likely facing a 21 per cent tuition hike, can the minister explain why Alberta students are paying more to get less for their education while companies like EnCana and Husky get a nice handout to lay off Albertans and then subsequently leave town?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, our ultimate objective and goal is to ensure a financially sustainable postsecondary system that delivers high-quality results and that ensures we are training a modern and diverse workforce. Under the former government our postsecondary system was left rudderless, without direction, and all they did was continue to throw money at the problem, as we've seen from them time and time again. With every problem they encounter, I guess the solution is just to throw money at it. We will find a much better approach to deliver high-quality postsecondary to the province of Alberta.

### Skilled Trades Training

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, my riding of Central Peace-Notley does not have big cities full of people. Rather, the towns and hamlets spread out across its boundaries serve as meeting points and service providers for a largely rural population. Among these services provided is advanced education, specifically the trades colleges, like in Fairview. The skills taught at schools are necessary to keep Albertans up to speed on the latest developments in industry and agriculture, enhancing farms and businesses across my constituency. Can the minister explain how this government seeks to continue its partnership with local trade schools and deliver top-quality education to rural Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Partnering with our rural local trade schools is an important priority. We'll be continuing to partner with them in a number of ways. First and foremost, as many people here know, of course, we've made an important and significant investment in trade programming across the province, which a lot of our rural colleges will benefit from. As well, as we work to roll out a new funding formula, we'll be working with each individual institution to find a way forward that is best suited.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, given that the previous NDP administration racked up unsustainable debt levels and given that the budget delivered last week is set on balancing the efficient delivery of services with paying off the massive debt load the NDP saddled Albertans with and given that this government seeks to deliver top-quality education efficiently to all Albertans and given that the trades are an essential component of Alberta's economy and our campaign commitments, will the minister explain to the House how this government will support the trades and, by extension, fulfill its promise to get Albertans back to work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, getting Albertans back to work is our top priority, which is reflected in our investment in the skilled trades. Just the other day I had the fortune of being with the Premier to make an announcement with Careers: the Next Generation, which at the moment allows 1,500 high school students to participate in apprenticeship learning. Our goal is to quadruple that number to 6,000 to help more students find pathways in apprenticeship learning. I want to thank the member. I've had the opportunity of visiting Fairview and, in particular, visiting the Fairview campus and having a great opportunity to find out more about the excellent trade programming that is occurring there in his own constituency.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that this government was elected to return Alberta's finances to order and given that this most recent budget calls for tightening of belts, particularly in Advanced Education, and given that larger institutions like Mount Royal, the University of Calgary, or the University of Alberta are able to weather financial storms due to their size and assets and given that the trade schools across my riding are small but essential to growth of trades and agriculture, can the minister explain how this government will veer from the unrestrained spending of the previous administration while at the same time ensuring smaller schools are not lost in the shuffle?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an important question and a very important challenge. Of course, as we know, the MacKinnon panel had some very clear details around postsecondary spending. To address this problem, we will be transforming the way in which we fund our postsecondary institutions to ensure the financial viability of the system and to ensure that our postsecondary system is meeting current labour demands and addressing the future labour challenges within the province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has the call.

### Calgary Police Service Funding

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few days ago in this House the Member for Calgary-Cross described the "devastating crime wave" that our constituents have experienced. But on Monday Calgary police chief, Mark Neufeld, told city council that the province is removing \$13 million from the Calgary police budget. Can the Justice minister confirm he's raiding the Calgary police budget during a devastating crime wave, or is he going to call Chief Neufeld a liar?

2:10

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we have fully funded the two grants that are provided to the city of Calgary for policing. We have dedicated additional resources for policing across Alberta, including the Alberta law enforcement response teams. Earlier this week I sent a clear signal to the mayor of Calgary that they need to get their fiscal house in order and start funding the priorities of Calgarians. I'm a Calgarian. I'm tired of my taxes going up. I'm tired of his pet projects. It's time to fund policing. It's time for the mayor of Calgary to get his house in order.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that Chief Neufeld said, and I quote, you start talking about numbers like \$13 million; that's about 130 positions is what that equates to, end quote, does the minister want the city of Calgary to hike property taxes to backfill his raiding of the police

budget, or is he okay with having 130 fewer officers patrolling the streets of Calgary during a crime wave?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I've talked to Chief Neufeld, and I've encouraged him to talk to his mayor to get Calgary's fiscal house in order. We have a former government on the other side that loved raising taxes. We also have a mayor in Calgary that loves to raise taxes. They have a joint connection here. They love Justin Trudeau. Our mayor of Calgary loves Justin Trudeau. That was a failed alliance for Alberta. We're standing up for Alberta. We all want to see Calgary get its fiscal house in order. I'm tired of paying more taxes in Calgary.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the minister told this House in June, "We're going to be making sure that our law enforcement officials have the resources that they need to get the job done," and given that now he is actually taking \$13 million away from law enforcement in Calgary, can the Justice minister explain, without having another public meltdown, why he's abandoning public safety in Calgary to pay for the Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to be lectured about justice and policing by the members opposite. Remember that earlier last month I invited all members opposite to come hear about their legacy on crime. We had a bus with "NDP legacy tour." They won't come and hear about their record. They won't come and hear about their record on crime. We have been clear in our budget. We are funding policing, more money for policing. It's time for the city of Calgary to get its fiscal house in order.

#### Budget 2019 Impact on Women

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, this government's budget attacks a lot of Albertans: postsecondary students, workers, AISH recipients. The list goes on. But today I'd like to talk about the impacts on women. The impacts are significant: on professions that are predominantly women such as nurses and teachers to cuts to affordable housing to deindexing the Alberta seniors' benefit, which impacts thousands of senior women. To the minister responsible for status of women: given all of these terrible changes, how have you been advocating for women with your cabinet colleagues? And, please, be specific.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to work with a government that understands the fiscal situation that we're in right now. I would suggest that the member needs to actually ask internally, in the opposition, about the hundreds of thousands of jobs that were lost while they were in government. In fact, if you look at the energy industry alone, 24 per cent of the workers that are in the energy industry are women, many of whom have lost their jobs as a result of very bad policy on that side.

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, given that on Tuesday we debated the Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women estimates and given that while the answers left something to be desired, my colleagues and I were happy to share the concerns of Albertans and given that there was only one question on issues faced by women or gender-diverse folks from the government caucus, can the minister please explain how, moving forward, she's going to be prioritizing supports for women when most of her colleagues don't seem to care about 50 per cent of the population?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Well, I can honestly say that on this side we deeply, deeply care about every single person in this province, especially women and LGBTQ2S-plus. One of the things I'm most proud of – actually, there are a couple of things. The Minister of Advanced Education has actively been working with Women Building Futures to make sure – when we were looking at some of the issues of gaps within working sectors for women, one of the big things that we found out was that there was not enough investment and whatnot going into women in STEM programs.

**Member Irwin:** Given that this government is reducing funding for Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women by a whopping 33 per cent, a funny way of showing your support, and given that this is just to make up for their \$4.7 billion no-jobs giveaway and given that when asked about a significant number of women health care workers who were fired, this minister suggested they go back to school or get a job in the trades, to the minister: can you please assure this House that despite your government's disinterest in women, we won't see any further cuts in the future?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Well, actually, I would suggest that the member again take a look at her own government, which brought in the largest tax ever in Alberta, which absolutely impacted women far more than anybody else in this province. If you want to talk about the impacts on women in this province, you only need to look at the previous government and the absolutely insulting tax that was put upon this province day after day. It impacted their ability to run their households, their ability to feed their families, go to work, and multiple other things.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod is rising with a question.

#### Landowner Property Rights

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have demanded that our government stand up for property rights. Previous abuses of these rights include false premises for expropriation, low compensation offers, devalued property, and the government freezing part or all of a private property with regulation but offering no compensation. During the campaign our party promised to fix these issues and restore the trust of Albertans in their government that we would protect property rights. Can the Minister of Justice inform us on what actions our government is taking to uphold Albertans' property rights?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, let me clear. This government respects property rights. When the Jumbo Valley trespass happened, the invasion of that property, we came out with a clear message, that trespassing on rural residences is not going to be accepted and that there are going to be real consequences to that. Our government will also be bringing forward a new Alberta property rights act that will further entrench the right to not be deprived of enjoyment or use of property without due process of the law.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has the call.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that Alberta is the only province that allows squatters to make legal claims to someone else's private property and given that one of our government's promises was to amend the Land Titles Act and bar



adverse possession claims and given that this would be an important step not only for property rights but for rural safety and given that this is a valuable initiative for many of my constituents in Livingstone-Macleod, can the minister please provide a timeline of when Albertans will see these changes take place?

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Minister of Service Alberta has risen to answer.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member for Livingstone-Macleod has said, this was one of the promises that we made in our platform. We are reviewing the recommendations from the Alberta Law Reform Institute about abolishing adverse possession, and we're reviewing our options to help address this issue. The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General has been leading the legislative work on this, but Service Alberta supports the minister. We'll work collaboratively with him and his department as they work to deliver on this platform commitment on adverse possession. We do recognize the hardships that landowners have faced on this file.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his answer.

Given that landowners have no explicit right to private property in our Constitution and given that Albertans have not always been fairly compensated for their private property by the government and given that property owners often lack options to take action against governments that are abusing power, how will this government protect private property owners from government overreach and their abuse of power?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Albertans will never be deprived of their right to own and enjoy their property without due process of the law. Our proposed Alberta property rights act, when we bring it forward, will propose an amendment to the Constitution to enshrine property rights in Alberta. We will also treat government regulation of real property the same as government expropriation for the purposes of compensation. This party is proud to stand with landowners, proud to stand up for property rights. It's a foundation of our party, and we're proud to stand as a government for property rights.

### Energy Efficiency Programs

**Mr. Schmidt:** Prior to 2017 Alberta was the only jurisdiction in all of North America that didn't have an energy efficiency agency. Our government changed that by creating Energy Efficiency Alberta, that saved Albertans \$330 million in energy costs. Now those programs are all gone so that this government can pay for its \$4.7 billion corporate handout. To the minister of the environment. Your government is increasing taxes and fees on almost everything. How do you expect families to continue to invest in energy efficiency?

2:20

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I see the NDP still don't understand why they were fired in April. Part of the big reason why they were fired in April is a result of the carbon tax that paid for the things that the hon. member is talking about. He seems to think that was free. What happened is that they reached in and taxed hockey moms and hockey dads, took that money out of their pockets, and then went and spent it on a slush fund that the NDP had for their own special projects, many of which had no impact on the

environment, some of which were spent on Ontario companies to install light bulbs and shower heads. We've been clear. We were clear with Albertans in April. We will have a different approach when it comes to emissions. We're excited about it. It'll be focused on technology and innovation, but it won't be from taking money away from hockey moms and hockey dads.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that those hockey moms and hockey dads are now paying more in property taxes, more in car insurance, more in home heating and electricity bills and getting nothing in return and given that the energy agency itself was creating 2,300 jobs and now this government has killed 27,000 jobs, what does this minister have to say to the thousands more who will lose their jobs in what was a booming green industry?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's ridiculous to watch the NDP continue to misrepresent facts over and over. Here's what I would have to say to Albertans. They fired the NDP in April. That was the start of getting us back on track. We've inherited a mess. That member was part of the cabinet that gave us that mess. We will be working diligently side-by-side with our industry, side-by-side with Albertans to get this province back on track. They can rest assured that Alberta now has a government, unlike the former government, who will not stand and protest with communist flags flying over the Legislature against our largest industries.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that I suspect the minister prefers Confederate flags to communist flags and given that the EEA contributed to \$475 million ...

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order.

**Mr. Schmidt:** ... in economic growth and given that some business owners in the solar industry are saying that with the cancellation of these programs they will, quote, go broke, what does the minister have to say to businesses who will be crippled by his decision to cancel energy efficiency programs to pay off the \$4.7 billion hole that he's given to big corporations?

**The Speaker:** The point of order from Calgary-West is noted at 2:23.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I prefer the Alberta flag, which flies proudly on my farm. I'm proud to be part of a government that will stand up for this province. That hon. member has been part of a government that has worked against this province, that sold out Albertans to Justin Trudeau and to their federal NDP leader. I'm proud of this province. I'm proud of the men and women who built this province. I'm proud of the energy industry in this province. I'm proud of Albertans north to south, east to west, and I will assure you this government will stand with them every day. Thank goodness the NDP is gone because all they do is sell them out.

### Red Tape Reduction Funding

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, the government has claimed to be tackling red tape. They appointed an associate minister to lead their efforts, and they promised this initiative would create jobs. Well, 27,000 jobs have been lost since this government has taken over. Instead of reducing red tape, the associate minister is actually tripling it according to the budget tabled on Thursday. Can the associate minister explain to this House why he is tripling the size of his ministry while Albertans are being told to sacrifice to pay for a no-jobs, \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth on what he just said there. Let's just talk about what their record is.

The truth is that they drove businesses away from this province. They drove the businesses away, and we lost jobs because of that. Over 170,000 jobs were lost because that government would not stand up with our job creators and our innovators. This government will do what we need to do, which is stand up for those job creators and those innovators.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, given that the red tape minister's budget will cost Albertans \$10 million by 2022 and given that the government is heartlessly taking away an estimated \$7 million this year alone from Albertans living with disabilities, can the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction please tell this House why he deserves a constantly growing budget while AISH recipients are being told the cost of living is too much to ask for?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, what I will tell this House is that what we're doing for Alberta is that we're trying to get Albertans back to work. We promised Albertans that we were going to jump-start the economy and get Albertans back to work, and that's what we will deliver. One of the ways to be able to do that is that we looked at other jurisdictions that did it well, reduced the amount of taxes that they have to pay, get a sustainable government working, and make sure that we reduce the regulatory burden. When the government did this in the past, we saw over 150 corporate head offices move here. Unfortunately, we've seen EnCana leave because of what this government did in the past. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Given the minister of red tape was tasked with creating an environment to encourage job creation and the only real job he's managed to create is his own at a cost of \$10 million and given that he's asking Alberta families to pay higher tuition, higher income taxes, higher insurance costs, and much, much more to subsidize the government's \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway, to the minister: given the huge costs of his department and zero return he's providing the people of Alberta, will he agree it's time to eliminate the red tape that is his ministry, or does he support red tape only when his name is on the letterhead?

**Mr. Hunter:** You know, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about real history rather than the revisionist history that these members continue to do. The truth is that I brought forward a private member's bill about three and a half years ago that talked about red tape reduction. You know, Mr. Speaker, if that government had acted upon that, perhaps we would not have seen EnCana leave and not lost all those jobs because of that. They need to look in the mirror when they look at the job crisis that this province is in.

### Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are generous people. We pride ourselves on helping our fellow Canadians, especially when times are tough elsewhere, regardless of what the NDP might say. All we ask in return is for a fair deal: the right to develop our resources and the self-determination to manage them. Albertans are practical, realistic people, and we have been clear that we should be focused on being champions of our energy industry and environmental record rather than villainizing them. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: what is our government doing to ensure that Alberta remains innovative in deploying emissions reduction technology?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I was excited yesterday to announce the winners of Emissions Reduction Alberta grand challenge to companies, who will split \$10 million to fund cutting edge technology when it comes to emissions reductions: Carboncure, who will save 530,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide by 2030 in the province of Alberta and a staggering 554 million litres of water annually; and Mangrove technologies, who will reduce 1.4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year by 2030, Mr. Speaker, all because they make new products.

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans voted overwhelmingly against the carbon tax on April 16 and given that Justin Trudeau has said that he will institute a carbon tax on any province that does not do so of its own volition and given that our government has a plan to ensure that emissions are reduced through our TIER program and given that the federal government has been working in other ways such as C-48 and C-69 to cripple our energy industry, Minister, will the TIER system help to avert this gross federal overreach?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, our industry partners were clear with us that they wanted to be regulated here in Alberta. They were crystal clear that they did not want to be sold out by this government like they were sold out by the last government. We've worked hard over the last six months to come up with a system that will keep our regulations on our industry right here in this province, not in Ottawa, and help us to continue to defend our largest industry inside this province and other industries going forward. We're excited about it. It's a refreshing change from the NDP's approach, which was to sell them out to their ally Justin Trudeau.

**Mr. Milliken:** Given that Justin Trudeau's environment minister, Catherine McKenna, has gone on record saying, "I don't have time for politicians that play cynical games about climate change, and I don't have time for politicians who pretend that climate change isn't real" and given that we say that climate change is real, to the same minister: what is our government doing to convince the Trudeau Liberals that their carbon tax on everyone and everything does nothing to reduce emissions and that our TIER plan, the technology innovation and emissions reduction system is a plan that can actually work? [interjections] Regardless of what they're saying on the other side against me.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. We're focused on technology and innovation that could actually reduce emissions. We're excited about that. Further to that, our message to Ottawa is that if they really want to have an impact on global GHG emissions, the solution is right here in Alberta with our clean natural gas. We will continue to call on Ottawa to help get our clean energy to places like Asia and India, which will have the biggest impact on GHG emissions while at the same time helping people out of poverty. It's time for the federal government to recognize the solution to this is Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

2:30

### Head Coverings Worn in Schools

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been more than two weeks since I asked the Minister of Education about the racial profiling incident at Christ the King elementary school, where an 11-year-old boy was told to remove his do-rag. When his mother protested, she was banned from the school property. The minister promised to investigate and report back to this House, but we are still waiting.

This minister is already enabling homophobic and transphobic bullying. Why is she also enabling racial profiling?

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I totally, categorically disagree with the statements that have been said by the hon. member. I am awaiting the report to come from Edmonton Catholic, and once I have that report I will share it.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, given that while this minister has done nothing for weeks, this boy has been forced to change schools and given that his mother has received no apology from this school or the district and remains banned from the school, will the minister direct Edmonton Catholic school to apologize to this family and lift the ban today?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I have been very clear that I support school board autonomy. They are looking into the matter. They are in the best position to look into and do the investigation. I will leave it in their capable hands.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, given that this incident has been deeply painful for Emmell, his family, and their community and given that this family has been ignored by the school, by the district, and by this minister's own office, will the Minister of Education commit to meeting in person with this family?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I'm always happy to meet with anyone. I'm very accessible. My doors are always open. People are phoning all the time. I have not received a request to meet from this individual.

#### Transportation and Community Grant Program Funding

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, this week I stood with several of my Edmonton-Whitemud constituents to talk about how this government's budget breaks promises. They promised and campaigned that they would keep the previous government's capital plan, but now thanks to their budget the Terwilliger Drive expansion that south Edmonton has been waiting years for is on the chopping block. Can the Minister of Transportation explain why my constituents will be sitting longer in traffic because he is prioritizing a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway over the needs of the people of Edmonton?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation is rising.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It surprises me to agree with the member that this project is important – not that the project is important; that's obvious – but usually there's not much to agree with.

I will say to the hon. member and the rest of the House that there are a lot of worthwhile projects across Alberta, and when we set our capital plan, it is a very tough job to decide what gets funded and what does not. But I can assure the hon. member that this project remains in our consideration for future years because it is important.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud is home to many active and successful community leagues and given that the government callously cut community facility enhancement program funding by 35 per cent, a program that the community leagues that I represent rely on, and given that the Minister of Finance told people concerned with cuts to CFEP and CIP that they would be required to do more with less, can the Minister of Culture explain why profitable corporations are being given more, but community leagues are being given less?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, firstly, I need to correct the record again. Our job-creation tax cut will result in an exponentially lower reduction in government revenues than what the members opposite are suggesting. In fact, this year alone the reduction in corporate tax revenue will be one hundred million dollars, far from the numbers they're putting out. More importantly, it will attract investment, create jobs and opportunities, the very opposite effect of what the previous government did.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that on page 144 of the minister's own fiscal plan it states that the corporate tax will give away \$4.7 billion and given that the people of Edmonton-Whitemud are known for their generosity – I know many of my constituents give their time volunteering and giving to charities and nonprofits like their local school councils – and given that this government has spurred tons of confusion by eliminating the lottery fund, which supported volunteer organizations and nonprofits, and moving those funds into general revenue, can the Minister of Finance please explain why charities in my constituency get nothing but confusion from this government while corporations get gigantic handouts?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we are dissolving the lottery fund. The function of that fund will continue as it has in the past. Charities and nonprofit groups will benefit at the same level as they have in the past. But something I don't expect the members opposite to understand is that we're doing this to streamline government, to reduce our capital required to operate, and save taxpayers \$13 million a year. We will deliver effectively but will do that in a much more cost-effective manner. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North has risen with a question.

#### Drug Treatment Courts

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning it was announced that this government will be increasing funding to drug treatment courts to the tune of \$20 million over four years. These courts are an avenue for people who are facing serious charges to get access to treatment and recovery resources to turn their lives around. To the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: how will this funding benefit those seeking treatment through drug courts?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. It was with great pride that I was there this morning to announce the expansion of drug treatment courts. We will be doubling the size of the drug treatment courts in the cities of Calgary and Edmonton. We're also looking to expand now as well into midsize centres across Alberta. That's the start. This program works. It's powerful. I was involved as a volunteer on the Calgary

drug treatment court board before I got into politics. It has resounding results. It also changes lives. It allows people to reconnect with family and get their lives back on track.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that many Albertans have turned their lives around through the drug treatment courts and also given that the program is intended to break the cycle of criminal behaviour driven by addiction, to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: how successful is this program in reducing repeat offences?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, this program is based on accountability. Seventy per cent of the graduates don't reoffend again. They're held accountable through a court process, where they have to go and look the judge in the eye on a weekly or biweekly basis as to the progress that they're having in this. They have to admit their guilt up front, and sentencing is deferred until they can graduate. It holds people accountable. It's compassionate, but it's also firm. We believe in giving addicts a chance to recover. That's what this program will do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government has also committed to improving the overall mental health and addiction care system and also given that the many people who are in the cycle of addiction are also in the criminal justice system, to the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: how does this expansion of drug treatment courts align with the government's addiction strategy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government's approach to addiction is fair, firm, and compassionate, fair to the communities that are dealing with addiction and crime, firm in tackling the disease of addiction, and compassionate in understanding that this is a health care issue. People need treatment and recovery. Drug treatment courts are an important part of our approach that will give people the opportunity to recover and to live a positive, engaged citizenship.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

## 2:40 Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One week ago today our provincial budget was tabled. It is clear that we have set a path to balancing the budget in our province as we understand the need to live within our means while also taking steps to ensure sustainability going forward. One area that Albertans spend far more on than any other province is in Advanced Education. The budget notes that we will be moving towards a performance-based funding model. To the minister: how and when do you plan on implementing this new funding model, and have postsecondary institutions been consulted on the changes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education has the call.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I have a bold and ambitious vision for our postsecondary system, one that is

foundationally based in transformative change. I believe that we truly have an opportunity to create a stronger postsecondary system, one that is both financially viable and that is producing a modern and diverse workforce.

The member is correct. We are in the process of transforming the way in which we fund our postsecondary institutions. Of course, we will be consulting and working with all of our postsecondary stakeholders as we develop this new, transformative model.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, an overwhelming majority of Albertans voted for a government that takes real leadership and does not shy away from hard decisions. I have still heard concerns in regard to the reduction of operating grants for our postsecondary institutions. Given that grants have been reduced and given that the tuition freeze has been lifted, to the minister: what tools or alternative revenue sources are available to postsecondary institutions to help absorb this reduction in grant funding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct. Of course, our institutions have a number of vehicles and mechanisms available to them in terms of revenue generation. Regrettably, under the former government there were a lot of handcuffs placed on our institutions and more onerous red tape that prevented them from engaging in other commercial activities to generate revenue from other sources. We are actively looking at ways of relaxing and loosening those restrictions with the right level of oversight and risk management so that our institutions can continue to generate revenue from other sources.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have also heard concerns about how the government allocated the grant reduction differently for institutions. Given that some postsecondary institutions will have to find a way to absorb this reduction in funding while others will not and given that this could directly affect the ability of the institution to attract students, can the minister explain to Albertans why 21 institutions in Alberta saw a reduction in grant funding while another five had their funding held?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been looking at the best mechanism in which to work with our institutions to find savings. At the end of the day, we recognize that a blind and uninformed savings reduction target across the system, a 5 per cent reduction across the system, would not be the most efficient and effective way. What we did is that we looked at the historical surpluses that our institutions have had going back the past five years. We applied savings targets to those institutions based on their historical surpluses. It's important to note that when we took a look at those surpluses, we saw that on average the postsecondary system has been generating over \$250 million in surpluses. We used that decision-making to decide how best to allocate those reductions within the first year.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will be proceeding to the rest of the daily Routine. Those of you who are travelling home for Halloween today, please drive safely and remember that it's better to drive to arrive alive.

## Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On July 2, 2019, the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship was deemed by the Assembly to be the special committee for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act pursuant to section 14 of that act. As chair of the committee it is my honour to table the requisite number of copies of the committee's report on the review of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. Copies of the report are also available through the committee office and online.

## Notices of Motions

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, after consulting with my colleague the Official Opposition House Leader, I wish to table a revision to the 2019-20 main estimates schedule. This revision is to change the time for the Municipal Affairs estimates by one hour in order to allow members the opportunity to participate in Remembrance Day ceremony events at the Legislature that morning.

**The Speaker:** Before I call on the hon. Minister of Transportation, I might just mention, Government House Leader: the same goal has been accomplished, but that's a tabling of a document. We don't have to move a motion in order for the estimates to be heard, just for future reference. But I appreciate it.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation was rising for a tabling.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of the Canada-Alberta Integrated Bilateral Agreement for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. In section 22 it has a remedy whereby the Canadian government may decide after the fact to withdraw from the program and not pay, fairly similar to the provincial remedy that has been discussed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South has a tabling.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. I rise to table the five requisite copies of an article by Moodys tax law, the first titled New Alberta Investment Tax Credits – Great for Business or Bureaucrats?

I also would like to table the requisite copies of a second article by Moodys tax law titled Alberta Investor Tax Credit Program – Even More Bad News.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of an article entitled Taxing the Rich to Fund Welfare Is the Nobel Winner's Growth Mantra. The Nobel prize winner in economics suggests that reducing taxes to boost investment is a myth. "You are giving incentives to the rich who are already sitting on tons of cash."

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings, the five requisite copies. The first one is from a constituent in regard to the stress that construction companies were under during the time – it was earlier in first session; I never had an opportunity to do that – when the NDP and Trudeau governments were causing undue pressures.

The second one I'd like to table is a clinical hearing evaluation for myself in regard to the left ear, that I have issues with, and I also have included a colour photocopy of the earplug I used in my left ear. I promised earlier in the week that I would table that to hopefully end that dialogue once and for all.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of two pieces of correspondence today from folks who are deeply concerned about education. One is somebody at the Buffalo Trail school division who talks about the \$800,000 in cuts that they anticipate as well as \$600,000 in growth pressures and the inability to serve students effectively.

The second one is from a teacher in Morinville who talks about having 35 students in a bio 30 class and the pressures that puts on and a sense of significant disappointment in this budget.

**The Speaker:** The Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My first tabling is from the *Green European Journal*, and it's written by Dr. Katharine Hayhoe and Tine Hens. It's entitled Rational Hope: Connecting Hard Truth with Climate Solutions.

The second one is for the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. It is just for clarity. People seem to be confused. It's page 144 of the government's fiscal plan for 2019-2023.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of communications from Susan Morrison from Tundra Petroleum Services, who talks about the fact that the Alberta export expansion program helped them access new markets and how disappointed she was to learn that this current government is no longer interested in supporting Alberta companies seeking new markets.

2:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation has another tabling.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of a guide, if you will, to places on the Alberta government website where templates of standard government contracts can be found, all of which include text that allows the government to withdraw from those funding agreements pretty much at any time they want, which also was the subject of some discussion this week.

## Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At approximately 2:21 I called the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora to order. To provide some context, obviously, points of order are typically heard after question period. However, if the Speaker deems for any reason to call a member to order, they are able to do so.

I believe the member is prepared to apologize unless you want to discuss the reasons why I might have called you to order.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm happy to do so, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I understand that your ruling is very clear, that saying "why is the Premier stealing" is unparliamentary. For that, I apologize and instead will use language more becoming of the House, even when I'm feeling so frustrated. I'm apologizing for the language that I used.

**The Speaker:** Apology accepted. That issue is dealt with and concluded.

At approximately 2:33 the hon. Minister of Transportation called a point of order.

### Point of Order Allegations against a Member

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. At that time the hon. member from across made comments about the hon. Minister of Education. While I don't have the Blues, they said something to the effect or pretty close to: the minister is enabling transphobic and racist behaviours. Now, as unpleasant as that is, I don't believe anybody in this House would be guilty of those things, but under 23(h), (i), and (j) it makes it clear that you can't make allegations against another member nor impute false or unavowed motives to another member.

My understanding of the way that you've ruled in this House on these matters, Mr. Speaker, is that as unpleasant as that may be, people can kind of get away with saying that the party opposite or something to that effect has done these things. But to actually pin that on an individual member, impugning their reputation, I think is generally considered unparliamentary, and I would ask you to ask that that be withdrawn.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Without getting into details nor arguing this point, I will on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Meadows withdraw the comment.

**The Speaker:** I consider the matter to be dealt with and accepted.

Members, the point of order which was called by the hon. Member for Calgary-West has been withdrawn.

Hon. members, we are at Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 19 Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce for second reading the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise and speak about this important piece of legislation. I do hope that it will gain the support of all members of the Assembly as it works its way through the debate in this Chamber.

I think it's important, before we talk about Bill 19, that we take a step back and look at the very first bill that made it through the 30th

Legislature inside this Assembly, which was the bill to repeal the job-killing carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. We made a promise to Albertans when we campaigned to earn the privilege to come to this place that we would get rid of the job-killing carbon tax, which was a tax on everyday Albertans, that reached into everyday Albertans' pockets and took their money and put it into NDP slush funds. We promised that, and right away we were able to keep that promise. I think it's very important that we remember that and we continue to celebrate that. The removal of the largest tax increase in the history of this province by the NDP is certainly something to celebrate.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

With that said, Mr. Speaker, Alberta has had a long history of managing emissions, of managing our environment, of taking the lead when it comes to our industrial activities. We're a proud, energy-producing province. We've been a leader on that file for a long time, not pursuing taxes on everyday citizens but working with the entrepreneurs in our industry, working with the innovators that have created the oil sands and other energy miracles right here in this province, that have been able to provide the economic engine not only of the province of Alberta but of the country of Canada.

Alberta was the first jurisdiction to manage its emissions. You don't hear that often, Mr. Speaker, when you're looking at the conversation when it comes around our energy industry, which is the best in the world. But the reality is that we have led the way in this province on this file for a very long time. At no time have we ever submitted in any arguments that we would not work with our industries to manage emissions, to manage pollution, to make sure that we can continue to have the best energy products and other products in this province to be able to sell to the world. We've been committed to that for decades. This government was clear in our platform that we will remain committed to that for decades to come.

But it's important to understand the contrast. Our vision when it comes to this important file is to continue to embrace that entrepreneurial spirit, to continue to stand with innovators inside our province, to make sure that we have a path forward to lower emissions and lower pollution inside our province, Mr. Speaker. The NDP and their allies like Justin Trudeau and their federal leader have a different vision, which is to tax everyday Albertans – hockey moms and hockey dads, seniors, people on fixed incomes – to tax our municipalities, to tax our schools, to tax legions, to tax on and on and on. We reject that approach. We will continue to reject that approach going forward.

So today I'm bringing forward second reading of a piece of legislation that allows us to continue the great tradition in this province of being able to continue to develop our products in the most environmentally friendly way so that we can sell them to the world, Mr. Speaker, by again being hand in hand with technology and innovation.

You know, yesterday I had the privilege of speaking at an Emission Reductions Alberta event here in Edmonton. We announced two important projects that I think really illustrate what we're talking about. We announced \$10 million in funding for two different organizations. One is CarbonCure, who's bringing in a way to use carbon dioxide to turn it into valuable chemicals, to take the by-product of some of the other products that we're already building inside this province and then go and make it valuable and turn it into chemicals that they can sell. All the while, we're reducing emissions. In their case, they anticipate saving 530 tonnes of emissions by the year 2030 in this province and are expected to save – and I think this is very impressive – a staggering 554 million litres of water a year.

That's innovation. That's technology. That's a positive result, Mr. Speaker, that benefits this province, that not only benefits the environment but creates industrial activity, creates jobs for people, and creates an opportunity where we can then, in turn, sell that product to the world to benefit others across the globe.

That's a big difference from what the former government did, bringing in a tax on places – I often liked to talk about, Mr. Speaker, as you know, when I was in opposition, the impact that the carbon tax that the NDP brought in had on my constituents. One of the stories I often liked to tell was what happened to the West Country seniors' centre right inside my constituency. I know that you know the story, but it's worth repeating quickly. This is a seniors' centre that was completely self-funded by the seniors that used it, created a recreation opportunity for the people in my community. The now Premier and I visited it a couple of times in opposition. You know, they almost shut down because the NDP's carbon tax on their heat caused them not to be able to afford to pay the bills, and they were going to lose the opportunity.

That's a contrast: a tax that you can put on seniors that cost them losing the place where they could recreate, a thing that has social value to the communities that we live in, or something like CarbonCure, who can actually invest in technologies that create jobs, that reduce emissions but create value as we go forward.

The second part of that announcement was for an organization called Mangrove Water Technologies. They have some technology which has the potential to reduce 1.4 million tonnes of emissions by 2030 in the province of Alberta alone and to open well over a hundred concrete plants, Mr. Speaker, here in Alberta and well over a thousand across the globe, working with technology that would take carbon dioxide and put it into concrete, one of the most used if not the most used construction products inside the province.

3:00

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will submit to you: does it make more sense to go the new Alberta government's way, to partner with people that have innovative ability like that and technology like that, that can create such value, even beyond environmental value? Environmental value is obviously the key part of what we're trying to accomplish here, but with projects like this we're going beyond that. We're creating jobs. We're creating industrial activity. We're creating economic growth right here inside this province.

That's why the Premier and our party put inside our platform the TIER program. We recognized that Alberta wanted to continue to be a leader when it came to emission reduction inside our province. We wanted to continue to be a leader so that we were able to sell our products to global markets but, second, because we wanted to protect our environment in this province. That's why we've been a leader from day one on this. Nobody can do it better than Alberta, Mr. Speaker. We have it right here. We have the answers to these questions right here, and with TIER we're creating an environment where our industrial activity, our energy partners, and other industries can partner with the Alberta government to actually make meaningful change when it comes to this.

Now, in the coming days you will hear from the opposition, who will continue to tout their job-killing carbon tax as the way forward on this, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to reject it. They will continue to stand and say that their process reduced more emissions, but interestingly enough, the process that I have submitted to this Chamber and, if the Chamber supports it, that will become the law in this province ends up almost with the exact same emission reductions when it comes to the program. When you take the technology investment that will come with the fund outside of TIER, we surpass the NDP's projections, pointing upwards of 57 megatonnes of reduction all the while without nickeling and diming

Albertans. Fifty-seven megatonnes by 2030 is not something to shake your head at. It's a significant accomplishment for our province, but again when you look at it hand in hand with inventing technologies that we can sell to the world and creating economic growth inside our province, it's a win-win. I certainly do hope that the hon. members take the time to support it.

One of the other components of TIER that I think is worth mentioning to the hon. members as I ask for their support of Bill 19 is this. When we started the consultation process about our platform promise around TIER, the Minister of Energy joined me as well as the minister of agriculture. Both of them have people within their scopes that fit within the 127 large emitters inside the province of Alberta. We had long consultations with the industry, one-on-ones as well as group meetings where we had conversations, and the one thing I heard consistently from every industry and everyone in it was that they wanted to be regulated in the province of Alberta. They wanted Alberta to decide our future.

They did not trust Justin Trudeau to decide the future, Mr. Speaker. Who could blame them? If you've seen the results and the rhetoric that have come from the Prime Minister and the people around him during this campaign, if you've seen the comments from the federal leader of the opposition party who is anti-oil and gas – he's not ashamed to say it. I know they try to not acknowledge what he's been saying, but he's not ashamed to say it. He wants to block our pipelines, wants to block our energy industry from doing it. Can you really blame our industry for saying to us, "We want to regulate here; we want to stand with you, be a partner in being able to tackle this problem in a made-in-Alberta way"? So we worked hard to make sure that we can accomplish that for our industry, to provide them the stability that they need to start to bring investment back to this province, investment that was forced out by the NDP government, to create a stable situation for that investment activity to take place.

We also have 34,000 conventional oil and gas facilities in this province that did not fall into the large emitter program for the 127 people that has existed in this province for a very long time, who are now in a spot that on January 1 they could have been brought in underneath the federal backstop on the industrial side. Those organizations were loud and clear saying that they want to work in an Alberta regulatory regime. We've worked hard, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we can protect our industry, because we're proud of it, from Justin Trudeau and his friends in Ottawa, who we know have sworn in some cases to completely destroy that industry.

Mr. Speaker, one of the shocking things that I found when I took over the portfolio as minister of the environment – and I know that many of my colleagues in this Chamber probably found the same – was that when you begin to work through your budget numbers and understand what the NDP had done, of course, as you know, we began to find out that the projections that the NDP had presented to the province were misrepresented, certainly, in the campaign. We had an economic situation in this province that was significantly worse than the former Premier and her party had presented to Albertans, so we began to sit down to try to figure out how we were going to work through that process.

I can tell you that the biggest thing – and I think that every minister will agree with this – is that the NDP's climate leadership plan, their carbon tax, has nothing to do with the environment. We've often stood in this place and talked about it being all economic pain and no environmental gain. It was weaved all though the budget, be it spent on projects – and some of those projects may have had value for the people who were involved with them – that certainly were not reducing emissions, that certainly were not going to help people with the environment, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] I

hear them heckle about that. That's what they did. That's what they did.

I once watched you, Mr. Speaker, give a speech about that very thing when you sat inside the opposition benches, pointing out what I think we used to affectionately, or nonaffectionately, refer to as the orange slush fund. We confirmed it when we became government. One of the first things we had to do was unravel that situation, and that stayed with me. It stayed with me that no matter what solution we bring forward, we have to make sure that it's dedicated to solving the problem. We have to be transparent with Albertans. We campaigned on saying that we would use some of this resource to be able to reduce the deficit that the NDP created, to reduce the debt problems that the NDP created.

With this piece of legislation, we make it clear. We make it clear which part, very transparently, will be invested in technology that will help us reduce emissions, and we make it clear which part will help reduce the deficit, which will ultimately, Mr. Speaker, help the very industries that are helping to pay into this fund.

I want to assure Albertans through you that we will not do what the NDP did. We will not create slush funds and pretend that we are dealing with the environment like they did, Mr. Speaker. We will not create that to go to special interest projects that they had. We will be transparent with Albertans, and that's what ultimately the legislation that is in front of this Chamber does. It renames certain funds to make it clear what the program is for, and it allows funds to be used for the reasons that we stated.

Ultimately, TIER itself will be primarily handled through a regulation, and we are releasing that at the same time as this legislation because they have to work hand in hand together, Mr. Speaker, but at the end of the day, the legislation that I'm asking the Chamber to pass, at its core, is to be transparent with Albertans and show them how we're going to utilize this resource going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to spend too much more time on this today except to talk about what I think is one of the most important issues when it comes to this file. The reality is, as we all know, that the GHG emissions and the environmental impact of our industry inside this province are not significant on a global scale. That is a reality. That doesn't mean – and I've been clear in my opening remarks – that we should not be working to clean up our environment or to make sure that we're producing products in an environmentally friendly way. Alberta has a long and successful history of leading the way on this file, but the reality is that if people want to have the biggest impact when it comes to global emissions, the solution is right here in this province. The solution is our clean natural gas. That is the conversation that we must have when it comes to our energy industry. The problem that people are identifying that they want fixed when it comes to emissions: Alberta can solve that world problem. The biggest impact that Alberta can have when it comes to reducing emissions is to get our clean natural gas to Asia and other markets.

Meanwhile, we have Ottawa, who continues to block pipelines, who continues to block us from being able to get our production to other parts of the world, and then we end up, as you know, Mr. Speaker, with a carbon leakage problem, which means that that energy demand is just being filled by other places in the world that don't have the same social standards as us, certainly, and also don't have the same environmental standards as us.

It's important that the rest of this country takes notice, takes notice of the resource that we have here, Mr. Speaker, that can solve the problem. If Prime Minister Trudeau and his federal Liberal government are truly committed to reducing worldwide emissions, they will answer our call to build our pipelines. They will stand beside us as we get our energy to other markets because not only

will it help reduce those global emissions, it will help people in some cases who are facing poverty.

3:10

It is a benefit to the world that we hold right here, and as we take TIER resources and we continue to invest in technology as it progresses, we'll be able to create even more benefit to the world. So truly – truly – I say to other governments inside this country: if they truly want to tackle global emissions, take notice of what's happening in Alberta, put your money where your mouth is, and let us get our product to market so we can help you tackle emissions on a global scale, and stop blaming the province of Alberta for what is a global problem. It's not acceptable. We have so many opportunities here when we focus on actually trying to solve a problem with means that will solve problems. We can benefit our province compared to the way the NDP processed their carbon tax.

Just a couple of days ago I also celebrated the opening of G4 technologies, a natural gas program, something that Alberta Environment and Parks and my colleague the hon. minister of economic development and trade's department and others have been involved in. They're taking forestry by-products and turning them into clean natural gas and putting it into our existing system so that people can heat their homes. Those are the things that we can accomplish with TIER, Mr. Speaker.

The choice that was before Albertans in April was to continue with the NDP's carbon tax on hockey moms and hockey dads, Mr. Speaker. I know that the opposition often laughs about this, but where I come from, we still have to drive. Their leader once told us to take a bus. There's no bus for my family back home in Sundre to take them to places. We drive. We have to. That's where we live. We have to drive to get to work, we have to drive to bring our kids to school, we have to drive for social events, and we have to drive to get groceries. That's the place that we live. That's the reality.

Taxing people inside my communities on fuel was not having an impact on emissions. We still had to drive. When my wife drives my youngest kids, Austin and Chyanne, and their 4-H calves to the 4-H show, Mr. Speaker, we're not doing that in a Smart car. We have to do it in a truck that tows a trailer. When my neighbour goes out to check on the cows or brings bales to his cows, he's got to do that in a truck. When tradespeople across this province have to drive and go to work, they have to bring their tools. The idea that you can solve this problem this way is ridiculous.

That was a choice that was before Albertans in April, and Albertans – I just want to back up – knew what the NDP's options were. The NDP made it clear. They passed legislation. They implemented the tax inside this province, a tax they promised would go to rebates and different things, but most of our households never received a rebate. They promised it wouldn't go to general revenue. They did put it in general revenue, and on and on. Everybody knows that portion of what the NDP did. But it's important to also know that they know what the current Alberta government promised. The TIER package, that I bring forward in this House today and in the regulation, is exactly what we promised Albertans that we would do, Mr. Speaker. Albertans knew the choice. They had the choice. It was very important to our Premier that he presented those options, and they spoke loud and clear in April, when they fired the NDP and they sent us here to do this job.

Yesterday, when we tabled TIER, Mr. Speaker, was a fulfillment of another campaign promise, at the end of the day, another promise made and another promise kept by this current Alberta government. We will continue to go forward doing the same thing. We will continue to go forward being proud of our industry. We will continue to go forward helping people that want to innovate. We will continue going forward with our technologies that are here, and



we will continue to fight to get our clean energy products to the world so we can finally have a significant impact on global pollution, but we can also help people on a global stage with poverty.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much, Minister.

On Bill 19 second reading are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary . . .

**Mr. Schow:** Cardston-Siksika. God's country, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** I didn't recognize you with the pork chops there, sir. Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I just want to quickly thank all members of the Assembly and all sides of the aisle for another hard week up here in Edmonton, and as always I wish them safe travels back to their constituencies. I'm just checking the calendar. Sorry, Mr. Speaker; they have October still up. I move to adjourn the House until Monday, November 4, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried. The Assembly adjourned at 3:15 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, October 31, 2019**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1313-26 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1329-31 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1347-57 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve.*), 1357-62 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c8 ]

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c5 ]

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cR-8.2 ]

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c4 ]

**Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c3 ]

**Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1375-83 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c7 ]

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 , passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cP-41.7 ]

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c2 ]

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cF-1.5 ]

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1393-94 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c9 ]

**Bill 13\* — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1345-47 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1383-93 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 cA-33.5 ]

**Bill 14 — Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act (Wilson)**

First Reading — 1654 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1655-77 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft.*), 1679-95 (*Oct. 9, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1708-25 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft.*), 1761 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft.*), 1763-67 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1768-70 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn.*), 1785 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cA-26.3 ]

**Bill 15 — Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019 (Glubish)**

First Reading — 1707 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1758-61 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1767-68 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1783-85 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c13 ]

**Bill 16 — Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 1782 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1810-17 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1817-18 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1911-15 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 c12 ]

**Bill 17 — Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act (Sawhney)**

First Reading — 1798 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1819-28 (*Oct. 17, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1915-26 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1949-59 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cD-13.5 ]

**Bill 18 — Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019 (Savage)**

First Reading — 1850 (*Oct. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1926-29 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft.*), 1931-45 (*Oct. 22, 2019 eve.*), 1947-49 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1959-66 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1978-90 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1990-94 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft.*), 2037-41 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2055-56 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c11 ]

**Bill 19 — Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 (\$) (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 2053 (*Oct. 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2123-26 (*Oct. 31, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 20 — Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2056-66 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2089-2100 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve., adjourned*)

**Bill 21 — Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2066-74 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2100-10 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve., adjourned*)

**Bill 201\* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 825-38 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 cP-30.6 ]

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta’s Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 838-40 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft.*), 1115-22 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft.*), 1882 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1883-87 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft.*), 2027-29 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c10 ]

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*), 1875-82 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft., not proceeded with on division*)

**Bill 204 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 4, 2019

Day 38

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Government Whip  
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Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

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Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
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Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
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Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Dang  
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Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Walker  
Yao

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Lovely  
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Rutherford  
Schmidt  
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Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

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Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
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Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Rowswell  
Stephan  
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Turton  
Walker

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Feehan  
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Rehn  
Rosin  
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Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 4, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind the responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Peter Matthew Neil McMillan. I would invite you all to join us in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it is my absolute honour and pleasure today to welcome a number of visitors to the Legislative Assembly. A familiar face to this Assembly is the former Member for Calgary-Elbow Mr. Greg Clark.

Also in the gallery this afternoon is the Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development from our good friends just to the east, the province of Manitoba, the Hon. Blaine Pedersen.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of folks joining us in the galleries this afternoon. If you are in the gallery and you hear the name of your group called, I invite you to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

From Edmonton-Whitemud, please welcome the School at the Leg. group, Earl Buxton elementary.

From Edmonton-Strathcona: St. Martin Catholic school.

Also joining us in the gallery today is a group of 20 hard-working public service employees from the Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board. Thank you so much for joining us and for all you do.

Lastly for this group of introductions, hon. members, I am very pleased to introduce to you 32 teachers from across the province who are forming the first-ever Teachers Institute on parliamentary democracy. I invite you all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, our anthem singer this afternoon is a constituent of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, Mr. Matthew McMillan. He applied to lead the Assembly in *O Canada* because of the work that he does with Canada's Cadet Organizations. As a naval lieutenant and cadet instructor Matthew works with the royal Canadian sea

corps *Undaunted*, where youth 12 to 18 learn healthy living, Canada's military traditions, and citizenship. He notes that every Tuesday his corps sings *O Canada* before their training, something that has been done by *Undaunted* for over a decade. It was a natural extension for him to lead us today. While not predating the province, *Undaunted* is one of the country's oldest sea cadet corps, and it is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Great job, Matthew.

Also in the galleries this afternoon are guests of the Minister of Health, here for the annual rural residents in the Legislature event. There are 12 members and four staff of the PARA, the Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta.

Joining the Minister of Advanced Education are members of the University of Calgary Students Union.

Lastly, welcome Todd Banks, a guest of the Member for Sherwood Park.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen: your guests.

### Ministerial Statements

#### Family Violence Prevention Month

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say thank you to the hon. members of this House for their support of Family Violence Prevention Month this November. The purple ribbons you are wearing signify what we as a government and we as a province are doing to put an end to family violence and prevent abuse. Many vulnerable Albertans out there need help, but they're unsure of where to turn, and we must do what we can to protect them from harm, to help them feel safe in their homes and to feel safe in their relationships.

Family Violence Prevention Month is an opportunity to raise awareness of what help is available and where to find it, but support does not end when this month ends. We want Albertans to know that help is available all year long. Those experiencing or at risk of family violence can find resources, helplines, online chat, and more at [alberta.ca/endafamilyviolence](http://alberta.ca/endafamilyviolence). Our family violence info line is also available 24 hours a day in more than 170 languages. Albertans just need to dial 310.1818 to speak with someone about how to get help in their area.

This government has prioritized putting an end to family violence. Not only have we been working to raise awareness of supports; we have passed legislation to protect people from violence and abuse. Once the Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act is implemented, people at risk of domestic violence will be able to apply to obtain information about a romantic partner's history of domestic violence. This will empower those at risk to make an informed decision while helping to prevent abuse and potentially saving lives.

These are important issues, which is why I'm thankful for your support this month as we raise awareness of family violence prevention. I hope you will get involved where you can and wear purple to recognize Family Violence Prevention Month. You can also show support on social media with posts and pictures using the hashtag #wheretoturn and #gopurpleab.

Thank you again for keeping Albertans safe. I'm proud to work together with all members of this House to help make life better for our province's most vulnerable people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert to respond on behalf of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm thankful for the opportunity to raise the issue of family violence prevention here in this Legislature. Family violence is an immense challenge in Alberta

and in Canada. Family violence has devastated many lives. According to the Canadian Women's Foundation 74 per cent of Albertans know of women who have experienced sexual and physical violence and abuse, an obscene number showing how far spread this problem is, particularly because it's still underreported. Elder abuse is a real and growing threat in all of our communities. Disabled Albertans have always faced incredibly high rates of domestic violence, often resulting in death: lest we forget, Betty Anne Gagnon.

Family Violence Prevention Month is important; however, an awareness month and lapel ribbons are meaningless if we as decision-makers do not do the essential work necessary to prevent family violence. That work includes poverty reduction, fair wages, family support, adequate funding for social services. This month we can all spread awareness of how the many tragedies can be prevented and make sure that everyone knows about the supports for survivors of family violence. I hope that all Albertans can have an open conversation about what the root causes are and what we can do to prevent family violence and to support survivors. You don't support survivors by kicking them off supports, like this government is doing, in order to save money.

1:40

The statistics are staggering. In 2016 1,984 children and youth were victims of police-reported family violence; 13,896 Albertans were victims of police-reported intimate partner violence. The current supports and prevention programs in our province are not sufficient. In 2017-18 16,722 women, children, and seniors were turned away from shelters due to lack of capacity. We must continue to invest in prevention of family violence and support survivors.

I was very proud that our government invested significant resources in community-based safety programs, prevention services, and supports for people fleeing family violence and in action to address poverty through minimum wage increases and indexing of AISH benefits.

I hope this awareness month will shine a light on the crisis of family violence in Alberta. I want to give the province the promise on behalf of this NDP caucus: we will always stand with survivors, always; we will do everything in our capacity to make life better for all Albertans.

Thank you.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East would like to make a statement.

#### Women Parliamentarians' She Should Run Initiative

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues and I have a few core beliefs that we all agree on. We believe in helping a neighbour when they need it. We know the importance of teamwork, but we also know the importance of individuality and staying true to oneself. What's common in these beliefs is the belief that nobody should be restricted in the pursuit of their own goals. I know I believe that no one should be held back from opportunities because of who they are or where they came from. When someone decides to run for public office, who they are should be a strength rather than a hesitation when deciding if they should put their name on the ballot.

I am proud today to introduce the She Should Run campaign schools initiative to every member in this House. This publication is an initiative of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians,

which I serve as Alberta's chair. CWP works as part of the larger Commonwealth Parliamentary Association towards better representation of women in Legislatures across Canada and throughout the Commonwealth. The publication outlines a framework for regional, provincial, and national nonpartisan campaign schools for women. CWP shares a vision of women as equal partners in the Canadian Parliament and in provincial and territorial Legislatures while aiming to increase women's representation in government at every level.

While serving in this House, I have met so many women who should run, but they hesitate or doubt themselves when it comes time to run in a nomination or get involved in the political process. These women are capable and have experiences that would benefit this House and every level of government across the country. Mr. Speaker, she should run, not in spite of who she is but because of it. She should run because she is capable, qualified, and ready to lead.

I urge every member of this House to consider this initiative and share this publication with your constituents.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Budget 2019

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The following are from the UCP platform; they are promises they ran on, categorized into three pillars: getting Albertans back to work, standing up for Alberta, and making life better for Albertans. Sadly, so far we've lost 27,000 jobs. Not sure which Albertans are getting back to work.

Even before the budget was released, the UCP demonstrated who they were standing up for. Profitable corporations received a \$4.7 billion handout. Yes, Mr. Speaker, every government has choices, and this government is clearly making ones that support an elite group.

Now, how about making life better for Albertans? We know Albertans are still hurting. Due to the price shock and continued challenges in the oil and gas sector, many Albertans are still out of work. This is precisely the time when they need support. Significant cuts to affordable housing, education, and infrastructure mean Albertans of today and tomorrow will not have the services they need, quality education for their children, or jobs created through the government's investment in infrastructure. Seniors, members of the disability community, older children in care, and university students will suffer the most under this budget.

This austerity budget, like others around the world, hurts regular people and helps the elite few. When citizens are supported through public programs, they're able to live with dignity, support their families, and contribute to the larger society. Taking away these supports at a time when they are needed the most only makes things worse, Mr. Speaker. Far from making life better, the UCP government is making things worse.

### Lynn Davies

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the late Lynn Davies, who was a community leader in Strathcona county. Community leaders are critical to ensuring Albertan communities are vibrant, lively, and thriving. Lynn Davies' enormous contributions to Strathcona county had such a positive influence.

Lynn had a love for rugby, a passion he brought with him from his home nation of Wales when he arrived in Canada at the age of 22. He made a major impact on the sport in Strathcona county. He was an original team member of the Druids rugby club of Edmonton, founded in 1960, and a founder of the Sherwood Park

Outlaws rugby club, founded in 1990. Due to the leadership of Lynn and fellow Sherwood Park resident Larry Wall, these two teams would merge in 1996, permanently basing the Strathcona Druids Rugby Football Club in Sherwood Park.

Lynn was a tireless advocate for rugby and was instrumental in 1993 in securing rugby facilities in Sherwood Park, which are the Strathcona Druids' facilities today. In 2010 the clubhouse was renamed Lynn Davies rugby park.

Mr. Speaker, over five decades of community service through sport Lynn created a rugby park, established rugby teams, mentored countless players, and founded major Alberta-based rugby tournaments. Most importantly, Lynn left an indelible, warm imprint in the hearts and minds of Strathcona county residents and the Alberta rugby community at large.

Mr. Speaker, Lynn Davies exemplified community leadership. My thoughts and prayers go out to his immediate family: his wife, Lorna, and three children, Jason, Caroline, and Rhys. We will forever miss and always fondly remember Lynn.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has the call.

### Postsecondary Education Budget 2019-2020

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you wanted to design a plan to sabotage Alberta's long-term prosperity, it would be tough to do any better than this UCP budget. Its centerpiece is a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway, and we know that money has already been handed over to shareholders and banks and has not created a single job. In fact, more than 27,000 jobs have been lost under this Premier's watch.

That handout was paid in part by cutting funding to our postsecondary institutions and jacking up the tuition that students have to pay to go to school. Our universities are already openly discussing the possibility of staff layoffs and not fixing decaying buildings. For some students a 21 per cent tuition hike means they'll have to leave school carrying a far greater debt load. For others it will mean even dropping out before their degree is completed. For some Albertans, tragically, this wrong-headed move will mean that they'll never be able to go to postsecondary education. That is a loss for all of us because they are innovators, inventors, and talented workers that would have led to our prosperity in decades to come. In the memorable words of Professor Sale of the University of Alberta, this is the kneecapping of a generation.

On top of it all, the Minister of Advanced Education has been telling this House that kneecapping was something that some students even asked for. This is not true, Mr. Speaker. What Alberta's young adults want is an opportunity to reach their full potential and a government that is focused on helping them do that. This government, unfortunately, is throwing those opportunities away and endangering our long-term economic prosperity simply to hand out a failed \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, prior to proceeding to Oral Question Period, I just might like to note that, as you may have noticed, your Speaker is fully engaged in November this year. Any fines that are levied during the next month will be submittable to a men's mental health charity of your choice.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Support for Youth Transitioning out of Care

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, this Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout is hurting the most vulnerable. Last week we learned that the Premier will claw back financial support for former children in care from the age of 24 to 22. No explanation, a complete reversal of his caucus's position, an absolute betrayal. To the Premier. These young people have suffered more than we can imagine. We promised to care for them. Why is a corporate handout more important to you than the young adults for whom we are all responsible?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services is rising.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is prioritizing funding for children and families who are most vulnerable, which is why Children's Services saw an increase of 8.5 per cent in this budget year. Often the most important supports for these young people transitioning out of care are social and emotional. That's why we've maintained the mentorship program, increased the advancing futures program by \$1 million. I have to say that it's unfortunate that this is coming from the members opposite, who seriously underfunded basic supports for children and families in care.

**Ms Notley:** What this government is prioritizing is \$4.7 billion to wealthy corporations. We are talking about 500 young people, many living with trauma, addiction, and mental health issues. The Child and Youth Advocate says that this change will hurt young people who need more support, not less. Premier, these traumatized youth live most of their lives in the foster system, taken from their parents, separated from their siblings, and growing up in a revolving door of homes. At the same time that you are giving billions of dollars to corporations, you are putting these kids on the street. What is wrong with you?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last few months were provided to us as a ministry to look at how we deliver services across the province. What we saw in this particular program was a natural drop-off in support and financial assistance agreements once recipients turn 22. That's for a number of reasons. As the member opposite referenced, these cases are often extremely complex. It's also clear that many of these young adults should be transitioned to begin lifelong support services and mentoring relationships rather than continuing in the child intervention space. My ministry will continue to support young adults as they transition from children in protection into adulthood.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, this cruel and heartless decision is traumatizing an already traumatized group of people, and you should be ashamed. This weekend I heard directly from tearful and scared child support workers and the young adults for whom they care. They say that this is going to lead to homelessness and even suicide. This is an emergency. Will the Premier support our call for an emergency debate so that he can explain to this House why we can afford \$4.7 billion in a corporate handout but not \$10 million to protect these young people?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services has the call.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said time and time again, we will continue to support the most vulnerable children and families in our province. Given the importance of transitioning young adults out of care and into the adult system, the plan was for



caseworkers who have strong relationships with these vulnerable young people to work through the changes over the next number of months as they move from child intervention into adulthood. However, once again the members opposite chose to take to Twitter to play politics and increase fear and uncertainty amongst Albertans while sharing only a small portion of the facts. We will continue to focus on supporting the most . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Police Funding

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has also been in full, cold, heartless spin mode when it comes to police funding, but a reality check is in order: \$5 million to \$9 million cut from Edmonton police; \$13 million cut from Calgary police. This Premier is making police foot the bill for forensic testing, the very tests that solve murders and solve rapes. To the Premier: will he admit here and now that his corporate handout comes at a cost of the very safety of Albertans, that this means fewer officers in our community? Can he be honest just once?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the budget that we put forward. Albertans elected us to get our fiscal house in order, and that is what we are doing right now. In addition to that, we made police funding a priority. Not only are we increasing funding, but we're increasing funding to police to combat organized crime. We said last week that municipalities need to get their fiscal house in order and stop playing games with policing. Albertans want them to fund policing. We'd encourage municipalities to do the same.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, they are cutting more than \$80 million from police over four years in the two big cities alone. The folks over there are intentionally, in a calculated way misleading Albertans. The Premier needs to listen to the Calgary police chief. He says that this budget means, quote, a collective diminishment of capacity. He says that there's nothing left to cut but boots on the ground. Is the Premier calling Calgary's police chief a liar? If not, will he start telling the truth and reverse this minister's devastating cuts to police?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I've talked to Chief Neufeld, and I also made sure, when I talked to him, that I said clearly that he should talk to his mayor, ask his mayor to fund policing. The municipalities are the ones that set the funding levels for policing. In this budget we made tough decisions, but one of those decisions that we made was to make sure that we continued funding the two police grants that we have. They are fully funded. In addition to that, we found additional money to go after organized crime with additional funding for ALERT. It's time for municipalities to tighten their belts but to fund policing and end the pet projects.

**Ms Notley:** Well, the people over there are generating fake news. When faced with the truth of his cuts to police in Calgary, the Premier's spokesperson said it was, quote, LOLZ, and denied the funding relationship between the government and the city of Calgary, one that appears in the budget in black and white. LOLZ, Mr. Speaker. Are the Premier and his staff literally laughing out loud as they cut police funding to Calgary during a spike in gun violence?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, to go after illegals guns: that's why we found additional money for ALERT, to make sure we crack down on organized crime.

Mr. Speaker, we've invited all the members opposite to come hear about their legacy on crime. This week we're going to be in Rocky Mountain House to hear about the NDP legacy on rural crime. Will they or will they not come to hear about their record on rural crime? I think that the answer is going to be no, but I want to invite them one last time to come and hear about their record on rural crime.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Education Budget 2019-2020

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, this Premier promised to, quote, maintain or increase education funding, yet every single school board is grappling with deep cuts. No funding for 60,000 kids but \$4.7 billion for big corporations. Boards are forced to choose between firing teachers or jacking up fees on parents or both. Rocky View school district said that they got \$10 million less than what this Premier promised and now, quote, service levels will decrease, and class sizes will be impacted. To the Premier: why did he break yet another promise to Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. As promised during the election, we said that we were going to maintain education funding, and we are maintaining education funding. Every single student that crosses through our doors will be funded, as we said we would do. Promise made, promise kept. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have no problem hearing the question; however, I'm having significant difficulty hearing the answer.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? The member opposite should look up the term "shell game" because she is the queen of it. Elk Island public school district says that the cuts total more than \$9 million. Elk Island Catholic schools say that their cut is \$2.4 million. With increased enrolment and evolving student needs, Elk Island public says that it will have to make, quote, difficult choices, which means that they may have to fire teachers. This is the exact opposite of what this Premier promised in the last election. Premier, tell the truth. Why are you cutting funding to kids in school just so you can pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

2:00

**Member LaGrange:** Well, Mr. Speaker, over 98 per cent of the Education budget flows directly to the school authorities, who deliver the services to our students. By reallocating restrictive grant funding and eliminating reporting requirements, we have reduced red tape and provided school boards with the additional flexibility to meet their local priorities. Education remains a top priority. It will always remain a top priority for this government.

**Ms Notley:** I urge the minister to speak to school boards. St. Albert public says that they will have \$4.6 million less next year alone, all while more kids walk through the door. How can the minister not understand it? They say, quote: a funding cut of this size cannot be managed without adjusting staffing levels and classroom sizes. They will have to fire teachers and EAs. There is no choice. Mr. Speaker, the Premier can't pretend he wasn't briefed on this. Come clean: how many Alberta teachers are going to be fired because of this government's broken-promise budget?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We continue to invest \$8.223 billion in education every year. We invested that much last year. We're investing this much this year as well. Budget 2019 clearly highlights that. The NDP continue to smear and fear when, in fact, they were wrong on the nutrition program funding, they were wrong on enrolment growth funding, and they were wrong on the overall budget. We are maintaining . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The hon. Minister of Education was nearly finished her answer. I'm not sure if she has anything to respond with, but I certainly couldn't hear the end of it.

Go ahead if you would like.

**Member LaGrange:** Sure. I would just continue along to say that we are continuing to invest in education. It is a huge priority for us. Our boards have said continually that they want sustainable, predictable funding, and that's . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has the call.

#### **Support for Youth Transitioning out of Care** (continued)

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I had the pleasure of meeting an incredible young woman named Shyannah Sinclair. Shyannah grew up in government care and has overcome many, many obstacles. She has a four-year-old daughter and a plan she made years ago to finish school and pursue her career passions by the time she's 24. Now her future is in jeopardy because of this government's heartless cuts to the support and financial assistance agreement program. To the Premier: explain to Shyannah and 500 other young adults about to lose this critical support why you don't seem to care about their future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services has risen.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my previous response, we are committed to supporting those most vulnerable in our province instead of creating fear and uncertainty on social media, on Twitter, allowing these young people to work with their caseworkers to transition. Examples like this are exactly why we increased funding to the advancing futures program, which provides supports not only for postsecondary but also for living expenses while former children in care are accessing postsecondary education. We will continue to support these young people transitioning into adulthood.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, you need to listen to the young people who are talking to you. Their lives are at stake. This government willingly gave over \$4.7 billion to big corporations and boasted about it. I'm not sure why given that it hasn't created a single job. Then they snuck in the cuts to SFAA, and it was only after being grilled in estimates this week that the minister admitted she'd made this terrible, cruel cut. To the Premier: did you hide this cut because you knew just how awful it was?

**Ms Schulz:** In typical fashion of the member opposite, the over-the-top rhetoric is completely false. Mr. Speaker, this plan is certainly under way in advance of the next budget year. That's why caseworkers will be reaching out to these young adults who are transitioning out of the child intervention system and into adult programs. We also know that many of these young people in this

group will better receive supports in the adult programs that best meet their unique needs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, again. We're hearing from outreach workers and young people themselves that their lives are at stake. That is not fearmongering. That is fact. Thank you. Joining Shyannah and me this morning was long-time outreach worker Wallis Kendal. Wallis knows what he's talking about. He's a long-time outreach worker and said that one of his clients is putting off addictions treatment while figuring out how to deal with these cuts. Wallis said, and this is a quote: the only thing that changes a youth's future is knowing that they have a future. To the Premier: last chance; will you give these young adults a future and reverse these cruel cuts immediately?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to empower our front-line caseworkers to work to support young adults who are transitioning out of child intervention . . .

**Ms Notley:** There's no money for that. You gave it to Husky.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Schulz:** . . . and into adult services that better meet their needs.

Mr. Speaker, we're also working with community partners to identify how we can better support these young adults as they transition out of the system. I won't take lessons from the members opposite, who didn't even fully fund child intervention services. But I can tell you that we're doing the right thing. We are funding the encumbrance from last year to support vulnerable kids and families, and funding increases will remain for Children's Services over the next four years.

#### **Rural Health Care**

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of West Yellowhead we have several communities with fully functional hospitals, but due to the distance between communities these hospitals need to be able to service a population often much larger than the town itself. In 1966 the Whitecourt health centre opened, with the ability to service the then population of 2,200. Since that time the health centre is serving more than 10 times that initial population. To the Minister of Health: why has the town of Whitecourt not received an upgrade to the health centre or additional facilities since 1966?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the capacity challenges in Whitecourt and across the province as well. We're dealing with those challenges as best we can as a government given the fiscal mess we were left with after four years of the NDP. We've had to make some tough decisions on capital projects to slow the growth of debt which we leave to the next generation. There has been some investment and some upgrades to the Whitecourt health centre, including a new renal dialysis unit. Alberta Infrastructure's facility condition assessment report does rate the facility as being in good condition.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Given that the current lab system in the Whitecourt hospital is only on an

interim accreditation status and given the incredible lack of storage, meeting, and work space and given that we are all aware that our government must show fiscal restraint after 12 of the past 13 years of government not balancing the budget, how is the minister going to ensure that rural communities and their health needs are a priority for this government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health is rising.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. AHS has identified the lab as a priority in Whitecourt, and planning is under way for upgrades. As the member points out, there are unique challenges in delivering rural health care. We're increasing access to primary care by funding 30 new nurse practitioners, almost all of them outside of Edmonton and Calgary. We're also working with AHS to increase telehealth and other solutions for remote areas, including the most advanced model in Canada for on-scene treatment of heart attacks by paramedics.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Whitecourt was promised a new health centre as early as 1993 and again in 2012 and given that as I talk to many rural MLAs, I'm hearing similar stories of inadequate health service delivery and given that rural communities do contribute immensely to our provincial GDP and just want to have the services they require, what is the Minister of Health doing to ensure that rural communities receive comparable quality and access to health care as Albertans in Edmonton and Calgary?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The basic challenges in health care are the same across the province, primary care and system capacity. We're going to keep investing in primary care through the nurse practitioners, that I mentioned, and other initiatives as well like increasing access to midwifery, and we're going to increase system capacity by adding new continuing care beds through the successful ASLI partnership with our continuing care providers. The AHS review as well is going to help find savings to reinvest in increasing capacity. A great example of the kind of change we need is our recent decision to expand the scope of practice for LPNs.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Buffalo has a question.

2:10

### Municipal Funding

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A little over an hour ago the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton and the presidents of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Rural Municipalities of Alberta issued a statement expressing deep concern with changes to their funding under the UCP government's budget. I'll table that statement shortly. They state that their "funding will grow at only half the rate of provincial revenue each year." Bluntly, they say that municipalities will be left behind. To the minister: why are you leaving municipalities in the dust while racing ahead with your – wait for it – \$4.7 billion giveaway to big corporations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Let me be clear. We have been working very closely with our municipal partners to come forward with a framework that they have been asking for

years. We will not at any point in time take instruction from these members opposite. They left us – I think the question they should be asking themselves is: why is it that after four years we are now dealing with more than \$60 billion in debt? I know that the members opposite have no idea how to make money, but they know how to spend money.

**Member Ceci:** Given that we'll get to the framework in a second and given that we already know that this government snuck a clause into their omnibus legislation, Bill 20, that could very well kill the green line LRT in Calgary and the valley line LRT in Edmonton and given that the Premier had previously committed to both of these projects but now seems to be backing away from that commitment, to the Premier or the minister: commit here and now that both LRT lines will be built and opened on time. If you won't commit, what are you hiding?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, part of our election campaign was to commit to the funding committed for the Calgary and Edmonton LRTs. That's \$1.53 billion for Calgary, \$1.47 billion for Edmonton. If the hon. member simply checks a clause of the legislation that's before the House right now, he will realize that that's a promise made and a promise kept.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo will know he has another question, so I'm sure he's happy to ask it now.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker. Given that Barry Morishita, the AUMA president, said that his organization is "extremely disappointed" that a UCP election promise was broken with the repeal of the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act and given that Edmonton's mayor, Don Iveson, says that the role of municipalities has been lessened by this government as a result of the fiscal framework changes, to the minister. You continue to disrespect our municipal leaders and countless other Alberta organizations. Is it true that you have to be a really big, profitable organization to get any time with this government?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to read a quote from the AUMA president: our members have already been doing a lot to help the province meet its goals, and this budget is the impetus for the next stage of that particular work. A second quote from the AUMA president: the government of Alberta's announcement of a new local government fiscal framework represents continued support and collaboration between the province and the municipalities. I think what is hard for the members opposite to understand is that we are not going to continue to fund the infrastructure of tomorrow if we embark on the multibillion-dollar ...

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-North West.

### Postsecondary Education Budget 2019-2020

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The president of MacEwan University said last week about this UCP's terrible postsecondary budget, and I quote: it's certainly the largest in-year reduction to the budget I've ever seen; with these levels of reduction to our funding, we will have to reduce our staff levels. Some reports indicate that a hundred or more positions will be lost at MacEwan alone. Can the Minister of Advanced Education please explain to students at MacEwan why there's no money for professors but there are billions available for big corporations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're just in the beginning of working with our students and postsecondary leaders to fundamentally transform postsecondary funding in the province of Alberta. The current model that we have is, quite frankly, quite antiquated and outdated. Our institutions deserve much more clarity and predictability in terms of funding from government. It's something that I know our institutions have been asking for and that our students have been asking for as well, and I believe we have the opportunity now to correct that problem.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you. Well, you know, given that funding postsecondary education is neither antiquated nor inappropriate and given that in addition to hiking tuition and slashing funding, this minister is also removing 100 per cent of MacEwan's infrastructure maintenance, can the minister please explain to students at MacEwan why there's no money to replace aging buildings on campus but billions available for big corporations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think, as I already stated in this House, the capital maintenance and renewal budget is suspended for this year and this year alone. That budget will come back online in subsequent years so that our institutions have the funding that they need in order to continue on with capital maintenance and renewal programs, that are important for their individual institutions.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just wants to gloss over the problem. Over the last 15 years we have had a 106 per cent increase in funding to our institutions while enrolment has only increased at 21 per cent. It's not sustainable. We need a better way.

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, I mean, given that funding postsecondary education is not glossing over postsecondary education and given that the minister sat in cabinet while it was agreed to dole out billions for a no-jobs corporate handout but couldn't even bother to speak up for something as petty as adding interest to student loans or fixing buildings in our universities, to the minister: why did you not speak up for our postsecondary students? Or did the Premier simply not listen to you?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is mistaken. I didn't say that funding is glossing over; I said that he and the members opposite were glossing over the problems. They avoided dealing with the problem. They didn't want to address it at all, which is why we have to address the problem now. Under their leadership we saw a postsecondary system that is rudderless, that is driving costs through the roof. It costs us \$36,000 per student compared to B.C., which is \$31,000, and \$21,000 in Ontario. He wants to quote the president of Grant MacEwan. I'll quote the former president of Grant MacEwan, who said that the ongoing tuition freeze is like being stoned to death with popcorn.

#### Public Safety and Justice Administration

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, my constituents have been concerned about the increase in violence in northeast Calgary for some time. At the same time, we have seen the city of Calgary cut back on funding to the police, and residents of my community are concerned there will be fewer police officers on the street. Can the Justice minister tell this House what steps are being taken to address any budgetary constraints while ensuring that my constituents have a justice system that protects victims and prosecutes criminals?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we were shocked at the neglect in the justice system when we came to office. Programs like MS-DOS are being used in the justice system, a program developed in 1981, when I was two years old. We still use fax machines as one of the most efficient ways – let me say that again; one of the most efficient ways – to file documents in the justice system. It is simply shocking. We're making a historic investment to update our courts. Also, the 25 prosecutors that the NDP promised weren't there. We have to hire that backlog and then hire 50 more prosecutors.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that I have heard from my responsible and legal firearms owners that they are worried about comments made by a member of city council, who has expressed his desire to ban handguns in the city of Calgary, and given that the vast majority of crimes are committed with illegal guns, many of which are smuggled from the United States, can the minister tell the Assembly what steps our government is taking to protect legal firearms owners while prosecuting criminals?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we need to crack down on illegal guns in Alberta. That's why we've increased funding to the Alberta law enforcement response teams. They've done amazing work getting guns and drugs off the street and cracking down on crime. They work in collaboration with our local law enforcement officials. I'm proud of the work the Alberta law enforcement response teams do. That's why even in these tough times we found additional money for policing, to go after organized crime, and to get those illegal guns off our streets.

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Calgary has seen property crime increase, especially around the new drug consumption sites, and given that these kinds of crimes erode people's trust in society and in the government, can the Justice minister tell the Assembly what this government is doing to ensure that every Albertan feels safe and secure?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, public safety is the foundation of our democracy. While I have the honour to serve in this role, I will not relent in speaking up for law-abiding Albertans. Also, we continue to go out and talk to Albertans across this province about their frustrations with the justice system. I will continue to be their voice to make sure that we bring reasonable steps forward. Their voice is resulting in new policies here that will keep Albertans safe.

#### Film and Television Industry Support

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's film industry is speaking out against this UCP government's budget. Local producers are warning that cuts to the screen-based production grants will force productions to leave our province. Last week HGTV productions announced that they will be moving to British Columbia, after operating in Alberta for over 37 years, because this UCP government misled Albertans about diversifying the economy. Can the minister of economic development and trade clarify why she's turning her back on the film industry just to pursue a no-jobs corporate handout?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government committed to implementing a filming tax credit in our election platform. We committed to that. A tax credit provides long-term stability and will help to attract large-scale productions. Converting the screen production grant into a tax credit brings us more in line with the incentives offered by other provinces.

**Mr. Bilous:** You're screwing up both.

Given that one film producer recently went as far as to say that this UCP budget will kill the film industry in Alberta and given that, unlike here in Alberta, the provincial governments of Manitoba and B.C. are actually working to grow and support their film industries, can the minister please tell this House when she will start working to grow Alberta's film industry and stop handing Alberta jobs to Manitoba and B.C.?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are maintaining \$45 million in funding while transitioning from the screen production grant to the film and television tax credit. The proposed film and television tax credit will be part of our commitment to grow Alberta's cultural industries by 25 per cent over the next decade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Given that the Alberta film industry generates returns of \$4.50 for every dollar invested and given that in 2017 film and TV productions created 5,350 direct and spinoff full-time jobs, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: I would have thought supporting a diversified economy would be your job, but if you won't do that, would you please stop destroying the industries that we already have here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The previous \$45 million screen-based production grant program was severely mismanaged by the NDP. In fact, former NDP MLA Craig Coolahan said that the NDP screwed it up. After evaluating the program, we learned that \$92 million had already been committed in screen-based grants by the NDP, \$21 million of which was committed to mere days before the election call.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Lethbridge-West.

#### Public Service Pension Fund Administration

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of Finance confirm whether he is abolishing joint governance for the special forces pension plan that covers police officers?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we are working to strengthen our pension plans in this province. We are taking concrete moves to eliminate redundancies and improve efficiencies. This move will strengthen pensions. It will strengthen and reduce risk for pension holders, and it will return value for both pension holders and Albertans.

**Ms Phillips:** Sounds like a yes.

Given that the Alberta teachers' retirement fund has been jointly governed since 1939 and given that this minister gave his word in estimates that he would produce the business case prepared by Treasury Board and the business case prepared by AIMCo that support his decision to move the ATRF into AIMCo, will the minister confirm that he will provide these documents to this House and to the boards of ATRF, LAPP, special forces plan, and PSPP?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we will provide the business case that we've used to make these decisions, but what's really important here is that we are taking, again, concrete moves that will improve and strengthen pensions, that will reduce risk for pension holders, that will reduce costs for Albertans. The previous government did not pay attention to finding efficiencies, reducing risk. They were a government that brought additional risk onto Albertans with virtually every move they made. We will not make that mistake.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the minister just now didn't commit to sharing a Treasury Board and Finance business case, only from AIMCo, and given that this government has made a number of partisan and ideological moves under the guise of professional public service, will the Minister of Finance also produce to this House the written professional advice he has received from Treasury Board and Finance officials regarding repealing joint governance for the various pension funds paid into by teachers, firefighters, police, nurses, municipal workers, corrections officers, and many, many more; in all, a quarter of a million Albertans?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, we are making moves that will improve the returns for pension holders in this province. We are making moves that will reduce the risk for Albertans and pension holders. We are making moves that will bring fiscal responsibility to this province. Albertans elected this government to bring this province to balance, to manage its resources responsibly. That is what we're doing. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has the call.

#### Community Grant Programs

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School parent councils, community groups, and other local nonprofits benefit greatly from access to various grants under the community facility enhancement program and community initiatives program. These programs, funded primarily from lottery and gaming proceeds, ensure that these all-important organizations can complement community grassroots fundraising to ensure their ability to undertake meaningful and impactful projects in their communities. To the minister: will CFEP and CIP continue to be funded by lottery funds, and will such funds continue to be segregated from general revenues?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The lottery fund is being moved into the general revenue, and lottery dollars will actually continue to flow through CIP and CFEP funds. We're continuing to invest as always into the arts and culture and into communities, and the process that you actually apply with will continue to be the same. Organizations that are conducting charitable casino events will still receive 15 per cent of the proceeds generated from slot machines in charitable casinos.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans rejected the overspending ways of a one-term NDP government and given that Albertans embraced this government's compassionate but responsible leadership and given that this government recognizes that the entrepreneurial and volunteer spirit of Albertans flows

freely into the nonprofit sector, can the minister inform Albertans on how this government will continue to strengthen and expand those partnerships with lean, mean, and passionate community and nonprofit groups in building community capacity and an enviable civil society? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Hon. members, I know that I usually have a hard time hearing the answer, but in this case I actually had a hard time hearing the question, if you can believe it.

The hon. minister for culture has the call.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Me too.

I was going to say that the ministry continues. What we want to do is be able to elevate nonprofits by strengthening their management and operational capacities. We have this amazing department. They support facilitation and training and leadership and skill development. In fact, we were really honoured this last week to be able to put some dollars towards a really, really great group of people. It's called Free Footie. You might know who they are. This funding actually goes towards helping especially new Canadians and refugee children.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the community facility enhancement program and community initiative program are effective, impactful, and generally well leveraged against private donor funding, which the members opposite tried to send out of this province, and given that the recent budget focuses on balancing fiscal prudence with compassionate investment and given that funding stability and predictability are essential in building community capacity, expertise, and impact, can the minister further share her long-range vision for these partnerships and the future of these granting programs so that I may share this with my constituents in Calgary-Fish Creek?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of culture and multiculturalism.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, and thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to be able to dispel some of the fear and the concerns that are going on. As per usual, people will be able to apply for these funds as they have been before. A lot of the not-for-profits were caught up in a lot of bureaucratic red tape, so we've been really, really fortunate to be able to change that to e-transfer. It's a difference of sometimes six months in getting dollars into particular funds and making sure that we're building capacity right away.

Again, in the summer we were able to work with Ken Goosen – he's the producer of GlobalFest – who works with vulnerable children. Our community is really happy and honoured to work with these folks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

### Indigenous Relations Budget 2019-2020

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This budget is deeply unfair to the indigenous people of Alberta. The Ministry of Indigenous Relations will oversee a 36 per cent cut to supports and services, and this government has undertaken this cut while touting a \$4.5 billion corporate giveaway that hasn't created a single job. Can the Minister of Indigenous Relations please explain why Alberta's indigenous people are being asked to do more with less and to pay for a jobless corporate giveaway?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government who's working so hard to build a relationship with

indigenous communities all across this province. I was proud to sit with the Premier when he brought leaders from every indigenous community across the province to Government House at the beginning of his mandate to have what was really a historical meeting, that unfortunately the NDP had stopped. I assure you that our government will continue to work hard to build our partnerships with indigenous communities all across this province to make sure that they can share in our joint prosperity.

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that in black and white on page 144 the fiscal plan shows the \$4.7 billion giveaway and given that this government eliminated the indigenous climate leadership program, which has been accessed by all 48 First Nations and all eight Métis settlements, can the Minister of Indigenous Relations explain why he's eliminating this program, which provided a clear reflection of indigenous values on the environment? Is it just so that you can pay for the jobless corporate tax giveaway that you're championing?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we heard clearly from indigenous communities all across the province that they want to be partners with us in prosperity. That's why we started the indigenous opportunities corporation. We're proud of that. In fact, what I've heard from indigenous leadership is that they're happy that the NDP government is gone now and that there is a government currently in power inside Alberta that is working toward shared prosperity, standing up for our energy industry. One thing I heard clearly from many chiefs is how disappointed they were in the former government, who did not stand up for our energy industry and did not stand up for joint prosperity, in fact even voted against pipelines.

**Mr. Feehan:** Mr. Speaker, given that we also know that the indigenous housing capital program has been eliminated and given that, as my colleagues have pointed out, supports for indigenous children in care are also being cut off earlier and given that while the minister continues to offer buzzwords and platitudes with no real action, funding cuts have eliminated programs and reduced supports in areas where we need the most support, can you please explain why it seems that indigenous people are among those paying for your failed corporate giveaway experiment?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that has an indigenous affairs minister like we do, one who is completely dedicated to working with indigenous communities across the province. He's done an excellent job. Our government is proud of him. He's travelled north to south, east to west to meet with indigenous communities from all across this province, working towards joint prosperity.

I see the hon. member has not bothered to answer for why he stopped having those joint meetings with the indigenous communities across the province, and our government had to restart them. The reality is this. We're proud of our indigenous affairs minister. We'll continue to work towards building our relationship with indigenous communities all across this province.

### Marshall House Emergency Shelter in Fort McMurray

**Ms Renaud:** The Marshall House emergency shelter in Fort McMurray has been closed by the Minister of Community and Social Services. This comes on top of the government's cancellation of rent supplements, which will mean a cold winter for many Wood Buffalo residents. Marshall House is the only shelter in the area that will take people who are intoxicated, and now those struggling individuals have nowhere to go. To the minister: why would a government claiming to care about the opioid epidemic push addicts into the streets while giving corporations a \$4.7 billion gift?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government takes helping Albertans seriously, and we are rolling out a comprehensive mental health and addiction strategy that includes people who are suffering from homelessness. As of this morning we announced that we're appointing a new advisory committee. We're rolling out our \$140 million commitment. That will include helping people who are struggling in homeless shelters and other places. We are taking a comprehensive approach in attacking this issue.

**Ms Renaud:** The gymnastics to not answer a question are unreal.

Given that there was not enough capacity at the Salvation Army facility in Fort McMurray to house all those in need and given that the Salvation Army will only accept residents after they sober up, to the Minister of Community and Social Services: why are you pushing addicts onto the street in Fort McMurray at the coldest point in the winter? Is your solution to the opioid crisis to simply hope that addicts freeze to death?

**The Speaker:** The Member for St. Albert will know that we are well past question 4, so preambles are not allowed.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I just want to say that this government is committed to helping and serving the most vulnerable in our province, and that includes those who are experiencing homelessness. In regard to the Marshall House, it had been operating significantly under capacity, and the savings that we're going to achieve from closing that down are going to be consolidated with the Salvation Army. We are going to be increasing funding for the Salvation Army.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that the government doesn't seem to hear the question – Marshall House has capacity for a hundred beds; the Salvation Army does not accept people until they're sober; the two are different – why are you closing capacity in Fort McMurray and tossing people out in the winter?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear in my answer. We are expanding capacity with the Salvation Army. The Marshall House was operating quite a bit, significantly, under capacity, which is why we made the fiscally responsible decision to shut that down, consolidate services, and expand capacity with the Salvation Army.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

#### Infrastructure Project Management

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We owe it to the hard-working people of this province to ensure that their tax dollars are spent in an effective and transparent way, especially when it comes to investing in infrastructure projects that better our province for everyone. To the Minister of Infrastructure: what is your ministry doing to ensure that dollars are invested and projects are completed in the most effective way possible?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, having worked on major projects in my previous life, I know that projects can easily slip sideways unless they are properly planned and executed. That's why I'm proactively monitoring the construction of various projects across the province to ensure that contractors deliver on their contractual commitments to complete projects on time, on budget, safely, and with a high degree of quality. For new projects, I will ensure that the scope is sufficiently completed before we invite bids.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Minister. Given that finding the right people for the right project is a critical part of the procurement process and further given that infrastructural investment must be built to last and that these projects should employ Alberta businesses first and help get Albertans back to work, how is this ministry balancing quality and cost-efficiency throughout the procurement process for publicly funded projects?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, we will take the ideological lens out of the decision-making process and focus on what is best and how best we can deliver value for Albertans. As promised in our campaign platform, we are looking at alternative procurement and alternative financing for various projects, and we will carefully review each project on its own merit. We will look at public-private partnerships to deliver high-quality projects built fast, on time, and on budget and also include innovation in the upfront design.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Minister. Given that we know public projects can cost the taxpayer more than initially invested when they are poorly planned and poorly executed and given that we must find ways to cut red tape in order to invest public funds directly into projects rather than into feeding bureaucracy, how is this same ministry cutting red tape and ensuring proper stewardship of public investment in these projects?

2:40

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, during the spring election Albertans elected our government to restore fiscal balance and get Albertans back to work, so red tape reduction is very important for our government and my department. Recently, for example, we updated the policy to remove a requirement for a new appraisal on properties to be sold that are within 15 per cent of the last external appraisal. That itself will save thousands of dollars for Albertans. A lot more work is being done in the background, and I hope to share that in the near future.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will move to the rest of the daily Routine.

#### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-North would like to make a statement.

#### Junior Achievement

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November is Financial Literacy Month. Throughout November organizations and individuals from across the country are encouraged to host and participate in events and share resources aimed at helping Canadians learn how to manage their personal finances successfully. Junior Achievement is an essential program which supports entrepreneur education and promotes skills and business leadership in our young people. We are lucky enough to have a delegation from Junior Achievement here today to assist MLAs in expanding their programs to their respective ridings.

Entrepreneurship and business acumen are difficult to teach in the classroom setting, and this program has amazing success. Generally speaking, these are skills that are best developed through mentorship arrangements. Junior Achievement is committed to inspire and prepare youth to succeed in a global economy. Financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship give students the skills and the confidence they need to become the leaders of tomorrow. Junior Achievement programs produce more financially

literate young people who grow up to save more and borrow less than the average Canadian.

I used to be a volunteer with Junior Achievement during my time at Imperial Oil. As a volunteer I saw students learning the value of self-confidence and of self-investment in building a successful future. Junior Achievement does a great job of utilizing the particular skill set of their volunteers to teach youth about real-world business opportunities.

Junior Achievement contributes to all Albertans when it inspires young people to become future business leaders. Mr. Speaker, our province prides itself on being a hot spot for innovation and entrepreneurship, and Junior Achievement exemplifies these values.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has a statement.

#### **New High School in Southeast Edmonton**

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, through this House, I would like to mention that during the Education committee estimates held on October 29, 2019, there was not much hope when I asked the Education minister a question about a much-needed high school in my constituency of Edmonton-Meadows. Three days later an announcement was made, on November 1, 2019, by the current UCP government to fund 15 new schools across the province, out of which there are four new future schools in Edmonton.

First of all, I would like to thank the Minister of Education and the government for this announcement and for considering the urgent need for a high school in the Edmonton-Meadows riding, which has more than the average population in any other riding across the city and is growing at a very fast pace.

Currently the design funding has been allocated for the development of this high school. But the need for a high school in the Meadows area was identified as a top priority by EPSB in its three-year capital plan 2020-2023 and with legitimate concerns that the public division will be out of high school space if the new school is not built by 2022. The cost of building was estimated at \$79 million by EPSB and would allow 1,800 students to attend high school near their homes.

As every school board struggles to deal with provincial cuts to pay for this government's \$4.7 billion handout, my constituents need to know the detailed plan of how and when this school will be built and how they plan to fill this school with teachers and guarantee that every student has the resources they need to succeed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

#### **Federal Policies and East-west Relations**

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 21 the people of Canada spoke in a result that had Liberals winning a minority government while losing the popular vote. In Alberta and Saskatchewan the Liberals were completely shut out, not winning a single riding, with Conservatives obtaining a huge majority of those votes.

But in order to win this election, Justin Trudeau pitted east against west. He created an inaccurate narrative to cloud opinions on Canada's resource sectors, becoming the first Prime Minister to run on a platform to purposely divide the country. Since the election, Mr. Trudeau has made comments about mending fences with the west and has indicated that TMX will be a priority for his government, but he still holds to bills C-69 and C-48, that restrict

Alberta's access to global markets and severely limit our ability to attract investment.

In the midst of a smokescreen that was created by the Liberals during the election, many tax changes were being contemplated such as increasing the carbon tax, increasing capital gains taxes, introducing inheritance taxes, and taxing homeowners with the sale of their primary residences. These proposed changes will punish Canadians and harm the economy at a time when some economists are warning of recessionary pressures. As Alberta's economy suffers, so does our ability to contribute to Confederation.

If this federal government is serious about repairing the fragile relationship with the west, they should start by slowing down and listening to the west. There is no need to appoint a liaison to advise the Prime Minister on our issue. Alberta already has a very capable person who spent hundreds of hours in a blue pickup truck criss-crossing the province listening to everyday Albertans. I suggest the Prime Minister listen to him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

#### **Budget 2019 and Government Accountability**

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There used to be a time when prairie conservatives believed in personal responsibility. It is a sad spectacle to see this government abandon that philosophy. Every day we are seeing people's lives made worse by this government's \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. But for every problem this government has caused, they've got someone else to blame.

This government is lying about education funding. Now classrooms are getting crowded, bus rides getting longer, and kids with complex needs are losing their EAs. The Education minister says: blame your school district.

This government is lying about police funding even as rural and urban communities struggle with crime. The chiefs of police in Edmonton and Calgary both say that the province raided their budgets. The Justice minister: well, he says to blame your mayor.

Then there's this Premier. He recently gathered up his entire communications team to help him go take credit for the opening of a new McDonald's that was being built even before the election. That's got to be a first for an Alberta Premier. Earlier this year the Premier was standing in EnCana place in Calgary when he unveiled his \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. How's that for irony, Mr. Speaker? EnCana was happy to take hundreds of millions of dollars from Alberta taxpayers before moving their operations to another country. Husky was just as happy to receive tens of millions from our province before laying off their workers. Once again, this Premier is trying to shift the blame. Earlier in his career this Premier used to denounce bracket creep as an insidious tax grab. Now, well, he writes them into his own budgets.

It's a pitiful sight, Mr. Speaker, to see a Premier and his cabinet so quick to blame others and so unwilling to take responsibility for their own actions, and it's a sad time for Alberta to see our province led by a cabinet who is unmoved by the cries of the most vulnerable in our society.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language**

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, while I appreciate that you are speaking about the government and not an individual, last week this Speaker provided caution with respect to the use of the word "lying." We've had significant discussion about using the word



around “misled,” but I provided very, very clear caution with respect to “lying.” You can rise, apologize, and withdraw your comments.

**Mr. Carson:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw my comments.

## 2:50 Family Violence Prevention Month

**Mr. Sigurdson:** November 1 was the beginning of Family Violence Prevention Month, and on Friday, to start the month, I attended the second annual Breakfast with the Guys fundraiser put on by the Rowan House Society. The Rowan House is a family shelter located in the foothills that works to provide families leading – edge care in domestic violence services. Currently there are over 350,000 cases of domestic violence in Canada per year. Breakfast with the Guys started last year as an educational seminar to help recognize the things we can do to bring awareness and help change the tide on domestic violence.

During the breakfast we heard from Mike Cameron, a Canadian writer, speaker, and philanthropist. Mike shared with a sold-out room the story of how his girlfriend was murdered by her ex-boyfriend in 2015. It was a courageous glimpse into a journey none of us would choose yet, in a sense, we’re all on. It provided an opportunity to reflect on a subject we desperately need to talk about, a reflection that we need to close the gap between who we wish to be and how we actually are behaving.

We need to constantly be aware that we all have a part to play when it comes to preventing domestic violence and abuse. Violence, bullying, and abuse are issues that should not stay behind closed doors. They are the responsibility of the whole community. The victims are people you know in your workplace, on your daughter’s sports team, around you when you are out with your friends. Together, through education and awareness, we can create a safer future for those who live with violence every day.

Today as a symbol of this important month of reflection I wear a purple ribbon and wear purple shoelaces in support of Rowan House’s shoelace initiative, a small symbol to help raise awareness. I hope we can all come together and show our support in their stand against bullying and abuse. We need to continue to raise the volume on this critical issue that affects so many families across all of our communities.

## Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately halt the policy decision to lower the age of eligibility for support and financial assistance agreements from 24 to 22 as this decision hurts young people transitioning out of care.

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a piece of correspondence I received from a rural educational assistant who tells me that she makes \$40,000 a year, and while she isn’t advocating for her pay to go up, she is advocating for significant increases to education funding to ensure that the kids who are doing without the educational support that they deserve get to have educational assistance in her rural riding.

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, I have a news release from today from the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton, AUMA president, and RMA president with regard to: Municipalities Need to Be Full Partners – A Statement on Bill 20. I have the requisite number of copies.

**The Speaker:** I noticed the Member for St. Albert trying to get my attention.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C, Summary for Policymakers.

## Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Minister LaGrange, Minister of Education, document undated, entitled Student Demographic Factors.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are points of order. The point of order raised by the Government House Leader at 2:06 has been withdrawn.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning on her notice of motion.

**Ms Sweet:** We withdrew both. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Sorry. There was just one point of order, at 2:06, which has now been withdrawn.

## Request for Emergency Debate

**The Speaker:** We are at the notice of motion under SO 30 for those following along at home.

## Support for Youth Transitioning out of Care

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today under Standing Order 30 on this urgent matter, being that this is the first opportunity for the Assembly to address the budget and policy decisions by this government. Members of this Assembly first became aware of the decision on Thursday, when during estimates the minister revealed that the age of eligibility for support and financial assistance agreements will be lowered from 24 to 22. In the days that followed, we heard from the community about the negative impacts that this would have on youth transitioning from care. We heard from youth, caseworkers, the office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Mr. Speaker, this decision will remove access to these supports to the tune of approximately 25 per cent of the youth currently eligible; 500 young adults will be cut off, 500 of our most vulnerable. This is urgent for many of them. This will put them into crisis mode, a mode that they spent their whole young lives in and out of, working to overcome. This is urgent because on Friday caseworkers, who had not been told in advance of this decision, began the heart-wrenching work of notifying their clients of this change. Also on Friday we heard from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate about their concerns with this plan, stating, “This will have long-term impacts.”

This is an urgent matter because once we start this ball rolling down the hill, we will not be able to stop it. It will simply be too late. Earlier we heard from the Minister of Community and Social Services about the importance of preventing family violence. Well, Mr. Speaker, these supports are part of that prevention. These youth have no natural supports, which is why they are in care. These

supports help them to break that cycle that leads to family violence, to make better choices, and to make life better for their children.

This government has a responsibility to these children, who they were the legal guardians for until they were 18, and this Assembly has a responsibility to hold this government to account. This decision was made without consultation with the very individuals who use this program and the population: these are youth themselves, their caseworkers, the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Where is the accountability? How can the people of this province trust this government? This government needs to immediately halt this decision before it's too late.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I implore you to rule that this is an urgent matter and is worthy of debate in this Assembly today. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I just want to be clear that this is an important issue to the government. I have a couple of brief points to make on the general topic which, I believe, speak to why there isn't an urgency to the debate.

First, Children's Services is prioritizing funding for vulnerable children and families. Second, what they saw was a natural drop-off in support and financial assistance agreements once recipients turned 22 as they progressed to adulthood and entered postsecondary and the workforce. As of April 1 around 480 adults with existing support and financial assistance agreements will be transitioned off payments and onto other government services as required. The program will continue to provide four years of assistance after adulthood is reached.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I would refer you to the sixth edition of *Beauchesne's*, page 113, point 387, which says:

The Standing Order is clear that the question [must] be specific and must require urgent consideration. It must deal with a matter within the administrative competence of the Government, and there must be no . . . reasonable opportunity for debate.

Page 113 of *Beauchesne's*, point 390, also states:

"Urgency" within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but means "urgency of debate", when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on [an earlier] enough [timeline] and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

In fact, our own standing order refers to this when it states, in Standing Order 30(7)(a), "The matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration."

In a ruling on November 6, 2018, Speaker Wanner noted the importance of this when he stated, "Furthermore, I must consider whether there are other avenues for debate in the Assembly on this subject matter." I note for you, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Children's Services appeared before the Standing Committee on Families and Communities for three hours Thursday last week, and the members opposite only asked two questions on this very topic in three hours. Perhaps they might be regretting now all their fruitless points of order, but that's not relevant to the moment.

In conclusion, at this time I fail to see how the opposition has met the requirement as set out in the parliamentary authorities.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the chair is prepared to rule on whether the request for leave for this motion to proceed on Standing Order 30(2) is merited. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has met the requirement of providing at least two hours' notice to the Speaker's office by providing the required notice, just barely, at 11:28 this morning.

The proposed motion reads as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately halt the policy decision to lower the age of eligibility for support and financial assistance agreements from 24 to 22 as this decision hurts young people transitioning out of care.

The relevant parliamentary authorities on the subject have been stated but are page 695 to 704 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, and *Beauchesne's* paragraphs 387 and 390.

3:00

I would like to start by noting that the request made by the member under Standing Order 30 should be in the form of a request to leave to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent importance. It should be in the form of a substantive motion since emergency debate does not entail a decision of the Assembly as set out in Standing Order 36. While I am often a stickler for the rules, this does not preclude our ability to continue in an emergency debate.

As stated by many Speakers in the past, including myself, the question of urgency under Standing Order 30 refers to whether there is urgency of debate, not whether an issue itself is important or urgent. My ruling referencing this point can be found on page 60 of *Alberta Hansard* from May 27, 2019. I would like to state that I, too, believe this matter is an important matter. Whether or not it is urgent for debate is still yet to be determined.

I would also refer members' attention to pages 698 and 699 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, which states that one of the criteria for determining whether a matter is truly an emergency is if it can be raised before the Assembly "within a reasonable time by other means." I think that today's question period was a perfect example, where this very issue was raised at question 1 and question 4 by the Official Opposition.

While there is no question that the issue raised by the Member for Edmonton-Manning is important, I also understand that it has been discussed as recently as last week at estimates for the Ministry of Children's Services on October 31. The issue could also be raised during the consideration of estimates that are forthcoming throughout the rest of this week or, additionally, at the upcoming debate on the appropriation bill that will in fact take place in the Legislative Assembly. I would also note that members have other opportunities to raise important issues such as during Oral Question Period or during Members' Statements.

I want to emphasize that the issue of funding for young people in care is certainly important, but I cannot find it to be a genuine emergency requiring immediate consideration as required by Standing Order 30(7). For this reason, leave is not granted, and the question shall not be put.

Hon. members, prior to proceeding to Orders of the Day, I did hear two electronic devices go off earlier during question period, certainly one in the neighbourhood of Calgary-East. Perhaps he would like to pay a fine to the Movember fund of the Speaker. Perhaps it wasn't him, but certainly it was in that general direction.

With that said, we are at Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

### Oil Sands and Fossil Fuels

508. Mr. Loewen moved on behalf of Ms Goodridge:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately demand the federal government

recognize the benefits Alberta's oil sands and other fossil fuels provide to the people of Canada in terms of economic growth, prosperity, and support for communities across Canada.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring forward Motion 508, a private member's motion, on behalf of the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of Motion 508. I think this is an important motion because while we've seen a lot more advocacy from our province, from grassroots campaigns to CEOs of the biggest integrated oil companies around, we still face a huge problem in this province.

Now, very recently Canada's 20th Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, visited Calgary and had a discussion at the U of C with Canada's 22nd Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. Mr. Chrétien referred to, quote, so-called western alienation and a so-called crisis on energy. End quote. How tone deaf, Madam Speaker. There are profound feelings of western alienation. There is an enormous crisis in our energy sector. But the former Prime Minister went on to say that Alberta is in its current predicament because of the, quote, tar sands.

Now, when the member was drafting this motion, Madam Speaker, there was some question about what the wording should be. They discussed changing the words "oil sands" for "energy sector" or "oil and gas" and a couple other iterations. I wanted to speak to the oil sands specifically because they represent not only 64 per cent of Canada's oil production, but they also seem to garner about a hundred per cent of the environmentalist scorn. For decades now incredibly aggressive campaigns from Greenpeace and other environmentalist organizations have slandered the oil sands. They have aggressively pursued an agenda of shutting down this employer of thousands that has created so much prosperity from coast to coast. They have unfairly maligned the great people of this province and the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche and her constituents in particular for developing the resources God blessed us with.

There's some truth to it when Chrétien says that the tar sands are the problem. The current opposition to getting a single pipeline built does stem from the ridiculous propaganda that the oil sands have been relentlessly subjected to over many years. That's why we need all the measures we've introduced, why we need our fight-back strategy and our energy war room, why we need our Energy minister to show up in Ottawa and testify against legislation they have brought in that has already de facto begun phasing out our oil sands, as our current Prime Minister put it, and why I think this motion is important. Ottawa needs to hear us loud and clear. We aren't going away quietly. We aren't going to let the Liberals from eastern Canada take away our livelihoods.

The other aspect that this motion addresses is the wealth and prosperity that the oil sands and fossil fuels generate for the country at large. We all know the stories of people across Canada who had lost their jobs and found hope and work in the oil patch. One of my favourite writers, Rex Murphy, tells it this way:

You will never read about it and you will never see it on the television set because it is a benign outcome of the fiendish oil industry. It was one of the great moments of Confederation that all people from all over Canada were summoned to the western provinces. People from provinces who had never intermingled before were working on the same project or allied projects. A renovation of Confederation at the citizen level takes place when a major project invites the brains and muscle of Canadians together at a common task and brings them in contact with each

other from people from all parts of the country. They learn by contact and common effort that this is what we share and that is what we have in common. Despite what you've heard, it is unity first and it is shared experience and it is common endeavour that constitutes the actual cement of a national feeling.

That's what the oil sands represent, Madam Speaker: the collaboration and the ingenuity of Canadians from all parts of the country building something great and developing the energy that the entire world relies on.

There are also tremendous revenues generated through taxation and royalties that flow into every region of this country from the oil sands. I think Mr. Murphy is correct to point out the dignity of work and the countless families that have been saved by finding work in the patch. Many Canadians know this to be true already, but sadly our federal government and our Prime Minister do not. We've seen the decline of our oil and gas sector hastened along by the terrible policy of the Trudeau Liberals. The Premier has pointed out that during the campaign Justin Trudeau went to Quebec and talked about fighting les grands pétroliers Albertains, the big oil companies in Alberta. Well, be it Syncrude, Suncor, CNRL, Husky, Imperial, or Nexen, I can tell you that they put food on the tables of thousands of Alberta families. They employ some of the brightest engineers, geologists, traders, and IT professionals around. They also employ pipefitters, welders, power engineers, and electricians. They live up to the highest labour and environmental standards anywhere on the planet.

3:10

This issue has come up many times in this House for debate, and we have seen other motions passed in support of our oil industry. But for the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche this is important to her, not only because it's personal for her and her constituents but because it is important that we do not relent in this fight against Ottawa. We must continue to stand up and speak strongly about the oil sands and what they actually represent to this country.

Cleaner energy sources cannot replace fossil fuels today, and they cannot replace fossil fuels tomorrow. It's a fact that there will be a demand for oil and gas products for decades to come. That's something environmentalists and Liberal politicians might want to ignore, but it doesn't make it any less true. So let's be clear. Inexpensive, abundant energy is what gives us the quality of life we take for granted, and the oil sands play an important role in ensuring the world has the energy it needs.

There's a sentiment that rings true to so many Albertans: why is Canada importing oil when we have the third-largest oil reserves on the planet, but we have no political will to get them to the market? Our oil trades at heavy discounts because of a political class in Ottawa that can't see past their short-term electoral interests. It's unthinkable that we continue to have to curtail our oil production because the infrastructure to get these products to market simply can't be built in the current political climate. Thousands of miles of pipelines safely criss-cross North America, transporting millions of barrels of oil, but as a result of a zealous campaign by environmental radicals, bad policy from government, and judicial activism, the capacity to move product from Alberta falls far short of what's needed.

Instead, companies are forced to ship oil much more dangerously by rail. The current situation is untenable for oil companies, who are pulling out in droves, for thousands of laid-off workers, and for everyday Albertans, who are sick and tired of transferring tremendous sums of money to Ottawa only to have Liberal politicians spit in their faces.

Let me be clear. This motion is about calling on Ottawa to recognize a simple fact and one on which I think every member of this House can agree: Canada is better off for having the oil sands.

I hope all hon. members will join me in supporting this motion. Let's send a strong message to Ottawa. Let's send a strong message to the Prime Minister. Let's send a strong message to Quebec and British Columbia. It is not just Alberta who is hurt by an absence of pipeline infrastructure. It is not by killing oil sands development that you will leave a greener planet for future generations. It is not by condemning Alberta's big oil companies that you will foster national unity. It's by acknowledging that this great achievement, some say a miracle, of extracting oil from what First Nations people once used to waterproof their canoes, has benefited every Canadian and must continue doing so.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Motion 508? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Motion 508. Let me begin by saying that we do recognize, we do know that Alberta's resource sector has been key to economic growth in this province, has been a key to economic growth in this country, has been a key for prosperity, for jobs right across this province and right across this country.

We can understand why the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche might need to bring this motion forward because I think she represents the constituency which is home to this industry, the biggest industry of our province. As the representative of that constituency I think she will need some assurance at times when we have lost almost 27,000 full-time jobs, that include 14,900 jobs from the resource sector, and we have not seen so far any progress on pipelines or on anything else that would get our industry back to work. We have not seen any supports from this government to this industry. So that's why, I guess, as the member from that constituency she will be concerned, and rightfully so. We are all concerned that since this government took power, we haven't seen any progress. We haven't seen any policies that will help our industry. If I talk about their rhetoric and political gamesmanship, they're really good at it, but they haven't done anything else.

We all hear about C-48, C-69. They talk about them here, they talk about them on Twitter, but the fact remains that on those two bills, it was our government, it was the then Premier and now Leader of the Opposition who made submissions, and those submissions were adopted by this government. They didn't make their own submission. They may have done it on Twitter, somewhere else, but actual submissions were put forward by the previous government and adopted by this government, which is a good thing because those submissions were well thought out and were submitted in consultation with the public service, industry, stakeholders. They were submitted with a view to making sure that our industry gets what they need. But they didn't do any submissions on those bills.

Similarly, when we were in government, the then Premier went coast to coast to build a case for our resource sector, for our Trans Mountain pipeline. When she started, it was only 4 in 10 Canadians who were supportive of TMX. With that campaign and with her leadership, with her advocacy, there were 7 in 10 Canadians who were supportive of that project. We have not seen anything from this government that they have done so far that would move support for that project. Instead, what they are doing: they are starting an energy war room with \$30 million of public money given to a failed UCP candidate to essentially troll people, to have a Twitter account and whatnot, which has not landed us access to new markets, which has not landed us any jobs, which has

not created capacity in pipelines. It's just a complete waste of public money.

The second thing. I think what this resource sector needs to acknowledge and what we need to acknowledge here is that we do have production capacity in our resource sector. We can produce more with even existing investments. I think the proof for that is that we had to curtail our production so that whatever we produce, we have the takeaway capacity to take that to the market. That clearly shows that we still have room to produce more with existing investment. The issue our industry is facing is takeaway capacity. We don't have access to new markets. We don't have capacity in our existing pipelines.

Seeing that as an issue, we worked with industry, we worked with the public service, and we came up with oil-by-rail contracts that would have moved 120,000 barrels per day more and would have kept economic activity going, kept production going. But they cancelled that. And not only didn't we get any benefit out of those contracts, but now Albertans are on the hook to pay \$1.5 billion as a penalty to cancel those oil-by-rail contracts, which was completely an ideological decision on the part of this government, because we entered into those contracts after a thorough consultation with industry.

3:20

Now they're saying that if some producer can arrange for their own oil by rail, they can produce more. They have left industry on their own. Instead of providing leadership, instead of providing some solutions, instead of taking steps to create more capacity, what we are seeing is the same bottleneck, and that's why we're losing jobs and we're losing investment in our resource sector.

Certainly, we need to acknowledge that this sector is important for jobs, for the well-being of all Albertans and Canadians, and we need to do things that will help us address the issues that are facing this sector. I think that earlier we heard about how the federal government needs to recognize that. We certainly believe that the federal government should recognize it's important and should retain the authority to build nation-building projects and be free of any provincial vetoes in doing so and for the supplies to pipelines running across provinces.

But I think the focus of the discussion this afternoon should be on the crisis that this province is facing. It concerns getting people back to work, and I think we haven't heard much from this government about that. Instead, with their policies, for instance, they said – and they told Albertans – that they will hand out a \$4.7 billion corporate gift to corporations and that somehow that will address the issues facing our resource sector. I think a couple of examples should be enough to make the case that this corporate handout is a complete failure. It's a complete disaster. It has not created the outcomes, it has not yielded the outcomes that Albertans were promised. Albertans were promised that by handing out this gift, there will be jobs and there will be new investments.

Let's talk about the resource sector. Two weeks ago we heard that Husky was laying off Albertans from its offices in Calgary, from its fields at a time when they have received \$233 million as a share of that \$4.7 billion handout. That's not fear and smear. It was reported all over. These are the facts. These numbers were included in their financials, that they got \$233 million from that handout, but we didn't see jobs coming back because of that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Motion 508? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise and speak to this motion and support Alberta's essential oil and gas

industry, that has led this province in economic growth and prosperity for decades and made us the envy of the world for our environmental standards, our human rights, our ethics and technology as well as our economy. Our UCP government has taken steps to restore investor confidence and bring back oil and gas jobs to Alberta. The oil and gas sector still provides jobs numbering in the tens of thousands when healthy and contributes millions of dollars to research and development as well as to diversify the economy through cutting-edge technology.

That is why this caucus, under the mandate of over a million Albertans, stood with our Premier to repeal the carbon tax as Bill 1. The carbon tax did nothing to reduce emissions and damaged Alberta's hydrocarbon job market. Increases to corporate taxes, burdensome regulations, and a failure to stand up for Alberta saw the level of uncertainty in the market reach such high levels that capital fled this province at an unprecedented rate, to the tune of billions of dollars. Today's activists fail to realize that the very bridges they stand on, the vehicles they drive, the houses they live in, and the very food they eat are only possible because of contributions from the oil and gas industry and the technology they provide, technology that provides energy in support of resource production, heating, and food.

Alberta is part of the global solution, not part of the problem. Where we succeed, we lead, and where we lead, others will follow. Not only do we produce our products to the highest environmental standards; we also reclaim lands through reforestation, carbon emission reduction, and technological advancement.

Wealthy climate activists utilize the benefits of our oil and gas ever more and every day as they use their private jets and yachts, eat and drink sumptuous meals fed, grown, irrigated, produced, and prepared with vehicles, tools, implements, and utensils made possible by this sector. They do this to an even greater degree than us average people, who drive to work and heat our homes just to earn a living and provide a home and opportunities for our children. Madam Speaker, how loud would their outcry be if these luxuries were taken away from them, or are these restrictions only meant for the rest of us? The hypocrisy of these activists is plain to see when they partake in the extreme usefulness of petroleum products as they drive gasoline-consuming vehicles or any vehicle with rubber tires to their protests, use cellphones, plastic and ink for their signs, their sunglasses, fabrics for their clothing, and on and on.

Alberta's oil and gas industry and its workers should be proud of our environmental standards. This province produces less than 1 per cent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, with more reductions being invested in every day. Other countries have no such standards, plans, or limits. China is building coal power plants at an alarming rate, with huge environmental impact. Alberta could help them and truly make a global difference by leading them to the highest levels of environmental technology and providing them with liquid natural gas and the technology for its power generation. Alberta can and should lead the world in its ethical generation of power through its oil and gas sector. This UCP government will not stand idly by while it is threatened by lies and exaggerations that slander one of the key economic engines in Canada. I will support this motion as we need to stand up and stand proud and tall for our oil and gas sector.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Motion 508? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I grew up with a deep respect for our oil and gas workers. My dad has built and maintained pipelines all across western Canada, including in

Alberta and Saskatchewan. He would go away for trips for weeks on end working on these projects. These projects are the veins that keep the lifeblood of the Canadian economy flowing. My dad has never complained. He has never asked for much. He understands and values the importance of hard work, and he passed those values on to my sister and I. These are values that I promised my constituents I would uphold and endeavour to demonstrate in my time as the MLA for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Madam Speaker, politics is becoming increasingly more polarized, and part of that is because of the inflammatory language used on social media that is then distributed to the masses in grand fashion. Now, I know we're not supposed to take what is said on Twitter seriously – and I try not to myself – but the fact of the matter is that social media and politics as we know it are inextricably linked. There is just so much misinformation out there. A few weeks ago I stumbled upon this tweet, and it, quite frankly, made my blood boil. Understanding my family's deep connection to the oil and gas sector, I think you and the members of this Assembly will probably understand why. The person who wrote this tweet is a vocal Alberta blogger and a supporter of the members opposite. She decided to weigh in on the federal election and tweeted out: "The reason Alberta is so Conservative is because it's full of a lot of dumb money. From a demographic perspective, this is largely a province of overpaid undereducated white guys. They vote accordingly."

Madam Speaker, political differences aside, this has to be one of the most disrespectful, offensive things that I've seen on Twitter, and given just how ugly Twitter can get, that's really saying something. This type of attitude, this slander of Alberta workers, particularly those in the energy sector: it's personal for me because I have a family who has worked hard to build the infrastructure and move the oil and gas that this blogger takes for granted. Those people are not "overpaid undereducated white guys." In fact, many of them are women. They're smart. They're hard-working. They do jobs that are demanding of their time, energy, and bodies in order to put food on the table. They spend weeks and months away from their families. They miss hockey games and dance recitals and spend birthdays in work camps, all to make our country's economy stronger and their families' lives a little easier.

With that said, Alberta is not "full of . . . dumb money." As a province, many Albertans have most certainly enjoyed sufficient prosperity over the years because of our bountiful natural resources, resources that are produced at the highest environmental standards, prosperity that we have willingly shared with the rest of Canada. Communities that rely on these resources and the activity created have benefited as well. The money that workers do take home to support their families absolutely is not frivolous. It's earned by hard work and intense labour, labour that most people don't even consider when they fill up their cars or turn on the heat.

3:30

The same blogger also struck a nerve with me when they made the outrageous assertion that women are disadvantaged by our energy sector because, quote, there are not a lot of young fathers that would stay home with their kids, especially in the conservative oil industry. Madam Speaker, I know many young fathers who make this incredibly hard decision to leave their families for weeks and months at a time to work to support their families. My uncle makes this choice, my dad has made this choice, and many young men will make this choice every day to keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table and even give their kids the best shot at life that they know how.

That's the true story of our energy workers, Madam Speaker, not this vilification that I see splattered all over social media and in op-

eds written by those who live multiple provinces away who think, I'm assuming, that their cars run on fairy dust, who, we can reasonably assume, have never seen the hardship of a recession or waved goodbye to a loved one as they leave for weeks on end.

For heaven's sake, I saw an article in the *Star* today that referred to the oil sands as the tar sands. It's amazing to me that this still happens. The version of reality, I guess, that these people spout, the version that leftist political parties have painted of our energy workers: that's not the version I know. I grew up understanding just how vital our energy sector was not only to my family but to our province as a whole. The most frightening thing about this attitude is its incessant and relentless focus on undermining Albertans and our contributions to Confederation due largely, in part, to our energy sector. It fuels the efforts being made by those not only within this country but around the world to land-lock our natural resources and to put an end to Alberta's industry as we know it.

I was sad to realize that not a single candidate outside of the Conservative Party of Canada had made an effort in the federal election to stand with our energy workers, people like those who are in my family. They had no plans for our economy or the Albertans that were struggling to hold down a steady job. Some of them expressed some sympathy for those experiencing hardship, but this fleeting, tone-deaf, lackadaisical response was the extent of their concern. In fact, many of these party leaders endorsed the idea of shutting down the oil sands entirely. That's a move that will leave hundreds of thousands of Albertans as well as workers across Canada jobless.

Madam Speaker, these contentious platitudes are discouraging. They frustrate me in ways that I cannot even begin to tell you in 10 minutes, but they also motivate me to keep fighting for what I know and what my government colleagues know is the right thing to do, to stand up for our energy sector, which is the most environmentally responsible and ethical energy sector of all major oil-producing countries. The world has been blessed with Canadian energy, and I am proud of it. I'm proud of our government for standing up for Canadian energy, and I'm proud of our government for standing with those workers. I'm proud of the hundreds of thousands of workers like members of my own family for being the driving force that gets our resources out of the ground and into pipelines so they can power the homes and cars of people around the nation.

I am proud of Canadian energy, and we should all be proud, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Motion 508? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure today to rise and speak in support of Motion 508:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately demand the federal government recognize the benefits Alberta's oil sands and other fossil fuels provide to the people of Canada in terms of economic growth, prosperity, and support for communities across Canada.

Madam Speaker, oil and gas, working together with our two other pillars, ag and forestry, have built this province for over 100 years. Currently our vital industry of oil and gas needs support more than ever given the leadership in Ottawa. The continual, endless undermining by our own Prime Minister needs to stop. It's illogical. It's foolish at a time the world demand for oil is growing, I understand, somewhere between 90 and 100 million barrels per day and growing. In the last few years we've seen America become self-sufficient, a leading exporter. We've seen many, many oil jurisdictions prosper, further human rights, further social programs, further their society. At the same time, the best producers in the world, Alberta oil and gas, have a federal government in their way.

Madam Speaker, you see, those of us on this side of the aisle understand the importance of a healthy economy and all the long-term benefits – economic, family, community, and social – that come when a province can compete on an equal footing in the international market. We understand the important role that our oil sands and other natural resources play in our economy, and we are going to ensure that those who depend on resource production and extraction continue to be able to feed their families.

Madam Speaker, it's only about six months ago since our campaign. I'm fortunate that it was my third one, but there are some parts of it I'll never forget: the two grown men who answered their doors in tears because of foreclosure and that kind of thing; the tens and tens of young men and women with the same story, who used to make \$100,000, \$120,000 working hard in an oil and gas or a construction business or a related business and now barely making ends meet at \$30,000 or \$40,000, just wanting to work hard and care for their families; 20 to 30 people on their way to North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas – even Argentina made that list; how sad, not working in Alberta – strong, trained, capable, important young Albertans that we may lose.

Madam Speaker, that's what's important to me. That's what's important to Cypress-Medicine Hat, way more than what we've seen over the last several years, when we've borne the burden of international celebrities who fly around the world, fly home for supper, and who seek to further their own careers by taking a dramatic, ill-informed stance against our industry while refusing to see the hypocrisy and the errors of their ways. We've endured social media campaigns aimed to demonize and demoralize our hard-working energy sector, that have stood by our provincial government and refused to defend our best interests at the federal level. As fair questions for all have clearly highlighted, a clear and American environmental oil and gas initiative spending tens and tens of millions of dollars to deliberately – deliberately – land-lock our oil and gas while they further their exports and their production: our federal leaders have fallen for it.

Madam Speaker, despite declining standards of living in our province and increased job losses, we watched as the previous government made no move to secure fleeing investment or secure pipeline proposals. It goes on and on, the companies that have pulled out of the oil sands: the Tridents; the Canadian company called Houston Oil & Gas, that just walked away from countless wells; the other companies in hardship; and of course, as a historian, as a Canadian, EnCana, a company that came from the roots of when the Canadian Pacific railroad was built across Canada. To take this huge risk, to do this huge thing in the nation building of Canada, they were given mineral rights, oil and gas rights. To see that legacy company move to Colorado at a time when world demand for oil and gas is growing is unfathomable. It's incomprehensible, and it shows how far offline our federal government is: fleeing investment, no pipelines built, money wasted and thrown away, and ensuring that shovels would never hit soil to provide that safe pipeline, efficient capacity that we need.

Madam Speaker, Albertans need to know that their voices are valued, yet we've continued to see legislation aimed at restricting and limiting our province's capacity to produce and market resources. Yeah, we can put it in a pipe and get it to the Lower Mainland; we just can't get it in a tanker. Maybe that pipeline will never be built.

Other provinces and our federal government worked against us at a time that we've been so willing to share prosperity, paying over \$600 billion in transfer and equalization payments, providing so many jobs and wealth to make Canada strong: unfathomable, Madam Speaker, incomprehensible, again when you consider how environmentally friendly we are, how safe we are, and the fact that

we all know that we're the best jurisdiction. We're scratching our heads, wondering why our leaders in Ottawa would seek to limit our ability to produce wealth and make the world a better place for all people and Canadians especially.

3:40

How can Albertans not feel excluded from our country's federation when we are governed by a group of individuals who would seek to physically block pipeline access for Alberta while continuing to allow foreign industry competitors to sail right up the St. Lawrence River, oil from Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, from our competitors, Russia as well, countries well known for human rights violations, antiwomen sentiment, histories of violence and severe discrimination towards minority groups? Madam Speaker, I think I saw today that the Saudi Arabia oil company is going to go public and become the most valuable company ever – ever – at a time young men and young women in Cypress-Medicine Hat can't get out the door to work. It's stupid.

It's hypocritical – hypocritical – of the federal government to attempt to stand on a moral platform of equality while allowing dictators to supply us with our basic resources. It's astounding and naive. There is literally human cost when you purchase products from totalitarian regimes throughout the globe. How can you champion freedom and humanity while financing and endorsing the persecution of minorities and women in these countries? You cannot have it both ways, Madam Speaker, and I think that that will become truly apparent in the next little while.

The development and growth of natural resource extraction in Alberta has brought new levels of prosperity to northern communities, who would otherwise have limited employment options. Madam Speaker, I'm not sure why I put "northern communities" in here because that is very, very true for Medicine Hat. We owe so much to the oil and gas industry.

Also, the indigenous people of this province have been left out of land and resource negotiations for decades, but it's through the development of infrastructure and pipelines that First Nations people will truly be able to profit, and so many of our good partners, fellow Albertans, and Canadians are showing their ability and their willingness to do exactly that. We have a moral obligation to work together as a province and empower First Nation communities and allow them to become equal partners in this potential success story.

Many organizations and resource extraction critics have long held the belief that indigenous peoples are inherently against industrial mining or oil sands projects, but of course we have seen time and time again First Nation people themselves and their leaders come forward to say that this is clearly not the case. They see our natural resources as gifts to be used for the care, for the growth of their communities and their people, for financial benefits of investment and jobs.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate your recognizing me and allowing me to express some thoughts here today on Motion 508. I've been listening very intently to all of the different speakers, and I've managed to make a few notes here and there, so hopefully I can get my thoughts in here in a brief amount of time. As you know, sometimes I can be a bit long-winded. Thankfully, I guess, there's only 10 minutes to speak here, and you can get me back down in my chair, right?

The overarching thing that I've been hearing here today is about how we can support our oil and gas workers. Of course, as you know, my background is in labour, and I'm all for good, high-

paying jobs with benefits, being treated with dignity and respect, making sure that work sites are as safe as they can possibly be. You know, as somebody who has spent some time on various different health and safety committees, I know that sometimes health and safety cannot be convenient and sometimes it's even not cheap, but it's necessary to make sure that we all get to come home to our loved ones each and every day. Again, just kind of keying in on some of the things we were talking about in supporting our workers.

I wholeheartedly agree with the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat about how our workers are not overpaid. You're absolutely correct; they're not overpaid. I don't believe they're overpaid. As a matter of fact, I think they're underpaid. So when I happen to see things like messing around with their overtime pay, I kind of struggle with that a little bit, how we're potentially setting up a possibility where these workers can then not get paid what they deserve. I do agree with you there.

I also heard the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who was talking about some workers that, you know, were trying to make it in around the \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year, and I do think that they should be paid more, so why did we do things like take away a statutory holiday? I don't think it's these kinds of things that help our case when we're trying to talk to the federal government about how they need to step up and back our industry.

I also did cue in on one other comment you made about hearing that word, "tar sands." You know, in my time that I spent on the Council of State Governments at the national level on behalf of the former economic development and trade minister, that was one of the biggest things I spent time on, trying to change that narrative. I would hear legislators down in the U.S. comment: oh, yeah, Alberta, yeah, that's where the tar sands are. It's like: whoa, whoa, whoa. We need to change that. I spent a considerable amount of time. I was actually starting to gain some ground there. There's certainly a lot more work. I know that just because something kind of looks like tar, it doesn't necessarily mean it's a bad thing.

I did notice a couple of comments from the Member for Central Peace-Notley around, you know: why are we importing oil? I agree. Why are we? Why aren't we refining our product right here in the province of Alberta, giving Alberta jobs and high-paying jobs, good benefits, and things like that? But then when I look back – I think the last refinery was built sometime in the late '80s. Why weren't decisions made from back then to be building refineries? We know those things aren't built in a couple of years. Our Redwater plant was a decade or more in the making. We're trying to drive this narrative, yet we've seen decisions in the past that are working against us in terms of how serious we are to support our workers.

I noticed that the Member for Lethbridge-East talked about how the government is very serious about trying to create jobs, yet we've seen almost 15,000 jobs lost within our energy sector. I start, again, talking about decisions that we've already made of giving a \$4.7 billion handout that hasn't created a job. We've changed labour laws. That is not creating jobs. I mean, we're down more than 27,000 in this province, so it makes it very, very difficult for us, Madam Speaker, to try to drive home this narrative about how important our industry is when we're kind of, you know, weakening our case, I guess, with some of these other decisions that we're making.

3:50

You know, it's not enough. I mean, we have to look at refineries, absolutely, but we can do other things. We can drive diversification like petrochemicals, things like that, which will create very, very good jobs here in the province. I've got a lot of friends that have spent a lot of time up in the mover of the motion's riding building those infrastructures, from scaffolders to electricians. I want to see

them working, but I want them, again, to be well paid, benefits, treated with dignity and respect, working on safe worksites so that we can get this infrastructure built.

You know, I guess I have to be very, very clear about one thing because I think there have been some sentiments that have been pointed in this direction that perhaps members in the opposition caucus support certain lines of thinking, I guess, shall we say, around provincial vetoes. Madam Speaker, that is quite frankly – I'll be honest – one of the silliest ideas I've ever heard. When we're talking about national infrastructure, that is left up to the federal government to decide. That's what they're there for. If we're not going to let them make those decisions, what's the point of having a federal government? I think it's very obvious that a decision like that is not supported at all by the Official Opposition, so hopefully we can maybe put that one to bed a little bit.

I guess, in the end, you know, we have to do what we can here in this province to support this industry. We need to get the product moving. We're certainly constrained by pipelines. We seem to have lots going south. We don't have any going in the other direction. But until then, we should be doing everything we can to get the product moving, and I think we had an opportunity to move some extra volume through rail, but, again, decisions that we've made in the past have been counterproductive in terms of trying to support that industry.

I'm maybe hoping that, going forward, if we're really true to where we're trying to go with this motion, advocating to the federal government about how important this industry is not only to Alberta but to Canada as a driver, we can't be making decisions which are counterproductive to driving that narrative. Hopefully, as we move forward, we might see some of those things change so that we absolutely come at it with a solid case, not only to the federal government but to the world. We have the best product here in Alberta. I think it should be desired by all, but that includes things like building refineries here, making sure that we're supporting our workers, not taking away their benefits, not taking away their pay, and certainly not – as we know, with a lot of workers in the energy sector, spouses tend to work in the public sector, so we don't want to be rolling wages back like that.

I'm happy to move forward in supporting this motion. I hope my other colleagues in the House will also support this moving forward.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will invite the Member for Central Peace-Notley to close debate.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In closing on this debate, I guess, obviously, this motion, Motion 508, is an important motion to really send a message to Ottawa and to our Prime Minister about how important the . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I apologize for interrupting you. There's been some confusion. There are three minutes left in debate before we close debate, so the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will try to keep it short. I had a lot to say about the importance of Alberta's oil and gas and the benefit that it brings to this country and to this nation and to this province and to the world, but it's been drawn to my attention that not everybody in this province, not everybody in this Legislature necessarily agrees that this oil and gas industry is an important oil and gas industry. It's been drawn to my attention that there is at least one member in this Legislative Assembly, from St. Albert, that seems to be able to tweet, and I quote, "So, who is responsible for putting up special interest group advertising in the [legislative]

windows?" Since when is defending Alberta oil and gas a special-interest group? Since when is defending the jobs of my constituents a special-interest group?

Madam Speaker, my constituents are hurting. Businesses are going bankrupt. My next-door neighbours moved this past weekend back to the east because they no longer had jobs in what was once a thriving community. It's not up to special-interest groups to defend; it's the people of Alberta that are rising to defend this province and its oil and its gas industry. It would be a great thing if the members of this Legislature all understood that it is part of our responsibility in this Legislature to defend the interests of all Albertans, especially in the oil and gas industry.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, there are two minutes left in this debate. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. I'm very proud to stand up in support of this motion from the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, moved by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie, to support our key industry. You know what? Every other part of Canada has a key industry that they support. I think of the auto industry in Ontario. I think of the dairy industry or aerospace in Quebec. I think of forestry in B.C. although Alberta is strong in that area, too. I think they're pretty unanimous in supporting their industries, and Alberta ought to be unanimous in supporting our key industry; not only that, we should support other provinces' key industry, and frankly, they should support ours because we are in it together, Madam Speaker.

This motion actually speaks to the heart of what makes Alberta great and, by extension, what makes Canada great. It is working together, making the most out of the gifts that we were given in this land. Nobody from Alberta put the oil and gas, other minerals, and resources here, but our job is to responsibly extract them, making the world a better place. In fact, we've come to the place where we actually lower emissions when the world uses more Alberta natural gas and oil as compared to other nations. We actually raise the world's average rate of responsibility, of human rights as compared to other oil-producing nations. We should be proud of this. We should be working together on it.

This motion really speaks to showing some pride in how it's responsibly extracting our resources by having high levels of human rights, high levels of safety and worker rights, that in Alberta we're showing the world how to do it properly. We invite everyone from across Canada and, really, around the world to support us on this because our responsible energy industry truly is raising the bar. I hope in this Legislature we all support that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order to 8(3) the mover of the motion has five minutes to close debate. The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Again, I think this is such an important motion to send a message to Ottawa and to our Prime Minister on the importance of the oil and gas sector and the oil sands not only just to Alberta but to all of Canada and all of Canadians. We know how much of an economic driver it is to our country, and obviously the importance is – one thing, I think, that struck me. Maybe I mentioned it before in the House. When Fort McMurray had suffered that horrible fire, they shut down the oil sands for, I think, two and a half weeks because of the fire. It actually made a noticeable difference in our GDP, the Canadian GDP. To think that two and a half weeks made a noticeable difference to the Canadian GDP, and we have people



running around suggesting we shut this down, that it should be phased out or something.

I think that, obviously, you know, it's insulting to our intelligence to think that somebody could think that that's good for Canada, to shut down this and to cause our oil and gas industry harm by slowing down pipelines and causing all Canadians to suffer from a lack of revenue by selling our products at reduced prices, a product that benefits all Canadians.

4:00

Now, we heard the members opposite talk about some things that were I guess I'll just say bizarre. I mean, we had the Member for Calgary-McCall spreading all sorts of misinformation and suggesting that we haven't done anything on this side of the House on bills C-48 and C-69. We know what happened during that time period when those ones were hitting Ottawa and Parliament. The NDP waited till it was too late to react, and they only reacted after pressure from us when we were in opposition. Now they're suggesting that we didn't do anything.

Just before the last election they came up with this oil-by-rail scheme that they had that was going to cost Albertans billions of dollars, billions of dollars to do something that was obviously a last-minute ploy to try to win an election.

We also know that many of the members on the other side of the House, the NDP members, have actively protested the oil and gas sector and pipelines in the past. We know what happened when Northern Gateway was cancelled; they did nothing. They celebrated, if they did anything. We know what happened when Energy East was cancelled; they did nothing. We know that when Obama vetoed Keystone XL, they did nothing. Now, of course, they're sitting there trying to talk like they're champions of the oil and gas sector and pipelines, and we know that we lost three pipelines during their tenure in government.

The Member for Edmonton-Decore talked about: why aren't we refining products here? Well, we still need pipelines once we refine the products to get them anywhere, and we need industry to come in and invest in Alberta. But based on their policies of higher taxes and crazy amounts of regulations and protesting pipelines, these industries haven't come into Alberta to do more refining here because they created a business environment that was unfriendly.

We know that we see the NDP in British Columbia trying to block a pipeline. We see the NDP all across Canada, in fact, their leader in this last federal election, actively campaigning against our oil and gas sector, and that's the same party. So, Madam Speaker, that's the problem we have in this House, these anti oil and gas activists, some of which sit across the aisle from us here right now. That's what's causing the trouble in our oil and gas sector.

We need to realize and we need to stand together and we need to respect each other's, I guess, opinions as we go forward. We need to go forward together and go to Ottawa and make sure that we support our oil and gas sector, not just for the benefit of Alberta but for all Canadians. We celebrate when other parts of the country do well with their products, right from coast to coast, and they need to celebrate with us, too. We need to stand together in this Legislature. We need to support our oil and gas industry. We need to support the oil sands.

We know that there's a world-wide need for our oil and gas products, which are produced under the most environmentally friendly conditions, labour friendly. We know it's the best oil and gas in the world, and we need to be producing more of it here if we want to do something for the environment and for the world. Of course, we need to stand together. We need to push back on Ottawa on this situation, where they're trying to restrict our rights to move our product to market.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, on the motion as moved by the Member for Central Peace-Notley on behalf of the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 508 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:04 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Reid
Allard	Loewen	Rosin
Amery	Lovely	Rowswell
Barnes	Luan	Rutherford
Carson	Madu	Schulz
Deol	McIver	Sigurdson, R.J.
Dreeschen	Neudorf	Singh
Ellis	Nielsen	Smith
Fir	Orr	Stephan
Glasgo	Pancholi	Sweet
Gray	Panda	Walker
Horner	Rehn	Yao
Totals:	For – 36	Against – 0

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 carried unanimously]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 8(1.1) the Assembly shall now proceed to government business.

4:20

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 19

### Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate October 31: Mr. Schow]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to respond to Bill 19, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, TIER legislation, introduced in this House to deal with the very serious and pressing issues of climate change in our environment and here in the province. I'm going to give my initial responses to Bill 19 here at second reading, and I look forward to having the opportunity to speak in more depth through the process that this bill will undertake in Committee of the Whole and so forth. For initial reactions to Bill 19, it's my view that this bill makes it clear that the UCP is not taking climate change seriously and that there are a number of areas within Bill 19 where we are taking serious steps backwards when it comes to efficiency, when it comes to making sure we're taking seriously the very real challenge that climate change presents to us and to our Earth.

We do want to be the most environmentally friendly producer of natural resources, and to do that, we need to do better. What the UCP has presented within Bill 19 is a plan that reduces emissions less than the plan put forward under our government. As I respond to Bill 19, Madam Speaker, I will be speaking at points about the

climate leadership plan that this plan replaces because with the climate leadership plan, Alberta was on track to cut more than 50 megatonnes of emissions over the next 10 years and reduce methane emissions from industry by 45 per cent by 2025. This new plan, although in places there are similar pieces – and I will speak to that – does not reduce emissions to the same level that the climate leadership plan would have.

My first critique of this plan is that it is taking a step backwards and not moving as far as we would like to see because this plan is entirely focused on innovation. Innovation is a very important piece. A point I would like to make, Madam Speaker, is that under our climate leadership plan funds were being reinvested into innovation to the same extent that we see here in the TIER plan. Support for innovation, we agree, is very important. But as well as that support for innovation, we also had so many other initiatives and spending in other areas on top of just innovation. Instead, what we're seeing is an environment that is less friendly to innovation through the implementation of Bill 19 and then through Budget 2019 and some of the many, many cuts that we've seen.

From the beginning, Madam Speaker, when we were in government and even now in opposition, we have been incredibly clear that we do not believe as an Official Opposition that the environment and the economy should be pitted against one another. We need to work to support both the economy and the environment, and there are very clear ways that we can do that through engaging with stakeholders and working with them. I was very proud to be part of the climate leadership plan process, where we moved the industrial carbon emission policy that was in place already when we first came to government, a carbon tax, I might mention to you, Madam Speaker, and the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation, where a great deal of very detailed work went into place to make sure that we could really move the dial and reduce emissions in our province and do so in partnership with industry.

As I mentioned, Alberta has had that price on carbon since 2007, and since that time all the revenues collected have been dedicated to innovation and green initiatives. I think that has been incredibly positive for this province, both in 2007 under the industrial carbon emission policies and after we made the changes in 2015 and created the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation.

What happens with Bill 19, though, Madam Speaker, is that the funds collected are no longer going to be dedicated to innovation and green initiatives. Instead, they will become part of general revenue: a plan that does not invest more in innovation and, instead, reduces the spending in some of those green initiatives, reduces supports for jobs in our renewable sectors. One of the things I was incredibly proud of with our climate leadership plan was that it supported more than 7,300 jobs in just the first two years with thousands of jobs still to come on the construction for various CLP projects and innovation initiatives. That is a big part of what this plan in Bill 19 is missing.

Now, within Bill 19 there are essentially two different implementations. For the electricity sector, which is the largest source of emissions in our province, Bill 19 will move forward the management of the electricity sector in a very similar way to how our government implemented it through the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation. For that I'm very supportive, because I think we got things right when it came to electricity and greenhouse gas emissions and how we can make sure that we are appropriately pricing while not driving business out of the province and appropriately accounting for the cost of greenhouse gas emissions and incenting good behaviour.

Again, I will repeat that the TIER plan is a carbon tax, a continuation of that price on carbon that Alberta has had since 2007,

and in the case of the electricity sector it continues the implementation of the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation that was put into place under our government.

On the other side, though, Madam Speaker, oil sands and other sources, the environmental standards have been significantly weakened compared to the climate leadership plan. Wanting to make sure that we are putting our best foot forward, making sure that we are reducing emissions wherever possible, I have to compare and contrast that under the climate leadership plan there were going to be 50 megatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> reductions over 10 years. Under this Bill 19 plan, I understand through the technical briefings and what I've read in the media so far, there's a suggestion that it'll be 32 megatonnes. There's a big difference, a lot of space between those two numbers, and that's one of the concerns that I have for Bill 19 and this implementation.

Again, on the electricity side things are looking positive. It kept a lot of the important work that was done under the preceding CCIR system. But on the oil sands and other sources, the large emissions, we're seeing a real change in direction here and the assumption that perhaps this government does not take climate change as seriously as it should be taken.

Those are some of my initial thoughts of the Bill 19 implementation. But I do want to really remark again on the fact that money raised through the work in Bill 19 will be placed into general revenue rather than used to support green initiatives, used to support other items that can be used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout the province. We're still charging this new carbon tax. TIER is what we're calling it now. We're undoing a lot of the good work that was done under the climate leadership plan, that really led to the jobs and the greenhouse gas reductions. The new, replacement carbon tax is going to put the money into general revenue, where it will be absorbed to pay for the \$4.7 billion handout to large, profitable corporations and spent on items like the energy war room, to plan attacks on Twitter perhaps but not as a dedicated pool of resources to help green the economy, to help support jobs in renewable industries, to help support the amazing programming that was done with indigenous communities.

4:30

As my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has mentioned, all 48 First Nations and all Métis settlements were able to take advantage, through the climate leadership plan, of supports for their communities to do local projects to help not only their financial viability but to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions of these different communities. We're missing that from this plan, that sharing of the benefits, sharing of that opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout Alberta.

Making sure that we continue to make progress on climate change and to implement good policies is so important. Whereas there are some positive aspects to Bill 19, on the whole I believe it misses the mark because although there's innovation funding within the bill, roughly the same amount that there would have been through the climate leadership plan, we've also just seen a number of cuts to innovation, to science, to universities, to support for innovative businesses with the cuts, that we will be discussing when we discuss Bill 20, to the innovation tax credits that had been set up. We really do need to look at Bill 19 in the context of all of the larger changes as well.

Now, during the federal election the federal Conservative Party did put forward a very TIER-like plan, and it received a great deal of criticism for not being strong enough on the measures that we need to take forward. I think that's certainly an interesting comment going forward.

I appreciate, in the electricity sector, the work that was done with the climate leadership plan, very, very detailed work, working with individual companies, working with the entire industry and a lot of very complicated data and modelling. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, as a member who was involved in that process, that the work that the public servants did supporting the changes was phenomenal, and I want to say thank you to everyone who worked on that file and helped to move that forward. Going forward, making sure that electricity facilities still have to meet that good-as-best-gas benchmark is a really key piece, so I certainly support that aspect of Bill 19.

However, again I will say that on the oil sands and other large sectors side we've seen a real step backwards, and that's where that difference between the climate leadership plan, at 50 megatonnes of reduction, and this current plan, which is estimated to be more at 32 megatonnes, comes in, because the electricity side has been left essentially the same. According to the fiscal plan 2019, TIER will cover about 48 per cent of all emissions in Alberta. Implementing TIER will be that positive step forward: that is kind of how the press release went. But it's a reduction in emissions removal, from the 50 that was in the climate leadership plan to this new plan that we see in front of us.

I think we need to continue to hold the government to account when they say that they are serious in taking climate change as a challenge that they're willing to tackle. This plan does not go far enough, and although there are some positives, overall my concerns around how this plan will be implemented, my concerns around how the funds will be spent and absorbed into the general revenue of this government – the removal of so many of the climate leadership plan initiatives, that led to the creation of over 7,000 jobs, has me quite concerned. As I've said – but I will emphasize – the reduction in emissions does not go far enough, in my opinion, in this TIER plan.

Making sure that all Albertans are aware of what's happening when it comes to this plan, I think, is really important because these decisions, this policy framework that's set out are incredibly complicated. During the course of this debate, from second reading into Committee of the Whole, I certainly am looking forward to being able to talk about some of the more nuanced differences within this plan and frame the debate around what we are trying to achieve and the measures that we are taking to achieve that. In reading the coverage initially from reporters, it's clear that this complicated policy, when it is boiled down, when I talk to people . . .

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a) on Bill 19. I was interested in the hon. member's comments, but I think the hon. member and, unfortunately, the whole NDP need to think bigger. They are talking about a perceived or real difference between the number of megatonnes locally reduced – and I'm not saying that that doesn't matter, because it's an important issue. But you know what? I think the hon. members across there might even agree that when you're talking about emissions, the air that we're protecting is world-wide; it's not just Alberta air.

Innovation is actually the key to success. For example, using the climate change leadership plan which the NDP had in place, their goal was to drive Alberta emissions to zero. Let's even say that they were going to drive Canadian emissions to zero. Well, statistically that would reduce the world-wide emissions by 1.6 per cent. The wildest, greatest thing that they could possibly accomplish with the

NDP's plan is to reduce the world-wide emissions by 1.6 per cent. We're focused on innovation. It's not going to take much innovation on a world-wide basis to reduce emissions by more than 1.6 per cent world-wide. Unfortunately, the NDP are too insular. They're thinking too small. They're thinking in their province instead of world-wide.

You know, people didn't switch from horses because horses don't work anymore. They moved from horses to cars because the innovation that created cars, that could go farther, go faster, and meet people's needs, was better. If somebody had focused on, "Well, how can we make horses faster?" and all the effort went into making horses faster, no one would have invented the car. Beyond that, it's through the innovation after that that cars went from five miles per gallon to 10 miles per gallon to 20 miles per gallon to 40 miles per gallon. You see, Madam Speaker, how innovation, if you think bigger and if you actually plant the seeds to create the better future of the world – a plan that is about innovation does that.

Even the former plan, the SGER, which was really focused on innovation, too, created things like carbon capture and storage, which a lot of people questioned, but today it actually helps the wells that are in the ground to produce more energy while using less water, to be more efficient and multiply those efforts over and over and over again.

But the NDP's drive to the bottom, to essentially sacrifice the Canadian economy so that we can virtue signal to the rest of the world that we're better people than them, wasn't really going to get us where we need to go. We actually need an innovation plan where Alberta can be part of leading the world, where we as part of the TIER program can innovate and create new technologies that will make the world more efficient and do the things that we need to do: keep people warm in the winter, motivate people from point A to point B in a car or whatever the next vehicle that people ride in is called. It might be a car for a long time; maybe somebody that's 15 years old now will invent something called something other than a car. The point is that innovation is the key. That's why this is an important step forward.

4:40

Again, I was a little amused by the hon. member talking about some of the money going into general revenue when the NDP's plan, when they went from \$30 to \$50, was to put 100 per cent of that into general revenue and nothing into innovation. Heck, they weren't even going to buy any more light bulbs, which will burn out, or any more shower heads. It was all going to go into general revenue while with our plan we will be focusing on making industry more innovative, creating technologies that could spread across the world. A very small percentage of emissions out of the United States, out of Europe, out of China, out of India using Alberta-made innovation in the future will make a much bigger, world-wide difference on emissions, potentially, than 1.6 per cent. We're actually giving a chance for that to happen. Buying light bulbs won't get that done. Buying shower heads won't get that done.

The previous government's plan actually punished Albertans for staying warm in the winter. They punished municipalities. They punished charities. They punished seniors. They punished schools. They punished families for buying groceries, for goodness' sake. This is something that actually looks wider in recognizing that the airshed and the emissions that we're trying to protect have to be thought of as bigger than Alberta and bigger than Canada if we're actually going to make a difference in the world. Consequently . . . [Mr. McIver's speaking time expired] Oh, I'm out of time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Well, are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak to Bill 19, the emissions management and climate resilience act, otherwise known as TIER legislation, as this UCP campaigned on in their platform. I appreciate that we're seeing the context of this legislation now and some of the information provided, and I'm very concerned. I mean, notwithstanding what we just heard from the Minister of Transportation, which I'm very concerned about – I mean, we heard things like, “Well, it doesn't make a difference if we don't do anything because it's more about the world context,” which is very concerning for me because it's essentially signalling that, one, he doesn't necessarily believe that we need to take strong action against climate change, which is very concerning, and two, that he doesn't believe that Alberta necessarily has a part in the world context, which is also very concerning.

I'm worried to hear this kind of virtue signalling from the government. I think that we owe it to the next generation of people in our province and across the world to take action, recognizing that, of course, climate change is going to affect us here in the province of Alberta, but it is going to have massive impacts on third-world countries, even more so. That's very concerning, that we stand here in this House and look at how it's going to affect our population but often not recognizing or not speaking to the fact that, you know, droughts are going to expand and flooding is going to expand. It's going to be harder to insure not only our province but other regions around the world, and what that is going to do to less fortunate populations than our own – I'm very concerned to hear that.

Once again, what we see in this TIER legislation is that the UCP is not taking climate change seriously. It is disappointing, really, to see that the UCP is presenting a plan that reduces emissions less than the previous plan under the NDP government. There were signals from the environment minister that somehow this would reduce as much as or more even than what we proposed, which is, as we can see from these details, not true at all.

It really is unfortunate that the government will use TIER to finance the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. The minister once again spoke about the fact that they think it's okay to put this into general revenue with no strings attached, but the fact is, you know, that the minister wants to point out that we took that money, but we invested it. We have cold, hard numbers and facts to show where that money was going. Unfortunately, under this UCP government we are not going to see that.

The minister spoke at length about innovations. Once again, not through this legislation, not through the TIER legislation, nor throughout the entirety of the platform or the platform that this government has brought forward are we seeing any dollars – or very few, if any – attached to innovation.

For one, we're seeing cuts to advanced education, which is very concerning. We want to talk about innovation for the next generation. Well, if you start making it harder for students to go to school and start increasing their taxes on the loans that they're taking out, well, there's not going to be as much innovation and not as many people going to postsecondary, getting postsecondary education. That's very concerning.

Also very concerning is the fact that this government has not provided any dollars to local communities, whether it's community leagues or municipalities, to actually reduce emissions through government buildings or through community league buildings, which is something that we took great pride in being able to move forward. The fact is that communities want to be a part of the solution, and unfortunately this government is not letting that happen.

Now, as the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods pointed out, there are two pieces to this: the electric side, which largely mimics

what our NDP government put forward through our plan – and I can appreciate that once in a blue moon this government gets things right, so thank you for that – but unfortunately, on the other side of the conversation, the emissions reductions that are seen in this TIER legislation are not what they need to be. The fact is that this government is actually incentivizing bigger polluters or is actually going to give bigger polluters more money than the companies that are looking to actually reduce their emissions, which is very concerning to me.

The fact is that we need to incentivize new operations to reduce their emissions, and that is not what we are seeing under this TIER legislation. It's a concern that was brought forward by Andrew Leach, a respected environmental economist and professor at the U of A, which has not been addressed by this legislation. From U of A? U of C? Now I'm confusing myself. Either way, of course, Andrew Leach worked very hard to help us with our climate leadership plan, work that we greatly appreciated, alongside industry, nonprofit organizations. Unfortunately, his work is falling on deaf ears under this government, so that's very concerning.

Now, once again, Alberta has paid a price on carbon since 2007, and since that time all revenues collected have been dedicated to innovation and green initiatives, which, once again, we are seeing disappear under this UCP government. As we saw in the budget, the government does not actually support innovation, as I talked about with cuts to Advanced Education, in terms of cuts to tax credits that were spurring innovation, the capital investor tax credit being one of them. It is very concerning that there is little to no signal from this government that they believe in innovation at all.

Once again, \$20 million from the revenue that's coming from the TIER program is also going to the Canadian Energy Centre, \$80 million over four years. Now, that's money that could have been invested in reducing emissions, whether it be for these large emitters or whether it be for households. I mean, this government goes on at length about the fact that our NDP government took action to reduce household emissions. We provided incentives for people to reduce emissions, and it's quite frustrating that this government doesn't recognize the importance of programs like that. One of the most important ways to reduce emissions across our province is to promote personal opportunities or opportunities for individuals to reduce their emissions. We saw something like \$500 million, \$600 million in reduced costs to Albertans, so it was no small reduction in costs. It's frustrating that this government is not going to move forward with any kind of plan to reduce individual household emissions.

Now, once again, the government cut significantly from innovation in other parts of the budget. AI funding was cut by \$100 million to \$40 million: the AITC program, the digital media tax credit program, and funding to science in various departments. Once again this government is talking out of one side of their mouth and saying that they believe in the innovations and future innovations of this province, but on the other hand they're removing any incentive to actually be innovative as an organization or as a person. So that's very concerning.

Now, the minister also made the point that we were looking to reduce emissions to zero per cent and, once again, that we're only 1.9 per cent of the world emissions, which really just goes to show that the minister doesn't really believe that we need to take any action, which is very frustrating for myself and my constituents. I have people coming to me often very concerned about the implications of the future of climate change. We've heard discussions in this House and throughout the world that if we don't take action within the next decade, there are going to be catastrophic implications. That's very concerning for me, and it's concerning that we aren't having real conversations in this House about what

that means. So when we talk about not moving forward on innovation, that's very frustrating for me.

We do have great opportunities in places like automation to reduce our emissions, but unfortunately this government has not provided any signal that we are going to be moving forward in that direction.

4:50

Once again, I just want to say that I do not support what we're seeing here. I think that the legislation that came before this was overall just better legislation in terms of taking action against climate change, reducing emissions, providing incentives to our communities and large emitters to take action to reduce those emissions, so I will most definitely not be supporting this legislation. I think that this UCP government should really go back to the drawing board.

One of my other main concerns is the fact that there is no price on carbon for regular Albertans, which is fine in itself, of course. This government ran on a platform to get rid of the personal carbon tax for households. My concern is what signal this is going to send to the federal government. Whether you support a price on carbon for individuals or not, the fact is that the federal government is looking to take action on this. The fact that there is no plan provided by the UCP shows that, well, we will be going to court, more than likely in the very near future. My concern is what that is going to cost Albertans. Once again, that's fine. You know, this UCP government will stand up and say that they won their mandate on removing that, but the fact is that Albertans and Canadians are going to be pitted against each other at a cost of millions of dollars. At the end of the day, the federal government does, as far as I know, have the jurisdiction to impose a price on carbon on us. When that inevitably happens, the UCP is not going to have a plan for that, which is also very concerning to myself and to many of my constituents.

Once again, I don't think that the right balance has been struck here in Bill 19. There are small portions, like the electricity side, that largely mimic what we had put forward in our climate leadership action plan. Unfortunately, it just does not strike the right balance for environment and industry.

So, once again, I will not be supporting Bill 19. I appreciate the time to speak to that today.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just very concerned about the member opposite totally misconstruing our Minister of Transportation's comments. The Minister of Transportation was pointing out that technology innovation is what is actually going to help the whole globe, not just what we're doing here in Alberta. This TIER fund and Bill 19 speak to reducing emissions by 10 per cent by the year 2020 and by 1 per cent for the years following that. If we could see that around the world, that 10 per cent target, if just the U.S.A. took some of the innovation and technology that we've developed here in Alberta and applied it to their emissions, that alone would be almost the same amount as all of Canada emits, just a 10 per cent reduction in American emissions. If we were to take the top five emitters around the world and reduce their emissions by 10 per cent, that would be three and a half times the entire output of Canada. Three and a half times.

I think they missed the point that the leadership that Alberta can show with our technology, with our innovations, by reducing our

emissions by 10 per cent, by being world leaders and applying that research and technology around the globe, will have multiple times the effect of what we would just do by punishing every household here in Alberta.

The other point that I would just like to raise, Madam Speaker, is that he raised a worry about the federal carbon tax that is going to be coming in in Alberta. At least we're fighting against that. But that federal carbon tax is not as onerous or as painful as the one that they themselves put in place. I find it very ironic that they speak to those worries and concerns as they're speaking against the very plan that they had put in place four years ago.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I simply was pointing out the fact that the Minister of Transportation was talking about moving forward on innovation, but unfortunately we have seen zero commitment to innovation through this provincial UCP government. That is a concern for me. I think it's a concern that I share with many Albertans. I'm sorry that the member did not necessarily agree with that.

Now, once again, this member went on to talk about the fact that other jurisdictions can do more than we can. He's trying to take away from the fact that we need to take action, which is very concerning for me. We're hearing this from many members of this government, and it's really the wrong direction to take. So it's unfortunate that he believes that.

Now, once again, the fact is that this member now sounds like he supports the federal Liberal price on carbon more than a made-in-Alberta one. That's something that he will have to take up with his own members. But the fact is that under our plan two-thirds of low-income Albertans actually received a rebate. It covered more than what they were paying into it. The fact is that we had a made-in-Alberta approach. It sounds like the UCP supports a made-in-Ottawa approach, which is very frustrating. Hopefully, he can clarify those comments in the future.

Once again, I will not be supporting Bill 19 as far as I can tell. I wish that there was more action taken on emissions reduction. I mean, it's in the title, but it's not in the details. Once again, I hope that this government will reconsider their commitment to technology innovation and emissions reduction, as in the title of this legislation, and go back to the drawing board.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 19, Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019. Before I begin just some of my comments on this piece of legislation, I just wanted to note that I think it's sort of sad that we've arrived at a place where it seems like we have to take a loyalty pledge about oil and gas.

Let me just be crystal clear about what I believe. I do believe that the oil and gas sector essentially built Alberta. I think we can't drive by a school or a hospital or any major infrastructure project and not understand that the benefits that we all received as Albertans are because of the oil and gas sector. That's really important. Our oil and gas sector workers are vitally important as they have essentially built this province. So let me just be clear on that. I do think it's possible to support this sector and to want to get the absolute best price for our product while recognizing that climate change is very real and

that, in fact, it's a crisis and that we can do both things: address the immediacy of the problem but also the opportunities that it presents while supporting this sector. I just wanted to put that out there.

Just on a personal note, I think that this building, steeped in tradition, is really the people's House. I think that advertising of any kind for any sector – and there are many valuable sectors in this province – is not a democratic thing to do. This is the people's House.

All that aside, I just want to speak to this legislation. You know, Alberta has had a price on carbon since 2007 – I think we all know that – and since that time all revenues collected have been dedicated to innovation and green initiatives until now. While we, the NDP government, used the Nobel prize winning strategy of carbon pricing, or putting a price on pollution, we also distributed rebates to up to 60 per cent of Alberta families while deliberately funding an energy transition, realizing that we were capable of doing a couple of different things at once.

I just would like to say something about the rebates. Now, I understand, you know, that in putting all of the revenues into general revenue and with less transparency about investment in rebates, it does have an impact on people. One of the things that the rebate did was to take the cost of energy and calculate sort of what people could afford in terms of their incomes and what they were using. It sort of redistributed, in a way, to lower income families. Let me give you an example of somebody on AISH, let's say. They don't live on a lot. They live on just over \$1,600 a month. For them, in getting that rebate – they were being rebated because they were using less and their incomes were low – they actually started to rely on that a little bit, the little bit of extra money that they received. So there is an impact to the changes that we made.

More than anything, a smart energy transition means that we have to address climate change, and when I say "address climate change," I don't just mean we have to immediately address the realities of climate change but that we have to take advantage of the amazing opportunities that are presenting themselves, because they're everywhere. But, like I said earlier, while we do these things, we continue to push and advocate to ensure that we get the best price for our product while there is a demand.

5:00

It's important to remember the federal campaign – you all like to talk about the federal campaign in here a lot – where their TIER policy was also introduced. I think the general consensus was that that particular plan was taking climate change not seriously at all. I would agree with that comment. Government has said that this plan will reduce emissions by five megatonnes less in 2024 under their TIER plan than under the preceding plan, the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation. Well, we were on track to reduce 50 megatonnes over the next 10 years, and the UCP plans to reduce emissions by 32 megatonnes. That's almost a 50 per cent drop. Government department staff have suggested 32 additional megatonnes will be reduced without innovation, and our plan was 50. Government is betting on innovation being able to reduce emissions by 57 megatonnes, and using that same assumption, our plan was forecast to reduce by 76 megatonnes.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

This act gives the minister the power to change the price per tonne by ministerial order. Now, I mean, we can debate this, whether or not that's a good idea. Given the fact that you do have an enormous mandate – we hear that a lot – and that you have a majority, you can pass legislation. But I do think it's important to democratically talk about the decisions that we're making about our energy sector and about Albertans. You know, putting it away in a cabinet room and making decisions by ministerial order I would

suggest is not the best way to go. Previously it was through legislation that we made. You may not have agreed with us at the time, but we debated in the light of day for a very long time.

According to this government's fiscal plan their TIER plan will only cover 48 per cent of emissions. Implementing TIER will lead to \$0.7 billion in lost revenue to the government coffers by 2022-23, and \$20 million of TIER will go to the Premier's seemingly pet project, the Canadian Energy Centre, also affectionately known as the war room or snitch line.

As I said earlier, I don't believe that this can be all or nothing: climate change or supporting the oil and gas sector. I believe that we have to do both well at the same time. I think we hear it all the time. We hear it from scientists. We hear it from leaders in this sector as well. If we fail to do that and if we go along this path that seems to be carved for us, it's this partisan debate of us versus them when it's about all of us. It's about Albertans. It's about our future. It's our collective future. It's not about what kind of party membership you hold. The reality is that, like it or not, climate change and the opportunities it presents but also the dangers it presents will impact all of us and all of our families.

I actually think there's a problem with funds not being dedicated specifically to an energy transition. Again, when I talk about transition, these are long-term transitions with goals that extend likely well beyond the time that we will be in this House, but it's about taking advantage of it right now. It's investment in other sectors, and that means job creation. We know that we're shedding jobs. I'm not pointing fingers, but the reality is that there are enormous pressures on every sector right now, and we know that with clean energy, green energy, whatever you want to call it, different energy, there are so many opportunities in terms of job creation, and our failure to act on that, to act responsibly on that, will be our peril, all of our peril, all Albertans.

There is job security in these jobs. We know this. Who doesn't know an oil and gas sector worker? I certainly know many, and I've seen the toll that the incredibly long hours take, the stress of not knowing sometimes if they're going to go back or if there's going to be another bust cycle that is going to devastate the reality of their work. It's difficult. They're away from their families for long periods of time, and I'm incredibly grateful to these men and women for the work that they do, but it takes a toll, and there are other opportunities. Albertans have the skill and the desire to build a sustainable energy system.

I get that change is difficult. I get that. I see it every day. But the reality of climate change, which, I would suggest, is a crisis and which I believe is a crisis, is that it requires us to look at the facts and to look at the science. I am not a scientist, but I do believe in science, that emissions impact our well-being and our health. We know this. This is fact. Emissions impact our health, the health of our communities, the health of our children, and the health of our future.

Climate change doesn't start forest fires. It doesn't start floods. It doesn't create hurricanes or anything like that, but scientists have told us for decades that they make these very challenging weather events more difficult. They last longer. They're more severe. They're more frequent. This is based on science, actual science. Our failure to listen to these scientists: history will not look kindly on us. We should be investing in innovation. We should be investing in science and research.

You know, sadly I look at the government's budget and, again, climate change impacts every single sector, from agriculture to environment to postsecondary. This is the time of a lot of challenges and opportunities, when we need to be investing in research and in science, and sadly I think that these sweeping cuts in so many of these sectors, so many of these ministries are going to create long-term risk.

I spoke a little bit earlier about a just transition for workers and seizing the opportunities to create different jobs, additional jobs, but economic transitions are very difficult. They need to be guided by a government focused on the end goal and not the political, personal agenda. You know, I was reading an article, I think it was yesterday or today, about some of the coal workers in the United States. Some of the really poor communities in the southern part of the United States were completely reliant on the coal industry. In fact, the community was likely built up as a result of this initial investment in coal, and people started working and all of those things. What has happened – and it's happening all over the world – is that coal is being phased out slowly. Ultimately, it harms workers the most initially. It harms the workers, it harms their families, and it harms communities. It does. We see the devastation.

I was reading about this devastation, these hundreds of workers now left without employment in a community that was really solely relying on this industry. They don't have health care. They don't have pensions. They don't have work. They don't know where to go. It's happening in states all over. I mean, we will see it happen in more and more places. So I think it's incumbent on all of us to recognize this and to start investing in these workers because they deserve our support and investment. These are the workers, as I said earlier, that built this province. They have so many transferable skills that we can work with them to ensure that they are not left behind, because they're important.

Emissions in Alberta. I think I heard earlier somebody making fun of light bulbs, which – I get it – has been a long-standing UCP joke about: "Oh, my God. NDPs like paying for light bulbs." Sure, it sounds a little bit silly, but I think you have to look at the larger move to energy efficiency. That was something to stimulate something. But let's talk about the little LED light bulb, shall we? I mean, they're not that expensive, but it's a way of saying to people: you can do this one little thing, and look what happens. Actually, when you use an LED light, you are reducing the energy needed for that light by 85 per cent, and only 5 per cent of that light bulb is lost or wasted to heat. That seems pretty innovative to me.

I know that there were a number of nonprofit organizations – I know people like to talk about, "Oh, it devastated nonprofits." Certainly, did people feel cost pressures? Yes. That was a reality. Absolutely, it was a reality. I appreciate that. What it also did was allow people to look at their nonprofit to say: "What can I do to make this better? How can I reduce the energy that I use in order to save more money to invest in the front-line supports that I need to deliver?"

For example, a homeless shelter. Let's say a homeless shelter takes on this project to look at: what are the things we can do to invest in this structure, in this place, in the way that we do business so that we save more money so we can spend more money on the purpose, and that is housing people that don't have places to sleep. That's just an example. I do know of a number of nonprofits that took advantage of energy audits and actually did some work, some of the really simple things that they were able to do, and reported back that it was a cost saving. For me, a nonprofit saving money on energy bills is a great idea because those funds get put right back into the purpose of their organization.

5:10

Like the federal TIER plan, I don't believe that this legislation goes far enough. I think it needs to address all emission emitters. Certainly, large emitters are a focus, but residential emissions, emissions from our vehicles, our SUVs, all of those things need to be included, and that includes investment, energy efficiency, and taking real steps.

You know, I do talk about climate change a lot because I think it's important and I think that there are enormous opportunities in

front of us. One of the things that I've always been amazed by Albertans from every sector is their ingenuity, their ability to work hard, and their ability to get things done. I believe given the opportunity to do a few things at the same time is to look at: let's do everything we can to support this sector, get the best price for our product, and move forward.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe the individual who caught my attention is the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate this opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a). I know how important it is that we support our oil and gas sector and also our environment at the same time. I'm an avid outdoorswoman, and my family, we spend a lot of time in the outdoors, so I definitely know how important it is to make sure that we're preserving our lands and everything else.

What really bothers me is that this conversation has been centred around balance. Well, this is exactly what balance is, Mr. Speaker. This is a targeted plan that will actually reduce emissions. We know that when the former Premier was on TV, she couldn't even point to how her carbon tax did that. At the end of the day, we all know that she actually didn't have a plan to reduce emissions at all. We have more needless grandstanding on this issue, when, really, I think the economy and the environment should be something that we are, you know, not really that too far different on at the end of the day. It does impact all Albertans.

You know, the carbon tax was a cash grab, whereas this is actually getting put toward something that will actually meaningfully reduce emissions, which is what I think people want. They want to know that the economy and the environment are not pitted against each other, that they're working hand in hand.

I heard a comment about this made-in-Alberta solution and how fantastic and fabulous it is that the NDP brought in their carbon tax, but at the end of the day we had a carbon plan in 2007. We were actually the first jurisdiction to have one, so Alberta has been leading for a long time. So for the NDP to get up and claim that their plan is sacrosanct, it's ridiculous and it's false. I just would encourage them to look back at previous legislation brought forward and how that actually supported that as well.

We need to reassure investors in this province. We've seen investment flee under the previous government, and I believe that we have an obligation to stand up for Alberta workers and Alberta jobs and the jobs in the oil and gas industry. We heard about this from the member before me, and it just is really interesting to me that she would get up and claim to stand for oil and gas workers and claim to know their pain or know what's going on when she considers them to be a special-interest group. I don't believe them to be a special-interest group. I know nobody on the United Conservative government believes them to be a special-interest group. I'm glad that she walked back her statement. I'm glad that she is repenting for that and that she recognizes that her comments were out of touch. I can only hope that her constituents will see that in the next election as well.

You know, when we're talking about this, it's important that we look at this through a larger lens and we look at this through something that is going to be affecting the next generation, which, I mean, many of us have a vested interest in. I want my kids and grandkids to have the beautiful Alberta that I grew up in as well, but I also want them to be able to have economic activity and jobs and a future, and they're not going to have that if we continue to tax people to death. It's ridiculous.

Putting in something like TIER, having something that helps us to be able to lower emissions, to be able to provide a better future

for the next generation, that's what's important, Mr. Speaker, certainly not getting up and grandstanding on whose job or whose plan is better. That's not going to get us any further ahead. The NDP have an opportunity right now to actually stand up for the environment and do something meaningful to address climate change. Instead of that, they're choosing to engage in partisan bantering. I guess we just have to get up and respond to that because that's our job.

You know, I'm really interested in hearing more about – I'm sure that we'll continue to hear different sides of this debate and more comments from the NDP, and I'm sure that they'll follow the same talking points of, "The UCP does nothing for the environment," that we're climate change deniers, that we're blah, blah, blah. But, at the end of the day, there is a plan here put forward, and they can choose to support that, or they can choose to sit on that side of the House and ultimately go against the will of Albertans, who voted for this in the general election.

We're taking meaningful action on climate change, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud of that because I think that we need to preserve, like I said, the land for the next generation. We need to preserve our lands and everything else. Once again, I just can't believe that we are hearing this and that we're being lectured by a member of the opposition caucus who actually stood outside on the steps of the Legislature and accused our fantastic workers of being special-interest groups.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me here. Well, maybe I'll just say that when we mention things like "grandstanding" – anyway, let's talk about Bill 19, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, or what is often being referred to now as TIER legislation. I'm looking at this plan, and, you know, I think that one of the things that we haven't kind of had the opportunity to bring into the conversation is around some of the financial implications of climate change. We've heard the insurance industry say very, very clearly that this is a very serious and major concern for them.

Some of the events that we're seeing take place: these events seem to be getting bigger in size. They're getting more intense in size. We're seeing things like hurricanes reaching some very, very devastating proportions. As we know, this past summer the Bahamas took a very, very major hit in such a way that nobody has ever really seen before. The flooding that occurred, not to mention the wind damage, in that area was absolutely significant. I don't know if we've actually seen a dollar value yet that's been placed on that, but it's something that has now come front and centre for the insurance industry around the implications of that and the costs that they're going to have to start paying out in terms of damages and whatnot.

When you look at Alberta and across Canada, I mean, the reality is that it's not anybody's fault or pointing fingers. It's just the way it is. Out of all of Canada's emissions, Alberta makes up approximately 40 to 45 per cent of those emissions across Canada, so I think that it's incumbent upon Alberta to lead the way and to be able to show everyone, basically, how it's done.

I think that when we were talking earlier around the motion and that whole description – you know, again, I don't understand why Alberta got this, Mr. Speaker, but they just kept calling it the tar sands, and it was so frustrating every time I heard that. What I noticed, again, over the course of time when I was visiting through the different Council of State Governments – Midwest, West,

national – we were starting to change the dial, the channel on that narrative and getting them to realize that it's not the tar sands; it's our oil sands. It's our energy sector.

5:20

As a matter of fact, I remember being down in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and I actually had a chance to speak with some representatives out of Oregon. By the end of that lunch meeting they were very, very keen to somehow meet with a delegation from here in Alberta. They didn't care whether the delegation went down to Oregon or if they came up. They said: "We've heard about your climate leadership plan, the steps that you have taken. How do we go about duplicating that in our jurisdiction?" It started to lead the conversation about how we can take very meaningful steps towards climate change.

We are seeing events now that are starting to cost us a lot of money as taxpayers. If we're going to be true to that narrative that we're respecting taxpayers' money, we can't be throwing it away simply because, as I think some of the other members have said before, we're almost pitting two things against each other. It's either that we have to work on the economy at the expense of the environment or – you know what? – we've got to work on the environment but at the expense of the economy. Nothing is more inaccurate than that. We can actually do both, but we have to make those meaningful moves. We have to change the channel, change that narrative so it becomes absolutely undeniable that Alberta is the place to get energy needs met.

When I start delving into Bill 19 and I'm seeing some of the, shall we say, less ambitious language around emissions, this is clearly – again, I guess I have to refer back to when we were talking earlier around that motion. We're saying one thing, but then some of our actions over here are kind of counterproductive to that. We're saying, you know, "Absolutely, we are onboard with climate change; we are going to do something about it," yet when we had a plan that, as I said in my own travels, was starting to become the envy of other jurisdictions wanting to duplicate it, now we're coming in underneath it? What kind of message does that send? It sounds like conflicting signals to me, Mr. Speaker. If we want to be taken seriously, if we want to be that destination for our energy products, we have to take a position that is above absolutely all, making it completely undeniable.

I think some of the targets that we have around here, reducing emissions by 57 megatonnes when we could have been reducing them by 76 megatonnes under the language that we currently have – why we would choose to be counterproductive and bring in language that is less sends a signal to other areas that maybe we're just not that serious about it. Then, of course, if we're hoping that they're going to change their habits and their tune, they're going to look back and say: well, Alberta is not, so why should we? I know we don't like to hear that, but that is what tends to happen. It's almost kind of a bit of human nature. We look around us and we go: well, that person over there is not doing that, so maybe we don't need to. We just lead the way, and we will set the conditions for everyone else to follow. It was happening. Others were starting to follow. That simple example of Oregon was that example. Again, with my own eyes and ears, I was surprised.

I am happy, of course, that the government side has chosen to incorporate around some of the electricity that the previous NDP government had put in, but again, you know, instead of taking that high standard, we're choosing to be almost counterproductive to ourselves and going: well, we'll just go under it. Again, it's sending mixed messages.

I know that in communities across Edmonton-Decore there's a lot of – I'll use the example of my community halls. In the



community that I live in, Evansdale, the Evansdale Community League, their community hall, now is net zero. It was achieved through the program that the previous government put in. They were able to access funds to be able to go install solar panels on their facility. They changed out their light bulbs. Of course, the Member for St. Albert talked about: yeah, you know, we can make all fun and games about light bulbs. But this made a significant difference in this community hall, and now the league is net zero. They had other leagues now starting to look at them. Here they set the bar, and everybody else started coming around: how can we duplicate what you're doing? They even wanted to try and duplicate it now as a group, maybe even get a better discount on things. It was things like the carbon levy that allowed those groups to be able to access funds, that made it possible for those projects to happen, and it would have made those projects possible for other groups as well. You know, I have yet to hear from the executive of Evansdale Community League regretting the decision, especially when their monthly electricity bill comes in. They were the ones to be able to set the standard.

I did want to quickly talk about the price on carbon Alberta has had since 2007. It's been mentioned by members on both sides, so this is not something new. When the NDP government came in, in 2015, we had a pretty good sneaking suspicion that something higher was going to be coming in at the federal level. What happened is that we chose to make decisions that would work for Alberta, a plan made here in Alberta and that we'd get to manage in Alberta. As a matter of fact, that plan worked so well that when that price on carbon was going to be going up higher at the levels of the federal government, we had complete control of that money.

From a business point of view – and I talked to some of my businessowners within Edmonton-Decore. I asked: does it make smart business sense to give up control of the money; in other words, to let Ottawa make the decisions for us? Yeah, they were going to give us the money back. Absolutely, they were. But they were probably going to be pointing fingers, saying: “This is where the money is going to get spent here, and this is where the money is going to get spent here and over here as well. Oh, what was that? It doesn't quite work for you? I'm sorry to hear that.” We had the ability to make those decisions one hundred per cent, so we started to invest right here, back in Alberta, on things like innovation, something that I certainly heard the Transportation minister talk about going forward, how important innovation is. This is what will drive things. But with decisions we've made now, it seems a little bit counterproductive in terms of the budget, where we don't seem to be going gung-ho on this innovation that's going to change the game, that's going to change the dial on what people are saying and thinking about the jurisdiction of Alberta. Right or wrong, okay? And, yes, they're wrong.

Alberta is the place to come to get your energy needs met, but for some reason they still don't think that's the case. By taking control of that money, we were able to invest, including in our energy sector, to be able to help our biggest emitters bring down their emissions, making them more efficient, bringing down our emissions as Alberta, again, generating anywhere between 40 and 45 per cent of all of Canada's emissions, and making it absolutely undeniable the place that Alberta holds, should hold, and will hold as we move forward.

5:30

Some of the things that I think I have mentioned have me concerned enough, Mr. Speaker, that I'm just not able to support this plan. I think that we are choosing language that is inferior to what we have. I think that we're sending mixed signals to potential

customers around the world, to jurisdictions that, you know, may be thinking of partnering with us. We're sending mixed signals there. We're saying one thing, but some of the decisions that we're making are saying something else. I don't think that helps to move Alberta's cause forward.

Unfortunately, I'm not in a position to be able to support Bill 19 right now, in its current form. Again, you know, kudos to where it is due. They did manage to take some language around electricity that was currently there. I kind of wish that you had taken all of it. Again, one minute we're saying that it's working for us, and then the next minute we're doing something else.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I believe I saw the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise under 29(2)(a) to really lend my voice and support to this bill, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019. You know, I have sat here in this Chamber and listened to members opposite on a wide range of reasons why they will not support this bill.

I'm going to address my remarks based on two themes. One, innovation is something that you would think would be a bipartisan aim of any bill that aims at seriously tackling the question of climate change. On that particular front I am a little bit disappointed that members opposite would not see it as fit, given their claim to really be climate change agents. Two, Mr. Speaker, is from the perspective of world emissions, in particular how we can put forward something that actually helps third-world countries, something that you often hear from the members opposite. In listening to some of their members today, they have referenced, you know, the impact of climate change on third-world countries. Again, I'm disappointed on that particular front.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that it is obvious, in listening to the members opposite, that nothing would satisfy them unless it's something – a proposal, a policy – like they had before, that nearly destroyed our economy. I think that it's obvious that unless you tax ordinary people and families and businesses and not-for-profit organizations with that, they will not be pleased. The type of bill they would want to see is a bill that targets families and businesses and ordinary people, like we saw, whereby they had no regard for moms and hockey moms and dads and families driving their children to school, to hockey games, to soccer games, or ordinary folks driving to work. Unless you impose a multibillion-dollar carbon tax on ordinary folks, the NDP will never be satisfied.

Mr. Speaker, that is why they have pursued with their federal allies policies that have devastated our oil and gas sector. You would think when you listen to them in this Chamber – you can easily fall into the temptation that these are folks who support our oil and gas sector. But carefully reading between the lines of their submissions in this particular House, you know, it's obvious that that informs their support for bills like C-48 and C-69. Otherwise, opposition to those two pieces of legislation should be something that is bipartisan, not just in this particular Chamber but outside. What we have seen is that you see them at virtually every rally that is protesting against our oil and gas sector. You have previous NDP cabinet ministers carrying placards protesting against the building of future pipelines. That's what we see.

They think that amnesia has suddenly set in to the people of this province, that they will not remember, that they will forget that it was one thing for you to talk about support for the oil and gas sector but then go out there and protest with people who seek the destruction of the same sector you're claiming in this particular Chamber to support. It doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker. I hope that

if they are serious about the need to combat climate change, they would work with us in making sure that we repeal C-48 and C-69.

Mr. Speaker, as someone that was born and raised in a third-world country where it is so hard to find electricity . . .

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen to speak on this matter.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege, and it really is an honour to rise in the House to speak to Bill 19, Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, also known as TIER legislation. I just wanted to clearly say from the beginning that, you know, listening to members on both sides of the House, I'm definitely not going to support this bill. There are a number of reasons that have been outlined by my colleagues as the reasons that we are not supporting this bill. At the same time, every time the members of the government side rise on 29(2)(a), there's nothing new that could impress me so that I will have something to support in this bill. The biggest debate, argument that is coming from the government side is innovation, other than the election-style rhetoric that the government is the biggest supporter of the energy sector, but the opposition doesn't care about it much.

Looking at this bill, it does nothing more on innovation than the previous NDP government's Alberta climate leadership plan would have invested in innovations. Looking at both the bills, I don't see the biggest difference in how this is going to promote more than what the Alberta climate leadership plan was doing. On the contrary, I am seeing that this is probably just the government's philosophical, ideological approach. They just wanted to move that and wanted to give everything to private hands to take care of something that's very, very seriously related to the people of Alberta. It was not even long ago that we saw in the fields, on the grounds of the Alberta Legislature our next generation and other Albertans and how concerned they are about climate change, that climate change is here.

5:40

The plan we had, that basically the government took leadership of, was one where we would not have to, you know, work under the federal government's climate leadership plan. So the money goes to Ottawa, and then we wait for their, you know, conditions, limitations, terms to get all that funding back to us. In that way Alberta will be controlled. They wanted to invest the revenue that was coming from the Alberta climate leadership plan and spend it in the way that we think is more important, to support our local economy in Alberta. This is how the Alberta government was able to support thousands of jobs in the energy sector, and there were more jobs actually coming if this, you know, Alberta climate leadership plan was still in place. More projects would have started with the Alberta climate leadership plan. There were to be more jobs created until now. It's sad to see that has gone.

The biggest thing that I was part of that I really want to stress is this. It was not only something that economically the government was moving forward on to support Albertans in diversifying the economy, supporting future generations, investing into the economy. Also, to me, at a few events that I was personally involved in, I saw this, you know, as a culture-changing move. When I say culture-changing move, there have been a few of the community events where our Alberta energy efficiency plan was launched, where government members made fun of us many times, spending money on those light bulbs and stuff. [interjection] Yeah. That's your point of view. I respect that, but I wanted to share my experience on this.

As a community member I was not part of this government, you know, at those community events. I personally saw thousands and thousands of people coming to know what this Alberta energy efficiency program was and signing up on their cellphones to Alberta energy efficiency programs that they wanted to participate in, not only people discussing what it was. Many of those people did not qualify. They did not get in. They could not register on the spot. They did not even eventually get into the program, but that was something to learn about, what exactly it was, how this was helping our environment, how this was helping our future generations. I saw that for many, many of those people that I met, they could not get into the program, but they went to the stores. They decided to change their light bulbs and the way they were spending money, knowing how this would save future generations. This is something that on that day had a big impact on me. The government of any jurisdiction can make changes in the life of the province or the country.

Some of the other achievements I would really like to actually highlight that the previous government had focused on through our Alberta climate leadership plan: one of those was the first \$100 million plus 50 per cent – I'm trying to get exactly where this information is coming from, actually.

The other climate leadership plan supported more than 7,300 jobs in just two years, and thousands of jobs were still to come with the construction starting on climate leadership plan projects and innovation initiatives as soon as they were to get off the ground. By moving to this plan, definitely the government is going to put those jobs in danger.

The previous government was also able to, you know, fund approximately \$220 million to small businesses by introducing an almost 33 per cent small-business tax cut, and this reduction would save business owners more than half a billion dollars. You know that the small-scale industry is the backbone of any economy, not only our economy. I owned a small-scale business for the last good 15 years, and when I look around my very small plaza, I see, like, that small area within even a few blocks would have been employing thousands and thousands of people. The small-scale industry is actually the biggest engine of the economy. This is how our previous government – part of our Alberta climate leadership plan was able to boost and support small-scale industry and provide the benefit of approximately half a billion dollars over three years.

That plan also invested almost \$3 billion that it was going to invest into transit over the next 10 years. That has supported Calgary and Edmonton: nearly \$1.53 billion for the Calgary green line and approximately \$4.7 billion to support Edmonton Transit, including the west valley. On top of this, it supported hospitals, universities, colleges, and \$40 million has been invested in schools.

The biggest part is this. When government was controlling it, you know, government identified all those people for whom it was hard to afford the cost, would have been too much to afford the carbon pricing. The government in a way provided almost \$700 million to the majority of Albertans to make their lives more affordable, to offset the carbon levy. They probably got more than what they have paid in the cost. More than 60 per cent of Albertans actually qualified for the rebate programs under the climate leadership plan that the previous government had.

Indigenous climate leadership. Actually, more than 65 indigenous communities in Alberta benefited from our climate leadership plan and 225 indigenous initiative projects since 2017.

5:50

Another big boom was to the solar industry. The solar industry has grown under the climate leadership plan approximately 500 per cent. That's where it says that there was almost a cultural change in

some of the areas. Installed solar capacity has increased actually from six megawatts – that was in 2015 – to 35 megawatts in 2018. About 3,100 solar installations have been completed and more than 335 companies have installed. They were actually working in Alberta to install all those solar projects.

The biggest thing and something that I really wanted to highlight: Albertans have conserved enough energy to power a city the size of Leduc under that climate leadership plan. The climate leadership plan, especially the 100-megatonne oil sands emissions cap, was the biggest thing that government House members discussed many times. That was something integral, very important to the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline by the federal government on top of the efforts the provincial government made to awareness or to the pipeline campaign across Canada, I would say, in Ontario, in B.C.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The individual who caught my eye was the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for speaking to this bill. Actually, I just wanted to take your last point first. When we talk about the 100-megatonne cap on emissions, this was actually one of the largest pieces of legislation that impacted our industry at the biggest level. I was here when we debated those pieces of legislation. The impact that it had on the industry, along with the capacity market changes that were made at around the same time to our electricity market – many members on the other side have been talking about market signals. Market signals, especially in energy, are imperative in terms of how it is that investors are going to come to this province and look at those numbers to see whether or not they're going to stay here. Those policies, especially to the point of the 100-megatonne emissions cap on our oil sands, were absolutely devastating to the industry and especially to smaller companies – by smaller I mean billion-dollar companies versus multibillion-dollar companies – that were absolutely not able to fulfill their commitments in the oil sands based on purchases that they had made to actually be able to create products.

I mean, I think it has to be said, especially from all of us in here, that we are the most responsible, and Canadian oil and gas is the answer completely and unapologetically. I would suggest, too, that if you look at the TIER program, you're looking at – one of the other members mentioned this earlier. We have a 20-year record on the incredible work that has been done in this province. My dad is a chemical engineer. I remember when I was little and he was working, the particulates in the air in Alberta were significantly different. Now, just between I believe it's 2012 and 2017, there's been a change of 29 per cent in terms of efficiency and the ability to remove particulates and actually to have a cleaner product. This is something to be so proud of.

In fact, if the previous government had looked at it from that perspective instead of going to Paris and cheering on the tar sands campaigns and allowing that language to actually resonate with the world, they could have actually used the information that Canadian oil and gas is by far the best in the world, the most responsible. That language would have changed the way that we look at this beautiful country and what we produce here and the responsibility that a government has to uphold what we do in this country. What a lost opportunity. Right now we're talking about schools and roads and how we build infrastructure across this country. It is the responsibility of governments in this country to work together to make sure that that happens.

The previous government poked holes in this by creating just the capacity market alone, Mr. Speaker. The capacity market sent

market signals to the industry to not invest here. The other thing I might like to add is that every single piece of solar or wind that comes online has to be double built with natural gas for the days that the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine in order to make sure that every family in this province stays warm in the winter. That is not ever spoken about. It is not just about wind and about the windmills or the fact that windmills – the environmental return on investment when you build a windmill is not even close to what you pay out at the end. There's no way to recycle them. There's absolutely no place.

I have 40 solar panels on my house, thermal and photovoltaics. There is no place to recycle them. They came from China. They were made with carbon in order to create the silicon that is on my house that gives me a very good return on my investment. By the way, when I pay into the grid, I get a very tiny return on my investment in terms of capital back, but I feel very, very good about being able to do that. I'll tell you that the 40 solar panels on my house: there's no place to recycle them. They're 10 years old already, so in 15 years when they're at their end of life, there will be no place to recycle those. They are going to be another addition into the dumps of Alberta, into some landfill somewhere. If we're going to talk about environmental returns on investment, let's talk about what we're really talking about here.

There are so many things that we can do, but let's talk about the realities of that. This TIER program takes into consideration the realities of that. I very much appreciate what the member brought forward. It's a very legitimate discussion, but let's talk about what's real here. Alberta responsibly produces resources better than anywhere else in the world. Fundamentally, that has to be the first thing that comes out of every single one of our mouths, and I will very happily every single day wear my T-shirts and put my signs up on my windows.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm cognizant of the time and aware that I probably won't get a chance to speak to too much today with respect to Bill 19, so I'll just make a couple of comments with respect to some of the things that we've been hearing today in the House. In particular, you know, we heard a number of government members speak to the issue of innovation and talk about how much they believe in innovation and that they believe that what is put forward today in Bill 19 supports innovation.

However, I do note that the investment that is set out in Bill 19 under the TIER program with respect to innovation is actually very comparable if not exactly the same as the investment in innovation that was put in under the climate leadership plan. So when they're speaking about their adherence to the value of innovation, they've really just matched exactly what the former NDP government did with respect to innovation except for the very big glaring error, which is that despite that they have a commitment under Bill 19 to innovation, they have cut supports for innovation in every way possible with respect to this budget that's been put forward by the government recently. For example, cutting supports for post-secondary institutions: we're going to see tuition increases across the board; we're going to see fewer people, young people, being able to access postsecondary education, to pay for that. They've cut away tuition credits, education tax credits. They've increased the cost of taking out loans.

So when they're talking about innovation, they certainly are not supporting the postsecondary institutions that are going to be

promoting innovation, nor are they supporting the innovative businesses considering that they have done significant cuts to those tax credits and those investor tax credits that were critical to innovation. I just think it's really important that when we're talking about innovation, it's not just talk. It actually has to be committing to the institutions and the businesses that are innovating. What we're seeing from this government is a clear lack of commitment.

I also just want to make one more quick comment because it was interesting on my part to hear the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat speak about this bill. I thought it was very interesting to hear her comments considering she doesn't actually have particularly a ton of credibility when it comes to speaking about the carbon tax, considering that she herself, well, was spreading quite a bit of misinformation about the carbon tax during the election, to the point that she actually had to issue a retraction of that.

I think we should be talking about facts, and when we're talking about facts, we should keep in mind that innovation under the TIER program is actually no better than what was under the climate leadership plan and, in fact, is worse because there is no commitment to the innovative technologies and the institutions that support that.

Overall – I think I'm going to run out of time – I just want to say that I think I'm not going to support a bill that is weaker than what was proposed . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. I think we're all on same page. Seeing the time, the Assembly stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m. today.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, November 4, 2019

Day 38

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
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Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

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### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Bilous  
Dang  
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Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
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Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, November 4, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening, everybody. Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 21

#### Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate October 30: Mr. Orr]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there members wishing to speak to second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today to speak in response to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. Not surprisingly, perhaps, I'm going to be speaking out against this particular bill for a number of reasons, particularly because I think it's very clear that this bill as well as Bill 21 and the estimates that were filed by the government last week are just intended to take money out of the pockets of Albertans. The goal behind that seems to be that the government has a debt to pay off, and that debt to pay off is actually the one that they've created themselves. It is the one created by the \$4.7 billion no-jobs handout that they gave away to corporations. When I say no jobs, it's not just that no jobs were created, but actually – are we on Bill 21?

**An Hon. Member:** Yeah.

**Ms Pancholi:** So sorry. My apologies, Madam Speaker. I'm aware now that we are actually on Bill 21, which is the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. But my earlier comments still stand with respect to my concern. With respect to that bill the comments are the same, which are that I do not support Bill 21 because it is actually a package of changes that go along with Bill 20 as well as the budget tabled by the hon. Minister of Finance, and as well as with Bill 20 and the budget, Bill 21 is designed to take money out of the pockets of Albertans.

So let's talk a little bit about the concerns. In particular, I'd like to highlight my concern right off the top with the decision of this government to temporarily suspend, as they've called it, the indexation of benefits for the assured income for the severely handicapped, of course known as AISH, as well as removing the indexation for income support in the seniors' lodge program.

With respect to AISH, you know, I actually recall that when I first got involved in politics, it was 1999. I worked in the constituency office of an opposition MLA, and at that time Ralph Klein was Premier. It was closely around that time when, I believe, recipients of AISH, who are some of the most vulnerable Albertans – these are Albertans who have significant and severe medical disabilities which affect their ability to work either permanently or to work in a very meaningful way because of their disabilities. They are very dependent on AISH in order to survive. Let's be clear. AISH is by no means a generous benefit. It's very minimal.

Back in 1999 I remember that the Conservative government even then was attacking the people on AISH, and really that was because, I think, they count on the fact that they are the most vulnerable and that they'll be the least able to actually stand up and collectively be heard by a government that seems to prioritize and benefit those

individuals who make donations and are generous to the governing party at the time. I think that they took advantage of that by attacking those vulnerable individuals on AISH, and we are seeing the same thing here.

What's remarkable, even more remarkable, about this is that the Premier repeatedly stated that he actually did not support the deindexation of AISH, and in fact a number of members on the government caucus side stood up in this House when – it was the NDP government that brought in the provisions to index AISH to the cost-of-living increase. Just as life gets more expensive and the cost of living goes up – the cost of food, transportation, housing: all of those things go up for all Albertans – individuals on AISH were being hamstrung by the fact that their benefits were not increasing with the cost of living.

It was the NDP government that came in and indexed AISH to the cost-of-living increase. That, quite frankly, is just common sense, honestly. As anybody who buys products, buys food, buys housing, you know that the costs go up, and if your income stays exactly the same, your buying power, your purchasing power, and your ability to survive if you're a vulnerable Albertan on AISH is significantly impacted. The NDP government brought in the indexation of AISH, and a number of the members on the UCP side, on the government side, at that time supported the indexation of AISH to the cost-of-living increase because they recognized that that is humane. It is the right thing to do, it is the moral thing to do, and it is the least, honestly, that we can do.

To see now, when this government is in power, them rolling back and going back, frankly, on their word and deindexing AISH, not only is it duplicitous in terms of their position when they were in opposition, but it is also duplicitous with respect to the position they took during the campaign and that the Premier took during the campaign, and it is an attack on the most vulnerable individuals.

I, frankly, find that to be repugnant, especially because we're talking about something like \$1,600 a month. For the Premier to come out when he brought out this budget and say that he did not believe that this was an onerous impact on individuals just shows to me how out of touch this government is and the Premier is with respect to the most vulnerable and what they're living on. For somebody on \$1,600 a month not having their benefits increase with the cost-of-living increase, that is actually the difference between more than one meal, probably, in a week. It's actually a difference between eating and not eating. It is onerous, and it's particularly onerous when you don't have the ability to change your circumstances because you have a significant medical disability.

To me, that is a shock, and frankly, because the language in Bill 21 is talking about temporarily suspending and given that this government has already demonstrated that it will not keep its promises to the most vulnerable Albertans, I certainly don't think that we can take any comfort from the fact that this is supposed to be a pausing, as the minister has said, because there's no indication that this government's word is good. That's my first comment with respect to Bill 21.

I also want to talk about ending the tuition freeze for the next three years, lifting the Bill 19 tuition freeze, that the NDP government had put in place, as well as increasing the student loan interest by 1 per cent. In my riding of Edmonton-Whitemud we're a great riding, and we're a lot of people who have a lot of young people who are in postsecondary, a lot of families that are continuing to support their children who are entering into postsecondary, but a lot of those kids are also working very hard to pay for their own tuition. I think this just goes to show where this government's priorities are, and it's not on postsecondary. That's been very clear.

In fact, even when I was meeting with my constituents prior to the budget being released, after seeing the government's blue-ribbon panel report, the MacKinnon panel report, one of the things that I consistently said to my constituents is to watch for the attack on postsecondary. I already had a pretty good feeling that this government's word was not good with respect to maintaining or increasing funding for education, and that was made painfully clear with the budget that was brought out because they have not funded enrolment growth at all despite their assurances.

In fact, we saw that writing on the wall with respect to education, but I thought it was particularly alarming to see the attack that the MacKinnon panel report made on postsecondary. What that means to me is that it's really a short-sighted vision for this province. In fact, when I go back to why I chose to run in this most recent election as part of the NDP under the leadership of the Leader of the Official Opposition, I knew it was because there was a vision there for a future for our province. It was a future of diversification. It was a future about investing in innovation and in tech and in the way our province should be going, and it was a real fulsome vision. What I was concerned about also was that I believed the vision that was laid out under the Premier's leadership and under the UCP platform was a regressive one, and this budget and this bill confirm that.

This is not a government that is actually committed to investing in postsecondary education, and by ending the tuition freeze for young students, what we're really seeing is that we're going to be seeing a lot of students drop out of the postsecondary system because they simply can't afford it. At a time when we are already talking about shortages in jobs, shortages in meaningful work for a lot of Albertans, to actually then cut out from under them our postsecondary system is to show that we actually don't have any plan. This government has no plan to fix that problem. They're not investing in our future. They're not investing in our young people, and I can say with absolute certainty that a number of the families in my constituency will be affected by that.

Not only is tuition – it's always, actually, a substantial expense for students, but predictability in planning their postsecondary education is also critical. It's critical that they have an idea of how much debt they'll take on, how much they need to save, how much they need to work, how much they are going to have to pay for postsecondary, because if they don't have that predictability, they can't plan for their education. What it means is that they're going to be the ones who are going to suffer, who are going to have to decide partway through their education that they can no longer afford to continue to do this. They may not qualify for loans. If they do qualify for loans, we now know that they're going to be paying a lot more in interest to pay that back.

**7:40**

I think it's a real short-term vision that this government continues to lay out for young people. I know that in particular I've already received a number of e-mails from constituents, a number of letters from constituents who are deeply concerned about that. You know, even just prior, earlier today, we were discussing Bill 19, the government's TIER program, which the government members were touting during that debate, how much that program is going to be investing in innovation, when actually that plan did not invest any more in innovation than the NDP's plan under the climate leadership plan was investing in innovation. Really, there's no further investment by this government in innovation, and then we see that they've actually gutted innovation by not just cutting the tuition cap but also failing to invest in various tax credits and incentives for innovation in this province.

I'm not sure what that's about with this government. I'm not sure if it's that there's a mistrust of postsecondary, a mistrust of intellectualism. I don't know what it is, why they seem to feel that postsecondary is not valuable, but in a province where we already have the lowest number of our young people participating in postsecondary, they seem to be pretty determined to lower that even further. That's not actually looking out for the future of Alberta, and it's certainly not looking out for Albertans. I know that there are a number of Albertans in my riding who are certainly going to be paying more for their tuition and more all around. If they have existing student loans, they're now going to be paying a significant amount more on that.

I also want to talk a little bit about the – well, actually, I'm going to defer this to one of my colleagues who I know is going to speak in detail about the reversal of the replacement worker ban in the public sector. Again, I feel like this government has demonstrated that it doesn't have a great deal of respect for decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada, particularly when it comes to labour decisions. They seem to be, again, thumbing their nose at our highest court in Canada. The decision to put in the replacement worker ban was the result of a Supreme Court of Canada decision, so to overturn that, I think this government seems to be inciting some more labour unrest but also litigation.

I don't know why the government thinks that it is a better use of public funds to invest in litigation than it is to index AISH to the cost-of-living increase. I don't know why they think it's a better use of public funds to give away \$4.7 billion to corporations, who are fleeing the province, who are not investing in Alberta, and who are taking that money and increasing dividends to shareholders or paying off their own debt, but they're certainly not creating jobs. To me, it's quite remarkable that this government continues to platform or position itself as a government of fiscal responsibility, yet they are literally throwing money away on lawsuits and corporate handouts.

Meanwhile it is the average Albertan who is suffering because we don't have the services not only that we want but that we need and deserve. They are continuing to hamstring not only the services we receive but those employees, those public-sector workers, who rely on the delivery of those services. That's their livelihood, and they perform critical public services, yet this government seems to be devaluing their work and devaluing them as workers. I've continually said, even in the previous session – and I'm saying it again now – that this government seems to prioritize certain workers over others when, really, all Albertans deserve to be valued and employed and to be respected for the work that they deliver, whether it be in the private sector, whether it be in oil and gas, whether it be in our classrooms or in our hospitals. Those are critical services for all Albertans that we all benefit from, and it doesn't serve us well to cut those services simply on a gamble.

That's really what the \$4.7 billion corporate handout is. It is a gamble. They have actually failed to provide any facts to support that it will create the jobs that they've promised. In fact, it's becoming increasingly evident that with this government's platform of jobs, the economy, and pipelines, they're failing to deliver on all three fronts. They're picking fights. They've created no jobs. Actually, 27,000 jobs have been lost. Therefore, when this government is tabling legislation around the budget, around taxation and their fiscal plan, what they're showing is that they actually are not being responsible with our dollars. They're not being responsible. They're not delivering the services that we require. They're simply gambling, and they're cutting on the people who are the most vulnerable, whether that be people on AISH or whether that be students who we are relying upon to build a strong future for our province.

I want to thank you again, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this. It is very clear that I will not be supporting Bill 21.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the comments from the hon. lady opposite, and I think any 29(2)(a) needs to begin with an appreciation for the message discipline of the member opposite. No matter what the bill is, they have the exact same attack lines and talking points, and if we have any deficit on our side of the House, it really is there, that we do not have the message discipline the members opposite have. No matter what we say, we will find the exact same attack lines coming from the opposite side of the aisle.

On the point of debt, Madam Speaker, I feel that while the hon. member brought up many prized NDP policies from the previous government, they forgot to bring up the policy of indebting future Albertans. We had debt growing at an unsustainable rate that was unparalleled to any point in Alberta history given we were debt free in 2004, and we find ourselves now barrelling towards \$100 million inherited NDP debt. I believe it's an important policy because debt is taxation delayed. They not only had a carbon tax crippling Alberta's economy, but they effectively have implemented taxation on Albertans going forward because there is no way to pay that back short of taxation. We are government. Debt is worse than that because it's taxation compounded as well. It is the most punishing of all the taxes that could be presented.

For this reason I'd like to commend the member opposite for bringing up some of the former NDP policies but remind the members opposite that they had much more of a history than just that. They also had the carbon tax, and they had debt crippling our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. I'd just like to respond and say that, yeah, it's really actually not that difficult to have discipline on messaging, Madam Speaker, when the two bills are pretty much doing the exact same thing, which is gambling away Albertans' money and not delivering on critical services that they need. Certainly, Bill 20 and Bill 21 are pretty indecipherable, so it's not difficult to not have different messaging.

With respect to that, I note that the government's budget that has been tabled actually increases the deficit by \$2 billion beyond what the former government had, so I'm not actually seeing any demonstration from this government that they're making any headway with respect to reducing Alberta's debt while at the same time they've given away money to corporations, billions of dollars to corporations, and have also failed to deliver quality public services. They're gutting public services and also gutting Alberta workers.

That's just my response with respect to that hon. member's statement. It's true that debt is a problem, but they're making no progress in actually paying down our debt. But they are making progress in cutting the services and quality of services for Albertans and taking more money out of their pockets and making life less affordable for Albertans. They're certainly very successful on that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise to put on the record my multiple reasons for being very much opposed to Bill 21, the so-called Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, which, let me tell you, is a very, very creative use of the English language. Nonetheless, this is a bill which has effectively been introduced to operationalize and implement and, I guess, execute some of the high-level plans of this UCP government.

Let me just sort of start where the last conversation ended. I will say, you know, that throughout my political career, when I have been engaged in conversations with folks on the right, they have been very, very intense and passionate about the need to eliminate the deficit and get rid of the debt. Now, I will say, quite honestly, Madam Speaker, that I, too, believe that one needs to be fiscally prudent and careful because, of course, we owe an obligation to the people of this province to be very careful with the money that we get from them through taxes and other sources of revenue.

7:50

But I always find it very interesting, Madam Speaker, when I hear about these things from the right because one of the things that they repeatedly do, just as a starting point with the matter of debt, is that they only look at debt as it relates to the numbers on the page, and they fail to acknowledge what happens with, say, something like infrastructure debt. For instance, when you're in a situation where you stop building schools for years and years and years on end, suddenly you are in a position like that of many of the members opposite, for instance, who live in Calgary, where they learn that, in fact, there will actually be a cap on the number of students who can attend high school in a building in the city of Calgary thanks to the decades-long failure to invest in important infrastructure. Soon we're going to have to be offering online courses to high school students because we literally will not be able to find room for them, because these folks here didn't see that as an investment.

I mean, that's one example. You, of course, have the other example of health care, where, for instance, the members opposite thought that having a modern, technologically up-to-date facility within which to treat the people of southern Alberta for cancer was akin to building a fancy box. That's how they talked about the Tom Baker cancer centre. They didn't see the failure to invest in that, oh, 15 years after the current Tom Baker centre had met capacity. They didn't see that as a form of debt. Yet it is, Madam Speaker, and indeed what it does is that it accelerates costs in a number of other ways.

Economists and people who look at balance sheets and at assets understand that letting something just fall to pieces is not good investment, it's not good management, and ultimately it can be more costly. Yet year after year after year in my somewhat long political career now I am subjected to this simplistic argument by those on the right, that somehow we should not be investing in important infrastructure upon which we then are able to grow our economy.

Anyway, that being said, what I find with this particular government, Madam Speaker, which is even more interesting, is that they wax poetically and passionately about the evils of debt – notwithstanding, of course, I must put this on the record, that Alberta does have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of any jurisdiction in the country by a long shot. And at the point, when the budget is balanced, or at least when it would have been balanced under our leadership, we still would have retained that position. Independent economists said that we had the healthiest balance sheet in the country.

But what I find so crazy about the passion with which the members opposite address this issue and the degree to which this



Bill 21 hurts hundreds of thousands of Albertans in very cruel, short-sighted, mean-spirited, hard-hearted ways is that we're going through all this because we care so much about debt. And you know what, Madam Speaker? The debt will be reduced by \$2 billion. We would have had it balanced at \$95 billion; they will have it balanced at \$93 billion. So all this song and dance, all these many attacks on Albertans are going ahead so that we can secure the difference between \$95 billion and \$93 billion.

The reason, then, of course, that we are having to embark upon all of these cruel, hard-hearted, mean-spirited attacks on the most vulnerable, not to mention the short-sighted, mean-spirited attacks on our youth and our future opportunities and our ability to diversify the economy, the reason we are engaging in this incredibly negative, not to mention somewhat misleading attack, if you were to compare it to what the members opposite told the people of Alberta a mere six months ago in the election, is so that we can, in theory, eliminate the debt. But you know what? They've made nary an impact on the accumulated debt. In addition, they've increased the deficit by \$2 billion this year alone. So the members opposite, who wrap themselves in the tattered blanket of deficit slayers, really aren't very good at that either.

However, Madam Speaker, what they are good at, as evidenced by this bill, is undermining the future of hundreds of thousands, probably millions at this point, of young Albertans, whether they be in K to 12, whether they be people that are hoping to secure the benefit of some form of postsecondary education, whether they be people who hope to engage in the benefits of a truly diversified economy. They are going to be very good at undermining the future of those Albertans, they are going to be very good at attacking the most vulnerable, they are going to be very good at creating labour chaos, they are going to be very good at alienating our front-line health care professionals, and they are going to be very good at breaking the promises they made in this election to municipal leaders elected throughout this province. Let's see. I'm just flipping through here. Have we covered all the things that Bill 21 does in the most general of ways? I think that we have. Oh, yes. And they're going to be very good at making every Albertan pay more in the form of electricity costs. These are, for the most part, the things that are embedded in this Bill 21, a number of strategies that will successfully undermine the quality of life for Albertans.

Of course, I always find it interesting that members opposite still talk about making life better for Albertans. Just to be clear, one member opposite talked about message discipline, and I'm sure those across will know that we talked about making life better for Albertans all the time. I find it amusing that the members opposite continue to say that, too, even as they are literally throwing young Albertans onto the street and rendering them homeless. They have the unmitigated gall to talk about making life better for Albertans. Wow. Like, pick a lane, folks. If your plan is to attack Albertans to allegedly reduce the budget by \$2 billion, by whatever that is – I don't know; 2 and a half per cent? – reduce the debt by about 2 per cent and to give away billions and billions and billions of dollars to wealthy corporations and then sit back, cross your fingers, close your eyes, and hope that five years later, when you wake up, somehow economic prosperity has arrived in its little magical form, if that's your plan, you know, you might want to pick some messaging that actually aligns with that plan. Let me tell you: making life better for Albertans? Not so much. That is really not what, in particular, is executed through this bill.

Let's talk a little bit about this bill. What are some of the things that we see in Bill 21? You know, I know they talk about ensuring fiscal sustainability. Let's call it an Act to Ensure that Life Gets a Whole Lot Worse for Albertans. That's the act that we're talking about today. One of the things that is being done with this piece of

legislation is that they are changing the legislation that we had put in place, that had legislated a cap on tuition. Now, why would you want to do that? Well, first of all, when we first got elected, in 2015, Alberta had the uncelebrated position of being ultimately – when you took into account tuition, noninstructional fees, market modifiers, when you put all those things together in a pot, Alberta had the unfortunate distinction of being the most expensive place in the country to go to university. Everybody here was: why are so many Albertans not going to university? Well, I don't know. Maybe because it's more expensive to go to university, or that was one of the things.

So we said: "You know what? That doesn't make sense, because we see education as being one of the most fundamental tools you can use to share in opportunities with people who desire to seek them, who desire to put in the work and the effort and the discipline and the creativity to pursue those opportunities, and the way to do that, then, is through postsecondary education." What we cannot do, Madam Speaker, is close the doors of postsecondary education to those Albertans solely on the basis of how wealthy they are or how wealthy their parents are. That was the road that we had definitely begun to walk along, so we made a decision that we would cap tuition and also eliminate or extremely limit noninstructional fees and market modifiers.

8:00

Having done that, we went from the most expensive jurisdiction in the country to the third-least expensive, and we were on-track to become the least expensive. Just imagine if we had succeeded in that, Madam Speaker. Just imagine how many bright, young people from the rest of the country we could have attracted to Alberta. Now what's happening already is that families in this province are looking at whether they can find a place in another province where their kids can get into that educational institution and where they can afford for them to be. We're actually now going to start pushing our young people out of Alberta. I can't imagine a more short-sighted plan.

You know, we talk in Alberta about our natural resources. We talk, of course, about nonrenewable resources as it relates to the oil and gas industry. Those are, without question, incredible endowments that none of us did anything to earn but were given to us by Mother Nature, I guess, that have given us tremendous opportunity in this province.

Another tremendous asset that we have in this province is our young people. I remember as Premier getting ready for meetings with Premiers from across this country and looking at the position of our province in relation to other provinces in terms of taxation and debt and economic activity and GDP and population demographics and health care costs, all those kinds of things. I remember being blown away by what an incredible opportunity we have in Alberta because we really truly were the youngest province in the country, the best-educated province in the country, so we had this resource that was so fundamental to building a strong province for the future. I would look at some other provinces where their population was aging at an incredible rate, where their tax base was shrinking, where their health care costs were skyrocketing, and where they had very little economic activity and room for diversification. I thought: boy, we have a tremendous opportunity right here in Alberta, but that window will close if we are not careful.

If we continue to look backwards, we will be looking backwards as the window in front of us closes on the opportunity to truly diversify our economy so that we remain the economic leader of the country. That will disappear before our eyes. Of course, that's one of the things that is happening within this bill, within Bill 21. We are very intentionally looking backwards to a past that no longer

exists as over our shoulder the window to our opportunity slowly closes at the hands of the members opposite, Madam Speaker. This bill does that.

It will hurt families as well. It will simply hurt families. Families save for years. I'm sure many folks over there are aware of the practice. You know, a baby is born, and you immediately start putting money aside in their RESP. You start planning for their education future. I don't know about you, but in our family we planned on the basis of certain assumptions. We planned that we would be living in a city with at least two postsecondary institutions. We planned that those postsecondary institutions would be sufficiently well funded, that kids could get in there if they wanted to get in there and that they wouldn't need to have a 99.999 per cent average in order to get in there. These folks over here had reduced the number of spaces to a point where nobody could actually get access anymore. That is the assumption that many, many people in this province made. They also made the assumption that tuition would be affordable, that they would not be trying to save to send their kids to the equivalent of an American Ivy League university.

What the folks over there want to do is jack up tuition because I think implicitly – I can only assume – that the folks over there actually think that postsecondary education is only for the wealthy and the privileged and that nobody else should get access to it. Certainly, that is the absolute, direct outcome of the plans that are embedded in Bill 21. It's exactly what is happening here. That is going to further increase inequality in this province and, ultimately, undermine economic growth and economic health. Quite frankly, I'm sure that folks over there spend a lot of time reading more than just Jack Mintz in terms of economists, and most economists will tell you that inequality breeds economic stagnation and is the enemy of economic diversification and growth. What we have here, as far as the plans with respect to postsecondary education go, is a fairly effective plan to enhance inequality across this province.

Another thing that is in this quite poorly-thought-out piece of legislation is the decision to eliminate the regulated rate cap for the cost of electricity. Now, the government is currently estimating that over, I believe, four years they will save about \$400 million. Put another way, that means that consumers over the course of four years will pay about another \$400 million. So there you go, \$400 million being offered up for consumers in Alberta, regular families with homes. That's what we're talking about. We're not talking about industry here; we're not talking about the money that's being lost there. To be fair, \$388 million the government will save by removing the regulated rate cap, and that is a direct transfer to the bills of regular families, regular homeowners, regular folks just trying to keep the lights on while they sit around the table helping their kids with their school work because, of course, they haven't seen a teacher for three days. Anyway, I digress. This is the plan that this government has in place. It's to transfer that cost, roughly \$400 million, to regular families in terms of the cost of electricity.

But wait, Madam Speaker, it gets even better when it comes to electricity because this is to be added to the fact that just recently on Bill 18 the government also voted down our amendment that would have put in place rules against economic withholding and would have ensured the goal of a reliable supply of electricity available at a reasonable cost to consumers. Of course, the members opposite chose to vote down that amendment. Apparently, they are not big fans of doing things that might be done at a reasonable cost to consumers because, again, regular Alberta families are not, actually, who is number one with the bullet with the folks over there.

So what we're going to see is roughly \$400 million downloaded onto family budgets in every part of this province, and at the same

time they're not even going to have reliability and predictability with respect to that because, on top of it, these guys think it's a great idea to go back to an energy-only market, where we will see the price of electricity go up and down to the tune of about a thousand per cent at any given time without any kind of warning or predictability. That, too, is something that folks over there thought was a great idea. Why? Because one or two electricity producers told them that they might come here and build electricity infrastructure if they had the privilege of playing around with people's electricity prices to the tune of a thousand per cent from month to month. Folks over there, when offered up that proposition, went, "Well, that sounds just great to the average Alberta household; we think that people would like that kind of unpredictability with their electricity costs because, you know, it's not onerous," to use a well-repeated line, which, yes, you will hear a great deal more of because your leader's idea of onerous is clearly framed through a particularly unique version of privilege that the vast majority of Albertans do not enjoy.

#### 8:10

Now, in addition to that little piece of cost that's been downloaded onto Alberta families here, we're also going to see some challenges experienced by families as it relates to their access to health care. In particular, this government has decided that what they're going to do is two things in order to really do everything they can to push doctors out of Alberta. The first is that they are going to attempt once again a strategy that has been ruled by the courts as unconstitutional at least once, may twice already, which is to tell doctors where they can practise and where they cannot practise. The courts have said that this is not a thing that you can do. It is illegal. It goes against principles within the Constitution. What do the members opposite do? They say: "Eh, let's do another illegal thing. You know, we haven't spent millions and millions of dollars on legal costs yet today, so let's do another thing that will generate millions and millions of dollars of legal costs," which, to be clear, you will lose.

So they initiated this attempt to limit where doctors can practise. Maybe it's nice talking points, to be able to write letters to the editor saying: we're going to do everything we can to force young doctors to practise only in your small town, no matter what. I know it sounds nice, and sometimes, you know, it is tempting to make public policy on the basis of what sounds good in a local paper's opinion piece, but I suggest that when you are in government, you actually have an obligation, Madam Speaker, to do the research and actually talk to people about what you can actually really do. This is a thing that is only going to result in creating a great deal of hostility, and undoubtedly after we've spent millions of dollars on lawyers, we will discover that we're not allowed to do it, and we will probably also owe a bunch of money as a result, too. Anyway, they've done that, and that's in this bill. It's unwise, it's silly, it's wasteful, and of course we can't support it for that reason.

Now, the other thing, though, when it comes to doctors, as though that's not good enough: we're also going to apparently give ourselves the authority to break contracts with the doctors. I don't know if there's been any negotiations with them, if there have been any attempts to actually sit down with them and talk about a strategy that might be more respectful. I know that our Member for Edmonton-Glenora, the former Minister of Health, spent a great deal of time talking with doctors in order to get them to come to the table to take reduced costs as we were working on bending the curve in terms of health care costs. You know what? It may well be the case that more needs to be done; I wouldn't suggest that that is not true. But to sort of walk in like a bull in a china shop – I cannot for the life of me believe that there's been any kind of substantive

negotiations at this point with the doctors. What's happening here is that folks are just going in and giving themselves the legislative authority to break the contract with the doctors, which invariably is going to undermine the confidence of doctors as it relates to setting up a practice here in Alberta. Let me just say that if we find ourselves with an extreme problem with respect to access to family doctors, we will all know exactly where to look for the cause of that problem. It will be this UCP government and the decisions they made as are embedded in Bill 21.

Let's just talk a little bit more about other people who are providing important front-line services to Albertans. Now, the issue around the rollbacks are not specifically embedded in this bill, but there is no question that there are a series of provisions that are absolutely designed to create unrest with the almost 200,000 people in this province who (a) pay taxes, (b) provide important services to all Albertans, and (c) contribute mightily to the economic health of this province through the fact that they actually are mortgage-paying consumers in an economy that, you know, needs more of those, not less. This government has decided that no, 200,000 people: that's a good-sized group that we should pick a fight with and be profoundly disrespectful to. Interestingly, a majority of them are women. This is hardly surprising because that's a whole other pattern that we see reflected in pretty much everything that this government does.

Nonetheless, this bill repeals the ban on replacement workers, which is part and parcel of the essential services legislation. Now, as members opposite know, the essential services legislation was something that came into place as a result of a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. Once again, it turns out that the government of Alberta was breaking the law left, right, and centre under the previous government and breaching the constitutional rights of roughly 200,000 Albertans. We had to bring in legislation that allowed for essential services legislation. Fine. Now, the way essential services legislation works is that various providers of services – let's take health care, for example – go before the Labour Relations Board. The employer and the union go in, and they talk about what services must be there in the event of a strike and what services the employer, i.e., the government, can do without for a period of time in the event of a strike. This negotiated work is done over a period of time. This is the system that exists in many other jurisdictions.

It is part and parcel of that system, then, that a ban on replacement workers is also put in place because otherwise, if you were not to do that, the negotiations themselves would be distorted and would likely not ever result in any kind of effective and useful outcome. In addition, anybody who knows anything about labour relations will tell you that by allowing for replacement workers, or scabs, as most people in the labour movement refer to them, what you do is you actually escalate and accelerate unrest and hostility and dysfunction within the bargaining relationship. That is why other jurisdictions, even very right-wing conservative jurisdictions, who inherit NDP bans on scabs ultimately maintain them, because they realize that, in fact, better labour relations and more productivity and better outcomes actually occur when you have a system that compels people to sit down and negotiate equally and respectfully and that if instead you invite scab labour into a labour dispute, what will happen is that hostility will occur and a great deal of dispute and conflict will occur. The number of days that are lost to a strike go up, and productivity goes down. That's clear stuff out there. It's actually clear.

Contrary to popular belief over on that side of the House, it's actually the case that with NDP governments we are typically more successful at getting more productivity out of both the public-sector and the private-sector workforce because we treat workers with

respect. It shouldn't actually be a great epiphany to hear that because it comes down to this: you respect the rules and you treat people with respect, and ultimately you get folks back to work sooner. What this legislation does is it sets up the opposite. It sets up a plan to pick a fight, to draw a line in the sand, to create conflict, to create hostility, and to ultimately undermine the security of those services and to ultimately undermine and reduce the productivity that would otherwise exist were you able to get to a resolution with respect to the bargaining regime faster. That is happening.

Meanwhile, we have – but we're not quite sure what the legal consequences are – another piece in this legislation that in theory is merely formalizing the bargaining oversight of the government as it relates to AHS and postsecondary institutions and school boards and a whole host of other intermediaries. But we're not sure if it's also trying to give them cover for what is otherwise an open-and-shut case of bargaining in bad faith as triggered by the Finance minister's backing and forth between, on one hand, threatening rollbacks and, on the other hand, threatening people with being fired.

8:20

Just to be clear, this is a repeated theme. I guess I'm not doing as well as some of the members in my caucus, but this is all so we can pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate handout that thus far has resulted in 27,000 jobs being lost and hundreds of millions of dollars being invested in other jurisdictions and companies like EnCana leaving Canada. It's not working out so far so well and also creating huge pressure for this government to do a number of really unwise things that make people's lives harder. It is being done for that reason.

At the same time, were the minister actually successful in getting a 4 or 5 per cent layoff – you know, I asked during the budget, and I've not yet got an answer, if he could provide to us the briefings he's received from his officials about what a 5 per cent rollback to 200,000 people would do to the economic activity of this province; it's not nothing. Or if that 5 per cent rollback was taken out by way of layoffs or firing, what would that do to the economic activity? That's separate and apart from looking at what the absence of those services would mean to the economy, which also, I suspect, would drag it down quite a bit. Anyway, these kinds of provisions are remarkably poorly thought out. They're bad for the economy. They're bad for the services Albertans rely on. They're bad for regular Alberta families. They're just bad, and they're very, very disrespectful.

I do not understand why it is this government literally gets up every Monday morning and says: hmm; we haven't broken a law yet when it comes to working people; let's see if we can do another one. You know, why there is so much hostility to the idea of working people coming together in order to secure more benefits for themselves and their families I do not know, but it's certainly alive and well with the folks over there.

Now, speaking of doing damage to other people and also doing things – and this was the second theme that I was going to mention, that this bill is just rife with broken promises. The folks over there misled Albertans. Pretty much every time their leader opened his mouth during the election campaign, something came out, and the exact opposite has happened ever since. If you look at the very verbose – and I'm pretty sure the leader must have had something to do with it – platform that came out in the last election, you can just go through and go check, check, check or highlight, highlight, depending, you know, on how you like to review things, maybe with stickies on the side, for every broken promise. It starts to look like quite pretty. It's like a little bit of an art project that your kids bring back from school with all the little stickies coming

off it, all the promises that are throughout that document that show where the Premier spoke, promised one thing, and clearly is delivering the exact opposite.

One of those places relates, of course, to the relationship between this government and municipal leaders and municipalities across the province. Now, when we get to Bill 20, I'll talk about that in more detail, but it is in this bill that we see the ability of the government to take more money from municipalities as far as it relates to traffic fines. Just to be clear, you know, it seems like we've talked about this a lot in the Legislature during question period, but the Attorney General seems profoundly unable to understand what it is he's just done. I have to assume he doesn't understand because otherwise he would actually be saying things that he knew weren't true, and we all know what the word for that is. What's happened here is that by proposing to change the way they share the revenue from traffic fees, the minister is taking just from Calgary and Edmonton alone about \$20 million a year. About \$20 million times four years is \$80 million. I know that the minister over there loves to talk about: oh, well, we're giving up to \$40 million in increased funding in ALERT. But, you know, I know that math is tough. No one wants to see a New Democrat try to do math, but I will throw it out there anyway; \$80 million minus \$40 million is a difference of \$40 million, which means \$40 million less for police, and that's just in Edmonton and Calgary.

I really wish that maybe back in the Confederation Room there some of you could have a little chat with your Attorney General, walk him through the numbers so that he stops saying things which are so obviously untrue because it's embarrassing. Quite frankly, he's becoming a little embarrassing. If I were you, guys, I would just give him a little briefing on that one.

Either way, the fact is this. When we go back to this matter of the UCP platform and the commitments that were made to Albertans in the last election, the fact is that Albertans were not told that they were going to get fewer resources dedicated to policing, yet that's what they're getting now. Albertans were told that they were going to get a government that was really concerned with law and order. Between the many police resources that I'm sure are still being taken up dealing with the whole kamikaze investigation and then, on top of that, the amount of work that's going into breaking labour legislation and breaching the Constitution, you know, I would say that law and order is not a number one priority over there, Madam Speaker. Frankly, Albertans deserve better.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**Ms Notley:** Another thing that I would like to talk about as it relates to Bill 21 . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, a point of order has been called.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on a point of order on 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona clearly just suggested that law and order is not important to us on this side of the House. It's also language that could certainly cause disorder in this Chamber, and I ask her to be cautious but also to retract those comments. On this side of the House we do believe that law and order is paramount and a priority for us, and I'd ask her to be cautious with the things she says.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to take the opportunity to speak on this. It was clear that the Leader of the Official Opposition was speaking about the government. It's a matter of opinion. In no way, shape, or form is it suggesting anything that would cause either disorder, nor would it be anything that is outside the ordinary function of this Chamber in regard to speaking on perspectives on government policy, which is what we debate here in this Chamber.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members, for your opinions on this matter. I would argue that talking about matters outside of this House that don't have anything to do with government policy is probably not actually talking about government policy.

Furthermore, there have been a number of instances throughout this course of debate, particularly comments made by the Leader of the Official Opposition, that are most definitely pushing the limits on the ways in which we speak about members and about governments, particularly around misleading the public or, you know, fast and loose with the truth. Those types of comments are not very helpful through this debate. I know that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition is a skilled orator and can certainly find better ways to discuss topics like these. I don't see a point of order; however, I would stress caution moving forward.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition to proceed.

8:30

### Debate Continued

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The next area that I was going to go to and that I think I will end on with respect to this particular bill, of course, relates to the series of decisions around indexing AISH, employment and income support benefits, the seniors' benefit, and the seniors' lodge program. You know, this is a tough one because this one – well, all of these are very close to our hearts, and I actually kind of thought it was close to the hearts of the members opposite as well. I know I won't be the first one to mention this, but it bears repeating because it does go to the degree to which Albertans can trust the members opposite when they say and do things and promise things.

Before the last election our government brought forward a bill to ensure that indexation was legislatively provided for in this House, and the reason we did that was because we were tired, in a province like this, of having so many people living so far below the poverty line. It just seemed wrong. And every year that inflation continued – to be clear, it did every year – people lost more, Madam Speaker.

You know, I always say that one of the proudest elements that I had or the proudest accomplishments that I had as the leader of the government that we led over four years was that over the course of those four years, even in the midst of one of the deepest, darkest, hardest recessions, created by the dramatic drop in the price of oil internationally, over that time we pulled 40,000 children out of poverty. We cut child poverty in half. Some people go into their political career to achieve only that. Now we have members opposite who seem to be absolutely committed to undoing that work, and one of the first places they are going to go to undo that work is to the most vulnerable Albertans we have: disabled Albertans who receive AISH, Albertans who have barriers to full employment who receive income support, Albertans who have no barriers but their EI has disappeared and they have no other choice but to receive income support, and low-income seniors. These are the people that these folks over there have decided are the go-to payers for this \$4.7 billion corporate tax handout, and it is shameful.

It is also shameful, of course, because before the last election, when we brought this legislation in, everybody voted for it. Everybody said that it was long overdue, and everybody said that they supported it. They went into the election and said to Albertans: "Look at us. You can count on us. We're not mean. We'll protect you. You can trust us. We voted for this thing." Then they came in here and undid it, and I honestly, for the love of God, don't know how many of you can look at yourself in the mirror after that. It is a profound betrayal of Albertans who need people in government to be on their side the most.

You know, another interesting statistic, which I discovered not too long ago, was that even in Calgary – and we know how hard Calgary has been struggling with the drop in the price of oil and with all the jobs that were lost in Calgary and continue to be lost under the leadership of this government – over that time I was quite surprised to discover that the number of people living in poverty, below the poverty line, actually went down. That was because government stood up and said: "Even when times are tough like this, we can have one of two choices. We can turn our backs on each other, we can create a divide and then spread it apart so that there are those who have and those who do not, we can sow division and make people angry at each other for the difficult situation we find ourselves in, or we can take a different approach. We can have each other's backs, we can support the people who need our support the most, and we can make sure that when we come out of this difficult time, we come out of it together, stronger, with more capacity than we had when the difficult time began."

That is the choice that our government made when we passed the legislation to begin indexing and to legislatively protect and to increase the rates of income for these groups. Members opposite say: oh, well, you didn't pass the legislation till, you know, the fall before the election. Well, what we did do was that we increased the rates to more than surpass what they would have been at had we begun indexation in 2015. So don't for one moment try to suggest that that wasn't a priority for us always and that we didn't in fact ensure that indexation was a feature of our whole term, because it was.

Now folks over there have decided that in order to pay for a \$50 million handout to EnCana, in order to pay for a \$230 million handout to Husky, in order to pay for a \$25 million handout to another one of the oil companies, the name of which I cannot remember right now, we have to reach into the pockets of some person with a severe disability who may or may not have children, who is relying on that AISH income to help put food on the table, and we need to remove, as of January 1, roughly – was it \$20 or \$30? I guess it depends on what the rate of inflation is – between \$20 and \$30 a month.

And the leader of those folks over there says: that's not onerous. I hope to God that at least some of you cringed when you heard him say that, that somehow for somebody who makes less than \$1,700 a month, trying to pay rent and put food on the table and pay the electricity bill and get from point A to point B on public transit and to do all the things that people do when they're living a life – to suggest that it is not onerous for that person to lose \$20 or \$30 a month and then another \$20 or \$30 the following year and another \$20 or \$30 the year after is cringeworthy. It reveals a profound level of entitlement that, you know, Albertans were promised they weren't going to see when they elected the UCP. They were told: "That's just a Conservative thing; that's not who we are. We're not entitled. We're a new brand of right wing." I think your leader stumbled a little bit there, and the curtain revealed a pretty old-school level of entitlement and tone-deafness to what it means to people to try to make ends meet on that small amount of money.

Seniors. I mean, we know, of course, that the seniors who rely on that benefit that will no longer be indexed are primarily women: your moms, your grandmothers, your aunts. Somehow they're okay to be the ones to fund your corporate handout. My goodness, it really is a difficult-to-process set of choices. You know, politics is about choices. There's no question; it is absolutely about choices. The majority members in this House, the government members, the UCP members, have clearly signalled to Albertans who they are and what their values are in the choices that are embedded in this budget and embedded in Bill 21. The choice to retain and preserve the ability to hand out \$4.7 billion to wealthy corporations and their shareholders, probably the majority of whom do not even reside in the province, and to make your grandmother pay for it in a loss of between \$20 and \$30 a month, starting on January 1: like, wow. Seriously? Anyway, I just don't know how you make those kinds of choices.

I mean, I can see disagreeing with us on what is the best way to incent economic activity. I can see disagreeing with us on what the best strategies are for diversification. But to stand here and break a promise, to quietly sit while we read back your quotes to you from a mere eight or nine months ago, and to make eye contact as you vote to support this kind of mean-spirited, cruel cut in order to support \$4.7 billion to well-established, profitable corporations, who appear to be using the money to subsidize their moves out of the province: that takes a lot of political will, I have to say. You've really got to believe in the need to pick on the most vulnerable really deep in your heart in order to make those kinds of choices.

8:40

What I will say is that in our caucus those are not our choices. We think that when you are confronted with hard times, you need to pull together, and those who can afford to pay a little bit more should. It doesn't matter if times are good or times are tough, your measure as a person comes down to how you respond to those who need your help the most when times are tough. It's easy to be generous when times are good. The question is: what kind of choices do you make when times are tough? I think that you must always be focused on supporting those who are struggling in poverty, whether it be your grandmother or the grandchildren who are living with that grandmother who are looking for three healthy meals a day. The choice should be to support them. That is the exact opposite of what we see revealed in Bill 21, an act to make life more difficult for Albertans. As you can imagine, we will be doing a great deal to resist the passage of this piece of legislation because it really goes against our fundamental values, and I would argue that it actually goes against the fundamental values of many, many Albertans.

We've had this conversation before, but just to be reminded, the Premier suggested that there was no need to have consultations with Albertans before the budget was released because, you know, they had this great consultation during the election. But I would argue that when the written version of your consultation with Albertans before the election now looks like a grade 3 kid's art project because there are so many colours and stickies beside all the different things that you've now broken promises on, the consultation is no longer a valid justification.

I would argue that even those Albertans who are struggling with what's been going on in our economy since the price of oil dropped – we've seen what's going on with the energy industry, and even as it recovers, we know that it's restructuring and that it will not even recover in exactly the same way, with as many jobs per barrel of oil. I would argue that the people who are very angry and very frustrated about that and, absolutely, angry at us, too – I'll be the first to admit it; there's no question about that – I don't think that

those folks would choose to give \$4.7 billion to wealthy corporations while we pull money away from vulnerable Albertans, severely disabled Albertans, low-income seniors, who are primarily women, and out-of-work construction workers. I don't think those people are the ones who should be paying for these \$4.7 billion corporate handouts. No matter how angry those folks might be at me – fair enough – I also still think that those aren't their values. It's not the values of the vast majority of people to do what's being done here, and it's not something that's going to garner you a tremendous amount of support when you go home at Christmas and describe to people the choices that you are making here today.

I think at this point I'm getting close to my sort of high-level analysis of Bill 21. I haven't had the chance to go through it in more detail, but we've hit the key points within it that are troublesome to us. I certainly do reserve the right and the opportunity to point out additional difficulties as they are revealed. This is what we've got from having gone through it and having analyzed it thus far.

I am very much appreciative, Madam Speaker, that I've been given the opportunities to speak as long as I have been in order to outline our concerns with Bill 21. I certainly hope that members opposite will take some of these concerns to heart and will consider making some of the changes that I know we will be looking forward to proposing once we get to that stage in debate. Of course, because this is an omnibus, which of course is another thing, it is jamming way more into it than you would normally see in a regular piece of legislation, and it will probably be a rather extensive conversation because there is so much in here that we will be seeking the opportunity to amend and correct and make better. So I look forward to having more conversations in more detail about those elements of the bill that we think can be improved. Until that time, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today.

With that, I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019**

[Adjourned debate October 30: Mr. Schmidt]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I'm pleased to rise for what, I guess, now seems like the second time to Bill 20, but really is officially the first time speaking to Bill 20, which is the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. You know, I'm still actually processing the eloquent statements by the Leader of the Official Opposition with respect to Bill 21, which absolutely apply to Bill 20 as well, mostly because it speaks to the values. It speaks to the values of this government caucus, but also it speaks to the values of the opposition caucus. If I ever needed a reminder as to why I'm here today and why I chose to do this – we all make a choice when we run for politics to make sacrifices with respect to our families and our lives, but it's because we believe in what we're doing, and we believe that we hold certain values to be true, and we want to promote those values. I can just say that once again, as I often feel when I listen to the Leader of the Official Opposition speak, it reminds me of exactly why I'm here and why I'm so proud to stand as a member of this opposition caucus.

I want to speak to the provisions in particular of Bill 20 because, like Bill 21, they have the same effect, which is that they are making life less affordable for Albertans. They are a series of choices about hitting the most vulnerable people the hardest but also breaking promises to Albertans and also making choices, because the

government made a choice to give away \$4.7 billion to corporations, and here we are seeing the outcome of that choice. You know, they rushed to do that, and in fact it was one of their promises that they kept with respect to their platform, to cut the corporate tax rate, but what they were not forthcoming about were all the cuts that would be coming to all the services and all the Albertans as a result of that choice. What they also were not honest and upfront about was the fact that that decision to cut corporate taxes was just, really, a gamble. It was a wish and a hope on something that would happen, that has clearly not happened yet.

The details of Bill 20 also show not only, again, that this government is making choices to sacrifice the well-being, the day-to-day life of Albertans for corporations' bottom lines, but it also shows, again, a lack of vision for the future of this province. It shows short-sightedness when it comes to diversification, about investment in postsecondary, and about investment in our young people. It continues to show and demonstrate that this government wants to roll back the clock 50 years to where we were in a different time and in a different world. But the world has progressed, and this government has not.

Specifically I'll mention, for example, the decision in Bill 20 – I'm going to keep referring to them as decisions and choices because that's exactly what this government has done, made a series of choices. They've chosen, for example, to end the interactive digital media tax credit and the capital investment tax credit and the community and economic tax credit and the Alberta investor tax credit and the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. Now, all that speaks to is that they're continuing to put all of Albertans' eggs in one basket. They're continuing to demonstrate that they don't actually care about diversifying our economy. They don't care about the growth that has taken place over the last series of years, both under the NDP government but even leading up to that, where there was so much great innovative work that was happening in this province.

**8:50**

Again, one of the reasons why I chose to run was because I saw in the innovation that was coming out that there was a way to diversify, to continue to show that we are an innovative group of people, we are an innovative province. We did that with our oil and gas industry, we did that in so many other ways, and we can do it with other industries, too. Yet this government continues to cut out those supports in favour of putting all of our eggs continually in one basket.

I also want to talk about the broken promise that this government made with municipalities. You know, I think we've all at this point heard the outrage from the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary with respect to the decision by this government, the choice by this government to rip up the city charters framework. Really, that was a clear broken promise because not only was the commitment to the city charters in the UCP platform, but repeatedly this Premier stood up and said that he was not going to do that. Yet he did exactly that. Certainly, when you listen to the comments from the mayor from Edmonton and the mayor from Calgary, they said that even in their conversations with the Premier, pretty much up until the point that this legislation was tabled, he had continued to maintain that he was going to keep city charters. Well, that was completely – I mean, a broken promise is a nice way to put it. In fact, what he was doing was telling untruths to the faces of the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton because he was saying he was going to do it and he did not do it. He actually ripped that up.

All that means is that we, Albertans and the city of Edmonton, the city of Calgary, are going to continue to pay the price for that. Actually, the Premier has said it himself: there is only one taxpayer.

There's only one taxpayer, whether we're paying taxes to the municipal government, to our provincial government, to our federal government. The Premier has stood up and he has made the situation for the people who live in the major municipalities in this province much harder. All that is going to do is download the responsibilities of the provincial government on to the municipal governments. We as Albertans are still going to pay for that. We're still going to pay for that whether we pay for it with increased property taxes, which is somewhat inevitable, but we're also going to pay for it in the fact that we will continue to have, which we had for 44 years under the Progressive Conservatives, an infrastructure debt. We carried a huge debt with respect to that, and now that debt is being created again by this provincial government by refusing to maintain its commitments to municipalities.

You know, I also note, by the way, that even just as recently as today the mayors from Edmonton and Calgary urged this government to consider an amendment to Bill 20, an amendment that would tie municipal revenues to provincial revenues at a 1 to 1 ratio which would give municipalities more resources when more resources are available, but when they're not available, they would also get scaled back, tying, basically, the revenues to the provincial revenue stream. It's my understanding that without even considering a formal amendment, the Minister of Finance has already refused to accept that. It seems like the Minister of Finance and this government are determined to make it incredibly difficult for municipalities to follow through on the commitments that they've made as a result of promises from the provincial government but also to download those costs on to Albertans.

I also want to speak a little bit about another broken promise. There is a consistent theme that's coming out here because Bill 20 in particular, but Bill 20, Bill 21, and the budget all reflect a series of broken promises from this government. The next broken promise – actually, I found this one to be quite surprising in its irony – is that this government is no longer indexing income tax brackets or the personal income tax exemption. Why this is so ironic? Well, it's called bracket creep, and where did that term come from? Well, from the Premier himself when he was the head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. He used to lobby against this kind of deindexation because he basically said: “Well, you know what? It's just raising income taxes without being up front and transparent about it.” Guess what? He's right. That's exactly what he's going to do.

Speaking about broken promises, this Premier campaigned strongly against, you know, the ogre of the carbon tax but also saying that he would not increase taxes, yet that's exactly what he's done, and he's done that to every single person. Every single Albertan is now going to be affected by that. That is an increase in their income tax.

I'll tell you that I represent a riding that tends to be a little bit more affluent. There are a lot of people, not everybody – certainly, not everybody in my riding is doing well, but certainly a little bit more privilege in my riding. Yet I have had a number of people, who maybe even voted UCP – I don't know – reaching out to my office, and they're saying: “What? This is not what we were promised. We were not told by the Premier that our income taxes were going to go up.” In fact, they thought he was the champion against taxes, yet one of the first things this Premier does is that not only does he break his promise about no increase in taxes, but he's doing exactly what he used to lobby against when he was the head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. In fact, this might be the only time in history that the Official Opposition agrees with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that this Premier is actually increasing taxes, and we're both shocked that he would do it. Now, I don't think there's ever going to be a time when we're going to be

aligned again with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, but with respect to that, all Albertans from all sides of the spectrum are shocked because this was a blatant broken promise. Yet that's what he did.

Let's also talk about amending the funding agreements for the LRT in Edmonton and Calgary. This was something that – again, when we're talking about transitioning and thinking about the future of our province, we really have to show a commitment to public transit such as the LRT. Again, this is a broken promise from the Premier to municipalities. He's basically deferred payment on those LRTs. And let's just say, once again, that when we're talking about a Premier who has a record, in only six months of being Premier, of breaking promise after promise, when he's saying that it's deferred until 2023, his word doesn't carry a whole lot of weight because he's also already demonstrated that when he says one thing, he can break that promise immediately and do something else. I don't think any of us are feeling any comfort when this government uses terms like “suspend” or “pausing” or “deferring” because really what we know is that their word is mud, frankly. It doesn't carry a lot of weight there. Certainly, I know that I'm concerned as somebody who lives in Edmonton and was relying on the idea that the LRT would be extended. I don't believe that this province is going to be funding that, and I'm not surprised that the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary would also not believe that anymore.

I also want to speak very quickly to the end of the lottery fund and moving that money into general revenue. Now, again, my constituency is comprised of a lot of very active volunteers. They actively volunteer within their community leagues, within their school councils. They're often very involved in nonprofit organizations. They do a lot of charity work in my constituency, and I'm very proud of that. People in Edmonton-Whitemud give back a significant amount. They put in a lot of their time and a lot of their energy into helping nonprofits, and they rely on things like casinos for lottery fund money.

Again, this government claims that they're just moving it into general revenue to save on administration costs, but we also know what happens when things get moved into general revenue. The amount of money that becomes available specifically for that allotted requirement disappears because all of a sudden you're competing with all the other draws on the general revenue fund. Actually, what the government caucus members used to rail about – although they were wrong, they'd say that the carbon tax was going into general revenue as a slush fund. They seemed to have a concern about that. Why? Because they thought it was just money that was going into the pool that could be distributed however government sees fit. But that's exactly what they're doing with the lottery fund. They're distributing that money into general revenue, so now all of those nonprofits, all of those school councils, all of those organizations that rely upon that money, that casino money, are now feeling like that money may not be there for them.

Can you blame them? I don't blame them. I don't blame them for feeling uncertain about that, particularly when, again, this government has shown its consistent track record of breaking their promises. They're using fudgy words like “deferring” and “pausing” and “suspending,” but really they're just simply – the trust is gone. The trust has completely been eliminated when it comes to how this government is dealing with their funds. Let's just talk about the other ways that – community leagues, for example, rely heavily on CFEP, rely heavily on CIP. Those have all been cut significantly.

So, of course, I have no words of comfort for my constituents when they say: “Is the money that we're raising, the money that we're working so hard for our nonprofits just going to be distributed? Are we going to ever see that money back?” I say:

"You know what? It's really hard to trust anything this government says right now and particularly this Premier because right now everything they say is a broken promise. What we're seeing in Bill 20, what we're seeing in Bill 21, what we're seeing in the budget: all broken promises." I really suspect that the Premier is going to need to get a little bit more communications advice. When he says, "Promise made, promise kept": I'm sorry; he's run out of opportunities to use that because now all we're seeing is promise made, promise broken. That has been consistently the case for particularly what we're seeing in these bills.

I am certainly very concerned. My constituents are very concerned, and I wish I could give them some comfort, Madam Speaker, but I certainly can't, not when the comfort is supposed to be coming from the mouth of our Premier, who has broken promise after promise.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

9:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I simply want to respond to a number of the comments that I've heard from across the aisle tonight on Bill 20. Firstly, in terms of our broad-based approach to incentivizing investment in this province and ensuring that we have an environment that will attract investment and encourage diversification, a broad-based approach, in fact, does encourage investment for sustainable diversification. It's the approach that doesn't have government manipulating capital flows, that may or may not be based on market realities or the sustainability of actual, real returns on investment, again without government interference. I'm confident that our broad-based approach will in fact lead to long-term, sustainable diversification.

In fact, our job-creation tax cut will disproportionately benefit nonenergy companies as resource companies support or contribute in a significant way through royalties, and thereby their corporate tax contributions through the corporate tax system tend to be somewhat lower than nonresource companies. Again, our job-creation tax cut will disproportionately encourage diversification in this province.

I do also want to just talk very briefly about debt. We've inherited a trajectory of \$100 billion of debt from the previous government if we'd stayed on the track that we found ourselves on. Our fiscal plan very transparently puts us at \$92 billion, but if we calculated the debt, in fact, if we used the same methodology as the NDP government did, we would in fact be at \$86 billion of debt after the end of four years. Madam Speaker, \$86 billion is a large amount of money, but it's significantly less than the \$97 billion that the previous government put us on in terms of the trajectory.

Madam Speaker, when I campaigned during this last election, there was one common-denominator issue that virtually all Albertans agreed on, and that was that we could not continue to spend and leave large, massive amounts of debt for the next generation. This was an issue that crossed gender lines, that crossed socioeconomic lines – it was oil and gas workers, it was teachers and nurses, it was parents, it was single folks – but there was the common sentiment that we could not continue to spend recklessly at the rate we were spending. In fact, the previous government's operational spending increased by almost 4 per cent per year at a time when revenues were flat.

Our budget and fiscal plan turn that trajectory down that so that we, this generation, can live within our means and not pass burdensome debt on to our children and grandchildren. Madam Speaker, what this means is that not only will we be able to deliver

programs today to Albertans, but we will be able to deliver high-quality programs to Albertans tomorrow and next year and for the next generation.

I'm pleased to support Bill 20 also because we are taking this time to clean up a number of funds that are simply no longer needed and, in fact, are costing Albertans, including the lottery fund, which we have evaluated. We've determined that if we dissolve the lottery fund, we can continue to support the great work that charities and nonprofits do in our communities at precisely the same levels of support that they received before. But, more importantly, Madam Speaker, by sound fiscal cash management, by dissolving these funds that no longer serve a purpose, we can save Albertans \$13 million a year. We would be irresponsible not to make these key moves to provide Albertans sound fiscal management, the very type of management that they elected this government to provide.

With that, I will conclude my comments for now.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 20, and I'm sure you'll be happy to know that I don't think I'll be going the full 90 minutes on this, so that's good news for everybody. That being said, it will take some time to outline why it is we are opposed to Bill 20 because there is no question that there are a number of features to it that are quite troubling.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I think, just sort of carrying on from where the Finance minister was just speaking, I'm certainly curious to hear the different calculation methods between the \$86 billion and \$92 billion, which I actually thought was \$93 billion, but I'm happy to double-check. Again, in our case, as I said, the last time our debt was projected was when we were planning on bringing in an \$8.9 billion deficit. At that time it was \$97 billion, and then of course we brought in a \$6.7 billion deficit. Of course, that would mean that our accumulated debt would actually be, well, below \$95 billion but at the very maximum \$95 billion.

Again, it's lovely to hear the minister talk about the evils of debt and the way in which that can impact on the ability to pay for things in the future, but I would suggest, then, that given that there's really no difference between their plan and ours, what we seem to be focusing on instead is the decisions of this government to give \$4.7 billion to profitable corporations.

But that's not all they're doing. There are, in fact, other things that they are doing in the course of this budget as reflected in this bill, so I'd like to take a few moments to talk about them. I've essentially divided them into four categories.

The first one, of course, which the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud spoke about, was this \$600 million tax increase. I've got to say, it's kind of surprising, the chutzpah of the Premier, who literally made his career railing against what he called an insidious and pernicious tax grab, a sneaky tax grab. There's no way he didn't realize what he was doing. Certainly, there was no way he missed the part in the very long-winded platform, that I'm pretty sure he had a fair amount of input into, where they said: no new taxes. He understands – again, I'm not trying to attract 23(h), (i), and (j) here; I'm just using the Premier's language – the nature of the insidious . . .

**Ms Phillips:** Invidious.

**Ms Notley:** Invidious. Oh, sorry.



... invidious, pernicious, sneaky tax increase that is embedded in this budget and in Bill 20, wherein Albertans pay another \$600 million over the course of four years. You add that up to the cost of the removal of their cap on electricity, and we're already at a cool billion that we've asked regular Albertans to pony up on over the course of the next four years. But wait; there is more, but that's not necessarily entirely covered in this bill, so I'll just talk about the \$600 million.

What I will say – and really this goes to trust. Now, I think that people should endeavour to be as straightforward and up front with voters as they can possibly be. You know, it's hard. I get that when you get into government, you are suddenly overwhelmed. You talk about drinking – oh, what is the phrase?

9:10

**Ms Phillips:** From a firehose.

**Ms Notley:** A firehose.

... from a firehose when you get elected to government. You just have so much stuff that comes at you, so much complexity, so much import. So it's hard sometimes to completely stick with your promises that you made when you ran in an election.

But my view is that when you present yourself to an electorate – in this case, the people of Alberta – you should do so with the utmost honesty and do everything you can to be as honest and as up front as possible. For instance, back in 2015 we did two things on that front. The first one: many people will remember that we put out a platform, and in it we had a budget. It turned out that we had miscalculated. Now, not everybody would have noticed that. In fact, it's very possible that no one would have noticed that. But I remember thinking: no; there is no way that we are going to try to pull a fast one on the people of Alberta. So we came out the next day and we said: "You know what? Sorry; we made a mistake." That's what I think Albertans are owed when they go to the task of casting a ballot.

The other thing we talked about in that election was that we said, "Hey, we're going into tough times" – we knew we were going into tough times – "so some people are going to have to pay more because that's the way we come together when you're going into tough times." We said that corporations needed to go from 10 per cent to 12 per cent, and we said that we were going to get rid of the flat tax and make high-income earners pay a little bit more, and that's exactly what we did. Just to be clear, even having done that, we still enjoyed an \$11 billion tax advantage over not the national average but just over the next lowest taxed province, adjusted for population. So I think we were okay.

Now, the reason I raise that, of course, is because the Premier has dedicated his whole life to being an antitax person. All he can do is go on about how taxes are bad, and all he could say in the last election was to talk about how taxes of any type are bad. That's all he ever said, Mr. Speaker, yet in his first budget, what does he do? He introduces a \$600 million tax grab onto every taxpaying Albertan in the province. I don't know about you, but that sounds to me like a fundamental breach of trust with the people of this province.

I agree that there probably does need to be more taxes paid – I would argue, about \$4.7 billion more taxes paid – in this province. But the point is that you can't run on one thing and do the opposite. That's what this is. On pure principle of supporting a broken promise, I can't do that. We can't vote for this because the members opposite were not honest with the people of Alberta when they last ran, in the spring election.

Now, the second thing that is embedded in this piece of legislation is the cancellation of the film industry credit, the AITC,

the capital tax credit, the scientific research and experimental development tax credit, the tuition tax credit, the education tax credit, and the community economic development corporation tax credit. All of these were elements of the plans that we had put in place to diversify Alberta's economy away from being solely reliant on oil and gas. Of course, Mr. Speaker, this is something that people in this province have talked about for decades, but we'd never moved on it. All of these strategies were geared towards focusing on incenting certain types of diversification and economic development and growth.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite love to quote a couple of different economists to argue that their \$4.7 billion corporate handout is going to be the magical elixir from which many new jobs will suddenly appear in the province of Alberta. But I would argue just from an economic point of view – I mean, at least one of those economists developed their projections on the basis of national numbers, not Alberta's numbers, so essentially their economic modelling was incorrect. The other one, you know, also tends to pair his positions with respect to corporate tax cuts with an equivalent increase to a sales tax and an ongoing call for a sales tax. Somehow these folks have just managed to pick and choose the models.

I would argue that either way it's an outdated model because to the extent that anyone believes that an open-ended corporate tax cut is the way to incent economic development, the fact of the matter is that that is only the case when you are moving from a highly taxed scenario to a very low-tax scenario. As I've already outlined, that's not the situation that we were in. That also, you know, assumes that we have just this clean sort of model with no other factors in place. We're not dealing with the fact that many other jurisdictions are competing with us in a whole bunch of other ways, that we are actually playing on an international level, and that quite frankly our efforts to diversify our economy need to be far more sophisticated and far more thoughtful. As a result, this broad-based corporate tax cut is unlikely to be successful. Indeed, where we've seen it experimented with in other jurisdictions in the world, particularly south of the border, it has proven to be an utter failure.

I'd like to just read a few quotes from folks on the issue of the broad-based \$4.7 billion corporate handout to already profitable corporations, most of whom are leaving the province, versus some of the targeted strategies that we had in place which are now being eliminated by Bill 20.

James Keirstead, president and CEO of Levven Electronics, criticized the UCP government for its plan to cancel targeted tax incentives like the Alberta Investor Tax Credit, choosing instead to reduce corporate income taxes.

'This is going back to the old way of doing things as opposed to targeted programs that can drive diversification,' Keirstead said. 'A broad-based tax decrease doesn't help drive the economy. It's really nearsighted.'

And get this:

'I can't believe I'm saying this but I kind of agreed more with the way the NDP were doing things... and I'm a staunch Conservative.'

That's what he had to say about this government's \$4.7 billion risky corporate handout.

Keith Warner is in the digital media space.

'It was a bitter pill for me to swallow,' said Keith Warner, whose video-game studio, New World North, opened earlier this year and now employs 26 people, with other positions still unfilled.

'I'll be honest, I was pretty upset.'

Mr. Warner said he set up shop in Calgary over Toronto after being enticed by the province's tax incentives, as well as the affordable housing market and proximity to his company's

headquarters in Colorado. Now, none of the provincial funding is available.

And then,

'I am absolutely 100 per cent questioning our decision . . . I would've made a different choice . . . I feel beat up on this one,' is essentially where he ends that.

Now, as far as the film industry credit, we have Emily Andras. She says:

I grew up in Calgary, now live in Toronto. I created a TV show, #WynonnaEarp, & chose to bring it BACK to Alberta to film (now in our 4th season). I am creating new series & also hope to make them with the best crews in Canada, #ABFilm. I can't if #ABPoli's disastrous cuts stand.

Finally, Bryan de Lottinville on the provincial budget.

'As one of the larger software companies in Alberta, we were disappointed by aspects of the Alberta budget, particularly as it relates to the need to support the burgeoning tech sector in this province,' de Lottinville told BetaKit. 'Both the removal of some of the tech-friendly tax incentives, and the comments of the finance minister to the effect that diversifying revenues is a "long term luxury" reflect, at best, a bit of short-sightedness and, at worst, willful blindness.'

That's what some folks have to say about the cuts that are embedded in this bill. They will not succeed in driving the kind of diversification that we need in this province. They will certainly – certainly – help shareholders who live in other parts of the country. But, really, how does that help our economy?

9:20

If you're talking about a 5 per cent rollback, if you take \$5,000 out of the pocket of a nurse who lives in Camrose, then – guess what? – the people who have businesses in Camrose are going to find that that nurse has \$5,000 less to spend in that community. Now, if you turn around and give that \$5,000 to a shareholder with EnCana, as we just have done, that shareholder, likely living somewhere in Manhattan – let's face it; people who own shares in major companies like that do not tend to be, you know, Joe and Jane Average Person – that person could go out and buy themselves a lovely \$5,000 purse, probably somewhere in Manhattan. That is great for the \$5,000 purse industry in Manhattan; it is not so great for the small-business owners who needed that nurse in Camrose to spend her money in their businesses. I mean, that's a whole other element to this handout to wealthy corporations who have literally no obligation to demonstrate any loyalty to the province of Alberta and the businesses there.

What else was cut through this bill? Well, we see, of course, that this is the one that cuts the tuition tax credit. Again, that is something that is worth thousands of dollars a year to Alberta families, regular Alberta families who were counting on that credit to either help them pay for their kids' university or, alternatively, to help those kids themselves pay off their student loans once they finished borrowing money to get themselves through university, once again a direct hit at either the incentive or the support for people who invest in getting a postsecondary education so that they can be the people who are our greatest resource, that younger, better educated population than anywhere else in the country. That's our greatest resource, and that's who we are targeting through the efforts here in Bill 20.

What else are we doing here? Well, the minister talked about the merging of a number of different funds: the cancer fund, \$450 million; the lottery fund, \$50 million; the environmental enhancement fund, \$150 million. All this money is being wrapped up and moved into general revenue. Now, the minister had made a lovely compelling argument for why that might make sense: oh, it's easier to administer, and we can save \$13 million.

But I can only go to the quotes and the comments made by the members opposite about their view of the sanctity of commitments around how money within general revenue will be spent. Back when we had the carbon tax, we actually had it established by way of legislation, that made it very clear in that legislation that you could not spend it on anything that was not related to reducing emissions unless it was one of the exceptions; i.e., the rebate or the small-business tax cut. We said that, but they said: oh, my gosh, no; the general revenue fund is the equivalent of a slush fund; you can't . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** It is.

**Ms Notley:** Oh. He says right now: it is; it's a slush fund. You should actually listen to what your Finance minister just said. He just said: well, some people accuse us of moving the lottery fund into a slush fund, but don't they understand it's general revenue? You folks should talk.

Anyhow, the fact of the matter is – yes, I will address you, Mr. Speaker; thank you for that reminder – that I know that general revenue is general revenue, but some of the folks over there, including the House leader, seem to believe that general revenue is a slush fund. Therefore, you can certainly understand – and, indeed, he just once again confirmed his belief that general revenue is a slush fund – why people who are very concerned about what would happen to the proceeds of the \$450 million cancer fund or the people who are concerned about what would happen to the proceeds of the \$50 million lottery fund, which supports community groups, nonprofit groups, charities throughout our province, why they might be a little nervous about these funds being released into general revenue, which, notwithstanding the lovely assurances of our Finance minister, appear to be perceived by other rather influential members of cabinet as the equivalent of a slush fund.

So people are worried. People are looking for answers. People are looking for guarantees. I certainly hope that when it comes to considering amendments to this legislation, in order to protect the sleep of those worried Albertans and to have them not worry about the statements made by the House leader, in fact the Finance minister will consider amendments we would put forward outlining restrictions on how those funds could be used within the general revenue fund.

The final thing I want to talk about, of course, is the extensive broken promises that have been made, delivered primarily by the Premier but certainly by anybody within the UCP caucus who campaigned under the platform that was released in the last provincial election. That platform said that the UCP supported the city charter. That platform committed that the UCP would fund what was inside the city charter. That platform suggested that they would support the green line and the west LRT. Now embedded in this bill we have a promise to break the city charter. We have a promise to reduce the funding that was part of the city charter legislation that we had put in place. We have a new regime that will ensure less certainty going forward for those municipalities.

All of these things are the exact opposite of what you can find in the UCP platform. I did have the page number of the platform somewhere. I don't have it with me now, but I'm sure my colleagues will do their best to remind the members opposite exactly where they need to be looking for the contradiction between what they told Albertans in the last election and what they are doing now. I mean, there's a lot of them; I get you. It's pretty much like reading the whole document. Nonetheless, we'll certainly try to find that particular page number.

**Ms Phillips:** It's 77.

**Ms Notley:** Page 77, the Member for Lethbridge-West tells me. Thank you very much for that.

Page 77 is where the members opposite committed to the people of Alberta, including the 70 per cent of Albertans who live in Edmonton and Calgary – is it 70 or maybe 60; I can't remember, whichever, the majority of Albertans who live in Edmonton or Calgary – where they said that they would respect the city charter and that they would fund the terms that had already been agreed on. Now they're going ahead to rip up the city charter and to not fund the terms that have been agreed on. That is there, and that is a broken promise. So, obviously, in the interests of integrity we couldn't possibly support that.

The other thing, though, is that the Premier and others, but specifically the Premier, promised Albertans that he would fund the green line and that he would fund the west LRT and that he supported those projects. Now what we see is this clause that allows them to back out of the deals on both of those projects with 90 days' notice and no other conditions necessary. Contrary to what the Transportation minister has been attempting to tell Albertans, those are not standard clauses. The reason they are not standard clauses is that if you put them in there, there would be an uncertainty premium of probably 50 per cent for anybody that wanted to actually sit down at a table and try to negotiate anything bordering on an honest agreement with the members opposite because they couldn't be counted on to be at the other side of the table for more than 90 days at any given time. That level of uncertainty means that any kind of contract becomes subject to a massive uncertainty clause.

9:30

It also means, therefore, with the level of uncertainty that has been injected into both of these projects by way of the 90-day clause, that the green line is very unlikely to go forward. The members opposite will try and say, "Oh, that's a decision of the city of Calgary," but that's patently false, Mr. Speaker. It is a function of a broken promise made by the members opposite. They promised the green line. They are now kiboshing the green line. They are responsible for it. They need to be accountable to Albertans for that decision.

Most recently we have heard from the mayor of Edmonton that they are concerned that now the west LRT is also in jeopardy because of the uncertainty that has been put in place with respect to this 90-day clause. It was interesting because originally, you know, I had heard from people at the city of Edmonton that even with the change to the city charter and the delay or the pause or the reprofiling or whatever word they want to use as opposed to "cut" that was put in place, the city of Edmonton thought they could still make the west LRT work. Then they discovered this 90-day clause, and they suddenly thought, their officials suddenly said: oh, now we are really not so sure because the uncertainty is just too much.

This is, effectively, a poison pill that these folks are injecting into the legislation for the sole purpose of killing these projects. I obviously think that is bad because I think public transportation is good for a multiplicity of reasons. I also think it's bad because it's what these folks promised Albertans in the last election, and now they're not doing it. I just think that with the level of cynicism that they are breeding in Alberta as a result of the disparity between the principles and the platform upon which they ran and the actual laws that they are bringing into effect now, it's just a sad day for our democracy, Mr. Speaker. That's a whole other reason why it's disappointing and why we obviously can't support it.

You know, as I said with respect to Bill 21, I suspect there are also a number of other very significant challenges embedded within Bill 20, but these are the ones that strike me as being the most

critical and the most challenging for us as a caucus to even begin trying to support this. We will endeavour to make amendments that will minimize the damage that is contained within Bill 20, but I don't know if we can. I mean, we really are seeing some significant challenges being imposed upon municipalities, imposed upon innovators and entrepreneurs and those who wish to engage in significant diversification of our economy. We are seeing significant limits being imposed upon those who raise money for cancer research concerns, imposed upon those who raise money for a multiplicity of other charity groups. We're seeing, of course, as well, challenges being imposed on anybody who wants to get anywhere near a postsecondary institution. Then, finally, we are seeing a \$600 million tax increase collectively on every taxpayer in Alberta.

These are things, of course, that are all being done in order to finance this ridiculous \$4.7 billion handout, which we know is only making wealthy shareholders, most of whom reside outside of the province, richer while Albertans are being asked to make significant, significant sacrifices. That is the outcome. We're not making any more progress of any significant nature with respect to reducing the debt. We're certainly not making any progress with respect to reducing the deficit; quite the opposite. What we are doing is making life harder for Albertans and really undermining the hope that they would have for a more modern, forward-looking, diversified future and one within which we support important infrastructure projects that will attract additional investment and ensure a better quality of life for Albertans across this province.

This is a very, very poorly thought-out bill, just as the budget is a poorly thought-out budget, and, just as I said with respect to Bill 21, it reflects a series of choices that certainly do not reflect the values of people in our NDP opposition caucus and, I would argue, absolutely do not reflect the values of the majority of Albertans. That the members opposite attempt to crow about the outcome of the last election: really, there is so much divergence between what we see here and what we saw in the UCP platform, that, you know, if they want to go out and show us more polling, then have at 'er, but there's no way anyone could reasonably make the argument that the election was an endorsement of what we see here in bills 20 or 21 because this is a complete one-eighty on so many positions that were taken by this UCP government in the last election.

We will continue to stand up for those Albertans who believe that everyone should pay their fair share to help us all get through these tough times and that if people have a little bit more, they should do their share and that the most vulnerable Albertans are not the ones who should pay the freight for the most wealthy and that all of us need to come together if we are actually going to do that thing that Albertans do so well, which is demonstrate entrepreneurial spirit, dedication, determination, discipline, and the energy that we have shown for so many years in the past to lead the country's economy and what we need to do going forward to lead the country's economy combined with a modern approach to diversifying the economy while supporting everybody within our province.

Appreciate very much, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to speak to this bill, and I look forward to the opportunity to engage in discussion of amendments that hopefully can make it a little bit more reflective of who we actually are as a province.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Government House Leader has the call.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise on 29(2)(a) to speak to the hon. member's

comments. The hon. member, the only Premier who ever oversaw a one-term government in the history of this province, when you listen to her comments today, you recognize that she still hasn't realized the great mistakes that she made when she was the Premier and, in fact, the impact that those mistakes had on the people that I represent and, frankly, on the people that she represents. There is so much to unpack in what she said that I may even have to rise after the 29(2)(a) to talk about this bill myself, to talk about some of the things that she said. But I want to talk about a couple of quick examples and then ask the hon. member some questions.

The first is that she refers to our platform, specifically to page 80, in regard to this commitment: maintain key infrastructure commitments in the province's capital plan, such as LRT extensions in Calgary and Edmonton. That's exactly what the hon. the Finance minister and this government have done inside this budget, exactly that. Another promise made; another promise kept.

Mr. Speaker, it does not matter how much the former Premier of that one-term government stands up in this House and how much her party attempts to mislead Albertans about the facts, it doesn't make it true.

The hon. member glosses over, while she is using her record to compare to this bill that we're debating today, about some major things that the hon. the Finance minister is attempting to fix with this piece of legislation and with the budget, that the Premier is working tirelessly on to be able to fix, which, quite frankly – not quite frankly; it is the mess that that hon. member created when she was the Premier of Alberta. She wants to talk about broken promises or misleading Albertans. The largest misleading of Albertans that I have heard of in my time in politics is when that hon. member never told them that she was going to bring in the largest tax increase in the history of this province. She never told them about the carbon tax. You want to talk about misleading Albertans?

9:40

My mom called that something very different. I can't say it in here because it would be unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker, but I'm happy to go and do it outside of the Chamber any time, because that was misleading Albertans. That's that hon. member's legacy, who then went on her way to add to that legacy while she was Premier and do some pretty shocking things, if you ask me.

Under her supervision as the Premier of this province, she pushed \$50 billion in investment out of this province then sat in this Chamber right here in the seat that is now right beside me, as the Premier of Alberta, and laughed at my constituents often in that seat. She did not care what happened to places like Rocky Mountain House or Drayton Valley under her watch. She didn't even bother to go there, Mr. Speaker, and recognize that those communities were dying under her watch, and did not bother to even take the time to come and talk to them. Over 180,000 jobs were lost under that hon. member's watch, and she wants to get up and talk about broken promises, Mr. Speaker.

How about this? That hon. member led a cheering party outside of this very building and spiked the football and told this Chamber and Albertans that she got two pipelines built under her watch. She didn't get two pipelines built under this watch. That hon. member has lost all credibility when it comes to this issue. I'm shocked that she continues to even be able to try to come here with a straight face and in any way try to defend her record, Mr. Speaker, because her record, in my view, is shameful, the way that she has treated this province.

How about some comments? This was very relevant to the budget because it fits with the direction that that hon. member was taking the province, and she wants to compare it to our budget. How about telling my constituents to take the bus? How about telling my constituents that they were Chicken Little, Mr. Speaker? How about

telling the seniors inside my communities that they should hold fundraisers to pay their carbon tax? How about, while these galleries were full, people from all over rural Alberta who were being victimized by criminals, and that hon. member, while I sat in the seat that she's sitting in and asked her a question while she was Premier, laughed at them even while they were in the Chamber. You can come and see it on my Facebook page if you like. The tape is up.

**Ms Sweet:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been raised. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against a Member

**Ms Sweet:** Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j): trying to cause disruption in the House, leading motives that – I need my book – trying to impute false motives to a member. Also, relevancy around how this relates to comments or questions in relation to the bill itself, not necessarily directly to the member.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** A couple of things, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we're dealing with a matter of debate. Second, however, it is a fact; you can go check the Facebook pages. The video of that dialogue between the hon. member and myself is public record, so it is on *Hansard*. And, third, it is relevant to this bill because that hon. member brought up her record in the context of this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and that's the question that I am discussing with her. That hon. member brought it up in the context of this piece of legislation, and clearly the point of order is just an attempt to stop me from calling her out on that behaviour.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, at this stage I do not find a point of order. It's my understanding, based on my recollection of what has been stated in the last few minutes, that it would be a matter of debate with regard to the facts.

At this stage there are about 35 more seconds with regard to your comments. I would say that if you could please try to direct it back towards the bill, though I do understand that at this stage we are also just commenting on those comments. Those comments are directly related to the previous comments that were made on the general debate. If the hon. member could please continue.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, my simple point was that this was my question to the hon. member: how she can stand inside this place with a straight face and talk about this piece of legislation after she treated Albertans like that. Instead of continuing to do that when it comes to legislation like this, when's that hon. member going to stand up and apologize to Alberta for what she did to it? It's a simple question.

**The Acting Speaker:** With 15 seconds left on 29(2)(a), seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise of course to speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, which is a very large piece of legislation designed to bring effect to many of the policy prescriptions that we see contained within the fiscal plan and within the government's overall budget. This budget, of course,

will make a number of changes to a number of different programs and so on on the grounds that we are better able, then, to balance our budget and take action on debt.

Of course, the specific programmatic changes this budget will bring in will have great effect on a number of people. Certainly, when we were making budgets, we felt that way, too, and that's why we did things such as lift 40,000 children out of poverty. It appears that through measures such as those contained within Bill 20 and its associated legislation, those 40,000 children will be going back into poverty, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the reasoning behind this bill and behind a number of the choices that are made in this budget such as to reintroduce very high levels of child poverty, for example, is, of course, the debt and associated issues such as the deficit. Now, the Minister of Finance indicates that some different calculation method may result in a lower level of debt. Mr. Speaker, all I can really go by is what's in the budget papers, which is \$93.3 billion. If the Minister of Finance would like to amend his budget papers, he should do so before November 19. Otherwise, I'm going to go with what's in front of me, which is \$93.3 billion in debt, certainly, and a budget deficit that is \$2 billion higher.

I'm quite certain that none of the people who sent us here, on either side of the House, would have expected, given all of the discussion of debt and deficit and taxes, for that matter, that three things would be so obvious in this budget: one, that the debt within the forecast period is within 3 per cent of the New Democrats'; two, that the budget deficit would be \$2 billion higher; and three, that every single person would be paying more personal income tax, which is, of course, one of the measures contained within this bill that we are deliberating upon today.

I find it curious that we are raising taxes for every single person, that every single person will be effectively paying more in personal income tax and/or losing income to cost-of-living changes, whichever way you want to look at it. I have described this previously as a piece of budget trickery. However, after a couple of years, when each family is looking at approximately \$300 more in personal income tax, it will not feel so trivial at that time. I find it curious that this measure is contained within Bill 20 and contained within the government's fiscal plans given that it is such a brazen measure to raise people's income taxes. I guess there is a certain amount of hubris that is guiding the decision-making.

Certainly, Saskatchewan undertook this initiative at the same time as they did other very cold-hearted things like applying a PST to children's clothing. They took away the funerals for people on social assistance. A number of other very unpopular measures in Budget 2017 Saskatchewan undertook, and they got away with it. They deindexed personal income tax.

I can only assume that this government looked east and went: okay; well, I guess we can just reach into people's pockets and grab 600 million bucks and claim that we're tax cutters, in the same way that we're going to borrow an extra \$2 billion and claim we're better on the deficit when we're not, in the same way that we're going to have \$93.3 billion at the end of the forecast period, which is within 3 per cent of the New Democrats but claim that we are such, you know, I guess, highly disciplined fiscal hawks. Anyway, the fact of the matter is that everyone will be paying more personal income tax at the end of this forecast period.

9:50

Now, I often think about the people who sent me here. Certainly, none of them expected to be paying more income tax because definitely nobody ran on that. But, you know, the folks who sent me here – Lethbridge is really known for two segments of population, seniors and students. Within seniors we have – many

pension incomes are indexed to inflation. Certainly, the parliamentary pension is one of these pensions. People, for example, who spent 19 years in Parliament and who are in line for a six-figure pension in the coming months will have that pension indexed to inflation, as the hon. Premier is, for example. His pension, which is probably – I don't think it would be an exaggeration to describe the Canadian parliamentary pension as one of the most generous pension plans in the country. That six-figure pension that that hon. member will be receiving within the coming months is indexed to inflation. Many smaller, more modest private-sector and public-sector pensions are also indexed to inflation.

As seniors receive their CPP, their public or private defined benefit or even some that have defined contribution plans as well, but definitely if they have a defined benefit pension – those are indexed to inflation, but the personal income tax will not be, so seniors will see their effective income reduced as a result of Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019.

Students, too, or their families will see their effective income reduced through the elimination of the tuition and education amounts tax credits. Many students or their parents rely on these tax credits, in some ways to offset the high cost of postsecondary education. At no point did the members opposite campaign on this matter. If they did on either thing, it would have been noticed in Lethbridge-West, but there was no mention of any of these things. Certainly, the tuition and education amounts would have also been noticed by a number of parents in Calgary who send their kids to university at the University of Lethbridge.

I'm looking through this act, and there are a number of tax credits that have been rescinded as well and a number where there have been different changes made to them. I'm going to leave aside the other diversification tax credits although I believe them to be meritorious public policy, and I also believe – mark my words – that some of them will be back. I think that the government is getting an earful on this. There will come a time when they will have to take some of these measures in order to diversify the economy. Certainly, what they're doing right now isn't working as companies are fleeing this jurisdiction.

But the film and tax credit piece: there is a sort of as yet notional commitment to bring in a full film and tax credit situation as opposed to the production grant situation that we have now, which, I agree, in a small way, is not ideal to growing the kind of film industry that we want here in this province, and to really leverage our strength in terms of film and television productions. But I think what I would give the government is a piece of advice here, which is: hurry up and get it done. This is an important piece of diversification.

I know that in southern Alberta it has brought a tremendous amount of economic activity. I was talking to one of the new breweries in Fort Macleod the other night at an event. They had the *Ghostbusters* set in their microbrewery a couple of different times. Their bar was variously made into a Mexican restaurant, I think, and a store or something, but the amount of activity that that movie set generated for the town of Fort Macleod was considerable. I've had the pleasure to spend some time in the neighbourhood of High River where *Heartland* is also filmed. I know a few people on that set as well, Mr. Speaker. In its 10th going into 11th season, I believe, it is a tremendously popular show and could not be filmed anywhere else. I think that part is clear. The industry needs certainty.

If the government needs added impetus – I know they are very afraid of young people with political opinions and run around being very, very scared of them – my eight-year-old is a huge fan of *Heartland* and has pledged to become a one-man picket should that series be relocated or cancelled. You know, if you thought Greta

Thunberg was scary, I will present to you my eight-year-old, who actually knows how government works. He even knows what a deputy minister is and will be seeking his meetings forthwith.

I think the last thing that I want to talk about, two things, on a much more serious note, Mr. Speaker – and that is this. The piece in here around the fiscal framework for municipalities is deeply troubling given that those commitments were made prior to the election and during. Many, many people rely on not just the infrastructure commitments but also the stable, predictable frameworks that the promise of the fiscal framework for the two large cities contained within it. I know that small municipalities were looking forward to finishing off similar arrangements. Now they don't feel like they can do that. That trust has been broken. That is a grave concern to those of us who rely on services in any of the smaller municipalities, of which there are many in this House. I don't believe that that trust will be easily regained.

Finally, on the matter of what we say we're going to do and then what we actually end up doing, you know, today we had more fines levied in the so-called kamikaze affair. We know of 15 people who have been fined a total of \$207,000, which reflects a win-at-all-costs sort of mentality. Win for what? To raise personal income tax, as Bill 20 proposes that we do? Win for what? To run up a debt of \$93.3 billion? To run a deficit \$2 billion higher than the NDP's? Savage cuts to social services, to Children's Services, to AISH, to income support, to housing and homelessness? Win for what? That is the win-at-all-costs ethic that has imbued this House.

The members across the way are going to have to ask themselves why so much money changed hands – we found out through a judicial review that there were buckets, you know, bags of money, very tawdry – why the promises were broken that were contained within the platform. Why, at the end of the day? Was it to balance the budget? Well, that's not happening. Was it to take action on the debt? That's not happening either. Was it to raise personal income tax? I don't think so.

Mr. Speaker, I think that as we go back and discuss with our constituents – I know I will be talking to two groups of people, seniors and students, and many, many others who did not expect their income tax to go up, who did not expect the economy to stop diversifying, who did not expect instability with respect to funding of municipalities. They're going to have questions. They're going to have questions for a group of people who will do anything to win, clearly – \$207,000 worth of fines – for a group of people who said one thing and then did another, for a group of people who raised their taxes and sold them a bill of goods on debt and deficit reduction, for a group of people who reintroduced a whole generation of children back into poverty. They're going to have to answer those questions.

With that, I think I'm going to move an amendment because it's clear that this needs to be debated more fulsomely. It's clear that none of these conversations were had during the election. I'm moving an amendment that . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Just being conscious of the time, would it be all right if, in order to expedite things, we just passed this around? There are only 10 seconds left.

**Ms Phillips:** I'm happy to do that. Great suggestion.

**The Acting Speaker:** What I'll do, then, is that once I take a look at it, we'll see if we need you to read it in, or maybe I'll just read it in.

Conscious of time, if the hon. member would just give a quick summary of the referral amendment, then I will read it into the record, and we will go on to 29(2)(a) after that. If the hon. Member

for Lethbridge-West would just quickly say generally what the amendment is.

**10:00**

**Ms Phillips:** Do you want me to actually read out the amendment?

**The Acting Speaker:** I'll read it out after. It's just that we're so short.

**Ms Phillips:** Okay. Well, I would like to move that the bill be not read a second time but that the bill be referred to the standing committee so that we can debate it later.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thanks.

I will just read it into the record very quickly. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

With that, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, before 29(2)(a), if I could, I would like to move that we move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

**The Acting Speaker:** My understanding is that that would require unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see that the hon. Minister of Finance has risen.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I need to rise to respond to some of the comments that were made by the hon. member opposite and provide some clarity around our four-year fiscal plan and the amount of accumulated debt that we as a province will have under our plan. In our fiscal plan we were very transparent with Albertans. We were transparent that our plan includes the \$3.5 billion of cash that we hold on hand at the end of each fiscal year, and because the last fiscal year will be an election year, it will require an additional \$3.5 billion in cash to be held. The previous government's fiscal plan did not include that \$7 billion cash balance that would be required.

Consequently, our fiscal plan is completely transparent with Albertans. We are wanting to ensure that they are aware of the entire amount of debt that we will have as a province at the end of our four-year fiscal plan. However, at that point in time we will have a balanced budget, and we can then begin down the road of paying down our deficit.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite alluded to the fact that children would not be better off under this fiscal plan. I want to point out that under our new program, the Alberta child and family benefit, close to 70,000 of our most vulnerable families will receive more, not less. They will receive more. This budget actually ensures that we are protecting our most vulnerable in this province. On that same line I want to point out that this budget includes increases to Children's Services, it includes increases to Community and Social Services, and it includes increases to Seniors and Housing. Along with our commitment to maintain health care spending – in fact, health care spending is going up by \$200 million – we have maintained our commitment to not decrease education funding.

This budget, more importantly, changes the trajectory of reckless, irresponsible, out-of-control spending that this government inherited and, in fact, provides a very credible path to balance within our first term, a path to balance that will not rob from the next generation, that will ensure that the next generation has high-quality programs and services.

There's been some discussion around postsecondary education. We recognize the absolute importance of postsecondary education in this province, the absolute importance of ensuring that the next generation has a high-quality education, an education that will allow them to pursue every opportunity, an education that will prepare them for the inevitable challenges that they will face as a new generation.

But, Mr. Speaker, the costs of postsecondary education in this province have risen at an exponential rate. In fact, these costs in this province average \$36,500 per full-time student per year. That's close to \$5,000 more per student per year than British Columbia and close to \$15,000 more per student per year than Ontario. So this budget, along with the great work of our Advanced Education, will begin to turn that high dependency on government revenues, on government expenditures down for full-time students in our advanced education system. We need to ensure that students today, tomorrow, next year, and 10 years from now have access to a world-class, high-quality postsecondary education. I have every confidence in our Minister of Advanced Education as he works with our world-class institutions on providing even greater value. That was a MacKinnon panel recommendation.

With that, I will conclude.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

On amendment REF1, as it will be referred to, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I speak with some interest in regard to the referral amendment that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West brought forward. Really, using common sense and looking at the totality of this Bill 20, for the casual observer or if someone happened to be handed this, it's a real dog's breakfast. It goes anywhere from taking away tuition tax credits to ending the lottery fund to increasing taxes, individual personal income taxes, changing the access to the future, putting on ice, potentially, the LRT funding for Edmonton and Calgary. You know, it's just all over the place. Quite frankly, I've never seen an omnibus bill quite like this one brought forward to the provincial Legislature in the time that I've been here.

I think it demands more careful scrutiny by both the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and the closer scrutiny of the general public as well to absorb this information. You have these things dropped immediately after, I would say, a very troublesome budget, and then suddenly you have two omnibus bills that skate around everywhere from personal income tax to changing employment standards here in the province of Alberta. You know, it's always a wise choice to take a sober second look at these bills, and I believe that the hon. member's referral of Bill 20 to the Resource Stewardship Committee is a very wise and prudent and reasonable way by which we can move forward for what's best for Albertans.

Thank you.

**10:10**

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to put the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:11 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Nielsen	Schmidt
Deol	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Phillips	Sweet
Feehan		

Against the motion:

Allard	Long	Shandro
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Nally	Smith
Copping	Nicolaides	Toews
Glubish	Nixon, Jason	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Guthrie	Panda	van Dijken
Issik	Pon	Williams
Jones	Reid	Yao
LaGrange	Schow	Yaseen
Loewen		

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 28
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[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to close debate.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This bill provides key provisions in order to implement our fiscal plan and budget that we presented to Albertans. This government has inherited a fiscal scenario that requires strategic action to clean up. This bill is part of that process. We inherited a spending trajectory of close to 4 per cent per year at a time when revenues remain flat. Our four-year fiscal plan, of which this budget bill is a key component, will turn our spending trajectory to responsible levels. It also includes our approach and our initiatives to attract investment and grow the economy. We're providing a credible plan to balance within this fiscal plan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to close debate on Bill 20.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has moved second reading of Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:18 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Long	Shandro
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Nally	Smith
Copping	Nicolaides	Toews
Glubish	Nixon, Jason	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton

Guthrie	Panda	van Dijken
Issik	Pon	Williams
Jones	Reid	Yao
LaGrange	Schow	Yaseen
Loewen		

10:20

Against the motion:

Carson	Nielsen	Schmidt
Deol	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Phillips	Sweet
Feehan		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 10
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[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a second time]

### Bill 19

#### Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019

[Debate adjourned November 4: Ms Pancholi speaking]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen to speak.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak to Bill 19. Of course, I wish to make it clear that I do not intend to support this legislation. I think it's no secret to any member of the Chamber that I and my NDP caucus colleagues believe that climate change is the most important threat that humanity faces today, and it's incredibly urgent that all of humanity take immediate action to avert this threat.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us that we only have eight and a half years before our carbon budget is depleted and we can no longer avoid the catastrophic results of warming more than 2 degrees Celsius. Our government, the federal government, has made a commitment under the Paris agreement to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions by 30 per cent below the 2005 levels by 2030. Of course, as a part of the country Alberta has to do its fair share in achieving those carbon dioxide emissions reductions. Under our government we were on track to do that. With the totality of the climate leadership plan we were on track to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 50 tonnes over a business-as-usual scenario by 2030.

Under this piece of legislation we take a giant step backwards. We are committed to only reducing our carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 30 tonnes less than a business-as-usual scenario. I have to impress upon members that we do not have time to be taking steps backwards in this fight against climate change. As the IPCC has clearly said, we only have eight and a half years, and by shifting our climate emissions plan backwards, we are increasing the risk that we will run out of time and no longer be able to deal with climate change and prevent the worst effects of climate change from happening in our world. It's very concerning to me that this is the direction that the government wants to take.

Of course, it comes as no surprise. The government seems to be moving backwards in every area on the environment and environmental protection. We see in the budget, of course, huge cuts to air monitoring, water monitoring, emissions monitoring, land policy, fisheries and wildlife management. Every aspect of environmental protection is being cut back significantly, most concerning including climate change.

Now, I do want to say that even though the government is mostly wrong, they're not entirely wrong, which is a shock because I think this is probably the first piece of legislation that we've seen in this House where the government hasn't been entirely wrong. They've been only mostly wrong, so I do want to congratulate them on that slight bit of progress. There are the two things that they did get right in this legislation.

First of all, they've admitted, by bringing this legislation forward and in their announcements when they released the legislation, that the federal government has jurisdiction over climate change emissions in Alberta. The minister quite clearly stated in his announcement that in order to avoid federal jurisdiction being exercised here in Alberta, they needed to bring forward this piece of legislation.

I'm glad that the government has finally admitted that federal jurisdiction over this issue exists, and I sincerely hope that after coming to this realization, the government drops its unnecessary and expensive lawsuit against the federal government over the consumer carbon tax and just gets on with the issue of reducing carbon dioxide emissions. All of those dollars that are being spent on high-priced lawyers to argue in front of courts could be spent on producing real carbon dioxide reductions here in Alberta, and I urge the government strongly to recognize, realize what they've said, that the federal government has jurisdiction over this issue, that they have the right to implement a carbon tax, and that they should just get on with the job of reducing carbon dioxide emissions here in Alberta rather than fighting something that they've already admitted the federal government has jurisdiction over.

The second thing that the government has right in this legislation is the treatment of the electricity sector. I am very pleased that the government has recognized that the way we've treated the electricity sector under the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation, that was brought in under our government, was the right way to go, and they're not making any changes to that.

In fact, I'm pleased that we are still committed to phasing out coal-fired power here in Alberta, and I'm very pleased that, despite their protestations to the contrary, this government is also committed to phasing out coal-fired power in Alberta. That is the right thing to do for the people of Alberta. It's the right thing to do for the people of Canada. It's the right thing to do for everybody on this planet. Not only will we save significant carbon dioxide emissions from phasing out coal-fired power; we will avoid any number of respiratory illnesses that result from the burning of coal.

I want to take a moment to recognize at this point the significant contributions that coal miners have made to the province of Alberta. We have a long and rich history of coal mining here in Alberta. I worked for a summer in what was then called the MD of Badlands. It's now part of the town of Drumheller. In East Coulee you can visit the Atlas coal mine, which is the largest still free-standing mining tipple in all of western Canada, one of the first coal mines ever developed in Alberta. Coal has provided reliable electricity to the people of Alberta for a number of decades. I want to thank the people of Alberta who've worked in the coal mines for the personal costs that they've borne working in coal. It's often said, Mr. Speaker, that the cost of coal is blood, because coal mining is an incredibly dangerous profession; it's incredibly dangerous working conditions. Coal miners suffer unbelievable health effects from doing their work, all so that we could have reliable electricity when we went home and flicked the switch, and I am so grateful for all of those coal miners throughout the decades who have provided the people of Alberta with that reliable source of electricity.

That's why we owe it to them to transition them away from coal justly so that they can make this transition along with the rest of the province of Alberta without suffering any negative economic



effects. I urge the government to honour the commitments that the government made to coal workers when we committed to phasing out coal, that they wouldn't be left behind, that they would be able to find employment, that they would be able to make good lives for themselves outside of the coal sector. I'm very concerned by recent reports that the government hasn't made any commitments whatsoever to coal miners in this province as to honouring the commitments that we made to them to transition them away from coal. I hope that in the coming days the members opposite do intend to let coal miners know what their future holds because that's part of the deal. If we're going to transition away from coal, which this government has committed to do, then we need to offer a fair and just transition for those coal miners and make sure that they can still contribute their time and their talent to developing the prosperity of the province of Alberta.

10:30

Those are the two things that the government got right. It should come as no surprise, Mr. Speaker, that everything else is wrong.

Of course, we've had a carbon price in Alberta since 2007, and all of that carbon price that's been collected has been historically funded to reduce carbon emissions. It's been invested in innovation; it's been invested in carbon capture and storage. It's been invested entirely in reducing the carbon footprint of the province of Alberta. Now, for the first time, the government has said: yes, we will implement a carbon pricing policy, but we'll take that money, and we'll turn around and give most of it back to them in the form of a \$4.7 billion handout; we'll keep a small amount that will be invested in innovations to reduce emissions, and then some of it will be used to fund our Twitter troll farm to mock environmentalists, people who are concerned about climate change. Remarkable. It's truly remarkable, and I'm sure that Vladimir Putin is smiling and probably closely taking notes because I'm sure that he would like to have official government policy on the books to harass and intimidate his political opponents the way that the members opposite are creating with this legislation.

You know, the government has correctly identified that the price of carbon should be \$30 a tonne. It's very concerning to me, though, that the government has not indicated with any certainty what the future price of carbon will be. The legislation provides for ministerial order to set the carbon price. So the Minister of Environment and Parks could wake up one day in a particularly bad mood, which I know is uncharacteristic for the Minister of Environment and Parks, always a pleasant and amiable person who is nothing but delightful to chat with in this House – but, let's say, you know, his disposition could change suddenly – and implement a \$100 a tonne carbon price on one particular sector. Perfectly legal under the legislation. Or he could wake up and, feeling extra amiable, could lower the price to \$20 a tonne or \$10 a tonne because he wants to give his donors a break.

That's not what good climate policy is, Mr. Speaker. Industry needs to know what the price of carbon is going to be now and well into the future so that they can plan to make the investments that they need to achieve the carbon dioxide reductions that they have to achieve. So I would strongly urge the minister to amend that section of the legislation and provide the industry the certainty that they're asking for in what the future of the carbon price is going to be.

The second thing that I'm very concerned about, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that, of course, we don't see all of this money being invested into carbon dioxide emission reductions. Now, the members opposite have claimed that they have a magic wand called innovation, that the paltry \$100 million or so that they're going to invest every year in innovation is going to achieve significant

carbon dioxide reductions over and above what they are already suggesting they'll produce with the carbon price alone.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we already have a number of innovations that we know reduce carbon dioxide emissions. They're called solar power, they're called wind power, they're called public transit, and they're called energy efficiency. All of those things are things that the government has scrapped, so I'm not sure what kind of innovation it is that the minister knows about that the rest of the world doesn't that will create these carbon dioxide emissions. But I don't hold out much hope that we'll achieve the carbon dioxide reductions that the government says that they'll achieve through this innovation magic wand that they apparently have when they are outright refusing to acknowledge the capability of existing technologies, those things that were innovative 10 or 20 years ago, that we know work. They're just throwing those by the wayside. I guess they seem to be much more optimistic than I am in the potential for technology to achieve these emissions reductions.

I know that I would certainly – I don't want to throw out the possibility of innovations. There are lots of things that Emissions Reduction Alberta is doing that are improving the performance of large industries here in Alberta, but we also need to do the work of reducing carbon dioxide emissions with technologies that we know work. So I would recommend that the government go back to the drawing board on their spending plans for climate change, on the TIER dollars, and invest in the things that will achieve actual carbon dioxide emission reductions for the people of Alberta, and I would suggest to all members that there would be a significant benefit. We know that the carbon tax was incredibly unpopular, but we know that emissions reduction is incredibly popular.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a). So much to unpack there and such little time, unfortunately. I'm sure we'll have more time to talk about it in the coming days. Instead, I'll just focus for this 29(2)(a) on two key issues.

The first is around the NDP slush fund. The hon. member referred to that slush fund in his comments, Mr. Speaker, and then discussed how this legislation that I have before the Chamber right now compares with what the hon. member's government did when he was in power. The fact is this. This legislation at its core primarily deals with the fact that it makes it clear how we'll be renaming the funds and then how the money within those funds will be handled or allowing it or a portion of it to go to general revenue. The hon. member is correct about that. What the hon. member glosses over, though, is the fact that his government did exactly that. Every minister on this side of the House knows, as they went through their budget process – the Minister of Finance would know for sure – how much the climate leadership plan and the NDP's carbon tax were being used as a slush fund through the entire operation of government on the back of Albertans and certainly were not being used for emission reductions.

The fact is this. Albertans had a choice. They had a choice in this last election when it came to this issue. The NDP never told them about their carbon tax when they campaigned on it, but certainly by 2019 the NDP's carbon tax was well known by the people of Alberta. The hon. member even agrees. It was not a very popular tax. I certainly agree with him. I think that it played a large part in why the NDP lost government – maybe they agree with that; maybe they don't – but the carbon tax itself and how it was utilized within the province was known.

How this government would approach the large-emitter side of that equation was also clearly articulated in our platform. It was very, very clear that we would go with the TIER system. It was very, very clear within that how we would approach that from a regulatory perspective and, Mr. Speaker, most importantly, how it would be spent: the first \$100 million plus 50 per cent of every dollar going to the TIER fund, the majority of the money going to the TIER fund – the hon. member is incorrect in his assertion that that is not the fact – and then the other 50 per cent going into general revenue towards deficit reduction to begin to fix the mess that the hon. member's government created inside this province.

Yes, a portion of that is going to defend what is commonly referred to as the war room, or the Canadian Energy Centre, as we now know, Mr. Speaker, to actually defend the industry, something that hon. member did not do when he was in power; in fact, he sold them out repeatedly to Justin Trudeau, to his federal leader in the NDP party, who was antienergy, antipipeline, and who they seem to have, according to their own leader, at least in her case, indicated that they voted for in the last election.

10:40

The fact is this, Mr. Speaker. This government has been clear on how they will use the large-emitter portion of that, going into TIER. He's right. That's been taking place in this province since 2007. Prices have changed, different variations of it, but the reality is that this is not a new thing inside this province. What is new is the transparency of the government on how they will utilize those resources going forward, which is the exact opposite of what that hon. member did when he was a minister of the Crown, just a few months ago, with his colleagues, where they told Albertans that it was going to go to rebates and it wasn't going to go to general revenue and they weren't going to use it for slush projects and they weren't going to do that. We now know that they did, in fact, eventually even admitting within their own budget that they were putting it into general revenue. They just didn't bother to go and change the legislation. They kept trying to back-door it.

Also, quite shockingly, they did not invest that money very well. We know that they spent significant portions of it, of course, on light bulbs and shower heads. I know as a rural Albertan that we always found it quite comical. First of all, I think that all Albertans found it comical, because we're more than capable of changing our light bulbs. I know that I'm extraordinarily taller than average, Mr. Speaker, but I think that most Albertans can also change their light bulbs. They didn't need the NDP's help, and they certainly didn't need the NDP to go and hire people from Ontario to change their

light bulbs. But then they went forward and got shower heads that didn't even work in rural Alberta because they weren't able to survive with our low water pressure and paid again an Ontario company to provide those light bulbs and shower heads. That's just one example.

Our government's approach will be different. You know, Emissions Reduction Alberta, which the hon. member referred to, will help to partner with us on many projects – I was happy to announce several of them this past week – that have significant, immediate emission reductions as well as water use reductions and other environmental benefits, that this government is investing in, the complete opposite, Mr. Speaker, of that hon. member's approach.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to join debate?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks to close debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm excited to see us vote on second reading and hope that everybody will support it, unlike what appears the NDP, who – I don't know; maybe they're climate change deniers. Now, I don't know what's going on. But they're on the opposite side this time, so it's quite alarming. But I do hope that my colleagues support the second reading of this important piece of legislation.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a second time]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, first of all, to all members of the House for what has been a great evening of progress. I'm always happy to see so much progress. As such, I think that it's time to call it an evening, and I will move to adjourn the House till tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

**The Acting Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.1) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations in the Parkland Room.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:44 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 5, 2019

Day 39

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 5, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a school group joining us in the gallery this afternoon all the way from Edmonton-City Centre, grade 9 students from Oliver school. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also joining us in the galleries this afternoon are guests of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry: Alberta Canola directors and staff from all over the province of Alberta.

Also, joining us as guests of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, welcome Constance Scarlett, Steve Baker, Daryl Zelinski.

Last but certainly not least, a very special welcome to grade 6 students following along in their classroom at Meadowbrook middle school in Airdrie, including Molly Pitt, the lovely daughter of our own Deputy Speaker. Hi, Molly.

Hon. members, please welcome our guests today.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for St. Albert has a statement to make.

### Budget 2019 and Poverty Reduction Strategies

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cuts to rent subsidies, cuts to funding for affordable housing, cuts to AISH, cuts to supports for foster kids trying to get their lives on track: this government isn't doing anything to help pull Albertans out of poverty.

To make matters worse, the Minister of Community and Social Services had the audacity to speak at the National Conference on Ending Homelessness right here in Edmonton yesterday, and she claimed her government was committed to pulling Albertans out of homelessness. This doesn't line up with anything her government has actually done. Just yesterday I asked the minister about her decision to close one of two shelters in Fort McMurray, and all I got were empty words and her pointing to other areas of her budget in an attempt to distract Albertans. Her tactics won't work, Mr. Speaker. More and more Albertans are realizing every day just how bad this UCP budget is. This government has introduced a budget that will see Albertans pay for more and get less.

I was proud to be part of a government that helped cut child poverty in half, and I have every confidence that our leader would have led us to cut it altogether in a second term. Now we have a government that seems bent on driving people into poverty, and they're doing this while cozying up to big corporations, giving them a \$4.7 billion handout. They're creating none of the jobs they promised.

My message is simple. To the minister: next time you speak at a conference about ending homelessness, can you at least be honest that your government hasn't done a damn thing to eradicate poverty?

### Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the use of unparliamentary language, no matter the context, is always unparliamentary. The hon. Member for St. Albert is more than welcome to stand, withdraw, and apologize to the dignity of the Assembly.

**Ms Renaud:** I apologize for using the word "damn." I take it back.

**The Speaker:** You apologize for the use of unparliamentary language. Is that correct?

**Ms Renaud:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** I would encourage you in the future to be much more careful with your choice of words.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont is rising to make a statement.

### Remembrance Day

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As our government's military liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces it's my privilege to speak about Veterans' Week. Every November, from the 5th to Remembrance Day on November 11, we observe Veterans' Week, where we remember the service and sacrifice of the men and women who served in uniform since the First World War.

This year we mark the 75th anniversary of the Italian Campaign, held during the Second World War. From 1943 to early 1945 Canadian troops advanced north through Italy. As Canadians fought through Italy, one of the toughest engagements was the Battle of Ortona, where tight streets and large amounts of rubble prevented the movement of equipment, leading to house-by-house combat as troops moved through the town. After a week of street fighting, Ortona was liberated. Throughout the whole campaign Canadians encountered challenging mountainous terrain, harsh weather, and a bloody fight against battle-hardened German troops. More than 93,000 Canadians took part. There were 26,000 Canadian casualties, and almost 6,000 Canadians lost their lives.

The Italian Campaign exacted a high toll and stands as one of Canada's great contributions to the Allied war effort. From 1939 to 1945 the contribution of Canada was immense, with approximately 1 million Canadians serving in World War II. They, alongside the hard work of those on the home front, made a significant contribution to the war effort and ultimately the victory against the Nazi regime.

Of course, our women and men in uniform have continued to distinguish themselves with their service to our country. I urge you to take time during Veterans' Week to remember the service and sacrifice of those who served our country in uniform, including in Canada's longest war, in Afghanistan. Attend an event, say thank you to a veteran and to those who continue to serve in uniform, proudly wear your poppy, and take a moment to think of those who came before us who fought and died to preserve our way of life.

Lest we forget.

**The Speaker:** Lest we forget, indeed.

The hon. the Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

### Family Violence Prevention Month

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members and guests, November is Family Violence Prevention Month here in Alberta. It's our chance to show our support for the prevention of family violence. Family violence can happen to anyone regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. It happens in dependent and trusting relationships. It happens behind closed doors to people we least expect and even in the family of one of my closest friends. It takes a community to work together to prevent and put an end to abuse.

Our government is working hard to prevent domestic and family violence. On October 30 Bill 17, the Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence Act, or Clare's law, received royal assent, which will allow individuals to easily access disclosure about their partner's history.

We want everyone in Alberta to be aware of where to turn if they are experiencing or are at risk of family violence. Awareness is an important step towards putting an end to family violence in our province. I'm proudly wearing a purple ribbon this month along with many of my colleagues here in the Legislature. The colour purple has been recognized internationally for many years to recognize family violence prevention.

We will also be reminding everyone what resources are available within our province. Our family violence info line is available 24 hours a day in more than 170 languages. Anyone can dial 310.1818 to speak to compassionate, trained staff who can provide information on how to get help. We also issue certificates through the safer spaces program so that victims of domestic violence can terminate a lease at no cost and leave an unsafe home. There are also many resources available at [alberta.ca/endfamilyviolence](http://alberta.ca/endfamilyviolence), including fact sheets, posters, infographics, and more.

I encourage everyone today to get involved in Family Violence Prevention Month. Show your support on social media, attend family violence prevention events in your community, and let people know where they can turn if they are in need. We can all contribute to the safety of our fellow Albertans by raising awareness and supporting the victims.

Thank you.

### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, \$211,723: that is the total of the fines issued by the Election Commissioner in the UCP's ongoing and growing kamikaze scandal. The fines just keep on coming as more and more illegal activities come to light. While the Premier and his inner circle continue to try to dismiss these serious allegations as Twitter gossip, that just isn't true. Interfering with an election goes to the very heart of our democracy, and the UCP's refusal to admit the seriousness of these allegations suggests they think that they are above the law and even democracy itself. Collusion, obstruction, prohibited contributions, contributions made with someone else's money, giving others money to make contributions – and the list goes on – offences which suggest a complete disregard for both elections and laws. UCP insiders seem to think that these fines are simply the cost of doing business. They think that the old-fashioned notion of no one being above the law just doesn't apply to them.

The public deserves answers. They deserve a government that thinks that democracy and the rule of law and other fundamental institutions of our country are important and worth protecting. I remember a time not so long ago, Mr. Speaker, when one of the fundamental principles that underpinned conservatism was a respect for institutions. I guess that that time has passed.

1:40

This government and this Premier need to stop hiding, demonstrate some leadership, and be up front with the people of Alberta. Our children are watching us. They deserve to see elected members who demonstrate through words and actions that democratic institutions are worth while. People once fought and died for these values. Those children deserve to know that we still hold them dear. They deserve better than this UCP government cheapening everything we stand for. They deserve honesty, and, Mr. Speaker, there are over 200,000 reasons to believe that they are not getting it from this UCP government.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if you could do the Assembly a favour and ensure that all of the sounds on your electronic devices are turned to silent, I certainly would appreciate that.

The hon. Member for Camrose.

### Volunteer Firefighters

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like so many other small towns across Alberta, the city of Camrose is served by a fire department made up almost entirely of on-call volunteers, and today I'd like to take my member's statement to thank them for their work. The city of Camrose fire department is over 110 years old and currently employs four full-time staff: a chief, a deputy chief, an inspector, and a public educator. Besides these four, the fire service has 40 trained volunteer firefighters.

I had the opportunity to meet with Peter Krich, the fire chief in Camrose for the last 19 years. This past week his congratulations to his volunteers was obvious and incredible. He made it very clear that without those dedicated volunteers and their heart for service, a city like Camrose would not have anywhere near the same capability to deliver quality of service to our area. These volunteers regularly risk limb and life, purely out of dedication to service of their community. These volunteers make up a huge part of the firefighting force all across our province. Over 80 per cent of Alberta firefighters are volunteers. These men and women are ready to jump into action at a moment's notice, whether to help at the scene of a highway crash or a house fire. Their service should set an example for all of us to aspire to.

There's another part of this equation, though, Mr. Speaker. These people have to be allowed to leave work whenever a call comes in for help. As such, businesses who employ them have to be onboard with this as well. This is especially apparent in small towns, where the body of firefighters and volunteers is quite small. To those business owners who see this as a way to give back to their community and send off those volunteers, thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-McCall has a statement to make.

### November 1984 Violence against Sikhs in India

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the victims and survivors of the November 1984 Sikh genocide. During the first few days of November 1984 thousands of Sikh men and women were brutally massacred in broad daylight on the streets of Delhi and across other cities, and many more were displaced. They were all targeted and killed for one reason: they were all Sikhs.

Mr. Speaker, all efforts to save them clearly fell short. Civil society, the state's institutions, and the international community, who all share the basic responsibility of protecting everyone's dignity, everyone's rights, and everyone's life, liberty, and security, completely failed them. The Sikh community here in Alberta and

around the world has been living with that pain and trauma for the last 35 years.

I have the honour of knowing many of the survivors and listening to their stories. They all see it as a genocide and a crime against humanity. They're all grieving. They're all still looking for answers. They are still looking for justice. Some believe that had justice been served in this case, the February 2002 Gujarat massacre could have been avoided.

Mr. Speaker, to all those who lost their lives in this extremely prejudicial tragedy, we remember you. To all those who are survivors of this tragedy, please know that we recognize your pain, we acknowledge the injustice, and we are ashamed of being bystanders. To all my colleagues here, let's stand together with our Sikh community as they seek justice and reconciliation and commit to ensuring that there will never be a November '84 again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Property Rights

**Mr. Barnes:** To fully understand the importance of property rights to Albertans, we must first understand why they were created to begin with. Originating in Europe during the Renaissance, property rights developed as international trade by merchants gave rise to mercantilist ideas. This was only further supported in 16th-century Europe as Lutheranism and the Protestant Reformation advanced property rights, emphasizing the Protestant work ethic and religion views on destiny. These principles served as the underlying pillars of the capitalist system and the basis of wealth creation. However, the system we more closely resemble today is a result of demand for human rights in the 17th century in revolutionary Europe. This is where the right to private property truly emerged.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've stood in this House time and time again to advocate for stronger property rights for all Albertans, property rights that aim to protect the economic and political desires of individuals and families and which protect people from the growing encroachment or misuse of government power or that of other citizens. I believe that a society that sees an erosion of property rights also sees the deterioration of other human rights. We are seeing this deterioration in Alberta every day as criminals continue to abuse the property rights, especially of rural Albertans, through trespassing, vandalism, theft, and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, rural Albertans do not feel safe. We hear horror stories every week about how people are attacked or threatened. We hear stories of criminals stealing equipment, trucks, and tractors, that rural Albertans depend on. People's lives and financial livelihoods are at risk. We need to take a hard stance against this kind of behaviour.

Not only have these hard-working men and women built our province, but they have also created wealth and prosperity for all Albertans. Mr. Speaker, they deserve to have their property rights and, ultimately, their freedom protected so they can create wealth on their land and live their life with their family safely.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross has a statement.

### Child Poverty

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about an issue that I'm very passionate about because it affects a disproportionate number of constituents in Calgary-Cross. Child poverty is an issue that many Albertans still have to deal with, and certain parts of our province have much higher rates of child poverty than the provincial average. Although Alberta has the lowest child poverty rate in Canada at 5 per cent, I think I can speak

on behalf of everybody in this House when I say that 5 per cent is still too high.

The Canada census defines family poverty as being under a certain threshold of annual after-tax income. For a family of four that number is \$38,920. Mr. Speaker, according to those figures, certain parts of Calgary-Cross have poverty rates as high as 70 per cent.

Families that face immense financial difficulties are not a problem that our government can simply avoid. Children that are raised in poverty are much more likely to resort to crime and self-harm later in life. This phenomenon can be seen when the maps of crime and poverty are compared. The results are nearly identical.

According to a study by the Urban Institute, nearly 30 per cent of children who grow up in low-income families never complete high school, chronic absenteeism is three to four times higher, and they are much more susceptible to bullying from their peers. This issue not only has consequences in the present times, but it will also have lasting consequences for generations if not addressed. Although the numbers are inflated due to the high economic recession in Alberta, northeast Calgary has always faced significantly higher rates of poverty than the rest of the city.

Mr. Speaker, I stand to urge our strong and united government to combat poverty and help struggling Albertan families. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, prior to moving to Oral Question Period, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a statement to make.

### Member's Apology

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have great respect for the role of the Speaker and the traditions of this House. Yesterday my passion for defending Albertans who need us to stand up for them clouded my judgment. Out of respect for the traditions of this Assembly and the complexity of your role, Mr. Speaker, I apologize to you and to the members of the Assembly and withdraw comments in posts on social media made outside of this Chamber.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, apology accepted. I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Budget 2019 and Alberta's Current Fiscal Position

**Ms Notley:** This Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout is a bust. In 2018 we were coming back: a 2.4 per cent GDP growth, 80,000 jobs recovered. Now every indicator is down. Business activity: down. Energy sector: down. Household spending: down. Labour markets: down. This Premier can now lay claim to Alberta's worst monthly economic performance since mid-2016. To the Premier: why not cancel your corporate handout and reverse your cuts before you trigger a second recession?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's true, as Albertans know, that this government inherited from the NDP a period of four years of economic decline and stagnation, a jobs crisis without precedent. In fact, it's pretty clear that in the first two quarters of this year under NDP mismanagement we were probably in a technical recession. We are doing everything we possibly can to turn that around with real action to demonstrate that Alberta is open for business, for investment to create jobs. Part of that plan, of course, is to get our

finances back under control, and we will do exactly what we were hired to do by Albertans.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this Premier is a master at blaming everyone else. Five-year-olds could take lessons. But this is happening on his watch. He was elected to take responsibility, so he should get to it. Oil drilling: down. Natural gas: down. Grain, manufacturing, wholesale trade, housing starts: down, down, down, down. Their budget is not an antidote; it is a poison pill. Why won't the Premier cancel his corporate handout and stop his heartless attacks on Albertans before he makes things even worse?

**Mr. Kenney:** Let's be clear about what the NDP would have us do, Mr. Speaker. They took Alberta's debt from \$13 billion to \$62 billion. They wanted it to go over a hundred billion. Why? Because they prefer sending billions of tax dollars to rich bankers and bondholders for interest payments. We instead prefer spending that on critical public services. But if you let debt run out of control, which is always the NDP plan – guess what? – you end up taking money from health and education to pay bankers and bondholders. We won't do that.

**Ms Notley:** A \$95 billion debt under our watch, \$93 billion under theirs, Mr. Speaker. Move on.

This Premier threw away every plan to diversify our economy. Energy value-add programs? Cut. Investment in tech incentives? Cut. Infrastructure projects? Cut. Now, last month the Finance minister justified this approach, telling the Calgary Chamber that economic diversification is merely, quote, a long-term luxury. To the Premier: do you agree with the Finance minister, and if you do, why does the economic development minister have a job, and if you don't, shouldn't the Finance minister lose his?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister did lose his job last April after having driven this province into a debt crisis, into a jobs crisis, after having presided over six credit downgrades, after having quadrupled the size of the provincial debt. You know, Albertans understand that we cannot run the province on a credit card forever, that if we do, we just end up enriching the bankers with interest payments. That's why with a 2.8 per cent saving, three pennies on the dollar, we are prudently bringing our finances back in order to guarantee programs for the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition for her second main set of questions.

#### Support for Youth Transitioning out of Care

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked this government why, when there's money for \$4.7 billion for corporations, they're cutting financial support for 480 kids who grew up in government care. What we heard was shameful. No compassion. The stories are heartbreaking: caseworkers forced into breaking the news to these young adults by reading from a script, young adults hearing these words and breaking down. This government is hiding what they're saving, but for these young people the cost is their lives. To the Premier: why is he doing this?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, every reputable economist on Alberta's finances has completely discredited this absurd \$4.7 billion figure, which is nonexistent. In fact, this year the estimated revenue forgone from the job-creation tax cut is \$100 million, not \$4.7 billion. Adults will continue to have access to the entire suite of Alberta's social services, which are actually being enhanced in this budget as the budgets of Community and Social Services . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Not if they're older than 22, they won't.

**Mr. Kenney:** . . . and Children's Services and supports for persons with disabilities are all being increased.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been noted at 1:55.

**Ms Notley:** I see the compassion continues.

Quote: I was really upset and shaking. Quote: my first thought was that I'm going to be homeless because I can't pay my rent. Quote: I used to joke about how I considered the MLAs to be my parents; when I found out this, it felt like I was being abandoned again. Mr. Speaker, many of us are parents. How can this Premier hear from these youth who have been through the most traumatizing childhoods we could possibly imagine and still do this? Through the Speaker to the whole front bench: if your own children were suffering, would you cut them off?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, under this government and even with our balanced plan Alberta will continue to have by far the most generous social supports of any province in Canada, which is why even while trying to deal with the NDP fiscal crisis we're actually increasing the budgets for Community and Social Services, for Children's Services, for persons with disabilities. Those who are adults, those who are 24 years of age: they will have full access to the supports that they need. If they're aboriginal youth, they will have the ability to have postsecondary funded by the federal government and access to all of the social supports of the government of Alberta.

**Ms Notley:** I beg the Premier to learn this file, Mr. Speaker. The folks over there have betrayed their own conscience. Before the last election they heard from the Child and Youth Advocate, they heard from caseworkers, they heard from former kids in care, and they all agreed on the age of 24, except that at one point the Member for Calgary-West thought it should be 26. You used to care. Now you don't. This isn't about finances. This isn't about savings. You found \$4.7 billion for corporations. Do you really expect Albertans to believe that you cannot afford to help these kids?

**Mr. Kenney:** You know, Mr. Speaker, the language of the NDP around this budget is grossly irresponsible, trying to instill fear in vulnerable people for a budget that reduces expenditures by less than three pennies on the dollar over four years, which will still end up with Alberta having the biggest spending government in Canada. We have to make some prudent choices to avoid jeopardizing the future of all of our social programs by sinking in a sea of debt. We won't do that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Education Budget 2019-2020

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In June the Calgary board of education expected to receive about \$1.3 billion for the current school year. They based that assumption on assurances that this UCP Education minister gave them. They could use every dollar that they're getting as they have a growing student population, large numbers of English-language learners, and students with special needs. Now documents have been made public showing that they have actually received \$164 million less than they expected. To the Premier: why did your government mislead Albertans about the cuts that you were making to education?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too am surprised that a school board with a \$1.2 billion operating budget, servicing 130,000 students is unable to find efficiencies in their overhead. This board has previously made a \$9.1 million accounting error, signed into a 20-year lease in which they are paying \$6 million more in rent than the total valuation of the building itself, and often projects deficits but ends the year with significant surpluses.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yesterday the minister said that she respected board autonomy. Today the minister comes in here and blames the board for the cuts that she's imposing on them and on Alberta's children. Edmonton public got \$76 million less. Calgary Catholic got \$97 million. Edmonton Catholic, \$52 million less. Lethbridge public, \$23 million less. St. Albert public, \$3.6 million less. Fort McMurray Catholic, \$3.3 million less. The list keeps growing. This Premier insists that the government funded education. Why do the numbers from school boards themselves make it clear that his government misled Albertans and continues to do so?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Every single student that walks through our doors is going to be funded at the exact same rate as last year. Albertans overwhelmingly elected our government to start living within our means. It's the same for every school division, and our government expects all school divisions to live within their means. I expect CBE and other school divisions to do the same.

**Ms Hoffman:** During the campaign, when we raised concerns about his plans to cut education funding, the Premier brushed it off as fear and smear. He insisted that he would maintain funding, but now we literally see hundreds of millions of dollars being taken from our classrooms. It's our students who are suffering, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: if I'm wrong, why are we seeing school boards laying off staff and speaking out publicly about how the UCP misrepresented the true impacts of their budget? Why is the minister continuing to say that school boards are lying?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year, the 2018-2019 year, the overall Education budget was \$8.223 billion. In 2019-20 the overall Education budget is \$8.223 billion. Over the last 15 years operational funding has grown by 80 per cent when inflation grew by 33 per cent and enrolment grew by 25 per cent. This is not sustainable. We cannot continue to grow way above enrolment and inflation. We are funding every single student. Every single student in our schools will be funded this year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has the call.

#### Budget 2019 and Homelessness Reduction Strategies

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Community and Social Services spoke to the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. She spoke about how thousands of people are without homes in Edmonton and how she will help end homelessness in Alberta. What she forgot to mention is how this UCP budget slashes \$44 million from rental assistance and another \$17 million from housing management bodies. To the Premier: doesn't he think

that this minister should have been up front about how this budget will actually increase homelessness?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that this government is absolutely committed to serving all Albertans, including those who are experiencing homelessness. I can tell you that we have maintained our budget for homeless shelters and for homeless outreach support services. I'm working very, very closely with the seven cities and the community-based organizations to find out how we can work together to find innovative solutions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Community and Social Services is going around telling people that she will help end homelessness. What she forgot to say is that this government is kicking 480 young adults off financial assistance, reducing seniors' benefits, and cutting AISH. To the Premier: if you're so convinced that your \$4.7 billion corporate handout is necessary, can you and your minister at least stop pretending to care about Albertans at risk of homelessness?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, my exact words were: I don't think it's aspirational to assume that one day we can end homelessness. Our government stands by that statement. In terms of the other comments made by the member opposite, we are working very closely with Children's Services, and we are taking a crossministerial approach to make sure that those who need supports will get those supports.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, homelessness can be ended. It just takes political will. In the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo alone there are 400 households who depend on rental assistance and housing management bodies; 190 more people are on a wait-list. These Albertans are living on very little. Tragically, this UCP government is making a 24 per cent cut to this program in order to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate handout. To the Premier: given all the issues I've raised here today, how can you actually claim to Albertans that your government is ending homelessness?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to reiterate that I'm working very closely with the seven cities and the community-based organizations to make sure that we're working together to find innovative solutions, leveraging the work that's been done, leveraging all our data, and, again, working with the municipalities to ensure that we do our level best to tackle the issues of homelessness.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis is rising with a question.

#### Film and Television Tax Credit

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The film industry is so important to Banff-Kananaskis. Films such as *The Revenant*, *Superman*, and series like *Game of Thrones* were all filmed in or around Kananaskis Country. These projects contribute to our economy and freely advertise our beautiful province on the big screen. But I've heard many concerns from film producers who operate in and around my riding about the future of the industry here in Alberta. I'm wondering if the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism can please explain the transition our government has made to a film tax credit and the rationale for doing so.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The film industry is an important sector. It's important to our provincial economy, and we are happy to continue government support. As was committed to in our platform, our government is transitioning the screen-based production grant to the film and television tax credit. This change has long been requested by the industry and will allow our province to secure large film and series productions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

Well, given that one film company recently left Banff-Kananaskis and moved to British Columbia because the previous NDP government mismanaged, overcommitted the screen production film grant budget by \$92 million and committed \$21 million of that just five days before the writ dropped and further given that Alberta is already in tough competition with other jurisdictions for film production despite having some of the most desired filming locations in the world, to the same minister: what is our government doing to clean up the mess the NDP left behind in our film industry and incentivize production in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The Member for Banff-Kananaskis is correct. The NDP mismanaged the screen-based production grant and massively overcommitted the budget for the program. This reckless lack of fiscal restraint has limited access to funds for upcoming projects. As we are transitioning to a film and television tax credit, we are honouring commitments under the previous grant program and are providing funds to the film and television tax credit.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you, Minister.

Well, given that international and Albertan filmmakers are paying keen attention to the steps that our government takes to support this industry and further given that our tax credit, which we are implementing, will be very different from the previous screen-based production grant, to the same minister: how does our government plan to grow this new program into a much more scalable model to ensure the film industry is sustainable here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As we transition from the previous screen-based production grant to the film and television tax credit, we are maintaining the previous budget of \$45 million between the two programs until we fully transition to the credit in 2022-23. In fact, not only are we maintaining funding for film; we're actually increasing it. We have the budget of \$45 million plus an additional \$1 million for the small production grant. The film and television tax credit will provide a 22 per cent refundable tax credit on eligible . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Why are they so mad, then?

**Ms Fir:** . . . production expenses incurred in Alberta.

## Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would just provide some caution. When heckling, if you're using unparliamentary language, you would hate for *Hansard* to be able to catch that and that to go on the record. So I would just use some caution while doing so in statements outside of those who have been recognized to make them.

At this point in time, though, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has the call.

## Budget 2019 and Alberta's Current Fiscal Position (continued)

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A debt that's \$93 billion, within 3 per cent of the NDP's debt; income taxes going up by \$600 million – surprise; every single person is going to pay more income tax – tuition, electricity bills, insurance costs, all up. But surely all of this is being done to lower the deficit, right? Wrong. The deficit is \$2 billion higher than it was under the NDP. To the Premier: will he admit that all of this pain for ordinary people is so he can dump \$4.7 billion of our cash on the front lawn of his rich corporate friends' mansions?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we did inherit that kind of a mess from the previous government, quite frankly. We are bringing Alberta's finances to fiscal responsibility. We've put forward a plan, a fiscal plan that will bring this province to balance within four years. We have inherited a \$1.5 billion cost from the previous government's irresponsible crude-by-rail endeavour, that we will have to pay for this year. That's a minimum \$300 million lower cost than had we continued with crude by rail under the previous government's plan.

2:10

**Ms Phillips:** Given that nurses, teachers, and municipal workers are all being fired as we speak, right before Christmas and the deficit is up, the debt is the same, the economy is stalled and given that economists are now saying that we're looking at negative economic growth and given that this is the UCP recession, with 27,000 jobs lost and counting, will the Premier admit that he is presiding over a recession so he can hand over \$4.7 billion to his rich friends, that are maybe going to use that money to create jobs in Wisconsin, while all he is creating in Alberta is pink slips?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what we're not going to do. We're not going to follow the previous government's plan, where the economy was in trouble. They increased taxes on everything. They introduced a \$1.4 billion carbon tax that they didn't tell Albertans about. They jacked up corporate taxes by 20 per cent and collected \$5.8 billion less. That's a \$5.8 billion hole in the budget for the next three years. We will not reperform that fiscal irresponsibility.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that it's been seven months since this Premier's been on the job but he hasn't created a single job and given that this Premier also has a six-figure pension coming to him – it's not the retirement security for teachers, nurses, firefighters, that he's going to raid, but his gold-plated entitlements for himself are safe – to the Premier. Given that our debt is the same, our deficit is up, our taxes are up, our jobs are down but our no-growth, recession-creating corporate handouts are up, perhaps he wants to change his jobs, economy, pipelines slogan to unemployment, recession, and debt.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we are confident that our four-year fiscal plan will return this province to fiscal responsibility. We've had

many, many commentaries that will prove just that. TD Economics says, “The government’s budget plan strikes a good balance between addressing the deficit in a reasonably timely fashion but not at such a hurried pace that it could knock Alberta’s still-fragile near-term growth . . . off track.” We’ve had several banks and financial institutions endorse this government’s plan for fiscal responsibility. We will not repeat the previous government’s error.

### Drinking Water Quality

**Mr. Schmidt:** On Monday Global News released the results of a year-long investigation into drinking water safety in Edmonton and Calgary. The results were shocking. In Edmonton 3 out of every 10 test results exceeded the federal guideline for lead in drinking water, and some results were as high as 120 times the limit. In Calgary some tests reported levels of lead that were nearly four times the federally accepted limit. Even more shocking is that Alberta Environment and Parks has never requested the data from EPCOR, and EPCOR has never provided it to them. To the minister: will you commit right here and now to launching a provincial review into this issue?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we’re happy to have adopted the federal standards, starting in January. Our government will continue to work with municipalities, homeowners, schools, and other areas that have water that we’re concerned about to be able to move forward in a productive way as set out in the federal guidelines. We have a plan to do that. That’s the direction that our government will be headed in.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that the minister has committed to implementing a plan and given that the cost of replacing lead service lines in Edmonton is only \$14 million, the cost of replacing the lines in Calgary is \$11 million, a fraction of their \$4.7 billion handout to the corporations, can the minister provide us with more details about what exactly his plan entails?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we have adopted, starting in January, the federal guidelines around this important issue. We will work in partnership with our municipal partners, homeowners, and other infrastructure areas of this province to be able to adopt those federal guidelines going forward. We think we have a plan going forward that makes sense, and we’ll involve all the partners that matter in this important issue.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that adopting the guidelines isn’t the issue, given that water is exceeding the already-in-place guidelines, and given that some Global News reports say that lead plumbing fixtures are still on sale in Edmonton, meaning that new-home buyers are potentially exposed to toxic lead, will the minister commit today to banning plumbing fixtures containing lead?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, as I’ve already said twice today, we are committed to adopting the federal guidelines and making sure those are implemented across our province. That’s the plan that we have going forward. We will work with municipalities. We will work with homeowners as well as school boards and other facilities within this province to make sure that we can adopt those federal regulations this coming January.

### Alberta in Canada

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, recent events have turned neighbour against neighbour and shaken the perception of many who have made this province and country their home. Many Albertans are

feeling frustrated with the results of the recent federal election and Prime Minister Trudeau’s, the NDP’s, and the Green Party’s consistent lack of respect for our province, its resources, and the economic engine that is Alberta to the rest of the country. Albertans don’t feel heard. What does this government say to those that are struggling to wave a Canadian flag in this beautiful province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member. Our government was sent here to stand up for Albertans. We will fight for fairness within Canada on equalization, on access to Canada’s coastlines, and on a number of other issues. I would say to the hon. member that Alberta now has a government that hears them, that will fight for them, and that will take action.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that the people in this province need to be able to know that the rest of Canada respects us and given that Prime Minister Trudeau can no longer turn a deaf ear to the needs of our province while demanding that Alberta continues to foot the bill for the needs of Ottawa, Montreal, and the rest of the east, as this province is Canada’s economic backbone, how will this government ensure that Alberta gets a fair deal that we certainly deserve?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation is rising.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government, through our Premier, has served notice to Ottawa that Alberta will proudly take our full place in Canada, that we will no longer be a doormat for Ottawa, as the previous NDP government was, and that we will stand up for the interests of Alberta. We have a lot of work to do, but I would say that Ottawa has promised to listen. They said that they’d build Trans Mountain, and we will hold their feet to the fire. We will hold them accountable because that’s what Albertans expect us to do, and we’ve actually put pressure on Ottawa to make that promise already.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta has already dealt with the consequences of four years of western alienation and given that we must stand up for our province while not giving in to excessive concessions to the east and other provinces who do not have Alberta’s best interest at heart, what does this government say about our relationships with our neighbours and with Prime Minister Trudeau?

**The Speaker:** I’m sure you’re referring to the government policy that that would apply to.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our policy, unlike the NDP’s policy and their leader, is to no longer be a doormat and sell out to Justin Trudeau but to stand up for Alberta, stand up for Alberta’s interests going forward, to fight for pipelines, to fight for fairness in the federation. The dark years are over. Albertans know now that they have a government that actually hears them, that is actually listening to them and will fight to make sure that Alberta’s place in the federation is respected, and I believe that the rest of Canada is already starting to listen.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Meadows has a question.

### Human Rights and Multiculturalism Grant Program

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A letter has surfaced online stating that this government has cut the Alberta Human Rights



Commission's human rights and multiculturalism grant program. This program provided support to community projects that foster equality and reduce discrimination. Now the grant is gone. To the Minister of Justice: how do you feel about cutting funding to combat racism to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway that isn't creating jobs?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Our goal here in Alberta is to make sure that all people feel valued and respected. There is a broader agenda to make sure that any grants and anything that comes forward has the ability to actually grow the amazing, amazing multicultural pieces that we have in this province. This is actually about bringing people together and not dividing like those folks would like us to do.

2:20

**Mr. Deol:** Given that the acting manager with the Alberta Human Rights Commission makes it clear in the letter I referenced that the human rights and multiculturalism grant program was established in 1988 and had worked to, quote, advance human rights and principles of equality, multiculturalism, and inclusion in Alberta, to the minister. This program has been helping community groups for 30 years. How do you feel about being the one to end it, and what message do you think that sends to Albertans?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, what I'm absolutely incredibly proud of is that this is the first time in 25 years that we have a ministry dedicated to multiculturalism, that is working along with platforms that have been brought forward. Did you know that we are bringing forward policy to provide security, especially in places of faith – mosques, synagogues, churches – to make sure that when you are down on your knees praying or on the ground, you do not have to look over your shoulder? We build capacity in this province to come together, not to divide like those folks.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that cutting this program is wrong and given that it comes at a time when we see concerns that discrimination is on the rise and given that my understanding is that the program accounts for less than \$1 million in the provincial budget every year, to the minister: will you do the right thing here and now and reinstate the human rights and multiculturalism grant program?

**Mrs. Aheer:** We have actually consolidated the grants. This is going to give us an opportunity to use that lens to be able to make sure that grants are appropriately put into communities, especially, if you can imagine, because this government is actually listening to folks on the ground and what they need to do to build capacity in their communities. In fact, we're continuing to invest. We're extremely excited to be able to talk to folks in their communities to find out where those dollars are best used. We're not making the decisions, Mr. Speaker; it's actually folks in their communities.

Thank you.

### Affordable Housing

**Member Irwin:** Housing is a human right, yet this UCP government seems to think that it's a luxury. Recently I told the Seniors and Housing minister about the lack of affordable housing in my riding. Tent cities have sprung up across our neighbourhoods, the problem is only worsening, and we now see that these tent cities are being torn down. Folks are being criminalized and pushed further into the margins. I pleaded with the minister to stop talking about

debt and efficiency, yet she repeated those same tired lines. These are real humans who are suffering right now, Minister. So to that minister: I ask you again to acknowledge the desperate need for housing. What are your plans to address it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, definitely, housing is important to seniors and vulnerable Albertans. Our government supports seniors to age in their communities and also all the vulnerable Albertans, so we make sure that those are all aging in their communities through the funding for building, operating, and maintaining housing for low- to moderate-income seniors and vulnerable Albertans.

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, given that one constituent who called my office is on AISH and after spending almost all of his AISH money on rent, he has only \$300 left every month for food and medication and given that he's been looking for more affordable housing but has had no luck and given that his story is a story of many – I fear it will become even more common due to this government's cruel and heartless cuts to AISH and housing – to the Minister of Community and Social Services: what do I say to this constituent and to all of the others who are struggling right now? And please, be specific.

**Mr. Kenney:** You know, we hear so much bizarre disinformation from the other side. I think that every now and then we have to stand up and bring this back to the facts. The fact is this. The budget for AISH, presented by the Finance minister two weeks ago, is actually increasing by \$143 million. It is going to go from being by far the most generous income support for persons with disabilities in the country to by far the most generous income support for persons with disabilities in the country, one-third more generous than any other province, with a full suite of other social supports available to those folks.

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, given that I suppose the message that I'm supposed to give that constituent is that they're already getting too much and given that I'm so proud of the vibrant indigenous communities in my riding – in fact, we have one of the largest urban indigenous populations in Alberta – and given that now we see the indigenous housing capital program has been killed, not only leaving a number of important projects in the lurch but also putting more indigenous folks in my neighbourhood and across the province at risk of homelessness, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations. Your cabinet colleagues, the Premier, they're not willing to stand up for folks in desperate need of housing. So my question is simple: will you?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I care deeply for the indigenous people, as you know, and our government is working hard to help them with various options. I attended the Homeless Connect here earlier. I believe I was the only member to attend that. It was very important. There were a lot of great initiatives going on there. I attended Ambrose Place. It's a shelter that provides culturally sensitive housing for the indigenous population. The sad reality right now is that the homeless population is drastically over-represented, and our government is dedicated to improving the lives of the indigenous community. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East has the call.

### School Construction

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government was elected with a clear mandate to continue to build schools and given that on Friday the Minister of Education announced 25 new capital projects, including a new K to 4 elementary school and a grades 5 to 9 middle school for Auburn Bay in my constituency of Calgary-South East, can the Minister of Education please provide this House with a breakdown of the 25 projects she and the Minister of Infrastructure announced last week in north Calgary? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's important for the Speaker to be able to hear both the question and the answer.

I'd like to hear from the hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd first like to thank my colleague for his tireless work and advocacy for his constituents. Budget 2019 honours our commitment to continue to build new schools across this province. Promise made, promise kept. This year's capital plan includes funding for 15 new schools, six replacement schools, and four modernizations and additions. These projects will touch all areas of the province and demonstrate our continued commitment to building schools across Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that tweets don't build schools and given that this announcement of 25 projects is 25 per cent more than were announced in 2018 and given that communities across Alberta have been waiting years for some of these projects, including the Calgary north high school, and given that the minister stated on Friday that she views these projects as important investments in our future, can the minister please tell this House about how our government prioritizes projects and chooses which schools will be built?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Absolutely. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and hon. member. For capital projects to be considered for funding, school divisions must first submit a proposal to the government outlining their request. Once received, my department analyzes the request and prioritizes applications as a result of a series of metrics. We focus on a few key areas, including health and safety concerns, constitutional obligations, and high need for enrolment growth. Albertans can be assured that our government is funding projects that have demonstrated high need for their communities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Given that the previous government tied playground funding to a separate pool of funding and given that playgrounds are essential for the development of our youth, especially those in grades K to 4, and given that parents across this province have been forced to fund raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for playgrounds beyond the taxes they already pay, can the minister please explain how playground funding will work moving forward?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to share on Friday that moving forward, any project that is approved by our government which includes a K to 6 component will include a playground. Our government views playgrounds as essential for

the development of the K-to-6-aged youth, and we do not believe the burden should be on parents and communities to raise funds for these projects. Moving forward, parents and communities can be assured that they will no longer need to fund raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for these essential projects.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a question.

### Physicians' On-call Pay and Rural Health Services

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, pay for on-call doctors has been cut by nearly 40 per cent, and that's fuelling concerns that there will be a serious shortage of doctors able to perform surgeries in rural Alberta. Dr. Noel DaCunha, a Westlock-area physician and board member of the Alberta College of Family Physicians, said that it could take three times as long to perform an emergency Caesarean section. He said that, quote, almost certainly there could be a life put at risk. To the minister: are you really ready to risk lives in rural Alberta by demanding a nearly 50 per cent reduction in on-call pay to fund your \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Physicians were notified of these changes on September 30, and the changes came into force on October 1. The physician on-call program funding was reduced by \$10 million as a result of an agreement that was reached between the Alberta Medical Association, the Ministry of Health, and Alberta Health Services. The revised on-call program reduces the number of billing categories from five to three and reduces the hourly stipend pay for each category. Officials advise that these changes will not reduce the availability of on-call doctors or impact local care.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Now, given that Dr. Gavin Parker, a physician in Pincher Creek, said that the \$18 paid out per hour to doctors is barely enough to cover the time and travel commitments that come with providing on-call rural health care and given that that pay has now been cut to \$11.50 per hour and given that there is no obligation for doctors to take these on-call shifts, to the minister: how can you stand in this House and declare that this somehow won't cause issues with offering quality care in rural Alberta? Is it that you don't actually understand the issue here?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my previous response, officials advise that these changes will not reduce the availability of on-call doctors or impact the level of care delivered to patients and families. I encourage that any physician with questions or concerns regarding these changes and how they will be impacted should be directed to contact their respective zone clinical department head or zone medical affairs office. I would also like to stress that this was a result of an agreement that was formalized through the decision-making body, that includes the Alberta Medical Association.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this reduction in pay for on-call doctors will reportedly save Alberta Health Services about \$10 million but given that that is a small price to pay for the peace of mind amongst Albertans who may need

emergency care in rural Alberta and given that providing health care in rural Alberta has been a decades-long challenge even before this government implemented its short-sighted cuts, to this minister: have you talked with the members of your caucus who represent rural ridings about how they feel about these reductions that could put their constituents at risk?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, you know, I'll mention as well Dr. Ted Braun, the vice-president and medical director of central and southern Alberta for AHS, in a CBC story, where he's quoted. It was posted today, and he made it very clear that he does not believe that the quality of care provided in rural hospitals will change in any way as a result of this. As well, I'd point out that in Alberta the average physician earns \$116,000 more than the neighbouring physician in British Columbia. As I said, next year we'll be conducting a review of the physician on-call program.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising.

### Child Mental Health Services

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been nearly two weeks since the Minister of Health made the inaccurate, hurtful claims that there wasn't a crisis in children's mental health, and it's been just over a week and counting with the minister refusing to apologize for this horribly hurtful and blatantly false claim. Now that the Minister of Health has had some time to think on the hurt and confusion his words have caused families and children dealing with mental health issues, will he finally and sincerely stand up and apologize?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been asked this question by our hon. colleagues on the other side a couple of times. I think I made it very clear in my supplemental answers that I was talking about hospital beds in public hospitals. Obviously, this government is spending a significant amount of more money in our budget on mental health and addiction. Obviously, mental health for our children and our adolescents is of great concern to us. I look forward to the members opposite, if they agree with us and this being a concern, voting with us on our budget.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that it doesn't cost anything to say sorry and given, Mr. Speaker, that our government took the idea of addressing mental health concerns seriously and invested \$200 million for the child and adolescent mental health centre, to be completed by 2024, and given that the centre would have included 101 in-patient beds, outpatient clinics, mental health programs, and family resources but given that this government has given a \$4.7 billion gift to profitable corporations while claiming there's no crisis in children's mental health, can the minister explain why this project doesn't appear in the capital plan, or have you just cancelled it?

**Mr. Shandro:** I'd like to correct the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, and point out that this project was actually only going to have five net new beds for this \$200 million. What we are doing is making sure that we're going to use the new council that was appointed by the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to be able to make sure that the capital spending that we spend is going to be in line with our government's priorities, and that's going to include making sure that we're going to continue to have community resources for our children and adolescents for their mental health and addictions.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that this morning the minister said 101 beds and given that the child and adolescent mental health centre appears nowhere, again, in this government's capital plan and given that, written on page 144 of their fiscal plan, this government's corporate giveaway is exactly \$4.7 billion and given that the mental health needs of Alberta children should come ahead of corporate profits, can the minister confirm that this oversight will be addressed and that the CAMH centre will be funded, built, and staffed, or does the zero-jobs corporate giveaway take precedence over the mental health of Alberta's youth?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, this morning, when I spoke in estimates and answered that question by the hon. member, before I was cut off, the point was that, yes, it was 101 beds, but it's five net new beds, because it was going to be taking beds from the community and placing them all centralized here. That was our concern, and we want to make sure that what happens in our capital spending on mental health, especially mental health for our children and our adolescents, is going to be in line with our priorities and making sure that it's not \$200 million for just five net new beds.

**Ms Sweet:** It's 101. You already said that this morning.

**Mr. Shandro:** Five net new beds.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will come to order.  
The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has the call.

### Rural Municipality Funding

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal officials in my riding of Drumheller-Stettler are relieved that finally they'll be getting the predictable, long-term capital funding they need, but they have some concerns with the built-in reduction in funding. With reductions on the horizon, they're wondering how they're going to provide the services that residents require while keeping taxes reasonable. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs outline how this budget will impact rural municipalities in ridings like mine while at the same time ensuring that residents have the core services they deserve?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are keeping our promise to maintain funding to municipalities for the 2019-2020 year, and we are keeping our promise to deliver predictable, long-term funding for all municipalities by way of the local government fiscal framework act. It took the NDP four years to almost get the job done. We got the job done with the help of our rural partners like the RMA, who recently said that this budget "represents continued support and collaboration between the province and municipalities."

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that this reduction, while modest, will certainly pose challenges for officials in my riding and others as they seek to provide world-class services without raising taxes and given that many of our rural municipalities are not only already finding it difficult to balance the books but remain viable and survive, can the minister explain what the rationale for these modest reductions was?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP miscalculated the state of Alberta's finances by more than \$6 billion. They tried to cling to office with these bogus numbers but were fired by Albertans. We are cleaning up their mess, and that's exactly what we are going to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the NDP spent months fearmongering about 30 per cent reductions in infrastructure funding, library funding, disaster relief program funding, et cetera, and given that the budget is now finalized for all to see and given that I've been hearing constituent concerns that \$3.25 billion of the approximately \$6 billion provincial capital plan is to be spent in Edmonton alone, can the minister explain what areas of concern he's hearing from rural municipalities now that the budget is public?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct that the NDP spent months spreading misinformation about our budget. The truth is, however, that we are maintaining funding for libraries, 911 centres, disaster recovery programs, and we are delivering on predictable, long-term funding, that all municipalities asked for.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Provincial Fiscal Position

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans know how poorly the previous government managed the people's finances. We know they overprojected revenues by billions of dollars. They promised hundreds of millions in the dying days of an election. They always knew they were going to lose. They made promises that they knew full well they could not and would not be able to keep. They left the people holding the bag. To the Minister of Finance: just how bad were the books left to you by the previous, fiscally reckless government?

2:40

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, when we formed government, we knew that things were tough, but when we actually got a look at the books, they were much worse than we anticipated. The previous government had overprojected revenues by as much as \$6 billion in their fiscal plan. We brought forward a budget that brings realistic, credible revenue numbers forward. We have turned down the irresponsible spending trajectory of the previous government to provide a budget that will balance in our first term.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Alberta was left with one of Canada's worst fiscal deficits. Given the size of the deficit, tens of billions of dollars in new government debt, six credit downgrades, a tax grab on everything, higher taxes that scared away investments, a job crisis, and the worst economic record since the Great Depression, can the minister explain how our province finds itself in this position?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, when they were governing, had this province with the largest per capita deficit within North America amongst all states and provinces. That was the trajectory that we inherited as a government. We will turn that spending trajectory down 2.8 per cent. It will not be drastic, but it will be enough to bring a credible fiscal plan that will balance in our first term.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta finds itself in its worst fiscal crisis since the Great Depression. [interjections] Given that the previous government broke its promise to balance the budget during its mandate and given that they continued to increase spending and continued deficits and added to the provincial debt, that generations of Albertans will be paying for, can the Minister of Finance explain the simple, measured, and realistic steps that he is taking to correct years of mismanagement by the previous fiscally reckless government? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Hon. members, we will have order.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans elected this government, again, to bring our fiscal house in order. The previous government during a time of flat revenues increased spending by 4 per cent per year, leaving us on a trajectory for \$100 billion of accumulated debt. This is debt that would have ensured that the next generation of Albertans would not have had access to world-class front-line service delivery. We presented a four-year fiscal plan that turns down operating spending, that will continue to deliver high-quality services, but we'll do it in the most efficient and effective manner.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if we don't take a break, we will finish in approximately the same amount of time, so if you'll stick with me, we will move immediately to the rest of the Routine.

Correction. In 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a statement to make.

### Skilled Trades

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today regarding National Skilled Trades and Technology Week. I was recently asked how I felt about the trades and if they were important. Quite honestly, I was taken a little aback. I couldn't imagine what our province or our country would be like without skilled tradespeople. I was reminded of a quote that Doug Stanyer, a construction manager and mentor of mine, gave one time. What he had said was: before there was construction, there was nothing.

My first big job was on an industrial project, the Ekati diamond mine, which was in the middle of the tundra in the Northwest Territories, as a project co-ordinator with Ledcor Industrial. This was my first real exposure to the skilled trades, and I learned so much. With winter closing in up north above the tree line, getting that superstructure up was critical. The ironworkers scooped me up as one of their own, and we were troubleshooting and coming up with solutions on the fly to meet schedule.

I also once worked for a pipefitter by the name of Brian Kientz, who was a superintendent. He saw me one night staring at a set of piping drawings as I was trying to understand them. I had never been taught about piping drawings or mechanical drawings in college. He asked me what I was up to, and I explained that it looked like a pile of spaghetti that was thrown on the page. He just laughed and took time out of his day to show me how to read them. Wayne Huddleston, a boilermaker, taught me about conveyor sections and setting crushing equipment. Don Fedun, another boilermaker, taught me about tank construction. John Madsen took the time to teach me

about safety and rigging for heavy lifts and how to efficiently manage men to get the job done.

Skilled tradesmen have been my mentors my whole life. Now that I'm on the skilled trades task force and vice-chair of the skilled trades caucus I have a chance to take all that I've learned from these folks and help break down the barriers that have been built up on how the general public perceives tradesmen.

To all the skilled tradeswomen and -men in the province, those working in technology to make our lives better, a heartfelt thank you. After all, before there was construction, there was nothing, and nothing is built without skilled tradespeople.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a tabling.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. I rise to table the requisite copies of two letters from teachers around the province who are concerned and speaking out against the decision of the government to take control of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund by transferring the assets to AIMCo.

I have a letter from Jennifer Krauskopf, who is concerned about the minister's statements on child mental health. She says, "I see evidence on a regular basis that the high need of services for child psychiatry in Alberta is greater than current services provide."

I have a letter from Doug Sparks, who is opposed to wage rollbacks for the public sector. He wants me to convey his "most heartfelt disgust to this weasel corporate shill of a government."

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you might do that in a member's statement or someplace other than tablings.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I have three reports to table before this House today. The first is the Safety Codes Council 2018 annual report.

The second is the Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety Association 2018/2019 annual report.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, is the Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta 2018 report.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has a tabling.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. These are from teachers that are outraged and shocked that this UCP government is blindsiding them by moving their pensions out of their existing fund. They're worried about some nefariousness that might be going on here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a document entitled Alberta Government Scraps P3 Funding Model for New Schools, where Conservative Minister Wayne Drysdale iterates how P3s cost the government extra money.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has caught my eye.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for St. Albert I would like to table the requisite number of copies of

an article titled World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency, signed by 11,263 signatories of scientists from 153 countries.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three sets of tablings. The first is the requisite number of copies of nine letters that I've received from teachers who are deeply concerned about the implications of this UCP budget on their classrooms.

Next, I have the requisite number of letters from 40 teachers also writing in about how concerned they are about the decision and political interference of this government with regard to the teachers' retirement fund and transferring the asset to AIMCo.

The last set of tablings I have are the supporting documents for the questions I asked earlier today, that being the budgets that were submitted to the provincial government by the Calgary board of education, Calgary Catholic school district, Edmonton public schools, Edmonton Catholic schools, St. Albert schools, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, and also the five copies of the October targets that were sent out to those boards to show the difference in funding.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, followed by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of 21 letters from teachers across the province who have written to me with their concerns, speaking out against the decision and political interference of this government in taking control of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and forcibly transferring the assets to AIMCo.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from a teacher concerned and speaking out against the decision and political interference of this government to take control of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to give the requisite copies of 40 letters from teachers around the province concerned about the government's choice to take over the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and transfer it over to AIMCo.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings today?

Seeing none, hon. members, we are at points of order. The point of order by the hon. Government House Leader at 1:55 has been withdrawn.

As such, we are moving to Orders of the Day, Ordres du jour. As hon. members will know, the daily Routine has now concluded and – we might just wait for the Speaker to conclude before exiting – pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon for the consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room. The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure in the Parkland Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:51 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, November 5, 2019

Day 39

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 5, 2019

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 21

#### Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate November 4: Ms Notley]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any hon. members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening to respond to Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, which is implementing much of the terrible budget that the UCP government has brought forward. Now, Bill 21, like the other bill, Bill 20, that was introduced on the same day, is an omnibus piece of legislation. What that means is that it touches a variety of different pieces of legislation that exist in different ministries, so in my remarks, brief as they will be at second reading, I'm going to be touching on many of the different aspects of Bill 21.

Let me begin just by stating that I will not be supporting Bill 21, Mr. Speaker, because there are a number of very, very hurtful to Albertans measures within Bill 21.

I'd like to just start by speaking to the various pieces within this bill. I'll start by talking about the changes that impact advanced education, our postsecondary sector. Bill 21 is going to lift the cap on tuition for three academic years and set an alternative cap in regulation. Now, we already know, Mr. Speaker, because the government has told us, that the new cap will be 7 per cent for each institution but up to 10 per cent for individual programs. That means that students in our province who have benefited from a cap on tuition, who've benefited from moving from one of the most expensive places to go to university to now something more close to the national Canadian average, can expect to see their tuition rise by 7 per cent a year for the next three years, 21 per cent. Or if you have registered in a particularly expensive-to-deliver program, perhaps you may see tuition increases as much as 30 per cent, essentially making the cost of postsecondary education more expensive for students in Alberta.

There are so many different problems with this, Mr. Speaker, but I'll highlight one that strikes me. Having the cost of tuition dramatically increase here in the province might mean our Alberta children choosing to go to school in other provinces where it is more affordable for them. The problem with that, as we know, is that a very high percentage of students who go away for university will often stay away. I'm concerned that we are making tuition here in Alberta less affordable, that we are making life less affordable for those students.

Now, also contained in Bill 21 is the increase to the interest rate on student loans by 1 per cent, again costing students significant money, adding up over the term of a student loan. We all know how difficult – well, perhaps we don't all know. Many of us know how difficult carrying student loans can be when you're just starting out in your career. Making sure that you have that debt paid off is often a top priority for new graduates, and what this change does is

change the Student Financial Assistance Act and make life more expensive for students.

The government's priority on lifting the cap on tuition and increasing the interest rates on student loans are two changes in Bill 21 that I completely disagree with. I don't think that this is what students asked for, despite what the minister responsible, standing in this House, had to say, and I know that there are university students at universities across this province who are concerned and are talking about organizing protests to try to communicate to this government how hurtful this change in policy can be.

At the same time, this government has cancelled the STEP program, which was often used by young people to find employment in the summer months.

The next section that this Bill 21 impacts is Community and Social Services, in pausing the indexation for people who rely on the assured income for the severely handicapped benefit. As well, Bill 21 moves the eligibility rules to regulation, making it easier for the government in the future, through regulation changes, to change who is eligible for AISH. Both of these changes are incredibly concerning because, of course, what this does is make life harder and more expensive for our most vulnerable, people who rely on the very modest amount of roughly \$1,600 per month – that is the amount I've heard discussed in this House – and who will now no longer be receiving the indexation.

What is indexation, Mr. Speaker? This is so that as the cost of living goes up in our province – we know it does each and every year – it offsets that cost of living by providing just a little bit more to the people who rely on AISH. I understand that to be roughly \$30 per month. When you are somebody who is living on an extremely fixed income, that is a critical amount of money. Thirty dollars per month can make a huge difference to someone who is living on very, very little. I feel like this government has not understood the argument as to why we should not be pausing the indexing of AISH, why it is important for those who are living with the very least to not essentially have the government balance the budget on their backs. Thirty dollars per month can make the difference between someone being able to get more bus tickets, possibly even go see a movie. Someone who is living on AISH deserves to have that normal life, to be able to afford to maintain a reasonable standard of living, and pausing the indexation completely removes that.

Pausing the indexation: there is also in this legislation no indication as to when the pause will be lifted. I can tell you, having seen it happen when, for example, we froze the price of tuition, that it makes a big impact very quickly. It's \$30 a month next year, but that becomes \$60 a month in two years, \$90 a month the third year. It starts to really add up, and it starts to put a lot of pressure on someone living on a very small fixed income. I do not think that we should be targeting our most vulnerable Albertans, those living on a fixed income, when looking at balancing the budget, especially given the fact that this government's budget still has \$2 billion of higher deficit spending than the one planned by our government, especially when we are still ending up at \$93 billion of debt at the end of this government's term.

I do not agree with the choice to pause indexation here as well as on employment and income support benefits. Again we're talking about vulnerable Albertans, Albertans who are very much down on their luck. As we all know as MLAs, we have many people who come to our constituency offices in desperate situations, needing help. I'm so grateful that we have Service Alberta and the income supports that we do here in the province, and I see Bill 21 as weakening that.

The energy change included within Bill 21 has to do with removing the regulated rate option cap, tied in with a bunch of other changes with the electricity system. I certainly know that with the

move to an energy-only market, with the likelihood of power spikes and price spikes impacting Alberta families, having that regulated rate option cap removed is something Albertans are going to notice.

Now, within Bill 21 there are a number of changes to Health. It includes giving the Minister of Health the authority to place conditions on obtaining a practitioner identification number, a specific piece of policy that I understand two other provinces have very recently moved away from because it doesn't work. The interesting thing to me about this piece of policy is that essentially the government is trying to use a stick to tell doctors where they need to go and practise. By taking ownership, by giving the minister that responsibility of being able to say where somebody can practise, he also has essentially the liability or the responsibility when there is a town that doesn't have a doctor. His phone is going to be ringing off the hook now because he's directly responsible for whether a doctor might set up shop and practise in a rural area, not to mention the constitutional issues with telling someone where they have to live.

7:40

I suspect that this piece of poorly-thought-out policy, that other provinces are moving away from, will be a thorn in this government's side should Bill 21 be passed. But I hold out hope, Mr. Speaker, that the reasoned arguments that the opposition is making will break through to the government members, and perhaps some amendments which we will be proposing in Committee of the Whole will be accepted. Hope springs eternal: that is my motto for tonight.

In the Health file it also includes provisions for changes to the doctors' master agreement with the Alberta Medical Association. Essentially, I see this as a further indication of how this government treats partnerships, relationships, bargaining, and that is with a complete lack of respect. Essentially, the government is trying to tilt the bargaining table in their own favour, giving themselves an emergency pull bar, where they can just cancel the agreements that currently exist. That's a bargaining chip. When they are sitting down to talk to doctors, they now have a card that they can more easily play in this game of negotiating, that should be based on respect. We've talked a lot about bargaining in good faith when it comes to the labour relations world. But, really, treating people as adults, going into any negotiations with respect, looking for those opportunities where there is win-win-win: this is all very important. Instead, what the government is doing is giving itself the ability to instead pressure and add bargaining pressure onto the AMA.

I see that as being very similar to the Labour and Immigration change where they are reversing the replacement worker ban in the public sector, essentially tilting the playing field in favour of employers. I strongly disagree with the reversing of the replacement worker ban in the public sector, Mr. Speaker, for a number of reasons. We know that replacement workers tend to escalate situations.

We also know that an essential services agreement is required in so many of our critical workplaces. Now what's going to happen is that the two parties are going to sit down and say, "In the event of a strike at this hospital, how do we make sure that those things that are essential, that are critical to patient care, that are critical to running the facility – to make sure that none of the equipment is damaged in a strike or lockout, let's work out how that is." On this particular ward, perhaps there are normally 10 nurses that are working. In the event of a strike or lockout, there will be two. Well, now those two nurses are going to come to work and replacement workers will also be there, people not familiar with the area, people who need to be trained, potentially, and it's going to escalate the tensions.

It's not going to help lead people to resolve in a respectful labour relations world, the way collective bargaining is designed to do. Think of essential services as a bargain between the two parties, entered into as adults, with respect. Now one side can bargain essential services and then throw that out the window and bring in replacement workers. It does not make sense to me, Mr. Speaker, and I have not heard a good case for why this replacement worker ban is included in Bill 21.

On the Justice and Solicitor General side, Bill 21 creates regulation-making authority and outlines the responsibility of specified municipalities to pay a cost for policing if required by regulation, something that I imagine has many municipalities concerned given the conversations we've been having with policing and the lack of respect that we've seen between partners in something that we should all be able to talk about and work on collectively, because it's all to our benefit. But we're not seeing that out of this government.

Under the Seniors and Housing piece, pausing the indexation of the seniors' lodge program and pausing the indexation of the Alberta seniors' benefit program: this ties into where we started, talking about pausing the indexation for people who rely on AISH. I think an aspect of having a healthy and strong economy, that seems to be lost on this government, is the idea that those who make the least are an important part of our economy. I can tell you that that \$30 that someone on AISH is receiving or that little bit more that someone on the Alberta seniors' benefit would get because of indexation gets spent in our local economy. When you start starving these Albertans from the funds that they need to live and survive, when they're not spending, that starts to stall the economy.

Similarly, when you ask for wage rollbacks from the public sector, when you start firing people: these are all things that harm the economy. In so many ways I disagree with how this government is proceeding.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available should anybody – I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has the call.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really was interested in what the member was saying, and I know that she probably has a few more minutes to expound upon the topics that are at hand. I wanted to know if there was anything in particular that affected her constituents that has come up recently with respect to the proposals in Bill 21. Quite often we do have constituents come to our offices with concerns that would directly result immediately upon the announcement or introduction of a piece of legislation in the Legislature. I know that's happened to me with respect to Bill 21. It wasn't just simply a matter of a delayed reaction; it was immediate. We had people phoning the office and appearing in person, wanting to tell their stories about the hardship and the harm and the fear they had as a result of the imposition of proposed legislation.

I would like to know if this is widespread in her constituency as well and if indeed she could provide one or two examples of individuals who specifically expressed the fear that this legislation was going to hurt as much as many of the members of the former opposition talked about when they suggested that rectifying what they thought were the problems with Alberta's economy was going to take measures that were going to hurt. Ultimately, now they're sitting in government, and the Ultimate Cuts and Pain Party is true to its word. It's hurting, and I wouldn't mind hearing the member talk a little bit about some of the individuals who come to her office with their stories of ultimate cuts and pain.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, and thank you to my colleague for that question, because he's absolutely right, through my response to Bill 21 – the impact to my local community is very real, and it's something that I've already heard from constituents about. One of the reasons why I'm so proud to represent Edmonton-Mill Woods is that it's a very unique area. It's a community designed during a housing shortage, during boom times in the '70s. Very interestingly, because it's not that common across Alberta, every neighbourhood in Mill Woods has affordable housing. As a result of having affordable housing in each of the neighbourhoods in my community, I do have a lot of people who are on AISH. I have people who are on fixed seniors' benefits, fixed-income seniors in my constituency, and we have received phone calls, one or two walk-ins, similar to what the member was referring to, people who are really concerned.

One of the things that has not been lost on people coming in is the fact that members of this government voted in support of the indexation of AISH when that was brought forward. They spoke passionately in support of this policy. The UCP, in their platform discussions and in interviews, said that reversing the indexing of AISH is not something that they were going to do. What I've heard from constituents who have stopped in to talk to me is a sense of betrayal and a sense of fear about how already difficult budgets to manage are going to be made worse with the changes in Bill 21.

I really want to emphasize that we are talking about people who rely on a very small amount of money to survive. I find it very difficult when I hear the Premier talk about how we have the most generous benefits now, how we will have the most generous benefits, because we are incredibly privileged as MLAs with generous salaries, and we are talking about people who are living on the bare minimum. That \$30 does make a big difference when somebody is working with so little. I know this because I have talked to the constituents that this impacts: to the seniors; to the people on AISH; to the university students who are concerned about rising tuition; to the parents who are concerned that they may not be able to send their son or daughter to university and have that be fully paid for, instead relying on loans. The interest on those loans is going up. There are so many different measures here that are quite concerning.

7:50

I've also, not only at my constituency office, watched a lot of the discussion on social media with a lot of anger and a lot of surprise. I've seen more than one comment from somebody who voted UCP who says: this is not what I thought I was voting for; this was not what they said during the election. In fact, again, they specifically said that they would not do these things.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members looking to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure this evening to rise to speak to Bill 21. I first started off by speaking a little bit about the size of the document and what it actually means to have a bill of this size containing measures of this kind. What it means is that we're facing what's commonly known as an omnibus bill, a bill that has, presumably, many measures that have some relation to one another, but that's not necessarily the case.

I don't recall, when we were in government, that we ended up in an exercise such as this, where we had a bill as large and with so many disparate parts coming together. This one is a prime example of what many, over time, in parliamentary parlance would deem to

be a rather elephantine piece of legislation that realistically could have been divided into many separate parts, that would have allowed much more defined and, I think, intelligent debate. Not to denigrate any of the words that have been spoken in the House so far on this piece of legislation, but the dissection of some of these pieces of legislation, which bear no resemblance one to the other, probably would have been in the interest of healthy debate and also in the interest of the people of Alberta, who really have a right to fully comprehend exactly what the intent of the legislation is in its small components.

I think that a lot of the measures are intended to be sort of hidden by their own volume. It's unfortunate that the government has chosen to operate this way with such a large omnibus bill. I won't beat that element to death. I just wanted to register my thoughts on the strategy the government has used, to stack numerous measures that are proposed in Bill 21 so that they can employ the principle: if you throw so much against the wall, people won't have an opportunity to fully digest it. That, of course, Mr. Speaker, is what we intend to assist with in our debates here, including tonight, on Bill 21.

The bill is an omnibus bill, as I mentioned, that I think attempts to create a smokescreen and looks to follow the theme of the government's war room where they create and pick fights with people and divide them. I would caution members of the government that when you do pick fights and divide people and create a smokescreen, you play with fire and you can get burned. People who feel that they're under attack will fight back.

I think evidence of that is shown by the number of constituents who are visiting our offices or who are calling and e-mailing, very upset and distraught in many cases, over the effects that they see Bill 21 proposes and will have on their livelihood, their life, their ability to live, and in particular over how much of an effect it's going to have on their children, particularly children of low-income families and particularly where there's a single parent involved, most often a mother. The stresses that these families are under already are burdensome right now, and the government is piling on to the costs that these families face. The stress that I sense in the phone calls that I'm getting is nuanced by many different elements of the government's policy that are now coming to bear on their budget, on the family budgets of low-income people, who seem to be the favourite target of this government. It's shameful, in my view, that they would see fit, in what many have deemed very petty ways, to nickel and dime families who are least able to afford to pay more in their strapped position.

For example, we've talked in this House already about the so-called temporary suspension of the indexation of benefits for AISH, the assured income for the severely handicapped. That is something that is unthinkable, is unconscionable, and many in the province – many pundits, many commentators, many letters to the editor, certainly every MLA in the opposition on this side of the House – can't believe that the government saw fit to actually go ahead and do this, to deindex the benefits for assured income for the severely handicapped, especially in a situation where that was something they just recently achieved and fought for.

We finally, as a government ourselves, were able to make that happen and give a small increase to AISH payments. It still wasn't as far as we would have hoped to have gone to increase and improve benefits for those who are really at the bottom rung of our economic spectrum, yet this government saw fit to dial that back. Perhaps you're hearing those individuals coming into your offices, MLAs' offices for members of the government, the desperation in the voices of these people who are wondering aloud how in the heck they're going to make ends meet. How are they going to see their way clear to ending up having around \$30 a month less in actual



dollar power and spending power as a result of this deindexation? That's on an annual basis, and it's ongoing.

It's interesting to note that if one does a bit of research on other governments in the past in this country who have temporarily deindexed the benefits for those on low incomes, no matter what they happened to be, whether it was direct benefits of assistance or whether it was tax bracket alterations or, to use the word the government likes to use, to pause the indexation of such benefits or tax brackets, the average length of time which these pauses tended to last seems to be about 15 years. Some pause. These people can look forward to a long period of time of suffering from loss of this indexation if indeed history is any indicator on this topic.

Now, I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that if indeed the government changes in this province and we were to assume power once the next election is over, we would see a lot shorter period of time when this measure was in place. We would once again put in place the indexation of benefits for AISH recipients and, hopefully, also improve the actual benefit itself.

It was surely a shock to everybody on AISH in this province and all the family members who know somebody or who have a family member on AISH and everybody in the province who tried to imagine living on under \$1,700 a month that this government saw fit to yank the carpet from underneath the feet of these folks and deindex them. It's attacking the people with the lowest possible income and income supports. It was an expression in letters to the editor that I hope resounded at the cabinet table and in the caucus room of the government very, very strongly, because this is a measure that I really think the government has an opportunity to save some face on and to rescind as part of this proposed Bill 21.

I really strongly believe that it will be an Achilles heel for this government and it will be wise for them to recognize that it probably wasn't the smartest thing to do, to deindex AISH. It really doesn't bode well for them.

8:00

What it does is hurt people; it hurts the people that really need our help. This government purportedly was one that was looking after individuals who needed help in the face of growing jobs and the economy, yet that's not what they're doing. They're basically balancing the books on the backs of our poorest people. It leaves a bad taste in the mouths of Albertans, who have a great sense of fair play. Certainly, people in this province are proud of the hard work that they do, but they also recognize that not everybody is born equal, with equal abilities to sustain themselves, and we have a responsibility to help individuals who do need it and rely upon it.

Yet to do what we've done in this measure alone is something that's a stain upon the record of this government and, I would dare say, in the history of this province. Hopefully, they recognize how brutal this is appearing to be as a behaviour on the part of the government and decide to rescind at least this measure; if not others, at least this measure. Every government has some Achilles heel, and this one, I think, is something that will really be damaging. It's not going to die down. It won't go home. It's a chicken that's come home to roost, and roost indeed it will in perpetuity unless the government sees fit to rescind this motion.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that you get the drift that I'm very, very upset that this indexation has been suspended or paused, and I intend to keep hammering on it until I see some movement on the part of the government. If they don't, I'll be one on this side of the House, joined by all my colleagues, who will rail against it, a nonstop campaign on behalf of those individuals who are suffering as a result of this very heartless – heartless – measure.

I also wanted to talk a little bit about the income support for the seniors' lodge program. It's something that we've grown to rely upon in this province, and it's something that I know back from the days when my own grandmother was a village councillor and deputy mayor in Thorhild, where they were in a big battle to get the lodge as the county seat in Thorhild versus Redwater, who wanted it as well. Thorhild ended up getting that lodge, and that was a huge feather in their cap.

The ability for people to live in place in their own village after retirement is something that people cherish. It's a right, it's an opportunity that people cherish, especially in Small Town, Alberta, in rural Alberta, which this government so happily purports to represent and whose interests they have at heart, according to them. Yet here they are in their retirement years, when people want to retire in their community, close to home, close to perhaps where they were farming, and supports for the seniors' lodge program are being cut back by measures contained in Bill 21. That leaves people in villages like Thorhild and Redwater or Spedden or Warspite or wherever you happen to be in Alberta where there are found these seniors' lodges, which are really the pride of the province – they were something that was a job well done in the past by past governments to provide these affordable housing locations within the local residential areas of rural Alberta, in particular, and now they're being threatened.

People are scratching their heads, basically asking the same thing as those who have had their AISH indexation suspended. They're asking: "What the heck did I ever do to you? What did I do to deserve this kind of treatment?" They didn't expect this kind of behaviour from a government that was elected to look after those who are least able to look after themselves but is now simply paying lip service to that claim. In real terms, they're going backwards. They're backsliding on those promises when it comes to AISH recipients and our valued seniors who are looking to retire with dignity in their home communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm doubly disappointed on these two measures alone, but there are many, many more. This omnibus bill goes on at length, and it spares no age group or no pocket of our population when it comes to them facing the axe from the Unending Cuts and Pain Party.

The tuition freeze that we had in place as a government for three years is something I'll talk about a little later on today.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has risen under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to comment on some of the things the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung said. In April of this year Albertans had to make a decision. They had to make a decision on whether or not they were going to follow a plan presented by the NDP to get our financial house in order. They rejected that because they did not believe that the NDP were serious or that they could. In fact, they took a look at the past record of the NDP: six credit downgrades in four years, an all-time record; going from \$13 billion to \$63 billion in debt; some of the highest deficits that this province has ever seen. I think that what they asked was: really, do we feel like these wraparound services are in jeopardy under an NDP plan? They recognized that they were in jeopardy in terms of sustainability.

So this government said: in order for us to be able to provide these wraparound services, that we hold so dear in Alberta, for those people who need them, we have to be able to get our financial house in order to be able to have those wraparound services for future generations. We are not a government just for today. We are a government for our future generations, and when we spend their

inheritance, what they have as wraparound services – education, health care – we do a terrible disservice to our children and our grandchildren.

Unfortunately, the NDP continue to talk about how bad this is, but let's be realistic. The truth is that there are \$1,400 AISH payments that go out every month to individuals. This is a third higher than the closest jurisdiction to us. [interjections] Sorry; \$1,700. I appreciate that.

Really, again, the position that the NDP have taken is a position where they say that this deindexing is actually pulling money away. The truth is that we have never had indexing in this province – never – since I believe 1979. Now, the members opposite – this is actually considered in their argument as a smokescreen. They're angry at us for having a real, credible strategy and plan to get ourselves in balance so that we can have sustainability of these wraparound services. This is the reality that Albertans were faced with on April 16, and this is the reason why a million Albertans gave us a mandate to get our financial house in order, because they do feel that it's important to have these wraparound services. Because of that, the NDP are upset with the decision that Albertans made.

We have a reasonable, credible plan to get ourselves back to balance so that we have sustainability in this province, and this is the reason why Albertans have chosen us to carry forward the flag for Alberta and to work for our most vulnerable.

8:10

It is disingenuous for the members opposite to continue to talk about how we are destroying the future of these programs when, in reality, we are making them sustainable. It's sad to see them grandstand on this issue, especially on the most vulnerable people of our province. For them to do that is deplorable, Mr. Speaker, and I don't believe that it serves those people who are in these positions well at all. We can talk about disagreements with our budget. That is exactly what we're supposed to be doing in here. But to grandstand on the people who are on AISH, our seniors: this is the worst kind of politics. What we should be talking about is who has a credible plan to be able to help get Alberta back on track for the sustainable programs that we have. That's really what we need to be doing.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to offer some of my thoughts on Bill 21, which proposes to do a number of things, including suspending indexation of benefits for the assured income for the severely handicapped income support and the seniors' lodge program.

I find it interesting to be following the Member for Taber-Warner who, not a year ago, on November 28, 2018, speaking to the matter of indexing AISH in legislation, that very member: "We believe that this is actually a fairly good, common-sense amendment and that the bill was good and that it's something that needs to be done, yet here we hear once again how bad we are for accepting it, supporting it, and voting for it." Less than a year ago, Mr. Speaker, this particular MLA voicing support for Bill 26 at the time, An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities. I guess we are not combatting poverty and fighting for Albertans with disabilities anymore, and for what, precisely? A deficit that is \$2 billion higher than the NDP, a debt that is coming in within 3 per cent of the NDP, for personal income tax hikes on every single one of us, and a number of other measures in Bill 21 that will make life

less affordable, including ending the tuition freeze, increasing student loan interest rates, and increasing people's electricity bills.

Now, the Member for Taber-Warner was not the only person to speak in favour of indexing AISH at that time. We also had the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul:

This indexing to CPI will greatly benefit all support recipients who have been waiting for years for an adjusted amount that reflects today's cost-of-living increases.

I guess we are no longer going to be giving those amounts. I will go on.

We've heard, devastatingly, from AISH advocates that some cannot even afford basic necessities. This is absolutely unacceptable.

I guess it's acceptable now for people to not be able to afford basic necessities. It's \$30 a month, roughly, in the first year, but through the power of compounding it will be more in subsequent years. We know it's not temporary. The fact of the matter is that maybe we should go back to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul one more time:

Every Albertan, as a base, should be confident in their ability to afford personal hygiene products and necessities. There is absolutely no one who should worry if this will be impossible for them.

Now there will be thousands of people who are thinking about their meal planning for the week. That's what AISH recipients in my constituency of Lethbridge-West have told me. That's what indexing means to them. That's why we did it, and that's why a little over a year ago this bill passed with the support of many of the members in this House, including the member who just stood up and said that we were the ones grandstanding. Well, it sounds to me like voting for Bill 26 a year ago was the dictionary definition of grandstanding, of saying one thing to get elected, to tell a story to people, a disingenuous story as it turns out, and then doing exactly another for the most vulnerable people. It is completely unnecessary. The actual number of dollars we are talking about pales in comparison to other matters that have been made a priority by the members across the way.

I notice here, too, that we have changes to the seniors' lodge program, the seniors' benefits. There are a number of seniors' lodges in Lethbridge and surrounding area. Free political advice: these folks vote. I have met with many of them. Some of them are in Lethbridge-East; some of them are in Lethbridge-West. Some of them are in Coaldale; some of them are out in Picture Butte and elsewhere. I don't remember ever going into a seniors' lodge and seeing a piece of UCP literature that said that rental supplement programs were going to change, saying that people were going to get less on seniors' lodge programs, saying that older Albertans were going to get kicked off the seniors' drug program or any of the other seniors' initiatives that we find in this budget that are enabled by Bill 21. I don't recall anyone ever campaigning on that to the thousands of seniors who live in Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? They're talking to me now. They are not impressed. They are not impressed at all, and there are a great number of them in Lethbridge-East who are wondering exactly what they were sold by this UCP government. They're wondering why they are the ones to have to pay for a \$4.7 billion tax cut. I'll continue to talk to them in Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East because somebody has to stand up for seniors. Somebody has to stand up for adults with severe disabilities and complex needs.

Somebody has to stand up for students, too. Lethbridge is known for two things, as I shared with the House last night, seniors and students. We have a number of students who come from elsewhere

to do their undergraduate degrees at the U of L, and it is also a place where many folks who come from rural communities come in, and they end up settling in Lethbridge. They are not amused that their student loan interest is going up. I don't remember ever seeing that in the volumes that were produced as part of the UCP platform. They were not honest about that at all. I don't remember ever seeing anything for the parents who are sending their students to the University of Lethbridge about ending their tuition and education tax credits either. So we have a number of pieces here that are going to have consequences, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Lethbridge-East elected a Liberal from 1992 to 2012, and Bridget Pastoor served in this House for many, many years. She has been a good friend and mentor to me. She was enormously successful in politics, both at city council and at being an opposition member from Lethbridge, because she spent an awful lot of time talking to seniors in Lethbridge-East. You know, those folks have a lot of voting power. They show up to vote, and no one ever told them that they were going to be losing these kinds of benefits within seven months of this government taking office. They made haste to go after seniors and their pocketbooks.

You know, it's really interesting, some of the rationale for Bill 21. One might find it on page 131 of the business plan, in which in some ways it sort of says that it's a problem that seniors' incomes are higher than in the rest of the country. I'm hoping for this particular performance indicator that the idea here isn't to push that performance indicator down by pushing down the incomes of the lowest income seniors. It will be noticed. It will be noticed in southern Alberta. It'll be noticed at the Alberta Rose Lodge, which is in Lethbridge-East. It'll be noticed at the Blue Sky Lodge in Lethbridge-East. It'll be noticed at the Heritage Lodge, right in downtown west Lethbridge. It'll be noticed at the Pemmican Lodge in downtown west Lethbridge. It'll be noticed at the Golden Acres Lodge, which is in Lethbridge-East. It'll be noticed at the Piyami Lodge in Picture Butte. It'll be noticed at the Sunny South Lodge in Coaldale.

8:20

Mr. Speaker, there are political consequences for going after low-income people's standard of living. The hubris is still strong. It's wafting from the other side of the House, but I have a feeling – I have a feeling – that when Albertans get a good sense of what this government is doing through Bill 21 and who they are targeting to bear the brunt of their \$4.7 billion tax cut, the tone will begin to change, or perhaps the arrogance will become more hardened. I'm not sure.

Anyway, moving on to allowing the Health minister to place conditions on new practitioner identification numbers: of course, this is unconstitutional. You know, barely a bill goes by where this government doesn't take the opportunity to find a way to back up a dump truck of cash onto some lawyer's lawn because it contains within it something that will be challenged. In this case, it will be that because it has already been struck down in two provinces, Mr. Speaker. Now, there are ways to work with the Alberta Medical Association, without abrogating people's Charter rights, to ensure that we have rural health care. These things can be done. We have some experience with this on this side of the House. Certainly, the Albertan Medical Association probably has some good ideas for how to affect that particular public policy and those outcomes as well, but we're not finding that in here. We're just finding an affection for the hammer of doing things that are against the law.

Of course, next step, we have changes to the master agreement with the Alberta Medical Association, going back to seniors, who are folks who use the health care system. Now, there is no question that reform of physician compensation was a matter that took up a

lot of bandwidth for the past four years and even prior to us, because the physician agreements were something that was grappled with in the Stelmach and Redford governments as well. There is no question about this. Having said that, allowing unilateral changes to the master agreement will prompt a war with doctors, and who will suffer? It will not be the people in this House. It will not be the wealthy donors and the people who were funnelling money through dark-money PACs to elect the members across the way. No. It will be patients. It will be seniors who live in the lodges that I just listed into the record, Mr. Speaker.

Now, finally, I don't ever recall anyone campaigning in the election on having fewer cops on the street. That is not something that I remember anyone taking a position on. It would have been a rather alarming position to take, especially given some of the issues we've seen in particular with drug trafficking and so on in southern Alberta. I don't ever remember anyone taking a position that we should have fewer police, certainly not the party of so-called law and order.

We see neither thing in this bill. We've certainly seen an unconstitutional move around physicians: so not so much enamoured with the law. Allowing changes to the master agreement: not so enamoured with order. Certainly, many of the changes in terms of changing through regulation how municipalities pay for policing: also not terrifically orderly. I'm noticing out there that that the municipalities aren't exactly going wild for this proposed change in Bill 21, Mr. Speaker. I'm not seeing a parade of validators for the minister's news conference in which he takes a victory lap on some of these changes that are hidden in Bill 21; in fact, quite the opposite. I am seeing a number of municipalities wondering how they are going to make sure that those police stay on the street and how they're going to fund that, given the changes that are also contemplated here in terms of changing how the province uses fine money that it collects on behalf of municipalities.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks with this. I think there are a number of things in this bill, and that is by its very nature. It is an omnibus bill designed such that there are so many different things in it that, you know, the opposition will stand up and they will say their piece, but a lot of the things will get lost in the shuffle. So I think, at the end of the day, what's going to be noticed are the things that hit people on their bottom line and the very, very cynical moves, in particular doing things that nobody campaigned on. Nobody really campaigned on higher electricity rates, although that is what this bill contemplates. Nobody campaigned on more of your disposable income after graduation going to student loan interest. Nobody campaigned, certainly, on ending indexation of benefits to AISH; in fact, quite the opposite. Both parties campaigned on indexing AISH. Apparently, only one had the intention of doing what they said they were going to do.

You know, in politics I have noticed that a lot of people have a lot of time for politicians regardless of their political stripe if they just follow through on what they said they were going to do. I can't tell you how many times I've had this conversation with Albertans, and I'm sure many of the folks in this Chamber have, too. You know, "Say what you will about Ralph Klein," people used to say, "he did what he said he was going to do."

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my friend from Lethbridge-West for her comments on this legislation. She spent a lot of time talking about the impacts that this legislation will

have on a number of people in her community, and I want to thank her for that.

I want to know if she would like to expand on the impacts that she sees to Lethbridge with the increases in tuition that this government is foisting upon students. Given that Lethbridge is a city of higher learning, with both the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College in a city of about a hundred thousand people, the student population is a significant portion of the population. We know that a lot of the students who attend university or college in Lethbridge come from out of town, so I'd like to know what impact driving students away from Lethbridge College and Lethbridge University, through these tuition increases and other ways that this government is making life more expensive for students, will have on the economy of Lethbridge now and on the future of Lethbridge. What will Lethbridge look like if it can't train people with skills for jobs for the future and can't train people to be citizens who are engaged in public life, the way that our government did? I'm eager to hear the Member for Lethbridge-West's thoughts on that issue.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, with three minutes, 20 seconds left.

**Ms Phillips:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. In the limited time I have, I think the biggest thing to underline is that when students have disposable income, when they have a summer job, when their tuition costs are under control, then you really do see in the months from September to the end of April quite a large uplift in terms of activity, particularly in the shoulder seasons – of course, in the winter it's a little bit different – in the downtown, for small businesses in the downtown. You see young people out and about a lot more, and when you talk to small businesses that are part of the business revitalization zone, the downtown BRZ, they will tell you the kind of purchasing power that both students, faculty, and support staff at the university and the college have, and that is really keeping a lot of the small businesses alive, quite frankly, in Lethbridge. So I think any reduction in FTEs that comes as a result of cuts or a reduction in disposable income that comes as a result of skyrocketing tuition will have an effect. There's no question. It will very likely have an effect as well on the housing and rental markets, and it will certainly have an effect on other associated services such as food banks, the health care system, counselling, and so on.

**8:30**

You know, the multiplier effects, in a positive way, of these two institutions, the college and the university, are very easy to see in the city and, in fact, the public service more generally; 20 per cent of the GDP of Lethbridge comes from the public service, about 1 in 5 dollars. That is an important driver of the economy because it is a regional health care hub, it is a regional seniors' care hub, as I described, and it is a regional education hub as well.

It bears noting that it's not just the tuition changes, but the changes to agricultural research will have a profound effect on the city's economy as well. At the end of the day, the moves around postsecondary and, in particular, to put ever more of that burden on students will mean a decreased amount of economic activity in the downtown. There's no question about that. Indeed, the University of Lethbridge Students' Union wrote a letter today expressing their dismay with this government's choice to, quote, put the debt on the backs of students. Too bad for them: the debt will still be on their backs, but they will also be paying more.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen to speak to second reading of Bill 21.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise in the House to speak to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. I just wanted to say that indeed I will not be supporting this bill. The reason why I'm not supporting this bill is not really based on philosophical articles or readings or my point of view. My arguments that I'm having against this bill are coming more from real life, what is exactly happening, the feedback in my riding and in my communities.

To put this into perspective, when I was looking at the bill, you know, I tried to visualize what exactly we're trying to address in this House with regard to, I will say, the fortune of Albertans. The last few days I tried to visualize exactly what we're seeing with numbers like \$4.7 billion, those billions. I tried to actually visualize those numbers: what do those numbers look like? When I came up with the information, I was surprised. When we were discussing every time a \$4.7 billion cut, a giveaway to big corporations, something came up on the Internet like this: one of the demographical visualizations will show that this is something like, in weight, 94,000 pounds or that this is a stack of bills 600 kilometres tall or long. So you can imagine, when we're talking about \$4.7 billion, what we are discussing here. Many of the members of this House, I'm very sure, probably would not have experience handling practically \$4.7 billion. That's why we will probably not see the direct impact, you know, of what we're trying to discuss here.

The other thing is it's not only the \$4.7 billion, that amount of money that I'm talking about, all the way from here to probably past Lethbridge, the stack of bills, the amount of money, but also the government's path to address, to fund that money, you know, on the backs of the not even, I would say, average Albertan. Looking at Bill 21, it's the most vulnerable people who need that very support, the ones that the government, I think, has determined to help, the people of their jurisdiction, in this case Albertans, the people who would expect the government to stand up, to have their back. But in this case the government actually picked those people to fund all those big corporations in the name of creating jobs.

In fact, it has been proven not only in Alberta. We have seen in the past six, seven months that my colleagues the members of this side of the House have been arguing that, you know, this experience has already been proven in many jurisdictions in the world that it does not really create that so-called trickle-down effect. All that happened is that the corporations were happy to put the money in their pockets and then probably find a place where they see that it is maybe more reasonable and wiser for them to go to do business and make a bigger profit.

That's exactly what we're seeing here in Alberta with Husky Energy: \$233 million. In fact, I will come to the point where the members on this side of the House are trying to discuss the effect on AISH recipients, students, and other vulnerable people. The one company that pocketed \$233 million from this government, all they did was handed out pink slips to their workers, and now they are announcing that they are going somewhere else to invest.

One more company, EnCana: \$54 million. Those kinds of amounts we can never imagine in our life, and you can expect what those most vulnerable people would probably understand about those amounts. EnCana has already pocketed that money, and they are not entrusted to create jobs. They are just looking at where they can make much more profit easier. They have made an announcement to move out of the province.

Given the evidence, it is not just us. It's everywhere, and I think that the government members also acknowledge this. The biggest problem is that the government is still not willing to listen. To fund that \$4.7 billion, the very painful thing we're discussing here is that the government picked the people that are called the severely

handicapped. You know, when I'm discussing this, the severely handicapped, "severely" is a key word in this.

I am emphasizing "severely" because I have been involved in such a real case for the last two months, where an individual is suffering from multiple sclerosis and is completely in a wheelchair. His wife is trying to look after him 24 hours and somehow managed to get two hours of a job to maintain her household expenses. She lost that very job a month ago. So I'm working with that family. They sold their car – they cannot afford their car anymore – and they can hardly pay their rent. Last month she asked me: "Please, find me a job or find a solution. We do not really have money for groceries this month."

8:40

This is what this government is doing. When it comes to serving your people, that is the duty we have in this House. This is what this UCP party had actually committed to those people in the election. They did not actually run the election on the agenda that they would come after those very vulnerable people and make them pay \$4.7 billion that they weren't campaigning on.

It's not only this. I'm also, you know, involved with another family. They have a special-needs child, and their whole family style has been changed. The mother cannot go to work anymore. She cannot, you know, afford to be the same person anymore even though the child has grown to be 10 or 12 years old. But it's not time that the mom can tell the child to get up and get ready, we're going to go the store or we're going to go to the school.

Those are the people who need support mostly, and the government turns their back to them. The government is still thinking that by funding \$4.7 billion – it has been proven in the last seven months that Alberta has lost 27,000 jobs, instead of creating, instead of helping anything in Alberta.

The other thing I just wanted to discuss is not only what the government is trying to address in this Bill 21. It's not one sentence of those lines, I would say, when they said that they're ending the tuition freeze, you know, suspending the tuition cap. You need to see the direction and the systemic moves they're making.

It was not long ago when they rolled back the youth worker wage. We argued that the youth worker wage is very critical for those young people to save money for their higher education, to maintain the expenses. Sometimes the parents are not able to support, and in many cases they help the family with earning that little money.

The government so badly went after those people, and they didn't stop there. I can see the move in this bill. I don't know what's going to be next after this. Now the government suspended the tuition cap. Not only that, they have also raised the interest on their loans. So the average student will probably end up paying \$4,000, \$4,500 more in their yearly tuition fee. So that is a move.

The government, I think, failed to understand about all those young people. It's not only the future of those young people; it is the future of this province. When those people go to universities, join programs, they are not only trying to progress their own career. They're trying at the same time, you know, to contribute to their own field with the expertise they will get to make this place better for all.

This is the key point I think this UCP government has failed to recognize: the funding of our schools, the funding of our universities. Standing behind these young people is not only critical to help those people, but it's also very crucial to save the future of our province and the future of our country.

The other thing I really wanted to mention is something that Bill 21 is trying to address. Bill 21 will give more powers to the minister to intervene and make decisions with regard to the family physicians and doctors, where they can work. I don't know. The

government probably is trying to do it with good intentions, but I would expect that on this, then, the government has a whole lot of resources when they're looking into something and coming up with the decisions to change the direction, to move to help the province. They would have, actually, the work done.

I'm coming from places where the governments have moved in that direction, but it had in no way helped the people, the young people and the people of those jurisdictions. That had become more and more, I would say, part of controversies where these kinds of powers are mostly used to penalize your opponents when it comes to – it has opened the way to corruption even, in many cases.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his comments. I really appreciate the stories he's been telling so far. I was wondering if during this exchange he might be able to elaborate on some of the things he heard from folks during the election campaign. Did he hear from any seniors who said, "You know, I understand our drug coverage is too rich; maybe it should be rolled back"? Did he hear from anyone on AISH: "You know, I understand that we get about a third more than other provinces, so I think my AISH should be rolled back"? Did he hear from seniors who live in his riding: "You know, I understand that maybe my own income shouldn't be indexed"? I definitely didn't hear any of those things, and I'm wondering if the member could talk about that. Did he hear from students who said: "You know, I think my student loan payment should go up. I think that my tax credit should be eliminated"? Did he hear any of those things when he was door-knocking? If not, what are some of the things that he did hear from those groups that he would have liked to have seen addressed in a government omnibus bill about the budget?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's the biggest thing I just wanted to emphasize. During the election the UCP in this case did not really – I just wanted to find the parliamentary word. Did they campaign on what they intended to do after winning the election? This is the biggest thing.

When I was going door to door, yes, in fact, jobs were biggest of the concerns in my riding and probably in most parts of Alberta. When the leader of the UCP rented or bought a blue truck, travelled from one corner to the other corner, there was only one slogan: They Will Create Jobs. There was no discussion that when we get in power, we will fund those big corporations, and the ordinary Albertans or the most vulnerable people of this province will be obliged to pay those big corporations, because somehow, you know, the leader of the UCP kind of had, I would say, the passion or something he thought about, that this was something, his obligation to do so.

But now, seven months into the government, when we talk to the students, when we talk to the seniors, the people are worried. The people probably differ from the UCP's ideas on a lot of stuff, but now they're angry. Now they're scared. This was not even something in discussion, so what's going to happen now?

8:50

As the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, you know, asked me about this, I just wanted to mention that during the break today I was trying to address the issue where a senior right now actually needs to go to a facility, but the facility cost will be approximately \$2,000 to \$2,100, and he's not in a position to come up with that kind of amount. So during this afternoon for a few hours I was just

working on that case. I was trying to see what kind of help is available, how I can just be involved in this to help that individual and family.

This is the reality I'm bringing on. I'm not just discussing bringing the philosophical debate here, the articles or writings from one or the other journal. This is the reality. This is what is happening on the ground. The government members need to realize.

Then, talking to youth. My own son, you know, goes to NAIT, and this is his second year. It was quite challenging even paying for his fees last year, and when he is looking at this increase, he is looking at me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen to speak.

**Member Ceci:** I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. You know, I have of course looked at this bill in detail along with my colleagues and listened to debate and want to touch on some of the things that have been mentioned tonight but also to kind of put my own spin on things.

First of all, you know, we all got into politics to help Albertans out. Politics is absolutely about choices. I can tell you that when I got elected in 2015, it was when things were crashing in our economy in this province. People remember that. They started before the election in May of 2015. In late 2014 the economy started going downhill pretty rapidly and led to Premier Prentice at the time pulling the trigger one year early on an election so he could get in front of all of that, Mr. Speaker. He wasn't successful, and the leader of the NDP captured the hearts and minds of Albertans. We were a government, and 54 or 55 of us sat on that side. It's about choices. During the most difficult recession Alberta has had in two generations anyway, we made choices that would have the backs of Albertans. We made choices that would protect Albertans through one of the deepest, darkest economic times in this province.

Former Vice-president Joe Biden says, when people come up to him and say, you know, what they value and all of that sort of thing, "Show me your budget." I would argue that we could show him this bill and we could show him the budget presented by the government, and he would judge that to be wanting. He says, "Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value." I don't think it takes very much investigation to see that the other side values a \$4.7 billion corporate handout more than they value the struggling Albertans who need their assistance. I've heard repeatedly from that side over the last several weeks: we will be there for the most vulnerable. Well, Mr. Speaker, they are going to put more and more Albertans in that position as a result of what they are doing.

I want to put on the record that when we came into government, the economy was going down, as I said. There was a retrenchment or a retraction of the GDP, about 4 per cent in 2015 and about the same amount in 2016. But in 2017 and '18, Mr. Speaker, the economy came back in this province, and it came back by about 4-plus per cent in 2017 and about 2.8 per cent in 2018. Now, this year, it's less than half a per cent, and that side has overseen the disinvestment in this province that's resulting from their \$4.7 billion corporate handout not stimulating the economy. In fact, it does stimulate shareholders of EnCana and Husky and every other energy company. Some are staying here, and others are leaving to make their domicile in the United States or other places. It does stimulate them, but it's not stimulating the economy. As a result, Albertans are worse off as a result of the actions propagated by the UCP government.

Before I go too much further, let me also put on the record that, you know, contrary to what we hear from the other side all the time,

Alberta under the NDP government had the lowest net debt to GDP of all the provinces and still has the lowest net debt to GDP of all the provinces. We would have balanced one year later than they propose that they're going to balance. At that point, Alberta under us would have still had the lowest net debt to GDP. Independent economists, Mr. Speaker, when they look at Alberta's balance sheet, say that it's the healthiest in the country. It was under us; it's still the healthiest in the country.

But the issue that will make it problematic going forward and problematic for our economy is that Bill 21 makes life more expensive for Albertans, all sorts of Albertans. I'll just touch on some of those areas where I disagree profoundly with what's in Bill 21. The bill takes off the legislated cap on tuitions. What we know about tuition is that it forms a substantive part of the cost of going to postsecondary school. When I went, there were grants and loans, and those things have been eroded and will be eroded by this UCP government. Tuition, for instance, can go up 7 per cent per year – and I think that in this bill or the information we've received from the budget over the last couple of weeks, it can go up 7 per cent per year – and it's likely to go up 21 per cent over three years. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, young people looking at their futures and trying to decide if they can afford to go to school?

You know, this province is blessed with great natural resources, and when we say that, in many cases people focus only on oil and gas, maybe agriculture, too. They focus on what's under our feet in this province. Of course, we didn't have anything to do with that. That was put there by God and geology.

But the other natural resource that gets overlooked all the time is our population, our people, our young people in particular, Mr. Speaker. Young people are what drive this province forward. We're the youngest province of all the provinces in the country. We have the most talented people in education, and we want them to continue to be able to afford to go to postsecondary education so they can be the sources of solving the difficult conundrums or wicked problems that we're experiencing in this province and in this world at this time like climate change, like poverty, like how best to address the health issues that all people experience, like Alzheimer's and dementia. We need young people to be our greatest natural resource, and they can't be that greatest natural resource if they are burdened by huge costs to go to school.

9:00

When parents have children, Mr. Speaker, they very much start planning right away for those kids. Of course, what parent doesn't want their child to go to college or trade school or postsecondary to make the best life for themselves as they can possibly make and be fulfilled and have fulfilling lives? But it's going to be challenging under Bill 21 and this UCP government to ensure that all Albertans who want to get to school have that opportunity.

Universities are expensive enough, Mr. Speaker, and that side is making them more expensive. During our time in government, when the legislated cap was on for tuitions, for the whole time we were in government, we were able to see our most expensive universities, the most expensive in the country, come down in price. During our time we saw our universities become the third-least expensive in the country as a result of our work. You know, that promise that parents make to their children when they're born, that promise that we should all have with the young people coming up and having their backs, that's being eroded as a result of Bill 21.

This bill hurts families significantly, Mr. Speaker, not only in the education area that I've just talked about but also because it creates greater inequality amongst Albertans in this province. Families, for instance, need access to health care. When parents have young ones,

there are so many times when they really need to be getting the comfort and direction of a doctor or a primary care nurse or other sorts of things.

This bill, as André Picard in the *Globe* today indicated, is bound to fail because of the restrictions it places on where doctors can work. It breaks the contracts, essentially, that we have with doctors. You know, with doctors, it's: you come to our province, and if you want to set up practice and you want to work within the system the AMA has, that's totally okay. André Picard talked about the unconstitutionality of these actions that have been taking place. [interjection] It's alarming that people come in here and don't have the decorum of the House. I would just say that it's alarming that this bill breaks the contract it has with doctors and tells them where they can work, essentially, by restricting payments to doctors.

Mr. Speaker, that is bound to fail. It's failed in other provinces, and it's bound to fail here. It's no way to work with people. When we had, through the former Minister of Health here, a need to work with the doctors, she went and consulted with them. This bill does not consult at all with doctors. In fact, we're finding out more and more things that are in this bill and other bills that have been brought forward by the government that they've not been upfront about, that we're only digging into now and alerting Albertans about the bad bills that are before them.

I want to say that with regard to breaking contracts, as is proposed in this bill, our former Health minister was able to go and get monies back from AMA, and she was able to do that because of discussions with them. We were able to get two zeros, Mr. Speaker, with the broad public sector as a result of discussions with them and essentially saying, you know: work with us. Nothing in Bill 21 is a "work with us." It's our way or the highway, and it's an enforcing kind of action.

The other promises that have been broken that have been made by the other side: it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the platform that they ran on, you'll see all sorts of areas where they have made promises, and those promises are broken. One of those areas is in terms of police funding. We see that this bill pulls more than \$40 million out of the two major cities alone over the term of the budget. It does that by increasing fine revenue and jacking up prices that we on this side made sure that were paid for, things like forensic testing. That side seems to nickel and dime and take money out of the hands of police forces across this province while at the same time saying that we're increasing funding. Well, you can't have it both ways; it's one or the other. And the truth of the matter is that they're making life more expensive for families and for institutions like police services in this province.

One area I'm extremely disappointed to have to stand up and talk about, because we were so pleased to put it in place for Alberta and to know that Alberta was leading the pack in this area, which is being retreated by the other side again, is in the whole area of indexation of important social programs, income support programs in this province. What we also hear from the other side is, you know, that this side only got to it, I think, in the fall of 2018, and: "Why did you wait so long to do that? You know, if it was so important to you, why didn't you do it sooner?" Well, I can tell you that there's nothing further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. When we, in fact, did it, we made sure that we had essentially indexed from 2015, when we became government, up to 2019, when it started. We did that first by increasing rates.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to talking some more.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I believe the individual who caught my eye was the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It always helps to see the clock.

I'd like to stand and just respond to my friend across the way. I can remember, of course, when we had the election in 2015 and I was surprised, of course, to see the NDP elected. At that point I wasn't involved in politics. I was practising as a corporate tax lawyer and serving many central Alberta businesses. I had a lot of respect and admiration for those taxpayers that contributed to the economy.

You know, as we kind of witnessed over time – and I'm glad that the former Finance minister just spoke before me. One of the things that really motivated me to run, frankly, was the horrible record of the NDP. In particular, the thing that really troubled me is that I don't feel that the NDP were actually ever serious about living within their means. They had a reckless disregard for that. You know, I always like to deal in facts. I don't like to deal in hyperbole. I like facts, so we'll share some facts with my friends across the way because it's important that all of us learn from our mistakes. You know, I know that our failures can be very valuable teachers, and hopefully we can be better from that.

What happened is that in 2015 the NDP took over government, and the government actually posted in the year in which they were elected a surplus of \$1.1 billion. Then, well, unfortunately, what happened is that in the next year – and I hope they have these numbers memorized, because they should. I expect our former Finance minister – I mean, I certainly hope he remembers these numbers. In '15-16 there was a \$6.4 billion deficit; the following year, '16-17, a \$10.7 billion deficit. You know, it's like they were shooting for the moon. Then we had an \$8 billion deficit, and then in the year that they got turfed, they had a \$6.7 billion deficit.

As I met other individuals in my community, individuals... [interjections] Yeah. I'm going to actually talk about that. In the NDP platform for 2015 they actually said that they were...

9:10

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Interrupting a Member

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Red Deer-South. I just thought that I would bring it to the whole House's attention that obviously individuals should speak through the Speaker. Actually, everybody has a copy of the Standing Orders. If you'd like to look at 13(4)(b), when a member is speaking, as in this case with the hon. Member for Red Deer-South, no person shall "interrupt that member, except to raise a point of order." I think that order and decorum is obviously paramount to this House, and I would like to ensure that I can hear the speaker. There will be ample time for all members in this House to debate. There will also be further 29(2)(a)s, so please.

If the hon. member could please continue, with about a minute, 52 seconds left on this 29(2)(a).

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Stephan:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm used to interactive conversations so sometimes I need to check myself on that as well.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I just want to talk about the NDP platform and a couple of things that kind of show their inept ability, unfortunately. They said that they would balance the budget in their platform, by 2018. So what happened? Well, we actually had a \$6.7 billion deficit, so a little bit off there. They don't really understand corporate taxes at all. In their platform they thought, based on their 20 per cent corporate tax

increase, that they would actually have \$3.7 billion more in corporate tax revenue. Guess what happened actually? In terms of their actuals they were \$8.4 billion off, so an overstatement on their corporate tax increases.

You know, I'm concerned that the member opposite suggests that Joe Biden should be our moral compass. I'm not so sure that he's my moral compass. I do want to do what is right, though, and serve the public interest by balancing the budget. That is the best thing that we can do for our children. We need to live within our means; we need to set a good example.

I know I don't have much time, but the member opposite also talked about education. The best thing we can do for our children when they graduate is have a strong economy so that they can graduate and have jobs.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are back on the main bill, Bill 21. Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate this evening? I see the hon. member – I'm certain that the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo wouldn't be moving around the Chamber while the Speaker is on his feet. Oh, my.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has the call.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, I would like to move the following motion. That second reading of Bill 21 be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the Bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

I will take my seat until that is distributed.

**The Speaker:** Thanks very much.

Hon. members, the amendment will be referred to as REF1.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The amendment I am moving is to refer the substance of this bill to committee, because I think that there is an enormous amount in this bill, and I think that there's an enormous amount in this bill that requires deep consideration. I take that, myself, as an incredibly serious responsibility.

Of course, having heard recently from the Member for Red Deer-South – he obviously thinks he knows everything about government and everything about the world and everything about everything and doesn't need to consider anything seriously, but I disagree. I think that all of us in this place are well served by taking some time to consider the things that we say. I actually think that that hon. member would be extremely well served by a little bit of humility in light of his clear lack of understanding of what's going on.

In any event, on to the bill. One of the reasons I think this ought to be referred to a committee is because there is an enormous amount in this bill. It affects a number of acts. In fact, I believe one of my hon. colleagues before me tried to read into the record just how many acts were amended and ran out of time. A lot of these things are very substantive.

Obviously, the changes to indexing of benefits are incredibly substantive. We've heard a lot about the changes to AISH, and that's a huge concern – I absolutely agree that that's a concern – but I think I'd like to talk also about a number of other benefits that are impacted by this. It isn't just AISH that's not being indexed; it's also seniors' benefits. For a lot of people who aren't in a position to work, won't be ever in a position to likely work in the future – this applies to AISH; it applies to seniors' benefits and a couple of other

programs – this is a huge concern because their income is going to erode over time and for potentially an indefinite period of time, and that makes it very difficult to be able to afford basics. That's certainly a concern. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has the call. If you'd like to have conversations, you're more than welcome to do so in the lounges.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, sir.

Certainly, that's one of the things that I think is definitely a major concern in this bill.

In addition to deindexing those benefits, there are also Alberta Works benefits, both for expected to work and barriers to full employment. Those often apply to individuals who may ultimately qualify for AISH but don't qualify currently or else individuals who are able to work fully but are just still seeking employment. Those benefits are actually, believe it or not, even tighter than AISH. In a lot of cases Alberta Works payments – well, obviously, in all cases, because it's statutory – are even lower. Those are individuals who have lost their job.

The individuals in barriers to full employment are often individuals who ultimately will qualify for AISH. They're just still in the application process. Certain disabilities sometimes make it more difficult to qualify for AISH. If you have certain types of disabilities, you're less likely to qualify, so those individuals will spend more time in those other programs. Those programs, believe it or not, have an income – not only is the benefit lower than the benefit for AISH, but they also don't have some of the other surrounding supports that impact your rent, subsidies to rent, or that impact your drug costs, those sorts of things. That's, I think, a huge concern, and I think it's worth taking the time to consider.

Obviously, I would be remiss if I didn't reference changes to the Police Act. I certainly think – obviously, we've heard concerns about those. Essentially, the changes themselves within the legislation just enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council, or cabinet, by way of regulation to determine what percentage of policing costs those communities will pay. We have of course heard from a number of communities about their concerns with respect to that because in some cases what we're talking about is potentially a situation where they'll have to raise the property taxes on rural residents by up to \$400. If some of those rural residents are also, at the same moment, on, say, seniors' benefits, which have just lost their indexing, that's a huge cost at the same time that their cost of living is going up and their income is remaining fixed for an indefinite number of years. I think that those are impacts that should be more fully considered.

9:20

In addition, the alteration here with respect to funding for municipal police is, I think, a concern. Certainly, in the context of Calgary it's a big concern because city council in Calgary has been under a lot of pressure, and they were forced to make some reductions. So the Calgary police have already taken a \$7 million reduction, and they've managed to absorb that internally, which is a serious concern for them. In addition to that, this additional \$13 million is going to be more than they can absorb without losing personnel. I know that the members opposite like to talk at length about finding efficiencies. Well, if there were efficiencies to be found, they were already found with the \$7 million. You know, at a certain point the efficiencies have been found.

I think what's worth noting as well – certainly, one of our big tasks when we were in government was to ensure that we were keeping the rate of growth of spending below CPI plus inflation. It



was something that was very important to us because prior to our coming into government, the sort of spending curve sort of looked like a porcupine. It was up and down and up and down with the price of oil. We decided that we didn't want the porcupine anymore, and we sort of wanted to stick to a CPI plus inflation kind of a model, which, I think, is important, and I think it's sustainable.

You know, keeping those costs down: there were areas that were more challenged than others, I guess, is what I'll say. Health, for instance, was a big challenge. I will forever be grateful to my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, who worked incredibly hard to keep that budget under control and had to make some very tough decisions to make that the case. The reason that health spending grows at that rate is in large part – well, part of it was a contract that my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora was able to fix with the help of the doctors, who very helpfully came to the table and reduced the cost of those contracts by over half a billion dollars a year, which is pretty impressive if you ask me. One might wonder, given their willingness to negotiate, why the current government is doing it this way rather than another, which is just another reason. But my point is that some things have a growth pressure higher than that. The reason the growth pressure is higher than that: in the case of health, a lot of it had to do with the doctors. As I've mentioned, my colleague addressed that.

But another big area of spending was an area of spending having to do with the availability of drugs. The costs of those drugs were going up and, particularly, new biologic drugs that come online. They have some amazing treatments for diseases like hepatitis C, that used to be a lifelong condition that had to be managed. That's actually a good thing, that the growth pressure is higher than CPI plus inflation, because what it means is that we're saving more lives. We're able to diagnose more things, we're able to treat more things, and we're able to save more lives.

I actually think that saving more lives is a good thing to spend money on. I actually don't think that that's something that should be frowned on, and I think, honestly, most people would agree. I think that if it was your loved one, you would absolutely agree. I think that if someone said, "There's a treatment available for your loved one, but we're trying to keep health spending under control, so we're unwilling to approve this new drug, that we know, scientifically, could save that person's life, because of costs," I mean, I don't think anybody in this Chamber would agree to that. That's one of the reasons that there is that kind of pressure.

Policing, interestingly, has similar pressures. They have a tendency to have a pressure to grow a little faster than inflation. That's for a couple of different reasons. One is that police are dealing with sort of more and more complex issues. Again, we understand more things. We now have a much greater understanding of drug addiction issues and issues surrounding mental health, which means that it behooves the police and is, in fact, I would argue, their duty, now that we understand those things, to respond accordingly. That makes their jobs more complex than they otherwise would have been.

Another thing is court decisions that come down that have a tendency to impact the way they do their work. For instance, I can remember that a couple of years ago there was a court decision with respect to production orders and warrants having to do with Facebook. A lot of evidence, obviously, is now on the Internet, on Facebook, that sort of thing, so that decision had a huge impact on the number of hours of work. It massively increased the number of hours of work that go into any investigative file because now they have to write all those warrants, and they take a very long time. Actually, I think it was a production order. In any event, the point is that it increases the amount of work necessary to go into each and every case, and that's what tends to drive those pressures.

Ultimately, rather than having a silly conversation about, "Well, you know, it's just ridiculous to let the budget grow ever," we should have a rational conversation about: as a society, what do we think is worth paying for? These things do cost money. Saving more lives costs money. Protecting more people costs money. So I think that we should take the time to step back and have a reasoned conversation about that because it's important. It affects us all, and I think that at the end of the day, if you asked everyone in the province, "Would you be willing to pay a few more dollars to ensure that your loved one gets the medication they need or has the police able to respond to them?" I think most people would be okay with that. Those are just a few of the issues in the bill.

Now, one of the things that I've just referenced obviously has to do with practice licences and where a physician can practise. Setting aside for a moment the issue of the potential constitutionality, which I think is genuinely in question in that instance, this is potentially a really big concern because it's not clear on what basis those will be doled out, to be perfectly honest. It's not clear where they're going to go or what they're going to do. You know, if they're over the budget line and someone retires in a certain area of the province, are they going to allow another practice licence there? What if people are having to drive farther for care? I think that's a huge concern. You know, there are people already, especially in northern Alberta, who have to drive quite a long way, potentially, to access care. That impacts the relative quality of their care compared to, potentially, other people in the province. I think it's important to know on what basis those decisions are going to be made, so I think it's worth taking the time to consider those decisions.

It's important to know: what are the things we're going to measure? How are we going to determine whether another specialist is needed in an area? How are we going to determine with certainty, you know, how much health care people can have access to, and how do we know? I mean, I've just detailed the reasons that health care, much like the cost of policing, tends to grow faster than population and inflation growth. What if the government, in trying to keep the budget flat, is essentially going to start restricting health care services in certain areas of the province? I think that's worth knowing.

There are a number of other changes in this bill as well. Some of them having to do with the Employment Standards Code have to do with restricting the definition of "employee." That doesn't, for instance, sound particularly interesting on its own, but that defines who can and can't access services. Actually, it's a pretty big deal because it means that something could happen to you that's contrary to the Employment Standards Code, and because you're an excluded person, it doesn't matter. It takes a group of people and potentially excludes them from access to certain rights. I think that that is a big concern.

I have many more, but I'm sure I'll get another opportunity at a later point.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise on 29(2)(a). To the hon. member, in regards to her referral moment – referral motion, I should say – I'll have more to say about this amendment shortly when I rise to speak on it.

But on 29(2)(a) I'd like to ask the hon. member a couple questions. She referred often in her remarks to when she was a cabinet minister, the Minister of Justice, in the province of Alberta just a few short months ago, when her party was in power. In comparing it to things within Bill 21 here and then to the context of why, she was explaining why she wanted to move a referral amendment in the House today, Mr. Speaker.

9:30

I do notice that she kind of glossed over the fact that what that would really mean is that she would be sending this important piece of legislation off to committee so that it could not pass this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, in the next several days, which ultimately would stop many of the budget implementation measures that the hon. the Finance minister is putting in place in large part to fix the mess that that hon. member and her colleagues made of this province when they were in government.

Now, I often moved referral amendments when I was in opposition, Mr. Speaker, as you know. Often I would tell a story about my horse Tank when I would move referral amendments. The hon. members that were in government back then are aware of it. Mr. Speaker, I know that you, as my benchmate, side by side a lot, would listen to my Tank stories. I would often tell a story about Tank. He knows when you're in the house. I don't know what it is with him, but he just knows that you're in the house, and he's got this thing for grain. First of all, my horse is a big horse. I mean, look. His name is Tank, and he likes his grain, and he likes oats, and he likes to do his thing. When you get in the house, he'll sometimes pick up his oat bin, and he likes to shake his head with the oat bin. I don't know. He seems to think that's magically going to make you leave the house to come out and give him oats. He gets so excited that he sometimes gets himself stuck in the corner of the corral in the fence and he scrapes himself up trying to get you to come outside and do it. You have to go out there finally, because he's cornered himself, and say: "Whoa, Tank. Whoa." Often I would say that when we wanted to refer a piece of legislation to committee. I'd say that we have to go: whoa.

But in this case, Mr. Speaker, I think another Tank story is more appropriate. [interjection] I don't know if the hon. member is laughing because my horse is named Tank. That's a good name for a horse. I'm proud of Tank, and you can come by the office after we rise today and see a picture of old Tank. But when you're crossing the river, when you're out for a ride with Tank, sometimes he's got this habit of just pausing in the middle of the river, and your boots start to fill up with water, and the saddlebags start to fill up with water, and it just becomes a mess, and that's one of those moments when you don't want Tank to go "Whoa." You want him to hurry up and get across that river because you're getting wet and you're taking on water.

The fact is that we have inherited a province that is taking on water because the NDP have been taking on so much debt, have messed up our system so badly, causing so many negative consequences to the people of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. This is not the time for them to send an important piece of legislation, to go "Whoa," and send it off to a policy committee to not actually pass this Chamber. This is a time to get across that river and stop taking on water. This government promised that we would stop taking on NDP water and, instead, we would get to work for Albertans balancing the budget.

So of course not. We're not going to support the hon. member's amendment. She wants to continue doing what, Mr. Speaker? Taking us down the road of record-breaking debt, record-breaking unemployment, devastating the people of this province, which is her legacy as a member of the former NDP government, probably the worst government. I certainly believe it was the worst government in the history of this province, the only one-term government in the history of this province, who want to come and spend their time trying to stop budget implementation bills that could begin to fix the mess that they created for Albertans. Not a mess that we created; a mess that they created, and they still haven't apologized to the people of Alberta. This is not the moment to go

"Whoa," and continue with the NDP policies. This is the moment to get across the river, stop taking on water, and start fixing the problem that is before this province.

That hon. member should explain why she wants to continue the path of devastating the people of the province, Albertans. It's shocking. I think that she should rise with the time that she has left and explain her behaviour.

**The Speaker:** I was struggling to see the relevance of the Tank story, but I'm glad that you got it back there in your very brief question or comment.

Are there others wishing to join in the debate this evening? The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in support of this amendment. It of course comes as no shock to me to hear the Government House Leader say that he won't support this amendment, although I suspect that it's not because of the reasons he stated. He knows full well, just like every member on the government side does, that the deficit that they're projecting is \$2 billion higher than ours was and that the debt is the same as it would've been under us. So to say that they're fixing the mess is flat-out wrong. What they are doing is shifting the benefits of the public services from the people who need it the most to the people who need it the least, with their \$4.7 billion corporate handout that is going to be paid for off the backs of AISH recipients, children in care, and students.

Of course, I'm not surprised that they don't want to talk about these things at committee because none of these things are things that they ran on in their election platform, so they just want to make sure that this bill gets passed as quickly – here we are at 9:30 at night, when nobody is paying attention. If they could shut the lights off and conduct the session in the dark so that nobody else knew what was going on, I'm sure they would, Mr. Speaker, because they didn't run on any of the elements that are contained in this legislation.

There's much to talk about, but I do want to focus my limited time on the issue of tuition increases and why I think that this bill needs to be sent to committee just to study the aspect of tuition increases that are contained in this legislation.

I will say flat out that I believe that education is a right. I think that education, especially higher education, is key to providing Albertans not just skills for jobs, which I recognize is important, but the knowledge and critical thinking skills that people need to live a full life and to engage in the public life of our province. Because of those reasons, I think that every Albertan should be able to go to the postsecondary institution of their choice, and they shouldn't face any kind of barrier, much less the kind of financial barriers that this government is intent on putting up in front of students.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've gone through a number of periods of history in the province of Alberta where we've built and expanded upon what is probably the best university and college sector in the entire country and alternating with periods of significant damage to that sector. When Alberta was first created as a province, one of the first acts of this Legislature was to create the University of Alberta in 1906. Alberta was an incredibly small province populationwise at that time, a few hundred thousand people at the most, but they recognized even in 1906 that the future of Alberta relied on having a vibrant and dynamic postsecondary sector, that Alberta couldn't forge a future for itself without high-quality higher education in this province.

That's why one of the first acts of this Legislature was to create the University of Alberta. That was followed shortly thereafter by the creation of a number of agricultural colleges. Of course, you,

Mr. Speaker, are well aware of Olds College, that was founded in 1913, along with Lakeland College, Fairview College. These were important institutes of higher learning, dedicated to the advancement of agriculture, which was at the time the most important sector of the economy in Alberta. That's because we recognized that we couldn't just leave things the way they were, that we needed to continue to train people in how to do their work in agriculture better. We needed to conduct the research to improve agricultural techniques, develop new crops, develop new livestock, develop value-added products. From the very beginning of Alberta's history we recognized that a successful postsecondary sector was the key to Alberta's future.

Now, after the founding of the province we went through a significant period of stagnation in the postsecondary sector, but in the late '50s and '60s the Social Credit government at the time went through a tremendous expansion of the postsecondary sector. In fact, most of the universities and colleges that we know today were founded in that time: the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge College, Medicine Hat College, Portage College, Athabasca University, Grande Prairie Regional College, NAIT, Red Deer College, and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

**9:40**

All of those institutions were founded in the late '50s and during the '60s and early '70s under the Social Credit government because even they had the foresight to recognize that the tremendous resource wealth that Alberta was benefiting from at the time wasn't going to last forever and that the key to making sure that Alberta was sustainably successful in the future was to invest in its people. That's why they expanded the postsecondary sector so significantly, so that it wasn't just people who lived close to Edmonton who could get a postsecondary education. They had a vision for providing postsecondary education to every citizen of the province regardless of where they lived. I think that the creation of those institutions went a long way to bringing higher education to the people of the province, people in every corner of the province, and I am grateful for the contributions that that government made to the higher education sector.

Now, that was followed by some years of treading water under Peter Lougheed and Don Getty, and then Ralph Klein and his Finance minister, Jim Dinning, took the axe to the postsecondary sector. They cut the budgets by almost 30 per cent in the early '90s. In fact, I had the opportunity on a number of occasions to meet Jim Dinning at University of Calgary functions, and he told me that that was always the first place that Conservative governments looked for cuts, the postsecondary sector. In my time as Minister of Advanced Education I used that as a warning to everybody in the postsecondary sector that I talked to. I said that should the UCP get elected, the first sector that they will look at for cuts is the university and college sector. Of course, unfortunately, I was right.

Jim Dinning wasn't the only Tory who took the axe to the postsecondary sector. Of course, Thomas Lukaszuk was Advanced Education minister, and he cut the budgets by 7 per cent under his watch. Then Jim Prentice's final budget, the last budget that he brought forward, projected 5 per cent reductions in grants to universities and colleges every year. Now, we all remember what happened to the Prentice government when they brought that budget forward. They were soundly rejected by the people of Alberta, and I think it was in no small part because he did what this government is doing, shifting the costs of services onto the backs of the people who can least afford it while refusing to make those who have the ability to pay for public services pay for them.

Now, he didn't go as far as this government does. He left corporate taxes flat. He left those untouched, which was incredibly

unpopular. This government, of course, is reducing corporate taxes all the way to 8 per cent, which is a huge mistake. Unless you're a corporate CEO or a shareholder, you end up paying more and getting less from this budget.

Now, under our watch the university and college sector went through significant growth and improvement. We brought stability to the system after a long period of instability. We increased funding to each institution by 2 per cent a year over four years. We brought in a tuition freeze. We brought in a fees freeze, which was really important because, as members opposite have said, the tuition alone in Alberta, in the province, wasn't the most expensive, but the combination of tuition and fees at universities and colleges in Alberta was the most expensive. Even though the old Tories pretended to regulate tuition, they created these massive loopholes that allowed universities to charge fees and market modifiers for programs that drove up the cost of higher education in this province to the point where it was the most expensive in the country.

On top of freezing tuition fees and freezing additional fees, we provided student mental health funding. We provided funding for up to 3,000 tech seats. We provided new scholarships for indigenous students, and I want to address a remark that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed made during question period today. He said that indigenous students would be able to get free tuition from their bands, which is flat-out false. He should know as a former member of the federal government that not every indigenous student is entitled to postsecondary education. Each band is given an allotment, and once that allotment is gone, potential postsecondary students who would be eligible but can't get the money are left in the cold. I sincerely hope that he apologizes for spreading this mistruth that every indigenous student is entitled to free higher education in this country because that's not true.

We also created for the first time in many decades new universities in the province of Alberta. We changed the Alberta College of Art and Design to the Alberta University of the Arts, and we also put Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College on the path to becoming universities, which is important for improving access to a university education in Alberta. All Albertans in all parts of the province have the right to a higher education, but the fact is that the farther you have to go to receive that education, the less likely you are to do so. That's why it was important to us as a government to put Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College on the path to becoming universities, so that potential university students in central Alberta and northwestern Alberta had the same opportunities that students near Edmonton and Calgary and Lethbridge had to get a university degree if they chose to do that.

Now, the issue of access, that I've mentioned, is a significant one. During the estimates debate the Member for Calgary-Bow expressed his concern about the low participation rates in postsecondary education here in the province of Alberta, and that's a concern that I share. He continued to point to the MacKinnon report, which insisted on making comparisons of our postsecondary sector to the postsecondary sectors in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. It's important to note that if we had the same participation rates in postsecondary education in Alberta as the province of B.C. enjoys, we'd need room for 80,000 more students. That's 50 per cent more students than are currently enrolled in the university and college sector in Alberta right now. How on earth this government thinks that they're going to be able to increase access to postsecondary education by cutting the budgets, cutting the grants to universities and colleges by approximately 5 per cent this year and increasing amounts over the next three or four years boggles the mind. We need to create spaces and hire staff and faculty to teach 80,000 more students to meet the Member for

Calgary-Bow's own stated goal to have postsecondary participation rates the same as British Columbia's, but we can't get there with the budget that this government is bringing forward.

That's why I think it's important that we send this bill to committee to look at this issue of access and look at what this government is proposing with tuition in combination with what they've proposed in the budget, in combination with all of the other things that they've done to students to make postsecondary education less accessible to them. Not only are they raising tuition, not only are they cutting the budgets that will lead to scrapping programs, firing hundreds of staff and faculty all across the province – they scrapped the STEP program; they're scrapping tuition and education tax credits; they're raising student loan interest rates; they're cutting wages for public-sector workers so that many of the students who graduate from university or college and go on to work for the public sector will have less of an ability to pay off student loans that will be bigger and more expensive. On top of all of that, they're doing nothing to create jobs in the private sector.

I was flipping through the debate in *Hansard* when we brought in the tuition cap, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly hope that I can provide some additional comments under 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

9:50

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Don't hold your breath, hon. member.

I appreciate this opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a). I wanted to just kind of address some of the things that have been said tonight in the Chamber, particularly by the members for Edmonton-Gold Bar and Calgary-Buffalo. Now, when we hear the language used by the NDP in this Chamber, I think it's actually a bit dangerous. It's dangerous because while they might be posturing or trying to put on a bit of a show, the people who watch their clips on their social media or Twitter or whatever don't know that. They contact MLA offices in an outrage with all this misinformation about what this government is actually trying to do. The reality is that it's trying to make things better.

Now, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has said that, you know, their government was trying to do what was good for the kids, for the children. To suggest that we're not is just blatantly outrageous. We have to make some difficult decisions as this government, and I would like to look at things with a glass-half-full kind of attitude. An example is the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. We may disagree on a number of policy issues, but I can tell by the emotion that she has when she talks about members in the gallery that come to visit that she genuinely cares about her constituents. She genuinely cares about this province, and I admire that. I do. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has been pegged, I mean, multiple times as having a very crusty exterior, but as a geologist I'm certain that he cares genuinely about the environment. I don't doubt that.

But I also care about the future of this province and leaving something better for my kids, Mr. Speaker. I don't want them to come to me in 20 years and say: "Dad, why didn't you do something when you had the chance? Why did you saddle me with all this debt? Why did you make it so unaffordable in this province now because of the massive debt load you left upon us as kids?" The members opposite can go ahead and try to package this however they want, but the reality is that the bill of goods that they're selling is a crock of crap. I apologize. I withdraw that remark.

If I may continue, you know, when I was younger – I think I was probably 10 or 11 – I wanted to get a Christmas present for my

brother. I didn't have any money, so what I did was that I took a textbook, a math textbook, and cut out the middle. Don't worry; it was discovery math. I cut out the middle and put this note inside and closed it and wrapped it up. He opened it up on Christmas Day, and he thought it was going to be this nice gift. He sees that it's a textbook. Then he opens it up and finds a note, and it was me just calling him a dummy. I mean, honestly, you can package anything as much as you want, make it look really nice, but no matter how nice you make that package look, it's still just a crock if there's nothing really of substance inside. That's the bill of goods the members opposite are selling.

They're trying to tell Albertans that in some convoluted way we're trying to destroy this province and we're trying to take from the most vulnerable. The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that right now Alberta is quite vulnerable. We are in a very precarious state in this province. We are careening down the tracks towards a hundred billion dollars of debt. Based on the way that the members opposite do accounting, I suspect that number is a lot higher, but we'll go with the hundred billion because, well, they're sure stuck on this \$4.7 billion, which is interesting as well. I'd be curious to see one of the members opposite actually break that number down instead of just using it as a talking point. I mean, really, like, the term has been thrown around in this Chamber a lot lately, that math is hard. Well, I'll leave that to them, especially to the worst Finance minister in the history of this province.

There are a couple of important numbers that I wanted to mention to him before my time expires. He talked about why the NDP got elected. There are a couple of things. My time is expiring, and I will sit down.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join in the debate? I do recognize that there's a government member who's risen to speak, and we have heard from a number of opposition members in succession, so I think it's reasonable that the government has the opportunity to join debate.

I would just caution the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika that the use of words like "crock" and the other word that you've apologized for certainly is likely to create disorder and they are unparliamentary. So I encourage you in the time that you have before you to use appropriate parliamentary language.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for not sitting down while you were standing. I kind of got caught up in the moment there for a second. I will be mindful of my language. As passionate as I get, I don't mean to create disorder. I just get passionate about the issues.

I just want to continue along. There are a couple of numbers I wanted to mention because the Member for Calgary-Buffalo had said why the NDP got elected. Well, one important number here is 28. Twenty-eight seats in this Legislature in the previous government went to the NDP caucus as a result of vote splitting. To suggest that simply because there was an unpopular budget or an unpopular government prior, which I don't necessarily disagree with – there were some things that Albertans were upset with and they had a right to be so. There were 28 seats, Mr. Speaker, where the vote total between the Wildrose and the PC would have been more than enough to fill that seat for a Conservative member of this Chamber, not an NDP member. So the Member for Calgary-Buffalo should recognize that. That's an easy number.

Another one is 100, \$100 billion. Now, I did already mention this a little bit, but I need to reinforce this point, that I think that number is actually low. Now, I'm going to stick with it, but \$100 billion is where we are going, and they want to sit there and say: "Oh, you know, your debt is going to be 90-plus billion dollars. Really,

what's the difference?" You're still talking about \$6 billion or \$7 billion in difference. Now, if that doesn't matter to you, I don't know what does. You're just throwing around numbers like you don't care. Like, that's crazy talk. I mean, seriously, it's like I'm taking crazy pills here. So I think about that number. I think: oh, my goodness. Like, you know, the difference of \$6 billion, \$7 billion, as if it's nothing. It's significant.

Six, a really important number here. The number six. Six credit downgrades, Mr. Speaker. Six credit downgrades by the worst Finance minister in the history of this province. Now, again, that number gets thrown around a couple of times. It may have lost its lustre. But think about that for a second. Think about how bad your credit goes in four years with six credit downgrades. Try borrowing money from your neighbour to start a lemonade stand after six credit downgrades in their credit book. They're not going to give you a dime. They probably wouldn't even let you have the dime that fell on the ground in front of their house because your credit is so bad.

Now, what about another number: two. Two billion dollars in interest payments to bankers and bondholders in foreign countries. Now, let's think about how many teachers, how many nurses, how many doctors, how many schools could be built with that interest money alone. The majority of that interest was piled on by the members opposite.

They sit here and they tell us how much we don't care about public-sector workers, which, again, I believe is, in itself, offensive. You know, I've used unparliamentary language today, and I do apologize, but that is offensive; that creates disorder. I'll tell you why. Saying that we don't care about the front-line workers while you pile on debt and increase the amount of money we pay every year in interest payments that could be going to these front-line services: that's offensive. That's offensive, right?

There are a couple of other simple numbers here: 63 members of the government caucus. It's an important number to recognize, you know, that we were voted in in April primarily because people were sick and tired of not having a government that listened.

**10:00**

I can tell you right now that I have constituents telling me all the time how responsive this government has been. The Minister of Environment and Parks: some people, you know, have seen him so many times, and they're just shocked that they couldn't even schedule a meeting with the Member for Lethbridge-West. I don't know if she was too busy or just overly dismissive of what mattered to people at the time; that's for that member to explain. But that's the kind of mentality that this government is taking, to be responsive to the constituents who hired us, because, make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, we work for them, right? They pay our salaries. We don't forget that. This budget, these bills: they're all the commitments that we made, that we're fulfilling to them.

Now, another number that's really important, that relates a bit back to what I just said, is 1,040,004. Now, if anyone from the opposition side wants to chime in as to what that number means, I'd be happy to hear you. You were very vocal during question period. I don't hear a pin drop over there now. That's the number of votes for the UCP in April, a historic number, Mr. Speaker. Like, think about what that is. That many people were so disenfranchised by the previous government that they came out in droves both in the advance polls and on general election day because they demanded change. Some people go out and they vote, you know, for years, they just kind of cast their ballot. It's their civic right. I bet people voted so hard that they ripped right through that paper for that Conservative candidate. I had people come up and tell me they couldn't wait to vote. They were lining up to vote in advance polls

just to be able to say to all their friends, to brag as a point: I voted to get rid of the NDP. Holy smokes. One million plus people sure did that. If we can do the math on that, that's 58.88 per cent of the vote. That's a pretty big number. I will say so myself.

You know, I'm done railing on the members opposite, but, again, I sit here and I listen to what they have to say. Again, I do believe they genuinely care, but they need to be careful as to what they say because while the language they use may be parliamentary and permissible in this Chamber, it creates disorder in the public, and that disorder leads to misinformation being spread across Alberta, and that's completely unacceptable. That's not the job that they were hired to do. We were hired to come in this Chamber and raise the level of debate to the highest level in this province, increase decorum.

If you'll notice, Mr. Speaker, during question period, as I'm sure you do, on this side of the House we allow the members opposite to ask their questions. [interjections] Well, let me rephrase. I'll rephrase that. But I'm sure you're going to clip this and put it on Twitter because Twitter is so cool. It is their right to ask the questions, and it's our job to take those questions. But I will say this. We don't heckle – we don't heckle – because it's their job to represent their constituents, and it's our job to answer the questions, the ministers' jobs. We don't heckle, right? We don't do that. We're raising the level of decorum. I guess I'm just trying to get the point across that Albertans have spoken loud and clear with their votes on what they want from this government. They have been very clear on what they didn't want.

I'm hoping that they're taking some lessons from that because what you see before you is another piece of legislation that is fulfilling campaign commitments to get the province back on track, to put our fiscal house in order.

I look at my three kids, and while they're young and they don't know what I do really for a living, really what politics is in general, there will come a time when they will. There will come a time when they will talk to me about what I do. They'll want to know what I do, and I want to be able to proudly look them in the face and tell them that I am doing what's best for this province and what's best for their future because that's what matters.

You know, I would feel terrible if I had to look my kids in the eyes in 20 years and tell them: "Sorry. I had an opportunity, and I blew it. I blew it because, you know, I was afraid. I was afraid of what the members opposite would say. I was afraid of what the Twitter trolls would say." I don't even have Twitter. You know, I don't have time for that. But I will say this, Mr. Speaker. I do have time for my constituents, I have time for debate in this Chamber, and I have time for feedback from the members opposite because I really, truly value input from different perspectives. But what I don't value is the kind of language used there to create disorder within the public.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I do want to qualify one thing. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar did mention Thomas Lukaszuk in relation to us. He's not one of ours. I just want to get that one on the record. No one on this side spent \$15,000 on a cellphone bill, but I digress.

I will say this. I am proud, Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to stand on this side of the House and help to fulfill the mandate of this government, to speak in favour of these bills, to stand with each and every one of the members on this side of the House because I know that their hearts are in the right place, just like the hearts on the other side. They are. I disagree with them politically, but they're in the right place. I will say that it brings me such great pride to know that when the time comes and I sit down with my kids, I can tell them that I did everything I could for them.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and respond to some of the remarks that the Member for Cardston-Siksika had to share with the Chamber. First of all, I want to take issue with his characterization of me as somebody with a crusty exterior. I don't think there's anybody in this House that would agree with the member when he says that. But should there be anybody who says that I have a crusty exterior, I would say that, you know, I'm like a croissant; perhaps crusty on the outside but soft and . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Flaky.

**Mr. Schmidt:** . . . yeah, flaky. I'm flaky. With friends like that, who needs enemies? Thank you, Edmonton-Glenora. I have completely lost track. Mr. Speaker, can I raise a point of order or something?

You know, I do want to respond to some of the things that the Member for Cardston-Siksika did have to say, not about my personality but about our characterization of the budget and his response to what his children will say to him 20 years down the road. It's instructive to me, I think, to share with him that – you know, I think it's widely agreed that perhaps, in retrospect, what the Klein government did to the budget of Alberta in '93 and '94, those early years, was probably a bit too drastic. I certainly spoke to a lot of people, a lot of people who worked in both the public and the private sector, who recognize in hindsight that the Klein budget cuts of the '90s were far too extreme, and that if they could turn back time and do things differently, they would probably choose to administer the finances of the province of Alberta differently.

I suspect that 20 years from now the member opposite along with all of his government colleagues will probably think the same way because, certainly, they are in fact taking money from the most vulnerable Albertans and giving it to the people who need it the least. It might take them a few years to realize that, but I'm certain that with 20 years of hindsight they will look back on this budget and the other fiscal measures that they've brought in and realize that it did very little to benefit their own children, to benefit my children, to benefit most of the children in the province while doing a lot to benefit the Hong Kong billionaire who owns Husky, the projects in Wisconsin and Newfoundland that Husky is using our taxes to finance.

**10:10**

You know, I hope that the members opposite look back on the lessons that Alberta learned going through the Klein budget era and realize that that was going too far. I think the Member for Calgary-Lougheed admitted as much when he spoke to the AUMA in September. He did recognize that those budgets affected municipalities very harshly and said that this budget wasn't going to be as bad as the ones in the early '90s. I don't know what the actual numbers turn out to be, but I know that the AUMA folks are severely disappointed.

I think that the members opposite like to talk about the million Albertans who voted in favour of them in April, and I can't help but wonder how many of those million are disappointed with what this government has done to the province so far. As we know, the economy is no stronger and, in fact, it's weaker now than it was on election day, in April. Jobs aren't coming back. I hope that the members opposite take this opportunity to make their children look fondly on them in the future.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** We are back on REF1, the amendment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the members for what I would say is quite an enjoyable debate this evening, including the little bit of banter. I want to assure all my colleagues and you, Mr. Speaker, and all Albertans that I in no way meant to disparage my hon. colleague the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I think that he has been a very strong advocate for the people he represents, and I think he's a fine man. I want to be on record saying that.

I also want to say that when I read some of the remarks from past debate and I hear some of the remarks that are being made here tonight, it's hard for me to make sense of how one person can say one thing not even a year ago and then say something that seems quite contrary a year later. I'm going to start with the remarks from the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, also known as the Government House Leader, who less than a year ago said:

I rise today to speak in support of Bill 26. I'm glad to see a piece of legislation of this kind here in the Assembly. I actually think it should have been here a long time ago, quite frankly . . . I, like other members in this Chamber, have heard from many people who are AISH recipients, heard about how tough it is to currently live under the current numbers. We've heard from AISH recipients who cannot afford basic necessities, as the hon. member just described, I mean, basic hygiene necessities.

He goes on, Mr. Speaker, to say how difficult it is for people to live on AISH at the level it was. Then here just a few months later we hear the same hon. member equating freezing AISH compensation with something that is being done to prevent taking on water.

When I hear these comments – and I hear the humanity in the comments less than a year ago. I hear the humanity around people living on such a fixed, limited income not being able to afford things like shampoo and how nobody should be in a position in a developed society such as ours, such a rich society and such a rich province, where we think it's okay for people who don't have the ability to work a job for income to live in those kinds of conditions. When I hear, earlier in question period, exchanges about, "Well, this is being done because we just pay people too much here who are severely handicapped" and then I read the comments from members who are now sitting in cabinet making those decisions to fail to increase payments for somebody who is living in these conditions, I find it very troubling. I think that I agree with the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre a year ago – a year ago – when he said: you know, we should have done this sooner.

Here we have a government caucus in this place tonight with the ability to at least stop this bad thing from happening. I will say that in my experience and in my conversations with Albertans, things like having a tuition rate cap, things like ensuring that your interest payments don't go up – we spend a lot of time talking about interest payments of government, and I want to remind everyone that in this bill we are making decisions about interest payments for students who have recently graduated who are on their path to repaying their student loans. Why are we okay with putting this burden and downloading this burden onto Alberta students, recent graduates who are doing their best to get a good start in life? We already know that there are 27,000 fewer jobs than there were when they were in school a year ago, on election day, in fact: 27,000 fewer jobs now. They have fewer jobs, and we're going to be asking them to pay more in their student loan payments.

I think taking a pause, saying to Tank or whatever analogy you want to use: "You know what? Let's pause. Let's go to a committee,

a committee that's still two-thirds government members" – it's not like we're sending this to somewhere where we think it's going to wither and die; we're sending this to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. I'll tell you that I know there are many competent members on this committee. There are 15 members total, chaired by the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche. I think that this committee has the potential to look at the implications of this bill.

Something that members in opposition used to say a lot that I found a little patronizing, so I don't mean it in that way, was: you know, you should have considered the unintended consequences; you should have considered the unintended consequences of your decisions.

What I have to say is that when we look at goals that are being set for increasing postsecondary participation in one sentence and then very shortly thereafter we see, "Well, we're going to eliminate the tuition rate cap, we're going to eliminate the tax credit, we're going to eliminate the summer temporary employment program, and we're going to increase loan repayment rates" – I'll tell you that when I knocked on the doors of Edmonton-Glenora, when I talked to folks in the community, low- and middle-income families are some of the least likely to be willing to take on debt, period. It's low- and middle-income families that need to be able to access student loans more than anyone else. So saying to them, "Okay; you're already less likely to participate in postsecondary, and now we're going to increase your rate of interest payments": it really does download a lot onto those families and those individuals.

I think our students in this province deserve an opportunity to attend a postsecondary of their choice. I think the Member for Cardston-Siksika and his children – I imagine he wants them to have the opportunity to go to a postsecondary institution one day, one of their choosing. I would hope that they'd feel confident choosing one in Alberta and know that their government isn't going to increase their tuition significantly, is going to ensure that they invest in the faculty that are there, and that they have an opportunity to pursue a variety of careers here in the province of Alberta.

I fear that one of the consequences, whether it's intended or not – maybe it is – of this legislation that we're asking the government to take a pause on and consider referring to committee, because committee can have an opportunity to look through it and grapple with some of these decisions, will be dismissed. I think that that's problematic.

In terms of Community and Social Services and seniors that have been mentioned, some of my colleagues have talked about AISH, and I, too, agree. Some of my colleagues who were members of different caucuses not too long ago said that they thought it was really important that AISH be indexed and that folks who have such a meagre means of income have the opportunity to have just a little bit extra in their pockets to go from month to month.

In terms of employment and income support benefits, again, this isn't something that people are really keen to apply for. They aren't really keen to put their hands up and say: "You know what? I need income support." But when they do, they deserve to have a government funding at a rate for today, not a rate for years ago. Again, failing to index this fails to acknowledge the reality. The reality that we have: the Conference Board of Canada, 2 per cent inflation this year; in education, which is where I've spent a lot of my focus as of late, 2.2 per cent enrolment growth. Anything that doesn't see 4.2 per cent growth in education would definitely be a cut.

**10:20**

But it goes even deeper than that. We also have the seniors' benefit. This is something that a lot of Alberta seniors rely on to

help them get from month to month on things like – at McQueen lodge in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Glenora there's a tuck shop. The tuck shop is open a couple of days a week. You can go down, and you can buy a word search. You can buy a stuffed animal for your kid or grandkid or whatever it might be. Having a few dollars in your pocket to be able to buy something from the volunteer-run tuck shop might not seem important to members of this House, but I can tell you that to my constituents it is deeply important as well as the seniors' lodge program.

In terms of eliminating the regulated rate cap, this is something that – I know there is a bit of an ideological bent, but I would have thought that making electricity prices more affordable, not less, would be a priority for all members of this House.

I've already spoken in a previous opportunity to some of the changes to physicians, so I probably won't go on about that right now.

In terms of Municipal Affairs, Justice and Solicitor General: enables provincial government to retain a greater portion of fines collected on behalf of municipalities. Wow. We already put it on the municipalities to collect these fines, and then we're going to ask that this money not be rightfully given back to those municipalities for infractions that are happening in their communities. This has the potential to be significantly devastating to our policing budgets and to those particularly in the two large centres.

Of course, enabling legislation where the minister has the ability to change the police costing model or change currently exempted municipalities: again, I know that there was a platform and I know that people were elected, but I can tell you that this was not in the platform. This was not in the literature that showed up at my house or any of the houses in any of your ridings. This wasn't something that you advertised you were going to do, so I think that, at a minimum, taking the time to consider the implications before rushing through would be fair and responsible.

In terms of labour, giving the minister greater authority to define an employee, setting restrictions on unionized employees for what services they access from government, repealing essential services and the worker replacement ban, reinstating specific bargaining unit exemptions, and prescribing limits on termination and severance paid to nonbargaining unit employees: these are things that, again, were not in the platform.

Here we are, only on Bill 21 of a new government and its first cycle through spring and fall session, and there's an opportunity to implement the platform. Instead, what's being implemented are a bunch of what I would say are really nasty cuts, nasty cuts that are going to really deeply hurt some of those who are most vulnerable in our society.

The Member for Cardston-Siksika asked about the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout, as I like to refer to it. It's on page 144 of the fiscal plan. I remember that because it's 12 squared. I like numbers, too, so for anyone who forgets: page 144 of the fiscal plan. We were saying originally \$4.5 billion because when we did the math, we estimated that it would be \$4.5 billion. But when the fiscal plan came out, we read the documents, we did the analysis, and we saw that it was right there in black and white, \$4.7 billion. That is, again, around the corporate tax reduction.

As was mentioned by one of my colleagues, the Member for Edmonton-West Henday, the announcement was made about this \$4.7 billion giveaway in the EnCana building. Of course, now we have the devastating news for so many families and so many people who've relied on EnCana for their livelihood for many, many years that they are leaving Canada. That is something that I think speaks to the fact that that \$4.7 billion giveaway was rushed into.

Now the government is asking us to rush into this Bill 21, a significant omnibus bill that attacks so many different areas within

a variety of budgets, and what we're doing as an opposition is saying, "Whoa, Nelly" or "Whoa, Tank" or Nabra or whatever metaphor you want to use to say that we need a little bit more time to have an opportunity to review this and consider the real implications of this. I think that all private members deserve that opportunity.

When members accuse us of sharing misinformation, we're actually not. We're reading the budget, we're asking questions in estimates, we're finding out what the implications are, so I think that it's fair for us to all have an opportunity to do that on a deeper level through this committee. I think that it's the responsible thing, and I think it's something that we owe to our constituents, whether they live in our ridings or not.

I often say: you know, I work for you, I work for the public, and that is my job. I think that for government to say out of one side of their mouth "We respect folks who are low income" and then out of the other side say "But we're taking away your meagre \$30 AISH increase this year to keep up with inflation because we are 'taking on water'" is not just disrespectful; I think it's actually inhumane. I think it's a really unfortunately way to speak to one another about things that our constituents rely on for meeting their basic human rights.

I think that saying, "You know, I know we said last year that we thought you should be able to afford toothpaste and shampoo and those kinds of things, but we got into government, and we decided that it was just so much more important for us to give \$4.7 billion to corporations; we've got to make that up somewhere, so you're going to have to do your part," while major employers have not created any jobs that the government had promised they would – this is not a discussion that I enter into lightly, nor is any bill, but this certainly has, I think, negative ramifications.

That's why I support the motion to refer to the exceptional committee on family and community services. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see that the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has risen.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, I love getting up on 29(2)(a), and I love having the opportunity to address this House. I think it's important, especially when we're talking about the Families and Communities Committee. I'm very happy to be able to be on that committee. It's a very productive committee. We do a lot of really important work. We've been overseeing estimates, just like the other standing committees of this House have.

One thing that's come up, over and over and over, is the job-creation tax cut and what it is or isn't. While the opposition likes to cite whatever page they do, if they go to page 64, it has a revenue comparison that actually shows what happens when you implement a job-creation tax cut, which is: create revenue, create jobs. When that happens, it offsets what it takes out of the economy. If they wish to look at a balance sheet, not like they really have in the past, they would see that there.

You know, what I can really tell you about is what happens in my constituency. In Brooks-Medicine Hat I hear all the time, time and time again, everywhere we go: you guys are doing a great job; keep up the good work. I mean, that's not to say that there isn't any criticism. Of course, there's criticism, and I think that's the best part of democracy, that there is criticism and we can hear it. Actually, it makes it better, makes us better. For me, I get to hear from the great people of Brooks-Medicine Hat. I mean, we have the opportunity through e-mail, through whatever else. Even in committee we had some people come into private members' public bills. It's been a great pleasure to hear from people about our plans and how that affects them.

I know that for the people in my riding the most important thing is jobs because in southern Alberta we've been devastated by the downturn in oil and gas prices. I mean, under the previous government there were 170,000, I think, jobs lost. That's concerning because I know that a large portion of that would be in my riding, anecdotally, of course. I talked to so many people. I talked to grown men who were crying on their doorsteps, and I know that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat referenced this yesterday, too. It's really unfortunate when you see this. You see families devastated by a loss of income, and the members opposite get up and talk about – you know, they just basically squash any opportunity for those people to get back to work by grandstanding on a tax cut that actually will help our province. If they continued to read or if they read all of the fiscal plan instead of just one line, they might know that.

**10:30**

Of course, I'm responding to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, so I will get back on topic. This shouldn't go back to committee, Mr. Speaker. This is a plan that's costed. This is a plan that has been endorsed by millions of Albertans, as the Member for Cardston-Siksika has said, and this is a plan that we believe in. It's a plan that Albertans believe in, which is why it should go forward. Any impediment to that, any thought of more time to drag this on – we need to get people back to work, and that's exactly what we're doing with our plan.

With that, I will resign my time. Hopefully, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora can explain to us why she seems to have read every single page of the fiscal plan except for page 64.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is responding.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for her questions. Again, page 144 of the fiscal plan is the page that I continue to refer to. I'm happy to answer that question about where the \$4.7 billion number is.

I'll also remind the member that cabinet ministers have said that it hasn't resulted in job creation and how much that disappoints them because it certainly isn't working. It also hasn't worked in that 27,000 fewer Albertans have jobs now than had jobs when they were elected. I agree that people absolutely voted for more jobs. They one hundred per cent voted for more jobs. Instead, what is being brought forward here in Bill 21 is a plan to cut payments for AISH recipients, to cut payments for seniors living in seniors' lodges, to cut payments for folks who are some of the most vulnerable and instead continue to increase costs for low- and middle-income families, including the increase to student loan repayment programs.

Again, I know that the member says: well, we ran on a platform. You absolutely did, and I can tell you that the increase to student loan debt repayments was not in the platform, Mr. Speaker, through you. It certainly is troubling to me. There absolutely was an election, and the majority of the seats were won by a party other than ours, but we were also elected as private members to come here and fight for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on the amendment. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, if there is a desire of the House to go to one-minute bells, then perhaps someone could move the request for unanimous consent.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to move for unanimous consent to go to one-minute bells.



[Unanimous consent granted]

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:34 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Ceci	Ganley	Phillips
Dach	Gray	Schmidt
Deol	Hoffman	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Issik	Rehn
Amery	Kenney	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Schow
Barnes	Luan	Schulz
Dreeshen	Madu	Schweitzer
Fir	Nally	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Neudorf	Singh
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Stephan
Hanson	Orr	Walker
Horner	Panda	Wilson
Hunter		

Totals: For – 10 Against – 31

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are back on the bill. Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Solicitor General has risen.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'd move that we adjourn debate at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've made some good progress here tonight. I'd move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Community and Social Services in the Parkland Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the main estimates for the Ministry of Labour and Immigration in the Rocky Mountain Room.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:39 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 6, 2019

Day 40

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 6, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests, so I think it would be advantageous if you let me get through them all, and then we will give our guests the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly at the end of such time. They are a group of grade 6 students from St. Charles school in Edmonton-Castle Downs. From Edmonton-City Centre please welcome students from NAIT, the radio and television program.

Hon. members, many of you may be aware that it is grade 9 go to work day. That's why I'm growing a goatee, so you know that I'm actually meant to be here and not with go to work day. There are a number of guests of this wonderful program. Guests of the Associate Minister of Natural Gas: a student from Richard S. Fowler school in St. Albert, Cole Sekulic, and his parents, Verdelle and Mike; the Minister of Education's communications team: Luc Bourdeau and his dad, Chris; Kate Cromb and her dad, Ryan. Both Kate and Luc are students of Elk Island public schools.

Also here today are special guests of the Member for Highwood: Eddie and Jessica Maurice.

Hon. members, as some of you may have seen in the Federal Building earlier today, it is Alberta Book Day, and I am pleased to welcome guests of the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, book publishers from all across the province, the Book Publishers Association of Alberta.

Also in the gallery this afternoon is a guest of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, a member of downtown Calgary's homeless outreach #BeTheChangeYYC team, Chaz Smith.

Also in the gallery today are guests of the Member for Lethbridge-East: a delegation of the association of southern Alberta Team Lethbridge. Welcome here.

Guests of the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek: please welcome representatives of Canada and Alberta's cement and concrete industries.

Visiting as guests of the Member for Banff-Kananaskis are representatives of the Springbank action coalition.

If I mentioned your name or a group that you're associated with, if you could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Grande Prairie.

### Remembrance Day

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to honour the men and women who have stepped forward to serve our country

and preserve our freedom. Each year in the days leading up to Remembrance Day, I think of the families that paid the ultimate price in the name of freedom and democracy. I think of the generations of Canadians that have benefited from these sacrifices, and I think of the generations of Canadians that were lost in those battlefields so long ago, the family lines that ended as soldiers laid down their lives in service to our country.

On October 29, 1917, Private George Carr Thompson of Oxford, Nova Scotia, was killed in battle on the fields of Flanders at Passchendaele. He was 22 years old. Private Thompson served in the 85th Canadian infantry battalion, known as the Nova Scotia Highlanders. He was my great-great-uncle, the brother of my great-grandmother, Hilda Thompson Wood.

Last week marked 102 years since he took his last breath, and I rise today to remember him and to recognize the loss in my family and in the generations that followed. I think of my grandfather – God rest his soul – who never knew his uncle but proudly recalled his service in one of the darkest times our world has known. In the face of oppression Private Thompson stood bravely and fought valiantly along with over 420,000 Canadians who served overseas during World War I. Private Thompson was one of close to 61,000 Canadians killed and 172,000 Canadians wounded in the war.

In the words of Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur W. Currie:

Inspired by the example of their fathers, our children will know that the rights enjoyed by Canadians have corresponding duties, the greatest of them all being personal service to the country in case of danger. Let us all serve our fellow men. Let us all hold high the love of our country so that the work begun on the fields of Flanders in France may be continued and that our heroic dead may rest in peace, sure that their sacrifice has not been in vain.

Lest we forget.

### Telus World of Science Edmonton

**Ms Hoffman:** Ignite curiosity; inspire discovery; celebrate science; change lives. Today it's my pleasure to honour the Telus World of Science Edmonton. While it's housed in the constituency I have the honour of representing, it's a treasure that we can all take pride in. For as long as I can remember, Edmonton has been home to the Space and Science Centre. I recall my first 3-D IMAX show, where as a young child I dodged the flies that were coming off the screen straight at me.

Here we are a few years later at the Telus World of Science, and it's probably even more dynamic than its vision originally was: almost half a million ticketed visitors annually and 75,000 children as part of a school group alone. In fact, the Telus World of Science is the largest ticketed cultural attraction in Edmonton. Whether you're enjoying the science garage; creating your own renewable energy; watching a stunning IMAX film in the new 4K projector, like the *Rocky Mountain Express* or *Secret Ocean*; creating black holes with your bare hands on your way into the Zeidler Dome and the space gallery; or visiting the feature exhibits like the current Marvel universe of superheroes, on its only Canadian stop, I might add, or Sherlock, Rubik's, Body Worlds – the list goes on – this place is amazing.

None of this would be possible without a strong fund development and without public investment. Under the NDP \$12 million was invested in the Telus World of Science Edmonton. I intentionally use the word "invested," Mr. Speaker, because this place has hundreds of Alberta volunteers and workers who rely on it. I'm proud to have Constance Scarlett, Steve Baker, and Daryl Zelinski here today on their behalf. When the minister of culture says that she values the Telus World of Science, I take her at her word. I wish her luck in advocating to her colleagues as we know Conservative

austerity often targets cultural initiatives, and this current budget is certainly no exception. I hope she has better luck in the spring, because we all deserve a science centre that ignites curiosity, inspires discovery, celebrates science, and changes lives.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

#### Alex Decoteau

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the government of Alberta's liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces I have the tremendous honour and responsibility of advocating for the brave men and women who have served us and continue to serve us bravely every day. One person that served our country as a member of the Canadian Armed Forces as well as on the world stage at the Olympics was Alex Decoteau.

Alex Decoteau was an amazing athlete. He won the C.W. Cross Challenge Cup five times. In 1912 he won the annual 10-mile race just outside of Edmonton in Fort Saskatchewan for the third consecutive year. He was winning competition after competition across Canada, which ultimately led to the Olympic Games in Stockholm, where he competed in the 5,000-metre race. He also went on to represent the Edmonton city police amateur athletics association at the dominion track and field championships in Vancouver.

Alex Decoteau was not only a great athlete. He also went on to become Canada's first indigenous police officer and a soldier during the First World War. At first he enlisted as a private in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, where he served in the 202nd infantry battalion and later the 49th. He bravely fought for the freedoms that we enjoy today and was tragically killed by a sniper in 1917 during the Battle of Passchendaele. We honour his great sacrifice and contributions to our country this week as we commemorate Veterans' Week and National Aboriginal Veterans Day on Friday.

In his memory our government has committed to the creation of the Alex Decoteau scholarship. This scholarship will be awarded to members or to immediate family members of fallen or disabled members of the Canadian Armed Forces from Alberta. I'm proud to stand with a government that is committed to making life better for all Albertans, especially our military families, Mr. Speaker.

1:40

#### Budget 2019 and Lethbridge

**Ms Phillips:** Lethbridge remains one of the best places in the province to raise a family and a model of a diversified economy to which other communities in Alberta aspire. Today we are lucky to have representatives from Team Lethbridge, a range of public-sector, private-sector, nonprofit and civil society leaders and organizations at the Legislature. Like me, they are here to ensure that Lethbridge is heard.

We have already seen this government's disregard for our city in their budget. Here's just a short list of our challenges: a broken promise on a new bridge for highway 3; cuts to ambulance services; no new schools despite the fact that we're one of the fastest growing cities in the country; no funding for a much-needed cardiac catheterization lab in our hospital; cuts to the arts and those that work in the creative industries; cuts to early learning, child care, and parent link centres; layoffs of teachers, educational assistants, and others through millions in cuts to our two school boards; cuts to urban indigenous programs; cuts to our parks and those who work to monitor and protect our environment; cuts to programs and tax credits designed to diversify and grow our economy and attract new types of investment and entrepreneurs.

Finally, Lethbridge is known for two things, seniors and students. We have seen this government go out of its way to make cuts to both by raising tuition and deep cuts to our university and college, cutting seniors' lodge assistance programs, seniors' benefits, and kicking tens of thousands of older Albertans off the seniors' drug plan.

Lethbridge withstood the worst of the recession caused by the collapse in the price of oil, but this UCP recession will undoubtedly hurt our community. Bigger deficits, higher personal taxes, and thousands of layoffs, all to pay for a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. That will mean that my friends and neighbours and all Lethbridgeans will have to look to one another through the hard times.

Team Lethbridge will help our community remain strong through the coming years of a UCP recession.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

#### Lethbridge

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm always proud to stand in this House and talk about my home, Lethbridge. Though we tend to be rather quiet about our successes and the people who make these victories possible, we should be proud of their achievements in their categories.

Nikka Yuko Japanese garden is within the top 10 of North America. The U of L is in the top five in Canada. Lethbridge College serves our registered apprenticeship program, that often has more students than Calgary. That's not per capita; that's total. We have a world-class agricultural production and food processing hub, with plans for an exhibition grounds to build and expand that presence even more.

I'm lucky enough to have many of these visionary people in the gallery today and here at the Legislature this week. This week marks the sixth visit of Team Lethbridge to Edmonton and to this Legislature. Beginning in 2008, Team Lethbridge has brought a like-minded group of individuals and associations to the Legislature in pursuit of building an understanding of how important our great city is to this province. Team Lethbridge works to build relationships between government representatives and Lethbridge's community leaders, which builds capacity in supporting the long-term success of our province as a whole.

Before ever standing in this House as an elected member, I recall myself being here as a member of Team Lethbridge on behalf of the Lethbridge Construction Association. Through uniting academics, educators, entrepreneurs, associations and organizations, Team Lethbridge brings the best and brightest from our community to our Legislature. The vision of Team Lethbridge is to foster a community, a province, and a nation that is not only ready to seize the opportunities of today but also the possibilities of tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, just as the sun rises in the bright blue sky of the east and sets in an orange ball of fire in the west, so our parties are represented in this Legislature. Recognizing our diversity, innovation, and wide range of thinking and pursuits, through their hard work these individuals know what it takes to become the pillars of our community. On behalf of them I would like to thank many of our government, opposition, and private members who have taken the time this week to get to know Lethbridge a little better.

**The Speaker:** It would seem teamwork does make the dream work.

#### Teachers

**Member Irwin:** Today I'd like to talk about teachers. I'm so proud to be a teacher, and I'm so proud to sit on this side of the House

with a few teacher colleagues in the NDP caucus who show me every day that once a teacher, always a teacher.

We've been hearing from a lot of teachers lately. A lot. They're worried. They're disheartened. They're deflated. They're being sent multiple messages from this UCP government. They're told that they're good enough to look after your kids but that they're overpaid and underworked and that their salaries should be rolled back. They're told that they're skilled, yet there's no room for a single practising teacher on this government's curriculum advisory panel, but there's room for businesspeople and an American researcher fixated on privatization. They're told that their professionalism is valued as they juggle complex classrooms, but then they're told that youth mental health is in a crisis and that there's no money to fully fund each of their students or to hire more educational assistants. They're told that their autonomy is respected, but they can no longer have control over the pension funds that they pay into, a decision made without consultation.

But don't get me wrong. This isn't about pensions. It's about people, and it's about respect and the complete lack of it from this UCP government and a growing list of contemptible attacks on public education. Most of all, it's about our students. They're the ones who are hurt the most in all of this. This government speaks a big game about investing in our province, yet their actions show that they continue to prioritize corporations over kids.

We build a strong province by building a strong education system, one that truly supports young Albertans and the people who teach them, not by asking teachers to continue to do more with less and certainly not by asking students to bear the burden in the name of efficiency and debt. On this side of the House we refuse to accept that our kids deserve anything less than a well-funded education system, one that values them, their teachers, and every person who helps them along their educational journey.

Thank you.

### November

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have the opportunity to speak at the beginning of this special month about a cause that is important to me and countless Albertans. This fine month of November, also known as Movember, has long been associated with the no-shave movement. Some of history's most glorious manes have been nurtured thanks to this tradition. I see that some of our colleagues are actively involved in this effort, and it's coming along quite nicely. However, this hairy convention has become so overwhelmingly popular that its true purpose is often overlooked.

The objective of Movember is to raise awareness of male cancers and male mental wellness by embracing facial hair. Movember raises important funds to support these issues, but most importantly it saves lives. It saved the life of my own son because he recognized that he needed to seek medical attention immediately. Early detection of cancer saves lives.

Mr. Speaker, 2,800 men in Alberta will be diagnosed with prostate cancer this year. An estimated 1,100 Canadian men will be diagnosed with testicular cancer, with a large proportion being Albertans. And more men will suffer silently through mental illness, and sadly some will die through suicide as a result. Just like cancer, mental illness is most successfully treated with early intervention.

One mandate of Movember is for participants to donate any money they would have spent on grooming to relevant causes like cancer research and suicide prevention. Likewise, people who can't grow facial hair themselves are encouraged to support a nonshaver. And to all Albertans, I encourage your support of this cause because you don't need to have a beautiful mane to proudly stand behind the causes that matter. To everybody participating in 2019's Movember,

regardless of your follicle strength, thank you for supporting this important cause.

### Budget 2019

**Ms Pancholi:** It has become increasingly clear that this government is targeting the most vulnerable Albertans to pay for their \$4.7 billion giveaway to corporations. As Official Opposition critic for Children's Services, that is clear as this government cuts off young people who grew up in foster care from critical support to transition them into adulthood. These young people have survived trauma, abuse, and neglect and have no family support. Now they have less than six months to plan for another abrupt and heartless change in their lives. Sadly, this is not the only proof that the government values corporate bottom lines more than vulnerable Albertans. From AISH to child care subsidies to seniors to indigenous housing: cuts, cuts, cuts.

But this budget doesn't just hurt vulnerable Albertans. It makes life less affordable for all Albertans. Last Friday a resident of Edmonton-Whitemud came in to my constituency office to talk about how this government's budget affects her family. As an artist she's scared that the cuts to arts funding put her livelihood in jeopardy. She's worried she'll join the ranks of the unemployed and underemployed because this UCP government does not value the contributions that artists make to our economy. She's scared for her husband, a hard-working public servant for decades, because she knows that the UCP does not value those who serve all Albertans. In fact, we've already seen public servants shown the door by this government. She's scared for her young child, a child that will see growing class sizes, fewer teachers, fewer EAs, and, once again, fewer supports for those that need it most because this government has not funded enrolment growth and school boards are in an unprecedented state of underfunding.

1:50

She is scared for her older child, studying at the U of A, who will see tuition rise by 21 per cent over their degree and will bear the burden of a crushing student debt for many, many years as interest rates rise. She is scared because every day brings more bad news for her family. Income taxes are rising, electricity prices are rising, school fees are rising, and life just keeps getting more expensive under this government.

Now, I'm sure the members opposite will once again accuse me of fearmongering, but I did not create this fear; they did. I will rise to ensure that every voice is heard and to ensure that the Premier and his cut-happy cabinet take responsibility for their actions.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Firefighting Service Funding

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year Albertans face larger wildfires. Last year was the largest burn ever. For the last 40 years incredibly brave and highly trained Albertans have rappelled out of helicopters, sometimes right on top of the fire, and fought the flames that otherwise we could not reach. But today we learned that these brave rap team members have been sacrificed to pay for this Premier's \$4.7 billion handout. Premier, why are you putting rural Albertans at increased risk from wildfires by disbanding this elite team?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, what this government is doing is massively increasing our budgeted resources for fighting

wildfires. The NDP never did that. In fact, we're taking the contingency budget allocation for firefighting for wildfires from \$200 million to \$750 million a year. We are more than tripling the commitment to that. Now, the Official Opposition leader is talking about a program that was used in less than 2 per cent of instances. The department believes that they can more efficiently allocate those resources to other parts of our wildfire teams.

**Ms Notley:** Well, I'm sure that that rap team would be happy to hear that their Premier thinks they only work 2 per cent of the day.

You know what? One member actually wrote: the dismantling of the wildfire rappel program in Alberta is a travesty caused by the careless and irresponsible Conservative government budget cuts; how are we supposed to protect human life, communities, watersheds, soils, infrastructure when the provincial government clearly doesn't support us? These Albertans get it, Mr. Speaker. Premier, this firefighter understands your budget. Why don't you understand firefighting?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that the NDP shortchanged our firefighters and our wildfire service, budgeting only \$200 million in contingency as opposed to the \$750 million assigned in this budget. Unlike the NDP, that tried to snow Albertans with massively unrealistic revenue projections and by shortchanging the wildfire fighters, we instead are budgeting for what we actually expect they may spend. The department has decided to prioritize the helitack and firetruck crews, and there will be more resources available for them in this budget.

**Ms Notley:** You know, the Premier knows full well that the numbers he is throwing out right now are not real. It's a question of whether you budget in advance or you pay after the disaster. We always paid. We always paid, and he knows it. But what he doesn't know is that he's cut 13 per cent of Alberta firefighters in this budget. He should learn his budget. Why did he do that, and why won't he reverse it?

**Mr. Kenney:** Again, the budget contingency for wildfires and other natural disasters has been more than tripled to set aside resources to respond as necessary. Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to underscore that the Minister of Labour and Immigration has announced the launch of our heroes fund, that will provide a contribution of \$100,000 to our first responders who are either severely injured or who, tragically, lose their lives, by adding a provincial contribution to the federal heroes fund to underscore our support for our first responders.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

### Wood's Homes in Calgary

**Ms Notley:** Back in 2007 the former government established the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act. It requires specific efforts to protect children from sexual predators. Today we learned that this Premier is ending a contract with Wood's Homes, a nonprofit in Calgary that does exactly this protective work. As an Albertan and as a parent I am appalled, Mr. Speaker. This Premier has chosen to turn his back on children who are victims of sexual predators in order to fund his \$4.7 billion corporate handout. Does the Premier really stand by this decision?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2019 was a balanced plan to create jobs, grow the economy, and protect our

vital services, which includes protecting our most vulnerable in this province. That is why my Ministry of Children's Services saw an increase of 8.5 per cent in this year and 15 per cent over the next four years. We will continue to procure the services we need in a transparent way and deliver on the needs of the most vulnerable in our province.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, apparently the Premier won't stand at all.

Children in Calgary fleeing from sexual predators, their only lifeline eliminated by this government. He's tried to claim in the past that he's concerned about sexual exploitation, but he's clearly not walking the walk. For heaven's sake, Premier, why won't you direct your minister to reverse this unconscionable decision?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as the minister underscored, even after having inherited a fiscal crisis from the NDP, we have found the funds to increase support for Children's Services by over 8 per cent and, in addition to that, new funding, as per our platform, by doubling the funding for the integrated child exploitation unit, operated by Alberta police services, and doubling the funding for the integrated threat and risk assessment unit, that helps combat domestic violence, as well as our action plan to combat human trafficking and so much more to prioritize the protection of the victims of sexual exploitation.

**Ms Notley:** This program has been in place for over a decade to protect children from sexual exploitation. The Premier is literally increasing the risk of sexual assault and trauma amongst children. Compared to the \$4.7 billion that he handed over to his profitable corporate friends, the cost of this outreach work is minuscule, but the human suffering it prevents is not. Premier, you must know you're wrong here. No corporate handout is worth this. Why not have the courage to admit it and protect these children in the process?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's time for the opposition leader to admit that she is making up a nonexistent corporate handout. The job-creation tax cut, which independent economists project will help to create 58,000 new full-time private-sector jobs, represents a revenue offset of \$100 million. Instead, if we were to eliminate that, we would still have an \$8 billion deficit that we inherited from the NDP in part because they overprojected revenues by \$6 billion.

Mr. Speaker, we are increasing support for Children's Services by over 8 per cent and investing more in protecting vulnerable kids.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** You've cut a contract to protect sexually exploited kids in Calgary; 27,000 people have lost their jobs. Those are the facts.

### AISH Indexation

**Ms Notley:** Earlier today I was joined by many Albertans who live with a severe disability that prevents them from working. Now, I was very proud that our government was able to raise their rates and index them for inflation after years of Conservative neglect. The current Premier and his party even voted for that, but since then they've changed their mind, and they are pushing these Albertans further into poverty. Premier, why are you forcing these Albertans to sacrifice their food, their rent, their heat for your billion-dollar corporate handout?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we are doing no such thing. The truth is that even though we inherited a fiscal crisis from the NDP that

threatened the future of our social programs, we are increasing funding for AISH, and we're doing so by 11 per cent, increasing the budget from \$1.285 billion this year to \$1.398 billion next year while incorporating the significant increase last year. Altogether, from 2018-19 to '20-22 this represents a quarter of a billion dollars of additional resources for AISH. Those are the facts.

**Ms Notley:** The facts are that each individual human being – think about the humans, Premier – is getting less. The Premier, right before he announced it, said: it's not onerous that they could get up to \$120 less. But, Premier, it's a week's worth of groceries. It's the difference between making rent. It's the difference between facing homelessness. Now, some of these Albertans are even raising children on those payments. Premier, they are here. Show some courage. Look up in the gallery, look them in the eye, and tell them once again that what you're doing is not onerous.

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing worse than the NDP's fundamental dishonesty, it is their hypocrisy. For four years in office, even while running the largest deficits in our province's history, they did not index AISH payments. AISH has existed since 1979. It has never been subject to indexation, not once in 40 years, including during the four years of the NDP, but now they are seeking to frighten vulnerable people. That is shameful. Instead, we're helping to increase AISH support by a quarter of a billion dollars. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our changes last fall indexed for every year that we were in government. Moreover, the members opposite voted for it, and then after the election they decided it was time to break out their cruelest, most heartless plans. That's what they're doing. When we raised the alarm, they told us we were fear-mongering. But you know what? The fear is real because the lack of dollars in each individual's bank account is real. Why won't the Premier stand up, be accountable, be honest, and reverse these ridiculous decisions?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, our budget incorporates the large increase in AISH payments made last year, which is why the budget for AISH – this is not an opinion; these are the hard numbers that are before the Legislature – is going from \$1.13 billion in 2018 up to \$1.4 billion, a quarter of a billion dollar increase. But in 2015, '16, '17, '18, and into '19 the NDP did not index AISH. It has never been indexed. We are continuing to support and, in fact, prioritize support for the most vulnerable.

### Education Budget 2019-2020

**Ms Hoffman:** For months the Minister of Education claimed that there would be no cuts to schools, and that's not true. Now the minister's fallback position is that crowded classrooms, longer bus rides, and removal of supports for kids with complex needs are someone else's fault. The cuts are real, but don't blame the UCP for their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout on page 144 of their budget; blame the Calgary board of education. What a pitiful performance, Premier. You must be so sick of this kind of a response, Mr. Speaker. What do you have to say to the school board of Wolf Creek public schools in Lacombe? They're facing a \$1.8 million budget shortfall. Is it their fault?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I can share with you the fact that we are maintaining Education funding. The \$8.223 billion that we spent in Education last year we are spending this year. Every single student is being funded at the same base rate they were funded at last year. Every student.

**Ms Hoffman:** The minister's office published a hasty op-ed just hours after the CBE went public with what the shortfall, that they were stuck with by this minister, meant for them. In the piece she writes that she's surprised that the Calgary board will have to lay off teachers and educational assistants. Mr. Speaker, she should not be surprised because she caused this to happen. Does the Premier also claim to be surprised by the \$7.8 million budget shortfall this minister has stuck the Parkland school division with?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am surprised because the CBE has an operating budget of \$1.2 billion. The overall operating budget for the city of Calgary is approximately \$3.5 billion. We have one school division receiving \$1.2 billion, servicing 130,000 students. My expectation is that every school division will look within their budgets to find efficiencies, including CBE.

**Ms Hoffman:** The question was about the Parkland school division, Mr. Speaker.

The minister seems content to point the finger at Calgary for the next four years while students and families suffer. What about the Foothills school division? They've also been stuck with an \$11 million shortfall from this minister to pay for her \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. Premier, are you really going to try to blame Foothills and every single one of Alberta's other school districts for the budget crisis that you and your minister have created?

**Member LaGrange:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that enrolment growth over the last 15 years has grown by 25 per cent, inflation has grown by 33 per cent, but the growth in operational funding to our school boards has grown by 80 per cent. We are maintaining the \$8.223 billion. School divisions are adequately funded. They are in the best position to look at their finances and find efficiencies if they need them.

### Diabetes Treatment

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, diabetes is one of the most common illnesses in Alberta and can take a significant toll on an individual's day-to-day life. I often hear from my constituents who live with diabetes that they worry about the availability of appropriate supports for their individual circumstances. If not treated properly, diabetes can become a major health concern or result in other major health complications, and ultimately these serious complications result in a strain on the public health care system. To the Minister of Health: what supports are available to Albertans living with diabetes?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. Diabetes is one of the most common conditions in the province. About 350,000 Albertans live with diabetes today, and that's expected to increase to more than 500,000 by 2029. Alberta Health spent about \$411 million last year to provide diabetes supplies and drugs. These benefits include \$90 million for insulin and related products and \$21.5 million for supplies like test strips

for blood glucose. Diabetes is a perfect example of the challenges in health care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Health has outlined various supports available to those who live with diabetes and given that there are now safer, more efficient technologies such as flash glucose monitors or continuous glucose monitoring along with insulin pumps and given that these technologies can greatly reduce the challenges of living with diabetes and that many Albertans have eagerly followed the progress on these technologies, can the minister speak to whether the government is considering covering any of these new technologies?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we're committed to maintaining our current benefits, and we want to do more where it's justified in terms of cost and benefit to patients. We know that living with diabetes or caring for someone with it can be a financial burden. Government in recent years has added benefits for insulin pumps, for example, at a cost of more than \$18 million last year. We're working with the University of Calgary to evaluate a number of diabetes technologies, including glucose monitoring devices. This health technology assessment will help inform future coverage decisions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I receive consistent inquiries from my constituents about diabetes and in particular glucose monitoring technologies and the progress and potential benefits these technologies could have for those living with diabetes and given that my constituents are anxiously awaiting the results of the technology review that the minister mentioned and that diabetes and prediabetes affects such a large number of Albertans, to the Minister of Health: when can my constituents in Calgary-Glenmore and Albertans across the province expect the results of this new review to be made public?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department has commissioned this through the University of Calgary. The review will examine the clinical outcomes and cost-effectiveness of a number of new technologies like continuous or flash glucose monitors. The assessment will be completed by the end of the fiscal year. It's a technical analysis rather than a public report. The data will help inform the department as they consider future coverage options for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

#### Children's Services Budget 2019-2020

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are even more cuts being planned for the Children's Services ministry. We've obtained a letter confirming that the early childhood coalition grant will end this March. This funding was used to advocate for early childhood development, hold workshops for parents, and help children in low-income communities. Now the grant is gone. To the minister: please explain why early childhood development isn't a priority but a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout is.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, we continue to prioritize supports to those in Alberta who need it the most. These were one-time grants that went to a number of early childhood coalitions across the province, and future funding was not provided under the former government's budget. These were one-time grants for community building and capacity building.

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has also cut child care subsidies for low-income stay-at-home parents and given that they've gone even further and also cut kin child care subsidies, which hits families who rely on support within their families to provide child care, particularly in rural Alberta, to the minister. You've told Albertans that you want to provide choice in child care. How exactly does gutting all of these supports do that?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This year's budget actually saw an increase of child care subsidy dollars. For the programs that the member opposite is speaking to, less than 1 per cent – I believe it's .08 per cent – of Alberta families used these two programs. They also had absolutely no checks and balances in terms of whether there was financial need, whether the parents were working, or any requirements for invoicing or proof of care. That's why we're going to continue to support those working parents in Alberta who need the supports the most.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our leader has exposed other cuts to the Children's Services ministry today and given that these all come on top of cuts to supports for former foster kids that we exposed last week in estimates and given that this minister barely blinks when asked about all of these cuts, to the minister: by the time you're through, how many vulnerable Albertans will be harmed by your cuts?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, our government prioritizes supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families. But what we won't do is continue to do the same thing we've always done because it's the way we've always done it. Part of this is our community-based organizations, especially in the early intervention and prevention space. Many of our community organizations are already well beyond us in terms of working together and providing innovative supports for vulnerable families, and it's time for government to catch up.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

#### Public-private Partnerships for School Construction

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. P3 schools are a failed experiment. Taxpayers pay more while students and families get less. Not long ago Conservatives came to understand this as well when the Progressive Conservatives cancelled 19 P3 schools and abandoned this risky ideological experiment. In 2014 the then Infrastructure minister, Wayne Drysdale, admitted, quote, that this project, a P3, does not make sense. End quote. Why is today's Minister of Infrastructure so infatuated with an idea that has been shown to be a disaster and proven to fail?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I can give you a number of examples where P3 projects were really successful. The member mentioned about a particular P3 project that was a failure, but I can give you so many examples. Our government is determined to evaluate case by case, and if the business case determines there is value for money, then we will proceed with the projects on a P3 basis. That's our campaign commitment.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that he claims he has many examples – but he can't even name one today – and given that the price of that failure was paid for by children, parents, and educators at schools in my riding and given that we had exposed ditches, mud so deep that children were getting stuck in it, construction fencing that was falling on children, and runaway heating systems that could only be turned off in Toronto, does the Minister of Infrastructure have any idea of the real human misery that his failed ideological P3 experiments will cause, or is he only focused on paying for his \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, this member just jumps up and down all the time, but he doesn't listen to me and what I'm trying to say. There were 40 schools built under P3 in the past, and those were all successful projects. Forty schools were built under P3. The P3 contractors cover the warranty, they bring private finance, and then they also build the schools faster and cheaper. Those are the advantages with P3. But we don't blindly apply ...

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that those successful projects he's talking about are the exact schools that I'm describing and given that children, parents, and educators at Bessie Nichols school and Johnny Bright school endured years of mud and heat issues and unsafe conditions because of the failed P3 school experiment and given that no other Alberta children and families should be forced to live through that to pay for this \$4.7 billion corporate handout, will the Minister of Infrastructure agree to come to my riding and meet with these students, these parents, and the staff in my office and hear their stories? Yes or no?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, these guys keep talking about \$4.7 billion, which was a myth we called out, and the Leader of the Opposition was misleading Albertans with \$4.7 billion. Specific to his request to visit his riding, I'll be happy to visit his riding.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake. [interjections] Order.

### **Flood Emergency Response Highway 88 Flood Damage**

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency residents of Marten Beach were positive that 2018 brought the 1-in-100-year flood. This year the flood was even worse. This year homes were flooded on the main floor. Water was so powerful that it washed out two culverts on highway 88 and shut down traffic. No wonder the flood was so bad: there were 185 millimetres of rain in four days. To the Minister of Transportation: what procedures does the government have in place to react to massive floods which shut down highways?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Flood response and mitigation is crucial to us. We have seen the devastation time and again, and being prepared is important. During a flood we work closely with municipalities to ensure that lives are protected. That's first and foremost. The Provincial Operations Centre kicks into gear and helps co-ordinate response efforts between government response partners and community members and, after the flood comes, our disaster response recovery program to help Albertans restore damaged property and municipalities recover and get back to work and restore jobs and personal property. It's a co-ordinated approach, and we keep learning each time it happens. I think we're getting better at it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that highway 88 was quite damaged by the flood and given that two culverts were washed out, rendering the highway impassable, and given that a temporary bridge over the Lily Creek gap was put in place and allows some traffic to go through but remains an obstacle for a lot of the industrial traffic, to the Minister of Transportation: what progress has been made on finding a permanent repair for the two sections of highway 88?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation has the call.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I understand the hon. member correctly, he's referring to the culverts at Lily Creek and Brady Creek. In this case I hope the member and his constituents will be happy to know that in this budget we've allocated funding for the two projects. They are not complete yet. They're currently in the design phase, but we are aware of it, and we have put money in place to make the necessary repairs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the temporary crossings on highway 88 are still in place and given that the temporary crossings stymie a lot of industrial traffic and force far longer trips and given that the plan is to replace these temporary crossings covering the washouts with permanent bridges, to the Minister of Transportation: when can we expect the permanent bridges to be in place?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the hon. member's lack of patience. He's only responding to the desires of his community. Highway 88, as he points out, is a major artery for industry as well as people. Our job is to make sure our road network doesn't hinder the movement of people and goods and services. However, as I said, the project is in the design phase, tentatively scheduled for 2019-20. Our hope is that construction will begin in the spring, and our sincere hope is that construction will be able to be completed next year during the fall season.

### **Budget 2019 and Lethbridge**

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, we have in the Chamber today Team Lethbridge, who are here to advocate for our city. The Minister of Infrastructure needs to make two commitments. One, why doesn't Lethbridge have any new schools when both our public and Catholic school divisions need new schools? Superintendents are here in the gallery. Two, there was a previous commitment to a 34-unit supportive housing complex, which is something the downtown



business association and others here today have been advocating for. It's nowhere in the budget as well. Where are these investments? The Minister of Infrastructure should give a clear answer to Team Lethbridge about his capital plan. They are here in the gallery today.

2:20

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, my job is to build the schools that are on the capital project list, so I would encourage the member to take it up with the Minister of Education. But our government has prioritized based on the needs assessment, and we are building the schools where they are required. Also, given the fiscal situation we are in, the projects will be prioritized. We have another capital plan that will be presented in four months. Then probably we can address some of those concerns.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that Lethbridge has two urgent law enforcement needs in addition to reversing the cuts that mean that our police budget is less this year, given that we need a SCAN unit in the city to shut down drug houses, given that we need a drug court because Lethbridge has the highest per capita use of opioids, and given that the mayor and several councillors are here today listening carefully, can the Minister of Justice spare us his usual yelling and puffed up theatrics and just give our city an answer on a SCAN unit and a drug court? Are we getting them?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we heard from the opposition earlier today: the fear is real. That is the state of the justice system across Alberta. In particular, when I met with the people in Lethbridge – our justice system is in disarray. We put in additional resources for things like Alberta law enforcement response teams to go after organized crime. I'm also proud of the fact that we have \$20 million to enhance drug treatment courts across Alberta. I look forward to working with Lethbridge... [interjections] I look forward to working with Lethbridge – I don't know why they're heckling when I'm answering their question. We look forward to working with them in expanding drug treatment courts.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that during the election this government promised to replace the highway 3 bridge in Lethbridge and given that I don't see that project in the capital plan, can the Minister of Transportation tell our Team Lethbridge guests, every single one of whom drove over that 60-year-old bridge yesterday to travel to Edmonton to hear his answer, specifically when he will fulfill his Premier's commitment to the people of Lethbridge and replace the highway 3 bridge?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 2:22.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I've received strong advocacy for the highway 3 bridge both from Lethbridge's mayor and from the Member for Lethbridge-East. I met with the mayor recently to discuss this, and while he made it clear that the city wants the bridge, he's also aware that the province did repairs on this bridge just a very few years ago. We don't want to throw those repairs away. This bridge, while it's needed, is not a safety need but rather a capacity need. We, respectfully, don't want to waste the money we spent on the bridge recently, but the day will come when that bridge will have to be replaced to add capacity.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has a question.

#### Postsecondary Education Budget 2019-2020

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here's a quote: "Students should not have to suffer just to receive an education." This was part

of a statement from the University of Lethbridge Students' Union yesterday. This organization is understandably panicked by this government's cuts to postsecondary funding and the resulting costs being dumped onto students. The tuition freeze is off, the tuition tax credits are gone, and interest on student loans is going up. To the minister: why are you making cuts on the backs of postsecondary students?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MacKinnon panel report pointed out, we have some long-standing challenges with our postsecondary system. The members opposite can scream and yell as much as they want, but the fact of the matter is that under their tenure postsecondary participation rates did not improve. Under their tenure enrolment in the province declined. It decreased. We haven't seen an expansion of access. We have to address the problem in a meaningful and substantial way, and we're going to do just that.

**Mr. Eggen:** Given that the University of Lethbridge Students' Union also states that postsecondary should be a place for students to "achieve their dreams" and aspirations and given that now many students I'm hearing from have continuous nightmares about how they're going to possibly afford a massive increase to tuition and given that this minister insists that he's on the side of students from Lethbridge, to the minister: will you commit here and now to undoing your half-baked plan to allow massive tuition hikes?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to supporting our students, it's a top priority, of course, for us, which is why we have not only maintained scholarships, but we have increased scholarships. We are providing over \$8 million over four years to new scholarships. As well, Budget 2019 includes an expansion of \$3 million for the Alexander Rutherford and an expansion of \$51 million for additional supports in terms of student loans. Those are the things that we are working on. As I said, we have expanded scholarships in comparison to the previous government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government is increasing scholarships by maybe \$4 million and taking out \$600 million from operating expenses – do the math – and given that, you know, students in Lethbridge say that "we will not be quiet, and neither should you" and that "we realize that many people [will need and] want to mobilize," to the minister: students are going to take action against your terrible budget, but don't you agree that they really shouldn't have to be doing this? They should be studying instead of protesting your terrible cuts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my conversation with the university presidents and college presidents I made it very clear to them that as they are looking to finding more savings and efficiencies within the system, they look, first and foremost, to administrative expenses. We, naturally, don't want to see the quality of education be affected. When you look at the MacKinnon panel report, you'll see that in Alberta we spend \$8,000 per student on administrative expenses while B.C. spends \$4,000 and Ontario spends \$5,000. If they can do it, so can we.

#### Natural Gas Industry Support

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, our natural gas industry has been hurting due to extreme low prices and limited market access. This

has caused workers in the natural gas sector to be laid off and wondering how they will be able to provide for their families in the future. Albertans elected our government on an overwhelming mandate because we promised to revitalize our natural gas sector and get hard-working Albertans back to work. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas: what is this government's plan to ensure our natural gas products can reach international markets and ultimately save Albertans' jobs?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, look, it is nothing short of tragic. Had the members across the aisle done anything – really, anything – to help the natural gas industry, they might actually have saved jobs for the natural gas producers. Now, the Member for Sherwood Park is absolutely correct. We were elected on an overwhelming mandate to stand up and fight for all Albertans. That includes the oil and gas workers. That's what we're going to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the former NDP government was well aware of the issues facing our natural gas sector yet chose to do absolutely nothing and given that the natural gas sector has been asking for assistance in finding solutions to these issues for years and years and given that in July several CEOs called on our government to mandate production cuts to natural gas to stabilize natural gas prices, can the associate minister comment on whether such cuts are being considered?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite were handed by the natural gas industry a Roadmap to Recovery, and do you know what they did with that road map? Do you know how they actioned it? They didn't. They sat on it. Now, perhaps if the members opposite had spent a little more time reading the Roadmap to Recovery and a little less time reading the Leap Manifesto, perhaps – perhaps – the natural gas industry would be in a different situation than it is today.

**Mr. Walker:** Given that our government cares strongly about environmental stewardship and given that natural gas is among the cleanest fossil fuels and has the potential to significantly lower global emissions and given that natural gas producers cite increased natural gas production in the United States as a reason for lower prices in our Canadian gas sector, can the minister please comment on what our government is doing to promote Canadian natural gas as the best option for energy consumption across Canada and around the world? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, our office is focused on promoting Alberta natural gas to key international stakeholders. We're meeting with international investors and delegations across Asia to get significant market access for our natural gas. Our LNG story is an impressive one, and I look forward to sharing it with the world.

## 2:30                      Firefighting Service Funding (continued)

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, the brave men and women who have dedicated their lives to fighting wildfires in this province and keeping our communities safe certainly know more about their job than this minister does. Tom Weston spent 11 years in the wildland rap program, that is now being cut. He said that, quote, forest fires do not get stopped from the air, much as Hollywood might have you

believe; they are stopped by boots on the ground spraying water, dirt, and directing air tankers and buckets of water to the places where they will be most effective. To the minister: explain to Albertans why after 40 years you are ending the rap program and eliminating this very proud and effective squadron of elite Alberta firefighters.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the member opposite: I actually agree with him. Forest fires are put out by boots on the ground. That's why we're refocusing how we actually fight fires here in the province of Alberta. Those 63 great men and women are part of the thousand-plus people that we hire to fight fires here in the province of Alberta, and they will be dedicating a hundred per cent of their time to actually fighting forest fires on the ground. They do an amazing job. They did an amazing job this year. We know that they'll do an amazing job next year in fighting our forest fires.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, the rap helitack firefighters are worth their weight in gold.

Now, given that firefighter Tom Weston expected the government would argue that this program is too expensive but given that he said, quote, how do you measure the damage that didn't occur because of us, and how do you do a cost-benefit measure when you can't measure what hasn't been spent? – to the minister: answer Tom Weston. Explain to him why you're willing to put communities at risk to pay for your \$4.7 billion corporate handout rather than maintaining this elite firefighting unit who spearheaded our firefighting attack.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is disheartening, it's not true, and I wish the NDP would stop. That's actually great fearmongering that's coming from the NDP. It is demand driven, the amount of resources required to fight fires here in the province of Alberta. We spent over \$600 million fighting forest fires, and that was all demand driven. We had a terrible forest fire year this year. The department would make recommendations to me as minister, I would go through Treasury Board, and we spent over \$600 million, way above . . .

**Mr. Shepherd:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** . . . the \$320 million average that we would have as a province to fight forest fires. Again, the premise of that question is just wrong.

**The Speaker:** I recognize a point of order called at 2:33.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has the call.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these 63 men and women who are part of this attack squadron go out on a daily basis and protect our firefighting capabilities to make sure that these fires don't go beyond a 24-hour period and are learning every day of the devastating and cruel cuts that this government is making to programs to keep Albertans safe and given that cancelling this program will leave many Albertans fearful of the next fire, to the minister: last chance; will you commit now to restoring the rap program, which is essential to getting forest fires out before they get big?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, terms like "fearful of the next fire" in our northern and forested communities is just wrong and irresponsible. I wish the member opposite would stop using language like that because, again, the 63 members that he has just

referenced could be hired next year. We are going to hire over a thousand wildfire personnel to fight fires, boots on the ground that actually make a difference in fighting forest fires. As minister I'm proud of the amazing work that they do and will continue to do here in the province of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View is rising.

### Calgary Fire Department and Police Funding

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Much like the Minister of Education, the Minister of Municipal Affairs continues to play the blame game. Now his lack of leadership is putting public safety at risk for a \$4.7 billion no-jobs giveaway. The Calgary fire department is facing a \$9 million cut, and firefighters say they are already at the breaking point. To the minister: what will you do besides pointing fingers to ensure there are enough firefighters to keep Calgary safe?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure this House that our firefighting departments are well equipped to deal with any disaster in this province. As you heard from our Premier, we have devoted \$750 million, something that the members opposite did not do while they were in office. I am confident that all of our fire departments in this province will have all the resources they need to protect our communities.

**Ms Ganley:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that we're talking about municipal fire services and given that Mike Henson, president of the Calgary Firefighters Association, said that, quote, citizen safety and firefighter safety is absolutely at risk, and given that funding to municipalities is being cut by this government and given that the city council in Calgary is left with two options, to cut services or hike taxes, again to the minister: are you really willing to risk the lives of people in Calgary by cutting municipal funding to pay for a \$4.7 billion giveaway?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, we have delivered the long-term, predictable funding that municipalities asked for. The answer that I have for members opposite is that the relevant numbers that they should be interested in is the more than \$60 billion they left for us in debt. We are spending more than \$2 billion on interest rates as a consequence of their disastrous policies in the last four years. What we would not do is jeopardize the future of our public service and those programs and services that they care about with their reckless policies.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that police are also facing a cut due to the UCP's terrible budget and given that all the minister can do is point fingers and all the Premier's staff can do is mock this awful situation on Twitter, to the minister: what exactly do I tell my constituents? That 911 services must take a back seat to pay for your terrible, no-jobs corporate giveaway?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I would tell them to call city hall, to call their elected officials and tell them to get their fiscal house in order and start funding the priorities of Albertans. I am tired of city hall in Calgary coming here and saying: they're putting policing at the top of the chopping block. Policing is critical. I'm a member from Calgary. I'm a resident of Calgary. I'm tired of my taxes going up. I want our funding priorities to be public safety. We have fully funded our grants and increased funding to go after organized crime. We encourage city hall to do the same. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### Eddie Maurice and Rural Crime

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, on February 24, 2018, Eddie Maurice, a rancher from Highwood, found two trespassers breaking into his vehicle in the early morning hours. Fearing for his safety and that of his 11-month-old daughter and after having verbally warned the trespassers to stop, Eddie fired two warning shots at the ground. We have recently discovered that the same criminal is now suing Eddie for \$100,000. Can the Minister of Justice please explain what he is doing to ensure that innocent people like Eddie won't have to pay those who victimize them?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, what happened to Eddie Maurice came up at every single town hall that I was at across Alberta. Albertans can relate to it because it could have been them in rural communities. It could have been their daughters. It could have been their sons. It could have been their wives. What happened to Eddie Maurice is wrong. It is not justice, and I'm proud today that law-abiding citizens do not have to fear somebody that's committing a criminal act on their properties suing them civilly. We're bringing forward legislation this fall. I'm proud of it. We're going to have the strongest property rights in all of the country. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that lengthy response times from law enforcement have left many rural Albertans feeling that they have no choice but to defend themselves, their property, and their families and given that charges wrongfully laid against Eddie were dropped by the authorities, can the Minister of Justice please explain what our government is doing to protect the property rights of all Albertans?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, today we announced a comprehensive package to make sure that property rights are respected here in Alberta. Like I mentioned earlier on, never again do we want to have somebody committing a criminal offence on their property being able to sue the homeowner. We're also making sure that we bring forward new measures to stop trespassing and send a clear signal to eco environmental extremists that want to trespass for their own agenda: not in Alberta. We respect property rights. We're going to be bringing forward new laws here in this province, the strongest in the country.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that. Given that many of the perpetrators of rural crime are repeat offenders and given that in this very case the trespasser, Ryan Watson, was only given a 45-day sentence but didn't serve a single day of it due to previous jail time served, can the minister please explain how our government is working to prevent criminals from becoming repeat offenders, particularly in rural Alberta?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, our laws right now are written for downtown Toronto; they are not written for rural Alberta. Today I'm proud that we are bringing forward community impact statements that can be brought forward on sentencing. We need our judiciary to hear the impacts of rural crime and what is happening in communities. I've met with so many people that fear for their loved ones, fear for their children. We want to make sure those considerations are before our judiciary. We need better presence.

We are going to be working with our prosecutors to get that evidence before the court to make sure that the justice system works for rural Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Calgary-South East is rising to make a statement.

### School and Playground Construction

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the election we made a promise to Albertans that our government would continue to build new schools. This campaign commitment was especially important to me and my constituents in Calgary-South East as we've experienced rapid growth and have been lacking much-needed school infrastructure for some time.

On Friday, November 1, just last week, I was delighted to join the Minister of Education and the Minister of Infrastructure and several of my colleagues to announce 25 Education capital projects that are part of Budget 2019. Fifteen new schools will be built across the province, including brand new high schools in Calgary, Edmonton, Leduc, Blackfalds, and Langdon. Six schools are slated for replacement, and four will receive modernization or additions. Two of these announced schools, the Auburn Bay middle school and the new Auburn Bay elementary school, are located in my constituency.

An additional important announcement was also made that day, and it will affect constituencies and communities all across our province. The Education minister announced that moving forward, new schools will have playground funding included in their project budgets, something that I've personally advocated for. This means that every new K to 6 school announced by our government will come with a playground, including the newly announced Auburn Bay elementary school.

This is a welcome announcement to my constituents in the community of Auburn Bay, that recently had to fund raise over \$300,000 for a playground for the Prince of Peace school, and to my constituents in Cranston, that will be fund raising to build their own playground shortly.

Studies have found that play improves the physical, mental, intellectual, and social well-being of children. These playgrounds will also enrich the communities that surround them.

Once again, I would like to thank the Minister of Education and the Minister of Infrastructure on behalf of my constituents in Calgary-South East, and I applaud the decision to ensure that each new elementary school is built with a playground.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I am pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 204, Election Recall Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon. This bill was referred to the committee on October 23, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, the committee's final report recommends that Bill 204, Election Recall Act, proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 204.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the motion for concurrence in the report is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Are there any members who wish to speak to the request for concurrence?

Seeing none, the chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills has requested concurrence in the report for Bill 204, Election Recall Act.

[Motion carried]

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

#### Bill 205

#### Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce Bill 205, the Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019.

Just one organ and tissue donor can save up to eight lives and make life better for up to 75 other people. A 90 per cent majority of Canadians support organ and tissue donation, but less than 20 per cent have made plans to donate. If introduced, this bill will change our underperforming opt-in system into an opt-out, or presumed consent, system to match other leading jurisdictions around the world and, hopefully, help the 700 Albertans on the waiting list for an organ transplant.

With that, I request leave to introduce Bill 205, the Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there was an hon. member who wanted to present a petition, and it was my error to not recognize her while she was standing. It would require unanimous consent of the House.

The question that I do have for the member is: is this a petition that has been approved by the library?

**Ms Rosin:** It was run through your office, Mr. Speaker. I believe so.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, apologies.

I'll provide some clarification for you. What you're presenting is actually a tabling, because unless it's been approved by Parliamentary Counsel, it's not a petition. Although it might be worded as a petition, it's unlikely that it's an official petition of the Assembly. As such, I invite you to table it during the appropriate time, which is Tabling Returns and Reports – and there are a number of those today – which we are currently at.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has the call.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of 46 individual letters from teachers in my constituency concerned about this government's proposal to control the assets of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quickly I'd like to recognize Dave Rupert and Dave Klepacki, who are in the gallery today on behalf of the Springbank action coalition.

Further, I would like to table today the requisite number of copies of a petition from the residents of Rocky View county and Calgary which expresses concern over the devastation that the proposed Springbank dam will have on the communities, residents, and business owners of Springbank, Bragg Creek, Redwood Meadows, and surrounding area. The petition also calls on our government to reassess the costs, socioeconomic impacts, and science of the alternative McLean Creek reservoir. I'm happy today to table five copies of approximately 1,200 handwritten and signed letters, of which I am also a proud signatory. We have approximately, I think, 6,000 pieces of paper here – some are here; some are in the back lounge – and these will be tabled today.

Thank you so much.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-North West I have on my list.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of 26 letters that were sent to my office from individuals who are very concerned about the government's choice to move the Alberta teachers' retirement fund monies to AIMCo.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have a lengthy list, but let's just go from who is standing as there may or may not be some members able to present their tablings.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South here.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you'll indulge me, I have a tabling on behalf of my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View. It's entitled Calgary Firefighters Association Frustrated by Lack of Resources for New Communities.

I also have an additional tabling of my own, Mr. Speaker. It's called Stuck in the Mud: Parents Sound Off on Dirty Grounds outside Johnny Bright School, which iterates how P3 schools have caused safety issues in my community.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a number of e-mails that I've received in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood from constituents who are all teachers and who are quite concerned about this government's proposal to take over the assets of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by Edmonton-Glenora.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of 11 e-mails that have been sent to my office stating that the government has crossed the line by taking over control of the assets of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. I have two tablings. The first is with regard to the question my hon. colleague from Edmonton-

Whitemud made earlier today, with the Family & Community Support Services Association of Alberta referred to in her question.

The second are additional letters about what many are referring to as the heavy-handed overreach of attacking teachers' pensions, the Alberta teachers' retirement fund. I had letters that I tabled yesterday, and here are additional ones that we continue to receive.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of an article from *National Geographic* entitled Most Countries Aren't Hitting 2030 Climate Goals, and Everyone Will Pay the Price: "Untold human suffering" is in our future as nations miss their Paris Agreement targets by a long shot."

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to table a document? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have the requisite number of copies of six e-mails my office has received from Alberta teachers about their great concern with the steps this government is taking around the ATRF and wishing to express their disappointment.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a letter sent by a former rappel forest firefighter with 10 years of experience who equates the capping of the rappel program to the firing of the lifeguards in a busy swimming pool.

I further have four more tablings, five copies each, of letters sent to various ministerial agencies commending the rappel firefighters for their work over the last 15 years.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the College of Alberta Dental Assistants annual report 2018-19.

On behalf of Mr. Schweitzer, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, the Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board 2018 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order.

At 2:22 the hon. Member for Calgary-West noted a point of order, which was subsequently withdrawn.

At 2:33 the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre also noted a point of order. I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you. I'll try to be quick because I recognize that people have to be in estimates soon. Under Standing Order 23:

- (h) makes allegations against another Member;
- (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member;
- (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

I appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that you may not have the benefit of the Blues. It may not have been caught in the Blues, but the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka – and this is not the first occurrence – repeatedly has made comments in regard to our caucus that

indicate: they're the ones who let Fort McMurray burn down. He has done that again today. Numerous times members of this caucus heard it.

We would just ask that all members of the House not make comments associated with that, recognizing that the tragedy of the Fort McMurray fire was something that this Official Opposition, then in government, did the best that they could do with what was happening and that those comments do nothing to help the debate of the House.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this in fact is not a point of order. As mentioned, first of all, maybe you have the benefit of the Blues already. I don't even imagine that anything like that in any way has been recorded in regard to the context of what the deputy House leader is referring to.

But further to that, we're clearly talking about topics that are of debate, and if we are going to spend our time point-of-ordering what members are saying to each other in conversations that they're having inside this House, then maybe we will start point-of-ordering every heckle that the NDP does. I'm sorry that the NDP may not like to be reminded about their mismanagement of the fire file. That, in fact, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is a matter of debate inside this Assembly.

As for accusing other members and stuff, I've watched today sadly as the opposition has continually got up both in heckling and within their questions and have accused cabinet ministers and members of this government over and over of doing terrible things to children, in fact, of hurting people, or of doing significant damage to Albertans, all of which, I want to be clear, is not true. I

think it's unfortunate that the opposition continues to do it, but I will also recognize that it is clearly a matter of debate.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the submissions from both of you this afternoon. It would not be possible for your Speaker to make comments on statements made by members that the Speaker did not hear. Having said that, I would suggest that these are the types of accusations that don't create order and decorum inside the House. I am in agreement with the hon. Government House Leader that these sorts of accusations aren't helpful.

If the hon. member said that – obviously, you, we, any individual in this House weren't responsible for letting Fort McMurray burn, so I would encourage members to not make these sorts of statements. But I did not hear that, so I'm not going to ask him to apologize or otherwise because I do not know whether or not that, in fact, was said and it would be inappropriate of me to comment.

Having said those things, pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Community and Social Services in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism in the Parkland Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:58 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, November 6, 2019

Day 40

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 6, 2019

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Before we get started on debate for Bill 20, I'd like to make a request, that in dealing with Bill 20, votes be separated so that we can vote on each of the sections separately. The sections are as follows: sections 1 to 5, 7 to 8, 11 to 12, 14 to 15, and 23; sections 6, 9, 10, 13, 16 to 21, 22 and schedule 2, section 25 and schedule 3; and sections 24 and 26.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. What I'm going to do is that I'm actually going to take the opportunity to just quickly review that. What I mean by that is that I think you might have missed a schedule. What I'm going to do is that I'm also going to list off all the sections, but I'm going to give them blocks as well.

What we're going to do – assuming that we go forward with your request, then it'll be: block A will be one block of sections, and that'll be your sections 1 through 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 23; block B will be section 6; block C will be section 9; block D will be section 10; block E will be section 13 and schedule 1, which is the one that I think you may have missed; block F, which is section 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21; block G, section 22 and schedule 2; block H, section 25 and schedule 3; block I, sections 24 and 26.

If you could just let me know if that's what you're looking to do.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much. My apologies; I did miss section 13 tied with schedule 1. Thank you for that correction, sir. These are what I'm proposing.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for his request.

I understand that past practice of this committee has been to allow a member to request that a vote on a bill such as one that is as complex as this and deals with several distinct propositions be divided and that then those votes be conducted in groups. Accordingly, I will permit the vote on Bill 20 to be divided once the debate has ended. For the clarity of all members, we will continue to debate all clauses of Bill 20 together, but when there are no further members wishing to speak and we move forward with the vote, then we will vote according to each block as previously noted.

Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise in the House tonight to speak to Bill 20. It feels like it's been some time since I've had the opportunity to be

here for an evening session, so good evening to everyone. Pleasure to see you all here.

Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019: in many respects, Mr. Chair, I would say that this is a cornerstone bill for this government. While it covers a very broad spectrum of changes in a number of different areas, it sort of really does speak to what I see being the economic philosophy of this government. We've had the opportunity, I guess, to hear a lot from the ministers and members of this government about what they want to see for the economy of Alberta and how they think that we are going to get there.

Now, indeed, I think all of us in this House want to see Alberta's economy thrive. We all want to see a more diverse economy. We all want to see Alberta doing well, and, indeed, Alberta still, Mr. Chair, to be clear, is doing quite well within the larger context of Canada. We are a fortunate province. But we recognize that the last few years have been incredibly difficult for people. We've had some very challenging times as an economy, with the world-wide drop in the price of oil, the impacts that's had, the shifts in investment, the changes in resource markets, the continuing challenges in gaining pipeline access to get our product to a better price in other markets. Those have indeed had their toll.

But when I think about what I'm hearing from this government about how they view the economy here in Alberta and how they think that we are going to get it back on its feet, it reminds me a little bit of high school, in particular when we talk about how we're going to build investment in the province. Now, what I mean by that is that I think back to high school – you know, high school is an interesting place to be. There's a certain social hierarchy, and everyone is a little bit insecure, and everybody is trying to build their social capital. Some think that the best way to build your social capital, to build your opportunity, your chances for your advancement and your place – often, Mr. Chair, when we're in high school, we don't see that far into the future. We only see what's in front of us; we have a bit of a limited understanding of what the world is like.

But one of the approaches people take is to say: "Well, hey. Who are the cool and rich kids? They've got something. If I can connect myself with them, if I can be friends with them, then that's going to get me ahead pretty fast. I can build a lot of social capital pretty quickly, and that doesn't require a lot out of me. I just have to make sure that I offer enough stuff that they're going to like me. If they like me enough, then I get some of what they have, and they're going to share that with me, and that's going to help me get ahead." Now, Mr. Chair, what I would say is: yeah, that works sometimes, I guess; if you change enough stuff about yourself, if you make enough compromises, if you sacrifice enough things about your own identity, then perhaps you're accepted into that cool clique and you get to enjoy some of those benefits. But it can also disappear just as quickly as you got it.

But, you know, Mr. Chair, you can also choose another path. You can choose to actually invest in yourself. You can choose: "You know what? Hey, maybe I don't fit in a cool rich clique. Maybe I'm not there, but I can build my own talents and skills. I can get to know myself. I can know what's possible for me. I can study, I can invest my time, I can invest my energy, build my own skill set, build my own opportunities and make friends that are going to stick with me. I build skill sets and opportunities that are going to carry on for a long time and are not dependent on anyone else."

Now, Mr. Chair, when I look at this government's approach to business and investment and when I hear them talk about what they want to see for investment in Alberta, what I hear them saying is that their biggest interest is chasing after the rich cool kids. What I hear them saying is that they're only interested in the absolute

biggest businesses, the businesses outside Alberta, that international capital. That is what they want to bring to Alberta. That's what matters. That is the only way Alberta is going to get ahead. Now, let's be clear. This is a global economy. It is a global market. Indeed, we need to work with a global perspective. There is incredible value in having international investment in the province of Alberta, which we continue to have.

7:40

But, Mr. Chair, the question is: how much do we think we need to sacrifice to continue to chase after that as the be-all and end-all and the ultimate good? Now, this government has answered that. They feel that we should be willing to sacrifice up to \$4.7 billion, and they feel that cutting the corporate tax down to 8 per cent is all that we need to do, well, that and, you know, reducing red tape and some other ambiguous things around creating efficiencies and that sort of thing. But really the centrepiece is this reduction, to 8 per cent, of the corporate income tax.

And when I hear them talk, they are not talking about how that's going to necessarily help Alberta businesses. What I generally hear them talking about is how that's going to bring in all this international investment and people from outside the province. Now, Mr. Chair, again, that is valuable, and that is important, but we also need to be building our industries here in the province. We need to be investing in ourselves. What I hear this government saying is that if you're a band geek or if you're in the AV club or the computer club, they're not interested in you in this high school. If you're in the film industry, if you are in the tech industry, if you're working in innovation, if you're working in anything, to some extent, outside of oil and gas, they don't have an interest. They will offer the 8 per cent corporate tax rate. They will offer that \$4.7 billion corporate tax giveaway, which does nothing for a lot of those industries because those are industries that are building something here in Alberta from the ground up.

I have quoted, time and again, from the A100, a group of investors here in the province of Alberta, Alberta-born and -raised investors who have invested here in the province of Alberta and built successful technology companies here in Alberta and want to invest back into successful technology companies here in Alberta, people who are experts and knowledgeable in this field, who say that a corporate tax cut does next to nothing for the tech and innovation industry. What is needed are incentives that actually help people invest back in their businesses here in Alberta to build skill sets, to build talent, to build innovation, to build products that stay here in Alberta.

Mr. Chair, today in the estimates for Economic Development, Trade and Tourism the minister had this strange notion that somehow building export capacity for Alberta businesses is sending business outside of Alberta. What a ridiculous concept. When Alberta businesses access other markets, when they expand into other places, they are building Alberta business.

Earth Water, a company from right here in Edmonton, started out with a couple of university students who had the idea that they would sell bottled water and put those proceeds back through the United Nations program to do social good. They're now in cafés and groceries stores across North America. They've expanded into tea and coffee. And now they've expanded into the country of Japan, and they did that through support through Alberta's economic trade office, who brought them out there and introduced them to stakeholders. They expanded their business, and now they are in grocery stores across Japan. That is money that flows back to Alberta and creates jobs here. This is an Alberta-born business that is not going to pick up and run because the price of oil drops.

Now, again, Mr. Chair, I recognize the value of global investment, bringing money in from outside, but what I heard from the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism today is that that is all this government is focused on. They are going to be turning the focus of every one of our international offices to bringing investment back to Alberta. They are turning away from trying to help Alberta businesses access global markets, at the same time that we are trying to do exactly that for one of our most important industries, recognizing the oil and gas industry.

Again, we are putting, apparently, all of our eggs in that basket. We are turning away from Alberta companies that are looking for the support of government to help them build, just like in the 1970s. Before we had an oil and gas industry in this province, government invested to create and support the research that got the ability to extract oil from sand to the point that commercial business was interested in investing in it. A corporate tax cut would have done nothing to start the Alberta oil and gas industry. It wasn't proven yet. That took the forethought and the investment and the vision of the government of Peter Lougheed. Premier Lougheed made the investments to kick-start an industry that is now the pride and joy of every one of these government members, and deservedly so. It's brought us a long way. It's going to carry us a good ways further.

The fact is, Mr. Chair, that we need to support other kinds of companies to do exactly that. We have other raw resources we could be building on in this province. They're right here at the University of Alberta: medical technology and medical research that's being commercialized and turned into products using investments through Alberta Innovates to get them to the point where they're then ready to go out and seek outside investment, which in part was empowered by things like the Alberta investor tax credit. Just like when we were starting out with oil and gas in Alberta, no commercial company thought it worth while out of the gate because it was yet unproven, so Premier Lougheed came up with a system by which the government derisked investment to convince other people to step up and try to put a bit of money in. The Alberta investor tax credit, just like investor tax credits in multiple jurisdictions across Canada, worked exactly the same way. It derisked that initial investment that allows these starting, fledgling, small companies to get up and going.

Again, Mr. Chair, what I am hearing from this government and what I'm seeing from this government is that they are not interested in those companies. If you haven't already proven yourself, well, forget it; we don't have time for you here in Alberta. You have an idea? That's lovely. Go figure it out, and when you've got something going on, come back and talk to us.

Mr. Chair, we have incredible opportunities here. We truly, truly do. I talked about medical research and innovation. Of course, we have AI, and I will commend this government for continuing to invest in AMII, in artificial intelligence research here in the province. Now, they are committing less than what our government had hoped to commit – fair enough – but they are maintaining that investment. I salute them for that. They at least have that much forethought. It's my hope that they will continue to make that investment because that is another raw resource we have here in the province of Alberta. We are ranked third in the world. That is why Google brought DeepMind, their artificial intelligence project, here to Edmonton. I haven't had a chance to visit their headquarters here in Edmonton, but from what I hear after my visit to talk with the folks at AMII, that's one incredible space. These are companies that are not afraid to invest when they're given the opportunity.

But what I heard from the minister of economic development and trade today in our estimates for her ministry is that they are not interested in trying to do what companies like Google would like to ask them to do. What this government has to say to Google is: you can have

part of our \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway, and that is all we have to offer. We are not going to invest in supporting postsecondary spaces for the kinds of employees that Google is looking for. I talk to tech companies in and around downtown Edmonton all the time: folks developing apps, products, all sorts of different things. They cannot find enough people who have the knowledge and the skill set that they need. Now, this government says: well, we don't want to pick winners and losers, and we don't want to just choose one thing over the other. But this government is very specifically looking to invest more in apprenticeships and the trades.

7:50

Again, apprenticeships and the trades are important. They are a part of the oil and gas industry; they are a part of the construction industry. They are part of many things which drive our province forward, but they are specific industries. This government is willing to pick particular winners, but on others it simply is choosing to look the other way. It's unfortunate, Mr. Chair. I don't think it has to be one or the other. We could be investing in both. Unfortunately, what I see in this bill is the government again sort of doubling down and saying: "No. We gotta chase the cool, rich kids. They're going to be the only ones that can save our province." No thought to those that are actually trying to build and invest in something new here in our province to help complement. This government has no plan B, and plan A has a few problems, too.

Ultimately, I don't understand why this government is choosing to simply do it this way. Now, the minister of economic development and trade said that, you know, the Alberta investor tax credit had some problems. It was too bureaucratic, too many layers, too many things. Well, by all means then, please make it better. This is a successful program in multiple jurisdictions across Canada. This is what made Alberta competitive for tech investment. As the A100 said, a broad-based corporate tax reduction does not do anything to make Alberta more competitive for tech.

Mr. Chair, you can't just simply try to plant full-grown trees. You've got to build the soil, and what builds the soil is when new and aspiring entrepreneurs here in the province of Alberta have the support and the opportunity to try new ideas and fail and try again, because every successful checked jurisdiction in North America, indeed probably in most of the world, was built on 100 companies that tried and maybe five that succeeded. That is only possible when we are able to create that sort of supportive environment, and government needs to be part of that mix.

At multiple events that I've attended with individuals from the tech industry here in the province of Alberta, they have made that a hundred per cent clear. There is not a successful tech jurisdiction in the world that did not have some level of government support, just like we would not have an oil and gas industry in this province if the government had not stepped up to help get that ball rolling.

Mr. Chair, this does not have to be either/or. I can wear a T-shirt that says "I love Alberta oil and gas" as well as a T-shirt that says "I love Alberta tech." In fact, it was the philosophy of our government that those two things go together.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen to join debate.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm going to pick up on some great points that my colleague the Member for Edmonton-City Centre made. I agree. You know what? The government talks a good game about diversification, but when rubber hits the road, we're not seeing actions follow words.

You know, we just came from estimates in Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, and I can tell you that there are

a number of points that I want to make that are directly tied to this bill. Again, I'll echo some of the sentiments of the companies. I think the first thing that, you know, maybe we need to ensure all members understand is that the tax credits that our government introduced came from the private sector. They're not New Democrat tax credits. They came from the private sector, who has said to us and to previous governments that Alberta needs these to level the playing field.

The characterization that these are boutique tax credits is actually a mischaracterization. The investor tax credit is sector-wide. It is open to every single sector. It is not picking winners and losers, although there is some irony and possibly some hypocrisy when the interactive digital media tax credit is "a boutique tax credit, too bureaucratic" – these are, of course, claims that the other side is making – "only serves a number of companies and is very complicated; we want these broad-based tools," but in the next breath the film industry gets a tax credit. I'm not sure how in members' minds that isn't contradictory, where one sector gets a tax credit, but another tax credit that's open to multiple sectors is considered boutique and, therefore, needs to go. You can't have it both ways. You can't argue two different things out of, you know, two different sides of your mouth and say: yeah, these are totally different.

Now, I'll be the first to admit, Mr. Chair, that I am in favour of the film tax credit program. You know, we introduced a number of tax credits in our term, and we did increase the funding for the film production grant program. Where I think the government missed the mark on the film tax credit – and I'm confident that if we'd had a second term, we would have introduced a film tax credit, not to replace the production grant. The production grant is really meant for the smaller cultural industries, the small cultural films that are being produced here in Alberta. The film tax credit was and is and could be a better tool to bring in some of the larger productions like *The Revenant* and other blockbuster films. I believe one of the *Ghostbusters* was shot here in Alberta. The film tax credit can help attract those larger productions, who said to us that the cultural film screen grant was not big enough and it wasn't the right tool. Fair enough. But I think the challenge is that this government is throwing that program out to move to the tax credit program, which is now, again, hurting the cultural industries, and the film tax credit has a cap and is not a big enough fund to be able to attract the big blockbusters.

Now, Mr. Chair, in my opinion – again, you don't have to take my opinion; listen to the film industry, who were at estimates tonight and who are irate and talking about folding up shop and moving to other provinces – both programs are poorly executed. So getting rid of the first one hurts the small cultural industries, and not using the precise tool, an adequately sized, uncapped film tax credit, will not help the big industry to the level that it could.

I can tell you that British Columbia last year had \$4 billion in revenue from the film industry. Last year. Now, members, you know, may jump up tonight and talk about how the screen production grant was oversubscribed. You're right. It was. But do you know what that tells us, Mr. Chair? It's that it was a popular program that was working. You know what? This year the film industry has seen record numbers. Why? Because our government funded the screen production grant. They were on track to have another record year this year. Do you know what happened, Mr. Chair? When the UCP formed government, they iced the program.

It was a little unclear in estimates earlier, which we tried to clarify. You know, the minister had talked about how the program is continued. No, it isn't. It's been frozen since the election. So when we talk about quoting companies who have said, "We are leaving Alberta," it's the companies that are saying that. So



throwing back rhetoric is not acknowledging that this freeze has in fact impacted industry.

8:00

Again, this is a very competitive industry, Mr. Chair, and we are competing with large centres that have significantly larger supports. Again, in British Columbia, in Vancouver especially, but also in Ontario there is no cap on their film tax credit. So when blockbuster movies look to come – we're talking large projects employing thousands of people and turning out, you know, hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars of revenue for hotels and restaurants, and the impact is significant – they're doing that in other jurisdictions, and Alberta will not be able to compete with them. I can tell you that.

But I want to touch a little bit on the interactive digital media tax credit, again, you know, a tax credit that provided a 25 per cent tax credit on labour. This is for companies where their number one driver of cost is labour. Again, programmers are well skilled. They're obviously well educated. They're paid well. These are good, mortgage-paying jobs. An interactive digital media tax credit helped level the playing field. In fact, Alberta was middle of the pack, at best, with what we offered. Quebec has got a 37 and a half per cent tax credit, and they also have a booming industry. Again, digital media companies generate billions – billions – of dollars.

When the government talks about diversifying the economy, I mean, so far, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, all that I've seen is lip service, because tools that were actually working are tools that are being gutted. The investor tax credit is a 3 to 1 return on investment, and I think it's shameful when the minister says: well, that only helped a couple of hundred companies. Okay. So your message to them is: "You're not important. You're a tech company. You're an investor. You know what? Your money is not welcome here. Go somewhere else." That's how the industry is interpreting it.

The province of British Columbia has had an investor tax credit since 1985. It works, is working. It provides a number of different opportunities, Mr. Chair. It provides opportunities for British Columbians to invest in B.C. companies. When you look at your tax-free savings account or your RRSP or maybe you've saved a few thousand dollars and want to spend it on a company in your province, the investor tax credit lets you do that, and it also derisks your investment.

You see, the corporate tax cut does not benefit these start-ups. I've said this before, but it's worth saying again. These start-ups have no retained earnings. They're not withdrawing money from their company. It gets reinvested. This government could put the corporate tax rate at zero, and do you know how many start-ups that would help? None. It would help none because they're not withdrawing their funds. What they need is a tool to help them scale faster. By scaling faster, Mr. Chair, they're going to hire more people, they're going to grow, they're going to grow the economy, and they're going to grow their businesses here in the province. That's a good thing. The investor tax credit was open sector-wide to any company that had to apply.

Now, members opposite in estimates today talked about how cumbersome it was. I appreciate the fact that they were quoting sources when we first announced the investor tax credit. I'll be the first to admit that initially, when we rolled it out, yeah, the application process was a little cumbersome. So we took that feedback, and we simplified it. But I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that what we won't do is allow companies that are home in other provinces to set up a shell company in Alberta, not provide any jobs for Albertans, not benefit the Alberta company but have access to an investor tax credit. That's the only thing I can think of that the

other side is proposing by saying: yeah, there's too much red tape. Well, no. There needs to be oversight on tax dollars.

But I appreciate that the program needs to be simple enough so that companies fill out a one-pager, qualify, and now they don't need to go back to government for anything else. They can go out and raise capital and offer a 30 per cent tax credit in addition to whatever equity agreement they have with their investors.

I also think it's disingenuous, coming from the other side, that these types of investments are unwelcome. The investor tax credit is scaled and layered with the Alberta Enterprise Corporation – we talked about that tonight, Mr. Chair – an incredible vehicle that leverages dollars through their entity, which is funded by the government, and matches them with industry dollars, venture capitalists, to create a fund which then invests in companies, and many of those companies are here in Alberta. A very successful program, it was started under the PCs. I'll give a shout-out to former Premier Ed Stelmach; it was started under his government. They started with \$100 million. We recapitalized them over the last four years, another \$75 million. Now, I've asked the minister if she'll consider recapitalizing them, because they are an incredible vehicle. At the moment there are zero dollars in this budget, but I'm hopeful that maybe the government will see the value of the Alberta Enterprise Corporation. But what helped to leverage the dollars was offering an investor tax credit that would help the companies scale even faster.

My frustration, Mr. Chair, is that the only thing I can see is that ending the investor tax credit, the digital media tax credit, SRED, and the capital investment tax credit is ideological. There are no two ways to slice it. The return on investment is there. The numbers are there. The government talks about how it's about finances. Well, open the books and look at how it was benefiting. The capital investment tax credit: \$200 million of tax credits leveraged \$2.2 billion worth of investment. Two point two billion: those numbers sound pretty good to me. This was a tool that helped.

The challenge, Mr. Chair, is that – you know what? – there isn't a silver bullet. I can tell you that what's not helping is that these cuts to the interactive digital media tax credit, to the investor tax credit are coming at the same time as cuts to postsecondaries. We invested in 3,000 new tech spaces around the province. Why, Mr. Chair? I don't know if you recall, but the city of Calgary was pursuing Amazon, Amazon's HQ2 bid, right? Amazon was saying: we want to go global for our second headquarters; any city is welcome to be in the running. I can tell you that we supported a bid by the city of Calgary, including a number of different offerings that we had. We were unsuccessful, but what we learned from that is that Alberta has some incredible talent, but we don't have enough graduates to land the big fish.

Here's the irony. Today in estimates the minister was clear that they're not interested in helping Alberta companies access new markets. That's what she said when I talked about the export expansion program: we don't care about Alberta companies going global; we want to bring the big investment back home. I think, quite frankly, again, it doesn't have to be either/or. That's quite short-sighted. We need to support Alberta companies accessing new markets so they grow back here at home and hire more people. It's a win-win.

We also need to attract investment back to Alberta, a hundred per cent. Companies like Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon are not going to come in droves to Alberta. Now, I know that Google is here with DeepMind – I'll talk about that in a second; that's artificial intelligence – but those big tech companies have said that they go where the talent is. What this government has missed is that of their top three things that they look for, a low tax rate is not in their top three. It's not. Talent is what they're looking for. Quality

of life is what they're looking for. You know what they love about Canada? Our public health care system. You know why? Because it saves them millions of dollars. They like our quality of life, they want talent, but they want to see that we don't just have the talent today, Mr. Chair, but that we are graduating talent that will continue to sustain their business.

You know where else there was an opportunity, where the window is closing and we're missing it, Mr. Chair? With the current President in the U.S. putting a huge limit on the H-1B visas, which are visas for people coming from countries around the world. Tech companies don't care about the colour of your skin or the religion that you practise. They want talent, and they will take talent from any country. You know where Canada has a leg up over the U.S.? It's that we, too, value people and don't care where you come from or what religion you practise. These companies are looking to make strategic investments in Canada, but we've missed the boat if we think that simply dropping the corporate tax rate is going to attract these types of companies. They want talent.

**8:10**

Those 3,000 tech spaces that we committed to: do you know how many saw the light of day? Four hundred and six. Four hundred and six, and those spaces are as good as gone when the funding is gone, so by the end of this year. Again, there is evidence that there is demand. Industry is asking for it. You know what? I encourage the government to talk to MobSquad, based out of Calgary, a great company that we helped bring here to Alberta. Every time I talk to their CEO, he tells me how much it hurts that to get talent, he's got to go outside of Canada. We have the ability to develop that talent here, but it takes investments. Massive cuts to our postsecondary system are not going to prepare our young people for these jobs.

You know, Mr. Chair, for me, what's frustrating is that investments in the tech sector – first of all, let me back up. Technology is not a sector. There is no such thing as a tech sector. Technology is applied to every other sector, from oil and gas and energy to agriculture to forestry to manufacturing to health care. It's an enabler. By making those investments, we are in fact supporting our oil and gas sector.

I mean, I'm sure the members all know that technology to do pipeline monitoring uses artificial intelligence. There is an incredible company out of Calgary called Hifi, that had some government support, which has a state-of-the-art pipeline monitoring system. I encourage members to ask them for a tour. It'll blow your mind what these guys are doing. It's based on, again, using technology, artificial intelligence, and ensuring that the people that are graduating from our postsecondaries have these skills, because the world is going digital.

Mr. Chair, Alberta has an incredible opportunity in front of us. I was disappointed that not only the \$100 million that we committed to artificial intelligence got cut, but now it's an extra \$34 million over four years. I said to the minister: I'm worried that Alberta will slip from third place in the world when it comes to artificial intelligence to who knows what position. And we will. We will lose the third spot without sustained investments to grow this area, which, again, has applications to every sector.

Mr. Chair, it's with disappointment that I rise to speak to Bill 20, to say that these tools, again, don't have to be politicized. They didn't come from the NDP. We didn't think of them. They came from the private sector, who said: we've been asking previous governments for these tools; please enact them. And we did.

You know, again, in putting all of Albertans' eggs in a corporate tax cut basket – well, I can tell you, Mr. Chair: how many jobs have we seen created from the corporate tax cut? I think zero. What we

have seen are companies that have said: "Thank you. We will take that \$50 million or \$250 million and go spend it in another jurisdiction." If the corporate tax cut is such a silver bullet, then why is it that companies like Husky are saying, "Yeah, well, we're not going to invest in Alberta, but thank you very much for that gift"?

There are tools, like these tax credits, that had results. They were measurable. The minister and the government have access to them. Honestly, Mr. Chair, if they sounded like a great idea but weren't producing the results, I would not be standing here speaking so passionately about these. This is about supporting Alberta companies to grow and scale here at home. Yes, we want to land the big fish, but guess what?

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 20? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has risen.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. He kept us in suspense. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can't wait to return to my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview because he left us hanging there.

**Mr. Bilous:** Oh, I'll be back.

**Member Irwin:** You'll be back. I know you will.

What I'd like to do is to shift gears a little bit here and speak broadly about Bill 20. You know, this is a giant Bill 20. It may actually be the largest that I've had in my hand here in the House, but bigger is not necessarily better in this case. The use of omnibus bills is something we saw under the Harper regime, and it's something we've seen in other jurisdictions. I would argue that it's quite ill advised, because there are so many elements in Bill 20 that are not related, each of which merits a debate on their own. I'm quite concerned about this because I think it's a sneaky tactic by this government to try to bring in, I guess, death by a thousand cuts. There's a lot in here to digest and a lot in Bill 21 as well and in some of the other bills that I think are forthcoming, and they impact a lot of people in this province.

I appreciate very much the comments of my colleagues from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and Edmonton-City Centre. I really appreciate the work that they both have done to build and support the tech sector and the tech industry and, in fact, support start-ups in particular, and I know both of those colleagues are hearing a lot from folks in the industry about their concerns.

I've actually heard a little bit as well. It's not industry that I'm as intimately connected with as my colleagues are, but I actually spoke with one young woman. She works in tech, and she's involved with a start-up. She's worried, she said. She was explaining to me what she heard was coming down the pipe and what, in fact, did come with the rollback of some of the tax credits. She said: "You know, I'm just someone who's new, who's starting out. All I want to do is build and build this province." Every cent that she makes gets reinvested, and the work that our NDP government did to try to help companies like hers was life changing, as my colleague talked about. I mean, we were able to attract and retain a whole lot of really effective folks in the industry. She's one example of someone who is quite worried. Just as my colleague mentioned, you know, some of these folks will possibly leave to other jurisdictions where it's a friendlier climate. That's certainly a concern to me.

But I would like to shift gears a little bit and talk about some of the things that concern me, because, again, this is a giant omnibus bill. One of the things that caught my eye was ending the access to the future fund, the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, and the environmental prevention and enhancement fund. You know, to be honest, I didn't know a whole lot about each of these, so I did a little

bit of digging. I was curious in particular about the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund. This fund is disestablished under what's proposed here in Bill 20, and the fund's assets shall be held in the general revenue fund.

Now, I guarantee you that some of the members opposite will talk about how it's not actually all that harmful, but before I get into that and before I counter those arguments, let's talk a little bit about what the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund does. I'm going to quote from their website here. It says:

We are a team of innovative leaders, scientists, and public health experts who specialize in cancer prevention. We take what we know and we find out what works right here in Alberta. ACPLF partners with communities, employers and health service providers who are interested in pioneering new approaches. Then we help bring solutions to the rest of the province, with a focus on groups who tend to have higher rates of cancer.

None of the things that cause cancer are easy to change on our own. So we're preventing cancer by helping to shape our communities, workplaces and health system to make it easier for all of us to take proven steps to prevent cancer every day. This can be by making healthy food options available and affordable for everyone; by building communities that provide shade and support being active; by encouraging our workplaces to support healthy choices; and by having our health care providers routinely talk to us about cancer screening tests we're due for.

And the list goes on.

It's very fascinating, actually. I didn't know a lot about it; I can be totally honest about that. They go on to talk more about some of the screening tools that they provide, some of the pretty neat, actually, interactive tools, whether it's about HPV vaccines or quitting smoking.

Now, my point in saying all this is that, you know – as I said, I think the members opposite will say: “Oh, you know, the funds aren't being lost. They're just being streamlined. We're trying to save some dollars here and there.” This is the loss of dedicated funds to address something as crucial as cancer prevention. I assure you that I am quite certain that there's not anyone in this House who's not been affected by someone with cancer. I worry about the movement of this fund to general revenue funds. In the future, I mean, doesn't that leave these funds vulnerable? I don't think I'm wrong in saying that we need – I mean, it's because of the foresight of previous governments to set up funds such as these – to recognize that those funds must be dedicated and they must be protected.

8:20

I worry greatly about this. I worry that this government is starting to set a precedent and is attacking pretty crucial funds that do really important behind-the-scenes work. Again, I bet the average Albertan can't tell you a lot about the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, but I would bet that their family has been impacted in some way by some of the programs and supports that they offer. You know, this leads to less accountability, and I worry about the stability of these funds. It's the pernicious nature of a bill like this, that sneaks a whole lot of little things in there, and as I said, when you unpack each on its own, you start to recognize that there could be a lot of long-term detrimental effects.

I want to talk about another aspect – and, again, I think each of us could speak for hours on any of the pages of this bill – the loss of the tuition tax credits. Actually, I met with two young people – gosh, it must have been last week now – who said that they're very worried about this. It was good that they acknowledged their privilege, too, and they acknowledged that, you know, not everybody benefits from tax credits, but they acknowledged that they certainly do. They're worried about this. They're actually two

folks that work with student union executives, and they said that this is just another attack on postsecondary students.

I think I recapped this last week, but let's just go through the list of all the attacks on postsecondary students. In Bill 20 here we've got the loss of the tuition and education tax credits. What else do we have? We've got the tuition freeze being lifted. We've got the student loan increase. The minister is saying that it's minimal, you know, that it's just \$15 a month, it's nothing, that sort of thing, just as our Premier would say that the deindexing of AISH is minimal as well, right? I mean, again, put yourself in that person's shoes. We know. We spoke with a number of AISH recipients today who noted that it certainly is onerous and that when you're struggling every day to make ends meet, a few dollars extra a month makes a huge difference. Okay. I've listed off a few of the things there.

Again, how is it that a student is going to be getting ahead? I appreciated what my colleagues, especially the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, talked about, you know, how you're raising tuition at a time when you want to be attracting students to some of these sectors like, for instance, the tech sector, right? There's not a lot of motivation for university students to even necessarily pursue an education.

That reminds me. Somebody shared with me on Twitter just the other day. She said that she's just becoming so deflated. She's someone who's struggling to get ahead, and she wonders sometimes if she should even enter postsecondary education. Of course, a number of people jumped in and said, “Yes, it will be worth it,” but you can imagine that she's just one of many young people who is struggling with that decision right now. And it shouldn't be that way. It shouldn't be that way at a time when we should be very much investing in our young people, not attacking them.

Wow. Like I said, there's so much to unpack in Bill 20. One of the interesting things about Bill 20 is the film credit. Now, let me just refer you to the exact – yeah. It creates a film and television tax credit act under economic development and trade. Now, I'm proud that in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood we actually have a vibrant arts scene. I'm really proud of that, and I've had an opportunity to talk to a lot of folks who work in various areas of the arts, including the film and screen industry. In fact, as I was pondering the large omnibus bills ahead of us earlier this evening, I received an e-mail from one person who actually works in the film and screen industry. His name is Robert, and I told him that I would read his letter tonight and share his concerns.

**Ms Hoffman:** Do it.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora for that go-ahead.

I am going to share that because he's someone who is working directly in this industry, someone who lives a few blocks from me and understands the industry a whole heck of a lot more than I do. Again, I can admit when I don't know a whole lot about something. I don't know a lot about this industry, but I'm learning. Let me share with you his thoughts. I'll just read the whole letter even though he has a few personal things in there.

We've met and chatted many times in the neighbourhood [at] the Carrot, Bike Edmonton North Shop, Zocolo. I am one of several thousand skilled Albertans working in the screen industry. I thought we'd bump into each other to talk about the issue [that I want to address] but you're probably busy in that big building by the High Level Bridge.

He's correct; I am.

If I may I'll let a unified voice of all Alberta Film/Media workers speak:

There was tremendous opportunity for Alberta to diversify the economy and create thousands of jobs in the latest budget.

The need for content is at unprecedented global levels. With Alberta's reputation for diverse locations and talented Albertan crew who bring that can-do spirit to every production, we would be positioned for success with the pre-requisite of a competitive and predictable incentive. Alberta would be part of a global industry and location of choice.

The [UCP] promised us that they would:

- Convert the Alberta Screen-Based Production Grant into a tax credit with greater flexibility to allow Alberta to compete for major media projects with provinces like British Columbia and Ontario. We will consult with stakeholders in the film, television and digital media industries to create an optimal tax credit designed to attract large productions and series.
- Incentivize media production in rural areas, following the lead of Manitoba's film tax credit.

They say:

[You know what?] We [appreciate] the move to a tax credit; however, the money allocated to the overall fund is not sustainable enough to grow our industry and capture the jobs and investment seen in other jurisdictions. Comments have been made from this government that this government must "clean up the mis-management by the previous government due to oversubscription of the incentive". With all due respect, the incentive grant program has been oversubscribed for years (even with the previous conservative government). This is due to the overwhelming success of our industry, our local producers and foreign producers know the great opportunities available here.

Our industry provides not only great opportunities for Albertans who have trained in Alberta post-secondary institutions, Alberta businesses who service the industry but with a booming industry, Albertans who have been laid off from other sectors (oil and gas for example) can easily transition into our sector.

Foreign productions bring their investment dollars (we are talking millions) to set up shop in Alberta for our locations. Locations that include dozens of small communities – Drumheller, High River, Irricana, Canmore, Beiseker, and Fort Macleod to name a few. Without a competitive tax credit and a rural incentive, it will have a negative impact on those communities who have seen a migration of businesses and tax-paying Albertans to other jurisdictions.

We [ask] you now to support the Alberta Screen Industries. Invest in the tax credit at the same level of funding (\$45 million per year) and watch our industry grow and provide returns on the investment.

Wow. That's the end of his letter. He says:

Kind regards,  
Robert

I want thank Robert and the folks from ACTRA for sharing that letter.

I want to reiterate the importance of listening to those folks who work in that industry day in, day out. I appreciated how much he talked about the investment that's been created because of the work that he and others in the industry have done. The comment about rural communities, which the members opposite represent: they're quite certain that any growth, any progress that's been made in those communities will flee, will leave. That's quite shameful to think about, especially knowing just how important that diversification is.

Folks like Robert are hard-working folks who do so much to add to the cultural vibrancy of our communities, and I urge this government to respect them and to listen to them. As I said, you know, I'm willing to admit when I don't know enough about something. I don't know a lot about the film and screen industry – I'm starting to try to learn – but I trust the experts, the ones who

have built this industry here in Alberta, the ones who've helped to make it thrive.

I really do urge the government to think about this and reconsider this. We gain so much from the contributions of the arts. I think we're all so proud when we see Alberta in movies and blockbusters. I know I certainly am even if it's in the Rocky Mountains. I mean, I don't live near the Rockies, but what a cool thing, to be able to say that Alberta is being showcased. So I take their warning seriously when they say that we are at risk of losing some of the strength of this industry. Again I want to urge the members opposite to really think about that and to listen to the experts, because I know they feel like they're not being heard right now, and it would be a shame to lose them.

8:30

I'm not going to speak about a whole lot more on Bill 20. Like I said, I really wanted to focus on the impact to some of these smaller things like the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, like some of these smaller funds being rolled into general revenue and issue a warning that this could have serious impacts in the future. When we're talking about something as important as cancer prevention, I think it's a fair warning, isn't it? I know my colleague the former Minister of Health certainly recognizes the critical importance of a fund such as that one as well as, I mean, the impacts of eliminating the education and tuition tax credits, something that I think, you know, some of the members opposite would say are seemingly minor. Again, when we're talking about, I guess you could say, a tax on postsecondary students right now, that's just another one to add to the list. It helps out a lot of families. I know a lot of families benefit from being able to claim those education and tuition tax credits.

Like I said, I'll end with my final point, just around, really, the importance of supporting our film and screen industry. As I said, I wanted to share the words of somebody in my neighbourhood, a constituent, Robert, who's quite concerned. He works in that industry. He's worked in the industry for many years. He's helped to contribute to that thriving industry here in Alberta, and he's quite worried about the loss of that industry.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Hon. members, are there any other – I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to join debate.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. A pleasure this evening to rise and speak to Bill 20. As other speakers have mentioned, we're talking about an omnibus strategy embedded in this bill. That seems to be a favourite effort on the part of this government. I know that the session started a couple of weeks earlier than we have traditionally started, with great expectations that we'd be seeing lots of legislation come down. The government warned it to be a full slate of legislation, that we needed to start early to get on with things and make sure that we had enough time to complete fulsome debate on all these measures that the government wanted to bring forward. What happened is that, for the most part, we piddled away a couple of weeks in October, time which could have been used dealing with some of these measures that are in this omnibus bill and having a full debate about many of them individually as individual pieces of legislation rather than having them introduced in an omnibus bill, which really doesn't seem to have a dedicated rationale or theme throughout it. There seemed to be a lot of disparate measures that were tossed into the omnibus bill just kind of randomly. It's unfortunate that we're approaching legislation this way in this House.

Overall, what I really get the sense of is that this government seems to be somewhat rudderless. The vision is lacking in terms of where, in fact, we fundamentally want to end up. We're in a period of time, Mr. Chair, when this province, the people of this province need serious measures that look well beyond the four-year life cycle of this particular government, that recognize the unique situation that we're in. Fundamentally, we're in that situation not as the government likes to claim, that the four-year term that the previous NDP government had put us in a financial hole; it's because we had mismanagement that lasted for decades in advance of that four-year period, where we ended up not planning to transition away from fossil fuels, and we ended up being complacent.

For whatever miracle of capitalism that the previous governments previous to our government had up their sleeve, they found it wise to rely upon one market primarily for the export of our petroleum products and never built any more than one pipeline to tidewater, which we still rely upon for export to international markets. That is what stuck us in the situation that we're in, and that is what we should be focusing our strategy on right now, a much more diversified strategy than one which simply looks at balancing the books in an effort to see at the end of a four-year cycle a balanced budget but no real vision for the long term. That's a shirking of the responsibility of any government, in my estimation, Mr. Chair, a responsibility to really recognize that we're in a transformational time frame, a shift where we need to take steps and take measures to prepare ourselves for the new economy that we're entering into, that's being thrust upon on whether we like it or not.

That's what we tried to do over the four years that we had to ensure that our young people found jobs, found hope, found opportunity, and that we had new investors come to the province to take advantage of the opportunities that we tried to incubate here through things such as the interactive digital media tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, community and economic tax credit, Alberta investor tax credit, scientific research and experimental development tax credit. Those investments in incubating companies and the minds and efforts of the talented people who were behind those companies that took advantage of those tax credit opportunities, those were the people who are going to sustain opportunities for our young people in the future. When we see in the next couple of decades a transition away from fossil fuels, opportunity exists to finance from the economic rent that we extract from those fossil fuels over the next two or three decades while we have a global market and the opportunity to extract global or world price by exploiting those markets that still exist and transitioning by investing in new technologies, artificial intelligence, in the grey matter that we have in the young population that we have in this province.

I just have difficulty getting excited about the vision that this government doesn't seem to be sharing, doesn't seem to be having in its foundation. Fundamentally, the only thing they seem to be thinking about is simply a balance sheet, a balance sheet where they say: "Hey, we're going to go ahead and take a race to the bottom. We're going to go and balance our books, and we're going to do it by taking away social programs, where it's going to hurt people and it's going to make people suffer more so than they would have under a program that wasn't so austere." Yet it seems as though they're willing to accept that suffering as a cost which they think is acceptable.

The people of this province have a great challenge to meet together, yet this government seems to be wanting to pit people against each other and pull us apart. And, really, it's a tragedy that during this time of transition we can't have a government that sees that the real way forward is to identify the issues or the challenges that we have in populations of our economy and people who happen to be unemployed. Rather than embrace those populations and those

people and say, "Look, we all have a responsibility to help those individuals," what we see instead, Mr. Chair, is a government that says, "Look, those people are hurting. We're going to make you hurt just as much so the pain is shared by everybody." Well, that's a rather scandalous proposition in my view, and one that's totally unnecessary.

We will end up, Mr. Chair, at a balanced budget and a debt position that was very similar under this government to what the previous NDP government would have ended up at. Maybe it would have been a year later that we would have reached a balanced budget, but the actual debt would have been fairly similar over a similar period of time. Yet in order to get where this government is taking us, they're really slamming a lot of people. They're looking at measures and proposing in Bill 20, perhaps, to attack those who may squawk the least or to put the powerful in their place. I speak of the repealing of the city charters for Edmonton and Calgary and putting a new local government fiscal framework act in its place. [A cellphone rang]

8:40

**The Deputy Chair:** To the hon. member, however, given that it is the season of Movember, I will direct the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre to the Speaker's office at some point with a donation.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I promise to be more riveting and gain the attention of more members in the second half of my speech. Nonetheless, it's a challenge that I hope to rise to.

What I was speaking about was basically managing the transition, Mr. Chair. I believe that Bill 20 is an example of a government doing a woeful job of doing that. It's a real abrogation of responsibility of government to seriously understand that we face an intergenerational hand-off, an economic transformation that few jurisdictions go through, yet we could see it coming. It's unfortunate that this slow-motion failure to recognize and to prepare our economy for transition from fossil fuels to greener energy, a greener economy, and to diversify our economy, truly do so, is something that this government seems to reject as a responsibility.

This whole budget, including the measures proposed in Bill 20, rings hollow as far as a project to create any kind of excitement for young people in this province. It rings hollow for those individuals who should be able to expect assistance from their government, not to be left begging as a result of austerity measures that are employed to grab a few million dollars here, a few million dollars there, and too bad, so sad if it's going to hurt you; you're going to contribute that way to the effort of this government to reach a balanced budget, and you're not going to vote for us anyway, so we'll take these measures and run.

Also, it's a matter of looking at Edmonton and Calgary's political power. The political equation in this province is something that the previous Conservative governments have taken a look at. They made some significant attacks upon the budgets and downloaded or off-loaded the responsibility to provide public services down to the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, or they ended up really slashing the capital amounts that the cities of Edmonton and Calgary had expected.

In this particular case with Bill 20 we are amending the funding agreements for the LRT in Edmonton and Calgary so the provincial cash can come after 2023. As a result of that, we may end up seeing delays in projects, delays in employment, higher unemployment than otherwise would have taken place. We're going to see the negative effects of economic development that won't happen, infrastructure that should have been put in place, and it's

infrastructure that is public expenditures that provide good-paying jobs and really increase the efficiency of both the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. By putting a pause, as the government likes to say, on the provincial cash by amending these funding agreements, they're only making things worse. It seems as though this government is intent on making things worse just to reach this goal of balancing a budget. It rings hollow with anybody who is suffering as a result.

It's a retreat. These measures proposed in Bill 20 are a retreat from hope, a retreat from optimism. They're a retrenchment back to a former day, when we saw previous Conservative governments looking as if a Holy Grail was reducing the deficit to zero when in fact the creation of that balanced budget ended up with another kind of deficit. We're seeing that all over again. A repudiation of history is what this measure proposes.

Hopefully, we'll see the government perhaps changing its mind on some of these measures proposed in Bill 20. I know that the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary and many other citizens are really shaking their heads at why it was necessary to attack the power centres of Edmonton and Calgary and rightfully questioning the motivation of the government as to whether it's simply a matter of extracting cash so that the government can balance its budget or whether the motivation was really a political motivation, whether this government is looking at squashing whatever political opposition there might be to their agenda of minimizing the role of government in the lives of Albertans.

I think that there's a global discussion on, and it's a healthy one to have. I certainly am on the side of believing that government has a role to play and a responsibility to lead when a population, when an economy, and when a political jurisdiction face significant challenges. To simply do as this government has done as their centrepiece, cough up \$4.7 billion and hand it over to corporations and suggest that laissez-faire capitalism will save the day by having these corporations who receive these corporate gifts invest in companies that will create jobs, has been totally discredited.

So far, of course, during this government's reign, we've had a drop in employment in this province of at least 27,000 jobs and counting, and we have seen the flight of numerous companies who have benefited from this \$4.7 billion tax giveaway. Husky, of course, is one, EnCana is another, and the list has grown even this week again. I know that our opposition predicted that this is what would happen. The government acted surprised when it happened, but it shouldn't have come to them as a surprise that the corporations who received this \$4.7 billion tax handout simply used it buy back shares or to pay down debt. Then some of them actually left the province, left the country. It's something that we warned against, and I think it's shameful that the government didn't see clear to heeding those warnings because it was very predictable.

We look at the government saying that the cupboard is bare and look at the measures in Bill 20, seeing that they are, of course, measures designed to extract expenditures on the part of the government so that they can reach a balanced budget, all the while claiming that the province is broke, that the cupboard is bare, yet we've got \$4.7 billion to give away. It's something that people are beginning to grasp in this province, like, what \$4.7 billion will purchase, how many schools that would have built and how many more than the 250 schools and buildings and refurbishings that we started would have been undertaken to complete, \$4.7 billion that could have gone to help the most needy in this province, \$4.7 billion that would have avoided having to raise tuition at a time when we need to attract students into our postsecondary institutions so that they may retrain for the new opportunities that, hopefully, the

government recognizes are there and must be there in different form other than the oil and gas industry, which is not going to be there in the same volume as we've had over the last 30 to 40 years.

8:50

I know that investments in value-added and in agricultural processing and forestry, in fact, in product innovation are something that we saw as a government as very, very valuable and necessary and actually a responsibility of government to do.

You know, to be fair, corporations like Alberta Innovates – previous to that I think it was the Alberta Opportunity Company, its precursor – were well-established bodies of research and incubation for companies that otherwise wouldn't have even existed or would probably have left the province. The seed money, the seed capital, the incentives that they were able to be given through those mechanisms ended up allowing them to thrive here. This was primarily started under Conservative governments, Progressive Conservative governments, I might add. But this particular brand of conservatism that we have now in government in Alberta sees no value in investing in the talents and the ideas of our Alberta entrepreneurs.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise again to speak to this bill. I likely will be speaking often to this bill. For the sake of time I will get to an amendment that I have because I'm eager to talk about how this is a reasonable amendment. My hope is that the government will consider adopting this amendment. I will pause for a moment for you to receive the copies.

**The Deputy Chair:** The floor is yours.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll read the amendment in. I appreciate that our pages are working very, very ...

**The Deputy Chair:** Just for reference, we'll be referring to it as A1.

**Mr. Bilous:** A1. Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was just saying that I appreciate that our pages are working as quickly as they can to get this amendment to members, but I'll read it out for the sake of all members. I move that Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, be amended in section 9(49) by striking out "Proclamation" and substituting "July 1, 2020." This is a very simple amendment. What this does is that it simply delays this bill's coming into force. Now, I'm sure, Mr. Chair, you're wondering why. I hope the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance will consider adopting this. Really, what this is just putting in a six-month pause on the deindexation of the personal income tax. We know that that's part of this bill. Really, it's just putting in a sunshine or sunset clause on the deindexing.

Now, I can tell you part of where this is coming from, Mr. Chair. With all respect to the government, unless I missed something, in the election this government did not campaign on raising personal income taxes on every Albertan. This is something that the government needs to be reminded of because even tonight in estimates I heard from the minister over and over again about our government introducing a carbon tax. Now, we did campaign on a climate leadership plan, but I am positive that this current Premier and this current government did not campaign on raising personal income taxes. If they did, I will humbly withdraw all these

comments, if they show me where in the campaign platform they said: we are going to increase personal income taxes on every Albertan.

It's a word game for anyone to stand up and say that deindexing is not an increase to personal income taxes because when a person's salary goes up and so do their incomes taxes, it's an increase. It's tax creep. The Premier is on record in *Hansard* in Ottawa many times talking about how tax creep is a raise on taxes. So unless there are two different standards, one for Ottawa and one for Alberta, you can't speak and argue it both ways.

A simple amendment. This doesn't torpedo the bill or kill this bill at all. It merely provides six months before this bill, should it pass in this Chamber, comes into effect. Essentially, the amendment is quite simple. I'm hoping the members, including the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, will consider accepting this amendment. It is a simple one, and I'm happy to take my place and allow other members to discuss both the bill and this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

On amendment A1 I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen to speak.

**Member Loyola:** Perfect. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to get up in the House and speak to bills before the House, especially in committee since we can talk for a little bit longer and express quite a number of views and even give perspectives.

Specifically, today I'd like to talk about Camille and Eric. They're constituents of mine. They actually run Mosaic Entertainment. I'll never forget when elected back in 2015, they were probably two of the first constituents that came knocking on my door to start asking me about tax credits and how potentially they could grow their business. At that time I do believe that Mosaic Entertainment was relatively new, just starting off, and they were able to secure funding for at least one major film, that was filmed here in the province of Alberta, if I'm not mistaken. I wanted to share with you the level of enthusiasm that Camille and Eric had. They had a dream. They had this incredible dream to build Mosaic Entertainment and to put Edmonton and Alberta on the map when it came to production.

I'll never forget visiting one of their sets. I do believe it was in the second year after being elected. The number of people that they had employed as a part of this production: it was overwhelming. It was overwhelming. They must have had a set and crew of I'd probably say well over 50 people. They were actually recording film in a house in Glenora. I'll never forget. They invited me to go and visit the house in Glenora where they were actually filming, and I've got to say that it was quite impressive being on the set of a major production like that, just seeing all the cameras and everything. You know, we were in one part of the house while the actors were in another part of the house. They were doing their thing, and it was fun. I want to say that it was also a great experience to see not only the actual filming and the actual production but the hope and the just overwhelming happiness that Eric and Camille had on their faces because they were doing what they always loved to do, and they were doing it right here in Edmonton, Alberta, by growing their business. So an Alberta screen-based production grant, that's something that was absolutely essential for Mosaic Entertainment and people like Eric and Camille.

9:00

Now, the other part about Eric and Camille that I want to share with you is that, of course, they're constituents, as I said. They have

two children. They live in Summerside, and Eric was the kind of guy who not only was so incredibly dedicated to building the business that both him and his wife were running, but he also gave back to the community. He was actually also on the Summerside Community League. He saw himself as a member of the community giving back because, of course, what's important for him was the fact that it wasn't just him living in the community, it was his children, the place where they call home.

Behind these tax credits, what I'm trying to get at is that these tax credits are helping people, yes, grow a business, but these same people that are growing their business also call Edmonton and Alberta their home. They have pride in this place. They want to make sure that Edmonton continues to grow, that Alberta continues to grow economically, that it truly is an economy that we can diversify as we continue to move forward. I want to thank Eric and Camille for their incredible drive, I would say, their incredible drive to not only build Mosaic Entertainment here in the province of Alberta but also their dream of putting production and film on the map as far as Edmonton goes, because it takes entrepreneurs like that who see well beyond the history of Alberta to truly diversify our economy.

Yes. I won't disagree with you: Alberta is known for petroleum. It's known for the petroleum industry. That's great. It's wonderful. It provides a base. It provides a base from which we can grow, and grow we should. [A cellphone rang] I'll never forget the very first time I ran for office, knocking on people's doors and talking to them and asking them: well, can we agree that we're too reliant on the petroleum industry? "Undoubtedly," they would say. I'd say: well, can we agree that we need to diversify our economy? "Absolutely. I've been saying that for decades." And these are Edmontonians, Albertans, who understand the importance of the petroleum industry here in the province of Alberta, undoubtedly, but they want to see more opportunities because they've had enough of going on the roller coaster, the boom-and-bust roller coaster of when things are good in the petroleum industry, well, things are great, everything is wonderful, but when the bust comes, so many people begin to suffer. They suffer, and we saw it. We saw it.

We saw the great number of people that ended up losing their jobs, and there are still people losing their jobs. Even with the promise of the UCP's corporate tax giveaway to big corporations, we haven't seen one new job being created. Instead, we've actually seen 27,000 jobs being lost.

Now, the question that we need to ask ourselves is: what is going to contribute to this economy? The tax credits that are being repealed by Bill 20, this omnibus piece of legislation, are actually going to be hindering rather than helping. This bill is actually hindering rather than helping the Alberta economy, especially when it comes to people like Eric and Camille.

Many times the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has gotten up in this House, and he's talked about people that he has met with who have actually benefited from the tax credits that the previous government, our government, the Alberta NDP government, created in order to help drive diversification here in the province of Alberta. Those tax credits were actually helping business, were actually making sure that we could provide a foothold for these businesses here in the province so that when the economy got tough when it came to the petroleum industry, people had other options.

Shouldn't that be what it's all about? When the petroleum industry is great: great, wonderful. All these people can have these jobs. But the more that we begin to diversify the economy, then people will have other opportunities, other opportunities when it comes to being able to provide for their families because, as I stated, Eric and Camille are Albertans striving not only to make their

dreams come true in this economy and in this province and contribute to the social, cultural fabric of our wonderful society here, but they're also putting food on the table for their children. Now, shouldn't it be that people have the opportunity to actually work at what they love to do? And shouldn't we as a government try our best to diversify the economy so that people can actually do that and contribute to the economy in a way that's meaningful to them?

You look at the number of people who are underemployed here in the province of Alberta, people that go to university or other postsecondary institutions for two, four years of education, come out, and end up working in something that's not even related to what it is that they studied. These are all people who are underemployed. If we had a more well-diversified economy, these people would actually be working in what it is that they love to do. Let me tell you this. When people are working in what they love to do, the level of production that they contribute to the society is overwhelming because people love to get up to go to work every day when they love their job. When an individual is underemployed, guess what? They may not have the same love for that particular position that they're in. When they go to work, they don't feel that they're contributing in the way that they truly want to contribute to the company that they're working for and for the economy here in the province of Alberta.

When people love their jobs, they contribute overwhelmingly to the company. They're willing to give more. They're willing to produce more because they understand that they're doing it because their job is not just a job. They see themselves as part of the fabric of our society. This is the kind of economy and society that we as government should be striving to facilitate for the citizens of this great province. We should be trying our best to create this kind of scenario when it comes to every Albertan.

9:10

You know, we have people come from all over the world, come to this province in order to work. That's a beautiful thing. I've always said that the cultural diversity, the ethnic, religious diversity that we have here in the province of Alberta only contributes more to its strength. That diversity helps us see things from different perspectives. The more perspectives that we have when we're looking at the world, the more well rounded and open-minded we become about understanding not only the world itself but also how to solve the problems that we're encountering as a society.

This is wealth. This is what makes us stronger. By being able to work together, bringing people from a number of different perspectives together in order to look at a problem, you end up creating a better solution. Now, imagine if we had that, with people who love their jobs, working at companies, contributing to the Alberta economy, all driven by their love for their work and giving to the Alberta economy. The only way that we're going to get there is by creating a more diversified economy.

It's, like, you go to an investment specialist, any one of them, and they'll tell you: you can't put all your eggs in one basket. I know that each and every one of the people in this House knows that. You can't put all your eggs in one basket. You need to diversify your investment portfolio. So what I can't understand is why it's good for people, individuals to diversify their investment portfolio, yet here in the province of Alberta we're not doing everything we possibly can in order to diversify the economy. We continue to have all our eggs in one basket. I'm not saying that the petroleum industry and putting our efforts and our work and our drive into making sure that it becomes more efficient is not something that we should be doing. I'm not saying that.

We should. We should make it better. We should make it more productive. We should make it more efficient, more effective, give incentives for the industry to do their best to meet the environmental standards that we're trying to meet and at the same time increase production and not only increase production but make sure that we're increasing our market share and make sure that we're exporting our products to other places in the world. This is all true. We can all agree on that.

Like the Member for Edmonton-City Centre said: just because you're doing one thing doesn't mean you shouldn't do the other. It's like when people juxtapose the economy and the environment. You can do both. You can have a strong economy. You can have a strong, well-diversified economy and protect the environment at the same time. That's what the Alberta NDP government was trying to do in our four years. I can only hope that we get that chance once again, to be back in office and continue to move Alberta forward to a more modern place, where people can actually have more opportunities and actually work at the things that they love to work at.

With that being said, I want to strongly encourage members in the House here to support this amendment being brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview as I believe that we need more time. We need more time to make sure that we get it right. I continue to have hope that all members in this House, although we may not see eye to eye – I know we don't see eye to eye, but that's not what we should be striving for. We should be proud of the diverse perspectives that we all have. Those diverse perspectives, like I was saying earlier, will help us come at the same problem from multiple viewpoints and help us create bigger, broader solutions that actually create more opportunity for the people of Alberta. That's what it should be about.

With that being said, Mr. Chair, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be able to rise in this House and share my thoughts with all the members here. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Prior to calling on any other hon. members with regard to this amendment, I do recognize that part of my role in this House is to ensure that I am fair and unbiased. As such, I must – I am duty bound – ensure, given that it is the season of Movember, that the hon. Minister of Health also make a donation, given the infraction of electronic instrument sounds earlier.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving on to Bill 20 generally, are there any hon. members wishing to speak? I see that the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 20.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

9:20

Bill 19

### Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill?

**Member Ceci:** It's a pleasure to get up, Mr. Speaker, and to share a few thoughts about Bill 19, the emissions management and climate resilience act, TIER legislation, in Committee of the Whole.



It's my view that this bill should not be supported. It has some serious flaws that will take steps backwards from the existing climate leadership plan that is in place and that has served this province well since 2015 or thereabouts.

You know, I remember earlier today that when I was getting up, I was listening to the news, Mr. Speaker. There were several scientists who were on the news from the Edmonton area. They were being interviewed. They were part of, I believe . . .

**Mr. Dach:** Eleven thousand.

**Member Ceci:** . . . 11,000 – I was going to say 1,100 – climate scientists around the world who had the same view and they signed on to the same declaration with each other. It had four or six parts, Mr. Speaker. The people who were interviewed locally were talking about the impact of climate change on their work. Their work included work in the north of Canada, looking at the tundra and how it has changed as a result of the impact of CO<sub>2</sub> on our environment. That was one person who said that they travel north regularly. They work in the regions up there, and they're seeing significant impacts that will absolutely change the way of life for the people, the inhabitants of the northern part of Canada. It will impact the rest of our globe as well because the tundra, the permafrost, is melting. It will never go back, it will never come back, and it will release carbon into the atmosphere because it was a sink. It was being stored in the permafrost before, and it's not going to be anymore. [A cellphone rang]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, but in the interest of how things have gone today so far, I believe that there may have been another infraction for electronic instrument sounds coming from the hon. Minister of Infrastructure, so I believe that he also will be making a donation in the spirit of Movember.

Hon. member, please continue.

**Member Ceci:** Sure. Everybody, turn your phones off. Turn them to silent. You can't afford it.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yours is good.

**Member Ceci:** Mine is good. Yeah.

The other scientist that I remember listening to as I was getting ready for work was one who regularly comes out to the glaciers in the Rocky Mountains. She said in her short – she was under 40 – time as a climate scientist, she can't even see a glacier that she regularly monitors from where she first saw it, Mr. Speaker, when she was standing. It's so far back and has retreated so much. I bring up that story and those people because they are of the view that if we don't, as a society in Canada and others across the world, deal with this issue, it will be the undoing of the life that we, our ancestors remember and change irrevocably for young people going forward in terms of the environment we live in. That's why I don't support what's before us, because it takes some serious steps backwards. Our plan, the climate leadership plan, actually invested money in innovation that this plan downgrades. This plan invests less money in innovation.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

As the climate scientists were saying on the radio today, if we don't innovate, if we don't do things differently, we are bound to change our world irrevocably for the next generation. That's not a legacy that anybody wants to leave. That's not a legacy all of us want to have on our backs, I'm sure. It's disappointing to see that this plan, this UCP plan, reduces emissions less than our previous

plan. We should be doing more. We should be striving for more, Madam Chair. What I see here, and what my colleagues have reviewed over the last several days – and it's in *Hansard* – is that they've critiqued and they can say unequivocally that TIER will not reduce the number of megatonnes in our province's production that our climate leadership plan was going to and did.

It's unfortunate, Madam Chair, that another aspect of this plan is that money goes into gen rev, and it looks like deficit reduction is an aspect of the expenditure for the monies collected under revenues. Deficit reduction, of course, is important, but as I was just saying, if we don't have an environment to live in that sustains life for us all in a way that doesn't degrade our environment, deficit reduction won't matter a whole lot for the people coming after us. We need to do more, and Alberta has done more since 2007 with the revenues being collected going to innovation and green initiatives. That's changing, as I said, with the plan before us. We invested more under the climate leadership, the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation. We invested more in all aspects of innovation. I was very disappointed today in estimates to see that in Alberta Innovates, which is a great partner in terms of trying to bring people together around solutions that will affect all sorts of things in our environment, there was a reduction in staff, reductions in money to Alberta Innovates. It means that that entity will be able to do a lot less. Who knows, it might have been holding part of the key for the work that needs to be done around climate change innovation.

We have to look at a number of things with regard to the plan that's before us, Bill 19, and I can tell you, Madam Chair, that on the reduction of megatonnes our plan had a higher number of megatonnes reduced for the work we were doing. In our plan it was 50 megatonnes over, I believe, 10 years. This plan only reduces 32 megatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. It will be reduced without any innovation happening as a result. When I think about some of the critiques of the plan before us, I know that there are some who have said that this proposed TIER system is a step in the wrong direction, and I would have to agree. It would disrupt the investment landscape as a result of being passed. It'll create policy uncertainty because it changes policy that was better in class than what is being presented.

9:30

It sends a significantly weaker signal, Madam Chair, to industry to reduce emissions because those emissions are reduced at a higher amount under the current plan, the NDP plan. It lowers the ambition of recently implemented and well-designed policy, and that's not the direction anybody needs or wants to go, especially when there is something before us as serious as climate change and the impact it's having on the Canadian North and other places, like our glaciers, which are the source of a great deal of Alberta's watershed.

We, of course, are losing that at too fast a rate, Madam Chair. That critique is from a person who knows of what he speaks. It's a person at Pembina. We need to listen to the climate scientists, like the 11,000 that signed the declaration for more to be done on this. Alberta can do more and has done more in the recent past. I think it would be good for all of us to get back to a higher standard of work in this area instead of lowering those standards.

You know, the government also talked about being able to reduce emissions by 57 megatonnes, but it would appear that that would factor in potential innovation. As I said, that doesn't seem to be happening. Under the same assumptions our plan is forecasted to reduce a higher amount of megatonnes, approximately 19 megatonnes more, at 76 megatonnes. We previously put all of our plan in legislation, Madam Chair, and that is being downgraded by

what's before us. In fact, it's a rather insubstantial document compared to what was there for the plan that we put in place.

You know, there is a system of benchmarks, Madam Chair, in this plan, not right here, but they will be in this plan. That's tremendous. I think that anything that sets benchmarks and companies have to surpass those benchmarks is a good thing, but the benchmarks that are put in place will be reduced, as I said, so that's not a good thing.

According to the fiscal plan document of 2019, this plan will only cover 48 per cent of all emissions in the province. It removes substantially the broader economy in terms of consumers and their impact on climate and focuses on companies who are involved in the energy sector. Again, that's a decrease or a downgrading of what's in the best interests of climate change and the impacts on the world, not to mention the significant impacts on our own country.

There are other parts of the plan that have been reviewed and I'd like to talk about briefly. The government says that there was significant stakeholder involvement in the production of this plan over the past summer. That's good as far as it's taken, of course, but I can tell you that the climate leadership plan that we worked on had significant stakeholder involvement as well, across industry, across society, and across differing groups. In particular, the major industry emitters were at the table and came together with environmentalists to form the plan that we put in place.

We know that your Bill 19 framework has already signalled that the carbon price will be \$30 per tonne. That was something that recently the Premier said would happen. I think the modelling for your plan took place on \$20 per tonne, or at least that was the signal that was given to the wider society and Albertans but recently was changed by the Premier. We started at \$20 per tonne and went to \$30 on January 1, 2018, and kept it at \$30 on January 1, 2019, because of the fact that the TMX pipeline was not resolved in terms of what was going to happen with it. But soon after that, the federal government purchased the TMX pipeline, and we would have changed our price at some – but we didn't. But the federal government did step up and buy the TMX pipeline and promised to work as hard as possible to get it across the finish line in terms of the expansion. I have no doubt that that will take place in the not-too-distant future. It's not a small thing that the financial plan, the fiscal plan, identifies three pipelines in it. One of them is TMX. I think it's in the '22 time frame – I'm not sure what quarter in '22 – but it may be in '23.

There have been criticisms about our plan from the other side, of course. I just want to set the record straight that Alberta was on track to cut more than 50 megatonnes of emissions over the next 10 years. That would have happened under our plan. It would have reduced methane, which is a really difficult, difficult emission because it's so heavy and significantly affects the ozone. Reducing emissions under our plan would have happened, and 45 per cent of it would have been reduced by 2025. That is better than this Bill 19 plan.

This government is not serious enough about this issue and needs to take a more serious approach if it is going to be amongst the stellar plans in the world, of which there are many. But Bill 19 won't be one of them.

We, of course, did much more than focus on innovation in our plan. We focused on assisting families, lower- and middle-income families, with the price on carbon. That's not in this plan, obviously, because that whole area of consumers assisting with the carbon price and using the price to affect behaviour is not in this plan. I remember that we contributed a significant amount of money, over \$600 million a year, I think, back to families so that they could address that impact in their budgets. Our climate leadership plan had rebates for 60 per cent of Albertans in it. What we see in your

plan is that a part of the revenue is going to pay off the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout that is built into your economic plan.

**9:40**

The climate leadership plan that we had had four main policies. There was implementing a new price on greenhouse gas emissions, also known as carbon pricing, and, as I said, that impacted behaviours, that collected money to go into a number of expense lines that were helpful to a broader number of initiatives to work off of fossil fuels and work towards a cleaner and greener electricity grid, renewables, and improve people's personal lives through enhancing their energy reduction in their own homes and businesses. Our plan had a phase-out.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and again speak to Bill 19, Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, or TIER legislation. This is my second opportunity to speak to this legislation, so I'm just going to review some of the points that I chatted about the last time. Again, I just want to underline that it is disappointing to see the UCP presenting a plan that reduces emissions less than our previous plan. I think, like the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has always said, that this should never be about pitting the economy and the environment against each other. Sadly, that's what we see happening all the time in this place and seemingly in this legislation. Let's hope not.

Anyway, as I said before, this plan does not invest more in innovation through the TIER fund than it did under our plan, so I think that that is important to note. Government has stated that emissions reductions are anticipated to be approximately five megatonnes less in 2024 under TIER than under the preceding CCIR. In fact, under our government we were on track to reduce 50 megatonnes of harmful emissions over the next 10 years. Now that's down to an unambitious 32 megatonnes. That's an almost 50 per cent drop, which is not good. I think, given what's happening in the world around us, in particular, this is not a good thing.

Looking at some of the numbers related to this piece of legislation: according to fiscal plan 2019 this TIER plan will only cover 48 per cent of all emissions in Alberta. As I said previously, certainly, large emitters are responsible, obviously, for a large part of emissions, but I think it's really important to understand that all of us are contributing to carbon emissions in all kinds of ways, and there are so many ways that we can all reduce our carbon footprint that collectively make a huge difference. Again, as I said before, I'm discouraged by the reduction of investment into energy efficiency, and I've heard people across make jokes about LED light bulbs. I get it; it's a good meme. In reality it's those little steps that were encouraging more and more innovation and investment. I think that something as simple as having an energy audit done on your home or business and then making the necessary changes actually went a long way to teaching people how easy it could be to reduce emissions. So it was unfortunate to see that reduction.

Implementing TIER will lead to a \$0.7 billion of revenue reduction until '22-23, and the fund is expected to take in – actually, I'm going to skip over that – so \$20 million of TIER revenue is supposed to go to the Canadian Energy Centre, again, that we affectionately call the war room or snitch line, \$80 million over four years. Once again, I understand that it's important that we promote our resources and get the best price possible, but, really, in a day and age when we're facing cuts in this budget that have the ability

to impact lives and to create a great deal of harm, whether it's in education, health care, social services, that we're spending this kind of money to hire, essentially, a failed UCP candidate to have a war room against people that have a difference of opinion. You know, a lot of it's been sort of secretive, so we don't really know what this war room is doing. I question this kind of spending on an initiative like this when we're making cuts that are impacting people's lives today.

When you compare the plan we had in place previously and this legislation, on average both plans invest about \$200 million in innovation. While I continue to hear the members opposite talk about, you know, how great this plan is because innovation is going to save us – I have no doubt that innovation is going to do amazing things, as it always does, as science does, but to say that it is the answer, I think, is not realistic. Note that we were actually investing the very same amount. Now, innovation can only take us so far. Just crossing our fingers and hoping that our investment in innovation gets us to the place that we need to be to reduce emissions where we need to reduce them is, I think, not realistic.

Government also cut some of the revenues that came out of the previous plan – government has not seen fit to replace them – and, in essence, significantly cut from innovation and other parts that were funded. Again, we've talked about this repeatedly. For whatever reason, it's not sticking, and it's not getting traction. It's unfortunate because we've heard stakeholders stand up, speak publicly, and talk about what will happen when we reduce the investment in diversification in these areas. We lost investment in AI funding, the digital media tax credit, and funding to science in various departments.

One of the things I have noticed as estimates have gone through over the last little bit is that, certainly, a lot of ministries have taken some really significant cuts, but there are a couple in particular that I find fairly worrisome. One is in agriculture. You know, I didn't grow up on a farm. I'm not an agriculture expert by any stretch. It's really only just what I read in the reports that I get where I try to understand what's happening in agriculture. It seems to me that there's a great deal of innovation that happens in that area. I know that all of us owe a huge debt of gratitude to that particular sector and to producers and growers in this province and in our country. One of the things – I think that people that are producers or in that sector are really on the front lines, and I think they themselves have been really innovative. But it's been really important to fund research, and that requires investment, and that requires scientists. It looks like the cut to agriculture in particular is doing away with a lot of those positions. I can't imagine that that's going to take us forward in any way.

Obviously, I have no doubt that we'll be losing scientists and researchers in environment, which is incredibly short sighted. I'm not surprised by that, but it is short sighted. I just wanted to remind people to go back. I get that it fits into the UCP's narrative or into a meme that is about the job-killing carbon tax. What it was was a Nobel prize winning strategy to reduce emissions, a market-based strategy to reduce emissions. I think it was kind of funny when I can't remember who it was now was talking about raising taxes like a sin tax on a carton of cigarettes: you know, it's going to reduce people's willingness to spend that kind of money to buy these things that are harmful. It's funny because that is the same principle that is used in the strategy that we introduced, but that didn't seem to stick.

Here are some of the key points or key facts under climate leadership, and I think it's really important to talk about these things because we lost a lot as a result. It's important to talk about what we lost. There were four main policies within the climate leadership plan. One of those things was, obviously, implementing a price on

greenhouse gas emissions or pollution. That was known as carbon pricing. Again I will remind people at every opportunity that it is a Nobel prize winning strategy. Economists, scientists will agree that this is a strategy that consistently helps bring down emissions.

9:50

One of the other things that we did – and, again, I'm glad that we did it in concert with supporting workers and supporting communities – is that we phased out pollution from coal-generated electricity by 2030. Our goal was to generate 30 per cent of electricity from renewable sources by 2030. One of the other strategies was to cap the oil sands emissions at 100 megatonnes. I certainly recall those long evenings of debate. Reducing methane emissions from upstream oil and gas production by 45 per cent was also something that we had introduced in this plan. Alberta was on track to cut more than 50 megatonnes of emissions over the next 10 years, the same as taking 10.6 million cars off the road, or nearly half the passenger vehicles in all of Canada. This is very much like eliminating the emissions of the Vancouver metro area three times over.

In terms of jobs we were heavily investing in this pillar of the climate leadership plan as it supported more than 7,300 jobs in just the first two years and thousands of jobs still to come, with construction starting on a number of projects. These are jobs that are now in danger, thanks to this change and thanks to this government. We cut the small-business tax.

I want to talk a little bit about transit. There was a significant investment in a plan because, again, the climate leadership plan was taking a very broad approach. It wasn't just about putting a price on pollution, but it was about looking at other areas. In transit we invested \$3 billion over 10 years for light rail transit in Calgary and Edmonton from the climate leadership plan, including \$1.53 billion for Calgary's green line, which now we're worried about, and \$1.47 billion to support the Edmonton transit, including the west valley line. It also included \$967 million for GreenTRIP and other transit investments.

I may have mentioned this before – it's really sad – that in St. Albert we finally got some GreenTRIP funding. I believe it was, to start construction on a new park-and-ride on busy St. Albert Trail and Campbell Road, I think it is. What the plan was: ultimately, like any city, sort of you're looking to the future, and a lot of folks that live in St. Albert do travel into Edmonton for work, so it was a park-and-ride centre that would allow eventually the LRT to come to St. Albert to continue to reduce emissions and get more vehicles off the road. Now, with the uncertainty around Edmonton and Calgary, the major cities that are really looking to increase public transportation, I really worry about St. Albert. I worry that we'll have a really great park-and-ride and a really great place to park for buses, but I worry that LRT access is a very long way in the future.

One of the really important things to remember under the climate leadership plan was the fact that about 60 per cent of Albertan families received a rebate. They received a rebate to help offset some of those costs. Is it sort of income distribution, in a strange way? Sure. But what that did is that it allowed more buying capacity for people that were sort of at the lower ends. For example, I was chatting with people on AISH because in preparation for budget estimates we were talking about AISH. One of the things that someone said to me was that in one rebate cheque, I think it was, she would receive \$150. For somebody who's living on \$1,600 a month to get that kind of rebate really sort of gave her a little bit more of a cushion to do some of the things she needed to do. Of course, like when we raise the minimum wage, we give more buying power to lower income families. They do tend to spend their money in local communities. There's another loss.

Energy Efficiency Alberta: I mentioned this a little bit earlier. Since 2017 – and I believe that we were at the time the only province without an energy efficiency plan. I'm not a hundred per cent sure about that. It's a little bit late. Now we're the only ones without an energy efficiency plan. Where's the logic there? We're trying to promote our product, and we're working hard to promote our product, get pipeline capacity increased, get a better price for our product. We want to keep saying: "We're, like, an incredibly responsible producer. Buy our product. Come here. Invest here." Yet we're the only province in this country without an energy efficiency plan. Like, how does that make sense? That doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me.

Let's take a stroll down memory lane and go back to 2017. You know, we added the – Energy Efficiency Alberta actually added about \$850 million in economic growth and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 5.7 million tonnes. Now, I mean, it's not 50 megatonnes, but 5.7 million tonnes just because we finally introduced an energy efficiency plan: that's pretty good. That's actually a really good investment. For every dollar we invested in energy efficiency programs, we got \$3.30 returned to Albertans' pockets. That's pretty significant.

One of the other things that we invested in because it was very important – and then just based on the recent estimates with Indigenous Relations and sort of some of the non answers, it's not clear to me where these projects are. But under the indigenous climate leadership, more than 65 indigenous communities in Alberta have benefited from 125 indigenous climate leadership initiative projects since 2017. I mean, that's incredible. I wish I could remember – and I know it's not an indigenous community – the name of the community that is completely sort of self-reliant for renewable energy. I might have to look up that article and table that tomorrow. But that's incredible, that just in such a short time small communities are making these kinds of investments.

You know, we see regularly in the news that different industries that are not oil and gas industries are worried, right? The solar industry, which had grown by nearly 500 per cent – installed solar capacity has increased – is worried. There's uncertainty because they're not sure what kind of investment is going to go towards that industry. About 3,100 solar installations have been completed. That's pretty significant. More than 300 certified companies have installed solar projects across the province. Albertans have conserved enough energy to power a city the size of Leduc. That's pretty significant.

You know, one of the things that I do want to focus on... [interjections] Sorry if I'm disrupting anyone's party over there. I just want to talk about why I keep sort of harping on the fact that we're not addressing the need to bring our emissions down faster, more significantly.

Or I can ramble a little bit more. I mean, there's a reason I wear this button every day. You know, it's like...

**Member Irwin:** I love that button.

**Ms Renaud:** This button. It says...

**Member Irwin:** What does the button say?

**Ms Renaud:** The button? My button says: science doesn't care what you believe.

**Member Irwin:** Absolutely.

**Ms Renaud:** That's kind of straightforward.

Like I said time and again, I am most definitely not a scientist at all. In fact, I struggle to get through some of the scientific papers

that scientists send me. But one of the things that I have learned from scientists who've taken the time to explain these things to me is that we have a crisis, that we have a very real crisis. I think that given the fact that Alberta is landlocked, we are fairly far north, we are not seeing the severe impacts that other places in Canada, particularly the coastal regions but other places in the world – I think that we are such a wealthy country, so we are not feeling the impacts of climate change. But they are around the world; countries are around the world. Our own country is really experiencing a lot of challenges on the coast, and I think you'll see more and more cities stepping up to say: "We do have a climate emergency. We do need to take this seriously." It's incredibly sad to me that the province of Alberta hasn't taken a leadership role to say, you know: "Yes, we're going to introduce some legislation that goes even further to reduce emissions while supporting this very important sector. We're going to take this further. We're going to do something and address this problem." We're not.

**10:00**

I mean, the northern parts of Canada are warming at twice the rate as the rest of the world, and I don't see a lot of concern. In fact, I see scientists and researchers being fired or budgets being cut. Emission targets are lower. We don't talk about this. We had 10,000 people outside of the Legislature. I don't actually care what kind of signs they had. What I saw were little kids. I saw one little guy...

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** I really appreciate that. I've been listening very intently to the previous bill that we talked about, and I've been listening to the TIER bill, which is actually fantastic, in my opinion. I know that the members opposite don't really like using technology to help save the environment. They prefer taxing little children and school moms and all of those to save the planet, so I know it's a bit of a reach for them sometimes to see that there's a better way of doing things than what they were doing before. I've heard some silly things in here a few times, and one of them that came up – honestly, I understand that there was a climate emergency recently declared by one of the city councillors in Edmonton. I've never experienced that type of climate change.

The really neat thing with the TIER program – the members opposite were talking about the larger polluters on the planet. Well, yeah, absolutely, it's not Canada. Canada is not a large polluter. Alberta is not a large polluter. If you look at China, for example, they put out about 25 per cent of the world's carbon. Now, that's kind of a big number to deal with. The population of China exceeds ours by – I don't know how many times – a billion times. You know, our population is about 35 million, and they have about 1 billion people. Obviously, they have a bigger impact as well. India is another place, you know, a hot spot in the world, that really doesn't have access to energy like we do. If you look at what India is doing, they're, I mean, even still burning animal dung just to heat, to have the basics.

At Enbridge Pipelines there was a gentleman by the name of Pat Daniel, and he was kind of a visionary. He was one of those CEOs that took it upon himself to make a difference. When you're operating one of those pipelines out there, the biggest cost that we had for operating those lines was electricity. What Pat Daniel had done at that time was put an initiative forward. He wanted to have wind power; he wanted to have solar. He wanted to do all of those things to offset it, and that's what we did as a company. We did that of our own volition to produce those things and to take care of that. We had the carbon offsets and all those good things put in place,

and we developed the technologies that went with it. We supported those industries. We had a whole green division that was working on that. Heck, when we did the Montana tie-line, we were in a joint-venture partnership, and 350 windmills were sitting down in Lethbridge. Those were the things that industry was doing before this climate challenge initiative package or leadership or whatever it was called before, before we started taxing school moms, before we started taxing people for it.

Now we seem to be polarized all the time, polarized on the difference of what we want to do for our planet, polarized on taking a different way and using the big polluters, the ones that actually have the horsepower to do this. If you look at our program and our package on the TIER program, it's using that technology. It's allowing the larger polluters to make their systems more efficient, take care of the carbon, scrub up their technologies, do all those good things, and then, heaven forbid, we could actually package that and send it across the world.

I've heard some numbers, for example, coming back to India and China, who actually want our LNG. If we had access for our LNG to get to port – now, here's a really neat concept. Just imagine. Just imagine if we got along as provinces, just imagine if we weren't scaring ourselves into a corner here all the time, just imagine if we had a corridor where we could send our liquefied natural gas or send gas itself off to the coast and not just to the Tsawwassen terminal. Get us to a deep-sea port maybe, heck, even up in Alaska. I'd take that, for example.

If you got us to B.C., that would be the best thing that we could do as western provinces, standing together. Take our gas, send it over there, use B.C. Hydro, where we actually are utilizing that, put LNG in place, and pump it off. Just imagine that. That would be the greenest energy that we could give to the planet. Send it to places like India, that are crying for this. Send it to China, where they actually want our products. That's how Canada can make an impact. That's how Alberta can make an impact. That's where we can take our technologies. We can take all the great folks that are in the artificial intelligence area, we can take all the good folks that get spooned up by that.

Because what happens is that if we start changing, we don't want to diversify the economy for the sake of diversification. It's like that same person waiting for that next leap in technology. Let's use an example here. We're all at the horse-and-buggy stage, and we're all riding horses. The next best thing is the automobile, and for some reason, before we get there to get that first car, we go and shoot our own horse. Before we get there, we watch everyone else gallop past us. What does that do? Nothing. You don't do anything. You don't get to the end of the race. You do nothing.

You know, I was at a chamber of commerce business meeting, and it was really interesting. You have all these ingenuitive people. They have different businesses, small, medium, large. They are diverse. They're all over the place. They're doing a bunch of great things. Here we are. I'm standing in line talking to a gentleman who is about in his 30s. He says: "You know, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but aren't we just in a downturn because we're changing, and there's no real need for fossil fuels, there's no need for those energies?" I asked him: "Do you know any other jurisdictions in the world that have this much energy at their disposal and what their economic state is?" He said: "What do you mean? Aren't they all the same as Alberta?" He had no idea. This is a guy who is actually at a chamber of commerce. He had no idea that Texas and Oklahoma are flat out. We're the only jurisdiction right now with this much resources that has this recessed economy. The event horizon for us for people demanding and needing our energy exceeds out past 2040.

Again, coming back to that analogy of shooting our own horse that we're riding before we get there, we're all going to go there. Those companies are looking for those innovations. And we looked at ourselves as energy companies. It wasn't just oil and gas; it is energy companies. If you look at Shell, for example – and I've heard it from the members opposite, too. They are saying how good a job they are doing by putting solar panels in place. They are, but they're not doing it here. They're doing it in a different country, and they're doing it on their own. The research and development department over at Exxon Mobil has literally more scientists on their staff than anybody else in the world. They have GDPs that exceed most economies. These are the folks that are already putting the innovation of technologies together. They're working on it. They're working on the solution for the next thing.

We've got a lot of the climate change leadership that's running around. We talked about *The Revenant* movie a little while back. Of course, it takes place in that beautiful landscape out towards Banff. One thing that I remember from that movie: Leonardo DiCaprio, a fantastic actor, jumped and started tweeting that he was experiencing climate change first-hand, saw the impacts that were taking place. Well, lo and behold, it was this climate change thing called a chinook. A chinook. And do you know where that word came from? It wasn't from us; we didn't invent it. It was the native peoples who have been there for 10,000 years. So that 10,000th climatic event all came to one climactic point, being Leonardo DiCaprio who is saving the planet.

That's the problem. We have a bunch of half-truths out there. The problem is that we're doing that to ourselves again, and we're getting these 30-year-olds that don't know what the difference is. They actually think that what we do for a living is bad, that we're actually in the middle of a major, major disaster in our own backyard, but we won't use our own technology. Instead, the best way to save the planet is to buy that Starbucks coffee or buy something else, and it's the act of nonparticipation that's actually doing it. Holding a sign up and down and protesting that the sky is falling is not going to fix it. Using our technology, using our smarts, using what we can to help out others and to help ourselves in the appropriate way: that's the way we have the best impact.

Now, do I believe that we have an impact on climate change? Absolutely. I believe we can do things better. Now, let me give you an example of something that I did. When I put in my heating system for my house, I buried it really deep, about 15 feet. I ran a geothermal-type system in place. When we were building our house, I put as much insulation as I could. I spent extra money to put all the nice windows that we could in there. I put everything so that I had positive drainage. We changed the place and the location of the house so that it actually had cross-flow, so in the summertime you don't need an air conditioner. The passive solar that I did: we put that in place. The heating system that we have: well, I have a couple of wood stoves in there, a fireplace, and I have a boiler system. The boiler system only gets turned on half of the year. I did this 15 years before the carbon tax came in place, and I'm not the only one from the energy sector that did that. We were always looking for something efficient. We were doing the right things before someone was holding a gun to our heads yelling: the sky is falling. Heaven forbid that you disagree and you want to do something a little bit different than taxation.

#### 10:10

Coming back to the Nobel peace prize winner with the economic model on taxing carbon: yeah; he won a Nobel peace prize. Fantastic. He did. In his model if you actually follow it, it includes that carbon pricing works, but you have to take away all the pre-existing levies and you have to have an order of magnitude. You

can't have your own sole economy doing it, or the whole thing fails. The groups that followed that, including Justin Trudeau, that were saying that this was the best thing since sliced bread, ran the model inappropriately. They were taxing on both ends. They were not having the buy-in, the weight of actually those tied-in economies. You know what happened when that Nobel peace prize winner ran that type of scenario? It failed every time. What did we experience? A failure. You cannot tax yourself into changing the carbon footprint without having all of those other elements in place. Heck, we can't even decide in this room how we're going to run our economy. Can you imagine trying to get 10 or 12 other countries onboard with that?

Here's the reality. We've got lots of energy at our disposal. We have the technology that we've already been using for the last 15, 20 years. You look at the coal-fired plants. I heard somebody in here speaking – I can't remember if it was the Leader of the Opposition or not – declaring victory when they said that the climate had changed here because we've actually reduced all the carbon because we've already cut off those coal-fired plants. In actuality we just opened up the pipeline for it, and we still haven't converted the boilers. Again those half-truths. We're still operating on the same systems that we had, and those were very efficient, very efficient indeed.

Here's another story. There was a mechanical engineer. I'm on my way to an airport, and we're talking about school and he wanted to talk about universities and what we're doing with funding there. We've got this nice little gentleman. He's going to rent me a car. I'm talking to him on the way to the airport and asking him, "What do you do?" "I'm a mechanical engineer." "Where'd you graduate from?" "U of A." "Why are you renting cars? Are you between semesters?" "No. I can't find a job." "As a mechanical engineer you can't find a job?" "No." "Well, why do you think that is?" "I'm not sure. Like, the oil prices around the world dropped down." "Oh. Well, why isn't our product any good?" "Well, I don't know. It's just not as good. It costs too much to produce." "Well, no. That's not the case. It isn't because our product is costing more on the market. It's actually recessed." When we talked about pipeline capacity, he got it at that point.

By the time we made the transition from driving from the south side of Edmonton to the airport, he then understood, and he goes: "Who else knows about this? Who else knows that this carbon tax doesn't work? Who else knows that our economy is in this state?" I said: "All of us. All of us do. It just depends on which Twitter feed you're reading. It just depends on which page you look at." It was interesting.

I found as well that when we talk about all the scientists that are lining up on one side of the fence that are receiving all the funding – I happened to see a newscast that was taking place. It was an interview with the gentleman who started The Weather Network. He's diametrically opposed to what's being put out there about all the climate concerns and all the climate risk. Again, here's a man of science that doesn't have his side heard because the folks like DiCaprio get the media feed. There are tons and tons of other people out there that have different ideas and different ways of doing things. It isn't one size fits all. But if we're going to have the best order of magnitude, the best bang for the buck: Canada, 1.6 per cent of the carbon output versus China, who's got 25 per cent. If you look at India, again coming back to that point: I don't know; are they another 10 per cent? If you have 35 per cent, argumentatively, and we have 1.5 per cent, the biggest thing that we can do is shut down our economy? We can kill that horse before we're ready to get there. Or can we actually export our product, make a bang for the buck over there, and let those folks have the energy that they need?

Quite honestly, I would love to have an open debate, but the alarmist things have to stop. You know, I've heard silly things like when we had some visitors coming over here from the Solomon Islands, and one gentleman from the other side had said that we'd better give them snorkels before you go home because we're having such a climate risk. Well, as a pilot I know that we're sitting at 2,500 feet. Villeneuve Airport is 2,500 feet above sea level when I'm sitting on the tarmac. Do you realize how much of a climatic event we would have to have before we flooded and got sea water in our boots? These are the types of things we're hearing.

The member before was talking about his exposure when he was up north and he was dealing with all the flies, the black flies in Zama Lakes. Well, this is as close to the environment as you can get: black flies so thick, quote, unquote, you couldn't even see the man standing next to you. The logical part of me goes: I've been up in the bush; I've seen black flies; I've been there; it was never that bad. Maybe it was at night. I don't know. Maybe that was part of it. He didn't realize it was dark, didn't realize that the blackflies weren't the reason he couldn't see him; it was just at night.

The other gentleman, in his 30s, when I was talking about that line, again thought that our commodities were outpriced. He thought that our carbon output was way different than conventional oils. Well, in fact, because of the technologies of folks up north – they've been developing this over years – we're almost there. We're almost at the same amount as regular output would be.

The oil sands themselves, reading back through some of the old information from the settlers up there, the Clearwater River – I've actually worked up in those areas. The reason why it's called the Clearwater River is because back at a point in time that was the only place you could drink water from that was clear. We have the world's largest oil spill that took place. God did it, not us. We've been cleaning it up.

You look at the stunted vegetation and the stunted animals that are out there when you left that natural. The natives used the tar that was oozing from the banks to cover their canoes. Now, you look at the areas where they've actually used that product and restored it, and we've actually done something good with that. You've got buffalo herds roaming out there. You've got great restoration. I mean, that's what we're talking about.

I ran across recently Absolute Aviation, Absolute aircraft heaters. Here's a small incubator group that's taking place out at the Edmonton International Airport. They're reducing 60 per cent – 60 per cent – of the fuel it takes to heat up a jet engine. These are the types of innovations that are taking place on their own.

You've got Wayfinder. Wayfinder is another company that's producing frac sand out by Glenevis. The displacement of using all the frac sand that typically comes from Texas or Minnesota: these are things that are taking place.

The Lornel Group: well, they use technology. They use tons of software to map out all the information on where all of the utilities are at. They do that. They also came up with a little sister company called Aerium robotics. This Aerium robobird is what they're producing. They're doing all these really neat, innovative things. These are companies that are taking place because of the energy sector, because they worked for these companies, because those are the spinoffs, and they're always developing and advancing this technology. Again, we all want to save the environment.

Mobile Augers: there's a company that started something. It was around 60 years ago. They're the ones that actually do all the soils testing, testing the LELs. Those are innovations that are taking place around the world.

There's another company out in Acheson. They do more work overseas than they do here, and their whole job is to reclaim soils.

They're flashing off all the LELs. So those are the things that we can be doing.

Instead of spending like drunk farmers' wives on a trip to Vegas and running the economy down and running the credit card up and doing all those things – it just irks me. Honestly, we all want to do the best thing for our kids, but instead of polishing the brass knobs on the Titanic while we're heading towards an iceberg because we don't want to look out the pilot's window and we don't see that iceberg out there because we're not listening or we're not hearing about a different way – instead, we're just going to head headlong, drive this thing into the iceberg, sink our economy, and take everybody else that's left in Alberta with us. We've poisoned the well for so long that tons of investment have gone.

I heard about all the jobs we were going to talk about, and here's a really quick number. That dirty energy sector that we keep talking about: \$92 billion, roughly, is what that thing is worth for our economy, just looking at some quick numbers. We have 360 some-odd million dollars for it. We're about 27 per cent. That's our economy. Some of the other members were talking about all of the great innovations we can do with AI and that we could do it with the technology and some of the film industries. I'm not refuting that; I think it's great. But when you're stuck comparing \$45 million or a billion dollars to \$92 billion, again, it's coming back to the idea of shooting that horse before you get there.

We can produce energy, the renewables. Wonderful. Flip up the windmill; turn on the solar thing. Do it on a winter's day when it's cloudy and there's no wind. The other side of it is that you've got tons of wind, but now you have no place to put your energy. So until you have a little nuke sitting there so that you can flip the switch on the nuclear power or you've got a coal-fired power plant or you've got hydroelectric that's sitting there or you've got a gas turbine – you need to have those items where you can flip the switch, and it's an integrated system.

Again, coming back to our TIER solutions, use the integrated systems. What we haven't figured out yet is how we store that energy, so whoever comes up with the best battery is going to win this race, how we can store the energy that we produce so it's available at that time. Again, in running these systems, they have to be integrated, and we want to get there.

**10:20**

The only way you get there is by the TIER program. That's the best footprint we have. If we called it the climate-leading challenge technology innovator and best superhero solution, well, maybe we wouldn't be arguing about it so much, but we called it TIER, just plain, old TIER. "Technology" is the first word in it, and it isn't as exciting as climate-challenging leader or ice-bucket challenge or whatever some of the other folks might come up with.

I think I've about run out my shot clock, and I think my conscience is clear. Obviously, I'm a big supporter of the TIER program. I would love to be able to see our provinces working together again; I would love to keep our country together. Heck, I'd even love it if we and all the members opposite could sit down and have a beverage one day and actually agree to something rather than getting too polarized.

**Mr. Bilous:** It's possible.

**Mr. Getson:** It's possible, and I appreciate that, sir.

Again, if we can utilize all the folks that are techies, put it together with our main driving economy, our industries, we're going to get there. Obviously, a lot of us have children, and we want to see the best for them. I don't want to see my kids exit our economy, go to a different province or a different country because

we've spoiled the earth, because we've poisoned the ground, or because we've poisoned the well of our economy, from which everyone was drinking, because we were too short-sighted on ideology. By having a good, clear conscience and understanding how this process works, with a majority government on our side and a minority back there to be our conscience, I think this just might work.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I certainly appreciate rising in the House this evening to consider this bill that's before the House and respect the fact that this is a democratic institution where we all have a chance to have our voice heard and contribute in our ways to try to make this place better, not just this place where we are today but this society that we are the keepers of today and that we are borrowing from future generations.

With that in mind, I just want to talk about a few things that I find problematic with the switch to TIER. Number 1, for me, to be very frank, is that I think it actually heightens our reliance on a boom-bust economy rather than creating opportunities for us to support our top three industries today – of course, oil and gas, agriculture, and forestry – and actually continuing to diversify into other areas of renewables and other types of good, long-term, sustainable employment for our province. That's my number one. I feel like this pushes even more eggs into one basket, one that I think has caused a lot of anxiety for folks waiting for the next boom when we're in the midst of a bust. One of the things that I don't appreciate about TIER is that I think it will actually make us even more reliant on the one industry.

The second one is that I think it doesn't create any options for individual consumers; it's put all of the onus on industry. I think that giving individual consumers some power in determining what ways they want to engage in a carbon economy is something that I appreciate, individual choice. I appreciate individuals having the opportunity to be able to feel like they're making decisions, like the last speaker said that he made prior to incentives, that there are actually additional incentives for folks who are in a position to be able to exercise that choice. That's number 2.

Number 3, I'd say, is the fact that there is no time given in this bill to transportation. Transportation, we know, is the third-largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. By cancelling investment in transit, in GreenTRIP, and in other initiatives that could be funded with this rather than it being put into general revenue, I think we're again putting greater reliance on the one industry and taking away from other investment opportunities and other employment opportunities and also taking away other transit options from the society at large.

Number 4 is that I don't believe that this will create any jobs, and I'd be happy to be corrected if it will. In reading this, it doesn't seem like this is going to enhance economic diversification, certainly, and certainly I don't think it will create more opportunities in this sector of the economy. I'd be happy to be given evidence and information that shows otherwise, but it seems problematic to me.

Number 5 is that I have serious concerns about revenue from here being funnelled towards the energy war room. I think that's not a good focus for what is supposed to be using the price on pollution to address emissions and find ways to reduce them. I think that putting this money towards the war room would be counter to the value that having a price on pollution brings.

Number 6 is that I have concern that TIER, COSIA, and Alberta Innovates overlap and create redundancies. I know we spend a lot of time in this place talking about the importance of efficiency, talking about cutting red tape, so I am nervous that TIER, COSIA,

and Alberta Innovates have overlapping roles and responsibilities and mandates.

Those are my six points. I'll just say them again quickly before I table an amendment, because I do have one that I think will help improve this and alleviate some of my concerns: one, lack of focus on diversification; two, not having any individual options for individual consumers; three, transportation; four, no new jobs; five, the energy war room; and six, creating more overlap and red tape and inefficiencies. Those are the main concerns I have there.

With that being said, I'd be happy to present the amendment that I have, with the requisite number of copies for the House, and I'll just keep one copy for myself.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1.  
Please proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm moving this on behalf of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I move that the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, be amended in section 4 by striking out clauses (b) and (c). If I could provide some rationale for that. Really, this amendment is about that TIER currently, as proposed, is all set to go into general revenues rather than a dedicated fund, and I think that this is problematic for a number of reasons.

Since there is a price on emissions that was introduced in Alberta, it has always been one hundred per cent reinvested in carbon reduction. This is the fund that was created previously. I think it was during Stelmach's time that there was a price on carbon, and all of that money was focused specifically on carbon reduction. By having it going into general revenues, I fear that it will go towards things like the energy war room and other things that don't actually achieve the mandate as has been mentioned in this House around reducing carbon emissions.

I think that this shouldn't be different. I think that with the fact that we have a price on carbon, it should be focused on the ways that we can support industry and support individuals and support our province in finding ways to reduce emissions and to indeed show that our fossil fuels and other energy forms in this province can indeed be the most environmentally sustainable long term and show that we are not taking our responsibility in this lightly.

I think the new system should not become a general slush fund. I think it's important that it be focused on the intent that was originally set in the original mandate. I think that when government says that they want to focus on innovation, I believe that, and one of the ways they could focus on innovation is by having this fund dedicated away from general revenue towards actual emissions reduction.

Also, the previous plan was for \$1.4 billion over seven years, and the new plan is for \$800 million over four, so both average about \$200 million a year annually, certainly enough money that we could focus it towards this dedicated area.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, could you just keep the volume down a little bit so that the member can be heard. Thank you.  
Please proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Also, the plan, I think, could have significant gains in innovation. Certainly, previous plans were to reduce 76 megatonnes. Of course, we appreciate that if there's any desire to reduce megatonnes, I think that that is a step in the right direction, but having this focused towards general revenue as opposed to a dedicated fund, where that is its sole mandate, I think is problematic and doesn't speak to the importance and significance which we are dealing with, the very real and pressing impacts of climate change.

10:30

With that, Madam Chair, I am happy to hear feedback from other colleagues about this proposed amendment. I think it's reasonable, and I think it's probably something that – other members, when in opposition, would have been happy to see dedicated funds focused towards dedicated clauses rather than to general revenues. That's simply what I'm asking for today.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, I'm happy to respond on behalf of the government and as the sponsor of Bill 19 to some of the comments by the hon. member. There's lots to unpack there, and fortunately we've got lots of time to unpack, so we'll spend some time on that. First, Madam Chair, I'd like to just talk a little bit about what the hon. member referred to as far as emission targets and/or projections, the NDP's plan on GHG emission reductions compared to TIER. It always surprises me how the NDP's numbers change on certain issues throughout the day. Even watching it today in question period, they can't keep straight as they exaggerate the cost of the job-creation tax cut.

**Ms Hoffman:** It's \$4.7 billion.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Four point seven is the one that the hon. member is heckling at the moment. I've heard her today say 4.6, 4.8. The reality is that they're off by \$4 billion, but what's \$4 billion amongst friends, particularly when you're the former Deputy Premier of a government that brought in the largest deficits and debts in the history of the province? They're wrong about that, as has been articulated many times. I'm happy to talk about that in more detail later. My point is that you can't trust the NDP numbers. You saw it there again just a few moments ago.

The reality is that when it came to the large-emitter program that the NDP had, they were projecting about a 32-megatonne reduction in the same period of time that our TIER program is projecting a 57-megatonne reduction. She said 76. Her own critic and the former minister who was in charge of the program has already said in the House, on this very bill, just a few days ago, totally opposite numbers. But mistakes happen, kind of like the NDP's carbon tax. But I digress on that for the moment. I'm sure I will get back to it shortly.

The hon. member wanted to talk about a slush fund. Her concern seems to be around the fact that this legislation will allow some of the money that comes from TIER to go into general revenue. She is, in fact, correct about that. That's the primary purpose of the bill. That comes down to the great difference between the NDP and the current government. The NDP, Madam Chair, you will be shocked to know – actually, you probably would not be shocked to know; you've been in this Chamber long enough that you already do know it – started out saying that their carbon tax would not ever go to general revenue. Then we found out in their budgets, as time went on, that it actually was going to general revenue despite the fact that their legislation said that it would not. Shockingly enough, even the stuff that they kept within the fund that we're talking about right now they were using for general revenue projects. They were using it throughout the entire government to try to meet financial objectives of their government. Sadly, we know that they didn't meet any reasonable financial objectives. They ended up carrying this government to the largest debt in the history of this province, overseeing devastating job loss and significant economic impact.

Albertans sent us here to fix the NDP mess, if you would, and certainly that was a slush fund. The difference for our approach, Madam Chair, is that we told Albertans that we were going to take a portion of the money associated with the large-emitter side and we



are going to spend it on technology and GHG emission reductions and helping with pollution issues inside the province. Then we were going to take another portion of it, and we were going to put it in two issues: one, to help with deficit reduction, to be able to clean up the mess the NDP created – we told Albertans that – and second, to fund the war room. Both issues, which the hon. member referred to, we were transparent about.

We're taking the time to legislate to make sure it's clear to Albertans what we're doing because we want to be transparent with Albertans going forward. We have committed to a formula on how that will work. We committed inside our platform very clearly that the first \$100 million for TIER would go to technology for emission reductions, and 50 cents of every dollar thereafter would also go to technology investment for emission reductions. The other 50 per cent would go to deficit reductions plus a \$30 million investment – actually, I think it was \$20 million; I can flip to the page in a minute – in the war room.

That's the choice that Albertans had in the last election, when they fired that hon. member's party from government and most of her colleagues, who had come to this place and supported the carbon tax approach while hiding from Albertans actually where the money was going. We came here, gave Albertans a choice. They could have the NDP's carbon tax on fuel: no rebates for most people in Alberta and investment inside NDP pet projects, very little investment inside the environment, sadly, most of it inside infrastructure, investing in light bulbs. I see one hon. member pointing out about investing in light bulbs.

You know what, Madam Chair? Shockingly enough, the hon. member supported – some of the new members here may not know this – and worked really hard to defend, as the Deputy Premier at the time, hiring Ontario companies to install light bulbs in people's homes and shower heads that often did not even work for the water pressure, particularly in rural Alberta, as I mentioned before. They forget about rural Alberta all the time, though. It's unfortunate.

But that's where they spent the money. In addition, they also spent it on different infrastructure projects, programs throughout government that had nothing to do with emission reductions, all throughout the government. Every minister of our current government has had to go through and unravel the mess that the previous government did using climate change money for things that had nothing to do with emission reductions.

The point, though, is this. Albertans had a choice. They knew, despite the fact that the NDP did not tell them about their carbon tax. As I said, Madam Chair, when we're outside the Chamber, we use different words for what that really means, but we certainly can't here. They did not tell them about it, though. They told Albertans that they would never put it in general revenue, and they did. They called Albertans Chicken Little for expressing concerns about it. We'll talk about sewer rats maybe at a later time. But the point is this. Albertans, by the time they got to the 2019 election, knew what the NDP's carbon tax was. They also knew what the UCP was proposing because we spelt it out clearly in black and white inside our platform, and Albertans chose in record numbers to fire the NDP and to go with our approach when it came to this important piece of legislation.

We know that the NDP is frustrated that Albertans fired them, and I sympathize with them. It's probably hard to be fired, particularly to have the legacy of being the only one-term government in the history of the province and devastating their party for probably at least a couple of lifetimes inside the rural portion of the province with the brutal policies that they imposed on the people that I represent. But they can't argue with the fact that democracy made a decision, and that's what we've brought here. This hon. member is now attempting to stop what was a clear

platform promise that was made to Albertans, that they voted for, Madam Chair. It is shocking. I don't even know how they could have come to this conclusion.

Now, it does go into a dedicated fund. That also may be where the hon. member is confused, maybe not well briefed on the issue or hasn't taken time to read the bill. I know she's moving the motion on behalf of another member so maybe that member did not explain ...

**Mr. Bilous:** You'd be out of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** What was that? Sorry?

**Mr. Bilous:** It'd be out of order.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, through the chair.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you.

They moved the motion on behalf of another member, so she may not be aware, but it does go into a fund associated with technology and investing in the TIER program. In fact, the bill also renames the fund that it goes into. Maybe the hon. member should take some time this evening to do that.

Further to that, I think that really what the hon. member should do as the former Deputy Premier of the province, the former Health minister of the province is take some time actually to still reflect on how her party has ended up over there. They haven't done that, Madam Chair. It's important to this piece of legislation because it's at the core of why the NDP was fired by Albertans, why Albertans lined up in record numbers to fire them.

Madam Chair, you know – I know; I'll go with what I know. I was getting calls from constituents who were travelling from as far away as the United States just to get home to vote to fire the NDP because of their carbon tax and other policies they brought in. When you would tell them on the phone, "Hey, you can vote in advance polls; there's this thing you can do to vote when you're away, absentee ballot," they'd say, "No; I've just got to get home and make sure my ballot is counted on the night because I want to be part of firing them." That's because of the proposals like she's proposing with this amendment, to try to go back to the NDP's failed carbon tax, already rejected by the people of Alberta. It certainly will be rejected by us. We're proud to have gotten rid of the NDP's carbon tax. We're proud to be clear with the people of Alberta on how we'll spend the money.

**10:40**

To her last point, which is in regard to not wanting to spend money on the energy war room, or the Canadian Energy Centre, that also was a platform promise. Yes, this bill makes sure that money can be used to be able to fund the Canadian Energy Centre and protect our largest industry, Madam Chair. This hon. member trying to move amendments to stop that from happening continues the NDP's behaviour of supporting people that will attack our largest industry. That hon. member was Deputy Premier to a Premier who appointed people, like Tzaporah Berman, to oil sands panels who have dedicated and sworn to be able to destroy our largest industry, who have protested and blocked pipelines that we needed to get our products to work, and have done more to cause unemployment in this province than anybody else.

The members smile because that's their ally. Remember, they are part of a federal – I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood smiling away, smiling away, excited about the fact that she supports a federal party and a provincial party that are antipipeline, that have people that are dedicated to the Leap Manifesto, which is dedicated to making sure that our energy products cannot be produced.

**An Hon. Member:** She's nodding as well.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** And she's nodding about it. She's dedicated. She's excited about it. That's fine. At least her position is there. Her position is known.

But then to move an amendment on the very – and the member's argument is this: it's to prevent the money from going to the energy war room. She wants to move this amendment to prevent money from going to the energy war room to be able to defend our energy industry.

As you can see, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood continues to smile excitedly about the issue. That's their goal. At the end of the day, they've never been able to hide it. When their leader admitted in this last federal election that she still voted for her federal leader despite the fact that he's on the record as trying to shut the oil sands, trying to stop all pipelines, and trying to make sure that our people remain out of work across this entire province and cannot survive with the largest industry, they sit inside this Legislature and smile about that support.

Well, Madam Chair, we reject their amendment because we have no problem with defending this province. We have no problem with defending our largest industry. Yes, we are not going to pass an amendment that would stop us from being able to finance the energy war room, because we're proud of our commitment to do that, because we're proud of our largest industry and, most importantly, we're proud of the people that work in it each and every day.

Unfortunately, it's unfortunate, which I said twice because it's very unfortunate, three times, that this party across from me is still dedicating their existence to trying to shut down the largest industry, the lifeblood of this province. Do you know what that means at the end of the day? They're standing with people like Justin Trudeau. They're standing with people like their federal leader. They're not standing with the men and women that built the industry, that built this province, and that continue to depend on it for their livelihoods. Sadly, they're not standing with the rest of the country, who also depends on that industry for their livelihoods.

Again, out of all the things that the deputy leader of the NDP just said, the most shocking is the fact that they would come to this Chamber and try to stop the energy war room from being funded. Their approach continues to be to back up Justin Trudeau, support Justin Trudeau's anti oil and gas positions, support their federal leader, their federal NDP leader, the same party, by the way, Madam Chair. The same party, right? There's no secret that I voted for the Conservative Party of Canada and supported them in the last election – I was very proud of that – but we're not the same party as the Conservative Party of Canada, as you know. They're the same party, run by the same leader, a leader who is on the record even in the last few weeks, who has sworn to stop pipelines and energy production. Well, that's why we need a war room. That's why we need a Canadian Energy Centre, to stand up to their leader and others like them.

Madam Chair, have you ever read the Leap Manifesto? You would be shocked to read the NDP's Leap Manifesto. You would be shocked. What it has to do with this amendment is that they are trying to stop us from defending our energy industry from things like the Leap Manifesto. It is so disappointing.

I will close with this. My biggest point is to make it clear to our colleagues that there's no way we're going to support – and I certainly hope that they support me in that statement – the NDP's continued attack on our energy industry and the people that work in it. We'll be proud to vote this amendment down.

Again to the NDP: take some time. And to the Opposition House Leader: you, too, take some time, take some time to reflect.

Through the chair to you: take some time to reflect on why you got fired, because if you keep coming back here and doing the same thing, you are never ever going to leave that side of the aisle.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:46 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Dach	Irwin
Carson	Dang	Loyola
Ceci	Hoffman	Shepherd

Against the motion:

Allard	Nicolaides	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Nixon, Jason	Shandro
Copping	Nixon, Jeremy	Toews
Getson	Panda	Toor
Glubish	Pon	Turton
Gotfried	Reid	Walker
Guthrie	Rowswell	Williams
Jones	Rutherford	Yao
Loewen	Sawhney	Yaseen
Long		

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 28
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to take the time to speak to Bill 19, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, which would introduce the new TIER policy, the marquee climate change policy being brought forward by the UCP government. I've had the opportunity to sit down and take a bit of a look at the legislation and to consider it a bit.

I came across an excellent piece written by everyone's favourite energy economist to quote when he agrees with you and ignore when he doesn't, Dr. Andrew Leach. Now, he recently wrote an opinion article for the CBC in which he undertook an analysis of the new TIER legislation. I have a great deal of respect for Dr. Leach, as apparently do many members in this Chamber, again perhaps on a selective basis. But let's go with the general premise that we all recognize that he is a man who has devoted a good deal of time to energy and the economy and the issue of climate change and has advised both Conservative and NDP governments on the creation of such policy, which is something that's apparently admired by the government, as we saw with the head of their MacKinnon panel, who, they are very happy to tout, was an NDP Finance minister but also consulted for the UCP. So we can assume that if we don't always agree with Dr. Leach on all of his thoughts, we at least all recognize that he is a voice of experience.

In his article he actually has a fair amount of praise, with some caveats, for this government on the TIER policy. In fact, if I may quote him, he says, "This is serious policy, not the complete abdication of action on climate change many will expect from [the Premier's] government." I'm not sure that that would be called damning with faint praise. That's more than faint.

He makes some observations about the bill, and he sort of talks in general about the concept of output-based pricing, which is something that we talked about in this House and, indeed, we have heard members in this House disparage when it came to consumer pricing and the carbon levy. Indeed, I've heard members talk about: well, how can you charge and then give money back and then say that it's going to do anything? Well, that's the basis of output-based pricing, and that is part of what's present here in TIER. The way Dr. Leach chooses to look at it, he says: "Think of these policies as the government sending companies a bill for their carbon emissions and writing giant novelty cheques to subsidize output." Fair enough. That was the same policy that our government had implemented in dealing with industry.

He observes that, of course, there are two major sectors in Alberta that are affected by TIER, those being electricity and oil and gas, and when it comes to electricity, he actually speaks fairly highly of the approach from TIER. He notes, of course, that electricity is the second-largest source of emissions in Alberta, after oil and gas, and notes that Alberta's electricity emissions are, in fact, more than half of the total emissions for the entire electricity sector in Canada. So the types of policies that we bring in on this indeed matter a great deal.

But what he observes is that the TIER plan put forward by the Minister of Environment and Parks, in fact, "levels the playing field across all sources of power." Basically, any emissions from any source are going to be charged \$30 per tonne, and all the generators, regardless of the source or the means by which they generate, are going to receive the output-based credits at the same rate. He notes that, in fact, that is the formula that was used by our government in our policy. That's excellent. I appreciate that the government, when they see a good thing, in some instances apparently is willing to continue with it.

Dr. Leach praises that choice. In fact, he even gives some praise, that I think the government would especially appreciate, in that if he had to choose between the Premier's and the government's TIER and Mr. Trudeau's carbon price on power, he prefers the Premier's and, I suppose, by extension, then, ours, on which this is modelled. The reason he gives for that: he says that the federal approach actually gives more credits back on coal than they do on gas, and they provide absolutely nothing to new or existing renewable power sources. So the criticism Dr. Leach has of the federal program is that it gives too high a subsidy back to the coal industry, giving less to gas and absolutely nothing to renewable sources. In essence, then, while you have higher emission plants paying more in a carbon price but are giving larger subsidies to coal, then that reduces the effectiveness of the policy. He observed, somewhat ironically: well, who would have thought that the Premier's plan would be worse for coal plants than Mr. Trudeau's, the Prime Minister's? But that is, in fact, the case. This government, the UCP, is being tough on coal plants in the province of Alberta.

Dr. Leach observes that under this plan, under TIER, "the cost advantage for low-emissions generators in the Alberta market remains exactly the same as if there were a carbon tax on electricity," so it balances out.

Now, while he has that praise for the government on how they've handled the electricity file, he says that he's somewhat less thrilled with how TIER approaches the question of the oil sands and other industrial emissions within the province of Alberta because it, in fact, abandons what works so well about the electricity section. Again, in the electricity section we have all output being treated equally, the same subsidies going back to everybody but, indeed, weighting it heavier for people that are emitting more. For example, coal is paying more because it's creating more emissions. Gas is paying less. Renewable energy, assuming it's completely carbon

neutral, is paying none. But when it comes to the oil sands, for some reason the government has chosen to flip and invert that. Basically, for everything outside of the electricity sector, we have emitters receiving more emissions credits if they have higher historic emission intensities. Dr. Leach observed, "It rewards exactly what we want to avoid," which is puzzling, Madam Chair.

**11:10**

The government seems to understand this very well when it comes to the electrical sector, but they flip it on its head when it comes to the oil sands and other sources of emissions. A carbon price is supposed to reward improvement. That's what want to see. We want to see things get better. But we also want to see innovation. Certainly, that's something we've heard the government members and the minister toss around quite a bit and talk about, the investments in innovation. Indeed, it seems that through TIER they are trying to cover for some of the fact that they have cut and removed so many other incentives and opportunities for innovation within the province, but we'll set that aside for the time being.

Dr. Leach observes that for oil sands in particular, where we're expecting we are going to continue to see production growth, which, despite the claims of the Minister of Environment and Parks, I have never been on the record opposing – where that production growth is still expected, companies need to see value from deploying the best technology. Under the previous system, under the system that our government had brought in, Dr. Leach says, "The full . . . carbon price would have factored into the financial value of innovation in new facilities as well as for improvements in existing facilities."

But under TIER that emissions-reducing innovation becomes less advantageous because the better performing you are with your facility, if you build that new facility and you build it in an innovative way so you actually reduce the amount of emissions and have less emissions credits every year for as long as the policy remains in place – if you do better, you will get less from the government. We're paying more to people that create more emissions and less to people that create less. To quote Dr. Leach: "Thanks for lowering your emissions. Now you get smaller novelty cheques than your competitors as part of our climate change program. The signal is backwards." That seems troubling to me, Madam Chair.

I appreciate that this government has done their homework. They looked at what was in place, they looked at some of the steps that our government has taken, they have made some adjustments, and they've got it pretty much right, it sounds like, on the electricity sector. But I do not understand why they are choosing to ignore what they seem to understand there when it comes to the oil sands and other sources of industrial emissions within the province of Alberta. The concern that Dr. Leach brings forward, which I kind of share, is that this change from the policy which our government had in place in the way that credits were being provided is that we're going to see a transfer of hundreds of millions of dollars per year which benefits primarily the highest emitting facilities in the province and then a significant reduction in the value of producing innovative and emissions-reducing technology.

Now, from what I've heard from the minister and from other members of this government, the entire purpose of TIER is to incent, to encourage the growth of innovation and technology. Indeed, that has been the claim, that that is, in fact, what's going to drive, in their view, a larger emissions reduction than our government would have achieved. We've had some discussion around those numbers, and I'm not going to go back into them here. But if we take them at their word, it seems problematic that we are

talking, in the words of Dr. Leach, about hundreds of millions of dollars per year going to higher emitting facilities, therefore discouraging investment in technology which is going to lower emissions.

I appreciated some of the words earlier from the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. He talked quite a bit about the work that industry has done to create innovation, and indeed I salute and respect that. But the whole intent of legislation like TIER is to reward the people who are already doing it and encourage those who aren't to get onboard to make this a broader spectrum initiative. I appreciate that the government has tried to find a way to do that with some of the smaller emitters in that they're able to group together to maybe then take advantage of some of these opportunities so that they can get some of those emissions credits and themselves then perhaps find ways to develop new innovation. That's fantastic. That's a great thought. Again, standing this on its head, where they're giving more money if you emit more and less if you emit less, seems to be an impractical way to encourage people to create more innovation and lower their emissions.

One of the other things that Dr. Leach brings up is an overall concern just in the message that is sent by employing a policy like this. Now, we've heard from members, and indeed I recognize that they ran very clearly on their plan to repeal the consumer carbon tax in the province of Alberta. It was very clear that they got a majority and had the mandate to do that, so they have done so. They convinced Albertans that a better way to approach this is to put the burden solely on the heaviest emitters and on industrial sources.

What Dr. Leach raises is the fact that if you take that provincial plan and you expand that to a national plan, then all of a sudden Alberta would be expected to bear the brunt of emissions across Canada because we have, as he notes, 314 industrial facilities in Canada that meet the Alberta definition of a large industrial emitter, 114 of which are in Alberta, and of the 253 megatonnes of emissions from those facilities, more than half, 142 megatonnes, are from Alberta facilities. So if we take the approach that we're implementing here or that this government is proposing to implement through this legislation and if that were to be the policy that was adopted by the federal government across Canada, Alberta would be expected to deal with about half of the emissions reductions for the entire nation.

Obviously, we don't support that. Obviously, we're not fans of that. Obviously, we appreciate the fact that, as Dr. Leach notes, people who burn gas in their car on the 401 in Toronto are paying for their share of emissions alongside the oil sands in Alberta in that we are sharing that burden more broadly across the country, much in the same way as we as Albertans indeed do share some of our wealth through the taxes that are collected by the federal government and redistributed by the equalization program.

Those are my main concerns with this bill: the way that it approaches the oil sands and indeed deincentivizes innovation, and the fact that I think this sends the wrong message as to how we need to approach this on the larger scale and as we continue to work with the federal government on how we will be folded into and work under the federal climate change plan and carbon

levy. It's sending a bit of a wrong message on how we would like to see that play out.

With that, Madam Chair, I think those are all my thoughts at this time. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, shall I call the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 19 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**11:20**

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 19, first of all, and progress on Bill 20.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Getson:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 19. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed, please say no. So carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all hon. members for another hard day of work. I'm just trying to catch the calendar here. I think tomorrow is the 7th, so I will adjourn the House until tomorrow, November 7, at 1:30 p.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30. At 8 o'clock tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider estimates for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs in the Parkland Room, and at 8:30 tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Executive Council in the Rocky Mountain Room.

The House is now adjourned.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:23 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 7, 2019

Day 41

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 7, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am honoured to have met with this morning and welcome to Alberta and to the Legislative Chamber this afternoon Mr. Chung, the consul general of the Republic of Korea. Mr. Chung is accompanied by the deputy consul general, Yongwook Na, consul general of Korea in Vancouver, and Ms Hester Kim, executive assistant to the consul general. Welcome to Alberta. Thank you so much for joining us.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have three school groups joining us this afternoon. Please rise as I call your schools: from Calgary-Klein, grade 6 students from Colonel Irvine school; from West Yellowhead, grade 6 students from Niton Central school; from Edmonton-City Centre, welcome to the specialized professional services. Thank you, all students, for joining us.

Hon. members, it's my absolute pleasure today to introduce to the Legislative Assembly perhaps the very best thing coming out of Livingstone-Macleod, the hon. member's wife, Darleen Reid. If you'd please rise and receive – we all know it was true; I was just saying it.

Also, in observance today is a very distinguished group, and it's my absolute honour and pleasure to introduce them to the Chamber. There are a number of indigenous veterans and indigenous leaders who are here in observance of indigenous veterans' day, which actually takes place tomorrow, November 8, but they were here today for a ceremony. If you could all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Hon. members, guests this afternoon of the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo are Cheryl Robb with Syncrude and Melanie and Lloyd Antoine, Fort McMurray residents and business owners.

Also, guests of the Member for Lesser Slave Lake are Herb Lehr, president of the Métis Settlements General Council, and Silas Yellowknee, Chief of Bigstone Cree Nation.

Lastly, guests of the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, welcome members of the wildland firefighter rappel program, also known as rap. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

## National Aboriginal Veterans Day

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow, November 8, is National Aboriginal Veterans Day, recognizing indigenous veterans from the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, and the Canadian Armed Forces efforts. While exact numbers are difficult to determine, approximately 12,000 First Nations and Métis soldiers served Canada with at least 500 losing their lives during major conflicts in the 20th century.

Today I'd like to honour indigenous veterans for overcoming challenges, for contributing their skills, and for sacrificing their lives for our country. Many travelled far from home to enlist and left their families to afford us peace, freedom, and all the rights and privileges of a democracy. These veterans contributed valuable skills, often working as successful sniper and reconnaissance scouts, who secretly gathered information on the enemy. Others created and interpreted radio code messages in indigenous languages to evade the enemy. Many of these veterans are from Alberta and deserve our recognition.

In World War I Henry Louis Norwest from Fort Saskatchewan had a divisional sniping record of 115 fatal shots, earning him the military medal and bar. Also during World War I Alex Decoteau, who was Canada's and Edmonton's first indigenous police officer, used his skills as an Olympian to serve as a communications trench runner.

Sadly, after their courageous efforts, all that many veterans were left with were memories of fighting amidst a land of rubble, smoke, burnt trees, and bloody casualties. Many of these veterans died. Others suffered from trauma and injuries only to continue to face discrimination here at home. They fought with courage, skill, and a deep commitment to our country, and they deserve our gratitude for selflessly sacrificing their lives and well-being for our freedom. On behalf of our government, thank you for all you've done for Canada.

Lest we forget.

**The Speaker:** Lest we forget, indeed.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs will respond on behalf of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we honour National Aboriginal Veterans Day on November 8 and Remembrance Day on November 11. As Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to the Canadian Armed Forces I am honoured to stand here today and honour those who have dedicated their lives to the service of Canada. Indigenous people have always played an important role in the Canadian military. Often their determination started well before deployment, travelling from remote communities, learning new languages, and overcoming discrimination and other challenges in order to enlist.

In the First World War over 4,000 indigenous people served in uniform. In the Second World War over 3,000 indigenous people served in uniform. Indigenous soldiers served bravely, and many serve as proud examples to the generations that have come since. Over 50 decorations were awarded to indigenous soldiers for bravery during World War I, soldiers like Henry Louis Norwest, a Métis marksman born in Fort Saskatchewan. He held a divisional sniping record of 115 fatal shots and was awarded the military medal and bar for his courage under fire. Sadly, Henry was killed three months before the end of the war. His sacrifice is like so many soldiers who were prepared to give their life for our freedom.

During World War II many indigenous soldiers shared their own language to support the war effort as code talkers. Charles Checker Thompkins from Alberta translated sensitive radio messages into

Cree so they could not be understood if they were intercepted by the enemy. Indigenous families also contributed to the war effort on the home front. They donated large amounts of money, clothing, and food to worthy causes and also granted the use of portions of their reserve lands to allow for the construction of new airports, rifle ranges, and defence installations.

In my previous role I was able to host a ceremony to honour Passchendaele, and I was able to meet the family of Private Alex Decoteau, Canada and Edmonton's first indigenous police officer. His great, great niece wrote a book about his life, and that is available from our very own Legislature Library. To hear personal stories of this incredible athlete is so important and a great example of how we need to continue to honour our veterans and pass their stories on to the next generation.

I've spent time working with the Aboriginal Veterans Society of Alberta and The Memory Project. Both of these organizations do important work to connect today's youth with the history and impact of our indigenous veterans. I want everyone here to know that they can reach out to these organizations. Please let schools in your constituencies know that these organizations can help co-ordinate visits from veterans to come and share their stories with our little ones. On behalf of my colleagues and Albertans, thank you to our veterans and their families for your sacrifice.

Lest we forget.

1:40

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South is rising.

#### Premier's Travel Expenses

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has a perfectly usable vehicle parked outside this building along with a driver, all provided to him at taxpayers' expense. He's also been seen driving a suspiciously clean blue Dodge pickup although we don't know who paid for that, but neither of these vehicles is fancy enough for this Premier.

After flipping some pancakes at Stampede, the Premier and his buddies and his buddies' wives whistled up a private plane to take them all to Saskatoon. I'm sure this really made the Premier feel like the big man on campus, and then he stuck Alberta taxpayers with the big bill. That's right, Mr. Speaker. Every Albertan is paying more income tax, more in property tax, more in school fees, more for their insurance, more to register their mortgage or their car while this Premier is blowing up Alberta's budget with his \$4.7 billion corporate handout, then he went in front of business leaders and said: we're broke; we have to make hard choices.

Mr. Speaker, it's this Premier's judgement that's broke. He's forcing hard choices on Alberta seniors, Albertans with disabilities, and Albertans with kids, but when he's partying with his pals and their wives, he chooses a private party plane over the car these Albertans are already paying for. We've seen this movie before, when an arrogant and ambitious Conservative Premier doesn't want to spend any time on the highway with taxpayers. Albertans have zero patience for this kind of free-spending entitlement.

Premier Redford's love of private plane rides brought down her government. The Premier may read a lot of history, but he sure hasn't learned anything from it. He even said that he would do it again. It's time for this Premier to get his head out of the clouds. He must apologize to Albertans and pay for his own private plane ride.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has a statement.

### Remembrance Day

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House to acknowledge Remembrance Day, a day to honour the memory of millions of Canadians who have served as part of our military and for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Our Canadian troops have bravely served in the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, Afghanistan, and many other international military and peacekeeping operations and are well regarded for their bravery and defence of our freedom.

Our nation may not be the most populous in the world, but our forces have had a major impact on the international stage. Normandy, Vimy Ridge, Dieppe, and Juno Beach are amongst many of the momentous battles that our Canadian soldiers played a vital role in.

The Canada we live in today is because of their efforts, and for that we thank them. For many, war is something only observed second hand, far removed from our everyday lives. We must take time and remember those that paid the ultimate price for our freedom and also acknowledge all of those that have served and continue to serve our country.

I would like to acknowledge the service of my grandfather, Walter St. George Armstrong, my father Jack Armstrong, and my family good friend, Kris, and many others who through their sacrifice helped make Canada and the way we live today possible. Our dedicated military families also sacrifice alongside our soldiers throughout the deployment, the moves, and the family separation.

May we honour their memory and teach the next generation and the generations to follow the high price that was paid so that we can live free. May we continue to wear our poppies as a symbol of remembrance. May we also stand alongside our veterans not only on the battlefields but as they return home. Much has changed in our world over the past 100 years, but the values of freedom, democracy and justice live on. May I sincerely offer my solemn thanks and eternal gratitude.

Lest we forget.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### National Senior Safety Week

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As MLA for Calgary-Fish Creek I'm proud of our active agers, the people that truly built this province, and it is therefore my privilege to address the issue of senior safety.

Every November from the 6th to the 12th we recognize National Senior Safety Week. Throughout this week awareness campaigns urge us to pay special attention to helping mature Canadians stay healthy, active, independent, and safe. In my own family I have been through and continue to be involved in building ramps, installing hand rails, modifying bathing facilities, and doing all possible to minimize the risk of injury. I've also had the privilege of cohosting numerous seniors resource fairs at the local Legion, connecting public and private service providers with our growing population of aging baby boomers, and, Mr. Speaker, I intend to continue to do so.

This year the Canada Safety Council is highlighting the most common cause of injury-related hospitalization among seniors. Falls and related injuries represent a disproportionate number of potentially life-changing and critical-injury incidents in our seniors population. Among seniors, falls made up a worrisome 81 per cent of all serious-injury hospitalization in 2017-2018. This year let's attack this worrisome statistic by encouraging seniors and those caring for them to not only address fall prevention tips to help them

to live safer lives but to do risk assessments along every step of their daily lives. Some preventative measures include encouraging regular physical and mobility-focused activities, providing stability and strength and thereby reducing the chances of a fall, and investment in nonslip footwear and walking aids.

Mr. Speaker, our honoured seniors represent a growing proportion of Canadians, accounting for some 35 per cent of the current population. By 2035 over 1 million seniors will call Alberta home. I would therefore encourage all of my colleagues to make time during this week to visit seniors in their community, to learn about the safety challenges facing them, and to take time to learn and share some practical tips that clearly demonstrate the much-deserved care and respect . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

### Budget 2019

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the UCP government released their plan for Budget 2019, my office has seen a significant increase in e-mails and phone calls from folks who are worried about how this bait-and-switch budget will impact them. We have heard from single parents worried about rising school fees, folks with disabilities on AISH, and high school students who are worried that postsecondary might just get too expensive. The UCP campaigned on getting Alberta back to work, yet our province has lost over 27,000 jobs since they took office. They insisted on giving \$4.7 billion away to big corporations and that it would increase investment in Alberta, but last week EnCana took their \$55 million gift, packed up, and left. They told us that we just need to tighten our belts and to put a few things on pause. Now they are slashing the many important programs that help our most vulnerable populations live with dignity.

There are a lot of people out there who are worried about a whole range of different issues in this budget, but, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you the one thing that they all have in common: they are confused about how this budget is supposed to help make their life more affordable. They're hearing things like "making life better" and "smarter public services," but now they're going to have to pay more in taxes for fewer services.

Given that this government has seen fit to spend \$10 million to create an associate ministry of red tape while cutting public services, scrapping social programs, and making it more difficult for our kids to get an education, I think it's high time the UCP government starts cutting through their own red tape. They need to clearly explain the true costs that Albertans will pay for their reckless and irresponsible budget.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Syncrude Partnerships with Indigenous Businesses

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The oil sands are a major driver for our local, provincial, and national economies. What people don't realize, though, is that the oil sands have also benefited our indigenous Canadians. Today in the gallery we have Cheryl Robb from Syncrude and Melanie and Lloyd Antoine, owners of Antoine's Pump and Equipment Maintenance. Very early on, Syncrude worked with indigenous-owned companies as over the last 25 years Syncrude has spent over \$3.5 billion contracting with indigenous-owned companies. In 2018 alone Syncrude spent \$518 million in indigenous content contracts, which represented 14 per cent of Syncrude's total annual procurement.

Because of that partnership, there is prosperity, prosperity for these local indigenous companies and their communities. Lloyd and

Melanie Antoine support our community. Specifically, Lloyd and Melanie support Girls Incorporated of Northern Alberta, they support the Centre of Hope, and they support Keyano College, which enriches our community. They take their hard-earned dollars from oil and gas development and support their families and our communities, too.

Thank you, Melanie and Lloyd, for all that you have done. Thank you for partnering in the prosperity of our natural resources. And congratulations to Syncrude, who have just hit the 3 billion barrel milestone. They have always ensured that our entire community and indigenous peoples have been partners every step of the way.

1:50

The employment opportunities strengthen everybody. When our people are working, they can send their children to university, they can donate to our social nonprofits like the SPCA and the food bank, and local sports teams are sponsored. The wherewithal to address abused women with housing and safety, children with lunch money, our addiction-afflicted with counselling: they are all supported when our community is working.

I know that under our current government and with great industrial partners like Syncrude and with fantastic people like Melanie and Lloyd Antoine, our community and each of us as individuals will become stronger than we ever thought possible.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Premier's Travel Expenses

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the last two weeks the Premier has said that people with disabilities, former kids in care, kids in the school system all have to get by with less to pay for his \$4.7 billion corporate handout. What he didn't say is that if he wants a pancake party with his Conservative friends, he'll fly them around on private planes and make Albertans foot the bill, no problem. To the Premier. This isn't hospitality; it's hypocrisy. Will he pay Albertans back for his irresponsible \$16,000 plane ride on Air Tory?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, another day, another effort by the NDP leader to mislead Albertans. There is no such thing as a \$4.7 . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** . . . billion handout. There is the job-creation tax cut, that will create 55,000 net new private-sector jobs according to several prominent economists and this year will represent a revenue shortfall of \$100 million, not \$5.7 billion. We ran on a commitment to stop Alberta's isolation under the NDP, to build alliances with like-minded provinces. That's why we hosted several Premiers, representing 60 per cent of the population, in Calgary. We provided them with logistical support to get to the Council of the Federation, part of our effort to stand up for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 1:52.

**Ms Notley:** Those Tory Premiers supported Alberta long before this Premier's pancake plane party, Mr. Speaker.

A private plane chartered by this Premier for his Conservative friends cost Albertans 16 grand. In estimates today the Premier cited good old-fashioned Alberta generosity as the reason, yet when he defends his broken promises to kids in school, to people with disabilities, to former kids in care, the Premier shows nothing close to Alberta generosity. Why does the Premier think that children



should pay for his \$4.7 billion corporate handout and his friends take private planes?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, almost every line in that was inaccurate. We're getting used to that from the NDP leader. One of the reasons she is the first Premier in Alberta history to be fired by voters after only one election is because she isolated Alberta whereas this government has built alliances. We've managed to get nine of 10 provinces agreeing to fight Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines law. We got nine of 10 provinces to sign on to energy and resource corridors, including oil and gas pipelines. We even got the government of Quebec to join us in suing the federal government to stop the imposition of the carbon tax. That will save us billions of dollars.

**Ms Notley:** A completely different topic.

Albertans already had one Premier with a taste for partisan planes. They truly don't want another. Now, Mr. Speaker, what is very true is that this Premier is telling Albertans to tighten their belts while he buckles up his for a private plane ride with his friends. He said that we can't afford to fly firefighters into the heart of danger, but we can fly a bunch of Tories into the heart of Saskatchewan. To the Premier. Give your head a shake. Why won't you apologize to Albertans, do the right thing, and pay Albertans back?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we invited several Canadian Premiers from different parties to come to Alberta to demonstrate solidarity for the 180,000 Albertans who lost their jobs under NDP mismanagement, to show their support for oil and gas, to stand up for the construction . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Hon. members, you would think that you would want to hear the answer to this important question. [interjections] Order.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, they're still angry with Albertans for firing them this April, but happily we have several . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members of the Official Opposition, the Speaker will hear the answer.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, while they're angry with Albertans, happily we had Premiers representing 60 per cent of the Canadian population showing solidarity with this province. In order for them to do that and to get to the Council of the Federation to fight for pipelines, we offered logistical help with one prop plane.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has a question.

#### Wildland Firefighter Rappel Program

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, today I was joined by 14 brave firefighters from the provincial rap program, and my colleague the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was joined by another 15 members at a press conference in Calgary. They are all part of the rap program, that has been cut by this Premier to pay for his \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry stooped to even further lows yesterday when he insulted them and implied they were lazy. To the Premier. These brave souls are in our Legislature today. Simple question: will you or your minister apologize to those firefighters?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, the laziness, I think, comes from that member opposite and the attacks that he said yesterday . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** . . . because overall, Mr. Speaker, the thousand wildfire personnel that we have here in the province of Alberta do an amazing job. They keep our forests safe. They keep our communities in the forested areas safe. They do an amazing job, and it's something I'm proud of. We've spent \$30 million for 1,000 seasonal wage positions, and that will continue. It is all demand driven, and we will continue to give the funds to these brave men and women, that do a great job keeping Albertans safe.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, I'll let the firefighters determine who's working hard on this file, me or the minister.

The rap program only brings on elite firefighters who are willing to literally jump into the middle of a blaze to put it out. Firefighter Logan Mahoney said this of the program's cancellation, quote: we would like to stress that this has a major effect on safety and that you can't measure damage that didn't happen. Unquote. To the Premier: are you willing to put the safety of Albertans and their homes at risk just to save money to pay for your corporate giveaway while you're insulting firefighters?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, again, the premise of that question is ridiculous. We do actually have the human external cargo program, that is an alternative to the previous rap program, and it's something that Alberta Parks has been using for decades. It's a proven technology and its proven methods that actually go out – and in the backcountry it's been used to rescue people. It's something where there's been a two-year pilot program that's already been in place, and it's something that's going to continue next year. That's extra certification to our brave men and women in the Alberta wildfire program, and that will continue.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are watching as this government refuses to bend, and the rap program, they say, is gone. They left our communities at risk as a result. They won't even apologize for offending the firefighters gathered today. To the Premier. These firefighters deserve respect and to be listened to. You haven't even agreed to listen to them. We have at least listened to them and met with them. Will you or your minister today commit to meeting with them and me immediately after question period?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, \$750 million is going to be committed to emergency wildfires, an emergency fund, for next year. I'd be happy to meet with Alberta wildfire members. I've done it all this year. They are brave men and women that keep Albertans safe. To try to politicize the public sector, I think, is just disrespectful, and it's something that we won't do on this side of the House. Again, happy to meet with the brave men and women, the thousand of them, that have been working extremely hard for Alberta Wildfire. I as minister am extremely proud of all the hard work that they've been doing. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has the call.

#### Emergency Management Funding

**Member Ceci:** The Wood Buffalo wildfire was the largest wildfire evacuation in Alberta's history. More than 88,000 Albertans fled their homes. It required unprecedented co-ordination between all partners. In the aftermath of the fire, Mr. Speaker, the KPMG report recommended that the province invest in a new Provincial Operations Centre to better respond to future incidents and protect Albertans. We funded it; they cut it. Why does the Premier believe

that protecting Albertans in an emergency is wasteful spending and that the \$16,000 spent on a plane ride isn't?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Myself and the Premier and a lot of MLAs spent this summer at the Provincial Operations Centre in Edmonton to tackle the northwest wildfire. I can confirm to this House that we've got a state-of-the-art facility. All the equipment that they need is embedded in that wonderful complex. What we don't need is to spend money that we don't have. While the NDP would continue with their reckless spending, we will rein in our expenses and bring balance to our finances.

**Member Ceci:** This morning the Minister of Municipal Affairs insisted that the cut to the Provincial Operations Centre was perfectly reasonable because it's, quote, a functional building, but the KPMG report states that the operation centre is "past its useful life." The abandonment of building a new facility is made all the more concerning with the word that this government is also cutting the rap firefighters program. To the Premier: we need highly trained firefighters and the necessary facilities and resources to keep Albertans safe. Are you really telling Albertans that their safety and even their lives are worth less than your \$4.7 billion handout to big corporations?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring some reality to the context of what's happening here. Next year we are going to commit \$750 million to the contingency fund for emergency responses. Emergency responses are demand driven. When there is a need, the province of Alberta steps up. Recommendations come through the department to ministers. They go to Treasury Board, and the funding is always there. It has been, and it will continue. That's just the process. Again, the fearmongering that happens on the other side is sad to see.

Thank you.

**Member Ceci:** The firefighters that my constituents in Calgary rely on are at their breaking point, and yesterday all the Minister of Municipal Affairs would do is point fingers when asked about the \$9 million shortfall that the Calgary fire department is going to experience. To the Premier, one last time: will you take responsibility and restore the rap program, properly fund firefighters in Calgary, and build a new Provincial Operations Centre? Or does every dollar have to go to your \$4.7 billion corporate handout and a \$16,000 plane ride, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has the call.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. As I earlier remarked, we have a state-of-the-art Provincial Operations Centre that's got all of the equipment and machines that we need. What we would not do is embark on reckless spending. Obviously, we are working so hard to rebuild our province. If we find that there is a need for a new building for the Provincial Operations Centre, we will do that. But at this point in time we have a functional Provincial Operations Centre that works and meets our goals. What we will not do is embark again on reckless spending.

#### Rural Education Funding 2019-2020

**Ms Hoffman:** The chair of Sturgeon public schools wrote to the Minister of Education on November 1: "Several significant changes arising from the 2019 Provincial Budget far exceed that which our

rural Division can bear." The letter itemizes \$3.3 million of lost provincial funding this year and says that next year "will mean further draconian cuts and fee increases for our families." The Minister of Education says that her cuts don't exist, so to the Premier, then: is the Sturgeon public board chair lying?

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the record, every student that walks through our doors in any school is going to be funded at the exact same level as last year. We are spending \$8.223 billion in the 2018-2019 year. We're spending \$8.223 billion in the 2019-2020 year. By reallocating restrictive grant funding and eliminating reporting requirements, we have reduced red tape and provided boards with additional flexibility to meet their local priorities.

**Ms Hoffman:** I quote:

To balance the 2019/2020 Budget the Division will deplete our limited reserves, increase fees, and reduce staff across all Schools and Departments. The cuts will be deep and have a lasting effect.

These deep cuts send a clear message that rural education does not matter.

That's from the board chair, Terry Jewell. To the Premier: why are you prioritizing a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout and making kids in rural schools pay for it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The truth of the matter is that all summer long, late summer, early fall, I met with school boards, and one thing that they told me over and over and over again was that they want sustainable, predictable funding. We have a new funding assurance model that we'll be rolling out in the new year, and part of that will be the sustainable, predictable funding. Again, every single student that walks through our doors will be funded, is going to be funded, was yesterday, will be tomorrow.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** I quote:

The communities served by Sturgeon Public Schools elected your Government with the belief that you and your Government would honour your commitments to our children, staff, communities and to Albertans . . .

The spirit of hope that accompanied your promises to the students within our collective care has been replaced by grave concern for the future of rural education and the communities that are the heart of a vibrant Alberta.

These are the Premier's supporters, Mr. Speaker. Is the Premier calling the Sturgeon public school board chair a liar? It sounds like his minister is.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I totally – totally, totally – do not agree with that statement. What I heard over and over again from our rural boards is the absolute support that this government is showing to our rural communities. It's unprecedented. Actually, I was in communities where they haven't seen the Minister of Education in decades, if at all ever. Therefore, I would just like to reinforce again that school boards are in the best position to deal with their budgets, and we are funding every single student. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Interprovincial Relations

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are frustrated with our current position in Confederation. Albertans know that we need to get a fair deal in Confederation. Albertans also know that to do this we need allies, and unfortunately under the previous NDP government some of our closest allies like Saskatchewan were alienated and pushed away. To the Premier: what has our government been doing to repair and build alliances to support Alberta's interests? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

You are a lively bunch this afternoon, but the hon. Premier has the call.

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, for the folks at home, the government is not heckling. It doesn't heckle. It's the opposition that's angry with Albertans for firing them last April. One of the reasons that happened is because the NDP isolated Alberta. They picked fights with our best friends right next door in Saskatchewan. They mocked the Premier of Ontario, who supports us on pipelines, on the carbon tax, on C-69, and on all of our vital economic interests. Instead of picking fights with other provinces, we've been working to build a coalition to help us get pipelines built, to scrap the carbon tax, to stand up for our vital economic interests.

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, given that I think Albertans feel that one of the primary barriers to our success and fairness in the federation is Prime Minister Trudeau, the federal Liberals, and the NDP and Greens who are propping them up and given that alliances with like-minded provinces are critical to standing up to a hostile federal government, to the Premier: could you please tell us how the alliances we are building with other provincial governments will help push back against federal policies like C-69, C-48, and the carbon tax, that are prejudicial against Alberta?

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you to the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report to the House that in part through Alberta's leadership under this government we managed to secure the support of nine of the 10 provinces and two of the three territories to call on the federal government to not proceed with the No More Pipelines law, Bill C-69, which the NDP could not bring itself to oppose for almost its entire tenure in government. I'm also pleased to report that we had several provinces speak out against Bill C-48, and I anticipate several provinces will support our constitutional challenge against the No More Pipelines law.

**Mr. Orr:** Given that the previous government thought that our best course of action was to forge an alliance with Justin Trudeau and given that the NDP-Trudeau alliance was a disaster for Albertans, to the Premier: can you explain how our government's approach to standing up to the federal government and advocating for the interests of Albertans will be more successful than the NDP alliance with Justin Trudeau's Ottawa Liberals? [interjections]

2:10

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I hear the NDP leader quite inappropriately heckling because she doesn't like to hear the truth about how her deal with Justin Trudeau sold Alberta down the river. She was in his office mugging for the cameras the day that he announced that he'd killed Northern Gateway and that he was going to bring forward the tanker ban. Instead, I'm pleased to tell the House that we even have the government of Quebec joining us at the Supreme Court of Canada to argue against the federal imposition of the carbon tax, that will cost Albertans billions. One of the ways we built this coalition was through the Stampede Premiers' meeting

that brought together Premiers representing 60 per cent of the population in the defence of our interests.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

### Rural Police and Sheriffs

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The Justice minister talks a big game about how he's going to add 500 police officers to take real action to combat rural crime in ridings like St. Albert. Bluntly, he promised more boots on the ground. Yesterday we learned that there are, in fact, no new boots on the ground. Maybe some different shirts, maybe new badges, but no new officers. Why did the Minister of Justice abandon such a public promise to rural Albertans to pay for his \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education is rising.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Alberta at the moment, just for some clarity for the members opposite, provides two very important grants to our cities and to our municipalities. The first, of course, is the municipal policing assistance grant, the MPAG, and the other is the police officer grant, the POG. The province stated quite clearly that neither of these grants will be reduced to our cities.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Given that boots on the ground means fish and wildlife, commercial vehicle enforcement, and Alberta sheriffs and given that all three of these branches saw their funding reduced by this minister's budget – that's on page 150 of his estimates, by the way – why does this minister think rebranding a smaller number of officers is going to do anything at all to address rural crime?

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Our government wants rural Albertans to know that we have listened to them, unlike the former government, unlike the members opposite, who did nothing to address rural crime in the province. We have listened to them, we have heard them, and we are standing with them. We are doing everything that we can to strengthen crime protection and fight crime in rural Alberta.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Try to follow along. Given that the minister says that none of these officers will be trained and ready until the fall of next year and given that this minister's policing budget will drop below 2018 levels – that is on page 108 of his fiscal plan – Minister, when will you come clean with the people of St. Albert, Rocky Mountain House – you name it – about your paper-thin plan that is actually taking police right out of communities?

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Mr. Speaker, the only paper-thin plan was the one that the members opposite were operating from as they were trying to tackle rural crime. We have a robust five-point plan to help us address and fight rural crime within the province, including an announcement that we made the other day regarding the creation of the RAPID force. This force will put more first responders into more rural areas. The government will be creating the Alberta provincial integrated police force, also the RAPID force, as I mentioned, and grant additional roles and authorities to Alberta sheriffs to take some real action on rural crime.

### Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services

**Member Irwin:** A United Conservative government will not address this issue, will not engage in this debate, will not initiate legislation. Mr. Speaker, these were the comments made by this Premier earlier

this year. What was he talking about? Abortion. Fast-forward a few short months, and what do we have? An MLA from the Uterus Control Party introducing a bill that's all about abortion. To the Premier: will you stand by your words and declare in this House today that you will not support this bill? Simple question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to talk about a private member's bill, let alone one that hasn't even been introduced yet. There is, of course, time and a place to debate private member's business, as the member opposite well knows. I would suggest that the member opposite wait and read the bill in question.

**Member Irwin:** Given that trans and gender-diverse Albertans continue to face a number of potentially fatal barriers when accessing the health care system, including long wait times for gender-reaffirming surgery, and given that when conscience rights are invoked, we know this can mean that vital services for LGBTQ2S-plus folks can be denied – absolutely unacceptable in 2019 – to the Health minister: will you commit in this House right now to ensuring that queer and trans people will face no additional barriers to accessing health services under your watch?

**Mr. Shandro:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, the 29 health professions that are in this province who have colleges all have standards of practice that prohibit discrimination.

**Member Irwin:** Given that a few weeks ago my colleague from St. Albert introduced a motion calling for increased access to reproductive health services where there's a desperate need, particularly in rural Alberta, and given that the members opposite refused to support this motion, claiming it was divisive – but it wasn't just about abortion; it was about access to critical services like birth control, midwifery and fertility treatments – and given that this Premier has also claimed that he will allow his members to vote by their conscience, to the Premier: will you force the entire government caucus to support a bill that hurts access to reproductive health care?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would caution that it wouldn't be appropriate for members to comment on a decision that's already been made by the Assembly.

If the minister of status of women would like to, of course, she would be welcome to.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's sad that the opposition lacks the sensitivity that is essential for a respectful conversation surrounding issues. Interestingly enough, during that motion half of that caucus didn't even show up to vote, so . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mrs. Aheer:** . . . let's talk about that for a minute. Secondly, it's clear, absolutely clear that instead of trying to bring people together . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear. It is clear that the goal of this opposition purely is to drive a wedge between Albertans. As the minister of multiculturalism . . . [interjections] You know what? There is an opportunity for respectful discourse in this place. I am honoured to have the debate.

**The Speaker:** Of course, the hon. minister of the status of women would know that referring to the absence or the presence of a member would be wildly unacceptable, and I'm sure she'll be happy to apologize after question period.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

### Child Protective Services Caseload

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I managed youth shelters, we worked with kids on temporary and permanent guardianship orders. For context, these were kids whose guardian was the provincial government that were placed in a homeless shelter and often assigned to a caseworker with caseloads of 25-plus high-risk kids. That was four years ago. We knew back then the caseload pressures and the challenges that were created for front-line employees. For four years we also saw the previous government fail to adequately fund caseload growth. To the minister: how are we going to do better for kids?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Despite what we've seen in terms of a cynical campaign of calculated misinformation by the NDP designed to scare and shame vulnerable Albertans, I'm going to present the facts. Unlike the previous government, we have a thoughtful and well-funded plan to ensure that government resources are targeted to at-risk children, youth, and families. Our government increased Children's Services' budget by 8.5 per cent this year, 15 per cent over the next four, and our child intervention budget alone saw an increase of \$68.5 million. That is after we fund the \$5.7 million . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the thoughtful response to this important issue.

Given that the lack of funding by the previous government for caseload growth has led to increased pressures for front-line caseworkers and given that increased pressures on front-line caseworkers has led to increased burnout and poor staff retention and given that it takes time to fill positions and train front-line employees to ensure that they are prepared for the challenging work ahead, what are we doing to help recruit, qualify, and train new employees to help manage the shortfall created by the previous government's failure to act?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

2:20

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We do have some challenges in Children's Services as it pertains to retaining and recruiting new front-line staff. We have maintained all front-line staff positions within this year's budget. We will continue to fill those positions. I'm also relying on the expertise of our front-line staff and management, who are working together, especially in some of the rural and remote areas of our province, on how we can best identify some of the challenges and begin to recruit and retain more staff in those very important roles.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that our front-line caseworkers often have very challenging work environments and given that their success or failure affects so many young lives and given that failure to communicate problems and issues within the department leads to

children falling through the cracks, to the minister: what are we doing to help support our caseworkers at all levels of the ministry to reduce potential burnout and the resulting attrition in our front-line services?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing to do this review, and we're undertaking this review with the AUPE and our front-line staff to determine some of the biggest impacts to front-line caseworkers. I want to say that we also work very closely with our community partners, and despite what the members opposite have been saying, we are continuing to fund multimillion-dollar partnerships with our community partners to continue to target supports for at-risk children, youth, and families who need it the most.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Public Service Wages

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Neither [our leader] nor the UCP are proposing cutting pay for public sector workers." That was a message this Premier's official Facebook account sent to an Albertan concerned that the UCP would cut the wages of teachers, just before the election. The UCP said that concerns about wage cuts were just fear and smear, but we now know that they want a 2 to 5 per cent rollback for the many hard-working public servants. Will the Premier just admit that massive wage rollbacks were part of his plan from the beginning?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we took several months this summer to take a look at Alberta's finances. We commissioned the MacKinnon panel for a report to do a deep dive into our finances and to provide a path to balance. What the MacKinnon panel found is that public-sector wages in this province are significantly higher, in many cases, than those in other provinces. We have a responsibility to deliver sound fiscal management on behalf of Albertans, and we will deliver that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier also claimed publicly that, quote, the UCP knows the value of our front-line public servants, end quote, right before directing his Finance minister to seek a cut in wages and given that hundreds of thousands could see their pay cut so that this Premier can pay for a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout, to the Premier: how can you say that you value the people who care for our loved ones and clean our schools when you're planning to lay off so many and cut the wages of the rest who remain?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, this side of the House has a great deal of respect for those public-sector employees, that deliver top-quality services every day on behalf of Albertans. We believe that our position is very defensible considering the losses that so many other Albertans have taken in the last four years with decreases in pay and in some cases, in many cases losing jobs altogether. We believe that we're providing a very defensible, responsible position going into public-sector negotiations.

**Ms Gray:** Given that this Premier promised Albertans that he wasn't planning to cut the pay of our public-sector workers before the election and given that day after day in this House the Official Opposition points out the many places where the Premier misled or wasn't up front with Albertans about his true plans, to the Premier:

will you now finally admit that you said what was necessary to get elected and now we are seeing your true colours?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, this government took time to become well informed to make responsible, sustainable decisions on behalf of all Albertans, including the public sector. One thing we will not do is reperform the recklessness of the previous government, the members across the House, who drove this province into an unsustainable spending trajectory, spending 4 per cent per year every year, over and above the previous, while revenues remained flat, driving us to over \$100 billion of provincial debt. We will not reperform that irresponsibility.

### Edmonton LRT Valley Line Funding

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, residents in my community are deeply concerned that this UCP budget will scuttle the long-awaited west leg of the valley line LRT. The Minister of Transportation has offered them no hope that this project will actually proceed. Instead, his government has snuck a clause into Bill 20 that allows them to pull funding to the project without cause. To the minister: why are you playing games with an LRT line that my constituents have been waiting for for so long?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member ought to know that what he just suggested is not, in fact, accurate. We promised to fulfill our promise of \$3 billion for LRT, including \$1.47 billion to Edmonton. A section in the legislation before this House right now actually confirms that very commitment of this government. The hon. member ought to know better. We are actually looking forward to the LRTs being built in Calgary and Edmonton, and we intend to work co-operatively with both cities.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, given that the bill before the House gives the government 90 days to cancel that project without cause and given that it's not me saying that the project is in jeopardy but, rather, Mayor Don Iveson and given that this government has hoped to sneak the clause to kill the valley line LRT past Albertans by cramming it into an omnibus bill that also raises taxes, cuts tax credits, and leaves Albertans paying more and getting much less, to the minister: are you willing to admit that you intend to kill the valley line LRT to help pay for your \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's been well established that the \$4.7 billion is not accurate. Experts have said so. I've also made it clear in the legislation that the money will be available for Edmonton. I appreciate that the hon. member is trying to make a point, but he actually ought to stick to the facts because the facts are that our government has committed to the funding for the LRT line and that our government will deliver the funding for the LRT line. We look forward to working co-operatively with the city of Edmonton in the construction and planning of that same line.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, given that the \$4.7 billion figure is on page 144 of this government's budget and given that we get nothing but rhetoric and finger pointing from this minister and given that the residents in Lewis Farms, Secord, Rosenthal, and all of west Edmonton are waiting on the valley line LRT and want certainty that it will be built as quickly as possible, to the minister: will you commit here and now to removing this heavy-handed clause from your terrible piece of legislation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the hon. member that the city of Edmonton, to my knowledge, hasn't had any complaints about the cancellation clause in the federal funding on the very same project. I don't know why they would have a complaint about a similar clause in the provincial funding. On that basis, I look forward to working with the city of Edmonton. I hope the hon. member will actually change his mind and get on the bus and actually support the city of Edmonton in working with us in getting the LRT built. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The Official Opposition will come to order.

The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

### Teachers' Retirement Fund Management

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that every member in this Chamber can agree on the pivotal role that teachers play in setting our young people up for success. I know that our government values their contributions to this province. I have been made aware of a considerable amount of misinformation surrounding our government's announcement on the Alberta Investment Management Corporation becoming the exclusive manager of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund. Can the Minister of Finance please clarify why our government is proposing this change?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having the ATRF use AIMCo as their investment manager reflects our commitment to make government more efficient, remove redundancies, and provide more value for taxpayers' dollars. Because AIMCo invests substantially more assets than ATRF, it can benefit from economies of scale and deliver with lower costs. The combination of similar or better returns for substantially lower costs creates a compelling rationale for AIMCo to manage these investments. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has the call.

2:30

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that many teachers have reached out to my office voicing concerns over a perceived loss of control over their pensions and given that this perceived loss of control has many teachers worried about AIMCo's management, to the Minister of Finance: can you assure this House and teachers in Brooks-Medicine Hat that the ATRF will have strategic control of the fund?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure you that teachers' pension compensation benefits will be unchanged. There are no changes to the plan itself. The only thing that is changing is the investment manager of the funds. The ATRF will continue to be the trustee for the plan, and it will continue to manage the administration of the pension. The ATRF board will remain in control of determining how the pension funds are invested at a strategic level as well as retaining ownership of the plan's assets. That is, AIMCo will invest according to the policies set by the ATRF board.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the language that has been communicated to my office has verged on inflammatory

and given that there is considerable fearmongering around hijacking of teachers' pensions and, further, given that in all likelihood the health of the fund will improve under lower administration costs, to the Minister of Finance: is there any concern about government influence over the fund, and can you elaborate on the potential health of the fund after making this proposed change? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford will come to order when the Speaker is on his feet. This is not the first time this week that we've had this conversation.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the ATRF board will remain in control of determining how the pension fund will be invested at a strategic level, and the ATRF will retain ownership of the plan's assets. AIMCo's mandate is to provide the best returns for the owners of the assets that they manage. We have great respect for AIMCo's independence, and we are confident that they will deliver excellent returns at a low cost for teachers.

### Drinking Water Quality in Daycares and Schools

**Mr. Schmidt:** An article in *StarMetro* this week revealed that more than 10 per cent of daycares in Alberta have drinking water that exceeds the maximum allowable concentration of lead. Lead is a neurotoxin that impedes children's brain development. It can cause behavioural problems and result in loss of IQ. It's unacceptable that our government will allow our children to be exposed to lead. To the minister: what action will you take today to stop kids from being poisoned by the lead in the drinking water at their daycares?

**Mr. Shandro:** It's a good question, Mr. Speaker. I've been advised by AHS, and both I and the Minister of Education have let those school boards know that AHS is there to be able to provide the support to be able to do the testing and to be able to provide any strategies that might be required to mitigate any safety concerns for our children.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that the same article identified that a quarter of all schools tested in the Calgary Catholic school board and the Elk Island public school board also had drinking water that exceeded the maximum allowable concentration of lead and given that testing of drinking water in schools isn't mandatory so we don't know how many schoolkids are being exposed to lead on a daily basis, what will the minister do today to prevent our children from being poisoned by the lead in their drinking water in schools?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. Of course, we're very, very concerned about this issue and concerned about the water that our children are drinking. School boards and municipalities are the ones that are testing and monitoring and maintaining water supplies, and as my hon. colleague has already said, AHS and my department are willing and wanting to assist anyone who needs it so that we can deal with this particular issue.

Thank you.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that the lead issues are easily solved – you simply replace the lead plumbing – but given that this government has handicapped municipalities and school boards by drastically cutting their infrastructure grants, to the minister: are you really going to stand in this House and support a \$4.7 billion corporate handout but deny any funding to fix the dangerous problem of lead poisoning in our schools and daycares?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said previously, AHS is there to be able to provide the supports for our schools in this province, to be able to do any testing that's required, and to be able to help them with any mitigation, any strategies that might be required to be able to help make sure that our kids are safe.

**Ms Notley:** By treating the lead poisoning: is that what you're saying?

**The Speaker:** Order.

#### **School Construction Needs in North Edmonton**

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has done nothing to address the growth pressures of north Edmonton schools. For years now the parents and students in my constituency have been in dire need of a new public and a new Catholic high school. In her announcement there was not a single project to address the needs and concerns of the residents of north Edmonton. Can the Minister of Education please clarify why she's fighting for a \$4.7 billion corporate handout but won't do a thing for the people in the area that I represent?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the election we made a promise to Albertans that our government would continue to build schools. We have actually carried through with that promise in Budget 2019. We are supporting 25 new capital projects for the education system, an increase from the total amount, increased from the previous government, of 2018. This includes 15 new schools which will be built across the province, including brand new schools in Calgary, Edmonton, Leduc, Blackfalds, and Langdon. Six schools were slated for replacement, and four will receive modernizations or additions.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, given that that list doesn't include north Edmonton and given that Queen Elizabeth high school in my area is in dire need of upgrades to the point that the school board would rather replace it and given that the minister and this government are putting no-jobs corporate giveaways ahead of the needs of my constituents, can the minister please tell me and my constituents and the people of north Edmonton specifically when they will get the new high schools they need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year at budget time we receive from school divisions approximately 300 asks for schools and replacements or modernizations. We only have limited funds, and what we are doing is building 25 new capital projects in this budget year. Through these significant investments our children will continue to learn in up-to-date spaces and safe spaces, resulting in better successes in our classrooms. We will be addressing future capital issues in the next budget.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Given that there was \$4.7 billion for corporations and given that enrolment continues to rise in Edmonton schools and they're already packed to the brim in some areas of the city and given that to address the capacity issues, work on building new high schools would need to begin immediately, can the Minister of Education please tell my constituents that she will reverse this oversight and immediately build the high schools needed in north Edmonton? If not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member knows, there is a matrix in place. Every school division puts in a three-year capital plan, and on that capital plan they prioritize their asks for the upcoming year. Then it goes to our department, and we go through a very long process in terms of determining which schools need to be built and addressed. As I've said, 15 new schools across this province are being built, including schools in Edmonton. Four new schools were announced in Edmonton, whether they were schools or modernizations. We also will continue to build modulars to address . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North has a question.

#### **Mental Health and Addiction Services**

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past weeks I have attended several events on the topic of mental health. Albertans from all walks of life face mental health challenges, and diagnosis rates are higher than ever. Education and awareness likely play into these growing diagnosis rates; however, services are often too costly to access, especially for our vulnerable youth. To the associate minister: what steps are our government taking to ensure that Albertans have access to affordable mental health services?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister of mental health.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for asking this very important question. On this last Monday we announced a new direction this government is taking. We appointed a mental health and addictions advisory committee. They are going to focus on developing a full recovery-oriented continuum of care to help Albertans to create multiple pathways to get the help they need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our United Conservative government has committed to investing \$100 million to implement a mental health and addictions strategy and given that during these tough economic times this investment should be made where it can have the biggest impact per dollar, where is this new money being spent, and how will it help people to move forward into a life of recovery and wellness?

**2:40**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud that our government, under a very difficult fiscal environment, committed \$100 million to help people to increase their access to recovery-oriented continuum of care. In that continuum of care we're going to focus on prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery. You have already heard us. We committed to 4,000 treatment and recovery spaces. Within that parameter treatment beds, detox beds, outpatient services, and community support will all be provided. In the coming months we're going to be informed by this advisory committee; more services will be guided through the advisory committee. We're going to engage Albertans at large to contribute what they can to work on this.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans face challenges in regard to addiction, depression, anxiety, and other issues and given that many of us have seen first-hand the potentially

devastating impact that untreated mental health and addiction can have on communities, to the associate minister: how is our government going to help Albertans and communities who have been affected by someone else's mental health and addiction?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for this great question. You are absolutely right. Mental health touches the lives of our family, our community, and our business. Unlike the previous government, that didn't seem to care about the community, the business, and they don't care about needle debris, our government will provide the support that Albertans need. We'll also keep the interests of our families and communities and safety at heart. We'll balance both.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Ceremony in Honour of Indigenous Veterans

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, prior to rising and departing for the weekend or sticking around for the very important Members' Statements and daily Routine that will follow, I'd just like to bring something to the attention of members of the Assembly if you'll indulge me for just a couple of seconds.

Earlier today, as many of you know, there was a ceremony that was held to honour indigenous veterans. This ceremony had a number of moving parts, but the Speaker invited them into the rotunda as late as early last week. There were some errors that occurred. Unfortunately, the Official Opposition didn't receive the appropriate invite to speak at that ceremony or to be acknowledged. That is an oversight on my part. I apologize for that, although the good news is that this was the first time that that ceremony took place in the rotunda. I look forward to that new tradition in an ongoing way in the Assembly with all members of the Assembly being able to participate.

Having said that, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements. If you are out on the roads this afternoon, please drive safely, and I invite you all to participate in a Remembrance Day ceremony on Monday.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

#### Budget 2019

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Alliance for the Common Good is a nonpartisan, religiously diverse association of congregations, unions, schools, and community groups representing more than 30,000 people in Calgary. On October 17 I attended their founding assembly, where they pledged to focus on four areas: mental health and addictions, building community, truth and reconciliation, and the environment. It is tremendously heartening to witness the formation of groups like the Calgary Alliance for the Common Good, but they can't address these issues alone. The sad truth is that they're being hung out to dry by the UCP government in all four areas.

In the latest budget AISH and income support were deindexed, restricting the opportunity for people with disabilities and on low incomes to engage with their community. The government says that it will not impact recipients of AISH and income supports, but the recipients know better. For years inflation has impacted their livelihood.

This government abandoned the NDP government's climate leadership plan, which reduced emissions by 50 megatonnes at the

same time as creating more than 7,300 jobs. The latest budget also cuts 36 per cent from the services to indigenous peoples and completely eliminated the indigenous climate leadership program, a program that was accessed by all 48 First Nations and eight Métis settlements.

These moves have seriously jeopardized the previous government's progress on truth and reconciliation. We see it in this budget over and over. The government is making Albertans pay for their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout.

Mr. Speaker, organizations such as the Calgary Alliance for the Common Good show the remarkable community spirit that exists in Calgary, but they shouldn't have to do this government's job for them. They need help. When is this government going to stop passing the buck, stop taking money out of the pockets of Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

#### Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and speak today about the establishment of the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation.

At a young age I told my father that I would like to be a pilot, and he proceeded to help me out right away. The next morning I found myself down at his sawmill piloting the lumber. I was very fortunate to be raised in rural Alberta and was honoured to work shoulder to shoulder in the sawmilling and forest industry for decades with many great indigenous families like the Duncans, Gerioux, Sinclairs, Desjarlais, Joachims, Whitehorses, Delormes, Morberlys, McDonalds, Wanayandies, and many others.

To see this bill pass through this Assembly, giving my lifelong friends, who are leaders in their indigenous communities, the opportunity to be true partners in the prosperity of our resource-rich province warmed my heart. It's a game changer. That is what my friends have told me, that will help indigenous communities in my constituency of Lesser Slave Lake and the rest of the province realize a higher quality of life. That is what this historic, unprecedented program is about, the quality of life of the indigenous peoples of our province.

Herb Lehr, the president of the Alberta Metis Settlements General Council, wanted to thank the indigenous minister for spearheading this, saying: he's inspirational, and he cares and wants to find a solution that is to the benefit of all Albertans as well as all indigenous people. Silas Yellowknee, the chief of the Bigstone Cree Nation, said that this is a great step forward to help First Nations work towards becoming fiscally independent.

The indigenous people in my constituency can see the hope and opportunity, opportunity to improve their quality of life and hope that their children and their children's children will be able to live a better life than they have. The message I have heard from my constituents is clear and simple. This is progress, progress that the establishment of the Indigenous Opportunities Corporation will help them in creating a better life for them, their families, and their communities.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has a statement to make.

#### Red Tape

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, sir. Mr. Speaker, red tape is one of the big issues facing investors and business owners in my constituency and Alberta. A recent World Bank annual report, titled ease of doing business, measured business regulation in 190 countries. It looks at



regulatory standards and red tape burdens on business. Scores serve as a basis for ranking economies and business environment. The report measures processes for incorporation, getting a building permit, obtaining an electricity connection, transferring property, access to credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, engaging in international trade, enforcing contracts, and resolving financial distress.

Canada ranks 23rd. This is the worst score Canada has received in the 15 years of record keeping. We have declined the last three years in a row and fallen steadily from fourth place in 2004. This is abysmal. It's concerning that we are not even in the top 20. Our biggest competitor, the U.S., ranks much better than we do at number 6.

Key takeaways from the report: with regulatory overreach, corruption increases, businesses go abroad, unemployment increases, investment leaves the country, and there was a causal relationship between economic freedom and GDP growth. Worse, this report didn't paint the real story for Alberta. The 2019 Red Tape Report Card from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business scored Alberta an F, the worst rating available.

2:50

Red tape has placed Alberta in the category of some of the worst business economies in the world. Businesses have left, unemployment increased, and investment has gone. These are the long-term results of regulatory overreach. We campaigned on getting Albertans back to work and restoring investor confidence. One of the steps we took to achieve this was the establishment of the associate ministry of red tape reduction. Under the federal Liberals and the provincial NDP, Canada and Alberta have fallen badly. This government has made the reduction of red tape a top priority. There is much more work to be done, and we will do it.

### Corporate Taxes and Government Spending

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, in the past few weeks we have heard the opposition delivering a message about a \$4.5 billion and now a \$4.7 billion corporate handout. The reality is that collecting fewer taxes is not actually a handout. It simply means that government isn't digging into someone else's pocket quite as much as it was already. While this is obviously a strange concept to some of my colleagues in opposition, it is something the current government takes pride in.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I have also been listening very intently as opposition members have discussed the electricity market. Having run a power plant for the last number of years, this conversation has proven particularly interesting. You see, as the opposition members have rightly pointed out, the coal phase-out was going to happen. However, when the NDP government decided to accelerate the coal phase-out, it cost the taxpayers \$1.4 billion via a corporate handout.

When the NDP government put a cap on electricity charges of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour and the actual price rose above that cap, it again cost the taxpayers \$800 million by way of a corporate handout into the Balancing Pool. Then, when the NDP government decided to purchase rail car contracts, which, according to private industry stakeholders I have talked to, industry was prepared to do on their own, again it cost taxpayers to the tune of \$3.7 billion, not to mention the \$2.1 billion handout for petrochemical diversification and partial oil upgraders.

Mr. Speaker, the previous NDP government enacted bad policies, made industry suffer, and then bailed them out using \$8 billion of taxpayer money. Our policies give industry much-needed relief, which allows them to continue investing in our province. That said,

when the members opposite are talking about corporate handouts and boondoggles, we should all take heed because it appears to be their area of expertise.

### Speaker's Ruling Interrupting Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a very long-standing tradition of not providing any comments during Members' Statements. There are lots of times to debate the facts in this House. You might disagree with the statement that the member makes, but there is no reason to provide comment during the statement while he is making it.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to provide oral notice that I think we might go past 3 o'clock today for the Routine.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

#### Bill 23 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice to introduce Bill 23, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019.

This bill will amend three statutes: the Court of Appeal Act, the Court of Queen's Bench Act, and the Provincial Court Act. The amendments will honour our constitutional monarchy and the history of the legal system by re-enacting a provision that will automatically change the name of the Court of Queen's Bench to the Court of King's Bench when Canada's monarch is a king, reduce the age of eligibility from age 60 to age 55 for masters in chambers of the Court of Queen's Bench to be appointed as half-time masters and for provincial judges to be appointed as part-time judges, and allow justices of the Court of Queen's Bench and the Court of Appeal to access federal funds to attend meetings related to the administration of justice without being limited to an annual \$500 per-judge amount.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

#### Bill 206 Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to introduce Bill 206, the Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019. This bill proposes that workers who receive a favourable judgment when they file a dispute with the Workers' Compensation Board will be awarded their compensation in a timely manner as well as have the potential to be compensated for any legal fees that may be incurred.

With that, I request leave to introduce Bill 206, the Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Peace River.

**Bill 207  
Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers)  
Protection Act**

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave today to introduce Bill 207, Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to commit to provincial law the fundamental freedom named in Charter section 2(a), “the freedom of conscience,” for health care providers so that these professionals never have to choose between their most deeply held convictions on one side and their jobs on the other. This bill is aligned with existing protections that many colleges and regulatory bodies governing these professions already have established and gives certainty to our valued Alberta health care providers while maintaining access to services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to robust debate in this House on the bill.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for first reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:57 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Long	Savage
Copping	Lovely	Schow
Getson	Luan	Shandro
Glasgo	Madu	Smith
Glubish	Nally	Stephan
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toews
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Hanson	Orr	van Dijken
Issik	Pitt	Walker
Jones	Pon	Williams
LaGrange	Reid	Wilson
Loewen	Rowswell	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Phillips
Ceci	Irwin	Renaud
Dang	Loyola	Sabir
Eggen	Nielsen	Schmidt
Gray	Notley	Shepherd

Totals:	For – 36	Against – 15
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[Motion carried; Bill 207 read a first time]

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** Are there any tablings for today? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received so far 254 e-mails about the ATRF, the Alberta teachers’ retirement fund. I’d like to table copies of just six of them.

I also have a tabling of an article I referred to last evening, Alberta Town Becomes Solar-powered ‘Net Zero’ Community. “The math makes total sense.” That’s from the Canadian Press.

Finally, one more article from November 1, 2019. It’s entitled ‘We Knew’: Ex Oil Boss Says Climate Change ‘With Us Forevermore.’

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by Lethbridge-West.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article entitled The UCP Budget is Leaving Albertans Dizzy, and That’s Deliberate, written by Keith Gerein.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two sets of tablings today. One is the requisite number of copies of the flight manifest for a private jet company from Calgary to Saskatoon. The flight flew back empty from Saskatoon to Calgary, costing some \$16,764.

I also have 59 e-mails and the requisite number of copies on the topic of taking control of the assets of the Alberta teachers’ retirement fund from teachers in Edmonton.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Edmonton-City Centre.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a number of e-mails to my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood from teachers who are quite concerned about this government’s proposal to take control of the assets of the Alberta teachers’ retirement fund. I’ve got 16 e-mails.

I’d also like to rise on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and table 22 copies of the same sort of e-mails from a whole number of teachers who are quite upset about this government’s plan to take control of the ATRF.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise and table five copies of multiple e-mails and letters that I have received from students in the faculty of medicine at the University of Alberta regarding their concerns over this government’s intent to legislate changes to how they allocate practitioner IDs in the opportunities in rural Alberta.

I thank several of those students for joining me today in the gallery.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have tablings on three different topics. The first is nine letters that I have received from folks who are deeply concerned about the government’s reaching into the ATRF, which has been in existence since 1939 as joint governance, and making a decision to move this over to AIMCo. They urge the government not to do so.

The second is letters from teachers about their concerns regarding their class sizes and the complexity of their classrooms and the even deeper concerns they have that things will get even more challenging with this new budget.

The third tabling I have is from the Sturgeon public schools, a letter that was sent to the minister as well as local MLAs, the Premier, and others that outlines the deep cuts that are coming to Sturgeon public, \$3.3 million this year alone. They itemize those and they say that they’re in direct conflict with what the government campaigned on and that they feel betrayed by this budget.

Thank you.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table 17 copies of e-mails from teachers upset around the ATRF pension changes.

I have two other tablings, Mr. Speaker. The first is a report produced by the Alberta Federation of Labour in consultation with

respected economist Hugh Mackenzie where they analyzed the report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's Finances and determined that should the government follow through, it would be a path to economic recession.

Secondly, I have the requisite number of copies of a second report produced by the Alberta Federation of Labour in consultation with respected economist Hugh Mackenzie where they analyze the newly released UCP budget and confirm the predictions of the Kenney recession from their previous report and suggest that these cuts could result in a cumulative negative impact on GDP of 4.8 per cent and the loss of over a hundred thousand jobs.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to table documents? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table an article from the *Calgary Herald* calling the budget "a credible budget plan." It goes on to say, "It pledges to prune back operating spending over four years, yet aims to protect priority areas such as health care, children's services and education."

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a copy of a letter I received from Alexander Grove. He's a Centre High science teacher. He says that his classroom this year is up to 34 students when it should be 25.

3:20

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, I have a tabling today. Hon. members, in accordance with section 21(1) of the Child and Youth Advocate Act I have the six requisite copies of the 2018-2019 report of the Child and Youth Advocate for the period April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

Hon. members, we are at points of order. The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), (j). At approximately 1:52 today during question period the Premier specifically was referring to the Leader of the Official Opposition and referred to her as attempting to mislead Albertans. Now, I believe that this is a fairly clear point. You've made several rulings consistently that when a member accuses another or alleges another member in this House has misled Albertans or the public, it is out of order. I know that the Premier knows better. I mean, I assume he knows better. On this first point of order I'm asking for him to apologize and withdraw his comments.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will withdraw that comment. I wish to clarify that what the Premier meant to say was: another day, another effort by the NDP to mislead Albertans. We withdraw. It's clear we're not to refer to a person in the House. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I thank you for your withdrawal and consider the matter dealt with.

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader for the second point of order.

#### Point of Order Insulting Language

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), (j). I'm going to implore the members opposite, because this is a similar example, that there is an apology along with a withdrawal as opposed to a backhanded second attempt to again infer what members are not allowed to do directly or indirectly, which you have said many times on many occasions.

At approximately 1:57 the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, in responding to a question from the Member for Edmonton-McClung, spoke directly to him as opposed to through you and said "the laziness . . . comes from that member" right there. I don't know if there's a more clear example of something, in my opinion, that's unparliamentary. That is a comment made to cause disorder. It was abusive, insulting language, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, and again "imputes false or unavowed motives" against the Member for Edmonton-McClung. I implore you to call on the government to apologize for this comment as it was an insult and offensive and to withdraw the comment.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate your encouragement. I hope that you'll do the same to your own caucus, who had a big problem with this just yesterday in repeating the unparliamentary language in their apology, in fact.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will withdraw and apologize for the hon. member's statement. I think what he intended to say is that the NDP are lazy, which is something that I'm sure all of us here would agree with. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** We got so close there – so, so close – to apologizing and withdrawing. It's always the easiest path forward. I encourage you to do so in the future.

Hon. Opposition House Leader, it's very difficult for the Speaker when you give him the high eyebrow about how he responds when only yesterday he didn't create any form of disorder for members of his caucus who basically flat out refused to apologize or, in fact, repeated the unparliamentary language in the very loose apology. The high eyebrow is not really appreciated by the Speaker.

We'll take point of order 3.

#### Point of Order Referring to the Absence of Members

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j), but there are a number of precedents. At approximately 2:17 the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women in response to a question said, referring to this side of the House, that "half of that caucus didn't even [bother to] show up to vote." Now, I'm going to draw your attention to a number of rulings. There are precedents on this, first, in *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, page 217. You know, it says that "the Speaker has traditionally discouraged Members from signalling the absence of another Member from the House." Again, there are many places that members have to be in order to carry out all of the obligations that go with their office.

There are numerous examples, Mr. Speaker, of previous rulings. In fact, you ruled against me at one point. That was on June 24 of this year. I withdrew the remarks, but you said that "we can't do indirectly what we can't do directly, which [is] to refer to the absence or the presence of a member."

There were previous rulings under Speaker Zwozdesky back on November 27, 2012. It was actually my former colleague from

Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood who referred to the absence. Again, Speaker Zwodzesky reinforced the decision and actually interrupted question period to force Mr. Mason to reframe his question during question period.

I'll also point you, Mr. Speaker, to *Beauchesne's* parliamentary practice, page 141, citation 481.

481. Besides the prohibitions contained in Standing Order 18, it has been sanctioned by usage that a Member . . . must not:

(c) refer to the presence or absence of specific Members.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is a warranted point of order, where the minister did in fact break tradition.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. In light of the time this afternoon I might just provide some comments, and then, hopefully, we'll be able to proceed in an orderly fashion. I would say that there may be some ambiguity here this afternoon as to the hon. minister of status of women. An argument could be made that she was referring to the voting record of individuals inside the Assembly, and of course a voting record could be commented on. In this case, because of the language that she used and because of my intervention during question period suggesting that she could apologize at the end of question period, I'll ask the hon. Deputy Government House Leader to apologize and withdraw. I think we've had a good example of how that can be done today. Let's see if we can all get there.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We apologize and withdraw. I just would like to point out that I think what she had said was that 11 MLAs out of the caucus of 24 voted. I don't think she intended to note that anybody was either absent or present. It was the voting record, a matter of public record. We do withdraw and apologize for that.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the apology and withdrawal. I think it would have been helpful to just apologize and withdraw so we could all move on in the most expedient way possible, but thank you for the apology.

Hon. members, we are at Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 21

#### Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate November 5: Mr. Schweitzer]

**The Speaker:** Anybody wishing to join in the debate today? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has the call.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Always a pleasure to get up in the House. As we continue to debate Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, I would very much like to introduce an amendment.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I can hand this over now and wait, Madam Speaker, until you have received the notice of amendment before I continue.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you very much, hon. member.

All right. This will be known as amendment RA1. Hon. member, please proceed.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Just for the record, I'd like to read this. I move that the motion for second

reading of Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill will negatively affect the most vulnerable Albertans, and should not proceed without further input from the public."

3:30

As has been highlighted a number of times by my colleagues on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, there are a number of effects that this omnibus bill will actually have on the Alberta public. It will significantly affect advanced education, the student financial aid assistance act, as well as affecting seniors' and health legislation. It will impact those who are receiving AISH, employment and income supports, the seniors' benefit, the seniors' lodge program. It will eliminate the regulated rate cap that was put in place by the previous government, our government.

In terms of Health, it will give the minister the ability to set conditions on issuing practitioner certificate ID numbers, and there have been at least two constitutional challenges, that were both lost, in British Columbia and Quebec, in relation to the proposed legislation that's being brought forward by this government. As well, for Municipal Affairs, it will enable the provincial government to retain a greater portion of fines collected on behalf of municipalities, and the enabling legislation gives the minister the ability to change the police costing model to charge currently exempted municipalities.

That's not all, Madam Speaker. In terms of Labour, it gives the minister greater authority to define "employee." It sets restrictions on unionized employees for what services they access from the government. It repeals the essential services replacement worker ban, of course, as has been highlighted a number of times by a number of my colleagues but specifically the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and critic for Labour here, who has brought this up a number of times. It reinstates the specific bargaining unit exemptions for budget officers, systems analysts, and auditors; prescribes limits on termination and severance pay for non bargaining unit employees; and the list goes on. It formalizes bargaining oversight by laying out that the minister can issue confidential directives to employers before, during, and after collective bargaining respecting the mandate, including terms of agreement, fiscal limits, and requests for information from employers, and it does not change exemptions at all.

Madam Speaker, these are but some of the issues that are being brought forward by the Alberta NDP caucus in opposition to the government in terms of bringing forward Bill 21, that we're highly concerned about. We're already hearing from a number of stakeholders in the communities on their opposition to a number of aspects of this piece of legislation. I think that the Member for St. Albert has gotten up and spoken eloquently about the effects that this will have on AISH recipients. As well, a number of other colleagues have gotten up in the House to talk about all of this.

With that being said, Madam Speaker, I will highly encourage all of the members of this House to support this amendment. With that, I will give you thanks for the opportunity to speak.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available on this amendment, RA1. Any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, I just want to respond to this motion. I certainly cannot support this motion. Bill 21 is very important legislation that will be required to implement our budget. The reality is that this government has inherited a very challenging fiscal

scenario within the province of Alberta, and Albertans elected us to manage our finances responsibly. We've presented a budget that we believe will do just that. In fact, we've had a number of banks that have confirmed that we have presented a very credible budget and a very credible path to balance on behalf of the province. Bill 21 is a key part of implementing that budget, so I will speak against this motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to RA1?

**Mrs. Savage:** Madam Speaker, with the agreement of the House, we would like to go to one-minute bells for the remainder of the afternoon.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. There are a number of ways in which one sustains fiscal sustainability. Indeed, looking at how much you spend versus how much you take in is an important consideration, and looking at areas where one can save money to ensure that you stay closer to within your budget is a good and reasonable thing. But you also have to carefully think about each decision you make in choosing to save money because not all choices are equal, and with the implications of them, particularly when you are dealing with systems as complex as those of a government and responsibilities as broad as those of a provincial government, that impact so many people's lives, I think it's important that we give very careful consideration to the steps we take.

That's why I find it concerning that, you know, with Bill 21 here, as with Bill 20, we see this government moving on so many fronts at the same time, with, it seems, not a lot of thought, perhaps, on some of these things. In particular, today I would like to speak about the piece in Bill 21 which allows the Minister of Health to set conditions on issuing practitioner certificate ID numbers. According to the government they are intending this as a tool to try to encourage more doctors to practise in rural and remote areas. This is a concern, I know, that has been present in the province of Alberta for some time. Now, I'm not quite sure precisely how they tie that to fiscal sustainability. It is an issue, and certainly the provision of rural health care is an important part of the government's work – fair enough – and they have included it here.

One of my concerns is that this is a fairly significant move on the part of government and one that has been tried in other jurisdictions and indeed been unsuccessful. We know, Madam Speaker, that indeed there have been two constitutional challenges against precisely this type of legislation and this type of move by government, and both times government lost. That was in B.C. and Quebec. Now, of course, we know that this government has no problem with throwing money at losing legal battles as they continue to move forward with their court case against the federal government on the carbon tax and as they intend to move forward in other areas, setting up their energy war room and other things. We know that this government likes to be litigious. Fair enough. That said, I don't think that it's the most practical way to move forward in trying to address what we recognize is a real issue, that being ensuring that we have enough doctors providing support and being willing and indeed encouraged to practise in rural Alberta.

3:40

Indeed, as I said, this has been tried in other jurisdictions. The province of New Brunswick is currently reversing their policy on this. The province of New Brunswick introduced this policy mandating where physician practitioner IDs were given out, depending on where they wanted doctors to practise, and what they discovered was that it was not successful in achieving their ends. Indeed, it created new problems for them that they had not anticipated. Indeed, the Minister of Health in New Brunswick, Mr. Hugh J.A. Flemming, said: "The physician billing number system no longer works for the province. It is flawed because it restricts the number of physicians practising, restricts the mobility of physicians and impedes recruitment." That's the Health minister.

The president of the New Brunswick Medical Society, Dr. Serge Melanson: after 30 years we've come to understand that this is a failed experiment; by removing it, we're essentially streamlining the process so that we can recruit physicians to the province faster and actually give more flexibility and options to physicians who are looking to set up practice in the province.

Madam Speaker, that sounds like they are working to cut red tape. That is one of the flagship policies of this government, but they seem to feel that in this particular instance introducing more red tape is going to improve the system. It's clear from the example of New Brunswick that they have come to see that that is, in fact, not the case.

Indeed, Dr. Melanson goes on to say, "The billing number system has not proven effective in recruiting physicians in any region of the province, rural or urban, and its restrictive nature has actually proven to deter some physicians from practising in the province."

This has been echoed, Madam Speaker, by Dr. Christine Molnar, the president of the Alberta Medical Association. Her observation is: "It's ironic that on one hand, we are witnessing reduction of proven, effective support for rural care through on-call." As we learned the other day, this government is pushing through a nearly 50 per cent reduction in payments for physicians who are currently willing to practise on-call, reducing incentives for doctors to practise in rural communities. As Dr. Molnar says, she finds it ironic that this government is moving on that front in that way while, on the other hand, they're "introducing restrictive policies that will undoubtedly inhibit rural access."

She notes that their rural members "are already stressed by a heavy burden of service." She refers to Bill 21 as "[restricting] access to billing numbers in the name of improving rural physician supply," but she notes again, as I have, that this is "a strategy that has failed in [multiple] other provinces."

Now, it's problematic, Madam Speaker, that this government is moving on what has proven to be a failed policy, that does not actually achieve the ends that they claim it would achieve, and at the same time is making an enemy of yet another health care profession in the province of Alberta. This government's track record on that in its brief six months in government so far is not a good one, looking back to Bill 9, one of the first examples we had of how this government intended to collaborate with the public sector and indeed many health care workers in this province by breaking their duly negotiated contracts.

When I raised this issue with the Minister of Health during estimates on Tuesday, his comment to me was that he believed, you know, that doctors would be willing to take the government at their word that they intend to negotiate in good faith. Madam Speaker, this government has not demonstrated good faith at any stage of their work with health care professions in this province so far. Bill 9: breaking contracts, making promises that they were not in fact

going to seek wage rollbacks, and now, of course, they are. Promise made, promise broken.

Indeed, to go back to a popular trope of this particular government and that many members who are sitting in this House today love to repeat about the carbon tax, this government did not include this intention in their platform. They did not tell doctors that they intended to take away their freedom to practise, that they intended to enforce that.

Now, I bring this up today in particular, Madam Speaker, because I have today here in the gallery several students from the University of Alberta medical program. These are some of the first doctors that will have the opportunity to practise in the province of Alberta under the new rules which this government is pushing forward through their sustainability omnibus bill. To the best of their knowledge, these students are not aware that the Minister of Health has taken any opportunity to reach out to and speak with medical students, who will be the first affected, for their thoughts on this bill. It seems clear from the comments from the Alberta Medical Association that they are not feeling that they've been heard either. What we are seeing and what I'm hearing from these students is that this will not be an effective way to convince them to go and practise in rural areas.

Now, I had a chance to speak with these students, and they've done some research, Madam Speaker. They've looked at other alternatives. Indeed, they pointed to a program, I believe, within the province of British Columbia, where they have outreach specifically to recruit students from rural areas and have particular streams within schools of medicine. If you recruit a student from a rural area, they are more likely to want to go back and practise in that area, and we see that often with teachers and with other professions. That is perhaps a better option for us to explore.

For a government that is talking about how it wants to invest more in the skilled trades and provide more opportunities for students to gain that experience across the province, perhaps they should consider one of the other suggestions that these students brought forward, that being that we work to open up more opportunities for students to train and do their practice in rural areas. Indeed, some of those students spoke to me about how they themselves have done that or some of their colleagues have. Once they have the opportunity to live in and experience those communities and learn more about the particular nuances and challenges of rural health care – because it is different from the city. We recognize that.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, members of the government often speak about the unique challenges that are faced in rural Alberta. So for doctors to practise there, they have to find other ways to approach. They may be required to be on call for a larger area. They may have less equipment to be able to work with. They might not be able to refer to a specialist as quickly. They have to have an adapted mode of practice. So giving students the opportunity to go out and get that experience, rather than simply by force of law telling them where they are and are not allowed to practise, I think could be a far more effective model, one that would not be subject to constitutional challenge at the expense of the Alberta taxpayer. It would not continue the habit of this government, so far, of picking fights and wielding a fairly heavy hand in how it approaches the health care sector.

These students care about health care in rural Alberta, Madam Speaker. They made that very clear to me. Some of them are from rural Alberta. Some of them are from other rural areas. Some of them are from urban centres. But they recognize the need to provide quality health care to all Albertans. They want to be part of that process. They want to support that, and I believe, you know, that all of our colleagues with the Alberta Medical Association do as well.

The path forward, Madam Speaker, is through collaboration, through innovation, another favourite word which this government likes to toss around, but when it comes to things like this, they seem to prefer to fall back on old things that have been tried and have failed. They have the opportunity here to look for new ways, new paths forward, but instead they are going with policies that have been subject to successful constitutional challenge and that are indeed being abandoned by other provinces in Canada. You know, I appreciate what Dr. Molnar brings up when she says – and then at the same time this government is creating disruption in so many other areas, by cutting the on-call pay for doctors, again, by nearly 50 per cent, which some doctors have said is almost guaranteed to put a life at risk.

These students also spoke to me about their concerns about how this government is deindexing AISH, how they are removing supports for vulnerable young people, pulling funding for housing for individuals who are homeless. These students recognize that when they are doing their practice and when they are in our health care facilities, their workload is increasing because we do not provide enough of those preventative supports.

3:50

Again that brings me back to where I started with this bill. Fiscal sustainability is not just about making cuts to balance now, it is making prudent decisions informed by recognizing that long-term investments or even just investments made now have long-term impacts. This government may be successful in lowering the deficit, though on this budget they certainly aren't. Their deficit is up from where we would have been as a government. Indeed, they are on a path to \$93 billion of debt, just barely behind where we planned to go while actually investing in these front-line services, working collaboratively with our health care professions to realize savings and realize improvements.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak? The hon. member for – the hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Always a safe way out.

I was quite interested to hear what the Member for Edmonton-City Centre – to give him an opportunity to conclude his thoughts. I know that, specifically, there are guests of his in the gallery who are very concerned about this piece of legislation. I know that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre supports the amendment because this refers it back to committee for further discussion, for an opportunity for the Minister of Health to meet with students like these and doctors, to come at negotiations in good faith, not through legislation. I'm curious to hear what else the member has to say.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Indeed, that is precisely why I support this amendment and believe that this bill should not be now read a second time.

To continue, these students have expressed to me their concerns that this government is creating this level of disruption throughout the health care system, making decisions like this alongside cutting wages, cutting back on RN hours, making cuts to EMS and ambulance services, which could in fact drive more health care workers, as we did see under the austerity years under Premier Klein, out of our province. Indeed, I remember that my own family doctor at that time, who had served my family for over a decade, picked up and left for the United States. It was no longer worth his while under that government to continue to practise here. This government speaks often about their concern about investment

fleeing Alberta. They seem perfectly content to drive out health care workers.

Like these students, we had physician residents that were here earlier this week who met with my colleagues and I imagine met with some government members. They were here specifically speaking again about investment in preventative supports, in particular harm reduction and other programs, which this government has continued to target and besmirch since coming into power, and expressing their concerns that some of the pivots this government may be choosing to take in how they fund addictions and mental health supports could indeed begin to drive up costs in health care and make their jobs more difficult. I can tell you that those resident students are the ones working on the front lines in the Royal Alex hospital, where they told me that they need more capacity for supervised consumption services because the spillover is landing in the halls of their hospital.

All that to say, Madam Speaker, that amongst many other reasons – again, this is an omnibus bill, which does many other things, including pausing the indexing for AISH, which again these students also have raised concerns about and so many other things – today my reason, in particular, for supporting this amendment that this should not be now read a second time is because of the further disruption this creates.

I would encourage the Minister of Health, when these students return here later this month for their regular advocacy day, to meet with them, listen to them, and hear their concerns. It's my hope that he's listening and that he will make room in his schedule to do that because the way we will move forward in improving health care in this province is not by dictative legislation and a heavy hand and the sorts of threats we are seeing coming from this government but through open negotiation and collaboration in true good faith.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members in the last minute of 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I do want to thank the Member for Edmonton-City Centre for his very thoughtful comments on some of the challenges that he has with the bill.

The challenge with a piece of legislation this size, Madam Speaker, is that these types of omnibus bills, again, popular in Ottawa – it's interesting how they're becoming more popular in Alberta now. Normally omnibus legislation is for housekeeping items. This piece of legislation could be broken, quite frankly, into a number of bills because of how many people it impacts. Now, I believe that the title of Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, is a bit of a misnomer. I think part of this bill could be renamed the Act to Raise Costs on Everyone, or the Picking Winners and Losers Act.

There are a couple of challenges that I have with this, Madam Speaker. Let's start with Advanced Education. The tuition cap is coming off, something that – you know, I think I can now safely say that I've heard it all sitting in this House in a short seven years. At one point in discussion or in a back and forth a couple of weeks ago the Minister of Advanced Education made it sound like students were asking for the tuition cap to be removed. They were asking government: "Please raise our tuition. This affordable postsecondary is just ridiculous. We should be paying more." That's the first time that I've ever heard of a student or students asking to pay more for postsecondary. I too was a postsecondary

student once, and I can tell you that I never thought: "Wow. I'm not paying enough. I should pay more." So that's interesting.

Now, I appreciate that the minister is talking about a new agreement that they're working on. The challenges when you talk to postsecondaries – and we've heard from a number of them that their costs are going up. In fact, in all of the different places in the budget, it sounds like postsecondary education is where there are the biggest increases, up to, I believe, 23 per cent. So that is going to make postsecondary unattainable for some students in this province. For every student? No. For some students? Yes. I appreciate that the minister has talked about increasing bursaries and grants, but unless those bursaries apply to every single student, you've made postsecondary more expensive and unattainable for some students.

Madam Speaker, I am a very, very big fan of our natural resources. I know that Alberta is blessed with an abundance of oil and gas, a very valuable resource. But in my opinion, our greatest resource in this province is the people, and investing in the people of this province will ensure that we continue to have a robust economy and that Alberta continues to lead the province, the country, and quite frankly the world in a lot of different areas.

In fact, I think it was just last night that I was talking about artificial intelligence and, you know, Alberta ranking third in the world. We're about to start dropping from that position, which is alarming. I think we're missing opportunities in that space.

But postsecondary is a great vehicle, Madam Speaker, to be able to ensure that Alberta is a solutions provider. We know that Albertans are entrepreneurial and innovative, but the tools and supports that help them to be successful for some students, not all, is through our PSE rates. Increasing the interest rates on student loans will make that more costly and more expensive. I'm sure it will make some students think twice.

Another area, Madam Speaker, that's of grave concern to me. I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition along with the Member for St. Albert had a number of guests who are adults that are on the AISH program. The fact that through this bill that indexing is being cut out means that – of course, every year through inflation costs go up, our purchasing power goes down, and it means less and less money.

4:00

Now, the payments that AISH recipients get are, you know – I know the government likes to talk about how they're the highest in the country. Well, when you look at some of our costs and you look at the cost of housing alone, to my understanding, most AISH recipients have just enough to scrape by, so removing indexing is going to hurt these people and hurt their ability to continue to make ends meet, Madam Speaker.

We also see that we're pausing indexing for seniors. You know, the very people who helped build this province, and you have a government through legislation saying: yeah, we're going to attack your benefits by deindexing them. Again, anyone who stands up in this House and says that that's not a cut, they're being very loose with the facts. Deindexing means less money moving forward, which is essentially a cut.

Very similarly, Madam Speaker, anyone who says that maintaining funding, whether it's education or health care, is not a cut – it is a cut. You know, a simple example in our education system this fall: 15,000 new students entering our school system. Over the next four years there will be 60,000 new students. Not adding a single additional teacher or teacher's aide or support staff means larger class sizes and is essentially a cut. There's no two ways to argue this.

In this legislation, in Bill 21, again, cutting indexing or eliminating indexing for the seniors' lodge program, for seniors' benefits is outrageous, quite frankly, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the fact that there is a desire for Alberta to get back to balance in the budget. I appreciate that. I had many conversations with Albertans who said that we want to do that responsibly and methodically. What I don't understand is that there are decisions that are being made. The answer isn't that there isn't enough money. It's that you haven't made the priority list. You're not important enough, because there are enough funds to be able to move to a path to balance responsibly, without picking fights with the public service, with teachers and nurses and doctors, saying, "You get paid too much. We're rolling your wages back," or deindexing AISH, and picking on seniors.

Madam Speaker, within 30 days of forming government, I think, from the election – I'll stand to be corrected – the government announced a \$4.7 billion corporate tax cut. There's money right out of the gate for that, but there's no money for anyone else. Everyone else: you can't; we have no money. Oh, but they did find \$16,000 for a flight. That doesn't count though. It's only \$16,000. But \$4.7 billion for a corporate tax cut: we are still waiting and, in fact, Albertans, quite frankly, are waiting for this to help incentivize jobs, but to date I'm not aware of a single job that that's helped to create.

We've heard of some amazing companies in Alberta that are, unfortunately, taking what they've gotten from a corporate tax cut and are investing it in Saskatchewan, investing it in Newfoundland, investing it in other provinces, or investing it in the U.S., but they're not investing it here. That flies in the face of the Premier and this government saying: "No, no, no. This corporate tax cut is going to help Alberta be more competitive. It's going to help businesses stay here." Okay. Well, you've yet to produce one example of that. "It's going to trickle down, and it's going to help create jobs." Well, again, haven't found a company yet. I'm looking, Madam Speaker, all the time to find companies that are going to use that to help create jobs.

Meanwhile other tools that were helping Alberta companies create jobs have been cut, have been axed. Once again, these are choices that are being made. You know, for me, it's frustrating that we're seeing the real priorities of this government.

Regarding energy, the electricity cap is coming off, so already we are hearing from groups of people around the province that are expecting their electricity prices to shoot up. Soon, Madam Speaker, you can look forward to your insurance rates going up substantially. It's ironic for a government to talk about: we're saving people money. No, you're not. You're playing a shell game, and you're actually costing people more. There's a list of fees in the budget. That means that everything is going to be more expensive, from user fees to insurance to – I'll look to my colleagues for other examples of the costs that are in the budget that are going to be going up. [interjection] Oh, of course. Thank you very much, Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Of course, you know, it's also rich, Madam Speaker, I just have to say. The other side criticizes our former government about the carbon tax, that we didn't campaign on it. Show me in your literature where you campaigned on raising personal income taxes on every single Albertan, because I'd love to see that piece of literature. You can't have it both ways. You can't attack us for saying – we actually did talk about a climate leadership plan throughout the whole campaign, and a price on carbon was part of the climate leadership plan. I understand. I'm not arguing to resurrect it. I appreciate that Albertans voted against it. But they didn't vote for you to bring in and raise provincial income taxes on

them. Not a single Albertan knew that that was something that you were going to do, nor was it something that you campaigned on.

That's in the first couple of sections. Sorry; I'm jumping ahead really quickly. Of course, my esteemed colleague from Edmonton-City Centre spoke about the government's ability to unilaterally terminate the doctor compensation agreement with the AMA. If you rip up a contract and break your word, then your word means nothing. How can any Albertan trust you when you say: "No, no, no. Here's an agreement, but we're actually not going to honour that because it's not convenient." Once again, Madam Speaker, it's not that we don't have the money. No. We spent \$4.7 billion, but just not on you. We spent it on others, that have still failed to produce the results that were promised.

Now, I get that the Premier is very excited about the MacKinnon report and because a couple of economists say that there will be jobs created. I've yet to hear a timeline, Madam Speaker. You know what? The other day I was talking to an unemployed Albertan, who said: "You know what? I need a job now, not in two years from now, when the corporate tax cut may or may not help." When I asked the Premier, I mean, his timeline was: maybe two years. So let's say to these Albertans: "You know what? I know that you have a mortgage payment coming up in two weeks. Can you wait two more years? Then maybe you'll have a job to make that payment." No.

But tools that were helping the economy grow – and, yes, our tax credits may have helped only a few hundred companies, but you know what? They were working. The numbers don't lie, Madam Speaker. We see the return on investment. We see how companies were growing. They were hiring people and helping our economy. Those tools have had the legs knocked out from under them. I'm growing tired of arguing with the minister of economic development and trade, who either doesn't get it or doesn't care, that the numbers for the tax credits were helping to create jobs. It's a tool that was working.

In this bill, Bill 21, again, attacking the very people who take care of us when we're sick, the very folks who are in high demand – I mean, you know, let's talk about rural Alberta and access to doctors and to health care. We have members of the government stand up daily and talk about either a care facility in their constituency or the need of a hospital or refurbishing or upgrading a hospital. I guess the plan is: let's fix some buildings, and then let's not worry about having anybody work in them. That was actually the MO a couple of governments ago, where they would build shiny buildings, and then they wouldn't staff them. The Member for Edmonton-North West remembers some of the schools that were built, yet there was no money for teachers or staff. That's great; so now there are empty buildings.

Other areas of this piece of legislation attacking workers: again, it opens up when it comes to labour, in addition to going after doctors . . . [Mr. Bilous's speaking time expired] Time flies when you're having fun, Madam Speaker. I have many more things to say.

4:10

**The Deputy Speaker:** There is an opportunity for Standing Order 29(2)(a) to be used. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview sharing his thoughts on this bill. I know that there were a couple of other things that he wanted to touch on, so I don't want to take up much time. I was hoping he might share those because I think those are important things that we need to know when we're making critical decisions about an



omnibus bill that, quite honestly, I think should be renamed the Act to Make Life More Difficult. If he could share his thoughts.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I'll thank the Member for Edmonton-Decore. I'll wrap up my comments here. It is my pleasure to speak to second reading and to speak in favour of this amendment that gives the government an opportunity to pause on this bill. I mean, I've tried to highlight some of the areas that I think are very, very challenging and very problematic for a number of Albertans. In fact, the personal income tax increase affects absolutely every single Albertan, but this one for seniors, for people on AISH, for supports for the most vulnerable, for our doctors, for labour, for our public-sector workers – really, I encourage the government to look at this amendment that merely sends it to committee so that, you know, some of the consequences, intended and unintended, can be reviewed. It allows for the government to have good-faith conversations with the very groups that it's trying to legislate.

You know, Madam Speaker, the labour unrest that Bill 21 will cause is significant. I don't know if you recall, but years ago a former PC government tried to bring in a number of different pieces of legislation attacking public-sector workers. They caused wildcat strikes all over the province. It caused massive disruptions, and it cost money.

Under our government, in four years, do you know how many labour disputes there were and unrest that caused an economic impact on the government or a real impact on service delivery for Albertans? You guessed it. None, because we met with these folks at the bargaining table in good faith. You know what we said? For many of these public-sector workers we asked them to accept zeros for a couple of years because Alberta was in a tough spot. We recognized the private sector was hurting. A lot of people had lost their jobs, but we said to the public sector: "Your salaries don't spike when prices go up. When the economy is hot, you're paid the same, but you have stability because when the economy hits a recession, you still have a good-paying job." We asked them through good-faith negotiations, and they accepted. They said: we understand that we need to do our part.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that legislating to roll back people's wages or open up agreements is an attack on working people. I think it will permanently question the faith and trust that the doctors and others have in this government to honour their word. If you don't have your word, then I don't know what you have.

With that, I will urge all members to support this amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment RA1?

Seeing none, I shall call the question on amendment RA1 as moved by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:15 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Eggen	Nielsen
Dach	Gray	Renaud
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd

Against the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Milliken	Schulz
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Nicolaides	Stephan
Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	Toews
Issik	Orr	Toor
Jones	Panda	Turton
LaGrange	Pon	van Dijken
Loewen	Reid	Walker
Long	Savage	Wilson
Luan	Schow	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 30
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[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to the main bill?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:19 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Milliken	Schulz
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Nicolaides	Stephan
Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	Toews
Issik	Orr	Toor
Jones	Panda	Turton
LaGrange	Pon	van Dijken
Loewen	Reid	Walker
Long	Savage	Wilson
Luan	Schow	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Bilous	Eggen	Nielsen
Dach	Gray	Renaud
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd

Totals:	For – 30	Against – 9
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[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a second time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, November 18.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:24 p.m. to Monday, November 18, at 1:30 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, November 7, 2019**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1313-26 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1329-31 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1347-57 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve.*), 1357-62 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c8 ]

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c5 ]

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cR-8.2 ]

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c4 ]

**Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c3 ]

**Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1375-83 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c7 ]

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 , passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cP-41.7 ]

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c2 ]

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cF-1.5 ]

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1393-94 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c9 ]

**Bill 13\* — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1345-47 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1383-93 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 cA-33.5 ]

**Bill 14 — Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act (Wilson)**

First Reading — 1654 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1655-77 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft.*), 1679-95 (*Oct. 9, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1708-25 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft.*), 1761 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft.*), 1763-67 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1768-70 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn.*), 1785 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cA-26.3 ]

**Bill 15 — Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019 (Glubish)**

First Reading — 1707 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1758-61 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1767-68 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1783-85 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c13 ]

**Bill 16 — Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 1782 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1810-17 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1817-18 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1911-15 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 c12 ]

**Bill 17 — Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act (Sawhney)**

First Reading — 1798 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1819-28 (*Oct. 17, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1915-26 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1949-59 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cD-13.5 ]

**Bill 18 — Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019 (Savage)**

First Reading — 1850 (*Oct. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1926-29 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft.*), 1931-45 (*Oct. 22, 2019 eve.*), 1947-49 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1959-66 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1978-90 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1990-94 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft.*), 2037-41 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2055-56 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c11 ]

**Bill 19 — Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 (\$) (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 2053 (*Oct. 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2123-26 (*Oct. 31, 2019 aft.*), 2146-57 (*Nov. 4, 2019 aft.*), 2177-79 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2237-49 (*Nov. 6, 2019 eve., passed*)

**Bill 20 — Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2056-66 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2089-2100 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve.*), 2167-77 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2227-37 (*Nov. 6, 2019 eve., adjourned*)

**Bill 21 — Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019 (\$) (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2066-74 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2100-10 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve.*), 2159-67 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve.*), 2193-2212 (*Nov. 5, 2019 eve.*), 2265-70 (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 23 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019 (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201\* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 825-38 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 cP-30.6 ]

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 838-40 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft.*), 1115-22 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft.*), 1882 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1883-87 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft.*), 2027-29 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c10 ]

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*), 1875-82 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft., not proceeded with on division*)

**Bill 204 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Nov. 6, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

**Bill 205 — Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019 (Jones)**

First Reading — 2223 (*Nov. 6, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)

**Bill 206 — Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Reid)**

First Reading — (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)

**Bill 207 — Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act (Williams)**

First Reading — (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed on div.; referred to Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 18, 2019

Day 42

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
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Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

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Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
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(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
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Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Yao

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Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
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Sigurdson, R.J.  
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### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 18, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, please remain standing as we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by His Worship Mayor Ben Kellert. I would invite you to all participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm very pleased to welcome our very first elected anthem singer, the mayor of Killam, Ben Kellert. His Worship has recorded three albums, sung at numerous football games and hockey games and even the occasional rodeo as well as many seniors' events, including at churches and lodges. Today he is joined by his wife, Tanny. I invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this afternoon we have a School at the Legislature group visiting us from the constituency of Edmonton-South. Please welcome the students from Roberta MacAdams.

Also joining us are dedicated members of the public service, employees from the Ministry of Service Alberta. Welcome, and thanks for everything you do.

Also, guests of the Minister of Advanced Education, representatives from students' unions and student union associations from the University of Alberta, MacEwan University, and Mount Royal University.

Last but certainly not least, in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon are family members of the MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock: the hon. member's son Jaron van Dijken, his grandchildren Niko and Emma, and the beloved Mrs. van Dijken.

I invite you all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Freedom of Expression

**Mr. Jones:** Freedom of expression and peaceful protest are foundational to the academic experience, the pursuit of knowledge, scholarship, teaching, and all intellectual endeavours. The purpose of a university requires the fullest and most varied expression of intellectual life for students, faculty, and staff. Critical inquiry, discovery, exchange of diverse perspective and ideas, and open discussion and debate are fundamental to the intellectual and academic life of any institution.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right. It reinforces all other human rights, allowing societies to develop and progress. The ability to express opinions and speak freely is essential to bringing about change in a society. Free speech is not only about your ability to speak but also the ability to listen to others and allow others' views to be heard.

Mr. Speaker, every student has a right and responsibility to speak, be heard, and engage in active citizenship and peaceful protest. We have some of our own postsecondary students with us today who are here to do just that, speak and be heard. That is why our government has asked all of our institutions to implement the University of Chicago statement on freedom of expression, so that our students and faculty have the highest protections. We firmly believe that freedom of speech and expression are essential to a healthy democracy.

During this time of fiscal crisis it is important that all of us work together and hear voices from all across this province as we work towards a stronger economy with more jobs. Our government is committed to ensuring Albertans from all walks of life live healthy and prosperous lives now and into the future. While we know Budget 2019 came with some very difficult decisions, I am confident that we can work together, moving forward to make Alberta the best place to live, learn, and do business once again.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Oil and Film Industries in Alberta

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had many reach out to my office regarding the film industry, and I wanted to share a story with you today from a stakeholder who compares his experiences in both the oil and film industries in Alberta.

The well was drilled by Shell; the film, *Unforgiven*, made by Warner Brothers. Shell hires a drilling supervisor; Warner Brothers hires an executive producer. Shell hires a drilling contractor; Warner Brothers hires a production manager. The drilling contractor hires a tool push, a driller, and a derrickman; Warner Brothers hires director Clint Eastwood, a first assistant director, and a cinematographer. The drilling contractor hires motormen, roughnecks, lease hands, et cetera; Warner Brothers hires gaffers, grips, makeup, hair, props, et cetera. Both companies hire accounting and payroll people.

In the case of the 4,500 metre triple rig 110 trucks moved it to site in the mountains near Hinton; *Unforgiven* rolled about 60 trucks, but unlike a rig that moves twice in a year, the film trucks moved every day until the final month of filming. On site at the drilling rig they had roughly 30 people in camp; on *Unforgiven* at various points they had 100 people in small-town hotels at Brooks, Drumheller, and High River.

Both crews spent money in small-town Alberta. Both projects worked 12-hour days. The pay scales on drilling rigs are similar in hourly rates to Warner Brothers' film crew. The Shell rig was blue

collar; a film set is also heavy blue collar. Both crew rates are in the mid-five figures, all the way to six figures in annual Alberta taxable salaries.

Who works on the rigs and films? Your friends, neighbours, hockey coaches, et cetera, regular people trying to make a good life for their families, who love where they live. He always thinks fondly of his days on that big rig in the mountains and on the Oscar-winning *Unforgiven* set.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the stakeholders for sharing their stories with me. I will continue to highlight the toll that this budget has on Alberta families and blue-collar jobs.

Thank you.

### 550th Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Birth

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, diversity is one of Canada's greatest strengths, and Canadians benefit from our country's multiculturalism and spirit of openness. On November 12 Sikhs in Canada and around the world celebrated the 550th birthday of Sri Guru Nanak Sahib Ji. He's the founder of the Sikh religion and one of the world's greatest symbols of peace, unity, and social justice. During his lifetime Guru Nanak travelled the world promoting equality, diversity, service, and compassion, which became the core principles of Sikhism.

1:40

He brought enlightenment to people who lived in darkness, where women were considered impure and less than human. Baba Nanak condemned those who committed abuse and discrimination against women. To him, this was one of the most shameful deeds that one could commit. Guru Nanak asks in his hymns how a woman can be called inferior, from whom kings and saints are born, and says that the reproductive strength of a woman is in itself a symbol of divine supremacy.

Many Sikh Canadians bring these values to life and enrich our country every day, reminding us that the principles of inclusion and respect for all are not only at the heart of the Sikh faith but are also central to all Canadians.

On this very special day I also want to thank the governments of India and Pakistan for their beautiful gift of opening the Sri Kartarpur Sahib corridor. I am hopeful this goodwill gesture will help to ease some of the tension between two nuclear nations.

Canada is proud to be home to one of the largest Sikh communities outside India. As a member representing the large Sikh community in Alberta I wish all those who celebrated the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji the best wishes of the Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a statement.

### Premier's and Adviser's Travel Expenses

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Recently this Premier tried to justify sticking Alberta taxpayers with the bill for a \$16,000 joyride in a private plane for him, his buddies, and his buddies' wives. The Premier claimed it was just a bit of Alberta hospitality. Well, to borrow a phrase, that dog won't hunt, because while the Premier and his friends were piling into the party plane, Mr. Doug Ford, the Premier of Ontario, made the same trip on a commercial flight. It's a dark day when Doug Ford has better judgment than the Premier of Alberta.

In just a few moments we'll hear him again try to defend the indefensible. This time he's sticking Alberta taxpayers with an

\$18,000 bill for his principal adviser to make four trips to London, where he dined out 43 times, Ubered around the city, and slept in the finest hotels. Maybe he'll say that it was a trade mission. Maybe he'll say that it was a war room mission. Maybe he'll say that it was kind of like the war room but not exactly.

Those are the three different stories his office has produced so far, Mr. Speaker. The excuses don't matter. There is no government business that requires a political staffer to stay in a five-star hotel, in a historic Georgian townhouse with an attached art nouveau champagne bar. This hotel describes itself as "a home to aristocrats." It was opened by the favourite chef of French Emperor Napoleon III.

So is Alberta in tough times or not? To borrow another phrase, this Premier needs to pick a lane. Here today in Alberta teachers are being laid off, disability benefits are being cut, and people are being thrown off their drug plans to pay for the Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout.

I know there are members of the government caucus that deplore what is happening in the current Premier's office: the police investigations, the sneaky tax increases, the no-bid contracts for friends and family, and now this repeated abuse of taxpayer dollars. Albertans have seen this movie before, Mr. Speaker, and the sequel is always worse.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

### Federal Methane Regulations

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A potential catastrophic situation is about to be imposed on Alberta on January 1 with the federal backstop for both methane and carbon coming into effect. The cost to our energy sector will be enormous, and it could lead to more companies, especially the smaller gas producers, going bankrupt. In fact, the methane regulations, by the federal government's own regulatory impact analysis statement, indicate it will cost Alberta billions to comply, a cost the feds don't even try to hide.

The largest emitter of methane in the entire country lies at Toronto's waste disposal facility, but I don't hear cries to reduce those GHGs.

Our province has worked for months with the federal government to achieve equivalency, but a decision has not been made because it has rested at the political level with Justin Trudeau. That said, we shouldn't even be having these discussions as both backstops are a significant intrusion into provincial jurisdiction, and we should seriously consider a constitutional challenge. The basis of that challenge lies in section 92A of the Constitution, which states:

92A. (1) In each province, the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to . . .

(b) development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural resources and forestry resources in the province, including laws in relation to the rate of primary production therefrom.

Albertans just got rid of an ideologically driven NDP provincial government who supported special-interest groups, stacked on taxes and red tape, and imposed a carbon tax. Now the federal government wants to pick up where they left off and pile on carbon and methane regulations in their quest to decimate our province's resource sector. This is not right. Albertans said, "No more," and elected us to defend this province, and, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we intend to do.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-North West.

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, today I joined students from the University of Alberta and MacEwan University. They were protesting hikes to tuition, increased interest rates on student loans, and cuts to overall budgets.

This Premier blew a \$4.7 billion hole in the budget with a no-jobs corporate giveaway. Students are upset that the government is now asking them to pay double to dig him out of this mess. Just a few weeks ago we were presented with a budget that has drastic negative impacts on postsecondary students and institutions. The government is proposing huge cuts to postsecondary funding, doubling tuition costs, and increasing interest on student loans. In addition, the government cut the education tax credit and cancelled the student summer employment program. These changes will have significant impacts on our students. Some students have told me that they will have to delay their education or they just won't be able to go at all. These short-sighted decisions will not only just affect many of our students individually but will also hurt the economic future of our province.

Mr. Speaker, there is a better way. Under our government, tuition went from the highest in the country to amongst the lowest in Canada. We also limited noninstructional fees to postsecondary students. Our changes saved students an average of more than \$2,000 for a four-year degree.

The students were clear on the steps of the Legislature today. They should not have to pay for this government's irresponsible \$4.7 billion giveaway to profitable corporations.

### Tax Policy and Government Spending

**Mrs. Pitt:** Winston Churchill said, "For a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle." Not that that stopped the previous government. Hikes on personal income taxes resulted in lower revenue. Hikes on corporate income taxes led to lower revenue. After all that, they decided to take everything with a carbon tax. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you find yourself digging into a hole, stop digging. Some people still don't get it. The crowd that wants to spend like there's no tomorrow is now asking for a provincial sales tax. In the tough economic times that we find ourselves in, the spenders want us to dig deeper into the pockets of hard-working Albertans. This can't go on.

We have a government that is going to do better. We know that we spend more per person than B.C., Ontario, and our recipient Quebec. We know this because we took the time to study our finances through Dr. MacKinnon's review. More of the same is literally something Albertans cannot afford. We cannot continue to spend more and get less in return. We finally have a government committed to getting our fiscal house in order and getting our economy back on track. We're protecting our cherished services like health care and education while making choices so that we have better and smarter public services. We're taking a reasonable and steady approach despite what the over-the-top critics are saying. After years of being the highest spending province, we're going to do what our critics couldn't do, find 3 cents on the dollar.

### Climate Change Strategy

**Mr. Schmidt:** Climate data released earlier this month revealed that this past October was the hottest October on record. September was the hottest September on record. So was June. So was July;

2019 will be one of the five hottest years in human history. The evidence of climate change is all around us, and with only eight years left to drastically reduce carbon dioxide emissions, we are quickly running out of time to prevent its worst effects from happening.

Rapidly reducing carbon dioxide emissions is pretty straightforward. We need to invest in renewable energy, energy efficiency, public transportation, and research and development. The money to pay for these measures has to come from somewhere, and Alberta has been collecting it from heavy emitters since 2007. But this government is committed to collecting less money from heavy emitters and using that money not to reduce emissions but to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway.

We tried to get this government on the right track by bringing forward an amendment to their heavy emitter carbon price legislation that would require all the money collected to be spent on reducing carbon emissions and mitigating the impact of climate change, and we didn't even prescribe where it should be spent.

We know the UCP loves to mock purchasing shower heads and light bulbs even though those are proven ways to improve energy efficiency, but what we don't know is what they think we should do to tackle climate change. We've heard a lot from the other side about saddling future generations with debt but nothing about saddling future generations with the catastrophic effects of climate change. Eight years from now, when it's too late to do anything about the problem, the members opposite will have to explain to their children why they spent so much effort reducing the debt from \$95 billion to \$93 billion while doing nothing about what really mattered, tackling climate change.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Premier's Travel and Bill 22

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that today Bill 22 will be tabled in the House. Now, the contents of that bill are under embargo. I believe, however, that Albertans will want the Premier to account for it very much. To the Premier: why are you scurrying away to Texas instead of facing Albertans and being accountable for your actions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government was elected on a mandate to get Alberta back to work, in part by restoring investor confidence, by going around the world to tell them the story that Alberta is open for business. That's one of the reasons I'll be travelling to Texas for the next three days to meet with CEOs of some of the largest energy companies and petrochemical companies in the world, to discuss, potentially, billions and tens of billions of dollars of future investment that will create jobs here in Alberta. While the NDP used to fly people like Tzeponah Berman around attacking our energy industry, we're going to where the decisions are made to get jobs created in Alberta once again.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I suspect those investors are also going to be very interested in the health and safety of this province's democracy. The Finance minister had an embargoed press conference with media on this from which the opposition was barred, but it's not the Finance minister who's attacking our democracy; it's this Premier. Once again I ask: why won't this



Premier look Albertans in the eye and explain himself? He can't stay in Texas forever.

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I understand the opposition had a briefing on that bill today. Secondly, I'm here answering questions. I always am available every week to answer questions from the media and in this Assembly. But where the NDP drove tens of billions of dollars of job-creating investment out of this province during their four years of catastrophic economic mismanagement, we are now proactively going out to try to restore investor confidence and bring some of that money back to Alberta. That's what Albertans hired us to do, and we'll do it without relent to restore investor confidence, to once again create good jobs in the Alberta economy.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a little bit of a hypothetical question, still linked to the topic a bit: if Paul Martin had fired Justice Gomery during the sponsorship scandal, if Justin Trudeau had fired Commissioner Dion during the SNC-Lavalin case, if Stephen Harper had fired the commissioner of the RCMP during the Mike Duffy investigation, in the event that those absolutely unfathomable scenarios had ever occurred, doesn't the Premier think that those leaders would have an obligation to stick around and explain themselves to the people of this country?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition will know that *House of Commons*, page 509, would prevent the asking of a hypothetical, but if the hon. Premier would like to respond, he's more than welcome to do so.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the government isn't firing anybody, but the voters fired the NDP in the last election for their economic mismanagement, and then they hired a new government to focus on job creation. They understand that that means restoring investor confidence. You know, I have here the expense tabs of the NDP's friend and ally Tzaporah Berman. That leader of the NDP sent Tzaporah Berman around the country, costing thousands of tax dollars, to fight against Alberta's energy industry, to fight to kill jobs in Alberta. We're doing the exact opposite.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** None of those things are correct, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Premier's Adviser's Travel Expenses Public Inquiry Commissioner's Legal Contract Award**

**Ms Notley:** What is correct, private planes, luxury hotels, sweetheart deals? Mr. Speaker, pro tip: this is not what tightening your belt looks like. The Premier and his friends are living large, giving out \$4.7 billion to corporations while insurance goes up, school fees go up, vulnerable Albertans get less. The *Calgary Sun* says that Toryland is back in business. To the Premier: why are you cutting services, preaching fiscal responsibility at the same time that you fly around in chartered planes, let your staff bill Albertans for luxury hotels, and let your friends jump through loopholes to hire their family?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, none of those things is true. I don't know where to start. Is she talking about Dr. Legg, a man with a PhD from Yale, who has made a massive pay cut to help work for this government to get people back to work? You know, I've got here the NDP's friend Tzaporah Berman staying at the Fairmont Hotel, charging taxpayers for her mochas and cappuccinos at

Starbucks while she was campaigning to kill energy jobs in this province. I'm proud to have Dr. Legg going to major financial institutions to fight back for this industry and this province.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's top adviser – poor guy, only making \$200,000 a year – had to spend at least \$18,000 for luxury London trips as well. I say "at least" because we don't know how much more he expensed to the war room slush fund. First, London was a trade mission. Then it was a secret, undercover operation. Either way, this Premier's 007 needed a champagne bar and vitamin C showers. To the Premier. Albertans deserve to know what expensive tastes are being satisfied through that \$120 million slush fund. When will they come clean to Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is none. There is no such thing as a slush fund. Dr. Legg works for the Premier's office and, through it, for Executive Council. His expenses are transparent. His travel expenses were arranged by the government travel office according to government travel rules, flying economy and staying in government-booked hotels. You know what he's doing? He's fighting back against the Extinction Rebellion nonsense that the NDP has aligned itself with while they're out there in front of the Legislature campaigning for the shutdown of our energy industry. We've had to dispatch somebody to argue against that case in amongst the major financial institutions of the world.

**Ms Notley:** Actually, we were out in front of the Legislature standing up with the young people who see this government destroying their future.

Now, we also learned that the head of the Premier's public inquiry into un-Albertan activities, coincidentally a major donor to the Justice minister, gave a \$1 million contract to his own son's law firm: no bids, no business case, no oversight except by the same public official who oversaw Tobaccogate. To the Premier: did you intentionally set this up to encourage this kind of cronyism? And if not, why don't you apologize to Albertans and fix this mess?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the NDP fear and smear has no limits. Mr. Allan has 40 years of experience as one of the country's leading forensic accountants, former president of the Alberta chartered accountants institute, former chair of the Calgary Stampede, chair of Calgary Economic Development, chair of the Canadian Tourism Commission, voted the most respected member of the Calgary community, Alberta Order of Excellence recipient, has worked in the nonprofit field for the homeless, for indigenous people, for the arts community. You know, we've asked Commissioner Allan to get to the bottom of the foreign-funded campaign against this province. He's a widely respected Albertan. How dare they smear his name.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** How dare these guys exempt him from conflict-of-interest rules, just like any other Albertan.

#### **Panel on Federal-provincial Relations**

**Ms Notley:** The economy is slowing, jobs continue to be lost, and now our kids' future is in jeopardy. The Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout hasn't created a single job, and now he's trying to distract from that failure by sending Preston Manning and friends on a road show to relaunch ideas that Ralph Klein shot down in 2004. To the Premier: will you admit that this is a cynical attempt to play on people's fears, or are you trying to distract from the fact

that you are failing to create jobs and to grow the economy? Which is it?

**Mr. Kenney:** That question perfectly illustrates why that was the first Premier to lose an election after one term in the province's history, Mr. Speaker. That leader and her party are so radically out of touch with the frustration of Albertans and our role in the federation that they actually voted for the federal NDP, that got 11 per cent of the popular vote. They went out and campaigned with Extinction Rebellion to shut down our energy industry, and now they refuse to listen to the voices of Albertans who say that we need a fair deal in the federation. We instead are going to listen with respect to those Albertans and come back with a plan to get fairness for Alberta in the Canadian federation.

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Albertans are angry, and they want a Premier who will focus on getting them jobs, not try to distract them with shiny objects. Mr. Speaker, the head of the Calgary Chamber of commerce calls it politics over policy and says that it creates uncertainty. Doug Griffiths rejected the ideas of Ralph Klein, saying that they were all risky and that they would cost too much. So either this is all a show or the Premier is seriously considering these risky, billion-dollar, ideological experiments, not one of which he discussed with Albertans in the last election. To the Premier: which is it?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP still doesn't get it. It is about jobs. When they made their failed strategic alliance with Justin Trudeau, they gave him a licence to shut down Northern Gateway, kill Energy East, surrender on Keystone XL, bungle Trans Mountain, bring in the no-more-pipelines law, bring in the tanker ban, bring in the cap on oil sands emissions, bring in the carbon tax: a body blow, all of that, to our industry and our jobs. Albertans elected us to fight back. We're going to listen to them on how best to do so, and we are going to keep our word with Albertans. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, fighting for jobs doesn't mean attacking people's retirement. You know, the Premier is a privileged recipient of a six-figure pension from Ottawa, so it's hardly surprising that he doesn't understand that for most Albertans CPP is the only retirement money they can count on. Now his panel is floating the idea of taking it over for politics. To the Premier: how does someone who only describes pensions as a tax on employers and someone who didn't lose a night's sleep over taking \$30 a month out of the pockets of people with severe disabilities think Albertans should ever, ever, ever trust him with their retirement?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we're going to listen to Albertans, unlike the NDP, who are rigidly ideological about these questions. Albertans want this province to assert itself within the federation. One idea is to do what Quebec has done successfully for six decades, to operate our own pension plan. We'll listen to Albertans on that. Ultimately, Albertans would have the final say in a referendum, but doing so, in principle, would allow us to reduce job-killing payroll taxes on Albertans. Because we have the youngest population in the country, we subsidize benefits for the others to the tune of \$3 billion a year. How about the NDP actually stand up for Alberta for a change?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

## Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Education minister took \$10 million away from Rocky View schools to pay for a \$4.7 billion, no-jobs corporate handout, and last week both of Airdrie's government MLAs confirmed that Rocky View is facing provincial funding cuts. That means more fees, less support for kids with complex needs and larger class sizes. To the Premier: can he explain why his Minister of Education just removed the class-size reporting requirements? Just admit that this is an attempt to conceal the impact of her cuts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education has the call.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. The reporting was tied to a failed grant. That is why I am now assembling a working group of education partners to re-examine this issue. Instead of working with education partners to develop new solutions, the NDP chose to continue to recklessly shovel money into a program that the Auditor General had already called ineffective. We will not do this. We are going to move forward.

**Ms Hoffman:** Hiring teachers and educational assistants is not recklessly funnelling money anywhere, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier's cuts mean that Rocky View parents are going to pay \$308 in busing fees. For the Premier's benefit let me explain that this is an onerous amount of money for ordinary folks. These parents are also paying for the Premier's provincial adviser to sleep in a luxury, five-star London hotel. How can the Premier justify charging parents \$308 more while his best buddy sips champagne in London?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The truth of the matter is that every single student who walks through our doors is funded. The envelope still remains at \$8.223 billion. We collect approximately \$2.5 billion in education tax dollars, but we are spending \$8.223 billion. This is unsustainable, and we are going to move forward.

**Ms Hoffman:** The next shoe is about to drop, Mr. Speaker. Parents and kids in Calgary schools will be learning in the days to come about an unprecedented mid-year fee hike. This fee hike used to be illegal. These new fees are the direct result of the Premier cutting the budget to Calgary schools. Why does the Premier think it's okay to charge parents more while he gives \$4.7 billion away in a no-jobs corporate handout?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 98 per cent of the Education budget flows to school authorities who deliver services to students. Over the last 15 years enrolment has grown by 25 per cent, inflation by 33 per cent, but operationally we've grown by 80 per cent. Again, this is unsustainable. Boards have the autonomy to allocate funds, and I expect them to prioritize their funding by directing it to the classroom and continuing to put teachers in front of students. Teachers in front of students are the ones that have the greatest impact in the classroom.

Thank you.

## Canada Pension Plan

**Mr. Stephan:** Mr. Speaker, over the past 10 years the design of federal formulas and programs have stripped more than \$200 billion

from Albertans to other areas of the country. One example is CPP. In 2017 CPP contributions by Alberta businesses and workers were about \$3 billion more than benefits paid to Alberta retirees. A government panel is soliciting input from Albertans on an alternative Alberta pension plan. To the minister: what similarities would an Alberta pension plan have to the existing CPP?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canada Pension Plan Act states that any province wishing to withdraw from the Canada pension plan, or CPP, must create a provincial pension plan with comparable benefits. If Alberta were to create its own provincial pension plan, Albertans would receive benefits similar to what they would have received under the CPP. While the benefits would be similar, there are reasons to believe that Albertans would benefit from lower payroll taxes under a provincial pension plan.

**Mr. Stephan:** Given that the Trudeau Liberals over the next four years are increasing CPP payroll taxes for Canadian businesses and workers by over 20 per cent and given that Alberta businesses and workers already subsidize the rest of the country with billions more each year than is paid to Alberta retirees, to the minister: will this increase to the CPP further disproportionately exacerbate the billions already taken from Alberta businesses and workers for other parts of the country?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans work more hours and make higher wages than Canadians in other provinces. As a result of that, Alberta will pay the lion's share of the enhanced Canada pension plan premiums. The end result of this attempt to expand the Canada pension plan will be a greater net transfer from Alberta to the rest of Canada.

**Mr. Stephan:** Given that CPP taxes for Alberta businesses and workers could be lower if Alberta did not have to make multibillion-dollar subsidy payments every year and given that with lower payroll taxes Alberta businesses could be more competitive, incent more employment, with Alberta workers retaining more after-tax salaries, to the minister: if Alberta had its own pension plan, could there be an opportunity for lower payroll taxes while maintaining or increasing benefits for Alberta retirees?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been independent reports that would indicate that if Alberta administered its own pension plan, it could result in lower contributions for employees and employers in this province, and that's why the Premier announced this as an idea to be added to the fair deal panel. One thing that I want to be clear and that the Premier has made clear, before any final decisions would be made, this concept will be researched thoroughly and it would ultimately be brought before Albertans in a referendum.

#### **Automobile Insurance Premiums**

**Ms Phillips:** Higher income tax, higher insurance, raiding our retirement savings, higher property taxes, higher deficit, same debt. The Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout isn't creating any jobs. It's just costing Albertans more. The Premier gave a massive gift to the insurance industry by taking the cap off our car insurance

rates. Constituents of mine have shown me bills that have gone up by \$500 or more a year. To the Premier: why are Albertans paying higher car insurance as part of your high-deficit, high-taxes corporate giveaway agenda?

**2:10**

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the previous government brought in a rate cap, which was just a Band-Aid on a problem that didn't fundamentally deal with the reasons why insurance premiums are going up in the automobile industry. Their rate cap was resulting in fewer Alberta insurers, which was resulting in less choice for automobile owners, and would ultimately result in much higher costs. We will not kick this problem down the road like the previous government did. We will work to deal with the underlying problems in the Alberta insurance industry. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, this minister and this Premier need to show leadership and find a better way to regulate insurance rates than slamming Albertans who can't afford it, or would Albertans only get a break if they were taking a private plane?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly what we're doing. We're taking time to identify the fundamental issues that are creating higher premiums and costs in Alberta's automobile insurance industry. We're going to work with the industry and with Alberta consumers to ensure that we have a solution that will ensure Alberta automobile insurance consumers have sustainable, cost-effective premiums in the future. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that the time for that conversation is before people get stiffed with hundreds of dollars in new bills every month and given that Kim Zook of Tofield told the media, quote, \$30 isn't much for your average joe, but to me it's a tank of gas for four days – right? – so it's harder for me than a lot of people, why is this minister more interested in defending his fancy staff toot-tooting around London than he is in Kim Zook of Tofield's pocketbook?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned, we're dealing with the fundamental underlying issues that are pushing insurance rates up in this province, and unlike the previous government who didn't have the courage to deal with the issues facing the insurance industry, this government will deal with those issues on behalf of Albertans.

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, the list of Albertans feeling the pinch of this Premier pandering to insurance companies continues to grow. Calgary father Scott Johnsen told Global News that the insurance hike will likely force his family to give up one of their vehicles. Just one problem: both of them work. To the Premier: can you explain to Scott Johnsen how exactly he and his wife are supposed to keep getting to work and supporting their young child if they have to sell off one of their vehicles?

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we are aware that insurance premiums are going up. We're also aware that there are underlying contributing factors that are driving those costs up. It's complex. We're already starting to work with the industry and with consumer groups to ensure that we can deal with those underlying issues and

ensure that Albertans have sustainable, cost-effective insurance in the future. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans from across the province have written to us with concerns of their insurance premiums rising even with clean records and given that the Premier and the minister don't seem to want to budge on their talking points as real Albertans struggle to keep their vehicles on the road, to the minister: will you commit to releasing a list of every organization you consulted before lifting the insurance rate cap?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the previous government, the NDP government, brought in a rate cap, which, again, limited options, ultimately limited products that were available to Alberta's motorists, resulted in some Alberta motorists not being able to buy collision insurance or comprehensive insurance. They were unable to actually buy plans that would extend their payments and make it more affordable. There were unintended consequences of that rate cap. We have lifted the rate cap, but more importantly, we're dealing with the underlying issues of the insurance industry.

**Mr. Carson:** Given that the minister has said that insurance companies could no longer afford to operate in Alberta with the rate cap in place but given that I'm not aware of any major insurance companies leaving Alberta in recent years and that threats from the industry seem to have been hollow, will the Minister of Finance commit to releasing any and all studies into the viability of Alberta's insurance industry, and will he release all other documents that guided his decision to lift the rate cap and hammer the budget of Alberta families?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, all this is pretty rich coming from the previous government, who didn't have the courage to deal with the underlying issues of automobile insurance. We will not make that mistake. Albertans elected us to come up with solutions that will stand Albertans in good stead today and tomorrow. We will deliver for Albertans.

### Bill 207

**Member Irwin:** Bill 207 is an attack on women, an attack on LGBTQ2S-plus Albertans, an attack on Albertans seeking medical assistance in dying. In committee this morning the Member for Peace River did nothing to persuade us that this bill is anything other than a foot in the door to reduce access to health care, particularly in rural and remote areas. I'm glad that the Minister of Justice has read the bill, and I'm glad that he's publicly planning to oppose it. Can the minister tell this House why he plans to vote against Bill 207?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, our party and our government campaigned on making it clear that we would enshrine into the standing orders the right of private members of this place to be able to bring forward legislation during their time and for each member of this place to be able to have free votes. Bill 207 is going through the private members' process. It will be debated through that process, and each and every member of this Chamber will have the opportunity to be able to make a decision that reflects what they think is in their conscience and in the best interests of their constituents when it comes to Bill 207.

**Member Irwin:** Given that the members have the opportunity for free votes but not the opportunity to freely speak when asked

questions and given that the Minister of Health claimed that he hadn't even read the bill as recently as last Wednesday and given that the same minister, who's a lawyer, said that the bill was, quote, over his head, can the Minister of Health tell us: has he done his job now, has he read the bill, and what will his response be? Will he oppose it?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I might just remind you that the use of preambles after question 4 . . .

**Member Irwin:** I said given.

**The Speaker:** I'm pretty certain that it was a preamble. Otherwise, I wouldn't have reminded you.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, our party is committed, our government is committed to free votes when it comes to private members' business inside this place, including all members of the government, including all members of cabinet, who have committed to that process, voted for it to be enshrined in the standing orders of this place. I understand that the NDP do things differently when it comes to their members, that they whip them and make them speak and do certain things that fit within the party line. For this party, when it comes to private members' business, we believe in open and free debate, which we look forward to having inside this Chamber. [interjections] We certainly believe in not shouting down other members of this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford will come to order. I had no problem hearing you; I did have some challenge hearing the Government House Leader during the question.

**Member Irwin:** Given that the Member for Peace River admitted today that he had no idea if he had consulted with a single member from the LGBTQ2S-plus community and given that this community is really hoping that the minister for the status of women will show up and speak up for them, can the minister or perhaps the House leader tell this House if she is satisfied with this lack of consultation, and will she oppose this attack on women's and LGBTQ2S-plus rights?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we have a robust process when it comes to private members' business. The hon. member knows that and, in fact, I think, is a member of the private members' committee, the standing committee on private members' bills. I understand that there was some preliminary debate around Bill 207 today and that there will be more to come in the coming days. This is something that we strongly believe in as a party, the free vote process. We will honour that. We will honour our commitment to Albertans, and we look forward to hearing the debate when it comes to Bill 207 inside this Chamber.

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, if the Advanced Education minister had gone outside a bit earlier, he would have seen hundreds of students gathered on the steps of the Legislature to protest this government's policy of higher tuition, higher interest rates, slashed tax credits, and lower supports for our schools. This minister is making students pay more just to pay for his \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway. Will the minister start listening to students and end his attack on postsecondary education?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite confused, to be quite honest with you. I'm not quite sure what the member opposite is talking about. You know, if you have a look at my calendar, most of my time, a lot of my time, is spent meeting with students and talking with students directly. As well, just on Thursday I was in Fort McMurray visiting Keyano College and had a town hall with over a hundred members of the university community: students, faculty, staff. Students are our absolute top priority, and they have the strongest possible seat at the table to help inform government decision-making moving forward.

2:20

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given that if this minister was actually listening to students, he would hear that they are opposed to an increased tuition of more than 21 per cent, they're opposed to losing their tax credits, they're opposed to \$600 million being taken out of operating expenses for postsecondary institutions, and they're opposed to leaving all of the money for capital projects away, when is this minister going to actually start addressing students' needs and start doing his job?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm taking a lot of time engaging with our students and listening to them and implementing their concerns and their objections. [interjections] I know the NDP wants to continue to yell and scream and not hear the response, but postbudget I had an opportunity to meet with student leaders. As we talked about moving forward from the budget, they wanted to ensure that the postsecondary institutions and universities were consulting with them and speaking with them. On Friday I was happy to send a note to our board chairs of all of our institutions and ask and encourage them to engage and consult with students as they're developing those . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park. [interjections] Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you. I'm very happy to have the second supplemental. Given that if this minister was calling those board chairs, they would have told him exactly the same thing, that they don't want their capital budgets liquidated, that they don't want to have to impose 21 per cent increases to tuition, that will literally cut off tens of thousands of students from being able to go to postsecondary, and given that this is really the best way by which we can diversify our economy, why is this minister making cuts to postsecondary education at exactly the worst time he could possibly do so?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question. The answer is quite clear. Those members, when they were in government, drove the province off the fiscal cliff. We are in a very clear situation that is not sustainable. We can't keep going in the same direction. Postsecondary enrolment in the province over the last 15 years increased by 21 per cent, yet funding increased over 107 per cent. In order to ensure the long-term sustainability and high-quality nature of our postsecondary system, we have to make some changes now. I know our students understand that, and we're working with them to make some challenging decisions.

**The Speaker:** Now the hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

## Federal-provincial Relations

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have spoken loudly about their concern surrounding an out-of-touch federal government. They know that Alberta needs to stand up for itself in Confederation in order to get a fair deal. We know that many politicians have been dismissive of the very real concerns of Albertans in this regard. Could a minister tell us whether this government believes that we should listen to the concerns of Albertans and work toward solutions or whether we should dismiss concerns, as some politicians have said, as, quote, distractions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will always listen to the concerns of hard-working Albertans who legitimately feel that they have not been treated fairly by Ottawa. Albertans have very real concerns and frustrations, and standing up for them is not a distraction. It's what we were elected to do. For the NDP to say that this is a distraction shows how completely out of touch with Albertans they are. That is part of the reason why they were the first one-term government in the history of this province.

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, given that amongst the many voices that have been dismissive of the concerns of Albertans, we have heard from eastern opinion elites and the leader of the separatist Bloc Québécois and given that the federal leader of the NDP has said that western Premiers listening to the people of their provinces is, quote, distracting, to the same minister: is it the job of this government to listen to Albertans or to those who have little understanding or respect for the deep frustrations of the people of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rather than representing the interests of Albertans, the members opposite have chosen to join their federal NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh, who over the weekend dismissed the concerns of Albertans and told Alberta to, quote, do better. Well, the federal NDP received about 11 per cent of the vote in Alberta in the last federal election, and their leader is not in any position whatsoever to tell Albertans how we should feel. We will listen to Albertans, not the NDP or the Bloc.

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, given that in response to our plan to listen to the concerns and frustrations of Albertans, the Leader of the Opposition said that, quote, what we are seeing is an effort to distract and given how this displays how out of touch the opposition is with the concerns of Albertans, to the minister: can you tell us whether MLAs and ministers should be listening to find solutions for the people of Alberta or dismissing Albertans' concerns as a, quote, effort to distract, echoing the language of the federal NDP leader and the leader of the Bloc Québécois?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The kind of rhetoric that we heard over the weekend by the NDP here and in Ottawa is a continuation of the last four years, where the government in Ottawa set up roadblocks in policies, regulations, and legislation that harmed Alberta. For four years, while other jurisdictions around the world were supporting their oil and gas industries, the NDP here and Justin Trudeau in Ottawa were taxing and regulating everything they could find. They pursued a failed social licence, they built nothing, and they drove investment out of this province. They burned it to the ground and salted the earth. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a question.

**Seniors' Benefits**

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this government's recently released fiscal plan, there is a bar graph that compares three provincial seniors' income support programs: B.C., Ontario, and Alberta. The narrative in the document indicates Alberta seniors receive funds that put them squarely on the poverty line and claims Alberta has a generous support system for seniors. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: have you talked to seniors about your government's efforts to push them below the poverty line? Did seniors tell you they received too much money?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, in my six months as Minister of Seniors and Housing I went to 30 different communities besides the two big cities, listened to our seniors, and listened to a lot of Albertans about how to better serve them and how to utilize our money and control the spending for something they really want. We are going to continue to do that. This government is going to spend the money on quality services and products for our seniors.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, income support programs are fundamental to supporting seniors to live with dignity in our province, and given that each year the cost of living rises, negatively impacting those on fixed incomes, like our seniors, and given that seniors built this province and deserve our respect and given that this UCP government has cut seniors' benefits, to the minister: why are you paying for a \$4.7 billion handout to corporations on the backs of Alberta seniors? How can you possibly justify cutting their benefits?

**Ms Pon:** Please review, Member, our budget. We increased by \$9 million our budget for seniors' benefits. Also, our government must get spending under control. Seniors have made our province into what it is today, but they also understand we need to live within our means. The MacKinnon report indicates that if we continue down this road of spending out of control like the previous government, we will soon be more than a hundred billion dollars in debt. They spent \$5 million a day on interest.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It amazes me that the minister cares more about interest rates than about seniors in our province. She's showing no compassion for them.

Given that the seniors population in Alberta is growing at the rate of 23 per cent annually, significantly higher than the general population, and given that the budget does not account for this growth in many areas, including the Seniors and Housing ministry, will the minister please explain to Alberta's growing seniors population why she's okay with seniors paying more and getting less as a result of this terrible UCP budget?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. member will know that even though this is a very important and sensitive topic, the rule for preambles still applies.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me repeat it again. Budget 2019 included an increase of \$9 million for Seniors and Housing – an increase – and we always make sure Alberta's growing seniors population is well equipped. It's not like the previous government. The four years they managed were unsuccessful years. The NDP did not address the needs of the growing seniors population. By 2035 1 in 5 Albertans will be over the age of 65. Our government will ensure that our most cherished residents have the supports they need, including maintaining . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Hospital Emergency Liaison Officer Program**

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, for many years ambulances have been getting stuck at our major urban hospitals for hours, leading to paramedic burnout and code reds, where there are no ambulances available to take a call. This problem has been especially difficult in Calgary. The hospital EMS liaison officer program, or HELO, was an initiative of the previous government to help ambulances turn around faster at major urban hospitals. That program was successful. To the Minister of Health: why did you cancel this program this past June?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps just to provide some clarity, I cancelled nothing. This is a decision of AHS. As the hon. member knows from the question that arose at estimates, HELO is one of, I think it's estimated, about a hundred different initiatives that AHS has done recently to try to deal with wait times in our emergency departments as EMS and paramedics are dropping off patients at our emergency departments. HELO: I'm advised by AHS that there was no information to provide that it actually made any difference. They are going to continue to try and innovate to be able to help our patients get admitted to the hospital.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that AHS's own analysis, which I will table, actually showed that all four of Calgary's major hospitals showed dramatic improvement in hitting their turnaround targets and given that both the chief paramedic and the associate executive director of Calgary EMS said that HELO was creating immediate improvements – and I will table those comments as well – why did the minister disregard this evidence and advice from paramedics and allow AHS to cancel this successful program?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, again, I made no decision to cancel anything. This is a decision of AHS. It was actually advice of the chief paramedic himself. When I spoke to him about this, I'm sure it was him who told me that HELO made no difference and that they're going to continue . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Read the report.

**Mr. Shandro:** . . . to innovate and try to find new programs to be able to make sure that our patients are admitted to our hospitals and that ambulances are going to get back on the street as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given that this minister clearly has not read the report – and I would encourage him to look at the documents that I will table today – and given that behind these statistics are paramedics trapped at work, away from their families for hours

after their shift was supposed to end, and given that this minister is choosing to leave Calgarians in acute distress waiting longer for an ambulance, to this minister: how could you possibly justify AHS cancelling the HELO program and leaving Albertans in distress while you stand willingly behind a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway that has yet to create a single job?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree that this is an issue that we have to deal with as a government.

**Ms Hoffman:** You should read the report.

**Mr. Shandro:** I'm very happy to answer the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora as well, Mr. Speaker, as she likes to heckle throughout my answers.

The answer is this. [interjections] We get asked and I get asked quite often why in six months we haven't fixed the mess that we were left by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. No, I haven't in six months fixed her mess. It's going to take a lot of work by this government to be able to make sure our patients are cared for. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

#### Mobile Home Owner Consumer Protection

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, residents of mobile-home communities, like all Albertans, are hard-working, persevering individuals. Many of these individuals live in mobile-home communities in West Yellowhead, and these families deserve fair treatment. I'm hearing from my constituents that in some cases targeted rent increases have forced these hard-working Albertans to leave their community, and my constituents don't feel that the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act has proven that it will protect tenants. Could the Minister of Service Alberta tell me how this government is going to ensure mobile-home owners are treated fairly?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for West Yellowhead for raising these important concerns. You know, I heard a lot about these kinds of concerns when I was on my tour this summer, and I want to assure the member and his constituents that I take these concerns very seriously. I wouldn't have toured the province if I didn't take this seriously and if I didn't think it was important. What I can further assure the member and his constituents is that we're getting there, and residents of mobile-home communities can trust that I've heard them. I as well as my department continue to spend a significant amount of time on this very important issue.

Thank you.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, given that constituents in my riding are concerned that their rights aren't always being respected and given that mobile-home site residents are concerned that their landlords are being unjust and given that information on the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act is not always readily available and easily accessible and given that Albertans want to stand up for themselves and their own communities, what is this government doing to ensure that mobile-home site residents know and understand their rights laid out within the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important that all Albertans, including mobile-home residents, know and understand

their rights. That's why we have a tipsheet specifically related to renting mobile-home sites, which is available on the government website. This includes information for both landlords and tenants, including, as I've talked about with several members of this Assembly, the fact that landlords cannot increase rents more than once a year and that they must give six months', or 180 days', notice of any increase.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, given that my constituents have turned to municipal and provincial government members, including the minister during his tour in August, and given that they are frustrated that they don't feel they're getting the answers or the attention they need regardless of whom they turn to and given that they're also frustrated because they don't feel that they get the attention or action required from site managers and community owners and they're nervous to speak up for fear of repercussion, again to the minister: how is this government going to make sure that tenants are able to get answers to their questions and their concerns?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for question, and thank you again to the member for his continued and tireless advocacy for his constituents in West Yellowhead. In fact, I just want to point out that when I was on my tour – I believe that it was in Hinton – the member had organized what was the most well-attended meeting to discuss this topic, so thank you to him for standing up for his constituents.

What I would tell him and his constituents, through you, Mr. Speaker, is that the best thing they can do is work with their local MLA and share their concerns and their challenges, and to the extent that they're having issues there, then they can work with my department. We are there to make sure that they know their rights and that their rights are protected.

#### Parent Link and Family Resource Centres

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, as a father of three children I understand the challenges that many families in our province may face. Many new families with young children across my constituency have accessed services such as parent link and family resource centres. They've expressed support and a sincere wish to continue these services. To the Minister of Children's Services: what does the future hold for parent link and these family resource centres?

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much to the member for the great question. Some early intervention and prevention contracts have been in place for more than 20 years. Instead of reviewing those services, new programs have been layered on top of existing programs, and we now have an inconsistent patchwork of programs and services across the province. We owe it to the vulnerable Albertans who rely on these services to transform the system. With the new family resource network and the support of community partners that's exactly what we'll do.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you to the minister for that answer.

Given that young people across the province face unique challenges and may not have strong support networks and given that it's crucially important that we have early intervention and prevention services in place to address these needs before they become critical, to the Minister of Children's Services: can the minister tell us what she is doing to ensure that Albertans receive equitable and necessary supports regardless of their income and where they live?

2:40

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, we won't continue to do things the way they've always been done just because that's the way we've always done them. Over the next six months this transparent process will allow community partners to propose best approaches on how we can strengthen the prevention and early intervention system. It needs to be more consistent across the province, it needs to reflect unique community needs, it needs to address the gap in services that sometimes exist for children over the age of six, and we need to implement the precedent-setting well-being and resiliency framework introduced this spring. Many organizations are already there, and we as government need to catch up.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you to the minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard a lot of discussion in my riding about the perceived end of these services, which has been exacerbated by the fearmongering of the opposition, to help put these families at ease and provide some assurance to them, to the Minister of Children's Services: can she set the record straight on funding for these critical supports?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, these programs will continue to support at-risk kids and parents. This is about providing services where they have the greatest impact and building on partnerships that are already happening between community agencies across all areas of the province.

**Mr. Feehan:** This is misleading.

**Mr. Loewen:** Point of order.

**Ms Schulz:** That means simplifying the system and reviewing where we are spending tax dollars. One example: we know that these dollars are going to things like community newsletters and system navigators. Mr. Speaker, if Albertans need navigators to access important services, then we need to change the system to better support their needs.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will return to Members' Statements, but prior to doing that, I think it's fair that we deal with the point of order at this point in time.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**The Speaker:** I very clearly heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford say, "This is misleading." Of course, that is wildly unparliamentary language, and I'm sure that he's happy to apologize and withdraw.

I don't understand why you might be standing. You don't look like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, but I'm happy to hear your call.

**Mr. Bilous:** No, Mr. Speaker, I'm not, but I would like to speak to the point of order that was called.

**The Speaker:** That's not possible because the Speaker is actually addressing the point of order. Even if the hon. member hadn't raised the point of order, the Speaker would have called the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to order because it was very clear to the Speaker. Of course, the Speaker's discretion at any point in time is to call a member to order, which I've done for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford because he very clearly said, "This is misleading," which is clearly unparliamentary and out of order. So

he's happy to apologize and withdraw, or we can continue to have this discussion.

Sorry. Hon. Opposition House Leader, you are not the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. The only path forward today is for him to apologize and withdraw. I'm happy to hear you one last time, but let's be clear that that is what is going to happen today.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I rise because in many accounts in this place, when it is government or an entity or a body, you have allowed the word "mislead," and it has not been a point of order. The member was not referring to the individual minister; he was referring to a topic, and therefore it is not a point of order, sir.

**Ms Hoffman:** Based on your past rulings.

**The Speaker:** I am very clear on what my past rulings are, hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I appreciate your assistance. In this House the Premier has apologized for utilizing the term "misleading" when he said that the Leader of the Official Opposition was misleading the House.

There was one individual who was speaking at the time that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford heckled inappropriately that "this is misleading," referring to the individual who was speaking. As such, by saying that "this is misleading," he has said that the minister is misleading the House.

He can apologize, or he can find the door. What would he like to do?

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the statement and apologize to the House for their interpretation of my comments.

**The Speaker:** This matter is dealt with and concluded. See how easy that is, hon. members.

In 35 seconds or less we'll move to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Drumheller-Stettler has the call.

### Don Cherry

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Political correctness in Canada is completely out of control. This time it is Canadian icon and hockey legend Don Cherry, who was fired by Rogers Sportsnet on Remembrance Day.

Don Cherry is a man who has dedicated more than most to helping support our veterans and active service personnel. He travelled to Afghanistan to entertain our troops during the conflict, and that is just the start of his support. Now he's been fired for making inarticulate comments about how everyone, especially new Canadians, should be wearing poppies and understanding why. Most Canadians agree with this point. The poppy is an important symbol of the sacrifice which previous generations made on our behalf.

His point was not made well and certainly not with political correctness. His passion no doubt comes from experiencing World War II as a young boy. He has already said that he wishes he had said "everyone" rather than "you people." This phrase has significant connotations of racism attached to it, especially when directed at marginalized groups. It is, however, a stretch to accuse anyone of racial bigotry simply because they used a phrase you do not agree with. Our own Prime Minister has dressed in blackface on at least three separate occasions, but he didn't lose his job. I guess Canadians experienced that differently.



In the words of Cherry's lifetime friend Bobby Orr: it's a new world, I guess; freedom of speech doesn't matter. Orr describes Cherry as: the most generous and caring guy that I know. Cherry has been saying controversial things on *Hockey Night in Canada* for over 30 years. To act in composure is not what made him synonymous with hockey. Cherry is an Everyman. He is passionate about hockey and has found his niche by being confrontational.

The point is this. Whether you agree with Cherry or not, we can't keep cancelling individuals just because we disagree with what they say or how they say it. This is not what breeds a healthy society nor a healthy debate. It certainly isn't fair treatment for a man who's devoted much of his time to supporting our troops and veterans. He simply wanted to urge all Canadians to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of three government motions and a few pieces of legislation if I could.

First would be Government Motion 35.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Government Motion 36.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Government Motion 37.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I wish to provide oral notice of three bills for the Order Paper, those being Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, sponsored by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry; Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law Abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019, sponsored by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General; and finally Bill 28, Opioid Damages and Health Care Cost Recovery Act, sponsored by the Minister of Health.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance.

#### Bill 22

#### Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. This is the last of the three budget implementation bills being introduced, preceded by bills 20 and 21.

2:50

This legislation will eliminate needless government spending, improve the efficiency and oversight of public agencies, boards, and commissions, and increase the value of taxpayer and pension plan investments. This bill will strengthen the governance and oversight of ABCs while also reducing duplication and nonessential spending. In some cases this will involve simple changes such as reducing the number of board members at certain agencies, boards, and commissions. In other cases we will dissolve agencies, boards, and commissions, otherwise known as ABCs, entirely and move their functions into ministries. These reforms will allow our government to realize significant administrative savings while still delivering the high-quality services that Albertans depend on.

Another key objective of Bill 22 is to strengthen the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, better known as AIMCo. The bill aims to consolidate the investment of pensions, funds, and endowments under AIMCo's management. The proposed changes are expected to increase AIMCo's investment portfolio by \$30 billion. This will enhance AIMCo's economies of scale and allow it to deliver higher expected returns for lower investment management costs. Strengthening AIMCo benefits all Albertans since it will increase the return on Alberta government funds and endowments, including the Alberta heritage trust fund.

Albertans know that our government is focused on finding savings through improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the public services that their dollars pay for. Mr. Speaker, Albertans have waited long enough for action to be taken to ensure publicly owned enterprises and agencies, boards, and commissions are delivering the best possible value for taxpayer dollars. This legislation takes a step in that direction.

This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Minister of Finance for that very thorough introduction of first reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for first reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:53 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Lovely	Savage
Copping	Luan	Schow
Ellis	Milliken	Schulz
Getson	Neudorf	Shandro
Glasgo	Nicolaides	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glubish	Nixon, Jason	Stephan
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Toews
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Turton
Hunter	Pon	van Dijken
Jones	Rehn	Walker
LaGrange	Reid	Williams
Loewen	Rowswell	Yaseen
Long	Rutherford	

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Renaud
Carson	Irwin	Schmidt
Dang	Nielsen	Shepherd
Deol	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley	Phillips	Sweet
Goehring		

Totals: For – 41 Against – 16

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 7(7) deems that unless notice is given prior to 3 o'clock, at 3 o'clock the daily Routine is deemed complete. As such, we are at ordres du jour.

3:10

### Orders of the Day

#### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 204 Election Recall Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon to move second reading of Bill 204, the Election Recall Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a measure to make elected officials in this province more accountable. The political climate in our province and across the country is rapidly changing, and we're seeing that politicians, in addition to the media and other public entities, are far less trusted than they have been in the past. This measure is an opportunity for us to restore some of that trust, to ensure that politicians are accountable to their constituents, those who elected them. We want to make sure that trust is restored. That is the motive for this bill.

I'm pleased to rise on this bill. I'm pleased to speak on it because it is something I have advocated for a very long time and the predecessors of mine have also advocated. To cite Paul Hinman is a great example, a true champion of recall legislation, someone who has fought for greater transparency and accountability in this Chamber when he was elected and someone that I consult regularly because I believe it's important to go to those who have gone before and to seek wisdom and guidance.

But what this really does is give more power and more and more authority back to the constituents, back to the ones who elected us. I am happy that this is being brought forward by the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon. Now, in addition to being an important piece of legislation, it was also a campaign commitment and something that I'm glad that the member decided to use his luck of the draw, the private members' bills draw, to bring forth. In the United Conservative Party campaign platform on page 89 it says:

A United Conservative government will:

- Introduce a Recall Act based on precedents in several jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom, the United States, and in British Columbia where the provision has existed since 1996.

Now, I believe this also speaks to a larger issue of changing the way we do things. One of the most detrimental phrases that could every be uttered in an organization is: this is how it's always been done. This is how it's always been done. It's terrible. It suggests that we're going to stay inside the box, that we're not going to look for new ways to be more efficient, to be leaner, to be better. For

years we have not had recall legislation. It was introduced in the past by a private member, but it never saw third reading, so now we're sitting here talking about it today.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

An example from my own life about changing the way that we do things: you know, back in late July we welcomed our third child in our family. It was a very joyful time, but with that came a lot more constraints on my own time. I needed to stay home with my wife and my kids and make sure that they were well taken care of. In doing that, I was a bit remiss in maybe taking care of my own diet and even going to the gym. Naturally, the body does as it does as it ages, and when the time came to prepare to come back to this historic Chamber, I realized that some of the suits that I usually wear may not have fit quite the way they used to fit. So I was faced with two choices. The first choice, Mr. Speaker, was that I could just go buy some new suits. Now, that would be a pretty significant dent in my pocketbook, and I choose not to do that. Or I could change the way I was doing things in my own life. I could take better care of myself, go back to the gym, change my diet. That is exactly what I did. I think that speaks to the main point of this bill, which is changing the way we're doing things.

Now, I also look at the process for this legislation, what it takes to initiate a recall. I'll go through some of those steps with you. The first is that a voter can only petition to recall a member for the electoral district in which the voter is registered to vote. What that means is that you, Mr. Speaker, could not introduce a recall legislation on me in my constituency given that you are a resident of Calgary and not God's country, Cardston-Siksika.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The second is that upon receiving the voter's application, Elections Alberta issues the petition and the voter has 60 days to collect the requisite signatures totalling 40 per cent or more of the number of voters that appear on the postelection list of electors. That is to say that of the list of electors on election day you must be able to garner 40 per cent of those signatures. That's very important to note.

The recall petition can only be signed by individuals who are eligible to vote in the member's electoral district at the time that the recall petition takes place. So if you may have been a resident, Mr. Speaker, in the constituency where the recall petition had been initiated but you were no longer living there but you were on the electoral list on the day of the election, that does preclude you from signing the petition.

Now, once that's done, the voter returns the petition to Elections Alberta at the end of the 60 days, and the Chief Electoral Officer has the following 42 days to verify the signatures. If the required number of eligible voters have signed the petition and the rules were all met, the member ceases to hold office, and a by-election must be called.

To wrap all that into a nice little package, it's important to know that there is a threshold here of 40 per cent. That's the big number. That's the bingo number here that people need to know. If you want to initiate a recall of a sitting Member of the Legislative Assembly, you have to be able to get 40 per cent of the signatures of the number of electors that were on the list on election day.

Now, I guess the question begs: when would this be applicable? I don't think the purpose of this is to try to recall a member of this Chamber just because you may not like something that they said in the media or something that they did while they were at a local event. This is a very serious process, something that we here must take very seriously, and the electors must do the same.

If I can take a little jaunt down memory lane, you know, sprinkle a little history on your ears, I'll do just that and give an instance where I think recall might have been applicable. I take a step back to during the leadership campaign for our now Premier. I was out knocking on some doors in the wonderful constituency of what was Calgary-North West. Now, for anyone who can remember, Calgary-North West was represented by none other than Sandra Jansen. Sandra Jansen was originally elected in 2012 as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party. We all know that the parties did merge and that the electoral districts have changed since then, but what hasn't changed and what remains still seared in the minds of the voters of what was Calgary-North West is the dramatic betrayal of trust that Sandra Jansen perpetrated on their votes. Ms Jansen crossed the floor on November 17, 2016, and was even subsequently named Minister of Infrastructure. How coincidental. How convenient.

Now, going back to that day, when I was out knocking on doors, I was often greeted with: "Thank goodness you're out here; thank goodness you're knocking on doors. Thank goodness you're moving towards the right direction of uniting the conservative parties in this province. We just wish you could do it faster so that we could get rid of this MLA of ours." I cannot tell you how many times I heard it. I'm paraphrasing, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that the language was far more colourful in many instances.

Then I went over to one of the local businesses afterwards to treat some of the volunteers to some nice refreshments and some appetizers, as I usually believe you should. You know, I think that one of the first rules of campaigns is that you've got to feed the troops. That's really important. You show that appreciation. I think everybody in this Chamber would certainly agree with that. Even the owner of the business that we were at, the restaurant, started asking us what we were doing there, and before we even got to it, that owner saw one of the T-shirts we were wearing and said: "Thank you for what you are doing. You are moving in the right direction. We've got to get rid of this MLA we have. I wish we could do it faster."

Well, Mr. Speaker, if only recall legislation was available back then, because I am certain that in the – well, I guess that I don't want to presuppose too much, but from the constituents that I heard in the wonderful area of Calgary-North West, I believe that there would have been an important call for that recall. For that reason, I'm grateful to speak on this today.

3:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has risen.

**Mr. Hunter:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Bills.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### **Introduction of Bills** (*reversion*)

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

### **Bill 25** **Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019**

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, thank you to the House for this. I'll keep this short. I rise today to introduce Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019.

Bill 25 follows through on our government's commitment to cut red tape. This is one of many steps to make Alberta one of the freest and fastest moving economies in the world, and I look forward to many more red tape reduction bills to come in order to be able to fulfill our one-third reduction.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 25.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for keeping that short, hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a first time]

### **Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders** **Second Reading** (*continued*)

#### **Bill 204** **Election Recall Act**

**The Speaker:** I saw the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise to speak to Bill 204, which is the Election Recall Act.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, the speaker before me was correct in at least one of his comments, which is highly unusual, when he indicated that this bill has a very high threshold. That is correct. This bill does have a very high threshold in order for this to occur, so for that part of the bill, we're fine with it.

I think the thing which concerns us more about this bill is that it's essentially a backdoor way to allow third parties to advertise during a different time period. Every time one of these things is started, we're going to see campaigns amping up and third-party advertisers mixing into the political mix. What this is is essentially an attempt by the UCP to Americanize our democracy, to put us in the position of constant campaigning, to put us in the position of pay-to-play politics, where if you don't have millions and millions of dollars, no one's really interested in your opinion, and I think that's incredibly sad. I think that our democracy is something that is under increasing threat here in this place.

Not only do we see this, but mere moments ago we saw closure invoked before a bill was even introduced – I would be surprised if someone could tell me that that had ever happened before in this place – a bill, incidentally, to fire an Election Commissioner who is investigating this government. That goes exactly to this bill, which is to say that it's just another backdoor way to slide in additional campaigning, additional money, pay-to-play politics, and I think that everyone should be concerned.

You know, this is premised on the justification of accountability of elected officials, and that justification in and of itself is an incredibly important thing – it is – but I'm not sure this achieves it. I think that what we lose here is so much larger than what we could ever possibly gain.

I also think that it's a distraction. It's yet another thing like this panel investigating the Wexit and everything else that's going on that's intended to distract from a terrible budget. This bill is being introduced to try and attract attention and pull attention away. In fact, I suspect there are a number of private members' bills that have recently been introduced in this place that exist for exactly that same reason, to try to detract attention from what Albertans should be paying attention to, which is a terrible budget, a budget that

hands \$4.7 billion to profitable corporations while taking from pretty much everyone across the entire province.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to be shocked by the behaviour in this place. You know, there are a lot of long traditions in this House. I apologize; I am trying to speak to the subject matter, but in light of what happened earlier today, it feels a bit shocking. Certainly, again, this bill does have a very high threshold. It's quite unlikely that recall could occur.

I'm not surprised to discover that the hon. members from across the way took this opportunity to once again attack a female MLA who stood up to the current Premier. I'm not surprised at all because they attacked her repeatedly in the past. You know, all of this goes on, Mr. Speaker, at the same moment that we're seeing this incredibly terrible budget, at the same moment that we have multiple members of the UCP under investigation. Well, I guess maybe not under investigation for much longer, since they've used the Legislature to remove the individual investigating them, but I think, again . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you. I just want to ensure that we stay on task with the topic at hand.

**Ms Ganley:** Okay. Well, how about if I speak to the last member's comments?

**The Acting Speaker:** I think that what I'm getting at with this is that it sounds to me like we might be getting close to talking about a decision previously made by the House. I don't think that this would be the right avenue to do so. If the hon. member would please continue with comments on Bill 204.

**Ms Ganley:** Sure. I'm happy to comment on Bill 204, and I'm happy to comment on the comments of the speaker immediately before me, who used the opportunity of this legislation to slide in a series of digs at a female member of this House who was the subject of some genuinely egregious behaviour in the past.

Mr. Speaker, again, the bill does have quite a high threshold, so it's unlikely that this will ever occur. We're not, again, opposed in principle to the idea that a person should be accountable. Mostly, this will introduce an enormous amount of cost. It will introduce a backdoor method by which political action committees can operate outside of the normal electoral time. It will introduce a method by which, you know, campaigning can pretty much become continuous, as in American-style politics. It's unlikely to be effective, although on that basis I wouldn't reject it because the point of the thing is good. I would reject it on the basis that it's likely to be extremely expensive, and it's likely to drive us further, again, to that Americanization of politics, which unfortunately we're seeing here in Alberta. I'm hearing it from constituents. I hear it on the doorsteps all the time, that the things people feel that they are entitled to say, that bar has shifted significantly. I don't want to see that happen here.

I think that, you know, this has been a place of respectful debate and respectful discourse for years. For years and years Alberta has been a place where we can respectfully disagree with one another. We're starting to lose that, and I'm worried that this plays into our starting to lose that. Again, by allowing backdoor entry of political action committees to be campaigning virtually constantly, we won't just get this sort of hyperpartisan electoral rhetoric in the months immediately preceding an election, but we'll get it constantly.

You know, I think we've probably all had the experience, everyone in this place, of volunteers coming back to our campaign office who have had a really negative experience, sometimes not even at a door. I mean, certainly, my colleague that ran in Calgary-Varsity had a horrendous experience of being followed around by a

truck, being followed around and having her volunteers threatened, having people take pictures of their licence plates and threaten to come to their homes. This is not something that we want entering – and I don't think that anyone in this room really wants that in politics. I don't think that anyone really wants that to be the case, that people are physically – physically – afraid to speak their opinions.

3:30

I don't think that that's the way we should be moving. I don't believe that anybody thinks that that's the way we should be moving. But as we let these American-style politics sort of seep into our Canadian democracy, as we let it seep into our democracy that the loudest voice and not the voice with the most coherent argument wins, I think we're going to see it more and more. I think that is sad, I think it is a loss that we should all mourn, and that is ultimately why I will stand in opposition to this particular bill, again, not because of the substance of what it does but because of this sort of backdoor attempt to bring big money into politics, you know, in between election cycles.

I think that between the provincial election and the federal election we're all a bit exhausted by the level of discourse that occurred. I think that it's good to have a break. It's good to go back and try to be able to have some time in between elections. I mean, it doesn't seem to be the way it's going, unfortunately, in this place. Certainly, today's events make it pretty clear that we're not going that way anyway, but I suppose my heart can wish that that could be a thing that exists in Alberta again, that that could be a thing that continues to exist in this province, because I think it's an important thing. I think that, yeah, this is an incredible concern.

With that, I will end my comments. I will say again that we are not against the substance of the bill. It's just this sort of additional allowing in of political advertising action committees as well as the additional cost that goes with this. I mean, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you're probably aware that by-elections are quite an expensive thing, and I suspect that in addition to – again, we're very unlikely to see a by-election, but the process itself is likely to add a certain amount of expense, and I don't really think that that is necessary at this point.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 204, the Election Recall Act. I do sit as a member of the private members' bills committee, so I did have the opportunity to hear the presentation by the hon. member putting forth this legislation and to hear from the stakeholders who provided their input as well with respect to Bill 204. I actually want to echo a number of the comments from my colleague the Member for Calgary-Mountain View in that my largest concern with respect Bill 204 is that it does appear to be a distraction.

What I did find interesting about the fact that this bill was brought forward as a private member's bill – and I understand that the member bringing it forward had a bit of a history with respect to this issue. However, this idea of recall legislation was actually set out within the UCP platform. It was set out there as a highlighted thing that the government would be bringing in. We've heard repeatedly from the Premier and from members of cabinet and all members on the government side about how important their UCP platform is to them, how they appear to justify any action, particularly if it was outlined in their very, very detailed, lengthy platform, with the assumption that all Albertans who voted for the

UCP voted for all of the commitments in that platform. We certainly do challenge that assumption.

However, it was set out as a commitment made by the UCP in their election platform, so I find it remarkable that this is being brought forward as a private member's bill and not as a government bill. It could have been part of the numerous pieces of legislation that we are seeing brought forward. It was a very intense legislative session that we had in the summer and that we are having now, but clearly this was not a priority for the government because it was not brought forward as a government bill. In fact, it was brought forward by the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

To me, it also speaks to my questioning about whether or not there actually is a commitment within the government caucus. I understand that it is a private member's bill, and we've heard a lot of comments recently about free votes on private members' bills. Perhaps there is a division – and I believe there likely is a division – within the members on the government side with respect to their support for this legislation. We know that with this kind of recall legislation, it's not the first time that it's been brought forward in this Assembly. Several of the members on the other side actually have voted against legislation like that in the past. I'm curious as to whether or not there really, actually is, despite it being in the government platform as a commitment, a commitment to this legislation. I suspect we're going to see a bit of division on this one.

You know, for me, my concern, when I look at the bill, is twofold. First, it's that there seems to be a lack of detail within the bill, that I think suggests to me that some very big loopholes, either intentionally or unintentionally, have been created. This was an issue that came up a number of times when we were in the private members' bills committee, which was questions about: who is authorized to collect funds during a recall petition? In particular, there was concern, actually, that the way the current Bill 204 is phrased, there is some room there for third parties to essentially be fund raising during a recall petition. Although the member bringing the private member's bill forward maintained that he did not intend for that to be the case, I believe that the current wording – and we confirmed this when we spoke with both the Chief Electoral Officer as well as the representative from Alberta Justice who came and spoke and gave a technical briefing on the bill – does not limit who can actually collect funds during a recall petition.

It does leave an opening for a prescribed entity to, by regulation, be able to collect funds, to be a participant, and that, to me, raises some red flags. It raises the alarm that perhaps we are going to be in a situation where we will have third-party actors, political groups organizing behind the scenes, and maybe even political parties, because there's actually no prohibition within this current act that would prevent political parties and other third parties from actually being the ones to raise funds for recall petitions. I take the member who brought this bill forward at his word when he said that that was not his intent. However, that is the outcome of the current wording of the bill. My concern around that is that perhaps it's not an unintentional oversight. Perhaps it is an intentional oversight and maybe not an oversight at all.

Really, my concern is exactly what my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View's was, that this is about continuing campaigning in between election periods. This is about creating a machine, a way for fundraising by political parties to continue to raise funds outside of election periods, outside the current parameters of our elections legislation. You know, I actually was very struck by the comments from my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View, because when she talks about the Americanization of our political system, that is, actually, precisely what it feels like. As an outside observer who watches what's happening in the American system, it does feel like the campaigning and the fundraising is going on all the time.

Now, of course, political parties have rights to fund raise, but to use a recall petition to do that actually seems like it's deliberately designed to continue to fuel the division that we are seeing, that is being promoted actively by this government. We've seen that the entire tone of this government has been about creating and identifying enemies. We've had members in this House stand up and basically say that it is about us versus them and that you're either with us or you're against us. To me, this kind of system, where we're going to be allowing fundraising and recall petitions to be filed, is just going to continue to fuel that.

To some extent, we have to have some trust and faith in our democratic institutions and the democratic systems that have been in place for some time. Now, I have to tell you that I believe that my own personal faith in our democratic institutions is starting to be challenged because we're seeing that we have a government that's actively undermining democracy. We saw a perfect example of that a mere two hours ago, less than that, actually, when, before even introducing a bill into the Legislature, the Government House Leader stood up and invoked closure of debate on that bill, before even introducing it.

Certainly, at a time when our democratic institutions are under attack by the very government that's in place right now, I think we have to go back and say: "You know what? We need to start looking at ways to be moving forward and actually governing."

3:40

One of my concerns that I'm consistently seeing when we hear the rhetoric that's coming from this government caucus is that it's all about lawsuits and war rooms and inquiries and referendums and potentially looking at ways to separate Alberta out from Canada. This is being fuelled by this government if not by the Premier directly. At some point we actually need to get down to business and govern and actually make decisions in the best interests of this province and stop fighting fights and actually move forward in a progressive way.

We're seeing no indication of that because this government, with its budget and all the measures it's taking, is attacking all Albertans from all sides right now. This is just one more piece of that puzzle as far as I'm concerned. It's another way to keep continuing to have this environment and a climate where we are in combat with each other, where we are constantly divided, where we are constantly seeking to tear down our institutions. Rather, there has to be some acceptance of the democratic will of the people when an election is made.

I think, actually, one of my concerns with respect to the details of this bill is that we have seen recall legislation in other jurisdictions. In the United Kingdom, for example, they do have recall legislation, but there is a requirement there that there be just cause to recall an elected official. You know, I'm not very familiar with what the details of the requirements for just cause are or what qualifies as that. Certainly, you would think it would be an automatic disqualification, even in our system, if there was criminal conviction of certain kinds. Certainly, there should be some reason, perhaps, that would give some assurance that this is not simply a way to continue to have political division and individuals and constituents fighting against each other when an election has taken place and the system has worked properly. If there have been no concerns about whether or not the election was proper, at some point we have to respect the outcome.

That is why we have terms in our democratic system. If an elected official has not been doing their job, has not been performing well, and if the majority of their constituents are unhappy with their performance, that's what the next election is for. That's the time to be mobilizing. We know you don't just mobilize and vote the day

of the election. You're really doing that for some time beforehand. Really, I think that that is the system we have in place, and I support that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Sherwood Park has risen to speak.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Very happy to take part in this very important debate, giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important bill. Bill 204 is a crucial step forward to achieving a more transparent and accountable government.

I got into politics not because I needed a job – I was happily employed – and not because I wanted to make a name for myself but because I wanted to help get a better life for the people of my own constituency of Sherwood Park and all Albertans. I believe that my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, ran for office for the same reasons. Even though we might disagree on policy, I am sure we all want to see a better Alberta. But time after time, Mr. Speaker, Albertans have seen politicians who say that they have the best interests of Albertans at heart and then completely ignore the voices of their constituents and who, we must always remind ourselves, will often break promises and who abuse their power, with little or no consequences.

Mr. Speaker, we are lucky to live in a democratic state, where all citizens are able to participate in the democratic process, but the voices of Albertans should not only matter on election day. They should matter every day, because Albertans are our bosses, and we should be held accountable to them each and every day. That is why I am proud of the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for introducing the Election Recall Act. It is time for us to adopt legally binding measures that will ensure Albertans have the tools to hold their elected officials accountable. This is something all of us as elected officials should strive for because, at the end of the day, we are working for the people of this province, and underperforming members should not have tenure that prevents them from being held responsible if they are not doing a proper job according to their constituents.

Alberta currently does not have any recall legislation, which means that displeased constituents have to wait up to four years to express their disapproval. The changes made in this bill will allow constituents of the riding to petition for a by-election if a total of 40 per cent of the number of electors that appear on the post polling day list of electors in the constituency sign within a 60-day period. This can only be done after the MLA has been in office for more than 18 months. This prevents officials from being ousted before being given a fair chance to represent their constituents. Completely reasonable, Mr. Speaker.

This idea is not new or particularly revolutionary. It is common-sense, pragmatic legislation. B.C. has had recall legislation since 1995, and many states, including California, Arizona, Washington – you have a mix of blue and red states, conservative and liberal there – have also implemented similar policies. This is not simply a North American phenomenon either, Mr. Speaker. We love the comparative international review here. Furthermore, dozens of countries world-wide have employed analogous rules regarding accountability for their elected officials.

Recall legislation not only improves accountability but also empowers private members to make the voices of their constituents heard and heard loudly. The bill also has measures to ensure that the recall process is fair and in accordance with the Election Act. The fact that canvassers cannot be paid in tandem with requiring a sizable chunk of the voting population to sign is a steep barrier preventing partisan or well-funded attempts at unrighteously attempting to remove an MLA from office in terms of frivolous

attempts. In the extremely rare cases, Mr. Speaker, where officials are undeservedly removed by a well-co-ordinated minority, they will still be allowed to run in the next election. Thus, the will of the people will still be reflected. The people are always right.

Mr. Speaker, a fundamental component of any functional democracy is checks and balances. Recall legislation is another check that ensures MLAs are held accountable by their constituents. This means that MLAs can't get elected and then do as they want with disregard for the feelings and wants of the constituents who elected them and who they're supposed to represent. This is so important. There should be recourse for constituents who do not feel adequately represented by their MLA, and this is what recall allows for. If an elected official is not properly representing their constituency, they should be promptly held responsible and accountable for their poor performance. This bill strikes an ideal balance between holding members liable for their actions and ensuring our government runs smoothly, without constant changes to its members.

In the 2015 election my riding was taken by the NDP, who won that riding. They then implemented vastly unpopular policies, to the disapproval of my constituents, including the carbon tax, which sprung out of nowhere. It was a total surprise. It was not in the NDP platform, nor was it mentioned in any of the debates. This tax was implemented despite mass disapproval among Albertans. The numbers showed 64 per cent opposition. But despite the huge backlash from my constituents in an energy-heavy riding, where 30 per cent of our income is derived directly from the energy industry, my constituents were very upset when the previous MLA in my riding voted in favour of this tax, which they did not run on. Had we implemented this recall legislation, that MLA would have been held accountable to their constituents and would have chosen the action that would have benefited the people in their riding rather than force their political agenda on them.

3:50

Our party, as mentioned previously, campaigned on delivering recall legislation. This is clearly outlined in our platform, that over 1 million Albertans voted for, a historic election and a historic support level. Our government has demonstrated that we are committed to keeping our promises, many of which were designed to ensure a more transparent and accountable government. Some of our key promises to make Alberta's democracy more transparent, accountable, and fair include fixed election dates, restrictions on government advertising approaching an election, and free voting. Recall legislation goes hand in hand with these other platform promises, Mr. Speaker.

When recall legislation was passed in British Columbia in 1995, it received overwhelming support, 81 per cent, at the polls.

Accountability to the people is crucial for a healthy and fair democracy. When underperforming members have to worry about their job security, it will encourage hard work and, frankly, reliability. Recall legislation would have prevented massively unpopular policies like the carbon tax from being implemented and discouraged elected leaders from breaking their promises or pulling out surprises, to many people's dismay. This would have come in handy for Manitoba voters when Premier Greg Selinger broke his promise to not increase the provincial sales tax, in Ontario when Premier McGuinty broke his promise not to increase taxes in 2004, and for Albertans when the former Premier, again, introduced the carbon tax, something that she did not campaign on, Mr. Speaker. And it applies to our government members, too.

Introducing and implementing this bill is about keeping a promise we made to Albertans in the last campaign. A fair and accountable electoral democratic system is crucial for a healthy and

functional democracy. There is simply no plausible reason to oppose this bill. It is a nonpartisan law that will only bring positive change for Albertans by holding our representatives to the same standards we would hold any other worker to in this province. As elected officials we are here to work for the people, not for our own personal gain. There is simply no excuse for having immunity to the political recourse and the consequences of not doing an adequate job representing the interests of our constituents, be it in the political profession or in the workplace outside of politics.

The requirements to successfully recall MLAs are high enough, Mr. Speaker, that it cannot be hijacked for partisan gain, and it will also be a rare enough occurrence that it will not destabilize the government. Operations will continue to run smoothly. This will be a large step forward for constituents who have a major and rightful grievance with their elected officials.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has risen to speak.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's an honour to rise on Bill 204. Like my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud stated, I too sit on the private members' committee and had an opportunity to hear a little bit more about this bill and hear from the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, who was certainly quite passionate about this bill. I wish he was just as passionate about other issues like health care or LGBTQ issues, perhaps.

Actually, before I get into some of the meat and bones, I do want to respond to the comments from the Member for Sherwood Park. I must say that while I am a new MLA, I was quite proud to see the work that the former Member for Sherwood Park put into her constituency, so to speak of her in the way that he did, to imply that she could have been subject to recall because of her support of the carbon tax, is absolutely shameful.

You know, I wonder. I have many, many friends who live in the Member for Sherwood Park's constituency who are teachers, who are public servants, who are nurses, who work in a variety of occupations, who are currently very frustrated with their member and are feeling like they're under attack. I would urge that member to think about his own approach to his constituency. I presume from his comments that perhaps he'll vote against – I don't know – Bill 20 and Bill 21 as well, then, if he's going to make those sorts of remarks about the previous Member for Sherwood Park. Again, I know because I've heard from a number of folks. One of my good friends teaches in Sherwood Park, and he tells me that he's written multiple times to his member and has not had an adequate response. So I just want to leave that there.

Now let's get back to Bill 204. It is a distraction and I believe it's a waste having this conversation right now, at a time when there are so many other topics that we could be discussing. You all have heard me speak about how proud I am to represent Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, a diverse riding which has incredible folks in it but also has its share of challenges, that I as an MLA am trying to address as best I can. You know, admittedly, it gets hard from time to time given the stories I hear from my constituents, folks who are AISH recipients who are struggling to make ends meet.

These aren't just hypotheticals. These are stories that I could point any member in this House to. I could point them to multiple e-mails, the correspondence I get from folks every day who are struggling, the calls my office staff receive on health care, affordable housing – that's a big one, right? – postsecondary education, education, and the list goes on. The point is that there are so many issues that we should be focusing on. I worry that this is a distraction, that this takes away from the important issues at hand.

I know that there's also a lack of – I've got the bill in front of me. I mean, it's a little more robust than some of the other private members' bills, I must admit, because some of them are quite thin. This one has a little bit more detail, but it does lack details in some areas. For instance, there's nothing to deal with PACs, third parties, political parties, or the use of data collected. You know, we're not seeing a lot of specifics around what is to happen with third-party advertising and whatnot. Again, I know we asked some questions about this in the private members' committee and were less than satisfied with some of the answers that we received, so I do worry about that as well.

Also in those meetings we asked the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon to talk about, you know, who he spoke to, who he consulted with, to kind of walk us through the process, because he said that he'd heard from many of his constituents about the need for this. I'm not doubting his honesty, but I have to tell you that I've been knocking on doors for quite a long time. I did prior to the election. I've knocked on every single door in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, many doors multiple times. I like door-knocking. I like talking to folks in my riding, and I can honestly say that the issue of recall legislation did not come up. It didn't, ever. I'm happy to be wrong in case one of my volunteers got it at the door, but I certainly personally did not hear about that issue.

What did I hear about? I heard about the need for housing, I heard about folks feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood, and I heard about the need for investments in education and health care but, again, nothing about recall legislation. I think it's important that we listen to our constituents. Again, I'm not doubting. Perhaps that member did hear about it, but I would gather and I would guess, in looking at some of my colleagues here, that they probably had a similar experience where they didn't hear a lot about recall at the door. I'm seeing some nods there.

**An Hon. Member:** Never.

**Member Irwin:** Exactly.

The other thing I want to point out is that this is actually in the UCP platform. I pulled it up. It was kind of an important pillar in the platform, in fact, on page 89 under Democratic Reforms. I'll just read this to you: "introduce a Recall Act based on precedents in several jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom, the United States, and in British Columbia where the provision has existed since 1996." Then there are a few other specifics provided in the UCP platform.

It's always nice to have the UCP platform handy for when there are confusing items brought forth by this government. In this case what I would ask about this – sure. That's fine. It's their prerogative to include that in their platform, but if this were such an important measure for this government, then why not move it as a government bill? I'm quite curious about that, and I'd love to hear one of the members opposite talk about why it wasn't prioritized if it is, as some of the members have shared already today, such a critical issue.

The other thing I want to speak about is the populist element of this bill. Now, hear me out. What I'm going to do is refer to an article – and I will share this with *Hansard* later on – in the *Calgary Herald* from February 2019 from someone who's not known to be too critical of this government, Corbella. I want to just pull out a few things that she notes because I thought it was quite interesting. Again, it's quite relevant to this bill, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you of that. She notes that "whether it's called populist Pablum or democratic drivel, one thing is certain, a few of the democratic reform promises made by [this Premier] can best be defined as bad policy."

4:00

Now, what she notes is that she actually pulls in the comments from a previous Member of the Legislative Assembly, Richard Starke, who talked a lot and went on a bit of social media discussion about how recall legislation is not the best step forward. He notes that, "Populist parties sell people on keeping elected officials on a short leash with a choke chain." He says that when you peel back the onionlike layers of policies like recall legislation, you should expect metaphorical electoral tears.

Now, Dr. Starke gives a couple of examples, and I looked up some of these, too, because I found them, as a former social studies teacher – I know the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon is one as well. Quite interesting. Dr. Starke points to the case of Covina, California, a city of about 50,000 in the Los Angeles area, as a prime example of why recall legislation is a bad idea and says:

In July 1993, the entire . . . city council was recalled by angry voters after councillors raised municipal utility taxes by six per cent to make up for a \$2.3-million budget deficit.

A new election was held and most of the newly elected city councillors were leaders of the recall movement. Once the new councillors got into office, however, they discovered that if they didn't increase taxes they would have to shutter the library, shut down the parks and recreation department and lay off 77 city workers. By the time a new election had been held a year had passed, the deficit had increased and the new councillors concluded that they had to raise taxes by 8.25 per cent to keep vital city services running.

This then – wait for it –

sparked yet another recall petition – which . . . was not successful.

Now, his point though – and it's a relevant case study – is that to suggest that this is going to provide better accountability, as some of the members opposite have suggested, and sound political decisions is false.

Dr. Starke actually goes on to point to another example. I won't read that whole example, but essentially: "In Peru, over 5,000 democratically elected authorities in 747 municipalities (46% of all Peruvian municipalities) were recalled in the period between 1997 and 2013."

It's not just a matter of inefficiency and of the fact that evidence shows that it doesn't lead to increased accountability; there's also the issue of cost, right? We did talk about cost a little bit in the private members' bill committee and, you know, the numbers didn't necessarily sound too alarming. But when you're talking thousands of dollars, when you're talking about the fact that that money could be used in so many other ways, I think we do need to think about thousands of dollars as being substantial amounts of money. Again, we haven't experienced this in Alberta, so we don't know exactly what the costs will be. We do have examples in other jurisdictions where in some cases the costs haven't been extreme, but again we don't know how regularly this could be used in Alberta. There's the administrative burden, and then there's a whole lot of additional work needed to move things forward.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has risen.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been an interesting debate so far, and I'd like to be able to touch on a few of the points that I've heard. Before I do that, I wanted to talk a little bit about my experience at the doors in Calgary-Klein. Granted, I hear and recognize the experiences of all the members of this Assembly and their experience at the doors. I started door-knocking in Calgary-Klein back in 2010, so I've got about nine years of experience knocking on doors in Calgary-Klein.

I'm just thinking of one particular story, actually, from this last election. I can tell lots of stories like this – I'm sure that you can also tell stories, Mr. Speaker – of the people that, when I've knocked on their doors, were feeling disillusioned and feeling like their elected people don't listen to them, feeling disconnected from their elected people, like they can't actually have an impact and that their voice and their vote don't matter. Many times people had come to the door like I had been at their door and had told them something and had promised them something and then went and got elected and did something completely contrary to that.

I think that this bill is absolutely critical. What it does is that it gives individuals like that a voice between elections, at the end of the day, making sure that their elected people continue to be accountable to them and not just showing up every four years begging and asking for their vote. I think what it does is help engage people throughout the election process.

We've heard a few kind of references to continuing campaigning. If continuing campaigning means that you're out and engaging with your constituency regularly and hearing from your constituents and making sure that their voices are heard, then this won't be a problem for you because your constituents will like you, and it's very unlikely that they're going to come out and enact this process in regard to recall. That's where I think this is so important.

I've been campaigning on recall legislation for eight years. That's why it's so much my pleasure to be able to rise here today in support of Bill 204, Election Recall Act. Again, for eight years I ran on the election platform that promised to strengthen Alberta's democracy. That included recall legislation. Introducing the Election Recall Act is a direct promise that this government and I made to Albertans during the election, and by now everyone should know that when this government makes a promise, we are going to keep it.

The key goal of this legislation is to enhance democracy by making MLAs directly responsible to their constituents between elections. As it currently stands, MLAs can only be fired by their constituents during a general election. We can all think of examples, I think, especially over the last four years, where this might have been particularly relevant, without getting into specifics. This bill would give constituents a method to recall an MLA if they are no longer representing them. As the MLA for Calgary-Klein I know that my boss is the constituents of Calgary-Klein, and I'm here to serve them and be their voice in the Alberta Legislature. I take that very, very seriously. If myself or one of my colleagues is no longer acting in the interests of those whom they represent, then they shouldn't be in that position anymore, and their constituents should have the opportunity to recall for that.

Our democracy lacks direct accountability to the public. As elected representatives we should strive to find ways to make our system more accountable and democratic. Bill 204 does that. It will strengthen Albertans' trust and participation in the democratic system. It allows for everyday citizens to be more involved with the political process by increasing their power. Isn't that what democracy is all about, the people having the power to choose their government? Why should this power be available only every four years? Bill 204 puts the public back in the driver's seat and in control of democracy.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan issue. On both sides of this aisle we should be striving to improve our democracy regardless of our political stripes. I think we can all agree that as an MLA our job is to represent our constituents, and if we are not doing this important job, we shouldn't be in this House. As the Premier said, government should be the servant, not the master, and you as the voter should be in charge.

Let us consider an example of when recall legislation would be used. An MLA, regardless of their party, wins a seat in the



Legislature. During the election this person could have presented themselves as someone who would work hard, represent their constituents. However, once they become an MLA and have their seat, they do a complete turnaround. They don't show up to work either in their riding or in the Legislature. They do not meet with constituents, and they do not bear the minimum duties of an MLA. Now, this MLA could get kicked out of a caucus and continue as an independent. However, they are still the person that is supposed to represent their constituents. If they are not doing this, there is currently no mechanism for constituents to remove the MLA as their representative. The MLA could not be doing any work and would continue to be paid. This does not make any sense to me. Speaking for myself and I'm sure for many of my colleagues, we did not want to be an MLA for the job security. In every other job you can get fired for poor performance. Why should there be a double standard for elected officials? This is a common-sense bill, and I see no reason to oppose it.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 204 may be a new idea in Alberta, but similar legislation exists in British Columbia and other jurisdictions across the United States and in 12 other countries. Bill 204 proposes the same parameters as we've seen in B.C. In order for a recall to go through and a by-election to be called, 40 per cent of the total number of voters that appear on the post polling day list of electors for the constituency must sign a recall petition – that's a pretty high threshold – no sooner than 18 months after an election. This threshold of 40 per cent ensures that the Election Recall Act is not used unless constituents are genuinely concerned about an MLA.

4:10

In British Columbia recall has been attempted 26 times, and we've been told that the costs associated with that are actually very, very small. However, it has only been successfully used once, and the MLA did step down before being recalled. I would say that the costs associated with not doing recall in regard to accountability of MLAs to their constituents and the concern that constituents feel disengaged from the political process because their MLA is no longer representing them are greater than the costs associated with recall.

Voices of Albertans should be heard every day, not just on election day. Bill 204 was a key aspect of a platform that over 1 million Albertans voted for and, certainly, something that I heard about lots at the doors. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to strengthen our democracy by supporting the legislation.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen to speak.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to provide some initial comments on Bill 204, the recall act. As I understand, it was contained within the platform, so fair enough. Here we are, Mr. Speaker.

I just heard some comments from my hon. colleague prior indicating that it wouldn't be a problem if there was a constant campaign and so on. Okay. Let's take that at face value, then. Let's take that comment at face value but subject it to a little bit of rigour. We're here to debate, after all, not just to agree with ourselves but to be open to input from others. After all, that is the point of being here.

There are significant issues with this concept of the constant campaign, in particular, if it opens the door to a constant, lawless stream of money that, in turn, opens the door to a stream of invective from the deepest pockets of external actors' international

funds funnelled to PACs and outside foreign interference in our free and fair elections. That is, Mr. Speaker, a problem.

What is the basis upon which I make those statements? Well, it is the Justice official who appeared before the private members' committee on November 4 in which she flagged five things. One, nothing in the bill addresses the role of political parties in funding, supporting, or organizing recall petitions. In other words, political parties are not subject to the normal rules. Neither, too, as I understand it then, is anyone else, and even money outside of Alberta is not governed by this.

There is no included offence for harassing someone who is canvassing for signatures or who is signing a petition. That, Mr. Speaker, must cause our colleagues to pause. Bill 204 does not contain rules relating to the role and conduct of the member or the member's supporters in raising or spending money. Once again, this would appear to open up some of the holes we've already blown in our election financing rules via the senatorial elections and calling them into further question by allowing, by my reading of this, international money, foreign money, money outside of Alberta to come in under the guise of a recall act.

It is not an offence to offer or accept an inducement to sign or refuse to sign a petition. In other words, people may be paid to sign a petition. That sounds an awful lot, Mr. Speaker, like some of the offences that are being currently investigated by the Election Commissioner. It is not okay in a democracy to offer an inducement to undertake any sort of activity within the electoral system.

There are no provisions regarding unauthorized use of the list of electors. Well, I imagine our constituents will be quite surprised to learn this, that our list of electors, then, can be used by dark money influence, by corporations, by foreign-funded actors to contact us using political messages in a never-ending stream of campaigning, in a never-ending stream of negativity to target individual members.

While I, too, quite enjoy the opportunity to go and talk to my constituents – I am well known for loving canvassing – and I, too, enjoy that constant check-in with my constituents, I do not enjoy, Mr. Speaker, the prospect of having this much dark money sloshing around our democracy.

Now, we do realize that this is very clearly a backdoor way to flout election finance laws, which has, in any case, been accomplished by the senatorial election. But there might be, if we could engage in a thought experiment – oftentimes in debate scenarios, if I recall my high school years correctly, one might engage in analogies or hypothetical situations to make a point in the debate, so let's perhaps try. I'm going to try to put myself in the place of the hon. members opposite to think of some instances where recall might be appropriate. Our colleagues have indeed shared some of their ideas with us around when recall might be appropriate, so let me try some, too.

Certainly, down south we've seen that some people believe the President of the United States ought to be in a form of recall, even before this latest round of hearings, for firing an FBI director who is doing an active investigation into how someone rigged an election. It's interesting to me that we could potentially have a member or series of members recalled for firing an Election Commissioner who has an ongoing investigation into how someone rigged an election. Perhaps it may be appropriate to indeed recall someone if a member was raided by the RCMP. Perhaps it may be appropriate to recall someone or initiate a recall – indeed, there is no requirement for an application to provide a reason, but we could imagine some of the reasons. That's what we will do right now.

Perhaps if a member was linked to a scheme to funnel money to an adjacent campaign for another candidate and people linked to that member then furnished donations to another person, which is an offence under the Election Act but then also potentially triggered

the income tax act if indeed those funds that were provided to someone then turned around and provided those donations and received a receipt, an income tax receipt, for them, that would then be both an unlawful contribution underneath the Election Act but also a contravention of the income tax act potentially. That might be a reason. If a member knew of such a scheme involving tens of thousands of dollars and knew of those unlawful contributions, that might be a reason to recall someone.

Perhaps if someone were under active investigation and took steps to in law obstruct that ongoing investigation and used their power as a lawmaker to obstruct that investigation, that might be a good reason to recall someone. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, other reasons might be, for example, a member who stands accused of forgery, bribery, or fraud. That might be a reason to recall someone. Perhaps a member who was fined for firing someone for sexual harassment, perhaps someone who was caught hunting on private land, perhaps someone who ran a voting station for a particular leadership contestant and is now being interviewed by the RCMP, perhaps other people who have had multiple RCMP interviews: those could be reasons to recall someone.

Or perhaps simply a group of people campaigned on one thing and then did another. We've had some of these examples already. One of the ones I thought of was Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall. He campaigned. He won a mandate. I believe it was in 2016. By 2017 he had turned tail and ran. Why? He had raised taxes on everyone through deindexing the income tax brackets. He had raised the PST on things like children's clothing and other essentials, raised the cost of construction by 6 per cent by adding the PST onto those things, ran a huge deficit, all kinds of things. He left before people could rise up, but that is a – we had some other examples of other provinces. So there is one for people.

Perhaps one might want to recall a member or series of members for contravening promises around indexing benefits for the severely handicapped, for example, taking one position and doing another.

Perhaps one might want to recall someone for raiding our only pension security for those of us who do not have a six-figure pension, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps it might be that if someone wanted to go in and take away those monthly contributions that we make under CPP that is in fact our money, perhaps if there was someone who wanted to make a play to the 80 per cent of us who don't have a public-sector pension, certainly don't have a six-figure one.

4:20

Perhaps one might want to recall a member who takes a particular position around LGBTQ2S rights, for example, such as the right to immediately and confidentially form a GSA, and says one thing during a campaign and then immediately at their first opportunity turns around and does another.

Perhaps one might want to recall a member who says, "No, no, no. We will not attack women's fundamental freedoms and our section 7 personal security rights. We will not legislate on these matters," and then at their second-most convenient opportunity does exactly that, Mr. Speaker.

So there are many reasons why one might want to recall an MLA. I certainly think that the existence of ongoing investigations and then the attempt to obstruct those investigations – as we're seeing south of the border, there's quite an appetite for consequences around that. We shall see if there are consequences anywhere else where hypothetically this may be occurring.

Now, of course, the recall legislation hasn't worked anywhere it's been tried. It increases red tape, which, of course, accomplishes the goal of misleading Albertans given that they didn't campaign on any of it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was jotting down a few notes here, but I guess the last member had made a great argument for voting in favour of it. I'm not sure if she'd finished or not, but it sure sounded like it would be one heck of a good idea based on all the potentials for that and giving folks the democratic right to yank someone or some person if they weren't fulfilling their needs or obligations or acting in an unduly manner or not in the job description.

You know, we've heard lots about the bogeyman. Quite frankly, there's an old adage that thee who lives by the sword should surely almost die. In our neck of the woods we favour that. Absolutely. The folks that we talked to, we campaigned on having one of these key elements and items. One of the reasons why it's so important that a private member would bring it forward is because even private members believe in what we campaigned on. It's not just a government promise; it's a promise of every UCP member that was out there. We had a platform. We didn't campaign on being a minister. We didn't campaign on being the government, ministers. We campaigned on being a candidate for those areas, and it went over with great success. Obviously, there's a strong majority government of UCP members here, and that's something that we strongly believe in: being representative, being accountable.

I can understand if the bogeyman was out there and I only won by the skin of my teeth – some of the members in the opposition may have – I think that yeah, they would be concerned. They would be concerned about that. But from what I've seen, NDP supporters are in favour of this. This is their Hail Mary. My wife brought to my attention that there were lots of folks applauding this, asking the loyal opposition leader, literally, on their Facebook feed: when is this coming through? Well, hallelujah. We're bringing it in. This is a great thing. It keeps everyone on all sides of the fence on their toes and responsible.

There was an interesting thing. When you held yourself accountable and responsible, when you are truthful in what you say and you can remember that – and also people's memories over 18 months: they're a lot more acute than every four years. Guaranteed on some of the things that happened with the carbon tax that Albertans had a really good memory after 18 months. They were chomping at the bit to wait for four years to make their decision. I can see why there would be some hesitance, but again, this is something, Mr. Speaker, that's so important to us as Albertans to bring this through.

There's an old adage in the patch sometimes they, you know, say when we're talking about dollars and cents and costs. The question goes – and it's a bit of a joke, tongue in cheek – why are divorces so expensive? Because they're worth it. Why would it be worth spending money in a by-election? Because it would be worth it. If that individual was not representative of their constituents, if they were not keeping their word, if they were not being truthful, if they were not following through with those promises, it definitely would be worth it. It would definitely be worth having that individual recalled, having the folks out in those constituencies having their voices truly heard in the democratic process. It would definitely be worth it.

The other thing that some of the members had mentioned, too: you're only as good as your last job. A lot of us that worked in industry understand that. Every year you go for a job interview. That's how I campaigned, Mr. Speaker, that this was a job interview to me. Once I got that job, that was the intent. It's a performance review. Most of us have those yearly performance reviews and some organizations quarterly because it's made to make sure the

process is better. It's made to make sure that you are actually keeping your commitments during getting that job. That's what this is. It's a performance review, so you'd better have your little running shoes around your neck as in the little adage in *Who Moved My Cheese?* where there were, you know, a couple of mice there. There were a couple of Hem and Haw characters. The whole adage behind that was: be on your toes, be ready for change, and be accountable.

Accountability and responsibility: those are things that the UCP believes in. I think that every politician should. As we've seen in history – and if we want to start citing some of the examples that the Member for Lethbridge-West just spoke about, she pointed out perfect examples of why someone should be recalled if that were the case. The Alberta people will make those decisions, and if we're bringing that forward to keep us all accountable, well, that works.

Here's a theory. Some of the folks that protest against this might be the ones that are the most concerned because maybe their skeletons haven't come out yet or maybe there are issues that they haven't taken account of. Myself, personally, I didn't really enjoy the door-knocking part of it. What I enjoyed were the forums. What I enjoyed in my area, being rural, were the cafés. What I enjoyed was meeting different organizations at events, going where there was a bunch of people and hearing that mass support. That was really important to me. Of all of the platform items we had, this is one that I'm so proud to see one of our private members bring forward. It resonated with him as well and his constituents, and it represents all of us. We didn't have to wait for the government to bring it forward. Potentially, maybe that's why there are some fundamental differences between our parties.

I'm in full support of this. I think that most people should be, and given that the folks I've seen that are of the NDP persuasion in my area also support it, I am truly speaking for all the constituents in my area. I think we should be in favour of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay. That was something.

I've been listening to some of the comments, and I just wanted to say, you know, that you don't get to pick and choose which campaign promises or things you said before the election and then say: "See? Look. Look what we're doing." I remember a lot of conversation around a lot of issues before the election. Certainly, what I'm going to say might support this legislation according to what you just said or not. Let's take a trip back and remember. When asked specifically about AISH, about indexing AISH benefits so that people with severe disabilities in this province would get a yearly increase of, like, \$30, we heard: "Oh, no. We're going to protect that. We would never do something like that." Okay. What about women's rights, accessing reproductive health care? "No. No. We're not going to do anything about that."

Yet still they allow private member legislation or they support private member legislation to show up in this place, and their response to everything is: well, we have a great big mandate. You made a lot of promises that you didn't keep, so if this turns around and bites you and you get recalled, I guess that would just be fair. You don't get to do these things and then just say: we have the right to do it because we won; we got all of these votes. What you continuously forget is that not everybody, not every single Albertan, voted for you.

What is immensely frustrating is that it feels like it has been a systematic attack on democracy in this place, in this place that is a symbol for democracy in our province. It started off slow – right?

– something really simple like: well, there's no need to pound the desks because we don't like it, so let's clap our hands. All right. Well, we don't like the fact that private member bills should be debated and voted on in this place without being censored by a committee where the government has a majority. Step two. Let's just chip away at democracy. Let's look at recall legislation that is so loosely written that it allows dark money to once again find a loophole to make its way into our democracy when we worked so hard in an all-party committee in the last sessions to look at ways to make this fair, to make it about that every single Albertan had a voice, had an ability, that their vote would mean as much as their neighbour's regardless of what their income was or what political action committee they belonged to. This is a systematic tearing down of those rights.

Like it or not, and I might not like all of the results of the last election – that's maybe an understatement – but I respect our voters. I respect what they said. I respect the people that showed up on election day and who voted early and who made those decisions, you know, by voting. This just takes us to another place, but it's almost like we're getting numb to it because it's happening so quickly. I can't remember which of my colleagues said it, but he said that it's like trying to take a drink from a firehose. Maybe that's the intent.

4:30

You know, some of my other colleagues have said this. I think this is just a blatant attempt to Americanize our democracy so that it's a constant campaign. We already expend enough during campaigns. We don't need to do this. We need to focus on our jobs while we are here, when we're in our constituencies. I think all of us would agree that we have an incredible amount of work to do when we're home in our constituencies and when we're in this place. We don't need to add another aspect of: let's just continuously campaign now because there's a backdoor way for money to get injected into our democracy. That's what I see this private member's bill doing.

You know, my colleague touched on this. There are some simple things that a caucus can do if your members have engaged in activities that are serious enough that the RCMP are investigating and that an independent Election Commissioner has fined – I think that it's over a couple of hundred thousand dollars now. You would think that a caucus would look at that and say: this is serious enough that this person should at the very least not be in our caucus until the investigation is concluded in one way or the other. But, no, let's support a private member's bill that looks at bringing more dark money into this process so that we can target individual people. It's not about individual members being intimidated by this; this is an overall intimidation.

Let's think back to the last election. I know that people on the other side like to say: well, you know, we don't have anything to do with people like Rebel media. I don't believe that, but whatever. Why was it that it was only in a couple of constituencies where this ridiculous electronic billboard showed up over and over and over again spewing garbage? This is dark money showing up in our democracy, and this private member's bill is opening yet another door. This is a systematic chipping away at democracy in this place, which is the biggest affront of all.

You know, the other member talked about what's going on in the United States. Certainly, our countries are very different, and I'm extremely thankful for that. But if we don't learn some of the lessons from our neighbours of some of the things that are happening there and do our best to protect our democracy – this isn't about our party memberships. This is about democracy for all

Albertans. If we don't do everything to protect that, then shame on us.

This act, of course, is brief, short in comparison, not super surprising. There is nothing to deal with political action committees, third-party political parties, the use of data that's collected. I think that we can all agree that that's a problem. This bill, once again, gives enormous power to cabinet and a lack of transparency to design regulation that works for them.

When you hide in the shadows and you make rules in the shadows, that's an affront to democracy, especially when it is something like recalling – it's more than recalling an MLA. This is about saying to Alberta voters: we don't trust you; we are going to launch this campaign to change the results of that election. As I said earlier, did I like or agree with – I mean, I have no business agreeing with the election results because I'm not a voter in those constituencies. But like it or not, the people of Alberta spoke. They didn't speak as loud as you think they did, and I think that you will find that out very soon. This, in my opinion, is just a systematic chipping away at democracy. It is a way to put more money in, when we all worked so hard.

I know that there are members across the way that sat on that all-party committee, the Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, that looked very hard at election financing and looked at: what are the best ways to close the loopholes that are here so that we do our very best to ensure that it is Albertans that speak out, not dark money, not political actions committees, but Albertans? This does the opposite. When you make these decisions and regulations and you hide them in secrecy, you are doing the very opposite of what you were sent here to do. You represent tens of thousands of people. They sent you here. Your job is to protect democracy, not to chip away so that you make it easier for your political party to do well in an election.

The members opposite can talk all they want about that this was a platform promise, but you blow a big hole in it when you pick and choose your platform promises or the promises that you made before the election. You can say that, yes, this is a platform promise. Okay. You made a lot of other promises, and not one person from the other side has stood up and said publicly, "You know, I don't agree with this piece of legislation; this goes against what we said we would do," one of those things being reproductive health care rights or access to health care for all people or access to an appropriate, timely referral, which is part of that process in health care.

I seem to remember many, many people – I can remember it from forums before the election. I can remember it from posts. I remember from what people said: no, no; we're not going to do that. You're doing it. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed in the fact that – maybe that's the intent – people are getting numb to the fact that you are chipping away at this democracy instead of building it up, making it more transparent so that we know where every dollar that goes into this process comes from. You know, you're very intent on having your little secret war room . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has risen to speak.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 204, the Election Recall Act. I will echo many of the sentiments brought forward by my colleagues in the NDP caucus because I, too, am very concerned about what we're seeing in this legislation.

Most importantly, as I quickly look through this Bill 204, I see the mention of the Chief Electoral Officer quite often and the role

that they will have in ensuring that this legislation is moved forward and that recall is taken forward when a constituent or a person in the community tries to bring it forward. That leads me to my first but possibly most important concern.

Earlier today we saw the introduction of Bill 22, effectively the firing of the officer, and now we see Bill 204 coming forward with increased responsibilities and obligations of that very same person. I'm very concerned – not to spend too much time, I suppose; of course, we will have a chance to debate it further – about Bill 22, what those implications and consequences are of removing this person from a position, first of all, as has been stated earlier in this debate, that is actively investigating a leadership contest where there are alleged wrongdoings to the fullest extent. We've seen fines laid to Albertans, so that's very concerning that now this government is going to fire and potentially rehire someone else that maybe has a vested interest in protecting their interests.

Once again, with Bill 204 we are extending their ability or their need to be involved. On one hand, we're getting rid of this person who has been working very hard to uphold our democracy. You know, we're talking about replacing them, and what that means to Bill 204 is very concerning to me.

Of course, there have been many points about the fact that this bill really does seem to be a distraction from the fact that the budget that has been delivered by this government that's currently under discussion is not popular by any stretch of the words. The fact that we're giving \$4.7 billion away to large corporations while telling seniors that they should be able to live with less, while telling people with severe disabilities that they should be able to live with less is very concerning. I think that this government caucus is concerned with it as well, so they are looking for any opportunity to deflect from the fact that their budget is so unpopular.

Once again, as has been mentioned by my colleagues in the NDP caucus, this really does seem to be moving towards a more American-style political system in terms of the constant campaign and fundraising that will be expected not only from Bill 204, as the private member brought forward with the Election Recall Act, but also in the discussions that we had earlier around the quote, unquote, Senate elections legislation that came forward and the fact that there were massive loopholes in the ability for, specifically, parties to fund raise to get these Senators – well, not elected but elected in Alberta. Of course, it's up to the federal government and the Prime Minister to make that final decision, whether they actually listen to that or not.

4:40

We are seeing a constant move towards, once again, an American-style political system where it's just a free-for-all. You can campaign at any time of the year; it doesn't really matter if it's an election year or an election cycle or not. That's very concerning to me because, as the Member for St. Albert brought forward, in the previous election we saw organizations like Rebel media targeting people that are deciding to put their name forward to run for election. It's really not fair. It's very concerning that we see these organizations that very well may be funded from outside of our own jurisdiction, outside of our province, and possibly even outside of our country. I would say most definitely funding coming from outside of our country. Really, this bill is opening up more loopholes to do just that, and that's very concerning.

The fact is, as the Member for St. Albert mentioned, the UCP doesn't really like to make public their relationship with Rebel media, but on election night in the last election Rebel media was sitting at their main election night event to celebrate their win. On one hand, we have a government saying, "Well, we don't make friends with people like this organization," but they save them a

couple of seats and let them televise their stream from their event. That's very concerning. Yes, it's a concern that we are opening up loopholes for organizations such as Rebel media.

Myself and people in my constituency are constantly inundated with text messages from organizations like Alberta Proud or Alberta Strong or whoever it might be that day, Sue or Shirley. I don't know. It depends on the day. That's concerning to me because we have these organizations where we really don't know where they're coming from or where they're funded from, and they are actively data mining people in our communities.

Of course we're concerned about funding coming in from other jurisdictions, but we're also very concerned about what is going to happen with the data from those text messages that are sent out and also the repercussions of data mining that might happen under Bill 204, which has been brought forward. Money is power, but so is knowledge, and having that data is just as good, if not maybe even better, than having the dollars. If you know how somebody is going to vote, which is all that these organizations are going after, whether you say yes or no, the fact is that they're getting what they're looking for. That should be of concern to all Albertans.

Now, for a government that wants to cut red tape, who says that that's in their mandate, this legislation really seems to be dead set on creating more bureaucracy and more red tape. The introduction of recall legislation, I believe, has been shown in a 2003 report by the B.C. Chief Electoral Officer to require increased bureaucracy to ensure that people are available to administer the legislation, just like the Bill 204 that we see before us. That's very concerning. Once again, at a time when this government is talking about getting rid of such an important position as the Election Commissioner, we're also introducing more bureaucracy to their position.

The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood also raised the point that Corbella, in an article from February earlier this year, when this discussion was happening, essentially stated, I think quite rightfully, though I don't agree with this person very often, if ever, that this legislation should be recalled. I would agree with Corbella on that fact. It went on to detail the discussions that Member Richard Starke had brought forward, and I also agreed with the points that he was making.

The fact is that recall legislation, at the end of the day, leads to public servants fearing doing the right thing because sometimes doing the right thing isn't always the popular thing. Sometimes it is unpopular to do the right thing, especially as we talk about taking action on things like climate change. It's quite clear that the government today does not agree with the decisions that we made. There were, of course, as the election showed, many people who also didn't agree with the decisions that we made. The fact is that we saw the writing on the wall that action had to be taken to combat climate change. We made those decisions. Once again, they're not always the popular decisions, but we believe them to be the right decisions.

Sorry; I lost my train of thought here. Let me go back to the 2003 B.C. point. Now, when we looked at the recall legislation there, there was an estimated cost of administering nine recall petitions, which all failed, I think it's important to note, that cost over \$550,000. They didn't even get to the point where a by-election was called because these petitions did not reach that threshold, yet it cost the system over \$550,000. That's very concerning, once again, for a government who's talking about reducing red tape and ensuring efficient spending of public dollars. Well, that doesn't seem to really go with that same message.

Once again I think it's important to point out the fact that the prevalence of global forces trying to influence our democracy is at an all-time high right now, going back to the point I was trying to make, whether it's an organization fighting to elect people who are

pro oil and gas or the exact opposite. I mean, it's a concern on both ends that radical environmentalists might try and unseat people. That's a concern just as much as it going the other way in terms of foreign influences on our democracy.

It's really not just a one-sided issue. The fact is that with the passing of this legislation and with actions that this government has undertaken under the, quote, unquote, Senate elections legislation, there will be a further prevalence of foreign influence in our democracy.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief. Bill 204 has been something that – when we were in opposition, I think we brought this forward a couple of times as a private member's bill. This is something that is not going to be a surprise to this Chamber, that this is something we feel very strongly about. The concept of recall is obviously in other jurisdictions. It is in B.C., that's for sure. The value of recall is to allow individual constituents to keep their MLAs honest.

The reason, I think, that we're hearing from the members opposite a rejection of this principle is because they recognize that had we had recall in the last four years, when they were in government, they would not have been in government for four years. Albertans rejected especially the carbon tax, which is interesting when the member who just spoke talked about how doing the right thing isn't always the easy thing, that it's the hard thing sometimes, but it's the right thing, and then he talked about the carbon tax. They still haven't recognized that that concept was rejected wholeheartedly by Albertans.

Now, this is the value to Bill 204, that if the hon. members in the NDP caucus really believe that they are representing Albertans, they should never be afraid of allowing recall legislation because they would know that the majority would be in their favour. The truth is that no matter the rhetoric, how much they spew in this House, they know deep down that they do not represent the majority of Albertans, which is certainly the case, as we've seen in the last election, on April 16, 2019, when the UCP received over a million votes, and 40 per cent less is what the NDP received.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a way for Albertans to have the accountability that they're looking for. Now, whether this actually gets enacted or not, just the threat of an MLA not being able to vote his or her conscience, vote the way that he or she believes that their constituents would want them to vote is enough for this bill to have real efficacy and real importance in this House. I am very much in favour of this.

**4:50**

Paul Hinman, who used to be an MLA in this House, passionately spoke about the need for this and how this is a check and balance on power. Now, it is a private member's bill, but it is something that a private member on the government side has brought forward, recognizing that it is important to have checks and balances on power. I don't believe that the NDP subscribe to that kind of belief, that you should have checks and balances.

They've spent a majority of this time talking about how we should be careful of this because it's dark money. Well, I would remind these members that I just decided to take a look at the 2015 contributions that the NDP received, and I was surprised to see that they received a substantial, six-digit figure from the Ontario steelworkers' union. What's interesting about this is that they talk about never receiving any kind of contribution outside of this jurisdiction, yet they have received that themselves. Now, I don't know whether or not that member knew. There were actually two

members that just spoke about how that was so bad, yet their own party has received a six-digit contribution from the Ontario steelworkers' union. Now, they talk about dark money. In reality, if that's not dark money, I don't know what is.

From the way they described dark money, they're saying that other jurisdictions are starting to gerrymander Alberta politics, yet they have no problems receiving a six-digit contribution from the Ontario steelworkers' union. You know what? When I took a look at those things, Mr. Speaker, there were actually other contributions as well, and the gerrymandering was happening in this province not just in 2015 but also in 2019 by the NDP and their allies. I think that this is a smokescreen, and it's sad to see how disingenuous these members are in their attack on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be able to stand in this Chamber and support this bill knowing that for over four years now I have been a big advocate to be able to have this kind of check and balance, checks and balances that we're willing to place upon ourselves, checks and balances that we're willing to say: "You know what? We want to be held to a higher standard in this House." This is what Albertans are looking for. If they believe that we are going to deviate from what we campaigned on, the 375 campaign promises, they have the full right to fire us.

We're going to give the power back to the people, which is what democracy is all about. I was surprised to hear the member say that we were trying to strip away democracy. Mr. Speaker, there's nothing stronger than a recall bill to empower the people and then empower democracy. There's nothing stronger than this kind of measure. This is a fantastic tool. I get that they're in opposition. I get that they are concerned that this could actually affect their numbers of 24 MLAs. In reality, why don't they just focus on representing their people, representing their constituents to the best of their ability? Then they don't have to worry.

This allows us, all members, to be able to vote our conscience, Mr. Speaker. This allows us to vote the way that our constituents want us to vote. This would allow us to be able to make sure that if there's a bill that comes forward in this House that is not in harmony with the way our constituents want us to be moving forward, then we could move forward the way that we think we should, the way that our constituents think we should. There's no problem with that. I don't understand the arguments against this.

I am in full support of this bill, and I applaud the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for bringing it forward.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise some of the issues that I have with this piece of legislation as it currently stands and to clarify some of the things that the previous speaker just said, amongst others, in this House.

First of all, checks and balances exist in that every four years there is an election. That's when members of this House are held accountable for their actions and words, through our regular elections.

What previous members have said as far as: well, this doesn't really cost that much. Actually, I challenge the members to bring forward the additional costs of having recall legislation.

Now, it is interesting that there are members who are currently sitting in this House who voted against recall legislation. In fact, you know, with all respect, there are two members, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek and the Member for Calgary-West, who voted against recall legislation in the previous Legislature and now are in

favour of this. Now, I'm not sure if they've had a change of heart or a change of mind or if that's how they have to vote.

I mean, to the previous minister who was speaking: this does nothing around free votes and voting how you want and what he was saying.

Mr. Speaker, the issue that I have with this bill as it's currently written – and I don't have an issue with recall legislation. I do think that, again, Albertans every four years – you're not elected for life. You have to win an election every four years, so if you do a really poor job, chances are that voters are going to send you a strong message and send you out of office altogether.

The challenge I have with this piece of legislation – and it's been said by those that have had a chance to look at it – is that it does nothing to deal with PACs, with third-party advertising, with the use of data that is collected, that can be used or misused. If the members opposite are adamant that they want to bring forward a bill or their private member, then this bill should be amended to ensure that we close any loopholes that currently exist. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in other jurisdictions that have recall legislation, they have closed those loopholes. These ones are gaping wide.

I also find it interesting that, you know, jurisdictions have tried to bring this in and changed their mind. In fact, Bible Bill, William Aberhart, brought in recall legislation and then was threatened to be recalled and quickly changed the legislation so that he couldn't be recalled.

You know, I appreciate that the UCP campaigned on this. This is a campaign promise. I do think that that argument is used when it's convenient because I don't recall you campaigning on raising personal income taxes or on legislating on women's issues or conscience rights or other things when, actually, their leader had said specifically that there wouldn't be those types of legislation being brought forward. Now, having said that, it was in the platform. That's fine.

But if you look at B.C. as an example, Mr. Speaker, they do have parameters on how third parties can act and advertise during a recall petition. Again, what we don't want are third parties who have a hate on for a member to, you know, do everything within their power, including raising huge sums of money, to oust a member because they disagree with a position that they took and to unduly influence voters as opposed to it being based on the behaviour of the actual members themselves.

I can tell you that we talk about how this government has set up a war room to go after foreign-funded campaigns, yet this bill, as it's currently written, allows for foreign-funded campaigns to influence and take over elections within the province of Alberta. I hope other people see that this is a huge problem and a little bit hypocritical, that in one way there are actions to try to stop foreign-funded influence, yet through this current piece of legislation it allows for that. Now, I appreciate that government members may say, "Well, this is a private member's bill, not a government bill," but I would hope that it does raise concerns for them and that it gets addressed, Mr. Speaker.

The reason that I'm opposed to this is that it's a waste of taxpayers' money, having multiple elections between terms. Again, four years, although some days feel like a long time, pass by very quickly, and Albertans have the right to exercise their electoral rights on whether or not a member returns to this Legislature or whether a member is elected in the first place. This legislation, even though it exists in other jurisdictions, I don't think does what these folks hope that it will do. I honestly think that the reason that this is being brought forward is really to change the channel on what's really happening.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, but seeing the time, 5 o'clock, the time limit for consideration of this item has concluded.

### 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

#### Walleye Fish Stock

509. Mr. Hanson moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to enhance the biodiversity, health, and economic value of Alberta's lakes by utilizing the Cold Lake fish hatchery and other tools at the government's disposal in order to increase Alberta's walleye fish stock.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand today and introduce Motion 509. This is an issue that comes up quite often in my riding, and I'll refer to some of the coffee shops around the area that refer to the local senate. One of the questions that often comes up, because a lot of these folks are retired, is lack of fishing opportunities up in northern Alberta.

Now, we've got a wonderful facility, the Cold Lake fish hatchery, that's been around for upwards of 30 years and has a capacity – that is my understanding – to rear a hundred million walleye fry a year. Even if we take into consideration mortality rates, we could still be looking at easily 60 million-plus fry being raised there per year. Now, over the last 10 years how many walleye have we produced at the Cold Lake fish hatchery? Zero. We haven't raised a walleye there in 10 years. They've been raising trout for fish ponds in Calgary, Edmonton, and other surrounding areas for community fish ponds and not utilizing the fish hatchery for what it was designed for back in the '80s.

Now, we look at lakes up in my area that have been closed to fishing for upwards of 20 years. The lifespan of a walleye is about 15 years. So we're actually hatching them, and the fish go through their whole life process and actually die of old age in our lakes, yet our residents aren't allowed to take their kids out and have a fish fry around the lake. That's one of the big things.

On top of that is a wasted economic potential. We have a loss of tourism. We have a lot of our local provincial parks, some of the MD parks that are up in that area that go underutilized because folks are – guess what? – going to places like Saskatchewan, where they can actually catch and keep fish. So we're losing, you know, revenue to our parks, revenue to municipal parks, hotels, motels, local sport-fishing shops, gas stations. It kind of goes on and on. For instance, just in 2018 over 24,000 Albertans purchased fishing licences in Saskatchewan rather than Alberta. Over the period between 2015 and 2018: \$1.5 million in lost revenue to the province of Alberta in fishing licences alone, nothing to do with the local impact to tourism or the life there.

You know, we've got municipalities that are willing to invest in tourism, that are willing to help out with raising the awareness on this, and we've had many, many town halls where we've had very robust conversations with local fishermen and guides that are asking for us to reopen these lakes. I'll give you one example. The town of Lac La Biche has been holding what they call Lac La Biche Pow Wow Days for upwards of 50 years. Over the last five years, when I was their MLA representing them, they've had an event called the Seniors' Fish Fry. Over the last five years at least and prior to that they've had to import walleye from Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Meanwhile you can go out onto Lac La Biche, right outside the facility where they're having the fish fry, and you can

catch upwards of a hundred walleye in an afternoon, and the mortality rate, depending on how deep the water you're fishing in, can be anywhere from 5 to 20 per cent.

It's very popular for the pelicans because they like to follow the fishing boats around. They know that out of every hundred fish that get caught, anywhere from five to 15 are going to come popping to the surface, and they get a free meal. So we're actually causing more damage by restricting fishing than by just allowing people to go out there and catch and release. It's very, very frustrating for the folks up in Lac La Biche.

One of the things I would like to see: even though I'm not their MLA, I'd like to be able to go up next summer and enjoy the fish fry up in Lac La Biche with locally caught fish. It's one of the things I'm trying to work with our department to promote.

We also need to look at the environmental balance that comes from the overpopulation of the walleye. Now, you talk to local fishermen. They were quite adamant at the town halls we held, and they spoke to the ministry staff that were there and the biologists that were there about mortality rates. They talked to them about, you know, long skinny fish with big heads that had no bodies because there are so many of them that they've eaten out all of the smaller fish and are basically starving to death. I said that most of them die of old age, but maybe a lot of them are starving to death as well.

Also, I'd mention, you know, that we've had a couple of lakes up in our area that have winter kill. Rather than allowing people to go and catch these fish, it's quite acceptable to have thousands of them die over the winter or on a hot summer day, when the lack of oxygen, because of the overabundance of fish, is causing these big die-offs.

Going on, like I said before, we are missing the good opportunities, the fishing opportunities. The seniors that I talk to tell me that, you know, when they were kids, they'd go out and enjoy the fishing experience with their grandparents. A lot of people are just saying: we'd like to be able to go out to our lakes, catch a couple of fish, take our grandkids, have a fish fry on the beach, and just have that experience as a family thing. I don't think it's too much to ask, especially with the overabundance of fish that we're seeing in our lakes up there.

With that, like I said, we've got the Cold Lake fish hatchery. The capacity is there. We'd be looking at utilizing that fish hatchery to rear some fish and stock some lakes. You know, some of the lakes maybe should be fished out a little bit to allow for some of the other natural species like whitefish and perch and northern pike to develop. There are some of those lakes that used to be fantastic perch fisheries. Now you go out and you can't even catch a perch. But guess what? You can catch a walleye on a perch hook. Or you're out fishing for northern pike in the traditional way that you'd be fishing for northern pike and you're not catching northern pike. But guess what? You're catching walleye. Again, we're seeing a lot of these lakes that have an overabundance. We're looking at just getting some balance back by utilizing the fish hatcheries.

We also have another tool at our disposal. Bill 206, that was passed back in May 2002, that was put forward by Mr. Ray Danyluk, the MLA for the area at the time, deals with the control of predators like cormorants. Now, we have statistics and video footage of thousands of cormorants landing on a lake. My understanding is that they can eat up to three pounds or three kilograms of fish, depending on what size of bird they are, every day. So as well as utilizing the Cold Lake fish hatchery, we also need to control some of the predators that are feeding on not only the small walleye that are in the lakes and hatching in the lakes but the perch and jackfish, or northern pike, as well.

Like I said, there has to be a balance. We're trying to promote fishing up in our areas, to increase the tourism and access to our lakes, to increase access to our public parks, and at the same time to rear the fish in a facility that was designed for that and bring some economic development and tourism back up to our area.

With that, I will step down and allow some other folks to stand up and speak to, hopefully in support of, Motion 509. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen to speak.

5:10

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by thanking the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul for bringing forward this motion. I've had the opportunity to have a couple of conversations with the member about the importance of recreational fishing to the province of Alberta. It attracts tourists not just from other provinces; it attracts tourists from all over the world to come here. We know that regardless of the reason a tourist comes, when they come, they're spending money. They're supporting our economies, often our local economies. In this context, I have had the opportunity to talk to the municipality and the council in Cold Lake as well as in Lac La Biche, that rely heavily on tourism.

We know that protecting our ecosystem is absolutely critical, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you that just this March – March 1, 2019 – there was a new regulation that came into effect. In the past one pike out of Lac La Biche could be kept if it met a certain slot size. As of March 1 no one can keep any pike out of that lake. I can tell you – I know the member probably has the stats – that the impact alone this summer on Lac La Biche has been significant.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

We have a beautiful provincial park, Winston Churchill provincial park, right down the causeway in the middle of Lac La Biche. Beautiful. If you haven't gone, Mr. Speaker, I encourage you to do so. I've camped there many, many years. I've heard that the reservations were down significantly, that it was a ghost town. You know, for the town of Lac La Biche and the county, again, tourism is the lifeblood of many industries, of many small businesses. They've asked for government to come up with a solution. We know we need to protect our ecosystem, but we also know that tourism is significant.

I myself, Mr. Speaker, will be the first to disclose that I love to fish. I love to fish in Alberta lakes. So any opportunity that we have to say to the government, "Hey, this requires your attention; let's look at some creative solutions" – I like what the member has proposed. As far as using our fish hatcheries to help restock these lakes so that we can continue to not only hold fishing derbies, which, of course, bring in a significant number of people and revenue to our local communities not just on those weekends but overall – I know that fishing is a huge attraction, especially for our friends down to the south of us. Again, we are competing with other jurisdictions in western Canada: in B.C. and, of course, in Saskatchewan.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, some people believe that walleye are the best-tasting freshwater white fish. Now, I will contest that. I do love walleye. And before people start getting angry, I do love walleye, but I also love northern pike. For anyone who has never had the opportunity of catching a pike and within an hour it goes from the

water to the frying pan, you're missing out, quite frankly, because it is absolutely delicious.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put forward an amendment. I consider this a friendly amendment. I have the requisite number of copies. I will wait a moment for our friends to bring it up to you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Once you see that the pages have essentially managed to hand out all the amendments, then just feel free to read it into the record and then continue along.

**Mr. Bilous:** Our pages are working diligently to get this to all members. I will read it for those members that haven't received it yet. I move that Motion Other than Government Motion 509 be amended by striking out "walleye fish stock" and substituting "walleye and northern pike fish stocks." This is, of course, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we do attract people who fish who are interested not only in walleye or pickerel but also who are interested in jackfish, or northern pike. I have been assured by the mover of this motion – and I appreciate that – that Alberta's hatcheries do have the ability to produce both walleye and pike. I think, obviously, this would be done in concert with the very bodies of water and folks under Environment and Parks.

Again, my hope, Mr. Speaker, is that by us debating this motion today in the Chamber, we will signal to government that action is needed. Again, I hope to hear from other members on their assessment of our current situation and this idea as far as how we can help to support our industries. I do want to acknowledge as well that this is another way to support our indigenous communities who do rely on fishing for sustenance. Really, I think this is a win-win-win all around to ensure that we are safeguarding our natural resources but still promoting and encouraging tourism and, of course, promoting our province.

I don't want to take up too, too much time other than to encourage all members to vote in favour of this friendly amendment to strengthen the motion that the hon. member has put forward. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Just for the record, going forward with regard to the debate on this amendment, we will be referring to this as amendment A1.

I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul has risen to speak.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. Just to be clear, I am in favour of this amendment. I did check with the local fish hatchery in Cold Lake, and they assure me that they can raise multiple species at that facility. They just have to keep them separate. They said that the only hard part is, you know, keeping your fingers safe when you're getting the eggs from a northern pike.

The member mentioned, you know, having caught a fish and getting it into the pan within the hour. That's exactly the experience that the folks around my area are talking about, getting out there with their kids or with their grandkids. I would just ask to make sure that the member actually measured that fish before he cut it up and put it in the pan.

**Mr. Bilous:** Always.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. Make sure you fall into the slot size there. Thank you very much.

I will of course be supporting this amendment, and thank you very much for bringing it forward. I've got no problem with adding northern pike to the hatcheries as long as it helps to get some recreation and tourism back up into our northern areas.

Thank you.



**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other hon. members looking to debate on amendment A1?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to Motion 509? I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has risen.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. I would like to speak in support of Motion 509, to enhance the biodiversity, health, and economic value of Alberta's lakes by revitalizing the Cold Lake fish hatchery and whatever other tools actually can be added there, thereby to increase Alberta's fish stocks, walleye and others.

This is an important piece for Alberta for a number of reasons. I can see economic value here, I see recreational value, and quite honestly I see food value, if I can put it that way. The economic value of Alberta's fishing, hunting, and trapping: the only figures I could find were from 2014 to 2016, but the GDP value of that sector has declined by 75 per cent over those three years. This is an area that Alberta should be actually enhancing and developing. There's a tremendous resource that we have here, and in times of economic difficulty we should be growing this industry, not curtailing it.

By increasing the fish stocks of our Alberta lakes, I think this has great economic value. That's the first thing I'd like to say. There are many, particularly American tourists who love to come up here for hunting and fishing. Fishing is a great thing for them to come to, and they bring with them not just the fishing experience itself, but they stay in hotels, they buy meals, they have travel expenses, they engage in other forms of entertainment when they're here. So I think this is truly something that we really should be growing, and we can do that by enhancing the fishery work and by actually expanding fish hatcheries across the province, truthfully. I admit that there can be a lot of demand on the fishing, so we need to make sure that we take care of that resource and we restock it on a regular basis. Even in my area there's a lot of demand. There have been some declining results in terms of fishing, and it just simply needs to be restocked. My question is: we can do that, so why wouldn't we?

5:20

I also have to affirm the huge recreational value for Albertans, especially when, you know, people are under stress, when things are difficult. The ability to go out there and just have a peaceful, quiet morning or afternoon or whatever it is, to be there when the sun starts to set is a beautiful experience. For me, when my children come to visit with my grandchildren, we always take an afternoon, we go out on the lake, we set up there, we have a campfire, we have food. The kids play games, they make snow angels, they make ice forts. It's a great opportunity for adults to visit when you're standing around the holes. It's an incredibly exciting thing for kids when they catch a fish and they pull it out and you help them. They learn things.

There's a social value for the community as well because people meet each other on the ice. Friends meet each other. I know churches that have planned special events out there. I know that one time a group took out a group of 30 Filipino immigrants, first time ever, to fish on the ice. They could not believe that they were driving on water. Incredible experience for us to share with all Canadians. There's a community, social experience that happens out on the lake. People who may not have been there have no idea how amazing this is. It's like a town square in Mexico. Everybody meets there and visits and socializes: huge recreational value for Albertans and part of our culture, quite frankly. We need to support it, not let it die.

Lastly, I do want to say that I think there is a food value to it for Albertans and especially – I know some of the Albertans that are out of work and that are struggling. I know some of them that actually go out, and they catch their fish, and they take it home, and it's a good, solid meal for them. It comes out of clean water. It's local food. It's not shipped in from Asia or someplace. It's a sustainable resource for families.

So for those reasons – economic, recreational, and even food value – I really think we have to support this kind of motion and, more broadly, throughout the rest of the province along the same direction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has risen to speak on this matter.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to stand and speak to Motion 509, talking about enhancing "the biodiversity, health, and economic value of Alberta's lakes by utilizing the Cold Lake fish hatchery and other tools at the government's disposal in order to increase Alberta's walleye and northern pike fish stocks." It was interesting to see that amendment come forward to add northern pike. Of course, if I had my way, we would add perch and many other species of fish, too, that we could be enhancing in Alberta here.

I think it's a great idea to be able to use this Cold Lake fish hatchery to its full potential and use it for potential that Albertans would like to see it used for because, of course, Albertans love to fish. They love to eat those fish that they catch: the walleye and pike and perch and whitefish, all those types of fish, even the trout in the western slopes and, of course, the trout that are stocked in lakes across Alberta.

I think that one thing Albertans like to do is that they not only like to catch fish, but they also like to keep fish. Of course, we have a situation in Alberta where there seems to be more opportunity to catch than there is to keep, and maybe that's like anywhere. But when fishermen can go out all day and catch fish and not be able to keep one, I think that kind of adds to a level of frustration. It shows that in some lakes the populations are plenty high enough for the actual fish in the lake, but for some reason the laws and regulations keep them from actually keeping some of those fish. In other lakes you could fish all day and maybe catch one fish, and it might not be legal.

Of course, if there's a way to enhance that opportunity going forward, I think that that's what the fishermen and fisherwomen in Alberta would love to see because right now many of them are travelling out of Alberta to go fishing. Of course, that's a loss of opportunity right in our own communities. When we think of rural Alberta and we think of some of the challenges they face with agriculture – you know, in the last few years in agriculture there have been some crop problems there that have caused losses to farmers, and we know that the oil and gas industry has been not in great shape for the last couple of years either. When we think of rural Alberta and the opportunity to have some economic development within those communities, I think that fishing would be great.

You know, in certain parts of Alberta there are very few lakes, so there are a lot of fishermen concentrated on just a few lakes. That's why it's so important to have this opportunity to enhance those lakes so that the fishermen that go to those lakes will have an opportunity to catch a fish, to keep a fish, and eat a fish. We stock trout in many lakes in Alberta, and for some reason we've been a little bit hesitant to stock some of these other species, and I think we need to be able to take advantage of these opportunities. We

have a fish hatchery, that I understand is a world-class fish hatchery, that can provide those opportunities to rear fish and stock some of these lakes. I think that if we take our world-class fish hatchery, we could create a world-class fishing industry or a fishing opportunity for the people here in Alberta.

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview mentioned that, you know, fishing attracts tourists from all over the world, all across Canada, and he's correct to a certain extent. But there are provinces around us that have better fishing or seem to be perceived to have better fishing and have a lot more opportunity and a lot more tourism going to those provinces. We need to be able to be in on that market and be able to take some of that opportunity and have it here in Alberta. Of course, like I say, this fish hatchery exists right now. It's sitting there. If we could just utilize it for developing our economy here, attracting the fishermen and fisherwomen who want to come from around the world right here to Alberta, we can do that. They want to come. There are tourists that already come to Alberta, some for fishing and some for other things.

Even if they're coming for something else, if they know they have an opportunity to go fishing also, that'll help to extend their trip. I know that when I travel to different places, if there's an opportunity to do some fishing or some hunting there, then I'm likely to stay a little longer because that opportunity is there. I think we need to have that opportunity for people that are travelling rather than having that opportunity lost to other provinces.

I think we can't forget, of course, that – it was also mentioned about First Nations but also residents of Alberta. We talk a lot about the economy and the benefit of jobs and tourism coming into Alberta for fishing, but obviously it's a recreational opportunity for Albertans, and it's an opportunity for the people of Alberta to put a fish on their plate that they've caught locally. There's obviously a lot of pride and a lot of satisfaction that goes into catching a fish, cleaning the fish, putting it on the table, and serving it to your family. A lot of people actually rely, to a certain extent, on that as a food source to help provide for their family.

Again, I think it's important for multiple reasons that we take advantage of this fish hatchery that we have and use it for more species than just the trout that it's been used for, recently anyways.

People don't fish just to fish. You know, I think if you sat there all day fishing and never caught a fish, that could be kind of boring, actually. It's nice to be out on the water, it's nice to enjoy the outdoors, but at some point you want to catch a fish, and at some point you want to eat a fish. I think that's something that we need to provide, not just an opportunity to throw a hook in the water and tour around the lake on a boat or sit on the shore and fish; we need to provide that opportunity to catch a fish and keep a fish. I think we've noticed recently that fishing licences declined, the sales declined. There aren't as many fishing licences being sold, so people could say: well, maybe fishing isn't as popular as it used to be; maybe it's something that's on a downward trend. Of course, if you go out fishing and don't catch a fish and you don't have an opportunity to catch a fish, the chances of you wanting to go back next year and go fishing decline.

I guess it's that adage that if you build it, they will come. I think that if we build a fishing industry here in Alberta and a fishing opportunity here in Alberta, the people will come. They'll come from outside the province – they'll come here for tourism, to fish – but also the residents will want to fish, too, because they'll have that opportunity to catch a fish. I think that a lot of times you see people out in the winter ice fishing and everything, and it's no fun if all you catch is ice. You need to be able to catch something and be able to take it home and have that opportunity to serve that to your family.

So I think this is a great motion, and I encourage everybody to support this motion. I think it's something that's been long in coming, and I think it's a great opportunity to put to use this fish hatchery that we have to produce the fish that Albertans would love to go out and catch and put on their table.

Thank you.

5:30

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Getson:** I'm going to make it really quick. I support this. I think it's an Alberta rite of passage. There are so many fond memories growing up in rural Alberta on this, and it's just been wonderful. To hear that we're actually going to start using the environment to bring more people in and promote it – because as young kids learning how to fish and catch your own food and the whole thing of learning how to build a fire in the wintertime is also a survival skill. A lot of that's being lost with folks in urban areas and otherwise.

I'm glad to see the members of the opposition – this is something we can all agree on. It's something that is very valuable and vital, and I really thank the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul for bringing it forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen to speak.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in this place and speak to any motion that's brought forward. To see a private member's motion which is actually something that we can all agree on in this House is, frankly, astounding to me. It's something that I myself have fond memories of, actually, when I was younger. I say younger. It was just a few years ago, but I have fond memories of having long drives with my father. We'd drive north, and then we'd drive north, and it felt like we were driving north forever, but then we'd get to this lake. We'd go out and cast some lines and we'd see what we got, because that's what we were going to eat for dinner that night. It was going to be something that we did together because our family wanted to have an outing that weekend.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's something that so many people in this Chamber, so many people in my riding and across this province are able to relate to. Alberta's lakes and using our lakes and using the outdoors and having access to these amazing facilities and natural resources are something that we should honour and we should protect and we should preserve. It's so great to be able to hear what so many of the other members of the House are saying, because having the opportunity to increase the fish stock in all these lakes means that we have more opportunities to share these experiences with others, more opportunities to share these experiences with Albertans, and, as we heard from members of the government caucus, it could be opportunities to share this with new Albertans as well, whether they're new by being born here or having immigrated here.

That's something that I think is very, very exciting. It's something that I think we should all be encouraging. I think it's something that we can bring back and say that every single member of this House, I believe, is going to be voting in favour of this motion, so we can go out and we can talk about how this is something that we agree is valuable for us. It's so important because we know that lakes are an important habitat that contribute to our environment. They contribute to our economy. They contribute to everything in this province, and it's something that is so vital to the lives of people like indigenous peoples and Métis communities and

the recreation opportunities and things we've been hearing about in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. Those recreation opportunities are fundamentally something that we know we need to encourage and we need to support.

Fundamentally, it's something that makes us human. It allows us to connect with ourselves, with our friends, with our family, and with nature, Mr. Speaker. That's something that's exciting, because having to learn how to gut a fish for the first time when you're nine or 10 years old is something that I think a lot of people, perhaps, in this room remember. They remember that first time when you're handed the knife, and they go: well, what do I do now? You learn pretty quickly that it's not so bad. You learn pretty quickly that it is a cool experience, that you are able to actually, from the lake to your dinner table, see the entire process of how food works. I think that's something that we should continue to try and strive to make available for future generations, for future Albertans, and for all Albertans that are currently enjoying that as well.

It's something that – who doesn't enjoy it when you're trying to get away from it all? Maybe members here in this Chamber remember over the last summer or, hopefully, over the next summer they will be as well able to get some time off and go to one of the great lakes here in Alberta and have that opportunity. Perhaps even, Mr. Speaker, my caucus members will chide me for this, but perhaps one of those lakes you go to fish at may even not have cell reception. That would be a real shame, that you wouldn't be able to get your cellphone going, but it would be something that certainly would be possible here.

I believe that that's why we need to support these healthy lakes. We need to support having these lakes that provide important environmental, economic, and recreational benefits for every single person across this province, because every single person deserves to have that chance.

I'll admit, Mr. Speaker, not every single Albertan will want to or will have the opportunity to go out and enjoy these lakes and enjoy using them for fishing while they live here in Alberta, but it's something that we should preserve and we should protect. We should give them that option because it's one of the great things that we can share. It's one of the great things that I believe this motion speaks to, how it can be prudently used to have these types of conversations and share how amazing our province is and how if we do this properly and if we protect these lakes properly, we'll be able to minimize impacts on things like natural habitats. It's something that I think is very interesting.

I think it's great to see that this motion also speaks to things like biodiversity, speaks to things like utilizing a local fishery, and all of those types of programs, Mr. Speaker. It's something that I think we on this side of the House agree with wholeheartedly. I think it's something that we would be happy to advocate for on behalf of Albertans because it's something that we know is something that Albertans enjoy. It's something that Albertans would like to continue to do.

We know that when we look at some lakes across this province, we do need that little bit of help for the biodiversity. We do need that little bit of work to make sure that they are sustainable. We do need that little bit of work to make sure that we have vibrant, thriving fishing opportunities, Mr. Speaker, because that recreation is something that we need to cherish. It's something that we need to foster. When we try to foster something, it means that we do have to go out and work with our local hatcheries like this and ensure that there are tools like that at our disposal and at the government's disposal to have that fish stocked, to have those opportunities, to have that recreation. It's something that I'm very proud that I'm going to be able to support. It's something I'm very proud I'm going to be able to vote in favour of.

It's something that I'm very excited about – again, Mr. Speaker, I know I spoke about this a little bit at the beginning – that we're able to find something that every single member of this House can agree on, that actually nobody is getting up here and having an argument over the merits of this. I think it was the member across who had spoken to how he wished we'd added more types of fish to this motion. That's something I think is exciting as well because it's simply more opportunity, right? Who couldn't advocate for more opportunity, more biodiversity, and more fun for Albertans?

We talk sometimes in this House about how one side or the other is trying to wage a war on fun, Mr. Speaker. We can see here today that that's not true, because every single person is going to vote in favour of trying to have that recreation available, trying to have recreation available for families, for communities, and have those conversations. We know that whether you're nine years old or whether you're 90 years old, you can get out there on a lake, and you can go fishing, and you can have a great time.

I'm really pleased that I'll be able to vote in favour of this. It seems like every single other member of this Assembly will vote in favour of this. I'm looking forward to hearing what other members of the government caucus and the opposition caucus here will have to say as well. I think it's something that's really so important that every single MLA has the opportunity to talk and every single MLA takes the opportunity to talk, because we deserve to speak on behalf of our constituents when it comes to issues like this.

With that, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to support this, but I hope we can hear from many of my colleagues as well. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has risen to speak.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am quite excited, maybe not quite as excited as the last member to speak to this motion but excited nonetheless. I do thank the member for bringing it forward. I think it sounds like we all agree to the fact that we should be enhancing the biodiversity, health, and economic value of Alberta's lakes. I would never venture, as some members have this evening, to choose a favourite fish, with the prospect of recall legislation before us. I would not want to alienate, say, my walleye-loving constituents, but either way, once again, I do appreciate that the member brought this forward.

As has been said, Alberta's lakes are an important natural resource to our province and need to be protected and preserved. They are an important habitat, and they also play an important role in the lives of indigenous and Métis communities as well as recreational opportunities, as has been stated.

Now, I will just point out the fact that while I do support this motion and I will vote in favour of it, I do have concerns with the overall picture that this government is painting for us. While we're talking about enhancing biodiversity and working to increase the economic value of our lakes, we're also seeing cuts to environmental monitoring through the environment ministry. We're seeing cuts to Alberta Innovates, when we talk about collaborating between industries. That's a concern for the future of adding economic value to this important industry.

5:40

When we look at cuts to postsecondary education and what that might mean for training opportunities in the future for our students, where on one hand this motion is talking about increasing economic opportunities but on the other hand we have a Minister of Advanced Education who's talking about reducing opportunities for people to get trained in this important industry, whether it's, you know,

environmental protection officers or conservation officers or the like, that's a concern to me. The overall goal of this government and the cuts that we're seeing don't necessarily go along with this motion.

Of course, on the other point, increased costs across the board, whether we're looking at the income tax changes that this government has made, bracket creep, it's going to leave less money in the pockets of Albertans. We talk about increased insurance costs and also the prospect of increased education costs now under this government because of the choices that they've made. Really, at the end of the day, all of those choices to increase the burden on Albertan families will mean fewer people are in a position where they can take the vehicle for a weekend and go fishing in these communities or at these lakes, so that's a concern.

With that being said, I do support Motion 509. I do thank the member for bringing it forward, and I believe it's something that we should be working towards all together.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Are there any other members wishing to speak on Motion 509?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul to close debate.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker. I thank everybody for their points, well taken, and for the friendly amendment that we've all accepted, and I would proceed to the vote.

Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 509 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 23 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Minister of Energy and Deputy Government House Leader has risen.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General second reading of Bill 23, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, the act will address a variety of issues facing our courts. The first of these issues involves the name of the Court of Queen's Bench. When Queen Elizabeth II ceases to rule, custom dictates that the name of the court is changed out of respect to the new monarch. This bill proposes re-enacting the section of the Court of Queen's Bench Act that would automatically change the court's name to Court of King's Bench. This section was repealed during the 2018 fall session of the Legislature. It's our belief that automatically renaming the court to Court of King's Bench best reflects our constitutional monarchy and honours the heritage of our legal system. This decision would be in keeping with similar naming provisions that have been enacted in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Bill 23 would accomplish two other matters. First, it reduces the age at which masters in chambers and Provincial Court judges may request to be appointed to part-time service. As the Court of Queen's Bench Act and the Provincial Court Act currently stand, these officials are eligible to be appointed to part-time service when they're 60 years old. Bill 23 would lower the threshold to 55 years of age. It would create greater work flexibility for judges and masters. It will also create a small amount of savings for the

province. Approval of these two changes would not be automatic. The Chief Judge of the Provincial Court and the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench would have power to deny a request if they felt it would create difficulties for the court.

Finally, Bill 23 would give justices of the Court of Queen's Bench and the Court of Appeal greater access to federal funds. Currently when these justices attend certain meetings, conferences, or seminars, the federal Judges Act places an annual \$500 limit on the amount of money available to pay their expenses. This limit places undue pressure on the provincial budget allocation for these two judicial branches. Bill 23 would allow the \$500 level to increase by authorizing their attendance at meetings, conferences, or seminars relating to the administration of justice with the approval of the Chief Justice. This change would allow these justices greater freedom to travel and carry out their duties. Taken together, these provisions, while small, will create a more efficient justice system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members wishing to join debate on this matter? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much. I am pleased to rise and speak to this bill. Obviously, there are sort of three main components that we're dealing with here. One of them is eligibility for part-time service. I don't think I have any concerns per se about that. It just lowers the age from 60 to 55 so that a judge may go part-time sooner. I think my only concern is that in light of the budget and in light of the forthcoming 20 per cent cuts to the court services, I'm a little concerned that this is just another method to reduce the number of judges available in the provincial court to hear matters. Of course, the reason that that concerns me, the reason that I'm concerned about a decrease in the number of hearing days available to the public, is that the justice system is fairly strained. I don't think that this is a surprise to anyone. It's been the case for – well, it's probably been getting worse for at least the last 20 years.

That was creating increased concern, and then in 2016 the Supreme Court of Canada came out with the Jordan decision, which is now a fairly famous decision, which basically said that matters could be stayed if they didn't reach court in a timely manner. It set limits, very firm limits, on what those matters were. We had challenges with Jordan here because when the decision came down, the court system had been slowing down, like I say, for a couple of decades. It was very difficult to turn that very large ship, but we worked diligently to do it, and we saw average lead times to trial in provincial court coming down significantly and average lead times for matters coming down significantly.

We saw less movement on that front, unfortunately, in the Court of Queen's Bench, and that's because those are federal appointments. Despite the fact that our current federal government – still current, I guess – had made some moves and allowed Alberta to have more judges, it was still the case that they weren't appointing sufficiently quickly. Unlike in provincial court, where the province had a lot more ability to move and to change things and where we saw lead times coming down a lot, we didn't see nearly as much happening in the Court of Queen's Bench. That's why it concerns me that we're going to have potentially fewer and that this could be used to have fewer provincial court positions, because it means that matters will take longer to get to trial again, and that means matters being stayed. That's bad for everyone.

It's incredibly challenging emotionally to be a victim of crime. I have talked to a lot of people over the years who have had

devastating experiences, and their experience with the court system itself is incredibly challenging. To go through all of that and to not even get your matter adjudicated, to not even get your day in court, to have the person you have accused of doing what may be the worst thing that's ever happened in your life go free without a trial: that's pretty awful. I don't think that anyone in Alberta should have that experience. That is my concern there.

When we talk about matters before the court, the criminal ones are obviously important, but there are a number of other things. Civil matters are important before the courts. Family matters are important. Sometimes these people come in before the courts, and they're coming a couple days before Christmas and they're literally arguing over who gets to have the kids on Christmas. The stress of that, not just on the families but on the children who are experiencing that, is incredibly challenging. The longer that conflict is allowed to draw on, the more negative experiences those children have, particularly in high-conflict cases where you're arguing over custody and access. It's a huge concern to me that this may be used as a way to decrease the number of sitting days, decrease the number of appearances available to Albertans. That is my major concern with this bill.

**5:50**

I'm actually quite supportive of allowing judges and justices to travel to attend federal conferences. I think that that's incredibly important. We certainly know that there's been a lot of attention recently around ensuring that judges are appropriately prepared to deal particularly with sexual assault cases in light of some very unfortunate things that have happened in the court system. I have to give them credit. The Provincial Court of Alberta, you know, after that happened, after I had the experience of having to complain about a sitting judge, which was a difficult decision for me, and his comments to a sexual assault complainant, the Provincial Court did go out and immediately bring in experts to assist them with that training. I do know that they were concerned about it, and I'm glad that they were. I think that we all ought to be, so that piece is quite important in terms of judicial education.

I think that the last piece of this, obviously, changes the name back to the way it was. Obviously, by way of miscellaneous statutes, so with the consent of both sides, both the previous government and the now government, who was then in opposition, had agreed that we ought to give the Lieutenant Governor in Council, so basically cabinet, the jurisdiction to change the names of the court if that was seen fit. It's a bit peculiar to me that they were in favour of it then and are against it now, but I don't think that this is a huge concern. I mean, the changes that we made at the time were made after multiple conversations with stakeholders who felt very strongly that the names of the court needed to be more reflective of everyone in Alberta, sort of more reflective of what they felt the courts should look like. Obviously, minds have been changed in that case. I certainly haven't had people banging down my doors to suggest that this is a concern for them, so I think that mostly that isn't a major concern for us. I don't think that the change that we made was bad. I think that giving cabinet the ability to make that decision was fine. I don't think that's sufficient to oppose it.

I guess to sum up, overall I think that this is mostly fine. My main concern, again, arises around Jordan because we've made so much progress. We've made so much progress on that issue, on ensuring that cases of serious and violent matters are not being stayed, and I'm really concerned that this is one step in reversing that progress.

With that, I will end my comments, and thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 23, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019. I share a lot of the comments from my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View, in particular, even as myself, a practising lawyer, who practised for some time before running for my current position, I actually had not given much thought prior to this about the fact that our courts are named the Court of Queen's Bench and what would happen when the Queen was no longer the Queen. I can honestly say that this is probably the first time I've actually turned my mind to that, to think about the fact that perhaps the current Queen has been the Queen for so long, my entire lifetime, so I had not really even thought about that.

While I was at first surprised by the change, of course, it does make sense. It does fit within our Constitutional monarchy system, and certainly we know that there are many symbols and traditions that we draw from the fact that we are a constitutional monarchy, so I can appreciate that that does need to change when the Queen unfortunately passes. I do have to say that I'm slightly concerned about the impact that that will have financially because, of course, there are so many ways that the Court of Queen's Bench – and even just terms of vernacular. Lawyers are quite, you know, familiar with calling it QB, which is Queen's Bench. Certainly, I can imagine that there's going to be quite a cost associated with making a name change, but that's just the reality, I suppose, of the system we have.

I had not heard the concerns raised by stakeholders that my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View expressed that perhaps the courts should be more reflective of the diversity of our province. I think that's a fair comment. However, I will say, you know, that I think we have the system that we have. That's been in place for some time. There are significant tradition and values that go along with that. I think that perhaps there's a bigger conversation that could be had around how we make sure our courts do reflect all of our diversity. I note, for example, we recently brought eagle feathers into the courtrooms, which I think is a fantastic tribute and recognition of reconciliation but also the value of our indigenous peoples. So, certainly, there are ways that our courts need to better reflect the diversity of our province.

I do also want to comment on the change in Bill 23 that will lower the age of eligibility for part-time service for judges to age 55. Like my colleague, you know, I share a concern. Well, I acknowledge and am respectful of the fact that judges have usually by the time they're appointed to the bench served for quite some time in the legal fields and are usually prestigious. I certainly am somebody who supports flexible work environments, particularly to accommodate individuals and families and whatever the case may be, but while I do understand that more and more judges might be seeking that sort of service and may be more willing to take the appointment were they to get that, I share a concern that it does cause a delay at a time when we are constantly talking about how to move our justice system to be more expeditious and to deal with concerns. My colleague rightfully pointed out the decision of the Supreme Court and Jordan, which actually created an imperative on our systems to move more quickly so that we are not staying charges in violent criminal cases in particular.

I do worry that with fewer judges working full-time, more judges working part-time, that does increase the demand that we need to make sure that we are actually appointing and working with our federal counterparts to ensure that more judges are appointed so that we do not see a slowdown in how our cases go through the court system because I think that's a significant concern to all Albertans. We talk a lot in this House about the administration of justice and

making sure that it is proper and fair, and part of fairness, of course, means making sure that it is handled expeditiously both for the accused but also particularly for the victims.

I'd be curious to know whether or not an assessment has been done as to how this could impact the number of appointments and the ability to move cases through the system and whether there's a plan of action should there be fewer judges available to hear cases because they're now part-time. Has there been an assessment of how we're going to make up for that by either appointing more judges or working with our federal counterparts to do so?

With respect to the change in Bill 23 that would allow for more judges to access federal reimbursement for travel to take conferences and to do that professional development, I think that's critical. Even as legislators we know – I recently attended a conference where I got to meet legislators from other provinces, and it is such an invaluable experience, not only because you get to learn a little bit more about what's happening in other jurisdictions, but it hones your own skills as well. That does not stop when you're in the legal profession. I know that professional development is a key part of my obligations. As a member of the Law Society we are all as professionals required to maintain that professional development, and so too should our judges. So I think that that is a fair and reasonable expectation, especially since we're looking for reimbursement from the federal government for that kind of travel. Certainly, we do want our judges to have opportunities to hone their

skills and to learn from the experiences of their colleagues in other provinces.

I'm mindful of the time, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, I will reserve any further judgments for any further reading of this bill. I do want to say that I think there are some relatively – they seem innocuous, but they're important changes and good changes. I am curious a little bit because I do think we need to answer these questions about the impact of the system as it goes through, particularly with reducing the number of judges potentially.

I'd be very interested to know about the cost implications about changing the name from Court of Queen's Bench to Court of King's Bench. There will be costs associated with that, and how will that be accounted for? Of course, we don't know precisely when Her Majesty will no longer be with us and the name change will be happening, but certainly I would hope that there is some planning that's being put forward into the system to make sure that we are prepared to make those changes clearly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but seeing the time is now 6 o'clock, the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, November 18, 2019

Day 42

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, November 18, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 19

#### Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 19, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, our government fulfilled its campaign promise, as you know, to repeal the carbon tax as our first priority. We were proud to accomplish that with Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, this spring. This was a promise that we made to Albertans along the way that we were excited to be able to fulfill for them to be able to take away the job-killing carbon tax and to be able to begin to move this province forward, something, I would remind you, that Albertans voted for in overwhelming numbers in April and sent clear instructions that they did not want a carbon tax going forward, clear instructions when they fired the NDP, who are now the only one-term government in the history of this province. A large part of that was to do with their job-killing carbon tax.

However, Albertans also voted in overwhelming numbers this April for a different solution when it comes to emissions reductions inside this province. They voted for the technology innovation and emissions reduction system that we campaigned on, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this bill that is before the House paved the way for. It's a commitment to implement the TIER system, as we promised. That will be achieved through Bill 19 if it passes this Chamber. So we are clear, this bill includes a name change, the TIER regulation and new provincial emissions management and resilience strategy.

Alberta's entrepreneurial spirit runs deep in this province. I understand that the NDP and some of their allies are anti the oil and gas industry, the industry that built this very province, Mr. Speaker, but I and my colleagues on this side of the House are proud of the oil and gas industry. We're proud of the energy industry. We're proud of their contribution to this province. We're proud of the men and women who built the energy industry and helped to build this province. At no time, unlike the members opposite, would you find me standing on the steps of the Legislature protesting against the very men and women who built this province, who have created an industry that is the economic backbone of Alberta, but not only that, the economic backbone of the entire country.

I always enjoy the member from Edmonton laughing when we talk about the energy industry, Mr. Speaker. I don't find the energy industry funny. I find it extremely important and an industry we should be proud of.

Our industry leaders, though, Mr. Speaker, my point is, are innovators. They are able to create such amazing things like creating the energy from the oil sands in northern Alberta, which has gone on to contribute to the success of this province in significant ways for decades, not only the success of this province but the success of the entire country. That type of innovation runs deep inside our province. That entrepreneurial spirit runs deep

inside our province. I'm proud of it. I know my colleagues are proud of it. The TIER program allows us to work to harness that same entrepreneurial spirit, to be able to focus on technology and innovation, to be able to move forward on the climate change file, to be able to move forward on reductions in emissions, Mr. Speaker, in contrast to the NDP's plan, which was to tax everyday Albertans, to reach into their pockets and to take tax money from them at the very time that Albertans needed their then government to actually stand up for them. Their then NDP government spent their time trying to tax Albertans instead of helping them and then took the money from that program, from their climate leadership program, and spent it on things like light bulbs and shower heads. Shame on them for that.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, they then took that money and they spent it with Ontario companies. Get that. I don't know if some of my new colleagues to this Chamber, who were not here in the 29th Legislature, know that, but that's what the NDP government did. They taxed Albertans while they were down. They took money from hard-working Albertans. They then spent it in Ontario companies to buy light bulbs and shower heads, Mr. Speaker, and then sent people around with those Ontario products to install them inside the people's houses.

Mr. Speaker, I know your neck of the woods. Both of us, as the co-MLAs for the great county of Mountain View, where I'm proud to be from and I know that you are proud to be from, were shocked to find out, then, that when they installed those shower heads in rural Alberta, where I'm from, they didn't even work. Not only that, they took the money, they invested in Ontario companies, they sent people around to install shower heads that didn't even work because the water pressure wasn't high enough in rural Alberta. Such a shameful process.

And then, Mr. Speaker, their leader famously – this is shocking. I know that you will be shocked. Their leader, the former Premier of Alberta, told Albertans to take the bus when they protested against her carbon tax. Told them to take the bus. How many buses are in your constituency? I know it's very similar to my constituency. Of course, you're from the east side of the Cowboy Trail. I'm from the west side of the Cowboy Trail, so maybe things are a little different west of the fifth, so to speak, but the reality is that we don't have buses. We don't have buses. There's no bus that comes and picks me up to bring me to Sundre to go grocery shopping or to do other things. It was a ridiculous, ridiculous thing to say but not shocking from a former government that called Albertans sewer rats or called them Chicken Little or those types of things. They clearly did not care about the implications of their carbon tax on the people of Alberta or the consequences to the very people of Alberta that they should have been trying to protect.

We, the current government, because Albertans told us to – I want to stress that – have brought forward the TIER program, which will focus on working through the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit in this province to be able to harness that to actually have implications in a positive way on emission reductions. We're excited about that, Mr. Speaker. It's why we brought the TIER program, something that Albertans voted for that was clearly put in the platform and is a clear contrast to – I see the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, who I know is the environment critic in their party. It's a clear contrast to their approach, which was to tax my constituents, your constituents, and everyone's constituents inside this House with no significant positive impact when it came to climate change.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP's approach also ignored the fact that the number one way that we can overcome this issue, which is a global issue, nothing that Canada does – and it's important. We should do

stuff. It's why we have legislation in this House today. But nothing that Canada does can have a significant impact on global emissions here at home except for one thing. Do you know what that is? Getting our clean natural gas to Asia and to India. Even the Paris agreement talked about that, about the fact that the number one thing that Canada and Alberta can do is take our clean energy products and get them to the rest of the world. That will have a bigger impact on global emissions.

Sadly, the former government, while they focused on taxing Albertans repeatedly, taxing fixed-income seniors, taxing school boards, taxing municipalities, taxing unemployed Albertans who are using fuel to try and find work, taxing farmers and ranchers, while they were focused on that, did not focus on the number one thing that they could do when it comes to climate change and emission reductions, which was to get our clean energy products to the world. Instead, do you know what they did, Mr. Speaker? They sided with their close ally Justin Trudeau, who was doing everything he could to hurt our energy industry, and even worse, they sided with the leader of their party – the provincial and the federal NDP Party are the exact same party – and they voted for him despite the fact that he was on the record trying to stop pipelines, trying to shut down the energy industry.

I see the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood smiling with excitement for supporting her leader. That's okay. That's her leader. That was her prerogative, but Albertans should understand that that's what the NDP's focus was. Our focus is working with the industry, continuing to reduce emission intensity, create innovative technologies that not only help us here at home but can help us abroad. That's exciting, Mr. Speaker.

The other important difference between this program and the NDP's program is that we are straight up with Albertans on how we're going to spend the money. The NDP took their taxes that they put on Albertans. They put it into what I affectionately or not affectionately referred to as the orange slush fund for all my time in opposition and then spent it all over government on different pet projects. Then they had the nerve, Mr. Speaker, to sit on these benches right here and to stand up over and over and claim that they were giving major rebates to Albertans when that was not the fact. What they were doing was taking money, putting it into general revenue, something that they promised Albertans they would not do and then did anyway, and then spent it on their pet projects.

7:40

Transparency on our side of the House is significantly different than the NDP. We put in our platform exactly what we would do: the first \$100 million plus 50 cents on every dollar to go towards technology and innovation and partnerships with our industry to reduce emissions and the remaining 50 per cent of every dollar to be able to go to deficit reduction to begin to clean up the mess that the NDP made when they were in power. Mr. Speaker, they didn't only make a mess of the emission reduction file, which, by the way, this province has been working on long before the NDP were in power, but they made a mess of everything when they were in government, so we had to do our part to be able to help to fix that.

Mr. Speaker, of course – and I know the NDP like to rail against this – an investment in what is affectionately referred to as the war room, the Canadian Energy Centre, that the Energy minister oversees to protect our largest industry. Well, of course the NDP rail against it. They voted for their federal leader, who wants the energy industry to be shut down. They supported Justin Trudeau, who said he doesn't want the oil sands to exist anymore inside this country. They stood with their federal Liberal allies and their federal NDP allies repeatedly, over and over stood against Albertans instead with their ideological friends in Ontario. We're

not doing that here. Instead we're standing with industry and our province and the people of Alberta.

My last thing that I want to show the contrast between the NDP's approach and our approach is that we are working to protect our industry from Justin Trudeau. The NDP over and over, Mr. Speaker – and I know you have been in this Chamber as long as I have and have probably had your own reaction to watching it repeatedly, but the NDP repeatedly have sided with Justin Trudeau over Alberta. Think about this: they sided with a federal Prime Minister who went out of his way to make life worse for Albertans, and they side with him.

We don't. We side with our industry, who we're depending on to create economic growth, to help people go to work inside our province, so we've created a system that keeps our energy industry, not just our energy industry but all of our industries, all of our large emitters and our conventional oil and gas facilities, being regulated inside the province of Alberta and not by an anti oil and gas Prime Minister that the provincial NDP have allied with and not by a federal NDP Party who's leader says that he wants to shut down oil and gas pipelines. Instead, we brought them safely to be able to have an opportunity to be able to regulate it inside our province with the province of Alberta. You know why, Mr. Speaker? Because that's what they asked for. They do not want to be with the federal Liberal leadership inside Ontario despite the fact that the former government, now opposition, wants to continue to sell them out to them.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I think all members of this House should support this important piece of legislation because it fulfills a promise to Albertans that Albertans voted for in record numbers. Record numbers. Clearly and transparently put inside the platform, talked about by the Premier every stop along the way in great detail, his plan. That's what Albertans chose. Albertans chose our plan and rejected the NDP's plan when they fired them just a few short months ago.

Second, it's a plan that allows us to be able to harness the great entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of this province that we should be proud of. It allows us to partner with the people that built this province to be able to help innovate our way out of what is a serious problem.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, it's a plan that is actually transparent on how the money from this fund will be used, unlike the NDP's approach to this, which was to say one thing while they were running and then come in and bring in the largest tax increase in the history of the province.

One other thing before I yield the floor, Mr. Speaker, because this may be the last time that we talk about an emissions reduction bill inside this place. The former government still has not apologized, and rather than standing up inside this place and rejecting the plan that Albertans voted for in overwhelming numbers, they should take some time to think about why they got fired, because at the end of the day it comes down to the plan that they brought forward on climate change. It comes down to the plan that they brought forward that hurt seniors inside my constituency, that hurt schoolkids inside my constituency, that made it harder for businesses to create work and created some of the largest unemployment in the history of this province, that caused billions of dollars of investment to flee this province. That's what they should be thinking about right now, reflecting on why Albertans rejected their plan so drastically instead of still trying to defend it.

But you know what? They won't, because this is the party that was in power when their leader's office told seniors, when they raised concerns about the carbon tax in my riding, to go and hold a fundraiser to pay for the carbon tax. Well, through you to them, Mr. Speaker, shame on them. Shame on them. They should spend some

time reflecting on that, coming up with emission plans that actually work for Albertans, and stop spending their time trying to tax Albertans, trying to take money out of Albertans' pockets and then spend it on Ontario companies or their ideological friends in eastern Canada. Instead, stand up for Alberta, stand up for our energy industry, stand up for our other industries, and stand with Alberta, not their federal allies Justin Trudeau and the NDP.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at third reading of Bill 19. Anyone else wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak against Bill 19 at third reading. You know, it's always interesting to hear the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre talk about climate change. In the 15 minutes that he had to defend the legislation that he brought forward, he said that this bill is huge, that it's the best bill on climate change that we've ever seen – he said, “Trust me; it's going to be amazing” – and then he didn't provide any details or any plan on how Alberta is going to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. In fact – in fact – he admits that carbon dioxide emissions are going to increase under this plan. And then for the remaining 13 and a half minutes he railed against our climate leadership plan. You know, fine. We're no longer in the place of having to defend the climate leadership plan. That has been clearly thrown out, but a majority of Canadians and a majority of Albertans want the country – and that means Alberta has to do its share – to reduce carbon dioxide emissions immediately.

As I've said many times in this House, time is running out. We only have about eight years to get our carbon dioxide emissions under control before we start triggering catastrophic changes in the world's climate system, Mr. Speaker, and to think that Albertans won't pay the cost is flat out wrong. We are going to pay the cost in increased fires. We're going to pay the cost in increased floods. We're going to pay the cost in increased drought. We're going to pay the cost in increased number of days where the heat is intolerable. People are going to suffer severe health consequences and possibly die as a result of catastrophic global climate change if we don't get our act together.

That's why it's absolutely unacceptable that this government stands up and says that it's taking the issue of climate change seriously and then introduces a bill that actually increases emissions. You know, this is clearly not acceptable. We are still waiting for the federal government to make a decision as to whether or not this meets the federal backstop. I eagerly anticipate the government's decision, and I certainly hope that everybody, both the provincial government and the federal government, takes their responsibilities to reduce carbon dioxide emissions seriously and that we see a plan developed here that will result in real carbon dioxide emission reductions.

I don't hold out a lot of hope, though, because in the last few sentences of the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre's speech he said that this is probably going to be the last time we discuss a carbon dioxide emission reductions bill in the House. I think that's a pretty terrifying fact. Here we have a plan that actually increases carbon dioxide emissions, and the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre says that there is nothing else we are going to do in the remaining days of our government to tackle climate change. That's unacceptable to me, that's unacceptable to the people of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I think that's unacceptable to Alberta and to Albertans' children.

It's ironic because we get lectured all the time about leaving intergenerational debt, fiscal debt, on the backs of Albertans, yet here we have a government that's leaving a huge climate change

debt for our children to have to deal with. I don't think that's fair. They don't seem to recognize the fact that they are saddling future Albertans with significant climate change debt, that will have consequences that are much more extreme than any fiscal debt that we could create.

7:50

On the issue of, you know, reducing global climate emissions, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is correct in saying that it is a global problem. However, the other statements that he's made wrapped around that are completely false. Again, we hear from the other side all the time that Canada has no responsibility, that there's nothing we can do on our own to reduce climate change emissions, and there's nothing that could be further from the truth. Canada, although it is a small emitter on the global scale, is still one of the top 10 countries that emits carbon dioxide emissions in the entire world. We're top 10. That means that nine other countries in the world have emissions that are greater than our own, and that means that we have a responsibility to reduce emissions simply because we've already had the benefit of carbon dioxide emission reductions, and we need to carry the load, as it were, when it comes to reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

The second argument that they come out with all the time is this idea that the best way to reduce global climate emissions is for us to ship natural gas to India and China. There are two things that are wrong with that argument, Mr. Speaker. The first is that none of the international agreements around reducing climate change emissions have any form of exchange of credits between countries, so Canada is not going to get any credit for climate emission reductions for reducing . . . [interjection] If the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, you know, would have the decency to keep his mouth shut while I'm speaking and engage in the debate when he has the time . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, while I appreciate the fact that you may not like the interjections from the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, I don't think threatening someone to keep their mouth shut is appropriate in this House. I think you can apologize and withdraw, and we can move on. I appreciate your commitment to not having people interject, but I also know that you know the rules of the place.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I apologize and withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Regardless, the idea that we can get credit for emission reductions in China and India is flat out wrong. There's nothing in any global climate change plan that says that even if China and India would use more natural gas in electricity production for their energy uses, it necessarily means that they will even reduce their carbon dioxide emissions. There's nothing about building natural gas infrastructure in Canada to ship it to China and India that will be a benefit to global climate emission reductions. You know, the members opposite need to be honest with Albertans when they're talking about what Canada has to do with respect to climate change emissions.

I had to laugh when I heard the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre complain about how not transparent we were with the money that was invested through the climate leadership plan. It was so untransparent, Mr. Speaker, that every budget document introduced into this Legislature contained in detail where all of the money was collected from and where it was spent. Every organization that was involved with the collection and expense of carbon dioxide emission reduction plans had to provide annual reports to this Chamber. There was nothing but complete transparency around where every cent of that money was collected from and where it was spent.



On the flip side, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is quite clear that \$30 million a year is going to be funnelled into the Premier's war room, designed for the purposes of vilifying people who are engaged in their democratic right to discuss public policy issues in the country. There is no oversight over that. In fact, the company is exempt from FOIP. There is no way that citizens are going to be allowed to see how that \$30 million a year is going to be spent.

In fact, we've seen already from the government a lack of transparency around what even constitutes war room business these days, with the Premier's principal secretary allegedly on business for trade missions, and then it might have been war room business, and then it was a mix of war room business and trade mission. Of course, we'll never find out the truth because we can't find out where the \$30 million that is being collected and spent on this war room is going to be spent. For the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to accuse us of not being transparent is mind-boggling, but I know that in the UCP world whatever is good for the goose is not necessarily good for the gander, so here we are.

The other thing that struck me as odd was the member's reliance on continued emphasis on Alberta's entrepreneurial spirit, that the money collected from the TIER plan is going to boost entrepreneurialism by letting the large emitters off the hook from funding research and development that they should pay for and turning that responsibility over to the taxpayers of Alberta. I don't see how that's in any way entrepreneurial. If private enterprise wants to sponsor research and development into carbon dioxide emissions, they're more than welcome to, but it's quite clear that they are either unwilling or unable to make those investments on their own, so they've asked the government of Alberta to pick up the tab.

Now, I am completely in favour of government spending on research and development, but to frame it as private-sector entrepreneurialism is absolutely ludicrous, Mr. Speaker. I think it would be wise for everyone to admit that this is a problem that requires collective action and that collectively all Albertans are responsible for working together on the solutions. That's why I think it's a good idea that we spend money on research and development, but it's also why we need to be sure that we're spending enough money on research and development and making other money available for the carbon emission reduction technologies that we know exist.

In my comments at second reading I said that we already know what works to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, right? It's energy efficiency, it's renewable energy, and it's public transportation. Those are the things that we need to be investing in to achieve significant carbon dioxide emission reductions, and all of those things are things that the members opposite have stepped away from. Now they're just pinning their hopes on some magical technology that's going to be invented that will somehow reduce carbon dioxide emissions when they're unwilling to implement the kind of technologies that we know will work.

You know, as a side note, Mr. Speaker, of course, the member opposite likes to highlight the fact that we've encouraged people to use public transportation, and then they say: well, we can't use public transportation in places like Olds and Rocky Mountain House because there is none. Well, that seems to me like a problem that the provincial government should fix. If there isn't public transportation available to people in those centres, then we should provide some. We should make public transportation available to people who don't have access to it. It's not just folks in Edmonton and Calgary who need reliable, affordable transportation to get to work and get their children around town. Everybody has that need. To say that investing in public transportation doesn't help the

citizens just reveals a lack of imagination on the part of the members opposite. In fact, we should be moving towards some kind of policy that creates public transportation that's more widely available to more of the citizens of Alberta instead of just laughing at people who suggest that public transportation is a potential solution to the issue of climate change.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other issues that I have with respect to this bill. We do have some questions planned for the member opposite during estimates tomorrow around some of the details of the TIER plan. Unfortunately, you know, it would have been nice to have been able to get that information before we were asked to vote on this at third reading, but here we are. We're a government, I guess, that's intent on making sure that we get all of our legislation passed without allowing the people of Alberta to thoroughly examine and understand the consequences of the legislation that we're passing.

8:00

For all of the issues that I've highlighted with this bill – the fact that it actually increases emissions, the fact that it eliminates spending on technologies that we know will work to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the fact that the money is being funnelled into a top secret Twitter troll farm, and the fact that, you know, it really leaves Albertans at significant risk of the effects of climate change – I urge all of my fellow members here in the House to vote against this bill.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 19 as 29(2)(a) isn't quite available yet but will be following the subsequent speakers? Anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 19, the emissions management and climate resilience act, or TIER. Let me make it very clear. Climate change is the largest crisis facing my generation of people. It is one of the most important things that we will ever do in this Chamber, so when the Minister of Environment and Parks gets up and says that he thinks that this will be the last time we ever speak of this again in this House, I think that is something that is shameful. I think it's something that we should strive to do better. In fact, it's in the name of his ministry, environment. We should be trying to actually, perhaps, do his job.

Mr. Speaker, we're here to talk about the bill today, and I think it's very important that we do talk about the impacts this bill will have on future generations because when members like the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka get up and heckle and speak and talk about, "Well, you drove a car to work today, didn't you?" and "You have to heat your house, don't you?" – these whataboutisms are really great and all, but the reality is that the science doesn't care whether you believe in it or not. The reality is that we as young people will have to deal and live with the consequences of climate change.

Legislation like this and repealing the climate leadership plan and moving with a plan that actually proposes that we increase our emissions is something that will have detrimental effects for decades and hundreds of years to come, detrimental effects for people like myself, detrimental effects for people that are younger than me in the next generation, and detrimental effects that perhaps that member will not see. That's true. Many people in this House will not see what those effects will be. They will not be here when the flooding comes. They will not be here when the forest fires happen, Mr. Speaker, but my generation will. I will, my children will, and the people that I know and love will. We are the ones that

are going to be living with the effects of climate change, the climate crisis. This is the reality of what is happening right now.

So when you use whataboutisms like “Did you drive to work today? Did you heat your house today?” that is a fundamentally flawed and, I will say, a fundamentally ridiculous idea because we can do things to help reduce global emissions, to help reduce emissions here in Alberta without resorting to trying to belittle individuals, without resorting to saying to individuals that they are the problem. It is a fundamental misunderstanding with what the climate crisis is. It is a fundamental misunderstanding of how we are supposed to deal with the climate crisis, because it is young people like us that are going to have to live with these effects. When the government members get up and say, “Oh, it’s not even a thing; it’s not real; it doesn’t matter,” or “They should just stop driving their cars and stop heating their homes,” that is completely ignoring the root of the issue. It’s completely ignoring what we are supposed to be fighting against. It’s completely ignoring how we actually should be addressing issues collaboratively in this House. Instead, these government members choose to belittle, they choose to ignore, and they choose to reject.

That is shameful. It’s because those are the things that we are going to have to live with. Those are the things that young people will remember. Young people will remember this. They will know that this generation, the one that came just before mine and before them as well, let us down. They let down the younger people because the younger people will no longer have clean air to breathe. Younger people will no longer have forests to go into and explore, our national parks here, for example. All these things are at risk. It’s not just the recreation, Mr. Speaker. It’s not just the playgrounds and the parks and the forests and the mountains and the oceans. It’s the very way of life. It’s the very ability to actually live. It’s the attack and the flooding. For something like I believe it’s — significant percentages of the world population live within flood zones, and as the water level rises in the oceans, their homes will be under water. That’s what we are talking about. We’re talking about a global climate catastrophe.

My colleague the opposition environment critic and Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar spoke about how we have eight years. That’s the problem with scientists, Mr. Speaker. They speak about how we have eight years to reverse the acts of climate change. The problem is that they’re probably too optimistic. They probably are actually saying: if we stopped emitting right now, all emissions, then in eight years we’d be fine. We know that’s not likely. We know it’s not feasible, but we also know that we can’t stop fighting. We can’t not try just because it’s going to make less of a difference.

It’s people like the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka who probably throw their coffee out the window when they finish it as they’re driving down the road. That’s because: “Well, one coffee cup is not a lot of garbage. Just like Alberta: Alberta doesn’t give a lot of emissions. If it’s only one coffee cup, what does it matter?” Well, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that I believe that any reasonable person in this province would say: well, that’s a stupid argument. That’s what these government members are saying when they say things like “Alberta is a small emitter,” when they say, “Alberta doesn’t emit enough to make a difference.” They’re saying that they are willing to throw their coffee cups out the window as they drive down the highway. That’s a stupid argument. I’m willing to say it. I’m willing to say it in the House on the record right now because it fundamentally ignores what young people have been saying, what scientists have been saying. It fundamentally doesn’t understand what a climate catastrophe is. It doesn’t understand why this is so important.

These are our lives. It’s not their lives. That’s right: many of them will not be here to see those effects. They will not be here to have

to live with the consequences of mass tropicalization, mass temperature increases.

To put it in perspective, Mr. Speaker, when the ice age happened, I believe there was a two-degree Celsius average global temperature difference. Average global temperature: there was a two-degree Celsius difference to what it was in about the 1980s. Since the 1980s the average global temperature has gone up almost one and a half degrees Celsius. One and a half degrees Celsius. We are on track to increase the temperature of this planet so much that the last time the temperature increased this much, half of the world’s global ice sheets disappeared. Half of the world’s global ice sheets. Almost all of North America, all of where we stand right now, where we are sitting right now was covered in ice last time the temperature changed this much.

That’s the type of disaster we’re talking about. We’re talking about a disaster that will be so significant that we will kill hundreds of thousands of people if not millions if not billions, Mr. Speaker. That is what is happening. That is what we’re talking about. We’re not being hyperbolic. When young people say, “This is a catastrophe,” we’re not being hyperbolic. We’re talking about the lives of millions if not billions of people on this planet.

Climate change is a real crisis that we can move to try and fight today, and this legislation does absolutely nothing. It increases the emissions that we will have in this province. It does absolutely nothing to actually make a difference. Mr. Speaker, it’s either because these members of the government don’t understand or they don’t care. I won’t hypothesize on which one that is, but it has to be one of the two because people and scientists and young people and people that aren’t young, either, have been talking about this for a very long time. They’ve been explaining that this TIER legislation, for example, is absolutely disastrous, that it is something that will absolutely harm our planet, Mother Earth, what gives us life. It will absolutely cause damage. That’s something that they don’t understand, that they don’t want to see, that they don’t want to reckon with.

I understand that it’s uncomfortable. I understand that it’s uncomfortable to deal with the reality that the way of life we have, myself included, Mr. Speaker, may be damaging our planet. That is an uncomfortable reality. It is something that nobody wants to admit. It is something that nobody wants to reckon with, but the reality is that it doesn’t matter whether we don’t like it or not. It will still happen to us. We will still have these effects on future generations. We will still have these effects on our families, our children, and our grandchildren because in as little as 10 or 20 years we will not be able to recognize what type of damage we have done. The planet will look fundamentally different. It will be fundamentally different. That is something that is very, very dangerous.

#### 8:10

It is something that we should know better, and we do know better. We had a better plan, and we had a plan that didn’t try to pit the economy and the environment against each other. But that’s what this bill is doing; that’s what this TIER legislation is doing. It’s something that’s absolutely shameful. It’s something that’s absolutely a misunderstanding of how serious this issue will be. That may or may not be intentional, but I certainly think that we should strive to do better.

When we talk about striving to do better, the environment minister spoke about it himself when he was speaking to this bill, how they wanted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and different emissions like carbon dioxide and methane. Well, this very legislation that we’re looking at right here proposes that we actually increase the emissions by a significant number of megatonnes, Mr.

Speaker. Again, on a global scale, perhaps, yes, it's not going to be as much as we would like. That's true.

Let me tell you that young people if you talk to them, scientists if you talk to them would say that we should be reducing emissions quite a bit more than even the climate leadership plan that we proposed had. That's the reality. I'll admit it. The climate leadership plan, people would say, was not aggressive enough. But to introduce a plan on the turnaround that actually proposes that we increase emissions is shameful. That is absolutely shameful because it shows that the government really does not understand and does not care about what this environmental impact will be. Does not care, Mr. Speaker. I think that is something that's very, very dangerous, it's something that is very, very shameful, and it's something that I'm very concerned about.

So I'm standing here in this House today – I'm standing here in this House today – fighting to make sure that we have this on the record, because we know that this government has a majority and that what they have is the ability to ram through damaging legislation. They have the ability to ram through legislation that's going to hurt generations for decades to come, for hundreds of years to come, perhaps millennia to come. We can't predict the future, Mr. Speaker, but what we can predict is that this will hurt our planet. That's what we can predict.

I hope that perhaps members will look into their hearts and, hopefully, into their textbooks as well, but I hope that they will look into something and understand how drastic these effects will be, understand how drastically the environment will be damaged, and understand what this means because this isn't just screaming into a void. These are actual impacts that will affect this planet. They're actual impacts that will affect these students, these young people, people of my generation, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I know some of them won't be here to see the impacts, but I will. When we fight again to try and save our planet or try to reduce the damage that's being done to the planet in decades to come here, when this comes up again and again, even if the environment minister does not want it to come up again – he said so himself in his opening remarks here – when we have these conversations, I'm going to be proud that I stood in this House and fought against this disastrous plan. I fought against this plan that does nothing to help the environment, absolutely nothing.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to be able to just comment on a couple of points that were made by the last two speakers, actually. I'm quoting, actually, the World Resources Institute. What they've said is that from 2005 to 2014 Canada's global emissions decreased from 1.8 per cent to 1.6 per cent. Now, it's interesting also just to be able to – you know, a couple of members stood up there and talked about some things that I thought were interesting.

First of all, the last member just said that we don't have to worry because we're all going to be dead on this side of the House in eight years, basically. I have to say that I'm 52. I sure hope I don't die by 60, Mr. Speaker, because that's a very young death. I'm just not sure if it was the overheated rhetoric that we normally hear from this member, but I can assure him that I'm healthy and I have no plans of dying at 60.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting things that I think needs to be stated is that when you take a look at Canada's emissions, we talk about – I think it was the member that was just before the last speaker that said that we're in the top 10 for global GHG emissions.

Here's the thing. We'll often hear members opposite throw out some statistics, and we hope that they've done their research and their homework and that they know what they're talking about, but I actually just decided to do a quick little research to see whether or not we were in the top 10. Again going back to the World Resources Institute, I'm just going to tell you what are the top 10. The top 10: China, United States, then E.U., then India, then Russia, Japan, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Iran. Those are the top 10. Now, I didn't see our beloved country, Canada, in there.

Perhaps this World Resources Institute is wrong. Perhaps the members opposite are right. Perhaps they have some indisputable facts that have not been presented to us here tonight. It's sad when they continue to throw out statistics, inflammatory statistics. We hear on a regular basis from members opposite that in eight years we're all going to be dead because of not addressing this issue. This is the sort of thing that gets my children and my grandchildren concerned, and we have conversations about this. I can assure the members opposite that this is not just a young person's responsibility. This is actually all of our responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, being able to find this information – I found it on a cellphone. Now, 20 years ago, maybe 30 years ago, I couldn't hold that cellphone in my hand. I had to actually carry it in a briefcase. How did I get to be able to hold that cellphone in my hand? Because of innovation. It is human history that when we come up with a crisis, we have not actually solved the crisis by going back 30 years or 50 years and deciding to live like we did 50 years or 30 years ago. How we solved every crisis in human history is through innovation. We've innovated our way out of it.

This is the reason why I'm in favour of the TIER program. The TIER program, first of all, incentivizes innovation whereas the NDP's strategy was to actually provide Albertans with no incentive to innovate their way out of this problem. In fact, what it said was: we're going to tax you. Really, it wasn't about reducing GHG emissions for them. It was about actually increasing taxes. The truth is in the pudding, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that they couldn't actually bring in a PST, so what they did was the next best thing, a carbon tax, because a carbon tax basically taxes everything.

Conservative governments in the past made all the necessary arrangements, and this is... [Mr. Hunter's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else wishing to join in debate on Bill 19 at third reading?

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 23 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to join in debate on Bill 23?

Is there anyone hoping to move second reading on behalf of the minister?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I did move second reading of Bill 23 this afternoon on behalf of the Minister of Justice.

**The Speaker:** Excellent.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

8:20

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I recall, just prior to adjournment for the dinner break, I was speaking to second reading of Bill 23, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019. Just to continue from my comments, I wanted to express that I do generally support Bill 23. I have some questions, however, that I think are some fair questions to ask with respect to this bill.

Arguably, I think that most people would say that these are pretty minor amendments, but they are something that we should consider and take a look at. In particular, I expressed earlier and I continue to express my concern about lowering the age of eligibility for part-time service for judges to age 55 from age 60 simply because I think there is a question that we have and we've expressed repeatedly – and all members of this House, I think, share this concern – about the administration of justice and making sure that our justice system moves efficiently through cases that they receive. We know that that has historically been a problem not just in Alberta but throughout Canada and, actually, throughout most court systems. Getting a matter to trial and having a matter proceed through trial can sometimes be a very lengthy process, and part of that challenge has been created by not having enough judges.

Certainly, when we're talking about moving some full-time judges both in the Court of Queen's Bench and the Provincial Court, moving more judges to be able to do part-time work, we have to make sure that we are appointing and that our federal counterparts are appointing enough judges to make sure that we still have a timely and efficient administration of justice system.

While I appreciate that many of our esteemed members of the legal community who do go on to serve as justices have worked very long and hard to be where they are and certainly I support the idea of more flexible work environments, I do share a concern that if we have more appointed judges who are now part-time rather than full-time, we need to make sure that we are making up for that by appointing more judges.

Certainly, I know that my colleague the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who is a former Minister of Justice, termed it, and I think it was a very appropriate terminology. She said that in trying to steer that large ship, there's a lot that has to take place before you can appoint new judges, and a lot of that is sometimes out of our control because it's based on how quickly the federal government also appoints new judges. However, it is important that we make some headway towards doing that. If we are increasing the number of judges who are now part-time as opposed to full-time, we do risk slowing down our system.

Again, as my colleague for Calgary-Mountain View pointed out, we have a very serious Supreme Court of Canada decision, the Jordan decision, in which the justices said, you know, that if criminal proceedings take too long, those criminal charges will actually be stayed against those accused members. That's something that we should all be concerned about. We know that a matter taking too long through the courts is actually a failure to administer justice fairly, and we don't want to risk more cases being stayed because of delay. That is only to say that while judges should be entitled to have the flexibility to work part-time, and they certainly have earned that, we do want to make sure that we are appointing enough judges to make up for those who are no longer working full-time hours.

I know these requests will continue to be approved by the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court and the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench. I just encourage the government, in particular the Minister of Justice, to carefully monitor the impact of this change to make sure that all Albertans' access to justice is not impacted by this change.

I also want to comment on one other change, of course, which was the change to move basically our court system from being called the Court of Queen's Bench to the Court of King's Bench. In the very unfortunate but, unfortunately, also inevitable situation where we no longer have a Queen as our Monarch, we will need to move to renaming the system. I actually indicated to my colleagues earlier, you know, that I have been practising law for 13 years and never actually thought about the fact that our justice system is the Court of Queen's Bench. I took that name for granted. It's been like that for my entire legal career. It's not that long, but for my entire lifetime we've had a Queen, so I never really considered what would happen at the point when we in our system no longer have a Queen.

I hadn't really thought about this change, but while I acknowledge that it's within our constitutional system and our constitutional monarchy system to be moving to Court of King's Bench, I note that it's going to be actually, I would guess, quite a costly and lengthy process to do that because it is quite ingrained in so much of what we do in Alberta, not only in our justice system but certainly within our justice system, the Court of Queen's Bench, QB as we call it. Those are things that will take some time to change. It's an administrative change, but it could be quite costly when we think of how many things are branded with that term. I only mention that to say that it's a change that may be necessary, but it certainly might be costly, and we hope that there will be some vigilance and thoughtfulness done in how that is implemented.

The last small change that's taking place through this bill is to amend the legislation to allow judges to travel for professional development opportunities, conferences and such, and to seek access for federal reimbursement for that professional development. Again, I am completely in support of that. We know that as professionals, even as legislators here in this House we have an obligation to continue to develop professionally, to meet with our colleagues, to learn from their experiences, to share our experiences and our information, and also to do proper training.

I actually note that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View made a very good reference to some very important and necessary training for judges around sexual assault trials, especially because we've had unfortunate instances in this province and in this country of judges who demonstrate a lack of understanding around rape myths and, unfortunately, have been applying those myths while presiding over criminal trials. It's very necessary that all judges get access to adequate and appropriate training, specifically with sexual assault, but just general professional development is important for all professionals. Certainly, I know that it's something that would be very valued by our justices currently.

I'm generally, as I've indicated, in support of this bill. I do think that we need to make sure that we're monitoring specifically the reduction of the eligibility age for part-time work for judges and think about how that might change our FTEs and caseloads and how it will effect overall court timelines. Other than that I'm pleased to say that I generally do support these changes. They seem to be small but timely and seem to be updating this act to appropriate levels with respect to service and our name changes. Therefore, I'm proud to stand in support of this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'd just like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for her caution around speaking about the Queen as she knows that one of your Speaker's favourite Standing Orders is 23(k) "a member will be called to order . . . [if they speak] disrespectfully of Her Majesty or any other member of the Royal Family." Great job in being cautious around one of my favourites there.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to ask a brief question or make a comment.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to make a few comments in second reading in regard to Bill 23, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act. I think that, by and large, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud pointed out, the Official Opposition seems to see Bill 23 to be in order. I mean, there are a couple of issues that I think it brings up that bear some discussion in regard to ensuring that we have sufficient judicial capacity here in the province of Alberta to deal with cases coming to each of our courts. We know that one of the ongoing challenges that we have in our justice system, not just in Alberta but right across the country, is sufficient capacity to have cases brought forward and executed in a timely, just, and reasonable way. I know that this idea around allowing the age of eligibility for part-time service to be reduced to 55 – I'm not sure where it's at now. It's probably 65, right?

8:30

**Ms Pancholi:** It's 60.

**Mr. Eggen:** It's 60. Okay.

So, I mean, that certainly does provide some flexibility and perhaps even allows judges to continue to practise longer because they are given some more space to perhaps be more reflective, and it increases the longevity of people if they choose to work part-time over a longer period of time. But I'm just wondering if the Justice department has done the math to ensure that, you know, we're not going to leave ourselves short. There's nothing worse than having cases that with I believe it's the Jordan principle – is that what it's called?

**Ms Pancholi:** The Jordan case.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. That's right.

The Jordan case has come down from the federal courts, that compels the timely execution of a case in all courts across the country. You know, that's caused us quite a lot of consternation and problems here in the province of Alberta because we quite simply don't have the space and the time. I saw a case in the news just maybe 48 hours ago or at the end of last week where someone was not given court time and a court case in a timely manner in our second official language, and that person ends up with a suspended sentence or, I guess, no trial. It's the end of it, right? So we want to make sure that we have judicial capacity here in the province of Alberta in both official languages and that we are not compromising that with this Bill 23.

The other part that I wanted to make very brief comments on is just to ensure that the savings that we might incur from the changes in Bill 23 – I mean, they are outlined in the technical briefing that we did get. You know, I just want to make sure that we're not compromising, once again, the integrity of the execution of justice here in the province just for the sake of saving the dollars, as put forward here by the Justice department, right? I see that the potential saving in provincial courts is about \$1.5 million from the '18-19 actuals, which is good. But I don't want to see – \$1.3 million I see. I see the Queen's Bench at \$0.8 million and so forth.

I mean, all of these numbers do add up, but when you consider the time and resources that are put into both our justice system and our police system and our corrections system, then we don't want to, you know, save a dime when we've already spent a dollar kind of thing. I just want to ensure that there's a provision for realizing savings maybe by Bill 23 but also a review process by which we

look to see that we're not, like I say, trying to save a dime when, in fact, we've already spent a dollar in the pursuit of justice and the conviction of criminals here in the province of Alberta.

Those are really the only two things that I wanted to bring forward in regard to Bill 23. I'm just going to skirt right around the whole Queen's Bench to King's Bench issue because I feel sensitivity around that. You know, you always want to be on the right side of the Crown. So with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will take my leave and hope that we might have some of those questions answered by the Minister of Justice.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment for the hon. member.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate at second reading?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call on the hon. Minister of Energy on behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to close debate if she wishes.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you. I just would stand up to close debate. I think we've heard lots of lively debate and comments on this. In respect of time and matter and having heard people voice their opinions on this, I would just simply like to close debate on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** I was trying to let the other side stand if they wished, but I suppose.

It is an honour to rise and speak this evening although I have some concerns, as I will outline here, with Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, an interesting name for an omnibus bill that really should be divided into multiple separate bills. I've spoken to this bill in previous conversations and in previous debate in this House, and truly I would argue that nearly each piece of this bill should be argued on its own. I can use the deindexing of AISH as one example, where the indexing of AISH under the previous NDP government, of course, of which I was not a part but was very proud to see the indexing of AISH, was its own separate bill. I am quite troubled by this use of omnibus bills that sort of merges together so many of what should really be separate pieces of legislation. I would argue that it's a sneaky attack. With Bill 21 it's really death by a thousand cuts. As I will outline here tonight, the impacts of Bill 21 are quite far-reaching, just as we saw with Bill 20, a very similar bill in that the impacts on people across this province are tremendous.

I just want to, for the benefit of those watching at home, of which there probably is at least one – some of the measures proposed in Bill 21: temporarily suspending the indexing of benefits for AISH, income support, and the seniors' lodge program; excluding budget officers, systems analysts, auditors, and employees who perform similar functions from bargaining units; reversing the

replacement worker ban; ending the tuition freeze; increasing student loan interest; ending the regulated rate option cap for electricity; allowing changes to the master agreement with the Alberta Medical Association; changes on how municipalities pay for policing; changing how the province uses fine money – I haven't even gone through them all – letting the government have greater oversight over collective bargaining. The list goes on. In fact, I didn't even name them all there.

My point in listing all of those is that these are almost a disparate set of measures that, again, should individually be debated, and I think that's only fair, especially when you are talking about things that truly impact the lives of Albertans. And in the cases of some of the pieces that I want to focus on tonight, they impact the lives of many in my constituency.

If I go back to that first element, temporarily suspending the indexation of benefits for AISH, income support, and the seniors' lodge program – well, I've spoken multiple times about my concerns around the deindexing of AISH. I've heard from many people in my riding who are concerned. I've shared in this House before that in my riding we do have pretty high rates of poverty and have a number of folks who do rely on supports like AISH.

**8:40**

In fact, I'm glancing at my phone because as I was sitting here earlier, I had someone who I met who receives AISH who messaged me and said that she's really worried, and I haven't responded to her yet. She's concerned about the changes under this government. I would think – I won't say her name because I haven't gotten her permission to share that – that there are many folks just like her out there who are quite concerned. For this Premier to say that it's not onerous and that it's not significant, deindexing AISH: well, again, I've heard from countless folks who would say that absolutely it is. I would love to ask the Premier and his ministers to come and talk to some of those folks who I've heard from who are really worried about how they're going to make ends meet every month. They're relying on that increase for inflation. We know that it's a significant challenge for a lot of them.

Included in that same change in the deindexing is the deindexing to the seniors' lodge program, which, of course, has implications for seniors' affordable housing in our province. I take pride in the fact that I tried – I knocked on every door in my riding or at least tried to, because of course you get a lot of folks who aren't home. We have a number of affordable housing complexes and seniors' lodges as well. I looked at the list because I thought that a lot of these are in my riding, and sure enough, a number of the seniors' lodges are in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. A lot of folks in those buildings are very much struggling to make ends meet from day to day. Again, losing out on the deindexation: there is quite a concern, and I'm not sure – you know, it reminds me that I need to go back and visit some of the folks, some of the friends that I met while campaigning because I bet a lot of them are struggling and are concerned.

I really think – and I think I will speak to this more later tonight – that this government should consider: you're giving \$4.7 billion away to large corporations. You've already demonstrated your lack of compassion for our most vulnerable. I would urge the members opposite to really think about: if the moral imperative isn't there, the economic one should make you reconsider because it's a small, small, small fraction of a budget that we're talking about here that has a huge impact on our most vulnerable. I always like to point out, especially when we're talking about AISH, for instance, the costs that we're going to be paying down the line by not providing proper supports now. I worry, and I think that if you're not able to make that small financial sacrifice of something like indexing to

inflation, I get quite alarmed. I would urge the members opposite to reconsider, particularly when it comes to the deindexing of those benefits.

What I would like to do is speak to the next point that I feel is quite resonant, and it's quite relevant today, and that's ending the tuition freeze for three years. Now, I recall in this House not too long ago the Minister of Advanced Education saying something to the effect of: students were asking us to lift the tuition freeze. I thought: oh, my goodness. That is some interesting malarkey, because I can't imagine postsecondary students asking to pay more tuition.

In the early 2000s, when I was an undergraduate student, I remember there being a few protests at the university. I don't remember protests at the Legislature but at the university, for sure. We had a pretty active students' union at the time. I looked back in a little bit of a moment of reflection today as I heard the protests were quite robust today as well. We're possibly going back to the era of PC cuts, but in fact the cuts to postsecondary education under this UCP government are even more extreme. I wasn't able to be at the rallies. I would have loved to have been at the rallies because, gosh, my life has been a lot of rallying lately, and I hate to miss them. Unfortunately, I was in the private members' committee meeting while it was going on.

I did read a couple of news stories, and one quote actually quite resonated with me. Students at both MacEwan and the University of Alberta, both of which are reporting huge shortfalls, \$44 million and \$17 million respectively – rallies were held at each campus. One student, Eunah Cha, a second-year international student in the Faculty of Nursing, voiced her concern about more expensive tuition. She said: I'm frustrated, I'm angry, and I'm very worried because of the tuition increasing and not being able to keep up with it; I don't know if education is going to be something that I can access next year. How disheartening is it that we have university students who aren't sure if they're going to be able to return next year because of the increases? For this minister to say that he's hearing that kids, that university students wanted this or that postsecondary students want this tuition increase is absolutely farcical. I think that students like Eunah are speaking out, and I hope they continue to speak out. What impact will it have if multiple students are facing the same experiences as Eunah, that they do in fact have to drop out?

I had a university student actually chat with me the other day. That student is at MacEwan University, in fact, and they've already made the decision that they're not going back to school next year. I tried to reason with them and say: you know, is there any way you can try to reconsider that? They had made the decision that it just wouldn't be affordable, that they'd have to work instead.

Part of that person's rationale was also around student loans, that they're already shouldering student loans, which brings me to the next point, the next measure in Bill 21 that's quite troubling, and that's increasing student loan interest by 1 per cent. Again, what message are we sending to young people, to future generations, to some students that are already struggling like Eunah? "Oh, by the way, you know, your tuition is going up, and if you need a student loan, if you have to have a student loan, well, you know what? Your interest is going to be going up."

I think that if we recap all the attacks on postsecondary students – I'm sure that my colleague from Edmonton-North West has been hearing from hundreds of folks impacted by the attack on postsecondary education. Let's just list these: the tuition freeze being lifted; Bill 20 speaks to the loss of the education and tuition tax credits; the student loan increase, which I just talked about. I think, again, the minister might have noted in the House here that it's only going to be about \$15 a month, that, you know, it's a nothing sort of thing when you break it down. Again, it's that same

sort of rhetoric, just like with AISH recipients: ah, it's only, like, 30 bucks a month, right?

Again, if you're living in a situation where you are having to make ends meet day to day, where you don't know where your next meal necessarily is coming from, every dollar does add up. I know that's not the experience of every student, but it is the experience of some. These are the students that we need to be thinking about. I just wonder, you know: how the heck are students today surviving when they're facing these financial barriers, and what's the motivation – gosh, what's the motivation? – for young people to engage in postsecondary?

I mean, I've talked about my experience as a high school teacher and being in rural Alberta, and part of my role was that I was an academic counsellor for a little while. I would try make sure that they had enough credits, and I would try to encourage students to go on to postsecondary. A lot of them just wanted to get out and work – there's no problem with that – but in other cases I met some kids who just didn't think it was financially viable: it's better if I go work for a bit so that I can make some money to go to postsecondary. But we know, the statistics show that if they go to work for a little while with the hopes of going to postsecondary, often students won't actually go back if they're gainfully employed. If they're not, that's a different story.

8:50

Nonetheless, you know, I had a lot of conversations trying to convince kids, students to engage in postsecondary, whether it was pursuing a trade at NAIT or going into university but really thinking about broadening their horizons, if for no other reason, as someone who grew up in rural Alberta myself, than to leave the small towns, the village, in fact, that I was at that time teaching in, to go see a little bit more of the world, even if that world is just 120 kilometres down the road in Edmonton.

I think about those students, and I think about how many other high school teachers right now are having those conversations and trying to convince young people to access postsecondary. Students are saying: "Well, why would I, right? You know, why would I when tuition is so high, when student loan interest has increased?" Yeah. The list goes on. The list goes on. Again, I would ask this government, in this piece of the bill as well, to think about this. I think it's a bit of an alarm bell going off already, with university students starting to protest and with many folks starting to speak out with their concerns as well because, to reiterate, it's an investment in the future, for sure.

You know, one of the other pieces that I find quite troubling in Bill 21 is the following: allowing the government to have greater oversight over collective bargaining. We've seen already a few attacks on workers from this government. In my short tenure as an MLA I've witnessed that. We had Bill 9, where there was an attack on the constitutional right to collectively bargain. We've seen already that this government hasn't been friendly to those public-sector employees, and I'm very much worried about further attacks. I'm worried. You know, I've heard from countless folks in the public sector. I've heard from a whole heck of a lot of teachers and nurses, teachers in particular.

Of course, it's something that's close to my heart, close to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-North West. We were both teachers, so I think we probably disproportionately hear from a lot of teachers as well who are feeling quite disheartened. As I said in the House not too long ago – I gave a member's statement talking about how teachers are reaching out and telling me that they're disheartened and they're feeling deflated. You know, I try to rally them, and I try to encourage them to keep speaking out and to ask their MLAs questions, but then the attacks keep coming, right? The

attacks on their pensions, for instance. As I stated in the House prior, this isn't about pensions. This is just one piece of it. It's about disrespect. It's about feeling continually disrespected by this government. In Bill 21 we see further reach into collective bargaining and into the constitutional rights of some of Alberta's workers.

In fact, I wanted to share a little bit of a letter I received from a constituent. She was fine with me sharing a little part of this. Actually, I've got a few letters, so maybe I'll share this first one. This is a message from Brynn,\* who said: you know, I'm worried that Bill 20 and Bill 21 are going to have serious consequences for my family. She notes that she is a public service worker. Her ministry did get a bit of increase in the budget, but she's heard that there will be an attack on her pay. She points out: actually, I'm a recent graduate, and I've got student loan payments that I'm making. She's saying, you know, that student loan payments are actually going to go up now.

What else do we see? We see an increase in tuition. She also, being a graduate herself – she's an older woman who went back to university. She actually has a daughter who's also in university, in her second year at the University of Alberta. She's got another child who's in high school. Now, you know, she's heard from other folks who kind of attack public-sector workers and say: well, hey, we in the private sector had to deal with that as well. She says: yeah, I get that, but I've only worked with the public sector for a year, and at least in the private sector I had a bit of an increase, a 1 per cent increase. She says that she's worried. She says that she's worried for her financial livelihood. She said: losing \$300 a month in my family's budget will not be sustainable for my family.

I think that that's an important story to share. She's quite concerned. She's someone who went back, jeopardized a lot to go back to school as a mature student, thinking, you know, that it would help her, that it would further her in her career. Now she's facing multiple burdens, right? She's facing the burden of having to pay for her postsecondary education through her student loans, on which the interest rates are of course going up. She's got children, one who's in university and one who's planning to go to university, and she has just established herself in the public service. She's fresh there, and she's worried about attacks on her pay. She doesn't mention it here, but I'm sure she's also worried about job loss. We know that across a number of ministries there are job losses and that there will be more job losses because we've asked about some of those in estimates.

I don't believe that her story is unique. I think that a lot of folks – as I said, we've heard from teachers, heard from a number of nurses as well who are concerned, right? This idea – and this is what a lot of nurses and teachers tell me: you know, we get attacked, with people saying that we have high pay and that we have a pay cut coming to us.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate your somehow being able to pick me out of all the people that jumped out. I really appreciate your being able to do that. This evening we're speaking about Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, which, quite honestly, I think I'd want to rename to An Act to Make Life More Difficult for Albertans. There are a host of changes in Bill 21 that are very, very problematic, but before I even get to those changes, I just want to talk about how Bill 21 has even been put together.

\*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

You see, Madam Chair, there are members on the government side who were members during the 29th Legislature. I remember that when the former NDP government brought in some legislation around labour, those individuals were very, very upset because they felt that that piece of legislation was an omnibus bill. You know, they wanted to argue, to separate things out, and whatnot, yet when I look at Bill 21 – and, by the way, this is just one piece of legislation that we've seen introduced. There are four omnibus bills before us. I think I've said this before in the Chamber. When you're prepared to stand up to criticize the way somebody is proceeding with something and then when it's your chance to come around and do that and you don't do something different – you do the exact same thing or even worse – that tends to be a little bit, shall we say, disappointing. I certainly saw a lot of those comments, so when I see four pieces of omnibus legislation before this House, it seems a little bit hypocritical on behalf of the government to be rolling these out the way they are.

But the reality is that here we are on Bill 21, a very robust piece of omnibus legislation, changing everything from indexation for AISH recipients to changes to exclude various different people from collective bargaining. We're seeing things like the lifting of tuition freezes, an increase in student loans, allowing the Health minister to place conditions on new practitioner identification numbers, changing how the province uses fine money it collects on behalf of municipalities. We're seeing proposals here around greater oversight of collective bargaining with public-sector employees, including even the length of the agreements: you know, no bad-faith bargaining possibilities there. We're seeing changes with the master agreement to the Alberta Medical Association, changes to regulations about how municipalities pay for policing. We have changes here that are encompassing a very broad spectrum of topics, which, as I mentioned before, is a very problematic position that I think this government has taken given how it's viewed omnibus legislation in the past.

9:00

As a riding in Edmonton that happens to have the three, all the high schools north of the Yellowhead freeway, I get the opportunity to chat with students all the time. They tell me about their aspirations for postsecondary education and all the great things that – you know, when they get through school, they want to be able to come out and essentially change the world, Madam Chair. It's very, very exciting to listen to. It's very, very invigorating right up until they see things like tuition that could be rising at dramatic rates and student loan interest going up. Certainly, through all of those times that I've been able to talk with those students and even the students that are currently attending postsecondary education with those same kinds of dreams and aspirations, I have yet to find one student that has said to me: please, raise my tuition; please, make me pay more on my loans. I stay awake at night thinking about the day when that will come, but, funnily enough, I just have not had a single one of those conversations before. So when I hear suggestions that these are some of the things that Albertans are looking for, I really question whether those conversations really took place because I have yet to find one. Like I said, I have three high schools in my riding. That's a lot of students that are eyeing postsecondary education.

The next piece that I have some significant problems with is the deindexation of benefits for AISH recipients. We've heard comments, of course, including by our Premier, that this will not be onerous on these recipients, and I highly beg to differ. This will be onerous. You know, to somebody who potentially has a very solid six-figure income from one source, also making a very good six-figure income here in the province, sure, maybe to that kind of an

individual \$30 or \$40 isn't onerous whatsoever. They probably could head out and maybe spend that kind of money on lunch. But for an individual that's on AISH, that is a significant amount of money. So when I see things like our Premier, who has argued very, very vigorously in the past, during his time as an MP representing a Calgary riding, against deindexing – I can't remember some of the words that the Premier used at the time, but I can assure you, Madam Chair, that they were not very complimentary around how bad the idea of deindexing is.

Now we have here in Bill 21 deindexing. One minute we're saying something over here; another minute we're saying something over there, kind of like the whole concept of this omnibus legislation. When we look at potentially what this is going to do, we're talking over the coming years into the '22-23 fiscal year. You know, I wonder what AISH recipients in this province could do with an extra \$300 million in their pockets. I suspect that they could probably live lives in greater dignity and respect, something that they deserve because they don't have the very high six-figure secondary income or a high six-figure income here in the province.

I think that the saying is that sometimes a society can be judged on how it treats its most vulnerable, and AISH recipients here in our province are certainly one of our most vulnerable in our society. For us to look at this and say, "Well, this is not onerous; this'll be fine": I think that we really, really need to start checking our moral compasses here, and we really, really need to rethink this decision about deindexing.

Now, when I start looking at some of the labour changes, you know, I've said multiple times in this House that my background is in labour. I very proudly come from labour. I spent the last 26 years fighting for workers to get a fair deal, to be treated with dignity and respect, to be able to work in a safe work environment, to be paid a good wage, to receive decent benefits. Those individuals will then come and build lives here in the province of Alberta. They'll spend it in our local economies, and everybody prospers because of it.

But the reality is that when you look at the labour world, one of the most fundamental things that takes place between and employer and a bargaining unit is fair bargaining. When I see things like the replacement worker ban, when I see things like oversight of the collective bargaining agreement, including even the length of that, that is bargaining in bad, bad faith, Madam Chair.

I think that we are going to see that public-sector workers, as these things potentially are rolled out, will become very, very annoyed with this government. Again, I'm trying to use somewhat good parliamentary language here, but these workers are going to get very, very upset. You know, I think that some of the protests that we've seen out on the front steps of this Legislature in just a short six months – I've always admitted that we certainly had our protests when we were government and on the other side there, but the number and the size that I've seen in just the last six months is potentially something to be very, very concerned about.

I don't know how else to urge the government to rethink this direction. They talk about wanting to create an atmosphere that businesses want to come to, that businesses want to invest in this province, but I think that they're going to have a very, very hard time if all they're seeing is labour unrest. They're going to see a workforce that is very, very unhappy, and I think that might end up giving them pause to come and invest here.

9:10

You know, during the election we saw that province where we're going to grow jobs, we're going to grow the economy, but we're not going to do it by treating our most vulnerable with disrespect,



by cutting services that Albertans rely on and creating a toxic work environment that will discourage that investment and that job creation from coming here to Alberta.

We need to really rethink our position on this and how we're moving forward. Again, we're trying to say one thing over here, but our actions are doing something totally counterproductive. I've probably mentioned this during some other debates in this House, where we seem to be stuck, where we've got this narrative, you know, of a direction that we're going to go to, which I suppose in theory sounds plausible, but we're making decisions, we're heading in directions that are counterproductive to that.

A simple, quick example of that in Bill 20 is around the tax credit. Again, we want to create jobs, but we're driving companies out. We're stopping them from expanding. So there's this narrative that's beginning to form very, very clearly, and I think it's going to hurt Alberta in the long run if we want to try to create jobs to grow the economy. Labour peace is one of the components that businesses will look at when they're thinking about investing in this province. They want to know the workforce is looked after, yet we're doing things like deindexing our AISH recipients. It just sends the wrong signals, Madam Chair.

When I'm also looking at things around how municipalities will pay for policing, I've heard some very, very significant concerns from municipal leaders around this topic and how that could affect the safeties that we enjoy within our communities. Absolutely, there is always room to do better, to provide better service, to make sure that our citizens are safe at all times. It's not something where you make one simple move, you wash your hands, and you say: look what I did; everything is fixed. It's constantly evolving. But if we don't give our municipalities the ability to fund those decisions, that will have a negative impact on our local communities, which then will also have an impact on businesses that are looking to invest here in the province, which will affect our ability to grow the economy and create jobs. Again, yet another example of how we've said we want to do one thing, but the decisions we're making are completely counterproductive to that.

Changes to fines and how they're collected: I don't remember over the last four years hearing from city councillors that that was something that needs to be addressed and changed. So I kind of wonder where we ended up, I guess, getting that impression that that was the type of change we need to make.

Then ending the rate cap on electricity: we've certainly seen other jurisdictions. What was that line? I think, you know, everything is bigger in Texas. Yeah, including their electricity bills and the number of swings that they get. Here we have the government that's talking about, "Well, we have the backs of Albertans; we're going to create stability for them," yet we're duplicating a jurisdiction that does not have that. So we're again in that position of conflicting ways of doing things. We very, very clearly have seen down in those areas where they have brownouts. They have potential blackouts. I bet if we started asking Albertans if that was something that they want to have, we probably would not find a willingness to have that kind of thing.

In regard to Bill 21, I just simply cannot support this legislation, this piece of omnibus legislation that was highly, highly criticized by serving members that sit in here today from the 29th Legislature. It is, as I said, An Act to Make Life More Difficult for Albertans. If we are seriously going to say that we're trying to make life better for them, that we have their backs, that we're going to create jobs, and that we're going to grow the economy, this bill certainly is making decisions that are completely counterproductive to that. I would urge all the members in this House to vote against this legislation. Let's get to work on actually trying to create jobs instead of losing over 27,000 at this point. Let's actually work

towards growing the economy instead of stalling it out. Let's get away from that narrative that we can be a better society if we treat our most vulnerable a lot better, because this bill certainly won't do that.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words here in committee in regard to Bill 21. Listening to quite a number of members speaking about how difficult it is to, perhaps, look at this bill in its totality – it is a classic definition of an omnibus bill – and the scope by which it moves around the province, both figuratively and literally, making fundamental changes to so many important services and responsibilities that we have here in this Chamber and here as a provincial Legislature, it becomes painfully obvious, I think, that what needs to be done is to look for separation between some of these ideas that are really quite disparate as well. Just listening to the Member for Edmonton-Decore talk about the range of what Bill 21 tries to accomplish: it has a regulated rate option, ending the regulated rate option for electricity, and then it talks about suspending indexation for AISH. It talks about the agreements with the Alberta Medical Association and then suddenly jumps around to municipalities and municipal taxes. For legislators to try to get your head around these is not easy, and for Albertans and the public I think it's definitely confusing. The use of this sort of omnibus bill, I think, is a poor choice. I think that if it's not deliberately trying to confuse the issue, then certainly it does make it a whole lot more complicated.

Madam Chair, as I had to pass forward to you some time ago, I just want to make a request that when we deal with Bill 21, the votes be separated so that we could vote on them separately as follows. Each of these is a separate section, then: section 1 as a separate unit, sections 2 and 17 as a separate unit, sections 3 and 5 as a separate unit, section 4 as a separate unit, sections 6 and 10 as a separate unit, sections 7 and 8 as a separate unit, section 9 as a separate unit, section 11 as a separate unit, sections 12 and 18 as a separate unit, section 13 as a separate unit, section 14 as a separate unit, and sections 15 and 16 as a separate unit. So I am seeing 12 delineations here, taking Bill 21 into its component parts for the purposes of voting. I have submitted that to the table and to you, Madam Chair, and I appreciate the opportunity to do so.

Thank you.

9:20

**The Chair:** Hon. member, thank you for requesting to separate the votes on Bill 21 in the sections as mentioned. For clarity's sake I am pleased to grant the request. I will also add that there is a schedule remaining for the sections that you didn't mention, that we'll vote on after the sections, and the individual sections blocked together will be numerical, starting from A to K.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. That works for me. Can I make further comments on it?

**The Chair:** Yeah. Please proceed. You still have 15 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Sure. Again, I think that this is going to provide some clarity both for this Chamber and for members of the public. We know that there are literally, let's say, thousands of students that are dealing with the aspects of Bill 21 in regard to tuition and student loans. We saw hundreds of young students – well, actually,

students of all ages – on the steps of the Legislature here today at lunch talking about the elements of Bill 21 that will definitely affect their lives both financially and in terms of the quality of their education. This lifting of the tuition cap will result, from the government's own budget, that we debated in estimates last week or the week before, in a 21 per cent increase to tuition.

I know that already tuition is not cheap, and people know that, too, so they make plans for themselves and their families. Sometimes you do it for many years. I know that in my own family we saved for many years with an expectation that postsecondary was going to be expensive but not out of range if we could plan ahead. Now suddenly, if you change the rules midway and within the next three years have a 21 per cent increase to that premium to go to a trades college or go to NAIT or SAIT or, you know, Olds College – right? – Lethbridge, you are inevitably creating a barrier, a ceiling so that some students will simply not be able to go, even if they and their family had been planning already and saving to make that switch. You know, in adult education it even becomes more, I think, sensitive because, of course, for older people going back to postsecondary training – let's say that they're going to go to a trades college and learn pipefitting or electricity or get an arts degree or go to law school – the expense of postsecondary education is a very, very important decision to work through.

If you start increasing prices – certainly, it's reasonable that tuition can change and go up over time. If you tie it or you pair it to the consumer price index for expenses in the province of Alberta, then, you know, I don't think that's unreasonable to have tuition changing to meet the inflationary pressures that might be had here in the province of Alberta. But having 7 per cent a year for three years, 21 per cent: I mean, that far exceeds any projection around how inflation is growing and other factors like that. I believe that, you know, while we do need to fund and make sure we're always looking for efficiency in all aspects of what the government funds and with postsecondary especially, I can't help but notice and I think the hundreds of people on the steps today and the tens of thousands of students notice that this government seemed to single out postsecondary education particularly for cuts and fee increases that far exceed either inflationary pressures or any other measurements that you could possibly bring forward to our postsecondary institutions.

You know, having the tuition go up that, like I said before, one, we will exclude many people from making a choice to go to postsecondary education. Two, we will be putting the burden of debt onto students in an inordinate and unfair sort of manner as well.

So there you are. You show up, and you pay that extra 21 per cent or so forth, Madam Chair, and then you're hit at the end with an increase to the interest rates of that student loan, that you incurred to get that degree or to get that trade training or what have you, at the end. I mean, we already know that student debt is a looming problem that excludes many people from making choices around taking postsecondary education but also is a burden of debt that people carry around with them for many, many years.

Perhaps I'm learning quickly as the Official Opposition critic for postsecondary education that, you know, student debt is real, it's tangible, and it is making life more difficult for young people. An increase by 1 per cent, let's say, on a \$30,000 student loan over time is a couple of thousand dollars more, and often people are actually incurring more than a \$30,000 student loan debt. I'm learning very quickly here now. I was with some students a couple of days ago that told me that they had more like either \$70,000 and \$125,000, respectively, for their student debt and had just finished their bachelors' degrees, right? They're looking at \$3,000, \$4,000,

\$5,000 more in interest payments because of this choice that this government made in this Bill 21.

Again, you know, it's a way by which for us to at least shine a light on each of these individual elements, each of these individual elements in Bill 21 that have a profound effect on Alberta families. I'm glad that you did grant us the opportunity to have separate voting avenues here with this omnibus bill.

You know, another one that I just was thinking about, and I think the hon. member on this side will probably shine a greater light on it, is in regard to this electricity rate, right? We know that the ending of the regulated option rate cap for electricity really puts us back to the bad old days in regard to having a reliable source of power and a reliable price for that power as well. Here in the province of Alberta it wasn't very long ago where we had that market rate that caused chaos, both chaos through speculators just playing the futures game on electricity and jacking up the price of electricity but also not encouraging capacity to be built into the market as well.

Here we are in this one other aspect of Bill 21, ending the regulated rate option for electricity, you know, and exposing both families and commercial electricity users to the vagaries of a market system that is proven to – and with very expensive electricity. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore said, in Texas they've suffered through this experiment and came back to look to a regulated rate because people were exposed to speculation, unfair speculation, on the rates for electricity.

Those are just two examples, Madam Chair, of things that we need to examine more closely, more specifically. I'm glad that you gave us leave to divide this into 12 different voting sections as well as the overall piece that needs to be voted.

I will cede the floor to others that, hopefully, will shine more light and more specific light on how we might be able to make each of these subject areas start working for Albertans rather than the punitive measures that Bill 21 represents at this time.

Thank you.

9:30

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 21, which really is the Making Life Less Affordable Act. It's my pleasure today to be able speak about something that I think is going to be so important for this House, and I'm hoping that every single member of this House will give support because we know that with the Americanization of the energy market and the elimination of the regulated rate cap, families are going to pay more for electricity. It's going to cost more, it's going to be less stable, and it's going to be a really bad system that doesn't allow us to protect the best interests of Albertans. Instead, we'll be giving money away, as the government has already done with their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout to the wealthiest corporations.

I'm hoping we can make a change together that's going to make this bill better, so with your indulgence, Madam Chair, I have an amendment to present. I'll wait for it to be distributed to the table.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-South, please proceed.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My amendment is that I move that the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended in subsection (2) by striking out "November 30, 2019" and substituting "December 31, 2019" and in subsection (4) by striking out "November 30, 2019" and substituting "December 31, 2019."

You know, Madam Chair, I think this is a very simple amendment. What it does is that it delays the removal of the rate cap on the regulated rate option here in Alberta for the electricity system. I think it's very important that we think very carefully about this because this amendment ensures that the rate cap will continue until the end of the year.

The reason I'm trying to bring this forward is because what this bill does is that it will potentially allow electricity companies and energy companies to go back and, at the end of December, raise and back charge for electricity to ratepayers. So electricity payers at the end of the year, during Christmas, during the holidays, when they're trying to spend time with their families, will actually end up paying more for power. In fact, the way the bill is currently worded, if we don't do this, they could actually end up paying more for a bill they've already paid, right? The way the existing bill is, without this amendment, is that a retroactive charge would have to be adjusted on their next bill. So for power they've already paid, they could end up paying twice because this bill eliminates the rate cap before Christmas.

What I'm saying, Madam Chair, is that I don't think that's fair. I think we should give the stability at least through the holidays so people can spend time with their families without worrying that this Americanization, this dangerous, risky ideological experiment in electricity won't hurt their family at least to the end of this year, at least through Christmas.

We know that without the rate cap families can pay significantly more for electricity. We've seen that. I know that my colleague from Edmonton-Decore spoke about how in many of these American systems like in Texas, where this exists, it's a failed experiment. Electricity costs more, and it's simply something that does not work and something that is not in the interests of making the electricity market work for consumers.

We want consumers to at least get through this year. I think it's important if the government is insistent on bringing in this risky American ideological system, making profitable corporations more profitable, giving \$4.7 billion away for no new jobs and sending jobs to the United States, in fact, Madam Chair. If that's what the government is interested in, at least let's protect families through Christmas. At least let's protect families and not back charge them, retroactively charge them more money for electricity they've already paid for. At least let's just wait until the new year because then families can start to assess their situation again next year and families will have that predictability to be able to assess their situation next year.

I think it's a very fair amendment, Madam Chair. I think it's very fair that we're going to be able to look at the market again and families will be able to assess how their financial situation will be in the new year. I think that's something that's very important. I think it's important that we can give that stability to families because we know that by eliminating the rate cap, power bills will go up. We've seen this before.

We saw this risky Americanization of the power system when it was first introduced over a decade ago. We saw the rolling blackouts. We saw the price spikes. We continue to see how that can affect families and cost them more. I'm asking for the government to show some heart. I'm asking for them to show enough heart to let families get through Christmas and the holiday season, to let them get into the new year and then make those assessments on how this is going to affect their families. It's not a significant change, Madam Chair. It's really administrative. It changes two dates in the entire bill. I'm not asking for the world. I hope that the minister will be able to support this, and I hope that the government caucus will be able to support this because I'm asking that we allow families just those four extra weeks, allow

them to have that stability, allow them to say: we won't get hit with more right as we're trying to buy the presents to put under the tree this year, right as we're trying to make sure that we have enough to squirrel away and make sure that our kids can have the best Christmas they can.

Life is getting more expensive under this government. They're raising personal income taxes. They're giving money away to corporations, \$4.7 billion to corporations, in fact. They're making electricity more expensive. They're making tuition more expensive. They're making school fees more expensive. They're making busing more expensive. All of these things are getting more expensive for families, Madam Chair. I'm asking today that we mitigate some of that. If we can make their electricity rates stay stable at least past Christmas into the new year, past the holidays into the new year, that would be something that I think would show compassion, would show heart, would show that we really do care and that we are here to try and do good things. It's not something that's going to significantly alter this bill. Again, it's two lines, not even two full lines. It's two dates. It's one month.

It's enough that we'd be able to look at it and say: hey, maybe you can go get that new toy. Last year I know it was Hatchimals, and I know that there were some people paying hundreds of dollars for these Hatchimals. Perhaps this won't make the difference for that, but what will make the difference is that families will be able to go out and make those decisions themselves. They will be able to know what their bills will be. They will be able to have that stability. They will be able to go out and say: "We know that we have these things to assess in the new year. We will be able to get through at least one more Christmas. We will get through at least one more holiday season." The family can get together and have those discussions, and they will be able to have that stability. That's something that is compassionate. I think it's something that's fair, and it's something that I'm hoping all members will be able to support. It would be unreasonable to say that we're going to give \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations and then take money away from families over the Christmas holidays. That's what I think is unreasonable, Madam Chair.

We're telling families that their rates are going to go up, that we're not going to protect them from rate hikes right in the holiday season, right when people are supposed to be happy spending time with their families and enjoying their holidays. What we're going to do with the removal of the rate cap is go in and make life more expensive. We've already raised tuition. We've already raised school fees. We've already made class sizes larger. We've raised personal income taxes. We've done all these things that make life more expensive.

But today we can make a change right now that at least sees families through to the new year, at least sees that they can buy that Hatchimal – I know it's not going to be Hatchimals again, Madam Chair, but they can buy whatever they need to buy this holiday – and that Santa really will come. This amendment in some cases, I believe, will actually save Christmas, basically. We will be able to have Santa show up again for some of these families. That's the difference we're talking about. In some cases for some families it could be as little as \$10, \$20, \$30, or it could be as much as a couple of hundred dollars. I think the government might be scoffing a bit, but for some families that \$30 is the difference for their holiday. That will be the difference between whether they can buy the presents or not. That will be the difference between whether they can get that ham for dinner or not.

Madam Chair, I think that is what we are here to do. We are here to try and make life better. We are here to try and be compassionate and have a soul. I'm hoping we're able to go and save Christmas by making sure that families can have a stable electricity rate into the

new year. Again, I'm not asking for the world. I'm not asking for us to eliminate this change. The government has made it very clear that they will be moving forward with these changes, and I've accepted that.

9:40

What I'm asking is: instead, can we please let families evaluate this in the new year? Can we please give them that extra 31 days? Because if they can evaluate in the new year, then that's a decision that they'll be able to make throughout the rest of the year and squirrel that 30 bucks away for Christmas next year. But this year we can still save Christmas. We can still make sure Santa Claus shows up for every single family. We can still make sure that kids aren't getting coal instead of whatever the greatest toy will be, Madam Chair.

Again, I think that for some families, whether it's \$10, \$20, \$30, \$100, or \$200, Madam Chair, it's going to make a big difference. It's something that will make a significant difference for these families. We know that this is important because we've had families telling us that the regulated rate option, if the cap is removed, is a scary thing. We've seen it in other jurisdictions. We've seen it in Texas. We've seen it everywhere, basically, that the energy-only market doesn't work.

We've seen right here in Alberta that it doesn't work. Those rolling blackouts – again, I've spoken about that on this bill before. I remember as a child that we'd have to light candles because we wouldn't have the power. The rolling blackouts would come because the energy rate spikes weren't sustainable, because the system was designed to fail. It was designed to make profitable corporations more profitable. It was designed just like the \$4.7 billion corporate no-jobs handout, to make profitable corporations wealthier instead of trying to work for families, instead of trying to provide stability for families, instead of trying to provide quality services for families.

Madam Chair, I'm worried that that's what eliminating the rate cap will do, actually. I really do believe that eliminating the rate cap will make life more expensive, that it will make life less sustainable, and that it will make life more unstable for families. We can at least stave that off till after the holidays. We can at least stave that off till after Christmas. We can at least stave that off until the new year. I think that's a very reasonable ask. I think it's something that's very reasonable because, again, it's only two dates in this entire bill, right? It's only two small dates. It's not even a significant change.

Sometimes we come in here, Madam Chair – I know that government members, when they were in the opposition, did this to us, and I know that we've done this as opposition. Sometimes you make changes like five years or 10 years or months and months and months. That's not what we're asking for. We're asking to save Christmas. We're asking for one month to make this change. I think that's a very reasonable ask. I think that families will appreciate it. I think that all of our constituents will appreciate it and will know that they can have stability at least into the new year. Families will be able to understand what their bills will look like at least for another month and that we aren't going to be going back and retroactively pulling money out of their pockets right after their Christmas bills come due. I think that no family would appreciate that, whether they bought the most expensive toy or not this year. No family will appreciate, as their bills are coming due at the end of next month, that they'll have to pay more, that they have no stability, that they don't know what their rates are going to be. They don't know whether the power bill is going to be \$100 or \$500, Madam Chair. I think that's very unreasonable.

I think what we need to do is have compassion. We need to understand that for so many families in every single one of our

ridings this could make the difference between whether they're going to have a stressful Christmas, frankly, a Christmas that – I mean, sometimes, you know, we'll joke that meeting with the family is stressful no matter what it is, but really in this case this is the difference for some families of whether they're going to be able to have that meeting, whether they're going to be able to have that Christmas dinner, whether those parents are going to be giving gifts to their children on behalf of Santa Claus, of course. For all the kids listening at home, Santa Claus definitely needs us to save your Christmas, Madam Chair.

Certainly, I think we want to make sure that we can have a real impact on families when we bring bills like this forward. We want to be able to have a real impact on our communities when moving this forward, and it's something that's very clear. We have that ability today. We have the ability today to bring stability to families at least until 2020. I'm not saying that this needs to be a five-year amendment or a 10-year amendment or 20-year amendment, as we've seen when they're stunts, right? When this type of amendment, Madam Chair, is a stunt, then it's a 75-year amendment with the date changes.

That's not what happened today. What happened is that we want one month. We want to be able to say to families that we fought, we changed, and we decided that you deserve to have stability. You deserve to know what your bill will be at the end of the month. You deserve to understand what your bill will look like. We know that energy usage is going to go up over the Christmas holidays, as is normal, Madam Chair. We know that that type of change happens with the seasons. It's wintertime here in Alberta, and as we know, it gets cold in wintertime, so energy usage goes up.

But what we want to be with that energy usage is that at least the families will know what they're expecting to pay, that at least families can then create a budget. If we bring this change in and we can pass this change, then those families, knowing now that they have stability until the end of the year, will be able to build their entire holiday budget, right? They'll be able to build and understand. If they've got one child or two children or five children, whatever it is, Madam Chair, they'll be able to know exactly how much they can budget for those families, and they'll be able to understand, for those families, exactly what that means for their household. That's the reasonable thing, right? That's the thing that makes the most sense.

We know that this Christmas season is going to be a tough one because this government is giving \$4.7 billion away to wealthy corporations while raising every single fee, whether it's your car registration or registering an RV or whether it's tuition or personal income taxes. If you're a family on AISH, then you don't get the indexing any more. Whatever it is, we know that this government is basically making life more expensive for every single family. But can we at least try to make sure that when they're heating their homes and using electricity this year, they're going to know what they're paying so that we can have a holiday season where they don't have to worry about that, Madam Chair, where they don't have to worry about what that bill is going to look like at the end of December, where they don't have to worry about how they're going to budget and afford those toys?

That's the type of decision, those are the type of people that we affect when we make change in this House, right? When we make laws and bills and debate these things in this House, we should all remember that we're talking about real people. We're talking about families. We're talking about families with children. We're talking about people who really do have to make these types of decisions. I know, Madam Chair, families like mine. When I was younger, my family was the one that had to make decisions like this, right? We didn't have all the flashiest toys when I was

younger, but it's families like mine that'll benefit the most from this because when we talk about that stability, when we talk about making that \$30 difference, if that's what this works out to – 6.8 cents is the cap right now, or \$68. When we're talking about if it's 30 bucks or if it's 50 bucks, whatever it is, that's a Christmas toy for two kids right there. That's the type of difference we're talking about. It's families that live in every single one of our ridings that will see this difference.

Let's get them through the holidays. Let's make sure they can have a fun holiday that their kids will remember for the rest of their lives. Let's make sure we can have an environment that is friendly. Let's make sure we can have an environment that encourages this and allows those families to understand what the impacts will be because you can't bring it back, right? If you ruin one Christmas, that kid is going to remember it forever. If you give \$4.7 billion away to wealthy corporations, raise their school fees, make busing more expensive, make tuition more expensive, make their personal income taxes more expensive, make their electricity more expensive, all of these things more expensive and then decide that we're going to go back in and take money away from you at the end of the holiday season, at the end of the Christmas season, that's what's a little bit heartless, Madam Chair. That's what's kind of heartless.

We can do this. We can make this change. We can make it better. We can stop some of this bleeding. We don't have to go to every single family and take money out of their pockets. That's not what we have to do today. We have the opportunity to make it better right here, right now. This amendment, Madam Chair, is a minor amendment. It changes the date by one month. It allows these families to know for the next month what their power bill can be expected to be. It allows them to know a maximum limit on the power bill. That's something that families will be able to work with. That's something that's very reasonable.

I think it's something that – there are a number of my colleagues, for example, who are social workers, and they'll have experienced families that this will make a huge difference for. This would make a massive difference in their lives because perhaps they do have two or three kids, and knowing how much they can spend and afford to spend over this holiday season, whether it's on, "Should they should get the extra-large fancy maple-glazed ham?" or whether it's on, "Should they get the newest toy?" – whatever it is, these are the families that need to know these things because they need to make those types of decisions. Those are the decisions that families need to make before the bills come due, right? If you go in after and make life more expensive after the invoices have already been issued, then it doesn't work because now they're in trouble. That's where we run into trouble.

9:50

Once again, I think we have an opportunity here to save Christmas. I think we have an opportunity here to make the holidays okay for families. I think we have an opportunity here not to go in and steal from every single family, to show some compassion, to have a heart, to go in and make life more affordable, to go in and actually tell these families that we care about them. I think that's what we can all stand up here to do, and I hope we can all agree on this. I hope the government understands that this is very detrimental to families. I hope they understand that by delaying it by only one month, we can make Christmas okay again. These families will be able to budget properly, they'll be able to have the stability that they need, and they'll be able to understand all those types of issues.

I'm looking forward to hearing from government members. I hope they'll be able to enlighten me, and I hope they'll be able to support me, because a minor change like this: we have the

opportunity right now to make sure these holidays are good memories for generations to last.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, Hatchimals were a thing, like, two years ago, not last year.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just respond to that proposed amendment with some information. For electricity customers who choose to stay on the regulated rate option, the elimination of the 6.8-cent rate cap is expected to increase the average residential electricity bill by about \$7 in the month of December – about \$7 – for each residential bill. That's all. The cap itself was put into place to hide the volatility created by the previous government's proposed move to a capacity market from the energy-only market. That's why we've removed the rate cap, because we're sticking with the energy-only market.

One last short comment. For those customers who are concerned with the \$7 increase in the month of December by the elimination of the rate cap, there are options to the RRO, and you can choose from more than 30 competitive retailers that offer a fixed-rate contract of less than 6.8 cents.

Again, the cost per electricity bill for the month of December is approximately \$7. For that reason, Madam Chair, we will not be supporting the proposed amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the Energy minister getting up and revealing her true intentions for the electricity system with her response to this amendment and also revealing, of course, the continued lack of compassion that we see from this government: "Oh, it's only \$7 this month. Oh, AISH clients are only going to get their benefits reduced by \$30 this month. That's not onerous. Oh, seniors are having their underage dependants kicked off their drug plans. I'm sure they'll be able to afford to pick up the tab." You know, this government is nickel and diming Albertans at every turn. They're told that these costs are small and that any reasonable person should be able to afford them, and they can't.

Yet when we point out, of course, the excessive expenses that the Premier's office is making, flying their friends around for pancake parties, sending the principal secretary to sip champagne with Conservative supporters in London, England, not London, Ontario, just so that we're clear as to which London we're talking about, well, that's perfectly reasonable – in fact, we should have sympathy for this person because he's reduced his salary so greatly, to the lowly amount of \$200,000 a year – and, oh, how wonderful it is that the people of Alberta have this master of the universe who's practically donating his time to work on behalf of the people of Alberta.

You know, it's interesting, with the Energy minister's remarks about the \$7 hit that regular Albertans are going to be faced with continuing this trend of a lack of compassion for the average person trying to make ends meet given this economic climate.

Furthermore, in my remarks and in my colleagues' remarks around moving from the capacity market back to the generation-only market, we had highlighted this tendency, the intent to push people onto these long-term contracts which, study after study has shown, have cost electricity payers more in the long run than staying on the regulated rate option. The Energy minister is

revealing the government's true intent, to continue to soak utility ratepayers by trying to sell them long-term contracts that aren't to their financial benefit. So here we go again. This government is working on behalf of its wealthy donors, the elite owners of the utility companies who stand to make huge profits from these long-term contracts, and doing nothing to protect the average Albertan from seeing a spike in their electricity increases this month and electricity increases going forward.

For those reasons, Madam Chair, I intend to support this amendment, and I intend to let every Albertan know that the Minister of Energy and all of her caucus colleagues display a shocking lack of compassion for the average Albertan and are, you know, working in the interests of the billionaires who run the electricity system in this province and are not interested in protecting average Albertans from getting soaked.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to this amendment that was proposed by my colleague. I think it's reasonable to ask for a one-month extension, 31 days, to allow people an opportunity to perhaps reassess some of their bills, to look at some of the things that they might need to cut in the future.

I think that the timing of this is quite fitting, Madam Chair. November is Financial Literacy Month, and I know that out of my office we've been hearing from not only constituents but from people from all over the province who are afraid. They're expressing fear. They're expressing concern when they've seen the release of the budget and how it's going to impact their family, and seeing that one of the many pieces of this omnibus bill is to eliminate the regulated rate cap, people are scared. They know that this is a bill that they have to pay, and when there's some unpredictability in it, it causes fear. Being that it's Financial Literacy Month, we're encouraging people to look out at the resources that are available to them to help them plan for their budget when everything is going up: their cost of insurance is going up, the cost of registering a vehicle is going up, tuition for students is going up.

Unfortunately, some of the things that aren't going up are the funding that several people with fixed income rely on: those on AISH, those receiving employment income supports benefits.

As my colleague had mentioned, there are social workers on this side of the House and on the other side of the House who have worked closely with families who have a very, very limited income, Madam Chair, and when we're talking about proposing a one-month extension, that seems totally reasonable. We know that the government is going to push this through – we've seen it time and time again – regardless of the impact on the people of this province. I think that asking for a minimal extension, to December 31, 2019, is something that is absolutely reasonable and should be supported by every member in this House. We know it's going to go through, so proposing this extension, I think, is quite fair. We talked about Christmas and that happening in the month of December and just the general holidays. Many families that don't celebrate Christmas celebrate the holiday season: they're spending time with family, they're going to social events. Having an increase in energy and having a decrease in their income might mean that they're not able to do some of those activities.

10:00

I heard people talking about Christmas gifts. I know many families that I've worked with over the years, Madam Chair, that

can't afford Christmas gifts. The government doesn't seem to be understanding that there are families out there that are struggling. They access services that are available in this province, to which so many Albertans that can give do, charities like Santas Anonymous, where families will put forward their children's age and their gender and ask for a gift because they can't afford it. It's humiliating to have to say, "I need this help," and we're forcing families, more and more of them, into this situation, families that can't afford a Christmas dinner, that are relying on the food bank. I'm not sure if members opposite have worked with families or have had to go to a food bank themselves, but it's not something that people are super excited to talk about.

When families are coming to my office and they're in tears about the impacts of this budget, it's something that I take very, very seriously, and it's something that I believe as legislators we all need to take seriously. I can't imagine looking at a family and saying: "You know, we're sorry, but everything is just going up. The cost of living in general is going up. We're not going to provide you any sort of indexing for your AISH or for your employment and income support benefits. If you're a teenager who is a mom who is raising a family and you're still in school, at your job you're no longer being paid minimum wage." These are just some of the things that this government has done and inflicted on families all across the province, and they're afraid, Madam Chair.

I think that offering a simple one-month extension is not too much to ask. We've offered many opportunities for the government to listen to Albertans and to hear their struggles and to hear their fears and to hear the actual, real-life impacts that these decisions are having. Knowing that there are families that have two incomes that are struggling to be able to pay for daycare – they can't afford daycare. They might not be able to afford two vehicles anymore. They might have to give up one vehicle because they can't afford the increase to the insurance and they can't afford the increase to register their vehicle again.

This is a province that has so much to offer. I mean, when we were in government, we reduced child poverty. Things like this in this omnibus bill I don't feel are working anywhere near reducing child poverty. It's looking at increasing poverty across this province. And raising rates for energy, I think, is one more step that hits every single Albertan in the province. It's a way that their rates are going to increase. Asking for a one-month extension, I think, is totally reasonable. We're saying: please just allow one more month to give them some time.

Like I mentioned, I'm encouraging constituents, when they're struggling with financial means and just trying to understand how they can budget – they might have had a job loss; they might be looking at an increase of their benefits. Financial literacy is something that a lot of people haven't learned. It wasn't something that was taught in school, and some families weren't able to pass that on, and they just continue to struggle month to month, paycheque to paycheque, literally deciding between paying a power bill or getting groceries. And when you have a child who is telling you that they are hungry, I can tell you what that parent is going to choose. They're going to choose to feed their child. It might not even be something as exciting as a Christmas gift that they're giving up.

These are real-life impacts that are happening right now across the province, and people are really worried about what tomorrow brings for them. Even the fear of hearing about all of these cuts in jobs: it's terrifying. People don't know if they're going to have a job tomorrow. People are afraid of the possibility of not having work.

Then when you look at options about them returning to the workforce, they might have to go back to school, postsecondary, to

diversify, to look at something else because their job is no longer an option. And when we're looking at increasing student loan rates by 1 per cent and getting rid of the cap on tuitions, these are decisions that are going to prevent people from going on to better their education to better provide for their families. It's not just young people that are accessing postsecondary; it's adults that are forced into a workforce that they're no longer eligible for.

When we talk about this small change, Madam Chair, I think it's one hundred per cent reasonable to ask for the extension to December 31 as opposed to November 30, 2019. Let's give families one more month to maybe look at their budget and to adjust some of their spending and prepare for the incoming energy increases that they're going to see on their monthly bills. It's something that's scary. When we think about why we're in this position right now, it's because the government gave a \$4.7 billion giveaway at the cost of increasing so much to Albertans, and it's just not fair. I think we owe Albertans some stability, at least through Christmas. I know this budget is very unsettling and causing serious strain in families and conversations around kitchen tables, water coolers, and if we can give one month to allow for an extension, I think that's something that's absolutely reasonable. I would hope that every member in this House can go back and say: yeah, I supported this.

We know it's going to go through, Madam Chair. We've seen it time and time again despite the government hearing heartbreaking stories from Albertans, that our side of the House has shared so openly. We have people flooding our offices with phone calls, with e-mails, reaching out on social media, coming into our offices, coming here to the Legislature to be heard, to plead with the government to not make these drastic cuts that they're making. It's falling on deaf ears, and I think a simple proposal that isn't going to stop it – we know that that's not going to happen – but extend it to December 31, like the hon. member is proposing, is something that we should all be able to at least vote on. We're asking people to pay more in a time when everything is going up, when costs are going up, and that's something that's not being taken into account.

You know, the minister had mentioned that it's only \$7. Well, that, to me, says that they're just out of tune with what some families are actually dealing with. It's not just \$7. It's impacts to child care, to their transportation. All of these things, Madam Chair, are impacting families. It's a huge impact. Knowing that we have an opportunity today to vote on a simple extension, one month – that's all we're asking, one month – to allow families to perhaps sit down and look at their budget, that's already so strained from so many expenses going up: I think that is something that's reasonable. Asking for a little bit of stability through the holidays is completely reasonable. Giving them a little bit more time to look at this, especially during Financial Literacy Month, putting it on families to help them come up with a better budget that can absorb some of these damaging decisions that the government is making I don't think is unreasonable.

When we look at the overall impact of this, it might not seem that significant to have just one month, but to many, many families across this province it's going to make a huge difference, especially when we're looking at the retroactive charge and the increased costs over December that many families deal with. They're rebudgeting for January for tuitions. They're looking at many things that are increasing, personal income tax. All of these things families are already talking about, and giving them 31 extra days, I think, could be a great benefit.

**10:10**

I just know that there are so many families that I've worked with over the years that truly struggle, and knowing the impacts on them,

knowing the single mom who is struggling, who's working now for less than minimum wage, going to high school, raising her child on her own, knowing the impact of this is heartbreaking. I was in that situation myself, Madam Chair, as a young mom going to school, working, trying to raise a child, and trying to budget and balance. It's hard. And then seeing that the cost of child care is going up: it's just really heartbreaking.

I know that this is a simple amendment that should be able to be supported by all members of the House. It's only 31 days. I think it's something that's reasonable, and it would show good measure on the side of government to support this.

With that, I'd like to conclude my comments. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, it's my pleasure to rise and also speak in support of this amendment to Bill 21. Continuing to have a regulated rate cap on until the end of this year, I think, makes a lot of sense. It is distressing because, of course, taking this off means that the consumers are vulnerable to price spikes. You know, people who are on fixed income: it makes it very difficult for them. Certainly, this bill also talks a lot about not indexing AISH or the Alberta seniors' benefit, for example, so these are other things that are sort of like a double whammy when you're not supporting people to have their cost-of-living increase.

It certainly strikes me as odd, Madam Chair, that the members of the government currently, while they were in opposition, spoke very highly of indexing. You know, I did some research and looked back in *Hansard* about how important – when we brought forward, in the fall of 2018, Bill 26, it was the indexing of AISH and the seniors' benefit, and many, many, many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle spoke very positively on that.

Actually, here's a quote from the Member for Taber-Warner. He says:

People with disabilities are those people who we need to help. The AISH program is specifically designed in order to be able to help them . . . I actually am very grateful for a lot of the work that the current NDP government has done for that part of our society, something that I think is very important to Albertans and to the people who need it.

So he spoke very positively in that regard.

This is from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

This indexing to CPI will greatly benefit all support recipients who have been waiting for years for an adjusted amount that reflects today's cost-of-living increases. We've heard, devastatingly, from AISH advocates that some cannot even afford basic necessities. This is absolutely unacceptable. The supports are in place in order to ensure that this is never the case for anyone. The fact that this is still happening is unacceptable and must be addressed. Every Albertan, as a base, should be confident in their ability to afford personal hygiene products and other necessities.

Here are two members from the current government that, while they were in opposition, spoke very passionately, very positively, congratulated our government at that time. We had indexed AISH and, of course, the Alberta seniors' benefit. But it seems like something has shifted. All of a sudden there's a new view, and I'm concerned that regular Albertans, vulnerable Albertans aren't being supported.

So I just really would ask the members to look at, you know, the quite significant difference from what they professed not very long ago and what they're saying now. I would identify that there's a clear incongruence, and I wonder why that is. I'd be happy to listen to any member sort of try to explain that because it does seem to

lack integrity, what was shared then and what's being shared now. Certainly, that's a very important quality in a provincial politician.

With that, Madam Chair, I will sit down.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, shall I call the question?

**Mrs. Savage:** Madam Chair, I move that on the amendment, yes, we call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We are now back on the main bill in Committee of the Whole. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

**Mrs. Savage:** Madam Chair, I now move that we rise and report progress on Bill 21.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn until tomorrow, November 19, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:17 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 19, 2019

Day 43

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 19, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it was my absolute pleasure this morning to welcome the consul general of France in Vancouver. Bienvenue. Welcome. Thank you for coming. Consul General Mr. Philippe Sutter, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon is a very familiar face, a friendly and lovely face at that, the former Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, Ms Genia Leskiw. Welcome back.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have two school groups in the galleries today. First, from Drayton Valley-Devon welcome grade 6 students from Calmar elementary, and, second, from the constituency of Edmonton-Manning welcome some more grade 6 students from Edmonton Christian northeast school. Thank you for joining us.

Hon. members, in the gallery this afternoon a guest of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood from Skipping Stone in Calgary, Anna Murphy.

Also in the galleries are guests of the Minister of Service Alberta. Welcome those from the AREA's government relations committee, Chair Jennifer Gilbert, Brad Mitchell, Bill MacDougall, and over 40 realtors from across Alberta today.

Last but certainly not least, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has five Edmonton-Glenora constituents that are joining us here in the gallery.

All please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### Holodomor Memorial Day

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we mark 86 years since the Ukrainian genocide known as Holodomor, a word made up of two brutal realities: "holod," meaning hunger, and "moryty," meaning a slow, cruel death. In just two years millions of Ukrainians died of starvation.

Two years ago I travelled to Kiev to pay my respects at the Holodomor memorial in the country of our ancestors. We carried a bowl of wheat as we walked by the angels of sorrow, statues that guard the souls of the starved. We passed 24 millstones that reminded

us of the 24,000 human lives ground to death every day during the famine. We laid our eyes on a statue of a girl with tears on her face, captured in time, along with her frail, malnourished frame.

Mr. Speaker, Stalin's plan was deliberate, and beginning in 1932 brigades of men came to steal any and all food. Many came specially equipped with long metal rods topped by hooks, used to prod any surface in search of grain to feed Stalin's armies.

Natalia Talanchuk remembers her mother forbidding her to look outside the windows in the mornings because out in the streets were bodies of the people who had died of starvation overnight.

Outside of Ukraine little was known, and inside to even speak of this event was a crime subject to imprisonment, exile, or execution.

Remembering the Holodomor isn't just for those of us with Ukrainian blood; it is for all of us. As Albertans we do more than remember. We act to ensure that their tragedy is never repeated. We are here as proof that hope somehow surfaced from the depths of despair of the Holodomor, and the spirit of the Ukrainian people was not broken. Generations later this spirit is alive and thriving in over 365,000 people of Ukrainian descent in Alberta and millions across the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Remarks in Ukrainian]

### Holodomor Memorial Day

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise today as one of more than 350,000 Albertans of Ukrainian ancestry. It was of utmost importance to me to attend today's commemoration ceremony marking the 11th anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act. The fourth Saturday of every November is now a day where Canadians make a point of remembering the Ukrainian famine and genocide of 1932 and 1933.

The Soviet regime, under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, imposed impossibly high quotas for the amount of grain Ukrainian villages were required to contribute to the Soviet state. When they were not able to meet these quotas, the Ukrainian people would have their homes searched and any food confiscated. Soldiers would be posted in watchtowers to prevent them from taking any of the harvest. People were forbidden from leaving the country in search of food, apprehended, and sent back to their deaths.

Holodomor, translated as "killing by hunger," was a horrific government-imposed famine which saw millions of children, women, and men starve to death. Thankfully, my gido had come to Canada at the age of 17 for a better life. Sadly, many of his family members ended up starving back in Ukraine. I remember as a little girl, my baba would be carrying around potatoes in her apron. I would ask her why, and she told me that they were there just in case.

This period was one of the darkest periods in human history, Mr. Speaker, and the Soviet Union took significant steps to keep it a secret. For decades these horrible acts went largely unrecognized outside Ukraine.

While nothing will erase the past, I am grateful that we can at least recognize that these heinous crimes took place. As Albertans we must always cherish democracy, defend human rights, and value diversity and the multicultural nature of our society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

### Chops and Crops Agricultural Event

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta farmers have faced many challenges this growing season, but I'm proud to say that Alberta farmers have once again done a magnificent job, doing

their part to help feed the world. In the midst of enduring weather uncertainty and devastating harvest conditions, they also continue to face trade uncertainty.

Mr. Speaker, all MLAs are invited to attend the annual Chops and Crops event happening in the Wales Room on the 10th floor of the Federal Building next Monday, November 25. This event is a wonderful opportunity to observe and appreciate the outstanding products our agricultural community produces. The event is hosted by the Alberta Beekeepers, Alberta Canola, Alberta Wheat, Alberta Barley, the Alberta Pulse Growers, Alberta Sugar Beet Growers, Potato Growers, Oat Growers, and Alberta Pork.

In addition to learning about these vital industries, a variety of fantastic food will be provided to really showcase the quality of products these groups produce. Last year the event theme was Industry of Champions, focusing on the fact that Edmonton was soon to host the Grey Cup. As such the event featured football-related decorations as well as trading cards for each of the commodities present. This year the theme is Food for Thought. I am sure they will leave us with a lot to think about.

We as legislators need to recognize the role we play in maintaining a globally competitive agricultural sector. Any extra cost that public policy adds will need to be paid for by the products that they produce. We have a huge responsibility to get it right.

I hope all MLAs take the time to attend Chops and Crops to demonstrate our commitment to agriculture in this province and its contribution to both the economy and the health and wellness of Albertans. MLAs have all been preregistered, so I would encourage members: check your calendars and attend if possible for an outstanding evening honouring Alberta agriculture.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a statement to make.

1:40

#### Midwife Barbara Scriver

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise in this House today to recognize Barbara Scriver, a midwifery pioneer in the province of Alberta whose career spanned 39 years. Barb caught her last baby in August, and I was thrilled to attend her retirement party. In hearing families share their experiences in Barb's care, it was evident that she carried out her work with passion, dedication, confidence, and joy.

One spoke of living in Fort McMurray and not having access to care there at the time of their pregnancies, so they drove for both to Edmonton to have Barb's support. The parents talked about the difficult labour that resulted in an emergency C-section and how Barb was calm, loving, and strong when they needed it the most. They said: she helped us make the right choices when we were scared and lost. They were grateful that she was also there for their second pregnancy that ended in a successful vaginal birth after Caesarean.

Another family talked about how much Barb involved the father in both of their pregnancies, which was especially helpful when the second came so fast that dad had to catch the buttery baby. When they heard Barb's cheery arrival and the baby cried out to her, they knew all was well.

While we are celebrating Barb's legacy, it goes deeper than the babies and the families that she personally supported. Her legacy includes advocacy for the profession and public access for all. While we aren't quite there yet, I am proud of the progress we were able to make under the NDP government in partnership with the Alberta Association of Midwives. I want all midwives, women, and allies to know that our party will keep pushing for more midwifery

care. While Barb may have caught her last baby, there are women and families throughout our province who need us to fight for them, and we will.

Thank you.

#### Interprovincial Trade Barriers

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, in April Albertans chose to chart a new path. They supported our vision of intense focus on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. We promised to pursue government policies that unleash the power of Albertans to create jobs and drive our economy forward. This is a significant shift from policies which took away the rightful earnings of Albertans through high taxes and burdened efforts of Albertans with bureaucratic red tape.

We have a lot of work left to do on all fronts, but we have made some great progress. One area where we have made fantastic progress is establishing Alberta's leadership on the elimination of interprovincial trade barriers. For too long it has been easier to do business across the southern border than across provincial borders. As many undoubtedly know, these barriers are extremely costly for our economy, other provinces, and our country as a whole. These interprovincial trade barriers are estimated to cost our economy between \$50 billion and \$130 billion every single year. That's almost \$9,300 per Canadian household.

That gap represents a massive opportunity for economic development and a potential increase in the base level of prosperity for many Albertans and Canadians, even if we can only capture a small portion of the total potential gains. These gains will lead to a real increase in the quality of life for Albertans and in the ability of our government to provide health care, education, and other services for Albertans.

Our government has shown real leadership by removing an incredible 21 exceptions under the Canadian free trade agreement. Alberta has become the national leader in eliminating internal barriers to trade. I am proud of the leadership shown by our government in eliminating these trade barriers, and I look forward to other provinces following our lead to create a more prosperous Canada.

#### Support for Agriculture

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta farmers are facing yet another dismal harvest season caused by poor harvest conditions, ongoing international trade disputes, and business risk management programs that are not equipped to handle the issues. Team Alberta, representing producer organizations comprised of the Alberta wheat and barley commissions, Alberta Pulse Growers, and Alberta Canola, have publicly called on the Alberta and federal governments to act immediately to provide financial assistance to Alberta farmers who face huge economic losses and very burdensome personal stress and mental health challenges as a result of conditions beyond their control. So far Alberta's agriculture minister has paid lip service to this but has failed to bring forward any real, concrete action plan to help farmers right now.

Three out of four past growing seasons, Mr. Speaker, have seen bad harvests. The latest crop report shows that 11 per cent of crops province-wide are still in the field. For specific crops the numbers are even more catastrophic: 17.3 per cent of the canola crop, nearly 15 per cent of the potato crop, and 45 per cent of the sugar beet crop are as yet unharvested. That's about \$778 million worth of unharvested crop in Alberta. According to John Guelly, the Alberta Canola chair, quote: farmers are experiencing a very disappointing crop year once again, and many won't be able to get their crops off

the field until the spring. This means delays in insurance and access to funds necessary for next year and to feed their families.

Mr. Speaker, it is the family farm that is most vulnerable to these challenges. When added to the heavy burden of having to compete with corporate agriculture producers who operate increasingly larger landholdings, we see an alarming rise in the incidence of mental health issues, including serious depression, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies, erupting in Alberta amongst family farms. Family farmers who leave agriculture depopulate rural Alberta, and they need our support right now.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Crime in Mid-size Cities

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that rural crime is a concern to many in our province. We have heard the stories of survivors of these crimes in this House. Our government has taken concrete steps to combat rural crime across our province, and I am thankful for that.

But there are concerns in urban areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary as well. Our mid-size cities across this province are facing increased instances of thefts, break-ins, vandalism, assaults, and other crimes. I've heard from my constituents about these incidents first-hand. Each incident is one too many, and further than that, each crime perpetuates negative assumptions about our mid-sized cities. There should be no hesitations about visiting downtown Lethbridge and supporting the local businesses that keep our city vibrant. We need an answer for our urban crime in Lethbridge to reassure those that have experienced it and to properly penalize those who offend.

I recently went on a ride-along with emergency medical services in Lethbridge. As incredible as it was to understand the life-saving work they do, I could not ignore how they're struggling under the increased workload due to these crimes. These front-line workers deserve our full support.

Beyond that, cities outside of Edmonton and Calgary deserve the same commitment and attention to safety that larger centres receive. No one's safety should be based on where they live. This applies to the folks who make rural Alberta their home, but this also must apply to everyone who makes Lethbridge their home.

Mr. Speaker, while we consider the impact of rural crime, we also have to consider how urban crime is harming our communities. These crimes feed assumptions about downtown cores, painting them as unsafe and inaccessible, which is discouraging investment and turning families away from these centres. We can no longer afford to let these acts go without justice. Steps have been made to serve this justice such as expanding the drug treatment court program throughout Alberta, but we need solutions to dispel the notion that our downtown cores are a lost cause.

Our communities deserve an answer and a solution to these crimes and a plan for downtown revitalization, one that will support these downtown centres while making sure those that commit these crimes get the help they need to prevent them from offending again.

### Federal Equalization Payments

**Mr. Schow:** Fat Surplus Means More Money for Quebec Families: that was the headline of Philip Authier's article in the *Montreal Gazette* on Thursday, November 7. The recent budget tabled by the Quebec Finance minister, Eric Girard, shows that the province enjoyed an \$8.2 billion surplus in 2018-19 and a \$4 billion surplus in 2019-2020. Girard said that the province is swimming in cash and will use the money to pay down the debt and address the issue

of astronomical parking fees. In Alberta we know that if you've eaten today, you thank a farmer, but I guess if you're in Quebec and you parked today, thank an Albertan.

These kinds of headlines stoke the ire of Albertans who already feel that Quebec is getting the lion's share of our money, and they're not wrong. Since equalization was introduced, in 1961, Alberta has given over \$600 billion, \$240 billion in the last 11 years. In that same time span Quebec has gotten \$107 billion. This begs the question: what gives?

My grandparents used to keep a poster of the milch cow in their house, you know, the one where Alberta feeds it and it gets milked in Ontario. As a kid I didn't understand what it meant. I even recall laughing at it, but there's nothing funny about tens of thousands of unemployed Albertans or the way we're treated by a country that depends so heavily on our generous financial aid. So it's high time Alberta gets a fair deal in Canada. It's time to get a pipeline built to the coast. It's about time Alberta gets a little respect from the east; otherwise, we'll just take it.

Our Premier said to the Bloc Québécois leader, Mr. Blanchet, that you can't have your cake and eat it, too. His smug response was telling. He said: you know what; I like my cake, and I will do what I think about it. As far as I'm concerned, I think he can have his own oil and do with it whatever he likes. Well, Mr. Blanchet can have all the cake he likes. Just don't expect us to pay for the ingredients, make it, bake it, and serve it to him on a silver platter. Those days are over.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Bill 22

**Ms Notley:** As the longest serving member of this House, Mr. Speaker, I've always respected its profound importance to democracy. You will all remember that I grew up watching my father debate here. I watched him and Premier Lougheed engage in a robust but fair exchange of ideas and ideals. That is why I am heartbroken by the attack on this House, its members, and its institutions through this Premier's Bill 22. To the Premier: before you establish yourself as the most undemocratic Premier in Alberta's history, will you please do the right thing and withdraw this bill?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the fake outrage from the NDP is ridiculous. This bill does a simple thing. It consolidates the election authority system within our province to be in line with every other province inside the country and the federal government. Let me be very, very clear. All investigations remain under the purview of an independent officer of this Legislature in the Chief Electoral Officer, who has served this Chamber for a very, very long time in a nonpartisan way. In fact, the last time they were appointed was when that member was the Premier of the province. The Election Commissioner position will remain and, in fact, will now be further away from political interference because they'll be reporting directly to the Chief Electoral Officer.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, winning the election does not give the Premier unfettered power to do whatever he wants. Our democracy demands oversight through this House, its institutions and officers, and the judiciary, and all must be independent, yet this Premier's decision to fire the Election Commissioner, someone who's actively investigating the UCP fraud, is an attack on democracy, a cover-up of the truth, and could even constitute an obstruction of

justice. To anyone on the front bench: how can you let this level of corruption into this people's Legislature?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, also a ridiculous statement. Let me quote somebody. "It is important to ensure that the varied activities of an [election management body] are directed by the organization and not controlled by some other level of government or the Assembly bureaucracy." Who said that? The current Election Commissioner of Alberta, Mr. Lorne Gibson, in a white paper on independence and accountability of election administrations that he wrote for the Northwest Territories in December 2016. This simply does exactly what Lorne Gibson suggested, brings the entire election system under one body. It remains with an Election Commissioner position and the Chief Electoral Officer being independent officers of this Legislature.

**Ms Notley:** Absolutely missing the point.

Let's all remember that in his bid to lead the UCP, the Premier's campaign set up a stalking horse, the kamikaze candidate Jeff Callaway. Then his staff ran this man's fake campaign from the shadows, a campaign funded by illegal donations, just to attack Brian Jean – Brian Jean – who served this province with integrity. The Premier has always shown disrespect for democracy in his own party, but now he's showing disrespect for the law. Why is this government covering up for him by firing the Election Commissioner in the middle of an investigation?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has already been clear. Those allegations are ridiculous by the Official Opposition leader. In addition to that, no one is firing anybody. We are consolidating the system, bringing the Election Commissioner position back to a system that is closer to where it was in 2018, before the NDP government changed it. The Election Commissioner position will remain. It will be underneath an independent officer of this Legislature in the form of the Chief Electoral Officer, a position that has served this Chamber for over a century very, very well. The current occupant of it I trust completely to operate in a nonpartisan way.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** The issue is not who that member trusts or doesn't trust, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Canada's Criminal Code prevents wilful actions to obstruct justice. The demotion or firing of an independent officer of this Legislature in the middle of an investigation into UCP operatives, into fraud and illegal donations tied to the Premier's own leadership race sounds pretty obstructive to me. This Premier is using the power of his office to politically prevent investigation into fraud and corruption surrounding his friends and his party. Why is this Justice minister protecting this Premier and his corrupt friends? What are they hiding?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again another ridiculous assertion by the Leader of the Opposition. First of all, the Premier's office is not making any decisions associated with Bill 22. This Chamber will make that decision by voting with the 87 members of this Chamber. Again to this, the Chief Electoral Officer will remain as an independent officer of this Legislature, and the Election Commissioner position will remain. All investigations will fall underneath their purview, completely arm's length from any political decisions, as they should be. This legislation ensures that that will continue and goes back to simply operating like every other province in the country.

**Ms Notley:** Absolute rubbish.

This Justice minister said nothing when it was revealed that the Premier's leadership campaign staff colluded with the candidate found to be funded by illegal donors. Now he's standing by as the Premier fires the Election Commissioner who was investigating those donors. This bill, which is obstructing justice, goes against the very spirit of the Attorney General's own profession and his sworn duty, as the Alberta Attorney General, to prevent the Executive Council from breaking the law. I ask the Attorney General: why is he giving away his integrity and for what?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this fake outrage and this fear and smear that we've seen from the opposition for very much too long, seen when they were in government: that's why they were the only one-term government in the history of this province. That's why they were fired by Albertans. This approach will not work. Albertans will not buy it. We will continue to ensure that the Chief Electoral Officer remains an independent officer of this Legislature, that the Election Commissioner is able to continue to operate within that capacity to continue with any investigations, completely arm's length from any political interference. That's what this legislation does. It brings us in line with every other province and the federal government.

**Ms Notley:** The House leader is misleading the House.\* The Premier is saying that Albertans are subject to one set of rules, but when it comes to himself, it's a whole new world, and he can rewrite them as any cover-up demands. He's firing the Election Commissioner, asking his cabinet to play along in this abuse of power, and then displaying a cowardly refusal to answer for his own actions. Why won't the Premier explain to Albertans what exactly it is he is trying so hard to hide?

### **Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language**

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that she can't make a statement like: the Government House Leader is misleading the House. She can apologize and withdraw.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, there are many, many conventions in this House which I believe are in jeopardy at this time. You just identified one of them. Unfortunately, the greatest jeopardy in this House is posed by Bill 22. At this point, we must have a full and honest conversation that doesn't involve misleading statements by any member over there, so I will not apologize until we have fully canvassed the destructive nature of this bill, in a historic way, to the people of this province and to the members of this House past, current, and future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition is the longest serving member of the Assembly. She knows the rules. The rules are that you may not make an accusation against another member that would indicate that they are misleading or lying to the House. This is a very serious matter, as is Bill 22. The hon. member will know that the Speaker takes no position on Bill 22. Whether it is a good bill or a bad bill, there will be plenty of time for debate. What the Speaker's requirement is is that the rules of debate are followed. If she chooses not to follow them, she won't be allowed to be in the House. Those are the rules that the House has set out, which she is a member of. The Leader of the Official Opposition can apologize for making the statement and withdraw, or she knows what the step after that is.

\*See page 2479, right column, paragraph 1

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, you are right. I am the longest serving member of this House. Before that I was a political staffer, and before that I was a political activist, and before that I watched my father in this House. I know how important the traditions of this House are. I know how important the officers of this House are. I know how important the conduct of this House is and the fact that we all got here fairly by rules which we all agree to follow. Bill 22 goes directly at the heart of that, and it is a far bigger threat to this House than whether or not I said that people over there misled or the House leader misled, specifically something that is in writing in front of this House already, in the Legislature, which is what he did.

But more to the point, Mr. Speaker, we see a corrupt act to interfere with an investigation in this House. We must be able to call it what it is because I have never seen a threat to this House like Bill 22, not in the province's history. I cannot apologize until we have fully canvassed every effort to stop the . . .

2:00

**The Speaker:** I appreciate your comments. [interjection] The Speaker has risen. Let me reiterate. The Speaker takes no position on the steps the government may or may not take. I have no feeling about the bill at all and the importance that it has to the Assembly. The only position that the Speaker takes is that the rules of the Assembly are followed.

I want to be very clear. The Leader of the Opposition is refusing a ruling of the Speaker, that the Speaker has made, that she is out of order. She acknowledges that a refusal to apologize will result in the removal of her presence from the House for the rest of the day. Is that the case, hon. Leader of the Opposition?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, there are many, many elements of this House that the Speaker has to defend. The integrity and the independence of officers and executive members of this Legislative Assembly, including the Election Commissioner, who is in the middle of an active investigation, is another thing the Speaker must defend. Regardless, I cannot apologize for having an open conversation about . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I never asked you to apologize for having an open conversation because, obviously, that would be outside the purview of the Speaker's role.

What I have asked you to do is to follow the rules of the Assembly, which you've chosen not to. So then according to Standing Order 24(2) the Speaker may name a member and require them to be removed from the Assembly, at which time, Rachel Notley, you are no longer permitted to be in the Assembly for the rest of the day.

[Ms Notley was escorted out of the Chamber by the Acting Sergeant-at-Arms]

## Bill 22 (continued)

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, there are even more serious consequences to Bill 22. This bill creates a real danger for any person who might stand up and call for this UCP Premier and his friends to be accountable to the law. It is appalling that this is happening against an independent officer of our Assembly when that officer has already uncovered widespread illegal activity. Will anyone in the UCP stand up for our democracy?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter how much the NDP want to continue with their fear-and-smear tactics, which are not working. The reality of this process is a simple consolidation, a

process that brings us in line with every province in this country and with the federal government. The Election Commissioner position remains. It goes further away from any potential for political interference by going under the Chief Electoral Officer, an office that has been in this province for over a century and has successfully served Albertans in that role. All investigations remain arm's length from any political body and from this Chamber and remain under the purview of the Chief Electoral Officer.

**Ms Hoffman:** The Premier has claimed that he has a mandate from the people of Alberta to do whatever he wants, but that mandate has limits. Nobody gets a mandate to break the law, fire law enforcement agencies, or undermine the very democracy that creates his mandate. This is Alberta. Does the Premier understand that there are limits to his democratic mandate?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this is a prime example of the Official Opposition overplaying their hand yet again. Nobody has fired a law enforcement agency. That is completely and utterly ridiculous. The Election Commissioner office and position remains. It is now consolidated within the recommendation of the current Election Commissioner in the province of Alberta, similar to other provinces. It consolidates the process, it saves taxpayers upwards of a million dollars, it protects all current investigations and future investigations, and it continues to make sure that this is run by an independent officer of the Legislature.

**Ms Hoffman:** I read the bill, and the bill says terminate. The Government House Leader can say what he wants, but the bill is in black and white, and it says terminate.

Yesterday the Premier didn't answer when asked about what would happen if the Prime Minister fired the Ethics Commissioner during the SNC-Lavalin case. If Paul Martin had sacked Justice Gomery, that would have been corrupt, too. The Premier knows this, and I'm sure his entire caucus does, too. At their emergency caucus meeting tomorrow who among them will speak up for our democracy?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, to be clear yet again, all of our election system remains under the Chief Electoral Officer, who is an independent officer of this Legislature. The position of Election Commissioner has not been removed. If this House decides to support Bill 22, the Election Commissioner will move into a consolidated role with the Chief Electoral Officer, exactly the same as it is all across this country and with the federal government. This consolidates the process, brings it closer to where it was before 2018, when the NDP changed the system. We have utmost confidence in the Chief Electoral Officer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

## 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you. On the night of October 26, 2017, two candidates of the final UCP leadership contest filed complaints of voting irregularities. Since then we've heard credible claims and seen documents that support these allegations. The Election Commissioner launched a probe to get to the bottom of it, but now he's been shut down by this government. One of those UCP candidates is now the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. He's charged with upholding the rule of law. Why is he allowing the government to undermine it?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, nobody has shut down any investigation. Let me be very, very clear. This was completely

confirmed by the Chief Electoral Officer's office yesterday. Any investigations will continue going forward under the purview of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Election Commissioner, which have now been consolidated into one office. Any investigation that may or may not be taking place will continue under their control. We trust the independent officer of this Legislature to make the determination of what is best going forward. He has been appointed by all members of this Chamber.

**Ms Ganley:** I see why the member might shut down the Minister of Justice on this issue. The Minister of Justice himself was one of the first witnesses to the illegal activity. He asked for an investigation, and now he sits in the government who's shutting down an investigation into bribery, forgery, and fraud. To the Minister of Justice: what is the public supposed to think when the chief law enforcement officer in the province sits silently while the government removes an officer in the middle of an active investigation?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, that is completely false. The allegations and words she's trying to put into my mouth did not happen. That is not what I asked to be investigated. I raised questions about a voting process. My concerns were addressed by the party. I accepted the result of that election where our Premier received a resounding mandate. I accepted that result clearly. The allegations that they have – we are going over old treaded ground. The good work of the Election Commissioner's office under Bill 22 will simply continue under the Chief Electoral Officer. That is what it's going to do.

**Ms Ganley:** It's in black and white, Mr. Speaker, in the bill. Employment contracts are terminated.

Last spring we pushed the Minister of Justice into appointing a special prosecutor to look into UCP voter fraud. Since then he has refused repeatedly to name a special prosecutor. To the minister: did you refuse to name a special prosecutor because it was always the intention of this government to shut down any investigation into themselves?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely ridiculous. The appointment of a special prosecutor is done independently of my office. The people are informed of the matter, they review it, and the ADM, independent of my office – I have no input into this whatsoever – made the decision to seek a counsel from Ontario to act in the role of special prosecutor. Those are the facts. Right now we've got people here torqued up to 11. Those are the facts.

## 2:10 CN Rail Strike and Commodity Transportation

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans know that one of the most critical issues facing our province is market access for our energy resources. For years we have faced obstruction to building pipelines to move our products, and industry has had to ship more and more oil by rail. Now we are facing yet another obstacle. The CN Railway union has initiated a strike action, which will disrupt our rail network and our ability to get our oil to market. Today alone the benchmark price for western Canadian oil has dropped by more than \$4. To the Minister of Energy: can you tell the House what impact this will have on our energy producers and Alberta taxpayers?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you to the member for this question, Mr. Speaker. Today's labour action by the railway union has a significant impact on Alberta's economy, and this morning Minister Dreeshen and I called upon Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to

immediately take action to recall Parliament early and introduce emergency back-to-work legislation. The federal government has already failed Alberta oil and gas workers: blocking pipelines, restricting market access, introducing bills C-48 and 69. We need immediate action from the federal government before . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy would know that naming any member inside the House or using their last name would be wildly inappropriate.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, given that in addition to the impact on our energy industry, this will also have a significant impact on our farmers, who rely on rail companies to ship our agricultural products to global consumers and given that many farmers in my constituency will be worried about how this union strike action will impact their families, to the minister of agriculture: how will this impact our farmers, and how are we going to support them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has the call.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that very important question. Rail strikes do have very damning effects on farmers. It's something that we've unfortunately seen here in Alberta and Canada many, many times. I was very proud to stand with our Minister of Energy to ask the federal government to get back to work so they can legislate the CN Rail line back to work. Ultimately, rail disruptions like this, the cascading effects that they have on our supply chain when it comes to our grain – 145 different countries get exports from the province of Alberta, and they need to go by train.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, given that any long or protracted union strike would cause severe harm to our energy workers, our farmers, and our province and given that the federal government has the power to end this disruption of our economy through legislation, to the minister of agriculture: can you tell us what the government of Alberta is asking the federal government to do in order to immediately end this union strike and stop any further harm to our economy?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that very important question. Over \$12 billion in exports from our agriculture sector, over \$4 billion in exports from our forestry sector: these are very big numbers. It is a very impactful issue when it comes to our sector and our province. With the difficult harvest that farmers were again faced with this year, this is an added stress. It's an added frustration that our farmers shouldn't have to face. That's why we're calling on the federal government to take this seriously, to come back early and get to work and actually have back-to-work legislation.

## Public Inquiry Commissioner Appointment

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, questions surrounding the appointment of Steve Allan to run this government's public inquiry continue to build. Today it surfaced that Mr. Allan held a fundraiser at the Calgary Golf and Country Club in 2018 for the now Justice minister. He also endorsed the minister in a written e-mail during the spring election campaign. To the minister: is he now convinced there's a perceived conflict of interest with Mr. Allan's appointment, or does he just not care?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, the smear job against Commissioner Allan needs to stop. This is an individual who received the Alberta Order of Excellence. He was named Calgary's citizen of the year. He was chair of Calgary Economic Development, chair of the Calgary Stampede board. He was named by Treaty 7 the honorary title of Chief Rides Many Horses.

The role of the commissioner, Mr. Speaker, is akin to a judge. They're treated with independence. All decisions made by Commissioner Allan regarding whom to retain, how to conduct his inquiry are his decisions alone, and that's reflected in how he's been engaged.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has refused to identify what steps were taken to ensure that Mr. Allan's appointment was above board – he has refused in the media; he has refused during three hours of estimates questioning that I did this morning – and given that this minister seems to believe that being accountable to the public isn't something that is included in his job title, how can the minister ask Albertans to trust him when he won't even come clean on what is clearly a patronage appointment? Why won't he produce a paper trail?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the appointment of Commissioner Allan that was a decision of cabinet. At no point in time has my office been involved with the inquiry after his appointment. When it comes to who has been retained, how he's being supported, that is not being run through my office. Commissioner Allan is somebody who has given back immensely to his community on homelessness, dealing with the Rotary Club. This is an individual who does not deserve this. We have the NDP on the opposite side aligning themselves in the same attacks Ecojustice is going after Mr. Allan with.

**Ms Sweet:** Given that Steve Allan has now contracted with the Dentons law firm to carry out some of the inquiry work, a contract that's worth almost \$900,000, and given that Mr. Allan's son is a partner of Dentons and given that the Justice minister himself worked at Dentons right up until the election, to the minister: are you really trying to tell Albertans that this appointment of Steve Allan doesn't reek of Toryland entitlement?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, this was reviewed by Deputy Minister Grant Sprague with respect to Steve Allan's retaining. He sent a letter to that hon. member. I am satisfied that Mr. Allan is not in violation of the code of conduct and ethics and there is no conflict between his private interests and his role as commissioner.

Previous to coming here, I worked for the three largest law firms in the province of Alberta. They employed about 500 lawyers at any given time. All of them have done work for the government. I resigned all of my positions before taking office.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Steve Allan's patronage appointment we first asked the Ethics Commissioner to investigate. She informed us that the way in which this appointment occurred prevented her from doing so. She pointed us to the Deputy Minister of Energy. We then asked him to investigate, and he has since refused. To the Minister of Energy: who exactly will investigate this very concerning appointment, or have you set it up so that no one can?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, again, the hon. members on the other side sent a request to the Deputy Minister of Energy, Grant Sprague, to review how this was done. Again, he sent a very detailed note back regarding all of the points that they asked, saying that Commissioner Allan is in no conflict. With respect to who he's retained, remember: this is the sole decision of somebody who's akin to a judge, their decision alone. We have to treat them with independence so that when they come forward with a report, we know it's done with integrity. Mr. Allan is somebody of the highest regard. This has been reviewed by department officials, and they found no conflict.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that it would appear that Steve Allan's appointment came in exchange for political favours and given that he now stands to profit from this inquiry, as does the law firm where his son is a partner, and given that this is all very shady and Albertans are raising questions, that are going unanswered by this government, to the Minister of Energy: can we really trust the results of this inquiry if you won't first address the perceived conflict of interest with setting it up?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy has risen.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The public inquiry is independent of the government. As such, the commissioner is responsible on his own for selecting contractors. The government doesn't interfere with that. As per the engagement agreement between the government of Alberta and Commissioner Allan the commissioner is entitled to select the resources at his sole discretion.

Thank you.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that golf course fundraisers, patronage appointments, and shady backroom deals are now plaguing this government and given that some are comparing this to scandals that plagued former Premier Redford – some are saying that the scandals are even worse, and I agree – to the Minister of Energy: will you actually show some leadership and launch an investigation into this appointment and make the details on the results public?

2:20

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, large law firms like Dentons, who Commissioner Allan hired, are regularly required to construct ethical walls between clients in order to ensure no conflicts of interest. Commissioner Allan operates independently of government. He's free to choose contractors of his own choosing, and we trust that is in order.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Grande Prairie has a question.

### Teachers' Retirement Fund Management

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week was constituency week, and I spent the entire week at home in Grande Prairie meeting with various groups, stakeholders, and constituents. One group that I heard from was teachers, who continue to express their concerns about their pension fund in light of this government's decision to group public pensions under the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, or AIMCo for short. There seems to be some confusion around this decision, why it was made, and how it will impact the teachers' benefit. To the Minister of Finance: will you set the record straight about the decision to move the ATRF under the AIMCo umbrella?



**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the opportunity to make some clarifying comments on moving the Alberta teachers' retirement fund asset management function over to AIMCo. The broader use of AIMCo is a reflection of our commitment to drive efficiencies, see that we deliver services...

**Mr. Eggen:** Stealing money.

**Mr. Hunter:** Point of order.

**Mr. Toews:** ... in a more cost-effective manner, and will result in cost savings, which will improve performance for the pension fund, Mr. Speaker. ATRF will continue to own the pension, they'll continue to administer the pension, and they'll continue to provide strategic direction.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that there seems to be a persistence of conflicting information, including the historical performance or track record of the ATRF versus that of AIMCo, and given that Alberta is a relatively small jurisdiction to attract personnel with the skills and experience to manage this level of investing, to the same minister: can you explain the benefits of having these pensions managed together, including the benefit to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. AIMCo has a long history of achieving excellent returns for their clients. The real gain for pension plans here is the sustainability of larger investment pools, which, ultimately, provide economies of scale and drive down costs in managing those investments. Alberta taxpayers, this government, and teachers all have the same priority and goals, and that is ensuring maximum returns and ensuring the most risk-mitigated environment for Alberta teachers' pensions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister. Given the answers already provided by this minister with respect to the benefits of this change and given the conflicting information that people have been hearing about their pension, to the same minister: can you provide some insight into the rationale for this move and whether there is a resource online through your ministry that concerned Albertans can access to get clear information about this change and how it will benefit them? Are you able to clarify the historical performance of AIMCo relative to other funds and how the ATRF will work jointly with AIMCo going forward?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned before, the ATRF board will remain in place. They will continue to manage the pension and provide strategic investment decision-making over AIMCo in terms of how the assets are managed. It's estimated that the ATRF's administrative fees will decrease by .25 per cent as AIMCo can apply economies of scale, which will drive costs down

in the management of these investment assets. That will result in substantial savings for the pension plan, which will result in improved performance for Alberta teachers' pensions and Alberta taxpayers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a question.

### Public Service Pension Board Appointments

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with the concerns that teachers have around this government's move to change pensions that we just heard about, inside of Bill 22 there is also an attack on workers' rights to have input into the decisions affecting their own pensions. The Minister of Finance has taken a board seat away from the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and handed it to management. This clearly weakens the voice of AUPE workers with respect to oversight of their own pension funds. Who, if anyone, did the Minister of Finance consult with before he made this decision?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, this change just simply reflects the representation to ensure that there is adequate and impartial representation on the pension board. Nonbargaining staff represent a full 25 per cent of the participants in the pension plan. This move is simply to ensure that there's adequate representation for all employees on the pension board.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that there is absolutely no mechanism for representation or accountability for this seat and given that this bill also gives the government power to veto the appointment of an individual selected by labour to sit in their seat on the board and given that this is yet another naked attempt by this government to intimidate and control working people, why is the Minister of Finance overriding the right of workers to name their own representative to their pension board?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the construct of unions nominating representatives to the board will continue. The changes will ensure that appointments are based on competency, and in the event there is a name that comes forward for which adequate competency doesn't exist, the unions will simply put forward an additional name. This is not going to dilute representation in terms of pension boards.

**Ms Gray:** Given that this minister just described vetoing choices made by workers around their pensions and given that this is simply the most recent attack on working people in Alberta and given that this government has already bargained in bad faith, illegally torn up contracts, openly plans to veto settlements and impose wage rollbacks, isn't it true that this hijacking of pension governance is purely to give the minister leverage in the labour disputes he plans to provoke?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, our changes to public pension plans in Bill 22 will strengthen the public pension plans in this province. They will ensure that pension boards have adequate competency to make the very significant decisions they make on behalf of the Alberta public-sector employees. This government is concerned about having adequate competency around the table, unlike the previous government, who simply wasn't concerned about competency at all.

### University of Calgary Layoffs

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, this Advanced Education minister stood in this House yesterday and claimed that the brutal cuts he is

inflicting on our postsecondary institutions to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway were in the name of sustainability and quality. Hours later we learned that the University of Calgary is cutting 250 positions on their campus. Can the Advanced Education minister please tell us how losing 250 positions at the University of Calgary will improve the quality and sustainability of postsecondary education?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the MacKinnon panel was very clear in a lot of its conclusions and findings. [interjections] In comparison to other provinces the province of Alberta spends \$36,500 per student whereas B.C. is able to educate their population at \$31,000 and Ontario at \$21,000. At the rate that we're going, that is clearly not sustainable, so we have to make some changes. We have to make some fundamental transformation to improve the situation for the future. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given that it's public knowledge that this minister has given his personal assurance to stakeholders in meetings that drastic cuts imposed on postsecondaries would not translate to job losses and a decrease in instructional quality yet here we are with 250 jobs lost at just one institution alone, now is your chance to come clean. Please, why did you tell these workers that their jobs were safe, and then they were fired?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, I've been working with our post-secondary institutions and have asked that they submit a budget impact assessment plan to my department by December 2 so that we can get a better understanding of how they plan to work through the next few years and how they plan to work through the budget. [interjections] I was quite clear that if one of our institutions has a clear plan that is not addressing administrative overhead and other administrative costs, I would have some serious concerns with that. Again, the MacKinnon panel showed that we spend double on administration per student than other jurisdictions. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. It's becoming more and more difficult to hear the answers.

2:30

**Mr. Eggen:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that students are furious, rallies and protests are being planned across this province to force this government to listen to students, and given that this minister didn't see fit to talk to students at the rally right here at the Legislature yesterday, to the minister: whose fault is it for the job losses at the University of Calgary? Is it the institution? Is it the students on campus? It feels an awful lot like it's your fault.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, it's their fault for creating the situation that we now have to clean up. They created a situation that is completely unsustainable. Not just that, they drove us to the ... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

Unfortunately, hon. members, I'm having a very difficult time hearing the answer at this point in time.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education has 20 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** They drove us to the edge of the fiscal cliff and then on top of that bashed our main industry, did not support it,

resulting in hundreds of thousands of job losses in our primary industry and putting us in a situation where we've had to make some very difficult decisions in order to get our province back to balance.

When it comes to students, I don't know what the member opposite is talking about. That morning I had the opportunity to meet with students and listen to their concerns. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. I heard the question. I'm going to have to hear the answer.

### Municipal Funding and Performance Measures

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, municipalities across the province were promised millions of dollars in order to contribute to and meet the needs of their cities. All municipalities need support from this government to provide the services that their residents rely on and need. These needs affect the smallest of towns to the biggest of our cities. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs please speak to whether these municipalities will receive the appropriate amount of funding, funding which was promised to them in order to meet the local needs of their communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I am proud that we are delivering all dollars promised to our municipalities for the 2019-2020 budget year. We have also delivered a new funding framework that will see a modest 9 per cent reduction in subsequent years, which will increase with provincial revenues and which still provides the highest level of per capita funding in the entire country. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross still has the call.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government promised billions of dollars to large municipalities such as Calgary and Edmonton for the expansion of their LRT systems and given that some of these large-scale projects are currently under way or in planning and given that many municipalities are projecting costs to be much greater than anticipated, can the minister please explain how this government plans to support these municipalities with these projects while ensuring that the higher costs will not result in provincial funding being frivolously spent?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We must always remember that there is only one taxpayer. I've been clear that I expect municipalities to reduce wasteful spending, cut red tape, and streamline operations and keep taxes low. I am proud to know that most Alberta municipalities are doing great work to align themselves with the goals of our provincial government and to make life better for all Albertans. I look forward to continuing to work with our municipal leaders.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. Given the difficulty of measuring local government performance on such a small scale and given that many constituents look to attain proper resources to allow them to understand this further and compare their municipality with other municipalities throughout the province, can the minister explain how this government will improve Alberta's knowledge and understanding on how local governments are

performing in regard to property taxes, municipal revenues, spending, and debt as compared to governments throughout this province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the members opposite will continue to heckle all day. After all, they taxed all movable and nonmovable objects in this province. What happened? Our revenue took a dive. But soon we will be introducing a municipal measurement index, which will track things like tax rates and spending for all local governments. This will improve transparency and accountability for all municipalities and taxpayers with a one-stop, easy-to-use platform. I look forward to all that in this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has a question.

### Traffic Safety and Transportation Funding

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This UCP Transportation minister compromised highway safety to pay for the UCP \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. He cut \$137 million from highway maintenance. He cut \$27 million from a fund to upgrade dangerous intersections. The minister's own business plan predicts these cuts will lead to 61 additional fatal or serious injury collisions. That's his own data. What is wrong with this minister that he signs a plan knowing it will make Alberta's roads more dangerous?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to make it very clear that safety is a number one priority for the Ministry of Transportation, for the Department of Transportation, and for this government. Certainly, our budget does not make any kind of changes or reductions that are going to compromise this safety.

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, talking points aren't going to save any lives.

Given that the rate of fatal or serious injury dropped every single year of the NDP government and given that every year our Transportation minister challenged the department to make the roads safer still with a lower target, is this minister really going to say with a straight face that this rise in projected collisions, the first in five years, has nothing to do with his brutal cuts to highway maintenance?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, again, I'm going to reiterate that this government and the Ministry of Transportation are committed to safety first. That is our priority. Certainly, the information that has been presented by the member opposite is not accurate.

**Member Loyola:** Given that the Humboldt Broncos bus tragedy occurred at an intersection the Saskatchewan government knew to be dangerous and given this minister cut 85 per cent of the fund to fix dangerous intersections in Alberta, will the minister commit today to releasing a list of the dangerous intersections that won't be fixed because he preferred a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to the safety of Albertans. It's unfortunate that we're using the tragic Humboldt incident as a partisan attack to perpetuate... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Hon. members, I cannot hear the answer. Part of this question period opportunity is the opposition has the opportunity to ask a question, and the government has the opportunity to answer it. We might not like the answer, but they do have the opportunity.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** I would just like to say that it's unfortunate that we are using a tragic incident and episode to perpetuate a narrative that is inaccurate and untrue. Our government is committed to safety for Albertans.

### Alberta Innovates Corporation Layoffs

**Mr. Bilous:** Today we have to deal with the fiscal reality of a significantly reduced budget and resulting significant changes in staffing levels and programs: that, Mr. Speaker, was the CEO of Alberta Innovates in a letter to her staff announcing that layoff notices would be beginning Monday and continuing into December. Up to 125 people are expected to lose their jobs leading up to Christmas. To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: can she please explain why she's sacrificing 125 jobs as part of her plan to pay for a \$4.7 billion no-job corporate handout?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, firstly, I want to acknowledge that job losses are difficult, especially for those families affected. I certainly want to acknowledge that. Alberta Innovates is in the effort, as is every government department, of restructuring, finding efficiencies, making changes to deliver more efficiently and more effectively on behalf of Albertans. We believe in the good work that Alberta Innovates does on behalf of Albertans, and we encourage them to continue to drive efficiencies in the way they deliver those services.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Put your money where your mouth is, sir.

Given that in the Alberta Innovates 2019 annual report Alberta Innovates supported the creation of 2,000 new jobs and that every dollar of funding generated over \$29 in follow-up investment – follow that – and that while job-creating organizations like Alberta Innovates get cut, this UCP government is handing over a \$4.7 billion giveaway, taking \$16,000 flights, and staying in luxury hotels, will the minister please explain why 125 hard-working Alberta Innovates staff need to lose their jobs?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, firstly, I want to correct the false assertions that the member opposite made, and that is that our job-creation tax cut results in as large a number as he suggested. Our job-creation tax cut will result in the net reduction of \$100 million of revenue this year.

Alberta Innovates continues to be a priority for this government. We are encouraged that Alberta Innovates is moving forward to find efficiencies to improve the effectiveness of the way they deliver programs on behalf of Albertans.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, given that it's been reported that the government asked Alberta Innovates to deliver the layoff notices on December 23, two days before Christmas, and given that this decision has been rightly described as inhumane, will the minister of economic development apologize to the staff at Alberta Innovates for her government's cruel and heartless plan to fire

people literally on the eve of Christmas? Are you really that much of a Grinch?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, I want to acknowledge that job losses are difficult, particularly for the families involved, but this is all part of an effort to restructure in the way we deliver on behalf of Albertans, to deliver more efficiently and effectively, something the previous government knew nothing about. We inherited a fiscal mess from the previous government. We will deliver sound fiscal management on behalf of Albertans. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

### Animal Rights Activist Farm and Ranch Protests

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend 15 activists were arrested in Canmore after targeting and illegally occupying and filming two Canmore sled dog facilities, both of which not only comply with but exceed the regulatory requirements. This is the second demonstration this year where activists have trespassed and put animals and business owners at risk. To the minister of agriculture: what is being done to deter these illegal acts and protect Alberta farmers, ranchers, and business owners?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. We are committed to amending the Animal Health Act, which will actually see fines increase to \$15,000 for a first offence and \$30,000 and actually one year of imprisonment for a second offence. At the end of the day, whether it's tourists going to our beautiful mountains to go on dogsleds or just turkey farmers, there is a culture of enforcement that Albertans expect, and it's something that this government is doing everything that we can. The great work of our Justice minister with his amendments to the trespassing act and increasing jail time and fines for criminal . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for addressing this incident. Given that illegal invasion of private property is dangerous to business owners and animals that live and work on these properties and it's harassing to property owners and given that we cannot allow facilities like Howling Dog Tours and Mad Dogs & Englishmen tours to become unfair targets of radical activists, to the same minister: when can we expect to see this new legislation passed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Soon. I was pleased, actually, to see that the RCMP did charge these illegal activists that were involved in this situation.

Mr. Speaker, through you to these illegal activists when they go out and break the law: the RCMP will charge you, you will face jail time, and we will fine you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that it seems that protesters are feeling emboldened lately when it comes to demonstrating on and illegally occupying private property all the while slandering and spreading false narratives about innocent business owners and given that we cannot allow this

trend among activists to continue into the new year and beyond, especially when these protesters target property owners that care for their animals and exceed excellence in industry standards, to the same minister: what is being done to put a final end to this brazen behaviour?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member and certainly the minister of agriculture will know that if there have been charges laid, there are certainly some rules around sub judice that you will want to be cautious with should you choose to respond.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the changes to the trespassing act, we will increase fines up to \$10,000 for a first offence and up to \$25,000 for subsequent offences and actually up to \$200,000 for organizations and imprisonment of up to six months. When we're dealing with amendments to the Provincial Offences Procedure Act, we will increase the maximum amount of compensation that can be awarded by the courts from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to the last members' statement. I know there's lots going on this afternoon. I'd encourage you to leave the Chamber expeditiously if you're needing to do so to get to other appointments.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

#### Medicine Hat

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, according to Colby Cosh, a journalist with the *National Post*, federal Conservatives need "an election strategy that will work in Skeena and Algoma, and perhaps gives . . . a little ground in Medicine Hat." I disagree.

The people of Medicine Hat are kind, charitable, and understand the importance of community. It is because of this generosity that Medicine Hat is the first city in Canada to eliminate homelessness. On top of this amazing accomplishment we are also leaders in energy, with a wind farm, 100 years of oil and gas exploration, while also serving as a training ground for hundreds of skilled energy workers. We also take pride in our fiscal responsibility and our respect for tax dollars. In fact, the Medicine Hat hospital is one of the very few hospitals in the province that manages to stay within budget year after year.

But if that wasn't enough, Medicine Hat could also be considered one of the friendliest cities in the world. It could have something to do with Medicine Hat being the sunniest city in Canada or perhaps be because of the beautiful scenery and landmarks like the world's tallest teepee. You could also look at the incredible talent, Mr. Speaker, that comes out of our city like Nobel prize winner Richard Edward Taylor or like Trevor Linden and Lanny McDonald, who played with the Medicine Hat Tigers. We also have incredibly talented performers like Terri Clark and MacKenzie Porter.

Again I would like to ask Mr. Cosh: what is it about Medicine Hat that wouldn't work somewhere else in Canada? We understand the importance of innovation and environmental leadership, we understand the importance of taking care of some of the more vulnerable in our communities, and we understand what it means to allow people to make decisions for themselves through low taxes.

Mr. Speaker, Medicine Hat is the best city in Canada, I would even say the world. Mr. Cosh, the Conservatives need to focus more on the leadership of such an amazing community, that truly represents the values of our great country.

## Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I'll table the requisite number of copies for Standing Order 42, urging the pressing matter of public interest in respect of the management and stewardship of records and correspondence regarding the Election Commissioner.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, just rising on Standing Order 7(8) to notify the Chamber that, if required, we will extend the Routine.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the extension. Unfortunately, given the schedule, we're unable, but we may extend just a couple of moments to deal with some of the issues.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide notice that at an appropriate time I will be moving the following motion in accordance with Standing Order 42.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to take all steps necessary to convene the Parliament of Canada as soon as possible to introduce emergency legislation to compel Canadian National Railway employees to return to work in order to prevent the potentially devastating impact of a strike on Alberta's energy and agricultural sectors.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. minister of agriculture for that.

Also, Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, it is appropriate for you to distribute those now, but we will deal with them at the appropriate time.

I'd also like to offer an apology to the hon. Government House Leader. In fact, Routine can be extended past 3 o'clock. I was confused by the unique situation of estimates.

2:50

## Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General has the call.

### Bill 27

#### Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and given our time I'll make sure I'm very brief here today. I'm here to seek leave to introduce Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019.

This bill would amend the Limitations Act, Occupiers Liability Act, the Petty Trespass Act, the Trespass to Premises Act, and the Provincial Offences Procedure Act. If passed, the amendments will make sure that we protect property owners, Mr. Speaker, that property rights are respected in the province of Alberta. We heard this loud and clear on our rural crime tour, that we need to make sure that Albertans have the strongest possible property rights here in the province of Alberta. It's integral to make sure that property rights are respected, that landowners can feel safe in their homes knowing that law-abiding citizens are protected.

**The Speaker:** I thought you were going to be quick.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a first time]

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of an open letter that was placed in the *Edmonton Journal* by 175 professional doctors in this province, titled Bill Removes Checks on Doctors Who Put Conscience Over Patients' Well-being. Maybe the committee should have extended the invite to a few more people.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have seven copies of letters from teachers within my constituency and in the area expressing their concerns about this government's intentions for the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and stating that they are not in support of the changes under Bill 22.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of two tablings. The first are 24 letters from teachers who are deeply concerned about the situation in their classrooms. One cites: "Overcrowding is a serious concern. There is no more room in my class for [more] desks." There are 35 students in that junior high class today.

The other tablings are with regard to the heavy-handed, ham-fisted attempt to claw back the Alberta teachers' retirement pension after it being established as joint governance in 1939.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. First, I would like to table a letter from the Election Commissioner in which he expresses his surprise and disappointment for the ending of his office, which he found out through the media yesterday at 3 p.m.

My second set of tablings, Mr. Speaker, is that I have the requisite number of copies of 34 separate letters from constituents of the fabulous constituency of Calgary-Mountain View who are concerned about the government taking over the ATRF and moving it into AIMCo.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I table the requisite copies of a letter from Craig Lukinuk, reeve of Smoky Lake county, in support of the interprovincial nomination of the North Saskatchewan River for the Canadian heritage rivers system. As he says, "We [must] safeguard the future of our North Saskatchewan River environment for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of future generations."

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have 53 letters from all over Alberta, actually – from Edson, Coronation, Medicine Hat, Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Edmonton, and St. Albert – regarding the cutting of AISH. The government likes to call it deindexing.

My second tabling. I spent some time in estimates this morning. It seems the minister isn't aware of what's on his government's

website about climate change, so I thought I would table five copies of that as well.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. Oh, sorry. I've already done that three times. That's how much I love Decore. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of seven letters sent to my office and other MLA offices on the opposition side from current and alumni members of the rapattack firefighting crews, who express devastation and their large concern that their positions have been cut, to the detriment of our ability to properly fight forest fires in this province. They're very, very concerned that we're going to have significant problems and losses as a result.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, I have two tablings today. The first is the six requisite copies of the annual report for the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the period April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

Secondly, I have six copies of the annual report for the office of the Ethics Commissioner for the period April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

Hon. members, we are at points of order. The hon. Member for Calgary-West made two points of order, that have subsequently been withdrawn. But at 2:22 the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction raised a point of order. It appears that it's going to be debated by the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

#### **Point of Order Parliamentary Language**

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the time of 2:22 the Member for Edmonton-North West said to the Minister of Finance while he was speaking: you're stealing money. I believe this is a point of order under 23(h), (i), (j), specifically (i). This would be "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." I ask him to apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I do withdraw the fact that I did say: "Stealing money." What I meant to say was: taking the pensions without the teachers' permission.

**The Speaker:** I consider that issue dealt with and concluded.

#### **Motions under Standing Order 42**

**The Speaker:** The issue has been raised by both the hon. the Official Opposition House Leader – and I'll go to him in mere moments – and then followed by the hon. minister of agriculture.

First, with respect to the Official Opposition House Leader's motion under Standing Order 42, I'd just provide a few comments. In the form that it's proposed, the motion resembles more of a request for emergency debate under Standing Order 30 as opposed to a substantive motion. I'd encourage all members, if they wish to move a motion, to please feel free to reach out to Parliamentary Counsel in advance. They are more than happy to ensure that it is in its proper form. But that doesn't prevent us from proceeding this afternoon. Despite this deficiency in the form, I'm happy to have the hon. Official Opposition House Leader move his arguments.

Just before that, though, I'd like to provide an outline with respect to the procedure. If unanimous consent is granted, because we are currently in estimates and the estimates vote is this evening, Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) requires that the Assembly stand adjourned this afternoon upon the completion of the daily Routine to allow for consideration of estimates in committee, and Standing Order 59.03(1) requires the vote for the Committee of Supply on main estimates later this evening. Should unanimous consent be granted to proceed with the motions by the Official Opposition House Leader or the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, that debate will be postponed until this evening following the scheduled vote in Committee of Supply and the introduction of the appropriation bill. I trust this clarifies our procedure moving forward over the next few minutes.

I will caution both members. This is not an opportunity to debate substantively your request but merely to provide the notice and to let us know why consent should be granted.

The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader.

#### **Election Commissioner's Office Records Management**

Mr. Bilous:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly consider pursuant to Standing Order 42 the urgent and pressing matter of the preservation of the public interest with respect to the management and stewardship of records or correspondence pertaining to ongoing investigations currently being undertaken by the Election Commissioner.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that the government served notice of a large volume of comprehensive changes yesterday. I'm sure you can understand that it's taking our caucus some time to digest these sweeping implications.

Today I'd like to provide a brief rationale for the need for this House to focus on the immediate practical implications of government legislation and how it affects the ongoing operations and investigations of the office of the Election Commissioner. I know and understand that there will be a more appropriate time to raise the particulars of Bill 22. I'm not here to speak to the legislation itself but, rather, an urgent problem that the active introducing of the provisions of the bill into the public record creates for an office of this Legislature. Commissioner Gibson is a dedicated and distinguished public servant. I have every expectation that he'll conduct himself with integrity even in these challenging circumstances.

3:00

That said, the tabling of Bill 22 creates an immediate and pressing concern with respect to the management and stewardship of records in the keeping of the office of the commissioner. This House must defend the public interest, Mr. Speaker. We have a duty to ensure that those records are secured and not subject to inappropriate access or destruction while their fate is before this House. That work must occur immediately, and it is the responsibility of this Assembly to ensure that the records of the Election Commissioner are secured while the House debates this bill.

Thank you.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has the call.

#### **CN Rail Strike**

Mr. Dreesen:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government

of Canada to take all steps necessary to convene the Parliament of Canada as soon as possible to introduce emergency legislation to compel Canadian National Railway employees to return to work in order to prevent the potentially devastating impact of a strike on Alberta's energy and agriculture sectors.

**Mr. Dreesen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask this Chamber to give unanimous consent for another very important issue that came up in question period again today, something that affects our agriculture and forestry sectors, our energy sector, and pretty much anything that goes on rail. We do so much exporting here in the province of Alberta, in the billions of dollars – \$12 billion in exports in agriculture, \$4 billion in forestry – and it's frustrating to see that a potential rail strike by CN would have devastating impacts to our major economic drivers in the province of Alberta.

So I'm urging for the unanimous consent of my colleagues here in the Chamber to be able to send a strong message to the federal

government that we do need to stand together to make sure that our economic drivers in the province of Alberta are allowed to function. Thank you.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the daily Routine has now concluded. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Energy in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta in the Parkland Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:03 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, November 19, 2019

Day 43

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
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Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
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Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
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Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 19, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening, everyone. Please be seated.

### Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the committee to order.

Prior to beginning, the chair will outline the process for this evening. The Committee of Supply will first call on the chairs of the legislative policy committees to report on their meetings with the various ministries under their mandate. No vote is required when these reports are presented according to Standing Order 59.01(10).

The committee will then proceed to the vote on the estimates of the offices of the Legislative Assembly. The vote on the main estimates will then take place.

Finally, the chair would like to remind all hon. members of Standing Order 32(3), which provides that “after the first division is called... [in] Committee of Supply, the interval between division bells... shall be reduced to one minute” for any subsequent divisions.

### Committee Reports

**The Chair:** I would now invite the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future to present the committee’s report.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2019-20 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Advanced Education; Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women; Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism; Ministry of Executive Council, Ministry of Infrastructure; and Ministry of Labour and Immigration.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I would now call on the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities to present the committee’s report.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Madam Chair, as deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2019-20 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Children’s Services, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, Ministry of Seniors and Housing, Ministry of Service Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

And now the chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee

has reviewed the 2019-20 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Environment and Parks, Ministry of Indigenous Relations, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Ministry of Transportation, and Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

### Vote on Main Estimates 2019-20

**The Chair:** We shall now proceed to the vote on the 2019-20 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, general revenue fund. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(5), which requires that these estimates be decided without debate or amendment prior to the vote on the main estimates, I must now put the following question on all matters relating to the 2019-20 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, general revenue fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

Agreed to:

Offices of the Legislative Assembly	\$159,915,000
-------------------------------------	---------------

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

We shall now proceed to the final vote on the main estimates on all matters relating to the 2019-20 government estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020. All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

I would now invite the hon. Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report the 2019-20 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2019-20 government estimates for the general revenue fund.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report the 2019-20 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2019-20 government estimates for the general revenue fund.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2019-2020 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2019-2020 government estimates for the general revenue fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, have been approved.

Offices of the Legislative Assembly.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, \$67,343,000; office of the Auditor General, \$27,834,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$4,291,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$33,229,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$945,000; office of the

Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$7,578,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$15,525,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$1,149,000; office of the Election Commissioner, \$2,021,000.

Government main estimates.

Advanced Education: expense, \$2,873,436,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$688,800,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$1,145,431,000; capital investment, \$15,326,000; financial transactions, \$1,310,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$1,417,598,000; capital investment, \$84,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$3,946,626,000; capital investment, \$683,000.

Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: expense, \$271,546,000; capital investment, \$2,331,000; financial transactions, \$1,554,000.

Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: expense, \$298,367,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Education: expense, \$4,916,835,000; capital investment, \$751,000; financial transactions, \$15,678,000.

Energy: expense, \$1,761,001,000; capital investment, \$874,000; financial transactions, \$98,899,000.

7:40

Environment and Parks: expense, \$651,209,000; capital investment, \$72,110,000; financial transactions, \$4,019,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$19,619,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Health: expense, \$20,982,469,000; capital investment, \$22,230,000; financial transactions, \$67,819,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$198,357,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$14,157,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$484,358,000; capital investment, \$1,327,268,000; financial transactions, \$36,777,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$1,367,512,000; capital investment, \$9,198,000.

Labour and Immigration: expense, \$220,860,000; capital investment, \$1,150,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$1,482,557,000; capital investment, \$4,104,000; financial transactions, \$48,887,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$455,426,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$19,700,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$611,233,000; capital investment, \$104,720,000; financial transactions, \$10,150,000.

Transportation: expense, \$1,128,536,000; capital investment, \$1,013,507,000; financial transactions, \$99,939,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$240,095,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$1,362,000; contingency and disaster and emergency assistance, \$680,000,000.

Madam Speaker, that concludes my report.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Well done, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report?

[The voice vote indicated that the committee report was concurred in]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:43 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer                      Loewen                      Savage

Allard	Long	Sawhney
Amery	Luan	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schulz
Copping	Milliken	Schweitzer
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Shandro
Glubish	Nicolaides	Stephan
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Hunter	Pon	van Dijken
Jones	Reid	Wilson
LaGrange	Rosin	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Dach	Gray	Sabir
Dang	Nielsen	Shepherd
Deol	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley		

Totals:                      For – 36                      Against – 10

[The committee report was concurred in]

8:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would now like to alert hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(7) following the Committee of Supply's report on the main estimates, the Assembly immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for the introduction of the appropriation bill.

## Introduction of Bills

### Bill 24

#### Appropriation Act, 2019

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 24, Appropriation Act, 2019. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a first time]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 22

#### Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to speak to the last of the three pieces of budget implementation legislation, Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. This bill deals primarily with Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions. As I did with the other budget implementation bills, I begin with changes in my own ministry, Treasury Board and Finance. Bill 22 proposes a number of changes that will enable the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, better known as AIMCo, to deliver even better results on behalf of all Albertans. AIMCo currently manages an investment portfolio of approximately \$110 billion. This is public money. It includes Alberta government funds and endowments as well as most of Alberta's public-sector pension plans.

First, the legislation would require the Alberta teachers' retirement fund, or ATRF, to use AIMCo as its investment manager. The ATRF currently holds approximately \$17 billion in assets that are managed and administered directly by the ATRF

board. I want to emphasize that investing these assets with AIMCo will not impact teachers' pension benefits, and it will not affect the ATRF board's control of the plan. The ATRF board of trustees would still set investment policy and guidelines while AIMCo would be responsible for day-to-day investment decisions within the parameters set by the board.

Second, Bill 22 will require the Workers' Compensation Board, or WCB, and Alberta Health Services, AHS, to use AIMCo to manage their long-term investments. AIMCo would manage approximately \$10.7 billion on behalf of the WCB. These funds would continue to be used exclusively for injured workers, and there will be no changes to workers' compensation benefits because of this bill. For AHS, AIMCo would manage approximately \$2.3 billion of investments. Again, this change is only about the management of investments in the fund. AHS will still have full discretion of how they use their invested funds, and health outcomes would not be impacted because of this proposed change.

Finally, Bill 22 would also remove the option in the Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act for various pension plans to use fund managers other than AIMCo. This applies to Alberta pension services; the local authorities pension plan, also known as LAPP; the public service pension plan, known as PSPP; and the special forces pension plan, known as SFPP. These funds are already managed by AIMCo, and altogether these changes would add around \$30 billion to AIMCo's investment portfolio.

A larger pool of investments would allow AIMCo to realize greater economies of scale, increasing the returns and lowering administrative costs on a range of public investments. Ultimately, consolidating pensions, funds, and endowments under AIMCo's management reflects our commitment to make government more efficient.

Bill 22 also proposes changes to the LAPP, PSPP, and SFPP to ensure that these pension plans follow industry best practices. These changes include requiring board appointments based on competency as well as representation and reinstates the Auditor General as the auditor for these pension plans.

Next, the bill will amend the ATB Financial Act to include a statement of ATB's financial mandate. As a provincially owned institution ATB needs to deliver the best possible value on behalf of taxpayers. Through Bill 22 ATB Financial would be mandated to manage its business in a commercial and cost-effective manner, turning risk adjusted rates of return that are similar or better than returns of comparable financial institutions in both the short term and long term and to avoid undue risk of loss by prudently managing its business, which includes establishing and implementing relevant plans, policies, standards, and procedures. These changes would improve ATB Financial's strategic alignment with the government's fiscal priorities.

Lastly, for Treasury Board and Finance we would dissolve the Alberta Capital Finance Authority. This group was responsible for granting and administering loans to local authorities. With its dissolution these responsibilities would be transferred directly to the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance, which will continue to provide low-cost loans to local authorities. The function of the Alberta Capital Finance Authority will continue uninterrupted, but we would achieve savings and reduce financial risks by bringing this program directly into government.

Next, I will discuss changes in the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General that return powers to the Chief Electoral Officer as they existed prior to the previous government's 2018 changes. This does not eliminate the Election Commissioner role but simply consolidates functions under the overall authority of the nonpartisan Chief Electoral Officer. The reunion of these two roles in a single independent office will bring Alberta back in line with

the model used in Alberta until 2018 and used in every other province. This reconsolidation of the office of the Election Commissioner into the office of the Chief Electoral Officer is an administrative measure intended to eliminate redundancy and streamline the function and the operation and implementation of Alberta's election legislation.

Moving on to Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, Bill 22 would dissolve two boards and one fund. First, the Alberta Sport Connection and its board would be dissolved. Programs offered by the Alberta Sport Connection would be incorporated into services offered by the ministry. Moving the Alberta Sport Connection programs into the ministry would better leverage existing government resources, thereby cutting costs and reducing red tape. Government's previous funding commitments to the 2020 Alberta Winter Games in Airdrie, the 2020 Alberta Summer Games in Lethbridge, and the 2022 Arctic Winter Games in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo would remain unchanged.

Next, we would dissolve the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation along with the historic resources fund. No programs will be affected as we would move the services and funding into the ministry. Owners of designated historic resources would still be able to apply for heritage grants through the same channels. This change would save an estimated \$200,000 annually.

One change we would make in Health is streamlining how the mental health review panel operates. Bill 22 proposes changing the panel size from four to three. It would also allow reviews to be conducted by video conference. Alberta is one of the only Canadian jurisdictions that requires four members for a panel hearing. The three-person panel will still have a registered psychiatrist to ensure the best possible medical advice. These changes would improve services for patients by streamlining the process and reducing unnecessary administration.

Moving on to Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Bill 22 would dissolve the Alberta Competitiveness Council and repeal the Alberta Competitiveness Act. The council has been inactive since 2011 and does not have a CEO or any employees. The proposed change is in line with government's review of public agencies to reduce waste, duplication, and nonessential spending.

Next, we are proposing two ways for Economic Development, Trade and Tourism boards to run more efficiently. Bill 22 would remove the requirement for a minimum of eight members on the Northern Alberta Development Council and reduce the maximum number of members from 10 to seven. Second, we would bring the same change to Travel Alberta's board: eliminate the minimum requirement of seven board members and reduce the overall maximum membership. A smaller board is more cost-effective and can be run more efficiently.

#### 8:10

As part of this bill we will also be dissolving the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, which has been inactive for more than three years and has no current membership. Through strict licensing and service standards our government already ensures that facilities serving vulnerable Albertans offer high-quality care. By dissolving this inactive committee, we are reducing duplication so that we can continue to focus resources on the front-line services Albertans rely on.

Lastly, we would dissolve the Campus Alberta Strategic Directions Committee. This committee was established by the Post-secondary Learning Act to provide advice to the minister respecting issues related to Campus Alberta. However, it's been inactive for nearly four years and does not have any appointed members. The Minister of Advanced Education continues to convene regular meetings with postsecondary board chairs.



Madam Speaker, those are the changes being proposed in the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. I appreciate the House's time and attention to all of these complex pieces of legislation. Our fiscal situation is challenging, but we've identified immediate changes that can help get us back on track. We're doing this all transparently and with respect for Alberta's taxpayers.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 22.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to speak against Bill 22. Certainly, we have seen this NDP opposition take a very principled stand against this bill that proposes an unlawful action, an act of self-dealing, and ultimately, the obstruction of justice through firing the Election Commissioner.

Now, we have already heard from the Leader of the Official Opposition, and we have heard from many of our caucus members that we oppose Bill 22. We do so because our leader has set the example. She has the distinction of being the longest serving member of this House. She is the longest serving member of this House because she has never given up, because she will always lead her caucus to stand up to the powerful, because she expects her caucus to rise to the same level of integrity that she has set for us, because she believes that Alberta can be better than this, which is an affront to the rule of law. She believes that we are better than this. She has led her caucus to oppose this bill because Grant Notley raised her to, and I only hope to raise my own children with the bravery and honesty that Grant Notley raised his own kids.

The NDP opposition opposes this bill because the foundation of a democracy is the rule of law and that the law applies to everyone and that laws get made out of the consent of the governed via the outcome of free and fair elections.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona's first act when she was elected as head of Executive Council was to begin the restoration of democracy after 44 years ended in rot and entitlement. Her first bill was to begin to clean that up. Why did we do that? Because of the 2015 election campaign. The prelude to it was shady nomination races. The prelude to it was the firing of an Election Commissioner, the elections officer, the very one that this government is now going back to those PC days to fire. We had partisan returning officers in our past. That's what you got when you lost a nomination race; you got to run the election.

It was always clear that we had to do more to clean up elections, particularly after this very same elections officer, an officer of the Legislature, was fired by the PC government. Why? He issued a report on illegal campaign contributions. Alberta Justice didn't prosecute a single one. He found nine cases. He made 100 recommendations, including – get this – regulating leadership contests. For this he was fired by the Conservatives, and he had to go to court to get his severance. The same guy, as it turns out.

So we knew that there were Conservatives who wanted to flout the laws. There was a long history of this in Alberta, and that is why – that is why – the officer running an election was split from the person receiving complaints and following up on those complaints so that we could uphold the rule of law and ensure free and fair elections in this province. Since that time the Election Commissioner has entertained over 800 complaints. This has been a busy man. He is not twiddling his thumbs over there as an officer of the Legislature: 800 complaints.

Why do we care? Well, we care because he has before him an active investigation. Let's talk about what that active investigation entails. On July 19, 2017, a fellow named Jeff Callaway met with the Premier of this province and his campaign manager to discuss the leadership race. Weissenberger admitted the meeting happened. Then Mr. Callaway collects \$60,000 in unexplained donations that were wired into an RBC bank account and then furnished to other people to make unlawful contributions. It is an offence to furnish money to someone else to make donations, yet this happened, and it happened with the knowledge of at least the Premier's director of issues management. We know this because the courts have told us this through documents.

When does the Election Commissioner first come onto our radar? Well, it's on January 27, 2019. He confirms that the office is looking into the UCP leadership race, and here's his first utterance to the media. He is concerned about obstructions to the investigation where someone has attempted to, quote, dissuade co-operation with investigators and hinder the proper disposition of matters. I wonder who that could be.

Then Cam Davies is issued a \$15,000 fine. Karen Brown is issued a \$3,500 fine. Darcy McAllister is fined \$8,000. Lenore Eaton has been told that she may serve up to two years in jail. Happy Mann is fined \$9,000. Then, after all these fines, what happens? Jeff Callaway files a lawsuit against the Election Commissioner, trying to obstruct his work – we have a long history of this – seeking an injunction to halt the investigation into his campaign. Now, who would do that? Who indeed? The current principal adviser to the Health minister, Ivan Bernardo, tells the media that he is in fact the person who is acting for the clients to stop the Election Commissioner's work from moving on. Bernardo suggests that the Election Commissioner should pause the investigation. Well, we're doing more than a pause now, so I guess Bernardo got his way.

Then Jeff Park is fined \$7,000. Amy Davies is fined \$3,000. Lenore Eaton is fined \$7,600. Christopher Maitland is fined \$4,500. Christopher Scaee is fined \$1,750. Randy Kerr is fined \$10,000. Darren Thompson is fined \$5,250. Jennifer Thompson is fined \$3,900. Jeff Callaway is fined another \$70,000. Well, it's a good thing Bernardo got a job with the Health minister because he sure wasn't a very good lawyer. On July 30 the Court of Queen's Bench rules that the Election Commissioner was the successful party on the application and is entitled to an award of costs. So it's good that he got a nice, juicy appointment with Executive Council after his work because he sure didn't shine as a lawyer on this file. Now they've applied to the Court of Queen's Bench for a judicial review. Of course, they've lost Bernardo, but they'd better call Saul because now they've got Jonathan Denis on the file. That is fantastic.

Well, why do we care? We know that the Premier orchestrated this unlawful campaign. We know that there have been consequences levied by this Election Commissioner. We know that people close to the Premier have already attempted to obstruct this investigation.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader has called a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Allegations against a Member**

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West just accused the Premier of conducting an illegal campaign, accused the Premier of Alberta of doing illegal actions. The facts are that in no way is that

true. The hon. member cannot accuse a sitting member of this Legislature of conducting illegal acts. It's not factual, and it certainly is going to cause disorder in the House. It is accusing an hon. member of this place of something that is just not true.

8:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that in context of what was being said, I understand this to have been a reference to allegations which have been made, fines which have been levied in multiple instances. Certainly, those allegations were made about a leadership race in which the Premier was a contestant. I understand the hon. member to have been speaking directly about those things. In many cases those fines have been levied, so I would say that those allegations have been in some instances proven. Certainly, in some instances there's evidence. I would say, overall, that this is a matter of debate, but I would respect it if you were to caution us to indicate that that was an alleged action as opposed to . . .

**The Speaker:** I'm prepared to rule. I can't imagine that you would provide any context that would be of assistance to me, but it is, of course, your right to provide additional comments.

I agree with the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View that caution is necessary, particularly around what is going to be a very sensitive evening, just my speculation, when making allegations about what members of the House have or have not done. Certainly, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West referred to a number of reports that are factual. I also would agree with the Government House Leader that there have been no fines levied, so as such making an allegation about what the Premier has or hasn't done will require some delicacy. I encourage the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West to be cautious with the words that she uses around making allegations about any member of this Assembly.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I ought to have said "alleged." Much to *Hansard's* dismay, I speak too fast, and I spoke too fast over my notes. So thank you.

Back to the point, we know that people close to the Premier have already attempted to stop this investigation. We know that they're appealing the fines, and there are tens of thousands of dollars at stake. We know, in fact, that there is \$211,000 at stake. There are a number of people who haven't paid their fines yet. So what happens when these investigations are dropped? Their friends don't have to pay their fines anymore.

We also know that there are a number of members of this government that are implicated in these investigations. We know that the MLA for Calgary-East has been interviewed, the MLA for Calgary-Elbow and Minister of Justice has been interviewed, and the MLA for Calgary-Edgemont and Minister of Infrastructure has been interviewed. The MLA for Chestermere-Strathmore and Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, the MLA for Calgary-Beddington and Minister of Seniors and Housing, the MLA for Calgary-Foothills and Associate Minister of Mental Health Addictions, the MLA for Cardston-Siksika, and the MLA for Sherwood Park have all been interviewed in this investigation that they are now seeking to undermine by firing the Election Commissioner.

Mostly, what we know about this is that it is clear that this government is willing to take the hit on firing the Election Commissioner – the public opinion hit, the bad headlines; the reviews are in, and people are not happy – because clearly the

alternative is much worse. We don't know yet what that is, but it has to be.

Now, I hope that the members across the way take a moment of pause. Not all of the members are caught up in this web, yet they will have to go home and answer questions as to whether they, too, are brazen. They are associated with a strongman; they are turfing the watchdog; they are politically interfering in the work of the Election Commissioner: those are just the last 24 hours of headlines, Mr. Speaker. They will have to answer questions from their own constituents.

They will get wrapped up in this even if they had nothing to do with it. Was it worth it? Is it worth it? Perhaps just speak up at the next emergency caucus meeting on Bill 22. Perhaps just speak out and say: no; let's press pause on firing the Election Commissioner because it is an affront to the rule of law. Caucus members would be heroes with the people if they did it. We'll see if anyone has the courage to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the public, certainly, and our own constituents will learn how much the NDP caucus cares about democracy in the coming days. They'll learn about how much we care about the rule of law and the integrity of elections. We will use every tool available to us to stop this. This is an odious attempt to undermine lawful election processes. This is an affront to who we are as Canadians. This posits that if you want to skirt the rules on leadership campaigns, you can absolutely do so because we'll just fire the guy that is investigating you after the fact.

Now, here's one of the reasons why we care so much about this. Here's the difference between folks who will just do politics because they have some sort of venal streak in them of a win at all cost sort of mentality. Here's the difference. Here's why we care so much about the integrity of elections and the rule of law in elections. Every vote matters. We all know that when we're out campaigning. Why does every vote matter? Because every person matters. Every person matters. On this side of the House it doesn't matter who you are; you will follow the law. On this side of the House it doesn't matter who you are; your X means the same thing in that secret ballot box. It doesn't matter who you are; you should not be able to buy yourself an election or favours or freedom from consequences, which is what we see with this bill. We will defend that principle of equality, the rule of law, and an election that reflects the will of the people, where no one is above due process. That is the approach of this NDP caucus to Bill 22, Mr. Speaker.

Now, it's very clear to me that some of the commentators who have indicated that the UCP believes it is immune to political fallout are hitting a nerve there. They do in fact believe they are immune to it. They do in fact believe they get a free pass because they won an election. Well, that's not how it works. No one is above the law. No one gets to skirt election rules. No one gets to break those rules, make illegal contributions, or derive a benefit, a tax benefit even, from making donations of funds that were given to them.

Now, Bill 22 is about much more than this. You know, the Finance minister earlier tried to make it sound really boring because there were a whole bunch of other things in it, just sort of skimming over the fact that it is a direct attack on the rule of law and an ongoing investigation and an open door to destruction of evidence, to stopping all of these thousands of dollars' worth of fines, to simply stonewalling anyone from getting to the truth. I think that Albertans are not having it. Albertans are very keen watchers of governments that treat them with arrogance and entitlement, and they can change their minds quite quickly, in my experience, when they see the footprints of arrogance and entitlement and hubris.

You know, the Government House Leader and Minister of Environment and Parks is laughing because he's arrogant, I guess. I don't know. I don't know why he's laughing, if he thinks it's fun.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order has been called by the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), imputing false motives. You know, throwing shots at the Government House Leader, Sundre's favourite son, is just inappropriate in this Chamber. It's causing disorder. I recognize that this is a bit of a heated discussion tonight. That's maybe a bit of an understatement. I would encourage the Member for Lethbridge-West to maybe retract her remarks and apologize.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, keeping in mind that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West did say that the hon. Government House Leader is arrogant.

8:30

**Ms Ganley:** I think what she said was: "He's arrogant, [perhaps] . . . I don't know why he's laughing." I mean, it has a certain amount of subtext to it. I think that perhaps we can all move on from this one, knowing that the hon. member will not do it again.

**The Speaker:** I think that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West will recognize that the Speaker is providing a significant swath here this evening given that when we say that a member is arrogant, even if we provide a qualifier, it's quite likely unparliamentary. But we'll provide an additional caution to her, keeping in mind that this is now the second in less than 20 minutes. I hope that she will revise her definition of what caution is.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Phillips:** Sure. Well, I was talking about, Mr. Speaker, Albertans' limited patience with arrogance, entitlement, and hubris. I'd like to read into the record some observations around this matter from a piece posted earlier this evening in *Maclean's* magazine.

It harkens back to the dismissive shrug with which United Conservatives greeted the scandalous revelations that came out about them during the provincial campaign . . . "Voters don't care about that stuff," Conservatives told me repeatedly last spring.

In a budget omnibus bill, United Conservatives will fold the election commissioner's office into Elections Alberta, effectively terminating [him] when the bill passes. This . . . does create uncertainty around the future of Callaway's court challenge . . . [The Premier's] allies say the investigations can all proceed . . .

. . . It's also true that if Donald Trump had the chutzpah to fire special prosecutor Robert Mueller, his probe would have . . . continued under somebody else's guidance.

But would it have had the same weight?

Yes, jobs are still scarce, Trans Mountain pipeline construction is in its still-uncertain infancy . . . But if Albertans give [the Premier] a pass on this strongman maneuver, they've signalled that he can get away with pretty much anything.

A strongman manoeuvre. I wouldn't want in a democracy to be part of a party that was led by what was referred to as a strongman manoeuvre. That's really not what anybody got elected for, and I know many of the members in this House deplore a strongman in other parts of the world. We were at the Holodomor memorial today. We have deplored some of the actions that we have seen in Hong Kong. We have deplored, certainly, the invasion by a strongman. We have deplored the invasion of Turkey into northern

Syria and what has happened to the Kurds: strongman manoeuvres. I don't think that anyone wants to be associated with that kind of language, yet those are the reviews for Bill 22. Strongman: there's a real connotation to that word that I don't believe we want to be part of.

Now, the Election Commissioner himself was rather surprised at this development. He learned of his dismissal, his firing, by way of the media yesterday. You know, it wasn't a tweet, like people get fired south of the border, but it was close. He was "concerned about the potential negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process." Well, that is not a ringing endorsement. That is not, Mr. Speaker, any kind of corroboration for the claim – the claim – for which the government has provided no evidence, that this is something that will simply reduce redundancy. This, in fact, doesn't show any of that good faith, when he learned of it in the media. He also details how many complaints he got and how needed his role is.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we deplore this bill. We deplore its attacks on pensions and other initiatives as well, but I think that what Albertans are about to see is the fact that the NDP caucus will stand up for their democracy, for principles, for integrity in the face of anyone or any action like this that seeks to undermine it and undermine the rule of law.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre; however, I have a list rolling, so we'll go back to the government side, and then we'll return to the opposition side.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is not yet available, so as such, the hon. the Government House Leader, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for an opportunity to rise in regard to Bill 22. Several parts of Bill 22 are worth discussing this evening. I'm sure several of my colleagues will rise in short order to discuss several important components of Bill 22 and why it's an important piece of legislation and why it deserves the support of all members of this Chamber as it works through the Chamber. I only rise today to respond primarily to some of the misrepresentation of facts that continue to be presented by the opposition, from the NDP, in regard to this important piece of legislation.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West just went through a rather lengthy tirade of not very factual statements, Mr. Speaker. She stated – and I want to unpack some of this for the members of the Chamber – that investigations would stop, stated that investigations somehow would not go forward, and the hon. member knows full well that that is not the case. The hon. member knows full well that investigations will remain and take place through the Chief Electoral Officer and the Election Commissioner office, which will work with the Chief Electoral Officer and continue with any investigations that take place, in fact, moving the investigative process even further away from a political body because currently the Election Commissioner reports to this Chamber through the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

The Election Commissioner will now report to the CEO of Elections Alberta and will continue any investigations – that's a fact – as they have for over 100 years in this province, until the NDP moved forward with their changes to change our system, different than any other system in the entire country under their mandate, Mr. Speaker, at which time, certainly, the legacy members of the current government caucus who were in opposition fought against because they thought that it was the wrong process for our province. In fact,

the Government House Leader of the day, Brian Mason, our former colleague – and I hope he's enjoying his time in his vineyard in Kelowna in the Okanagan there tonight – had to move time allocation and closure to be able to get that through because the opposition of the day certainly was very, very clear that they disagreed with breaking the election system into two in our province.

The person who provided some of that advice, interestingly enough, some of the information that we determined that it made no sense to break apart the management of our election system and the policing of our election system, was actually the current Election Commissioner, who, in a white paper that he provided to the Northwest Territories government, I believe in 2016, Mr. Speaker – I referred to it in question period today – made it clear within that white paper that separating the election system into two separate organizations and not having it run as one was probably ineffective, certainly not cost-effective, and took the organization in two different directions where it wasn't working together. This bill simply does this.

8:40

The second thing that the hon. member said seemed to be implying that fines that were already issued by the Election Commissioner would somehow not have to be paid or would go away. That, Mr. Speaker, I want to again reiterate, is not factual. Again, the NDP has trouble with facts occasionally – I do know that – but in this case they're definitely not being factual. Fines have been issued. The Election Commissioner's office remains in place, will continue to do its work, just now in partnership and back with the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta, which, again, has been there for a hundred years.

The fake outrage from the NDP is certainly ridiculous. I did enjoy a little bit of time to have the opportunity to be able to call back home to a few people over the supper break and spend a little bit of time explaining to them what was taking place in the Legislature today, and I can tell you that the majority of people that you talk to in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre are just tired of the NDP's fake outrage. They were tired of it in the last election, which is why in my constituency they got something like 7 or 8 per cent of the vote and the United Conservative Party was about 82 per cent. I recognize that west-central Alberta is not the traditional heartland for the NDP, to be fair. I don't know if the NDP has ever broken 10 per cent in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. It's not a place they spend a lot of time campaigning.

But I can tell you that on coffee row in Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, and Rimbey they're just shaking their heads about the NDP continuing their tactics of fear and smear, continuing to come into the Chamber and say that the Election Commissioner office won't exist when it will, continuing to say that investigations won't take place when they will, continuing to say that there'll be political interference in investigations, Mr. Speaker, when we know that the system will still remain under the care of an independent officer of the Legislature who reports to this Chamber, an independent officer, by the way, who was last appointed when the NDP was in power in this place. In my experience as a member of this Chamber, Mr. Resler, the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta, has always acted in a nonpartisan way and has done an excellent job in his capacity as the Chief Electoral Officer. I am not aware of any concerns from the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices or from this Chamber in regard to his performance and any reason why we should in any way question his credibility or his ability to be able to make sure that investigations go forward.

The last comments that I would like to talk about are in regard to some of the unfortunate comments that Member for Lethbridge-

West made in regard to the hon. the Premier of Alberta, indicating that he is under investigation by Elections Alberta. At no time have I seen anything that indicates that the Premier of Alberta is under investigation from Elections Alberta. I do certainly acknowledge that Mr. Callaway's campaign appears to have been under a lengthy investigation by Elections Alberta. Again, if any member of this Chamber, including the Premier, is under investigation by Elections Alberta, those investigations will be protected within the legislation that the hon. the Finance minister has brought forward to this place.

But to stand up inside this place and indicate that an individual of this House is under investigation when they don't know that is appalling, Mr. Speaker, and not becoming of any member of this Chamber. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West then went on to name individual cabinet ministers, including the Minister of Justice and others – I didn't write them all down as she was saying them – and then indicated that because they had responded to interviews, being requested to – in those interviews they were told that they were not under investigation, clearly told that they were not under investigation and were happy to be able to provide any information that they may have been able to provide. I was not in those interviews, obviously, but I do know that those members were told that they were not under investigation. But then they have to come to this Chamber, where they represent their constituents, and hear from the Member for Lethbridge-West accusing them of being under investigation even after they had been told that they were not under investigation: again, very unbecoming of a member of this Chamber and very disappointing.

But it goes to the credibility of the NDP when they continue to misrepresent facts to Albertans each and every day, stating things like, "Investigations will not be protected" or "The Election Commissioner office will not exist" or "This will now be run by political offices, not by independent officers." Mr. Speaker, Albertans lose faith each and every day in their Official Opposition, and one great example of that is this: as you look at the coverage – the Member for Lethbridge-West referred to coverage this evening – you see over and over the Official Opposition referring and stating, outright stating, that closure and time allocation has been moved on this legislation already and that there will only be three hours of debate on this legislation, which is not factual.

In fact, I happen to know that unless the NDP intends to allow us to have the vote on this sometime before midnight tonight, I can tell you as the Government House Leader that I intend to keep us debating on Bill 22 well into the wee hours of the night to give the Official Opposition as much time as they can on the second reading of this legislation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that by the end of this evening, we will have already well surpassed the amount of time of debate that the NDP are trying to tell Albertans that they get on this legislation, again misrepresenting facts to Albertans. That's why the NDP has no credibility left, because they just immediately go to fear and smear, won't stick with facts, spend their time focused on ridiculous allegations, and it's disappointing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West spent a lot of time accusing people on this side of the aisle of horrific things that, in fact, are not true and then went on to sit on a very high horse and say that the Official Opposition and the NDP in this Chamber are perfect and they don't do anything wrong and that this is just the most appalling thing ever. I've already established why it's not, but that is very rich coming from a member who sits in a caucus whose own leader has confirmed that there were two investigations into sexual misconduct of her caucus in which something was found, and that leader has refused to even declare whether those current members actually sit in those benches today. That's confirmed by their leader.

Now, I won't do the same thing that the Member for Lethbridge-West did, stand up and start naming people based on rumours that I've seen on the Internet on those people because that would be inappropriate for a member of this place, so I won't do that. But for them to stand up here and have the nerve to say something like that when the Member for Lethbridge-West knows that she is sitting in the benches, possibly – she may even know who they are; I don't know – with two people that her leader has confirmed – confirmed – were involved in serious sexual misconduct, confirmed by an internal investigation by the NDP. That hon. member should maybe have a talk with her leader and her caucus about whether that's appropriate.

As the debate goes on tonight, I do hope that we talk about other aspects of Bill 22. It's an important piece of legislation, and ample opportunity will be given to debate it, but we should stick to the facts. We should not be misrepresenting facts and confusing Albertans. Let me be very, very clear that the Election Commissioner office remains, reports are protected, investigations will continue. The Chief Electoral Officer will remain an independent legislative officer of this place, answering through the same processes, through the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and upwards to this Chamber, not to the Premier, not to cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, you and I both know that's not how it works despite the NDP wanting to accuse the Premier of that. Those are the facts. No matter how loud the NDP lies . . .

**Mr. Shepherd:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and apologize.

No matter how loud the NDP misrepresents facts to Albertans when it comes to this legislation, they can't make what they're saying, in fact, actually be factual, Mr. Speaker, because it's not, just like when they continue to go to this Chamber and say that there are only three hours of debate on a bill when there's going to be significantly more than three hours of debate on a bill. It's just not something that the majority of Albertans are buying anymore.

It's got nothing to do with arrogance, what happened in the last election. You know the communities that we come from. They wouldn't accept people acting in arrogant ways. In fact, that's why they rejected what they thought the NDP government was being, significantly arrogant. It's got to do with facts. The Election Commissioner is protected; investigations are protected: those are the facts. There is no political interference with this.

I predict, of course, that the NDP are not going to be able to get focused on any other portion of this important piece of legislation. Ultimately, the decision will be made by the 87 members of this Legislature, and then we'll move on to the next piece of legislation. The NDP will continue their tactics of fear and smear. Look, I've made no secret: I think that's why they're on their way not only to not be the Official Opposition and not government but, next, to be the third party and, I predict, at some point not to even have a seat in this Chamber, because of the fear and smear tactics that they've chosen to do. That's why Albertans rejected it.

I know that the members that were re-elected for the NDP inside this Chamber – I congratulate them for that – haven't taken the time to reflect on why all their colleagues lost their jobs. It's because of this fear and smear tactics, the ridiculousness of this NDP opposition. I do encourage them to stop misrepresenting facts to Albertans.

8:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we call the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment for the member.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate rising following the hon. House leader in his own rather lengthy tirade, that was certainly rife with a broad range of misrepresentations of facts and certainly had a large lack of factual statements, as he himself attributed to the Member for Lethbridge-West. Amongst them, I would note his laughable claim that the firing of the Election Commissioner in the process of moving that position under the Chief Electoral Officer, in fact, is a good thing because it removes him further from political influence. The hon. House leader indeed made the claim that the Election Commissioner currently reports to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

Having served as the chair of that committee, indeed I know and yourself, Mr. Speaker, being well informed, as obviously the Government House Leader is not, about the actual operations of officers of the Legislature, that they do not report to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, none of them, including the Election Commissioner. They are appointed by this House. They respond and are responsible to this House and can only be removed or appointed by this House. If that is what the Government House Leader considers to be political interference, then every single officer of the Legislature, from the Auditor General to the Ethics Commissioner, all the way down the chain, suffers from a similar amount of political interference. So let's be clear. What this government is choosing to do with this bill is not improving the independence of any officer of this Legislature. They're removing a significant level of independence from the position of the Election Commissioner.

Now, the hon. House leader also made the claim that the Member for Lethbridge-West said that current members – and she named several here, indeed, some who are serving as ministers – were under investigation. That is, in fact, not the case. I invite him to take a look perhaps at the Blues or *Hansard* when that is released, and he can see that she clearly indicated that they merely had been interviewed as part of ongoing investigations both by the Election Commissioner and the RCMP into members of the governing party, investigations which have been duly noted in multiple media reports. As yet, I have not seen the lawsuits of defamation, so I am assuming that those reported facts indeed stand as facts as reflected by the Member for Lethbridge-West, which are far from what the Government House Leader suggested as being rumours on the Internet. It's what is known, Mr. Speaker, as journalism, though I appreciate that perhaps, given some sources of media which seem to be popular amongst some members of government at times, they may not quite understand.

That said, I appreciate the opportunity tonight to speak to Bill 22. You know, Mr. Speaker, every day during question period and at times during debate I have the perhaps somewhat dubious honour of listening to some members of government offer their opinions of myself and my colleagues and our questions that we bring to this House on behalf of Albertans. I have the fortune, I suppose, of sitting quite close to several of them. Indeed, the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka tends to be particularly colourful. But indeed it's not an unfamiliar thing here during the day for me to be told by these members that we are terrible people, that we are, in fact, socialists. Just for the record I have never actually even read a book by Karl Marx. I'm not a man of political philosophy or having studied political science. It seems that, indeed, at times members of the government seem to think that we've done some incredibly terrible things, suggestions that we would allow a community such as Fort McMurray to burn. Apparently, they have the belief that we

would somehow intentionally attempt to destroy an entire industry or economy.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that their opinion of our Election Commissioner, Mr. Lorne Gibson – well, as this came up for discussion today and as it was raised during question period, indeed these members to my right were pretty clear about their opinion of Mr. Gibson as they laughed at the concerns that we raised here in this House. Indeed, we've had discussions of arrogance and entitlement. The word "smug" comes to mind. That is what I've been seeing from members of this government in discussing what is a profound change.

What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker: I have not seen a single member of the media, individuals who have been observing politics in this province for, in some cases, decades, who have a deep knowledge of the history and the actions of governments in this place – not a single one of them dismissed this as something laughable. Indeed, aside from those who are directly affiliated with the government party, with the UCP, their direct partisan friends and allies, every single political commentator I've seen is calling out the arrogance, the entitlement, the utter disregard for democratic convention that this government is demonstrating in this action to fire the very Election Commissioner who is currently investigating multiple participants in their leadership race, spiralling ever closer towards the Premier himself.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have yet to run into a single Albertan that finds this a laughing matter, that considers this a small thing. I'll tell you that I've been beginning to receive a number of e-mails already. The nights that I've been out, last night when I was out in the community, indeed, people that I've run into today: this is being raised, this is being discussed across the country. This is on national news. This is what this government wants to represent for us here in our province.

Indeed, what I heard today from these members here to my right is that, in their view, Mr. Gibson is a partisan appointee, Mr. Gibson, who has never held a political membership, to the best of my knowledge, in his life, a man who has been absolutely scrupulous in all of his work, to the point that the Government House Leader feels that he will try to defend this policy by quoting a white paper from Mr. Gibson as an expert on electoral politics and indeed, particularly, electoral financing. Yet it is the allegations of members of this House that Mr. Gibson is compromised, that in his work investigating illegal campaign donations within the very sphere of influence of the Premier himself, involving a kamikaze campaign, which the Premier has denied on multiple occasions but, again, which we have seen reputable journalists and media in this province repeatedly bringing forth evidence of – there, Mr. Speaker, are your misrepresentations of facts, the denials that we continue to hear from these government members.

I suppose that this level of partisanship, of mockery, of telling themselves what terrible, misguided, awful people myself and my colleagues must be: perhaps that's what it takes to be able to screw up the courage to assuage your conscience to vote for something as reprehensible as this section of this bill.

Indeed, members of this government today tried to tell me that this bill did not in fact fire the Election Commissioner. Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. Right here in Bill 22, section 13(11)(5):

Any employment contract between the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the person who, immediately before the coming into force of this section, held the office of Election Commissioner under this Act is terminated on the coming into force of this section.

That means he's fired. He is fired upon this bill coming into force.

9:00

Now, the fact that he may, if the Chief Electoral Officer should choose, be rehired does not negate the fact that the government is passing a bill to fire the individual who is currently investigating a kamikaze campaign, thousands of dollars of illegal campaign donations, whose information, that he found in the course of his investigations, has gone on to spark RCMP investigations into potential electoral fraud, Mr. Speaker, involving complex voting schemes, potentially fraudulent e-mails, again reaching into the very circles in and around the Premier himself.

Mr. Speaker, it is not my job to afford this government and these members any benefit of the doubt. That is not why I'm here, and that is not what I am asked to do on behalf of my constituents. Indeed, they are making it quite clear that that is not what they are wanting me to do on this bill. And I dare say that if these members actually sat down and had the conversation with the constituents in their own constituencies according to the actual facts, their constituents would not be big fans either. Yet these members are choosing to laugh and to mock in their attempt to screw up the courage to vote for a bill that, frankly, insults and tramples on the trust that their constituents have placed on them to act with integrity and uphold rather than undermine the very democratic institutions that gave them their seat in this House. There is no denying that there is a preponderance of evidence that indicates there was, at the very least, some incredibly shady trickery involved in the very race by which the Premier became the leader of his party and went on to gain the premiership. But, apparently, his members are okay with that. That's how politics gets played.

Mr. Speaker, I ran because I wanted to see politics done better in this province, because I was tired of the arrogance and entitlement I had seen from previous governments. Indeed, there are members of this current government that were part of those governments and saw this the first time around yet somehow are willing to sit here and do it all again. As the Leader of the Official Opposition said today on national television, this goes to the very heart of Canada's Constitution, the separation of the judiciary, the executive, and the legislative lines, which these members seem repeatedly content to blur.

The Member for Lethbridge-West gave a lengthy explanation of the many questionable actions in which members of this governing party have been involved, which come close to and touch on so many people intimately involved with this party, indeed, at this time with this government and with members that are sitting here in this House, that have led to a total of more than \$211,000 worth of fines that have been levied.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is not my job to give this government any benefit of the doubt, and I can assure you that every one of these members would not do that if the shoe were on the other foot. They would not for a moment hesitate to call this kind of an action out. Indeed, we see how far they are willing to go with their conspiracy theories around environmental organizations attacking the province and taking on other things in their misrepresentation, as we continue to see as we discuss this bill.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of questions for the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, but just before I get started, the implication that Mr. Resler, the Chief Electoral Officer, is not capable of doing his job or having a significant role in being able to carry out any investigations is quite despicable. In recalling this discussion previously, when I had the

privilege of being in opposition, the arguments around this were quite heated at that time as well, and I can remember consistently having the discussion.

Actually, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre was the chair at that time and did a really good job of actually mitigating a lot of the very, very great debate that went on around the necessity for having a commissioner at that time. It was very interesting to see the disrespect that was intended and implied towards the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Resler, that he was incapable of doing the job that was set out for him, which, by definition, within the definition of what the commissioner does, he already does. The whole discussion around this was around a redundant job, a redundant position already held by an extremely competent human being who, within his capacity over the years of doing this, had already shown his ability to do so and who in the future, with the legislation that could pass possibly here in the next little while, will continue to do the work that has already been set out, including the investigations that are already under way.

So I go through this. You know, there were so many things, and I'll get a chance, I'm sure, to talk about this a little bit more. When the contract was negotiated, Mr. Speaker, the opposition was talking about time allocation, and this has been a big part of their discussion. Did you know that the time allocation that was put on this discussion of the motion was one hour? One hour. That was the discussion that we were allowed to have around a duplication of a role, that was obviously a duplication, and also questioning the competency of the Chief Electoral Officer, who already had this position and was extremely, extremely good at his job.

My question for the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is: maybe you could tell me what the job of the Chief Electoral Officer is and why you feel that Mr. Resler is not capable of doing the job that he was sent out to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to answer that question. I would answer it by pointing out that upon the creation of the office of the Election Commissioner, he immediately began receiving a large number of submissions. Indeed, he has spoken many times about the capacity that he has had to have. Now, he has managed very well within the resources he had, but he received a large number of submissions, concerns, complaints, requests for investigation, all of which he has acquitted quite well.

At no point have I suggested that Mr. Resler was not doing his job. I think Mr. Resler was working within the capacity and the resources that he had. With the changes that our government brought in, many of which had been recommended by Mr. Gibson and for which he was fired by a previous Conservative government for daring to even suggest – strengthening oversight of, in particular, I would note, leadership campaigns – there was a great increase in what the expectation was of what would need to be done. So our government decided and determined that having a dedicated officer of the Legislature to uphold and enforce those rules could be of benefit to the people of Alberta, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, it has been.

Now, this government may not like the fact that the majority of wrongdoing and issues that he has found are attached to themselves and their friends and their party – they may choose to view that as partisanship – but I would say, Mr. Speaker, that it is simply Mr. Gibson doing his job, much as Mr. Resler continues to do his, which is running and operating elections in the province of Alberta.

9:10

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are back on the bill. I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika would like to join in the debate.

**Mr. Schow:** I sure would, Mr. Speaker, and I am grateful that you recognized me to speak on this bill. It's an honour to stand up in this Chamber tonight to talk on Bill 22, a really important piece of legislation that I think is really going to achieve one of the ultimate goals of this government, which is to make things leaner, to be more efficient, to be more effective, which is what over a million Albertans asked us to do.

We do have bosses back in our own constituencies, and those bosses have made things very clear to us as we went through the campaigns. It's interesting, as we listen to some of the debate tonight, that I feel like I was almost hearing – I wouldn't say almost. I was hearing a campaign-style speech from the Member for Lethbridge-West, almost invoking an inner Churchill, if you will. Such passion. But what I think she fails to understand is that campaigns aren't won in this Chamber. Campaigns are won out on the doors. Having worked countless campaigns, I'd be happy to consult with the Member for Lethbridge-West on how to run one, because, you know, as someone who has been involved with one at a number of levels, I can certainly share some advice on how to do that.

Like I said, the first one is really, actually consulting your base, consulting those who would actually want to be involved in your campaign, and maybe getting a bit of a team together – a campaign manager and some volunteers – even feeding them some food, which would be a nice option there. But one of the things you don't want to do is go and insult your campaign volunteers or insult those who may actually want to come join your campaign, like the member has done this evening in criticizing our government and the direction we're going and those who voted for us and supported our side. If that member is looking to win a leadership race and draw some supporters from this side onto her side, she might want to actually show a little more respect to those citizens.

Now, I also found it interesting that in talking about this bill, a measure to make Alberta more lean, more effective, that member decided to invoke references to Syria, Hong Kong, and the Holodomor – we commemorated today the 11th anniversary of the act – which was, of course, Stalin's genocide of over 10 million Ukrainians. That kind of reference is completely unacceptable. And if the shoe was on the other foot, I believe that that member would be standing up in outrage over that kind of a comment. To suggest that Bill 22 is even comparable to the atrocity of the Holodomor: Mr. Speaker, I would venture that that's several steps too far.

I also find that when the members opposite are talking about Bill 22, they're only talking about one small portion of a very significant piece of legislation. I mean, if you look at this thing, this is pretty dense stuff. There are about 13 pages that talk about the Election Commissioner whereas the rest actually deals with the overall mandate given to us by Albertans with overwhelming numbers. That's like being the family member at Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner who goes in the fruit salad and just picks out the strawberries. I mean, really, nobody likes that person because, you know, you're just taking one part of the salad. Take the whole thing. Let's have a robust conversation about this bill, not just about the one piece.

I recall when I was living overseas in Russia. When I left, I packed everything, including the kitchen sink. You can imagine that in going away for two years, you think you're going to need all these shirts and pants and belts and shoes and socks and everything else that you think is so essential at the time, and then you get over

there – and for anybody who's gone backpacking over in Europe, you'll know that you can't take everything. I learned that lesson really quickly because I lived in several different cities. I lived in St. Petersburg, right in the centre of the city, I lived in Veliky Novgorod, I lived in Pushkin, and I lived in Peterhof, in some beautiful places in Russia, where I was doing service work, serving the Russian people and cleaning up hospitals and teaching English classes. But through moving from place to place to place, every time I left an apartment, I would leave a number of things behind because I realized it just wasn't necessary. It wasn't going to fit in my suitcase, and I didn't need it to accomplish the goal that I was there to do, which was to serve the people.

Similar to this bill, we have to be lean and look at the things that were outlined by the hon. Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board. I think these are good things that we're doing. You know, we look at AIMCo. It currently manages about \$110 billion, and we've taken a measure to move the ATRF into AIMCo, \$17 billion into AIMCo. Now, there have been a lot of misconceptions about this move, but the reality is that this has no impact on teachers' pensions. This has no impact on the ATRF board control of the funds as the board will still set the investment strategy. It's simple.

So I don't know where this backlash is except for what the NDP might be telling the media, and that is flat out just spin, just misinformation, and I guess that's their job. You know, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has said that he'd be doing no favours nor pulling any punches, and I can respect that. That is Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition's role in this Chamber, to hold the government to account, and I truly respect that. I've said that lots of times before. I do respect that role but understand that it's important, Mr. Speaker, to have the facts straight.

Same thing with WCB and AHS, moving long-term investments into AIMCo. From WCB it's \$10.7 billion and also \$2.3 billion from AHS, and both will maintain discretion over the funds. That will not change. You know, these changes alone add about \$30 billion to AIMCo. Now, what does that mean? That means savings because of economies of scale. That means savings because of reduced inefficiencies. So I don't see how that is really a bad thing.

For anybody looking within their own pocketbook or their own chequebook in their home, if things are a bit tight, you start tightening the belt, you start making some difficult decisions. If I've got a \$100-a-month grocery bill – and I wish it cost \$100 a month to feed me – and somebody came to me and said, "You know what? You can only spend \$97 this month," I'd put back the chocolate bar. You know, I'd put back both chocolate bars, maybe all three of them. But the reality is that we have to make these kinds of decisions and recognize what is essential versus what is not essential.

Furthermore, there are a number of provisions in this bill – a number of provisions in this bill – that will help accomplish this goal. We've moved the Alberta Sport Connection program into the ministry. We've dissolved the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, also the historical resources fund. The mental health review panel has gone from four members to three members. Why there's four members I'm not quite sure. As I understand it, as earlier stated, these boards typically have three members in other jurisdictions, so why do we have four? I'm not sure, but this is a good move towards being efficient. We've dissolved the Alberta Competitiveness Council, repealed the Alberta Competitiveness Act.

To reduce waste and duplication and nonessential spending is the goal of this bill, and I don't understand why all we're hearing tonight is one part of a much larger piece of important legislation to accomplish a goal that over a million Albertans voted for, over a

million Albertans asked us to do. This is us responding to our employers, Mr. Speaker.

Now to address the issue – I wouldn't call it the elephant in the room because we've already talked about it a lot, but I'll address it myself – of the changes of the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General to return powers of the Chief Electoral Officer as they existed prior to the government's changes in 2018. Now, I was a staffer here in 2017. I don't remember all the dealings that happened in 2018, but my understanding is that this does not eliminate the Election Commissioner's role but simply consolidates the functions under one single authority, the nonpartisan Chief Electoral Officer. To suggest that that gentleman, Mr. Glen Resler, is incapable of doing this job would be nothing short of offensive, so I don't imagine that the members opposite are suggesting quite that. You know, moving these two roles into a single independent office will bring it back in line with the way Alberta was in 2018. The consolidation of the office of the Election Commissioner into the office of the Chief Electoral Officer will eliminate redundancies and streamline processes and operations. Mr. Speaker, it should come as no surprise that this is a move that our government is making.

9:20

If you look at this bill again, even more pieces that are part of this bill: you have the Northern Alberta Development Council – the minimum members are now seven instead of 10 – dissolve the Social Care Facilities Review Committee; dissolve the Campus Alberta Strategic Directions Committee.

Mr. Speaker, this is one part of a much larger bill, yet we're focusing on that. I suspect that deep into this night we're going to continue to talk, at least members on the opposite side are going to talk specifically about 13 pages in a much larger bill. I just would love to hear some thoughts about some other parts of this bill instead of cherry-picking the strawberries out of this fruit salad. Rather, let's hear about the rest of it, hear their thoughts.

Instead – I'm going to continue – probably, through the rest of this evening, as we debate this longer: more campaign-style speeches like the Member for Lethbridge-West gave us. Now, I do appreciate her moxie. I know that I knocked on doors during the campaign in her constituency to help out the person from our party who ran against her. There were members of her constituency who spoke quite highly of her and her work ethic, and that's great. You know, I understand that. But if that member is going to run for a much larger role, to try to run the party, which would ultimately be an attempt to run the province as potential Premier, she might want to recognize that there is a world outside of Lethbridge-West. And to appeal to those average, everyday, extremely normal Albertans, she might want to recognize that they think about more than just one part; they think about the whole piece. What's the future of this province going to look like if we end up with no ability to fund anything because of the fiscal disaster of the province, that we were put in by her government?

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take up a whole lot more time, but I do really want to emphasize the importance of Bill 22 and what it does for Alberta. We are an efficient people. We are a hard-working people. I am, as I've said so many times before, the proud grandson and great-grandson of ancestors who came here, certainly not for the weather but for the opportunity of a better life, something that they could leave for me, that I could leave for my kids. Now is the time where we still have the opportunity to change the way we do things, change the way that we operate, change the way we look at problems, because we are still in a position to make those changes.



As we were travelling at a rapid pace towards a fiscal cliff, someone had to hit the brakes, and that's what Alberta did on April 16. Albertans finally said: we've had enough; we recognize that we voted for change in 2015. Albertans did not want the PC government, and they did not want a Wildrose government. They chose the NDP, and that was the will of the people. I will never disrespect the will of the people. But in April of this year those same voters made a conscientious decision to hit the brakes and decide what was best for this province, and it was not the direction that the NDP was going.

So I will be supporting this bill. I will be voting for this bill, and I will continue to consult my constituents on this bill. What I've heard so far is gratitude that this government is actually doing what it said it would do. It's not going ahead and making any kind of crazy changes or implementing significant new tax hikes on them that were not campaigned on during the election. Our campaign was clear that we would reduce the size of government, that we would be mindful of spending, and that we would be supportive of Albertans and the things that they need, and we're doing just that. [interjections] The way we were doing things before, Mr. Speaker, was not working. Albertans clearly said that.

While I appreciate Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and the heckling that they decide to engage in now and during question period, at some point in time they have to recognize that Albertans are going to be tired of them crying wolf. They're going to be tired of it, and they're going to become tone deaf to it, if they haven't already, because – I'll tell you what – in my constituency of Cardston-Siksika all of this that they're talking about, all the hyperbolic phrases are falling on deaf ears.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has a brief question or comment to make.

**Ms Ganley:** A brief question or comment: well, I definitely do have several comments, Mr. Speaker. I think the first thing that I'd like to pick out from the speaker before me was that he asked repeatedly: why are we hearing about just this one part of the bill? Well, we're hearing about just this one part of the bill because that's the part of the bill that impacts the rule of law in our province, so I think that that's a pretty significant concern. You know, the member certainly referenced his ancestors coming here to this country for several opportunities. Well, a lot of people come here to this country for opportunities, and those opportunities are preserved. One of those opportunities that people come here for is the rule of law in this country, the idea that, fundamentally, everyone will be subject to the same laws, that there will be no arbitrary laws, that laws will not be made to support the random whim or will or flight of fancy of whoever happens to be in government. That's a fundamental reason that people come here. So the reason we're talking about this portion of the bill is because the rule of law is important.

In Mr. Gibson's letter that he wrote to the media earlier, he wrote: I'm concerned about the potential negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real or perceived integrity of the election process. Mr. Speaker, the reason that we're focusing on this section of the bill is because this is the section of the bill that undermines the public's confidence in democracy, that undermines the public's confidence in our electoral system. We are standing in the Legislature of this province. We are standing in the Legislative Assembly, and I think that in no place in the country, perhaps excluding the Parliament of Canada, would it be more important to preserve the impact of democracy. I think there should

be no group of people who are more concerned about the public's perception of our laws and of our democracy and of its health. I think my comments about that are that the reason we're so concerned about this one portion of the bill is because it's the part that strikes to the very essence of who we are as a people and how we choose to govern ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, there are, in fact, other areas of this bill that I could go on about at length, and were they in a different bill, I would do that. I think that using the length of this bill, using that it has crammed together unrelated things, removing an officer who is actively investigating the political party of which the government members are members with removing people's rights to govern their own pensions – I mean, those are some wildly disparate things. This is some, like, serious omnibus legislating. Implying, because you've rolled these unrelated things into one bill in an attempt to move them through the House quickly, in an attempt to avoid any public scrutiny on them, that by picking one thing out of such omnibus legislation, we are somehow doing wrong to the public: I mean, it's almost mind-boggling. It's shocking to suggest that, oh, well, all the government has to do is take a really ugly piece, something they really badly want to hide, and bury it deep inside other unrelated legislation, and then the opposition ought not to talk about it. I mean, it was a good attempt, but it didn't work.

I don't think it's very reasonable to stand in this place and suggest that because they have rolled unrelated things together in an attempt to pass them quickly through this House, that ought to cause us not to be concerned about the rule of law and about how we fundamentally govern ourselves as a people. This concept of the rule of law has been around for a long time, the idea that it's the rule of law versus the rule of force, so people cannot by greater strength or greater numbers overcome the law. [The time limit for questions and comments expired] It seems I've run out of time.

9:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak against this Bill 22. I think that's the only logical thing that comes to my mind, that in good conscience I can only oppose this bill. As my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View was talking about, in reference to the Member for Cardston-Siksika, why we are talking about just one part of the bill, let me talk a little bit about that.

This bill amends 31 pieces of legislation. Thirty-one pieces of legislation. You will remember, as part of the 29th Legislature, many occasions. One that comes to mind is that Labour Relations Code changes and workers' compensation changes were put together by our government, and the then opposition, the UCP, was lighting their hair on fire that this was omnibus legislation. They brought all kinds of motions, they used all kinds of rules to split that legislation so that they could debate those things thoroughly. I think that if they truly believed in that kind of debate, they wouldn't bring forward a piece of legislation that amends 31 pieces of legislation.

It's not reasonably possible to address all 31 in the time that I have, so I will have to prioritize what I choose to speak on. Certainly, changes to the Election Act are of utmost importance to me and to my constituents because we were all elected in a democratic process, and having strong democratic institutions is important and vital for a strong democracy. Both the Chief Electoral Officer and Election Commissioner were playing very important roles, one for election management and the other one in enforcing the laws and conducting the investigative role, investigations. Both of these roles are important, and nowhere in my comments would I

ever suggest that one role is less important than the other. I have utmost respect for both of these offices.

There was considerable talk about facts, so I will state some facts. Then I will have a little bit more discussion about it. One thing: it's a fact that the Election Commissioner's office and the Election Commissioner will no longer exist if we pass this piece of legislation, Bill 22. That's very clear in section 13 of this legislation. We can all agree that based on this piece of legislation, if passed, which will be passed, I think, the Election Commissioner's office or the Election Commissioner, Lorne Gibson, will no longer exist there.

The second thing. I think that it's a fact that prior to this piece of legislation passing, the Election Commissioner is an independent officer of the Legislature. He is not reporting to the Chief Electoral Officer. Instead, he is an independent officer of the Legislature. His annual report says that in the first nine months he had 450 complaints, and to date there are 800 complaints that were made to the Election Commissioner, so certainly people have concerns about how these election laws are enforced. Albertans have raised concerns, and they deserve to be heard. Those alleged violations need to be investigated.

Another thing that is a fact is that the UCP leadership campaign from 2017, in which our Premier was victorious, is under investigation by this same office. I think that is also a fact. It's also a fact that certain members of the UCP caucus, including from the front bench, have been reached out to, have been talked to – and I'm not saying that they are involved in it – by the RCMP, by law enforcement, in relation to this investigation. Those members include the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Infrastructure, the minister of culture and status of women, the associate minister of mental health, and the Member for Calgary-East. These are the facts that we know so far. Again, I'm not alleging that they are involved in it, but these are facts, that they have been reached out to by law enforcement in relation to the UCP leadership campaign from 2017.

Also, it's a fact that \$211,723 have been levied as fines on 16 people or corporations. That's a fact that is publicly available. We know even the names of the people who have been fined.

I think I will note another thing, that somewhere I was reading that consolidating these two offices will save the government \$1 million over five years. But to the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance, just a suggestion: had we not changed the Election Commissioner, he would have given you \$1 million in five years at this rate anyways because in one year he fined \$211,000, times five. Over \$1 million you would have collected, so you didn't save much there.

Then it is also a fact that this Bill 22 says that the Election Commissioner's office may continue, but it doesn't say that there will be an Election Commissioner. The fact is that this bill doesn't indicate whether the current commissioner will be rehired or whether any commissioner will be hired. It doesn't say whether any of those active investigations will continue when this commissioner's office is dissolved. These are the facts.

I think we value here our institutions, we value here the rule of law, and when we know that there is an active investigation that may potentially involve some members of the UCP caucus – may involve. In the midst of that investigation what this bill is doing is removing the very person who is investigating that file. It's taking away the independence from that very person who was investigating this scandal. It, in fact, completely gets rid of that person's office. On this side of the House and Albertans: they're rightfully concerned that it's an attack on our institutions, on our democracy.

9:40

The UCP talks about their mandate. I think Albertans gave them a mandate of jobs, economy, and pipelines. That was their key slogan. Nowhere in that most detailed platform of the UCP did they tell Albertans that they will remove the office of the Election Commissioner, the very office that is investigating the kamikaze campaign, which may involve some UCP members, that they will remove that. Albertans didn't give them a mandate to walk roughshod on laws and attack the rule of law and democracy in our province.

It's an important piece that is included in this Bill 22, and that's why we are focusing more on this change, because this will change many things. This will dilute respect for the rule of law. This will diminish the respect for our institutions. This will send a message that with power you can stop an investigation that may potentially include you. Albertans certainly deserve better than this. Those who elected me in Calgary-McCall certainly deserve better than this. Personally and many of those who are first-generation immigrants: we have seen, we have witnessed with our own eyes, in our own experience, when the rule of law is violated, what happens to society. We have seen those things when institutions are weaker, what happens to the society.

This change certainly weakens our institutions. It certainly puts the rule of law in question and, I think, the basic and fundamental values that we believe in as Albertans, as Canadians, that every individual is equal before and under the law. Here we have a caucus who is thinking they are not equal before and under the law, so they are changing the laws in the middle of an investigation that may potentially impact them. It's clearly wrong, and we will be opposing it here in the Legislature, in this House, and everywhere across this province because it's fundamental to our democracy, fundamental to our province.

There are many other things that I can touch on, and one of them is public-sector pensions. Arguments were given that it will remain the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is anyone wishing to add an additional question or comment? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member was just starting a thought, and I'm wondering if he could conclude it for the benefit of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I was getting to public-sector pensions. Responsibility is given to AIMCo, and Albertans are asked to trust this government that there will be no changes and that they will get the same benefits and everything and to have trust and confidence in AIMCo's ability to manage the funds; they're very experienced people.

The fundamental question here is, Minister, that it's not your money. This money belongs to those who contributed to this fund. That's the fundamental thing, and they have every right to manage their money where they see fit. It's not about AIMCo's ability or inability to manage their fund. It's not about whether their benefits will stay the same or not. It's about people's basic right of self-determination. They have financed and funded these pension plans, they have a vested interest in these plans, and they have every right in a democratic society to choose how to manage these funds. Without consulting them, without affording them an opportunity to have a say about their funds – I would have preferred it if you had

done a referendum on it for these fund holders and asked them whether they want you to move it to AIMCo or not. It's not about AIMCo's ability or inability to manage these funds; it's fundamentally about those people's basic right to self-determination, those people's basic right to manage their own funds the way they see fit. It's an attack on people's basic rights, and certainly that's unacceptable. Again, we will oppose that attack here in this Legislature and across this province.

Also, after seeing how this government has dealt with the Election Commissioner's office – I think, at the end of the day, that the minister retains the authority to direct AIMCo – I think people sure feel that their funds may not be safe in the hands of this government. If they can remove the Election Commissioner that is investigating them, how can they trust this government with their pensions? At the end of the day, for many that's their only source of income, and they cannot trust this government handling their pensions like this without any consultation whatsoever with them. They deserve an opportunity to understand these changes better. They deserve an opportunity to be heard.

9:50

There are almost 400,000 people that are part of these pension plans, pension funds, and I think that among those 400,000 people there are very capable people who can manage these funds. At the end of the day, it's their money, it's teachers' money, and they should have a say and a right in how their monies are invested. They need to be consulted before this takeover by this government of their funds.

Also, other things this government... [The time limit for questions and comments expired] Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on the main bill.

Unfortunately, I believe that you're the mover of the bill, unless you're planning on adjourning debate.

**Mr. Toews:** I thought it was 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** Sorry; 29(2)(a) has expired. The time has elapsed.

We are moving back and forth from government to opposition, so we'll have the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to say that about two and a half hours ago my youngest daughter returned safely from a three-month trip to Europe. One of the joys of this modern age is that even though she was halfway around the world, we got to stay in constant touch with her through online chats and text messaging. Three months ago she left for Europe with a bank account that was full, and she sent us pictures of her upgraded seat on the airline. She sent us some lovely pictures of her wonderful meals in Paris, and she did send us a text that said: I can't afford me. Today she returned with less money in the bank. She flew economy. She still got home safe, but she realized that her circumstances were different than they were three months ago.

Albertans realized in April that our circumstances are different than they were four or five years ago. Our government was elected on a promise to live within our means, to find efficiencies, and to bring our province back to balance. This bill is an important part of actually getting that done. By eliminating redundant ABCs, this bill also reduces red tape for everything from social services seeking licences to easing access to receiving mental health and addictions treatment, making life better for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, every member on this side of the House spent hundreds of hours at the doors in our spring election campaign. It led to this government receiving the largest mandate of any

government in Alberta's history, with our party receiving over a million votes. This was key to our understanding of why we were sent here. At every door we heard the same stories of job insecurity and anxiety about the economy, of how our families have had to make significant changes to their lifestyle as a result of pay cuts at work, a partner being laid off, or the carbon tax hurting a family that was already living paycheque to paycheque. It is from this that we established our priorities: to bring back jobs, to get pipelines built, and to reignite our economy.

This demanded leadership from the very top rung of this government. To exemplify this approach, our caucus agreed to take a 5 per cent pay cut while the Premier himself reduced his pay by 10 per cent.

Our budget continued this approach by laying out a clear and credible path to balance. Hard decisions had to be made, and our budget as well as the report from the MacKinnon panel prove it. Where we can, we must always look to find efficiencies that can prevent us from having to make even more painful decisions. While much of this work is being done by the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, it was also reflected in both our budget and a number of bills that have come out. Tonight this Bill 22 builds on that work by finding efficiencies in a number of additional areas, whether it be eliminating boards that already haven't functioned or existed for a number of years such as the Alberta Competitiveness Council, which has been inactive since 2013, or finding more efficient ways for boards to operate such as the suggested changes to the Northern Alberta Development Council and the Alberta Sport Connection. Our government is taking concrete action to live within our means and to return our province to balance.

That said, these necessary and pragmatic steps aren't what the media will focus on. This opposition's over-the-top theatrics regarding the steps we are taking to bring our province in line with other jurisdictions will of course steal the headlines. So if I can, Mr. Speaker, I would like to address some of the fear and smear that the NDP is trying to change the conversation with, both in the changes to the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and the changes to the chief electoral office.

I have seen a number of questions asked in this House already about the role of AIMCo and ATRF. I know I've personally gotten to learn a lot more about AIMCo and how they already manage a number of the public-sector pension plans. It's been encouraging to hear of AIMCo's success in managing these funds, Mr. Speaker. While, like almost everything we debate in the House, we're not likely to go home at the end of this debate in perfect agreement on what the best course forward is, the rhetoric from the other side of the House far overexaggerates the issues at play. AIMCo outperformed the ATRF from August 2017 to August 2018, with a return of 9.8 per cent compared to ATRF's 9.6 per cent. AIMCo has also outperformed the ATRF over the last four years.

That, however, while being a benefit, is not the best reason why I feel this move should be supported. The larger investment pool held by AIMCo will allow the ATRF to significantly reduce administration fees. These fees can be directed back into the fund, protecting both teachers and taxpayers.

In addition, I believe that it's important to note that the ATRF will be able to maintain the same strategic decisions that they have always had, with the board of the teachers' retirement fund retaining control of determining how the fund should be invested as well as retaining ownership of the plan's assets. The board will continue to develop policy for the fund while being able to leverage the substantial assets of AIMCo to do so.

The other area that the NDP has created fear over is the changes to the Chief Electoral Officer and the Election Commissioner. Mr. Speaker, Alberta didn't even have an Election Commissioner until

2018. The appointment of a separate officer as the Election Commissioner simply doesn't make sense. It was simply an extension of the NDP's reckless disregard for taxpayers' dollars. The Chief Electoral Officer has always been capable of ensuring that elections proceed fairly and according to the law, and they have done that for over a century. The accusations that have been levelled that this was done in order to end the investigations currently being pursued by the Election Commissioner: this is simply not the case. As officials from Elections Alberta as well as members of our government have confirmed, there will be no immediate impact on ongoing investigations, and the Chief Electoral Officer is free to continue to pursue them now that they are rightfully back in his file.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's unfair to say that the rhetoric in this House has hit some ridiculous levels this year, but for a bill that aims to implement a number of cost-saving measures, the rhetoric around this bill has hit a new fevered pitch. I look forward to voting for this bill and the pragmatic cost-saving solutions that it will bring to Alberta taxpayers.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to hear from this member. We don't often get an opportunity to hear from him in the House, so I appreciate that he took the opportunity to share what I hope were his thoughts on this bill.

Just to address a couple of things there. He spoke of rhetoric reaching a fevered pitch. Mr. Speaker, I would agree that many times we do hear a lot of rhetoric coming out in this House. Indeed, we often hear that from members of government as they put forward what are so joyfully known as puffball questions during question period. We certainly hear that from ministers of the Crown, ministers of the government, when they are purportedly answering questions in this House. We have a lot of give-and-take in this House, I think, in terms of what constitutes rhetoric. I would suggest to this member that when we are talking about, in this case, not just the simple act of moving the Election Commissioner's office, though certainly that is a profound decision, but taking away the independent office of an independent officer of the Legislature and making them subservient to another officer, that is, in and of itself, a fairly profound move. It's not the simple sort of housekeeping that this member seems to think.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, to be clear, none of us have stood in this House and suggested that that is the issue with this bill. The issue that we have brought forward is around the very appearance if not outright existence of a rather serious conflict of interest in choosing to make that decision, much as we have discussed the appointment of their commissioner, Mr. Allan, for the war room.

10:00

This government and, I guess, this member as part of it does not seem to understand the principle that when holding a position with this kind of power and indeed when enacting legislation in this province, which is an incredible privilege, one should be utterly scrupulous in avoiding not only actual conflict of interest but even the appearance of the same, which is why, Mr. Speaker, it is not a matter of us stealing headlines. Trust me; every journalist was breaking down the door to write this story long before we ever reached out to talk to them. Social media was full of their amazement at the audacity of this government to make this move.

I suppose my question, then, to the member is: does he appreciate that what he considers to be a simple piece of housekeeping has, indeed to a large number of Albertans and, I would dare say, even

an increasing number of people who voted for him and his government, at least the appearance if not the outright suggestion of craven self-dealing and clear conflict of interest, an attempt for government to pass legislation solely in its own favour?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod should he choose to respond.

**Mr. Reid:** I'd like to thank the hon. member from the other side. Tough decisions need to be made – we all agree – decisions that are better for the people of Alberta and the efficiency of this government, because it's not my money, and it's not your money. It is the money of Albertans. [interjection] Absolutely.

I ran on the premise that government is too large and that we need to run leaner because we simply cannot sustain our province at the levels that we were operating at over the past number of years. What we presented in our budget, what we present through this legislation, Mr. Speaker, are those opportunities to make decisions that will cause Alberta to be sustainable in the long run, to move through these difficult times, and to once again experience the province that enjoyed the prosperity that my great-grandparents moved to this country to take opportunity from, that I enjoy today as their descendant. As a businessman every day I needed to make decisions to cause my business to sustain the tough times to get to the success so that we and my staff could prosper. We need to do the same as government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 22. I would retract that. I don't think it's a pleasure to speak to Bill 22 because it's such a terrible bill. But we rise today and we speak on what is perhaps one of the most influential pieces of legislation that we will see in our time in this House, and it's influential in all of the wrong ways. It's influential because it is an attack on the core fundamentals of our democracy, it is an attack on the core fundamentals of independence and justice, and it's an attack on and an affront to this very House. It speaks to the high level of corruption that this government is complicit in. It speaks to the high level of corruption that they are willing to go to in firing the independent investigator that is currently investigating corruption, fraud, bribery.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Unparliamentary Language**

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, a very exciting 30-second start. To imply that the government is complicit in corruption would be unparliamentary. You have about 14 minutes left. We've seen how the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West was able to express points passionately but do so in a parliamentary manner. I would just provide some caution that you might heed some of her discretion as you debate. I'm very keen to have a full and robust debate on Bill 22. I have no position, as I mentioned earlier, on Bill 22, but I want members to be very cautious with the language that they use with respect to ensuring that we are respectful of the traditions of the Assembly.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take that under advisement.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, we have never seen an investigation like this in this province, an investigation into alleged corruption, bribery,

fraud, forgery by members of this government caucus, investigations that were being performed by an independent office, by an independent officer. Then we see in black and white in this bill that that contract has been terminated. Those are the words that were used by this government. They are the ones that are terminating the investigation of the person doing the actual work to determine whether corruption had occurred, to determine whether fraud had occurred, to determine whether criminal acts had occurred.

Those were the types of things that were being investigated, and now through the media – they did not even have the courtesy to give a call to the commissioner himself. They did not even have that professional courtesy, Mr. Speaker. They fired him through the media. That is absolutely shameful. That is something that no democratic institution in the Westminster system should ever see, and these government members should know better. They should know better than to be so shamefully brazen, as has been reported, as to try and do this type of action, to go after the person doing independent investigations without even consulting with that investigator. That is something that is absolutely shocking to me. It's something that's absolutely shocking because these members should know better. They should know better.

When the Justice minister, Mr. Speaker, was running in this very campaign that is now being investigated by the Election Commissioner – well, it was being investigated by the Election Commissioner – the Justice minister himself raised concerns that there were irregularities, raised concerns that there was voter fraud, raised concerns that they needed an investigation into this. And now that that investigation is moving forward, the Justice minister is supporting a bill, this Bill 22, that will absolutely terminate that investigation. If that's not hypocritical, I don't know what is. This hypocrisy is deafening.

We just saw a member across the way, a government backbencher, get up and speak passionately about how we need to reduce the size of government. Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, what they've done by this termination is that they've actually cost the government more money, because the over \$200,000 in fines that the government caucus members and their party have had to pay has actually exceeded the amount that it cost the government to run that office this year. Those fines, the types of allegations and corruption that we're seeing being fined, the types of bribery and fraud that we're seeing being fined would have sufficiently covered, actually, the costs, so I don't know what he's advocating for here. I think he's actually advocating to reduce the size of government where it harms his party. That is something that's absolutely shameful.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It's something that's absolutely shocking, and Albertans will not stand for it. Albertans know they deserve better from their democracy. Albertans know they deserve better from their government, Madam Speaker. It's something that we can see right here plain as day, that this government either does not understand or they do not care about what this means for democracy. I think Albertans will be able to make that decision themselves.

I have a bit of a message to pass on. I know that there's quite a lot we're going to get through tonight, but I know that my former colleague and a former colleague of yourself as well, Madam Speaker, and of many members of this House, the former Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, Brian Mason, was referred to earlier in debate today. I believe it was by the member who's the current environment minister. He actually wants the environment minister to know something. He wants the environment minister to know that he's not in British Columbia. Indeed, he's actually, just

like many Albertans, at home, and he's watching our debate tonight. He's watching our debate, and he wanted me to actually express that it's with great difficulty because he's having to spend so much time listening to government members and, in particular, the Government House Leader. I think that's something that's very concerning for him and concerning for many Albertans.

10:10

We look at the effects of this bill. I think that in the last Legislature that member had been one of the longest serving members of this entire Chamber. Indeed, he was the longest serving member of this entire Chamber in the 29th Legislature, and today the Leader of the Opposition is the longest serving member of the 30th Legislature. They will tell you and they have said in this House – at least, the leader has said it in this House – that this is a fundamental affront that has never been seen. This is an attack on the core of what we stand for, of why we are elected and why we are sent here. This is an attack on every single thing this institution stands for. This is an attack on how we do government, on how we do governance, and on what good governance looks like, Madam Speaker. It's an attack on the very foundation of what this building symbolizes, and that is what is so shocking and so scary.

It's scary, Madam Speaker, and I use that word because Albertans are worried. They're worried that there was interference in the independent judicial process here, the independent investigation, the independent investigation into forgery, fraud, bribery, corruption. Those are the things that people that are in the government caucus and people who are affiliated with the government party are being accused of. Those are the shocking things. When we see that these attacks are going on on the independent office, when we see that the independent officers are not even given the courtesy of a phone call, then it's something that's very, very, very concerning for Albertans.

Really, Madam Speaker, always you don't want to get caught in the cover-up. That's something that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has said to me as some advice he wants to pass on, and I think that's very prudent advice. It's very prudent advice because we're going to be seeing a lot coming out in the days and weeks and months to come. The things we are going to be seeing or that I hope we will be seeing – the investigator has now been fired, summarily terminated by this government, by the Finance minister's bill. We know that that is something that is very concerning.

We know that this government has a record, Madam Speaker. The facts of the matter are that this government has a record and a pattern of misusing taxpayer money. They've gone in and chartered private planes. They've gone in and given \$4.7 billion away to the wealthiest corporations. They've gone in and decided that it was appropriate to fly other Premiers and their wives around. Then, on the other hand, when investigations into impropriety are going on, they are now firing the very person that would be responsible for those investigations. That's the shocking thing, right? We can see this pattern moving forward. We can see this continuation of what Albertans are seeing over and over again.

That's concerning because when somebody says, "Well, I made a mistake, and we'll fix it," that's okay, right? This government had every single opportunity to say that time and time again, but instead we saw that the Justice minister refused over and over again to apologize. We saw the Premier refuse to apologize for misusing taxpayer money. We saw these government members refuse to apologize for being hypocritical regarding the investigation. We see this time and time again. What they're telling Albertans and what they're telling this House is that they have no respect for the fundamental foundation of our democracy, that they have no

respect for the fundamental foundations of what we stand for, of why we were elected here. The very institutions that we represent are being attacked by this bill.

I know one of the members across the way – I think it was the Member for Cardston-Siksika – said, “Well, I wish you’d talk about more things and wouldn’t pick individual pieces out of the fruit salad,” Madam Speaker, but you know what? This entire bill tries to do so much. Those members, this government, is trying to distract from the very fundamentals of the danger. They are trying to distract from what they are attacking. They are trying to distract from that they don’t respect this institution. They don’t respect the process of governance. That’s what’s really concerning to Albertans.

That’s why, Madam Speaker, you’ve seen all over the media, I’m sure – and Albertans are seeing it, too – in every single major outlet, even the conservative ones, that people are concerned. They’re saying that this government has no respect for the public, they’re saying that this government has no respect for the institutions, and they’re saying that this government is so brazen, the words that are being used, that they don’t think that public fallout even matters to them. That’s extremely concerning because it’s not about public fallout. We know that. It’s not about public fallout. It’s about respecting democracy. It’s about understanding that we have a parliamentary system here in Alberta. Instead, what we are seeing is the government firing the person responsible for investigating corruption, firing the person responsible for investigating members of their own party, Madam Speaker. That’s shocking because in what universe are you supposed to be your own judge, jury, and executioner? In no universe. That is foundational to our democracy here. It’s foundational to western liberal democracies to be able to have these separations of power, to be able to have this independence of our judiciary, to be able to have these ideals that nobody is above the law.

Instead, this government has reached in – reached in – and broken all of the traditions, broken all of the rules, broken all of the things that we are supposed to accept as traditional Westminster parliamentary systems and western liberal democracies, broken all of the conventions and decided that they can go in and fire their own prosecutor. That’s absolutely shocking. Albertans will not stand for this. Albertans know they deserve better from their government. They deserve a government that will not allow the prosecutor that is currently investigating their party to be fired like this, Madam Speaker.

We’ve heard, time and time again, how this bill is about reducing the size of government and all these other things that are great and how we should look at the administrative processes and all those things. Members of the government backbench got up and spoke about how we should look at the administrative processes that changed here because those nitty-gritty details are so important.

Well, Madam Speaker, what is most important in this bill is that all of those nitty-gritty details are actually just being thrown in an omnibus bill. They’re trying to make it so that it’s too hard to debate this bill. They’re trying to make it so that it’s too difficult to figure out what is important in this bill. There is lots that’s important in this bill; that’s true. But this government does not even have the respect for this institution – they don’t even have the respect for this institution – to introduce individual bills for each of those processes, right? They could have pulled out ATRF into an individual bill. They could have pulled out LAPP into an individual bill. In fact, most governments would, Madam Speaker.

But what we are seeing instead is an Americanization of our democracy, an intentional Americanization of how we do legislation in this House, an intentional attack on our fundamental democratic institution. They’re giving \$4.7 billion away on one hand, they’re chartering private planes, they’re doing all these

things, and then they bring in an omnibus-style bill just like in the States. That’s something that’s very shocking.

I think that they are trying to do some very dangerous things. They’re trying to do some very dangerous things in this House. They’re trying to do things that underpin and attack the foundations of why we are here. They attack the foundations of why we were elected. They attack the foundations of our entire process, Madam Speaker, and that’s very dangerous. It’s very dangerous that we can see this type of thing happening in front of us.

We can see history being written. We can see history being written when we have a bill that actually proposes to fire the prosecutor who is investigating corruption, bribery, fraud, and forgery, including from people who sit in this very House right now. People who have seats in this Chamber are currently being investigated, and many of them who are not being investigated have been interviewed. I believe it’s actually dozens of people on the government benches. When we hear that they are now firing that investigator, that is an attack on our justice. That is an attack on democracy. That is an attack on our Legislature, and that is something that is absolutely shameful. That is something that is absolutely disgraceful, and these government members should be ashamed. I hear them laughing and chuckling away, but they should be ashamed.

I know that some of them, if the shoe was on the other foot, if, let’s say, they were MPs in Ottawa – in fact, some of these members were MPs in Ottawa – if they had seen a federal government pull this off, would be lighting their hair perhaps even literally on fire, Madam Speaker. I wouldn’t dare to speak on what they may or may not do. That is something that we would see time and time again.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

**Ms Phillips:** The member had begun some thoughts on the implications of firing the Election Commissioner and certainly has pointed to some evidence as to why this might be problematic with respect to due process, the rule of law, and the integrity of free and fair elections in a democracy. I’m wondering if he can continue to share those thoughts with us.

10:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for their comments there. I think it’s very important that when we look at this legislation and we look at what this legislation proposes to do and when we look at – in any western liberal democracy, what we see is that this legislation is an affront to those systems. I’ve said it before, but I think that this is really shocking. This is tinpot dictator stuff, right? This is actually crazy stuff, to go in and try to fire the person investigating yourself. No other system in the world would accept this as a reasonable way to do justice in your system. The integrity of the judiciary, the integrity of having independent investigations are fundamental.

You would expect this type of bill to be brought in in countries, Madam Speaker, that we would consider too dangerous to travel to. That’s where you would expect this type of bill to be brought in. Instead, we are seeing this bill brought in in Alberta, which is supposed to be a free and strong area, a free and strong province. Instead, we are seeing this bill brought in in what is supposed to be a western liberal democracy, what is supposed to be somewhere with free and fair democratic elections. That is one of the greatest jeopardies posed to our Legislature and likely will be for generations to come.

We are seeing history being written right now, and government backbenchers should realize that. They should realize that they are being a part of one of the most fundamental changes to what we do in this province and how we recognize the independence of investigations and the integrity of our democratic institutions. They are right now voting on a bill that will affect this province for generations to come. They are voting on whether we think it's okay to fire the person investigating corruption, fraud, bribery, and forgery, Madam Speaker. That is what is being voted on right now in this bill. That is what's being debated in this bill.

And the government will accuse us of being dramatic. The government will accuse us of using hyperbole, Madam Speaker, but it's right here in black and white: the Election Commissioner is being terminated. That is insane. That is actually insane. It is a type of thing you would never expect to see in a justice system like this, the type of thing you would never expect to see in a democratic institution like this. Every single thing that this building stands for, that this Chamber stands for is being attacked by this bill, and that is not hyperbole.

It is not too much to say that this will fundamentally damage the trust Albertans have in our democratic institutions, and that's not my opinion, Madam Speaker; that's the opinion of the Election Commissioner. That's what he wrote in his letter when he found out he was fired summarily through the media. That's what's shocking, that this government has so little respect for that office, the office that has fined their party over \$200,000, that they fired him through the media and now are ignoring that this will undermine our democratic independence, our democratic institutions, and independent offices of this Legislature. That is a type of corruption, that's a type of fraud that is going on when we vote for this bill. That is what is so scary.

I want to say it again because I think it's important that all members of the House are able know this, but I think it's something that is – you don't want to get caught in a cover-up, right? You don't want to be caught in the cover-up because there will be consequences. This attack on our justice system, this attack on our democracy, this attack on our Legislature will not be allowed to stand. It cannot be allowed to stand because we live in a western liberal democracy, Madam Speaker. We live in a democracy that is supposed to have freedoms, that's supposed to have independence and integrity, and when we move forward and fire our own prosecutors that are investigating our own parties, that will ruin it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to join some comments to what's already been said here today on Bill 22, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. This is a thick bill. As we've seen, this government has also had two previous ones, 20 and 21, which are also omnibus bills. This one changes or amends 31 statutes, so it's a substantial piece of legislation.

It does, as many of my colleagues have already shared, sort of hit at some of the foundations of a democratic state, and I guess I just – you know, there are different sorts of categories, categorization systems, but I came across just some principles of democracy that I think are worth talking about at this point because I think that this bill jeopardizes some of those principles. Certainly, I know that my colleagues care very much about having a robust, fair democracy, and we actually – for myself, I mean, that's really one of the reasons I got involved in politics, because I really wanted to make sure that people were engaged and that anyone could be a representative if they did the work and had a set of values that they wanted to champion.

You know, I grew up in Alberta, and I grew up in the Peace Country. My views were often in the minority, but I had deep roots in what my values were. I often was the dissenting voice in the classroom, but I know what I believed, and my roots have only grown deeper through the years. I'm an Albertan, just like the folks in the room, but I haven't been, a lot of times, the majority. I have had the dissenting voice. But that's what's so cool about a democracy, that we honour that dissenting voice and that we are a tolerant society and that we know that people can have different values but still coexist in harmony or, hopefully, close to harmony.

Some of these principles that I just want to identify. Just fundamentally, you know, we accept the results of the elections. We know what's happening in this House. We know that we are 24 members here in the opposition. Of course, that's not enough to be a majority, so the government has the majority, and that makes them in charge and make decisions.

But in a healthy democracy, of course, there are opposition voices that can be heard, and sometimes opposition voices can actually influence the government enough that they may change decisions because they will see some aspect of what's being shared and think: ah, we should have integrated that into that plan. A democracy is not just: that government won, and then nothing more can be said about it. There's lots that can be said about it. I'm sure that the governing party right now would say that when they were in opposition, they too influenced the government, which was the party that I represent. It is kind of a give-and-take. It's not just an absolute dictatorship or anything.

Certainly, we know that democracy has to have accountability. We talk about citizen participation. That's sort of fundamental to a democracy, encouraging that, enhancing it. Controlling abuses of power: we want to make sure that people aren't, you know, using their positions and taking advantage of that. You have economic freedom. People have choices. They can choose to work in a certain field. They can join unions. People can do all sorts of things. We believe in equality, that people have the right to opportunities and that people sometimes need a hand up to have them access those opportunities. We believe in human rights. Anyway, there's a long list of sort of aspects of democracy, and I just wanted sort of to remind my colleagues in the House that those underpin the decisions, the things we do each day, how we conduct ourselves in this Legislature.

**10:30**

Bill 22, to get more specific here, is challenging some of those tenets, principles of democracy. Of course, I along with my colleagues in the NDP caucus here do have some trouble with it. As the government clearly sees, we've been focusing on a key aspect of Bill 22, which is the most egregious piece of it, which is the firing of the Election Commissioner. We all know – it's been said clearly in here – that there's an ongoing investigation into the leadership contest of the UCP; \$200,000 has been levied in fines. A lot of those people who were fined are now in the court system fighting those fines, so it's not settled. Even though the fines have been levied, there are, you know, defences on either side going ahead. There's much work to do.

It is a deep concern that the current government would want to fire the commissioner unless, you know, there's something that we don't know about what's gone on. Are they trying to hide something? I mean, transparency: I didn't get far enough down my list, but transparency is also another sort of tenet, principle of democracy. We need to understand how things are happening, so we need to have transparent processes. This change has really created a lot of fog, I guess, very little transparency, so that concerns me greatly. We know that in order for, I don't know,

justice to be done – like, who is going to carry on with the work of the commissioner? How will the evidence be secured? What will be done to make sure that fair processes are continued? I don't hear the government really explaining that.

I mean, there's been a firestorm of response to this bill in the media, you know, social media but also in the mainstream media. I just wanted to refer to an *Edmonton Journal* columnist. Keith Gerein wrote a piece today about it, and I just want to share that with the House. What he says is:

When a government charges ahead with a move as seemingly brazen as this, it can indicate only one thing. Alberta is now being governed by those who have lost any fear of political fallout, a machine that has come to interpret its election mandate as a blank cheque to do whatever it wants, no matter the optics, the cost to accountability, or the threat to democracy itself.

I just want to pause there before I go on and just make a comment. That is something that we do hear from the government over and over again, that because they have a majority government, no other voices can be heard. Somehow I don't have legitimacy, or I'm being told that I don't have legitimacy in standing in this House. I find that extremely offensive. I mean, when they were in opposition, they had every right to stand up and champion their values. I have that right right at this moment, and I take offence when I'm told that just because we don't have a majority government, I have no voice. I do, and I know my constituents voted for me so that I would share that voice. I think that Keith Gerein's comments here are very articulate in that, you know, that is sort of the narrative that we are hearing from the government.

I'll continue with his words.

For those still gamely trying to keep up with the government's agenda, the election commissioner at the centre of this – Lorne Gibson – is the same one who in just 16 months of work, has imposed 30 letters of reprimand, punished nearly 90 instances of political over-contributions, and issued more \$200,000 in fines to people connected with Jeff Callaway's UCP leadership campaign.

The same commissioner who is responsible, in part, for what little the Alberta public knows about that scandal, and who may well be investigating further alleged malfeasance connected to the UCP race, including what role [the Premier] may have played.

In short, if there was ever an independent officer of the legislature who proved his or her worth in such a short time, it is this commissioner.

**High praise for Commissioner Lorne Gibson.**

Still, the UCP government says it has two legitimate reasons for firing Gibson mid investigation and placing the responsibilities of his office under the control of the Chief Electoral Officer.

First, the move will save close to \$1 million over five years, and second, it will put Alberta back in line with other provinces that do not have a separate, independent commissioner's office.

In effect, the UCP would like the public to see this as a purely administrative move with no larger impact whatsoever, rather than an attempt to obscure alleged party corruption [and] government corruption.

The UCP's rationale rings hollow in two respects, according to Gerein.

To begin, the idea that Alberta should have the same election law enforcement model as other provinces comes across as hypocritical, considering the UCP has been eager in other instances to break from the pack, whether it be to create a separate minimum wage for youth or try to impose geographic restrictions on doctors.

As well, saving \$200,000 a year – approximately what it costs to deliver health care for five minutes in Alberta – is the government equivalent of scrounging the couch cushions for

loose change. It's hard to imagine the UCP would see those paltry savings as worth the political blowback, unless there was an advantage at stake.

**Yeah. What's that advantage?**

The fact that the government plans to invoke closure on the bill . . .

It's true. The government gave us notice that they were going to invoke closure before they introduced the bill, so any talk that they didn't do that is mythical.

. . . and limit debate to three hours, also tells you how much confidence the UCP has in the legislation standing on its merits. (Not to mention the fact that [the Premier] is spending the next few days in Texas, 3,500 km away from annoying questions about the move).

Ultimately, the overriding concern here has to be for the progress of any open investigations, particularly the UCP leadership probe, which includes some unfinished court challenges.

The government says it expects all such investigations to continue. However, they also admit the decision of how to assign staff resources, and whether to rehire Gibson – or any commissioner for that matter – will now be up to the Chief Electoral Officer.

And even if the current electoral officer, Glen Resler, decides to let the probes stand, his contract is up in April, giving the government an opportunity to find a new officer less interested in investigating.

**Then he goes on to say this:**

To no one's surprise . . . Albertans are already comparing the move to that of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has shown an inclination for trying to obstruct any institution or individual investigating him.

These are the words of a journalist, published today, who obviously covers Alberta's provincial government and what it does.

I mean, there are so many aspects of that that really undermine, certainly, Albertans' faith in the work that we're doing here. It makes no sense, what is going on, and Bill 22's firing the Election Commissioner makes people shake their heads. Regular Albertans are wondering what's going on. They're surprised by this. I mean, I know that this is something that is pretty important to the Premier and the UCP. They had a very large platform, and they said that they would fulfill their platform, and it's in their platform. That's their plan going forward. Unfortunately, these are things that weren't in their platform. It is, I guess, what's politically expedient. Sometimes, you know, they're saying one thing but doing another. Therefore, people are confused, to be frank, and kind of outraged, as I think Keith Gerein does very well articulate.

**10:40**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I suspect you will table that document that you read from although it may not be necessary as you pretty much read the entire document.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are you wanting to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to 29(2)(a) and ask a number of questions of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, who spoke so eloquently about Bill 22 and some of the affronts to her sense of democracy that it represents. I couldn't help wondering, as I listened to her profound remarks about the impact Bill 22 will have in the lives of her constituents and some of the remarks that she's already received from her constituents, what indeed she thinks the reaction will be, as we all do, when she goes to meet with young students in some of the classrooms that we as MLAs visit and read to on a regular basis each year. Quite often the beginnings of those meetings with those students are prefaced with



small vignettes of what it's like to be an MLA and participate in government or opposition sides of the House and fulfill our duties as MLAs and perform the roles that we're elected to perform as members of this Legislature.

In light of this Bill 22 I'm wondering if that changes her sense of pride in trying to describe exactly what this democracy we're a part of is really founded on. I'm just wanting to hear perhaps what her initial, unvarnished remarks might be when she considers talking next time to groups of students in Edmonton-Riverview in light of the changes that this bill will bring to democracy in Alberta and the views of Albertans themselves about it and perhaps how we're seen in other jurisdictions as well.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much to the Member for Edmonton-McClung for those comments and questions about, yeah, speaking to young Albertans who we often, you know, as MLAs – I mean, I think that's one of the most enjoyable parts of the job, going to, especially, grade 6 classes, because it's part of that curriculum where they learn about provincial government, and hearing their questions and trying to understand that. To be honest, I feel that part of the work of any MLA is being a witness – right? – to what is actually happening and understanding it. I guess we're sort of all very, I think, deeply, compared to an average Albertan, understanding the machinations of government and how it works and how it doesn't and what supports it and what doesn't support it.

Certainly, what encouraged me – and I usually talk to young students about this – is: why did you become a politician? I didn't become a politician willingly. I really had to be convinced and wooed a bit before that. I had been a social worker for 25 years, but I was frustrated with dealing with cuts after cuts. I mean, I worked front-line social work when Premier Klein was here, and he cut public programs by 50 per cent, and I just saw the devastation. I certainly had deep concerns about the choices the government was making, and I continue to have those concerns with this Conservative government.

But, you know, besides talking to Albertans about the importance of decisions that are made in this House and how it impacts their lives, earlier today I was with a group of professionals. These are adults who vote and work in our province. There were a lot of people pretty disgusted with the choices of this government. There were a lot of people who were shocked that AISH and Alberta seniors' benefit were being deindexed, that bracket creep was happening, because all Albertans are going to be paying higher taxes. This government didn't run on that in their platform. Unfortunately, they didn't honestly tell Albertans what their plan was. Certainly, these professionals I saw were very disheartened by Bill 22 and by people not having the resources to carry on with the investigation, possibly, and the lack of willingness to really support our democracy, because we want people to feel better . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I entered politics to represent people, regular, average, everyday people, because I am one. My background is construction: early mornings, black coffee, and hard work, a training ground where contracts are still done on a handshake, a look in the eye, and based on one's character and integrity. In fact, I ran my business under the name of Integrity Builders for more than 13 years and built a reputation over that time for characteristics that allowed me to win a nomination and an election this spring. This new job as a Member of the Legislative Assembly is very different from my former career. Plain language

isn't plain. A single word can change the meaning and connotation of an entire phrase, and nothing is as straightforward as snapping a line and cutting a sheet of plywood, where you measure twice and you cut once. I understand that world, and I am still learning this one.

But I know people, and the Minister of Finance looks me straight in the eye and has a solid handshake, and I trust him. I also know that that may not be a good enough reason for many people, so I began reading Bill 22 to learn for myself the truth that is written there, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God. On page 21 of the bill, under 153.093(5) it says:

Any employment contract between the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the person who, immediately before the coming into force of this section, held the office of Election Commissioner under this Act is terminated on the coming into force of this section.

Pretty straightforward that that person is terminated.

It carries on in subsection (6). That says:

The person who, immediately before the coming into force of this section, held the office of Election Commissioner under this Act may be appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer as the Election Commissioner pursuant to the Public Service Act.

So that individual could have their job back if they're deemed to be worthy of it.

As stated by the Minister of Finance and completely true, the Election Commissioner is removed by this act but can absolutely be put back in place at the discretion of the Chief Electoral Officer should he or she be deemed the best choice of that office, not by an elected official, not by this government in power but at arm's length and in line with the practice of nearly every other provincial Legislature in Canada. I think that's pretty straightforward and clear.

In the same way, under 153.093(2)(f) it says:

An investigation commenced by the Election Commissioner under section 153.09 of this Act or section 44.95 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act before the coming into force of this section may be continued by the person who holds the position of Election Commissioner.

The only challenge I see here with some legalese or that kind of thing is the word "may," meaning it may continue or it may not continue based on, presumably, the experience, understanding, and character of the Election Commissioner as well as the evidence or lack thereof, and I leave that to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer and whomever they may appoint to the office of Election Commissioner.

This bill, in fact, in the vast majority of its changes, in plain construction language, cleans up duplications and redundancies of agencies, boards, and commissions, predominantly to save Albertans money. By eliminating waste and bureaucratic growth, this bill makes good, thoughtful decisions in light of our current fiscal situation, which is not sustainable and on a trajectory to reach \$100 billion of debt. That is a legacy I will not leave for my children, and I will support this bill.

I started this evening speaking about trust. It is clearly evident that trust is truly lacking in our society today, but I will continue to try to build trust where I can and whenever I can, just like building a construction business, by doing it one person at a time. Like we used to say in construction: just keep nailing, and it'll all come together.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

10:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the main bill, Bill 22? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move an amendment, which reads as follows . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before you read the amendment, could you just wait till it's distributed to me?

Hon. member, this will be known as amendment RA1. Please proceed.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much. I move that second reading of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that dissolving the independent office of the Election Commissioner could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process in Alberta.

Boy, that's putting it mildly.

Madam Speaker, I think that of all the bills I have ever seen come before the House, this is the one that I probably find the most objectionable. The reason I say that is because it strikes at that which is most fundamental to how we govern ourselves, that which is most fundamental to how our institutions are set up. It strikes at the rule of law, but in this case, you know, we're talking about something that does impact the rule of law, the rule of law and specifically the decision of the Election Commissioner, so not just the rule of law but the perceived and actual fairness of our electoral process. I think that that should be a huge concern to everyone in here, and I hope that members in this House will support this.

I think one thing that's worth clarifying is that the members opposite keep rising and saying: well, this is a debate about, you know, whether there is one person or two people making this decision and how exactly the legislation is written and who's in charge of whom. But that just misses the point so fundamentally on so many levels. The point isn't who should have jurisdiction or who should investigate what or whether there should be one or two or what the efficiencies are; the point, Madam Speaker, is that the man was terminated in the middle of an active investigation into the very people who are terminating him. I mean, those points about who should investigate what and who's in charge of whom and what the legislation says are all incredibly important points but not as important as the fact that he is investigating members of a political party, a political party that forms the government in this province currently, and members of that same government, of that same political party who are being investigated are coming forward to remove him from his office.

He has issued 211,000 and some dollars in fines to date against multiple different individuals. Every time, it seems, that this issue comes up again, more individuals are found to be complicit. I mean, we're literally talking about envelopes of money. Those are some of the allegations. I think that should be a huge concern. I think the fact that the Election Commissioner has levelled so many fines, the fact that the RCMP is investigating related matters should be a huge concern.

What message does this send, Madam Speaker, to those members of the RCMP? What message does it send to those people who are also investigating allegations of fraud around this same matter? I think the message that it sends is: don't look too deeply; we may decide to get rid of you, too. I think that's a message that's pretty

concerning. The idea that those who are in power can remove oversight of themselves is a huge concern.

You know, we hear people talk about the rule of law a lot. I feel like it's maybe a concept that doesn't penetrate that deeply. Fundamentally, what it means is that you, that I, that every person in this room, that every person in this country are subject to the same laws, that we are all equal before those same laws. Decisions about how those laws impact us, decisions about whether we have violated those laws are not based on who we are or who we know or how much money we have or who our friends are. Those decisions are fundamentally based on our own actions. Different circumstances, different application, but fundamentally everyone gets the same rules.

I can't imagine a principle more fundamental. I mean, go to a class of kindergarten children and ask them whether it's fair to play a game where everyone has to abide by the same rules except the person who's chosen to be in charge because they get to remove from the game anyone who calls them out on violating the rules. I think it's pretty straightforward that no one would consider that acceptable.

That isn't all the bill does. Part of the concern is the number of unrelated ideas that are rolled together here. This bill also attacks pensions governance. For instance, teachers in this province have had the ability to have an equal say over the use of their pension funds for a number of years. I think that's pretty appropriate, you know, if it's their money. These are educated professionals. They have a direct interest in this matter. It's been this way for a number of years. They care about their own retirement future, and I think it's reasonable that they care about the future of their retirement savings, so they want to have a say. What could be more democratic than saying that they are permitted to elect representatives to have that say on their behalf? This bill changes that.

It also has an impact on the retirement savings of many other folks. We worked long and hard when we were in government to ensure that many different types of employees had a say through their union about the use of their pension funds. LAPP, for instance, was certainly referenced earlier today. I think that's important. I think it's important that people deserve to have a say in their retirement funds.

You know, the member before me spoke at length about regular people and how he's here to represent regular people. Well, at the same time, he's defending a bill which takes the rights away from regular people to have a say in how their retirement funds are managed. It imposes on them requirements about – essentially, the implication by the Finance minister earlier today was: we have to have the ability to remove the chosen representative of the workers because that person might not meet the standards of competence. We're not worried about management, and we're not worried about us meeting a standard of competence, but we're really worried that the workers might choose someone that doesn't meet that standard. I think that that is a pretty unfair thing to say.

**11:00**

I think this bill does a lot of things, and I think one of the big concerns here is that we're talking about not only an enormous number of things that are done in this bill and an enormous impact on the financial concerns of the people that were in the pension programs impacted; we're also talking about something that impacts the rule of law and how we govern ourselves as a democracy.

To bring forward a huge bill like this, all rammed together, and to move that closure can be used at all three levels before the bill is even introduced is a big concern. You know, the members opposite are going to argue: well, we didn't invoke it right away; you had

more than three hours of debate. I mean, that's a pretty low bar, but I think the concern is that it's not the hours of debate. It's not the number of hours that we're here in the middle of the night talking about this bill. The concern is the overall time for the public to notice. I'm not here to stand on my own convictions alone. The purpose of my having the ability to debate this bill is not because I'm a special person somehow. It's because I'm someone who was elected to represent a whole lot of other people, so the concern isn't about whether or not I have time to speak to the bill or whether or not I have time to look at the bill. The concern is about whether or not my constituents have time to understand the bill.

Given that we're looking at potentially seeing this pass before the end of the week, in four days, when we're sitting overnight, when I have no opportunity to even go back to Calgary and speak to my constituents about this bill – incidentally, my office had received already this morning more than 50 e-mails about this bill – you know, I think that's a huge concern. I think that when we attack our fundamental democratic institutions and we try to do so in such a way that we can move it through in less than a week in order to avoid public scrutiny, that should be a big concern. That's what this entire thing is about, avoiding public scrutiny. The removal of the Election Commissioner is about avoiding future public scrutiny. The moving of the bill to remove the Election Commissioner so quickly is about avoiding public scrutiny. I think that that's a really big concern.

The idea that the members opposite are talking about, "Well, that person could have their job back if they're deemed to be worthy of it," that's kind of exactly the concern, right? Who's doing the deeming of the worthiness? The idea that investigation should be independent, that those investigating breaches of the law should be independent is fundamental.

You know, the government loves to accuse us of fear and smear, but a lot of this isn't even coming from us. A lot of this is coming from the media, is coming from the people out there. I don't think there are actually words that I can use in this place that are sufficient to describe my feelings about this bill, which is fundamentally attacking the rule of law, attacking our democracy. I think that that is a pretty big concern.

I was reading sort of historically different things about the rule of law, and many moons ago Samuel Rutherford used this to argue against the divine right of kings. That's the thing that I'm concerned about here, right? The idea that the king had divine right was something that was being argued against. This was the idea that the rules applied to everyone else but because the king was divine, they didn't apply to him. I don't want to see that happen here in Alberta. I don't want it to be the case that we live in a place and we can say: well, the rules apply to everyone unless of course you're investigating those who are in power, in which case you will be removed from your office because the rules ought not to apply to them.

I believe that every person in this province should be concerned about this. This isn't a conversation about how the rules should be enforced or who should enforce them or whether it's better to have one agency or two. It is a conversation about whether those rules ought to be enforced at all. I think that that is a huge concern.

[The Speaker in the chair]

If we're saying that the rules should be enforced so long as they aren't enforced against members of the governing party, I think people would be appalled to hear that, to hear that this is a conversation that we are having here, and I think it is a sneaking in of American politics into our system because I think we've seen some very similar things in the U.S. with the current President

around the idea, you know, I mean, even the consideration of removing people that are investigating you. That's not appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, we don't even know how or if the evidence is being secured from this investigation. I mean, that's a pretty big concern. Are they transferring that evidence to the RCMP? Where does it go?

I think, you know, the Election Commissioner himself, his comments are very telling. "I am concerned about the potential negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process." I think that this whole incident calls into . . . [Ms Ganley's speaking time expired]

And with that, I will sit down.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on RA1. Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley caught my eye.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I just want to confirm that we are talking about the amendment before us here now. It seems like the member that put the amendment forward didn't talk a lot about the amendment, talked about everything but it, including teachers' pension, which I don't see in the amendment at all. She talked a lot about, you know, complained about the lack of time for debate, but of course she took a lot of time talking about everything but the amendment which she brought forward. So, I guess, when we're complaining about the hours of debate that they may or may not have, it seems bizarre that they would take time and talk about anything else other than what's at hand, which was, of course, the amendment.

Now, I just want to go through this amendment a little bit. It suggests "that dissolving the independent Office of the Election Commissioner could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration." Now, it's always good to go right back to the bill itself, I think, because, obviously, there's all sorts of spin going on from the NDP and their friends, and a lot of times that spin doesn't always represent the truth or what's actually written in the bill.

When I look at the bill here, it says on page 20, section (11), and this is under the heading "The Office of the Election Commissioner is dissolved."

(2) On the coming into force of subsection (1), the following applies.

- (a) the property, assets, rights, obligations, liabilities, powers, duties and functions of the Office of the Election Commissioner become the property, assets, rights, obligations, liabilities, powers, duties and functions of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Now, obviously, this amendment suggests "that dissolving the independent Office of the Election Commissioner could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration." So I guess what this amendment is suggesting is that there's no independence of the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. Now, that's a pretty serious allegation, I think. I think that we have some confidence in the Chief Electoral Officer being able to do their job in that office and the Chief Electoral Officer himself doing his job, but obviously, the members opposite are suggesting that there is "the real and perceived integrity of the election process." So they're suggesting that there could be a problem with the integrity of the election process if the Election Commissioner's "property, assets, rights, obligations, liabilities, powers, duties and functions" are turned over to the Chief Electoral Officer. Now, that's pretty serious.

Now, I'm going to go on and read the next section. First, I'll read:

(2) On the coming into force of subsection (1), the following applies:

- (b) the records in the custody or under the control of the Office of the Election Commissioner are transferred to the custody and control of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Again, when we apply this amendment's suggestion that dissolving the Election Commissioner office "could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity," it's another serious allegation, that the office of the Chief Electoral Officer is somehow going to have a perceived lack of integrity and lack of independence.

11:10

I'm just going to go on and read the next paragraph.

(2) On the coming into force of subsection (1), the following applies:

- (c) an existing cause of action, claim or liability to prosecution of, by or against the Office of the Election Commissioner is unaffected by the coming into force of this section and may be continued by or against the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

So any suggestion by the members opposite and their allies, that are out running around spreading information, that any action or claim or prosecution that's going on with the office of the Election Commissioner would somehow be stopped by this bill is absolutely false. It states clearly in the bill that that will be continued "by or against the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer." Again, this amendment is suggesting somehow that the Chief Electoral Officer could have a lack of independence or real and perceived integrity. When we look at things like that, we understand that this amendment, obviously, has no bearing at all and should be voted down.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are back on RA1. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to provide some debate.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to rise this evening to speak to the amendment to Bill 22, which, I would say without hesitation, is an understatement of the session given the impacts that the bill would have should it be passed. I fully support the intent of the amendment to Bill 22 to not have the bill read a second time because, as the amendment states, "the Assembly is of the view that dissolving the independent Office of the Election Commissioner could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process in Alberta."

As I said, Mr. Speaker, the statements contained in the proposal to amend Bill 22 are certainly an understatement and something that is underscored by the current Election Commissioner himself, who in a media release today eloquently expressed how, in fact, any democracy should be very careful to protect the ways in which it conducts elections. His intent, of course, in making his disappointment known about the fact that indeed he was going to be losing his position and that the position would be terminated stemmed not from a personal sense of loss but about "the potential negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process," and that's a quote from his statement released today.

He goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, that his "disappointment stems from [his] firm belief that the citizens of Alberta must have confidence and trust in the integrity of all aspects of the provincial electoral process." That is critical and fundamental to what we're speaking about this evening, confidence and trust. I'm just

wondering how in the world we as Albertans in many facets, in many different situations can seem to express and have the same sense of confidence and trust in our electoral process should this Bill 22 pass unamended or pass at all. We're speaking to the amendment now to not have the bill move forward. That confidence and trust is something that many of us in this Legislature and Albertans in general have proudly exuded when we would go and speak about our province and our electoral process and our democracy in many different forums.

But now with this Bill 22, which proposes to fire the Election Commissioner, a bill which invokes closure at every stage of debate to basically get it over with quick so that it's out of the news and Albertans can move onto something else, the government's hope is that this will be something that is a quick Alberta snowstorm. Boom, it's over and melted and the grass will appear and everything is normal again, but this flurry is going to be a deep pit, a deep, heavy snowfall in the government's agenda, Mr. Speaker. It's something that they can avoid by adopting the amendment which we proposed as the opposition.

It's amazing that less than a year into its mandate we're at this place, Mr. Speaker, where a government that proudly came in talking about how it had won the right to govern, a majority in Alberta, is now with its tail between its legs, looking to fire the Election Commissioner because it seems to be afraid of what this commissioner might turn up in upcoming investigations and indeed in ongoing investigations that are alleging some very, very serious breaches of the Election Act.

In committee a number of months ago, previous to the last election, I believe it was Alberta's Economic Future Committee – I could stand corrected – there was a member, actually the proud, final standing member of the former Progressive Conservative Party to name himself and brand himself as such in this Legislature. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, the former classmate of mine at Queen Elizabeth high school, stated, somewhat shockingly to me, when we were talking about setting rules around the nomination process for leadership races within political parties in Alberta – he stunned me by saying very forthrightly and resolutely and in a committed way that was really disappointing to me that government has no business in a nomination process for leadership. This really set the tone for what I began there to understand was the actual heartfelt belief of even Progressive Conservatives and now in the subsequent government and Conservative parties that there should be a closet within which nominations for leadership and leadership races within political parties are shrouded.

The crux of the matter is that the UCP government members believe that the process by which political leaders are chosen by their parties should be held in secret, as that member indicated to me so strongly, that the public has no right to review the political parties' leadership races and nomination procedures. It should be done without public scrutiny, away from the public eye, in secret, without rules or at least without any public knowledge of what the rules are that the public could scrutinize, out of sight, out of mind, none of your business. Mr. Speaker, I was very shocked and very disappointed in that member, whom I as well as many other members of this Legislature had great respect for, but that is one view that I certainly had nothing but derision for.

To see that Conservative members of this Legislature thought that a political party is some kind of private club to which public scrutiny has no right was shocking, yet that's exactly the type of attitude that is embedded in Bill 22, and we see it, unfortunately, with pride being displayed by the members opposite in the government. I'm just wondering why they come to these seemingly entitled views of what indeed political parties are and what indeed a democracy is. It astounds me that anybody who's

in this Chamber, who's gotten elected, gone through the process of a nomination meeting and so forth could end up having the opinion that somehow the public doesn't deserve to know how those decisions are made within a political party, yet that's the attitude of this government. Bill 22 is a prominent display of that total disdain for the respect for our democracy that we would hope all members of this Chamber and all citizens of this province and indeed the country have.

11:20

As I mentioned to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview in my remarks to her under 29(2)(a), how indeed are we going to face schoolchildren that we talk to and proudly talk about our democracy, that we represent, in the light of this Bill 22, which proposes to remove an Election Commissioner who actually is involved in active investigations into alleged abuses of power and corruption on the part of the current government? Even the grade 6 classes – and I shouldn't say “even” because they have really impressed me whenever I go there with their level of understanding and their knowledge of the political process, and that's evident when you walk by the hallways when they come to do their mock parliaments. Their understanding of our democracy and what it should be is actually pretty deep, and I really am saddened to know that our grade 6 classes in these coming weeks are going to be talking about this piece of legislation and scratching their heads and, hopefully, having lots and lots of questions about what it is that this government is actually up to.

Out of sight, out of mind: why would the government want to do such a thing? It should be an interesting discussion for grade 6 classes, probably even right through to high school and university level classes, as to what this government is up to. I know that my constituents are talking about it. They're astounded. In fact, professionals in this province are talking about it, and they're not happy with it. They're ashamed, they're embarrassed, and they're angry about it. Now, even today, looking to speak with members of the Alberta Real Estate Association who were at the Matrix Hotel earlier this evening, members opposite from government may not have heard the shrillness of the arguments that I heard, but certainly I had a number of the members there talking to me about how shocked they were that this government would actually try to pull a stunt like this, to try to actually pull the rug out from underneath the Election Commissioner,

who has been hitting UCP leadership campaign operatives with massive fines,

in the words of Mr. Don Braid, a journalist who's of some repute in this province, not one who is necessarily the friendliest to the progressive part of the world in this province. But I'll tell you what. Mr. Braid is not overly impressed with what's going on with Bill 22 and this government. He goes on to say in his comments:

Bill 22 rolls the commission duties into Elections Alberta, the outfit that governs the wider realm of running and regulating elections.

Chief electoral officer Glen Resler [then] can decide if he wants to rehire Gibson, whose job was to enforce the election and financing laws.

Now, he goes on to say:

The government says current investigations will continue, whether Gibson is retained or not. All fines and penalties are still valid . . .

although that remains to be seen. A lot of questions are up in the air.

People I was speaking to at the reception for the Alberta Real Estate Association were dumbfounded that this current government would have the audacity to fire the Election Commissioner in the middle of an investigation which wasn't, frankly, going their way.

Even in the light of, you know, major fines that had been levied and perhaps other unforeseen judgments coming down and maybe even more fines, this government chooses to pass or attempt to pass legislation, Bill 22, to shove under the carpet the current Election Commissioner, have the role usurped by the Chief Electoral Officer, and expects that Albertans are going to be hoodwinked by this and that it will go away very quickly without much public debate.

Well, I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker. They are about to be very, very surprised if that's what they thought, because the large number of complaints that were received by the Election Commissioner early on after he was returned to office after being fired by a previous Conservative administration speaks to the fact that Albertans wholeheartedly disagreed with that member's desire to operate political parties as a private club. I speak about the former Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, who said in committee to us that he thought that political parties were basically tantamount to private clubs and that public scrutiny was not something that the electorate deserved to have and had no right to oversee, these private political clubs that they were so entitled to belong to.

I wonder aloud about other conversations we have as MLAs when we do our constituency work. What are we to say to newcomers to this country, Mr. Speaker, who want and are hungry and thirsty to learn about our democracy and who come from places where there is no democracy, where the rules are broken constantly if there are any rules, who struggle to put in place rules that emulate what we thought were the gold standard here in Canada and in Alberta, where the election laws are something to be proud of, where you can run to be a leader of a political party in full knowledge that the rules that are in place will be followed? Yet these newcomers will question exactly what's going on in this province if this bill passes, and rightly so.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen on 29(2)(a).

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, and I want to thank my colleague for his comments. He spoke at several points about the feedback that he has received from Albertans, whether it was at an evening mixer that he attended or talking to school groups. I just wondered if he might be able to tell us if he as an MLA has been contacted by his constituents around the contents of Bill 22 and how that has informed his position on this piece of legislation and through that to the reasoned amendment that is before us, that we are currently debating.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung if you'd like to respond.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to the hon. member's comments. I've always appreciated her deep and insightful analysis of any issue we're debating in this House, and that certainly goes for this debate tonight on Bill 22 and the amendment thereto that we are discussing right now.

Other members in this House have spoken earlier this evening about this debate being one of the rule of law versus the rule of force. That is something that I was alluding to when I spoke about us as members of the Legislature or even members of the public who happen to be at gatherings where we find ourselves talking to newcomers about our electoral process. What are we to say to newcomers to this country who want to learn about what this gold standard of democracy that we supposedly have in this province means to us and how it enshrines the rights of everyone to, without fear of reproach and without any expectations of interference, fairly

achieve public office, a leadership role within a political party in this country, in this province, knowing that the rules are going to be followed and that there are consequences for not following those rules? Those consequences are what keep in check those who might want to thwart the rules and just, in fact, go ahead and take over a leadership position in a way that many of these newcomers have seen in countries that they left or escaped in order to come to Canada. Many countries come to mind, Mr. Speaker, where those individuals who come to this country will tell stories of there being no democracy, no opportunity to have a representative government, no opportunity to even run for office. It simply would be a dictatorship position where a leader would expect to rule for life, perhaps, and have no inclination to ever give up power or to ever give any credence to or believe that anybody had any ability or right to openly oppose them.

11:30

That seems to be what's happening, Mr. Speaker, in this province. A government, that was elected last April, a United Conservative Party government, seems to be implying with Bill 22 that they have a divine right to govern without opposition, without necessarily bending to the rule of law. That's something that's shocking as far as the history that we have in this country, a proud history of representative democracy, that we have fought world wars to defend. My family members have certainly been overseas to defend it. I know that those who we recently remembered on November 11 as having served and fought for our country to defend our values, our democratic process and our electoral process, would be turning over in their graves to look at what this government is trying to do to our electoral process here in Alberta. Never mind my late grandfather and my father, who both served in the Canadian Army to protect our democratic rights, but even my grandmother, who served at home, keeping the family farm operating during wartime, who later was elected numerous times to serve on village council in Thorhild, never ever in her wildest dreams would have thought that this would come to pass.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on RA1. I see the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock — for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all the changes that went on in the previous four years, I can understand why you're confused with regard to my constituency having changed from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock to Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock now. That was just part of a lot of the changes that occurred during the previous term of government. I was here as a member of the Official Opposition at that time, and I feel I can spread some light on how we came to this point and on some of the concerns we had when the previous government was introducing the changes to the Election Act and to how we would be overseeing the process within Alberta.

You know, the amendment is to essentially not utilize this act and that we not read it a second time. I believe that Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, is long overdue. I'm thankful that the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance is taking it seriously, finding ways to do governance better, to do process better, to be able to find efficiencies within how we're able to move forward in a manner that respects the taxpayer's dollar and respects the fact that government needs to be accountable to the taxpayer on how their money is being spent. I believe that the plans that are being proposed in Bill 22 will lead to better governance, will lead to more efficient government, and I'm happy to support it at this time. I

believe that we should continue on with our process through second reading.

You know, there were many times during the previous government that I had concerns over how the previous government would just continue to not look for ways to manage more efficiently, manage better, but on the contrary the previous government continued to spend, spend, spend without any consideration for Alberta taxpayers.

We even take a look with regard to the changes in the Election Act and the process with regard to the elections. Some of the advice that our Leg. Offices Committee was receiving was not adhered to. When we take a look at even things such as door-to-door enumeration, the advice was that it has been seen as being ineffective, yet the government of the day decided that \$11 million spent on an enumeration was good value for taxpayers' money. I had other concerns with that.

With regard to Bill 22, you know, we get a lot of letters and a lot of people that contact us as MLAs with what they've heard, whether it's in the media, whether they've heard it from their acquaintances, whether they've heard it from their association, and they want clarity. They want clarification on what is happening: how is this going to affect them, and is this going to be a good move to move forward?

At times I've been able to speak with individuals. I had a call from an individual just yesterday morning in the office here. I rarely get a call on the phone, but the individual was very happy to be able to talk directly to me. He was very concerned with Bill 22 and the implications it had with regard to the office of the Election Commissioner. But when I was able to direct him to the bill, able to help him read through the bill, it alleviated a lot of the concern that he had with regard to the process moving forward and how the government has decided to essentially amalgamate into the office of the Chief Electoral Officer the functions of oversight over elections.

Everybody is of the opinion or there are a lot of people that are hearing that the Election Commissioner has been fired. The Election Commissioner office will be terminated. The individual that's currently holding the office will be terminated. It may be appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer if he so chooses, and the investigations that are continuing on will continue on. All the due process that has been going on in the Election Commissioner's office will be transferred over to the Chief Electoral Officer, and we can expect that those processes will continue on. To make it as if all things have come to a halt with regard to the investigations: I think that's misleading the public. The media, I believe, needs to properly inform the public of what truly is going on.

You know, I reflect on the office of the Election Commissioner, and I was very involved in committee with regard to that. We also were dealing with I believe it was Bill 32 during the previous mandate, and we as the Official Opposition had serious concerns with the direction that the previous government was moving in. We had identified early on in the process that there were concerns about the establishment of another office of the Legislature. We understood that there were going to be increased costs, that those were probably costs that could be controlled within the office of the Chief Electoral Officer much better than by establishing a whole new office with new locations, new people, and that the Chief Electoral Officer was in a good spot to be able to proceed with this duty.

11:40

You know, back in December 2017 there was much debate over whether or not we needed to move forward with that. I quote from *Hansard* — let's try to find out who was speaking here; it looks like

the member from the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills – with regard to the establishment of an independent officer of the Legislature with the election commissioner.

While it is important that we ensure that we have the appropriate checks and balances within our electoral system, adding an independent office of the Legislature I do not believe is the right path forward with respect to the independent elections commission. If, in fact, the government would like to have an independent elections commissioner, there is no reason why this commissioner cannot function within the confines of the chief electoral office.

Okay. We go further here about

an independent elections commissioner within the province of Manitoba, a province where good portions of the NDP world view have come from, and as such, they like to point to it as a real pinnacle of NDP thought, so they like to do some of the things that they've done there. One significant difference between Manitoba and what they're proposing here is that the independent elections commissioner in Manitoba actually reports to the Chief Electoral Officer and works inside the confines of that office, not as an independent office of the Legislature.

We heard earlier today that the other provinces have this structure and that it is working fine for them.

The setting up of a completely separate office: I believe it was a budget of around \$2.2 million that was introduced earlier tonight in Committee of Supply. Was that good spending of taxpayer dollars? We can look further into the debate with regard to the elections commissioner and those types of things and find that there were many, many individuals from the Official Opposition at that time that were very concerned with the redundancy of the separate office and also with regard to whether or not it was going to provide good value for taxpayers.

I think I will move forward with some of the concerns that were being brought up from the work that we did as a search committee when we went to look for an elections commissioner and some of the concerns that were brought up at the time when the motion came forward to the Legislature highlighting the concerns of the private members of the Official Opposition that participated on that search committee. I quote myself from *Hansard*, May 1, 2018, on many of the things that we were concerned with while we were on the search committee. Going forward, we as members on that committee from the opposition were not in favour of appointing

an individual as Election Commissioner who did not have all-party support.

During the last term I served on

a number of the search committees that we've put in place over the last couple of years, with a very good working relationship during search committee meetings, and we were able to come to unanimous support in all committees. But from the outset of this committee...

Again I'm quoting from when the motion came forward.

... in December it became very apparent that the members from the governing party were prepared to move forward in a way that I would consider to be somewhat haphazard, a little bit reckless.

We have long been disappointed in how members of the government caucus chose to conduct themselves throughout the entire search process. It became evident at our first meeting, at the end of December, that government MLAs were determined to proceed in a reckless fashion by forcing the Legislative Assembly Office to compose a job posting and a position profile for a brand new position in less than 48 hours.

This was a brand new position, yet the government was ready to just move at breakneck speed, without proper due diligence. We saw where the previous government decided that it was prudent to advertise for this position during Christmas. These were all concerns that led to where the members from the opposition on that

search committee could not find it within themselves to actually support the motion that came forward to the House. We had made many of these concerns known to other members on the committee. For all Albertans to have confidence in the individual – we felt that it was important that that individual would be able to have the full confidence of all Albertans. Just given the history of the individual that was hired as the Election Commissioner, there would be concerns with the fact that that individual had already gone into a position of suing the Alberta government, with concerns of that.

Like I say, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance...

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women has the call.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much, and thank you to the member. One thing I just wanted to reiterate – and the member was mentioning this – is the 48 hours in which this office was created.

The interesting thing was, too, that – there were a couple of things that I would like to provide some clarity on. One of them was a mistruth that was brought forward, hopefully accidentally, by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, that Mr. Gibson was fired. He was not. His contract was not renegotiated, and that needs to be extremely clear. Let me provide some clarity. His contract was not renegotiated. He had moved here from Manitoba and had not had his contract renegotiated and therefore was frustrated and therefore chose to sue the government at that time. He was not fired. His contract was not renegotiated. There's a huge difference there. Let's provide some clarity there.

The second thing is that the implication that Mr. Resler is not capable of doing his job has been completely implied. The intention is, of course, there because if the government is making a decision to choose at that point in time that they know best and that they're going to go forward with the decision on a new commissioner without any consultation nor a proper, appropriate time to create a tenure to bring a person forward for that particular position, over Christmastime, too, spending an extra \$20,000 bringing people in in order to be able to create said position, a redundancy that we all understand to be true at that point in time – that's the second piece.

The third thing is that Mr. Resler himself had stated at that time that he was completely capable and confident and had the people that he needed to do the job at that time. These are some of the facts.

The question I have – and potentially the member could answer this for me. As I understand it, the Chief Electoral Officer is independent. Would you please speak to that, about the independence of the Chief Electoral Officer, their job, and the competency of Mr. Resler?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock should he choose to respond.

11:50

**Mr. van Dijken:** Good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have full confidence in the Chief Electoral Officer and his abilities to be able to oversee this function within his office.

I do have one comment that I was not able to get to. When the motion was brought forward before the Legislature, in our meeting as the Committee of Leg. Offices we felt that it was prudent for allowing Albertans to know what contract was being entered into with the Election Commissioner. We now are able to see what that contract was. We now are able to see the direction that the previous government decided to go in. Under the sunshine list disclosures we have a compensation of \$159,523 for nine months' worth of work, which translates into just shy of \$213,000.

My amendment to the government motion of the day was essentially to allow this disclosure to happen so that Albertans could see what was happening within the process of fulfilling the duty to hire an Election Commissioner. The salary was advertised, the position was advertised with a range of \$152,818 to a top of \$212,801 for a maximum term of five years. The previous government felt it was prudent to hire an individual that, although fully capable of being utilized as an elections consultant, never really gave me any indication that he had done any significant investigative work. So to start that individual at the top of the range, at the top salary, for a five-year term concerned me. I felt that there was opportunity to negotiate with the individual to ensure that we were in a position to move forward, to essentially go with fewer years in the term. So we proposed that amendment. The previous government decided that that was not necessary. The amendment was voted down.

I believe that that was, in my opinion, a failure to recognize the need for accountability and transparency. They could have provided more confidence to Albertans that they were doing something that we could all be confident in.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on amendment RA1. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods would like to provide some comments.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amendment that my hon. colleague has introduced. It may be because I was at the NDP Provincial Council this past weekend debating resolutions, but I have to say that this amendment does not go far enough. I will be supporting it. [interjections] Your conventions aren't like that? Okay. Just an inside joke over here. This amendment does not go far enough. I will be supporting it, but I want to speak to, first, the amendment as it is and then what I think the amendment is missing, which I think is appropriate context for why we believe that this bill should not be read right now and instead should be amended by deleting all of the words.

First, let me start by talking about what the amendment does talk about. The amendment talks about the real issue, the negative impacts that dissolving the independent office of the Election Commissioner could have. Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the members of the government caucus throughout the debate this evening, and I really don't understand the mental hoops that they must be jumping through to make this seem logical to themselves. To be here and to pretend to not understand why this has reached national media and why it seems as though everyone who comments on politics or reports on politics or watches politics or is an expert on politics is looking at this situation and going, "You know, it doesn't pass the smell test" – in fact, many people are using far stronger language, and we're seeing this coverage across Alberta but also across the country.

For the members of the government to pretend to not know why this might be perceived as a problem, to terminate the person who is investigating issues related to their 2018 leadership contest and 2019 election, is disingenuous. I don't believe them. I have heard the call-in talk shows on the radio with countless people calling in to say: I voted UCP, and I cannot believe what this government is doing. I have seen the e-mails that I am copied on that your offices are receiving. Albertans believe in a strong democracy. Albertans believe in trust in their elections. Canadians are proud of that democracy. The actions of this government to fire the person investigating them and then to jump through some mental hoops to try to justify that is a little bit beyond belief.

Also, how can the member who spoke before me, from Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, stand without laughing to talk

about how crazy it was that they had to write a job description in 48 hours when I am being expected to pass an 80-page omnibus bill that touches 31 pieces of legislation, that impacts every Albertan on the election side, 400,000 Albertans on the pension side, countless others, with all the minor changes inside, in what looks like will be about 72 hours? Seventy-two hours for this large omnibus piece of legislation, and the member opposite is talking about the two days it took to write a job description as if that – again, the mental hoops, the connections that are not being made to connect the arguments they are making on one hand and what is actually happening in this Chamber and in our province shock me because if you're going to fire the person who's investigating you, at least acknowledge that there is a perception that there could be a problem with that.

Also, acknowledge the words in your bill because they say very, very clearly that all of the ongoing actions, claims, liabilities, prosecutions, anything that this office is doing – it does not say: it will continue. It says: it may continue. The words "will" and "may" and "shall" are incredibly important when drafting legislation, something that I and many of the colleagues who sat in this House before understand very well. This government has chosen to include the word "may." They can stand in this House and say, "Of course, everything will continue," but the legislation doesn't say that, and they know it.

They say that the Election Commissioner is not being fired, but the legislation says that he is. He is being terminated, and he is receiving severance which I believe is less than what was in the contract that he signed. His severance is being lowered. He's being fired. The position is being demoted, yet – I mean, honestly, this could potentially be called the Lorne Gibson clause because they are getting rid of Lorne Gibson. They are getting rid of a particular individual who is the individual investigating them, and they are jumping through hoops to try and explain it away. This from the party and from the political side of the spectrum that talks about the rule of law constantly. In this case, they are jeopardizing our democracy. They are jeopardizing the trust that Albertans have in what happens in our province.

I genuinely believe that this reasoned amendment is very important because all matters relating to the 2018 leadership race and the 2019 election should be closed before any changes to this officer take place, if only for the perception. Let's not talk about the real, what actually – the government believes that there is no real impact to the investigations, but you have to admit that the perception is out there clearly among Canadians that there is a real issue with what's happening here. The perception is really important here. We need to make sure that people feel trust in their democracy and trust in their government – and I can tell you that from the conversations I'm having with my constituents, they do not feel that there is trust here – so that is what this amendment does say.

**12:00**

I began my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by saying that this amendment does not go far enough, because I believe that all of the words of this bill should be deleted also because of the terrible impact to pensions. I have 200 e-mails from teachers extremely concerned about the move of their pension funds to AIMCo, done in a unilateral way with no consultation. To date – and I did just check the ATRF website – this government has not provided a business case or analysis. The analysis done by the ATRF shows quite clearly that in all scenarios that they have run, the ATRF size has been an advantage and their returns have been better than AIMCo's and would have been better than AIMCo's, even taking into account



the analyses of bigger is better and that if AIMCo had more money, they could find efficiencies.

I think that the 400,000 people who are part of ATRF, LAPP, PSPP, SFPP deserve the time to know what is happening with their pensions and to understand it. Now we're back to the 72 hours, Mr. Speaker, because Albertans are not being given the time to consider the contents of this omnibus legislation and the impacts to them and their lives. When we're talking about pensions, we are talking about the money these workers saved and put in place for the future. We are talking about something very key to these Albertans.

Now, timing is everything, and the timing of the debate of Bill 22 is interesting to me because, of course, our Premier is away in Texas. Almost the entirety of the debate on this legislation may happen while he is away, and that is deliberately done. [interjections] Oh, I apologize. Mr. Speaker, allow me to withdraw. It is getting late, and I should not have recognized that.

I would also note from a timing perspective that tomorrow the new federal cabinet will come out, and that's going to dominate a lot of the headlines, maybe cover up a few of the things that are happening. I think that we need to focus on the fact that Albertans deserve to know what is happening in this legislation. I think that's an incredibly important point, and the number of letters and submissions that I've received from Albertans leads me to believe that that is the case.

Now, speaking of pensions, I do want to suggest that we have some serious questions not only about AIMCo's ability to generate returns that are higher and better than ATRF's but in the case of PSPP, LAPP, SFPP and the statements that this minister has made around AIMCo's independence from government. In AIMCo's statute it says that the corporation must act in the best interests of its clients, but AIMCo is still a Crown agency that must follow directives from the Treasury Board. A directive is broadly defined to include policy under the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act, APAGA, and that prevails over AIMCo's act. So as we debate this reasoned amendment, the government needs to explain how AIMCo will maintain distance from government when it's clear that Treasury Board directives are a key part of how government can influence what AIMCo is and is not doing.

On other things that this bill touches on, again talking about the referral and how it does not go far enough, I would include in the referral the negative impacts of moving teachers' pensions without consulting them and the damage that does to trust, the concerns and the stress that that has caused. I would include the damage it does to remove AUPE's seat at the governance table. Losing that seat, losing that influence over their own members' money is a real issue, Mr. Speaker.

I would say that this bill should not be continued because of the new competency matrix, that the government is trying to process, giving them a veto over the nominations that the sponsoring organizations make, because it's suggesting that the members, the workers, who put their money into these pensions will somehow nominate incompetent people. Which of the members of the boards now are incompetent? Please identify them. If you suggest that we are implying that the Chief Electoral Officer is incompetent in some way, which we have not and would not, certainly in your legislation and in your answers in question period you have directly stated that there are issues of competence with the people currently on the board. I would love to delve into that more because I would argue that there is not an issue of competence.

The Finance minister also completely skipped over a good chunk of this bill in his introductory comments. I would note that he didn't mention that this bill allows political parties to merge. Why would this bill be doing that, Mr. Speaker? Perhaps the government should be telling us all about the changes that directly

impact their party and the parties that they were formed from and the financial arrangements between those parties because they've legislated it across several pages of this bill yet not spoken of it in this House.

Here we are with potentially less than 72 hours to process a bill that is 87 pages, across 31 pieces of legislation, that talks about so many different things: the ATB Financial mandate, changing the mandate to allow them to be more commercial and cost-effective and to avoid undue risk of loss. When I was a part of Premier Notley's government . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**Ms Gray:** My apologies again. I withdraw that.

. . . of the previous government, we specifically gave ATB Financial more money to give out more loans to support businesses. By giving them the direction to avoid undue risk of loss, does that mean fewer loans for small businesses? Is this fewer loans for farmers? Is that the decision that ATB Financial is going to have to make?

These are some of the concerns that I have, Mr. Speaker, so this reasoned amendment does not go far enough. There are some serious concerns with this bill and serious concerns with how this government is moving forward with this legislation. The 400,000 people who are part of these pension plans and all Albertans concerned about democracy deserve more time to fully understand what is happening in this omnibus piece of legislation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 23 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 23 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

### 12:10 Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers with respect to the bill? The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I rise to table some amendments. Shall I pass those up to you? How do I get those to you?

**The Chair:** The pages will come and grab the amendment from you. Just wait till I receive it before you proceed.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A2. Please proceed.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Madam Chair, would you like me to read this out?

**The Chair:** Yes, please.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Okay. On Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, the bill is amended as follows:

- A Schedule 1 is amended
  - (a) in section 1(d) adding “to the Minister” after “delivery”;
  - (b) in section 20
    - (i) in subsection (1)
      - (A) in clause (a) by striking out “April 1, 2020” and substituting “the coming into force of this Act”;
      - (B) in clause (b) by striking out “March 31, 2020” and substituting “the day before the coming into force of this Act”;
    - (ii) in subsection (2) by striking out “March 31, 2020” and substituting “the day before the coming into force of this Act”;
  - (c) in the schedule
    - (i) in section 1
      - (A) by striking out “22%” and substituting “C”;
      - (B) by striking out the following:
 

B is the estimated designated assistance amount.

and substituting the following:

B is the estimated designated assistance amount;

C is the prescribed percentage applicable in the prescribed circumstances.
    - (ii) in section 2
      - (A) by striking out “22%” and substituting “C”;
      - (B) by striking out the following:
 

B is the designated assistance amount.

and substituting the following:

B is the designated assistance amount;

C is the prescribed percentage applicable in the prescribed circumstances.

I will take a moment to describe what all that means.

Madam Chair, I rise today to table amendments to the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

I’ve heard just absolutely fantastic stories from filmmakers and producers since taking on my role, and I’m super proud to say that our government will be maintaining funding for the film industry with our budget and moving forward, and this is despite some very interesting words from many in the opposition. The industry will be receiving the same amount of funding as they have in previous years. There will be a transition period as we shift from the previous grant under Culture to the new tax credit under Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. The previous government was not listening to the industry and severely mishandled the previous grant program, leaving our government with quite a mess to clean up. I’m really proud to say that the creation of the film and television tax credit is just actually the first step.

As of April 2019 there were \$92.5 million worth of grant commitments scheduled for payment between 2019 and 2022. We will be meeting all of those commitments while still introducing our new film and television tax credit. We are committed and we did

commit in our platform to developing a film tax credit, and the hope is that it’s designed to attract large productions and series to Alberta. We are transitioning from an existing grant program because it not only puts us in line with other provinces, but it is what the film industry has asked us to do.

Since film production began in Alberta, in 1917, our government is the very first government to have the vision and leadership to recognize the need for a tax credit program. These amendments have come after consultation and a lot of consultation with industry. My colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism has worked tirelessly to meet with many film producers, unions, and studios since the budget was tabled, and I’m really happy to say that we’re addressing some of their concerns. We’ve had a lot of chances to listen to the industry. In order to provide confidence to the production companies and industry, we’ll be launching a new intake process. We really want to have this happen as soon as possible. These amendments create a new application process, the intake to start no later than January 2020.

If principal photography began after March 1, 2019 – this gets a little complicated – the production company then will be eligible to apply, in the first year of the program, from the date of proclamation up until March 31, 2021, in order to accommodate the companies that had applied to the original screen-based production grant, which was originally under Culture, in May and August of 2019. The transition takes a little bit of time, but we’re trying to accommodate all of those things in between. This will allow the companies that applied for the screen-based production grant in May and August of this year, 2019, to then be able to apply for that tax credit, which is what they’ve been asking for. That will actually happen starting April 1, 2021 – sorry. That’s that tax credit.

Starting April 1, 2021, at that point in time, there will be no retroactivity allowed. We’ll make those accommodations initially up until then, but starting on April 1 of the 2021 year, there will be no retroactive ability. The companies that applied between March 1, 2019, and the day of proclamation as well as those who apply between the day of proclamation, somewhere in January-ish, and March 31, 2021, will be eligible. This gives us a little bit of flexibility. We really listened to the industry to help this move a little bit faster.

We’re also amending the tax credit formula. This formula will be set out in regulation rather than legislation. This gives us a little bit of flexibility, especially because there are a lot of different scenarios, as we know, around the industry. We want to make sure to be as flexible as possible for them. Not all productions are the same, and there are many needs that are different between the applications, so we want to acknowledge that and make sure that we take that into consideration. Production companies will receive an authorization letter that will include – what we’re wanting to do is to have an estimated amount of tax credit that they can receive based on their estimated eligible production costs.

What will be included is that there will be a subtracting of any designated assistance that they may have already received – that’s grants and applications from other ministries – towards the same production. These changes mean that the actual amount of the tax credit that the production companies will receive will be based on their actual eligible production costs minus the other forms of designated assistance. Again, the designated assistance is other grants that they may have received for the same production in other ministries. This ensures that the film and television tax credit only supports eligible production costs incurred in Alberta. This has been something that we’ve all been working on diligently to make sure that we can make that happen.

We’re also making a change that more clearly defines what it means for production to be completed. This is absolutely an

imperative piece of accountability for the film industry and for government. It ensures that the film and television tax credit supports projects that are complete and available for distribution and broadcast. Regulations will further clarify completion of production. We're very much looking forward to working with the industry to figure out what that definition will look like.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm moving that we rise and report Bill 23 and report progress on Bill 20, but I don't know if you need me to adjourn debate first. You don't. So I am moving for the committee to rise and report Bill 23 and report progress on Bill 20.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

12:20

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 23. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all members of the House for their hard work today. I move that we adjourn the Assembly until tomorrow, November 20, at 9 o'clock a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:22 a.m. on Wednesday]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 20, 2019

Day 44

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Acting Speaker:** Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. So may Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 21

#### Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to speak.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 21 in Committee of the Whole. It gives us a chance to spend some time on different sections of the bill. Since this government has made a decision to hide most of their legislative agenda by burying very complex and important issues, which they have actually identified as both complex and important, in bills that tie together unrelated acts of the Legislature, it's really good to be in Committee of the Whole, where we can pierce that intent to hide and speak to issues. So I will, if the opportunity allows, be speaking to this bill on a number of occasions this morning and throughout the days ahead.

Previously I've had a chance to talk about the incredible attack on democratic rights that this bill represents with regard to unions and some of their functions in society and the fact that workers in this province have been the focus of repeated and, well, serial assaults by the government in legislative terms.

I would like to turn my attention this morning at first to the attacks on students and again begin with my overall concern and then move into a conversation about some of the particulars that are offensive in this bill. Hopefully, at some point members of the government side of the House will make whatever feeble attempts they have to legitimize this bill before voting for it.

I want to speak about the issue of students here because I think that this is again an issue of democracy. The benefits of a democracy are widely known throughout the world, and many people aspire to participate and contribute to democracies. But a fundamental aspect of democracy is the ability for average citizens to fully understand their role in participating in democracy and to make effective choices when voting. I think that any scholar of the history of democracy will tell you that part of the reason why the Westminster-style parliamentary democracy has done so well is because there has been an adjunct of an increase in public

education, available freely to all citizens, that supported that ever-important democracy.

What we have in this bill is an attempt to decrease access to postsecondary education, where in fact people often spend a significant portion of their time understanding and learning either aspects related to the democracy directly, through political science or other studies of that nature, or various areas of learning in various faculties at the universities and colleges and technical institutions, where they learn about the details of content area that is relevant to our conversations here in the House. Yet we have a government that is dead set on creating barriers and reducing accessibility for many people in this Bill 21.

Now, it's really important that we take the time to recognize how significant education is to the well-being of our society, and it's significant in a number of ways. As I mentioned, it allows people to receive the greatest amount of information necessary to become participants in our democracy, but it also helps to spread democracy outside of the voting booth. It spreads democracy outside of the voting booth by ensuring that no matter what family you're raised in, no matter what unfortunate circumstances you may unfortunately have been born into, you have an opportunity to make better for yourself in society. That means that just because your parents didn't have an opportunity for postsecondary education, it doesn't mean that you will be limited in going to postsecondary education. That means that we have an opportunity for people to move up in terms of socioeconomic position within society, which is a very democratizing aspect of the structures of our world right now.

This is what's been attacked by this government, the ability of people who are from more vulnerable or unfortunate circumstances to make changes in their world and to move on. Now, we know statistically that if your parents did not go to postsecondary education, the chances of you going to postsecondary education are significantly reduced compared to people whose parents did go to postsecondary education. Many of us know that in the colloquial sense.

I happen to be very fortunately blessed in terms of my birth. I was born an individual that has all the privileges a society has to offer, including both parents who are university educated and grandparents who were very highly focused on university education. You know, there's a story within my family about my grandmother on my mother's side refusing to move to Regina when a job offer was given to my grandfather, because they didn't have a university there at the time, but finding themselves eventually fortunate enough to move to Saskatoon, where there was a university, the University of Saskatchewan.

My grandfather, who fought in the First World War at Vimy and Passchendaele, thought education was very important, so much so that although he had three daughters – and daughters were not always educated in families in the '40s, '50s, and '60s – he ensured that all three of his daughters were university educated in the 1950s, so high value on education at the time. That was only possible because education was affordable to him. He wasn't a rich man. He worked for Marshall-Wells, and as was very common in those days, his wife, my grandmother Evelyn, was at home raising the children, part of the community, part of the church, part of society in many very productive ways. One of the things that she had insisted on was that her daughters also get university education, and the consequence was that at a time when not all women had that kind of access, they did have that access because education was affordable at the time.

9:10

Now, I think it's really important for us to realize how much that's changed over the last number of years. For example, when I

went to university, in my first year, 1977, I was able to work at Camp He Ho Ha for the summer and earn very little money, because essentially it was an organization that while they provided us some dollars for having put in eight weeks of work – essentially, they paid me \$50 a week to work at Camp He Ho Ha, but it was an excellent experience. It helped to give me lots of understanding of the universe and the concerns that the disabled community has about some of the barriers that they experience.

But that \$400 turned out to be exactly how much I paid for tuition for 10 full courses that year at the University of Alberta. I was able to be a contributor to society, working in the disabled community during the summer, and then go on to the university and pay my full tuition. Fortunately, of course, I also had parents that were more than happy to have me live at home and subsidize me in that way. Not everybody has that.

Now, with my own children going through university, we're at a place where university tuition is completely impossible to raise on your own. My son who went through law school eventually in the early 2000s was paying over \$15,000 a year. There was no way he could earn that kind of money over the summer. At the time, I was a social worker earning probably about \$50,000 a year and didn't have the wherewithal to completely support him, although he lived at home, so he had to take out student loans but has been able to pay those off. That's fortunate for him.

The issue here is that we have set up a system now where people like myself, who just by happenstance of birth end up in the right family with the resources necessary, can ensure that their children go on to advanced education, but people who come from families that either don't see the value in advanced education or where they may see the value but don't have the ability, because life has not dealt with them fairly and has not given them the financial wherewithal to be able to provide education, are being told now that the barriers that are going to prevent them from making that move from a lower socioeconomic status to a higher economic status are being raised by this government.

The government has made a number of assaults on university tuition here in this bill, and the consequences of them are dramatic and specific, but they're differentially specific; that is, some groups are being hurt more than others. The first group, that I've already mentioned, is people who don't have the dollars to go to university. Tuition will be rising by somewhere in the neighbourhood of about 21 per cent over the next number of years, and that by itself is a barrier for many people. What we will see is that people who clearly have the intellectual ability and the wherewithal personally to attend university will find themselves unable to do so because they simply can't afford that level of tuition in their life.

But on top of that, the government has also made a decision to increase interest rates on university loans and to reduce the tax deductions for university attendance. Now, this is an issue that is passed over by a lot of people but is very critical for a particular group of people. There are a significant number of women that are attending universities at the postgraduate level such that they have finished their bachelor's degree, often with the support or help of family members when that was possible, but then they go on to pursue a master's degree. We have a particular circumstance there that the majority of people going on to get master's degrees or PhDs in the province of Alberta are women. Many of them have multiple responsibilities in their lives. Not only are they going to university, but they're often at a life stage where they're raising children or are part of a family, often taking care of elderly seniors, and really living complex, stressful lives.

One of the things that helps them to do all of this work is that they receive payment from the universities in the form of grants for postgraduate students to be TAs or RAs, research assistants or

teaching assistants, or other functions within the university. Now, that means that their own income is high enough that they need to use the tax deductions to reduce their income to reduce the taxes that they have to pay. They can't pass it on as perhaps a 17-year-old or 18-year-old student might pass it on to their parents because their income isn't high enough to pay for it. But at the graduate level, because of the research assistantships and the teaching assistantships, their income is high enough that they must use that tax deduction themselves.

Now what's happened is that we have an assault not just on people who are most vulnerable from a financial point of view, but we also have an assault on women, who are most often in the position of seeking these sorts of degrees, being told that the tax deductions, which they themselves are using, are not going to be available to them any longer. As well as being in postsecondary education so they can become, you know, our speech pathologists or our OTs, occupational therapists, or our social workers or our nurses, all of those kind of degrees that people are participating in or, of course, the sciences – sorry; I come from the humanities, so I tend to mention those – and become our scientists, our engineers, our lawyers, our doctors, all of those people are being told that as well as dealing with the stressors of being in postsecondary education and being of the age at which they're likely also to have other responsibilities such as caring for children, being part of a family, or caring for elders, the costs of going to university are going to rise dramatically.

I can tell you that the deductions that were available until this government came along were significant in terms of the amount of return to a family. It could often mean the difference of \$3,000 or \$4,000 a year in terms of the money that would be returned to them against their research assistantship or teaching assistantship positions.

I think we have a real problem here. We have an act that is selectively harming people of a particular category and therefore is problematic. It's selectively harming people who are in postsecondary, selectively harming women, and selectively harming people who are trying to change their life circumstances and move forward from one socioeconomic group to another socioeconomic group. I think these consequences are worth paying attention to because if we allow these kind of things to happen, we will end up in a society where we have those that are privileged and those who are not.

Naturally, that's going to happen in any society. It doesn't matter where you are in the world. That's going to happen. But one of the best things about a democracy is that we have ways to reduce the likelihood of that, to give those that have been oppressed or have been neglected or have been forgotten a chance to move into the section of society that benefits from the fortunes of society, people who weren't necessarily born into it but who are willing to do the work to try to achieve it, and this is what this government is attacking.

It is at its core an attack on the nature of democracy. It is at its core an attempt to create a society in which we have the privileged and the nonprivileged, in which we have those that will benefit from the structures of society and the goods of society versus the people who will not. It puts a larger, higher, taller barrier between those two groups so that individuals who are dissatisfied in one aspect of their life can't move over to the other aspect of their life. When you begin to undermine democracy in order to privilege a small few so that you can become part of a richer, more powerful class, then you are acting in antidemocratic ways, which seems to be the underlying theme behind most of the legislation brought forward by this government. They actually seem to dislike democracy, and this is something that we need to stand up and challenge.

9:20

Some bills, like Bill 22, that we talked about do it directly and are a complete and obvious assault on democracy. Bill 21 does it more subtly. Bill 21 does it by creating the circumstance under which democracy will become more fragile. Democracy will have less of the supports necessary to sustain the vagaries of world dynamics. I think that that is very problematic.

I would like to see this government take a very serious look at this and look at the creation of a two-tiered reality, that they are trying to create here in this province, saying to the people on AISH who are living on \$1,600 a month: "You don't get to have \$30 extra a month in order to help pay your grocery bills. You don't get to have that." On the other hand, people who are international multimillionaires will be able to get \$4.7 billion in tax reductions. Now they're talking about reducing royalties, too, which isn't even a tax. It's our money as a government. They're saying that we're going to give away our own value for free to somebody else so that they can become wealthy and so they can export that wealth to another land, another country. What we have is people unable to pay for their groceries here in Alberta being told: there's no money for you, but if you want to build a swimming pool in Texas, here's some dollars so that you can do that.

That's what this bill is doing, and that's why I am objecting to this bill amongst the other things that I've previously objected to such as the assault on unions and the assault on worker rights. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members looking to join the debate on this matter? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen to speak.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to get up in this House and continue speaking to the bills that we have before us. Like my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford, I'd like to focus specifically on how this government continues to undermine the democratic process and democratic institutions within our society.

As the member was getting to, one of the most important democratic institutions that we actually have in our society is unions. Now, I know that members on the other side of the House don't feel that way. They actually appall unions. They know the reasons why. But this actually gives workers the opportunity to organize within themselves and ask for the specific benefits and pay that they think are required under the current economic system. It gives them the opportunity as well to debate these things amongst themselves. I know this first-hand because, of course, I used to be within a union at the University of Alberta, the Non-Academic Staff Association. I remember going through the process by which we democratically decided what things we were going to focus on as we went into the collective bargaining process.

Of course, this government wants to undermine that entire process by centralizing power and making sure that the minister of Treasury Board and Finance, in essence, can eliminate the entire bargaining process if he chose to. This is what is really problematic about this bill.

Of course, so many of the people that are actually represented by these unions, public-sector workers, are people who honestly aren't making that much money compared to a lot of people in this society. Many of them are constituents of mine. My constituency happens to be a constituency that's full of many new Canadians, many, many new Canadians. I've spoken to a number of them. I remember attending an event by the Nepalese community. So many of the Nepalese community are people who are professionals, like many

others from other communities as well who have come from Pakistan, from India, from Latin America, people who are new Canadians and are within these unions and are represented because they're public-sector workers.

Now, these new Canadians come to this country, like all immigrants came to this country – of course, we recognize that we are on treaty land and that we share this land with indigenous people – looking for better opportunities for them and their families. This bill undermines that opportunity. In the same vein, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was talking about how this bill undermines the democratic process by not providing people access to postsecondary education. Well, undermining their ability to bargain for themselves, being public-sector workers, being part of a union, is also incredibly problematic. Incredibly problematic.

I believe that new immigrants have come here – my family was part of this community not too long ago. My parents came to this country because they thought it would be better. We came fleeing political violence back in our country. My parents came here believing that this would be a better opportunity for them and for us, their children. I have three brothers; we're four in total. I'm happy to say that all four of us ended up getting access to postsecondary education but with student loans. We had the same loans that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was talking about. Having to take out student loans in order to pay for our postsecondary education – it took a substantial amount of time in order to pay off those student loans after graduation.

I think that this is something that all members of this House should consider because now we're creating a situation where people actually have to pay more for postsecondary education in the province of Alberta, considering that our government actually put a tuition freeze in for over four years, making sure that people could continue to access postsecondary education. On average an arts or a science student's tuition at the University of Alberta is going to go up by \$371 a year. This first year it'll go up by \$371. Over the next four years students could see an increase of up to an additional \$371 per year, so over a four-year period that would mean an additional \$4,000. Those \$4,000 are \$4,000 that that student will have to take out in additional student loans and then, when graduating, will have to pay for.

As people know, when people are in debt, it puts them in a situation where they can't as actively participate in the economy. Yes, it's helping banks because they have to pay back the student loan and they have to pay the interest on those student loans, but it inhibits people from being able to buy a car, purchase a home for themselves and their families. Many students, once they graduate from university, end up getting married and starting a family. These are people that want to create a home for their future families – right? – for the kids that they're going to have. Being substantially in debt is going to inhibit many of these people who are graduating, many of them new Canadians or the children of new Canadians, that have purposely come here seeking a better future.

9:30

We have to ask ourselves: is this really the kind of Alberta that we want? Do we want to continue to undermine the democratic process, creating a situation where people won't have as much opportunity to actually participate in the economy? It inhibits people.

Getting back to the unions and their democratic institutions, I wanted to cover that in that process, people are elected to represent within the union, and this is something that members on the other side seem to forget or just simply overlook. All director positions within unions: they're elected positions. The members of that union

actually vote for the person that they think is best going to represent them within that union. It's a process. It's a democratic process.

Many times the members from all kinds of unions have the opportunity to actually be consulted by the directors of the union. The president, the vice-president, all the people that make up the core of the directors of the union, then begin a process by which they consult with the members on the bargaining process. So many times, while at the bargaining table, the bargaining team is not necessarily the directors. When I was president of the Non-Academic Staff Association, I wasn't part of the bargaining team. I was the president of the union but still not part of the bargaining team.

There was the opportunity where we created a situation where we went out to the members. We wanted to make sure that members not only were consulted but actually had the opportunity to participate in the bargaining process themselves. Within the bargaining team there were actually members at large of the union, that actually sat on that bargaining team so they could reach out to other members within the union, consult with them, talk with their fellow members within the union, and then bring those issues and concerns not to the president, not to the vice-president, not to the directors, the elected positions, but to themselves, participating within the bargaining process. It was they that decided, "Okay; well, if we can't get a pay increase, then at least we should be able to get some other kinds of benefits when bargaining with the employer," in this case the University of Alberta.

It looks like this government is doubling down on bad-faith bargaining. They want to be able to erode this process, and this is what's substantially wrong with this bill. It's actually taking away the ability of workers within their unions to represent themselves at the bargaining table. It may be pay, or it may be some other benefit like how much coverage they get when they go to the dentist or they take their child to the dentist – I mean, I'm sure that many people here know that it can be quite costly – or what kind of drugs they have covered by their benefit program when their children need any kind of medication because of an illness or anything like that. These are things that are so simple but at the same time so important to these families. By eroding this, it affects people's lives in very, very dramatic ways. People may think it's a small thing, but these are things that end up costing and then coming out of that person's pocket for things that they would normally have the benefit of if they were able to participate in the bargaining process.

All of this is being done, of course, to pay for this \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. We have yet to see one job created because of this amount of money that's been given to these corporations. In fact, not only have we not seen jobs created; we actually see these corporations taking the money and going to other jurisdictions and investing that money in other places, not only in other places across Canada but also other places in North America, in the United States. So you have to ask yourselves. Here we are taking money from the people who need it most, whether that be through the collective bargaining process and workers, all these Albertans who work so incredibly hard for the public sector or for postsecondary institutions or whatever the case may be, and we're giving that money to corporations that are not even investing it here in the province of Alberta.

The cost is being borne by Albertans themselves, who really now have to reach into their own pocket in order to pay for things such as medication. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford talked about the deindexing of AISH and how AISH recipients are now going to receive \$30 less. Now, I don't know if any member over on that side has tried to live on the amount of money that an AISH recipient gets from the government, but \$30 to them is a lot of money. The amount of money that people are going to

have to reach into their own pocket for in order to pay for the things that normally they would have gotten under a benefit program – all those things are going to impact the amount of money that these people have in order to pay for their families, for the needs that their families have.

This is what's so difficult to understand about this bill and why this government is actually reaching into the pockets of Albertans and then not only reaching into the pockets of those Albertans for that money to go to general revenue and even perhaps provide services for more Albertans, not even that. It's actually being taken out to give this \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout, and the money is not even being invested in the province. Where's the rationale in that? This is what we on this side of the House just can't seem to understand. We're supposed to be investing in Alberta and the future of Albertans, making life better for them. Instead, not one job created. In fact, jobs are being lost, continue to be lost here in the province of Alberta, and the money – that is Albertans' money because it's tax collected from Albertans – is actually going to these corporations and is being invested in other jurisdictions.

I have to ask the members on the other side of the House: does this make sense? Does this make, actually, any sense, that this is the way forward to actually improving the lives of Albertans? Getting back to the fact that this is just incredibly undemocratic, why is more and more and more power being centralized with the bills that are coming forward from this government? That is another question that we need to ask. Like the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford actually stated, Bill 22 does that in a very specific way, and Bill 21 does it in perhaps a more elusive way.

**9:40**

When you take away money from Albertans and their spending power in the economy, you're actually taking away the process of economic democracy, of them being able to participate in the society, in the economy, being able to help prop up and move the economy forward. Less money in the pockets of Albertans means that our economy is going to suffer, that less money will flow, and people will start to say, "Okay; well, perhaps this year I won't make the investment in a car" or "This year I can't make an investment in buying a new house." This is what's going to end up happening. So instead of actually making the economy grow, we're actually going to stagnate. We're going to get into deeper trouble.

Again I state that the money that's being taken from Albertans through tax is actually going to this \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. We need to ask ourselves: is this really the kind of society that we want to build, that we expect for Alberta to move forward? So many new Canadians in my riding have come to me and asked me: "Why is this government moving in this way? Why is it doing all these things? It's actually making life more difficult for Albertans." So it's really important for me to stand up in this House and actually draw attention to these matters.

I think that having been part of a union in the past, it's also my responsibility to be the voice for those people, who I actually used to work with, making sure that their democratic rights within unions are being respected. Of course, that's what we see here . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Hanson:** Mr. Chair, I was sitting quietly, enjoying my coffee here this morning, and I couldn't help but notice the irony in the member's speech. It's interesting hearing an NDP member talking about the problems with incurring debt and having to service it when you're finished school. It's pretty rich coming from a government that put our province \$60 billion in debt, and we're now servicing that debt at \$2 billion a year, the fifth-largest line item in our budget. It's almost laughable to hear him talk like that.

I think that as a government what we should be doing is providing opportunities for our young people so that when they are in university and do get that opportunity during the four months that they get off, maybe they could actually go out and get a job and work their way through. I know a number of young people that actually took advantage of the Alberta advantage when things were prosperous here in the province, and they would go out and work in the oil patch or in a good construction job over the summer and build up enough cash that it carried them through the whole year so that they didn't have to have a second job or incur debt that they had to pay off after they graduated.

It's quite laughable to hear that member talk about debt in that way and the problems of incurring debt and then having to pay it back at higher interest rates when they totally forgot that concept in the four years that they were in government. Shameful, absolutely shameful, that now we have to carry that debt and that our children and our grandchildren will have to carry and pay off the debt.

**Ms Pancholi:** Talk through the chair. I'm not the chair.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'm talking through the chair. I'm just looking at you.

**Ms Pancholi:** Yeah. Don't look at me.

**Mr. Hanson:** It seems to me I've . . .

#### **Chair's Ruling Addressing the Chair**

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I just want to remind hon. members that the concept of talking through the chair doesn't necessarily mean that any individual on any side of the House has to be staring at the chair in order to be talking through the chair. The idea is that third person is predominantly how we like to engage in debate, and the purpose of that is to ensure that this depersonalizes the debate. I think that it's fair to say that members from all sides sometimes veer close to the line on that aspect.

So what I would do is that I would just ask the hon. member to try to focus his comments with regard to ensuring that he's moving through the chair. If he would please continue.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Hanson:** Absolutely. And through you, Mr. Chair, I obviously struck a nerve on the opposite side there by, you know, pointing out the fact that they did get us into all this debt and into this mess and had us on a trajectory to \$100 billion. And in future years we could be facing \$4 billion a year in debt, which would put the debt servicing as the third- or fourth-largest line item on our budget.

You know, we talk about having to make these changes to get us back to a track of prosperity in this province. And the complaining that we hear from the other side: they're the ones that put us in this position. We're asking for a small, 2.8 per cent decrease in spending in this province, that they drove through the roof in the four years they were in government. The fact that they would stand up here today and talk about how terrible it is for students to have debt and a debt load when they did the same thing to our province is shameful. I think that they should be ashamed of it and stop talking about it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to stand to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today to express my significant opposition to Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal

Sustainability Act, 2019, especially because this bill and all parts of the government's budget actually do nothing to ensure fiscal sustainability. I note that the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul stood up and was very excited to speak about debt. He must be deeply, deeply disappointed by the budget that has been tabled by his government, considering that it actually does not reduce the deficit. It increases the deficit and does nothing to address ensuring fiscal sustainability. In fact, what it does do is throw away – that is what it's done so far – \$4.7 billion in a corporate giveaway to large corporations that have not actually created any jobs. In fact, we've seen a significant amount of job losses. So when you put a \$4.7 billion hole into our budget, I guess you've got to make up for it somehow. We look at Bill 21, Bill 20, Bill 22, the estimates we've been considering. Clearly, this government has decided that average Albertans, vulnerable Albertans, all Albertans will be paying the price for that gamble.

I want to go back, actually, and speak specifically to the issue of deindexing AISH, which is a key component of Bill 21, although I should note that it's buried amongst all the numerous other cuts to Albertans in ways that will increase the costs of living for Albertans. It's just one of several, but it does deserve a little bit of highlighted attention because of the fact that it so cruelly targets the most vulnerable in our province.

I'll tell you a little story, if we can talk about beginning my political career. It wasn't necessarily a clear trajectory for me. I actually began when I was an undergraduate student at the University of Alberta. I worked in my local MLA's constituency office. I was working there as a constituency assistant. Prior to working there, I didn't really know much about what MLAs dealt with every day. I knew that I was interested in politics and political science, but I went into that office a little bit green on what the day-to-day activities of a constituency office were. The constituency that I worked in was at that time called Edmonton-Centre. It's now Edmonton-City Centre. It is a very downtown, urban riding, with a high turnover of residency. A lot of new Canadians live in that area, a lot of lower income individuals.

One of the issues that I learned a whole lot about very quickly, working as a constituency manager, was AISH. I actually can say, with a great deal of privilege, which is what I know I had at that time and still do know, that I never even realized that there were so many people in our province who were living on so little every month because of very significant medical disabilities. It didn't even really occur to me that people could live off such a small amount of money. These are people who are there because they can't work or they have difficulties working in a permanent way, so they are some of the most vulnerable Albertans we have.

**9:50**

I got a very quick introduction to the life that they led because those individuals are so dependent on what at that time and still is quite a very small amount of money, really, to get by. Their stories were absolutely heartbreaking, and at that time AISH was not indexed. I mean, this was 1999, and AISH was quite a bit lower, of course, than it even is now, but it was not indexed. Over the course of the years that I worked in that constituency office, I got to meet many individuals on AISH who were struggling to get by on practically nothing. It completely astounded me every day to see how much they were expected to do with so little.

The other thing that became quickly apparent is that they often communicated a lot with me at the constituency office because they had a hard time managing the system and navigating the intricacies of trying to – it's a difficult process to get approved by AISH. It's a difficult process to survive on AISH. As these are already some of the most vulnerable Albertans, the amount of

self-advocacy they had to do was also astounding, to simply get the pittance, really, that they were getting from the government. As much as I could, I felt it was my job to advocate and support them when I could.

Now here we are, 20 years later. I have my own constituency office now – and I’m very proud of that – and I know that I am still being contacted, my office is still being contacted by recipients of AISH who are struggling. Now we see that this government has cruelly and callously chosen to take money out of their pockets. Now, while that’s cruel enough as it is, the part that I am struck by is the fact that so many of the members opposite just a year ago made statements in this House about how important indexing AISH was, simply being a humane, decent thing to do.

I actually was not part of the previous government, as you may know. This is my first term, so I spent a little bit of time going back and looking at *Hansard* and looking at the discussions and the debates that took place in this House around the issue of indexing AISH, as the former government, under the Leader of the Official Opposition as Premier at that time, brought forward.

I want to highlight something first off the bat, because when this has been brought up in question period so far this session, the Premier has stood up and somehow made some kind of statement that implies something, that the government under the current Leader of the Official Opposition didn’t bring in the indexing of AISH into legislation until year three of their term, which is absolutely, first of all, not an argument for deindexing AISH. It’s an appalling argument to say: well, you didn’t do it. But we did do it, and members on the other side did support it. But as the Leader of the Official Opposition has repeatedly stated, AISH amounts were actually increased the first three years of that government’s term, and it was in that third year where we also passed legislation to index it to the cost of living because that is just common sense. It is just common sense that we know that the cost of living increases for all of us in every single way. Inflationary pressures exist. The cost of living goes up.

For those people who do not have or have very limited capacity to actually increase their income by working: to say that they are frozen in time at one small allowance which is, frankly, barely enough for anybody to get by is ridiculous. We all know that. We all live in this world where we see our cost of living go up all the time. In fact, I sat in on the estimates for five different ministries over the last few weeks, and consistently I heard ministers talking about increases in small budget items and saying: oh, well, we had to increase that because of inflationary pressures, because we know that cost goes up. The government seems to accept that there are situations where it is very critical that we increase how much we spend on something because – guess what? – the cost of living goes up.

The government has acknowledged it numerous times in its estimates, but yet when it comes to the people who have the least, the people who have the least capacity to actually increase their income, we’re saying, “No; your costs have to remain frozen,” when we know that the things that they purchase, the things that they spend their money on go up all the time.

I want to go back to the fact that I did find it a very interesting exercise to review *Hansard* from last year, when the former government brought in the indexation of AISH, and I was really struck by some of the comments from some of the members on the government side in support of indexing AISH. Now, there were a number of statements. Some of those members are no longer members of this Legislature, so I’m just going to focus on the comments from members who are currently still members of the Legislature.

In particular, on page 2086 of *Hansard*, which was November 22, 2018, in debate on Bill 26, which was the indexation of AISH, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek stated:

Indexing, I think, is something that is a natural thing to do because we don’t want those people on those fixed incomes to be falling behind day by day and year after year to the point where they can’t put food on their tables, it’s hard for them to make rent, it’s hard for them to live a respectable and respectful life and to ensure that they have that opportunity.

This is still a quote from the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

So, Madam Speaker, we’ll be supporting this bill. I’ll be supporting this bill. There are a lot more questions we would like to address I think in Committee of the Whole as well, but I do thank the minister for bringing this forward, for addressing this. It’s taken a little while, but here we are, an opportunity for us to do the right thing, and I’ll look forward to supporting it.

I wonder how the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has changed his mind in the past year, how he no longer believes that it’s the right thing to do. Perhaps we’ll see. Maybe he will vote against his government’s decision to deindex AISH. Perhaps he will, and I look forward to that because I’d like to know what happened in the last year, where he no longer thinks that indexing AISH is the right thing to do, that in fact it’s okay to let these people fall behind year by year by year and day by day by day. I’m interested to hear that.

Also from the previous session of this Legislature, on page 2207 of *Hansard*, November 28, 2018, the Member for Taber-Warner, who is now the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, stated this, and it was a very compelling argument. It was a very personal argument. His quote was:

I believe that it needed to be indexed for some time, and I was never in a position where I could advocate for that. I’m now in a position where I can advocate for it, and I want to be able to do that, because I’ve seen the face of an individual in our society, a close person to me, my brother, who has been affected.

Now here we are, a year later, and I’m wondering if the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction – he’s actually now in a better position to advocate than even where he was a year ago, when he was a member of the opposition. He’s now an associate minister within this government’s caucus. I’m wondering what steps he’s taken to advocate within his government against the deindexation of AISH. I’m compelled by the fact that the member has a very personal affiliation with this. He’s got a family member who’s affected. Now, I don’t think that the Premier has declared that this is going to be one of those situations where there is a free vote – I doubt that there will be; this is a money bill – but I’m curious as to how the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction can reconcile his position from a year ago with the position that his government has taken now.

To me, it is perhaps the most careless and casual way to treat vulnerable Albertans. I believe that, by the government’s calculation, this is going to save about \$7 million a year, to deindex AISH; over the course of the term of this government, \$100 million. You know what? That’s less than half of the money that Husky has received this year as a corporate handout from this government as a result of the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. Husky walked away with \$233 million, and guess what they did with that? Well, maybe they paid down their own personal debt, maybe they gave it out as dividends, but what they didn’t do with it is invest it in Alberta. What they didn’t do with it is create more jobs. In fact, they cut jobs. They put more Albertans out of work. For less than half of what we just handed away to Husky oil in this province, we could have at least maintained the cost-of-living indexation on AISH for the people who are the most vulnerable in this province. That was an opportunity that this government had, and they made a choice.

One of the things that we need to realize is that every single time, every single item in this bill, in Bill 20, Bill 22, and the government's estimates, represents a choice, a choice by this government as to who they're going to support and who they're not. What we're seeing is that they're choosing not to support vulnerable Albertans, but not only that; they're choosing not to support average Albertans.

10:00

Let me tell you what also struck me when I did my little deep dive into *Hansard* from last year, again, not having been a member of the Assembly. You know, of course as a member of the public I remember some of the debate in the public sphere about the carbon tax, but I hadn't read all of the comments made by members on both sides of the House with respect to the carbon tax. Within the topic of indexing of AISH, as I was reading *Hansard*, what struck me was how many members of the then opposition, now government, railed against the carbon tax on the basis that it took money out of the pockets of Albertans. That's what they kept saying: oh, the carbon tax made life more expensive for Albertans.

Never mind the fact that most of those individuals received a rebate, and the money that was collected by the carbon tax was legislated in terms of how it could be spent. A huge majority of that went back to rebates, so a lot of those low-income Albertans who had to pay carbon tax actually got that money back. The other way that money went was to support the small-business tax decrease. I know it's almost a waste of time to talk about to this government caucus because they don't care about climate change at all, which is evident even by the bill that they presented that's suppose to be their position on climate change, but it also went to things like energy efficiency, innovation, technology, and developing our growing but no longer, now stagnating renewable resource energy sector.

But to go back to the carbon tax, because I don't feel badly talking about the carbon tax, they railed against it because it was making life more expensive, never mind that people got rebates, yet we have seen nothing from this government caucus to stand up for the average Albertans now who are seeing, as a result of this budget, as a result of bills 20, 21, 22, all of the ways life has become more expensive under this government. I mean, honestly, I could probably spend an entire 20 minutes of time going through all the ways it's become more expensive, so let me just highlight.

Even within this bill we see the absolute bottom-line increase to tuition costs. We know that's going to happen. In fact, that's an intention of this bill. Postsecondary students are going to be paying more themselves if they're paying for their own postsecondary, or their families, if they're doing that, are going to get less back in education tax credits, so guess what? They're also paying more. Removal of the cap on electricity rates, deindexing of AISH, deindexation of seniors' benefits, more families being cut off the Alberta child and family benefit: the number of ways that this budget that has been presented by this government is going to increase the cost of living to average Albertans far exceeds anything that the carbon tax was putting on people. Absolutely.

You pile that all up for the average Albertan. Let me tell you, they're paying a lot more, and they're not getting rebates. That's what they're not getting. They're not getting rebates, yet I don't hear any protest. Why do they now not have a problem picking the pockets of Albertans? Some of them are getting paid less than the minimum wage. We know they're not collecting overtime at the same rate. That's all okay for the members on the government side. What's most appalling is that it's perfectly okay for them to be taking them out of the pockets of people who can't actually

collect more money by working more because they are severely disabled.

I am looking forward to going back even to *Hansard* of this session to see how many times individuals like the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, how many times the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction will stand up and argue against the deindexation of AISH. Just a year ago they had strong, strong views against it and deeply held personal views. It seemed to be almost a moral argument from some of them. Now, however, they seem to have no problem with taking money from the most vulnerable Albertans. I find that to be either hypocrisy, or perhaps their self-interest in maintaining their position within their government caucus is more important, but I don't know what that is.

I don't know how people flip-flop on their morals because I certainly know that I don't and the members on this side of the House don't. We've been very clear over and over again. The Leader of the Official Opposition has said it a number of times, and it's absolutely right: "When times are tough, those who can pay more should. It should not come off the backs of those who cannot pay more." Yet this government is giving away money to profitable corporations, part of whom are not even really based in Alberta. Half of them are now investing not only outside of the province but outside of the country. Who is benefiting from that? They are, but we are not. Albertans are not.

Let's go back to the fact that all of that was built on a gamble to create jobs, yet just yesterday we heard about 250 employees being laid off in the University of Calgary. We hear about a hundred employees being laid off from Alberta Innovates. This budget is actually costing Albertans jobs, and that is not what this party, the government party, campaigned on. They campaigned on creating jobs. Not only have they failed to do that so far, but they're actually costing Albertans jobs.

Now, one can assume that that is because the jobs that have been lost are jobs that they don't really care about. Let's be clear. There are Albertans in this province that this government does not seem to care about that much. They don't care about their jobs. I can tell you that in my riding a number of people who were hurt during the oil and gas price drop, which has to be said over and over again because the government likes to blame the NDP – hey, I wish. I wish that our Alberta provincial government had the power to control the oil and gas industry. We can see that the government party can't because they haven't created jobs. All their supposed love for the oil and gas industry has not actually done anything to create jobs here because – guess what? – a lot of that is outside of your control. What you can control are a number of Alberta jobs that a lot of Albertans rely on.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

### **Chair's Ruling Imputing Motives**

**The Deputy Chair:** I do also just want to take this opportunity to again – I think we may have come close to the side of either not talking through the chair or imputing false motives with regard to other members in the House with regard to whether or not people care about climate change. I'd just caution members in order to ensure that we have effective debate in this House.

### **Debate Continued**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members looking to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.



**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to speak against Bill 21, the so-called Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. Of course, my caucus colleagues have done a marvellous job of outlining some of their concerns with the bill and why we shouldn't vote in favour of this piece of legislation, and I want to highlight some of the things that I think are wrong with the piece of legislation.

There are two parts to this legislation that I find particularly offensive, and that is the increase, the allowed increase, to tuition for the next three years – up to 23 per cent, I think, is what the Advanced Education ministry has put out in its press releases – and the increase in student loan interest rates. Mr. Chair, this follows a number of other throat punches that this government has given to students in the past few months. Of course, we've seen them reduce minimum wage for students under the age of 18 from \$15 to \$13. We've seen them take away the STEP program, which provides students with valuable opportunities to work. None of those things have achieved any objective other than making life harder for students, which I think is really the true intent of the government.

You know, it was interesting to hear the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul complain about students who are whining about debt and just telling them to go find a job. In fact, this government was elected on a platform of making sure that young people had jobs, but nothing that they've done has actually led to job creation for young people. Unemployment for young people is still stubbornly high. It's in fact higher than it was when we left office. Of course, they've taken away significant job opportunities for students by removing the STEP program. I'm not exactly sure where a young person is supposed to find a job when this government is actively preventing students from accessing opportunities to get work.

Of course, this is not only shifting – it's interesting, Mr. Chair. One of the things that we often hear from government is how we can't saddle Albertans with debt, but they're happy to saddle students with debt, as if students aren't Albertans. In fact, in his comments on this bill the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul certainly suggested that it was more fair for students to bear the debt than all Albertans generally speaking to bear this debt, which is really interesting.

**10:10**

You know, when we talk about raising taxes to cover the debt, when we talk about raising personal income taxes on wealthy people, when we talk about raising corporate income taxes, when we talk about eliminating subsidies for corporations, you know, the members from the UCP scream bloody murder: oh, we cannot pick the pockets of rich people because they're the ones who already pay the taxes; they pay more than their fair share of taxes, so we can't dip into their pockets any more. When we talk about who should pay for the debt, the members opposite are always there to defend the interests of the wealthy and their corporate donors to make sure that they don't have to pay any more, but when we talk about the provincial debt, well, that's everybody's responsibility, and we sure can't ask, you know, the corporate CEOs in Calgary, who are making out like bandits in this \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway that this government implemented on day 3 of the Legislature, to pay more. We can ask students to pay more, students who have nothing. We're going to make sure that their first days in employment are spent trying to get out from under a mountain of crushing debt, and that's not fair. We have people in this province who can afford to carry the debt and the deficit, but this government is not willing to make them pay their fair share and is instead putting the burden on students. That is wrong.

Mr. Chair, we've all, or many of us, anyway, have been in the position of having to pay off student loans. I was in the unfortunate circumstance of having to go through university during the so-called Klein revolution, when tuition skyrocketed. It was twice as expensive in my last year of university as it was the year I started, and that was four years. At that time I wasn't even eligible to get Alberta student loans because of the circumstances that I was in. I had to scrape together money from all kinds of sources. Fortunately the STEP program existed at that time, and I was able to cover a substantial part of my expenses while being a student through that employment, but now even that's gone. When I graduated from university, there were significant debt reduction programs that were available from the federal government, and I managed to take advantage of some of those. Those have been eliminated. Students who start university this year will graduate four years from now with more student loans that cost them more money to pay off.

What are the economic prospects that they're facing? This government has done nothing to create jobs. This government has done nothing to raise wages, so a student now graduating in the year 2023, hopefully, if they can complete a degree in four years, which is highly unlikely because if they're lucky enough to find a job, they're going to have to work 20 or 30 or 40 hours a week on top of their classes just to be able to afford to go to school, so they might have to spend another year or two or three just to be able to complete their degree – when they graduate, what kind of economy are they going to graduate into?

This government is certainly not creating jobs, and every economic forecast that we see come out about the future economy of Alberta shows unacceptably slow growth. If a student is entering university now in any kind of health care profession or education profession, there certainly won't be a job for them because this government is making sure that public-sector employees are kicked to the street. We've seen 250 people laid off at the University of Calgary this week. We've seen 300 people laid off at the Calgary board of education yesterday. That's just the beginning. Not everybody even knows what their allocated budgets are going to be from this government, so we're going to see thousands and thousands more layoffs. The ones who are lucky enough to keep their jobs, Mr. Chair, are going to have to deal with wage rollbacks that are going to be imposed by this government.

I know a lot of public-sector workers who lead a reasonably comfortable life but are only one or two paycheques away from having to declare bankruptcy. Now this government is going to fire some of them and roll back the wages of the rest. Then they have the unmitigated gall to tell the students who want to go into those kinds of careers that they're going to have to work harder to pay off more debt, if they're lucky enough to find a job, and if they find a job, they're not going to have the financial means to pay off the debt because they're working overtime to make sure that they squeeze the wages of the remaining public-sector workers. It's absolutely wrong. I hope that this weekend, you know, the members opposite take the opportunity to go into their ridings and explain to them, to the young people of this province, why they're stealing their futures.

It's particularly upsetting to me, Mr. Chair, because, as we get reminded of every day in this House, we have no rural members in our caucus. The members opposite like to present themselves as being the defenders of rural interests. Everything that they're doing is going to make it even harder for potential rural students to make it through the doors of a university or college because the barriers that rural students face are even greater than the barriers that urban students face. Not only do they have to face the costs of tuition and books and food; they also have to face the cost of transportation because, Lord knows, there's no public transportation available

anymore in this province from small towns into university or college towns.

They're going to have to face the costs of accommodation, and that's going to go up, too, Mr. Chair, because this government is cutting the budgets of every university and college. And where are the universities and colleges going to make up those cuts? It's going to come from residence fees. It's going to come from student meal plans. So now out-of-town students are going to have to pay more not only in tuition and books and food and transportation; they're going to have to pay more just for rent. There are thousands and thousands of potential rural students who won't even make the trip, who are going to look at the overwhelming costs of going to university, and they're going to say: "You know what? I'm not going to bother. Why bother? There isn't a job for me. Even if I was lucky enough to find a job, if it's in the public sector, which is the largest employer in most small towns, they're going to roll back my wages, and they're always going to be threatening to fire me."

**10:20**

What rational person going through high school in a small town in Alberta is going to think that there's a future for them going to university or college under the administration of this government? They're not going to, Mr. Chair. I can tell you that the data already supports that. We know that if you live within 100 kilometres of a university or college in this province, you're way more likely to go to a university or college than if you live further than 100 kilometres away. That was under the policies of our government that froze tuition and kept student loans affordable and made sure that we had grants available and maintained the education and tuition tax credits. All of those things are being scrapped, and in service of what?

You know, the title of this bill makes me laugh, Mr. Chair, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. Anybody who looks at the budget knows that there is nothing resembling fiscal sustainability for the public finances of the province of Alberta. We've got a deficit this year that's \$2 billion higher than the one that we projected in 2019. We've got a debt that's within the margin of error of the same one that we projected by the end of 2023. We're entering into a recession that's caused by the massive wage cuts and layoffs that this government is intent on seeing through.

So whose fiscal sustainability is this bill ensuring? It's certainly not the province of Alberta. It's certainly not students. I think we know here on this side whose fiscal sustainability is being ensured, and that's big corporations in Alberta, with the \$4.7 billion handout on top of a whole bunch of tax giveaways from municipalities, royalty holidays, a whole other bunch of subsidies and tax deferrals. Big corporations in Alberta are more profitable than ever before. I wish the members opposite would at least be honest when they're talking about ensuring fiscal sustainability as to whose fiscal sustainability they're ensuring. It's not ours. It's not the fiscal sustainability of 99 per cent of Albertans. It's the fiscal sustainability of the Hong Kong billionaire who owns Husky Oil. It's the fiscal sustainability of Murray Edwards, the CEO of one of the biggest oil companies in the country, who doesn't even live in Alberta, can't bring himself to spend his time with the lowly people who have given him so much and asked for so little from him. He spends his time in London, can afford to send his children to any university or college in the world that he pleases.

In the meantime this government is making sure that the same opportunities that are offered to the children of the Hong Kong billionaires and the Murray Edwards of the world, who control capital in this province – our children don't have those same opportunities, and they can't explain why. But it's our fault, I guess. You know, we didn't have the moral rectitude to become

billionaires and be able to afford to send our children to any school that we could want, so we have to suffer.

Mr. Chair, it's incredibly upsetting, and the people of Alberta are not going to stand for this any longer. I was encouraged to see students protesting on the steps of the Legislature earlier this week, defending their own interests, making sure that they have the opportunity to get an education that will make their lives better and, furthermore, making sure that those students who are currently in high school and junior high school, who are looking forward to an education in a university or college, also have those same opportunities.

If there are any students out there who are listening to the speeches – I'm sure many are – I encourage them to do more to make sure that the members opposite hear their opposition to what this government is doing to take away their futures, to what this government is doing to make sure that they have to work harder and longer and get less all in the service of a \$4.7 billion giveaway to the wealthiest here in this province. It's not fair and it's not right, and students are upset. They have the right to be upset, and they should express how upset they are in any way they can to the members of this government so that this government maybe reconsiders its position and stops throat punching the students of this province in service of the masters of capital. [interjection]

I hear the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat taking issue with the language that I've used.

**Ms Glasgow:** Yes.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I sure hope that she can go back to her constituency and explain to . . .

#### **Chair's Ruling Parliamentary Language Addressing the Chair**

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I'm just going to take this opportunity to, with great effort, ensure that all members ensure that they try to ensure that their language that they are using isn't of a type that might be trying to incite some sort of negative decorum within the House and that all individuals on both sides ensure that they make an effort to speak through the chair. There will be ample time, of course, in Committee of the Whole to debate on this matter.

If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar would like to continue, there are 10 seconds left on this one. Otherwise, the option is his. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes. I guess we have to be polite even though this government is intent on making sure that students' lives are harder, and that's outrageous.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members looking to speak to this? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm very happy to make some contribution to the debate here on Bill 21 in Committee of the Whole. I had the opportunity to meet with more university student representatives yesterday, and they were very concerned about elements of Bill 21. Let's not forget that it's an omnibus bill that ranges from postsecondary education to health to energy to labour to municipal affairs and so forth. You know, again, I remember yesterday members opposite from the UCP talking about the shortage of alternatives for bus transportation in the rural areas. Well, they have at least created an omnibus that travels through this

Legislature metaphorically and is both cumbersome and, I would suggest, poor drafting of legislation, borrowing from, I think, some very nefarious habits that were developed in the federal Parliament, imported back here, and quite frankly, causing a great deal of confusion and havoc amongst the population that would be affected by this bill.

As I said, yesterday I had an opportunity to meet with university student representatives, and what they wanted me to point out to this government – and I'm happy to do it here this morning – is the fact that the tuition cap being suspended or being lifted will result in thousands of students not being able to afford to go to school. You know, this government likes to point out that it's 3 pennies on the dollar or whatever that they are imposing on Albertans with this budget. Well, a 21 per cent increase over three years for tuition is far more than pennies, Mr. Chair. It represents thousands more dollars that students will have to pay for the privilege to go to school. This is not just universities, but this is trade schools. This is NAIT and SAIT, apprenticeship programs, and so forth.

**10:30**

I know that this government likes to perhaps cloak their attack on postsecondary education, saying that they are refocusing on the trades. But talk is cheap, Mr. Chair. I noticed and certainly all of the people actually engaged in postsecondary and the trades noticed that there's no money for that. There are some words. You know, you can't take words to the bank. You can't use words to pay for your tuition or your apprenticeship program.

This whole notion that this is a shift to ennoble somehow the trades: well, that's great, and I encourage any efforts to do that that are substantive. But this budget or this bill hasn't anything to do with actually putting money into the trades. You know, it has some small scholarships that have been augmented and changed; for example, putting an additional \$3 million into trade scholarships – or maybe it's up to \$4 million – with two different scholarships.

Let's not forget that this same budget takes out \$600 million from postsecondary education. You know, the percentages: the scale of \$3 million or \$4 million to taking away \$600 million is exponential. Let's not pretend that somehow this is anything but quite a targeted cut on all forms of postsecondary education, including the trades.

Another element that student leaders brought to my attention yesterday was the instability of operating, programming funding that this budget is imposing on schools across the province. We just saw a small but very significant indication of that with the announcement from the University of Calgary, just hours after the Advanced Education minister professed to be, you know, protecting jobs and making investments in postsecondary education: 250 jobs gone from the University of Calgary, just for starters, quite frankly. I mean, there's much more to come.

Another aspect that we had in discussions with student leaders yesterday was how the mental health initiative that was started by the previous government, our government, in postsecondary institutions is in serious jeopardy with this budget. We know that the mental health crisis amongst young people, especially, is even more pronounced in our postsecondary institutions. I know that the pilot, for example, that was offered at the University of Alberta for mental health strategies and initiatives and supports was oversubscribed within the first two weeks of September, when school opened here a couple of months ago. It was a small indication but a significant one of just how much of a need there was for mental health supports at our postsecondary institutions.

Now people are saying, like: "What's the future of this? Can we sustain and continue to hire the people that had been brought in to develop more comprehensive mental health support programs in our colleges and universities across the province, or do we just have

to let that go?" It's a big question mark, and I would venture to say that it exacerbates the instability or the nervousness and tension that students are feeling to know that their mental health supports that they rely on to reduce stress – this, in fact, is creating another source of stress in our colleges and universities.

Another issue that was brought to my attention by postsecondary leaders yesterday is the suspension of the capital and maintenance funding for institutions right across the province. I know that by trying to realize economies in the maintenance of structures in any place, in any time – it could be your own house, or it could be a school or a hospital, university buildings, trades buildings – by trying to save a dollar on maintenance, you end up with an exponentially larger problem down the road, where the structure is compromised. You end up having to pay much more, or you even lose the use of a structure that's not been properly maintained over time as per what the schedule of a building should be – right? – anything from painting to fixing the roof to ensuring the heating systems are being updated. This is an investment to ensure the longevity of a building, and to compromise on that, I think, is short sighted. It's for the sake of showing on paper that you have reduced one ledger for one year or for one time, but in fact you've just deferred that expense down the road.

I saw this very often in the capital assets that our education system had. The maintenance budgets were shortchanged for many years, even decades, by the former Conservative government, and those costs came back to roost by, you know, having to perhaps even put some buildings in mothballs or not being able to use them, right? There's a certain point where if you scrimp and you cheap out on maintenance, eventually all of the money and more that you've saved, perhaps, on one hand comes back to bite you when the building is not usable and/or is compromised in some not fixable sort of way. Again, very short sighted.

I think that Albertans have learned this lesson from before, from previous Conservative governments – right? – by not building the capacity, let's say, in education. Again, I saw it first-hand as minister. Then you have to play catch-up, you know, which is good, I mean, to actually face the reality of what the needs of your population are and build the buildings that you need, build those schools, build postsecondary capacity. But to put your head in the sand and to pretend that that's not a looming issue in 2019 for the students that are currently in junior high school here in this province or elementary school right now is irresponsible, right?

I can tell you first-hand that we have had an enrolment increase in our schools over these last four years at least. I can tell you of, you know, between 2 and 5 or even 6 per cent or even up to 13 per cent in some districts, Mr. Chair. Those students largely, I can tell you, are in elementary or junior high school right now. What happens to those tens of thousands of students in the next five or six or seven years? We hope and presume and we plan and we expect that a large percentage of them should be attending postsecondary education. Do we have the capacity for that looming demographic of young people that are moving through our elementary and junior high schools and high schools right now? No, we don't, not even close. As I learn more about the postsecondary file, it's become clear to me and to the presidents and to the managements of all of our colleges, universities, trade schools, and so forth that we have a looming shortage of spaces in our postsecondary institutions to accommodate the people and especially the young people of Alberta.

**10:40**

I prefer to look optimistically. You know, we can perhaps correct this measure while we have an opportunity to do so, because just like the seven-year-olds that are learning how to read in our schools

right now, the junior high and high school students that will be ready for postsecondary in a few years' time – time doesn't wait for that. There is a window of opportunity to get people engaged in postsecondary education, to learn a trade, to pick up a degree, but that window opens and closes, and it's time sensitive. If we are tens of thousands of spaces short for postsecondary and trades positions in this province for that population, then they lose out. They don't go, or it becomes so expensive that only the people that have considerable resources get to go, and the rest are left out.

We have the lowest participation rate in postsecondary education in Canada here in Alberta. Interestingly, we also have the highest percentage of population with postsecondary degrees here in Alberta as to the rest of the country. That tells me, I think, and anyone who's listening, Mr. Chair, that people bring the degrees in with them from other jurisdictions, and we are not meeting our responsibilities for our own population to ensure that Alberta's young people, especially, are participating and getting meaningful postsecondary education here in Alberta. Obviously, I think that that's a fundamental responsibility of the postsecondary education minister and of this government, to rectify this.

I know that our government was starting to address this issue by making tuition more affordable, to bring it closer to the national average for tuition so that that barrier for people to go to school was made somewhat easier. Now, in 2019, suddenly is dropped from the sky a budget that is a direct attack on any progress that we might have made or planned to make in the postsecondary file: tens of thousands of new spaces needed, and instead there are cuts, a total freeze on capital building, again, just at the point where we need to start to build our capacity in postsecondary education.

There's a movement away from permanent instruction positions in our colleges, trades, and universities and to sessional instructors – right? – at much reduced rates, much more unstable circumstances, and a real, measurable increase in class sizes, especially in undergraduate and trades programs, that interferes with the capacity for people to learn in those classrooms. Sessional instructors do, you know, I'm sure, yeoman's work to ensure that their students are getting the education as best they can, but that inherent instability of having a sessional position, leaving a sessional position, hiring different sessional positions, larger class sizes, for sure: it all adds up to a decrease in the quality of education that a student will receive in a college trades program or university.

There you have it, Mr. Chair, a toxic combination of a dramatic increase in the costs of a postsecondary education and the reduction in the quality of that same postsecondary education. I don't think that, you know, it's fair, quite frankly, to the hundreds of thousands of students that we have in our postsecondary system now and those tens of thousands more that are just coming up the pipe, that are in grade school now across the province.

We have one of the youngest populations in Canada as well. You know, it's a sign of optimism and hope that people are having families, and with that is the expectation that we can provide a good-quality education that will allow them to thrive and do well economically here in the province. It's obvious that the number one indicator of success and rates of pay for anyone in a society is their education and the quality of education that they have, a direct correlation to the pay that someone brings home and the success of an economy as well.

I would suggest that part of the reason that we have been very successful in, you know, gross domestic product here in this province and per-family income and so forth is the fact that we have a well-educated population. As I said before, we have a well-educated population, people that are bringing their qualification and their education from elsewhere, which is fine. I think that's fair play, and we need our population to continue to grow. We have that

immigration from other provinces and other countries, too, which is, again, a wonderful thing, but we also have a responsibility to move the dial on the participation rates of people, young people especially, in our postsecondary institutions. This budget, Bill 21 specifically, throws a spanner into the works with that ambition big time.

Postsecondary students that I met with yesterday asked me to bring up this issue around student loans and the tax change that's associated with student loans as well. Again, you know, you can play with numbers and talk a good talk by saying that you're increasing this by a small percentage and that people can afford it. But with a student loan, let's say, of \$30,000, you're talking about thousands of dollars more that a student will have to pay over time. I am just getting an education on just how much student debt people are actually carrying, and \$30,000 isn't a lot. I had an individual from another university in my office last week that has not even finished an undergraduate degree yet and has more than \$70,000 in accumulated debt, right? So it's like carrying a mortgage for a property. Another gentleman who was with him expects at the end of his master's degree to have \$125,000 of debt.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise again today to speak on the matter of Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. You know, there are so many different parts of this bill that are problematic and that should be of concern and are of concern to many Albertans. I spoke at length just earlier today about my concerns around the deindexation of AISH and how that attacks the most vulnerable Albertans. However, I also would like to speak to another piece of the act. This is actually something that I think the government caucus would be in agreement with.

Perhaps I'll begin by indicating that I would like to table an amendment to Bill 21. I've got the copies here. We're just distributing the amendment right now. Would you like me to wait, Mr. Chair, until it's all circulated?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes, if we could just wait until the pages get a chance to run it to the members.

Just for the record, this will be referred to as amendment A2.

**Ms Pancholi:** Amendment A2. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, if you would please read it into the record and then go ahead and continue with your debate.

10:50

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended in section 13(2) by striking out

“or government initiatives.”

Because Bill 21 is a very large bill, I will give a little context to what this amendment is about. This section refers to an amendment to the Provincial Offences Procedure Act. It is amended by section 13(2) of Bill 21. Specifically, it amends section 14(3) of the Provincial Offences Procedure Act, which currently states:

Where, under an enactment,

- (a) the Crown in right of Alberta collects an amount of money in respect of a penalty, fine or sum of money payable under the enactment or the proceeds of a forfeiture, and
- (b) the amount collected by the Crown does not belong to the Crown in right of Alberta,

the Crown in right of Alberta may, notwithstanding any Act and subject to the regulations, retain a portion of that amount to offset

the expenses incurred by the Crown with respect to the collecting of penalties, fines, sums of money or forfeitures arising under any enactment, and that portion that is retained by the Crown belongs to the Crown in right of Alberta and shall be deposited in the General Revenue Fund.

That's the original section 14(3) of the Provincial Offences Procedure Act.

Bill 21 amends that by adding basically that the fines and penalties that are collected under the Provincial Offences Procedure Act are to be used to fund programs that support or improve the administration of justice or government initiatives.

What I'm suggesting by this amendment, Mr. Chair, is that the words "or government initiatives" be struck out. What that would mean is that any fines, penalties, or sums of monies that are collected under the Provincial Offences Procedure Act can only be used to improve the administration of justice and cannot be used for other government initiatives. That's the intent behind the amendment.

I think, actually, that given some of the comments and what I actually think the intent of this section of Bill 21 speaks to, this should actually be consistent with what the government has stated a number of times. They have referred with a lot of disdain to funds that go into the general revenue fund as a slush fund. Specifically, they applied that term to the collection of funds under the climate leadership plan despite the fact that the legislation was very clear under the climate leadership plan as to how funds collected through the carbon tax would be used. Even as recently as, I believe, yesterday or maybe it was the day before, on Monday, the Government House Leader spoke very derisively of the use of the general revenue fund as a slush fund. This is ironic, too, by the way, because we know that there are other measures put forward by this government. Just as an example, the lottery fund has now been dissolved, and all of that money has been put into the general revenue fund. We are supposed to trust the Minister of Finance when he says that that won't actually result in a reduction of monies going out to nonprofit organizations that rely upon lottery funds to conduct their work. In that case, apparently, the general revenue fund is not a slush fund; I guess it depends on, in the government's view, who is in government.

Given the freewheeling spending that we've seen from this government of late with respect to expenses and cronyism and pancake plane parties, I'm not really sure who should be wearing the moniker of slush fund, but I certainly don't think it's the members in the opposition or when they were formerly the government. Those accusations were never levied against us.

In any respect, I appreciate that the Government House Leader, in particular, but many government members have been clear that they don't believe that money should go into the general revenue fund to be a slush fund. Therefore, I suggest that monies that are collected under the Provincial Offences Procedure Act, which are specifically collected through fines and penalties under that act, should not go to government initiatives generally. I think that that actually means that they would be using those funds to basically compensate or make up for the \$4.7 billion corporate no-jobs handout that has already been done by this government. Really, those fines and those penalties should only be used for the administration of justice, to improve the administration of justice. In fact, that is consistent with what the wording of Bill 21 includes. Section 13(2) does seem to be that the government is also of the view that there should be some parameters around how monies collected under these fines and penalties should be used.

It is actually the government's suggestion in 13(2) of Bill 21 that it only be used to "improve the administration of justice or government initiatives." I would say that if they're trying to fulfill

a certain intent, which is making sure that the money gathered under these fines is used for the purpose for which it's intended, they actually should not want the money to be used for other government initiatives. In that respect, it just really could be anything. Government initiatives is a pretty general term. We know that any activity by the government could certainly fall within that description. Really, it's saying that the money could be used as part of the general revenue fund for any purpose. You know, I'm going back to some of my legislative drafting training, but the intent, certainly, behind 13(2) of Bill 21 seems to be to prescribe some limits on how that money can be spent. Therefore, I would say that it's undermining the intention of that provision to also allow this money to be used for other government initiatives.

My hope is actually that the government will take this as a friendly amendment. Really, I think I understand what their intent is behind this section of Bill 21, and we're helping them out a little bit to be very clear that the money collected under these fines should really only be used to improve the administration of justice and not for any other purpose because that's what the money is paid into. It's paid under the Provincial Offences Procedure Act, and it should be used for improving the administration of justice.

Just yesterday I had the distinct pleasure of sitting in on the estimates for the Ministry of Justice. I heard the minister speak at length about his commitment and objectives around improving the administration of justice but also speak at length about, you know, the tight financial times we're in. Really, if he's looking to make some significant measures and progress with respect to streamlining and improving the administration of justice, here's an opportunity to make sure that the funds that are collected under these fines and penalties only go for that purpose.

Again, I view this as a friendly amendment, and I assume and I am hopeful that the government caucus will view it that way as well. I look forward to having some further debate on this.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

### **Chair's Ruling Decorum**

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Prior to hearing from any other members, I just want to remind the House that although we're in Committee of the Whole and, you know, there's the opportunity for a few more discussions, et cetera, perhaps even between the aisles, members should not break the line between the speaker and the chair as they are wandering about the House. I think it happened twice with the last speaker. Just a reminder on that point.

### **Debate Continued**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members looking to speak to this amendment A2? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West has risen to speak.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I thank, certainly, the member for bringing forward this amendment. However, you know, this is something that I think our government certainly would be more than happy to engage in these types of conversations with members of the opposition. I appreciate it being a reasonable amendment, but not having heard from the Justice department with respect to this particular amendment, the way I am reading this – when I look at page 47 of Bill 21, Mr. Chair, 13(2) states:

Section 14(3) is amended by adding "or to fund programs that support or improve the administration of justice or government initiatives" after "arising under any enactment."

I think government initiatives are important in ways that are enhancing the community. These are initiatives that are to provide value to the community. I think that by removing “government initiatives,” that would certainly cause, you know, concern in regard to possible good deeds that these government initiatives may be doing.

That being said, I certainly appreciate the friendly amendment that was provided by the member opposite. However, at this time we cannot support this amendment. Thank you.

11:00

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The individual who caught my eye is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. One of the things I appreciate about committee so much is that we have the opportunity to bat things back and forth and to rise to speak to these matters as many times as necessary. I think that with this one, certainly I would propose, then, that perhaps the Government House Leader consider taking this amendment to Justice. He said that he hasn’t had the opportunity to discuss this with the actual officials in the Ministry of Justice. I think it would be, then, beneficial for the Government House Leader or the Acting Government House Leader or the designate or the Justice minister, for example, as well as for all members of this Assembly for the member to do so, to actually take this back, consult with the officials, make the proper determination once having garnered that additional information before addressing this amendment here today.

I think that if there was a motion from the government side to potentially adjourn debate on this matter to have the opportunity to engage in those discussions before rushing to make a decision on this amendment, that would be beneficial. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Oh, sorry. I can move that.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. I didn’t hear that it was actually moved.

**Ms Hoffman:** I didn’t actually move it myself. I was gesturing that maybe somebody else would, but I’d be happy to move that we adjourn debate.

**The Deputy Chair:** On this amendment? Just for clarity, you’re asking to adjourn debate on this amendment?

**Ms Hoffman:** Let’s do it first on the amendment, yeah.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. All right.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Ellis:** I ask that we rise and report, Mr. Chair.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul has risen.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 23

#### Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie has risen to speak on this matter.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to move this morning on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General third reading of Bill 23, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, this act will address a number of issues concerning our courts. The first involves the name of the Court of Queen’s Bench. When Queen Elizabeth II ceases to rule, convention dictates that the name of our superior trial court is changed out of respect for the new monarch. Renaming the court will require a significant number of changes to signage, seals, and forms as well as other official documents and websites bearing its name.

This bill proposes re-enacting the section of the Court of Queen’s Bench Act that would automatically change the court’s name to the Court of King’s Bench. This section was repealed during the fall 2018 session of the Legislature. It’s our belief that automatically renaming the court to the Court of King’s Bench recognizes our constitutional monarchy and honours the heritage of our legal system. This decision would also be in keeping with similar naming conventions in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The provisions of Bill 23 cover two additional matters. First, it would reduce the age at which masters in chambers and Provincial Court judges may request to be appointed for part-time service. As the Court of Queen’s Bench Act and the Provincial Court Act currently stand, these officials are eligible to serve for part-time service at 60 years old. Bill 23 would lower this threshold to 55. This change would create greater work flexibility for judges and masters. It may also create a small amount of savings for the province.

Approval of these requests would not be automatic. The Chief Judge of the Provincial Court or the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen’s Bench have the authority to deny a request if they feel it could create difficulties for the court. In this way, Bill 23 would balance the needs of judges and masters against the demands on court resources.

Finally, Bill 23 would give justices of the Court of Queen’s Bench and the Court of Appeal greater access to federal funds. Currently, when these justices attend certain meetings, conferences, or seminars, the federal Judges Act places an annual \$500 limit on the amount of money available to pay their expenses. This places undue pressure on the provincial budget and the allocation of the same for these two judicial branches. Bill 23 would allow justices to access federal funds beyond the current \$500 limit by authorizing their attendance at meetings, conferences, or seminars related to the administration of justice, with the approval of their Chief Justice. This change would allow these justices greater freedom to travel and carry out their duties.

Taken together, the provisions of Bill 23, while small, will help make the justice system more efficient for us and for the province of Alberta. It’s my hope that members of this House will continue to support this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to this matter?  
Seeing none, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie to close debate.

**Mrs. Allard:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise again on behalf of the Minister of Justice and close debate on Bill 23.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a third time]

## 11:10 Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 24 Appropriation Act, 2019

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance has the floor.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 24, the Appropriation Act, 2019.

This is a budget that will enhance Alberta's competitiveness by enshrining the job-creation tax cut, adopting the accelerated capital cost allowance provisions, and cutting red tape. When these measures are fully implemented, we will have the most competitive overall corporate tax regime in Canada and lower corporate taxes than 44 of 50 U.S. states. Once again Alberta will be the destination of choice for investors, and we feel very optimistic about Alberta's prospects. However, we're not assuming a fast recovery by Alberta standards. We need to be cautious and focus on the things we can control, and this includes getting our fiscal house in order by bringing spending in line with comparative provinces and eliminating our deficit while creating the conditions for businesses to thrive in Alberta.

Budget 2019 lays out a plan for government to live within its means while protecting the front-line services that Albertans depend on. It includes a moderate operational spending reduction of 2.8 per cent over four years to get our budget back in balance. This is essential to bring our province's debt under control and prevent our children and grandchildren from bearing the burden of paying for services that we use today.

Taxpayer-supported debt now stands at \$62.7 billion, and Alberta taxpayers paid \$1.9 billion to service these debts last year. That works out to \$5 million a day, money that goes to bankers and bondholders instead of projects that Albertans care about like roads, schools, and hospitals.

The MacKinnon panel found that Alberta spends more per person on many key government services than comparable provinces do. Worse still, the panel demonstrated that our service delivery is no better than in comparator provinces, and while these findings were troubling, they present an opportunity for us as government. If other provinces can deliver high-quality services for less money, so can Alberta. Budget 2019 will bring our spending closer in line with other provinces, and it will thoughtfully reprioritize our spending to ensure that we keep our platform promise of maintaining or increasing funding to vital public services.

We are investing \$20.6 billion per year to provide health services. This includes increases of \$100 million for a mental health and addiction strategy, \$40 million for the opioid response, and \$20 million for palliative care.

We are also providing \$8.2 billion for education services. The budget keeps our promise to maintain current education funding and fund enrolment growth of 2.2 per cent.

Budget 2019 does not make cuts to the social programs vulnerable Albertans depend on. In fact, we're increasing funding to Community and Social Services to address human trafficking and sexual exploitation, rising caseload pressure, and to undertake a comprehensive review of programming.

We're also increasing funding to Seniors and Housing to maintain overall benefits for seniors.

Children's Services will see a 15 per cent increase over four years so we can continue to provide the tools necessary to support healthy families and communities.

Budget 2019 makes good on our commitment to stand up for Alberta's interests. Albertans told us loud and clear that they want a provincial government that is willing to defend our energy sector and stand up against unfair federal policies. Standing up for Alberta is more important than ever given the results of the federal election, and we're committed to defending our world-class energy industry. Budget 2019 commits \$30 million for the Canadian Energy Centre, which will promote Alberta's responsible energy practices and combat misinformation. This is on top of the \$2.5 million we announced in July for a public inquiry into foreign funding of anti-energy campaigns. We're also pushing back against prejudicial federal policies that force Albertan taxpayers to pay more than their fair share to Ottawa while receiving fewer federal services than other Canadians. Our government is committed to working with the federal government and all provinces and territories in a review of the major federal transfers to ensure these transfers do not discriminate against any one jurisdiction. Mr. Speaker, federal fiscal transfers must be fair. We are in the process of reviewing all federal fiscal programs and are pushing to both cap the size of the equalization program and exclude nonrenewable resource revenues from the program's calculations.

During the election it was clear that Albertans wanted change, they wanted jobs, and they wanted a government with a real plan to bring investment and prosperity back to Alberta. What they didn't want was to carry on the legacy of debt that had become too commonplace in Alberta or to pass that debt on to their children and grandchildren. I believe that Budget 2019 is a thoughtful and measured budget. It will end the overspending that has plagued Alberta for almost 20 years and puts us on a credible path towards balance.

I along with my colleagues look forward to implementing Budget 2019, a plan for jobs and the economy, and I urge you all to support this bill today. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Member.

Are there any members looking to speak to this? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West has risen.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much. Thank you to the minister for bringing up those important comments, but at this time, Mr. Speaker, I ask that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Minister of Transportation has risen to speak.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've had some good, lively debate here this morning. We've made some progress, and as such I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:17 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 20, 2019

Day 44

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests and visitors with us today, including two school groups. It's my absolute pleasure to welcome, from what is, in my nonpartisan opinion, the most outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the students from Prairie Christian academy as well as, from the excellent constituency of Edmonton-Meadows, grade 6 students from Julia Kiniski elementary. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, as some of you are aware, you had the opportunity to attend in the lower rotunda and meet representatives from the Stollery children's hospital visiting today. I'm pleased to welcome some very, very special guests. I believe that they have arrived in the gallery: Emma and Cameron Nagel, Jacob Martens, and a special shout-out to the folks from Airdrie-East, Payton and Easton Langenau. Welcome and thank you for joining us.

Hon. members, this afternoon in the galleries are guests of the Member for Livingstone-Macleod from the organization for scleroderma.

Also in the galleries are guests of the Minister of Health: representatives from Alberta Health Services and Covenant Health here in observation of World Wide Pressure Injury Prevention Day.

Visiting as guests of the Member for Highwood: Mr. Brent Nelson, Chad Hughes, and Sean David.

Also, guests of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: members of Alberta's Hutterite community as well as MNP Alberta.

Last but certainly not least are guests of the Member for Peace River: the Wiebe family and their eight children.

All of those who are able and would like to, please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Stollery Children's Hospital

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, the health of our province starts with the health of its children. The Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation has a great vision to transform children's health care so that every child, no matter where they live, can get the best possible care. That's why we're proud that the Stollery is being hosted today at the Legislature. This is an opportunity for our Legislative Assembly members to celebrate this amazing, world-renowned expertise that exists right here in our own backyard and in backyards across Alberta, to help kids like Payton and Easton Langenau from Airdrie, Jacob Martens from Grande Prairie, Emma and Cameron Nagel from Leduc, and Emily Gordon from Sherwood Park. I'm proud to say that almost all of these Stollery kids and their families are here with us today in the members' gallery.

As the second-largest children's hospital in Canada the Stollery sees more than 293,000 patient visits every year, and nearly one-half of those kids come from outside of the Edmonton region. The Stollery children's hospital is one of the busiest and most specialized children's hospitals in Canada, performing more than

11,000 surgeries per year and providing care to some of the most complex health care cases anywhere in the world. The foundation is committed to investing in the best people, programs, equipment, and research to make sure that the Stollery has what it needs to care for kids for generations to come. It's the primary funder of pediatric research, \$40 million over 10 years through the Women and Children's Health Research Institute at the University of Alberta. With donor support the foundation is helping to give the sickest kids the best chance anywhere in the world for a long and healthy life.

Stollery day is a chance for all of us to reflect on the tremendous impact this hospital has had on the quality of health care in our province. On behalf of Emily, Emma, Cameron, Payton, Easton, Jacob, and their families, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** If you might indulge me as a father of two who have both spent time in children's hospitals, I too would like to voice my thank you to the Stollery and to those who do great work for our children.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

#### Holger Petersen

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to pay tribute to a great Albertan, a long-time resident of Edmonton who has made enormous contributions to the music scene in our province and, indeed, across Canada and around the world, Mr. Holger Petersen. Holger started his career as a drummer, playing with bands like Hot Cottage in bars across Edmonton. He earned a diploma in radio and television arts from NAIT and in 1969 became the host of *Natch'l Blues* on CKUA Radio, a program which now stands as Canada's longest running program dedicated to blues music.

Not content to simply play records, in 1976 Holger founded Stony Plain Records to support and promote some of the amazing artists he'd had the fortune to meet, interview, and eventually produce records for. In the 45 years since, Stony Plain has gone on to release over 400 albums by a wide range of artists, which have won over 30 maple blues awards, 11 Junos, and been nominated for six Grammys. Holger himself has earned multiple awards for producer of the year, a Canadian country music award for record company person of the year, lifetime achievement awards from no fewer than five prominent blues associations, a Queen's golden jubilee medal, the Order of Canada, and honorary doctorates from both Athabasca University and the University of Alberta.

As if that wasn't enough to cement him as a force to be reckoned with in the provincial, national, and global music industries, Holger also helped found both the Edmonton Folk Music Festival and the Alberta recording industries association, now known as Alberta Music.

Holger's ongoing success is rooted in his endless curiosity, unerring ear, and genuine warmth. He's a deeply knowledgeable blues evangelist, a tireless champion of good music, a community builder, and the consummate fan. This Saturday I look forward to joining Holger's friends, family, and peers as they gather at CKUA Radio to celebrate his remarkable 50-year achievement in broadcasting in addition to his many contributions to the Canadian music landscape.

Congratulations, Holger, on 50 years. We look forward to many more.

#### Holodomor Memorial Day and Political Discourse

**Mr. Schow:** This Saturday is Holodomor remembrance day, the solemn day when we recognize Communist dictator Joseph Stalin's

genocide of Ukrainians through a deliberate, co-ordinated famine. Soviet propagandists claimed that the famine was of natural causes, that some bad weather resulted in poor crops, but it was anything but that. In order to achieve his political ends, Stalin and his thugs confiscated food and let Ukrainians starve to death. The Ukrainians were resisting Soviet socialist collectivization, so Stalin devised a famine. Through his terror famine Stalin murdered upwards of 10 million human beings. Think about that for a moment. The Holodomor is undoubtedly one of the greatest atrocities in human history, an atrocity we should never forget. Holodomor is especially solemn in Alberta, where hundreds of thousands of Albertans trace their Ukrainian roots.

Now, I recognize that those of us in this Chamber have diverse political views, and sometimes we strongly disagree on matters of public policy. That's healthy. These disagreements and the debates ensure that we have a strong democracy. But we should not minimize crimes such as the Holodomor for the sake of convenient political argument. I was frankly shocked and stunned when the Member for Lethbridge-West invoked the Holodomor last night when debating Bill 22 before this House. This spring 55 per cent of Albertans voted for the United Conservative Party; over 1 million votes cast for us, the highest voter turnout since '82. There is absolutely no valid comparison. While I'm not optimistic, I sincerely hope that the Member for Lethbridge-West will apologize. There is no excuse for invoking Joseph Stalin when speaking about the democratically elected government of Alberta.

We must ensure that future generations remember the evils of Soviet Communism, including the Holodomor. That includes not minimizing those crimes by comparing them to contemporary debates in modern politics.

#### 1:40                      **Lead in Drinking Water**

**Mr. Schmidt:** I've now risen a number of times in this House to raise the issue of lead in our drinking water. Earlier this month it was reported that our drinking water contains unacceptable concentrations of lead. I and many Albertans were extremely concerned that more than 10 per cent of Alberta's daycares and a quarter of all schools tested in the Calgary Catholic school board and Elk Island public school board had drinking water exceeding the maximum allowable concentration of lead. This is extremely concerning as lead is a neurotoxin that impedes children's brain development. It can cause behavioural problems and results in loss of IQ.

However, there is hope. There are solutions we can commit to right now. They are straightforward. We have already taken lead out of gasoline and paint, and we can take it out of our drinking water as well. We can replace all lead plumbing. Like Ontario, we can make testing for lead mandatory in all schools and daycares. I think this is a straightforward solution that we should commit to as soon as possible. To prevent this issue from ever occurring again, we should implement an outright ban on all plumbing fixtures that contain lead. These fixtures should not be sold or installed in Alberta. The government can commit to this right now and start taking action this afternoon. We've heard from this government that they're willing to implement federal standards and support schools in testing their drinking water, but that's not enough. We need to be decisive.

We need the government to take action on the solutions outlined. The government cut municipalities and cut school boards in their budgets, which leaves them at the mercy of the government to be able to finance taking action against lead. That's why I'm calling on this government once again to replace and ban lead plumbing and make testing mandatory. The government found money to

finance a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway. Now it needs to find the money to protect our drinking water and our children.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

#### **National Child Day**

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured today to rise to acknowledge November 20 as National Child Day. It's especially exciting to see so many children here sharing it with us today. I know that you and all members of this Assembly will agree that there is nothing more important than our children. We may often be at odds on questions of policy or priorities in this House, but one thing we have in common is that we want the best for our children. We recognize that our commitment to them now and supporting their well-being and development will have a lasting impact on generations to come. National Child Day serves as a reminder that everything we do, every choice that we make impacts young people in this province now and into the future. It is a reminder that children in Alberta and around the globe have a right to high-quality education, health care, protection from abuse and neglect, and a voice in this society.

Last month the South Sudanese community in Calgary shared with me the struggles of their children. These struggles, including addiction, mental health, violence, and isolation, are shared by every community across this province. These challenges must be faced head-on by our families, community organizations, and government. Together we can equip our children and give them the help that they need to reach their full potential. It is why we work to leave things better than we found them, because one day Alberta will be in their hands. When all in this Chamber are long gone, those whose lives were touched by our actions will stand in our place. Our government is committed to a path that will give Alberta's children the opportunity and the means to build a bright and happy future. We all have a role to play. Mentor a young person, coach on a local team, donate time or money to a community organization, and take an interest in young people.

I want to thank all members for sharing their commitment to Alberta's children and for the excellent work that you all do on their behalf. To mark this occasion and on behalf of my colleagues in this House, it is my great pleasure to stand here today and recognize this day.

#### **Budget 2019 and Teachers**

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, members of our caucus have continued to be inundated with e-mails and letters from our constituents as a result of the budget currently being debated by the House. Whether it's classroom sizes, school fees, insurance rates, pensions, collective bargaining, public servant job losses, the termination of the Election Commissioner, loss of tax credits, increases to tuition rates, corruption, honestly, the list is exhaustive.

Recently a constituent reached out to my office regarding the government's ill-conceived grab of the teachers' pensions. She was concerned, to say the least, stating: pensions belong to teachers, not the government; with that, we respectfully ask that MLAs take their hands off our pensions. Unfortunately, since that e-mail I have received an update, and I would like to share Ulana Soletsky's story with the House today.

Since my last e-mail I have been informed that I might lose my position with the school board because of the last budget. I have been a classroom teacher since 1983, and now I have held the position of math consultant in my school district for the last 11 years. I have also been offering professional development in math

education for 11 years. To hear that my position might be eliminated has been absolutely frightening and frustrating.

In the last few days I have also heard that the UCP government might be tabling a voucher approach to education. Our education system is one of the best in the world, let alone Canada. I have worked with teachers in the private school systems and can tell you honestly that what we have in the public-separate districts in Alberta is a much superior learning environment. What sense does this make, and how can we stop this? I am so frustrated and frightened that I am having great anxiety about the future of education in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, this anxiety that Albertans are living under is a direct result of the government's ongoing sacrifice of the well-being of families and individuals to support a \$4.7 billion giveaway, and it's shameful.

### Weed Notice Appeals

**Mr. Rowswell:** Mr. Speaker, on October 31 I attended the northeast regional agricultural service board conference. There were many issues important to rural Albertans discussed. One that caught my attention was an issue that related to red tape reduction. Our government has found inefficiencies in the way in which growers can appeal a weed notice. Growers in Alberta are subject to the Weed Control Act, and when an inspector finds that someone is noncompliant with the act, they will provide an inspector's notice in writing.

Inspectors make mistakes from time to time, so of course the act allows for an appeal process. You see, Mr. Speaker, the appeal process has been known to take at least 110 days, and in some cases it has taken over one year. I'm sure that even my colleagues from the urban areas could understand that in 110 days these noxious weeds have matured, dropped their seeds to spread across the countryside, making the problem worse.

What could possibly cause such an important decision to take this long, and what can be done about it? Previously the government lawyers would review documents, prepare briefings, go back and forth with the ministry and the producer for an unknown length of time. This would delay the decision into the winter and the decision would be revisited in the spring and the process would start again. The ministry has changed this process. Using existing legislation in section 9 of the Government Organization Act, our government will be appointing one or more people to oversee the review process and conduct in-person hearings, with all evidence present. With this new process a written decision will be issued within 30 to 45 days of the hearing. This gives plenty of time to take corrective action and control the weeds before the problem gets worse.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the producers and growers in our province, including many in my own riding, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for all their efforts in reducing red tape and efficiently managing problems. Thank you.

### Government Policies and Women

**Member Irwin:** Women make up over half our province, yet Alberta women continue to see the lowest participation in the workforce in Canada, experience higher unemployment compared to men while working in the province with the nation's largest gender wage gap. Under four years of an NDP government our gender-balanced cabinet worked tirelessly to apply a gender lens to policy decisions, including when introducing budgets, with a goal of ending gender-based violence and finally closing Alberta's deep economic gender gap.

Yet instead of continuing the push for gender equality, the UCP is hurting women. I'll say it even if it hurts this government to hear

it. Before you say I'm exaggerating, let me explain with some facts, and, wow, do I have a lot to cover in two minutes, so here we go.

In only six months the UCP have: gutted the status of women ministry with a 42 per cent cut and many millions gone as well; slashed supports for child care while creating uncertainty for those in \$25-per-day early learning and child care centres; deindexed the Alberta seniors' benefit, affecting thousands of senior women across our province; kicked off 46,000 dependants from the seniors' drug plan, disproportionately affecting women; cut and froze the minimum wage, of which two-thirds are women workers; hiked tuition for postsecondary students, again affecting a lot of women; attacked collective bargaining rights and public pensions and announced a rollback of wages for our hard-working public-sector workers who are, again, mostly women; abandoned the 52 dedicated health care workers in Vegreville who were, you guessed it, mostly women; and introduced the dangerous Bill 207, which attacks the fundamental rights of women and LGBTQ2S-plus Albertans to access the health care and services they need. I've shared a list, and something tells me that this isn't exhaustive.

Now I throw it back to you, Mr. Premier, and your government: what will you do to start improving the lives of women now? Asking for 2 million or so friends.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

### Election Commissioner

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the House leader for the government said: nothing is changing; the Election Commissioner can keep doing his investigations the same as before. The bill, however, says in black and white that the commissioner is "terminated." Let's be clear. The government is bringing forward a law to fire the person who has issued more than \$200,000 in fines against UCP campaigns because they keep breaking the law. To the Justice minister: do you really want to go down in Alberta's history books as the guy who fired law enforcement to conceal the truth about his party and his boss?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, nobody has fired law enforcement. What I said yesterday was that the Election Commissioner's office continues going forward under the structure if Bill 22 is adopted by this House. In fact, the structure that is proposed brings us in line exactly with how it is in Manitoba and with the federal government. And for every other province inside this country, they actually do not have an Election Commissioner. The point is this. Every other system in this province, the entire system is run under one office. In fact, the current Election Commissioner has even advised other governments that that is the best way to structure these types of systems.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the bill terminates the Election Commissioner, who is charged with investigating fraud into the minister's party. The commissioner says that he has 800 investigations – 800 – many of these still ongoing. The commissioner reminds all members of this House that, quote, his office prevents the emergence of a culture of corruption within the political and electoral process. To the keeper of the Great Seal: isn't that what you want to be known for instead of the keeper of great secrets, who brings corruption back to Alberta?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, the Election Commissioner's office remains in place if Bill 22 is adopted by this Legislature. It will fall under the Chief Electoral Officer. Any and all investigations that



are being undertaken will remain in place and be able to be completed. Elections Alberta have governed our election system in this province for over a century very, very successfully. This simply takes our system back to where it was before 2018. It protects the integrity of the independent officers of this Legislature but brings us in line with the system that's all across this entire country.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, no one believes the tired spin.

Former Conservative MP Monte Solberg says, quote, the optics are pretty bad. Mount Royal Professor Duane Bratt says, quote, it's a cover-up, plain and simple. And Rick Bell says that he's seen the ghost of Alison Redford wandering the hallways of the Legislature. Does the Premier really think he has a mandate to bring corruption back? That's what he's doing in Bill 22.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm excited that corruption will continue to be investigated in all ways by the Chief Electoral Officer and the Election Commissioner's office under Bill 22. [interjections] The investigative process will remain in place, the office of the Election Commissioner will remain in place, and the Chief Electoral Officer will remain in place, protecting the integrity of our election system. That's important to this government. We are taking the system and bringing it in line with the exact recommendations that the current Election Commissioner has provided other governments. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Calgary Board of Education Layoffs

**Ms Hoffman:** The Premier printed the word "jobs" on poster board during the election, but today 300 teachers are being laid off in Alberta's largest school district, Calgary public. Three hundred teachers, Mr. Speaker, in one district in Calgary. This government said that there would be none. The Minister of Education said, "Our government and I are very committed to keeping teachers in front of students." What does the minister have to say to the 300 teachers who were just fired and the thousands of students who relied on them to help them with their learning?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do sympathize with those teachers, their families, the students, the parents, all who are affected by this rash decision. You know, I just don't understand it. I'm struggling to understand how this happened. I have been very clear from the beginning that teachers in front of students has the greatest impact on student learning, and the reckless mismanagement of tax dollars by this board is not going to go unaccounted for. I will be ordering an independent financial audit and governance review of the Calgary board of education.

**Ms Hoffman:** The minister won't take responsibility. She only knows how to distract. I have warned this minister for months that giving \$4.7 billion away in a no-jobs corporate handout would mean teacher layoffs. Parents warned her. The ATA warned her. The CBE warned her. Everyone knew this was coming. So how can the minister claim to be surprised and divert responsibility when this is exactly what everyone knew was going to happen with her budget?

**Member LaGrange:** I am surprised. I have a board with a budget of \$1.2 billion that services 130,000 students whose first option was to go cutting teachers. That is unacceptable. Unacceptable.

Therefore, that is why I am calling forward an independent financial audit and a governance review to determine what is going on in that board.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, the CBE says that they could fire all of their HR, their legal, their senior management, and it still wouldn't add up to the amount that this minister has cut from their budget.

The minister's mismanagement means that thousands of schoolchildren in Calgary classrooms are losing their teachers mid-year. They will be in bigger classrooms with fewer supports. Districts right across Alberta are facing the same deep cuts, and kids are paying the price for this minister's mismanagement. All this government has left are excuses. How many more Alberta students are going to have to get ripped off before this minister decides to audit herself and her own bad budget, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be quite honest, I offered the CBE the expertise of my department to assist them with their finances, and they chose not to take us up on that offer. On Monday I met with every single board chair from the four metros, their CFOs, and their superintendents, and at no time did they mention any massive layoffs. There is a history here with this particular board, with this particular division, of mismanagement. I will get down to the bottom of it. There will be an independent financial audit, and there will be a governance review to see . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

#### Government Policies and Nurses

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, if the Minister of Health had just gone outside today, he would have met hundreds upon hundreds of registered nurses rallying on the front steps of this Legislature. Nurses are the front line of health care. They're at the bedside in emergency rooms, in surgeries, in long-term care facilities. They support new mothers and seniors and Albertans struggling with opioid use. How does this government thank them? By taking away control of their pensions. To the Premier. Albertans trust nurses with their lives. Why can't you trust them with governance of their own pensions?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is being disingenuous with Albertans. The fact is that in Bill 22 we respect and will continue with joint governance with our public-sector workers relative to their pensions. We are making changes to ensure that we see competent individuals on the boards of these pensions, pension boards that manage billions of dollars on behalf of their members. Bill 22 strengthens public-sector pensions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that this wasn't in their platform, there were about a thousand nurses here today that don't believe this minister. The Premier's attacks on nursing don't stop at pensions and wage rollbacks. His broken-promises budget practically brags about cutting \$100 million worth of funded RN hours from Alberta's health care system. Why is this Premier so eager to take front-line nurses away from the bedside and from people in the community in order to pay for his \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has risen.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an issue we've been asked about before in question period. This is an attack on our expansion of the scope of practice for LPNs in this province. I'd just like to point out that attacking the expansion of the scope of practice for LPNs is really trying to attack, actually, patient safety. The goal of our government is to make sure that there are fewer transitions in the care of our patients. Whether it's an acute-care hospital or continuing care, we want to make sure that our LPNs are practising to the full scope of their clinical knowledge and skills.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Bill 9; attacking pensions; wage rollbacks: why should these nurses trust anything this minister has to say? This minister could have heard some of those nurses today, some real human stories from the front line, if he had just taken the time to go outside and meet with them. If he understood that health care was about human beings and not corporate handouts, he might make some better choices.

What exactly was this minister doing this morning that was more important than actually speaking with the people who deliver front-line health care for the people of Alberta?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to be able to continue to engage with all of our health care professionals throughout the province, to be able to listen to all of our different health professionals, nursing health professionals in the province, to be able to listen to our RNs and to listen to our LPNs, as I did earlier this year when I listened to the LPNs and did what the previous government refused to do, which was to expand the scope of their practice to allow better patient care in this province.

#### Election Commissioner

*(continued)*

**Mr. Feehan:** Mr. Speaker, we've learned today that the Election Commissioner has been investigating more than 800 complaints, including many we know of that involve voter fraud in the UCP leadership race. We also know that the commissioner was going to go before the legislative committee next week to detail the contents of many of these investigations and to request additional funds for those left outstanding. Now this government is rushing to fire him. To the chair of the Public Accounts Committee: will the committee schedule a meeting to hear from the Election Commissioner?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you to my hon. colleague for the question. I share his concerns about the role of the office of the Election Commissioner. It is a matter of urgent public interest to scrutinize the public accounts and activities of the Election Commissioner for 2018-2019. As such, as the chair of the Public Accounts Committee I have written to all members of Public Accounts this morning to request an emergency meeting.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm concerned that part of this government's rush to pass Bill 22 is a direct result of them wanting to silence the Election Commissioner before he presents his annual report next week. I have to wonder if the UCP government cabinet is using the House now to suppress the findings of his investigations because they fear the damage that it would do to the UCP and the current Premier. To the chair of Public Accounts: what would be on the agenda of such a meeting?

**The Speaker:** All members of the House will know that *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at 512, 513 addresses this very issue. The only issue that is able to be discussed is around the

scheduling of a meeting or the agenda. As such, this question would be in order.

The hon. the chair of PAC.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to my hon. colleague. Certainly, the Election Commissioner himself expressed concerns yesterday, and I believe that our Public Accounts Committee has a role to play in ensuring that democracy is upheld. The committee does have legislative oversight over the commissioner and how he has used the resources provided to him during the 2018-19 fiscal year and what contingencies and protocols are in place to ensure those funds do not go to waste if he is indeed fired. In the interest of accountability and upholding the rule of law, I am seeking support from all Public Accounts members for an emergency meeting.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you to the chair.

Mr. Speaker, I worry that the UCP cabinet will actively work to stop this emergency meeting of the Public Accounts Committee. We have seen that this government does not believe that the rules apply to them on repeated occasions. To the Government House Leader: will you now rise and commit that you will not block the efforts of the Public Accounts Committee chair to hold an emergency meeting with the Election Commissioner before Bill 22 passes?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, as a member of Executive Council I am certainly not a member of a standing committee of the Legislature, nor do I have a say or any control in the schedule. However, as the hon. member is well aware, the committee as a whole decides its scheduling matters, and I suggest that they continue with their process and have a conversation amongst committee members to be able to schedule the next meeting and agenda items as per our system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Camrose is rising with a question.

#### Rural Crime Prevention

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week in my constituency a woman and her dog were shot and killed. My constituents are afraid. Criminal activity has skyrocketed in our province and has become increasingly violent, with individuals being targeted numerous times. Law enforcement is frustrated. They go to great lengths of time and often endanger themselves to arrest these criminals. To the Minister of Justice: what is our plan to address rural crime?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. It was a privilege of mine to go to Camrose and hear directly from people in the community about their frustrations with rural crime. I'm proud of the fact that we made a significant announcement earlier this month to make sure that we have enhanced boots on the ground with our RAPID force announcement. We also need to make sure that we start changing precedents in the judicial system. That's why we brought in community impact statements. I'm hoping that the stories that I've heard in my town halls across Alberta can now be conveyed in a thoughtful way to our judiciary so that we can start having stronger penalties. It's time for the justice system not just to work for downtown Toronto but to work for rural Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government has made this announcement but rural Alberta in particular has not yet heard a timeline and given that rural Albertans deserve to feel safe in their homes and in their communities and given that this is currently not the case, what is the government's plan to give rural constituents, especially in my riding of Camrose, some assurances of safety not only for themselves but for their property?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the community impact statements that I mentioned will be starting to be available in January. We also just introduced Bill 27. It is going to respect property rights in our province. Albertans deserve the strongest property rights possible. That's what this bill does. It makes sure that law-abiding Albertans can't be sued by criminals committing a criminal act on their property. That's common sense. That's what we heard from Albertans on the road. We're taking concrete steps now to help make sure that rural Albertans can feel safe.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that law enforcement and citizens have let me know that we are suffering from a catch-and-release program and given that my constituents believe that the same criminals keep repeating the same crime on the same people and given that we need help to combat the rural crime crisis in our communities, what is being done to help the constituents of Camrose and all rural Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We're hiring 50 more prosecutors to make sure they have the time and resources to make sure they can have the caseload to go after repeat offenders. We're also making sure we provide additional training to our RAPID force, our sheriffs, our fish and wildlife officers to make sure that they can help contribute with our police on the ground to catch these repeat offenders and keep people safe. These are concrete steps. We're taking them now because rural crime is at a crisis and we have to act.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

#### **Canadian Energy Centre and Premier's Adviser's Expense Audits**

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One week ago the members for Edmonton-Manning and Lethbridge-West and I wrote to the Auditor General. We requested that he audit the travel costs of the Premier's principal adviser, David Knight Legg, and I'm pleased to report to the House that the Auditor General will be proceeding with this audit. Can the Minister of Energy state clearly, after so much confusion, whether the Premier's friend and personal adviser, David Knight Legg, was on official war room business when he stayed at five-star hotels at taxpayers' expense in London?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the NDP are playing with misrepresenting facts to Albertans. What the Auditor General did in fact say is that that is routine. Every three years they move through ministers' offices and the Executive Council for audits, and it happens to be that we are in the cycle portion where Executive Council is up for an audit. That's what the

Auditor General said. Of course, we want the Auditor General to continue with all routine audits. But what we also want and what Albertans want is for the NDP to stop misrepresenting facts inside this House. It's not doing anything to help Albertans.

**Mr. Sabir:** I'll table the response later today.

Given that we also asked the Auditor General to audit the entire budget of the war room and given that I can report that he is proceeding with that audit as well, does the Minister of Energy regret trying to conceal the war room budget from Albertans, especially given the repeated abuse of taxpayer dollars that have come to light in the Premier's office and in the Attorney General's office?

**2:10**

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy has risen.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have said from day one that the Canadian Energy Centre, also known as the war room, will always be subject to audit by the Auditor General. It was set up that way, to be transparent and accountable, and that's the way it will operate.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the Election Commissioner uncovered dozens of illegal acts by the Premier's associates and was still actively investigating a member of the UCP caucus when this government decided to fire him and given that the government has chosen to hide the reason or any form of accountability when it comes to David Knight Legg's shady London trips and given that the government is also hiding all the details of how its so-called war room is spending its \$30 million budget, does the Premier also plan to fire the Auditor General before he can complete these two investigations?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's so outrageous to see the NDP continue to misrepresent facts. Of course, as we said, this is a routine audit that goes through every three years. We welcome the Auditor General to continue his important work. What this really comes down to is the NDP's ongoing war against the war room. This is the party that, when they were in power, put Tzepporah Berman in charge of our oil sands, a person who is dedicated to shutting down the energy industry. [interjections] I promise you that this government will continue to defend the energy industry inside this province despite the NDP trying to take them down.

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

#### **Lowe's Hardware Store Layoffs**

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Lowe's Canada announced it was closing six big box hardware stores in Alberta. This means significant job losses in Calgary, Edmonton, Airdrie, St. Albert, and Sherwood Park. It's yet another consequence of this government's failed economic policies. The total number of people laid off likely or should have been reported to the minister of labour. I know that he has this information, so can he rise in this House and tell us how many Albertans lost their jobs at Lowe's today, or is he too embarrassed to say?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, any time there are job losses we recognize the hardship that creates with families and individuals, and we certainly acknowledge that today. But in October there were over 20,000 new private-sector jobs created in this province. We are confident that the policies that we're implementing will turn the tide from the investment loss the previous government created in

this province. We will see investment come back to the province and, with it, jobs and opportunities for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's not all bad news, at least if you're a shareholder of Lowe's and not a worker, and given that Lowe's earnings per share and cash dividends are both up, which is good news for the traders in Toronto, for sure, but another loss for Alberta workers, can the Minister of Finance say how much of the \$4.7 billion corporate handout was given to Lowe's in exchange for them laying off Albertans?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, when we hear the members opposite talk about a fiscal and financial policy, it leaves me with no doubt why investment fled this province by the billions when they were in government. They continue to be antibusiness, which equates to antijob, anti economic prosperity, and anti-Albertan.

**Mr. Bilous:** Given that Amazon, Google, RocketSpace, Cavendish all made investments in Alberta under our government and given that Husky, EnCana, Lowe's, and many others have all happily taken this Premier's \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout and then laid off Alberta workers or relocated outside of Alberta or invested in other provinces with Albertans' tax dollars, how does the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism explain her failure to even keep the jobs that she started with?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, all we have to do is listen to the University of Calgary School of Public Policy, where research has demonstrated that every time corporate taxes are lowered, it results in a point – one dollar of lowered corporate taxes results in 95 cents gained for employee wages. [interjections] Our policy of reducing corporate taxes will result in investment, increased job opportunities, and higher wages for Albertans. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. I heard you heckling all through the question. Perhaps you could not heckle while the Speaker is on his feet.

### Dialysis Service in High Prairie

**Mr. Rehn:** Mr. Speaker, my constituents were led to believe that there would be significant upgrades to health care services in the town of High Prairie. While my residents understand that there are many health care needs all around Alberta, they are frustrated because they have a pressing need to access dialysis services in High Prairie that has not been met by previous governments. To the Minister of Health: will this government support the High Prairie health care centre so that my constituents can access the high-quality care they deserve?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not just High Prairie. The NDP spent four years making empty promises on health care to all Albertans while they watched access get worse and waiting lists get longer, yet according to the latest CIHI data they increased health care spending faster than the government before them. They promised a dialysis unit for the new hospital in High Prairie, and they committed capital funding to build it but no money to operate it. So it's been on hold because our government, unlike that previous government, does not make empty promises. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake is the only one that has the call.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there is a significant need for a new dialysis clinic in High Prairie and given that High Prairie residents in need of dialysis must travel to either Slave Lake or Peace River, both over 100 kilometres away, or Edmonton, nearly 400 kilometres away, to the same minister: will this government fully fund the dialysis unit in High Prairie so that my constituents do not have to travel hundreds of kilometres to access the dialysis services that they need?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, the member is correct. The capital dollars have been flowed to AHS but no operating funding. I've consulted with my department and AHS, and we've determined that with the savings anticipated from the AHS review, we can ask AHS to fund the operation. So, to the hon. member through you, Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. I am proud to announce that today we can advise that we have told AHS to move forward with the construction of that new dialysis unit and to open it as soon as possible. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister.

Given that a staged rollout of obstetrics in High Prairie began in January 2019 and given that the High Prairie health care centre has experienced staff shortages and given that the government repeatedly promised in the election to push resources in health to the front lines, to the same minister: what will the government do to address these staff shortages in High Prairie so my constituents can access the health care they need in their own community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health has the call.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recruitment and retention continue to be challenging for dialysis and all services in northern communities. The new dialysis unit will help by adding capacity in the area so there are more jobs and more centres to share the demand. A big part of the recruitment challenge is the cycle of underresourcing in the north and other remote areas in the province. It's hard to attract people to work in places that are already short-staffed. We're going to break that cycle, and we are going to do so by adding capacity across the system, especially in primary care. We're going to strengthen the system in the north for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South now has a question.

### Calgary Cancer Centre

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For decades Conservative governments have played games with the Calgary cancer centre – they announced it, they cancelled it, they moved it, they reannounced it, they recancelled it – in a vicious cycle that hurt the people of Calgary. Our government ended those games and started construction to ensure that Calgarians would finally get the centre they deserve. But in their first budget, the UCP has returned to that tried-and-true Conservative strategy and delayed funding for the Calgary cancer centre. Can the Minister of Infrastructure guarantee right here and now that despite the delayed funding in his budget, the Calgary cancer centre will still open on time and be fully staffed? Yes or no?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, none of this is true. The member has, respectfully, completely misunderstood what a construction schedule is. Once we had a construction schedule, we aligned our

funding to align with that construction schedule. We are still going to be funding another billion dollars to be able to fund that centre. It's going to be a total of \$1.4 billion. That funding is just aligned with the construction schedule. I regret that the hon. member does not understand that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

2:20

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister cannot answer whether it's going to be on time and fully staffed and given that the UCP delayed funding by \$184 million this year and given that they plan to delay funding by a further \$114 million next year and given that this government plans to cut funding for nurses by \$100 million over the next four years and given that the government is standing proudly beside a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout, will the Infrastructure minister please explain why he's removing almost \$300 million from the cancer centre over the next two years? Have you leveraged this project to pay for your failed corporate handout?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as we've said many times in this House and just recently with the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and the minister of labour, who attended with me at the cancer centre: on time, on budget. Again, another day, another opportunity for the caucus opposite to continue to perpetuate made-up numbers about the job-creation tax cut, because it's a continued attack on job creators in this province, and it's shameful.

**Mr. Dang:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that it becomes apparent that the Health minister hasn't read his own budget and given that this government's budget cuts both funding for this cancer centre and nurses to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate handout and given the Conservative track record of delaying and cancelling this project in the past and given that the UCP's commitment to this project was represented when their Infrastructure spokesperson dismissed this project as a "fancy box," to the Minister of Infrastructure: will the cancer centre open fully staffed, or will the needs of Calgarians come second to a \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Panda:** Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask that the member, instead of jumping up and down, listen to me one more time carefully. There is no \$4.7 billion corporate handout, number one. Number two: the Calgary cancer hospital will be built on time, on budget. I hope we'll put an end to that question one more time.

### Support for Transgender Albertans

**Member Irwin:** Today is the Transgender Day of Remembrance. This day honours those whose lives were lost because of acts of violence against trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse people, and it's also an important opportunity to raise visibility for trans and nonbinary people and address the issues the communities face. I was so proud of our NDP government for taking leadership on trans rights. To the minister of status of women: what specific actions do you plan to take to support the trans community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, and thank you so much for the question. We are honoured to stand with the transgender community today, especially to honour the murders, the bigotry, and other inhumane acts that have been perpetuated against this community. We proudly fly the flag both here and at McDougall in Calgary.

**Member Irwin:** Given that a number of organizations that serve queer and trans populations are facing funding shortfalls and given that these organizations have historically relied on grants from Status of Women and as well through the human rights education and multiculturalism fund, both of which have been eliminated by this UCP government, to the minister. I'm not exaggerating that without funds to support vulnerable trans-supporting organizations, lives are at risk. What can I tell these organizations that are worried about how they will provide critical supports and services without funds?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much for the question. Well, I'm actually proud to say that through the ministry there's actually been an increase of dollars towards Multiculturalism and Status of Women. There are multiple dollars that are going out to vulnerable people through Community and Social Services and other priorities that are in this province. We developed the multiculturalism portfolio and mandate in order to have that intersectionality. To just be clear, the GBA plus within the Status of Women is for that lens to make sure that we adequately fund and make sure that we're helping out as much as possible with these things.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. Given that one of the major barriers trans folks face is access to timely health care and given that Bill 207 further threatens trans health care access, allowing health professionals to deny essential health care, and given that we know that delayed or denied health care can mean the loss of trans lives, to the Health minister. You've not yet shared your position on Bill 207. I hope you've had some time to learn about it and reflect on it. Will you be supporting this terrible bill, and if so, why?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, as I said previously to the member opposite when she asked, one of my greatest concerns is to make sure that all Albertans have access to health care, especially the trans community. I'm very proud that our 29 health professions in this province have in their standards of practice prohibitions against discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. I'm very proud to say that I will, as Minister of Health, continue to make sure that access for the trans community will continue to be there, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to make sure that we continue to do so.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has the call.

### Red Tape Reduction for Small Business

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we heard that our government launched the red tape reduction small-business industry panel. The stated goal of this panel is to identify and cut the red tape that is holding back members of the small-business community and would-be Alberta entrepreneurs. We made it a priority to listen to and work with Albertans to find the right solutions that will help get Albertans back to work and to make their lives a little easier. My question is to the associate minister through you: what is the impact of red tape on small business, and how will seeking their direct input help us achieve our red tape reduction targets?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member. I know that the Member for Livingstone-Macleod, before

he actually entered into the tumultuous realm of politics, was a small-business owner himself, so he recognizes that small businesses are disproportionately affected by red tape. What we've done is that we've struck this panel in order to be able to receive good submissions from people who are in the trenches that are having to deal with these hoops that they've got to jump through, that oftentimes take away their ability to actually free up their hands and do what we ask them to do, which is to create jobs. We're going to make sure that these guys can do what they do best, create the jobs.

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, given that the associate minister has been meeting with the small-business panellists and given that he emphasizes the importance of supporting small business in Alberta and given that as a former small-business owner myself I saw the impact of excessive red tape on everything from lost productivity to increased costs and given that these burdens hurt not only employers but also employees, my question to the same associate minister: what sorts of problems are small businesses telling us they're encountering most, and how can this government help them?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, the member is correct; 2 out of every 3 new job hires actually come from small businesses in any robust, strong economy. So if we're to help those small businesses, we need to do one thing: we need to get out of their way. We need to make sure that we actually free up their hands and unclip their wings so that they can do what we need to them to do, which is soar in this economy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the associate minister. Given that small businesses are often where young Albertans receive their first work experience and given that youth unemployment in Alberta is unacceptably high after four years of NDP economic neglect and given that excessive and restrictive red tape hinders employment in key areas of my riding of Livingstone-Macleod such as hospitality, agriculture, and health care, once again to the associate minister: how can we reduce red tape and make sure that small businesses are able to again hire young Albertans and also that young Albertans wishing to start their own business can do so?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. You know, the youth are our future, and what's concerning is that when we actually provide them with the opportunities that they need to be able to start a business and become an entrepreneur, they will get into it, and they will actually see a great life because of it. I've been an entrepreneur since I was knee-high to a grasshopper, and I can tell you that it was a great life. The problem is that under the NDP they continued to heap all sorts of red tape onto those job creators and those innovators, and in the end they drove business out of this province.

#### **Lois Hole Provincial Park Management Plan Environment and Parks Ministry Budget**

**Ms Renaud:** The Lois Hole provincial park is located on the western edge of St. Albert, Edmonton, and is bordered by Parkland county to the southwest and Sturgeon county to the northwest. This urban provincial park is almost 2,000 hectares of lake and wetland ecosystem. Appropriate oversight of the Lois Hole park, lake, and wetland is vital to flood management, conservation, management of recreation pressures, and urbanization. To the minister of

environment: will you continue to fund the Lois Hole provincial park management plan as is, and will there be any reductions?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest in parks all across the province. I don't know specifically the parameters around the park the hon. member is referring to, but I'm not aware of any reductions in spending when it comes to that park. I will be happy to check and get back to the hon. member on the specifics.

**2:30**

**Ms Renaud:** Given this minister is responsible for cuts to water management, wildlife management, fisheries management, parks conservation, air quality monitoring, environmental emergency response, and so on, to the minister: if you're not a climate change denier, why don't you believe the warning of more than 11,000 of the world's climate scientists, who warned us that we clearly and unequivocally face a climate emergency that will cause untold human suffering? Plus, can he give us a parks' breakdown of the funding in writing?

Thanks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP managed to be nice for a whole 30 seconds. I think you should note that on your calendar. Here's the reality. Our government takes climate change seriously, has just passed the TIER legislation in this place this week. We'll continue to move forward on that. What the difference between us and that party is, when it comes to this important file, is that we will continue to work on innovation and technology to move Alberta forward in a positive way while not destroying our economy in this province like that hon. member did when she was part of a government that caused \$50 billion to flee this province with her ridiculous carbon tax.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that I'm not very nice, I'd like to ask one more question. Do you believe it was a responsible decision to cut programs and activities in the ministry of environment in order to give a \$4.7 billion handout to corporations and fund a \$120 million war room/snitch line instead of investing in emission reduction and climate change mitigation? Try to stick to answering the question for once.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we are investing significantly inside the emission management file inside this province, and we're proud of that. Again you see the hon. member continuing to attack the Canadian Energy Centre. We have the opposite approach. We are proud of the men and women who work inside the energy industry in this province and their contribution to both this province and to this country. Unlike the former government, who aligned themselves with both the federal NDP, who are antipipeline, and their good friend Justin Trudeau, who's anti the oil sands and the energy industry in general, this side of the House will stand with Albertans, will stand with our largest industry each and every day. That side will sell them out.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

#### **2019 Harvest**

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a very difficult year for Alberta farmers: poor harvest conditions, trade disputes, and business risk management programs that are not equipped to handle these issues. Team Alberta, representing the Alberta wheat and barley commissions, Alberta Pulse Growers, and Alberta canola, has called on this agriculture minister for financial assistance, but he has failed as of yet to act to support our farmers and ranchers.

Can the minister of agriculture tell me and the House what it will take for him to provide concrete actions, real action to help farmers instead of the lip service he's been giving them lately and why his government happily hands over \$4.7 billion in tax dollars to profitable corporations but closes its ears . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Numerous times in this House we would highlight the devastation, the very difficult harvest that happened this year. Again, I would reiterate to farmers – I was actually at the Alberta Milk AGM this morning and told farmers in the audience that the province of Alberta will be there to support them, whether it's through the suite of BRM programming. I've had meetings with AFSC in Lacombe, where we actually talked to the leaders there to show that we need to act as fast as we can. A lot of the unharvested acre benefit program – they can get a cash advance to crops that are out in the field right now covered in snow. We're on top of this, and we take this situation very seriously.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This crop year is very serious. Given that the latest crop reports give an example of the difficulties that our farmers and ranchers have had and given that 17.3 per cent of the canola crop, nearly 15 per cent of the potato crop, and a whopping 45 per cent of the sugar beet crop have not yet been harvested and given that this is around \$778 million in unharvested crops, what more evidence does the minister of agriculture need to stop passing the buck and provide assistance to our farmers? We heard he's started to talk about things that might be available. Four point seven billion dollars in tax dollars were handed out on a platter to corporations, but the cupboard is bare for our farmers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, farmers need to get their products to market. We actually had a unanimous consent. We actually asked the opposition to have unanimous consent here in the province of Alberta to the federal government to recall Parliament early and to actually have back-to-work legislation for the pending CN strike, that's ongoing. Unfortunately, the opposition had an opportunity to actually support farmers. Instead, they chose to sit on their hands and vote against it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this country we support farmers as well as those who work in the railway transportation industry and their right to collective bargaining, and we'll leave them to do so with the counterpart in the federal government.

Given that the difficulties faced by farmers in this disappointing crop year mean that farmers will face delayed insurance and access to funds needed for next year and to provide for their families and given that rather than platitudes and talking points farmers are looking for leadership and action and that farming should be a nonpartisan issue, as nonpartisan as it comes, will the minister of agriculture tell this House how much longer he wants farmers to wait and why . . .

**The Speaker:** Perhaps if the hon. member didn't use such a long preamble, he would have been able to get his entire question in.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, through you to the opposition: you had your chance. Yesterday you could have given us

unanimous consent to send a strong message to Ottawa that we needed Parliament to reconvene earlier and to actually have back-to-work legislation in this pending CN strike, which has a disastrous effect to our farmers. The backlog of rail contracts will pile up, all that cost being borne by our farmers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North is rising with a question.

### Daylight Saving Time

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Service Alberta announced that the government is reopening the discussion on whether or not Albertans should keep changing their clocks twice a year or should stay on daylight savings year-round. He's encouraging Albertans to register their opinions in an online survey. Since Albertans just talked about this only two and a half years ago, to the minister: why are you doing this survey now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. The reason we're having this conversation now is because more and more regions across North America are having this conversation right now. B.C., in fact, just tabled legislation to consider stopping the practice of changing their clocks twice a year. A private member in Yukon just introduced legislation for the same thing. Legislation has been passed on this recently in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Nevada, Oregon, Tennessee, and Washington. North America is starting to move in this direction, and we think it's time now for us to have this conversation with Albertans and to hear from them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta has been observing standard time for the past two and a half weeks and given that regular standard time is the time Albertans followed before daylight saving time was ever introduced or adopted, can the minister tell me why there is no option on this survey to stay on standard time year-round?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's an important question. As I said before, more and more governments are starting to have this conversation and tabling legislation on this. Most of these jurisdictions are choosing to stay on daylight saving time, which we would call summer hours, all year round as opposed to standard time. What we need to be mindful of is that it's important to consider what our partners from other jurisdictions are doing and that we are not proposing to act in a different direction. That said, I'm very interested to hear from Albertans on this. That's why we're bringing this survey forward, and I encourage everyone to participate.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the survey ends on December 10 and also given that there is no information on what the government will do with the information it collects or receives or what their next steps are and given that Albertans, including me, want to see action on this and not just more conversation, can the minister tell us what is in his next steps after the survey?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. What I would say is that this survey is just a first step in the process. We've had a lot of interest in this in the first couple of days, almost 100,000 views on our survey website so far. This clearly is something Albertans are interested in talking about. I encourage everyone to participate in the survey. I don't want to presuppose what Albertans are going to say on this, so at this time it's just important to hear from Albertans. Once the survey has concluded, we will determine our next steps.

### **Calgary Commercial Vacancy Rate and Nonresidential Property Taxes**

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, in 2014 and 2015 Calgary's downtown vacancy rate exploded; 6.7 million square feet of downtown office space became unoccupied as businesses downsized and abandoned leases they could no longer afford. This trend never turned around as the NDP predicted. The loss of this tax revenue caused city hall to ramp up property tax, which only further burdened the businesses who are and, unfortunately, in many cases were trying to weather the storm. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what is our government plan for nonresidential property tax in the coming years?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that question. Although the numbers are beginning to improve, the commercial vacancy rate in downtown Calgary, which at its highest was around 30 per cent, is one of the most disturbing legacies of the previous NDP government. As we have all seen, city officials chose to deal with this issue by relying on massive property tax increases, a decision that has threatened the viability of hundreds of Calgary businesses. I've been clear that this is not an acceptable solution going forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we are talking about prime office space in the heart of Calgary's downtown core going unoccupied and given that vacancy rates are still hovering around 25 per cent by most estimates and given that NDP policies only further pushed businesses further into distress, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to attract businesses back to Alberta?

**Some Hon. Members:** Nothing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can understand why the members over there would like to continue to heckle, but our government is doing so much to show investors that our province is once again open for business. In my own department we took emergency action to support the shallow gas industry, which is now on the rebound. Whereas the NDP imposed the largest tax increase ever on Calgary, we imposed the largest tax reduction. We scrapped their failed carbon tax.

**Mr. Milliken:** Given that the city of Calgary has increased their property tax levy on businesses by 37.8 per cent since 2014 and given that over that same period the NDP provincial property tax levy on businesses rose by 20.8 per cent and given that municipalities have an important role to play in making Alberta open for business again,

can the minister explain what our government is doing to ensure that municipal taxes do not become unsustainable?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Municipal taxes have already become unsustainable for too many people like Kelly Doody, a small-business owner who saw her property tax bill go up by a whopping 427 per cent. I have had the pleasure of touring many Calgary businesses, some that have been in the same family business for three generations. My friend over there who has done nothing for these businesses but raise taxes would let this continue. I am saying that enough is enough, and I'm glad the city has taken steps towards reducing taxes. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

### **Members' Statements (continued)**

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### **Fentanyl Use Prevention**

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Drug use, addiction, and overdoses are a real and dangerous problem in our province. Our province has been plagued with abundant drug use, trafficking, and manufacturing. Last year alone the annual deaths linked or directly caused by opioids exceeded 700. That is the biggest number of overdoses since the crisis began, a nearly 6 per cent jump from the preceding year.

The biggest culprit is the synthetic painkiller fentanyl. Fentanyl is a derivative of morphine, but it is around 100 times stronger. Three milligrams of fentanyl looks like a couple of grains of sand in your hand. That is why accidental overdoses can happen in the blink of an eye. While alternative drugs come with a litany of other problems such as addiction, dependence, and loss of bodily control and function, fentanyl is the number one lethal and accounts for an astounding 81 per cent of all deaths from drug use. The death toll is around two a day in our province. Calgary has been hit particularly hard. It has the most accidental deaths related to fentanyl in all of Alberta.

Our government must put an end to this crisis. Our law enforcement should focus on targeting producers and distributors to choke off the supply that is holding Albertans hostage. Addicts should be treated at health facilities and not thrown in jail for their addiction. In order to suppress the opioid crisis, we must properly filter the real culprits that are perpetrating and benefiting from the crisis, not the Albertans that are caught in a hard place and are now being strung along in this scheme.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I am pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 206, Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019, sponsored by the hon. Member for Livingstone-



Macleod. The bill was referred to the committee on November 7, 2019. The committee's final report recommends that Bill 206 proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 206.

Thank you.

[Motion for concurrence carried]

### Introduction of Bills

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

#### Bill 26

#### Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill that finally repeals and replaces Bill 6. I'm proud to introduce the Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019.

After extensive consultation, Madam Speaker, at over 25 different stops across the province – I've personally put over 8,000 kilometres on my own truck – we finally came to a place with practical, common-sense changes to Alberta's labour relations, occupational health and safety, worker insurance, and employment standards. I'm very proud to introduce this bill.

Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you. My constituency office has been flooded with letters regarding the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and the concern about . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Wrong spot.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Wrong spot? Okay. I'm sorry, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. Tablings? My apologies. There is a ton of confusion right now.

We are going to do tablings right now. Are there any members? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you. As I was saying, my constituency office has been flooded with letters from teachers, retired teachers about the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and just concerns about the government moving all the assets to AIMCo. I have the requisite number of copies, and I'll table them today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of news reports featuring quotes from pundits and columnists, that I referred to in my leader's questions earlier today, about the Premier's decision to fire the Election Commissioner in the middle of the investigation of fraud in the party. I have five copies of the column by Rick Bell where he compares the Premier to former Premier Alison Redford, five of the tweet referencing Mount Royal professor Bratt calling it a cover-up, and five copies of the CBC story where former Conservative MP Solberg says that he can't defend it and that it's bad optics.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I, too, have received lots of e-mails and concerns about Bill C-71. I have the requisite five copies of Ten Myths about Gun Control.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

2:50

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. My office has received to date about 200 e-mails from concerned teachers around the ATRF and the impacts of Bill 21. Today I'm tabling 31 of those letters received at my office.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know what big fans these guys are of Greta Thunberg, so I have a really interesting article. It's entitled Here's How Climate Pollution in Provinces Greta Marched in Compares to Sweden's. Kind of interesting. Five copies.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today and would like to record the requisite number of copies of a large pile of e-mails that I've received in regard to Bill 207 from many constituents in my riding and all across Alberta who are quite alarmed by Bill 207 and would like it to effectively be killed.

Thank you.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 24 Appropriation Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate November 20: Mr. Ellis]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise today and speak to Bill 24, Appropriation Act, 2019. I'm going to focus most of my comments, actually, on one particular ministry and hope that my colleagues will perhaps join me and speak to the other ministries.

As you may know, I'm the critic for two areas, Community and Social Services and francophone issues, but I'm going to focus on Community and Social Services today. Just last week, I think it was, we spent about six hours in committee asking questions, getting some answers but asking a lot of questions about the budget specifically for Community and Social Services. I would like to highlight some of the issues or some of the concerns that we identified during those six hours of questioning.

It's really quite a large ministry, as I'm sure everybody in this Chamber knows, and it includes a number of different areas, programming areas, that are absolutely vital to the survival, well-being, and thriving of Albertans. Those include things like FSCD, which is funding for families that have children with disabilities; PDD – the acronym stands for persons with developmental

disabilities – which is funding that allows people with developmental disabilities to live and work and recreate in their communities; and then, of course, AISH, which is assured income for the severely handicapped.

Income support for people with barriers is not a step below AISH, but it is in terms of eligibility, so people not quite able to qualify medically or for other reasons for AISH benefits will often go on income support with barriers. There are income supports for people who are expected to return to work. There is also funding for homelessness initiatives, homeless shelters, also shelters for women fleeing violence. So you can imagine that this is an enormous ministry, I believe, tasked with incredibly vital supports for Albertans.

Moving right along, we spent about six hours asking questions, and we learned some really disturbing things, which is why, again, I will not be supporting this budget because I believe this budget, contrary to what we hear every single day – there are no cuts; it's just fear and smear; everything is just great; the \$4.7 billion we're going to give to profitable corporations will trickle down, and life will be wonderful: that's not exactly how it goes.

In the Ministry of Community and Social Services, certainly, I first want to talk about AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, an old name for it. I hope one day we get to the place where we rename it. But all of that aside, assured income for the severely handicapped allows people with severe handicaps to receive a monthly income of about \$1,680; I think it's a little bit more than that. That also includes medical benefits, and these medical benefits are vital for people living in this kind of poverty. Now, I understand that over \$1,600 a month is better than income supports, better than abject poverty with nothing, living on the street, but it still requires that people that get this live in poverty. That's the reality. That's just how it is. Medical supports are important. That covers dental care, vision care, things like that. It also helps pay for the maintenance cost of service dogs, let's say.

Now, while this government did not cut AISH benefits – you know, if I'm going to give them kudos for something, they didn't roll this back like they rolled back the minimum wage; they didn't roll this back, so I am grateful for that. Just before the election – well, actually, it was about a year ago – we actually indexed AISH. That means that, every year, AISH benefits would be indexed to inflation; they would go up. We also caught AISH up for the time that we didn't index while we were in government, so that was about – I don't know – a \$90 increase. So we did that. The government didn't cut it: good job. That is one good thing. I will give you that.

What you did do was that you removed something that the community has been asking for for decades. For absolute decades they have been asking for this. The way it goes in Alberta for people with disabilities: you know, they're busy trying to live, trying to live in poverty, too, so for them to mobilize and advocate for a raise, for an increase is really, really tough. It has been our experience that over the four decades of a Conservative government, really the only time they got an increase was when oil and gas prices were high. There looked to be a lot of revenue, there was a lot of room to move, and then sort of as an afterthought AISH was increased. So what we did, although it isn't very much every year – it's about \$30 – is that we assured severely disabled Albertans that they don't have to do that anymore. Although this isn't going to lift them out of poverty, because – let's be honest – this is like poverty wages, it will help. It will help defer some of the costs that go up every single year.

Now, thanks to this government – you know, you have removed caps, so insurance rates are going up. I have no doubt whatsoever that the cost of the carbon tax, that is no longer transparent thanks

to your legislation that you're bringing in, will be passed on to consumers. Believe it or not, people on AISH are consumers, and they will pay that increase. This government has deindexed that, saving about – what? – \$10 million. Now, let's put that in perspective. This government has a war room, a secret war room, where we really don't know what they're doing other than acting on reports of un-Albertan activities. This war room is, like, \$30 million, \$120 million over four years. Indexing AISH was, like, \$10 million. I am hugely, hugely disappointed that this government wouldn't make that commitment. Hugely, hugely disappointed.

The reason that I'm spending so much time on the indexing is because it's not just AISH. Let's say that you're an Albertan that has a disability of some kind – you have a chronic mental health issue, whatever it is – but you don't yet qualify. For whatever reasons you don't medically qualify for AISH benefits. You're on income support for people with barriers, significant barriers to employment. That means you are living on just over \$800 a month. Eight hundred dollars a month. Can you imagine? I believe that is \$845 a month. Now, sure, if you have a child, you might get a little bit extra for child care or transportation or something like that, but it's under \$900 a month.

You chose to deindex that. That is a choice you made. You chose to give \$4.7 billion to profitable corporations, and you chose to stop indexing these benefits for people with severe disabilities, people with significant barriers to employment. I don't know about you, but if you've ever known people trying to live on AISH or income support, talk to them. Go meet them. Ask them what it's like. Ask them what a \$30 increase per year means to them, and then show up here and vote on this. I guarantee you that you might change your mind. That sounds a bit funny: to guarantee that you might change your mind. I would hope that you would change your mind.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, just a reminder to speak through the chair.

3:00

**Ms Renaud:** Yeah. I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. I will absolutely speak through you.

The other things that I noticed in – I'm going to move a little bit and talk about PDD, which is another huge programming area in this ministry. Persons with developmental disabilities provides supports for people who are over 18 who have significant challenges, disabilities, to living, working, recreating in their communities. PDD supports allow people with disabilities to pay for staff. Madam, what that would mean is – let's say that you live with your folks, and your folks go to work. You have a job, and you need to be supported in that job. You might need a bit of assistance with personal care, whatever that might be. PDD would fund those hours, and you would hire someone to do that work. All good.

Some people use community service organizations or service providers. The service providers will hire staff for you. Sometimes you live with a roommate; they'll help co-ordinate that. They'll do the training, the oversight, all of those things. The vast majority of these organizations are nonprofit although there are some for-profit organizations. I believe there are around 150 of them providing service in Alberta. I'm not a hundred per cent sure about that number.

This year – fabulous – that program didn't get cut. One more point for this government. Actually, I applaud that because an immediate cut like that would have done damage that I can't begin to describe. So I am grateful for that.

What I'm very worried about are the out-years. If you've looked at your own budget, in the out-years AISH and PDD now do not keep pace with intake growth, the number of people that, let's say,

turn 18 and are eligible for supports or perhaps move to Alberta for work or have sustained a significant injury of some kind. The numbers go up. That's just the way it is. Just like education, that's just the way it is for disability supports. The numbers go up. Certainly, we do lose some people, whether they move out of the province, they pass away, or they no longer require supports. That's often the case for employment support, which is fantastic. But the numbers go up every single year.

In your budget, in the out-years it does not keep pace with the growth. That, to me, is very concerning. That is the same case with FSCD support, and that is support for children with disabilities. Madam Speaker, you can imagine that I was very concerned when I saw these out-years, although this current year: all good, no problem. Out-years: there's a problem.

What is also a problem is that we spent quite a bit of time reviewing PDD. I think the disability community is very used to having things reviewed for them or having things reviewed internally. What was new about the way that we did it is that we actually opened it up for everybody to participate. That was the second time that we did that. What we saw were recommendations from all over the place about all kinds of things. I think that's the unique part of this process, that nothing is not considered or talked about or looked at or deliberated.

Now, we heard while we were in estimates that the Minister of CSS, or Community and Social Services, was very clear about the way that the review would be done and that it would be done internally. I asked numerous times: are you saying that this will be done internally? Yes. Will there be any self-advocates involved in this? That would be a person with a disability that advocates for themselves. No; this would be done internally. That's worrisome when on their radar for review are things like: let's look at changing the IQ for eligibility for this program. Do I think that's a good idea? Absolutely. I think that IQ number is as ridiculous as any standardized assessment that tries to measure a human being. That being said, you have to do this properly; otherwise, you will harm people. If you try to dilute a service so much that you harm other people, you're not doing any good.

The internal review coupled with the cuts in the out-years coupled with the lack of information about where they were going is very, very worrisome. When I look at these numbers, I can breathe a little sigh of relief for right now, but I'm scared to death about the next few years. I don't see a plan. I see an internal review looking at squishing a bunch of people into a little box, and the box needs to be fixed. Those are some of my concerns there. I have grave concerns.

Also in this ministry are supports for homeless shelters and homelessness prevention, which are absolutely vital in this province. We have a problem. I actually think that if we have one homeless person, we have a problem. Although we do have our challenges, we are an incredibly wealthy, fortunate province in an incredibly wealthy and fortunate country. Every single day I'm proud to be Canadian, and I'm proud to be Albertan. I know that if we decided that this was something that we could end, we could end homelessness, but that requires investment, and this budget doesn't do that. One of the most general questions I asked the minister during estimates was: is this government committed to ending homelessness? A simple question, really, because that determines your intent. Is this UCP government committed to ending homelessness? The answer: hmm, no.

Okay. Moving on, we looked at one specific example of that in Fort McMurray. Sadly, I've only been to Fort McMurray a couple of times, so I don't know what the shelters are like in Fort McMurray. I don't know what the homelessness struggles are. I can imagine that in a northern community there are difficulties just

given the location, given the temperature, all of those things. As I understand it, there are two shelters in Fort McMurray. The Salvation Army is one. The other one, I believe, is called Marshall House. In estimates I verified this information and asked for some clarity, and I understand that the decision by this government was to close one homeless shelter, that being Marshall House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess I had a number of questions for the hon. Member for St. Albert. She clearly has a breadth of knowledge around income supports for Albertans, and I was just hoping that she might be able to let myself know and Albertans as well, through you, of course, about where the best value investment is for Albertans with severe disabilities or AISH recipients and what structure we can put in place.

I find her last comments intriguing, that we do have the capacity to eliminate child poverty here in this province, but what mechanisms do we need to put in place to ensure that that's achievable? We saw a significant reduction in people living in poverty in Calgary while there was an economic downturn, which I found to be very reassuring news, that we learned about recently. Then earlier this spring we learned that, in fact, during, again, a significant economic downturn over the last four years we managed to cut child poverty in half. The burning question, I think, in the hearts of all Albertans who care about other human beings is: how do we finish the job?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to my colleague. As I know that he knows, ending child poverty, I think, is something that is possible. I think that, just like ending homelessness, it's absolutely possible if you focus on it.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I think that just the work that we did: in a short period of time we were able to bring down the number of children and families in poverty significantly. But it's not just one thing. There is no one magic answer; it was all kinds of things. It was increasing the minimum wage. It was investing in affordable child care. It was all of those things. What we've seen in this budget, particularly in this appropriation bill, is a systematic tearing down of all of the investments we made that contributed to bringing people out of poverty. Now, keep in mind that this took decades to get us here. It will take a lot of time and investment to get us out.

3:10

But let me give you an example of why community and social service supports are so important. When you review, it's vitally important that you have people that use these supports to guide you, because we don't have all the answers in this place, believe it or not. One woman called my office. She's a single parent of a child with severe autism in, I think, the first grade. Of course, she qualified for FSCD supports so she could have respite for her child and so she could have after school care with qualified providers. The deal was that she had to pay for her staff and then submit receipts and then be reimbursed. Every time she paid out her staff, it was about \$800, okay? She worked full-time to support her child; she actually had two children. She couldn't afford to pay the \$800 and then wait a couple of weeks to be reimbursed. That's what poverty looks like: you can't even access supports that are available to you because you can't afford them.

Trying to change that a little bit so that billing was a little bit different or maybe she could get an advance of some kind: none of those things will happen without a review that is done and guided by people that use the supports. During estimates I repeatedly heard this minister say that the review is going to be done internally. I can pretty much guarantee you that that's going to be a fail as far as the people with disabilities, the people that use those supports are concerned unless you involve them in the review.

Going back to the comment about child poverty, I think sometimes people have a stereotype in our heads about what a family in poverty looks like. I'll tell you that the vast majority of people that live in poverty – actually, let me flip that. The vast majority of people on AISH and people that receive PDD supports live in poverty. I'm not just talking about how occasionally you have to go to the food bank at the end of the month, Mr. Speaker. I'm talking about poverty. I'm talking about poverty that doesn't give you choices. I'm talking about poverty that is also sometimes a barrier to employment because you can't do the things that you need to do.

On that, I'm going to end my comments for today. Thanks.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen to speak on this.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. I won't speak a great deal of time, but I did want to get up. I listened earlier to the Finance minister move second reading of Bill 24. I took some comments down with regard to what he was saying, and I'll start with what I agree with. The capital cost allowance was something that, when I was the Finance minister, the federal government was endeavoring to get provinces to sign on to. We certainly heard that, and I remember us working towards that in the planning that we were doing as a government. Other provinces have done similar capital cost allowance policies within their fiscal plans and the way they allow relief to corporations around their capital investments. Good plan.

What I don't agree with in what I heard the Finance minister talk about is the job-creation bill. He's taking an approach to bringing that down from 12 per cent to 8 per cent over four years. We know that where Alberta was, at 12 per cent, was in the middle of the pack of all provinces and territories across this country. It wasn't the highest, and it wasn't the lowest. It was the middle of the pack. I don't agree with that. I think it's significant. We have repeatedly said – on page 144 of the fiscal plan, it's right there, Mr. Speaker – that it means that \$4.7 billion won't be coming into this province to address the many necessary programs and services that Albertans rely on.

We're starting to see the reverberation of that bad decision throughout the province in the education sector. We heard just today the critic for Education speak to the minister and say that that was a negative impact on not only the CBE in Calgary, but there was Sturgeon; there were other places. There were a significant number of layoffs happening as a result of the lack of appropriate resources coming in because of policies like the job-creation tax bill, which will avoid \$4.7 billion from coming into the treasury, and being left without the necessary funds to address the health and education and postsecondary school education needs this province has. That's not something I support, and I think it's a bad idea and one that will continue to have negative impacts around this province not only this year but in subsequent years, and we will be left with a social and economic infrastructure deficit akin to what happened in the mid-90s here. Why would we want to repeat something that everyone believes is in the wrong direction?

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Minister of Finance, certainly on this fiscal plan, over and over again talk about the MacKinnon panel. We had, when we were government, our own fiscal policy expert come in and address the needs of this province as we were going into the deepest recession and longest recession, over two years, that this province has gone into in generations. That fiscal expert was David Dodge, former Bank of Canada governor. Mr. Dodge came in and talked about the right size of our capital infrastructure plan, and he recommended an increase of 15 per cent over the previous government's budget with regard to the capital infrastructure. That put it from about 6 to about 7.5, 7.8.

We followed that recommendation, and we were able to ensure that in the depth of the recession Albertans who were working for Alberta companies and who were struggling got the necessary public investment to keep working. Schools were built, Mr. Speaker. We were assisting municipalities across this province to address the infrastructure needs they had, and they spent those monies wisely on improvements in their municipalities that would make roads safer, make facilities more environmentally efficient and on and on and on. It kept Albertans working. That was the point of it, to make sure that the companies in Alberta and Albertans continued to work. That was the capital infrastructure recommendation that David Dodge gave us, much different than the work of the MacKinnon panel, I can tell you, because at this point in time I think the economy in Alberta is about half a per cent in terms of nominal growth. That is flat, essentially.

The job-creation bill, the direction of the MacKinnon panel, is not having any measurable improvement effect in this province. That is what this fiscal plan is doing. It's not having any impact at all in this province. When we were government, the first two years were very challenging, as everybody knows. In '15 and '16 there was a retrenchment of the economy, but in '17 and '18, as the former economic development minister will tell you, the province of Alberta grew faster and stronger than any other province in this nation. It led the nation in terms of GDP growth. What we hear from the Minister of Finance is that, you know, the recovery has not been fast. Well, no kidding, Mr. Speaker. It is not happening. It's not been fast. It's not happening. Though he didn't say this – I'm kind of putting words in his mouth – he urges us just to wait and be patient. Wait and be patient, and it will happen: well, I don't buy that.

3:20

The other area that he talked a lot about is with regard to, as he called it, the unsustainable debt servicing. I think it was \$1.971 billion in the '18-19 year. That's nowhere close to accurate. It's not unsustainable in terms of being able to be serviced by the province of Alberta. Just to put it in context, when we look at the total number of assets and total number of liabilities, this province's net assets at the end of the year of 2018-19 were over \$23 billion, Mr. Speaker. When we look at the net debt to GDP in this province, we continue to enjoy the lowest net debt to GDP of any province, including the federal government. It is somewhere around 8 per cent if you look at the net debt to GDP, and with our path to balance that the previous government, that I was part of, sketched out, we would only top out at 11 to 12 per cent net debt to GDP.

Now, yeah, it's a growth in the net debt to GDP from 8 per cent to 12 per cent, but when you compare Alberta to other provinces and the federal government, we had the lowest net debt to GDP, and we'll continue to have the lowest net debt to GDP of any province. The next closest net debt to GDP higher than us would be currently in the 13, 14, 15 per cent, and they go all the way up to 33, to 40 per cent. Now – I agree – that's too high. But Alberta will never get that high. We're at 8 per cent now, going up to 12 per cent with the path to balance. Mr. Speaker, it's hyperbole for the Finance minister

to say that we had unsustainable debt in this province and we couldn't carry it. We could carry it. We're the lowest in the nation in terms of net debt to GDP, and we have the best balance sheet of any province still to this day.

Mr. Speaker, those are the things that I wanted to communicate to correct the record, because it was part of that government's narrative, I guess, that Alberta needs to get its fiscal house in order. We have the best balance sheet. We have the lowest net debt, and we will still have that when the balance occurs.

I do note that the government of the day is increasing the deficit by \$2 billion from where it was left by our government. That, obviously, is in the wrong direction, and they need to answer for increasing that deficit. It's got to go in the other direction, and we were taking it in the other direction. Now, they'll say that it's a result of the bad policies on this side. Mr. Speaker, I don't buy their financials in terms of what they think about our policies. We were given a highest grade by the C.D. Howe Institute in terms of our processes two years running, and that is a fact.

We do need to get this province going in terms of its growth, and I'm fearful that the policies put in place by the current government are going to take us in the opposite direction. Certainly, access for our oil products in this province is critical, and we were endeavouring to do that on a short-term basis with crude by rail, and that has been struck out. That's unfortunate. Mr. Speaker, the pipeline situation was markedly improved by the previous government. Of course, the federal government has purchased the pipeline and has put money towards the expansion of the pipeline. All of those things will in time – in time – benefit this province, in the 2023-2024 time frame.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the fiscal plan, and I see some numbers that say balance in the 2022-2023 year. That's dependent, of course, on a significant uptick in bitumen royalties. I really wonder if pipelines are going to be happening by 2022-2023 when we see the significant challenges that are out there. Rest assured that the people on this side will continue to push for pipelines so that our balance sheet can get healthier on the revenue side.

You know, I just think, as my colleague who spoke just before me was saying, that it's really problematic that the most vulnerable in this province are paying, essentially, for policies put in by the government on the other side. Mr. Speaker, that is a moral problem that I think needs to be addressed by the other side.

I listened to the other side. They say, "No, we're not reducing the benefits to those most vulnerable," but when you take away indexing, then going forward, you are reducing it, Mr. Speaker. They're not changing the original amount, but they're saying: it's only going to stay there. As we know, with CPI and inflation the purchasing power of that original grant amount will get smaller and smaller going forward. Now, that's the difficulty that the Leader of the Opposition raised when we listened to this on the other side. It's not accurate, but they hide behind the fact that they're not changing the grant amount. But they are taking away indexing, which means that it'll get smaller going forward. They never say that, so it's wrong to stand up here on the other side and to say, you know: we're addressing the needs. They're not.

Those are my comments about the appropriation bill, Mr. Speaker. There is a lot of good work, of course, done by the bureaucracy to put this all together. I noticed there are missing areas that were in our budget, the last budget; namely, the net debt to GDP graph is gone because they don't . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Transportation has risen to speak.

**Mr. McIver:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), yes, because it is available.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with some amusement to the remarks that were just offered to the House. I'm quite interested. It's actually refreshing to see the former Finance minister now take concern about the amount of debt that Alberta is in. Oh, how Albertans wish that the former Finance minister showed any bit of care and concern about that issue when he had the power to do something about it, when he actually not only didn't pay attention to it but actually floored it, if you will, and put the debt clock to the mat. Now he's complaining because it's not slowing down.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when you're going as fast as you can running Alberta into debt, including borrowing money for this week's groceries, even if you slam on the brakes, it takes a little bit of time to stop that forward momentum. We are trying to hit the brakes in such a way that we can still look after Albertans and do it in a gentle way, 2.8 per cent over four years, and get the incredibly irresponsible and reckless spending momentum of the previous government under control while looking after Albertans' best interests.

It was also interesting to hear just now the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo talk about how AISH was being cut. I would ask him to refer to the remarks from his colleague from St. Albert, who about 20 minutes before said that those benefits were not being cut.

**Member Ceci:** Deindexed.

**Mr. McIver:** I see him now trying to correct himself, so I'll help him out.

**The Acting Speaker:** I would just remind hon. members to speak through the chair. There will be ample opportunity for debate, and if the individual who perhaps really wants to speak has already spoken at this stage of debate, there will still be 29(2)(a) available as well in the future.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I listened patiently while the previous member spoke. Though I didn't necessarily agree with everything, I did listen, I thought, quite quietly to all of the comments regardless of how irresponsible I thought many of them were.

Mr. Speaker, I'll continue. As I say, the hon. Member for St. Albert – and it was actually quite refreshing to hear her say that because I'm pretty sure that that hon. member said something quite different in previous days. I thank her for this, by the way. She did say: I thank the government for not reducing the actual benefits that AISH recipients are getting now. And she did go on to say that she would prefer it if the indexation would be there in the future. But my point, Mr. Speaker, is that's a departure from what the last speaker said. I would refer the last speaker to his . . .

3:30

**Mr. Eggen:** You can't make stuff up.

**Mr. McIver:** He still can't stop, Mr. Speaker.

But the point is . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will try to hear my own thoughts while I carry on. I'm trying.

Here's the thing. The hon. member is talking about how we ought to reduce the level and the rate at which we're going into debt. I agree with that. I will reiterate the fact that the former Finance

minister should have shown a little bit more care and responsibility about that during the four years that that hon. member had the maximum amount of control over that issue, yet was completely reckless and irresponsible with it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are working hard to undo the damage that was done in those four years. That's why this budget is before us right now, including this Appropriation Act, 2019. We need to deliver the services. We need to do it responsibly and carefully and with a great deal of forethought, restructure the way government happens so that we can continue to deliver the services that Albertans most need and want in a responsible way while turning around the economic fortunes.

Again, it's interesting to see members on the other side today talking at different times about how debt was a bad thing for students. Well, debt is a bad thing for Albertans, Mr. Speaker, when it's irresponsibly put in place. Debt is a tool that can be used to build infrastructure if it's done in a responsible way, but when it's left to run out of control, with no demonstrable efforts in place to pay the debt back, it's completely irresponsible. That's what the previous government did, and we will not.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen to speak on this matter.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise. Actually, the timing couldn't be more perfect to talk about or speak or respond to comments that the Minister of Transportation just made, which – I don't know, I mean, I'm sure it's not unbeknownst to him. He's been talking about debt and how it's bad and how much, you know, our government was running up. I will notify the minister, who I'm sure is completely aware, of the fact that the very budget that we are debating, this bill, is putting Alberta \$2 billion further into debt than the proposed budget by our government. The deficit in this budget is over \$8 billion. Under our government it was \$6 billion. That's black and white. Members can get up and, you know, try to change history, but the numbers are right in front of us in this appropriation bill.

Interestingly, as well, this government likes to talk about the campaign promises they keep. They don't like to talk about the campaign promises that they break. There's a list of them, Mr. Speaker, but one of them is the fact that during the election they campaigned on a path to balance a year earlier than what was proposed. Now they are on the same path: '23-24 is when they will balance. The other thing that's interesting is, you know, they try to sound like they are these slayers of deficits and everything else, when under our government, at the rate that we had proposed, yes, Alberta's debt would have been about \$95 billion. Under the UCP, \$93 billion. It's definitely misinformation, but it's not factual that they're going to pay it down much faster than we would.

The difference, Mr. Speaker, lies in the fact that they're giving away \$4.7 billion. That's \$4.7 billion that could've been used to fund classrooms, to fund teachers. Just today we learned that Calgary, the CBE, is firing 350 teachers because of their budgets. What floors me is that instead of this government owning up to their bad-news budget, they turn around and deflect and blame others. I mean, I don't know if that's now their thing. It's kind of been that way for the last – I don't know – hundred years, at least the last few weeks. I can tell you that that's been the approach that they've taken, to blame the school board for mismanaging their funds as opposed to – you know, you get the Justice minister, the Minister of Municipal Affairs blaming cities for not using their money appropriately when this government is downloading services to the municipalities and then forcing them to have to look at the only tool

they have, which is property taxes, which is a terrible tool, which needs to be retooled.

In fact, we did that. At least, starting with Edmonton and Calgary, we had city charters in place, Mr. Speaker, that would give them the ability to participate in revenue sharing. The great thing about that – and I give a shout-out to the mayors of both cities, who said: "We want a share of the revenues, but we also understand that you can't have it both ways. So we will also be with the province in years where our revenues are down, when their funds will go down, so that, you know, they're in the same situation that the province is. That's fair, and they were willing to do that.

I mean, again, municipalities deliver, I believe, somewhere around 90 per cent of the services that individuals rely on. [interjection] Well, I know that municipalities get less than 10 cents per tax dollar to deliver a bulk of the services.

Some of the issues that I have with this budget, Mr. Speaker – you know, there are a number of things. This government didn't campaign on increasing personal income taxes. Again, for a government that supposedly is so antitaxes, I don't know how these folks look themselves in the mirror to say: I'm opposed to taxes. Okay. What about the personal income tax increase? "Well, that doesn't count." Oh, okay. I see. That's how you justify a raise of personal income taxes. I don't recall that during the election, the UCP campaigning on raising personal income taxes.

You know what? You can wordsmith and massage the language and words as much as you want, but removing a tax bracket is tax creep, and it's an increase in taxes. Their very leader – their very leader – used these exact same arguments in the federal House of Commons. Apparently, there are two different sets of rules: one you play by when you're in Alberta, and one you play by when you're in Ottawa. I think it's ridiculous. If you want to increase personal income taxes, well, then you should have run on it. You can't have it both ways.

This budget has a number of issues, Mr. Speaker. I mean, we see cuts to education. We see nurse layoffs. Again, there was just a protest today of nurses. You know, folks over there like to distract and try to talk about: oh, we're opposed to something else. No. We're in favour of funding front-line health services. This government promised that the front line wouldn't be affected. We knew that that wasn't the case, and now we're seeing the results of this very budget coming forward.

We see that AISH has been deindexed. Okay. Again, we can play the wordsmith game. It's a cut, Mr. Speaker. Find me a year since we've had currency where inflation was zero. Find me a year in the history of the world, of any country that has had currency where inflation has been zero. I see that one of the members may be looking to take on that challenge. Inflation is real.

I mean, the other thing that's interesting about inflation is that, you know, your cost of food and energy are not part of the actual inflation formula, which seems kind of counterintuitive considering those are the two things that drive costs, for sure.

But the point, Mr. Speaker, is that by deindexing AISH from inflation, it is a cut. Maybe it's not a cut this year, in 2019, but it'll be a cut next year. It'll be a cut the year after and a cut the year after. I mean, it's the same as freezing funding to schools. Fifteen thousand new students entered the school system this year. There'll be 15,000 next year, the year after, and the year after. Not increasing funding to be indexed with inflationary costs or, in this case, the growth of schools, is a cut. There are no two ways about it.

I think that there are other issues that I have with this budget. We're seeing an attack on teachers. Again, you know, later on we'll be debating Bill 22, which places the government's hands all over teacher pensions. I haven't met a single teacher that asked for it.

3:40

We see cuts in this budget to Alberta Innovates. In fact, we just learned yesterday that they're firing 125 of their staff. Mr. Speaker, this is my plea to all of the rural MLAs in this room. Alberta Innovates has people on the ground throughout this province who help support small businesses to prototype, get their products to market. You know, the government likes to talk about cutting red tape. Well, you know what you did? You just layered on red tape by cutting all of these positions that would actually help businesses get their ideas off the ground. Alberta Innovates has an incredible ROI. For every dollar that they invest, there's a \$28 follow-on investment. For those that are unfamiliar with that term, it means that for every dollar that Alberta Innovates invests in a company, the private sector is investing an additional \$28. That's huge.

This is how we grow our own companies here in Alberta. The next Google, the next Facebook, the next Amazon can be here, but when you stifle these supports and you choke them out and you have this naive mindset that a single corporate tax cut is the silver bullet, you either have to get out of your offices and talk to small businesses or something because the corporate tax cut does not help these very businesses. It doesn't because they don't pay taxes. They don't have retained earnings. I mean, will it help other companies? Yes. Companies have said that. Now, unfortunately, it's helped companies like Husky say: thank you very much; we're going to take our couple hundred million that you just saved us, and we're going to go spend it in Saskatchewan. You know, if that's not a slap in the face, I don't know what is, Mr. Speaker.

But, you know, in addition to cuts to Alberta Innovates, there are also cuts to artificial intelligence. I mean, the government says that they're in support of it. Where? Show me. Show me the line items of where you're supporting it, because I believe that AMII is actually getting a cut, which is ranked third in the world, Mr. Speaker. They help companies to develop technologies that use artificial intelligence to support oil and gas. So even if you folks think that there is no other sector in Alberta other than oil and gas – and, yes, oil and gas is important, but as Albertans, our economy, there are many more sectors – artificial intelligence and technology support oil and gas. By making cuts to AMII and Alberta Innovates, you are effectively cutting and hurting the oil and gas sector. Think what you want. That is the reality. These companies develop technologies that ensure Alberta is on the cutting edge. Where did SAGD technology come from? Alberta. Fracking? Alberta. These are technologies that were developed here because of investments.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you're well aware of this, but the oil and gas sector in Alberta never would have gotten off the ground back in the '60s and '50s if it wasn't for help from the provincial government, so this idea of, "No, any government support is just wrong," well, either you don't know history, you're naive, or you have your facts mixed up, because governments have supported the oil and gas sector in order to kickstart that industry. Companies were going broke trying to drill, unsuccessfully. They weren't finding anything in the ground, but they were going broke because of it, so the government stepped in. There is a role for government.

This government talks about the four or five different tax credits that our government introduced as boutique and unnecessary, yet in the next breath introduces a film tax credit. You just refuted your own argument when you said that they're not necessary, because the film tax credit is a boutique. Mr. Speaker, I'll be the first to say that I'm in favour of the film tax credit, just as I'm in favour of the investor tax credit, the digital media tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, SRED. These are all critical to helping small companies grow, and the reason it should be government is because government can derisk so that the private sector will then invest in

these companies. That's the role and the power of the provincial government.

You know, folks over there talk about how bad debt is. Now, we know that you can't be in debt forever, but I will ask any member in this House to tell me if they know anyone who paid for their house without taking a mortgage, who just went to the bank with \$500,000 from their savings and said: buying a house. Not all debt is bad debt, Mr. Speaker, and the rates that the government can borrow at are better than anyone else's. There is a place and a role for government. I'm not arguing that government should take on debt in perpetuity, not at all.

Again, what's interesting is that the folks over there don't like to look at their own leader and the deficit budgets he put in place when he served in Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, one year his deficit budget under Stephen Harper was over \$100 billion dollars. One year. To talk about how you're the champion – and I hear somebody say: well, that's one year. Debt is debt. You can't argue: oh, it's bad if the NDP does it in Alberta, but it's okay if the former minister of immigration does it in Canada. I'd also remind the members that your own budget is an \$8 billion deficit budget right now, that you're tabling. Ours was \$6 billion; yours is \$2 billion higher. Like, you keep arguing in circles.

Other areas that I have concerns with in this budget: cuts to programs, again, that were working. The community and regional economic support program was helping local communities diversify their economies. They came up with the ideas, not the bureaucrats, not the people in this room. It was designed and developed by local communities, business organizations who said, "Hey, province, we need a little bit of financial help," so we said, "We'll go in fifty-fifty." The dollars have supported incredible projects in every single riding of every member in this room, and it's shameful, Mr. Speaker, that that program is cut. It was pennies on the dollar.

It was a very small sum of money that had a huge impact, similar to entities like Alberta Innovates. Some of their most successful programs are \$10,000 vouchers, but the \$10,000: you talk to the small businesses – and I encourage members in this room, of this House to go speak to those businesses – and they will tell you that that was the difference between them going bankrupt or going under and them being successful. A small sum of money but a critical support system and critical support that the government could play. "Unfortunate" is not the right word, Mr. Speaker.

Another program that's been cut is the Alberta export expansion program. That program helps companies access new markets.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

**Member Ceci:** Could the member – I was listening to the member talk about: basically, you're not going to support the budget. What would make this a budget you could support? I think everybody would be interested in that.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen to respond.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question that was warm and fuzzy. You know, to answer the member or to respond to the member, I mean, it's tough. Obviously, we recognize that there is a way to get the deficit to zero without having to make massive cuts to our education and health care systems. Now, I know that the members opposite will say: we're not. But you are, though. It's black and white. It's in front of you. Calgary board of education would not be laying off

300 teachers if they didn't have a cut. They're not just going to do that for giggles. There is a way to do it.

I think that the corporate tax cut going from 12 per cent to 8 per cent: if you look at other jurisdictions that have tried it – and there are many U.S. states that have – it actually backfired, and it didn't work. What it did was that it gutted government revenue so that they had to cut back or cut out the services they were providing.

Yet the corporate tax cut is not creating the jobs that it was supposed to. What was, Mr. Speaker, are some of the programs that were introduced. The tax credits were creating jobs. We were attracting and retaining companies here in Alberta. We've heard from a number of digital media companies who have said: we were going to relocate to Alberta; you've now told us that you're not open for business and we're not welcome here, so we're going to stay in other provinces. Here's the funny thing. The Alberta interactive digital media tax credit was in the middle of the pack. In fact, in Quebec theirs is 37.5 per cent. Ours was 25 per cent, and I can tell you that the province of British Columbia has one as well.

3:50

When companies are looking for a level playing field – we had that here, Mr. Speaker, so for me what's so disappointing is that the other side, the government, has politicized these tax credits. It appears that the Premier and his government are throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Because the credits came in under our government, they are somehow bad. You know what? Talk to the private sector. They don't care who brings them in. They've been advocating that a government bring them in; we happened to. They're good ideas. The return on investment is there. The investor tax credit has a 3 to 1 return on investment. Don't take my word for it. Talk to the companies that are saying: you've now disadvantaged Alberta. Again, I get that the talking points are: the corporate tax cut. It doesn't help these companies. For me to support the budget, I would have looked for, again, better tools to help get the economy on track.

I've yet to see how this government has furthered the Trans Mountain pipeline. It was under the former government that we forced the federal government to purchase the Trans Mountain pipeline so that it wouldn't fail and regulators wouldn't have to start from scratch. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that under, you know, the leader of the government when he was in Ottawa federally, because of failures to adequately consult, projects like Gateway were torpedoed and were shot down. I mean, the Premier, when he was in Ottawa, did not get any pipelines to tidewater, so we are in a position where now we are behind the eight ball and it is a challenge to get our products to tidewater. It's frustrating that previous governments didn't work hard enough to get them done.

I mean, we've seen construction resume on the Trans Mountain; that's great. We see line 3 has resumed; that's fantastic. This government had nothing to do with it. Did we? No, we didn't. I'll call a spade a spade. But it's good news that that project has started.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in 2016 4 in 10 Canadians supported the Trans Mountain pipeline, and because of the work that our government did, we got that number to 7 in 10 Canadians. We raised the level of understanding and consciousness on the need for pipelines. What I don't see moving the needle is jumping up and down and screaming, picking fights with every province and telling them that they're all wrong.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen to speak on this point.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some interest to speak to the Appropriation Act, 2019, here, the budget for this new, UCP government. I certainly appreciate the scope by which any budget is constructed. I know from building five, at least, that it's a formidable task, and you can certainly see a lot of hard work by our public service here to deliver this 2019 budget for the province of Alberta.

The areas that I want to focus on here this afternoon are the ones which I am responsible for as the critic for the Official Opposition here in the Legislature, which is Advanced Education, and then I would also like to make some comments on the K to 12 education budget as well because, of course, I have a vested interest in that as an Albertan and as a former Minister of Education as well.

First off, then, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the Advanced Education budget I know that people were bracing for a reduction in grants and in capital and changes to tuition and so forth, but both the scale and the scope of the cuts directed at postsecondary education here in the province of Alberta, I think, came as a bit of a shock to those hundreds of thousands of people that are involved in advanced education and to the general public as well. I think we've seen a history of Conservative governments in this province making cuts to Advanced Education when they're delivering budgets like these.

But the scope and the scale of this particular attack on Advanced Education, I think, was both an incorrect decision and, I believe, was quite mean-spirited and misdirected as well because when we start to look at the larger things we need to do here in Alberta to help diversify our economy, to help to train a 21st-century workforce, to look for new technologies that we can own or be uniquely showing some leadership on in regard to the economy, all of these ambitions and goals reside in advanced education institutions. That's where you have research and development that gives us things such as nanotechnology and artificial intelligence and, you know, advances in biomedical technology – right? – with the work that's done here at the University of Alberta around kidneys and so forth and diabetes.

I mean, there's an infinite list of value-added products if you want to look at them that way. They're things that help humankind to advance and to create a better world for everyone, but you can make money off them, too. You can make lots of money off these things, and the research and development element of advanced education, you know, just suffered a significant body blow with the reductions in the grants to the universities, especially the large universities in both Edmonton and in Calgary. I mean, that's a mistake, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly.

We know that postsecondary institutions are economic generators unto themselves anyway, right? They help to mitigate the negative effects of economic downturns in other areas. We don't have to look any further than places like Lakeland College and its positive effect on the town of Vermilion, Alberta, allowing stable jobs and sort of a place to, you know, grow that town. You have colleges like Keyano in Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie. Each one of these – Lethbridge is a very good example of how postsecondary institutions literally help to stabilize the economy and rough off the edges of economic booms and busts, because these are stable jobs that are providing an essential service that makes investments into communities. So making cuts: it really just doubles down on the negative effects of an economic downturn to direct cuts to our postsecondary institutions.

Let's not forget that, of course, postsecondary institutions include the trades, right? I know that this government has put forward an interest in investing in the trades, which I think is an honourable and very positive idea. I certainly would support that in all ways. We know that we will have a generational turnover of trades professionals here in this province over the next number of years,



and we need to make sure that we are directing both money and support to people that are interested in acquiring a trade, both young people coming from our K to 12 education system but also adults, young adults or even older people, to make choices in changes to careers. All of those are honourable and reasonable goals.

We know that we have a strong industrial base that requires quite a large population of trained professionals to get the job done, but you don't do that, Mr. Speaker, by cutting those very training programs and reducing the spaces and the opportunities for people to acquire those trades. Where do you get that? You get that through apprenticeship programs. You get that through dual-credit programs. You get those through our polytechnic schools and our trades colleges like NAIT and SAIT. You don't cut those same places and expect to get any result besides a negative result coming from those places.

As well, we know very well – the facts are irrefutable – that we have a very large contingent of young people moving through the K to 12 education system now that are perhaps in elementary or junior high school, but what's going to happen to those young people when they finish grade 12? They will need postsecondary positions to continue on with their training, be it a trade or university degree, any kind of professional training.

4:00

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to build capacity in our postsecondary institutions to meet those future needs, not reduce those same places and make them more expensive. I mean, that's just the worst combination possible. We know that there are tens of thousands more spaces that we need to start building immediately, both the capital infrastructure that's associated with that and the professionals and the professors and the support staff that would support tens of thousands of new positions. I've been told by university presidents around the province that we need to start building the equivalent in capacity of another University of Lethbridge here in this province immediately, to meet the needs of the growing demographic of young people that are coming down the pipe and will require postsecondary education.

You know, when I look at a budget like this, where it's providing cuts to advanced education and not making those investments, I see a very short-sighted exercise that has been chosen to reduce the balance sheet but to reduce the balance sheet at the expense of the essential services in advanced education that we require now and in the immediate future as well.

The Advanced Education budget here as presented also has basically eliminated capital maintenance and infrastructure for advanced education. Again, to my previous argument that we actually need more capacity and space, that's a wrong-headed view. In regard to maintenance and deferred maintenance, it's even just as bad or even worse, right? We know very well that if you fail to make the investment in maintenance in aging facilities, then you exacerbate the problem, where you literally lose those structures. There are places at the universities of Alberta, Calgary, Lethbridge, and so forth where you literally will not be able to function without following a proper maintenance schedule.

Again, this is a way to move some dollars off a ledger for the optics of trying to reduce spending, but then you end up with a deficit, a material deficit, that someone is going to have to build and do in the future. I was faced with that very thing in K to 12 education, where we literally had to build almost 200 new schools over the last number of years because previous governments chose to not build the schools that we knew we needed for young people and families here in the province of Alberta. You know, maybe people can come up with those big plastic cheques and show paid in full and all that kind of stuff. Absolute nonsense, right? If you

have, let's say, an infrastructure deficit, someone is going to have to build those things sometime, and good for a responsible government to make the choice to do so.

Again, I have my concerns around the advanced education element of this appropriation budget. We know that decisions that are made to reduce the tax credit for students paying tuition and so forth are making postsecondary education more expensive. I know that this is being sold as not a consequential increase in expense, but it is if you're a student, right? I mean, every dollar counts, and one of the obstructions to even getting people to consider going to university or to trades college or so forth is the expense. I know that the hon. minister opposite likes to argue that that's not the case, but it's blatantly and obviously and commonsensically true that if something is too expensive, people are not going to do it. If they don't see a material advantage or perception of advantage, then you are not going to have people choosing to engage, quite frankly.

It's a responsibility of a modern state to have affordable postsecondary education available to all people, not just to people that have the money to do it, not the people that come from, let's say, a lineage of families that already went to university and their parents before and their grandparents before that, but for everybody to have an opportunity and to equalize that opportunity at every juncture possible. I certainly don't profess to be a conservative by any means, but it's on the very conservative line of thought to look at your population at least as a potential economic unit that you want to maximize.

For budgets like this, heading in the wrong direction with advanced education, making it more expensive, more inaccessible for individuals, you're literally cutting off your economic potential for people based on their ability to pay for training, right? You get the smart kid, you know, that just can't quite afford to go, can't get that trades ticket, and you're underperforming that person as an economic entity, potentially for the rest of their lives. These are all things that I think we know in here as conventional wisdom, but this appropriation budget sort of flies in the face of conventional wisdom, common sense, I would say, particularly in advanced education specifically and in regard to the responsibilities of a good government generally.

Another area that I find considerably of concern is around K to 12 education, where this government swears up and down that they're not making a cut, that every student is funded, and so forth, and so on, right? Well, I happen to know the budget that they were using up until today, and what they did was simply move money around. The key element to a successful K to 12 education budget in the province of Alberta is to make sure you're funding for enrolment. More kids are showing up at the schools every year, and you want to make sure that they're getting a high-quality education, meet their educational needs at every step along the way, have a rigorous curriculum and highly trained teachers and good facilities in which to do those things, right? This K to 12 budget: lo and behold, the secret missing ingredient here is that they simply took money from one place and put it into another, right? They liquidated the class size improvement fund, and they took the classroom improvement fund as well. You move the money around. It's like the hokey-pokey: you take two steps forward and one step back.

**An Hon. Member:** Is that how you do the hokey-pokey?

**Mr. Eggen:** That's how you do the hokey-pokey. You know, that's why I learned how to play in a band, because I could never dance, right? In the hokey-pokey you would take one step forward and two steps back, and that's what this K to 12 education budget is. We know it because we have school boards that are now having to lay off teachers. I was shocked to see that the Calgary board of

education is looking at 300 positions right now being gone, probably more as they start to add up the true effects of the budget. I just find that very disturbing.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anybody be looking to make questions or comments.

Seeing none, are there any other hon. members looking to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's Calgary-McCall . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** . . . a very vibrant and diverse constituency. It's home to people from many different cultures and backgrounds and also home to many newcomers. In general, I think, the income of the people in my constituency is relatively lower as compared to the rest of Calgary. I think this budget will impact them in significant ways, and I have had the opportunity to talk to many of my constituents about this budget, and they have shared many concerns in this regard.

I think I will begin by saying that this budget is cutting everything to the bone. At the same time, they came up with a policy of handing out the \$4.7 billion gift to corporations, and they want all Albertans to believe that somehow that policy will fix every issue this province has ever faced or will face in the future. Certainly, we disagree with that. Certainly, economists disagree with that. Trickle-down economics doesn't work. Even this year a Nobel laureate for economics said that these kind of tax breaks do not create jobs; they do not spur investments. So it's a completely failed policy.

4:10

If we look at the different areas of the budget, like, it's cutting from every single ministry, every single service that people in my constituency rely on, people in Alberta rely on. It's cutting grants to postsecondary students, postsecondary institutions, as my colleague mentioned earlier. It's raising interest rates on student loans. It is hiking tuition fees for students, and there are many, many young Albertans in my riding who do go to the University of Calgary, who do go to these postsecondary institutions. And because of this budget, they will be paying more.

It's also cutting supports for children in care, cutting from the child care pilots that we started, essentially making it difficult for those children to get ahead, making it difficult for women to participate in the workforce.

It's deindexing AISH and income support. Earlier the Minister of Transportation said that they're not cutting AISH. In fact, AISH was due to increase on January 1, 2020, and yes, you are cutting it. You are cutting it by \$30 per month. It's almost \$380 per year, so you are cutting \$380 from AISH every year until you start indexing it again, for which you haven't given any date. Yes, you are taking away from Albertans with disabilities. You are deindexing income support programs. You are taking money away from those who are most vulnerable.

You are deindexing seniors' programs. You are taking money away from the seniors. You are taking them off the drug program.

CFEP, CIP grants, that are from culture, tourism: you are cutting 35 per cent from CFEP grants; you are reducing CIP grants that availed my constituents, many newcomer organizations quite frequently. So they will have less support because of this budget.

Also, it's ending all the tax credits that were helping us attract investment, that were helping us diversify our economy. As a result, people will have less opportunities to invest. People will have less opportunities to get jobs.

They are cutting from municipal grants. The Calgary police chief has been saying for a while now that they are cutting \$13 million from Calgary police grants. We in the northeast have seen a spike in crimes, and we were at this point looking for more supports, not cuts to the police, cuts to law enforcement. They won't be able to do their job effectively if they don't have the resources they need. This budget is cutting grants from the Calgary police and police and law enforcement in general from all across the province.

It's also cutting from education. Today we heard that there are 300 teachers who are let go, laid off from the Calgary board of education alone. I think that will have a real impact on our youths' education. That will have a real impact on the families in my constituency and across this province.

Then they are raising insurance rates for everyone. We have kept it at 5 per cent. Now that cap has been removed, and Albertans, everyone, will be paying more in their insurance costs.

Similarly, if I come to the Energy ministry, which I'm the critic of, all they are telling us is that the war room and their inquiry will fix everything this industry is facing. We asked in question period, we asked in estimates how the war room will work. There is no business plan so far. There is no strategic direction whatsoever. Same thing with the inquiry: all we know so far about the inquiry is that a \$900,000 sole-source contract was given to a firm where the inquiry commissioner's son is a partner, and the Justice minister formerly used to work at that firm.

They are removing the cap of 6.8 cents that we brought in on the electricity bills, and yesterday in estimates the minister stated that that program will cost somewhere around \$380 million in four years. That means that Albertans were saving \$380 million, were better off by having that cap. Now that cap has been removed, so Albertans will end up paying \$380 million more in their electricity bills. That's a lot of dollars every month on their electricity bills. I'm sure those people who pay these bills do live in your constituencies as well. It will impact them as well.

In short, this is a budget that will adversely impact families in my riding and across this province. I think that when times are tough, we do not turn our back on our youth, our children in our education system, or those who are coming out of foster care. We do not ignore those who are sick and needing support. We do not ignore newcomers who are needing supports and services. This budget is doing exactly that. In good conscience I cannot support this budget. This budget will hurt Albertans all across this province.

This government should not impose this kind of budget to further their ideological agenda of austerity and trickle-down economics, which has failed all across the globe every time that it was experimented. I think that at this point this government needs to take these concerns seriously. Albertans are crying out loud against these cuts. There are protests and rallies on the Legislature steps every single day. They need to take their earplugs out and listen to these Albertans' concerns and reverse these cuts because they will hurt Albertans all across this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't be supporting this at all.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available to anyone should they choose to make any questions or comments.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to speak.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you. It's a pleasure to rise today to give brief remarks and add to the debate surrounding Bill 24, the appropriations measure, the act that the government relies upon to bring forward its budget. I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, the hounds are unleashed on this one. It doesn't matter what ministry we spoke

to in estimates; the axes were out. The government claims that the budget measures they've taken to reduce public services and make cuts were way, way less than what you might have seen in the Klein years, but I'll tell you what, the pain they've been causing certainly reminds me of the Klein years.

The amount of correspondence that I've gotten in my constituency regarding things like the deindexing of AISH is heart-rending to listen to. When you look at what's actually happening to individuals who are on AISH, they will be receiving about \$30 less per month as a result of the loss of deindexing plus the other measures that the Member for Calgary-McCall just referred to. It's going to end up being even more than that. Those are our most vulnerable people, who are living close to the edge of not making it. Indeed, none of us, I think, in this House would have any desire to live on that type of an income. It's difficult to imagine how in cabinet the decision to come to this deindexing measure was made. I don't know what they were thinking. It is not a very appetizing thought for anybody who is on AISH right now, having just had their income indexed by our government previously, to face the fact that they're going to be going backwards again. They're wondering what the heck they ever did to deserve this.

Once again, with the Education ministry we've constantly been told by members opposite in the government, particularly the Education minister, that the cuts wouldn't result in layoffs. Well, the Minister of Education today rose in the House to say how surprised she was, how upset she was that indeed 300 Calgary teachers were getting the axe. Her response, her reaction was to blame the Calgary board of education, suggesting that it's somehow a governance issue and it's the board's fault. We begged the government to reconsider. We prognosed exactly what was going to happen, and we hoped that we would not have to come forward and say, "We told you so," but indeed that's what's happening. It was very predictable. This Calgary board of education round of cuts is only the first big one we're going to hear about. There are going to be lots more coming. The blame lies squarely at the foot of this Minister of Education and this government, and it goes on through to every ministry that one can think of.

4:20

But I'll focus, Mr. Speaker, on Bill 24 and the ministries which touch on my critic role in particular, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. You may recall that over the past few weeks I've spoken quite passionately about the Alberta Beekeepers Commission and their efforts to lobby the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry for help right now, and what they got was sweet nothing for beekeepers who were at risk of going under. The claim, of course, is that the cupboard is bare, yet we had a \$4.7 billion gift going to major corporations that was on the wing real quick, and I don't even know if they were demanding it.

Believe me, the ideology that is just across the way is determined to fail again by proving that corporate tax cuts don't get reinvested into the economy. They go to pay down debt. They go to buy back shares. Time and again we've seen, even with this \$4.7 billion gift to corporations, that corporate tax cuts are out the window and forever lost for Albertans to use and invest in their livelihood and welfare and their social services and perhaps advancing their economic interest in things that we really need over time, especially right now, in this province.

For example, we had another really very bad crop year, and it's still ongoing. This agriculture minister – it's the third year in four that we've had a bad crop year – is basically suggesting to the agricultural community, to farmers, to producers to rely upon existing insurance mechanisms, yet they've been telling him time and time again that those instruments aren't sufficient. They're not

satisfactory. They don't meet their needs. Yet he's unwilling to come forward with urgent assistance, once again saying: "The cupboard is bare. We can't afford it. Sorry. There's nothing there for you." There was \$4.7 billion for large corporations, and \$4.7 billion is, like, 10 per cent of our budget out the window, out the door, forever gone, invested into something that will have no return whatsoever, and hardly a thank you from the corporations who received it.

Another instance of the cupboard being bare, Mr. Speaker, in Agriculture and Forestry is the rapattack firefighters, 63 absolutely dedicated, highly trained men and women who rappel down from helicopters into forest fires that are relatively fresh and new in an attempt to stop them before they get larger than a hectare if at all possible. They cost about \$1.4 million on an annual basis, these 63 firefighters. That investment has a return on it that is exponentially returned because of what they do in terms of minimizing forest fire damage, keeping many, many fires – I'm talking hundreds of fires – each year from growing bigger than a hectare and keeping them from growing beyond 24 hours in duration. They contain fires to less than a hectare. They also get down and they cut helicopter pads for other helicopters to land so that larger crews and more equipment can come in, and they spot equipment along larger fires as well so that they can have multiple attack centres on these fires.

The alternative that the minister is suggesting as a new technology, a basket with a long line to bring in crews, is something that these helitack crews will tell you is absolutely more dangerous and not an adequate response. They will end up having fires get larger as a result, and the cost that they will cause in actually being a less effective method is way, way more than \$1.4 million, than these 63 well-trained, highly fit, very energetic, and essential spearhead of our forest firefighting attack team will ever have cost. It's a very, very bad move that the minister, so far, seems to be making.

I've managed to arrange a short meeting with the minister on this issue, and I believe, my understanding is that they were going to meet again. I hope – it's my sincere hope – that the minister will be convinced by his discussions, if indeed they take place, directly with these rapattack firefighters to change his mind, to realize that his \$1.4 million budget item is something that should be maintained and probably even added to as a means of making sure that in a time when our forest fire risk is getting higher and higher, we do everything possible to minimize the size of fires as they are ignited.

Those three items within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry reflect a pattern of telling Albertans that in many ministries the cupboard is bare. In fact, there's money to give away to corporations, to the tune of \$4.7 billion.

I also asked in estimates, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Service Alberta about the real estate industry real estate assurance fund and why that fee was increased to \$1.50 per \$5,000 of a mortgage that was registered on land titles from a dollar. We're talking millions of dollars that will be added to the real estate assurance fund as a result. He indicated that there was no problem with the assurance fund. It wasn't underfunded. It didn't need the amount of money that it was getting as a result of this increase, yet it's being increased.

So my query was: what in the world is this money going to be used for? Is it going into general revenue, or will it actually be dedicated to the assurance fund? I didn't really get an answer about that yet, but I'm going to be very much alert to what type of uses this money gets put to because his indication was that it goes into general revenue. But it's a dedicated fund, and it could be a slush fund that ends up getting used for things other than the real estate assurance fund as a means of sort of a hidden tax, a generation of tax that the government claims they weren't going to make, just like

the \$600 million they're generating in added tax that Albertans would pay as a result of bracket creep.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering what it will take for this government to get the message from Albertans – it doesn't seem that they're willing to talk about democracy or involve themselves in any way – to deter them from their absolute blind goal to go ahead and marry themselves to the idea of corporate tax cuts as a way of inciting the economy rather than helping people who need the help, who will actually spend the money in our economy, to end up getting our jobs created.

I could go on for a whole lot longer, but I think many of our other speakers have covered lots of the other subjects, and what I'll do right now is move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Government Motions

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Minister of Transportation has risen to speak.

#### Alberta's Oil and Gas Industry

28. Mr. McIver on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its support for Alberta's oil and gas industry, for the continued responsible development of best-in-class energy resources in accordance with the highest ethical and environmental standards, and for individuals who show their support by wearing their pro-Canadian oil and gas apparel, including when visiting the Alberta Legislature, and urge the government to continue its efforts to advocate for the reversal of federal and provincial policies that have negatively impacted workers in Alberta's oil and gas industry.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my good friend the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and the Government House Leader I'd like to move Government Motion 28. May I speak to it?

**The Acting Speaker:** Please.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Folks, this is a motion that we're putting on the table. I think it's self-explanatory, but because some folks at home that are watching may not be as familiar – this is really important. The energy industry certainly isn't our only important industry, but it is by far the largest one, the one that employs the most people. Actually, it's not only Alberta's most important export industry; it is far and away Canada's largest and most important export industry.

4:30

Folks, it's been under attack. It's been under attack from a whole number of fronts. It's been under attack by, amongst other things, federal policies like Bill C-48, the tanker ban. While our country every day, just about, takes in hundreds of thousands of barrels of foreign oil, some off the east coast, somehow our oil, Canadian produced, highly responsibly produced, ethically produced, with high environmental and human rights standards, is not allowed to be shipped. Yet oil comes into this country with much lower environmental, human rights standards every day, and somehow that's okay. We are under attack: people that even just wear T-shirts in support of our industry getting told they can't visit the Parliament Buildings.

Our industry is under attack from other provincial governments that are opposed to our pipelines getting our product to the coast,

which is really interesting because, through the great efforts of the women and men that work in the energy industry, Alberta contributes to Canada through equalization, most years, above \$20 billion per year, which other provinces get to enjoy the benefit of. Albertans have been generous and would be okay to remain generous like that if we were allowed to just ship our products and get them to market, to get the best price.

In fact, what's happening right now is not just costing Alberta money. It's costing Canada money, it's costing the other provinces in this country money because when we are selling at a discount of sometimes \$23 and more per barrel, that amounts to millions and millions of dollars every week, every month, and every year.

**Mr. Bilous:** It's \$18 right now.

**Mr. McIver:** Yes. Thank you. The Opposition House Leader says "\$18," and I don't doubt him. I'm just saying that that's not atypical: sometimes lower than that, sometimes a lot higher than that.

Folks, this is something that – I would feel better if we had unanimous support of this motion. I think it's support for anybody in this House that claims they do care about Alberta jobs. Last time I counted, we all claim to care about Alberta jobs. This would be a good way to actually say that we care about Alberta jobs, by saying that we are in support of our industry, we're in support of those who show support of our industry, we are in support of the men and women that work in the industry, and, by golly, we are in support of all of the schools, hospitals, roads, and social programs that the profits and the royalties from the energy industry bring to Alberta, bring to Canada, and bring to each of our communities and, in many cases, to our families.

It's my sincere hope, Mr. Speaker, that this motion will receive favourable support from the House, and I would respectfully ask for that support at this time. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I think I should have probably been more clear at the very start, when you asked if you could speak to it. I should have noted that it is, under I believe it's Standing Order 18(1)(a), a debatable motion, allowing for debate in the House.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this motion. I do want to thank the minister for his comments and his words on this motion, especially because I appreciate that although he could have chosen to attack the previous government or criticize the previous government, he did not do so, and that was noted. I will keep my comments to the positive as well, looking at, again, the importance of the oil and gas sector to the whole Canadian economy.

You know, for me, what's frustrating in provinces like Quebec, especially, is that there is a failure to acknowledge that there are hundreds and hundreds of Quebec and Ontario companies who benefit from Alberta's oil and gas sector. It benefits Canadians across the country not only through things like equalization, because, as we all know, that's based on personal income, and because Alberta is the economic engine of the country, we pay more than our share. I also agree that the equalization formula is broken. Alberta pays a disproportionate amount as a have province. Four provinces in the country contribute to the equalization formula, I do believe, and I understand and appreciate the role of that, that we want to ensure that Canadians have a similar standard of living no matter where they live in the country. I agree. We are one country.

But, again, Mr. Speaker, what is frustrating is when you have other jurisdictions or parts of this country that are choosing to bring in their energy from countries that are run by dictators, that have no environmental standards, that have poor working conditions, and that are shipping their crude across the ocean. I don't know what could be more damaging to the environment than that, should those tankers spill.

We know that pipelines are the safest mode of transportation, Mr. Speaker. We know that we need market access, and we need pipelines. That's why we unequivocally support not only the Trans Mountain pipeline. I've stood in this House on many occasions and talked about the importance of pipelines in every single direction. I'm proud that our government did commit 50,000 barrels per day to the Keystone XL pipeline in order to help that pipeline move forward.

You know, I'll mention briefly the discount. I was just watching on BNN this morning that it's up to \$18 per barrel, which is significant. This is \$18 a barrel that Canadians are losing because of lack of market access. Back last fall we had actually a clock, so to speak. It's like the debt clock except it was a clock showing the lost revenue to Canadians because of the delay of the Trans Mountain pipeline. The clock had started, I think, on August 31, 2018, and within a couple of months it was already at \$15 billion, Mr. Speaker. I don't know where it's at today, but I'd imagine that it's north of \$30 billion if not even higher than that. So it's critical.

We know that we have an incredible industry. It's good jobs for the men and women of this country. We're very proud of it, and we're proud to support this amendment. Now, having said that, Mr. Speaker, in addition to allowing members of the gallery to wear their oil and gas T-shirts, I think we should be showing unequivocal support for the other sectors that are drivers of the Alberta and Canadian economy, including agriculture, forestry, technology, you name it. For those reasons, I have an amendment that I would like to share with the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

We'll just give the opportunity for the pages to pass it around, and then I will make another decision.

I was just actually checking to see how long it was. Looking at the length of it, I would ask if you could please read it into the record and then continue with your comments.

**Mr. Bilous:** Absolutely – thank you, Mr. Speaker – with pleasure. I move that Government Motion 28 be amended (a) by adding “agricultural industry, forestry industry, renewable energy industry and technology sector” after “express its support for Alberta's oil and gas industry” and (b) by adding “and other clothing supporting Alberta's industries” after “pro-Canadian oil and gas apparel.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, again, the purpose of this amendment A1 is not to detract from the oil and gas sector; in fact, it's to highlight the fact that there are other sectors that are absolutely critical that are also especially hurting right now. We know that the agricultural sector has been hit hard because of weather over the last couple of years. In fact, I believe that many crops in Alberta – farmers have struggled to get their crops off the field. We have challenges with market access and getting them to market. We know we've had challenges with trade, not only tariffs but trade barriers, you know, whether it's canola and getting it to China or other products.

4:40

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the forestry sector employs, I believe, over 18,000 men and women in this province. It is absolutely critical to the Alberta economy. They have had challenges, especially in the last couple years and even currently,

while we still have an ongoing softwood lumber dispute with the U.S., who, of course, is our largest market. You know, despite efforts in trying to increase market access in other countries, they too need our support.

Quite frankly, this is about allowing Canadians or visitors, really, to wear apparel that supports our oil and gas sector but also the other sectors critical to Alberta's economy. While we do support this motion to show and allow visitors who visit this Chamber the ability to wear a T-shirt to support our industry, I firmly believe that we should support all of the industries that drive the Alberta economy. I mean, I'd imagine that members opposite, as we have, have been contacted by members of other industries saying: yes, we support oil and gas, and people should be allowed to wear those shirts, but what about our sectors? What about the people that are raising the best beef in the world here in our province? Should they not be able to wear a shirt that says, “I love Alberta beef” or the other sectors?

Really, this is meant to broaden it to show unanimous support for all of Alberta's sectors that are absolutely critical to driving the Canadian economy. For those reasons, I strongly urge all members to support this amendment. I hope all members will support this amendment. My fear, quite frankly, folks, is that if we don't support this amendment, it sends the message to the agricultural sector, the forestry sector, and other sectors that they are not as important or as critical to this province. I know that members would say: no; we support all of these sectors. I urge members to show that support by accepting this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members wishing to join debate on amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to lend my support to this debate and move other members, hopefully, to vote in favour of the amendment. I concur with the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview in bringing forward this amendment to very much make clear the importance of other sectors in our economy, particularly the agricultural and forestry industries, which are often seen as the second cousins to the leading light, our oil and gas industry, in Alberta.

That can no longer be because as we see the transition, a generational shift from fossil fuels over time, over the next couple of decades, our agricultural and forestry industries are going to have to take up a lot of the economic space in this province that right now is occupied by oil and gas. We should do everything possible to make sure that the prominence of agriculture and forestry is brought to the forefront as we promote the industries that they are in terms of extraction of renewable materials, in terms of trees and growth in agriculture, but also in value-added processing and artificial intelligence and developing new genomic structures, whether it be in crops or in cattle or hogs or other forms of animal husbandry. There's unlimited potential in our agricultural and forestry industries, which I think should be heralded at every opportunity.

This is one small way, in adopting this amendment, Mr. Speaker, that we could demonstrate that we see agriculture and forestry as industries that are on an equal footing and share equal prominence in the minds of, certainly, the opposition but hopefully also government members and that we should always take the opportunity to elevate agriculture and forestry and other industries on top of our oil and gas industry. I think that including them specifically in this amendment is an important step in that direction, and I fully encourage all members to actually go ahead and adopt the amendment because we don't want to be leaving out industries

as an afterthought that really are going to become more and more important over the next two or three decades.

They are important now – I certainly agree with that – but they are going to be increasingly important over time, and we should take every effort to make note of that and herald their prominence because more and more Albertans are going to be relying upon jobs in the value-added component of agriculture as well as in forestry, Mr. Speaker. Both are definitely at the forefront or on the verge of lots of innovation and technological advancements that will spring forward new products and innovations, that will hopefully result in new markets being opened for Alberta products.

I think that if indeed we play our cards right and don't continue doing some things that this government is doing, such as axing 51 full-time equivalent positions from the Agriculture and Forestry ministry, we can actually maybe develop some of these products in collaboration with the private sector but also maintain our scientific capacity within the ministry. There are some things that this government is doing that are basically dumbing down ministries by cutting budgets to scientists within the ministries, that I don't agree with because it diminishes the capacity of, particularly, our agriculture and forestry industries to collaborate with the private sector, and that's a wrong direction to go in.

I think that with this amendment, we correct another small wrong-directional step that this government is making so that we can draw attention to the prominence of our agricultural industry, our forestry industry. They should be in lockstep with the oil and gas industry in this province so that we don't lose sight that all of these industries are a team, that they're in tandem. Ministries and this government should be collaborating so that one benefits the other at all times.

With that, I'll encourage all members in the House to support the amendment. I hope that we see shirts of many colours, of many industries, hopefully made with Alberta hemp, worn in this House whenever the occasion is permitted by the Speaker's office but certainly, though, not displayed in the windows of the Legislature, which are sacrosanct and nonpartisan, flat spaces to be left alone.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the hon. Minister of Transportation has risen.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to speak on the amendment. Let me say that the amendment seems reasonable. I would imagine that all members of this House support our agricultural industry, our forestry industry, our renewable industry, our technology sector, and are happy with clothing that expresses those sentiments, and though it's not mentioned here, I'm sure that we also support the growth of the hemp industry.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to support this. We're going to support this because basically we agree with the words in it. If there's any hesitation that we have, it's because to some degree – I think you might even agree, and maybe even the mover might agree to some extent – it could be seen as watering down the message of the government motion. But in the spirit of hoping to have a unanimous vote of support for our energy industry and now our other major industries, we think that's an important message.

4:50

It's an important message to send on behalf of Albertans, and it's an important message to send on the day that a new cabinet is sworn in in Ottawa, a message from the Legislature in Alberta to that new cabinet, with a new mandate. Even the old ministers are new

because they have a new mandate, so in that case all that's old is new. The government is of the opinion that a message of this nature, of solidarity, to our federal government and all Canadians is a positive message and one that we sincerely hope will get – one should never presume the vote of a Legislative Assembly of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, as you know. I think that we actually have rules against that. Nonetheless, let me just say that I currently live in hope that we will get a unanimous vote on this because it is a message that very much needs to be sent to Ottawa and all across Canada on this day.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anybody be looking to take that opportunity.

Seeing none, are there any other members that wish to speak to amendment A1?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** Moving back to Government Motion 28 proper, are there any members wishing to speak on this motion? I see the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has caught my eye.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to just take a few minutes here to talk about the benefits of this motion. You know, coming from Drayton Valley-Devon, I have the privilege of being at the heart of the oil industry in Alberta. It's where Leduc No. 1 first came in, and it's the area of Alberta that first exhibited the boom that we have in our modern oil industry today. So I wanted to speak to this just for a few minutes.

"Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its support for . . . [the oil industry]." Mr. Speaker, I don't think it takes much to be able to see that the oil industry has been the foundation of modern Alberta. It's created prosperous communities, prosperous business communities like Acheson in my constituency. It's the oil and gas industry that has created the need for drillers and welders and operators and electricians. It's the oil and gas industry that has provided the incentive for entrepreneurs to create the companies that have helped to harvest this wealth that we have in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we should with great pride be able to stand up and speak to this motion, everyone in the House. We understand that when we wear a T-shirt, when we wear a hoodie that proclaims the oil and gas industry, this is something that should be encouraged. When we look at the policies of the federal government and the nation, as we look at this oil and gas industry, we need to double and redouble our efforts in this Legislature and as Albertans to support the oil industry and all of the industries that are in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to stand today to say that I support this motion and that I will be voting in favour of it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on this motion? I'm seeing no one. Oh, I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems there's a little bit of confusion, but I'm happy to rise and speak in support of this motion. Also, it's lovely to see the Assembly agree today. That's a nice, refreshing change. I can envision us all in a Team Alberta T-shirt or something.

Anyway, I do want to speak specifically to the oil and gas industry although I certainly appreciate the comments from the member opposite with respect to the other industries that are hurting, in particular agriculture. I know that in my area of the province there are some real challenges with respect to crops

wilting in the fields under the heavy, wet snow. I certainly appreciate those comments and would stand in agreement that the agricultural industry at this time in our history is struggling, but I will focus my comments on the oil and gas industry this afternoon and the importance of oil and gas to Alberta and for my constituency of Grande Prairie, certainly a foundation to our economic stability and the wealth generation of my region.

We are blessed in the city of Grande Prairie and the surrounding area, the Peace region, to enjoy a diversified economy, with oil and gas, forestry, and agriculture as the primary pillars. Through development and investment in these industries Grande Prairie has become a northern hub for our province, creating further expansion and affording our residents an average wage-earning that is significantly higher than the provincial average. The city of Grande Prairie, located in the heart of the Montney and Duvernay oil and gas formations, has become the central hub for housing, health care, recreation, shopping, and services that are needed to support and retain the labour force of this expanding economy. Indeed, there have been multiple times since 1997, when my family settled in Grande Prairie as entrepreneurs and job creators, that our economy grew so quickly that access to the labour force required for expansion was critically short. I can tell you that in light of the times that we're experiencing now, that would be a lovely problem to have again.

Mr. Speaker, my generation has enjoyed the best quality of life that any generation in Canada has been afforded. I believe Canada is truly the greatest country in the world, bar none. As a proud Canadian I believe it is my duty to stand up for Canadian oil and gas, and as a proud Albertan I certainly stand up today for Alberta's oil and gas sector.

Energy scarcity creates significant lack, Mr. Speaker. Without access to sufficient energy you don't have clean water, reliable food, shelter, schools, hospitals, critical infrastructure. I just wanted to highlight – I pulled up some facts on oil and gas for Canada – that in 2018 the oil and gas industry employed more than 269,000 Canadians and indirectly supported over 550,000 jobs in the Canadian economy. That's 550,000 families with employment. Canada's energy sector accounts for over 11 per cent of our gross domestic product. Government revenues from energy were \$14.1 billion in 2017. That's an astounding number. I could go on, but I don't think we need to hear the statistics or just the messages.

Alberta and Canada have an abundant endowment of resources, and our nation has built its standard of living on creating value by delivering resources to the world through our fish, forestry, grain, potash, electricity, fertilizer, food, and so much more. Resource-export economies rely on efficient transportation to reach markets, between provinces, to the U.S. and overseas. Canada's energy industry has been built on supplying Canadians and Americans with reliable, affordable energy. We need to continue to build new transportation facilities, pipelines, and other production facilities to serve those markets in an open and competitive way. I rise today to stand up for our energy industry and to speak out one more time against the destructive policies of the Trudeau Liberals such as bills C-48 and C-69.

Beyond North America, the strongest growth market in the world is Asia, where Canada and Alberta can play an important role in providing responsibly developed natural gas and oil. Alberta and Canada need to create the conditions to efficiently and safely build the pipelines, LNG plants, and ports to ship to overseas markets. By supplying responsible energy to Asia, Canada can grow our economy, create prosperity in the communities where energy is produced, along the transportation routes, and at the export communities as well. This development will also greatly help indigenous communities build the capacity of their youth as

valuable contributors to society and as potential owners of Canada's energy production.

I could go on and on and on, but I just wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that even in this economic downturn I've had the pleasure of attending many different fundraisers in my community. Over and over and over again the oil and gas sector has come to the aid of our community, has donated significantly: last year, at the hospital foundation gala, \$750,000 from CNRL – that's remarkable – in support of the hospital foundation, which is a legacy gift. When you give to the hospital foundation, AHS then continues that service or that equipment in perpetuity. I think that's incredible. Without prosperity in our communities, whether it's from oil and gas or agriculture or forestry or other industries, we don't have additional, abundant funds to give to other initiatives to support our communities. I wanted to give some examples.

5:00

Another company that operates in Grande Prairie and Calgary, Seven Generations, in 2018 alone gave over 5,000 volunteer hours in the communities where they operate. They contributed over \$1,228,000 to different initiatives. I could read the list. It is a staggering list: initiatives like women's shelters, the SPCA, the hospital foundation, so many interesting ones, indigenous veterans day, Hythe Minor Hockey, the Humane Society, on and on and on it goes. That's the kind of thing that happens when our economy is working properly.

So I stand today in support of oil and gas. I stand today primarily in support of Alberta. I stand firmly on Team Alberta, and I hope our federal Liberals and their new cabinet are listening to the needs of Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has risen to speak.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of this motion as amended urging our support for the oil and gas industry. I think that there is no question that it's one of the most important industries that we have in our province. It has generated wealth and prosperity for all Albertans, for all Canadians for decades, and it continues to play an important role in our economy, in our prosperity, and in the services that we enjoy and, I guess, the standard of living we have in our province.

I think that there are two things that I want to say. The government side always wants to say and portray us as if we don't support our oil and gas industry and that they are the champions of this industry. What I want to say is that as an Albertan, like, personally I'm a part owner of this resource, and those whom I represent are part owners of this wealth and this resource, and collectively we all represent Albertans, who own this resource. We can disagree on how best we can develop these resources. We can disagree about policies, but one thing is for sure, that as owners we have a vested interest in making sure that our resource sector or resources, this wealth, is managed in a way that is sustainable and generates prosperity for Albertans today and for generations to come.

One thing that I wanted to get out of the way is that we as Albertans, we as owners, we as representatives of the owners support this industry, and we have a vested interest in developing these resources in a sustainable manner so that we can all benefit from this resource and this wealth. That's why we are supporting this motion.

We also brought forward an amendment that reflects that we also support other clothing supporting Alberta's industries, all other

industries. We do know that oil and gas is an important industry, but we do have potential. We have other industries that with the right support can thrive as well, and they are thriving. Agriculture supports our daily living, food, and generates a lot of employment as well. We have an emerging tech sector. We have other industries as well that we need to focus on and that are also important for many reasons, including that we need to diversify our economy as well so that we are not reliant on one industry at all times.

Third, I want to also mention that I think these symbolic gestures are important, but in order to support our industry, we need to take concrete steps in addressing the issues facing our industry. What I have heard so far from industry, from my colleagues, from my previous experience in government is that the number one issue that our industry is facing is market access and takeaway capacity. Even right now our industry has enough production capacity that without additional investment we still produce more than what our takeaway capacity is. When we were in government, we supported this industry. We focused on issues; we focused on concerns that industry brought to us. That was the reason we supported the Trans Mountain pipeline. We supported line 3. We supported Keystone XL. In fact, when we started, there were 4 in 10 Canadians who supported the Trans Mountain project. The then Premier and now Leader of the Official Opposition went coast to coast to build a case for the Trans Mountain pipeline. As a result of that advocacy, now there are 7 in 10 Canadians who support that project. It was because of our stance on this project that the federal government ended up purchasing this project, and now we are seeing construction on this project. Same thing with line 3. So nothing can be further from the truth, that we don't support the oil and gas industry. We have a vested interest in supporting this industry as representatives of the owners of this resource and as part owners of this resource.

I'm glad to support this motion, but at the same time I would urge the government to move beyond these symbolic gestures and focus on issues that are facing our industry. Work with industry to find new markets. Work with industry to build takeaway capacity. When we were faced with takeaway capacity issues, we worked with industry, and we brought forward oil-by-rail contracts that would have increased our takeaway capacity by 120,000 barrels per day, that would have generated \$2 billion in revenues. What this government did because somewhere in the campaign they said that they would reverse everything that we were doing: without thinking, without consulting anybody, they cancelled those contracts as early as May. Because of that ideological decision, now Albertans are on the hook for \$1.5 billion in penalties. We haven't seen any takeaway capacity that has been created under this government, so they need to focus on those issues. All we are seeing is the Energy Centre, which we have asked about. How will it help us with the issues that our energy sector is facing? We have not heard anything. That centre does not have a business plan. That centre doesn't have any employees, no strategic plan whatsoever.

I'm supporting this motion and urging this government to focus on issues that our energy sector is facing. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see that the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has risen to speak.

**Mr. Getson:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just got back from doing some other business across the way and was a little out of breath but had a chance to catch my breath and hear something that was fantastic. It looks like we're agreeing to a motion, both parties, to support the oil and gas sector. In addition, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has put an amendment that we've accepted here, and it includes other industries. To me, this is

fantastic. Honestly, this is fantastic despite some of the language that might have pulled us into the ditch and got us scrapping again and fighting back and forth about who did what and when and ideological statements. I think the public record is clear on that one. I think the Alberta population voted well in favour of a group that actually does what they say, not just wearing T-shirts once in a while but backing it up. But I don't want to digress and go into that, either.

I was really happy with the agriculture industry because I was a farm kid. That's what I grew up with. That's the first thing that we started on, obviously, raising cattle and doing that. The supplement that we had for diversification: a little family sawmill. In the winter time we'd get a small forestry permit, we would log off those areas, and by doing that as a small business, we employed a bunch of the local folks as well, and then we'd saw up that lumber. So that ties in exactly with what I grew up doing.

5:10

Renewable energy? While I was at Enbridge, we actually put up 350 windmills, so we had renewable energy as well tying into the power sector. Again, that was driven there. Technology? Well, I happened to work for another local company that put in the first lease road to Leduc No. 1. That was their history. Ledcor started out from that, and that company ended up growing and branching into pipeline divisions, industrial divisions, electrical divisions, road maintenance. They also had this one thing that we were putting in, fibre optics, so again understanding technology and dealing with that.

I'm actually really, really happy to be able to stand up and support the amendment that was put forward and to be able to actually show our support for that sector. There were over 180,000 people that lost their jobs, and unfortunately the radio and media play that we got at that time was down in Ontario with 2,500 people working in an auto plant taking priority. Obviously, sending this clear message as a group from this Legislative Assembly, that we are standing together, that we are standing up for those folks – we're proud to say that we produce the best, ethical energy in the world, not just wearing T-shirts once in a while but actually saying it and meaning it out there, so walking the walk as well.

I appreciate it, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Two minutes and 50 seconds left under 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to Government Motion 28.

Seeing none, I'm prepared to ask the question. I will give the opportunity to the Minister of Transportation to close debate on behalf of the Government House Leader if he should so choose.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. On behalf of the Government House Leader and Minister of Environment and Parks I just wanted to say thank you to all members of the House for what I can't be sure but am hoping will be a positive vote all the way around. I will just reiterate that this is an important day to do that. There's a new cabinet in Ottawa. This is a good message for us as a Legislative Assembly to send to Ottawa and across the country.

I will stop talking now and hope we achieve what I just talked about.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

[Government Motion 28 as amended carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]



**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 20**  
**Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019**

**The Deputy Chair:** Currently, we have before us amendment A2 as brought forward by the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. Are there any questions, comments, with regard to this amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has risen to speak on this amendment.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my absolute honour to rise this afternoon in the House to speak to the amendment to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. This amendment, I think, is something that we absolutely can be in favour of. I think it's wonderful that government has listened to industry, has listened to myself as the critic for culture as well as many members on this side of the House. It's been something that we've been asking for for quite some time, and I believe that this is a good first step when it comes to supporting the incredible film industry that we have here in the province.

I do, Mr. Chair, worry that it might not go far enough. We have heard from industry that they weren't consulted prior to the introduction of the tax credit, either about the transition from the grant or about the grant itself, despite many claims from government that they had had robust consultation. During estimates we were here and going through the culture budget, and we had over 50 members from the film industry that came to watch the estimates. I have to say that it was absolutely an honour to be able to be the representative and the voice in that meeting. I was able to meet with many in industry, from all over the province, well before the budget was tabled, hearing their concerns, hearing what they felt were absolutely necessities to be included in the budget.

Then to see the budget and to see that what was being proposed would have completely destroyed industry – like I said, I'm happy to support this. I think it's a good first step, but it's something that I think still needs to actually have ongoing consultation with industry. We've heard a lot of fear from industry. Part of my job I see as being able to be the voice of industry. I had so many come to me expressing concern about being penalized by government and just being completely fearful of putting their name to any of their remarks or any of their comments out of fear of some sort of consequence or being punished, because the system that's available right now is a juried system, so that directly could impact their production. If they submitted an application, there was a real fear, I would say, of being denied that process. We were accused of spreading unnecessary fear, but now we know that those fears the industry had, that there would have been no money, were founded.

This amendment allows for changing of the dates for immediate applications through a new intake process, the Assembly was told last night by the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. Previously, under the way it was written, there would have been no new applications until at least April 1, 2020. We heard very clearly from industry that this would completely destroy the progress that has been made in this province. We heard over and over of producers, productions that were leaving the province. They were going to provinces like B.C., where they have a wonderful system in place that supports industry. As this was happening in estimates, people were on social media, people were in the next room talking about this, that people were physically leaving, making decisions to leave the province while the estimates were occurring. I was accused of causing fear. It wasn't based on my comments; it was based on the responses from the minister.

It's an unsettling feeling, knowing that you've been reaching out and you've been desperately pleading for an industry that has such an incredible impact here in our province, not just with the sharing of stories about the beautiful people of Alberta, our history, the use of our incredible landscapes throughout the province but the jobs, Mr. Chair. I think that's something that is essential when we're talking about what the film and screen industry means. There are so many employment opportunities. I spoke yesterday in the House in my member's statement, comparing one person's experience of working in the oil field on a rig to working in a production. It really can be a wonderful opportunity for those that are seeking to diversify their employment to come work with the film industry.

5:20

Some of the jobs that the screen industry creates: if you would grant me the opportunity, I would just like to list a few that are impacted. Jobs are employed in this industry. We have electricians, accountants, drivers, chefs, mechanics, environmental scientists, photographers, lawyers, hair and makeup stylists, clothing designers, carpenters, editors, sound designers, heavy equipment operators, project managers, logistical co-ordinators, paramedics, gardeners, animal trainers, of course actors, CGI artists, interior designers, security guards, students, visual effects artists. Mr. Chair, those are just simply a few of the jobs that are available and created by the screen industry, and I know that something that Albertans are looking for is jobs. We want to be able to create an economy that is working, and we want to have a diversified economy, and they're already doing it.

To see that there's been an amendment proposed that is going to support the film industry, I think, is incredible, and it's definitely a good step forward. It's a show of good faith, if you will. It's a little bit discouraging to know that yesterday in the House the minister had indicated that she was so pleased that her colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism was meeting with industry after the budget had been tabled. This all could have simply been avoided had they been actually meeting with the industry prior to the budget. I know myself as the culture critic, as soon as I was appointed to this role, it was something that I did immediately. I had people reaching out to me from all over the province, from many different industries, not just in film, wanting to be able to share their story and share their concerns.

Mr. Chair, they have an incredible story to tell. There are so many different projects that are happening in the province right now, like *Ghostbusters*, a project that is impacting rural Alberta. It's hotels. It's food. It's the sets, the building of the sets, the crews that are world-renowned. We have them here in Alberta, and if those people leave the province, they're not going to come back.

To be able to maintain our screen industry here in the province is absolutely essential, and I think that this amendment is a wonderful first step to do that. I think it gives a message to industry that they're heard, that our fighting on this side of the House as the Official Opposition has an impact when community, like this industry, comes together and has their collective voice heard and we're able to share it in estimates in this House. Whenever we're talking to people, it has an impact.

For everybody that came to me and shared their story, whether they were wanting to do it anonymously or whether they wanted to be proud of their story and put their name to it, I am so, so grateful. I want to thank them because without their words and their story, we wouldn't be here today. I'm only effective as opposition when I have people reaching out to me, telling me their stories, and despite the fear, so many were able to come forward and share that.

I sincerely hope that this is a first step of working with industry and that there is a commitment from this government to move

forward in consultation with them. When we're looking at the policies and the regulations that they're referring to, I believe that we need to go to the experts, and those experts are industry, and they're more than willing to help provide information and solutions. You can do a cross-jurisdictional scan to look at what some of the other provinces in the country are doing, and it speaks volumes with the success of those screen industries.

I think that when we looked at what the concern was with this plan, there was not a lot of communication that was happening from government to industry, so seeing this as a signal, I think, is a really great thing. I know that part of my commitment and the commitment on this side of the House is to continue to monitor to make sure that there's progress in this and to make sure that government is meeting with many from industry, not just a select few. There are so many that I've heard from that have said that they want their voice shared, and they have a lot of value to add to this conversation. There's a lot of experience here in the province, with incredible people that love Alberta, and they're pleading. They want to be able to stay in the province, and I hope that this government is taking that seriously.

When we look at all of the impacts that the screen industry has in the province when it comes to our economy, when it comes to creating jobs, good, mortgage-paying jobs, I think it's absolutely essential that we continue the conversation. I know that this side of the House is going to be holding the government to account and paying attention with this credit as it moves forward. I know that so many are going to continue to reach out and let us know if they're not being heard because this is something that is an expectation of Albertans. When you're making decisions about their industry and how it's going to impact them, they absolutely should be consulted in that process. Seeing this, I think, is a good step.

I'm very, very proud of the advocacy that industry has done when they've come together and held town halls and information-sharing sessions. They're working on educating about what the industry means to Alberta. There's an organization called Keep Alberta Rolling, and they share amazing stories about the impacts that film has in this province, and it's something that is shared world-wide, Mr. Chair. Alberta is known for some of the most striking scenes in the country. People from all over the world want to come here and film here, not just because of the scenery, which is spectacular, but because of the crews that we have here. They know that when they have a production in Alberta, we have world-renowned crews that are there. They're of the utmost professional standing, and they're committed to this industry. They love their province just like we do, and they want to stay here.

I think that knowing that government is taking this seriously and moving this amendment – I would hope that all members of the House would support this, and I would encourage government to continue to advocate for the film industry and all of the many benefits that it has across many different industries in the province. It's not just the film. Like I mentioned, all of those other working professions that work within this industry have a huge impact.

We know that it's important that as we're moving forward with however this rolls out, because there is reference that ongoing consultation is going to need to occur, and they need some form of flexibility because they understand that industry has many different needs – to me, that means working with industry itself and continuing to listen to the people that work in this field and offer solutions. They come to us with solutions about what's best for their industry, and I think that as elected officials the least we can do is to listen to that and to do our best to make sure that that's something that's happening, which would keep us competitive and keep film coming to our province. It's essential.

I'm very, very honoured to be able to stand and say that we had a part in this, that our side of the House kept asking those hard questions that industry wasn't getting answers to and kept telling those stories of the so many that have been impacted by this budget and just the freezing of the money that was flowing. I'm very proud of the work that we've done, and, Mr. Chair, I'm very proud to say that I'm going to continue, as I know many colleagues on this side of the House are going to continue to do, to keep Alberta rolling.

With that, for now I think I'll wrap up my comments. I would just like to encourage industry to continue to share their voice and to continue to reach out to government and ask to be consulted with, demand to be consulted with. We're paying attention, we're watching, and we're here to fight alongside them. Overall, I would really encourage that everyone in this House support the film industry and support the amendment to this bill.

Thank you.

5:30

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to this amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's my honour to rise and speak to this amendment. I'll make some general comments, and then I want to respond to some comments the minister of culture made yesterday evening in regard to this amendment. Now, the amendment fixes some of the problems that are in the bill as it currently exists. The minister knows that this came from two places; number one, comments that we've made as far as the challenges. We heard directly from industry as far as the limitations of the film tax credit.

Now, I do just want to share – you know, I've said this before in this Chamber – that I am supportive of a film tax credit. I can tell you that our government had debated and discussed the film tax credit and were close to being able to get it over the finish line. The reality is that we didn't, and I wish that we would have, but I will give credit where credit is due. I'm pleased that this current government has introduced a tax credit.

We signalled very early on and in estimates especially the challenge with no intake. The intake has been paused since the election, Mr. Chair, and the problem is that until this amendment came forward, new applicants wouldn't be considered until after April 1 of 2020, so there was a gap. The problem is that industry has said that with this gap it's not just a small pause or delay. It basically is the difference between films coming to Alberta or going to another jurisdiction. That interruption has huge consequences. Industry has been incredible, incredible advocates. I want to thank my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, who's been a very vocal champion for the film industry.

I'll give a little bit of history on this, Mr. Chair. The program that was in place for many, many years had some challenges with it. It was a grant. It was meant for small cultural film industries and projects. It had a few challenges. Our government tried to – we increased the amount of funds that were available because there was a backlog of projects. Now, a backlog of projects is actually a good problem to have. What it means is that there's a significant demand for projects to come to the province of Alberta. We know that these are good jobs. We know the impact the film industry has, especially on small communities, rural communities: hotels being booked up and full, restaurants being busy. I mean, the amount of money that comes to the province through the filming of a series or a show or a feature film is significant, and Alberta has trailed behind other

jurisdictions for many years. Again, we talk about levelling the playing field. Why? You look at the film industry in British Columbia, and it is massive, a massive contributor. It is one of the pillars of their diversified economy. I believe that Alberta can compete but with the same or similar and the right tools.

The film industry had asked us to keep the cultural grant that's used for smaller productions but also to introduce a film tax credit. Now, the way that this was first introduced by this current government was: get rid of the cultural one; bring in the film tax credit but at the same level as a small cultural grant. Well, Mr. Chair, that didn't solve either problem. That actually created a new problem because the larger shows, whether it's *The Revenant* that was filmed here in Alberta or other shows that are, you know, Time Warner, Hollywood movies, require a much larger tax credit or break to level the playing field, to make Alberta competitive compared to, again, other jurisdictions and what they offer.

You know, in hindsight I wish our government could have got it over the finish line, but we didn't. Happy to see this move forward. Again, for me the challenge with this amendment – and I'm glad that the government is amending this piece of legislation before it goes through. I can tell you stories, Mr. Chair. Before most members were in this Chamber, there were examples of the previous government from 2012 to 2015 that would make amendments to a piece of legislation, the House would vote it through, and six months later they would bring back a different bill amending the same piece of legislation. Once, it happened three different times, which tells me that there wasn't an adequate level of consultation to solve the challenges or fix the existing legislation all in one shot. I appreciate that we haven't voted this through and now in spring go: oh boy, here are some challenges.

Now, I do want to talk a little bit about some of the comments the minister of culture had made last night that, quite frankly, are incorrect. I have the Blues. I don't have *Hansard* at the moment, Mr. Chair, but talking about how the minister made a comment that "The previous government was not listening to the industry and severely mishandled the previous grant program, leaving our government . . . a mess to clean up." Well, that's not true. We did listen to industry and consulted with industry significantly. I can tell you that this amendment is coming now, after the film industry blasted the current government based on estimates when the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs and I talked to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism over and over again about this film tax credit and the flaws or the challenges that existed with it in its current state.

I do appreciate that the minister did say that since the budget was tabled, the minister of economic development and trade has been meeting with industry. Great. My request is: please meet with industry before you bring in pieces of legislation that impact that industry. Since it was introduced, they started meeting with the film industry. Well, ideally, I think, Mr. Chair, the industry said: "No. Meet with us before you plan to make sweeping changes, not after." Thankfully, their voice was loud enough and they were persistent enough to be able to get the minister's attention and say: here are some challenges with the bill.

Now, I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that I was very proud on one of my trade missions. In fact, in November 2016 I was proud to lead the largest trade delegation the province of Alberta has ever led in its history. There were over 86 different businesses and business organizations that accompanied me to Asia. A number of companies came from the film industry. Again, one of the roles, in my opinion, of government is to act as a convener or a way to bring people together. A number of film crews, along with AMPA, sat down with the minister of film and trade and television in the Guangdong province. Now, that individual has now been elevated

in the Chinese government. He's actually now the minister for the country in charge of all film, radio, and television. It was incredible to work with him, a gentleman full of life who loves Alberta. He loves Banff, and he loves Canada. Alberta is his favourite province.

We worked together to develop a sister partnership between Alberta and Guangdong. In fact, that's Alberta's second sister partnership in the country of China. For context for members, the province of Guangdong is responsible for one-fifth of China's GDP, similar to Alberta and its relation to Canada. Guangdong is one of their economic engines. It's a powerhouse in the country and actually an absolutely beautiful province. I recommend to all to visit there, but I digress a little bit. The meeting happened between the minister and the film industry, and they were very interested. They signed MOUs that came from that meeting looking at ways to collaborate. I believe the highest number of tourists in the world come out of China. There are a significant number that come to Canada. We want to encourage that and grow that even more.

Mr. Chair, I mean, my point is that we've been working with the film industry to look at what they present as far as opportunities: an opportunity to help diversify the Alberta economy, an opportunity to strengthen the Alberta economy. They employ many men and women throughout the province. This change, this amendment to the bill, is positive in that it fills that gap.

5:40

You know, my hope is, as the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs had also said, that this consultation now, this dialogue that is happening between the government and the film industry will continue and will continue so that the minister and this government will continue to monitor what is going on in the film industry and make changes.

Now, I appreciate some of what the minister of culture said. There's going to be much in the regulations. I know that legislation sets out a framework, and I appreciate that having some of the details and regulations just means that if tweaks need to happen, it's more expedient. I get that. I mean, I have challenges when, you know, legislation is paper thin and everything is in a regulation, but in this case, to be able to be a little nimble: that I do appreciate.

With this, I can tell you, again, Mr. Chair, the different changes that this makes, the two – and I appreciate that. We're not going to have this gap in funds for the film industry between the election here, in 2019 to 2020, which was one of the issues the film industry had, the message that that sends. That will be amended in this amendment, which I appreciate and so does the film industry. The second area that this amendment helps is removing the cap. There was a maximum cap of 22 per cent that will now be what's prescribed in the available circumstances for the film. That's what I believe was used in the original grant program, but that's what industry also was asking for. Now, what I'd like to see is the tax credits to be ongoing but also to increase their amount because, again, in order to compete to bring the really large blockbuster films to Alberta, we need to be able to compete with the other jurisdictions and their film tax credits.

Again, for me, I would have loved to have seen a continuation of the grant program, but you narrow the amount and the scope so that it's available for those smaller cultural films, which are really, really important, but also allowing Alberta the opportunity those big film sectors. So, Mr. Chair, with that, again, I encourage the government to continue to engage with industry.

Now, what's interesting and my final point here, Mr. Speaker, is that once again there is a little bit of doublespeak going on in the sense that the film tax credit is okay, but the investor tax credit and the interactive digital media tax credit, well, those ones aren't okay.

They're boutique. I mean, unfortunately the message that this government has sent to those industries is that: "You're not important. We're not interested in the tech sector. We're not interested in attracting Albertans to invest or derisk Albertans investing in companies in their own backyard." You can't say that boutique tax credits are not good because they're boutique and then at the same time support one of the boutique tax credits. You either support tax credits that are working and provide a return on investment like those others ones – the investor, the capital investment, and the interactive digital media – in addition to the film tax credit, but picking the film over the others is exactly what the government says it doesn't do, which is picking winners and losers.

The investor tax credit was sector-wide. It was open to every single sector of the economy, not one specific sector or another. If anything, the film tax credit is more boutique than the investor tax credit. So my hope, Mr. Chair, is that the government will look at the film tax credit, see the value that it's going to provide, how it's going to help level the playing field, attract investment to Alberta, and then look at the investor tax credit and the interactive digital media, and my hope – and I will continue to press this government – is to bring them back in some form to tell the tech community and start-ups that we support homegrown Alberta companies. We also want to attract investment into Alberta companies, and the best tool to do that is an investor tax credit.

So I urge the government to look at the success of this program, at other tax credits that will help diversify the economy, attract investment, grow our Alberta companies, which will in turn create jobs, support the GDP, and get Alberta back on track. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members looking to speak to amendment A2?

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 20? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** It's the Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview show this afternoon. As the hon. Minister of Transportation knows, brevity is not my strength although, you know, this is the time to talk about the benefits and challenges of different legislation.

My comments on Bill 20. Again, I appreciate that we did just unanimously pass the amendment that amends the film tax credit. I want to outline some of the concerns I have with the removal of other tax credits that were working, Mr. Chair. We know, for example, the investor tax credit: a 3 to 1 return on investment in the province over the past couple of years. This is a new thing, to stand up the investor tax credit. Other jurisdictions like British Columbia have had one since 1985. It's helped diversify the economy.

Mr. Chair, here's how it helps. Start-ups and small companies are riskier investments than, say, you know, looking at a blue-chip company that's been around for a significantly long period of time. They have a larger market capitalization. They'll have everything from retained earnings to significant cash in the bank. Hopefully, the companies don't have too much debt. But for start-ups, when they're first getting off the ground – I mean, most entrepreneurs will start with their own funds and then go to friends and family.

The challenge, Mr. Chair, is that once a company has exhausted those funds, they now need to look at raising money through, well, the market or going to a broader circle. At that point a lot of angel investors won't necessarily look at a company because they're in between being – well, they're often too small at that point, and they'll struggle to get an angel investor. The other thing is that the

companies at that point don't need massive amounts of new investment. I know angel investors that won't look at companies that can't use a million dollars or more. They're not at that place where they need that sum of money.

Mr. Chair, what happens is that there's a gap between, you know, using your friends and family, equity that you've raised, and going out to do your series A. What the investor tax credit did was fill that gap so that a company could very easily, despite what some members opposite have said – the information is not accurate when they say that it was cumbersome and burdensome to fill out an application for the investor tax credit. We got it down to I believe it was two pages, a simpler process.

Now, part of the reason why there is an application process: there has to be oversight. In fact, I don't think anybody on the other side would say: "Yeah. You know what? For any company that claims they're an Alberta company, that is incorporated, that doesn't have to prove that they have any Alberta employees, sure, we should just give them money." I think we would see ourselves in a position where we'd be taken for a ride by individuals that would claim that they are an Alberta company and wouldn't be. So there needs to be some oversight. But I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that when we first introduced the investor tax credit, one of the challenges of the program – and this was brand new – was that the application process was a little bit slow, and we heard that from industry. I'm very proud that we in very short order amended the investor tax credit. We simplified the application process because we listened to companies who said, "You need to make this more simple," so we did.

5:50

That investor tax credit, Mr. Chair, enables companies to go out and try to raise equity but offer an individual like you or I or any member in this Chamber or any Albertan a 30 per cent tax credit on the money that they invest in the company in addition to whatever equity stake they get. Knowing that you're getting 30 per cent of the money you invest back automatically, regardless of the outcome or the future of that company, makes it more enticing to invest in that company.

Now, we know that Albertans work really hard for their money. Whether you're saving in a tax-free savings account or your RRSPs, you want to be prudent with your money. You don't want to make risky investments. The challenge with a lot of start-ups is that they are riskier because they aren't established and they're new, but these are where all of the best ideas come from. Being able to support Alberta companies through an injection of investment because we had an investor tax credit: that's significant.

We know that that has helped hundreds of companies to grow at a much quicker rate. Isn't that what we want? Aren't we trying to help support the economy and support entrepreneurs and businesses? Well, that tax credit did just that, and I know that the government has access to the information to see that it was a 3 to 1 investment. Around \$95 million from the Alberta investor tax credit attracted close to \$300 million of investment. Sorry. We conditionally approved about \$30 million of investor tax credits that leveraged close to \$100 million of follow-on investment. A 3 to 1 return on investment is significant.

You know, Mr. Chair, I have an issue when the minister of economic development and trade makes the comment: well, that only helped a couple of hundred companies. I'm sorry, but if we can help a single company to grow and expand, that's good news. To say that the investor tax credit is not as valuable as some other tool I think is insulting to these very companies. It sends the message that if you want to start a company and grow here in

Alberta, we're not going to help you; we're going to make it more difficult.

You know, for a government that claims that they want to reduce red tape and grow the economy, here was a tool that was in place that was working and, again, a little bit newer. Part of what takes time, Mr. Chair, is getting the word out to Albertans, "Here is a new tool available at your disposal to invest in Alberta companies" and to spread the word to the Alberta companies that you can now go out and raise capital or raise equity easier, which is, I think, a good thing. For me, the challenge here, one of the challenges with Bill 20, is that it's removed the very tax credits that were working and that were helping grow and support the economy.

I know that the clock will automatically kick us over into the evening, but, for me, I have other points. I mean, that was just the investor tax credit. Part of the investor tax credit was the community economic development corporations, or CEDCs. Now, Mr. Chair, those are corporations that can get set up that provide a social benefit, so for-profit social benefit, which I think is incredible. Within the investor tax credit we consulted heavily with that sector, companies like Momentum and others that would help use that tool to, again, raise equity for companies and clusters of companies under the one corporation that could then raise money to go out and bring a social good in addition to turning a profit for investors.

Mr. Chair, that exists in the province of Nova Scotia. Those tax credits exist in other jurisdictions that we modelled ours on, that were, again, just starting to take off. Unfortunately, I mean, you want to talk about clipping wings? Well, this government just clipped the wings of these tax credits, that were just starting to take flight.

Mr. Chair, the capital investment tax credit: this is a tax credit that helps companies pull the trigger on making investments today and helping the economy recover. What we've seen in the last couple of years is, unfortunately, a number of examples where companies are sitting on their cash reserves and are hesitant to make the decision to invest in either a new facility or an expansion or new equipment. So this capital investment tax credit did that. It was a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit that a company could use any time in a 10-year window, up to \$5 million.

We conditionally approved \$200 million for the capital investment tax credit, that leveraged \$2.2 billion of new investment. I know that the government can look at those – they can't refute those numbers because those are the numbers, and they have access to that information. Mr. Chair, \$200 million leveraged \$2.2 billion, thousands of jobs in communities around the province. That tax

credit was working. Again, you know, one of our intentions, had we continued to govern the province of Alberta, would have been to extend those two tax credit programs because they were successful.

For me, what's frustrating is when you have a tool that is helping Alberta businesses and job creators and it gets thrown out or eliminated. For what, Mr. Chair? The province has the funds. I mean, they've chosen a \$4.7 billion corporate tax cut over programs that have a track record of supporting companies. Again, the corporate tax cut does not support your small businesses that aren't withdrawing earnings, that are keeping every dollar and putting it back into the business. I know that they know that. Then why? Why eliminate tax credits that are working? It is only by and because of ideology: because they were brought in under the NDP government, therefore they are bad. Well, I think that's naive. I think it's short-sighted.

Again, I appreciate if the government wanted to put its own spin on them, but here's the part that I can't understand, Mr. Chair. They've agreed that the petrochemicals diversification program, that our government introduced, is good and is working. Again, it has attracted investments: you know, Inter Pipeline, investing \$3.5 billion northeast of Edmonton; the Canada-Kuwait joint venture, that's attracting \$4 billion of investment. For those programs, the government has admitted: "Yes, it's a great program. It's effective. It's doing what the NDP said it was going to do." Again, happy to have those numbers scrutinized. But they attracted investment. Why? Because they levelled the playing field, which is what we said when we introduced them, and half that side voted against them when we were government. Now that they've had a chance to crack the books open and take a look at it, they've decided that these are good.

What I don't understand is how some programs that we introduced you're continuing, yet the tax credits, that were successful, that were just starting to get a significant uptake, you're deciding to eliminate here. You know, Mr. Chair, I'm quite disappointed for those reasons, and this is why I really struggle, even with the film tax credit, to support this bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. It seemed like perhaps he had notice of finishing a sentence there.

Pursuant to Standing Order 4(4) – obviously, it's 6 p.m. – the chair will leave and return at 7:30 today. From this point until 7:30 today we are recessed.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, November 20, 2019

Day 44

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, please be seated.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Great to see you tonight. I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 20.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much and good evening, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. In my opinion, the ayes have it. That motion is so ordered.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 22 Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019

Ms Ganley moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that dissolving the independent office of the Election Commissioner could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process in Alberta.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment November 19: Ms Gray]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has approximately zero minutes left. As such, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment perhaps for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to provide her a moment to conclude her thoughts.

**Mr. Dach:** I just wanted to offer the opportunity to the hon. member to finalize her comments if indeed she had not completed what she wanted to say on the topic.

**The Speaker:** That is a brief question or comment. I appreciate that from the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has the call.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague. I was, when we were last speaking to Bill 22, referring to the notice of amendment that was moved by my colleague from Calgary.

Given that I have just a few minutes left in the debate on this amendment, I think perhaps I'll just summarize what I had said during the larger portion of time I was given, which is that this amendment does not go far enough. The amendment suggests that all words after “that” be deleted and substituted with the following:

Bill 22 . . . be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that dissolving the independent office of the Election Commissioner could have negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process in Alberta.

I do support this amendment. The reason I feel that this does not go far enough is because there are so many other reasons to not read Bill 22 a second time right now.

Now, as the amendment speaks to, there are some very real risks with the dissolving or terminating of the Election Commissioner. In his statement about this, the existing Election Commissioner stressed that he's

concerned about the potential negative impacts on the independence of election administration and the real and perceived integrity of the election process.

And he remarks that Albertans should have

trust and confidence that the election laws established by the legislative assembly are being followed and that there are consequences for those who choose not to follow them.

I completely agree with the Election Commissioner in that assessment.

Now, along with the termination of the Election Commissioner, a man who is currently investigating the governing party for election activity around the 2018 leadership race and the 2019 election, Bill 22 also includes dramatic changes to pensions that impact nearly 400,000 Albertans who are part of LAPP, PSPP, SFPP, or the ARTF. AIMCo will become \$30 billion greater once all of the funds related to Bill 22 are moved from the ARTF.

I will repeat one of my earlier comments, that I have received over 200 concerned e-mails from teachers who are quite upset at this unilateral decision taken without consultation. I have it on good authority that over 16,000 e-mails from concerned teachers across this province have been sent to MLAs of various constituencies. That is of great concern to me.

As well, the removing of seats from the sponsor boards, removing AUPE's seat, moving that to be management, non-union, is a removal of the voice of workers. As well, by putting on a competency matrix, this government is saying that they do not believe that workers can choose competent people to govern their pensions, so I'm very concerned about that.

Mr. Speaker, I am also concerned about the changes to ATB Financial in changing their mandate because I am concerned that it could mean fewer business loans, fewer supports in rural Alberta, and a change to how ATB manages its business.

I support this amendment, and I hope all members of this Assembly will support this amendment, that will allow Bill 22 to be rethought, that will allow this government to not take action that many are viewing in an incredibly negative light not only here in Alberta but nationally as it has received national attention, and that will allow the existing Election Commissioner to be able to complete all matters relating to the 2018 leadership contest and the 2019 election before any changes are made to this office. I would

expect that the governing party, who is such a believer in rule of law, would understand that Albertans are proud to be part of a very strong democracy and that anything that calls into question those democratic systems should not be proceeded with.

Those are my concerns, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate my colleague for asking me to finalize my thoughts.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) has expired.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment today? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to be able to share my thoughts on Bill 22, which is before us right now, and, more importantly, my concerns with this legislation, the first concern being the fact that we are debating this Bill 22 at such an incredibly fast rate. I mean, this legislation has not been before us for very long, not enough time, most definitely, for me to share my concerns and hear the concerns or comments from my constituents, which was a comment that was brought up by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View yesterday evening. I share that concern, and I imagine that all of my colleagues do.

I imagine that some of the government members do have concerns with how quickly we are moving with this legislation as well because as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View stated, the fact is that it's one thing for us as members of this Legislature to be able to digest the information that is before us, especially in something as big as this bill is, Bill 22, the omnibus bill that it is, but the other fact is that we need to be able to have an opportunity to be able to speak to our constituents about the widespread changes that this is making to many areas, both ABCs as well as pensions, which are incredibly important to the people who are going to be impacted by that, as well as the transparency of our democracy. That is what I will spend most of my time discussing, I imagine, in my time right now.

The fact is that I got into politics – what's it been? – four years, eight months ago because, well, I believed in democracy. When we go to places like classrooms and we talk about our role as legislators in this building and the role that we play as representatives for our constituents, we talk about the importance of democracy, and we talk about the importance of the party system as well and what role that plays in the democracy here in our province.

I'm very concerned with what we see before us, really, the disappearance of transparency when it comes to things like the leadership race. When we were first elected, in 2015, we took swift action, as you may remember, Mr. Speaker, to remove things like corporate and union donations. We lowered donation caps or the ability for money and power to influence our elections. We brought the leadership races under the purview of the Chief Electoral Officer, if I remember correctly, and we made PACs more transparent and limited the ability for influences other than political parties and individual members to influence our elections. I believe wholeheartedly in those changes that we made over the last four years.

7:40

Now, in contrast, what we have before us is a government bringing forward Bill 22, where they are effectively firing the person that is investigating a leadership race where there were allegations that have been proven to be true, to the tune at this point of over \$200,000. Now we have legislation put before us by this government that would actually eliminate that position, eliminate the person that is, on an ongoing basis, right now, this moment, investigating the internal happenings of their leadership race within their party. That is very concerning to me, Mr. Speaker, because,

once again, I believe that our role in this Legislature and as representatives of our communities is to strengthen democracy. Unfortunately, it seems that on the other side of the House, through this legislation and other pieces that have come before us, they do not have those same beliefs. That is very, very concerning to me.

Now, another concern that I have with this legislation and the fact that they're eliminating the important role of the Election Commissioner is the fact that this UCP government is essentially signalling that it doesn't really matter what happens behind the closed doors of leadership races and party politics within your own party as long as you get elected to be government. And if you're elected to be government, well, then you can do things like fire the investigators that are looking into wrongdoings within your own party. That is very concerning to me, and I think that sends a lot of red flags to not only the members on this side of the House but all Albertans.

If you've been following the debate and the discussion around this on social media, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you have – and I'm sure all of the members of this Legislature have been – they would see and you would see that there is not a lot of sympathy for this piece of legislation before us when we look at the firing of the Election Commissioner and, effectively, the reduction of action that is going to be taken, I suppose, against this party and the wrongdoings that they have in fact been implicated in. That is very concerning to me. I don't want to have to go back to my constituents and go back to the kids in the classrooms that we visit on a daily basis or a monthly basis and tell them: sorry, kids, but today, you know, party politics was more important than the democracy that we have in our province. That is something that I'm going to have to discuss with my constituents.

Now, once again back to the fact that through my discussions with constituents and seeing the discussions online, there is – as far as I can tell, anecdotally, I suppose, the only people that are supporting this legislation are, of course, the members of the government caucus up to this point and their press secretaries. Now, there are a lot of them on social media, and they get paid good money to tweet about these things, but the fact is that those are the only people that I see supporting Bill 22. That also should send red flags to people across this province.

Now, once again, this Premier has tabled legislation to fire the Election Commissioner, who is currently investigating both the party and members of the UCP caucus that are in this House today, and that is very concerning to me. The fact is that whether members of the government should be able to actually speak to this in the first place is a concern for me. The ethics around that, whether people that are involved with a party that is under investigation should be allowed to pass legislation that is going to affect that, is a concern for me, Mr. Speaker, and I imagine it is a concern for all Albertans.

Now, I think about how this legislation looks from the outside. Of course, we talk a lot about the dome effect, being in this House and maybe only hearing one side of things or the opinions of the members only. I think about what this looks like from the outside looking in. If I'm a constituent or an Albertan out there and I'm looking at this legislation before us and I see that once again a governing party is trying to stop or slow down an investigation that has implications for their own members, that's very concerning for me. I think that's something that the government caucus should be taking seriously. I only think that, you know, one day they might look back on this and say: maybe that day I should have supported democracy instead of attacking it. I imagine that will come up at some point. I hope.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that this is an abuse of power. This is attacking the very foundation of democracy and the very foundation

of the rule of law, which the Member for Calgary-Mountain View went on at length about yesterday, the fact that we should all be governed by the same laws no matter how much money we make or who we are in society. The fact is that this government is using their power to pass legislation about something they did not campaign on. I didn't see in their platform to fire the person that was investigating their party, but here we are. That is a concern for me because, first of all, the government does not have a mandate to pass this legislation, and second of all, they did not consult on this legislation.

This caught everyone off guard, including the Election Commissioner, who found out that he was going to lose his position and lose the ability to continue his investigations through the news, which is also very concerning to me. If we were to take it at face value that this government was in fact removing the person that's investigating their party for efficiency reasons, well, maybe they should have had that conversation with the Election Commissioner before they decided to put in black and white in their legislation that his position would be terminated, Mr. Speaker. We talk about cutting red tape. We talk about holding consultations almost daily, yet here we are. We have an important role in our electoral system, the Election Commissioner, finding out over the news that he is losing his job, being terminated, which is very concerning.

I'm sure that the media release that the Election Commissioner put out has been talked about, but I would just like to point out a few of the things that he said in that media release. Now, he said that this disappointment, the disappointment that he has from not being able to continue his investigation, stems from the firm belief that the citizens of Alberta must have confidence and trust in the integrity of all aspects of the provincial electoral system, not just the casting and counting of ballots on election day. I agree with that, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the words that the Election Commissioner said in his media release.

I think, once again, that the party system that we have in our province is an important part of our democracy. It should be held to the same standards that we hold our elections to. Once again, it is a concern. The integrity of the system can be attacked if a government says: "Well, it's all fine because we're government now. You know, the past is the past. The leadership race: many fines were divvied out, but those people are working in our offices now." The people that were part of the investigation as well as part of creating what is being investigated: those people are working in the offices of this government, and that is also a concern for me, Mr. Speaker.

Now, once again, I appreciate that the Election Commissioner is concerned with what this means for our democracy. He goes on to say that it's not the fact that he's losing his job, by any means, though he appreciated the opportunity to serve Albertans as the first Election Commissioner. The fact is that in firing the Election Commissioner, the signal that it sends to Albertans, once again, is that you can do whatever you want behind closed doors of your party as long as you're elected to government after the fact. That is very concerning.

Now, the fact is, Mr. Speaker, like I said earlier, that those Election Commissioner investigations that are ongoing include members of this very House. Allegations of fraud, forgery, improper inducement, and bribery: those are all very serious concerns. Once again, I would echo the fact that I'm concerned that members of the government are even speaking to this legislation. I think that there is an ethics issue there, but I suppose that will rest on their conscience and not mine.

Now, it is without any precedent for the government to fire an investigator in the middle of investigating the government. It truly reeks of entitlement. I'll go back to the fact that I got involved with politics because I wanted to strengthen democracy. I believe in the

foundation that we have here in the province, which is being eroded through Bill 22. I got involved because I was very concerned with the many years of PC government about the entitlement that we saw, the mass floor crossings, sky palaces, and simply about the fact that the government became so comfortable and so complacent, because they had been elected for so many years, that they stopped listening to the people of Alberta.

7:50

Now, this UCP government has moved swiftly to take the place of those Progressive Conservatives that I worked so hard to get unelected, yet here we are, Mr. Speaker, and unfortunately today they have a majority. We will see if the people believe that they should keep that after things like we are seeing in this legislation, which are very concerning.

Now, we've also seen this Premier allow top officials in his government to do things like take – oh, actually, this was the Premier himself taking \$16,000 chartered flights for him and his friends to pancake breakfasts. That's concerning to me, Mr. Speaker. Once again we're seeing the entitlement of this UCP government quickly coming to the surface.

Once again, we heard about senior staff under the Premier going to London and expensing thousands of dollars to taxpayers for hotels, lavish five-star hotels with vitamin C showers. Mr. Speaker, have you ever taken a vitamin C shower? I haven't. I'm interested to know what that feels like, but I imagine I wouldn't expense it to the taxpayer if I decided to go down that road. That is concerning to me, Mr. Speaker.

Now, once again, by firing the Election Commissioner, it's become quite clear that this Premier has forgotten that he was elected to serve all Albertans, not just the ones who voted for him, not just the ones who donated to his leadership race, and not the ones who donated to his election either. Truly, he has no mandate to do what is before us in Bill 22.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I imagine that you can appreciate the gravity of the changes to transparency within our elections from this legislation before us, the implications that are before us, but I also want to focus on the fact that there are changes to public-sector pensions.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood would like to add a brief question or comment.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add a question and comment to my colleague for Edmonton-West Henday. I really appreciate his remarks, particularly his early remarks when he was speaking about teachers and about how he's hearing from a lot of teachers. I would just like to recognize that I see a number of teachers in the crowd in the gallery tonight. They can give us a wave. These are hard-working teaching professionals who ...

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, just as a way of a heads-up, recognizing that you're new to the Assembly, I just wanted to provide some caution. It is not customary for members of the House to engage members of the gallery under any circumstance. While I also have a love and appreciation for teachers and am glad that they're here, I certainly wouldn't want to start a habit of engaging members in the gallery.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will play the new card, as I have many times already, and note that I respect very much the teachers who are here and all the teachers across the province. Myself, I was a teacher as well.



I have to echo the member's comments that I've had countless e-mails. I just checked my e-mail, and we're getting hundreds of e-mails about Bill 22 and about the concerns related to teachers' pensions. Teachers are feeling frustrated, they're feeling disrespected, and I would like the member to just comment a little bit more about what he's heard from teachers and the disrespect they're feeling from this UCP government with Bill 22.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to continue for a short while, so thank you for that question. I also appreciate that we have – now I'm going to do it. I won't recognize them, but I appreciate who we have here today with us.

So getting to the point: my concern with the changes to public-sector pensions that we see within this legislation. First of all, there was zero consultation done on this, Mr. Speaker. Once again, this was not in their platform, and that should be concerning to every Albertan. It most definitely is concerning to the people who are within the public sector that have pension changes within this legislation. This government, the members that are here today, should be ashamed of themselves. That is the truth, Mr. Speaker, and I imagine they are. I imagine that, just like my office, they are getting inundated with hundreds of e-mails from concerned public servants in our province, and they should listen to them. I can't imagine what the members of the government are telling those people when they write back and say: oh, you know, I understand your concern, but the Premier told me to vote a certain way, so that's probably what's going to happen. I understand that the government says that they'll have a free vote. We'll see how that free vote plays out as this debate continues.

I have a great appreciation for the teachers and all public servants across our province: nurses, health care providers, and all public servants. I would never support something as atrocious as what we're seeing in Bill 22 and the attack on public-sector pensions. I have had teachers come to me at community events and raise concerns. I imagine, once again, that the government members have as well, but the difference is that I'm going to support those public-sector workers by voting down this terrible piece of legislation. We will see how they vote at the end of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there's approximately a minute and 37 seconds left under 29(2)(a). I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually have to throw it back to the Member for Edmonton . . . I do apologize, I don't know the name of the constituency. What is a vitamin C shower?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday, if he chooses to respond.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's not anything – well, I guess I talked about it. With that top public servant under your government, I imagine that you can ask that member, considering how much they paid for that opportunity. Like I said, I've never been involved in a vitamin C shower, but maybe he can ask that public servant, who gets paid something like \$300,000 a year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there's approximately one minute left under 29(2)(a) if anyone would like to ask a brief question or comment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the Member for Edmonton-West Henday's comments around Bill 22, some of its failings, shall we say. One of the things that I wanted to just go back to very quickly if I could, Mr. Speaker, is around the termination of the Election Commissioner and how that transition will occur, bringing that position back into the Chief Electoral Officer's purview. You know, we've heard very, very clearly from the Minister of Finance that this decision was made on the basis of what I like to call bottom-line decision-making. If we're here to simply save a million dollars, maybe I should suggest . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on the amendment. If I can just provide a little bit of clarity to the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday, it would be fine for you to thank people for attending. The challenge is when we cross the line from thanking them for being here to engaging them to do something that they're not allowed to do. As such, we would hate to put them in any sort of position where security would be concerned.

I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford rising.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate having an opportunity to speak yet again to this duplicitous Bill 22. You know, of all the things I've seen go through this House over the last five years, this is absolutely the most treacherous bill I've seen come into the House with an apparent intent to reform agencies, boards, and commissions and government enterprises but with an underlying intent to take control away from the people of Alberta and put that control in the hands of government members so that government members can use the resources that should be available to the members of society in the province of Alberta but use those resources instead to pursue the aims of government in their very narrow, rigid, backward-thinking manner. I think this is completely unacceptable.

I've had an opportunity previously to speak about my concerns about the attacks on unions and the undemocratic nature of trying to undermine unions and the rights of people to act in collective ways, to control their lives and their places of employment. I've also had an opportunity to talk a little bit about some of the underlying very antidemocratic moves here that assail the underlying need in society for the population to have an opportunity to be well educated in the democratic process so that they can appropriately engage in that process and hire the best people during the election process.

**8:00**

So having talked about those things, I want to talk about the fact that this is really a duplicitous bill, because what it says it is doing on the surface is not clearly showing what it is in fact doing underneath. Whenever we question this bill and whenever we say that we have a lot of concerns about what is happening here, members of the government – the Minister of Finance and other people – stand up and say: "Nothing is happening here. We're just simply shifting dollars from point A to point B, and the same things will happen all along." But I want to remind people that something much more pernicious is happening here, and that is that the monies are being taken from places where citizens in the province of Alberta have control and have a voice over what happens to that money, and they're being brought into a place where only the ministers have control over those things. I think that's the truth that we have to pay attention to.

When this Finance minister says, "Oh, we're simply taking the money from the Alberta Sport Connection, and we're moving it into general revenues, but we'll simply use the money in the same way that we have used it in the past," that sounds nice. It sounds like:

“Okay. Fine. Instead of having this body distribute the money to some 80-plus sports organizations in the province, we’ll simply move it into government, where there will be less bureaucracy. We’ll reduce the number of bureaucracies, and we will continue to do the same thing.”

But what they don’t tell you is that under the previous arrangement there was a set of parameters given to the people who distributed that money such that we knew how that money was going to be distributed. We knew the process they would go through to ensure that that money was democratically distributed. Now that money is going to be moved into the general coffers of the government of Alberta, and decisions are no longer subject to the parameters that they were previously subject to when the money was under another act such as the Alberta Sport Connection Act or the historical resources fund.

Let me be clear about what’s happening here. This is money for the Special Olympics. It was decided by a group of Alberta citizens that this is how this money should be spent. Now that money is being taken away from them, and there is simply a hope that that money will continue to be there.

Now, you have to ask yourself: “Why is the government doing that? Why are they taking the money away from a very useful and productive process and bringing it in-house, where instead of having citizens of the province of Alberta do that as representatives of all of us, only a very small group of people get to make that decision?” Once they get it away from the other acts, they no longer have to be responsible to the intent of those acts. They can simply decide on any day to not do what they say today they are going to do. The Minister of Finance says, “Don’t worry about it; we’ll keep doing the same thing,” but once it’s out of the act, there’s nothing to hold them to that.

Now, I’m very concerned about the groups that are being denied these funds and have no guarantee that they will have those funds available to them again next year – like the Special Olympics or the museums such as the Glenbow Museum and so on – those organizations that are being folded up under this act.

But, more importantly, I am concerned about what’s happening with the teachers’ pension fund, because exactly the same thing that I just talked about with these two different organizations, that are being wrapped up under this act, is happening to the teachers’ pension fund. Right now the teachers have a good relationship with people who are investing their dollars and have people on the board who can speak to how those monies are invested and have ultimately been very successful in terms of their investments and have had a good return.

What happens, though, when that is shut down and that is moved into government, into AIMCo, is that suddenly the teachers do not have the same level of control that they always had. Suddenly decisions are being made not by people whose funds they are but by people who have a variety of motivations for controlling those funds. This is why I say that this act is duplicitous. It is an act that is really treacherous to the people who have, with all integrity, put their pension funds into the hands of managers who they’ve developed a relationship with and who they have been able to work with to get a good, positive return.

Once it has been moved into AIMCo, what actually happens is that the government gets to decide whether or not they want to do what the teachers want to have happen or not. Now, the Minister of Finance will tell you: oh, no; we’re going to do the same thing once it’s in government. But what’s really clear is that they can say that they’re going to do the same thing, but there is no actual control to force them to do the same thing. They may do the same thing, especially in the first year, when they’re trying to get things settled down and they’re trying to make sure that people aren’t upset, but

then afterwards they can slowly – or perhaps quickly, because they seem to do these assaults on the citizens of the province pretty quickly. In seven months they’ve engaged in quite a wide range of dishonest and corrupt activities that we are challenging here on a daily basis.

A year from now, two years from now the government may suddenly decide that all of that money that’s now in AIMCo would be beneficial for government purposes in some other thing than to provide the best returns for the teachers. It says that explicitly in the act, that AIMCo must do the things that the government directs it to do. It’s written into the act.

That’s what’s most dangerous about this act. This act is saying on the surface: “Don’t worry. Everything will be the same as it always was. We’re just moving where money is being held and being invested.” But what’s really happening is that it’s being moved from a place where people have control and the ability to respond to a place where they do not have control and do not have the ability to respond but where the government has a great deal more ability to control, which I think is a very autocratic way to treat other people’s money. I think it’s something that we should be very, very concerned about.

I think that the underlying intent of this act is one that people should pay a lot of attention to. On the surface, we keep being told: “Don’t look over here. There’s nothing to see. Don’t worry about it. It’s all going to be fine. Nothing is really going to be different.” Whenever you’re told that, you always have to ask: “If nothing is really going to be different, then why are they so dead set on making sure that this happens? Why would they bring in a bill and then have the Premier disappear for the week that it’s being discussed?” Why would they make sure that – I saw your look. I got the point. Sorry.

**The Speaker:** We obviously wouldn’t want to refer to the absence or presence of a member of the Assembly as that would be considered to be a point of order. I’d just offer some caution, then, to the member.

**Mr. Feehan:** I didn’t say that he disappeared from the House. Sorry.

The point here is that what we’re seeing is a government ramming through a piece of legislation as quickly as possible because they know what it really means, and they know that it takes a while for the citizens of Alberta to receive the information that they need in order to be able to respond. The quicker they do it, the sooner they get to a place where even if you do learn what is actually happening, there is very little that you can do about it because the act has already been enacted.

**8:10**

I think that that’s the intention of this act; that is, to take control away from the citizens of Alberta and do it at such a speed that they are unable to respond because they simply haven’t had time to not only get the content of the act but to understand the implications of that act. That’s the thing that we’re very concerned about here.

If I look at this whole act, the underlying theme remains the same, whether it happens to be taking the teachers’ pension plan away from them so that it can go into government control, whether it’s taking the money away from the Special Olympics, whether it’s taking the money away from the Glenbow Museum, or whether it’s taking money away from citizens who are receiving AISH. In all of these cases it’s about the government bringing unto itself the power and control over other people’s money and making decisions such that those other people will be subject to the whims of the government of the day. When they’re under their own act, the advantage is that it’s moved arm’s length away from the

government so that there are people who are not sitting members of the House who are making decisions. Now suddenly it's all coming into the House and into government hands so that they can make decisions. I think that's something that we have to be very, very concerned about.

We know that this act also has a very strong intent to get the government itself out of trouble. An officer of this Chamber, the Election Commissioner, has been investigating apparent fraudulent behaviour in the UCP leadership election, has indeed assigned over \$200,000 in fines against the UCP members, and has been indicating that there are many more people yet to talk to and more resources necessary to complete that application. What we have now, again, is this nefarious underlying intent to pull that commissioner out of his work site, to stop him from making a report he was supposed to make as early as next week, and to prevent him from doing any further investigation. Now, again, the Minister of Finance is going to say: "Don't worry. The same function can happen. It's going to come into government, but we promise that once it's in government, we'll do the same thing." But that's not what's going to happen, and there's no guarantee that it is.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe it was the hon. Minister of Finance who caught my eye.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have to respond to the member opposite's comments, certainly to a few of those. Firstly, relative to moving the teachers' pension plan into AIMCo, I just need to again clarify the facts. There is so much misinformation that's circulating right now, creating undue fear, quite frankly, amongst teachers and, particularly, retired teachers, that it just behooves me to rise and to clarify a number of the comments.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, the ATRF Board remains completely intact, with the same composition as it has been in the past. The ATRF Board will continue to administer the pension plan as it has done in the past. The ATRF Board will continue to provide policy direction and oversight on the investment goals and strategies related to the pension funds. What is changing is that those funds will be housed at AIMCo, again, under the high-level oversight of the ATRF Board.

The concept that this is a takeover by the government of teachers' pensions is ludicrous. It simply is not founded in any fact. The ATRF Board will continue to have that high-level oversight.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of wins in this move, but the real win is a win for teachers. The real win is a win for teachers because at the end of the day teachers' pensions will be better protected in a larger investment management firm.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Toews:** At the end of the day . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

#### Point of Order Behaviour of Guests in the Gallery

**Mr. Schow:** I believe that the hon. Speaker has already mentioned engaging with the audience or members in the gallery. Just recently I heard a number of them making comments behind me as I turned around, and they were trying to engage further. I ask that maybe the members of the gallery remain respectful of the work we're doing here and allow us to continue this healthy debate that we're engaging in tonight.

**Mr. Bilous:** First of all, this is not a point of order. Points of order pertain to members of the Assembly. Mr. Speaker, with all respect, it is your prerogative to deal with members in the gallery. It is not up to another member in this House to tell members of the gallery how to behave.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would concur with the position of the Official Opposition House Leader. It is ultimately the purview of security to ensure that the galleries are also maintaining order. If there was ever a reason to do so, of course, the Speaker could take steps, but I don't think we're anywhere close to that at this point in time.

The hon. Minister of Finance had the call.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moving teachers' pension funds to AIMCo will ultimately result in cost savings for those pension funds as the larger investment management fund as a whole can result in economies of scale, which will result in reduced costs in the management of those funds. Our estimates are that the cost savings alone will result in approximately \$40 million of savings overall per year, which will accrue to both the teachers and ultimately to Alberta taxpayers as both parties will benefit down the road with lower contributions while defined benefit pensions are maintained at the same levels. Fundamentally, foundationally, Alberta taxpayers and teachers ultimately have the same goal when it comes to public-sector pensions. Both parties benefit as returns are increased and as costs are driven down and as risks are mitigated.

Mr. Speaker, there are congruent goals in going forward with moving the actual assets to AIMCo and, again, recognizing that ATRF will continue to administer the pension plan. ATRF will continue to provide direction and strategic oversight over the investments. The board makeup of ATRF will remain the same as it's been.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there's approximately one minute remaining in 29(2)(a). I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to provide a comment.

**Mr. Feehan:** Mr. Speaker, if the words of the Minister of Finance had any veracity, his behaviour would have been different. If he truly believed what he just said, then he would have gone to the ATA and said, "I have a great plan; it's going to give you a better return; let's sit down and figure out how this can happen so that we would benefit all people in the province of Alberta," as he just said. He did not do that. In fact, the ATA president, Jason Schilling said, "Show us the numbers and convince us it is in our interests, instead of unilaterally seizing our pension assets." If he really did think that this was going to be a benefit for the teachers, he would have talked to them and convinced them, but he didn't believe it, so he didn't do it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:20 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Luan	Sawhney
Amery	Madu	Schow
Barnes	Neudorf	Schulz
Dreeshen	Nixon, Jason	Schweitzer
Ellis	Orr	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Pitt	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Toews
Horner	Rosin	Toor
Hunter	Rowswell	Walker
Long	Rutherford	Wilson
Lovely		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Gray	Nielsen
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol		

Totals: For – 31 Against – 10

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Time Allocation on Bill 22

35. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on Government Motion 35 today. It is my duty to move to Government Motion 35. I do not believe that time allocation should be used lightly or often inside this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I believe that this is only my second time to use this in my capacity as Government House Leader. I do note that the Official Opposition House Leader will be on the opposite side of this motion, I assume – he may be voting for it – but just a few short months ago he was on this side of the House and would often move time allocation with his Government House Leader at the time. I have a list of comments that he made and several members across the way had made in support of time allocation and times in which they have voted for it, but I don't feel the need to go into great detail on that today.

The reality is this. We have a responsibility as a Chamber to be able to control the pace of debate, to be able to make sure that ultimately we're able to get legislation through this House. Time allocation should rarely be needed, but the reality is that at times on very few bills this is the only way to be able to proceed to be able to make sure that the Chamber can do its important work that it's responsible to do for the people of Alberta.

I would quote, Mr. Speaker, from December 4, 2013, a paragraph that the former Premier David Hancock said when he was a Government House Leader in regard to closure:

On a few bills, very few bills actually, at more than just the committee stage ...

At the time they were arguing whether or not time allocation should just be used at the committee stage.

... at other stages of the bill, there are times when the House manages its time well, and motions of time allocation are not needed or are left on the Order Paper. As we can see on the Order Paper [in his case], there are some left from [the] spring. It is one of the ways [though] in which government business can be managed, brought before the House for appropriate discussion, timely discussion, and timely implementation.

Today I move time allocation in that same line of thought, that we have to continue to make sure that legislation moves through this Chamber in the coming days to be able to accomplish all of the objectives of the 30th Legislature when it comes to the sitting before Christmas.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that often we work together to be able to limit debate sometimes for our own members. It's what government House leaders do. That's what opposition House leaders do. We choose critics when we're in opposition to respond to certain things, on the government side we choose certain ministers that will move certain bills or speak to certain bills, and sometimes we have government caucus members not rise to be able to give the Official Opposition more time. We negotiate those things. We negotiate question period rotation. We negotiate opportunities when the Official Opposition has amendments that they need to move and time grows late, where the government goes out of their way to be able to give them that opportunity. That's the reality of what we do in this Chamber. Sometimes, when things begin to grind to a halt, we have two options within our standing orders. Interestingly enough, closure has been removed from our system since 2003-ish, but we do have time allocations in the standing orders, the mechanism that I'm using today. We also have a standing order called the previous question, which helps to control time within this Chamber.

8:40

I want to be clear. Adequate time will still be provided to debate Bill 22. It's an important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and the Official Opposition has a responsibility on behalf of their constituents to debate it fully. I will provide them that opportunity. At this stage we've already provided them five hours so far. There are three stages of this legislation that we have to go through, and we will provide the Official Opposition adequate time to be able to do their important work as the Official Opposition, to bring amendments as they see fit, and to have an opportunity to be able to debate this important legislation.

But we will not plug up the Legislature. We'll make sure that the legislation that is needed for Albertans will pass, that Alberta's budget will pass, and that we'll be able to implement that budget and continue to move forward. If we do not work together to be able to control the pace of this House, we would be in a spot where we would only pass one or two pieces of legislation. That's not a spot that I'm willing to let this Chamber get into, and it's not a spot that Albertans want. They want their legislative business to be done, Mr. Speaker. I suggest, through you to the opposition, that they make the best of the time that they have so we can make sure that we make the best piece of legislation that we can.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll start off by saying that this move that the Government House Leader and the government is doing is, one, unprecedented and historic. No time in Alberta's history has a bill been introduced in the very same week that all three readings have invoked closure to limit debate. The fact that the government is invoking closure at 8:40 p.m., after a mere

five hours of debate, which is not a significant amount of time – as the hon. member knows, we have debated many pieces of legislation for many hours. The fact that the Government House Leader the other day rose to give notice for closure for three sections of the bill before the bill was introduced screams of how afraid this government is of the very legislation they brought forward to attack the very people that are sitting up there.

This piece of legislation to meddle with the teachers' pension is undemocratic. They did not ask for it. I would love for the Finance minister to respond to this House. Whom did he consult with who asked to move the teachers' pension to AIMCo? If the pension is going to save \$30 million yet the teachers' board is going to have all the oversight and continue to have the due diligence over the fund, what is the purpose of moving it to AIMCo? In fact, the minister should know this – and I have a great deal of respect for AIMCo. Had the minister and this government actually talked to teachers to say, "This is what we're proposing to do with your money" – not your money; their money – then we wouldn't be here, Mr. Speaker. But the fact of the matter is that the government know they are in the wrong, which is why they've just invoked closure after five hours of debate. It's absolutely shameful. They are afraid to face the very people whose money they are trying to meddle with.

We have yet to have an answer as to how this saves \$30 million. How is this better? In fact, the Finance minister should know that last year the teachers' pension outperformed AIMCo. There goes your argument that the fund can do better if it's managed under AIMCo. But the point for me is not whether it's AIMCo or the teachers' fund. Consult with the very people whose money you're touching. It's not your money. Hands off. Then to exacerbate things, Mr. Speaker, they invoke closure after four hours. Shame. Shame on every one of you for invoking closure, shutting down debate in this very House. Closure is one of the most antidemocratic methods that the government has.

I can and will say: yes, there were rare occasions that our government introduced closure. Never three motions of closure for a whole bill, introduced on a Monday and passed on the Thursday. That is unprecedented. Never in Alberta's history has a bill moved – and, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you're wondering why. I've been trying to figure out why they would want to move at breakneck speeds. I can tell you that there are only two possible reasons: they're trying to hide something, so either the Election Commissioner has something really good that's about to come out, and they want him nowhere near what's going on, or they don't want him in front of Public Accounts, which is supposed to happen at the end of next week.

Otherwise, if this was merely about moving money, first of all, you should have consulted with the teachers. I'm offended by that. I am a teacher. You do not have the right to move their money, their pension money, without talking to them first. I don't care what financial arguments you make, that's their decision to make, not yours.

The fact that this government is moving this quickly, invoking closure at 8:40 on second reading after a mere five hours of debate, is unprecedented. I don't know what the Government House Leader is talking about as far as debate grinding to a halt. I don't know if that's some kind of weird joke, but five hours of debate is hardly grinding this place to a halt, Mr. Speaker. The minister claims that there will still be adequate time. According to whom? So you have the ultimate authority on what is adequate and what is not? You know what? I would venture a guess that the 50 people up there would disagree with you that the one hour for second reading that remains on this bill is adequate time to talk about their future, their retirement. They earned that money, not you. I find it rich.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 35 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:47 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rowswell
Amery	Luan	Rutherford
Barnes	Madu	Sawhney
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Schulz
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Hanson	Orr	Toews
Horner	Pitt	Toor
Hunter	Rehn	Walker
Long	Rosin	Wilson

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Gray	Nielsen
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol		

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 10
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[Government Motion 35 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 22 Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019 (continued)

[Adjourned debate on the amendment November 20: Mr. Jason Nixon]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung on RA1.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to RA1. I'm left to refer at the commencement of my remarks to what the Minister of Finance recently said when talking about Bill 22 and its surrounding debate that we're having here tonight about it. He mentioned that we, in his mind, were creating undue fear. I tell you what, Mr. Speaker. If he wanted to undo fear, he'd withdraw the bill. The fear that he's creating is actually real, and it's a fear in the minds of many people who have expressed themselves throughout the last few days to all of our constituency offices. In fact, the running count, the tally, the clock count that we should have in front of the Legislature, similar to what the Premier had when he was with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation – we should have a count of all the e-mails that we're receiving on this issue. I don't know if you'd imagine how many e-mails we're at, but it's an astounding amount, Mr. Speaker: 29,000 e-mails and counting. Twenty-nine thousand constituents have written to us. My inbox is flooded. And I'll tell you: they're not boilerplate e-mails; they're not templated. They are individual letters of concern, and believe me, they are awfully angry.

I'll tell you what. Members of this House will recognize that at this late hour it's very unusual to have people in the gallery, but there are people in the gallery in force, Mr. Speaker, people whose pensions are being moved without their permission, and they are fearful for their retirement incomes. Those individuals in the gallery represent a small portion of the 29,000 and counting members of

the teaching profession who have respectfully written all of their MLAs to demand that this move be halted. It is not undue fear. We ask the Minister of Finance to actually undo fear and withdraw the bill.

Now, I won't necessarily thank the government for one of the consequences of the proposals under Bill 22 because it's probably a piece of their strategy to invoke this fear and cause the chaos that they are doing, hoping that this chaos under the Bill 22 proposal might hide some of the other nefarious things that are going on with other pieces of legislation. I mean, we have a number of pieces of legislation this week, six bills, I think, at least being introduced this week. Others to come. It's an inundation of legislation that the government hopes will cause, by volume, a smokescreen under which many things will pass and not much will be actually seen.

Though as we focus our attention on one thing after another in this House, each one seems to be a larger and larger controversy and some of them full-blown scandals. I speak of the firing of our Election Commissioner, which is, of course, part of this legislation as well. It is something that is unprecedented in most democracies, certainly in ours, where a government will actually fire the Election Commissioner who has ongoing investigations into the propriety of their own leadership election process. This act of very cynical ploys by the government is something that they hope the electorate will forget about, the same way that I'm sure they didn't expect the reaction of 29,000 and counting teachers to at least take the time to send an e-mail. Also, as I'm reading these e-mails, almost every one of them that have been sent to my office says, "Yes, indeed," when my constituency assistant has asked if they can be quoted and if we can use their names. They're not saying, "Oh, no, don't use my name." They're saying, "You're darn right." That's what they're saying. Almost without exception, when they're asked if they wish to be identified, they are not hesitant about it.

Unlike other events in Alberta history, where in past years you may have had somebody disagreeing with the government and a small opposition of three of four NDP members and maybe some other members of other parties would rail against it and people in their neighbourhoods and their constituencies would tread relatively softly, not wanting to stick their heads up too high and be counted for fear of being ostracized – that was the way things happened in Alberta when there was a relatively . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. My apologies both to you as well as to the Assembly. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung actually spoke to the amendment immediately following the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, so as such, he is unable to speak to the amendment twice. However, if we happen to get back to the main bill, as he has not yet spoken to it, he could do that if that was possible.

We will move to another speaker.

9:10

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** We move that we move to one-minute bells for the duration of the evening, including in Committee of the Whole.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a question has been put to the Assembly, a request, which would require unanimous consent, to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** I invite another hon. member for the Official Opposition to rise. The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to this. Actually, it's not my pleasure to speak to it because this is just

wrong. To have an omnibus piece of legislation like this, in my opinion, it looks like legislation that a corrupt government would pass. It is a piece of legislation that is going to do an incredible amount of damage in terms of trust with our essential public-sector workers. It is going to do damage to the democracy of this place, the integrity of this place, and not one government member actually seems to care. That's incredible to me.

I'm going to speak to the pensions, and I would like to thank all of the people that are watching, all of the people that have taken time out of their evenings to come here and watch us because it's that important to them. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like any member on the government side thinks it's really important. They have not even sort of put out a little shred of, "Maybe I understand some of the concerns." They have not talked about, "Well, you know, maybe we could go back and speak to people." No. It's once again: "We know best. Opposition is fear and smear." It turns out we're not fear and smear. It turns out we know exactly what we're talking about, as do they.

So firing an independent officer, the Election Commissioner: that is something that corrupt governments do. They find ways to cover things up. They have all the power. They do things to cover things up. Let's look at Alberta here for a second. Let's look at some of the things that this commissioner has done, just some of the things he has found because he's really, really good at his job. Apparently, he's so good at his job that you want to shut him down.

So let's look at some of the administrative penalties. Some of them are quite recent. They're in November. Robyn Lore, contributor: penalty of \$4,000. Again Robyn Lore: another \$4,000. Oh, look, another one: \$9,000. Agropyron Enterprises Ltd.: \$8,000. That's just November 1st. Energize Alberta: fines of \$6,300, \$2,000, \$2,500, \$3,000, \$500, \$3,900. It just goes on and on.

Jeff Callaway, UCP – oh, that's the kamikaze guy. Sorry if I said his name and I wasn't supposed to. He colluded with a third party to circumvent contribution limits. Gee, I wonder why the government wants to shut him down. Jeff Callaway, another fine: \$2,000 for taking money that he shouldn't have. Another one for Jeff Callaway, solicited or accepted a contribution: \$3,000, again inappropriate. It just goes on and on and on.

If you type in Alberta Election Commissioner, it'll come up. You can have a look for yourself. See how long that list is. In just the short time that he's been doing this work, he's fined the UCP and their operatives – was it \$211,000? But we're supposed to buy that you're just doing this to save money because, you know, it'll be like a million dollars in five years and you're so fiscally responsible. Oh, wait. You have a war room snitch line that is – what? – \$120 million over four years. Mr. Speaker, do you think that anybody is buying this? They're not.

You can continue to talk about your great big mandate, and you're going to do all this stuff because Albertans sent you here to do it, but you are going to find out very quickly that you are responsible to the people of Alberta, and they're not happy. You will see that very soon. You might not see it right now, but you will see it very soon. You were sent to this place to enhance democracy, to protect it, to value it, to do everything that you can to ensure its integrity. You know what you don't do to ensure integrity of democracy? You don't fire someone who's investigating you. That looks an awful lot like corruption.

This bill is shameful. I could go on about all of the things that are wrong with this bill. It's so big. What you've done is that you've just shoved everything in there that you possibly can because, you know, you want us to pretend like we're trying to drink out of a firehose. There's just so much that it's difficult for us to actually inform Albertans of what you're trying to do. Isn't that the point? That is the point. That is exactly what you're doing.

I am so frustrated for all of our public-sector workers, for our teachers, for our nurses, for everybody that has worked so hard to actually have a degree of control over their future and over their pension. I for one am eternally grateful for all of their work. I will always be. You know what you do when you're grateful? You respect them. You include them. You speak to them. You consult them. You don't run over them. I think it's just shameful, what you've done.

I could talk a little bit about – you know, there are all kinds of things. You have dissolved groups that oversee really important programs, that I think are important, like Special Olympics, like the Steadward Centre at the university, that provides supports and physical activity for people with disabilities. There are so many things. It encourages and mentors indigenous coaching, women in sport.

There are so many things that you have shoved into this bill and then invoked closure. What is today, Wednesday? The Government House Leader stood up, Mr. Speaker, and tried to tell us: well, you've already had five hours of debate. Really? Something that is this important for all of these public-sector workers? This is their pension. This is their future. This is what they've worked for, and you are choosing to ignore them, to stuff earplugs in and not listen to them. You never even asked them. You know what? You don't know what's best for people. You do not. Like my colleague said, I have great respect for AIMCo, I actually do. But I have more respect for the people of Alberta. I have more respect for the teachers and the nurses. You do not show respect by ignoring them.

This piece of legislation is really something. You know, it literally – and I'm sure my colleagues have said this – changes or amends 31 statutes. It's an unprecedented affront to democracy, and the fact that the government chose to roll this out and then invoke closure is just – I don't know. I don't even have the words for it, actually. It's shocking to me. It's shocking.

You know, I used to have some American friends and American family, and I teased them a lot because sometimes they'll be talking about American politics and what's going on there and just the degree of corruption that has led to impeachment hearings, because there is a leader of a country that is alleged to have done some very, very serious things, so serious, in fact, that the entire country is talking about impeachment. I used to tease my friends and family quite a bit about just the corruption: "How did you get there? I mean, were there signals along the way? How is it that this is okay?" You know what? I look at what's happening right in front of us, and I'm stunned by it. It's like a really bad Netflix show. It's just an affront to democracy.

Yesterday, when our leader stood up – I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I understand that what you told us was that you were just following the rules of the House. But what she did, to me, was speak truth to power. What she did was say: "You know what? This can't be allowed to happen in this place." Too many people have fought for too long and too hard for democracy to be able to flourish in a place like this. That means not firing people that are investigating you. That means not hijacking people's pensions. That means not hiding changes in a bill that is so ridiculously huge that you just don't want people to see it. On top of that, you just stop debate because – why? – you don't feel like being here late, you're tired of listening to us, you're tired of the e-mails. Well, you know what? That's part of democracy.

9:20

**Member Irwin:** Teachers are tired. Nurses are tired.

**Ms Renaud:** I do believe the teachers and the nurses are very tired.

It's unfortunate that the government members just can't even be bothered to listen to any of this, so they stop debate. They've only given us a little bit of time, couldn't care less what we have to say. That sends a message. It sends a huge message. We should be working every single day in this place to earn the trust of Albertans, and earning the trust means being honest with them and including them.

You know, I talked a little bit earlier today about some of the things I was worried about in the area that I'm critic for, and that is Community and Social Services. One of the things that I was very concerned about, Mr. Speaker – and I'm using this as an example – is that one of the things I learned is that there was going to be a review of a very large ministry that had a lot of programs in it, from AISH to PDD to supports for children with disabilities, homelessness support, women's shelters. One of the things that I was very surprised to hear was that that review will be done internally. Well, when you do a review internally, you don't get the information that you need because the information that you need comes from Albertans, and it comes from the people that are involved in the decisions that you're making or who will be impacted by the decisions that you're making.

So is it a pattern? Kind of seems that way. We've had all kinds of changes, and nobody has been consulted. The people that matter have not been consulted. This has been driven by ideology, misinformation, in my opinion, and I believe that the goal of this is not to make Albertans stronger or to make Alberta stronger and united. This is about self-serving partisan politics. That's what I believe it is. You don't do something like this, you don't introduce a bill that is this enormous and then say that five hours of debate is enough. It's not enough. It will never be enough.

I know that my office is just flooded with e-mails – e-mails from nurses, e-mails from teachers, e-mails actually even from students, e-mails from family members, e-mails from community members who are concerned – and their message is very simple: they were not consulted, and they're angry. They have every right to be angry. I'm angry for them. I know that this caucus will continue to talk about it. You know, you all might forget about it in a little bit. We will remind you. This is a shameful piece of legislation, and if this is the example that you are setting for the next three years, it's going to be a long three years.

I just wanted to say a couple of other things. One of the things that has worried me, I guess, over the last few months is the comments that people make about public-sector workers. It has come from the front bench, Mr. Speaker, it has come from the backbench, it has come from social media. It's this disdain for public-sector workers that I just don't understand. I don't get it. They are the fabric of our communities. They're the foundation of our province. They're there when we need them most. They're there when we don't need them, they're there when we don't notice: they're always there. They educate our children. They help us raise our children. The disdain that comes from this government is really stunning to me. It is absolutely stunning. Of course, their choice not to consult on this really, really important move is just another example of the absolute disdain for our public-sector workers, that I don't understand, that I think is dangerous. It's so disrespectful. It's incredibly disrespectful. It's sad. It is really unfortunate.

I hope that our Premier – like it or not, the voters decided, so he's our Premier – chooses to stand up and explain himself, I really do. I hope that our Premier has the courage to look our public-sector workers in the eye and explain this, I really do.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford caught my eye first.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just listening to the Member for St. Albert speak about some very important aspects of this bill and her real, deep anger, I think, quite legitimate and thoughtful anger, about the nature of this bill and why it is being brought in. The thing that really struck me, amongst the many things, of course, was her comments about the respect toward public service workers, whether they happen to be working for a department in government or whether they happen to be teachers or whether they happen to be nurses, the lack of respect that is shown by this government and particularly in this bill. I think it really is telling that they keep saying: don't worry; nothing bad is happening here.

If they truly believe that, why would they not have heeded the word of the chair of the ATRF, who asked for an audit to demonstrate whether or not moving these monies from the ATRF to AIMCo would indeed be positive for the teachers? I think their actions speak much louder than their words. If they do respect teachers, why don't they go to the teachers and demonstrate that this is a positive thing to be doing and work together to make it happen? They know that they can't do that because they have no evidence that this will be positive in any way whatsoever, but once the money is under their control, they don't need to talk to the teachers at all. Now, I know that the Minister of Finance has said: oh, the board of the ATRF will be kept intact. If it's being kept intact, why are you taking the money away from them? It doesn't make any sense. It has no face validity.

I would like to hear the Member for St. Albert speak a bit more about this deep lack of respect that she was addressing. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. You know, one of the things I wanted to mention earlier – I am angry about this, and I think a lot of Albertans are angry about this. Part of the anger, obviously, is the complete lack of respect – the complete lack of respect – for our teachers. But part of the anger comes from – I can't believe that you actually think that we're going to buy your excuses. That's the part that I just don't get. You stand up and say things like, "Oh, no; we're doing this to save you money" and then you look at us like we're supposed to believe you. It's a little bit shocking to me.

Let me give you an example of how ridiculous this is some days, right? One of the things that you told us, Mr. Speaker, that the government told us was that getting rid of, firing the Chief Electoral Officer will save the government a million dollars over five years, and that's, like, super important because you guys are all fiscally responsible. But just the other day, when speaking to another piece of legislation, another member who sits over there stood up to speak about the cost of accountability. I think he was talking about recall legislation. He said:

Why would it be worth spending money in a by-election?  
Because it would be worth it. If that individual was not representative of their constituents, if they were not keeping their word, if they were not being truthful, if they were not following through with those promises, it definitely would be worth it.

Accountability and responsibility: those things are worth it, right? Okay; that's all kinds of strange.

Number one: do I think a million dollars is a lot of money? Yes I do. Do I think that a million dollars to invest in an independent officer to ensure free and fair elections so that each Albertan's vote is worth the same as the other, do I think that's a good investment? Oh, yes, I do. Absolutely I do. What do I think about recall legislation? Well, that's for another day.

9:30

I just wanted to give that example because it's just one example of the things that the government, Mr. Speaker, stands up and tries

to sell us and tries to sell Albertans, and they actually think that we're buying it or that anybody is buying it. You're doing it to save money? Again, firing somebody who's investigating you, that's what corrupt governments do. Let's not be that. It's not too late. We can stop this. You can stop this right now. You can admit a mistake. You can stand up and say: you know, well, we're going to reconsider because not only does it look bad, it is bad.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I will often ask conservatives is: what are you trying to conserve? What exactly is it that you are attempting to conserve within our society? What we see before us in this bill is this government attempting to conserve entitlement, and what just behooves me is that there are members on that side of the House that are just completely oblivious to what this government is doing.

Am I angry? Yes, I am, Mr. Speaker. You know me to be a passionate man. When I get up in this House, I call a spade a spade, and I say it like it is because like our hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, I too like to speak truth to power.

Now, one of the things that conservatives love to say is that it's about freedom. It's about freedom and that they're protecting freedom, when honestly what they are talking about is freedom of capital, freedom of wealth, and the people who own that wealth and continuously use it in order to take advantage of others in our society. In fact, Conservative governments, no matter where they are within the world, actually preach less government because somehow they think that less government – and remember that government is supposed to be here to serve the people. Government is supposed to be here to serve the people of this province. Less government. As a result of that less government, it obviously means centralization of power, and that's exactly what this bill does in so many different ways, and so many of my hon. colleagues have already spoken to that, but I'm going to get into it.

Well, first, let me just take a step back because one of the hon. members on that side of the House just earlier got up and made reference to the Holodomor, for which we have an amazing amount of respect, and criticized the Holodomor and Stalin for the centralization of power.

**An Hon. Member:** Careful.

**Member Loyola:** No. I'm amazingly respectful, hon. member. You don't have to worry about me. What I'm talking about is the centralization of power.

It behooves me that members on the other side of the House are staying so incredibly quiet when this bill that we have before us right now, Mr. Speaker, is attempting to do exactly that with the teachers' pensions.

As was pointed out by so many of my hon. colleagues, teachers weren't even consulted. They weren't even consulted, and their pension plan actually outperformed AIMCo. So I have to ask the other members on the other side of the House: what is going on here? Why this move without any consultation with the people that this bill actually affects? Now, I understand, I get it. You think less government will be better. That's your political, partisan opinion. But when the rubber meets the road, Mr. Speaker, when the rubber meets the road, "Is that what is actually best for the teachers of this province?" is what we have to ask ourselves. Is bringing these monies, these monies that these individuals have worked so incredibly hard for throughout their entire lives, taking those monies and bringing them under the control of AIMCo, where they will have less of an opinion on how it will actually function.



Now, the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has gotten up in this House and very eloquently danced around the fact that, "Oh, everything's going to stay the same," just like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford pointed out so many times. "Everything's going to stay the same." But it's not. It's not.

Now, in our society, Mr. Speaker, we should be striving to make our institutions more democratic, where citizens of this province actually have more of a say on the governance, not only of pension funds but, also, over all matters of government. We want more people involved in the democratic process than less people involved in the democratic process, and I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that you would agree with that. We strive so that our institutions can be more democratic, so, then, why do have before us yet another bill that makes them less democratic?

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I really wanted to point out – and it was something that was brought up by the Member for St. Albert, bless her – is the fact that Conservative – and it's not just this Conservative government – governments in the past always tried to pit public-sector workers against taxpayers, as if we're not all citizens of this great province. Now, you've got to ask yourself: why pit the public sector against the taxpayers? Why create that division? Why put that in there? It's because they're trying to convince taxpayers that less government is better, and, as a result, our institutions being less democratic is actually better, bringing more of the control inside the purview of government is better.

These public sector workers, like the hon. Member for St. Albert said, are the ones that come into work every day. They're the people that are sitting up in this gallery right now that dedicate themselves to educating our children, to making sure that they have the best education that they can possibly have here in the province of Alberta, to make sure that our children are properly prepared for the future that's in front of them. They dedicate themselves day in, day out, and I'm sure that a lot of members in this House on both sides of the aisle remember that one teacher, that one teacher that influenced them so much, that inspired them so much to keep learning and wanting to seek more education and more knowledge.

9:40

Those are the kind of people that are sitting up in that gallery right now, Mr. Speaker, because not only are they passionate about standing up for the future and teaching our children and making sure that Alberta is prepared for the future so that we can move towards a more modern way of being and, dare I say it, a more democratic society but they're also here because they care about the pension and they want to have their say in how those monies are managed, just like anybody else would do, just like every individual that goes to their bank and deposits money in their RRSP. They can decide how that money – where it's going to be placed, whether it's going to be a mutual fund or whether it's a guaranteed investment certificate or whatever the case may be. These teachers want to be able to have the same kind of say, provide direction, and that is what's being taken away from them right now.

So let's not fall into the trap, hon. members. This isn't about pitting the public sector against the taxpayers. We shouldn't continue to bring before this House proposed legislation that would actually make our institutions less democratic. I'm asking the members on the other side of the House: please consider the words that are coming out of my mouth; don't just blindly vote for this piece of legislation because cabinet has asked you to.

We're all here to represent Albertans, whether they be teachers or other public-sector employees. We're not just here to represent those who want freedom for their wealth. Yes, they are a part of our society, and, yes, they provide an instrumental role in making sure that our economy functions, but they are not the only Albertans that

deserve a voice inside of this House. We're here to represent all Albertans, and that's what I'm asking all the members of this House to do, Mr. Speaker, to please consider all Albertans and not just those that share their personal, partisan, ideological frame of mind. Let's be true to the democratic institution that we were elected to participate in.

I tell my constituents regularly that I may be a member of the Alberta NDP, and I was elected as an NDP member, but I represent all of my constituents. No matter what their political beliefs are, what their ideology is, they all have an opportunity to walk inside of my constituency office and sit down with me and express their opinions. That's what we should be doing while we're inside this House, not representing only one group of people, one self-interested group, but all Albertans.

So I'll end with the words that I started with: what exactly are you trying to conserve?

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Would anyone like to add a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to comment on the amendment? The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Easier said than – anyways, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to be here tonight and to just talk a little bit about Bill 22. I have had the opportunity to be able to listen to members opposite debate this issue.

The first thing I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, is that – I don't know if the members know – my father is a retired teacher. He taught all of his life. The reality is that I actually am a teacher as well. I taught for two years. Never made so little in all my life. This was a long time ago, and teachers get paid better now, which is great. We want to be able to pay our teachers well. But I remember when I finished my degree, Mr. Speaker, and I came back and I taught in Alberta for two years. I took home \$1,960 a month, and there was no way for me to be able to provide for my family on that kind of a wage. So I looked at my father, what he was making. He had tenure, and he was making a little over \$2,400. I realized that my father, for as long as I can remember, would teach during the year, and then in the summer he would have to make up for what he didn't make during the teaching year by going and doing construction, and I would help him on those construction jobs. The members opposite talk about how they have, you know, the only real-life experience when it comes to the public sector. I disagree. We have lots of experience on this side as well about what the public sector is dealing with.

But I want to unpack some of the information that the members opposite have used in this argument. Now, my father, when the media and the NDP blew this issue up – and they did blow it up. The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie said that we should stop pitting the taxpayer against the public sector. I want to call that member out, Mr. Speaker, through you, and I want that member to know who has stoked the fire on this issue. It has been the NDP all the way. Along with their liberal media counterparts, they have stoked the fire. They have sent the information out through the ATA as well to the teachers, and this information has been false.

When my father and I talked about this, he was concerned. He said: "What's going on? I'm retired. I need to make sure that my pension is still going to be there." I said to him: "Dad, your pension is intact. In fact, what we are doing is that we are trying to make sure that your pension is sustainable for the long run." So what happened when the NDP and their close friends and allies the ATA sent out the information? They cherry-picked data points. This is specifically what the NDP do. They will present something in a certain way so that they can incite people against each other.

Now, when the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie says that we are the ones who are pitting the taxpayer against the public sector, I call him out on that when they are cherry-picking the data points. We've shown specifically that over a 10-year period AIMCo outperforms the ATRF. So, Mr. Speaker, if that is the case, why would we not move that amount, that \$18 billion, over into AIMCo, which is already working with \$115 billion. Now, it only makes sense that a fund that is investing \$115 billion has more buying power in terms of its investment capabilities than a fund that is only investing \$18 billion.

But, Mr. Speaker, what's interesting about this is that when we took a look at this and being able to move this together, the NDP forgot to tell a bunch of information, which is that the ATRF was the outlier. It was the outlier for all the other public-sector pensions, which were under AIMCo. I get that the NDP are struggling with the decision that was made on April 16 – we still hear this from the NDP today – but the truth is that they lost the election. They lost the election. Albertans chose a different path because they recognized that Alberta was on the wrong path for four years under the NDP.

Look, I was in opposition, Mr. Speaker. You and I were in opposition together prior to us being able to win the election, so I get how tough it is to be on that side. I get how tough it is to be able to watch the government go forward with what they had said to the public. But you know what? They have to get over the fact that they lost the election, and when they talk about their strategy – oftentimes when I was on the opposition side, I'd hear them say constantly that we had done everything wrong for the past 44 years under Conservative governments. What is amazing about this is that if that's the case, why did the members even move here? Most of them moved here. So why did they move here? Because there were jobs and there were opportunities here.

9:50

This is the plan that this government has tried to be able to establish. This is about jobs and the economy, Mr. Speaker. This is about being able to consolidate the ATRF under a world-class investment fund. This is about being able to take the agencies, boards, and commissions and make sure that they're efficient. I appreciate this bill because this is certainly a red tape reduction measure, something that is very dear to my heart.

This is something that we campaigned on. We told Albertans that we would be getting rid of at least one-third – at least one-third – of the regulatory burden. Now, Mr. Speaker, if they are going to lose their minds over what we're doing in this session over one bill, I can't imagine how they're going to handle the fact that we're about to give this government a giant enema. We're going to make sure that this government gets rid of at least one-third of their regulatory burden. So if they're going to lose their head over this one bill, they need to pace themselves because we're just getting started.

Mr. Speaker, I was sad to hear the same rhetoric coming from the members opposite about our fight-back strategy. The reason why we have to do a fight-back strategy is because the members opposite drove \$50 billion of investment out of this province with their antibusiness rhetoric, with their antibusiness policies, and their antibusiness legislation. What's interesting about it is that this ex-government – the only government that actually had only four years in the existence of Alberta – had the opportunity to be able to talk to business and say, "You know what; we really want you guys to be able to jump-start the economy and get Albertans back to work," because they saw that jobs were leaving. Then they piled regulation on regulation on regulation on top of them, and then they piled all sorts of taxes on top of them, and then they continued to disparage them at every opportunity that they had. Then they would ask them:

"Well, why aren't you guys creating more jobs? Why aren't you expanding your businesses?"

If they are supposedly the champions of the public sector, do they not understand that there is a symbiotic relationship between the public sector and a strong, robust economy? Don't they understand that you cannot continue to live on a credit card and expect that to be sustainable? Don't they understand that the only way that we can have good-quality health care and education in this province is if we have a strong, robust economy? How are you going to get that strong, robust economy? You can't buy your way into a strong, robust economy. You need to make sure that the businesses, especially small businesses – Mr. Speaker, 2 out of every 3 new jobs come from small businesses. Red tape disproportionately affects small businesses. If we don't start addressing these issues, I don't know how the members opposite expect us to be able to get Albertans back to work.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are champions of Albertans. We are the champions of all Albertans, whether it's the private sector or the public sector. The public sector cannot have a sustainable system unless we have a robust, strong private sector as well. So it is our job to make sure that we get out of the way of those job creators and those innovators. If we don't get out of their way, then we will not have the tax base to be able to pay for the important work that our public sector is doing. We hold both as important. But the past government did not seem to understand that symbiotic relationship. Because of that, they were fired after four years, the only government in the province's history to be fired after four years. They did not get it. They didn't understand it. They still don't understand it today, and they're still upset about it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they say that we're not representing Albertans. They say that they have heard from all of their friends and close friends and allies. You know, certainly, when they stoke the fire of misinformation to the teachers, I can see how they would be upset. My father was upset until I talked to him about the fact that we are going to actually save the ATRF \$41 million a year. Now, if we save the teachers \$41 million a year, that money can be then put towards the pensions. Why would we not look for those kinds of efficiencies? The members opposite have got to understand that. They have got to understand that. But you know what? I get that they're in opposition, I get that they have to be able to try to inflame and to do their job as opposition, but what they're doing at the expense of teachers is deplorable. It's deplorable.

I've actually sat with many teachers in my riding – just so that members opposite know – and I've listened to their concerns that are basically just talking points of the NDP, and what I said to them was: "Listen, let me just at least give you the other side, and if you still feel that we are doing something that is not right, then I can take that back to the government. I can take that back to my colleagues." After explaining to them, Mr. Speaker, the other side of the equation, they said, "Well, why weren't we told that?" A good question. You know, we're supposed to have the NDP sending out correct information. We're supposed to have the ATA sending out correct information. We're supposed to have the media sending out an unbiased report. Unfortunately, we have not been able to see that. So what do we do? We have to go out and we have to talk to individuals one at a time and try to be able to go through the information that the NDP have been providing and let them know: "Look, this is the other side of the story. Please take a look at it. You're educators."

Mr. Speaker, I really do believe that there are going to be some teachers that are upset. Even if we tell them what we're trying to do, even if they see an extra \$500 per teacher in their pockets each year into their pension funds, I think they would still be upset. They'd still be upset. [interjections] And here we're getting heckled

by the members opposite, that supposedly know all the numbers. According to what we heard from these members opposite before the budget came out about how many hospitals we were going to blow up, how many teachers we were going to fire – all this stuff has not come to fruition. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, they're continually heckling. The members opposite know that there's 29(2)(a) for them to be able to speak about the issues, but they can't wait. They just have to heckle. It's fear and smear, and it's the anger machine that we constantly see from the NDP. Albertans rejected that in the last election because they recognized that you can only cry wolf so many times until people stop believing you. I saw that in the election. There was so much fear and smear coming from the NDP in the last election that people got sick and tired of it. They finally said: "No. It cannot be true. The last 800 times you've said that the sky is falling, it hasn't happened, and therefore we don't believe you." And that's why they lost. They lost because Albertans don't believe them anymore.

Now, I don't know why they continue to go down this path that they're going down. It has not worked for them. But you know what? Look, if that's what they want to do, fantastic. Keep going at it. They can lose the next election as well. But you know what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker? We're going to keep to our campaign promises. We made 375 campaign promises to Albertans, and we're going to fulfill every one of them. Why? Because we actually care about Albertans. We want to get them back to work. We want to make sure that Albertans get back to work. This is a full-time job for us. They messed it up so badly on the other side for the last four years that it's very difficult to be able to accomplish this. We will make sure that Albertans get back to work.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has the longest look on his face.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there was a lot to break down in the words that were just spoken by that member, many things that I'm concerned about. Of course, we have quite a difference in ideology from this side of the House to that side of the House, as we're seeing here, as we see every day.

One of my main concerns is the fact that the member continues to go on at length about, "We can't afford to pay teachers, we can't afford to increase AISH payments for people who are living in poverty, we can't afford to index seniors' benefits or cover dependants of seniors who are low-income Albertans unless the economy is firing on all cylinders," as has been said in this House by government members. That's something that we've heard from this government day in and day out, and that's very concerning to me, Mr. Speaker, because I don't believe, personally, that we should be saying, "You have to wait until we bring in X amount of dollars until we can actually help lift you out of poverty," but that is what this government says each and every day, and that is what they're saying in this legislation as well.

10:00

The member also said that there were 375 campaign platform commitments that they're planning to get through. Well, I looked through their platform. I didn't see this in there, so that's very concerning to me. Once again, they do not have a mandate to pass this legislation.

The member also went on about the fact that even if they did come clean about how this legislation actually works, the teachers and the nurses, well, they still might not support it. Well, maybe you should have had that conversation before you brought Bill 22 forward. That might have been a good place to start.

Now, another point that the minister made was that we are pulling the cloth over the eyes of Albertans, that teachers and nurses and other public-sector workers that are affected by this – essentially, what the member is saying is that these members of our public sector, people who are incredibly intelligent, who are some of the highest educated people in our province, can't take the time to learn about what this legislation does. I imagine the 50 or so teachers and nurses and other public-sector workers who are in this gallery right now know exactly what is happening in this legislation, and it's not because of press releases that we've made or conversations that we've had through social media or, as the member states, that the "liberal media" has brought forward. I imagine that in the limited amount of time that they've had, unfortunately, because of the speed at which this government is trying to move through this legislation, they have looked at what is in this legislation, and they're very concerned. That's what they're trying to take to this member. Unfortunately, they are not listening, and that's very concerning to me.

How are the members that are sitting in the gallery today, the members of the public sector who are going to be affected by Bill 22 and the attacks on their pensions, how are they supposed to trust this government when just this week the minister of agriculture said that the federal government needs to impose antiworker back-to-work legislation against the Teamsters, the railway workers that are trying to fight for safer conditions in their workplace? To have a minister of this House try and call on the federal government to impose something that is protected by Supreme Court rulings is absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker.

How are the members of the public sector supposed to trust that this government has their best interests when on other files we've seen – once again, with Bill 9 the government was in negotiations with public-sector workers: "Well, we'll just push those back a couple of months, and we'll see how things go. Oh, well, now the MacKinnon report has come back, and we think you should actually take a 5 per cent rollback." That is not respectful to our public-sector workers, and that is exactly why those same workers do not trust that this government has their best interests at heart. And, really, who could blame them? Who could blame them?

The fact is that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the Finance minister and every other person on the government side who has stood up today have not addressed our concerns, concerns about: "Why are we doing this in the first place without consultation? And if there is a real reason for this to move forward, why haven't you shared it with the public? Why haven't you shared it with this House? Why haven't you tabled the documents showing that AIMCo can actually get a better return?" If that conversation happened before you brought forward this legislation, then maybe this wouldn't be happening.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Government Motion 35 after one hour of debate all questions that remain for second reading need to be put. As such, we are on amendment RA1.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:04 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Gray	Nielsen

Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol		
Against the motion:		
Aheer	Lovely	Rowswell
Amery	Luan	Rutherford
Barnes	Madu	Sawhney
Dreeshen	McIver	Schulz
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Walker
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson
Long	Rosin	
Totals:	For – 10	Against – 29

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on Bill 22 for second reading, as moved by the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:09 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:		
Aheer	Lovely	Rowswell
Amery	Luan	Rutherford
Barnes	Madu	Sawhney
Dreeshen	McIver	Schulz
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Walker
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson
Long	Rosin	

Against the motion:		
Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Gray	Nielsen
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol		
Totals:	For – 29	Against – 10

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a second time]

#### Bill 24 Appropriation Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate November 20: Mr. Dach]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in accordance with Standing Order 64(3) the chair is required to put the question to the House on the appropriation bill for second reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:13 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:		
Aheer	Luan	Rutherford
Amery	Madu	Sawhney
Barnes	McIver	Schulz
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Pitt	Toews
Horner	Rehn	Toor
Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Long	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

Against the motion:		
Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Carson	Gray	Nielsen
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol		
Totals:	For – 31	Against – 10

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a second time]

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 22 Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's great to see progress as we proceed through the evening.

With that, I do have an amendment that I would like to move. I have the appropriate number of copies for the pages and will await your instructions.

**The Chair:** Hon. Government House Leader, this will be known as amendment A1. Please proceed.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm moving the following amendment to Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. The bill is amended as follows: (a), section 13(11) is amended by striking out the proposed section 153.093(2)(f) and substituting the following:

- (f) The responsibility for an investigation commenced by the Election Commissioner under section 153.09 of this Act or section 44.95 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act before the coming into force of this section is transferred to the person who holds the position of Election Commissioner, who may continue the investigation.

And (b), section 24 is amended by striking out "Sections 14 to 17" and substituting "Sections 20 to 23."

10:20

There are two sections to this amendment. I will speak to the second first, Madam Chair, if that works for you, that being (b) in regard to the language around section 24. That is a simple amendment that was caught by drafters in government legal counsel as they proceeded through with this legislation. It is a minor modification. I don't anticipate any concerns with that. Drafters, as you know, do excellent work when they're putting together legislation, but it is very complicated and dry, and sometimes they catch one of these on the way.

In regard to section (a) it doesn't change anything within the current bill that is coming to Committee of the Whole in regard to investigations, as has been stated by the government along the way through the discussion in regard to Bill 22, Madam Chair. Investigations will continue. The Election Commissioner's office, if Bill 22 passes this Chamber, will move under the Chief Electoral Officer. That position will remain, and any investigations that are taking place can continue through that process. Processes have existed in this province for over a century, as you know. But the one change that we'd like to make and why I'm moving this amendment is to make sure that it's clear so that everyone understands that, particularly given the ongoing fearmongering from the Official Opposition, making the change to make it crystal clear what the legislation always did say; that is, that investigations will pass on to the Election Commissioner and the Chief Electoral Officer, going forward, with this legislation.

I think that's important to clarify in a clear way for Albertans along the way, Madam Chair, and also to reinforce the fact that we will be moving, if Bill 22 passes this Chamber, to the same system that exists in the province of Manitoba and the federal government, which are the only two jurisdictions in our country that have an Election Commissioner. Every other province does not have an Election Commissioner. They just have a Chief Electoral Officer, the point being that we will run this under one organization going forward, as it had been in our province prior to 2018 and had been for over a century in this province.

Interestingly enough, Madam Chair, is actually the way the current Election Commissioner has recommended to other governments in the past, including the Northwest Territories, with their white paper in I believe 2006 – I may be off on the date but within that range – making it clear that it makes the most sense, when you're managing election systems, both from the investigative perspective but as well as managing elections, that you do that from one agency. I think that's important. That's what this legislation does. I do hope that all members of the Chamber will support this minor amendment to make it clear that investigations will be continuing and protected under this legislation.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, and thank you to the member for this amendment. I have just a question for him. I agree that section 13(1)(f) – the language here is slightly different, but it still says “may continue the investigation.” In your remarks you said very clearly “will” and that this was for certainty that the investigations that may have been started will continue, yet the word “may” is still there. If you could please explain that.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Madam Chair, a few of my colleagues may have some other comments, particularly those that are lawyers in the Chamber. I do see the hon. the Municipal Affairs minister is itching, it looks like, to get up in Committee of the Whole this evening, and I'm looking forward to hearing his comments from a legal

perspective. As you know, I'm proud not to be a lawyer. I do advertise that quite often in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

But there are two different issues that I think the hon. member is confusing. The transfer of investigations: it's clear within this amendment. It was clear within the legislation prior to this anyway, but this does make the language more clear for people when they're reading the legislation that it will transfer. The hon. member seems to be indicating that the Legislature would then indicate to an independent officer of the Legislature what investigations they will continue with or how they will proceed with investigations. That would be wrong, in our opinion. It is not the place of this House or any member of this Assembly to indicate to an independent officer of the Legislature what investigations they go forward with. We don't have that information, and in addition to that, it is important that they remain independent from political interference and continue to do their work. To do what the hon. member seems to be suggesting would actually, Madam Chair, I submit to her through you, be getting into a level of political interference, something that the government is not prepared to do.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Government House Leader noted, I am one of the few lawyers in this House – I am one of the few lawyers in the House, hon. members – so I just want to provide a very narrow comment on the question that is asked by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods on the use of “may,” “shall,” “will,” or “must” . . .

**An Hon. Member:** And “can.”

**Mr. Madu:** . . . and “can.” You know, let's bear in mind that the purpose of this amendment, as the House leader rightly said, is to make sure that there isn't any political interference. One of the difficulties between us, members on this side and members opposite, is always this game of philosophical differences and fight when it comes to a matter that is common sense or that is of substance in nature. There are numerous occasions in which the courts have had to interpret the word “may” to “shall.” But what they want us to do with respect to this particular bill is to tie the hands of the Election Commissioner to act in a certain way, which I think would be highly inappropriate. The whole essence is to make sure that that particular officer is independent, uses his own judgment and powers and discretion as has been given to him under the law without the NDP telling that particular member how to do their work.

Legally speaking, again, this is a typical example of how members opposite have inflamed the debate and discussion around this particular issue. My hope is that at some point, you know, they would put aside their extreme ideological partisanship and focus on the issues before them. Courts have interpreted – there are several instances in which the courts have held how to interpret the words “may,” “shall,” and if it becomes an issue for that particular officer, I am confident that that officer will deal with it because under the proposed legislation he would have the authority to deal with that particular issue.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I, too, am very proud not to be a lawyer in this Legislature, but I also want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for his comments because he's correct. You know, I was just talking to my friend from Leduc-

Beaumont, who was also a police officer, and one of the things as a former investigator, both him and myself, is that we have the officer discretion. When a complaint comes in, it's not something that we shall do; this is something that we may do, and we use that officer discretion to either continue on with the investigation or not continue on with the investigation. I do agree with my learned friend the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West that you do not want to tie the hands of an investigator, and you must allow them to have that discretion.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. I thank the House leader for this amendment. I think it is an amendment that provides a lot of clarity for this bill. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my privilege to rise and speak to this amendment. Now, I may not be a lawyer, but I think there's a difference between "may" and "shall." You know, we could just use an example, say, of the Bible. There are the 10 commandments. I don't think they said: thou may not kill. Like, you may, you may not, maybe. It's pretty clear in the context of the Bible: "thou shalt not." Now, there is a difference between "may" and "shall." This does not ensure that the investigation will continue.

10:30

But you know what, Madam Chair? This amendment is irrelevant to the extent that what this bill does is fire the very person who is in the middle of an investigation. That doesn't erase the fact that nowhere in Canada have we ever seen this type of legislation. The Leader of the Official Opposition framed it really well when she said: this is equivalent to if the Prime Minister fired the lead investigator into the SNC-Lavalin case in the middle of the investigation. It's an unprecedented move to eliminate the very position of the person who has open investigations. I mean, this is a very, very serious matter. In fact, that's exactly why the Leader of the Official Opposition refused to apologize and is not in the House at the current moment. This is an unprecedented attack on democracy.

Now, what's astounding – I mean, so far tonight we've talked mostly about the changes to the teachers' pension. If the argument is simply that it's going to save money, then I really don't understand why the government couldn't bother to talk to the teachers. I find it also offensive and reflects a naive understanding of how the ATA works and that somehow either teachers are all New Democrats or – I'm not sure what.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** No, they're not.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much. They're not.

Anyone who says "teachers are all" and put them into a political party box is incorrect. But I can tell you that teachers are upset, most teachers. I don't care what political party they belong to, which way they voted. They're upset because this government is without notice, without consultation, without conversation – the very people who claim that big government is bad. Guess what you're being? Big Brother. You're taking their pension and saying: "We know better. We know where your pension should be. We're going to give it to AIMCo to manage." Now, again, as I've said before, I have the utmost respect for AIMCo. I know that they have delivered good results, but if the teachers – well, first of all, the teachers should have been asked and should be given a choice, not forced through legislation. It speaks volumes, quite frankly, to how the government views consultation and actually having conversations with people.

I mean, that's one of the issues that I have with this current omnibus bill.

I mean, the other thing is that this government has three massive omnibus bills that are before this House right now. Now, Madam Chair, you'll remember in the last four years the number of times members of the former caucus of the Wildrose would stand up and say: how can we debate a piece of legislation this thick when it's only been tabled a day or two ago? I heard it over and over again in the last four years. I know that there are members who remember saying it and who have heard it. I know the Government House Leader may have made comments like that once or twice or maybe more than that.

The point is, Madam Chair, that this legislation was introduced less than 48 hours ago. We've moved into Committee of the Whole. We've gone through second reading. We didn't spend as much time as we would've liked, and now we're in committee. We know that the government intends to, should the House all vote in favour of passage, move this bill through before the end of the week. Now, if that does happen, that's unprecedented. In Alberta a piece of legislation like this has not been introduced and passed through all readings in the same week, let alone a piece of legislation that fires the person who has open, active investigations, and that person now will be terminated. Now, I mean, nobody believes the government when they say: well, he could be hired back. Okay. I guess in theory, sure. I doubt that's going to happen.

The other thing is why do we need this piece of legislation to be passed at breakneck speed, Madam Chair? What is the government afraid of? What does the commissioner know that they don't want to come to the surface? We know that he was scheduled to come in front of Public Accounts next week. Again, you know what? Maybe it's not either of those two reasons. I would love for the government to rise and say, "The reason we need to move this at breakneck speed is because of X," and then we can have a robust discussion about that.

Madam Chair, this piece of legislation makes changes to teachers' pensions without the very people being consulted. Again, you know, coming from a government that claims they like small government: well, clearly, you don't. Your actions are the opposite.

Again, with actions for removing the office of the person who's had over 800 complaints when it comes to the election and election irregularities – now, I would hope that everyone in this House stands for democracy and transparency and wants to ensure that Albertans have a voice and a mechanism, if there are concerns about the election, of how they can be resolved. Quite frankly, the reason that this position was created is because those complaints weren't adequately being resolved or explored, and we heard that from Albertans. To say that it's now rolled into one position, that it's the same thing: it's not the same thing, Madam Chair.

Albertans are concerned. I mean, we've had letters pouring in, not just from teachers. I believe on the teacher file that over 29,000 letters have come in. I know for a fact that every single member in this House has letters coming into the constituency office, and if you stand up and say that you don't, I know that is incorrect. I know that there are letters coming in. They aren't chain letters, Madam Chair; they're from teachers that are writing letters individually and sending them in, expressing their shock that this government would, without their permission, without their input, without any of their questions, make massive changes to their pensions, changing the joint governance, lowering the number of representatives that sit on the pension board. Again, the Finance minister can talk about: we're not changing joint governance. Well, you're changing the number of people in joint governance. So okay. There will be a representative but not the same number that existed before this bill came in.

There's a reason, Madam Chair, that until recently we had about 50 people in the gallery watching the discussion – that's just here – let alone the thousands of people that are watching this debate throughout the province. Teachers, quite frankly, are shocked. This government did not campaign on making sweeping changes to their pensions without talking to them about it first. Like, who do you think you are? To stand up and say: we won with a – well, you didn't win an autocracy. You didn't win every single vote in this province. You didn't win every single vote in your own riding. Nobody did. So to say that you somehow have carte blanche to do whatever you want – I don't know when Alberta turned from a democratic province to whatever this government thinks it is now, where they answer to no one.

Madam Chair, for the purposes of this amendment I appreciate what the Government House Leader is saying it will do. You know what? Even if I give him the benefit of the doubt – I know he can be a good guy – it doesn't change the fact and the reason that I cannot support this bill. It cannot be improved through an amendment. In fact, we could put up 5,000 amendments, and it still would not fix this bill. This bill needs to be torn up, and the government needs to go and talk to the teachers, find out what they want to do with their money. If the teachers say, "Yes, you know what? We're happy to move from the ATRF to AIMCo," then okay. I wouldn't stand up here and have a problem. If the teachers voted on what they wanted to do with their pension and they voted, "We want to move it," that's their democratic right. I would support that. But to stand and say it's going to save money, yet the board – and I'd appreciate if the Finance minister will clarify this because from his previous comments he had said that the ATRF board will still have oversight or still be involved as far as how the funds are being invested. Then where's that cost savings? The board is doing their exact same work, only now they actually don't have the authority to direct how the money is being invested.

10:40

The other thing is – and maybe the government would have a little bit of a rationale or a leg to stand on if the ATRF was really poorly performing and AIMCo's return on investment was much higher. Even then I would say that you still need to ask the teachers. It's their money. But the ATRF is performing better than AIMCo. The teachers didn't ask for this. The teachers haven't been consulted. Now, whether the government wants to go through the ATA or talk to teachers directly, that's fine. But I will remind all members that the ATA is a professional organization, so it is extremely disrespectful for any member to talk poorly about the ATA. I can tell you that they will not be very happy when they hear the comments that were made by the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. But they weren't consulted. No teacher was. Or if they were – you know what? If I'm wrong, then I'm happy for the Finance minister to stand up and say: here's a list of all of the teachers we've reached out to, maybe not individually by name, but these are the schools that we talked to to get input on whether or not we should move their pension funds.

In addition to my concerns about the pension changes, in summary, Madam Chair, this amendment is irrelevant to the extent that it doesn't change the fact that the very position that is undergoing active investigations is being fired. For that reason I will not be supporting this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and talk about some of the things that the Official Opposition House Leader had to say and correct some of

the record. First of all, I would not accuse the Official Opposition House Leader in any way of deliberately misrepresenting facts or misleading this Chamber because I don't think that was his intention. With that said, though, he spent a significant amount of time . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order: 23(h), (i), and (j). The Speaker has ruled over and over again that you cannot do or say – you cannot back door a comment. What you would say – you can't impose it. I'm not thinking of the right words. You can't impute a motive of what you would say . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Indirectly.

**Mr. Bilous:** . . . indirectly what you can say directly. Thank you for that help. This was a team effort on this point of order. I appreciate that.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Rising on the point of order, I in no way was back dooring a comment. In fact, I was very, very clear that I don't think that at any point the Official Opposition House Leader would attempt to mislead the House. Unless he thinks me saying that he would not mislead the House is in some way saying that he would mislead the House, I don't even follow the logic. But you know what? Madam Chair, I'm feeling very charitable this evening, so I'll be happy to withdraw the comments that the Official Opposition House Leader would not mislead the House. I don't know what he's trying to say, but I'll let the people at home figure that out.

Back to the comments in regard to Public Accounts. This is the problem, Madam Chair, with this legislation and the NDP's approach to most of their files but particularly in the last few days in this legislation. The NDP continue to misrepresent facts whether deliberately or by accident, I think probably a combination of both. In this case I'll give the Official Opposition House Leader the benefit of the doubt. He's new to the Official Opposition side although this is his second time on that side of the House. I don't know if he has forgot the difference between standing committees, but he continues to say that the Election Commissioner was coming next week to the Public Accounts Committee. That is not factual. The Election Commissioner was not scheduled to attend the Public Accounts committee next week. That's not factual. That's the problem with the NDP's approach to this. They continue to say things that are not factual. How do they expect Albertans to believe them when they continue to do that?

An example yesterday: they continued to tell the media and everybody that they could that there was time allocation already moved on Bill 22 – not factual – and that they were only going to get three hours to debate Bill 22. Not factual. In fact, I was on my way in to question period today when I was speaking with the media. It was interesting to be able to have that conversation about the fact that the day before, the NDP told the media that they were only going to have three hours to be able to debate the bill, and the night before, we had already debated this bill for over four hours and were well on our way to much past four hours and will continue for a period of time significantly longer than that. So again not factual. Well, how can Albertans believe a party that at the very least gets it wrong so much?

Now, the Election Commissioner was scheduled, like all independent officers of the Legislature, to come to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. I don't know if the hon. member has the privilege of being a member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices or if he ever has. I do know that I have had the privilege of being a member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices for several years, Madam Chair, and I can inform you that the Election Commissioner and the Chief Electoral

Officer and the Ethics Commissioner and the Auditor General and the Ombudsman and the Privacy Commissioner and the Child and Youth Advocate and on and on: those independent officers of the Legislature do report to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to talk about their budget. That is what was scheduled for next week, Madam Chair, when it came to the Election Commissioner, to discuss his budget, not to discuss investigations of any kind. In fact, that would not happen. In no way would the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices try to politically interfere in any sort of investigations, and I don't think any member on that committee from any party would try to politically interfere in an investigation. So why all of a sudden do the NDP want to give the impression that the Election Commissioner would go to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to talk about some sort of investigation?

Madam Chair, you know. I think, in fact, if I recall, you were a member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices for a while, maybe you still are. I don't know. You know what the process is. It just becomes kind of ridiculous when the NDP misrepresent facts so much to Albertans. How do I now as a member of this place who is trying to listen to their ideas when it comes to this legislation at this point, in Committee of the Whole – hopefully, the hon. members bring forward some amendments that may or may not benefit this legislation from the government's perspective. I hope they do bring forward some that will benefit it. If it happens, I'm sure the hon. the Minister of Finance will be happy to pass those amendments to be able to make his legislation better. But how could he even trust the Official Opposition now, when they misrepresent so many facts just on one piece of legislation over the last couple of days? How can any Albertan who is paying any level of attention trust the NDP? Now, I guess, Madam Chair, that's why the NDP are the only one-term government in the history of the province and they were fired in April. But I digress.

Some of the other concerns that the hon. Opposition House Leader has raised I found quite offensive, frankly, Madam Chair, in regard to the CEO of Elections Alberta, an organization that has overseen elections in this province for over a century. For over a century it has overseen the elections in this province. I have met the current CEO of Elections Alberta several times, particularly in my capacity as a member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, and know that my experience with him – in fact, I sat on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, that was put together by the hon. Opposition House Leader's current leader when she was the Premier of Alberta. The current CEO of Elections Alberta sat on that committee with us for several months, doing important work as we went through the process of revising election laws inside the province of Alberta. My experience with him is that he has always acted in a nonpartisan way. He has been very, very competent in his capacity as the CEO of Elections Alberta and certainly has shown no reason for anybody not to trust him or for any member of this House to indicate that they don't trust the CEO of Elections Alberta or Elections Alberta to do the important work that they've done in this province for a century.

I will point out to you that the current CEO of Elections Alberta was reappointed by an NDP government when the NDP government had control of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and could have appointed anybody that they liked. So, clearly, it appears that they trusted Glen Resler to do that job. But then I just watched the Official Opposition House Leader rise and say that there were not adequate investigations going on, that issues were not being resolved when it came to our election system, Madam Chair. That's a direct attack, from my perspective, on an independent officer of this Legislature, to even imply that the CEO

of Elections Alberta and Elections Alberta were in some way not doing their job when they had that capacity.

10:50

I'd say that at the very least maybe it's indicating that the NDP, who are now the Official Opposition, when they were in government seemed to have some sort of a problem with the Chief Electoral Officer. I don't know why they reappointed him, then, if that was the case, but to stand in this House and say that about an independent officer of this Legislature, Madam Chair, I would submit to you is offensive and, quite frankly, shameful, and the hon. member should apologize to the Chief Electoral Officer.

I do note that the Official Opposition House Leader again glosses over a couple of very important facts. The first is that not one province – I don't know if every hon. member knows this – in this country has an independent Chief Electoral Officer and an independent Election Commissioner, not one province except for Alberta, who just got that recently, in 2018, after the then NDP government forced it through under time allocation. Then Government House Leader Brian Mason forced it through under time allocation and brought in a separate office, making us different from any other jurisdiction in the country. At the time the legacy parties that make up the current government – actually, no. We were already merged, Madam Chair. The current party that makes up the government in the province of Alberta had lots of protests about that idea because the structure was wrong.

You know, Madam Chair, who made it so clear that the structure was wrong? The current Election Commissioner. The current Election Commissioner that the hon. members are referring to has written advice to other provincial and territorial governments, including the Northwest Territories, advising them how to structure offices around elections. I used the quote in question period the other day, as the hon. members may remember. It makes it clear that it makes no sense to separate the management and the investigation of our elections, and it makes sense to keep them in one capacity. Now, there are two jurisdictions in this country, and soon to be three if Bill 22 is passed into law in the coming days, that have an Election Commissioner and a CEO of Elections Alberta or Elections Canada, but they are in the same office. The Election Commissioner works for the Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Manitoba, Elections Canada, and, if Bill 22 passes, Elections Alberta.

Now, the other thing that the Official Opposition House Leader said – and I think this just proves the point that the NDP will just say anything. You'd think that after all these years I would have already figured that out, but sometimes it just quite shocks me. When you see the Official Opposition House Leader get up and say with a straight face that this bill will get rid of the office – he said it, Madam Chair – of the Election Commissioner, that hon. member must know if he read the bill that that is not factual. Or he didn't read the bill, and I don't know why he would comment on it and say some sort of office had been replaced inside that legislation if that is not the fact. The Election Commissioner's office remains in place. The staff that are within the Election Commissioner's office remain in place.

The idea that all of a sudden when the Election Commissioner's office and the process of investigations is brought back into the same system that used it for a hundred years that somehow information or serious investigations that may or may not be happening would automatically just puff and disappear is ridiculous, first of all, but, second of all, just a complete and utter attack on the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta. Madam Chair, that is what the Official Opposition is saying when they say that.



The people that will come and take over those files and those investigations and any of the information that may be in the Election Commissioner's office are not me. It's not the Premier of Alberta. It's not any member of this cabinet. It's not any member of this Legislature on either side of the aisles. It's not the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. Do you know who it is, Madam Chair? It is the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta, an independent officer of this Legislature who has served this province for a very long time, served it with integrity, and has never, as far as I know, been accused of any wrongdoing that I am aware of – certainly, if he was, I don't know why the NDP would have reappointed him – and has brought forward several elections without any complaint, including the last election and an election before that, where the then Jim Prentice PC government called a snap election a year before an election was supposed to be called. I know that I ran in that election, and I don't recall any significant problems. There are always problems in an election because it's pretty complicated to run an election across a province the size of this province, but no major problems. He was able to bring in the 29th and 30th Legislature, in my experience, with no problem.

Now he – wherever he is, if he's watching this – has to get up and watch the Official Opposition House Leader, the Leader of the Opposition's right hand inside this Chamber, and watch him say with a straight face that somehow, Madam Chair, the Chief Electoral Officer is going to make investigations disappear. It's appalling. To repeatedly say that inside this place is just offensive.

If there is some reason that that member knows of that the Chief Electoral Officer would do that, it's certainly his responsibility as a member of the Legislature to go to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. But it seems to me that he has indicated that he's not a member of, but as you know, Madam Chair, any member of this Legislature can attend a standing committee meeting at any time. He should inform the chair that there's a reason that the Chief Electoral Officer cannot be trusted with investigations, because I'm certain the Chamber needs to know that.

But you know what, Madam Chair? I suspect he won't go out of this Chamber and say that about the Chief Electoral Officer. He won't go out and say that about Elections Alberta anywhere but in this Chamber where he enjoys parliamentary immunity. If he truly believes that the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta are so corrupt – and they're not – that they would somehow make investigations disappear, he should march out and he should tell that to the TV cameras. If he really thinks that about Glen Resler, the independent officer of this Legislature in charge of our elections, he should leave this room where he has parliamentary immunity and go and tell those TV cameras what he just did there. You know what? He won't do it. He won't do it because it's not true.

The CEO of Elections Alberta has operated with integrity in the entire time that I have had the privilege of serving inside this Chamber. He deserves better than that from the Official Opposition, Madam Chair. Again, watching the NDP approach legislation like this just shows you again why Albertans fired them. It just shows you again why they probably will never return to government in our lifetime, and, as I predict, if this is how they're going to approach Official Opposition, they'll be the third party and then eventually not even a party inside this Chamber.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I just wanted to add my voice as the Member of the Legislature for Edmonton-South West to the ongoing debate on Bill 22.

You know, Madam Chair, I have listened to the contributions coming from the members opposite on key issues contained in Bill

22. Number one, the office of the Election Commissioner and the teachers' pension – let me say this about the Election Commissioner. I listened to the Member for St. Albert in her remarks say that the Election Commissioner has fined the UCP and their operatives. Again, this goes to show the level of misinformation designed to cause fear and anxiety out there. Let's be clear. The Election Commissioner has not fined the United Conservative Party, and as I've always said . . .

**Ms Renaud:** Just your operatives.

**Mr. Madu:** I'm sure that *Hansard* would confirm that you said "the UCP and their operatives."

That was the language expressly used by the Member for St. Albert, and that goes to show some of the difficulties that I, quite frankly, have had with members opposite. In my very few remarks before this House I have appealed to them to focus on facts and the substance before this particular House and not political theatre, looking into these cameras in this Chamber. Again, to be clear, the Election Commissioner has not fined the UCP as a political party.

But coming to the substance of the bill before this particular House, you know, what we have had – Madam Chair, speaking through you to everybody out there, and there are citizens listening across this particular province – from the NDP is to say that we have, by this particular bill, fired the office of the Election Commissioner and that it is designed to gut the investigations against the UCP and their members.

**11:00**

Madam Chair, I just wanted to read into the record that section 153.093(2) of the bill reads:

On the coming into force of subsection (1), the following applies . . .

- (c) an existing cause of action, claim or liability to prosecution of, by or against the Office of the Election Commissioner is unaffected by the coming into force of this section and may be continued by or against the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

I've already addressed the legal meaning of may, shall, can, and will and how the courts of this land, including the highest court of this country, have looked at the interpretation and the application of those words. But no. The NDP would – [interjection] I can see why the Member for Edmonton-Decore would heckle because any time you speak the facts, it rattles them so bad because that is not what they're interested in. To anyone listening out there, that really is contained in this particular bill.

I will also go further to read into the record subsection (f), which says:

an investigation commenced by the Election Commissioner under section 153.09 of this Act or section 44.95 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act before the coming into force of this section may be continued by the person who holds the position of Election Commissioner.

What we have been hearing in the media and online coming from the NDP and their allies is that this is designed to end the ongoing investigation by the Election Commissioner. To the contrary, and let me be clear to all those watching and listening tonight: all of those functions are preserved by the bill that is being debated before this particular House. Their fundamental problem, which is, again, a philosophical difference between those of us over here and the members opposite, is what they have always done. Prior to the introduction of the Election Commissioner, that office was never in existence for the more than 100 years that this province has had to manage elections. [interjection]

Again, Member for St. Albert, there is another point, remember, between those of us over here and the members opposite. Whilst we will stay quiet and allow them to speak – we will give them all the time they require to speak – they would never allow those of us over here to say what we want to say. Under the Westminster parliamentary system, when we allow you to speak and hear all that you have to say, it is common decency and courtesy that you would give the same to us. As a newly elected member of this House I am still hopefully looking forward to the day when that will be the case.

Again, there isn't anything that we have done other than to say to the NDP that we've had a system that has served us so well for more than 100 years and that we have never had any problem with. It has worked so well. We have a Chief Electoral Officer whose record is impeccable, an independent officer of this House who has had the honour of performing the particular jobs and responsibilities for a while, until the NDP said: "Hell, no. We must infuse our political ideology and division into our politics." That's exactly what this is all about, and they would want our citizens across this province to believe that this is anything other than their pursuit of their ideological purity. No, Madam Chair, I don't think that was what the people of this province voted for us to do.

You will recall that in the period leading up to the election, there was fear and smear and divisive and identity politics to the point where even their allies, the NDP and their allies, called my very self a white supremacist. You can go online and fact-check this. I still have the e-mail asking me to apologize for being a white supremacist. Many of them took to Twitter and Facebook echoing the sentiment. Again, why would they not sit down and pay attention to the facts? No. They are prepared to ignore the facts in pursuit of their ideological intention, which has always been to create fear amongst our citizens.

Madam Chair, I do not think that is what the people of this province voted for. I do not want to dwell too much on the Election Commissioner issue but simply to conclude on that particular point that if they think that returning this province to the system that virtually every single province, including the federal government, operates under – if they think that is bad, then in the next election they will have the opportunity to take that before the people of our province. With that, it is astonishing the level of fear that I have had to sit in this Chamber and see emanate from the members opposite.

I will now turn my attention to, again, one of their fear and smear – and I'm glad that some of our teachers are in the gallery tonight. Let me say to them that I have enormous respect for all of you, for all of our teachers. I have always said in public that I do not think that I would be standing before this people's Chamber if it were not for the men and women like our teachers. Many of you here know where I come from and my history. Education is something that I do not toy with. If it were not for education, I do not think that I would be here speaking to this particular bill. I want our teachers to know that there is nothing that we have proposed, in giving AIMCo the responsibility to manage the investment portion of your pension, that is an attempt to gut or destroy or, in the language of the members opposite, to take over your pension.

You know, Madam Chair, AIMCo, as a fund management company, manages all kinds of funds from endowment funds to pension plans to government funds to special proposed funds. Some of the funds currently under the management of AIMCo are the local authorities pension plan, the public service pension plan, the special forces pension plan, and the management employees pension plan. The entire public service's pension plans, all of those plans, are under the management of AIMCo.

11:10

For the NDP to sit in this particular Chamber and say that this is a takeover by this side of the House, you know, to somehow weaken the particular pension that is for the interest and benefit of teachers is ridiculous. I mean, nothing could be further from the truth. Again, it is always a case of fearmongering. But I think that at the root of this particular issue is the world view of the NDP. For those of you who have had the opportunity to take a look at the NDP constitution, there is something that is called socialism, and oftentimes we accuse them of being socialists. Many of them have also had to stand up in this particular House and want to run away from that, but in their own constitution, appendix C of the NDP constitution, under the Principles and Aims of the Alberta New Democratic Party, they say this:

Socialism is essentially the application of democracy to the economy.

**Member Irwin:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. Yes. Under consideration right now we have an amendment that is relevant to something other than what the member is talking about, so under 23(b). He's speaking about our party constitution, which is not relevant, and I would urge you to call this out of order.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I know that in Committee of the Whole there is certainly a broad latitude. I believe that the member was certainly bringing his story into a direction that of course is part of what we are discussing right now in Committee of the Whole. I would argue that this is purely a matter of debate, and I hope that the member will be able to continue with his story.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, discussions frequently in this Chamber are not all on point at all times yet sometimes relevant to the discussion at hand. There has been a large breadth given to all members in this Assembly when it comes to that matter, but I would urge all members that, you know, temperatures are high. This is an emotional topic for many, and it's a good reminder for all members to focus on the task at hand.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has the floor.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There is no doubt that I am discussing Bill 22, which is what the amendment before us is all about. I also listened to the opposition leader talk about some of the things that pertain to Bill 22 but were not entirely focused on the amendment before this House.

Madam Chair, you know, I was referring the House to appendix C of the NDP constitution. This is their document, what they say they represent. Again, they wrote:

Socialism is essentially the application of democracy to the economy. Economic democracy, i.e. democratic socialism, assures production to supply the needs of all people. Decisions about what shall be produced, when and where, and decisions about where we shall make our living and under what conditions,

are now left largely in the hands of private interests. The market economy produces transnational corporations, who give private profit priority over public interest, social justice and workplace democracy. Through the efforts of many, we have achieved a degree of social and political democracy. Economic democracy demands a co-operative rather than a competitive system . . .

The New Democratic Party believes that only a revolution in thinking can lead to the establishment of democratic socialism.

Madam Chair, half of how we determine how we build a society that we can be proud of and that our children can be proud of is the lens with which we view the world.

Here you have the NDP, you know, when they were in office, when they were in government twice using closure to appoint the current Election Commissioner, and they also used closure on Bill 6. They have used it twice while they were in office, minimum twice, something that they have today stood in this particular House to attack us on. It's the height of hypocrisy. You will hear them argue: oh, circumstances are different. No, circumstances are not different. The fact remains that you've used something that you've called undemocratic. That is exactly the language that many of their members have used tonight to describe what happened in this House tonight, undemocratic. It's something that they've used at least twice. To every member in this particular House and to all members, everyone listening: that is what we are dealing with from the NDP.

Again, the corollary to that as well is our desire on our part to make sure that we run efficient government, to make sure that we depart from what we saw in the last four years, a previous government that believed that, you know, you can tax anything that runs or is standing. They would want us to pour money on any problem that they see out there without an opportunity to think through that system, to make sure that the system is actually serving the taxpayers of this province well. No wonder that here you have a political party that knows how to spend money without end, that doesn't understand that there's only one pot of money, that we don't pluck money from trees, that there's no pot there kept somewhere where we go and dip our hands to get money, and that there's only one taxpayer, who is either our citizens or our corporations.

What did they do? They like to complain about consultation, but they brought the largest multibillion dollars in taxes, that they did not consult with the people of Alberta on. They did not have a democratic mandate to impose that multibillion dollars in tax.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand up and speak to the amendment to Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. Just so we're clear, we're talking about this amendment. Yes, I listened to the minister talk a lot about, you know, what we're saying: it is incorrect, there's no harm here, there's nothing to worry about, trust us. The reality is that this is your amendment. That means something.

**11:20**

The other part is that – I understand that you're a lawyer; I am most definitely not a lawyer – I do have issue with some words. As I listened to you talk about the words – and I'm not going to make any lawyer jokes or anything. Here's the thing. I'm going to play off what my colleague said earlier. There's a difference between "You may pay your fines for collusion" and "You will pay your fines for collusion." Do you see how that works, how that word works in a sentence? There's a big difference, and your amendment misses it. In my opinion, this amendment is really just trying to appease someone because I believe, Madam Chair, that the

government understands that there is a massive amount of protest, blowback, and concern with this piece of legislation.

Although I do appreciate the government's attempt to make this really, really large, overreaching, unconsulted, undemocratic in my opinion, piece of legislation a little bit better, Madam Chair, you missed, because what you needed to put in here is, absolutely, "will." Don't leave any wiggle room, because I think that we all know in this place that it's really important to have language that doesn't allow for the wiggle room, that makes it very clear. "Shall," "will": that's clear. "May": not so clear.

Let's move on a little bit from the particular wording in here. The minister spoke up and just talked a little bit about: the opposition is really sort of making hay with this bill, and really, instead of raising legitimate concerns, what they're doing is creating division. Madam Chair, I take issue with that. I would say that causing division is perhaps having something like a little secret war room to report un-Albertan activities. Something like that would be divisive. Something like aligning yourself with a group like, say, Rebel media, that spreads hate and lies: that's dividing. What we are doing is our job, and we're opposing a piece of legislation that is, in my opinion, an overreach that is hard to describe.

Yeah. Talk about consultation: if you are going to take away whatever control exists for teachers and for other pension holders, the very least you could do is speak to them, and you didn't do that because, once again, you know better, but we're supposed to trust you, just like – you know, I think back, Madam Chair. Trust is a big thing, and I think that even if it was the correct thing to do – let's just say that moving these pensions was the correct thing to do and that it made sense for everybody, for government, for Albertans – you have to ask, you have to consult them, you have to speak to them. Why do you think they're speaking out by the tens of thousands? They're not okay with this. This attempt to try to make it better and then tell us that the language is, "Well, you know, you should know that this will work, no problem" – that's not right. That's not fair. I mean, you might get a gold medal for linguistic gymnastics, but that's about it.

I'd like to go and talk a little bit about – I read this article. I wish I would have written down the title of it. It's from, I think, the International Monetary Fund. It was an article about corruption in government, and one of the quotes that stuck with me said: corruption distorts government priorities. I would, Madam Chair, expand that a little bit to say that even the perception of that distorts government priorities because the government priorities should be – certainly, we have a different lens. We look at things through a different lens. But when you start to spend so much energy and time trying to silence people and to silence opposition, to limit debate, to not consult, to miss all of those really important steps that are part of our democracy, you are distorting the government priorities, and that's what this is about.

Now, I listened to the House leader kind of go on about: well, we have this position; we don't need the Election Commissioner. I would say simply, looking at the track record of the Election Commissioner in the last little while, that I'm pretty happy he was there. I don't know about you all, Madam Chair. I don't know about the people that have been fined. There are, like, \$211,000 worth of fines, and if I'm not mistaken – perhaps I am, and if I'm to be corrected, then I will be – the independent Election Commissioner referred something to the RCMP. That seems pretty serious.

For anybody watching at home, if you are unclear on the role of an independent officer, the independent Election Commissioner, that, yes, is a new position, that was a new position, it was put in place for a reason, because if there is anything that we do in this place, it's that we protect and defend the democracy, the electoral process – and that includes the money that goes into the electoral

process – so that every single Albertan's vote matters just as much as their neighbours'. Dark money should not influence our elections. It should be about each individual Albertan casting a vote. It's pretty simple.

This additional layer of oversight was welcome. I welcomed it because I think that if you want to say that you promote transparency and you are a protector of democracy, you do stuff like this. This is what you do. I think that if we look back at the history of this tiny, little office – and it's not a big office – they've been pretty productive. They've been quite busy. They identified where people chose to not respect the law: \$211,000 worth of fines. That's something. That is something.

For those watching along at home, if you have your computer or smart phone, I would say: check it out. It's at the office of the Alberta Election Commissioner. It talks about the role of this position, and it talks about the legislation that guides it. It's really straightforward, it's really easy to understand, and you can see why a position like this for independent oversight is so important.

The job of the Election Commissioner is to ensure compliance with and enforcement of the Election Act, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act and certain aspects of the Local Authorities Election Act. Non-compliance and enforcement matters relating to federal elections do not fall within [this],

just so we're clear.

Now, I think the House leader, Madam Chair, if I'm not mistaken, earlier was trying to say something about us standing up and saying that the termination of this position was somehow being disrespectful to another position. Well, that's not true. These are two very independent positions. They do different things, and I would think that they would welcome each other's help. That's a fair amount of work. To properly oversee a provincial election is kind of a big deal. I continue to ask myself, like: why on earth would this particular government be so focused on getting rid of this person? Well, if you go to the website and you have a scroll in, you can read, you can learn quite a bit about this position. You might get a sense of why this government is really focused on getting rid of this position.

But let's focus on the actual commissioner.

[Mr.] Gibson was Alberta's 5th Chief Electoral Officer . . .

That's great: lots of experience.

. . . from June 2006 to March 2009 and previously held the position of Deputy Chief Electoral Officer for Manitoba. [He] has been working in the election field as an election administrator and an election management consultant for more than 20 years. He is a recognized expert in the area of election law enforcement. Lorne Gibson was a public representative on the Discipline Committee of the Manitoba Law Society . . . and a member of the Appeals Committee for the College of Registered Nurses . . .

I don't think any of us will dispute that this is an incredibly appropriate person for this role. I think that if you look at even the last few months, what this person in a very small office – I think that it's just the commissioner and actually four full-time employees that are doing all of this work.

11:30

So, you know, going back to what the government told us, Madam Chair, that really they were just getting rid of this position to save money, that it's all about saving money – that's it; it's just about saving money – yeah, Albertans don't buy that. Albertans do not buy that. A million dollars over five years and you are going to chip away at the oversight of provincial elections? That's not right. I don't buy it.

Back to the amendment. This is very clearly the government saying: "I think we made a mistake. Let's try to fix it. Let's try to fix this piece a little bit." Only you missed it again, because you

didn't include the language that you needed to. What you needed to include was not "may" but "shall" and "will," and you missed it. This amendment misses it. You missed it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Actually, I am very thrilled to see this amendment come out. I think it makes it crystal clear that any investigation or anything going on before the act comes into power will carry on. In the first revision the word is correct. The opposition has pointed out that it does say that before the coming into force of this section, it "may" be continued by the person.

But the amendment clearly changes that, and the article isn't "shall" or "will". It's actually "is." That's the article that changes it and makes all the difference, in my mind, even though I'm not a lawyer.

The responsibility for an investigation commenced by the Election Commissioner by section 153.09 of this Act or section 44.95 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act before the coming into force of this section is transferred . . .

"Is transferred." "Is" is a definitive article, if I remember what my mother, who was a teacher, taught me. I really appreciate that definitive article being in there. It makes all the difference to me.

That's why I am thrilled to support this amendment to make it very clear not only for us but for everybody who's partaking in this bill that any investigation is transferred. What that independent officer, at arm's-length from any elected official, chooses to do with that investigation is up to them. That's where the word "may" comes into force, their actions at that point in time. It would be entirely inappropriate for any elected official in this House to direct an independent officer in what they should and should not do. To me, it's very clear – and I'm just a layperson; I'm not a lawyer – so I'm thrilled about that.

I'm also thrilled that in the act they may appoint the commissioner again. I would assume that with an office of this repute in Alberta, if they terminate an office and create a new office with the same name under an arm's-length, independent Chief Electoral Officer, they would pick somebody who was competent, educated, experienced, thorough, prudent. I would assume that someone with those characteristics may be the current Election Commissioner. Maybe he'll put his resumé in, and maybe he'll be chosen by that independent, arm's-length person if he fits the bill.

I am sure that the current Election Commissioner in his investigations must have taken some notes, maybe has some files, some contacts, come to some conclusions. I'm sure that it's not just stored in his brain. I'm sure that being a competent, educated, experienced, thorough, prudent investigator, he would have written that down and that those files would be transferred to whoever holds that position, whether it is the existing individual or whoever else is chosen because they are competent, educated, experienced, thorough, and prudent.

For me, this amendment needs to be highlighted, and the primary fact of why it is being brought here is to make it crystal clear that any investigation is transferred to that office. That's why I am very happy to support it and thankful that the government brought that forward for all of us who aren't lawyers to be able to understand it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The custom is that a member of the opposition will speak next, so I will recognize the Member for Edmonton-Decore and then a member from the government.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that because I have been itching for the last little while to speak to this amendment. I've heard some very, very interesting comments here as this has proceeded along.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

You know, like the Member for St. Albert, I too am not a lawyer. However, I do come from labour, Mr. Chair. I've served as a shop steward, I've served as a union representative with the local's membership as a whole, and I've sat on the bargaining committee – guess what? – working on language. So I was listening intently to the Minister of Municipal Affairs talking about how these words are interchangeable. I highly disagree, because we've seen, as an entire labour movement, fight after fight after arbitration after arbitration after grievance around the word “may.”

But you know what? I'm going to run with your idea here that they are interchangeable. Based on those comments from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and MLA for Edmonton-South West, that would mean that any future arbitrations, any future grievances, any future legal challenges arguing around the word “may” will now mean it's an automatic win for those people challenging that word that was used inappropriately.

If that's not the case and they're not able to succeed in those challenges, I would then assume that the government will step in, that the labour minister will say: “Oh, no. These are interchangeable words. They mean the same thing, so you have to award it to those grievors, to those ones submitting the arbitrations to the labour board.” I have a feeling that the people from labour are going to be very, very excited about that potential now, that they will no longer have to continue to fight that word “may.”

When I look at the implications that this amendment has, Mr. Chair, on the language that we currently have, when we talk about how the Election Commissioner will be terminated upon effect of this coming into force – and that refers to subsection (5) – in subsection (6) it says:

The person who, immediately before the coming into force of this section . . .

which, of course, would be our currently serving Election Commissioner, Mr. Gibson,

. . . held the office of Election Commissioner under this Act may be appointed.

So as soon as the act comes into force, he will now have his job again as the Election Commissioner, rolled into the elections office. That's how I understand it. That's your language. You're the expert telling me that he's getting terminated, and then he's immediately getting rehired right away to serve as Election Commissioner, which makes me feel a whole lot better because, of course, the Election Commissioner currently has somewhere in the neighbourhood of 800 different files that he is looking at. To take away the individual that has been working on that and depending on how long it would take to rehire somebody, it poses a significant problem, so I'm really glad that that transition now will be seamless.

The unfortunate part, Mr. Chair, is that, because of my experience, I know that that word is not the case, and I think we're going to have some problems moving forward. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview basically said that even with these changes, the bill itself still contains very, very significant problems. I have a feeling that we had probably a very incredible viewership tonight on Assembly TV, just based on the number of people that we had in the galleries watching the debate on Bill 22.

I don't think that this amendment is going to serve the way you think it will. I guess, at the end of the day, we'll see how that

happens, and I look forward to watching how this rolls out, Mr. Chair.

11:40

**The Acting Chair:** The Minister of Treasury Board and Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to speak to this amendment. This is an amendment that provides clarity, and on the theme of clarity I would like to provide additional clarity on Bill 22 in a number of areas. To provide clarity, ultimately we have to go back to the rationale for the bill as a whole and the fact that Bill 22 is a budget implementation bill. Albertans elected this government to bring fiscal responsibility to the province.

Mr. Chair, fiscal responsibility is something that had not occurred in this province over the last four years, and Albertans were loud and clear last April. They elected a government who would commit to bringing this province to balance. They elected a government who would build a sure and strong foundation by responsible fiscal management that would ensure economic growth and prosperity not only for this generation but for the next generation.

That is the budget that this government presented on October 24, and it's that budget for which this bill is so important, because Bill 22 is part of the effort to implement that budget that we presented to Albertans. Bill 22 is about streamlining government processes. Bill 22 is about simplifying and improving program delivery. Bill 22, Mr. Chair, is about ensuring that Albertans receive value for their hard-earned tax dollars. Bill 22 is about operating efficiently and providing better value.

I want to speak a little bit about the ATRF pensions because, Mr. Chair, there is so much misinformation and fearmongering going around these days in the province around ATRF pensions. Firstly – and I've risen and made this comment time and time again, but I need to make it again right now – by moving ATRF investment management functions to AIMCo, ATRF will continue to own and be the managers of teachers' pensions in this province. Pension benefits will remain unchanged. The ATRF will continue to provide strategic policy direction on how those funds are managed. I believe there's confusion around who pays for a defined benefit pension plan in this province. Teachers pay for part of that defined benefit plan, but taxpayers pay the other half of a defined benefit pension plan in the province.

Mr. Chair, Albertans elected this government to manage the province's finances responsibly, thinking of this generation, thinking of today's public servants and tomorrow's public servants and the next generation. When we took office and I was sworn in as a minister last spring, I, like, I expect, all of the other ministers, asked of our departments to identify efficiencies, identify opportunities for this government to provide better value to Albertans, and the department came back with a long list of opportunities to find efficiencies, to deliver more cost-effectively, to save hard-earned taxpayers' dollars.

We know what the MacKinnon panel reported, that Alberta spends \$10.4 billion more per capita every year than the average of British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. Mr. Chair, the MacKinnon panel put a fine point on where our problem lies, and we have to deliver much more efficiently – much more efficiently – than the previous government delivered on behalf of Albertans. Moving ATRF to AIMCo is a value proposition that will benefit teachers, that will strengthen their pensions, that in the long term will reduce their contributions while maintaining their defined pension benefits.

Mr. Chair, it will also reduce taxpayer cost to supporting the other half of pension contributions, which lies squarely on the government as the employer and ultimately on Alberta taxpayers.

But there's more because the government or employer contributions actually come out of our Education budget. As you know, this government committed to Albertans that we would not reduce the Education budget. K to 12 education is critically important even at a time of fiscal restraint.

Last year, Mr. Chair, Alberta Education spent \$405 million on their portion of the defined benefit premiums. As we can find savings and efficiencies due to using AIMCo, which manages a larger volume of assets which will create economies of scale and drive down the costs of managing those investments, not only will teachers benefit – and they will – but Alberta taxpayers will benefit. Those funds that we saved will remain in our Education budget. By moving ATRF pensions to be managed, for the investments to be managed by AIMCo, this will add \$20 million to the front lines of education spending every year. Albertans elected this government to deliver more efficiently, to deliver more effectively, to respect Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars. This move accomplishes that.

Mr. Chair, I haven't mentioned the cost to this government to pay for the unfunded portion of the pre-1992 teacher pension plan, which the Alberta government, Alberta taxpayers, have taken sole responsibility of. That is an additional \$471 million. This government, the taxpayers of this province have every reason to be very interested in the risk management and the returns of the Alberta teacher pension plan. The really great part, Mr. Chair, is that the teachers' goals and taxpayers' goals are congruent. Both parties will benefit from increased returns, lower costs, and less risk. We have the same goals, the same end. This transfer of managing the investment assets of ATRF, moving that investment responsibility to AIMCo, will accomplish just that.

I want to reiterate a key important fact that gets lost in the discussion at every turn, and that is this: that ATRF will continue to manage the pension plan, that representation on ATRF will remain the same, that ATRF will continue to own the pension plan. The government is not taking the teachers' pension plan. ATRF will continue to provide high-level strategic policy direction for those pension funds.

Mr. Chair, I just believed it was incredibly important as we discuss clarity in the amendment before the House that we clarify some key facts around one of the provisions in Bill 22.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, we will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Acting Chair:** We will now move on to further discussion on Bill 22. Any members wishing to speak to the bill, Bill 22? Thank you. The Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

11:50

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm rising in the House to speak against Bill 22. We had quite a bit of patience listening to the debate on Bill 22, the views of the government House members from the other side, for hours and hours. One thing I really wanted to stress is that it does not change the fact that through this Bill 22 the government is taking the case in hand to remove this very officer, the position that is investigating some of the government House members. This is a fact. This fact did not change. It does not matter, like, how long a debate we have and whichever government House members, you know, rise to defend Bill 22. This fact is obvious, and it's still there. The government has presented this bill to remove the Election Commissioner that had been investigating the government House members for the last almost two years.

I just wanted to stress that in a democracy one of the important tenets of the democratic principles is the rule of law, where government and government officials have to obey the same law just like everyone else. This is something under this bill that the government is trying to avoid to protect the members of the government that are being investigated by the Election Commissioner.

Going into a little bit of history, in 2017 the Election Commissioner of Alberta had levied more than \$211,000 in fines against people and organizations involved with the campaign for Jeff Callaway, who ran for the leadership of the UCP in 2017. The same year the documents leaked and showed that people working on UCP leadership campaign for the Premier and Callaway for months exchanged strategies, ideas, memes, advertising, plans, and talking points. The commissioner has to date levied 31 administrative penalties against people and organizations connected to the Callaway campaign for allegedly funnelling money to Callaway to run a kamikaze campaign against popular party leader, contender, and former Wildrose Party leader Brian Jean. The Election Commissioner fined political actors for improperly funnelling others' money – others' money – not their money, to the Callaway campaign that was illegal, colluding to circumvent legal political contribution limits, and obstruction of an investigation. As a matter of fact, Callaway himself has been fined for accepting donations he ought to have known were prohibited. Mr. Chair, that is the reality of what we are debating here. That is what is existing as of right now.

Voting for this bill or even proposing this bill I would say is the largest attack on democracy. This is the greatest abuse of power that one can have. Just because the government six, seven months ago in the general election won the majority, it does not mean they can't play by the rules or that the government members will have a different set of rules. This obviously shows the culture of entitlement. When it comes to the ATRF, so many members of this side of the House, my colleagues, have very eloquently spoken on this issue. The hon. member of the government the Minister of Finance, you know, stood in the House many times and stated how beneficial this will be, that this will probably benefit the teachers and those very employees whose hard-earned contributions they are trying to raid, I will say.

If they're so confident, if they've heard this much expert advice, what is preventing them from talking to those very people whose hard-earned money they are trying to raid? It is simply clear that the government is moving forward to raid those funds to fund the \$4.7 billion tax giveaway to big corporations because that is the hole this government has created in the budget. That move has not created a single job in Alberta so far.

I'm very concerned looking at what is happening in this House and what is being proposed. The systemic act of the government's proposal of almost seven years of going after youth workers, going after students, going after people with severe disabilities, and now the public-sector workers, teachers, nurses, when in fact the government is offering – not offering, threatening to force them to take the 5 per cent rollback. At the same time the government argued to give an unprecedented raise to their own people they hired for jobs, making the argument that their worth is much more in the private sector. This is very shameful. Looking at their systemic acts and steps, it's very, very important for us in this House to oppose this Bill 22, the biggest attack on democracy in the contemporary world, I will say.

I didn't plan to speak the full length of my time. The experts are actually, as we are debating this bill in the House, giving their views on the bill. I just wanted to probably reference one of these for the record to *Hansard*. The article in Global today by Heide Pearson is

titled *Firing of Alberta Election Commissioner Called ‘Political Interference,’ Opposition Seeks Intervention*. In this article the political science professor at Mount Royal University states – his name is Duane Bratt – that it is believed that the move is “designed to end the investigation of the UCP leadership race in 2017.” This is not the view of the NDP caucus members.

12:00

The government House members are so confident. They have a majority. They’re going to pass this bill by the majority, but Albertans will speak up. As of today I just wanted to give you the feedback. The people are showing up in my riding, in my office. Those very people that in the last election did not vote for us, that took UCP signs for their yards, that supported the UCP for creating jobs: they are showing up in our offices. That was a mistake, voting UCP in the last election. You can pass this bill, you can use your majority in the House, but the people of Alberta will definitely speak up.

You know, I’m deeply concerned by systemic moves in the House. Looking at the historic acts and the moves of the government, I’m afraid if we don’t oppose this bill, if we don’t defeat this bill, it is not going to stop here. The government will keep going on and on, one after the other issue. I’m actually extremely concerned about the safety and the security of those very people. They had courage to reveal the kamikaze campaign. I don’t know what next step this government will take if this bill is passed.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

Madam Chair, I’m honoured to rise in the House to speak against this bill, and I also ask the members of this House to please vote against this bill. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 22.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 22. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

[The Speaker in the chair]

## Government Motions

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

## Time Allocation on Bill 22

36. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good evening. Great to see you. Good morning, I think. We’re into the next day.

Mr. Speaker, in the interest of time and the hour I will be brief. I do want to point out that it is my duty to move this government motion today to continue to make sure that the Chamber can progress with Alberta’s legislation.

I do want to refer to some comments made by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I believe her constituency would have been a different name at the time, but while she was serving in the capacity of deputy House leader under then Government House Leader Mr. Mason, she spoke to what was the last time that she spoke to a time allocation motion inside this Assembly. Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, it was the time allocation motion brought forward by her government to appoint the current Election Commissioner. One of the comments that she brought up inside that was this. She said that in regard to that motion, which was heavily debated inside this Chamber, “it has been debated multiple times, for a total of about six hours,” at which time the government closed debate on the entire issue, not just one stage of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to point out that at this point we are headed towards nine hours already on this legislation. We are only in Committee of the Whole. At the end of this it will be over 10 hours of debate on this legislation. We still have one more stage of the bill to go, showing, certainly, the government’s commitment to continue to make sure that the Official Opposition can do their important role, their constitutional role, inside this Chamber of holding the government to account and making sure that we are able to prepare the best legislation that we can for Albertans, which is their job. They certainly at the time of debating similar issues thought that six hours was enough for the entire thing. At that time, actually, if you look further into *Hansard*, you will see that when I responded to the hon. member then as the Official Opposition House Leader, I protested about six hours, certainly would have been a lot happier at that time as the Official Opposition House Leader if I had already had 10 at this stage of the legislation. That was at the end.

So I’m glad that I’ve been able to fulfill the promise of the Premier and myself as the Government House Leader inside this Chamber to always make sure that the Official Opposition can do their job inside this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the next hour of debate in Committee of the Whole. I do hope that the Official Opposition has some amendments. We would be curious if there’s some input to help us be able to make this legislation better. Then, of course, I look forward to the next stage, which will hopefully be third reading, assuming that Bill 22 makes it through Committee of the Whole if we have the support of the majority of the members of this Chamber. I don’t know if that’s the case, obviously, until the vote is called. I do suspect that it’s the case.

With that, I look forward with eager anticipation to the Official Opposition’s response to this important time allocation motion and to seeing if the Official Opposition House Leader has some quotes

from me when I was the Official Opposition House Leader about time allocation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to add to the debate on behalf of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very concerned, and I rise to object to this closure, this time allocation, that's being brought in because it is absolutely undermining the democracy of this House. He is comparing it to previous closures, but I want to point out a number of ways in which this is dramatically different than previous closures.

For example, he mentioned that there was a time when after a number of hours of debate the previous government invoked closure actually to appoint the Election Commissioner, and at that time it was a completely different circumstance. We hadn't designed the closure before the actual debate occurred, which is what has happened here. They didn't come into this and say: look; we've heard enough about this. They said before they actually introduced the bill that they were going to invoke closure, and now they're invoking that closure. A completely different circumstance. It wasn't like they heard enough and thought it was time to move on. They never intended to hear things. That's what's different about this one.

It's completely outrageous going into the House knowing that you're going to subvert democracy before you even actually begin to have the discussion. This is something that has never been done before in this House, where they plan it ahead of time, introduce it, and then they make sure that the whole thing happens in a three-day period of time. Sometimes bills in this House take weeks to get through because government is wanting to present their point of view to make sure people understand it. But, clearly, they don't want to present their point of view in this case. They do not wish to be able to tell the people of Alberta what is going on, and the reason why is because the only reason they're doing this is not to do something like the last time, where we were just simply appointing someone to a position; they're doing this to avoid the investigation of corruption in their party, a completely different circumstance than the last time. To compare those two is just outrageous. The fact that the leader of the government side could stand there and make that comparison just tells us how much he disrespects the people of the province of Alberta, how much he thinks he can slide under the carpet and pretend: nothing's going on here, folks; please, look away.

**12:10**

That's not something we're prepared to do on this side of the House because we understand what is happening here. We understand that invoking closure is to avoid prosecution. That's what it's about. It's not to end discussion in the House. It is to ensure that they can continue to engage in practices which people in the media have been referring to as corrupt. I can tell you that the media over the last number of days has been very clear that they see this as an illegitimate, autocratic behaviour by this government. They think they can fool people, but people are beginning to hear about this, and as they hear about it, they are outraged.

People coming into the House, sitting here to listen to the debate about things that matter to them, find out that they're not going to be able to hear that debate about the things that matter to them because this government really doesn't care to talk to the people of Alberta. They didn't talk to the teachers before they took their pension plan away from them. They didn't go out and say, "Look, we have a great idea that's going to be so good for you and for

government," because they knew that wasn't the case. So what they've done now is that they've come in and they have created a bill in which they are hiding the truth. They are subverting the process of democracy in which we should have an opportunity to speak to things that matter, that are fundamentally important for people, that are about the trust that's been put in the government by the teachers after serious and long negotiations with the previous government some years ago to create a pension plan that the teachers would have a voice in. Now all of that has been taken away without any kind of discussion.

That's a dictatorial behaviour and one that's completely unacceptable to this side of the House and is unacceptable to the people of Alberta. They do not want a dictatorship, they do not want these totalitarian and controlling kinds of behaviours, and they're going to tell this government in due course that they will not put up with it. We will not put up with it on this side of the House either.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 36 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:13 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Long	Rosin
Amery	Lovely	Rowswell
Barnes	Luan	Rutherford
Dreeshen	Madu	Sawhney
Ellis	Neudorf	Schulz
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Pitt	Walker
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Nielsen
Dach	Gray	Renaud
Deol	Irwin	

Totals: For – 27 Against – 8

[Government Motion 36 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 22 Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019 (continued)

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to stand up and speak. I will try and keep it short. I just want to get some things on record because I, too, have had the phone calls to my office, the letters, the e-mails, some very, very concerned, especially from teachers and nurses, about some of the changes and especially from teachers about the pension. Ultimately, I think it



comes from a difference in information and where they're getting their information from.

Now, I would like to challenge the multitudes up in the gallery tonight and the tens of people that are watching at home at this late hour. It is 20 after 12, after all. I'm actually going to clip the speech that the Minister of Finance just gave at approximately 11:40 to 11:50 this evening. I would encourage people to listen to that – it's written in *Hansard*; it will be there forever – and consider where they are getting their information from. Because I get calls from people that are friends of mine that are teachers. They're very concerned, and they're very upset. I say, "Well, where are you getting your information from?" And they say, "Well, you know, we're getting it from our union reps and from the ATA."

The Minister of Municipal Affairs read a little excerpt from the NDP's constitution, and I would like to add to what he said. I'm going to read you a little section from article 7, the provincial council and who makes up the provincial council.

7.01 The Provincial Council shall consist of:

- (a) the Provincial Executive;
- (b) two (2) members to be elected from the Party Caucus . . .

It goes down farther:

- (h) two (2) members of the Alberta Federation of Labour.

And then:

- (i) one (1) member from each of the affiliates in Alberta.

12:20

If you're a teacher or a nurse or a public-sector union worker in Alberta, chances are that you fall into the section of affiliate. I'd also like to add that as an affiliate every one of you members out there, since you joined your union and started working, have been paying \$1.25 a month of your union dues that go directly to the Alberta Federation of Labour, and that's a fact. Now, you wonder where your messaging is coming from when your union leadership and the Alberta Federation of Labour are actually sitting on the provincial council for the New Democratic Party of Alberta? [interjections]

I'm going to go on, and I'm going to read you a little bit more.

7.02 Provincial Council shall meet at least twice a year at the call of the Executive.

I can see they're getting pretty riled up about this because they don't like the facts.

7.03 Provincial Council shall be the governing body of the Party in Alberta.

So membership from the affiliated unions and the Alberta Federation of Labour are the governing body of the New Democratic Party of Alberta.

Now, you wonder why you're getting misleading information from your ATA and your United Nurses association and your union representatives? The messaging is coming directly from the New Democratic Party. You wonder why you're getting conflicting, fearmongering messaging? It's because your messaging is coming directly from the opposition, the government opposition.

I would just like, folks, when you hear this fearful messaging that's coming out, listen to Mr. Toews' message. It's the truth. He stood up here. It's on . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Name.

**The Chair:** Member, names.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'm sorry. Names. I apologize. It's late.

The minister went on quite eloquently for 10 minutes. It will be clipped, and it'll be on Facebook. Please share it. Before you fall to

the fearmongering and the false information, consider your source. Please consider your source.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Considering that time is of the essence – we now have less than one hour to finish debating this important and terrible piece of legislation – I need to clarify a couple of things that the member said. He's actually misinformed. The ATA is not part of the AFL, first of all. They're not part of the Alberta Federation of Labour. They are also not part of the NDP. The ATA is not affiliated with anyone. In fact, I'm pretty sure the previous member's comments have offended the ATA. They are a professional organization, just like the Law Society of Alberta and other professional entities.

Yes, part of – I'll explain it. They are both the professional body that approves who becomes a teacher – they set the standards – and they are also a union. They are both. But they are a professional organization. I guarantee that ATA members are offended by the accusation that either they are part of a political party or fund a political party. No, they're not. They are not. They are apolitical. They are nonpartisan. Individual members may choose to affiliate with a political party; the ATA does not. They are a professional organization. Anyone attacking the credibility of teachers or as a profession: I take offence to that. I'm a teacher. My teaching has nothing to do with my political views.

So for the record, to clarify, the ATA is not part of the AFL. They are not affiliated with a single party, not any political party. I encourage members to look at the ATA, and if they don't believe me, talk to them directly.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I would like to say every time I rise in this House that it's an honour because it's an honour to represent my constituents, but I'm not feeling very pleased to speak to Bill 22. This bill is absolutely an attack on democratic institutions. This is another omnibus bill, one of the many. I've got a few of them here. This was a Harper-era technique, throwing a whole bunch of bills into one, when each of the sections of those bills should really be a bill on their own. There are 31 statutes that are changed or amended in here. It's an absolute affront to democracy. It's an attack. As we've heard tonight, it's an attack on a whole lot of hard-working Albertans, which I'm going to talk about in a moment.

I'm not going to speak a lot about the Election Commissioner because I believe my colleagues have done a very good job with that. I've spoken a lot about what I've heard from teachers and nurses, but I can tell you that I'm hearing a lot from my constituents about the corrupt nature of this government and about the firing of the Election Commissioner. I find that interesting, you know, that the members opposite will insinuate fear and smear and will talk about how we're blowing things out of proportion, but I'm intrigued by the level of interest in this.

It reeks of corruption. I think why people are speaking out more than they ever have before is because it just continues. The corrupt acts continue. The entitlement of this government continues. I mean, we talk about the Election Commissioner, who is currently investigating the MLA for Calgary-East for fraud. We see entitled behaviour from this government already – what? – six, seven months into tenure: \$16,000 charter flights; \$18,000 for hotels; staff; something about vitamin C showers earlier.

What I want to speak about is the attack. That bothers me a lot because I have a lot of friends, a lot of neighbours, a lot of constituents who are public-sector workers. So I want to talk about pensions, and I want to talk about the unprecedented attack on teachers and nurses and other public service workers in this province. I was really proud to see so many teachers and nurses here tonight in the gallery. There's at least one teacher still up there in the gallery, and we're at – what? – about 12:30 a.m. I'm confused about a few things as well. You know, I know that the members opposite, many of them, have teachers in their own families. They're telling stories about how they've got a teacher in their family and that person is fine with it. Well, I'm telling you that 30,000 teachers and counting have reached out to us. And counting.

I wish this was just about pensions. Truly, it's not. It's not just about pensions. It's about so much more. It's about a continued pattern by this government of attacking teachers in many ways over a short tenure. I've spoken about this before. The list is pretty lengthy. We can point to things, obviously, like the attack on pensions, but we can point to other things. The curriculum review panel: set up a curriculum review panel, but don't put a single practising teacher on it. Yet, there's room for businesspeople. There's room for an American researcher, who is funded by the – who are they? – Koch brothers in the United States, a researcher who's focused, you know, on privatization and bringing a voucher-style education system here to Alberta. Yet, again, not a place for a single practising teacher to advise on what is going to be a curriculum for this entire province. Just one example.

There are countless other examples. We've seen a few examples tonight, attacks on the professional body of teachers, the Alberta Teachers' Association, right? Your insults aren't helping tonight. We're talking about tens of thousands of Albertans, and to insult them, as some of the members here tonight have, is shameful. And I'll tell you that the word will spread about this display, not just the comments towards teachers but the undemocratic acts that are happening, the invoking of closure on a bill that in itself should take many, many hours. We should have a fulsome discussion on the elements within this bill.

Let's get back to the attack on pensions. I actually want to quote the Alberta Teachers' Association. I was a teacher myself, just like one of my colleagues here, from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I respected the Alberta Teachers' Association. I still respect the Alberta Teachers' Association. They're the voice of Alberta's teachers.

We put our hopes and dreams for our retirement into these pensions. We also put in half the funds! The least the government can do is let us have 50 per cent of the say when it comes to how the funds are managed.

Now they don't even want us to have that.

The Alberta government has proposed removing the fund assets from the [ATRF] . . . and transferring them to [AIMCo].

This will not save the government any money, but could actually cost the fund through lower returns.

### 12:30

These are the countless e-mails we're getting, and as another member on my side mentioned tonight, these aren't just form letters. I'm getting a lot of really personal e-mails. In fact, I've had a few e-mails from teachers that I used to teach with not only saying, "How is this happening?" and "How could they do this?" but then their next question is: what can we do about this? They're getting mobilized. Teachers are getting mobilized. Nurses are getting mobilized. It's a whole heck of a lot of Albertans who are getting mobilized.

Now, it's interesting. We've heard this Premier talk about how, you know, he's sort of thrown around the fact that: "We might pull

out of the Canada pension plan and create our own Alberta pension plan, but don't worry; Albertans will have a say before we do that. There will be a referendum."

**Ms Renaud:** Just trust us.

**Member Irwin:** Trust us. Exactly.

So he is willing to have a referendum on something like the CPP, yet he's not even willing to talk to teachers before making this move? Not even willing to consult with teachers? I think that that's one of the things that hurts teachers the most right now. He couldn't even bother asking us? He couldn't even bother engaging?

You know, it's interesting. I've been in this House only – what? – six, seven months, and I remember the members opposite talking about consultation and engagement and being so proud of their record and, you know, criticizing us for our record, yet, wow, we're talking about tens of thousands of Albertans. You couldn't even have had a conversation with them.

No wonder teachers are angry. They have every right to be angry. Like I said, I don't understand how the members opposite can't also be angry, because I know – I guarantee you – there are members in this House from the government who are not supportive of this move because they've got family members who are impacted. Now, I know that your Premier has said that you can have free votes, so I'm still hoping that there will be members opposite who will make use of their free votes and vote against this terrible bill.

As I said, I've heard from many teachers, many of my old teacher colleagues, and they're not just angry and furious, like I said, they're sad as well. They're just feeling deflated. Again, it's not just about pensions. It's about the continued attack on them and their profession.

I actually talked with one teacher who told me that, you know, she's been teaching for nearly 30 years, giving it her all, someone who's entirely active in her school community, coaching, doing so much beyond teaching, always there late at night, that kind of thing. She's been there nearly 30 years, so she's getting close to retirement, and she's upset. She feels betrayed. Why would they do this without asking teachers? That's a long-time teacher, someone who's been in the classroom for nearly three decades.

I've also heard from brand new teachers. One teacher talked to me about how she started teaching a bit later, in her late 20s, not that long ago, but she plans to teach for 30 years, so, you know, she's in it for the long haul, and she's excited about that. She mentioned how she struggled to get through university. She's now paying student loans, which, incidentally, I reminded her will be going up as well because this UCP government has also in their short term attacked postsecondary education. She's a new teacher paying into her pension, and she's now thinking: well, when am I even going to be able to retire? She's concerned about that.

I remember when I started teaching, I was out in rural Alberta. I told this story before. I was teaching in the metropolis of Bawlf, Alberta, and, you know, it was great. It was a great place to start teaching, in that village, but I remember that I didn't have a lot of money, and with every paycheque a lot of money went to our pension. It was a big chunk, and I remember thinking: "Oh, my goodness. This is a lot coming off my paycheque." But then you think about it: wow, this is an investment for the future, right? It's hard when you're trying to make ends meet, but you've got that long-term vision of: "Okay. You know what? It's for the greater good. It's savings. I'm putting it away." So I think about teachers like that, who are now in the position that I was. But they're facing retirement insecurity whereas I was feeling pretty confident when I started teaching that that pension was going to be there for me and it was going to be stable.

You know, we've heard a couple of the members opposite going on some interesting tangents tonight attacking teachers. One of the members, the associate minister for red tape, talked about, you know: Albertans chose a different path. I wrote down some of his words. And I'm thinking that, yeah, they sure did. Yeah.

You can go on about how we lost the election, but I'm hearing from a lot of Albertans who are having buyer's remorse. They didn't vote for their pensions to be attacked. They didn't vote for AISH recipients to be attacked. They didn't vote for their own income taxes to be going up. The list goes on. I mean, I want to let other people speak, so I won't go on with the list of attacks this government has levied on folks that they weren't expecting, that they didn't vote for.

In fact, we were out in the rotunda talking with a number of teachers and nurses, and one of the teachers shared a story about a friend who works at a large energy company in Calgary. She conveyed the conversation, saying that, you know, they were going back and forth for a while, and this person who works for a large oil company said, like: "Yeah. I voted for this government, but I didn't vote for this." Downtown Calgary attitudes are starting to shift. Folks like that who did admittedly vote for the UCP, someone who works in the oil industry. As I said, I've heard from a lot of folks from all corners of this province who are experiencing buyer's remorse.

Again, I wanted to share that story to encourage the members opposite to think about perhaps exercising their free votes and actually reading your e-mails. I know that, if you're like me, you're behind on your e-mails, and you don't always see your constituents' e-mails. Go through them. Read the stories from teachers, from nurses. Some of them are incredible, and some of them voted for you. So I urge you to listen.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I guess I want to come at it from the perspective of – I sit as the chair . . .

**An Hon. Member:** These guys here are getting time.

**Mr. Orr:** Oh. Okay.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Given that we are in the final hour of debate at Committee of the Whole, I certainly appreciate a little bit of the time to talk about some very real, serious concerns that there are in Bill 22 and the significant changes. My colleagues have talked about a wide range of impacts within Bill 22, which, to remind everyone, is an omnibus piece of legislation that changes 31 statutes, that does so many different things.

With my limited time to speak at Committee of the Whole, I'm going to focus in on pensions. Specifically there are some major changes to public-sector pensions in Bill 22. There's a very good reason why teachers and nurses have been in the galleries today, because of these significant changes, changes that in many cases put Alberta completely out of step with pension governance in other jurisdictions.

I'm going to quickly run through it because, again, I don't have much time, but there are some serious concerns. I really believe that we cannot pass omnibus legislation without fully investigating the questions that it brings up. I'm going to pose you some questions. We have to understand the impacts.

Firstly, with the change to move ATRF to AIMCo and removing the ability for LAPP, SFPP, PSPP, to leave AIMCo, AIMCo becomes the permanent and exclusive provider of investment management services. There is no choice. None of these bodies are able to change. AIMCo is de facto what they must use.

Secondly, AIMCo is an agent of the government of Alberta. As a Crown agency it is subject to direction by the responsible minister.

Now, we've only had this bill and been able to review it since 3:15 on Monday, an omnibus piece of legislation that does so, so much. Our ability to really dig into this has been hampered by the time pressures involved. So I want to say thank you to those who have been doing the work of analyzing this bill.

**12:40**

So we agree that AIMCo is an agency of the Crown, and as a Crown agency it is subject to direction from the minister. Our analysis of Bill 22 shows that there is no clear protection for public-sector pension plans and their members if there is a conflict of interest between ministerial directives and their obligation to act in the best interest of their clients.

Bill 22 is literally putting politics back into pensions. Our government worked hard to take politics out of pension governance, and, instead, Bill 22 firmly reinserts it. Most pension arrangements across Canada have no provisions whatsoever that allow a ministerial or political direction on investments. But here we're at real risk of AIMCo being directed for political purposes instead of in the best interest of pension plan members. The fact that Bill 22 creates a confusing and contradictory governance structure for Alberta's public-sector pension plans should be concerning for everyone.

Bill 22 should be clear: is it the responsibility to the plan members and to getting the best returns, or is it the responsibility to follow ministerial directives? Bill 22 doesn't tell us that. It's confusing, it's contradictory, and right now plan administrators are fiduciaries and owe their fiduciary obligations to the members of the respective plans, as they should. As a Crown agency the corporations will have obligations to the minister.

And in order to write a ministerial order, the minister is able to do that quite easily. I will note that federally there is the possibility for regulations to adjust pensions, but in order to do that, it has to be fully transparent, public. There are votes. It's a whole thing. Here: a ministerial order, and all of a sudden politics are directing our pensions and how investments are being made.

Now, there have been some changes on the boards for PSPP, SFPP, LAPP. The principle of proportional representation has been severely weakened, and it's taken a significant step away from the democratic foundation of the joint governance of pension plans act. It was originally set up to ensure that there were balanced interests and to make sure that workers had a fully representative seat, across multiple seats, at the table. But now the seat has been taken away from AUPE and given to non-unionized management employees, which, I will note, do not have the organization to let someone represent their interests on employment-related issues. There are no elections for this seat. There is no way to be accountable to the membership on employment-related issues because it's not set up that way. These are non-unionized employees, and unlike unionized employees, non-unionized employees are subject to dismissal without cause if, for example, an employer doesn't like the position that they're taking on pensions.

So we have a really big problem. The seat that has been removed from AUPE will potentially have decisive voting rights, and it's being given, in a way that there is no possibility for representation or accountability, to a person who may be under pressure from the employers. This changes the balance on these boards. It changes how

decisions are made. This is significant, and it's included in a larger, omnibus piece of legislation. I cannot emphasize that enough.

I also want to just stop and make note that there are 400,000 Albertans with assets in ATRF, PSPP, SFPP, LAPP. So 400,000 Albertans are involved in these pensions, and here we've already raised several significant concerns.

Now, I also want to mention what Bill 22 does that I didn't even realize Bill 22 did for the longest time because the minister never mentioned it. It erodes significant member protections that were provided under the joint governance of pension plans act. The rights of part-time, non-unionized employees to continue their membership in the LAPP and the PSPP have been removed. Part-time employees and their ability to continue in these pension plans: this is a significant concern, particularly during a time when this government is cutting back and hours of work are being reduced. I'm concerned about this, and I think pension plan members are concerned about this.

It is my opinion that members of the government should be concerned about the changes that no one has talked about in this House so far. The minister has not talked about part-time, non-unionized employees losing their rights to be in the pension. As well, the rights of all new part-time employees to join the LAPP and the PSPP used to be protected. Bill 22 removes this protection. I can tell you that the life of part-time employees is difficult enough. We've all heard about the gig economy. We've all heard about workers having to work multiple part-time jobs. Now the pension rights for these workers are being removed in this bill, but because it's a small piece in such a larger piece of legislation, an omnibus bill, nobody is even noticing. Well, Madam Chair, I noticed, with the help of some analysis of this bill, and I have serious concerns that it doesn't appear the government is interested in responding to.

As well as the concerns around part-time employees, successor right provisions have been removed. What does that mean? Well, it means that if an employer privatizes their operations or contracts out a portion of their work, the successor employer will have no obligation to maintain the employees' participation in LAPP or PSPP. I can tell you that there are many Albertans concerned with this government starting to privatize services to the public. Now, on top of the concerns that that might happen, we have the knowledge that thanks to Bill 22, if the employer privatizes operations or contracts out some or all of the work, then the new employer has no obligation to continue employees in the LAPP or the PSPP. That's a significant concern to workers.

So here we are. It's nearly 1 in the morning. We're in the final hour of debate in Committee of the Whole. I've raised a number of significantly serious concerns to do with pensions that impact 400,000 Albertans, on top of the already discussed, through limited second reading debate, concerns around firing the Election Commissioner. We really haven't talked at all about allowing political parties to merge. The government hasn't said a word about that, but we know that that's contained in this bill. The change to the ATB mandate: I have raised questions about what this might mean for the ATB and how this might impact rural Alberta, small-business loans. We hear crickets on these critical issues.

In my view, Madam Chair, Bill 22 brings politics into pensions. It confuses how pensions are governed. It is not clear through the bill. If the minister writes a directive and tells AIMCo how they need to invest their money, do they need to follow that directive, or do they need to follow their duty to their members? Bill 22 doesn't clear that up. It introduces that. We know that of pensions across the country, this is unique.

So I would urge this government to change its direction. I would urge all members of this House to not vote in support of legislation that has not been fully canvassed, that there are significant concerns

with from all of our public servants, many of whom have come to stay in the gallery to watch this debate. I believe I heard that 29,000 teachers have sent correspondence of some kind on the issues of Bill 22. Bill 22 opens the door for political interference in pensions. That is what it is doing. Bill 22 takes away the power for workers to have a right and a say in what happens with their pensions, that they pay into.

12:50

This is their money. This is their future. They didn't ask for this to happen. The government certainly didn't run on it in the election. There are serious questions about how this will work and the impacts it will have, and I'm not hearing those being addressed, which is a serious concern to me. So I will be voting against Bill 22 in Committee of the Whole. We will go from a bill being introduced on Monday that looks like it's going to be passed on Thursday, with significant issues, concern from the public.

As much as the government would like to talk themselves into believing that this is the NDP stirring up fear, I can tell you, Madam Chair, that this is not. People are worried. People have questions that are unanswered. There are major topics like successorship that the minister hasn't even mentioned in this House. How many other pieces are in this bill that haven't even come up for debate? I think there are a significant number, just based on my understanding of Bill 22 and the things that I am still discovering as I sit here tonight through this debate reading the bill and trying to do the best job that I can as an opposition MLA.

Thank you for the limited time.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move an amendment.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A2. St. Albert, please proceed.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be amended by adding the following after section 44:

Coming into force

44.1 Sections 11, 12(2) and (3)(a), 13, 14(2)(a), (5), (17) and (18), 15, 17, 18, 27, 30, 35 to 38 and 40 come into force on November 1, 2024.

As you can see, this amendment actually extends for five years these particular changes that I think we've been talking about all evening, talking about why it's not just the perception of what's happening here but what actually is happening. By pushing it ahead by five years, what it allows for is an appropriate transition. Without sort of messing around with the language, it ensures that there is no interference in this investigation or in the investigations undertaken by the Election Commissioner.

I think we can all agree that continuity is important, particularly when we're talking about investigations. I think it would give the people of Alberta some reassurance, actually, that the government is serious about hearing the concerns around not just the appearance but what this bill actually does in terms of interfering in an active investigation, a serious investigation, a serious investigation of collusion, about donations and all of the things that we've talked about.

It's unfortunate that the amendment is getting ripped up before we're done, but okay. It sort of goes right along with closure and the earplugs, but let's just proceed.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to move this amendment, and with that, I will sit down.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment here, making, I guess you could say, an opportunity for the government to tap on the brake, push pause, and consider some of the implications around some of the legislation that's being considered here, particularly around the Election Commissioner.

One of the things that I don't think we've had the opportunity to really explore here, because we certainly aren't seeing it in the legislation, a very large piece of legislation – you know, it's funny. I've said before that history matters. Being one of those members that was around in the 29th Legislature, I certainly remember members of the opposition at that time making comments whenever a bill got over about 50 pages. They were quite concerned with the amount of information and the amount of time that they were able to digest it in and what kind of consequences there could be. Here we have an omnibus piece of legislation, one of four pieces of omnibus legislation that the government has brought in, that they used to criticize quite highly. As a former member of the 29th Legislature, Madam Chair, you probably remember some of those conversations around that. They accused the former NDP government of trying to ram through all kinds of legislation, which, coincidentally, at the time was all around just labour, within one ministry.

If I remember right here, we are talking about changes or repeals of 31 statutes and repeals of two acts, the Alberta Sport Connection Act and the Alberta Competitiveness Act. We're seeing changes that dissolve the Campus Alberta Strategic Directions Committee, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, the historical resources fund, the Alberta Competitiveness Council, and the Alberta Capital Finance Authority. This amendment gives us the opportunity, again, to kind of tap on the brake and take a look at what we're doing.

I really want to thank the Member for St. Albert for bringing this forward. Those, again, that might have been around a little bit in the 29th Legislature probably remember saying things along the lines of: "You know what? This amendment will give us the opportunity to maybe try to take bad legislation and make it less bad." When we are seeing changes that could potentially affect literally hundreds of thousands of Albertans and their money – I mean, I've heard the Minister of Finance go on at length about how great this plan is and how much extra money it's going to make and how it's going to lower our costs and everything. I think the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford kind of probably said this fairly well. I'll see if maybe I can repeat it with as much clarity: if it was such a great plan, Madam Chair, they should have been able to take it to these fine workers, and I would suspect they would have been clamouring over each other to accept such a great deal. But the problem is that it isn't.

It wasn't some kind of fear and smear plan that the NDP put together. This happened all by itself. It didn't even need our help. The media picked up on this; the workers picked up on this. I kind of think of it this way, Madam Chair. If we were all asked by our bank, "Well, hang on just a second; we've got this really great plan for your bank account; we're going to let this other bank manage it," I have a feeling that people in here would have a really significant problem with that. "I'm not dealing with that bank. I'm dealing with this bank. This is where I want my money. This is the company I want to have manage it." But we have legislation that's proposing a similar thing. This amendment, again, will allow us to

tap on the brake, consider what we're doing. We might want to talk to some of the folks about what they want. Do they want their bank account to be managed by another bank?

**1:00**

As we've seen at this very late hour – we're already at 1 a.m. discussing a bill that, if it was such a great idea, there would have been no problem taking it to the people and saying: "Here's our plan. This is what it could do, and it's going to be great." I'll bet you that they would have come onboard. Again, here we go with history coming back. You know, I remember hearing at length about how the former NDP government didn't consult, that they didn't talk to anybody about anything. Then you get a new government in that criticizes and has the chance to show how to do it better, and they end up doing it worse. We've seen the people outside. You just can't ignore that. Well, I guess you can ignore it. You just pull down your shades, close the windows, turn on some loud music, and pretend it's not there. We need to slow down. This amendment I think at least gives us a partial opportunity with which to do that.

As I've said, Madam Chair, I have significant concerns around the Election Commissioner. Again, I know we had a bit of a discussion earlier tonight about language and one simple word and how they're interchangeable, but the problem is that my experience tells me that that's not the case. You know, when I think about an Election Commissioner who has 800 files or more, if we end up getting rid of that individual, what is going to happen with those files? How are they going to be transferred over? Will they be secured in the meantime, until the next individual can come in and try and catch up? I mean, 800 files: that's a lot. I think that's going to significantly slow down any kind of investigations that are currently going on, and I must say that there are a few investigations that are whoppers, I mean, fines over \$200,000.

**Ms Renaud:** Two hundred and eleven thousand.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Two hundred and eleven thousand. I mean, you just don't rack up those kinds of things if there's not something significant going wrong unless, of course, there might be some kind of an idea of how to maybe derail that sort of thing.

We need to slow things down. We need to take this amendment; we need to accept it. We need to think about what we're doing. Let's consult with people about how they would like to see their money handled, not tell them what's going to happen. I mean, I think it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of – oh, yes; I made note of that – 29,000 letters. Not 29, not 290, not even 2,900, but 29,000 e-mails expressing concerns about how pensions are being handled by this government. That alone should be enough to push the pause button.

Again, I'm sure the former members of the 29th Legislature that currently serve in this House right now would have had significant problems had the former NDP government brought in omnibus legislation like this and not only once but four times in this one single session. We probably would have been here in these kinds of hours just listening to that alone, not even necessarily the contents of those bills, just the fact of the number of changes that are going on. If we don't press the pause button, Madam Chair, we are in for a rough ride.

I remember the government – we heard it over and over again. To be elected on creating jobs and growing the economy, they say that we have to bring back investment into Alberta. A simple change like taking hard-working Albertans' pensions and telling them what to do with it, I guarantee you, will not create labour peace in this province. Companies looking to invest in this

province will look at that, and they will hit the pause button. We're already probably upwards of around 30,000 job losses in a short six months, and you want to create more labour unrest? We've already seen the protests, more protests and growing protests in the short six months than I think we did in our four years when we were government.

Another favourite line: "The Official Opposition is here to help. We're here to help. We're going to help you take bad legislation and make it less bad. We're offering an opportunity to hit the pause button by accepting this amendment and giving us the opportunity to rethink how we're doing things." When there are 400,000 people, almost half a million, that are very concerned, and we've only heard — like I said, 29,000 teachers so far have expressed; I can't even begin to count the number of nurses. At some point in time you have to sit there and say: "You know what? Maybe this isn't quite the right path that we're on." Madam Chair, I'm really expressing sincerely that the government look at this hard, take the opportunity to press the pause button, relook at this legislation, and perhaps we might be able to make some bad legislation less bad.

With that, I will take my seat and allow others because all we have is an hour left in this debate, which doesn't give much time for voices to be heard across this province. That, unfortunately, is shameful, something that we definitely heard when members were the Official Opposition. Hopefully, others will get a chance to express their constituents' views.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for his insightful remarks. I know that there are only a few minutes left to speak to this stage of the bill. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford talked about the significance of closure.

Briefly, Madam Chair, you know, bills normally pass through first, second, Committee of the Whole, and third, and there is always an opportunity for members, all members, should they so choose, to speak to each reading of the bill. When closure is imposed, basically, it limits the amount of time in debate that can happen in this House. Now, I appreciate the Government House Leader and others will say that there's been more than enough time, that it's been more than enough, that the time has been adequate to debate this bill. I disagree. I think we have different opinions on what is adequate.

**1:10**

First of all, Bill 22 is a significant piece of legislation that amends, I believe I heard my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods say, about 31 statutes. That's significant, Madam Chair. It's also important to note that this was introduced fewer than 48 hours ago. We're already in Committee of the Whole, and in four minutes this bill will be voted on. Because the government has a majority, I believe that there's a good chance that they're going to win that vote, and then we'll move on to third reading, all within one week. There are a couple of aspects of this bill that really fly in the face of democracy. I know that we have at least one teacher in the gallery, who is here at 1:13 a.m. listening to debate, I imagine, because she's quite concerned and I doubt was consulted on the future of her pension and the fact that this government is unilaterally moving teachers' pensions over to AIMCo.

Now, the argument that has been put forward by the Minister of Finance is that there are going to be cost savings because there won't be a duplication of the board or the ARTF with AIMCo, but then in the next breath he says that the ARTF will still have

oversight; it's just that they won't actually make the investment decisions. That's clear as mud, quite frankly, and that doesn't make sense. For me, the frustrating part and what I'm hearing from teachers is that they weren't consulted; they weren't asked. This is a unilateral move by government saying that they know what's in the best interests of the teachers. You know, quite frankly, if the government is so proud of this move, then why didn't you talk to teachers about it? I don't think it was in their campaign platform. I know that there are often boastful comments about the 300 and whatever pages. I'd love for someone to point to where you claim to increase personal income taxes on every Albertan and campaigned on that one. This is another example.

You know, in addition to that, Madam Chair, the fact and the reason that I'm supporting the amendment to delay this coming in by five years — and as the Member for Edmonton-Decore said: listen, it will make a really bad piece of legislation a little less bad. It's not going to make it good; nothing could make this good. The shredder would make this good. But the fact is that the very individual who is investigating criminal charges is about to lose his position and we're told: oh, no; that won't affect the investigation whatsoever. Nobody believes that, quite frankly. At least this amendment delays this move by a couple of years so that the current commissioner can continue his investigation unfettered, uninterrupted, and we can get to the bottom of some of these serious investigations. I mean, it is a very, very significant matter that this bill essentially ends the investigation, muzzles the lead investigator, and we're told: no, no, no; don't worry; it will continue. I think from the letters that I've heard and that my colleagues have received, Albertans are outraged. Again, examples or similarities would be, you know: if during the SNC-Lavalin investigation the lead investigator was fired, do you think Canadians would go, "Yeah, that seems fine; there's nothing going on here"?

I think that people are flabbergasted, and the fact that the government is ramming this through shows that they're hiding something. They're scared to face Albertans, who are just learning about what's going on. This is just part of the reason why we normally take a couple of weeks to pass pieces of legislation, so that Albertans can weigh in on it. This was introduced this week, and I'm pretty confident that it's going to get passed tomorrow, and that's it. Again, you know, teachers: well, sorry, your pension has now been moved over to AIMCo, and if the government or future governments decide to backdoor claw some of your benefits from your pension, well, too bad. The government didn't run on that. At least, I'd love for a member to show me where in the UCP platform it talks about moving the teachers' pension from their own pension fund to AIMCo. Again, as I've mentioned before, Madam Chair, the fact that the teachers' pension has had a better rate of return than AIMCo: there's not even a financial argument that holds any water whatsoever.

This bill is awful, Madam Chair. It's antidemocratic. It flies in the face of democracy because it is essentially eliminating the very person whose job it is to investigate complaints. In fact, that position has over 800 complaints to investigate, and they're now going to disappear. How is that transparent? How is that democratic? You know, for those reasons, this amendment at least delays the firing of the commissioner by five years so we can at least get to the bottom of these active investigations, that are occurring right now. These are criminal investigations. This is no light matter. The fact is that this bill is an affront to Albertans' democratic rights.

It's also an attack on the future of the teachers. I don't know and don't recall any teacher being consulted on whether they want the government to move their pension over. For anybody in here who has a pension or even savings, if someone came in and said, "Yeah,

I'm going to take it over, and we're going to move it into what someone else feels should control your money," I don't think anybody in this House would say: "Yeah, please. You know what? Go ahead, take my money, and you can decide what to do with it."

The fact of the matter is that if the government is so proud of this piece of legislation, then why didn't you talk to teachers about it? Why don't you have a referendum? You seem to love referendums. Have a referendum with the teachers – what do you want to do with your pension? – and then respect their decision as opposed to making a unilateral move that they had to find out about through the media. Like, talk about not just a lack of consultation, but clearly this government is showing the little respect it has for teachers.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 36 I must now put all questions necessary for the disposal of this bill at this stage.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

[The remaining clauses of Bill 22 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 22 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:18 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Aheer	Long	Rowswell
Amery	Lovely	Rutherford
Barnes	Luan	Sawhney
Dreeshen	Madu	Schulz
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Hanson	Orr	Toor
Horner	Rehn	Walker
Hunter	Rosin	Wilson

1:20

Against:

Bilous	Feehan	Nielsen
Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol	Loyola	

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 8
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[Request to report Bill 22 carried]

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 22.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 22. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no.

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** So carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all hon. members of the Assembly for all their hard work this evening. Lots of progress today. I am just checking. I am going to move to adjourn the House till technically today, though it's tomorrow in legislative time, Thursday the 21st at 9 o'clock a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 1:23 a.m. on Thursday]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, November 21, 2019

Day 45

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, November 21, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

Please be seated.

Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Third Reading

##### Bill 22

#### Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you. It feels like I only saw you just a few short hours ago. It's my pleasure today to rise on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move third reading of Bill 22, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019.

As you know, this is the third and final budget implementation bill along with bills 20 and 21 and is aimed squarely on getting Alberta's finances back on track. Bill 22 accomplishes this by improving the efficiency and the oversights of public agencies and eliminating needless government spending.

It will require the Alberta teachers' retirement fund, the ATRF, to exclusively use AIMCo to manage its investments. The ATRF currently manages its investments in-house, with assets of around \$16.5 billion as of August 31, 2018. Shifting management of these funds to AIMCo is expected to save .25 per cent on administrative fees when the changes are fully implemented. This may seem insignificant, but because of the scale of these investments it equates to an annual savings of \$41 million for the ATRF, or almost \$500 annually for each teacher that contributes to the fund. Mr. Speaker, I would assume that you would agree that that is not insignificant. Under these changes the ATRF board would retain control of how the pension fund is invested at a strategic level as well as retain ownership of the plan's assets. Most importantly, it will have no negative impact on teachers' pensions. In fact, it is likely the contribution rates to the fund will be able to decrease over time because of the economies of scale. It's a winning scenario for those with pension benefits under the ATRF and for Albertans as a whole.

Similarly, Bill 22 will require Alberta Health Services and the Workers' Compensation Board to use AIMCo to manage their investments and endowments. Again, this will enhance AIMCo's economies of scale, Mr. Speaker, reducing investment costs and

contributing to higher expected investment returns. There will be no changes to the workers' compensation benefit or employers' cost. For the WCB these savings are approximately .4 per cent annually on administrative costs, which equates to about \$15 million a year. In total it's estimated that moving management of these funds to AIMCo will contribute to an overall annual savings of \$91 million for AIMCo's investment management costs. This is all through leveraging economies of scale and getting the best outcome for taxpayers.

In addition, Bill 22 will consolidate the office of the Election Commissioner into the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, as has been the situation inside this province for over a century. The Chief Electoral Officer will have the full authority, Mr. Speaker, to continue or initiate any investigation currently being pursued by the commissioner in line with the existing Alberta law, despite what the opposition continues to tell Albertans. This administrative change will not affect the oversight or the investigatory powers under any relevant act.

Bill 22 would also dissolve and make board changes to support the reform of Alberta agencies, boards, and commissions throughout many areas.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, Bill 22 will be able to help the Alberta government implement a budget, that they promised Albertans they would bring forward, that would help to get our finances back on track inside this province as we continue to fix the astronomical mess that was made by the former NDP government when it comes to their mismanagement of the financial situation in this province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Time Allocation on Bill 22

37. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my duty to move this motion on behalf of the government. It is important that we continue to maintain pace through the Legislature to be able to accomplish all the goals that Albertans have asked us to be able to accomplish inside this place.

Mr. Speaker, last night we talked at length about Bill 22. In fact, I think it's important to note that Bill 22 has already passed the length of any other bill that has been debated inside this sitting of this session by quite a bit. In fact, we are well over 10 hours already of debate on this legislation and have been debating it since Tuesday inside this Chamber, using basically the majority of time that this Chamber has this week on this bill, and we'll continue to debate it this morning. At the end of it, it appears that Bill 22 will have had the most debate of any bill that goes through this sitting of this session inside this Chamber.

Now, the other issue that I think is important to note as we discuss this is that last night the opposition only had one amendment to Bill 22. I do appreciate that they brought it forward. That is a great sign that the hon. Finance minister has drafted an excellent bill. I have

very rarely seen on any contentious bill the opposition only have one amendment. I do appreciate them taking the time to bring that amendment forward, but clearly there's not much else to say on the bill if they only have one amendment when it came to this important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is that we have mechanisms within this Chamber to be able to keep the pace going through the House. House leaders often negotiate speaking times. We use critics to speak to certain things. We use ministers to speak to certain things. We limit certain members from being able to speak to be able to keep the pace going through the House, Mr. Speaker. If we did not do that, we would end up in situations where we would only pass two or three pieces of legislations in a sitting, something that is unacceptable to Albertans. There are also two other mechanisms: one, which I am using today, is time allocation, and second is a standing order where we can move the previous question. These are all tools that are used to be able to keep legislation moving through the Chamber.

I do encourage members to utilize the remaining time on Bill 22 to make sure that we have a good discussion and ultimately are able to get this legislation out of the House in a way that is good for Albertans, Mr. Speaker. With that, I ask all of my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 37. Is there anyone in the opposition that would like to respond? The hon. the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the conversation that we're having is a bit not on point. I think that when the Government House Leader rises to say that this bill has had more debate than any bill in the House – this is a bill that was introduced on Monday. We are speaking today, Thursday. In fact, that's less than three complete days that this bill has been in the public. I hasten to remind the members that when we talk about the amount of debate that a bill has had, it's not really just about us. It isn't just about us. It's about the public. It's about the public's ability to engage with the bill. It's about the public's ability to understand what's happened. It's about the media's ability to ask questions about the bill. It's about our ability to have an actual dialogue back and forth.

9:10

Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader also references the fact that we didn't raise a sufficient number of amendments. I mean, this bill is no good from beginning to end. How are you supposed to amend a bill that removes pension rights from people, that fires an Election Commissioner in the middle of an active investigation?

On that note, this sort of long diatribe about the fact that the investigation will continue – you know, if we read a story about another country and we heard that the king in that country was discontinuing an investigation but he was only discontinuing it so that he could allow it to continue at his discretion, how would we respond to that? This idea that at the government's discretion the investigation can be allowed to continue: well, that's the entire problem. That's the point, that we are all supposed to be subject to the same laws.

Those laws are meant to be investigated and enforced by independent branches. Mr. Speaker, we have heard the hon. Minister of Justice rise in this House how many times and say that he has no impact at all on the Crown prosecution service, that he has no impact at all on the police, that those investigations need to be completely independent. Apparently, the same does not go for this particular investigation. The idea that it's impossible for the

minister to impact Crown policy, that it's impossible for the minister to name the special prosecutor who is involved in the investigation of these same charges or this same matter under RCMP investigation, while meanwhile the government is able to come in and remove the Election Commissioner in the middle of an investigation: I think that that's absurd.

I think the idea that we have debated this for too long or it has had too much time – we're talking, Mr. Speaker, about the fundamental underpinnings of our democracy. We are talking about a person whose job it is to investigate whether or not the democratic rules we have all collectively selected to govern ourselves ought to be enforced. The question we're having here isn't about how things should be enforced; it's whether those rules ought to be enforced at all. I think that the public should be deeply concerned about that, and I think that they deserve time to respond to that.

This is an enormous piece of omnibus legislation. I can remember, Mr. Speaker, several members from the then opposition, now government, who used to complain when we put two related statutes together, the labour code and the Employment Standards Code. Both deal with the same thing, employer-employee relations, in different areas, whether unionized or non-unionized areas, and the now government members, then opposition members, were incredibly up in arms about that. This amends far more than just two statutes, so I think the idea that we've had sufficient debate – we're still finding things in this bill.

You know, certainly one of the other things that's in this bill is the ability of two political parties to merge. That wasn't an ability that existed before, and what this essentially does is to allow the United Conservative Party access to funds donated to the former Wildrose Party and the former Progressive Conservative Party. Honestly, Mr. Speaker, seeing the way the United Conservative Party is now behaving, seeing the return to Tory land, I feel like there are at least a few people who donated to the old Wildrose Party who wouldn't be really happy to have their money transferred over.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members to vote against this motion.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 37 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:14 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Long	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schweitzer
Copping	Neudorf	Shandro
Getson	Nicolaides	Stephan
Goodridge	Nixon, Jeremy	Toews
Guthrie	Panda	Turton
Hanson	Reid	van Dijken
Hunter	Rutherford	Walker
Jones	Savage	Yao
LaGrange	Sawhney	Yaseen
Loewen		

9:30

Against the motion:

Carson	Hoffman	Sabir
Eggen	Pancholi	Schmidt
Ganley	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.

Totals: For – 31 Against – 9

[Government Motion 37 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

(continued)

#### Bill 22

#### Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019

[Adjourned debate November 21: Mr. Jason Nixon]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we're at third reading of Bill 22, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to take a few minutes just to counter some of the things that the Government House Leader said very recently. One, he said that this bill has had more time given to it than any other bill. Well, again, it was introduced Monday late afternoon, and here we are, Thursday morning. The government has brought in time allocation, so around about 59 minutes from now they expect to be able to ram this through.

The Premier has not addressed this bill even once in this place, and I think that that is shameful. I think that if you want to bring forward a bill to fire the guy who's investing fraud, forgery, and bribery in your own party, you should at least stand in this place and defend that, but the Premier has refused to stand in this place and speak to this bill in any way or fashion. I think that if the Prime Minister would have done that in the SNC-Lavalin case and then fired the investigator in the middle of the case, there would have been even more outrage than Canadians rightfully expressed.

I think that when the House leader talks about economies of scale at the same time his Premier is talking about pulling out of the CPP, it definitely seems to be an attempt to speak out of both sides of the mouth at the same time. You know, the CPP isn't good enough for the Premier. The Premier thinks that we need to create our own Alberta-based pension. Then here we have teachers, who've had their own pension, and they've had joint governance. They've had the ability to make decisions about their own money, their own future, and their own contributions since 1939, and here we're going to tear that all up in less than four days. I think it smacks of hypocrisy.

I think that that definitely doesn't reflect the things that I hear when I'm talking to folks in Edmonton-Glenora. They want fair, respectful, transparent government. They want a government that respects law enforcement, doesn't fire them in the middle of an investigation and certainly one where there are 800 open files and more than \$200,000 in fines levied against the party that is indeed bringing forward this legislation to fire the law enforcement that's been tasked with enforcing fair elections in this province.

I also have to say that the folks that I've talked to in regard to ATRF and this heavy-handed attempt to take away any kind of say that teachers have over their own pensions and other public service workers as well, of course, definitely don't feel that this has been well canvassed or that it reflects their values or that it reflects anything that was campaigned for in the very recent election, an election where a lot of people said: "Oh, don't worry. It's fear and smear from the NDP. Nothing to worry about here."

I'll tell you who else doesn't think this is fair or well canvassed, Michael O'Neill. You may not have had a chance to meet him. He's booked four days to protest on the front steps of the Leg. He comes to us from Myrnam, Alberta, not necessarily known as the socialist

democracy of the north, but he certainly begs this government and all members of this Assembly to respect him, to respect his pension, and to give him at least due consideration. He booked four days to protest because he assumed that there would be at least four days of debate, but here we are, ramming this through in such an expeditious fashion that totally disrespects the will of folks who own those pensions.

As well, I would have expected – you know, a party that likes to talk tough on crime sure seems very eager to fire the people who are tasked with actually investigating those crimes and making sure that people are held to account and that we have fair and open elections in this province. I would say that not only is this disrespectful to future democracies in this province; I think it's disrespectful of everyone's current mandate as well. The fact that here we are, more than \$200,000 in fines, and we're firing the person who's tasked with upholding that law: I think it's blatant disrespect to every democracy in the developed world, and I think it also is disrespectful to our own duty and responsibility.

Certainly, when the Speaker, multiple times a day, reminds us through the prayer of the day that we have an obligation not to do things that are self-interested, to work to improve the condition for all and at the same time we're firing somebody whose very task it is to ensure fairness, I think that that is only self-serving. I think it's incredibly disrespectful, and I think it speaks to the arrogance that has evolved so quickly. Somebody – they're a math teacher – said to me: you know, when you add two fractions, which we saw through two previous parties, you have to have a common denominator. It seems that the lowest common denominator has been achieved here, one where we have extreme arrogance in terms of thinking that we're above law enforcement, and we also are attacking important public services and those who provide them, like the folks who are very rightfully worried about their pensions.

The last thing I want to say on this matter. Folks who were here in the 2015 Assembly have heard me talk about my dad and how he was a principal in northern Alberta and how frustrated he was when he was forced to lay off so many staff, forced to cut so many services in his school, and then also forced to take a rollback. The part I didn't mention is that in his dying days he talked about how that rollback that was forced upon him not only attacked his earnings for those years; it attacked his pension, and it also impacted what he was able to leave my mom because, of course, she would receive his pension after he died. That very pension was attacked through changes to his compensation, and now that very pension is being attacked through this change to the ATRF. I think it's shameful. It's incredibly disrespectful.

I think that every child in this province who should be able to look at their parents and think that they are engaged in the public service and that the public and the government, as the representatives of that public, respect the work that their parents do – I think that this is not what any person in this Assembly ran to do, and if they did, I think that they should give their head a shake because I think that this definitely isn't what they canvassed on at the doors when they were asking to be the representatives of the public and to work for all of those teachers, to work for all of those students, to work for every single person who lives in our individual ridings.

That's what I have to say about that. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to join the debate? This would be on the main bill, not on 29(a)(a) as it's not available. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.



**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on Bill 22, a bill that I wholeheartedly support, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. I have sat in this Chamber and listened to quite a bit of debate. You know, it's been robust. I think it's been a good opportunity to hear what other members of this Chamber think of this piece of legislation, a good piece of legislation, in my opinion, but there have been a couple of things that I do take a little bit of issue with, and I wanted to address that in my remarks. I did speak on this in second reading, but having heard more, I think that there's more to respond to.

The first was a comment made by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View regarding a king, a king who would ultimately fire one investigator and control the investigation under his own purview. I don't think that that is an accurate description of what has happened here in the slightest. The reality here is that the office of the Election Commissioner has been moved under the purview of the Chief Electoral Officer. These investigations are going to continue, which, I believe, is the most important point here, the fact that these investigations will continue.

9:40

What I found most frustrating, though, was the insinuation by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View that now that things will be moved into the purview of the Chief Electoral Officer if this bill passes – I would hate to presume the outcome of a vote – somehow that means that the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Glen Resler, operates at the discretion of the Premier or Executive Council. How arrogant is that, for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View to suggest that we control what Mr. Resler does? His is an independent office, and one that must be respected and not passed around this Chamber like a political football. I would caution the Member for Calgary-Mountain View about that.

Also, something that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora had mentioned in her remarks here was that the Premier has yet to speak on this. Well, the reality is that our hon. Premier is currently in Texas doing what the previous . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** Point of order.

#### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of Members

**Mr. Schow:** I do retract that. I recognize that that was out of order, and I apologize.

**The Speaker:** You might wait until I call the point of order, but you are correct. Referring to the presence or the absence of a member would be a point of order, and I appreciate your apology.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for that point.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Schow:** Our Premier is doing what the previous government failed to do, which was to attract investment to this province. Investment was driven away by the billions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, over the last four years, and we are now putting measures in place to ensure that the message is sent across the country, across the world that we are indeed open for business. But that's not just going to happen itself. The Premier has made many visits across different provinces, different countries, and his job is to ensure that we can have a prosperous province here, that people recognize that Alberta has a distinct advantage, especially with some of the new pieces of legislation that are being passed. So it is a bit ironic that the hon.

member opposite would say something like that because we do believe that what the Premier is doing is well within the job description that Albertans gave him on April 16.

But the truth here is that this bill is an attempt to make government lean, to make government operate more efficiently, and to improve economies of scale. Currently AIMCo manages \$110 billion. The ATRF moving into AIMCo has no impact – no impact – on teachers' pensions. I don't know how many times that's been repeated in this Chamber, but that is the reality there. The second thing is that there is no impact on the ATRF board's control over said pensions. The board still sets the investments. I would see this as a net positive because we are improving economies of scale. The same thing goes with WCB and AHS moving into long-term investments, moving into AIMCo: \$10.7 billion with WCB, and \$2.3 billion with AHS. The discretion over the funds has not and will not change. These moves alone, Mr. Speaker, add an extra \$30 billion to AIMCo.

Now, the member opposite also talked about moving Alberta pensions back here and doing an Alberta pension plan. I would see that, again, as a positive move. One, it does send a message that Alberta is certainly looking to have more control over the money within its jurisdiction. But so does – that brings back \$40 billion into AIMCo's investment, which again improves economies of scale, gives AIMCo more ability to invest.

I don't try to venture into trying to understand the logic of the members opposite, and I'm not looking to venture into personal attacks because that's not appropriate in this Chamber. But I don't know where the financial literacy side comes into this on the opposite side.

We've also had a move to move the Alberta Sport Connection programs into the ministry, dissolve Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, the historical resources fund. The mental health review panel is moving from four to three members. We dissolved the Alberta Competitiveness Council and repealed the Alberta Competitiveness Act. Like, the list goes on and on and on here of moves that this government is making to achieve its ultimate goal of becoming more lean. It's what Albertans asked us to do. It's what our boss has asked us to do. Anybody in this Chamber on this side of the House who listens to their constituents would know that when you knock on those doors, when you talk to your constituents, when you read the correspondence, which we do, the message continues to come in, floods in: please continue along the path of restoring Alberta's advantage, restoring Alberta to a province that is a beacon of hope and opportunity. What this means for Albertans is that we are again returning to a place that they can be proud of, a place that I can be proud of.

Now, I love this province. It is a place that my parents grew up in. It's a place my grandparents grew up in and their parents before them. There is a lot riding on what we are doing here, and that's why I believe so strongly that we are on the right path. The path that we were moving on under the previous government I argue was not the correct one. I argue that there was mismanagement of the province's finances, and I believe that we are now stuck in a situation where we have to make some difficult decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I don't intend to take up a lot of time, but I did want to quickly respond to comments from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I look forward to further debate.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to be able to respond to some of the statements that the Member for

Cardston-Siksika made and some of the things that have been raised in debate in third reading of this bill.

Certainly, what I've heard from all members who have spoken so far is that we've had a lot of correspondence from our constituents about this piece of legislation. Indeed, our office in Edmonton-Gold Bar has been flooded with e-mails from constituents, not just my own but also of the members opposite. They've made it quite clear in their e-mails to my office that members opposite are not listening to their own constituents, which is shameful.

You know, I've had people like David and Rosemarie and Gerry and Dorothy and Val write to us about the undemocratic actions of this government and express deep concern about the move to take teachers' pensions away from teachers and move them into AIMCo. Honestly, Mr. Speaker, in the four and a half years that I've been elected, I've had more letters on this particular piece of legislation than anything else that has gone on in provincial or federal politics over the last four and a half years, which is remarkable.

What's also remarkable, Mr. Speaker, is who hasn't written to my office. You know who hasn't written to my office? The CEO of Suncor, the billionaire owner of Husky Energy, Cenovus, EnCana. None of the CEOs or shareholders of those companies have written to my office. They're more than happy to sit back and let the most antidemocratic and corrupt government consolidate power with this legislation because they know that the gravy train is going to keep on rolling. They've been given a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway, they've been given tax relief at the municipal level, they've got a \$30 million propaganda machine that's being run out of the Energy minister's office and the environment minister's office, and they keep asking for more. Now they want CN Rail workers to be forced back to work so that the oil can keep on flowing and their profits can keep on rolling in while CN workers struggle for the right to fair wages and safe working conditions. Of course big business in Alberta is not going to raise a voice. They're not going to lift a finger to do anything to prevent this government from consolidating power because they have billions and billions of dollars at stake.

**Mr. Panda:** They were your friends until yesterday.

**Mr. Schmidt:** The member for wherever the hell he's from, the Minister of Infrastructure . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we are very familiar with what is and what isn't parliamentary language inside the Chamber, and I think that we can apologize and withdraw for the use of unparliamentary language.

9:50

**Mr. Schmidt:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for not remembering the constituency that the Minister of Infrastructure represents and using unparliamentary language to express that. But I am incredibly passionate – and so are the people of Alberta – about what's going on here today.

You know, there was a recent poll out, released earlier in November, that said that 70 per cent of Albertans think that big corporations have way too much power in this province – and that was before this bill was introduced – and now that power is being consolidated in the hands of this group, who dare to call themselves a government. They've consolidated power and moved so quickly that Vladimir Putin would blush at the gall that these people have in crushing democracy.

You know, back to the issue of corporate power, it's not just about crushing the Election Commissioner's investigation into their potentially fraudulent activities in the UCP leadership race. It's also about getting their greasy, fat little fingers on teachers' pensions and using that money to prop up an oil industry that can't get

investment from anywhere else. The central bank of Sweden won't invest in it, right?

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I oppose this legislation and everything that the members opposite have said about it to date.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I would like to just be clear. I have no concern with anyone's passion, and I encourage passion inside the Chamber. I only ask that we do it through the use of parliamentary language. We all know that that swath is very wide, as we just saw in your remarks.

We are on the main bill, Bill 22. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move an amendment to this bill, and I will await its arrival.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this amendment will be referred to as HA1.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be amended by deleting the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019, be not now read a third time but be read a third time this day six months hence." This, Mr. Speaker, as you will be familiar, is commonly known as a hoist. The hope is to pitch this bill forward into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I think that if ever there has been a bill that could use some additional time to contemplate, it is this. We have heard repeatedly from members of the government benches how much time there has been to debate this. I point out again that this was introduced Monday afternoon. We are now at almost 10 o'clock on Thursday morning. In terms of enormous lengths of time, I feel that if your employer were to tell you to analyze and speak to and get a public debate going on 80 pages worth of material in less than 72 hours, normally you would find that a bit onerous.

I really think that the time for debate of this has been insufficient, and I think that the time for the public to engage in this has been insufficient. That is the main thing. It is the public here that has been affronted. Certainly, we in the opposition are offended by this action, absolutely, but it is the public whose rights are ultimately being undermined in this case. It is the public who has that concern in ensuring that each and every member of our society is held subject to the same laws and that those laws are investigated fairly, that they are investigated impartially, and that they are investigated in the absence of political interference. That is a basic principle of our system.

Even more so, this is a person who's investigating offences against our democratic principles. So it's not just the rule of law; it's actually democracy itself that has been called into question here. I think the public has a really sincere interest in this. As members of the public, we pride ourselves on the fact that we are governed democratically. If we allow it to be the case that that democracy can essentially be for sale, that big money can come in and can purchase power and voice in this place – and not just purchase democratic power but purchase democratic power that then puts it above the rule of law, that then puts it in a position to undermine the very laws that are in place to protect our democracy – I think that's just incredible.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things that are wrong with this bill. Opting out people who are part-time – and we know Conservatives are famous for leaving average working people with part-time, tenuous work so that they are not in a position to speak

up for themselves, so that they are not in a position to be able to feed their families, so that all of their energy is dedicated to meeting their basic needs – this is another step along that way. They are taking control of people's pensions. This is people's life savings, that they've worked for. They're relying on those pensions.

There is so much that is wrong with this bill, but primarily I think the thing that I would say is most wrong with it is that fundamentally it is an attack on justice, democracy, and the rule of law.

With that, I will end my comments.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Seeing none, on the bill, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak against Bill 22. On this historic day we have the first time ever . . .

**The Speaker:** My sincerest apologies. It's on the amendment, not on the bill. I'm sure that you don't mind. I just wanted to make sure that we're all talking about the same thing.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you. That was part of the confusion but, I'm sure, not all of it. Mostly mine, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise on this historic day. This bill needs to be stopped. Certainly, this is one of the fastest bills to ever move through the Alberta Legislature. Also, today we're hearing, down south in impeachment hearings, about corruption and obstruction of justice. Today the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, will be charged with bribery, the first time in Israeli history. So we have examples of places where justice has been obstructed, where power has been abused, where democratic norms have been subverted, and on this day I rise in Alberta to provide comments on exactly the same thing.

Now, the pink slips are raining down, particularly in Calgary, where 250 people have lost their jobs at the University of Calgary, with 300 layoffs at the Calgary board of education, 125 at Alberta Innovates. This is on top of many private-sector layoffs. People are losing their livelihoods right before Christmas. What happens is that this government then moves forward with a cover-up. No one voted for this. They didn't vote for the pink slips. They didn't vote for the cover-up, either, of the investigations that are ongoing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've spent a lot of time knocking on doors in Lethbridge. I'm quite certain that nobody in Lethbridge, in that entire city, voted for a cover-up. They didn't vote for fraud. People in Lethbridge didn't vote for self-dealing arrogance or obstruction of justice. People in Lethbridge did not vote for making excuses or trying to cover up bribery, forgery, abuse of power, entitlement, destruction of democratic norms. They did not vote for anyone to ally themselves with a Premier who has been variously now described as a strongman and tone deaf on democratic norms. They did not vote for \$211,000 worth of fines for breaking elections laws. They didn't vote for rigging elections. They didn't vote for people that would make laws that would only benefit themselves. I know that what I am doing here today on this historic day is voting against those kinds of abuses of power.

10:00

It is regrettable that not everyone in this House shares that commitment to democracy. It's actually not that hard. There are basic rule of law principles that are being violated here by this government's actions and by this bill. This is to say nothing of the attack on pensions. This is to say nothing of taking away the power of working people to decide how their retirement security is going to be invested. This is to say nothing of the 741 e-mails that I have,

at last checking, received from constituents who are worried about their retirement security and their own savings, the future of their own money.

Mr. Speaker, I am dismayed that this government and these government members, these backbench members, are voting for things that no one should endorse. I am dismayed at the principles at work here and at the willingness to sell out those basic principles that brought us to this Chamber in the first place. It is profoundly disappointing on a personal level that some members of this Chamber – I thought they were better than this, and that is disappointing to me. We will continue to work for people to uphold the rule of law, to advocate for basic democratic norms, to ensure that obstruction of justice does not go unchallenged because ultimately that's what the people from Lethbridge who sent me here asked me to do, and that's what all Albertans have asked every single UCP MLA to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Anyone else wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)?

On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak because despite the assurances that have been made repeatedly by the Government House Leader that there has been plenty of time for debate, this is actually my first opportunity to stand to speak to Bill 22, and we're already running out the clock on that. The reason it's my first time is not – I've been in the House every single day, all day, all night Monday night, all day Tuesday, all day Wednesday, but guess what? This government scheduled debate of Bill 22 for the dead of night on the two nights, yeah, when I was not scheduled to work. And guess what? This is not a fulsome debate. This is not a lot of time to discuss something that goes to the very heart of our democratic institutions. This is absolutely an intention to stifle debate. We've seen this government do it over and over again, but now we're seeing them do it on a bill that goes to the heart of our democratic institutions and chips away at it. Actually, more than chips away at it; cuts at it.

I'm actually going to take this time and say that I'm pleased to be able to speak because I have an obligation to speak on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of the numerous Albertans who have flooded my constituency office with outrage with respect to Bill 22. This bill was introduced Monday afternoon. In less than 48 hours I had over 400 e-mails alone, not to count letters that have been coming in and phone calls but e-mails alone, over 400 from constituents who are outraged about Bill 22. I have an obligation to stand right now even though the government is doing their best to stifle opportunity for debate, to stifle the opportunity for Albertans to be heard in this Chamber.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

I'm taking that opportunity to say that I am incredibly disappointed and disheartened. I am a new member to this Assembly, and when I decided to run for office, it was because I profoundly believed in the institution of democracy. I believed that we had a system, that we had checks and balances in place to make sure that the voices of all Albertans could be heard. I remember in the first session watching the government caucus and particularly the Premier swing around their big mandate based on their platform because they were bringing in legislation. Well, of course, I don't agree with what was in their platform because I didn't run for the UCP. I ran for a party that has principles. While they swung that big mandate around, we had to say: "Okay. You know what? That was in your platform. You're bringing in legislation to bring in your

platform. All right. We don't agree with it, but that is what has happened." However, we have now far deviated from that platform.

Albertans did not vote for a cover-up of an investigation into this Premier and into this caucus and into this party. I certainly don't think that the constituents for all of the members across the way in the government – all of their constituents, did they vote for a cover-up? I don't think they did. I'm actually quite surprised. I should actually say that I'm quite disappointed to see how few government members are actually there to represent their constituents, to actually stand up and say: "You know what? I have a problem with this. I have a problem with supporting a bill that is going to terminate the Election Commissioner who is there and is actively investigating 800 complaints into violations of the Election Act." Eight hundred.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Let's be clear. A significant amount of that so far, at least based on the fines that have been levied, are with respect to this Premier's leadership race. What is the first thing that this government does? We actually talked about it. We actually mentioned it in spring session. We said: how long – how long – until this Premier fires the Election Commissioner? Oh, and everybody stood up on the government side: fear and smear, fearmongering; it's outrageous. Of course, they'd never do that. Of course, they never did it. Guess what? They did it.

Not only did they do it, but the Premier has not had the courage to stand up and defend why he's done it. In fact, what he's had is the House leader – quite frankly, this morning I was quite impressed by how sober and quiet the House leader was when defending Bill 22 because normally when he stands up in the House, particularly in the evenings, he's a lot more spirited. But this morning he was very sober and calm and gave his presentation about why he believed this was just an administrative change, just going to combine two bodies into one, and it'll save the government \$220,000 approximately. That's according to the Finance minister, which is interesting because they didn't seem to have a problem throwing around \$16,000 on pancake plane parties or \$18,000 on secret missions to the U.K. Oh, but \$200,000: that's enough to justify gutting our democracy. So it's interesting that the Premier hasn't had the courage to stand up and say that in this House; however, he's having his members do that for them.

Well, all I can say is that I am standing up here to defend democracy and to stand up for what I've been hearing not only my constituents but from what I know that constituents across Alberta have been saying, which is that to fire an Election Commissioner who is in the middle of investigating and has already levied hundreds of thousands of dollars of fines against other people who were involved with the UCP leadership race is outrageous. To fire that investigator and to do it with such speed, to do it with such force, to invoke closure, to close debate, and to force it through in less than three days after the bill was introduced, well, that suggests to me that this government is in a rush to hide something. Guess what? They're not fooling Albertans. Based on my inbox, based on what I'm seeing across social media, across the institutional media, a media who, actually, by the way, have typically been very supportive of the government caucus, they're all saying: what is the rush to hide?

Well, I guess, if the government gets their way, which they will because they have their numbers and they're forcing this through, we'll never know what they have to hide. That to me is an affront to democracy. It's an affront to why we are here today, and every single member in this Assembly that is going to vote in favour of Bill 22 should be ashamed of themselves. They should be ashamed

that they are not standing up for their constituents, who did not vote for this.

I'm glad that I had an opportunity to speak because the government has sure done its hardest and its best to deprive the opportunity for Albertans and the opposition to speak on this. I'm glad I had the moment to do it here. I think it's absolutely outrageous that we even have to have this debate. I think the government has really done their best to really undermine the trust of Albertans in them, and it will be them who will have to pay the price for that the next time there's an election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone wishing to add a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, on the amendment, is there anyone else that would like to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak on this amendment to Bill 22. Certainly, I'm standing in favour of it. Like my hon. colleagues on this side of the House, certainly – you know, there is a significant issue with Bill 22. We know that for government to operate in a fair and just manner, there are three branches of government. There is the executive, the legislative, and the judicial, and currently this bill is actually interfering with that process that creates fairness and justice in our system. The executive branch is really messing up with the legislative branch here, very heavy-handedly moving in to terminate the Election Commissioner.

You know, one of the reasons that I ran politically was because I was disheartened by some of the things that were happening and the decisions that, you know, different political leaders were making, and I wanted this system to be respected, as you do, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that the people who are governing our province are doing so in a fair and just way, that our systems are respected, that there's accountability, that the rule of law is being respected, that there is citizen participation. These are all sort of tenets of a democracy.

**10:10**

Like many members, sometimes when I knock on the door of a constituent, they tell me: "I'm not voting." They tell me: "I'm not voting." They say: "Oh, you know, everybody is interested in their own interests, and I don't trust that system. What's the point? It doesn't matter what I say." I'm always wanting to encourage them and convince them that: "No, no. It's so important for you to be involved, to have your voice heard. Each Albertan who's eligible to vote, each has equal power to do that." But you know what? When this kind of stuff happens, it's shaky ground I'm standing on because people will point to this, and they'll say: "Come on. Look what happened just now. Look what happened. The Election Commissioner was doing an investigation into the leadership of the UCP, and they are firing him through legislation."

I have very shaky ground to stand on when, you know, our government is doing this kind of disrespectful action that interferes with the different branches of government. Albertans have the right to be outraged, really, by this. It's not okay what this government is doing. I know they have argued: "Oh, it's just administrative. It's not a big deal. It's up to the CEO of Elections Alberta, who can just hire this fellow back." I mean, come on. We're not so naive to see that that's really happening. If that was true, then why go through this whole process? I mean, the economic issues: I think the \$200,000 a year that will be saved is like a drop in the bucket. There must be another reason.

Certainly, we're hearing from, you know, many students or professors of politics that there must be an underlying reason. Certainly, Duane Bratt, a political scientist from Mount Royal University, is saying that it's a cover-up; it's black and white. Keith Gerein, the journalist for the *Edmonton Journal* – it was this morning that I read his column – said: hey; the UCP is using up its political capital pretty quickly.

I mean, the election wasn't that long ago, and there have been many egregious things that have happened: chartering a plane with Conservative Premiers and their wives, sending staff over to the U.K. on the taxpayers' dime. I mean, these are all things that certainly are not fair or just, and Albertans have the right to be outraged. The government, frankly, should be listening to them instead of, first of all, giving notice of closure and then denying that: "Oh, no, no. We've already debated it four times. We didn't do that." But it's so clear that they had a plan in place so that they could rush this bill through. It's just disingenuous to sort of suggest that having done that, they were open to debate. The government is not open to debate on this. They're going to push it through in whatever way they possibly can. Certainly, on this side of the House we are extremely concerned about that because we see this as just another aspect of not respecting our democratic process here, and it's not okay.

This bill amends or alters 31 statutes. I mean, this is the biggest piece of it, the firing of the Election Commissioner, but of course, we know of moving the Alberta teachers' retirement fund over to AIMCo. That doesn't even fit with Conservative principles. What is the political expedience there? It isn't about, certainly, fairness at all. The fact of self-determination: teachers have had their own pension plan, they've had excellent returns, they've managed it themselves, and then arbitrarily the government just says: oh, we're moving it over here. I don't know. My understanding of Conservatives is they want to not muck around in things so much. Let things run as they do. It's certainly a pretty heavy hand of government that is taking the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and moving it over to AIMCo. I mean, I don't know. If I was sitting on that side of the House, I would really be wondering: what's the rationale for that? It certainly doesn't seem to fit with what I understand of Conservative principles, so there is some political expedience that's going on here and, I feel like, an erosion of values, really, on the government side.

Those two aspects of this bill are certainly very egregious, and our side of the House stands very much against them. Certainly, we stand very strongly with teachers, that they have the right to manage their own retirement funds. Certainly, they've done that very well for many years.

With making those two strong points, I will now take my seat. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone wishing to add a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the third reading of Bill 22. Let me start by saying that it's a defining moment for this Legislature and for this province. The reason I'm saying this – and we have been saying it, Albertans have been saying it, it's everywhere – is that nobody believes that the change government is suggesting, the firing of the Election Commissioner – the government wants us to believe it is just a simple administrative consolidation. Nobody is buying it, and there are very clear reasons that everyone should be able to understand why they are not buying that.

A reason for that is that this very Election Commissioner is investigating somewhere around 800 cases. Among those, there is one case that relates to this governing party, its leadership in 2017. That's a matter of public record. It's also a matter of public record that from this governing party, if I start from one corner, the Minister of Justice has been reached out to by law enforcement in relation to this investigation, the Minister of Infrastructure has been reached out to by law enforcement in relation to this investigation, the minister of culture and status of women has been reached out to in relation to this investigation, the Minister of Seniors and Housing has been reached out to in relation to this investigation, and the MLA for Calgary-East has been reached out to in relation to this investigation. No one, even from that side, can deny that there is an investigation that's ongoing.

In a democratic society, when there is some investigation that's ongoing, we don't use and abuse power to interfere with that investigation. That's rule of law, and that's fundamental to our democracy. What we are seeing in this bill is that that fundamental principle of rule of law has been attacked, and our democracy has been attacked. Every member of this House, on both sides, should take a moment and think about how they will go down, how their stance on this bill will go down in history. Will you be standing on the side of this bill, that is attacking rule of law, that is attacking democracy?

**10:20**

That is just an attempt to get rid of the commissioner who is investigating some of the things that your party may be involved in. There may be some consequences for the governing party. That's how you want to be remembered? It's a serious obligation. The bill was just introduced Monday, last Monday.

**Ms Hoffman:** This Monday. Yeah.

**Mr. Sabir:** This Monday.

If nothing else, take some time. Go to your constituencies over the weekend and ask Albertans what they think about it. Ask the people who you represent. Ask them whether they want you to stand for this cover-up or whether they want you to stand with democracy and the rule of law. You have not consulted anyone on this. The public is skeptical of the motives behind this bill.

Anybody who knows that the Election Commissioner was investigating the UCP leadership, they have questions about it, whether it's real or perceived. I think for the sake of rule of law, for the sake of democracy, you can leave this aside and bring the other 30 changes that you're bringing through this legislation. Once that investigation is concluded – I guess somebody may buy that, that you're now consolidating their office, but so far I have not met a single person who thinks that this is an administrative consolidation. Political scientists, academia, political commentators, columnists, journalists, everybody. They're saying one thing, that it's a cover-up, that it's an attempt to stop the investigation into the UCP leadership race.

Many of you have spoken on this bill. Not a single person touched on this investigation. Acknowledge there is an investigation that involves your members, people from your front bench. Acknowledge that. It's out there. It's public record and has been confirmed many times. Acknowledge that it's an ongoing investigation and then tell the public that you're firing that commissioner who is in charge of that investigation and see whether they buy your argument or not.

It's clearly an attack on our democracy, on our institutions, on our principles like rule of law, and on every one of us. If government is doing it, it's the obligation of private members on

that side as well to think about it. They were elected to represent Albertans. We were all elected to represent our constituents, not the party. Especially when you all know that there is an investigation and your party is implicated in it and that's the commissioner who is investigating it, firing that commissioner doesn't send a good message for anyone in this province, in this country.

This is a serious, serious issue. Everyone in this Chamber has a responsibility to rise above the party lines and think about the consequences for this House, for the rule of law, for our democracy, for our independent officers. It will erode public confidence in our institution of democracy, that you can win an election, use your majority, abuse your power, and do things that otherwise would not be allowed in any democratic society.

I urge all members of this House to vote down this piece of legislation and vote against the firing of the Election Commissioner, who is investigating your party. That's the least you can do for democracy and for the rule of law.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone wishing to bring a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora on the amendment.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For everyone's awareness we are considering an amendment to Bill 22, the bill that has been referred to as a bill to cover up investigations and charges related to fraud, forgery, and bribery in the UCP, just to be clear, the party, specifically. More than \$200,000 in fines have been levied, members of this very House have been under investigation, and there are significant concerns that the Premier has failed to even stand in this House and defend this piece of legislation.

The amendment here is that it be amended by essentially referring this to come back to the House six months from now to give everyone the time to prove that this isn't about shutting down investigations, that this isn't about firing law enforcement in the middle of their investigations. Law enforcement, you know, is supposed to be about making sure that we uphold the law, that we have a place that enforces democracy in all of our pillars that make us proud to be Canadian and to live in a democratic society, one where people who are elected don't have the ability to act as though they are above the law, that we have a law that is fair and just for all. I am deeply concerned that what we have here is a government that continues to push forward with their own interests, their own self-interests as the guiding force.

We wrote to the Ethics Commissioner after this bill was introduced. And just to remind everyone again, this bill wasn't introduced until Monday afternoon. The Premier has not stood to defend this legislation in any way in question period, in bill debate in any way. The Premier has failed to defend it. That's why it's only fair that we have the ability to delay this and return six months from now.

We wrote the Ethics Commission about our deep concerns with this legislation, the fact that there are people in this House that plan on voting on it, and the commissioner has said that she absolutely does not have sufficient time – she responded to us just a few moments ago – or ability to be able to review this and determine if members of this House rightfully deserve to be able to vote on this bill or not. The letter is here, Mr. Speaker. I'll be happy to table it at a time that I am able to. The Ethics Commissioner said that she requires more time, which I think that the only right and fair thing for us to be able to do, then, is to move to adjourn this bill so that we can review the Ethics Commissioner letter and be able to make sure that any member of this House is voting with the proper

authority and support of the Ethics Commissioner before they put themselves in further risk. They've already been under investigation for fraud, forgery, and bribery. They certainly shouldn't be causing the Ethics Commissioner in this place – and that is essentially what she says in this letter.

I move that we adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:30 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Hoffman	Shepherd
Dang	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley	Phillips	Sweet
Goehring	Sabir	

Against the motion:

Allard	Hunter	Rutherford
Amery	Issik	Savage
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Schow
Barnes	Loewen	Stephan
Copping	Long	Toews
Getson	Madu	Toor
Goodridge	McIver	Turton
Gotfried	Neudorf	van Dijken
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Walker
Hanson	Pitt	Yao
Horner	Reid	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 33
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[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Government Motion 37 every question necessary for the disposal of Bill 22 will now be put.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment HA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:47 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Gray	Sabir
Dach	Hoffman	Shepherd
Dang	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Deol	Phillips	Sweet
Goehring		

Against the motion:

Allard	Jones	Savage
Amery	Loewen	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Long	Schweitzer
Copping	Madu	Stephan
Getson	McIver	Toews
Goodridge	Neudorf	Toor
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Horner	Pitt	Walker
Hunter	Reid	Yao
Issik	Rutherford	Yaseen

Totals: For – 13 Against – 33

[Motion on amendment HA1 lost]

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:05 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Loewen	Schow
Amery	Long	Schweitzer
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Shandro
Copping	McIver	Stephan
Getson	Neudorf	Toews
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Hanson	Orr	van Dijken
Horner	Reid	Walker
Hunter	Rutherford	Yao
Issik	Savage	Yaseen
Jones		

11:20

Against the motion:

Carson	Gray	Sabir
Dach	Hoffman	Shepherd
Dang	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Deol	Phillips	Sweet
Goehring		

Totals: For – 34 Against – 13

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to ask for unanimous consent to shorten the division bells to one-minute intervals, including all votes in Committee of the Whole, notwithstanding Standing Order 32(3), for the remainder of the morning sitting.

[Unanimous consent denied]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 24 Appropriation Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Certainly, this continues the frustration that I think many Albertans have been feeling, particularly when it comes to the Appropriation Act and a number of the clauses in it. This budget is a direct attack on the things that the Premier and his entire caucus said they weren't going to be attacking. The Appropriation Act certainly doesn't reflect

what they said, that they were going to maintain or increase education funding.

Just yesterday over a hundred teachers in the Calgary board of education, that's one public school district in one city, received termination notices. Probably like me, Madam Chair, you have spent time on social media hearing from families and hearing from students and hearing from those teachers who are directly impacted about how difficult it is to think about how to finish off this current calendar year knowing that they won't be there to support these kids in the upcoming months. For those parents who are finding out about these teachers being laid off, St. Albert is another example. St. Albert full-day kindergarten is being eliminated, kids partway through their school year being moved into different classrooms with different classmates and different instructors. For anyone who has loved a five-year-old . . . [interjections]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, could you just turn the volume down on your chit-chat, please, so that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora can be heard.

Please proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. For anyone who knows and has loved a five-year-old or can remember when they were five themselves – I know it's challenging, but some can challenge their memory to go back that far. Starting school that first official year of kindergarten is a scary enough time as it is. You spend a lot of the year trying to develop routines and learn to love learning and just appreciate being at school. I know that for the five-year-olds in my life, their teacher is a big part of that, their teacher and their classmates. That's what determines whether or not they're excited about going to school.

When they have layoffs mid-year, which of course were inevitable because the government chose to bring in their austerity budget mid-year because they were too busy campaigning on the federal election and not wanting to impact outcomes of that election to bring it in prior to the commencement of the school year, which would have been bad enough. If that budget would have been brought forward in June and schools would have been given their targets in June, which normally happens, even the one year – people often go back to: well, the NDP didn't pass a budget until the fall when they were first elected. We were elected around the same time. That is true; we didn't pass a budget until the fall, but what we did do is that we gave schools their targets. We said to schools: "This is how much your per-pupil funding is going to be. This is how much we're going to invest in the class size initiative fund. This is how much we're going to invest in the small schools by necessity grant. From that you can extrapolate and do your best to estimate what your funds will be." We did that so that staff could staff appropriately. In fact, in 2015 it meant many more teachers were hired because, of course, our school districts were growing.

The UCP government, however, decided that they were going to refuse to do that, refuse to bring forward those targets. Instead they would have messaging, and this was referred to often in the House: our messaging has been clear; we are going to fund enrolment growth. That's what was said in this House. As a result, teachers had their contracts either extended or new ones were hired. That's what was done because that's what was said in this place. That's what was said in the House.

Now here we are a few months later, and of course what happened instead is the shell game of the century. All those little pots of money that were hidden underneath these shells got cut. A number of grants were completely eliminated, like the class size initiative or classroom improvement fund or the bill to reduce school fees for parents. Some money was put into new enrolment

but not as much money as was taken away – right? – not as much money as was taken away. Some money was put into new students but not as much as was taken away.

Here we are months into the school year when these young children have developed their routines, understand their classroom conditions, understand what they need to do to be successful, and boards are left with no choice. Now that the budget has actually been given down and they find out that they are losing tens of millions, some even more, in funding, they're left to lay off staff. This isn't just in Calgary public, as I've mentioned, or St. Albert, as I've mentioned. Maybe two weeks ago now a letter surfaced from Sturgeon school division. It goes on in great detail to say, you know: we voted for this government in large numbers. Quite a significant mandate in that riding in particular, for example. They said: we voted in this government based on the promises that they made, the promises that they made in the spring about maintaining or increasing education. Instead what they've been given is multimillion-dollar cuts. They said: this is going to mean real impacts in every single one of our schools; there will be staff reductions. They go on to say: we will also have to consider increases to school fees.

When we're talking about appropriating the budget, these are the kinds of things that we are being asked to go ahead and authorize. Go ahead and authorize the breaking of a major campaign commitment. I get why that commitment was made in 2019. It's because in 2015 when the PC government said, "Oh, we're not going to increase funding even though there will be an increase in the number of students," that set off a massive chain reaction that cost the PCs a number of seats, I would say. Arrogance and entitlement, that was definitely part of it, a culture of . . .

**Mr. Schow:** Vote splitting.

**Ms Hoffman:** Vote splitting? Maybe. Maybe people chose to vote for a different Conservative party because they thought that the one that was there was too arrogant and entitled and had definitely strayed from its original values system. I think that people who voted for the, quote, United Conservatives this time didn't think they were voting to bring corruption back or at least not quite as quickly as it seemed to have been. It definitely united votes. It also united them around what clearly seems to be voting on things that, even when the Ethics Commissioner, as yet another independent officer of this Leg, says that you shouldn't be voting on – it doesn't seem to be slowing down the expeditious nature with which this United Conservative Party has decided to move forward.

**11:30**

Back to 2015. There was definitely a campaign to not fund enrolment growth, and we know that a lot of Albertans thought that that was completely wrong. I think that's one of the reasons why the now leader of the UCP in the election said: we will fund education; we'll either maintain or increase. Then in the spring in this Legislature, when the Finance minister that day was answering questions on behalf of the Education minister, the Finance minister said: we will absolutely fund enrolment growth.

I guess, you know, today we have the Education minister saying that, well, she's completely blindsided that because she cut education funding, teachers are being fired when that is absolutely what everyone was saying, since the 2015 election presumably, would happen if you cut education funding and a budget area where the significant lion's share – last I heard it was about 80 per cent of education funding – is for front-line staff. These are the custodians in your school that keep your school safe and warm and clean. This morning I was dropping my niece and nephew off. The custodian is

out there with a backpack clearing the walkway so kids can get to school, so that kids can have a good day and they can be safe when they're there.

The admin assistant at the front desk who makes sure that when kids don't show up, their parents and guardians immediately get notified so that they can be safe, they can be accounted for, and they can either confirm that they are at home or they can make sure that that person knows that they're not there and finds a way to get them there; the educational assistant who spends time one on one with students, working through many, many students with complex learning needs, that have continued to grow over the years, to get the appropriate support and attention that they need to learn in the classroom as well as other basic human dignities – like, there are students who require support in the washroom and students who require support in social settings – making sure that they can have a fully inclusive educational opportunity; the principal who makes sure that leadership is provided to that school system, that timetabling is done appropriately, that when there are behaviour challenges, they're addressed, that when parents need a voice, they are heard through the school council or one-on-one meeting opportunities: all of these front-line folks account for about 80 per cent of the education budget.

When you cut the education budget and you're surprised that these folks are losing their jobs, either I don't buy it, or I think it shows gross incompetence. Either I think you knew what you were doing, or you were in way over your head, and either way I think it's highly problematic.

The good news is that we as members of this Assembly have an opportunity to right the path. We don't have to just rubber-stamp what gets proposed; we actually get an opportunity to engage with the real consequences, engage with the constituents, our bosses, in our ridings and right across this province to make sure that we move forward with something that we are proud of and that we know will actually result in improving the condition for all, something that we literally say a prayer for multiple times a day in this House: improve the condition for all. Undoubtedly, this budget that we are considering does no such thing. It very clearly is an attack on the condition for our most vulnerable, including people who I mentioned, students.

Let's also talk about seniors for a moment. I was door-knocking again last Thursday when I stumbled across a door, and one of the seniors said to me, "Am I personally going to see any difference in the way my life is today?" He said: "Of course, if I go to a hospital, I will. Like, that would be really difficult, if these kinds of impacts, cutting \$100 million from registered nurses, for example – I don't want to see that negative impact. But on my day to day, if I'm not at a time of crisis where I really need public services, am I going to feel it?" And I had to say, "You know, I'm really sorry to tell you this, but the government is considering deindexing, which means taking away the increase that you are currently entitled to for your seniors' benefit." He said, "Holy man, that's money out of my own pocket." And I said, "Yeah, it is, but that's one of the things that they're doing right now."

He said: "But they said that they were going to balance the budget. Are they doing that?" I said: "No. Actually, this year the deficit is about \$2 billion more than it would have been under the plan that we were proposing during the election." Then he said that he was appalled by that.

Then he said: "But, clearly, they're going to help municipalities, right? They're going to help fix the potholes on my street. They're going to help make sure that the services that I rely on – you know, I'm starting to use DATS occasionally. That's going to be better, right?" I had to say: "No. Unfortunately, they're talking about cutting municipal funding." He said, "Oh, but they wouldn't touch



police officers, would they?" I said: "Well, municipal police grants are definitely one of the areas that we've heard there are significant reductions in. You know, the city of Calgary's chief of police, who I think is a very worthy authority on this, has talked about the reductions there." He was quite rightfully appalled.

As well as downloading all of this – not all of this; a significant amount – onto individuals, there's also downloading onto municipalities. The regular grants that they count on to ensure that they can maintain their services, their infrastructure, and the local supports they provide to their communities are also being attacked in this current budget.

He said: "Now, I've heard this 4.7 number. What is that?" I said: "Well, it's on page 144 of the actual fiscal plan of the budget. It says that there will be \$4.7 billion less collected from corporations. That's essentially giving that money to corporations." He said, "But they must have to create some jobs to go along with that, right?" "No. No, they don't." He said, "So Husky, who, you know, just announced that they're downsizing, gets to keep all of this money?" "The truth is: yes."

You know, these kinds of conversations are happening right across our province. Again, the truth is that we don't have to just come into this place and rubber-stamp things that somebody has told you to rubber-stamp. We all were sent here to represent folks like that gentleman I was talking to on his front step that snowy Thursday. We are sent here to make sure that we are standing up for every Albertan.

Let's mention folks who are on AISH, the assured income for the severely handicapped. I'm sure you all know somebody who is on AISH; I know I do. I know a lot of people who are on AISH who scrimp and save and pull together from their little bit that remains once they pay for their accommodations and once they have copays and those types of things that are required with regard to their health care plans, who scrimp and save to have a little money to spend in their local economies. You know, they're not socking away big amounts of money to send to private offshore savings accounts or even buy things on the Internet, like others might do. They are spending their money in their very local economies. For the vast majority, if there is any additional money once those immediate expenses are gone, it's spent in the local economy.

Oh, I should tell you about Sam. I'm 90 per cent sure that's his name. He wears this jacket, and I joke that he's almost like the Neighbourhood Watch in Dovercourt, one of the communities that I represent, because he spends so much of the day walking the street, checking in on things, making sure that everything is safe. He lives on AISH. I saw him the other day at one of my friends' houses. He rang the doorbell, and he said, "Hey, can I have some sugar?" which is a very neighbourly thing to do, to ask for a cup of sugar. I said, "Yeah." While my friend was getting the sugar, I said, "Oh, are you baking something?" He said: "No. It's for my coffee." I said, "Oh, did you just run out?" He said: "It's \$6.75 at Rexall, it's \$6.75 at Safeway, it's \$6.75 everywhere I shop. I can't afford to buy sugar anymore, so I knock on my neighbours' doors, and good thing they give me some sugar." We're literally taking somebody who's living on AISH and taking \$30 that he is entitled right now to have but, once this bill is passed, will not. As a result, he literally has to beg his neighbours for some charity, for some sugar for his coffee. You know, this isn't what I thought we were sent to this place to do.

For that reason and so many others, I will be voting against this appropriation act, because I think it's important that we have a government that represents all and fights for all, not just a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout to those who, arguably, will move from one of the lowest taxed jurisdictions in North America to by

far – I think that only a few, like, less than 10, will be lower taxed. You know, it doesn't seem to reflect the values of the folks that I represent in Edmonton-Glenora, and I doubt it reflects the values of many of the folks that we represent in this fine province.

I'll be standing up for students, those living on AISH, seniors, and ordinary families who rely on the government to put their needs above their own personal interests, desire for power, and other things that we say the prayer in opposition to, every single day in this House.

Thank you very much for your consideration, Madam Chair.

11:40

**The Chair:** All right. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora for her comments. I do have some questions about this bill, and I'm wondering if anybody from the Treasury benches can answer this. Before we vote on this bill – and, of course, Committee of the Whole is our opportunity to amend these kinds of things – I note that we are voting to spend \$2,021,000 on the office of the Election Commissioner. I'm wondering if anybody from Executive Council could tell us where that money is going to go now that this House has just voted to dismantle the office of the Election Commissioner. I'm wondering if anybody from Executive Council can inform this House where the money that's slated for the office of the Election Commissioner is going to go.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. I think that's a very fair question. Thank you very much to the member for asking it. I think that when you're passing a budget and at the same time you're abolishing an office, it makes sense to ask that fine question.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, it's a real shame that we can't get an answer from any member of Executive Council on where this \$2,021,000 is going to go, especially since the stated reason for dismantling the office of the Election Commissioner is to save \$1 million over the next five years. Now we're voting in favour of a \$2 million expenditure on an office that legally no longer exists. I think that's rather odd, and it's concerning to me that nobody from Executive Council is willing to answer the question.

I'm also concerned, Madam Chair, about the amount of money that's allotted for the office of the Ethics Commissioner. I see that we only have \$945,000 allotted to her office for the work that she's going to do in this fiscal year. Given the fact that we've seen the result of the vote on Bill 22, we know that we have at least 33 UCP MLAs who are probably going to be under investigation by the office of the Ethics Commissioner. I don't know exactly how much each investigation costs, but conducting at least 33 investigations is not going to be a cheap endeavour. I expect that the office of the Ethics Commissioner is going to need significantly more than \$945,000 to carry out that work unless, of course, it's the Executive Council's plan to scrap the office of the Ethics Commissioner as well once she launches her investigations. But I guess that remains to be seen.

You know, there are a number of concerns, as my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora has outlined, with the overall outlays of the

budget and the fact that big corporations here in Alberta are getting a \$4.7 billion windfall while folks on AISH, seniors, and students are getting far less. For those reasons and the fact that Executive Council can't even answer a simple question about the budget of the office of the Election Commissioner, that doesn't even exist anymore, I can't support this budget.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, I move we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 24.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Speaker, take two: I rise to ask for unanimous consent to shorten the division bells to one-minute intervals, including all votes in Committee of the Whole, notwithstanding Standing Order 32(3), for the remainder of the morning sitting.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Committee of the Whole

*(continued)*

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 24

#### Appropriation Act, 2019

*(continued)*

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers to the bill?

[The clauses of Bill 24 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 24 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:47 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Amery	Jones	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Schweitzer
Getson	Long	Stephan
Goodridge	Lovely	Toor
Guthrie	Neudorf	Turton
Hanson	Nicolaides	van Dijken
Horner	Nixon, Jeremy	Walker
Hunter	Reid	Yao
Issik	Rutherford	Yaseen

**11:50**

Against:

Carson	Goehring	Phillips
Dach	Gray	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir
Deol	Irwin	Schmidt
Eggen	Loyola	Shepherd
Feehan	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley	Pancholi	

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 20
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[Request to report Bill 24 carried]

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, hello again, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 24.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We've made some excellent progress this morning. I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:53 a.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 21, 2019

Day 45

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
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Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

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Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration



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Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

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Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

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Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
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Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

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Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

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Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

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Feehan  
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Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 21, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Former MLA Manmeet Singh Bhullar

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we begin the business of this afternoon, I would like to acknowledge the anniversary of the passing of a dear colleague and friend to many members of this Assembly, Mr. Manmeet Bhullar, the MLA for Calgary-Greenway. Mr. Bhullar was a dedicated and deeply kind member of this Chamber, and he was tragically taken from us doing what he loved to do best, selflessly helping a fellow Albertan. We continue to think of and pray for his family and many friends. He is profoundly missed. Please join me in a moment of silence in his memory on this anniversary.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have several guests in the galleries today, including two school groups from Davidson Creek elementary, students of the constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Also in the gallery are students from the constituency of Livingstone-Macleod, from Livingstone senior high school.

Joining us at 2 o'clock from the constituency of Edmonton-West Henday is Unlimited Potential Community Services.

Please welcome our schools with us today.

Hon. members, it is my great pleasure to welcome – and I know we'll have some more to say on this a little bit later in the proceedings – a most familiar face to this gallery in celebration of his recent retirement from the Legislative Assembly. Seated in the Speaker's gallery is our former Sergeant-at-Arms, Lieutenant Colonel Brian Hodgson; his wife, Bonny; their children Alastair, Gillian, Heather, and Chloe; along with a number of his friends and family. Thank you so much to each and every one of you for being here today.

Hon. members, guests from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills: welcome, Larry and Grace Martin; Erhard Poggemiller and his wife, Evelyn; and their grandson Cameron.

Also joining us in the gallery are family and friends, stakeholders of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

We also have guests of the Minister of Seniors and Housing. Here celebrating National Housing Day are various housing foundations and societies from across the province.

I invite you all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Former Sergeant-at-Arms Brian Hodgson

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if you will indulge me for just a few brief moments, I would like to have a small amount of Speaker's latitude today to make a statement for Mr. Brian Hodgson. He was appointed the Sergeant-at-Arms in January 1993 and served an impressive 27 years in that role before retiring in September of this year.

In his role as Sergeant-at-Arms, director of visitor services, ceremonial and security services, he served through eight general elections, 11 by-elections. In the entire history of this Assembly's 113 years Brian Hodgson served with 408 members of the only 950 members in Alberta's history. He was an integral part of the planning and execution of the royal visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the province's provincial centennial, in 2005; the centennial of the Legislative Assembly, in 2006; the centennial of the Legislative Assembly Building, in 2012; and countless other historical moments that will live on as cherished memories.

He was first introduced in this House on January 25, 1993, by then Speaker David Carter, who at that time asked members to take a look at the very distinguished resumé on their desks in front of them – the resumé showed the new Sergeant-at-Arms – and asked that he rise and be acknowledged by the House.

Prior to starting his career with the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, he was an intelligence officer for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service for six years. It was around this time last year, November 5, 2018, to be exact, that Mr. Hodgson was most recently recognized in the House for his involvement with the Armistice 100 Committee, a group dedicated to preserving and celebrating the memory of the 100th anniversary of the First World War. As an Army Reserve Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel Hodgson was the first member of his regiment, the South Alberta Light Horse, to volunteer to serve in Afghanistan. In 2004, with the full support of the Assembly, he was granted leave of absence by then Speaker Kowalski to carry out his service to Canada.

In addition to being a dedicated husband and father, it is clear that he has spent the better part of his life dedicated to local and national as well as provincial public service. His contributions in these areas have been recognized through the awarding of the Queen's golden and diamond jubilee medals, the Canada 125 medal, the Alberta centennial medal, and the Canadian Forces decoration with two bars.

I know that we already did this, but I think it is worth another opportunity. I would ask all members of the Assembly to rise and thank him for his dedicated service to our province. [Standing ovation]

### Members' Statements

#### Campaign Investigations and Provincial Legislation

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, before the election, when the members opposite were first thinking about running for office, I wonder how many of them sat at the kitchen table with their loved ones and said: this is a great opportunity for me to help cover up corruption and illegal activity. Hopefully, none of them, but during the last days of that campaign and into the first weeks of government, as the Election Commissioner and the police and the special prosecutor began to investigate, the more perceptive members probably sensed that a moment was waiting for them just over the horizon, a moment of moral testing.

That moment was today. The Premier asked his caucus to disband a law enforcement agency that is closing in on at least one member of that caucus. The Premier directed government MLAs to participate in a cover-up of corruption and illegal activity. Maybe they think they can hide behind the flimsy fiction that this is just an administrative adjustment, but nobody is believing that nonsense. Or maybe they hoped they could hold their nose and vote and the whole thing would just blow over after a few weeks.

It won't, Mr. Speaker. The MLAs that are complicit in this cover-up will wear that stain for the rest of their careers. The RCMP is still investigating. We may well have charges and trials and testimony that

will open this whole sordid affair to the public, but by then the good names of the members opposite will be tarnished forever.

It's not an easy thing to refuse an order from your Premier or your House leader, but all of the members of this House will have to go back to that kitchen table and sit with their loved ones again. On this side of the House we will say: I did what was right. On that side they will say: I did what I was told.

#### **Former MLA Manmeet Singh Bhullar**

**Mr. Gotfried:** November 23, 2015, a day I will always remember, a day we lost a dear friend and colleague: Meeta to many who knew him, the hon. Manmeet Singh Bhullar. We lost Meeta as he selflessly lost his life doing what he did best, helping others. When first elected, in 2008, after a long history as a PC youth, Manmeet was the youngest member of this House but by no means the smallest. The occasional eruption of Mount Bhullar was a contrast to his reputation as a gentle giant amongst all who came to know him.

**1:40**

He served as Minister of Service Alberta, minister of human services, and Minister of Infrastructure during his impactful time in office. He was one of only nine PCs left in this House in 2015, and his loss was deeply felt amongst us, his absence today reminding us of what could have been.

Mr. Speaker, I sat beside this mountain of a man. A member of this House who served with him can attest to a great young Albertan, larger than life, who was taken from all of us too soon. He was a man of integrity, a champion for youth, always willing to lend a helping hand or word of encouragement to all members of this House. His warriorlike commitment to building a better Alberta was truly an inspiration to us all.

Manmeet is survived by his loving wife, Namrita; his parents, Baljinder Singh and Sukhvir Kaur Bhullar; his sister Tarjinder; his brother Appy; and a large extended family of dear friends in the Sikh community and well beyond. His legacy lives on through the Manmeet Singh Bhullar Foundation school and park, created to inspire and empower Albertans to follow in his footsteps in making the world a better place. Albertans embraced the hashtag #nicetomanmeetyou. An honour for all it was, indeed.

In further remembrance, I would ask everyone in this House to join me in a few moments of reflection for our friend, our colleague, our own fallen soldier, Manmeet Singh Bhullar.

Rest in peace, dear Meeta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, and thank you to the member for those kind words for a dear friend of mine as well.

#### **Former Sergeant-at-Arms Brian Hodgson**

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, our Sergeant-at-Arms, Brian Hodgson, served his last day with the Legislative Assembly of Alberta on September 16, 2019. After 27 years of distinguished service Brian is the longest serving Sergeant-at-Arms in the province's history, and we could not be more grateful for his dedication and service to this Assembly.

Brian has contributed to our country and province through many forms of service, including military service and community outreach. He even served with my father in the reserves. Brian took great pride in ensuring the safety and security of the Assembly and its members through his role as the Sergeant-at-Arms. He was also

incredibly passionate about parliamentary democracy and upholding the ceremony and traditions of the Legislative Assembly and the Westminster system, on which it is based. During his exemplary military career he was involved in operational service with the British and Canadian armies in Germany, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, and Afghanistan. His service in Afghanistan while on temporary leave from this Legislature further demonstrates his commitment to advancing democracy.

Brian was also instrumental in many of the historical moments at our Legislature. One of the highlights of his career was, of course, the royal visit in 2005, where Brian escorted Her Majesty the Queen into this very Chamber. That was the first royal address from a reigning monarch in Alberta's history. He was always eager to educate others and share the importance of parliamentary democracy and its traditions.

In his retirement Brian will continue his lifetime of service through his passionate participation in various community boards and associations. He also plans on spending some very well-deserved and quality time with his wonderful wife, Bonny, and his four children – Alastair, Gillian, Heather, and Chloe – as well as his beloved horses at his ranch.

On behalf of everyone in this Assembly and the people of Alberta thank you, sir, for your service. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

#### **Former Sergeant-at-Arms Brian Hodgson**

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleagues in the NDP caucus I'd like to take a moment to congratulate Brian Hodgson on his retirement and thank him for his service in the Legislature as the Sergeant-at-Arms for the past 27 years. Brian and I met in 2012, when I was first elected, and it was obvious then, as it was throughout his career, that Brian was dedicated to serving this Assembly and this province. He worked – and worked out – tirelessly and effectively to make sure the Legislature is a safe and welcoming place. He helped ensure that this place was always accessible to members of the public, which is vital to allowing Albertans to come here and engage in the democratic process. The work that goes into making this a safe and welcoming place often goes unnoticed, so today I'm grateful to have the opportunity to extend my thanks and appreciation on behalf of my caucus colleagues to Brian Hodgson.

I know that members of this Legislature will remember Brian for his community service, his service to his country and province, and his love of cycling. Sir, we do miss seeing your bicycles in the Legislature. After 27 years Brian deserves some time to relax, and we wish him and his family all the best in their future endeavours.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not on my notes, but Mr. Hodgson's horses are out in the finest part of Alberta, which is in my constituency. So welcome, sir.

#### **Affordable Housing**

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to recognize that tomorrow, November 22, is National Housing Day. National Housing Day is an opportunity to bring awareness to the challenges Albertans with low income face finding a place to live and examine new solutions to address this need. Affordable housing is a critical

issue for some Albertans. Currently there are more than 110,000 Albertans living in 65,000 government-subsidized housing units.

Our government is committed to making housing affordable and accessible for Albertans. We're exploring creative solutions to accomplish this such as mixed-income models and private-public partnerships while getting the most out of every taxpayer dollar. We aim to support more affordable housing developments with the same amount of taxpayer investment. Our 2019 capital plan includes \$619 million over four years to deliver 2,700 new and regenerated affordable housing units and to maintain the 26,400-unit Alberta Social Housing Corporation-owned portfolio. We are also sustaining capital maintenance and renewal funding to ensure that safe and maintained housing units are available for Albertans with low income. As a member of the minister's advisory committee on housing we collaborate with community leaders, build knowledge, share ideas, explore potential opportunities, and help to identify priorities.

This morning the Minister of Seniors and Housing announced a review of the income verification process for affordable housing applications. This common-sense initiative will make the process easier and more efficient for Albertans who apply for affordable housing. We have listened to tenants, applicants, and housing providers who say that they could benefit from a simpler process. We will continue to work closely with our partners to help us deliver affordable housing in a way that's efficient and effective.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach National Housing Day, I can assure you that our government is dedicated to strengthening our affordable housing system so it can support Albertans who need it most, now and in years to come.

Thank you, sir.

### Affordable Housing

**Ms Sigurdson:** Each year since 1998 communities across Canada have marked November 22, tomorrow, as National Housing Day. This day was created to raise awareness about the importance and need for affordable housing. Our NDP government made affordable housing a priority. We created Alberta's first-ever affordable housing strategy. We invested an unprecedented \$1.2 billion to maintain and build public housing. This was a long-overdue investment as the sector had not been supported well for decades. In fact, this investment was four times greater than the previous Conservative government's affordable housing budget.

Sadly, in the current government's budget we see a backwards move; \$17 million was cut from the budgets of public housing management bodies. This means that ongoing maintenance and repairs are being delayed. In some instances units are being closed, which means that affordable housing availability is decreasing.

In addition, \$44 million has been cut from the rent subsidy program. Albertans looking for support only get an announcement on the website that no applications are being accepted. This creates health issues because rent payments cut into money available to purchase healthy food. It also means living in housing that is not well maintained: leaky roofs, drafty windows and doors, exposed electrical wires. Research shows that children who live in this housing have poorer health outcomes and increased behavioural challenges. This can then lead to failure to thrive, low levels of academic achievement, and ultimately the inability to secure a well-paying job in the future. Lack of affordable housing has far-reaching implications.

The benefits of affordable housing are manifold: improved health and well-being, improved educational outcomes, increased employment opportunities, improved personal security, flourishing personal relationships, and positive financial outcomes. These

findings are well documented in academic research. Governments need to look at this data and make evidence-based decisions.

Besides all this, Mr. Speaker, I know the importance of affordable housing first-hand . . .

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

1:50

**Bill 22**

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the government rammed through Bill 22 even as the Ethics Commissioner raised serious concerns of conflict of interest for government members. The Ethics Commissioner's letter was delivered while this government was voting down attempts to delay this corrupt bill. The commissioner wrote saying that she did not have sufficient time to properly investigate allegations of conflict of interest against the Premier, his ministers, and members of his caucus. What was so urgent about this corrupt bill that it couldn't be held while the Ethics Commissioner did her work?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this is the problem with the NDP. At this point Albertans can't believe anything that they say, and I certainly would not. I don't blame them for that, because they continue to come in and misrepresent facts. First of all, the Ethics Commissioner's letter says no such thing. It does not say anything about investigating the Premier in any such context or any member in this Chamber. The Ethics Commissioner provides advice on how members can vote in this Chamber when it comes to certain things that could be problematic under the Conflicts of Interest Act. Our staff has spoken with the Ethics Commissioner today, and we are confident that everybody is within the Conflicts of Interest Act.

**Ms Hoffman:** The Ethics Commissioner advised that anyone in the process of being investigated by the Election Commissioner or the RCMP or who has colleagues or staff under investigation would likely be in breach of the Conflicts of Interest Act, breaking the law, if they debated or voted on Bill 22. That's exactly what happened here this morning, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why did you risk every member of your caucus breaking the law this morning? What are you hiding?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, you can't really trust what the NDP have to say. This is the same opposition who said that there would only be three hours of debate when it came to Bill 22: not accurate. This is the same opposition who said there was time allocation on Monday on this legislation: not accurate. This is over and over an Official Opposition who accuses random people of things that are just not factual. It's extremely disappointing. Let me be clear. Again, we have been in contact with the Ethics Commissioner, and we are confident that all members who participated in Bill 22 and in debate are within the Conflicts of Interest Act.

**Ms Hoffman:** It is truly shocking to see this government pressing forward with a corrupt bill to silence an independent officer of the Legislature and then doing so over the objections of another independent officer of the Legislature, this time the Ethics Commissioner. What occurred this morning in this place is a travesty, and there will be numerous ethics investigations in its wake, so I must ask the Premier. You silenced the Election Commissioner. How can Albertans be sure you won't silence the Ethics Commissioner as your next target?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again the NDP are misrepresenting facts. Actually, at the end of the Ethics Commissioner's letter she was clear that the political decision that was before this Assembly was a decision of this Assembly, and that she in no way had any ability nor would she try to interfere with a political decision of the Legislative Assembly, unlike what the Leader of the Opposition did, calling on the Lieutenant Governor to do something unconstitutional and not sign a bill that was decided upon by this place. Again, the NDP need to stop misrepresenting facts. At this point nobody believes them anymore. That's the reality when you continue to misrepresent facts all day.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** By using its majority to shut down an investigation into law-breaking in its own party, the UCP has secured its legacy as the most corrupt and undemocratic government in the history of Alberta, perhaps even the history of Canada. This is not the stuff of a democracy; this is the stuff of a strongman regime. Does the Premier even understand the damage that he has done to the rule of law in our province?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter how many times the NDP misrepresent facts; they're not going to make what they're saying factual. What they're saying is not factual. You know, what Albertans are most frustrated about was a former government who signed up with Justin Trudeau to stop our energy industry, who supported a federal NDP leader who tried to block our pipelines. That's who Albertans are frustrated by. That member was a Deputy Premier of a government who hired Tzeponah Berman to then go out and try to shut down our energy industry. I can tell you that the people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre haven't forgotten that, and they sure have not forgiven it.

**Ms Hoffman:** If Justin Trudeau had dismissed the ethics commissioner before he could release the damning SNC-Lavalin report or if Paul Martin had dismissed Justice Gomery before he could complete the probe into the Liberal sponsorship scandal, just imagine the howl of outrage that we would have heard from the members opposite. But now, when we see unethical behaviour in Ottawa in the future, no one will listen to this Premier. No one will listen to Alberta. Was destroying Alberta's moral authority within Canada worth it for the Premier to save his own political skin?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, the temporary leader of the NDP Party is misrepresenting facts or the party is certainly misrepresenting facts . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . when it comes to this issue. The reality is that the Election Commissioner office remains in this province. That's the fact. That legislation is very, very clear on that, that passed in this place this morning. In addition to that, I passed an amendment myself last night that made it clear that all investigations must be able to continue and be transferred over to the Chief Electoral Officer. [interjections] No, it doesn't say "may." It says: must be transferred over to the Chief Electoral Officer.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 1:55.

**Ms Hoffman:** Every member of the UCP who voted for Bill 22 will be remembered as being complicit in shutting down an active investigation into fraud, forgery, and bribery. Every member who voted for Bill 22 voted to protect their Premier's political career at the expense of their own integrity and the voters who elected them

to this House. It is shameful. What was so damaging to the Premier that he had to drag down the entire caucus, their reputations? What are you hiding?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, more ridiculous comments from the deputy leader of the NDP. None of that is factual. Again, making up investigations inside this place does not make them true. Let me be clear. Investigations that may have been taking place under the Election Commissioner remain intact. There's still an Election Commissioner. There's still a CEO of Elections Alberta. There is no political interference within that operation. It remains an independent officer of this Legislature. That's what is taking place. Those are the facts. It doesn't matter how hard the NDP work to misrepresent them to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for her third set of questions.

### Calgary Board of Education Layoffs

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 20 the Education minister told this House: "This morning I met with the CBE and they were able to confirm for me that the reports of 300 job losses are false. Their plan is to keep teachers in front of students and maintain existing staff levels." A week later the CBE passed its 2019 budget and submitted it to the minister, who raised no objections to it for five months. To the Premier: what has changed at Calgary public since June other than the deep cuts you made to their budget?

**Member LaGrange:** The CBE's decision to end the contracts of 300 temporary teachers is unacceptable. I made it very clear that that board needed to look at other options in terms of dealing with their fiscal mismanagement. Right now I have ordered an independent financial audit and a governance review of this particular board. At the end of the day, we need teachers in front of students, and that is the direction that they need to take.

**Ms Hoffman:** Now thousands of kids in Calgary are having their education compromised while this minister points fingers and announces reviews. These kids won't get another chance at these classes. They can't wait. If the Premier truly believes that CBE is at fault, why won't this minister intervene immediately, today, and make sure that all 300 teachers are still in their classrooms in January? Why won't she stand up for kids in Calgary public schools instead of a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. As the hon. member knows, school boards have contracts with their teachers and their support staff. They're in the position to do this. But CBE playing politics with our teachers and with our children is unacceptable. This reckless mismanagement of taxpayer dollars cannot be allowed to continue. That's why I've called for these reviews.

**Ms Hoffman:** In June the minister said that everything was fine. Three hundred job losses: that's just fear and smear, she said. Then she cut their budget by \$32 million. Yesterday the minister said that she was shocked. She couldn't understand how 300 job losses could have possibly happened in Calgary schools. Either she's grossly incompetent, Mr. Speaker, or she's something that I'm not allowed to say in this House. Will she commit to a fully independent audit of the CBE, and will she commit to resigning from cabinet if the audit finds that the cuts were caused by her budget?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, what a ridiculous attack on our Education minister. Let me be very, very clear. Every member of this government and every member of the government caucus is proud of our Education minister, who is working very hard to be able to restore the mess created by that party when they were in power when it came to education.

2:00

This cabinet and this party stand side by side with our Education minister. Let me be very, very clear: the Premier is very proud of our Education minister. You know who should resign? Every member of that caucus who worked against our energy industry while they were in power, who worked against Albertans each and every day and sold them out to Justin Trudeau.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### **Bill 22 Public Service Pension Changes Budget 2019**

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 22 does many awful things, but one part that hasn't gotten enough attention yet is that this UCP government has removed an AUPE seat from the pension sponsor board and corporation board. When asked about removing workers from the oversight of their own retirement funds, the Finance minister said that the change was about restoring competence. Suggesting that the representative AUPE workers put forward were not competent is heinous. To the Finance minister: when will you do the right thing, immediately repeal Bill 22, and apologize to the people?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are doing the right thing. We're managing this province's finances responsibly. We're ensuring that we're making changes that will strengthen pensions, that will improve returns, that will improve governance on pension boards. We have ensured that there's adequate representative representation on pension boards, and for that reason we've added one member that represents nonbargaining management staff as they had no previous representation.

**Ms Gray:** If this minister wants to talk about who is competent and who is not, let's start by looking at his budget. What would you say, Mr. Speaker, about a budget that breaks election promises by slashing health care and education and somehow raises the deficit by \$2 billion over last year? I'd call that incompetent. To the Premier: when will you unreservedly apologize to the working women and men of this province for your Finance minister's comments, when will you replace him, and when will you start worrying about the real lack of competence, which is around your cabinet table?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, this government has brought forward a responsible budget, a budget that brings this province back to balance in its four-year fiscal plan. We inherited a financial mess from the members opposite. Albertans elected us to get our house in order. We will do that.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, all members of this House know that we have received serious concerns from over 29,000 teachers about Bill 22. Teachers, nurses, and public servants were in this gallery until very late last night because their government is playing politics with their pensions, and their concerns fell on deaf ears. To the government cabinet: when will you take out the earplugs, meet

the Albertans who have been on the steps of the Legislature, finally start listening to the people that teach our kids and care for our loved ones, and repeal Bill 22?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we have great respect for the public servants that deliver on behalf of Albertans every day. Bill 22 and the changes we're making to pension governance will strengthen public service pensions. They will reduce costs. They will ensure that we have strong governance. In terms of ATRF it will result in better returns, lower costs, lower premiums for teachers. The ATRF continues to own the pensions, manage the pensions, and provide high-level direction. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### **Homeless Shelter Services in Fort McMurray**

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans experiencing homelessness need somewhere to go, especially now during Alberta's cold winter. My community expects that its various orders of government will work together to ensure that resources are effectively and efficiently supported. The closure of the first floor of Marshall House in Fort McMurray has left people with questions about what is being done to take care of the folks that were staying there. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: how is our government ensuring that all individuals experiencing homelessness have a place to go this winter in Fort McMurray?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, we will not be leaving these individuals out in the cold. The government of Alberta works with our community partner, the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, to ensure that community needs are addressed. Since 2012 the government of Alberta has been funding empty beds at the Marshall House Emergency Shelter. Empty beds. Last year the government of Alberta funded 70 spaces at this shelter while on average only 24 individual spaces were used per night. Sufficient shelter capacity will continue to exist in Fort McMurray at the Salvation Army . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, given that if we evaluate those that are disadvantaged in maintaining housing, we see that many are afflicted with mental illness and addictions related to alcohol or drugs and that when addressing homelessness, our society recognizes that we need to allow for people who are inebriated to have a safe space, and given that the member opposite, in typical fashion, gave ignorant statements about the lack of intox beds available at the Salvation Army, again to the Minister of Community and Social Services: can you tell this House how many spaces will be available for the intox community?

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted at 2:06.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that the Salvation Army will have a total capacity of 91 beds, including 56 sober spaces and 35 intox mats. Marshall House, however, did not have intox spaces at all. We are confident there will be more than enough space for homeless individuals needing shelter in Fort McMurray.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, the Salvation Army in my community has stepped up to address this void with space for the homeless, and given that as the largest nongovernmental direct provider of social services in Canada, with a mandate of providing shelter for homeless people and rehabilitation for people who have lost control of their lives to addiction, the Salvation Army will address these issues in Fort McMurray, the question is: will this government support the Salvation Army to host these additional individuals?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely. Our government is consolidating shelter services at the Salvation Army, which will be expanded from 67 to 91 beds. The Salvation Army will receive additional provincial funding to operate 24 additional sober spaces, which equates to the approximate daily occupancy of Marshall House but at about one-third of the cost. This change will ensure that tax dollars are spent wisely while taking care of the individuals experiencing homelessness in this northern city.

Thank you.

### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigations

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Mr. Speaker, last night our caucus proposed an amendment to Bill 22 to allow the current Election Commissioner to continue his work independently, without control by this government, for five more years. The government promptly voted it down. To the Government House Leader: did you vote against the amendment because you were worried just how much corruption the commissioner would uncover when it comes to the UCP if given five more years?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, here lies the problem. For some reason the NDP don't trust the current independent officer of the Legislature, the Chief Electoral Officer, who is now ultimately responsible for investigations and the Election Commissioner position, which will answer to the Chief Electoral Officer. Again the NDP is misrepresenting facts. This government, this Chamber, MLAs, cabinet have no connection at all to the investigations. They fall under an independent officer, the Chief Electoral Officer of the Legislature, who has served this Chamber for well over a decade and served it well.

**Ms Hoffman:** You broke the law.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** I will acknowledge another point of order at 2:09.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Chief Electoral Officer's contract actually expires in six months and we don't know who will be replacing that person and given that with the termination of the Election Commissioner Albertans wanting justice will now look at the RCMP investigation into the UCP leadership contest and given that the Minister of Justice clearly has a conflict of interest in this matter, to the minister: will you remind this House why it took you so long to appoint a special prosecutor to oversee the RCMP investigation into the UCP and release the process to Albertans so they know that it actually happened?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, there have been many statements by the Minister of Justice, including statements that have come out from his department, making it clear that what that hon. member is referring to is just not factual. That's just not how the process works. With that said, the hon. Justice minister is not in conflict in any way. This is the problem: these members continue to get up in

this House and accuse other members of the Legislature of things that are not factual. You cannot trust the NDP. You can't trust them politically because they're out against Alberta's best interests, but you also can't trust what they're saying because they keep misrepresenting the facts.

2:10

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the House leader just won't say whether or not there's an independent prosecutor that's been established and given that we know nothing about the steps the Minister of Justice has taken to ensure he's not involved in an investigation in which he's been called as a witness and given that the people of Alberta have likely lost trust in this government to do the right thing given what's happened over the last three days, to the Minister of Justice: isn't it time that you name publicly who is the special prosecutor responsible for overseeing the RCMP investigation into the UCP leadership? What are you hiding?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely nothing is the answer. There's been a heck of a lot of hypocrisy from the other side. This hypocrisy needs to stop. They're smearing people's good names. If we're getting into the politics that they're playing, they appointed under their administration six judges that made material donations to the NDP. One made a \$4,000 donation right before being appointed. I'm not saying that they're not fit for office. People can be involved in a political process. They have to stop the hypocrisy. They have to stop this politics and seeing everything as an ethics violation. Stop it.

### Sport and Cultural Organization Funding

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, in their rush to give wealthy corporations \$4.7 billion, this government is abandoning Alberta communities. Their omnibus bill to fire the Election Commissioner and attack people's pensions also dissolved the Alberta Sport Connection, which provides funding and support to more than 80 groups. Can the minister of culture tell this House why she is cutting support to organizations like the Special Olympics – the Special Olympics – while giving corporations hundreds of millions of dollars to invest in places like Wisconsin?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear rhetoric from the other side, rhetoric that attacks job creators in this province. It's no wonder that when the members opposite governed, we witnessed an exodus of billions and billions of dollars of capital out of the province and, with it, jobs and opportunities. This government is changing that narrative. We are introducing a very competitive business environment, including the most competitive corporate tax rate in the country.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that in addition to taking funding away from the Special Olympics, this government is slashing support for other organizations that support sport like the Alberta Schools' Athletic Association and given that this government is literally taking supports away from sports development centres in this province to pay for their no-jobs \$4.7 billion corporate handout, can the minister of culture explain why this government appears to value sports less than they do subsidizing Husky's investments outside of Alberta?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, included in our budget is an effort to become much more efficient, to remove redundancies, and to streamline government because that results in saving hard-earned tax dollars on behalf of the taxpayers of the province. We are dissolving funds wherever it makes sense. The function of those

funds, including the Alberta sports council, will continue through the department. Committed amounts to special sports events will continue to be funded in the future.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that this government is also dissolving the Alberta historical resources fund, which preserves and protects historic projects and preserves Alberta's history, and given that when also dissolving the fund, this government fired the existing board without even giving the courtesy of a phone call, can the culture minister explain why the Premier's friends and their spouses get charter flights from this government but dedicated volunteers get tossed out on the street?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. Again, we are presenting a budget that streamlines government, that finds efficiencies, that ensures that we can be on a path to balance within our first term. We committed to Albertans that we would do that. We are delivering. The function of these funds and these boards and committees will continue, as they have in the past, through the departments, only in a much more cost-effective manner.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

#### Rural Schools

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural education systems work a little bit differently than they do in cities, and as our province urbanizes more and more, this disparity grows. Among other things, when rural schools are funded for enrolment, it often fails to meet the needs as rural schools get smaller and inflation goes up. This becomes more and more true as rural populations decrease. To the Minister of Education: what is your ministry doing to address this very real issue faced by small, rural schools as they struggle to make ends meet?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question. We know that rural schools often face unique challenges such as declining enrolment, long distances, and sparse populations. Recognizing this, rural boards benefit from a higher rate in the one-time transition grant as we transition to a new funding framework next year. As we develop a new funding framework, one of the key goals is to provide equitable funding so students can receive an education that prepares them for success no matter where they live.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for her answer. Given that rural schools tend to be older than urban schools and given that weather and time have more of an effect as a result of a lack of shelter due to residing on emptier landscapes and given that such schools in my riding, like J.T. Foster, Blackie and Livingstone school, have long been in need of modernization, can the minister describe what she and her department are doing to enable schools in my riding and those across rural Alberta to maintain themselves and modernize?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I am aware of the situations facing the schools in the member's

riding. For schools to be considered for modernization funding, school divisions must submit a proposal to the government outlining their request. Once received, my department analyzes the request and prioritizes applications as a result of a series of metrics, which includes enrolment growth and health and safety concerns. I can assure the member that projects proposed by this local board will be assessed under this model in upcoming capital budgets.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you again, Minister.

Given that many of my constituents have reached out to me and to my office expressing their concern that once again no new school projects have been announced in southern Alberta and given that schools in my riding such as Blackie, J.T. Foster, and Livingstone, which were mentioned before, are desperately in need of modernization and repair, can the minister please outline options for these schools until such time as they qualify for capital plan funding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question, hon. member. Local school divisions are in the best position to comment on their own capital projects and their own needs. As I previously stated, for schools to be considered for modernization funding, school divisions must submit a proposal to the government outlining their request. Each school division outlines their own priorities annually, and I will have more to say on future capital projects when Budget 2020 is released.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert would like to ask a question.

#### Henson Trusts for Persons with Disabilities

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you'll remember that our government passed legislation that would allow people with severe disabilities to support themselves after a caregiver passes away. Henson trusts are allowed by law in every province across the country and are supported by people with disabilities. Why is this government turning its back on the disability community by sneaking a provision into Bill 21 that would repeal Henson trusts and make it harder for people with disabilities to pay for their very basic needs?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I absolutely reject that language of sneaking around and making changes. Absolutely not. Since I've been sworn in as minister, I've made a concerted effort to undertake extensive stakeholder engagement to hear the voices of the disability community, and we are doing our level best to make sure that our services are sustainable and efficient.

**Ms Renaud:** Mr. Speaker, given that I don't care what verbs you're comfortable with, you are cutting this. Given that this government has not conducted any consultations on these changes and given that these changes are not supported by the disability community, that this government has already sent into a tailspin because you cut AISH, why is the government making a bad situation for people with disabilities worse by taking away the ability to support themselves after their loved ones are gone? [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order. I would just provide some caution to the member that she would address her questions through the chair and maybe say "this government did something or other," and not "you." It's not parliamentary.



The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

2:20

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to emphasize that we have not cut AISH. AISH benefits are maintained. In fact, the core benefits are the highest they've ever been historically.

One thing I want to talk about today is that when I speak to stakeholders, when I speak to parents, their biggest worry is: what is going to happen to my children after I'm gone? The question that we're facing now is how to make sure that these programs are sustainable for the long term. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The hon. Member for St. Albert is the only one with the call.

**Ms Renaud:** I'm stunned by that.

Given that the repeal of Henson trusts was hidden in Bill 21 and given that when Henson trusts were brought in by our government, the CEO of Inclusion Alberta said, quote, we'll no longer have to fear our children with disabilities having to be impoverished by the government in order for their benefits to be sustained, end quote, and given that this government has already cut benefits for people with disabilities to pay for your \$4.7 billion handout, what exactly is this government doing to ensure fiscal sustainability for people with severe disabilities in real time, right now?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, again, the rhetoric that we've cut AISH benefits or that we've cut disability services is not true. It's simply not true. It's simply inaccurate. We're committed to working with the disability community in addition to Inclusion Alberta to make sure that we are focusing on the issues that matter most to the disability community, which is sustainability for the long term, not just for the next four years but for decades and generations to come. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

#### Health Ministry Consultations on Biologic Drugs

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, thousands of Albertans living with Crohn's or colitis are currently dependent on biologics to keep those painful and debilitating bowel diseases in remission. Dr. Remo Panaccione of the University of Calgary, a world-renowned expert in this field, sat down to share his expertise with the Minister of Health, but before they could talk, the minister asked him to sign a 10-year nondisclosure agreement, or NDA. This is outrageous behaviour, and it begs the simple question: what does this minister have to hide about his plan for biologics? Who does he think he is? Vladimir Putin?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, that's categorically false. I never asked anybody at that meeting to sign an NDA. It's absolutely false.

It is true that the Ministry of Health, as has happened in previous administrations as well when it has consulted with stakeholders, has asked for NDAs. Yes, those folks who met with me in that meeting this week asked me why the ministry had asked them to sign an NDA. I have never asked anyone to sign an NDA. I am not going to be asking anyone to sign an NDA. I was very happy to be able to answer their questions. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has responsibility for his ministry and given that Dr. Panaccione rightfully refused the bizarre request and given that he reported that

the conversation that followed was at best awkward and one sided and given that while this Minister of Health has spoken about his desire to move Alberta's drug plan away from biologics towards biosimilars and given that he still seems to have no desire to actually listen to experts or people living with these conditions about the impact that could have, to this minister: is this really how he conducts himself with Albertans, refusing to speak with anyone who isn't sworn to secrecy in writing?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, if the conversation was one sided because I was listening to the stakeholders, I don't know why that would be a criticism of me.

Yes, it is true that Budget 2019 did announce that we would be expanding our biosimilars initiative. The exact details have not been determined. They have obviously not been announced either. I hope to be able to determine the details of that expansion of the initiative by the end of the year and be able to announce those details. Of course, before we do that, both my office and the ministry will listen to stakeholders, including patient groups, before we make those decisions.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the conversation was also described as the minister being barely interested and given that biologics are a small component of Alberta's health care system but are life altering for the patients who depend on them to keep their disease in remission and given that this minister, as part of his ambitious plans to transform our health care system, will have to meet with thousands of Albertans and discuss a wide range of issues that affect them directly and given that there can be no good public policy without real consultation, how often does he request that Albertans sign NDAs, and will he commit to ending such an insulting practice?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, I have not asked anyone to sign an NDA, and I'd love to hear again Edmonton-Glenora heckle me as I answer this question because it was a practice that the Ministry of Health did under her as well. Before the Ministry of Health is able to consult with people and able to provide details on what's being considered – yes, they have in the past, both under this administration and previous administrations had NDAs. I've never asked anyone to sign an NDA, but I do encourage all patient groups and other stakeholders, pharmacists, and physicians to be able to work with the ministry to be able to give them their best advice.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

#### Highway 628 Capital Plan

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 628 is a crucial highway that connects the town of Stony Plain to the Whitemud freeway in Edmonton. The previous government committed to a reconstruction of highway 628, a necessary project given the number of my constituents that commute to Edmonton every day for work. I'm grateful to see that highway 628 is still on the 2019 provincial construction program posted on the open Alberta portal as of November 8. To the Minister of Transportation: what is the current status of this project, and when will my constituents finally see this major transportation link completed?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would say to the hon. member: thanks for the question. We know that highway 628 is an important link between Edmonton, Spruce Grove, and Stony Plain

and residential developments in Parkland county. We have allocated \$46 million in Budget 2019 towards rebuilding 16 kilometres between highway 779 and west Edmonton city limits. We intend to get going on that construction project this summer coming up, and I hope that the hon. member will both enjoy the benefits and remind his constituents to drive safely as they go through that construction zone.

**Mr. Turton:** Again to the minister: given that the congestion on highway 16 is a barrier to commuting for the many constituents of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain who work in Edmonton and given that the only other avenue into Edmonton is highway 628, which needs reconstruction to be a viable option, and given that our government promised to prioritize capital plan spending on projects that are important to enhancing economic prospects, can the minister commit to following through on that promise by enhancing access to the large job market of Edmonton for the people of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thanks, Madam Speaker. Despite the financial mess that was left by the previous government, we are still committed to building infrastructure in Alberta. We know that highway 628 provides a direct connection to Whitemud on the south side of Edmonton. Design work is already under way on this important project to reduce congestion, and by accommodating drivers that would otherwise use highway 16 and 16A into Edmonton, these improvements to highway 628 will help ease congestion for residents and commuters trying to get to work, and we are looking forward to delivering this important project.

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: given that this government has already promised an expansion of highway 1A for the sake of providing greater access and safety to First Nations and for improving economic opportunities for the Stoney Nakoda First Nations in particular and given that it was already mentioned that a safer reconstruction of the highway will increase access to multiple urban centres, will the minister commit to working with the Enoch Cree Nation to expand highway 628 all the way to Edmonton, thereby increasing economic opportunities for the First Nation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to working with indigenous people in Alberta and protecting them when they travel around the province. As the hon. member rightly points out, 628 runs across the boundary of Enoch Cree Nation, and we understand the importance of this highway to them. That was one of our considerations. By improving travel in and around the Edmonton region, we hope to make life more convenient for all Albertans, including our indigenous partners, and we will continue to work with First Nations and indigenous people as we have demonstrated with the aboriginal opportunities . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a question.

## 2:30 Seniors and Housing Minister's Remarks

**Ms Sigurdson:** Seniors built this province and deserve respect and support, neither of which they are getting from this UCP government.

On Monday the Minister of Seniors and Housing said that seniors need to "live within their means." Seniors can take no lessons on living within their means from this plane-chartering, London-hopping, patronage-appointing government. Can the minister of seniors explain how she can say that seniors need to live within their means while the Premier's staff are living in five-star London hotels?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, this patronage stuff that they're talking about here has to stop. This hypocrisy has to stop. Provincial Court Nominating Committee: appointed by the NDP, a member of that committee donated \$20,000 to the NDP. Alberta Human Rights Commission: one person on this committee donated \$13,000 to the NDP. You have four other people on here as well that donated over \$1,000 to the NDP. This hypocrisy has to stop. These people are qualified for their roles. I'm not questioning that. The hypocrisy has to stop.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that this minister who thinks that seniors need a lesson on living within their means is supporting a budget that is kicking 46,000 Albertans off the seniors' drug plan and given that this minister is supporting the same budget that gave \$233 million to Husky to invest in New Brunswick and the United States, can the Minister of Seniors and Housing please explain to seniors why she expects them to live with less so that wealthy corporations can get a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we've said before, this year's budget is a balanced plan focused on creating jobs, growing the economy, and protecting vital services for Albertans who need them. We're providing support for those most in need of seniors' programs and services as well as affordable housing. We are maintaining funding for seniors' benefits at current levels, ensuring the most vulnerable seniors can count on a stable source of income and financial assistance during this difficult financial time in our province.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the minister can somehow justify slashing seniors' benefits while applauding the Premier's adviser expensing \$45,000 in six months on top of his \$200,000 salary and given that this minister has the gall to tell seniors to live within their means while handing out \$4.7 billion for wealthy corporations, will the minister apologize to seniors for telling them that they need to live within their means while the friends of this government are living large on the backs of seniors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Seniors and Housing has said in this House, Alberta has had an overspending problem thanks to four years under an NDP government who drove us to be on track to exceed \$100 billion in debt. We cannot unfairly burden this and future generations ahead of us. We are acting now, taking care of Albertans, including our seniors.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a question.

## Calgary Police Service Funding

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A spike in gun violence this year has the residents of Calgary deeply concerned. The news reports 76 firearms-related calls to Calgary police since the beginning of October compared to 47 reported incidents last year,

yet this government's budget has left the Calgary police with a \$13 million shortfall. Can the Minister of Justice explain to Calgarians why he is cutting Calgary police funding, or is his Twitter fight with the mayor a higher priority than the safety of Calgarians?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the little part that the hon. member said that I agree with is that our government has asked cities and municipalities to tighten their belts. There are some areas that have got less funding, but where they spend less funding is what they consider their lowest priority. We are suggesting that municipalities use policing as one of their top priorities, which means that they wouldn't cut funding there. If some municipalities consider policing the lowest priority, it's their decision, but it's not the decision we recommend.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the Calgary police have indicated that the budget shortfall resulting from this UCP budget could force the service to cut another 130 positions and given that this UCP government can find money for five-star London hotels and a no-job \$4.7 billion corporate gift, can the minister tell us why he has taken money from Calgary police fine revenues when they need these resources to protect Calgarians from gun violence? Isn't the minister worried that gun violence will rise even further if police have less resources?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right in that we've asked the cities to live with less provincial funding, but the decision on where they take that funding from belongs to the cities. Again, we are concerned about violence in the cities, which is why we recommend they do not take that funding from the police, that they find something else to consider their lowest priorities. When they take the money from the police, that means they think the police are the lowest priority. In this case we don't agree. We think the police are a high priority and that's one of the last places they should reduce funding from.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the Justice minister claims that public safety is his most important job and given that Calgarians and Albertans expect their governments, both provincial and municipal governments, to work together with police to keep our streets safe, can the Minister of Justice suppress his ego, call the Calgary mayor today, and figure out how to ensure safety on Calgary streets?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, it's without question that the mayor of Calgary and I disagree from time to time. Trudeau's mayor needs to get his fiscal house in order. As the Minister of Transportation has mentioned, policing should be the top priority of city hall in Calgary. I'm a Calgarian. I want my fiscal house in order there. I'm tired of paying higher taxes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to his question about violence in Calgary. We're taking that very seriously. I've done two town halls in northeast Calgary, where that member represents. I'll gladly go back there again if that member wants me to come and talk to people in the community. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung will come to order.

### Public Inquiry on Antienergy Campaign Funding

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that the foreign-funded eco-activist group Ecojustice has launched a lawsuit to try and stop the public inquiry into the foreign-funded attacks on our energy sector. I have to say that my constituents and myself are completely tired of these attacks on our energy workers. Like most

Albertans, we don't believe that extreme, foreign-funded interest groups should be able to interfere in our economy or our democracy. To the Minister of Energy: can you tell this House why it is so important that we continue to stand up to these foreign-funded interest groups like Ecojustice?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you for that question. Like many of my colleagues on this side of the House, I proudly worked in the oil and gas sector for many years. For 13 years I worked in the pipeline sector, and from there I saw first-hand the effects and the tactics of energy opponents who attacked our pipelines. They directly attacked our pipelines. They stopped our processes. This was a direct attack on Alberta, a direct attack on pipelines, a direct attack on jobs. We were elected on a platform to stand up for those jobs, and that's what we're doing.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, given that the public inquiry is specifically targeting foreign sources of funding for the campaign against our energy industry and given that Ecojustice has received \$815,000 from the U.S.-based Tides Foundation, one of the central groups involved in the anti-Alberta oil sands campaign, given all of that, could the Energy minister tell us what she thinks the motivation behind the Ecojustice lawsuit might be?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you look on the website of Ecojustice, it says that their mission is: we go to court. They litigate. They like to highlight their litigation against Northern Gateway pipeline, Energy East pipeline, Trans Mountain. They even went after the line 9 pipeline. They call our oil sands the "tar sands," and they say that it's one of the most destructive places on the planet. [interjections] Their motivation is obvious. Their motivation is to shut down the oil sands, to land-lock our province, and it's appalling that the NDP go "hear, hear" and applaud Ecojustice. I will stand with Albertans.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, given that we are looking forward to reading the forthcoming report from Commissioner Allan on the public inquiry and given that groups like Ecojustice and the Official Opposition, who are chirping so much right now, seem so intent on standing in the way of completing this inquiry and report, can the Minister of Energy confirm that Commissioner Allan will be proceeding despite these attacks and advise us on when this report will be available?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government was elected on a platform promise to launch a public inquiry into the foreign sources of funds behind the anti-Alberta energy campaign. That's exactly what we did when we asked Commissioner Allan to lead this fully independent inquiry. Commissioner Allan will release his report no later than July 2, 2020.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed immediately to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross has a statement to make.

### Provincial Pension Plan Administration

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta deserves fair and unbiased treatment from the federal government, but for decades Ottawa has given us little attention. The only time they seem to care about us is when they think they might lose out on some of our tax money. The federal government should adequately reciprocate the financial contributions our province gives them with effective services and funding.

A key first step in maintaining provincial autonomy, lowering costs for Albertans, and granting our province more leverage for itself would be to decentralize some of the services that are currently being provided by Ottawa. Starting an Alberta pension plan would be an important change that could bring massive benefits to the people of our province. Quebec has had a provincial pension plan since 1966, and it has worked with success, despite its median age being one of the oldest in the country.

Mr. Speaker, a provincial pension plan could provide incredible results for Alberta. If we chose to maintain the current CPP contribution rates, our annual payments would drop from 9.9 per cent to 5.85 per cent. This would translate to a 2 per cent cut for businesses and individuals, while keeping all of our retirement benefits intact. This drop would leave Albertans with more money in their pockets and would spur business growth and investment. Alternatively, Alberta could keep the 9.9 per cent rate and provide our citizens with one of the most generous publicly funded retirement savings plans in North America.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has the youngest population of all provinces and one of the highest workforce participation rates, and our pension plans should reflect that. Albertans that work hard their whole life and pay into pension plans should be contributing to their own future retirements, not for retirees in the east.

Thank you.

### Norwegian Oil

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, recently Greta Thunberg called out the Nordic countries for basically doing nothing despite having the possibility to do the most. I agree with Greta. The Nordic countries have failed to live up to their vaunted reputations on the environment.

Specifically, let's talk about Norway. Alberta is often compared to Norway, although instead of doling out its financial windfall to its neighbours, Norway tucks it safely away in a nice sovereign fund. Did you know that Norway is one of the original purveyors of oil dependency? They were leaders in the mass slaughter of whales for oil, which they rendered from the blubber. They got people addicted to convenience lighting in their quest to profit from oil. Shame. Soon they discovered oil offshore. Despite having a strong domestic supply of hydroelectricity, they have drilled hundreds of sites, pulling out massive amounts of hydrocarbons in the middle of the rough ocean waters, and there is leakage. It's time environmentalists broadened their views and looked at the pollution we're imposing on our oceans.

I am calling on the folks from across the way to get their friends from Leadnow, Greenpeace, Environmental Defence, and the rest as well as all those cool celebrities like Leonardo DiCaprio, Jane Fonda, and Neil Young to go visit Norway. Just like when you visit Fort McMurray, you can fly in, grab a franchise coffee, and head out for your photo op. You can do the same thing in Norway, but unlike Alberta, where our entire province depends on oil and gas revenues to put food on the table and to heat our homes in the winter, Norway mines those hydrocarbons to sell to the world. If these environmental crusaders can put enough pressure on Norway, this is a nation that can afford to stop their hydrocarbon production

because they have their trillion-dollar nest egg. Environmentalists can feel pride knowing that they've made a difference, a difference in actually making an entire nation give up an industry it does not even need. So go on, go away, go visit Norway.

### Alberta in Canada

**Mr. Loewen:** Albertans have never been so disappointed and frustrated with their federal government. As I've met with my constituents, I've heard the same word over and over again: enough. Enough of the federal government undermining our economy, enough of the federal government sucking this province dry, enough of our federal government taking us for granted, and enough of Alberta accepting it. Alberta is and has been pivotal to the prosperity of Canada as a whole for generations. Every province in this country benefits from the success of our economy, especially our oil and gas sector.

Some people say that this is biting the hand that feeds it, but it's actually so much worse. It's like our fellow countrymen are trying to cut the hand off entirely. There is a deep-seated resentment for Alberta in some corners of this country, and it is being pandered to by our federal government. Again we say: enough. Enough of a federal government that wants to keep our natural resources in the ground; enough of a federal government that would like to land-lock our natural resources from the rest of the world, driving the price Canadians receive for their product down; enough of an attitude that tells us oil and gas pipelines are unacceptable while cash pipelines flow wide open to the east.

It is time to control our future, to claim our destiny. It starts with the realization that we will never be offered a fair deal without demanding it. We will never get a fair shake unless we are truly prepared to stand up for ourselves and fight for it. What a fair deal looks like is up to Albertans, but we know from the experience of other provinces that we can assert our place far more effectively by seriously considering ideas like a provincial pension plan, a provincial police force, opting out of federal programs in exchange for full compensation, triggering a referendum on ending equalization, the collection of our own taxes, playing a larger role in international relations, and more.

We have real tools at our disposal. My constituents have told me that it's time to use them. Albertans aren't asking for special treatment. They just want fair treatment. Albertans finally have a provincial government that will stand up to our federal government. Why? Because Albertans have had enough.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

#### Bill 28

#### Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand before you to beg leave to introduce a bill, a bill named the Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act.

This legislation will enable our province to participate in British Columbia's proposed national class action against opioid manufacturers and wholesalers. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta taxpayers should not be forced to shoulder the cost of opioid-related injury, illness, and disease when we can trace the roots back to the unlawful actions of these companies. This legislation would allow us to hold opioid manufacturers and wholesalers accountable for health care costs and other damages related to opioids.

I therefore move first reading of Bill 28, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 19(5) of the Auditor General Act as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I'm pleased to table the report of the Auditor General of Alberta, November 2019. Copies of this report will also be provided to all members.

Thank you very much, sir.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a tabling.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of the correspondence received earlier today from the office of the Ethics Commissioner regarding the deep concerns around there being violations of folks voting on Bill 22, which passed third reading earlier today. I'm tabling it as I referred to it in my debate earlier today as well as in question period.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Edmonton-South.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of two articles. The first article is about climate change. It's called the Last Arctic Ice Refuge Is Disappearing. The second one is The Most Important Climate Numbers You Need to Know. Both are informative and show the absolute dire nature of climate change.

Thank you.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of tablings for you today. First, I've received hundreds of letters, but here are 10 letters from teachers telling the government to keep their hands off their pensions.

I also have a tabling of a petition I ran, in which 1,457 Albertans have said no to firing the Election Commissioner and corruption in the UCP government.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies received by the NDP caucus members concerning the corruption of government in passing Bill 22.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of an open letter from a constituent, Mary Pinkoski. She writes asking to consider the ramifications of what happens to a population when they are presented with a multiplicity of cuts in all areas of their lives. Albertans "are complex individuals who are now experiencing the resounding fear and desperation that naturally comes with having many areas of our lives placed in jeopardy by these austerity . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I appreciate the reading of the letter, but that's the purpose of tabling it, so that all members have the opportunity to do so.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the Member for St. Albert I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from a constituent, Élodie Maunder. She's a teacher who sets out her great love and passion for teaching and how she is concerned about the challenges faced by the government's changes to education.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

## Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the Alberta College of Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists annual report 2018 and the College and Association of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta annual report 2019.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan Act the annual reports for the years ending March 31, 2015, March 31, 2016, March 31, 2017, March 31, 2018, and March 31, 2019.

Pursuant to the provincial judges and masters in chambers registered and unregistered pension plans regulation the annual reports for the years ending March 31, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. But prior to doing so, perhaps the Government House Leader would like to provide the House an update.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity. I rise on what I believe is the Official Opposition House Leader's first point of order . . .

**The Speaker:** Sorry. I'm hoping that you might consider extending the Routine.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Oh. It would be my pleasure as the Government House Leader to extend the Routine. [interjection] Well, let's just do it, just in case, Mr. Speaker. In honour of the Brian Mason standing order I extend the daily Routine.

**The Speaker:** Well done. Thank you.

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader. Apologies to the House.

## Point of Order Factual Accuracy

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j). At approximately 1:56 the Government House Leader made a statement accusing the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, referring to her as the interim leader, misrepresentative of the truth. I don't need to go much further than that. As you know, as you've ruled in the past, I would request that the Government House Leader withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Given the recent interest in points of order, I might just provide some context around why this might be a point of order compared to other situations that may not be. The hon. Government House Leader did on numerous occasions refer to groups of people like the NDP misrepresenting information or the Official Opposition

misrepresenting information. But in this case he referred specifically to the temporary leader of the NDP, being an individual, accurate or not, misrepresenting the facts. As such, this particular instance does constitute a point of order.

I'd ask the member to withdraw and apologize.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Throughout a lengthy question period I managed to deliver it right every time but one, and I certainly do agree that it was unparliamentary. I do withdraw and apologize.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, point of order 1: I consider it dealt with and concluded.

Point of order 2: at 2:06 the hon. Official Opposition House Leader raised a point of order.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on Standing Order 23 (h), (i), (j), specifically where the statement, that I will share with the House in a minute, not only makes an allegation of another member but "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo made a comment referring to one of our members, stating that the member opposite made ignorant statements about X, Y, Z. That's less important for this. But, again, that type of language is meant to create disorder, is an allegation against a member. For those reasons, I request that that member apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** The government whip.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly thank the member opposite for his submissions on this particular point of order. However, I happen to have the sheet. I'm not necessarily mentioning the question that, of course, the member was asking, but what he said was: "given that the member opposite, in typical fashion, gave ignorant statements about the lack of intox beds available at the Salvation Army." I would submit to you that he was referring to no one specifically, in particular, of the members opposite, certainly referring to a member within the NDP but not identifying a specific member. So I would argue that that particular point would be considered a matter of debate.

Secondly, I would also further argue that, you know, to be ignorant of a particular subject would certainly mean to be unaware or have a lack of understanding of a particular subject. I know for myself, as an example, or somebody who has not been to Fort McMurray in, I would say, decades, that I would be somewhat ignorant as to what is going on in the Salvation Army regarding intox beds in that particular area.

I do not believe in any way that he was trying to incite but instead state, really, a fact that there was a lack of understanding or awareness of this particular subject by a specific member opposite but not directed to any one particular member opposite. So I would argue that this is just simply a matter of debate, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for your time.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the submissions with respect to this point of order. I would suggest, as I do have the benefit of the Blues

— and while members may find ways to get transcripts of what happens or doesn't happen inside the Chamber prior to the publication of the Blues, of course, only the Speaker has access during question period. The Blues read that "given that the member" not "a member" has been spoken. But with that, I will say that there are some validities to the points of the government whip saying that one could make an ignorant statement without being ignorant.

Given the closeness to the line of being unparliamentary — I've never tried to actually split a hair, but we may be doing that — I think I will rule in this case that it was a point of order and ask that the member apologize and withdraw.

**Mr. Ellis:** On behalf of the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo I apologize and withdraw the comment.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** So well done.

At 2:09 the hon. Government House Leader raised a point of order during questioning.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I'll let the hon. member reply.

**The Speaker:** Would someone like to rise and provide some direction to the Speaker? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Perhaps she's rising to apologize and withdraw a statement she made.

### Point of Order Allegations against a Member

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Like the Government House Leader, I got it right about 15 times today, but one time in a heckle I said something that I regret. I apologize, and I withdraw the remark.

**The Speaker:** Teamwork makes the dream work.

Hon. members, we are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, first of all, through you to everybody in the Chamber as well as staff, your team, and across the LAO for another good legislative week. It's been a long week, with some late nights.

As I always do, Mr. Speaker, at this time I encourage all of our colleagues on all sides of the aisle to drive safely — I'm hearing of some bad weather in certain parts of the province — as people travel back to their constituencies. Of course, today is a particularly tough day for many members of this Chamber, the anniversary of the loss of our dear friend Manmeet in a highway accident. I just want to encourage everybody again, from every party, to be careful.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I think it's time to get everybody back home to their constituencies for the weekend. I look forward to seeing everybody next week. I will move to adjourn the House until next Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, November 21, 2019**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1313-26 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1329-31 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1347-57 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve.*), 1357-62 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c8 ]

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c5 ]

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cR-8.2 ]

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c4 ]



**Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c3 ]

**Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1375-83 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c7 ]

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 , passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cP-41.7 ]

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c2 ]

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cF-1.5 ]

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1393-94 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c9 ]

**Bill 13\* — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1345-47 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1383-93 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 cA-33.5 ]

**Bill 14 — Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act (Wilson)**

First Reading — 1654 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1655-77 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft.*), 1679-95 (*Oct. 9, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1708-25 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft.*), 1761 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft.*), 1763-67 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1768-70 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn.*), 1785 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cA-26.3 ]

**Bill 15 — Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019 (Glubish)**

First Reading — 1707 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1758-61 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1767-68 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1783-85 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c13 ]

**Bill 16 — Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 1782 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1810-17 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1817-18 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1911-15 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 c12 ]

**Bill 17 — Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act (Sawhney)**

First Reading — 1798 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1819-28 (*Oct. 17, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1915-26 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1949-59 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cD-13.5 ]

**Bill 18 — Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019 (Savage)**

First Reading — 1850 (*Oct. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1926-29 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft.*), 1931-45 (*Oct. 22, 2019 eve.*), 1947-49 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1959-66 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1978-90 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1990-94 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft.*), 2037-41 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2055-56 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c11 ]

**Bill 19 — Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 (\$) (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 2053 (*Oct. 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2123-26 (*Oct. 31, 2019 aft.*), 2146-57 (*Nov. 4, 2019 aft.*), 2177-79 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2237-49 (*Nov. 6, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2305-10 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

**Bill 20\* — Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2056-66 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2089-2100 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve.*), 2167-77 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2227-37 (*Nov. 6, 2019 eve.*), 2366-68 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve.*), 2410-14 (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft.*), 2415 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., adjourned, amendments agreed to*)

**Bill 21 — Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019 (\$) (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2066-74 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2100-10 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve.*), 2159-67 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve.*), 2193-2212 (*Nov. 5, 2019 eve.*), 2265-70 (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2312-23 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve.*), 2369-81 (*Nov. 20, 2019 morn.*)

**Bill 22\* — Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019 (\$)**

First Reading — 2282 (Nov. 18, 2019 aft., passed on division)

Second Reading — 2340-66 (Nov. 19, 2019 eve.), 2415-21 (Nov. 20, 2019 eve.), 2422-29 (Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 2429-40 (Nov. 20, 2019 eve.), 2441-48 (Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division with amendments)

Third Reading — 2449 (Nov. 21, 2019 morn.), 2451-58 (Nov. 21, 2019 morn., passed on division)

**Bill 23 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019 (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 2262 (Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 2301-03 (Nov. 18, 2019 aft.), 2310-12 (Nov. 18, 2019 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 2366 (Nov. 19, 2019 eve., passed)

Third Reading — 2381-82 (Nov. 20, 2019 morn., passed)

**Bill 24 — Appropriation Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2340 (Nov. 19, 2019 eve., passed)

Second Reading — 2382 (Nov. 20, 2019 morn.), 2394-2405 (Nov. 20, 2019 aft.), 2429 (Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 2461 (Nov. 21, 2019 morn.), 2458-61 (Nov. 21, 2019 morn., passed on division)

**Bill 25 — Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 (Hunter)**

First Reading — 2284 (Nov. 18, 2019 aft., passed)

**Bill 26 — Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019 (Dreeshen)**

First Reading — 2394 (Nov. 20, 2019 aft., passed)

**Bill 27 — Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019 (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 2336 (Nov. 19, 2019 aft., passed)

**Bill 28 — Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act (Shandro)**

First Reading — 2473 (Nov. 21, 2019 aft., passed)

**Bill 201\* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 825-38 (Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 cP-30.6 ]

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 838-40 (Jun. 17, 2019 aft.), 1115-22 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft.), 1882 (Oct. 21, 2019 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 1883-87 (Oct. 21, 2019 aft.), 2027-29 (Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Oct. 30, 2019 aft.) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c10 ]

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), (Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly), 1875-82 (Oct. 21, 2019 aft., not proceeded with on division)

**Bill 204 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — (Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), (Nov. 6, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 2283-95 (Nov. 18, 2019 aft., adjourned)

**Bill 205 — Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019 (Jones)**

First Reading — 2223 *(Nov. 6, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills)*

**Bill 206 — Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Reid)**

First Reading — 2262 *(Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), (Nov. 20, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)*

**Bill 207 — Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act (Williams)**

First Reading — 2263 *(Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed on div; referred to Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills)*







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 25, 2019

Day 46

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

### Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 25, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by the Glendon school choir. I would invite you all to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's my pleasure. This morning I had the opportunity of meeting with the consul general of the Netherlands, Mr. Henk Snoeken. He's accompanied by the honorary consul general of the Netherlands in Edmonton, Jerry Bouma. It's particularly special having these gentlemen here this year as it is 75 years of freedom in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Canada and Holland share a deep and meaningful bond stemming from the results of the Second World War, that continues to be a rewarding relationship all these decades later. Thank you for coming, and welcome to Alberta.

Also in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon a special guest: the Member of Parliament for Lethbridge, Ms Rachael Harder. She is accompanied by a number of constituents of hers and of the members of Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this afternoon, here for the School at the Legislature: from the constituency of St. Albert, students of Muriel Martin school.

Also, our anthem singers this afternoon, as I previously mentioned, guests of the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul: from Glendon school grades 2, 4, and 7, a range of students. A huge thank you to their teacher, Ms Amy Charter. Thanks for doing such an amazing job.

Also, guests of the MLA for Sherwood Park: Gunjan Mehta and Kashyap Pandit from the Hindu BAPS organization. Welcome.

Guests of the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat: welcome the Newell Christian School all the way from Duchess today.

Last but not least, joining us and visiting the Official Opposition caucus are Wallis Kendal and Jasmine Nepoose.

Hon. members, please welcome our guests today.

### Members' Statements

#### BAPS Charities

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize BAPS, which is a Hindu religious and social organization. It is a Gujarat, India based global spiritual organization that is dedicated to community service, peace, and harmony. As a world-wide Hindu organization BAPS actively engages in a number of endeavours aimed at spirituality, human development, and welfare. BAPS has more than 50,000 volunteers and 1,100 Hindu temples, with 100 centres right here in North America.

I have had the honour of attending BAPS events in Edmonton and Sherwood Park along with visiting the BAPS temple in Calgary. Most recently in Edmonton I along with the Minister of Municipal Affairs attended the BAPS Annakut Mahotsav event. Hindu community temples celebrate Annakut Mahotsav after the Diwali festival. The event had an exhibition stall that promoted the message of the Hindu Vedic literature: the world is one family, unity and tolerance. What an incredibly positive and inclusive message.

The inspiration behind the activities of BAPS in Edmonton is His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj. The Premier has had the opportunity to personally meet His Holiness and has a long-standing friendship with BAPS. The Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Community and Social Services have been to the BAPS temple in Calgary, too.

Mr. Speaker, BAPS is a great example of a faith-based civil society group that greatly contributes to Alberta through volunteerism, charity, spirituality, and social welfare supports. It is my sincere honour to recognize and salute BAPS in the Legislature today.

Thank you.

### Campaign Investigations and Bill 22

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, numerous members of this government's cabinet and caucus have been interviewed by the RCMP in their ongoing investigation into voter fraud and identity theft that appear to have plagued the UCP leadership race. The Minister of Justice, the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of Seniors and Housing, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, also the Member for Cardston-Siksika and the Member for Sherwood Park were all interviewed by the RCMP as part of this scandal.

Let's keep in mind that the Premier tried to shrug this off as Twitter gossip at one point. But before the Justice minister turns his all-caps rant at me, let's make one thing clear: Albertans know that Twitter gossip doesn't result in over \$200,000 in fines. Albertans deserve a government that is up front with them. They deserve a government that doesn't try to hide from accountability or the rule of law, they deserve a government that doesn't fire those investigating them, and they deserve a government that takes their responsibilities under the Conflicts of Interest Act seriously. Just how many of the members I listed off earlier checked with the Ethics Commissioner before voting on Bill 22? My guess is none, Mr. Speaker.

I implore my colleagues on the other side of the House: take a stand. You know what this government is doing isn't right, and I

know that your constituents are telling you that, too. This is your chance. Listen to the people who elected you instead of the Premier's office. I hope you take it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Tax Policy

**Mr. Guthrie:** I'm not sure if you've heard, Mr. Speaker, but the NDP are claiming a \$4.7 billion corporate tax giveaway. The NDP claims: tax cuts don't work; the only way to help the economy is to continue increasing taxes. They say that they would balance the budget and would do so while ramping up their spend-and-tax policies. I am so looking forward to the NDP shadow budget that shows their path to balance in the next three years.

1:40

But let's talk numbers as we do have four years of NDP governance to look at for the effects of tax increases. First, we have the surprise-of-a-lifetime tax, called a \$1.4 billion carbon tax, that caused every Albertan to suffer; followed up with a 20 per cent increase in corporate taxes, increases to personal taxes, and a \$350 million increase to provincial property taxes. But it didn't stop there. They agreed to increasing CPP and WCB premiums. They packed on regulations and red tape which further reduced business competitiveness. As Alberta's only single-term government the NDP decimated the resource sector and drove capital investment out of the province in every sector by double-digit numbers. They shrunk the private sector and reduced our provincial earnings growth to the slowest in Canada by a country mile. Unemployment skyrocketed, vacancies grew, private-sector wages plummeted, and bankruptcies erupted.

The NDP claimed that they would gain \$6 billion in tax revenues, but all they did was realize an \$8.5 billion tax revenue shortfall, average over \$12 billion in debt each year they were in office, proving through their own doing that tax increases hurt all Albertans.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is our intention to reverse this catastrophic economic failure by the NDP. It will not be easy, and it will take time, but we will not be deterred.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Campaign Investigations and Bill 22

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, Bill 22 has passed, and I'm sure this government has moved at record speed to fire the Election Commissioner and any trace of his investigation into the UCP leadership race. For those wanting justice, we hope and assume the RCMP investigation into UCP voter fraud soldiers on.

Let's be clear that Bill 22 is the most undemocratic and unethical act this Legislature has ever seen. Albertans won't forget, neither will this Official Opposition, and neither will I as the opposition critic for democracy and ethics. Albertans won't forget that these days just before the spring election the Member for Calgary-East had his business raided by RCMP officers in connection with the voter fraud investigation. Albertans also won't forget that the Member for Calgary-Glenmore was specifically named in a letter provided to the RCMP about the voter fraud that occurred. The letter detailed offshore e-mail servers and voting kiosks being run specifically to put the campaign by the current Premier over the top. Albertans also won't forget that despite being Members of this Legislative Assembly for seven months, neither of those members have come clean about what they know and whether they believe it's acceptable to remain as MLAs while under RCMP investigation. To both members: your silence is deafening.

The Premier, for his part, has dismissed all these allegations and called them Twitter gossip, but Bill 22 indicates that there is much, much more at play. And this Premier hopes that he can change the channel after his Texas hideout. I promise him this, that neither myself nor the 23 other MLAs on this side of the House will let Albertans forget what occurred last week, because it was shameful. Still, I believe in my heart that justice will be served someday.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-North.

### High School Construction in North Calgary

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak to declare my commitment to education in our province and investment in public infrastructure. Education is the most basic right for our children, and an educated Alberta is better for all of us. Our province is known for being innovative and entrepreneurial. That is because we value education and investment in our youth.

I want to express my excitement and appreciation regarding the recent announcement to build the north Calgary high school. For more than 15 years the families of Calgary-North have been advocating for a high school, and I am so pleased that our government has listened to their voices. In fact, Mr. Speaker, while I was door-knocking last spring, this was a high priority for parents in my constituency, among other things like jobs, economy, and pipelines. The new high school will have the capacity to serve about 1,800 students from north Calgary. A high school in Calgary-North was a growing need for the community and is well received by its residents. The announcement of a new high school shows Albertans that our government is committed to education. Having a high school closer, too, will increase a student's ability to participate in extracurricular activities and be more active in the community involvement. A new high school in Calgary-North will give students not only the opportunity to go to school closer to their home but also offer them excellent learning opportunities and better community participation.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my sincere thanks to the Northern Hills Community Association, who worked tirelessly for the past 15 years advocating for a high school, as well as all the residents of Calgary-North. Their commitment, hard work, and dedication paid off.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Climate Change

**Ms Renaud:** According to the UN's World Meteorological Organization the concentration of climate-heating greenhouse gases has hit a record high. The rising concentration of greenhouse gases follows inevitably from the continued surge in global emissions. We know that the world's scientists have calculated that emissions must fall by half by 2030 to give us a good chance at limiting heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius, beyond which hundreds of millions of people will suffer more heat waves, droughts, fires, floods, and extreme poverty.

Our planet is undergoing one of the largest changes in climate since dinosaurs went extinct. Although some of the changes our planet will undergo in the next few decades are already baked into the system, how different the climate looks at the end of the 21st century will depend largely on how humans respond now.

In April Environment and Climate Change Canada released Canada's Changing Climate Report, and the report states that Canada's north has started melting. It's projected that Canada

overall will warm almost twice the global average regardless of what we do to fight it.

UCP members like to point out other bad-actor countries when trying to deflect from their dismal action on climate change mitigation, energy efficiency, and climate leadership. Whataboutism will not solve the massive climate change challenges ahead of us. Swearing allegiance to one type of energy producer and plastering their signs on the people's House, our Legislature, will do nothing to address the massive challenges ahead of us. The only way that we as a province and country address the massive challenges and opportunities ahead of us is to unite behind the science and to act like our house is on fire.

Thank you.

### Parliamentary Democracy

**Ms Rosin:** Mr. Speaker, I have a massive amount of respect for our democracy in this province, and part of my respect for our democracy, of course, includes its processes. That's why I'm always a little amazed when I witness members of this Assembly completely disrespect the institutions that make this province so great. Every time I enter this House, I'm overwhelmed and humbled by the opportunity I have been granted to represent Banff-Kananaskis and to make decisions that will hopefully make life a little bit better for Albertans, but it's becoming increasingly obvious that some enter this House and see it as an opportunity and a platform to spread fear and division instead of promoting constructive dialogue and cohesion.

I'm particularly unimpressed by the calls of the Official Opposition and their leader to pressure the Lieutenant Governor into behaving in a way that undermines our democracy and disregards the voices of Albertans. Last week the Leader of the Opposition demanded that the Lieutenant Governor block and barricade Bill 22 from becoming law. You see, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to live in a province where we can't demand that democratic institutions be overturned just because we don't like them or personally agree with them. I'm proud that we can't bully our way around the processes or make unfounded demands of those involved in it.

For those on the other side of the aisle who feel like they can bend the process for their own agenda, do these members not remember what they themselves said about a man who attempted to petition the Lieutenant Governor in 2016? Twitter was overwhelmed by the hashtag #kudatah and the widespread mockery of the NDP, who lambasted the very idea that someone would petition the Lieutenant Governor. Yet here today it seems that that opposition has decided to take a page right from the playbook and make kudatah the official NDP policy.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. I for one don't stand for this hypocrisy, nor do I stand for political moves that erode our democracy and undermine our institutions. The opposition can stomp their feet and bully and tweet all they want, but it won't change the outcome of this democracy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona would like to address the House.

### Member's Apology

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address my comments from question period last Tuesday. Last week we witnessed an unprecedented attack on Alberta's democracy, namely the firing of the Election Commissioner while he was actively investigating members and associates of the government caucus.

During question period I used unparliamentary language to describe the Government House Leader's actions when he claimed that Bill 22 does not fire the Election Commissioner. In fact, the bill did specifically fire the Election Commissioner, and he has now been fired. In the face of the contradiction that appeared between the statement of the House leader and the words within the act, I used unparliamentary language when I said that the House leader was misleading the House.\* While I retain my position that the House leader was incorrect when he suggested that Bill 22 did not fire anyone, I respect the rules and traditions of this Chamber, and as such, I withdraw my comment.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Election Commissioner and Bill 22

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to be back, and I also offer a welcome back to the Premier. Bill 22, jammed through the Legislature while the Premier was in Texas, is an abuse of power that breaches the rule of law. The Premier fired the Election Commissioner in the midst of active investigations into him, members of his caucus, and members of his party. The House leader had the gall to tell this House, "No one is firing anybody," but the bill says that Mr. Gibson is "terminated." To the Premier: if you believe you did the right thing, will you at least correct the record and admit that as of today Lorne Gibson is no longer the Election Commissioner? Please tell the truth.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Leader of the Opposition knows full well, the position of Election Commissioner carries on within the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, which has been responsible for the administration and enforcement of Alberta election law from 1905 until July of 2018, analogous to the system that exists in every other province. As the Chief Electoral Officer said last Friday, "All investigations begun by the Office of the Election Commissioner will continue under Elections Alberta's statutory mandate." Nothing could be more clear than that.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is wrong. The folks over there are not telling the truth, and they know it. There is no Election Commissioner right now, and this public firing has intimidated anybody tasked with holding this Premier accountable. The investigation has already been compromised. This is classic political interference, intimidation, and abuse of power. This is not, however, the classic behaviour of democratic leaders. The House leader said there was no panic, but they passed the bill with an urgency of someone on the run from the law. To the Premier: what are you hiding?

**Mr. Kenney:** Absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Bill 22 received more hours of debate than any other bill before the Legislature in this fall session. Let me carry on quoting from the Chief Electoral Officer, who says:

Prior to July 2018, when the Office of the Election Commissioner was created, Elections Alberta was responsible for receiving complaints and conducting all investigations regarding non-compliance with the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. Elections Alberta is once again tasked with performing this regulatory role. It will resume the

\*See page 2328, right column, paragraph 4



role in accordance with its duty to act independently and to apply the election and election finance legislation consistently and fairly.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thanks to Bill 22, Mr. Speaker, there's no such thing as anybody having a duty to act independently. The Supreme Court of Canada defines the rule of law as "supreme over officials of the government . . . and thereby preclusive of the influence of arbitrary power." This Premier thinks he's above the law and that he can fire those who would hold him to account on a whim. Last week the Premier forced this House to serve as his tool for this abuse of power. What is so damaging that this Premier has to abuse his power, corrupt this House, and break the rule of law to keep it secret?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, all of that sounds like the campaign of fear and smear we heard in the spring election that Albertans rejected. Instead, I'll quote from an independent officer who has been independently administering Alberta elections law for several years, who was in fact appointed by the previous NDP government, when he said on Friday, "All investigations begun by the Office of the Election Commissioner will continue under Elections Alberta's statutory mandate." All that's changed is that instead of the commissioner being accountable to the Legislature or the government, the commissioner is now accountable to an independent, arm's-length official.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** What's changed, Mr. Speaker, is that the guy that has fined those guys over \$200,000 just got fired by those guys, but you know what? Let's go into quotes because it's not just me and some of the folks at the Grey Cup who were worried about this Premier. The *Star* says that Bill 22 "amounts to an abuse of power" and "an affront to democracy that will not be easily swept under the rug." The *Globe and Mail* says it "raises serious questions about democracy in Alberta." The *Edmonton Journal* says this commissioner should have been allowed to finish the job. To the Premier, Albertans don't believe you. Why won't you come clean with them?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, many commentators remarked on how the real violation of the democratic spirit came from the Leader of the Opposition when she wrote to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor asking that she violate our Westminster parliamentary constitution by effectively vetoing a law duly passed by the elected representatives of Albertans. I know that the leader of the NDP has had a hard time coming to terms with Albertans firing her last spring, but here's the reality. Albertans' elected representatives passed this law to restore . . .

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I have a hard time coming to terms with is the attack on democracy by this Premier.

But let's keep going in terms of what other folks think. Graham Thomson calls it dangerous. Ryan Jespersen calls it disgraceful. Rick Bell says that it stinks. Jason Markusoff asks, "How the (expletive) does he think he can get away with this?" And Charles Adler says, quote, we've just witnessed goons laying a beating on democracy and then denying they did. Premier, are all of these people wrong, too?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what's wrong: the opposition leader violating our Constitution by seeking to have the representative of the Queen refuse to pass into law a law duly

adopted by the elected representatives of the people of Alberta to strengthen the independence of the Election Commissioner so that he or she will in the future be accountable to the Chief Electoral Officer, an independent officer of this place, as opposed to directly to the government. This is common sense, what every other province in Canada does. It's what Alberta did for 114 years.

**Ms Notley:** No other government in Canada or anywhere in the Commonwealth has presumed to fire someone who's in the midst of investigating them, Mr. Speaker.

Now, more people. Mount Royal professor Duanne Bratt calls it, quote, a cover-up, plain and simple, and a travesty of democracy and justice. U of C political scientist Lisa Young says that the Premier is "trying to lay the groundwork for those who have [already] been fined for breaking election law to walk away." U of C political scientist Melanee Thomas says, quote, the Premier is using the power of the state to silence an independent body, and this is corrupt. Premier, a simple question: why do so many Albertans think you are corrupt?

**Mr. Kenney:** It's so sad over there that they're now resorting to quoting NDP candidates like Ms Thomas as objective sources.

Mr. Speaker, for 114 years this province had one bureaucracy administering the elections law until the NDP decided to create an entirely redundant office. We have restored the same independent implementation of election law that existed for the first 114 years of our history, the same model that exists in every other province and at the federal level. It's going to save taxpayers' money and will strengthen the independence of the office of the commissioner.

#### Bill 22 Votes

**Ms Notley:** Quote: I don't see a conflict of interest. End quote. That's the Premier telling the Ethics Commissioner that he, the one under investigation, is the best judge of whether or not he can fire his investigator. This Premier fled the province to avoid voting on this bill. He knows that he's in conflict. Clearly, this plan to abuse their power was cooked up behind closed doors within his cabinet. The question is: did the Premier recuse himself, did he hide from those discussions, or did he in fact orchestrate those discussions? We need an answer.

**Mr. Kenney:** Again, Mr. Speaker, Bill 22 was principally about the consolidation of agencies, boards, and commissions per our government's budgetary mandate to reduce unnecessary duplication. We did this with respect to dozens of agencies, boards, and commissions. I will remind the NDP leader that both of our legacy parties opposed the creation of the separate Election Commissioner's office because it was completely unnecessary and redundant bureaucracy, so we have followed through on the position that we took two years ago and during the last election. Now the Chief Electoral Officer says that "all investigations begun by the Office of the Election Commissioner will continue under . . ."

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, most people do not believe that their accountability to the law is redundant.

The Ethics Commissioner warned these folks that anyone under investigation and anyone with direct associates under investigation would likely be in breach of section 2 of the Conflicts of Interest Act had they voted. Since this Premier is under investigation, discussing this bill with his whole cabinet, who would consider this Premier their direct associate, not to mention the many other UCP operatives under investigation, will this Premier admit that this

corrupt bill is an attempt to further his own political interests by making his cabinet break ethics laws?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader is just reaching beyond the point of desperation now. The truth is that she was seeking to break the Constitution of Canada by encouraging the Lieutenant Governor to ignore the democratic will of the elected people of Alberta. [interjection] The NDP leader is heckling angrily. You know why? She's still upset that she was fired by Alberta voters a few months ago.

We are keeping our word to consolidate redundant agencies, boards, and commissions and the position we took, consistently opposed to two separate election bureaucracies. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie will be cautious with what he chooses to heckle or not heckle.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our Constitution is founded on the rule of law, and the member opposite is now the absolute textbook case of what it looks like when you break the rule of law. Now, the Ethics Commissioner said that several members of the UCP either are or likely would be in breach of conflict of interest if they voted on Bill 22. Now she will have to investigate serious breaches of the law over there as a result of this rushed vote. To the Premier: with new investigations under way, how can we be sure that you're not going to be firing the Ethics Commissioner next?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, once again, the enforcement of the elections law now continues with the Election Commissioner consolidated within the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. That is effectively the system that Alberta had in place for 114 years, that exists in every other province. It's the position that the two legacy parties of this government took in opposition. It's consistent with the position we took with Albertans, and it's consistent with the continuation of any investigations with the office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition for her fourth set of questions.

### Bill 22 and Public Service Pension Changes

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, this Premier loves to brag about his mandate, but he does not have a mandate for corruption, and he also doesn't have a mandate for stealing control of people's pensions, two things in Bill 22 he never consulted on, never ran on, never told anyone he was planning to do. Unlike this Premier, these public servants weren't handed a golden pension from Ottawa. They earned it by paying into it their whole career. Why does this Premier think his opinion is more important than theirs when it comes to their retirement savings?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP should know that all public-sector pension plans in Alberta have been managed, in terms of their assets, by the Alberta Investment Management Corporation. There was one outlier, which is costing taxpayers and teachers \$42 million a year for redundant administration. Taxpayers contribute 50 per cent of the premiums to that plan. The ATRF board will continue to oversee its administration by AIMCo. The chair of that ATRF board will be an ATA representative. This is consistent with how all other public pensions are managed.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, historically AIMCo has been a reasonably safe bet because they're free from political interference, but as we see with this Premier, all he does is politically interfere. No laws apply to him. He'll fire his own investigator, and he'll start telling the experts at AIMCo how to invest Albertans' retirement savings, too. Bill 22 says that the government can dictate 10 per cent of AIMCo funds, billions of dollars. To the Premier: what gives you the right to make risky decisions with the retirement savings of regular Albertan families? Who do you think you are?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the entire preamble of the question was false. Secondly, who did she think she was when she had AIMCo investing all of the public-sector pensions in the province save one?

We are able now to take the \$20 million of government savings by consolidating asset administration at AIMCo and put that to the front lines of the education system. The NDP would rather use that money to offer seven-figure salaries to investment managers for a redundant public-sector pension plan. It makes no sense.

**Ms Notley:** The Premier seems to be struggling. Let me help. The Premier gets a sweet six-figure pension from Ottawa when he turns 55. I'm sure he's looking forward to it. Let me help you understand what it is you're doing. Imagine Justin Trudeau took control of your pension without your permission and started investing it in SNC-Lavalin. I think you'd be a touch upset. You would want to defend your pension from greedy politicians, just like these workers do. Why won't you listen to these Albertans and leave their retirement savings alone?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it is becoming shameful to hear the leader of the NDP raise totally unfounded and irrational fears amongst people about their retirement savings. Let me remind her that as Premier she maintained a policy where AIMCo was managing the assets for every public-sector worker in the province, save one group, which is spending \$42 million in redundant administrative costs, which can be saved to provide greater resources for front-line education and, in due course, to also reduce premiums for teachers.

### Gender-based Violence Prevention

**Ms Glasgo:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta has the third-highest level of reported domestic and intimate partner violence. It is reported that a dozen Alberta women are killed every year in domestic disputes. We also know that coming forward can be frightening due to stigma. Can the Minister of Community and Social Services tell us what the government is doing to empower survivors of domestic violence and ensure that Alberta women can make informed decisions about their domestic partners?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, Alberta has one of the highest rates of domestic violence among Canadian provinces, and we're committed to protecting vulnerable Albertans who may be at risk or affected by this pervasive issue. In fact, Alberta had 10,000 victims of domestic violence in 2017 alone. In October we introduced Bill 17, disclosure to protect against domestic violence legislation, that will give people the ability to request information about an intimate partner's violent past. We believe this law could save lives and empower people at risk to make informed decisions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister of Community and Social Services for her advocacy. Given that today is recognized as the first day of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence and given that this government has prioritized the prevention of intimate partner violence and given that there are community stakeholders doing significant work to prevent violence, what is this government doing to engage, inform, and educate Albertans about this important issue?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been an absolute privilege, especially this past weekend, working with the CFL commissioner, Mr. Ambrosie, along with the work that we're doing to really shine a very, very bright light on domestic violence through their programming. I'm very proud to work with the Premier and the Minister of Community and Social Services, who are so completely dedicated to making sure that we attack this absolutely abhorrent act and that we shine bright lights on it as soon as possible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are many types of gender-based violence that go widely underreported and given that there have been reports of Canadian women taken abroad for female genital mutilation and given that this barbaric practice permanently maims women and vulnerable girls and given that our government is taking action on gender-based violence, can the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women tell us how we can all get involved in raising awareness on this important issue.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We begin this 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and this is a vital tool that encourages people every single day to be able to go out into their communities and to stand beside each other, especially acknowledging bystanders and what the importance is of what people can do. We are going to be having a free screening of a very, very important documentary on Wednesday, and we would invite all members of the Legislature to join us to learn about female genital mutilation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **Public- and Private-sector Layoffs**

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans didn't vote for this corruption and abuse of power. They thought they were voting for job creation. Well, let's check in on that. On Wednesday 125 workers at Alberta Innovates got the news that this Premier had fired them. That's about 20 per cent of the workers at an agency that created 2,000 new private-sector jobs over the past year alone. Why is this Premier firing people from an agency that was creating private-sector jobs and diversifying our economy just to pay for this Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Layoffs are always challenging, especially for the families affected. The decision was made due to

the fiscal situation the previous NDP government left us. Their reckless spending policies have required us to clean up their mess. Alberta Innovates, as all government departments, is in an effort of restructuring, finding efficiencies, and finding ways to deliver more effectively.

**2:10**

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that on day 2 of the Premier's trip to Texas 300 teachers in Calgary found out that the Premier had fired them, too, and given that that's what happens when you cut more than \$30 million from a district budget and given that the Education minister actually told this House that she doesn't understand what's going on, I'll ask the Premier: why are 300 classrooms full of children losing their teachers to pay for this Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout, and does the Premier think that that's what Albertans voted for?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised that a school board with a \$1.2 billion operating budget wouldn't be able to find enough efficiencies and be able to optimize to ensure that layoffs didn't occur. The Education minister announced that she will be conducting a financial review and a governance review of the Calgary board of education, a school division that, quite frankly, in the past has been known to not make financially responsible decisions. We will get to the bottom of that.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that on Thursday, day 3 of the Premier's Texas trip, Calgarians rallied at the U of C to protest the Premier's firing of 250 workers there and given that that adds up to 675 public-sector jobs lost in three days to pay for the Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout, what does the Premier have to say to those hundreds of Albertans who were working to make their communities stronger, and did he go to Texas just to avoid looking them in the eye?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I recognize the challenge when jobs are lost and the hardship experienced by families. We recognize that that is true, but in October there were over 20,000 private-sector jobs created, which we find encouraging. We're confident that the policies that we're implementing will attract investment and create good jobs for Albertans. This government was elected to bring financial responsibility back to the province, and that's what we're doing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this government was elected, we've lost over 10,000 jobs. Now, clearly the Premier thinks his government gets a pass on corruption if his \$4.7 billion corporate handout creates jobs, but while the Premier was in Texas, Lowe's Canada announced the closure of six stores across Alberta, more than 300 job layoffs, and this, of course, follows Husky and EnCana and others who took the Premier's handout and laid off hundreds of Albertans. How much evidence does this Premier need before he admits that his no-jobs corporate handout is a complete and utter failure?

**Ms Fir:** Mr. Speaker, it's strange to see that the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, suddenly cares about the economy after their government raised taxes on job creators by 20 per cent, took in less revenue from those taxes, and drove tens of billions of dollars in investment out of our province. We take no lessons from any of the members opposite on how to grow an economy after they spent four catastrophic years destroying it. If what they were doing

was so right and they knew what they were doing, why did Albertans put them on that side of the bench?

**Ms Notley:** Well, given that the members opposite have broken pretty much every promise they made to Albertans since the election and given that also last week Federated Co-operatives announced the closure of its warehouse in northeast Calgary and the layoffs of more than 200 Calgary workers and given that Federated Co-ops is closing that warehouse because its main customer can get a better deal from a B.C.-based company, how does the Premier – the Premier – explain the failure of his \$4.7 billion corporate handout to those 200 Calgary warehouse workers?

**Ms Fir:** Mr. Speaker, once again, we take no lessons on job creation from the NDP government, that oversaw the loss of 170,000 jobs and the loss of tens of billions of private-sector investment. As was mentioned, October job numbers show an increase of 20,000 private-sector jobs in Alberta. The members opposite didn't care about layoffs in Calgary when they brought in their job-killing carbon tax and raised taxes on job creators. Once again, if they knew what they were doing, and if what they were doing was in the best interests of Albertans, why did Albertans put them over there?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that “We won; they lost,” is not actually an economic plan and given that just last week, while the Premier was in Texas, we saw retail sales in Alberta fall significantly even as they rose everywhere else in the country and given that's hardly a surprise since this Premier is sacking thousands of Albertans, who have then less money to spend in their local stores, causing more private-sector job losses, why won't the Premier spend more time creating jobs, less time firing people, less time abusing his power, less time attacking democracy, and less time breaking the rule of law for the first time in history?

**Ms Fir:** Mr. Speaker, our government and our Premier and our entire team are working hard to bring jobs back to Alberta. Our Associate Minister of Natural Gas was in Japan and South Korea, the Premier was in Houston, and I was in Chicago and Minneapolis, taking a team approach to bringing investment back to Alberta, not spending four years sitting behind a desk, raising taxes, and driving investment out of this province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. [interjections] Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland is the only one with the call.

### Traffic Safety

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When travelling our roads and highways, we feel safe and with good reason: we have good infrastructure. When something happens to us motorists, we feel safe because only a cellphone call away there is a tow truck driver to help us when we need them the most. It has come to my attention, however, that we've recently lost another tow truck driver while performing his job. Such a loss cannot be acceptable, and the safety of these hard-working men and women must be ensured. I and many of my constituents want to ensure that such a tragedy is prevented in the future. To the Minister of Transportation: can you advise what is being done to assist our tow truck drivers so that they can be safe on the road while doing their jobs?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. First of all, I'd like to express my concern

and sympathy for the tow truck driver that lost his life, for his family, and loved ones. I want people to know that we take safety on Alberta highways very, very seriously. We are constantly looking for ways to improve safety on Alberta roads, and right now we're actually spending some time thinking about how we might make life more safe for tow truck drivers and other people working on Alberta's roads. When they're keeping the rest of us safe, we need to look after them, too.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that another vital part of our economic growth is transporting goods and services in a timely manner and given that the Acheson business park is a major economic hub for the capital region and given that the transportation of goods and investment in the area is stifled due to the movement of 50 trains a day crossing highway 60 and given that we are also concerned about safety, committed to job growth, and growing opportunities and investment for Albertans, can the minister please advise the Assembly on what we are looking to do for the solution in Acheson regarding the highway 60 overpass?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member. Safety on every road in Alberta is an issue that just doesn't sleep, and we need to be constantly vigilant. Budget 2019 commits \$8 million to major improvements on highway 60, west of Edmonton. It will twin highway 60 between highway 16 and 16A and construct an overpass over the Canadian National Railway tracks, when they get back to work, and realign the interchange at highway 16A. This is a safety issue, as every construction project is, one of many that we are considering.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, I'm sure that there will be some connectivity here in the third supplemental.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll connect the dots quickly. On anything that has highway or train traffic, we're talking about safety here. In my constituency we have a bunch of them, sir.

The third question that I have here is given that rural communities are intersected by and often have major highways running through them and folks need more time to transition and slow down while they're going through these communities and that out in my area we have Gainford, where they're looking to have their speed limit sign moved to the east approximately 500 metres, which will give the traffic that's travelling through that area ample time to slow down, can you please advise, Minister, what can be done out in Gainford?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the third question on highway safety. I wanted to let the hon. member know that the speed limit review completed in October 2019 found that the existing 80-kilometre-per-hour zone through Gainford is appropriate. However, the review also recommended that the 80-kilometre zone be extended at both the east and west ends of Gainford in order to enhance safety. So I'm hoping that the hon. member's constituents will be pleased to know that we expect to have the extended 80-kilometre zone done by the end of this year.

### 2:20 Support for Youths Transitioning Out of Care

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, according to the Children's Services website at least two former foster children have died in the past 11

days. We have learned as well that there may actually be three deaths and that all came as a result of suicide. In light of these tragedies I rise in this House with the hope of convincing this Premier and the Children's Services minister to reverse their heartless cuts to the support and financial assistance agreements program that support these young people. To the Minister: what can you tell us about these tragic deaths, and will you now reconsider the cuts to these vital supports?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Any time a young person in our province dies, it is a tragedy, and my heart goes out to their families. We post all deaths publicly and are committed to being as transparent as we can, although the member opposite would know that I can't speak to specific cases. I rely on the great work being done by the office of the Child and Youth Advocate to point out where we can make continuous shifts in policy and practice to better support children and youth in care in our province, and a large part of that is working to identify ways we can work with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to better support young people who have gone through such trauma.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that long-time advocate and outreach worker Wallis Kendal said today that this government is playing Russian roulette with the lives of these former foster children by cutting their age of eligibility for supports from 24 to 22 and given that the Premier can somehow find \$4.7 billion to hand over to big corporations but is turning his back on young adults attempting to get their lives on track, once again to the Premier or the minister: will you please reverse the cuts to supports for these young people?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Currently part of the work that our ministry is undertaking is reviewing all support and financial assistance agreements. Ultimately, a number of these young people past the age of 22 choose to end their connection with the Ministry of Children's Services. A number of these young people between the ages of 22 and 24 are making a transition into other lifelong adult supports through government. We are working as the Ministry of Children's Services along with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to ensure that at whatever age those young people transition, it is seamless.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a number of the young people who recently lost their lives were actually above the age of 22 and on the support and financial assistance agreements and given that the Child and Youth Advocate released a report today on six young people transitioning out of government care who died in 2018 and given that the advocate in response to these deaths made recommendations to strengthen supports such as safe housing and staff training and given that it's clear the advocate believes that the age of eligibility should remain at 24 and that these people need more supports, not less, to the Premier and the minister. The budget hasn't passed yet. I'm begging you. Will you reverse the cuts to supports for these young ...

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, we are reviewing these programs and identifying where there are ways where policy and practice can shift to better support these transitions into adulthood. The reality is that oftentimes some of the most important supports are the social and emotional supports for these young adults as they transition into adulthood. We are going to continue to fund mentoring. We have increased the advancing futures program by a million dollars. This is a program that doesn't exist anywhere else in Canada. We are going to continue to support these young people as they transition out of the child intervention system.

#### **Seniors Advocate Health Advocate Appointment**

**Ms Sigurdson:** "What steps will this new government take to answer the Wildrose call to create an independent advocate for our seniors?" That was the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I did answer his call and appointed a dedicated advocate for seniors. That member must be crushed to learn that his own UCP government is undoing that and merging the job into the Health Advocate. Did the minister of seniors explain her decision to this member before she went back to the failed PC-era plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the current Seniors Advocate for her service to seniors and their families and wish her well as she returns to teaching, her academic career. The current office of the Seniors Advocate will continue to support Albertans until December 24. Health and Seniors and Housing staff will develop a transitional plan for continued service to Alberta's seniors, their families, and service providers who are asking for information and referrals on issues of concern.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the Health Advocate is also taking on a third job, the Mental Health Patient Advocate, and given that seniors will now have at best a third of the advocacy that they got under our government, again to the minister: why do you have money for private planes, energy war rooms, and five-star London hotels but no money for seniors?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The service currently provided by the office of the Seniors Advocate will continue. Funding for the office of the Seniors Advocate staff will be transferred from Seniors and Housing to Health, and a combined office can address concerns more efficiently given that in 2018-19 almost one-third of inquiries were health related.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that this government is already deep into PC-style patronage appointments for their cronies, donors, and supporters and given that the appointment of former PC Party and United Conservative Party executive director Janice Harrington to be the advocate for health, mental health, and now seniors is perhaps the greasiest patronage appointment of them all, did the minister look for a qualified person at all, or is she content to reward her partisan friends at seniors' expense?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has risen.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were pleased to appoint Janice Harrington as our new Health Advocate. She is highly qualified and will serve Albertans well. With an extensive background in leading organizations through rapid transformation and change, Janice is uniquely qualified to advocate on behalf of

Albertans for positive health and mental health outcomes. [interjections] The incumbent Seniors Advocate as well will be returning to her job at the University of Alberta. A combined office will result in annualized savings of close to half a million dollars, and this matters at a time when we must be very mindful of the costs. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Camrose has a question.

### **Rural Crime, Biosecurity, and Property Rights**

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Camrose recently hosted the Minister of Justice on his tour around the province to discuss rural crime. There was an outcry from the community about the heinous crimes that had been committed against them in rural Alberta. Recently, while at the RCMP Regimental Ball in Viking, members and constituents shared with me their frustration regarding dropped charges after an extensive effort to catch criminals. To the Minister of Justice: what proactive initiative is our government taking to correct this injustice?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Our prosecutors simply have too high of a caseload. That's why I'm proud that today we announced the fact that we're doubling our articling class of law students for the next year, 2020. We will be increasing it by 150 per cent in 2021. This will give us a pipeline of young students and Albertans to come and be part of Alberta Justice. We're also encouraging many of them to take up positions in rural Alberta. Once a lawyer sets up roots in a community, we will be making sure that those members also build relationships in the community, and then they will have a higher likelihood of staying.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that protesters are causing cross-contamination by trespassing from regular farmland onto organic farmland, a massive issue in my constituency, and given our government's recent announcements about rural crime and given the difficulty in being recognized as an organic farm and given our government's commitment to protecting farmers and their property, to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: what is our government's plan to protect the biosecurity of Alberta's environment?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things we heard loud and clear from Albertans is that they want the strongest property rights possible. We've worked with the minister of agriculture to bring forward Bill 27, and that right there is going to provide Albertans with the security they need to know that they have the strongest property rights possible. We're going to make sure that we have fines for people that trespass: \$10,000 for the first instance and up to \$25,000 for a follow-up and also jail time if they repeat. Albertans deserve clarity that we stand with law-abiding Albertans. We stand with our farmers. They do amazing work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given the importance of maintaining accreditation to many of the

local organic farmers in my constituency and given the risk that trespassers pose via the risk of cross-contamination and given there seems to be no ability for farmers to protect their property under current legislation and given our government's promise to take action in regard to the protection of rural property rights, can the minister please elaborate on what kinds of changes are being considered for the protection of my constituents and other law-abiding Albertans?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition to making sure we have the strongest property rights possible, we're also providing enhanced powers to our sheriffs, our fish and wildlife officers, and also our commercial vehicle officers. That's what we're calling our RAPID force, an additional 400 law enforcement boots, with enhanced powers, on the ground to help keep law-abiding Albertans safe. We heard this loud and clear. We consulted with Albertans, and we've taken action based on their recommendations. This isn't done. We're not spiking the football. These are concrete steps that we're taking. It's the beginning of helping to right the wrongs of rural Albertans. Many of these people have felt like they haven't had a voice for years. They have a voice now in this government.

### **Speaker's Ruling Supplementary Questions**

**The Speaker:** I might just provide a cautionary note to private members who are asking questions. Traditionally the lead question and two supplementals all connect. I think I've provided significant latitude in the past. Perhaps today that latitude has been stretched beyond the point of what a supplementary question is. We can do better in the future.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### **Government Photography Contract**

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, communications and public engagement is an agency within Treasury Board and Finance. It's supposed to be nonpartisan. It's supposed to follow government rules for competitive bids for contracts, but in July a small Calgary company called Vek Labs got a \$73,000 sole-source contract for "photography and video services." Why did the Minister of Finance approve this lucrative sole-source contract for Vek Labs?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, our government was elected to bring fiscal responsibility to this province. We've delivered a budget that will do just that. We're confident that our four-year fiscal plan is the plan that Albertans elected us on. We will deliver on that plan. Careful procurement is very important to us and part of our plan going forward. We will look into the member's question.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that I might have a partial answer for the minister, Mr. Speaker, and given that the young man who owns Vek Labs is the son of a generous UCP donor, given that Vek Labs made several campaign videos for the UCP on the party side, including a short documentary film about the Premier visiting his hometown that was shown at the UCP convention in February, isn't it true that the Finance minister handed a \$73,000 no-bid contract to this company because of its close partisan ties to the UCP and to the Premier himself?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy of the other side needs to stop. Let's take a tour down NDP lane, this time in advanced education. Athabasca University: we have a donor here of \$3,000 to the NDP, appointed to the board; \$4,000 donation to the NDP, appointed to the board; \$3,000 donor to the NDP, appointed to the board. Stop the hypocrisy.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that, Mr. Speaker, if the Justice minister wants to attack the judiciary, he should just come out and say so, but given that the film industry is reeling from this government cancelling their tax credits in order to pay for the Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout, given that Alberta's hard-working and talented filmmakers and videographers should have been able to put in a competitive bid for that government contract, to the Minister of Finance: please explain to Albertans why this government has returned to Tory-land tactics and reserved fat, no-bid contracts for donors and friends.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this is just more fear and smear from the Official Opposition. You want to talk about appointments. That member was the environment minister for an NDP government who appointed Tzeporah Berman to an official panel associated with the oil sands, a person who is dedicated to stopping the entire energy industry. We will not be lectured by that side of the House when it comes to appointments. We will not tolerate the fear and smear over and over from the NDP. This is why Albertans fired them seven months ago.

### Bill 207

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker, a few days ago four UCP MLAs stood with our caucus to vote down the repugnant Bill 207 in committee. This bill posed a real threat to the health care of many Albertans, so I thank those UCP MLAs for standing up to protect Albertans' access to reproductive health services and medical assistance in dying. A few ministers also declared their opposition, including the minister responsible for status of women, but she did so without mentioning women's reproductive rights, abortion, or LGBTQ2S-plus rights. Will she now acknowledge that Bill 207 was an attack on those rights?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Bill 207 was redundant and unnecessary, and that is why I did not vote for it.

**Member Irwin:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that a majority of UCP MLAs on the committee voted to uphold the rights of Albertans to access abortion and other reproductive health services, but given that the MLA for Cardston-Siksika did vote in favour of this terrible bill and that during debate he even tried to compare reproductive health to eugenics – shameful – will the Minister of Health reject the shocking and hurtful statement from the MLA and call for him to publicly apologize?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why I'm so proud to be part of this government is that we committed to being able to respect the private members' process of this place and respect free votes. Albertans were clear to us that they wanted their MLAs to be able to have free votes when it comes to private members' business before this House. I'm proud of this government for enshrining that within the standing orders of this Legislature. We will continue to stand up for the right of each individual

member of this place to be able to exercise their conscience when it comes to private members' business because that's what we promised Albertans. Promise made, promise kept.

**Member Irwin:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that many members of the UCP caucus relied on support from antichoice groups like RightNow and The Wilberforce Project and given the Premier's long-standing opposition to abortion, including statements in the past comparing it to slavery, and given that voting against Bill 207 could maybe indicate a potential fresh start for this government on women's rights, will the Premier confirm that he himself will vote against any further attempts from his colleagues to limit reproductive rights?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I'm very honoured to be part of a very diverse caucus. It's a huge privilege to be able to debate in this House, but I will not, nor will anybody else on this front bench, be commenting on potential legislation that has not crossed our desks yet.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Postsecondary Education System

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's postsecondary system is broken. Costs are through the roof on spending per student. Alberta spends nearly double on administration than Ontario and B.C., and despite all this spending, our province underperforms in participation and completion. Albertans are not graduating and not getting jobs. To the Minister of Advanced Education: just how serious is this situation, and how does this spending impact services to students such as those at Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is absolutely correct. The situation that we've inherited is quite problematic and quite dire, and we are absolutely intent on addressing the real systemic problems with the system. To give you some perspective, over the last 15 years enrolment in our postsecondary system has increased by 21 per cent. However, funding to our postsecondary institutions has increased by 106 per cent. What's more troubling is the amount that we spend on administration. We spend \$8,000 per student on administration here in the province of Alberta. B.C. does it for \$4,000 and Ontario for \$5,000. We believe we can do better.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given the commitment for a funding model change and given the necessity of finding a solution for tuition that makes sense for students and for the public purse, can the minister elaborate on how the current funding method contributed to this fiscal situation and how a new funding model will correct it while ensuring access to services is not inhibited for students like the ones who choose to study in Lethbridge?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again the member is correct. The current funding mechanism that we have for our

postsecondary education system is not working. There's a wide discrepancy between the amount that's distributed per student – for example, there are some institutions where the amount of funding is upwards of \$30,000 per student, and in other places much less – so we are really looking at addressing this situation. We'll be moving forward, implementing a new funding model that will help us be more diligent with our tax dollars.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Given that Alberta has a long-standing spending problem that spans multiple governments and given our government's commitment to sort our fiscal situation out, to the same minister: will reform in our postsecondary system give institutions more flexibility to generate their own revenue, while maintaining consumer protection for students, in order to create a system that is more innovative in its delivery of postsecondary education and more independent from relying on taxpayers?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction will be quite happy. We're looking at taking a series of different approaches to reduce red tape in our postsecondary institutions so that they can be free to innovate and compete and continue to generate high-quality research and, by the same token, be innovative in their revenue generation, engage in commercial activities without having to get drawn down in red tape.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

#### Bangladesh

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, on October 7, 2019, Abrar Fahad, a 21-year-old student at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, was brutally murdered for taking a stand on Bangladesh's interests through a social media post. His attackers were members of the student wing of the ruling party. Before perishing, he was tortured for seven hours. Abrar's right to free speech was upheld by the Bangladeshi Constitution and the universal declaration of human rights, but this right and Abrar's life were still undermined and coldly discarded by his assassins.

That anyone should fall victim to crime or fear for their safety for exercising their fundamental human rights is absolutely unacceptable. In solidarity with the Justice for Abrar movement, Bangladeshi community members gathered on the steps of this very Legislature yesterday to form a human chain and demand that justice be served, and I was proud to stand with them. At their event they stated that the systemic use of violence to suppress free speech is unfortunately commonplace in Bangladesh and is often sanctioned by political doctrine. The tragedy that befell Abrar Fahad is not an isolated incident.

In solidarity with them I bring this injustice to the attention of the Alberta Legislature to heighten public awareness of human rights violations in Bangladesh and to urge not only us but the Canadian government as well to take action in addressing this internationally. Abrar Fahad was a young student with a promising future who meant only to think critically and to express his opinion. For this, he lost his life. By raising our voices against this oppression and encouraging others to do the same, we aim to inspire and lay the foundation for a brighter future in which civil discourse and exchange replace senseless violence and conflict.

Free speech is likewise protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and to have this value violated in one country

is to have it violated in all. The Bangladeshi community believes that it is imperative that we all stand united in calling for accountability and prompt action, united in calling for principles for which we stand, and that the perpetrators of this heinous crime be brought to justice.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

#### Scleroderma

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Scleroderma: hard word, harder disease. Affecting approximately 1,700 Albertans, scleroderma is a rare, chronic, multisymptom autoimmune disease that affects the body's connective tissue. In scleroderma, cells start making collagen as if there was an injury that needs repair. The cells do not turn off as they should and end up making too much. The extra collagen in the tissues can prevent the body's organs from functioning normally. In simple terms, the disease creates a thickening and hardening both internally and externally. It's like your organs are slowly turning to stone. The cause of scleroderma is unknown, and currently there is no cure.

Mr. Speaker, there are treatments that can help slow the process down and improve the quality and quantity of life for persons affected by the disease, but these can be costly or difficult to access. Albertans living with this rare and debilitating condition face significant physical and emotional challenges, often resulting in feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and being a burden to others. At first glance those living with scleroderma can seem perfectly healthy, which makes the disabling condition even more challenging. The fatigue alone can be debilitating and misunderstood. Those suffering will face unwitting comments like: yeah, I had a bad sleep last night, too.

But with despair, there is still hope. The scleroderma society of Canada is an organization focused on raising awareness, funds, and support for those with this disease in an effort to find a cure. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the entire team at the scleroderma society of Canada, who joined us last week here at the Legislature. They are terrific leaders in the fight to find a cure for this little-known but disabling disease. In particular, I'd like to thank Maureen Sauvé for sharing so openly her personal and painful journey of living these past 18 years with scleroderma. Currently there is no co-ordination of support groups in Alberta, and the society is working to change that. To those in Alberta living with this debilitating condition: they want you to know that you are not alone.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I, too, would like to thank the team for scleroderma. I've been practising the word all weekend.

#### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of Government Motion 38. Shall I read it into the record?

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to take all steps necessary to immediately introduce emergency legislation to compel Canadian National Railway employees to return to work in order to prevent the potentially devastating impact of a strike on not just Alberta's economy but Canada's economy as a whole.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert is rising.



**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have copies of some of the correspondence that I've received at our constituency office from teachers in St. Albert talking about the pressures of classroom sizes. I'd like to table those as well as an article from Stanford University entitled *Climate Change on Pace to Occur 10 Times Faster than Any Change Recorded in Past 65 Million Years*, Stanford Scientists Say. I referred to it in my member's statement today.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? Someone circle the calendar.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Dreeshen, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, pursuant to the Farm Implement Act the Farmers' Advocate Office annual report 2018-19.

On behalf of the hon. Mrs. Sawhney, Minister of Community and Social Services, pursuant to the Protection Against Family Violence Act the Family Violence Death Review Committee 2018-2019 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at *Ordres du jour*.

### Orders of the Day

#### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 204 Election Recall Act

[Debate adjourned November 18: Mr. Bilous speaking]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to join in the debate this afternoon? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me this afternoon to be able to speak to Bill 204, the Election Recall Act. As you're probably aware, I was a part of the committee that initially reviewed this bill. We, of course, decided to send this back to the House so that we get a chance to talk about this bill today. At this moment I'm not in a position that I would be able to support the bill. However, if there were some changes that were made around this bill, I might have the opportunity to take a second look and possibly put my support behind it.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Of the concerns I have, one of the biggest ones, of course, is language. We see some language in here, and just based on some of the debates that we've had in this House and the bills that we've seen passed, including such things as Bill 22, where we seem to have had a bit of a discussion around what the word "may" entails and how, apparently, according to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that's interchangeable with the words "will" and "shall" – keeping that kind of thing in mind, I have some concerns around Bill 204 and around how some of the wording may play out.

Some questions that I think I might have, moving forward, would be around corporate and union donations. Certainly, when we look at the recall act, it excludes those within it, but should the government of the day decide to repeal those kinds of things, how would that, then, affect this recall act?

2:50

I think that when you're looking at the topic of recalling an MLA, certainly I think that is a situation that exists solely between the constituents of that MLA and, of course, themselves. When I start seeing, potentially, some loopholes here around third-party advertisers getting involved, I get a little bit concerned around that, Mr. Speaker. So I would like to see some language that maybe inhibits third-party advertisers to participate. Again, this should be between the constituents and the MLA. I mean, if they're that angry as to recall the MLA for whatever their actions may or even may not be, then certainly I don't think third-party advertisers need to be involved in that sort of thing.

We've seen some things around some of the timelines, things like that, and some of the discussion that ensued around maybe some of the fees. Obviously, we're going to have to have a bit of a deeper debate, going forward, on that.

I didn't want my comments to go too long here. I just wanted the opportunity to get up and point out some things that I would like to see potentially adjusted and some further debates around some of the other language. Like I said, when I'm seeing things like the Election Commissioner being terminated, around that language, and then not being rehired immediately – you know, the word "may" is supposed to now mean the same as "will" and "shall," and that certainly doesn't seem to be the case – then I would be very, very concerned, potentially, around some of the language that's contained in 204.

So at the moment I'm not prepared to support this moving forward, but I do look forward to maybe more debate further on, including in Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other hon. members looking to join debate?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon to close debate.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and speak to Bill 204, the Election Recall Act. It's my belief that this bill will strengthen Alberta's democracy by enabling Albertans to recall an elected official should the need arise. The right of recall, I believe, helps to ensure that a member of the Legislature stays truly accountable to their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, this important piece of legislation is crucial for keeping our democracy thriving and our members truly serving the needs of Albertans. By definition we are a representative democracy, and that's the very core of what we are called to do, to represent. That means that we must embody the needs of our constituents.

Trying to ensure that representatives actually represent their constituents has a long history in Alberta. Sir Frederick Haultain, Premier of the North-West Territories, successfully lobbied for provincial status but was not successful in creating a Legislature where party politics and party solidarity would not dominate the Legislature.

Recall was introduced to me when I became a member of the Reform Party. This party espoused a grassroots vision of democracy that spoke to myself and to thousands of Albertans and Canadians.

Recall should not be easy, but allowing for recall brings the benefits of accountability to the electorate and provides a positive way forward for the electorate when it realizes that their representative must be replaced. This Election Recall Act is an attempt to rebalance our representative system of democracy so that the people of Alberta will be able to hold the MLA accountable

when they stray too far from their primary responsibility of representing their constituents.

The use of recall legislation is a just and proper tool to hold those elected officials accountable for their actions, and it reminds everyone in their party that individual MLAs are ultimately accountable to their electorate. Recall legislation exists in over a dozen countries, including the United Kingdom, and most states in the United States have recall legislation, but B.C. is the only other Canadian jurisdiction to have recall legislation in place. B.C. adopted the Recall Initiative Act in 1995. Mr. Speaker, recall should not be easy, and it does need to be crafted in such a way as to reduce the likelihood of recall for partisan reasons.

In B.C. 26 recall petitions have been requested, with only six petitions returning to the Chief Electoral Officer within the 60 days and only one petition having achieved the threshold for recall. However, the MLA in question resigned office before the recall petition came into effect. We can conclude from the example of B.C. that recalling an elected member has not been easy to achieve, and therefore it has not resulted in partisan politics disrupting an MLA's four-year term.

Secondly, B.C.'s recall history demonstrates that the recall legislation, in one sense, is a last resort to be used when an elected representative has lost their way and is no longer representing the high standards of elected office.

Private member's Bill 204, the Election Recall Act, is based on the thresholds of the B.C. legislation. It will require a petition numbering more than 40 per cent of the total number of electors that appeared on the post polling day list of electors from the last general election, and it has to be gathered within 60 days. Only those currently eligible to vote within the riding can sign the petition, and as done in B.C., there will also be a buffer before a recall petition can be started. Constituents will have to allow their elected MLA the chance to perform their duties; therefore, no petition can be started until 18 months following the election. In addition, no petition can be started within six months of the beginning of an election window, and only one petition can happen at a time.

Five hundred dollars will be required as a fee to initiate a recall, which will be refundable upon filing the financial statements, and donation limits are set to \$4,000 a person. Lastly, unexpended funds must be given to a charity to prevent political parties from using recall to pad their bank accounts.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 204, the Election Recall Act, will add one more needed piece of accountability into our system of democracy.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a second time]

### **Bill 206**

#### **Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019**

**The Acting Speaker:** I believe that the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has the call. Should the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod wish to move second reading on Bill 206, he has the call.

**Mr. Reid:** Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today on my private member's bill, Bill 206, the Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019.

Over the years I have worked through various professions and for various companies, and I understand the reality of what happens in the workplace. One of my favourite places that I've worked and one of my favourite jobs was with a great Alberta company, WestJet.

WestJet prides itself on being a company that embraces and works hard on what we called our culture of safety. There are inherent risks in working in the airline industry, and the company worked very hard, right from the CEO all the way down, to ensure that a culture of safety was not only maintained but continued to be developed day after day.

However, even in the midst of those cases, I met many colleagues who had been injured in the line of work. Having the right mindset, having the right procedures, and having the right type of equipment all worked to reduce workplace accidents, but we also realized that sometimes they just are inevitable, and it happens. I've heard the tragedy of lives that were tragically changed by a simple overlooking of safety issues or just the fact that there are hazards that are present in almost every job in our society.

My understanding of workplace accidents grew more after I became a small-business owner and was responsible myself for developing that very same type of culture of safety in our workplace. We worked with hot ovens, sharp knives, hot beverages. We worked with a mix of young and old in a very fast-paced environment. Again, as much as we worked hard to make sure that accidents did not occur, sometimes they were unavoidable. Fortunately, they often tended to be minor burns, minor cuts, but sometimes slips and falls also happened as well.

3:00

As a small-business owner I had a great interest in making sure that my staff were well looked after. As a small-business man in Alberta we work very hard alongside those that are employees of our companies, and they become like family. I know we often had conversations with folks in the workplace when something would happen. We'd say: we need to make sure we do an incident report; we want to have the paperwork in place just in case this isn't as simple as we think. I wanted them to be able to make sure that they were compensated should the injury take them out of the workplace for a while.

As a business owner we pay our dues to WCB, and our expectation was that when our employees needed those benefits, those would be paid out to them in a timely manner. As I came into this role, I learned that that's not always the case for all workers in Alberta, and I think that's a tragedy. I was really excited to be able to bring forward this piece of legislation, which was actually started by a predecessor in the previous session, to really ensure that workers in Alberta that are injured in the workplace are properly taken care of. Those of us that run and own small businesses know that workers are our greatest asset, and to make sure that they and their families are taken care of well should be important to all of us.

The goal of my legislation is simple. It's to ensure that those who are forced to take a leave of absence because of a workplace injury can continue to put food on the table for them and their families. Difficulty in receiving money duly owed by a public agency should not mean a missed mortgage or credit card payment. Again, as a business owner I saw this all too often, employees who had missed time and were left abandoned by a system that we as business owners pay into for their protection. As a result, employees can feel pressured to return to work before they are really healthy enough to do so or will take out loans or put on extra credit card debt just to keep their heads above water.

There is an emotional toll on families who don't know where their next paycheque is coming from. We have seen that far too clearly over the last number of years as families struggle to make ends meet. Whether through the rapidly expanding opioid crisis in Alberta or increasing rates of suicide and depression, the last couple of years have demonstrated the large effect that economic issues can have on social issues. This bill does not claim that it will reverse

these issues en masse in any way, but if we can prevent even one family from facing that kind of economic uncertainty, the kind of uncertainty that breeds these issues, then it's worth it.

You may or may not be aware that there are five steps to any WCB claim. Hopefully, no one in this House has had to go through those procedures, but if you have, let me just bring you up to date. First, you need to report your injury. Next, your claim is classified as either a lost-time or no-time-lost claim. The third step is where my bill starts to have some effect. At the third stage a decision is made on whether a claim will be accepted, denied, or needs further medical investigation. If a claim is denied, an appeal can be made through the Appeals Commission. The Appeals Commission, should they reverse the decision of the WCB, then hands the decision back down to WCB, who is forced to comply. The Alberta Workers' Compensation Act, the legislation which oversees the Workers' Compensation Board, already puts a 30-day deadline on WCB to implement a decision of the Appeals Commission.

While a claimant could go to the courts already, Bill 206 reaffirms the rights of the claimant to go to the Court of Queen's Bench and ask for a court order directing the WCB to pay the due compensation immediately. This common-sense solution that prevents greater losses for families is a small change that I believe can have a large positive impact. The bill also grants claimants the ability to seek remuneration for legal costs related to any appeal made under section 13.3(2). This allows workers to proceed with a greater level of certainty. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is a very small change.

Bill 206 simply addresses a gap in the legislation that can and should be addressed. Chances are it will only affect a handful of decisions each year, but the scale of the change doesn't determine the importance of this legislation. Bill 206, should it pass, ensures that a family going through what is already a tough stretch of time has a little bit more stability.

Mr. Speaker, my final point is about accountability. I, like many on this side of the Assembly, ran on bringing accountability back to government, and this is one way we can do that. I believe that both of these changes can do much good for families going through trying times. Albertans who have been injured at work deserve to have peace of mind and know that they will be compensated on time. While small, I believe this change has potential to have wide-ranging positive impacts around the province.

I'd like to thank you all for your debate, and I'd like to thank all members for the support that they've expressed for this bill. I hope that we will see support from both sides of this House when we go to vote today.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Sorry. To the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod: I just want it to be clear for *Hansard* because I'm not sure that I heard it. Just to be clear, you are moving second reading of Bill 206. If you could just say yes.

**Mr. Reid:** I am moving second reading of Bill 206.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members looking to join in this debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has a thought.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to be able to rise in support of Bill 206. Of course, I would highly encourage all members of this House to support this as well, but I think we should talk a little bit about what we're seeing here with this. With the Member for Livingstone-Macleod bringing this forward on behalf of some constituents that, unfortunately, had a

problem with WCB – my background being in labour, I'm always about the front-line worker. It's very, very, I guess, disappointing when I hear cases like this happen and constituents are not actually able to get a judgment that was due to them. I mean, when WCB was originally created, it was meant as a safety net for workers and, to some degree, as a safety net for businesses as well when workers get injured. We've heard that sometimes no matter what you do, the odd accident occurs. Thankfully, most of the time, hopefully, it's a cut finger, maybe a small sprain, something, you know, not too serious. But when there are serious injuries, that needs to be there to take the burden off workers while they're away from work and, of course, to be able to take the burden off employers as well. I mean, that's what they pay their premiums for.

I guess when I'm looking at this bill, as somebody who sat on not only my workplace health and safety committee – I sat on my union's provincial health and safety committee – I see a very genuine commitment from the Member for Livingstone-Macleod. You had talked about your time at WestJet. I do, of course, know that they place very high standards on their safety, trying to reduce the risk at the work site. I don't know if you remember, Mr. Speaker, on some other pieces of legislation where I'd be talking about how we're doing one thing over here, yet we're making decisions over here which may be a little bit counterproductive to that. So when I do see the government benches bringing in a government motion around legislating back to work for CN workers, promoting that, who are currently out on strike because of safety concerns, just like the folks from WestJet that work in a very, very dangerous situation – I mean, I don't know if I'd be willing to walk around on a tarmac with active aircraft driving around on it, but, you know, our CN workers are actively walking around with trains moving around that, quite honestly, just like a jet engine on a plane, could kill them, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate: such a great piece of legislation coming forward to help workers, yet some decisions by the government are being counterproductive to that.

I also noticed the one comment you made around how workers are our greatest asset, and I couldn't agree more with that statement. But then I see, unfortunately, again, decisions. You know, we're taking away overtime pay potentially to workers who earned it deservedly. We're potentially pulling back on holiday pay, which is counterproductive to our greatest assets to businesses. Again, in my time back in labour, your business probably would have been one of the ones that I would have promoted as the way to do it. You were the example of how well you looked after your employees.

3:10

You'd also mentioned around accountability. Again, a great piece of legislation, you know, talking about how we need to be accountable to our workers. Decisions around, you know, firing the Election Commissioner potentially removes that kind of accountability. So in a way I really feel for the Member for Livingstone-Macleod, who has these types of legislation pieces coming forward, which is counterproductive to the spirit in which he is bringing this legislation forward.

You know, when we talk about standing up for ordinary working Albertans, making sure they're protected, we see \$4.7 billion corporate handouts for companies like Walmart. Again, a little bit counterproductive. Of course, we heard a little bit earlier, you know, around that figure. I guess I'll just remind everybody that it's on page 144 of the budget.

I think that when we're crafting legislation, Mr. Speaker, we always have to look at how workers fit into that because Alberta workers build this province – they're currently building it – and I think government needs to do more to respect that. Bill 206

certainly, absolutely does that. It's unfortunate that we actually have to enshrine in legislation that they even have to go to court at all. It should just absolutely happen, especially when they get a judgment in their favour. But to just simply delay it because that just seems to be the easiest thing to do – again, WCB was never meant as an adversarial system. It was supposed to be there as a safety net for workers that get injured.

I just struggle, Mr. Speaker. Seeing such a great piece of legislation brought forward like this to close an unfortunate loophole, again, sometimes it takes something to happen before we realize that there might be a little bit of a hole that needs to be plugged up. But I'm seeing pieces of legislation that are just completely counterproductive to this: a youth minimum wage for people just because they're not 18 years old. That's very counterproductive to workers. You know, we see other things like maybe potentially studying the minimum wage as a whole and considering bringing back a liquor server wage, which is, again, counterproductive to the well-being of workers here in the province of Alberta, which, of course, primarily will affect women in that industry. Again, I can't commend, you know, this legislation enough around standing up for workers, but I see legislation that's counterproductive to that, which is trying to actually drag them down and bring them backwards.

I know there'll be others that want to get up and share their support for this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and I do look forward to getting the chance to talk about this more later on. I will support this legislation wholeheartedly, and I would certainly encourage all members of this Assembly to support this legislation as well.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright has risen to speak.

**Mr. Rowsell:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise to discuss Bill 206, presented by my friend and colleague from Livingstone-Macleod. This legislation will ensure that Albertans who have been through the rigorous process of appealing a wrongfully refused Workers' Compensation Board claim are not put under further stress by being subject to additional costs when asking the Court of Queen's Bench for assistance in receiving the compensation. In these cases the individuals undergoing the stressful process have already been subject to workplace injury, undergone the disappointment of their claim being refused prior to undergoing the process of appealing that claim. At the very least I think it's only proper for WCB to provide them with the compensation they are owed within 30 days of being advised to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the injured person is not alone in being penalized in this situation. Clearly, this process is unfair and discouraging to the injured worker, but the process can also put strain on the employers. This lengthy appeal process and the uncertainty, whether the WCB will provide compensation within the 30-day time frame granted, can also leave employers unsure about the future of their employees, and in the cases involving small businesses with a few employees, they may be left unsure about the future viability of their business. While the legislation, Bill 206, would help to provide the certainty that business owners and employers need, the real purpose of the legislation is to protect the injured individuals, individuals whose families are relying on them. These people have been working hard for their families, and in some cases the appeal process has left them without resources to support their families.

At this point their next course of action is to appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench for a court order. The proposed legislation would

ensure that workers who follow through with this process would be remunerated for their legal costs following obtaining an order. If this legislation is passed, my hope would be that the WCB would manage to implement more if not all of the advised compensations within a 30-day time frame. Their incentive will be to avoid being held accountable for additional court costs.

This is a modest proposal. The cost impact of this isn't large as, in truth, there are not many cases brought to the Court of Queen's Bench. But, Mr. Speaker, for the families who do have to take this step, the costs associated are significant. In some cases workers have had to wait for 90 days after the Appeals Commission rendered their decision advising that the claim should be compensated. That's 90 days of potential financial hardship, 90 days of not knowing how and if they're going to pay their bills or perhaps put food on the table. To add insult to injury, literally, they will likely incur additional fees if they choose to pursue a court order. This is unacceptable.

Although this bill is unlikely to affect many of the people here in this Assembly today, we need to stand up for the individuals who at a low ebb find it difficult to stand up for themselves. Accidental injury in the workplace could happen to anyone. No family is prepared for this to occur. The WCB is an important service legislated to protect Albertans sustaining an injury in the course of working to earn a living.

The value of this program must not be taken for granted. The WCB fulfills a valuable social function. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing that the WCB on occasion appears to not meet fully the expectations we place upon them. These people deserve to be dealt with in a timely and fair manner. They do not need financial or bureaucratic issues adding to the physical problems that they're already dealing with.

When I first heard about this situation, I found it hard to comprehend. How is it that a public body like the Workers' Compensation Board, when advised by another public body such as the Appeals Commission that they owe money and should within 30 days pay, is unable to comply? This is a flaw in our bureaucracy which can have a deleterious impact on families.

If we look to our colleagues in Ottawa, the federal government has a similar issue in their Department of Public Services and Procurement. This issue can be summed up in one word, Phoenix. Many have heard about the Phoenix pay system, which has created a poor reputation for itself by persistently paying federal government employees incorrectly, neglecting to distribute pension and vacation pay, and failing on a number of other administrative fronts, impacting negatively on people. Like Phoenix, the current system of appeals deemed successful by the Appeals Commission has failed Albertans. These government agencies are withholding money from hard-working Canadians, releasing it to them at a leisurely pace of their choosing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that neither the employees at the WCB nor those at Phoenix are doing this maliciously. We all experience problems created by system errors, as in the case of Phoenix. However, in this case we're not dealing with a system error. This is something our government can regulate, and I believe we owe it to Albertans to do so.

So, Mr. Speaker, I stand today to invite all colleagues in the House to support my colleague's bill. I invite you to support both the workers and the employers who face difficulty in these rare but nonetheless disappointing circumstances. If this legislation moves forward, my hope is that all deserving workers will be compensated fairly and in a timely manner with the compensation they truly deserve and are entitled to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:20

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any others? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen to speak.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to speak to Bill 206, Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019. Over the last several years the operation of the workers' compensation system and ensuring that there is fair and adequate compensation for injured workers as well as support for an overall sustainable system has been very, very important to me and to the work that was done under the previous government in completing the first comprehensive review of the workers' compensation system in 15 years.

Through that work, the review that was undertaken, to my knowledge there was a very in-depth consultation process where workers were able to come to in-person sessions. As well, we received over 1,700 online submissions. The issue with workers not receiving payments that had been ordered by the Appeals Commission did not make it into the report and into the work that we did. Bill 206 is a bill that I will give my support to. As the member who has moved second reading spoke to, it reaffirms the rights of the claimant, potentially closing a gap here, and adds something that I agree with, which is simply that if an applicant is incurring costs to get the compensation that was ordered for them, there should be a clear opportunity for the courts to award those costs, because the family that is fighting for adequate compensation should not be the ones paying for that fight that they are having.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I think Bill 206 really reinforces, to me, something that I know. Our workers' compensation system is incredibly important. Albertans, both workers and employers, place a very high value on this system, and we've heard that from the speakers who've spoken already today. We know that the WCB covers, when I last looked at the numbers, nearly 2 million workers here in the province and over 160,000 employers. Both workers and employers rely on this system, that was based on a historic compromise to make sure that there's fair and adequate compensation, that should be delivered in a timely way. The timely compensation when there is an appeals award is what Bill 206 ties into.

Now, I do want to emphasize that through the very large consultation that we undertook, we heard many, many times about the vast majority of claims being handled well by the system and usually being resolved within a couple of weeks. But we also know that when claims start to get complicated, when there is something that isn't straightforward, because worker injuries can have multiple factors playing into them, that's when we start to see parts of the system break down. The consequences for workers not getting fair compensation and the consequences for employers who have workers out on injury who are not able to get the rehabilitation they need to get back to work can be quite devastating. It can be very, very life impacting if the WCB system is not assisting people as best as it possibly can. That was one of the reasons why we revised the workers' compensation legislation, the system.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, I was very proud of some of the changes, things like establishing the Fair Practices office to help Albertans navigate, to provide resources and support to workers and employers using the system, addressing part of the concern around how complex WCB can be. Some of those changes were great. I think we were able to identify and resolve some major issues with the system, but the thing that I think is even more important is that we actually put into the Workers' Compensation Act a review of the act, where we will not let 15 years elapse without a thorough

review of something that is so critical to both workers and employers in the system.

Right now in the WCB act it says that on or before February 1, 2021 – so, likely, our minister of labour is already starting to hear about this from the department as they put together timelines and plans for what the next review might look like – the WCB act needs to be reviewed by a panel of experts representative of worker interests and employer interests and then every five years thereafter. This first review, mandated by the legislation, is happening at a little bit of a faster pace because, of course, we want to check in on the system and all of the systems that have been touched by the work that our government did to do things like implement the Fair Practices office; establish the code of rights and conduct; change supports and improve supports for young workers, who can often have very, very negative, life-changing impacts when they incur an injury when they're just starting out in their career; and improve the benefits for surviving spouses and children.

All that said, Mr. Speaker, I think the workers' compensation system is incredibly important to workers and employers. I think that it can and often works very well. When it doesn't, we need to address that because of the huge negative impacts that that has on both workers and their families as well as the employers, who genuinely want to see their workers rehabilitated, supported, and returned to the workplace whenever possible. In Bill 206 the reaffirmation of rights of the claimant – I will be supporting Bill 206, and I hope that through the work mandated by the legislation, this government will undertake to continue to review and improve the workers' compensation system and that this important system will be there to support all of Alberta's workers.

In my opinion, I will just mention, that should include workers who work in farming and agricultural industries. I think that will be something we debate under other pieces of legislation, but in this case I will support Bill 206, this clarification and this amendment act, and will thank the MLA for bringing it forward to make sure that workers are getting the compensation that has been deemed appropriate and ordered for them in a timely way.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to Bill 206.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to join the debate? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has risen to speak.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand in this House today and voice my support for Bill 206, brought forward by the Member for Livingstone-Macleod. Workplace accidents are stressful and difficult to manage regardless of the type of injury or incident. The pain and stress of these incidents often extend far beyond the initial occurrence and can have a lifetime of consequences for those that are injured. The last thing that someone working their way through the workers' compensation process needs to be dealing with is an unnecessarily long and tedious route to receiving the compensation they have proven to need from the WCB. Those that follow the due process, ensure the accuracy and thorough completion of their claim, do not deserve to be additionally hindered by arduous disbursement processing times.

There are several examples we can point to throughout our country of how negatively long disbursement processing times impact individuals and their families. One stands out to me in particular. Not too long ago we witnessed the hardships that the federal government's Phoenix pay system caused for employees paid through that process. Under the Phoenix pay system federal public employees were experiencing delays in pay, overpayment and underpayment, and this wasn't just a select few. It impacted many federal public service workers and negatively impacted their

families in a demonstrable way. Families couldn't put food on the table or keep the power on without a consistent paycheck. In some cases questions of foreclosure and eviction were raised.

We cannot allow space for similar occurrences to happen in our province. Granted, I consider this example to be a worst-case scenario, but the undue stresses of having questions and vague areas when it comes to receiving remuneration are visible here. More than that, it seems fairly obvious to me that an increasing waiting period for compensation would be detrimental to anyone or their family. Getting behind on bills often leaves families in a hole that can take months or even years to climb out of. It is simply not enough to tell those who are waiting for compensation to just keep waiting.

3:30

The rest of the world keeps going if you're not ready for it, Mr. Speaker. It's not like any of us can politely ask the bank to please wait a few more weeks until we get our mortgage payment to them. Albertans who are hurt shouldn't be left in the dark or left hoping for disbursement. This is a process that should be clear and without any guesswork or hope involved. When it comes to remuneration, a few days late is often too late for many, let alone weeks beyond that. The data speaks for itself here. The change proposed in this bill will only affect a handful of individuals as 97 per cent of WCB claims are not appealed and are paid out on time according to what's set out. But those that are not living in this 97 per cent need to be noticed and addressed as well. Of those that appealed their WCB ruling, 67 per cent of decisions made by the Appeals Commission were implemented on time, with those individuals seeing disbursement on schedule.

There is, then, still a relevant proportion of individuals who are not seeing disbursement in the time that they need. We have an opportunity through this bill to become the first jurisdiction to legislate a time limit on when these decisions must be implemented by. This bill is not creating red tape or providing the opportunity for future burdening through the introduction of such a change; instead, it is providing a concrete and viable solution to the issues that injured Albertans face when receiving the remuneration that they are duly entitled to. When an injured worker goes through the tedious appeals process and wins, they have fought for longer than required to justify their disbursement. It doesn't make sense to allow these processes to drag out for an individual to receive what they have proven they are entitled to.

There are many negative assumptions and stereotypes discussed when a worker is injured on the job and must go to WCB for help. The system isn't meant to be adversarial and isn't meant to be an added stress on workers who are already facing struggles from their injuries that may likely impact their careers and their lives. It is wholly unfortunate that when these Albertans are needing aid, they are meeting roadblocks and red tape instead. These are Albertans who have fought and proven that they require more assistance than initially assessed. For many, filing a WCB claim is a first step in a long journey of healing and reintegration. When injured in the workplace, there is enough stress and panic inherent in these incidents. We do not need to add to these stressors by allowing their compensation to be an unpredictable variable.

Therefore, I am proud to speak in support of this bill. I urge my colleagues to consider supporting it as well as it is one piece of holding WCB to account as we set a new standard of excellence. We have an opportunity to trail-blaze in this area and help this small sector of injured Albertans who need our assistance the most when navigating through this process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, are there any wishing to speak on this matter? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has risen.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise today on Bill 206, Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019. This bill, as we've heard from some of the speakers today, ensures that the Workers' Compensation Board is accountable to complaints.

I've risen in this House multiple times to stand in support of workers' rights, and I will always stand in support of workers' rights and working people. We've heard from countless working Albertans over the last little while. In particular, I've heard from a lot of folks on some of the previous legislation wherein their rights were being attacked, whether it was pensions, whether it was their constitutional right to collectively bargain, the list goes on. This bill aims to address a challenge, but I would argue that it really doesn't make up for a lot of the attacks that we've seen on workers.

While I support this bill, I find it troubling that this government continues to sort of pick and choose when they're in support of workers. I'm not talking about a small segment of the population; I'm talking about tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of Albertans, the same workers who built and are building this province. Like I said, I've heard from a lot of them, and not just constituents in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood but across the province. Some of my hon. colleagues have risen today and tabled the piles and piles of letters that they've received from teachers and nurses and others. Again, I just really want to point out that I'd ask this government to think about the many conflicting messages that they're sending to workers of this province.

Now, one of the things that I also want to highlight is the fact that I'm so proud of the work that our NDP government did to ensure worker safety. In fact, the previous speaker from our side, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, did an incredible job as our Minister of Labour. One of the things that she did was that she brought in An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, the point of which was to improve workplace health and safety and provide compensation and meaningful support to injured workers and their families. The point in doing so was to ensure that workers would have the same protections as other Canadians. I appreciated them, and I quote what she said. This was in 2017, and I can provide it to *Hansard*. She said:

Every Albertan should be able to go to work and come home healthy and safe at the end of the workday. When they don't, they deserve to have access to the medical and financial supports they need to get healthy, care for their families and return to work.

This bill would better protect hardworking Albertans and provide fair compensation to Albertans injured on the job.

I so much appreciated the work that that hon. member did to ensure worker safety. She didn't just focus on one aspect of workers, such as worker safety; she focused on increasing the minimum wage; she focused on ensuring that workers would be fairly compensated for overtime, for instance.

As I said, while I support this – and I've heard actually from folks in my own constituency about their concerns around WCB, and we know that there are a number of stories that have come forward about concerns around workers' compensation – I just wanted to get it on the record that I really want to urge this government to think about the message they're sending to Alberta's workers: while on one hand we want to support their health and safety, on the other hand we're attacking pensions; we're decreasing the minimum wage, cutting overtime. We're trying to bring in American-style labour laws to Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to this matter? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has decided to rise.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 206, Workers' Compensation Act (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019. Just to sort of echo some of the comments of my colleagues, it's my understanding that the bill ensures that WCB is accountable to complainants. Of course, I will always stand in support of workers' rights, as will my colleagues.

I think we can expand that a little bit to say that we'll always stand in support of ordinary working people. Although I do appreciate that this particular bill looks at perhaps a weakness in the system or a piece of the system that really has the potential to harm people in terms of their well-being and their family's well-being – you know, I guess that's the point of legislation like this: when you find loopholes or difficulties, you fix them through legislation when you have the ability to do so.

While I appreciate this effort and I appreciate that it is important to deal with the issues that the member opposite has identified through his constituency work or his outreach, I think it's really important to back up a little bit and look at the larger problem. Unfortunately, some people don't get to this place and won't be able to use this piece of legislation. I think that it's really disingenuous, I guess, for me to even talk about this and say why it's a good idea when you back up and look at the larger problem around worker safety and around WCB.

3:40

Of course, like most of us do in this place, I think that we use the lens of what is familiar to us to try to understand sort of the implications of legislation or the implications of legislation that's missing or pieces that are missing, so I'm going to use the lens of disability workers. I would like to say that it is one thing to protect the rights of people who've been injured and who have gone through due process and have gone through all of the stages that they need to, but it's quite another to not do your part to prevent these problems from happening. I'm actually a firm believer in prevention. Certainly, you need to have the safeties in place after the fact, but I'm a firm believer in prevention in that if we can prevent some of these things from happening, perhaps one day we won't need any kind of legislation like this. Who knows?

I did want to talk about disability workers. I think that it's important for the government to understand that some of the things they've done in the very short time that they've been in power do have the ability to harm workers. They might not harm them this week, but there is a potential for great harm to happen. For those of you that don't know, disability workers are highly underpaid, in my opinion. Actually, I think that they provide one of the most important and vital services to Albertans. They work with young people with disabilities. They work with youth with disabilities. And by disabilities I don't just mean developmental disabilities or somebody with, let's say, Down syndrome. I'm talking about perhaps someone that's been diagnosed with FASD, somebody who is on the autism spectrum, somebody that might have behavioural difficulties. They provide essential services that allow people to live in their community, to live as independently as possible, hopefully to go on to postsecondary education and inclusive employment. The problem is that when you erode the funding or the support for these particular workers, if you erode, let's say, the minimum wage of these workers or you erode the earning capacity around overtime of these workers or if you cut funding to individual contracts for these workers, you create an environment that is actually quite dangerous.

I'm sure that most of you know or have heard of – I'm sure it's been in the news. Actually, there's one that's been in the news quite recently of a woman who was supporting somebody with quite challenging behaviours. And I'd like to add a note that during my time as a disability worker I supported a number of people with very, very complex disabilities who perhaps had the ability to be aggressive. But when you properly train staff and you train them around safety and you train them around how to de-escalate a nonviolent crisis intervention – of course, you have to train them around first aid as well. But when you train people properly, you put in the time and put in the money to train people properly, and you staff these individuals properly. Sometimes that requires, you know, not having just one person there with them. When you train disability workers properly, you allow them to maybe focus on one job.

You may not know this, but a lot of community disability workers have to work more than one job to be able to support their family. So very often you will have somebody show up for a shift who has already done maybe an overnight shift that was supposed to be a sleep shift, but they were unable to sleep because somebody that they were supporting was having difficulty.

You can see that all of these things are risk factors, and if indeed you want to prevent a WCB claim or an injury or a fatality, these are the things that you have to do. You have to invest in prevention.

For anybody that's interested – I could tell that there are people just riveted right now – there was a case in 2011, I believe, and it was a woman from Camrose. I believe it was Valerie Wolski. Valerie Wolski was supporting a young man who was about 25 years old. It's not unusual to have smaller in stature women supporting larger men. When you're trained properly in nonviolent crisis intervention or you're not tired because you've had to work a couple of jobs or you are not always working alone because you have adequate funding, when these things are in place, tragedies like Valerie's are less likely to happen. As you may know, Valerie was, I believe, strangled and died in her workplace, which is tragic, but what's even more tragic than this is that this isn't the first time that it's happened. What's even more tragic is that it happened again quite recently in Calgary.

There was a fatality inquiry that happened after this, and there were a number of recommendations that really focused on some of the issues that I'm talking about, about the need to prevent these kinds of tragedies from happening.

I guess I continue to go back to this, that I think it is, again, wonderful using a private member's bill to close a loophole that the member identified for people going through that system, that appeal system or that judicial system. I think it's really important to back up and to look at: what are the things that we can do to prevent these injuries and these fatalities from ever happening in every sector, not just the disability sector but in construction, whatever it is?

I'd like to also, you know, focus on another area. I'm sure most members in this place have been inundated by letters from teachers. Let me first say that for the rest of my life I will be eternally grateful for the teachers that participated in raising my children, that taught them at every phase of their life, that actually created a solid foundation for them and, more than anything, inspired confidence and curiosity. I am thankful for the teachers, but I want to talk about these teachers. In the letters that I tabled earlier today, they focused on class size. What the teachers did that was really quite interesting was talk about: what were the risks associated with the increase in class size? Very often those risks focused on not being able to meet the very complex needs of the students that were joining their classrooms.

For example, with a grade 3 class – already difficult if you've ever tried to corral a bunch of grade 3 children – it's challenging.

Add to that mix more children than you anticipated, then add to that mix the loss of an educational assistant, and add to that mix a child or two with very complex learning needs or behavioural needs, and what you do is that you increase the risk of that teacher being injured. I don't just mean a physical injury. You add the risk of a really serious injury. I continue to focus on these examples because it's really important to prevent these things from ever happening. There are absolute savings in terms of cost if you are preventing this: costs to WCB, costs to the system afterwards.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members wishing to join debate on this matter?

Seeing none, should he choose to take it, the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod to close debate.

**Mr. Reid:** I rise and close debate on Bill 206, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a second time]

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 to allow the Assembly to immediately resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 206, Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### 3:50            **Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### **Bill 206 Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise in Committee of the Whole to speak to Bill 206, a private member's bill, Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019. I had the opportunity to hear a little bit about this bill as a member of the private members' bills committee, which heard from the member sponsoring the bill, as well as had the opportunity to receive a technical briefing from the ministry of labour with respect to this bill. That was a great opportunity to hear a little bit more, and I appreciated the words from the sponsor of the bill, the Member for Livingstone-Macleod, who spoke to why he brought it forward.

I'll begin by saying that I support the idea, of course, of us as private members in this House bringing forward the concerns of our constituents. I think that's a very important and most fundamental role that we serve as representatives of our ridings. The opportunity to hear from your constituents is something I know we all take very seriously. We spend a lot of time responding to their concerns and meeting with them. Having this chance to bring forward a bill to speak to concerns that we've heard from our constituents is a very meaningful process. I know that as a new member of this Assembly myself I'm looking forward to the opportunity, when my name gets drawn, for a private member's bill and that I can bring something

forward myself. I certainly am very respectful of the chance that the Member for Livingstone-Macleod took to bring forward his constituents' concerns.

Of course, I will echo the comments from a number of my colleagues to say that, of course, I absolutely support the idea that for workers who are entering into and engaging with the Workers' Compensation Board, that process should be as simplified and easy as possible, particularly because we know that when a worker is injured on the job, it's always a very challenging time, both for the employer and the employee and the employee's family as well. So in resolving those matters and moving forward quickly and seeking to address as timely as possible the injury that the worker suffered – and we know that in seeking supports from appropriate health care professionals to get back to work, because everybody wants to get back to meaningful work, it's in the best interests of all that that happens as quickly as possible – I certainly support the process or any measure that would certainly expedite the workers' compensation process, because we know it is a process that has historically been very challenging for both workers and employers.

I commend the work that my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods did, when she was the former minister of labour, to really make some substantive changes to the Workers' Compensation Act with those objectives in mind, of seeking to protect those employees but also the employers so that everybody can get back to work. I really respected the very meaningful engagement and review that the member did, when she was the minister of labour, to engage with all stakeholders who are invested in the process to find ways to improve that. You know, Bill 30, which was a former bill brought forward by the former minister of labour, went a long way to addressing a lot of those concerns. Certainly, again, I speak to the value of improving the process.

I will say that I do have a bit of a hesitation with Bill 206, only because I take to heart some of the comments from the technical briefing that we received from the ministry of labour when we were in the private members' bills committee. In that briefing the representative from the ministry of labour did go through and talk about what was currently in the Workers' Compensation Act, and in particular he pointed to section 13.3(2) of that act, which speaks to the implementation by the Workers' Compensation Board of a decision from the Appeals Commission. Actually, built right into the existing Workers' Compensation Act in 13.3(2)(b) – and I am a lawyer, so I like to talk about the subclauses of sections – it does actually already prescribe a 30-day timeline for the implementation of a decision of the Appeals Commission. That's currently already in the act, so while I support the bill and what it's bringing forward, I will say that I'm not certain that it is achieving the objective that was originally laid out by the sponsor of the bill, which was to implement Appeals Commission decisions in a timely fashion, only because it appears that the act already has that provision.

In fact, the representative from the ministry of labour gave a great overview – unfortunately, I can't recall the statistics at this time – about how many of those Appeals Commission decisions are implemented within the 30-day timeline that's set out already in the act. I only speak to this because I have a bit of a hesitation around making changes to legislation where those changes are actually not completely necessary. In this case it does say that the existing act already requires the Appeals Commission to implement decisions within 30 days or within the prescribed timeline limits that are set out within the decision of the Appeals Commission on a matter before them.

What I see Bill 206 doing is not actually implementing that 30-day timeline, but in looking at the specific provisions of Bill 206, it says that if the board has not implemented the decision within 30 days, that person may then seek an order from the Court of Queen's



Bench to implement the decision. It doesn't actually introduce a 30-day time limit. That actually already exists in the act. What it does say is that if the board does not implement the Appeals Commission decision within 30 days, the applicant has another 30 days to go to the Court of Queen's Bench to enforce that order.

Again, for me, this is simply about: if the goal was to make sure that the Appeals Commission is implementing its orders within 30 days, that's already in the act. What Bill 206 really does is simply say that they have a right to seek an order enforcing that from the Court of Queen's Bench. It doesn't necessarily move the process forward. It simply adds another layer, within which the applicant can then make an application to the Court of Queen's Bench, which, as we know, can in and of itself be a bit of an onerous process. I do note, though, that Bill 206 also does allow that for an applicant who seeks an order enforcing that decision from the Court of Queen's Bench, the applicant may recover their solicitor-client costs. Again, that's a notable thing, because we do know that it is a great burden for an injured worker to take on to then have to continue to advocate for themselves. They often do retain legal counsel, so to be able to recover those costs is an important element to that.

I do support this bill, but what I do see is that I'm not sure it's achieving the objectives the sponsor had in mind. It does still send a message – and I think that that perhaps is the greater objective of Bill 206 – which is that decisions of the Appeals Commission should be implemented in a timely fashion and that it is important to that worker, to that employee that that takes place. Certainly, I think that's a valuable message. I'm not sure that the content of the bill changes the process as much as we would like to hope or believe that it would, but certainly I am proud to consistently stand up in this House and advocate on behalf of workers and employees.

While I commend the sponsor of the bill, the Member for Livingstone-Macleod, for bringing this forward, particularly because it is in the best interests of injured workers, I have to echo the comments of my colleagues on this side of the House, which is to say that we have seen already in the short time of this 30th Legislature a number of attacks on workers. We've seen attacks on their overtime pay. We've seen attacks on the minimum wage. We know that there is a review of the minimum wage going on for serving staff in restaurants, and we know that that's probably coming as well, because, quite frankly, a number of these review panels that have been established by the government have predetermined outcomes. We all know what's going to happen.

4:00

We've seen the attacks on minimum wage employees. We've seen the attacks on overtime. We've seen the complete attack on workers' pensions. Without consultation, without a mandate, this government has transferred their pensions. While I will continue to stand up – I'm proud to see that my colleagues are of course also going to stand up for workers' rights, and I'm happy to see a member from the government side stand up and seek the protection for workers in this specific way – I really think that this government has a bit of a credibility issue when it comes to standing up for workers' rights because we've seen an unmitigated attack on workers' rights so far.

This is a small change. I go back to the fact that I'm not even sure it's a necessary change or that it's going to achieve the objectives set out by the member. Really, if the government and the members of the government caucus want to have some credibility and actually stand up for workers' rights, they should rethink a lot of the decisions that have already been made by this government. Perhaps they have an opportunity going forward to amend some of the things that they have done already to attack workers' rights.

So while I will support Bill 206, it is certainly not an endorsement of the government's approach to workers thus far. I'm proud that we will continue to stand up for workers' rights on this side of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members looking to speak on this matter?

Then I am prepared to call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 206 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed, please say no. That is carried.

**Mrs. Savage:** I move that we rise and report Bill 206.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 206.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen to speak.

#### Economic Diversification in Rural Alberta

510. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to identify and eliminate red tape that prevents innovative private-sector economic diversification in rural Alberta's communities for the economic benefit of these communities and Alberta as a whole.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today. I'm pleased to rise and move Motion 510. Now, this motion is important to draw attention to rural Alberta. As many of you know, 41 seats in this Chamber are considered to be rural Alberta seats, seats that are representing areas that are not part of our major city centres, you know, places where agriculture is our main economic driver and where people toil outside for hours at a time. They're the kind of people who shower after work, not before work. Some of these men and women are the backbone of Alberta. They're the people that I'm proud to represent in Cardston-Siksika.

I wanted to start with a bit of a story about one such type of business. I live in Cardston, Mr. Speaker, as you know. It's a beautiful place to be. You should come visit some time. I highly recommend it. I think you'd love the view, especially of Chief

Mountain. In Cardston there is this clothing store. It's called Atkins, and Atkins can be traced back to 1893, at the time of the arrival of the Card family. Now, when the Card family came – as you can imagine: Cardston, Card – they came with a shoemaker, and that shoemaker ended up leaving. They needed one, so they sent off for Frederick Walter Atkins and offered him \$16 to come to Cardston and make shoes.

He was making shoes and making boots for the mountains, and he travelled, as I understand it, by horse to Cardston. Later, in 1947, his son Henry Harwood Atkins constructed the building that is the current location of Atkins. He built this building, and it still stands today as a staple of the community of Cardston. Later on Bert and Shirley Gibb took over in the 1960s. They held this business in their care and maintained it for years, until 1997, when their daughter Kris MacDonnell took over the business.

This is an example of a southern Alberta success story, the way that businesses can thrive and they can succeed in what others might consider to be difficult economic or climatic, you know, parts of the province. I know that people don't come to Alberta necessarily for the weather but for the opportunity, and they make the most of it.

When I was talking to Kris MacDonnell about Atkins, she said that one of the greatest pieces of advice she had ever heard was something that her grandfather said to her dad. As you can imagine, through the over a hundred years of its history Atkins has gone through some difficult times, times when, you know, they could have considered closing their doors because maybe it just wasn't going quite as well as they would have liked it to. He said: "When you owe people money, send them bits of money over time. Don't just disappear on them. Maintain a relationship with those you owe money to even if it's just a little bit. That will improve your credit and your credibility with those you owe money to and show good faith to the people that you do business with." Now, it's my belief that the people in Cardston-Siksika in general all operate in good faith, and I think this lesson is a great example of that.

The point here is that there are lots of opportunities that aren't being realized in Cardston-Siksika and, I believe, across the province, and that is why I think that we need to look at opportunities to remove red tape, Mr. Speaker, to remove barriers that hold back these businesses, some of the great ideas that could be fostered right here in Alberta. It's no secret that Alberta is heavily dependent upon our oil and gas sector, the most ethical oil and gas sector, I think, around the world. It's a world-class product that we should be getting to market, but we're having a difficult time there. While that's happening, I think that there are opportunities here, and we should be exploring those.

So I was pleased during the campaign when I heard our Premier talk a lot about getting rid of the barriers that are standing in the way, this red tape, and setting up an Associate Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, something that my colleague to the left here is working tirelessly to execute. Mr. Speaker, the saddest thing in life is wasted potential, and while that is a quote from one of my favourite movies, it is the truth not only in life but also in business. Are we realizing our potential in rural Alberta? I think that there are opportunities there that we're not quite exploring.

I want to talk about one of those opportunities that comes to my office, comes to my attention quite often, and it is the fact that in Alberta we have only one border crossing that's open 24 hours a day – it's in Coutts – whereas just south of Cardston we have a border crossing that closes at about 11 o'clock. This poses a bit of a problem, a bit of a barrier for those who live in the area. Cardston has just a wealth of history. There's so much to offer in Cardston and southern Alberta in general. Those coming to southern Alberta might have a bit of a concern about the ability to get home at the

end of an evening if they stay a little bit late. They're always checking their watches.

One opportunity – and I know it's not entirely within our control – is to look at an option of supporting a 24-hour border crossing at Carway. Carway is only 20 minutes from Glacier national park in the United States. This is a park that sees between 3 million and 3 and a half million visitors each year. It's also not far, again, like I said, 20 minutes from us. So, you know, if you want to come across the border into Canada, you can do that, but if you want to stay, there might be the concern of not getting home in time. Going to visit places like Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump or plays in Cardston or visit the Remington Carriage Museum or Writing-On-Stone or beautiful Waterton is another reason, Mr. Speaker, that you should most certainly – and I encourage everyone else in this Chamber – come down to Cardston. If you have not been to Waterton, you are sure missing out on a real treat.

#### 4:10

Another part here is the reality that there is a lot of truck traffic that comes through southern Alberta and goes through Coutts, and that truck traffic, if they're not going to make it through the border, is going to be diverted all the way through Coutts. That's an extra hour on your drive time when you could be going straight through Carway as opposed to going to Coutts. When you think about trucking, as someone who did drive a truck for a while in a previous career, time is money, Mr. Speaker. Time is money. Tick-tock. I'll tell you that it's important we save money where possible. That's an opportunity to look at.

This red tape reduction is so important because there are so many people who are looking at Alberta as this beacon of hope and opportunity, this place where you can come and start something fantastic, something you can be excited about, something that I'm excited about. But what's in the way? Oftentimes, red tape and bureaucracy.

To use a bit of an example about how that gets in the way, growing up in the rural part of the country, my friends and I got our hands on a mid-90s Honda Accord. It was a manual transmission. That's when I learned how to drive a manual. This was long before I turned 16. We would drive this car – not on the road, of course, Mr. Speaker; that would be illegal – in the field. It was a field car. Driving it around – we were getting used to driving a manual stick shift there – we noticed that between two of the fields, as they connected, there was a bit of an incline. It was a bit of a bumpy ride as you went over it, and I thought: well, what if you go a little faster; what would happen?

You can imagine that if you go a little faster, maybe the front tires come off the ground. Naturally, we began to explore this more, with seat belts on of course, and realized that there was a real opportunity to jump this car and really catch some serious air in this field car of ours. It just weighed a lot. Between the passengers and everything in the vehicle, it was really hard to maximize that air time, that hang time, in this vehicle. But as we started jumping it more and more, we realized that parts started falling off. As the parts fell off, we reduced the weight. As we reduced the weight, we got more hang time. It was a nice little cause and effect there.

So we got to thinking: what else can we take off this vehicle? We parked this thing in my garage, and we went to work on it. We started taking out the spare tire. We took out any other unnecessary weight, even parts of the exhaust pipe. We took out some of it; other parts of it just fell off, bumpers, Mr. Speaker. Now, these are all integral pieces for the road, but if you're trying to get maximum hang time in this field car, you've got to take them off. We did just that, and lo and behold you get going at about 90 kilometres and hit this incline and – bam – air time like you wouldn't believe.

Now, I relate this back to the point that I'm trying to make here: what's holding Alberta back? What's holding Alberta back from getting that maximum hang time, all that potential? I'll tell you what it is. It's red tape and regulation, and I encourage us to get rid of it.

Well, that's all my remarks.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members looking to join the debate on this? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen to speak.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your recognizing me. I was listening intently to the story there, and I must admit, Member, that I'm glad you didn't remove the seat belts. We don't even want to think about what might have happened with that.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon on private member's Motion 510, which, of course, says:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to identify and eliminate red tape that prevents innovative private-sector economic diversification in rural Alberta's communities for the economic benefit of these communities and Alberta as a whole.

I have to say that I rise at this moment with a bit of confusion, to say the least. I just talked about some of these things in the last discussion on a bill. I've talked about these things in previous bills where we see something being brought forward in terms of legislation, but the actions and the bills that we've brought forward previously are counterproductive to that.

When we're talking about trying to create an atmosphere for innovative private-sector economic diversification, I would of course be remiss – the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview would want me to mention these things. Cancelling things like the capital investment tax credit, cancelling things like the AITC and the digital media tax credit: these were things that were going to allow small and medium-sized businesses to be innovative, to be able to grow. When we take these things away, it's counterproductive to what we're asking to do right here in this motion.

I guess I'm looking at the Member for Cardston-Siksika. He's trying to, you know, work hard for the businesses that call his area home, allowing them to grow, to prosper, to be able to create jobs, hire more people, grow their businesses. Yet we see things going on within the government that are counterproductive and that are actually hurting your businesses and their ability to be able to grow. We've heard comments, like from the Finance minister, that these types of economic diversification are just a long-term luxury. I would highly disagree. I think your businesses trying to grow, create jobs, and be prosperous is not a luxury. I think it's a necessity. That kind of a comment is counterproductive to how we can move these things forward.

Of course, you were talking about red tape, and the government did create an Associate Ministry of Red Tape Reduction. That is going to cost Albertans over the next four years \$10 million. We've seen the government moving, cancelling, you know, things like the Election Commissioner because that's going to help save us a million dollars, yet what I've found, Mr. Speaker, during estimates when I was talking to Treasury Board and Finance, when I was talking to Municipal Affairs, when I was talking to Labour – I've seen other critics when they were talking to their ministries – is that there are clearly red tape reduction strategies going on within those ministries that didn't need the help of the red tape reduction ministry. Right there, just in terms of efficiencies, I think we could maybe take that \$10 million that we're going to spend, and maybe we could do things that could invest in, like, Cardston-Siksika and

its businesses to allow them to grow, to be innovative, and to start playing on a larger scale or maybe even the world scale. Wouldn't that be great?

I mean, we've seen things – I'm sure that the Member for Lethbridge-East would be very, very aware of this – like Cavendish Farms, a fantastic business that wants to grow here in the province, yet we are seeing things that are working against them to be able to do that. I mean, we were talking about them investing \$360 million in the plant, \$430 million in the facility where full production capacity is going. I was astounded at this, quite honestly. I mean, processing 735 million pounds of potatoes: I can't even imagine what that looks like. That's a lot of potatoes. That is a lot of potatoes, Mr. Speaker. You know, in creating the French fries to be able to ship them around the world, what would have helped them to do that would have been things like the capital investment tax credit, like the Alberta investment tax credit. That would have helped them to be able to scale up and do those types of production levels. Again, it's counterproductive to what this motion is trying to do. It just really feels like the government is actually working against the Member for Cardston-Siksika with his motion and him trying to advocate so hard for his businesses.

**4:20**

You know, in terms of budget cuts, Mr. Speaker, that again are going against rural Alberta and their ability to be innovative, to be able to prosper, Agriculture and Forestry saw a budget cut of 9.1 per cent. Environment and Parks was ending the Alberta community resilience program, which provides flood and drought mitigation funding for municipalities, First Nations, Métis settlements, improvement districts, special areas. All of these things would have been able to help rural Alberta to be able to prosper, to be able to protect their investments from things like floods. We've certainly seen some of the floods in this province getting much, much worse. We've all heard that term about 1-in-100-year events. It seems like we've had three or four of those 1-in-100-year events just in the last decade alone. It's taking away those types of funding to be able to provide things like flood mitigation, which will protect the assets of rural Albertans and their businesses to be able to continue to innovate and prosper.

We've seen Transportation cutting highway funding maintenance by 25 per cent. I mean, if rural Alberta businesses are going to try to innovate and grow, create jobs, not only service Alberta but the world as a whole – I've always believed that our businesses can all work on the world stage. I've always, always believed that. But how are they going to be able to get their products to market, to that world stage, if we're cutting back on maintenance? Again, it's counterproductive to what the Member for Cardston-Siksika is trying to do, advocating hard for his businesses. The government is working against him. I'm very, very confused with regard to this.

I think that, unfortunately, because of that, it's incumbent upon the government to be able to step up, to back up the Member for Cardston-Siksika. I think we can take that \$10 million from the ministry of red tape, invest it in your businesses to be able to prosper and grow because, clearly, red tape reduction is happening within the ministries themselves. I have yet to see any red tape reductions create jobs. Well, except for one. We've created one job, probably the minister himself.

Unfortunately, I'm not prepared to be able to support this motion at this time. I do hope that the member's businesses will be backed up by maybe some different policies from this government, hopefully other investments that will allow them to prosper, but right now the indication that I'm getting from the government is that they don't care about that member's businesses. I would like to

see that \$10 million invested in your riding and your businesses and in my businesses as well in Edmonton-Decore. I'm known as the shopping district, Mr. Speaker. I have three major malls. I have so many businesses within my riding. They're fantastic. I would invite you to Edmonton-Decore as well. We've got some great restaurants. I'm sure you'd love them.

But I'm going to urge other members to not support this at this time.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of this motion and would like to just comment a little bit about the last member's speech, from Edmonton-Decore. There was a word that he used, "confused." I have to say that that is a fairly appropriate word that he used. I think that it's interesting. I see the confusion probably in that there are a few words in there that would confuse him like "innovative private-sector" jobs. Obviously, something that we've seen for the last four years from this government is that their whole strategy has been that they believe that injecting the government and the government's role into society in a free-enterprise society is actually the solution. In fact, if you read through their appendix in their constitution, you'll see that their job, they believe, is to actually micromanage and that they think that they're smarter than the economy.

What we've learned through years of trying different types of economic models is that a free economy, where it has the minimal interference by the government, is the most prosperous. This is really why I'm in favour of this motion. I think that the Member for Cardston-Siksika has gotten it bang on when it comes to the need to be able to have government get out of the way, get out of the way of our job creators and our innovators.

It always amazed me listening to the members opposite when they were in government not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, argue that they were confused why so many private-sector jobs – I think there were at one point over 180,000 private-sector jobs that had fled our markets. It confused them. They were confused because they didn't seem to understand that there is a direct relationship between the government's intervention and taking away that incentive for our job creators to actually get in and to start a business, to take on that risk. I actually do understand why the Member for Edmonton-Decore is confused, but that is actually no excuse.

The truth is that we were hired on April 16 to get Albertans back to work and to jump-start our economy. They hired us not to get in the way of our job creators and innovators but to get out of the way. I think that the member needs to realize that. I would have to say that I don't know if the member has gotten out enough and talked to our job creators and our innovators, because what he wouldn't hear from them is: "You know what? We need you to hold our hand and we need you to actually make us into this successful business." No. The number one thing that I hear, Mr. Speaker, is: "The government needs to get out of our way. The government needs to let us be so that we can actually do what we feel is the right way to be able to create wealth, to be able to start a small business, and to risk and to become an innovator and to hopefully knock it out of the park." The sky is the limit for entrepreneurs.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that there are many, many immigrants that come to this province. A lot of the immigrants come to this province because they think that this is the place where they can actually make something of their lives, that, again, the sky is the limit here, that Alberta would be a place where they could come and start a business, that they can actually provide for their families better than they could where they were living. Now, when the government gets in the way and when the government, through

continual red tape, heaps on layers and layers of red tape, it takes away the incentive for those newcomers to come to this province and to try to start a business. I've said this many times in this House. Small businesses are disproportionately affected by red tape, so it's extremely important for us to be able to turn back that tide.

There's an interesting study that was done down in the States that showed that had the United States curbed red tape or regulatory increases since 1980, they would have seen an increase of almost 32 per cent in the size of their economy. An eight-tenths of a per cent increase year over year they would have seen. That's a substantial amount, Mr. Speaker. Think about the size of our economy, what we would have done had we also tried to curb this thing called red tape.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I like how the Member for Cardston-Siksika is talking about innovative private-sector economic diversification in rural Alberta. What I think is important to recognize is that, really, of our job creators and innovators in rural Alberta, a lot of them are farmers and ranchers, and we made a huge step forward – I have to take my hat off to the agriculture minister and the labour minister for being able to come together in repealing Bill 6, that devastating NDP bill that added, again, so many layers of red tape onto our rural job creators and innovators, our farmers and ranchers.

4:30

I want to tell you a story, Mr. Speaker, about how those unintended consequences have really affected a member from my constituency. I won't use names. This family has asked me not to. They're humble people, as you often find in rural Alberta. This family had a very small farm. It wasn't a big farm, but they had the option of – when Bill 6 was introduced, they didn't really know what was expected. They had to figure out whether they were going to hire another person and become completely occupational health and safety compliant or – the wife was going to be going and getting a hip replacement. Now, she could no longer help her husband on the farm, so they had to make a choice. The choice was either they hire another person to help take care of what she was normally doing or she goes and gets a hip replacement done. She had been waiting for about a year and still no hip replacement.

They did like everybody does. They just basically said: well, our option for getting a hip replacement is going to cost us X amount; our option to become occupational health and safety compliant so that we can have another person come to our farm and work is going to cost us this much. Well, Mr. Speaker, they had a consultant come in. I haven't been able to verify or validate their numbers, but they said that this consultant told them that it was going to cost them \$200,000 to bring their farm up to occupational health and safety compliance – \$200,000 – whereas they could go down to Kalispell and get a \$39,000 hip replacement done. Guess what they did? They mortgaged their house, they went down, and she got a hip replacement done in Kalispell.

What a terrible option for them, Mr. Speaker. On one hand, you're going to have to spend \$39,000; on the other hand, you're going to have spend \$200,000 because of some unintended consequences of a government that was more interested in piling on red tape than they were interested in actually helping our job creators and innovators do what they do best, create jobs. This is the reason why job creators rejected them en masse on April 16 of this year. They rejected their approach. They said: no, you do not have any interest in being able to help our job creators jump-start; you're interested in being able to maybe start increasing public-sector jobs. They did a lot of that, but they certainly were not interested in private-sector jobs.

Mr. Speaker, this is a legacy that the NDP will have to wear. The legislators opposite will have to remember that instead of them being able to actually jump-start the economy through intervention by the government, in reality they actually destroyed the economy by government intervention.

So I am all in favour of this motion. This motion speaks to a truth, which is that when the government gets out of the way of our job creators and innovators, they know best how to be able to jump-start the economy and get Albertans back to work, and that is the solution, Mr. Speaker. It's not anecdotal. It is the solution. We've seen numerous examples in different parts of the world where they've done this right. In fact, there are some studies done in Scandinavian countries that did this right and found that they can get up to a 2.3 per cent increase in GDP by just focusing on red tape reduction.

This is something that I'm very much in favour of, and I'm grateful for the member bringing it forward.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has risen to speak.

**Mr. Horner:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and speak in support of Motion 510, brought forward by the field-car-driving Member for Cardston-Siksika. I just would say that I learned to drive the same way, drive a stick, and I appreciate his analogy. As the car loses parts, you definitely get more air on the incline of opportunity, so I think it's quite fitting.

Mr. Speaker, if you ask farmers around Canada, they'll tell you that Albertan farmers are some of the luckiest in the world – maybe not this fall, though; it has been a challenging harvest – a wealth of land turned into a wealth of resources. As the subsurface of Alberta was mapped and analyzed for oil and gas, many did well by becoming partners of industry, leasing surface rights to companies that wished to further explore the subsurface or install infrastructure. Others found work and participated directly as this new economy demanded more and more labour. These jobs were high paying and easy to get.

Those days appear over for now. The easiest resources to find and to extract were targeted first, and through 2014 a high price created an opportunity for further growth in more unconventional plays such as SAGD and more marginal oil sands deposits. As the price of oil has stagnated in recent years, the jobs have dried up and the investment has fled.

This is not our province's first experience with the cyclical nature of the energy industry. Energy is a global commodity, and the price is subject to forces outside our control. This means that when the price is low, our province is hard hit. The energy industry remains the main economic driver of our province, and I'm certainly not downplaying its importance. When we discuss economic diversification, we must therefore place it in terms of supplementing the industry rather than replacing it.

Albertans' hard work exploiting our world-class energy reserves has been so successful that it shifted our entire country's economy. Mature labour markets like those of the Maritimes, where jobs were often hard to find and far lower paying on average, saw an exodus of people moving westward seeking prosperity.

The creation of economies of scale in the oil sands has incentivized companies to invent and deploy innovative technologies that have given Albertan engineers a reputation as some of the most versatile and qualified globally. While the oil sands remain innovative and productive, opportunities for rural populations to share in the prosperity have evaporated as companies have stopped drilling. They're asking for help, and they deserve it. They're not asking for a handout but a hand up.

The previous NDP government often paid lip service to diversification of the economy, but their efforts were doomed to failure. Albertans have created new industries before through hard work, innovation, and prudent governance. Burdensome taxation, overregulation, and complex red tape stand in the way of entrepreneurs and businesses from setting up operations in rural communities. Our government must be prudent and stand behind Albertans that are working to meet these ends.

The labour market has become increasingly bloated as layoffs have continued and the need for service companies dwindled. This is a highly skilled labour base that would be a tremendously valuable asset to any industries that choose to call Alberta home. I do not know the specific industry we should be courting, but what I do know is that the skills and talents of Albertans go far beyond the oil and gas industry.

Alberta has world-class business and postsecondary programs in forestry, agriculture, mining, and technology. Innovative companies like Shaw Communications, WestJet, ATCO, and Sport-Chek were all started right here in Alberta. There is no reason that we should not be fostering an environment in which small companies with big ideas can thrive. New opportunities for business in fields like ag tech, energy efficiency, cannabis, and many more must not be passed up. We as a government must be actively working to be sure that Albertan businesses are not overly constrained by red tape as they try to innovate and Alberta competes with other jurisdictions to draw in business. We have always been a province in which entrepreneurs can thrive.

Mr. Speaker, we must find a balance between diversification and a strong energy industry. The previous government could not find this balance. When the bottom fell out of the oil industry, the NDP was left with a \$6 billion hole in their budget. A diverse economy is an essential step towards smoothing the boom-and-bust cycle of the energy industry, but that does not mean we should forgo the next peak. Energy has always paid the bills in Alberta, whether privately or providing the means for expansive government services. Our province is uniquely positioned in Canada, still managing to create a sizable sovereign wealth fund as eastern provinces claimed a piece of the pie. This is a savings account for every Albertan.

Rather than raising tax rates and creating additional regulatory burden for small businesses and entrepreneurs, as our previous NDP government did, we must rely on rational decision-making to set them on the path to success. We must attract investment, both foreign and domestic, and incubate small businesses so that those who innovate can quickly scale right here in our province. It is imperative that we work to cut the red tape that has kept businesses from basing themselves in rural Alberta so that our next recession is less deep than the last.

Our government has already put forward several programs to help improve conditions in rural Alberta. The rural entrepreneur immigration program in tandem with the rural renewal program will help our province to direct skilled labour to rural communities, with the intent of starting or taking over existing businesses. We have also committed to expanding our programs which incentivize media production in rural areas, which follows the lead of Manitoba's film tax credit.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's economy is one of the best in the world when hydrocarbon prices are high. When they are low, milk and honey are harder to find. I want a province for my kids where they have opportunities of all kinds. By the time they grow up, I'm hopeful that whatever their passion is, there will be an opportunity for them to thrive right here at home.

I have heard criticism related to Alberta pension funds that Alberta is just too small to have world-class financial services expertise. This is absolutely ridiculous, and Albertans should be livid about this patronizing attitude. We're no longer the expansive and empty prairies. It is time we built an integrated and diverse economy which reflects that. Cutting red tape on rural businesses is the first step in the right direction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen to speak.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. I don't believe, in substance, that the idea of allowing economic diversification – I think that that's a very good thing. I think my main objection is that this government's approach to that has been incorrect. I mean, over a number of years it has been tried many times, to reduce the general corporate tax rate and hope that that spurs innovation, but that hasn't had that effect. The reason for that is because a corporate tax rate is paid only on profits, and in fact it's paid only on profits in excess of half a million dollars.

A lot of businesses, when they start up, are not in that position, so they need a different sort of assistance, assistance that I think the Alberta investor tax credit was providing, and I think it was doing a very good job of that. In fact, I've certainly heard from a number of individuals and from members of the legal community that they were working with companies who had planned to come here, to open offices or to open up here, who are no longer going to do that because those opportunities are no longer available to them, whereas programs like that exist in other jurisdictions.

I think that that is a huge concern because, really, the point here is to diversify the economy, to assist businesses in other areas to spring up, and I don't think that this rhetoric that the members across the way put out, that if we're in support of other industries, we can't possibly be in support of oil and gas, is correct. I think you can be in favour of both of those things at the same time. I don't think they are anything resembling mutually exclusive.

I think, you know, this idea that somehow that plan wasn't going to work: I mean, not only had it begun to work already, but it would have only increased in the future. We'll never see that now because it's been cut off. We have credible reports of all sorts of industry folks that could have come here, particularly in the tech sector, that won't be doing that now. I think that is a real shame because I think that those were good, solid, mortgage-paying jobs, which, at the end of the day, is really what we're after.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that while I'm on my feet, it's worth commenting on some of the comments made by the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction because I do think that it is possible for us to disagree in this place without becoming personal or without becoming insulting. To see that member rise in his place and suggest that when the Member for Edmonton-Decore says that he's confused about how this is supposed to work, which is a legitimate question – and he laid it out on a number of legitimate bases – that's just because he's confused about life generally is deeply inappropriate, especially coming from someone who has risen in this place and suggested that potable water is red tape, who, when asked what red tape he plans to reduce, couldn't provide a single example of a bill, couldn't provide anything resembling an operational definition, and to date hasn't provided anything resembling an operational definition.

I think that if one is confused by that, one is rightly confused by that, because it's confusing. When you say, "Oh, well, it's things

that harm business, but we won't in any way reduce it in such a way that it impacts the lives or livelihoods of Albertans," well, I mean, that's not a definition that anyone can sort of operationalize in a way that's important. Those are my comments on those comments.

You know, I think that when we're talking about attracting investment to rural Alberta, the Cavendish facility in Lethbridge is definitely worth mentioning. That was an investment that was attracted by our government. We did that by working with the folks there. They made that investment, and it will produce a lot of jobs, jobs in an area that could use jobs.

I must actually say that I met recently with the folks from Team Lethbridge. Their municipality and their businesses and their nonprofit organizations all tend to come up here together to talk to MLAs, which is actually a very effective strategy, in my view. They had some fantastic ideas having to do with economic diversification and what sectors they wanted to attract and how to attract investment from outside the province rather than attracting it from other municipalities.

I think there's a lot of good evidence that there are a lot of ways to go forward with a strategy that isn't based on trickle-down economics. Honestly, you know, we hear the members across the way saying that the problem is that we think we're smarter than the economy. I mean, setting aside for a moment the fact that an economy isn't anthropomorphic, that it's not the sort of thing that has an intelligence, I think it's entirely possible – and I do hear the member laughing. I realize he thinks it's impossible for someone like me to have something relevant to say in this place, Mr. Speaker, but fortunately we have the opportunity for all of us to debate here.

The members across the way and I have a fairly deep disagreement. We have a deep disagreement over whether trickle-down economics works, and I think there's an enormous amount of evidence on our side. I think that in the last 20 or 30 years the entire field of economics has done a lot to change from being based on theories to being based on evidence, and I think that's a really good change, a positive change in the world. I realize that the members over there appear to think that it's hilarious that anyone would think that that's a good thing, but it is a good thing.

I think that as it becomes more and more the case that economics is based on actual evidence in the world, we're seeing more and more that the trickle-down theory just doesn't work. That's not a method that's effective, and it's certainly not a method that's effective under certain circumstances. Having now dropped the corporate tax rate 1 per cent, if we continue to drop it – we're already at the bottom, so that's not going to attract any additional investment, and I think that generally that's been clear. The aim of attracting investment specifically intended to diversify our economy is a good aim. What we have seen under this new government's policies is companies taking the money and running to other jurisdictions to invest the money. I don't think that's an effective strategy, and I think that the numbers bear out my conclusion that it's not an effective strategy because all we have seen is more and more job losses under this government.

I think, Mr. Speaker, you know, that spending particularly \$10 million over the next four years on a ministry that is, in my view, redundant is probably not a really good use of taxpayer dollars, especially at a time when we're talking about cutting educational supports in classrooms, when we're talking about cutting health care funding, when we're talking about cutting funding to police. Why it is that we would be spending \$10 million on a ministry that, as far as I can tell, isn't actually doing anything is entirely beyond me.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that that will end my comments with respect to this matter. The members across the way and I are obviously going to disagree rather strongly in terms of whether economic

diversification is a priority or whether it ought to be, as they say, a long-term luxury. I don't think it's a long-term luxury. I think it's something that we have to do. I think it's something that we have to do now, and I think it's incredibly important.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be in favour of this motion, and as we move forward, I hope that we see a level of debate in this place that is perhaps a little bit more elevated. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Camrose has risen to speak.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my pleasure to spend time over the last number of months in my constituency consulting with constituents. One of the main issues that continues to arise is the excessive red tape that is strangling our economy. This is especially true when speaking to business owners. Rural entrepreneurs face an increasing number of challenges in a rapidly changing world. On top of the struggles caused by the NDP mismanagement of Alberta's economy and those faced by urban entrepreneurs, rural business owners face declining populations, high transportation costs, and the fear of vandalism, pushed by a rural crime crisis in our province.

4:50

Mr. Speaker, in talking to my constituents, they have outlined a number of regulatory issues that hinder the success of small-town entrepreneurs. I'd like to highlight just one of them now. Interference with project management makes jobs take longer. Project management is less efficient, and it becomes harder for small businesses operating in areas with fewer customers to turn a profit. Because of this, jobs become harder to come by and families are forced to relocate to cities, further exacerbating the problems. Because of this difficulty in moving projects forward, business has left Alberta. The regulatory burdens imposed by all levels of government have led to a hurry-up-and-wait problem and a failure to guarantee anything our job creators strive for.

Maybe I'll use a large-scale familiar example to explain this problem. As I'm sure everyone in this House is aware, the Trans Mountain pipeline has struggled with moving regulatory goalposts for years. It has been approved and reapproved over and over again. Recently the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau has introduced Bill C-69, the no more pipelines law, a new framework for infrastructure projects. The issue, Mr. Speaker, is that C-69 fails to address any of the real issues and allows the goalposts to be moved indefinitely. As a result, Albertans have suffered. A failure to get this project completed has real effects on the daily lives of Albertans.

Now imagine this happening to multiple projects in rural areas. These delays all have an effect on the health of our rural communities. This is a major barrier that rural areas need to address. This isn't to say that urban areas don't also face issues with regulatory barriers placing roadblocks in the way of major infrastructure, but there is a massive difference in a delay in road construction adding a couple of minutes to a commute in comparison to a rural road adding half an hour to your drive into town. As our towns shrink, it becomes even more difficult when businesses promising employment are delayed in opening their doors by red tape and excessive regulation.

One area where we saw regulations threaten our rural areas was the imposition of the previous government's seriously flawed Bill 6. Thanks to the organization of a number of farmers the bill was significantly amended, but as I along with many of my colleagues have heard, this did not go far enough to protect our farmers from more regulation. That's why I was so glad to see the Minister of

Agriculture and Forestry bring forward Bill 26 as a replacement to ensure worker safety while also reducing the regulatory burden on family farms, who don't have the tools to navigate red tape that large corporate farms do.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, regulations can have a devastating impact on small rural communities. This is something that our government should be taking very seriously. I'm glad that my colleague from Cardston-Siksika has brought this issue to the forefront, and I look forward to advocating for further red tape reduction in rural areas alongside him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen to speak on this matter.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I'll keep my remarks with regard to Bill 25 to the municipal affairs areas if I maybe could just ask a number of questions or concerns that have been brought forward.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. We are currently discussing Motion Other than Government Motion 510. If you would like to speak on that matter, please feel free.

**Member Ceci:** With regard to the red tape reduction . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** And I will also just mention to the member that in about three minutes we will have reached 55 minutes of discussion on this matter.

**Member Ceci:** Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

With regard to Motion 510, then, you know, red tape is certainly something that's important for all of us to address. We, of course, endeavoured as government, when we were in government, to ensure that only the regulation that was important and necessary was put into place. The fact that we're talking about red tape generally helps out other orders of government, particularly the local levels of government. When we get to Bill 25, I'll have the opportunity to address it in more detail. But, Mr. Speaker, the importance of generally addressing red tape is obviously brought forward in an actual bill that's before us, including the one that's with regard to the farm areas, farm implementation, farming.

We, of course, are getting feedback from the different organizations, RMA in particular. I've been reading their website with regard to this. They speak specifically to Bill 25. They don't talk about this motion that's before us. They do say about Bill 25 that they would like to find out more information. When we get to that, I'll talk to the associate minister.

We, of course, worked very hard to make sure that projects like the Cavendish Farms had the infrastructure in place, got that put in place as quickly as possible, so there was no real issue there.

We, of course, want to make sure that we're not standing in the way of economic diversification throughout Alberta, including the rural areas. We see a benefit to addressing red tape.

I do have many questions about the municipal affairs area and Bill 25, and I'll wait to get there for that discussion.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

About one more minute, if there are any hon. members looking to speak quickly on this matter.

**Mr. Rowsell:** I've got, like, 50 seconds to talk. Is that right? Okay. I'll start. Mr. Speaker, no one can deny the positive effect of our energy sector. The point I want to make is that, you know, it

sustains our province, and therefore any discussions about economic diversification must remain focused on supplementing our energy sector, not replacing it or shrinking it. We should follow the lead of the hard-working oil and gas workers and be proud of our rich energy resources, which, through the hard work of Albertans, we developed into the greatest wealth-generating asset in the country.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Given the time I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika to please close debate on Motion 510.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to close debate on Motion 510. If there's one message that I can get across through the debate that we've had in the last hour, it is: don't forget about rural Alberta; don't forget about rural Alberta and the hard-working men and women who live there.

I represent one of the most southern constituencies and live in one of the most southern parts of this province, right by the U.S. border. We have so much to offer Alberta. We have so much to offer this province and this country. Any opportunity that we have to start something great: we'll snatch that opportunity, and we'll make the most of it. That's what we do in the south. While I know that the urban parts of this province play an integral part of our success and our prosperity and I'm grateful for those places – I'm grateful for Calgary and Edmonton and Red Deer and all the other major cities, Medicine Hat, where my own parents live – we cannot forget about rural Alberta.

I feel like some of these messages that have been sent are that rural isn't as important. I can't speak to the logic behind the committee that redrew the boundaries for this Chamber, but we lost four rural constituencies, Mr. Speaker. That suggests that there are four fewer voices in this Chamber on behalf of rural Alberta. For anyone living in the urban parts of this province, I encourage you, as I do all the time when I stand up and speak on behalf of my constituents, to step out of the urban bubble. Step out of that bubble, and come visit for an extended period of time rural Alberta, and see the kind of men and women and the families we're raising and the way that we do business out there. Then you'll recognize why we advocate so hard for what rural Alberta has to offer this province.

5:00

You know, we talked a great deal though the campaign and even in this Chamber now, with all the things that were passed in legislation, about how important it is to support small businesses and the agriculture industry out in these rural parts. We promised that we would cut taxes on small businesses, and we've done that

with our job-creation tax cut, that will result in a sustainable growth and diversification of this economy.

One piece of red tape in other provinces that we've seen that drew people to Alberta was that medical professionals could incorporate here in Alberta. A number of people have come from other jurisdictions to Alberta because it's a more favourable place to do business.

Now, like the member who just previously spoke said, you know, we don't want to replace our oil and gas industry, but we'd like to supplement it with other economic opportunities. That is exactly what I'm hoping to do.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business even gave the red tape costs per employee as \$6,744, which gave us a failing grade. I'm not looking to throw shots across the aisle, but what I am trying to say is that we do have barriers here, Mr. Speaker, and they cost real money. They cost real money. It costs businesses, and the reality is that it costs jobs.

When you live in a community of 3,500 people, like I do, or other communities across Cardston-Siksika, where the town sizes range between, well, I guess, very small to 1,800 people, 2,000 people, 3,500 – they're not all bedroom communities for Lethbridge. These are all communities that need support, that have hard-working men and women there who just want to make the most of their opportunities, and they're there.

I encourage this government and I encourage the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction to keep along this path to supporting economic diversification in Alberta. Don't forget about rural Alberta, Mr. Speaker, because rural Alberta plays such an integral part in this province. We contribute so much to the country. We produce, we work hard, and all we ask in return is for a little bit of support, to not be forgotten when the time comes when policies are developed. I implore the government to do that. I've received a lot of feedback. In fact, when the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction just spoke, I was greatly encouraged by the continued direction of his ministry.

If I can close by simply saying, Mr. Speaker, how grateful I am to have this opportunity to move this motion, to speak on behalf of the fine people of Cardston-Siksika, and to have it echo through this Chamber as many times as possible: don't forget about rural Alberta.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 510 carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Deputy Government House Leader has risen to speak.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until this evening at 7:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:04 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, November 25, 2019

Day 46

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, November 25, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening, hon. members. Please take your seats.

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 24 Appropriation Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I move on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board Bill 24, the Appropriation Act, 2019, for third reading.

Madam Speaker, it's pretty exciting that this government's first budget is here, a transformational budget. I'm sure all members of the Chamber certainly agree with that. I know that my side of the aisle, or the government side of the aisle, is excited to be able to fulfill promises that were made to Albertans along the lines of getting our fiscal house in order with this important piece of legislation and starting the path forward to fix the absolute catastrophic damage that was done to this province financially by the NDP in their time in government.

With that said, Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 28 Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Minister of Health to move second reading of Bill 28, the Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act.

Madam Speaker, it's a privilege to rise to speak about this important piece of legislation. It's my hope that Bill 28 will gain the support of all members of this Assembly. I think it is important before we talk about Bill 28 that we take a step back and look at the situations Albertans find ourselves in in regard to opioids and addiction. Alberta continues to see the lasting effect of the overprescription of opioids, with an average of two Albertans who fatally overdose every day. The situation is far from resolved. The opioid crisis has touched Albertans in all corners of the province, of all backgrounds.

In 2016 alone 37.2 per cent of opioid overdose deaths were related to prescription opioids. This is in large part because of the overprescription of highly addictive opioid medication, including drugs like OxyContin, hydromorphone, and prescription fentanyl. The opioid manufacturers' and wholesalers' aggressive marketing efforts lead to this overprescription. These efforts included spending hundreds of millions of dollars to educate doctors on the use of opioids for treating chronic pain over the long term and stating that the risk of addiction was less than 1 per cent.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, we will never be able to bring back those who we have lost. We pray for the families who lost

their loved ones as a result of those actions. We're working to strengthen a system of care that gives families avenues to access support and to heal. There are also many more Albertans who find themselves in the grips of addiction, battling a disease that is left untreated. The untreated one is only leading them to a fatal and progressive illness. That being said, there are a large number of Albertans who have found recovery from addiction and who live lives in recovery every day.

Our government recognizes that recovery is possible and recovery works. That is why we are focused on developing and expanding access to treatment and recovery resources so that all Albertans who face addiction have an opportunity to recover. We believe in Albertans, we believe in their resiliency, and we believe in their ability to recover. We have committed \$40 million over the next four years specifically for opioid response and an additional \$100 million over four years to improve access to recovery-oriented mental health and addiction services. Every Albertan deserves the opportunity to recover and to live a life of health, wellness, and positive, engaged citizenship.

Madam Speaker, with all that being said, Alberta taxpayers have been on the hook for the health care costs that have been incurred as a result of opioid manufacturers' and wholesalers' unlawful actions. The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act is the first step in our efforts to recover those costs. Not only have Albertans had to pay with their extra tax dollars, they have had to pay with their communities. The actions of those companies have led to heartache, loss, and death while also leading to enormous costs to the health care system as a whole.

Let me give you some examples here. In 2014 the total cost of substance use to the Alberta economy was estimated at \$5.5 billion. Of that, approximately \$52 million was spent in 2016 on health care costs related to opioid use. This is according to the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. We estimate that since then opioid-related health care costs have increased significantly with the subsequent growth of the opioid epidemic. The aim of the proposed action is to recover health care costs and other damages caused by the defendants' unlawful actions, including their aggressive marketing efforts. These efforts led to the overprescription of highly addictive opioid medications. These medications, as I mentioned earlier, have caused many to experience heartache and pain, and a great many more lost their lives.

Alberta has experienced many costs at a system-wide level as a result of those actions. This legislation would allow the use of statistical and population-based evidence to establish causation and quantify health care costs and other damages caused that can be attributed to the opioid-related wrong actions here. It would allow Alberta to recover costs on an aggregate basis rather than on the individual it incurred on a personal basis. It would also allow the recovery of health care costs regardless of when the damage occurred. If the directors and officers of a corporate defendant are implicated in opioid-related wrongs, this legislation would make them jointly and severely liable with their corporations. Bill 28 would also demonstrate to the defendants in a proposed national class action that Alberta has the tools in place to proceed with litigation, should that be necessary. This all means that Alberta would be able to participate in the national class action in the most practical and efficient manner.

Madam Speaker, we are committed to holding opioid manufacturers and wholesalers to account for the opioid damage and health care costs that they have contributed to. This legislation will enable us to try to recover most of those costs that Alberta taxpayers contributed to. Our priority is to reinvest any damage awarded back into our health care system to strengthen the health

care system that has taken on so many costs as a result of this issue and to ensure that all Albertans have access to a recovery-oriented system of care that encourages health, wellness, and a positively engaged citizenship.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all Members of this Legislative Assembly to support the second reading of Bill 28.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise and to speak to Bill 28. First off, I just want to start by saying that we will be supporting this bill.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Hear, hear.

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah. We can work across the aisle. I know, shocking.

This is something that obviously is important to all Albertans, when we're looking at the issues around the opioid crisis and the significant impact that it's had on all Albertans across the province, the family members, the friends that have been lost unfortunately because of the crisis, and, of course, the ongoing issues that continue to happen with the use of fentanyl. Now with it being laced, obviously, with other drugs on the streets, we're seeing an even more significant increase. Of course, this is extremely important.

I think it's important to recognize that although this bill doesn't address the supports and services that can be provided to Albertans, it does speak to looking at holding individuals accountable for the responsibility that they have around ensuring that when drugs are being created, they are being distributed and used in an appropriate way. I also recognize that it's important that, as other provinces are doing – and I'm glad to see us joining other provinces in this lawsuit – we're looking at what this means for the impact on the resources for health care front-line workers, treatments, emergency services, as well as our overall health care system.

7:40

In saying that, the one thing that I did notice in the bill, that I know the minister and I will probably continue to chat a little bit about, is just where the money will go. As we know, typically when issues like this occur and there are lawsuits on behalf of the Crown, the money automatically goes back into general revenue. Then once it's in general revenue, as the Minister of Finance would know, he gets to kind of decide where it goes from there and if it goes back into Health or if it gets allotted to just paying down deficits or different things like that. One of the things that I would like us to be able to have a chat about, and would be interested to hear from the government side at some point, is that there be a commitment that a portion of the dollars that are returned to the Crown at some point, whenever this lawsuit occurs, would be allocated to ensure that it's going directly to supports for mental health and addiction and that it's not just being put in general revenue to then be allocated wherever it may be.

I recognize that – and I do want to thank the associate minister for being open to having a dialogue with me – of course, some of the concerns around this are that it's not just about treatment and mental health and addiction services completely. It's also about the overall health costs that are associated when supporting someone with opioid addiction. Of course, there needs to be some supports and financial returns to the Ministry of Health around emergency services, around health care services for individuals that have been hospitalized due to struggling with their addictions, so I recognize that not all of the money that would be coming back through this

lawsuit can go directly to Mental Health and Addictions. Although I would love it all to go to treatment, I recognize that there needs to be some ability to return the funds to areas where support services have been provided. Of course, I recognize that, and as we continue through the stages of this debate, I'm looking forward to hearing from the associate minister or the Minister of Health around what those options might look like or if there have been conversations on the government side around how some of that can happen.

Another thing that I do want to just quickly chat about is, of course, that there is a little bit of a difference in the bill when it comes to Ontario and B.C. It's just a question that at some point, again, over the debate I would like clarity around. In Bill 28, section 8 is different from the B.C. bill, which excludes certain officers and directors from liability. I'm assuming that's something that the government of Alberta has learned from the B.C. lawsuit so they're just trying to strengthen the ability to look at other, bigger jurisdictions or making sure that there's a broader ability to look at more directors and officers than just what B.C. was able to do. I think that's great if that's what's happening. I think it's extremely beneficial to learn from what other jurisdictions are doing and be able to strengthen our bill to be able to do that.

Also, there have been some pieces added to this bill, which I think is also probably learning from other jurisdictions, about making sure that we're using aggregated data and, obviously, being able to use that information and taking that forward so that we can actually demonstrate in court the measurements that are being used. I appreciate also in this bill that although this is going to be happening on behalf of all Albertans, Albertans' health information doesn't actually have to be shared. There is information within the bill that says that you can talk about a group of individuals instead of having to look into identifying individuals that may have been impacted. I think it's important, given that this is a very sensitive topic for Albertans, that we're protecting as much personal information as we can. Again, I see that that's happening in the bill – again, I support the government in this and acknowledge that the bill has been written quite well – and that's great.

I also want to of course – why not? – just mention that this was something that was also in our platform. I mean, it's always nice to see that both sides of this House can agree on something. Even though it was in our platform, it was also something that was important to the government side, so there are some things that, obviously, both sides of this House can agree on.

I think I'll just leave it at that. Again, I just want to say that we will be supporting the bill, of course with some questions as we move forward. I'm sure the associate minister and I can chat a little bit, and he'll be able to answer my questions in the future.

Thank you. [some applause]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Oh, the things that happen in this House.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 28, Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act. I just wanted to reiterate what my colleague just said, that it is quite interesting that the government chose to take a piece from our platform, and I'm actually quite happy that they did. Obviously, it was our intent to go forward with – I don't know that the bill would have looked identical to this, but I am happy to see that this is happening.

I think that before I speak to some pieces of this, I would like to just be clear and put on the record some of the actions we had taken and some of the investments that we made that were particularly important. The reason I say that, as I said even earlier today, is that

this is a tool, a great tool, a tool to try to mitigate and recoup some of the damages and some of the costs. But, of course, some of the most serious damages we'll never be able to recoup. We've lost too many people because of opioid addiction and other addictions, actually, and that is a very sad piece. But, again, this is a useful tool.

I do want to focus and I will focus a little bit on prevention. Although this is the end result of trying to recoup some of the costs of these very damaging opioid addictions, it is really important to focus energy and resources on preventing this in the first place. Of course, we will support this legislation.

Some of the investments that we made in 2018-19 were that we directed \$63 million to address the opioid crisis. The breakdown of that was \$39 million for the 2018-19 opioid response budget, which was dedicated to the implementation of the Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission's recommendations and continuing to fund initiatives that were previously recommended. There was a \$4 million investment for community and addiction beds in Alberta Health Services. For anybody that has worked on the front lines and had to assist someone into an acute-care facility, I'm sure that you will attest to the fact that beds are scarce. The wait is often very, very long, and it is a difficult process. So that was a welcome investment. Also, there were \$10.4 million for opioid treatment, \$9 million for opioid medication coverage, with GOA Health and supplementary benefits.

Again, some of the more specific key investments were just over \$14 million in start-up and operational funding for safe consumption sites – I certainly hope that we have more of an opportunity to discuss the merits of these sites; I think we hear on a regular basis just how much benefit there is in terms of life-saving benefit, actually lives that are saved, because of these sites – \$9 million in funding for Suboxone and methadone; \$4.3 million to establish the virtual opioid dependency program. I've not actually looked into that or talked to anybody that has used that, but it certainly seems like a good investment.

7:50

This was really important: almost \$3 million to improve access to opioid treatment in primary care, again going back to the number of addiction beds available through Alberta Health Services. For anybody that has ever supported somebody to try to get primary care treatment for an opioid addiction or even an opioid overdose, it actually can be quite challenging.

Let's move on here. There was a \$1.3 million investment to develop an injectable opioid therapy program, \$1 million for a community-based naloxone program. You know, I would say that if any members in this place have not had any training around this or, you know, even just gotten a kit for your office, it's not a bad idea. I know we did a couple of years ago. Thankfully, we've not had to use it, and we've not had to give it out. But it is there, and we do use it as a bit of a teaching tool for anyone that comes in that has access to the public or that maybe finds themselves in a situation where it would be useful. We talk about that, how to get it, and then how to use it.

We also made a significant investment in needle debris mitigation, which I think is important, and there were some other initiatives.

I think it's really useful for us to talk about just how many naloxone kits were distributed between January 2017 and December 2018. It's actually a staggering number; 124,000 naloxone kits were distributed, saving – and these were self-reported reversals – 7,700 lives. I think that is an amazing investment.

As of October 2018 six safe consumption sites are operational in Alberta. There are four in Edmonton, one in Calgary, and one in

Lethbridge, and the first hospital-based safe consumption site in North America is at the Royal Alex. Again, it is worth mentioning that from January to September 2018 there were a total of 122,497 visits to the Lethbridge, Calgary, and Edmonton community-based safe consumption sites. A total of 1,316 overdoses were attended to, and there were no deaths on the sites. I think, you know, that if we're going to talk about what a successful program looks like, that would be it.

Again, I will support this bill, certainly, but I think it is really important to emphasize again and again that this is a tool. Once is too late for many people. It's a tool to recoup some of the costs, some of the loss, but I think the biggest opportunity we have is to prevent this from ever happening.

How do you prevent addiction? Well, there are a lot of thoughts on that, but there are some very straightforward things that we as legislators can do to do our best to legislate, to do everything we can to prevent this. There are a few things that we know for sure contribute to the prevention of addiction, and one of those things is poverty eradication. Although it's a simple phrase, it's an incredibly complex action that requires a focus on the work, and it requires dedication of resources.

I guess it's a few months now that we've been in this place debating pieces of legislation and certainly the budget, and what I have seen – I've heard again and again, you know, that it's about sustainability, that it's about, I guess, giving tax breaks to large corporations and then hoping that that trickles down to everybody else. But there has not been, in my opinion, a consistent, focused effort on poverty eradication.

That requires a lot of work on multiple fronts. [interjection] Yes, it does require jobs, but it also requires good-paying jobs at the very lowest end. That means low-income earners. That means young people that earn the minimum wage trying to save for school, of course now trying to save for school with slightly higher tuition. That means people on income support. That means people that are unable to work for a variety of reasons, some of those reasons being addiction, mental health. That means people being on income support and knowing that that income will be indexed, at the very least. These are grinding poverty wages, but at the very least this was a little bit of a hand up.

Poverty eradication requires investment in safe and affordable housing. It requires investment in access to medication, access to therapy, access to all of these things that people living in poverty cannot afford. You know, it's not surprising when you hear somebody that has lived their life in poverty talk about the path that led them to the place where addiction was the result. You can see very clearly all along the way the failure of whatever systems we've set up in terms of poverty.

As legislators there's not a lot that we can do to help individual people from this place, but what we can do is introduce and support legislation that does everything we can to ensure that we address poverty.

You know, I talked a little bit about the therapies that are required. I don't know if you've ever supported somebody who doesn't have any disposable income. They're trying to live on under \$900 a month. If you've ever tried to do that, it's virtually impossible. Every month that goes by, you are further and further in the hole. Then someone will say to this person who is living in poverty: "Well, you really need some therapy. You should really go see a therapist. You should go see a counsellor. You should go to this group. You should try this." But in real time that means maybe having a bus pass or being able to afford a bus pass or being able to afford your portion of the counselling fee, any of those things, or being able to afford child care or having a home.

All of these things are interrelated, and I understand that this piece of legislation is not focused on eradicating poverty. In fact, it's more about lawsuits. I understand that completely. But I just want to continuously remind this government that we have more tools to use. There are more things that we can do, and you have to know that any investment you make to eradicate poverty has a direct result on addiction. We know that. I think that the science is pretty clear. We've known it for a while, yet I don't know why – I guess it requires a lot of attention and resources. But we do know what the answers are, and they are prevention and investment.

Again, I do understand opening the doors to have producers of this product, very much like cigarettes, be responsible for what they have done and what they have created and what has been misused. I support that, and I agree with that. I don't always agree with all class-action lawsuits. With this one I actually would, because I do think that ultimately, as a class of people that are represented together to seek damages, they are harmed, and I think that in this environment and in this day and age we see these types of lawsuits more and more frequently. We have seen it with survivors, I think, of the '60s scoop. That was a class-action lawsuit.

More and more these days we see – and, again, I don't mean to skirt my responsibility to be loyal to certain sectors of this province – that the reality is that in our world, in North America in particular, there are more and more people coming together to look towards producers in certain sectors, sometimes oil and gas, that are saying that they want class-action litigation because of the implications or the ramifications of what different sectors have created, for lack of a better word. I don't always agree with every piece of litigation or every action. However, I do understand that it is a tool to use with producers and people that have reaped enormous benefit, not just a little bit but enormous benefit, from producing things like opioids and other things.

Again, I just want to reiterate that I am supportive of this legislation. I think it would have been quite lovely to have other pieces of legislation that addressed prevention so that we would never get here. Ultimately, of course, that is the goal, that we don't get here. I would have liked to see that. I would like to see that in the future, because I think that if we're just constantly trying to put a Band-Aid on a gaping wound, we're not really going to get very far.

On that note, I will take my seat. Thank you.

8:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to also support Bill 28, the Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act. I think this is a good step in supporting those with addictions. I would have liked to see it do a little bit more, but I'm happy to rise and talk about things that we can do as a government to support those that are struggling with opioid addiction.

We know that Albertans need this government to take action. Action: what does that mean? I think that means making sure that there are resources available for our health care and front-line support being put in place, expanding treatment and wraparound supports that are already in place, providing more for those that offer support and services to those struggling with opioid addiction.

We hear the countless heartbreaking stories of those that have died because of opioid use. When you sit down with a family and talk about the loss of their loved one, it's heartbreaking. You hear from families that if only there were more supports within the

system, if only their child, their spouse, their grandchild was able to access more resources, more supports, perhaps this person wouldn't have died from an opioid overdose. Madam Speaker, I can tell you that I've heard these stories too many times from friends who have family members who are struggling with opioid addiction and just feeling completely helpless to what they can do.

I have a very good friend whose sibling suffers from an opioid addiction. He is a parent. He's now a grandparent. He lives in rural Alberta and really, really struggles to find resources, to find a physician that fully understands the needs that he has rather than writing another prescription for an alternative medication. He's struggling with opioids, and he's turned to the streets to find these drugs because the physicians have stopped providing the prescriptions, but they're not providing an alternative. They're not providing him services, addictions treatment that would perhaps save his life, and he has begged for some of these services. He has told me that he doesn't want to live this life, that it's something that he's embarrassed by. He makes promises to family that he's going to stop but can't. I know that in my friend's efforts she's met with addictions counsellors to try to get some resources, what they can do as a family to try and support him. The thing with addictions is that the majority of the services that are available, unless the addicts themselves want to get help and services, are not able to provide supports.

So knowing that we're making a step forward with supporting those suffering is a good thing, Madam Speaker. I think that hearing from Albertans about their concern about this crisis is essential, and we've heard that supports and resources are absolutely essential when we look at ways that we can support those suffering from addictions.

Our government, like we heard the Member for St. Albert talk about, made significant investments in ensuring that supports were available for those that were suffering. We made sure that community and addictions beds were funded, that specific opioid treatments through Alberta Health Services were funded. We increased access to things like naloxone, making sure that our first responders had them because we know that when someone is using and they are overdosing, naloxone will save their life. We know that safe consumption sites save lives. These are the types of steps that we took as a government to assist those struggling with opioid addictions.

It's not so much looking at the crisis but how did we get here, looking at prevention for those even starting on opioids. We heard the member talk about things like poverty having an impact. We know that for those that are struggling, that are dealing with job loss, that are dealing with threats of potential job loss, that are dealing with financial barriers, employment barriers, those are major stressors in peoples' lives, and they might then turn to ways to numb that. Right now it is a crisis of opioid use, and that's very tragic because people are dying. It's something that you can use once and overdose.

I've heard stories of parents whose children are struggling. Hearing a parent talk about the acknowledgement that they need to go and get a naloxone kit because it could save their lives – the terrified look on their faces is heartbreaking, knowing that they need to access a drug that potentially might save their child's life in the event of an overdose. Then trying to educate their child about the importance of safety: risk management, when you're working with people that are struggling, having that conversation; not using alone, making sure that you're around people that are aware that you are using opioids. Then how to administer naloxone, should that happen, is part of that conversation that we're trying to educate people with.

It's absolutely essential that we keep talking about this because without funding and without providing essential resources into our

health care system, people are going to continue to die. I think that having a bill that is talking about that and looks at ways that we can start supporting people is something that's really, really important. Like I said before, this is something that doesn't go, I think, far enough, but it's a good first step. I know that it's something that I'm proud to stand in the House and talk about.

I know that the Royal Alex here in Edmonton was the first hospital that had a safe consumption site in North America. I know that that's a hospital that my constituents access. It's somewhere that my constituents go. You hear the stories about people in the community that are using in that area, so it's a logical, natural place to put a safe consumption site. If that's the community where people are using, it only makes sense that that's also a community where they're going to use the safe consumption site.

I have statistics here. From January to September 2018 there was a total of 122,497 visits to the Lethbridge, Calgary, and Edmonton community-based safe consumption sites. A total of 1,316 overdoses were attended to, and there were no deaths on these sites. We know that investing in services that help people, that meet people where they're at, saves lives.

Talking about this opioid crisis is so important. I'm happy to stand in the House and just say that this is something that I know was in our platform in supporting the opioid crisis, and I'm glad that this government has taken that leadership that we provided and is making a piece of legislation that is moving in the right direction. We know that we need to continue to improve access to opioid-dependency treatment facilities: perhaps opening clinics, opening more services, doing more education.

Making sure that our indigenous communities are properly funded: that's something that is very important. We took that to heart in our government. We heard from indigenous communities that this is something that they needed, so we invested. We put an additional \$4 million in funding to support their own opioid-related initiatives in their communities. They have practices in their communities that they work through with treatment, and we said: "We want to support you. You come up with your program, and we will help fund it. It's your community. You're asking for this, and we want to support it."

8:10

Continuing to provide public awareness, like I talked about, initiatives within communities where they're self-identifying that they're struggling, listening to the community because they're the ones who see those that are struggling with addictions, believing in them, and making sure that they have the resources to support the community – we need to make sure that we're continuing to raise awareness and reduce stigma around opioid use. Like I said, if someone is using and they have shame and embarrassment about that use, they're more likely to use alone, in isolation, and overdose. If we're talking about it and acknowledging that someone is struggling, we can then provide services and support to that person that could perhaps save their life.

Madam Speaker, I again say that I rise today to support Bill 28, and I look forward to further debate and discussion on this as we move through this legislation. I just want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, would any minister like to close debate?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I mean, I think it's a bill that's caused quite a bit of debate in this House already, but it's always important to go back and look at what the consequences of the bill will be and how it will affect our families, our communities, and our neighbours.

Obviously, this bill makes every single Albertan pay more, right? It uses a sneaky measure, which the Premier himself railed against and called bracket creep when he was on the CTF, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, to do a tax grab and make every single family pay more in personal income taxes. That's something that is in black and white in this bill, and it's something that I think members of the House need to be aware of when they vote for or against this bill. I mean, we also think that there are going to be higher property taxes.

We think that investors are going to be moving their capital to other places. Indeed, we've already seen quite a few losses in the film and television industry. We've seen investment and jobs leaving this province and moving to other jurisdictions. We're also seeing things like tech jobs disappear because many of the investor tax credits and the digital media tax credits and the capital investment tax credits that were important in bringing technology, gave companies like BioWare the ability to double the size of their staff here in Edmonton, and attracted investment in jobs and technology jobs here to Alberta – they are now looking elsewhere. They're moving to other jurisdictions. They're moving to the United States. They're moving to other parts of Canada like Vancouver or Toronto.

It's something that I think is disappointing to see in this bill. It's disappointing to see that this bill basically takes a program that was diversifying our economy, that was investing in communities, making good new jobs, that supported things like oil and gas and also had the opportunity to diversify away from oil and gas, to do both of those things at the same time – we had these targeted investments to start bringing new corporations and new companies and start-ups and innovation here to Alberta. Instead, what we see is a \$4.7 billion handout to the wealthiest corporations, that doesn't create any jobs and isn't effective at spurring innovation or helping start-ups because, Madam Chair, as we know, start-ups don't benefit from this \$4.7 billion corporate handout; only wealthy, profitable corporations do, and that's something that I think is disappointing to see.

We think that there are going to be things like property tax hikes. We can see that money is going to be diverted from things like community organizations when we see the lottery fund being brought into general revenue. We can see that different funds that support cancer research are being abolished, and environmental protection and enhancement are being abolished. Those are all very disappointing things. It's the type of values that this government has. They don't think it's important to have these separate funds that are targeted to supporting our communities, supporting our

communities in specific ways. The values show that they think it's better in general revenue, that this government knows better, that this government doesn't need direction on these funds, and I think that's something that's disappointing.

It's disappointing that this bill also attacks things like light rail transit. We know that the green line is now in jeopardy in Calgary. We know that the west LRT is now in jeopardy in Edmonton. It's really shocking, the attack on municipalities and the inability for the province to have actually gone to the table and negotiated some of these changes with municipalities. Instead, the government decided that they're going to tell cities what to do, that they know better, that that's their job. That's the government's prerogative. I think it's disappointing. I think cities are disappointed, I think municipalities are disappointed, and I think Albertans are disappointed. It's something that's shocking, and it's shocking because – I've listed this laundry list of changes that are coming that are going to hurt families, that are going to hurt communities, that are going to hurt Albertans, Madam Chair.

But you'll note something, that not a lot of them are quite that related, Madam Chair. It's interesting because it speaks to this government's direction for the Legislature. It speaks to how this government wants to treat the Legislature. What's happening is that this government is trying to Americanize this Legislature. They're bringing in an omnibus bill, a bill that changes, I believe, something like 20-some things at once. That's something that we've seen happen in American Legislatures, the Congress in the United States, the Senate in the United States, where they do these big omnibus bills and try to tack on as many things as possible so that it's hard for the opposition to understand, it's hard for the opposition to debate effectively, and it's hard to really narrow down what the intent of each single bill is, because it has multiple intents. That's something that's disappointing.

I don't think it's what we want to see here in the Legislature. I don't think we want to see an Americanization of our democracy. I don't think that we should Americanize how we do things in this province. I think Albertans are proud that we have our own way, that we can do things in a respectful manner, and that we don't have to try to use underhanded tactics like omnibus legislation to try and hide what's going on.

If the government indeed was proud of what they were doing and if they thought that Albertans supported what they were doing, they would know that they didn't have to do this, that they didn't have to try and wrap it all up and ram it through the House in one big package. They would know that they could bring each piece of the bill individually and debate it to its full merits. If they believed that Albertans supported it and they believed that that was something that they were proud to present, they wouldn't have tried to bundle it all up and try and hide it in one package to make it as complicated as possible and address almost every single ministry in this House. I think it's something that's short-sighted, I think it's ideological, and I think it's something that's going to hurt Alberta's prosperity. When we look at this clear partisanship, this pure ideology, and this pure changing of how we want to do things in Alberta to be more like the Americans, I think that's something that Albertans aren't going to be very happy about.

I'm going to go back and talk a little bit about some of these broken promises. We can see in this bill – again, Madam Chair, it's an omnibus bill, so I have to be all over the place here – that the dollars that were promised and the multiyear agreements for charters, for example, that were in the UCP platform are simply not being followed through with. The platform is actually just being broken. The promises are being broken by the government. It's in black and white, and perhaps that's why they tried to bury it in a 102-page-long bill.

Perhaps they didn't think that people would notice, Madam Chair, but we noticed. We noticed that on page 77 of the UCP platform it says, "Maintain dollars promised to municipalities for 2019-20, as well as the multi-year agreement in the Bill 32 Charters for Calgary and Edmonton." That's the quote from the UCP platform. Instead, what we see is basically a complete broken promise here. Instead, they're going to tear up the contracts. Instead, they're going to dictate to the cities how they want to move forward. Instead, they're going to dictate the terms of the agreements that are going to be negotiated moving forward, so they're not really negotiations. It's bad faith. I think this government knows a couple of things about bad-faith negotiations. This just again plays to that narrative and shows that they don't respect actually talking about how things should be done.

**8:20**

Again, from page 81 of the UCP platform, Madam Chair, they also said that they would "consult with stakeholders in the film, television and digital media industries to create an optimal tax credit designed to attract large productions and series." Again, given that the industry basically hates this tax credit – indeed, by cancelling the other film production grants and the former digital media tax credit, basically it's going to cost jobs right here in this province, it's going to cost people their livelihoods, it's going to cost families the ability just to make a living. Given that this is what this bill is doing and that the type of things they are doing directly affects the pocketbooks of Albertans and directly puts Albertans out of work, contrary to what their platform had intended to do, contrary to what they promised Albertans, given that they are directly, intentionally putting Albertans out of work – I think that's something that's very disappointing. I think it's something that all members of this House should be concerned about, that members of the opposition are particularly concerned about.

I think it's disappointing because we're seeing that when they give \$4.7 billion away to big corporations, there are no returns and there are no jobs and there's no investment here in Alberta. In fact, we're actually seeing companies take their money and take it somewhere else. A big example is the United States. EnCana is walking away, and they actually said that they're taking \$55 million additionally as profits as a result of the Premier's wealthy gift to profitable corporations. The Premier promised that his giveaway to big corporations would create jobs, but instead what we're seeing is that we're losing 27,000 jobs. That's something that's disappointing. We're seeing that this government's \$4.7 billion giveaway to wealthy corporations, profitable corporations, is doing absolutely nothing to fill office towers. It's doing nothing to provide relief for out-of-work oil workers. It's doing nothing to provide relief for the economy.

In fact, as people continue to struggle and jobs continue to be lost, the types of cuts that are being brought in in this bill, the types of cuts that make life more expensive for every single Albertan, the increase in personal income taxes: all these things basically show that this government is standing up for wealthy corporations instead of for everyday Albertans. That's something that's very disappointing. It's something that's very disappointing, that we're seeing these types of cuts, because the investment tax credits and the capital investment tax credits and the digital media tax credit and all of the types of credits that were targeted and actually working are now just being removed. They're actually just being taken away, right? They were creating jobs, and families depended on them for their jobs.

As we can also see, this government's reckless cuts to the public service and this government's reckless cuts to innovation are now resulting in another 25 per cent layoff of the entire Alberta

Innovates Corporation staff, Madam Chair. Alberta Innovates is an organization that helps spur innovators, helps spur start-ups in particular and other organizations to do diversification – for example, they do things like oil field technologies; they do things like agricultural development – all across the spectrum. Instead of supporting innovation, instead of supporting these new jobs and diversifying our economy, instead of supporting these organizations and start-ups and job creators, what the government is doing is they said: we're going to remove all your grants, and then we're going to cut the actual branch that is there to support you.

Again and again this government is not standing up for small businesses, this government is not standing up for Albertans, it's not standing up for jobs. Instead, they're giving money away to their friends and donors and the wealthiest corporations.

I think it's something that's very disappointing because we're also seeing that on one hand, while they're making life harder – they're taking jobs away; they're removing funding from things that were creating jobs – they're slashing and burning the benefits that Albertans rely on as well. I mean, the new Alberta child and family benefit will reduce benefits for, I think, about 165,000 Albertans. That's something that means 165,000 Albertans will basically have less in their pocket at the end of every single month. That's not what this government ran on. I don't think this government intended to try and hurt this many families. Out of those 165,000, 55,000 of those Albertans will lose the benefit entirely, so there are 55,000 Albertans that are completely losing the child and family benefit tax credit. That's something that's very shocking to me because basically they've made 55,000 Albertans' lives harder – right? – 55,000 people in this province. Their lives are undeniably harder. They will have less money in their pockets at the end of the month because of the changes that this government wants to bring in this bill.

I think it's something that's disappointing. I think that this government should speak to it and explain to those 55,000 families why they think it's okay to take money out of their pockets without asking, why it's okay to take money out of their pockets without consulting at all. I know that the Premier and this government have spoken to how they wanted to move without consultation. I think that's very reckless. I think it's something that is going to hurt a lot of families, and it's going to make a lot of families suffer. I think that that's something that nobody in this House wants. When we see the government moving forward with these reckless cuts, these reckless attacks on basically every facet of our province, it is really shameful, and I think it's really disappointing.

We can also see that pretty clearly the government doesn't care at all about postsecondary students and their families. They're raiding financial supports for students. Tuition is going to go up by as much as 23 per cent, Madam Chair. Student loan rates are going up, so basically if you had a student loan, good luck, because now you're paying more. It works out to thousands of dollars per loan, something that is being used basically to pay for the \$4.7 billion giveaway to profitable corporations.

If we're looking at postsecondary and we're looking at how people keep diversifying and how people get back to work and how people try to support themselves, well, postsecondary is one of the best ways to do it, to go back to school, whether it's another trade or some other form of postsecondary, and try to learn other things and try to be able to be useful in the workforce and have other opportunities in the workforce.

But instead of actually giving those opportunities to people that are out of work and young people, this government has decided that they're going to cut that and give \$4.7 billion away to profitable corporations, that are going to lay off workers, lay off thousands of

workers, and then move out of the country and take the money out of the country because they're just pocketing those profits, and I think that that's something that's very concerning. I think it's something that this government should be concerned about, but it appears that they either don't understand the impact or they don't care, Madam Chair, and that's something that's pretty disappointing.

I mean, I think I've spoken a lot about how basically this omnibus bill, this American-style omnibus bill, that attacks so many Albertans and attacks basically every facet of our community, is shameful and it hurts communities and families, but I want to hear from some of my other colleagues here as well, so I'm going to make sure we give some time for that.

I encourage every single member to actually read the impacts of this bill, to actually look at the bill and say that there are 165,000 families that you're taking child benefits away from. There are 55,000 families that you're actually taking the child and family benefit completely away from. I want every single member to think about that because what you're doing is that you're reaching into those households and you're telling them that they deserve less and that they shouldn't have support and that it's going to hurt and that you're okay with that if you support that.

That's just food for thought, Madam Chair, but I look forward to hearing from the rest of my colleagues.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak and perhaps offer some constructive changes to Bill 20. As my colleagues have said before in the media and the general public, these omnibus bills are problematic because of the scope and the breadth of what they try to cover. Perhaps, you know, totally unrelated, different topics sometimes can be both confusing and maybe not focusing in exactly how it should be.

I am this evening going to propose a specific change to a section. This section is 24, and it's talking about postsecondary education specifically, which is, of course, my responsibility as critic for the Official Opposition. What my amendment will try to address is issues around enrolment. Quite frankly, it took me a while to even sort of get my head around this one. I figured that if I was the critic, then I should know better, and I do, but for the general public and for others, you know, we need to cast some clearer light on this.

Maybe what I'll do, Madam Chair, with your consent, is to pass this amendment around, and then I will make some comments on it, okay?

**The Chair:** Awesome. Thank you.

Hon. member, do you have the original copy?

8:30

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. Sorry.

**The Chair:** Okay. Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A3. I'll just give the member a minute to get a copy back.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Great. Thank you very much. This amendment, I think, has to do, like I said, with enrolment. The amendment should do the following things, right? When the minister wants to change enrolment targets, he or she must consult with the faculties or institutions in question. I think that making that explicit is pretty much a prerequisite for any changes to enrolment. You know that we want to make the best, efficient use of the positions in the



faculties that we have around the province or the trades colleges or what have you – apprenticeship programs, let's say – and it's important to have conversations with the people on the ground that know best what's going on.

Second of all, if enrolment targets would affect a regulated profession, then the minister would have to consult with those responsible bodies as well. Again, I know from experience – you know, speaking to the teachers, for example, or with the licensed practical nurses' regulatory body, with the doctors – that this is all absolutely essential. We know that, let's say, for example, enrolment is quite explicitly determined in trades colleges like NAIT and SAIT in consultation with industry. They can give a pretty good idea. That's how places like NAIT and SAIT end up with an 80 or 90 per cent job success rate for their graduates in the trades, because they have an explicit conversation setting enrolment spaces with industry. That's worked really well for many years, and I think we need to continue with that.

Thirdly, the minister would have to ensure that enrolment targets are not adversely affecting completion rates of Alberta high school students, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit high school students. Again, we want to make every effort to increase our graduation rates here in the province of Alberta. I know that, for myself as a minister, we employed a "Where is there room for most improvement?" sort of model in trying to improve high school graduation rates, and where there's room for most improvement is definitely with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. So we want to make sure that we are creating an environment where kids can look to graduate from high school with a purpose, that purpose being that there are postsecondary positions and opportunities for them to look forward to, to move to after they get their high school graduation completed.

I mean, that's, I think, a very practical and friendly change to this section of the bill that I believe will benefit lots of students. I'm doing this just to avoid, perhaps, unintended consequences – right? – down the road, because we don't want to limit the opportunities or possibilities of students, especially students that otherwise maybe don't normally go to a trades college or university or something like that, and just to keep the doors open fully for everybody.

These enrolment targets can be a signal to students and to institutions, and we want to make sure that we're sending the right message, not the wrong message. Setting the wrong enrolment target could lead to a number of challenges for institutions that may not be able to meet arbitrary targets, or they may just not be able to make sense of them at all, right? Again, you want to make sure it's something that people can live with, can live with in their planning. You know, one of the strengths of our postsecondary system here in the province of Alberta is its diversity. We have smaller colleges like Lakeland or Portage or Keyano, let's say, that provide very targeted regional programming and know what their students and what their clients and what their potential students are and how they could reach them in the future.

I noted, when I visited Concordia college here in Edmonton a couple of weeks ago, how their long-term planning was very specific to their college and I think offered an insight that is unique to their ability to see where their students had been coming from and where they will be coming from in the future. Indeed, they were super successful. They've, you know, doubled their enrolment in a very short period of time. They're growing. They need capital investment, just as a little hint to the hon. minister that they are growing and that they will come, and we need both the capital investment and the teachers' support to make that happen. That's just one of our 28 or so colleges across the province, and many others are in the same situation.

We want to build. That's my point, Madam Chair, that we want to build growth based on being creative and responsive to the regions, and we want to make sure that if we are setting targets and so forth, we're doing that in a responsible and fully open and consultative manner. I think this amendment does the job. It's a pretty fine, fine amendment if I do say so myself, and I would encourage constructive reflection and criticism of it, perhaps with the idea that we would pass it and make an amendment to Bill 20.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise to speak to this amendment, which I do plan on supporting. I thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for bringing it forward. I think it's important that we do support it.

Once again, looking at the legislation as it currently is stated, the minister may establish an enrolment target for a public postsecondary institution. Now, this amendment would change that to seek consultations of no less than six months before allowing a minister to establish such an enrolment target. I'm very concerned with the legislation as it's originally stated in Bill 20, with the fact that the minister now wants to further meddle in the postsecondary institutions within our province. We've heard this minister stand up day in and day out and say, you know, things like, "We need to get the politics out of postsecondary education" and "We need to let them be independent of the minister," yet here we have in Bill 20, in black and white, that the minister actually wants to further meddle in their ability to offer programming. So that's very concerning to me.

Once again, the philosophy of this UCP government on one hand says that they want to get out of the way of organizations like postsecondary institutions, yet in this legislation they're trying to do the exact opposite, which is very concerning. Really, the amendment is very reasonable in the fact that it asks that the minister provide six months of consultation with these institutions before making these arbitrary enrolment targets, and I think that it's the right thing to do.

**8:40**

This government talks day in and day out – their actions speak louder than their words, of course, but they talk about consultation very often. I would be interested to find out who they consulted with that brought these concerns about enrolment targets being enforced by the minister. I'd be very interested to hear from that minister how this came into Bill 20 in the first place.

We have many concerns. Once again, we look at Bill 20 talking about getting rid of these very important tax credits, which I will speak more to later. Their reasoning is that we need to get out of the way of politicians making decisions about where money should be moved. Well, of course, we will talk about the \$4.7 billion that they are planning to move outside of the province, which is very concerning. On one hand they're getting rid of these very important tax credits which align us with other provinces in terms of the ability of the government to support industries like the digital media industry among others. Unfortunately, they are trying to get into the politics of deciding where students should go to school.

Once again, I thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for bringing this forward. I do plan on supporting it. The role of consultation in our democracy and as we create legislation is incredibly important. I would hate to see this section of Bill 20, which will, I imagine, hastily be moved through this Legislature, just like the previous bill was, and have wide, sweeping changes to

the way that we do business and the way that we interact with our postsecondary institutions – that's very concerning to me, Madam Chair.

Once again, I don't think that the government should be in the business of deciding where students go to school or what they are doing in school, and I think that students who are in high school right now and thinking about what they want to do will be very offended that now we have a minister trying to pass legislation that may, without consultation, dictate how they are receiving their education in postsecondary or what education they are getting in the first place.

Of course, postsecondary institutions, as has been discussed, offer a wide array of programming, whether it be bachelor studies or – for myself, when I went, I first obtained a certificate in radio-television broadcasting, a two-year diploma. Then I returned for my electrical apprenticeship. I think that people should be able to study whatever they want to study. With this Bill 20, if it weren't to accept these amendments, that may change, and that's very concerning, especially when we consider the funding that these postsecondary institutions receive from the minister and from the Ministry of Advanced Education. If a postsecondary institution decided that they wouldn't in fact listen to the minister in how they would provide programming or establish enrolment targets, there's concern that the minister might come back and, you know, hold funding as a dangling carrot over these institutions. That's very concerning to me.

Once again, I hope all members will support this amendment to Bill 20. I think it's common sense. I think it's the right thing to do. Consultation is always the right thing to do, and rarely is there enough consultation. I think this strikes the right balance.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any more speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to speak in favour of this amendment. Certainly, you know, this omnibus bill that we're discussing right now, Bill 20, needs a lot of improvement. This goes partway to creating some improvement, so I appreciate my hon. colleague's amendment to shift things to make sure that students are able to access programs as they need to. I mean, one of the things that we know about this legislation that is proposed before us is that it is challenging students, absolutely, to make sure that they have the support that they should have in a province that's rich like Alberta, that should be supporting students to access postsecondary education.

There are other aspects of the bill that certainly are, you know, really – one of the questions I've posed in this House before is that when you look at legislation, when you look at policies, it's really important to ask: who benefits? Who benefits from this? Then you can tell whether – that goes a long way in terms of the assessment of that policy. There are many people who are not going to benefit from this legislation. Certainly, you know, two big players in our province are the big cities, both Edmonton and Calgary. Both of our mayors have come out very strongly against Bill 20. Quite frankly, they've been kind of shocked. Of course, I know that it's very important to this government to recite repeatedly, "Promise made, promise kept," but in terms of the city charters it's: promise made, promise broken. Both big-city mayors have talked about them scrapping the city charters fiscal framework, going from a \$500 million plan that we, when we were government, worked very long and very hard on and really did our due diligence on to support really progressive, positive wins for both the province and those big cities. Of course, they need a bit of a different setup than the other

centres that are smaller. The big cities have sort of unique needs and demands, so we worked very closely with both Mayor Iveson here in Edmonton and Mayor Nenshi in Calgary.

Mayor Iveson said that he was very disappointed because he was not expecting this change and that the province broke their commitment. He said: it was completely blindsiding to us that that's been reneged on as a campaign promise and as a piece of legislation that the UCP themselves voted for. This is also confusing because I know that the government likes to talk about making commitments and fulfilling their promises, but here's a clear one where they absolutely didn't. Certainly, Mayor Iveson has talked about, you know, the impact that it's going to have on the city of Edmonton and said: we're going to have to make some cuts, and they're going to hurt, and I'm going to explain to Edmontonians why the government of Alberta's broken promises are making life harder for Edmontonians. A direct quote from the mayor: projects like the LRT expansion will be delayed as funds aren't coming until later.

Mayor Nenshi also said, you know, understanding certainly that it was a part of the platform that this would be continuing, that the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act would continue: the United Conservative caucus voted for it in the fall Legislature sitting and will respect the multiyear funding in that agreement. Nenshi said: that's a black-and-white promise. With that, Nenshi crumpled up the piece of paper he was holding and threw it away because it meant nothing. The commitment dissolved right before him.

Certainly, the big cities are not benefiting, and much more is expected of them from this government. That's a pretty – I don't know – damning situation, I would say, because I think that any government wants to have integrity. I'm just confused by this omnibus bill where they clearly have ripped up those agreements with the big cities.

Besides that, there's just, you know, unrelated – really, as we know, it's an omnibus bill; it has all sorts of things thrown together in one. It makes it kind of difficult to make any coherence out of it. There are many funds that are going to be cancelled, and whatever reserves are left in them will just be transferred to general revenue. For example, with the access to the future fund, about \$58 million will be transferred; with the environmental protection and enhancement fund, \$150 million will be transferred just to general revenue; with the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, \$451 million; and then with the Alberta lottery fund, \$52 million. These organizations that are being disbanded by this omnibus bill provided some valuable contributions to our province.

**8:50**

One of them that I'd like to talk about a little bit is the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund. Certainly, this organization supported society to have awareness about cancer, how to prevent it. You know, certainly, we know that cancers are linked to how we live. Some cancers are; some cancers aren't. Things such as what we eat and how much alcohol we drink, whether we're active or up to date with our screening tests: these are all important things. And this Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund would actually do education programs, support Albertans to understand: what are some things that we can do to take care of ourselves? You know, having a cancer diagnosis can create a huge difficulty for a family.

I mean, we know there is a tremendous amount that can be done to overcome a cancer diagnosis. I'm living proof of that. I have had treatment for leukemia, and I am doing quite well now. I'm being followed for the next year and a half or something, and then, they tell me, I'll be cured if things go well. I'm so grateful for the tremendous work that this group has done with all sorts of different kinds of cancers.

One of the things they did was that they did reach out all over Alberta, to many different towns and cities and people living on-reserve, and actually helped them to understand what are some things they could do to overcome the challenges, you know, to make sure that they were healthy and living well.

Here in Edmonton the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund actually funded the Kids on Track Association of Edmonton. That helps kids who live in low income, new Canadians, ethnically and culturally diverse, and marginalized families who may be socially isolated and face barriers to inclusion. They were given a grant to increase operational capacity to provide more opportunities for the families that they worked with. That's just one of them. I have, like, several pages.

Up in Fort MacKay they had an outdoor community garden project to build on the success they'd seen with the indoor tower garden. This garden will become a community hub and create a sense of community and togetherness for residents and community members.

The Samson Cree First Nation was partnering with a number of community agencies to engage youth in a new health program, Cree youth cooking skills, and it'll focus on promoting a healthier lifestyle through an improved understanding of healthy eating, cooking skills, and cultural teachings.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary received a grant; Jasper Place Wellness Centre, Food4Good received a grant; the North Peace Youth Support Association in Fairview and the Alexander First Nation and the Viking Community Wellness Society received a grant. You know, I hope I'm making myself clear in that I'm explaining that all over our province people benefited from this program, and now it seems that our current government no longer thinks that this is important and has just put the excess revenues, I guess, into general revenue.

We also know that with the access to the future fund, Alberta Advanced Education, there was \$58 million in that. That helped our advanced education system be innovative, supported them to develop excellence in Alberta's advanced learning system. I mean, that's one of the key words, it seems, maybe a buzzword that this government likes to use, "innovation." You know, innovative things are going to happen so that magically programs can go on without funding, just through innovation somehow. But innovation actually needs funding. It needs support, and it needs money. This is a program that was already set up that, unfortunately, is no longer going to be served. Are we going to be able to continue to have that innovation in the advanced ed system?

One of the areas that I'm certainly quite concerned about is just, you know, what this government has done to the film and video industry in cancelling grants and replacing them with tax credits. The issue is kind of twofold. One is that the grants that have been cut have been replaced by tax credits. You know, some people have low budgets, and because of that, they can't really claim anything. They need those grants. They can't go ahead with a project without those grants.

When the cuts to the grants were made, the film industry and the video industry were, you know, strongly impacted. I met with representatives from the film and video association, FAVA, here in Edmonton. Their office is located in my riding, in the Orange Hub, which is sort of a building that has many nonprofits. They said that they're just overwhelmed with the changes and that so many projects are now in limbo. Projects can't go ahead with the smaller creative artists trying to do these projects because the grants have been cut, and the tax credits just aren't enough. There's actually a whole year in there, because of just the way this government has changed the rules on when you can apply and when you can't, that they won't have funding.

You know, when I talked to the staff there, they said: I don't want to move out of Alberta, but I feel like this change in how we're going to be funded is actually forcing me to. They're looking at places like Manitoba, possibly, having to move projects out of the province. This is just tragic because the industry was really building and growing and had some momentum. To have almost a year of funding not come through really has stymied so many projects. It's really very sad because a lot of the work that they're doing is local. It's about Alberta. There are a lot of projects focused on, you know, indigenous Albertans. These projects may be lost or moved somewhere else because this government is not supporting our film and video industry. That is very troubling. It's a creative industry that was really beginning to thrive, and we're very sad to see that happen.

You know, other aspects that I'm concerned about, too – again, it seems almost illogical that we're talking about the film industry, talking about those funds, talking about the city charters, and now I'm going to talk to you about indexing tax brackets, yet this is all in one bill. This is in this omnibus bill. It's very clear that this government just wants to ram things through without us really having the time to understand and clearly debate fairly.

Now I'm going to talk about indexing tax brackets. It's the first time since 2001 – that's, you know, 19 years ago – that tax brackets have not been indexed. Even though this government's narrative is that, "No, we're not raising taxes," they absolutely are because their neglecting to do this has meant that all Albertans will be paying more, \$600 million more in taxes over this term. That is a concern, absolutely, for our opposition here. We are not in support of that. Each year, we know, the cost of living goes up. Those kinds of things are just done, and this government is just trying to grab money from individuals. Despite them saying that for sure they're not going to raise taxes, it's a clear indication that they are.

You know, in moving to do so many different things with this bill, it's confusing for regular Albertans to even understand what this government is doing, but I think that perhaps that's part of the plan. The plan is: we're just going to try to ram as much through, and Albertans won't really understand, so they can't actually be concerned about it. Certainly, on this side of the House we are concerned, and we are doing our best to identify these things that this government is doing that are hurting Albertans. It's not as rosy as it was presented during the campaign and what they said in their platform. There are clear broken promises, and I've identified some of them right now: not indexing tax brackets, breaking the commitment regarding the city charters. These are things that are hurting Albertans, hurting Albertans here in the big cities . . .

9:00

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order.

**Ms Sigurdson:** . . . and certainly also . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry, hon. member. A point of order has been called.

#### **Point of Order Relevance**

**Mr. Ellis:** I apologize. I hesitate to interrupt. I'm sorry. I was certainly listening intently to what the member was saying. I rise under 23(b):

speaks to matters other than

(i) the question under discussion.

I certainly appreciate the member's opposition to the bill itself, but we are talking about the amendment here, postsecondary enrolment targets. I appreciate the fact that the member has talked about everything in the bill with the exception of postsecondary

enrolment targets, but I certainly ask the chair to try and bring this under the amendment on which we are talking.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I would tend to agree with this point of order. You have about three minutes left, which I'm sure you will use to talk about the amendment. Please proceed.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I will focus now more closely on the amendment. Certainly, the amendment is to Bill 20, and that was my focus. But I understand that this is – I just want to again reiterate that I certainly am concerned about many things in Bill 20, and this sort of amendment does go some of the way to improving the legislation before us and making sure that students are supported.

With that, Madam Chair, I think I'll take my seat.

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Happy to rise to speak to the amendment before us. You know, I'll be voting against the motion, and I'll be encouraging them to do the same. I find the amendment quite prescriptive in what it's seeking to achieve here. I mean, it's absolutely important that as we look at moving forward and we look at developing enrolment targets with our postsecondary institutions, we do that in a collaborative and a consultative way, as we have been, as I have been with our institutions thus far in terms of fulfilling our campaign commitments that we made to Albertans as they relate to postsecondary education. We've doing that with a lot of very thoughtful discussion, very thoughtful debate and deliberation with our postsecondary stakeholders, our university administrators, our faculty representatives, our student leaders. There's definitely a very strong desire and a very strong history already from our side in terms of active consultation with our postsecondary institutions, and we will absolutely be continuing that as we look at developing enrolment targets for our postsecondary institutions.

The bill already makes it clear, on page 64 here if you're following along, in that it says, "The Minister, in consultation with public post-secondary institutions, may identify and establish enrolment targets." It's a little redundant and too prescriptive. I think it's important that we do have consultation with our postsecondary institutions, which is already proposed in Bill 20 here for us to be able to do that. Again, I find the amendment quite prescriptive, and it may result in many unforeseen problems and challenges. There are specific timelines in here, a requirement for six months of consultation for enrolment targets, and other prescriptive elements such as competitive admission requirements and that it cannot change more than 5 per cent from the previous year. I think we absolutely have to be very careful and diligent about how we establish enrolment corridors. There's no question about it. We have to be very thoughtful, and that'll be done in consultation with our postsecondary institutions in the right way.

I know that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction would agree with me when it comes to this amendment as well. This has been a recurring theme that we've seen over the past few years, and our institutions are really looking to us to follow through and fulfill our campaign commitment of removing onerous red tape. There's been a lot of that which has been imposed by the former government. We believe it's important that our institutions have the ability and the time and the resources to engage in those activities

that are central to their mandate – pursuing research objectives, innovating, providing high-quality education to the young people of Alberta – not filling in needless reports and onerous administrative requirements, a lot of which have been imposed on them by the former government.

So I encourage my colleagues to not support the amendment that we have before us for the time being. Again, I believe that it's too prescriptive. I do believe, again, it is important that we do work in consultation, in collaboration with our institutions. They certainly know that that's my preference moving forward. That's the relationship that we've cultivated.

I'll yield the rest of my time to you, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members on amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank my friend the Member for Edmonton-North West for bringing forward this amendment and my friends the members for Edmonton-West Henday and Edmonton-Riverview for speaking so thoughtfully to the amendment, and I also want to thank the Member for Calgary-Bow for actually getting up and speaking to the amendment. It has certainly not been the habit of members of Executive Council to debate in any way the amendments that the opposition has brought forward, so I do appreciate the fact that the Member for Calgary-Bow has at least engaged in the debate. However, I do take issue with a number of the points that he raised.

First of all, you know, I think it's important for us to establish that here in the NDP caucus we believe that access to higher education is a right and that every student in Alberta should have a fair shot at going to the university or college of his or her choice. That's why we're bringing forward this amendment, Madam Chair. First of all, the first section talks about making sure that the enrolment targets that are set don't adversely affect student completion rates or negatively affect competitive admission rates. One of the things that we've seen already in the postsecondary sector here in Alberta is skyrocketing admission requirements because of the lack of spaces available in postsecondary programs. That's across all programs. It's not just limited to medicine and nursing, business, those high-demand programs. Even for programs that in other jurisdictions see falling enrolments – and I'm thinking about a basic science degree, for example – enrolment admissions for those kinds of programs have skyrocketed.

I've got a number of young people in my life who were in the process of enrolling in university or college over the past year, and even though these people had averages in their grade 12 years in the high 80s and low 90s, they couldn't get a space in a basic science program at the University of Alberta. That's the case at many universities all across the province. We heard, when I was Minister of Advanced Education, from a number of parents, particularly in Calgary, that their students who were high achievers – by any standard, they were high achievers – couldn't get into the programs of their choice, Madam Chair. That speaks to the lack of accessibility in postsecondary education in this province, an issue that will only get worse under the policies of this government. You can't cut government grants to every college and university by 5 per cent or more and increase accessibility to those programs.

I would be curious to see what's going to happen at the University of Calgary, who just announced that they're laying off approximately 350 staff. What is that going to do to the enrolment requirements in basic arts and sciences programs at that university, when you've got 350 fewer people to deliver those programs to the students?

9:10

That's going to be the case at every university and college because we know that all of the layoffs are not being announced yet, but we anticipate that with the massive reductions in the government grants that we have seen under this UCP government, we can anticipate far more layoffs of that magnitude all across the sector.

I would just note that it's interesting that the government presented in its full-time equivalent estimates in the fiscal plan that there were only going to be 300 layoffs in the entire postsecondary sector with the government grant reductions that the government brought forward, and I would hope that perhaps the Minister of Advanced Education would at least ask the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to revise those numbers so that they more accurately reflect the number of layoffs that we have seen already. They've already exceeded their targets, and that's only one institution that's announced layoffs, and there are far more to come, but that's a side note.

We also want to make sure that, you know, the minister and the department are engaging in consultation, and in section (2) of this amendment that we're bringing forward, we specifically list students because students are often left out of the consultation processes that take place in the postsecondary sector.

Under our government we were quite proactive in making sure that students had a seat at the table. We were engaged in a number of consultations. We engaged in student mental health improvements, and we had students engaged in the consultation process around how to improve the delivery of student mental health programs on campuses all across Alberta. We engaged in a tuition review and a funding model review. We made sure that students were at the table when we were consulting on those issues.

We also had a tech seat enrolment increase plan, and we had student representatives involved with those consultations as well. It's important, I think, that we establish the legal requirement, then, that students be included in making sure that consultations happen with their voices heard because we certainly don't want the people who are going to be most affected by the minister's decision to monkey around with enrolment targets to negatively affect students and not have their voices involved in the process before the minister engages in those kinds of decision-making efforts.

I think that, you know, the one aspect that the Member for Calgary-Bow raised in his opposition to this amendment was the fact that we're prescribing a target for a period of not less than six months on the proposed enrolment target, and I think that that's only fair and reasonable given the speed at which changes in the postsecondary sector have been imposed by this government. It came way too quickly, completely by surprise. There was nothing about any of the changes, other than the adoption of the Chicago principles, that was in the UCP campaign platform, and the system can only handle so much change at once. So if the minister engages in this enrolment target project, we need to make sure that it's done in a thoughtful and timely manner, and I think that a period of not less than six months to engage in those kinds of consultations is reasonable given the sudden shocks that have been applied to the postsecondary system already by this government and the need to engage in any further changes in a thoughtful and reasonable manner.

The Member for Calgary-Bow well knows how difficult it is to make change in the postsecondary world, and I think that all of the stakeholders who are involved in the postsecondary world would welcome and appreciate a six-month time frame for consultations around proposed enrolment targets.

You know, the enrolment targets, of course, with respect to including members of the regulated profession: I think most universities and colleges who do provide programming for students

who are going into professions that are regulated already have some kind of mechanism to consult with those professions. But I think that in these cases it's even more important that those representatives be at the table, particularly given the fact that this government is waging an all-out assault on members of the public sector. Regulated professions who will be working in the public sector will be significantly and negatively affected by this government's decisions to kick a number of public-sector employees to the curb, and we want to make sure that we're not imposing enrolment targets on those kinds of programs and then graduating students who don't have a possibility of a job because this government refuses to fund an adequate number of spaces in the public sector.

You know, it's interesting. In his response to this amendment the Member for Calgary-Bow has complained on the one hand about it being too prescriptive yet on the other hand complains that he's the great laissez-faire, hands-off government, and of course nothing could be further from the truth. This accessibility and affordability clause was nowhere to be found in the Post-secondary Learning Act, and enrolment targets are an entirely new thing in the postsecondary sector, that the Member for Calgary-Bow seems to want to impose on the system with no good justification.

Now, I will say that we did fund targeted program growth in the postsecondary sector under my watch, but that was a response both to our government's desire to diversify the economy of Alberta away from oil and gas, something that this current government has completely abandoned, much to the detriment of future generations of Albertans, I'm sure, but also to the demand from the growing tech sectors in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary and other places where that sector is growing. They told us that in order to attract investment and to create growth in that industry, we needed to graduate people with technical skills that would allow them to be employable right away upon graduation. That's why we funded those enrolment growths.

You know, it's interesting that the government has moved away from that. We had set aside \$50 million to create 3,000 new tech spaces in the postsecondary sector over the next five years, and the government has completely removed the funding available for that. It's interesting that the minister is so eager to impose enrolment targets, yet any funding that was made available for creating enrolment targets has been removed from this budget.

I also want to express some concerns with the fact that the Member for Calgary-Bow seemed so reluctant to include students in the consultation requirements, as this amendment does. I want to warn him against just listening to the voices of university administrators, who, I can tell you, don't always have the best interests of students at heart. They are considering a wide number of factors when they make their decisions. Students are certainly one of them, but it's not always the overriding factor. In a climate where government grants are drying up pretty quickly, you know, university and college administrators are focusing more and more on what's best for the bottom line and making sure that students' concerns are not addressed as the top priority.

9:20

The minister is going to be approached with fantastic-sounding programs, you know, a new certificate in synergy or a diploma in interdisciplinary studies or a master's degree in business for engineers or I don't know what other kinds of things. The price tag for those kinds of programs is going to be extremely high because any time a university or college introduces a new program, that is an opportunity for that university or college to also set a new tuition rate. They're going to recommend the creation of a bunch of fantastic-sounding programs that are going to cost an arm and a leg and that will only provide access to the absolutely wealthiest of the

students here in Alberta and will do nothing to increase access for the people who are disadvantaged due to social, economic, geographic, or cultural factors.

That's why it's really important, Madam Chair, to have students at the table, because they understand what it's like to struggle to get into a university or college, and they act as an effective counterbalance to the voices of administrators, who are definitely not shy about creating very expensive programs that cater to only the wealthiest in the province and do nothing to enhance the accessibility or affordability of the postsecondary sector here in the province.

You know, I would encourage the Member for Calgary-Bow and the other members of the UCP caucus to give this amendment careful consideration. I think it would be wise for everyone to vote in favour of this amendment because we want to make sure that the enrolment targets that are set by this government do not negatively impact students in this province, which, if left unchecked and left only to the desires of the minister alone in consultation with postsecondary-sector administrators, would probably not happen.

I'm sure that all members want to go back to their constituencies and tell the young people in their constituencies that there will be a place for them in the university or college of their choice and that they voted in favour of this amendment to make sure that those spaces were provided, so I hope that all members here in this House will vote in favour of this amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I welcome the opportunity to speak to this amendment. As many of you will know, I have been an instructor at the University of Calgary for many years and, in fact, continue to hold tenure at the University of Calgary in the Faculty of Social Work.

You know, some of the considerations in this particular section of this, well, simply ridiculous compilation in Bill 20 of unrelated phenomena are of concern. We know it's of concern because whenever you're trying to bury things in a pile of other things, you know you're trying to hide them. I am very concerned about what the intention is and what direction we're going with here. The underlying concern for me is the difference between myself and the members of the government in terms of our attitude toward university and other postsecondary institutions in terms of their purpose and their value in society.

Now, the thing that concerns me is that in this section of Bill 20 that is being amended by the amendment we're discussing right now, it's trying to introduce into the Post-secondary Learning Act some increased influence by the minister on the decisions of the institutions which are provided with the responsibility of educating our citizenry. That concerns me a great deal. One of the important aspects of a democracy is that we have people who have a variety of backgrounds and experiences all being given the opportunity to bring their talents and understandings and their skill sets to make decisions on behalf of that section of society for which they are responsible. Now, sometimes that feels a little bit mucky. Sometimes it feels like there are a number of different people making decisions for different reasons.

If we were talking about business, for example, the government members would be very happy about that. They would say that government should stay out of the way and allow businesses to compete against each other and do things. From that organic process, then, good things will rise, and because of the competitive nature of the marketplace, things that are not successful will fall away over time.

Here we have a section of Bill 20 where the government is doing exactly the opposite, so there's inconsistency in their fundamental understanding of what they believe about the nature of society. In this case they're trying to insert the government into the discussion on what institutions will do in order to ensure enrolment in particular areas. That's of great concern because, again, like almost every bill that has been brought forward by this government, it's a centralization of power and decision-making into the hands of a few. We'll literally be in a place where 24 members of cabinet will be making decisions that used to be made by thousands of people around the province of Alberta. When you do that, when you create this small oligarchy of power, then we are in danger of having only a very narrow philosophical range being pursued in terms of our education of our citizenry.

That's of deep concern to me. I'm very concerned that the underlying intention of this act which we're trying to amend here is to bring it into a small group so that they can push particular ideological notions about: what is a valuable piece of learning, what is a valuable pursuit at a postsecondary level versus a nonvaluable? As soon as you have government deciding that these things are valuable – we'll support them, and we're going to increase enrolment in these areas, but we will not do that in these other areas – then we have centralized control, which I think is problematic and even dangerous.

I can tell you that I know that the government very often has a very simplistic view of what education is about, that somehow education needs to be specifically and concretely directed toward a particular form of employment; that is, if one goes into a university or NAIT or one of the academic postsecondary institutions, the government is saying that they should only be going in there because they have the ultimate ideal of obtaining employment in that particular area. I think that that's a very dangerous concept in a democracy.

In fact, we know that in universities a significant number of the students in any program will never actually be involved in the profession for which they're being trained. If you go to an average law school, for example, you'll find that it's almost 50 per cent of students that never actually end up practising law beyond a very brief time after they've gone to law school. Instead, they use it as a kickoff place to move into places such as politics, very common for people with legal training, or go into business, where, while they may bring some of their legal knowledge, they're not actually acting as a lawyer or solicitor in any way but, rather, acting as an executive within that operation. We know that students do that. Every professor will tell you that a significant portion of their students are not going in the direction of the employment to which the government would like them to be trained.

9:30

We think that's okay, and we think that it's okay because our understanding and our value for university education goes much beyond the practicalities of being trained for a particular function in society. Those other things that students learn are fundamentally important in a wide range of things in society. The ability to analyze situations and to engage in complex problem solving is fundamentally important in almost anything you do, not just your business or your occupation but, rather, your whole engagement in society.

We talk often here about the fact that we're very concerned about the undermining of democracy that's been going on in this Legislature over the last number of weeks. One of the things that a good postsecondary education does is provide people with the tools to effectively participate in that democracy, to not just simply vote for whatever is going to give me my job, my profession the greatest

outcome – how am I going to personally gain from this? – but to think in a more community-oriented, publicly oriented manner so that they are pursuing not just the simplistic demands of their own wants and needs but, rather, looking at: how do we create a society in which the greatest number of people will benefit and that all people will have opportunities to enjoy participation in?

It's that kind of thinking that has led us to the place where we can now say that compared to 100 years ago or 150 years ago, people have an ability to participate in the benefits of society in a way that was not true 150 years ago. In Canada 150 years ago and before that in England and other places from which many of our people came to settle here in Canada, they didn't have opportunities. If you were born into the wrong class, you simply would never have an opportunity to move out of that class and participate in society in a new way. It was completely unlikely that if you were born into a poor family, you would ever become a doctor, you would ever become a lawyer, or you would ever become an academic.

It's because we believe in the values inherent in all people that we believe that all people should have the opportunity to move from whatever circumstance they happen to be born into into the circumstance that would allow them to express their greatest abilities and to contribute the most to the larger society, not just for themselves but for all people. For some people, we know that their contribution will be affected by the barriers that they experience, whether it happens to be poverty, whether it happens to be disability, whether it happens to be, you know, family trauma, all of those kinds of things. Our desire is to understand those barriers and to move beyond those barriers so that we can help all people to step over the barriers and move into a place where they would not have been unless we had created the opportunity for them to do that. That's what happens at a university, at a postsecondary institution like a technical institution, not just simply training for the job.

So it's really important that when we start to look at the issue of enrolment targets, we have to be very cautious about the limited philosophical point of view we have about a university and the danger of using an act like the Post-secondary Learning Act to pursue that limited philosophical perspective. Instead, what we want to do is that we want to look at those broad, grand ideas that have helped us to rise above the chaos of our life, the kind of life that has been described as short and nasty and difficult by philosophers, to a life in which people can be celebrated for their talents, whatever they may be, and for their opportunity to contribute those talents to the larger society.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

That's the kind of thing that we're getting at here when we talk about amending this section of Bill 20, and that is that we want to ensure that none of the decisions that are being made by the minister are going to stop us from engaging in those grand philosophical ideas that have led to us having the best standard of living in western democracies that the world has ever seen, the least amount of violence that history has ever seen comparatively to what it would have been like 300 years ago, the greatest amount of opportunity to change your socioeconomic status, the greatest opportunity for you to travel and to see greater parts of the world and to participate in the governance of your own society through a democratic process that requires that you have knowledge and the ability to engage in analysis and thoughtful decision-making in terms of that participation. Those are the kinds of things we need to protect if we're going to move forward here.

If we suddenly revert to, "We need more doctors, so we're going to try to increase the number of doctors, but we don't really care whether or not they have a broad education; we simply want people

to perform a function," then we're going to find ourselves going backwards in terms of what we have achieved as a society, and that's really not acceptable. That's true of any profession. If we say that we want more lawyers – God forbid; I come from a family of many, many lawyers – but we didn't ask them to think broadly beyond their own profession, then we would find ourselves in trouble. There is no profession that by itself completes society. We need all professions. We need the talents of all people, who bring with them different experiences, different understandings of the universe, and different ways of engaging in the democratic process and in the community in which we all live.

This is the thing that's of concern here in Bill 20, that we are moving away from these fundamentally important democratic processes that we have literally spent thousands of years creating and that have helped the greatest number of people to rise up from the hard-toil work of having labour that only is directed at feeding themselves for a day in hopes that the next day they can also do the same thing to being able to actually contribute in a grander, more celebratory way in the benefits of all society, some of them by being excellent doctors, some of them by being excellent lawyers, but some of them by being the sort of people who help us to think better and to make better decisions by bringing incredible artistic talent to the visual arts, to the dramatic arts, to sculpture, and to dance and all those other kinds of areas. That's what enriches society, and you don't get that by saying that we need more people to perform a particular governmentally decided function.

We need people to be able to move into those kinds of professions because they are personally engaged and have within them talents and abilities that other people don't have. I would love to be able to say that I can sing, but I simply cannot. I could certainly clear out this House if I were to start singing now, but I certainly admire the people who can do that. I can tell you that they truly enrich my life and enrich the life of the society in which I live. I have friends who have moved to Edmonton simply because we have such a wide range of possibilities here in Edmonton. They came here. One friend, who I had an amusing conversation with, said that he came to Edmonton because they have things like the Folk Festival and the Fringe Festival and the jazz festival and the Heritage Festival, and I said to him: "Oh. Which one of those do you like the most?" He said: "Oh, I don't go to any of them. I just love to live in a city that has all of those things."

9:40

I thought that was amusing but I also understood what he was saying. It wasn't about his own personal needs that were being satisfied and fulfilled by any of those particular things. It was about creating the opportunity for society to thrive, not simply to survive by completing the functions that are necessary for a society to get along day to day to pay their bills but to actually create an opportunity for people to enjoy their lives and to enjoy their relationships with other people and to create the society in which the outlook of your day is about being in relationship with others and not just simply providing the function as a cog in the machine to some other system merely so that you can put food on the table. I think that that's the concern that we have here in this amendment, and that is that we need the government not to be overly controlling in terms of making decisions about the enrolment targets.

Now, we know that universities for a long time have been engaged in processes where they try to encourage enrolment and try to ensure that students are successful. It's generally referred to in academic settings as strategic enrolment management, or SEM. I just want to read you a quote by Michael Dolence, who said that SEM is "a comprehensive process designed to help institutions . . .

achieve and maintain the optimum [enrolment],” where “optimum” is “defined within the academic context of the . . . institution.”

It’s very important that we trust our institutions, that when we create universities, we trust them to have an understanding of their own function and their part in the larger society. We encourage them in their strategic enrolment management, but we do not control it. We do not move that kind of decision-making away from the universities and the colleges into the role of the minister because I think there’s danger when we do that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A3? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It’s always a pleasure to rise and speak to an amendment in this place, particularly when it’s an amendment from my hon. colleague for Edmonton-North West.

I think that it’s a very reasonable amendment, because when we look at amendment A3 and we look at Bill 20, Bill 20 basically does every single thing it can to attack postsecondary students, right? It makes life harder in almost every single way for postsecondary students. So why don’t we try to do something about actually getting people into postsecondary? If we’re going to make their lives hard and we’re going to make their lives expensive and we’re going to make their loans cost more and their tuition cost more and all the things that they do cost more, Mr. Chair, then perhaps we can at least make sure that they get into school first. I think that’s something that’s very important.

I think it’s very important. When we look at the way Bill 20 is worded before the amendment, it basically gives carte blanche to the minister – right? – to do whatever he wants, to have no guidelines on how to set out these targets without doing any consultation. I think that’s something that’s very shocking. I think that governments shouldn’t move in that way. Governments shouldn’t do things without consultation. They shouldn’t do things without understanding the effects it will have on communities, without understanding the effects that things will have on completion rates of high school students, FNMI students, and so much more, and without understanding what it will do to affect things like competitive admission requirements.

When we talk about these types of issues, Mr. Chair, we have to understand, in a wholistic picture, that postsecondary education is not in a bubble, right? Everything we do at one end affects the other end. When we do things like increase tuition by 23 per cent as a means to pay off the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway, when we do things like try to increase student loan rates by 1 per cent, on the other end you’re going to be affecting enrolment. You’re going to be affecting the ability of people to enter the schools. So when the minister makes these carte blanche changes to entrance requirements and enrolment caps and enrolment targets – this amendment allows us to ensure that we’re not prohibiting, in a negative way, students from entering postsecondary education, because we know that postsecondary education is so essential to having a strong workforce. It doesn’t matter whether you go to a trade school or a college or a university. Going to postsecondary education improves your life outcomes in so many different ways. That’s something that I think that members on both sides of this House will understand and support.

When we talk about these programs, we have to understand that we should be trying to have a measured or reasoned approach, right? The minister got up earlier and spoke a little bit about how he thought it was too prescriptive and how he didn’t like how prescriptive it was and how it kind of told him what to do. I think

that’s something that’s a little bit disappointing, Mr. Chair, because when we look at the amendment, it says: well, the minister must consult. That’s basically the crux of the amendment here, that the minister should actually talk to people about what he’s doing. If the minister doesn’t think that’s an important aspect of his job, then I think that perhaps the minister has a lot of things about his job he needs to reconsider.

I think it’s very important that when we look at amendments, we actually understand what they’re proposing, understand what the core values of the amendment will be, and understand how the core amendment will change what we’re trying to move forward with. When we talk about having a proposed consultation period and enrolment target period and all these sorts of things and when we talk about the different types of professions that are being governed and having these types of significant changes, that the minister in the original bill, without the amendment, is being given carte blanche to change, when we see these significant powers being given to the minister without any consultation, it really begs the question: why should we trust the minister? It’s not that I say that I don’t trust this minister, but legislation has to work for years – right? – and potentially decades, Mr. Chair. It’s important that when we pass legislation, we understand what the long-term impacts are going to be.

Without doing adequate consultation and without requiring the minister to do adequate consultation, I think it’s doing a disservice to all of our constituents. It does a disservice to all Albertans, really, because having the ability to actually understand the impact by talking to administrators, by talking to students, by talking to high schools, by talking to school counsellors, by talking to teachers – doing consultation is not a bad thing. This government seems to think that doing consultation is a dirty word. Consultation, for them, is a dirty word, Mr. Chair. The Premier himself said that they wouldn’t stop for consultation, that they must move forward quickly. I think that that’s something that doesn’t speak to why we are here as legislators. It doesn’t speak to: what is the best type of change we want to make for our province? It doesn’t speak to the type of bill that we want to be passing. I think that’s something that’s a little bit disappointing. I think it’s something that I’m hoping the minister will reconsider, that I’m hoping all members of this House will reconsider as well.

When we talk about planning to increase participation, when we talk about trying to kind of improve the livelihoods and abilities of students across this province, it’s important that we actually understand what we’re doing. Right here, in section (a), sub (b) of the amendment, we want to make sure, for example, that we don’t do things to increase the competitive admission requirement significantly. These competitive admission requirements, Mr. Chair, are something that many institutions use in many different fields. I know that the field that I went into, computing science, had competitive admission requirements. I know that the fields a number of my friends went into, such as engineering, had competitive admission requirements, and many, many other faculties had them as well. But when we talk about competitive admission requirements, basically by the stroke of a pen, by a very, very minor change, this minister could suddenly have somebody who would have gotten in one year, and the next year they could be 10, 20 per cent out of the admission requirement range, right?

That is something that students should have. Students should have a stability of knowing that they need to aim to have certain targets. Students should understand that if they want to get into certain fields, they sort of have a ballpark at least of where they want to perform. I think that’s something that’s very important, that we can give students this stability. We’re already taking away the stability of students in terms of tuition, for example, knowing that



tuition is going up potentially 23 per cent to pay for the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. We know that student loans are going up a percentage point as well, working out to thousands of dollars. I think it's over \$7,000, if someone will correct me, per student over the life of their loans. When we're talking about large numbers like that that are already affecting students' ability to plan effectively, students' ability to have that effective long-term planning, and affecting their ability to enter school – that's on the back end, Mr. Chair. Things like student loans are on the back end. Things like how much tuition cumulatively adds up over four, five years is on the back end.

9:50

But the front end, getting students into school and into postsecondary, should be this minister's primary goal, to actually help more and more students get into postsecondary. Instead, it seems that this minister doesn't actually care about that because he thinks, in this case, Mr. Chair, that a clause making sure that we don't adversely affect competitive admission requirements would be negative. That's, of course, very concerning, especially when he's also rebuking a clause that says that we want to make sure that completion rates of Alberta high school students, including FNMI, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit high school students, are maintained without adversely damaging the ability of students to complete their secondary and then enter postsecondary education.

When we're looking at these types of changes and the minister not actually reading and understanding that the consultation with these groups is important and not understanding that the consultation would allow us to have better policy and better targets, I think that's something that's very concerning. I think it's very concerning that the minister just doesn't think it's valuable, doesn't think it's valuable to consult and doesn't think it's valuable to talk to the actual people who are being most affected by this. We understand in this House that we want people to complete postsecondary education, we want people to attend postsecondary education, and we want people to have the best experience possible in postsecondary education, but we know that this bill, Bill 20, is making many, many if not all of those things harder. We're trying to make this bad bill better by making it on the front end for students to enter university, NAIT, whatever it is, whether it's a trade school or a college or a university, whatever they need to enter, Mr. Chair.

What the minister doesn't understand is that bringing in adverse requirements like this and bringing in adverse outcomes like this can actually harm those entry rates, right? So why don't we step back? Why don't we consult on that? Why don't we actually talk to the people that need to get into these schools and people that are running these schools and all of these things, Mr. Chair? I know my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar has spoken about how perhaps not only listening to administrators is good, but it seems that the minister doesn't even want to listen to administrators. I mean, administrators don't always have the best interests of students in their role, and I understand that, but at least they have some interest. Without accepting this amendment, the minister doesn't want to listen to even the administrators, doesn't want to listen to anybody. The minister thinks he knows best, and I think that that's something that's a little bit disappointing.

I think it's disappointing because we know that in some cases we do need to collect information – right? – that we do need to collect a better picture of what's going on and how the things and policy that we set in this place and in Executive Council will affect thousands of people if not tens of thousands of people, Mr. Chair. That's why we look at this amendment. That's why we look at saying: "Let's just slow down. Let's consult. Let's talk to people. Let's understand the impacts." I think it's very reasonable. I think

that members of the now government caucus, when they were in opposition, brought amendments forward like this many times and spoke at length about how consultation, slowing down the process would benefit Albertans and would benefit the ability of the government of the time. I'm sure that they would agree that the government now could make better decisions as well if they simply actually talked to Albertans and actually talked to the people they were affecting and talked to the families that they were affecting.

It's disappointing that this minister doesn't think that's something that's important to him. It's disappointing that this minister doesn't think it's something that's important, to have those types of conversations and to understand the types of impacts we'll have. When we look at Bill 20, we can see, again, that 23 per cent increase to tuition. We see a 1 per cent increase to student loan rates. We see in all of these attacks again and again, for example dissolving the access to the future fund and all of these types of attacks on postsecondary, that this minister doesn't seem to actually have the best interests of the students at heart, doesn't seem to want to be encouraging more students to enter.

When we look at this and say that, well, the minister doesn't even want to consult on the enrolment targets that he's giving himself the power to set and doesn't even want to talk to people about the enrolment targets that they want to set, Mr. Chair, I think that's something that's very concerning, because we can see throughout this bill, time and time again, that it's an attack on students, that it's an attack on the ability of students to enter and maintain and sustain and stay in postsecondary education. It seems the minister doesn't really have the answers to why that's an adequate thing.

I think the minister got up early and said that this amendment was too prescriptive. Well, Mr. Chair, it says that the minister should consult. If that's too prescriptive, then I don't know what the minister thinks his job is. I think it is the duty of the minister to make sure that he has the best information for the bill moving forward, and I think that many members here would agree with me. I think it's disappointing that the minister doesn't understand that.

I think it's a very reasonable amendment. I think it addresses a lot of the clauses that are concerning in terms of not recognizing that you could have spikes in competitive admission requirements, not recognizing that those fluctuations in competitive admission requirements can adversely affect things like school completion rates, can adversely affect secondary completion rates, not postsecondary but secondary school completion rates, can adversely affect things like, obviously, postsecondary admission rates.

It's this whole idea, Mr. Chair, that students don't deserve stability, right? The Conservative government here is bringing forward a bill that overwhelmingly says: "Students don't deserve stability. They don't deserve stability in their tuition fees. They don't deserve stability in their student loan rates. They don't deserve stability in their admission requirements." Again and again and again we see that this government doesn't seem to understand why somebody might want to be able to plan, why they might want to be able to plan the next four or five years of their lives. Especially as a young person, especially as a student, when we look at students – and let's say that you're 17 or 18 years old and planning to enter a postsecondary institution, whether that's a two-year trade program or a four-year degree or whatever it is – when students are looking to enter postsecondary, they want to be able to have a plan.

I know that when I entered postsecondary, I thought I had a trajectory. I said, "In four or four and a half years I'll be able to complete these programs and enter into additional streams," whatever it was. I know a lot of my friends had the same thoughts. I know that even, like, many years ago – I won't say how many,

Mr. Chair – when my father entered and he went to NAIT and got a computer programming certificate, he knew that he wanted to complete it over two years, and then after that, he'd try and find a job. But this type of stability, that students want to plan for, wanting to understand what their life will look like: especially when you're a younger person, 17 or 18 years old, you're looking at spending upwards of a quarter of your life in postsecondary, basically – right? – because you're going to spend four or five years in it. You're looking to spend a quarter of your life, and you want to plan that next quarter of your life. Instead, this minister thinks it's not important that that stability exist, that it's not important that these students be able to plan, that it's not important they know what their tuition is going to be, that it's not important that they know what their student loans are going to be, that it's not important that they even know what the admission requirements are going to be, so they don't even know if they're going to be able to get into the thing they've planned for.

I think that's something that's pretty shocking. I think it's something that I hope we can do better. I hope we can do better because students deserve to have that knowledge, right? If you're entering school, in many cases, Mr. Chair, for example, you're in an advanced program at your school, so you're in an advanced placement program, AP, which is commonly seen here in Alberta, or you're in an international baccalaureate program, IB, as well. If they're in either of these programs, in many cases, when they're in grade 11, so when students are 16-ish years old, they're already planning their entry into postsecondary. They're already planning their entry into degree programs, and they're taking requirements to get into degree programs. They're doing things like arranging their courses for their grade 12 year to make sure they get into degree programs and not understanding the stability of those admission requirements, let's say, if they want into a science or an art, if they want to get into chemistry or biology or computer science or whatever it is. Not having that stability and not having the understanding of what the admission requirements are can really adversely affect the ability of these students to plan.

It speaks again and again to how this government doesn't seem to understand the needs of students. When we talk about the needs of students and that stability and how they need to be able to plan their lives, Mr. Chair, and plan the next, probably, most formative years of any of their lives, that's where consultation comes in, right? That's where the minister needs to go and actually talk to people and understand how these are going to impact their lives, but the minister doesn't think that's important. Being forced to actually go talk to the people about the changes his bill is bringing forward in Bill 20 here: the minister thinks that those types of things are too prescriptive. Perhaps telling the minister to do his job is too prescriptive, and that's a little bit disappointing.

It's a little bit unfortunate, I think. It's unfortunate for students and unfortunate for people planning to enter the postsecondary system. It's unfortunate for people that want to get into a trade school or another postsecondary institution, Mr. Chair. That's something that's unfortunate, because this minister, I think, needs to do better, right? We need to understand how you're going to be affecting the largest stakeholder, the most important stakeholder when you're the Minister of Advanced Education, the students. If you don't understand how this is going to be affecting the students, if you don't care how this is going to be affecting students, I think we have to have a really solid conversation about: what are you doing as the Advanced Education minister? If the enrolment caps without this amendment suddenly spike 10, 15, 20 per cent, then some of these students aren't able to get into postsecondary, and that begs the question: what is the Advanced Education minister even doing in their portfolio? What is that minister even doing, and

why does that minister think it's okay to try and restrict the students from entering the fields and entering the postsecondary? I think that's something that's very concerning.

10:00

I think it's something that needs to be answered here today because when we look at the minister's authority, when we look at what we're giving the minister authority to do today, we need to understand that students deserve better, right? Students deserve a government that is listening to them. Students deserve a government that is trying to fight for them, is trying to make their life more affordable, and this bill does none of those things, Mr. Chair. It does none of those things. This amendment doesn't fix many of those things, actually. I'll admit to you that it fixes one of those things. It fixes admission a little bit. It kind of fixes admission, and it fixes some enrolment targets, but this government doesn't even want to go that far. They don't even want to make one change that would benefit the students.

I think that when the minister refuses to want to listen to students and listen to consultations and actually understand the impact they'd be having on high school students looking to enter postsecondary – it's not only high school students, Mr. Chair. I know that many people go back to postsecondary some way through their career as well. That allows them to do things like upgrading. It allows them to do things like mid-career changes. But if they don't understand and they don't really have the ability to predict what the competitive admission requirements are going to be for their re-entry into postsecondary either, that actually limits the ability for people who are looking to find different types of work and new work as well. It speaks again and again to how this minister and this government don't seem to care, don't seem to understand that adversely impacting people's entry into postsecondary is a negative thing. Adversely impacting people's ability to understand and have stability around postsecondary is a negative thing.

I don't know why we need to explain this to the government. It's something that should be self-evident, Mr. Chair, but perhaps it speaks to their values and how they don't really believe that we should be supporting these people. I think that the people who are looking for new jobs, the people who are looking to enter the workforce and get this type of education, would disagree. I hope that every single member of the House will think very solidly about that and understand how this is going to affect their constituents and their families and their neighbours and their communities.

I encourage every single member of this House to vote for this amendment, and I look forward to hearing from the rest. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A3?

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving back to Bill 20 proper, are there any members looking to speak? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. This is yet another huge piece of legislation. You know, it's sort of interesting. I can remember not that long ago, when some of the government members were on opposition benches, that regularly they would quote the number of pages in pieces of legislation that were in front of them and would proceed to go on and on about the time that was required to read it or how perhaps pieces didn't fit

together. Suddenly that just seems to be gone, so we're just inundated with these massive pieces of legislation that do a really good job at camouflaging quite a number of things. Let's just start. Where to start? Let's start at the beginning, I suppose. Just for the record, for clarity, this bill has 102 pages, repeals five different acts, creates two new ones, and amends a dozen other ones. It's a little bit disturbing.

Let's focus first on tax credits that are in this piece of legislation. Although there are a number of things that are changed in this legislation, what is disturbing is the theme, and the theme seems to be: investment in other sectors or unique sectors or sectors that would lead to true diversification just doesn't seem to be very important. We've seen just systematic cutting, reducing, or completely eliminating the work that's been done, the path that's been laid towards diversification.

I really question why that is. Of course, the answer has got to be that if you're going to create a \$4.7 billion giveaway for already profitable corporations – and let's be clear that these are corporations that, I believe, are earning a net profit of about \$500,000 a year. These are fairly profitable corporations – and, you know, great for them for doing so well – but it's unfortunate that we are directing these kinds of resources to these companies. These fledgling start-ups or these companies in really unique sectors that have the ability to take us in new directions and truly are job creators in and of themselves: these are the folks that are really suffering. Again, I don't know why. I guess this government really does want to take us backwards in all kinds of ways, some of them in terms of our human rights and social justice and, it looks like, in terms of our economy as well.

Let's call this \$4.7 billion giveaway what it is, and it is – you know, we've called it before trickle-down economics, which really is kind of a joke. It started as a joke, but that's what this is. So I just want to talk a little bit about – there's a business columnist out of the United States that had quite a bit to say about this sort of thinking. Some of the things he had to say were quite interesting and, I think, add to the discussion here. He says:

One of the biggest lies foisted on the American people . . .

Again, he's from the United States

. . . is that rich people getting richer – when rich people get richer, we all benefit, that being the basic premise of so-called trickle-down theory. For decades working families have been told not to worry about the growing wealth gap between the nation's haves and have-nots. A rising tide lifts all boats: we've been told that with encouraging smiles and pats on the back.

You can see sort of where he's going with this.

Here's another contributor. I'd like to quote William Darity, who's a professor of public policy at Duke University. He says:

It's nonsensical to think that greater wealth for the rich translates to improved fortunes for everybody else. Otherwise, we would not have observed such an obscene increase in the degree of income equality that has restored the magnitude of levels that existed on the eve of the Great Depression. I've not seen anyone make a serious claim for a trickle-down effect with respect to wealth. Put simply, there is no empirical evidence, none whatsoever, that trickle-down economics deliver as promised, bringing more jobs, higher pay, and better conditions to millions of people. The reality is that the rich get richer – the rich get richer – full stop. They buy more houses, cars, boats, and stuff.

That's how he ended his quote. I mean, it's a little bit flippant towards the end, but I think you get the message.

I think that when we look to the south, we see an entire country really engaged in this – I don't even want to call it "trickle-down" – move towards creating more tax breaks and tax incentives and wealth for a very, very small portion of the people that live there. We know that the gap between the very, very wealthy and then the

rest of the people continues to grow. I'm sad that this government has chosen to emulate those choices. You know what? I must add that in the United States currently, their President – we'll see how long that lasts – a Republican, has done what Republicans have always wanted, to give great big tax breaks to wealthy people and to wealthy corporations and then tell the rest of the American people: yeah, this will trickle down; you'll be great. In fact, it hasn't. These fiscal hawks, these fiscal Republicans have now created the largest debt they've ever seen. How does that work?

I think that in such a short time – and I also find it quite interesting that before we even began to see what was in the government's budget, before we had a chance to debate anything, this government jammed through a corporate tax break of such magnitude that it would jar everything else after it. That's very telling, that they wouldn't wait to put it into the budget to discuss, to debate, to allow questions on. They just did it at the very beginning, knowing that Albertans would see what they're doing.

#### 10:10

We are seeing this almost on a weekly basis, that very large profitable corporations, having already received the benefit of this tax break, are actually taking their money and going elsewhere when really this was supposed to be about job creation. It turns out that it's more about wealth creation, which is unfortunate.

Again, let's go back to some of the other things that have been jammed into this huge piece of legislation, which is really unfortunate because when we have such a small amount of time to go through this and to talk about what this means for the future of Alberta, for the future of Albertans, we don't actually have time to go through and to really examine all of these pieces.

As I was flipping through it, I noticed that one of the tax credits cancelled – and I have to admit that I'm not totally surprised by this – is the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. This particular tax credit provides support in the form of tax credits and/or refunds to corporations, partnerships, or individuals who conduct scientific research and experimental development in Canada. Now, of course, thankfully, there is still a federal program in place. This particular tax credit is 35 per cent of the first \$3 million in qualified expenditures and then 15 per cent on any excess amount. Alberta now will join Prince Edward Island as the only provinces that don't offer a provincial top-up to this federal program. Once again, it's just another step backwards. It's almost like a systematic changing of where we were, a very progressive province that was sort of leading the way in Canada, to: now we just are joining the back of the pack. We are losing really important tax credits, and people will go elsewhere. We are losing important tax credits, important programs. Why? I don't really know.

One of the things that will impact thousands of Albertans is the education and tuition tax credits. It's hard to believe that this government is so arrogant and entitled that they would believe that Albertans can manage the kind of cuts that they're just throwing at them by saying: "Trust us. Trust us. By investing in this large corporate tax giveaway, everybody will benefit." Well, let's look at an average family with a postsecondary student. You've now cut the education and tuition tax credits. Students will pay more for their tuition. If they're required to take out a loan, they're going to pay more for that loan. If they tried saving for tuition for postsecondary, they would have likely earned less than minimum wage because this government saw fit to reduce that as well. It's like this full-frontal attack on postsecondary education and Alberta families. Once again, it's just another example of the very wealthy doing quite well, and the rest of us just need to suck it up.

One of the other things that I was really disturbed about was the child and family benefit tax credit. What really bothered me is that on the day that this budget was dropped, actually, as we were feverishly going through it trying to figure it out, we calculated very quickly that by changing the income thresholds, what this government had essentially done was cut. Of course, they like to spin it. In their minds, they way they spin it is: "Nothing is cut. Nothing is changed. Everything is great. Nothing to see here. Move along." But really there has been a lot of damage done here. The child and family benefit tax credit: we'll reduce the benefit – here's a big number. Listen to it: 165,000 Albertans will be impacted by these new income thresholds. Now, I know it doesn't bother you because this doesn't impact you, but I can tell you that there are thousands and thousands and thousands of Alberta families that barely get by. This particular tax credit: if they are just on the cusp of that income cut-off, when you change this benefit, you are going to cause damage. But you don't seem to care. You don't seem to listen. All we get back is: "Nothing has changed. Nothing to see here. Everything is fine. It'll all trickle down. We'll be rosy. Everything will be good." It's not good.

The Alberta child benefit: let me give you an example. When I talk about . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for St. Albert, but in accordance with Standing Order 64(5) the chair is required to put the question to the Assembly on the appropriation bill standing on the Order Paper for third reading. The committee must first rise and report without question put.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. That is so ordered.

Prior to moving to the question on the appropriation bill, I believe the hon. Government House Leader has caught my eye.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** It's like you're a mind reader, Mr. Speaker. I'm just so blown away by that.

I'd like to move that we move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 24 Appropriation Act, 2019 (continued)

**The Acting Speaker:** The chair is required to put the question to the Assembly on the appropriation bill standing on the Order Paper for third reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:18 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Rowswell
Allard	Long	Schweitzer
Copping	McIver	Toews
Ellis	Nicolaides	Toor
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Glubish	Orr	Williams
Goodridge	Panda	Wilson
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao
Guthrie	Pon	Yaseen
Jones	Reid	

Against the motion:

Carson	Feehan	Schmidt
Dang	Goehring	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Renaud	Sweet

Totals: For – 32 Against – 9

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a third time]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

(continued)

#### Bill 27

#### Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 27, the Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, over the last few months as I've travelled across Alberta, I particularly focused on rural communities and mid-sized centres across Alberta, talking about rural crime, talking about the challenges that we have in our communities: too many people that are living in fear, too many people that are too brazen in their criminal activities targeting rural communities, targeting Albertans. The feedback that we received from Albertans was crystal clear. We need to make sure that we have the strongest property rights possible in the province of Alberta, and that's what this bill here works towards, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that Albertans know that their property rights will be respected.

We heard on a couple different areas, Mr. Speaker. One is on trespassing. People just have been too brazen in their trespassing, so the purpose of this bill helps tighten that to send the clearest signal that that can't be done in the province of Alberta without facing a stiff penalty. In addition to that, we also saw the fact that criminals, people committing a criminal act on property, then have the brazen determination to sue a law-abiding property owner. Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable in the province of Alberta. This bill seeks to make the proper amendments to address those issues, and I'll get into the details here.

Today I'm seeking support for Bill 27, the Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act. If

passed, it will help halt the erosion of property rights in Alberta and deter those seeking to trespass on private property. The proposed amendments will add an explicit reference within the Petty Trespass Act to land use for the production of crops, the raising and maintenance of animals, and the keeping of bees.

It will also increase the maximum fine for trespass without notice from \$2,000 and \$5,000 for first and subsequent offences to \$10,000 and \$25,000 respectively. It will increase the maximum penalty for trespass with notice to fines of \$10,000 and \$25,000 for first and subsequent offences respectively, a term of imprisonment of up to six months, or both; create an offence for a corporation to direct counsel or aid a trespass; create a maximum fine of up to \$200,000 for corporations; create provisions in the Petty Trespass Act and the Trespass to Premises Act to address entry under false pretenses; increase the maximum compensation that can be ordered for loss of or damage to property under the Provincial Offences Procedure Act from \$25,000 to \$100,000; reduce property owners' civil liability for injuries or death to criminal trespassers and make this retroactive to January 1, 2018; and amend the Limitations Act to suspend the limitation period for a civil action pending the determination of possible criminal conduct on the part of the property owner.

Mr. Speaker, these are measures that Albertans have long been calling for. They're asking to be protected. They want to make sure that their property rights are respected. I hope the members, on both sides of this House, will support this legislation and for the rights of property owners across Alberta to be respected in the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any members wishing to speak to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and to speak to Bill 27, the Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019. That's a long title. First off, I want to recognize and acknowledge that, of course, trespassing on anybody's property is obviously a very scary thing, even scarier in rural Alberta when you're isolated and you're not as close to your neighbours and it feels like the police are too far away. This bill, obviously, addresses a real concern, but there are some questions and some clarity that we're asking for at this time as we move forward into Committee of the Whole.

Part of the question and concern that we have is that most Albertans are good neighbours, and we all look out for each other. We understand, you know, that making sure that our neighbours are protected and safe is important. But what we see with this bill is that there's a potential to be going down a dangerous path, and that's the path around stand your ground legislation. What we're looking for and what we need clarity on is what this will look like. Obviously, there is a way that this legislation can start creating changes that could potentially start looking at stand your ground.

We have some questions for the minister. If a trespasser is shot on someone's property, will there continue to be a criminal investigation? This seems to make the law more complicated in many ways. How will people be educated about the profound changes in this bill, particularly in regard to the duty of care?

There's also a provision in the bill that speaks to the government's plan to train wildlife officers and others to respond to 911 calls. Again, we just have some questions about: how will they be trained to deal with the particular situations that they may be

responding to? Will they be given the same authorities as police officers, and what will those look like?

The other piece that I am curious about as well is why the bill is retroactive to January 2018, why it's not coming into force at proclamation, and why it's backdated to January 2018, a full year, well, two years prior by the time this bill may potentially be proclaimed.

There are questions around the exemption from civil liability for injuries to trespassers when the owner has reasonable grounds to believe the trespasser is committing or about to commit a criminal offence, also around landowners not being liable for injuries or death unless it was clearly caused by the landowner. Trespassers that get injured have no civil claim unless it's proven that the landowner or occupier committed a criminal act. The landlord does not owe a duty of care to the trespasser.

There are lots of questions just around the retroactiveness of this and then why it's so explicit around some of these questions. Again, I'm not saying that they aren't justified. They're just for clarity and just pieces that we're asking for.

Then, of course, why have the references for the penalties increased to the point that they've increased to? Where was the decision and what was the rationale around the dollar amounts that were chosen? Again, I'm not saying that there shouldn't be penalties but am just wondering why they were increased to the levels that they were increased to and then, of course, substantially for first and subsequent offenders.

Those are just some of the questions that we have. Obviously, as we move into Committee of the Whole and the minister is able to maybe respond to some of my questions, that would be beneficial.

**10:30**

I do want to highlight, though, that there is definitely some real value in some of the concerns that are being addressed around the trespassing component. I know that we've heard from experts about the risk to biosecurity around some of these farms. Obviously, hog producers have some real concerns around the swine flu and the fact that it's easily transferable to people if they enter the barn without going through the appropriate steps to make sure that they're not transferring it. When the issues around the Hutterite farm for the turkeys became an issue, again, there's a real concern and real risk around the biohazards around turkey farms and making sure that we aren't transferring diseases between animals and humans and then taking them off the property.

I think that those concerns are definitely valid and definitely things that we need to discuss. It's just clarifying some of the other questions around where and why we're doing that. To be honest, my biggest concern is why it's retroactive. Like, what's the rationale to 2018 and not coming into force when it is proclaimed? There has got to be some rationale there that I'd be really interested in and curious to hear about.

Obviously, as we continue forward, there may be some more questions that come up from my hon. colleagues, but for now I'll just leave it at that and look forward to hearing from the minister in response to some of my questions.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak at this time?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a second time]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you. Man, things are just moving through here so fast. I love progress. I know you like progress, too,

Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the opposition for being so co-operative this evening. As such, I'll move that we adjourn until tomorrow, Tuesday, November 26, at 10 o'clock a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:33 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, November 26, 2019

Day 47

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
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Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
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Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
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Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

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Research Services  
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Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
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Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
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Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
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Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
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Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

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Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
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### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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Rehn  
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Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
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Nixon, Jeremy  
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Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 26, 2019

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. So may Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

We are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 25

##### Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise today for the second reading of Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019. The proposed legislation reflects our government's commitment to cut red tape and to make Alberta one of the freest and fastest moving economies in the world. It also reflects our commitment to reduce red tape in order to make life better for everyday Albertans. The Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, builds on the momentum established by actions already taken by our government to reduce red tape.

It makes changes to several pieces of legislation. Generally speaking, the changes proposed by Bill 25 can fit into three themes: to encourage investment by speeding up regulatory approvals, to reduce regulatory burden for municipalities and other government partners, and to eliminate or modernize outdated and redundant rules.

Under the first theme we have three amendments designed to encourage investment by speeding up regulatory approvals. Bill 25 will amend the Forests Act and give the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry the authority to approve forest management agreements. Currently these agreements are subject to approval by cabinet. Allowing the minister to approve forest management agreements will make the approval process less burdensome while continuing to allow proper oversight by government. Of the 17 submissions submitted by the Alberta Forestry Association, this was number one on their list because it allows them to get wood to the mills faster and allows them to be able to get their people back to work. The proposed change aligns with other land-use dispositions such as those for oil sands or gravel operations.

Bill 25 proposes an amendment to the Hydro and Electric Energy Act as well. Currently stand-alone legislation is required for every hydroelectric development in Alberta once the normal regulatory process is complete. Bill 25 proposes to repeal this unnecessary requirement in order to encourage the development of small-scale hydroelectric projects. All projects must still undergo public

hearings and environmental impact assessments, but cumbersome legislation isn't required to get these projects under way anymore.

This bill proposes to repeal also the Small Power Research and Development Act as it is no longer required. The act was created to support renewable small-power generation development in the mid-1980s to early 1990s in Alberta. The program expired in 1994, and the last contract ended earlier this year. Alberta has a thriving renewable energy sector, and the small-scale generation regulation already supports market-based electricity generation for renewable and alternative energy sources.

Moving on to our next theme, to reduce regulatory burden for municipalities and other government partners, Bill 25 proposes an amendment to the Municipal Government Act to streamline provisions that hamper administrative efficiencies for municipalities. This bill proposes the repeal of a provision in the Safety Codes Act to better align with national building and fire codes. Government will follow future editions of national building and fire codes, ensuring we meet strict standards while still promoting safety for workers and for the structure.

Moving on to our final theme, to streamline, eliminate, or modernize outdated or redundant rules, Bill 25 proposes to amend or repeal six different pieces of legislation. First, the bill proposes to repeal the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Foundation Act. The foundation has not existed since 2002, and its functions are no longer a part of the persons with developmental disabilities program. Repealing the act will dissolve this inactive foundation and would have no impact on delivery of PDD services.

Second, Bill 25 proposes to remove a provision in the Glenbow-Alberta Institute Act that prescribes that management, in displays of items in the Glenbow Museum collection – actually, it describes prescriptively those collections. This amendment removes red tape and encourages an innovative collaboration by allowing the Glenbow to loan out parts of its collection. Because the amendment requires an agreement with the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, the government of Alberta will continue to have a say in the ongoing protection of Alberta's cultural assets.

Third, the bill proposes an amendment to the Health Professions Act to dissolve the Health Professions Advisory Board. The board's advice has not been requested since 2012. The board's dissolution was recommended by the Public Agency Secretariat as part of a review of agencies, boards, and commissions, and we're acting upon that review.

Fourth, Bill 25 proposes to repeal an outdated reference to chiropractic services under the definition of basic health services in the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act as chiropractic services have not been covered since 2009.

Fifth, Bill 25 amends the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Act to make it easier for Albertans to become organ donors. Albertans will now be able to register online in one easy step to indicate they want to donate their organs and tissues after their death. This will save Albertans, and it will reduce time and confusion regarding their wish to donate their organs and tissues.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I want to be able to remind the Member for Edmonton-Decore, when he continues to say that this ministry is doing no good for Albertans, that when B.C. did this, they actually increased organ and tissue donations by fourfold. B.C.'s residents were richly blessed because of this kind of a legislative change and because of the red tape reduction efforts there. We're going to do the same thing here, so I hope that the member is seeing this as a very positive effect and the reason why we should be actually effecting red tape reduction here.

This also clarifies how Albertans can donate their bodies to educational research. To be clear, this amendment is separate and apart from the private member's bill currently before the House. However, this bill allows those who do not want to opt in to organ donation because of religious or cultural reasons to also opt out online.

Sixth, this bill will amend the medical services incorporation foundation act. The M.S.I. Foundation's board appointment process hasn't changed since 1970. It is outdated and causes unnecessary delays in appointments. Currently three public board appointees must be made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Additionally, the MSI board's chair is to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council as well. This amendment would change this to allow the Minister of Health to appoint the three public board members and for the MSI board of trustees to select the chair from among their membership, giving them more control over what happens in that board. The proposed changes will improve efficiencies of the foundation's operations and will streamline its appointment process.

Now, this concludes my overview of Bill 25, Mr. Speaker, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019. These changes are designed to encourage investment, reduce regulatory burdens, and streamline, eliminate, or modernize outdated or redundant rules, allowing government to move quicker. Together the changes proposed in Bill 25 represent a conscious and co-ordinated effort to reduce red tape across government, to free up the creativity of our partners in businesses and government, our job creators and innovators, and to make life better for all Albertans.

I'd like to thank the members for their time, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to a healthy debate on this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Just for the purposes of clarity of *Hansard*, I would like it if you would just please state that you are moving second reading of Bill 25.

**Mr. Hunter:** With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 25.

10:10

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen to speak.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you on this rather wintry day as we were coming in here. We now have before us, finally, in second reading, Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019. Seeing as how we brought it up right out of the gates, I will of course mention around the organ donation that I am part of the private members' committee that was reviewing the private member's bill that came forward. On the theme of organ donation we're certainly very excited about what that could be, and hopefully the minister will be quick to amend his rules should that private member's bill pass because the two would kind of conflict a little bit. But, you know, that's really just a little bit of housekeeping there.

On the whole, Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about Bill 25, an omnibus piece of legislation, the fourth such piece of legislation that we've seen before this House, I have to admit that seeing this type of bill being presented in the House here today is kind of contradictory to some of the members that served in the 29th Legislature, particularly their displeasure around omnibus legislation or what they felt was omnibus legislation. As you know, Bill 25 proposes approximately 13 different changes across six different ministries. I do remember a certain discussion around some labour legislation that was changed back in the 29th

Legislature that absolutely dealt with several different changes within that bill but within one ministry.

You know, the associate minister, of course, back then had said something, I believe, on May 30, 2017:

This legislation from the NDP government is omnibus in nature and would be best served if split into two distinct components to allow for faster passage of compassionate care leaves. This government is being disingenuous by lumping together changes to both the Labour Relations Code and the Employment Standards Code into one big omnibus bill.

Yet here we are looking at 13 different changes across six different ministries. I think I've said it before on other pieces of legislation that are like Bill 25, Mr. Speaker, that to come across with those types of comments and then, when you have the opportunity to do it different and apparently do it right, you actually just seem to repeat the cycle, which we've seen four times now, including Bill 25 – so is this a disingenuous attempt at lumping a whole bunch of legislation into one bill and, you know, justified in that?

Whatever the case is there, Mr. Speaker, we do have this here before us, and we need to look at its components, some of which, again, I don't have any potential concerns with, including things like the organ donation. But I do have some concerns around some of the other pieces that are being proposed in this.

You know, I think the one thing that we have to remember is what this ministry was mandated to do. It was supposed to be able to help to create an atmosphere that creates jobs and helps to grow the economy. So when I see such things like "How do we store some of Alberta's museum treasures?," I'm wondering: how is that creating jobs? How is that growing the economy? It seems more like a statute change than red tape reduction.

I mean, we've seen in other legislation where the government has been very, very proud that they are, for instance, merging different departments, all under the umbrella of red tape, being more efficient, and saving Albertans money. When we get excited about a million dollars – say, for instance, we roll the Election Commissioner into the elections office – and then we look at this ministry in itself dealing with red tape, very clearly we saw during estimates that ministries were able to deal with red tape on their own, making their own decisions. I mean, the labour ministry, right out of the gate, actually created a bunch of red tape, you know, but that's beside the point here at the moment. But they were very clearly making decisions around red tape. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs was very clearly making red tape decisions to try to help municipalities do their jobs a lot easier. The Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance very clearly was making decisions around red tape.

Funny, of course, that the red tape ministry, which Bill 25 came out of here, is very clearly making red tape decisions without the ministry. Maybe I might want to suggest to the government that with this \$10 million ministry we have here, that seems to have only created one job so far, they maybe might want to look at just rolling it all into Treasury Board, letting everybody else do their red tape decisions. Then maybe we can take that \$10 million and put it into something effective, maybe like not rolling back AISH recipients' incomes.

We're starting to see a pattern, Mr. Speaker, around how legislation like Bill 25 is coming forward. Of course, there's a great, big emphasis on giving, for instance, \$4.7 billion in tax breaks to great, big, wealthy corporations like Walmart, but we're focused on legislation that, quite honestly, I think could be simply dealt with through statute changes. But we're trying to claim red tape reduction here and claim a ministry, so I guess if I was in that

position and I had to justify \$10 million, I'd probably be looking for any kinds of little things that I could find as well.

Some of the things that this thing is looking for include changes within the forestry act. It proposes to transfer things from orders in council to a ministerial order. I certainly remember members opposite in the 29th Legislature getting rather excited about more powers being given to the minister to make decisions. Here again we're in that situation where we're saying one thing, yet actions that we're doing say something completely different, and they're contradictory, Mr. Speaker. I'm not necessarily possibly concerned around this, but I do have to point out that, you know, this was something that was a problem for some of the members opposite, including the associate minister of red tape, when it came to giving more ability for the minister to get business done.

We have things around the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Foundation Act. I was able to do a little bit of checking. This is a bit of a housekeeping item, Mr. Speaker. It hasn't existed since 2002, so it's probably pretty safe to say that we won't be using that going forward at this point. But, again, is this creating jobs? Is this growing the economy? I would argue that that's not the case. We're not creating jobs. We've created one job, but we're not growing the economy with changes like that. I think it's a little bit, I guess, short when it comes to being able to say that, you know, we're making substantial changes that will – I think the words were: supercharge our economy.

**10:20**

Again, I'd mentioned a little bit earlier around the Glenbow-Alberta Institute Act. You know, I guess again I'm questioning: is this really red tape reduction? Is this creating jobs? Is this growing the economy? That was the number one thing that the UCP ran on during the election, Mr. Speaker, and this is our A game coming out of the gate. I know the first bill was to help to create the ministry and sort of some of the framework for how it was going to operate. It sure would have really been nice to have seen a definition around red tape. Maybe then we wouldn't be potentially considering some of these things as red tape reduction. Maybe they would have been more considered like statute changes and things like that. But I just struggle to see how this creates jobs and how this grows the economy.

We also see some changes in the Small Power Research and Development Act. Of course, this is a repeal. The government says, of course, that contracts have been concluded and that the small-scale generation regulation already supports market-based electricity generation from renewable and alternate energy sources. While I think this is probably a good idea, I guess I question that because I haven't seen a lot of interest in this government, Mr. Speaker, around renewable and alternative energy.

Again, you know, we have a potential piece of legislation here that we're changing. We're saying one thing, but things that we've done before, things that we've said before are a little bit counterproductive towards that. I don't think it necessarily sends a signal to investors to be able to help grow an economy when we're not really supporting the industry but we say that we're going to help make things more streamlined. I'm really not too sure whether this will be a benefit or not, but time will tell with regard to that.

We've also seen some changes around the Hydro and Electric Energy Act. I think this could be a positive change for approval, that it's not going through legislation. Certainly, you know, we've seen in the past – and, I think, the easiest example, Mr. Speaker, around changes, and I'm surprised this one's not in this bill because this would have been a really simple one, Minister – where schools can't change their name without coming to the Legislature for approval and having an MLA sponsor that, I mean, really, just to

change the title at the top of the paper or on the envelope or something like that. I'm surprised that that one wasn't in here because that actually would have been red tape reduction, helping those not come through the Legislature. I think given some of the cuts that we've seen, though, with regard to the budget, we might have some worries around that change here for the Hydro and Electric Energy Act.

We're also seeing some changes within the Health Professions Act. Now, that's the one thing about omnibus legislation, Mr. Speaker: it can be difficult sometimes to reach out to stakeholders to be able to get their input. Again, we're looking at 13 different changes across six different ministries, and it's been difficult to try to get some feedback. I am concerned that, you know, some of the changes – and I'll get to those shortly here, Mr. Speaker – maybe haven't necessarily been thoroughly consulted on, again, another point that members who were part of the 29th Legislature and are serving within the government and the government caucus very regularly accused the previous NDP government of not doing around consultations. Again, we have the chance to show how to do it better, how to do it right, yet we're not seeing those types of things.

It's reviewing a number of agencies, boards, and commissions. That work, you know, rightfully is being continued, so I will give kudos in that sort of department there. That was work that was started by us to try to make things move a lot more efficiently. I'm always willing to listen to those types of things. I know that for the former Finance minister that was something he wanted to make sure was done. He didn't quite get a chance to finish that work, but at least this government is continuing on that fine work that he started.

I'd already mentioned around the tissue, organ. I don't think I need to continue around this one.

I would like to spend some time, though, Mr. Speaker, on one part, and that's the Safety Codes Act changes. One of the things that we've seen change over the years is around the height that wood structures can go to. We're always, you know, mindful of checking with people, checking with builders around how we can do those structures, but one voice that has always been absent from the table has been fire. When we're talking about a structure that potentially could be going over six storeys now, I think it's very, very important that we have those voices at the table.

You know, when we look at house construction, for instance, Mr. Speaker, they used to have the really big, thick beams through the house to help support the house, and from what I understand, those were designed at the time to be able to survive in a fire, giving as much as an hour or even maybe a little bit more. Certainly, people would be able to egress from the building, but then fire coming into the building would be safe enough to try to get that fire put out. What we've seen in some of the changes now is a lot thinner beams around that. It's my understanding, speaking with folks from fire, that on average those things may only last somewhere between eight to 15 minutes, and a lot of times we see fire showing up on location, ready to go to deal with the fire at the eight-minute mark, which means that there are about four minutes left for them to try to get that fire out.

When we translate that now to a building that's potentially going over six storeys, we need to make sure that we have fire at the table in order to look at how that structure is built so that not only does it give people time to get out of the building safely but that fire has time to get into the building and actually put the fire out. That is something that has been very much lacking not only on the provincial scale but also on the national scale. I think we have an opportunity here to bring that voice to the table to make sure that as we're moving forward, changing these safety codes and the regulations, the building codes and such, those are expressed within



that to make sure that our first responders, our firefighters are able to go safely – well, relatively safely – into a structure and come out again when it's done.

Of course, when you have these structures, the most critical part is during construction, Mr. Speaker. Those things can sometimes go up like a Roman candle. I lived in the west end of Edmonton here, and there was a large structure – I believe it was four storeys – that was being built at the time. Unfortunately, it caught fire, and all of the structures that were nearby in terms of, you know, lower buildings and whatnot – it completely melted all of the siding off these buildings, generating an incredible, incredible amount of heat.

Again, I think that as we move forward, when we're looking at these safety codes within Bill 25 and some of the changes that we might be proposing, we need to have those voices at the table in order to make sure that we are building these structures in the safest way possible not only for people to be able to get out but for firefighters to be able to get in and put that fire out. Hopefully, we might be able to have a larger conversation in Committee of the Whole around that, and maybe we can look at some ways that we might be able to deal with that in terms of getting fire at the table during that part.

10:30

We've also heard of some of the changes for municipalities. I know there's a bit of a concern from the RMA around some of the changes that are being proposed in Bill 25. Perhaps it was just simply an oversight at the time, but the deadline for completing ICFs, the deadline here . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 25, the so-called Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act. You know, I reviewed this act, and while I'm new to the Legislature, I have had experience in the past working within government and seeing things called miscellaneous statutes amendments acts. Some of you members, especially those who had been part of the previous Assembly, would be familiar with that. When I actually reviewed Bill 25, I was surprised or maybe I will even say amused to see how a lot of what is actually proposed as significant red tape reduction would be changes that would actually be part of a miscellaneous statutes amendment act, something that, of course, I hear and understand from my colleagues that the previous members complained about.

Let me just say that calling it something else, calling it a Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, doesn't actually make it anything different than, really, a miscellaneous statutes amendment act although I will note that there are a couple of other pieces in there that don't actually fall within that but are actually either policy changes or increase red tape. This is actually a great exercise in irony, I have to say, to call something red tape reduction when what we've really seen is that this government has increased red tape by creating – well, they have created one very significant public-sector job, which is the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Again, I mentioned that I worked in government for some time before. I know that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has stood up in this House and has questioned a number of times the credentials of members of the opposition as Albertans because of, apparently, where we lived before we moved to Alberta or how many of us were actually born in Alberta. Apparently, that's significant to the associate minister since he continues to bring it up over and over again. I have actually spent most of my life here in

Alberta, and I can say that I actually have a little bit of Alberta history, a little bit of Alberta government history that I recall.

I think it would have been in 2006 that the Alberta government, under the former Progressive Conservative governments, the previous ones, had a ministry called RAGE, which was the restructuring and government efficiency ministry. A very apt acronym was RAGE because it really caused nothing but rage for most of the bureaucrats and, probably, Albertans because it was a giant waste of money and time. In fact, that seems to be what this government is repeating here. Let's create a body; let's fund it with \$10 million I believe it is. I'm looking at the Member for Edmonton-Decore. Yeah. Head nodding. Yeah, \$10 million given to create an Associate Ministry of Red Tape Reduction. Well, we've been through this pattern before.

Now, I appreciate that this government seems to like to repeat some of the worst parts of previous Conservative governments. They seem to be very quickly falling into some old habits: you know, entitlement and cronyism and these patronage appointments that they love to do and creating panels and talking about fiscal responsibility when really they're throwing away money on pancake parties and planes and, you know, very, very five-star hotels. I mean, like, obviously, the lessons are hard to unlearn, apparently, for Conservatives. They haven't learned the lesson about the waste of time that was the restructuring and government efficiency ministry back in the previous Conservative government, so they're repeating that mistake, which is the Red Tape Reduction Act.

You know, I think I'm allowed to speak about my own absence and presence in the House, so I will say that I wasn't present in the House when late last week the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction stood up and introduced this bill. I believe – I saw it on social media – that he made a very bold and very classy statement. I know sarcasm sometimes doesn't come across in *Hansard*, so let me just state that I am being sarcastic when I say that it was classy when he referred to the fact that he was going to be giving an enema to government about red tape reduction. Very classy for an associate minister. Then I thought: well, interesting. Then I read Bill 25, and I thought: "Wow. Is this the bold statement that he's going to make? Is this the quote, unquote, enema that he's giving to government?" He has a pretty different understanding of what an enema is than I do, I guess. I mean, I've never had one, but clearly he thinks it's a pretty mild procedure, considering this bill and the contents of it. Let's be honest. There's very little in here that does anything to substantively reduce red tape, and it does nothing that could not have been achieved by simply doing a miscellaneous statutes amendment act.

I note as I'm going through it: okay; so they're repealing some acts that apparently have been spent in terms that the contents and the objectives of the bills have been achieved or completed, such as the Small Power Research and Development Act. The government claims: okay; that's no longer necessary, so it's repealed. Great. That's fine. It could have been done by a miscellaneous statutes amendment act.

I note that they have made changes to the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Foundation Act because they're saying that the foundation has not existed since 2002, so there's no need for the foundation. That's fine. I can't see a real concern with that. Again, that could have been done by a miscellaneous statutes amendment act.

I believe that the same applies to a number of other bodies or advisory committees, and I do note that the former government actually had done a complete review and was doing these reviews of these agencies and boards, so certainly this was probably inevitably going to be happening anyway.

They dissolved the Health Professions Advisory Board under the Health Professions Act. It hasn't been in place and used since 2012. Yeah. No problem. Go ahead and do that. Again, it could have been done by a miscellaneous statutes amendment act.

Really, if this is the bulk of the associate minister's work, he must be quite disappointed. I wonder: what is he going to do once this bill is passed? Of course, I'm not naive. We know that this bill will likely be passed. Despite whatever we say on this side of this of House, the government will vote in favour of passing it. I just think that then his work is done, right? And this cost Albertans \$10 million? This is what we established one new position within the public sector for? This is what we've done? Well, he must be very proud of himself to complete his entire mandate with this bill.

The other thing that's important to note, apart from the quite minor amendments that this bill makes that could have been achieved without the establishment of a \$10 million position and department staff and everything to review that, is that there are some pieces in here that I'm not even sure are red tape reduction. I'll go back to one piece in particular that I have a little bit of familiarity with given my past work. I note, for example, that Bill 25 amends the Education Act to require school boards to enter into joint-use agreements with municipalities when school boards provide services in one or more municipalities. Well, of course, all school boards provide services in one or more municipalities, so essentially this is mandating all school boards to enter into joint-use agreements with municipalities.

Now, my background is that I've worked with Alberta Education, but I also worked directly with school boards for many years, and I'll say that this already takes place. This is already happening. Almost every school board that I've worked with has joint-use agreements with their municipalities. But further to the point, for a government that stands up and says that they believe in government efficiency and in lowering red tape to actually mandate locally elected bodies, which are both school boards and municipalities, force them to enter into agreements and then create a system within this act with the amendments to the Education Act where they actually monitor those agreements and make sure that they're in place – they actually mandate how those agreements can be amended, which is quite intrusive, actually, for a government.

It's actually getting quite into the weeds with other locally elected bodies who are entering into agreements about what those agreements must say. Not only is that contrary to, I think, the position that this government has repeatedly stated, which is that government should be hands-off and entities should be able to do whatever they want, but apart from that, it actually goes contrary to the principles behind the Education Act. Now, we stood up on this side of the House when this current Education Act was being debated again in the summer session, right after the election. I actually have a very detailed understanding of the Education Act given my past work, and I've stood up in this House and said many times to the members opposite, particularly the Minister of Education, that I wasn't confident that the members were actually familiar with the contents of the Education Act.

It seemed to me – and it's plainly obvious to most Albertans as well – that they were only fixated on one piece of the Education Act, and that was the piece that rolled back protection for LGBTQ2S students, which they achieved because that was the only purpose behind why they brought in that Education Act. That's why they sought to bring it forward. Promise made, promise kept. They rolled back protections for LGBTQ2S students, so good for them. The problem, as I pointed out a number of times in the Legislature, is that the Education Act has a whole bunch of other pieces involved in it, and one of the core fundamental pieces is that it grants natural person powers to school boards.

10:40

That was as a result of school boards, again locally elected bodies – and I have to emphasize that given the statements by the Minister of Education last week where she's threatening a locally elected school board, the largest in the province, because she's so shocked that cutting education funding means laying off staff. She's now threatening a locally elected school board with disbandment. I appreciate that she might not be very familiar with the powers and responsibilities of a locally elected body like a school board, but those natural person powers were critical to what school boards wanted in the Education Act.

They wanted to be able to make decisions about when they enter into agreements. They wanted to be able to have the authority, as they are locally elected, to manage their budgets to some extent but also to make those decisions of when and if to enter into joint-use agreements – that's just one example – to enter into any agreement, really. That was a core part and a core principle behind the Education Act.

But here we see, by virtue of what I will say is essentially a miscellaneous statutes amendment act or a red tape creation act, that this government is now meddling with that, which speaks to me again about the fact that this government is not familiar with what was in the Education Act, is not familiar with what were the core principles and objectives behind that act, which was to grant greater authority. Now they're going in and mandating that school boards enter into those agreements.

Look, I'll say this again. Most school boards already enter into these joint-use agreements because they're critical. To actually treat school boards as if they don't know already the value of joint-use agreements, the value of working with our municipalities to talk about how community spaces, things like – we see now, you know, the development of schools that are connected to community rec centres and spaces that are really designed to work with the community, not just serve either schools or municipalities but actually to serve the community. School boards and municipalities have been doing this for ages. They think it's really great. The ones I've reviewed have always been very great and very co-operative.

I just find it very ironic that it would be included in this act as if it's some kind of red tape reduction because actually it's about now government overseeing. I imagine they'll have to mandate or somehow require a review of these agreements to make sure that they're actually in place and have the provisions in place. So they're actually creating red tape, which is completely unnecessary, for the most part. To include it as part of red tape reduction says to me that this associate minister really has very little to do.

In fact, where we heard this government stand up and beat the drum about red tape reduction is about approving projects, approving energy projects and all that. I see none of that in this act. Of course, I think it's going to be diffused, as it always has been, into the work of each individual ministry and their responsibilities within their ministry to create efficiencies, to make sure things are working properly, to make sure the objectives of the ministries are met. That's always been the responsibility of individual ministries, and I imagine that's still happening right now. I imagine we're going to see that review as it constantly was happening through all government, making sure that things were happening the way they should.

But it only speaks to, again, the fact that the creation of a separate, stand-alone, red tape reduction associate minister and ministry is actually a facade because red tape reduction is about making sure that all the government ministries are operating efficiently. No further evidence is required than this, frankly, anemic bill that we are seeing right here. Really, what this is, again, is to show that red

tape reduction and creating an associate minister and all of that responsible for that was just some sort of symbolic measure to show to their base that they're taking red tape seriously. Well, if this is their evidence of taking red tape seriously, if I was – and I'm not – a UCP supporter, I would say: "Wow. That's pretty sad. This is not very effective. This isn't going to do much." I'm also wondering what the associate minister is going to do next because, really, this seems to be all that they have coming forward.

You know, again, I was not part of the previous Assembly, the previous Legislature, but I understand and I'm not surprised it's been a constant criticism whenever big omnibus bills are brought through. We've seen at least four of them this session alone, and it's a make-work project for a government who has demonstrated in the last few weeks that they actually do not have efficiency at the heart of what they're doing. I think this is a very good piece of evidence to support that; \$10 million thrown away on a bill that, frankly, could be achieved with a miscellaneous statutes amendment act and actually does not eliminate red tape.

I think that once again we're seeing more proof that this government really is not about fiscal responsibility or fiscal efficiency. They're throwing away money on pet projects. I, for one – I'm sure many of my constituents feel the same way – am starting to get a little bit fed up with that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak and to voice my objection to the contents of this bill, mostly because it's a waste of time. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments.

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My pleasure to speak to Bill 25, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, specifically focusing on the issues with regard to the MGA and the changes proposed in this act that reflect on the MGA or amend the MGA.

You know, as I was going through it, there were a number of things, of course, that I want to focus on. I want to pick up first where my colleague left off with regard to the ICF process, the intermunicipal collaboration framework process. I note that on the website for the RMA they do go into this a great deal because there are a number of proposed changes that would impact the ICF process. Perhaps the Minister of Municipal Affairs or the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction can provide some clarification at some point. I did listen to the associate minister talk about how the proposed changes to the ICF and the Municipal Government Act would improve things for municipalities, but I'm not sure of all of the changes that he's talking about and how it's actually red tape reduction and how it would improve life for municipalities throughout the province.

For one, the deadline for rural-to-rural ICFs remains at April 1, 2021, and as I understand it, some of the rural municipalities can have a dozen or more other municipalities on their boundaries. That remains quite challenging in terms of a timeline for them, April 1, 2021.

I do note that many of the things in this bill soften or make it easier for municipalities to focus on the issues that are important between them and not on all of the long laundry list of services that they potentially had to go through. This bill kind of says, "Where there's disagreement, that's where we want you to focus" or "Where there's a benefit, we want you to focus on that area and not other things that you won't be working together around." You know, on the surface that makes sense. I do wonder about the

comprehensiveness of future intermunicipal collaborative frameworks and intermunicipal development frameworks with that kind of understanding. The concern that was brought forward was: is the deadline for rural-to-rural ICFs remaining at April 1, 2021, when there are such a significant number of counties and MDs on the boundaries of some? Do they need more time? I think this is suggesting they need more time to do that.

I just want to also say that there are some things in this around the arbitration process, that is a significant portion of this bill. Arbitration between municipalities is an important aspect of sorting things out. The question that I have, though, is: do any of these changes in the bill deal with who actually pays for the arbitration or the experts that are brought in? If this is making it more challenging for municipalities to resolve disputes between them, perhaps the province should be putting some money on the table to incent or to help municipalities work together so that they can get to the end process, which is, you know, the sharing of resources, the sharing of services, so that we're not making things redundant at the municipal level that they could very well share like waste-water and water services.

**10:50**

Speaking of waste-water and water services, I know that the AUMA received over 140 responses when they asked their members and surveyed their members about: what would be important in a red tape reduction bill? Many of those responses, 60 per cent of the responses, identified that they encountered regulatory barriers when dealing with drinking water, stormwater, and waste water, and I fail to see in any of this bill where that is being addressed. It strikes me that the AUMA membership went to the extent of talking to their members and getting some feedback, and I fail to see where that feedback is incorporated into this bill. You know, you don't get many chances to bring forward bills, probably, if you're an associate minister, so I would think that you would want to make sure you're addressing the needs of those AUMA members that are out there.

Also, just looking at what was important for those members of the AUMA, it says that over 50 per cent of the respondents highlighted that they experienced red tape in grant applications and reporting. Now, I have looked throughout this bill, and I fail to see where, under the various ministries that are impacted by changes here, grant applications and streamlining of regulations are identified. I could be wrong, and that's where the associate minister or the Minister of Municipal Affairs or any other minister dealing with grants may have the opportunity to clarify for me when they get the opportunity.

I'd just go back to additional changes that are proposed in the bill, that come forward from the RMA in this instance. You know, I just look at joint-use and planning agreements that are between municipalities and school boards. Certainly, I know there are challenges in that regard, and I just don't know if all of the proposed changes here will benefit municipalities and school boards. I think they're intended to. But I can tell you that forever in Calgary we've been working very closely with the two, now four, school boards in that municipality for the benefit of both the taxpayers – children, parents – and good planning. I'm not sure where the problems are that are seen as being fixed by what's before us today.

The review of ABCs was talked about by my colleague previously. I can tell you that we did a significant review of agencies, boards, and commissions. I'm not sure that I'd see it as red tape reduction to say that one is being killed that hasn't been in service since 2004, whatever it was. That doesn't really kind of address the definition of red tape reduction. When we did the review of agencies, boards, and commissions, there were over 200 and

some – I can't remember the exact number – and it was reduced to under 170. I think that would qualify as red tape reduction. But that's already been done, as I said.

The other aspects of changes that I'd like to focus on that I read in this bill have to do with making life simpler, I guess, and easier for municipalities. You know, it's eliminating the requirement – I just don't see it as red tape – for names of people who are attending in camera sessions of a council to not be put forward or to not be documented. I'm not really sure what that's about. I wonder if there's a concern about in camera sessions of councils generally and that this is an attempt to take that opportunity away from councils. You know, it's certainly something they do when there are issues that can't be relayed to the public immediately. They go in camera to essentially get their act together and find out more about a particular issue before it's reported on. But you do have to report on what the issue was when you come out of in camera. So I'm not sure what changes in here would be red tape reduction. I'm certainly looking forward to the associate minister telling us.

There is a change from 90 days to 120 days for by-elections. I'm not sure how that's red tape reduction, but, you know, perhaps you can clarify. There is a need, of course, when there is a vacancy on council and there's a significant amount of time before the next election, that that seat get filled, and there's a process that has seemed to work forever. Now there's a change to 30 more days to allow councils to fill that position. If anything, it would seem to delay it up to 120 days. Perhaps the associate minister can tell us if that came out of any of the discussions that he had with the RMA or the AUMA or who brought it forward and if it's a long-standing, nagging thing that municipalities have worried about and wanted changed. Certainly, I don't know what the problem is.

I think those are some of the concerns I have. Obviously, the RMA has given a significant amount of feedback. From reading their website, I can see that the concern is around arbitration cost and that the concern is around the number of changes to the IDP process, the arbitration process, and several other things that are other proposed changes that are in here.

I will sit down now, Mr. Speaker, and hopefully the associate minister and others can provide some clarification to me. Thanks.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise and speak to Bill 25. For anyone who has taken the time to read through it, it's misnamed, quite frankly. It's not red tape reduction at all. I mean, I think there are actually two pieces that may reduce cabinet approval time, again not necessarily having the effect that the minister will tout or that this government claims about how it's making it easier to do business in the province. I don't know of a regulation change, other than one in here, that actually does that.

You know, I want to start off, first of all, reading into *Hansard* the dictionary definition of red tape, which is important because many of my comments to follow are about the fact that I'm going to give examples of how it's not actually red tape reduction. Red tape, as defined by the *Oxford* dictionary, is "excessive bureaucracy or adherence to rules, especially in public business." I don't know if you know this, Mr. Speaker, but the origin is from Bill C-18 federally, so named because of the red or pink tape used to bind official documents. That is actually the history of red tape.

Now, a number of changes that this bill makes, as my colleague had mentioned, don't actually require legislation. They can be done

through miscellaneous statutes. There are some that could be done through OIC changes, including the dissolution of some boards. In fact, by bringing forward a piece of legislation, it's actually added levels of bureaucracy, the fact that we are taking time, all of us, to be here to debate a bill where many of the functions of this bill aren't necessary in its own stand-alone provision. This government is gung-ho to put forward omnibus legislation that has sweeping changes to dozens of acts affecting every single Albertan. That can be done in omnibus legislation like raising the personal income taxes of every single Albertan. Yet making a few statutory changes needs its own piece of legislation?

I think what we're seeing here, Mr. Speaker, is a trend, that this government is trying to create the illusion of doing things but isn't in fact moving them forward, not much. Again, I will come to a couple of examples here, and one of them I do agree with, so I will give credit where credit is due.

**11:00**

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, first of all, that the dissolution of some of the boards in this that have not been functional: that's not red tape. The board is not even meeting. There is no red tape. That's not preventing anyone from doing anything, including the minister or any government. That's a dissolution of a board. That could be done in a statutes act. It doesn't need to be put in its own stand-alone bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as well, the appointment – I think it's the health board the minister spoke of. Appointing board members now can be done by the minister. Now, is that going to save time on taking it to cabinet and going through the cabinet debate process? Yes. Does it make it more expedient? Yes, it does. Now, I can tell you that there is a reason and a long-standing history for why appointments go to cabinet and aren't done by individual ministers. Part of that is to ensure that there is oversight, that it isn't a minister appointing friends or buddies or others who maybe aren't qualified. But they could do that if they had the sole discretion and the sole authority.

The other thing is that, again, part of that process is so that cabinet members can deliberate. I'll give you a great example of something that I find concerning. The change to the Forests Act: now the minister has the exclusive authority to enter forest management agreements. Now, the challenge that I have with this – I mean, first, my question is: how many forestry companies did the minister speak to, and how many of them are asking for this? This is news to me. I have a pretty good relationship with the forestry sector, but maybe they came and spoke to the minister about this change.

The challenge with this is that the forest management agreements, including dealing with the amount of harvestable timber, impact more than just this single minister. This has incredible impacts on the surrounding municipalities around the Crown land. It has impacts on the Minister of Energy's portfolio because these forest management agreements impact the oil and gas sector. They have significant impacts on the Minister of Municipal Affairs' portfolio. They have impacts on Environment and Parks. The challenge with giving the minister exclusive authority to enter into forest management contracts or agreements is that you've now siloed this one responsibility that the minister has, so now the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry doesn't need to talk to the other ministers. They don't need to be looped in to talk about: what are the other points of view or perspectives on approving a certain section of land for use in the forestry sector?

The other thing that's interesting is that I don't know if all of the forestry companies are going to be in favour of this, where it may give certain benefits to individual companies and not to others. I hope that when we get to Committee of the Whole, the Minister of

Agriculture and Forestry can talk about the number of companies that he's consulted with and how taking this to cabinet was so onerous. I can tell you that I've been part of cabinet deliberations on forestry management agreements and felt that I appreciated having the different perspectives of the different cabinet ministers, each of them coming, obviously, with their own individual lens and with the lens through which they see different issues through their portfolios. I found it very, very beneficial to have those conversations. So that's one that – I guess, you know, we could consider that eliminating red tape, not having to go through cabinet. The challenge is that there's a reason behind it and, I think, quite a legitimate reason.

The other one that's interesting in this bill, Mr. Speaker, if I can find it here, relates to the AUC approving hydroelectric dams. I'm curious to know: who was consulted on this? Again, what is the new process for the AUC to ensure that they are adequately consulting with indigenous groups, consulting on the environment, consulting with municipalities who are going to be impacted by this, by the creation of dams? This is going to have significant impact on wildlife habitats.

I can tell you that under the PC government, between 2012 and 2015, I sat on the Resource Stewardship Committee, where we took a significant amount of time to travel the province and study the issue of hydroelectricity in northern Alberta and the impacts that a new facility would have, whether that's run-of-the-river or an actual dam. You know, I'm interested to know the impacts that this will have for the electricity companies – on their transmission, on supply, on their costs – which also would go through the AUC.

The other thing that's fascinating is that I've recently learned that the controversy around the Oldman dam – this is why we actually have the existing legislation, because it was so controversial. There was a Supreme Court decision on that project. Anyone who lives in that area, I think, will recall that part of the reason there are these processes in place is to prevent another situation like that from happening.

Yes, I guess you could make an argument that that's red tape, but it's red tape that's there to ensure projects get approvals. I mean, what's interesting is that, again, the government talks about the disappointment with the Northern Gateway being torpedoed – fair enough – and feeling disappointed that it did, but let's look at: why was it torpedoed? It goes back to failure to adequately consult before that project was given the green light. In order to ensure that we get projects moving forward, whether it's pipelines or hydro dams, you know, having these pieces in place – they serve a purpose. They may be a little time consuming, and they may be onerous, but if it means that the project will go forward, then I think it's worth it, rather than being embroiled in courts and injunctions, tying up dollars. Again, I mean, you want to talk about eliminating uncertainty. Well, that creates uncertainty for investors. Having a very clear process mapped out, I think, is your better approach.

The other thing that's interesting is that in estimates with the Energy minister we talked about ways to improve the AER, how they can expedite their approval processes, because we know that that's an issue, especially for energy companies. There are examples of projects that have been tied up for years. You know, I appreciate the Minister of Energy responding or answering this question, saying: "Well, we are working on that. We are working with the AER to identify ways that they can expedite their approvals." Okay. Well, it sounds like the Minister of Energy sure doesn't need the minister of red tape to get involved. If anything, he's probably going to slow it down.

I don't see the value-add of that ministry. I agree with what she's saying, that there are a number of things that we did, whether it's regulations that came through cabinet, et cetera, and

to look at them with a lens of: what service are they providing? What purpose do they provide? Is it still necessary, and if not, do they need to be amended, or can it be eliminated? But we don't need a whole new ministry to add a new layer of bureaucracy looking at bills and regulations when, quite frankly, as the Member for Edmonton-Decore said, we can use that \$10 million elsewhere. You basically mandate to every ministry that they look at every single regulation and piece of legislation through the lens of: what new regs would this create, and would that be a burden for either businesses or others? I don't see the clear value of that ministry, quite frankly.

Now, having said that – and I don't think it was necessary to come through a whole ministry – where I will give credit, whether this is for the minister of red tape or the minister of ag and forestry: allowing buildings to be higher than six storeys, I know, is a huge boon for our forestry sector. I'm quite confident that they were quite happy about this. They were asking at least our government to consider this. I know that there's an example; I believe it's in British Columbia. It's the tallest wood-structure building, that is really a showpiece. It's, like, 20-some storeys high, Mr. Speaker, built of wood, standing today, with absolutely no problems. We'll knock on wood. Really, it points to how the forestry sector, through innovation and their technologies, can build structures that are as fire resistant as those made of other materials.

Now, I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Decore talking about: I hope that our firefighters have been consulted on this and discussed and weighed in on the impact. But I know that, from a forestry point of view, aligning Alberta's regulations with federal to 12 storeys is a good thing. The one piece in this bill that I do agree with and appreciate is that section. I will say "Good job" to the government and, quite frankly, "Good job" to the forestry sector because I know that they've been very vocal in asking for this. But, again, this one piece: does it need to be in this bill when you have three other omnibus pieces of legislation that are making amendments to a number of different statutes?

**11:10**

Really, it begs the question: is this creation more of a talking point? It was part of the election platform. You know, I guess, to put it one way: where's the beef? We're talking about all this red tape elimination. I don't see it, quite frankly. This bill, unless I overlooked it – I encourage the minister, when we get into committee, to talk about which of these changes will expedite or help businesses, because so far I haven't come across examples where this actually helps resolve the issue of red tape. To go back to where I started, Mr. Speaker, with the definition of red tape, many of these changes are not actually red tape reduction. It's a great talking point. It's flashy. The government can go to Albertans and say, "Look at what we're doing" although anybody who dives into this says, "Where's the red tape reduction?" Again, is it necessary to create a ministry and to have a bill which does this?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I mean, those are really the issues that I have with this unnecessary – there are three massive omnibus bills before this House right now, maybe two, that it could be a part of. I'm curious to have the debate continue in Committee of the Whole, and I will leave my comments there.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anybody wish to make quick questions or comments.

Seeing none, are there any other members looking to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has risen.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 25. As my colleague was finishing up his remarks, he was asking, “Where is the red tape reduction in this bill?” and he was looking around. I think I would agree with him. I didn’t see any red tape reduction in this piece of legislation. Rather, it’s more like an omnibus bill, which makes amendments that deal with 13 pieces of legislation.

Some of the members on the other side will remember that when they were in opposition, we were bringing forward changes to workers’ compensation and the Labour Relations Code, fairly connected pieces of legislation. They were doing everything, essentially, to split that because that was an omnibus bill, that was too much for them to deal with, that was curtailing debate on these bills. Now here we are. That’s the third or fourth piece of legislation in this sitting where they’re dealing with as many statutes as they want and want us to debate all of these changes.

I think, as was mentioned before, that some of these changes have nothing to do with red tape reduction. If you’re getting rid of some body, some foundation that was never consulted, that was never in the way of making decisions, that was of no use, I think those are the kinds of things, cleanups, that are for a miscellaneous statutes act. In every session, every sitting there used to be one, at least, that dealt with those kinds of changes.

Then there are things that are more like policy changes. As was mentioned about the wood structures, changing the wood structures, allowing wood structures more than six storeys or changes to the Safety Codes Act: these are substantive changes, policy changes. I think that the ministries that deal with these pieces of legislation, I would argue, are better positioned to make those changes. If those ministers need another minister to look into their ministry and tell them what process is not good, I think that’s a bigger concern.

When I was in Community and Social Services, we looked at AISH application procedures, and we were able to reduce the information that we were getting from individuals that was not needed. Their applications were 22 or 23 pages, and we were able to bring it down to 16 pages. Then the application was in two or three parts. We were getting one section filled, and then we were giving the medical form for clients to take to their doctor and get that filled, so we combined that application as well. That was somewhat of a reduction in the red tape. Today, when I looked at this legislation and went through the pieces of legislation it deals with, I quite frankly had to look up, really, what red tape reduction means. As my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview quoted from the dictionary, I also googled it to just, I guess, clarify for myself that whatever I’m thinking red tape reduction is, that’s exactly what it is. That is, I guess, cleaning procedures. How it’s defined in Google is that you are reducing the bureaucratic obstacles. I think that here we don’t see any kind of reduction on those lines at all. It’s either a cleanup that was done previously in a miscellaneous statutes act, or it’s some kind of policy changes that are better suited for the ministers who are in charge of those ministries to deal with.

I don’t see a huge red tape reduction if I talk on a couple of statutes, a couple of changes that relate to the Energy ministry. One was the Small Power Research and Development Act. The government says that all contracts have been concluded, so repealing this may be a good idea, but as such it’s not reducing any kind of bureaucratic obstacles that were in the way of these projects or that will change the way we do things. Rather, I would say that it only gives another indication on the part of this government that renewables, as we have seen before, are not a priority for this government. I’m not sure if the programs that were previously under Energy Efficiency Alberta will continue with the target of over 30 per cent; in Energy estimates we were told that they are not.

I don’t think it’s in any way, shape, or manner red tape reduction as I understand it.

The second thing is the Hydro and Electric Energy Act. I think that’s the most important change contained in this piece of legislation, how we will deal with hydroelectric projects. These are oftentimes projects of huge magnitude and importance, and meanwhile many other considerations and just leaving it to one minister may remove some unnecessary requirements. Considering what we have seen from this government and different ministers, I think it’s concerning that they are just consolidating powers in their hands. What we have seen in this Energy ministry so far is that there will be some war room, the Canadian Energy Centre, where they appointed a failed UCP candidate to look after our oil and gas resources’ reputation. The same thing happened with the inquiry when that kind of power was exercised. They appointed a commissioner who awarded another \$900,000 contract to a firm where his son is a partner. That kind of consolidation of power under this government’s minister is also a concern, and again I don’t see how this is reducing any kind of bureaucratic obstacles from any of the process.

**11:20**

When the UCP was campaigning, they were using this red tape reduction, essentially, to make Albertans believe that somehow there is a huge bureaucracy, that somehow the size of the public service is huge, that there are managers managing the managers, that kind of rhetoric. They promised Albertans that they would clean up those things and make processes easier. This bill doesn’t do anything along those lines. It’s just another miscellaneous statutes act, or the changes contained in it should have been properly consulted on and dealt with by the minister responsible for these statutes.

Based on these, I will not be supporting this piece of legislation because it does nothing to reduce red tape at all.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise to speak to Bill 25, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, briefly and focus on some elements of the proposed legislation. Although it changes or repeals up to 13 acts, the same thing could have been accomplished, as other speakers have talked about, by using a miscellaneous statutes amendment act, not a red tape reduction act in and of itself. It’s trying, actually, to give purpose to the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. It’s an attempt to give him something to do and speaks to how unnecessary the whole bill is and the whole ministry is.

Reducing regulation and updating existing regulations and statutes is an ongoing process, Mr. Speaker, that has historically taken place throughout governments. It can be dealt with by cabinet decree or a Premier’s mandate letter to the ministers without creating an entire ministry to be the red tape minder overlooking all ministries. All of this, as other speakers have mentioned – and I certainly concur with them – could have been accomplished through miscellaneous statutes amendment acts, which is a rather normal process of updating existing legislation and statutes.

The government uses the language of red tape to justify eliminating key services to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate handout, and it does nothing to create jobs. This bill is simply a collection of housekeeping items that can be done, as I mentioned,

in the statutes amending act or done by the ministers responsible for their own acts.

As critic for Ag and Forestry I wanted to touch briefly upon a couple of things that this act does to touch that ministry. For example, the entry into forest management agreements can now be done through a ministerial order instead of an order in council. While I agree that this is a reasonable change, it could have been done in a statutes amendment act or by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. It does not justify the associate minister's job.

Secondly, with respect to the forestry end of the ministry that I'm the critic for, of course, the measures would be better placed in a miscellaneous statutes amendment act, as I mentioned. The parts of the Safety Codes Act which would be changed allowing wood buildings to be higher than six storeys is something that I applaud along with our Opposition House Leader, and it is bringing it in line with federal regulations. It is something that will allow larger, higher buildings to be built out of wood.

I note that in the Alberta Forest Products Association election platform, that they released last March, they were hoping, as a key recommendation, to seize "future opportunities including building public projects with wood, investing in research to develop new products, and helping to open new markets." All of these hopeful recommendations from the Alberta Forest Products Association are things that are reflected in the desire to amend the regulations allowing higher buildings, taller buildings, to be built with wood. We certainly applaud that. However, expressing this desire to have more public projects built out of wood is something that the Alberta Forest Products Association envelopes in a goal of having regulations that allow the development of new products here in Alberta and, of course, is always involved in making sure that any proposals they make to change safety codes do in fact reflect their desire to maintain safety of buildings.

Much, much work has been done by the Alberta Forest Products Association in concert with their scientific wing, and nothing in their recommendations would be something that could be described as an unsafe or unexamined factor when they talk about increasing the number of storeys that they're allowed to build with wood. I certainly support that, but the Safety Codes Act changes, once again, did not have to be implemented through a mechanism such as a red tape reduction act and would more properly have been found in a piece of legislation under a miscellaneous statutes amendment act.

I certainly applaud the Alberta Forest Products Association for its desire to promote the building of higher structures with wood and also certainly hope the government would concur that we should be seeking every opportunity to make sure that the construction of public buildings with wood to a higher height is something that is actually discussed seriously and, hopefully, promoted within government circles so that we can see more structures using Alberta's technology to create taller structures with wood implemented in the very near future. But, once again, it didn't have to be implemented by way of a bill called the red tape reduction act, something that's simply here to justify the minister's existence. It is a ministry which really is looking for a role to play when, in fact, the role was already being played by ministries themselves, as historically has taken place throughout time.

I wanted to touch upon one more of the elements of this act. I could reiterate a few other things, but I think I will probably just stick within my critic role as it relates to Agriculture and Forestry and suggest that the ongoing recommendations of any minister to his deputies are always to make sure that redundancies and unnecessary legislation and regulation are brought to his or her attention. The whole concept of a red tape reduction act is really an effort to try to create an impression in the public that governments

don't have this as an ongoing measure when, in fact, it can be pointed out that in our past government's history this was an ongoing process – we had made great strides in reducing inefficiencies and reducing the number of agencies, boards, and commissions that were not operating or operating efficiently – and that the whole creation of the red tape reduction ministry is a rather ironic creation of more red tape in and of itself.

Once again, a miscellaneous statutes amendment act has historically been used for this type of legislation. We didn't need an omnibus bill that kind of showboated what governments normally do as a matter of process. I would hope that this is the last time that we see the creation of a ministry designed to do something which, in fact, accomplishes the opposite.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I won't be supporting the legislation. I do look forward, however, to seeing the pieces of it that are touching on particularly our forest industry and developing technologies and implementing regulations to allow the creation of public buildings in particular to a higher storey made out of wood, particularly wood that is designed and engineered in this province for export globally. That's something that I hope to see. But, once again, it wasn't necessary to do it through this piece of legislation. A miscellaneous statutes amendment act would have been the better mechanism to have used.

Thank you.

11:30

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak on this matter?

Seeing none, the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction to close debate.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the robust debate and the presentation by the members opposite of their concerns. I will let them know that we have made copious notes and are looking forward to being able to discuss them in Committee of the Whole.

I would like to just really quickly confirm to the members that – I want to remind them that we are not creating a new budget item, that this is actually an associate ministry under Treasury Board and Finance. So we are reallocating some of the funds that that ministry has in order to be able to focus on and address the issue of red tape reduction, which the hon. members had the opportunity in the last four years to do but failed to do. Albertans have said that this is important to them.

One of the other concerns that I've heard is that this is not a red tape reduction initiative. Now, I would obviously disagree with them on that, and I would state to them that this actually does matter. I stated at the beginning, when I talked in my introduction of this Bill 25 in second reading, that when B.C. did this organ and tissue initiative, they actually saw a fourfold increase. That actually had a material effect on individuals' lives, a fourfold increase in organ and tissue donors. So, Mr. Speaker, this actually does matter. It doesn't just matter to businesses; it matters to individuals. This was a red tape reduction initiative which took place in B.C., and this is a best practice that we've decided to put into effect as well here. It is actually something that I very much enjoy doing, to be able to work on these red tape reduction initiatives.

I would like to speak also to another point that they made, that it could have been done in other ministries. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a government-wide initiative. It's just focused under the red tape reduction ministry's responsibility and mandate. Each of the ministries that have brought forward these submissions has been well vetted. I have the greatest confidence in these ministers and

their ability to be able to look for those redundancies, which is what we've seen today with this bill.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks and thank the members and move to close debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a second time]

**The Acting Speaker:** Just prior to moving to Committee of the Whole, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader did catch my eye. If she could please continue with some remarks.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to adjourn the Assembly until this afternoon at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:34 a.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 26, 2019

Day 47

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 26, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this morning I had the pleasure to meet with the consul general of the Czech Republic in Toronto, Mr. Ivan Počuch. He's accompanied today by Jerry Jelinek and Trade Commissioner David Müller. Thank you, all, for joining us at the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there are several guests joining us today. We have school groups here, starting with the school group from Edmonton-Rutherford, students from George P. Nicholson. From Edmonton-Whitemud please welcome students from Monsignor William Irwin school. Last of our school groups today, from the constituency of Edmonton-South welcome students from Roberta MacAdams. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, also in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon I'm very pleased to welcome the better half of the Member for Lethbridge-East, Ms Deanne Neudorf.

Also in the Speaker's gallery today are guests of mine. Welcome Mr. and Mrs. Peck – these are the parents of Samantha Peck, who works for the Associate Minister of Natural Gas – and also a son of constituents in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Welcome here today a guest of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, Mr. Hamish McNaughton Kerfoot, a board member of Rocky View county FCSS program.

Visiting the Minister of Transportation: please welcome members of the Canadian Urban Transit Association.

Also, visiting the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: a very warm welcome to Alberta Sugar Beet Growers and constituents joining him from Taber-Warner.

Also, special guests of the Minister of Seniors and Housing: from the city of Edmonton, Chief of Staff Aileen Giesbrecht and social development branch manager Jackie Foord.

Last but certainly not least, constituency guests of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora: please welcome Sylvia Krogh and Louise Swift.

Please rise, receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Raging Grannies

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for acknowledging my guests: Sylvia Krogh, Louise Swift, and Edda Loomes. They are constituents and active participants in public life in the province of Alberta. They also happen to be Raging Grannies. This is their second trip to the Legislature in less than 10 days. Last Monday Sylvia, Louise, and Edda came here to take part in a demonstration against the government's cruel cuts to our postsecondary institutions.

For those of us not born into privilege and wealth, postsecondary education is a crucial doorway to a career and a better life, both for ourselves and for our families. But this government is slamming that door shut for many Albertans with a 23 per cent tuition fee hike,

jacked-up interest on student debt, and cancellation of the tuition tax credits, just to pay for a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout.

Sylvia, Louise, and Edda could have stayed home. They could have stayed warm. But they came here to support Alberta's young people and make those points using their constitutional rights of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. After the event was concluded, Sylvia, Louise, and Edda, who are all seniors, were hoping for a moment to sit down, warm up a bit, have a cup of tea, and maybe use the bathroom. But when they came into the front doors of this House, the people's House, they were denied access and turned away. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker, tour groups being ushered in but engaged and publicly active citizens from Alberta turned away. This is disgraceful.

It is also very symbolic of this government, a government that has broken its promise to Albertans, a government whose attention is focused on rewarding its cronies and donors, a government that is dismantling and firing agencies and people who hold them to account. The Alberta public is the final check on this government. How quickly they are returning to the PC era of the front doors of this building being locked to keep the public out.

I hope that the presence of Sylvia, Louise, and Edda in the gallery today can help remind this corrupt government that Albertans will make them answer for their choices in this place.

### Millar Western Forest Products Centennial

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge the incredible contributions of Millar Western within my region for the last 100 years. This summer I had the incredible honour, along with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and the Member for Central Peace-Notley, to participate in the 100-year celebrations of Millar Western. That day, as I am certain my colleagues will attest, I also showed off some pretty impressive axe-throwing skills at the celebration.

J.W. Millar incorporated his company, which was active in logging and construction, in 1919 in Saskatchewan and shortly afterwards was logging and sawmilling in Alberta. Mr. Millar chose to make Edmonton the home of the company's head office. In 1988 Millar Western pulp became Alberta's first bleached chemithermomechanical pulp, or BCTMP, mill.

You see, Mr. Speaker, while some may only recognize Millar Western as the company which supplies the 70-foot Christmas tree to Churchill Square each year, the contribution this company has made to my community is much, much larger. They employ hundreds of full-time and contract employees and contribute millions of dollars to our local economy. Millar Western leads the way in sustainable forest practices and environmental stewardship. They represent our province and country with their market access in the U.S., Asia, and Europe, yet here at home they ensure that our province and country are well represented by providing scholarships and training in trades to young people.

Three generations of the Millar family have been actively involved in the operations of Millar Western. Today Mac Millar and Janet Millar keep a watchful eye on the company, and I must say that they are truly incredible and genuine people.

Mr. Speaker, while I am here today to acknowledge Millar Western and the incredible milestone of 100 years, I trust, from what I have seen as I get to know them and with the forward thinking and leadership of Mr. Craig Armstrong, that Millar Western is indeed a young company as they will inevitably be here for generations to come.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

### Calgary Dinos' Vanier Cup Championship

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My wife loves it when I start talking football, so I know that every member of this House will be excited to hear about my great love for this game.

Mr. Speaker, the final game of the season. We had trained all year: 6 a.m. workouts, after-school practices, an entire summer dedicated to exercise. It's minus 10 outside, but you don't feel the cold. Adrenalin is keeping you warm. Your team, your brothers, are huddled up. Coach calls your number: blitz. You hover towards the line, then back. You keep 'em guessing. Ball is snapped. Go. You hid your blitz well. Unabated, clear path to that quarterback. I was the inside linebacker in a 3-4 scheme, and I loved it when the coach called my number.

Football is one of the great sports. Some may argue that hockey in Canada reigns supreme, but I would be happy to take on that debate. No matter your perspective it is fair to say that with 107 years of the Grey Cup, football is a big part of the Canadian identity.

That is why it is my pleasure to rise in this House today to congratulate the Calgary Dinos on their 27-13 victory over the Montreal Carabins. It has been 24 years since the Dinos hoisted the Vanier Cup back in 1995, with a close call in 2016, when they were edged out by Laval for the championship. Twenty-four years is a long time, but I'm sure any Blue Bombers fans in the House know the pain of a championship drought.

Through hard work and dedication, giving as good as they got, the Dinos showed Calgarians and Albertans that they were unstoppable. Their second touchdown a beautifully connected 10-play, 87-yard drive. Their quarterback, Adam Sinagra, and their head coach, Wayne Harris, led their team with distinction. When injuries took out defensive players, they soldiered on and claimed the Vanier Cup.

As an alumni of the University of Calgary I am very proud of the Dinos' win, and I would ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Dinos in their victory. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

1:40

### Sports in Alberta

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about my experience as a football mom, a hockey mom, a dance mom, a soccer mom, and in general a sports parent. All three of my children have been involved in sports growing up, and my youngest still plays hockey.

I've been at the early morning practices and now the late-night hockey games, freezing my feet and my buns off in the arena, cheering on my son. I'm such an enthusiastic and proud mom that, to my son's embarrassment, I have a blanket with his face on it that I showcase in my particularly proud moments.

I've also been involved in managing and coaching teams and know the level of commitment put in by parents, youngsters, and volunteers to foster a team atmosphere and a family dynamic amongst all the players and families. It's for this reason I want to thank the Northeast Zone Sports Council for continuing to foster their incredible work ethic that makes everyone feel like they are included and part of a larger family. This year marks their 50th anniversary in north Edmonton, and I want to congratulate them for being a stalwart in the community.

Opportunities to participate in sporting activities are vital for communities. This is why I am deeply concerned with the dissolution of the Alberta Sport Connection. I know the positive impact sports has on all who participate, and this decision is creating confusion and uncertainty for the community groups and

organizations throughout the province as they work to ensure participation in sports for all. With this decision this government and the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women are once again sacrificing communities and families in order to pay for their \$4.7 billion giveaway, and I will continue to call them out each and every time.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Aviation Industry

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As an airline alumni I proudly rise to speak to an important element of Alberta's economy and future. Air services are a vital asset in our transportation network as we develop comprehensive multimodal infrastructure to better serve all Albertans. Aviation is a key driver of global economic development. It is a proven stimulant with respect to tourism, commerce, investment, and trade. Time and again we see how strategically planned air services support employment, increase labour mobility, add value by enabling trade, and set the stage for building strong and impactful relationships across all sectors of the economy.

We all enjoy travel opportunities, but let's not forget the economic benefits also brought to Alberta. Strategic thinking and planning are required to launch and sustain air services as an enduring pillar of the Alberta advantage. Mr. Speaker, under the previous NDP government we saw indifference that may have contributed to the loss of vital air cargo links such as Cathay Pacific and Air China. These were important international air services which brought business to Alberta and export capacity to the world, now likely lost for the foreseeable future.

Air services, including the operations of our own provincial flag carrier, WestJet, provide many direct employment opportunities for Albertans, including but not limited to pilot training, aircraft maintenance, ground operations, and deep Arctic aviation such as the proven skills of Alberta's own Kenn Borek Air. This industry brings diversification and new opportunities and emerging markets to all Albertans while encouraging innovation and leading-edge technology investment in broader aerospace applications, including UAS and UAVs, commonly known as drones.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we need to recognize the vital importance of this industry and strategic attraction and retention of air services to ensuring that Alberta is well served now and into the future with respect to building the bridges of trade, tourism, investment, commerce, and friendship in an increasingly global economy. Our future depends upon it, and we can and will get it right under this UCP government.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has a statement to make.

### Budget 2019 Petition

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past couple of weeks we've been talking to Albertans about this budget, and what we've heard is that people are disappointed, frustrated, and angry. My office has received hundreds of letters, and I've been meeting with more concerned citizens than ever before. They're concerned about the attack on Alberta's most vulnerable citizens, from deindexing AISH and destroying Henson trusts to increasing class sizes and eliminating 100 per cent of the urban indigenous programming in my former ministry.

People know that this budget is mean-spirited and will cause significant difficulties for years into the future. That is why over 10,000 Albertans signed our bad-budget petition and counting. They are angry that they are paying more and getting less, all so this government can give a \$4.7 billion giveaway to the largest corporations, who then in turn are investing in Wisconsin and not here in Alberta. Calgary lost 1,000 jobs last week alone. This government is failing to create jobs and at the same time is asking families to pay more income tax, pay more to send their kids to school, pay more for seniors' drugs, and the list goes on.

I encourage all Albertans who watch my member's statement to head online, sign our petition, and join us in sending a message to this government about their terrible budget. I want to tell this Premier that Albertans are frustrated. He has broken countless campaign promises and made cuts that most would deem unthinkable. He's made postsecondary more difficult to attain and has threatened the well-being of patients who depend on biologics for inflammatory bowel disease. Just yesterday we watched as this government plowed ahead with cuts to supports for former foster kids even as reports of some of them dying as a result of suicide went public.

This budget is shameful. It's heartless. It's cruel. But we have tens of thousands of Albertans behind us, and as the numbers grow every day, together we will stand up to this government.

### Energy Industry

**Mr. Neudorf:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans know the value of the oil and gas sector here in our province. We live in an ecosystem where we cannot ignore the ongoing impact of our energy industries. Some of our province's largest donors to youth programs, community initiatives, and arts and culture projects are the businesses and business owners that choose to invest in Alberta energy. We know that when our industry is strong, flexible, and fully allowed to innovate, we all reap and enjoy the benefits of industry's success. It is difficult to imagine an Alberta without Alberta energy, yet it seems that an Alberta without Alberta energy is the vision of our future that some of our neighbours are committed to.

To our neighbours in Quebec, who in one breath oppose Alberta resource development while wondering in another why they do not have a reliable source of propane in the face of a CN strike, I remind them that pipeline projects are the safest and most reliable way of getting energy across our country. As long as this country utilizes oil and gas, this energy should be from Alberta. Beyond that, it should be transported by pipeline projects that get our energy across our country and empower numerous communities along the way.

I agree that developing an answer to how we will fuel the future is a priority to all of us. Albertans are known for their resiliency and their comeback stories of success. Strong leadership and a vision for a better Canada of tomorrow require investments in renewable resources. This is not a question of if we will invest but a question of when and how we will invest. Management by crisis will not produce answers, and refusing to participate in Alberta-based pipeline projects across this country is not realistic, admirable, or saving anything. There is no solution to renewable resource development that doesn't come hand in hand with our current energy sector. That is why I am absolutely committed to supporting our platform promise of a TIER fund and supporting real, fact-based science. Technology and innovation have always moved us forward and will again while working with and in support of our Alberta oil and gas industry.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Alberta and Quebec

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Late last week Quebec's Finance minister, Eric Girard, published a column in the *Financial Post* which struck a conciliatory tone with western provinces. Girard wrote: "Québec is a partner of Western Canada and wants it to prosper. Québec supports Alberta's proposal that the federal government make the necessary improvements to the fiscal stabilization program." Girard said that his government is working to increase Quebec's GDP, which will eliminate the need for equalization, and notes that while the province will not accept an oil pipeline, they would be open to courting LNG development. This tone is refreshing to hear, but make no mistake, the political reality is muddy.

While Girard promises that Quebec's "government shares [our] concerns about the economic challenges [we] are facing, and the hardships experienced by families living [here]," just as loud is the absolute rejection of these same statements by Blanchet, who recently said that western separatism is inevitable because Canada is not a coherent or relevant country. When we have politicians attempting to soothe western worries while simultaneously their nationalist counterparts belittle and alienate our questions are raised. We must ask ourselves: which of these two speaks for Quebec?

Girard offers a calming hand to the west. He assures us that our interests are interlinked and that the west's pain is felt by the provincial government of Quebec. Blanchet scoffs at these same statements and calls Canada itself a petrostate, seeming to suggest that the interests of the west supersede those of the east. As our government fights to have our voice heard in Confederation, Quebec will never help us achieve that goal. They seem to feel that Alberta has an extra seat at the federal table when out here we know that exactly the opposite is true.

Preliminary discussions between our Premier, our Energy minister, and their new federal counterparts have been promising and optimistic, but this all feels very familiar. Until we have shovels in the ground, Albertans will be hoping for the best while preparing for the worst.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Election Financing Legislation

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, as if it's not enough to breach the rule of law, abuse power, and likely breach the Conflicts of Interest Act, yesterday this government sent Justice lawyers to delay hearings into the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's challenge to laws designed to keep big money out of politics. These government lawyers promised the court that the law would be changed so that the CTF would no longer have a complaint. To the Premier: is there no end to your self-interested abuse of power to promote your own political success?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I guess the Leader of the Opposition didn't bother to read the platform upon which this government received a historic electoral mandate. It committed us to getting big money out of Alberta politics. NDP-affiliated unions spent millions of dollars trying to buy the last election. Thankfully, they failed. This is why we will keep our commitment to Albertans by bringing forward amendments to the election finance disclosure law to limit contributions to so-called political action committees to \$30,000 a year.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, this is not about that particular transgression. This is about the gift to the CTF and others like it. The election finance laws were passed by this House to close loopholes that allowed foreign, corporate, or union money to influence elections. We put people first. Yet multiple third-party supporters of the UCP challenged these laws in court, and now it appears the Premier is going to fix the problem for them, the very people he used to work for, for heaven's sake. We took dark money out of politics. Why does the Premier want to put it back in?

**Mr. Kenney:** They did no such thing, Mr. Speaker. They created a legal structure that helped their union affiliates to spend millions of dollars trying to buy the last election. Albertans weren't buying it, though. Instead, they voted for a platform to finally get big money out of Alberta politics by limiting to \$30,000 the amount of money that so-called PACs can receive. In addition, we're going to get the NDP's green left, foreign-funded interest groups out of our politics by banning them from contributing to political action committees in Alberta.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't appear to understand what it is I am talking about. Yesterday Justice lawyers told the court that the government is going to rewrite these laws, likely to the satisfaction of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation as well as other corporate, foreign-funded third parties supporting them. You know, this government claims to be fighting against foreign-funded interests, just apparently not the ones who support this Premier. Premier, why do you support foreign-funded interests that support only you?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, not only have they not read the platform, but they refuse to listen to the answer, which is that we will act for the first time in Alberta political history to make it illegal for foreign interests to interfere in our politics by contributing to the so-called political action committees that the NDP created in their legislation. There are other issues before the court dealing with the constitutionally protected freedom of expression. For example, we don't believe people should be prosecuted for publishing books, and we'll stand with Charter rights for freedom of expression.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **Election Financing Legislation Election Commissioner**

**Ms Notley:** This Premier wants to stand up for the Charter rights of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, who he used to work for, but nobody else's. It's part of the same plan to unlevel the playing field, to pick winners and losers, to help his friends get him re-elected. It is outrageous, Mr. Speaker. Why is this Premier playing games, abusing his power to further his own political interest at the expense of Alberta voters?

**Mr. Kenney:** I think I get what's going on here, Mr. Speaker. They don't want us to limit their union buddies from spending millions of dollars in the campaign. They don't want us to stop the foreign-funded green left from interfering in our politics. They don't want us to stop the government from prosecuting people for publishing books. But we won't listen to the NDP. We'll listen to Albertans, and we'll keep our word.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier tried to call the Election Commissioner's office redundant. Now experts are telling us that the separation of the commissioner from the CEO is actually a step forward because it guarantees investigations into misconduct involving election officials. So from a pure policy perspective, Bill 22 takes Alberta backwards. That's on top of the abuse of power perspective, the breach of rule of law perspective, the political interference perspective, the conflict-of-interest perspective, oh, and the corruption perspective. To the Premier: what in God's name are you trying to hide?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, some of Canada's leading experts on elections law have confirmed that it is inappropriate to have an Election Commissioner, who enforces the law, responsible to politicians. We are following their advice. In fact, Mr. Gibson himself, I believe in a report on the Northwest Territories, suggested that election commissioners should be integrated within the offices of chief electoral officers, which is why every other province in Canada and the federal Parliament have followed that approach. It's only the NDP who wanted a separate, redundant commissioner responsible to politicians instead of an arm's-length ...

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, in fact, B.C.'s former Chief Electoral Officer said that we were truly ahead of the curve, and other experts say that probably the rest of the country is going to adopt the rules that this guy just got rid of. But you know what? The Premier fled the province and ducked the vote last week because he knows that this is a gross abuse of power. Political commentator Rob Breakenridge called it "one of the biggest acts of political cowardice in recent memory." Before the Premier is forced to change his party colours from blue to yellow, will he finally stand up and explain why he fired Mr. Gibson and Mr. Gibson specifically? Why the gag order? What is he scared of?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the real question for that failed former Premier is: why was she the only Premier in Canada to create a separate, redundant election bureaucracy that was answerable to politicians and not to the Chief Electoral Officer? Why was she mucking around with Alberta election law in this way? This government has kept its word with Albertans. We opposed this unnecessary, duplicate, redundant bureaucracy in opposition. That opposition has been expressed in Bill 22. We've kept our commitment to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, be cautious with the allegations that you might make either during debate or outside of debate.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier is intimidated by experts, but he really should consult one or two of them.

#### **Calgary Finances**

**Ms Notley:** Nonetheless, this Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout is hurting Albertans. Last night hundreds of Calgarians showed up to a town hall to hear how the Premier's cuts to the city will impact families. Low-income transit passes: gone. Mary Salvani is on AISH, which this Premier also cut, and relies on that pass to get groceries and visit the doctor. She said, quote: I feel like everything is coming up against me. To the Premier: are these the kinds of efficiencies that the Premier promised to find in Calgary, and why is he most focused on attacking the most vulnerable?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition said is, as is so often and sadly the case, completely wrong. In fact, the budget renewed the low-income transit pass. Why? Because of the general approach of this budget to prioritize support for the vulnerable. Even in the midst of a fiscal crisis created by the NDP, we are increasing significantly the budgets for Community and Social Services, Children's Services as well as for mental health and addictions. [interjections] Now they're so angry that they can't stop heckling.

**Ms Hoffman:** We are angry.

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora will come to order.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier created this problem by cutting funding to Calgary halfway through the year. Now, Poverty Talks! says that the cuts will mean fewer affordable housing units at a time when the province – read you guys – is also cutting rent supplements. Quote: it's going to mean a lot of evictions, and it is catastrophic to the whole system. Evictions at Christmas, in the middle of winter. Premier, why are you making those with the very least pay the very most to cover your \$4.7 billion handout to big, profitable corporations?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP created, in the words of former NDP Finance minister Dr. MacKinnon, a fiscal crisis, a track towards over a hundred billion dollars in debt, which would have us spending billions and billions on interest payments to bankers instead of social services. This government has a credible plan to stop that fiscal disaster while protecting the most vulnerable in a budget that actually increases funding for Community and Social Services by 7.6 per cent and for Children's Services by over 8 per cent. We got it done.

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the choice this Premier's cuts are forcing on Calgary is simple: raise taxes or cut jobs. Now, I'll assume the Premier doesn't want higher property taxes and would rather see more people fired. That's kind of been his shtick so far. So, Premier, help Calgary decide. Who should they fire first: police officers, firefighters, EMTs, bus drivers, or snowplow drivers? Those are the top contenders at last night's meeting. That's the decision. Premier, your cuts are doing this. Help them decide who gets fired this Christmas.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I guess four years in government did not mitigate the NDP's total fiscal and economic illiteracy. Here are the real questions. How would they stop a reckless dive into over a hundred billion dollars in debt? Would it be just borrowing more and paying more in interest, or would it be raising taxes? Why doesn't she just come clean and admit that what the NDP really wants is to impose a sales tax on Albertans, and if that's not true, when are they going to finally come forward with their so-called shadow budget? It's so far in the shadows that we can't even see it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 2:01 on behalf of the official . . . [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is the only one with the call.

### Calgary Board of Education Layoffs

**Ms Hoffman:** Yesterday I met with some of the 300 Calgary public teachers who are losing their jobs as a result of this UCP budget and

this Education minister's incompetence. One teacher I met with has been teaching for 32 years. She specializes in working with vulnerable children who are struggling with their mental health. Her school hired her because of the classroom improvement fund. This minister cut that funding, and now those kids are going to lose this crucial support. There are reports that more than 200 students have walked out of Calgary classrooms today because they are protesting this government's budget, so to the Premier: why did he choose a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout over the well-being of children living in Calgary?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Education minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really do sympathize with the teachers and the families and the children that are involved here. But, at the end of the day, this was a decision that the CBE made. They chose to end the contracts of 300 of their teachers, of the most important people next to the students themselves. They are responsible for this decision. They did not reach out to our department to help them in this process, and ultimately they have the responsibility of this decision.

**Ms Hoffman:** Another teacher I met yesterday in Calgary was the spouse of an active duty member of the Canadian Forces. When this member was deployed to the Calgary area, the whole family moved there. This teacher got a temporary contract with the Calgary board of education. But this minister cut more than \$30 million out of Calgary public's budget, and now this teacher is out of a job. To the Premier: why is he pushing hardship and unemployment onto a military family who are already facing and sacrificing so much for our country? Why would he make this woman sacrifice her job as well?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The school board, the CBE, actually has a budget of \$1.2 billion. It's an operating budget serving 130,000 students. The city of Calgary has an operating budget of \$3.5 billion. They have an operating budget a third of that of the whole city. I do call them to account because instead of prioritizing the students and the teachers in the classroom, they chose to cut the teachers, who are one of the most important people next to the students themselves. They are responsible for this decision.

**Ms Hoffman:** The minister is the one who cut more than \$30 million from Calgary public's budget, and she won't even take responsibility for that decision. She created the conditions that have resulted in this.

Another teacher I met yesterday is married to somebody who worked in oil and gas. He recently was laid off. The \$4.7 billion corporate handout didn't save his job. [interjections] And the members opposite are laughing. Now his wife, a teacher, is laid off from Calgary public schools. Just like that, both incomes gone. This household has faced such brutal cuts, that Education and a massive corporate giveaway have only made worse. To the Premier: the Calgary families have . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We've seen over the years, obviously, a pattern of mismanagement by this board, so that is why I'm calling an independent financial audit and a governance review. What I see happening is the CBE using our children and our teachers as political footballs. The Grey

Cup is over. They need to stop playing political football with our children. [interjections]

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Order. [interjections] Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein is the one with the call.

### Energy Project Regulatory Reviews

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On September 6 the Energy minister launched, quote, a thoughtful and thorough evaluation of the Alberta Energy Regulator in order to maintain the high standards that have made Alberta a global oil and gas leader. Unquote. In the past few years the red tape in project approval has threatened to eat away at the Alberta advantage. We had reached a point where it took twice as long to get projects approved in Alberta than it did in Saskatchewan. Can the minister update the House on what progress is now being made to lower the differential of approval times between Alberta and our peer competitors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy has risen.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're committed to improving investor confidence in this province, and that includes having a regulatory process that attracts investment. That's why we launched a review of the Alberta Energy Regulator. We're looking at the governance, the mandate, and the operations within the AER. We're looking to find out why the process became so bogged down over the last four years. We're looking for transformative change and for continuous improvement. At the same time we're also cutting red tape. All of this to return and attract investment to this province.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's oil and gas industry faces many challenges, including the uncertainty now created by the passage of federal Bill C-69 and the creation of a new Impact Assessment Agency, and given this government's commitment to champion new oil and gas projects within Alberta and reduce red tape for the new approvals to restore Alberta's competitive advantage, can the minister please answer how Bill C-69 could potentially introduce even more uncertainty for Alberta's approval process?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a lot wrong with Bill C-69. Our Alberta Energy Regulator review is meant to find efficiencies and efficient process to attract investment, but Bill C-69 does the absolute opposite. It creates lengthy, costly reviews with unlimited public participation. It creates a polarizing process where public policy is debated. It's lengthy. It's an uncertain process with political interference. It's also unconstitutional – it reviews projects in our exclusive jurisdiction – and that's why we've launched our constitutional challenge.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. I'm glad to hear there's hope on the horizon for Alberta's oil and gas producers.

Given that the review of the AER is ongoing, can the minister please answer how the government of Alberta will continue to reform this regulator and bring its activities back in line with the needs of industry, Albertans, and reality to reduce red tape, get

Albertans back to work, and shorten and streamline the regulatory process?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The review of the AER will be completed shortly. As I said before, we're looking for transformative change. We've also replaced the board of directors of the AER, and they're in the process of hiring a new CEO. We're cutting red tape, and we're implementing the recommendations of three independent parliamentary oversights, including the Auditor General, that found serious mismanagement of funds, conflicts of interest between 2015 and 2018 at the AER. We're reviewing this to make sure that type of stuff never happens again.

### Government Alcohol Purchase Contract

**Ms Goehring:** In the past six months the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women has purchased more than \$35,000 worth of alcohol from a company named Prestige Liquor. That's the first bulk purchase of alcohol by the government of Alberta for at least five years. Can the minister tell the House what the purpose of this purchase was?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Actually, Mr. Speaker – and thank you for the question – no. I have absolutely no clue, and I'm happy to get back to the member once I figure out what that is all about.

Thank you.

2:10

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Minister. Given that the government already has a track record of corrupt procurement and no-bid contracts for supporters, cronies, and family members and given that Prestige Liquor has only been in business for just over a year and has never done any business with the government of Alberta before this Premier was elected, can the minister say why Prestige Liquor was selected as the sole supplier of alcohol for her ministry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We continue to see the NDP play fear-and-smear games inside this Legislature. The minister has already said that they'll get back to the hon. member in regard to that specific issue. The real question is: when the NDP were in power, why were they giving contracts to antipipeline and anti-oil and gas friends? Tzeporah Berman is a perfect example. [interjections] That former government, that Leader of the Opposition, when she was Premier, put Ms Berman in charge of a committee in charge of reviewing the oil sands even though she was dedicated to destroying the energy industry. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. [interjections] Order. Order. It's important for all members of the Assembly to be able to hear the answer.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that the owner of Prestige Liquor, Mr. Keshav Pareek, is a long-time Conservative donor dating back to 2004 and given that Mr. Pareek had donated \$4,250 to the Premier's 2017 PC leadership campaign, isn't it true, Minister, that Prestige Liquor got a corrupt contract to sell the government more than \$35,000 worth of alcohol because of their partisan support and personal friendship with the Premier?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, as the minister said, they'd be happy to get back to the member specifically on that issue. But there the NDP go again jumping the shark. Let me ask them a question I already asked them before. Did Tzeporah Berman get the contract to help shutdown the Alberta oil and gas industry because she was friends with the NDP? [interjections] Was that corrupt? I don't know. I certainly know my constituents thought it was pretty corrupt that the NDP, when they were in government, hired somebody to be in charge of the oil sands who was dedicated to destroying the oil and gas industry. That's the legacy of the Leader of the Opposition and her party. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The Member for St. Albert has the call.

#### Henson Trusts for Persons with Disabilities

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I was joined by Albertans concerned about further attacks by this government to the AISH program in Bill 21. Our government, I'm sure you'll remember, passed legislation to establish Henson trusts in 2018. The change gave disabled people the ability to manage money they might receive as a financial gift or an inheritance by placing it in an exempt asset like a registered disability savings plan or trust fund without risking their eligibility to AISH. Now those trusts are gone. To the minister: what could possibly be your reason for this change? Is it to kick more people off AISH so you can pay for the massive \$4.7 billion . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I want to be absolutely clear that Bill 21 does not change how the AISH program treats trusts, including Henson trusts. Albertans can continue to place assets into these trusts for their loved ones without it impacting their benefits in any way. Again, to reiterate, there has been no change to Henson trusts.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that we understand how this works – Bill 21 moves eligibility criteria for AISH from legislation to regulation, allowing the minister to change it at will – and given that this UCP can't be trusted to support AISH and given that they didn't campaign on cutting AISH and given that cutting the cost of living is a cut, will you admit that you're changing eligibility criteria so you can make further cuts going forward without consultation, or internally consulted, as the minister likes to say?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, we have not made any cuts to the AISH program. I've said this many times in this House, and I'm going to say it again. That's absolutely incorrect, and perpetuating the same narrative just creates unnecessary fear in the disability community. In terms of why these provisions were moved from the act into regulations: it's consistent with how the income support program works, and it's consistent with the PDD program as well.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that I was joined today by the parent of a disabled Albertan – her name is Christie – and given that Christie said, and I quote, as a family we're working very hard towards our child's independence, and if something happened either to my husband or myself, I know tomorrow I want to rest assured that neither of our children nor their guardians and trustees will struggle, unquote, and given that ending Henson trusts throws Christie's plans into disarray, to the minister: what do you say to her? Drop the rhetoric. Put away the notes. Answer the questions. You might

not call it a cut, but you have done something very negative and very harmful. Just answer the question.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I have answered the question, but I'll answer it again. To this individual that the member opposite is speaking about, through you to her directly: we have not changed Henson trusts. They are intact, and they will remain intact. Certainly, if the member has any questions about this, I mean, she can feel free to contact me directly for some more clarity. I have stated many times that there is no change to these trusts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has a question.

#### Stony Plain Central School Replacement Project

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Stony Plain Central school is an incredible middle school in my riding, and it does a fantastic job of delivering high-quality service despite the fact that the school is extremely overcrowded. Plans for a new replacement school have been in the works for years. The replacement school would offer vastly increased capacity and better facilities for students and is desperately needed in the riding to address the growing population in the community of Stony Plain. To the Minister of Education: is this project continuing under this government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question, and thank you, hon. member. The Stony Plain Central K to 9 replacement school project was approved in 2018 and is currently in the design phase. Budget 2019 included \$1.4 billion over four years to continue work on previously announced school projects across Alberta, including this one. Alberta Infrastructure is expecting a schematic design report to be completed in early December.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for her answer. Given the importance of the reconstruction of Stony Plain Central to the education of middle school aged children in my riding and given that my constituents have already been forced to wait for a long time for this critical need to be addressed and given the delays my riding has seen under the previous government in getting school projects completed and completed well, can your ministry illustrate to us a timeline of when the new school in Stony Plain can expect to be receiving students for the very first time?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The timeline for the completion of this project will be determined once it's gone to tender. At that time, the construction schedule will be developed and an estimated completion date will be made public. We'll be able to get back to you with those dates as soon as possible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the importance of this project to my riding and given the fears raised by poor execution of previous projects, in particular the failure to plan for or fund a playground at Prescott school in Spruce Grove, and given the hoops that families of Prescott students have had to go through just to find funding for a playground, which they still haven't received, and given the importance of playgrounds to a school environment for



encouraging outside play, can the minister commit to ensuring that important equipment like a playground is funded?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and hon. member, for the question. As part of Budget 2019 our government has announced that funding to help build playgrounds will continue to be provided to new school projects with K to 6 programming. Moving forward, new schools will have playground funding included in their project budgets. This removes funding from a separate pot and puts it into the overall project. No longer will parents have to fund raise for hundreds of thousands of dollars to build playgrounds, which are as essential as any gymnasium.

Thank you.

### Bill 22 and Public Service Pension Changes

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, we all continue to be inundated with letters and calls from workers who are horrified at this government's plans to take political control over their pensions. The Minister of Finance should clearly know at this point that Alberta teachers do not trust his plan to move their pensions to AIMCo. I'm asking this minister to make a promise to these folks today. To the minister: can you promise here and now that you will never ever politically direct AIMCo how to manage Albertans' pension funds?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I appreciate the opportunity to clear up a lot of misinformation on ATRF pension investment management moving to AIMCo. ATRF will continue to provide high-level strategic direction and investment policy over their pension assets. ATRF will continue to manage the pension plan. AIMCo operates at arm's length from this government. We're confident that AIMCo will deliver excellent results on behalf of Alberta teachers and taxpayers.

2:20

**Ms Gray:** Given that with the corrupt Bill 22 this government has also moved to weaken the pension protections for part-time workers and given that this government jammed Bill 22 through the House in a matter of days, before many hard-working Albertans even knew that their rights had been stripped away, to the Minister of Finance: can you please inform this House how much the government is saving by stripping away pension protections for part-time workers, or is that something that you hoped workers wouldn't notice?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, Bill 22 strengthens public-sector pensions on behalf of Alberta workers. We've made changes to improve and strengthen the governance of pension plans to ensure that we have the competency and skill sets required. We are confident that our world-class asset manager AIMCo will deliver high-quality results for Alberta public-sector workers and ensure that we receive maximum returns on behalf of Alberta taxpayers.

**Ms Gray:** Given that the minister can't seem to bring himself to talk about part-time workers and the implications in Bill 22 that impact them and given that I've searched the UCP platform from front to back and found no word of these pension changes and given that there are massive concerns, indicated by rallies and 30,000 letters that have come to MLAs, to the minister: will you undo your pension changes, commit to more consultation, promise you won't politically interfere, or finally tell this House what your real plan for pensions is?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to ATRF asset management, teachers' pension assets going to AIMCo, that will result in \$41 million of savings as the large asset balance that AIMCo manages drives down the costs of managing those assets, \$41 million in savings, which will improve, in fact lower, the contribution rates for Alberta teachers and move \$20 million into the classrooms as we as an employer save premiums.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Health Consultation Nondisclosure Agreements

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, last week the minister adamantly denied that he'd asked a physician to sign a nondisclosure agreement, or NDA, before he'd share vital information about changes to medications used to treat Crohn's and colitis. He even took to Twitter to defame Dr. Panaccione by accusing him of lying about having been asked. Today I'll be tabling copies of that NDA. I'll ask the minister again: why would you ask a physician to sign an NDA before you would share information about your plans to make significant changes to how he can care for his patients?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise again in this House and again talk about nondisclosure agreements that stakeholders might be asked, if they're asking for a ministry to provide confidential information — as I said last week, I did not ask a physician to sign a nondisclosure agreement. At the end of the meeting I was asked by that physician why the ministry is asking for NDAs if a stakeholder is asking for confidential information. Well, let's answer that through three questions. Has the Ministry of Health used NDAs in the past, including under previous governments, including under Edmonton-Glenora? Yes.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'll answer the rest later on.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Dr. Panaccione rightly refused the NDA as it would leave him unable to advise his patients about changes that could drastically impact their health and given that he left the meeting feeling handcuffed and unable to practise the best medicine possible, to the same minister: is the real reason you wanted that NDA because you know that both patients and doctors would resist your plans to interfere in their medical decisions and gamble with their health and their quality of life just to save a buck?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as I was saying previously, has the Ministry of Health used NDAs before? Yes. Do other ministries use NDAs sometimes when a stakeholder is asking for confidential information? Yes. Have other provinces used NDAs in the consultations regarding biosimilar consultations? Yes, B.C. and Ontario. The manufacturer, or the originator, that's upset about these NDAs: that originator manufacturer actually has executed the NDAs in those two other jurisdictions, B.C. and Ontario. This is about the ministry providing confidential information to these stakeholders.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this minister has broken trust with medical doctors, nurses, health care aides, lab technicians, and now gastroenterologists and thousands of Albertans living with Crohn's and colitis and given that his and his staff's bumbling of this file has now prompted a protest at this

Legislature by patients asking this government to take them as seriously as the corporations benefiting from their \$4.7 billion handout, to this minister: will you end your government's practice of blindsiding Albertans with life-altering changes without consultation and commit to never asking another stakeholder to sign an NDA?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, again, I have not asked anybody to sign an NDA. Anybody who wants to meet with me does not have to sign an NDA. Anyone who wants to speak with me does not have to sign an NDA. I will never ask anyone to sign an NDA to speak with me, to give me their feedback. I said that last week, and I'm going to say it again. Nobody has to sign an NDA to speak with me, to meet with me or meet with the ministry.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat is rising.

### Choice in Education

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to ensuring that Alberta students receive a high-quality education regardless of which school system they choose, whether that be public, separate, francophone, charter, private, or even home-schooling. Alberta Education recently launched a survey to collect feedback from Albertans regarding school choice in our province. Some Albertans have expressed concern that choice in education would mean that different systems provide different education. To the Minister of Education: how does Alberta Education ensure that education continues across the board?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and hon. member. Alberta has a long and successful tradition of supporting school choice, and our government is committed to preserving, protecting educational choice. Choice does not mean differing qualities of education. Rather, it provides parents with the opportunity to choose the type of education that best fits their unique situations and their needs. Regardless of the educational path a parent chooses for their child, Albertans can be assured that their students will receive a world-class, high-quality education.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for her answer. Given that our province has a long history of supporting school choice and given that many loving Alberta parents are passionate about their children's education and given that the previous government would not divulge the names of all who contributed to the recent curriculum rewrite even when outright asked to do so by the opposition of the day, to the same minister: who is the government interested in hearing from with regard to the choice in education survey?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We want to hear from every Albertan. Every single Albertan has a unique perspective on educational choice, and we want to hear from them on what opportunities they believe can help protect, improve, and enhance education choice in Alberta. The feedback gathered will be used to inform the development of the choice in education act, and I encourage everyone to fill out the survey that is online at [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca).

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the universal declaration of human rights states that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that their child shall be given and given that the previous government placed school choice under attack and took an adversarial approach to loving parents, to the same minister: how will this government ensure that parents have a strong voice in their child's education? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. minister has the call.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and hon. member, for the questions. We were elected with a very clear mandate to bring forward a choice in education act which will reaffirm and make firm that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children. We have a long and rich history of school choice to celebrate in this province, in fact, over 170 years. Our platform was very crystal clear. We will protect and preserve educational choice in Alberta. Parents can be confident that their role in their child's education will be protected by this government. Promise made, promise kept.

### Environmental Policies

**Mr. Schmidt:** A recent report from the United Nations environment program states that if drastic action isn't taken, our planet will be heading towards warming of 3.2 degrees Celsius in our kids' lifetimes. This report, compiled by many leading scientists from institutions around the world, makes it clear that urgent action is necessary. Can the Minister of Environment and Parks tell this House what additional steps he'll take to reduce emissions and combat climate change, or does he think that dusting off and renaming the PC's old plan is good enough?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are quite happy with the TIER program that we've introduced inside Alberta. We're partnering with our largest emitters inside this province and working on 55 per cent of our GHG emissions inside the province right now with concrete action, working on technology and innovation, and actually moving forward on the file, unlike what the previous government did and that member did when they were in power, which was to tax hard-working Alberta families at the very time that they needed their government to stand with them, with no environmental gain. All economic pain, no environmental gain. Alberta voted for a different approach. We followed through on that promise, and I'm proud to say: promise made, promise kept.

2:30

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that the minister has dealt significant economic pain to this province by slashing renewables and the energy efficiency industries in favour of a \$4.7 billion corporate handout and given that the UN report states that renewables and energy efficiency are one of the key measures to effectively reduce emissions, can the minister of environment state what steps he will be taking to rebuild the thriving renewables sector devastated by his policies and actions?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing to see the NDP continue to misrepresent the job-creation tax cut, which actually is only \$100 million in cost, not four point whatever billion dollars. [interjection] What you see with that hon. member and the party across the way, that is heckling me right now during the answer, is that they don't want to stand with job creators.

They don't want to stand with our largest industry while tackling this problem because they, like their federal party, are committed to stopping the energy industry. Our party campaigned on a different approach. Albertans voted for it in overwhelming numbers when they fired that party, and we're proud to have brought it into place.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that our party is not in the pocket of big corporations like the members opposite and given that the United Nations report states that the world is seriously behind when it comes to reducing emissions and given that the report also states that in order to address this crisis, efforts to cut emissions will need to be tripled, will the Minister of Environment and Parks tell this House what steps he's considering to further reduce emissions? Or is the so-called TIER program all that we get?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, that hon. member is right. Albertans know for sure that they did not stand with job creators. In fact, they stood with the green left, the foreign-influenced green left, who is dedicated to shutting down our energy industry. While that member was in government, just a few short months ago, he went out of his way to be able to support his federal leader and those types of organizations, who then caused devastation to our province, record job losses, record deficits, record debt, and caused over \$50 billion in investment to flee this province. That hon. member and his former government failed this province. We will not.

#### Government Photography Contract

**Ms Phillips:** Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I asked the Finance minister why his department handed a \$73,000, no-bid government contract to Vek Labs, which is a partisan UCP ad firm. The minister didn't seem to be much aware of the corruption in his own department, but a spokesperson later told media that they were pressed for time during transition and had to pick someone quickly. The trouble is that the contract didn't start until July, two months after the cabinet was sworn in, so that wasn't true. Let's give the minister another chance to explain away patronage and self-dealing. Why did the Premier's partisan friends get a lucrative government contract from this Minister of Finance without bidding for it?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, this contract was awarded at a time when there was high demand internally for the services, for these types of services. The rates being proposed by the vendor were analyzed to ensure that they were competitive with other suppliers for the same product. One thing: we will not be lectured about economic matters by the members across the House. They had this province on a trajectory to economic failure. We will turn this province around and deliver a balanced budget. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. It's important that all members can hear the answer as well as the question.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that this Minister of Finance's debt is the same as the previous government's debt, given that the legal exemption clause that this minister used to justify this corrupt contract was not urgency – it was that only one vendor could provide this service – and given that there are obviously many professional photographers and videographers in Alberta, isn't it true that Vek Labs got this contract because they are buddies with the Premier and shot a hometown hero flick for him during the last provincial election campaign? That's what this is about.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the opposition continues to create fear amongst Albertans, unfounded fear. Again, we will not be lectured

by the members across the House. We've inherited a fiscal mess left by the previous government, which includes uncontrolled spending at a time when revenues remained flat. We are managing this province's finances responsibly. We've delivered a four-year fiscal plan that will lead us to balance. We're delivering for Albertans. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. [interjections] Order. The Official Opposition has plenty of time to share their opinion, and it's only when they are standing.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that someone has to lecture this government about corruption because, clearly, the minister is not listening and given that this minister's spokesman said, "We needed somebody who the Premier's office was comfortable with, so we asked them, which is how we came up with that supplier," and given that that's about as clear a confession of corrupt procurement as you will ever hear, why did this Minister of Finance abandon his ethical and professional standards and sign off on the Premier's friends getting a no-bid government contract?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans elected this government to bring this province back to fiscal responsibility. The members opposite had us on a trajectory of continued job losses and the flight of investment capital by the tens of billions. We are changing that trajectory. We've created a competitive business environment that will attract investment, create jobs, and bring this province to fiscal balance.

#### Natural Gas Industry

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, Canadian natural gas is produced under a world-class regulatory system. It is being used throughout the world to reduce global emissions. The world needs more natural gas from Canada and, in particular, from Alberta. Estimates show that in the next five years global demand for natural gas will increase by more than 10 per cent. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas. Alberta is a major supplier of clean and reliable LNG. Can you please share what the level of interest is from Japan and South Korea to purchase our natural gas?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I'm pleased to share that there's a renewed sense of optimism regarding natural gas in Korea and Japan. Now, it's no secret that the NDP spent four years stifling free enterprise and innovation, and it didn't go unnoticed by the international community. They damaged our brand, but I'm happy to report that our message of natural gas and Alberta being a destination for clean, secure, ethically sourced natural gas landed well with investors.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that on your mission to Asia you met with government and senior leaders across the energy industry to promote Alberta's clean, secure, and ethically sourced natural gas and given that part of your mandate is to get more Alberta natural gas to Asian markets through LNG projects, can the associate minister please share, from his perspective, what potential opportunities were discussed that could get Alberta natural gas to overseas markets and get Albertans back to work?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to visit two of Asia's largest LNG importers, and this is critical because we have to find

markets and destinations for LNG off the west coast. But we didn't just go to Asia for LNG. I'm pleased to report that we had a number of great conversations with pet-chem companies, petrochemical companies that didn't even have Alberta on the map, and now they're looking at us as a serious destination for petrochemical facilities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the former NDP government drove much-needed foreign investment away from our province and given that this government was elected on an overwhelming mandate to bring investment back into this province and given that this government recently announced its commitment to continuing with the petrochemical diversification program, which is so important in my riding of Sherwood Park, can the associate minister please tell the house how the companies he met with responded to bringing their investment dollars back here in this province of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After four years of the NDP damaging the Alberta brand and chasing investment away from the province, we had to send a message that Alberta's experiment with socialism is over. We are now open for business. Our message of being a destination for secure, clean, ethically sourced natural gas is landing on strong ears.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

## 2:40 Driver's Licence Road Tests

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Getting your driver's licence is a rite of passage in rural Alberta. It signifies maturity and responsibility given the importance of road safety. For many years Alberta had a system that was envied. Our system placed safety as the priority while ensuring a low-cost, efficient system for driver certification. Now we have a system that is envied by no one, and my office is flooded by complaints. To the Minister of Transportation: what is the government doing to clean up this mess?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. The hon. member is right. Since the public takeover in March 2019 road test times have skyrocketed to 12 weeks' waiting time. This is unacceptable. Our government has taken action since day one. We've authorized overtime and weekends. We've added more government employee examiners. We've licensed examiners from outside of government to help us catch up, and we have returned the class 5 basic test to 30 minutes from 45, which will allow us to do thousands more tests per month.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the response. The public is furious about the current state of driver certification. Given the correspondence I've received in my office about the impact that these changes have had on potential drivers getting their first licence and given the impact to our economy by delayed driver certification, can the minister tell us how the government plans to fix this system in the long term?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll say to the hon. member that my phone rings off the hook every day with Albertans concerned about this. Last week we announced the beginning of a public review of the driver examination system. We will be engaging Albertans and key stakeholders, including driver examiners and registry agents and Albertans, about road tests. We are going to take action to reduce wait times to make sure that Albertans get the level of service that they expect and that they deserve because it hasn't been acceptable.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. It's shocking how badly the system is performing. Given how well the previous system served Albertans by ensuring safe drivers on the road while maintaining a low-cost, efficient system before being blown up by the previous government and given how awful the current system is serving Alberta drivers and job creators, why did the NDP make such a disastrous change?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, I don't know that I can answer for what the NDP was thinking, but the hon. member is right. They absolutely blew up the system on March 1 of this year during the beginning of the busiest time of the year for driver examiners. They cut the number of driver examiners to less than half. Mr. Speaker, if hon. members want to know whom to blame, they only need to look across the aisle, as Albertans do. But we're cleaning it up. We're adding driver examiners. We are looking at how we can increase the system more. Again, we've added thousands more tests each month in one step, by simply changing some of the tests from 45 minutes apart to 30. But we're not done; we won't be done until there's an acceptable wait time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I might just provide a little bit of caution. All private members will know that questions that they ask should be about government business. What a previous government did or didn't do may not in fact constitute government business.

In 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

### Support for the Energy Industry

**Mr. Schow:** This past Sunday 3.9 million people tuned in to RDS and TSN to watch the Winnipeg Blue Bombers thump the Hamilton Tiger-Cats in the 107th Grey Cup. It was a convincing win that ended Winnipeg's championship drought, which my friend tells me lasted 10,535 days. But who's counting? That is a long time, though.

While thousands took to the streets to celebrate the win, others took to social media. For what, you ask? A hoodie, specifically the Premier's hoodie, worn at centre field for the coin toss, that said on it: I heart Canadian oil and gas. How absurd, how pathetic. To the Twitter trolls: shame on you. Go find a hobby.

It's clear as day that the world needs more energy. World-class, ethical oil and gas is the pride of Alberta and the economic engine of Canada. It is highly ethical, innovative, and life-changing work. As someone who worked on a drilling rig, I am fiercely proud of our energy sector and all the good it does. Its prosperity affords so many things that we value while creating hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions in economic activity.

Sadly, the pride I have for our energy sector isn't shared by all, not by people who dump their raw sewage into the rivers, lakes, and oceans or those who happily receive billions in transfer payments

made possible by our oil and gas, and it's also not shared by those who'd rather import their oil and gas from countries with appalling human rights records.

Our oil and gas sector needs hope. Blocked by our own federal government, we can't get pipelines built even when parts of our country can't fire up a barbecue. If the public and the media spent more time promoting our oil and gas sector and less time dumping on it, we might actually find some public support across this province and shovels in the ground.

To our Premier, thank you for making the most of every opportunity to stand for our ethical energy sector and for saying what needs to be said over and over and over: I love Canadian oil and gas.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First off, as chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I'm pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 205. That's the Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-South East. This bill was referred to the committee on November 6, 2019.

The committee's final report recommends that Bill 205 proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 205.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the motion of concurrence in a report is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Are there any members who wish to speak to the motion for concurrence?

Seeing none, the chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills has requested concurrence in the report on Bill 205, Human Tissue and Organ (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019.

[Motion for concurrence carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I'm also pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 207, Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Peace River. This bill was referred to the committee on November 7, 2019.

The committee's final report recommends that Bill 207 not proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 207.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the motion for concurrence in the report is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Are there any members who wish to speak to the motion for concurrence? Please rise. Hon. members, seeing that there are members who wish to speak to the motion for concurrence in the report, that debate will take place on the next available Monday under the item of business Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks and the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of Bill 29, Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019, sponsored by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, in accordance with section 4(7) of the Election Act and section 4(2) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act I'm pleased to table the following report, A Report of the Chief Electoral Officer: Annual Report 2018-19.

Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to table documents? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies of a document entitled Climate-heating Greenhouse Gases Hit New High, UN Reports.

I also have a document I'd like to table on behalf of the Member for St. Albert that's titled Climate Change: Greenland's Ice Faces Melting "Death Sentence."

2:50

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Conflicts of Interest Act and the Legislative Assembly Act the Report of Selected Payments to the Members and Former Members of the Legislative Assembly and Persons Directly Associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly for the year ended March 31, 2019.

On behalf of hon. Mr. Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations, responses to questions raised by Mr. Feehan, hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and Ms Phillips, hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, on November 5, 2019, Ministry of Indigenous Relations 2019-20 main estimates debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order, and at 2:01 the Official Opposition House Leader raised one.

### Point of Order False Allegations

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), (j). At approximately 2:01 the Premier accused the opposition, the Alberta NDP, of wanting to introduce a PST. Now, again, this is under 23(h), (i), (j), makes allegations, imputes false or unavowed motives, or uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder. That is exactly what the Premier did.

I appreciate that momentarily – I can only imagine what the Government House Leader is going to say. The reality is this, Mr. Speaker. The government is continuing to misrepresent the facts by making an allegation such as that, which is patently false. I would demand that the government prove this allegation, which we know is false because never have we proposed such a thing. The fact of the matter is that the Premier and the government are trying to divert from the fact that this UCP government is actually raising income taxes on every Albertan. They are raising taxes. It's in their budget. They are trying to do the old bait and switch or misdirect and point

blame to us when they are, in fact, the only party that is raising taxes on every single Albertan.

For that, Mr. Speaker, I request that the Government House Leader on behalf of the Premier withdraw those comments.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's going to happen today. It is interesting to see how sensitive the Official Opposition is in regard to a PST. I'll use one quote from the Canadian Press. In March 2017 the now Leader of the Official Opposition, the then Premier, the leader of the NDP responds to a question in regard to a PST, and she goes on to say that bringing in a PST in Alberta might be talked about in the next election.

That's just one of many quotes associated with the NDP that I could utilize this afternoon, but I won't bother because you and I both know that this is clearly a matter of debate. Now, I as an Albertan am very shocked at the love affair that the NDP appear to have with the PST, and I certainly hope that if they ever are given the privilege of forming government again, they won't do that to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, I don't think Albertans will ever give them the privilege again, but that also is a matter of debate. This clearly is not a point of order, and we should move on with the day.

**The Speaker:** In fact, this is not a point of order. It is very clearly a matter of debate. The leader of the government made some statements that the Leader of the Opposition may disagree with from time to time. As it turns out, the Leader of the Opposition sometimes makes statements that the government also disagrees with. This is why we are here. This is a matter of debate, and as such it is not a point of order.

#### Speaker's Ruling Bills Containing Similar Provisions

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am prepared to provide some guidance and ruling with respect to Bill 25 and Bill 205, that are both now on the Order Paper for second reading.

Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, received second reading in the last 24 hours. Members will be aware that section 7 of Bill 25 would amend sections 4.1, 4.2(1), and 9(3.1) of the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Act. Bill 205, the Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019, which will be placed on the Order Paper for second reading following the Assembly's concurrence in the committee's report, which happened this afternoon, proposes numerous amendments to the act, including the repeal and replacement of sections 4.1 and 9 and the amendment of section 4.2.

The principle at issue, as stated by Speaker Zwozdesky in his December 3, 2014, ruling, found on page 335 of *Hansard* for that day, is that "a Parliament or Assembly should not debate the same issue twice in the same session." *Erskine May's Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 25th edition, at page 634, notes:

There is no general rule or custom which restrains the presentation of two or more bills relating to the same subject, and containing similar provisions. But if a decision of the House has already been taken on one such bill – for example, if the bill has been given or refused a second reading – the other cannot be proceeded with if it contains substantially the same provisions.

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 3rd edition, at page 568 also provides that "two bills similar in substance will be allowed to stand on the Order Paper but only one may be moved and disposed of. If a decision is taken on the first bill . . . then the other may not be proceeded with."

Accordingly, Bill 25 has now received second reading. I must determine whether Bill 25 and Bill 205 contain substantially the same provisions. Although Bill 25 proposes amendments to sections of the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Act that Bill 205 also seeks to amend, I have concluded that the two bills, although inconsistent in some respects, cannot be said to contain substantially the same provisions.

In arriving at my decision that these two bills may both proceed, I reviewed *Erskine May's* summary of a somewhat similar case in the U.K. House of Commons, found at page 635 of the text, involving a government bill and a private member's bill with some overlapping provisions. On January 24, 1995, the Speaker ruled that although the bills clearly overlap,

"in many respects they are incompatible and they cannot be said to contain substantially the same provisions. To the extent that their provisions differ and are incompatible, the House may at some stage have a choice to make between them,"

as I do today. The Speaker in that case

did not . . . consider it right to prevent the House from proceeding with the second reading of either bill.

Accordingly, debate shall be allowed to proceed on Bill 205 if it is called in the Assembly for second reading. There is also nothing preventing the Committee of the Whole's consideration of Bill 25. I am confident that members will be able to work together to resolve any inconsistencies between the bills should both continue to progress through the stages of bill debate in this Assembly. This concludes my ruling.

As such, we are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 26

#### Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move second reading of Bill 26, the Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

This bill is the result of extensive consultations over months with agriculture stakeholders and fulfills our platform commitment to build common-sense farm workplace legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start with quotes from the Alberta agriculture sector – these are farmers, farm workers, ranchers, and people in the industry – because ultimately this is a piece of legislation where we actually got consultation from the industry. As I mentioned, it took months in the making to get to this point. Just to read off some quotes, if you would indulge me, on what the industry folks, what people in the agriculture sector are saying about Bill 26, this was in the *Calgary Herald* today, from Will Verboven. The government "directly consulted producer organizations and the public at large and came up with legislation that takes a more common-sense approach to the farmworkers rights issue." Again, from Albert Cramer, the president of the Alberta Greenhouse Growers:

The greenhouse industry is very thankful to the Government of Alberta . . . for [their] support in recognizing greenhouses as farms. Being excluded from the definition of farms under the Employment Standards Code was a huge challenge for our industry and we are grateful that this has been [reflected] in the Farm Freedom and Safety Act.

3:00

Tom Steve, Mr. Speaker, from the Alberta Wheat and Alberta Barley commissions, their general manager, said:

In terms of the overall shape of the industry, consultation has been a critical feature of the new government [in terms] of Bill 6 and the Farm Freedom and Safety Act. We didn't have that under the previous government in 2015 when those changes were rolled out. We are very encouraged and optimistic about the future shape of farm safety legislation in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, here's Ryan Koeslag, the executive vice president for Mushrooms Canada, who said: we are very happy to see the Alberta government making agriculture a priority and applaud the minister's leadership – but we don't have to get into that – and consultative approach to building this policy and legislation; we are pleased to see that Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act upholds the right balance between recognizing all farms, big and small, having unique work challenges, and at the same time includes important farm safety standards.

Again, I'll go on, Mr. Speaker, to Maria Leslie from the Alberta Chicken Producers, who said: what stands out to me the most is the consultative process that's taken place throughout the entire process – to consult, then legislate, hearing from producers – we're really looking forward to seeing it come into legislation and how it rolls out with education for producers, what the supports are, if there are tools for producers with farm safety down the road; from an industry association perspective, we want to be able to support our producers as much as possible, so that's something that's very supportive to us.

Tom Lynch-Staunton, from the Alberta Beef Producers, said: one of the things we're very happy with is a focus on education and awareness and creating a culture of safety, rather than being heavily regulated and forced into compliance, so that you can create safety, and farmers and ranchers will want to make sure that their farms are as safe as possible.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, another industry quote is from Janet Krayden from the Canadian Mushroom Growers Association: the entire Alberta Agriculture team took a lot of time with us, and they really listened; they even came to the farm and met our workers and were able to go through what our issues were, and they listened, and because of that, we're able to make changes that are acknowledging that agriculture is unique, but also having the balance with farm safety.

Mr. Speaker, that's just a small sampling of industry reaction from farm workers and from farmers actually appreciative of something that we campaigned on back in April, that we would actually consult with the agriculture industry on how we could repeal the disastrous, failed NDP Bill 6. Going back a little bit into the history of 2015, when the NDP did bring in Bill 6, there are many members here in the Legislature that saw the massive farm protests. It was from farmers from across the province, Mr. Speaker, from every different commodity association that felt that they were having the rug pulled out from under them. It was a government that didn't consult, that didn't listen to them, and they implemented Bill 6 which had no practicality on a farm, and there was no way to actually implement it.

Over the years, the then government, the NDP government tried to tweak and make changes to Bill 6, but at the end of the day, it was always set up to fail, and that's why it's great to move second reading of Bill 26, which will finally get us past that disastrous phase in Alberta.

Again of disastrous phases, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to mention that the Teamsters strike is finally over against CN. I'm glad that the Teamsters finally came to the table and are actually getting back to work. It's also nice to see that the Leader of the Official

Opposition has ended her own self-imposed strike and is back here in the Legislature.

**Mr. Dach:** Point of order.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Not only did we consult with farmers in 25 different consultations . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I heard a point of order, but it is my understanding that that point of order has been decided to not be moved on, so if the hon. minister could please continue with his comments.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, a little bit more on the consultations. We had 25 different consultation stops across the province, listening to thousands of farmers over the summer, but we also had an online survey as well that had over 1,000 different responses that came in. I put 8,000 kilometres on my truck driving to every corner of the province and having face-to-face meetings with farmers and farm groups and farm workers.

The four main themes that we consulted on during these consultations were employment standards, insurance, labour relations, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We also asked, as a fifth theme, to get farmers' actual direct input on research. That's something, again, that we campaigned on in April, Mr. Speaker, moving away from the previous NDP government's government-led research priorities to actual industry-led research priorities and actually having industry lead research decision-making in the future. Now that we've compiled all these 25 different consultations and all these online submissions, taken all this feedback to me and to the industry associations, I think we've actually built common-sense farm workplace legislation that actually works for farmers and ranchers and not against them.

This proposed legislation allows workers to have choice when it comes to workplace insurance. It exempts small farms from employment standards legislation and workplace insurance requirements. It ensures basic safety standards but provides flexibility on OH and S. It includes nurseries, greenhouses, mushroom and sod farms, ranches, and ranch employment standards that ultimately they will be exempt from. It reinstates the exemption for the farm and ranch sector from the Labour Relations Code, minimizes red tape, and reduces the regulatory burden on farmers and ranchers. Through the Farm Freedom and Safety Act, we're going to restore balance, fairness, and common sense to the regulation of Alberta's agriculture sector.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that farms are unlike other businesses. Farmers and ranchers require flexibility in meeting labour and employment standards. This act allows farm employers to have choice when it comes to workplace insurance. The new legislation requires that some farm and ranch employers must have insurance but ultimately allows business operators and farms to choose what type of insurance works best for them and their employees. For example, large farms with six or more employees must have either WCB or private insurance. The previous government forced all farms to have WCB insurance, which, again, didn't make any sense. There were lots of farmers – and we heard it on our consultation tour – that had private worker insurance. They ended up having to pay their private worker insurance plus pay the mandatory WCB worker insurance, which ultimately duplicated their cost and was completely unnecessary, but again was the tone-deaf nature of Bill 6 in the previous government.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, we're also including nurseries, greenhouses, and mushroom and sod farm operations to have the exemptions from employment standards. These changes are directly based on feedback that we heard during these

consultations. This grassroots approach that we took was key because we know that operating a farm is unlike operating any other kind of business. Farmers and ranchers need that flexibility to meet their unique business needs. As they make investments to create new jobs in our communities and continue to contribute to our provincial economy, it's important to have a piece of legislation that actually encourages job growth, economic activity, and investment in our agriculture sector.

Mr. Speaker, coming from a farming background, this legislation means a lot to me and to the constituents of mine in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. That's why I'm so honoured to move second reading of Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, and to see through an important government platform commitment. Again, as a new minister in this government it was a great opportunity to be able to go out and talk to farmers and go to every corner of the province and actually talk individually to people. Lots of us here have heard of dome disease and that government officials and MLAs can be talking to bureaucrats and not have a good understanding of what happens outside in reality. I think in the farming sector there are no more down-to-earth, real people than farmers, being able to go out and talk to them and understand how they do what they do best. We've had farmers in this province for well over 100 years, and they've always cared about their employees. No one cares more about farm workers than farmers. It's great to see that now a government is actually being responsive to farmers. They're not thinking that their ideological bent somehow needs to be pushed down onto farmers.

Mr. Speaker, again, I'm very proud to move second reading. I'm looking forward to the ongoing debate and discussion on Bill 26. Thank you very much.

3:10

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any members wishing to speak on this matter? I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has risen.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not that pleased, really, right now to be speaking to this, but I am certainly pleased to have the privilege to begin debate on this matter on behalf of Alberta's Official Opposition. Ideological bent: that's the phrase that the minister of agriculture and former campaign worker for the current President of the United States, Donald Trump, described or attributed to those of us who would make Alberta the last province in the country to protect the health, safety, and working conditions of farm workers. Ideological bent. Here's an ideological bent: surviving at work, staying alive at work, not being permanently injured at work.

The reason our government and, in fact, many, many opposition members for decades leading up to our government pushed for Alberta to finally join the rest of the provinces throughout this country in providing the most basic of workplace protections to farm workers is because what we were seeing was that the agriculture industry actually saw the highest numbers of deaths per capita of any other industry in the province. People went to work and they died, Mr. Speaker, and there was no provision for protecting them. They were not covered under health and safety, and they had no access to compensation, and of course their family had no access to compensation should they die at work. So we thought: "Gee, that's strange. We are in Alberta, and Alberta farmers are some of the best farmers in the world, let alone in the country of Canada, and they are perfectly capable of ensuring basic minimum protections for their workers." That's why we brought in Bill 6.

Now, I'll be perfectly honest. The way it rolled out and the way people started talking about sort of the application of a broad range

of the inapplicable and nonapplicable rules to farms created a great deal of fear and concern, and certainly we have to take responsibility for that. There is no question that what we then did do is that we spent at least two years meeting excessively with farmers in order to talk about practical applications of health and safety rules in the workplace. What we did not do, however, was delay the application of the Workers' Compensation Act to farms nor did we exempt them from simple, basic – basic – employment standards rules that you would expect to see in most developing countries, let alone in the province of Alberta. That is what we did.

Just to talk a little bit about the history, just to begin with this, as I said, we got off to a very bad start. Farmers were very concerned about the complexity of the particular safety regulations in particular that were going to be imposed upon them and the way in which they would be applied and enforced. There was a tremendous amount of work that went into working with farmers and different commodity groups. We had probably, if I recall correctly, about five or six different working groups where people sat around the table and spoke at great length about the particular elements of the agriculture industry to ensure that none of the rules that were put in place were too onerous. It was a lot of work. A lot of work. When that work was ultimately done, the vast majority of stakeholders who were part of that process were pleased that it had happened.

When we finally got the regulations in Bill 6 completed, we had the second vice-president of the Alberta Federation of Agriculture say about the changes that were brought in: it was about time. He said: you know, I don't want my kids and grandkids going into a career path, if this is what they choose, where they won't be treated well; we believe that farm worker protection is important, and I don't see a lot of changes that need to be made. These were changes that needed to be made from the changes that we brought in initially.

In 2018, when asked about the repeal of Bill 6, Albert Kamps, who was the chair of the ag coalition, said that repealing the farm safety act would be throwing out a lot of good with the bad. Yet that is what this government is proposing to do.

Let's talk about what has been ripped from farm workers, what rights have been exploited or stolen through the application of this bill to people who work for farmers in Alberta, rights that, as I've said before, are enjoyed by farm workers in every other part of the country, Mr. Speaker. I don't know why it is that we feel we have to wear the mantle of the most exploitive farm worker jurisdiction in the country, yet that seems to be something that our ideological minister of agriculture, in pursuit of imposing the values of the President of the United States onto the people of Alberta, thinks is wise for Albertans.

The first thing, of course, is the issue of the application of workers' compensation. Now, the minister suggested that he heard from people who were in a position of having to pay both. They had to pay for their private disability insurance, and they also had to pay for WCB. That's not true. No one is forcing them to pay for their private insurance. They were being told that they have to pay for workers' compensation.

Here's a news flash, folks. There is a tremendous amount of difference between what workers' compensation will provide if someone is injured and what certain disability plans will provide if someone is injured. A tremendous amount of difference. In most cases, the vast majority of cases, what you're going to see is a profound reduction in benefits that working Albertans who are employed on farms will enjoy. If farmers find that it is less expensive to pay for disability insurance or injury insurance than it is to pay for workers' compensation, I am willing to bet my house on the fact that it's because the benefits that would be provided to that injured worker will be substantially less. As a result, we are



making a very considered decision in this House to take money away from workers who are on farms, who do not have care and control of their workplace because they have to legally follow the directions of their employers, should they get injured, should they get permanently injured.

You know, we have the situation of the young man who was killed in a silo, whose body was mutilated in a silo, just a few years ago, and it was his accident at work that generated a fatality inquiry, which, of course, recommended a number of things, including the application of workers' compensation law so that his widow and his children would be left with something. But this government has decided that that is no longer necessary.

3:20

Now, this bill doesn't set any minimum standard for what the alternative disability or accident insurance should provide. For all we know, it could be one of those great little things, where, yeah, you sign here, and if somebody gets killed at work, yeah, there you go; there's your \$30,000 payout. Yeah. Thanks, Dad. It was lovely knowing you until you died at work. Here's \$30,000, compliments of Jason – compliments of the Premier and the UCP government. My apologies. I wouldn't want to say the name of the Premier in association with the decision to leave orphans without access to compensation benefits should their father die while working on a farm that is no longer required to provide for access to the orphans of the dead worker.

To be clear, there is an average of 18 workers who are killed on farms every year. Eighteen. It's actually been going up a little bit but on average 18. Eighteen workers die. Now what's happened is that this UCP government has suggested that they are not entitled and their family members are not entitled to benefits, to orphan benefits or to widow benefits, as a result of this act.

Now, the government itself suggests as well that they will be also exempting, I believe, farms with five or fewer permanent employees. That amounts to, according to the government, I believe about two-thirds of the farms. I'm just trying to see here somewhere in my notes. I think it suggests that it also means that we are exempting roughly – oh, it's somewhere here; just give me a moment here. Okay. I will find it and get back to you. But what we have is that we are exempting well over 50 per cent of farms and employees who work in farms from even the obligation to have any kinds of protection, whether it be WCB or even some other kind of alternative disability program.

What that means is that of those 18 people who die, probably 12 of them will find themselves with almost no eligibility for any kind of compensation for their family once they are killed at the workplace. That's, you know, 12 people roughly a year whose families will find themselves with virtually no longer any kind of compensation coverage. I appreciate, you know, that's only 12 families who are left with nothing. It's only 12 deaths. I guess folks over there can go to bed at night and say: "Ha, those 12 folks. Who knows? If we're lucky – we'll cross our fingers – maybe they don't have families. Maybe they're not married. Maybe they don't have kids. So we'll cross our fingers and hope because that way when they die, the 12 of them die, no one is going to care that there's no compensation for when they die." Maybe. The other six or so will be eligible for compensation, but it will be significantly less than what they were eligible for before. That's the 18 people or so that die every year.

Now, as well, since 2016, when Bill 6 came into effect, people then had the ability to apply for workers' compensation benefits should they be injured. Just to be clear, the number of people who were doing that: in 2016 it was 777 workers that were injured while working on a farm. In 2017 794 workers were injured and filed

claims with workers' compensation because they were working on a farm. In 2018 it was 886 Albertans who work on farms that were injured and filed claims for workers' compensation. So far this year we are on track to exceed the number of 886 Albertans who work on farms who were injured.

Next year those roughly 900 people who are injured when working on farms will no longer be able to apply to WCB for benefits. Now they will have to file a claim with a private disability provider, and for all we know, they will get 30 per cent of what they would have gotten, 20 per cent of what they would have gotten. But – oh, wait – because roughly two-thirds of them are exempted completely from having to have any kind of coverage because they are now considered part of small operations, 600 people will get nothing. Maybe they, you know, fracture a disc. Maybe they are temporarily paralyzed from the waist down. Maybe they lose an arm. Maybe they have a dislocated shoulder. Maybe something falls on their head. These are all the kinds of things that happen in workplaces when people are injured, and they lose time from work. All those things can happen, and now, thanks to this government's actions, roughly two-thirds of them will have no claim for anything. About 600 Albertans injured every year: bye-bye.

I guess, you know, it's just part of making sure that we have the lowest standards of care for people who work on farms anywhere in the country of Canada. Great. You know, I have to tell you that I've met with a lot of farmers who really don't think that they need to be those people, but that's what this government is allowing to happen. That is workers' compensation. To be clear, this idea that we were forcing people to pay for both WCB and private insurance is ridiculous. The minister is incorrect. What we said is that they had to pay for WCB, and if some farmers were paying for more that is great, but no one said that they had to pay for more.

Now, what else have we seen as a result of this bill? To be clear, this bill goes farther. This bill actually makes the situation for people who work on farms worse than it was before we brought in Bill 6 in 2015. How? Well, we've expanded to include a whole swath of groups that were not exempted in the past, whose employees were entitled to be members of unions, to be covered under the Employment Standards Code, to receive the minimum wage, to have access to WCB. All those people in these additional areas that this government has decided to expand the application of this to, those people are now also exempted. We have taken quite an effective run at clawing back the rights of a whole schwa of people who were previously not even impacted by Bill 6 before because they already had rights, but these guys figured: "No, no. We need to expand the group of exploited employees in Alberta. That's our create-jobs plan."

It continues to amaze me when I hear members opposite suggest that their economic development plan is premised on the idea of paying people less or nothing or forcing them into situations where they get injured or ensuring they get no compensation for when they are injured, that sort of importing developing country standards into the province of Alberta is somehow part of some brilliant economic development plan. It's beyond backwards, Mr. Speaker.

3:30

What kind of other things have been clawed back from workers who work on the farm? Well, overtime, hours of work. Now to be clear, we were very responsive on these issues when we brought in Bill 6. We allowed for a tremendous amount of flexibility around overtime and around hours of work to accommodate the nature of farming and the sort of urgent nature that occurs at certain times of the year or with certain types of livestock or with certain processes, to allow for the kind of flexibility that farmers were asking for. But these guys thought: "No, no, no. No need to sort of balance people's

rights or balance people's needs. No, no, no. Heaven's no. We'll just get rid of all the standards." As far as I can tell, it seems that everybody has been exempted from the standards with respect to being eligible for overtime or ensuring that they are not forced to work more than 12 hours at a time because, you know, you might actually do something unsafe, like hurt yourself, if you're working 13, 14 hours. No; just keep working. There's no limit on that now.

Interestingly, this so-called small producer or small operator I think is the category, anyone that has five or fewer employees, which amounts to somewhere between half and two-thirds of the farmers that are out there, is not apparently covered by the Employment Standards Code at all anymore. From what we can tell between looking at the act and reading what is on the minister's own web page, it appears as though we've decided to exempt them from the minimum wage altogether. I don't even know how you do that, simply don't pay anybody minimum wage. Like, seriously, these folks aren't going to be entitled to minimum wage at all. Over half of the employees working on farms now will not be entitled to a minimum wage. I've just never seen anything like this before. It's shocking. You know, it's sort of *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens. Let's go right back to southern U.S., early 1800s. Why pay anybody anything? I guess that's how we're going to create jobs. Jobs, they say.

That is absolutely shocking to us. I don't know how folks over there sleep at night. Like, literally, you want your kids to go out and take a job where someone says: "Nah, today I've decided not to pay you. Sorry. That's how you run a business. I know you all showed up today. I know that you got injured and that you're probably not going to be able to work for another three to six months, but I've decided not to pay any of you because minimum wage doesn't apply." Yeah, that's what this legislation appears to do, as far as we can tell.

Another thing, of course, is that it worked very, very quickly – the very, very unorthodox and aggressive, I would say, bullying and unprecedented decision to bar at the introduction of this bill, at first reading, the access of any workers, either on small farms or larger farms, to the Labour Relations Code such that they can't unionize. Somehow we had to write it that way. We couldn't possibly let anybody debate it before we did that. I have no idea what the point of that was. I mean, it's an exceptionally undemocratic thing. You guys have a majority. You'll absolutely be able to strip basic constitutional rights to unionize from these workers until such time as some of them, you know, cobble together what pennies they have to go to the courts, to have the courts tell them that you're breaking the Constitution again. Somehow it was so important to you that you had to make that effective on first reading. Wow. You must really hate these workers. It's really shocking to me how much you guys must dislike people who work for farmers. I don't know why you have such a hate-on for them.

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Transportation.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, in 23(h)(i) and (j) it talks about imputing motives to another member that are not true, saying things designed to create disorder in the House. The Leader of the Official Opposition's ridiculous statement that "you must really hate [farm] workers," clearly falls under both those categories. Now, I understand that the Leader of the Official Opposition is upset about

their severely unpopular legislation being overturned. She's certainly allowed to say that. She's certainly allowed to say she doesn't like our legislation. She's not allowed to make claims like that.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to respectfully ask the hon. member to withdraw and apologize for those remarks and then carry on with whatever diatribe she has remaining.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen on this point of order.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's fairly transparent that we're talking about a matter of debate. We've just seen, mere moments ago, a ruling that the government is allowed to say that we're in favour of a PST despite the fact that we've never made any such statement because it's a matter of debate.

We're now dealing with a situation in which the government has brought forward legislation that basically takes away the rights of certain farm workers to work in a safe workplace, to have access to disability or death insurance should they be injured or killed. I think in terms of why it is that the government is doing that, you know, the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition was clearly speculating with respect to what the motives could be. This is clearly a matter of debate, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm prepared to rule on this. At this point I do not believe that this was a point of order, the reason being that without the benefit of the Blues, it's my understanding that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition was discussing the government generally.

That said, I would like to take the opportunity to mention that I think that where we are with the debate at this stage is that there could be some language that is getting close to causing disorder in the House. I would just take a moment to remind all members of the House to ensure that they do not use language to incite disorder within the House as the goal of this endeavour that we are in is to have effective debate, and language that causes disorder does not do that.

If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona could please continue with her remarks.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Notley:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that. I'm certainly quite happy to hear from members opposite exactly why it was that they had to take the unorthodox and really quite unprecedented step of barring farm workers from access to the rights provided by the Labour Relations Code on the reading of the bill at first stage rather than letting it go through reading at all stages and the votes at all stages as with every other part of the bill. I'd be very curious to find out why that is. I mean, it is an extremely unorthodox and, I would say, heavy-handed step to take. It absolutely impinges upon my rights as a member of this Assembly to even debate this and to, you know, perhaps be successful at amending it because it's apparently already in effect. I'm not even sure what the rules of order are with respect to whether we can at committee even try to amend that section of the act since it apparently came into effect with first reading. It is really a heavy-handed strategy that is very unprecedented. I'm just not sure why it is that we have to have that particular element of this rather heinous piece of legislation jammed through so quickly. Like, was there an organizing drive under way somewhere that we didn't know about? I literally don't know.

What we do know is that actually very few workplaces were impacted by providing access to the Labour Relations Code, exactly

as we said when this first came into effect, but we wanted to give workers that opportunity should they at some point choose to seek out union representation. Mind you, it might be more applicable now given that we have so broadly expanded the number of workers who are exempt from these basic fundamental human rights. There's no question that we have added a very large number of working people to the list as a result of this, but I remain curious as to why this government had to remove these workers from the protection of the Labour Relations Code

3:40

I mean, it's quite, as I say, beyond the pale that we are actually suggesting that they're not protected by basic minimum wage laws. I think that probably they would care a lot more about that than access to the labour code because, in fact, up until now they were all getting paid the minimum wage and now they may not get paid anything. We don't know. I suspect that workers are more concerned about that than they are about access to the labour code in the immediate term. Then again, the Supreme Court of Canada has said that this is a fundamental right that all workers should have access to, so it is very troubling to me that the members opposite would have moved so fast to exempt workers from the application of the labour code.

Basically, what we've got here is a bill that is designed to attack the rights of some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens and also the rights of many foreign workers and temporary foreign workers. You know, I'd say that it's probably fair to say that the majority of workers who will be impacted by this are people of colour, and I would argue that there's probably an adverse effect discrimination going on here on the basis of one's membership in a racialized community, but we will follow that . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. McIver:** Again under 23(h), (i), and (j), language designed to create disorder in the House. The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition just stood in her spot and suggested that this legislation is because the government is racist.

**Ms Hoffman:** She did not say that.

**Mr. McIver:** She did. She said that this is based on racial things. Certainly, the suggestion was there. That is language designed to create disorder. I respectfully request that you ask the hon. member to continue in a more appropriate manner.

**The Acting Speaker:** I will hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition was speaking to the impact of these policies. I think it's well known that disproportionately the individuals who will be impacted by these policies are individuals who are more likely to be members of racial minorities. I think that there's good evidence for that. Again, this means that it's having an adverse effect, so this is possible. Policies do this all the time. When certain policies are put forward, whether it's the intention or not, they have impacts on people, and sometimes those people are members of minority groups at a greater rate than the general population.

Mr. Speaker, this is clearly a matter of debate. What we're talking about here are the facts, the population that this has an impact on

and who the members of that population are. I think it's pretty clear that this is not a point of order, that this is simply a difference of opinion.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you hon. members. I'm prepared to rule. This, in my estimation, is a matter of debate and specifically a disagreement on the facts. Taking into account the previous point of order, I would take this opportunity to make a further statement to the House. Language that ultimately does create disorder in the House is one of the key aspects that we should be, obviously, not working towards. Points of order, though, in themselves do not necessarily showcase that that wording that is being used does create disorder. However, I think that in this circumstance we are seeing that points of order often are related to when language creates disorder within the House.

What I would ask is that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona ensure that the language that she uses focuses towards the bill at hand and that there is not any purpose behind the language to create disorder within this House.

If the hon. member would please continue.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that ruling.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Notley:** Let me just clarify. You know – there are some lawyers here in the House – there is a principle in law called adverse effect discrimination. Fundamental to it is the notion that it's not actually intentional but that sometimes laws are passed that have an adverse effect on a particular protected group under either human rights law or the Charter. Sometimes it's women; sometimes it's people by age; sometimes it's people with disabilities; sometimes it's people with, you know, different sexual orientations; sometimes it is racialized minorities.

The principle, adverse effect discrimination, is a legitimate point of law. I've argued on that principle numerous times in this House since first being elected, in 2008. I just want to assure the chair that in no way was I attempting to create disharmony or unhappiness in the House, but I would not be doing my job if I did not raise the potential of adverse effect discrimination arising from the contents of this bill. Indeed, that's what I was intending to do.

Going forward, though, Mr. Speaker, I think that, generally speaking, what we know is that we are creating a situation where a large number of working Albertans will not be paid as much. They will not work as safely. They will have fewer rights. Their rights under the Charter are being violated. They are being treated differently than almost every other worker like them in the country, at the hands of this government. Their families and loved ones are also being attacked by this bill because their eligibility for survivor benefits is being either eliminated or significantly jeopardized. Their right to be compensated should they be injured, in an industry which the evidence shows is very dangerous and has a much higher rate of injury than most other industries in the province, has been significantly attacked by the terms of this bill. These are the things that are happening in this bill.

Now, if we were in a situation where the application of Bill 6 had ended up looking like people had threatened or feared and smeared that it would look like back in December 2015, it might well be the case that changing the bill to support the rights of Alberta's farmers would be an important step in supporting their economic well-being. However, it is my view and it is the view of many farmers themselves who participated in good faith in the more than two years of consultations that our government undertook after the

introduction of Bill 6 that in fact what we ultimately reached in Alberta was a reasonable compromise and that it did not impede the ability of Alberta's farmers to do the best they can economically in their field.

3:50

I get that there are many things challenging Alberta's farmers these days, not the least of which was the recent CN strike, the bad harvest this year, previous bad harvests, commodity prices. I know there are many things that Alberta farmers struggle with each and every year, and it's an industry that is harder and harder to make one's way in. But that being said, one doesn't make one's way in an industry by insisting on having a set of rules for one's employees which are the lowest and the most unsafe in the country and exempting them from basic principles like access to the minimum wage.

I actually do look forward to being corrected by members opposite on this matter of the minimum wage because, honestly, we saw it on a web page of the government, suggesting that we were actually exempting these folks from the minimum wage. I actually find that so shocking. I can't believe it's actually true, so I would be happily corrected by any member opposite about the access to basic minimum wage rights for any worker employed in these small operations. We certainly do need clarity about this because it's the government's own briefing and the government's own web page that suggest that these workers would not actually have a right to any minimum wage. I certainly hope that that will be corrected, but if it's not, well, then we're going to hear a lot more about that because that's, obviously, kind of a basic, fundamental breach of UN human rights, that I can't imagine most folks over there, even, would actually sign on to.

With that having been said, I will happily cede the floor and look forward to having a more detailed discussion about the terms in this bill and hearing from the government, in particular, why it is that workers who are injured need to have the compensation to which they are entitled so significantly reduced, why it is that workers in big, commercial agriculture operations need to have their Charter rights so significantly attacked by this government, why it is that they should be compelled to work more than 12 hours a day without a rest break, why it is they should not be eligible for basic minimum wage payments. These things are all very critical questions that need to be asked. These thousands and thousands of people who work on Alberta's farms are also Alberta citizens, and, to me, I just don't understand why it is that we would treat them as if they were not.

With that, I cede the floor and look forward to having anybody else offer up comments. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to speak.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tempted to say, any time I follow the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition in debate on the same subject matter, "Yeah, what she said; ditto," because of her eloquence in delivering and her total coverage of the subject matter six ways from Sunday. It's always a challenge to follow a debater with the skill of the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. But, yea, though I walk in the valley of the totally covered subject matter, there is more to say on the topic. I think I speak from some personal experience when I talk about WCB coverage and the effects that it has on families, those that find themselves with coverage and the effect that it will have on paid farm workers, those that find themselves without coverage at all or perhaps with

diminished coverage as a result of the legislation, Bill 26, the so-called Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, which certainly has no freedom involved for farm workers and diminishes their safety.

In my consultations with stakeholders and experts, whether they be academics in the field or occupational health and safety experts, one of the things that I found very recently – and it was very disappointing and disheartening, shocking, and it made me angry to know – is that there's a chill that has descended over this province among those who would seek to express an opinion publicly in dissent to any government position that might be brought forward, whether it be legislation or regulation. It's a chill that I felt growing up in this province during 44 years of PC reign, when you would find that nobody wanted to speak out publicly about government policy in any form of dissent for fear it might hurt them, for fear it might hurt their business, that they would suffer the wrath of the existing Conservative hegemony, for fear that they might not get promoted, for fear that they may not have the opportunity to apply for a grant or to perhaps receive further funding for a research project, for fear that their career would be under threat.

Mr. Speaker, when government members opposite talk about this party in opposition creating fear in the province – I'll tell you what – there's no greater source of fear in this province than the government of Alberta's policies towards the workers of this province as expressed in Bill 26, the Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019.

People who would normally be expected to have expert opinions brought forward and heard on the floor or at least allow their names to stand in opposition to the measures contained in this bill are saying: certainly, I'll talk to you on the phone, but don't use my name because I really don't want my research grant to be pulled; I don't want funding to be cut; because of my fear for the 15 or 20 people who work under me who would no longer have employment if, indeed, I was to come out and express publicly my opinion about this piece of legislation. That is the chill on democracy that we've seen before. I grew up with it. When you went to school and high school and university, with that chill in effect, where public servants, where individuals who would be fully expert in their field wouldn't deign to say something publicly because they feared retribution in some form or another from the existing government, the Conservative government of the day.

That same fear now is totally embedded throughout the province, and I'm very, very concerned about that. Bill 26, in my efforts to consult with stakeholders, is a perfect example of the type of intimidation tactic that this government has placed on opponents to any piece of legislation that this government brings to the floor of this House. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, there's no fear on this side of the House about bringing those concerns forward to the Legislature and also, as publicly as possible, to represent those who've been muzzled by this government or feel they can't afford to risk their job or their funding to come forward and talk in opposition to this government's proposals and proposed legislation.

I heard earlier this afternoon on a different matter the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat cite the universal declaration of human rights in relation to how it supported the families and their rights to choose the education of their choice for their children. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you something else that the universal declaration of human rights also protects, in article 23. It protects the rights of working people. It protects their rights to work. I'm quoting from article 23 right now, which I'll table although I'm sure it's been tabled in the House numerous times when people stand to protect workers' rights and the universal human rights that all of us should enjoy, although in Alberta that seems to be something the government doesn't believe in. Article 23, universal declaration of human rights:

- (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

4:00

Finally, Mr. Speaker, under article 23 of the universal declaration of human rights:

- (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

The universal declaration of human rights, relied upon to support the argument earlier this afternoon of the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, equally applies to the rights of workers. Indeed, this government is totally ignoring that declaration of human rights when it comes to, in fact, the introduction of this legislation. The moment it passed first reading, what this legislation did was deny the right of workers on farms to organize and form a union.

In many cases we've heard members of the government suggest that it would just apply to a small number of people so it really has no bearing; it's an insignificant piece of the legislation. If indeed it was that insignificant, why in the world did they find it necessary to make it for the first time in Alberta government history, I believe, enforceable upon the passing of first reading of the act? It's totally shameful, or perhaps I should say shameless. The government seems to be proud of attacking workers whenever they possibly can. They love to beat their opponents and reward their supporters in legislation, which aren't necessarily the rules of the game that a fair-minded government will employ when looking to govern this province with legislation and bring forward legislation to benefit Albertans.

As I mentioned, in my consultation with stakeholders, occupational health and safety experts, they are universally appalled by this legislation, knowing that indeed it's going backwards and backwards in time. That's really what this government has been doing since day one with legislation aimed at turning back the clock in so many respects. I'll remind the House that the date is 2019. It's not 1919, but 1919 is a date that we should remember in Canada. Of course, I speak about the date 100 years ago when we had the Winnipeg General Strike. The Winnipeg General Strike resulted in the deaths of some workers at the hands of police in a strike that was designed to establish the rights of working people to organize, form unions, and negotiate an agreement with their employer and have those rights enshrined in law. In fact, the Canadian Constitution does have those rights enshrined, so it's another significant document that this legislation flaunts and this government chooses to totally ignore. In fact, it's insulting to have a government in this province, my province, suggest that workers' rights are something that they can ignore with impudence.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that there will be a price to pay for this. I've taken a few taxi rides lately. I know it's anecdotal, but very seldom have I had cab drivers offer opinions about what people are saying. The first thing they talk about is: "Why in the world did they pass that law to fire that guy, you know, the guy that was talking about investigating the election of the leader? And what the heck is going on with people who want to form a union? They can't do that anymore? Is that something that's not possible? I thought that we had a Constitution in this country." Well, in fact, they're right. We do. People are talking, although some people are unwilling to come forward and to speak publicly for fear of retribution from this

government, and that's the aura that we've now begun to live under once again in this province.

It makes me more than a little bit angry when the government members suggest that we are an angry opposition. You better believe we are because we reflect what's going on in the province, and the members of this society who respect working people are more than a little angry once they get over the shock and dismay of the gall of this government to go ahead and do such things as disregard the universal declaration of human rights and our Canadian Constitution by taking away the right to organize from our working people. Although they may be a small group of people on farms – and calling it an ideological bent, that is unacceptable, to say the least. The protection of health, safety, and rights of farm workers: the universal declaration of human rights has this embedded in it. It's done so to protect workers who are in some of the most dangerous kinds of work in the world. Of course, I speak about agricultural work, farm work. It is one of the most dangerous workplaces. In fact, in Alberta it is the most dangerous workplace to work in.

We brought in Bill 6 to address concerns and to bring Alberta in line with other provinces so that the workers in Alberta could actually have the same protections that workers in every other province and jurisdiction of the country enjoyed. It also allowed us to fall in line with the Constitution and the universal declaration of human rights regarding the rights of workers. Certainly, we have no disagreement that the farm is a unique place of employment in this province. Be that as it may, it doesn't exempt the farm from the obligation of providing a safe work environment and also worker protection as far as their right to organize goes. I know that the government has asked us to examine and consider the options that have been given to farmers, where you would have WCB insurance versus a private insurance option. But I ask members to consider what, in fact, benefits you would get if you are the victim of an accident and you have had the necessity as an insured worker under WCB, if you've had that happen to you, what you actually find yourself doing to support your family.

When I mentioned that at the beginning of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I talked about having some personal experience in the field. It didn't happen to be myself who suffered an injury in the workplace. It was my dad. Over the course of his construction career, which is a significantly dangerous career as well though not as dangerous as the agricultural sector, he suffered four different injuries which required time off and recovery during periods of receiving WCB benefits. Let me tell you that if it weren't for those WCB benefits, we would have been out of our house, on the street, perhaps living in the basement of relatives or anybody else who would take us in. Us six kids who were living under WCB benefits never knew what financial straits we were in. We knew things were tight, but because of the management of my parents, they managed to keep a roof over our heads and us fed. Subsequently I learned that at the end of each month, we had three bucks left over. There was a lot of hardship, but we actually were able to get by, even with the benefits of WCB.

That is what the government wants to take away or deny farm workers as a result of the passage of this bill to supposedly provide freedom and safety to farm workers, the security of an insurance that will at least allow a family to survive during a period of convalescence. At one point it was actually a period of two years where my father was not working, and we certainly were grateful for that coverage.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments should anybody wish to take that opportunity.

Seeing none, are there any other individuals wishing to speak on this matter? I see the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has risen.

**Mr. Horner:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak in support of Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, the bill to replace Bill 6, the slap to the face from the previous government to small farms and families all across the province. For a little context for this House, I'm a beef producer farmer, and I employ one full-time employee. We ranch and live in outback Alberta, at least an hour's drive in any direction to buy a jug of milk or find a bank. I'm not complaining. It's the wide open prairie: land too poor and region too dry to farm more than pockets, but great natural cattle country. It takes a pretty large spread to run enough cows to raise a family, so neighbours are far apart, and there are not many amenities for newcomers or people looking to start a life. I'm telling you this to explain the relationship, at least in my case, between employee and employer in rural Alberta. You cannot attract labour and you definitely cannot retain labour by treating workers poorly or asking workers to perform unsafe tasks.

4:10

For the purposes of this speech and to try not to embarrass him, I'll refer to the wonderful employee who works for me and with me as Bill. After a death in the family I had the opportunity to buy the family farm at a young age. I was in my early 20s. This is rare for intergenerational farms. It usually happens a lot later in life, but I embraced the challenge, got a bank to believe in me but knew I would need full-time help. Shortly after, I met Bill. Bill and I are the same age. He was born and spent his youth in Mexico, worked in agriculture throughout the U.S. as a young man, and ended up working in Leamington, Ontario on a tomato farm. It was in Ontario that Bill met his wife, who I'll call Susan. She will hate that if she ever hears this. Bill and Susan decided to come west, following the advice of family and friends, in search of opportunity and a safe place to start a family.

So Bill and I met. He needed a job, and I needed help in a hurry. We were a week away from seeding. When we seed this upcoming spring, it will be 15 years that Bill and I have worked together. Along the way we've learned a lot and from each other. I've learned how to be a more compassionate, flexible employer, to never ask something of someone you would not do yourself and that understanding Bill and Susan's life away from the job is more important than the job. This hasn't always been easy. There have been many hurdles along the way.

One of the main issues, and how this ties back to Bill 26, is in regard to health and safety. Farms and ranches can be dangerous, no question, full stop. Livestock are big and strong with strong fight-or-flight instincts. If you're new to handling cattle, things as basic as how to stand when running a sorting gate or how to approach an animal in tight quarters make all the difference between a safe task and a dangerous one. Equipment is fast-moving and unforgiving. PTOs, post pounders, and augers have led to many a wreck, many horrible, some even fatal. Bill was new to handling cattle. He'd worked on some extremely large feedlots in the corn belt but had never really gotten out of the feed truck, so we always tried to be training and explain why we do things: try standing here when loading the crowding tub, how to load the liner in a safe way for the cattle and for you.

In around our second year together Bill cracked his wrist. He had a gate come back at him while loading some yearlings. I remember this event clearly. He received a cast in town and returned to work the next day. I asked him what he was doing here. Whenever I break something, they usually say four to six weeks. He said that he didn't

know how this worked. On the huge feedlot in Iowa or on the industrial tomato farm in Ontario you felt like a number and could just be replaced. I sent him home to chill with his family and said: come back when you're healed. He asked if anything would change regarding pay while he was laid up. I said: "Of course not. You were hurt working for me." I joked with him: "I doubt I could replace you if I tried." He thought it was a joke; I was kind of serious. Not many want to live in Pollockville, Alberta, and it would take me years to train them up to how we do things. I told him that he was stuck with me.

After the cracked wrist we decided to get some workplace insurance just for peace of mind. It was a simple plan that covered Bill and his wife whether he was hurt at work or not and while he travelled. This policy seemed to suffice for a couple of years. Once in a while Bill would get terrible gout. He used to say that it was from gorging himself on tomatoes from his couple of years in Ontario. One day while visiting his doctor for gout relief, they did some tests and found that he had poor-functioning kidneys. Bill didn't seem totally surprised. He said that it runs in his family. He has since stabilized his condition through diet and lifestyle changes, but it will never get better. His doctors have told him that he can maintain this for a long time, but at some point he very well could need a kidney transplant. This forced Bill to think about his own mortality and his family's future. It kick-started a desire to try and pursue a life insurance policy. He soon learned that locking down a life insurance policy was basically impossible with a prediagnosed condition.

We made some inquiries and after many dead ends found a group policy that, with my wife and I involved, we could qualify for. That's what we did. Bill now has coverage that protects him, his wife, and all three of their children. It has a full dental plan for their entire family. It covers them anywhere in the world at any time. It has disability and a life insurance rider payable to his family. We did this around 2011. No government had to tell me to.

When Bill 6 was brought forth by the previous government, I remember being shocked that what I was doing as an employer was not good enough. I remember telling Bill that the government wants me to sign on to WCB insurance. He was quite concerned that I would cancel our existing policy in favour of WCB. I could not do that to him and his family, so I signed up for the WCB coverage and just paid the extra fees.

The linkage to occupational health and safety was a huge concern for most small employers like me. It just doesn't reflect farm realities. I remember hearing about an information session on Bill 6 where people were talking about working farm hours. Someone asked: what about calving season, up all night trying to save as many calves as you can? The response was: well, just turn the bulls out during the day. It would have been hilarious if it wasn't so scary and ridiculous.

I'm proud to have been part of the consultation process on Bill 26 with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. I think the bill represents a balance of the different realities between small farms and bigger, more industrial farms. We need to aspire towards a culture of farm safety always. It's critical that we continue to teach and present the dangers of farm work in schools and out.

As for Bill and Susan, they are staples in our community, have three kids in our local school, and are working towards owning their own home. When I decided to run for this role, I had to ask his permission. When I asked my wife, the first thing she said was: have you talked to Bill? Bill and my wife gave me permission, he got a raise, and here we are.

I realize not every situation is the same, but this is a story I knew to tell. Bill 6 was a terrible bill built in urban Alberta to appease organized labour. We know how to take care of our people on small

farms in Alberta because they're like family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West has risen.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Those were certainly wonderful comments by my hon. friend. You know, I know that he is a farmer. I know that there are many farmers within the United Conservative caucus. I would certainly like him to talk a little bit about his experiences not only farming but certainly the experience on Bill 6, which is something that I was a part of in this Chamber during the last Legislature, when there were thousands – not hundreds, Mr. Speaker, thousands – of Albertans on the front steps of this Legislature protesting Bill 6. Maybe, or maybe not, that member was a part of that.

I would like to know what impact that Bill 6 had had on the community which he certainly represents and is a part of. I'd also like to know, Mr. Speaker, what experience, I guess I'm going for, people like him bring to the table, and maybe, when people are commenting about certain subjects which they have no experience on, what possible adverse effects that that may have when they're certainly criticizing someone who is a farmer, who owns a farm, who understands what it is to be a farmer.

You know, I do remember the former minister. I forget the exact context, but I know it became very much a running joke within this Legislature, the thought that calving could only occur during the daytime. It completely tells me the absolute naïveté of the previous government and, I would argue to say, the current members of the Official Opposition, so I would like him to make a few comments in regard to this.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

I remember the Bill 6 rally very clearly. I was not present, but I had very many neighbours and friends that took part, and it was mostly a feeling of shock. You know, when people read the original bill, if I recall, before there were some amendments, they said: oh, this is going to kill 4-H. The family exemptions weren't there yet. Our 4-H clubs were concerned.

4:20

I have a lot of elderly neighbours that use seasonal help that thought it would have to speed up their retirement. We already are seeing a big turnover in rural Alberta with larger farms swallowing up the smaller farms. It's about economies of scale. It's about technology. Plain and simple, a bill like this just made it impossible for the smaller farms to have the safety protocols in place with a small number of employees. That was where you saw a lot of this. It was elderly couples. They'd worked their whole lives. They weren't ready to sell their farm and retire, but they couldn't take on the additional help to continue on with their farm.

The adverse effect? Well, it made a lot of people angry. It made a lot of people upset. They didn't know why decisions were being made from the halls of urban Alberta when they weren't being listened to. They thought they had common-sense objections and amendments that could be made, and it just seemed to fall on deaf ears.

A lot of the farm data that was used to propose some of this I have a big problem with. At my house where I live, if you go a quarter mile behind my house, 400 yards, there's a body of water.

If my two-year-old son crawls through the fence, makes it out there, and drowns in that body of water, that is a farm accident. If the exact same situation happens in a house backing onto a park in an urban area, it's just an accident. There are things in play when we live within where we work, and that can't change in rural, farming Alberta. Decisions that involve how we live with our families, with our hired people: they need to consider that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak against Bill 26, the so-called Farm Freedom and Safety Act, and I want to address a couple of points that have been raised by the members opposite during debate.

First of all, they continue to point to the number of protesters who were out on the steps of the Legislature as justification for the bill that they're bringing forward here to this Chamber. I would certainly hope that if the number of protesters is an indication of the urgency of a matter, then they would look at the number of protesters who were on the steps of the Legislature when Greta Thunberg was here. It was tens of thousands of people, the biggest rally in Alberta Legislature history. The members here in the intel caucus to my right are laughing at the issue, but the issue of climate change is urgent . . .

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), language designed to create disorder in the House: the hon. member just called the members of the government the intel caucus. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. If you can't draw the line here, I'm not sure where you can draw the line. I would respectfully ask you to insist that the hon. member apologize and withdraw the remark. If there's anything designed to create disorder in the House, we just heard it loud and clear. I realize it's your decision; I'm not pretending it's not. If you can't have this withdrawn, I guess there's no line.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is rising on this matter.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I apologize and withdraw my comments. I'm sure that that's not the last we'll hear from the Minister of Transportation during the next 15 minutes.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Schmidt:** If the number of protesters on the Legislature is any indication of what the government will take seriously and deal with as a matter of urgency, then climate change would be the number one issue that this government is dealing with rather than giving away \$4.7 billion to their corporate friends.

The other issue that I want to raise is, you know, that the accusations about misinformation that has been propagated by members of our caucus while discussing matters of public policy that the government is bringing forward pale in comparison to the misinformation that those members spread during the Bill 6 debate, which I was here for. Of course, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler and the Member for Calgary-West referred to one of the classic pieces of misinformation that was continually repeated during debate, this idea that somebody from our caucus or somebody from the agriculture ministry made this comment about

turning bulls out during the day so that people don't have to calve at night. That's ridiculous. There's no proof that anybody ever made that statement. It's a Facebook meme, but of course we see a government that's run by Facebook memes now, so we understand, of course, why they continually believe this garbage that they tell each other.

Anyway, I do want to also address one of the issues that was repeatedly raised during the Bill 6 debate and is being raised now, this issue that farmers are nothing but good employers who treat their employees with the utmost respect and pay them what they're worth and deal with their safety standards as a matter of urgency. This issue was triggered by the fact that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, I believe, earlier today had guests from the Alberta sugar beet farmers. With respect to sugar beets, Mr. Speaker, we have a terrible history of forced labour in agriculture in this province that I want to remind all members of this House of.

First of all, I want to refer to an article that was dated February 11, 2018. It's called *Sweet Irony: Zen Garden Memorializes Forced Labour on Alberta Sugar Beet Farms*. It was published by the Canadian broadcaster. It talks about an artist who is a descendant of sugar beet farmers in the Lethbridge area. She describes what her great-grandparents and grandparents were forced to do during the Second World War. Because they were farmers in British Columbia and because they were of Japanese descent, they were forced to give up their farm to the government of Canada and move to Picture Butte, Alberta, and were forced to labour on sugar beet farms during the Second World War and for five years after the Second World War ended. She describes the conditions that her grandparents and great-grandparents had to live through.

At the farm her family was made to live in an old granary with no insulation. In the winter, many people grew ill.

"A lot of people died from that illness," said McKinnon. "It was hard, and the labour was tough, too, it's very difficult to grow and harvest."

Working sugar crop fields, both cane and beet, is notoriously brutal work. Despite the hardship, her family survived and McKinnon's mother was born on the farm.

That is the history of Japanese-Canadian internment labour on Alberta sugar beet farms.

But those weren't the only people who were forced into labouring on Alberta sugar beet farms, Mr. Speaker. I want to share with the House another story that was also published by the Canadian broadcaster. This one is dated June 18, 2017, and says 'You Had No Choice': Indigenous Manitobans Shed Light on Exploitative Farm Labour Program that Ran for Decades. The subtitle is: Called 'Grab-a-hoe Indians,' Were Recruited to Work Sugar Beet Farms with Brutal Conditions, Little Pay. Now, Rebecca Bone of Camperville, Manitoba, in the story talks about being forced by the government of Canada to work on the sugar beet farms of southern Alberta. She describes it like this: "We worked until our hands were blistered, our skin was burnt and we were always hungry." They worked 12 to 14 hours a day, were not offered water, much less food to eat, and went home with \$300 in their pockets if they were lucky. And you know the reason why, Mr. Speaker, they were forced to work on these sugar beet farms? Because the government of Canada threatened to take their children away from them if they didn't do it. That is the legacy of some of the farm labour here in Alberta that we have to deal with. This isn't in our grandparents' or great-grandparents' history.

This article goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, that these people were forced to work for next to no money . . . [interjections]

4:30

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I just want to remind those members of the House that there will be ample time to debate this

issue, and if they have any questions or comments, there is 29(2)(a) available. All debate should be referred through the Speaker.

If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar could please continue.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's concerning to me that the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock wants to make light of the issue of forced labour on sugar beet farms during debate.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, I think that in that case that would constitute imputing a motive to the hon. member. I would ask that the hon. member withdraw that comment, apologize, and please continue with his comments.

Again a reminder to the whole House that we are endeavouring to have an effective and useful debate in this House, which also then would require all of us to ensure that we use language that is not abusive or insulting as that would lead to disorder in this House.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I apologize and withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Schmidt:** What I was going to say is that this was a government program that was enforced upon indigenous people, that continued on until the 1980s, Mr. Speaker. That means that when I and a lot of my caucus colleagues were happily enjoying preschool, spending our time watching *Sesame Street* and eating snacks, playing on the street with our friends, these indigenous citizens were forced to labour for next to nothing for Alberta sugar beet farmers. That is also the labour history of farmers and their employees in this province.

I appreciate the fact that most farmers are good employers, and I appreciate the fact that most farmers are concerned about safety conditions and pay for their employees on their farms. But, Mr. Speaker, we have a tragic history of exploiting labour here on farms in our own province, and that's why we have legislation like this, to protect farmers and their employees on the farm. We cannot rely on every single farmer being a good employer. We cannot rely on every farmer who employs somebody to work on their farm to pay them a fair wage and ensure that they have safe working conditions. That's why it was necessary for us to bring in Bill 6, that ensured farm workers the right to safe working conditions and the right to organize so that they can protect themselves and fight for fair wages and solid working conditions.

It is a shame, Mr. Speaker, that in defence of this legislation we are whitewashing Alberta's history with respect to farm labour, and I think that we need to just be honest with ourselves about what has happened in the past in this province, reconcile ourselves to what has happened, and admit that we need to do better as a province to protect farm labourers so that those kinds of exploitative conditions cannot be repeated under any circumstances on any farm in this province.

The other point that I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, is that, of course, we see again in Bill 26 an attack on labour unions, this time making it completely illegal for farm employees, farm workers to organize themselves into a labour union. Members of my caucus have asked the question: why would the UCP strip somebody's constitutional right to organize? I think I'm willing to provide the answer. It's because organized labour is a legitimate threat to their power.

If you want any indication as to how seriously they take this threat to their power, you only need to look at the fact that on day 1



of the CN Rail strike the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake stood up on his hind legs and demanded that Justin Trudeau and the federal government . . .

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

#### Point of Order

##### Insulting Language

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much. Under 23(h), (i), and (j) he certainly said – and I don't have the benefit of the Blues in front of me – that the Minister of I believe it was Agriculture and Forestry . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I am going to rule on this point of order. I am going to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to withdraw and apologize, the statement regarding hind legs.

Before you do that, I'm just going to look for a nod from the Member for Calgary-West to ensure that that was the point of order that he was raising. Okay.

If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar would withdraw and apologize for the insulting language that he used.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I apologize and withdraw. The next time I'll say that he stood on his front legs.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** We are moving on to the next speaker. Are there any . . .

**Mr. McIver:** I have a point of order, in that case, Mr. Speaker.

#### Point of Order

##### Insulting Language

**Mr. McIver:** Under 23(h), (i), and (j). Mr. Speaker, you just did the right thing. You made the member apologize and withdraw, and he repeated the insult using "front legs" instead of the – I'm sorry. I know the hon. member doesn't like the rules here. I know the hon. member doesn't care for any level of decorum or respect here, but I'm sure even his own teammates at this point are embarrassed. I think that to maintain the dignity of the House, I would respectfully ask you to insist that he apologize and withdraw for repeating what he just had to apologize for and withdraw about two seconds before he said it.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd like to rule on this. I would ask that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar withdraw and apologize for the comment that he made regarding front legs as in my mind I do not see the difference within the context of how it was used immediately after the previous apology.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I apologize and withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

#### Debate Continued

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen to speak.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, a number of my colleagues have spoken to this bill already. I don't propose to go on for a long time. I would certainly concur in the comments of the Leader of the Official Opposition and Member for

Edmonton-Strathcona on a number of points that she said, but I think there is just one thing I would like to clarify, simply because I feel strongly about it because of my time, before I came to this House, in which I was a practising lawyer.

What frustrates me more than anything, Mr. Speaker, is when we're having a conversation that isn't about the actual facts. I think, you know, when we're talking about this bill, the part that frustrates me the most is the conversation we've had around workers' compensation insurance. Now, I had certainly worked with the workers' compensation system as it stood before we were in government, and there were a series of flaws with that system. I don't deny it. It was definitely not a perfect system. We did a lot to change that system, and I think we did a lot to improve that system. I think it's a much better system than it was. But this idea that people ought not to be subject to WCB because they can buy other insurance out there that's better: I think I need to quarrel quite loudly, I suppose, or at great length with that point because I just don't think that it aligns with the actual facts.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The purpose of WCB insurance, Mr. Speaker, is that it's no fault. It's no-fault insurance. So if a worker is injured, they get compensation. If a worker is killed, their family gets compensation. That's it. It's the beginning and the end of the matter. That is a very different situation than when you are dealing with private insurance. When you are dealing with private insurance, the insurer has the right to step into the shoes of the person so insured and litigate a matter. What does that mean? Well, what it means is that if a worker is injured, if a worker is killed, it is not necessarily for the insured to decide whether or not that worker will be compensated.

4:40

And I agree with the members opposite, the members of the government. It is absolutely true that there are farmers this country over who would buy that insurance voluntarily, who would comply with WCB, who would comply with OH and S and do all of that voluntarily, who care very deeply for their workers, who do things for them that are over and above the law. I absolutely agree that that is the case. I'm not quarreling with that at all. I'm not saying that it's 100 per cent of people, because it isn't. In fact, you make the laws for the people who are not behaving well on their own. That is usually the case with the law. The fact that we have a prohibition on murder isn't because everyone walking around out there is a murderer; it's because some people are.

But I think the members opposite are absolutely right. Most farmers would do the right thing in this case. But they don't necessarily get to make that decision. If someone is injured or killed on their farm and that person or that person's family seeks compensation, the insurer has the right to step into the shoes of the insured and run the case, instruct the lawyers. That is how an insurance contract works.

Mr. Speaker, the problem becomes – and, you know, we see this in the States a lot, where an injured worker is attempting to sue their employer. This is a worker who's injured. They can't return to the work they were doing. Usually they're already a marginalized person who has limited employment options to begin with. Essentially, their family is left with no ability to pay the rent, with no ability to buy food, with no ability to do anything for years and years and years while the matter is tied up in litigation. The family of a worker who has been killed on a farm doesn't need compensation six years from now, when the case resolves. They need compensation now. That person's wife and children need to

eat now. They need to have shelter now. They don't have time to wait years and years for a case to resolve.

Again, many insurance companies will behave well, but we make laws for the ones who don't. There are certainly many cases in which a party with greater financial resources essentially engages in what would be termed exhaustion litigation. That means that they bring forward motion after motion after motion after motion, assuming that the injured worker who is suing them does not have the financial resources to send their lawyer to court over and over and over. Eventually they drop the case because they don't have the financial resources to continue, especially in light of the fact that they're unemployed.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I consider it quite an emotional issue because I have met people in these circumstances. These are real cases. These are real people, who really exist, who find themselves in a position of having been injured and having to seek compensation and being unable to get it. And whatever flaws may or may not exist in the WCB process, at least we're not dealing with an injured party who is essentially trying to sue an insurance company with vastly greater resources being tied up in litigation for years and years. That is my primary concern.

This conversation that we are having with the public about how lots of insurance is better than WCB is just false. It may be better in the sense that it is less expensive for the person who is insured to buy, but it is certainly not better from the perspective of the worker or the worker's family, who, rather than getting immediate compensation in the case of WCB, now has to wait for years and years while the matter is tied up in court and litigated, sometimes on grounds that are not meritorious, sometimes on grounds that have no basis in law. Sometimes the insurance company will just run a case to see if they can get the plaintiff to go away. And I think that is sad. The reason that it upsets me is that it uses the legal process, a process in which I have a great deal of faith, a process that I think is incredibly important to each and every one of us in our society, in a way that, in my view, is deeply inappropriate. Why I think that the WCB is often better is because when we're talking about cost and we're talking about benefit, we need to keep in mind when we are speaking that the no-fault component of WCB is a massive benefit to workers. That is an incredibly important piece of the puzzle, and somehow it is being excluded, whether intentionally or not, from the conversation about this.

Mr. Speaker, I merely wanted to take the opportunity to rise and point out that that, I think, is something that is a very important factor. It's a factor that ought to be considered. It's a factor that ought to impact on every single one of us in this House.

Having now said my piece, I will take my place.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment. I see that the hon. Minister of Transportation has risen under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very interested in the comments about the no-fault policy of the Workers' Compensation Board. I think that there are a lot of Albertans that might take issue with that.

I did spend a period of time, Mr. Speaker, as the labour minister for this great province, and I remember – I know that our current labour minister is here looking at me intently now, wondering what's going to come out of my mouth next. But the fact is that during that time in my office there were many days when there were people lined up around the block all day every day with WCB complaints. I think that they would say that it's not a no-fault insurance.

I had one constituent that actually lost both of his legs in an accident and had to fight to get prostheses. In fact, Mr. Speaker, he got prostheses about 20 years ago. You can only imagine, as I can only imagine, how much better the technology is for prostheses 20 years later. The old ones were clearly worn out, and we had to fight like crazy for about a year to get replacements for that person. I'm not sure that that person would agree that WCB is a no-fault insurance.

Many other people are injured on the job where the WCB has told them that it's their own fault. I'm not sure that that really squares with what we just heard in this House about no-fault insurance, people whose lives had been ruined. I would wonder how the hon. member would reflect upon that and whether the hon. member that just spoke has had any – I'd be surprised if the hon. member didn't hear from some constituents in her riding about similar things. I think the hon. member probably takes meetings with her constituents, and her constituents are probably similar to mine in that she probably gets them on a regular basis telling the hon. member similar things to what I just recounted to this House.

I could go on with hundreds of other examples because I've heard hundreds of other examples, and, no, that's not an exaggeration. I'm sure our current labour minister gets a regular diet of similar stories, complaints, appeals into his office as well.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the member to think about the fact that many farmers, as our member talked about earlier, have not only WCB insurance but other insurance as well, and in many cases farmers and ranchers made it known to us that the WCB insurance was not as good as what they were already paying for.

I would ask the member also to reflect about the fact that probably a good part of the reason that the Official Opposition was very much removed from rural Alberta was the fallout from Bill 6. That wasn't the only thing. There was the carbon tax; there were a whole bunch of other reasons. But certainly Bill 6 is something that people in rural Alberta – to this day many of them will spit when they say "Bill 6" because they are so disgusted with the poor way that they were treated by the previous government, the poor attitude that they were addressed with when the previous government used phrases like "We are going to create a culture of safety," as if farmers in Alberta for a hundred years didn't care about their family and their friends that were helping them out on the farm and working for them. What an insult. What an insult, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the hon. member to think about those things.

4:50

You know what? The other thing, too, is that now, as the hon. member from our side who's a farmer said, we have sometimes farmers and ranchers that maybe don't have the physical ability currently to do some of the more dangerous jobs on the farm, which I've heard they actually are doing anyway because there's too much paperwork, after the NDP was finished, to make it worth their while. So they're doing things that they should be hiring other people to do, actually creating less safety.

Also, I'd ask them to think about the fact that we heard from the other side about how 12 families will have no coverage. Well, we don't know that. Those 12 families that the official leader over there talked about: there's a very good chance that those farmers and ranchers would have all had insurance other than WCB. We heard no mention from the other side about the 180,000 families without a paycheque after they were done in government. I didn't see any tears shed over there for their policies that caused all that to happen, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are back on the main bill, Bill 26. Is there anyone else wishing to add to the debate this afternoon?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question on second reading of Bill 26, the Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a second time]

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

**The Acting Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### **Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019**

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to Bill 20? The Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, Bill 20. It's fairly difficult to keep track of what bills 20, 21, 22 do. This bill deals with 17 pieces of legislation, repeals five, creates two new ones. Certainly, I think that omnibus legislation pretty much is the norm for this government.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I would remind the other side that when they were in opposition, they used to object even to related pieces of legislation such as workers' compensation or labour relations. But now, when they are in charge, they can put almost 17 pieces of legislation together which don't have much in common other than . . . [interjections]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, please continue.

**Mr. Sabir:** It amends or deals with 17 pieces of legislation, as I said. They have one thing in common, that all these changes that are brought through this Bill 20 take money away from the pockets of Albertans and give it to the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. That's what I find common in all these changes.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

If we look at some of the things that they are doing with this piece of legislation, I think these things, whatever is in this piece of legislation, don't help us in any way, shape, or manner with jobs, the economy, and pipelines, which was their key slogan. For instance, if we talk about jobs, this piece of legislation ends all kinds of tax credits: the interactive digital media tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, the community economic development corporation tax credit, the Alberta investor tax credit, the scientific research and experimental development tax credit, the personal tuition tax credit, the personal education amount tax credit. Because of these tax credits, we were not only diversifying our economy, but these tax credits were attracting investment into Alberta, and they were creating jobs. Essentially, by removing these tax credits, this government is not only breaking their promise of creating jobs; rather, they are making us lose these jobs that were created by these tax credits or were going to be created by these tax credits.

Then the tuition tax credit that relates to postsecondary, advanced education: they are hiking the tuition fees on students all across this province, and on top of that, they are changing the tax credits. They are taking those tax credits away. They are charging more interest on outstanding student loans. Again, that will also shut down, make it difficult for students to seek postsecondary education. For many of us who are not born into wealth, education is the only way to get

ahead or have a decent living. With these changes, I think this government is making it difficult for everyday Albertans to be able to attend postsecondary schools.

Then it also changes film and television tax credits. My colleague from Edmonton . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Castle Downs.

**Mr. Sabir:** . . . Castle Downs has talked about it at length, that in our neighbouring jurisdiction, for instance, in B.C., these credits are way more than what we were offering, and they are bringing in way more revenue. They are attracting tourism. They are attracting these companies because of those credits. What we are seeing here is that these tax credits have been changed in a way that everybody in the industry is protesting against. They are not happy about this change, and they are of the view that this will stifle investment, that this will destroy our industry. Again, nobody is listening to the industry because they want to save some money so they can pay for their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate gift.

Advanced Education, Environment and Parks, Health: there are many things that this piece of legislation is dealing with. They're eliminating the Access to the Future Fund Act, the environmental protection and enhancement fund, the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Fund Act. The Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act: what they are doing is that they are, for instance, merging Alberta lottery funds into general revenue, and they are assuring Albertans that those funds will still be available to the organizations. The thing is that nobody wants to believe what this government says because they have said many things that they won't do, but they still went ahead and did those things anyway.

5:00

There are many examples. They said about AISH, the assured income for the severely handicapped, that they will not change that. In fact, they supported Bill 26 when brought forward by the previous government. What they did: they not only changed AISH; they deindexed it, taking \$30 away from Albertans with disabilities, almost \$380 per year, so that they can fund their policies like a \$4.7 billion handout. Now, when they say that they are taking lottery funds and putting them in general revenue and telling organizations that these funds will be available to them, nobody wants to buy that argument because we have already seen an almost 35 per cent cut to CFEP, the community facility enhancement program, that many nonprofit community organizations and communities were using to build their centres, to build their cultural centres. From there they can provide services to the communities. They are cutting that one.

We have seen cuts to the CIP grant, the community initiatives program, and we haven't heard anything about antiracism grants. So when the government tells us that they're just moving the lottery fund into general revenue, nobody wants to trust this government because they have done things that they said they would not do. It's another thing that's of huge concern for organizations in our communities.

The Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund: they're also changing that one. We have heard from this government that they want the market to fix everything. They want market-based research, but I think that in this House there will be many people who have been impacted by cancer. Every year we see that there are many Albertans who are suffering from this, and having publicly funded research on the prevention of cancer is important. It's in the public interest. Taking that fund away I think is irresponsible. Again, that's not what Albertans voted for. What they voted for was jobs, the economy, and pipelines, and none of these things create any jobs. None of these things help us do anything with our economy or

pipelines. All it does is take money so that the government later can fund whatever they did in their job-creation tax act, where they gave \$4.7 billion to corporations.

I think I already spoke briefly about the deindexing that they have done through this legislation. They have done that with the AISH program, deindexing of the AISH program. That's something around \$30 per month, and if somebody is living on a limited income and, on top of that, they have a disability, that \$30 makes a huge difference. The explanation the government gives: oh, it's not that onerous. If you are living on a limited income, certainly taking \$380 away from them per year is onerous, and it's huge for those individuals.

It's also deindexing income support programs. It's also deindexing the seniors' benefit. Again, these are small increases, but for those who are receiving these increases, that sometimes is the only source of income that they have, and it matters to them. It's huge for them. This legislation is also taking that indexing, those increases, away from Albertans. It, again, will have huge impacts for those individuals who were relying on these services.

I note that they said that times are tough, so that's why they are doing it, but they didn't put any sunset provision on when this deindexing will be lifted, when they will start indexing these benefits again. There is no such assurance provided in this piece of legislation, and Albertans certainly are concerned how their only support is dealt with by this government. Again, while they're taking money away from Albertans with disabilities, while they're taking money away from seniors, while they're taking money away from those who are on income support, this government is also giving \$4.7 billion in corporate handouts and wants Albertans to believe that that handout will somehow create jobs, against all kinds of academic advice and data that is available on those kinds of policies.

We have seen that kind of trickle-down economics fail everywhere around the globe. When we see that, like we saw the evidence here in Alberta, even companies like Husky, who got \$233 million out of it, were not able to invest that in Alberta because the issues facing our industry are different. It's about takeaway capacity; it's not about their production capacity. Even if they invest, they will not have takeaway capacity in pipelines; they will not have access to markets to ship that product and sell those products. So they are giving that money to the corporations who will not have an opportunity to invest in our province, and they so far have done nothing to address takeaway capacity and market access issues.

Every day we are just told that there is a \$30 million slush fund that is monitored and administered by a failed UCP candidate, Tom Olsen, that he will somehow use that fund anyway on Twitter and rapid response, those kinds of things, which will help us get a pipeline or will help us get market access. That didn't happen. Then we also gained access to only new markets. There is an inquiry going on, yet of the \$2.5 million they have allocated, \$900,000 went to the inquiry commissioner's son's law firm, where our Justice Minister worked formerly. These actions didn't do anything to help us with market access or new markets.

With all these cuts, all these changes that are brought forward by this Bill 20, I think there are possible consequences. Clearly, we can see that because of the changes contained in this piece of legislation, Albertans will be paying more in income taxes. This is also dealing with services that they are cutting. They are off-loading onto municipalities. As a result, municipalities either will have reduced services or higher property taxes. With the changes they are bringing forward to the investor tax credit, it looks like we will be losing jobs, we will be losing investment, and venture capital will move to other places.

Similarly, we are losing millions of dollars in the television and film industry and the jobs that come with that. Again, government policies are driving investment out of the province, driving investment and jobs away from the province. Similarly, the tech sector will be heading somewhere else if we are not providing the right environment for investment. Fewer companies will then be interested in our research and development and innovations in terms of green infrastructure because government policies clearly show they are not there to support these kinds of initiatives.

That's on the one hand. There are many important programs like CIP, CFEP, and antiracism grants that were helping communities to address issues facing them. For some of those organizations, these grants were the only source of funding they were getting from government through the lottery fund. Oftentimes these organizations do organize casino nights where they volunteer for the funds they receive. Now through this bill those funds, those lottery funds, have been merged into general revenue, and none of those organizations know whether or not they will get funding going forward.

Again, they're also meddling with the cancer research fund. That's a very personal issue for so many Albertans, and we as Albertans have a vested interest in investing in prevention research, life-saving research when it comes to cancer.

**5:10**

Again, less funding for environmental protection and enhancement. There were two major initiatives, one in Calgary and one in Edmonton, the green line and the LRT in Edmonton. Those were the projects that would help us with many issues that are facing our cities. They will help us with traffic congestion issues. They will help us to take more cars off the roads and provide environment-friendly transportation. They are moving funds around from those projects as well, which means that these projects could get delayed.

Again, this bill is over 100 pages long and deals with dozens of acts. There's never enough time to deal with each change on an individual basis, how they will impact our constituents. All I'll say is that for the most part, when you go through these changes, one theme is common. It's taking money away from Albertans, it's taking services away from Albertans, it's cutting into the services that Albertans rely on, all in the name of a \$4.7 billion no-jobs handout, that has not created a single job. In fact, we have lost 27,000 jobs under this government's watch. I think we saw 1,000 jobs lost just last week in Calgary, so clearly government policies are not working, and with the changes they are bringing through this piece of legislation, they are taking what Albertans have.

I will not be supporting this legislation. I believe the changes contained in this legislation will hurt Albertans. They will have an adverse impact on my constituents and Albertans across this province. These are the services that Albertans need and rely on. I think that nothing is safe from this government when it comes to cuts. For instance, when we became government, Alberta was the only province that didn't have an Alberta child tax benefit. In 2015 we brought forward that child tax benefit. If your income was below \$43,295, you were able to get that benefit. Now they have changed that base threshold to \$41,000, meaning that there will be families who will not be able to access that. Before, if it was 165,000 Albertan families who were able to access that benefit; with this change only 55,000 would be able to.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures

and Taxation Act, 2019. You know, it's become incredibly clear over the two legislative sessions that we've had so far that in their election platform this government, the United Conservative Party of Alberta, misled Albertans. It was an utterly disingenuous document. In putting it forward, it was engaging in an elaborate shell game. It was playing hide and seek with the facts, concealing actual intent, and they were being a good deal less than forthright with Albertans. Indeed, I would say that that document was not honest with Albertans about what this government intended to do. Bill 20 is a prime example of that. You know, it's somewhat surprising because, Madam Chair, as I'm sure you're familiar, the UCP policy platform was 118 pages long – 118 pages. Indeed, this Premier and members of this government like to brag about the incredible detail that they put in their policy platform and what a massive mandate it gives to them, but in Bill 20 we have a number of pieces which they did not see fit to include.

So if they were so scrupulous, Madam Chair, in putting together this policy platform and ensuring that they wanted to let Albertans know everything they intended to do, then I can only assume that there was ignorance involved in the creation of that document as to actually what needed to be done and what they intended to do or there was a good deal of that policy platform itself that was incredibly dishonest.

Let's have a look here at what we have in Bill 20 and the incredible dishonesty that was contained in the UCP policy platform. Let's start with the cancellation of education and tuition tax credits. Now, Madam Chair, I recognize for many members of this Assembly, particularly those who've served in government before and many who perhaps are serving now as ministers, the times when they had to depend on a tuition tax credit are a bit of a distant memory for them, which perhaps makes it easier for them to foist this burden on students. They can file that away in the dusty catacombs of their memory, the times when they themselves took advantage of those very same credits to pay for their education, of when they took advantage of the significant subsidy that there was from government at the time and the, indeed, much lower proportion of tuition that students would have had to pay, so that they can excuse the fact that they are taking \$20 million out of the pockets of Alberta students and their families this year alone.

Madam Chair, I can tell you that it was not that long ago that I returned to school to earn my bachelor of arts in professional communications. I can tell you that as I worked full-time and attended school full-time and took out lines of credit to cover the cost of my schooling, those tuition tax credits made a significant difference. They allowed me to upgrade my laptop when my old one was failing, and given that I was taking an online program, that was pretty significant for me. That is an expense I could not have afforded otherwise and would've had a significant impact on my education. But these government members are willing to callously disregard this burden that they're placing on students at the same time as they are, in fact, raising tuition rates for students across the province. They are making school more expensive and then taking away some of these small amounts from income tax credits that students had access to, to help defray the cost of their tuition and the cost of their books.

That was not in the UCP policy platform, Madam Chair. I dare say that if they had gone forward to their constituents or when they had sat down and met with postsecondary students and said that that was their intent of what they would want to do, that would not have been met with much good cheer or support, so they chose to allow their policy platform to be utterly dishonest with Albertans about their intent to do that. The average student will pay \$600 a year more thanks to this government just from this change. That doesn't count the extra amounts they'll be paying in tuition.

The child and family benefit tax credit, Madam Chair: this government is merging what were two separate benefits that existed previously, the Alberta child benefit, which our government introduced, and the already existing Alberta family employment tax credit, which our government increased. We saw the impact of that over the time we were in government, with a 50 per cent reduction in child poverty in the province of Alberta. Now, that was not the work of those programs brought forward and invested in by our government alone; that was also the federal Canada child benefit program. But that had a significant impact on low-income families in the province of Alberta.

5:20

I would dare say that if we want to see a general improvement in our economy, then lifting people out of poverty is a very good way to do that. People, when they are lifted out of poverty, depend on fewer government services. They require fewer community supports. They are able to move into better paying jobs. Their health improves. It lowers costs in every area of our society. It improves what people are able to contribute.

Now, the thing is, Madam Chair, that there are challenges as people find that path out of poverty, right? It's kind of like if you're helping someone out who's stuck in the mud, so you're giving them that hand, you're reaching out, you're helping to lift them out. If you pull them halfway out and then let go, they're quite likely to fall back in.

What we have happening here, with the Alberta child benefit now being merged with the Alberta family employment tax credit to create the child and family benefit tax credit, is that on the surface it looks like a good thing in that it will increase benefits for the lowest income families by 15 per cent. To that, Madam Chair, I will indeed say kudos to this government. That is a respectable thing to do. That will help those families more and, indeed, will help contribute to moving that other 50 per cent out of child poverty. However, the new benefit phases the benefit out more quickly as incomes rise. As a result, there will be \$40 million less overall going out to Alberta families because about 55,000 Alberta families are going to lose this benefit entirely.

Now, again, Madam Chair, one of the things we recognized as a government was that it's not enough to just get people part of the way out of poverty and then let them drop. You need to help get them completely back on their feet and up and rolling. That's why when we brought in the first actual provincial housing strategy that we had in the province of Alberta, one of the adjustments we made was allowing people to be able to stay in affordable housing, government-subsidized housing for longer. What we found and what we had heard back from our partners, stakeholders in the community is that when individuals were forced out too quickly, they did not land on their feet. In fact, they would have a more difficult time and oftentimes would end up falling back. Individuals needed greater support for a longer time to be able to amass the money they might need to make a down payment on a home or to buy that second vehicle that allows them to be a two-income household, or take other steps that, in fact, put them in a place of fiscal stability.

But what this government is doing is choosing to cut those families off sooner, much as this government is now choosing to cut off youth who turn 22, instead of at the age of 24. To save a few dollars, Madam Chair, this government is choosing to place people's hard-won progress in jeopardy. That's of no benefit to us as a society. That's of no benefit to us as an economy. It's of benefit, I suppose, to the government backfilling their \$4.7 billion corporate no-jobs giveaway, but it is not prudent social policy. And it was not in the UCP policy platform, which so badly misled Albertans.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council noted this particular change. When I speak with community agencies and folks that are serving those who are living in or are on their way out of poverty, they are not encouraged by this government or that this policy is being brought forward without any consultation, without any prior notice, and indeed at a time when government is pulling back on funding for so many other things which help to address the issues that these families face, placing in jeopardy the great progress we have begun to make as a province. But you know, Madam Chair, the educational and tuition tax credits, the changes to the child and family benefit, family employment tax credit: the cherry on this government's sundae of disingenuity has to be their changes to personal income tax.

Now, thinking back to this past spring, Madam Chair, the Premier, then the Alberta opposition leader, told Global News that he would not be making any changes to personal income tax rates, okay? The article goes on to note that he said that the United Conservatives would delay any tax changes until the budget was balanced. Okay. Well, it seems quite clear now that that statement he made was far from straight with Albertans. Indeed, I would suggest that it was decidedly crooked. On hearing the Premier's remarks at that time, I think it would be fair for anyone listening to infer that any honest person making that kind of a claim would in fact mean that they had no intent of asking Albertans to pay more income tax. Government members like to talk about how plain-spoken they are and how plain-spoken folks in their area are. They like to talk about severely normal Albertans. I think if you presented any of those individuals with those two statements by the Premier, they would say: that is a man who is promising that I will not pay more income tax.

But in Bill 20 we see that was not in fact the case. At best this government is breaking that Premier's word and breaking the promise and at worst the Premier was being, shall I say, incredibly precious, rather smugly clever, utterly disingenuous with his choice of words. Of course, that's what we've seen with this government, Madam Chair. They do not speak plainly with Albertans. They do not deal honestly. We've seen that here in this House last week with their massive omnibus bill, Bill 22, which, again, contained many elements this government did not campaign on, had never introduced before, and which they rammed through at lightning speed without consultation or discussion with any Albertans. This government is not interested in speaking honestly with Albertans.

However much the government members may choose to sit here and try to convince themselves otherwise, that myself and my colleagues were such terrible people and did such a horrible job in government . . . [interjections]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, my apologies. Can we just turn the volume down a little bit on the chatter? It's very loud. Thank you. Please proceed.

**Mr. Shepherd:** . . . that this level of disingenuity, that this level of antidemocracy, that these sorts of deceptive choices are justified.

Well, if government members want to choose to delude themselves in that, I suppose that is their choice, but I would note that when it comes to the question of personal income tax, the Premier, before he was the Premier, indeed, before he was the Official Opposition leader, was very clear about what he thought about deindexing income tax. To be clear, the government's own documents show exactly what this is, stating, "With the need to control spending, continuing to index these benefits is unaffordable for the time being. Alberta will resume indexing the tax system once economic and fiscal conditions can support it."

Clearly, they are changing income tax despite their promise, and they will be forcing roughly 2 million Albertans who pay income tax to pay more, \$600 million more. The Premier, before he was Premier, before he was Leader of the Official Opposition, had made the promise that he would do no such thing, and made it quite clear what he thought of bracket creep, that it was a pernicious tax on inflation, an insidious tax on inflation, a hidden tax grab, a backdoor tax increase, a serious systemic flaw in our tax system, and that bracket creep constituted an annual tax increase.

5:30

So despite this government's repeated and utterly disingenuous claims that they are not raising income taxes for Albertans, Madam Chair, they are, in their Premier's own words, once again something that was not contained within the UCP policy platform, which was clearly, decidedly dishonest with Albertans. They were sold a false bill of goods. They were presented with a menu with many items they didn't know they were going to be served.

We've seen this time and time again on so many fronts with this government, Madam Chair. Indeed, Albertans weren't asking for \$16,000 charter flights. They weren't asking for sweetheart deals in their energy war room. That wasn't in the platform either, much as all these other things which I am noting in this legislation were not present in that platform. They weren't told they would be served a side of entitlement and arrogance with a distinct flavour of the bygone Redford PC era. That was not included on the menu. Certainly, recently we've noticed a distinct bouquet of corruption wafting up from the actions of this government and the legislation it's choosing to bring forward, like this bill which we are debating here in the House today, Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I can only wonder, Madam Chair, at the disregard in which this government holds Albertans and which each of these government members is choosing to make themselves a party to.

Again, they can sit and try to convince themselves that I am the deluded one and that I and all of my government colleagues are the awful, terrible people that perhaps they're being told behind closed doors that we are to help them stomach the passage of a bill like Bill 22. I can tell you that I speak to a pretty wide breadth of Albertans across this province, and while I recognize that there are Albertans that support this government and will continue to support these policies, even as disgusting as I may find some of them – the decisions of the government, to be clear, Madam Chair, because this government also likes to be rather disingenuous about how it quotes the *Hansard*, so I'll be very clear on that: the disgusting decisions being made by this government. I respect all Albertans regardless of what political choice they may choose to make.

Certainly, if they wish to take this government at their word, that is their right, but I can tell you that an increasing number of Albertans are unable to do that, not at a time when government is seizing their pensions without consultation, not at a time when this government breaks contracts with front-line workers, not at a time when this government fires the Election Commissioner.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise tonight to speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I want to start by saying that I've spoken to this before in the House because this is something that – my community is reaching out to me to express concerns, whether it's parent groups, whether it's community leagues. Then, of course, being the culture critic – this is something that the film industry is very upset and concerned about. So I would just like to share some of the letters of concern

that I've been receiving through my office, whether it's directly to me or whether I'm being CCed on a letter that perhaps has come to the attention of the Premier's office or other members that are in this Chamber. We have received a lot of correspondence.

One that I would like to highlight tonight is from the Edmonton Castle Downs Recreation Society, the CDRS. It's an organization that has compiled within it several community leagues that both myself, as the member representing the beautiful community of Edmonton-Castle Downs, and my colleague the Member for Edmonton-North West – we share community leagues that come together under this organization. I have to say, Madam Chair, that they are an absolutely essential part of north Edmonton. They do so much to give back to our community, and they are involved in so many aspects to ensure that the amazing community of Edmonton north is taken care of.

They wrote a letter, Madam Chair, and I would like to share that letter. It's addressed to the Premier. It says:

Community leagues are groups of neighbours who volunteer to organize events, activities, and programs in their local neighbourhood, who plan and build local amenities and who advocate for the services they need to make their community thrive. They represent and are supported by community members of all backgrounds, faiths, and political spectrums. Community leagues help people live active, connected lives, combatting social isolation and promoting inclusion and engagement.

The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, the EFCL, serves as an umbrella organization to connect, represent and enable community leagues to preserve and promote the community league way of life. The EFCL and Edmonton's 160 community leagues have serious concerns about funding cuts in Bill 20.

With Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, the provincial government of Alberta plans to make changes to the lottery fund as well as cutting funding by more than a third for an essential grant project for community leagues, the community facility enhancement program, CFEP. This funding is what allows community leagues to build and maintain vital recreational infrastructure such as community halls, ice rinks, playgrounds, basketball and tennis courts. Because Edmonton's community leagues have their facilities on licensed land, they are currently restricted in the ways that they can fund raise for them. Many grants that community leagues are eligible for are matching grants, which match funds obtained through programs such as CFEP. This makes CFEP an essential source of funds.

Over half a billion dollars worth of community-based infrastructure exists thanks to community leagues, in partnership with the city of Edmonton and the province of Alberta. For close to 100 years Edmonton's community leagues have built hundreds of amenities, including 126 community league halls, 250 playgrounds, 119 outdoor community ice rinks, 55 water spray parks, 46 basketball court facilities, 25 community gardens, 24 outdoor tennis court facilities, 10 BMX-skateboard tracks.

Under Bill 20 significantly fewer community leagues will be able to access CFEP. This threatens not only community league facilities but also the programs and events they house and the collective community way of life. Without the ability to build and maintain community halls, community leagues will not be able to host programs and activities for all ages. Existing facilities in need of renovations to ensure accessibility will remain inaccessible to community members. Playgrounds will fall into disrepair and become unsafe for children to use. Some community leagues may need to cease operation as they lack funds to make critical investments in infrastructure.

Community leagues depend on CFEP funding for the ongoing repairs and renovations needed to ensure that these neighbourhood amenities provide vibrant and safe places for neighbours to gather. Cuts to this program will have a devastating

and lasting impact on communities and neighbourhoods within the capital city.

We look forward to hearing from you on how you plan to help community leagues maintain their operations and preserve the community league way of life in Edmonton.

Sincerely,

Lynette Thompson, president of the CDRS.

Now, Madam Chair, this is something that I know not just the CDRS has been concerned about. These are conversations that are happening all across our communities. They rely heavily on the supports and resources and programming that community leagues offer.

5:40

I know that in my community of Castle Downs they host things like movie nights, where families can get together and watch movies and have popcorn and have snacks. They do things like cartoon breakfasts, where everybody gets in their jammies and they go sit in the community hall, watch cartoons, and eat cereal. We have skating in almost all of our communities, which is run by incredibly tireless volunteers that give up their time so that they can have kids actively participating in something that we thrive on here in Alberta as a recreational pastime, playing hockey, or just simply being out on the ice, skating.

There are several of the community leagues that, because of the generous donations of those in our community, offer skates to those that don't have skates. There are children and adults that will come out to Lorelei and skate for the first time. I know that I was so honoured to be able to help a three-year-old, Maggie, learn how to skate for the very first time. She was wobbly, and she looked a little bit like Bambi, but it was because the community league offered the arena and they offered the space to do that and the skates for kids to come and try that she was able to skate for the first time. She was cold, but she had fun. She had a smile on her face, and it was an incredible experience.

To know that there are so many families across this province that rely on the investment from our province, from our provincial government, to be able to maintain these facilities – it's very concerning to me that this is something that is being taken away. I know that we have Christmas celebrations in our community leagues. We have different Ramadan celebrations that are occurring. We have such an inclusive community in Edmonton-Castle Downs, where people of all ages, people of all different backgrounds – and it gives them an opportunity to come together as a community. That's their common interest in Edmonton and, I'm sure, across the entire province. The Castle Downs Rec Society strives to ensure that there is inclusivity in our community, and they work very, very hard at doing that, and they take incredible pride in our community leagues.

We have so many volunteers across Edmonton-Castle Downs that have been participating at the community league level for, sometimes, over 35, 40 years. They started when their children were young. They perhaps wanted to volunteer because their child was participating in a sports programs like soccer, so as a way to kind of reduce some of the fees, they volunteered, and now they have grandchildren and they are still involved in the community. Hearing that history and the passion that it brings, knowing that this bill is going to cut those monies that are so heavily relied on in our communities is just devastating.

Knowing that there are going to be facilities that might actually have to close down because there might be a major repair that's needed and they're no longer eligible for that funding – it's devastating to think that somewhere where you could just walk across the street to access your park or the ice rink might be gone.

It's something that's going to impact so many Albertans. I know that when we look at the importance of community, it's something that is really strong in Alberta. As a community we come together, and we support each other, and we take care of each other.

What I'm seeing happening right now, Madam Chair, is that so many across the province are coming together to fight what's happening with this current government. They're afraid, they're concerned, and they're rallying together. They're coming to the steps of this Legislature to speak against these drastic, senseless cuts when we know that it's because they put a \$4.7 billion corporate tax giveaway without creating any jobs. It's at the expense of our communities. It's at the expense of those family members that so heavily rely on things that are happening right next door.

I know that as a mom I often spent time at the community leagues of my kids, whether they were taking cooking lessons – during spring break there were playschools that were offered through the community leagues. At my children's community league they have so many different fun things happening. We're looking at ways to engage adults in it, so one of the community leagues does a paint night, and it's very, very successful.

I know that our community league has reached out to the community of Edmonton-Castle Downs and Edmonton-North West to survey them about: what do they want? They're incredibly engaged in reaching out to community to find out what the needs of the community members are, and we heard loud and clear that they want activities. People want to be able to engage in their community leagues across Edmonton north. To be able to provide those services and to be able to rely on government for support is essential, and we're hearing that we're at risk of losing this. To me, that just is something that is so wrong. There are so many people that are organizing, coming together to speak out about it.

The other piece of this incredible, huge piece of legislation that I would also like to touch on is the film industry. As the culture critic we've heard, I've heard, my side of the House has heard incredible concern with what this government has been doing in terms of the impacts on the film industry. We've heard that they hadn't been consulted with prior to the budget coming out. They weren't consulted on this piece of legislation and the impact on them. We're hearing across the province that what's happening is that production and very, very talented people in the film industry are leaving the province of Alberta because of the decisions that this government has made.

When we're debating the amendment, which I appreciate, from the government to this bill, it speaks to the ability to actually open up applications. In the way it was written prior to the amendment, applications wouldn't be able to be processed until at least April 1, 2020. Industry was saying that that is absolutely going to collapse their industry here in the province. After some really well-attended meetings in Calgary and having had the estimates attended, film finally was able to get a meeting with the minister. The unfortunate thing is that this happened after Bill 20 had been introduced and after the budget had been introduced, which is too late when we're looking at ways that the industry needs to be supported.

We know that having a tax credit is absolutely essential, and we know that the industry wants more than that. They want the cap to be taken away on this. They've been asking for that, yet the amendment didn't include that piece of it. It included a small piece, which I was happy to support, but it's not enough. Part of this bill is still not doing enough and causing millions and millions to be lost in the industry in jobs and investment here in the province of Alberta. You hear industry folks talk with passion about what they do and how they want to stay in the province. They love where they

live, they love doing content about Alberta, and they love the fact that we have such a beautiful landscape.

We have some of the most educated and professional crews in the world, Madam Chair, and knowing that decisions from this government are putting those projects at risk is devastating. Hearing people come to me and express concern that they might have to leave the province of Alberta because of the impact that this government is making on the film industry is devastating. They don't want to leave. They want to be able to stay here. But when you look next door, to our neighbours in B.C., who are thriving in their film industry, in order to have a job that pays for your family, that can put a roof over your head and food on your table, you have to go to where the jobs are. For a government that was saying that their number one goal is to create jobs in the province, they haven't created a stable environment for the film industry. People are leaving.

What that means is that millions of dollars that should be invested into this province are leaving, going to other provinces, and this isn't the only industry that the government's decisions are impacting. We know that people are coming to the government with solutions. They have ideas, and they're reaching out, expressing concerns. The government is not listening. We're listening, and we're paying attention, and we're going to continue to fight for what the industry wants. I know several of my colleagues on this side of the House have been fierce advocates here, talking about the importance of the film industry. They're meeting with stakeholders. They're meeting with those that have so many great ideas. We're pleading with the government to listen and to make change because once the film industry leaves the province of Alberta, it's very unlikely that they're going to come back.

5:50

I have a letter that I would like to read, Madam Chair, from an IATSE member. She writes:

Dear Ms. Goehring,

Thank-you for coming to the ASIAC meeting this afternoon.

I am a member of IATSE 212, and work in the Costume department.

It is positive to see that the Film Industry has been moved to the Economic Development, Trade & Tourism Ministry, and that the government has decided to move towards the Tax Incentive instead of the grant system, as we are a business. I am however puzzled, as to why the incentive was capped. According to Damian Petti, president of IATSE 212, the current \$45 million cap generates 12-15 projects with budgets over \$3 million, for over \$300 million in production. Dropping the annual cap down to \$15 million would only incentivize 2 or 3 large projects and we would lose several hundred million dollars' worth of production. Unlike in other industries, this tax rebate is paid out 1 year after the production has finished, not up front. The product is already delivered, the money is spent, so there isn't any risk to the Government with this investment.

The film industry has real economic benefits in that the money is spent in the community. In 2014, I worked on a large historical TV Mini-Series. I worked as a buyer in the Costume Department and I was 1 of 6 people buying for our department. At the height of production I was spending around \$30,000 weekly at local businesses. I was 1 person in 1 department. Many of the vendors were small businesses, who were in turn able to continue to employ staff. This is one small aspect of the monies spent on a production. I should also mention that due to the nature of the projects we attract, we are often filming all over the province. Economic benefits reach across this province, from hotels and catering, local services such as porta-potties and tent rentals, antique shops and lumber yards, and so on. I have been



on several productions where the director has opened up a tab at the local coffee shop and told the crew to have a coffee on them. When you have crews on set of 200+, this is a nice little payday for the local businesses. It all adds up.

On a personal note, since becoming a member in the Union in 2014, I have been able to qualify for a mortgage and purchase a little townhouse. Perhaps the biggest ramification of the exodus of film productions for myself, is that when I need to renew my mortgage I will no longer qualify and will lose my housing. I am born and raised in Alberta, and have parents in their 70's and 80's. I would like to be able to spend their last years in the same city as them, not be forced to move elsewhere.

I find it frustrating that, with the current economic climate in Alberta, and the Government's own stated desire to diversify economically, they fail to see this for the economic boon this could be. Obviously work needs to happen in other areas of the economy (oil and gas, agriculture), but the Film Industry could take some pressure off the Province, in the form of positive cash flow, while work is done to begin to resolve these other areas.

In 2017/18, the total volume of film and television production in Alberta was \$255 million, while in BC was \$3.5 Billion and Ontario was \$2.8 billion. While we will probably never be at the level of Vancouver, I just don't understand why, in this economy . . .

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a couple of moments here to say a few words around Bill 20. I mean, indeed, there are so many different pieces to this bill that it's worth while to take some separation, to separate the comments, to perhaps focus on one topic at a time. The topic that I would like to just say a few words about is the change to the personal income tax brackets that this Bill 20 is proposing, which is to allow what is known as bracket creep to take place in personal income tax here in the province of Alberta. This is, by the government's own estimation, going to cost Alberta taxpayers about \$600 million over the term.

You know, there are about 2 million Albertans who pay income tax in any given year here in the province of Alberta, and taking off the indexation of taxes is a significant increase in personal income tax in this budget. I know that a lot of the UCP strategy over these last few weeks is to deny the existence of these things in the budget, but here it is in black and white, very clear, that the deindexation of taxation will cost Alberta taxpayers about \$600 million.

You know, this is one of these slow-burn things, Madam Chair, because it takes place over time. People do their taxes, and you slowly come to realize over time that "Hey, our taxes have gone up"

and that they've gone up quite significantly over time. I mean, certainly, you know, it's fair that people pay taxes for the goods and services that we provide on a municipal level, on a provincial level, and on a federal level, but this whole idea of reducing taxes, that the UCP seems to like to run on, is absolutely not true. Here in this bill that we're debating right now is an increase to personal income taxes for all Albertans, starting now, as soon as this gets passed. I mean, I find this to be disingenuous. I find it to be certainly difficult for people, and they need to get their head around it.

You know, it affects not just all Albertans, but I think it also puts pressure on other levels of government because, of course, there's only one taxpayer, Madam Chair, and now taking more money from that single taxpayer for this provincial level of governance also puts pressures on other levels of government, specifically municipalities, and on the responsibilities and the expectations that are being put on them with reduced budgets from the same Bill 20 as well.

You know, I find it to be quite surprising, Madam Chair, if you look at this. Of course, our Premier was previously a cabinet member and in opposition in the national government, and he spoke long and very eloquently, when he was in the federal government, about how dishonest it is to deindex taxation on a personal level. But obviously he was learning these tricks very well because now he's imported this idea from Ottawa, turned it upside down, and did this very thing to Albertans in this budget, increasing their personal income taxes by deindexing the tax brackets that are used. People call it a tax creep, right? Yeah, I think it's certainly a tax creep, and it's creepy, too, quite frankly, that someone would be so disingenuous as to suggest that they are lowering taxes or not going to increase people's taxes and, lo and behold, there it is.

I'm curious to know, Madam Chair, as people travel around and receive feedback from their constituents across the province, how they manage to sell this one, that this UCP government is increasing your personal income taxes with Bill 20 by deindexing tax brackets. I'm sure that people will bring it up because, you know, it flies in the face of all the rhetoric and language that we heard for so many months and years from the same government, talking about how you want to decrease taxes and liberate people's taxes or whatever language they like to use, and here you see the very opposite. They're decreasing taxes for corporate income tax, certainly for profitable corporations, to the tune of \$4.7 billion. That puts a big hole in this provincial budget.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. The Committee of the Whole will be recessed until 7:30 this evening.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, November 26, 2019

Day 47

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 26, 2019

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Please be seated. I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 25 Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that when the committee rises, it report progress on Bill 20.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I just want to confirm with regard to your request to rise and report Bill 20: because Bill 25 has been put under consideration, we will have to rise and report both. Is that your intention?

**Mr. Schow:** Then in that case, Mr. Chair, I withdraw that motion at the moment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments to be offered with regard to Bill 25? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you recognizing me this evening to further the discussion around Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, one of several pieces of omnibus legislation that we've seen come through this Assembly in this session alone, something, of course, that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction was very firmly against, that kind of a practice. Yet here we are with a bill in front of us that sees 13 different changes across six different ministries, and arguably, I would say, most of it is not really red tape reduction. It's more like, you know, statutes amendments that could have been done throughout different ministries. It seems like a little bit of a reach just to maybe, potentially justify the \$10 million that taxpayers are going to pay over the next four years for this ministry for decisions that are very clearly being made by many, many of the ministries all by themselves.

Nonetheless, we do find ourselves here, so for the moment I would like to key in on just a couple of items with regard to this bill. The first one is around the Safety Codes Act. What that is bringing forward is allowing wood buildings to be higher than six storeys. Of course, we understand that this may be bringing this in line with federal regulation, but of course we have heard that there are, potentially, regulations that'll be coming into force which may allow structures made of wood up to 12 storeys. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview had mentioned earlier, in second reading, that this would be a great opportunity for our forestry industry to be able to expand within the province, supplying materials to build these structures. I would certainly agree that that is an opportunity.

But I think what I really want to focus on here, which I really wish had maybe been mentioned within this, is the component around safety, Mr. Chair. When we're looking at building some of

these structures, you know, we look at the types of standards so that in the event of an evacuation, can people egress from these buildings quickly, easily, safely? Certainly, in the event of fire you don't want to have things like a collapse while people are trying to get out. One of the components that seems to have been missed throughout the conversation – and this is widely just around building codes as a whole – is that firefighters have to go into these buildings to try to put them out. While we factor in the numbers for how long it will take people to get out, we tend to forget about the amount of time it's going to take for them to get on-site, to get into these buildings, and then put these fires out before we have any kind of structural collapses.

You know, given the fact that in many other components of other bills that have come before this House across this session, we've clearly seen that there has been very little to maybe almost even no consultation with stakeholders. I would suggest that with code changes of this magnitude we ensure that our first responders – our firefighters, our ambulance, our police – are able to safely get into these buildings to do their jobs before they come down, a very, very important component. I'm hoping that that will be very, very seriously considered, bringing those voices to the table, when we're looking at further expanding what will ultimately be the regulations around the safety code changes.

Again, you know, is this necessarily red tape reduction? I think that for the purposes of discussion here this evening, maybe I'll give the minister this one for tonight on this topic here.

The other section that I wanted to bring up, which I had started making comments on earlier and unfortunately ran out of time, was around some of the changes under the Municipal Government Act. There were some concerns from the RMA around some of the ICFs that they currently have on the go. Some municipalities have as many as 15, and with the timelines that we have here around getting these completed by April 1, 2020, there's a very, very high level of concern around those. I think that, you know, maybe the wisdom of this House might be able to prevail, and we would have the opportunity to maybe make those pressures a little bit less around that.

With that, Mr. Chair, I do have an amendment to present around that, and I will wait for your instructions once you get them.

**The Deputy Chair:** I'm going to let the pages run around to drop it off for everybody. Given the amendment you can go ahead and read it into the record right now.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Obviously, I would propose to move that Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, be amended in section 10 by striking out, "April 1, 2020" wherever it occurs and substituting "April 1, 2021."

**The Deputy Chair:** Just going forward, this amendment will be referred to as A1.

If the hon. member would like to continue his comments, please feel free.

7:40

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. In my quick discussions around that component with the RMA, there was a little bit of concern around being able to complete some of the outstanding work that the rural municipalities have on the go right now, with some municipalities having as many as 15 of these ICFs remaining. There's some concern that they're not able to get that work completed.

But also one of the things that I managed to have a quick discussion on: they had surveyed their membership specifically around, you know, Bill 25, some of the implications that it has for

them. This was one of the things that they had identified. They had received responses from 46 of their 69 municipalities, which is approximately 67 per cent of their entire membership. What they noted, Mr. Chair, was that approximately 41 per cent of their respondents were either not so confident or not at all confident that they will be able to complete all the required ICFs prior to this deadline. They noted that there was a lack of time and capacity as the largest challenge for completing some of these.

The second-largest challenge was related to negotiating, of course, with their neighbours and some uncertainty around the municipal budgets on fulfilling cost-sharing commitments. Of course, I guess we can always have a discussion around the great many uncertainties that have been created around this budget that the government has introduced, but this is certainly something that they identified as being part of it.

Approximately 59 per cent of the respondents identified a timeline extension as the most helpful action that the government of Alberta could take to support municipalities in completing ICFs. I guess the last thing that I will note: the capacity challenges associated with completing many agreements in a short timeline are causing significant financial and workload issues for rural municipalities.

What I would suggest that we do is to amend this timeline by simply one year, because what will happen is that if they're not able to complete these ICFs in the required time, it's then going to go to arbitration. It will then take as much as a year to complete those arbitrations. It would probably be just simpler to extend the timeline by the one year, let them complete these ICFs, and then just simply move on with the business of the day.

It is my hope that members across the aisle will support this. Basically, it's a friendly amendment, almost, Mr. Chair, allowing the RMA an appropriate amount of time to complete all of these pieces of work that they need to do and get on with the business of serving their constituents of their municipality.

With that, I will take my seat, Mr. Chair. Hopefully, we'll get some feedback around this, a little bit.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members looking to speak to A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the ICFs, the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks, the amendment that's on the floor, I think, makes good sense in that it was surveyed or canvassed with an organization that is supporting many of these municipalities in trying to complete them. It's difficult, time-consuming. I do note that throughout the bill and the changes to the proposed bill that'll affect the MGA, there are things that make it easier for municipalities, but this one remains difficult. The ICFs are challenging in that they need to get their own staff, perhaps hire other staff, contractors, to do the work that their own staff may not have expertise in. As the mover has said, there are a number of these municipalities that have numerous, numerous frameworks that they have to put in place.

So giving them another year from the anticipated date when this should be done is good. They probably will be coming back to their minister and asking for more time, and on an individual basis the minister will look at perhaps extending. But a blanket extension like this really provides them with the time and opportunity that they need to do a good job and be able to hand them in on the date that is anticipated that they hand them in, which is now just one year after.

I think that there's good sense here. I don't know if the member spoke directly to the RMA individuals. I know that he was quoting

from their website and the information that he was able to obtain and did speak with representatives of RMA. They identified this as something that would be particularly helpful.

I just would say that one of the challenges that I've been hearing, with regard to this new government and their consultation with municipalities, is that – and we saw it in a previous bill that was brought here, Bill 7, Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019, in the springtime, and there was a discussion about how that would make life better because municipalities could look at attracting businesses and give them up to 15 years of deferment. The consultation, I think, in that case was woefully inadequate. None of the municipalities were asking for that. They didn't put their hand up and say: this is what we need to get ourselves under way. It was really something brought forward from the other side, an ideological perspective, not unlike the \$4.7 billion tax giveaway to big, wealthy corporations.

This is something that's different. This is something that they are asking for and do wish to see put into place so that they can do the job that they want to do, which is to improve their working relationships, their sharing of services with other municipalities on their boundaries. I would hope that members opposite would give opportunity to support this amendment, which is a reasoned one. I'm hopeful.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members looking to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. I will keep my comments brief because I think that both of the members who have spoken before me have spoken well. Speaking to the government caucus through you, Mr. Chair, I just want to say: please consider this not an opposition amendment but, rather, an RMA amendment, because we are simply listening to feedback that they've communicated to us and, I imagine, directly to the government caucus as well.

It's a very straightforward amendment, very clear to understand. It doesn't prevent the government's intentions. This is really a one-year delay as requested by RMA. I really just wanted to stand up and suggest that this be considered an RMA amendment if that might help the government in considering it. I'd be very interested to hear what the minister responsible thinks of this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on this amendment? I see the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has risen.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do appreciate the hon. member's amendment, and I agree with him that it's certainly something that municipalities have talked to, many on our side as well, saying that this is very difficult. Some of them have, you know, 12 to 14 of these ICFs that they have to do.

I actually commend the member for bringing forward the amendment. One thing I would say, though, is that what's interesting is that this is actually your doing. These timelines were actually created under the NDP, so I'm not sure what has changed other than the fact that you're not the government anymore. I'm not sure, Mr. Chair, why all of a sudden now there's such an interest in having this pushed back when in reality as the government there was no interest. There was always continual pushing for the 2020 date. I'm not exactly sure what has happened other than the fact that they have become opposition and they're in opposition to the bill, which they have already said.

7:50

Mr. Chair, we will not be accepting this. I recommend to the members on our side that we do not accept this. I think it's important to make sure that these timelines are met where we can, and for those communities that are struggling, I think that the Minister of Municipal Affairs can try to work with them in that spirit.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A1?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving back to Bill 25 proper, are there any hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 25? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you again, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. It's unfortunate. You know, this was again something that the RMA was looking for. I guess what we're going to end up doing is that should they not be able to complete these, we'll be going through the arbitration process, creating a whole bunch of red tape, which your ministry is supposed to reduce.

But on the whole with Bill 25, Mr. Chair, I'm not seeing a whole lot of red tape reduction around this. I mean, you know, we're supposed to be trying to create jobs. We're supposed to be trying to grow the economy. Yet when we are looking at things like how museums are supposed to store their artwork, I don't see how that's creating jobs and growing the economy.

I've also tried to reach out to the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors. One of the suggestions within this bill is to remove the references to chiropractic services. You know, any time we potentially look at removing language without consultation – and that was the one thing that I was very, very clear, that was communicated to me when I initially had the chance to speak with the association, was that they only found out about these changes when it was announced. So there was no discussion with them about how this may or may not affect them. Certainly, I remember the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction going on at length during the 29th Legislature about how consultation was never happening with the former government, yet here we are, you know, not practising what we preach essentially. I think it's a little bit disingenuous when you do those kinds of things.

I would, of course, like to make a few other comments around changes to the forestry act. Again, I heard members during the last Legislature, very concerned about giving yet more powers to the minister directly. I don't know if that's necessarily going to be a bad thing. Allowing forestry management agreements to move a lot faster may prove to be a good thing. But, again, you know, it always seems to be coming back, Mr. Chair, when we're talking about some of the things that we're doing based on some of the things that we've either said in the past or have done in the past that are counterproductive to those kinds of things. So when I hear things like, "Well, we can't be giving more powers to a minister," yet we're about to give more powers to a minister, it's just very, very conflicting information.

We kind of went quite a length during the second reading of this. It just seems to be a bill that's a bit of a – I think one of the members mentioned that it was a bit of a make-work project, trying to justify to Albertans why they need to pay \$10 million over the next four years for this ministry to either make decisions or assist in decisions that, clearly, other ministries are already making all by themselves. I would suggest that if we're looking at things like folding the

Election Commissioner into the Chief Electoral Officer's office so we can save ourselves a million dollars, I mean, I would suggest to the government that I could save you \$10 million. Let the decisions that are already being made around red tape remain within the ministries, and maybe take that \$10 million and give it to AISH recipients.

With that, I look forward to some of the rest of the debate here this evening in Committee of the Whole on Bill 25. At this time I don't feel that I can support this bill going forward.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 25? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I rise to make a few brief comments with respect to Bill 25. Again we're dealing with a fairly long bill here. I definitely don't object to everything in it. There are certainly some things, I think, that are worth consideration. I will say that I question deeply whether we need \$10 million and a minister to do this work. I do believe that this work can be done within ministries, and in fact I think we heard several times in estimates that ministries were perfectly capable of doing this work on their own. I feel like perhaps having a bill and having a minister and having a ministry is a bit, shall we say, of political theatre, if you will. I think that that's a bit sad.

You know, I think one of the things, perhaps naively, that I felt when I got into politics initially was that I hoped to have some honest conversations with the electorate. I hoped to have some real conversations about real issues that maybe occurred at a deeper and broader and more fulsome level than some of the conversation we've had before. I feel like red tape reduction is, in my view, one of the worst examples of that. It's something that is said. There's no operational definition. No one really knows what it means. It's kind of a thing that people nod along to, but they don't really know what, necessarily, we're talking about.

Mr. Chair, I absolutely think it's a good idea to do things as efficiently as possible, and certainly I took that to heart when I myself was a minister. There were tons of things we did. We implemented criminal e-file, which was a big change. We did a lot of changes to the way certain court processes worked. We made changes to the way enforcement worked; for instance, ensuring that individuals were not having warrants issued for their arrest for C-Train tickets. That saved an enormous amount of time on the part of court clerks, in addition to ensuring that individuals were not being put in jail for C-Train tickets, which is really, I think, not the best use of those jail facilities.

Certainly, there were things that were done in that direction. It's something that I think I was deeply committed to and that I think my colleagues were deeply committed to. This is probably very inside, but, of course, your Minister of Justice generally will chair the Legislative Review Committee, so I saw a lot of regulations that came before me, and I was able to witness a number of different things that were done to ensure that we made processes easier for different individuals. Obviously, the court things are the ones that I'm most familiar with, but there was certainly a lot done by my hon. colleague, now the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, who worked very diligently to ensure that there was a one-stop shop.

I mean, we created the ministry of economic development and trade, and that gave businesses a place to go. We certainly heard sort of resoundingly positive opinions on that, because they knew where to go to bring their issues and to bring their concerns and to have conversations about things.

I think that overall in terms of finding efficiencies, I'm absolutely in favour of that. I feel that most of the things in this bill are a bit of window dressing. You know, it's a bit of a political communications act, and I don't know if it's the best use of our time in this House or the best use of the public's understanding. You know, we're dealing with a budget that significantly changes direction. We're dealing with a number of gigantic omnibus bills, so I think that, you know, those things are all concerns for me.

With that, I think, Mr. Chair, that I will end my comments because I certainly know that my hon. colleague has a few more comments to make, so I will resume my place and allow him to make those comments.

8:00

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo is rising to speak.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, just looking at some of the proposed changes again in this act, I can tell you that this bill – and, of course, it covers a wide range of things, from intermunicipal collaboration frameworks to intermunicipal development plans to arbitration, which is a really long section in here. It would be really great to hear from the associate minister about why such a substantive, robust section on arbitration is necessary. You know, we proposed giving a little more time to municipalities around the province who are doing ICFs so that they wouldn't necessarily have to involve themselves in arbitration – they could work things out on their own – but that was turned down.

Another thing that's in here substantively is joint-use sites. But I do just want to point out one area that I think is good in relation to municipalities, certainly the ones that are trying to save money, and that's bylaws for sending certain documents electronically – that's under section 608 on page 18 – so it gives a little more flexibility to municipalities to do those things.

As we know, many, many, many people engage with, say, doctors, municipalities, universities, their own local community association bodies electronically, and they're kind of taking those steps to facilitate their contact with all these areas. Certainly, municipalities want to be on the forefront of that as well, to (a) save money, to (b) quicken the connection between themselves and citizens or ratepayers or taxpayers, property owners. The fact that this section has been added – and it looks to give councils the bylaw establishment abilities to send notices under electronic means, where before, I remember, we used to have to send out notices by Canada Post. It takes time, and it's a lot of money, as we all know, on our ad mail in elections, that we were all a part of just recently and in the past.

You know, of all the things that are in here, that seems to be one that's red tape reduction cost savings for municipalities throughout the province. That's a good one. You get a red mark for that. The rest, I think, soften some provisions, and they make, it seems to me, things more onerous for municipalities, particularly in the area of arbitration, and I'm not supportive of those.

Overall, I think that this omnibus bill is another unfortunate way of presenting something to this House, and it does not to me look like there's \$10 million in savings with regard to the presentation here. I know that the associate minister in his presentation earlier said that there are, I think, six reasons why this is a good thing to support, but I think that what I see in here is a little bit more flexibility with regard to how documents can be shipped. That's good. The rest of it, I think, needs to go back to the drawing board.

Both of the large associations that deal with municipalities have some concerns with this bill, and I just think generally that the

government is not in the mood of consulting with municipalities. They certainly didn't do that around Bill 7, that was in the spring, because no one that I know of wanted that bill to go through at the municipal level, but it went through nonetheless.

Those are my comments, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 25?

Seeing none, I am prepared to ask the question. Are you ready for the question on Bill 25, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 25 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

## Bill 27

### Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise this evening to speak to Bill 27, moved by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. I'm delighted to be able to ask, I hope, questions that the minister might be able to help me understand around Bill 27. In my review of this piece of legislation there seem to be quite a number of changes to the justice system contained within. There are a few different acts that are modified: the Petty Trespass Act, Limitations Act, Occupiers' Liability Act.

The question that I wanted to ask in Committee of the Whole, to the minister and/or any government member who would be willing to explain it to me, is that in Bill 27 there's something happening that seems to be unusual or different than other legislation that I have worked on, in that in two sections – the Limitations Act, section 5.2(4); and the Occupiers' Liability Act – there are references to the date of January 1, 2018, which from my reading I think means that these changes are essentially retroactive back to that date. Now, the reason that I'm wondering about this is because very often – most often and almost entirely, in my experience – legislation is from the date going forward. I'm wondering just about unintended consequences.

Then I did some quick googling because I find the Internet very helpful, especially when we're dealing with legal things. My reading of the legal and practical implications of retroactive legislation seems to indicate that it's something used very, very cautiously because the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has section 11(g), specific to retroactive offences. Because retroactive legislation, from my reading, appears to arise infrequently, it appears to be and many times can be considered controversial. I saw language – this is more lawyer talk – in one article that said: it was against the principles of fundamental justice to have retroactive laws. I'm just quoting things that I read.

Given the past practices of this House and the potential for unintended consequences I'm concerned specifically about those

two sections. I wanted to kind of ask those as questions to kick off my Committee of the Whole comments on Bill 27.

Thank you.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** When it comes to the date being effective January 1, 2018, typically speaking, for limitation periods there's about a two-year window to bring forward a claim, so the idea with getting this bill proclaimed would be to go back and make sure that claims as they come forward – it distinguishes any potential claims that could be brought. Going back to January 1, 2018, just gives clarity, for people that are law-abiding Albertans, that they won't be facing these claims, because typically speaking you have to bring a claim within two years of it arising. That's the intention of going back to January 1, 2018. We did research it with our department to make sure that that was appropriate in the circumstances, and there's precedent to be able to do that as it relates particularly to tort claims.

8:10

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members looking to speak to Bill 27? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much to the minister for rising to respond to the concern raised around those dates. Now, in second reading my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Manning asked a number of questions. It is on her behalf that at this point I would like to move an amendment touching on the sections we were just discussing, and then I will continue to speak to it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. I would just ask that you read it into the record for us.

Going forward, this amendment will be referred to as A1.

Please feel free to continue with your comments.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. On behalf of the MLA for Edmonton-Manning I move that Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019, be amended as follows: (a) in section 1(2) in the proposed section 5.2 by striking out subsection (4); and (b) in section 2(2) in the proposed section 12 by striking out subsection (6).

The amendment touches on exactly the section that we were just having a quick conversation about. The reason for the amendment is the strong concern about introducing that retroactivity for the changes to the Limitations Act as well as the changes to the Occupiers' Liability Act.

Although the minister has spoken to clarity for Albertans, I'm concerned that by not having legislation that is on a go-forward basis, it would introduce confusion as well as introduce, potentially, discussions around what I found in researching retroactive legislation, the fact that similar provisions to our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 11(g), which speaks specifically to retroactive offences, exist in international, regional, and comparative law instruments. Based on my understanding of this piece of legislation and practice within legislating the law, putting in retroactivity to things that have to do with criminal offences appears to be incredibly unusual. I'm very concerned, especially when we start talking about something that – my concern might be that it could become a Charter challenge, given the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 11(g), and, generally speaking, just past practice.

Many of the colleagues who have been in the Chamber for a while will understand the phrase "unintended consequences," the potential for unintended consequences when you're putting in these

changes and essentially changing the law and retroactively applying it back to January 1, 2018. The Member for Edmonton-Manning has proposed this amendment. I support the amendment and am pleased to move it on her behalf. What Bill 27 seems to be doing in these particular sections is highly unusual and could have negative consequences or unintended consequences that we want to protect against. I appreciate the opportunity to hear from the minister on this, but I still think that the most prudent course of action would be to accept this amendment and to not have that retroactivity.

Again I will say that I appreciate the minister speaking to give a brief explanation, but in what he said there wasn't something compelling or something that made it seem like this retroactivity was necessary or why this was important and good for citizens and for Alberta going forward. For those reasons, I will be supporting this amendment. I think it's fairly clear in what it's trying to do, and that is simply that the legislation that we pass in this Chamber does not do something unusual, does not to something that might be counter to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and force the government of Alberta or other parties to have to challenge this through the court system, which so often happens when legislation is not refined to the right degree.

With that, I will end my comments and urge all members to support my amendment to Bill 27. I will also be eagerly listening for additional debate on this amendment.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

We are on amendment A1. Are there any hon. members looking to speak to this amendment?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are moving back to the original Bill 27. Are there any members looking to speak to this? I see the hon. Member for Highwood has risen to speak.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Chair. Today it's a great honour for me to be able to speak to Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019. This bill, I believe, if passed, will strengthen protections for law-abiding Albertans and their properties. I believe that this bill is a crucial step in tackling the complex and vast issue of rural crime here in Alberta. In our election platform we made the promise to Albertans that we would tackle rural crime. Albertans gave us an overwhelming mandate supporting that platform. Bill 27 helps us to fulfill one part of that promise to Albertans.

We saw rural crime rates skyrocket under the previous NDP government. When the Official Opposition wants to talk about statistics that show a downward trend in rural crime, I'll be quite clear: rural crime is still on the rise. You only have to walk out into the rural communities right now and listen to the residents to understand that.

People just aren't reporting anymore. They're frustrated and losing faith in the system. When *Maclean's* released their annual Canada's Most Dangerous Places 2019, Alberta had seven places ranked in the top 10. This report was just a small glimpse into some of the problems that Albertans are facing in rural communities right now, today. I can't stress this enough: Albertans deserve to feel safe in their own homes.

8:20

This bill will increase the fines issued to criminals that trespass onto law-abiding citizens' property through amendments to the trespass laws. This includes increases to maximum fines of trespassing, with fines up to \$10,000 for a first offence and up to

\$25,000 for subsequent offences, as well as possible prison time of up to six months. I'll explain why this is important. The strategy of criminals when they're doing these crimes is to send people out to trespass. They case properties, they record what's there to be stolen, and they leave. So trespassing is a major issue. This is a major problem, and we have to have the fines behind this to give support to our enforcement to be able to make it that this is not work they're going to continue to do. We have to get this principal step in how they do this crime – we have to find a way to be able to stop this.

If this bill is passed, it will also introduce amendments to the Occupiers' Liability Act that will better protect law-abiding citizens. I want to be clear about this: law-abiding citizens. Mr. Chair, I cannot stress how important this part of the bill is not only to the residents of Highwood but to every single resident in Alberta. It's absurd to think that any innocent, hard-working, and honest taxpayer resident can be revictimized by the same criminals who break the law, steal their property, and trespass on their land.

Mr. Chair, when I mentioned rural crime, a couple of the first words that always come to my mind will always be Eddie Maurice. His story has shone a light on the issues that exist in our justice system and some of the gaps that need to be filled. An unfortunate reality in many rural communities across Alberta is that these law-abiding citizens have been impacted by what is happening, and they can be impacted in the same way by what's going on to Eddie and Jessica Maurice. This is a story that resonates with all of us. I've gotten to know Eddie and Jessica Maurice, the impact of their story, what has happened to them, two very hard-working people in this province. What is happening to them and what has happened to them in the past has affected every part of their life: their work, their family, the anxiety that's going on in their lives.

This is critical – critical – that we continue to support our rural residents and find ways to prevent this from happening and make sure we actually, finally take a stand and show rural residents that we do support them. This is a story many Albertans know and they understand quite well. Many individuals wonder themselves what they would do if they were in the same situation. They can relate to this. Rural residents are concerned, over and over, about how easily this could be them. They could be in this situation – they could be Eddie Maurice, they could be Jessica Maurice going through this – that is happening right now. Mr. Chair, our rural residents need our support. Support like this bill makes common-sense changes to help bend the curve on rural crime. This bill sends a clear message to criminals, and my hope is that we'll also provide a beacon of hope for our rural residents.

After four years of being ignored, for once they finally have a government that is here to listen, understand them, and truly support them. For four years rural crime was not properly addressed. The opposition can talk all they want about their increase to funding, some small changes they made, but they never set foot in my riding. They never talked to the residents out there. They never listened to their stories, and I have many more than just Eddie and Jessica Maurice. This government represents all rural areas in these seats over here, and we also have a minister that has travelled across this province and worked exceptionally hard, putting himself in front of everybody here in Alberta to hear these very difficult stories, hear the frustration that is here, that is now, and that is today.

The problem of rural crime has reached a boiling point. Rural Albertans don't feel safe anymore in their homes or on their property. Our government understands the anxiety and the trauma that have come from rural crime all across Alberta. During the campaign trail, over and over I knocked on every single rural door that I could, listened to as many rural residents as I possibly could. I've attended every rural crime town hall meeting. The biggest issue I heard, aside from jobs and the economy, was always rural

crime. Many residents of Highwood have been calling rural crime basically a crisis, a crisis that needs to be dealt with, and it needs to be addressed seriously. I agree with that statement. This is a crisis.

I assured voters that this will be one of the priorities that a United Conservative government would tackle if elected. That is why I stand here today in support of Bill 27, the Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019. I made a promise to my residents during the campaign, and I want to be clear that this bill is only just the start. This government is committed to a continued effort to address this issue until rural residents once again will finally feel safe in their own homes.

I will always stand up for my community and all of the rural residents across all of Alberta. I will always be there to stand in front of them, listen, and hear their concerns. I want to continue to be a strong voice on this, and I want everybody to know, not just in my riding but across Alberta, that I'll continue to stand up in this House and fight for rural Alberta when it comes to the rural crime issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me this opportunity to speak to this very critical, important bill. I hope everyone in this House supports it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to speak.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to rise this evening to speak to Bill 27. I'd like the House, all members on all sides of the House, to take a moment and listen to a short story, that I'll relay to you, with respect to a situation that I encountered a few years ago. I actually lived in rural Alberta for a while. I had an acreage property that was west of Edmonton, and I quite enjoyed it. I was there with my young family, three children and my spouse then, about 25 years ago. Every time that I have heard about Bill 27 when it's come before the House or when it was first introduced, I always harken back to the night I'm about to describe to members here in the House, that I won't ever forget. It leads me to question exactly what an individual member of this Legislature would do or would have done or would consider would be the right action to have taken. What if it had turned out differently?

What I'm speaking about, Mr. Chair, is a night in the dead of winter when everybody was asleep, about 3 o'clock in the morning, and I heard an ungodly crash. It sounded like somebody had actually come through the patio door. I was up like a bolt and raced downstairs with a knife in one hand and a tire billy in the other, yelling and screaming at whoever might be in the house to get the hell out or face the consequences, ready to defend my family with my life, if necessary. I was convinced that somebody was in the house.

I'm wondering exactly what would have been a defensible action in my case if indeed there was an intruder in the house. What it turned out to be was that above the fireplace we had a wind chime screwed into the wood facing. The wood had dried out, and the screw gave way, and the metal wind chime had fallen down onto the brick hearth. It sounded exactly like the patio window had been crashed into. There I was, standing in the middle of the family room on the main floor, ready to defend my family. It turned out, of course, that there was no intruder. Certainly, sir, I was convinced that there was. You know, had it turned out to be a drunken neighbour or someone seeking immediate help after a road accident and I killed him, then what? Or if I had shot them, what should happen to me then? What consequences there? Would I be absolved of any responsibility?

8:30

This is a situation that I think that we need to really take a hold of and something that I certainly think about whenever I've thought about Bill 27 and the legislation being proposed. It was a situation that was very real to me that cold winter night. I often think: back then, what circumstances would have allowed me to be absolved of responsibility had I actually used deadly force and killed somebody? Should I be absolved of responsibility? I mean, it's an issue that deserves some serious thought. We're talking about a serious issue with somebody coming onto somebody's property, but I think that there's also a responsibility, as is shown in the Criminal Code as well, that you better be doggone sure that you're in imminent danger. Not every situation is black and white. If indeed we are considering legislation which is going to absolve somebody of responsibility for using deadly force, I think that we should be very, very cognizant that not every situation is standard when it comes to the possibility of an intruder on somebody's property and that circumstances had better warrant the action that one takes.

It's not simply black and white, and it's not a rah-rah situation. It's deadly serious, and I can attest to that because I was in a situation where I thought I was going to be involved in a significant, deadly fight. I just wanted to relay that story to the House and have people picture themselves in that situation for real and consider what responsibilities they should have to themselves and perhaps what responsibility they might have to address the situation and make very quick decisions but decisions that have consequences for all concerned, no matter who's involved.

With that, I'll leave that question for members to consider and, hopefully, drive home my point that this is a very, very serious issue which deserves more than mild contemplation.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any other hon. members? Of course, I see the hon. Member for Highwood has risen.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Well, I would like to just address those recent comments about the concerns raised by the member opposite about this, and I think that I can put some of those to rest. I mean, the bill specifically states right in the line: Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019. Now, anybody that went outside of the law and did something that was a criminal act, of course, would be outside of that, as anybody would be. As the member opposite was saying about coming down and if he had found that it was not a wind chime that had fallen and that it actually was broken glass, it was a mistaken, just drunken neighbour and he had done something that was outside of the law, of course this bill doesn't apply. So I think that it's pretty simple to say that even in the name, just in the header itself, it's pretty self-explanatory and cleans up that entire argument to this bill in its entirety. This bill is designed to protect law-abiding citizens. I think and I hope that just by that statement that it puts those arguments to rest for the member opposite.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members willing to speak to this matter? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to make a few comments on the bill and on the subject matter that was raised by the hon. Member for Highwood shortly there before me and by my colleague from Edmonton-McClung as well. I do want to say that I actually don't think that it's quite as simple as the hon. Member for Highwood would propose, that either there is law

abiding or there's not law abiding. When it comes to defending oneself or to defending other people under one's care under the Criminal Code, I actually think that's a fairly complex test in terms of what constitutes self-defence versus what would constitute a criminal act. I think that that's actually quite a complex question when you're talking about someone coming onto your property and what you can do in response to them. I do think that what my hon. colleague from Edmonton-McClung has to say is actually a valid question. I do think that that remains a complicated area of law, and that's what a lot of the concern about this is around in the first place.

I did want to just respond to a couple of things. I think it's a bit of an unfair characterization to indicate that our government wasn't concerned about the issue, because we were concerned about this issue. We were concerned enough that we took action and, I would say, significant action. Ten million dollars is nothing to sneeze at. You know, the actions we took were having an impact. I do think that boots on the ground is a legitimate reaction to crime. Having more police officers is a legitimate response to: we have concerns about crime in our community. The suggestion that that was in some way not doing anything is just false. It was doing something.

In fact, those crime reduction units have been shown to work not just here but in other jurisdictions across the country. That method of thinking about crime, the idea that we ought to target prolific offenders because those are the offenders that are responsible for much of the crime: I think that's correct. Demonstrably in the court data, in terms of people who are coming before the court, it is in fact the case that there is a small number of offenders who are responsible for the majority of incidents, and I think putting in place crime reduction units to target specifically with surveillance, with proactive policing of those particular offenders is good. In fact, we were just in estimates last week. The current minister has confirmed that those units will be continued because they are working. So I think that actually we do have agreement on that, that that is a positive step.

Now, I'm not by any means suggesting that we had solved the problem. I think that as long as one person is the victim of crime, you won't have solved the problem. It's a problem that we need to continue to make progress on. For those victims it's a legitimate impact. It's a legitimate impact on them. So as long as there is one, it's one too many. I don't think I have now or ever suggested that that was the end of the matter. In fact, when we made that announcement, we said that we are going to add police officers, we are going to add civilian staff, we are going to add prosecutors, we are going to add better ways of doing business, we are going to increase funding to rural crime watch associations and to citizens on patrol, and we're going to help with information sharing between different units. We said all of that, and I think that all of that moves in the right direction. We also said that we will continue to monitor the situation to see if additional resources are needed or if additional steps need to be taken. I think that that was a good move. I know, certainly, that despite the UCP having voted against it at the time, it's being continued under this UCP government. It would suggest that they've changed their mind on that issue.

One other thing I did want to suggest: I do think that evidence is the important basis for decision. You know, the hon. members are right when they say: well, maybe that evidence isn't reflective of the reality on the ground. That's sometimes the case with respect to criminal matters in a lot of different ways, right? We're seeing much increased reporting in terms of sexual assaults, in terms of domestic violence. There is an open question: are those increased reports because the instances of those sorts of violence are in fact increasing, or are those increased reports because there is more attention around the issue and therefore more people who have been impacted are reporting? I'm not for a minute suggesting that that's



unrealistic. What I am suggesting is that when the RCMP data indicates that there are, you know, 400 or more fewer vehicle thefts in 2018 than there were in 2017, that data could be said to be fairly reliable because I don't know anyone who wouldn't report their vehicle stolen however frustrated they are. Insurance requires that you make a police report on your stolen vehicle before you can get money back for that vehicle.

8:40

I appreciate that there are some types of crime in which the members may or may not be correct – and we can have an open conversation – but I think that when we're talking about vehicle thefts, there would be a lot of convincing necessary for me to say that those numbers are not in fact reflective. I think the RCMP certainly thinks that this has been an effective strategy and that it's having an impact. Are we there yet? Absolutely not. Should we take additional steps? Absolutely we should. But I do take offence when the members opposite suggest that we didn't care or that we didn't do anything at all because that is not correct.

With respect to this bill, I think the first thing I have to say is that I'm not actually opposed to everything in it. When we're talking about trespassing, certainly, we've seen recent instances of concern, and I obviously won't discuss those because of the sub judice rules. But it is absolutely the case that when you have people who do not understand livestock going into locations where those livestock are located, that is a very dangerous situation. It's also a situation that has the potential to have negative impacts on public health because there are potentially issues of communicable diseases there. I actually think that moves in that direction are not necessarily bad. I think that some of those moves are a really good idea because sometimes people do things without, shall we say, reflecting all the way to the end of those things, and I think that we should act to protect the people who own the property, the public in general, and also the individuals who may not be thinking their actions all the way through, who may be exposing themselves to livestock and to diseases that they don't fully understand, and that we ought to act to protect all of those people. So that portion of the bill I'm actually in agreement with.

I do think it's worth, just given the sort of high-level messaging around this, Albertans understanding that this amends the trespass statutes. This amends the Occupiers' Liability Act, which has an impact on people's civil liability. It does not and cannot amend the Criminal Code because the Criminal Code is not within the jurisdiction of this Legislature, and I think that some of the public debate on this issue suggests that people think that the Criminal Code is being amended. I would just caution Albertans that that is not the case.

The other comment I wanted to make with respect to this issue, because I do understand that people have a lot of fear, was that, just like my hon. colleague for Edmonton-McClung, I just wanted to tell a story. I had had a meeting when we were in government, when I was the minister at the time, with the hon. member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake and the hon. member for – another hon. member.

What is your riding, sir?

**Mr. Hanson:** It was Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Ms Ganley:** Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. That's right.

We had met with a number of residents, a number of councillors, a number of folks representing First Nations, and I remember a chief saying to us something that stuck with me, that really, really stuck with me. That chief had said: "People from my nation, when they go driving around and they're on the roads, if their car breaks down, they don't get out of their car. They stay in

their car and they call someone for help, and they're scared. They're scared to get out of their car for fear of being mistaken for a trespasser." That had a real impact on me because I don't think that anyone should be scared in our province. I guess what I would say to that is that I don't think that residents should be scared. I don't think that people driving in their cars should be scared. I don't think that anybody should be scared. So that was just one issue that I wanted to raise.

With that, having spoken to the bill generally, I did want to add my concerns with respect to a specific section, and I am going to move an amendment. I will wait for that amendment to reach the table.

**The Deputy Chair:** If the hon. member would please just read the amendment into the record. Going forward, we'll refer to this one as amendment A2. Then please feel free to continue with your comments.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019, be amended in section 2 in the proposed section 12(4) by striking out "or is about to commit".

The purpose of this amendment: I'll read the whole section just so that people can get a sense of this. Again, I do this because there are portions of this bill that I actually think are very important, but there are portions of this bill that I think create a level of legal uncertainty that I am not comfortable with. We're repealing section 12 and replacing it with this, so 12(4) is a new one, and it reads in its entirety:

For the purposes of subsections (2) and (3), a trespasser is a criminal trespasser if the occupier has reasonable grounds to believe that the trespasser is committing or is about to commit an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada.

The reason that I have concerns about this is that when we say "has reasonable grounds to believe that someone is about to commit an offence," my concern is that I think that an individual – because people could be mistaken about things and frequently are – can see someone and believe on reasonable grounds that they are about to commit an offence when, in fact, that person is a perfectly law-abiding individual who is there for whatever reason. Perhaps their car has broken down. Perhaps they've gotten lost. Any number of reasons. I think what concerns me about saying "reasonable grounds to believe" that someone is "about to commit an offence" would relieve the individual doing the injury from liability. I just think that that's a bit of a concern, and the reason that I think it's a concern is, again, because someone could have reasonable grounds to believe that someone else is about to commit a crime when, in fact, that individual has merely become lost or had their car break down. Perhaps they're inebriated, or perhaps they're a young person who's gotten turned around. There's any number of scenarios that the mind can dream up.

Suggesting that now the occupier doesn't owe that individual a duty of care I find a bit troubling. I do find that a bit troubling because it suggests that – yeah. I mean, I think objective tests exist for a reason. I think that this bit about "or is about to commit" just takes it a tiny bit too far, and that makes me very uncomfortable.

My hope is that the government will consider this amendment. I think it would improve the bill, so I would urge all members to vote in favour of the amendment. With that, Mr. Chair, I will end my comments.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I see the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations has risen to speak to amendment A2.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're country folks. If somebody comes on our land looking for help, we give them help. I've taken people to the service station to get gas. I've fixed tires for them. But where I live, if somebody comes to my farm at 4 o'clock in the morning, they're looking for trouble. I'm centrally located. I live an hour from anywhere. I live in the middle of a section. If you're from the city, you probably don't know what a section is. That means it's a half-mile to where my house is from any direction.

8:50

I just want to paint you a little different story than what you've heard. I wish this is the only story I had, but this is one of them. It's 4 o'clock in the morning, 40 below outside. I see some lights come in my driveway. If someone's coming in my driveway – it's treed. Believe it or not, I'm a tree hugger. It's all treed coming up to my house. I see these lights come in, so I look out the window. Whoops, they're at my nephew's truck. Oh, there goes his window. I get on my phone to 911. I say: "I've got somebody breaking in. What do I do?" "Well, what are they doing?" I say: "Well, they just smashed the window out of my nephew's truck." "Well, they're not breaking in your house, then?" I say: "No." "Well, call us if they break in the house." "Are you kidding me?" This is a true story.

I flick the lights on a couple of times. Then another vehicle comes in. They called their buddy because they think they've got more than one car to pick up. Now I've got three people in my yard at 40 below. I'm out on my step, not much on. That would scare most people away, but it didn't scare them away.

They can't get the car started, so now they're kicking the door of my shop in. I'm back on the phone again to 911. "What's your problem?" I say: "Well, I've still got these three people here, and now they're breaking into my shop." "Well, are they assaulting you?" I say: "What do you mean?" "Well, do they have their hands on you?" I say: "No. If they did that, I probably wouldn't be talking to you. We're exchanging colourful adjectives at this moment here." They say: "Well, we're really busy. We can't come out unless they're actually assaulting you." Click.

I'm an hour from anywhere. The next closest police are probably an hour and a half away, coming from Red Deer or someplace. I'm on my own. It's a different situation if you live in the city than if you live in a rural area. It's dangerous out there. Now I'm up here by myself. My wife is home alone. You have no idea what it's like unless you live in a rural area, what crime means.

I wish that this was the only story I had. I've had people with rifles on my property trying to steal things. My neighbours have lost – he's a young fellow. He's a surveyor. They've taken his truck. They've taken his quads. He can't even get insurance on it anymore. What's he supposed to do? There's no work for him out there as a surveyor, and he has lost all his stuff not once, but twice, out of his shop in his yard.

We're unprotected out there, Mr. Chair. We need help out there. To think that all country people are just waiting there with a gun to shoot somebody – we're not. I mean, like I said, we'll go out of our way to help people. We'll take them, we'll help them, but we need help out there.

This bill at least gives us some help. To think that if somebody is stealing my stuff and then they can turn around and sue me for slipping on some ice or spraining their ankle for kicking the door of my shop in – Mr. Chair, we need help out there, and this gives us some help. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. Minister.

Are any other members looking to speak to amendment A2?

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Going back to Bill 27 proper, are then any hon. members looking to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, are you prepared for the question on Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 27 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

## Bill 21

### Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered at this time? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen to speak.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. You know, as we were sitting and debating the last bill, I was taking the opportunity, while listening to debate, to also respond to one of my constituents, oddly enough a constituent that I went to high school with who, coincidentally, now happens to live in my constituency. It's always interesting how these things come around. She had written to me to express some of her concerns about the decisions she sees being made by this government. She listed several things, but the very first thing that she listed, that she raised as a concern – actually, maybe I'll just read it here. "Much of what the current government is pushing does not align with their platform commitments, and therefore is disingenuous at best, and more likely, entirely fraudulent."

Now, I spoke at some length about this earlier today as were debating the yin to this bill's yang, Bill 20, and talked about how on so many fronts the decisions that have been made by this government are absolutely contrary to promises they made in their election platform or are, in fact, simply not contained anywhere within that platform and spoke at some length about how that document was pretty much being utterly dishonest with Albertans about what this government intended to do. Indeed, in Bill 21 we see more of precisely that from this government, more changes that they did not campaign on, more things which they promised they would not do and are indeed doing. There's a word for that, Mr. Chair, but I'm not allowed to use it in this Chamber.

This government is not dealing from a straight deck, particularly when it comes to something like AISH. When we introduced the bill to index to the cost of living, members of this government had the gall to stand in this House and say: well, why didn't you do this sooner? Now, Mr. Chair, they are standing in this House to vote against doing it at all. They are happy to give \$4.7 billion away in a corporate handout that is yet to create a single job but indeed has instead seen companies take their millions of dollars that they've received from this government and take them elsewhere, in many cases while, in fact, laying off Albertans, taking jobs out of our province. But they will reach into the pockets of every single person in this province who receives AISH or social assistance and take out \$30 after they said that they would not do that. There is a word for that, which we are not allowed to use in this House. These members know well what it is, and they know well what their government has done and is doing.

They are increasing, Mr. Chair, interest on student loans by 1 per cent at the same time as they are taking away students' educational tax credits, at the same time as they are allowing tuition to rise by as much as 21 per cent over the next three years. They're spitting in the face of every single postsecondary student in this province.

9:00

**Mr. Yao:** That's a bit harsh.

**Mr. Shepherd:** It is harsh, Member. It is harsh. It's incredibly harsh for a student who has been working for years, who has graduated high school, who has spent their summers saving to afford their education, who has planned their budget, to have this government turn to them and say: "Goodbye to your educational tax credit. Six hundred dollars more per year. Your tuition will rise 7 per cent a year." Now we find out that the University of Alberta today announced they will likely be raising their residency costs thanks to cuts from this government. That is harsh, Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** You know your comment that we spit on people? That's harsh, sir.

**The Deputy Chair:** Through the chair, hon. members.

**Mr. Shepherd:** It is an insult to postsecondary students, Mr. Chair. It is disrespectful in the extreme. But that is what this government is choosing to do. That is the burden they are choosing to put on Albertans.

At the same time, they're also taking away the student temporary employment program, providing no other opportunities for students who, in fact, are then able to get valuable job experience while helping out organizations, nonprofits, other businesses, a win-win situation. But, no, this government would prefer to give those dollars away to corporations that are taking that money and saying, "Thank you very much," folding it into their pockets and those of their shareholders, and not investing a cent back into the province of Alberta. It is utterly disingenuous, Mr. Chair. They did not run on that. They did not campaign on that. Indeed, I'm sure the postsecondary students that went out and knocked on doors, because we know some did, for perhaps yourself, perhaps other candidates that now sit here in government – I'm fairly sure none of you told them. I'm pretty sure none of the members in this House told those students what they intended to do to them and raise their costs.

But this bill is not all about cuts and increasing costs, though certainly some of the other decisions will indeed, I would say, Mr. Chair, increase some costs for government. This, of course, is one of the many omnibus bills which this government has chosen to bring forward this session. Thankfully, they're giving this one a bit more breathing room than they did Bill 22 last week, where they fired the Election Commissioner, who's investigating their party, in a brief four days while the Premier did not take a single opportunity to stand in this House and defend his disgusting and corrupt legislation. Indeed, a noted columnist, Ron Breakenridge, today called that cowardice on the part of this Premier, cowardice which all members of this government chose to support. There's leadership for you.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

Within this legislation we also see some changes in health care. Now, I spoke to this earlier, Madam Chair. Again, we had some students here, resident doctors from the U of A, who came to express their concerns about this government's intent to give the minister the ability to set conditions on issuing practitioner

certificate ID numbers, again, an insult to students, an insult to those who have been going and working under a set of conditions that were set out and a reasonable, I think, set of expectations about the opportunities they would have here in this province, which this government seems intent on taking away along with their tuition tax credits, along with the cap on tuition, along with affordability for their education. Indeed, we have seen how this has failed in other jurisdictions where it has been tried. In fact, the province of New Brunswick, as I spoke on at some length before, is now recanting this policy, recognizing that it did more harm than good, led to a shortage of doctors in urban areas, led to a shortage of doctors in rural areas. It did not at all address the problem.

You know, I had the opportunity to meet last week with the members of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta and have some conversation with them about their thoughts on this, and I spoke with a gentleman there who himself works as a rural doctor, worked as a rural doctor for a number of years, and said that what incited him to work as a rural doctor and to greatly enjoy that experience, Madam Chair, was the fact that he had had the opportunity to train in a rural area, to take part in a program which gave him the opportunity to try rural practice.

Indeed, there are programs which do this at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary, and when the student residents were here and when I spoke with them, that was their recommendation as well, that giving doctors the opportunity to practise in a rural setting, where often they face challenges that they would not face in the city, having the chance to learn how to work in those environments, to learn how to deal with the different kinds of equipment they might have access to or the lack of other specialists, finding out how they can still indeed provide quality health care in those settings, gaining that experience is far more effective than putting them at the barrel of legislation and saying, "You will practise where we tell you to practise," a proposal that has lost two constitutional challenges. Of course, we've seen with this government that they don't mind wasting taxpayer money in the courts. They seem to be pursuing that on a number of fronts with pieces of legislation and other decisions that they're making, and that is their prerogative. We'll see how Albertans feel about that eventually. But that is yet another one of the many provisions that are crammed into this omnibus Bill 21.

Now, another aspect of this legislation – I had the opportunity to speak with the minister about this at the estimates process the other week – is giving the government the ability unilaterally to terminate the doctor compensation agreement with the AMA. Now, I spoke about this earlier on Bill 20, Madam Chair, and the fact that this government seems intent on just building distrust with every possible demographic and community and stakeholder in this province, whether it's ripping pensions away from teachers and public health care workers, again without consultation, without mentioning this in their platform, without taking the time to discuss it and ramming that legislation through, again, in a mere four days as those public servants sat and watched in the gallery. That's harsh, almost as harsh as spitting in their face, the level of contempt that this government shows for those individuals and their concerns and indeed the democratic process.

We see that breaking of trust with postsecondary students. We see that breaking of trust with indeed all Albertans in the decision to fire the Election Commissioner in the midst of his investigations into this government's party and the leadership campaign which elevated this Premier to this place. We saw them breaking the trust of all public-sector workers back this spring with Bill 9. We see them breaking their trust in now asking for wage rollbacks, which they said they would not ask for, yet another area in which this government was utterly disingenuous. It is being entirely

hypocritical. We have this government breaking trust with so many sectors of Albertans like education funding, on which this government swore up and down that it would not cut any amounts from education funding. Well, as you yourself, Madam Chair, have attested to, the school board in your area is indeed facing a cut now. You have your thoughts on what they should do in the face of that, but you have certainly in the press agreed that that was, in fact, the case. Yet your government, this government, swore they would not do that.

9:10

Yet another area in which this government is breaking trust: I'll talk about Bill 20, income tax, raising that, once again breaking trust with Albertans. Yet again we have this government saying: we want to reserve the ability to unilaterally terminate the doctor compensation agreement with the Alberta Medical Association. On that, the minister, when I raised this with him in estimates, said: "Well, no, I don't think that puts a chill on our relationship. I don't see why there'd be any reason that the Alberta Medical Association should distrust our government. Trust us. We're the government. We're here to help." Madam Chair, this government is fast exhausting any reason that any Albertan should trust them on any question. When they continue to bring forward legislation like this, which gives them sweeping unilateral powers to break contracts, run roughshod over agreements, I can't see what could be possibly more insulting, more harsh to Albertans.

Indeed, I've talked about, you know, that this bill calls itself ensuring fiscal sustainability. Madam Chair, you do not secure fiscal sustainability by creating chaos. You do not create fiscal sustainability by making enemies of every single partner you have to work with to achieve your goals and ends. This government seems to feel that it can simply impose order by diktat and fiat on every aspect of Alberta. They'll pass their legislation, and Albertans will all fall in line and do as they're told. That is how they intend to ensure fiscal sustainability in this province.

Madam Chair, our government worked collaboratively with Albertans on many fronts. I hear it every day when I go out and meet and talk with stakeholders in any number of fields about how they appreciated working with our ministers, that they felt listened to and heard, that their ideas were accepted, that our Minister of Health was able to speak to a number of folks about some concerning issues without requiring them to sign a nondisclosure agreement, was able to share information with them. Indeed, because of the collaborative relationship she had built, they were able to have those discussions and nothing was leaked to the media. But this government seems to feel that they can simply bully their way through, that they can order Albertans to fall in line, that they can simply pass legislation, ram it through this House without regard, without consultation, without discussion, and Albertans will simply fall in line.

Indeed, that's what we see in the labour provisions in this bill: the minister taking more power for himself, the greater authority to define what an employee is, to set restrictions on unionized employees for what services they can access from government, to repeal the essential services replacement worker ban. Now, on that, Madam Chair, that's a topic worthy of discussion. We saw how quickly members of this government leapt to their feet to call on the federal government to legislate CN workers back to work. They could not have seen a law passed fast enough. That was their first step. But what did we see today? We saw that the standard negotiating process worked.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise – I think it's my first opportunity in Committee of the Whole, certainly – to discuss Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, being proposed by the Minister of Finance, an act that amends a number of different pieces of legislation, 19 in all, so there's a lot for members to consider in this act. There might be some places where perhaps the government may want to pause and consider whether it is, in fact, worth it to take some of the steps that have been proposed in this legislation. A number of different people, organizations, groups will be affected by this bill.

Certainly, there's no end to the people that will be affected by the end to the regulated rate cap on electricity at 6.9 cents per kilowatt hour – that's pretty well every household, small business, and farm – who were to have their electricity rates capped until 2021 but now will no longer. While 6.9 cents per kilowatt hour represented the 10-year average of electricity pool prices, it has been the case in a couple of the months under consideration that the price has gone above 6.9 cents. I fully expect that this winter, given what we know about the electricity market right now, people's pool price, the rate, will go over 6.9 and potentially quite a bit higher. The depths of winter and the hottest of summers are when we see the most load on the electricity system and therefore the pool price piece going up considerably.

We know that ordinary people, who already have a number of affordability concerns – we hear affordability concerns all the time from our constituents. We hear them around things like car insurance and other drivers of our monthly bills, property taxes, those kinds of things. We certainly hear from our constituents on that. Certainly, the actual usage of electricity is only one part of the bill, and there are other pieces – certainly, the distribution and transmission charges – that people have quarrel with, and, I think, rightfully so. But there is one thing that government can do to control those costs, and that is to cap the electricity rates. I think it's really too bad that we are just leaving people at the mercy of higher bills.

Another piece that concerns me considerably and that has not had as much debate – and here's where I really do think that the government may want to pause – is around adjusting. It's on page 12. It's the piece that amends the Alberta Housing Act, and what it does is that it freezes the indexation for the amount that, when people are paying – if you're a senior in a standard seniors' lodge, you get an amount over and above your rent that is sort of a basic monthly disposable income amount, that is laid out within the Alberta Housing Act. What this bill does is that it pauses that indexation of that amount every year, so that will also eat into many seniors' disposable income. We're talking, in some cases, you know, \$300 or \$400 a month. Certainly, for nursing homes it's \$322, so it is a small amount of money to government but a large amount of money when that's all you're looking at for your monthly disposable income amount.

9:20

We know that a number of the people that are affected by this are, of course, often women, and they are often on their own, and they don't necessarily have the benefit of a defined benefit pension or even defined contribution, in many cases. They didn't necessarily pay into CPP at the top end for most of their careers, women of that generation. This is an awfully mean-spirited move by this government, to freeze the amounts for monthly disposable income for people in seniors' lodges and nursing homes. Certainly, I have a number of both facilities in my riding, and people are worried. They're worried about what happens when this bill passes. They are, you know, not as worried about, maybe, January 1, 2020, but much more worried about what happens after that as the \$30

become \$60 through the power of compound interest, that we all know very well becomes much, much more over the years.

We also know that on these attempts to take away indexation of various benefits, it's not necessarily a pause at all. It took some 15 years federally to reindex a number of programs, so we know that this is just a grab of cash out of people who can really least afford it.

When you go back to the title of this bill, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, I think the question that we have to ask ourselves as an Assembly, as 87 people elected by constituents, is: fiscal sustainability for whom exactly? I mean, this is a budget bill that proposes all of these changes to ordinary people's lives, yet it also proposes – and I think we're pretty well past all of the various appropriation acts – the same level of debt at the end of the fiscal period under consideration and a higher deficit, also higher personal income taxes for people, fewer benefits for seniors, student loans that cost more, electricity bills that cost more. This is to say nothing of the other pieces of this bill around things that are proposed for the Alberta Medical Association and so on. Fiscal sustainability for whom? Really, the fiscal picture is essentially the same after all of this pain for ordinary people.

In fact, all of this traffic in e-mails and telephone calls and voice mails and letters written in cursive handwriting that I know all members of this House receive from people, especially older people, about the impacts on their daily lives: I really have questions about whether it's worth it, this \$4.7 billion giveaway detailed on page 144 of the fiscal plan and then all of these political prices to be paid, whether it's with ordinary working people and their electricity bills, whether it is for those who are living in seniors' lodges or nursing homes, whether it is for those who receive AISH, for example, or whether it is for students, who are either going to be paying higher tuition, of course, but then on the back end, once they're finished, also subjected to higher student loan interest rates. The figure that I saw: over the life of an ordinary undergraduate degree, for a 10-year loan people will be paying about \$2,000 more in interest.

Maybe that's not a lot of money to some folks that have six-figure pensions from Ottawa, but you know how it is a lot of money? When you need to replace the dishwasher or the washing machine or the roof and you've got two little kids and you're five years out of university and you've got a job but you're just getting by because you're trying to get rid of those student loans, and then you have an emergency like that. Those are the kinds of real-world consequences of decisions we make as a result of this bill. That's what will happen to folks.

You know, I might propose at some point in these deliberations that the government really take a look and decide: do we really need, for example, to punish those kinds of young families that I just talked about with a 1 per cent higher interest rate on their student loans? Perhaps that's something where there could be a climbdown given that the debt is the same and the deficit is, in fact, higher, so path to balance or those other drivers that the government claims are behind this bill are not actually real. If that's the case, then there might be some things here that – potentially they may either want to consider some compassion or consider some political consequences. Certainly, seniors are known to get their vote on, and they are noticing – folks who live in lodges are noticing that their benefits are going to be frozen, people in long-term care facilities as well – that maybe it's not worth it to finance a 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway that creates no jobs and is just simply a giveaway.

A couple of other things are of keen interest to me, Madam Chair, and those are around the AMA agreement. I am actually quite surprised that it contains within here the power to terminate the agreement. I don't know what useful purpose it serves to put a stick

in the spokes of the ordinary course of discussions with physicians. I do not understand why the government and the minister would want to continue to breach the trust with physicians in order to get to a new AMA agreement. I have no doubt that there are a number of ways in which the existing agreement can be improved upon. That's the way of the world; it can always be improved upon. There's no doubt in my mind that the existing agreement as it is now was much improved over the previous agreement. I don't understand why this government would want to slam the door on further improvements by torching trust with physicians. I mean, physicians have said that the bill clearly identifies that government is not required to live up to terms of future contracts, and doctors have observed that the province is cynically asking them to work towards agreements when it appears they are the only party to be bound by them.

You know, this is about the kind of health care and the kind of expertise that we all expect in those moments of emergency, in those moments of needing acute care, in those moments of needing a specialist, in those moments of bringing babies into the world, in those moments of saying goodbye to our loved ones. Through the whole of our lives there are physicians and other health care professionals there.

I do not know why we would want to introduce this kind of chaos into our health care system were it not for the notion that chaos is actually a feature, not a bug, of this bill and that undermining the basic principles of universality in the health care system, having a rather pugilistic relationship with the five principles of the Canada Health Act and the notion of universality, is in fact the goal of this government. That's the only thing that actually explains this at all, because it has been proven that the AMA agreement can be improved upon through a respectful relationship with physicians. That's not to say that our government agreed with them all the time, and it's not to say that they agreed with us. That is the way of negotiation, and that is fine. When there are adults in the room, everyone recognizes that. But what this does is to posit that the role of government is to take their toys and go home, something of a tantrum. And that is deeply troubling, or it's foreshadowing for how this government is going to conduct itself with respect to our medicare system.

9:30

Finally, I'll turn my attention to this piece around police funding for municipalities. You know, I think it's clear that what's happening here is that that presentation, the sort of chit-chat time, that the province proposed with municipalities, especially rurals, on how to evolve, if you will, the police funding formula is contained within this act. Really, what this shows us is that property tax hikes, if people want to keep their policing, are on the horizon. This gives them the ability to do that.

The fact of the matter, I think, is that if the government wanted us to think that this was benign, (a) they wouldn't have consulted on something that is demonstrably not benign, which is raising the amount that rurals have to contribute to their policing costs considerably, and (b) I think we would have seen a much more robust approach to consultation with municipalities on this matter. So between that and the fine revenue piece, I think what we have is an indication that this is a government that says on the one hand that they are concerned about law and order and that they are concerned about front-line staff, but what they'll really do is turn around and blame municipalities, just as we've seen them blame school boards, for reductions in service in the front line. These are the sorts of things that will be noticed.

Again I wonder if at least some of these initiatives are just simply not worth it. In particular, given that the stated goal is ensuring

fiscal sustainability and given that the debt at the end of the forecast period is pretty much the same as the New Democrats', I can only assume that the government has concluded what we concluded, which is that the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio, the lowest net debt position, and an excellent credit rating were in fact well supported by the structure of the Alberta economy at this time given that their numbers are the same.

There are going to be a number of folks who are very, very concerned about the outcomes of this bill. It might not be in the next four weeks, and, you know, the price politically to be paid may not be demonstrated fully until perhaps a year from now, when we're having these conversations and municipalities have actually had to respond to some of these police funding changes, when people have seen that the small increases to their monthly living amounts, if they live in a lodge or a nursing home facility, are not increasing, when AISH recipients are seeing that their amounts are not increasing and they're increasingly unable to keep pace with the cost of living. These things will add up over time, Madam Chair.

That is why I have proposed to the government that perhaps, for example, the minimum monthly disposable income amount for people who live in seniors' lodges might be something that they will want to back down on so that they can say that they did when they are called to account for this, which they will inevitably be. There are small changes that they could make that demonstrate good faith and goodwill for ordinary people, particularly people who do not have a lot to begin with, and I'm thinking here of the many, many seniors with whom I visit in my riding, in both lodges and in nursing homes, quite often.

The final piece that I will say here is that it really doesn't appear – there are a lot of health care and seniors' pieces within this act, but I've seen precious little appetite to actually improve the system in any way, shape, or form in the six or seven months I've been observing what is happening, both in my own constituency and across the province, with respect to, in particular, Seniors and Housing issues but as those intersect with health care. I'm seeing a few initiatives stuck in the mud such as the dementia care strategy, some aspects of the mental health strategy. In particular, the dementia care strategy: a lot of those folks end up in nursing homes, and they are affected by this bill.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill 21. Of course, my colleagues have raised a number of different concerns about this particular bill, and I think I have had the opportunity to raise some concerns as well. I think there are many, many sections of this bill that concern me.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

In the main, in addition to the bill itself concerning me, the fashion in which it's being brought in concerns me. I think that these sorts of omnibus bills – and we have two of them before the House still and one which had passed through in what I would consider record time, in under three days, already. I think that that's a big concern because what this is designed to do is to ensure that the public doesn't have a chance to have understanding and to have input. I think that the point of democracy is for the public to have understanding and to have input, so when I see that it is the case that the government is attempting to evade that, it becomes a very big concern for me.

There are various different parts of this that continue to be a huge concern for me. One of the things, I think, that I wanted to draw to the attention of individuals is an amendment to the Provincial

Offences Procedure Act. It doesn't sound very exciting, but what it actually does – in this case, we're talking about returned fine revenue, and initially it was meant to go specifically, essentially, to the processing of those tickets. That was what the province's share was for. Now we're talking about just anything that not only improves the administration of justice but literally any government initiative. Essentially, what that does is that it removes the collars around that. At the same time, the government is taking back from municipal police services a significant portion of that revenue, and now we're not seeing it used to process those tickets. We're seeing it used for anything the government wants. This is essentially a money grab.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

It's interesting that that would be coupled at the same time with stopping changes that we had made. Certainly, it was an initiative led by my hon. colleague the former Minister of Transportation to, as he put it, put the cash cow down humanely when it comes to photoradar. Certainly, we've seen the government make moves to back that off and to allow photoradar that is not based on safety to continue. I think that's a big concern for me, and particularly when coupled with this particular amendment in this bill, it is a concern.

There are a number of other, I think, concerns that I have with respect to this bill. Certainly, some of them having to do with impacts to the Labour Relations Code are of big concern for me.

One of the things that I thought we could do to try and at least improve some portion of this bill, since it is likely that the government will use its majority to move this bill forward one way or the other, is to move an amendment. I will wait for that amendment to make its way to the table.

**9:40**

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A3.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. What the amendment does: I am moving that Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended in section 8(7), in the proposed section 8.1, by striking out "and" at the end of clause (c) and by adding, following clause (c), "(c.1) updates on the maintenance of existing capital assets, and."

Essentially, what this amendment is doing is that it's adding to that section the need for the government to report on the maintenance of existing capital assets. This is, in my view, important, because certainly one of the things I think that we've seen past Conservative governments do in an effort to make it appear that they are saving money without actually saving money is that they defer capital maintenance. I think that that's a real problem because ultimately it costs more money in the long run.

Certainly, my mother worked at the old cancer centre, the Tom Baker cancer centre, and for a number of years every time it rained, they pulled out the buckets because so little maintenance had been done that there were holes. The same thing happens here at the courthouse in Edmonton. The state of rural courthouses was quite abysmal, and there are a number of other buildings that are in that position.

Basically, in order to create what I would call a short-term win by making it appear that they've reduced spending, what actually gets cut is capital maintenance, and even though it appears to save money, it actually doesn't. This actually used to drive me crazy before I got into government – there were many things that drove me crazy, and this was one of them – because it's a shell game, right? It's essentially moving money around, making it appear that you've reduced the deficit, but you're doing it by failing to maintain

your infrastructure, which actually costs you more money in the long run, so in fact it doesn't save any money.

I think this is worth noting, and I'm happy to have someone table it at the appropriate time tomorrow. I'm referring here to the UCP's platform commitment which included transparency on this. I'm looking at page 29, which, again, I'm happy to table. We're talking about:

- . . . provide transparency on prioritization criteria, establish predictable funding levels, and ensure adequate maintenance of existing [needs].

There's also a portion that says:

- Prepare and publicly release an annual Government of Alberta Infrastructure Report, as part of the province's Annual Report, to provide detailed information to Albertans on the progress made in meeting the various commitments.

One of the things here we're talking about ensuring is adequate maintenance of assets. Given that this was a commitment that this government made, I see no reason why they would vote against it. Actually, I think it's a very good idea. Sometimes that happens in life, where the party that you stand opposite from suggests something in their platform that actually you agree with, and I think that's happened on a number of different issues, probably, across the House.

It is my hope that this particular amendment will be accepted by the government because I think that in the long term it helps us all. You know, I think this bill is supposed to be, at least according to the title, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act – one might question, based on the clauses within the bill, whether that title is, in fact, accurate. If we're ensuring fiscal sustainability, if it really is the intention of this bill to ensure that long-term fiscal sustainability, I think this is a very good amendment because I think this amendment ensures that we're actually doing that, that we're not merely appearing to do that. I think that that's a very, very important thing.

You know, we talk about deficits – right? – and people look at the numbers. We can look at the deficit this year and see that it's \$2 billion bigger than the deficit was last year. That number is an accurate representation of a certain number of things, but there are also things that come outside of that. In addition to the actual deficit and the actual debt, we have to consider things like infrastructure debt and consider things like: what costs have we pushed forward?

This is one of the things – I mean, there are a number of things that are like this. When we fail to invest in education, when we fail to give elementary school students the support they need and, in fact, even younger than elementary school students, when we fail to invest in affordable child care for young children, when we fail to invest in high-quality programming, we see these adverse childhood experiences that make it difficult for those children to perform later in life. That results in vastly increased costs, vastly increased costs in terms of potentially winding up on government benefits instead of ending up being productive members of society, vastly increased costs in terms of having trauma and conflict that may ultimately lead them to come into conflict with the justice system, and then, you know, we see those increased costs in terms of incarceration, which is extremely, extremely expensive. It would be much, much cheaper to just fix the problem at the outset.

We see those costs, too, in terms of a failure to invest in affordable housing. If we don't invest in affordable housing, when we get, you know, further along, those individuals who are not housed are incarcerated, and that again becomes very expensive.

This is just one more instance of the same thing, where perhaps we're pretending to save money, but really we're not. When you have assets, when you have buildings and you don't do maintenance on them – say, the roof is supposed to be replaced periodically.

When you fail to do that, the roof starts leaking, and that damages the insulation, and that damages the walls. Ultimately, what you wind up having to do is far, far, far more expensive than that which you would have had to do in the first place. You know, essentially, you save \$100 this year, and five years from now you pay \$4,000. That's not saving money; that's a trick, and it's designed, in my view – and this was used very much under former Premier Klein and has been used by other sort of right-wing governments. It's very much used to appear to save money while, in fact, not saving money.

I think this amendment will assist the government not only in fulfilling its platform but also in ensuring that when we're talking about financial sustainability, that's really what we're talking about, that we're really, actually saving money. We're not just playing a shell game that makes us appear to save money when actually we're spending way more money. I think that that's something that Albertans were concerned about in the last election. I think it's something that Albertans are concerned about today. I think it's something that they are rightly concerned about. So I'm very hopeful that we'll see this amendment go forward.

With that, Madam Chair, I think I will close my comments on the amendment and urge all members to vote in favour of it.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to stand and speak to this amendment as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I was interested to hear the comments made by the member stating that Bill 21 is a shell game. I had to think about the idea that she sees this as a shell game versus the idea that when the NDP took office on May 5, 2015, they had a \$1.5 billion surplus provided for them. There was \$13 billion of debt, but they had over \$6 billion in a rainy-day fund as well, and they went from \$13 billion in debt to \$63 billion in four years. That is a shell game.

9:50

The truth is that what they've done is put so much pressure now because of the cost of servicing that debt that rather than taking the \$2 billion or \$3 billion that has to be used to service that debt to actually build schools and to provide for that capital investment or infrastructure deficit, as she calls it – we can't do that anymore. We have to send that over to Toronto, to bankers and bondholders. That is a shell game, Madam Chair. This is the place that the NDP has put us in, which is interesting because now they're saying: well, we've got to make sure that we keep maintenance costs and spending going.

Well, Madam Chair, I'm still interested to see the shadow budget that the NDP is going to be bringing out. Based on the information that they've been sending to us, Albertans don't believe that they had any credible ability to balance the budget in four years. So it's left up to us to be able to make some very difficult decisions. This was not an easy task, to be able to get to where we're at, but it was a reasonable approach that we took, finding 2.8 cents on the dollar of savings. Based upon being able to go out and consult with Albertans, we saw that they saw this as a reasonable approach. But, again, there has to be some things that we have to do to be able to bring our spending back in line.

So, Madam Chair, I do recommend to my hon. members that they don't accept this amendment, that they do not vote for this amendment. The NDP had their four years to prove to Albertans that they were going to be fiscally responsible. For them to now say that they're going to try to micromanage how we are fiscally

responsible, I think, is disingenuous on their part, and I would recommend that the members do not vote in favour of this.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to my colleague for bringing forward what I think is a very reasonable and fair amendment. This certainly is about making sure that we maintain the existing capital assets we have as a province.

When I think about capital assets in my riding, I think about the many, many schools that exist, and for good reason, in Edmonton-Glenora. A lot of young families live in the riding. A lot of programs that draw students from across the city and capital region are in the riding. We have schools like Edmonton Christian west and Mac, which is the only French immersion Catholic high school on the north side. We also have Ross Shep, the other French immersion public high school on the north side. When I think about these buildings – both Mac and Ross Shep had renovations recently. Shep's is just about finished, thank goodness. It's been a long haul and something that I'm really glad is finally coming to a conclusion. When it was put on the capital list as a priority for a modernization, it was, I would say, long overdue.

This is something that – I think it's important to have updates about maintenance and existing capital assets so that we as a province, we as the owners of that facility know and understand what the checks and balances are for it and make sure that we maintain these capital assets that we all own. I emphasize “that we all own” because we do have a shared responsibility and a shared opportunity, I think, when it comes to public infrastructure. When I also think about other facilities like the Misericordia hospital, technically outside my riding but certainly a west Edmonton hospital that has punched far above its weight for many, many years and has been long overdue for a new emergency department in particular and other phases of redevelopment on that site, which, I would assert as well, must be a priority, I think it's only fair for us to report publicly and make sure that we are accounting for deferred maintenance that happens in our public assets as well.

We'll hear different numbers from different folks about what the deferred maintenance actually is, which is why I think having updates that are in a standardized provincial process in accordance with this proposed amendment makes the most sense. Some folks, when they count deferred maintenance, count asbestos abatement; other folks don't. Certainly, there would be very varying reports on what those liabilities would be as well as what the asset is valued at at any point in time.

When I'm talking about the schools and the hospital that serve my riding, for the most part I'm not saying that because this is something that only applies to me. Certainly, we know that every single one of my hon. colleagues in this place, Madam Chair, has schools in their riding, and we want to keep it that way. We want to make sure that we are holding to account the government for maintaining education funding and maintenance funding and doing replacement planning in a reasonable way.

I can't help but draw the parallel between us saying that we want to have updates on maintenance and existing capital assets as part of this bill and parallel legislation that we have. For example, when I lived in a condo and was on the condo board, there were requirements that we have a regular, ongoing, updated plan about what the long-term plan was for maintaining the building, our shared asset, we as owners in that facility. We as owners in provincial capital, I think, deserve the same. I think we deserve to know where we're at in terms of risk liability, maintenance, and assets. I think that that is fair and reasonable as owners of public

assets, whether it's a home that you share as a communal asset among other condo owners or whether it's essential public services that we count on in our communities and throughout our province.

I think that this amendment is very fair and reasonable. I think that it's something that is worth due consideration of this House. You know, we've had one government member speak to it, and I would certainly welcome hearing opinions from others because I think many members of this House ran because we wanted to be good stewards of the public purse – hopefully, all members who ran for this Assembly wanted to be good stewards of the public purse – to make sure that we maintain and improve the condition for all, something that we literally say a prayer for every day in this House, and that we do so in a way that gives us the best information to be able to hold one another and ourselves to account in that effort.

Those are some of my main comments with regard to this specific amendment. There are many other pieces in this bill that I think warrant continued conversation and scrutiny. Certainly, this is one of the heavier bills this session, both in terms of the actual weight of the bill itself – it's 66 pages – as well as the number of different pieces that it amends. This is not something that anyone, I think, should take lightly. Sections like the Seniors Benefit Act, sections like the Public Service Employee Relations Act, not sections that I recall being talked about much on the campaign trail: there are many pieces in here that seem to have slid in under this, what many are calling an omnibus bill.

I think that it's important that we have due consideration and that the government entertains important amendments that increase transparency, accountability, and public reporting on things like capital assets that we have in this province. Those are some of the main points that I wanted to make at this point in debate, specifically as they relate to this amendment. I'm happy to discuss the bill and other amendments should they surface.

I hope that reflection upon some of those important public assets in individual ridings as well, I might add – actually, let's do another one. We're in a building right now that has scaffolding on it, and I'm sure many members of this Assembly, like me, thought: “What is happening to this building? What are the kinds of improvements that need to be made?” Particularly at this time we know that there is so much discussion around fiscal accountability, so I think it would be beneficial for the government to take the opportunity to have this kind of fair and open transparent reporting to the public about public assets, because I'm sure there is very good reason why there is scaffolding around the Legislature right now, doing work on this building, but I would certainly feel better if it was discussed and reported very publicly and we were all able to understand why that is.

I know that it's hard for a lot of folks, when they're seeing layoffs in the public as well as the private sector, to understand why government would be spending money on things like buildings, which is why I think increasing reporting about things like deferred maintenance and existing capital assets would be beneficial to all of us when we're understanding and holding to account the government for decisions it makes on its use of capital assets.

Those are some of my comments with regard to this particular amendment, and I look forward to hopefully hearing from other members of the government as to why they might be voting the way that they possibly could be. Thank you.

**10:00**

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?



Seeing none, I'll call the question on amendment A3 as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** We are now back on the main. Are there any members wishing to speak?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report Bill 25 and Bill 27 and report progress on Bill 21 and Bill 20.

**The Chair:** Hon. minister, just to confirm, you want to rise and report on bills 25 and 27 and report progress on 20 and 21?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Correct.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 25 and Bill 27. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 20 and Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.  
The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We've made a lot of progress here today. I like to see that, people working together to get that done. I move that we adjourn the Assembly until tomorrow, November 27, at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:03 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 27, 2019

Day 48

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 27, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, hon. members.

Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. So may Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

##### Adjournment of Fall Session

39. Mr. Schweitzer moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2019 fall sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

[Government Motion 39 carried]

##### Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

40. Mr. Schweitzer moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:  
Be it resolved that:
1. The 2018-2019 annual report of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices for review;
  2. The committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
  3. In accordance with section 21(4) of the Child and Youth Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 90 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any members wishing to speak to the motion?

[Government Motion 40 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Third Reading

##### Bill 25

##### Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019

**Mr. Schweitzer:** I'm standing up a lot here this morning, Madam Speaker. You know, I have to rise and give a speech on behalf of the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. I'm going to read this speech for the first time as we go through it together, so hopefully this isn't a painful exercise for everyone. I'm going to do my best to read the notes.

I rise on behalf of the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction to move third reading of Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019.

Bill 25 represents our next steps for making Alberta's economy freer and faster and upholds our commitment to cut red tape that impacts the lives of everyday Albertans. Bill 25 proposes changes to several pieces of legislation and repeals some legislation that is no longer in use. It reduces regulatory burdens for municipalities and other government partners and streamlines, eliminates, and modernizes outdated or redundant rules that impact all Albertans.

Some examples of this include speeding up processes for forest management agreements and regulatory approvals for small-scale hydroelectric projects, saving time for these businesses and encouraging future investment. Brock Mulligan from the Alberta Forest Products Association spoke about how this is going to affect the forestry industry. He noted how red tape around granting forestry management agreements created immense uncertainty for sawmills and that an FMA renewal takes years of planning and that any delay on top of that can be a huge setback. Allowing an approval that can now be made via ministerial order adds certainty to the process, speeds up approvals, and ensures stability for these job creators. I think we all agree that that's a positive step forward.

It also makes changes to modernize our building codes and brings them in line with upcoming federal standards. It removes legislation that is no longer needed – the Small Power Research and Development Act, the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Foundation Act – and repeals the out-of-date reference to chiropractic services from the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act.

As recommended by the review of agencies, boards, and commissions, Bill 25 dissolves the Health Professions Advisory Board, which has not been in use since 2012. It also updates the very outdated board appointment process of the M.S.I. Foundation and streamlines recruitment. It gives the Glenbow institute greater flexibility in the management and display of their collection.

A change that will potentially save lives: Bill 25 will make it easier for Albertans to provide online consent for organ donation. This is a new, one-step process that eliminates the paperwork to become an organ donor.

Ultimately, Bill 25 is about creating efficiencies and making it easier to deal with government processes and procedures. The savings earned from these changes aren't specifically monetary, but they do save Albertans, industry, and government something just as important, time. As we all know, time is money. If passed, these 11 changes will join the more than 80 red tape reduction-related initiatives already implemented or approved by government. I'm proud of the progress the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction has made in cutting red tape over the last six months, and I'm proud of how Bill 25 contributes to it. We know that there's more to do, and we're going to continue to cut red tape across government.

I'd like to thank the House for the thoughtful discussion and support for this bill. I look forward to the associate minister bringing forward more red tape reduction matters in the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate your recognizing me this morning to talk about an item that, of course, being the critic, is near and dear to my heart, red tape reduction. I guess the only problem I have is that we are looking at some changes within Bill 25 that really aren't red tape reduction. It's

more like statute amendments that could have been done in other pieces of legislation.

We are looking at a bill right now that is omnibus in nature, something that the associate minister himself, during the 29th Legislature, was opposed to. The opposition that I had mentioned in earlier debates was around the labour legislation changes of Bill 17 in the 29th Legislature, which proposed, of course, many different labour changes within one single ministry, whereas here we have approximately 13 different changes across six different ministries. I can't help but wonder what the associate minister would have said had the previous government introduced a piece of legislation like that. I bet that he would have been very much opposed to that or maybe tried to break it up into a bunch of different parts, things like that.

Nonetheless, here we are looking at a ministry that was tasked to create an atmosphere that will create jobs and will grow the economy. Yet, you know, allowing a museum to better manage its assets and its displays: I'm struggling to see how that is creating jobs and how that is growing the economy.

You know, as we go through this bill, we see changes to the Forests Act, and I would probably agree that speeding up the process for those types of things would definitely move things along. Of course, I have heard the associate minister in the past being a little bit critical of a minister receiving greater powers to be able to move things along. It's kind of like what I've said before on different pieces of legislation, how we've said things in the past, but then we're doing something now, and they're contradictory. It sends a bit of a signal, I think, to outside investors that Alberta is confused about what it's trying to accomplish. We shall see how this one moves forward. My hope is that this will allow the Agriculture and Forestry minister to move some projects along a little bit quicker.

When we look at the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Foundation Act, this of course has not existed since 2002, so this will remove it from the legislation. Again, Madam Speaker, how is something like this creating jobs? How is something like this growing the economy? I realize that sometimes a government will look for low-hanging fruit to deal with here, but it looks like there wasn't even really an effort on behalf of the minister to just reach up to grab that low-hanging fruit, preferring to maybe find what was just already laying on the ground. This could have probably been dealt with through a statutes act and not red tape, but I guess, you know, that when you're looking at your ministry costing Alberta taxpayers \$10 million over the next three and a half years, you'd better make some kind of a work project in order to justify your ministry. Clearly, right now the only job that's been created has been the minister's job. That has been it.

9:10

**Mr. Schmidt:** He has staff, too.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I guess he does have staff, too. That's correct. I guess we shouldn't forget about them.

We also see some changes within small-power research and development. Although repealing this may be a good idea, again, I see little interest on behalf of this government with regard to renewable and alternative energy sources. We do have a climate crisis facing us here, and if we don't start taking action on it now, it's going to be our future generations that are literally going to pay the price. We've seen weather events, you know, the 1-in-100-years events that have taken place. We've seen three or four of them just within the last decade alone. The costs for those kinds of events are climbing more and more with each one. I think it would be incumbent upon the government to maybe embrace renewable and

alternative energy sources with a little bit more vigour. Hopefully, this change will inspire them to take that on and help reduce our emissions here within the province of Alberta.

We also see some changes around the Alberta Health Act. Specifically, one of the things I wanted to point out is with regard to the removal of chiropractic services. Upon speaking with the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors, they were not consulted on this change. I have unfortunately not been able to hear back from them on their review of this. The only way they found out about it was, of course, through a media report, a bit of a pattern which I've seen with this government around different consultations.

One of the ones at the forefront in our minds right now is the hijacking of pensions. For instance, the teachers were not consulted on this. We've heard from literally tens of thousands of teachers that are upset with this. If it was such a good plan, Madam Speaker, then they could have brought it to them. When we're looking at things like Bill 25, again I wonder just how much consultation was done.

That would then lead me around to the one item that I want to highlight first, the Safety Codes Act and the changes that are being proposed there. If we can give our forestry industry the opportunity to promote their products and their businesses right here within the province of Alberta, that's certainly not a bad thing, but I think that one of the voices that has been absent throughout all the discussions around building codes has been fire. They have some concerns around that in terms of getting into those structures to be able to put them out. What I've heard consistently from fire is: when we're looking at the building codes, we're focused, as we should be, on getting people out of the building should a fire occur, but we also have to keep in mind that someone has to go in to try to put that fire out. Their concern around floor collapse, building collapse has been absent from those types of discussions around building codes in the act.

I am hoping, should this go forward, Madam Speaker, that those voices will be added to the conversation. I'm going to advocate very, very strongly for that. Even at the federal level we've seen an absence of that when we're dealing with building codes. Again, I hope the government will take this very, very seriously, will bring them to the table, and will allow the changes that will come from the safety codes to create a safer environment for all with regard to that.

We've also seen some changes around the Municipal Government Act, and one thing that I wanted to specifically highlight was around the ICFs. Unfortunately, the amendment I brought forward earlier to Bill 25 was not accepted by the government. This was something that RMA was hoping to have changed. They felt quite strongly. As a matter of fact, out of 46 of their 69 members that were polled around this subject, 41 per cent of them were not so confident or not confident at all with regard to being able to complete their ICFs prior to the deadline of April 1, 2020. I had proposed that we extend that by one year to give them enough time to complete those. Some municipalities have as many as 12 to 15 of those on the go right now.

But, of course, what will happen now is that should they not be able to complete those ICFs, it will then proceed to the arbitration process, which could take up to another year, which means that we should have probably just extended that date by one year and allowed those municipalities to get that work done. Really, it kind of feels like we are creating some red tape when Bill 25 is supposed to be reducing the red tape, Madam Speaker.

You know, again we're seeing a pattern where pieces of legislation that are being brought forward were not consulted on. The RMA would have really appreciated having their voice heard

around that. Not that they have any problems with most of the changes that are proposed within Bill 25, Madam Speaker, but this will create some problems for them.

So, unfortunately, I'm not really in a position at this time to be able to support this type of legislation. I think decisions around red tape are very clearly being made within the ministries themselves. That was made very, very clear during estimates. Treasury Board, Municipal Affairs, Labour: we've seen other ministries that are very clearly making their own red tape decisions. I think the \$10 million that Albertans are being asked to pay for this ministry could be better served in other directions. Maybe we could look at giving AISH recipients that money and being able to raise up their lifestyle.

With that, I shall take my seat. My hope is that all members will seriously consider voting against this bill, and maybe we can find more efficient ways with which to bring legislation like this forward.

Again I would like to highlight that I do hope that around the safety codes – the reality is that the government does have the majority – they do bring fire to the table when they're looking forward and creating the regulations around the Safety Codes Act, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I rise this morning to speak in favour of the third reading of Bill 25. You know, I have listened to some of the arguments that have been put forward by the members opposite against this bill. It is very important to note my disappointment with the members opposite. On one hand, they seem to have their cake and, at the same time, eat it. They have spoken in favour of some of the things they like about this bill. Ordinarily speaking, you would think that they would vote for them. It is important that we listen carefully to what they are saying. This is not about them not liking the content of this bill. Again I go back to their view on government. We have dedicated the time and resources to make sure that we eliminate all of the burdens that we as a government have imposed on businesses, on municipalities. They do not philosophically support stuff like that. To the contrary, they want to heap on more red tape, big government. That is their idea of how governments should run, which we fundamentally disagree with.

9:20

Madam Speaker, I am going to speak specifically about some of the aspects of Bill 25 that pertain to my ministry. I am glad the member opposite, the Member for Edmonton-Decore, did indicate one of them, which is the Safety Codes Act's amendment, the repeal of a particular section that at this point in time only allows for the construction of six-storey buildings. When in a time of serious economic challenges, especially with respect to our oil and gas and our agricultural sector, and we have put forward an amendment that would help that particular struggling industry, you would think, again, that that in itself should be a consideration while members opposite vote for this bill. We're now allowing the construction of 12-storey buildings with wood, something that has been welcomed so much by that particular industry and something that they have lobbied for for years while the members opposite were in government. They didn't get it done, and finally we are getting it done. Despite their, you know, good talk and agreement that that's something that we ought to do, they are voting against it.

But, Madam Speaker, the other aspects of municipal affairs that impact this particular bill: I'm going to just give you a few examples. I heard them talk yesterday. They were saying: why would you extend the requirement for a by-election to be held from 90 days to 120 days? They took issue with that. You know, I can't tell you how many ministerial orders I have had to sign seeking an extension from 90 days to 120 days. I am having to spend so much of my time dealing with the request for an extension. Again, you would think that that would be a welcome development, that rather than municipalities having to send out this request any time they needed a by-election, in my experience – and I'm sure members opposite, those of them who have been part of cabinet, would know. They would not disagree with this. This is a constant request for extension. Finally, we are removing that particular red tape that requires our municipalities to come to us every single time they need an extension to extend the time period required for a by-election to occur. That's number one.

Number two. First, I heard the Member for Edmonton-Decore talk about intermunicipal collaboration frameworks, otherwise known as ICFs. Madam Speaker, let's be clear. The intermunicipal collaboration frameworks are a valuable tool to get municipalities working. They're meant to get them to work together, but what we have seen is that, again, these are – you know, I also heard the member opposite talk about the need for an extension from the deadline of April 2020. Again, this is something that they put in place, not us, so we inherited this problem from them. Our job is the difficulties that we have heard from our municipalities with the ICFs: how do we fix them?

That is exactly what the changes that we have proposed in Bill 25 with respect to ICFs seek to accomplish. Let's be clear. We now made it easier for municipalities to work together to build these agreements while still keeping the intent of having municipalities work together to find efficiencies. In particular, Madam Speaker, these changes will make it easier for municipalities to adopt ICFs, allowing them to do it by resolution instead of by bylaw. Think about that. Think about the amount of resources, staff costs that they would require when municipalities begin to formulate bylaws, the process in itself that goes into all of that. Now, as a consequence of Bill 25 they will be able to accomplish that by a simple resolution. That will save council time and money.

Madam Speaker, we also allow individual municipalities to notify us of when the ICF is complete instead of providing us with a full copy of that agreement. Again, this will save them time, and it will save them money. Most importantly, we have significantly simplified the contents of an ICF, giving municipalities more flexibility about what matters will be addressed within the agreement.

Madam Speaker, I also heard about arbitration: you know, how do we resolve disputes that come up as a consequence of ICFs? Let's be clear. The current legislation has created a burdensome and unnecessary dispute resolution process that doesn't make sense for Alberta's municipalities. The proposed changes not only limit what an arbitrator can provide rulings on; they also ensure that this process aligns with the Arbitration Act, the standard legislation all arbitrators use to help them resolve disputes. This will make it easier both for municipalities and arbitrators.

Madam Speaker, the other change that we are proposing has to do with the rightsizing of intermunicipal planning, and we will find that in sections 631 and 631.1. The current legislation creates a significant and unnecessary regulatory burden by requiring our municipalities to develop intermunicipal development plans, which then identify the kinds of development that occur on their shared border. These changes that we have proposed will make it easier for municipalities who share a border that don't have any significant

growth to not have to complete these plans, an often onerous and complex process.

Again, this will save them time and money, and if that is not red tape reduction, I don't know what that is. Maybe the members opposite again need to, you know, think it through, when we bring substantive changes that will improve the lives of businesses and communities, rather than to always have to run to their ideological beliefs. That also eliminates the need for ICFs to have IDPs as part of their framework, ensuring that even if there isn't growth in the region, municipalities still have the opportunity to discuss shared services.

You know, Madam Speaker, the other proposed change that we are making is streamlining assessment processes, otherwise something we've called incorrect, when there is incorrect assessment information. You'll find that in sections 291, 295, 467(1), and 665(4). Currently the MGA creates a number of unnecessary and unclear rules around assessment and assessment processes, and we are making amendments to make this more straightforward. For example, we are clarifying that assessors and the assessment review boards don't need to use incorrect information.

We are also making it clear that assessment review boards can both increase and decrease assessments. We're also making a clarification about what improvements are assessable if they are being used as part of a manufacturing or processing facility. These changes will clarify and streamline the assessment process both for municipalities but also for individual businesses.

You know, Madam Speaker, I have heard the argument from members opposite about: why don't we use a different legislative tool to address the changes that we're making here? What we heard them talk about: they do not understand that what they are proposing is – in those cases only where there are no disagreements, there are no contentious issues, that's when you use the statutes amendment as a tool. Oftentimes this is always what I find with the members opposite. You know, they try to frame arguments in a way that doesn't really make sense. There is a defined process. There are defined changes and amendments that you could use the statutes amendment tool to accomplish. Those are really in matters where you are just cleaning things up. But you can tell, looking at some of the changes that we have, reports from the municipal government side, that that would be highly unsuitable, to use the statutes amendment act as a tool to accomplish this.

9:30

Madam Speaker, one of the changes that we have also proposed has to do with meeting minutes, section 208(1)(a)(i). The current legislation prevents municipalities from recording now something as simple as this, minutes with notes or comments. However, we heard from many municipalities that they would prefer to do so because it provides important context for residents. These changes would remove that requirement and make it so municipalities can provide more information to their residents.

Madam Speaker, we are also making changes with respect to the assessment review board and subdivision appeal board clerks. Right now the legislation requires that both assessment review board clerks and subdivision appeal board clerks must be designated officers. There is no additional authority provided by naming them as designated officers. We are removing this as an unnecessary requirement. Again, that will speed up the process of the work done by the assessment review board.

Madam Speaker, we are also allowing electronic notices. You will find that in section 608.1. Right now municipalities must send a number of notices in the mail. These changes will allow municipalities to send this information electronically should their

citizens choose to opt in, again, a typical red tape reduction, something that we don't need given this day and age.

Madam Speaker, we're also removing the annual bylaw requirement in section 369.1. Right now there are a number of tax bylaws that don't change but have to be passed every single year. These changes, again, will remove that requirement provided the bylaws remain the same. This will save valuable time in council meetings throughout this province. Now, we see this all the time, bylaws that don't change. Nothing has happened that will require council to change them, but every single year council is required to revisit those particular bylaws and repass them. If that is not red tape, I don't know what that is.

Madam Speaker, we are also requiring tax rate bylaw changes. When a municipality, for example, makes an administrative error, they are required to obtain a ministerial order. This is something that – if I haven't dealt with this particular issue, you know, I've dealt . . . [Mr. Madu's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to take an opportunity to address some of the issues that the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West had brought up in regard to this bill. I think that his comments demonstrate his profound ignorance of what goes on here in the Legislature and how legislation is put forward and, indeed, ignorance of what his government is trying to do with this whole red tape ministry. Indeed, we can see many, many examples of why this ministry categorically is both irrelevant and redundant and is a way to try to mislead the public that this UCP government is trying to address certain issues around roadblocks that take place in the government.

You know, I couldn't help but notice just this morning, for example, that the Ministry of Service Alberta has a release saying that they're cutting red tape for Alberta condos. I haven't had a chance to read it yet. It just came up on the feed from the provincial government. But there you go. It could very well be a good bill, the Minister of Service Alberta looking for ways to perhaps amend something that's happening in regard to condominiums. Certainly, there are a lot of problems associated with leaky condos and the administration of condos and so forth, so the ministry moved forward and made some changes, and perhaps they did a good change. Is this anything to do with the ministry of red tape? No. Is it another layer by which this government can spend millions of dollars, tens of millions of dollars for a publicity stunt to say that they are reducing red tape for the people of Alberta?

You know, quite frankly, many if not all of the sections of this bill, Bill 25, which is hardly worth the paper that it's printed on, are things that you can do within your ministry. In fact, the Minister of Municipal Affairs should do well to take advice from his own department. They will tell him very clearly that he was fully capable of doing all of these changes to municipal affairs within his department and, quite frankly, probably without even having to use the time here in the Legislature to administer those changes to municipal affairs.

Many of these other sections: same thing, right? I heard the Minister of Energy speaking yesterday about changes that she was going to make around an issue, again with tacit knowledge that, in fact, there's no need to call the minister of red tape to do this. She did it herself and, you know, probably did it much more quickly and more efficiently and with great use of time and value of time,

without having to move through this whole dog-and-pony show that they call the ministry of red tape.

I mean, let's just call things for what they are, Madam Speaker. This is an exercise in propaganda, right? Of course, the government needs to deal with these issues in energy and health and municipal affairs and so forth, but all this really ends up being, quite frankly, is another omnibus bill that has things in it that, you know, you could probably accomplish through regulatory means or by using the departments or miscellaneous statutes. Those are all tools that are available to this government.

I mean, I don't know. How much is the red tape ministry costing?

**Mr. Nielsen:** Ten million.

**Mr. Eggen:** Ten million dollars – there you go, right? – just exactly at the time when we're looking for ways to save money; \$10 million dollars, I know, could certainly be of some assistance in regard to postsecondary education, in regard to health, in regard to core areas where we actually need to make investments during precarious economic times.

It's just really important for all of us to take two steps back and realize what you can actually do and the tools that you use and use them in an authentic, honest way here on the floor of this Legislature. Don't make up some bogus ministries and, you know, call bills something that they're not. Quite frankly, do your job.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019. As many of my colleagues have brought up, I also have some concerns with this legislation, mainly that it does at the end of the day seem to be a make-work project for the ministry of red tape reduction. That's a concern for me at a time when we are talking about reducing the cost of government while also adding an entirely new ministry for something that, as has been stated often by this side of the House, could be done within the ministries themselves.

I think that through the process of estimates we got a clear picture of that as our critic for red tape reduction asked every single minister or nearly all of the ministers about their capacity to eliminate red tape within their own ministry. They all seemed quite capable to do that on their own with the civil servants that they have within their own ministries. They seemed like they were moving forward on changes that would have reduced red tape without the need for an entirely new ministry at the cost of \$10 million over the next three to four years. It's been stated that this could have been done through a miscellaneous statutes amendment act – I would tend to agree with that – some of it even done through regulations, without having to take the time of members in this House, where we could be debating important things like the fact that this government is cutting funding to classrooms and to municipalities.

9:40

I will get more to it here shortly, but when we hear from the Minister of Municipal Affairs that changes like changes to the framework for municipalities and growth management boards and his unwillingness to change the date that's in the legislation here, an opportunity to work with our municipalities and work with the RMA, who raised concerns with the date of April 1, 2020, I mean, that is – what? – four or five months away from now: with the cuts that they've been given by this Minister of Municipal Affairs and with the changes that have happened, they are expected to come up with these frameworks.

The consequences of not doing so, well, push through to arbitration. That's going to be a concern for these municipalities, and they've raised their concerns with this minister. I'm not sure why there isn't a willingness to amend such a small piece – well, it's quite a big piece of this legislation. I'm not sure why the minister is unwilling to budge on that date and the date for that framework. That's very concerning.

Just looking at the changes that we've seen to advocates, the advocates that are offered by the provincial government, and the cuts that we've seen there, I mean, we're supposed to take Bill 25 at its face value. You know, we've only seen this legislation within the last week, week and a half, and we're suppose to take it at face value, that it's doing what the government is telling us it's doing. On the other hand, we see this government amalgamating, for lack of better terms, advocates in our province and saying that that's a reduction of red tape. That's very concerning to me, Madam Speaker, as we see cuts to seniors' benefits and as we see the unwillingness of this government to move forward on supporting people on AISH. Now we're actually putting these advocates into one area instead of having several advocates for the different areas. That's very concerning.

The other fact is that this UCP government has brought in a party insider to advocate on behalf of Albertans against changes that might be coming forward from this UCP government. That really seems like a conflict of interest. Once again, we're suppose to take Bill 25 at face value, but in other instances what we've been told is not how things are going to play out. That's very concerning to me.

Once again, the changes in here, some more drastic than others, to Agriculture and Forestry, Minister of Community and Social Services, culture, Energy, Health, Municipal Affairs, and Education, changes to many different departments in this omnibus bill, which are very concerning with the amount of time that we've had to spend with this legislation – well, really, there still are questions that are unanswered by this government. That's concerning as well.

When we talk about red tape reduction, it really should be about getting people back to work: how do we do that? Unfortunately, nothing within this legislation is going to get people back to work. Maybe some small pieces, but I don't think I've seen any of that, getting people back to work, in this legislation.

Once again, as we went through the estimates process, as we asked the ministries, "What is your ministry doing to get people back to work? How are you speeding up approvals within environment?" – the fact is that this government has reduced positions in departments who are in charge of approving applications in environment and essentially putting people back to work. Unfortunately, when you start eliminating those positions of environmental protection officers and people who are working on moving forward applications, well, we are not going to reach the targets that we are trying to reach when you're eliminating something like over 200 positions from the ministry of environment.

Then on the other hand, you're going to say: well, you know, we lost all those positions, but we'll still be able to do just as much work. I don't think that's the truth. The people in the ministry or the department of environment across this province, the people who work hard to make sure that all things are considered before moving forward on applications and approvals: I don't think those people appreciate that this government is reducing the people in their department and then saying: "You have to do twice as much work. What are you doing?" That's very concerning. Once again, when we see changes like that, unfortunately we can't accept things from this government at face value, especially in omnibus legislation like we see here.

Now, the Minister of Municipal Affairs also said, you know, that the NDP opposition may agree with very small pieces of what we're seeing here, so why won't they accept the whole thing? Well, unfortunately, that's not how it works, Madam Speaker. Just because we support one little piece of this omnibus bill before us does not mean we can support all the other things that are of concern to us. That is the job of us as legislators in this Legislature, to bring forward our concerns, bring forward the concerns of the people in our community, and unfortunately there are still concerns that are unaddressed in here. Once again, as we've seen through Bill 22 and essentially every bill that's come through this Legislature in this session from this UCP government, we have not had adequate time to take these concerns back to our constituents, and we are going to see that once again here.

The fact is that when legislation is brought forward so hastily, as it is in Bill 25, and we see changes that are brought forward to the Municipal Government Act and concerns raised by the RMA and other organizations, well, really, that should give us cause for pause. We should really sit down with these municipalities, hear their concerns. Though it seems that they support certain aspects of Bill 25 or the changes to the MGA, on this very important one about building frameworks for municipalities and their boards and working with the other municipalities around them, unfortunately, they have concerns with this, and they have not been addressed.

Madam Speaker, at this time I do not believe I will be supporting this legislation. You know, the changes that we see to ABCs in here seem relatively – I want to be careful with my words – harmless in terms of the fact that some of these advisory boards, the UCP says, have not been used since 2012. But, once again, I still have concerns about removing advisory boards at a time when this UCP government is moving so hastily to reduce supports in education, for seniors, in AISH programming, and across the board. When we talk about reducing ABCs, when we talk about reducing the ability of advocates at a time like that, that's very concerning for me.

The fact is that in a democracy, in a strong democracy, there will be the opportunity for dissenting voices to be heard, and what we've seen from this government, as they cut back on the number of advocates and they put party insiders in positions to be the advocates on behalf of Albertans, is, once again, really, what I believe to be a conflict of interest. Unfortunately, it's setting a precedent that this government does not actually want to hear from the people that their legislation is affecting.

Once again, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, I will not be supporting this legislation as it stands right now. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 25. Every time somebody from the government side gets up and speaks about this bill and explains what red tape is, the meaning of red tape is completely lost on me. Every time I have to look it up and google what red tape actually is. Again, when I was looking at it this morning, I think it's something that's referred to as "excessive bureaucracy or adherence to rules and formalities . . . in public business." It refers to excessive regulations or rigid conformity to formal rules that are bureaucratic and hinder or prevent action or decision-making. That's the understanding I have of the words "red tape" and what red tape reduction would mean.

There are many clear examples in our province, in our regulations, where we can make improvements; for instance, the New West Partnership trade agreement between Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan,

and now Manitoba as well. That was one example of how governments were working together to reduce red tape, to facilitate business, to facilitate transactions across provincial boundaries. With red tape, I have something like that in my mind. That's what the reduction of red tape would look like. It will facilitate some process, it will facilitate small businesses, businesses to do things more efficiently and without any bureaucratic hindrance or without any adherence to rigid formal rules.

9:50

Before I go to the provisions of this bill, I also want to say that when the government was campaigning during the election, they used red tape reduction in a completely different sense. At that point they wanted Albertans to believe that there are managers managing the managers in the public service, that somehow there is bloated bureaucracy and that that's why processes are not very efficient, and that that's not what they would do. But now they are using that language, this bill, to just, I guess, check off something that they promised during the election. With this bill, they can check off that they have fulfilled that promise. However, I think what they are doing here doesn't reduce red tape within the meaning of that word. Rather, it's reducing services, eliminating services, all to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate handout.

If we look at the different acts that were changed, let's, I guess, start with the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Foundation Act. The government says that the foundation has not existed since 2002, and they're cleaning up that act. I don't understand how something that hasn't existed since 2002 and was never used was a hurdle, how that was obstructing any kind of decision-making. It's just a cleanup that is usually done in a miscellaneous statutes act, so this change doesn't do anything to reduce red tape. I think the Minister of Municipal Affairs would agree with me that this is not red tape at all. This thing hasn't existed, wasn't used since 2002. It's a cleanup, and standard government practice is that those kinds of things are dealt with in a miscellaneous statutes act.

We look at other changes; for instance, the Small Power Research and Development Act. Essentially, this bill repeals that act. The government is saying that all contracts have been concluded under this act and that the small-scale generation regulation already supports market-based electricity generation from renewable and alternative energy sources. Again, this act has already been spent. Whatever business was happening under this act, those contracts have already been concluded. Again, this is a cleanup typically done under a miscellaneous statutes act. It was not adding to any kind of red tape, and removing it is just a cleanup. It's not red tape reduction within the meaning of those words. I guess that repealing that may be a good idea, but so far the government has shown very little interest in renewable and green or alternative energy. I hope that by doing so, they are not just signalling once more that they have no interest in that kind of electricity, in those kinds of renewable or alternative energy programs.

Similarly, this piece of legislation also deals with the Hydro and Electric Energy Act. This change and also another change, that is in the Forests Act: for both these changes what they are doing is changing the process. Instead of cabinet approving a project or instead of legislation to approve a project, now the minister will be able to do these approvals.

A minister approving things may be more efficient and may cut bureaucracy, but I think that it's consolidating powers within the hands of the minister, and there won't be any oversight. Again, this change may not necessarily be red tape reduction. What we have seen from ministers when they had the power was, for instance, appointing failed UCP candidates to the energy war room, appointing your donors to the boards, and those kinds of things. So

consolidating power in the minister's hands may not be a good thing. There may need to be better oversight instead of just consolidating all the power in one minister for decision-making. Again, I don't know if this will cut red tape or create some other issues that we have seen in other appointments and other processes.

Similarly, under the Health Professions Act, Bill 25 dissolves the Health Professions Advisory Board. The government is saying that this board has not been used since 2012. If something has not been used since 2012, it's clearly not in the way of any action or any decision-making. It's just a cleanup, and for the most part governments have done that in miscellaneous statutes acts. Again, in no way, shape, or manner within the meaning of the words "red tape reduction" does that amount to red tape reduction or even come close to reducing red tape. It's just a cleanup, standard practice in a miscellaneous statutes act. That's what governments previously have done, and by previously I mean for decades.

This repeals outdated references to "chiropractic services" in the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. It changes it, updates it. I don't know how it's red tape reduction because we have stopped using a term, "chiropractic services," and changed it to some other term. This piece of legislation just changes that terminology and wants us to believe, wants Albertans to believe that that amounts to red tape reduction. By no stretch can you bring that action under your red tape reduction. It's clearly not. It's just, again, a cleanup of legislation, and typically that has been done by previous governments under miscellaneous statutes acts. I don't know if they will count these changes toward their goal of cutting red tape by one-third and if that's what red tape cutting will look like.

Then there are changes to the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Act. It changes the consent through an online registry and certainly makes the process easier. But, again, we don't know what kind of consultation was done with organ donor organizations or Albertans in general and whether it was a fit for Service Alberta or whether it would have been better for Health to take the lead on this one.

Lastly, I will speak a little bit about the M.S.I. Foundation Act. These changes update the board appointment process. The government says that the appointment process has not been changed since 1970. The way I think this change may work – at least, we are skeptical that it may be another opportunity for the UCP to appoint their friends, insiders, and 22 other failed candidates. One has already been appointed, so 22 remaining failed candidates.

10:00

Similarly, other changes in the Municipal Government Act are changes to their charter agreements. The municipal government gets 120 days instead of 90 days to call a by-election. We already know that this government initially, during the campaign at least, didn't mention that they would not respect the charters, and there may be some suggestion that they may have said that they would even honour those agreements. They didn't, and now there are further changes to that.

I don't know what kind of consultation was done with municipalities. These changes could very well – these are policy changes, substantial changes – have been brought forward by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, not of Red Tape Reduction. These are substantial changes. These have nothing to do with process. These are policy changes that will require consultation and conversation with municipalities.

Similarly, the government gets 120 days instead of 90 days to call a by-election. Before, a municipal government was able to do that in 90 days. Adding another month to that is not red tape reduction by any stretch of those words. It's adding more red tape. Instead of 90 days, now they have 120 days, so that will slow down these by-elections. I don't know who was consulted on this change, which

municipalities were saying that they need to move to 120 days, and what the reasons were for that move. I think there is a lot that needs to be explained by this government. Again, if we look at this bill, this change is fairly substantive. It's a policy change, and I don't think it amounts to red tape reduction.

Considering that lately the government has gone after municipalities a fair bit, using this omnibus bill to hide changes to the Municipal Government Act I don't think is a fair use of this Legislature. As I said before, the rationale behind these changes needs to be explained. I think it will help us if we know what kind of consultation was done with municipalities, which municipalities were in favour, whether only pro-business councils were consulted or if councils in general were consulted, all of those kinds of things.

On safety codes: that's also a substantive change, that allows wood buildings to be higher than six storeys. That may very well be . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for recognizing me. I'm just listening to the talking points from the Member for Calgary-McCall, and I guess I'm a little confused here. Out of that whole thing, I gather that what he's saying is that if the name of this bill was just slightly different – he doesn't see any problems with what the content of this bill is. He seems to agree with everything that's in there, that they are improvements and that they're all seen to have a positive effect.

I guess what I'm trying to ask is: maybe the Member for Calgary-McCall could clarify, you know, that if the name was just slightly different, this would go through. I can't see any other reason in anything he said that was a clear objection to the positive things that are contained in the bill. So I'm just kind of standing up to see if he can clarify his position as to whether just a simple name change is what he's looking for.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. What I was saying is – I'm pleased that at least one member realized that what the bill said that it's doing is not what the bill is doing. That was the purpose of my comments this morning. What I said is that the bill is claiming that it's a red tape reduction act. I started my comments with a definition of what red tape reduction means. It means that you are removing "excessive regulation or rigid conformity" to some kind of process that hinders decision-making, that hinders action. That's what red tape reduction means. You're absolutely right that this bill says Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act. It doesn't do anything along those lines.

The things that are contained in it, as I said, may very well be good things, but they are not reducing red tape. For instance, the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Foundation Act hasn't existed since 2002, and removing that doesn't really do anything to reduce red tape. It's simply something that was sitting there, that governments have done through miscellaneous statutes acts. You're right that the name of the bill says something different. The bill actually is not doing anything along those lines.

Similarly, on the Small Power Research and Development Act, every contract, according to the government, has been concluded. This act doesn't do anything. It doesn't serve any purpose. It's not red tape. It's just sitting there and needs to be cleaned up through a miscellaneous statutes act. Again, you're right that the name of the bill is very confusing because it doesn't do anything in these changes.



Other things. For instance, there was one more thing on the Health Professions Act. It dissolves the Health Professions Advisory Board, that according to the government has not been used since 2012. So if a thing has not been used since 2012, help me understand how that can be red tape, how that can hinder any decision-making, how that can hinder any action. It's just sitting there and can be cleaned up through a miscellaneous statutes act. It's not red tape reduction.

Again, I agree with you. You're right. The name of the bill is so confusing. If it was something different, I may have been able to analyze these changes a bit differently. But since the government wants us to believe that this bill is about red tape reduction and it doesn't do anything to reduce red tape, that's why I'm confused.

Sure, there are changes that I may not disagree with. For instance, this bill will allow wood structures of more than six storeys. It's not red tape reduction at all, but it's a matter of, I guess, discussion and consultation, analysis on whether they're safe or not, on what kind of supporting infrastructure we need. It's a policy question. Again, it's not red tape reduction.

Similarly, with the Municipal Government Act, before they were to call a by-election in 90 days. Adding another 30 days, making it 120 days for a government to call a by-election instead of 90: how is that red tape reduction? That's why I was confused.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019. I have to say that I agree with a lot of the conversation that's happening on this side of the House about this piece of legislation. I think that in the past I've made reference to this ministry as being a little bit of a *Seinfeld* episode, a ministry about nothing.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

There's a lot of information in this bill that could better be defined and used under the ministries that hold the piece of legislation that they're proposing to change. We know that ministers have the ability to go through their ministry and look at efficiencies, inefficiencies and make those decisions to streamline things, to make things easier. The fact that there is a ministry that specifically is on red tape reduction seems a little bit ridiculous in the sense that it's adding one more level of government looking through other ministries that are quite capable of doing that.

10:10

We've heard a lot from the critic from Edmonton-Decore, and I just have to say on the record, Mr. Speaker, that he's been doing some incredible work and advocacy in reaching out to the many different industries that are being impacted by this legislation. One of the themes that we're hearing is that there hasn't been a lot of consultation and that people aren't being asked when their industry is being impacted.

So we have questions on this side of the House when some of these things are coming forward through this piece of legislation. Who did they ask? Did they ask Albertans if this was something that was perceived to be a barrier? Did they have conversations with the ministers directly to say, you know, "Is this something that you would like to address under your ministry?" which makes sense to me, that they're capable of dealing with their own ministry and looking through their own capabilities, or is this something that was just kind of concocted within this ministry to show that they are perhaps doing something? That is a question that I have.

Specifically, when I look through this significant piece of legislation, there are so many different ministries that are involved. We have Agriculture and Forestry, Community and Social Services, Culture, Energy, Health, Municipal Affairs, Education. All of these ministries, I would argue, are very likely capable of reducing red tape within their own ministry, yet here we are debating this piece of legislation.

I would like to speak a little bit to some of the things that impact culture and, in my opinion, should have been addressed through the culture ministry, specifically to the Glenbow Museum and the Glenbow-Alberta Institute Act. It's something that removes a provision prescribing the management and display of items in the Glenbow collection. The government is saying that this will enable more long-term loans and changes how the Glenbow can manage its inventory. I would like further explanation as to what this means and how they came to this decision. Was this something that the museum had asked for? Was this something that they had heard through their ministry of culture? Perhaps it is. It's unclear how this decision came to be. Was it something that the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction came up with?

I know I've been meeting with museums all across the province. We've been listening to their incredible stories and prideful stories about what they do to contribute to the history of Alberta as well as what they do to engage with people that visit Alberta. We have museums in every corner of this province, Mr. Speaker. As a mom I've taken my children many, many times to the museums, the Glenbow included. I have to say that the curators of these museums, the volunteers that come in, and the staff work so hard to make sure that the experience of the person going to the museum is incredible.

I would say that I would trust the museums and their curators to make these decisions about their collections. I know these things are planned well in advance. They're constantly coming up with new experiences and new ways to tell the stories of the beautiful history that we have in the province. The Royal Alberta Museum here in Edmonton is highlighting some of the incredible stories of Alberta, of our indigenous communities. We have beautiful stories about the prairies. We talk about different collections that are coming through the museum, and I know that those decisions happen well in advance. In seeing that there's this change that's being proposed, I'm curious how this came to be.

One of the things that we saw in the budget was that museums would be getting less money, and the suggestion to make up for that is to charge people more in admissions, so asking Albertans to pay more while the museums are being given less to run their programming. I don't think that that's very fair. I think that that's probably something that museums absolutely did not ask for.

In the fall, Mr. Speaker, I attended the Alberta Museums Association conference gala and awards. I have to say that it was an absolutely incredible experience to hear from many museums and individuals across the province that spoke with such passion about the work that they do bringing the experiences to Albertans and to people that travel through our province. From military museums to the Edmonton Valley Zoo to a museum in St. Albert: just absolute pride. A lot of the discussion was about telling stories, being able to share experiences, and a focus on education with our young people.

Like I mentioned, as a mom I've often taken my kids to museums where we hear there's a new collection, and they're excited to go and see it. The *Vikings* collection that is happening at the RAM right now is something that I didn't think my 15-year-old would be excited to go and see, but he sure was. We put our hats on, and we went in and looked at what it was like to be a Viking. It's those experiences that you can have as a participant walking through the museum, or it's the experts that bring in that collection, that have

that history, that took the time to understand and learn and then turn around and educate the public about that. It's incredible.

I know as a mom that those were some really great years when my kids were little, trying to find out what we could do in the city or around the province, being able to turn them loose on the museum staff and let them ask all of their hows and whys and have experts from the museum share the story, where I didn't have to answer those endless, endless whys with my children. I know it's something that they take great pride in. I know that they want to work with the government, and they want to be able to share the experience.

I'm curious if the culture ministry or the Red Tape Reduction ministry had these conversations and if this came from something that was authentic and came from the museum itself saying, "We would like this in place," or if this was something where they said: "Okay. We need to add one more ministry to this Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, so let's choose this." It feels like some of this stuff is just thrown together for the sense of throwing it together, which is a little bit concerning because the ministries, like the museums, are the experts in their area, and they know what's best. They should be having those conversations, and I fear that those conversations aren't happening with the experts. Perhaps this isn't even an ask from the Glenbow Museum. It might have been. It's not clear. This is definitely something that hasn't been explained.

I know that what the museums are looking for in the province is support to be able to share their story. When you have little communities, rural communities, that have a really great museum, it's a way to attract the public when they're travelling through. There's a fantastic museum, an aviation museum, in southern Alberta that I hadn't heard of. We were driving through on our way to Lethbridge, and lo and behold there was this beautiful museum, so we stopped in and, you know, were able to enjoy the museum and learn about some of the history of aviation in the province. Had it not been for the museum, I probably never would have stopped there.

Stopping at the museum also led me to stop at their candy store, and I have to say that I got some fantastic candy. It's investing in that small rural community in Alberta. The whole community comes together to celebrate these wonderful little pieces of history that they have. I know it's a place where families come together, and they talk about the history. There's pride when they're engaging in their museum. Sometimes in the small communities it's just a great hub for community to come together.

When we're talking about red tape reduction, I would suggest that the government created this ministry to say: "Check. We did this as a promise made, promise kept." So it's more wording than actual action. Like the Member for Edmonton-West Henday mentioned, if we're really talking about red tape reduction, what that means, and looking through this legislation, it should be about getting people back to work. I don't see how many of these actually accomplish that.

10:20

The strategy right now should be taking care of Albertans and looking at what we can do to support them and get them back to work at this time. Changing the structure of some of these things that the ministries could have done themselves is not getting people back to work. I would suggest that it's just smoke and mirrors and somewhat, like I mentioned earlier, like an episode of *Seinfeld*, a bill about nothing, a ministry about nothing that really has no impact on the betterment of Albertans.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It's a little bit concerning that there is so much in this piece of legislation – like I mentioned earlier, all of the different ministries that are impacted – without a lot of outcomes. These things could have all been easily addressed, if needed, by the ministry that holds the portfolio. I don't feel that we're at a place right now, Madam Speaker, where we can say, "Yes, I believe that enough consultation has happened, that this is actually something that is reducing red tape" as opposed to just saying that it is, saying those fancy words. It's a word that this government has used, that they're taking pride in, but it's not actually doing what I believe they intended it to do, which is to remove some of that bureaucracy and to get people back to work, to make life easier for Albertans. I don't see how the majority of this piece of legislation does that, and I don't understand the rationale of taking it away from the ministries, which are quite capable of dealing with that.

When we talk about the Glenbow Museum, I don't know why it couldn't have been addressed under the ministry of culture. I think that she's a minister that can go through her ministry and meet with the different museums that are represented across the province and have those discussions and make those decisions if it's something that's required. I just question if all of the other ministries have done that.

When we look at the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Act, which some of the members have talked about. I think that anything we do that can make it easier for Albertans to consent to organ donation is absolutely something that is positive. I've spoken very, very openly in this House about my support for education around organ donation. I think that something that is being missed in this is: who should house this information? Does it really need to sit under Red Tape Reduction, or would it be better served under Service Alberta, where the registries of Alberta sit already? They're already the organization that's responsible for getting consent for those that wish to donate their organs.

It's something that should be happening at every registry across the province. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, I can speak from personal experience that this question isn't asked. And being that my best friend's son is a heart transplant recipient, it's something that I'm very sensitive about, so I'm very aware of how as an Albertan I can become an organ donor. Waiting for it to be asked at the registry, it didn't happen this last time when I went to renew my licence. It's something that's already in place. It's something that already happens, so I would suggest that as a way to continue to support Albertans in becoming organ donors, it has to start with ensuring that the policies that already exist are happening as opposed to making new policies and new regulations. It doesn't make sense.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I had to get up because I appreciated the reference to *Seinfeld* so much that I felt the need to comment on it. As a huge *Seinfeld* fan myself I wanted to talk about my favourite show. I want to thank the member for that reference. I also wanted to point out that, as she actually just demonstrated for us, *Seinfeld* being the show about nothing actually seems to apply to absolutely everything, even here in the Legislature. I think most of us who are *Seinfeld* fans can think of moments where we have been living life and been able to reference a *Seinfeld* episode that applied to life. Anyway, thank you for that.

I wanted to talk a little bit because I think there's been an exception taken to the title of this bill, red tape reduction. As well, there's been some exception towards the department itself, saying

that this is a way we can save \$10 million. I wanted to comment a little bit just because of my history. I used to work at the Mustard Seed. My title was the mobilization strategist. That was kind of a fancy way of saying the volunteer manager, but the reason that they didn't just call me the volunteer manager is because they wanted me to think about mobilization and strategy across the whole organization. This wasn't just about recruiting, training, orientating volunteers and figuring out where they could fit within our organization. This was about coming alongside each department and helping the managers in those departments really think through how they could change their department so that they could include and incorporate the community in the work that they did. The point is that the mission of the organization was mobilization – that was one of our main pillars – but it wasn't happening. It didn't necessarily happen. When you're working with vulnerable people, when you're working in a shelter in crisis, there's always something else that's taking place.

I think that the Member for Edmonton-North West, being a former minister, could attest to the busyness of a ministry and that there's always some new priority on your plate for that day. So the idea of having a department, an area, a champion that is focused on the concept of mobilization or that is focused on the concept of red tape reduction coming and working alongside ministries, alongside government, helping us think through "How can we be better at this?" and making sure that it is a focus, that it is a priority – the idea that this can naturally just be done in the ministries: yeah, that makes sense. It should be done in the ministry. Just like when we worked at the Mustard Seed, our team should have been thinking about how they build their programs to incorporate and include volunteers, but it made a huge difference when there was somebody to do that.

Another example of that was when I worked at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary. The same idea. I managed the shelters. We knew how important natural supports were for the young people that we worked with. We knew how important it was to focus on that, to be able to help wrap people around and reconnect back with family. But, again, we didn't necessarily always have the time to really focus on that or think about how to develop our programs around that. We started a pilot project called the fusion program, where we had a team that was dedicated specifically to doing that work. What we found by developing that team is that they came and worked with our programs, and it changed the entire culture of our organization to make sure that family worked, and natural supports were a part of what everybody did. But it took that catalyst, if you will, to come in and work alongside people to help develop that culture and motivate people towards that end. I've heard a number of speakers talk about whether or not this ministry should even be there. I'm very much supportive of this ministry.

The other thing that I'd like to comment on, too, is that there's been some talk about whether or not there's been consultation happening on this. I know we've been criticized for not consulting on some things, but from my perspective the entire Department of Red Tape Reduction is a consultation process. I know that the associate minister and his team have been stretched across this province trying to hear from people and have created mechanisms for people to be able to speak to this. This has been a massive consultation process to make sure that we're hearing from Albertans across the board, not just in business but also in government bureaucracy, recognizing that the better we are at reducing red tape and redundancies within the bureaucracy, we're going to save money and be more effective and efficient for the Albertans that we serve.

I just wanted to throw all of those things out there to create, you know, some counterpoints to what I've been hearing from the

previous four speakers. Thank you very much for the *Seinfeld* quote. [Mr. Nixon's speaking time expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Very good timing.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very pleased to take the opportunity to say a few words in regard to Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019. Again, we've sort of heard a theme for the morning, which I think rings true when one looks to common sense and looks to the ways that things get done here in the Legislature. You know, the role of each ministry that we have here represented in this government and in this Legislature is to ensure the delivery of services that they are responsible for and to make adjustments along the way to ensure that those services are delivered in an efficient manner.

**10:30**

Although, you know, we certainly see ebbs and flows of the degree of efficiency in regard to those responsibilities. I think that is an ongoing process. Actually, the comments from the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein are interesting and instructive in a way. Yes, it is important to always take a step back and reflect and perhaps have outside sets of eyes to help move things along – right? – in any given organization, and sometimes it's helpful to have someone point out those things that can be done differently. But the idea that you have a ministry that does do this: then things start to become obscured and confused and, I believe, actually serving to increase the bureaucracy and the so-called red tape that this minister and this ministry is supposed to be charged with reducing.

Again, I mean, I can't think of a better time and place to illustrate this very thing than to shine a light on a release that just came out here this morning, as we were debating this bill, from the Ministry of Service Alberta, that talks about revising regulations, governance around condominiums here in the province of Alberta. I can see that the minister is listening. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that on cursory reading of these changes that Service Alberta are making to condominium governance and so forth, they look pretty good. I think they're things that need to be done, right? I think there are a lot of, you know, overdue things that have been worked on for quite a long time, and here we are with a series of changes to condominium governance around these various things, I guess, in regard to bank accounts and insurance and reporting and so forth.

Two things. Number one, it's important to not categorically say: oh, well, you know, we're just removing regulation here to make things better for condominium owners and governance and so forth. You're changing regulation, right? One of the underlying messages that we get from this red tape ministry generally and this Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, specifically is that somehow inherently regulations are bad and that the more you take out, the better. I know that this government has imported this concept from some American jurisdictions, some of them saying that, you know, if you make one law, you've got to take out two kind of thing. We've heard this from different places in the United States.

I mean, the idea behind that inherently is that you're saying: well, regulation in law and governance are somehow inherently bad, and the more you take out, the better off everybody is, right? For example, these changes to the Service Alberta condo thing: again, I could see some definite benefits. I've heard of issues that have come from condo governance and so forth that, you know, needed to be addressed. But it's a question of changing those regulations and sharpening and refreshing them – right? – not just taking things out

and taking out regulation. This was all very happily done within the Ministry of Service Alberta.

You know, I noticed, sort of to my amusement, that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction is kind of tagged onto the release, like colour commentary, and saying, “Hey, this is great,” sort of like Don Cherry talking about a slapshot or whatever and how great that was but having little or nothing to do with the whole process otherwise, right? Let’s call it for what it is, Madam Speaker. The Service Alberta minister is fully capable of doing his job. He seems to have done so at least today, and that’s great. It’s really little or nothing to do with the red tape ministry or ministry reduction or anything like that.

As we move through this specific bill, again, this is very poor governance because it’s sort of a mishmash omnibus bill. You can have statutes amendment acts that come up from time to time in a legislative session for things that maybe come due or need to be addressed or what have you. Often they will be discussed – well, almost always, in fact, they will be discussed with all parties so that you get a briefing on it and you come to an agreement or a concord around: yeah, these are a bunch of things that need to get done, we will put them together, and away we go. Again, this government is importing a very troublesome concept from Ottawa, which is to create substantive omnibus bills that span the globe, the universe of what the provincial government might be doing. You might have some things that are innocuous or self-evident tagged in with something that’s absolutely serious and reprehensible, as we saw with bills 20, 21, and 22.

Then you have Bill 25 popping up like a gopher on the prairies here. What it looks like to me is that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction sort of made an all call-out and asked ministers if he could just hand them something, please, to put into a basket so that we can show that this red tape ministry is actually worth while or is doing something at least. I can envision, Madam Speaker, sort of a fire drill thing going on, people handing in stuff from the side of their desk and saying: “Okay. Maybe you can have this. You can’t have the condo one because that’s more substantive and we want to have a separate press conference for that, but you can have some small thing that you can tag onto Bill 25.”

Combined in there as well are things that I think are quite troublesome, as the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs talked about in regard to culture and museums and so forth, or the Hydro and Electric Energy Act changes in regard to hydroelectric projects, and the Health Care Insurance Act changes in regard to chiropractic services. You get the point, Madam Speaker. You have this mishmash of things that come together in this bill that – you know, you find to varying degrees. I certainly do see some concerns around some of these things specifically. I just wanted to go through some of them because it’s, I think, incumbent and responsible to do so. You have the Forests Act, talking about entry into forest management agreements. I’m quite certain that this is one of those classic ones that could have been dealt with in a statutes amendment act or by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry himself. I just think that that seems self-evident. You have the issue around the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Foundation Act, and this repeals this one.

Now, again, it really speaks to me of the utility of having a statutes amendment act. This is a foundation that has not existed for 17 years, which is quite a long time, since 2002. It’s very straightforward to do this. It’s not like there was something – again, if you use the definition as the hon. member explained to us earlier this morning, of moving regulations getting in the way of progress, well, if you have something that’s been lying idle for 17 years, I don’t suppose there’s a whole heck of a lot going on there that would suggest that it’s within the definition of red tape reduction

that has meaning. That to itself: I mean, maybe you can repeal the act or what have you. Again, it feels like someone that has tossed their share into the pot for the red tape reduction associate minister, finding something that otherwise they could just leave off to the side of their desk.

**10:40**

I think that the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs talked quite eloquently about the Glenbow collection. I concur with her. I think that a critical issue I know with the Glenbow is that they have one of the best collections of western Canadian history in the world, and they need support to ensure the integrity of that collection. Just trying to change some small regulation on them, that’s great, but I would suggest that’s a great opportunity for us to talk about something substantive in regard to the Glenbow, which is that it needs more support to both ensure the integrity of the collection and to increase the capacity for them to display that collection for the benefit of Albertans and the general world as well.

The Small Power Research and Development Act change is, again, repealing an act. You know, I think that the government says that all contracts have been concluded on this, so that means it’s kind of defunct, right? The small-scale generation regulation already supports market-based electricity regulation from renewable and alternative energy sources. Again, it begs the question of something that is substantive and top of mind and relevant to our economy, producing jobs and producing power and helping to diversify our economy, which is investing in renewable energy.

We know that we’ve seen substantial setbacks since this government was elected in regard to renewable energy because of the insecurity or instability that this government has created by signalling that they’re not interested in supporting solar and wind energy and geothermal to the degree to which our economy requires. Again, let’s maybe use this Bill 25 and just happen to hit on some small regulation that the government claims has already concluded – right? – and remind ourselves of the importance of actually making an investment in renewable energy.

Another area here is the Health Professions Act change, which is dissolving the Health Professions Advisory Board, which has been sitting idle according to this government for 17 years. You know, that just tells me that if that’s the case, then this is statute amendment act material and easy to work with in that regard. And on and on.

There are a total of 13 different acts here. You know, again, by looking for things that are self-evident that need to be changed, first of all, I guess, it’s important to try to have some sort of coherent package that you can work with to define those things and to make sure that you’re not taking one thing down by attaching it to something else. In other words, if you have something that’s self-evident and pretty obvious and easy to deal with and then something else that’s contentious, tying them all together is a problem.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

I see the hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I was listening intently to the Member for Edmonton-North West as he was commenting on this bill. I just wanted to rise quickly to make a couple of comments. First of all, I wanted to thank the member for mentioning some of the work that was announced earlier this morning out of Service Alberta but tied to red tape reduction. These things do go hand in hand. As the Member for Edmonton-North West mentioned, we announced the updates to the condo

regulations that we paused back in June of this year, and I was very happy to be joined by condo owners groups like the COF and the Strathcona County Condominium Association to support the work we did as well as property manager groups like CCI north and south. At the end of the day, we've accomplished something really, really great here, which is to find an agreement among many different interests who all have a stake in the regulations that impact condo owners and condo managers and everyone in between.

At the end of the day, this does reduce red tape. This is reducing unnecessary burdens on condo owners and on property managers and ultimately eliminating and reducing the risk of increased condo fees. This is a perfect example of what, you know, our Premier and our Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction have always asked of us as fellow ministers and MLAs in this government. It's not just about reducing the number of regulations although that's a part of it. At the end of the day, at the root of what we're trying to do here is to reduce the unnecessary costs of compliance with regulations on Albertans and Alberta businesses. If we get that right, Madam Speaker, we're going to unleash the productive capacity of our citizens in Alberta and our businesses here, and we're going to make it easier for folks to invest in Alberta and to create jobs in Alberta.

In this case, with the condo regulations, we're going to reduce the risk of increased costs on everyday Albertans who live in condos. Madam Speaker, there are over 500,000 residents in Alberta that live in condos, and this impacts every single one of them. I'm really proud of the work that my officials have done, that my team has done, and of the time and attention we took over the last number of months to get this right.

I just wanted to, you know, make a bit of a comment: just because I did that in Service Alberta doesn't mean we don't need an associate minister leading this very important file. This was a huge platform commitment of ours: to reduce red tape and to make Alberta the most competitive jurisdiction for folks to do business in but to also reduce costs on everyday Albertans. That's why I'm very proud of the work that my colleague the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction is doing to lead this charge. He is making sure that every one of our government ministers as well as our MLAs are always thinking about: how can we reduce unnecessary costs of compliance related to red tape, unnecessary regulations? In some cases that might mean actually reducing the number of regulations.

In other cases, as with this condo example, it might mean tweaking the regulation to ensure that it is accomplishing the appropriate objectives. In this case my task was to find the right way to balance the need for improved governance for condo owners with the need to ensure that we don't layer unnecessary burdens on them that would cause an escalation in their condo fees in perpetuity. I'm confident we found that right balance. We have the support of the full condo industry on this. You know, it is because of the leadership of our Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the leadership of our Premier, who have both made it very clear that this is of critical importance to our broader vision as a government to get Alberta back to work, to attract investment to this province, to accomplish getting our province back to a path to balance. All of these things are interrelated and of critical importance.

I guess I just wanted to say that I take a bit of issue with the comments made earlier by the Member for Edmonton-North West. While I appreciate his complimentary comments about the work that Service Alberta did and announced today, I don't believe that that's evidence to support his claim that we don't need the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction or the bill that he's bringing forward. I think these things all go hand in hand. We need someone at the helm, leading this very important exercise, to make

sure that we get it right. You know, I'm proud of the work that my team has done, and I'm proud of the minister.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, are there members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Red tape reduction, honestly, is wonderful. One of the reasons why I actually stepped off the bench of private industry and decided to throw my hat in the ring was right around this one particular item. I can give you an example. It was a project that I was consulting on. It was called the Whitefox project, and it was going to displace processed water that was being released back into the McLeod River, move that upstream to the Fox Creek region through 135 klicks of standard little pipeline, heavy walled, that we had put in there. It was going to start using processed water. It would make a value-added chain, so diversifying the economy, if you would. It would take ANC's processed water and also Millar Western's.

**10:50**

These folks had a process. They had a supply they're putting into the rivers. It's costing them money. The upstream side guys, the guys who are doing the actual fracking in that area: well, they're actually drawing out fresh water. They're taking it from lakes, they're taking it from rivers and streams, and they can't get a constant supply. Arguably, industry was looking at doing innovative green technology, looking at all those types of things, and that project got delayed.

Now, here's the reason why it got delayed. My team, my own consulting group, had to go find other work. I had to find places for my guys. The engineering group down in Calgary: well, they had to be displaced to other projects. The contractors were lining up to consult and trying to get some of that capacity back to work and folks in those areas, the drilling programs from the upstream guys all had to be rejigged and pushed back, and that money didn't go into the economy. And what do you know? The fresh water is still being used, and they're still putting it down a hole.

Now, the reason for this? Red tape, the red tape being that it wasn't an AER project. The commodity type: it didn't quite fit within the box because we were being innovative. They decided that both the AEP – well, actually, they had a choice to make: should it go under the AEP, or should it go under the AER? Well, pontification and these different groups doing all their due diligence, following all the processes and procedures, came up with the glorious decision that both of them should. That delayed the project another couple of years, with \$135 million, \$155 million sitting on the table. Investors were offering to give us another \$200 million to spend the next year, and we can't even spend the cash.

There's no need for red tape. The well-intentioned groups, the well-intentioned ministries can come up with their own solution and point at themselves in the mirror and say: hey, we're part of the problem? Not a chance. Even the best intentioned ones in those groups can't break through that culture. The reason is simple, absolutely simple. We've seen this lots in industry. Bill Gates has spoken to it, about business at the speed of thought. When you've got a brontosaurus, a lumbering beast that's been built up for hundreds and hundreds of years based on our government procedures, it clumsily moves through the forest, you know, hypothetically. I know some of the members opposite won't get the concept unless it's literal and right in front of them. Brontosaurus don't exist. Climate change did happen. They got wiped out way long before. They're not around anymore. If you can stick with me, this would be great. There's this big brontosaurus lumbering along, and it can't react quickly enough to some other animal chewing on

its tail. It'll bleed out by the time it hits the ground because of – here's the leap – red tape. It becomes too cumbersome.

One of the other things that I did in my prior life: I was one of those consultants that would get tapped on the shoulder and would be asked to go look at different divisions and different groups within business. You would go into these groups. They're all well-intentioned, well-run organizations, but they're always looking for efficiencies. The good companies are always looking for efficiencies. The way they do that is that they open up the dialogues and have, you know, little suggestion boxes, and they do all those things, but the really good ones get peer groups. They get either different departments from different divisions, different managers to come in, or they hire a consultant. They bring a consultant in with outside expertise, because as consultants, well, you're kind of the mercenaries of the world. You go to different organizations, and you get this tribal knowledge that you bring from these different groups, and the best part about that is that you get to bring in and plant new ideas and seeds. You wouldn't believe how many organizations, well intentioned or otherwise, had so much resistance internally because they're not adaptive to change.

There was this book called *Who Moved My Cheese?* I mean, Dr. Spencer Johnson labelled that one out. You've got, you know, a couple of little characters. They're at cheese station number nine or number six or something like that. Basically, these folks become normalized. They think that the cheese is going to be there every single day and that nothing changes and that life is good. All of a sudden these two other little characters come into the story. Well, it's Hem and Haw. No. I'm sorry. Hem and Haw were the characters, the people. You've got Sniff and Scurry. All of a sudden they show up, and they've got little running shoes on. They actually had to come from the outside world, not from cheese station nine. They had to look at something different. They came from the outside, and they find – ergo, the story, Madam Speaker, without regaling you with the whole book, is that things change. All of a sudden the cheese isn't there. Things aren't the same. You don't just have – let's take that leap – the fat of the land and money rolling in hand over fist anymore. There's a scarcity in that little market.

So what do the mice do? They take off those little running shoes they had. They go out and they find new cheese. They go out and they look for the innovations. They go out and look for the change. They come back at night, and they're kind of looking around, but they take that risk. They go out there and they make a change. One of the little people: all of a sudden they're starving. Well, they're indignant. "The cheese isn't there. We deserve this. We're entitled to it." And here's another leap. "Maybe we'll just, you know, tax everybody to death and have more cheese come." Well, that doesn't work. No cheese magically fell from the sky.

One of the characters actually took a risk. It was tough for them at the start, but then they found Sniff and Scurry down the road. What do you know? Things were actually better. They had a variety of choice, but they had to make that cognizant choice, that leap. The other little character: he was so entrenched. I think it leaves the story readers to their own devices, that he actually just starved to death because he wasn't adaptive to change.

I'll give you another example. In my little campaigning run I was up at the Rockyford colony. The Hutterites up there: they're a fantastic group. They've got a wonderful farm, like we've heard, down in Jumbo Valley. A lot of these communities have just the best stuff. You know, they're totally onto it. They produce eggs and poultry.

He gave me an example of how much red tape was being built up. He said: "You know, we produce the same eggs. We have the same chickens. We have the same barns. We have everything. It's all the same. It used to cost us about \$5,000 a year for one person

to kind of part-time do this. We do the same cleanliness in the barn. We do everything with all of the same protocols. All of a sudden, in the last four years, a new regulation comes out, and then that one gets taped over because it's partially covering the original one. Some of it's applicable, some of it's not, so you can't take them both off. It's not just a revision; you've got to have two. And then another one comes out and another one." He said: "The only thing that's changed is that it went from one or two inspectors to eight, and now I have to pay \$45,000 to somebody off the colony to be able to manage the new regulations. Nothing has changed substantially." So we've piled this up.

I've used this phrase: the enemy is us. Yeah, we keep building this stuff up, all of these great intentions. The movie reference: we talked about *Seinfeld*. I'm thinking it's more like *Guardians of the Galaxy*. We've got the starship troopers next door running around thinking that they're saving things, and for everyone else in the studio audience it's a comedy of errors. We know that this doesn't exist. If we don't actually go and change something, it's just not going to magically work out in the end by happenstance or chance or, heaven forbid, a talking rodent who looks like, you know, whatever.

Part of the healthiness of all of this dialogue is that we're actually having a dialogue today. We're talking about some substantial changes – no, not substantial; tweaks, if you would. We've got one little piece of legislation. We were criticized that the red tape department wasn't doing anything. Lo and behold, we've done something, and here it is.

Well, now they're surprised, coming back to Hem and Haw, that you actually did something. Now that you've done something: "Well, yeah, it's not that specifically. We'll go to the dictionary again about what red tape literally is, what it means to you, what my feelings are," et cetera, et cetera. But it doesn't really change the thing. This little law that we put out here, this little Bill 25, is actually going to make some changes. Are they huge changes? No. But it's going to be a culture of change.

Again, coming back to that point, this ministry is self-sufficient. It's a subset of Treasury, so the money was always there. We're not going out and finding new money. It was always there. We're just reallocating it so that we can actually help. When the groups and the organizations understand that there's a red tape group, they're looking internally as well because this is that culture of change that's taking place.

As far as consultations, there's a website out there. People have been pouring all of their ideas, all of their concepts into there all summer long, and it won't stop. This is four years of change. Because we can't personally as an individual see everything around us, you get different lines of sight. You get different viewpoints that come in. That's true consultation. We had round-tables. I was fortunate enough to be at several of them to help facilitate those dialogues, and you wouldn't believe the gamut of information that came in, again because we're all experts in our own little areas. All of this stuff is coming, and I'd suggest that the members opposite, like those little mice in that thing, get on their little running shoes and get ready. Change is coming. We're keeping our word. We're doing what we said. We're making it happen, and this is proof. So if you like the cheese, fantastic. If you don't like it, too bad – go find some new ones – because we're going to have more of an appetite for it.

Minister, thank you so much for what you're doing. Don't get distracted by the little potshots that are taken from the sideline. Let's keep going forward. To all of those folks out there that have actually been sending in their information and their feedback and their comments, keep it up. We're acting on it.

I'm going to leave you with one other item, Madam Speaker, that came up at a round-table down in Calgary. This is from those, you know, energy guys. When they were looking at the energy market, some rules had been changed in behind. If I have a genset that's running on-site and it's producing all the power I need for my site and I have a surplus, I can't put that surplus back into the grid. Rules were changed. I might have a surplus of 50 to 60 per cent of my capacity. You know what they're doing right now because the rules in behind changed? Here's another thing that we can look at as red tape. They have to waste it on-site. They've got things out there called toasters. That's what the euphemism is. They put the energy into them, and they displace it in heat because they can't put it back into the grid.

So you can stick up as many windmills as you want, you can stick up as many solar panels as you want, but you've still got waste energy up there that's doing nothing. Industry wants to sell this power. They want to do something good with it. They want to have the capacities, but they can't because of these silly rules and regulations. And, of course, this department that's not doing anything: well, guess what? We are. We're looking at it. We're hearing what the stories are. We're hearing what you have to say. We're not going to boil the ocean all at once, but, guaranteed, we're going to stick with you. We're going to do the right things for the province, and we're going to get things done over the next several years, well, the next four years, for sure, and, you know, God willing and the creek don't rise and the voters come onside and like what we're doing, we'll be here a long time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

11:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a third time]

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### **Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019**

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. This bill is also 102 pages long. It repeals five acts, creates two new ones, and amends a dozen others, clearly an omnibus piece of legislation. How quickly the folks over there forgot that they used to complain about even two pieces of legislation brought together by us. Now here we are dealing with more than a dozen pieces in one act, and it's becoming routine for this government.

I guess they're using this omnibus legislation to hide many things from Albertans. This legislation has a lot of broken promises, broken promises such as to "maintain dollars promised to municipalities for 2019-20, as well as the multi-year agreement in the Bill 32 Charters for Calgary and Edmonton." That's from page 77 of the UCP platform. Again, another quote: "consult with

stakeholders in the film, television and digital media industries to create an optimal tax credit designed to attract large productions and series," on page 81 of the UCP platform. Given that the industry is calling this tax credit a catastrophe, I think it's safe to say that that promise was broken, too.

What this government has done through this bill, along with the budget and other related bills, is they have put forward their plan for this province. What we see through this is that they are giving \$4.7 billion to corporations and telling Albertans, want us to believe that somehow that policy will fix everything. We know that this government promised Albertans jobs, economy, and pipelines. So far we have not see any improvement in the economy, we have not seen any improvement in job numbers, and we have not seen any progress on pipelines. Their policy of \$4.7 billion follows, like, the classical trickle-down theory, which is not even economics. That kind of policy has been rejected, has failed previously. Even the Nobel laureate for 2019, one of them, Dr. Banerjee, recently stated that cutting taxes for the richest doesn't spur investment or create jobs.

We have clearly seen that in Alberta, where we saw the government promise that this \$4.7 billion giveaway will help them create jobs, will help the job creators. Instead, what we are seeing here is that companies like Husky got \$233 million from this, but they are still laying off Albertans. They may have money to invest, but they are not investing in Alberta because market conditions need something other than these tax breaks. Similarly with EnCana, they are leaving Calgary. They also benefited from this policy, but again they cannot invest here because market conditions need something other than these policies.

This legislation clearly is not helping us by any means to improve our economy or get some jobs or help with the pipeline. Instead, I think there are things contained in this piece of legislation that will make things even worse. For instance, this piece of legislation is ending all kinds of tax credits: the interactive digital media tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, the community and economic development corporation tax credit, the Alberta investor tax credit, the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. These are all tax credits that are in place to encourage investments that will create jobs. This government, again, wants us to believe that their \$4.7 billion handout will fix everything, and they are getting rid of these important programs that were actually bringing in investment, that were actually creating jobs, to pay for their failed policy.

This legislation is also making life difficult for everyone, for everyday Albertans. For instance, it also takes away the personal tuition tax credit, the personal education amount tax credit. On top of that, we have already seen that they're increasing the interest rate on student loans. Again, this legislation is shutting the door of postsecondary on everyday Albertans. With the kind of hikes and elimination of these tax credits, it's becoming more and more difficult for everyday Albertans to get postsecondary education. Clearly, this bill is not helping with jobs, with the economy, or with pipelines.

Earlier I mentioned about film and TV tax credits. That's how they've bungled those credits, and the entire industry is not happy with that. They've been asking this government to reconsider their policies because the film and TV industries, those production industries, generate jobs, they generate investment, and they showcase our province. Cutting their support is clearly not helping us with the economy or jobs.

In Advanced Education they also are ending the access to the future fund and leaving it in general revenues. There was a certain for these dedicated funds: they were dedicated to achieving certain goals. Just mixing it up with general revenue is showing Albertans: "No, no. These funds will still exist to do the same thing." I don't

think anybody is buying it. Similarly, they are cancelling, like, the environmental protection enhancement fund, the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, and the Alberta lottery funds.

**11:10**

A couple of these funds I want to comment on; for instance, the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund. They are moving these funds into general revenue while these funds were set aside for reasons. They were dedicated to cancer prevention research, and there are many Albertans who are not pleased with this change. They don't trust the government that keeping these funds in general revenue will serve the purpose.

They did the same thing with the Alberta lottery funds. Nonprofits across this province are not pleased with this change, but this government is not willing to listen to them. They are moving these funds into general revenue and want Albertans and want these organizations to believe that even though they are putting them in general revenue, somehow these funds will still exist for them to use. There is a huge concern out there in the nonprofit sector, in community organizations, and in community associations who were relying on these funds for important programs.

Other changes: bracket creep. They are deindexing personal income tax. I think that when those things were done at the federal level, our Premier, then in the federal Parliament, was very vocal against these changes, how creepy those changes were, how insidious those changes were. Now they are sliding these changes into Bill 20 to increase income tax on every Albertan. That's the same bracket creep as when they were in Ottawa. They used to oppose it, but now they think it's okay while Albertans are not okay with their taxes going up because they were promised. They were even told during the campaign that the 5 cents that they were paying in a carbon levy on their gasoline was too much and that they will remove that one. Instead, they are adding in personal income tax. They're charging them more in income tax. They're cutting their services. They're cutting their health care. They're cutting their education. These things were never promised, and the public never gave them the mandate to do those kinds of things. This bill clearly breaks the meaning of those promises that they said they wouldn't do and that now they're doing through this piece of legislation.

Because of this legislation, I think all Albertans, in all our ridings, will end up paying more in personal income taxes because of these changes that are contained in this piece of legislation, omnibus legislation. This piece of legislation will have an impact on their services. This already has an impact on municipalities, and people in our ridings will end up paying more in property taxes.

The government said that their agenda is to create jobs, but through this piece of legislation they are taking away all the tax credits that were bringing in investment, that were creating investment and incentives for investment, and that were attractive for the venture capitalists. Now, I think they are chasing those investors and that venture capital to other places because of their ill-conceived policies. Similarly, I think we are losing millions in the film and television industry, again because of this government's policies. Those jobs along with tech sector jobs will be heading to Vancouver and Toronto just because this government can't get it right. Fewer companies will end up investing in our province in research and development, in development of new inventions, because they are cutting from those grants as well. They are laying off people at Alberta Innovates.

While we are losing all these important things, we are seeing our property taxes go up, we are seeing our income taxes go up, and we are paying more to get less. Money is being diverted, essentially, from our schools, from our health care, from our community organizations, from the lottery fund, from the cancer prevention

legacy fund, all of those programs, just to fund their \$4.7 billion tax giveaway. That's on page 144 of the budget, just in case. We have also seen reductions in capital spending. Two projects, the green line in Calgary and investment in the LRT in Edmonton, are in jeopardy as well.

I think the government needs to think about it. This was not what they promised Albertans. Albertans went with their promise on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. That's what their mandate was all about. But anything and everything contained in this bill is not helping us create any jobs. It's not helping us improve our economy. It's not helping us build the pipeline. Instead, it's taking things away from Albertans, what they already have. It's attacking their livelihoods at a time when the government has money, \$4.7 billion, to hand out to companies who haven't been able to create any jobs because the market conditions are not there. The government is not interested in addressing those things, in addressing the takeaway capacity issues and in addressing new market access issues, which will automatically, I guess, attract investment, and with that investment will come jobs.

But here so far under this government's watch we have seen 27,000 jobs lost. We have downtown Calgary, where people are still looking for jobs. Just in the last week or so we lost 1,000 jobs. All of those jobs were lost because of this government's policies. They didn't fund the CBE properly. The CBE let go 300 teachers and instructors, support staff. Because of government policy, Calgarians are losing jobs, and that will also compromise our education. I don't think that is what Albertans voted for, what the UCP promised during the election. They said that they would fully fund education. Now we are seeing job losses, and then they find somebody to blame – in this case it's the Calgary board of education – and commit not to do anything. They know that their policies have resulted in that job loss. We are seeing cuts at the University of Calgary, and we are seeing cuts at Mount Royal, all because of this government's policies.

This bill, essentially, is helping them implement those policies, which clearly don't help Albertans, which don't create any jobs, which don't create any investment, which don't help us with the economy or help us with pipelines. They don't want to reconsider or listen to Albertans who are asking them to reconsider their policies. Every other day we see that their big mandate gets humiliated on the steps of the Legislature. Teachers are protesting, nurses are protesting, nonprofits are protesting, and kids are protesting: everybody is protesting against your policies. So I guess you need to listen to Albertans. You need to listen to what they need, what their priorities are, and reconsider these things which will clearly make life more difficult for Albertans, which will clearly not help us with jobs or the economy.

**11:20**

Moreover, one more thing that I want to mention is that when we became government, Alberta was the only province without a child tax benefit. I'm proud to be part of the government who brought forward that child tax benefit. Now what we are seeing here is that they are making changes to the base component that is paid to families. They lowered it to a net income of \$41,000. Madam Chair, that will impact many families in your riding, in my riding, and all across this province. That child tax benefit change will impact 165,000 Albertans with this new threshold. There are 55,000 Albertans who will completely lose this. In the term of the previous government . . .

**The Chair:** Are there other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.



**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise this morning to speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I've spoken numerous times in the House about this omnibus bill that's being proposed and the many concerns that I'm hearing from industry and from my community, whether it's parents or community leaders, nonprofits. There are so many that have concerns about this piece of legislation that's coming through. There's just so much that's incorporated into this. It's hard to break it all down and talk about what the impacts are.

As the critic for culture I've been an advocate for industry, for encouraging government to listen to industry. I know that something that is of grave concern is that the minister of culture stood in the House and praised her colleague the minister of economic development and tourism, saying that now that the budget has been introduced, they will be starting consultation with industry. Well, Madam Chair, this is a little bit too late. We've heard loud and clear – our side has, for sure – the concerns that they have with this legislation and the budget that's been proposed, about going forward the way it is. We know that industry is pleased overall that it's moving to a tax credit, but we have continued to hear, prior to the budget being introduced and prior to this piece of legislation being introduced, that they have concern with there being a cap.

I know as the critic for culture that this is something I take very seriously. I've been meeting with industry all across the province to hear their concerns, and I'm being included in their correspondence to government and to the Premier with their suggestions. It's really unfortunate that I hear members opposite stand up in the House and make no reference to hearing these concerns. I know they're being brought forward because I'm being included in the letters and the e-mails.

I just am concerned that this isn't resonating with members of the government and that they're not listening to industry when they're saying very loud and clear that the way that this is proposed is definitely going to be damaging to their industry. It's taking away jobs, an incredible number of jobs, that are here in the province, good-paying jobs that we know are part of diversifying our province. We have a workforce that lives in the province, that works in the province, that wants to remain in the province of Alberta, and they have solutions on how that can happen. The government isn't listening to those suggestions.

There's considerable concern when we're hearing that projects are leaving the province. We hear from this government over and over about how they want to bring investment into the province. Madam Chair, we have it here right now. We have incredible talent in the province of Alberta when it comes to the film industry, and they're leaving because of the decisions that this government is making. They talk about bringing investment in, yet it doesn't seem to be a priority that they want to maintain what's already here.

We know that industry hires so many across the province in different fields, whether it's catering, whether it's truck driving, whether it's hair and makeup. There's so much that's diverse about the film industry that it just simply doesn't make sense to me why this government wouldn't efficiently fund it, wouldn't efficiently support it, and won't even sit down and talk to industry about how they can make those investments stay in the province. I know that when I hear from producers that they are leaving to go to provinces like B.C., that is a huge concern. Why the government doesn't see that this is an incredible opportunity to continue to invest in this strong industry in the province is mind-boggling to me, Madam Chair.

I would just like to share with the House some correspondence that I've received from numerous members of industry that have also reached out to the government. I haven't heard it yet come up in the House in any of this debate. I haven't heard members of the

government make reference to any of the concerns or solutions that industry has brought forward. So as the culture critic it is my absolute pleasure to stand in the House and to give voice to the industry that has been pleading with the government to make changes, pleading with the government to hear them. It's not happening, and I'm just concerned that their voice isn't being shared, so I would like to be able to stand and share some of the experiences and some of the correspondence that I know the government is getting, but it isn't being talked about.

The first letter that I received as the critic says:

Dear hon. Premier and ministers,

The following post is from a gentleman who worked for many years in the Alberta film industry and has had to move to British Columbia to be able to continue to work. He has given me permission to pass on some of his posts. Please read this carefully and understand the urgency with which we ask you to change what you have set up for our industry. We ask you to remove the cap and open the doors to the film industry in Alberta, open the doors for business in Alberta.

I am one person in a large industry. In the past two days I have turned down shows from three media companies. One is the richest company in the world today. The other is the third richest. Both companies are tech companies that are new in creating broadcast content for entertainment. The companies will hire hundreds of Canadians to create that content at middle-class to upper-middle-class wages. The average age of the new workers they will be hiring will be mid-30s and a number of mid-20s, all the way up to us old veterans. As I hung up the phone with a producer from the world's richest company, my first thought was: where are they going to find crews? None of these shows are on any active rumour lists. Vancouver is at maximum capacity. I just happened to be contacted very early in their planning.

As I read about cutbacks in education, health, environment, et cetera, in Alberta, I think: what are they doing? You need to get your province working right away to add to your revenue stream, not lay them off waiting for the oil fairy to show up and give you another boom to [expletive] away. UCP, you are either open for business in your province or you are not. Either way, they better figure it out soon because this new media tech content boom, like all booms, will level out into a smarter, more streamlined model at some point.

All shows start with a person and a bank account set up where they choose to do business. People are hired; then the millions pour into the economy of the place they choose. If they like the place, they return over and over again. In the case of one Hollywood network, they produce most of their broadcast content in Vancouver. As for the current content boom, even Hollywood says that this cannot be maintained at this level, yet nobody knows when it will slow down. The main reason for a slowdown: there are not enough top crews available in the world to produce all the content on the books right now. Wow. An industry crying for more people to train and then pay well.

So, Alberta, you have a choice. Add to your provincial coffers by putting in a sustainable program to keep Alberta rolling. By doing that, you can get more people working, which means more taxes. More taxes means less cuts to services. Less cuts to services means happy services. How hard can that be?

Thank you for your time.

Joanne Jacobsen, Alberta film and television makeup artist.

11:30

Now, I don't recall any of that content being discussed in the House by the government. I think there are incredible points when it comes to the validity of the investment that the film industry makes here in the province of Alberta. Again another story shared of people leaving the province to go to B.C., where they're a supported industry in that province. We already have it here. Why

not sustain it, help it grow? We know that productions are looking to come to the province. We know Netflix, Disney: they love Alberta. We have world-renowned crews with incredible, incredible experience and history right here in the province who want to stay in Alberta. They've shared over and over that they love living in Alberta and hate the fact that they're now forced to leave the province because of this budget.

When we look at what's been proposed in Bill 20, like I had mentioned, moving to a tax credit is absolutely something that the film industry has asked for, but they want the cap removed. They're saying that this is a barrier that is going to impact them, and it's not enough. It's being supportive of one part of it but then feeling like the other piece, that's so essential, isn't there. While government has taken a piece of what they've asked for, which is complementary, it's not actually going to be effective with what they've proposed. Industry is saying loud and clear that it's an opportunity right now when film is booming in the province of Alberta.

This is going to absolutely, catastrophically, impact for years to come. We know that when productions leave the province, crews leave the province, and they're not going to come back because they're going to be successful somewhere else. To me, it is an incredible shame that we're losing out on all of that knowledge, that talent, and those good-paying jobs that so many rely on here in the province.

We talk about being able to diversify our economy. Well, the film industry is a natural place to do that. I've made statements in the House from someone who had experience in oil and gas, who worked on a rig, and had an incredible comparison between life working in the oil and gas industry and working on a film crew. It was skills that he had learned in the oil and gas industry. He was no longer able to work in that field and is now thriving in an industry where his skill set is just transferable. It's something that absolutely makes sense to me, Madam Chair. When we hear that people are being laid off in oil and gas, where can they go? This is a natural fit for those jobs that are continuing to be lost in the province.

My son is 25, and he is a fifth-generation oil and gas worker. He is a journeyman insulator. He has seen the impact on the economy and what it means to work in the oil and gas field. He needs to diversify, and his skill set is something that can be easily transferred to this industry. He's got so many opportunities here, but why would you take a career that you have in oil and gas and take the time to invest in a new industry such as film when you know that it's not being funded and you know that the industry is saying: we're leaving the province. You've got all of these incredible opportunities for these young people, like I had mentioned, in their 20s and in their 30s and, as he has referred to himself to, an old veteran. They're able to take their skill set and work within the film industry, but they're leaving.

It just doesn't make sense to me why the government waited to talk to the film industry after the budget was introduced, after this piece of legislation was introduced. It just says to me that it's not something that's a priority, and it's potentially too little too late. That's something that is very frightening.

I know that government can make a difference. They can create an amendment and propose it. We saw them do that with the recent amendment to this specific section of the act that made applications possible for January 2020 as opposed to waiting until April 1, which is a positive first step. So we know that they've been listening somewhat to what industry is asking for, but we're still not seeing the commitments that they had made in their platform. They made promises to the film industry in their platform that are not reflected in the legislation that they're proposing, which, to me, is a promise made and a promise not kept, which is very concerning.

Now, I'm very appreciative that the minister is meeting with industry, or they are saying that that is going to happen, and we on this side of the House are paying attention because we can't trust what they're saying. The information that industry is providing to them isn't coming through in the decisions and the conversations that we're hearing from members of government. They're pleading. They're writing letters to their MLAs, they're writing letters to the Premier, to the ministers with their solutions, yet they're not talking about it, which is very concerning to me, because I'm receiving that correspondence in overwhelming amounts.

I know that it is a solution that makes sense. It's a solution that's going to continue to have industry thriving in the province, and it's going to keep them working here in our province, which I know every member in this Chamber wants to see. We want to see job creation. We want to see Alberta be successful, and we have an industry that's already here and is willing to continue and wants to continue to create that environment.

We know that in rural Alberta, when you have a production come in, that means that hotels are busy, that the local coffee shops are busy. Catering: we know that they're socializing; they're eating out for dinner. They're doing all of those things that are just creating an incredible economic impact in that small community, and it creates buzz in the community. When you know that there are actors like Bill Murray that are going to be at your local diner, it creates an excitement there, and it creates more people to come into that community to experience that with a chance of being part of a production, however that looks.

When you hear people in industry talk about their excitement and their passion, it's hard to not get excited about what they do for a living. It's something that I would say the majority of Albertans experience. We all enjoy at some point going and watching a movie or watching a documentary, and knowing that it was Alberta made, as an Albertan it makes me proud. When we hear about documentaries of experiences that Albertans have, I know that it's something that's very touching. Knowing that it came from Alberta, that it's about Alberta's history, whether it's about an organization or an individual, there's great pride in that, and it's something that we are world renowned for.

People from Hollywood look to Alberta. We have some of the most beautiful landscapes here in this province that I think the world should experience, and the way to do that is by investing in an industry that wants to help. They want to work with government. They want to continue to see this thrive in this economy, and they're just being told no. This piece of legislation does not do enough to support an industry that is telling the government that they are leaving.

When we're looking at ways to diversify, when we're looking at ways to create jobs, they have a plan to do that. It's concerning, Madam Chair, that the government isn't listening and isn't making those incredible decisions that so easily could alleviate that fear and alleviate the mass exodus out of our province.

**11:40**

I have another e-mail letter that I would like to share. It's to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Dear Minister,

Prairie Dog Film & Television is an award-winning dramatic production company dedicated to scripted television series production. We have filmed 198 episodes of television, creating thousands of jobs for Albertans. We have impacted our local economy by injecting over \$40 million into the Alberta community by hiring Alberta crews, cast, and businesses.

Our company provides the highest ratio of Alberta spend per project, meaning we hire Albertans to be the content creators and decision-makers. Our goal is to increase the above- and

below-the-line positions in Alberta. To do this, we hire and train from within. We're the only Alberta organization that not only films its shows in Alberta but completes postproduction in the province, offering more jobs that spend money within Alberta.

In May 2019 our company moved its head office from Edmonton to Calgary to grow our business and develop a new crime series called *Tribal*, airing on APTN in February 2020. We proudly film the series in Calgary and are currently in postproduction in our new postproduction facility here in the city.

At this time the impact to our company is severe. The cost of investment to uproot the company and move to the production centre of Calgary, build a postproduction facility so we don't have to send the work to Toronto or Vancouver, and relocate our team members is significant. The longer the government continues to freeze our industry and reduce our incentives, the more impact it will have in the long term. Our talented crews will leave if they can't sustain full-time work, leaving us with unexperienced and limited amounts of crew to continue our craft.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 20 here this morning. I think that yesterday I was focusing on the bracket creep that we saw in this bill. The government is increasing personal income tax for every Albertan by a number of \$600 million during the course of this action. Increasing personal income tax I think goes against almost everything that this government was running on in this last election and the general rhetoric that they seem to indulge in on a daily basis both inside and outside of this House. So I think that everyone in Alberta should know that this budget through Bill 20 is increasing everybody's personal income tax with this tool or this contrived process of bracket creep.

Today I'd like to talk about tax credits. I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs did a great job just talking about the loss of support for the film industry, but this budget through Bill 20 also inflicts significant damage to business incentives that had been in place for a number of years and that businesspeople built their plans on. They might have moved or built new business interests here in the province of Alberta based on these tax credits.

You know, tax credits are a very effective way by which you can incent business development in any number of areas. I know that our government used them quite a lot in regard to building a value-added petrochemical industry here in the province with the incentives around polyethylene and polypropylene plants, that we see now being constructed in Alberta. Tax credits were the foundation for the success of those businesses being given incentives to build here in Alberta.

A number of tax credits that we saw here that were very successful as well included the equity capital tax credit for businesses doing research and development and the commercialization of new technology. This was part of the Alberta jobs plan, and – boom – suddenly it's gone. We know that, for example, tech industries such as the video game industry took a significant hit in regard to the choice that this government is making, as part of Bill 20, to take these credits out. We know that probably there have been a number of testimonials and people, tech companies voting with their feet, quite frankly, making their intentions known that they would leave the province based on the lack of support that they received from this government by cancelling these tax credits.

The community economic development corporation tax credit was also cancelled. Alberta-based investors in community

economic development who are encouraging rural economic development or making a social impact in the community were eligible for this community economic development corporation tax credit. This was a way by which we could see investment in areas outside of the major cities. It's gone, much to the concern of those who were counting on this credit.

The capital investment tax credit: cancelled. Again, this was a nonrefundable tax credit that was valued at 10 per cent of a corporation's eligible capital expenditure, up to \$5 million. The capital investment tax credit encouraged companies to make timely capital investments by returning a percentage of the company's costs, including the purchase of machinery, equipment, buildings, for projects related to manufacturing processes or tourism infrastructure – right? – again, a very, very focused, targeted investment that was very popular, that encouraged capital investment and encouraged small business to expand to meet their needs.

Now, I know that the government has words and rhetoric around the cancellation of credits like this, saying that, well, they're going to have a corporate tax reduction that's global and covers off anything that might be lost from these tax credits. But, you know, we heard loud and clear, from the very people that had the rug pulled out from under them in regard to these tax credits that they built a business model on, that, no, what most of these small businesses do, especially tech industries, is that they fold back their profit, fold back their capital and money into making further investments in their company, because they're growing. It's not this static thing that other, large corporate entities might be, that take a corporate tax reduction and just take it as profit-taking or take it as liquid capital and move it out of the province, as we saw with many companies choosing just to take the cheque and go, right? With tax credits, you know that you're targeting something that will be reinvested back into the Alberta economy.

In fact, we have demonstrable evidence that these tax credits were succeeding. In the absence of them, as the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs pointed out very clearly, they have to vote with their feet, right? The film industry is super competitive, and it's super mobile. We saw productions literally pack up in mid-season sometimes because they can shoot something like *Fargo*, the show, in Alberta or they can shoot it back in North Dakota, where *Fargo* actually exists, if they're giving them a better incentive to film there. This same scenario is playing out with tech industries and tourism investment as well.

**11:50**

Another tax credit is gone, the interactive digital media tax credit, a 25 per cent refundable tax credit for labour costs associated with interactive digital media activities, to support growth in the interactive media industry. This encouraged corporations to stay here in Alberta, talented entrepreneurs of the province. The program was available to corporations to create digital media, in particular gaming. Gone. Gone, Madam Chair. Left close behind in the wake would be those people making choices to invest elsewhere.

The scientific research and experimental development tax credit: cancelled. This was providing tax credits to corporations, partnerships, individuals to conduct scientific research and experimental development. This was a tax credit that was built in tandem with a federal program, which is still there, right? Often businesses or development institutions, universities and so forth, and scientific research look for grants and/or incentives that can be combined at different levels of government. They count on that partnership to build this development and experiment in scientific research, that often provides game-changing industrial

development. We look at some of the work that's been done in artificial intelligence here in the province of Alberta.

Nanotechnology, biomedical research, and so forth: it's a long game, Madam Chair. It isn't something you just produce and give away like you cut a cheque for a corporate tax cut and then they get the money the next day and they take it off to put in the bank in Switzerland or wherever – right? – or invest in other states or provinces, because they got the money, and they run. Instead, scientific research tax incentives and tax credits allow long-term research that pays significant dividends by helping to diversify the economy. Making investment in biotechnology, in nanotechnology, in artificial intelligence, and so forth is a wise, long-term investment.

We must make decisions in this Legislative Assembly that don't just affect next week but affect the next decade, the next generation. Clearly, with Bill 20, this budget generally is an affront to that cause, to that idea that somehow we can clear the ledger from tax credits and so forth, that we can make these reductions – we reduce and cut cheques to large, profitable corporations, and we look good for the media cycle next month rather than the business environment and diversification over years and decades.

Shame on this government for doing something that I find absolutely stunning – this list goes on and on – the attack and the affront of increasing personal income tax, pulling the rug out from under a whole range of tax credits that were functioning very well,

thank you very much. You know, you end up in a worse place. You might be able to show that your ledger is reduced for this next fiscal season . . .

**The Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt, but we will now need to rise and report progress on Bill 20.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. van Dijken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 20.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.  
The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I got that kind of nod. With the fact that we're at about four minutes to noon here, I think it would make sense for us to adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m. today.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:55 a.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 27, 2019

Day 48

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 27, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's my honour today to introduce a familiar face to the Chamber, former Member for Stony Plain Mr. Ken Lemke.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a couple of school groups visiting us this afternoon from the constituency of Edmonton-McClung as well as the constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. If our students would like to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

In the Speaker's gallery this afternoon is a very special guest of the Member for Livingstone-MacLeod. His daughter Elisabeth Reid is here to see her dad in action.

Hon. members, this afternoon in the galleries are guests of the Minister of Education: members of the research branch, evidence and labour relations sector, and system excellence division.

Also in the galleries are guests of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. Please welcome members of Fertilizer Canada.

Guest of the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: welcome acclaimed documentary filmmaker Ms Giselle Portenier.

Also – I don't see them, but they may be arriving a little bit later – visiting the Member for Central Peace-Notley: Michael Saiuw and Christina Cunningham from Vertex Pharmaceuticals, as well as members of the cystic fibrosis community in the new developments of CF drug treatment.

If you would like to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

### Female Genital Mutilation

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring attention to a practice that impacts the human rights of women and girls around the world. This year, as part of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence we are also looking at how we can make an impact here at home, in Alberta, and beyond.

One of these areas is the practice of female genital mutilation or cutting. This despicable practice happens on every continent except Antarctica. Over 200 million women and girls around the world have been cut. The practice occurs because of myths and misinformation, but the facts are that this violent act has no benefits whatsoever. It does only harm. A girl who has undergone female genital mutilation or cutting can suffer from lifelong health complications, even death. Regardless of these facts, up to 4 million girls are at risk of being cut every year. That's one girl every 11 seconds. Girls are born perfect in every way, and this practice is a method of sexual control.

Mr. Speaker, female genital mutilation and cutting has been an indictable offence in the Criminal Code of Canada since 1997. Any parent who performs this procedure or gives permission for it to be performed on their child can be charged. I was shocked when I learned that, to date, there has not been a single prosecution. This is because the practice is surrounded by secrecy, and the prevalence of it in our province is unknown.

That is why tonight we are hosting a special screening of *In the Name of Your Daughter* at the Royal Alberta Museum with film director Giselle Portenier, who we have sitting in the gallery. Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of the Assembly and the public to attend. Giselle Portenier's film gives a voice to the girls who haven't had voices for thousands of years. This inspiring film, shot in northern Tanzania, is about girls' courage, standing up for their rights, and preventing and addressing female genital mutilation and cutting. This film is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the complexity of these issues. It is about Rhobi Samwelly, who risked her own life fighting this harmful practice of cutting the clitoris and protecting girls in her safe house. Following the film, we will be holding a panel discussion to talk about female genital mutilation and cutting and gender-based violence.

This practice is not based in one faith, culture, or religious text. It's not about politics, and it's not about party lines. The time is now, where we must all stand up together and end female genital mutilation and cutting. We must end violence against women and girls. This is our responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to respond on behalf of the Official Opposition.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost 30 years ago activists at the inaugural women's global leadership institute started the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, that runs from November 25 to December 10 every year, ending on Human Rights Day. Every year organizations around the world unite to call on governments and individuals to put an end to gender-based violence around the world.

It is important to note that when we talk about gender-based violence, we acknowledge that there are multiple genders. We know that trans, nonbinary individuals, and two-spirit people are at a higher risk of being targeted both here and globally. No matter where you live, women and gender-diverse people are not immune. They're disproportionately at risk.

Despite almost three decades of activism the statistics remain alarming. Up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime. One hundred and thirty-seven women across the world are killed by a member of their own family every day. Rape continues to be used as a weapon of oppression. At least 200 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation.

Indigenous women are physically and sexually assaulted almost three times more often than nonindigenous women here in Canada. Indigenous women also experience domestic violence at higher rates and are roughly seven times more likely to be killed by a serial killer.

Approximately 50 million adolescent girls world-wide have experienced forced sex at some point in their life.

Transgender women of colour are living in crisis, especially black transgender women. This year alone in the United States at least 22 transgender and gender-nonconforming people have been killed, and all but one were black.

School-related gender-based violence is a major obstacle to universal schooling and the right to education for girls. Women still report instances of sexual harassment in the workplace that far

eclipse their male counterparts. Eighty-two per cent of women parliamentarians reported having experienced some form of psychological violence while serving their terms.

This is not an exhaustive list of the stats. We know that there's much, much more, including the victims we'll never hear about.

Mr. Speaker, we – community members, society, all members of this House – must continue to support all efforts to end gender-based violence. This means talking about it, and it also means action. It means making laws that support those efforts. It means ensuring that organizations have adequate funding to address these issues. And it also means supporting survivors both in our communities and abroad. We've got a long, long way to go, but I know that with concerted efforts from all of us, we can get there.

Thank you.

## Members' Statements

### Culture Ministry Alcohol Purchase

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a fiscal Conservative, and I'm proud to be part of a government that is leading by example when it comes to MLA wages and benefits. That's why I was so surprised to hear from the NDP that the minister of culture and tourism was purchasing enormous quantities of liquor. Was it for her own personal consumption? Worst of all, the NDP claimed that the liquor was being purchased from a UCP supporter. Cronyism, booze, fiscal mismanagement: the story was too good to be true.

Well, as is all too frequently the case when it comes to NDP allegations, the story was too good to be true. The liquor was actually purchased so that it could be sold to thirsty patrons of the Royal Alberta Museum. Strangely enough, the Royal Alberta Museum had been purchasing from the very same business when it was under NDP management. This just proves that when it comes to the NDP, there is one thing you can count on: misinformation, fear, and smears. This story is about as real as their promises to balance the budget.

The thing is that this isn't even the first time the NDP has been caught red-handed. Only a few months ago the NDP was forced to issue a public apology for spreading misinformation about a UCP nomination candidate. But they didn't learn then, and they keep inventing new ways to misinform Albertans, like their ongoing attempt with the price tag of the job-creation tax cut.

1:40

You see, Mr. Speaker, while our government and my colleagues here on this side of the aisle will continue to deal in facts and numbers, the NDP can continue to deal in fear and numerology. I'm proud to stand with this Premier and this government to continue delivering on our plan to create jobs, grow the economy, and build pipelines. That's what Albertans want, and that's what Albertans elected us to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigations

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, for the benefit of my friends on the government benches I'd just like to remind them of some of the many scandals the Election Commissioner they voted to fire was investigating. Since December of last year the commissioner was investigating irregular contributions to the Jeff Callaway campaign and, clearly, for good reason. It has been learned that Callaway's campaign was funded by a single \$60,000

corporate donation, which was divided up between people who claimed to be donating their own money to Callaway.

Callaway's campaign, as you might recall, was created to help the Premier attack Brian Jean. The Premier's director of issues management would write speeches, debate talking points, create graphics and videos, and give strategic direction to Callaway's campaign. They even chose the date and wrote the speech where Callaway dropped out and endorsed the Premier. To sum it up, Mr. Speaker, fake donors for a fake campaign cooked up to attack an honest man in Brian Jean.

Now, the Premier, House leader, and Justice minister can stomp their feet and declare this fear and smear as much as they'd like, but let's look at the objective facts. The Election Commissioner, that this Premier fired, has issued 58 fines, totalling over \$211,000, and fined 16 individuals and companies. The Election Commissioner and his team had been working hard to uncover the details of this deep scandal, and he was still working up until this Premier decided that he had had enough about accountability and that a transparent government wasn't worth a million dollars over five years.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are watching and waiting for answers on this scandal. Let's hope that this government and Premier are finally ready to give it to them. Frankly, though, I'm not holding my breath.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka is rising on a statement.

### AgSafe Alberta Society

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently received a copy of a letter written by a constituent, Tom Kootstra. He's a dairy farmer located near Ponoka. He's also the chair of Alberta Milk. He writes for Alberta Milk:

We are writing you to express our strong support of the excellent work delivered by the AgSafe Alberta Society (ASAS). Alberta Milk represents and is solely funded by the 507 dairy farm families in the province. We are governed by an elected Board of Directors of dairy farmers.

As one of the ten founding members of ASAS, Alberta Milk and its farmer members are fully supportive of the mandate and programming deliverables of ASAS. The strong farmer awareness and educational approach of the ASAS has helped to raise the importance and profile of farm safety across our province. Farm families deserve support as they work to keep their farms and ranches safe and healthy for their family members and their staff. Dairy farmers, like all Alberta farmers wish for all ... to arrive home safely each evening.

AgSafe is an industry-led organization that delivers farm safety management tools, resources, and programs for Alberta farmers and ranchers. The NDP government's passing of the disastrous Bill 6 didn't improve farm safety. As Tom says: while you can't legislate ag safety, AgSafe seeks to create a culture of safety. AgSafe is a coalition of 29 agricultural producer groups representing 97 per cent of the ag industry across this province. With one voice they advocate on behalf of farmers and ranchers. AgSafe has done tremendous work in terms of advocating for farm safety across the province. They are an organization made by farmers for farmers.

I take my hat off to the Alberta farmers and their efforts to be organized for safe farm families. I want to acknowledge the excellent work provided by the society on behalf of Alberta farm families. Great work, Alberta Milk and all of the ag member groups of this coalition.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, prior to moving to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, I would like to take a brief moment and

opportunity to remind you all that the alert-ready emergency system is scheduled to be tested in Alberta during the proceedings this afternoon. Please ensure that your electronic devices are turned off for approximately the next 30 minutes as I would hate for anyone to have to pay a fine for an electronic device going off.

### Climate Change Policy and Job Creation

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, last week Albertans received concerning news on two fronts. The first front was jobs and the economy. The city of Calgary alone saw 1,000 jobs lost in just one week in both the private and public sector, lost because a \$4.7 billion handout to corporations doesn't create jobs and because public-sector workers like teachers and postsecondary workers are paying for that handout with their own jobs. With three more years of government cutbacks in the future and with unstoppable structural change leading to permanent reductions in Alberta's workforce, the prospect of creating jobs has never looked more bleak.

The second front was on climate change. The United Nations reported that the world is on track to warm by more than three degrees Celsius if we don't drastically reduce carbon emissions. Albertans will pay the price with increased droughts, floods, fires, and disease.

But there's good news. We can tackle both of these problems at once with smart government policy, policies like investing in more renewable energy, like wind, solar, and geothermal power; policies like investing in energy efficiency in our homes and in our industries; policies like investing in more public transit, improving the existing systems in our cities and expanding public transit to more people living in rural Alberta. All of these investments would more than make up for the losses we've seen in the traditional energy economy and give thousands upon thousands of Albertans the ability to live and raise their families in prosperity and retire in dignity.

Albertans have been hurting for a long time, and we're all looking forward to the next economic boom, but we don't have to wait for the next boom. We can create one, a green boom. The best part of a green boom: this one won't go bust.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East has a statement.

### Federal Energy Policies

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The results of the 2019 federal election were a crushing blow to many Albertans. Over the past four years our energy industry was crippled by the devastating policies enacted by the Trudeau government. Legislation such as the antipipeline Bill C-69 and antitanker Bill C-48 were direct attacks on our province. Bill C-69 pretty much guarantees that building future pipelines will be an immense struggle, even more so than the constantly changing wall of legal barriers that is required right now.

At the very least, the federal Liberal government put on a facade and pretended they were semi pro pipeline. That much cannot be said for the federal NDP. They are completely and avidly antipipeline, antienergy, and anti-Alberta. If Trudeau works with the federal NDP, it could spell the death of one of the nation's most important industries.

Our province's energy industry is the source of immense wealth, wealth that benefits not just our province but all Canadians. Our contributions to federal programs such as CPP and equalization far outweigh the benefits we receive. If the other provinces want to reap the benefits of our resources, they should also be willing to help ensure the success and prosperity of the industry.

Not only is it hypocritical of other provinces to demand the benefits of our energy sector while at the same time trying to stop it at every turn; it is divisive and unhealthy for our country. We must work together as Albertans and as Canadians to ensure national unity. Provinces must build each other up, not tear each other down.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Oil Transportation and Production Curtailment

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the first things this Premier and the UCP government did was rip up the oil-by-rail contracts. This meant we no longer have the capacity to ship 120,000 barrels per day. This further hurt our ability to get our resources to market, and it meant that the Premier had to extend curtailment.

This government doesn't have a plan for market access, and it's hurting jobs and investment. Drilling rights auctions are on track for a record low, and we have had one of the lowest number of active drilling rigs on record. For the next year, oil drilling is expected to be flat at best. Each working drilling rig supports 145 direct and indirect jobs. There are currently over 30 per cent fewer active rigs than last year. Assuming that the lifting of curtailment would return us to 2018 levels of drilling, that's 6,815 jobs we are missing out on due to the extension of curtailment. The curtailment extension is hurting investment in the province. The CEO of Imperial Oil says that the \$2.6 billion Aspen oil sands project in northern Alberta, announced a year ago, will remain on the sidelines until the province completely ends its oil curtailment program.

1:50

The Premier claimed his \$4.7 billion corporate handout would create jobs and investment in Alberta, but this hasn't happened here. Husky received \$233 million and then turned around and laid off hundreds of employees. EnCana has moved its head office to the U.S. They are investing elsewhere. Since the corporate handout was implemented, there are fewer jobs in the natural resource sector, layoffs, and companies moving, precisely the kinds of things this handout was supposed to prevent. It proves they haven't created the market conditions to attract investment. It proves they got the economy completely wrong.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Farm Worker Wages

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in democratic societies, when people work, their employers are required to pay them. It's kind of a post Industrial Revolution sort of thing, but now under this Premier's bill there's no guarantee that many farm workers in Alberta will get paid at all. This isn't reversing Bill 6, which I understand was in their platform; this is reversing hundreds of years of basic labour and human rights. To the Premier: why do you believe farm workers in Alberta should have to work for as little as \$2 or \$3 an hour or maybe nothing at all?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we just heard right there the contempt that the NDP has for Alberta's farmers, the leader of the NDP suggesting that farmers are not going to pay the folks who work for them. You know what? It's our farmers who helped to build our society. It's our farmers who feed our society. It's our



farmers who make enormous sacrifices, farmers right now who have gone through a terrible year, and the last thing they need is the Official Opposition casting aspersions on them as a bunch of folks who are trying to exploit labour. This government stands by and will defend our farmers.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, this isn't about defending or not defending farmers. This is about making sure basic rights to be paid for your work are still in existence in Alberta. The vast majority of farmers, of course, as with any employer, pay their employees regardless of the law. But there still needs to be a law, because the bill opens the door to abuse by those who would hurt and exploit others. Some of these workers come here on temporary contracts from foreign countries. They need the fundamental protection of a right to be paid. Why do you think they don't need that fundamental right?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the line of questioning is ridiculous and contemptuous of our farmers, who are people who make enormous sacrifices. Every now and then our farmers need a bit of help, and of course they treat their workers well. The NDP distrusted our farmers so much – the NDP, so owned by their union special interests – that they created a law to unionize farm workers. Guess what? There wasn't a single workplace that got unionized, not one. What does that tell us? That our farm workers are happy with their relationship with their farm employers.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't appear to understand what they are doing. Nowhere in North America can you be employed, have legal working hours, and not be paid at least some type of minimum wage. This Premier now has the honour of introducing the most exploitive labour regime on the continent. This is the Alberta disadvantage. This is not about supporting farmers or not. I support farmers, too. And farm workers work hard. Again to the Premier: why do you remove the right for those workers to be paid by right?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the only thing being removed here is the NDP's credibility as they make stuff up that is manifestly untrue, just like yesterday. They made up a \$35,000 liquor purchase by the minister of culture when, in fact, it was purchased by a restaurant starting under the previous NDP government; just like they asserted yesterday that this budget eliminated the low-income transit pass when, in fact, it was renewed by the last budget; just like they make up this so-called \$4.7 billion tax break when, in fact, this year it's \$100 million. Would the NDP please just stop making stuff up?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I will keep doing is reading the documents that that government tables in this House. If they don't like them – I'm sorry – they're their documents.

### Calgary Police Service Funding

**Ms Notley:** Now, the fight against a rise in deadly gun violence has become a daily activity for Calgary police. The Premier cut \$13 million from those police just to pay for his \$4.7 billion corporate handout on page 144. Now the chief is saying that if the city doesn't find new money to backfill it, 85 positions will be lost. Premier, this is your cut. What should Calgarians do, pay more tax or buy a gun and lock their doors?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the crime wave in this province began under the NDP, and it began under their friends in Ottawa, who began stripping away tough-on-crime laws. This government is acting to protect citizens from criminals and from both violent and nonviolent property crime. The Minister of Justice has already begun implementing our platform commitment to hire 50 additional prosecutors, to put more police on the roads. He'll be having an important announcement about that in the days to come. Unlike the NDP, this government stands to defend law-abiding Albertans.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the folks over there really need to stop misleading Albertans. They promised 500 more officers. Instead, we're getting eight new articling students, asking bylaw officers to do more dangerous work, telling rural municipalities to pay more for the few police they already have, creating delays in the court system, and slashing 85 positions from CPS alone. Why won't the Premier admit that the safety and security of Albertans will always come second to his \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the job-creation tax cut actually represents \$100 million in forgone revenue this year. As projected by multiple highly regarded, independent economists, it will lead to the creation of up to 58,000 new full-time private-sector jobs. If we want to grow the resources available to fund public services, we need to restore investor confidence and get this economy moving. That's what the job-creation tax cut is about. They raised taxes on businesses and saw revenues from businesses decline. That was the job crisis they created. We're turning it around.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, they're turning it around for Newfoundland and Wisconsin.

Anyway, 78 shootings, five fatalities, 33 injuries: while this is going on, the Calgary police chief told council that if they decide to freeze taxes, it means a full \$8.4 million hole in their budget. Last spring this Premier claimed that he was the law-and-order guy – indeed, today he did – but he's responsible for cutting 85 positions in his city during a rise in gun violence. To the Premier: your cuts have consequences on the lives of real people, including your neighbours; why are you breaking yet another promise to them?

**Mr. Kenney:** We'll do no such thing, Mr. Speaker. We're not reducing police funding. The municipalities are responsible for their budgets. They're accountable to their taxpayers. Dr. MacKinnon's panel confirmed that provincial grants to municipalities in Alberta are higher than in any other part of the country. That's why we are asking our municipal partners to be part of fiscal responsibility as we reduce overall government spending by 2.8 per cent, less than 3 pennies on the dollar. The NDP's alternative? I guess it's nothing but a sales tax.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Hundreds of students in Calgary walked out of their classes this week to protest the layoffs of 300 of their teachers. I'm deeply moved by this display of love and support that young people are showing towards their teachers, and it's a stark contrast to the blame game that this Premier is playing. We know that the Premier blames the local board, but blame won't teach these kids grade 11, Premier. Why won't the Premier take action to reverse the more than \$30 million in cuts that he's passed on to the Calgary public board?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

2:00

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. CBE's fiscal record is one that all Albertans should be concerned about. They do receive a \$1.2 billion operating budget to oversee 130,000 students. That is roughly a third of what the whole city of Calgary operates on in their operating budget. This board has previously made \$9.1 million in accounting errors, signed a 20-year lease for which they are paying \$6 million more in rent than the total valuation of the building, and often projects deficits and ends the year with significant surpluses.

**Ms Hoffman:** So she blames Calgary public, but last night Red Deer Catholic, where the minister was a trustee for 11 years, announced that they would have to cut an additional \$2.75 million from this year's budget. That's on top of the \$2.3 million that they already cut after their first look at the provincial budget, earlier this year. That's more than \$5 million cut from a budget that this minister helped to write for more than a decade. This Premier keeps saying that he maintained funding for education. That's clearly not true. What does the Premier have to say to the people who voted for him on a promise that he has broken?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I respect the fact that Red Deer Catholic is looking at their budgets and becoming fiscally responsible. But going back to the CBE, the Calgary board of education, who chose to – the first line of defence was to go to 300 contracts, to end the contracts with 300 temporary teachers, disrupting the lives of those teachers and those students. That is unacceptable.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, the minister just said that they weren't fiscally responsible when she was the board chair. You've got to be kidding me.

Also, last night the Edmonton public board began planning for their 2020 budget, and they are anticipating 8 to 10 per cent cuts based on the data from the minister. The board is going to use up their reserves and will be facing hundreds of layoffs. So the Premier can't say that he's surprised; boards have given him notice. What's happening in Calgary will happen in Edmonton. Is the Premier going to stick to his \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout at the cost of these teachers, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I, again, sympathize with the teachers, the students, the families, but this was a decision made by the Calgary board of education which was very rash. It ended the contracts of 300 temporary teachers. I have ordered an independent financial audit and a governance review because at the end of the day they have a \$1.2 billion budget, and they are not meeting the needs of their students. Albertans overwhelmingly elected our government to live within our means and get our finances in order. As a public body the CBE has a responsibility to assist in this endeavour while still supporting their students . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising with a question.

#### Election Commissioner's Office

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, last week this government raced to fire the Election Commissioner and stop his investigation in its tracks.

Presumably, the office of Lorne Gibson is full of sensitive files about alleged voter fraud and all of the nefarious actions taken to ensure this Premier won the UCP leadership race. Bill 22 was given royal assent on Friday. Can the Premier inform the House if the Election Commissioner's office is still open and functioning, and if not, can you please inform the House what happened to the sensitive material in the office?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer, who is an independent officer of this Legislature, has already answered all of the hon. member's questions. I suggest that she refer to his press release, and if she has further questions, she can contact the Chief Electoral Officer. But this is another example of what the main point is: no one can trust what the NDP said. It's just like yesterday, when they accused the minister of culture of buying \$35,000 worth of liquor for her office. That was ridiculous. It turned out that it was for a museum, and using the same supplier that was in place under the NDP government. Here's the reality: the NDP make things up. Albertans don't believe them.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Mr. Speaker, last week I wrote to the CEO of Elections Alberta to ensure that the records in the commissioner's office are preserved properly. This is critical to ensuring that any investigation being conducted into the UCP leadership race is seen through and that justice is served. I asked for a report back to the Legislature on the process for storing and transferring those records, and I have yet to hear back. To the Premier: do you support my call for a report from Elections Alberta? Will you do everything in your power to ensure that it's provided to this House?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this side of the House supports the independent officer of the Legislature. The CEO of Elections Alberta has served this Chamber for a while and, in my experience, has done a good job and was reappointed actually by the NDP when they were in government. Again, back to my earlier point. Nobody can trust what the NDP is saying because they just make things up, just like yesterday standing in the House and, again, accusing the minister of culture of buying over \$30,000 worth of liquor, when it turned out that it was associated with a restaurant and a regular purchase, and then defamed, in my opinion, a good, hard-working business in the province of Alberta who provides liquor to that establishment.

**Ms Sweet:** Our leader also stated that she will be filing further complaints about the vote on Bill 22 to the Ethics Commissioner. Those complaints are forthcoming. Let's remember that the commissioner did warn members of this House under investigation or linked to investigations to be very cautious. The Justice minister's response to her warning was to take to Twitter, with a Trump-like response: no conflict. People clearly loved that response. To the Premier: since the commissioner's warning have you been diligent and reached out to the Ethics Commissioner to determine if you are, in fact, in conflict?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we know that the Ethics Commissioner has actually called out that hon. member on several occasions for abusing the process when it comes to contacting the Ethics Commissioner.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we are confident that we were within the Conflicts of Interest Act and that members who participated in the debate were within the Conflicts of Interest Act. Yes, as I said, our staff have talked to the Ethics Commissioner, and we think that we are within the Conflicts of Interest Act. We take that very, very seriously. We also take her time very, very seriously, and I suggest

that that hon. member heed her advice and stop wasting that independent officer's time.

### Educational Curriculum Content

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, I was sadly not shocked when I received a letter from a concerned Calgary parent about politics in her son's grade 10 social studies class. He brought home a test reflecting a deeply concerning anti oil and gas rhetoric with correct answers being: oil sands development means the destruction of tracts of forests, and oil sands development should have more restrictions on it. To the Minister of Education: why are anti-Alberta and anti oil and gas attacks passing as curriculum in our school system? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. I think the Minister of Education has the opportunity to answer the question before anyone else.

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, this is deeply troubling. Alberta has a great story to tell when it comes to our responsible energy industry and the tens of thousands of workers who make a living from oil and gas. Alberta's energy industry and the prosperity it creates builds schools not just in Alberta but right across Canada. To hear about this type of rhetoric emerging in our classrooms is troubling. Our educators have a duty to tell the truth about our responsible energy industry. We said that we were going to take politics out of the classroom, and that's exactly what we will be doing.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this test also contained attacks on capitalism, free trade, and globalization and given that another one of the correct answers on this test was: free trade is behind many of the ills of the modern world; it should be stopped, and given that this continues to highlight that radical left-wing ideology has made its way into our classrooms, what is the government going to do to ensure that we take politics out of the classroom and instead invest in a generation of critical learners? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. It's very difficult to hear.

**Mr. Schmidt:** You just can't criticize . . .

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar will come to order. It's very difficult to hear the question. I expect I might have a challenge hearing the answer, but I might be surprised. That would be lovely.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This type of ideology has no place in our schools. Teachers do have a wide array of approved course materials in line with the curriculum that are factual, based on evidence, and clear of bias. While some teachers choose to use those materials, others do have the latitude to find resources that are outside of the approved materials. It's frustrating to see that someone would choose to bring their own political ideology into the classroom. We will look into this as we develop a new curriculum. We will get politics out of our education system.

**The Speaker:** Now the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More shocking news that might shock the other side over there. Given that this parent also

highlighted the recent federal student vote and given that part of the instructions for that vote was an explanation that if you vote Conservative, that means you support racism and don't care about the environment, but if you vote Liberal, NDP, or Green, that means you are not a racist and that you care about the environment, to the Minister: how and why is this type of blatant and biased political partisanship making its way into our classrooms in this great province? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not surprised to hear this. When you see radical activists like David Suzuki, who attacks our energy industry and compares our province to Mordor, actually get invited by the ATA to speak with their members, it's hardly surprising that educators would feel emboldened to bring those biases into the classroom. Parents are losing faith in our education system when they hear about stories like this, and we must act. While the NDP want our children to protest alongside them and their friends in the Extinction Rebellion, Alberta parents really want our curriculum and our schools to prepare our kids for real life. [interjections]

2:10

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Photoradar Review

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, our government took many steps to eliminate improper use of photoradar, including banning it on multilane highways and in transition zones where posted speed limits change rapidly. We were also requiring, by March, all municipalities to demonstrate that they were only using photoradar for safety and not to bring in revenue. We were putting down the cash cow. To the minister: will municipalities still have to comply with the rules we put in place by March, or will you let the cash cow live on?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that the hon. member is complaining about what their government didn't get done during their time in office. As we announced yesterday, we are going to work with the 27 municipalities that use photoradar, the 27 police services, to get good data collected. The report done during the NDP time said that the data wasn't available. We are going to ensure thereafter that photoradar is used for safety and not just as a cash register, as a cash cow, punishing people unreasonably.

**Member Loyola:** Well, given that many Albertans are worried that the announcement about another two-year study on photoradar is just this government pumping the brakes on taking real action and given that we had actually given Albertans a clear deadline for improper use of photoradar to end and given that we also know that this government has cut heavily into funding for municipalities to pay for its \$4.7 billion giveaway to big corporations, to the minister: are you simply attempting to soften the blow of those cuts by boosting total fines for Alberta motorists?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wants those fines to be upped, which indicates to me that he wants photoradar to be used as a cash cow. In his first question he said no. In his second question he said yes. I would challenge the hon. member with his third question to decide what side he's on.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I know which side I'm on – I'm with Albertans – and given that this government is hiking costs to cover its \$4.7 billion no-jobs giveaway and given that this government is also now taking a larger share of speeding fine revenue than they were previously, to the minister: is this the real reason you're allowing photoradar to live on, because you need to help to pay for your failed corporate handout experiment?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, I guess 2 out of 3 says that he's in favour of a cash cow photoradar, because that's what he's pushing for, Mr. Speaker, more money to municipalities through photoradar. We are advocating for more safety for municipalities through photoradar. I guess the hon. member has decided what camp he's in; he's with the cash cow.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### Job Creation

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This UCP government campaigned on creating jobs and investment in the province. They made all sorts of claims that all we had to do was give \$4.7 billion to corporations, and jobs and investments would come flooding back to the province. However, we've actually seen the opposite. Their corporate handout hasn't created a single job to date. If anything, we've seen investment leave the province under this UCP government, including Husky and Imperial. To the minister: where are all the jobs and investments that you promised us?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting that the members opposite expect our government to fix, in seven months, four years of gross incompetence. This was a former government that raised taxes on job creators and actually brought in less revenue. Even an elementary school student can understand that that doesn't work. October job numbers showed an increase in 20,000 private-sector jobs in this province, and we're confident that that will continue.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, 2.8 per cent growth in 2018: you can't spin that.

Given that crude-by-rail contracts would have moved 120,000 barrels of oil per day and given this government ripped up these contracts, leading to an extension of curtailment, and given there are 11,300 fewer jobs in the natural resources sector since the \$4.7 billion corporate handout was introduced and given that lifting curtailment would easily lead to an additional 6,800 jobs and given that companies are actually moving out of the province, will the minister finally admit they have not kept their promise to create jobs and investment in the energy sector?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy has risen.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. After spending 13 years in the private sector working for the oil and gas and pipelines, in my role in this job what I know and what I know clearly is that the main problem is the lack of pipeline capacity, and it's the lack of investor confidence and the lack of ability for investors to believe that Canada can get infrastructure projects built. Over the last four years, while that government was in power, every single pipeline project failed, was either cancelled, vetoed, or delayed, and their leader sat in Justin Trudeau's office the day he killed Northern Gateway pipeline.

**Mr. Bilous:** Millions of barrels of oil would have already moved.

Given that our government introduced a number of programs to diversify our economy and create jobs and given that these programs were successful in attracting investment and given that this government has now pulled the rug out from under many businesses by cancelling these programs in order to pay for their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout and given that these cancellations will lead to a loss of \$19.1 billion in investment and almost 18,000 jobs forgone, will the government finally admit they failed to create jobs and investment and, worst of all, they failed Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is creating the best broad-based macroeconomic conditions for businesses to thrive through our job-creation tax cut. Unlike the members opposite, we don't have an "or" mentality to the economy; we have an "and" mentality. We can support agriculture and energy and support innovation, diversification, and other sectors. With respect to the tax credit programs the member opposite is speaking of, just a few weeks ago one of the companies that was a benefit of that tax credit system is posting: we are hiring programmers, senior designers, accountants, concept artists. They're doing just fine and are completely sustainable.

### Public Service Wages

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees is pushing the government for a 7.85 per cent wage increase. AUPE bosses are completely out of touch with the financial realities of our province. Albertans are facing unemployment, and the management at AUPE has the audacity to ask taxpayers for an outrageous increase in pay. It's not the teachers and it's not the nurses that are out of touch; it's the union bosses. To the minister: what message do you have for AUPE going into negotiations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Listen, we're all in this together as Albertans. We all have to do our part to live within our means, and we cannot ask Alberta taxpayers for public-sector pay raises at a time when over the last few years we've seen so many Albertans lose their jobs and certainly, in some cases, take a cut in pay. Our MLAs have rolled back our pay by 5 per cent, our Premier by 10 per cent. I would ask union bosses to work with us at this time of restraint. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Given that Albertans are paying higher on average for government services and given that AUPE management is demanding an increase in pay, knowing that it very well could lead to a reduction in employees, yet omitting this information from its members and given that members of the AUPE are starting to realize this union is out of touch and they're starting to hold them accountable for the millions they pay in dues, Minister, how will you ensure taxpayer dollars are being spent in the best way possible while maintaining high-quality government services?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Public-sector wages make up over 50 per cent of our budget, and our public-sector

remuneration rates are higher than those of other provinces. We can no longer afford to be an outlier in this Confederation. Our government will be a responsible steward of this province's finances. We will make decisions that are in the best interests of Albertans. We will manage this province's finances responsibly.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Given that thousands of Albertans have lost their jobs over the past four years and further given that the demands of the unions in our province seem to be dominating the headlines and much of the government's time, not to mention the lies they are spewing to their members – I am happy to see that so many people are holding them accountable – Minister, how will your ministry balance the misguided demands of unions with the actual needs of everyday Albertans who just want to get back to work?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me start by saying that we appreciate and recognize the contribution that the public sector makes in delivering high-quality services to Albertans every day. Our government is committed to ensuring that the public sector is sustainable, not only today but for the next generation, and our government will not allow union demands to outweigh the voices of so many Albertans that are still struggling with economic uncertainty. Let me be clear. There are no provisions for public-sector wage increases in this budget.

#### Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, this government's treatment of farmers and ranchers during this difficult harvest has alternated between lip service and neglect, but now we see that this government's lack of respect for farm workers has reached a new low. This government and the minister of agriculture are openly attacking the rights of farm and ranch workers. Can the minister of agriculture please explain why, at a time when farms and ranches need support and resources, he is stripping the rights of workers to organize on small farms or to be paid at all, contrary to our Canadian Constitution and the universal declaration of human rights?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are actually very close to repealing Bill 6, so I would say that we are actually on the side of farmers on this side of the Chamber. After extensive consultations it was found that there was no need for unions on farms. That was after 25 consultation stops across the province talking to farmers and farm workers from all different types of commodity backgrounds. It's interesting that over four years under the NDP government there was not one single certification of a union on an Alberta farm. We're proud that on this side of the House we actually listen to farmers.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that this minister has bragged about his 8,000-kilometre tour of rural Alberta but given that this minister's flagship piece of legislation allows farm and ranch workers to be denied WCB coverage if their employers decide not to subscribe to it and given that it's patently obvious that this minister of agriculture never spoke with paid farm and ranch workers during his heralded consultation tour, is the minister now trying to actually claim that farm and ranch workers told him they did not want WCB coverage?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is categorically not true. No one cares more about farm workers than farmers, and under Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act,

occupational health and safety will still be the case in Alberta, but farmers would be allowed to develop their own best practices rather than having to go under the OH and S code. The NDP thought that they were in the best scenario to actually dictate what would actually happen on a specific farm. We're giving farms and farm workers the freedom to develop the best practices on the farms, which they do so well already.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you. We're going backwards, back to the prelegislative days, when workers had no rights whatsoever.

Now, given that farmers who opt out of WCB coverage could be exposed to lawsuits over injuries or fatalities that have occurred to paid farm workers on their farm and given that these types of lawsuits can have a major negative impact on farms and ranches and in many cases may spell economic disaster and bankruptcy for the farm, did the minister of agriculture consider the high risk this legislation places upon Alberta farmers and ranchers who opt out of WCB coverage, and will he admit that he has left these farmers blowing in the wind?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can see that the NDP is having quite the issue of opting in and out, whether it be union dues for political activities or opting in and out of insurance. Ultimately, we want to have choice in worker insurance because that's something that we heard directly from farmers. They could have a WCB choice in worker insurance, they could have private insurance, but under the previous NDP Bill 6 lots of farms were forced to have two insurances that they had to pay those premiums for. Ultimately, there was better private-sector worker insurance that even the workers preferred. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

#### Anti-Racism Advisory Council

**Ms Goehring:** The Anti-Racism Advisory Council was established by our government earlier this year and designated to advise the government on the development of antiracism and antidiscrimination programs, but since taking office this UCP government appears to have ignored this council. The co-chairs of the advisory council said last week that they were introduced briefly to the minister in a phone conversation on May 24 but haven't heard from her since. Will the minister of multiculturalism tell us why she failed to engage with or even talk to the antiracism council, and what signal does this send about this government's priorities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I'm looking very forward to continuing conversations. In fact, I think we have one set up here next week. This is the first time in 25 years that we've had a ministry of multiculturalism. It's very important to the government, also very important to the Premier. This is about going beyond the expectations of how it is that we take care of people in this province through culture and faith, making sure that there's security in places like churches and mosques and synagogues to make sure that people can pray in safety.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the silent treatment from the minister has council members feeling that their important work they do will be dissolved by this government, will

the minister end her government's shameful treatment of the antiracism council and commit to calling them, every single member, by the end of business today, and will she commit to them that their work will continue?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Mr. Speaker, I would think that after yesterday's fiasco the member might want to consider the words that she's using and the methodology by which she asks a question. I've already stated that I've spoken to the advisory panel and that we will continue to speak with the advisory panel and will continue on the path. The multiculturalism piece absorbed the antiracism council from Education into Multiculturalism. This is a process that is very important to this side. We're not going to rush it just because they ask us to.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you. It's been six months, Mr. Speaker.

Given that this government's refusal to communicate with or provide resources to the antiracism council means that they can't even hold a meeting and given that while they leave the antiracism council in limbo with zero support, this government and minister are happily handing out a \$4.7 billion corporate handout that is being spent in places like Wisconsin, is the reason that the minister of culture is ignoring this council because she plans to fire them and end their vitally important work?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, again let me reiterate the importance of making sure that multiculturalism, antiracism, and all of the pieces that are tied together with that are very important to this. Just to be clear, on that side they spent \$20,000 on one meeting. The resources that they're asking to be spent for one meeting over one weekend – one meeting, one weekend, \$20,000 – they haven't answered about to the taxpayers of Alberta. Just to be clear, that member, based on yesterday's misinformation, should very much take a clear look at the questions that she's asking to this side.

### Opposition and Government Positions on Agriculture

**Mrs. Allard:** Alberta has a long and proud agricultural history. People came to our province from all over the world and for generations homesteaded here. Farmers, including many from the Grande Prairie area, helped to build this province. We should be proud of our farm families. Unfortunately, the members opposite on more than one occasion have displayed disdain and disrespect to Alberta farmers. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar once attacked our very own agriculture minister for being a "son of a rich farmer." To the minister of agriculture: could you tell us why it is important for every member of this House to respect our hard-working farmers and defend Alberta agriculture instead of attacking it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Farmers are job creators. They contribute to our economy and the social fabric of Alberta. But as you know, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was kicked out of this Chamber and couldn't even vote on his own piece of legislation last year. Also, it wasn't for disrespecting me; it was for disrespecting the traditions and rules of this very institution. Just recently we had another example of such disrespect as the Leader of the Official Opposition disrespected this House with a self-imposed strike. Farmers are tired of being disrespected, and that is why they voted for . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP fought endlessly with Alberta farmers over their disastrous Bill 6 and given that again the NDP Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar just yesterday seemed to question the practices . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mrs. Allard:** . . . of Alberta farmers on fair pay for workers and farm safety standards, to the minister: can you tell us how our government will be taking a different approach in repealing and replacing Bill 6 and actually supporting our farmers instead of criticizing them?

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:30 by the Official Opposition House Leader.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has the call.

2:30

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very important question. The true colours of the NDP came out yesterday. Again I'll quote the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, while we were debating Bill 26, when he said: "We cannot rely on every single farmer being a good employer. We cannot rely on every farmer who employs somebody to work on their farm to pay them a fair wage and ensure that they have safe working conditions." That perfectly explains the NDP's mindset towards farmers. No one cares more for farm workers than farmers. That is why we consulted broadly across Alberta, to get farmers' input on how we can repeal Bill 6.

**Mrs. Allard:** Mr. Speaker, given that just yesterday we had some hard-working Alberta sugar beet farmers here with us in the Legislature and given that once again the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar got up and bizarrely tried to conflate the responsible and ethical practices of Alberta farmers with the policies of Japanese internment . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mrs. Allard:** . . . by the federal Liberal government during the Second World War, can the minister tell this House about the great work that our farmers do and why it was offensive and wrong for the member to make this comparison?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 2:31 by the Official Opposition House Leader.

Right now the hon. minister of agriculture has the call.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week the Official Opposition reached prestige status in misrepresenting the facts to Albertans. Yesterday in this House they demonized an Edmonton small business, and then they demonized Alberta's entire ag sector while debating Bill 26. Yesterday the current Leader of the Official Opposition said, in debating Bill 26: "Wow. You must really hate these workers. It's really shocking to me . . ."

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** ". . . how much you guys must dislike people who work for farmers," and I don't know why you hate them so much.

Mr. Speaker, no one cares more for farm workers than farmers.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 2:32 by the Official Opposition House Leader.

We are at the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### School Head Covering Policies

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just yesterday the Edmonton Catholic school board meeting was adjourned early because of a peaceful, silent protest about an ongoing dispute about racial prejudice in school dress codes. The family of the boy at the centre of this dispute does not feel heard by the school or the board. Now, I thank the Minister of Education for having met with the family. She told them that she had received a report from Edmonton Catholic, a report that she's repeatedly promised that she would produce and table in the House. Will that minister table that report today, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I would like to reiterate something I've said time and time again. No one should ever feel discriminated against based on race. I have received a report from the Edmonton Catholic school division, and I have met with the family. I'm awaiting some follow-up information before I move forward with next steps. The Education Act mandates that all schools are created with safe and caring school spaces, and I'm confident that that's what we have in our school system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this minister also told the family that she would consider a review of the headwear policies at Edmonton Catholic schools, particularly the wearing of do-rags, and given that the minister previously stated that she's in favour of board autonomy, was the minister's promise to this family sincere, and if so, can she clarify how she intends to work with the board, while respecting their autonomy, to address and change this discriminatory policy?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I do respect board autonomy. I was a trustee for 11 and a half years and wore many hats throughout that time period. What I did share with the family was that I would be reviewing whether Edmonton Catholic followed board policy. That's what I've committed to doing, and that's what I will continue to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that clarity. Now, given that this minister came out strongly in October with a promise to resolve this issue but given that more than a month later the dispute is continuing and starting to interfere with the regular operation of a major school board and given that this government has shown that it's not shy about taking a direct hand in many aspects of the public service and given that all that's required to bring this to an end is a simple apology, Minister, what specific steps will you be taking to ensure that Edmonton Catholic comes to a resolution with this family?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I have said that I have received a report from the Edmonton Catholic school board. I have met with the family. I'm awaiting further information as far as my next steps, but I continue to advocate that the school board and the family continue discussions so that they can resolve it without interference from government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a question.

### Seniors' Benefit Program Funding

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is cutting off supports for seniors while lecturing them about needing to live within their means. While the minister is admonishing seniors about how they're costing more than this government is willing to pay, seniors are watching them splurge on private planes, fancy London hotels, and a \$4.7 billion giveaway, printed in black and white on page 144 of the UCP budget. Will the minister of seniors admit she was wrong to suggest that seniors are the ones who need a lesson in living within their means and apologize?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I want to mention that we do care about seniors, and in this budget we increased by \$9 million the budget for Seniors and Housing. Just to refer to the question she asked, we do care. We continue to make a commitment to take care of our seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Except they stopped indexing the Alberta seniors' benefit, and they've cut thousands of people off the drug plan. Therefore, they are cutting seniors' programs.

Mr. Speaker, this government seems to be thinking of cutting tens of thousands of seniors off these plans, and given that they think it's disrespectful to suggest that the Premier's \$200,000-a-year adviser stay in a hotel that doesn't have a vitamin C shower and a champagne bar, can the minister explain why she's trading away affordable medication for seniors so that the Premier's six-figure salary adviser can travel through London ...

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. I generally find that when members don't use a preamble, they have ample time to get in their question. I don't think that was the case in the previous one.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the member talks about cutting seniors' benefits, this absolutely is a misrepresentation of information. The benefit we just eliminated is for seniors who are under 65 years old. By the way, the indexing is a temporary measure that will be reviewed once we have Alberta's financial house in order. Seniors understand we have to go through thoughtful measures right now, and in the long term we will protect the public services ...

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that this government is trading the needs of Alberta's seniors for a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway and has created more investments in New Brunswick and Wisconsin than it has in Alberta, will the minister really look seniors in the eye and tell them that while this government isn't willing to pay for seniors' drug and income benefits, they're willing to subsidize Husky while it moves jobs and investments out of our province?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we will make no apology for our job-creation tax cut. It is a key policy plank that will attract investment, create jobs and opportunities. The members opposite increased corporate taxes by 20 per cent, sent investment out of this province by the billions of dollars, with it jobs and opportunities, and collected fewer corporate tax revenues the following three years. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod must ask a question.

### **Rural Police Service Funding**

**Mr. Reid:** I must ask a question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government committed to addressing the rural crime crisis we are currently facing in Alberta. I was glad to see the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General taking this so seriously and touring the province to ensure that my constituents and all rural Albertans are heard. However, the NDP, in attempting to fearmonger about our budget, stated that the budget included cutting funding for police, including in rural areas like mine where the crisis has visible and damaging effects. Can the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General please clarify the status of police funding in Alberta?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our budget increased funding for policing. We're proud of that. I'm also proud of the fact that we've gone out and consulted with Albertans across rural Alberta to talk about rural crime. We've taken decisive action to make sure that we have the strongest property rights possible in the country. We're proud of what we brought forward in Bill 27.

When it comes to the future of policing, we're continuing to talk with rural municipalities about the future of policing. You can't talk about that without talking about rural crime. We're hopeful that we can get to a new partnership going forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that my riding of Livingstone-Macleod covers multiple towns, municipalities, and counties and given the wide variety of population-dependent funding models and given the reassurance that he just gave me that the police funding would not be cut, can the same minister explain the effects that a new funding model might have on municipalities of all of these different sizes and explain how this will better protect the victims of our rural crime crisis?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, if we proceeded with a new police funding model, every single dollar would go into more law enforcement across rural Alberta. But there also has to be accountability that comes with that. If you're asking somebody to contribute, you have to have accountability in governance. That means that rural municipalities have a seat at the table to help make sure that we set the priorities. Direction wouldn't come from Ottawa; it would come from the municipalities.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you for that answer. Given that many smaller municipalities believe they need more protection than the service agreements they signed provide and given that these municipalities are often rural ones that cover vast expanses of our province and given that these areas are often the ones hardest hit by the rural crime crisis that we face, can the minister expand on what effect the budget and new police funding framework will have on these municipalities as they aim to address the large and growing issue that they face?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. If we proceeded with this, the feedback we heard from municipalities loud and clear is that it would need to be phased in

over numerous years to make sure that we allow for the gradual ramp up and ability to resource the additional law enforcement. We heard that loud and clear from the people on the ground. We have to make sure that there's accountability that's brought with it, that we can get those additional boots on the ground. If we proceeded, it would be a historic new partnership, a new way to proceed with policing in rural Alberta. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order. In 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

### **Members' Statements**

*(continued)*

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### **Free Economy**

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Alberta has a long and strong history of being an economically free engine that powers our great country, a province that rewards the hard work of its citizens and celebrates the contributions of our agriculture and energy industries and the numerous businesses that innovate and invest in our communities and in our families. To quote the late Margaret Thatcher: "A man's right to work as he will to spend what he earns to own property to have the State as servant and not as master . . . they are the essence of a free economy. And on that freedom all our other freedoms depend."

The previous government did not understand that, Madam Speaker. They took us on a path of reckless power grabs and attempted to restrict the freedoms that are engraved into our way of life. They launched an assault on the freedoms of Albertans through reckless increases to deficits, debt, taxes, and red tape. That is not the Albertan way. It goes against the embedded values of freedom and fiscal responsibility that have resulted in the success and prosperity of this great province.

Albertans know what is best and that if they keep their money in their own pockets, they will be responsible and they will be generous. They will take care of their families, friends, and neighbours. They will invest in themselves and invest in their communities. In Medicine Hat you just need to look at entrepreneurs like Chris Hellman, who owns franchises in Mr. Lube and Moxie's, or Hillary Beck, who owns the retail stores Friday's Image and Kitchen Kaboodle, to see the great contributions that Albertans make in their communities. It is important that we protect our ability to make these choices for ourselves and make decisions freely, away from the influence of government.

I stand here incredibly proud to call myself an Albertan, to be part of a province that welcomes all with open arms, a province that believes in giving those struggling a hand up and not a handout, a province that is generous and kind. From Leduc No. 1 to expansive ranchlands and canola fields, some would say that our province is like a perfect cup of coffee, strong and free.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **Family and Community Support Services Program**

**Member Ceci:** Madam Speaker, since 1966 the government of Alberta has partnered with municipalities and Métis settlements to fund preventative social services through the family and community support services program. This week the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta is holding its annual conference at the Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton. Their theme is



Resilient People, Strong Communities, and the attendees will discuss issues ranging from poverty reduction to reconciliation to housing.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, throughout my career as a social worker, alderman, and MLA I have witnessed the extraordinary work done by FCSS. I've seen vulnerable children gain confidence by taking part in community art programs. I've seen people in crisis receive the support they need at the Distress Centre. I've seen hungry Calgarians served a warm meal at the Alex community centre. These are all programs that benefit from FCSS funding, filling gaps left by other provincial programs. Unfortunately, under this government those gaps are getting wider, and the job of FCSS is getting more difficult.

While the NDP were in government FCSS support rose nearly 40 per cent, but the present government has frozen that support. The NDP government indexed some income supports such as AISH and seniors' benefits to inflation, but this government has scrapped that. Our government funded a school nutrition program, but this Premier would rather send his advisers for champagne than send our kids to school with breakfast. The UCP government expects programs like FCSS to fill the gaps these cuts create, but that's just not credible. They don't get it.

Mr. Speaker, people from around the province are gathering today to spend a few nights in the Fantasyland Hotel, but on Friday they will leave fantasyland, go home, and deal with the hard realities on the ground. Unfortunately for them, this government lives in fantasyland all year-round.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Women in the Energy Industries

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In under a century women have made phenomenal progress. However, even after getting the right to vote, women had an uphill battle. Whether it was equal pay or fighting to be accepted into certain professions, women have strived to do more and to be recognized as equal. Up north the heavy equipment operators were only men at one time. Now not only do you see women driving those 400-tonne trucks, but they are the preferred operators because they are simply better drivers.

It isn't just the big trucks women drive but entire companies, too. Take Syncrude: their managing director is a brilliant woman by the name of Doreen Cole. She has been the top executive at Syncrude for almost two years now, and she has done an admirable job in a tough time. She didn't just break the glass ceiling, Mr. Speaker, she shattered it to become Syncrude's first female top executive. That is only her latest position. Previously she was a senior VP at both Suncor and EPCOR, and this year she won a business award for female leadership.

Suncor also has brilliant female leaders. Senior Vice-President Shelley Powell is the prime example. Having worked at Suncor since 1995, Shelley, armed with her bachelor's degree in chemical engineering and her two master's degrees, has excelled at Suncor as a leader. She has applied her skill set to driving continuous improvement in the administrative and operational performances of Suncor. Now she's responsible for providing safer, more reliable operations of the base plant as well as the in situ assets. She is knowledgeable, wise, and well educated. Most importantly, she is a kind, caring leader who gives back to our Fort McMurray community.

Doreen Cole and Shelley Powell are trailblazers. Following in their path are many female leaders that are working their way to the executive boardroom. That's why this government is investing in

women. Women Building Futures is one way our government has committed to investing in equality in our society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

#### Bill 29

#### Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise and introduce Bill 29, the Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019.

Bill 29 will continue the good work we did after implementing Bill 7, the Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019. This legislation, Mr. Speaker, will expand the incentives included in that legislation to include machinery and equipment. If passed, this bill would give municipalities yet another tool in their tool box to attract investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. In accordance with section 19(1)(a) of the Auditor General Act as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I'm pleased to table the results report of the Auditor General of Alberta for the year ended March 31, 2019. Copies of this report will also be provided to all members.

Thank you very much, sir.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article titled Doctor Asks Terminally Ill Kids What Really Matters In Life – Here Are Their Answers, from June 17, 2019, by Dr. Alastair McAlpine. It's great levity and a little bit of a reminder about what's important in life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this House today to table the requisite number of copies of nearly 4,800 signatures from concerned citizens asking for the immediate termination of support and operation of the supervised consumption site in Lethbridge, organized and gathered by the Lethbridge Citizens Alliance.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a tabling.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As referenced in my question to the Minister of Health yesterday, I have five copies of the nondisclosure agreement that was presented to Dr. Remo Panaccione in order for him to be able to speak with the minister about this government's intentions for requiring the use of biosimilars over drugs prescribed by the patients' physicians.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by St. Albert.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a document from the *Calgary Herald* on the topic of a sole-source contract of some \$73,000 that was given to a firm with partisan ties to the governing party.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies from the *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* entitled *Scientists Reach 100% Consensus on Anthropogenic Global Warming*, a consensus among research scientists based on a review of over 11,000 peer-reviewed articles.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much., Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a constituent's communication with my office who is extremely upset about the current government in their move to move teachers' pensions. Very, very clear on this – I encourage all members to take a look at that – “keep your hands off my pension.”

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are points of order. At 2:30, 2:31, and 2:32 the hon. Official Opposition House Leader raised three points of order. I am guessing we might be able to speak to all three of them at the same time. I will provide you the opportunity to do so now.

#### Point of Order Improper Questions

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the first two can be grouped together, and the third one is in regard to a different member.

I rise on 23(h), (i), (j), and that's during question period, obviously, when the Member for Grande Prairie rose to ask questions to the minister of agriculture. First of all, in her question, I mean, not only did she make allegations, her questions were completely designed to create disorder, to attack another member in this House. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that her question, you know, not only attacked a member but identified the member, and her questions absolutely had nothing to do with government policy.

Now, I know that there is extreme latitude in this place as far as where and how members can ask questions on different topics, but I know that you yourself, Mr. Speaker, on a number of occasions have encouraged members to remain within the space of policy. Her questions had nothing to do with government policy and were used to conflate comments that may have been made yesterday but were dealt with.

The issue for me is really the fact that using question period in the way that she did completely goes against our standing orders, where it really was abusive, insulting language that was used to create disorder. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that for those reasons, I'm seeking that the member withdraw her comments.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I do agree with the Official Opposition House Leader that the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar were offensive but not really relevant to a point of order with regard to question period. It's clearly a matter of debate in the context that the hon. member is referring to. Also, if the Official Opposition House Leader wants to indicate that talking about agriculture legislation or how farmers are

consulted or impacted by agriculture legislation or are participating in agriculture legislation is somehow not government business, I do see why that party has no rural Alberta seats inside this Chamber, clearly, with those comments.

This is a matter of debate, and the agriculture policy around legislation associated with safety issues is certainly a matter of government business.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for both members' interventions. I would say that, certainly, in asking questions with respect to legislation that has passed with respect to Bill 6 or, in turn, Bill 26 there is, I think, some precedent to suggest that the questions were about government business.

Having said that – and I don't intend to find a point of order in this case – what I will do is provide some caution to the private member with respect to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 510. This particular section is on questions that are in order or are not in order, in this case, “make a charge by way of a preamble to a question.” In footnote 76

Speaker Scheer cautioned against the “growing trend” of oral questions preceded by preambles that “criticize the position, statements or actions of other parties, Members from other parties and, in some cases, even private citizens.”

Now, given the fact that the member was essentially quoting from *Hansard* with respect to the debate yesterday, I also believe that we have a matter of debate before us.

All of that is to say that I think it's important that all members remember that we are all responsible for the decorum of the Assembly and to consider such when crafting our questions. As such, the question was related to government business and is not a point of order at this time.

Hon. Official Opposition House Leader, on point of order 3. Would you like to withdraw point of order 3, or do you disagree?

**Mr. Bilous:** Correct. Withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Perhaps it is both, but that's neither here nor there.

Point of order 3 has been withdrawn. As such, I consider the matter concluded and dealt with.

We are at Ordres du jour.

3:00

#### Orders of the Day Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Firearms

41. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize and support the ability of Albertans to lawfully and in a responsible manner own and possess firearms and to engage in permitted activities involving the use of firearms, including but not limited to hunting and sport shooting.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move Government Motion 41. I'm excited to move that motion on behalf of Albertans in this place but also in support of my friend and colleague the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, who is a passionate advocate on this issue and, I know, will speak shortly on this important motion, as well as, of course, on behalf of the constituents of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Many of them are law-abiding firearms owners who use firearms in appropriate ways inside this province and are shocked to continue to see comments from the recently re-elected federal

Liberal government as well as the Official Opposition's federal party, Mr. Speaker, which you, I know, are well aware is the same party as the provincial party – structurally and leadershipwise they are the exact same organization – who continue to make disparaging comments associated with firearms owners inside this province and also indicate that in some ways the federal government may take action against law-abiding firearms owners inside this province to take away their property or in any way to be able to stop them from utilizing their property in appropriate ways inside this province.

We saw the former federal Liberal government do that with things like the registry and other laws that they brought into place, Mr. Speaker. I know that we have been excited to have seen recent federal victories underneath the Stephen Harper Conservatives, but we want to make it clear that this Assembly, this elected body of Alberta representatives, will stand with law-abiding gun owners inside this province.

Further to that, we want to see if the provincial NDP is going to choose to stand with their federal party, their federal leader. We do know that when it came to things like pipeline policy and energy policy, they have chosen to stand with their federal leader as well as their close ally Justin Trudeau, who campaigned to stop the energy industry – catch that: campaigned to stop the energy industry – to shut down pipelines. That's who their leader, the Official Opposition House Leader admitted that – not the Official Opposition House Leader. He did not publicly admit that. I apologize. I misspoke there. The Leader of the Official Opposition: I don't know if she knows that her Official Opposition House Leader may be indicating that he maybe voted for Andrew Scheer. I certainly hope that's the case. We do know that the Leader of the Official Opposition admitted – admitted – in the newspaper that she voted for her federal leader, who is trying to shut down the oil sands and is directly attacking the people of this province.

The question then comes with this motion. We'll see during the debate and the ultimate vote in this place if the provincial NDP is going to listen to their federal leader of the same party, their ultimate overseer of their provincial party, or are they going to stand with Albertans? We know how they stood when it comes to energy policy. They sold out Albertans to Justin Trudeau and to the federal NDP leader. What are they going to do with firearm owners inside this province? I can tell you . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Great question.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** We'll see what happens, Mr. Speaker.

But I suspect that the government caucus in this place is going to vote to stand with firearm owners inside this province, and I look forward to hearing a robust debate on this important issue this afternoon.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 41. Under Standing Order 18(1)(a) this is a debatable motion. Is there anyone that would like to join the debate this afternoon? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgow:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Government House Leader for placing this on the Order Paper. It is so important that we stand with our law-abiding firearm owners in this province. I'm going to start with a personal story because I think those go over pretty well in this place.

I grew up in a family that loves guns. We have all sorts of calibres. We go out sport shooting. We hunt regularly. You know, my very first time shooting a gun was a .22 Hornet, actually. We shot gophers and all sorts of things out in the prairies and had such a good time. The very first thing that I had to learn when I was a young girl was safety. I think that before I could walk, I knew that

you had to check the chamber of a gun before you could pick it up. I knew how to check to see if a gun was loaded before I could tie up my shoes. I know that under parental supervision, obviously, and a family's guidance and also just common sense, our law-abiding gun owners here in Alberta are safe and they're taking care. I just wanted to start with that.

The next gun that I was privileged to own was a .243 Remington. This is also known as Lucy in my family. Lucy is affectionately referred to as she has been the demise of many a deer. She's a good friend to me, old Lucy. My dad and I have taken many expeditions out in many ridings in this province, including the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's. We do a lot of sport shooting as well as taking care of business out there. We know that owning a legal firearm and using a legal firearm effectively can actually provide meat for the entire year. Not only does it provide you meat; it's delicious, Mr. Speaker.

The next gun that I got was something for Christmas. This is probably the best Christmas present ever, but I got a 7mm-08 Remington from my dad as well. This little beauty packs a punch, let me tell you. My 7mm-08, which is carefully locked, stored, and taken care of, has been another good friend of mine, in fact. It took down a moose and an elk in the past two years, provided meat for my family as well as provided some really good family bonding with me. Actually, it also provided some nutritious meat for the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and his family, perks of being friends with me, I guess. That's what a good old-fashioned legal firearm owner will get you.

I know that many members in this House understand just how important it is to own legal firearms as well. We heard many reports about rural crime increasing in this province. We know that criminals are deterred when legal firearm owners are armed. We're not advocating for anyone to be out there willy-nilly, but we know that this deterrence is a major factor. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that 29 per cent of Canadian homes possess one or more guns, with an average of three guns per home. There are 12.7 million legal firearms in Canada.

I say all of this because false gun rhetoric has been rampant. We saw this in the federal election. We've seen this dating back to before I was even thought of, I'm sure. You hear a lot of people saying: "You know, if we just took guns off the street, everything would be fine. If we just took guns out of the hands of everyone, we'd be fine." Not only is that demonstrably false; it attacks law-abiding citizens, and it attacks rural Albertans disproportionately.

You know, we see a lot of increased gang violence, but that's mainly in Toronto and Winnipeg, not to say that that's not important. We need to be cognizant of that, and we need to be curbing that. But these guns are not legally obtained, on average. These guns are taken normally from our border to the south of us, Mr. Speaker, and these guns are used to harm other people.

At the same time, when you're talking about a handgun ban – most of these incidents actually occur with rifles and shotguns. Now, by no means am I advocating for a ban of any kind of firearm, but to go after handguns and law-abiding handgun owners is totally not the right approach. These criminals want something that is easily concealable, so they'll saw off a shotgun or they'll saw off a rifle if they can't get their way. Of course, these tragic incidents with our neighbours from the south – and our hearts go out to them – are tragic. They deserve to be addressed. But once again, going after law-abiding gun owners like many of the members of this Chamber and their families is not the answer.

One thing that people often get misconstrued is that they say: it's so easy to get a gun; it's so easy to do all of these things. That couldn't be more far from the truth. Getting a gun in Canada isn't easy, in fact, and many who talk about this have never been further

than walking through Bass Pro Shops on their way to the rest of the mall to obtain one. First, you have to take a firearm safety course. This covers the evolution of firearms and ammunition, operating the action, safe handling and caring procedures, how to load a magazine, the care of your firearm, responsibility of firearm users, safe storage, display, transportation, handling. Then you have to complete an exam, and you have to get over 80 per cent on that to pass the course. Also, if you want to obtain a handgun, you have to get a restricted PAL, so that's another test. There are many, many safeguards in place to make sure that people who should not be owning firearms do not own them. But once again, taking them away from the rancher who has to shoot the coyotes who are attacking his calves is not the answer.

3:10

There are robust rules around storing guns, including removing the bolt, storing it in a container that can't be broken into, and unloading restricted weapons. Obviously, Canadians are respecting these rules, and Albertans are respecting these rules, and we have an obligation, especially as the only party with rural members in this House, to be standing up for those law-abiding gun owners.

I mean, I'm sure the opposition is going to get up and talk about crime rates and how catastrophic it is. I mean, I heard them reference gun violence in their comments, which obviously is a very important issue. But let's talk about crime for a second. Criminals are not going to obtain a legal firearm. They are going to go somewhere else. They're going to saw off the end of a shotgun. They're going to find another way, south of the border, to find themselves a firearm and do with it what they want to do. Taking those guns away, like I said, from cattle ranchers, from people like my dad, from people who are providing for their families is not the answer.

A really good story I heard, actually, about our really awesome hunters and gamesmen was in Medicine Hat not too long ago. The executive director of the food bank was telling me that a young boy shot his very first doe, and he actually donated it back to the food bank. What a horrible firearm owner, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, *Hansard* doesn't always pick up on sarcasm, as another member has noted in the past couple of days, but obviously I'm being sarcastic. This guy is fantastic. This young man went out and harvested his very first animal and then donated it to people who need it. Like, I can't think of anything more Albertan than that.

Criminals also aren't taking safety courses. They're not doing any of this. They're not consenting to legal background checks. They're not doing anything that somebody like the members of this Assembly or the people in rural Alberta would do. They're doing things that they shouldn't be doing to begin with, so telling them to go through some bureaucratic process that takes forever as well as to go to a store and purchase a firearm legally: it's not going to happen, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, restricting the sale of those firearms is not the answer. We know that the vast majority of gun violence we see in Canada is committed with illegally obtained guns.

One thing you hear a lot of, and I think this is partially because our media – I mean, I saw it in the *Toronto Star* not long ago – was going after Bill C-71. Now, this whole motion is largely in response to that because the recent Liberal policies on guns are knee-jerk reactions to an issue that they really don't understand. I would be surprised if Justin Trudeau has ever picked up a firearm. I'd be surprised if he's ever been in Bass Pro Shops or Cabela's, to be completely honest with you. It's not on the fancy streets in Toronto, so I can't see him really frequenting that.

Bill C-71 was passed in the House of Commons in June of 2019, but the standing committee on public safety did not consult with

Canadian gun owners, and they moved time allocation on the bill. They opened up the door to a long gun registry and potential confiscation of weapons from law-abiding gun owners. This cracks down on these gun owners' ability to transport guns even to a shooting range.

Now, Rachael Harder, the MP for Lethbridge, tabled a petition against this bill. This petition was started by a then 15-year-old Mr. Ryan Slingerland from Coalhurst, Alberta . . .

**Mr. Schow:** Hear, hear.

**Ms Glasgo:** The Member for Cardston-Siksika is pretty excited about that.

. . . and he got over 86,000 signatures in just three months. I'm told that this is one of the most signed petitions in the House of Commons' history, so that's pretty impressive. This just goes to show that there are Canadians that care about this issue. Specifically, there are Albertans that care about this issue.

I'll be really interested to see if the members opposite take a moment to even think about speaking to this motion, if they even take a motion to defend rural Albertans. I know they didn't in their last budgets. They didn't in their last four years. But, hey, here's an opportunity. I'll pass them the ball and see if they'll take it, but who knows?

Instead of something like C-71, efforts should be focused on deterring youth from joining gangs; creating opportunities for gainful employment, which is exactly what this government is doing; stopping robberies in rural communities, like you see with Bill 27; enhancing mental health supports, like you see with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Our government is doing all of these things, Mr. Speaker. We are taking action on crime and criminal activity in this province, but what we're not doing – and I repeat: we are not doing – is going after law-abiding citizens. Now, I know the members opposite as well as their federal NDP counterparts would have you do that. They would have you go after Mark and Sally who own a ranch in Brooks. They would have you go after any member of this House who wishes to go sport shooting. But that's ridiculous, and it's not the answer.

Now, you know, in my time getting to know firearms and hanging out with my dad, I've learned a lot of things about firearms usage, and one of those things is that you have to be responsible. My family is nothing but responsible, and I know that members of this House are nothing but responsible when it comes to the care and ownership of their firearms. To blame these people, to blame law-abiding citizens for the actions of so few is preposterous.

We know that right now we are in a rural crime epidemic, Mr. Speaker. We heard yesterday from the Minister of Indigenous Relations about people coming on to his property. We've heard from other members of this House just how scary it is to have somebody pull into your driveway at 3 in the morning, not knowing who they are. Now, if you can deter that in any way, why not? Of course, nobody's advocating for any kind of harm to anyone, but you need to be cognizant of the fact that this is happening.

What's happening on the other side of the House is to push an ideology. You know, I'd be curious to know how many of them actually believe in it. Or do they just read their speaking notes off? I'd be curious to know if any of them have actually talked to rural Albertans about what they're facing. I do. I hear from people coming into my office talking about how frightening it is that they can't get a police officer to come to their home, or I hear from the Minister of Indigenous Relations, who gave an impassioned plea to the other side of the House to stand up for families like his, who are facing crisis. To me it's just sad.

You know, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the United Nations reports that Canada ranks third amongst developed western countries, behind the United States and Norway, in civilian ownership of firearms. These individuals are hunters, farmers, sport shooters. They're not violent criminals, and they shouldn't be treated as such. The federal government should treat the over 2.1 million Canadians who own firearms properly. They shouldn't be treating them as bad actors.

Justin Trudeau says that he cares about the interests of Albertans. You know what? I'm going to give him the benefit of the doubt. I hope that he does reach out to Albertans. I also hope that he knows that if C-71 is to be enforced and law-abiding gun owners are to be slandered in a way where they would be treated as criminals, Albertans won't take to that kindly. Our province rejected his party entirely. Something went on in Edmonton Strathcona, but I respect the results of that election. If Justin Trudeau really cares, he will listen to and respect the concerns of legal gun owners. I know that I respect them, I know that I hear them, I know that I am one, and I know that this side of the House will do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very excited to speak to this motion. I have a few different elements that I want to speak to in the motion. First, though, I do want to just respond to some comments that the previous speaker made. You know, comments insinuating or inferring or making assumptions about how the other side may feel about a motion, I think, are dangerous to the extent that until members have risen to speak to it, we don't know how they feel.

I'll start off by saying that I will be supporting this motion, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk a little bit about the motion and where I stand, and then I want to talk about the fact that this motion doesn't bind the government to do anything. This isn't about legislation. This doesn't bind the federal government to take an action or not take an action. For those reasons, you know, we are using valuable time in the House to debate a motion that I know is important to rural Albertans. Absolutely. There are lots of city dwellers that are gun owners. In fact, my broader family all own firearms, responsibly of course.

3:20

I'll start off by saying that, you know, again, the reason I support this motion, Mr. Speaker, is that Albertans and, I would argue, Canadians that are lawful and that lawfully own firearms should have the right to own those firearms. I can tell you, and where I do agree with the previous speaker, that I think it is ridiculous for any government to try to bring in laws to make it more difficult for law-abiding citizens, claiming that that's going to deter criminals. I think that's naive. Criminals aren't buying their rifles from their local hardware store and then registering them and then going to commit crimes. I don't believe it makes our streets any safer nor does it help with that issue of violent crimes.

You know, I do believe that, again, the need or the desire for especially rural Albertans – the members spoke about coyotes and others attacking farm animals. They absolutely need to be able to take care of their animals, their wildlife, and obviously in remote parts of rural Alberta they're far from fish and wildlife or others that could assist them with unwanted predators. Again, I appreciate the desire, and in fact governments – any government – shouldn't be standing in their way, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to say that I myself and I know that several members of the NDP opposition caucus have gone to firing ranges. Last year I fired at clay pigeons for the first time. That was a hoot, I must say, Mr. Speaker. I have very good friends of mine that are hunters, including my in-laws. What I can tell you is that I was supposed to take my hunting course last fall, ran out of time, you know, because of the responsibilities in the House, but I will and plan to get my hunting licence – absolutely – and my firearms safety course as well. That's on the to-do list. I know that many members are responsible gun owners or hunters.

I'm not going to take up a ton of time. I know other members in the House want to speak. The element of this that I struggle with a bit, Mr. Speaker: I support the motion and understand where the government is coming from on this motion; I fail to see how this affects actual government policy or will effect change. I get that, you know, members may speak to the fact that this will send Ottawa a message. I'm not sure if a motion debated in this House that's nonbinding will send the government a message.

We know that we have other pieces of legislation that are in front of us that do require attention and debate. A motion like this is good for Albertans to see that we support them, members from all parties in this House, and support their rights to possess and own firearms. For that, I think now they see clearly that there are members from all sides of the House – in fact, I think I have a colleague or two that will also speak to this motion. I won't ruin the suspense of whether or not they're going to be supporting it. I'll let them speak for themselves.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion. You know, we stand with all Albertans and Canadians who are gun owners, who want to possess and responsibly use their firearms. With that, I will take my seat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is anyone wishing to provide a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To me, seeing this motion here today was like Christmas. You know, make your puns or your pardons or anything else. It's like redneck Christmas today. It's great to actually see this. Part of it is some of the stigmas that are around firearms ownership. The member opposite had mentioned that a number of firearms owners in the city actually have them. Absolutely. When you look at gun owner statistics, you're more likely to own a handgun if you're a white-collar worker. You're more likely to own a shotgun or a rifle if you're blue-collar or live in the country, and that's just how it goes. Then there's a bunch of others like us that have a little bit of each. My gosh, it's fantastic.

Growing up in rural Alberta, one of the first things that we learned was that equipment will hurt you. Machines can hurt you if used improperly. There are lots of tools on the farm that are kind of scary, and they can hurt you if they're not used properly. Firearms were top of the list. As a young lad that was the first thing you kind of learned right off the hop, so no different than the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat. You're taught that.

Now, my own personal story with that is that we had a few different firearms on the farm. You know, getting off the school bus at night, especially in the spring and the fall, one of my jobs was to go back and check cutlines. It was to go back and check fences, check on the cattle, and everything else. That little .22 that I was taught from a young age to use and respect and everything else, well, that was my travelling companion, that and the dog. I'll tell

you that the time that we spent back in the bush going and checking on the animals and a couple of times firing a couple of shots near some coyotes that were going towards calves, that's kind of what we had growing up with it.

You know, as I progressed and got off the farm a little while later, you kind of look back at that. I was thinking of some of the significance when you have family heirlooms that are passed down. Well, some folks have tiaras. Some folks have coffee cups, other ones. There was this 1894 lever-action Winchester. My Grandpa Getson had passed away before I was born, but that old rifle: to think that my grandpa one year had been out there hunting a deer and he had actually used that rifle, and my father used that rifle. I had my chance to use that rifle when I was old enough. It's kind of one of those things that kind of stuck with us. There's also that side of it where folks potentially down in Ottawa and Toronto don't understand that connection. It's not just something that goes bang in the middle of the night.

The social media that I've seen over C-71, you know, after the Justin Trudeau government got back in place is already starting to ramp up, the fact that we're taking questions during heritage trust about individuals coming and asking if our group is supporting assault weapons. There's this misnomer that responsible firearms ownership lends itself to assault weapons. Again, if you're going to follow that train of thought, there's a bunch of misinformed folks out there that think modern sporting rifles and handguns, as an example, are considered assault weapons. Well, they're not. Those have been illegal in Canada since 1977. Any of these crimes that have been reported: there's never been one incident of an assault weapon that's been used in these crimes that has been obtained legally. Now, some of the grandfathered items or the museum pieces they have – so I kind of wanted to do away with that as well.

The concern that we're seeing here, and one of the reasons why, I think, the government brought this forward was to show that, yeah, we have a little bit of a different culture out west. Forty per cent of Canadians own firearms. You know, if you're looking at that – again, the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has stated that we only rank third in the world. Actually, we're on par with the United States when it comes down to shotguns and rifles, but we don't have any of the crime that they have. I think it has to come down to how we utilize these things, how we're trained with them.

Now, I've got a small confession to make. I never played golf until I was in my 20s. I never got around to it. It was always something that was a little bit foreign. I actually had a mechanic from the work I was doing at the time, Aubro Services, Mike Bouchande. He took me under his wing, and he taught me how to play golf. The only reason why I learned how to play golf, Mr. Speaker, was that I was at that age when some of my friends were starting to get married off. It was at a stag event, I guess, if you would, that my friend was going to go golfing. Being the type of person I am, the last thing I wanted to do is show up there not knowing how to do something and cause potential harm or disarray to the nice golfers that I've seen on the television shows and all that. Just imagine me rolling up and hammering out balls in the wrong direction. That would be pretty bad. Mike took me under his wing, and he spent some time with me that night learning how to shoot the golf ball and doing that. He brought an old bag of clubs that he had, and we did that out in the parking lot one night after work. When I went to the golf course, I then didn't feel so foolish. I felt like I wasn't going to be a safety issue with anybody else and had a heck of a good time. I took that on, did something a little bit different, made some new friends.

My new friends from the city, well, they'd never fired a rifle, so quid pro quo in that case. We actually ended up going out to a gun range, and we took the time to do that. They then, too, developed

an appreciation. No different than the member who's never shot skeet before, who took it up, and in his words he had a hoot. So it's breaking down some of those barriers.

The other thing that's really interesting with golf is that it takes a heck of a lot of time. Mr. Speaker, I don't know about you, but I can barely find enough time to make it home to see my wife and kids sometimes with this new job let alone try to book off a full day to go golfing. But I can with my kids, because I'm fortunate enough to have space on my own property, go down with my three girls and my son and take some time and actually go and shoot tin cans with a pellet gun or to go in the back. My daughter Cora developed an allergy to pumpkins. This little girl, who's nine years old now, for the last four years hasn't been able to carve a pumpkin. We've had to do that. But I'll tell you that taking and putting a couple of little marks on that pumpkin's face, and the smile on her face when I took the .22 out back and got her to carve that pumpkin remotely: priceless. I mean, those are going to be memories of carving pumpkins. It's a family tradition in our house now to carve pumpkins every year.

3:30

It's very interesting to see how, you know, the kids respect that. They're not out playing video games. They're not playing first-person shooter games. They don't even make things go bang, like some kids may have done. We've actually developed a respect for these tools, these firearms. That would be the last thing that these kids would ever do. They understand what can happen, the consequences of it. They're responsible for those actions. So there are some little things that we get to do out on the farm.

One of the other big events that I had was, you know, growing up and packing that .22 around and shooting cans. My uncle Joe Oleksiew asked my dad one day if I could go to a turkey shoot. Now, I'd never been to a turkey shoot before. I was actually thinking we were going there to shoot turkeys, Mr. Speaker. But as it turns out, what you're doing there when you get to that gun range, well, then, you're shooting paper targets. The person with the best score on there, well, you end up winning. I didn't win. I know you were waiting for that.

The technique of actually popping tin cans and moving down range and hitting moving targets was completely different. So then my Uncle Joe taught me about control. He taught me about breathing techniques. He also taught me how to watch out for those other people on the firing line because, again, when you're hunting or in the bush, it's different. Then you're learning about that.

Now, when I originally started buying my own firearms, it was literally because of the long gun registry. People can box things in a corner and hope that it never happens. Does everyone remember the story of was it Sleeping Beauty, Mr. Speaker, the spinning wheel? I would hate to get this one wrong. The whole premise of that is that you're going to lock away all these spinning wheels, and that little Sleeping Beauty is never going to prick her finger on the needle. Lo and behold – we all know what happens – she conks out and gets woken up by Prince Charming.

When I first had my son, I didn't have my own firearms. It was kind of that story that stuck in the back of my mind. I had grown up with them. Now I brought this new little person into the world, and I was going to be responsible for him. With my job I was always travelling and on the road. Some of the concerns I had were: what happens if my son Leif ends up over at a friend's place? What happens if his friends don't actually have the same control on firearms that I was brought up with? This is their friend's house, and they're used to playing with toy guns and all those things. What happens if? It was that breaking point and deciding: well, should I be responsible and teach them the right way to do it, or should I take

the chance and have the folks down in Ottawa and Toronto make those decisions and potentially have something go wrong? Well, I chose the first way. It was to actually have those firearms and expose him to them.

Now, rolling the clock forward, I'd never really worked with pistols much, but I had worked with some folks that had. They had trained and served formally as well. So I ended up taking this firearms training course through Sierra riflecraft, Ben Klick. He had brought some friends in that also do some training. They do handguns and carbines and transition training as well. They were former Airborne. They're currently serving members of our police force. Now, at this course, a pretty small group of folks, there were also active duty snipers. When you're sitting and you're training with these folks, they teach you complete control. Safety, safety, safety, safety. They could take you and break down your own firearm. They could put you through the malfunctions and the procedures. They had me, you know, from the gun range guy who goes out and shoots a gun, a pistol maybe, once or twice every couple of years to being proficient at drawing and holstering and being on target in three rounds down range under a second. Complete control through jamming situations, your carbine transitions. You have to clear it and do everything else. Safety, safety, safety, and proficiency. So all of those skill sets.

I asked them at that time, you know, because it was all adults at this course, I said, "Do you allow kids here?" They said, "Well, how old?" And I said, "Well, my son is 14." They said, "Well, we don't, but under the condition of what you've shown us, and, you know, if he comes here and doesn't show those characteristics, he'll be bounced." And it was a \$700 course, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't a cheap thing. So they allowed him in. My son picked up those proficiencies, those little skill sets that I taught him all along. He was using the AR-15s. He was using a .226 for a side arm as well for the pistols. And he was all through that.

Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, when you transition to the end of your training course – and he met a lot of professionals out there as well; lots of doctors and lawyers and such – they do everything under a timer, under duress, under stress. So if anyone ever has to pull a firearm out, you know, heaven forbid, in the case of an emergency or they're going to go shoot that first deer, your heart rate is up, everything is elevated. What they do is that everything's under a stress environment, so they're timing you, and you're essentially firing against the person next to you at targets at different distances. You've got live targets, moving targets, stationary targets, different positions, everything else. Well, lo and behold, my 14-year-old son ended up winning that against serving police officers, against some former military people, and actually he beat me in it as well, which was a little humbling, but a very proud dad moment.

Now, my son, like the member opposite, was going to take his hunter's training course. Well, he ended up taking it in school. Coming back, my son was aghast at what was being taught in that school for the actual control and the way they managed those firearms. This is a teacher teaching the course who didn't have the same level of safety as the firearms owners or the firearms trainers that we went with.

Again, part of this is understanding who we are as Canadians, understanding who we are as Albertans. Rural crime: we've talked about that. One of the leading messages I had asked out in our area was how many folks in the audience, in an audience of 200 – and this probably won't be a surprise for your demographics either, Mr. Speaker – owned firearms. We look at the statistics across Canada: 40 per cent, basically, arguably. Eighty per cent of the people in that room put their hands up.

Now, again, coming back to what types of firearms, I was talking to a bunch of them. It's not just the old lever-action rifles that everyone sees or the old John Wayne big loop that you're seeing in the movies anymore. When we are talking about firearms, predominantly most of them are semiautomatic firearms now, and a large portion of them, at least 25 to 30 per cent, are modern sporting rifles. These are the evil black rifles that everyone's talking about. Myself, in my gun cabinet: I don't own a bolt gun. I have the old lever-action 30-30, and that's as close as I get. Everything else I have is of that stream, so it's a semiautomatic-type rifle.

Now, the reason why I picked those wasn't because of the movies. It wasn't because of some other silly thing. Honestly, it's because of engineering. These types of platforms have been out for at least 60 years. In the last 20 years their accuracy and their reliability have increased substantially. You've got a company like Alberta tactical firearms out of Calgary. The gentleman is a former police officer. He ends up changing his vocation. He ends up buying a machine shop, and in a number of years he's building trailers, those things. He develops some respiratory issues. He ends up transitioning over and building high-quality, Alberta-made firearms.

Now, if you're familiar with the AR-15 platform, those are considered restricted, verboten. You can only take them out and use them at gun ranges. The actual firing principles of them, being a direct impingement with a semiautomatic nature: there isn't any ruling on it. So what this gentleman designed was a different fit-up, so you're operating your lower receivers. Essentially, if you took it to the uninformed and didn't know the internal workings, threw 'em on the bench, you wouldn't know the difference between that and an AR-15. This gentleman with good old Alberta ingenuity came up with a way of having this thing legally owned as a nonrestricted firearm, Mr. Speaker. He has the modern hunter, which is in .308 calibre and up, so the big game stuff, and then a modern varmint: wonderful, finely accurate rifles. In fact, some of these rifles have been winning competitions against the bolt guns, so a really good product.

If you look at North Eastern Arms or Black Creek Labs, they're out of Ontario. They've done something similar. Diemaco, if you look at them: that's the Colt Canada version. These things are renowned all over the world.

Canadian shooting sports: you have Elcan, which provides some of the highest quality optics in the world. They're Canadian made. There's an entire industry out there that's devoted to this. Over \$141 million a year goes into shooting paper targets.

Myself, when I go out hunting, I am the worst hunter ever. I'm usually rushed in the last couple of days of the year, but it's not about that. It's about me and my son going out, and it's like me going back and sharing some of those traditions and going back to some of the old farm properties and walking those old cutlines again. It's that rite of passage.

That's the thing that folks in Toronto and Ontario – they're making these well-intended gun laws – aren't understanding. It's not the people that go through all the courses, that go through all the training, that go through all the licensing to get their firearms and to use them and to control them responsibly that are the issue. The issue is the ones that aren't. Mr. Speaker, if you make it more and more difficult for the people who go through all this length of exercise and have it that every five years you're screened through the police and you have all the questions that are filled out by your spouse and those close to you, the only ones that are going to be left with these things are the criminals. To me, that's far more dangerous than anything else.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I might just ask for some discretion from the House. If you're interested in shooting clays and playing golf, you might just come down to the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and visit the Silver Willow for sporting clays. You can essentially do both.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

I see that no one has risen, so I will call upon the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by Central Peace-Notley.

3:40

**Ms Phillips:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in support of this motion, Government Motion 41, a perfectly reasonable government motion on a matter of federal jurisdiction expressing a perfectly reasonable set of sentiments on the topic of firearms ownership, including but not limited to hunting and sport shooting. That is excellent.

I want to give a special shout out to Ted Feller over at Marksman Guns & Sports. It's on 13th Street N. I had the pleasure, I guess it would be about a year and a half ago, of doing an announcement in Ted's shop, surrounded by a lot of heads mounted on the walls, to reduce the fees for hunting licenses for senior citizens in the province. That was a really fun day because we also announced a mentorship program for seniors to mentor some of the young hunters that are taking their hunting certification through AHEIA, the Alberta hunter education folks. It was a really great opportunity to visit with constituents who would be paying less for their hunting licenses, folks over 65, just as they do for their fishing licenses.

That was one of my great memories as a minister. That was a fun day. I remember the federal government did something mildly ridiculous in that I had to answer questions on that day in the dead of summer, so the poor guys behind me, who were all over 65, had to stand there as I responded to the national media in both official languages under a banner of heads on a matter that had nothing to do with their discounted hunting license.

I grew up in rural Alberta. I remember the 1980s and being somewhat confused when gun ownership and gun laws began to become a matter of national debate, because I was essentially a farm kid. I remember being a little bit confused as to what the problem was here because I didn't know some of the axes of conflict that gun ownership was beginning to lay bare between urban and rural and lawful gun ownership and use of firearms for hunting or for sport shooting and some of the consequences of an illegal gun trade that was essentially popping up in our cities at that time and has persisted to this day.

I do remember over time, when I was a kid, responding to some of the changes for gun ownership. For example, different locked cabinets and all of those kinds of things came in over time. My dad, not being a details guy at all, relied on my mom to make sure that all of the permits were in order, all the cabinets were correct, and all of those sorts of things because – my dad has left us now, and I don't think even if here he would take offence – if it was left to him, I think we would have very quickly become non law-abiding firearms owners in my household if it wasn't for my mom making sure that all of the Is were dotted and the Ts were crossed.

Certainly, you know, when my dad was around, shooting tin cans in the backyard with the .22 – we certainly had more than enough space to do that – it was a thing that my sister and I did a lot, with my dad's quasi safety conscious supervision and my mom's more than safety conscious supervision to make up for it.

Over the last couple of years, when I was environment minister, I got to have a lot of interactions with the Alberta hunter education folks and other folks locally from the gun club as well. Some of the friendships that I made at the gun club in Kananaskis I really appreciated. They were having some issues related to some of their

environmental permitting, and some things had changed with respect to their location in Kananaskis, wildlife corridors, and other pieces. They were having a hard time navigating all of that. You know, some of the concerns of the department I think were pretty fair enough, and some of them needed to be worked through, so I went out with the gun club in Kananaskis. Like I said, I had shot a .22 a lot when growing up, but I had never used other firearms, so I, too, got to learn how to shoot clay pigeons.

I went with Danielle Larivee, who is the former Member for Lesser Slave Lake, and she was much better at it than I was because they're loud and they're heavy, and when you're five foot two, the thing can really put you on your back foot if you're not quite ready for it. I got better over time with the folks from the Kananaskis Gun Club teaching me. One of the people was, of course, Cam Westhead, who was one of my helpers that day. He wasn't a full instructor, but he is also a member of the Kananaskis Gun Club. I'm pretty sure I can report to the House that over time the department did ensure that the Kananaskis Gun Club can stay where they are, which is fantastic, with a few modifications to their lease with the department. That was an excellent outcome of my visit there, certainly more excellent than my actual skeet shooting performance, which, I think it's fair to say, would be charitably described as fair to middling.

Obviously, I support this motion. I have no issue with it whatsoever. I believe that there are a number of lawful gun owners who also support this motion. Certainly, when we're looking at organized crime activity or other criminal activity, these are not folks that are stopping in at Marksman Guns & Sports on 13th Street North. There is a whole illegal gun trade that bubbles up from the United States that does need to be dealt with. That's got nothing to do with ordinary people who are simply pursuing hobbies of various kinds.

The final piece, though, that I will touch on in terms of my comments on this motion, Mr. Speaker, is that, you know, it's a pretty mild motion. It doesn't really even call on the federal government to do anything. I'm glad that it makes the government backbenchers feel like they are heard in the overall government agenda. I'm glad that they now feel that somehow the Premier's office and others heard them in terms of wanting to articulate some of the things that were important to them. That's really what this motion is about. It's about keeping the wheels on caucus and the backbench. It doesn't really contain anything that is even mildly controversial. It's not even really about calling on any other order of government to do something. You know, I do think it's unfortunate that we are using this time to essentially engage in, you know, caucus solidarity exercises rather than actually moving forward with bill debate or other things that are actually part of our work and our legislative agenda.

You know, be that as it may, there are all kinds of ways that premiers' offices and sort of the centre of politics keep the wheels on the bus with respect to caucus solidarity. They thought that this was a nice way to do it and engage the backbench. That's very nice for them, but I do think that in this House our time could be perhaps more productively used than this way.

Having said that, happy to support this motion, and happy to cede the floor to my colleagues who, I'm sure, will describe some of their views on the matter as well.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and talk about Government Motion 41:



Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize and support the ability of Albertans to lawfully and in a responsible manner own and possess firearms and to engage in permitted activities involving the use of firearms, including but not limited to hunting and sport shooting.

Mr. Speaker, I think Albertans deserve and have a right to possess lawful property in a responsible manner. I think the left's answer to this situation, one of them, was the long gun registry that was imposed in 1993. When the long gun registry was brought in, it was supposed to be at a cost of \$2 million, and we know that that ended up costing I think close to \$2 billion. Of course, during that time period I believe that the stats suggested that probably 70 per cent of firearms were not registered, so it was obviously a dismal failure.

3:50

To that point, I'll just read this short quote from the Ontario police commissioner. I think this is from 2003, so after 10 years of the federal government's long gun registry. It says:

We have an ongoing gun crisis including firearms related homicides lately in Toronto, and a law registering firearms has neither deterred these crimes nor helped us solve any of them. None of the guns we know to have been used were registered, although we believe that more than half of them were smuggled into Canada from the United States. The firearms registry is long on philosophy and short on practical results considering the money could be more effectively used for security against terrorism as well as a host of other public safety initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, we've seen governments in the past fail in this regard when it comes to trying to restrict or take away the rights of Canadians when it comes to firearms.

I think we can all agree that safety should be number one, and that's, of course, you know, widely understood and widely respected. Safety is the key issue in dealing with firearms. I know that in my family, my home, and my community – and I'll include my business, too – the number one thing that we always consider is safety first when it comes to dealing with firearms.

Crime is a separate issue. Obviously, punishing law-abiding citizens that own firearms is not the answer to crime. We know that being tough on crime, especially gun crimes, is a far greater deterrent. People that commit crimes with guns should be severely punished for that crime. We know that just merely possessing a firearm is not a crime; nor should it be considered that.

Now, the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat talked about her favourite firearm, Lucy. I do have a favourite of my own, and it's called The Magic Magnum. It's a 7 mm Remington rifle with a Kevlar stock, a custom mountain rifle, that I've had for many years. It's looking a little worse for wear. It's been used by many people from all over the world, from all over Alberta, and from all over our community and by my family to take aim. It's known for, you know, the one-shot kill. That's The Magic Magnum. That's kind of my favourite firearm in my home.

Now, we know that hunters use firearms. Of course, I think it's widely accepted across Alberta that having hunters manage wildlife is the most accepted way to manage wildlife. Obviously, hunters could use bows, crossbows, or firearms, guns, but there are many areas and many species where it's not practical to use bows all the time. If we want to manage wildlife, we need to be able to harvest them effectively, efficiently, and in a humane manner, so that's why so many hunters use firearms in that sport.

We also have the target shooters, shooters that use firearms for recreation. You know, shotgun users will shoot sporting clays. We have a lot of target shooters in Alberta, and those are perfectly acceptable ways to use firearms and to enjoy them for recreation.

Now, many people in my constituency own and use firearms, and they use them respectfully and safely. Of course, we don't want to

see government interfere with that right to enjoy our property legally and lawfully and safely. Just on the weekend, for instance, I was able to harvest a white-tailed deer, and I was able to bring in some of the meat yesterday and feed many of the MLAs on this side of the House. It was a great opportunity to enjoy the natural bounty that we have here in Alberta. Of course, that was taken with a firearm.

We need to stand up for Albertans. We know how Albertans feel overwhelmingly on this issue of firearms. Federally, we know that the Liberals don't see things quite the way we do when it comes to this. We also know that the federal NDP, which is of course the same party that the members opposite belong to – we know that, for instance, the federal NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh, is urging the Prime Minister to immediately give cities the leeway to ban handguns. So here we have the leader of the NDP urging the Prime Minister to encourage the banning of handguns in Canada. Of course, when we see things like that, we know how they feel, really, about firearms. They obviously voted for that party in this past federal election and a leader that has taken this position. When asked about Bill C-71, Leader Singh said: yes, right now our caucus is in support of this bill. That is a quote.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's good to hear that there is some support on the NDP bench for this motion. Maybe they feel they can support it because they feel that it has no teeth or it has no substance or for whatever reason, but I would love to see the members on the NDP side go to their federal leader and stand up to him and stand up to their federal party and support Albertans and support this motion on a federal level. That's when we will truly see how the members opposite feel about the lawful ownership of firearms by Albertans.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, I think this motion is a good one to send a message to Ottawa. Like I said, I would encourage the NDP opposite to take that to their federal leader and see if we can have a more positive conversation federally on this matter.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has some comments to make.

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. It's an honour to rise here and give a few thoughts in support of Motion 41. I just want to get involved in this caucus solidarity exercise, if that's what this is. I think it's a great use of our time. I feel like I've had far, far more frivolous endeavours in this House. I think we all know that there's pressure on firearm owners from our federal government, and this is a great motion showing support for our law-abiding citizens and firearm owners. Most of my comments have been echoed by my caucus mates. You know, I think firearms are part of our culture. They're a useful tool for farms and ranches. Hunting and sporting clays: great, great pastimes. It's really part of our culture.

I was just going to share a little story. I remember being about 12. You know, growing up I had the Daisy BB gun, and that was kind of your pal. You'd head out, and you might get a gopher, shoot a pigeon, and learn how guns work and get better at the craft. I remember I had an uncle visit from Scotland. I'd never met the man before, and I could immediately tell he was a very strange, strange cat. He'd been everywhere in the world. He'd done everything. He'd been to Alaska, South America, all through Europe. He'd taken every tour. I remember just watching in sheer amazement as he crawled around on the hillside with an old lever action .22 of my dad's and was shooting gophers. I couldn't believe it. He was crawling and doing little rolls. It was the most bizarre thing I've

ever seen, but the point is that when he got done, afterwards I remember him telling my dad: I've been everywhere, and that was absolutely the most fun I've ever had, shooting gophers at your place today. Then he did a really creepy thing. He piled up the gophers and asked that we take his picture. I thought that was a little bizarre. Still, you could see the joy it brought him.

I would also just like to touch on, you know, that I did quite a bit of hunting as a younger guy. I don't seem to have the time now, but I really enjoy having hunters come onto our land. I just got a text from a guy that said: thank you so much for letting my son come out and shoot his first deer. These were strangers before they called. They'll probably be back. They're friends now. This is part of our culture that brings people together.

4:00

I'd also like to say, you know, living in remote rural Alberta – we talked about the fear of rural crime, and I know the Member for Edmonton-McClung told a story yesterday about the fear he felt from those wind chimes that he thought were an intruder in his house. I can say that I've had that feeling, and I'm not making fun of the wind chimes. I've had a text message from an RCMP constable saying: there are people armed and dangerous; this is the truck they're driving; they're heading your way. Then you actually have to sit there with your wife, with your kids sleeping, and say: do you want to have a gun in the house? You actually have to go through that process in your head. Do you want to escalate something? And then there's that fear that you know you're the last line of defence to protect them. So I just wanted to say that that's a very real thing.

Also, as a rancher and a cattle producer there is nothing that hurts you worse than when maybe you're calving pretty hard and you go out in the morning and find that you're a little late. You've got calves on the ground, and their guts are spilled, their tails are eaten off, or maybe even worse, the cow can't get up, and you've watched a pack of coyotes work on her all night. It's not fun, as someone that cares about animal husbandry and livestock.

I remember when BSE hit in 2003. I'd just gotten out of college. Cattle were basically worthless. My grandfather had a fairly antique, as I would describe them, herd of cows at the time. Immediately the salvage market went out of cattle. You couldn't get rid of them. They were worth nothing. It cost you more to take them to town to get rid of them than you could sell them for. So between our province and Canada they came out with a pretty good plan, but it involved shooting the cows. I know that I had, you know, not the pleasure but the displeasure of having to shoot hundreds of cows between 2003 and 2005. I don't know how you would perform tasks like those without a useful gun that provides so much utility and safety for a rancher. I don't know what could replace that. I just wanted to add that.

I think this is a common-sense motion, and I'll enjoy supporting it. I'll cede my time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, I am prepared to recognize the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont if he's wishing to speak?

Is there anyone else? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, having already spoken to the motion, I'm not sure.

**Mr. Bilous:** Correct. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm requesting unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the duration of the afternoon.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** I'm prepared to call the question on Motion 41 unless there is anyone else wishing to speak. The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont. We've been down this road.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your recognizing me just for a couple of minutes. I just wanted to touch on why I support this motion, and I wanted to talk about my time in policing for 10 years. As a police officer I was never concerned about law-abiding gun owners; I was concerned about criminals.

I can tell you that in my time on patrol, in the latter half of it I came across guns more and more often, ones that were makeshift, ones that were put together from other parts, people who had them in their own vehicles and stolen cars. That was the concern. It was criminals having guns because they were willing to use them.

I wanted to share that for the federal government to try to ban handguns and move forward with that against law-abiding owners is the wrong way to go. What they need to do is strengthen the laws and the punishments for criminals who are using these firearms. If you're caught with a firearm, with the way the Charter of Rights is, you have done something else to get there. It's not that you can just search a person or search their home. You have to have committed a different crime, either displayed that gun, used it, or something else that gave power for a search to come across it. Why people would carry these in public, it's not necessary. Law-abiding gun owners should be respected.

One night I was coming down Gateway Boulevard, and a car came out of a motel. We got into a car chase. As it parked at a local apartment, I saw the guy take something off his chest. He gets out of the car and he's wearing a tactical vest with prohibited magazines fully loaded. He had a bandana. He had left a Kriss Vector assault rifle in the car. It was a close call for us. However, we managed the situation. But that person received a conditional sentence order, so no jail time, just a community order. Basically: don't do it again. This is the message that we're sending to people who are breaking these laws.

I think that what we need to focus on are punishments that are substantial enough to prevent those kinds of crimes from occurring. We shouldn't be going after law-abiding gun owners, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone wishing to provide a brief question or comment?

Seeing none – I feel like we might have adamant agreement this afternoon – I'm prepared to call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 41 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:07 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Sawhney
Allard	Lovely	Schow
Amery	Loyola	Schulz
Barnes	Luan	Sigurdson, R.J.
Bilous	McIver	Singh
Ceci	Neudorf	Smith
Dach	Nixon, Jason	Stephan
Dreeshen	Orr	Toews
Getson	Phillips	Turton
Glasgo	Rehn	Walker
Glubish	Rosin	Wilson

Gray	Rutherford	Yao
Horner	Savage	
Totals:	For – 38	Against – 0

[Government Motion 41 carried unanimously]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Hon. members, upon reviewing the committee's records this morning, it was noted that amendment A2 was not disposed of last evening. Accordingly, the committee will return to debate on that amendment, and additional copies of amendment A2 will be distributed to all members.

While they're being distributed, I think it's appropriate to ask: will there be any speakers on Amendment A2? Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll read this into *Hansard* for the benefit of members who haven't received it yet. I'm moving this on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, that Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended in section 13(2) by striking out "or government initiatives."

Really the purpose of this, Madam Chair, is quite simple. What this does is ensure that monies collected don't go into general revenues or some kind of slush fund but that it's used for initiatives, I believe, as the member was intending.

With that, I'll keep my comments short. I encourage members to support this amendment.

**The Chair:** All right. Just for clarity in *Hansard*, this amendment was moved on November 20 by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to amendment A2?

If not, I will call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We are now back on the main bill. Are there any speakers wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment that I'd like to move. I'll just wait.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A4. St. Albert, please proceed.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, and to move the amendment. I move that Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended in section 4 by striking out subsections (2), (3), (5), (6), and (9) and in subsection (7) by striking out clauses (a), (b), (d) and (e).

I'd just like to say a couple of things before I get into some of the technical pieces about why this amendment is a good idea. First of all, as I had some time over the weekend to take some of the pieces of legislation that I hadn't had enough time to really go through carefully, I took them home and sat down and read them. As I was

reading through the sections that apply to AISH – of course, it is quite complex because you have to compare the legislation and try to figure out what it actually means and what the potential of these changes are. I actually had to read it a few times to be sure that I was understanding what I was reading, and it turns out that indeed I was. That is the danger. I just want to highlight that that is the danger or, I guess, less danger – but that is the risk of an omnibus piece of legislation that addresses so many different moving pieces, that it is quite easy to bury it, to bury changes that have the ability to impact people's lives. I'm going to talk about some of those changes.

I would like to remind members that I know they like to talk about platform commitments and who did what and who didn't do what, but I would like to say that I remember distinctly promises made by the UCP before the election, promises to preserve AISH benefits and to support and respect people with disabilities. I believe that the changes that are being proposed in this piece of legislation do exactly the opposite. I do believe that this amendment will attempt to undo some of the potential damage, some of the risk also, that this legislation poses to Albertans.

Now, let's be clear. Assured income for the severely handicapped – and again, I really do hate the name of this particular piece of legislation. It's old. It's not incredibly respectful, but that's what it's called. This piece of legislation – and the key word here is "legislation"; that is the law – protects certain things about AISH, which are benefits that are paid to people who are eligible under the criteria of severe handicap. They were put into law, really, if you want to boil it right down, so that we couldn't mess around with it, so that the law was there, the rules were there, eligibility was there. You could not make significant changes to this legislation without debating it in this very place. That's what democracy is, right? You propose an amendment. You propose significant legislative changes. This is the place that you do it. You don't do it in a minister's office. You don't do it in a boardroom. You don't do it behind closed doors. You do it here, particularly when it impacts so many people.

Let's just go through what some of these things do, some of the things that have been put into this piece of legislation. Section 1 of the AISH Act, which the government proposes to change, is amended in clause (b) by striking out "section 3.2" and replacing it with "the regulations." Let me tell you what section 1 is. Section 1 is the section about definitions, so it defines a client, which is another old, dated word, as "a recipient of a benefit who is eligible under section 3.2." That defines who is eligible for benefits. Basically, what this is doing, what this is proposing to do is to take the legislated definition, "severe handicap," and move that from the AISH Act to regulation.

Once again, we've heard over and over and over from this government: "We're not doing anything. We didn't cut AISH. We're not changing anything. Nothing to see here. Move along." Well, I would agree that this legislation doesn't do it yet, but it does open the door for some changes that are very significant. Then I would think about a phrase that I often think about when I look at some of these things: it's really not what you say; it's what you do. If you are moving these pieces out of legislation into regulation, I would ask just one question: why? What are you doing? Why are you doing this?

4:20

Here are some other changes: section 1 of the AISH Act is also amended by repealing clause (i). This is the one, again, under definitions. Section 1 defines severe handicap. This move in this piece of legislation completely removes the definition.

Section 3(1) is also amended by striking out “section 3.2” and replacing it with, once again, “the regulations” wherever it occurs. Section 3(1) is all about the benefits, the AISH benefits. This removes the definition of eligibility for benefits that include living allowance, child benefit, personal benefit, health benefit and also include cohabitating partner and dependent children of the person receiving AISH. You can imagine that by moving all of the things that were previously in this section from legislation into regulation – I’m going to ask the same question: why? What is the purpose of this? I am quite certain that the UCP list of things to change, tackle, repeal, and remove is quite long. Why exactly is AISH in your target?

Section 3.2 is repealed and moved to regulation. Section 3.2 defined eligibility for benefits and previously included age and residency, severe handicap – once again, the definition – income and assets of cohabitating partner. This moves eligibility for benefits out of the act into regulation.

Here’s another one. Section 3.3 is repealed and not replaced. Section 3.3 is about exempt assets of the person and cohabitating partner and previously included assets in trust, Henson trusts, and time to invest assets. Previously legislation allowed for approximately a year for somebody, let’s say, receiving an inheritance to make decisions about where to direct that. This moves exempt assets out of the act into regulation. Why?

Section 12(1) is also amended – this is about the scope – and moves to regulation.

Schedule 1, of course, is amended. We’ve all heard about that. These are CPI adjustments. That is indexing. For those of you that were not in the Legislature when we passed this legislation a while ago, it was a really great day, actually. I think that altogether everybody in this place at the time supported this. This was more than \$30 a month that people would get as an increase with, you know, tying it to inflation. This was about finally saying to the community, the disabled community, that you no longer have to beg for a raise every year. You no longer have to wait and hold your breath for a time the government of the day decides they’re doing well enough to give you a raise. This says: “You are respected. You are respected enough for us to commit these resources to invest in you and to invest in your family. We’ll do that every single year to lessen the poverty that you have to deal with just that little bit.”

You know, if you calculate, let’s say, a 40-hour work week for somebody on AISH, sadly, I think they’re earning under \$10 an hour. This is not a healthy benefit. I’ve heard the minister stand up a number of times, and I think her rationale for deindexing or cutting AISH has been: well, other provinces pay less. I don’t know. That’s just wrong. When you calculate that these AISH benefits pay the person less than \$10 an hour but your rationale is that other people in other provinces live in worse poverty, that’s wrong. That’s incredibly wrong.

Here’s another thing that really sort of worries me, schedule 2. Schedule 2 in the AISH Act is enormous. It’s massive. It really deals with a lot of the mechanics of benefits, how they’re determined, how they’re assigned. This omnibus bill, Bill 21 – and I think it’s a little bit weird, ensuring fiscal sustainability when you are cutting benefits for people with severe disabilities.

By repealing schedule 2 and not just amending – this legislation repeals it altogether. Schedule 2 is the determination of income, so basically this piece decides who gets AISH based on your income. This includes deductions from determinations: employment earnings, other earnings like child support – did you know that? – honoraria, death benefits. Death benefits used to be exempt from that calculation.

Money received for home repairs. We heard the Minister of Community and Social Services talk about investment in RAMP. It

used to be called the residential access and modification program. I’m not entirely sure if it’s still called that. The acronym is RAMP. There was a bit more money put into the RAMP program so that people could invest in their homes, stay in their home, age in place, deal with a disability, whether it was, you know, adaptations to your washroom or a ramp or whatever it was. People get money to do those things. Schedule 2 is now repealed, so that money for home repairs gets calculated.

Scholarships, bursaries, seniors’ benefit of your spouse: that now is gone. All of these things were included in schedule 2, but this piece of omnibus legislation has blown that up and moved it to regulation. That means that what once was protected in law is now moved to regulation, and we will not know what’s happening. We will not know. It will not be debated, and you will not be counted in this place. We will not have a chance to speak to those fundamental changes to a program that are essential to the survival and well-being of people with disabilities in this province. I’m not okay with that. I don’t know how you feel. I’m not okay with that. Now, it’s one thing to say – and the partisan politics aside, I don’t care which government it was. I don’t care which party. I don’t care who was the Premier. I don’t care. I think that it is reckless and irresponsible to take something that was once enshrined in law and move it to regulation.

Let me give you an example of the kinds of things that can happen when something is not protected by law. I’ll give you an example of how AISH works. Let’s say that you apply for AISH. You get all your documents in, and really the very important documents are the medical documents, the medical reports from your physician, from, let’s say, your therapist, from somebody qualified to do an assessment. Once the application package and those documents are received and reviewed by more than just an AISH generalist – these are the titles of the people that work in AISH. Once they are reviewed and are determined to be satisfactorily applied for – I’m not sure of the phrasing that they use. Once they stamp that – they decide the date that that information was received and approved – the process begins.

Then you go through the process of approval, and I think one of the saving graces was that even if it took a few months, even if it took six months because things were really bad and too many staff had been laid off – hint, you know, you’re laying off 223 people in CSS; I don’t think it’s going to get better – at the very least you knew that when you finally got through that, your benefits would be retroactive to that day that it was stamped. Yes, we got all the documentation in; good to go. That’s gone. None of us knew about it because it wasn’t protected in the law.

Now, you can talk about sustainability all you like, that you are only cutting benefits for those that apply or that are on AISH because you’re trying to protect something for the future. Focus on right now. These are real people living in real poverty, trying to raise families, trying to buy food. Real people. These are real people. This is not about a story for somebody who isn’t born yet who will likely need benefits. Who knows what that will be? This is about real people. I would say that if you’re going to talk about savings, it’s about \$10 million a year to index AISH benefits, and your war room is \$120 million over four years. This is about choices. This is about choices. You are making deliberate choices.

4:30

Now, I am not saying that everything will be repealed, changed, squashed, and thrown out. I am not saying that at all, but I’m saying: what are you doing? Why are you doing this? Actually, you can say one thing, but I’m looking at what you’re doing, and you’re doing this.

You're taking it from the law – and it's protected – and you're moving it to a place where we can't see what's happening, where Albertans can't see what's happening. It's hard enough for us to follow this, because it's very complex. Can you imagine somebody with a developmental disability trying to follow this, trying to understand what's happening? You represent them, too . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Address the chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, everything through the chair.  
Hon. member, proceed.

**Ms Renaud:** . . . all of us, the collective you, the royal you.

One of the things that we learned in budget estimates – that was long, and I certainly appreciated all of the things that the minister agreed to follow up on in terms of information when we asked questions. I get that that's a lot to try to cover and answer, and I'm looking forward to those responses. One of the things that became crystal clear for me, Madam Chair, during estimates was what was going to happen next. Once again, one of the things that the minister was very clear on was that she couldn't answer a lot of the questions that were posed to her because – I get it – she's new to the position and it's a lot to take in. I cannot even imagine. One of the answers that kept going again and again was that we have to review things. I think it's really important for Albertans to understand, especially Albertans with disabilities and their families and their allies, that she said that this would be reviewed internally.

Now, that is a complete one-eighty from the way that we believed consultation for things like AISH, for supports for people with disabilities needed to happen. There is no way that any one of us can possibly understand what it is like to live with a disability unless we, in fact, live with a disability. The only way to be able to capture the voices and the needs or maybe the wishes or the ideas, the suggestions of people with disabilities is to include them in the decision-making. I'll tell you that you don't include people in decision-making after you've made the decision or after you have decided to cut something. They can't be a rubber stamp; they have to be included in this process. I would say that this government is not doing a very good job so far.

In estimates I asked some key questions, Madam Chair. I asked about AISH indexing. I have heard the government's reasons. I have heard them say that this is about money. I really don't buy that, because I see what you're spending on the war room. I have heard that these changes were made because of money and because, you know, what people want is sustainability.

My question was: who did you consult with? Before you deindexed AISH, which is a cut – let's be clear: semantics aside, deindexing AISH is a cut – you didn't consult with the disability advocate. That's his role. You didn't consult with the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. That's their job. I don't believe you consulted with any self-advocates. I don't really know who the government consulted with, so it would be quite lovely to get a list. If I'm wrong, I'd be thrilled to be proved wrong about this. If the disability community said, "Yeah, we can manage this; this isn't a problem; we can do this; we understand the big picture," that would be great, but that's not what I'm hearing, not one bit.

Madam Chair, the reason that I'm proposing this amendment – I would ask the members that are in the Chamber or that will consider this amendment to think about it. I don't believe that this piece of legislation immediately axes anything. What I do believe is that it opens the door for changes that will not be debated in the light of day in this place.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. member from . . .

**Ms Gray:** Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**The Chair:** Thank you. The wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm sure you've driven past us. As you head towards the Legislature, just on the right, when you're going up Calgary Trail, you're going right past Mill Woods for a bit.

Thank you. I appreciate being recognized in this debate, especially on amendment A4. I really just wanted to rise in this place to share that I would encourage all members to support this important amendment, brought forward by my colleague. I think that the remarks she's been making in favour of this amendment have been compelling. I certainly hope that all members of this House are hearing what the Member for St. Albert has been saying because I think it's really important to this debate about Bill 21. Although it is an omnibus bill, we need to be looking at, particularly, these important pieces that impact people's lives.

I appreciate the moment to stand briefly to speak in support of amendment A4, that we are currently debating. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members on amendment A4?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:36 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Irwin	Phillips
Ceci	Loyola	Renaud
Dach	Pancholi	Sabir
Gray		

4:40

Against the motion:

Allard	Luan	Schulz
Amery	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Barnes	Orr	Singh
Dreeshen	Rehn	Smith
Getson	Rosin	Stephan
Glasgo	Rutherford	Turton
Glubish	Savage	Walker
Guthrie	Sawhney	Wilson
Horner	Schow	Yao
Lovely		

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 28
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the bill.

**Mrs. Savage:** Madam Chair, I move to adjourn debate on Bill 21.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Bill 26**  
**Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019**

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for . . . Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just think Nellie. Think Nellie, and it will come to you: Nellie McClung. I know there was a school in my constituency, and that was the name.

But I certainly have matters of serious concern that even Nellie McClung might have advocated about this afternoon when we speak of the Farm Freedom and Safety Act legislation that's before us. I wish to offer a few comments and suggest a few concerns and offer up a few questions to the minister on the piece of legislation.

Of course, as we know, Bill 26 amends the Labour Relations Code to exclude farm and ranch employees from the definition of employee. That exclusion effectively precludes these workers from forming or joining a trade union. This exclusion is actually contrary to section 20 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects workers' freedoms to engage in associational activity. I have great concern about that and about excluding any class of workers from the protection of the rights that are guaranteed under international conventions such as the universal declaration of human rights and our own Constitution.

I'm wondering if the minister has done any analysis or looked at a risk analysis as to how this bill might comply even with trade agreements such as CETA, if indeed that's a consideration that his ministry undertook when looking at crafting this legislation, this bill.

Also, Madam Chair, under the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between the EU and Canada, article 23.3, the right to freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining are guaranteed. I'm wondering if an effective analysis and a legal analysis of that was done. Is the minister confident that this bill would hold up to legal scrutiny under analysis of their contravention, perhaps, of CETA agreements, the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between the EU and Canada?

Concerns abound about the actual constitutionality and legitimacy of the denial of workers' rights to organize. One of the justifications, Madam Chair, that the minister has offered in this House as to why they indeed failed to enshrine or maintain this right to organize for paid farm workers is the suggestion that he made earlier in this House, that many people had the opportunity but failed to exercise this right to organize during the period of time when our Bill 6, which gave them that right, had been in force.

Yet, Madam Chair, many rights exist which may not necessarily be exercised. For example, of course, as we know, he says that it wasn't exercised, but many people also did not vote or exercise their right to vote in the last election. No one that I've heard, on this side of the House or the other, would be advocating for those people to lose the right to vote. Simply because a right is not exercised is no justification to strip individuals of those rights, in particular in this case, where the right to organize and form a labour organization and union to protect one's worker rights is not a right that should be stripped simply because it may not have been exercised under certain circumstances by a certain class of workers. There well may be and, I would argue, there certainly are impediments to classes of farm workers who would have been allowed this right under Bill 6, impediments which would make it difficult for them to exercise those rights. It may well be, going forward, that those impediments would have made it difficult under any circumstances to exercise those rights.

However, as we know, the government has made the decision to go ahead and introduce legislation that will repeal the right for farm workers to actually earn at least a minimum wage. There's a loophole in this legislation which excludes the farm workers from being subject to certain rules and regulations that they had enjoyed before. The government has indicated that farms will no longer be subject to the detailed safety rules set out in the occupational health and safety code but, rather, will be simply subject to the rudimentary safety rights set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which would continue to apply.

At present, Madam Chair, farms and ranches with paid nonfamily employees must enrol their workers in the workers' compensation system, like virtually every other employer in every industry across Canada. Now, workers' compensation coverage provides wage loss, rehabilitation, and fatality benefits to workers. Workers' compensation also precludes workers from suing their employers if the worker is injured. Now, before 2015 such coverage was optional, and relatively few farms purchased it. Some farms purchased private injury insurance, and studies showed that those that did purchase such insurance found that relying on farmers to purchase private insurance left a significant number of farm workers uninsured or underinsured, and the private premiums were more expensive than workers' compensation premiums. Private insurance also left farmers open to civil suits where injuries or fatalities occurred.

So, Madam Chair, this isn't just simply reversing Bill 6; this is reversing hundreds of years of basic labour and human rights advances by removing core protection for workers.

We know that the vast majority of Alberta farmers care for their workers, particularly because we know that many of these workers who are on these farms, family farms, especially when we're talking about the small farm where there are five or fewer workers, are the community members, the neighbours, friends, sometimes even relatives of the farmer who employs them. Of course, we're not suggesting that there is no concern on the part of the farmers for the safety of their employees. However, that still doesn't mean that these workers don't have the basic right and shouldn't have the basic right to enjoy the protection of legal frameworks and legal minimum standards such as having a minimum wage standard of some kind. However, this legislation actually precludes that standard from being implemented because it effectively excludes them from the definition of employee and therefore doesn't give them the same protections they have enjoyed previously under the Labour Relations Code and employment standards regulations as well.

We're going backwards in a way that I don't even know if many farmers would really be in favour of, because they're looking at denying rights to people who they probably see in their community apart from their work on the farm. These, as I said, are their own community members and people who work in the area, perhaps not only for them but for other farmers. They're probably the last ones that farmers want to deny basic workers' rights to, yet this legislation does precisely that.

I think it's very, very disappointing to see that the government found it necessary to deny basic legal rights to paid farm workers in the province. It went much further than what they suggested they might do by simply repealing Bill 6. It goes even deeper into the well of taking away rights from workers. No other jurisdiction in North America exempts any class of workers from earning at least some type of minimum wage for their work. The Premier and his government are more than undoing Bill 6; he's taking Alberta back to preindustrial labour relations laws. We are very, very disappointed with the move by this Legislature, by the government,

to go backwards and basically attack and single out paid farm workers rather harshly and unnecessarily.

4:50

There's another class of these workers, Madam Chair, who are itinerant farm workers or workers who are temporary workers from afar, the least able to defend themselves. The government is well aware that whether they are foreign workers here on temporary contracts or whether they are local workers who are coming to work on farms, the likelihood of these workers being able to mount a challenge to enforce their rights and oppose the government's restrictions on their right to organize is pretty limited. It's very difficult to understand why the government wanted to go to this length to try to stifle the opportunity of a class of workers in this country to exercise legal rights that every other class of worker in the country has. Alberta will be more than an outlier; it'll be unique in North America, never mind Canada, in repealing the right of farm workers to organize and at least have a basic minimum wage and the ability to enshrine a basic minimum wage and have that backed up by legislation.

I think that Albertans should take a close look at what this legislation is doing and wonder aloud: who's next? That's a question that many Albertans may have in their own mind when they see this government targeting a specific group of workers who are very, very unable to really fight against this type of legislation. This government is stripping away legal rights that are enshrined in our Constitution, enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights, that are enshrined, perhaps, in the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between the EU and Canada, trade agreements in CETA, yet the government sees fit to strip away these rights.

It's not something that I think even farmers expected them to approach as far as the repeal of Bill 6. I think that many farmers will be surprised and perhaps a little shocked to see what loopholes have been left here so that workers on their farms don't end up enjoying rights that are globally and universally accepted as basic labour rights, that all workers should enjoy in a democratic society at the very least.

The question that will be one that I think is legitimate to wonder about is: who's next? What class of worker does this government want to chip away at? Will it be another sector of farm workers? Or perhaps it'll be wage labour elsewhere, where they think: "Well, these people haven't been on strike lately. They haven't had any labour action. They haven't exercised their right to form a union. Maybe we'll just take that right away from them as well." The beat goes on.

I think this government may be using this as a bit of a testing ground as well to see what kind of reaction we get from the labour movement and from Albertans in general. Dare I say, Madam Chair, that the reaction will be loud and clear that Albertans don't stand for basic labour rights being taken away from individuals, where we turn ourselves into a preindustrial-era jurisdiction. We respect the rights of people to organize.

This is 2019, not 1919. The Winnipeg General Strike happened 100 years ago, and the right of workers to organize, no matter what category of worker they happen to be, has been enshrined in our laws and our Constitution and the universal declaration of human rights and in other international treaties for decades and generations. This government is seeing fit to turn that clock back. I find it disheartening, shameful. I would hope that the government will see fit to perhaps alter these pieces of legislation or the parts of it, at least, where these loopholes exist to show that they actually do respect the rights of working people and that we follow the pattern of respect that's shown internationally and enshrined in law in many other pieces of legislation and international treaties.

With that, Madam Chair, I'll close my remarks and, of course, let it be known that I certainly don't support this bill in any way, shape, or form.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 26? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member for Edmonton-McClung: I really appreciate his, I guess, view of how things happen on farms and his view of how a consultation process took place. I am from a farm community. I did grow up on a farm. I did actually attend a few of these consultation items that we took.

I guess, just to set a pretext for that, the old farm act, the one that they had, Bill 6, that we're obviously pulling off the table: it was a platform commitment. It was something that was poor legislation. There were tons of folks that protested against it. That's all in the past, and that's all the history. But as far as folks in my area, how much they were onboard with that act: nobody knew who I was when I ran for election, and not too many people outside my area know who I am now, but at any of the farming events or any of the items where I run into folks in that industry, all I have to do is say, "I'm the guy who beat the former ag minister," and I'm getting drinks bought for me. People are jumping up and down and shaking my hand because it was probably the least representative member for that industry. Unless I run into some of the loggers and the folks in the forestry sector – well, then, it's kind of a split between who's fighting for buying me rounds.

What happened in my area when we actually went up to Mayerthorpe and we consulted with the folks: they came to the meeting. They brought all their concerns, the items that we're looking at in talking about the farm freedom act. Now, you had people that were farm workers. You had people that were from the industry. You had farmers themselves. You had folks that were sitting there. Honestly, I expected it to be a little more one-sided, but it was a pretty fulsome discussion. When you actually have them talking about – and this is the group – putting up offers and suggestions of how to actually train people, how to run the farm safer, how to make sure they have pause for, you know, working hours, conditions, everything else along those lines, this is true consultation. Now, I don't think that Mayerthorpe was unique in this. I strongly believe that this is kind of a groundswell, if you would.

Talking about farming practices 100 years ago or going down some other path – I hate to say it. You don't necessarily have to have a hammer and sickle over somebody to make them do the right thing. We're well beyond that now in this day and age. People do things the right way because it's the right thing to do, although it might be scary for some folks to not have it written down to the infinitesimal detail and to hold those people to that type of extent. They're going to do the right thing. I saw that first-hand, Madam Chair. I saw that first-hand when they were talking about the care and custody of their workers.

I have folks that are in the bee industry in my area. It's not just the honey producers; it's the folks that actually produce the bees themselves. They're looking for relaxation of a bunch of other laws because they can't find people here to actually help grow the bees. They're actually predominantly in Mexico. I have folks that are on tree farms that bring in folks from Mexico, as an example, bring them over here and work all these hours, the time and the money that goes into that and the care and custody from these people, because they know that every dollar they earn here has an order of magnitude effect back in those villages. These are folks that aren't even Albertans.

They're not exploiting them. They're helping them, bringing them here to give them lots of work, pay them decently, give them great accommodations because they know that the money that they earn here goes back to their villages. They can buy a farm tractor, and next thing you know they're producing more revenue in those areas. These are the same folks that are being painted with that brush, that would take advantage of those types of folks that work for them or people that are from the area that work for them. Quite frankly, it's wrong.

But the consultation that did take place was genuine and true. It holds to one of our platform items, and it really speaks volumes to what we're trying to do here. I won't go on for hours. Honestly, I'm in favour of it.

Some of the information that's coming from the members opposite is very skewed. It's not representative of the facts out in rural communities, nor is it representative of that strong farming industry. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to stand and address this bill in Committee of the Whole because I have a number of concerns. I've spent a great deal of time working with the farming and ranching community, talking about these issues, and I've heard a lot of what I've heard from the community reflected back in the debate on this bill.

5:00

There are a great number of farming and ranching families, employers, the AgCoalition that became AgSafe: strong voices for health and safety, strong support for making sure, whether they be family or paid, whether they be part-time and temporary or full-time, that all workers come home safely. I certainly know that from my own experience working with these communities, and we've heard that through the debate.

I am not supportive of this piece of legislation because despite what the member who rose before me just said, that all employers want to have those reasonable basic minimums and want to protect and provide for their employees, what this bill actually does is remove all minimum employment standards for all workers. The members in this House have said that to introduce the idea that there might be a worker who is exploited or there might be a worker who is underinsured or uninsured is to insult all farmers. I do not believe that that is an accurate characterization. No one accuses oil and gas of being bad employers because they have to follow occupational health and safety and that if they were good employers, then we wouldn't have OH and S, and they would just naturally do it all. That doesn't make sense, Madam Chair.

We have minimum employment standards, we have minimum workplace protections for a very deliberate reason. In fact, these minimum employment standards and marketplace protections exist for farm workers across this country, except soon not in Alberta. Alberta will be the only place where minimum standards like statutory holiday pay, hours of work, and minimum wage will not apply to vast swaths of workers in this particular industry. That is unusual. That is something that is removing rights and protections from a group of workers that in many cases are considered to be vulnerable workers, and it's something that is happening not because – I'll pause my thought there, Madam Chair.

Employment standards and those minimum basic protections are something that we recognize for the majority of workers in Alberta. Here in this bill not only do we remove those minimum standards of protection from farm workers, but we actually expand the

number of workers and industries where those minimum protections will not be than even before Bill 6 was originally introduced. That is of grave concern to me because we know that having those minimum employment standards there in many cases is required or is the minimum that many workers receive. That is my first comment around employment standards.

I would like to certainly commend the work that AgSafe and the producer groups are doing to raise awareness. I would say that in conversations with many of those producer groups I often had people talk to me about how we could expand the safety and the requirements to a larger number of workers in these industries.

We know that by exempting these workers from minimum employment standards, it puts Alberta out of line with other jurisdictions. Similarly, by removing that right, which is constitutionally protected, to be able to organize through the Labour Relations Code, that puts Alberta out of step not just with other jurisdictions but with the Constitution of Canada. That is something that has been argued and reaffirmed in a number of jurisdictions and in a number of ways, so putting us out of step. I would note that as the members have argued in their debate on this piece of legislation that no farms or ranches had used that constitutional right to collectively bargain since it was given to them, that very fact makes me question: then why are we taking it away? Why are we removing somebody's right when you've even reflected back that the workers have not been using it? There appears to me to be a bit of a logical disconnect there.

Now, on the topic of the WCB, the workers' compensation, we know from before Bill 6 that under the PC government there were a number of studies and reviews done that showed a great number of farm workers were either uninsured or underinsured and not being covered through private insurance.

With the requirement of WCB, we've seen that there have been a number of claims, lost-time claims and injury claims, over the past few years while WCB coverage has been in place: in 2018, 886 claims against WCB. When I see those numbers, when I see that there are 371 lost-time claims, the way I reflect on those numbers is that those are all people who received rehabilitation or compensation for a workplace injury. These are all workers and employers who were supported to make sure that when an incident happened, everyone was supported, given treatment if necessary, given physiotherapy if necessary, and then helped to get back to work.

This is not just about the workers. This is also about the employers because, of course, through WCB that coverage means that an employer cannot be sued. This is the important historical bargain of the workers' compensation system. We know through the review of the WCB system how highly valued WCB coverage is by both employers and employees. When the system works well, it works incredibly well. It's a system that continually needs to be updated. Of course, we had completed the first review of the WCB system in 15 years. It's a system that continually needs to be updated.

I would note, just talking about how long since reviews, that on the employment standards side our review and changes to employment standards to bring Alberta in line with the rest of Canada around things like making sure that there was protected leave when someone has a sick child and some of the other changes that were made was the first major review of employment standards in 30 years. So Alberta had employment standards that were significantly out of date.

What this bill does is essentially return to an employment standards regime of 30 years ago in some cases, if at all, because I've seen estimates that roughly 80 per cent of workers will not qualify for those minimum employment standards. I will repeat



again that we know that the majority of employers are good employers. This is the case for all industries. We do not create employment legislation for the good actors; we do that to make sure that everyone has that same minimum standard of protection for farm workers or for other industries. That's why employment standards are applied so universally.

I would note that Alberta does have a number of exemptions to employment standards in other industries that should be reviewed. In fact, that work had begun under our government, and I hope that the minister of labour will continue to do the consultations that need to continue.

Now, when Bill 6 was originally introduced, absolutely huge concerns were raised. We then spent the next two years working very closely with farming and ranching communities, working with the AgCoalition, that then kind of turned into or helped to form AgSafe, listening very carefully and working with the farming and ranching community to try and find the right balance in implementation. I think everyone recognizes that this is an industry and a sector where there is a high level of risk. We know that agriculture and forestry continue to see the highest fatality rates among any major sector. In Alberta we have a lot of industrial sectors, but in agriculture and forestry is where we see the highest number of deaths and a high number of injuries.

5:10

One of the reasons why I think it's important that all workers have reasonable compensation and coverage is because not only does that impact them, but it impacts families. The impact on families, when there isn't adequate compensation and rehabilitation, can be quite devastating, particularly because asking injured workers to use the court system to get compensation becomes a very lengthy thing, and it becomes a barrier for many who don't have the financial means to implement that.

In my response to Bill 26 I really want to highlight that removing minimum employment standards, removing minimum hours of work, minimum wage, stat holiday pay, all of those factors, from employment standards for a huge swath of workers in this industry I think is a big step backwards. Having private insurance which will be defined by regulation: I think we are at risk that there could be workers who are underinsured. I'm concerned about the implementation of copayment when we know that there are now, potentially, no minimum wages set in this sector for a large number of the workers in this industry.

Those are some strong concerns that I have with this bill. Absolutely, it is a fact that repealing Bill 6 was part of the UCP platform, but I would note that Bill 26 does more than just repeal Bill 6. In fact, it includes even more exempted workers in new industries that were not previously there. One thing that we've been able to do since farming and ranching was brought in under WCB is improve the data tracking to know what the injury rates are looking like, the types of injuries, because that information can be used with good partner organizations like AgSafe to continue to improve safety standards and education and to improve getting the information out there. Of course, nobody wants injuries. Everybody wants to see workers come home safely at the end of the day. Sometimes to make sure that that happens, having good information is key, so continuing to do that is really important.

One thing Bill 26 doesn't do but was done in Budget 2019 is continue to fund AgSafe and continue to help those producers. I think it was 29 producer groups that created AgSafe. It's not part of this bill, but I would really hope to see this government continue to support the important work that is happening through that organization. It was originally started with grants from government to help the organization begin, and it continues to receive funding

now. I would suggest that that needs to continue happening, and that's a major part of continuing to improve health and safety and get that programming out to all who are interested in it. I know a lot of farming and ranching families and employers have worked with AgSafe to improve practices, and I think that's really commendable.

I suppose to summarize my concerns with this bill, removing minimum employment standards, which at this point I have not heard the government address – it was raised in question period today, Madam Chair, but again I did not hear that addressed. Removing those minimum employment standards is a huge concern for me. I'll repeat that it's estimated that as high as 80 per cent of workers in the farming and ranching area could find themselves exempted from minimum employment standards. The Labour Relations Code changes essentially preventing a group of workers from a constitutionally protected right to collectively bargain: I'll note again that that right was not exercised in the past few years, so the reason for removing this I have to question. If I'm not mistaken, it wasn't even mentioned that this was being removed in the government press releases on this, so a change that's been put there.

The potential for people to be completely uninsured and the damaging impacts that injury or fatality can have when that is the case – even more of a risk is being underinsured. I think there is a very big difference between the WCB, which has been an organization set up specifically and redirected even recently to make sure that there is a workercentric focus, a real focus on supporting workers and employers and getting back to work, versus a private insurance company. Private insurance companies often have a focus on making sure that the claims costs are minimized where they can be versus the WCB, where there is an entire system set up to deal with rehabilitation.

So these are my concerns. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 26 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 26 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:16 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Aheer	Lovely	Schulz
Allard	Luan	Sigurdson, R.J.
Amery	Neudorf	Singh
Barnes	Orr	Smith
Dreeshen	Rehn	Stephan
Getson	Rosin	Turton
Glubish	Rutherford	Walker
Guthrie	Savage	Wilson
Horner	Sawhney	Yao
Jones	Schow	

5:20

Against:

Bilous	Gray	Pancholi
Ceci	Irwin	Phillips
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Totals:	For – 29	Against – 9

[Request to report Bill 26 carried]

**Bill 28****Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act**

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today in support of Bill 28, Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act. As many of the members in this House would know, the contents of this bill, which are essentially to allow for the government to seek, through legal action, recovery from opioid producers damages that have contributed, of course, significantly to the opioid crisis in Alberta. This notion of actually seeking legal action against opioid producers was actually part of the NDP's platform commitment. This was part of our campaign commitment and part of our election platform, so I do commend the government for seeing that great idea and implementing it because it does show that they are able to recognize some good ideas when they see them. I appreciate that they are bringing this forward as this is something that we, of course, strongly support.

I don't think there is an Albertan here who has not been somehow affected or knows somebody who has been affected by the opioid crisis in this province. I can tell you myself that I certainly know people in my life who have been affected and have loved ones who have been affected. As well, I did a significant amount of work in my previous life prior to being elected with school boards who are trying to do education with their students and their schools and trying to really get a handle on this even before – they seem to identify that crisis quite early on because we know that it disproportionately affects young people. We know that there have been so many lives that have been lost and that have been affected by this crisis. Certainly, we should be taking all measures we can to tackle this crisis on behalf of all Albertans.

I am disheartened by the government's lack of support for supervised consumption sites because we know how they absolutely, one hundred per cent save lives. We know also that supervised consumption sites are part of a strategy. It is certainly not that any government has ever suggested that it is the sole way to approach and to tackle this problem. It is one critical piece to saving the lives of those individuals and then working towards treatment and recovery and education, but certainly there are many facets to this crisis that need to be addressed, and I maintain and would like to put on the record, as I don't think I've had the opportunity to do so yet, that I strongly support supervised consumption sites as one of those key strategies to address this crisis.

Certainly, what is being brought forward today within Bill 28 is another measure that I support. Although we know that seeking legal action is not a certainty, we know that it is a costly and long-term strategy. We've seen it taken by governments against tobacco manufacturers, automobile manufacturers in the past. We know that specifically with respect to opioids we've seen that there has actually been some success in other jurisdictions. I'm thinking about legal actions that have been taken in the U.S. We know that a number of states have taken legal action against these producers

because they should be held accountable. They should be held accountable for the product that they've produced and the damage that has been wreaked as a result of their product, and I certainly support taking those legal measures.

But it is not a certainty. It is an admirable measure. It should be part of, again, as I mentioned, a comprehensive strategy, but I think the other thing that we need to look at is that if we are going to be pursuing this bill, which I will be supporting, we do need to make sure that we are also thinking about, hopefully, the outcome if we are successful as a province in actually recovering some costs from the producers of opioids. In particular, I think what is of interest and should be of interest for all Albertans is that if we do recover these costs, any recovery should actually go back into our system to support mental health and addictions services.

To that end, Madam Chair, I am tabling a proposed amendment to this bill. I'll just wait a moment for the amendment to be received and distributed.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Ms Pancholi:** Madam Chair, would you like me to read the amendment?

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1. Please proceed.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll take a moment. I know it's currently being distributed to the members. It is a bit of a lengthy amendment. I do want to read it into the record, however. It is important because it speaks to the objectives of the amendment, and it speaks specifically to the situation and circumstance in the event that the government of Alberta, on behalf of its citizens, is able to recover some costs from opioid producers as a result of legal action. It speaks to what Albertans believe should be done with those funds that are recovered.

To that end, amendment A1 moves – actually, I should indicate that I'm moving this amendment on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning. My apologies; I should have clarified that at the beginning. The amendment is to move that Bill 28, Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, be amended as follows: (a) section 1(1) is amended by adding the following after clause (g):

(g.1) "Minister" means the Minister determined under section 16 of the Government Organization Act as the Minister responsible for this Act;

and – this is the key clause – subsection (b) the following is added after section 14:

Review by committee of the Assembly

14.1(1) A special committee of the Legislative Assembly must, within 6 months after the day on which this Act comes into force and in accordance with subsection (3), begin a review of the matters set out in subsection (2).

(2) The special committee must consider each of the following for the purpose of the review under subsection (1):

- (a) whether the expenditure of monies recovered by the Crown in an action brought under section 2(1) should be restricted to specified purposes,
- (b) if the special committee determines that expenditures should be restricted, specifying the purposes for which expenditures should be permitted,
- (c) whether a separate fund should be established into which the money referred to in clause (a) must be deposited, and
- (d) any other matter that the special committee considers necessary and relevant to the matters set out in clauses (a) to (c).

(3) Subject to subsection (4), the special committee must, within 6 months of the day on which the special committee commenced its review in accordance with subsection (1), submit a report to the Legislative Assembly that sets out its recommendations in respect of the matters considered under subsection (2).

(4) If the Legislative Assembly is not sitting at the time of the completion of the special committee's report under subsection (3), the special committee must submit the report referred to in that subsection within 15 days after the day on which the Legislative Assembly commences its next sitting.

(5) Subject to subsection (6), the Minister must, within 30 days of the submission of the special committee's report under subsection (3) or (4), as the case may be, submit a report to the Legislative Assembly that specifies the recommendations set out in the special committee's report of which the Minister approves.

(6) If the Legislative Assembly is not sitting at the time of the completion of the Minister's report under subsection (5), the Minister must submit the report referred to in that subsection within 15 days after the day on which the Legislative Assembly commences its next sitting.

(7) The Minister must, on a quarterly calendar basis that commences on the day on which the Minister provided their report under subsection (5) or (6), as the case may be, provide a report to the Legislative Assembly in respect of all approved recommendations that have not been implemented.

My apologies; I appreciate that's a long amendment.

However, the point of this amendment is simply to state – it is not to delay the proclamation or passing of Bill 28 should it be passed by the Assembly – that within six months of proclamation of the act, the matter would be reviewed by a special committee to consider whether or not to set aside, to restrict any funds that are recovered to be specified for a specific purpose, basically saying that with any dollars that are recovered as a result of legal action, this special committee will consider and consult with Albertans about whether or not they want those funds to be dedicated to a specific purpose.

5:30

In particular – and I don't want to presuppose what this committee would find as a result of its consultations – we would expect, I believe, as the purpose of this is to recover funds related to the opioid crisis in this province, that those funds would be used specifically for, potentially, mental health and addiction services. Again, that would be a matter that would be under consideration by the special committee, to determine how the funds that are collected as a result of legal action would be used.

Again, part of the reason why we are seeking legal action is to recognize that there have been significant damages suffered by Albertans, specifically and individually by Albertans and Albertan families, but also as a society, as a community, as a government we have incurred significant costs to deal with the opioid crisis in this province. We're not unique to this; this is certainly a situation that's taken place in all provinces. But we have incurred a significant number of costs to provide treatment, to provide recovery, to provide supervised consumption sites, education, naloxone kits, all of those things that we've had to do. The strain on our health system as a result and the loss of lives, the loss of those individuals and those Albertans who are contributing to our society: in the crudest sense, it's actually dollars and cents, but more than that, of course, it's the damage that it's wreaked on our communities and our individuals and our families.

But there's actually been a cost associated with that as well. If we have incurred these costs and a court is to find, which we hope they would, that the opioid producers share some responsibility and liability for those costs, then that money should go back into paying

for some of the services and investing in dealing with the crisis that they created. I think that that is actually something that the government should support, because I believe that that's the intent behind taking such action, in order to actually hold those responsible who should be held responsible for the costs that have been incurred and to invest those costs back into treating and supporting Albertans and supporting Alberta communities and families and individuals.

This is intended to say: look, we know why that money and those costs have been incurred, and let's make sure those funds are being put back into mental health and addiction services. We know that the government has repeatedly stood up and, of course, said that we are in a dire fiscal situation. Any money that is recovered should go to actually, then, supporting the treatment and addiction services and all of the important work that's required to get a handle on and to eradicate the opioid crisis in this province.

Hopefully, the government will see this as a friendly amendment. I've already indicated that I support this bill, and this is not intended in any way to delay or to avoid the proclamation or passage of this bill but only to say that once proclaimed, once passed, a special committee will be set up to have this discussion, to have the discussion with Albertans about how any funds recovered through legal action should be spent, where they believe is the best place and the best investment in these services, and to provide recommendations. That is simply what the objective of this amendment is. It's intended to really focus the proceeds that may come from any legal action towards real, beneficial effects on this issue and to let Albertans decide what they believe is the best use of those dollars.

Again, I highlight that I am hopeful that government members will see this as a positive and friendly amendment to simply improve upon what we believe is already a good and important bill and to really thoughtfully think about how Albertans should have input as they are the ones that have been so affected and have borne the costs and the weight of this crisis on this province.

I do hope that the government members will seriously consider supporting this amendment and see it as a way to simply make this bill that much better, but it is a bill that we already support. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't want to speak too long, but I do just want to get on the record here. I very much appreciate some aspects of this bill, Bill 28, but I believe the amendment introduced by my hon. colleague for Edmonton-Whitemud on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning is an important one, and I say this from a place of seeing the opioid crisis on a daily basis. I don't know if I want to say that I have the honour, but I have three of the four safe consumption sites in Edmonton within my riding, and why I'm so proud to see them in action is because they have saved so many lives. Safe consumption sites have been an incredible addition to the neighbourhoods that I represent.

I just want to get on the record to talk about the fact that we know that the opioid crisis is so intimately connected to issues around mental health. One of the reasons why I think it's so important that we support this friendly amendment is that we know there is much more investment needed in combating both mental health and addictions. I think that if we can have the funds dedicated specifically to addressing that, we'll really be able to be using those monies in an appropriate way.

You know, we've talked about mental health in this Chamber multiple times. We know that there have been some members,

including the Health minister, who've sort of rejected the idea that there is a mental health crisis in youth. There absolutely is, and the numbers prove that. I want the members opposite to really consider the importance of those investments. I know they've said that they've made some investments in Calgary, for instance, but we know that the CAMH centre here in Edmonton is delayed, and we know that serious investments are needed.

I want to point out that the evidence around harm reduction is clear. I was proud of the investments that our government made in addressing mental health and addictions as well. But I do worry that if this amendment is not accepted by the members opposite, we're losing a really important revenue stream that should absolutely be reinvested. Okay?

With that, like I said, I won't speak too long, but, you know, the evidence is clear. We've got an opportunity to use those funds in a way that will absolutely go back to those people who need the funds the most, right?

On training, it's interesting that the member talked about naloxone kits. I mean, again, I've seen the power of those first-hand. Actually, my staff and I took naloxone training not long ago. We talked to some of the front-line workers with Streetworks, who are there every day on the front lines reversing the effects of overdose. It's incredible how effective that is. Again, if we can be using the funds from these lawsuits directly into programs like theirs, the entire community, not just those within my neighbourhoods but the entire community, and the entire province will benefit. We should point out that while safe consumption sites are, you know, predominantly concentrated in the core parts of Edmonton – like I said, three within my riding – we know that there's a need elsewhere. We know that in suburban parts of the city, for instance, the opioid crisis is very much an issue.

Again, I just wanted to put that on the record. I urge the members opposite to think really carefully about this amendment and to think about accepting it, because, truly, it will benefit the entire province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, want to get on the record to say that I support not only the amendment but the original motion, I think, that's before us. Alberta joining B.C. in regard to trying to sue for damages to Albertans is an important thing to do, not unlike car manufacturer and tobacco company suits that have been successful in other parts of North America and the world.

We, of course, have a crisis with regard to opioid use in this province. Indeed, all of Canada does, some places more drastically and tragic effects in other places. But I can tell you that in the home community that I come from, Calgary-Buffalo, there are issues that would be improved if there were recoveries from the companies that make opioids that have impacted people in Calgary-Buffalo.

5:40

I do want to also point out, you know, that with any monies that come as a result – and it would be years off, likely – dedicating these monies to this issue in particular would be the best thing that could happen for Albertans, not only addicted Albertans and those with addiction and mental health issues but Albertans who are related to or connected with or know people who are negatively impacted by opioid use.

Madam Chair, this goes back many years. I mentioned earlier that I was a social worker in my earlier career. I haven't thought about him in a long time, but I can remember one gentleman who had a horrible work accident in a vehicle he was driving. He had a brain injury as a result of it and was in constant pain. Of course, he went

to many doctors to try and find pain relief and likely ended up breaking the law with numerous prescriptions for oxycodone hydrochloride and other drugs that would take away some of that pain that he was feeling as a result of the massive brain injury that he had suffered. He and his family suffered incredibly because of his inability to work, his inability to have relief from the pain he was in, and it affected them all.

I was just thinking that if in years to come there is a similar and a successful suit here with payments to people like that in Alberta who are so horribly impacted by the addiction to drugs they're on, they could perhaps find support and treatment that would be more successful than what he was doing. Of course, fast-forward from that to the present day, and I'm incredibly proud to be the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo. There is a supervised consumption site in the Sheldon M. Chumir health centre, the urgent care centre there. It does great work to ensure that people who go there under supervision and use injectable drugs are safe. It has not had any deaths on-site.

It's not the only thing that's going on in Calgary-Buffalo. There, of course, is counselling going on, there is residential care going on for people who have addictions. There's a whole range of treatment available to people in Calgary-Buffalo and throughout Calgary. Certainly, there needs to be more, and I've heard the associate minister talk about the spectrum of addictions and mental health services that need to be present. I could see that if there were funds received from this suit that we will be joining with B.C., those funds dedicated for filling out that spectrum of care would be a really important thing, starting from education, awareness, treatment, residential support, all the way through to medical support and supervised consumption support for those people who aren't quite ready to move into longer term relief of that addiction they're in in some other fashion.

I certainly think that if you read through the amendment, it makes a great deal of sense. Thank you to my colleague for bringing it forward. This kind of reserve, dedicating these funds for this purpose, is, I think, something all Albertans can get behind: seeing good money spent, in terms of a lawsuit, if it's dedicated to addressing the reason they're involved in the lawsuit. I, of course, just want to get on the record again that supervised consumption is an important part of the necessary spectrum of services, and I support that.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak?

The hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's certainly a breath of fresh air in this House that we have the opposition joining the government in supporting our bill. I certainly prefer that kind of momentum, when we stand together for Albertans and fight with the ones that took advantage of our vulnerable citizens. Certainly, our voice will be stronger. So credit to you guys, and thank you for that.

Regarding this amendment let me tell you this. When the Minister of Health introduced the bill, he spoke very clearly that it is our intention to keep the money within the health care system when we get it. When I stood up to introduce second reading on this, I reinforced that message. We're doing this anyway, so in the spirit of red tape reduction we don't need another lengthy procedure, another committee to do this. Unfortunately, I wouldn't recommend we consider this amendment, but thank you for the spirit of supporting the bill. Let's get down to the bill and get it over with.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:47 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Pancholi
Ceci	Irwin	Phillips
Dach	Loyola	Sabir

5:50

Against the motion:

Allard	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Amery	Orr	Singh
Getson	Rehn	Smith
Glubish	Rosin	Stephan
Guthrie	Rutherford	Turton
Horner	Savage	Walker
Jones	Sawhney	Wilson
Lovely	Schow	Yao
Luan	Schulz	

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 26
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there any more speakers to the bill?  
Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 28 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

**Mrs. Savage:** Madam Chair, pursuant to Government Motion 31 I wish to advise that there shall be no evening sitting tonight, so I move that the Assembly – I rise to read to report and then adjourn. I'm so excited about adjourning.

**The Chair:** All right. Just to confirm, we are going to rise and report on Bill 26 and Bill 28 and rise and report progress on Bill 21.

**Mrs. Savage:** Yes. Exactly.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 26, Bill 28. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this day for the official records of the Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.  
The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** The motion I was excited for. Pursuant to Government Motion 31 I wish to advise that there shall be no evening sitting tonight, so I move that the Assembly adjourn until tomorrow, November 28, at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:53 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, November 28, 2019

Day 49

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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New Democrat: 24

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Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, November 28, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, hon. members.

Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. May Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Third Reading

##### Bill 27

#### Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure today to move third reading of the Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019.

I've had the opportunity of travelling across Alberta for the last few months talking to people about rural crime, talking to people about property rights. This bill will give us the strongest property rights possible right now to make sure we send a clear signal that property rights are to be respected in the province of Alberta. It's going to protect our farmers. It's going to protect our homeowners across this province.

It's something that we heard directly from Albertans, that this was something that they were looking for. They wanted to make sure that people that wanted to trespass for their own agenda, for their own, you know, purposes, just have a clear signal that that will not be tolerated in the province of Alberta. There are going to be fines now through this legislation that will send a clear signal that you're not to be picking on law-abiding Albertans on their properties. It's a clear signal to the organizations out there that target the vulnerable in rural Alberta that no longer are they to be targets in the province of Alberta.

It's our absolute privilege to bring forward this legislation. I'm hoping that everybody in the Chamber supports this bill. Again, it's a real honour to be part of the team effort as well. I really want to say thank you to all of my colleagues from across Alberta that worked with us on this bill to help bring forward the ideas of their communities to get this done. I'm hopeful that we'll get support here for this bill. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, there's a lot of chatter happening this morning. I ask that when we're in Assembly, we just keep the volume down so that all members in this Assembly can be heard when it's their turn to speak.

Right now I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good morning, all. I am pleased to rise this morning to speak to Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019. As I've mentioned in this Legislature before, I too have at an earlier time been also a rural property owner and lived on an acreage property outside of Edmonton and have had incidents of concern late at night on my property when I thought somebody was breaking in, so I understand the concerns of rural property owners and of the government to want to make sure those fears are assuaged.

However, I think that this bill perhaps goes a bit too far as far as the proportionality of consequences is concerned. I know that there were some incidents where individuals went onto agricultural properties to express their opposition to certain practices by agricultural producers that they thought were incorrect, and they chose a method of occupying the agricultural property to protest those methods. Madam Speaker, there are laws already in place with respect to trespassing. I'm not sure if the extra penalties that are contemplated by this legislation are in any ways necessary as deterrents. Of course, the government members may disagree, but I think that they really are out of proportion to the trespasses that they are attempting to deter.

I was, in fact, a little shocked at the level of penalties that the legislation contemplates for trespassers. Certainly, there are concerns about individuals who trespass onto rural property and particularly those of agricultural processing operations where biosecurity is important. I visited turkey farms, and inside those buildings biosecurity is something that is of utmost importance. There is a procedure for entering those properties so that there is no contamination, and I followed those procedures when I did visit with some of my colleagues earlier, in the first term of office when we were in government. I'm certainly aware of the need to maintain biosecurity and of the costs that can be incurred if biosecurity is breached on those farms.

However, the legislation before us, Bill 27, has some pretty, pretty hefty penalties involved, and I don't know if they are warranted. I think the trespass act already has penalties in it that really did effectively cause deterrents. You're not going to stop everybody from choosing to protest in this way, but I think that the penalties that were already in place certainly would have allowed judges to exercise and render verdicts that indeed made individuals think twice about perhaps doing it again. However, I also did mention in my previous remarks about the seriousness of contemplating action as a landowner against somebody who may be on your property and apparently up to no good. Of course, the Criminal Code does cover this, and one would be exposed to the sanctions of the Criminal Code no matter what this Legislature decides to do with respect to this trespass statutes act.

I relayed an incident whereby I thought somebody was inside my rural acreage property and was prepared to exercise whatever force was necessary at that point in time, but circumstances may have prevailed where, indeed, if somebody actually had been killed in an incident or an incident where somebody is trespassing on another's rural property, those circumstances are always unique, and to take us down a path towards the stand your ground legislation that we see in the United States is not something that I wish to tread on. I know that Albertans consider trespassing as a very serious issue and that the risk to rural property owners is something that we understand because, of course, the response times are longer. There is a concern about individuals on rural properties being more exposed because of the fact that they don't have the rapid response time, but the UCP seems to be trying by the backdoor to get in some measures that otherwise wouldn't have been possible.

I just wonder, as I did when I thought back to the incident at my own property, you know, if somebody had actually been breaking

into the house, I just wonder in a situation like that, Madam Speaker, if a trespasser is actually shot on someone's property, will there still be a criminal investigation as a result of this legislation? I would think that the Criminal Code would still apply, but this seems to be a law that tries to make things more complex than it really has to be. I'm wondering how people will be educated on the regulations and really the profound changes in this bill, particularly in regard to the duty of care.

There seems to be a prevailing attitude that is promoted by this government that, in fact, shoot first and ask questions later might be supportable, and I don't know if indeed that's exactly the message that the government wishes to convey with this legislation. That's not a situation, I think, that would be a healthy one for Albertans to get into, where you could end up with a lot of wrongful deaths and a lot of injuries to people who were just straying onto property perhaps as hunters. That happens, as the Government House Leader can attest. I know that individuals looking for help after a road accident will sometimes late at night go onto a property and bang on a door, and that could end up potentially in their death or injury if somebody feels threatened by that on a rural property in the middle of the night or during the day.

**9:10**

I'm not sure if indeed the government is planning to really do an education campaign to make it very, very clear what the person's rights and responsibilities are. Even in a very stressful situation where quick decisions have to be made, we expect our police officers, our peace officers, to make those decisions. Certainly, we have not given them the right to shoot first and ask questions later. They must make decisions in a split second that have protocol attached to them. I think the same needs to be expected of citizens when they are looking at exercising deadly force.

Government's plan under this legislation is also to train wildlife officers and others to use handguns and weaponry and to respond to such calls. Now, I'm hoping that the training that the government plans to do will assist these wildlife officers and others who may be asked to be called to these 911 calls, to keep the response time as low as possible, is going to really embed the protocol required of peace officers before they discharge their weapons in their roles as peace officers. It's a pretty consequential event when a police officer or peace officer discharges their weapon or uses deadly force or exercises any kind of force against another citizen. That's a decision that's guarded by and guided by protocol.

I think citizens need to understand that their rights to do that certainly have some limitations and that the consequences of exercising that kind of force may be dire for them. Ultimately, outside of any legal measures that they may face – just look at what we have today going on in the case of Constable Woodall, who lost his life in my riding four years ago. Today 80 officers who were involved in that case are meeting and attempting to finalize their thoughts and understanding of the whole process, knowing that it's something that's going to be with them for the rest of their lives. This type of issue affects police officers very, very deeply, so individuals who involve themselves in exercising force to protect their own property will have consequences in their own life because it'll be something that will be with them for the rest of their life. I know the incident in my own home is something I won't ever forget, and it involved nobody actually breaking in. Just the thought that somebody was was something that was a big enough concern.

I know that there is concern about biosecurity, as I mentioned, on the agricultural properties. That's something, of course, that no Albertan condones, somebody trespassing onto a farm or agricultural producer's property and causing them disruption as well as cost because of the biosecurity breaches that might take

place, but my contention, Madam Speaker, is that trespass laws in place right now have significant consequences for trespassers. The egregious penalties that are in part of this legislation are, I think, higher than they should be. The penalties and the fines and jail time consequences there are shocking.

I'm concerned also about the additional exemptions for civil liability for injuries to trespassers. It's retroactive to January 2018. I don't know if this government realizes how risky it is to go back and legislate retroactively. It's not something that is done very commonly, and it's ground that government should tread upon with a very large sense of care and attention. I think that Albertans will be watching as to why exactly this retroactivity is being put in place and whether it's something that will end up being a legal issue, a concern for the government. It may be an element of this piece of legislation that the government should think twice about implementing because it's not something that I think is really part of the whole body and the intent of this bill. It's a small element to satisfy a subset of desires in the caucus to reach back into a particular situation, and it's treading on some pretty dangerous legal ground, I think, as a government. Any time you retroactively legislate, you do so at your own peril as a government from a legal standpoint.

Once again, the Criminal Code will apply to individuals, in my view, who are exercising force against trespassers, and those consequences are something that should always be considered, but whether or not this legislation will actually protect an individual landowner from a duty of care to trespassers is a question that I suppose will be learned over time as various incidents come to light and as things pass through the courts.

The act itself widens the definition of what a trespasser is. It adds specific references to people entering on properties on false pretenses.

It increases the penalties for trespassing to \$10,000 for a first offence, \$25,000 for a second, with repeat offenders facing prison for up to six months. Madam Speaker, as I indicated, these are pretty large penalties. Whether or not they're necessary is a matter of debate. I think that these are much higher than warranted for these first or second offences. I think the current penalties in place may have not thwarted recent incidents, but they certainly have in the past been deterrents, and judges have the opportunity to exercise those penalties right now. I think that \$10,000 for the first offence, \$25,000 for a second is more than egregious, and I wonder why the government thought to put them so high. Maximum fines for first and subsequent offences would increase from \$2,000 and \$5,000 to \$10,000 and \$25,000 respectively. One again, I think that the penalties are overly egregious in this legislation, and they are unnecessarily high.

Notwithstanding that, of course, we don't condone trespassing in any way, shape, or form, especially when it concerns people's lives and safety and their property and also, of course, when it is tantamount to a disruption to their operation and one that ends up costing them time and money and interrupts their freedom to operate and enjoy their property.

I also wanted to note that organizations or corporations that aid, counsel, or direct trespassing can be fined up to \$200,000 under this piece of legislation, and that again is a sledgehammer. Once again, one wonders who the government intends to aim it at. Is it something that is put into this legislation in an effort to once again stifle dissent or perhaps an effort to disassociate organizations from certain causes for fear of reprisal, for fear of being fined in case one of the individuals that they represent perhaps does trespass and ends up being prosecuted? Would that capture them with this net and end up with them facing significant fines under this piece of legislation?

9:20

Madam Speaker, while I certainly respect the principle of this legislation, that individual property owners deserve to be able to enjoy their property free from trespassers, I believe that the existing legislation already has adequate deterrents in it and that disproportionality of the response in this legislation is an overreach and that landowners in this province should be cautioned that notwithstanding this legislation of protections it purports to contain, protecting them against liabilities in the event that they injure somebody or even kill somebody while protecting their property, there may be consequences that this legislation doesn't protect them from in the protection of their property. As a result, they may have a false sense of security in exercising what might be called "shoot first and ask questions later" type of response.

I think it's very much incumbent upon the government to very clearly lay out the actual rights and obligations of landowners as a result of this legislation, should it pass. If indeed individuals end up in situations where they have injured or harmed somebody on their property and then face consequences that they didn't expect and then look towards the government and say: "Hey, we had this legislation; how come I'm not protected?" they may have some answering to do to those individuals if indeed they haven't gone forward and made sure that a very serious education effort was made to explain exactly the rights and obligations of landowners as a result of implementation of this piece of legislation.

Those are my concerns. I know that rural property owners have legitimate concerns, agricultural producers as well, about trespassers. But legislation that does prevent or provide sanctions for trespassers should be proportional to the offence, and I think that this legislation goes well beyond that proportionality.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a huge honour for me to be able to rise today and speak about Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019. This is an act that many of my constituencies have been asking for, and I'm glad to see that the Justice minister has taken these concerns seriously.

Before I start, I just wanted to thank the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General for holding a town hall in Camrose on October 9. My constituents' concern about rural crime: they feel like they were neglected by the previous government. The approach that this government has is very personable, and they felt honoured to be able to have that chance to interact and engage and share what's happening in my community.

I have quite a few towns and municipalities in my constituency, from Tofield to Hardisty, Bashaw to Viking. There are also Ryley, Daysland, Killam, Sedgewick, Lougheed, Forestburg, Rosalind, Heisler, Alliance, and, of course, Camrose, and I could go on. But I think this provides a nice overview of my community. Madam Speaker, I've heard from each of these towns about the impact that the rural crime crisis is having on their communities. People are scared, and I don't think their fear is unfounded. Just a couple of weeks ago an elderly woman and her dog were shot and killed while going on a walk. This week alone, there have been multiple thefts in Forestburg, a town with a population of under 900 people, thefts from vehicles in Lougheed and Killam, towns with respective populations of 256 and 998 people, a break and enter in Daysland, 824 people, and yet another break and enter in Lougheed.

Madam Speaker, these are our small towns, and they're valued by those who live there for the sense of security they provide and

the friendly atmosphere they breed. I think anyone who grew up in a small town, such as myself, can recall fond memories of having real relationships with everyone in their town. They're our friends and our neighbours. In a town like Lougheed, with only 256 people who call the place home, everyone knows everyone. It's a great town with a friendly atmosphere, and I'm proud to represent it.

But when a town as small as Lougheed is hit by both theft from a vehicle on Wednesday and a break and enter on Saturday, it tears at the fabric of the town. While Killam, which holds the local RCMP detachment, is not too far away from Lougheed, the Killam detachment isn't large and serves 11 towns, all undergoing the same crisis. Madam Speaker, people in these towns are legitimately afraid, and the province needs to find new solutions to address our rural crime crisis. It's why I was glad to see the minister stepping up and offering legislation in hopes that it deters criminals from even thinking about trespassing.

If I can, I'd like to address one other issue, that is legislation affecting my riding. The issue of biosecurity for organic farmers is a real issue in my riding. Being accredited as an organic farmer is incredibly difficult. As I think anyone who has ever worked on an organic farm can attest, cross-contamination is very easy to do, but even a small amount of it can lead to organic products no longer being able to be identified as such. This includes cross-contamination that can occur merely as a matter of walking from a nonorganic farm to an organic farm. Despite what the NDP and particularly the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar might think of our farmers as being rich . . .

**Mr. Schmidt:** Point of order.

**Ms Lovely:** . . . the loss incurred by food not being deemed organic . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, a point of order has been called.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Schmidt:** Under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), the member is clearly using language to impute false motives and incite disorder. I ask that she withdraw the comment and apologize.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Would the government like to respond?

**Mr. Schow:** Madam Speaker, I don't see a point of order here. I believe this is really just a matter of debate. The member is simply repeating something that was said by the member who called this point of order, citing what that member believes. You know, our agriculture members in this House are citing things from their background. I do believe it's a matter of debate. We are speaking about agriculture, speaking about trespassing, protecting our agriculture producers, who are very important to this province and our prosperity. I don't see a point of order here but, rather, just a matter of debate. I encourage that we just proceed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, it's very early to be having these types of conversations. However, I will caution the member to tread lightly in this area moving forward. I don't see a point of order, but there is room for caution.

Please proceed.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Lovely:** If I might just go back to the trend of thought, our farmers aren't rich, and the loss incurred by food not being deemed



organic can be devastating. I hope that this legislation will help combat this issue as well. It is important that our farmers have as much stability as we can grant them, and protecting them from trespassers is incredibly important. While I hope to see more from our government on protecting biosecurity, I am glad for at least this first step.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to represent the largely rural riding of Camrose. Camrose is made up of a large number of towns, hamlets, and localities. It's important to me that the needs of the constituents are being addressed, and I'm glad to see that this bill is taking a strong step in that direction.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019. I haven't spoken to this bill yet, so I had a look through, and a couple of things stand out as, I think, concerns. I think there's no question that the House shares the goal of public safety, of public order, and shares a goal of reducing the incidence of rural crime. That is why we took the specific public policy responses that we did in our time in government with respect to investments in rural crime and empowering the RCMP with more resources to be able to address the problem.

The ADM for public safety reported to Public Accounts a couple of months ago in some detail the successes of those initial investments in specifically targeted initiatives to work with the RCMP to reduce rural crime. He went into some detail about how those programs are being successful and how those resources were deployed, and it was, I think, a very good presentation to the Public Accounts Committee, who had questions, rightfully so, on both sides of the committee's membership, about the investment of resources in crime prevention.

9:30

There's no question that in seeking a remedy, you have a number of different tools at your disposal as government. You certainly have the public policy remedy, not just through deployment of resources, but also you do have an ability to deploy other kinds of law enforcement professionals in order to address various aspects of keeping public order. For example, you can empower commercial vehicle officers to do more. You can have more integration between RCMP and bylaw officers. There are a number of different things that you can do.

I learned about this when I was the environment minister. I took a pretty law-and-order approach to some of the abuses that we were seeing serially on the landscape of our waterways, in particular, of our public lands, everything from the leaving of garbage and the dumping of garbage, which a lot of landowners know very, very well if they are on the edge of public land, to other disorderly activity, both motorized and nonmotorized. It was that sort of thing that we certainly invested in as well to restore some order on the landscape. It's part of the piece – right? – of people going out to rural areas, where there are fewer law enforcement eyes on the landscape, in order to undertake antisocial activities of various kinds. So there are definitely remedies in policy and in resourcing.

There are some legal tools available at the provincial level as well. There are not as many tools available at a provincial level of government given that the jurisdiction over the Criminal Code is

federal, so whenever we're doing something that is outside of a public policy response – that is to say, more integration or deployment of resources – the province has to ensure that it is actually going to meet its goals. It can be much more difficult to meet those shared goals that I think we have in this Legislature. When it tries to do things that are outside of its jurisdiction, it can become problematic, and what ends up happening is that the goal of more public safety and public order is not reached because the measures that are undertaken by the provincial government can be found to not conform to proportionality. That is the first serious concern that I have here with respect to the level of fines and the level of response.

I remember that when we increased the fines for various kinds of activities on public land, things that none of us like to see, you know, like leaving your garbage and destroying waterways and things like that, it had to go to a committee that sort of oversees administrative penalties. It's a committee in Justice. I wanted those fines to be as high as possible. I wanted them to be just egregiously high, because I do believe that part of the problem in enforcement on public land is that people just sort of went: "Ah, 300 bucks for a ticket. Whatever." We increased those fines considerably. I just kept pushing the committee: "I want more. I want higher." I really firmly believe that there needs to be a punishment and that it needs to pinch – the shoes need to pinch – with these administrative penalties out there. Essentially, we got it to a place where the advice was: "Well, if you go any further than this, then you're going to be starting to interact with this concept of proportionality. What you don't want to risk is that some of this stuff gets thrown out and that you don't actually ultimately achieve your aims, your goals." Again, these were goals that I know that everyone in this House shared.

That's the first thing that I would caution on, what you don't want to do in your zeal to solve a problem using some of the administrative or legal tools at the provincial government's disposal. Ultimately, you don't achieve that goal because it gets caught up in the courts unnecessarily. That is the first piece that I would raise a caution on.

The other piece is around the retroactivity of the legislation. Again, this begins to then interact with our various Charter rights, our legal rights. I believe it's section 11 of the Charter where retroactivity becomes an issue. Again, what you don't want to do is pass a piece of legislation that then ultimately gets struck down by the courts, and you don't achieve your goals because you've gone a bridge too far.

The other piece that I would certainly caution around these exemptions for civil liability for injuries: it is not a good idea ever for a Legislature to pass laws that address only one case or that specifically target one person or group of people. In fact, one of the landmark Supreme Court decisions around the concept of rule of law in this country came when the Supreme Court struck down an action taken by a Quebec Premier, Duplessis, at the time – I think it was 1959-ish – when he revoked a liquor licence for a Jehovah's Witness. He didn't like Jehovah's Witnesses. That's fine. That was his personal opinion. He then abused his office to specifically target this one man's business, and the Supreme Court said: no; you're not allowed to do that.

I mean, of course, there were whole other laws in Quebec at that time that were struck down, that essentially made our religious freedom laws, so the Jehovah's Witnesses could live without persecution, as they were being in Quebec at that time. We all enjoy many of these religious freedom protections that even preceded the Charter, and we also enjoy protections from people passing laws directly to target one person or one group of people, which is an abuse of power, because of those decisions at that time. That is sort

of the basis of a lot of our interpretation of our liberties in this country.

When you are passing a law in this retroactive sense to speak to one case or a set of a cases, you are then treading on very difficult legal terrain, and certainly this argument has been made. The Roncarelli decision is cited whenever governments attempt this, and I think that that might be a Supreme Court decision that the government may want to go back and reference and think about a little bit more deeply as they go forward with making new laws.

I think what we are looking at here is a piece of legislation that is designed to solve a problem, and certainly around the biosecurity and some of those trespassing issues for large livestock or other farming operations I agree that there should be a legal response. There are maybe some public policy responses, but I think that in those cases there should be some legal response, so I certainly have no quarrel with that part of this bill. What I worry about, though, is that ultimately the goal will not be achieved.

9:40

Another piece that I do worry about is that given that there are many complicated aspects, it sort of complicates and muddies trespassing law. The other idea that the government has, on the public policy response side of responding to rural crime, is a plan to train wildlife officers and others to respond to 911 calls. When we have trespassing rules that then become a little bit more legally unclear and you have people who are law enforcement but are not trained in the first instance in these kinds of issues, you may in fact be moving into areas that are quite difficult for wildlife officers and others to respond to. I know that I have spoken to many wildlife officers in the last couple of months around this plan to train them to respond to 911 calls and so on, and they're really nervous about it. Really nervous about it. This even complicates that set of issues more, and I think I would want to see a lot more training for those fish and wildlife officers if this is indeed going to be the case, because I know that many of them have expressed to me a number of concerns around this.

I think that ultimately what we're looking at here with this piece of legislation is a legal response when a public policy response is actually what is called for with respect to resourcing, with respect to ensuring that rural crime is addressed in a way that is substantive, that is reflected in data and evidence once those investments are made, and is certainly using the tools that we have out on the landscape already with some of this integration between RCMP and bylaw and other law enforcement officials. Investing in those things, I believe, will actually get us to our shared goal of safer communities, particularly in rural Alberta.

I will conclude my comments on that, Madam Speaker. I am worried about retroactivity. I'm worried about proportionality. These are real legal issues in drafting legislation, and they will, if used in a way that is somewhat careless or intemperate, lead to legislation being struck down and will lead, if challenged, to the government not addressing our shared goals of safer communities, and that's ultimately, I think, the most worrying thing about this. We need to address rural crime. We need to address issues of serious trespassing. We need to address some of the insecurity that both just ordinary homeowners and landowners feel but then also operators of large facilities like hog barns and, you know, large poultry operations of various kinds. I want to see us do that, but I want to see us do it in a way that is thoughtful, that will endure, and that will actually solve the problem that we have all collectively identified.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I know that it's a difficult thing in opposition, having sat in opposition for four years, and sometimes your job is even more difficult when a piece of legislation is brought forward that actually deals with an issue, an issue that needs to be addressed by the society, and actually does so in a reasonable, balanced, and responsible fashion. How do you do your job as the opposition when you're faced with a bill like the one that we have before us today, Bill 27, the Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019? This is an eminently reasonable piece of legislation.

Having been with the Minister of Justice as he's toured over the province, as he's talked to the people in my constituency and to the people in the constituencies across this province – he's gathered the concerns and gathered the information from the people of Alberta, from the farmers, from the people that are facing problems with rural crime, and then come back with an eminently reasonable and effective and responsive piece of legislation, one that will actually meet the needs of Albertans. It must be a very hard day today to be in the opposition, when you're faced with a piece of legislation that is responsible and as reasonable as this one is here today. So I understand why they're having difficulty.

I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-McClung for standing up and speaking to this issue. However, I guess one of the tough things that you have to do when you're in opposition is that you have to try and be the opposition but not oppose for the sake of opposing, actually come up with reasonable suggestions for how you could make the bill better or come up with a rationale for why the piece of legislation misses the mark. I'm having a hard time hearing those kinds of arguments from the opposition today.

You know, I think it was perhaps a poor choice of words when the argument was brought up that this piece of legislation is encouraging people to – I believe it was: shoot first and ask questions later. I believe that's an irresponsible reading of this piece of legislation. When you actually read the legislation, you can see that that's not in there at all.

We can go to section 2(2) under the Occupiers' Liability Act.

(2) Where a trespasser is not a criminal trespasser, an occupier is not liable to the trespasser for damages for death of or injury to the trespasser unless the death or injury results from the occupier's wilful or reckless conduct.

(3) Where a trespasser is a criminal trespasser, no action lies against the occupier for damages for death of or injury to the trespasser unless the death or injury is caused by conduct of the occupier that

- (a) is wilful and grossly disproportionate in the circumstances, and
- (b) results in the occupier being convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code . . .

It's really hard, I understand, to be the opposition when a piece of legislation so clearly outlines the conduct that is expected out of people that are property owners in this province. This is not a blank cheque to do anything, and to suggest so, I believe, is stretching things beyond what we would consider to be a reasonable limit in this Legislature.

You know, it seems to me that the Member for Edmonton-McClung spent an awful lot of time talking about the trespasser's rights, forgetting entirely that this is about law-abiding citizens and the use of their property and their capacity to defend and protect their property. We should be far less concerned with the person that is actually breaking the law than with the people in this province that are trying to enjoy their property and to do so peacefully.

I understand and I was actually very appreciative of many of the arguments that the Member for Lethbridge-West brought forward in the House this morning, but I was a little bit mystified when she

starts talking about civil liability and she says that this legislation targets one group of people. You're darn right it targets one group of people. They're called criminals. They're called people that break the law. To use a suggestion that this law targets some business, some person that's doing a law-abiding act or performing a service of business to the people of this province, and to equate that with a criminal act, I think, stretches the arguments.

I would just say that I'm glad that the opposition is performing their job today. I'm glad that the opposition is trying to come up with reasons for making this bill better.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll keep it brief, and I'll keep it on keel. You know, part of the issue with us in rural Alberta in dealing with this is that there are a lot of heated feelings because, quite frankly, we've been under siege for a number of years. Let me give you an example of how it used to be in rural Alberta.

Growing up, we were west of the city, probably about an hour, an hour and a half, right around there, out towards Chip Lake. We were heading to the city. We'd go to the city about once a month for a big shopping trip, those types of things, growing up. I was about 12 years old at the time, and it was the wintertime. I had to run back to the house and do something before we went on this family trip, and I went and locked the door.

Well, we got about – oh, shoot – 15 minutes down the road, and my father had asked me a question, and it came to pass that he said, "Let me get this right; you locked the door?" And I said, "Yeah, I locked the door on the way out." Then he said: "What in the heck are you doing? What happens if somebody breaks down on the side of the road out there? What happens if somebody hits the ditch and then they have to walk? The only place they're going to have that's warm is our house." He turned around, and we went back and unlocked that door. That was how it used to be. When somebody came up your driveway, you kind of waved at him. You didn't know if they were a friend or a stranger or otherwise, but that was the case.

9:50

Well, roll the clock forward. I bought a little hobby farm. It's about 40 acres. I'm on the road working construction and down on the east coast. I come back, and I'm spending some time with my wife in the sunroom at night, and there are these headlights parked out on the side of the road. I'm going: "Who's that? What's going on?" She says: "I don't know. They've been coming out here, and then other cars meet them on the side of the road in the night and everything else." Now, we're not that far. We're not an hour and a half away from town anymore. We're about 45 minutes away from town. The interesting part with that is that you've got main highways intersecting and you've got little crossroads, and quite frankly it's pretty tough to chase that many rabbits with one dog. That's what's happening. There are drug deals and drop-off points taking place.

She called me one time. I was a little bit concerned about it. There was a minivan that was stolen, obviously, and burnt on the side of the road of our place. This is not the same as when I was growing up, when we were 12 years old and being concerned about locking the doors.

Yesterday, no less, there was a gentleman that called me from my constituency. He's frustrated as all get-out. There is one person in that community that has been in and out of our legal system, back and forth, nonstop. They know who the person is, they know which

drug house he's living in, but obviously we're not going after him because he's in the drug house and there's a bigger play from the police that want to get him. This one guy had \$148,000 of his equipment stolen. He knows where it's at. They can't go touch it. They caught the guy for selling about \$5,000 worth of stuff, and that was it. It's a petty crime, and he's out doing it again.

These are folks that are so darned frustrated. When we had our town hall – and I didn't see anyone from Edmonton-McClung, Edmonton-Gold Bar, anybody else that came out to see our area, and we're just in Calahoo, again, only 45 minutes away – 200 people showed up. We asked a question, Minister: you know, how many people have been affected by rural crime? I'm very much audience participation: a show of hands. Over 75 per cent of the people in that room put up their hands. That was powerful to me, 75 per cent of the room. Then I started going down the rabbit hole, Madam Speaker. Who's been hit more than once? Only a few hands dropped off. More than twice, three times? By the time I got to four times, there was still 30 per cent of that room that had their hands up.

People are concerned. They can't get insurance anymore. They can't call in the claims on the insurance. The criminals show up in the back of the yard, out in the shop, with what looks like a firearm. Maybe it's a broomstick handle; maybe it isn't. But coming back to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, you're sitting there with your wife and kids. You've got the shop lights on. You're trying to do things. These people aren't going. They're discharging firearms first. And you're going to have us held hostage because we're worried about a trespass law? These people don't care about the \$50 trespass law. Good fences make good neighbours, and guaranteed, Madam Speaker, we have fences all over the place.

It's not a problem of some kids lollygagging across – I don't know – Edmonton-McClung, trick-or-treating one night, who happen to go across someone's lawn. This is completely different. When I pick up that phone to call the RCMP, guaranteed they're not there for an hour. I have one hour of a home invasion, to put it in context for the members opposite. One hour. I don't know what those people are thinking. You've got either the crowd that falls within the Kumbaya days – everything is good, and they've got this entitlement that they can just walk onto people's land – or the more concerning part: you've got the drug crowd. You've got the crowd that is trying to feed a \$10,000-a-week habit.

I'll put it in context. The first time that I came across that was out in Vancouver. I'm along the Burrard Inlet. We're installing fibre optics along the Burrard Inlet in Vancouver. I was interviewing security companies. I had worked all across Canada with the company I was with as a project manager. This was the first time I've heard – and this is going back a number of years now, 20 years ago – of a security company insisting they have attack dogs with them.

To me, that was a pretty big liability, so I'm going: "Okay. What gives? What's with the attack dogs?" The guy that I was interviewing for that contract puts it in context for me. He says: "Just imagine. Just put yourself in a circumstance where you have five minutes to live, and the only thing that's going to fix it is medicine. If you get something, you need it. You need that medicine, or you're going to die, and you've got five minutes. What would hold you back?" I mean, arguably, for anybody put that question: "Well, not much. There are five minutes. That's it." He says: "That's what the heroin addicts are like. We're not being held up with knives. We're not being held up with guns. We're being held up with needles." That was 20 years ago. Working along there, being around that culture, I got to see it. There is a problem out there.

At our town hall meeting – and here's a strong, strong message to support that. This is now. One of the participants from the audience stood up and wanted to tell their story. He is a constable. He didn't say where he was from, but I'll say it here. He was EPS. He is from the city of Edmonton. He lives in my area. He stands up and says: there is not a crime issue; there is a drug issue. All of the bad guys in Edmonton know there's lots of coverage. But you know where the bad guys in Edmonton go to make it easy? Well, they just take that nice 10-minute drive or 15- or 20-minute drive. They go out to the country. So that's what we're getting. We're getting all of your bad guys. You've got all the police. You've got all the coverage. We're getting your bad guys.

**Member Irwin:** There are no bad guys in my riding.

**Mr. Getson:** Well, you might have the best riding in town, then, if you haven't any crime, because they're all probably coming out to my neck of the woods. It proves my point. If there's no crime in that member's area, then guaranteed this is substantive. This is the Edmonton Police Service that is saying that. There is a drug issue.

There's another name I'm going to mention. I haven't talked about this before, and it really kind of struck me. I'm driving home – this is going back about five years ago – and I hear a name from my past. It was a person that I had played basketball with. It's a person that I had worked together with. You know, we had gone to the same parties and events. We chased after the same girls in high school, all that type of stuff. We were buddies, doing that through thick and thin, a lot of those reactions. Here comes the gentleman's name: Travis Vader, a hard-working young farm boy, all that kind of stuff, who fell into an element and went completely down a different path. So the wolves that are amongst us didn't necessarily start out on that path, but they're starting to be driven to this.

Rural crime is an issue. These trespass laws: fantastic. We've heard overwhelming support for that. If the folks from the NDP would like to come out to our areas and hear some more of these messages directly, they will understand it. It's not that we're all a bunch of gun-toting, hillbilly rednecks out there. Well, not all of us. I would say that I kind of fall within that ilk. I kind of take that with a badge of honour. But there's part of it.

So when people, members opposite are wondering what it would be like to do that: yeah; what would you do to protect your family? What would you do to protect your property? What would you do? Again, understanding that, if I put it in the same context, you have someone coming into your home, you have someone occupying your back garage, you go out in the middle of the night, and you try to ask them to leave. No one, none of your neighbours can get to you. No one's going to get to you within an hour, and this isn't the first time. It's the fourth or the fifth or the sixth time, and you know who it is. They're walking through it, and that's probably part of the biggest concern of all of this.

Again, Minister, I appreciate and applaud your efforts. When you had mentioned that you were not just going to throw the book at the perpetrators on those types of trespass crimes, that you were going to thicken it, that really resonated with the folks in rural Alberta. The drug issues that we have: there's a bigger, deep-seated issue that falls to it. These folks are not in their right mind. You have to put yourself, honestly, back in this concept. You are either one of three types of people: you're either the wolf being the predator that's preying on people, you're the sheep that does nothing about it, or you're the sheepdog that stands up and protects it.

In rural Alberta all of us have some dogs, and some of us are those sheepdogs, and that's, I think, why a lot of us are drawn to

this. We're here to help protect and speak for the people that we represent, we're here to help to protect our families, and we're here to help give a voice. Hopefully, it resonates and people understand that it's real. It's real. This is the first step of making it right and making people feel like they're not the victims anymore so they're not so frustrated.

Obviously, I'm very much in support of it, Minister. Thank you for it. Keep up the great work. The folks in my area are behind you, too.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Question. Question. Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, I am the Speaker of this House, and I will call the question when I am ready to call the question.

Are there any more speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a third time]

10:00

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 29

### Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise and move second reading of Bill 29, the Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019.

This legislation would empower municipalities to attract investment, create jobs, and help them realize their full economic potential. Municipalities deserve the freedom, the opportunity, and the flexibility to make the choices that fit their unique local economic circumstances whilst at the same time helping with our province's provincial priorities. This legislation that we are proposing is concise. In short, we are proposing to expand the powers of municipal councils to create proper incentive programs for a machinery and equipment assessment class. Municipalities know what is best for their residents. We are simply getting out of their way and letting them do it.

If passed, Madam Speaker, Bill 29 would allow municipalities to provide property tax incentives for up to 15 years for machinery and equipment. This would give Alberta a competitive advantage over jurisdictions across Canada and the United States. Other jurisdictions have programs like this in place. Saskatchewan and British Columbia as well as Texas and Arizona are some of the examples. If passed, we'll be helping municipalities provide one of the longest tax incentive timelines in North America.

Some individuals and groups may disagree with the proposed legislation, arguing, I would say, Madam Speaker, in error, that it may lead to increased competition between municipalities. Increased competition is exactly what we are looking for, but we can't keep thinking that competition is between each other. Alberta as a whole has become uncompetitive with other jurisdictions. This isn't a zero-sum game. We need to bring the Alberta advantage back to grow the power that we all share. We need to get investment back from neighbouring provinces, foreign countries, and particularly the United States.

We want to help grow our economy, not just manage it. If passed, Madam Speaker, I believe this legislation will bolster investment and economic development across our great province, particularly as we continue to restore our province as a destination of choice for investors.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move second reading.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Sure. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 29, Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019. I'll keep my comments relatively brief at this stage of the debate on this bill as we begin to have a look at it and provide just a few opening comments.

The first piece that I would flag is consistency, Madam Speaker. It would appear that the government ought to make up its mind if it is in favour of what they call boutique tax credits or not. We have an inconsistency here between other statements of the government and the province with respect to how fiscal policy is deployed in the province and this bill. This is, in fact, exactly that type of fiscal instrument. It is a specific type of tax break. The existence of this bill makes a number of their other arguments inconsistent or at least raises questions about their actual commitment to that line of argumentation.

I think that, as the minister indicated, there is a bit of a misalignment with other stated goals of this Legislature and of municipalities in particular for regions to be able to thoughtfully plan development over a long horizon period of time in a way that is both individually beneficial but also does not undercut one another or otherwise lead to friction between municipalities. There's certainly the risk of that with this particular measure that is proposed in this bill. I think that as we go through debate, perhaps we will begin to see some of those arguments being made by various municipalities as well. It's quite possible at this point.

I think the third piece that we have to ask is: what is going to be achieved through this bill? Certainly, we have a bill before this House, Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act. That's obviously a goal shared by everyone on all sides of this House, but fiscal sustainability applies for municipalities as well, and what we're seeing right now is a great deal of fiscal instability for a number of municipalities, not just with respect to the future of MSI in the next fiscal year, not just with some of the other reductions that have been made, whether it's in flood mitigation, other forms of infrastructure, the capital plan more broadly, road maintenance, and so on. These are all reductions that municipalities will have to grapple with sometimes co-operatively and sometimes individually as municipalities.

There are also a number of consequences of some of the actions that have already been taken by this government with respect to revenues for municipalities. I'm thinking here particularly of the reduction for shallow gas operators then leading to sometimes other operators just simply not paying whatever has been assessed to them by the municipalities in which they are operating, to the point where we are now looking at, it has been reported, about \$81 million worth of unpaid property taxes from oil and gas companies. That's according to the Rural Municipalities of Alberta.

There have been specific remedies for this proposed by rural municipalities that, to the best of my knowledge anyway, my most recent knowledge, have not been addressed by this government or by this minister specifically. That could be the case. Some of these specific asks that have come from the rural municipalities could have been addressed in this legislation because some of them are

actual legislative tools that need to be deployed. Others are through directives with the Alberta Energy Regulator. Rural municipalities have asked through improved legislated tax recovery options. That could have been in this bill as well, but we do not see it. We don't see action from this minister on that topic.

Members of the RMA have recently endorsed a resolution calling for greater oversight and accountability from the oil and gas industry and the Alberta Energy Regulator. They have certainly asked for broadened tax recovery powers. They've asked for an early detection system that can identify if oil and gas operators are struggling before it gets to the point where there is no money to pay these taxes. That could have been addressed by the minister. Certainly, the RMA is the largest group, the umbrella group for rural municipalities, the largest by their sheer individual numbers given the number of smaller municipalities that we have in this province. That could have been included in this bill so that we could accomplish the, I think, shared goal with the rural municipalities of achieving strong, effective local government, which is their stated goal.

There are a number of issues with this piece of legislation. We will have a little more time in the coming day or two to review it, Madam Speaker, at which point we can provide more detailed analysis and propose amendments or otherwise query the intent of certain pieces of the act. Certainly, on the face of it, we have problems here with consistency, with alignment with other stated goals. We have problems, as it is, with resourcing in municipalities, and certainly this bill is silent on the actual pressing needs that municipalities have asked for, in particular the rurals.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a second time]

10:10

## Government Motions

### Statutes Repeal

42. Mr. Schweitzer moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to section 3 of the Statutes Repeal Act, SA 2013 cS-19.3, the Legislative Assembly resolves that the following statutes, appearing on the list of statutes to be repealed which was tabled in the Assembly by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General on June 11, 2019, Sessional Paper 64/2019, not be repealed:
1. Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Trails Act (2004 cB-2.5);
  2. Forest Reserves Amendment Act, 2004 (2004 c9) s8;
  3. Health Professions Act (RSA 2000 cH-7) ss 155(1)(c), 156(n), (u), Sched. 1;
  4. Health Professions Amendment Act, 2008 (2008 c34) ss12, 13, 15;
  5. Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act (2013 cP-18.5);
  6. Tobacco Reduction Amendment Act, 2013 (2013 c24) ss3(c) to (e), 4(a), 6, 7, 8(a), 19(b), (c), (d) "(e.4)", (f) "(g.2)", 20, 22;
  7. Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Amendment Act (RSA 2000 c34 (Supp)) s8 "8.1(3)".

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This motion is necessary in order to grant a one-year extension in the statutes listed in the motion as our government reviews the need for those statutes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I did not think there were that many words on that page.

Are there any members wishing to speak to Government Motion 42?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Government Motion 42 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

(continued)

#### Bill 28

#### Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General and keeper of the Great Seal.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are making great progress this morning. I'm as excited to hear about this speech as anybody else is in this House because I'm really learning about it as we go, just as everybody else here.

Madam Speaker, it's a privilege to rise and move on behalf of the Minister of Health third reading of Bill 28, Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act.

I was pleased to see that Bill 28 passed second reading with the unanimous consent of this House. Alberta continues to see lasting effects from the overprescription of opioids. With an average of two Albertans who fatally overdose every day, the situation is far from resolved. This is largely in part because of the overprescription of highly addictive opioid medications. The opioid manufacturers' aggressive marketing efforts led to this overprescription. These efforts include spending hundreds of millions of dollars to educate doctors on the use of opioids for treating chronic pain over the long term and stating that the risk of addiction was less than 1 per cent. We pray for the families who have lost loved ones as a result of these actions, and we are working to strengthen a system of care that gives families avenues to access support and heal.

Madam Speaker, Alberta taxpayers have been on the hook for the health care costs that have been incurred as a result of opioid manufacturers' and wholesalers' unlawful actions. Bill 28 is the first step in our efforts to recover those costs. In 2014 the total cost of substance use to the Alberta economy was \$5.5 billion. Of that, approximately \$52 million was spent in that year on health care costs related to opioid use. This is according to the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. We estimate that since then, opioid-related health care costs have increased significantly with the subsequent growth of the opioid epidemic.

Bill 28 enables Alberta to participate in British Columbia's proposed national class action against opioid manufacturers and wholesalers. This legislation will allow Alberta to recover health care costs and other damages caused by the defendants' unlawful actions, including their aggressive marketing efforts. This legislation would allow the use of statistical and population-based evidence to establish causation and quantify health care costs and other damages caused or contributed by an opioid-related wrong. Bill 28 will allow Alberta to recover costs on an aggregate basis rather than on an individual insured person basis regardless of when the damages occurred. If the directors and officers of the corporate defendants are implicated in opioid-related wrongs, this legislation

would make them jointly and separately liable with their corporations.

Our priority is to reinvest any damages awarded back into our health care system. Madam Speaker, we are committed to holding opioid manufacturers and wholesalers to account for the opioid damages and health care costs that they have contributed to.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and again thank you to every member in the House for their good work on this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 28. Again, I just wanted to reiterate that we are in support of this bill. This was something that was in the NDP platform during the election and something that we obviously support when it comes to trying to recover some of the costs that are associated with the opiate crisis and making sure that those individuals who are part of the creation of opiates and the distribution of opiates are doing so in an ethical and responsible manner.

In saying that, obviously, there was an amendment that was put forward yesterday on my behalf that, you know, I really wish had been passed. I appreciate the minister standing this morning and saying that the money that is reclaimed and received by the government will go towards health care costs and reimbursing the government for the expenses that come out of supporting individuals with addictions, specifically opiates. The amendment yesterday, however, spoke to ensuring that Albertans had some ability to have consultation around where that money went and to ensure that the minister was willing to put a financial bill forward in the future that required that money to go into health and specifically some of it to mental health and addictions supports. I feel that that's important.

As all members of this House understand and probably already know, any money that comes into the government, whether it be from court action or taxes, revenue of any kind, always goes into general revenue first, and once it's in general revenue, it is then decided where that money goes. The fact that there isn't a mechanism in place, that this bill doesn't speak to the fact that it's actually going to be allocated to Health, that it's actually going to be allocated to mental health and addictions, for me, is a concern. It's very easy to have a settlement come in and it go into general revenue and somehow not make it to where it needs to be.

We know that mental health and addictions is something that, when we look at the overall Health budget, is a small, small percentage of the overall Health budget. It would be nice to see that, with something that is as specific to addictions as the opiate crisis and the fact that we have lost Albertans because of the opiate crisis, a portion of any money that is returned to the government would go to mental health and addictions, because we recognize that this is the reason that we are getting involved in this action. I recognize – and again I will acknowledge that I've had conversations with the associate minister's office – that obviously not a hundred per cent of that money can go directly to treatment programs and/or specific mental health and addictions pieces because there are additional costs around emergency services and health services outside of just treatment and the spectrum of care. But in saying that, it would have been nice to see the government take the initiative and actually commit to the allocation and not allow it to go into general revenue.

10:20

Although we will support the bill, I will be open and transparent that as this action continues and if any money is reclaimed and

returned to the government, I will be watching to make sure that some of it is actually going towards mental health and addictions treatment and that it doesn't somehow make it into general revenue and stay there. I believe that although the government has made commitments around funding for different things for mental health and addictions, we can always do better. It's obviously something that I am very passionate about, and I think that any opportunities for us to evaluate how we provide services within health care that strengthen services around mental health and addictions is important. I'll just keep auditing every once in a while and seeing, if any money comes back, where it goes.

Again, we will be supporting the bill, and I look forward to seeing what the outcome of the actions across the country are. I believe that in looking at what's happened in the United States, there is definitely potential for some form of recovery. I think that that will only benefit Albertans if used appropriately.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Well, I think our schoolchildren came on a great day to see this Assembly working together and pushing forward legislation, so welcome to the Alberta Legislative Assembly.

At this time I will ask if there are any other members wishing to speak. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak this morning to Bill 28. You know, over the last couple of days, as we've been debating a few bills, I've certainly been quite critical of the government for moving forward with a number of things which they did not mention in their elections platform, but this morning I rise to commend them for doing precisely that, for moving forward on a piece which was not included in their elections platform. In doing so, I will also thank them for incorporating a piece that was in ours. This was something that we had brought forward and committed to.

Now, of course, we had the benefit of having been in government and having had the opportunity to work with folks within the Ministry of Health and the many excellent public servants there, who had provided us with some advice and some insight. Indeed, we had learned a great deal about the challenges that government has faced as a result of the opioid crisis and the sources where that came from. I'm sure that informed part of why we decided to include that in our elections platform, that if we had the opportunity to form government, we would move forward with such a lawsuit. I am pleased that in this case the UCP government is choosing to take that advice as well.

Now, we know that this is something that has been looked at by a number of different jurisdictions, and very appropriately so. I recognize that this is a serious health issue. Around the world, certainly in the U.S. and in Canada, we are seeing that there are very serious impacts on population health. Indeed, here in the province of Alberta 733 people died of opioid overdoses, including fentanyl. We've seen that opioid-related deaths and injuries are a critical public health issue across Canada, with one Canadian dying every two hours due to opioid use.

We know where this epidemic traces back to, Madam Speaker. We know this goes back to the late '90s. We've seen revelations now, there have been documentaries, there's evidence that has come forward, there's been investigative journalism which shows that companies manufacturing these opioids were in fact engaging in dishonest practices, falsely assuring and falsely telling people in the medical community that these products were not addictive, and aggressively pushing doctors to prescribe these to their patients.

We know that opioids have a place and have a use. Indeed, I have received e-mails in my role as critic for Health for the Official Opposition from people within the chronic pain community who have been very clear about the value that opioids hold for some of them. We recognize it is an important part of treatment. For some, that is the only relief they have from chronic pain, and if managed correctly, it can be a beneficial thing. But what we also recognize is that there was this disingenuous campaign by these pharmaceutical companies to boost their profits, again, the sort of short-term thinking which we see sometimes in which one looks only at the bottom line and not at the larger effects of the decisions you're making and prioritizing only the personal good, and indeed that's what we saw these companies doing.

We have seen jurisdictions stepping forward, much as we saw with tobacco companies, where folks have stepped forward and sued tobacco companies for, again, a dishonest and disingenuous practice in the past, trying to hide the harm that their products were creating even though they were well aware of the fact that that harm existed and of the costs, then, to the health care system. Of course, we faced a similar thing with opioids, and now we're seeing similar cases go forward. In Oklahoma the courts recently ordered Johnson & Johnson to pay about \$572 million for engaging in false and misleading marketing of their drugs and opioids in general. We see similar court cases proceeding now in the province of British Columbia. They're suing dozens of opioid manufacturers and even distributors. They're moving forward with that, and I think it makes sense that we here in Alberta would move on that front as well.

This is an opportunity for us to acknowledge the health costs that we have, and as my colleague from Edmonton-Manning noted, a good use of those funds, whatever we may be able to receive from these lawsuits, would be to fold that back into the health care system. As she said, I'm pleased to hear that that is in part the intent of this government. I'm pleased that my colleague will be keeping track of that to see how that is done. Certainly, while we are in agreement with this government on the need to move forward with this and that this is a good course of action to try to recoup some of those costs and get dollars that we can invest back into the system to address the issue of opioid use, we have had some disagreement across the aisle as to how those funds are best invested.

Now, to be clear, I think we all agree on the goal and the outcome that we want to see. We want to see a mitigation of the public harm, and indeed we've heard from members in this Assembly, in debate on Bill 27 earlier, about the effects it has when people are addicted and the problematic behaviour that comes from that, then, and how that is spread out. We recognize that while opioid use exists across the province, indeed there are problems with addiction across rural communities as well as urban communities that drives – we do see people even that are using, as was noted, in urban areas that are going out to rural areas. The effects ripple out. It's a broad-spectrum issue.

We also recognize the health care costs and the other things that are involved, but we recognize that there has to be a suite of services to address this issue. I have been troubled at times to hear some of the types of language that have been used by the Premier and other members of his government in regard to those who are substance users or in regard to how services are provided in the community. It's been unfortunate that at times I've seen that used, in my view, as a political wedge, in a very politically divisive way, when this is something on which we all want to move forward and achieve a greater good. To try to cast aspersions on areas such as harm reduction or to suggest that those are more problematic is, to me, concerning.

I can tell you that here in my constituency of Edmonton-City Centre the harm reduction practices such as the supervised

consumption sites have led to, according to the data and according to reports from the police and others, a reduction around the sites where this is occurring, where those supports are being provided.

**10:30**

Now, indeed, I agree with this government that we should also be investing in recovery opportunities for those individuals who wish to pursue that and for whom that works. Indeed, we should encourage as many as possible to seek assistance, but we recognize that there are a range of ways that people are going to find that recovery. For some, that's going to be through an opioid antagonist program or an opioid replacement program. Indeed, that has been proven in many cases to be one of the most effective ways to get individuals back on their feet, stabilized, and in a position where they are not, in fact, then dependent on a habit that is going to force them to go out and try to find that \$10,000 a week but instead are provided with a prescription, which they go and receive in a clean, sterile clinic from medical professionals who offer them follow-up and other life supports and allow those individuals to stabilize, to reacquire housing, to go back to reunite with loved ones and family, to get back into the workforce, and find stability. At some point some of those individuals may indeed be able to in fact leave that prescription behind, even, to work with medical professionals to wean themselves off that. Some may require it for longer.

I'm not myself a medical professional, but I've had the chance to speak with many who offer those programs here, and I can certainly speak to their passion and their commitment and the incredible value they see in the many stories they've told me of lives that have been changed. I think it's important that as we move forward with this, that as we look at that investment of how many dollars come in from this lawsuit, they're invested in the full range of services.

Indeed, I would encourage this government, as they take this positive step, I think – inasmuch as one can say, I guess, that proceeding with a lawsuit is a positive step – to use this in a way that's going to benefit and address the core issues that drive so many of the problems that we discuss here in this House and to perhaps

set aside some of the political rhetoric and attempt to take advantage from, I think, understandably, the very real concerns that people bring forward about the chaotic effect that the promulgation, the proliferation of opioids throughout our system has on so many communities, recognize that at root these are social issues and even behind the fact that people become addicted to opioids, recognize that that is often driven by mental health issues, issues of poverty, issues of personal trauma and that this is not a question of moral failing but indeed a number of other elements on which, unfortunately, these particular pharmaceutical companies chose to prey and profit.

I'm thankful that we've reached a place now where there's a much better understanding of how this came about. It's a form of thinking I hope we can apply to many, many other areas, where we understand that perhaps pushing profit above community good can indeed create many unintended consequences, can provide incentives for businesses or others to behave in ways that, while it may do themselves some good in the short term, in fact does great harm to our community and causes great cost in the long term. Perhaps that's something we can consider as we also move on and continue to debate this government's budget.

That said, I appreciate that the minister has taken on this fight, that he's bringing forward the legislation to enable the province to recover these costs, and I will be supporting Bill 28.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a third time]

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Speaker, we've made a lot of progress here in an hour and 35 minutes this morning. I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:35 a.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 28, 2019

Day 49

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration



## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 28, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

**Mr. Jack William Ady**

September 22, 1932, to November 26, 2019

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we begin this afternoon's proceedings, let us take a moment to pay tribute to a former member who passed away this week. Jack William Ady served three terms as a Progressive Conservative member, for Cardston from 1986 to 1993 and for Cardston-Chief Mountain from 1993 to 1997. He was also the father-in-law to Cindy Ady, Member for Calgary-Shaw from 2001 to 2012. Mr. Ady served as minister of advanced education and career development from 1992 to 1997. Mr. Ady passed away on November 26, 2019, at the age of 87. We will be paying further tribute to Mr. Ady in the spring sitting, when members of his family are able to join us.

In a moment of silent prayer or reflection I ask you to remember Mr. Ady as you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let the light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Hon. members, for those of you who may be interested in attending the service, I believe that it is this Saturday. My office has further details with respect to the service for Mr. Ady. Feel free to reach out to the office for those details. [A cellphone rang]

It sounded distinctly like a cellphone tone over there in the back corner, perhaps from the hon. Member for Peace River. I'm not sure, but of course we want to ensure that all of our electronic devices are turned off.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have two school groups in the galleries this afternoon. From Edmonton-Glenora please welcome students from MAC Islamic School, and from Strathcona-Sherwood Park welcome Wye elementary school students. Thank you all for coming to the gallery. Joining us a little bit later on are students from Edwin Parr senior school. Hon. members, please welcome our students.

Members, in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon, please welcome guests of the Minister of Indigenous Relations and the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, representatives from the Paul band First Nation, accompanied by board members from Good Energy. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, visiting guests of the Minister of Advanced Education: representatives from Alberta Students' Executive Council.

Also in the gallery today are guests of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: 4-H Hall of Fame inductees Sally Barkwell and Lee Carothers. As well, they have a number of guests joining them.

Also in the galleries – you may have noticed them in the lower rotunda this morning – we have some great folks visiting the Legislature as guests of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora: representatives of Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention.

Last but certainly not least are guests of the MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. Welcome the Elder family: Monique, Anne-Marie, and Philip.

Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Time Allocation on Government Bills

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, back on June 19 of this year I rose and gave a member's statement cautioning this government against its use of time allocation. At that time I spoke about how it is the debate that happens in this place, not just the holding of elections, that allows us to call Alberta a democracy, so I urged the government to show restraint in the future use of time allocation, because constraining debate in this place damages the democratic principles that we have all sworn an oath to uphold and protect.

Given the events of last week and this government's determined abuse of time allocation rules to stifle almost all debate on Bill 22, it is clear that this UCP government will continue to ignore democratic norms as they lunge from scandal to scandal, and it's a deeply tragic shame, Mr. Speaker. Last week we witnessed an unprecedented act of political cowardice. A government conveniently lacking in leadership obstructed justice by ramming through a bill that fired the Election Commissioner, an investigator who was looking into the UCP's own corrupt leadership race. Every time this government uses time allocation, especially when used presumptively, as it was last week, they reveal themselves to be unfit caretakers of Alberta's democracy.

Albertans watch and care about the debate that goes on in this building, their building. Albertans are watching, and they have developed a taste for frequently changing governments of late, Mr. Speaker. If the UCP continue to abuse their power in this place for their own convenience and self-dealing, I think Albertans will be wanting to continue that new electoral tradition in just a few years' time.

### Vulnerable Albertans and Budget 2019

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, after the budget address on October 24 I managed to get home in time to attend the Okotoks business awards gala. I would like to express my sincere congratulations to all of the incredible business nominees and award recipients.

Now, the highlight of the gala for me was the chance to meet Loree and her daughter Sydney. Sydney is an incredible young girl. She is a leukemia survivor, and she also has Down syndrome. Mr. Speaker, Loree told me about how her daughter overcame her fear of flying by writing a book to explain how fun the entire experience could be. From arriving at the terminal to boarding and the flight, they wrote a positive story that gave her the confidence to overcome her fear. This is an amazing story in itself, but to add to this, they have now published the story as a children's book illustrated by Karon Argue, an Alberta artist who is legally blind. I have to say that this story touched my heart in a profound way.

Our government has presented our first budget, a budget that ensures that we can continue to provide quality services to vulnerable Albertans like Sydney, a budget that establishes a prudent, thoughtful plan to stop the unsustainable increases to our debt.

Now, the opposition wants to criticize this budget by the misinformation of a \$4.7 billion tax cut that is actually only \$100 million, and that is a fact. Their hypocrisy is disappointing considering they are responsible for \$2.2 billion every year of taxpayers' money going to service the debt that they created, \$2.2 billion that no longer goes to help vulnerable Albertans, \$2.2 billion that goes to banks and bondholders overseas. We owe it to Albertans to make sure they have the support they deserve, now and in the future.

Sydney is an amazing young girl, and through her story she has reminded me that even though the previous government left this

place in a fiscal mess, this government can turn the page, overcome the fear, and write a new story, one of a positive future for Alberta.

**The Speaker:** I might remind all members of the House and, in particular today, the Government House Leader that it's the custom that we don't walk between the Speaker and the dais when entering the Chamber or exiting it.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has a statement.

### National Adoption Awareness Month

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to mark National Adoption Awareness Month and offer my warm greetings to all adoptive families in Alberta and raise awareness of the children in need of adoptive homes. We all know how important family connections can be and how loving, supportive families create bonds that can last a lifetime. I think we all understand what those bonds mean to children who are adopted, to the parents who adopt them, and to the birth families who maintain ongoing contact through open adoptions. Providing a child in need with a permanent home is a remarkable act of caring and an expression of hope and faith in the future.

National Adoption Awareness Month presents the opportunity to celebrate adoption and to raise awareness about the children in need of adoptive homes here in Alberta, whether through licensed private adoption agencies, direct placement adoptions, international adoptions, which is the route that my family took, or children in government care who cannot be reunited with their immediate or extended families. Our government is working hard to find permanent, loving homes for children, teens, and sibling groups who otherwise wouldn't have one.

Postadoption services lend assistance to adoptive families here in Alberta. The supports for permanency program provides financial assistance to families who adopt or obtain private guardianship of children under the age of 18 in permanent government care, and the postadoption registry provides information and services related to adoptions dating back to the 1920s.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to cut through the red tape to make the adoption process more timely for children who are unable to be cared for by their birth families or by extended family. We want to ensure that we are finding the best possible fit for those waiting kids as quickly as possible.

This month of celebration is an important reminder that adoption is a wonderful option for any Albertan wishing to build a strong and loving family. On behalf of my colleagues in this House it is my great pleasure to recognize National Adoption Awareness Month and the many adoptive families in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I do appreciate your statement today. It particularly hits close to home for the Speaker.

### Food Bank Use

**Ms Renaud:** In 1981 Edmonton's Food Bank, the first official food bank in Canada, was formed here in Alberta. Since that time, through boom times and bust, over 90 food banks have been created in communities across Alberta, proof that prosperity hasn't been for all.

Well before the election of Justin Trudeau in Ottawa, before the fall and complete collapse and assimilation of the PC dynasty in Alberta, food banks were seeing a growing recession at their doors in the increasing numbers of people in their communities needing

food assistance. These numbers grew through the collapse in the value of oil, a global commodity, and appear to be growing again as this government acts less like a shock absorber and more like the one delivering the blows to employment, sustainable funding, and the daily cost of living for Albertans.

In early November the Calgary Food Bank reported a spike in demand for their services, saying: what's needed now is government action. In a CBC news article, Calgary Food Bank CEO James McAra called for stronger employment legislation, more affordable housing, and social programs that don't claw back benefits when people start earning money. Edmonton's Food Bank reported record demand for help in October as over 23,000 Edmontonians accessed their food hamper program. Food assistance is once again growing, with no end in sight. Food Banks Canada released their HungerCount 2019 Report. The recommendations include supporting the creation of affordable early learning and child care across the country and increased supports for single adults living with low incomes.

A 2018 survey of food bank clients in Edmonton showed that just a few hundred dollars per month would make the difference between being food secure or not. As the cost of insurance, education, transportation, and user fees rises and as fewer supports are available due to funding cuts and the cost-of-living increases for everyday Albertans, the trend swings rapidly towards becoming food insecure, and as we've seen, food bank numbers will continue to grow.

Thank you. [An electronic device sounded]

**The Speaker:** Oh, my, that sounded a lot like a second electronic device in the Chamber today.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

### Paul Band Energy Business Partnership

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the constituency of Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland we've had our challenges over the last four years. Between the federal Liberals and the previous NDP government it's been an uphill battle. Albertans spoke clearly this April. We took back our province. We're working together to get back to where we belong in this country, leading the charge for innovation and prosperity. The hardships we've faced together will make us stronger, and a common goal with a clear direction will unify us going forward.

However, the challenges we have faced over the last few years fall short of what the Paul band has been struggling with. Back in June I met their chief and council and discussed the challenges that they're having. On a tour I experienced first-hand some of the infrastructure challenges that they face every day, the main roads that require four-wheel drive for several days after a rain as an example. We also discussed crime, drug issues, and the need for reservation policing. We discussed the off-site low-income housing that they're trying to build to support their members living in Edmonton and how the new school under construction will help the next generation. We also spoke about the old arena, a building that was central to socializing in their community and the surrounding regions. Hockey is a common bond for all kids and parents, and unfortunately that arena has been in disrepair for the last 20 years due to lack of funds.

The leaders did not ask me once for money; they asked to be part of the solution, to help with the model of regional co-operation so that revenue could be generated to pay for their basic infrastructural needs. As their MLA I managed to connect a new company called Good Energy with their leadership. Together they will be purchasing and operating undervalued Albertan energy assets. The

Paul band will have seats on the board of the company and will have members of their community working on-site. In addition, the company will build a trades training centre on the reserve so that members can obtain and upgrade their skills as well. It's anticipated that there will \$3 million per year generated for the band, plus wages for their members. This is the reason why the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation was created.

This UCP government has set the stage for true consultation and participation, and I look forward to all of the things that we can build together. Alberta is open for business. [some applause]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### Public Engagement in Alberta Politics

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the privileges of this job is the opportunity to meet so many Albertans who are doing fantastic work in their communities, Albertans who volunteer or work as part of their community league, their school council, charitable groups, and nonprofits. I've been particularly moved by the stakeholders who spoke out to fight against the regressive and discriminatory Bill 207; compassionate, compelling, and articulate advocates.

Most recently I've been inspired by the individual Albertans who have written their MLAs and the Premier, called our offices, and rallied on the steps of the Legislature and throughout the province, Albertans who are outraged by how quickly this government broke its campaign promises with this budget, how it seized their pensions without consultation, how entitled and arrogantly it spends their money on their buddies and cronies, but most outrageously, how corruptly and self-servingly it undermined our democracy itself by firing the Election Commissioner. The Premier didn't even have the courage to stick around and do it himself.

There's very real frustration, fear, and anger in Alberta towards this government. We're hearing it everywhere we go, in articles, on social media, at community meetings, in the grocery store. This government has broken faith with Albertans, and at a record speed.

What we hear most is: "What can we do? How can we fight back against this corrupt government?" Let me provide Albertans with some suggestions. E-mail, call, and ask for meetings with your MLA, particularly if they are government MLAs. Copy opposition members so we can hold government MLAs accountable for what they're hearing. If you live in my riding or anywhere in Edmonton, contact the Minister of Municipal Affairs. He is Edmonton's voice in cabinet and must answer for why he is failing us. Talk to your friends and families. This is not just politics. This is our future. Albertans must energize, organize, and mobilize.

Most of all, my message to Albertans is: don't forget. This government is doing this in the first year of their only term because they're counting on the fact that Albertans will forget what they've done by the next time the election comes around. Don't forget, because I can assure you that the Official Opposition won't.

### Fair Deal Panel Chair

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased to see our government taking decisive measures to assert Alberta's place in Confederation. Today the Premier announced Ms Oryssia Lennie as the chair of Alberta's Fair Deal Panel. Ms Lennie is the former Deputy Minister of Western Economic Diversification Canada and brings a wealth of knowledge about federal-provincial relations.

She'll be joining my colleagues, the hon. members for Banff-Kananaskis, Cypress-Medicine Hat, and Fort McMurray-Wood

Buffalo, along with other prominent Albertans to fight for our province's interests in Ottawa. Ms Lennie's distinguished career as a devoted civil servant who has worked on complex constitutional and intergovernmental negotiations will serve her well in this important role. She brings a wealth of experience from her time in both the federal and provincial governments.

Mr. Speaker, there has perhaps never been a time in history where Albertans have felt so alienated from the rest of the country. Legislation targeting our biggest industry, a broken and unfair equalization system, and Laurentian elites in Quebec and Ontario who sneer at the very industry that heats their homes and fuels their cars: it's not hard to understand Albertans' frustration. I'm so pleased that this panel has been tasked with listening to Albertans around the province and examining measures like withdrawing from the Canadian pension plan, creating a provincial police force, and establishing a provincial constitution.

Chairing this panel is a tall order and one for which Ms Lennie is well suited. Along with her colleagues she will be conducting town halls in community centres and church halls around the province. Albertans can also submit their feedback online, and let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I know more than a few people in my constituency who will most certainly be sharing their ideas with the panel.

On behalf of the United Conservative caucus I'm pleased to extend our best wishes to Ms Lennie, because, Mr. Speaker, it's time Alberta got a fair deal.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Holodomor Remembrance

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are shocked by the comments made by a University of Alberta instructor. In summary, this instructor believes that the Holodomor, the deliberate murder of millions of Ukrainians by starvation, is a myth. This instructor should be ashamed.

Everyone is entitled to their opinion, but facts are facts. Perhaps this part-time instructor could demonstrate some intellectual curiosity and learn the facts of Holodomor from the Holodomor research and education consortium at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. He would not have to go far. It's at the University of Alberta.

According to the University of Alberta's directory the instructor is not just a misinformed historian and political theorist holding on to rejected conspiracy theories, the instructor is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education, specializing in elementary education. The fact of the matter is that the Holodomor is a recognized mass genocide on the scale of the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide.

1:50

The U.S.S.R. deliberately targeted Ukrainians because they were farmers. They were stripped of their farms, food, possessions, and crops. Their village leaders were murdered. Millions of Ukrainians died as a result of the genocidal intentions of Stalin's Communist regime.

Mr. Speaker, the facts have to be stated over and over again because the Soviet Union tried to cover up the Holodomor. Only upon the fall of the Soviet Union did the facts become available, and the evil inflicted on Ukraine became more widely known. We cannot forget.

I am proud of my Ukrainian heritage. Ukrainians are here in Alberta and in Canada in part because of the genocidal war inflicted upon Ukraine. We have done so much to help build this province and country. The memories of millions that were lost should not be

forgotten. We study tragedy of the past so it will not happen again. All I can say is: shame.

### Oral Question Period

#### Justice Ministry Layoff of Civil Lawyers

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, today we've learned of this government's plans to fire 90 civil law lawyers from Alberta Justice as part of its continued run of cuts to the provincial budget. Some of these lawyers are tasked with child protection and make emergency applications to get kids out of dangerous situations. To the Premier: is keeping our kids safe no longer a priority as you scramble to pay off your failed \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we are going to be downsizing the legal services division in the province of Alberta. We're going to make sure that we focus the priorities of that division and make sure that we continue to service the needs of Albertans. We'll continue to provide services for Children's Services. That will continue. Why are we here? We're here because of the fiscal train wreck that we inherited from the other side. We will get our budget back on track; we will balance our budget. It's the responsible thing to do.

**Ms Pancholi:** Maybe the minister just hasn't taken the time to learn what these lawyers do. These civil lawyers are tasked with enforcing environmental protection laws. They take on employers when unsafe conditions lead to the death of workers. They take violations of the building codes forward when people's homes are unsafe. Frankly, they keep Albertans safe. To the Premier: what's your plan? Are you just going to stop enforcing laws? Is this what you call red tape reduction?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, from the other side over there what we have is simply an attitude of no lawyer left behind. We're going to focus the priorities of government and make sure that we focus the initiatives to make sure that the services of Albertans are met. We're here to make sure that those additional services, critical services, are met in a responsible way. The general public wants us to make sure we have prosecutors. I'm encouraging these civil lawyers, if they're interested to continue working for the province of Alberta, to apply for prosecutor jobs. We're hiring there.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think there's one lawyer that Albertans would like to leave behind.

Minister, you're putting people at risk, and that's not okay. These lawyers also advise the government when they're breaking their own laws. They help make sure the government complies with the rule of law and the Constitution. Frankly, we could use them now more than ever with this corrupt government in charge. To the Premier: are you firing these 90 civil lawyers because you're tired of having them tell you that you're breaking the law?

**The Speaker:** It would be unparliamentary to imply that a member of the House is breaking the law. I'm sure that's not what the member meant, because if it was, she would need to apologize and withdraw.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I think that that question speaks for itself. It's a ridiculous assertion. Here on this side of the House we are getting focused in the Justice department. We are downsizing, making sure we focus on the critical areas of government that Albertans elected us to focus on. That's what we're doing. We inherited a fiscal train wreck, sinking to over a hundred billion dollars in debt. My constituents sent me here to make sure we fight

for them, fight for every tax dollar to make sure it's used wisely. That's what our department is going to continue to do. [interjections]

**Mr. Ellis:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 1:55.

The Member for Calgary-McCall has the next question.

#### Technology Industry Development

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oil and gas workers were stunned when the Energy minister told the media that she wasn't concerned that her \$4.7 billion corporate handout had not created any jobs. Yesterday we also found out that the economic development minister is just as negligent with her file when she said the companies she took a crucial tax credit away from are, quote, doing fine. Premier, is the minister really that out of touch with the high-tech, IT, and interactive media industries?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP just don't get it. They fail to understand that the root problem of all of this is the failure to build pipelines over the last four years. Now, the Minister of Justice has told me that he still has his bus that he offered to the NDP for their rural legacy tour. I'd like to put them on that bus and give them a tour to Bruderheim. Bruderheim: yes, that's where the Gateway pipeline would have started. Perhaps if they would see that, maybe they would realize their role in this was the failure to build pipelines.

**Mr. Sabir:** The CEO of Beamdog said that he feels betrayed. He has to pass on the plan to double his workforce in Alberta, and he is now looking at other places to create jobs. The CEO of New World Interactive said, and I quote, our process of bringing the right people in and growing the ecosystem here has slowed down substantially if not completely halted. Is betrayal and frustration what the minister meant when she said that these companies were doing fine?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite wants to speak about betrayal. Well, Albertans demonstrated how they felt about their betrayal of the carbon tax introduced by the previous government by putting them on that side of the bench.

Mr. Speaker, we're creating the best economic conditions for businesses to thrive. Prominent economists have said that our job-creation tax cut will create 55,000 jobs as compared to the 170,000 jobs lost under that government.

**Mr. Sabir:** Sandi Gilbert, chair of the National Angel Capital Organization, said, and I quote, this government campaigned on the fact that they wanted to increase investor confidence, and with this uncertainty they're doing the exact opposite. Adrian Camara, CEO of software company Athennian said: it's going to be impossible to raise a seed round into a technology company in Calgary. To the minister: if you were actually listening to the job creators in Calgary, wouldn't you know that they are not doing fine?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite talks about investor confidence. It takes time to build investor confidence and build relationships. It takes time to do that when you're starting from a neutral position. It takes twice as much time to do that when

you're starting from a mass deficit position in investor confidence, that the former government left us in, but rest assured, we're on path to fix their mess.

### **Bill 26 Insurance and Employment Standard Exemptions**

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, this government has not released any estimates for how many Albertans will be excluded from employment standards and injury insurance if Bill 26 is implemented. Looking at the exclusions this government is bringing in, some experts estimate that workers on 80 per cent of farms could be stripped of their basic employment rights, rights other Alberta workers have and other farm workers have across Canada. To the Premier: how many Albertans won't have rights to vacations, vacation pay, termination pay, or a guaranteed minimum wage after Bill 26 passes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to actually bring this conversation back down to reality. The NDP yesterday was talking about this going back a hundred years in employment standards, but in reality it goes back four years. This actually aligns us with Saskatchewan, Ontario, and New Brunswick for employment standards. So the over-the-top rhetoric coming from the NDP on Bill 26 is really insulting when it comes to how they treat farmers and how they're saying farmers would actually treat their workers, because at the end of the day nobody cares more about farm workers than farmers. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, does the minister know how many farm workers will not have employment standards or insurance coverage after Bill 26 passes?

While our government believed farm and ranch workers should have the right to basic rules around deduction of earnings, employment records, dispute resolution, this UCP government is moving to strip them away. Can the Premier explain to the hard-working farm and ranch employees on 80 per cent of farms in Alberta why their government doesn't feel they should be able to access these rights, rights that exist in other workplaces in Canada and on farms and ranches across Canada?

2:00

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Again, Mr. Speaker, Bill 26 puts us in line with other provinces. There are actually a lot of different workers here in the province of Alberta, whether it be real estate brokers, securities salespeople, insurance salespeople, students in work experience, students in off-campus education programs, extras in film or video production, counsellors or instructors at nonprofit educational or recreational camps for children, municipal police service members, and postsecondary academic staff, that are all exempt from certain aspects of employment standards here in the province. Again, the over-the-top rhetoric from the NDP is just ridiculous.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, the minister is talking about exemptions that hadn't been reviewed in decades, work that I hope the current minister of labour will continue, that we started. Under our government paid farm and ranch workers also had the right to things like unpaid, job-protected leave for things like maternity leave, compassionate care leave, bereavement leave, and long-term illness and injury leave, but this UCP government obviously does not

believe that paid farm and ranch workers should be able to access those rights. To the Premier: why do you feel that someone who works on a farm in Alberta should not be entitled to job-protected leave to care for a child or mourn a loss?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we spent the entire summer consulting with farmers. We had 25 different consultation stops across the province, talking to farmers and ranchers and farm workers. The NDP's romanticized socialist class warfare is prevalent in the Leap Manifesto. But Albertans know better. They see through all this over-the-top rhetoric. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### **Calgary LRT Green Line Funding Affordable Housing**

**Member Ceci:** There's more and more concern about the critical green line LRT in Calgary, and it's all this government's fault. Now a city councillor is proposing pulling money from a new arena to put behind this project. I'm seeing mixed reaction to this proposal, but it was never on the table before this government shorted the funding for the green line. To the Premier. You love to say that you're the green line's biggest champion. Are you really going to let it die under your watch?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows or certainly ought to know, the funding that we promised in the campaign for the green line will be available for the city of Calgary. We reprofiled the funding by a couple of years, but we've worked with them. We've had people from Transportation go down to talk to the city officials already, talk about how they can do that. There's only one party that can cancel the green line, the city of Calgary, and we sincerely hope that they don't do that because our government would love to see it built. I mean, we are putting \$1.53 billion behind that.

**Member Ceci:** Four years is not a couple of years, Mr. Speaker. That's how far they've pushed it out.

Mr. Speaker, the concern for the green line swirls around a clause in Bill 20 that allows the government to pull funding for the project within 90 days. While the Minister of Transportation has claimed that this clause is typical, neither the city of Calgary nor the Official Opposition has been able to find evidence of similar clauses in project agreements of this size. To the minister: will you provide a list of contracts with 90-day termination clauses, and if not, will you pull this clause out of your terrible piece of legislation?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said in this House before – and if the hon. member was listening, he would know – there's a termination clause in the federal funding for the very same green line project. I'd just ask the hon. member to be a little more informed the next time he gets on his feet.

**Member Ceci:** You know, Mr. Speaker, there's also ongoing concern about affordable housing in Calgary, and there is talk of moving some of the money from the arena to affordable housing projects, and since this government cut \$44 million from rental assistance and another \$17 million from housing management bodies and made those cuts to help pay for the \$4.7 billion handout to big corporations, to the Premier. A housing crisis that you're making worse and no green line to get Calgarians to and from their jobs. I guess you have to be a CEO of a big company to get any traction from that side.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I spent nine years on Calgary city council with the hon. member asking the question, and the hon. member ought to know that when the province gives the city money, whether it's more or less, the city decides where that money goes. The hon. member didn't care about money then, he didn't care about money before he got fired as the Finance minister, and he hasn't taken the time to learn anything about how it all works up till today. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South has a question.

### **Infrastructure Project Prioritization and Management**

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the election our Premier said that health care infrastructure priorities should be determined in a nonpolitical way based on local needs, the age of the hospital, and the pressure on that local hospital. The Premier is correct. The public interest is served when infrastructure priorities are determined in an objective, nonpolitical way based on merit and fairness. To the minister: how will our government's proposed infrastructure act support that priorities are based on merit and fairness?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the Member for Red Deer-South for asking that important question. The new infrastructure act, which I'm going to introduce next spring, will outline how the government will prioritize projects and report on capital spending. I hope to be consulting Albertans soon on the criteria that will be used to prioritize projects. The act will also mandate a 20-year strategic capital plan to help guide decision-making to keep politics out of infrastructure.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in the election the Premier requested the NDP to stop campaigning with our tax dollars and given that the NDP tried to buy votes with billions of taxpayer dollars in unfunded capital promises and given that when the public interest is subordinated to political vote-buying, there is a great disservice to the public interest, to the minister: how will the infrastructure act support that the public interest is not subordinated to political vote-buying?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member that protecting the public interest is top of mind. That's why in the following months we will be going through stakeholder consultation to test the prioritization criteria and seek input on what else could be included in the act to provide transparency, predictability, and accountability. The act will set a fiscal framework, but the act would not set any budget targets.

**Mr. Stephan:** Given that government projects cost far more than private-sector comparables and given that projects such as the Sturgeon refinery, with an initial budget of \$4 billion, is now several billions more and given that when government is an incompetent steward of taxpayer dollars, the capacity to fund other projects is undermined, to the minister: how will the infrastructure act not only support that the right capital projects are prioritized but that once prioritized, they are constructed in a responsible manner? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. [interjections] Order. The House will come to order.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, the MacKinnon panel made recommendations around procurement, and I am commencing a review of that process. It is critical to select the right contractor for the right project each and every time to ensure projects are delivered on time and on budget and are constructed safely. Stay tuned. I'll be making an announcement soon on how we will be enabling the contractors to measure their own performance and how we will hold them to account.

### **Condominium Insurance Premiums**

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Service Alberta made an announcement around changes his government is making to condo regulations, but he failed to address an issue that's impacting tens of thousands of Albertans. Insurance premiums for condominiums have been skyrocketing, with Global News reporting that some condo buildings are getting slammed with fee increases as high as 700 per cent. Why hasn't the Minister of Service Alberta acted to keep Albertans from being priced out of their own homes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. We have heard these concerns from the condo residents who are impacted by these increased insurance rates. We're aware of the problem, and we're sympathetic to that problem. But, as the member opposite knows, the Condominium Property Act, which is what Service Alberta is responsible for, has provisions to say that condos do need insurance to cover the replacement cost of their properties. This is important because if they suffer a catastrophic event, they need to be able to rebuild their homes. The Condominium Property Act does not deal with affordability and accessibility. This is a Finance issue, and we're working with the Ministry of Finance to discuss . . .

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has claimed to support homeowners but these skyrocketing increases will trickle down to condo owners, who will be forced to pay more in condo fees as a result, and given that this government didn't bat an eye before supporting a \$4.7 billion corporate handout while completely disregarding these Albertans who are going to lose their homes, what plans does the Minister of Service Alberta have to address the concerns of condo owners, or since he didn't bother discussing premiums at his announcement, are they even on his radar?

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the cost burdens that condo owners face are something that's very front of mind for me, and that's why, when I announced the adjustments to the condo regulations yesterday, that will now come into force January 1, I was very clear about talking about how important it was over the last number of months to work with condo owners' associations as well as property managers and condo board members to make sure that in the pending regulations that were coming forward, we would get the governance improvements while being mindful of cost increases. We struck the right balance.

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, given that a lawyer specializing in condominium law stated his belief that the premium increases are a result of insurance companies trying to improve their bottom line and given that improving the bottom line of profitable corporations

while leaving everyday Albertans to struggle with the consequences seems to be the mantra of this UCP government, will the Minister of Service Alberta stop with the empty talking points, get to work, and take action to reduce these outrageous insurance fees?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that we have done more to protect condo owners from unnecessary costs than the previous government did in four years. I am confident that because of the approach that we took on the condo regulations, this will prevent unnecessary costs from being layered upon condo owners, resulting in the prevention of future condo fee increases. This is something I'm very proud of. I have buy-in from property managers across the province, from condo owners' groups across the province as well as from condo board members across the province. This is something that they failed to do. These were groups that were complaining about their regulations. They are happy about ours.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Medical Diagnostic Test Wait Times

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The previous government, our government, took positive action by providing dedicated funding to help reduce wait times for life-saving diagnostic scans like CTs and MRIs. This minister chose to let that funding expire, and now all he's got left are excuses and finger pointing. I've been approached by many patients affected by this, and now even doctors are beginning to speak out. Why did this Minister of Health rush through his government's \$4.7 billion handout this spring but fail to take any actual action on diagnostic delays?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I understand that some physicians and patients say that they're waiting too long. I rely on AHS to ensure that patients are not put at risk. AHS needs to work with their clinicians. If there really are patients waiting too long, then they need to accommodate those patients. AHS has a \$15 billion budget, and they are responsible for meeting priority needs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that AHS acknowledged that the wait times are growing due to a spike in demand and the end of that one-time surge funding and given that Dr. Ernie Schuster, president of the Edmonton Zone Medical Staff, says that those delays started six months ago, on this minister's watch, and given that this minister's inaction is pushing people into emergency rooms to get scans done, which is the most expensive possible way for that to happen, how much money is this minister's failure to act on diagnostic delays going to cost Alberta taxpayers?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the hon. member that we've actually increased funding for AHS by \$100 million. I know that demand is growing by a couple of per cent a year, but we need AHS to find the money to meet those needs within the existing budget. This is why the review of AHS, which will be available to us at the end of the year and, I think, released to the public in January, is so important. We need to reduce costs and reinvest those savings to serve patients.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Dr. Schuster also spoke to the media about situations, for example, where a patient has pancreatic cancer and has to wait up to 200 days for a scan – thanks to the lack of action here, the cancer will be more

advanced, and that's clearly bad for the patient and all involved in the medical system – has the minister got anything to say to Albertans who are waiting for a cancer diagnosis other than the usual blame game and finger pointing?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, AHS's total cost per CT scan is up to 50 per cent higher than other provinces. We need to work with clinicians to reduce those costs and to reinvest the savings in doing more scans if they're needed, not throw more one-time dollars into the system, hidden through the population and public health budget, which the previous minister did. The prices we pay are just too high. They're out of line with what other provinces pay. AHS pays radiologists, for example, \$188 to interpret CT scans while B.C., for example, pays \$97.

### Traffic Safety

**Mr. Rowswell:** Mr. Speaker, in August of this year there was a 10-vehicle pileup outside the town of Cereal, Alberta, which left three people dead and devastated their families. On September 15 a multivehicle collision took place outside of Innisfree, Alberta. The two vehicles had pulled over after the collision, but their vehicle was struck by a semi-trailer, taking the lives of both drivers. My question for the Minister of Transportation: what can be done to reduce the severity and likelihood of these devastating accidents, that wreak so much havoc on the lives of Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The worst news I get as Transportation minister is when I hear about deaths and injuries on the roads. Safety is our top priority, and I would like the hon. member to know that after every major event our staff goes out and reviews the situation and the facts around it to see if there are improvements that we need to make, whether it's the construction of the road or signage or other things. But there is no substitute for people driving carefully. In the meantime we are delivering MELT, a higher standard of training for truck drivers, and we are doing many other things.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta implemented changes to licensing and commercial driving regulations such as stricter safety compliance and more mandatory training earlier this year and given that semi-trailers are involved in 8.4 per cent of crashes despite making up only 1.6 per cent of vehicles on the road, can the Minister of Transportation tell the House how effective these changes have been in reducing automobile accidents involving semi-trailers and commercial vehicles?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell the member that it's too soon, it's too early to say since we're just delivering MELT, or mandatory entry-level training, a new, higher standard that originated in the United States and a requirement for Canadian class 1 and 2 drivers to cross the border as of February 2020. But I'd like the hon. member to know that we'll monitor this. We are busy talking to truck drivers, bus drivers, industry members from across the province about how they can make sure that this is done in a safe way and how it can be delivered more affordably so we get that top-level training to as many drivers as possible.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Given that Alberta has the third-highest traffic-related fatality rate amongst Canadian provinces and given that over



half of all fatal accidents were in rural areas and given that our rural highways are subject to additional dangers such as snow and black ice in the winter months and given that Alberta has been devastated by dozens of major crashes on our rural highways this year – and the death toll keeps rising – what policies can be implemented in order to improve the safety of our rural highways and to protect the lives of my constituents as we head into the winter?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like the hon. member and all members of the House to know that our highway maintenance contractors are required to be winter ready by October 1 of every year. There are 600 snowplows contracted to cover the 31,000 kilometres of roads. They're all GPS monitored, so we know when they're out there. We know how fast they're going, whether the blades are up or down. They're all required to keep adequate stocks of salt and sand and to get out on the roads as soon as they can. But there is no substitute for Albertans caring about themselves and caring for their fellow Albertans who are on the roads, and I would encourage all Albertans to be cautious.

#### 2:20 Persons with Developmental Disabilities Program

**Ms Renaud:** There are almost 13,000 disabled Albertans supported by the persons with developmental disabilities program, or PDD. Some receive funding for 24/7 care because of the complexity of the disability. During budget estimates I asked: how many people are currently on the waiting list for PDD supports and funding? The minister told me that there are 12 people on the waiting list and 2,200 people on a new level of waiting list that's in planning. To the minister: would you please clarify for this House and all Albertans what the new criteria are for disabled Albertans to move from the fake waiting list to the real one?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I do want to make it clear that the process that's in place right now is very much the same process that was in place with the previous government. In regard to the numbers on the wait-list, I don't have the exact number. In estimates I said that it was 12. But there is an in-service planning wait-list as well. Again I don't have the exact numbers, but they're in the range of about 2,100.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that in November of 2009 Betty Anne Gagnon, a woman with a developmental disability, died of a blunt head injury and her caregivers were charged with failure to provide the necessities of life and given that Ms Gagnon was killed while being supported by family members and those same family members had in fact attempted to secure PDD respite services via a service provider and given that the Hon. Judge M.M. Collinson issued numerous recommendations to that ministry following the fatality inquiry, can the minister please tell this House how her department will ensure that all disabled Albertans on both waiting lists will be kept safe?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, certainly, that is a very, very tragic case, and I'm aware of all the recommendations that came out of that situation. I had mentioned to the member opposite that I am undertaking a comprehensive review of all programs, including the PDD program. Yes, it will be partially an internal review as well, but I will be consulting with stakeholders and the disability community before undertaking any decisions.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that PDD caseloads remain extraordinarily high and given that the minister has stated that the Ministry of

Community and Social Services will cut 223 positions in that ministry this year and given that we're hearing reports that successful intake now primarily focuses on very complex cases and that intake has slowed to a trickle, increasing the risk of abuse and injury, can the minister assure this House that her government will continue addressing the fatality inquiry recommendations and will not introduce service caps to the PDD program?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely true. Caseload pressure is unprecedented. We have growing caseloads, and that's why it's so important that we undertake these comprehensive reviews, to understand how we can ensure that these programs are going to be sustainable for the long run, because right now the situation is untenable and the safety of Albertans depends on making sure that we make improvements to these programs so that they indeed are sustainable.

#### Postsecondary Tuition and Residence Fees

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, despite the claims from this government about wanting to make postsecondary education more sustainable, this government is doing quite the opposite: increased tuition, increased student loan interest, fewer services. Now we learn that students at the University of Alberta are facing a 5 per cent hike to their residence fees. Can the Minister of Advanced Education explain how more expensive housing plus all of these other costs he's imposing on students would somehow make our postsecondary system better?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, what's really important for us is that we give our institutions the autonomy and flexibility to make the operational decisions that are most important to them. I know that under the former government what they tried to do is micromanage every aspect of an institution's operations, to the point that it was limiting innovation and limiting other research and other activities, tying up their time in producing needless reports and unnecessary information. We're going to remove those handcuffs and give our institutions an ability to look at their own operations and figure out what their immediate priorities are. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given that the president of the University of Alberta Students' Union has said that this residence fee hike, combined with another tuition hike and other costs that this minister is championing, will actually price some students out of even being able to go to school and given that as a direct result of this minister's policies the University of Calgary has confirmed that they will be increasing their tuition dramatically, how many students is this minister willing to see priced right out of Alberta's postsecondary institutions before he reverses his devastating cuts?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, it's quite interesting to hear the member opposite talk about numbers and enrolment figures. Under their watch they instituted a five-year tuition freeze, that they told Albertans and they told everyone would increase accessibility, but in fact it did the complete opposite. You know, look at the numbers. Look at the facts. You can see it. It's right there in front of you for everybody to see. Total enrolment in the province is down today from when the freeze began. So we're definitely not going to take any lessons from the members opposite when it comes to strengthening our postsecondary system. We will get it right.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, given that students should be able to afford tuition as well as a place to live and given that ensuring postsecondary affordability was a priority of our government while this minister's approach seems to be to make students pay more so that profitable corporations can have their \$4.7 billion gift, will this minister actually ensure that students can afford postsecondary education, or does he just not seem to care?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, ensuring tuition remains affordable is a top priority of mine, which is precisely why we've made the tuition changes that we have. We've maintained the cap on tuition to ensure that tuition does not spiral out of control and that it remains consistent with the Canadian average. As well, we have provided a tuition policy and framework that give our students predictability. From the date of the budget students have four-year clarity, a four-year window as to what tuition will be, unlike with the members opposite. When they were in government, they decided tuition policy one year to the next to the next, deciding what they were going to do. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has a question.

### School Nutrition Program

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. Some parents in my riding have expressed their appreciation of the benefits that school nutrition programs provide their children. I recognize that good nutrition has an extremely positive impact on a child's learning, and some constituents in my riding were quite pleased that Budget 2019 maintained funding for the school nutrition program. Could the Minister of Education please explain to the House how the increased investment in this program will help more students benefit from the school nutrition program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is absolutely right. Good nutrition has a very positive impact on student learning. That is why I was proud to announce this morning that we have increased funding to the school nutrition program by 20 per cent. Despite the NDP's rhetoric before Budget 2019, we have been clear that we value and appreciate this program. This new investment is \$3 million more than the previous government budgeted and demonstrates our continued commitment to ensuring students receive nutritious meals while attending our schools.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Minister. Given that before the budget the NDP fearmongered about cuts to this program and given that Budget 2019 proved them absolutely wrong and given that this increased investment brings the total funding for this program to a higher level than the previous government funded it, can the minister please explain why the government chose to increase funding to the school nutrition program by 20 per cent?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and hon. member. During my province-wide tour I heard very loudly and clearly from school divisions that they want to engage their community partners in supporting their nutrition programs. That is why this 20 per cent increase will enable nonprofits to partner with school divisions on piloting innovative ways to reduce operating costs and administrative burdens on schools while ensuring that students continue to receive

quality, nutritious meals. We value good nutrition for our children, and this increased investment of \$3 million demonstrates that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you. Given that multiple nonprofits supported this announcement and given that school boards across Alberta believe that increased community partnerships will help them support more students and given that positive nutrition is not solely an education issue – rather, it is a community and social services issue affecting all communities – can the minister please explain how she intends to help school divisions involve nonprofits in supporting positive nutrition for our students who need it?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again for the question, hon. member. I completely agree with the member. Nutrition is not just a school issue; rather, it is a community issue. This increased investment will come in the form of a new grant for nonprofits to pilot better delivery of the nutrition program in partnership with schools. My department will engage with school authorities and experienced nonprofits, and any nonprofit who is interested in applying can submit a proposal to Alberta Education. I'm excited to see how the pilot unfolds as our school divisions work with nonprofits to develop whole out-of-community solutions to student nutrition. This will be a win-win.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

### Education System and Financing

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year UCP delegates gathered at their AGM and voted for a resolution to strip LGBTQ2S-plus students of crucial legal protections. Then, sure enough, we got Bill Hate, which turned that transphobia and homophobia into law. This weekend the UCP will gather again, and this time members are calling for an education voucher system. Albertans deserve to know where this government stands. Will this UCP government bring in a voucher system? Yes or no?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government who is here to stand up for all Albertans. Our Premier has been clear about that during his campaigns all the way to the Premier's chair. That's why I've been proud to campaign with him along the way. I'm excited to go to the second convention of the United Conservative Party and celebrate the fact that since the last time that we met, we united the conservative movement and Albertans were able to fire the NDP six months ago. I look forward to hearing the debate when it comes to resolutions, but I assure you that we will continue to be in this House to stand up for all Albertans.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that that answer is very different than the one the Education minister has been giving publicly to many organizations, Mr. Speaker – the Education minister has flat out said that there will not be a voucher system – which is it? Is it the Government House Leader and what he said here in this place, is it what the Education minister has been saying to stakeholders who are very concerned about a voucher system, or is it what the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka's riding association is putting forward? Which schools does he think are good schools and bad schools, and what is the truth? What's going to happen at this convention?

### Speaker's Ruling Questions outside Government Responsibility

**The Speaker:** I struggle to find any form of government policy in the question. You did a very fine job on the first question in asking what the government policy might be coming out of that convention, but in this case you didn't ask anything about government policy. I will provide the government the opportunity to respond, but if they choose not to, we'll move to the next question.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to respond in regard to government policy and reiterate what I just said in the last answer, which is that this government will continue to stand up for all Albertans. The Education minister has already addressed that issue, as the hon. member just pointed out. She speaks on behalf of the education policy for this government, and she can continue to do that.

What I'm excited about is to be at the second United Conservative Party convention this weekend to celebrate the uniting of the conservative movement and the successful firing of that member's former government.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the same UCP resolution includes bizarre claims that "students are entering adulthood unemployable and increasingly radicalized by extremist ideologies" and given that this is both completely false and deeply insulting to hard-working teachers, educational assistants, and all Alberta students, will the minister condemn this UCP description of Alberta schools and commit to condemning it at the mic at her convention this weekend?

### Speaker's Ruling Questions outside Government Responsibility

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I provided you some cautionary notes on how the member might respond to a question about government policy. I might even provide a suggestion for you: is this going to be government policy in the future? That would be a question in order. However, the one that you asked was not in order, and unless the Government House Leader would like to respond, we'll be moving to the next set of questions.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Happy to respond, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that you can't respond to a question like that from the hon. member because she's part of a party who continues to bring forth things here that, it turns out later, are not true, just like when she accused the hon. culture minister of spending \$35,000 on liquor. I can't rise in this place and answer speculation on different things from the hon. members . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . across the way, Mr. Speaker, because we don't know when the NDP is actually presenting real facts inside this Chamber. But I can tell you this. I'm excited to be at the United Conservative Party convention this weekend.

#### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** This morning Sturgeon public schools released a statement about the district budget that the board passed last night.

"The October 24 Provincial Budget included reductions to education." Overall Sturgeon is \$3 million short of what the minister promised them in June. Everyone knows that the minister broke her promise to maintain school funding. Why did the UCP take money away from families to pay for a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. As we indicated through the budget, every student who walks through the door of one of our schools, whether they attend a public, a catholic, a francophone, a charter, a private, or are home-schooled, will continue to be funded at the exact same rate they were last year. Over 98 per cent of the Education budget flows to school authorities who deliver services to our students. By reallocating restrictive grant funding and eliminating reporting requirements, we reduced red tape, and what we did was provide the boards with the flexibility to meet their local priorities. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Greater St. Albert Catholic says they got \$3.7 million less than the minister promised them and given that that means the board is dropping a surprise \$313 busing fee onto parents retroactive to the beginning of the school year, does the minister have any idea what this does to a family budget right before Christmas? Why won't she take responsibility for what she's done in her budget?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. As I've said numerous times, over and over and over again, our budget for 2018-2019 for Education was \$8.223 billion. The budget for 2019-2020 is \$8.223 billion. We collect approximately \$2.5 billion in educational tax dollars. We spend \$8.223 billion. Enrolment has grown by 25 per cent, inflation by 33 per cent, but our operating has grown by 80 per cent. This is not sustainable.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are massive teacher layoffs in Calgary and given that there are surprise new busing fees in Rocky View and St. Albert, given that districts across this province are exhausting their reserves, even the minister's home district of Red Deer Catholic, given that Sturgeon public is warning of, quote, further draconian cuts and fee increases to come next year, does the minister really believe that families impacted by her cuts are doing fine as well?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I've been in contact with school divisions, school boards, administrators, parents, and on and on and on. I have been very, very engaged in the process. In regard to the CBE, their choice to let go of 300 contracts of the most important people, those who teach our children – besides the children who are in our schools to learn, the teacher is the next important. What they did is reprehensible. They need to take account for the actions that they took. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

### Health Care System

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, I noticed in the Auditor General's November 2019 report that Alberta taxpayers are no longer paying for health care costs associated with accidents that were due to wrongful acts by third parties. This is good news. However, from 2013 to 2017 the department did not manage to recover approximately \$140 million in health care costs, an average of \$28 million per year. Can the Minister of Health inform the Assembly what measures his ministry is taking so that large cost recovery gaps are avoided in the future?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct. Alberta taxpayers shouldn't be responsible for health care costs caused by the wrongful acts of others. That's why we have the Crown's Right of Recovery Act. The Auditor General pointed out that we were underestimating the revenues available. It was a problem, as the member points out. It got fixed. We'll recover \$147 million from Alberta automobile insurers in 2020. This was supported by the insurance industry, and it will not impact insurance rates for individual Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the minister's assurance on the Auditor General's report. Given that another major initiative to improve efficiency is the connect care information system and given that Alberta Health Services has said that it is essential to improve the functioning of the system but there have been some problems reported with it, I'm hoping the minister can give us an update on the status of the connect care implementation, especially the concerns about delays in reporting lab results.

2:40

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the staff and the department for the work that they've been doing. There are no new recommendations this year, and the Auditor General recognized the improvements in cost recovery, that I just referred to previously. We've implemented a number of other recommendations, including important steps to strengthen oversight in long-term care and improve conflict-of-interest processes. Work is under way on all the outstanding recommendations, including important actions to improve mental health services and modernizing our health care card.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that health care costs are nearly half of the provincial budget and given that health care costs continue to rise and that every option has to be examined when it comes to finding efficiencies, could the minister point out some of the proactive measures that would help our health care system address issues before they become serious and expensive problems?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, I suppose I could mention, Mr. Speaker, connect care. Maybe the member wanted to ask about connect care. We can talk about connect care. It was just launched by AHS on November 3. Overall, the launch has gone well considering the skill and complexity of the change. Anyway, we need to make sure that – I thank the hon. member for his questions.

**The Speaker:** I, too, thank him for his question, but we are currently on Members' Statements and will be heading there directly.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Freedom of Religion

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Societies evolve but not always for the better. It is historical fact that the United States evolved from freedom to indentured servitude to slavery one restrictive law at a time. The restrictions of these rights had the support both of wide segments of the society and their legislators. Surely this could not happen in Canada with our long tradition of democracy and respect for individual rights, yet I see troubling signs.

Quebec is creating a secular society and pursuing a legislative course of freedom from religion rather than freedom of religion, which will inevitably restrict people of faith from public service jobs. Recently, Catherine Ford's article in the *Edmonton Journal* addressing public religious expression concluded: "All this is personal and intimate. It has no place in the public sphere." It would appear she supports an increasingly popular belief that in a democratic society, religious and moral values are best kept private. While I support each individual's choice to pursue a faith or not, I'm an adamant defender of the constitutionally enshrined right for all Canadians to practise their chosen religion.

Surely we have learned what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. so eloquently said: "There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must do it because Conscience tells him it is right." For many Canadians their conscience dictates that they abide by the doctrines of their faith, both privately and as their faith intersects with the wider public politic. We must defend our Charter rights for when we weaken individual rights, especially freedom of religion, one law and one judicial ruling at a time, history tells us that it rarely ends well.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a notice of motion. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3), I wish to advise the Assembly that on Monday, December 2, 2019, motions for returns 5, 7, and 8 will be accepted. Then motions for returns 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 will be dealt with.

**The Speaker:** As a way of context for members, this is with respect to Motions for Returns or Written Questions which are private members' business. We'll be dealing with those on Monday.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by the hon. members for Drayton Valley-Devon and then Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table with the requisite number of copies a grade 10 social studies test which included deeply concerning anti-oil and gas rhetoric and is a prime example of the political bias that needs to be removed from our classrooms.

Further, I am endeavouring to secure a copy of the potentially offensive student vote instructions and welcome further examples of such egregious information that is happening in terms of events and incidents across our province in the future.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the following documents, and I have the requisite number of copies. I received these from constituents that support conscience rights in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table five copies of Keith Gerein's article the NDP's Day of Blunders Giving the Official Opposition a Bad Name. I might suggest they change the name to the Tinfoil Hat Party.

**The Speaker:** I'm not sure that that's part of a tabling, but the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the requisite copies of an e-mail from my constituent who works for ATRF with her opinion, a very wise opinion, about why this will not actually save money and that consultations should have been done.

I have one more tabling, Mr. Speaker, which is the requisite copies of a letter from the Ridge Community League, which is a community league within the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud, a letter to the Premier outlining the effect of the cuts to the CFEP program on their community league.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Morinville-St. Albert.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an e-mail from a constituent, Anita Keefe, who describes her five-year-old son's life-threatening allergy to latex. This tragic allergy has affected every part of his daily life. I have the requisite five e-mails that describe the dire situation that this young boy finds himself in on a daily basis.

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first one is published by Food Banks Canada, and I referred to it in my member's statement. It's called HungerCount 2019 Report. I have five copies of that.

I also have a briefing paper from the Climate Council dated November 12, 2019, and it's entitled 'This is Not Normal': Climate Change and Escalating Bushfire Risk.

**The Speaker:** Anyone else wishing to table a document or a return?

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration, pursuant to the Government Organization Act, authorized radiation health administrative organization annual reports for the following: Alberta Association for Safety Partnerships, January 1 to December 31, 2018; Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors, July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019; Alberta Dental Association and College, January 1 to December 31, 2018; Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, November 1, 2017, to October 31, 2018; College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, January 1 to December 31, 2018; University of Calgary, April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019; University of Alberta, April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

On behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, responses to questions raised by Ms Phillips, hon. Member for Lethbridge-West; Ms Sweet, hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning; MLA Ceci, hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo; and Mr. Dach, hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung on October 31, 2019, Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance, 2019-20 main estimates debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. Now, I didn't receive a withdrawal from the hon. Member for Calgary-West, but perhaps that's what he's rising to do.

**Mr. Ellis:** Regarding the first point of order or the second point of order?

**The Speaker:** Whichever.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, the first point of order, sir: I will be very brief because I've been communicating with my friend opposite here, and he's willing to withdraw and apologize in regard to the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I believe that she had made a comment referring to an individual about being corrupt, and what she meant to say was that the government is being corrupt. For her misspeaking I do withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I consider it dealt with.

**Mr. Ellis:** The second one, Mr. Speaker, I believe that you efficiently dealt with, so I withdraw the second point of order during the exchange between the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and the government side. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Teamwork has indeed made the dream work today. Are there any others?

Hon. members, we are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Minister of Transportation has risen.

**Mr. McIver:** Focus, Mr. Speaker. Everybody has worked hard, and we made good progress this week, and in some parts of Alberta there is snow on the roads that'll make the trip home more dangerous than it ought to be. Based on the progress that we've made this week, I'd like to thank all members of the House for their participation in getting us to this point. At this point I would move the Assembly adjourn until Monday, December 2, at 1:30 p.m., and I wish all members from all sides of the House to get home safely and to return here safely at that time.

**The Speaker:** I second the comments made by the hon. Minister of Transportation with respect to travelling safely. Drive to arrive, and when in doubt, sleep it out. Please feel free to stay in the city here if you're driving into any dangerous conditions.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 2:51 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Thursday, November 28, 2019**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1313-26 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1329-31 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1347-57 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve.*), 1357-62 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c8 ]

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c5 ]

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cR-8.2 ]

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c4 ]

**Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c3 ]

**Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1375-83 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c7 ]

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 , passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cP-41.7 ]

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c2 ]

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cF-1.5 ]

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1393-94 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c9 ]

**Bill 13\* — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1345-47 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1383-93 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 cA-33.5 ]

**Bill 14 — Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act (Wilson)**

First Reading — 1654 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1655-77 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft.*), 1679-95 (*Oct. 9, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1708-25 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft.*), 1761 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft.*), 1763-67 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1768-70 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn.*), 1785 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cA-26.3 ]

**Bill 15 — Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019 (Glubish)**

First Reading — 1707 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1758-61 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1767-68 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1783-85 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c13 ]

**Bill 16 — Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 1782 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1810-17 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1817-18 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1911-15 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 c12 ]

**Bill 17 — Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act (Sawhney)**

First Reading — 1798 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1819-28 (*Oct. 17, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1915-26 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1949-59 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cD-13.5 ]

**Bill 18 — Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019 (Savage)**

First Reading — 1850 (*Oct. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1926-29 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft.*), 1931-45 (*Oct. 22, 2019 eve.*), 1947-49 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1959-66 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1978-90 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1990-94 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft.*), 2037-41 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2055-56 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c11 ]

**Bill 19 — Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 (\$) (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 2053 (*Oct. 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2123-26 (*Oct. 31, 2019 aft.*), 2146-57 (*Nov. 4, 2019 aft.*), 2177-79 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2237-49 (*Nov. 6, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2305-10 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 22, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020, with exceptions; SA 2019 c16 ]

**Bill 20\* — Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2056-66 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2089-2100 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve.*), 2167-77 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2227-37 (*Nov. 6, 2019 eve.*), 2366-68 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve.*), 2410-14 (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft.*), 2415 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., amendments agreed to*), 2509-23 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve.*), 2564-70 (*Nov. 26, 2019 aft.*), 2600-05 (*Nov. 27, 2019 morn., adjourned*)

**Bill 21 — Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2066-74 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2100-10 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve.*), 2159-67 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve.*), 2193-2212 (*Nov. 5, 2019 eve.*), 2265-70 (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2312-23 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve.*), 2369-81 (*Nov. 20, 2019 morn.*), 2579-86 (*Nov. 26, 2019 eve.*), 2628-30 (*Nov. 27, 2019 aft., adjourned*)



**Bill 22\* — Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019 (\$)**

First Reading — 2282 (*Nov. 18, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 2340-66 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve.*), 2415-21 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve.*), 2422-29 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2429-40 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve.*), 2441-48 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2449 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn.*), 2451-58 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 22, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c15 ]

**Bill 23 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019 (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 2262 (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2301-03 (*Nov. 18, 2019 aft.*), 2310-12 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2366 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2381-82 (*Nov. 20, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 22, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 22, 2019; SA 2019 c14 ]

**Bill 24 — Appropriation Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2340 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 2382 (*Nov. 20, 2019 morn.*), 2394-2405 (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft.*), 2429 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2458-61 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn.*), 2461 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 2505 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve.*), 2523 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 26, 2019; SA 2019 c17 ]

**Bill 25 — Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 (Hunter)**

First Reading — 2284 (*Nov. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2527-37 (*Nov. 26, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2571-74 (*Nov. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2587-2600 (*Nov. 27, 2019 morn., passed*)

**Bill 26 — Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019 (Dreeshen)**

First Reading — 2394 (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2551-64 (*Nov. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2631-35 (*Nov. 27, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 27 — Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019 (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 2336 (*Nov. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2523-25 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2574-79 (*Nov. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2639-45 (*Nov. 28, 2019 morn., passed*)

**Bill 28 — Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act (Shandro)**

First Reading — 2473 (*Nov. 21, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2505-09 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2635-38 (*Nov. 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2647-49 (*Nov. 28, 2019 morn., passed*)

**Bill 29 — Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 2618 (*Nov. 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2645-46 (*Nov. 28, 2019 morn., passed*)

**Bill 201\* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 825-38 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 cP-30.6 ]

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta’s Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 838-40 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft.*), 1115-22 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (*Jun. 24, 2019 aft.*), 1882 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1883-87 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft.*), 2027-29 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c10]

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*), 1875-82 (*Oct. 21, 2019 aft., not proceeded with on division*)

**Bill 204 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Nov. 6, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 2283-95 (*Nov. 18, 2019 aft.*), 2488-89 (*Nov. 25, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 205 — Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019 (Jones)**

First Reading — 2223 (*Nov. 6, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Nov. 26, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

**Bill 206 — Workers’ Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Reid)**

First Reading — 2262 (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 2489-95 (*Nov. 25, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2495-96 (*Nov. 25, 2019 aft., passed*)

**Bill 207 — Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act (Williams)**

First Reading — 2263 (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed on div; referred to Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Nov. 26, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 2, 2019

Day 50

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Carson  
Ganley  
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Long  
Neudorf  
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Williams

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Pancholi  
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Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 2, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, children of all ages, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by the Brother Anthony choir. I would invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this afternoon we have a number of guests joining us, a couple of school groups as well. From the constituency of Edmonton-South West, joining us from the School at the Legislature, welcome to St. John XXIII Catholic elementary.

Also in the galleries today are a group of dedicated public servants and employees of the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Actually, let's get those students to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

I'm also pleased to welcome our anthem singers this afternoon. With that stirring rendition you should be careful; you might get put on full-time. The Brother Anthony choir is a volunteer group, formed 23 years ago, from the Knights of Columbus Council 10014 in St. Albert. They lead the congregation monthly at Holy Family parish and provide holiday carolling at senior residences all around the region. Thank you so much for joining us today. You did a wonderful job.

Also visiting, guests of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford: please welcome 27 survivors of the '60s scoop. Thank you for joining us. Please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

Visiting are guests of the Minister of Advanced Education. Welcome to the Medical Students' Association from the U of A and the University of Calgary.

Also in the galleries this afternoon are guests of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Welcome Nadine Cardon and Cathy Pearson.

Guests of the Member for Edmonton-McClung: please welcome members of Edmonton's Jewish community.

Also in the gallery today are a number of guests of the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, health care workers from a variety of organizations.

Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Protester Conduct outside UCP Convention

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, this weekend Albertans saw first-hand what happens when irresponsible rhetoric and intentional distortion of facts from the opposition meets thuggish union activists. They attack people who disagree with them. Let's be clear. This isn't some hyperbolic hot take from folks on Twitter. This was real, it was targeted, and it was against a female journalist.

You see, Mr. Speaker, this weekend while nearly 1,700 UCP party members gathered to celebrate our historic win that sent our UCP government to Edmonton with a historic mandate with over a million votes, the NDP and their public union friends took to the streets with signs and uninspired chants, which is just fine. It's their democratic right to do that. But as the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and the NDP's acting leader marched outside, a man decided to attack a female reporter, bashing her with a sign. Now, there has been an effort to find this beta, this thug who hits women, but the union cronies who supported him refuse to identify this violent attacker.

It's shocking that the NDP have yet to condemn this attack on this female journalist, and the union leaders share that blame. What if it was someone from the *Edmonton Journal* or the *Calgary Sun*? Imagine the rightly justified outrage for such an attack on the free press. The silence from the opposition leaves Albertans to wonder. Why haven't the NDP disavowed this violence that occurred at an event some of their MLAs were a part of? It's not hard to say that violence has no place in our political discourse. Why is that so hard for them to say? Their lack of condemnation – it's just sad, Mr. Speaker.

A few short months ago Albertans fired the NDP for their complete and total failure. We know they're still mad at Albertans for firing them, but we surely can all come together and condemn violence. The fact that they have yet to condemn an act of violence against a female journalist is simply shameful.

#### Health Care Workforce

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I'll be putting forward a motion for emergency debate on this government's intention to terminate over 5,000 public front-line health care positions, including nurses, lab technologists, and many more. To explain why, I'd like to share some of what I've heard from these workers themselves in just the past two days.

From an RN:

I work in the busiest emergency department in western Canada, which is also one of two trauma centres in Edmonton. Today alone, I received 21 messages asking me to come in for overtime.

From a resident physician:

I am currently doing a rural rotation in Peace River Alberta – when I do overnight shifts in the [ER,] there are only 2 nurses . . . to assist with patients brought in from the periphery . . . If nursing jobs are cut province wide then rural hospitals who are most in need of extra nursing help will be impacted.

From another family physician:

[With] cutting nursing jobs, the UCP are also directly threatening not only primary care but also, I believe, medicare . . . I have no doubt [that they] will be effective

in bringing forward a two-tiered system in our province.

I can't possibly work more hours or days without affecting my mental health, work-life balance, or patient care. I know many family physicians feel the same.

From another RN:

I work 12 hours, seven days a week, holidays, weekends, and nights. I work short-staffed. I work with sick babies, a very difficult and stressful job. Please invite the Premier to spend one 12-hour shift with a nurse before he decides to do anything with our wages.

From resident students I met with today and who sit here in this gallery, they told me that cuts to nurses and other allied professionals will only hamper the ability of rural physicians to provide effective patient care.

Mr. Speaker, this government needs to stop. It needs to back up. It needs to listen to the front-line workers, who provide the care that Albertans depend on, about the impacts that their reckless cuts to pay their \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway to big corporations are going to have on patient care in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has the call.

1:40

### Capitalism

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few short weeks ago the NDP joined an Extinction Rebellion protest outside of the Legislature. They stood alongside people shouting and screaming for the total shutdown of our economy. They lined up beside antipipeline, anti-oil, and anti-Alberta signs and nodded along as the crowd screamed that we must keep oil in the ground. The NDP then joined the virtue-signalling cheers as Greta Thunberg took the stage. Now, we know that Greta would fit right in with the anti-oil and gas rhetoric of the NDP and their Extinction Rebellion friends, but what we didn't know is that she would fit into the anticapitalist rhetoric of Alberta's left as well. The free-market system, that Extinction Rebellion, the NDP, and Ms Thunberg call colonial, racist, and patriarchal systems of oppression, is what built our modern world.

Alberta's indigenous communities are standing up for themselves, demanding to have their voices heard as they fight to lift their people from poverty to prosperity and build new opportunities for themselves. We are proud to help provide the support they need to tell their story to the eco colonialists who want to speak over the voices of our indigenous peoples.

In case the radical activists of the left have forgotten: global poverty is dropping and has been for decades. Why? Because of capitalism. Since the 1980s the expansion of free-market capitalism and free trade access across the world meant that two billion people who previously lived in extreme poverty no longer do so. Modern miracles are saving lives through the transformative innovation in health care. Why? Because of capitalism. Global hunger is declining, and new high-tech crops are being developed to combat hunger at its source. Why? Because of capitalism.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans know that the Leap Manifesto, Extinction Rebellion, leave it in the ground, antipipeline NDP and their friends have never supported the systems that built our modern world. But on this side of the House we are thankful for the prosperity, the progress, the modern miracles made possible through and because of innovation, ingenuity, and the creativity of capitalism.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

### Health Care Professionals

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend we learned of the 5,100 front-line health care workers, and counting, that this

government is set to axe. Who are these folks? Well, we've all had personal experience with them, so I'll share some of mine.

They are the nurses and health care aides that came running when my friend who had just undergone cancer surgery pressed her call button 10 days ago at the Royal Alex. They are the people in medical device reprocessing who ensured that the scalpel and other medical tools used during that surgery were sterile and safe. They were the paramedics who picked my grandma literally up off the floor of her long-term care facility and safely assessed and transported her to the emergency department, where she later underwent emergency hip replacement surgery, following the traumatic fall that she had. They are the folks who worked in the kitchen of her long-term care facility, who cooked and modified the meals to ensure that she was nourished in her final years. They are the X-ray techs who diligently took X-rays of my broken wrist before and after surgery to ensure it was healing properly. They are the OTs and PTs who helped me regain strength and mobility while helping me learn to manage the pain. They are the allied health professionals who helped my mom fight cancer, like the social workers, psychologists, and radiation techs at the Cross Cancer Institute. They are the home-care teams, RNs, LPNs, HCAs who came to my parents' home to care for my dad and for us as we helped him die at home.

Let's be clear that the 5,100 positions don't count attacks on family physicians, these families' physicians who tell patients that their child has kidney disease or autism or mental illness. While we fight for these folks and work to do the right thing for families in this province, it's hard to stomach these cuts, Mr. Speaker, cuts that don't need to be like this, cuts that are precipitated by the \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway to corporations. While this Premier, cabinet, and entire UCP caucus keep putting their friends and insiders first, giving away billions and asking ordinary families to pay the price for it, I don't want you to just think about the 5,100 people who received notice last week; I want you to also think about all the people they serve.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

### Budget 2019 and Government Spending Reductions

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was managing the Mustard Seed shelter, I was left with the daunting task of reducing our budget by 20 per cent. The downturn in the economy left us short, with 30 days to figure out how we could move forward with less. My team and I walked through our systems. We evaluated everything that we did. Our determination to not leave the people that we served out in the cold led us to what I would call transformational change. We refined our systems. We increased efficiencies. We got back to our core strategy of community mobilization, and we called on Calgarians to help.

Mr. Speaker, what happened next I would call nothing short of a miracle. Volunteers from the community took over our shelter floor. Many of our staff changed their focus from providing basic services to supporting those volunteers. Others were redirected towards advocacy, housing, aftercare. We saw hundreds of people moving out of our shelter. This was not an easy time, but we got through it, and it only helped us to become better at what we do.

Alberta is once again facing tough times, and like my team was asked back in 2008, we are asking government, school boards, municipalities, Albertans to help us get back on a path to balance with as little disruption to front-line services as possible. It will not be easy, but I know that with ingenuity and the passion of Albertans we can find those opportunities. If done right, we will revolutionize how we do government.

The good news is that despite all the fear rhetoric that we are hearing, we are not looking for deep, draconian cuts but looking for a mere 2.8 cents on the dollar. Cuts are never easy. Decisions around this budget were not made lightly, but I strongly believe that this exercise will also lead to increased government efficiency and the transformational change that will aid us in providing high-quality government services long into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Election Commissioner

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, Friday certainly was a busy day for members of this Assembly and the government. While the UCP was gearing up for their AGM, members and the media were scrambling to keep up with the flurry of activities. It would have been easy for very important revelations to have been missed as health care and government workers learned about the devastating job losses on the way in this province. That revelation took place during the Legislative Offices meeting on Friday, during the much-anticipated presentation to the committee by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Just a week after the passing of Bill 22, that we were told would save taxpayer money and that terminated the Election Commissioner and rolled the responsibility for that office into the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, we, the members of the Assembly, the media, and the public learned what this would mean for democracy and the ongoing investigation of the Election Commissioner's office.

So what did we learn? We learned that, contrary to the government's assertion, this move would not save Albertans money. The Chief Electoral Officer confirmed that his budget for investigations was, in fact, \$100,000 more and that that is without the salary of the Election Commissioner himself. Yes, you heard right. In comparing the budget that had been prepared by the Election Commissioner with the budget prepared by the Chief Electoral Officer, there's actually more money needed. We also learned that 76 complaints have not been investigated at all, complaints stemming from the spring 2019 election.

Mr. Speaker, this has given rise to a looming question for many Albertans. If the elimination of the Election Commissioner, Lorne Gibson, who has levied more than \$200,000 in fines to people close to the Premier and his party, was not about saving money, what other possible rationale could there be? Sometimes you just have to call a spade a spade and ask yourself: what is the UCP hoping may be missed under the guise of cost savings? Our democratic institutions demand that we continue to dig until we find the answers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

### Northern Alberta Development Council

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Northern Alberta Development Council, known as NADC, was established in 1963. The NADC is a provincial government agency that investigates northern Alberta's social and economic development priorities, programs, and services to ensure supports meet the needs of northern residents. The council is tasked with producing quality regional development information, supporting education and skills enhancements, and building strategic partnerships. The NADC's vision is to create "a stronger Alberta through a stronger north."

In support of continued development of the north, the NADC has identified several priorities, including timely communication with government and northerners, the development of a skilled and educated local workforce, the continuation of a robust, diversified economy, and providing ongoing support for strong and vibrant

northern communities. I am proud of my recent appointment as chair of the NADC and look forward to meeting with the council next week to get started in this new role.

Encompassing over 60 per cent of Alberta's total land mass, the NADC region accounts for approximately 9 per cent of Alberta's population and includes 18 municipal districts. The NADC is working hard on a number of initiatives that will bring economic prosperity and opportunities for communities across northern Alberta. Some recent initiatives of the NADC include research on broadband access in the north, particularly in rural and remote areas; geothermal energy development; and the potential for processing flax fibre. In addition, for over 40 years the NADC has offered bursary programs to help attract and retain skilled professionals in demand throughout the north. In 2018-19 the NADC distributed over \$1.5 million in bursaries to recipients.

I am excited about the role that the NADC and the north can play in Alberta's economic recovery as we work hard to get Albertans back to work. This is another promise made, promise kept, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has the call.

### Nursing Workforce

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This UCP government ran on an explicit commitment to balance the budget "without cutting front-line services." It's right there on page 12 of their platform. Now we all know that that was intentionally designed to mislead Albertans. Alberta is going to lose more than a thousand RNs and LPNs in order to pay for this government's \$4.7 billion corporate handout, and that's just the start. This Premier made a serious promise to Albertans in writing, and now he's breaking it. Why should Albertans ever – ever – trust a thing he says again?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's ridiculous, and that's what you see from the Official Opposition and that hon. member in particular. That's the kind of leadership that you see, her party misleading Albertans, causing fear all across this province. It's absolutely ridiculous. What we want and I'm so proud to have is a Premier that is showing true leadership today in Toronto, who got a deal, unanimous consent of every province and territory, to fight against Bill C-69, the no more pipelines bill. When that hon. member was the Premier, it took her 200 days to even send an official down to Ottawa to defend our province.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are probably 30 or 40 nurses up there, and I can't believe how disrespectful that answer was to the question I just asked. Nurses are the very definition of front-line health care workers. When Albertans are sick or injured, they're the ones who are there to take care of them. In their letter, that was sent on Friday, in black and white AHS says, "We need to be more efficient and focused." To the Premier: what on earth does a health care system focus on if it's not the workers who are right at the patient's bedside? Why didn't he tell Albertans he was going to fire them by the thousands?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this government remains committed to defending front-line workers, to defending front-line services inside Alberta Health Services. What this NDP Official

Opposition continues to do is fear and smear, misrepresent facts, mislead Albertans, and cause fear all across this province. That's not leadership. That's not leadership with that hon. member now, but she did not lead the way when she was the Premier of Alberta either. She's created the situation that we find ourselves in. This party, this Premier will lead the way. We'll keep our promises to Albertans, and we'll get this province back on track. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the stuff I am talking about is in black and white in letters from AHS. Even that House leader can't deny that. We warned that this government's \$4.7 billion corporate handout would mean mass layoffs of critical front-line health care providers, and not surprisingly they said that it was fear and smear. Now we know what it actually was, the truth. Here's another warning: you can't dismiss thousands of health care workers without harming patient care and Albertans. Albertans did not vote for an attack on their health. Why won't this government reverse these dishonest and cruel cuts?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, as the Premier said Saturday, we respect our front-line health care workers. We want to work in partnership with them to get our province back on track. We will continue to call upon them as our partners to find ways to be able to help get our province back on track because that's true leadership from the Premier. Unlike that member when she was the Premier of Alberta, who took 200 days to even go to Ottawa to defend us on Bill C-69, you see true leadership now from the Premier in Toronto today, who has gotten a deal, unanimous consent of every leader of every province or territory inside this country, to defend our province. That's leadership.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

### Health Care Services

**Ms Notley:** Friday's letter from AHS, which is actually what we're talking about, also says that they're considering repurposing and relocation of services. The government likes to talk about its rural representation, so I sure hope rural members are listening to this, because Friday's letter means moving services out of rural hospitals into the cities. It means moving jobs out of rural communities. No surprise when this government takes its marching orders from a woman who closed 53 rural hospitals. Why is this government so quick to betray rural Alberta?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** All rural MLAs on this side of the House will never be lectured by that member when it comes to defending rural Alberta. We have stood in this Chamber and defended our homes over and over from that member when she was Premier, who attacked our communities over and over. That's not leadership. We have a Premier and a party that are in charge now and that are focused on leading, getting our province back on track. The Premier showed it yet again in Toronto, a focus on leadership. They're focused on fear and smear, misleading Albertans, and causing fear all across the province. Mr. Speaker, through you, shame on them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** If I could provide a bit of advice for the members of the opposition: if you're going to be heckling, it should probably be parliamentary.

The Leader of the Official Opposition has the call.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, AHS says that acute-care beds will close "as continuing care beds open" as well, so rural MLAs with a new continuing care facility in their riding should look forward to their hospitals being threatened with closure. Indeed, the House leader might remember that AHS tried to do this in Sundre, and the previous Minister of Health put a stop to it. So what will the House leader tell the people of Sundre when his government tries once again to close his hospital? And, please, can the member give me a heads-up when that press conference starts? I really want to be there for that one.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would like to come to Sundre or Rocky Mountain House or Rimbey, she can come any time. In fact, I tried to get her to do it several times when she was the Premier of Alberta, but she continued to ignore rural Alberta.

Here's what's happening. The opposition continues to mislead Albertans. That's what I tell the people of Sundre. It's disappointing to see their ridiculous behaviour. Shame on them. Mr. Speaker, through you to them, shame on them. I can assure Albertans that this government will keep its promises, will continue to defend front-line health care services, and will continue to lead the way, unlike what the NDP did, which was repeatedly sell out this province over and over and over.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what I did was that I protected the Sundre hospital, and the member opposite is going to sit quiet while it's once again threatened.

Now, the AHS letter also specifically warns of "reducing or ceasing the provision of services." Now, this is just another in a long list of broken promises and misinformation provided by the UCP to Albertans during their campaign. Can the Premier please advise this House exactly which services will no longer be provided by this government, or, to put it plainly, which services will Albertans only access if they are super rich and have lots of cash in their pocket?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the people of Sundre know who will stand up for them. It's this side of the House and certainly not that hon. member, who went out of the way to make their lives so much worse when she was the Premier of Alberta.

Here are the facts. You see the way they approach this, which is to mislead Albertans, cause fear, cause smear, scare people by misleading them and misrepresenting facts. I can assure Albertans, through you, Mr. Speaker, that under the leadership of our Premier they will continue to see leadership, just like today in Ontario, where we will build bridges. They're going to destroy bridges. We will build bridges and defend this province each and every day.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for her third set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, it's reading letters in black and white from this government that causes fears for Albertans. On Friday, in doing that, they also learned that this government is considering a plan to close acute-care beds for every continuing care bed that is opened. The Health minister had previously said that this number is roughly 1,700. Now, many Albertans who should be in continuing care are currently in acute-care beds – we know that – and that's why we kept our election promise, something you guys should try sometime, and opened more than 2,000 new beds. However, we need acute-care beds to stay open in order to reduce surgical wait times. So has this Premier abandoned . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, that's all they can do. All they can do is misrepresent facts, fear and smear, make things up. It's so disappointing. I'm so glad that we have true leadership inside this province. Today the Premier also got a unanimous consent deal with all the Premiers, of every province and territory, when it comes to fighting for equalization rebates inside this province, bringing equalization back here to Alberta. That's leadership. That's leadership. We're proud of him for that. When you contrast that to this ridiculous behaviour, this fear and smear and making things up, I'm so grateful that we finally have real leadership in this province.

**Ms Notley:** So disrespectful.

You know, this government is also considering an American-style plan to privatize emergency medical services. Imagine an ambulance system that is designed to maximize shareholder value at the expense of Albertans' safety. Alberta's paramedics work incredibly hard, and they work through some of the most emotionally demanding circumstances. Why is this government punishing them and the people whose emergencies they respond to with threats to sell off the province's ambulance system?

2:00

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, you can't believe anything that's coming from the opposition. They misrepresent facts. They cause fear. They make things up, the NDP, just like when they told the minister of culture that she had bought \$35,000 worth of liquor. You can't believe them. That's not leadership. I'm proud that we have a government in charge right now that is willing to lead the way, that's going to keep its promises to Albertans and is going to get us back on track, all the while defending front-line public services, including health care, because that's important.

**Ms Notley:** This member is denying the black-and-white words and the letters that have been sent by this government to Albertans. I can't believe that he will not take responsibility for it, Mr. Speaker. It is so shameful.

Now, on Friday we learned that this government plans to fire more than 5,000 front-line health care workers, close health care facilities, close beds, and cease some services altogether. This is a complete abandonment of their promise to Albertans. Will they at the very least agree to an emergency debate so that Albertans can learn why this government decided to break so many promises to Albertans?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this government promised Albertans that they would defend front-line services, and we still continue to do that. We also promised Albertans that we would fix the fiscal mess that that one-term Premier created in this province. She failed this province. She created the worst fiscal situation in the history of this province. This side of the House promised that we would fix it while protecting front-line services. We will keep that promise to Albertans. That member should really stand in this House and apologize for what she did when she was Premier.

#### Election Commissioner

**Ms Sweet:** "It's going to save taxpayers' money": that was this Premier attempting to justify his government's corrupt Bill 22 just one week ago in this House. He hid in Texas while his government raced to fire the very man investigating his fraud-filled leadership campaign, but we learned Friday it will in fact spend \$100,000 more to run the commissioner's office under Elections Alberta. To the

Premier: will you admit this corrupt piece of legislation was never about saving taxpayers' money; it was only about saving yourself?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, yet another example of what I'm talking about. You can't trust the NDP. They mislead Albertans, and they make things up. The Chief Electoral Officer actually said that there would be a savings of approximately \$390,000. Honestly, it's time for the Official Opposition to stop making things up . . .

**Ms Notley:** Why don't you stop lying?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . and start doing their job and representing Albertans. What they are doing is a complete disservice to this province.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, through you to them: shame on you; do your job.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 2:03.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, the CEO of Elections Alberta actually said that he was asking \$100,000 more than the Election Commissioner. The Premier deemed the Election Commissioner's office to be completely unnecessary and redundant, but it also surfaced during a Friday committee meeting that 76 investigations haven't been started. That's 76 cases where justice hasn't been served or maybe never will be served with this Premier calling the shots. To the Premier: will you admit that you want to slow down investigations into election fraud or cancel them altogether, and is it because you deceived Albertans in your bid to become a leader?

**Mr. Hunter:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning should be very, very cautious with the use of her words when she makes suggestions that an hon. member of the House would deceive.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, you can't even bother, in my opinion. I'm not even going to try to answer that question because they continue to make things up. As I said: the Chief Electoral Officer said that the costs will be reduced by \$390,000. Yes, his overall budget is higher. Do you know why? Because of increased costs because of municipal elections, to be able to bring in and handle the regulations brought in by the former NDP government. That hon. member knows that but is continuing to create fear and smear across this province. It's all the NDP have. It's why Albertans fired them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to see that the House leader has finally admitted that it is higher.

We've kept our commitments to Albertans: that was this Premier once again attempting to downplay this government's corrupt Bill 22. It's not saving money. It's not cutting redundancies. In fact, Elections Alberta is going to rehire the commissioner's position, just likely not the guy that was investigating the Premier. It isn't certainly something this Premier ever mentioned on the campaign trail. To the Premier: if I'm wrong, tell me on which page your huge platform talks about firing the man investigating your fraudulent leadership?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, you see exactly why Albertans don't believe the NDP, and they shouldn't. That member yet again knows that the Chief Electoral Officer has said that there's a \$390,000 saving from the redundancies of bringing the office together. Yes, there's an increase to be able to cover the costs associated with the municipal election changes, and that hon. members knows that. That's what you get from the NDP: misleading Albertans, fear and smear, going out of their way. That's why Albertans don't trust them, that's why they were fired in April, and that's why they're the only one-term government in the history of this province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. We are a lively bunch today. [interjections] Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Holocaust Memorial on Legislature Grounds

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from members of the Jewish community about the current state of the Holocaust memorial here on the Legislature Grounds. When it comes to the Holocaust, we have a duty, a duty to remember. This memorial, erected by the Edmonton Jewish community in partnership with the government of Alberta, is part of the way we remember. It is part of the way we respect those who suffered and died in the Shoah. To the Minister of Infrastructure: are you aware of the concerns surrounding the memorial's state of disrepair, and will your department be taking action to resolve this issue?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for bringing this issue to the attention of the House. I have been made aware that the Jewish community has concerns about the state of the memorial, and I can tell the Assembly that I'm committed to working with the Edmonton Jewish community to ensure the condition of the memorial is restored. I know that all the members of this House agree with me that we have a duty of remembering, and learning the lessons of the Holocaust is an incredibly important one.

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, given that the minister is aware of the problem and committed to taking action to remedy it and given that, among other issues, it seems that discoloration of the memorial is a significant problem, can you expand on exactly what will be done to ensure that these problems are resolved?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I can report to the House that I have already met with the members of the Jewish community to discuss their concerns. One issue is the natural discoloration of the bronze material that the memorial is made of, and another issue, I'm told, is the natural settling and cracking of the concrete. I'll work with the Jewish community as per our 2003 agreement that is in place regarding the maintenance of the memorial.

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to hear the answers from the minister.

Given that this is an important matter to members of the Jewish community and the public at large, will the minister commit to keeping the Edmonton Jewish community updated and apprised of the restoration of the memorial going forward?

**Mr. Panda:** Of course, Mr. Speaker. As the member pointed out initially, this memorial was erected in a partnership between the government of Alberta and the Jewish community, and in that spirit of partnership we'll continue to work closely with the community and keep them fully apprised of the work that we'll be taking on in its restoration. We'll ensure that the memorial continues to stand as

a symbol of memory and the commitment of our government and the people of Alberta to never forget the Holocaust and those who perished in that evil act.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Energy Industry Layoffs

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we learned that Husky has cut its capital spending plan by \$500 million over the next two years. This will cost further jobs, and it comes after Husky received a \$233 million handout from this government. Husky already fired 370 Albertans. Albertans were promised jobs and investment. To the minister: will you admit that you have failed to do your job, or do you simply not care about hard-working Calgarians and Albertans?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that as a province Alberta has to be competitive with other jurisdictions. That was not the case over the last four years. That's why we have been relentless in bringing back jobs and bringing back investment. That's why we're creating the correct regulatory environment to attract investment. We're creating the right tax and fiscal environment. They failed over four years, and we're cleaning it up.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that this government refused to honour oil-by-rail contracts that would have moved 120,000 barrels per day and given that ripping up oil-by-rail contracts has led to the extension of curtailment and given that the extension of curtailment has led to one of the worst drilling seasons on record and given that next year's drilling season is predicted to be just as bad, to the minister: you can only blame us for so long. Are you really trying to be the worst Finance, Energy minister that this province has ever seen?

**Mrs. Savage:** I won't take any lessons from them. Mr. Speaker, I sit in a caucus with members that I'm proud to sit in caucus with who work for the oil and gas industry, people like the Member for Calgary-North, the Infrastructure minister, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, who literally worked building pipelines. While they were protesting pipelines, our members were building them. They failed, and we're cleaning it up. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Sabir:** I meant to say Energy but Finance, too.

Given that over 11,000 jobs have been lost in the natural resource sector since the government implemented its \$4.7 billion handout and given that companies are choosing to invest in other jurisdictions instead of Alberta, to the entire government cabinet: how many more Albertans have to lose their jobs before you abandon your ridiculous and misguided \$4.7 billion no-job corporate handout?

**The Speaker:** I'll provide a caution to the member on the use of preambles.

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP really do not get it. They fail to recognize that over the past four years, they in Alberta and their partner Justin Trudeau in Ottawa tortured the regulatory and the fiscal and the investment environments. Their members were signing the Leap Manifesto. [interjections] Justin Trudeau in Ottawa was talking about phasing out the oil sands. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. I've heard the question. I'll hear the answer.

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, they really do not get it. They failed for four years. We're cleaning up their mess. They didn't build pipelines. They didn't get a single additional barrel of oil to market.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

#### **Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society Funding**

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 28, 2018, Rachel Notley apologized to the survivors of the '60s scoop. She said, "For the loss of families, of stability, of love, we are sorry." Unfortunately, while the UCP were present for these words, they do not appear to have any impact on this government. Eighteen months after hearing these words, members of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society have learned that their government funding has come to an end. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: when did you decide to abandon the '60s scoop survivors in favour of a \$4.7 billion giveaway to your corporate friends?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to acknowledge all the members of the '60s scoop who are here with us today and thank you for bringing this important issue to the House. The '60s scoop, of course, had terrible lasting effects on generations of indigenous children here in Alberta, and I was honoured to attend the '60s scoop exhibit at the Royal Alberta Museum and in the Devon library this year to hear about their pain and suffering and to read about the loss of their culture, that deeply affected them. This government is committed to a path of reconciliation with indigenous people in Alberta, and the '60s scoop chapter must be a part of those efforts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You'll cry about it, but you won't give them any money.

Given that the apology went further, "For the loss of identity, of language and culture, we are sorry. For the loneliness, the anger, the confusion, and the frustration, we are sorry," and given that while the NDP government was truly committed to reconciliation and helped to establish the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society, this government has decided to abandon those survivors just as they are building their new identities, to the minister: will you commit to returning the funding to SSISA for the next two years?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I just spent the last weekend with a good friend of mine who is a '60s scoop survivor, and we talked about this issue in depth. To the member I can say that this government will look at ongoing participation and support of the '60s scoop. However, we're still awaiting the final report from the society before we can move onto future programming initiatives. This government firmly believes that the '60s scoop survivors' stories and narratives must be heard and be a part of our reconciliation efforts moving forward.

**Mr. Feehan:** Minister, we're waiting for you to put your money where your mouth is for once.

Given that the '60s scoop . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, can we have another try here without a preamble?

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that the '60s scoop survivors have been travelling the province to teach both survivors and others about this devastating legacy and have now travelled here to the Legislature to condemn this antireconciliation, will the minister agree to meet with the survivors who are here in the gallery and myself immediately after question period?

**The Speaker:** Perfect.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that question and the offer. The '60s scoop saw thousands of Alberta children losing touch with their families, communities, culture, and traditional language, and this caused lasting – lasting – negative issues with mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical health and well-being. Survivors and their families are still feeling the effects of the '60s scoop today, and Alberta will ensure that the telling of this dark period in our history will always be a part of our commitment to reconciliation. I'm always, of course, open to meeting with the people that are here. [interjections]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, order, because the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake has the call.

#### **Drinking Water Quality in Indigenous Communities**

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many indigenous communities across the province do not have access to clean drinking water. They are left with boil advisories and do not get the same luxuries and privileges that many of us in urban and rural communities do. Water safety is a serious issue and causes many serious health concerns. We see that many indigenous communities are left without clean drinking water and forced to face these serious health issues. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: how will this government get clean drinking water to the indigenous communities in Alberta that live without it today?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. Over the summer I did have the opportunity to travel to many parts of Alberta and meet with the First Nations and Métis communities. For example, right in my own area I met with the Ermineskin First Nation and the Samson First Nation on the Maskwacis waterline; as well, up in Frog Lake First Nation, on its proposed project. Our government will continue to work with First Nations across the province and ensure that they have access to safe and reliable drinking water. Of course, we'll be speaking with all of our partners to determine the future of this program.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal government has failed indigenous communities in Alberta, leaving some without access to clean drinking water, and given that we live in a country with 20 per cent of the world's fresh water and given that we have the technological means to be able to get clean drinking water to these communities and given the importance to a community of a stable long-term source of fresh, clean water, to the same minister: when will these indigenous communities get access to clean drinking water?



**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We work closely, of course, with the Minister of Infrastructure, who has set aside money for these important projects. I'll be meeting very soon with our federal counterparts in the near future, and we'll be bringing up this important issue. Our government is committed to strengthening our relationship with the First Nations in Alberta. Of course, clean, safe water is a fundamental need in every community and should be there for them. We will continue to work with all of our government partners to improve access to water, and we work closely, of course, with our Minister of Transportation on these funding issues.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

Given that the main drinking water advisories are highly concentrated in indigenous communities and given that contaminants in drinking water such as E coli make those who drink it violently ill and given that the federal government's idea of a solution is to focus on changing long-term boil-water advisories to so-called short-term advisories that last for many years at a time, to the same minister: what is this government doing to solve the clean water issue that many indigenous communities continue to deal with?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, of course, for the question. Just this past weekend I met with several members of the Métis settlements, and we discussed these very important issues. The government believes in removing economic barriers to Alberta's indigenous communities and sharing prosperity. Again, we'll be speaking with all of our partners with respect to the future of these programs, including the federal government. Rest assured that safe water supply for Alberta's indigenous peoples is top of mind of this government.

## 2:20 Affordable Housing and Seniors' Programs

**Ms Sigurdson:** Along with firing thousands of public health care workers on Friday, this government also said that 2,500 government employees will be cut across multiple areas, including the Seniors and Housing ministry. This government has already ignored an affordable housing crisis in our province. They cut \$44 million from rental assistance and another \$17 million from housing management bodies. To the minister: are you going to cut even more from the housing budget?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question, Member. Affordable housing is quite critical for some Albertans, in particular those with low income and seniors on fixed income. Our government will ensure that more affordable housing is available for those who need it the most. We are committed to working closely with our private-sector partners to ensure that every dollar contributed by Alberta taxpayers to capital investment is fully leveraging.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that in a letter sent to AUPE on Friday, the government claims that it is embarking on a seniors' program review and is planning to cut housing programs and given that this minister has already told seniors to live within their means, even as she backs the Premier's \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout, to the minister: are you planning to hide from seniors and affordable

housing providers for your entire term? Why won't you listen to seniors and Albertans involved in the affordable housing system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please stop misrepresenting my message. What I meant is that the seniors will teach of living beyond our means. It's not like the other party. They never, never understand that, and we are cleaning the mess right now.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that this government has already kicked 47,000 people off the seniors' drug plan and given that cutting thousands upon thousands of front-line public health care workers is going to lead to more suffering among seniors and given that plans to privatize ambulance services also leaves many seniors wondering if their 911 calls will be answered, to the minister. You haven't said one word to object to the gutting of health care by the Premier and the Health minister, and now you're plotting cuts of your own. When will you step up and serve vulnerable Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has risen.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think what we've heard today from the caucus opposite is a very artful construction of an alternate reality. We campaigned on maintaining or increasing health care spending, and that's exactly what we did. We are spending \$200 million more on health care spending than that government ever did. The AHS disclosure – let's talk a little bit about the AHS disclosure, Mr. Speaker – to our unions was so that they can have the best information available to them so they can meet with us and then they can negotiate in good faith.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

## Family Medicine

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Minister of Health is here clean-shaven today, but he is not coming clean to Albertans. In order to pay for its \$4.7 billion corporate handout, we just found out this past Friday that this government is planning deep cuts to family medicine. Family doctors keep Albertans healthy. They are the front line in care. They help detect problems early and keep people out of the emergency room, the most expensive place for them to be. Now this minister wants to limit the number of patients a doctor can see in a day and make each of those visits shorter. Why is the minister taking such a totally wrong-headed approach, putting patient care at risk?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, none of that is true. Look, we are in the middle of negotiations with the AMA. We have tabled a proposal with the AMA. We're happy to continue to have conversations with the AMA, the Alberta Medical Association. This is the organization that represents our physicians throughout the province and their compensation. We're happy to continue to be able to meet with the members and the negotiating team from the Alberta Medical Association so that we can come to a resolution in the best interest of patients as well as their members.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given that Dr. Christine Molnar of the Alberta Medical Association wrote to her members that this minister's plans will have "a negative impact on care for thousands of patients" and given that she goes on to say, "The proposals would be devastating to rural family practice... a group that government in other venues purports to support," will this minister listen to the warning from Dr. Molnar and abandon this dangerous attack on family medicine?

**Mr. Shandro:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, this is a process; it's a negotiating process. There are ups, and there are downs. I look forward to the AMA, the Alberta Medical Association, continuing to meet with us in good faith, to have these conversations, to represent the concerns of their members so that at the end of the process we can have an agreement with the AMA that's in the best interests of their members and patients in Alberta.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that this government's dictatorial and condescending approach shows that they have no interest in collaboration and given that Dr. Kathryn Andrusky, president of the AMA section of family medicine, told her members:

The devastation these unilateral... impositions will wreak cannot be overstated. There is a significant danger that family doctors will become completely disengaged from the health system as a whole, team members will need to be laid off and some family [physicians]... will simply have to close their doors.

Given that this is an extraordinary warning from Alberta's family doctors, why will this minister not listen?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, we are listening. We're in the middle of negotiations with the Alberta Medical Association. We're listening to them. We're meeting with them. We started meeting with them on November 13. On November 14 we provided our proposal to them. We're looking forward to continuing to meet with them, continuing to get their counterproposal to us so that at the end of it we can have an agreement with the Alberta Medical Association that's in the best interests of patients in Alberta and their members.

### Property Crime Prevention

**Mr. Loewen:** Constituents in my riding are concerned about crime in our smaller communities. In particular, I receive a great deal of correspondence about property crime: trespassing, breaking and entering, theft, and destruction of property. It is not uncommon for criminals to target tools and vehicles, the very things that people need to go to work and support their families. People deserve to feel safe in their own homes and not stressed about the security of their hard-earned property. Could the Minister of Justice let rural Albertans know what the government is currently doing to protect the rights of lawful Albertans and stop criminals in our communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to that member for the question. This party has brought forward Bill 27, which will create the strongest property rights possible, the strongest property rights in the entire country, to make sure that law-abiding Albertans know that we stand with them. We're going to make sure that the signal to criminals is that farmers are no longer to be targets on the property of Alberta. The strongest property rights possible: that's what this party believes in; that's what we've delivered for Albertans. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Minister.

Given that rural communities and families living in more remote places endure longer response times for police services as a result of larger areas to cover and greater distances and given that these communities are facing added pressures dealing with crime,

oftentimes committed by those from outside the community looking to sell stolen goods elsewhere, is the Minister of Justice considering ways to increase the resources dedicated to enforcement and policing in rural Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's why we announced the RAPID force, to enhance the authorities of 400 peace officers, sheriffs in the province of Alberta, to make sure that they're there to help respond to 911 emergencies, to help make sure that we can reduce the response times for Albertans in need, to make sure that they can feel safe. As well, we brought in the scrap dealer measure to make sure we go after all of the theft that's happening across rural Alberta, the copper wire theft, to make sure that we can hold scrap-metal dealers accountable, to make sure we don't have stolen property being sold through scrap-metal dealers. That's important.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you. Given the great concern in my riding about substance abuse and the prevalence of illegal drugs in our communities and given the way that trafficking and the use of these illegal drugs bring with them other criminal behaviour, including property crime and theft, and given that illegal drug use can be so destructive to families and communities, what steps is this government taking not to just keep these harmful drugs out of our province but to help treat addictions and end these patterns of drug abuse and criminal activity?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud of this team. We've dedicated \$50 million over four years for the Alberta law enforcement response teams. They're doing amazing work tackling organized crime, getting the drugs off the street, getting illegal guns off the street. They're doing amazing work. We also have to make sure our prosecution ranks have the proper complement to make sure that we can prosecute the cases of Albertans, to make sure we hold these criminals accountable. That's a promise made, promise kept by this government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### 2:30 Biologic and Biosimilar Drug Coverage

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I stood and spoke with 100 Albertans on these steps about how this government is forcing them to switch from their life-saving medications that keep them in remission from critical diseases like Crohn's and colitis. They want them to use cheaper, less well tested alternatives so that the province can save a few pennies, and this government has used NDAs to shut out medical experts from that decision, experts who have told this minister that drug companies have lowered the cost of their drugs to match the price of alternatives. To the minister: why is your government so determined to tell Albertans what level of care they should be happy with and what treatment they should be receiving?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as Budget 2019 said, we are looking at ways to expand the biosimilars initiative in this province. As the hon. member knows, though, those decisions have not been made. I've said that before in this House and outside of this House. I hope those decisions are made by the end of the year. We will have an announcement by the end of the year. Before we do that, we're

going to continue to speak to other provinces. On Friday I was happy to be able to speak to Minister Christine Elliott from Ontario, to speak a little bit about what they're doing, meeting with patient groups like the Arthritis Consumer Experts and, as well, physicians and pharmacists.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government's dictatorial and condescending approach gives patients no reason that they should trust this government and given that I've gotten numerous e-mails from Albertans who are worried about how this change would drastically impact their lives, like the 24-year-old oil and gas worker who told me, "My environment is working against me, my own body works against me. And now [my] government is working against me," to the minister: did you consult any actual IBD patients before you inserted yourself between them and their physicians to decide what medical treatment they should receive?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is using the past tense. I'm going to say it again for him: we're in the middle of consulting with patients. Have I met with any IBD patients? Yes, I have. I've had them in my office. I've met with them.

**Ms Phillips:** How many lobbyists?

**Mr. Shandro:** None.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to meet with these patient groups, we continue to be able to speak with physicians, we continue to meet with pharmacists, and we're going to continue to do that before we make our decisions by the end of the year so that it's going to be in the best interests of patients.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that I've also heard from a mother who's had three bowel resections due to Crohn's and a 17-year-old who had her colon removed due to colitis and given that she said that this switch would not only force her to change medications but will take her away from the treatment practitioners she's been with for 11 years and given that she wonders why this government has broken their promise of transparency and maintaining the province's quality of health care, to this minister: please assure us that you will not put the well-being of these chronically ill Albertans at risk as one of the corners you're willing to cut to pay for your government's \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway.

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as we look at the expansion of the biosimilars initiative and what we're going to be doing as a province, my commitment to all Albertans is that whatever medication people use, if they're on a biologic or a biosimilar, whatever they get is going to be safe and appropriate. That's my commitment to Albertans. Thank you to the hon. member for his questions.

#### **Holocaust Memorial on Legislature Grounds** (continued)

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Holocaust monument has provided a solemn place for Albertans to gather every May since 2003 to celebrate Yom ha-Shoah, or Holocaust Memorial Day, to honour victims of the Holocaust, six million of whom were Jewish, and given that it's been almost 20 years since the memorial sculpture was unveiled on the site just north of the Terrace Building

on the Legislature Grounds and that no major maintenance or repairs have ever been done, will the Infrastructure minister commit today to maintaining an open dialogue with members of the Jewish community and myself to plan how to get the necessary repairs done before May 2020, this coming spring?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, as you'll remember, just a few minutes ago I answered the question from the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. I'll repeat that. Yes, I met with the Jewish community of Edmonton, and I assured them that I'll work with them as per the agreement we made in 2003.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the initial project and contract work was approved by Alberta Infrastructure in 2003 and that estimates for the current required granite repairs, cleaning, and coating of the monument itself and site maintenance are estimated to be under \$20,000 and given that this expenditure would mean a great deal to the Jewish community, to have the Holocaust monument, a provincial monument to Holocaust victims, respectfully maintained, and given that it took the advocacy of an opposition MLA to light a fire under this minister, will the minister commit today to funding the refurbishment of this meaningful provincial memorial so work can be completed before next May?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, Infrastructure has guidelines regarding construction and placement of monuments. When specific requests are received, maintenance requirements are specified. Usually the sculpture costs over \$128,000 to erect. In 2003 that's what was spent on that monument. We are aware of the concerns, and we are looking into that.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that this government apparently prides itself on reducing red tape, I challenge the Infrastructure minister to use this project to demonstrate how fast a government apparently free of red tape can move when they put their mind to it and when an NDP opposition MLA advocates on behalf of his constituents. Will the minister commit today to the House and to the many members of the Jewish community who have joined us in the gallery as my guests today that he will do everything in his power to have the refurbishment of the Holocaust monument completed before we gather to celebrate Yom ha-Shoah once again in May 2020?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, as I assured the Jewish community of Edmonton, I will continue to work with them and look into the matter. Conservative parties around the world, including Narendra Modi of BJP in India, support the state of Israel and Jewish people and grieve the events of the Holocaust. I will meet with the member opposite and address these concerns as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### **Recycling Regulations**

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Waste management is a real concern to Albertans and municipalities. RMA and AUMA have both asked for an extended producer responsibility regulation in Alberta. The Recycling Council of Alberta has been proposing a made-in-Alberta EPR program for paper and packaging for years. EPR is self-funding, costs government nothing, yet Alberta is the only province in Canada not to use it. To the minister of environment: will this government establish EPR in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the important question. He is correct. Both RMA and AUMA have asked us to look at EPR. We continue to consult with RMA, AUMA, and other stakeholders as well as taking time to look at other jurisdictions across this country and the world, to look at other ways that we can manage waste and recycling inside our province. We've heard the concerns from Albertans across the province. We'll continue to work to balance recycling with economic needs in the province going forward, and we'll find a solution that works for Alberta.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you for that answer.

Mr. Speaker, given that agricultural plastics are a growing concern – a 2012 report found that 50 per cent of farmers either burn the plastic, creating pollution, or send it to landfills – and given that there have been multiple studies and pilot programs on how to better handle this growing challenge, including another three-year pilot currently running, and given that Saskatchewan currently has an agricultural plastics EPR regulation, to the minister: are you considering an agricultural plastic recycling regulation?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you again to the hon. member for an excellent question. Yes, we are looking at ag plastics. I've heard from my constituents loud and clear that that's something they want us to look at and that the agriculture industry has asked for for a long time. The minister of agriculture's department and my department are working together on a pilot project which goes till 2022. We're evaluating that in real time. As that progresses, we'll be looking at what has worked and what has not worked, ultimately, though, towards an agriculture plastic solution in this province because that's the direction that we promised Albertans that we would go.

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Alberta Recycling Management Authority supervises the recycling of paint, tires, electronics, and oil and given that the Alberta Recycling Management Authority operates under provincial regulation and is funded by the fees that are charged on the sale of these products and given that the current regulation is outdated – some new electronics are not included; fees have not kept up with costs; some tires are not being collected in a timely manner – will the minister commit to a review of the Alberta Recycling Management Authority regulation?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, yes.

## 2:40 Investment in Alberta and Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Singh:** Last session we passed 13 bills which were designed to fulfill our platform commitment of getting Albertans back to work. Already we are seeing investor confidence up and small-business owners feeling relieved, although it takes time, as any good economist will tell you, for government economic policies to be felt, and there is still much work to be done to reverse the damage the NDP did. Can the Minister of Finance please update the House on our government's next steps to get our economy and our finances back on track?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. In recent years Alberta has faced some of its most challenging economic times since the global financial crisis, and in response to this challenge the previous government

did the unthinkable. They imposed a carbon tax, they hiked taxes on businesses, and they borrowed unsustainably to fund government. Our approach is fundamentally different. By reducing business taxes, by repealing the carbon tax, by implementing the accelerated capital cost allowance provisions, we are attracting investment and opportunity for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

Given that under the previous government we saw investment decrease in almost every industry – a 61.3 per cent decrease in the mining, coring, oil and gas extraction sector; a 27 per cent decrease in the finance, insurance, and real estate sector; and a 21 per cent decrease in the construction sector – can the minister update us on the government's plan to bring investment back to Alberta?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, when the previous government hiked corporate taxes by 20 per cent, investment left the province by the billions and, with it, jobs and opportunities. Moreover, they collected \$5.8 billion less in corporate revenue over the next three years. It was a failed experiment. Our government is taking a different direction. We are making the most competitive business environment possible to ensure that we attract investment, create jobs, opportunities, which will lead to increased government revenue in the long term.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

Given that over the past four years everyday Albertans were tightening their belts and paying more for the cost of living and given that the NDP's out-of-control spending put Alberta on the path to being \$100 billion in debt by 2023-2024 and given that our government was elected to clean up this fiscal mismanagement, can the minister please update this House on the status of the government's effort to balance the budget?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, our province has had a long-time spending problem, and this fact was made abundantly clear by the MacKinnon panel. In Budget 2019 we laid out a credible plan to get Alberta back to balance. We're committed to finding efficiencies, reducing redundancies, and reducing operating expenditures by 2.8 per cent, which will lead this government and this province back to balance. We will deliver responsible financial management to the people of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

### Health Care System Layoffs

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, as we approach the end of the year, the bad news for Albertans just keeps coming from this UCP government. Albertans have had to watch levels of corruption and betrayal usually only seen on *Game of Thrones*, and while this government enjoys taxpayer-funded pancake parties and lavish trips to five-star London hotels with historic champagne bars, Albertans have to pay the price for their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout.

On Friday Albertans learned more about how they will pay the price for this government's failed policies as the UCP cut over

5,100 public health care jobs in a single day. These cuts will have devastating impacts on Albertans, our health care system, and the families of health care workers. These losses will be felt everywhere in Alberta, not just this year but for years to come. The health care workers that the government fired put everything into taking care of our families. Over the last few days I have seen many touching stories of health care workers going above and beyond while having their good name smeared by this government. Just this spring the UCP told Albertans that they would never cut public health care, but now we see that it was just another fake promise told to Albertans to get elected and return to their Tory land gravy train.

Now that this UCP government shredded the last copy of its public health care guarantee, they are taking steps to implement their vision of American-style health care. Albertans do not want these changes, Mr. Speaker. American-style health care makes access much more difficult and expensive. It will lower the quality of care for Albertans and cause longer wait times. Albertans were never told that they would have to pay for this government's \$4.7 billion corporate handout in health care. In fact, they were told it would have no impact on them at all, but on Friday we could see that this promise wasn't worth the paper it was written on.

This UCP government needs to stop attacking Albertans to pay for their failed policies. Albertans deserve much better.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I also understand birthday wishes might be in order for the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

#### Small Business and the Christmas Season

**Mrs. Pitt:** People in Alberta are struggling, and for my constituents in Airdrie-East there is no exception. Airdrie is home to many small businesses, and it is no secret that under the leadership of the past government, they suffered immensely. Before our government, people were frustrated by having to navigate needless government red tape and pay additional taxes. Alberta's economy was in shambles.

Finally, we are starting to see a light at the end of that tunnel. I've heard from my constituents that they are relieved by our efforts to reduce red tape, increase investor confidence, and get our economy back on track. It will take time. Some are starting to get back to work and keep their businesses afloat. However, so many of them are not so lucky. They are still looking for work, and their businesses are at risk of going under.

Just a couple of weeks ago I attended an event that hosted workshops to help local entrepreneurs grow their businesses with social media. The room was filled with eager Albertans ready to learn how to reach new clients and promote their business. Albertans are hard working, innovative, and adaptive. They are ready to move forward, and so are we.

As many of you are aware, Christmas is just around the corner. All of us here will go home to our families, and when the celebrations are over, we will come back here to quite possibly one of the best jobs in the whole world. We as MLAs are privileged to be able to come to this Legislature, represent our constituents, and get this province back on track. Especially during Christmas, I will remember that there are Albertans that are struggling, from small-business owners to people in the trades. There are children who won't see any presents under the tree, and there are parents wondering how they will put food on the table and keep the lights on.

Let's remember them and support local organizations like the food bank, the Lioness Club, and the Mustard Seed, who will make

Christmas a little more hopeful. Christmastime is the best time of year to practise what we read in 1 Peter 4:10, that says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, at some risk of being accused of being partisan, I understand that the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika is also due a birthday wish or two.

#### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of a motion under Standing Order 42 at the appropriate time.

**The Speaker:** If you can read us your motion, that would be appreciated. Maybe if the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre could pass it to the Member for Edmonton-Manning, then she could read it into the record.

2:50

**Ms Sweet:** On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-City Centre:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take immediate steps to protect the public health care system in Alberta by working with Alberta Health Services to cancel the recently announced layoffs of health care workers, including nurses, and any plans for the privatization of health care services which are contrary to the publicly stated goals of the government.

#### Speaker's Ruling Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, at the appropriate time the hon. member will be able to move the motion under Standing Order 42. Just by way of procedure, it would be possible for the Member for Edmonton-Manning to move it on behalf of the member if he was perhaps at a meeting or some other function. I would hate to refer to the presence or the absence of a member, but in the future that would be the appropriate path forward. Having said that, we are able to proceed.

My apologies to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud if I missed you at Presenting Petitions. It will need to be done either when tabling reports or tomorrow.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** We have a number of them. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by St. Albert, please.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did want to table this petition today as I do have a guest from my constituency in the gallery to hear about it. On behalf of my constituent from Edmonton-Whitemud I would like to table a copy of a petition signed by 232 Albertans which is urging the government to introduce legislation that a pet store operator and any vendor at a reptile, bird, and/or mammal exhibition shall not sell any live mammal, bird, reptile, or amphibian unless the mammal, bird, reptile, or amphibian was obtained from a public animal control agency or shelter, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a Humane Society shelter, or rescue group that is in a co-operative agreement with at least one private or public shelter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. As a way of formalizing that procedure – you're certainly welcome to table that document

now. Apologies to your constituent. But if you will do me a favour, as petitions are managed slightly differently by the library, and also table it again tomorrow during Presenting Petitions, that will make sure that it's also dealt with appropriately.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table a number of documents. I have another 17 letters about class size, and I have a number of e-mails just to St. Albert from concerned constituents about their pensions.

I also have some e-mails directed to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Community and Social Services. They've not heard back, so they're sending them to me to table them.

Last but not least, I have five copies of an article. I believe that this was in *Nature* magazine. It's entitled Climate Tipping Points – Too Risky to Bet Against.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, and then we'll take you as you come.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a few letters here to table today. I'll just take a moment to highlight a couple of pieces on them as they were sent to government representatives, and the members wanted to ensure that they were on the record and that they got an adequate response. They feel that that hasn't been the case at this point. To the MLA for Calgary-Varsity a letter about the proposed voucher system, degradation of public education, and severe concerns about the direction of this government.

As well, another one . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we're not going to be reading any of the letters.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm not.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Let's make sure that that's the case.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The second one is around vouchers, budget cuts, and public education. Again, deep concerns to the local MLA, the MLA for Calgary-Varsity.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies of several dozen letters sent to my constituency office from teachers that were concerned that this government has taken their pension without their permission.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. My first is a letter from constituent Cassandra Hodgetts. She's a 24-year-old RN who's worried about her future and has great concerns about cuts to our health care system.

The second is a letter from a constituent, Breanne Nicholson, who works as an occupational therapist and is also concerned about cuts to our health care system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by Edmonton-Manning.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of an e-mail from a constituent, Sherry Langland,

who is writing concerning the government's proposal to take control of the assets of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

I also have a number of e-mails from constituents regarding cuts to education as well as the voucher system, and I table them here for us today.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview the requisite copies of a pension e-mail received by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview; also the requisite copies of e-mails that I have received as the Member for Edmonton-Manning; and the requisite copies of an article speaking to the firing of the Election Commissioner not being a cost saver.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today: two angry constituents, one talking about how the government has crossed the line by not consulting with teachers about their pension and another from a very angry teacher. They basically say that MLAs need to take their hands off their pensions.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My office continues to receive correspondence from teachers concerned about this government's move with pensions. I'm tabling the requisite copies of a number of those letters.

**Mrs. Allard:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of the Northern Alberta Development Council 2018-19 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like my colleagues, I'd like to table five copies of e-mails from constituents outlining their concerns about this government's insistence on seizing control of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Dreeshen, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, pursuant to the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council annual report 2018-19.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:03 the first point of order was raised. I see the hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** I don't have a point of order, but on procedure I'd like to notify the House that the Routine will go past 3 o'clock today. We have three minutes left.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika on the point of order.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to quickly set the stage here. The time was 2:03. The speaker was the hon. Government House Leader. While he was speaking, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, while looking at him, clearly said: stop lying. Now, we all know in this Chamber that to accuse someone of lying would be unparliamentary. I would ask that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona apologize, retract her remarks, and, of course, raise the bar.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, at 2:03 or 2:04 I think the leader did say that that's a lie in response to the Government House Leader's comments, and she would like to withdraw that comment. She meant to say that the government was misleading Albertans.

**The Speaker:** I consider the matter concluded and dealt with.

Hon. members, not that long after that there was an additional point of order that was raised at the time by the associate minister of red tape. I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika rising on the point.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against a Member

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we flash forward just a few minutes to the time of 2:05, while the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning was speaking, she said clearly in her remarks: you're "corrupt." Now, I would like to ask that she apologize and retract that comment. That would be breaking Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), which is the reason why I'm rising on behalf of the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. Again, I ask that the member retract that comment and refrain from using that kind of language moving forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I indeed did hear what transpired. I don't believe that "corrupt" is a word that is unparliamentary. Indeed, I think it describes many of the actions of this government very appropriately, so I don't withdraw the comment at all.

3:00

**The Speaker:** Well, this is very interesting because it certainly wasn't anything close to what was said. I would agree, though, that if she had made a statement that said, "You are corrupt," that would be unparliamentary. If she made a statement like, "The government is corrupt," as much as I am concerned at the direction of decorum with language like this, I think that in the past I have said that that isn't a point of order. However, I have the benefit of the Blues, and the hon. member did say: "To the Premier: will you admit that you want to slow down investigations into election fraud or cancel them altogether, and is it because you deceived Albertans in your bid to become a leader?"

Now, at that point in time the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction did raise a point of order. However, I did provide caution to the member and said that she needed to be very, very cautious with the use of her words when making a suggestion that an hon. member would deceive the House or deceive Albertans. In her subsequent question she did just that, chose much better words.

As such, I won't ask for an apology today but provide all members a cautionary note that each and every one of us has a responsibility to each other and to Albertans to raise the level of decorum. I have heard

on many occasions today accusations, from both sides of the House, of the opposition misleading, the government misleading. While this certainly is within the rules, I would suggest that it is not adding to debate and adding to the decorum, so I encourage everyone to govern themselves accordingly.

As such, I consider these matters dealt with and concluded.

### Motions under Standing Order 42

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

#### Health Care Services

Mr. Shepherd:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take immediate steps to protect the public health care system in Alberta by working with Alberta Health Services to cancel the recently announced layoffs of health care workers, including nurses, and any plans for the privatization of health care services which are contrary to the publicly stated goals of the government.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask for unanimous consent to move this motion because, like many Albertans this past Friday, a dark day for health care workers in the province of Alberta, I was devastated to see the numbers ticking upward indicating the impacts on health care as a result of the decisions of this government. As estimates currently stand, over 5,000 health care jobs, front-line public health care jobs, are being placed in jeopardy as a result of the choices being made by this government. That number is honestly expected to rise. That's over 5,000 individuals who will no longer be caring for our loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, the response from Albertans, to say the least, has been overwhelming. My office has received a number of phone calls, e-mails, Facebook messages, including from many individuals in the constituencies of government members. Just this past weekend over 1,000 people in Calgary protested outside the UCP AGM. I should mention that in our term not once did anyone protest one of our AGMs, but I digress.

At that meeting members of this government caucus debated and passed policy resolutions that will continue to have a negative impact on all Albertans, and indeed they voted against upholding the principles of the Canada Health Act, which flies in the face of the guarantee made by the now Premier of this province less than a year ago. What was that guarantee? It was to maintain or increase health spending and maintain a universally accessible publicly funded system. His members apparently didn't get the message.

They also said that they'd be working with front-line employees of AHS. Well, I for one would like to see some proof that in working with these front-line employees – how many of them said that their day-to-day life would be better if there would be fewer of them? I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in my travels across this province speaking with front-line health care workers, I have not once had any tell me: there are far too many nurses here.

That's why this is urgent. These decisions are about job losses and privatization of the health care system, and they're coming fast and furious. Every day that these decisions go unanswered, it puts more hard-working health care workers at risk. It is this government, Mr. Speaker, that is creating fear. At risk of losing their jobs, they are putting people at risk of degrading care levels for all Albertans. It also puts health care accessibility for all Albertans at risk. Privatization is not the answer. It is fundamentally contrary to a universally accessible system. Universally accessible means that no matter who you are, how much money you have, who you know, you will have access to the quality care that you need when you need it.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore ask that this House grant unanimous consent to debate this motion and ask the members opposite to stand up for the people of this province.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under Standing Order 42(1) “a motion may, in case of urgent and pressing necessity previously explained by the mover, be made by unanimous consent of the Assembly without notice having been given under Standing Order 39.”

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** Now we are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my hon. colleagues. I rise today to oppose the position of the report coming back on Bill 207. I put forward Bill 207 in order to protect, to elevate to law the standards of practice that we have in Alberta protecting conscience rights for medical professionals. It is deserved that it be in law as protection as those Albertans, like the rest of us, should know that they will not enter their workplace and be forced to act against their conscience on deeply held matters of conviction and morality.

I have that benefit here, as do my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. We are dealing with the important issues of government; these individuals are dealing with the important issues of life and death. Protecting conscience for these individuals is paramount not just for us, not just for the minority group that needs the protection, but for our society as a whole. That is why I am standing here today in defence.

If we look at a quote from Member of Parliament Garnett Genuis, she recently wrote:

Diversity isn't just about the colour of your skin or the symbols you wear. Respecting diversity means allowing people with substantively different views of life to express their opinions and to access professions. A society that does not understand this is not a free society. It is, therefore, vitally important to ensure that Charter protections for freedom of conscience are taken seriously.

There are a number of Albertans that have written to me, and I know that many members have received much correspondence on this issue. It affects individuals in a very deep and meaningful way, whether or not they know they have the protection of rule of law when they enter their place of work, where they're not being forced to choose between the most deeply held convictions on one hand and their job on the other.

A former ambassador of religious freedoms, Andrew Bennett, also wrote recently: “Doctors and other health care professionals cannot be uncritically bureaucratic in their work. They encounter a host of moral and ethical considerations daily, making moral judgements more often than most other professions.” I heard this time and time again, not from the majority of Albertans but from those select few that are in these professions, from those select few that do not have the same moral views as the wider society.

One palliative care nurse in Calgary wrote:

It is a real concern of mine that I would one day have to give up my calling [as a palliative care nurse] and so I feel strongly the need for the Conscience Rights Protection Act; so that my ability to nurse for those suffering and dying may not be jeopardized. That I may not have to tip-toe facility to facility in search of a job that would be “safe” for me to work.

These are real concerns for everyday Albertans. My goal is only to protect them in moving forward, because a society that protects conscience is a society that truly accepts plurality and diversity in Alberta.

One other letter I received was from a young girl who recently graduated high school and is in her first year of university. She was a Syrian refugee. She came to Canada just over three years ago. This was the same time that MAID became legal after the Carter decision. She wrote a long letter, and in that letter she mentioned a few things that I want to highlight to the Assembly today.

I never want to be told or forced to advise someone to [pursue] Euthanasia . . .

She's writing because, like many young Albertans, she wants to work in health care. She has plans to become a doctor. She wants to go to Oxford and serve.

3:10

I'll continue the quote.

In that case, the system would not be granting me freedom of conscience and belief. The system would be forcing me to do something I do not believe in and that is contradicting to what the Charter of Rights and Freedoms states. I was hungry to have the right of freedom and conscience rights and the idea of not having it is deeply [troubling to me].

She goes on to write that the happiest moment in her life was when she landed in this country, and she continues to say:

I fear that I might give up my future career and aspirations if I would be acting against my will and my conscience . . . I do not want to ever choose between my career and my moral convictions and neither do you.

I think that is particularly pointed, that she cares as much for your conscience rights, your freedoms that you have in this House and as a Canadian, as we should care for hers. She's not a doctor yet. She aspires to be one. That's why this sort of protection is so important.

I hear over and over again, not from the majority of physicians and surgeons, not from the majority of nurses – many or most of those have no problem with any of these procedures that are of deep social concern for the minority. But I ask ourselves: in a society where we know these procedures will continue on, in a society where we're committed to pluralism, to diversity – and that diversity, as Member of Parliament Genuis says, is not just a flaccid diversity, not just a diversity for show but a diversity of beliefs as well. My question to this Assembly is: how do we reconcile these? How do we reconcile these deeply held moral convictions with the fact that we will have a diverse society where there is a moral majority with a set of views, that they think services should be accessed?

I suggest that the solution is not being a bull in a china shop and running roughshod over the rights and freedoms of those individuals. I suggest the path forward, instead of turning doctors, physicians, and nurses into a question . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt; however, there is an issue that is important to the Assembly, and I'd just like to take a five-minute recess. If we can do that and if members of the Assembly want to pop into their respective lounges, I'll be happy to provide an update in moments.

[The Assembly adjourned from 3:13 p.m. to 3:22 p.m.]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the safety and the security of all members of the Legislature and staff I move that we adjourn until 7:30 tonight.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:22 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, December 2, 2019

Day 50

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, December 2, 2019

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered at this time? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to begin by acknowledging the trauma that happened here today and recognizing all the people who've been impacted by it, including people in this building, the staff who responded, and the people at home. I know many are feeling triggered today by such a public and tragic loss of life. People who die of suicide don't chose to die; it's something that happens. I grieve for the person who died today.

Tonight we're considering the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, a bill brought forward by the Finance minister, a bill that is one of two significant omnibus bills that have sweeping changes that I think have, I would say, the vast majority of them, detrimental impacts on the people of this province.

I'm going to start by talking about the child and family tax benefit credit, something that I know made a significant difference in the lives of so many in the four years prior to this most recent election. There are many things that folks on the other side criticize that we did, but I haven't heard anyone criticize lifting half of the children who were living in poverty out of poverty by supporting those families through the child and family tax credit as one of those initiatives. Of course, there were many others, including initiatives to support women entering the workforce through things like piloting the \$25-a-day child care plan, increasing opportunities for people fleeing domestic violence. The number of people that have talked about not being able to afford to leave a very unsafe situation is something that no one should ever have to feel, that they can't afford to leave an unsafe situation, that they can't afford to break a lease.

One of the things that I know made a significant impact, whether people knew it personally themselves or not – you don't always notice a tax credit, but you do notice if there's a little bit of extra money in the bottom of the bank account once you finish doing your taxes – is that new child and family benefit that was brought in, that benefited 165,000 Albertans for the better. Now we're seeing that 55,000 Albertans will lose the benefit entirely, and many will lose it partially.

The maximum benefit was \$4,998 per family for both credits, and it's \$5,120 per family under the new credit. But the income thresholds have been changed significantly. Under the old system it was paid to families with an annual net income below \$43,295, a very precise number, I know. The reason why it's precise is because things like this need to be indexed and adjusted every year, with income being indexed, but of course we know that indexing isn't something that this government is choosing to continue with. So instead of \$43,295, it's being changed to \$41,000. It used to be

\$1,155, or \$96.25 per month, for the first child; \$577, or \$48.08 per month, for the second; and the same numbers for the third and the fourth. Families with a net income between \$26,769 and \$43,295 could receive a partial benefit.

That's being changed significantly. As a result, many families will drop off the list completely: as we said, 55,000 completely removed from the list and about half removed partially. There are no details about the breakdown except that families with two children may receive \$593 and up to four children may receive \$889 per year. Families with a net income of between \$24,467 and \$41,000 may receive a partial benefit. These are things where I emphasize the word "may" because I think leaving these types of things up to consideration of "may" rather than "shall" certainly creates greater uncertainty for many families.

In terms of the Alberta family and employment tax credit, under the old system families were entitled to receive the following amounts: \$801 per year, or \$66.75 per month, for one child; \$1,530, or \$127.50 per month, for two children. There were further breakdowns for three and four, and they did escalate for those numbers of children. Instead, that's being changed to a net income of \$27,060 to \$41,000. The maximum working component will range from \$681 per month – again, that's a decrease from the \$801 – to a maximum of \$1,795, and again that's a decrease from the \$2,113 that it was previously. The credit starts to reduce at \$41,000, and it's phased out completely at \$61,000.

Again, not things that were campaigned for less than a year ago during what has been referred to as, you know, a massive mandate. There certainly were a number of things that a mandate was given on, but cutting income for low- and, I would say, below average income families certainly wasn't front and centre in the platform. I don't remember any campaign stops that emphasized that.

I'll touch base on the access to the future fund, too. It's pretty clear that the government has chosen not to prioritize postsecondary students or their families. The government went after the financial support for students by, of course, increasing tuition and increasing the student loan interest rate payments. That's another one. I talked to some recent graduates who said: "I was relieved when I graduated and tuition was frozen. Having those final years with a frozen tuition rate – not that tuition was particularly affordable, but at least it was frozen and predictable. But now having the interest rates upon graduation increase by a whole percentage: that's a significant adjustment."

Imagine, anyone in this House who has a mortgage, if your mortgage payments went up by 1 per cent with next to no notice and without the ability to shop around and get a better rate, because of course you don't have that when it's a student loan. It's a provincial loan in a province that's supposed to be investing in you and your future and instead unilaterally chooses to increase those payments by a per cent. That is a significant increase for many folks who are still transitioning to the world of work and are in beginning positions, and often the compensation isn't significant.

The purpose of the fund, the access to the future fund, was to support innovation and excellence and enhance and expand opportunities for Albertans to participate in accessible, affordable, and high-quality advanced education without restrictions. This is something that I think most of us would probably say. When people raise postsecondary with you when you're door-knocking, I doubt that they said: "You know, there are too many choices. It's too affordable. We need to reduce choice, and we need to make this more expensive." I imagine that you probably heard things to the contrary.

I know that when I grew up, in northern Alberta, there was AVC when I was a child, Alberta Vocational College, and then Northern Lakes later on. That was the only option, really, locally, and it was still a good drive, about half an hour either way, to either campus.

The opportunity of having to go away when I wanted to pursue an undergraduate degree: at least tuition wasn't as expensive as it is today, and it certainly wasn't as expensive as it will be tomorrow.

I worry when I look at the statistics. When I was studying education, I looked at the statistics about who is most likely to be able to participate in postsecondary, and who is most likely to become teachers was specifically the area that I was looking at because I was doing my education degree at the time, after my math degree and my religion degree. When I was doing education, it was very clear that it was middle- and upper middle-income families, that it was men more often than women at that time, that it was urban more likely than rural, and that it was people who had European ancestry more likely than people who were newcomers or who were indigenous to this land.

7:40

I remember thinking, "Well, at least I only had two of those sort of working against me, and at least my parents were in a position to be able to help me come to Edmonton and set up home here and make that transition." But many families aren't. For many students, particularly those who are from lower income families, the idea of taking on debt is already terrifying. The idea of taking on debt, not getting a tax credit for the tuition, and having your interest rates hiked up unilaterally is very scary.

When we're talking to students – and I imagine that probably all members of this House or at least the vast majority do spend time in schools and that students probably ask them about their career path, ask them about what it's like to be an MLA, ask them if they went to postsecondary – I would like to be able to say that we're working to make life better for Albertans. I've seen that on podiums in the past and seen it on podiums recent as well. I know that government likes to have those statements, and it's true. That should be our mandate. It should be our goal in life when we come to this place, to bring forward bills that will indeed make life better.

But what we are doing just in one small part of this bill, because this bill is so sweeping, just in this piece around access to the future, is that we are making decisions tonight that will make life more difficult, that will make life harder, and that is certainly not why I get up in the morning, and it's not why I door-knocked. I don't think it's why anybody in this place decided to run for office in the first place. I could be wrong. Certainly, they're welcome to tell me that they decided that they wanted to take away postsecondary funding and increase the rate of tuition and get rid of the tuition tax credit, that that was one of the big motivators for running for office. Feel free to tell me that. I would certainly be shocked, but, you know, if that's why you're in this place, then own it, I would say. The fund currently has \$58 million in net assets, as we understand, but that will of course be depleted significantly.

I'm going to touch on the cancer prevention legacy fund because this is something I did mention in second reading of this bill, I believe. Here we are again today, and I still think that there are so many questions left unanswered about why it is that the government feels so focused on reducing something or eliminating something, rather, that is focused explicitly, that had a sole mandate, and that had a purpose of preventing cancer, I think, something that should be a focus of this Assembly. I think it should be a focus of all societies that have the ability to do research. I think research into something like preventing cancer and, of course, curing cancer as well should be a top focus.

This fund supports teams that do work around prevention. About 45 per cent of cancers in Alberta, we know, are caused by factors that can be changed, and about 6,700 cancer cases could be prevented every year. I know that this is something, I imagine – not unlike suicide, cancer impacts virtually every family in our

province. Cancer is something that about half of us, at some point in our lives, will personally experience, and of course anything that could be done to prevent that, to prevent that hardship on the individual as well as on families, I think, should be a focus of government.

That's making the ethical argument. There's, of course, the fiscal argument, too, with regard to how much we spend on cancer treatments every year, and rightfully so. We need to do everything that I think is within the proven evidence of being effective in treating cancer. I think that that should be afforded to all Albertans. I don't think that I want to be in a place where some could get treatment and others could not. But, again, if we can prevent nearly 7,000 cases of cancer in our province every single year, that is something I think we should all strive for and work to make a priority.

And that's the thing. When you have these dedicated funds that are separate from general revenue, they have a dedicated mission. They have a dedicated focus, and their focus really has been very significant. I'd say that their legacy is one that I think deserved an opportunity to continue rather than be absorbed into general revenue and be at the whim of the government of the day, whether or not they would have that dedicated focus. I would certainly hope that this government would have that dedicated focus.

I also hoped that this government wouldn't be laying off nurses and teachers, just as was foreshadowed in the prior election. We were told that no such thing was going to happen, and then here we have it. In Calgary alone, 300 Calgary public teachers have received layoff notices. On the weekend, Friday, we learned that 5,100 – and counting – health care workers will receive layoff notices in the near future. It certainly isn't something that was campaigned on. In fact, when we asked about it during the election, we were told that we were fearing and smearing and that, of course, no such thing would happen.

Here I am, saying, "I have deep concerns about the cancer prevention legacy fund being disbanded and moved into general revenue," and I am told: "Oh, don't worry. We'll still fund that work. We're just not going to do it from a dedicated body." I find that really hard to swallow. You know, fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. I'd say: fool me over and over and over again, and no wonder I have no faith when I'm told that something is being taken away but don't worry; it'll just be absorbed and will be handled somewhere else. I sincerely wish I could believe that. I really do, because it's not my desire to see us live in a place where things like cancer prevention have to be considered budget cycle by budget cycle. I think that cancer prevention is something that we should all agree we are committed to, and as a government and an opposition, as an Assembly, we shouldn't be eliminating cancer prevention from an area of focus for this government.

I think it's something that every Albertan would expect their government to care about, preventing cancer and doing what they can in what are arguably the world's best research institutes. Here in the province we have two fantastic research institutes, between Calgary and Edmonton, doing cutting-edge work in this area, and that work needs to continue. We worked hard to attract these researchers who are here as well and the folks who do the work through Alberta Innovates in terms of the health side and, prior to that, the Alberta health futures initiative, I think it was called. I'm sorry; my brain is a little full today. This is something that has been happening for years. We've been attracting and properly funding research in these areas because we believe that Alberta should be a leader and that Alberta should be driving for positive change and the elimination and prevention of cancer. The fact that that is being dissolved, this cancer prevention legacy fund, through this bill, I think, is something that is deeply troubling to myself and, I imagine,

to many Albertans, who expect their government will do more to support cancer prevention and research, not less.

Then, of course, there's the lottery fund. Something that I've had raised with me a number of times is around the community facility enhancement program, CFEP. These are grants that are being cut this year by 35 per cent, and that's approximately 100 projects that won't be funded this year. There are also cuts to the community initiatives program of at least 8 per cent, but we don't know exactly how much is going to be cut because when we've asked those questions, we haven't gotten clear answers. The minister wouldn't say how much that funding is now for grants that used to be offered for initiatives around antiracism and status of women initiatives.

These are all areas that concern me that relate directly to this bill. I understand that the minister has given verbal assurances that the funding from the lottery fund will continue to support community programs, but the numbers certainly are telling a different story when we go through those budget line items. So there is concern that this move in this bill will further the lack of transparency and the separation of talking points from reality.

7:50

Cutting the STEP grant. Many of us, I imagine, in this place – I worked as a STEP student. I worked for the Alberta Community Crime Prevention Association. It was probably one of the many pieces that set me on the path to where I am today, working with law enforcement, many city police as well as RCMP, working with community agencies, working with social justice organizations to make sure that we were focused on a crime prevention through social development model, one that was proven to be the most cost-effective as well as the least damaging to individuals or to communities. Something that I think relied heavily – that STEP grant not only turned into a job for that summer, but it turned into part-time employment for at least, I think, another two years while I was in university. It's hard to remember. The months kind of blend together sometimes. I'm proud of the work that we did in that organization and some of the legacy that continues today.

It also helped me learn more about the John Howard Society and the work that they did, particularly at that time, around the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the work... [Ms Hoffman's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak at this time? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I, too, want to carry on where my colleague for Edmonton-Glenora left off. I think the first thing that I want to say is that this bill is regrettably taking many wrong turns in terms of what's necessary in our province. I know that there are many proposed cuts buried within the bill, and I think all Albertans as a result will feel the effect of this austerity over time.

I think the first thing that I want to talk about is the ripping up of the city charters fiscal framework. Of course, that was a great deal of effort and work that was put in place by the previous government, and as you know, Mr. Chair, it was signed on to by the two large cities. When the new government came in, it was summarily ripped up in terms of the presentation of this budget before us. I think the two large cities, rightly so, and probably other municipalities around the province are wondering what the sense is in signing contracts or signing agreements with this new provincial government as they don't keep to other contracts that are before them.

The city charters fiscal framework allowed the understanding that when the economy was doing well in Alberta, cities, those two cities in particular, would do better, and when the economy wasn't doing very well, as is the place now, where we're about half a per cent of GDP growth or less when we get to the end of the year under this new UCP government – they understood that they would go up with better years and down with not-so-good years. With the framework that is being worked on, the local governance fiscal framework, they will do worse with good years and even less well in bad years, Mr. Chair, as a result of not seeing \$1 per \$1 increase with regard to increases in the economy and increases in provincial revenues and seeing only 50 per cent of that come through.

Now, I know the explanation has been, "Well, you know, these are tough times, and everybody has to tighten their belt," but that doesn't really make sense in terms of where municipalities are at. They provide, I think they say, somewhere around 80 or 90 per cent of services within their municipality to citizens, and they receive about 10 cents on the tax dollar. The agreement we had in place with those two large cities was a fair one. They agreed to it, and they understood it, and it was a model that we were looking at for other municipalities around the province. But, as I say, it was summarily ripped up by this UCP government.

The next thing I want to focus on, Mr. Chair, as my colleague did, is around the lottery fund. Where we worked with a commission to oversee the investment of those funds, that is being changed now. The lottery fund is disestablished, and the money from the fund shall be paid into general revenue. Many people come up to me and say, you know: "What is happening? Will we see the same amount of funds? Will we see the same sort of process put in place?" They really don't know, and they're, like me, suspicious that the general revenue fund will see the monies and that there won't be the commitment that was there with the previous government, that had been there for a long time, in terms of how the lottery fund worked. I was on one of the first lottery fund boards, back in the year 2000 or so, for the city of Calgary, and we worked very hard to disburse those funds to all of the appropriate nonprofits that were eligible for those funds. That was how it operated many, many years ago, and I think that that was a better system than the current one that is being put in place by the UCP.

I want to go on to the Municipal Government Act, Mr. Chair. I want to talk about the changes that are proposed there. Of course, the changes, for the most part, are around funding. That will be a significant change for municipalities. They won't be able to anticipate, on a very big basis, the money coming from the local government fiscal framework, as I mentioned.

I do want to say that there are many other aspects of this bill that don't seem to be in the best interests of public transit, green infrastructure, municipalities around the province. One I want to focus on – and I'll shortly provide an amendment to it – is with regard to the green line in Calgary and the valley line in Edmonton. Mr. Chair, that's found from page 97 to page 102. We know that when this bill came out, there was a great deal of consternation and, frankly, surprise by the two cities, where they again felt they had an agreement in place. They did have an agreement in place with regard to funding, and that funding was summarily, again, ripped up. The agreements were changed, and they cannot count on the monies coming from the provincial government.

Frankly, they're scrambling to ensure that their projects can go forward in the future and doing all sorts of things at their own city councils to talk about: you know, if we can't anticipate when the monies are coming from the provincial government and they are far less than we anticipated, can we go back? In Calgary's case there was a motion brought forward to look at perhaps ripping up the

contract with the Calgary Flames that was put before their council for discussion at their budget deliberations last week. Mr. Chair, that's the extent that councils not only in Calgary but around the province are subjected to as a result of the changes that this government has undertaken with regard to signed agreements that were put in place.

I'd like to put before this House an amendment with regard to the green line in particular, and I'd like to essentially go back to an agreement that was signed with the city of Calgary in particular.

You know, I've seen and heard different ministers talk about: we're not really doing anything that's untoward; we're providing clauses in the contract there that make sense or are buried in other contracts around the province with regard to large projects. Just before I read this out – I'll give it to the Clerk for her to read – I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that I am not aware of the clauses that are talked about by the Minister of Transportation and others as being normal clauses for projects of this size.

I'll give you a minute to read it, and then I'll read it into the record.

8:00

**The Deputy Chair:** If the member could just read it into the record now for everybody's benefit, and then please feel free to continue with your comments.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you. I will continue with my comments. The amendment is to Bill 20, and as I said, this starts on page 97, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, be amended in schedule 3 as follows: part A, section 7 is struck out; part B, section 9 is amended by striking out subsections (3) and (4); and part C, section 16(1) is amended by striking out clause (c) and substituting the following so that it would read:

- (c) for the purpose of section 5(2), prescribing the funding that will be provided and disbursed to the City of Calgary;
- (d) for the purpose of section 5(3) and (4), respecting amendments to the grant agreement;
- (e) for the purpose of section 6, prescribing the funding that will be provided and disbursed to the City of Edmonton.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll continue.

As I said, it's very disturbing, and I'm speaking from kind of channelling the people at the councils in Edmonton and in Calgary, where they had agreements in place with regard to major infrastructure, the likes of which neither city has undertaken in the past and which they both called their biggest infrastructure throw of their history. In Calgary's case – and Edmonton might be somewhat similar – it was about 4 and a half billion dollars, with a "b," Mr. Chair.

As we know, what's before us here is essentially changing all aspects of that agreement, and it changes it by putting everything at the discretion of the minister and also with regard to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Mr. Chair, we know that the Lieutenant Governor in Council is bound to work with orders in council from cabinet, so really what this is doing is putting the minister in a position to hold funding, change funding, and get out of funding entirely. That person would take recommendations to cabinet, and cabinet would deal with those recommendations and pass them on to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. I don't know how you can, as a major city in this province undertaking the biggest civic infrastructure construction work they have ever taken on, deal with a situation where really they can be subjected to 90-day clauses, where they can be given notice to terminate the grant agreement without cause. It's onerous, it's draconian, and it shouldn't be in this section 3. It should be struck from section 3, and that's what my amendment gets at.

If we want to see our cities develop, if we want to move people on a mass transit basis, if we want to construct these projects that will take, you know, five to 10 years to complete – no one would undertake this work with a 90-day clause built into it. They would be risking quite a bit and not being good fiduciary partners for their citizens, and they would be taking on the risk themselves. That's not how these agreements have been happening in the past. That's not how these major infrastructure projects take place. We don't put all the risk on one party and say: all the benefits go to the citizens in that community if you take on the risk. We want the city of Calgary, the city of Edmonton to undertake this work, to put people back to work. It would be 20,000 people, Mr. Chair, in Calgary's case, that would have the benefit of long-term employment if this were to go forward in the way that the agreement was proposed. As this agreement is proposed now, those jobs will not happen as a result of the tenuous agreement the province has made with the city of Calgary.

Really, Mr. Chair, the whole bill has some problematic pieces to it. Section 3, schedule 3 at the end is, in my estimation as a Calgarian, the most problematic and should be amended so that we can ensure the benefits of the jobs, the employment, the emissions reduction. I've heard estimates of a quarter of a million people per day being transported by a future green line when it is built. It starts out much lower because of the shorter amount of green line constructed in phase 1, and phase 2 they're looking at currently in terms of how it gets constructed. But those jobs, the emissions reduction: none of that happens if the city of Calgary does not feel confident with the money coming from the province of Alberta. That's why I'm recommending that these pieces be put in and the offending pieces be taken out.

Mr. Chair, Edmonton is a different matter. It's also mentioned in my amendment: "(e) for the purpose of section 6, prescribing the funding that will be provided and disbursed to the City of Edmonton." I know many people want to see the valley line built as well, with almost an equal number of employees being taken on from the private sector, the public sector. That, of course, is at great risk if we don't see changes to this as well.

Mr. Chair, there are a number of tax credits – I want to move on to those for just a second – that will be lost with this bill. As we know, ending those tax credits, seven of them, will have a great impact across this province. Just last week the Calgary Economic Development corporation mentioned that one of those tax credits being lost – I believe it was in the interactive digital media area – means that a thousand more jobs won't be coming to Calgary. Really, we're going backwards in terms of business attraction as a result of the provisions in this Bill 20.

I would just hope that members of this House see the reasons for addressing these changes that I've put forward in the amendment and know that by striking out the clauses that are offending, Calgary and Edmonton will both have greater certainty on when monies are coming, and they won't feel at risk on their own with regard to the province pulling out of this funding agreement in schedule 3 within 90 days. It's totally inadequate for a project of this size. It leaves them scrambling, and that would be far too onerous on a city that is trying to do the right thing by investing in public transit for their citizens and the province of Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Just for the benefit of the House, this amendment will be referred to as amendment A4.

Are there any hon. members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, specifically with regard to the amendment that has been proposed by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Again, I am going to limit my contribution tonight to those amendments, the first of which is to strike section 7 from this act. The second is to amend section 9 by striking out subsections (3) and (4) of the act. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo has also proposed a substitution, as identified in part C of the notice of amendment that we all have, requiring that section 16(1) be amended by striking out clause (c) and substituting the following: (c), (d), and (e), that deal with section 5(2), sections 5(3) and 5(4), and section 6.

8:10

Let me say this, Mr. Chair. You know, part of the reason why we brought in the local government fiscal framework act is in order to make sure that we are funding our municipalities at a level comparable to the rest of the country.

The Member for Calgary-Buffalo was the previous Finance minister that oversaw record debt and deficit like we have never seen before. If you will recall, Mr. Chair, in all of the four years that he put forward a budget, we ran billions and billions of dollars in deficit. The former government inherited about \$1.3 billion in surplus and turned that into a minimum of \$6.9 billion in deficit for each of the four years that they were in office, and they racked up debt like we have never seen before, a provincial government-wide debt in 2015 that was \$12 billion, and they took it by March 31, 2019, to nearly \$64 billion and, by all estimates, on a path to a hundred billion dollars.

That was the fiscal environment that this government inherited from the previous government. They embarked on reckless spending as if there was a pot somewhere or a tree from where we pluck money. That was the record of this member that has now put forward an amendment, you know, that would essentially make it impossible for us to fund our municipalities, to allow us to live within our means and fund them in a way that is comparable to the national average.

By the way, Mr. Chair, you know, there is no question, as the MacKinnon report concluded, that we spend 20 per cent more than the rest of the country, so it's irresponsible, I would submit, for the former Finance minister to be putting forward this type of amendment, that only goes to return us to the era that the people of this province rejected in record numbers on April 16.

As Minister of Municipal Affairs I am proud of the fact that we replaced the city charters fiscal framework with a local government fiscal framework act that works for each and every single municipality in this province. Mr. Chair, when I was travelling around this province this past summer, what I heard from those municipalities loud and clear was that they do not want us to pick winners and losers. They want us to be fair across the board. They expected, contrary to what the members opposite would like us to believe, that there was going to be a period of fiscal restraint in order to bring us back to balance and make sure that never again would we face the circumstances that we face now as a consequence of the members opposite's fiscal and financial recklessness. So on that basis alone, it's obvious that I will be opposing very strongly the recommendations contained in section 7 in the proposed amendment.

Now, he also proposed striking a clause that we had inserted, Mr. Chair, with respect to the funding for the various LRT projects, in schedule 3 of Bill 20, the public transit and green infrastructure project act, a clause that essentially, you know, puts on notice both cities to make sure that when you are embarking on that level of unprecedented investment, in the billions of dollars, in physical

infrastructure that we have seen in this province, that we are prudent and diligent in making sure that the project timelines, the costing, and all of those things are on schedule.

We have been clear. We have committed \$1.5 billion, you know, to these projects in Edmonton and in Calgary, and we have made it clear to our municipal partners that we are prepared to follow through with them, but at the same time we also expect them, our partners, to make sure that these projects proceed in a fiscally responsible manner. What the member opposite would like us to do is what they have done in the past four years, which is that wherever they can find money, just throw it without any strings attached. No wonder then, Mr. Chair, that we find ourselves in this awkward position, having to make sure that we live within our means, you know, something that previous Conservative leaders worked so hard for. There was a time in this province when we were debt free, and, you know, in just four years they ballooned that debt.

Mr. Chair, this amendment that the member has put forward, including, you know, a provision to allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to be able to make bylaws, I mean, rules and regulations to make sure that the intent behind both the local government fiscal framework act and the public transit and green infrastructure project act remains. This is something that you would see in virtually every piece of legislation that grants the Lieutenant Governor in Council the power to make regulations, or in some instances a minister to provide a ministerial order. So for all of those reasons it's obvious that none of this amendment would work for me, and for that I will be opposing it.

But, Mr. Chair, I think it's very important, again, as I have said, to reflect on how we got here. At a time when we should be focused on rebuilding our economy, making sure that our focus is on jobs, the economy, and the pipeline, which has been what we campaigned on, the business for which we obtained a record mandate from the people of Alberta, that ought to be the focus of this Chamber. And I will implore all the members opposite to join us in that particular effort because when we succeed as a province economically, when we clean up our house, the two biggest cities of Edmonton and Calgary are going to be the biggest beneficiaries because those are the two places where we spend the bulk of our provincial resources. They are our two biggest cities, and they are important. Edmonton, after all, is our capital city. They are an important partner.

8:20

I have said privately and publicly that even in these difficult economic circumstances that we face because of the disastrous policies of the members opposite, we must continue to build. Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, with respect to those two items, specifically speaks to that. You know, in Budget 2019 we maintained MSI funding for 2019-2020 a hundred per cent, even given the current climate that we face. All we are asking for is a modest 9 per cent reduction by the time the local government fiscal framework act kicks in, two years from now. Two years from now, Mr. Chair, so that we can bring balance to our finances and begin to grow our economy and finally begin to pay down the record amount of debt that members opposite have bequeathed to this province.

Mr. Chair, once again, I think that it is irresponsible for the members opposite to be putting forward an amendment that seeks to undermine the hard work that we have put in on this side of the aisle to rein in the financial recklessness that we saw in the last four years. One of those is that the previous NDP government overprojected their revenue by \$6 billion, and then you wonder why we had to make the tough decision to cancel the city charters fiscal framework, that was negotiated on the basis that we were going to have an additional \$6 billion in revenue. That did not happen. That

wasn't the case. So the question I have for the members opposite is: where do they expect us to get that extra \$6 billion from?

Obviously, what they would prefer us to do is to continue to borrow and saddle the next generation with multibillion dollars in debt, a debt they did not ask for. You know, we are spending \$2 billion in debt-servicing costs, \$2 billion that I would prefer to spend in this city, in Calgary, but, Mr. Chair, it's something that we sent overseas to bond masters, who are not living in this country, because, again, of the policies pursued by the previous government.

So it is disappointing, Mr. Chair, to see this type of amendment. This is not the type of amendment I would expect from a former Finance minister who ought to be aware of the dire economic and financial circumstances that we face as a province. On that particular business I will implore all members of this particular House to vote against this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has risen.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to the amendment. While I was listening to the remarks from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, it sounded like he completely missed what this amendment is doing. Anything and everything the minister said has nothing to do with the amendment at hand. I will read section 7, for instance. The amendment suggests that section 7 be struck out. Section 7 reads, "the Minister may amend any term, condition or provision of the grant agreement or a funding agreement by regulation." What this provision is doing is concentrating power in the hands of cabinet, in the hands of the minister. What we have seen from this government: when they got the power, they abused the power; they even fired the Election Commissioner who was investigating them. So they can't be trusted with these kinds of powers on an important project that is vital to the city of Calgary.

I will read a little bit about the project that's at hand. It's not just merely a transportation project. It's about the future of Calgary, it's about the future development of Calgary, and it affects thousands and thousands of people in Calgary. Stage 1, for instance, will have 20 kilometres of LRT track. It will have 14 stations, 18 bridges, one kilometre of elevated track between Inglewood/Ramsay and 26 Avenue stations, three park-and-ride facilities with a total of 1,800 to 1,900 stalls, three tunnels, four kilometres of city tunnel from 20 Avenue N. to Macleod Trail, one light rail vehicle maintenance and storage facility, approximately 40 to 45 low-floor vehicles, each 40 metres long. The worth of the total project: \$4.6 billion. On the opening day the benefit listed for this project: it will carry 60,000 to 65,000 Calgarians – that's a huge number – serve all Calgarians by connecting to major activity, employment, and industrial centres outside the downtown core of Calgary; connect over 2,300 existing affordable housing units; support businesses, employees' travel choices for 191,000 existing jobs. So it's a vital project for the city of Calgary.

What I heard from the minister has nothing to do with what we asked to be amended. He said that the former Finance minister had a deficit. What the former Finance minister projected was \$6 billion. What your minister is projecting is \$8 billion, \$2 billion more than what we projected.

**An Hon. Member:** UCP math.

**Mr. Sabir:** That's your math.

Otherwise, everybody else will agree that your deficit is higher in this budget than what we had projected. You have completely

failed to understand why this project is vital to the city of Calgary, and I would suggest that instead of hurling insults at the city council, calling them spending freaks, go sit down with them, talk to them, understand why it's important and why this . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but I'm sensing that this has turned from a third-party conversation through the chair to a direct conversation across the aisle, so I would ask the hon. member to just speak through the chair. Thank you.

**Mr. Sabir:** Through you, Chair, I want to say that it's an important project for Calgary. It's an important project for the city's future development. As an MLA for Calgary I think it's my responsibility to speak about the importance of this project.

What I was saying, through you, Chair: the reason that I heard for rejection of this amendment has nothing to do with the amendment itself. What the amendment was trying to do was take, I think, these kinds of arbitrary powers away from the minister and leave it where it was before.

I think the right way to do it, Chair, will be that the city of Calgary, the city of Edmonton have some certainty. If they have planned for this project for years, it shouldn't be the case that this government can take everything away just on a 90-day notice. That's way too arbitrary. That puts the future of this \$4.65 billion project at risk. That puts the future of this important project at risk which will help carry over 60,000 to 65,000 Calgarians every day. It's creating jobs, and once it's complete, it will help us connect those who are working in the downtown core with a job. It will help people who are living in affordable housing units. It will provide them with an affordable form of transportation. Also, it will help us reduce greenhouse gases by 30,000 tonnes, and that's equal to 6,000 vehicles being taken off the road on the opening day of this project. So it is clearly an important project.

Through this piece of legislation, where they have done many other things, the things they are doing with this project are that they are concentrating arbitrary powers in their hands, that will put the future of this project in jeopardy. That creates uncertainty for the city of Calgary. That creates uncertainty for Calgarians. That's why this amendment, brought forward by my colleague the MLA for Calgary-*Buffalo*, is an important one. It seeks to amend and make changes that are needed to create that certainty, to assure the city of Calgary that they will get the funds needed to complete this project. That's why I'm speaking in favour of this amendment.

**8:30**

Through you, Chair, the minister also mentioned that when they campaigned, they campaigned on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. I don't think that anywhere in their big, huge platform it was mentioned that they will put this kind of project at risk by cancelling the charter framework, city charters, by putting in arbitrary powers like that, that they can cancel this project on a 90-day notice, whether it's in Calgary or Edmonton. They didn't campaign on it. That was not the promise that they made. That's not what Calgarians expect from them.

Calgary is already hurting. We are seeing each and every day that we are losing jobs in Calgary. Even today we learned that 370 people were laid off at Husky last week or so, in a couple of weeks. These are the projects – not only are they creating jobs during the construction phase; many future jobs depend on these projects. So far what we have seen from this government is that they brought forward a \$4.7 billion corporate handout, and what are we getting in return? Energy companies like Husky are getting \$233 million from their handout, and they are laying off Albertans here in Calgary. They are investing in Wisconsin, they are investing in

Saskatchewan, and they are investing in the U.S. We are already losing jobs, and putting that kind of uncertainty in the legislation respecting this project will not send a good signal for the job market in Calgary, for future jobs in Calgary.

What we are seeing here because of their policies: companies like EnCana, who benefited from their handout, from their policy, are moving their investment down south. So far whatever policies they have brought forward have not created any jobs. They have not attracted any investment. What we have going in Calgary through these kinds of measures, through this kind of concentration of power in the hands of cabinet and ministers: they're putting the future of this province at risk as well. It's creating huge uncertainty. Ask Calgary city council; ask Calgary's mayor. They are also elected representatives of the people of Calgary. They won't agree with this government's policy to do so. What so far we have seen from this government, from this minister, through you, Chair, is that they have been hurling insults at them that they're spending freaks – they're this; they're that – but this is not something that anybody in Calgary would want to see.

They're talking about modest reductions of 9 per cent. Sometimes 9 per cent reductions are huge. Ask somebody who is living on AISH. I am just, I guess, digressing a little bit. We added an increase equivalent to CPI. That's less than even a 2 per cent increase sometimes, but it's \$30 a month and almost \$370 a year. Sometimes these increases are huge, and cutting, like, 9 per cent: we are already seeing the impact in Calgary. It's already projected that property taxes are going high. It's already projected that services will be impacted.

That's why I will be supporting this amendment. It's an important amendment. It restores certainty for this project. The government, if someday they don't like what's going on in Calgary, won't be able to cancel it on a 90-day notice. It's an important project for Calgarians: many jobs depend on it right now and, in the future, how the city shapes, how jobs will be created, how people will be able to connect jobs with recreation, with their loved ones, with each other. Having these kinds of amendments – the minister will be able to amend the funding formula; the minister will be able to cancel it on 90 days' notice – is absolutely not acceptable. It creates uncertainty.

I will urge that all members of this House, especially those who are from Calgary, should stand for this amendment. It will bring certainty, and that's exactly what the city wants. The city wants this project to go forward. It's an important project for, I think, many different reasons, that I talked about as well: the creation of jobs, future job creation; how our city shapes; reducing congestion in our downtown core; reducing greenhouse gases, taking 6,000 vehicles, on opening day and per day, kind of from the streets. It's an important project. The government should take this amendment seriously, and the government should take Calgary seriously, which is already hurting, and should not put the future of this project in jeopardy.

That's why I'm speaking in favour of this amendment, and I urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen to speak.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, let's be clear. What the hon. member opposite just said, in summary, is, you know, again, for us to be able to provide funding without any oversight whatsoever as to how that money is spent. Section 7, that the member referred to, that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo asked us to strike, is an amendment to a grant agreement or funding agreement. "The

Minister may amend any term, condition or provision of the grant agreement or a funding agreement by regulation." This is something that the members opposite used all the time in the various legislation that they passed. [interjections] It is a standard practice to grant the Lieutenant Governor in Council . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, there will be ample opportunity, given how debate follows in Committee of the Whole, for any member to speak on this amendment, so I would just ask that the hon. minister continue and that the House afford him that opportunity.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, we are making an investment of a record \$1.5 billion, and the members opposite would not want us to make sure that that money is used prudently. That in itself is the rationale behind their request to strike section 7 from Bill 20.

Mr. Chair, you know, they also ask us to strike sections 9(3) and (4). Section 9(3) reads:

Any proposed changes and related information submitted to the Minister under subsection (2) must be approved by the Minister prior to the City proceeding with the changes to the project.

This is particularly important given the fact that in recent months we've heard that the proposed costs for that particular project were growing by the billions. We are in this province struggling with . . .

**Member Ceci:** The money is only one part of it.

**Mr. Madu:** One point five. The money is just 1.5: that's what I heard. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo just said – \$1.5 billion is nothing to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** I didn't say that.

### Chair's Ruling Decorum

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, please. There is one hon. member currently with the floor, and that's the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I invite an exceptional debate between both sides of this House, and in order to do that and in order to do that effectively, then I would say that other members will of course have the opportunity to stand when that opportunity arises at the appropriate time, my guess is possibly once this member is done. Then we will move on to the next member. That would probably be the best way to carry forward.

If the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs could please continue.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You can tell that this has been my experience in this House, where there is heckling after heckling. Members on this particular side will always give them the deference to allow them to speak and debate issues on the floor of the House. Then it is always difficult for us to be able to hear the responses to their questions.

8:40

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Chair, back to section 9(3), that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo is, again, asking us to strike. These are large-scale projects, and what section 9(3) is seeking to do is to give the minister that oversight responsibility to review changes, if any, to the proposed project. Again, that is what they are asking us to strike. No oversight whatsoever: no wonder we found ourselves on this fiscal cliff, because they have no idea what oversight means.

Mr. Chair, they are also asking us to strike subsection (4) from section 9. I read subsection (4):



The Minister may modify or impose additional terms and conditions prior to approving the proposed changes to the project.

This is in relation to subsection (3). If the minister looks at the particular project, he may then make a recommendation to the city to require them to make changes so that the project can proceed in an orderly fashion and in accordance with the intent behind the project. Again, it speaks to oversight and making sure that issues of costing, timelines, and relevance are maintained in a large-scale project of this nature.

The member also proposed changes to section 16(1) with respect to striking clause (c) and substituting the following. Again, if you go back to section 5(2), that the member is urging us to amend, section 5(2) says:

Notwithstanding Schedule E of the grant agreement, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may by regulation prescribe the funding that will be provided and disbursed to the City of Calgary.

You know what the member is urging us to do, Mr. Chair? "Prescribing the funding that will be provided and disbursed to the City of Calgary." So if there is reason, you know, for the minister, by regulation, in accordance with subsection (2), to prescribe the particular funding, he is seeking to remove completely that responsibility. That is not how a responsible government functions.

Mr. Chair, the member is proposing changes to section 5(3) and section 5(4). Subsection (3) reads:

Notwithstanding Schedules D and F of the grant agreement, the Minister may by regulation amend the auditing and financial reporting requirements that must be met by the City of Calgary.

Again, it speaks to sound financial and auditing principles. Again the Member for Calgary-Buffalo is asking us, you know, not to have anything to do with whether or not this, arguably one of the biggest investments that we will make in this particular sector, is carried out in a way that protects hard-earned tax dollars. A requirement to amend the audit and financial reporting: got it; it is not required. Again, no wonder we found ourselves \$64 billion in debt, a record deficit.

Second to last, Mr. Chair, subsection (4) says:

Notwithstanding Schedule A of the grant agreement, the Minister may by regulation amend the eligible and ineligible expenditures.

Again, sound business practice when it comes to large-scale projects, to make sure that the confines of this particular project remain as tabled.

Finally, Mr. Chair, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo's last amendment has to do with section 6 of the public transit and green infrastructure project. Section 6 reads:

Notwithstanding any term or condition in a funding agreement that sets out how funding will be provided and disbursed to the City of Edmonton, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may by regulation prescribe the funding that will be provided and disbursed to the City of Edmonton.

Again, seeking to gut any oversight over this large-scale project. That, I will submit, Mr. Chair, would be irresponsible in a time that we are seeking to rein in the recklessness of the previous government and show that we are providing value for hard-earned tax dollars and making sure that we do not saddle ourselves with multibillion dollars in debt, that we are not trying to dig ourselves out.

For the members opposite, you know, to provide this type of amendment is disappointing. On that basis, Mr. Chair, this amendment has no business making it to this Bill 20. I will urge all of my colleagues to vote against the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has risen to speak.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise to speak to this amendment to Bill 20. I'm sure I'll have the opportunity to speak to my concerns around Bill 20 as a whole, but of course we have this amendment before us. I appreciate the Member for Calgary-Buffalo bringing it forward.

I also just want to point out the fact that the minister just spoke twice to this amendment, and I always appreciate it when ministers are willing to speak, but the fact is that the second time the minister rose, he didn't say anything different than he did the first time. He didn't answer any of the questions that were brought forward when the amendment was brought forward. If the government is going to take part in this debate with us, which I do appreciate, I would appreciate it more if they actually brought something new to the table when we bring up our concerns.

Just a few things that I want to point out as this debate continues. December 15, as my city councillor pointed out, will be the 10-year reunion, I suppose, since the valley line LRT route was approved. Here we are 10 years later, much too late, I would argue, for this to be moving forward. But, thankfully, under our government I had the opportunity to stand with an NDP government, with the Minister of Transportation, and the federal Minister of Transport as well and commit the funding for this very important piece of infrastructure in our city, in regard to the valley line LRT, which is affected by this amendment as well.

When I see this government bringing forward clauses within their legislation saying that they are able to cancel – and my biggest concern here is not necessarily the 90 days. As the Minister of Transportation continues to say, that is a normal thing, yet he has not been willing to bring any examples of that forward. But my bigger concern is the without-cause clause in there. Now, I have repeatedly questioned the Minister of Transportation in this House, and unfortunately that minister has continued, from what I can tell, to bring forward facts that do not align with reality. The minister said that in the federal legislation – now, I would appreciate it if the minister wants to correct me if I'm wrong here, but from what I could tell, there is no without-cause cancellation clause in that legislation. The 90 days is in there. The without-cause piece is not. That becomes a concern when we look at the ability of this government to create relationships.

**8:50**

I mean, when this government ripped up the city charter fiscal framework, their first attack on our municipalities, and then, further to that, when the city mayors were concerned that this government was not going to hold up their end of the bargain, that first of all they supported when we were in government, when we brought forward the legislation to commit this funding to the municipalities – then, again, during the election they said that they were going to still keep that campaign commitment and keep that funding commitment – well, you can only imagine that the big-city mayors were very concerned. The mayor of Calgary ripped that piece of paper up and threw it in the garbage because that agreement, that this government committed to, was not worth the paper that it was written on.

Once again, how are these municipalities and these big-city mayors supposed to support this idea when, first of all, they bring their concerns forward and what happens? The Minister of Justice attacks the mayor of Calgary, calling him a liberal mayor, calling them, you know, fiscally irresponsible and whatever else they decided to call them that day, and then they came back to this House and said: "The municipalities should trust us. You know, we have their best interests at heart." Well, unfortunately, I don't see how the municipalities and the mayors specifically could trust anything this government has to say, especially when the conversation has

not even been had in the first place. This was thrown at the mayors and thrown at city councils.

Another concern I have is that, once again, the Minister of Transportation in question period in response to my questions answered, saying that he has not heard from any city councillors that they are concerned about the without-cause clause in Bill 20. I find that very hard to believe, Mr. Chair. It makes me question whether this minister has even had a conversation with any of these councillors, because the people that I've talked to have been very concerned about that 90 days but more specifically about that "without cause." Once again, the minister continues to say things that I don't necessarily believe, and I'm not sure that the city councillors do either, yet this government wants to consolidate power within their ministry.

Once again, they say that they should be in charge of the fiscal accountability of the cities in this instance, that they should have the final say on whether they get the funding from the province or not. It is absurd, Mr. Chair, because on one hand we have a government that's saying, "You should trust us with your money, and we should tell you if you're allowed to spend it on this," but on the other hand you see mounting levels of debt. The Minister of Municipal Affairs just stood up talking at length about the amount of debt that we took on, not recognizing the amazing movement that we saw in infrastructure debt reduction. But this government is now moving forward with a \$4.7 billion handout to the largest corporations. Just yesterday we saw that Husky is pulling \$500 million out of their capital spending, but we're supposed to and the city is supposed to believe that this government is going to make the right decision for them. Well, I don't think that's the case at all.

Now, once again, it's been 10 years since the valley line west LRT route was first approved. It is time – and I have heard from my constituents that it is time – to move forward on this. Unfortunately, what this government is doing is downloading their debt onto municipalities. The government is saying that they are not going to commit to the first couple of years of funding, as was promised, which only means that the city, the municipality, is going to have to pick up that debt-servicing cost, which is actually going to cost them even more to pay for because cities cannot get that money at the same rate as the provincial government.

Once again, I fully support this Bill 20 amendment. I think that the 90 days without-cause cancellation clause is absolutely ridiculous. Maybe the Minister of Transportation wants to clarify that, the without-cause pieces, in the federal legislation, and then I would apologize for my mistake, but I would be interested to hear from him. Thank you to the member for bringing this forward.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to speak on this amendment.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise in this House most evenings, not so much this evening. But I will speak to the amendment to Bill 20 because, of course, this LRT project also runs through my riding of Edmonton-McClung, and it means a great deal to my constituents as well. It's passing strange, perhaps not so much, but I'm very curious about the government members' positions with respect to how things must be with a long-term project, one which is supported by government, perhaps government money, whether that be in the public sector versus the private sector. If it's a long-term project such as maybe an oil sands project, which is, of course, over the course of many years, from initial investment to oil being produced and then shipped and exported or produced and refined, if it's a long-term project like that, then the government members are all for stability and

guarantees and making sure that the security is there for these large-industry members and investors to proceed with the project without delay, without uncertainty, knowing for sure that from point A to point B that project is going to be supported and that they have the backing of the government's support without question.

That goes as well for other infrastructure projects, Mr. Chair; for example, pipeline projects. We've heard often from members opposite, on the government side, about how important it is to provide security, certainty, long-term stability for major infrastructure projects like pipeline projects, for example, yet those pipeline projects are something that usually will enjoy the government's support. Knowing that, of course, for commitments of many years and major, major infrastructure dollars and government guarantees, it is very important for the security and completion of those projects that the security be there.

The same thing goes, Mr. Chair, for other private infrastructure projects like refineries, for example. They're usually a significant number of years from initial planning to financing to engineering to design and eventual construction and the bringing into commission of refineries. That type of project is something that government members also suggest requires stability, long-term support, unwavering commitment. Uncertainty is not something that can prevail during these types of long-term commitments according to government members when they are in support or speaking in support of major private-sector infrastructure projects.

However, Mr. Chair, I find it more than contradictory when government members, on that side, in speaking to this amendment, will talk about their 90-day clause without cause, the escape clause which they are now trying to implement, which this amendment hopes to reverse, as something that is somehow necessary for the stability of the government's position and their budget. Well, it certainly creates a whole lot of uncertainty, a whole lot of damage to the long-term projects that are the green line in Calgary and the LRT expansions in Edmonton.

These projects are no more dispensable than some of the major infrastructure projects that have been undertaken privately, Mr. Chair, yet the distinction that we see between them, even though they may be comparable – and sometimes the public infrastructure projects have more impact in terms of creating jobs and employment and investment and public good and social good over a long period of time. Even with those projects where we now will see the government hoping to maintain a 90-day clause without cause to retract those projects, we find that the certainty and security for those projects is something that the government values less because they're public infrastructure. Somehow they seem to be dispensable projects.

It's in opposition to what they consider essential for private-sector projects, whether they be oil sands, whether they be pipelines, whether they be refineries or other major infrastructure projects that quite often get put on hold or delayed for years until they end up being way more expensive than they otherwise would have been had they been implemented, put in place, constructed on time, rather than being put on hold.

**9:00**

This amendment, by which we seek to reverse the 90-day clause-without-cause proposal in the government's bill, is something that would go a long way to maintaining the sanctity of the need for long-term certainty in major infrastructure projects, whether they be public or private. It's not something that is totally switchable when you're building a public versus a private infrastructure project. There is a question of public dollars in play quite often with the private infrastructure projects: the major infrastructure projects are reliant upon government support, subsidy, long-term financing, financial backing, yet those private-sector projects rarely get

interfered with or stopped in the middle of a major project, because for some reason they seem to be sacrosanct and untouchable, and the government is very much the first one to come to the defence of maintaining certainty of investment in infrastructure projects that are private sector based.

However, in this instance, Mr. Chair, we see public infrastructure at risk, projects that are being put on hold, where the government has adopted the word "pause" to make it more palatable to the public. But pausing or putting them on hold or invoking a 90-day clause is something that the public is painfully, increasingly aware of in this province. There's a long, long, and growing list of infrastructure projects that this government has put on hold, indefinitely paused, put into the black hole of never-never land and probably never going to happen land. What's happening in this province is that people are asking: "What's next? Who's next? Who's the next target?" People see their neighbours being targeted. They see their neighbouring cities being targeted, where infrastructure projects are being put on hold, delayed, are probably never going to see the light of day, are possibly up for targeting in the next budget cycle.

In this particular budget cycle, Mr. Chair, we see the Premier indicating: oh, it's not so bad; it's just a certain percentage level. Well, multiply that percentage level by four, and you've got a pretty significant amount of infrastructure being delayed, obstructed, or taken, perhaps, right off the table.

It's not something that this government, I think, really has felt the wrath of Albertans about, but I'm sure they are prepared for an earful because indeed that is something that they're going to get. When an infrastructure project so important to the public as the green line in Calgary is as well as the LRT in Edmonton – the LRT goes through my constituency of Edmonton-McClung as well as that of my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday and that of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora as well and has been waited for for 10 years. It affects the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, pretty much everybody from Edmonton centre to the west end, following the line. And then the valley line as well.

All those major infrastructure projects having to do with the LRT are now put under question because the government wishes to maintain their 90-day clause without cause, creating uncertainty and also creating an environment where future investors, future bidders on projects like these may very well have second thoughts about going ahead and bidding on large public infrastructure projects in this province because of the uncertainty the government has created in their strategy of maintaining for themselves a 90-day clause without cause. If indeed a project may end up getting put on the back burner or halted after so much has been invested already, after 10 years of painstaking public consultation, after deciding upon the routes, if that project is then potentially going to be, at the stroke of a pen, put on hold or potentially never ever going to get built, investors and even engineering companies, contractors are going to be wanting perhaps not even to bid. If they do bid, they're going to be wanting to build in an insurance clause to protect themselves in the event that the project gets put on hold.

So this government, which prides itself on being so much the proud builder of infrastructure and the entrepreneurial wizards of the long term and the only ones in the province that are capable of governing with a mind to the bottom line, is in fact creating a situation where long-term infrastructure projects of a public infrastructure nature in particular are being put at risk of escalating costs because of their practice now of retaining unto the cabinet a 90-day clause without cause, a kill-the-project clause.

I wish the government would be consistent in its application of their ideology towards their supports for long-term infrastructure projects in terms of how much they see the need to be giving certainty and security for these projects over the long term. What

this amendment to the bill proposes to do is to return us to a situation of that security, where this 90-day clause without cause is rescinded, where the government accepts that public infrastructure is as indispensable as private infrastructure and that it requires and deserves the protection of that long-term certainty that governments should be giving to public infrastructure projects in a similar way as to private infrastructure projects by not giving themselves the right to yank the carpet out from underneath those who would be investing in these public infrastructure projects as well as the taxpayer, whose public money is at risk and whose wait for the social good and public benefit of these projects has been, in this case, over 10 years.

It is very insensitive, in fact, uneconomic, and poor governance on the part of the current government of Alberta to put in such a clause, to create such uncertainty, add a high level of cost, and damage the long-term viability of many future public infrastructure projects by creating a climate in the province of uncertainty and lack of trust of the government's willingness to proceed from point A to point B to get a project actually built. It's not a situation that one would have expected from a so-called free-enterprise government but perhaps one that's not too surprising to see from a government that does seem to have public infrastructure and public servants in their gunsights as a target for their cutting of budgets. It's a system of imbalanced priorities.

It begs the question, as I asked before: what's next, and who's next? In my particular riding of Edmonton-McClung there is the Misericordia hospital, and there's an emergency ward that this government has said that they would build. They would complete the project that we announced when we were in government, a \$65 million addition, a new emergency department at the Misericordia hospital. I'll tell you what, Mr. Chair, I've got a sneaking suspicion that that's the next one on the chopping block. We'll be seeing what happens in the next budget cycle.

Be warned, Albertans. There are projects that you have planned for, that you have spent numbers of years hoping for and campaigning for. They've been approved, they've been announced, yet they might be yanked. The Misericordia hospital emergency ward is one that I fear this government has targeted next for chopping. Be warned that this might be happening. I for one as well as other members of my caucus will be certainly ready to mobilize those individuals who want to support the continuation of this important infrastructure project to make sure that the government follows through on the commitments that we made and that they said they would honour.

Mr. Chair, with that, I conclude my remarks with fair warning to the government that public infrastructure projects deserve to be treated with the same respect and capacity to reach their fruition as private infrastructure projects. This requires the certainty of a long-term commitment and certainly is threatened by the inclusion of a 90-day clause-without-cause part of a piece of legislation, that threatens to crater these projects in midstream and threatens the long-term viability of public infrastructure projects, that deserve the certainty of those that are found in the private sector.

I'll conclude my remarks and invite all members to support this important amendment to revert to a situation where 90-day, pull-the-rug-out clauses without cause are not part of the legislation.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

On amendment A4 I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen to speak.

**9:10**

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in regard to this amendment to Bill

20, and I appreciate the Member for Calgary-Buffalo bringing it forward. You know, it's interesting. I've spoken a number of times on Bill 20. I guess there's sort of a common theme that runs through it, although I struggled for weeks to try to figure out what it was, because you have your film and tax credits, you have the tax credits for the high-tech industries, you have these changes to the municipal governance and so forth, advanced education and so forth. It seemed quite disparate, but when you start to put it together, the common theme I'm starting to see is that this current UCP government is bent on consolidating authority and power over so many areas in our economy.

You know, Mr. Chair, this could be quite a dangerous exercise, especially, let's say, with the green line or the valley line in Calgary and Edmonton, respectively. These are very significant projects that are key to the economic development in each city moving forward for the next 20 years or more. We know that there is for both an appetite for building each of these projects, and you have, very carefully and over a long period of time, a joining together of three levels of government to fund them. So for this UCP government now to come forward and to put any question as to their sincerity around moving forward on these lines undermines the whole thing. When you have three levels of government putting forward such a significant amount of money, it's not easy to do. If one-third of the partnership is suddenly demonstrating less than a rock-solid commitment to building these lines, then it calls into question the viability of being able to do that in the future, moving forwards.

You know, I found it interesting that the Minister of Municipal Affairs – and he did it twice, because he did the same speech twice, so I got the message, for sure – seems to say: well, since there's such a great fiscal instability, we're not sure what to do. The message that I get pretty loud and clear from this minister is that he's not committed to these projects and that he says: well, we have to balance the budget. Well, you have to build the things that you're responsible to build as well, right?

We know that the green line in Calgary, say, for example, is a major investment in how the future of the city is going to look like economically – right? – transportationwise, housingwise, for development. I mean, there are literally things being built, all planned along the line. I know that in the Ministry of Education we had met together with the city to try to align new schools along the green line so that, you know, kids could use the green line to go to school. Just building infrastructure around nodes: this is how big cities grow and develop over time. You see successful 30-year plans or more. I think this is part of a 30-year transportation and development plan that integrates housing, retail, schools, hospitals – you name it – with the LRT line as sort of the trunk of the whole thing.

Don't play with these sorts of things when they're already in motion, right? Don't just say for the sake of consolidation of power that, you know, without any particular reason you would somehow have a 90-day withdrawal on these important projects. I mean, that is irresponsible governance, Mr. Chair, quite frankly. I'm really proud of the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo bringing forward this sensible amendment, that I encourage everyone to support.

We know that here in Edmonton, for example, any degree of interference that we saw with the current leg of the valley line really slowed things down, right? If you haven't driven along the length of the valley line, it goes from downtown Edmonton, across the river and then up Connors Hill to the Bonnie Doon area, down Argyll Road and so forth down south. I haven't gone very much further south than that. I'm a north-side guy. It has been delayed significantly, and some of those delays were to do with interference by levels of government in the project. The federal government stuck their nose in and, you know, demanded that it be a P3 project.

That slowed the thing down by a long shot, right? The fallacy of either saving money or efficiency or anything by building it as a P3 – we learned very well from the P3 disaster of building schools here in the province of Alberta that it's a dead-end road.

Again, by making sure that projects are organic and that they are being managed by the experts on the ground to ensure the efficiency and what's needed in a city, that's the way to be a responsible manager at a provincial level, not sticking your fingers in, changing the rules in the middle of the game – right? – and expecting anything but uncertainty and consternation as to whether, you know, the project is a go. Is it a go in a timely manner? Are we going to have delays that will just end up costing the project an awful lot more money over time?

I think that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has got a good amendment here. I'm certainly behind it, and I hope that others in the House will follow as well.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen to speak on amendment A4.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to address a few things I heard coming from the Minister of Municipal Affairs a little while ago, particularly the city councils in both Edmonton and Calgary: I get the impression that he believes that they're junior legislators in this province and that they don't have the skills and abilities that he does with his seven months of sitting in this Legislature. You know, I just need to remind him that there are people on Calgary city council that have been there for 26 years. The mayor has been there for nine years, since 2010. That city is the largest urban centre in this province and the source, along with the area around it, the census metropolitan district, driving the major part of economic leadership in this province. They know what they're doing. They have built over time the west line LRT, the northeast line LRT, the south line LRT, and of course they want to add to it with regard to the green line. The other significant projects that I can think of that they've built and delivered on time, on budget are things, like the downtown convention centre, major interchanges throughout the city, costing hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. Chair, you know, this amendment is not one that's saying that more money needs to be given to the city of Calgary or the city of Edmonton for their major LRT projects. It's not saying that any less money needs to be given to them, the province's money which we committed to both Edmonton and Calgary. In Calgary's case it was \$1.5 billion. I'm not recommending that more needs to be given. I'm recommending that what needs to be given needs to be assured to them that it's coming. We know that with this budget it's been pushed off four years. A dribble of money is going to be happening in the next four years, and then after four years the balance, leading out for several years, will be delivered. That, of course, puts significant challenges in front of the city of Calgary. This amendment seeks to correct the onerous parts of Bill 20 that no one counted on in the city of Calgary. They were surprised when this bill came out and objected to it, of course.

9:20

You know, I think what I object most to is the Minister of Municipal Affairs – and I'm taking from what he's saying, but it's like he treats them like a junior order of government, that they're less legitimate than this order of government, the provincial government, or indeed the federal government. Well, that party doesn't think the federal order of government really knows what they're doing. That's unfortunate as well, that they believe that.

I just want to correct some other things. When we were in government, Mr. Chair, we targeted operational spending, operational investments at population growth plus inflation growth. We tried and stuck to that effort to bring that spending down to that level, that combined level of population growth plus inflation. Those were tough years, 2015 and '16. As you know, they were recessionary years in this province.

But '17 and '18 were growth years, and they were growth years to our GDP as a result of our work to make sure that people kept working as well as the fact that David Dodge, the former Bank of Canada governor – you know, you have your expert who guided you on the blue-ribbon panel; we had our expert, David Dodge, former Bank of Canada governor – said very early on that the recession will be tough on this province and billions will be leaving because private investment won't be coming to spend that money here because of the recessionary years. He said: because those private investment dollars are not going to be here, use your public dollars to keep this province going. As a result of our investment of those monies, which this minister says was irresponsible because it racked up debt, Mr. Chair, I can tell you that in 2017 the GDP in this province grew 4.6 per cent.

Where did it go in 2019 after the policies of the UCP have come in? It's .5 per cent. It's flat or it's going to be in recession as a result of these policies brought forward by Janice MacKinnon and others in the blue-ribbon panel. In 2018 the GDP grew just around 3 per cent. Again, that's a number that won't be seen by the UCP in their management of the budgets and the GDP in this province in 2019. It won't happen.

Lastly, Mr. Chair, I note that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has been speaking to Calgary media and talking about how the Calgary council, you know, is spending way too much money and being critical of Calgary council. I just saw a newspaper report, and the mayor is firing back on all of that stuff. He is saying that maybe this government is trying to distract from their destructive budget, that's having an impact on the city of Calgary right now with a 33 per cent cut on police funding, with a reduction in MSI that's going to be a problem for the city of Calgary going forward, with changes that they're bringing forward that weren't discussed, weren't talked about, weren't negotiated, were just as a matter of course brought forward and that said to the city of Calgary: "Here. Now deal with this." Deal with it they will, but it's not because they have a good partner on the other side. It's because they have a draconian UCP government who, out of all costs, is saying: you're going to have to tighten your belt, and we don't care if it results in higher taxes. It's going to result in higher taxes. That's clear.

I just wanted to correct the record on all those things, that we're not talking about more money going to the LRT green line. We're talking about treating the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton as legitimate partners in the development of infrastructure in those cities, something they have been doing for decades, Mr. Chair, and they'll do for decades after this one-term government is gone.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Transportation has risen.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll just make a couple of brief comments here. The hon. members across seem to be wilfully short of memory, and that's okay. Sometimes I'm short of memory, too. I just hope it's not quite so wilful as what I think I detect here. We've had some of these discussions in question period and made it clear that the members opposite are complaining about a cancellation clause in the provincial side of the funding, but on the federal funding for the very same LRT line there's a cancellation clause, and somehow the members opposite don't seem at all

troubled by that, nor do they seem to understand the inconsistency in being troubled by one and not at all by the other. In fact, they seem to think that one doesn't exist and the other one does, but in fact both of them exist.

The funding was promised in our campaign. The hon. members are fond of referring to the section of the legislation that talks about the cancellation clause – and I'll remind them again that there's a section for cancellation in the federal funding – but they're ignoring the section that I think the city would be interested in, and it says that the full \$1.53 billion for Calgary and \$1.47 billion for Edmonton is payable, which means promise made, promise kept where I come from.

I know that they have to say these things because they're trying to distract from the disastrous record that they had when they were in government and the fact that they didn't get these things completed. I guess you could hardly blame them because after being the only one-term government fired in the history of Alberta and having racked up debt at a record rate, which was the accumulation of deficits at a record rate, and having created unemployment in Alberta at a record rate, they've got a lot of records.

Actually, you know what? They've got gold medals in all the wrong sports. They have left 170,000-odd Albertans out of work. They have taxed Albertans with their carbon tax in the most destructive way, which made everything more expensive for the least vulnerable Albertans, including municipalities, by the way, who also complain constantly about the NDP's carbon tax, and which also made it more expensive for seniors, people on low income, charities, nongovernment organizations, churches, community associations. The folks across the aisle were severely . . . [interjections] You know, Mr. Chair, I can hardly hear myself talk.

#### **Chair's Ruling Interrupting a Member**

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I feel compelled to still hesitate to interrupt. However, I would say that the crosstalk in the House isn't helpful for me to be able to hear the individual with the call at the current time. As I've stated a few times in today's evening session, there will be ample opportunity for members to speak after the individual with the call. I think that there have been some repeated comments from the other side of the House which I would welcome in the course of debate. However, at this time it is the Minister of Transportation who has the floor.

Please continue.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to do this, and I'll note that while the Member for Calgary-McCall was speaking, we sat quietly and listened regardless of how little sense his comments made. When the Member for Calgary-Buffer spoke, we sat and listened regardless of how little sense that made. I'm just here correcting some of the nonsense that we heard earlier. [interjections] See? They still can't be quiet.

You know what? The fact is that the city of Calgary was not well served by the member opposite. The fact is that I don't think I voted ever for a budget there because the tax increases were always too high, and I'm not sure whether the member opposite ever voted against one of those. But you see, Mr. Chair, therein lies the problem. At some point somebody has to think about what things cost, they have to think about the value of things that they're buying, and they actually have to think about the poor people that have to pay the bill. See, there's a place where there's a big difference across the aisle

from where we are, because we actually do think about the value of things, we think about the cost of things, and we actually think about the poor people that have to pay the bill.

**Ms Hoffman:** Then why is your deficit bigger?

### **Chair's Ruling Interrupting a Member**

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I have to call order at this point. I have, in the last 40 minutes, probably made the same interruption four or five times, so I would just ask that – at the present time the individual with the call is the Minister of Transportation. Do not worry, for if there is a member from your caucus speaking, then I will afford the same opportunity for that member to speak on this amendment. So if the hon. member could please continue, then after he is done, there will be, like I said, ample opportunity for debate on this amendment.

Please continue.

9:30

### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll try to hear my own thoughts, if I can, over the din.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying before the folks on the other side were heckling as they could, the big difference between our side of the aisle and the other one is that we actually have to take the time to consider who has to pay the bill, because there is no such thing as government money. Whether it's a city government or a provincial government or a federal government, it's only people's money. It's the taxpayers' money. None of it's our money. We just are hired through the election process to be stewards of that money, and we all have – I try to remind myself of this every day, so I'll say it out loud for everybody's benefit – temp jobs here. We only temporarily steward the money that belongs to the citizens, but while we're doing that, on this side of the aisle we actually think about those poor citizens when they have to pay back the debt that's accumulated by their government, where the folks on the other side seem to think that it comes from a money tree or some other place, and they never consider that the money has to be paid back.

Therein lies a great deal of the difference, Mr. Chair, and therein lies the fact that while the other side wants to spend \$3 billion without any control over how the money is spent, we actually think it's . . . [interjection] Again, I can hardly hear myself for the former Minister of Finance that got fired after one term, Mr. Chair. It's unbelievable that, although I listened quietly the whole time he was talking and never said a word, the hon member just can't seem to stop yapping during the time when someone else is speaking.

However, Mr. Chair, I will say that the other side seems to not actually concern themselves with who has to pay the bills for their bad habits, which is why the other side was fired after one term, which is why the worst Finance minister in the history of Alberta was fired after one term along with all of his teammates, which is an indication that he never learned anything during the time on city council, during the time as Finance minister and in the last few months in opposition hasn't really put that together. That's why I'm saying these things, to help the hon. member so that he might be more successful in the future.

Mr. Chair, this is important. It's important because the cities want their LRT. It's important because our government wants to help them pay for the LRT. It's important because in the legislation there's a section where we've said that we have set aside \$3 billion so they can build their LRT. But then we go to the difference between our side of the aisle and the other side of the aisle. Our side

of the aisle simply wants to make sure that the money is spent on what the city said it was, which I think is a reasonable way to steward the money that is not ours. The folks on the other side want to hand over \$3 billion with no strings: no checks, no balances, no belts, no braces, no way to control and make sure the money is spent on what it is intended for.

Now, Mr. Chair, we trust the cities, but to quote Ronald Reagan, the phrase "Trust, but verify" is a good one. All we're saying is that we do want to give them this money, we do want them to build their LRTs, we do want them to be a success, and we want those LRTs to serve the good people of Edmonton and Calgary. We just think it's our duty as stewards of the taxpayers' dollars to have some mechanism to make sure the money is spent on what we said it was going to be spent on, which again takes me back to the difference between this side of the aisle and the other side. We care very much about accountability with how the money gets spent. The other side seems not to care a whit.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen to speak and has the call now, please. [interjections]  
Order.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and talk about the amendment from my hon. colleague from Calgary-Buffalo. It's an amendment to this omnibus bill, Bill 20, and we certainly need to reflect on what actually is in this bill. You know, on a day like today, when we've had a significant tragedy on the steps of this Legislature, I am pleased to stand up and speak about how important it is to support Albertans. Unfortunately, there are some changes that are happening here in our province that are hurting Albertans. Certainly, if we can improve this bill, which I believe this amendment does, then we can absolutely improve the conditions for Albertans.

First of all, on section 7, it says at the beginning of this amendment to strike out section 7. I just want to refer to that. "The Minister may amend any term, condition or provision of the grant agreement or a funding agreement by regulation": that's pretty carte blanche, Mr. Chair. It is, like: pretty much do whatever the heck you want to. Is that good legislation? And it's by regulation, so it doesn't have to be an order in council. I mean, for sure this bill would be much more fair – we know that in a good government there are checks and balances. This sort of removes them. It is quite audacious that the government would put this kind of clause in here.

Also, other aspects of this bill talk about specifically Calgary, and many of my colleagues have talked about Calgary. In section 5(2) it says: "Notwithstanding Schedule E of the grant agreement, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may by regulation prescribe the funding that will be provided and disbursed to the City of Calgary." Of course, that's about the green line. That also is a significant heavy hand. It's taking away the authority of Calgary, which did have a plan, and saying that they can delay it, which seems to be what this budget indicates. What havoc that creates for our largest municipality. Is the government realizing what they're saying? You know, in a very heavy-handed way they're taking away the authority of our major municipality to make some choices and decisions.

I am just going to refer to a CBC article about this. This is what Mayor Nenshi said. Regional infrastructure has taken a hit of \$50 million, and the green line is now a big problem, Nenshi says. The city was supposed to receive \$555 million for the planned LRT over the next four years, but it's now down to \$75 million. According to the mayor it's 20,000 construction jobs that are now in the balance. He says, and I'm quoting: I don't know how you complete the green

line on time, and we certainly don't have the debt capacity; I don't think it's too much to say that the project itself is in jeopardy. So by this legislation they are creating a lot of, tremendous difficulty for the city of Calgary. This amendment would improve that and make it not just sort of a unilateral decision by this government, that actually would be respecting the city of Calgary, not what this government is doing.

Secondly, in another clause we're referring to the city of Edmonton. They are delaying, actually, the funding for that. You know, these are millions of dollars in delay, which causes, of course, some more jeopardy for a project. As with many of my colleagues on this side of the House, that expansion does go through my riding, sort of Stony Plain Road over to Meadowlark mall. It goes through my riding. I'm concerned about that because that does give people in Edmonton-Riverview much better access to the downtown core, to the west. It is a very important investment by this government. Really, the government broke an agreement with those large cities about that. This amendment, brought forward by my hon. colleague, certainly would go a long way to support that project to go ahead.

You know, all of us come to this work with different backgrounds, and I come to it from social work. One of the things we always ask about any kind of policy is: "Who benefits? Who doesn't?" So who's benefiting from this? I'm very concerned that the cities are really hurting by this and also regular Albertans who need access to transit. We know how fundamental and important transit is. We also know that seniors often don't want to drive when they're older, so having access to efficient, affordable transit is so key. This is who the government is hurting. They're not supporting them. This project was committed to, well on its way, and it's just very tragic that by this omnibus bill they're rolling back supports for many people who would be taking advantage of that transit system, for sure.

**9:40**

If we ask ourselves more about who benefits from what's in this bill, I just want to say another aspect. You know, the hon. member who was speaking just previous to me seemed to tell us what we thought. I don't know, but it kind of irritates me when people tell me what I think or why I'm doing something. I think it's disrespectful. It's actually very important that we care enough to let other people express themselves, but all sorts of ideas about why we did what we did: I just really take a lot of exception to that because one of the things we did was we really committed to making sure that average Albertans were supported. This bill is rolling that back.

One of the things they're doing is that the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit are being rolled into one in this bill. In so doing, that's changing the threshold, so fewer families actually are eligible for that; 165,000 families will receive less, and 55,000 families will no longer be eligible. I'm concerned about that. Those are average Albertans that aren't going to have those supports. That's what I care about. I care about people being supported. You know what else that the Alberta tax child benefit did? It reduced child poverty by 50 per cent in this province. That is something I stand here so proud of, and I would do it again.

I would not give a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway. I would give money to people who are on a low income, for children living in poverty, and I would increase the minimum wage. I would do the things our government did, and you know what? It wasn't crazy spending. It was actually redistributing the wealth because we know that in Alberta we have the highest inequality of any province in Canada, and that's nothing that I'm proud of. I'm distressed by that. The top 1 per cent – I have the stats here – earned 46 times that of

the poorest 10 per cent, the largest gap of all the provinces in Canada. So what the heck are we doing? Continuing to give all sorts of money to the elite, \$4.7 billion to corporations: why are we doing that? Why are we deindexing AISH and the Alberta seniors' benefit? We're pushing people down. We're just supporting another elite group. That's not responsible government. Actually, that's the role of government, to develop a more robust middle class, so we as a government lifted the floor by increasing minimum wage, supporting all sorts of programs for people. What this government is doing is the complete opposite, and we have increased inequality.

We know that income inequality is particularly striking in urban areas, with the major Alberta cities, Edmonton and Calgary, coming in second and third place after Toronto for the largest income gaps between the top 1 per cent and the bottom 10 per cent. That's really nothing that I'm proud of, and that's actually one of the things that motivated me to get into politics. It's because I wanted to create more equality in this province, and that means supporting people with important programs. But of course this bill isn't doing that. This bill is continuing to erode programs for Albertans. Certainly that's not a good move, and we know that by this amendment that actually helps it. It takes away so much power in the hands of the minister, which seems outrageous to me. We really have checks and balances in politics, and the minister shouldn't be able to just by regulation decide what contract is signed, what clause goes in. You know, these are multimillion dollar projects, sometimes billion dollar, so it just seems ridiculous that this would be going on. I just want to speak very clearly that I am in support of this amendment.

I also just want to talk again about who benefits and who doesn't. This omnibus bill also talks about, you know, many tax credits. They're taking away some tax credits. In my riding there's the film and video association. It's called FAVA. FAVA is, of course, an umbrella organization advocating for film and video. I met with a young woman. Her name is Katrina Beatty, and she's a film producer. Because of the delay, of not continuing to accept applications for the screen-based production grant – this year I know that the minister did make some amendments, and now apparently it's . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you. However, I think that at the present time we're dealing with amendment A4, and I would say that we should make efforts to be relevant to that. The only reason I've chosen to do this at this time is because the premise of your statement, after you stated that you were done talking on amendment A4, was to then say that you were going to start discussing the bill proper. I would say that there will be ample time for you to do that. I'm not trying to stifle your debate on the bill. All I'm saying is that at this present time I think that it would be a more effective use of discussion in the House on this amendment to stick to the amendment. When this amendment does end up being accepted or defeated, then we will move to the bill proper. If you could please continue with that in mind.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, I just want to refer again to the amendment, then, put forward by Calgary-Buffalo. Again, I just think it's, you know, extraordinary to think that a minister has this omnipotent power. Striking out section 7 would be very important. You know what I think? It's a bad habit that this government has. It thinks that it can do things sort of unilaterally, without involving the big cities.

The hon. member who spoke before me talked about the bad habits of our government. Well, I just want to talk about their bad habits. One of the things that they're doing is firing teachers and nurses. They seem to care more about – and he was part of this government – sky palaces and private planes and going to London and five-star hotels. This government has some bad habits, very

unlike our government, which did not have any of those scandals because – you know what we did? – we invested very much in supporting people and caring about people, regular Albertans, not elite people.

I absolutely want to support this amendment. I know that for the cities, both of them, it would improve their contract. I think that they've broken good faith with the large cities. Both mayors, you know, were shocked that these huge changes were made. These amendments would talk specifically about how to make it better and not delay funding, not reduce funding.

This is all very important to fairness and justice, which I really encourage the government to understand, the people on the other side. You know, caring about all Albertans is their job. It's not just about the elite. It's not just about corporations. It's also about regular people who need to take transit. It's also about regular people who are involved and need some help with public programs, kids in schools, all of those people. It's not just about that top 1 per cent, which this government seems to think are the most important. They're busy creating more inequality, which is not what is fair or just.

I think that I've made myself clear on this point. With that, I'll sit down.

9:50

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. I would just ask the hon. member to table the CBC article at the appropriate time.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A4?

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving to the bill proper, Bill 20, I see the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 20.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 29

#### Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered at this time? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen to speak.

**Member Ceci:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'll start with comments first and later put forward an amendment. The things I want to say with regard to Bill 29 – of course, it builds on the bad Bill 7, which we dealt with in the spring. That bill I think you could probably call picking the pockets of municipalities around the province. It certainly doesn't do a whole lot for municipalities, who want stable and predictable funding from their local tax base, from the province in this case, maybe even from the federal government. They want stable and predictable funds. Bill 29 does none of that. As we heard with Bill 7, the concern of many municipalities was that it puts them in a race to the bottom with other municipalities around the province trying to attract businesses, that then would be, you know, tax exempt or tax deferred for a period of up to 15 years. That is not stable. That's not predictable in terms of those tenants, which they believe are really important for them to address their needs going forward as municipalities.

The only – only – good thing about both bills 7 and 29 that I can envision is that they are enabling legislation, which means that municipalities have the ability to use them or not. Mr. Chair, I think

we're finding out every day that municipalities are not using this enabling legislation, bills 7 and 29, when it gets royal assent. You know, partially or fully exempting taxes for nonresidential properties as in Bill 7 and now for machinery and equipment, which can be in place for up to 15 years, is not something that grows a municipality. In fact, it's something that puts it at risk of being not sustainable in the future.

The other thing I wanted to remind members of this Legislature about is that it doesn't really give new authority to municipalities. They can already do things like cancel, reduce, refund, or defer taxes under section 347 of the MGA. We know that that has been used by the city of Calgary. It has been used by Chestermere. It has been used by Lethbridge. That enabling legislation is already in place. Just as the previous reaction to Bill 7 from various mayors around the province, including notably Iveson and Nenshi – they were worried that it would create a race to the bottom, and it doesn't address the property tax problems that those cities, particularly in Calgary's case, are trying to address.

Mr. Chair, there's another thing that Bill 29 won't do. The machinery and equipment already is in place in many municipalities, not all. You know, will it attract new business to this province? That's suspect. It may attract a feeding frenzy amongst municipalities who try and eat each other's lunch with regard to new businesses by offering them up to 15 years of tax referral or exemptions.

Mr. Chair, the other thing that I wanted to bring out, of course, is that this bill distracts from what municipalities really need, which is a solid framework that will replace MSI. What we know with regard to the local government fiscal framework is that it will not replace MSI in the same way as the MSI agreement or the city charters agreement that we had put in place had addressed, that if revenues grow at the provincial level, they would grow at the same rate at the municipal level. That's not happening, so stable and predictable funds aren't guaranteed as we had put in place. This bill does nothing that municipalities can't already do for themselves if they chose to. They have that power under section 347. What we see with this is nothing that gives them anything more than they already have.

I'm going to put forward an amendment soon, Mr. Chair, but I just wanted to say that, you know, I don't believe this is what municipalities were asking for. I think it's a missed opportunity. This bill and the previous Bill 7 are not something that municipalities, as I understand, as I can remember, were clamoring for. They weren't asking to be given an opportunity to give up 15 years of taxes for businesses in their area. In fact, with M and E that's not something that the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton can use. I don't think they have the infrastructure in place, that asset class in place in their municipalities to take advantage, if they chose to, under this enabling legislation. It really treats municipalities differently in that regard.

The numerous cuts to municipalities on top of this potential cut, if they use this, I just want to remind members of the Legislature, include things like cuts to the Alberta community transit fund, cuts to police officer funding throughout the province, infrastructure funding cuts, MSI cuts. There's a clawback of the fine revenues, we know, to municipalities in this province that the province is undertaking. As I talked about with the local government fiscal framework, we know that the revenue will grow slower in both of those areas as a result of the changes.

It seems like, you know, a better approach would have been to stay with what our previous government put in place, and that's tax credits that were being utilized across this province. But the giving up of funds in this Bill 29 and Bill 7 are very much like the failed policies that were put in place by the UCP government in terms of



the \$4.5 billion they're giving away to wealthy corporations as a result of giving taxes away in terms of the handout to those corporations. This is more of that, Mr. Chair, more of that in Bill 29, which is the same as Bill 7. I think that we're seeing that approach as not being successful because we're not seeing the reinvestment of monies in the province from those corporations that received those monies, \$4.7 billion. We're not seeing jobs return as was promised by this UCP government in their platform promises of pipelines, jobs, and the economy.

**10:00**

What we are seeing, Mr. Chair, is concern and worry from municipalities, who believe that, you know, their stable, predictable funds are getting more unstable and less predictable as a result of this enabling legislation, which they probably won't use. Why would you when you can't count on the province following through with its promises? Why would you work to give up money at the local level that you are counting on to invest in your community?

With that said, Mr. Chair, I want to bring forward an amendment, and I'll wait till it gets handed over to you with regard to speaking to it. The original is on the top.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, if you could please read this amendment, which we'll be referring to as amendment A1 for debate. If you could read it into the record and then, just in the interests of time, continue with your remarks.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you. I will. I move that Bill 29, Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019, be amended in section 2 by adding the following after clause (d):

- (e) by adding the following after subsection (9):
  - (10) Within 6 months of the coming into force of the Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019, and every 4 years after that, a committee of the Legislative Assembly must commence a review of the amendments made by that Act and submit to the Assembly, within 6 months after beginning the review, a report that includes any amendments recommended by the committee.

That, Mr. Chair, is endeavouring to address the fact that I believe – and I haven't heard anything to the contrary – that municipalities may not be utilizing this act, just as they're not utilizing Bill 7. I've not heard any anecdotal information. I've heard the minister stand up and say, you know, that this county or this MD is using Bill 7. I think what we need to do is get some actual evidence that the bills brought forward are having a positive impact on the communities that the minister wants to see use them.

Without any evidence, Mr. Chair, what we really are getting is, like, trophy legislation to match or mirror the kinds of things that the UCP government has done with regard to their taxation policies for corporations, which, unless somebody can point to where it's had a positive effect, haven't had an effect of growing jobs or increasing investment in this province.

What this amendment really does is provide an opportunity for a committee of the Legislature to hear information and evidence. Perhaps they want to talk to municipalities who have tried to use this or will use this or did use this about what impact it's had in their municipal districts around the kinds of goals or aspirations the minister talked about with regard to Bill 7 or with regard to Bill 29, which is fixing Bill 7, which doesn't really do anything at all either, in my view.

Mr. Chair, what we hear from municipalities, you know, is that they'll look at it, that they'll try and figure out if there's some positive impact it has. But multiple-year tax exemptions, both full

or partial, and deferrals of taxes to attract investments very much seems to them like putting them in a less stable, more unpredictable place for collecting taxes from businesses that enjoy everything going on in municipalities.

Mr. Chair, the previous item that the Minister of Transportation talked about, how I was on councils and that he was voting against tax increases and that I was supporting reasonable tax increases: I just want to remind that member that Calgary has been judged – and you don't get this way by racing to the bottom in taxes and taking away the ability of your councils to invest in public infrastructure, a public realm, that makes a difference in people's lives – even as recently as this year as the fifth-best place to live in the world. In Canada it's usually up there in terms of the third- or the second-best place in Canada to live.

You don't get that way by racing to the bottom in taxes, as I was saying. You do that both by investing in and addressing the public realm, the services people rely on, and keeping that within a reasonable level for the people who are your citizens. We did that in Calgary, and I'm proud to be a member of council that stood up to make that happen. While some people voted against every expenditure of dollars in our city, I believe it's the right thing to do, and it's been evident to others looking at Calgary and saying: that's a pretty great place to live. I'm proud of that. I'm not so proud of Bill 29 and Bill 7 because, as I said, they create a situation that will result in less predictability and stability for municipalities, MDs, and counties around the province with regard to their collection of taxes.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Premier has risen to speak on this amendment.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to be able to rise in debate, just having arrived back from Toronto and the Council of the Federation. I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for his participation in this debate, his amendments, and his constructive engagement in an important part of our strategy to get Alberta back to work by restoring investor confidence. Given the questions and skepticism raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, I thought that I would offer some context for the bill before the House and indeed Bill 7, which preceded it in the spring session, both introduced by the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

In I believe October of last year, I was on a visit to India renewing acquaintances and friendships that I have amongst the senior political and business leadership of the world's largest democracy. During our meetings, both in New Delhi and Mumbai, I encountered at least two major global energy companies with large future investment budgets for petrochemical projects around the world. Both of them expressed an interest to me directly in prospectively investing billions of dollars in new capital spending here in Alberta, projects that would create potentially thousands of jobs and also provide a local market for our stranded Alberta natural gas to help that industry. However, they both raised with me very bluntly the competitive disadvantage that we were at in some respects, and one of those was property taxation. They raised with me the fact that they were looking at prospective petrochem investments on the U.S. Gulf coast, in Texas and Louisiana, and in other jurisdictions, all of which were offering lower property taxes, all of which offer very strong incentives to attract major job-creating capital investment of that scale and nature.

**10:10**

These CEOs of major global companies were very blunt with me in India last year, saying that if Alberta really wanted to be

competitive in attracting these kinds of investments, we had to show – I remember one CEO saying it – quote, at least as much flexibility on issues like property taxes as the U.S. Gulf states do, unquote.

Now, the U.S. Gulf states, by the way, Mr. Chair, have benefited from approximately \$200 billion in new capital investment in petrochemical projects in the past five years alone. Two hundred billion dollars. That has created tens and tens of thousands of good, high-paying jobs, very often in blue-collar trades and operating jobs for good union workers down in the U.S. Those jobs should have been created here. Our share of the global petrochemical industry has been shrinking. I understand – I'd have to verify the exact, precise numbers – that we've gone from about 3 per cent to about 1.5 per cent of the global petrochemical market over the past decade or so because of all of that new investment elsewhere.

I got a very clear message in India that we needed to get in the game, partly through greater flexibility in local property taxes. I came back here, and then a few weeks later I visited the Industrial Heartland and was greeted by Her Worship the mayor of Fort Saskatchewan and the mayor of Strathcona county and other local officials. They were very clear with me that one of their top policy proposals, Mr. Chairman, was to give municipalities greater statutory flexibility under the Municipal Government Act to offer property tax incentives to attract major new capital investment like petrochemical plants. There I had the demand being expressed by prospective investors, the request being expressed by municipal governments here.

I consulted informally with other municipal governments that are keen on attracting new capital investment, and the ones I consulted thought this was a good idea. Now, I know that that is not a unanimous view amongst our municipalities; I grant that. Some have told us that they don't want to have to compete. Well, I say to them – and I've said this to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association – with respect, that the whole economic ethos of Alberta is one of competition, and that principle of competition should not be limited to the private sector. In fact, the whole idea of our federation is partly the idea of having a competitive environment, and we have created that. That's the Alberta advantage. Municipalities that want to create their own municipal advantage I don't think should be restricted from doing so.

Really, the NDP's position on this, Mr. Chairman, is that the government of Alberta, through this Legislature, should dictate to them what their local property tax regime is. All we're doing is giving them the option to act freely to incentivize job-creating investment. If there are some municipalities where, instead, their local voters choose to elect councillors who are focused on higher taxes rather than more jobs, bully for them. That's the democratic choice they can make now and, under this legislation, in the future.

Let me also point out, Mr. Chair, that since this government came to office in the spring, we have been involved in a number of intensive conversations with major prospective investors, including in the petrochemical industry. In fact, as you may know, I was in Texas for three days on an investment promotion trip two weeks ago, and almost half of my time in Texas was spent with major global petrochemical companies, getting into really serious conversations about investing prospectively, in each instance, more than \$10 billion in petrochem projects in the Edmonton region. We are entertaining expressions of interest from at least four companies in that industry. If they all went ahead with positive final investment decisions, those decisions would represent cumulatively over \$30 billion of incremental capital expenditure, primarily in the Edmonton region.

I can tell you that, to be illustrative, just one of those, a prospective \$10 billion capital expenditure on a petrochemical

project, would be projected to at its peak employ 10,000 workers. That's in the construction phase. Then in the operating phase I believe it would be closer to 1,500. In both instances, whether in the construction trades or the professional services, architectural and engineering, or the great blue-collar jobs to follow in the operational jobs, you're talking about really good-paying jobs here. A lot of those, I would remind the NDP, would likely be unionized private-sector jobs as well.

This is a good news story, but I've got to tell you, Mr. Chairman, these petrochem companies were very clear with me that they're looking at other jurisdictions. They're looking at the U.S. Gulf coast. Some of them are looking at the Middle East. Some of them are looking at Argentina. Who knew? Argentina has a huge emerging oil and gas sector. There's cheap natural gas feedstock like we've got, lower labour costs, and lower property taxes. What happened was that after we passed Bill 7, we heard from more of these companies saying: look; we appreciate your gesture there, which opened up some flexibility for nonresidential property tax incentives for up to 15 years in Bill 7, but the real value for us and in terms of the competitive decision we have to make with the U.S. Gulf coast and other jurisdictions, the real difference would be if this applied to machinery and equipment. That is why we've come forward with Bill 29.

I can understand that the opposition may be skeptical about this, but I just do want to convey to the members of the opposition and to our partners in municipal government that what's motivating this, Mr. Chairman, is actual, real-live input from these prospective major investors that could create tens of thousands of jobs in Alberta. One of the reasons we brought this forward – I will admit this one was not mentioned in our throne speech. Frankly, when we started the fall session, we did not expect to bring forward this bill. This bill was a result of the input I received in Texas from these companies. We wanted to send a very clear message that we are hungry for that investment and those jobs, that we will move quickly. We wanted with this bill to demonstrate just how quickly Alberta is prepared to move not just to meet but to beat our competitors for thousands and thousands of good blue-collar, high-paying jobs. That's the point of this bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to Bill 29?

Seeing none, I am prepared and ready for the question on amendment A1.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving back now to Bill 29 proper, are there any hon. members wishing to speak on this?

Seeing none, I am prepared for the question. Are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 29 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? That is also carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

10:20

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 20 and rise and report Bill 29.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 29. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the report, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. The motion is carried and so ordered.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Good evening, Mr. Speaker. I ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39 in order to proceed to Government Motion 43.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader has the call.

#### Amendments to Standing Orders

43. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

A. Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, effective October 8, 2019, be amended as follows:

1. Standing Order 7 is amended
  - (a) in suborder (1) by adding “Deferred Divisions (Thursdays)” after “Tablings to the Clerk”;
  - (b) by adding the following after suborder (3):
 

(3.1) Each of the following Members may, immediately after a Ministerial Statement is made, make a statement in response to it:

    - (a) a member of the Official Opposition for a period of no longer than 3 minutes;
    - (b) if requested by a Member other than the Member referred to in clause (a), and on the Assembly’s granting of the request by unanimous consent, that Member for a period of no longer than 2 minutes.
  - (c) in suborder (7) by adding “except in respect of Deferred Divisions” after “items in the ordinary daily routine”.
2. Standing Order 8(1.1) is struck out and the following is substituted:
 

(1.1) Notwithstanding suborder (1), on a Monday afternoon

  - (a) if no items of business under suborder (1) other than Motions other than Government Motions remain on the Order Paper for consideration prior to 5:00 p.m., the Assembly shall proceed to Motions other than Government Motions, and
  - (b) if no items of business under suborder (1) stand on the Order Paper for

consideration, the Assembly shall proceed to consideration of any items of Government business under suborder (2).

- (1.2) Notwithstanding suborder (1.1) and (5), on a Monday afternoon following the conclusion of business for consideration of the Assembly under suborder (1), the Assembly may grant unanimous consent to proceed to an additional Motion other than a Government Motion or to any other item of business that is not yet due for consideration by the Assembly.
3. Standing Order 13 is amended by adding the following after suborder (6):
 

(7) Subject to Standing Order 16 and 32(4)(b), after the Speaker’s calling of Orders of the Day a Member may occupy another Member’s unoccupied seat during the proceedings but must immediately relinquish the seat on the request of

  - (a) the other Member, or
  - (b) the Speaker.
4. Standing Order 32 is amended by striking out suborder (4) and substituting the following:
 

(4) When Members have been called in for a division

  - (a) there shall be no further debate, and
  - (b) despite Standing Order 13(7), a Member must remain at the Member’s seat during the division.
5. The following is added after Standing Order 32:
 

**Divisions at third reading may be deferred**

32.1(1) A division on the vote on a motion for third reading of a Bill shall be deferred upon either of the following Members providing notice to the Assembly:

  - (a) in the case of a Government Bill, the Government House Leader or a member of the Executive Council acting on the Government House Leader’s behalf;
  - (b) in the case of a public Bill other than a Government Bill, the sponsor of the Bill.

(2) A notice that a division shall be deferred under suborder (1) must be provided prior to the sounding of the division bells for the division.

(3) If a division has been deferred, the Clerk shall conduct the division

  - (a) on the Thursday immediately following the day on which notice was provided under suborder (1), and
  - (b) during the daily routine under “Deferred Divisions”.

(4) Despite Standing Order 32, if more than one division is to be conducted during the daily routine under “Deferred Divisions”, the Clerk shall

  - (a) sound the division bells only before the first deferred division, and
  - (b) limit the interval between the sounding of the division bells to one minute.
6. Standing Order 41 is amended
  - (a) in suborder (4) by striking out “amend the motion” and substituting “amend the motion or replace it in its entirety”;
  - (b) in suborder (5) by striking out “amended motion” and substituting “amended or replaced motion”; and
  - (c) by adding the following after suborder (5):

(5.1) A Member may not make a request to the Speaker under suborder (4) with respect to a motion other than a Government motion that has previously been amended or replaced on the Order Paper.

7. The following is added after Standing Order 52.04:

**Motions in committees**

52.041(1) The Chair of a standing or special committee may establish deadlines by which a Member who wishes for the committee to consider a proposed substantive motion or proposed amendment to a substantive motion is required to file the proposed substantive motion or proposed amendment with the Committee Clerk.

(2) On receiving a proposed motion or amendment in accordance with suborder (1), the Committee Clerk shall distribute a copy to each Member of the committee.

(3) A Member may not, without the approval of the committee, move a substantive motion or an amendment that was not filed in accordance with suborder (1).

(4) The Chair of a standing or special committee may take all reasonable steps as the Chair considers necessary to facilitate the committee's consideration and disposition of multiple proposed substantive motions or proposed amendments that are before the committee for its consideration.

B. And be it further resolved that the amendments in this motion shall come into force on passage.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have the copy of Government Motion 43. Of course, it's on the Order Paper. It's quite lengthy. I seek your instructions if you need me to read it into the record or if it's satisfactory moving it in the context of it being on the Order Paper. I will summarize what is in it either way, but I await your instructions.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate that, hon. Government House Leader. I just seek the guidance of the House to ensure that everyone has a copy of the Order Paper as well as the motion. That being the case, you can proceed with your summary.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that. This is a fairly lengthy but simple amendment to the standing orders. First off, it will codify practices for ministerial statements. As you do know, we operate under several Speaker's rulings in regard to ministerial statements. This will now put those Speaker's rulings into the standing orders the same way that they've been called in this Chamber for a long time and codify that practice within our standing orders.

The second thing it will do is clarify that government business can be done on Monday afternoons when there is no available private members' business. If there is available private members' business, that will take precedence. Certainly, we have found a few times in the 30th Legislature already, particularly at the beginning of a sitting, that there was no private members' business available yet, and it makes sense to be able to then use the time in the Legislature to our full capacity. Mr. Speaker, I know that you know that time in the Legislature is valuable, and that allows this to happen.

The third thing it does is allow MLAs to sit in other members' seats after Orders of the Day have been called. Members will still have to be in their own seat to speak. They'll have to be in their own seats during the daily Routine, question period, and to vote, Mr.

Speaker. This basically means now that during second reading and third reading it will be the same as it is in Committee of the Whole; members will be able to freely move around the Chamber and interact and do other work with their colleagues.

It will also now allow for divisions at third reading to be deferred to Thursday afternoons, Mr. Speaker, by the government. I should note that there's an error in the version that members are looking at as we speak, a minor clerical error, that adds a second 15-minute bell to the same process. I'm sure everybody agrees that we don't want two 15-minute bells during that process. I do anticipate that one of my colleagues will rise shortly to move an amendment to change that error.

The other thing it does is that it makes changes to Motions Other than Government Motions to allow private members to replace entirely the wording of their motion. This would allow them to make one change per motion for private members' motions. We've seen situations where private members of both parties have sought to make changes to their private members' motions, and we want to be able to provide them an opportunity to do that. We think that by doing it once, that allows for any mistakes to be fixed but does not allow for it to be abused.

Lastly, it amends the Standing Orders to empower committee chairs to set deadlines on motions or amendments to those motions, and this should lead to less drafting of motions on the fly in committee meetings.

Those are the changes to the standing orders that we are proposing. I do hope that it enjoys the support of the majority of members in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing the debate.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this Government Motion 43, which is changes to the standing orders. I mean, it's sort of a mixed bag, quite frankly. I appreciate the intention of many of these changes. Some of them, I think, our side here as the Official Opposition have a problem with.

Just to go very briefly through each of the seven sections that are described here, as the Government House Leader just did, number 1, which is the codification of the ministerial statements, I think that that's fine. I mean, you know, it's sort of a long-standing practice that we've done and it kind of just puts that to paper, and I think that we don't have a problem with that.

The second one around Monday afternoon, you know, this idea of moving to government business if there's no private members' business available, in itself, I mean, that is practical, but it speaks to a larger problem that we're starting to see emerge here in the Legislature, which is that sending private member's bills to that committee first is turning into quite a logjam. I think that the government side and opposition side both have experienced problems with this, so I would respectfully suggest that we take a look at that over time – right? – because what we've seen now with a number of bills going to committee straightaway is that somehow they get lost. I think that we've experienced frustration around that, and so have private members on your side, too. Maybe if we can try to fix that – this standing order I think is a symptom, perhaps, of a larger problem that exists in regard to the changes to private members' business.

The seating thing, well, you know, I think it's okay – right? – being able to move around a bit. I think that people have started to realize, the new members, that you can do that during committee, and it's kind of refreshing to move into different places. I'd ask hon. members, if they're sitting in my chair, to not touch my stuff, but I

think otherwise we don't have a big problem with that. I was joking, of course. You can touch my stuff as much as you like. It's okay.

In regard to the bell thing, I think the government members spotted the same problem that I saw, right? We're going to fix that, I believe, Mr. Speaker, with an amendment so that you don't have two bells going on there. I think that that is reasonable.

Being able to amend the motion by the person who's brought it forward: I've seen that a couple of times in the years that I've been here, so I guess that's a small thing that could be used. I mean, if you want to do that on the fly during the course of debate, I think that might add some liveliness to the dynamic interaction around when we're debating motions and so forth.

The last one, motions in committees: I have a problem with this, right? You know, again, the flow of committee and making motions from the floor, I think I've seen that over the years to be a really productive way by which you can move committee business to a more productive end. Having to submit motions ahead of time to committee I think is getting in the way of both the traditions and the function of parliamentary democracy and how committees function, and I don't think that is really the best thing moving forward.

Yeah, it's kind of a mixed bag. I mean, I would suggest that, you know, based on number 7 and perhaps number 2 and so forth, it makes it a problem for us to be able to vote for this motion in its entirety. Thank you.

10:30

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'd like to just take a few moments with Motion 43. Obviously, this is a motion that will help kind of streamline things with the business that happens in this House, make things just a little easier and a little more friendly to get things done in an orderly fashion.

Saying that, I would like to move an amendment at this time. Would you like me to read it out now or wait for it to be distributed?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if you could just wait until the table has a copy of the amendment, and then I will allow you to proceed as they're distributed. We'll just wait for the table.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will refer to the amendment as amendment A1.

Please proceed.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Government Motion 43 be amended in part A in section 5 in the proposed Standing Order 32.1(4) by striking out "if more than one division is to be conducted" and substituting "if one or more divisions are to be conducted."

Mr. Speaker, it's a small adjustment in words, of course, but we all know in this House how words matter and how small changes in words can make a big difference. Obviously, the intent is to include all divisions that would happen, so the terminology "one or more" versus the previous wording, which was "if more than one," which would mean that the first one wouldn't be subject to this amendment. I hope that's fairly clear as far as what we're looking for here, which is that "if one or more divisions are to be conducted" is the main phrase that we would like to substitute in.

I'll leave that with this House right now. I'm free to hear any other discussion on this matter. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to provide questions or comments with respect to amendment A1 under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to comment?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question on amendment A1.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Speaker:** We are back on Government Motion 43. I see the hon. Government House Leader is rising again. I would assume that it's not to speak to the government motion given that he's already done so.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question on Government Motion 43.

[Government Motion 43 carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to all members of the House I thank them for all their hard work this evening, lots of progress. I'm trying to find the date tomorrow; I believe tomorrow is December 3. As such, I would move to adjourn the House to December 3 at 10 a.m.

## Statement by the Speaker

### Death on Legislature Steps

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, prior to adjourning this evening, I would like to just make a very brief comment about this afternoon. We do not know what the circumstances of this person's situation was, and I don't think that it's for us to speculate about. I do know that we've all been affected by this afternoon's incident. I personally have been affected by suicide before today, and today's tragedy has also affected me. It has also affected our first responders, whom we thank for their service and efforts today, as it has affected others in the building.

What we do know tonight is that every life lost is a gutting, heartbreaking tragedy. On behalf of all members of the Assembly I wish to offer my sincerest condolences to the family and loved ones who are feeling the pain this evening of this terrible loss.

I also know that we all can and should do better as we continue to try to support one another, that we can reach out to someone struggling, that we can be more compassionate and more patient and more empathetic towards our families, our friends, our neighbours, our co-workers, and indeed to our fellow Albertans. A moment like this demands not only our reflection but also our commitment not only to do good but to be good to one another.

For any members or staff who are needing additional supports I encourage you to reach out to the 24-hour employee assistance line. That number can be found in the earlier e-mail correspondence from today. As well, there will be counsellors on-site tomorrow here in the Legislature Building as well as in the Federal Building for any staff or members who so require.

Having said that, I hope that you all have a restful and safe evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:37 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, December 3, 2019

Day 51

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, December 3, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Morning, hon. members.

Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. So may Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Hon. members, please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Third Reading

##### Bill 29

#### Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise and move third reading on Bill 29, the Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019.

Madam Speaker, this legislation would help municipalities compete internationally to attract investment, create jobs, build the economy, and realize their full economic potential. Our government believes that municipalities should be empowered to make decisions that work in their region. The legislation that we are proposing is concise. Bill 29 would expand the powers of municipal councils to create property tax incentive programs similar to Bill 7, passed in the spring, but for machinery and equipment assessment class.

Municipalities know what their local opportunities and barriers are. We know competition is tough for large industrial projects. Too often they have been heading south of the border. This gives one more tool to local governments to attract big job creators. If passed, Madam Speaker, Bill 29 would allow municipalities to provide property tax incentives for up to 15 years for machinery and equipment. This would give our province a competitive advantage over jurisdictions across Canada and the United States. Other jurisdictions have programs like this in place. Saskatchewan and British Columbia as well as Texas and Louisiana are some of the examples. If passed, we would be helping municipalities with the flexibility to offer, if they wish, one of the longest tax incentive timelines in North America.

Some individuals and groups may disagree with the proposed legislation, thinking that it may lead to increased competition between municipalities, but Madam Speaker, I have been clear that increased competition is exactly what we are looking for. Alberta has been losing these competitions, and we need to turn that around. We have seen investments, for example, in petrochemicals moving south of the border to the tune of nearly \$200 billion. We need to position our province to make sure that it is attracting some of those investments. I am proud to introduce this as one more way that our government is restoring the Alberta advantage.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. With that, I formally move third reading on Bill 29.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 29. I appreciate that the minister got up and spoke, and I do want to speak to a number of the points that he raised, number one being that this is going to make municipalities more competitive. What it's going to do is encourage municipalities in a race to the bottom. I can tell you that the petrochemicals – the minister is correct that there's about \$200 billion worth of investment around – actually it's higher than that. Internationally and within North America there has been about \$200 billion worth of investment. Companies are eager to invest, but I promise you that reducing machinery and equipment is not going to attract them to Alberta.

What has – and this minister knows this and the gas minister knows this – is the petrochemical diversification program, a program that I'm very proud we introduced under our government, that has seen two projects well under way, Inter Pipeline and Canada Kuwait, both building facilities to the tune of somewhere between 3 and a half billion to \$5 billion, resulting in thousands of jobs and, of course, adding value to our resources, which is something that Albertans have been talking about. I remember sitting around the kitchen table when I was a kid, my parents talking about: why don't we diversify and upgrade more of our resources here in the province?

Those two programs have been very successful. I am happy to see that this government has removed ideology on this decision and has continued the program because it is successful and it's those types of programs that will attract these billions of dollars of investment. It is not getting municipalities to reduce or forgo collecting machinery and equipment.

Again, I've met with dozens of these companies around the globe, and they've talked about levelling the playing field, and a program like royalty credits did just that, Madam Speaker. So I do encourage the government to continue to look at programs like that. In fact, I'm anticipating that there should be a beautiful \$10 billion announcement right around the corner with a company that we had lined up that never got it out the door. I won't spoil it for Albertans as far as which company I believe that'll be, but I look forward to those types of announcements.

The challenge with this, Madam Speaker – and it's quite possible that there are some municipalities who asked for this, but I can tell the Minister of Municipal Affairs that with the councillors and communities that I've been meeting with, you've already seen a complete shift in their approach in how they are working with the other municipalities. It is now cutthroat. I think there are 342 municipalities in the province of Alberta, unless a few have been amalgamated and that number is a little bit lower. You have 342 little fiefdoms, all competing with each other. Well, the problem with this is that when you go international – and the ministers that have travelled will know this – we have to work together to put Alberta on the map, let alone a little community here or there that is trying to compete internationally on the world stage.

What's disappointing to see is the work that we did to encourage municipalities to collaborate in order to compete, to look at how regionally they can work together in order to attract these big investments. You know, my concern, Madam Speaker, is that the tools that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has introduced have flipped that on its head. So municipalities are working together a lot

less. They've loosened the rules on intermunicipal IDPs, on intermunicipal collaboration agreements, and it's unfortunate.

The other thing that we've seen this government do – and they may praise this ability that they've given municipalities, but I think many municipalities are feeling frustrated that this government is downloading services on to municipalities, so, again, cuts to police funding. And I get that the Minister of Justice loves to say that we're not cutting it. I'm sorry; it's in black in white. Yes, you are. So municipalities have less to work with, and then saying to them, "Now you need to drop your tax rate to be more competitive," even though that's the only tool they have to pay for things like roads and bridges and infrastructure and policing. I mean, for the smaller municipalities, obviously, it's the province that picks up that tab.

It's challenging, Madam Speaker. I mean, municipalities collect less than 10 cents on the dollar from taxes, yet deliver the majority of services, and this government continues to point to municipalities and say: well, lower your tax rate; continue to drop them. Those are the same taxes that municipalities use to provide services. You know, I'm sure municipalities are thinking: well, then, fund us; sure, we'll drop the machinery and equipment tax rate, we'll drop our property tax rate, but make sure that we have the dollars to deliver services that Albertans count on.

The other thing, you know, Madam Speaker, is that if you gut all of the infrastructure, trade corridors, and what companies rely on, you could have the lowest tax rate in the world, but if you don't have ways and means for companies to get their products and services to market, they're not coming here. You know, I encourage the government to talk to companies, especially down in the U.S., that we're trying to attract, and listen to their top three priorities. I can tell you that quality of life is in the top three for most companies. What is that? That's things like having an incredible health care system: affordable, publicly delivered, publicly funded health care. I can tell you that companies spend significant dollars down in the U.S. paying their employees' share of health care, so they look to Canada with envy. I can tell you that for most companies talent is in their top three as well, Madam Speaker.

#### 10:10

Now, I know in our energy sector, obviously, natural resources – you know, they need to go where the natural resources are. I'd like to see this government work with municipalities to help support them to make Alberta more competitive. Again, I've talked to the Minister of Energy a couple of times on the fact that they are working with the Alberta Energy Regulator to expedite approvals of projects. That gets a check mark. Way to go. That is positive. We need to do that. We know that that will help to attract companies. We know that business moves at the speed of light and government is a turtle, and that's probably even being generous to government, how slow government moves. But those are the types of levers or signals, I think, that industry is looking for and will approve.

I mean, we are definitely in challenging times. You see that Husky just made an announcement where Albertans, 370 of them, are losing their jobs. You know, I hope this makes the government stop and reflect on the fact that what they believed would be a silver bullet for the industry, by dropping the corporate tax rate, has not had the outcomes that they've expected. Anybody over there who says: "No. It's doing exactly what we said it would do." Well, point to the jobs, because I only see job losses. Now, I appreciate that others may say, including the Premier: "Well, wait a couple of years. We've got to wait until this thing ramps up." Okay. So in the meantime we just sit, twiddle our thumbs, and watch layoff after layoff occur?

I'll tell you what tool would have helped attract more investment, especially in oil and gas: the capital investment tax credit. That's

something that this government blindly cut. I believe it was an ideological cut, again, you know, the government has access to the numbers, Madam Speaker. We know that \$200 million leveraged \$2.2 billion worth of investment. That's a fantastic return on investment. For me, what's tough is that that was a tool that would have helped do what the minister is trying to accomplish through allowing municipalities to lower their machinery and equipment, what they collect.

There are tools that the government had, and I encourage the government to look at the capital investment tax credit and consider bringing back some iteration of it. I mean, I understand that the government will want its brand on the program. I can tell you that business doesn't care who introduces it as long as there are those types of program, just like the PDP. I'm sure, you know, companies in Japan and elsewhere aren't saying: "Oh, okay. It's a different program because there's a different government in place." They don't care. They just want to see that these types of programs are there to level the playing field.

I mean, this is exactly it, although it is interesting when you hear the government, for certain programs, talk about how that's picking winners and losers, yet for other programs, that doesn't really count, right? I mean, the minister of economic development and trade criticized the investor tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, and the interactive digital media tax credit, calling them all boutique tax credits, yet the film tax credit: "No. That's not a boutique one. That doesn't count." It's a double standard.

Now, I'm in favour of all of them. Again, I've said this to the minister, that I agree and applaud the government's decision to look at a film tax credit. I know that they've met with a lot of industry members to tweak it, because with their first iteration they don't have it right. But, again, you know what? I'll give them a chance to improve it. I can speak from experience that when we first rolled out the investor tax credit, it had some challenges. We went back to the investment community and talked to them, and they said: you know, we need to iron out some wrinkles, and we did. I was quite proud of the fact that, again, we continued to listen to industry to ensure that we got it right. So I hope, with all sincerity, Madam Speaker, that they will do the same for the film tax credit. I think there's incredible potential for Alberta to compete with jurisdictions like British Columbia and Quebec and Ontario. Again, I hope for and encourage this government to review a capital investment tax credit.

Now, something the government did – and I'll give credit to the Minister of Finance – was accelerate the capital cost allowance. We know that that is a tool that has worked in the past. We have a track record across Canada when that occurs. I know the federal government did it, but I am happy to see that the province is also doing that in order to encourage companies to invest now.

But, again, you know, the silver bullet of reducing the corporate tax rate has not produced the results, and I think it's fair to say that it has not produced the results that the government is anticipating. Again, Husky took their roughly \$250 million that they got in tax savings or in the forgone taxes they didn't have to pay and then invested it elsewhere. Meanwhile in Alberta, the very province that gave them this gift, they say, "Yeah, we're actually going to cut our investments by about \$500 million, and that's going to result in about 270 job losses," which is unfortunate. I appreciate the fact that nobody in this House wants to hear of a single job loss. We all understand the implications of that. I hope what it does is cause the government to reflect on putting all of their eggs in one basket versus looking at: what are some other ways to improve?

Now, I know the minister of red tape will get up and say: we've done all this red tape reduction. As we've spoken about, Madam Speaker, half the bill that he brought forward isn't about red tape.

You know, eliminating a board off the books which hasn't met for 10-plus years is not red tape. I don't know whose red tape you're cutting or for whom. I do think, as I've pointed out, that working with the AER, working with Environment and Parks to look at expediting approvals: that's reducing red tape. That's making it easier and faster for companies to pull the trigger. Again, we've all heard of examples of companies that have had to wait far too long for approvals, and we know that capital doesn't wait. It'll go to jurisdictions that are eager to have those investments.

This is why I encourage the other side to also look at something that we did that I'm quite proud of, working with three different municipalities up in northwestern Alberta, the trimunicipal partnership between the MD of Greenview, the county of Grande Prairie, and the city of Grande Prairie. They came to the government and said, "We'd like to basically form an industrial zone and look at getting some of those initial approvals out of the way so that we can go to industry, so that we can go on international trade missions and say to companies: we have a plug-and-play model, so we can bring you in and get you up and running in a much shorter time frame than if you had to start from scratch; then you'd have to deal with multiple municipalities." We gave them some funding through the CARES program, which, again, is another program this government cut, which was having a real impact on communities all over Alberta. In fact, you know who got hit the hardest? The rural communities that were accessing the CARES funding.

Regardless, the fact is that we worked with those municipalities to help get them up and going when it comes to creating a regional economic zone. I encourage the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and the Minister of Environment and Parks, which is what we did – it took three of us to get together; actually, it was four of us – to look at helping to make this happen. I said it when I was Minister of Municipal Affairs: I hope to see that replicated throughout the province.

You know, the ministers will know that there's a great example of municipal collaboration, regional collaboration, with the Industrial Heartland. They came with me on every single trade mission that I led and helped advertise and support the petrochemicals diversification program. Of course, the heartland has attracted billions of dollars of investment, including through the PDP program. Now, theirs is a little different model because that was private land, not Crown land, that they came together on, but I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that it's still – and I've said to the AIHA – a shining example of what can be accomplished when municipalities work together.

**10:20**

The challenge I have with this current bill – and I appreciate the intention of this bill and what the minister is trying to do – is that it will encourage a continued race to the bottom, a race for municipalities to undercut each other in order to try to attract investment. I'm a big fan of, again, "Let's collaborate to compete; let's work together as Team Alberta to compete on the international stage," not "Let's argue with each other and try to fight with each other to attract investment." That's not going to do it, Madam Speaker.

When we look at the best examples of where investments have come, you look down south, near Lethbridge, to the Cavendish investment, the largest of its kind in southern Alberta. That took six of our ministers working together, working with the company, but the company also worked with the city of Lethbridge and the county of Lethbridge because they recognized that a rising tide lifts all boats and that by working together, attracting that kind of investment will benefit residents in both municipalities. I mean, the reality is that most people don't identify themselves according to the invisible municipal boundaries, right? They identify themselves

through their communities, so that type of investment of Cavendish, which was hundreds of millions of dollars, benefits the whole southwest region of the province.

With that, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to get on the record. Again, I'm happy to give credit where credit is due, but I'm also happy to point out, when there are and were successful programs, that if it ain't broke, don't fix it, you know, as that applies to the capital investment tax credit and some other tools that, unfortunately, the government has taken away.

With that, I will take my seat. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? Hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, you've already spoken to this bill. I'm looking for other speakers to the bill.

The hon. minister for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Not minister, but thank you for the promotion, Madam Speaker. Given the communications back and forth, I don't know if I'd want that chair, quite honestly.

There was an old saying in my area: if you lay with dogs, it's going to give you fleas. Well, that holds true in a lot of this. We've heard about some of the things in setting up the economy. Folks are kind of wondering why we have investment leaving the country, and actually, honestly, I think the NDP should stand up and take a bow. You don't poison the well of investment, you don't send these mixed messages, again with the partners down in Ottawa, and then wonder why people are leaving. If there's any question or wondering why it was after October 21 that a lot of these big companies decided to leave, it was literally that the Trudeau government got in place. Again, I stood up here on the 17th talking about some of those inconsistencies and some of the concerns about unifying our country. Well, this is proof. You have long-standing Canadian companies that are hesitant about keeping their headquarters here.

As far as talking on, you know, Bill 29, consultation is ongoing. There are going to be a few bumps and bruises along the way, but the intent of this is fantastic. I heard the member opposite just talking about collaboration, or lack thereof, of some municipalities. Here's something that I got from folks, actually, in the economic trade and development office. Again, the other member opposite had actually been in charge of that group. I brought two county mayors together and an investment group over from Asia. Their name is XCMG, and they're the number 5 equipment manufacturer in the world. I brought all of them to the table. I also had our Member of Parliament, Dane Lloyd, there as well. These people from economic and trade development asked me at the end of the meeting: how did this happen? How did this happen, Madam Speaker? Well, it happened because one MLA took the initiative to talk to people in his area, to get to know these mayors, to have them collaboratively come together. There was no animosity amongst them because everyone is looking collaboratively now towards regional development.

One of the councillors from Sturgeon was actually over on a trade mission under Sturgeon county's flag themselves and ended up over at XCMG's headquarters and started promoting Nisku, started promoting all the good things that we can do down in Nisku, from the oil field to helping manufacture this equipment.

We also had meetings with the other mayors. We had Leduc county onboard; we had Sturgeon county; we had Strathcona county; we had Parkland county. These are all folks that are working together in this regional development anyway with the heartland development. Mayor Hnatiw is absolutely on the tip of the spear on this, leading this. We have the Villeneuve landing network. We're talking about building up Villeneuve for industrial



space. We're talking about corridors that actually tie in with highway 60, that goes all the way down to highway 2 and takes all of that trade into consideration.

Again, are these folks going to race to the bottom and cut each other's throats? Not from what I've seen, Madam Speaker, and not from some of these departments. These folks span elections, and they're coming back and asking me, a humble new MLA to the area, "How is this happening?" I said, "Because we invited them to work regionally."

Perhaps under different leadership the group worked differently, but all I know is that right now things are actually starting to come together. Minister, thank you very much for your efforts in this. The folks in my area appreciate it. Honestly, consultation is going to be ongoing while we get through this, but it's all with the right intent.

Again, with me coming from that other industry, yeah, I know why everyone is hesitant. We've been sending mixed messages. But the leadership right now is coming across at the provincial level. We've seen that in spades with the Premier's announcement yesterday of his meeting with his cohorts. Thank you very much for the ability to stand up on this, Minister. The folks in our area are behind you. Keep doing what you're doing. We need to get the investment back.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, would you like to close debate?

**Mr. Madu:** Yes, Madam Speaker. Thank you so much. You know, we have gone through a period of economic stagnation in the last four years, a period where we saw a record lack of investor confidence in our province, especially with respect to our vital economic interests, as a consequence of policies that were pursued by the previous NDP government.

Madam Speaker, there is a reason why in the last four years what we saw was companies leaving our province. Rather than attracting investment, investors and businesspeople were telling us that unless we make a fundamental shift, it will be hard and difficult for them to bet their hard-earned dollars on an economy and especially a government that was pursuing antibusiness policies. Businesses are very much interested in an economic system that isn't layer upon layer of red tape. The ease with which they do business is one of the things that they are looking for. In this type of environment in which we find ourselves, we are faced with the harsh reality that more than \$200 billion in investment has gone to the south in petrochemicals, an investment, or at least a good chunk of it, that ought to have come to this particular province given the blessings of our huge natural resources in both fossil fuel and natural gas.

Madam Speaker, with policies like bills C-48, C-69, and the previous government's support for a federal NDP leader that was sworn to the destruction of our fossil fuel industry and who was adamant that they would not support the construction of any new pipeline, it's no wonder, then, that those investments were not prepared to come to our province. We saw a record six credit downgrades. So there is a lot that we have to do, and this is just one part of our effort to make sure that we restore investor confidence and assure the business community that our province is once again open for business.

Madam Speaker, with that, I will seek the permission of this House to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will call on – the hon. Member for St. Albert would like to speak to the bill?

**Ms Renaud:** We had a little mix-up with the order, Madam Chair, but I'm happy to speak to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019.

I don't know if other members in the Chamber know that today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The United Nations has been marking this day since the early 1990s. It's been a while, and I do think that we've made quite a bit of progress internationally, certainly in Canada.

10:30

Before I get into this bill I do want to recognize, although members opposite like to slam the Trudeau government – I certainly have done my fair share of that as well, but I would like to give credit where credit is due – that the federal government did see fit to pass federal legislation around accessibility for people with disabilities, and that was a long time coming. I think, you know, it's not often that I would say that the United States is so far ahead of us in this regard, but they are. They actually have had the Americans with Disabilities Act for quite some time. Although the federal legislation certainly didn't go as far as I would have liked, it is a beginning. I did want to mention that.

Today is International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and I think that again we're reminded that the goal of this celebration, the United Nations calling attention to this, is that it looks at the leadership and empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities, particularly here as disabled Albertans, but it looks at the empowerment and inclusion of people with disabilities around the world.

Of course, one of the largest barriers, challenges, that faces this particular group of people is poverty. I know that I talk about this frequently, that grinding poverty is actually, sadly, the norm for far too many Albertans who have severe disabilities, people that have qualified for AISH but not just AISH. As we know, there are income supports also available to people for whom, for whatever reason, the barrier is too significant for them to sustain employment and then sustain themselves going forward. They qualify for income support when they're not able to qualify for AISH.

I'm going back to this again. One of the things that we did before the 30th Legislature, one of the things we all did in this place, and I do believe we all voted on together, was to make changes to the AISH Act that would allow those benefits as well as income support benefits and benefits for seniors to be indexed to inflation. Although it's not a great deal of money every single year – it's probably between \$30 and \$35 given, you know, the situation – it is a game changer. More than that, the act of actually legislating that benefits are indexed to inflation is a message to the community of people with disabilities, to their families, and to their allies that it's about respect.

It's about taking the onus off this community of having to advocate all the time for a raise. It's sort of like, you know, that job

maybe that you had when you were younger where there wasn't a lot of structure in place in terms of wage grids going up or performance evaluations that would set targets, and then you would evaluate those and determine your increase based on that information. You had to go in and sort of beg for a raise: "Hey, I'm doing a really good job. I really need a raise." This is very similar.

This was us saying to this community: "We value you enough. We understand that the cost of living pressures go up every single year, and this is why we're doing it. We're legislating that you will no longer have to advocate or beg or wait for government to determine at what point we say that, yes, our economy is successful and strong enough that we can do this." Because I'll tell you that that changes year to year. People's plans change, government's sort of desire for different outcomes change, but what never changes is the poverty, the grinding poverty that people with disabilities live with. For us, this was a way to legislate that respect and mandate that every government respect this community enough to ensure that they had these cost of living increases every single year.

But we took it even further than that, which was outstanding, Madam Chair. For those of us that were here prior to the recent election, I think we all remember the lengthy debate that we had around trusts for people with disabilities. We refer to them as Henson trusts, as they've been called in other jurisdictions. These are discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts that are set up. This was one more way of ensuring that people with disabilities, once their loved ones – their guardians, their families, whoever it was – were gone, would still have sort of that backstop or that cushion or that safety net. That would be there for them and would not have been eroded through eligibility requirements or different levels. That would have been safe. It would not have been used to calculate whether or not they were eligible for AISH benefits. It would just be there. You know, I said this the last time I spoke to this bill, Madam Chair. Before we did that in Alberta, I believe we were the only jurisdiction in this country that didn't have provisions for this kind of safety for people with disabilities.

The reason I'm highlighting these things again is that one of the things that was most shocking to me about Bill 21 was that not only was this a massive piece of legislation that shoved in every kind of thing you can imagine – I think that about 19 or 20 different pieces of legislation are amended or changed – but that these really important decisions that were made by the last Legislature would not be given this really sober second thought about: what does this mean for people? Really, what does it mean? Well, \$30 to \$35 for you and me: with the income that we have, we likely won't see that; we likely won't feel the difference. But for somebody living on just over \$1,600 a month or, even worse, for someone on income support with barriers living on less than \$900 a month, losing \$30 to \$35 is a big deal. For families losing the guarantee, the assurance, that these trust accounts will not be used, that they will not be suctioned away, that they will not be used for eligibility – now that's gone.

I'm incredibly sad that throughout this debate so far I've not heard a government member stand up and address these questions. I ask again: if you don't intend to harm the integrity of the progress made for AISH recipients, why are you moving these provisions and these protections from legislation, which is law, into regulation? It's sort of the same story with: why would you cut AISH? "Well, we didn't cut AISH." Well, you did cut AISH; you just are using different language to describe it. You can call it deindex, whatever you like. The reality is that going forward, you have reduced the support that the government of Alberta is providing to disabled Albertans right across the province. That's a fact. I'm incredibly sad that not one government member has answered any specific questions about this. I've asked about

deindexing. I've asked about Henson trusts. I have asked about all of these things. We know that the disability community and the advocates have said: this is not good; don't do this.

I believe that there's a great deal of respect for a provincial organization called Inclusion Alberta. This group, actually, by the way, was the group that advocated for many years to get this done. This group has publicly said that if the government does what they are able to do by moving this protection into regulation, they will go forward with legal action. That leads me to believe that there is a concern. I also believe that there was a post from a law firm – I think it's a Calgary law firm – that also addressed the Henson trusts and the inherent danger of moving these protections and provisions from legislation into regulation.

Still, not one government member has stood up and explained why on earth they would take these protections and provisions from the law, from the AISH Act, and move them into regulations. Why? What is the plan? If there's nothing to worry about, if there's nothing to see here, why on earth would you do that? I can't imagine that the government is looking for more work for no reason. I'm quite sure that you have enough to repeal, undo, and take backwards. Like, why would you do this?

**10:40**

You know, some of the other things that are also incredibly alarming to me – again, I have heard from government members the same information: no, no; don't worry; it'll be fine. Okay. I would really like to be reassured that everything will be fine, but I don't understand why you would take these things from the act and move them into regulation if you have no intention whatsoever of addressing (a) the definition of severe handicap and (b) eligibility, the eligibility of spouses or cohabiting partners. All of the benefits that are taken into consideration when eligibility for AISH is determined, things I mentioned the last time I spoke to this bill, things like death benefits, things like scholarships and bursaries: all of these things are critically important to eradicating poverty, which is, sadly, still in this day and age one of the biggest challenges that disabled Albertans face right across this province.

You know, there were a lot of things that we invested in for people with disabilities to start to chip away at this poverty that has been built up, secured, almost institutionalized over the last I don't know how many decades. What we're seeing is a systematic draw backwards. Whereas we finally got protection in the AISH Act – finally – now it's gone. Why? Why does no person from the government benches have the ability, the authority, the moral compass to stand up and explain this? Not just to me, because I'm actually not on AISH. I don't have a family member on AISH. Explain it to Albertans.

I know that every single one of the people that have been elected to serve in this place represents disabled Albertans – I know every single one of you do – and their families and their allies. You owe them an explanation. You don't owe me an explanation, clearly, but you owe them an explanation as to why you would systematically remove the progress and the protections that we installed in the AISH Act and move them to regulation when you didn't have to. You really didn't. You could have actually taken us in the other direction and made it even stronger. There are other things in play around employment that relate to AISH. There are other things in play around income supports that would do really unique things for people with disabilities to move them forward instead of squarely planting them in the poverty that is their reality today.

In one piece of omnibus legislation you've managed to take us backwards in, I don't know, 20 different areas, one of which, of huge concern to Albertans, is related to AISH. Can you imagine for people, for disabled Albertans, to think: okay; well, the government

is not cutting AISH this year. We saw their budget. We saw their projections for the next few years, and what we have established – and this is fact, right? These are not speaking points. This is fact based on your own documents. AISH increases to the overall AISH program will not increase in the out-years.

Yes, you did cover everything you needed to cover, the growth and all of that this year, which is great, and I've said that before, but in the out-years the per cent of growth that is required because AISH intake – people move to Alberta; people turn 18. They become eligible for AISH benefits. That intake, that growth, does not match your budget in the next few years. Clearly, there is something in play. There is something being planned to address that shortfall. The government has been fairly clear about not reducing the actual AISH benefit amounts, which is great. I'll take them at their word. But what else is planned? You've removed provisions within the AISH Act around eligibility, around protection in terms of discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts. You've actually removed the ability to define what is a severe handicap right from the act.

As you know, maybe for new members that aren't quite aware, when something is in the act, it is enforced and monitored, and there is oversight in a very different way than when something is in regulation. When something is in regulation, although, yes, there are some steps that have to be taken – if you are vigilant and watching, you'll be able to see what happens – we don't debate it in this place. We were all sent here to represent people. This place is where we have robust debate about what is being planned and what has been introduced, but you've now removed the ability to do that.

Madam Chair, once again I'm incredibly disappointed. I'm disappointed, number one, in the enormity of the changes being proposed and, well, the unwillingness of government to actually just say it. If that's what you're doing, own it, just stand up and say: "Yeah, that's what we're doing. Yeah, that's what we're planning. Could be we might be cutting this. We might be changing how you qualify for AISH. We might be changing how you define 'severe disability.' Yes, we're doing all of these things, and that's why we've moved this stuff out of legislation into regulation."

I've heard nothing, just crickets. So we are left to wonder: what is going on? You don't owe me an explanation, but you sure as heck owe your constituents an explanation. If you choose to continue to ignore them, you will get the blowback. I have no doubt about that.

With that, Madam Chair, I am going to end my comments and pass it on to my colleagues. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's always an honour to get up in the House and speak to bills and specifically Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. I've gotten up several times in this House to speak about the differences in perspective that we all have. I appreciate that our colleagues from across the way and over here to our right have a specific way of looking at the world and what they deem to be the most appropriate way for moving forward. I have no doubt that they honestly believe that they are making the economy better. But where we begin to differ is: who actually has to pay for making those changes moving into the future? What we see with Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, is that so many of the costs are passed on to Albertans, not only just Albertans in general but also in some cases the most vulnerable Albertans.

I've gotten up in this House several times to speak about my constituents and the makeup of my constituents. A lot of them are

young families. Also, a lot of them are new Canadians, that have come here to Canada to establish themselves so that they can provide a better future for themselves and for their children, many of them with the hopes that their children will be able to go to university and receive a much better education than perhaps they would have back in their country of origin.

So they're happy to be here, to immigrate to Canada, to now call Alberta their home and set up and establish their roots here, just like many other Canadians have done. They come here as immigrants, establish themselves, start businesses, contribute to the economy and to society as a whole, and really make sure that they're contributing because they want to be able to live here in a successful way, live up to a certain standard of living. What we see with Bill 21 is that it's eroding that standard of living for people who are working two, three jobs.

Now, I identify so much with these immigrant families because, of course, as I've shared before in the House but I'll share again, my parents came here fleeing violence in South America. For 17 years they worked two jobs. You know, for me, this is what bothers me, I'll say, Madam Chair, that so many people on the right side of the political spectrum will criticize people on the left as being lazy or that we don't want to work hard enough or that we don't know what real hard work is when nothing can be further from the truth.

**10:50**

My parents came here. They had their day jobs, which they worked for eight, eight and a half hours a day, sometimes nine. They would come home, they'd make dinner quickly, and then they were back out the door once again. My mother and father worked for 17 years doing janitorial service just so that they could make ends meet, so that they could pay the mortgage, make sure that we had enough to go to school, make sure that we would never have to go without.

These are the kinds of Albertans that call Alberta home, new Canadians that are here working hard each and every day. You know, so many times we hear from other Albertans that these new Canadians are just coming here to live off the system. I'm sure that there are some bad apples out there – I'm sure – but the grand majority of all these new Canadians that are coming here are coming here to contribute and give over and above to make sure that this economy continues to function.

So it's at their service that we as a government should be inside this House making sure that we are helping them out as they continue to forge forward in building a better life for themselves and for their children. Of course, with Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, again – I repeat – it's affecting in some cases the most vulnerable of Albertans. As my colleague from St. Albert discussed at length, with the deindexing of AISH it's going to affect people who are the most marginalized. The most marginalized.

But in terms of university students – well, first, let me say this. I get where the perspective of the colleagues on the other side is coming from. They expected that their \$4.7 billion corporate handout was going to create jobs. The reality of the fact, though, is that not one job has been created through this whole process, and instead – hey, you know, what I just find unfathomable is the fact that we continue to have members from the UCP get up inside this House and continue to criticize us and blame us for so many of these companies that are leaving this jurisdiction when they've already given money out to some of these corporations to give them the incentive to stay here.

Instead, what do we see? They're taking that money, and they're investing it in other jurisdictions across Canada and North America, and they're actually leaving. Under your government they're leaving. Under your government they are leaving Alberta. So what

do you say to that? Your incentives don't seem to be working. I mean, you can be like: oh; okay; well, you guys were in government for the last four years, so you created the conditions. Well, now you're in the driver's seat, guys. You're in the driver's seat, and your corporate handout hasn't produced one new job yet.

In fact, there are so many people being laid off in the private sector. Not only that, we have people in the public sector now being laid off. Universities are laying off sessional professors. We've got teachers' assistants being laid off in the education system, teachers themselves. Classrooms are growing. All to pay for this \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout, and now Albertans are going to have to pay through Bill 21, what you've called the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act.

I get it. We've got to live according to our means. I get it, but at the same time: who are you asking to make the sacrifices? Now, there are people in our society, in our province who can afford to pay just a little bit more. I remember being on the doorstep and talking to some of these people, doctors in my community who were like: "You know what? I don't mind. I don't mind having to pay a little bit more under a progressive taxation system. I don't mind doing that because I do have the means to give a little bit more so that we can continue building and moving Alberta forward." But under Bill 21 we're asking the most vulnerable people to sacrifice.

Now, I don't know what it's like to live on AISH. I have no idea. I'm sure that there are a lot of people out there on AISH who would love to let everybody in this House know what that reality is like. I've had a few constituents come and see me over the years to tell me about what their reality is like, having to live on AISH, how tough it is, and having to make decisions between paying rent or paying electricity bills and buying food at the supermarket. I'd hate to be in that kind of a position. I'd really, really hate to be in that kind of a position, yet this is the reality that so many people are going through.

When we ask the most vulnerable to make the sacrifices, what does that say about us? What does it say about us, the members in this House? Why can't we find other ways? Why aren't we making other priorities and making sure that we can pay off this debt and deficit as we continue moving forward? Why are the most vulnerable people here in the province of Alberta being asked to sacrifice when we see our own Premier taking jets with his friends from a pancake breakfast?

We see employees of the Premier going to London, you know, staying in hotels with champagne baths. I don't even know what that is. I've never even heard of that before in my life. [interjections] These are the kinds of hotels that these guys are staying at, people that are under your watch. People that are under your watch. [interjections] Yeah. Chirp, chirp, chirp, eh? Chirp, chirp, chirp. Yeah, you can't stand it, right? When you're asking the most vulnerable people in Alberta...

**An Hon. Member:** Vitamin C showers.

**Member Loyola:** Vitamin C showers. There you go. That's what it was.

**An Hon. Member:** Champagne baths.

**Member Loyola:** Oh, champagne baths, I wouldn't put it past them. [interjections] Champagne bars? Is that what it was? Champagne bars? There you go. That's what it was, see?

I've never even heard of those things, never even had the experience before. Never had the opportunity to stay in such a luxurious place as that before in my life. That's not the kind of Albertan I am. Obviously, the government has people under its watch going to London, staying at these luxurious hotels, and the

taxpayer is having to pay for it. Yet this government has no problem asking the most vulnerable Albertans to sacrifice so that we can ensure fiscal sustainability as we move forward.

**11:00**

What I would really like to ask the members from the other side to think about is: why are you asking the most vulnerable to sacrifice? People living on AISH shouldn't be the ones that have to help us make sure to balance this budget moving forward. People that are living paycheque to paycheque shouldn't be the ones that have to bear the brunt of making sure to balance this budget. Children in classrooms shouldn't be the ones that have to bear the brunt of making sure that this budget is balanced. University students shouldn't have to bear the brunt. Right? We need to find other ways in order to make sure that we are fiscally sustainable moving forward. There are other ways to do it. All I'm asking is for the members from the other side of the House to really contemplate what it is that they're asking Albertans to do.

You know, the government has tabled 107 pages of legislation, that cover a vast array of topics. I understand. They're wide ranging and complex. Some of the members on the other side, when they were on this side, criticized this whole omnibus approach. They were, like, "Oh, you can't do that," yet here they are now, in government, doing the exact same thing. Doing the exact same thing. What's most disappointing is that the government is using this omnibus approach and hiding so many of these things, as was well described by the Member for St. Albert, when it comes to the indexing of AISH and, of course, the Henson trust. There are so many other aspects within this omnibus approach where the true intentions are being hidden from Albertans, Madam Chair. It's really important that the members from the UCP get up and speak about this as well.

Of course, these intentions that are being hidden within this omnibus approach are going to be impacting people in your constituencies as well. I'm sure that every constituency across this province has people who live on AISH, has average Albertans that are trying to send their children to university, has children that are in the school system that perhaps now are having to deal with 35 children in a classroom. And then those constituents will be asking each and every one of you: why is it that we have to make the sacrifices when we see your government doing these other things like taking jet planes and having employees that stay at luxurious hotels, with vitamin C baths, showers? Right? It's okay. Don't worry. Don't worry. If you like taking vitamin C showers, it's okay. Don't worry.

The other thing that I haven't had the chance to talk about as well is the deindexing of the seniors' programs, seniors who have given so much to this province over their lifetime. This government said that they were going to make life better for seniors, yet here again in this omnibus legislation we see the intention being hidden. Instead, they're taking money out of the pockets of seniors to pay for this \$4.7 billion, again, corporate no-jobs handout. They're taking benefits from seniors and their dependants, especially those who live on a fixed income, and that's wrong. It's just plain wrong.

There are cuts to lodge funding, the deindexing of benefits, kicking dependants of seniors off their drug plans, the seniors' drug plan. Although these things may seem small, to people who live on a fixed income, just the same as for those who live on AISH, to these seniors, who also live on a fixed income, even a little bit of money goes a long way, and they'll have to decide whether they pay for the drug that they need or whether they're going to be paying for groceries. I just can't understand why the most vulnerable in our society are being asked to make these sacrifices when we're supposed to be here defending their interests.

Again, I'm just going to appeal to the members of the UCP. You all have seniors that live in your ridings. You all have people who live on AISH. You have young families who have their kids going to school, families that are trying to send their children to university. What are you going to say to them when they show up at your door asking why they have to make the sacrifices?

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. It's not doing what the title suggests; rather, it takes money away from Albertans from everywhere to pay for the UCP's \$4.7 billion corporate no-jobs handout.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

Before I talk about the bill, I do also want to recognize that today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Today we recognize the contributions they make to our communities, to our society, recognize the struggles that they face for their full inclusion, and also recommit ourselves to making sure that they're included in the cultural, economic, political, and social life of our province.

When I think about it, I think there are many things in this piece of legislation that are attacking the services that Albertans with disabilities receive.

When we were government, we made a lot of improvements. For instance, we were able to set up Alberta's first disability advocate to represent their viewpoint and to have their voice at the decision-making tables. We proclaimed October as Disability Employment Awareness Month, recognizing that their participation in our job market, their participation in the economic life of the province is way lower than other Albertans. We didn't just proclaim it; we also put money where our mouth was. We added funding to their employment programs. We created almost 20 internship opportunities within the Ministry of Community and Social Services. We indexed AISH. We increased it. We indexed it so that the benefit level won't erode with the cost of living. This piece of legislation is taking that away.

Mr. Chair, you will remember that during the campaign I said that they will reduce these benefits, that they will cut these benefits, and the Premier himself took to Facebook with a video that it's just over-the-top rhetoric and that we are creating fear and smear. What we are seeing in this piece of legislation is that this government is taking back that \$30 increase that they were supposed to get with CPI. At a time when they can pay for a \$4.7 billion handout, they think it's too onerous for the province to provide them with a \$30 cost of living. For those individuals who are on AISH that are living with disabilities, they are living on a limited income, and on top of that, they have disabilities. They think it's onerous to pay a \$30 cost-of-living increase for them. That piece of legislation is taking that increase away.

11:10

When we were in government, we also improved and increased income exemption for individuals with disabilities. What this legislation is doing is taking those exemptions and putting everything in regulation, that won't be debated in the House. Instead, a minister of cabinet will be able to decide what they think is acceptable for them to set these exemptions at. We also increased AISH child benefits, making it \$200 for the first child and \$100 for every subsequent child. Again, those benefits have now been taken from the act and put into regulation. That leaves it for the

government and for the minister in cabinet to change those benefits without bringing them here or providing all of us with an opportunity to debate about those things.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

We simplified AISH application forms. We also made changes to the Henson trust. For people who have some inheritance or some money, if they want to give it to their loved one, give it to an individual, give it to their children, that money won't be counted in their eligibility for this program. It won't impact their benefits. Again, that was also a piece of legislation that was supported by the then opposition. It was passed unanimously in this House. What they are doing is removing that as well. Alberta was pretty much the only province that didn't exempt Henson trust, but they are bringing us backwards here as well.

When we were in government, there was a scale called the support intensity scale. The entire disability community was of the view that it was humiliating for individuals to go through that scale. They had been asking previous governments to remove that, and they never did. We worked with the community and also removed that support intensity scale. We repealed PDD safety standards that were imposed on them without any consultation by the previous PC government. We created a province-wide phone line to report abuse with respect to individuals with disabilities. We reversed previous government cuts to PUF, program unit funding, for schoolchildren.

There were many things that we worked on. We improved these programs, but certainly there is more work to be done. But instead of making any progress, instead of making improvements, what this piece of legislation is doing is taking us backwards. It's taking away from Albertans with disabilities. It's taking away from cost-of-living increases on their programs. It's repealing, almost, Henson trust, and it's taking all their benefits into the regulation, where they can be changed through order in council. These changes will hurt Albertans with disabilities, and I urge all members of this House to think about these changes. They all were elected to represent their constituents, and every one of us has individuals with disabilities in our constituencies, in our friend circles, in our families. These changes are eroding those benefits for those individuals, and it's not fair to those individuals. It's not something that a fair society will do to its most vulnerable.

Similarly, this piece of legislation is also pausing indexing for seniors' benefits. It's taking seniors off drug plans. It's changing the income for seniors' lodge programs, residual income. Before the budget the Minister of Seniors and Housing was saying that seniors will get whatever they need. Instead, what they are getting is that whatever they had before this is being taken away from them. Clearly, I guess, promise made, promise broken. These changes will make life harder for our seniors. I guess we, again, all have seniors in our homes, in our ridings, in our communities, and they deserve way better than this.

Then some other changes were also made which will make it difficult for municipalities to provide services which they were able to provide before. For instance, some of these changes are enabling the provincial government to retain a greater portion of fines collected on behalf of municipalities. That's what we saw in Calgary, where the Calgary police chief has been saying for a while that their funding has been cut since the province is trying to retain a greater portion of the fines collected, hence that \$13 million shortfall in Calgary police funding. That's coming at a time when our communities have raised safety concerns, in particular communities in the northeast. The Member for Calgary-Falconridge will know that they have raised major concerns about violence in our communities, the rise of crime in our communities,

and now we are seeing changes through this legislation that will enable the province to change this funding and, I guess, put the safety of Albertans at risk.

Also, there are changes in this piece of legislation with respect to postsecondary education. One, the tuition cap, that was in place for four years, has been suspended. I think the Minister of Advanced Education is the only person who was requested by students to raise their fees and who was told by students that they didn't like the tuition freeze, that they wanted their fees to skyrocket. I think that's what they are doing with this and also making the student loan interest rate go up by 1 per cent. They are also cutting credits for parents with another piece of legislation.

This piece of legislation, the changes contained in Bill 21, if passed, will make life more expensive for Albertans across this province. It's part of their budget where they will want Albertans to believe that their \$4.7 billion corporate handout will attract investment, will create jobs, but we haven't seen that. We didn't see investment. We didn't see the jobs. That policy is not paying for itself. Instead, money is taken out of the pockets of Albertans to pay for that failed policy. There is now enough evidence, like we have been saying before they brought forward this policy, that this policy has not worked before. It will not work now. Trickle-down policy doesn't work. Trickle-down is not even in economics. Being a student of economics, I could say that it was just a political scheme. It was never economics by any stretch of that word.

**11:20**

What we are seeing now, that those who are benefiting from that handout – for instance, my colleague earlier mentioned that Husky has received \$233 million, and they have not created a single job. I think the Minister of Energy will agree with me that instead they have laid off 371 jobs. That's a public number. They are moving investment away to Wisconsin, Saskatchewan, and the States. They have reduced capital funding. How much more evidence does your side need to reconsider this policy? If any of those things that I am saying are not correct, I invite the Minister of Energy to state it for the record if Husky has not done that. Same thing with EnCana. They also got a break from this, but they are moving down to the States.

So we are seeing their policy fail. We are seeing job loss. We are seeing investments moving away from our province. We are seeing companies moving away, and because of that, we are seeing this kind of legislation that's even taking money away from seniors. It's cutting their CPI increases, which in some cases is maybe less than \$10, so they can pay for their failed policy. This piece of legislation is taking seniors off drug plans, almost 45,000 seniors, so that they can pay for their failed \$4.7 billion policy. It's taking money away from housing bodies. It's taking money away from Albertans with disabilities so that they can pay for their failed policies. In short, this piece of legislation is making life difficult for Albertans, and things they are doing with many of the programs are not acceptable to Albertans.

On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities I urge government members to think about Albertans with disabilities and how this piece of legislation will impact them. I know we may hear from them in the rotunda a half-hour from now that they are committed to providing everything to Albertans with disabilities, and at the same time they will come back and vote on this piece of legislation, that is taking benefits away from Albertans with disabilities.

Again, I think I will conclude my remarks by saying that this piece of legislation is just making Albertans pay for this government's failed policies. It's taking money out of the pockets of Albertans, and now Albertans will be paying more to get less.

Not long ago this government, this UCP caucus, wanted Albertans to believe that they were paying 4 to 6 cents on a carbon levy that was killing their livelihood, that was killing their province. Now they have this kind of legislation where their taxes are going up, where their services are cut, where their school funding is cut, where money is taken out of their hospitals, where money is taken away from Albertans with disabilities, where money is taken away from seniors. Like, everybody is paying more just for their failed ideological policies, that have not created a single job.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and through you to the Member for Calgary-McCall. At the beginning of his close to 20 minutes there he mentioned some tweets that he had put out prior to and during the campaign last spring. I was hoping that he would take that opportunity, because he never has, to apologize to myself and my staff in St. Paul and to an individual that as a result of his irresponsible tweet when he was the Minister of Community and Social Services, where he claimed that the UCP was going to cancel AISH, within hours of that – and I have the e-mail from the perpetrator that apologized and directly correlated his actions to the tweet from the minister. He came out just before midnight and threw two rocks through the window of my constituency office because of an irresponsible tweet from a minister of the province of Alberta.

This is Committee of the Whole, and that member has the opportunity to speak at length as many times as he wants, so maybe if he's going to mention those kinds of tweets that he was talking about, perhaps he'll take advantage of this opportunity to stand up and apologize. He never has. He hasn't apologized to the individual. He has not apologized to my staff for putting them through the stress that he did. An absolutely irresponsible tweet, an untrue tweet, and it continues. We've seen it over the last couple of months, time after time after time, the fearmongering from that side that's causing people unnecessary distress, Madam Chair.

**An Hon. Member:** You want to talk about stress?

**Ms Hoffman:** Speak to why you're cutting AISH.

**Mr. Sabir:** You're cutting AISH.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. See, they don't like it when you strike a nerve, do they, Madam Chair?

Irresponsible public messaging that causes people unnecessary strife to the point where individuals that are on the edge are pushed to the point – the man in question had never had a criminal record in his life, and now he had charges laid against him. He was very apologetic, but the charges were laid because he'd made an attack on an office and thrown rocks through a window within hours of a tweet by that member when he was a minister. It's embarrassing. He should apologize, and I wish that he would stand up and take this opportunity to apologize. He never has, and I think it's shameful.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 21 this morning. Although I am tempted to respond to some of the comments made by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold

Lake-St. Paul, you know, for the sake of maintaining decorum, I won't.

I do want to address the issue of doctor practitioner IDs here, that is present in Bill 21. It was interesting that yesterday, of course, many of us here in the House were meeting with medical students, from both the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta, to hear about their concerns around doctor practitioner ID restrictions. I think it's fair to say that the med students from both the U of A and the U of C are opposed to this idea of restricting doctor practitioner IDs, and they were here to meet with us to tell us that in person. It's a shame, Madam Chair, that a number of colleagues from the opposite side were unable or unwilling to meet with the medical students, from what I understand. But, you know, in my discussions with the medical students, of course, I informed them that that was instructive of who the UCP is really working for. If they're not willing to meet with medical students to talk about this significant issue, it's quite clear that they are not interested in the well-being of medical students and future medical practitioners here in the province.

11:30

One of the questions that the medical students asked me was: why is this government going ahead with this idea of restricting doctor practitioner IDs when the evidence is clear that it doesn't work to improve access to health care in rural areas and that it's also been found to be unconstitutional? The answer that I gave them was that this is a government that doesn't actually pay attention to or care about the evidence, nor does it care about losing in court. This is a government that is concerned, really, with only two things, Madam Chair: it's concerned about consolidating its own power, and it's concerned with Americanizing our public health care system. That's what we see here with this move to restrict doctor practitioner IDs for soon-to-graduate students from the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary.

We know that access to rural health care is not, even though that's the stated concern of the members opposite, actually what they're concerned about. We can tell by their actions that they're not concerned about access to rural health care. The medical students that I had the privilege of speaking to yesterday had done internships in rural locations around Alberta and found the experience to be frustrating and demotivating because at the time there were not adequate supports, in their view, for the practice of medicine in those areas. They had limited access to nurses and other health care professionals that they require to be able to provide quality health care to their patients. They didn't have access to the technologies that urban health care professionals have.

The situation has only gotten worse under this regime. We found out last Friday that the government is intent on laying off almost 8,000 public-sector workers, most of whom are going to be in the health care profession. We don't yet know where those positions are going to be eliminated, but with numbers that big, Madam Chair, it's hard to imagine that rural health care won't be on the chopping block.

If the members opposite are genuine in their concern for providing access to rural health care, they wouldn't be moving to cut the number of people who are working in health care in rural areas like they are. That was quite clear to the medical students as well. They understood quite clearly that this government is insincere when it's saying that it's concerned about access to rural health care for the people of Alberta.

They also understood that by restricting practice IDs, it was the thin edge of the wedge to opening up more American-style health care in Alberta. There's nothing limiting a graduate of medical school from hanging up their shingle and operating in private practice. They don't

need a practice ID. They can take whoever can afford to pay the bills in to see them. It was quite clear to the medical students, as it is to us here in our caucus, that this move to restrict practice IDs is not about access to rural health care at all. It's about opening the door to American-style health care, where the people who have benefited from the \$4.7 billion corporate handout that this government has given will be able to access the finest doctors and the best health care that money can provide. The rest of us are going to be left struggling to get the health care that we need in a system that's being intentionally driven into the ground.

You know, the med students had some helpful suggestions for the government if they are genuine in their concern for increasing access to rural health care for Albertans. One of the things that they indicated was that not only would it be wise to continue to invest in health care professionals, staffing levels, infrastructure, and technologies in rural health care in Alberta but that it would also be wise to increase the number of medical students who are accepted into medical school programs here in Alberta from rural schools.

There are a number of things that need to be done in order to increase rural student access to medical school programs that this government is doing the exact opposite of. You know, rural students, as I've said in debate about this bill before, not only need to be able to afford to pay the tuition to the university that they want to go to, but they also have to be able to afford to find accommodations and be able to afford to feed themselves when they're going to school far away from home.

When this government cuts grants to universities at the scale at which they have and when this government forces universities to raise tuition by 23 per cent over the next four years – when the government cuts grants, that encourages layoffs. We've seen massive layoffs already at the University of Calgary, and there are hundreds and hundreds more to come across the system. We've already seen that the University of Alberta is approving fee hikes for residences and meal plans. That barrier to anybody who wants to go to university is getting ever higher, and the barrier to somebody who has to move away from home, which includes rural Albertans, is getting even higher still.

We're cutting the ability of the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary to deliver a quality program to the most students that they can afford to, and we're also making it harder and harder for rural students who would like to become medical students to even be able to afford to attend school in the first place. How on earth, given that set of circumstances, are we going to realize the potential of bright, ambitious young people living in rural Alberta to attend medical school with barriers that are so high? I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that we won't.

The problem is already severe. Of the medical students that we met with yesterday, I asked if any of them were from rural locations, and none of them were, Madam Speaker. We know that students who have grown up in rural Alberta are more likely to go back and practise in their hometowns or in similar settings once they've completed their studies than kids who have grown up in urban areas because they're familiar with it. They like life in rural Alberta, they want to be close to their friends and family, and they want to contribute back to the communities that have given them so much support. Again, I say that if the government were genuine in its concern about increasing access to rural medical care, it would do the things it needs to do to incent rural students to be able to attend medical school in this province. In fact, the government is doing exactly the opposite.

11:40

There is much more that I could say about the way this government is treating doctors in general. All I can say is that when

I had the opportunity to speak to the medical students, I reminded them of the power that medical students and their colleagues who are already practising medicine have to push back against this government's agenda, because doctors have the trust and respect of everybody in Alberta, certainly much more than any of us sitting here in this Chamber. The people of Alberta will believe them when they say that our health care system is under attack, that this government is doing everything it can to Americanize the health care system and make sure that only the wealthy benefit from this system. If they use their power wisely, they can successfully push back against this government's reckless agenda to Americanize our health care system.

I fully expect that medical students and their colleagues practising medicine already will use that power to their full extent to make this government walk back its American health care agenda. I assured the medical students and I will continue to assure every health care professional that I meet that we are with them in this fight and that we won't stop until this agenda to Americanize our health care system is entirely scrapped.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise today to speak again in Committee of the Whole with respect to Bill 21 as proposed by the government. I will speak once again to my deep concern with respect to a number of the provisions within this act, but I want to highlight a couple in particular. We've had a lot of the members stand up here today and speak about their advocacy, the concerns that they hear from their constituents. In fact, in all debate in this House we hear members from both sides of the House stand up and speak on behalf of their constituents, which is our most core and fundamental responsibility as representatives for each of the ridings within this Legislature.

I want to share the story of a constituent that I met with just this past Friday, when I was in my constituency office, because it was extremely compelling and moving. The constituent who came into my office is the mother of a severely autistic 18-year-old son, whom she obviously cares very deeply for. In fact, the entire time that we were meeting, she had her phone out, and she apologized, to begin with, by saying, "I apologize for keeping my phone out, but my son is currently with his aide, and in case he needs assistance, I need to always have my phone at the ready." Of course, I said: "That's no problem at all. Of course I completely understand that." What was particularly moving about our meeting and our discussion was that as the mother of a child, now a young adult, with severe disabilities, she of course has spent the full past 18 years as a parent advocating for and caring for her child and planning and probably shaping and creating new plans for how she would care for her child going forward.

Many of us in this Assembly are parents. You know, we raise our kids, and we anticipate the day when they will be independent and be able to live on their own, and we hope for and we invest in that future for them. But for parents of children with severe disabilities, they're planning a different future. They're thinking not just about caring for their child in the immediate and making sure that any barriers to opportunities that they may have are limited but about making sure that they have a fantastic quality of life, all the hopes and aspirations that we all have for our children. But they also have to plan for the fact that their children may never be able to be independent and may never be able to live without the care of medical assistance and therapists and, importantly, a parent.

Of course, the reality is that at some point these severely disabled children will grow up to be adults, and at some point their parents

will likely pass on. These parents have an additional burden, which is to think about and plan for a future where they're no longer around to step up and advocate for their children and to think about it in a way that I don't think most parents can even conceive of when they first discover they're going to be having a child. You don't think about that. You don't think about: well, what happens when I'm no longer around? That is a very harsh reality for these families, to be thinking about who's going to care for their adult children when they're no longer there.

That is why Henson trusts were so important and continue to be so important. Those trusts were a way for families to put away money to ensure that when they're no longer around, their adult children are still taken care of. It is a common-sense approach to exempt those trust funds because this is planning for the future. This is planning for a time when there is no family member or parent who's available to provide that support. It is planning for the future, and it is common sense to exempt those funds from the eligibility requirements for young people when they're seeking application to AISH or any other supports because this isn't money that is there because they have wealth or they have a storage of money for disposable income. This money is for planning for a future when there is nobody in their family who is still able to care for them. This is something that we as a system should respect and should support because it is key to families doing the planning for the future so that their children are taken care of but also to plan for a future to lessen the dependency or the need for additional government support and to ensure a standard and basic quality of living for their child, which all of us as parents and Albertans understand is a priority. These families should be commended for being able to do this planning.

I'm proud that this is something that the former government respected and understood, that Henson trusts were something that we needed to put in legislation to protect so that those families knew that their child was not going to be penalized as a result of these funds when seeking basic supports under AISH. It has been said a number of times – I've said it; my colleagues have said it – and we will continue to say that AISH funding is such a bare minimum amount, such a small amount to live on for these individuals that any cut, any reduction in that amount has a significant effect on those individuals. These are the individuals who are severely disabled, who have significant limitations on their ability to work and to earn their own income. It is not a lot of money. As my colleague the Member for St. Albert said, most of us would never have to imagine living on such a small amount of money, but for many Albertans that is the reality.

To be able to plan ahead, for these families to be able to do that and to invest for their children is so important. That is why it is such a disgrace, I believe, for the Henson trust and for money that's put away by these families to be removed from protection under Bill 21 for eligibility requirements for AISH.

What I find most disarming when we've had these conversations in the House is that these omnibus bills were brought forward by the government with a significant amount of details that affected multitudes of pieces of legislation, so many different things are snuck in here. This is only one of many omnibus bills that this government has brought forward in this session, and the idea is that they're hoping these things will get snuck by Albertans, perhaps snuck by the opposition but definitely snuck by Albertans, and that we're not going to catch on.

What I find most disarming is that this was snuck in, yet we've seen that the Minister of Community and Social Services stood up and denied it was the case, which led me to believe that perhaps the minister has not even read this bill. Either she was not aware that this change was brought forward or she truly believes, as this



government does, that when you cut the amount of money that people are making and the amount of money they're eligible for, it's not a cut. That is such a bizarre world of cognitive dissonance that we're living in, where we're standing here talking, presenting, and discussing the bills that are brought forward by this government and saying right here that this individual on AISH is now going to get less and that that is a cut, and the government member stands up and says, "That's not a cut," as if repeating it over and over makes it true. We're actually speaking to the provisions of their bill, yet they continue to not actually answer the question and address the issue of why they have cut supports for those most vulnerable Albertans who are on AISH.

We brought it forward in this House and the Member for St. Albert raised it in question period and it has also been brought forward in an amendment to this bill. We've said: look, in this act, Bill 21, you have removed the protections for trust money from the eligibility requirements for Henson trusts. And the Minister of Community and Social Services stood up and said: no, that's not true. But it is right here; on page 17 of Bill 21 it clearly states that "section 3.3 is repealed." Section 3.3 sets out the eligibility requirements for somebody who's seeking AISH. I'm going to quote part of it but not all of it. Section 3.3 specifically states:

The value of all assets of a person and the person's cohabiting partner must not include

- (a) the value of any assets that are held in a trust in which the person or the person's cohabiting partner has a beneficial interest.

That is the provision that states that trust monies must not be included in the eligibility assessment for somebody applying for AISH.

11:50

It explicitly says in Bill 21 that that section is repealed, so when we stand up and say, "You are repealing the protections for Henson trusts," and the minister and government members stand up and say, "No, we're not," it makes me wonder if they have a version of Bill 21 that we don't have, that Albertans don't have. You know what? Honestly, I wouldn't be surprised. I wouldn't be surprised if that's the case, because I think that perhaps either the members get talking points that speak to legislation that's different from the one that's tabled in the House or perhaps at this point I would believe anything from this government with respect to what they're trying to sneak by Albertans.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, a point of order has been called.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise on a point of order under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). I see the members opposite shaking their heads saying that this is not a point of order. I do believe that, in fact, it is. It is imputing a false motive to this government of trying to sneak things past Albertans.

I recognize that you don't have the benefit of the Blues, Madam Chair, but we need to be very cautious of the things we say in this Chamber.

**Ms Pancholi:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. Great.

**Mr. Schow:** That goes, of course, for the member there as well as she's trying to taunt while I'm making a point of order. I just don't quite understand where she sees that going and, really, where she

gets the gall to have that lack of decorum in this Chamber. I'd ask her to apologize and retract that comment. This government is not trying to sneak anything past Albertans. Rather, we're trying to make life better for all Albertans.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This is not a point of order. The comment made is a difference of opinion. On this side of the House we believe that some of the legislation are things that the government may be trying to put past Albertans. This was not a comment directed at an individual member, and therefore it does not fall under 23(h), (i), and (j). It is not a point of order; it's a difference of opinion.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, as we near this Christmas break, when we will be reintroduced to our constituents, I would suggest that we focus on that and not language that may inflame others.

This is not a point of order, but I will express some caution to the hon. member as she proceeds with the rest of her time.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As I was saying, I believe that it's important that the government is forthcoming and honest with Albertans about what's contained in their bills.

In section 3.3, which is repealed, is the protection for Henson trusts. When the Minister of Community and Social Services says that this is not being repealed, that is actually contrary to what is in Bill 21. I'm here to speak on behalf of my constituent, who is representative of a number of constituents and is probably representative of constituents from across this province and across the Assembly, who was in tears in my office because she believed that she had been doing what was right and best for her child for the past 18 years by putting away money in trust and believed that it was the only assurances that she had going forward that her adult child would be cared for and would not be penalized when seeking supports from this government, from AISH. She was counting on that. It gave her peace of mind to know that her child would be cared for to some degree in her absence.

For the Minister of Community and Social Services to stand up and say that that is not happening when Bill 21 clearly repeals that – I invite the Minister of Community and Social Services to then make it clear and to propose her own amendment to Bill 21 to correct that. Actually, the Member for St. Albert did that. She proposed a clear amendment to Bill 21 to clarify, apparently in accordance with what the Minister of Community and Social Services is saying, that Henson trusts are protected. That was an amendment that was brought forward by the Member for St. Albert. The government members voted against it, and it was voted down.

I simply have to ask on behalf of my constituent: if there is a clear commitment from this government to protect Henson trusts, to protect severely disabled Albertans, to protect their families, who are seeking to protect them going forward, then bring forward your own amendment to correct the mistake, I assume, that was made in this bill because as of right now this bill repeals those protections.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Standing Order 4(3), we will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, say no. So carried.  
The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you. I move to adjourn the Assembly until this afternoon at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:56 a.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 3, 2019

Day 51

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 3, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good afternoon, hon. members. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, it is a privilege to welcome back some familiar faces to this Chamber, members of the Alberta Association of Former MLAs. Please rise as I call your name: Shiraz Shariff, Karen Leibovici, Ed Gibbons, David Coutts, and Heather Klimchuk. Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, we have two school groups visiting us today: from the constituency of Edmonton-McClung welcome students from Callingwood elementary, and from the constituency of St. Albert welcome students from Joseph M. Demko school.

Now, hon. members, as you may know, the Speaker hosted the International Day of Persons with Disabilities ceremony in the rotunda today, and I am so pleased to welcome two recipients of the 2019 Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities award: Ms Donna Desjardins and Mr. Joseph Sask. Please rise. Congratulations. I'd also like to welcome the chair of the council, Mr. Neil Pierce, and Stella Varvis, chair of family support for children with disabilities, Provincial Parent Advisory Committee. Thank you for coming.

Hon. members, we have guests of the Minister of Seniors and Housing: John and Lyle Hallet. Also, visiting the Minister of Health this afternoon are guests from the University of Alberta's master of nursing program. Visiting the Minister of Transportation is his constituency assistant from Calgary-Hays, Tyler Van Vliet, and his partner, Zoe Szeremet, visiting us from Australia. Welcome, and thank you, Tyler, for all you do. Guests, please rise and receive the welcome of this Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

### Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I rise to speak in light of the tragic event that occurred yesterday on the steps of the Legislature. Suicide is a reality that far too many Albertans and Canadians are familiar with. Let's be honest with each other. Suicide is not an easy thing to talk about. It's a heartbreaking reality that we must confront all together, and yesterday's event has once again brought the tragedy of suicide into the spotlight.

Every day in Alberta one or more people may die of suicide and more may attempt suicide, not to mention the countless others who experience depression and other forms of mental illness that can lead to suicide. The difficult reality is that each life lost to suicide leaves a ripple effect across the lives of those who live on – the family, the friends, the loved ones – who are left with broken pieces of their lives, unable to make sense of this tremendous loss. It's a loss that too many people know. I want to remind everyone

experiencing those challenges that there are services available 24/7 and that you are not alone. You are loved, you are valuable, you are strong, and you are worth it.

Over the past years there has been tremendous work done to reduce the stigma that relates to suicide and mental health challenges to help those who are suffering to find help and to bring those who are struggling out of the darkness and into the light. We have awareness days, public health campaigns, and many passionate citizens who dedicate their lives to work with others to get people well.

But, with that, sometimes we forget that there are many small things we can all do to make a difference. We can ask someone how they are doing. We can show someone that we care. We can take the time out of our busy lives to ensure that the people we love know that they are loved and that our loved ones know that we will be there for them every step along the way.

We must all work together to talk openly about depression, mental health challenges, and suicide. These challenges are all too often silent until a tragedy makes them painfully visible. Everyone needs to know that help is always available and that asking for help is a sign of strength. There are resources available to everyone in this province 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

It shows strength to ask for help. It shows strength to take a hand. It shows strength to share your experience. To help somebody else is very well worth it. If you or someone you know needs help, you can call Health Link at 811 or the mental health helpline at 1.877.303.2642, or if you're in a crisis, simply call 911, because you are worth it.

I know that we must continue to talk in an open and honest way about these difficult issues. At the end of the day, we're all Albertans, and we want each other to be happy, healthy, and resilient.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As all Albertans, we want to take care of each other, to be a shoulder to lean on at times when things are tough. Yesterday we lost a friend, a family member, an Albertan to suicide. Even though we may not know his name, we know of the common struggles he faced – the feeling of isolation, unloved, unwanted, struggling with perceived failures – moments that all of us can relate to.

We all have days where we just don't feel like we belong in the world that we live in. As the day-to-day stressors build up, some of us don't know what to do, who to talk to, or even if we should. Many have been raised not to talk about their feelings, to man up, go to work, and just do what needs to be done. We know better. We know that as people we need to be heard, to feel valued, to know that even in moments of being vulnerable, it is okay, and the days will get better.

We must take real steps to address the mental health crisis in the province. By working together, across all party lines, we can continue to build on the resources and supports that people need. We must continue to expand supports for children and youth so that we can address their mental health needs as early as possible and continue to recognize that as our world continues to become more complex, adults also can get the resources that they need. We all know in this House that there is much more to do.

For those that are in need of support today, please reach out. If you feel that you can't speak to a friend or a family member, then call the mental health line at 1.877.303.2642. It's there 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

We have a responsibility to each other in this House and in the province to take the time to listen, to talk to one another, to

recognize that at different moments and at times we all need to be loved. So take that time. Slow down the business of the day and take a minute, a minute to take care of yourself, to breathe, and to enjoy the minutes and the moments that can quickly pass us by.

1:40

Value who you are, the gift that you give to others around you in just being you. Value those around you, the ones that bring meaning to your life. Tell them that you love them, that they are important. Take the risk of being vulnerable, and show your true feelings to those who are around you. Take the time, that small moment of compassion, that moment of telling someone you love them. A quick hug can make all the difference to a person who just needs that moment. All we really have in the world is time: time to love, time to be loved, and time to enjoy the gifts that each day gives us. So tell the people around you that you love them.

For those who are listening, for those who feel alone, you are valued, you are special, you are loved, and you deserve to live.

Thank you.

## Members' Statements

### International Day of Persons with Disabilities

**Ms Renaud:** I'm grateful to the United Nations for declaring this day in 1992 the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The 2019 theme is Promoting the Participation of Persons with Disabilities and Their Leadership. Celebrating publicly is important, but more important is to measure our progress and to set goals so that we can measure that progress and that our progress is from one year to the next, that it's not marked by election cycles or board appointments. It needs to be like a relay race, where we hand off to each other.

We need to have continuous monitoring on really important issues like poverty reduction. We need to support Albertans with disabilities as they look for employment. Graduates don't find work. Chronic unemployment is a problem. Underemployment is a problem. Participation in postsecondary education is dismal. We need to properly fund education so that parents and families are not having to advocate for this every year. We need to have a place where seclusion rooms don't replace adequately funded classrooms. We need health care that is accessible, complex care that is accessible. We need to address domestic violence and prevent abuse and neglect because that is a chronic problem in this community.

We need to do like the federal government has done and introduce legislation also. Bill C-81, the Accessible Canada Act, received royal assent in June 2019, and it requires that the federally regulated private sector, government of Canada Crown corporations, and Parliament do everything they can to address accessibility. But the most important job that we have is to create inclusion, real inclusion, and that requires commitment, dedication, and action every single day. There are 6.2 million Canadians the age of 15 and over that identify as having a disability.

We have a lot of work to do. I hope that we celebrate today, but I hope that next year's celebration marks a summary of the work that we've done together to take the UN's pledge to leave no one behind.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

### British Columbia Energy Policies

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The B.C. NDP government is working to block Alberta energy from reaching global

markets. For example, the B.C. government's lawsuits and judicial harassment of the Energy East pipeline and the Trans Mountain pipeline killed the first and threatens the second. Take also, for example, Alberta's liquefied natural gas. On the one hand, B.C.'s NDP are doing everything they can to stop us from developing our LNG. On the other hand, B.C. is building several LNG projects, including the largest private-sector LNG project in Canadian history. This double-dealing clearly reeks of hypocrisy. To the B.C. government I say: how dare you wilfully support and develop your LNG projects but at the same time try to stop us.

Not only that, but B.C. is actively working against climate change. B.C. is Canada's largest coal producer. They demand that we all reduce GHGs but at the same time export millions of tonnes of coal to China. China is the world's worst polluter and the largest coal consumer. Not only do they have 15 coal plants, but they are building eight more on Chinese soil and another 300 across the world. I guess that with all the Chinese coal money they make, it is no wonder that B.C. looks right past their pretend climate change goals. No wonder Vancouver is the largest coal port in North America. No wonder they are denying First Nations along TMX the prosperity they are asking for. No wonder they turn a blind eye to the lack of Chinese regulations, employment standards, their poor environmental stewardship, and, of course, their dismal human rights record.

The B.C. NDP are the new coal barons, and they've sold out their environmental morals in the name of Chinese dollar signs. The action of the B.C. government directly conflicts with their environmental grandstanding. They are acting only in their own financial best interests and not in the interests of Albertans and the rest of Canada.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Civil Society and Government Programs

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Albertans do not like big government. We do like civil society, though, with Albertans' average donations to registered charities the highest in Canada. Government should foster, not seek to supplant, civil society. Here's an example. The Mustard Seed is a registered charity, with services in Red Deer. They have a lunch program, delivering school lunches to children in need. This service, supported by community donations and volunteers, cost little and worked well. Then along came the NDP, who displaced this service with a big-government lunch program. Instead of free volunteers, big-government employees. Instead of lunches based on need, free lunches to entire schools regardless of needs. The Mustard Seed's approach was clearly better, yet the NDP sought to use the rough fist of the state to supplant the gentle hand of civil society.

Madam Speaker, Albertans yearn for change in government culture. What can government learn from civil society? In civil society love is the motivating force, not a paycheck. Motivated in love, civil society seeks to go the extra mile to serve the one. Mediocrity and bare minimums are incompatible where there is an overarching desire to serve others in love. Let all who work in government seek to instead serve in government and, by following the example of civil society, ennoble that service by serving in love in seeking the public interest. This makes us better in our stewardships.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

### Urban Indigenous Program Funding

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On Sunday the Premier reported to media that the cuts now being made are not like the cuts made by then Premier Klein because, whereas the Klein cuts were across the board, these cuts were targeted. So the question we now need to ask is: who is being targeted? The answer is clear: the indigenous community and, more specifically, the urban indigenous community. While the Premier talks about the cuts amounting to 2.8 per cent, the truth is that the cuts to the urban indigenous programming are 100 per cent, and they're across Alberta.

In estimates I asked for a list of the programs to be cut, and the minister was unable to answer me, which is quite telling. Fortunately, I was able to receive a list in writing. When it arrived, I was astounded to learn who was being targeted: the native friendship centres, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre, Metis Calgary Family Services, Native Counselling, the Red Deer Urban Aboriginal Voices Society, and the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth in Calgary.

Let's talk about what the programs do for indigenous people. They assist families leaving reserves and transitioning to urban centres. They support youth leaving high school to begin postsecondary. They guide women leaving prison to integrate into society. They help women involved with child welfare services to re-establish their homes and resume parenting their children. It is clear that this government is unwilling to assist indigenous people who hope to improve their lives. Isn't that a statement? What this government fails to understand are the consequences of destroying relationships that have been built over years. They cannot simply shut down these programs in hopes that others will be available in time. When people are in the process of making transitions, they often have approach-avoidance behaviours, which means that they enter the programs and exit them a number of times. It's critical that the personnel remain the same so that there are welcome, known faces there for people who recommit themselves to change.

Minister, tears are not enough. It is time for you to find some nerve to resist these assaults.

### Teacher and Teacher Aide Positions

**Mr. Long:** Madam Speaker, I rise today concerned. I'm concerned because school boards across Alberta are threatening to cut teachers and teachers' aides. I've spent time in classrooms across my riding and know that those students deserve the resources necessary to achieve a high-quality education. The teachers in my constituency are incredible people. They work hard. They go above and beyond because they care so deeply about their students. I trust that all teachers do. What concerns me is that while there are many school boards across the province, including those in my riding, who are prioritizing children's education, some are choosing to politicize teachers and the education of our students in an attempt to negotiate with our government. Many of my constituents are confused when they see other school boards making these irresponsible decisions. Why would a school board fire teachers when they can make cuts elsewhere?

1:50

My constituents understand that our province is in debt, and they understand that we need to be responsible while paying off this debt so we can get Alberta back on track.

Albertans also understand that this is a transition period and that a new funding model, currently under development, will help to relieve some of these tensions going forward and into the future.

What confuses them, Madam Speaker, is that school boards are threatening to lay off teachers before they're willing to make any other concessions. It is especially confusing when the government has told them that they expect boards to prioritize the classroom. These boards have reserves. They have savings which they can draw on to help fill gaps where those gaps may exist, and it absolutely baffles me that boards would choose to cut teachers before using these. I see no reason for school boards to be cutting staff when they could make cuts elsewhere or draw on their reserves.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to thank all the school boards who are putting in tremendous efforts to provide the best possible education for our children and still protecting teachers' jobs during this transition year as our government begins to clean up the fiscal mess left by the previous government.

I also want to commend all the teachers who show up every day no matter what and who show so much care for the next generation.

### Oral Question Period

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Health Care System

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's good to see the Premier again, and I'm hoping he can help explain a few things to his House leader. Yesterday the House leader tried to deny that this government has ordered mass layoffs of front-line health care workers. That's only one business day after this government sent letters to those workers announcing that thousands of them would be sacked. Perhaps the Premier can do better. Albertans read the UCP platform, and Albertans have read the letters. Why is this Premier breaking his fundamental promise to Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** I'm not, and the government is not, Madam Speaker. The United Conservative Party committed to maintain or increase health care funding. Last year health care funding was \$20,409,000,000. Under this budget it's \$20,610,000,000. Next year it'll be \$20,616,000,000, going up to \$20,672,000,000 in the fiscal year 2022-2023. Those are increases, not cuts.

**Ms Notley:** Well, he also promised to protect front-line services, and on Friday at least 5,000 people heard that they were going to lose their jobs.

Now, the Health minister is also displaying the utter contempt for the facts that has become a bit of a hallmark of this government. Yesterday he told media, quote: none of these reductions represent any service cuts at all. Now, Madam Speaker, AHS is laying off thousands of front-line workers, and the letter speaks openly about "reducing or ceasing the provision of services." To the Premier: is his government's refusal to acknowledge what they're doing a function of embarrassment, incompetence, or institutionalized gaslighting?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, the government is not laying off thousands of people, and the Leader of the Opposition is irresponsibly trying to create fear for people's job security. In fact, the government has indicated the maximum number of positions that could be affected by changes over the next four years. We would hope that there would be significantly fewer positions affected and that those that are affected would be affected by not replacing people as they retire or leave the workforce. We've always been clear about seeking to maximize changes through attrition rather than layoffs. Even if that number were to be real,

we'd still represent the highest per capita number of nurses in Canada.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Madam Speaker, I would suggest the Premier read the letter a little bit more closely because it doesn't say what he just suggested it did. It does say, however, that they will be looking at closing acute-care beds as continuing care beds open and patients are moved over. Albertans have seen the letter, so think closely. Now, that's about 1 in 5 beds, and while we have no argument at all with getting patients into the right care, those acute beds are still needed to reduce surgical wait times. Will the Premier admit that closing beds is part of his plan to create more private care for the very wealthiest while the rest of us wait even longer?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I will remind the hon. leader of the NDP that during her tenure as Premier hospital wait times for most procedures increased even though the government increased their health budget by 15 per cent, and this is the problem. We have by far the most expensive health system in Canada, but we have higher than average infant mortality and lower than average life expectancy and generally above average hospital wait times while on an age-adjusted basis we spend 30 per cent more per capita than the average amongst Canadian provinces. We call upon the unions to work with us in finding more efficient ways of delivering quality health care to ensure that universal care is there for all in the future.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Closing health care beds isn't going to fix any of that, Madam Speaker.

Now, one of the longest running debates in the United States is how to fix their health care system. Democrats and Republicans don't agree on much, but they agree that their system is broken. In Alberta we've taken a different path with medicare and with the Canada Health Act. But at the Premier's own UCP convention his party rejected a motion calling for him to comply with the principles of the Canada Health Act. To the Premier. You promised to protect public health care. Now your party is attacking it. Why should Albertans trust you at all?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, we are of course maintaining universal – you know, the question is so utterly ridiculous because it's the same NDP medi-scare that we've heard every year for decades in this House and in every other Legislature across Canada. When the NDP is desperate, they roll out the old medi-scare card. But with respect to the letter to which she refers, this is a requirement of the collective bargaining process to indicate the total number of positions that could be affected, not that are being affected. She's trying to scare nurses, suggesting that hundreds of people are being laid off when that is simply not true. It's irresponsible.

**Ms Notley:** I am strangely surprised that the Premier did not refer to the decision of his UCP party as medi-scare at their actual convention. But, you know, I guess it all depends on the audience, Madam Speaker.

Now, our plan for lab services was based on the Health Quality Council saying that it was the best value. Now it's being sold off. We improved ambulance turnaround times in hospitals with a program this Premier cancelled, and now they're threatening to sell that off, too. Over the weekend the Premier's party called for still more privately delivered health care. Why did the Premier hide his real plan for health care from Albertans during the election campaign?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, under the NDP much of our health care was delivered by private providers, by physician contractors, by private medical clinics, by day surgeries done by nongovernment-operated hospitals, all within the context of our universally accessible and insured system. That's how the health care system operates in Canada. We need to challenge all of our partners to help to do that more efficiently, including NDP-affiliated unions that are asking for one-year pay increases of as much as 8 per cent. Taxpayers can't afford that.

**Ms Notley:** What taxpayers can afford, actually, is a Premier who would negotiate in good faith and not in the public. Nonetheless, Albertans also voted to protect health care and respect the Canada Health Act. They're getting something very different and very dangerous, and they deserve to see the real plan. Yesterday his caucus voted down our request for an emergency debate, so I challenge the Premier to debate the future of health care with me instead, live. He should tell Albertans about why he thinks American-style health care is the best. He should have the courage of his convictions and be accountable instead of hiding from the debate. To the Premier: will he do that?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, this is a debate right now, and Albertans had a debate in the spring on the NDP's record on spending more for less on health care, on spending more than any other province and getting less, on spending more and wait times going up. Now she talks about negotiating in public. It's her affiliated unions, that are actually literal constitutional legal affiliates of the NDP, that are asking taxpayers to pay 8 per cent more in salaries per year when the average private-sector family's after-tax income is down by 8 per cent over the past five years. The NDP could not be more out of touch.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition for her third set of questions.

### Investment in Alberta

**Ms Notley:** Albertans deserve more than 35-second clips, especially when they are filled with as many inaccuracies as we just saw right there.

Nonetheless, yesterday Husky Energy revealed to its investors what this government didn't have the courage to report to this House, that 370 Alberta workers lost their jobs this fall. What's even more, though, is that Husky is cutting overall spending by half a billion dollars, but they'll still find money to upgrade a refinery in Wisconsin, all this while they pocketed a quarter-billion-dollar corporate handout from this Premier. Why won't this Premier admit he's creating jobs in Wisconsin with Alberta's tax dollars while Albertans themselves get fired?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, Husky was very clear that it's because of curtailment that they're making these reductions, curtailment imposed by the previous government because they allied themselves with the Trudeau Liberals, who killed the Northern Gateway pipeline, killed Energy East. By the way, let's not forget that the NDP was opposed to Northern Gateway. They were opposed to Keystone XL. They did nothing to ensure the construction of Energy East, unlike this government. With the opening of Enbridge's line 3, the Canadian portion, pipeline optimization, and special production allowances on rail, it would mean several hundred thousand additional barrels of Alberta crude being shipped in the next year.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I was very pleased, actually, to be at the announcement of line 3's beginning of construction, but investors are backing away from Alberta because of the uncertainty that this Premier is actually creating. He's cancelled successful tax credits, he's threatened Albertans' pensions, and he's cynically fanning the flames of separatism for his own political ends. The CEO of Calgary Economic Development reported last Friday that Alberta missed out on a tech firm that employs a thousand people because of these very actions. Why is this Premier driving investment away with his failed economic policies and irresponsible rhetoric?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, that is so ridiculous. I'm so pleased to have the opportunity to tell the House about the success Alberta had in winning the support of all 13 provinces and territories yesterday, support for the construction of pipelines, for global market access for our energy, for demanding that the federal government rewrite the no more pipelines law, Bill C-69, and for a fair deal on the fiscal stabilization program and equalization payback to Alberta. Unlike the NDP, we've got every province and territory standing with Alberta on key aspects of our fair-deal plan.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Madam Speaker, last week a survey of Alberta small businesses showed yet another steep drop in business confidence. In fact, it's the fifth month in a row that small-business confidence has dropped in Alberta. Almost a third expect layoffs in the next 90 days. We're down more than 10,000 jobs since this government was elected. When will this Premier stop whining about how it's everyone else's fault, take responsibility for the problems he has created, and do whatever it takes to get Albertans back to work? [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order.  
The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Madam Speaker, that display is exactly why the NDP was the first government in Alberta history to be fired by Albertans after one term: anger and tax hikes, a reckless fiscal policy. They raised taxes on businesses, on property, on everything through the carbon tax, on incomes. Revenues went down from almost every one of those sources, and tens of billions of dollars of capital fled the province and, together with it, jobs. This government is acting with lightning speed to do everything possible to bring job-creating investment back to Alberta.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** To the Premier. Day in and day out the Education minister has repeated tired talking points, saying that she is maintaining education funding, but now we have learned that she has told some boards to use their limited money they have for building maintenance as a last-ditch effort to lay off fewer teachers. Why? Because she's cutting education funding, plain and simple. Nobody is happy with this budget performance. Does the Premier really think it's okay to put an unsafe roof over an oversized classroom?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, incessantly restating a mistruth doesn't make it any truer. Page 88 of the budget, Ministry of Education operating expense: last year, \$8.223 billion; this year, \$8.223 billion; next year, \$8.223 billion; and so on. We have the second most expensive education system in Canada on a per capita basis.

This is not a reduction in spending. Would the NDP please stop trying to mislead Albertans? [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, heckling is not yelling across the aisle.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** The Premier lives in Calgary. Calgary public has \$32 million less than they had last year, Premier. It's plain and simple. It's math. It's black and white. Please stop denying the facts. The minister is now telling school boards to choose between safe plumbing or teachers. On this side of the House we believe that kids deserve safe classrooms, a toilet that flushes, and a teacher who's there to support them. It's clear that the minister doesn't share those values. To the Premier: do you really think it's okay to have toilets overflowing and overcrowded classrooms, and if you don't, why won't you amend your budget to fund education properly, as you say you're doing but clearly aren't?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, I believe the hon. member knows that what she is saying is, to be generous, inaccurate. She knows that the budget passed by this Legislature ascribes \$8.223 billion to education this year and next year, the largest expenditure on education in the history of Alberta, the second-highest expenditure on education per capita in the entire country. If her friends . . .

**Ms Notley:** Twenty thousand more kids this year. Twenty thousand more kids alone . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry. I thought we addressed the yelling issue earlier, hon. leader.

Hon. Premier, please continue.

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, for the folks at home who heard somebody shouting, that was the Leader of the Opposition showing no respect for this institution.

If she's really concerned about these issues, perhaps she could speak to her friends in the school boards about ensuring that this stable budget is reflected in their decisions.

**Ms Hoffman:** Perhaps the Premier should talk to his friend the Education minister about the realities facing schools: \$32 million cut from the Calgary board of education, Madam Speaker. How can the Premier deny facts? I know he's got a nice big rolled-up budget, but the reality on the ground is different: \$32 million cut from Calgary public, 300 teachers laid off. The minister knows it. That's why she's telling them to divert money from buildings that are rotting to prevent more layoffs. Why won't the Premier admit the facts, stand in this place, and take responsibility for his atrocious budget?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, again, the budget for education is being maintained. We are maintaining our commitment to Albertans in that respect. We spend the largest amount of money in the history of the province on education even in the midst of a fiscal crisis, a fiscal crisis created by the NDP. Of course, based on enrolment numbers and a number of other criteria in the formula, largely established by the previous government, there will be from year to year adjustments in different school boards, but in the case of the Calgary board of education, with a \$1.2 billion budget and a large reserve, the question is: why was their first resort to lay off teachers? It wasn't the right choice.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Health Care System (continued)

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I proudly ran as a candidate for this party because, as our platform clearly stated with our public health guarantee, a UCP government would “maintain or increase health spending and maintain a universally accessible, publicly funded health care system.” This pledge is important to me and all members on this side of the House, and it shows an importance to priority in challenging fiscal times. To the Minister of Health. Please give an update to me and this House. Is this government following through on its promise?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The answer is yes. As the member indicates and reminds the House, we campaigned on maintaining or increasing health care spending. That’s exactly what we’re doing in Budget 2019. Let me be clear to the members opposite that nothing in the mandatory disclosure that was provided to our unions last week indicates any cutting of services, any cutting of access to health care services. Absolutely, we are delivering on our health care guarantee. We’ve given the unions the mandatory disclosures that were required to be provided to them. These indicate modest, potential reductions, causing people to overreact, like the members opposite are acting right now. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, members of the Official Opposition were given quiet time and respectful time to ask their question. I would ask that you would honour that to members of the government as well when they are asking their questions.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

2:10

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that at the end of last week AHS announced that they will be reducing staff by nearly 500 full-time positions over three years through attrition and given that this represents approximately 1 per cent of total AHS registered nurses over three years, which is significantly less than the yearly employment turnover, to the Minister of Health: are you cutting nursing positions, or will they be reallocated elsewhere?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. AHS has informed the unions of potential modest reductions, including a reduction in RN positions of under 1 per cent per year over the next three years, as the member indicated. This is less than normal turnover. I would also note that we currently have about 3 per cent more RNs per capita than the national average, so the total potential reduction would still leave us around the national average. We’re giving our unions the best information available so that we can negotiate with them in good faith. Any reductions would be through attrition as much as possible. Three-quarters, I would note, of all the potential changes in health care staff are due to a change of employer, not through reductions of jobs overall in the province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that yesterday the opposition leader suggested that rural ridings with new continuing care facilities ought to brace themselves for a reduction in front-line services elsewhere and given that the purpose of additional continuing care facilities is to reduce the burden on hospitals in providing long-term care and given that rural areas already feel a deficit in care providers compared to the cities, to the Minister of

Health: can rural areas expect equivalent services in addition to the opening of continuing care facilities?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, they certainly can. We need to increase the overall capacity of the system. That means adding continuing care across the province, especially in many of our smaller urbans, where the unmet need is mainly for continuing care. We recognize that there are unique challenges to delivering rural health care. The 2019 budget for the Health ministry puts patients first regardless of where they live. We need to do things differently, and, yes, that will mean some changes in how services are delivered. It’s a dynamic system, always changing so that we can always dynamically meet the care of Albertans throughout the province, but it will not mean reductions in access.

### Calgary Finances

**Member Ceci:** Madam Speaker, up to 216 Calgarians will lose their jobs at the city of Calgary next year due to provincial funding cuts. These city workers will join 300 teachers losing their jobs at Calgary public schools, 250 staff losing their jobs at the University of Calgary, 300 warehouse workers losing their jobs at Federated Co-ops, hundreds more at Lowe’s Canada, and now thousands more Calgarians will be losing their jobs in public health care and ancillary support. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why does your government care so little about working Calgarians?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me be clear. In budget 2019-2020 we maintained 100 per cent in MSI funding to all of our municipalities. I think that the question that that Member for Calgary-Buffalo ought to ask himself is: how did we get there? We got here as a consequence of their four years of disastrous policies. That’s how we got here. We are now cleaning up the mess that they created. They caused so much fear in our economy that it led investors to leave our province, taking hundred of billions of dollars in investment away from our province.

**Member Ceci:** Yet city workers will lose their jobs.

Given that the people earning those paycheques would have spent money in local businesses on food and other necessities and benefited the Calgary economy and given that those paycheques were all cancelled so the Premier could give \$4.7 billion in handouts to corporations that are now spending that money in other provinces and in the United States, my question is: how many jobs has this minister created in Wisconsin by forcing hundreds and hundreds of layoffs in Calgary?

**Mr. Madu:** Madam Speaker, unlike the previous government, that left more than 200,000 of our fellow citizens out of work, as a consequence of the changes that we are now beginning to implement in order to clean up their mess, in October alone we added 23,000 private-sector jobs, unlike when they were in government. You know, the public service bloated, and that led to the flight of investments away from our province. We are cleaning up their mess, and we will not be lectured by them.

**Member Ceci:** Given that even with a frozen city budget Calgarians are paying more property taxes to backfill provincial cuts and given that this includes a property tax increase just to keep the existing police officers on the street after the Minister of Justice

raided their fines revenue, why is this government forcing Calgary property owners to subsidize job creation in Newfoundland while their friends, neighbours, and family in Calgary are laid off by the thousands?

**Mr. Madu:** Madam Speaker, this side of the House is responsible for the provincial government, and the city councils across this province, like that of Calgary, are responsible for their own budget. We provided the police grant to municipalities. That grant was maintained at 100 per cent. Again, the question those members over there ought to ask themselves is: in the four years that they were in office, what did they do? We know the answer: more than \$60 billion in debt. That is their record.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Seniors' Driver Medical Examination Fees

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This government continues its full-fledged attack on Alberta seniors. They have kicked people off the seniors' drug plan. They have cut into rental and housing assistance for funding, and now they're planning to deinsure drivers' medical exams, the very exams that seniors are required to take so they can continue to drive their vehicles. Just shameful. To the minister of seniors: why are you making life more expensive for seniors on every front while cutting a \$4.7 billion cheque to big corporations?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Once again I will just remind the opposition member that our Budget 2019 includes an increase of \$9 million for social and seniors' services and makes sure that Alberta's growing seniors population is well supported.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, given that the population of seniors is growing at 23 per cent annually, of course they need to increase the budget. But individuals are getting less – it's easy to understand that – and given that seniors are required to pass this driver's medical exam at 75, again at age 80, and every two years after that and given that fees listed online suggest that these drivers' medical exams cost in the neighbourhood of \$80, to the minister: please inform Alberta seniors of just how you expect them to pay for your constant barrage of added costs being downloaded onto their already very tight budget.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our government must get its spending under control. Seniors have made our province what it is today, but they also understand that we have to control our budget. It's not like the opposition members, who spent money like crazy. We are cleaning up their mess. The MacKinnon report indicated that if we continued down this path of spending, we would soon be more than \$100 billion in debt. We are spending \$5 million a day on interest instead of \$5 million a day to buy . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, given that the government is balancing their budget on the backs of seniors and given that cutting insurance for drivers' medical exams is expected to save the government about \$4 million and given that that represents less than one-one-thousandth of a fraction of the \$4.7 billion giveaway to big corporations and given that that handout isn't creating jobs but that cutting insurance for seniors and will have harmful impacts on our

seniors here in Alberta, to the minister: will you stand up for Alberta seniors, do the right thing, and immediately restore insurance for drivers' medical exams?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just to correct the record, our job-creation tax cut is actually only affecting government revenues this year by \$100 million, nothing close to the number the members opposite are saying.

Albertans elected this government to find efficiencies, to ensure that we deliver programs in the most cost-effective way . . . [interjections]

2:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members. [interjections] Hon. Member for St. Albert, please stop yelling.

Hon. Minister of Finance, you have 35 seconds.

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, again, Albertans elected this government to manage this province's finances responsibly and clean up the mess the members opposite have left us. We will deliver.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### Children's Services Programs

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Spruce Grove Parent Link Centre in my riding provides parenting supports in a judgment-free environment to give extra help to any parents that need it as well as opportunities for parents to connect with other parents who have children of similar ages. Some of my constituents have inquired about the status of these opportunities as a result of the upcoming expression of interest for early intervention and prevention grants. Can the Minister of Children's Services assure my constituents that programs similar to these will continue to be delivered?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The short answer to that question is: absolutely. This is about providing services where they have the greatest impact and building on partnerships that are already happening between agencies and communities across the province. What we won't do is continue to do things the way we've always done them because we've always done them that way. [interjections] Over the next six months this transparent process will allow community partners to propose the best approaches on how we can strengthen the prevention and early intervention system and serve children and families across the province.

**Mr. Loewen:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the Minister of Children's Services for her answer. Given the demand for these services in my riding and given that our government has committed to continuing to fund programs for the most vulnerable children and families in our communities, as was seen by the increase in funding for Children's Services, and given that constituents in my riding are worried about whether funding for these kinds of programs will



continue, can the minister elaborate on why she made the decision to consolidate these kinds of programs?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order has been noted at 2:21. Two points of order have been noted at 2:21.

**Ms Schulz:** Madam Speaker, children deserve to be safe, supported, and get a good start in life no matter where they live in our province. For too long there has been a patchwork approach to services that is difficult for vulnerable families to navigate. The new system needs to be more consistent across the province. It needs to reflect unique community needs. It needs to address the gap in services that sometimes exists for children past the age of six years old, and it needs to focus on implementing the precedent-setting well-being and resiliency framework introduced this spring. Many community organizations are already doing this, and government needs to catch up.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that I've heard from many stakeholders and constituents in my riding regarding this process, in particular from those who use the Spruce Grove Parent Link Centre, can the Minister of Children's Services please share with this House some of the feedback that she has received over the last few weeks on this initiative?

**Ms Schulz:** Madam Speaker, I know there are colleagues, likely on all sides of this House, who have heard a great deal of feedback on this new plan. I do understand that change can bring uncertainty, but certainly we've also heard positive feedback from partners across Alberta. In Edmonton we heard, quote: it's the first time in my career in Alberta in 15 years that I've seen a revisioning of our sector, and quite frankly it's long overdue. End quote. In Vegreville we heard: "The Province's updates to the Parent Link Program could allow us to improve and build upon existing services. Change isn't always easy. I commend the province."

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Health Care Professional Positions

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In recent days my office has been flooded with e-mails, phone calls, messages of grave concern from health care workers and physicians and everyday Albertans about how devastating the health care cuts being carried out by this government are and how they will affect them, and I have no doubt that the members opposite have been receiving them, too. Indeed, we saw this government standing today in question period to attempt to spin this away as they fire 5,000 health care workers and counting. As they jeopardize their jobs, it's not going to help patient care. To this minister: what will happen when these beds are closed because RNs aren't there to staff them?

**Mr. Shandro:** Madam Speaker, spending more than the NDP government ever did on health care is not a cut. We promised Albertans when we campaigned in the last election that we would maintain or increase health care spending. That's exactly what we did in Budget 2019. That's what we're going to continue to do in future years as well. We'll continue to work with Albertans and make sure that we're going to have our spending be patient focused. We're going to work with both the Alberta Medical Association, our physicians, and our unions to make sure that our spending is in the best interests of our patients in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, given that this UCP government's style of consultation is, apparently, to act first, ignore questions later, we asked Alberta doctors how this government's proposed changes to compensation to physicians would affect them and their patients, and given that the doctors we spoke to said that they feel scared, disillusioned, angry, and undervalued and given that patients will be forced to higher cost areas of the health care system such as ERs and admissions to hospital, to this Minister of Health: is the chaos you're creating in our health care system worth your \$4.7 billion gift to big corporations?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said yesterday, we started meeting with the Alberta Medical Association on November 13. We provided them the next day with our proposal. We're looking forward to getting a proposal back from the AMA, the Alberta Medical Association. We're looking forward to continuing to work with them, seeing what their concerns are, and meeting with them, continuing to negotiate with them in good faith, and making sure that the money we spend on physician compensation is going to be in the best interests of patients.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Madam Speaker, that it's not only Alberta nurses and doctors who are getting hurt with these cuts, given that a pharmacy team of eight hard-working Albertans here in my constituency has been notified that the General continuing pharmacy will be contracted out due to AHS budget cuts and given that these doctors, nurses, and seniors depended on this team to provide in-house pharmacy services to 502 residents, a cut that barely puts a dent in this budget, and given that this team, some of whom have been there for 25 years, is already doing everything they can to reduce costs and truly care for residents and patients, will this minister immediately reverse this terrible decision?

**Mr. Shandro:** Madam Speaker, in our budget, our health care budget of \$22 billion, we provide a grant to AHS of \$12 billion. We trust AHS to be able to work within their budget of \$15 billion – that includes our \$12 billion grant to them – to make sure that they're spending in the best interest of patients. There are going to be decisions throughout the system by AHS and our other allied health professionals. There are going to be changes throughout the system. It means we act dynamically to react to the needs of our patients. This isn't a system that is carved in stone; it is a system that acts dynamically to react to the needs of patients.

### Health Care System (continued)

**Ms Notley:** Well, Madam Speaker, last Friday a number of letters were delivered to health care unions and health care professionals across this province, and in those letters they talked about the elimination of thousands of FTEs. They talked about additional changes that were coming in the future that would significantly reduce the quality of health care. They talked about a new Ernst & Young report that would bring about even more recommendations. But what they did not do is talk about how any of this related to what this Premier ran on in the last election. I asked this Premier if he would stand up and debate these issues in a full forum so that we could fully discuss them, and he hasn't answered my question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to be able to talk about the Ernest & Young report that we're expecting to get sometime by the end of the year so that we can release it to the public in January. I think it's going to be very informative for us as a ministry and as a government, as a province, to work with AHS. It's going to be the first time in their 10 years that someone from the outside has been able to review their processes, their policies, their structure to make sure that the spending at AHS is going to be in the best interests of patients throughout the province.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Madam Speaker, given that the Premier promised that he would not affect front-line services in health care – he is – and that he promised that he would respect the Canada Health Act and that his party just passed a resolution to not do that and given that they turned down our request for an emergency debate on Monday and given that they didn't say a word of those letters when they debated the health care budget just last month, will the Premier stand up for what he apparently believes is correct and debate me on these issues the way Albertans deserve?

2:30

**Mr. Shandro:** Madam Speaker, all of that is false. AHS has informed the unions through mandatory disclosures. It's part of the process. Throughout any negotiating process there are ups and there are downs. We look forward to continuing to work with our unions and being able to meet with them at the negotiating table so that the agreement we finally come out of with our unions is going to be making sure that the spending that we have in the health care budget is going to be in the best interests of our patients.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Madam Speaker, given that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre just described what I believe is probably the first of thousands of real-life consequences from this government's decision to cut health care and attack health care and hurt Albertans and given that Albertans have a right to know whether any of this suffering that they will be forced to endure is worth the \$4.7 billion corporate handout that that Premier just gave away and given that they have a right to a Premier who will stand up for what he allegedly believes is the right way to go, why won't the Premier commit to debating me on this issue?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again we see from the NDP how naive they are. They think that the health care system, a system that's \$22 billion and serves 4 point something million Albertans, should be carved in stone, that it should never change. It's actually a feature of this system that it can change to react to the best interests of our patients, that we can have change with the system and make sure that the \$22 billion that we have is spent in the best interests of our patients.

#### Federal Fiscal Stabilization Program

**Ms Rosin:** Madam Speaker, in the past decade alone Albertans have paid \$200 billion in equalization to the federal government. This is unfair and unsustainable, especially at a time when other prejudicial federal policies simultaneously hurt our province's economic interests. One clear issue is the paltry sum that our province has received in return from the federal fiscal stabilization program despite our recent economic hardships. To the Minister of

Finance: why is Alberta receiving so little from this federal fiscal stabilization program?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Fixing the fiscal stabilization program is absolutely crucial to Albertans getting a fair deal in Confederation. I want to thank the member for her service on the fair-deal panel, which is hosting its first town hall tonight. The purpose of the fiscal stabilization program is to protect provincial revenues, but it has proven to be wholly inadequate. In 2015-16 our province experienced a \$7 billion drop in revenues, yet because stabilization payments were arbitrarily capped at \$60 per person, Alberta only received \$251 million.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Well, given that Alberta contributes so much to Canada, without so much as a thank you from Ottawa for how much we sacrifice for the rest of this country, and given that the fiscal stabilization program has failed us in our time of greatest need, can the same minister please tell us what needs to change to ensure a fair deal for Albertans from this fiscal stabilization program?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. The key issue here is the \$60 per person cap on fiscal stabilization payments. Without this cap, Alberta would have been entitled to actually \$2.2 billion over two years, ending 2016-17. Our government is working with the federal government and other provinces to reverse this indefensible cap. Further, we're demanding a retroactive stabilization payment or equalization rebate of \$1.7 billion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you again to the minister. Well, given that there was positive news yesterday after the national premiers' meeting, when it was announced that our Premier successfully convinced other Premiers to support Alberta's position on fiscal stabilization, and given that all Premiers across Canada are now committed to calling on Ottawa to reform this program and make sure that western provinces get a fair deal, can the minister explain what the next steps are to make sure that Albertans get some money rebated to us through this fiscal stabilization program?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, our Premier's leadership was critical in achieving nation-wide support for our position on fiscal stabilization. The federal government cannot continue to force Albertans to contribute so much through programs such as equalization and continue to shortchange this province on fiscal stabilization. I'm working with my provincial counterparts to advocate for the same changes, and I've had productive discussions with the federal Finance minister, Bill Morneau, on this issue. Fiscal stabilization is an issue that requires correction. We're working on it. We're going to get it done.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

### Nechi Institute

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. For 45 years the Nechi Institute has been teaching mostly indigenous students in areas like addictions, counselling, and therapeutic training. Their courses are internationally recognized. Now this UCP government has deemed their work to not be a priority and sent the institution an eviction notice, instructing them to vacate their lodge by March 30, 2020. Will the Minister of Infrastructure immediately explain why he's evicting this group that is doing so much good in their community?

**Mr. Wilson:** The province of Alberta continues to be in the midst of an opioid crisis. This government's priority is to expand access to addiction treatment for all Albertans, especially indigenous Albertans, who are dying at a rate four times faster than nonindigenous in the province. As our friends at Poundmaker's Lodge state:

We believe the current government has been extremely responsive and taken . . . necessary steps to implement and support Truth and Reconciliation recommendations toward increasing treatment bed space necessary for our indigenous people's survival.

The Nechi Institute is currently occupying a strategic clinical space, and we are open to working together to find a suitable alternative location.

**Mr. Feehan:** You clearly haven't spoken to them.

Given that the Nechi Institute feels that remaining at their current location is important as it is "synonymous with healing facilities that work with us in concerted efforts to combat addictions plaguing our people" and given that this government claims to care about addictions and mental health services but then makes horrendous decisions like this alone, will this Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions tell this House whether he played a role in evicting the Nechi Institute and how exactly this fits into his ministry's approach to mental health and addictions?

**Mr. Kenney:** Madam Speaker, the government of Alberta is investing an additional \$150 million to address the mental health and opioid addiction crises. Part of that is the creation of thousands of additional spaces for treatment, including a considerable increase in the number of treatment beds at Poundmaker's Lodge. They need to use the space to treat patients. We'll find other space for the Nechi Institute, but this is about additional beds to treat additional patients at a treatment centre. We'd like to hear some congratulations from the member opposite for that.

**Mr. Feehan:** Madam Speaker, the problem here is that they made a decision without . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, that certainly sounds like a bit of a preamble. I will let you restart.

**Mr. Feehan:** Given, Madam Speaker, that they failed to consult with the agency that they evicted before making this decision, it's completely ridiculous to defend it now, when they could simply have gone. I'd like to have this Minister of Indigenous Relations stand up and say – will you speak to the Nechi Institute to reverse this decision or at least include them in the decision instead of just arbitrarily sending them eviction notices?

**Mr. Luan:** As you heard our Premier talking about, this government takes it very, very seriously that we're increasing access for mental health and addiction treatment for Alberta indigenous communities. Madam Speaker, you're going to hear us make an announcement tomorrow, an important announcement, that we're significantly increasing the treatment services for

indigenous communities. Along with that, you'll see that we are adjusting what we have, the limited resources, to make the space available to significantly increase the treatment and recovery health services there.

### Budget 2019 and Tax Policy

**Ms Phillips:** Madam Speaker, this UCP government hiked every Albertan's taxes. Families are going to pay hundreds of dollars more by 2020-2021. Hundreds of people in Lethbridge – it will be thousands by the end of this UCP mandate – are losing jobs in health care, postsecondary, K to 12 education, and many other public services. The justification is the debt, but under the UCP the debt is \$93 billion, and the UCP deficit is \$2 billion more. Will the Minister of Finance admit that all of this is to pay for a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout contained on page 144 of his terrible budget?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, it's very rich to be lectured by the members opposite, who put this province on a track to a fiscal cliff, a spending trajectory of an over 4 per cent increase per year while revenues remain flat. Albertans elected this government to bring fiscal responsibility to the province. That's what Budget 2019 does. Our job-creation tax cut will attract investment, will create jobs. We're confident of that. We've had 21,000 additional private-sector jobs in October. We're confident that we will get this job done.

2:40

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Madam Speaker, given that this UCP government is on track to \$100 billion in debt and given that Albertans will pay more to get far, far less, where is the economic analysis by this Finance minister of what will happen to small cities like Lethbridge as thousands of people lose their jobs? Will the minister provide any analysis that shows what happens to our real estate market, our small businesses, our entire economy when thousands of people are tossed out of work, or do people in my city not matter because they're not UCP friends and insiders?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, when the members opposite were in government, they raised taxes on corporations. They raised taxes on individuals. They introduced the largest tax hike in the province's history with the carbon tax. With that, it sent investment out of this country and this province by the billions, with the jobs and opportunities, which ultimately led to lower government revenues. We will not follow that trajectory. We will take a different track. We will bring balance back to . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given, Madam Speaker, that the debt is the same and the deficit, like everyone's taxes, is going up as a result of this Finance minister's incompetence, will the Finance minister commit to at least reversing his income tax hike on everyone? Even those who are losing their jobs will pay more taxes in his spring 2020 budget. Or is the quick action from his department reserved for booking expensive trips, private jets, and handing out plum sole-source contracts to the Premier's friends?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, the only members in this House who have raised personal taxes on Albertans are the members opposite. Our budget does not raise taxes on Albertans. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, I am proud and will not make apology that we have a Premier that's travelling, that's standing up

for Albertans, that's standing up for our energy industry. This was needed long ago. The members opposite failed to deliver to Albertans. We've a Premier that's delivering every day.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, in less than 30 seconds we will resume Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

#### Antiracism Strategy

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you. Madam Speaker, today I would again like to highlight the importance of the Anti-Racism Advisory Council to the government, which has been one of the many great initiatives started by our previous NDP government that the UCP has heartlessly slashed. This council played an important role of advising the minister on how to implement tangible actions to combat racism all across the province. I asked the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women on May 29 for an update on how this government would combat racism in Alberta. I'm very disappointed that after six months the minister had no clear answer or directions for the council.

The current UCP government cancelled the grant run by the Alberta Human Rights Commission, valued at \$1 million per year, that helped fund antiracism and antidiscrimination programs for decades in Alberta. This ministry has reduced the community initiative program and other initiative programs by \$56.8 million over four years, which shows a clear lack of interest in combatting racism.

The minister has not come up with any initiative to fight racism or any steps to consider this particular issue a legitimate problem. Given that there has been an increase in hate crimes and extremist and separatist views, the government needs a concrete plan to combat racism. Madam Speaker, to date this UCP government has only delivered good news to big corporations.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of my constituents I strongly request that the government break the suspense behind their strategy, going forward, with the Anti-Racism Advisory Council and come up with a plan to educate students and people over the issue of racism and its impacts combined with the steps this government plans to take against any hate-related racist incidents occurring in Alberta in the future.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

#### 30th Anniversary of l'École Polytechnique Shootings

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This year is the 30th anniversary of the senseless murders at l'école Polytechnique de Montréal. On December 6, 1989, 14 women were killed in cold blood simply for being women, making it the deadliest mass shooting in our country's history.

Before the killer opened fire on a group of women, he told them: you're women; you're going to be engineers; you're all a bunch of feminists; I hate feminists.

The women attending l'école Polytechnique were breaking down gender barriers by studying in nontraditional fields. In doing so, they were advancing the fight for women's rights everywhere. They were proving that women could not only enter but also succeed at any academic pursuit they chose. They all had bright futures ahead

of them, futures that they never had a chance to realize because of this senseless act of gender-based violence.

On December 6 we will not only remember the 14 innocent women who lost their lives 30 years ago in Montreal, but we will remember every woman who has been a victim of gender-based violence. I will personally be honouring these women as I participate in ceremonies at both the University of Alberta's Campus Saint-Jean and NAIT, and I encourage all of my colleagues and fellow Albertans to find one of the many memorial services occurring on December 6 across our province and take a few minutes to remember these women and all of the victims of gender-based violence.

Together we can fight hatred and violence. Together we will honour them and remember them.

Thank you.

#### Oil and Gas Industries

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Madam Speaker, I started my working life on a drilling rig in the oil and gas sector. I've seen first-hand how the industry has progressed over the past three decades. The environmental innovations and technology improvements that come from our industry have made us global leaders. We have set the bar on environmental and ethical production across the planet.

I stand here every day in support of Alberta's oil and gas sector and its hard-working people. This includes mothers and fathers who sometimes spend weeks or months on end away from their families in order to put food on the table. Alberta's oil and gas sector is the backbone of our economy.

The need for oil and gas in our everyday lives is everywhere. We need it to heat our homes, to get to work, power the Internet, right down to the clothes on our backs. That is why this government understands how crucial it is for us to build pipelines. It's time that we stand proud and also advocate for what our oil and gas sector can do to improve the environment on a global scale. The demand for this industry is not going away in the near future, and the increase in demand should be met by the most environmentally and ethically produced energy in the world, so it's heartbreaking when we see companies like EnCana relocate their headquarters.

Gwyn Morgan, former CEO of EnCana, said, and I'll quote: I'm deeply saddened that as a result of the disastrous policies of the Trudeau government, what was once one of the largest Canadian-headquartered energy producers now sees both its CEO and the core of its asset base located in the U.S. End quote.

Regardless, after numerous delays this government is now on track to see additional capacity for Enbridge line 3, and we will fulfill another campaign promise with pipe for TMX going in the ground before Christmas. This government will not stop there. We will continue to work tirelessly for more pipelines. We were elected to stand up for Albertans, create jobs, restore our economy, and get pipelines built. We will do just that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

2:50

#### Public Accounts Committee

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today on behalf of Albertans to stand up for their best interests and to remind ourselves that our primary goal as legislators is to represent them to the best of our abilities. As deputy chair of the Public Account Committee I am an outspoken advocate of leaving partisanship at the door in our all-important work. Our objective and focus should be to respectfully hold our ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, and Crown corporations to account in a nonpartisan

manner in bringing government policies to life for everyday Albertans. Fifteen members of this Assembly have the privilege of serving on Public Accounts, and our mandate is to review the reports of the Auditor General of Alberta and the public accounts of this province.

The Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation's list of best practices strongly reinforces that public accounts committees function most effectively when partisan behaviour is left behind. We have heard from our federal peers how their Public Accounts Committee has found a way to check their partisan hats at the door and, in doing so, have passed 70 unanimous motions in recent years. Madam Speaker, that's 12 members from three politically diverse federal parties passing 70 unanimous motions. If outcomes that are in the best interests of all Albertans are the objective and nonpartisan perspectives help us to achieve this, then I would strongly suggest that this is what we should collectively strive for as we end this session and focus on doing our best work in 2020 and beyond.

I am proud of the unbiased clarity and focus demonstrated by UCP members, eight of them fresh, new, and idealistic MLAs who have kept their promise to hold their government to account during their first year in office. Make no mistake that on this side of the House our commitment to holding the government to account, to working hard for Albertans, and to leaving our partisan hats at the door will be unwavering in the years ahead. We humbly thank you for the honour and opportunity to serve.

Thank you.

### Presenting Petitions

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again to table under the appropriate portion of the Routine a petition that I brought forward yesterday on behalf of a constituent from my riding. It's a petition signed by 232 Albertans. The petition urges the government of Alberta to introduce legislation that a pet store operator or a vendor at a reptile, bird, or mammal exhibition shall not sell any live mammal, bird, reptile, or amphibian unless the animal was obtained from an animal rescue organization or a humane society shelter.

Thank you.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I have a tabling, five copies of the LAO annual report. Thank you.

Any other members wishing to make a tabling? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have a couple of tablings today. First, several copies of letters that I've received – I'm sure other colleagues have received similar letters – from teachers talking about their deep concerns about class sizes as well as how it relates to what the Learning Commission says are appropriate class sizes and on the complexity in their classrooms as well.

I'll be tabling those as well as letters I've received from a number of Albertans talking specifically about cuts to public education and specifically the attack on public education that is being proposed through the now UCP policy, passed on the weekend, of a voucher system here in the province of Alberta, which, of course, would push an American-style education model. These Albertans are deeply concerned.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, my constituency office has been deluged with hundreds of letters from Alberta teachers, teachers in my riding, regarding their retirement fund. I'm tabling 27 more today, and I have the requisite copies.

Also, I have a second tabling, which is, again, about education, about public education, and just some significant concerns that constituents of my riding have regarding the cuts to education.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm tabling five copies of four letters. The first is from Ms Pringle, a constituent concerned about her public service pension and Bill 22's removal of that joint governance.

The next one is to Alisha, a public servant, a 20-year city worker who's worried sick that Bill 22 fundamentally affects her retirement future, from Ms Sellars, a teacher concerned about class sizes growing, her pension, and the lack of suitable funding.

Mr. Fouhy, a teacher, disagrees vehemently that his ATRF pension was invested in AIMCo and moved.

Lastly, Mr. Haskoylu, a parent of two children in public school, is concerned about the job cuts affecting the quality of his kids' education.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The former Member for Calgary-Buffalo and current Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to table copies of letters from Albertans as well. These Albertans are concerned about the provincial government taking over their pensions, whether LAPP, CPP, ATRF, or AIMCo. I will not read the first letter since it's not very parliamentary.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of an e-mail from my constituent on behalf of close family friends who are constituents of the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. They are deeply concerned about this government's decision to withdraw coverage of Remicade and the impact it will have on their young son.

I would also like to table the requisite number of copies of 35 e-mails from constituents who are concerned and expressing their strong objection to the government's decision to seize their pension. Their message to the government is that they should keep their hands off their pensions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I have again dozens of letters from Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Calgary, and Edmonton from citizens that are very upset about this government taking their pensions without their permission.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have two tablings I'd like to make. The first is a number of e-mails received from folks, again, all across Alberta who are quite concerned about the budget, in particular cuts to the public sector.

The next tabling I would like to make: a number of e-mails, again, from folks from Red Deer-North and from other parts of Red Deer who are quite concerned about education funding.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a document that I would recommend all MLAs read entitled *The Five Corrupt Pillars of Climate Change Denial*.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Member for St. Albert to submit the appropriate number of copies of an article entitled *Exposing the Canadian Oil Sector's Victim Complex*: "This is part four of a four-part series, in which *Canada's National Observer* presents a data-based dismantling of the false claim that Alberta's oil and gas sector has been targeted by a cabal of American foundations."

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I did not realize that the Clerk had some tablings today. As such, I will use my ability within the standing orders to extend the Routine.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta annual report 2018-19.

On behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act the Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis annual report 2018-19.

On behalf of hon. Mr. Madu, Minister of Municipal Affairs, response to a question raised by MLA Ceci, hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, on November 7, 2019, in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs main estimates debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, we are now at points of order. I noted two points of order. The first one was from the Official Opposition at 2:21. That's confirming the confusion that we had earlier.

The only point of order is by the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

3:00

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes. I am raising a point of order under Standing Order 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." At about 2:21 in an exchange between the Minister of Children's Services and the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain I and I think many others in this House clearly heard the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford use a vulgar phrase that is clearly unparliamentary. Now, I would prefer not to repeat the words, but I would say that the phrase would represent the subject matter of someone who studies bovine scatology. Now, I'm sure that the hon. member has an education, but I don't believe that that's probably the subject

matter of his education. I would ask at this time that the member retract that and apologize to the House.

**Mr. Feehan:** Madam Speaker, I admit I said the words and that they were wrong, because I assume that they are not full, but they're probably down a quart. As a result, I withdraw the words and apologize to the House. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, would you like to try that one more time?

**Mr. Feehan:** Madam Speaker, I withdraw the words and apologize to the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. I will consider that matter now dealt with.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Third Reading

#### Bill 26

#### Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to move third reading of Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, but first I would like to commend the benevolence, the compassion for democracy of our Government House Leader, who in an upcoming motion will actually return Bill 26 back to Committee of the Whole. I am happy to have more time to debate Bill 26, which actually will repeal and replace the disastrous and failed NDP Bill 6. Throughout the development of this piece of legislation we had 25 consultations – about half of the government caucus attended those – to hear directly from farmers. From Irvine to Fairview, from Grande Prairie to Drumheller we talked to thousands of farmers. The four main themes of this piece of legislation are employment standards, labour relations, occupational health and safety, and insurance. With that we had very positive responses from the farming community.

I'm happy to hear how the debate unfolds this afternoon. Thank you.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you. First of all, it's my first opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 26. I'd like to just take a brief moment through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister of agriculture, my neighbour to the east in central Alberta and my friend, and congratulate him on this important piece of legislation as well as the minister of labour, who have worked very, very hard. I must say, on behalf of the constituents of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, through you to him, thank you very much for beginning to push us back on a path to be able to defend our farm and ranching communities and the constituents that I have the privilege to represent and to undo the disgrace that was Bill 6 that we saw inside this Chamber inside the 29th Legislature.

The hon. minister is correct. I do intend to move a recommittal momentarily. Actually, you know how I'm going to handle this, if it's okay with you, Mr. Speaker, is that I will send the amendments to the table and then give my remarks at that point when you give

me permission to. As soon as we have a page, and they're coming. I didn't give them much notice.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, we will just give the pages a couple of seconds to just pass out the amendment. Then, going forward, what I will do is that I will ask that you read it into the record. Going forward also, we will be referring to this as REC1, so if the pages could, please.

Hon. Government House Leader, prior to having you read it in, hon. members, if you don't know yet, this is a recommittal amendment being proposed by the hon. Government House Leader. The purpose of the recommittal amendment to the motion for third reading is to return a bill to Committee of the Whole for the reconsideration of certain specified sections. If this amendment to recommit Bill 26 to Committee of the Whole is carried, the committee may consider only sections 1(3) and 2(2).

Hon. Government House Leader, if you would please read it into the record and then continue with your statements.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to the Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering sections 1(3) and 2(2).

Mr. Speaker, I am glad that you took a few moments to explain to the House what this amendment means. It is very rare, obviously, inside this Chamber, particularly for the government side of the House, to move a recommittal amendment, the first time, certainly, for me and the first time that I've ever seen it in my time in the Chamber from any Government House Leader.

The reality is that I want to be very, very clear. The side of the House, the government side of the House, completely and fully supports Bill 26, Mr. Speaker. I know I will be voting for Bill 26 at each and every stage. Again, through you, I thank the minister of agriculture for bringing this important piece of legislation to this Chamber. Having said that, I have always said, as has the Premier, that I respect the role of the Official Opposition. I was proud to serve in the Official Opposition inside this Chamber in the 29th Legislature, and they do have an important and constitutional role in our democracy. I've always said that I will go out of my way to make sure that they have ample time to be able to participate in debate and do their important work within our democracy.

I spoke, when we were dealing with time allocation on Bill 22, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that government House leaders and opposition House leaders work together to be able to have the flow of debate in the Legislature move forward so that things can pass and, ultimately, the business of Albertans can be done in this Chamber. Sometimes time allocation or using standing orders to move that forward when you are at points where there basically is going to be no resolution to disagreements is how this Chamber is designed. Other times opposition House leaders will spend their time limiting which members of theirs speak so they can strategically use certain members of this House to be able to deliver a message better. As you do know, often a Government House Leader will ask his members not to speak nearly as much on pieces of legislation to provide the opposition more time to do their work. That's the process. It's how our system works, and I'm proud to participate in that as the Government House Leader.

Last week the opposition reached out to me, Mr. Speaker, to ask and to point out that they had mistakenly or somehow stopped debate on Bill 26 in Committee of the Whole and it had passed in committee, but they felt that they wanted to be able to still move forward some amendments. Hearing that and recognizing that we

had time, I wanted to be able to accommodate that process, to be able to provide the opposition ample opportunity to debate this important piece of legislation and to bring forward their amendments. Of course, the minister of agriculture and his team will evaluate those amendments. Me moving this recommittal does not mean that the government is committed to the amendments. We haven't actually seen them yet. But it does mean that the government is committed to giving the opposition ample time to do their important role inside this Legislature.

I do want to close with making it clear, as I did in the beginning, that the government and our government caucus inside this Chamber fully support Bill 26. It's a long time coming, Mr. Speaker. We campaigned on getting rid of the hated NDP Bill 6. I am very excited that it looks like we are getting close to that work being done, and I encourage all of our members to continue to work hard to be able to get Bill 26 out of the Assembly so it can receive royal assent and the NDP Bill 6 can finally be repealed. We can add that to the big pile of promises made and promises kept by this government.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Government House Leader. Are there any hon. members looking to debate REC1?

I'm not surprised to see that there are none, so I'm prepared to ask the question.

[Motion on amendment REC1 carried]

### 3:10 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 26 Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** The Committee of the Whole has under consideration sections 1(3) and 2(2) of Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered at this time on these sections of the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and to my colleagues for this opportunity to continue debate in committee, which I believe is a fundamental and important stage of bill consideration.

I do want to answer the question raised by the Government House Leader around not recalling this ever happening, reverting to committee. To remind members who were here in the 29th sitting of the Legislature, we did indeed do this with a bill in health once. There was a bill where the opposition had significantly advocated, and upon reflection we in the government thought it was important to reconsider one of the amendments that had been proposed by them and to propose one of our own, and we did indeed go back to committee. While it doesn't happen often, it certainly has happened. I would say that when we did it previously with that health bill, it led to better outcomes, better legislation, and a bill that I think both sides of the House were proud to vote through in its final stage. So it's not something that is done lightly, but it is certainly something that I think can improve legislation overall. That certainly is my hope for the debate we're engaging in here this afternoon.

I do know that my colleagues will have some amendments with regard to particular sections in this legislation, and I'll be happy to

speak to those amendments at that time, but at this point I want to highlight some of my concerns as the bill currently stands. I also want to begin by acknowledging that I am well aware that this was definitely in the UCP platform. This is one thing that was campaigned on, to bring in a bill to repeal the legislation brought in by the previous government, but what we're considering here today doesn't just do that. It goes back to far, far greater rollbacks on protected rights for workers than just those that we brought in when we did bring in the previous Bill 6. So while there is a mandate, I would say, to reverse the progress that was made under that bill, I don't believe there is a mandate to roll back rights for workers even further than that.

I'm going to start by talking about a couple of areas. In earlier stages of debate one of the things that was said, probably by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry – if not him, I'm happy to be corrected as to who said it – was that a testament to the great working relationship between farmers and workers is the fact that no farm workers chose to organize, unionize, or engage in collective bargaining during the period that this law was in place, which I think is a fine argument if you're going to keep that right in place down the road and people choose not to exercise it. I think taking away that right takes away that argument because, of course, you are no longer giving the right to have a choice in your relationship, and to work collectively, as many Charter cases have proven, is constitutional. Not to be collective is unconstitutional; therefore, the right to collective bargaining is a constitutional right. There have been many cases that have argued that point. So here we are rolling back that right. Disappointing but perhaps not the thing that I find most difficult in this.

One of the areas that I do find incredibly difficult – and on the right to organize, of course, that's a breach, so I don't want to downplay that. I do find that offensive, but one that I find probably even more so is the rules around overtime and overtime pay. And I get it. While I was a town kid, my grandparents had a farm, and we spent a considerable amount of time after my gido passed away with my baba on her farm. She told many stories about how the men that they hired over the years, while my gido was still alive and then those who helped in the transition years when he was sick and then later after the land was rented out, made such a big difference to their quality of life and their ability to have a farm, a mixed farm with dairy and eggs and grain and often hogs as well.

I understand that there are times where they will have to work overtime, naturally during calving season, which is my favourite time to visit up north and spend time with my friends on their farm. I pretend to help out. I mostly just drive the Gator and look for wagging tails. There is something about that excitement and that time of year, you know, knowing that you're only going to get four or five hours of sleep at a time, but that's okay because you're out there to save a calf, a calf that is, obviously, a life, but it's also a thousand bucks, give or take, right? You're out there, and you know that you've got a chance to save a thousand bucks if you catch a calf and a cow that are in distress and make sure that they can make it through the night and get the care that they need.

I deeply enjoy those times on the farm. But I do think that it is worth recognizing that when someone goes above and beyond in terms of the hours that they work, there be some type of additional compensation for that. Maybe it's with time in lieu. I know that there are a lot of folks who help, who are farm workers on farms, and when the quieter time hits, you know, November, December, that's a great time to take off a number of days, go on vacation, and not worry about pay in any way.

I do think that that should be rewarded, that extra dedication during particularly tough times like calving season or harvest as well. Of course, you can't predict the weather and you can't

schedule 9 to 5 and you certainly can't always schedule 40 hours a week, but when somebody busts their hump and puts in, you know, an 80-hour week, I think that they deserve to be recognized and have that additional time paid back to them with some kind of premium.

I think we will probably hear arguments that that naturally happens, and I think probably for the vast majority it does, but the reason why we have laws is to protect the minority. The reason why we have speed limits on our highways is not because we think everyone will drive erratically and put lives in danger. The reason why we have those is to make sure that if somebody does behave in a way that's unsafe for others, there are consequences for that.

That's one of the reasons why I think it's important to have legislation, to protect the minority who are at risk. I would say that by taking away these rights that have been in place for a number of years – this isn't something that was just brought in recently. I think that when we take away rights, we erode our responsibility of pursuing justice for all and improving conditions for all, something that we literally pray for in this House every day and that I think is our mandate.

Additionally, the working-hours section I think has some concerns for me in particular, about what it is we are going to be eroding by changing these requirements.

I also think that putting in a marker of five – and I'd be happy to hear more from the minister as to why he chose five. I guess that you have to pick a number at some point, but five seems a little bit arbitrary to me, so that is a concern for me.

Those are some of what I'd say are my highest areas of concern. You know, this isn't something that a lot of people have been feeling brave to speak up on, but there are a number of people who have spoken up. For example, there were some folks, part of the AgCoalition, that said that repealing the farm safety act would be throwing out a lot of good with the bad. Of course, I don't think we're in this place to do that, you know, to do revenge-seeking politics. I think we're here to do good for all. I think that there were certainly a number of positives in the farm safety act that should have been maintained.

3:20

Also, we have the National Farmers Union. Glenn Norman, who has a farm at Kneehill, says that it's made people more aware of the real issues that there are around safety and that it's important that safety be a top priority for anyone, whether you own a farm or whether you're working on a farm for somebody else. These are things that I think should be foundational, that everyone should make sure that we have basic standards in place for.

I have to say that I think some of the changes that are being proposed go far beyond what was campaigned on in the mandate and are rather regressive. I think our Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has been quite articulate in highlighting some of those, particularly ones around having any kind of minimum wage. I know a lot of people who enter into agricultural work do it for a love, a commitment, and a passion for the land, for being stewards of that land as well as for the livestock that they care for or fowl or other living things on their farm. But they also deserve, in my opinion, to have a fair and at least a minimum wage of some sort. Relying on those who are in vulnerable positions to find some way to fight for their own rights, when the government won't even put a basic minimum wage in law to ensure their protection, I think is really harmful. I think it's counterproductive, and I think it could have serious negative effects for folks who want to choose a career in agriculture.

But when you look at having – you do have OH and S. Let me also say that a lot of people I know who work in agriculture, work



in other sectors as well. They work in oil and gas, or they work in forestry. Many fight fires in the summers in the area that I grew up in. They are ways to supplement the farm income. When they work off-farm on those sites, they very capably adapt to OH and S and other restrictions because they are smart, they're capable, and they certainly are able to and wanting to ensure their own safety so that they can return from their other job, that supplements the farm, back to their farm. I think having basic safety standards is certainly fair and reasonable.

I think that all of us probably know somebody who has been injured in a farm accident. I'll tell you about my own uncle, Uncle John Krupa,\* who had the original family homestead out at Thorhild. He was stuck in his baler for three days.

**Member Ceci:** Holy jeez.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. And he lost his arm.

I'm not saying that increased OH and S standards may have saved him. They may have. Fortunately, he survived that accident. But, certainly, if he would have had somebody checking on him more frequently, his quality of life and that incident may not have been as traumatizing as it was. He sure was able to find the most in life, and he said that the hook could still help him pull calves. Certainly, it was very effective at scaring the great-nieces and -nephews around the kitchen table. But I don't think that anyone should be in a position where they have increased risk and hardship done to them. That's why I think that having some basic OH and S requirements would not necessarily be a bad thing. I think it could be a very good thing.

I agree that farmers, farm owners and farm workers, probably all want to be safe. They all want to be safe and make sure that they can come home at the end of the night to their families, and I think that government could certainly support them in that effort. I don't think it's unfair or unreasonable in any way for us to have basic standards in that way. Basic compensation standards as well as basic safety standards I think should be a right. I don't think that they should be a privilege afforded to those who happen to land on a good employer. I think that everyone who works hard should deserve a basic minimum wage and should deserve basic safety measures to ensure that they can provide for themselves and the folks that they love as well as be safe.

Those are some of my main concerns. I'm grateful that we're returning to committee and, therefore, have an opportunity to bring forward some amendments. Again I'll say that when that health care bill came forward, passed through committee, and then went back, it was obviously an opportunity for us to reconsider some of the points that the opposition made that seemed fair, that seemed reasonable, and that seemed like an opportunity to put in some increased accountability measures. At that time it was for folks in regulated health professions, and at this time it's for protecting vulnerable farm workers.

The last thing I want to say is a comment on the title of the bill, the Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019. I felt a little throwback to the days of the then Member for Strathmore-Brooks. Derek Fildebrandt definitely liked to talk about freedom a lot. Anyway, a little shout-out to him. I don't think his name has been said in this place in a long time, and I didn't expect that I would be the one to say it, but in regard to this bill definitely a throwback to him screaming the word "freedom."

Thank you very much, hon. members.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, for recognizing me this afternoon to add my voice for the first time to debate on Bill 26, a piece of legislation that I have some significant concerns with. Like I've said, with my background being in labour I get hung up on the language. I'm always looking for the bogeyman in it. I'm always looking for how language is set up that could create a negative situation. We've certainly seen some interesting points made around language in this Chamber, you know, very recently things like "may" being the same as "will" and "shall." When I see those kinds of things, I'm always looking for how they will negatively impact people.

Just before we had the opportunity to send this back to committee, of course, I couldn't help but notice the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and the Government House Leader congratulating themselves quite profusely around taking away hard-working farm and ranch employees' rights, rights that, believe it or not, have existed in every other part of this country for well over a decade at the very minimum. I remember discussions in the 29th Legislature, you know, having been very honoured and fortunate to be able to serve during that time, talking about how bringing these kinds of pieces of legislation would absolutely destroy the farm, yet I couldn't help but wonder why the same pieces of legislation that were already in place in other parts of the country had not done that. They were operating just fine. Employees' rights were protected, and they had the ability, when things went wrong, to have a safety net.

The first thing I wanted to bring up, Mr. Chair, was around when we were talking about how we want to get this done very, very quickly so that we can get these changes in effect, but the problem is we've already seen changes that are already in effect, yet the bill hasn't actually really fully passed yet. There's this quest that I've seen the government on around slamming through legislation at breakneck speeds, and we've very, very clearly seen that there has been no consultations around those types of things. I think that when you're talking about the safety of employees, we really need to make a diligent effort to communicate with those employees that are potentially put at risk.

When we look at taking away some of the occupational health and safety rights, what Bill 26 is proposing here right now, again, having been fortunate enough to serve in the 29th Legislature, I remember debating some of these things when they were first being proposed to come in. Something that absolutely shocked me when I first learned about it was a story of a farm. I'm hoping that I'm remembering the area in which it occurred, somewhere in the Edson, Hinton area, Mr. Chair. Unfortunately, there was an accident on that farm, and that farm employee lost his life.

3:30

His widow had to go through the court system, and that fight spanned six years in duration, Mr. Chair. Six years later she finally did get a judgment awarded in her favour. She would probably have very much rather traded that judgment for her spouse. What happened was: great; she got the judgment, got compensated, but the result was that that farm had to declare bankruptcy. It was destroyed because of that judgment. There was no system in place to protect both sides.

You know, to members opposite: all it takes is one example that puts the onus on us to make sure that that doesn't happen again, yet here we are in Bill 26 reversing that safety net that not only would have protected that farm worker's spouse but would have protected the farm from going out of business. We have to be able to balance those things. This bill is rolling that back.

The next thing I wanted to point out is under subsection (2)(a)(iv). Again, Mr. Chair, the language gets me hung up on

\*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

things, and this is probably some of the most concerning language I have ever seen. The reason I say that – you know what? I probably heard the Minister of Transportation say the same thing back when he served in opposition in the 29th Legislature. “You guys won a majority government. I get it. You get the opportunity to change things, undo things, go in a different direction. Absolutely. That’s what you get to do.”

You know, when you form a majority government, that’s what happens. You campaigned, as I understand, to repeal the changes we made around farms and ranches. I understand that. But this language right here in (2)(a)(iv), where it says that “a person employed on a farming or ranching operation as determined under subsection (2) whose employment is directly related to the farming or ranching [experience]” – now, I’m not going to continue to read on; everybody is able to do that – what that does, based on the language that we are seeing there, is that it fundamentally changes the definition of an employee.

Yes, you won a majority government. You’re allowed to repeal what we did. I don’t think you got a mandate from people to take the whole discussion around what an employee is back a hundred years. You are fundamentally telling people in an industry that they can’t even be called an employee anymore, and that is very concerning.

Now, Mr. Chair, I understand – and I doubt that on what I’m about to say, there would be any member in the House that would disagree with me. I think we have some of the most fantastic farmers and large farming corporations, arguably, I would say, on the continent. I don’t think anybody would debate me on that. But what I’ve learned in my experience in labour is that when you have so many fantastic employers, there’s always one bad actor that will take legislation like this and will absolutely use it against their employee. I’ve seen it happen. Again, all it takes is one.

Thinking back to that story I said earlier around that widow having to go through all of that hassle to get a judgment, after I’ve finished speaking, maybe the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry will get up and tell me – I’m wondering if he consulted with the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction about creating that kind of a hassle again. Apparently, that ministry is there at a cost of \$10 million to taxpayers to help the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry reduce red tape, to make it easier for everybody. I’m hoping that he’ll let me know that he did consult and that that was the way to go, in which case I would argue that that’s creating red tape, which is not what you’re supposed to be doing.

I also couldn’t help but zone in here on the fact that because we’re changing the language around employee and some of the other language changes that we’re seeing in Bill 26, it repeals the rights for farm workers to unionize. Now, again, as somebody who’s come from the labour movement, I’ve always said very clearly to people: if the employer treats their employees with dignity and respect, if they pay them a decent wage, if they give them some benefits – surprise, surprise – it’s very, very difficult to unionize that kind of a workplace.

You know, here’s where I will use the same example again as I always have. I’ve been a part of trying to unionize Costco, and every time I always heard: “Well, I get paid a good rate. I have benefits. I get sick time. There are occupational health and safety rules in place to keep me safe. My boss just treats me good.” We weren’t able to organize Costco. Surprise, surprise.

But then you get examples where you see, for instance, a particular restaurant – it happens to have been close by; it’s under different management now – bouncing cheques to their employees. They weren’t treating them with dignity and respect. I even remember one of the problems that employees had, specifically the female employees. The owners were asking them to wear very

degrading outfits because that would boost business. That’s one example. All it takes is one, Mr. Chair. That’s usually the case for why you bring in these kinds of changes to protect people. This bill is failing miserably at that, based on the language.

Now, I could certainly say, you know, from what I saw during the 29th Legislature and what I’ve seen during this Legislature, Mr. Chair, that there are probably members of the government and caucus side that aren’t very appreciative of what the labour movement has done, not only for them but also for their constituents. I mean, I seem to remember a comment in the last Legislature around: well, unions are just human traffickers. One of the silliest things I’ve ever heard.

That kind of makes me wonder. With sentiments like that, those potentially are workplaces that need to be unionized so that they are able to work safely on-site, so that they are treated with dignity and respect, so that they do get a fair wage, so that they do get benefits. This language that we are seeing proposed throughout Bill 26 is allowing those single bad actors to run roughshod over Albertans, the people you were elected to protect, the people you were elected to advocate for, the people you were elected to keep safe.

3:40

I guess I’m stunned, Mr. Chair. Like I said: I get it. They won a majority government. They were able to come in and make changes on things that we did to try to make good on those pledges that we had been elected on in the 29th Legislature. But like I mentioned earlier, very clearly, you were not given a mandate to take labour legislation back a hundred years.

Mr. Chair, I will be watching closely as this legislation is more than likely put into place. I don’t know if any of the amendments that will be proposed will be accepted. I hope they will. As the Official Opposition we’re here to help. We’re going to try to make, well, some bad legislation less bad and try to protect Albertans from being taken advantage of or, even worse, when we have temporary foreign workers that are coming in, having them treated even worse because this legislation will be enabling for those bad actors.

As we see the fallout from these changes, I hope that the government and members of the caucus are going to be willing to stand up and take responsibility and say, “Yeah, we made those changes; that was us, so that’s all on us, and we accept responsibility for what goes wrong,” and that they’ll be willing to stand in front of those people and say: “We got it wrong. We didn’t protect you.” Hopefully, it won’t be a case of the worst-case scenario where you’re standing in front of a family member saying, “We should have protected your loved one,” because occupational health and safety rules weren’t in place.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen to speak.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I’m grateful for the opportunity to speak on Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, and grateful that we have an opportunity as well to offer some amendments to this same bill. You know, I find it interesting to look through this bill and how it does repeal some or almost all of Bill 6. I certainly do understand logically the government’s execution of their mandate and platform to in fact bring in replacement legislation. I mean, that’s what they said they would do, and they’re doing it. That’s all fine and good.

But there are some sections in this Bill 26 that I think should have some further scrutiny on them. I think that what we might see a case of here is that Bill 26, in repealing the former Bill 6, has some

overreaching activity going on. By repealing or no longer allowing any right to unionize or to collective bargaining for farm workers and, you know, talking about repealing the WCB coverage and some other areas as well, I think we need to take sort of a logical second look at these things.

We all know that, as with all things, our farming industry is evolving over time. Indeed, it's a very strong part of our economy here in the province of Alberta. It's a historic part of who we are as a province and indeed is a modern part of our economy that is producing lots of value-added products and, of course, producing the essential food that we need and so forth. Part of that evolution and that phenomenon, Mr. Chair, is that we see a movement from the traditional family farm – right? – to larger commercial or industrial operations. I think this is a phenomenon that we see in other parts of the world as well. As you see the consolidation of individual family farms into larger commercial or industrial units, then it's important for the labour laws to keep pace with that change as well. In other words, you have more people working as employees on farms, and you have more, you know, larger operations and people working for wages and on shifts and so forth.

While it's, I think, eminently reasonable to have some concession for the particular ways by which the, you know, farms do operate and the seasonal activities do take place, like harvest and calving season and all of those things – you know that you have to accommodate for that – you also have to accommodate within a framework of some standards for labour.

Again, we do produce regulation and law here in this provincial body, and we do it for a whole range of human activity. When we do make laws generally here, we don't do it with the notion that individuals are inherently going to break laws or to push them but with the contingency that some might be doing that. We have rules around traffic and safety and criminal law and so forth, not to presume that the vast majority of Albertans do in fact break those rules and laws but for the protection of individuals, for the contingency, the possibility that someone might do that at some point in time, right?

Having some standards for labour, let's say, in the agricultural industry, I think, is a reasonable move forward considering the historic evolution towards larger commercial operations here in the province of Alberta and to make sure that we're protecting people every step of the way. We want the agriculture industry to flourish, as it has for the entire history of the province of Alberta. It's been a backbone of both our economy and who we are, I think, as Albertans, and we want to keep it that way, right? Part of the way by which you can do so is to make sure you are building a framework of regulation that protects people who do work in that industry.

I have a couple of issues that I just want to bring forward in regard to Bill 26. The first one that I am a bit concerned about is that Bill 26 removes the right for agricultural workers to form or join a union by excluding them in the terminology of employees from the Labour Relations Code. I just want to point out, you know, that we don't want to make laws that otherwise will be challenged later. That's a problem, right? I know that the Alberta Labour Relations Board ruled that the exclusion of other workers, in this case of nurse practitioners, I believe, from the Labour Relations Code was deemed to be unconstitutional. The nurses tried to bring them into a bargaining unit in a formal manner, and the Alberta Labour Relations Board found that that exclusion was, in fact, unconstitutional, saying that these workers were not managers. That's where the state of play is for those particular workers. Excluding any workforce from being called, quote, unquote, employees, I think, is problematic at the very least. I think that it's worth it to explore that and perhaps make some adjustment to Bill

26 to ensure that we are staying on the right side of constitutionality and the rule of law.

Another issue that I just wanted to bring forward is around, you know, this idea of excluding a group of employees that aren't managers and whether the government is understanding that the exclusion of certain groups of employees like nurse practitioners and/or farm workers is going to stand up in court. It's a worthwhile thing to look at. I mean, that's a very reasonable thing that we can pursue, and I believe that it is part of our responsibility as legislators to make sure that the laws we're making are legal, so to speak, right?

3:50

What else did I want to bring up generally? I think that section 21 talks about the rights of employees and employers under the code. Subsection (1) provides:

An employee has the right

- (a) to be a member of a trade union and to participate in . . . lawful activities, and
- (b) to bargain collectively with the employee's employer . . .

Again, if we are moving outside of those statutory rights, I'm just concerned that we might be ending up with a problem down the road.

I think that we do understand generally the government's direction in regard to bringing forward legislation here, but, again, talking about excluding people from the coverage of the Workers' Compensation Board, I think, has a problem inherently built into it as well. We know that the WCB, while it's had its problems over the years, is a way by which you can help to protect not just workers, but you do in fact protect employers as well because they actually will move in and provide the services that an injured worker might need straight away. I believe that WCB coverage also protects the employer from litigation, right? That is a big deal when it comes to injury and people being sued for those injuries. The WCB is a way by which we can help, you know, both to get timely access to, perhaps, rehabilitation that an individual needs and to protect employers from being involved in litigation as a result of a workplace accident.

I mean, those are the two things that I kind of wanted to bring forward at this time. I think that always, you know, we need to cut through some of the hyperbole and rhetoric that we might use around farm safety and so forth and look for what the best way is (a) to ensure the protection of human beings working in any industry, specifically in the farm industry, and, two, to ensure the continued prosperity and support of the agriculture industry by this provincial body, the Legislature.

Those are my initial comments, and I think we might have a couple of amendments that might help to address those issues that I just brought up. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen to speak.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 26. I think I'll begin by actually saying thank you to the government for being able to move this back so that we can consider some amendments to this. I think that that's an important thing. I have, it will be no surprise to anyone to discover, a number of concerns with this bill.

Certainly, I have always been concerned when you're talking about any employee being sort of excluded from the Employment Standards Code. Normally when you talk about people who are excluded from the Employment Standards Code, you're talking

about workers that have a relatively high amount of power relative to their employer.

For instance, when I was practising as a lawyer – lawyers are excluded from the Employment Standards Code. Well, again, lawyers are fairly educated professionals, and there are not that many of them, so that gives them a certain relative sort of strength of negotiating position, shall we say. Now, certainly, I'm sure that there are articling students who would argue that they lack said strength of negotiating position, and I've in fact heard jokes of people who've actually worked out, you know, on the 100-or-so hour week that they work, what their actual hourly wage is. Ultimately, I think those individuals are in a position to advocate for themselves. That's the same reason that we have managers that tend to be excluded from some of these provisions, because, again, they're sort of in charge of the area. They have a relatively sort of high level of power in the situation.

But when we talk about farm workers being excluded, I think my concern is that many of those people are not in the same position. They're not always in possession of sort of extended educational criteria. They're often not even citizens of this country, which puts them in a very, very tenuous position. I won't go on at length about the difficulty that temporary foreign workers experience, but in my previous employment the people that came into my office and the things that they had experienced as temporary foreign workers were shocking. It was incredibly eye-opening to someone who has lived in this society for as long as I had and not really known that this was something that was going on.

I'm not saying this about everyone who employs temporary foreign workers. In fact, I have known some people who employ temporary foreign workers who are very, very good, who are good advocates for their employees, who want to help people come here so they can send money back home or so they can ultimately immigrate to Canada and bring their family over. There are some fantastic employers.

But we don't make the laws to deal with those who behave well on their own; we make the laws to deal with those who do not behave so well on their own. I had heard some incredible stories. So when we're talking about excluding these people, it's a huge concern. When you're talking about excluding them from even recourse to employment standards, what that means is that if they aren't paid, like, if they're not paid at all, they have to sue in court. Well, first of all, that's a lengthy and complicated process. That's the reason employment standards exist in the first place, so that people have a simpler process that doesn't involve hiring a lawyer. Secondly, given how long it takes to get a court date, if you're someone who's not in the country permanently, you may never get resolution. You may be gone before this even comes up. I think that all of those things are a big concern.

I've spoken, I think, at length previously to this bill about my views on why WCB coverage is important and about the fact that one of the things that WCB coverage brings with it that people don't always contemplate or consider is the fact that that coverage is no-fault. Rather than someone having to sue, the coverage is just: if the necessary elements are proven – that the worker was injured, they were injured at work, they need certain compensation or certain medical care – then that's it. That's the end of the issue.

Now, admittedly, the WCB process is imperfect. It has certainly been the case that people have sort of bounced around from appeal boards and had some significant troubles with WCB. I'm not going to suggest for a second that that isn't the case. Compared, however, to the process that they receive when they have to deal with a private insurance company who's making them sue, that process is significantly better, because there are things set up about it. The WCB process is intended to be operated by people who are not

lawyers. They have an appeals body that specifically helps you to advocate before the Appeals Commission. All of those things are in place, and I think that those are incredibly important things, particularly when you're talking about people who may not have English as their first language, who may not have extensive amounts of education, who may not be super familiar with even the sort of basics of Canadian law or Canadian society and are therefore not in the strongest position to advocate for themselves.

You know, I've said this before, but the concern I have with allowing private insurance is, again, that it's not even the farmer on whose farm the accident occurred that gets to make the decision. If an employee is injured and they want to seek compensation, the insurance company literally, under their contract, has the right to step into the shoes of the insured person and take carriage of the claim. That means that even if the farmer may want the insurance to pay out, they don't have to. The insurance company can make the decision to litigate the matter in court. Sometimes this can take years and years and years, and for an injured worker who's potentially not able to work, who has no funds to access, who is probably struggling to have a place to live and food, let alone keep up with this litigation, that's incredibly challenging. I'm not in a position to fix that problem because that would interfere with the substance of the bill.

I am, however, in a position to move an amendment that I think at least somewhat improves this. I will keep one copy so I can read it and wait for it to hit the table.

4:00

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. If you could please just read it into the record and then continue with your remarks.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. On behalf of Ms Gray I move that Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, be amended in section 1(3) in the proposed part 0.1 in section 1.2 in subsection 1(a) by adding “, subject to subsection (3)” after “authorized by the regulations” and by adding the following after subsection (2):

(3) For the purpose of subsection (1)(a), private insurance coverage must be of a type and amount that is equal to or exceeds the type and amount of coverage available under subsection 1(b).

What this does is that it basically ensures that any private insurance coverage that is purchased meets at least the same standards as WCB coverage would meet. I think the reason that this is again important is that it ensures that even though we're not dealing with no-fault insurance, at least if the individual is successful, if they prove their claim, they're able to get the same thing.

I do want to make something very clear on the record here, that by proposing this, I am by no means suggesting that everyone would not do it of their own volition. I suspect that many, I would venture without knowing, probably most would do this on their own. Most would do this because it's the right thing to do. In fact, we've heard stories from both sides of the House of many farmers and many farms that had coverage that exceeded what was necessary, so for most people this isn't going to create an issue. It just creates, essentially, a floor to ensure that everyone is operating on the same playing field, to ensure that there are rules around what we have to do instead of just taking it on faith. I think that that's important. What this will do is ensure that that coverage is in the same amount.

In the most tragic of circumstances we'd be dealing with the death of a worker, and this would ensure that their families get at least what they would have gotten under WCB, again assuming that the claim is proved. I think that's important. One of the reasons I

think that's important is because not everyone has private life insurance. Life insurance is important. Everyone should get it. That's a very lawyer thing to say, but not everybody does have it. In fact, I think there's an increasing number of people who don't have private life insurance. This would ensure that if someone is killed at work, their family receives some compensation. I think that that's pretty important. I don't understand the compensation under WCB to be particularly rich, but it's something. It's something that allows that family to be able to get by, at least in the interim phase, so that at the same time that they're dealing with intense grief for the loss of their loved one, they're not also dealing with financial strain and financial burden and an inability to pay for somewhere to live.

I think this is an important amendment. I think that many out there, myself probably included, would say that it probably doesn't go far enough, but I do think it's better than nothing. I think it is an improvement over the current state of affairs, and I think that that's good, and I'm hopeful that the government will consider this amendment in the spirit in which it is intended to ensure that going forward, folks just have access to that minimum level of coverage. Again, I'm not proposing that this fixes all of my concerns with the bill, but I think it's something.

I think it's an important something because for an injured worker – and I've obviously dealt with a few – things are very challenging. Again, in my experience with them, they want to work, and they want to contribute to society, and they feel a strong desire to be earning income and taking care of their family and taking care of themselves. I think that's the case for most people. When somebody gets injured, that tends to affect them, obviously, financially, but it also affects them emotionally, and it affects them emotionally because they want to be able to provide. A lot of people have a lot of their self-worth sort of tied up in that. Just at this moment when the individual is struggling, we want to make sure that there are some rules in place in terms of how much compensation they're able to get. I think that ultimately that is incredibly important, and I think it's a positive step that we can take towards protecting these workers.

With that, I will close my comments on the amendment and urge all members to vote in favour of it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has risen to speak on amendment A1.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to explain why I won't be able to support these two amendments from the opposition. First off, I'd just like to address the previous speaker and the former Justice minister of the province when she was saying that when it comes to negotiation bargaining power, somehow lawyers are in a stronger negotiating position than farmers. I'd have to say that (a) I think that farmers and farm workers are actually stronger than lawyers in a lot of respects. When it comes to farm workers and their critical roles that they have at very sensitive times throughout the year, they have a tremendous amount of value on farms, and that's why farmers appreciate and treat farm workers so well here in the province of Alberta.

I just wanted to clarify that point and also bring to the attention of the House other exemptions of employment standards. A cross-jurisdictional scan that we've done: 4 out of 10 provinces have a family member exemption for employment standards; 9 out of 10 provinces here in Canada have a full exemption from overtime. When you go into specific provinces, our neighbour to the east, Saskatchewan, has employment standards that don't cover employees producing food on farms, ranches, or market gardens.

Manitoba has farm workers that are exempt from employment standards such as general holidays, hours of work, and overtime. I've listed off the many exemptions and examples of exemptions for minimum wage here in the province of Alberta. That goes from students to extras in a film or video production, again, with a large laundry list of other professions here in the province that are exempt from employment standards. I do think it's a very large stretch for the NDP to say that somehow farm workers shouldn't be under that category. They're under that category in other provinces as well as many other professions here in the province of Alberta.

The second part to their amendment on insurance, Mr. Chair. Throughout the consultation period this summer, when we talked to farmers from across the province, there was an apples-and-oranges comparison to private worker insurance. That's something that – we had a unique opportunity here in the province of Alberta to actually have a comparison. Farmers knew what it was like prior to 2015, prior to the previous government forming government. They had private worker insurance, and the market had developed worker insurance products that actually worked for specific farms, for specific types of farms, and also for specific farm workers.

**4:10**

When the NDP brought in Bill 6 and there were mandatory WCB premiums that were put on all farms, you had a hodgepodge of different farmers saying: "Okay. I guess I'll pay two insurance premiums just because I have to due to the red tape and the extra burden of Bill 6, but I really want to keep my private worker insurance because it benefits me, and it also benefits my workers. It covers them off work. If they go skiing, for example, and they break their leg," which I've actually done, "they would get coverage off the work site." You had other farmers that actually said, "No; well, I will cancel my private worker insurance, and I will go to WCB," which ticked off both the farmers and the farm worker because they preferred their private worker insurance.

Ultimately, this bill, Bill 26, will give a choice in worker insurance so that the farmer and the farm worker can sit down and they can decide: what is the best type of insurance policy, worker insurance policy, that specifically fits a farm? I think that's a Canadian first. I think that choice in insurance is something that is a great thing and one of the very strong aspects of Bill 26.

This NDP amendment: I would not be able to support it, Mr. Chair, but am happy to hear more opinions and debate on it throughout the day. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A1?

**Ms Ganley:** I would move that we adjourn debate on this matter.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall progress on Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, be reported when the committee rises? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** That is carried.

## Bill 21

### Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to address this bill. I think it's perhaps the second time I've been able to do this, and I do want to say that there are many possible consequences to supporting this bill, and that's why I'm not supporting it, Mr. Chair. I will try and illuminate members opposite with regard to some of my concerns to the bill as I talk through some of the aspects of it.

Mr. Chair, Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, purports to address many things, including tuition costs, student loans, electricity bills, seniors' hardship issues. It talks about, of course, hardship for Albertans who rely on disability income supports. I don't say that it does this effectively or positively for any of these issues that I'm addressing.

One issue that I do want to bring up off the bat as a result of having met with a bunch of young student physicians just yesterday. They identified the concern with this bill around – they believed it would attack their rights as doctors to work where they wanted to in this province once they graduated. They came and explained to me that Bill 21 really ratchets down where they can practise as a result of billing numbers not being given to doctors in certain areas of the province. They felt that that would be a drain on the numbers of graduate doctors who are coming out of med schools.

I asked them, you know: what's the impact on your current class? There are about 140 to 160 students in classes. Calgary has three years of classes of med students, and the University of Alberta has four years of classes, so about 160 students in each of those three- or four-year programs. They said that a significant number of their classmates are starting to be concerned and talk about going elsewhere because of this very bill that's before us. I know they met with the Minister of Health and shared that same concern with the Minister of Health, and I can tell you that they met with the opposition MLAs. We heard them out.

[Mr. Jones in the chair]

I would have to say that I'm very, very concerned that we will be training young doctors but that once they graduate, they'll look to other provinces to practise in the fields that they wish to practise in because of the restrictive policies in Bill 21 on them. It's obviously not a really good thing to happen. The investment that Alberta is making in their training, I would suggest, is tens and tens and tens of thousands of dollars for each of those students. As we know, they want to practise in the areas that they're studying, but if they're not able to do that and get billing numbers in those areas, then they will leave, Mr. Chair, and leaving is the last thing we want to see happen. They said also that this has been constitutionally challenged, and it has been upheld in terms of their ability to practise where they wish, so they just don't see the benefit of Alberta going down the same road and losing students in the meantime.

I do want to focus a little bit on something that I think is a tragedy for the most vulnerable in our province, particularly seniors and AISH recipients and income support recipients and families that set up Henson trusts. Earlier today we heard the Minister of Seniors and Housing address the issue of the lack of being able to in this budget support seniors who are going for testing for their licences. It's covered at this point in time and has been by the NDP government and probably by the PC governments before that. It has been covered in terms of their health insurance costs for that test, doctors testing to make sure that they continue to be adequately fit to operate a motor vehicle in this province. That's being removed by this bill before us, Mr. Chair. So the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, is actually making life more difficult for

seniors in our province who are mandatorily tested for licensing after the age of 80.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

More broadly, we see the deindexing of seniors' programs in this province as a result of this bill being brought forward, which again makes life more difficult for Albertans who are seniors. I think my colleague for Edmonton-Riverview said it correctly, you know, that it's all in service of giving a large corporate handout of \$4.7 billion. Seniors are wearing that in part, Mr. Chair, along with many other vulnerable populations.

Additionally, the deindexing of AISH: I want to just spend a few minutes talking about that because, again, I think that that's a tragedy to affect this province. AISH recipients, of which there are about 57,000 in this province, were going to receive their first increment after being indexed from 2015 to 2019 by the previous government, the NDP government, so their benefit had risen, but their first indexed rise in benefit was to be January 1, 2020, and this Bill 21 is eliminating that. As a result of addressing this, the Premier said prior that he didn't believe the elimination of this indexing would be onerous on people who receive AISH, but I would argue differently.

4:20

I met an individual who said that, you know, AISH was obviously his sole income and that it keeps him in his apartment. If there's any change in his status as a result of apartment rents going up, he may in fact be having to move to a cheaper place, less suitable for his needs as he's not well. The deindexing of this AISH payment is something that touches not only 57,000 people but their families. It touches our reputation as a province, Mr. Chair, where we are, again, looking to some of the most vulnerable, financially insecure people in this province to pay for the \$4.7 billion corporate handout that is going to wealthy corporations.

Of course, that's not the only recipient of income supports that is being deindexed. I talked about seniors' benefits. I talked about AISH recipients. I want to focus now on people who receive Alberta Works supports, those who have basic employment supports. There's one other file under Alberta Works that will be similarly deindexed after January 1. You know, these are not substantive monthly supports that people get, but they're going to not receive the consumer price index or the portion of it that was planned for them on January 1.

My colleague talked a lot about the Henson trusts. As we know, we put that in place as a result of advocacy from people who have loved ones who are disabled and want to ensure their long-term enjoyment and quality of life and put monies away. We made sure that those folks would be able to enjoy that trust as an estate planning tool and not see it be eaten away by the policies that were previously in place. We did that, and the removal of that is obviously not something that's going to assist those individuals.

I just want to move on to a few other things that are in this that look like they're going to be problematic for many people in Alberta, and those are cuts to policing and other municipal taxes being hiked. I come from Calgary. I have heard long and hard about the changes to the fine revenues that will make our police service less robust, less boots on the street, as a result of taking a larger portion of the fine revenues that are identified in this Bill 21. Certainly, I heard from many RMA members at the conference I attended with regard to the changes that that will have in their communities and the concern they have going forward if there is not some way of coming up with a solution that involves them in the decision of that solution that they can live with.

I would encourage, of course, members of the government to keep listening to those members, those local politicians from counties and municipal districts because at the local level they have the skills, the abilities, and they understand their situations. Omnibus bills like this, that bring 19 pieces of legislation into place and create one piece of new legislation, are not something as transparent as you would hope. We need to kind of do a better job of explaining what exactly is in these bills for our colleagues who are working at the local level and, of course, want to make sure that their communities are sustainable as they go forward. Without that agreement, without that ability, they really are shooting blind and are having to deal with whatever comes down on them. That's not partnership, Mr. Chair. That's something a lot less than partnership.

The 19 pieces of legislation in one new piece of legislation cover everything from the Health Care Insurance Act to the Housing Act, the Utilities Commission Act. I talked at length about the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act. Of course, the regulated cap on electricity rates is coming off as well. I listened to a radio report this morning which talked about where those prices are going in the future, and they were significantly higher than the cap that was put in place by the NDP government.

I want to focus a little bit on the Post-secondary Learning Act. That act, of course, is going to address the issues with regard to tuition. I was recently at a rally where students were present, and they talked about the challenges they believe they'll have as young people trying to complete their postsecondary education, which, we all know, is the key to a better job in life. If their postsecondary education gets expensive, then they may take other avenues or jobs or make other decisions instead of staying involved with postsecondary education. A 7 per cent increase per year for the next three years: compounded that'll be about a 23 per cent increase on that education from today to the future.

I went through a couple of degrees, and both times when I did that, I was able to enjoy not only loans but grants from the institutions and the governments, both in Ontario and here. That was a very different time, you know, when we were able to afford our whole education based on those two incomes, grants and loans, and then supplement that with summer work, summer jobs. Students are less and less able to make that happen for themselves. They rely on a lot more loans, and they have to pay those back. Of course, in this bill those loans are going up, cost plus 1 per cent, which will mean that postsecondary education is even more expensive. Then, on the other side, with less money going to postsecondary institutions from this government in other budget lines, we know that those institutions will be finding other ways to jack up the costs of those programs for their students.

Mr. Chair, all in all, this Bill 21, again, is a problem on many levels. It creates greater hardship for seniors in this province, it creates greater hardship for students at the postsecondary and college levels in this province, and if you're a person on disability income supports, you're going to be receiving less money going forward from this government with regard to deindexing. Just on deindexing, you know, for weeks since the budget has come out, I've listened to various ministers talk about how the benefit remains the same: there's no difference; what are you concerned about? You know, when you parse that answer, the benefit may be the same as the benefit last year, but with the deindexing it's less of a benefit going forward. But that's never kind of acknowledged.

4:30

It's somewhat disingenuous to really listen to members on the other side when they say: "Nothing has changed. Everything is the same. You're reading this wrong." I don't believe Albertans are reading it wrong, Mr. Chair. I believe Albertans can read black and

white. As my colleagues so many times have pointed out in question period, Albertans can read exactly what's in Bill 21 though it is an omnibus bill and very confusing. It ensures fiscal sustainability on the backs of those different groups that I've mentioned. It would be great if members on the other side would just admit that, but they continue not to.

Right from students who are currently in school to young doctors who are finishing their schooling, everything in this bill is a problem for Albertans that will come home to roost in the near future. Albertans will see this bill for what it is. It's an endeavour to ensure fiscal sustainability on the backs of Albertans who are least able to advocate for themselves. We are here as an opposition to do that advocacy. We've been tabling letters, we've been tabling petitions, all to say that there are problems with this, and we need to have that on the record. I've put it on the record at least a couple of times.

I think, you know, the thing that I was most proud of going forward was the work we did.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen to speak.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill 21. Looking at Bill 21 and the possible consequences of the changes this bill proposes, it doesn't seem like I will be able to support this bill anyway. In reading the name of the bill, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, and under this bill the changes for students, you know, and people on AISH, it seems like this bill is going to probably result in more austerity than sustainability for Albertans. Under Bill 21 the government is proposing changes to the tuition fees and tuition fee increases.

I will put the changes into perspective and look at the patterns that we are working in the House to address on the issues of everyday Albertans. The government has already rolled back youth worker wages, which has hit their ability big time to save for their higher education.

Through this bill the government is also proposing to cancel the STEP program. This is the second-biggest, I will say, adverse effect on very young people. They will be out of work. The STEP program was very effectively helping, supporting young people to find jobs that would help them to save, you know, money for the things they would probably need for school or to help them save the money they will need for tuition for higher education at the institutions.

Even in looking at the very first of the changes in this omnibus bill, I will say that this bill has mixed up a number of things to confuse people. This is one of the changes out of the 70 changes this bill proposes, and it is enough for me to oppose the bill. It is going to affect these very young people: removing the tuition fee cap. I still remember – I can't forget – those comments the Minister of Advanced Education made in the House, that this was something that was never a concern of the students in universities or the students, you know, pursuing higher education. This is very ridiculous. It was not that long ago, I think a week ago, that we saw thousands of people from the two educational institutions in Edmonton. They came to the Legislature, to the Legislature steps. They opposed the government's changes, and they were willing to meet with the government and share the pain and suffering they're going through and the bad impact this bill is going to cause.

I was sad to see that none of the government members of the House dared or had the courage to go out and speak to those young people that were braving the very cool weather on that day. That is one of the biggest reasons why I think that not only myself but every single person in the House thinks education is a fundamental right

of people, that this has to be protected. This bill is going to have quite an adverse effect. It's very hard.

I still remember one of the conversations I wanted to bring into the discussion. During my campaign, when I was door-knocking, there was a person that would really not be convinced by whatever I would say, but as soon as, you know, I discussed the cuts in education and all of the things, he remembered. He jumped on it and stole the opportunity from me to speak. He agreed that Alberta hasn't even recovered from the Klein cuts to the education and health systems – and this is very important – and this is how he committed his support to me on that day.

This is concerning to Albertans. This is also concerning to the people in my riding. You know, the feedback on the government's budget, on the changes being proposed by the government like the Bill 21 changes to tuition, the changes to student loans: the responses and feedback from the people in my riding are flooding in. I'm receiving e-mails and written letters, and people are coming to my office to see me and give their feedback personally. I still have hundreds of e-mails. I will probably see if I will be able to table those responses from very concerned constituents in my riding. I will see if I will be able to table those responses. That is my responsibility, and I will try to table them, hopefully tomorrow. That is the biggest concern.

4:40

Other big changes are being proposed. I don't know what measures and what homework and what sources and what kind of consultation the government is doing in proposing these kinds of changes in the bill. I'm surprised to see that the government dared to propose deindexing the benefits to the AISH recipients, the very people that are severely handicapped and totally dependent on someone for their life 24/7. The benefits they receive are not even enough to afford the basic, basic necessities of their lives. If you take this into consideration, that the people depend on it in their daily lives, if you take some form of compensation into consideration, receiving the help they depend on, there's no way that you can say that the benefits they're receiving – there's more to do for them.

I just wanted to discuss one more experience I had with someone in my riding. The person was literally crying, you know. He said that he has to come up with and pay \$1,000-plus out of \$1,685, the approximate benefit he's receiving right now. He said that the rent for his place is more than \$1,000, and on top of that, after taking care of the electricity bill and the other utility bills, all those things, there's nothing left sometimes in the month to buy groceries. People have to choose between keeping a roof over their head or putting food on the table. This is a very serious situation. I think the government should have done some more work on this before proposing, actually, to deindex the AISH benefits to very vulnerable people.

That is the other thing. I would even offer to the government to – you know, probably not. I oppose this bill. They probably need to consult the stakeholders and the AISH recipients and to evaluate the real situation they are going through, that they are suffering in their day-to-day lives and expecting more from the government. That was one of the issues when I was running in the last election. I committed to those people that I will represent their issues on their behalf in the House, and I'm very proud to stand in the House on behalf of those needy people and say that this cannot be supported at all. I, on the contrary, urge, even at this stage, the people of this House to do meaningful work in the House. You need to do more consultation, and you need to get more information. You need to roll back the proposals you are offering in this Bill 21.

There are proposals in the bill related to doctors, where it says that the bill will give more power to the minister in issuing a certificate number, and he will also be able to decide where the new doctors can further practise and where they cannot practise. It might have been proposed with some good faith – I'll just give the benefit of doubt on this – but I come from experience, and you can see the unintended consequences. By the time it's passed, it does not have to be, you know, practised the same way that the government might have done. In the broad end, thinking of that, it is going to probably help solve some of the issues the government has in their mind.

These kinds of changes have been very, very controversial and give such a lot of power to the ministry and the people who are well connected to the ministry or to, I would say, the authorities. These kinds of laws have become more to pick and choose people, more to sometimes penalize those people who you don't get along with, who you don't like, or sometimes penalize your opponents and create wedges. In many cases it became the reason for growing corruption in many places. I will still say that this bill was probably put forward with very good faith, but this can lead us to some very unintended consequences. The government really needs to reconsider this change and needs to do more work and more consultation and give more time if they want to move on and change something like this.

The other thing I just wanted to bring into the intention is that life is already becoming harder and harder, and this is even harder due to the province. We all acknowledge that we are going through a tough time. People are having a hard time finding a job. There are more people out of work these days than when the UCP came into government seven months ago. Inflation is still growing. The changes to the electricity law might also affect the living standards of the people and will also probably make their living standard more costly. With living standard costs growing steadily, if not rapidly, I would say, the government needs to support the more vulnerable communities. They should not actually put more burdens on them. The government has taken a big, open-hearted step based on their ideology that their giveaway to big corporations was going to bring in a number of jobs. The amount of something in hand was considerable; \$4.7 billion is not a small amount of money.

Government open-heartedly decided based on a few of the economists they wanted to rely on and believe, even though the vast majority of people opposed it. A number of facts were discussed and tabled in the House, that these kinds of practices have been, you know, experienced in many parts of the world and just even close to our country, close to our province, south of the border as well. But none of the places really see any, you know, positive outcome out of this.

4:50

On the one hand, the government, you know, showed this big heart based on some philosophical beliefs; not signing the agreement, not signing the contracts but just based on their philosophical beliefs. But on the other hand, the government is going after those very vulnerable people, going after \$20 a month on those people. You know, that makes a huge difference to those people, and I still wonder what the government is going to achieve out of this, by proposing these moves, but the only thing we are sure of – and this is obvious – is that it will make their lives harder and make their lives worse.

Also, the changes to the seniors. These people also, you know, are already living with very limited means, so the changes to the seniors by deindexing seniors' programs is going to make their lives harder. The people, the community that's already living with very, very limited means – I can share an example. I did discuss this ...

Thank you, Mr. Chair.



**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 21, the so-called Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. It's interesting, the title of this piece of legislation. The government wants us to believe that by implementing this legislation in conjunction with the rest of their budget, they're ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the finances of the province of Alberta, but of course nothing could be further from the truth. We see that the deficit for this year is \$1.5 billion higher than it would have been had we brought down a budget this year, and the government is still on track to rack up \$100 billion worth of debt in the near future. It's quite clear that the government is not actually all that concerned about ensuring fiscal sustainability in any meaningful sense, so I think that the name of this bill is a misnomer.

What I do think is going on here, though, is that the government is ensuring the fiscal sustainability of its friends and donors while making fiscal sustainability for the people that are going to pay for those friends' and donors' gifts have a harder time making ends meet, Mr. Chair. You know, we've asked ourselves the questions, and certainly my constituents have come to me saying: "Why is this government balancing the books or attempting to balance the books on the backs of students and people on AISH and people receiving income supports, learner supports, seniors who need seniors' benefits? Why is the government making those people pay while they're giving a \$4.7 billion handout to their wealthy friends and donors?" My response to them is: that's the point. This is a government that is governing for the wealthy classes and is taking advantage of the lack of power of those that are under attack here in this bill to be able to transfer wealth to the government's wealthy friends and donors.

If you look at the list of people who are negatively affected by this bill, Mr. Chair, it's quite clear that the government is intentionally attacking people that they think either won't fight back or can't fight back. Or, you know, there is another class of people, I think, that the government is taking advantage of. This is a group of people that will support them regardless of what the government does to them or regardless of what other government policies are going on. Certainly, there is a move to make sure with some of the changes that are being made, that are transferring wealth from the average Albertan to the wealthy corporate donors that prop up this government, that the government can dodge accountability.

I want to go through those in order, Mr. Chair. Certainly, we see, first of all, in this bill that one of the groups of people that's being attacked, because they don't have the power to fight back and the consequences for this government are low, is students. We know that all of the polling shows and certainly from my own discussions, people who are of the age for going to university or college are certainly left-leaning and far more likely to support our party in an election than the members opposite. There's nothing that the UCP can probably do that would bring those people on board with them, so there is little electoral consequence that these members think that they'll have to pay for attacking students the way the have in this piece of legislation: raising tuition by 23 per cent over four years, hiking the interest rates on their student loans. It's quite clear, Mr. Chair, that the UCP thinks that by attacking students, they won't have to face any electoral consequences.

I'll maybe take issue with that. I know that we saw quite a few hundred students on the steps of the Legislature here not too long ago pushing for the government to back away from these decisions, and I'm sure, Mr. Chair, that's not the last that we're going to hear from students. I would remind students that even though they are

besieged by a whole overwhelming suite of responsibilities – they're working jobs to make ends meet; they've got incredible demands on their time with respect to homework and classes, extracurricular activities, those kinds of things – students do have the power to fight back.

We've seen student movements affect significant change in other jurisdictions around the world. Certainly, Chile is going through a time of significant change thanks in no small part to the activism and collective action of students in that country. I think that once students wake up to realize how much power they hold collectively here in this province, they will start to exercise that power and will begin to act to make sure that this government backs away from some of these decisions. Certainly, students will have my support in whatever expression of that power they choose to use against this government.

5:00

The next group of people that are under attack in this legislation is seniors. Of course, we see that the seniors' benefit is being cut next year. I think probably, if I had to guess why the government is picking on seniors in this bill, it's because they're taking seniors for granted. They think that no matter what this government does, seniors will more likely vote for Conservatives than for anybody else in the provincial election. Mr. Chair, they're taking advantage of that fact so that they can find these reductions in Alberta seniors' benefits and transfer that money to their billionaire supporters and donors.

I think the government is overplaying its hand. I don't think they are right in taking advantage of the support of seniors like this. The seniors that I've talked to in my constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar – and I have a lot of them, Mr. Chair. Edmonton-Gold Bar has one of the highest populations of seniors of any riding in the province. Certainly, seniors did support members opposite in the last election, but that support is quickly evaporating because of moves like this to slash seniors' benefits next year in addition to kicking thousands of their partners and dependants off of the seniors' drug plan in addition to the other attacks that my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Riverview has outlined repeatedly in this debate as well as in her questions to the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

They're also attacking people who rely on disability income supports. So that's AISH recipients, but it's not just AISH recipients. It's people who receive income support to supplement their income in cases where they can't work or they're having difficulty finding work or they're going back to school to get the education that they need to get a better job. Those are people, Mr. Chair, who have a hard time advocating for themselves, standing up for themselves. It's quite clear to me that this government is targeting them because the government perceives that they don't have the capacity to fight back and stand up for themselves.

I think that again, just like with seniors, the government is overplaying its hand here. I've got a lot of AISH recipients and people on income supports who have never voted before, Mr. Chair. But these kinds of cuts, these kinds of cruel cuts that are made, shifting money that should rightfully go into their pockets into the pockets of people like Murray Edwards and Nancy Southern, are absolutely offensive to them. When the next election rolls around, these people are going to come out and make their voices heard, and they are going to stand up for themselves. I think the government will come to regret the day that they brought this legislation forward because it has really aroused a political interest that hasn't been there for a lot of these people for a long time, if ever.

Certainly, we've also seen the government think that it's a good idea to attack doctors and medical students with restrictions on

practice IDs. Again, Mr. Chair, I think that the government assumes that because med students are busy with their studies and their clinical placements and all of their learning, they don't have the time or the capacity to speak up against this government's unconstitutional move to restrict practice IDs. I think we certainly heard loudly and clearly from the medical students who visited us yesterday that that's not true. These medical students have more than enough ability to understand what's going on and are marshalling the resources that they have to push back against this government as well.

Doctors, of course, are another group that's under attack. This one strikes me as incredible hubris on the part of the members opposite. I can't think of a group of people in Alberta who wield more power than doctors, and why the members opposite insist on attacking doctors and related health care professionals – it's not just in this bill. We see them attacking the work of doctors in the conscience rights bill that was brought forward by the Member for Peace River. That certainly caught doctors' attention. They didn't like that. There were 176 doctors who wrote a letter, as published in the *Edmonton Journal*, speaking out against that.

Doctors see the pattern that's going on here. It's not just the Member for Peace River in an isolated attempt to legislate conscience rights. It's not just this piece of legislation that seeks to terminate the agreement with doctors at a moment's notice. They see the pattern here that this government is establishing of attacking health care, and they are also pushing back. I have to say that, you know, why the government thinks that it has the mandate to attack doctors the way it has is beyond me. But I can guarantee you, Mr. Chair, that that is a fight that this government is absolutely bound to lose.

We have here a number of changes in Bill 21 related to municipal funding. They're going to cut the amount of fines that are available to municipalities, and that's going to result in either service reductions or tax hikes at the municipal level, possibly both in some municipalities. That's a tax hike that the members opposite can dodge accountability on quite easily. We've seen the Member for Edmonton-South West try to dodge accountability for the tax hikes already, this morning even, when we were debating Bill 29, because it's not his job to tell municipalities how to run their budgets. I guess it is his job to cut their funding and make it harder for them to make ends meet. But if there are service reductions or tax hikes that result because of those funding reductions, well, that's the municipality's fault. They can't be held responsible for the choices that mayors and councils all over the province have to make, which is remarkable, Mr. Chair.

We hear time and again from the members opposite that part of being a Conservative means taking personal responsibility for things; yet at every turn this group of Conservatives here in this House refuses to accept responsibility for anything. The economy goes down? It's Trudeau's fault. Can't get a pipeline built? Foreign-funded environmental activists. Municipal tax hikes? Well, that's city council's fault. Teachers being fired? Send in the auditors to audit the school board because the government can't be held responsible. You know, I wish that the members opposite would actually live according to what they profess to believe and start taking personal accountability for the decisions that they're making, rather than trying to dodge accountability and blame others for what's going on.

5:10

Finally, we see some measures to attack the power of organized labour: making some significant changes to the collective bargaining process, repealing the essential services replacement worker ban. Mr. Chair, of course, that's all part of a broader pattern that we've seen over the last however long. How long have we been

here? It's only been seven months; it feels like seven years at times. You know, we've seen restricting bargaining rights in Bill 9 earlier in this session, we've seen the farm labour bill eliminating the ability of farm workers to unionize, and now in this bill we have changes to the collective bargaining process and eliminating the replacement worker ban on essential workers.

The reason that this government is so intent on attacking labour unions is because labour unions have real power to fight back against this government. We saw it with the CN Rail strike. On the first day of the CN Rail strike the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake was demanding that the federal government legislate the people back to work, not because he's genuinely interested in the well-being of the nation but because this threatens his agenda. The other labour unions that exist in this province also threaten this government's agenda, and that's why they're using every legislative trick in the book to take away their power.

But I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that working people in this province are having none of it. I have never seen a level of worker unrest as we are seeing right now. You know, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed appears to be taking it lightly. When 2,000 people show up to protest his annual general meeting in Calgary, he welcomes it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul has risen to speak.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. You know, a couple of times today and just recently from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar we've heard mention of foreign-funded environmental activists. During question period we were basically accused of falling for conspiracy theories.

You know, I spent a couple of minutes here in the last hour. It doesn't take you very long to dig up some information. One of these fellows – the man's name is Michael Marx – started a group called CorpEthics, who started the Tar Sands Campaign that we hear so much about. Strangely enough, he's got very, very close ties to a lady named Tzeporah Berman, who was appointed by the previous government to the OSAG panel. Actually, both Tzeporah Berman and Michael Marx were presidents of the same organization at one time.

I'd just like to read you a couple of excerpts from a couple of the things that I'll be tabling tomorrow. The CorpEthics history says, "In 2008, CorpEthics became engaged in the North American Tar Sands Campaign." It goes on further in that same paragraph and says, "The campaign successfully blocked all major proposed pipelines, most notably when President Obama rejected the proposed Keystone XL pipeline." This isn't a conspiracy. This is right off the man's own website, and you're the ones that are promoting this stuff.

You know, at one time I talked about comparing these folks to *Stampede Wrestling* when they talk about their fight for Alberta.

**An Hon. Member:** Great show. I love that show.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. It was great. But we all knew the fix was in, right?

**Ms Ganley:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I hear a point of order has been called.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I think this has been a very long session, and I think, you know, we're all entitled to

express our opinions, but I think we're here today to talk about Bill 21. The hon. member hasn't even so much as sort of attempted to make his comments about Bill 21. I think perhaps if I could ask the chair to intervene and direct him back to the subject at hand. I believe his comments are intended, under 23(h), (i), and (j), to provoke disorder and have no other relevance to this bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I'm prepared to rule. I think that in this case there's been a wide swath with regard to debate on all parties and all members. I would, however, taking into account the statements from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, just ask that the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul bring it towards the bill at hand. I assume that that's coming.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Hanson:** Absolutely. Mr. Chair, I'm simply in the manner of debate, in the classic form of debate, responding to comments made by somebody else that spoke for 20 minutes closely related to Bill 21. I don't know, but you know, just responding. He's the one that brought up that we were – basically accusing us of conspiracy theories in response to foreign-funded environmental activists that affect our ability to raise funds in this province. Royalties are a big part of it. Sustainability under Bill 21 would be closely related to royalties. I think protecting our oil and gas industry, which they failed to do for four years, is a matter of debate, and I think definitely falls under the purview of Bill 21.

I would just like to carry on with the same Michael Marx that they get so excited when I talk about apparently, a PhD, but he also talks under the Tar Sands Campaign. It's a 17-page item that I'll be tabling tomorrow for the benefit of the members opposite. They can actually read about the folks that they support. You know, perhaps they should educate themselves. Just some key words that come out like "non-conventional fuels, like tar sands oil from Canada . . . Stopping the flow of tar sands oil now, as well as other non-conventional fossil fuels."

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Chair, I'm sorry. If I could just interject one more time.

**The Deputy Chair:** I just want to be clear on what we are interjecting about here, because he has the call. If you stand, that doesn't necessarily give you the right to be called.

**Ms Ganley:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** Point of order? Absolutely. Let's hear it.

### Point of Order Relevance

**Ms Ganley:** Once again, if the member could even refer us to the section of the bill that he's presently discussing, I would be happy to entertain his comments, Mr. Chair, but I believe the comments are really just intended to inflame matters in the House. I don't think that that's enormously helpful. I would be happy to resume my place if we could even know what section of the bill we're talking about.

**The Deputy Chair:** I'm happy to rule. I think that it has been made clear, though, that the hon. member is relating his comments to comments that were made previously in this House. I don't think that it would be within my purview to actually make the hon. member refer to a specific section when I think that it's within the realm of debate on all sides, all members, to talk about bills in general as well.

If the hon. member could please continue. However, I would say that if he could please try to relate it as best as possible, obviously, to Bill 21, because I'm sure that's what you were doing here.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Hanson:** Actually, you know, Mr. Chair, we've sat here and listened to hours and hours of debate. It's drifted off into tangents that, you know, we've sat quietly and allowed it to go through. We've been . . . [interjections] Here we go. I've obviously struck a nerve, and I think that's probably enough for one day being that it's this close to supertime.

I'll just continue to, you know, talk about the Tar Sands Campaign. I can read out a few more things. I do believe that it definitely ties into Bill 21, which is the sustainability of our province. Royalties are a big part of it. The Municipal Affairs minister is nodding his head. Like, we get a lot of our money in this province from royalties, and have. It's been very beneficial to our province for very, very many years, 56 years at least.

5:20

The idea that talking about a campaign to shut down our oil and gas industry, that the other folks support with their Leap Manifesto sign-ons – it becomes very clear when you read this. It becomes very clear when you read the Tar Sands Campaign strategy, where they try to influence governments and infiltrate governments. That's exactly what's happened here in Alberta over the last four years, and I think it's an embarrassment.

I'll be tabling this tomorrow for everyone to read. Anybody that wants a copy, I'd be happy to give it to them. It has obviously struck a nerve with the Leap Manifesto crowd next to me, so I'll just call it a night and take my seat.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm certainly proud to rise in this place. I wish we could be speaking of things that I think are more beneficial, but tonight we're going to talk about what the government is doing in this bill, Bill 21, to limit access to health care. That seems to be a bit of a theme. We've seen it earlier this week, or actually I guess it was late last week, when notification went out to health care workers that there will be 5,100 less of them very early in the new year, and that's with regard to nurses, registered nurses as well as LPNs, health care aides, paramedics, OTs, PTs, you name it. This government is significantly underfunding health care; education, too, but in this regard health care.

The latest attack in this bill is around medical graduates, medical students, through the controlling of prac IDs, the physician practitioner IDs, that have been the long-standing practice in this province of how physicians receive payment for the services that they provide. Whether they specialize in family medicine or oncology or any other field, whether they practise in Edmonton or Edson, they all have a prac ID. Some are on ARPs; some are fee for service. While this government could be focusing on ways to improve public health care and make sure that it is actually going to be long-term sustainable for future generations, instead they seem set on limiting the access to doctors for folks in this province.

Many people say: well, this has been tried in other jurisdictions. They're right. It has been tried in other jurisdictions. When British Columbia tried it, there was significant push-back from the medical association. It didn't start with the doctors pushing back, though, it started with the students pushing their medical association and later

the medical association taking it to court and eventually winning. But what happened in the meantime, I would say, was devastating to health care in British Columbia. What happened in the larger urban centres in particular is that . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** I will give the floor to the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul on this point of order.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, Mr. Chair, I just got called on relevance to what I was talking about. Now the member is talking about things that are happening in British Columbia.

**The Deputy Chair:** I'm prepared to rule on this matter. I think that the hon. member will remember that though you were called on a point of order, there was not a point of order found at that time. So given the wide berth on some of the discussions that have gone here, I think that given what the ruling was previously as well, I would say there is no point of order or that I don't find one, but I would ask the hon. member to make sure that she ties it to Bill 21.

Please continue.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Happily. Part 1.1 physician resource planning, section 28.1(1), page 5 of the hard copy, for the hon. member's awareness, since he doesn't seem to be aware of what the bill is actually influencing on communities, including communities in northern Alberta.

Back to the British Columbia lived experience that this government seems dead set on imposing here in Alberta. In the larger urban centres what happened is that when physicians were retiring, they were essentially able to sell their practices to folks who were willing and able to pay for the access to be able to practise in those communities, which meant that already established physicians were able to capitalize on the lack of the free market that members so often on the other side say will solve all the world's problems, but here they are imposing some of the most severe market restraints on physicians in this province that I think we have seen anywhere in Canada. So British Columbia is one example. They want to talk about the free market. Let's look at what happened there when prac IDs were rolled back in this way. That was one example.

Quebec: very similar initiative rulings there through the courts. Yes, this bill will be very, very busy good times for lawyers because, certainly, this is infringing on a number of individual rights and liberties. In Quebec what happened was that the physicians, again, spent time in the courts, and the government there learned that they have to balance the carrot with the stick, right? They can't just force folks into employment situations that infringe on their mobility and their ability to practise in other areas, that there have to be some incentives. In Quebec one that has worked quite well is that there is incentive pay or disincentive pay, depending on which way you want to look at it, for folks who choose to practise in areas where the government might not want to be incenting them to practise quite so much.

Another one, of course, that likes to be referred to is New Brunswick. New Brunswick is probably the most current case. It wasn't the courts that in the end said it was ineffective. Although there was time spent in the courts, for sure, it was the Minister of Health in New Brunswick, Mr. Chair, who said that it certainly

wasn't effective and that it wasn't achieving the outcomes. Rather, what was happening – I've got a nice quote here, so I'll just read it. The New Brunswick Minister of Health said: "The physician billing number system no longer works for the province. It is flawed because it restricts the number of physicians practising, restricts the mobility of physicians and impedes recruitment." I'll be happy to provide that tabling tomorrow and the reference for *Hansard*.

What the government is doing has been tried and tested in other jurisdictions. Either the courts or the system itself has proven that it hasn't been effective. Yesterday there were a number of med students here both from the U of A and U of C. We had the opportunity to meet with them, and they are very deeply concerned about the attack on their profession and their professionalism and their ability to live, work, and play in the province in places of their choosing. When I asked them for a show of hands of who plans on practising in Alberta, almost everyone put their hand up.

I said: "Show of hands. Who would like to be able to choose to live, for example, in Edmonton or Calgary, where they're currently living." The majority put their hand up. Now, not all did, because some would really like to be able to return to their hometowns. For example, if you're somebody who grew up in the area that the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul just referred to and you wanted to return to your geographic region, and you'd had a dream of serving as a doctor in Bonnyville because that's a community that you grew up in and that you'd like to serve in your career, but the government decides that, no, you can't – it isn't even about wanting to practise rural medicine. Maybe it's about wanting to practise rural medicine in your hometown, and the government says: "No, you can't. That is not an option."

That's what we're debating here tonight in this bill. Bill 21 has a whole section dedicated to what is referred to as physician resource planning but really is the curtailment of doctors in communities throughout our province. We've had a history in the past of recruiting from out of province and sometimes even out of country, and especially in the north I know that there is a significant amount of recruitment. So interesting priorities, especially when we tell Alberta students: "No. We're going to control prac IDs. We're going to tell you where you can live and not live."

One other example I want to give you. One of the students yesterday talked about how by the time you're a doctor, you're usually a little bit more mature. You've had a little bit more life experience behind you, and many have partners. Many are married. Many are at a point in their life where their government imposing on them where to live could impact their personal relationships as well. One who lives in Calgary has a husband who works in oil and gas and wants to stay working for the company he's been working with in oil and gas. Worst-case scenario, which seems likely because it's in black and white in this bill: the government passes this, and that physician isn't able to practise in Calgary because she can't afford to buy an established practice and has to choose between her partner and her profession.

5:30

Some people say: well, there are lots of professions where people are told where to live and they are accommodated for that. One of the best examples that's been given to me was by somebody who was a med student, who had also been a paramedic and also been an active service member in the military, who said: when I was assigned somewhere, my husband was interviewed, and we were placed together, and he had guaranteed employment, and we had a system that supported us in integrating into that community.

What these med students went on to say is how concerned they were for their colleagues and for their patients. If people are assigned to communities, they will either go there feeling resentful,

not feeling like it was a choice that they made, or they will choose to leave. They will choose to leave the province altogether. That is not something that they wanted to contemplate. When we're trying to encourage youth in this province to pursue a career in health, in the health sciences – and many will consider medicine – are we actually encouraging them to leave our province?

I hate to draw on the cynical part of me. When I read this bill and I see these failed practices from other jurisdictions being considered, I think, like: does the government actually want us to fail public health care? Does the government want to create a condition where people say, "Well, I'm fed up; I will pay out of pocket"? I seriously fear that that is the actual intention of this bill because when you look at the other case studies from other jurisdictions and you've seen how they failed and you talk to the people of this province who are directly impacted by this – I'm talking mostly about the students and, of course, the countless patients – I have very little other justification to give than: the government actually intentionally wants to create chaos in public health care, wants to intentionally invoke a system that has proven to have failed in other jurisdictions, and wants to create great distress for people in being able to access public health care.

I really wish that wasn't the case. I wish this wasn't about pushing a system that has failed in so many jurisdictions. But that is the section I've chosen to focus my comments on at this stage, at this reading here tonight. Certainly, there are many other flawed areas in this bill, but that is one that I think I have some particular recent experience in. I think it would be beneficial to all of us to really push back on what has proven to be ineffective and potentially illegal and, I think, actually, really infringes on what so many people say is a value that they hold around the free market. This certainly is the opposite of anything to do with the free market. This is about controlling and dictating where individuals, if they want to live in the province of Alberta, can live and work.

I think that there are other ways to incent the right type of outcomes in people choosing communities that need to be served or types of specialties that need to be served more. I think that one of the best ways you can do that is making sure that there are proper and adequate staffing levels for allied health and proper and adequate equipment and opportunities for people to practise to their fullest scope throughout the province. I don't think it's always all about money. I think a lot of it is about being able to live and fulfill the career dreams you had when somebody chooses a profession.

Those are the pieces I focused on at this stage, at this point. Certainly, there are a number of other flawed areas in this bill as well, but this is one that I think members on both sides of the House must be scratching their head about because certainly every case study in Canada has proven that this fails, that this is wrong, and that it is not something that we should be heading down the path of. I imagine that colleagues might want to ask the Health minister and the cabinet why it is that they're pushing for this model so aggressively when it's proven to fail.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen to speak.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. You know, I have sat down here and listened to many of the contributions by the members opposite. I would like to focus on the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora as well as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. You know, one of the last comments from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was that it seems to her – and I'm paraphrasing – that this government really wants to fail health care

and that she's scared that that may be the case, yet again the same fearmongering that we saw in the last election.

This bill, Bill 21, is titled Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. There's a reason why we've chosen to put forward an omnibus bill that seeks to address a wide range of areas in order to make sure that we are spending taxpayers' money wisely and in a way that ensures that those programs and services are there for them, something that the members opposite had no clue how to do in their last four years that we had them in this province. Let me remind members of this House and, through you, Mr. Chair, all those listening tonight from their various homes that this province at this point in time is in this fiscal mess that has made it possible for us to come forward with a pragmatic, sensible set of bills to undo all of the damages that members opposite, including the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who sat as the Minister of Health, and the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, who sat as the Minister of Advanced Education – their cabinet pursued policies that devastated our province and our economy.

Let me give this House a very simple example. We collect, on average, in education property taxes \$2.4 billion. That's all we can collect, but education K to 9 costs us about \$8.4 billion, \$8.6 billion. The members opposite will not sit down and ask themselves: if we destroy the critical sector where we make the extra \$6 billion, how are we going to fund education for K to 9? You know what their answer is? Their answer is, you know, more taxes and a sales tax. That's all they've got to offer on a real problem. On a real problem that is their answer: a sales tax and more taxes. I ask them, the members opposite: to what extent are you going to tax the people of Alberta before you realize that you are in fact making it impossible for our economy to recoup? To what extent are you going to tax businesses before you realize that sooner or later you will no longer find businesses to tax? Where do we find \$6 billion?

If we in this province and in this government chose the line of the members opposite and destroyed our oil and gas sector – you have members of the previous cabinet. You know, I remember the Member for Edmonton-North West, formerly the Member for Edmonton-Calder, with a placard written: no more pipelines. A good number of them right here: the only places where you see them are places where there are protests protesting the same source of the money that they want to spend. If they have their way, if the members opposite should have their way and land-lock Alberta's fossil fuels, the source of the bulk of the money they would want us to spend as if there's no tomorrow, how are we going to pay for those programs and services? How do we pay for them?

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar sits in this House every single day. All we hear from him is, you know, affirmation of those who seek to destroy our vital economic interests.

5:40

**Mr. Schmidt:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** I believe that a point of order has been called. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Point of Order  
Imputing Motives**

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes. Under 23(h) and (i), of course, the Member for Edmonton-South West is making allegations against me, imputing false or unavowed motives to another member, that, of course, being me. I have never ever stood in this House and affirmed anybody in advocating for the economic destruction of this province. I will not stand to listen to the Member for Edmonton-

South West imply or outright say that I do. I ask that he apologize and withdraw.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I'm prepared to rule on this. In this specific case I don't think that there's a point of order. I don't think that it was the hon. minister's intention to quote something. I think that it was more of an idea of debate between views across the floor in this House.

With that, I would ask the hon. minister to continue.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. You are correct. You know, in Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, you will find 16 pieces of legislation that impact on key areas of our government, that pose financial pressures on government resources. We have a responsibility to make sure that the most vulnerable amongst us our taken care of. That is not the subject of debate.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Then why are you scrapping, what are you moving . . .

**Mr. Madu:** I can hear the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar heckling, as he always does in this House.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen on a point of order.

#### Point of Order

##### Allegations against a Member

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, under 23(h), makes allegations against another member. I can't remember a single time that I have heckled anybody in this House, and I demand that the Member for Edmonton-South West apologize and withdraw. Maybe, in fact, I can take him on a tour of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and he can apologize to my constituents personally.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I am prepared to rule on this one. I would actually say that in this case I don't find a point of order. What I would say is that I would take this opportunity to remind all members of this House that in the spirit of spirited debate there will obviously be disagreements with regard to what people are saying or how people interpret what is being said.

I am in no way trying to limit individuals in this House from making points of order. However, I would also like to take this opportunity to ensure that hon. members don't use things like points of order to try to join debate. I think that in Committee of the Whole there will be lots of time for us to debate. As you know, individuals aren't limited to 20 minutes only in this forum. They can speak on many different occasions.

If the hon. minister would please continue.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I was alluding again to the various legislation that – Bill 21 seeks to make sure that the programs and services under those 16 pieces of legislation are there for those for whom they were made and that they are there for the next generation, our children, our seniors, and those who would use various health care facilities in this province. The point again is that Bill 21 and indeed all of the other bills that we've put forward that will help us implement the budget that we announced in October are all geared towards making sure that we rein in the financial

recklessness that we saw in the last four years. We heard in the course of the last campaign that the people of this province told us that the path of the previous NDP government was not sustainable.

Again, a very typical example: we made a commitment to maintain or increase health care spending. Now, that commitment is going to be dependent on our ability to afford it. The members opposite would want us to actually follow through with that commitment. The members on this side are prepared to follow through with that particular commitment, but it will be dependent on our province's ability to pay for it.

You know, in Budget 2019 we followed through with our commitment. In fact, we increased health care spending by over \$200 million, but if you listen to the members opposite, you would think that we slashed health care spending by half. Listening to their rhetoric in this Chamber, all you hear is language that causes fear and anxiety in our citizens. They knew quite well that that is far from the truth, that indeed we are spending more money on health care than the budget that they put forward in 2018. Fact. They can't dispute that.

Mr. Chair, you know, Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, seeks to reverse some of the policies that we saw from the previous government. In 2015 the entire provincial government debt was \$12 billion. In a short four years they took that particular debt to nearly \$64 billion. In 2015, before they assumed office, they inherited a surplus of \$1.3 billion. You know what happened? In their very first year they ran a deficit of \$6.8 billion; the second year, \$10 billion; the third year, \$10.1 billion; and in the last year, before the people of this province kicked them out, \$6.9 billion.

Now, put that aside. On one side, you see from a surplus of \$1.3 billion to a deficit in the billions of dollars in one, two, three, four years. Then look at the debt that they left us: \$64 billion, on course to nearly a record \$100 billion if the people of this province had not stepped in. Unprecedented in the history of this province. As a consequence – as a consequence – we are spending more than \$2 billion on interest. If we didn't do anything, if nothing happened, that \$2 billion would become \$4 billion. Yet the members opposite sit here every single day and tell us how we should go to a particular point and plug in more money while at the same time seeking to undermine the same source of the money they seek to spend. It doesn't make sense. It doesn't add up. It doesn't add up.

That is why, Mr. Chair, through you to all of our citizens watching from home, Bill 21 is essential – essential – to undo the damages of the previous NDP government so that those programs and services that they care about can be there for them.

You know, they talk about \$4.5 billion; then it became \$4.7 billion. This is the alternative universe that the NDP lives in. From \$4.5 billion it became \$4.7 billion. The truth, Mr. Chair, is that more than \$60 billion in investment left our province, disappeared. Investors were telling us that as long as we had this previous NDP government, they would not invest. There was so much of a lack of investor confidence everywhere in our province that even investors in foreign countries were telling us that the combination of the federal Liberals and the NDP at the provincial level made it impossible for them to even consider investing in our province.

5:50

To them through you, if we do not attract investment in our various communities, into our economy, how do we grow our economy? How do we innovate? How do we create jobs and opportunities? They like to tell us that they are the party that is pro employees. Let me remind them that without businesses, without job creators, you know, you would not have jobs and employment for those who need to get them. Mr. Chair, I spent part of my life litigating on labour and employment law and actually on behalf of

employees, and I had the opportunity, as someone who has spent hundreds of hours with the same people they claim to protect, to try to figure out what is important to them. There's nothing more important to them than to make sure that they have that job to be able to take care of themselves and their families, pay their bills, save for retirement, and take their families on vacations. Those are some of the things that are important to them.

What did we get in four years? Record job losses, unprecedented: 200,000. Two hundred thousand job losses and they tell us that their policies were working. Meanwhile our economy was bleeding jobs. They tell us that their policies were working; in the meantime our province and our economy was bleeding investment to friendly jurisdictions in North America.

Mr. Chair, recently we heard that south of the border, Texas in particular, has had more than \$200 billion in investment from the chemical sector. We have oil and gas in abundance, all of the natural resources that that particular sector would require. We have that in abundance here, and throughout the four years that the NDP were in office, they refused to come here. There's a reason for that. When political leaders speak, it's not just citizens who listen. The business community pays attention. That is why, you know, when I sit here and hear them use language like pickpockets to describe employers, to describe the people who create the jobs that our employees need, when I hear the members opposite say that we are giving away \$4.7 billion to wealthy corporations, it tells me right away that they have not a shred of understanding on how you build an economy.

The truth is that when you have a depressed economy, when companies are telling you that they cannot expand, when they have been taxed to death – again, remember, Mr. Chair, that the previous government told us that if we increased the corporate tax by 20 per cent, we would get more revenue and we'd be able to fund more programs and services and wouldn't have to borrow. What happened? The 20 per cent led to a \$6 billion hole in the provincial treasury. As a consequence, they embarked on this reckless borrowing. How do we, then, incentivize our business community to make sure that those businesses are here, expanding and investing? I would submit that Bill 21 and indeed, you know, the \$4.5 billion that they allege and they like to say is a tax cut to wealthy corporations are part of our plan to restore investor confidence and make sure that we are creating the jobs of tomorrow.

It will take time. It took four years for them to send away more than 200,000 jobs from our economy. It took four years for them to rack up \$60 billion in debt. It took four years for them to give us four straight deficits, billions of dollars in deficits. We will not undo all of their damage in eight months. I am thankful that this side of the House recognizes that, and we are embarking on that hard work to undo all of those damages for the sake of this economy, for the sake of the same employees you seek to protect and advocate for so that we can once again rebuild our economy and be able to afford the programs and services that our people rely on.

With that, Mr. Chair, obviously, I will be supporting Bill 21. I urge all of the members of this House to support this bill so that we can begin to undo the damages that the previous NDP government caused to our economy.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen to speak.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm proud to rise after that particular speech. We have the Member for Edmonton-South West going on at great length about the deficit, which, incidentally, is \$2 billion higher this year under the UCP than it was under the NDP last year. I think it's also worth noting that the Member for Edmonton-South West went on at length about the raising of taxes, which I consider very interesting in light of the fact that he is basically chief minister in charge of the raising of taxes. This bill alone, in fact, significantly cuts funding to municipalities, specifically police funding to municipalities, forcing them to raise taxes or cut police. I think that municipalities are quite rational individuals, and they know that this is not a good time to be cutting back on police, so that foists the costs onto the residents of those municipalities.

In addition, Mr. Chair, this minister has significantly cut MSI flowing to municipalities, again raising taxes on those municipal residents. The proposal in this bill, which was circulated to municipalities, rural municipalities specifically to make them pay up to 70 per cent of their police costs, could cost each individual resident up to \$400 a year on their property taxes. So I think it's a bit rich for the Member for Edmonton-South West to rise in this place and talk about how his values are not to raise taxes when, in fact, he has raised taxes on every Albertan in this province. The fact that he has used a shell game to force it onto municipalities doesn't change that fact. This is a bill that raises taxes. And that's fine. It's within the government's purview to do that, but at the end of the day it's, I think, an unfair allegation to suggest that he's against raising taxes when, in fact, he has done so on various fronts at various times.

Now, certainly, there are a number of other issues in this bill, which I will be happy to address. I think that what I had hoped to address in this particular instance was changes to education, to advanced education specifically, but I see that we have reached 6 o'clock, so I will save my comments for our return.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Noting the time being 6 o'clock, the committee stands recessed until 7:30 p.m., at which time we will continue with Bill 21 in Committee of the Whole.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, December 3, 2019

Day 51

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Irwin  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 3, 2019

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, please be seated.

#### Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's always a pleasure to get up and speak about the vitamin C showers and the champagne bars and luxury hotels.

**An Hon. Member:** It was champagne baths.

**Member Loyola:** Well, you know, I mean, technically, if you wanted to, you could take the champagne, put it in the bathtub, and you can have yourself a champagne bath, now, couldn't you? Who knows what it is that the Premier's staff is doing while he's there in London. We don't know, right? We don't know.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, as much as I enjoy vitamin C showers, I suspect we're going to get to the bill quite quickly.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Most definitely. See, I love to talk about the exorbitant expenditures that this Premier and the Premier's staff indulge in while specifically asking Albertans to sacrifice so that we can, how they put it in this bill, ensure fiscal sustainability for the province of Alberta.

Now, it's surprising. So many times you have members on the other side speak about these kinds of exorbitant luxury costs and say: "Oh, no, no, no. That's not the case. We need to be fiscally responsible. We need to watch our spending." Yet here we have the Premier hopping on a jet with his friends, no less, from a pancake breakfast over to another municipality on a private jet. On a private jet. Now, it would be one thing if maybe they flew economy class. You know, I like to fly economy class. It's a little tight.

I remember that there was this one time where I got bumped up to business, and wow. That was luxurious. So I can't even imagine what it was like for the Premier to get on his private jet with his friends and just have a good old time as they were flying from this pancake breakfast. It must have been luxurious. It must have been really luxurious. At the same time, this Premier and this cabinet are asking all of us to approve a bill that's going to make the most vulnerable people here in the province of Alberta pay and make sacrifices. See, this is what we constantly get – this is what we constantly get – with Conservative governments, putting in place these kinds of budgets.

You know, austerity budgets let the people pay, yet those who are living high on the hog – there are those who even in this province say: "You know what? I don't mind. Let's have a progressive tax. I don't mind paying a little bit more because I happen to make a little bit more." These same Albertans that have a conscience say: "Hey, I don't mind paying just a little bit more so that I can help out my brother Albertan, my sister Albertan, my friend Albertan." I want to make sure that I'm gender inclusive – right? – Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. This is what I find just

incredibly problematic with these austerity budgets, that not everybody has to make the sacrifices. Why?

Now, I get it. I get it. You know, like, our friends on the conservative side that like to implement these austerity budgets: they often point to bad apples, bad people, and say: "Oh, look at them. They're taking advantage of the system." We hear an awful lot of rhetoric, maybe not from the members inside this House but from conservatives that speak ill even of people who are on AISH. I'm sure that some of the people in this House have heard the judgments that are made about people who live on AISH: "They're living off the system. Why don't they just get a job?"

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Oh, shame on you.

**Member Loyola:** No. That's what I hear from conservatives that actually come to my office. That's what I hear from people who propose to support the UCP: why can't these people just get a job? Well, it happens to be that they're severely handicapped. That's why they can't work. Now, I'm not saying that the members of this House are saying that. I'm not saying that. I'm saying that this is a common judgment out there that we need to put an end to.

Now, someone who's living on AISH has to make the decision at the beginning of the month how much they are going to allocate. When you talk about budget, you can best be assured that for people who are living on AISH, they know what it's like to live on a budget. They know what it's like to have to make sure that each and every penny is accounted for, because they know, when it comes to the end of the month, it's going to mean paying the telephone bill or buying groceries or, you know, buying those extra dozen eggs at the end of the month. It's like that, things that perhaps we don't really have to be that concerned about here in this House, as members of this House. Perhaps we're not pinching pennies as much as the people who are on AISH are.

But this is a serious concern, and this is why I continually bring it up in this House, that all the members of this House should be really considering when it comes to this austerity budget that you want to put forward: who are you asking to make the sacrifices? People on AISH. We're also asking our fine seniors to make cuts. We learned today that more cuts are coming for seniors when it comes to – what was it again? Help me out here. It was the insurance. They need to take the exam to be insured so that they can get their driver's licence. That's once every two years after 75, and then after 80 it's once every year. This government is going to cut funding specifically so that those seniors – and this is something that the Alberta government requires of them. Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't. Yes, we need to make sure that our seniors that are driving are driving safe, but give them a hand. You're asking them to do this. You're asking them to comply with this. Help them out. Why are you taking funding away from this important necessity for seniors that want to be able to drive around the city?

You know, my mom – she'd probably kill me if I referred to her as a senior, but she is – is 75. But you know what? She's 75, and she acts like a 45-year-old. She's always keeping herself busy. You know, I have not seen another person that has dedicated so much of their time and effort to renovation projects of her apartment condo like my mom. She just loves keeping busy, but she's a senior and she's on a fixed income. Instead of this government making life better for seniors all around, they're taking money out of their pockets.

7:40

We've got this austerity budget. We're asking the most vulnerable in our society to make the sacrifices for this austerity budget. At the same time, we have a Premier that has decided to

give away \$4.7 billion as a way to be able to draw investment to this province, but we have yet to see one new job from this failed economic policy. I say “failed” because it’s been tried in so many other jurisdictions across North America. We don’t see it working. Then we’ve got to ask the members from the other side: “If you see that it doesn’t work in other jurisdictions, why is it that you are so adamant in applying it here in the province of Alberta? Why are you so adamant about doing it?”

You’ve got an austerity budget that’s asking the seniors and those on AISH, the most vulnerable, to sacrifice in order to meet the demands of this austerity budget so that we can pay off the debt, and we’re giving away \$4.7 billion to corporations that are actually taking the money and running. They’re going and investing it in other jurisdictions across North America. But the Premier sees fit to jump on a private jet with his friends and go have a good old time, right? Not only that, but we see an employee directly related to the Premier’s office going to London a number of times and staying in a luxury hotel. It was, like, \$16,000 a trip, I believe.

It’s important, then, that we ask ourselves, because you can’t be asking the most vulnerable in society to make the sacrifices if you yourself aren’t willing to lead by example. Lead by example. If you’re going to continue to live in the lap of luxury while implementing an austerity budget but then ask the most vulnerable people in our society to pay for it, what does that say? What does that say? I’m asking the members on the other side to please, please, please consider what it is that you are doing by voting in favour of Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. You know what? Members, my friends from the UCP, I agree that we need to be sustainable. We need to be responsible. But don’t ask the most vulnerable in our society to pay for it. Don’t ask the most vulnerable in our society to pay for it. This is the reality that we need to be asking ourselves right now.

Now, there were cuts to lodge funding, the deindexing of benefits. But you know what? I don’t want to get too judgmental. Okay. I’m going to put it this way. The one that I feel is probably the most heartbreaking is kicking dependants off the seniors’ drug plan. That is heartbreaking. Seniors, who have dedicated their lives to making Alberta a great place: you’re going to kick them off this drug plan because you’re trying to meet the demands of paying off this debt. I’d say: “Hey, reverse that one. Reverse that. Reverse the deindexing of benefits. Reverse kicking dependants off the seniors’ drug plan.” I’m sure that many of you have mothers and fathers, seniors in your life, and you know how dependent they have become on new drugs as they’re growing older and older. We all know that seniors are living longer and longer, and they require medication. That’s why I say that this one is the most heartbreaking.

I see some of the members on the other side shaking their heads. It’s heartbreaking that you’re asking seniors to make this particular sacrifice. I’m just asking the members on the other side to please consider what it is that they’re proposing by bringing in Bill 21, this so-called Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act.

One of the other things that I find particularly troubling as well is keeping fine money from municipalities and the fact that, from a government who said that they were going to increase funding for policing, here we are debating a way to open the back door to the cuts. Municipalities all across the province are going to have to figure out how to deal with the cuts that this government is now putting in place, much the same as is happening with education.

I know that there are a lot of members from the other side, representing the UCP here in this House, that represent rural communities. I’m interested in knowing what the constituents of these rural communities are saying to you when it comes to Bill 21. I’d love to hear from members on the other side about what their

constituents are saying regarding this, right? It’s interesting that so many from rural communities voted for the UCP, and now those same people that voted for the UCP are going to have to pay for it because money is being kept from municipalities. Municipalities have no other choice than to increase property tax on those same people, so they’re going to have to pay for the same services that they had in the past.

See, this is the thing. Yes, we do want to ensure fiscal sustainability, but who are the people that we’re asking to sacrifice?. That is the question. Why can’t we figure out a way where the most vulnerable Albertans are not the ones that are going to have to make the sacrifices that you’re asking them to make here in Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act. Now, I’ve talked before about postsecondary students and how much they’re going to have to pay. Student loans are going to end up costing them more in interest. People are going to have to pay higher electricity bills. I’ve already talked about the hardship for seniors, those on AISH.

The one that I can’t really understand is the attack on doctors, why this is something that you’d roll into this omnibus piece of legislation. I get it. You’re trying to negotiate. But this whole thing on doctor practitioner IDs: I mean, it’s been tried in other jurisdictions.

7:50

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I see the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Good to see you this evening, and thank you for an opportunity to respond on behalf of the government caucus in regard to that bizarre speech that we just heard. I have to say that I have some concerns. It may come as a surprise to you that I disagree with, well, everything that that hon. member just said.

The problem that we see with the NDP – and I spoke about this in question period yesterday – is that the NDP continue to misrepresent facts to Albertans, continue to mislead the province about what is actually taking place with the hon. Finance minister’s budget. They continue to say things that are just not factual, Madam Chair. A great example of it in this session, of course, was during question period, when the Official Opposition said to the minister of culture that she had spent \$35,000 on booze, that her office had spent \$35,000 on alcohol. At the time I got up, you may recall, and I said that they had jumped the shark. I knew for sure that the minister of culture had not spent \$35,000 on liquor inside her ministerial office. I’d known her a long time. It didn’t make any sense at all. I already knew that that, in fact, was not factual. It turns out that it wasn’t factual. It turns out that it was for a museum, that has a restaurant. And it turns out that the supplier, despite implications from the NDP to the opposite, was actually somebody that was used when the NDP were in government.

There are lots of examples like that, and there are lots of examples of that right in the hon. member’s speech. For example, health care funding is being cut. The hon. member spent a considerable amount of time – I don’t know if my colleagues noticed this – saying that health care spending is going to be cut in our province. Now, Madam Chair, as pointed out by the Premier – and the hon. member knows this because I know that he’s looked at the budget – health care spending, in fact, is at the highest that it has ever been in the history of our province. It has not been cut. In fact, it has been increased, as the hon. Health minister can articulate and already has.

Now, education has been cut: that’s the other one that the hon. member says. Well, that’s a misrepresentation of facts. Right there

in black and white in the budget it shows that education spending remains exactly the same.

Further to that, Madam Chair – you might find this interesting. There are two things, again, of misrepresenting facts repeatedly inside this Chamber, but then they said that children's services have been cut. In fact, the Children's Services budget has been increased – has been increased – not cut. The Community and Social Services budget cut according to the hon. member: not accurate. In fact, that budget has been increased. Seniors and Housing has also been increased.

The reality is that Albertans figured this out back on April 5, when they fired the NDP from government. They knew you could not trust what they said. Madam Chair, at the end of the day, the NDP just make it up. That's what they do. You see them do it each day in question period. You see the hon. member doing it here tonight. Yet again the NDP are presenting things over and over that are not factual.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about this private jet allegation from the hon. member. What it specifically has to do with Bill 21 I don't know, Madam Chair. But the reality is that the hon. member spent a significant amount of time speaking about it in regard to that legislation, so I guess he certainly feels that it has something to do with this piece of legislation. So let's talk about that a little bit. As the Premier said, he had a group of Premiers from all across the country and they had to use a plane to be able to get them to a meeting. If I recall – I'm looking at my colleague the hon. Minister of Finance – it was a \$16,000 flight.

**Mr. Toews:** Yes.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I could be off slightly on that. I got confirmation: it was \$16,000. He flew them there, and they had a meeting. To build coalitions across this country is a priority, I would say, and he did that. He met with the Premiers.

Now, fast-forward a couple of months later, and just yesterday the Premier returned from Toronto. What did he do when he was in Toronto, Madam Chair? He came back from Toronto with the support of every Premier in this country to stand up for the province of Alberta. Every Premier, including Quebec and Ontario, B.C., and the territories to the north. Obviously, of course, not surprising that Saskatchewan and Manitoba would be in that group as well as the Maritimes. He came back with the support of all of them to stand up for this province and this country against Justin Trudeau and Bill C-69. That's what he did. That's what happens when you build bridges like our Premier has.

Now, the other contrast is what the now Leader of the Official Opposition did when she was Premier when it came to Bill C-69. I think it's a great example because it's a direct comparison with what the Premier just did in Ontario. We go back now to what the former Premier did. The current leader of the NDP, still leader even when she was Premier but now Leader of the Opposition, sat in this Chamber for 200 and some days while members of the opposition, including myself, sat in the benches they're in now and asked them questions each and every day about why they wouldn't get on an airplane and fly down to Ontario and stand up for this province to Justin Trudeau in advance of Bill C-69.

You want to criticize the now Premier of Alberta for spending \$16,000 to help build a coalition of Premiers across this country to stand up for this province? Madam Chair, that's ridiculous. Through you to that hon. member, that is a ridiculous argument. I am proud that our Premier has taken the time to build those relationships with Premiers across the country, and now you're seeing the results in regard to the equalization rebate agreement from Premiers, that that is something we should look at. That alone

could result in well over a billion dollars. The hon. Finance minister is going to give me that number in a moment, too.

**Mr. Toews:** One point seven.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** One point seven billion dollars. Well, I can tell you that if it cost you \$16,000 to get all the Premiers together to be able to result in well over a billion dollars returning to this province, my constituents will say: good job, Mr. Premier. I say, through you, Madam Chair, to him: good job, Mr. Premier.

Going and defending our province is not something to be ashamed of. Building bridges across this Confederation to be able to defend the interests of Alberta is not something to be ashamed of, and I certainly know that the Premier is not ashamed of it. I can certainly tell you that this government is not ashamed of it, and not one member of the government caucus is ashamed of it. We're proud of our Premier for doing that. We're proud of our Premier for standing up for our province. It's about time somebody did, Madam Chair.

Now, the hon. member likes to talk about rural Alberta. He makes no secret that he's not from rural Alberta – he represents an urban constituency – and I make no secret that I'm from rural Alberta though I love urban Alberta. I love rural Alberta. I love Alberta, but I'm proud to be from rural Alberta. I'm proud to be a rural Albertan. I'm proud to have raised my family in rural Alberta. I see that my little brother is laughing. I was born in urban Alberta, with him, but I saw the light, in my mind, and I moved to rural Alberta.

**Mr. Toews:** What part of Alberta?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Rural Alberta. I'm proud to be from rural Alberta, and I am proud to call rural Alberta home, and I am very proud of my constituents who are from rural Alberta, as I am of urban Alberta.

I don't see this as rural versus urban Alberta. We need urban Alberta and we need rural Alberta to succeed. It's about Alberta, but I am not ashamed to be from rural Alberta, and, yes, rural Alberta, like urban Alberta, has different needs on certain things. Our lifestyles are different, and we have different things that we need, and that hon. member seems to want to rise in the House and be able to say that he can articulate the concerns of rural Alberta and then ask: who's standing up for rural Alberta? Well, Madam Chair, that hon. member sat on this side of the House in a government who had every opportunity to be able to stand up and learn about rural Alberta, every opportunity to represent rural Alberta. In fact, they had members from all across rural Alberta, particularly in the north, and they had their chances.

Now look across the aisle. Look across the aisle. Not one member from rural Alberta. Rural Alberta spoke loud and clear on April 5 on who they want to represent them, and it ain't the NDP. So you should maybe think a little bit about that. Through you, Madam Chair, to the hon. member: think a little bit about your approach, because I can tell you that what the NDP is selling, rural Alberta ain't buying, and they ain't going to buy it any time soon. They have outright rejected the NDP because of their behaviour.

**8:00**

Now, this other thing, about trying to imply – and the hon. member went out of his way to make it clear that he was not referring to a member of the Legislature, which is good, because that would be unparliamentary – that supporters of the United Conservative Party were coming to his office to tell him that people on AISH should just get a job. Now, if somebody came to the hon. member's office and said that, shame on them. That is completely inappropriate and not something that this party would stand for at



all, nor should anybody stand for it. But let's think about that in the context of the fact that the NDP, as a general rule, are just making things up. We've seen it over and over. And now that hon. member somehow wants this House to believe that a random United Conservative Party member came to his office to visit with him just to tell him that people on AISH should get a job. If somebody did that, shame on them. But that's not how the Conservative side of the House thinks. That's not how this government thinks.

I was proud, when I was in opposition, to vote for the very first raise for AISH in a very, very long time. This government, under the leadership of the minister and the Finance minister, have kept that raise. They've kept that raise. The idea that somehow AISH is being reduced is not factual. That's another thing that is not factual. Yes, the indexing is not in place. The indexing was never in place under the NDP, not for one year. That's a fact. But at no time has anybody in this House tried to take away that increase for the people that are on AISH. At no time has anybody shown anything but compassion for people that are in those situations.

Madam Chair, my little brother, the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, and I had the privilege of working for many years with people that needed AISH. I understand why AISH is needed inside this province. I've seen people struggle to even get on AISH sometimes and to be able then to make ends meet. We understand that. We're deeply compassionate. That's an important part of our lives, and for that hon. member to in any way imply that anybody who has conservative thought somehow doesn't care about somebody who may need AISH is shameful and, quite frankly, just an absolutely ridiculous statement by that hon. member, and he knows it. He knows it.

You know what Albertans need? You want to talk about compassion? Albertans need us to get the economy going. They need to get people back to work. They need to get taxes flowing back inside this province. They need to be able to have the money to be able to get the services that people need, including people that find themselves in a spot where they have to be on AISH. That is exactly what the hon. Finance minister and this government are trying to do. That's what Albertans voted for, to get us back on track.

Madam Chair, why did we have to do it? Why did we have to find 2.8 cents in savings? That, in the grand scheme of things, is not as drastic as the NDP are trying to make it sound; that's for sure. I can tell you that in my constituency – do you want to know what rural Alberta thinks? Rural Alberta doesn't think it's that drastic. In fact, I would think many of my constituents think it's maybe a little low, but we are trying to find balance to be able to make sure we protect services.

What they really need – you want compassion? – is not what the NDP did. What the NDP did was oversee over a hundred thousand people losing their jobs. They sat on their hands while people inside my constituency lost their homes and hadn't worked for years. That hon. member talked about rural crime. They sat on this side of the House and laughed. Their leader laughed at us when we asked questions about what was taking place with rural crime inside our constituencies. Finally, now we've got a Justice minister that actually came to Rocky Mountain House. I know that became a funny thing in question period because the Justice minister kept inviting them to my home in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, but really in some ways it wasn't funny because I invited them for years to come out there and see what was happening to my constituents. That's not compassion, what they have done there.

Putting a carbon tax on fixed-income seniors and having them struggle to pay their bills: that's not compassion, Madam Chair. That's not compassion. What the NDP are trying to pass themselves

off as is absolutely ridiculous. That is the party that just seven months ago oversaw the demise of this province, put us into the largest debts in our history, the largest deficits in our history, oversaw the largest job loss in the history of this province, caused tens of billions of dollars of investment to flee this province under their watch. And they have the nerve to stand up here and act like they're compassionate? They're not compassionate. Tell that to all the job creators across this province who've lost their businesses, who risked everything while this side of the House, the former government, now the NDP, sat on their hands and didn't even bother to help them and, in fact, often criticized them, that it was somehow a bad thing to be a job creator and create businesses and put people to work inside this province. Well, shame on them for that. They want to say shame on us and that we're not compassionate and then mislead Albertans as a party in regard to what is actually taking place with the budget.

Let's talk about farmers and ranchers. The hon. member is now the great champion of rural Alberta. Well, I could tell you that the farm and ranch community certainly didn't support the NDP. Why? Why did they not support the NDP? Interestingly enough, Madam Chair, they did support them in northern Alberta in 2015, but they did not support them in northern Alberta in 2019. Why? Because that party sold out farm and ranch communities. They sat in the same benches that are right here. The former Finance minister, sitting right where the current Finance minister of Alberta was sitting, said to me – and you can go see it on Facebook – that farmers and ranchers inside my communities were deliberately trying to hurt their employees. He said that, said that they were trying to force them to put hands in machines so that they could lose their hands and all this stuff. Look, I put it up on Facebook because I couldn't believe it at the time. That's not compassion. That's not respect for the people that built this province.

It's absolutely ridiculous that the NDP keep doing this. The reason why it frustrates me so much isn't because we sit here and listen to this. In fact, Madam Chair, most of the time when I hear the NDP misleading with misrepresenting facts inside this process, I just shake my head and move on. But the reality is that this time around they're scaring people for no reason. Telling people that health care is cut when it's not cut and it's increased is scaring people for no reason. Telling people that Education has been cut when it has not been cut is scaring people for no reason. Telling people on AISH that their benefits are going to go down when they're not going to go down is scaring people for no reason over and over and over, and there's no need for that.

The Official Opposition has a responsibility in this Chamber, and they should do it, Madam Chair. They should do their role. In fact, earlier today I helped them do that by taking a bill and putting it back into committee because they wanted more opportunity to debate that bill and do amendments on that bill. That's their job. So I stood up for them in this Chamber as Government House Leader and brought it back to committee to help them. But what their job is not to do is to not go out of their way to scare everyday Albertans, who are working hard and living their lives across this province, who don't have time, obviously, to go through the entire hon. Finance minister's budget in detail, like we do in this Chamber. They elected us to do that. They depend on their elected representatives to tell them what is taking place inside this Chamber or with the budget, and then their elected representatives stand up in this House and over and over and over say that there are cuts that are taking place that are not taking place.

Madam Chair, that hon. member knows that Health spending has increased. He knows that. I've known him a while. He's definitely capable of reading the budget, and I've seen him talk about the budget in detail in standing committees and when I've served on

standing committees with that hon. member before. He knows that. He also knows that the Education budget hasn't been reduced. He knows that, but he chooses to spend his time in this Chamber trying to create fear. At the end of the day, that's what the NDP Party, sadly – sadly – have become.

It is shocking to me that the NDP still have not taken the time to find out why they sit on that side of the House. I could tell you. I was there when the Progressive Conservative Party was ousted in 2015, and all of us sat on that side of the House. I could tell you that the very first thing that we did, Madam Chair – I know you were there – was that we took time and we sat down and said: what the heck went wrong? We started to adjust to that, started to recognize the mistakes of our party and the mistakes of some of those who came before us. We began to adjust it. That's how we ended up back on this side of the Chamber. Albertans gave us the privilege of representing them as their government again in here because we took the time to do that. The NDP, clearly, have not done that if you just listened to that speech.

At the end of the day, you know why that is, Madam Chair? Because they're angry with Albertans. They're mad at Albertans because Albertans fired them. They're mad at Albertans because Albertans rejected their carbon tax. They're mad at Albertans because Albertans rejected their terrible fiscal mismanagement. You know what they're most mad at Albertans about? Because Albertans saw through their fear and smear and were not going to accept being misled by the NDP Party anymore.

Madam Chair, through you to Albertans, I want to assure them that this government will not do the behaviour of the Official Opposition. We will continue to fulfill the promises that we made to them inside this Chamber, we will continue to stand up for them each and every day, we will continue to bring this province forward in the most compassionate way that we can while trying to make sure that our province succeeds, and, yes, up to and including sitting here each and every night and listening to the bizarre behaviour of the NDP as they continue to try to scare Albertans. I will still continue to repeatedly stand up and say, Madam Chair, through you to them: "Shame on you. Shame on you for your behaviour, shame on you for your behaviour when you were in government, and shame on you for your behaviour now. Stop doing it. Stand up and do your job for real. Stop scaring Albertans."

8:10

**The Chair:** Are there other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And now for something completely different and factual. There are a couple of things in this bill that I'd like to speak to. I know I have had the opportunity to speak to a couple of different sections of this bill, but two of the things that I feel like I haven't touched on too much and that I really want to talk about are changes with respect to Advanced Education and changes with respect to Health, in part because they influence one of the things that ultimately, I think, drove me into politics. That is the view that when we're budgeting, ultimately what we're having is a collective discussion about our values. It is a way that signals our values. I've heard it said: "Don't tell me what your values are. Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what your values are." I think that it is true, because it's very easy to pay lip service to something, but to actually make that investment is more challenging.

One of the reasons, I think, that that is so incredibly important is that it is absolutely possible to save money in the short term that costs you far, far more in the long term. It's possible to affect your bottom line in a positive way in one year but actually cost yourself

10 times more in future years. I think, for instance, of my house. Say that I were to choose not to replace my roof when it needed replacement. Potentially, that could wind up with mould going all through my house, and that would be much more expensive. So even though I appeared to be a competent fiscal manager and saved myself the cost of the roof in one year, ultimately the cleanup of the rest of the house and the restoration, potentially, of the rest of the house would cost orders of magnitude more. Some of these cuts, I think, do exactly that.

I'm going to start with Advanced Education. I think that, at the end of the day, Madam Chair, Advanced Education is one of the ways in which we most successfully prepare our people for the future, through which we diversify the economy. I think that, at the end of the day, this is an incredibly important area to invest in. I also believe that people should have the right to access education based on how hard they're willing to work, not based on how much money their parents have, not based on the family that they were born into, not based on the location in which they were born but based on how hard they're willing to work and what they can achieve. I think that should be a fundamental value that we all share.

This bill, in my view, attacks that because what it does is that it allows tuition to increase at massive rates. What that means is that when people are being selected for university, instead of being selected on the basis of their past performance, instead of being selected on the basis of their marks or their volunteer work or various other contributions that they themselves have made, they are selected based on how much money they have access to. You know, when you're 17 and you're applying for university, the money that you have access to is based, in large part, on your parents' financial situation. What I don't like about these changes, the suspending of the tuition cap, is that it changes things so that those who are getting into university are those who have greater financial means as opposed to those who have worked harder. That fundamentally conflicts with my values, and I think that it conflicts with the values of a lot of Albertans.

Seeing tuition costs skyrocket at the same time that we're talking about increasing interest on student loans: I think that's a challenge. I think that's a challenge for a lot of people. I'm sad that this is the direction of our advanced education system, because education is the great leveller. It's what allows everyone the ability to make the best of themselves in society. Education is fundamentally something that I think everyone deserves to have the right to access. I think that education should be accessible, again, based on what you've done, on your performance, on your marks, on your volunteer work, not on your parents' financial situation, over which you had no control. You were simply born into that situation. So that is one part of the bill that I think is very bad. Obviously, I think all parts of this bill are bad, but in particular I wanted to highlight that one.

Again, I think that this reduction in Advanced Education – why I don't like it from a fiscal standpoint? Because it costs us more in the long run. We save a little bit of money now; meanwhile people don't have that access to education. People don't have the opportunity to get out there and get the education they need to have businesses and diversify the economy and contribute in the ways in which we can. When we're selecting the individuals who are ultimately going to hold those positions on the basis, again, of their parents' financial means rather than the basis of their own achievement, I don't think we're necessarily creating the best economy for the future, and I think that costs us all, each and every one of us.

The other part I wanted to talk about in this bill that I think also potentially has that impact of saving money in the short term and ultimately costing more in the long term: one of the things this bill

does is that – it doesn't do it, but it allows the government the ability to unilaterally terminate the doctor compensation agreement. Now, obviously, the compensation agreement for physicians that we were handed in government was not something we were delighted with. It was handed to us by the previous Conservative government. It grew in costs at 8 per cent a year, every year for 10 years, which is not, in my view, prudent.

So we went back, and we sat down with the doctors. I'm so proud of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and the work that she did. She saved this province half a billion dollars in doctors' costs. I think that's exceptional. She did it without creating strife and without violating agreements. She went to the table and she asked people to come to the table and said: look, this is the situation we're in. They voluntarily came to the table and helped out. This was actually the case with many people throughout the province who voluntarily came to the table and committed to take less or to take zeroes. I think we should thank those people for being willing to be committed to the province and not punish them or call them out or call them lazy.

This gives the government the ability to alter those contracts unilaterally. Why this concerns me: I'll just take one example. One of the things that's being floated out there right now is to remove an additional cost that goes to family physicians when dealing with complex care. Why does that upset me? Because what it means is that physicians essentially, if they're dealing with a more complex client, are not getting compensated for that time, so they're having to volunteer their time. Well, as anyone who's ever run a business knows, there are certain things that you'll do out of the goodness of your heart to give back to those in the community around you because that's an important part of running a business. But it's also the case that you can't work for free because you have costs to cover. You have an office to cover. You have staff to pay. You can't volunteer a hundred per cent of your time because it's not going to work in the long run.

What this does is that because it makes those doctors have to treat those more complex patients for free, it means that some doctors just aren't going to take any on at all because they're not interested in volunteering their time, and other doctors are likely to find themselves in the position where they can't volunteer a hundred per cent of their time. They have staff to worry about to pay, they have office costs to pay, so they're not going to be able to absorb all of those complex clients. This is bad for doctors because they're having to turn patients away. It's bad for patients because they're not getting their needs met. Ultimately, it's bad for the system, and it's bad for the bottom line. Those complex patients don't vanish into thin air just because the government refuses to acknowledge them. They go to acute care. They walk into the emergency room, where it costs us multiple times that amount to treat them, where it costs us far, far more than it would have cost us simply to give them access to a family physician, where potentially they wait until they get much sicker, and then they have to be hospitalized.

**8:20**

I liken this to a situation that I've always found interesting, where someone presents with something like bronchitis. We're not willing to pay for their antibiotics because we don't have universal drug coverage. We don't pay for their antibiotics, so they get worse, and eventually they get pneumonia, and then we pay orders of magnitude more to hospitalize them. Well, that doesn't make a lot of sense, really. I think that this is a very similar situation, and it upsets me because it's trying to play a shell game. It's trying to save money this year by spending more money somewhere else. I think that's bad for all of us. It's bad for political discourse because it

doesn't appropriately communicate what we're talking about. Most of all, it's bad for these patients.

So those are two pieces of the legislation that I feel that I wanted to highlight and get a chance to talk about why they're frustrating to me. I think with that, I will finish. I'm sure I will get a chance to address this issue again. I think that there are a lot of pieces that are of concern in this particular bill.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Hon. members, indulge me for a minute. I have a friend visiting from Airdrie who has joined us in the gallery, Pastor Biyi from Airdrie, my friend Biyi. Anyway, I know we're not in introductions, but I'm the chair, so I can do that.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm rising this evening to speak in committee to Bill 21, entitled Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. Of course, one of the questions that I have asked many times rising in bill debate around this extensive piece of legislation – it's quite a long bill with a number of different bills amended within it – is: fiscal sustainability for whom? Certainly, the deficit this year is \$2 billion higher than the deficit last year. Certainly, we are at the end of the forecast period under consideration in these budget papers, expecting \$93 billion in debt in this province, so that is virtually the same as was forecast at the Q3 economic update earlier in 2019.

Certainly, this bill itself contemplates a number of changes to the bottom line for ordinary people given as it is paired with, obviously, the legislation that we passed earlier this year around reducing the corporate income tax rate for already profitable corporations, paired with, of course, the increase in personal income tax of some \$600 million by the end of 2022, sort of mildly ridiculously referred to as a savings for government when, in fact, it is an increased cost for ordinary people, some \$200 to \$300 in the first instance for a typical family, for an average family. That, of course, will continue to rise, given that the government has not articulated any form of end in sight to that particular tax hike for people.

This Bill 21 also contains within it some of the more cruel and unusual pieces of public policy. Not a year ago members of this government caucus voted for indexation of benefits. It took them less than a year to turn their backs on recipients of assured income for the severely handicapped by reversing that indexation, having the temerity to refer to that as not onerous at \$30 a month in the first instance. Of course, it will escalate through the power of compound interest, Madam Chair, over the years. Again, this government has made absolutely no commitment to any end in sight for AISH recipients or people who receive Alberta Works or people who are beneficiaries of the seniors' lodge program. That indeed is an element that many Albertans find distasteful, that there has been no straight talk with people who receive those benefits or many other benefits such as the seniors' lodge program and the monthly allowance for people in long-term care. If I know anything about seniors, and I do – I represent a very large number of seniors in Lethbridge – they notice and they vote, Madam Chair. So that is a thing that is real for the government's consideration in Bill 21.

There are a number of other measures contemplated in Bill 21 that I want to speak to this evening that I haven't yet. First of all, there were some measures around health care that are both interesting and I think are designed to introduce chaos into our publicly administered health care system and certainly undermine the consensus that Albertans have that a single-payer health care system is indeed the way that we want to take care of ourselves and one another. In particular, we have – it seems, anyway, coming from this government – a great deal of appetite to pick a big fight

with doctors. Allowing changes to the master agreement with the Alberta Medical Association has enabled in this bill, in the first instance, essentially setting up a situation where the members of the AMA are expected to bargain in good faith, but the government is not. That makes for not only an uneven playing field but a great deal of frustration among physicians and instability in the system. Instability in the patient-doctor relationship ends up being patients who suffer, ultimately. Physicians are only too aware of this, which is why they have spoken out against the provisions in this bill.

I certainly have heard from physicians in Lethbridge who are not amused, Madam Chair, not in the slightest, with this very unilateral, heavy-handed move by this government contained hidden within a bill that also does a number of other things and sort of shoved through in a massive omnibus exercise, reminiscent of the way Stephen Harper governed. Well, we know what happened after people grew tired of that type of governing. They showed them the door.

You know, I do believe, though, that there are a number of legitimate conversations that we ought to be having around the future of our health care system. There is no question that a system as complex as our medicare system, which is, of course, the envy of the world, requires constant improvement. Even the master agreement with the AMA: as it comes to an end and expires, it ought to be renewed. Of course, there can be improvement on that agreement as we go along but not in a situation where we are actively sowing the seeds of bad faith. That, in particular, if the government is looking for amendments, would be a good-faith one and to simply not move forward with that and just move forward with good-faith bargaining. We were able to do it and achieve significant savings on this side of the House when it was our turn to do it. They can do it, too, Madam Chair.

But if that's still on the table, then might I suggest some other priorities for Lethbridge health care, in particular, and in southern Alberta. I think, in the first instance, the government ought to commit to keeping the Pincher Creek, Cardston, and Raymond hospitals open. There is a great deal of concern as they close acute-care beds and open continuing care beds, this so-called repurposing. There have been many conversations about what that means. Rural hospitals are certainly at risk. To that list I will also add the Milk River hospital.

Certainly, our government made a commitment to a cardiac catheterization lab at the Lethbridge hospital. I've spoken about that. I've spoken with constituents that I ran into door-knocking who pleaded with me to continue to raise this issue. We require this service. I see it nowhere in these budget papers. If the government is looking for actual good-faith initiatives in terms of improving our public health care system, that might be one. I've met with constituents lately who are very concerned about the availability of dementia care units in southern Alberta and in Lethbridge, family members who have been able to find care, but they are seeing strains in the system, and they are worried about the future of dementia care. Dementia respite care is something that Lethbridge still requires. I just had a meeting with a concerned constituent last week on that matter.

**8:30**

Certainly, registered nurse supervised intoxic facilities are something that this government has said that they in notional terms are committed to but have yet to make good on.

Supportive housing and wraparound services in our downtown was a commitment that was made under our government. The funding was committed to, yet it has yet to materialize in Lethbridge.

The Lethbridge Chinook hospital emergency doctors are beginning to speak out about the state of our emergency department and what they fear for the future of our ability to meet public health care needs in southern Alberta.

Family physicians are starting to reach out to me and to others about the unilateral changes that have come as a result of this government's actions. They are worried that they are not going to be able to spend more than 10 or 15 minutes with people who have complex care needs. Certainly, we see a number of these folks in Lethbridge, where we struggle with one of the most acute per capita opioid crises in the country and, indeed, on the continent.

Certainly, administration costs have been something that the south zone AHS has taken very seriously, and they are in fact the lowest in the province, as I am briefed. While Alberta, according to CIHI, has the lowest administration cost for a health care system in the country, the south zone is leading on these things, so perhaps instead of the pugilistic tone that the province has set with both AHS and its workers and with its administrations and physicians, it may want to look at those best practices in the south zone and emulate them elsewhere.

Now, the reason why I bring these things up and the reason why it's so important is, first of all, that this bill allows for a number of new approaches to collective bargaining. Certainly I don't believe that, while it may be that if people were interested in good-faith collective bargaining that was not happening inside the media, that was moving along consistent with the principles of the rule of law, consistent with the principles that have been articulated through about three or four Supreme Court decisions on this matter now – it might be that I would have no problem with some of these provisions in Bill 21 in terms of this so-called grade of oversight over collective bargaining with public-sector employees and working with the agencies, boards, and commissions that are ultimately the employer. However, what we've seen from this government, both in action and in word, is an increasingly hostile and arrogant posture with respect to public-sector workers, the majority of whom are women that are under consideration in the health care system and in the education provision, although we're not talking about that right now.

In Lethbridge what we see is that about 1 in 5 dollars in the GDP and about 1 in 5 workers are in fact public-sector workers. This is a large chunk of the economy that are nurses, LPNs, auxiliary nurses, people who work in AHS warehouses, lab techs, physios, occupational therapists, of course counselling therapists, psych nurses, orderlies, maintenance staff. This is to say nothing of our paramedics and hard-working firefighters, who respond when we need them. Bargaining with all of these groups of workers is now a matter of a great deal of unnecessary strife. It introduces an unnecessary amount of stress around kitchen tables in my riding and elsewhere, but I was elected here to stand up for those folks in Lethbridge who are worried about their livelihoods because of this attack on both public-sector workers and the value of their work because of certainly the privatization agenda that drives this and, ultimately, because this government remains committed to undermining our public health care system.

This is why we repeatedly hear the Premier mocking anyone who might raise concerns about our public health care system. No one in Lethbridge elected me not to stand up to that. We all need health care, ultimately, and none of us can afford thousands of dollars out of pocket either for private health insurance or for simply paying out of pocket to jump the queue. Certainly, those of us who would be left behind, that is to say those of us who are not in the 1 per cent, would be left with a much diminished system if indeed this government moves ahead with some of these attacks on public health care.

You know, what we saw on Friday, as a result of this collective bargaining process that is now moving along and some of the changes that are contemplated in Bill 21, is that approximately 7,000 people across the province will lose their jobs. That'll mean hundreds in the city of Lethbridge. Hundreds in the city of Lethbridge. The effects on our small business, on our real estate and housing markets, on our entire economy, which relies on both the public and the private sectors, will be innumerable.

One question that I have had over and over again is: where is the analysis on what will happen to our economy? We have some Disneyland fantasyland analysis of how many jobs will come by magic through the reductions in the corporate income tax rate for already very profitable large corporations, analysis that was, in fact, based on Canadian economic indicators, not Albertan, so it's flawed in the first instance. We have heard that from the province, but what we haven't seen baked in is what their projections are for the slowdown in economic activity, particularly in areas where we see a number of public-sector workers, what that will mean for overall demand in those cities, what it will mean for our housing markets, our property values, and what it will ultimately mean for ordinary people.

Now, I have said at many points in this House before that Lethbridge is known for two things. It is known for students, and it is known for seniors. I notice here a number of changes in the postsecondary system. Before I sit down, I would like to speak to those on behalf of my constituents. Both Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge posted record high enrolment this year, the most enrolment they've ever seen. That means approximately, well, at least 6,000 students at U of L. Given the full load equivalent at Lethbridge College and the fact that they have more part-time students, I'm not sure about the numbers there, but I do know that they had record high enrolments at both institutions. What we are seeing here is ending the tuition freeze, so those students will be paying more out of pocket, or their parents will be.

Obviously, that has an effect on Lethbridge families, but it has a profound effect on Calgary families as well. A number of Calgary families send their kids to the University of Lethbridge because it's reasonably close but it's a little bit far away so that, you know, there's a bit of independence there. It's an affordable town to live in. Rental prices are not overly exorbitant like sending, you know, a kid to the Lower Mainland, for example, or places like that. It's a small enough town that kids aren't going to get lost, right? So a lot of Calgary parents send their kids to the U of L for those first couple of years or to Lethbridge College for the first couple of years. What they are going to see now is a massive increase in those costs, not just around tuition but potentially around other costs as well, certainly for student loan interest, increased by 1 per cent, plus ending the tuition tax credits that either students themselves or their parents avail themselves of over the course of a postsecondary degree.

Now, postsecondary is that great leveller. It is a place where international students come, and they decide that they want to stay. Then they achieve their permanent residency, and we are all better off for it. It is a place for kids like me, who grew up in rural Alberta, who had a grand total, I think, on my dad's side of one relative who had ever attended university – none on my mom's side, but my dad's – to actually go and achieve a graduate degree. I went in the Klein years, so there was a student loan there, but still, those things would not be possible without publicly accessible postsecondary education. We did see that that kind of accessibility, particularly for people of more modest backgrounds, lower income kids, working-class kids like me.

8:40

Over the course of the Klein years we did see reductions in accessibility. We did see lower participation rates happening in Alberta that were different than in other provinces. We had a distinction, a not very laudable one, of being the jurisdiction with the lowest participation rates and some of the lowest high school completion as well. That path out of high school and into some form of postsecondary education, regardless of what it might be, was simply not available to people as tuition was skyrocketing.

Now, we've been able to stabilize some of those costs. I know that there are many, many working-class people, whether they are newer to Canada, whether they come from lower income backgrounds or they come from backgrounds that are not necessarily lower income but it wasn't sort of done in their family to go to university – I know that bringing down those costs was something that made university more accessible to people, not that everyone should go to university. Far from it. But that made some of those dreams, whether it was to be an engineer or a physician or a nurse, that are only achievable though university education more possible for people.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we've got lots of visitors here tonight. Because it's almost Christmas, I would just like to recognize some constituency managers up in the gallery: Tasha Schindel, the constituency manager for Calgary-Acadia; and Miguel Racine, the constituency manager for the hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing. Welcome here. It's a pleasure to have a visible audience. We know there are so many people tuned in online.

With that, I will be seeking additional speakers to the bill. The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we are still in Committee of the Whole.

## Bill 20

### Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 20. I've spoken to this bill a few times, mostly focusing on some of the major concerns to the film industry, also the concerns with the Alberta lottery fund. Today I'm going to be focusing on the Alberta lottery fund and what I've been hearing from constituents as well as Albertans all over the province with their concern about these cuts and the changes in this piece of legislation, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. There are so many agencies and communities across the province, nonprofits that rely heavily on the lottery fund. They have reached out through e-mail, through walking into my office, phone calls, conversations at the grocery store, you name it. People are concerned about what's happening, and they would like to have a voice.

I've been forwarded a document from Vital Signs through the city of Edmonton. They're an organization that is through Edmonton Community Foundation. They're the fourth-largest community foundation in Canada. They

help stimulate change and community growth by supporting donors and granting in the following areas: community and social services; arts, culture and heritage; health and wellness;

education and learning; environment; recreation and leisure; and social enterprise.

They've compiled a document, where they've done a lot of research through the city of Edmonton, about how some of the programming that is offered in the city impacts Edmontonians, those coming into Edmonton as tourists. We have information about sports and rec that is put on in communities where we know we host many different events, where it's minor soccer or baseball, and communities come to Edmonton to use our facilities. There's a major concern with what's happening in this piece of legislation with the Alberta lottery fund and what communities are going to be eligible to provide to their communities going forward.

I thought I would share some of these incredible statistics that they've compiled through the Edmonton Social Planning Council. Their vital statistics website says that they are

an independent non-profit, non-partisan, social research organization. Established in 1940, [they conduct] research and analysis into a wide range of topics, particularly in the areas of low income and poverty. The council's publications and reports provide the public and government with current and accurate information to support informed decision-making.

Now, I would like to think that government perhaps looked at this document, but what I'm hearing across the floor as well as from the community is that there is a sense of not feeling consulted with, not feeling that they were a priority when decisions to cut were made. So I would just like to share some of these incredible statistics. One of them that is quite amazing: it says that 76.3 per cent of Albertans attended an arts event in 2018, so that's saying that Alberta cares about art and they care about what's happening in the province. We have the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the operational grant recipients. They exceed the population of the province. They're an organization where it is their job to make sure that Albertans have an ability to access art, children are exposed to art in their schools, and their whole philosophy is being able to bring art to Albertans.

We know that when people are coming through the province, we have some incredible museums, and we have beautiful art throughout our cities that showcases Alberta artists. It's amazing. If you just even walk out of the Legislature and down 108th Street, there's glass blown on every single streetlight, and that was done with a local artist here in Edmonton who blows glass and worked with a school in Highlands-Norwood to teach kids how to do that. It's incredible that these young people get this one-on-one time with an artist from Edmonton, and now their art is showcased right here in Edmonton across from our beautiful Legislature, all the way down 108th Street. It's those little things in our city that make it so beautiful, and it's those things that people are really, really nervous about being cut and what happens.

We know that the arts community is very strong in Alberta and that it includes a wide variety of different disciplines like literature, drama, poetry, prose, performing arts, dance, music, theatre, media and visual arts, drawing, painting, filmmaking, architecture, ceramics, sculpting, and photography, just to name a few. There are artists here that are both paid and unpaid. A lot volunteer, give back to the community, but a lot of them also rely on grants that they would have been able to apply for through the Alberta lottery fund, and now that that's going into general revenue, there is a fear that they're no longer going to be able to access that funding.

We know that people in arts community are passionate about sharing their art. There are those perhaps like myself: if I do a piece of art, it's for my own enjoyment in my own home. But there is art that needs to be seen and enjoyed. We know that there's evidence of healthy lifestyles in being exposed to the arts community. Art therapy is something that can help with self-expression, it can manage pain, and it's been proven to reduce fatigue, stress, anxiety.

The 2018-2019 Health Arts Society of Alberta will bring more than 400 professional musicians to perform for elders in care across the province. That, to me, is absolutely amazing, knowing that there are seniors that can enjoy art in their seniors' facility or at their community centre. Knowing that that is something that might be taken away by removing the Alberta lottery fund is a fear that I'm hearing. When we talk about the positive impacts of the arts, we know that it is definitely something that can have an impact on your mental health, on your mood. It's something, whether you're experiencing it or you're doing it, that has a positive impact. It just makes me really nervous that this is something that's going to be potentially taken away.

8:50

Talking about equity in the arts, there are parts of the statistics that say that equity in the arts has a long way to go, that women make up 51 per cent of the 650,000 art workers in Canada but represent only 25 per cent of artistic directors. Minority women are more likely to have contract positions and less likely to be in full-time positions of leadership. Now, this is a statistic that I know isn't unique to art, but when we look at the praise and recognition, 72 per cent of directing awards were given to men; 62 per cent of playwright awards were given to men.

The arts community is working at looking through the lens of diversity and equality. This is a great way to empower our young girls to get involved. Arts is such a personal expression. They're taking that leadership and looking at ways to help support girls and women in expressing themselves, so when we have a government that has the status of women and culture under her ministry, this is something that is concerning, that it's not being talked about. It's not being considered, the impacts when we're cutting programs like the Alberta lottery fund. I wonder how much of that lens has been looked at when they're cutting programs like this, the impact on our women and our young girls.

We know that a lot of this legislation impacts people with disabilities. We have 27 per cent of members who are hard of hearing or living with a disability that earned less than \$20,000 per year as compared to 18 per cent of able-bodied members in theatre and live performances. My daughter is in postsecondary right now, becoming an interpreter for the deaf. Knowing that she could have a job in assisting someone who's going through an arts program, she is, in essence, going to be exposed to that. I think that when we look at the different jobs that she might have as an interpreter for the deaf community, it's sad to me that perhaps someone that would apply for a grant from the deaf community might not be eligible anymore and might miss out on that opportunity.

We know that there should be a focus on equity and looking at women and people with racially diverse backgrounds and people with different abilities. The arts community is actively looking at that and making sure that this is something that they're addressing when they're going forward with their programming and when they're developing their art structures for the province. I think that it's really important to know that this is something that is being tracked and it's being studied, and we have statistics that show that this is something that's important.

We know that there's a lot of volunteerism that happens in the arts community. While a lot of them are asking for grants, a majority of people come together because they're passionate about this. When we look at the incredible people of Alberta, we know that they're philanthropists and they're people who give back in their community, so taking away the Alberta lottery fund is taking away those opportunities for people to stay engaged as a volunteer in their community.

This Vital Signs statistic shows that an average of 52,000 people volunteer each year to assist the arts in Alberta; 52,000 people are engaged in the arts program here in province. It says:

If volunteers were paid \$15 an hour . . .

The minimum wage unless you're a minor or a server.

. . . their labour would be worth more than \$28.5 million, equivalent to approximately 14% of the total revenue for the sector in the province.

That's amazing. We have people in this province that want to be engaged. They want to be involved somehow in the arts community. To me, 52,000 people would be impacted if that no longer was an option in the province.

We know that Edmonton and, I'm sure, many other communities across the province invest in art in their city. The city of Edmonton's Percent for Art program allows 1 per cent of the eligible construction budget of any publicly accessible municipal project for the acquisition of art. As of January 2019 there are 233 pieces of completed public art, and 29 are in progress. I think that is absolutely incredible. This is something that Edmonton has prioritized and wants to make sure that Edmontonians and those visiting our beautiful city have access to.

Now, if an artist comes forward and they have a submission and they would like to see something in the city, to know that they can't access that grant funding might mean that we don't have those pieces of art. We have some of the most beautiful art collections here in the province, and to know that that is at risk is something that concerns me, Madam Chair. When we look at the Alberta lottery fund and all of those organizations that rely on it, they're afraid of what that means and how it's going to impact what they do for their programming, the different activities that they do around the city. Art is a big part of that.

The other piece that's part of this statistic document is sports and recreation. I've spoken in the House a lot about being a sports mom. My kids are very involved in community sports. My oldest started with baseball, worked through soccer. All of that was provided through our local community leagues. Who provided those supports? Well, it was volunteers. Community leagues are run by volunteers, who are committed to making sure that people in the community have access to affordable sports, affordable programming, whether it's yoga or painting that's run out of that community hall. But in order to do that, they need funding. They rely on the Alberta lottery fund for a lot of that funding. If that's gone, what happens to our community leagues? What happens to that little league baseball tournament that happens every year in Castle Downs, where families come together? There have been families that continue to come and support and volunteer at the different venues years after their children stop participating in baseball. It's wonderful. It's a way for the community to come together and support one another. But they need their facility, they need their community league itself to do that.

Vital Signs has created some definitions about what they feel sports and recreation are. They've defined active living as "integrating regular exercise and physical activity into one's routine and valuing the physical, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs that these pursuits fulfill." We know that being physically active is important at all ages, whether it's your littles and they're learning how to skate or it's your seniors that are out dog walking or mall walking. Castle Downs has a really great community that is involved and is active and is reaching out to the constituents to see what they want. Community leagues are important, and having access to these things is absolutely essential.

We know that 49 per cent of Edmontonians participate in active recreation or organized sports. The main reasons that they've identified for participation: 80 per cent of it is fun and enjoyment;

78 per cent is health and well-being. According to the live active survey among those who are active in the top activities: 29 per cent are walking, running, jogging, hiking; 43 per cent are aerobics; 21 per cent are swimming. There's another statistic here, lack of participation: 51 per cent of Edmontonians did not participate in organized sport or active recreation in the past year. Among those not participating, the reasons are: 32 per cent, time and distance; 26 per cent prefer to spend time on other activities; 16 per cent was health or ability; 10 per cent was cost of activity. Participation in sport and recreation tends to increase as income increases. What this means to me is that those that don't have a lot of extra money aren't able to participate in sports. What community leagues do is that they provide that affordable opportunity to do that through grants and funding through the Alberta lottery fund.

9:00

When we see this statistic of 51 per cent of Edmontonians not participating, I would guess that that's probably pretty consistent across the province. When income is a factor, when organizations are no longer able to apply for grants for supports, that means that the cost of those activities is going to go up, which means that those participating are going to reduce. So when we look at those that have a fixed income or even a moderate income, the priority might not be to have their children participate in sports; it might not be the adults wanting to play volleyball. They can't afford it.

The other piece that struck me was the distance, that 32 per cent didn't engage in activities because of the distance. We rely so heavily on community organizations to provide programming that's close to home. When you can just walk down the street to your community league to access basketball or soccer, that reduces the barrier. When you then have to rely on public transportation to get to an activity, participation reduces significantly. My fear and the fear of so many that I'm hearing from is that by taking away programming within communities, you're impacting people's quality of life, their ability to actually participate in some sort of recreation.

We know that more than half, 54 per cent, of Canadian families are financially strained from their kids' extracurricular activities and that one in four, 27 per cent, have gone into debt as a result. So it's important for families to be able to have their children accessing these types of community-based programming, and it's important to the community leagues to be able to offer that.

I know that Castle Downs did a survey in the community, and we asked: "What do you want to see in your community? What's important?" The majority of people said that if they had programming where they could be active, where it was safe for them to do so and affordable, they would do it. What that meant was that Castle Downs had to consider investing in some more infrastructure within the community.

Some of the things that were talked about. You know, people say that you can go for a walk. It's something that's free. You can do it right out of your door. But when the community is saying that they don't feel safe because of poor lighting or access to, let's say, Beaumaris Lake because of the structure collapsing, these are things where the communities rely on provincial governments to help with funding, so that they can do something that's free for them, as simple as walking.

We know that by adding lighting – because we live in a province where it gets dark early, people work and by the time they want to go out after dinner, it's dark. We need to invest in simple things, and as a province we should be supporting communities in doing that. When the constituents are saying, "This is something that's important; this is something that we want to see," I think it's the provincial government's responsibility.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the call and to my colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs for her people-centred commentary on what I think is a bill that is anything but people-centred, other than perhaps people-targeted because it seems like there are many, many attacks on individuals. We always hear about individual responsibility, but I think this is a heightened level of onus put on individual responsibility, something that certainly was not campaigned on in the last election and that, I would say, the government has no mandate to implement.

I'm going to talk about a few of the areas tonight that I haven't had a chance to talk about in great detail. The first one I'm going to touch on is the effects to municipal funding. The government plans to cut grants in lieu by 25 per cent this year, and it's planning to cut them by an additional 25 per cent next year. So grants in lieu: what is that? I'm not sure, maybe it was discussed somewhat at caucus. I doubt it was discussed extensively because I can tell you that municipalities expect people and businesses and government agencies that are in their communities or government buildings that are in their communities to pay for the services that we all receive.

Because one order of government that is subject to another order of government can't impose a tax bill on that order – so a municipality can't issue a tax bill to the provincial government – what has been done for as long as I can remember, Madam Chair, is that the provincial government had a grant in place of taxes. GPOT, I think, they often referred to it as. That grant in place of the tax base was already, arguably, not the full cost of what it would be to issue all of the services to those buildings and the folks who live and work there.

For example, many of us have offices in the Federal Building, and everyone else who doesn't has one in this building. The city plows the roads for us to get from our places of accommodation or permanent residence, whatever it might be, to this building to be able to do the work that we do here. When there are moments of crisis, we call on the city police to come and support us. They aren't here every day, thank goodness, but we know that there are times of crisis where we need to call on the city police, we need to call on local law enforcement, like we experienced just yesterday, Madam Chair. I think it behooves us to contribute to the cost of providing those services that benefit us all.

So these grants in place of taxes in this bill will be cut by 25 per cent this year, an additional 25 per cent next year, not exactly paying our fair share for the services that we receive from the municipality here in Edmonton. There are provincial buildings throughout this province. Many of our municipalities have provincially owned buildings, and they expect that the province will give them this grant in place of taxes, and while they would like it to be higher, they certainly didn't expect that it would be lower, 25 per cent reductions for each of the next two years. That definitely wasn't something that was in the Premier's speech at RMA, for example, or in the platform, that government is going to shirk some of its responsibilities when it comes to paying taxes for the buildings that has.

I think that that is not just a degradation of responsibility, but I'd say that it's quite embarrassing. I'd say that it's something the government – I get why it wasn't in the RMA speech, because I think it's something that probably embarrasses a lot of members, that I imagine many of your municipal and MD and county leaders have spoken to you about.

I know that when there was discussion of this when the government changed in 2015 and I was then minister of seniors, they were concerned that the government might not be paying their

taxes on all of the seniors' homes that we had throughout the province. We did what I would argue was the responsible thing and made sure that we paid our taxes. Now here we have a bill that is making it not only legal for the government to continue to cut what they pay in taxes but is downloading those pressures onto the very municipalities that have been counting on these grants in place of taxes.

Another piece is the 9 per cent cut for MSI funding for Calgary and Edmonton – well, isn't that just lovely – the MSI funding that they counted on for many years to provide the municipal sustainability that enables all of us to have the kinds of buildings and amenities and services that we expect. Imagine when folks are here in Edmonton, while they're here for work, that maybe they pop in at a public library or use the bus or the LRT or use a major road to get to and from this place. These are all things that MSI contributed to, and now that's being cut. What's going to happen – we've seen it already happen in this place – is that when Edmonton and Calgary are facing 9 per cent cuts, they're faced with looking at service reductions in excess of that, and of course the majority are people-centred in their budgets as well as in the provincial budgets.

[Mr. Getson in the chair]

So if you're looking at cuts of that magnitude, you're looking at the kinds of attacks on public services and on the very people who are being attacked further in this bill with what the now Premier has referred to in the past as an insidious tax grab, income bracket creep, right? So here we go. We're going to download things onto municipalities. We're going to download things onto individuals. So that is certainly very frustrating.

9:10

There's one little line in here, Mr. Chair. It's just one tiny line in section 10 now, I guess, and it repeals the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act. It just says, "The City Charters Fiscal Framework Act is repealed." It's on page 55 of the bill. When we saw this bill tabled, the next day there were emergency meetings called for many municipalities across this province, and I attended the one here in Edmonton, for at least a portion of it. What the message was, loud and clear: promise made, promise broken.

It was actually in the platform of the now government that they would respect the city charters fiscal framework. Instead, this bill in one line repeals it. Not long to break that promise, that's for sure, and certainly disrespectful to the municipalities who did all of that negotiating in good faith. When they saw that it was in the platforms of both major parties in the last election, they had a great sigh of relief because this is something that had been such an ongoing work for many years, that was landed prior to the last election but committed to by both major parties in the last election. So, of course, there is significant anger and frustration on the part of the municipalities that are dealing with a broken promise yet again.

Yeah. So not paying taxes, breaking funding agreements, reducing the existing funding agreements, and then, of course, we have the addition of the 90-day clause, that has the ability to terminate without cause significant infrastructure projects that our two largest cities have been counting on for years, ones that the now Premier likes to say that he championed, but he's writing in these clauses to break the very commitments that were made by the last government, that he said he would maintain.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

I'm going to pivot to some of the other areas that I think in some ways reflect on the very difficult news of this government's credit downgrade earlier today. Moody's brought in a downgrade. I don't



celebrate these types of things. I think it's not something that we're excited about. Certainly, I think when the government criticized downgrades in the past, when they were in opposition, they seemed to be celebrating them, and I take no enjoyment in this moment. I want you all to know that. But I'm going to reflect on a few of the pieces in the downgrade that comment on why this has been done and what I think in this bill actually furthers the situation and would lead us to further downgrades if the government doesn't take the advice of Moody's.

There are two areas that I want to refer to. One says that it "reflects Moody's opinion of a structural weakness in the provincial economy that remains concentrated and dependent on non-renewable resources – primarily oil." And it goes on to elaborate on that. So what's being done in this bill to end the structural weakness in the provincial economy? Well, it's actually furthering what Moody's says is a structural weakness, an overdependence on one commodity. Of course, I am very grateful that we have such a strong oil and gas industry, but it can't be our only industry.

Individual Albertans are called upon to diversify their own income regularly. I spoke with an artist just a couple of weeks ago who talked about how she would love to be able to do fine art all day every day, but of course that isn't an option. That wouldn't be a sustainable way to generate income, so she teaches, so she does public pieces, so she does commissioned pieces. You have to take what you've got and find ways to diversify your income base. If somebody who is a very talented fine artist can find ways to diversify her income, I think it certainly would be of benefit for a government that has the responsibility of creating an economy and supporting an economy for more than 4 million people to take that urgency that Moody's is saying around overdependence and structural weakness and diversify.

What's happening instead in this bill? Well, we're seeing the repealing again of different types of things that help support economic diversification. Here's another one: page 60, section 17. It repeals the interactive digital media tax credit. It's repealed upon proclamation. There's another one here, the film and television tax credit: significant changes to that. These are areas of our economy that were growing in recent years. Oh. And, of course, the small brewers, right? These are areas in our economy that were growing in recent years.

Of course, the intent is not to have them replace our primary industry; it's to have them augment the primary industry. Just as back in the time when my grandparents were homesteading, the main industry of the day was agriculture, we still have a very strong agricultural base in this province. But it wasn't sustainable for us to rely on that – or on trapping and fur trading – being our primary and sole industry indefinitely. It's important that as society continues to move forward, we continue to find ways to have a strong base in nonrenewable resources but to expand that into other parts of the economy.

Of course, something that I was proud to support the expansion of was our energy legacy in this province in areas in addition to oil and gas. With the PDP, obviously, we talked about getting full value and greater components out of our raw resources rather than always selling the most basic, raw version of our resources to other jurisdictions to have them upgrade, refine, send it back, and for us to pay a premium on that. Doing that work in Alberta to get better value and more jobs out of our resource was the responsible thing to do, but so was it the responsible thing to do to have the digital media tax credit.

This is an emerging industry and one where we as Albertans, I think, should be at the forefront and not following and looking for the leftovers from other jurisdictions. As well, the film and television industry: I know that any time I see any kind of glimpse

of Alberta in a TV show, in a movie, I get excited. I get that sense of pride, and a lot of Albertans do, whether it's the Strathcona farmers' market featured in a number of, you know, holiday movies or our beautiful Canadian Rocky Mountains, and there are other places across this province that get featured from time to time as well. Find ways to expand that, to expand, you know, both the actor, film director, editor sorts of positions but also the many blue-collar jobs that come on those sets as well, what are seen as some of the complementary pieces to the arts. There are a lot of people who work in television and film and in the theatre who really contribute to a diversified economy and the cultural fabric of this province. We are the sum of our many parts, and I definitely feel that this bill is attacking many of the parts that I think were growing and were contributing to a more diversified economy.

Moody's also talks about environmental risk. They talk about risk in relation to oil as well as floods and fires. Again, I think it's important that we act in a more proactive way rather than implementing short-sighted cuts like the cuts on the RAP program. Growing up in the north, I knew a bunch of RAP firefighters personally. I probably saw them from afar and admired them greatly, and there were a lot of kids in our town who, when they grew up, didn't just want to be firefighters; they wanted to be RAP firefighters. They wanted to be the men and women who jumped out of the helicopters and saved the farm or saved that trapline or saved that area of brush or saved your town. That's one of the areas that a lot of kids in the community I grew up in wanted to be a part of, and instead we have a budget that attacks the very programs that have been in place, many of them for decades.

And that's the thing. I think a lot of folks on the other side of the House like to say: well, we were sent here to undo what the NDP did. I would say that that's a very simplistic argument to give. I think there were a number of things that people weren't sending folks here to undo, but, okay, let's say that you buy that simplistic argument, that you're here to undo what was done in the last four years. Well, then, why undo things that have been done for the last 40 years: the RAP program – about 30 years in existence in this province – and a number of initiatives. Oh. And the ATRF: that was something that was set up as joint governance in 1939. You know, this is the same time as many of us hear the stories about our loved ones – my grandfather, for example – getting ready to go off to war. This is something that has been in place for far longer than the four years when there was a different party in power.

9:20

The party of today seems to feel that it is important to roll back time in such substantive ways, that I think are causing really deep and damaging impacts on future things. Like, when Moody's looks to see, "Okay; given the last downgrade and the advice that we gave, what's being done to implement those cautionary notes and to actually focus on diversification?" I fear that when they see the impacts of things like Bill 20, it is actually moving in the wrong direction and that it's going to make it more difficult for us, Madam Chair.

With that, I want to express again that I think that two omnibus bills, 20 and 21, that have such sweeping impacts on so many different areas that ordinary folks rely on, are disrespectful at best and, I think, are really damaging to the folks who rely on these programs. At the same time that we're telling people, "You can't get your tax credit anymore for your tuition, tuition that you've been saving up for and paying and struggling with, but we have the money to spend on things like flights to other jurisdictions for folks who work in the Premier's office," you know, I think that we have some questions to ask about what our priorities are and how it is that we're going to make sure that we support the diversification

that I think everyone deserves in this province. Again, I find these measures in this budget very regressive and far beyond the scope of what was campaigned on and what the mandate was given for.

Those are some of the comments I wanted to share with regard to Bill 20 at this point tonight. Perhaps there will be more later, but at this point those are my primary areas of concern that I wanted to highlight for my colleagues, again, those being the shirking of responsibility to pay taxes to municipalities; the cutting of major grants, including MSI, to municipalities; the shredding of the cities charter, that was committed to in the platforms of both political parties, certainly committed to in the government platform; the tax credits that would have moved us forward being eliminated, which I believe will move us backwards; and the attacks on tax credits for ordinary folks through the tuition tax credit elimination.

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I think this is my first time speaking to this bill. Looking at the bill, some of the changes being proposed in the bill are quite disturbing. It's very obvious that I won't be able to support this bill.

Of the changes this bill proposes, the very first thing I was looking at is the impact of ending the interactive digital media tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, the community economic tax credit, the Alberta investor tax credit, and the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. Looking at all those changes being proposed, I would say that this seems to be a very short-sighted, ideological, partisan decision that in no way is going to support economic prosperity, and definitely it will have an adverse effect moving forward to diversify our economy.

I would also say that this was a lost opportunity, that there was huge potential in this sector in Alberta. It could grow and help diversify the economy, and by this government's proposal Alberta will lose the huge potential in growing, I will say, the film industry. I really wanted to actually share a quote from one of the employers in this sector, Keith Warner. Keith Warner, whose video game studio, New World North, opened earlier this year and now employs 26 people and has some more positions still to be filled, said: it was a bitter pill for me to swallow; I will be honest; I was pretty upset.

The other thing, one more change I wanted to actually emphasize in this bill, is taking into consideration the end of the lottery fund. The government is going to move the money into the general revenue fund. Before coming to take on my new role after the general election in April, I was lucky to have the experience to be able to work with a number of community organizations and personally know many of those individuals who work day and night to keep those organizations going. They do volunteer work without any compensation after going to work from 9 to 5, and they give spare time, that they can easily choose to spend with family or doing some other activities, to try to help build the communities through those organizations by going and providing a platform in the communities to help promote local talent, bring communities together, build bridges between communities, and, not only that, also integrate those cultures into the larger Canadian mosaic.

Those are organizations that do fund raise in the communities. They do spend their volunteer time there, and they also, you know, depend on the funding from the lottery funds. Moving these funds to general revenue has actually created so much uncertainty for all those individuals. They deserve to have that funding from their government. On the contrary, the government has said that the government will still be supporting those programs, but there's a

lack of information. There is nothing specific to back up the government's claim. Those, you know, members of the organizations, of the communities cannot rely on the word that our government is actually claiming.

One of the other aspects that I just wanted to speak about: the government is actually proposing a change to child tax credits. They are rolling the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit into a single Alberta child and family benefit. By doing that, this is going to impact big time on Alberta families. The new Alberta child and family benefit will reduce – 465,000 Albertans will be impacted by this new income threshold. This includes 55,000 Albertans who will lose the benefit entirely. This is not a small number. You know, once again I just want to reiterate: 55,000 people who now receive these benefits will not be eligible to receive the benefits entirely if this bill is passed.

9:30

The other, you know, very disturbing thing. I was looking at the kind of change this is proposing. Families with a \$26,000 net income: how much can you assume that it does these days? To pay your mortgage, pay your rent, that even accounts for nearly \$12,000 to \$18,000, \$20,000. How much is left to take care of the well-being of the family or to put food on the table for the children, for the family? When the government worked on this, I don't know what kind of consultation they have done, what kind of work they have done, what kind of homework they have done on this. This is very disturbing news. The people making an income in the range of \$26,000, net family income, will be impacted by this, and the people, the families whose net income is more than \$41,000 or \$43,000 will lose the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta child and family tax credit base. These are the kinds of changes I'm looking at being proposed by this bill.

It's for sure that there's no way that we can support this bill. I'm going to be, actually, very brief. I have more to say on this bill. I was going to link some of the information to moving the lottery fund into general revenue. The government says, you know, that they will still back up those programs. I have spent, like, six months asking these questions many times to the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. She is not even sure and not even clear on the cuts the ministry is – actually, it's already cut. They have cut the community facility enhancement program. The community initiatives program has been cut 35 per cent and the other program by 8 per cent. The question has been raised many times that the worst impact that that is going to have is going to be on the community organizations. Not only this, but a number of people from the organizations are coming to our office and sharing their concerns. Their applications for these grants are being declined, and now they are going to lose even their dependency on the lottery fund. That's very concerning.

For those reasons, I actually oppose this bill and also, you know, urge the government members of this House to give more time and think again, take a thorough look at the kind of changes being proposed. This is going to hurt everyday Albertans. This is going to hurt some of the very important work being done in our communities, and this is a lost opportunity of the potential we had, actually, to grow the film industry.

Thank you, Madam Chair. With these comments, thank you once again.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity tonight to rise and speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. This essentially is a budget bill.

It's not the budget bill, but a large portion of what we see going on within this bill is, as is stated right there in the title, fiscal measures and taxation to help achieve this government's ends.

I want to reflect a little bit on what I've been hearing and seeing from this government in terms of how they view going about achieving a budget balance, about how they view achieving what they feel needs to be a flushing out, shall we say, of government waste or red tape or debt and deficit. Indeed, it was I believe the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction that offered this House a fairly colourful analogy of how he viewed that process taking place and his thoughts on the concerns that we've raised as the Official Opposition about the manner in which this government has been going about its promise to balance the budget while attempting to also backfill, of course, the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway. That minister rose in this House – and I quote from the eternal words of *Hansard*, to which this minister so kindly donated his careful thoughts. He said, “Now, Mr. Speaker, if they are going to lose their minds over what we're doing in this session over one bill, I can't imagine how they're going to handle the fact that we're about to give this government a giant enema.”

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Now, as much as some might not want to dwell on that particular metaphor from this particular minister, I want to stop and take it apart a little bit. The first thing that strikes me about this minister's metaphor about this government's budget and indeed about the pieces that we see contained here in Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, is the crudity, the fact that it is not only certainly crude in many ways, as folks noted on social media and certainly have commented on since – it was perhaps, some would say, in poor taste – but crude also just in the ignorant simplicity with which the minister chose to express himself and chose to express the idea about how we'd deal with what is, in fact, a challenging and complex reality.

Secondly, I would reflect on the cruelty of the minister's analogy. The manner in which the minister brought this forward and suggested this particular medical operation to aid in what he feels is a significant problem with the government is one of brute force. That goes back to the crudity but does also speak to sort of this government's general approach, which is to bully its way through, to force things from the top down or, perhaps in this analogy, from the bottom up. It is not a question of co-operative or thoughtful action. It's not a question of careful and considered. It's a question of simply imposing, forcing, and, some might say, attacking.

9:40

Lastly, what struck me about the analogy is its idiocy, Mr. Chair, simply in that what the minister was proposing is not a practical or reasonable solution to the actual problem. Now, admittedly, it's a short-term solution. Certainly, it's one that is going to yield very rapid and probably a lot of results but, frankly, utterly fails to address the actual underlying problem.

Of course, again, that's what we see with this government and with the kind of measures that they're putting forward here in Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, the sort of approach they are taking with, say, a system as complex as health care, which in itself is not unlike a living being in its complexity and all the different parts that have to work together to make that system work, a system that is indeed much greater than the sum of its parts. What we have here is the minister proposing a very flashy, incredibly messy, and very ill-thought-out solution to a problem that he's barely considered and understood.

Now, if we were to talk to any medical doctor about how they would want to help out a patient who is dealing with this kind of

situation, who is dealing with a chronic health issue like this, say, dealing with, shall we say, to not be quite as crude as the member, a chronic blockage. Any decent physician is going to sit down and actually talk with the patient, assess the problem. What are the root issues that led to the situation that the person finds themselves in? What are their eating habits? What are their sleeping habits? Is this individual getting much exercise? What's the environment they're living in? What are the other things they are experiencing? The doctor is not going to come in and, as the minister suggests, try to ramrod through a solution. They're going to actually sit down and consider and try to identify: how did we get into the condition that we are in now?

Now, admittedly, Mr. Chair, there are Conservatives who do this, who actually approach complex policy problems and complex systems of government and issues that need to be dealt with within a government system in a thoughtful way. Certainly, the more moderate, progressive, and thoughtful Conservatives do tend to do that. I have known and I have seen those individuals, and it's appreciated. But those of a more reactionary and ideological bent, when they approach these sorts of situations, always seem to fall into the temptation of trying to frame it as a moral judgment, as a failing of character: if only this individual had been more disciplined in their diet, if only they had exercised more, if only they weren't so lazy and unmotivated. Often the unsaid subtext is: if only they were more like me.

Now, Mr. Chair, to bring this all back around to what we are talking about here, Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, and indeed the proposal of a budget that this government has put forward and indeed its overall approach to how it wants to bring Alberta's fiscal house into order, the analogy that we saw from the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction in that the solution to this problem is “to give this government a giant enema” reveals much more of the ignorant thinking and much less of the thoughtful and considered. Indeed, you consider the great damage that could be done if you try to embark on your solutions in such a way from a medical or a political policy standpoint. You are more likely to do far greater harm than you are to do good or achieve your ends.

You're not achieving a long-term solution. You're not, in fact, actually altering anything about the habits that got you into that situation to begin with. Indeed, we've seen that with previous Conservative governments in Alberta that have come in preaching this kind of rhetoric about how they at long last were going to be the ones who were going to bring this fiscal order into this House. They were going to be the ones to finally reconfigure the health care system in a way that worked efficiently. They were going to be the saviours of Alberta.

Mr. Chair, here we are again, and we have no new ideas at the table. We have these same tired tropes, the same utter failure to actually address root issues, to consider the real problems. Rather than sit down and actually work with the individuals involved in these complex systems, with the people that make up the political body that is our government, the folks that are running our health care systems, all the other people that are part of this system here in the province of Alberta, to work to improve and change habits, to work to find better ways to do things to address what are the root issues that come with this – how did we get here? – no, their solution is to, in the words of the associate minister, “give this government a giant enema.”

That says it all to me right there, the lack of thought, the lack of consideration, the utter failure to understand the thoughtful and careful work that should go into this to bring our House, indeed, into better fiscal balance. And indeed – and I'm not one to dance on a grave, but it's unfortunate – we saw today what Moody's thinks of this government's plan so far. This credit downgrade that the province

received today indicates that with the solution that this government has brought forward, its \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway, its intention to ramrod through reform at lightning speed, to blast through its policy with a firehose, they aren't impressed. They see the fact that this government is on track to pretty much the same level of debt that it stands in this House and decries every day and judges our government for having had the moral failing to run towards – they're driving towards that exact same fiscal cliff, Mr. Chair.

Moody's is looking at the fact that this government, in fact, has a higher deficit this year than our government projected. Again, this is all part and parcel of Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, which is enacting measures to support that budget and this government's plan that is driving to over \$90 billion in debt.

The question is: who's going to pay? The question is: is the patient going to survive the procedure? Are we going to come out of this at the end of this government's first term with Alberta on a stronger footing in the sense that it has actually built a more resilient approach, a more resilient economy, better fiscal habits and looking after all Albertans as opposed to simply trying to rocket through reforms, make wild cuts in hopes that the elaborate shell game which this Premier and his ministers are choosing to play with funding will yield numbers that they can hide behind for the next provincial election.

What we see with Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, is exactly those sorts of ill-thought-out actions, not addressing actual systemic issues, not actually working with folks to move things forward. Instead, we see this government driving personal income taxes up, something which they did not campaign on, something on which they are one hundred per cent lacking in even telling a half-truth. We see them leading to higher property taxes in our municipalities. We see millions lost in the film and television industry, investments in jobs, as they have fumbled their initial introduction of the film tax credit. Indeed, we see more of the sort of moral judgment that this government likes to rain on everyone else while refusing to train it on themselves.

9:50

The Minister of Municipal Affairs having said that in this bill – as was noted by my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, there is a single line which breaks the promise this government made, yet another area where the UCP platform utterly misled Albertans, that they would respect the city charters that had been carefully negotiated and discussed with Edmonton and Calgary. That minister stood in this House and said that he had to do it, Mr. Chair, that he had no choice but to be utterly disingenuous, to utterly betray their campaign promise, that he was forced by our government.

What we see, Mr. Chair, is that, instead, this government is simply bent on running headlong into its own ideological judgment, its own reckless spending, its own debt. It's just simply choosing to put it somewhere else in the hope and the prayer that maybe someday that \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway might create a job. It hasn't yet. We'll wait with bated breath. In the meantime we've seen that what we are left with are these ill-thought-out measures cancelling tax credits that had brought Edmonton, in part, helped to bring Edmonton, to now being ranked as the 10th tech city in the world.

Now those credits are gone, part of this government's giant enema, courtesy of this Premier and his cabinet, just as a part of which now we've seen a thousand jobs that were flushed out of Calgary as this Premier is continuing to stoke isolationist rhetoric and create a fiscal environment that does not help the tech industry, creating an environment where people are not wanting to create jobs and, in fact, are not creating jobs.

I think I've had a lot to say on this bill. I've had a lot to say about the disingenuity of the government, the crudity of its methods, the top-down, dictatorial, condescending manner in which they're going about imposing their will on the province. I know we're nearing the end of this session and the passage of these bills. Well, this government will have the opportunity, I guess, to go forward and try to prove to Albertans that they are going to achieve what they said that they were going to achieve. So far I can say, Mr. Chair, that they have not convinced me. They have not convinced the folks in Moody's. I can tell you that, based on a lot of the actions they've taken this weekend, over the last couple of weeks – firing the Election Commissioner that was investigating them with no justification, jeopardizing thousands of jobs across the province for folks that are providing public front-line health care, driving out tech industries, all these things – there are a lot of Albertans that aren't convinced either.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to Bill 20? I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I'll move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader again.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you again, Mr. Chair. First off, in order to move to Bill 26, which is the plan, I move the following motion, that the committee rescind the motion to report progress on Bill 26 that happened before the supper hour.

[Motion carried]

## Bill 26

### Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** For the purposes of this, we will be dealing strictly with sections 1(3) and 2(2). Are there any comments or questions? We are currently on A1. I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has risen.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have the opportunity – and I certainly want to thank my colleagues for giving me the opportunity – to rise to speak to this bill in committee and also to be able to rise and speak to this particular amendment that was put forward by I believe the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, who is also the Official Opposition labour critic.

This amendment proposes to change the provision in this bill that would remove the mandatory nature of workers' compensation coverage from the previous regime governing the employment circumstances of farm workers. What it would propose to do is suggest that, well, if you're going to remove the mandatory nature of workers' compensation for this particular subset of employees – because, of course, what we've learned here is that, really, this bill has removed workers' compensation and employment standards protection from the vast majority of workers employed in the task of providing agricultural services to farmers. But for that small group that remains that still has access to some form of compensatory coverage, they no longer by matter of right have access to workers' compensation. Instead, the employer, typically a much larger employer, can choose to forgo workers' compensation coverage and instead have some form of private disability provider.

We are proposing a relatively minor change here. Obviously, we wouldn't do any of this stuff. Let me begin by saying, of course, that I think it's a gross violation of human rights and general belief in the right of people to be able to care for themselves and/or their families should they be injured at work in what is without question a very unsafe and injury-prone occupation. Frankly, this decision to remove from these people the basic protection provided by workers' compensation is really quite cruel and very much dismissive of the well-being of a very large group of working people who are also, at the same time, amongst the most vulnerable in any employment sector in this province.

But that is the decision, that is the choice that these members have made, that they do not want to provide basic rights and protections for one of the most vulnerable groups of working people in this province. That is apparently not part of their value system. Therefore, we are very much limiting the group of people who might have any access, in fact, to these types of protections, and within that small group of people we are also removing their right to have access, particularly, to workers' compensation. Instead, their employer gets to choose between workers' compensation and private insurance. We would suggest, therefore, that if we are going to have this ridiculous situation, then at the very least – and that's what this amendment is geared towards – alternative private insurance be effectively equivalent to what that worker might receive were they eligible for workers' compensation.

#### 10:00

Why should we do this? Now, as some folks in this House might know, one of the areas of law that I used to practise – you know, there's a larger area around labour relations and labour rights, but one subset of it was, of course, health and safety and workers' compensation and disability law, so I have a fair amount of knowledge in this area. People here will remember that it's certainly not difficult for me to go into a rather long debate over the shortcomings of workers' compensation, and indeed that was why our government worked very hard to improve some of the very unjust elements that existed within workers' compensation. The irony of all this is that what I can say is that nine times out of 10 workers' compensation actually provides better coverage than private insurance because, in fact, I have dealt with both regimes.

What is it that workers get if they are very – well, let me just back up a bit and let me just talk a little bit about, you know, what it's like on a farm and some of the kinds of hazards that people can be exposed to on a farm. You know, I grew up about six hours north of Edmonton. My very, very, very first job, that I did not last long in – I think it was at most two days – was working in a market garden when I was about 13, picking vegetables. To be quite fair, I was pretty wimpy, and after two days of picking these vegetables, I had sunstroke and sunburn and all the things and I was practically passing out and I whined incredibly to my parents.

So I moved on to my second ever summer job, which was working in a honey-making place and working with bees and scraping the wax and the honey off the frames as they came through. We worked in this little shed on what was essentially a farm. It was running around 40 degrees, and I spent the whole day running away from bees. As you can imagine, there were hundreds of thousands of bees in this building, and all I did was run around away from them. Needless to say, it wasn't my most successful day at work either. The third day or fourth day I actually moved on to waiting tables, and that actually took and I did that for the next few years. That being aside, I quickly learned that it's not hard to become ill or get injured when I was working in the market garden.

Now, at the same time, you know, I was pleased to be sort of a token member of one of my parents' closest family friends' family,

and they ran a ranch and a farm. It was a very big farm, very big ranch. I used to stay there sometimes for great lengths of time during the summer. The first time I learned to ride a horse, the first time that I learned to drive a vehicle I was about nine years old driving around the fields. I'm sure many people recall that. I remember, you know, jumping into haystacks, all that kind of good fun. I also remember going camping for the first time when I was about 10 years old and literally running back to the house being chased by a bear very late at night. A great place to grow up.

The fact of the matter is, though, that they were very good farmers, very, very responsible farmers, although right now it doesn't sound like they were the most responsible parents, but I feel it worked out well in the end. Nonetheless, the fabulous patriarch of the family, who was one of the most successful farmers, I would suggest, in the whole area, when he was in his, I think, early 70s had what happens to many farmers. You know, he was working a long day and tripped and got his foot caught in the auger and lost two-thirds of his foot and ultimately ended up being in the hospital for quite some time. It took some time before he was able to recover because, in fact, as a result of the surgery he ended up getting an inner-ear infection. It took him about two years before he could actually drive and ride horses again and do all that kind of stuff. To be clear, he loved riding horses because, in addition to farming and ranching, they also raised horses and they raced horses. He was an incredibly effective and talented rider, but it took him a couple of years before he could get back on a horse. Anyway, he eventually did.

He owned this place. He loved it. It was in his bones. He was born there, raised there, died there. In fact, in terms of dying there, ultimately, a few years later, actually, quite some years later – I guess he was pushing 90 at the time – he was out chasing cattle in his vehicle and was driving around the hills of the Peace River, the banks of the Peace River, and made a mistake in judgment, got too close to the edge, where it was too steep going down into the river valley, and lost control of the vehicle. It started careening from the top of the river valley down to the bottom. If anybody doesn't know the Peace River valley, it's about twice the size of the North Saskatchewan, so it's kind of a big drop. He hurled himself out of the truck and then walked six kilometres back to the farmhouse where they immediately took him to the hospital, where he stayed for the next several weeks before he ultimately died.

These are things that can happen on farms, whether you are the owner or whether you are the worker, whether you are one of the best farmers in the community and you have done it for 90 years or whether you are a temporary worker who's been brought up from Mexico to work during the harvest for five months. Let me be clear. There are lots and lots and lots and lots of folks who fall into that latter category. If you are injured, it matters what kind of compensation you have access to. The fellow that I was describing, at that point, I mean, as I said, they were very, very, very successful. They didn't have to worry about their income when he was not able to work anymore, but people who work and rely solely on a wage – and we'll talk in the next amendment about whether or not they actually get to have a wage – need every cent. If they are injured, they need compensation.

Workers' compensation provides, especially for lower income workers, which farm workers definitely are, essentially full wage replacement. They provide it for as long as the condition that has arisen from the injury requires active treatment. It could be something that lasts for two weeks, or it could be a form of compensation that lasts for four years. In the case of the person that I just described, this family friend who struggled, who had imbalance problems as a result of the surgery after he lost two-thirds of his foot, he actually was not back to a place of being fully

able to work again for over two years. Had he been receiving workers' compensation benefits, he would have had his income replaced, or if it was an employee that had had that problem instead of him, he would have had his income replaced throughout that whole time.

What else would he have gotten? Well, he would have gotten physiotherapy. He would have gotten, in some cases, accelerated health care. He would have gotten access to a whole wide range of rehabilitative service. He would have gotten access to counselling. Had it been that he was never actually able to go back to that type of work, he also would have gotten access to retraining and retraining options. In addition, if he'd been left with a permanent pension, he would have also ended up with a lump sum payment or an ongoing pension for the rest of his life. Had he not survived or had it been the second accident that I just described, if he had children either under the age of 18 or actively in postsecondary education, they would have received an orphans' benefit, and his wife or spouse or partner would have received a lifelong pension as a survivor. That's what would happen under worker's compensation.

**10:10**

Under private insurance, though, private insurance arrangements can involve as little as a one-time \$20,000 payout. They don't necessarily involve regularized income replacement. If they do, they do so at a highly, highly discounted rate. Moreover, they have arbitrary end dates regardless of whether the injury is still in play, whether there is still a disability. In many cases they don't have any kind of long-term impairment pension or long-term impairment payout. In addition, survivors or family don't have access to benefits should the person actually die, nor does the surviving spouse. They definitely never look at retraining or rehabilitation. They don't provide those things.

The question then arises: why? Why are we going to invite these vulnerable, low-paid workers who happen to work in one of the most unsafe occupations, statistically speaking – this is not a value judgment. This is just statistically speaking. Heaven forbid, look at the evidence. That's where the evidence is. One of the most unsafe occupations. Why would we have these vulnerable workers exempted from having the fulsome protection or quasi-fulsome protection, at least, the most fulsome protection available, anyway, offered by the WCB and allow employers or invite employers to replace it with what is a fraction of that amount of protection? Why? Why would you do that?

Now, I don't have to spend a lot of time asking why. It's very clear who folks in this government support and who they do not, who they think are second-class citizens and who they do not. It's very clear that those who are vulnerable, I think, basically from the perspective of those on the other side, are vulnerable for a reason and it's their fault and it's certainly not the job of anyone in government to stand up for them. In fact, it is part of a strategy to make them more vulnerable, and somehow that's going to create economic growth. I think most people would argue that that's a complete fallacy, and there's a plethora of evidence out there to suggest that really it is an antieconomic growth strategy. Really, it's just cruel and in many cases a breach of fundamental human rights.

Nonetheless, I can't speculate exactly why it is that members opposite would adopt this approach. I would, however, urge them to reconsider. I would urge them to, at the very least, for that small subset of farm workers that will still have access to this benefit because, of course, you are actually exempting the vast majority of farm workers from any of this. Of course, those folks will just get to go off and sue their employers, but in the meantime you will be exempting these farm workers from this kind of protection. I would

suggest that that does not help the economy, it does not help those workers, it does not help job creation, it does not help the overall quality of life of people in our communities, and it is a short-sighted and mean-spirited approach that can be easily remedied by accepting this amendment that was thoughtfully put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Mills Woods.

I would urge members opposite to consider supporting this thoughtful amendment put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods because to do otherwise would be to engage in an almost spiteful kind of attack on a very vulnerable group of workers for no apparent outcome other than to ensure that they or their families suffer more should they be so unlucky as to be injured on a farm. It is with that in mind that I would urge my colleagues in this Legislature to give second thought and to consider voting in favour of this amendment designed to provide greater protections to vulnerable farm workers here in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A1? Seeing none.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:15 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Deol	Hoffman	Phillips
Ganley	Irwin	Sabir
Goehring	Loyola	Shepherd
Gray	Notley	

**10:30**

Against the motion:

Allard	Kenney	Pon
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Reid
Copping	Loewen	Schow
Getson	Long	Shandro
Glubish	McIver	Smith
Goodridge	Nally	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Issik	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Jones	Panda	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 11	Against – 30

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving to Bill 26 proper with regard to sections 1(3) and 2(2), I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen to speak.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise in Committee of the Whole to speak to some of the aspects of Bill 26, a bill that I very strongly disagree with in certain key areas, so I will speak to that disagreement. I will start by talking briefly about the section around the fact that workers on 80 per cent of farms in Alberta will not have access to mandatory workers' compensation coverage, coverage that provides workers with not only assistance with their injury but compensation, medical aid when medical aid is needed, rehabilitation, and

economic loss payments, meaning that if someone is no longer able to earn a wage, it will be compensated to them.

We now have the data on that workers' compensation coverage for the past three years, as it has been mandatory here in Alberta, and we know that there have been a significant number of lost time claims, disabling injury claims throughout the province. In 2016 we had 415 disabling injury claims, in 2017 we had 441, and in 2018 we had 473. These were all instances where workers experienced significant injury, a disabling injury, and received compensation and help to get back to work. At the same time their employer was provided with a system that would help to get their worker whole and hardy and back to work again and also would make sure that there was not a private lawsuit that would potentially jeopardize their business operation or in many cases the family home, the family farm. That system, based on the agreement between employers and workers to make sure that there were no lawsuits but there was appropriate compensation, I think, is incredibly important.

One of the key concerns with Bill 26 is that it is deferring to regulation what type of private industry coverage could be granted to workers. We just debated and voted on an amendment that would have moved more clarity into the bill proper. Certainly, it is a strong concern to me that workers will not have the compensation that they deserve, workers that are working in an industry that statistically we know has greater injury rates and greater death rates than in other industries, and we consistently see that through the statistics that are released through the Alberta labour department. It's something that we often remark on when the day of mourning comes around and we remember the workers who have lost their lives, because there have been for the past many years a number of agricultural workers counted among those numbers.

I think it's really important that I stand and object to the change around insurance compensation and particularly the fact that in this bill it defers to regulation making sure that there's adequate protection not only for workers but also for employers. We will, when those regulations are completed and published, be looking to see that there are some important standards placed around that to make sure that workers who are injured as they're trying to provide for their family get compensation, get rehabilitation, that they so importantly deserve.

The other aspect is that through the workers' compensation system we've had data and reporting on injuries that before we didn't have an ideal way to track. WCB and occupational health and safety work with our medical professionals to try and track through admissions into hospitals and through other measures to get a sense of injury rates. Prior to the original change to bring the agricultural industry under workers' compensation, that data was spotty at best. Over the past three years we've actually got more information about the types of injuries, and that allows us to be more proactive and work with organizations like AgSafe, which is founded by 29 producer groups and is working to improve education and awareness. I certainly would encourage this government to continue to support the AgSafe coalition and continue to support improving health and safety in this important industry. I've started my remarks by talking about that workers' compensation piece.

I would now like to change tack and talk just a little bit about another section of the bill that essentially exempts entirely workers at 80 per cent of the farms in Alberta from minimum employment standards. Now, employment standards are those minimum rules and conditions for employment in Alberta. With the changes in Bill 26 workers at 80 per cent of the farms in our province will no longer have those minimum standards.

Now, where we had been at with employment standards is through the consultation process working with technical working

groups and consulting widely with Albertans looking to find that right balance between employment standards, regulations that apply widely throughout Alberta, and specifically in farming and ranching. In employment standards on farms and ranches there had been already a number of very special rules made that only applied to wage nonfamily workers. Hours of work and overtime did not apply, general holiday pay was specifically calculated, and importantly, rest periods were acknowledged, where employees were entitled to four days of rest for every 28 days of work.

Some of those accommodations I think were really important, but also with employment standards coverage workers in our agricultural fields could have job-protected leaves after 90 days of work. One of the things that Bill 26 does is it removes that job protection for leaves. I really want to flag that these are leaves that the workers themselves are paying into and are part of our federal employment insurance system. That includes everything from maternity leave and parental leave to critical illness of a child leave. We spoke quite a bit about the critical illness of a child leave when the job protection for that was originally brought in here in this province because Alberta did not have job protection as part of its employment standards.

That change was made in 2017, and we talked quite a bit about a young, single mother in Lethbridge who had a child diagnosed with cancer, went to take the federally provided critical illness of a child leave, something that she fully qualified for, but because employment standards protections providing job protection to that mother were not available in Alberta, because the employment standards legislation was 30 years old at that point, that young mother was fired from her job rather than having her job held. Please keep in mind that the leave she was asking for was completely unpaid on the part of the employer. She was simply asking to not lose her job while she cared for her critically ill child.

**10:40**

That exact scenario can now happen for workers in the agricultural field because now the minimum employment standards that protect minimum wage, unpaid job-protected leaves, vacation, vacation pay, payment of earnings – and I can tell you from my time as a minister in this province that a strong majority of employment standards complaints often end up being about wages, whether it be total nonpayment or just disputes around payment of wages. That workers on 80 per cent of farms in our province won't have access to employment standards to help resolve disputes, when there may be one that arises, I think is really unfortunate in this province.

I would note that the employment standards system is not a combative one. Generally speaking 81 per cent – 81 per cent – so 4 out of 5 times employment standards complaints are resolved voluntarily. Very rarely does it need to become an investigation or to become something that involves an employment standards officer contacting employers. But having that protection when a worker is not getting the compensation they deserve, particularly when the alternative is to then go through the court systems, when our justice systems, as I've understood the debate in this House, are not getting the resources that they need. How long will a worker need to wait for a paycheck that they are owed?

I think those basic protections are really important, and I really want to emphasize that the general trend around employment standards in the agricultural industry in Canada has been to improve and extend protections, not to take them away. Alberta is moving against the trend in Canada by now removing employment standards protections that are very important to so many families and give them access to people who will help enforce minimum standards and give them even just basic things like termination notice and termination pay. I will repeat again that employment

standards are minimum safety standards, and workers on 80 per cent of farms will no longer have that under Bill 26. I strongly object to that.

In light of that, I am going to move an amendment at this point, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I've taken a quick look at it. If you could please just read it quickly into the record and then continue with your statements.

**Ms Gray:** I move that Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, be amended in section 2(2) by striking out clause (a). What this change does, for those who do not want to flip directly through Bill 26, is it simply continues the employment standards protections for wage, nonfamily workers on farms and ranches to be the same as what they are today, standards that acknowledge the unique nature of farms and ranches, standards that only apply in a few specific categories, which are minimum wage, job-protected leaves, vacation and vacation pay, payment of earnings, termination notice and termination pay, administration, and enforcement.

So a high-level summary: these workers would continue to have the ability to contact employment standards when there is a dispute with their employer, to access voluntary resolution but also potentially more support when needed to make sure that wages owed to them would be paid. It also brings them back to having that minimum wage to make sure that they are paid at the very least \$15 per hour or \$13 per hour if they are a student, under the changes this government has brought in.

I would at this point conclude my remarks and simply urge all members to support this amendment that simply seeks to provide minimum employment standards protections that acknowledge the uniqueness of farms and ranches back to the workers at 80 per cent of the farms and ranches in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members who wish to speak to this amendment? Just for clarity, we will be referring to this amendment as A2. The hon. Official Opposition leader.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm again pleased to be able to rise to speak to this amendment. Let me begin by thanking the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for bringing in this thoughtful amendment. It's more than thoughtful. It is critical. It's life saving. It is ensuring that Alberta maintains the kind of basic human rights you would expect to see in any democratic country anywhere. It is an effort to stop a disingenuous rollback of rights to far, far, far lower rights than we saw before our government brought in Bill 6 in late 2015.

Let me just start with that. I mean, absolutely, the members opposite ran on the platform of reversing the changes that we made through Bill 6 back in late 2015. Now, I actually think that it was an incredibly backward and thoughtless decision to run on this particular plan because, of course, even though there was, without question, a great deal of uproar over our introduction of Bill 6, our government worked diligently and, I would argue, responsibly and very pragmatically with a broad range of stakeholders within the agricultural sector in order to accommodate the unique business and operational needs of farmers while still ensuring that Alberta workers would take their rightful place alongside other farm workers throughout the rest of the country as being, well, you know, humans who were entitled to the basic rights that generally humans are typically entitled to. It seemed like an unnecessary rush to undo all that we had managed to accomplish in terms of accommodating the needs of farmers while at the same time protecting a profoundly

vulnerable group of workers. Nonetheless, that's what they chose to run on, so when we saw this Bill 26 come forward as an act to undo all that we had done to protect those farm workers, we were not surprised.

We were surprised, though, when we really dug into it. Of course, it took us a little bit more time to dig into it because we were not afforded the typical privilege of getting briefed. When we were finally able to dig into it, we discovered that this bill actually goes much further than simply taking us back to pre Bill 6 times. In the past although workers in the agricultural sector did not have health and safety protection – and to be fair, they still, I think, retain that health and safety protection, so that is a good thing – they had the protection of very, very, very basic employee rights prior to Bill 6. They didn't have the protections around most hours of work rights. They didn't get overtime. They didn't get holidays. They didn't get much termination pay. They didn't get any of those kinds of things, but they did have the fundamental right to be paid for their work. Now that doesn't exist anymore. So that is quite a step backward.

**10:50**

I understand from the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods that it has been suggested that this simply maps onto the New Brunswick regime. Well, we've taken the time to look at the New Brunswick regime, and let me just say that it does not map onto the New Brunswick regime. Interestingly, in a discussion paper published by the New Brunswick ministry of labour in 2016, they described the situation that they had there, and they said that they had this very strange situation where they were exempting small farms, much in the same way that this minister is trying to do, but it was a smaller group. Rather than five or fewer employees that are employed for longer than six months, it was three or fewer employees who are employed for longer than six months. They said, you know, that the strange thing about this is that here we have these, quote, unquote, long-term employees, i.e. the employees who were employed for six months or longer, who are exempted from the New Brunswick employment standards code even while the shorter term employees, the harvesters, enjoyed the benefits of the coverage. They said: this is a very strange thing, and we should fix this; we don't understand why this is the case. But that is the way their legislation was interpreted.

Anyway, what that shows is that it is a very different situation here. The way this bill has been constructed by the drafters is that it exempts the employees themselves from any coverage at all from the Employment Standards Code, which means not just those employees with six or more months of service but any employees who work for that employer are exempted now from coverage under the Employment Standards Code. So if you're taking the seasonal employees and saying that they don't get the benefit of the Employment Standards Code and that those with five or fewer employees don't get the benefit of the Employment Standards Code, we're now basically exempting the vast majority of agricultural workers from the Employment Standards Code.

In the past what had happened is that they had their own specific regulations, which ensured that at the very least they got paid wages and were covered by the minimum wage. When they worked an hour; they got paid an hour. Those kinds of things. But the way this is structured is that we've excluded them completely from the application of the Employment Standards Code, which means, of course, that the minister of labour, should he at some point sit down and realize that he honestly didn't mean to create a slave class in Alberta and try to pass regulations to provide some level of protection, he does not have the legislative authority to pass those regulations anymore because he has statutorily prevented himself from passing those regulations.



What we were trying to do was stop them from making this mistake. You know, we took some time, we talked to folks. We said: really, you seriously don't even want to give yourselves the opportunity to pass regulations that say, "Yeah, it's okay. You've got to work longer hours, and you don't get overtime; you don't get days off; harvest days are intense, blah, blah, blah, all those things. But we still expect that you're going to get paid." What's happened now as a result of this is: no right to get paid, nothing whatsoever.

Then I called a few lawyers, including some experts in this out in Ontario, and I said, "Well, what happens in common law in Canada? Like, if they are simply at the whim of the common law, will the common law read in the minimum wage as sort of a given that that has to be part of the contract?" And the lawyer said: well, you know, it's been a long time since this structure has been in place, so we don't really know, but the fundamentals of the common law are that there has to be demonstration of a contract having been put in place, and the contract means that both sides have to understand what they've agreed to, and in most cases it's helpful that it be in writing.

However, since a lot of these folks who are seasonal employees often come here, actually, from Mexico and other parts of Central America to work on farms – anyone who does farming knows that that's where many of these seasonal employees are coming from – they often don't speak English well enough and don't necessarily read English well enough to be able to determine whether there's an actual meeting of the minds in terms of the contract. So it is actually very possible for a person, upon discovering that they haven't been paid and that they're never going to be paid and that they had no right to be paid, if they try to sue in court, the court will say: well, did you have a written contract; did you have a common understanding? More likely than not, they'll be relying on casual verbal conversations, and they won't be able to prove their case. This, of course, assumes that you've got someone with the wherewithal to actually hire a lawyer and go to small claims court and try to make their case.

Now, of course, you would think that some things might protect those workers, like, you know, that the employer has to keep a record of the fact that they made these people work for X or Y numbers of hours a day, a week, a month. Well, nope. No, they don't. They used to have to under the Employment Standards Code, but they sure don't anymore.

Now, there used to be regulations that provided for a minimum amount of deductions from people's paycheques for room and board. Nope, those don't apply anymore.

There used to be regulations we had actually put in place after much conversation and accommodation and discussion and negotiation with a broad range of farmers. There used to be rules that said that for every 28 days a farm worker must get four days off. They could get it all together; they could get one day off a week, you know, whatever. It doesn't have to be specific. The farmer can pick and choose. They could, you know, hopefully, use that day on a bad weather day or whatever, but there had to be four days off in 28 days. That, of course, doesn't apply anymore.

In fact, what can happen now is that you can get some poor fellow coming from Mexico or some other part of Central America to a farm, have it arranged, a friend through a friend, verbally, maybe in English or maybe not, nothing in writing. They show up. They stay in the bunkhouse. We all know what bunkhouses look like. Anyone who's ever been on a farm knows about the bunkhouses. They stay in the bunkhouse. They get food provided by their boss. They work 50 consecutive 12-hour days, and at a certain point they go: hmm, 50 consecutive 12-hours days; shouldn't I get paid? Well, in the Employment Standards Code there would be a rule that says that

every now and then the employer has got to pay you. That doesn't apply anymore. Anyway, they're told: sorry; no rules there.

So they worked 50 consecutive days, 12 hours a day, no day off – they have no right to that – they're likely living in some rundown, very possibly mouse-infested bunkhouse, getting food a couple of times a day. Then at the end of that – and they've worked whatever 50 times 12 is; is that over 6,000 hours? – they've worked those hours, they go to get paid, and the boss says: "Well, we would pay you, but your room and board actually costs a fair amount. We were only ever going to pay you \$3 an hour because there's absolutely nothing in the law anymore to prevent us from deciding to only pay you \$3 an hour." There was, but there isn't anymore thanks to this bill. That's what you're doing. Don't look at me like that because that's what this bill is doing, guys over there. That's exactly what you are doing. You have removed the right of these people to be paid a minimum wage. You have given . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, it's my understanding that . . . [interjection] Through the chair, please, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Through the chair, I would suggest to anyone who is skeptical about what I'm suggesting: you should read your legislation very carefully because that's exactly what it says.

The boss says: "You can get paid \$3, \$4 an hour, but it turns out that your room and board costs that much. So you're not going to get the \$3 an hour for the 6,000 hours you worked, but what we will do is that we'll write you a cheque for \$800 because that's what's left, but we'll throw that in the mail to you. Give us your address in Mexico." You know what? There is absolutely nothing that this very vulnerable worker can do about that, and there is no place they can go to complain about that. They're not allowed to talk to employment standards officers because that's been exempted.

We have literally invited the opportunity for workers to be historically exploited just in this province. This scenario will only be legal in Alberta. It absolutely astounds me that the members opposite think that's okay. You know, literally, folks, I'm not here making this stuff up. I would rather have just said: "Oh, yeah. Okay. We got rid of Bill 6. I guess that's unfortunate. We'll talk about it a bit, and then we'll carry on because that's what they ran on, you know. What are you going to do?" But, no, we have to talk about this. It is jaw-dropping to me that folks over there would quietly look at their phones and ignore this conversation and be okay with the fact that we are constructing a legal regime within which the scenario I just described is absolutely permissible. It is shameful. Interesting.

**11:00**

Now, what are some of the other things that these workers have no access to? Well, as we've already talked about, it's the minimum wage. We've already talked about rest periods. Obviously, there is no access to maternity leave or parental leave, reservist leave, no compassionate care leave, no bereavement leave, no domestic violence leave, no citizenship ceremony leave – that's ironic – no critical illness of a child leave, no long-term illness or any injury leave, no personal and family responsibility leave, no death or disappearance of a child leave, also no vacation, no vacation pay. I've already talked about how they have no right to a payment of earnings and no right to have the employer keep employment records. They, of course, have no right to get notice when they are terminated. They have no right to termination pay. They have no right to have rules around what is deducted from their earnings limited. They have no right to process or file complaints. There are no rules for work for individuals under 18 years old. Yeah, those are the highlights of what we have decided that this particularly

vulnerable group of workers are not entitled to be protected around. That is what we've done.

Interestingly, when I raised this in question period last week, the Premier rose and with great moral outrage suggested that I was attacking the personal integrity of every farmer in Alberta by suggesting that maybe it might be important to have rules in place that would provide for basic – basic – human rights protections for these workers. Just to be clear, the things I just outlined are identified in the UN international human rights code, that is expected of any country. Just to be clear, there will be a complaint filed against this government when this bill passes. We'll be filing it. Notwithstanding that, the Premier thought that I was being offensive and insulting to farmers by suggesting that they needed laws in place to avoid these kinds of fundamental breaches of human rights.

Now, let's just work through the logic of that little piece of brilliance, Mr. Chair. If that is the case, one would argue that anybody here that suggests we should have speed limits in school zones is attacking the fundamental integrity of every single person that drives a car, because we should know that they can be trusted to drive safely through a school zone. Or, if we were to suggest that there should be rules to prevent people from drinking and driving, well, then, we are fundamentally attacking the individual, personal integrity of every person that ever picks up a drink, myself included because, you know, I happen to like to enjoy a drink. Apparently, by suggesting that we have rules that prevent people from drinking and driving, that would be a fundamental attack on my integrity according to the incredible intellectualized logic track of the Premier. Let me suggest that the Premier maybe needs to think through his arguments a little teeny bit longer, because that is the most ridiculous argument I have ever heard.

Now, it has also been suggested in previous conversations around the minimum wage and exemptions to the minimum wage for children – that's where we decided that we would go from \$15 an hour to \$13.25 an hour for children who are working. The minister of labour suggested that by reducing wages by \$1.75, we were going to be creating jobs for children. Now, I again take issue with that logic. I'm wondering if the thought here is that by violating international standards of basic human rights, we are hoping to create jobs for those people who are seeking jobs in the international standard of human rights exempt field, because I know that there are lots of people out there begging to get work here in Canada in a setting that violates their basic rights.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I really appreciate the new components and arguments that have been raised by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, who obviously has a passion for protecting workers' rights, not only a passion but a skill set. Having been a labour lawyer, I think she has much to add to this bill around its constitutionality as well as the ethics around it. I'd ask that the member continue with her analysis and proposals.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who wish to perhaps continue? I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for that intervening speaker.

**Ms Notley:** Yeah. Thank you, hon. member. I did have just a couple more things to say. We'll see how long. Anyway, I won't go on for too much longer. I really just do want to highlight this issue as well, about how we really are talking about vulnerable workers. There

has been a long-standing tradition of temporary agricultural workers from other countries coming to Alberta for short periods of time to work on our farms and our ranches and who then go back home, and that is fine. I know of many wonderful relationships that have developed between farmers and ranchers and folks that worked for them from other countries that, you know, spanned decades as they visited back and forth and all that kind of stuff, so I know that those arrangements happen.

But, to me, the idea that we would show our face in any kind of international setting or, frankly, national setting and say, "Yes, we are a place where people can come to work and get paid \$3 an hour or \$1 an hour or never" and that that's okay because we think that's what's necessary for our farming community to be able to survive and that Alberta farmers are so vulnerable that they simply cannot uphold the same standards as farmers in every other part of the country – I don't know. Like, to me, that's not a selling point to the rest of the world or the rest of the country for why Alberta should be considered an economic engine of the country or anywhere else. Frankly, what we would end up being considered is an economic exploiter. Quite frankly, I think most farmers would be embarrassed that this government thinks that the only way they can survive is to break ILO, international human rights, and United Nations laws. I actually think our farmers are quite capable of competing and being successful while also paying people that they ask to work for them.

I just do want to talk a little bit, though, about this because it is not just something we're talking about for rhetorical flair or anything like that. I mean, this is a true experience. You know, way back in the day, when living in Toronto, I had the opportunity to work with a number of different groups of temporary foreign workers who were working in a number of different sectors, including in the agriculture sector in Ontario. This was back in the late '80s. The depth and breadth of the suffering that was imposed upon these people, the amount of abuse they were expected to tolerate, the challenges that their families were expected to just suffer through were things that opened my eyes in a way that they never had been before. Honestly, as a young law student in the late '80s I was shocked at the conditions and the working conditions that we would allow to exist in sweatshops in some of the poorest parts of downtown Toronto as well as in some of the farming settings outside of Toronto at that time. I became involved then and never stopped working around groups that were developed and grew out of the desire to fight for the most basic of human rights and employment rights for these vulnerable workers.

**11:10**

It really saddens me today that we are talking about moving forward on a bill that would give Canada such a black eye, such a step backwards, such an exploitive record. This isn't about righting the so-called imbalance between unions and employers. I mean, that's a whole other story and a whole other debate. This is not about that conversation within a window of prosperity where we disagree about who gets more and who gets less. This is about a window that is much bigger, where you have basic, fundamental rights to be paid for your work or you do not have basic, fundamental rights to be paid for your work.

I was cautioned, the last time I talked about this, about getting too hot and using inflammatory language to describe a situation where we intentionally, statutorily, institutionally, through the levers of this government, enable a situation where people will work and will have no right to be paid and will be brought to a country and then led along with promises of fairness, only to discover that they have been exploited and that they have no recourse. Here in Alberta we are going to say that that's the way

things work because some people just aren't good enough to deserve a fundamental wage.

It's a very sad day that that's what this province is. No other province in the country, Mr. Chair. No other province in the country. Everywhere people deserve a basic wage for their work. Most places they deserve something called a minimum wage. Typically efforts are taken to exempt people and provide a lower minimum wage if you feel like attacking the youth, women, whatever, but never have I seen us completely eliminate the right to a minimum wage at all. Because of the structure that the drafters have adopted in writing this bill, that's exactly what this government is intentionally doing, breaching the ILO convention, setting itself up for complaints to the United Nations, fundamentally undercutting the rights of the most vulnerable Albertans and the most vulnerable people working here in this province of Alberta. Let me tell you that Alberta farmers don't need any government to do that for them. They are more than capable of doing what is right to be successful in their businesses, and it's, quite frankly, insulting to them and anyone else to think that that's what they need. It's insulting to all Albertans that we have this black mark, this legislative, statutory black mark, on our record.

The way to avoid that is to pass this amendment. Pass this amendment, include those workers, and then if you want to undercut them and exempt them from certain parts of the Employment Standards Code, write the regulation to do that and make it clear. But maintain basic rights. Maintain the right to be paid. Retain the right to be paid a minimum wage. Retain the right to collect your pay if you are not paid. These are such fundamental, basic rights. Pass this resolution, and then write a regulation to address whatever you feel you need to do. Do not vote down this amendment and block your ability to fix this problem.

I hope members opposite will consider doing something that is remotely akin to trying to protect Alberta from what will otherwise be pretty much one of the saddest days as it relates to human rights in the history of this province in about the last five or six decades.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A2? I see that the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration has risen to speak on this matter.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to speak briefly to this amendment on behalf of my colleague Minister Dreeshen. I want to speak a little bit to a background of why we're making this change concerning the farm freedom act. You know, this is a promise that we made.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you right at the start. However, I think that it would be probably better to refer to the hon. member in question who you were referring to as the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Copping:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes. Thank you.

**Mr. Copping:** My apologies. Thank you for the correction.

By background, why are we making this change in the farm freedom act? Quite simply, Mr. Chair, this is a promise that we made. When the previous government passed Bill 6, it imposed additional costs, rules, and regulations on farmers – rules and regulations that they had before – and made it more difficult for them to run their operations. Further, farmers and ranchers were outraged. I understand that there were protests on the front of the

Legislature, days and weeks of protests, concerns about Bill 6 imposing costs making it difficult for farmers moving forward.

Mr. Chair, you know, I'm a city boy from Calgary-Varsity, but I did grow up on a ranch outside Water Valley, Alberta. I understand ranching. You need significant flexibility because the cows don't drop the calves between 9 and 5. That happens at 3 in the morning, 4 in the morning. They need you to be able to actually do the work. This type of work also is where family members help each other, neighbours help each other, and you need flexibility to actually get the work done.

The farmers and ranchers were outraged when Bill 6 was passed. It wasn't necessary. Farmers and ranchers do not, as suggested by members opposite, exploit their workers. In fairness to the members opposite, although they made some changes, this anger remained. We heard it loud and clear prior to the election, so we made a commitment in the farm freedom act to address this issue. We made a commitment that we would repeal Bill 6, that we would require employers to maintain workplace insurance for farm workers but give them choice, either WCB or some type of private insurance, that we would ensure basic safety standards, and that we would exempt small farms from employment legislation, following the example of New Brunswick.

In addition, we made a commitment, Mr. Chair, that we would immediately launch comprehensive consultations. My colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry did exactly that. Over the summer he held consultations across the entire province, spoke to thousands of ranchers, farm workers, and farmers. He listened, and from that he created Bill 26 to address the issues, the additional red tape, while at the same time maintaining safety for farm workers. We lived up to those commitments, ensured basic safety standards. That's here in the bill. We reduce some of the red tape in regard to the application of the code, but the act remains, and there's a commitment to safety. We are maintaining our commitments in terms of providing choice and specifically exempting small farms from employment legislation following the New Brunswick example.

In New Brunswick, just so we're crystal clear, the legislation is very clear. It exempts all small farms and ranches from all employment standards. The members opposite suggest somehow – and they point to the minimum wage provision, for example, – that this is unconscionable, that this is done nowhere else in Canada. Mr. Chair, that is simply not the case. In Saskatchewan minimum wage doesn't apply. In Ontario minimum wage doesn't apply. Then, as we already talked about, in New Brunswick minimum wage doesn't apply.

Does that mean that farm workers there are being paid \$1 an hour? No, Mr. Chair. That's simply not the case. That's not what it means. We made a commitment to farmers and ranchers that we would provide flexibility. As the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry says, "No one cares more about farm workers than farmers" and ranchers. On the small farms they're like family. They work together, ensure that they have safety. Given that that is the commitment that we made, given that that was what was demanded by farmers and ranchers, and given that they are not exploiting their workers, quite frankly, I suggest that we reject this amendment.

Thank you.

11:20

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has risen to speak on this amendment.

**Ms Notley:** Just a couple of quick points. As I said before, we absolutely acknowledge that the members opposite ran on repealing

Bill 6. We are opposed to it, but we understand that's what was going to happen. The structure of this legislation does more than repeal Bill 6, as I've said.

The member opposite talked about the debacle and the misery of all the demonstrations that occurred at the end of 2015 around Bill 6. It is true. That is true. That is why we spent two years trying to respond to them as opposed to putting up signs in our window telling them that we don't care about what they have to say, as was done by this government to demonstrators, demonstrations that were 10 times the size of the demonstrations he described.

He talked about flexibility. We understand the need for flexibility. We actually adjusted things in order to put in flexibility. I was just now even talking about other ways to provide even more flexibility. Nobody is negating the issue of flexibility.

What we are debating is the issue that there is no right to a minimum wage. I have documents here that say that through other regulations every other province actually provides minimum wage. Because of the way you've structured this legislation, you don't have the regulatory authority to provide for minimum wage, so we will be the only province with no minimum wage. I don't know how many times we can describe that.

We talk about and the member opposite has talked about allowing families and neighbours to work. That would still happen. That happened under Bill 6, quite frankly, and that could still happen. This is not about that. This is about those people who are working as employees typically coming in from other countries.

Finally, the member opposite talked about how the application of the Employment Standards Code is a form of red tape that needs to be eliminated. I am sorry, Mr. Chair. The obligation to pay people a wage for work: if that's what you call red tape, then I think that most Albertans would agree that that whole ministry should be eliminated. That's not red tape. That's human rights. If that's what red tape means to you folks, then I think we need to really reconsider that whole ministry.

That is my response. I am aware of what exists, but what I am saying is that even though other jurisdictions provide great, great levels of flexibility and different sets of rules, they have given themselves the regulatory authority to ensure that minimum wage applies. This removes that regulatory authority from the government. Then it is very clear on the record that there is no minimum wage unless you fix this, which is what we are proposing. If you pass this amendment, you would still have the regulatory authority to exempt everybody exactly the way you want to but still ensure that they have to get paid a wage. It would be shocking that you wouldn't take steps to ensure that that was the case.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, on amendment A2 as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:24 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Deol	Hoffman	Phillips
Ganley	Irwin	Sabir

Goehring	Loyola	Shepherd
Gray	Notley	

Against the motion:

Allard	Kenney	Pon
Amery	LaGrange	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Schow
Copping	Long	Shandro
Getson	McIver	Smith
Glubish	Nally	Toews
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yaseen
Jones		

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 31
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving back to the bill proper, Bill 26, are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill at this time regarding sections 1(3) and 2(2)?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report sections 1(3) and 2(2) of Bill 26 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:30 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For:

Allard	Kenney	Pon
Amery	LaGrange	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Schow
Copping	Long	Shandro
Getson	McIver	Smith
Glubish	Nally	Toews
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yaseen
Jones		

Against:

Deol	Hoffman	Phillips
Ganley	Irwin	Sabir
Goehring	Loyola	Shepherd
Gray	Notley	

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 11
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[Request to report sections 1(3) and 2(2) of Bill 26 carried]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 26 and report progress on bills 20 and 21.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** I will now call on the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills and certain sections

of Bill 26. The committee reports the following sections: sections 1(3) and 2(2) of Bill 26. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 20 and Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all members for another good evening of work. I would move that we adjourn the Assembly till tomorrow, Wednesday, December 4, at 9 o'clock a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:36 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, December 4, 2019

Day 52

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, and all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, please be seated. We are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Third Reading

##### Bill 26

##### Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. Take 2.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a bit of déjà vu as I'm happy to rise in this House to move third reading of Bill 26, the Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, as I did yesterday.

I thought it was great, Mr. Speaker, that there were more members in the House that got to debate this bill yesterday. There were some amendments, there was thoughtful debate on both sides of the House, but it's great to see that our rural caucus really had a lot of involvement in the developing and drafting of this bill.

As I've said numerous times, Mr. Speaker, there were 25 consultations that happened across the province this summer, and it was great to see, you know, farmers and farm workers from every type and size of farm and commodity of farm. They all came together, and there were four major common themes that I think are throughout Bill 26. Those themes are changes to employment standards, labour relations, OH and S, and insurance. If I can just go a little bit into each one of those here and, again, into the rationale of why there was such a consensus in the farming community behind each one.

When it comes to employment standards, Mr. Speaker, that was probably one of the fastest conversations that happened, where every different farmer and farm worker just has that understanding, the realization that farming is unique, that there are peak times of the year in which you have to do whatever it takes to get it done. You're not just fighting against the clock. You're fighting against Mother Nature and conditions that are outside of your control. The old saying that you make hay when the sun shines pretty much encapsulates perfectly why there have to be exemptions from employment standards for farms here in Alberta, as there are in other jurisdictions, in other provinces across Canada. Again, it's just that understanding of the reality of farming.

There were members opposite that talked about their times helping out in calving or harvest season and during harvests. I mean, it was nice to see that there was at least an understanding that, again, farming is unique.

When it came to labour relations, Mr. Speaker, something that we heard from the farming community is that there has been no certification of unions. Again, there was a concern that because of the sensitivity of the type of work in agriculture, you could have negative effects on farms if there was a strike. Something that farmers would say is that there's no need for unions on farms because, again, there are such amazing relationships between farmers and farm workers. They're sitting there at the dinner tables with farmers and farm workers together, and that close camaraderie between farm workers and farmers is just a reality of what happens out in Alberta.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act, that overarching piece of legislation, is going to be there, but it won't be prescriptive by the specific OH and S code. Again, that was something that farmers said was ridiculous, that the previous government, with Bill 6, tried to have specific OH and S codes that each individual farm would have to try to adhere to, which, again, was impractical and something that was never developed. Someone said that, you know, if you could just legislate common sense, I think you'd find the right balance, and I think this overarching OH and S Act will achieve that.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the biggest part of the consultations that we had, that took up the most amount of time, was on insurance. This bill will have choice in insurance of WCB or private insurance. It's something that I thank the minister of labour for, his work specifically on this as well, talking to insurance industries to say: "Look at a crossjurisdictional scan again of what's offered in the United States and in other provinces and in other countries. How can we actually get a comparator to WCB? It doesn't have to be the same, it doesn't have to be an apple-to-apple comparison of WCB worker insurance as a private insurance option, but what are the benefits of private worker insurance, and what are the benefits of WCB?" I think that this choice ultimately gives that flexibility to farmers and farm workers, whether it be copay, whether it be certain levels of coverage, whether it's on a work site or off a work site. That flexibility is going to be there for farmers and farm workers, and I think that that insurance piece is something that, again, has been very appreciated by the ag community.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that there have been lots of articles on this already, kind of an initial response from the ag community. I'd just like to read a couple of quotes from an article – I think it was from yesterday – in the *Alberta Farmer Express*, Alberta's New Farm Safety Act Gets Warm Response. This was from John Guelly, the Alberta Canola chair:

It's making farming easier . . . Everybody was scared to go across the road . . .

We can [now] think about expanding again without a whole bunch of hoops.

That is, again, farmers on the ground saying that the changes to Bill 6, to now have this Bill 26, are actually making farming easier. But also there is a willingness to expand. There's optimism in the agriculture community such that farmers are now willing to expand their operations and to invest more back into their farms.

Also in this article Kevin Bender, a regional rep for Alberta Wheat, said:

It will lower stress levels and give more freedom . . .

For our sake, we didn't want to hire people because we had all this red tape to deal with.

Again, it's just an understanding that what we're trying to achieve here is to unlock the economic potential of our agriculture sector, and I think we've come to a really good balance.

In third reading now I would like to thank all the members of this House for their time and their study and everything that they've contributed to this debate and the drafting of this bill and the

consultations. I think about half of our government caucus were actually at these consultations over the summer, and I'm just very grateful for all of the team effort that went into the drafting of Bill 26. I'm happy to see how the vote turns out, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Speakers List Following Bill Recommittal to Committee of the Whole

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, by way of providing context with respect to third reading, as this is the first time in the 30th Legislative Assembly that a recommittal motion has taken place and third reading has been moved again, the speakers list has been reset. It is as though the previous third reading has not yet taken place, so any member of the Assembly is able to speak to third reading regardless of whether or not they had spoken previously to third reading, just by way of context for you.

The other comment that I have for the hon. minister is that he quoted at some length from an article. It would be reasonable and expected of him to table it in the Assembly later today.

I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung would like to provide comment.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While I rise today, I regret to inform the House that I don't share the minister's enthusiasm for passage of this piece of legislation.

Bill 26 is a backwards step in many ways, and I know that the minister is proud to bring forward this legislation, seeing that he's ticked off a lot of boxes, as far as he believes the farming community is concerned, with respect to eliminating what we had brought forward when we were in government, our Bill 6. Of course, this not only repeals Bill 6, Mr. Speaker; it goes a long way beyond that. It implements some very damaging and awkward elements in this legislation.

9:10

I know the minister just mentioned a moment ago that he felt that the new Bill 26 eliminated a lot of red tape. Well, Mr. Speaker, what he refers to as red tape are actually international labour standards and standards of law that are enshrined not only in national constitutions such as our own but also in the universal declaration of human rights. For example, the legislative norms that you find in most western democracies are that the right to organize is enshrined and respected in legislation and in constitutions. Yet this piece of legislation removes that right for farm workers and small farms, those with five or under employees.

While indeed the family farm in the agricultural sector, where producers are growing crops and raising animals, is certainly a very unique place in the category of workplaces, it is still a workplace, Mr. Speaker, and, as such, workers who are on those farms deserve the same protection as anybody else with respect to the right to organize. While the minister is correct in saying that that right has not been exercised often, his estimation that it's not therefore necessary because there's such a collegial and respectful relationship between farm workers and their employers on these small farms – that's no argument and no justification for removing such a basic fundamental right, to organize, if indeed farm workers feel the need to come together.

As I've mentioned before in this House, we are at the 100-year anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, where Canadians lost their lives trying to establish the right to organize in Winnipeg after the return of soldiers from the First World War. This celebration of the 100-year anniversary of that is certainly an

interesting background to what we see happening in Alberta right now, where the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is happily removing the right to organize from a class of workers, from farm workers on small farms, and suggesting that it's simply something that isn't necessary, that they're not using it and therefore they won't miss it.

Well, it begs the question, Mr. Speaker: who's next? And what's next? What category, what class of workers will this government go after next when they decide that perhaps a piece of labour legislation shouldn't apply in a particular category? Just simply saying that there's no need for this legislation because it hasn't been exercised and because there's a special relationship on the farm between farm workers and their bosses, their employers, isn't a justification for taking such a drastic step to actually remove the right to organize in a workplace. I think it's something that people across the country and, in fact, internationally will look at, shake their heads, and wonder: in a western democracy what level of labour rights will we sink below if indeed the government continues on this path to eliminating the long-standing norms of fundamental rights in labour legislation?

We fail to recognize as often or as well as we should, Mr. Speaker, in this Legislature the fundamental necessity of having a healthy labour movement and healthy labour legislation which allows and respects the right of workers to organize and form a union and represent themselves in negotiations. That pillar, as we look at pillars in this Legislature holding this building up, these columns – one of those fundamental columns happens to be that right to organize, the right to associate, the right to form a union and to represent oneself in labour negotiations as an organized labour force. Without that, if indeed we keep chipping away at it, as this government seems intent to do, we end up with less of a real democracy. That is more than shameful. It's something that Albertans should recognize and raise their voices against, as organized labour certainly is doing right now.

I know that people in this province who are working people, who were perhaps involved already in the labour movement and maybe even with organized labour, are appalled at what's happening, particularly with this measure. According to the AFL president, Gil McGowan, speaking about the UCP farm workers bill:

Bill 26 is a giant step backwards for farm, ranch and agriculture workers . . . back to no longer having the basic workplace rights enjoyed by their counterparts in every other Canadian province. In fact, this bill goes beyond repealing the workplace protections put in place under the previous government. It takes Alberta even further backwards by adding more exempted workers in new industries such as greenhouses and mushroom farms, which were previously covered by workplace legislation even before Bill 6.

Mr. Speaker, I will table the statement from Mr. McGowan that I'm quoting from now later on in the House.

He goes on to say that the minister responsible for this bill "should be singled out for particular criticism." I agree with that. It's not something that one should be enthusiastically cheering about, as Mr. McGowan says, "stripping rights and protections from some of our most vulnerable and long-suffering fellow citizens," farm workers, protections that internationally are respected under covenants such as the universal declaration of human rights as well as the Constitution of this country.

Mr. Speaker, of course, it's very evident that this minister is no friend of ordinary working Albertans. He's really got his sights set on attacking organized labour, and this is one small way that they can put a stick in the spokes of the ability of organized labour to continue their internationally respected rights to actually organize and form a union. I think it's a bit of a trial balloon, and we'll see how far they intend to take it. There will be other elements in other pieces of legislation where this government will try to test the will

of Albertans again to allow them to diminish the rights of workers to exercise their long-standing rights to organize, and we will be ever vigilant on that front.

Now, I'll go on to say also that beyond reversing hundreds of years of basic labour and human rights by removing core protections for workers – we know that the majority of farmers, of course, care for their workers and pay more than the law allows, but not everyone. Something that I have yet to hear a good explanation for from this minister or this government, Mr. Speaker, is why it's okay for some workers to be paid as little as \$2 or \$3 an hour or perhaps nothing at all because the minimum wage requirement is gone from this legislation. If indeed it's gone for paid farm workers, the right to expect to actually be paid, if that's completely exempted, what is next? What piece of legislation will this type of draconian measure be inserted into next?

Once again, we have the explanation from the minister and members of the government saying: "Well, gosh. You know, farmers have a great relationship with their employees. They will work out the payment arrangements. There's no need for minimum wage requirements. That's just onerous red tape." Well, I'll tell you what. These are fundamental rights that are established internationally. On our globe, anywhere on the planet, workers should have the right enshrined in law that they will be paid for their work. As our Leader of the Official Opposition yesterday noted, it may be something that can be negotiated, the actual minimum wage that somebody is paid, but the actual right to earn a minimum wage is fundamentally nonnegotiable. Yet this government seems to think not and has implemented in part of this legislation a measure to eliminate the need to actually have a basic minimum wage. So it goes on. It's fundamentally a gleeful attack upon workers and their rights.

9:20

In Bill 6, that we had brought in, it originally exempted family members from the applications of employment standards, and that's well expanded on in Bill 26. The expanded clause on pages 5 and 6 of the bill adds:

- (b) employees who are employed in a farming or ranching operation referred to in subsection (4), or to their employer while acting in the capacity of employer of those employees, if the operation employs 5 or fewer employees.

So, indeed, what we'd end up having is an exemption of a class of workers, unlike any jurisdiction in North America, from earning at least some type of basic minimum wage for their work. It's more than undoing Bill 6, Mr. Speaker. It's taking Alberta into pre Industrial Revolution labour law territory.

We'll continue to monitor the situation as the government moves forward with legislation in other areas. However, I think Albertans are rightly forewarned that the attack will continue and that labour legislation will be something this government will continue to chip away at so that the rights of workers that are enshrined in international law are diminished under their watch.

We understand, of course, that this was a key campaign promise of the UCP, but it goes way too far, Mr. Speaker. Our farm and ranch workers deserve to be protected by modern workplace health and safety rules. It's important to get occupational health and safety right because, of course, lives are at stake.

Here again the government is picking the pockets of workers for their overtime as well. So not only will these hard-working workers now have to deal with the fallout; the government has increased their cost of living to pay for its \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway.

Now, if the government is truly sincere, Mr. Speaker, about supporting farmers, it should take action about the many farmers that are impacted by poor harvests and are struggling. They told the

government that they need action and that the current framework does not work for them, but they're not getting anything.

The government estimates that about three-quarters of Alberta's farms will be classified as small operations. So three-quarters of Alberta's farms will now become workplaces with no protection for workers as far as their right to organize.

When it comes to the choice amongst insurance options, WCB versus private insurance to cover paid workers on the farms, the repeal of Bill 6 once again shows that the government has a poor lack of judgment in making the decision to get rid of the requirement to have WCB. For example, in 2016 there were 777 WCB claims in the agriculture industry, 794 in 2017, 886 in 2018, and 572 in the first eight months of 2019, therefore showing that indeed the WCB was a viable product, a worthwhile insurance option, and one that farm workers were exercising their right to use. It was working. Yet this government sees fit to once again mute the needs of paid farm workers by directing that secondary option, private insurance to be offered alongside of WCB. It's something that paid farm workers will be lessened in their benefits from.

The paid farm workers who indeed are injured on farms can now sue their employers, which is different from what would have happened under our Bill 6, where WCB was in place. It protected the employer, actually, from further litigation in the event of a WCB claim being made. This is something that I think the minister has failed to really emphasize in his proud plunge to make WCB an option and in his desire to promote the option for private insurance.

I'm not sure how many lawsuits a small farmer could sustain if indeed an injured worker, an injured employee from that person's farm decided that the compensation from a private insurance claim was insufficient to compensate him or his family for the damages suffered by an injury or death on the farm, but this type of civil litigation for injuries can run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. I would venture to say, Mr. Speaker, that one lawsuit from an injured worker on a farm could potentially sink a family farm. That's the type of exposure that this minister has opened up with the option to continue with private insurance versus the WCB. We will certainly be monitoring that and finding out over time how many farms actually go bankrupt and have to foreclose because they suffer a lawsuit against them which they don't have the means to pay.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, the right to exercise the option to organize as farm workers; the occupational health and safety standards, which will not necessarily be enforced on these small farms, the fact that you won't have the database to determine best practices because of OH and S being not as widely implemented under this legislation; the labour relations situation where you don't have a basic minimum wage necessity enshrined in legislation, where there's no need for an employer to respect the right of the workers on family farms to organize; the option to opt for private insurance and therefore loss of the OH and S data and the exposure that a family farm operator will suffer as a result of insurance claims and lawsuits that will result: this certainly isn't something that I think all Alberta workers look forward to.

For those in the workplace throughout the province who are witnessing what's going on right now with the family farm and the government's attack on labour legislation therein under the guise of red tape when in fact what they're looking at doing is chipping away at international labour standards under the code word "flexibility," which is code for opting out of universally recognized legislated labour law norms, these are all major steps backwards, Mr. Speaker, for this province to take in terms of labour legislation.

I think that internationally we'll see that we have a pretty big black eye as a result of this. People who regarded Canada as a place where workers' rights were fundamentally protected and enshrined are



wondering how far backwards we're going to go and how far backwards – other countries who think that they will also want to perhaps chip away at workers' rights will now feel that they have the pathway to go. I really need to say that this legislation is a disaster.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on third reading of Bill 26, the Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019. I see the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has risen.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to be able to rise today and to speak in favour of Bill 26, the Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019. I want to start by saying thank you. I want to say thank you to the hon. minister that has brought forward this bill. It is true that we had 25 consultation sessions across this province, and it was a pleasure to have the minister in my constituency to meet with the good citizens of Drayton Valley-Devon. I can tell you that they were grateful. They were very grateful to this minister for taking the time to come, for asking, for listening, for committing to reflect their concerns on this bill. They had grave concerns with Bill 6, that was passed by the previous government. I had farmers in my constituency literally in tears of frustration over Bill 6. So to have a minister that would visit our constituency, that would listen to the concerns of the farmers in my constituency, and that would enact this piece of legislation – they're very grateful, and on behalf of my constituents I want to say thank you for this bill.

9:30

This bill addresses in a very common-sense way the concerns that my constituents brought up. You know, they kept telling me, as we went through the original Bill 6 debate, that farming is different, that farming is not like most other businesses in this province. We even call it the family farm, because one of the realities of farming in Alberta is that many of these farms are run by families. They live on them; they work on them. Everything about their life is surrounding this farm. It's a family farm. To apply the labour code and all of the rules and regulations that were under Bill 6 to the family farm just made no sense, in their minds, so it's good to see that in this bill we've recognized that.

Small farms, with under five employees who work less than six months consecutively, will be exempt from all employment standards and workplace insurance. It recognizes the reality that small farms will often hire on a very casual basis. It might be for calving season. It might be over harvest. You know, this kind of work just doesn't apply to the employment standards and the issues for workplace insurance, et cetera. Farms that are larger, that have a significant number of wage workers: they're required to follow occupational health and safety. They're required to have workplace insurance and to meet employment standards. This makes sense.

There is so much common sense in this bill. I know that my farmers in my constituency are appreciative of the common sense that you've brought into their work environment.

We now have the capacity for farm workers to be able to purchase their own disability and life insurance, and often that means that they can be covered for hours after they're working, so off the clock. This allows them to have the choice of whether they'll be covered by WCB or by some form of private insurance. We do expect our farms in this province, our great farms in this province, to follow and to maintain basic safety standards while being exempt from the application of the OH and S regulations and codes. Anybody that has been in a farm environment understands just how difficult it would be to apply those standards that might be fine on a factory floor to a family farm.

Now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung spent a great deal of time, prior to me, talking about Bill 26 and spent a lot of

time talking about a very typical view from the other side of the House, that sees the world almost exclusively in a class structure. Now, let me start by saying that I believe that every Member of this Legislative Assembly supports the idea of having a healthy labour movement. It's part of the modern civil society that we live in. Everyone in this House, I believe, will and does support the concept of labour rights and the ability to organize. But I think we have to be very careful. Not everything in life falls into that rigid structure of class warfare. Not everything in life can be governed by and overseen by a labour movement mentality. I think that we heard clearly in this province that as far as farmers and ranchers and farm families in this province, they don't fit into that rigid world view.

I think we have to be very careful when we stand up in this House and we laud the 100th anniversary of something like the Winnipeg General Strike. I think we have to be very careful. General strikes are known to be disruptive: disruptive to the economy, disruptive politically, disruptive to a society. To laud that period of time in 1917 and the Winnipeg General Strike, especially after we heard over this last weekend of members of the opposition supporting, as they should and as they have every right to and as we would all support with a healthy labour movement, the ability to picket, when we start to hear people, either inside or outside of this Chamber, supporting the concept of a general strike, I would be very, very, very careful.

I would be interested to hear if the members on the opposite side would be willing to clearly stand up and deny their support for the concept of a general strike. I would be very interested to hear if they would be willing to couch some of their rhetoric and put some parameters on their rhetoric. To worry more about what other countries are thinking about how we legislate in this province than listening to the people of this province and generating legislation that works for the people of this province – rather than trying to force them into the straitjacket of class warfare philosophy, I would suggest that perhaps somebody has to reconsider what they believe would be best for the people of Alberta.

I'm very happy to be able to stand up and support Bill 26. I'm very happy to see that we have brought some common sense, that they asked for, back into this community, that some farms and ranches will be exempt from the Labour Relations Code, that therefore farm workers will not have to face this issue of unionization, that no government official will randomly inspect a farm or a ranch, that OH and S will visit a farm should there be an incident that needs to be investigated that involves a waged, nonfamily worker. Common sense.

I think that's the one thing that I would stress today, that I believe that the farm families across this province, especially in my constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon, wanted to say thank you. They truly appreciated the capacity to be involved in the consultations that went on across this province. They have seen the results of this bill, and they're happy with the results of this bill. They believe that they've been listened to. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to say with regard to Bill 26: promise made, promise kept.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to comment on one of the things that the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon said. I can't remember clearly if in his past life he was a social studies teacher or not. I'm not getting any response from the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon as to whether he was a social studies teacher or not. Yes, he was. So it makes it even more egregious, then, that

he would refer to the Winnipeg General Strike as happening in 1917. As a social studies teacher, of course, he should know that the Winnipeg General Strike happened in 1919. I hope that, you know, he sends out a corrected message to all of his former students who he may have misled in his career as a social studies teacher in leading them to believe that the Winnipeg General Strike was in 1917.

9:40

**The Speaker:** I also look forward to additional grammar corrections if you want to provide them.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Yes. I would thank the hon. member for helping me to get the date appropriate. As far as making mistakes as far as numbers are concerned, I guess we must all be happy that on this side of the House we're not making the same mistakes that the opposition made when we can look back and see that we have a \$63 billion debt.

**The Speaker:** Are there any others wishing to join in the debate under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and bring forward a few of my thoughts on Bill 26 and, more importantly, my concerns with it. Of course, we've seen this government rush to move forward with this legislation. They campaigned on some form of what Bill 26 is, though they weren't very specific during the election what that would look like, and now we see that. Really, despite the name, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, there is nothing within this legislation that will actually increase safety on the farms across our province, so I'm not sure why they decided to put that in the text. Nevertheless, here we are.

Bill 26, of course, will repeal some or most of what was put forward in Bill 6. No more right to unionize, as we've heard from both sides of the House. We in the NDP caucus, of course, are not supporting the fact that this minister is trying to take away the rights of workers that are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I suppose that is what I would mainly like to focus on for a moment, recognizing that in provision 2(d) everyone has the following fundamental freedoms, among them being the freedom of association.

In this legislation and as we've seen from this government through a lot of their legislation, they do not respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They do not respect rulings that have been upheld by the Supreme Court. We saw that in Bill 9, when they forced public-sector unions to wait on negotiations that were moving forward. Of course, after that, now we have the government calling for a 5 per cent rollback of these wages, negotiating in bad faith despite what the labour minister, the agriculture minister, and everyone else on the front bench seems to think.

In that provision it expresses that

freedom of association protects three classes of activities: (1) the "constitutive" right to join with others and form associations,

which we're seeing attacked in this legislation,

(2) the "derivative" right to join with others in the pursuit of other constitutional rights; and (3) the "purposive" right to join with others to meet on more equal terms the power and strength of other groups or entities.

Mr. Speaker, we see similar provisions throughout other pieces of Canadian legislation and laws that are binding: article 1(e) of the Canadian Bill of Rights; article 22 of the international covenant on civil and political rights; article 8 of the international covenant on

economic, social, and cultural rights; articles 1 to 11 of the International Labour Organization's convention 98. I could go on and on, but the fact is that this government is attacking the rights and freedoms that we as a country and as a province have protected through legislation, and rightfully so. Unfortunately, this government, I imagine because so many lawyers have donated to their party, needs to create jobs for these lawyers, and here we are.

**Mr. McIver:** No lawyer left behind.

**Mr. Carson:** No lawyer left behind, indeed, Mr. Speaker, as the member of the UCP caucus just brought forward. That does seem to be the real motto of this government. While they campaigned on jobs, pipelines, and freedom or whatever it may have been, really, what we're seeing is that getting lawyers jobs is their main goal. We see that once again in this legislation.

Of course, as has been laid out by our NDP caucus, we see the weakening of rules around overtime and overtime pay in this legislation, rolling back, once again, the protections that give workers the right to receive extra compensation after working in excess of eight hours in a day or 44 hours in a week. Unfortunately, this government doesn't believe that workers, whether they're farm workers or in any other industry, deserve to be paid fairly, and we see that in other pieces of legislation as well.

We also see that this government is exempting farm workers from employment standards regulations, Mr. Speaker, protections that are in place to ensure that the workers across this province, no matter what industry, are protected from unsafe working conditions. The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon pointed out the fact that farmers and ranchers work in an industry that is quite different from any other industry across this province, and I agree. The fact is that as hard as farm owners try, there are always going to be dangers on these sites, and we need to ensure to the best of our abilities that we are protecting those farm workers. Unfortunately, what we're seeing is an erosion of those protections through this legislation, which is very concerning.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon also pointed out, not to hang onto it too long – I don't intend to agree with anything that member says. He pointed out that the general strike that was being discussed earlier was disruptive, but the fact is that the protections that those workers were looking for through that general strike and the lack of protections was also disruptive, Mr. Speaker.

Now, once again this government – well, that member was saying that we essentially should be ashamed that we would say we would support workers that are trying to collectively get the safety standards that they should be afforded. Well, Mr. Speaker, at the same time this government just within the last couple of weeks was calling on the federal government to enforce antiworker back-to-work legislation. So here we have a member of the UCP caucus telling us that we should be ashamed while they once again are trying to push forward with things that are unconstitutional, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, we see a rollback of insurance in WCB coverage, and we had brought forward an amendment, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that would ensure that if a farm was to decide against WCB coverage and move to a private insurance – which in my opinion is fine as long as we're ensuring that the equal protections are there from what they were currently receiving from WCB. Unfortunately, this government did not feel it necessary to ensure that proper levels of insurance are in place on these farms, which is also concerning.

Now, overall, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that this legislation not only rolls us back to just prior to Bill 6, but it rolls us back way further than that even. It is Wednesday; this government seems to think it's way-back Wednesday, back in the 1800s, early 1900s. That seems

to be, unfortunately, where they're coming from with all of their bills, and we will continue to see the erosion of the ability of workers to protect their own interests under this government, to collectively engage in negotiations, as we've seen the erosion of that ability, which is extremely unfortunate, and I can imagine that we will see court challenges from this legislation. Once again we will see lawyers making their money and everyone else losing out.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I cannot bring myself to support this legislation. I think it should go back to the drawing board, which is why I also supported an amendment we had brought forward to send this back to committee, which is really where it should go.

The fact is, as was pointed out by Gil McGowan, the AFL president, on the introduction of this legislation – now, I will say that I don't agree with everything Gil says, but in this instance where he says that "Albertans will no longer be able to track farm and ranch injury rates for the province. Boy, oh boy, Mr. Speaker, that sounds like a number that we should probably keep an eye on, yet here we are with this government no longer thinking that's important.

We saw this happening before the introduction of Bill 6. We swiftly made changes to that while also increasing the number of occupational health and safety officers across our province to ensure that investigations were happening and that safety was, in fact, in place. Unfortunately, once again from this government we see across-the-board cuts, which I imagine will affect those occupational health and safety workers, that traditionally are doing this work, which once again leaves these communities less protected.

9:50

Now, Mr. Speaker, once again I will point out the fact that I understand this government committed to this in their platform. Unfortunately, I think they have just gone way too far with this piece of legislation. I will also point out the fact that I understand that farmers and ranchers in our province work in exceptionally unique conditions, that they do know their workers the best, that they every day work hard to ensure that those workers are protected to the best of their abilities, and that they have strong relationships. There's no doubt about that, but the fact is that we as a government need to do our best to ensure that the legislation and the regulations in place are protecting every worker no matter what industry they work in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'm finding it quite strange here listening to the members opposite talk about Bill 26. When I listened to the member opposite talk about us rushing Bill 26 through – obviously, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry spent the summer, in fact since we were elected and since he was chosen as the minister, travelling across Alberta having open town halls in I don't know how many communities, probably about 25 different communities, asking farmers specifically what they would like to see as we repealed the failed Bill 6 that the previous government put forward. Now, I know that the members opposite, when they put through Bill 6, never had near, not even a fraction, the consultation that we've had with this minister with Bill 26, so the suggestion that this was rushed through – in fact, I believe we actually brought it . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Two whacks at Committee of the Whole.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yeah. We brought it back to Committee of the Whole for them so that they could have further discussion and bring

forward further amendments on this bill, so the suggestion that we were rushing through is just absolutely bizarre. Now, it seems like every time somebody gets up there and speaks on that side, all they can talk about is unions. In fact, they're even quoting their lead researcher, Gil McGowan, on what he said about this bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know what farmers felt about Bill 6. Bill 6 was deeply resented by the farming community across Alberta. There were rallies on the steps of the Legislature with Bill 6. The farmers spoke loud and clear, and they spoke loud and clear on election day when the members opposite never had one representative elected from rural Alberta. You know, they talk about things being quite different on the farm. The member opposite acknowledged that, and he's exactly right. Things are quite different on a family farm, and that's why we want to represent that in Bill 26. The members opposite, if we would look at what they brought forward when they first brought forward Bill 6 in the discussions – obviously, they had to back down on some of it. I'll tell you what: the agriculture industry still rejected it flat out.

It's interesting that the members opposite feel like they want to double down at this time when the agriculture industry spoke so loudly and clearly. I don't understand why they keep getting up and talking about and supporting their previous Bill 6, trying to talk against Bill 26 that honestly had a hundred times more consultation than Bill 6 did. I don't even know which agriculture sector or which farmer the NDP talked to when they brought in Bill 6, but I'll tell you that it couldn't have been anybody that I've been in association with, anyway, since I've been elected.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we keep hearing this over and over again from the other side, talking about Bill 26 and trying to disparage it. I think they're desperate. They're desperate to try to find something that they can disparage about Bill 26, but Bill 26 was consulted on with the agriculture industry. The minister travelled across Alberta and talked to farmers and asked what they wanted to see in this bill. Those are the facts, and obviously it's dramatically different from what those members on the other side did with Bill 6 when they were in government, when they brought that forward. In fact, that was probably the number one thing, that the consultation on it did not exist. In Bill 26, the consultation was there in 25 communities as the minister travelled around through the summer talking to farmers.

Again, it just seems like the members opposite want to double down on something that was an abject failure. At that point when they brought forward Bill 6, the trust was lost with the agriculture community. Here they keep furthering that mistrust with the NDP. I guess at one time I'll try to figure out why they keep going down this same path of failure.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are back on Bill 26. Are there others wishing to join in the debate?

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me this morning here to add my comments to Bill 26. Of course, this is only my second opportunity, but it will be my final opportunity to add some comments to a piece of legislation that I think is just looking for litigation.

I guess probably the easiest thing to say is that I don't have to work very hard, Mr. Speaker, to find something to criticize about this bill. It's actually quite effortless to do that. As I've said before on other debates, coming from labour, I also focus in on the language. What does the language mean? What does it imply? How does it affect people? That's what I like to focus in on when we're looking at pieces of legislation like this.

I'd given a little bit of, for lack of a better word, a shout-out to the Minister of Transportation in the earlier discussions. Like he had said before, I get it. The UCP won a majority government. They have the ability to change things that they see fit to change. That's their right. But I don't think they campaigned – unless somebody would like to point me to the direction in whichever copy of their election platform that it says that they were going to roll back basic human rights a hundred years by withdrawing pretty much the definition of employee that's contained on page 7 of Bill 26. I read it out earlier; I won't do that again. Everybody has the ability to look at this. It very much changes how an employee is described. It removes that, and that very clearly is a violation of human rights. You will most likely have litigation formed in this. However, we do see a pattern where this is something the government seems to relish, getting a chance to litigate in all kinds of different directions.

When you remove a person's ability just even simply to be called an employee, that opens up a potential for things to go sideways. As I'd mentioned earlier, I don't think there would be a single member in this House that would disagree with me when I say this. I think some of the farmers that we have here in the province are the best on the continent, bar absolutely none. But all it takes is one bad actor. You've seen those investigative reports where they rigged up a fridge and they called in a bunch of repairmen, and there's always one that just tries to push it too far and take advantage of somebody. I've seen it in my experience in the labour movement, where there are some fantastic employers.

I've always given a shout-out to Costco. They pay their workers well, they treat them with dignity and respect, they give them some benefits, and the working atmosphere is safe. And surprise, surprise: you're not able to unionize them.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

10:00

In situations where you don't have an employer that treats people with dignity and respect, that doesn't provide a safe working environment, that doesn't pay them well, that doesn't give them any benefits, don't be surprised when they want to look for somebody to represent them.

So this bill, Bill 26, Madam Speaker, will set up those conditions to be possible, just like some of the conditions that are being set around insurance, okay? I had mentioned this earlier in debate, where there was a situation where a farm worker unfortunately had passed away on the job site, and she had to fight in court for six years and did eventually gain a judgment in her favour. What was the consequence? Obviously, six years of litigation, all the money that was being spent on that, and – how about that? – because of the judgment, it killed that farm. That farm had to shut down.

All it takes is one, one time when we have to pause and say: maybe we should address that. Usually what happens when we bring forward legislation, Madam Speaker, is that we are looking for those times, those one-offs – unfortunately, there's more than one-offs usually – where legislation has to prevent that from happening.

When you remove the language around somebody even being able to be called an employee, are they going to get at least minimum wage in this province, or are they going to be paid under it? I don't know. All it's going to take is one, at which point – you know, I think I heard one member state that they're expected to follow the occupational health and safety rules. That doesn't mean that they will. Most will, and they'll do it happily. But all it takes is one, that one instance where a worker gets severely injured or possibly even loses their life. Is that when we're willing to stand in

front of those family members and say: "Well, you know, there was an expectation for that to happen. We don't know why it did. It shouldn't have. The rules were right there." So it's language like this that's contained in Bill 26 that I get very much hung up over. It's very, very difficult for me to be able to support that kind of language.

Like I said, I get it. You want to repeal what was Bill 6. I get it. You won the majority government. I don't think you ran on a mandate to turn things back a hundred years. I would argue that you don't have that. To put Albertans at risk or, even worse, temporary foreign workers that are brought in – like I said, I've seen farmers. My cousin has a cherry farm in B.C. and has gone to the ends of the Earth to support her employees, but I can't say for certain that a hundred per cent of people will do that. We've seen it. Like I said, those little investigator reports are really interesting, watching those things where they set up a situation to see how many will actually be honest about it. There's always one, but it's that one time that will come back to bite us on this legislation. It will force the government to have to stand in front of that family and say: yeah; sorry; we messed that up.

I hope that as we move forward on this bill – and I know it will get passed. If something should go wrong, I'm hoping that this government and this minister will stand up, take responsibility, and own the situation that you've now potentially created.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to comment in response to that member and some previous speakers from the opposition. Again, the mindset of the NDP that somehow farmers are out to exploit their workers and that there's a violation of human rights happening down on the farm, that is so far from reality. It's very frustrating. I know that on our consultation tour that frustration was also shared by farmers. They always felt that they were being attacked by the members opposite.

I mean, Madam Speaker, when you look at the people who profit from a labour movement, when you look at people that profit from creating an artificial fear narrative between job creators and the people that actually work for them, it's interesting to see members opposite. He proudly always says that he comes from labour. That socialist class warfare, that narrative that always has to be promoted by people in that space, is alarming, I think. Their quasi arm's-length NDP researcher, Gil McGowan, even wrote an article about me, calling me a "proto-authoritarian servant of employers." If that's socialist speak for supporting job creators in the province of Alberta, I guess I'll proudly wear that label from the NDP researcher, Gil McGowan, from AFL.

Also, there was a history lesson. I know I shouldn't go down a path, Madam Speaker, to follow the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. He was very quick to criticize a member on our side that was off by two years on a date. I'm not a social studies teacher, and my history is a bit hazy. They've said numerous times in this House that this bill goes back to pre-Industrial Revolution. It's my understanding that that's, you know, Britain 18th century . . .

**Mr. Smith:** In 1750.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** . . . 1750, not Alberta 2014. Again, they're off by a couple of hundred years, 200-plus years. I mean prior to Bill 6 when I say that this bill brings us back. I'd hate to see any of those members back anything up on a farm because I'm pretty sure they'd run over whatever they were trying to back up to.

Also, when it comes to temporary foreign workers, that's a completely separate issue. This bill won't address that. They're under their own special federal rules. Madam Speaker, again this goes to, you know, the radical activists that members opposite seem to be able to promote, radical activists that came on Alberta farms. There's this push against farmers and the way that they do business. We on this side are proud of our farmers. Whether they're a dogsled operation out near Canmore or a turkey farm in southern Alberta, we're proud of the hard-working farmers that we have here in the province of Alberta. We'll always stand and promote and do everything we can to protect them from radical activists, that have these radical ideas that you keep hearing from members opposite as well as from radical groups across the province.

Ultimately, it's something that other provinces are following suit on. Ontario actually introduced stronger legislation on protecting its farmers as well, and other provinces are looking at taking examples from Alberta. It is great to see that we are leaders here in Alberta and that other provinces are following our example in protecting farmers and also farm workers.

One of the greatest parts of Bill 26, that I think is overlooked by the members opposite, is the increase of investment in the agriculture space. We've seen – I think it was a couple of months ago, actually, in your riding or just north of your riding, I believe, Madam Speaker – a \$20 million investment in a new farming operation just north of Calgary. The CEO was very quick to say that with coming changes to Bill 6, that was the confidence that they had to invest here in the province of Alberta and create more jobs for Calgary and region. It is something that I think was overlooked in this previous debate, how these changes are actually attracting investment, attracting great jobs here in the province of Alberta.

Again, as many of my colleagues have said, this bill was in development a long time and has the support of the agriculture community. Thank you.

**10:10**

**The Deputy Speaker:** That mushroom farm is indeed just north of Airdrie and in the wonderful constituency that I represent.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've been feverishly taking down some notes here just to try to address a few of the things that have come up. I do thank the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry for bringing Bill 26 forward. That was one of our campaign promises, and I think he's done a terrific job here.

You know, the last speaker from the opposition was talking about litigation and this being ripe for litigation. Well, last night the Leader of the Opposition stated in this place that she's going to lead that litigation, so I guess it's not surprising that they know that litigation is going to be coming forward. I think that that doesn't serve a good purpose since the people and farmers and ranchers of this province were asking for this.

Another thing that's been coming up. This has been coming up a lot. You know, we know that workplace safety on farms and ranches is of utmost concern. The accident numbers that come out from farms and ranches are not accurate. Anything that happens on farmland and anything that happens on a ranch qualifies: unrelated car accidents, heart attacks. Anything that would be a home-related accident is actually considered a farm accident because your farmhouse is right on your ranch.

Now, you know, I'm not going to minimize farm accidents and farm safety. I know about this, and I know about it first-hand. There have been enough incidents that I've seen that make me fully appreciate how dangerous a job it can be. In fact, that's how I got

into farming and ranching. It was because of a farming workplace accident.

My wife's family are farmers and ranchers in Consort. My brother-in-law was the youngest in the family of four, and he was going to take over the family farm. At 26 years of age he was working down at the feedlot, and there was an auger in one of the bins. When you're finished using an auger, you will make sure – farmers and ranchers know this – that the auger is empty. This particular auger still had grain in the top, so when he went to move the auger, it started to tip over. It was big, and there was a lot of weight in it. He tried to hold it down, but my brother-in-law was unable to do that. It threw him in the air. He either hit his head on the way up or on the ground. It left him a quadriplegic, and he later passed away. Because of this there was a family decision that was made by my wife and me. We were in Vancouver at that time. We moved to Consort, and we started our life on the ranch.

I know that every farmer has stories like this, and we all know about farm safety. Family farms and their employees are just that; they're part of the family. We take care of family. Last night I listened to the Leader of the Opposition talk about ranchers, talk about them not paying their bills, that because there's no minimum wage, they're going to pay \$3 an hour – as if somebody is actually going to work at \$3 an hour – and that there would be no obligation to pay. I mean, it's just outrageous, the kind of things that I was hearing from her as well as from the opposition, claiming that they're going to shortchange their employees. I mean, how ridiculous.

I left the farming business 10 years ago. At that time we were paying temporary employees 20 bucks an hour. That's a decade ago. It's called the marketplace. The marketplace dictates the wage. As far as not paying, you're in a contract with this person when you hire them; of course you're going to pay.

You know, also, another thing that this addresses – and it's a good one – is that there are farms such as berry farms that are out there. They operate on, well, a minimum type of a wage plus a production wage. They incentivize their staff. They'll have a wage plus an amount based upon, say, the amount or the weight per hour that you bring in in production through the day. Actually, it can be quite lucrative for their employees. But the raising of the minimum wage slowed down their production. It actually decreased production on these farms. This helped to address that issue.

You know, talking about Bill 6 and some of the rules and the regulations that came forward, some friends of mine that are farming in that Consort area have a 1,000-head cow-calf operation. It's basically him and his brother that work the farm, and they have one employee. What Bill 6 did was that it gave them so much fear about having their staff work with cattle that they wouldn't let them work with cattle anymore. The two brothers could work with the cattle, but their employee had to go and do other work because of that fear that somebody may get injured. The OH and S regulations that came forward, et cetera: it's not practical. The employee wasn't happy either. A person that's working on a farm and a ranch: they want to be working with cattle. That's what they love. They love animals. Now they're being told that they couldn't do it just because of some silly regulations.

Bill 6 took these OH and S regulations and applied them directly to the cattle industry, and it didn't make any sense. You know, I'll tell you something. Cattle: they don't listen. Cattle don't follow procedure. I'll tell you that. It's not like you're going to work on a boiler and can take a set procedure and work step by step through it and that every time it's going to be exactly the same. Cattle don't work like that.

As far as timing is concerned and hours, you know, on our feedlot – we had a feedlot – in the spring we had cattle in that had to be fed,

and you have to look at animal health every day. But then you have an overlap there, where you're seeding and you're calving. The hours that are necessary here: they're odd. They're odd hours. Those calves have got to be checked every three hours, certainly. If you have a heifer calving, you're going to be sitting there watching her for a while. You cannot have strict, set-out hours because animals lives can be at risk.

Once again, Madam Speaker, I am very happy to see Bill 6 come forward. I think this is a very practical approach. It makes sense, and farmers and ranchers asked for it. Thank you once again to the minister for bringing this forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

10:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, would the minister like to close debate? The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that it's great to see all the differing opinions on this bill. Again, it's gone to Committee of the Whole twice. I think that it's the first bill that we've had here in this Chamber that's achieved that. It goes to show the importance.

Again, the great leadership of our House leader and his respect for democracy to be able to have that flexibility and allowing further debates on bills and issues that are near and dear to the hearts of both sides of the House: I would commend him on that procedural endeavour.

Also, Madam Speaker, I'm thrilled to see that we've come so far. I know that this may be our last day here in the Chamber, and in the spirit of Christmas it's great to see something that I think might be a great gift to the farming community right before Christmas.

Thank you very much. I would like to move closure of debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a third time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 20 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**The Chair:** Are there any speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I rise with great interest to have further discussion around Bill 20. Again, we find that bills 20, 21, and then 22, which passed through this House at lightning speed, were all omnibus bills with many egregious elements to them. Quite frankly, it takes a while for people to unpack each part of this substantial bill and provide some constructive criticism for each section.

The part that I want to just talk about here today: you'll find it on page 64 of Bill 20. I can see everybody furiously getting out their bills. How many pages are in this bill in total, anyway? It is unbelievable, right? A hundred and two pages, at least nine or 10 different major sections, changing the landscape of everything from personal income tax – this is the creepy tax-creep bill that will take \$600 million out of the pockets of everybody, really. It's an income

tax hike that doesn't exclude any Albertan, really, maybe the very richest. It's entirely possible if they have very clever tax lawyers, I guess. It moves through, you know, anything from the green line, as we've talked about before, to taking a shot at the film and television industry, with tech industries leaving the province. You know, it's just a train wreck, Madam Chair.

But the area that I want to talk about here this morning is on page 64 of the bill, and this is in regard to postsecondary learning. The essence of this section is to establish enrolment targets for postsecondary institutions around the province. Again, this is a radical departure from how our postsecondary institutions did administer themselves and work on the ground to ensure that they are meeting the demand for various sorts of training and making decisions based on what the needs are for industry as well.

Here we have, in the midst of all of that, a long-standing tradition of postsecondary institutions making sound and considered decisions around funding various departments and so forth. For example, NAIT and SAIT have, you know, their very organic way by which they determine spaces for trades, let's say. We can take the examples of plumber and pipefitter. Currently this is determined by positions for apprenticeship. This is a very reasonable way, by which you have a connection between hands-on training over a period of years for an apprentice and then moving back into the classroom from time to time, in either NAIT or SAIT, to receive more formal instruction as part of the apprenticeship program. It works pretty well.

You know, I hear lots of noises from this government about wanting to emphasize the trades, for example, and, you know, that is very interesting. Here we are now on page 64 of Bill 20, where the long arm of the bureaucratic interference of this government is moving into making enrolment targets from the desk of the minister of postsecondary education. I love to – well, I don't love it. I mean, we hear ad nauseam from this government about how they want to free the marketplace and all this kind of thing – right? – and then here we are with another example of them reaching deep into postsecondary education and building an infrastructure for them to determine, from the lofty desk of the postsecondary minister, enrolment targets for postsecondary institutions around the province.

I mean, I find this to be a huge problem. I find it to be going against the principles of reason and common sense that have determined the various departments that we have in our postsecondary institutions for learning, you know, a whole universe of relevant and useful things that help to drive our economy, to help build better citizenship, to upgrade individuals so that they can have a more fulfilling life, to increase economic opportunities for people in a reasonably equitable way, which is what we use education for, to reduce barriers for individuals to better themselves both as individuals and as workers and so forth. But here we have the government, this UCP government, reaching in and changing all of that.

It's a problem, Madam Chair, quite frankly. I know that postsecondary institutions are not happy about this. Slowly this information is disseminating amongst students as well. I mean, this is a change that will affect the future prospects of thousands of students that are, let's say, probably in grade school right now, where you're literally changing their ability to make choices about what sort of education they want to get, what sort of future they might be pursuing. Instead, you have the long arm of the UCP government in Edmonton telling people what to do and what to learn based on setting enrolment targets from the central planning committee of the UCP politburo or whatever they call it. Oh, I guess it's called the cabinet, right? You know, that is a problem.

Fortunately, though, Madam Chair, we're here to help, right? The Official Opposition is here. We work day and night to make sure that we provide constructively critical amendments to make life better for Albertans and even make life better, quite frankly, for the UCP government. This will help them, you know, have a more judicious and expeditious governance of postsecondary education by not going down the road of setting enrolment targets, enrolment quotas for individual departments in our postsecondary institutions around the province.

**10:30**

So it's kind of like an early Christmas gift, Madam Chair, from our Official Opposition to the government here for us to consider. I have an amendment that I think will help, help everyone, and I expect no thanks but, rather, a robust debate on the amendment that I have for this section of Bill 20.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A5.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, please proceed.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Thanks, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, be amended in section 24 in the proposed section 122.1 by striking out "in consultation with public post-secondary institutions" wherever it appears and substituting "after consultation of not less than 6 months with public post-secondary institutions, and their affected faculties and students."

That's a pretty good compromise, I think. Really, I think that the government has little to no business sticking their fingers into setting quotas for postsecondary institutions. They do a very good job of managing those things – thank you very much – already. So, you know, this amendment kind of gives a little bit of a nod to perhaps whatever thought processes, or lack thereof, went into this particular section of Bill 20. My amendment here, then, compels at least the government to enter into a consultation period for a number of months and includes the public in that consultation, too – right? – including the students. Lord knows, the students should have a say in how their education goes. They pay tens of thousands of dollars to go to school, and suddenly, if they hear that the minister from Edmonton suddenly pulls the rug out from their studies, then they should have this period of time to both maybe take a sober second look at that decision and indeed have a consultation around it with the teachers and the students and the administration of said postsecondary institution.

At this point in time, Madam Chair, you know, we need to, I think, repair some damage that's taken place over these last couple of months. This government went in hard and created a lot of shock and consternation around their attitude towards postsecondary education. We saw them, for example, opening the door in their very own documentation to 21 to 23 per cent tuition increases over the next few years. They've taken away the ability for students to claim a tax credit for their tuition – right? – which many people depended on to balance their modest budgets as a student and to continue on with their studies. You see this attempt in Bill 20 to set quotas and targets for university and for colleges and trades and so forth as well.

I mean, I think that we also saw a huge operating cut to grants to various postsecondary institutions. We saw the complete elimination of the maintenance grant for postsecondary institutions, which is astounding, quite frankly. In a broader sense, if we cast our eye a bit broader, we saw the elimination of the STEP program, that thousands of students depended on to, you know, help pay for education by getting jobs in their field, which is a very essential part

of, I think, a modern approach to education, to get experience in perhaps a related field that you're studying in so that you can add that to your resumé and become more employable in time.

The list goes on, Madam Chair, of I think a concerted attack on postsecondary education, of which this section of Bill 20 is one. I'm offering some small change here in regard to making it at least a little more democratic and using the expertise and the experience on the ground and in the field between various administrations for different universities and colleges to talk about where they're going to go, put their priorities forward for education, and, of course, involve the students and the general public in that exercise, discussion as well. It's a pretty fair amendment, I think. It's nice. It's compact. Like I said, it's kind of like a little Christmas present here before the actual festivities begin. I believe that this amendment will help to assuage some of the other divisions and conflict that this government has created around postsecondary education.

I will cede the floor to others to talk about this, and I look forward to the discussion. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm pleased to rise in support of the amendment that's been brought forward by my friend from Edmonton-North West. I want to thank him for trying to make what is a terrible piece of legislation a little less terrible.

It was interesting, Madam Chair, that during the estimates discussion with the Member for Calgary-Bow he stated that his goal was to increase Alberta's postsecondary participation rate, which up until recently has been the lowest in the country. That's nothing that anybody should be proud of here in this room. If we want to have a vibrant, dynamic, growing province, we need more students to be going to university or college in this province, and I applaud the Member for Calgary-Bow for stating that his goal is to increase participation rates in postsecondary education here in the province of Alberta. Just for the record that was also my goal when I was Minister of Advanced Education in the last government because participation rates in postsecondary education have been flat for a number of years. It's interesting, though, the different approaches that he and I took to the issue of increasing student participation in postsecondary education. It was our view as a government that in order to get more students into universities and colleges, those institutions needed funding to run their operations. That's why we increased funding for universities and colleges by 2 per cent every year.

They also needed new classroom spaces, and that's why we invested in a significant expansion of infrastructure on campuses all across the province. The new science complex at the University of Lethbridge just opened up this year. That has dramatically expanded classroom capacity at the University of Lethbridge. The government is still investing in the renewal of the MacKimmie complex at the University of Calgary. That will dramatically expand classroom facilities at the University of Calgary. We invested in the renewal of the Dentistry/Pharmacy building at the University of Alberta. That building was being almost unused because it was in such a state of disrepair, and investing in the renewal of that building will dramatically increase the number of classroom spaces that are available to students at the University of Alberta.

**10:40**

We invested in a new campus in High Prairie for Northern Lakes College, which was desperately needed. High Prairie campus of

Northern Lakes College was an old Alberta forestry trailer that had any number of dead animals in the air space between the bottom of the trailer and the ground surface, which, I joked with the chair of Northern Lakes College, provided all-you-could-eat meals for the students there if they were interested in that. That, fortunately, won't be the case any longer, and the students in High Prairie will have a modern, expanded classroom space in which they can conduct their learning.

You know, we increased funding that was available for their operations. We dramatically increased support for expanding classroom spaces. We invested in maintaining the existing classroom spaces because the previous government had left a significant infrastructure deficit behind on campuses all across the province. That was the institutional side of the investments that we made in order to increase public participation rates.

Oh, we also invested in new tech seats. Our plan was to invest \$50 million over five years to increase the number of seats in tech-related programs by approximately 3,000 spaces. I appreciate that the government is still planning to continue funding for the 400 or so spaces that were created in the last days of our government. It's a shame that the government is not going to continue to invest in those spaces, that are much needed, or were, at least until the government decided that it was not interested in supporting development of the tech sector in Alberta. I guess that if we're not going to support the development of tech-related industries in the province, there's no need in continuing to invest in tech-related education spaces in universities and colleges according to how the members opposite approach the issue of economic diversification.

That was the institutional side, Madam Chair. Then, of course, we recognize that finances are a huge barrier to many students attending university and college. I can't tell you how many potential students I met during my tenure in Advanced Education and still meet today who rule out the possibility of even going to university or college because they think that they can't afford it. We tried to tackle that by freezing tuition rates for four years. We also froze mandatory noninstructional fees for the same period of time and eliminated the ability of institutions to introduce new mandatory noninstructional fees, which meant that during the last four years Alberta went from the most expensive place to go to university to the middle of the pack. While other provinces were increasing their university tuition and fees, ours remained flat, so comparatively it became much more affordable to go to university or college in Alberta than in other jurisdictions in the country.

We dramatically expanded access to student loans, and we kept those student loan rates affordable. We increased the number of scholarships and grants that were available. We introduced the indigenous grant, which provided tuition and fee support for indigenous students who were studying at university or college. We created an apprenticeship grant for apprentices who weren't employed but wanted to continue with their technical training. That resulted in thousands of unemployed apprentices being at least able to continue in their technical training while they were still trying to find work so that they had the technical skills to be able to advance their apprenticeship.

We also invested significantly in mental health supports for students so that students who were already in university or college and experiencing the stress related to studies and all of the things that go on for young people while they're in university or college could get the help that they needed. So not only were they healthy, but they were well enough that they could continue on with their studies and complete the programs that they were in so that they were able to graduate. That was also a significant support for students.

Now, contrast that approach with the approach that the Member for Calgary-Bow was taking in trying to increase participation rates. He's scrapping the education and tuition tax credits, so that will make it less affordable for students to go to school. He's scrapping the tuition fee freeze and allowing universities and colleges to increase tuition by up to 20 per cent over the next four years, so that's going to be another fee hike. He's also increasing the rate of interest on student loans. It's going from prime to prime plus 1 and a half, I believe. That's going to be a significant hit for the tens of thousands of student loan holders already in the system. All of those legislated fee increases are going to hit students severely.

Included in that have to be the indirect fee increases that are going to result from the cuts that the Member for Calgary-Bow is making to the university and college grants. They have to make that money up somehow. They can't make it all up from tuition, so all of the ancillary fees related to going to university or college are going to go up. That means that residence fees are going to be more expensive, meal plan fees are going to be more expensive, and parking fees are going to be more expensive. We've already seen a number of universities announce increases to those fees for the next year. All of those things are going to make it much less affordable for Alberta's potential students to go to university. I think that's going to have a chilling effect. There are a lot of people who are in high school or junior high right now who are wondering whether or not they can even afford to go to university or college, and they're going to decide to not go because the Member for Calgary-Bow and this government have made the financial barriers to getting a university or college education too high for many of them to overcome.

In addition to that, though, not only is the Member for Calgary-Bow making it more expensive for students to go to school, but he's also reducing the capacity of universities and colleges to undertake their work. He's got a plan to reduce the government grants by half over the next period of years. Not only will we not be able to increase enrolment in most programs; it's going to mean reduced enrolment in most programs and the elimination entirely of a lot of programs, we suspect. It's already having a negative effect on postsecondary education. We see hundreds of people being laid off at the University of Calgary already, and we expect hundreds more to be laid off at institutions all across the province in the coming days.

In addition, of course, the capital grants have been reduced to a paltry \$12 million, from \$120 million to \$12 million, over the next fiscal year, Madam Chair. Universities and colleges won't even be able to afford to replace their light bulbs with that little money. Construction of new projects has ground to a halt. This government has committed to building almost nothing new on university and college campuses over the next three or four years. I don't know. I honestly can't see how the Member for Calgary-Bow is going to increase public participation in postsecondary education when he's making it way more expensive for students to go to school, eliminating their ability to deliver most programs, and saying that they can't build any new classroom spaces over the next four years. When pressed, the Member for Calgary-Bow really didn't have a good answer. I suspect that these enrolment targets are one of the tools he expects to use to increase participation rates, but how is he going to do that?

**10:50**

One of the things that is true about the postsecondary sector is that the level of compliance you get with government direction is directly related to the amount of money that you give them in government grants. Universities and colleges are not like schools, where they get all of their funding from the provincial government



and have very tight control over curriculum, enrolment, all of those things. Universities and colleges are much more independent from government direction than the primary school system and the secondary school system, and that's the way it should be, Madam Chair. I couldn't imagine what universities and colleges would look like if the members opposite had direct control over what they would offer. I suspect that the University of Alberta would have only two faculties, a faculty for oil and a faculty for gas, and everything else would be shut down.

It's critical to the academic enterprise that government intervention be limited as far as possible. That's why we're bringing forward this amendment, so that at least the Member for Calgary-Bow can't get up in the morning and arbitrarily decide to cut enrolment to a philosophy program at the University of Calgary by 75 per cent and mandate an increase in – I don't know – petroleum engineering at the University of Alberta by 150 per cent just at his own whim. I think that my friend from Edmonton-North West is correct in saying that these enrolment targets need to be set at least in consultation with public postsecondary institutions over a period of six months to make sure that all of those consultations consider the affected faculties and students.

Six months is a reasonable period of time for conducting these consultations. Academic institutions are not nimble organizations, let's say, and they make the direct civil service appear fast and lean in comparison. Six months is a reasonable time, I think, for academic institutions to conduct these consultations to see whether or not the enrolment targets that the Member for Calgary-Bow wants to impose on them will be reasonable. I think that it makes sense to include everybody who has a stake in the future of the postsecondary system to have their say as to whether or not these enrolment targets make sense.

Like I said, in an ideal world we wouldn't be discussing this kind of legislation at all. The minister would just let universities and colleges continue to do the good work that they've already been doing for a number of years, consulting with industry and consulting with the public already to set their enrolment targets. They already do that, Madam Chair. A number of programs at universities and colleges all across the province already have committees comprising students and faculty and potential employers to look at the program, whether or not it's meeting everybody's needs, and decide how the programs can be improved to do that. I don't think that allowing the Member for Calgary-Bow and his cabinet colleagues to get their fingers into the process will improve things. I think it will actually damage the academic enterprise.

Of course, we've already seen that certain members across the way don't have a lot of respect for academics in the first place. We know that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed has accused professors of being communists. You know, he's tried to smear the name of an expert in political science by making allegations that her work is unworthy because of her affiliation with the federal NDP. So this is all part of a pattern, Madam Chair, of undermining the academic enterprise, broadly speaking.

I think that this amendment will at least limit the amount of damage that the members opposite are seeking to do to our postsecondary education sector, and I think it would be wise for all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of this amendment so that we have a rational and reasonable process, at the very least, for setting enrolment targets rather than just allowing the minister at his own discretion to set them without consultation, without any consideration to the effects that his decisions will have.

With that, Madam Chair, I encourage all of my colleagues here in the House to vote in favour of this amendment, and I want to thank again my friend from Edmonton-North West for bringing

forward such a reasonable amendment and at least trying his hardest to limit the damage to postsecondary education that this bill in its original form is set to do.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to address this very wrong-headed bill and to talk about some of the concerns that have been expressed across the province of Alberta about the single-minded and negative perspective that is being taken by this government with regard to its finances and specifically with regard to the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, which reveals quite significantly the government's lack of understanding of the work that's being done across this province to redeem us from some of the difficult economic times that we've had over the last few years.

I think that we can see, by reading the daily paper, that judgment is already in on this bill and all of the economic bills of this government when we see in the last few days Moody's bond-rating agency downgrading the province of Alberta because their economic plan fails to take into account any future thinking. They specifically cite, of course, particular aspects of that failure with regard to a complete failure of looking at the revenue side of the question in this province and a complete failure to . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we're on amendment A5.

**Mr. Feehan:** I do understand that. I'm talking . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. I assumed you were getting there.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. Certainly.

Moody's also talked about a failure to move off the reliance that we've had on our natural resources in this province, not that we shouldn't have done what we did to try to generate as much income as we could from our natural resources. The issue that Moody's cites is the failure to understand that a singular emphasis is unacceptable. As a result, we have a downgrade, and this is what brings us to this amendment here, and that is that the government is failing to understand that if we actually are going to resolve the economic problems in this province, we need to create as much diversity as we possibly can in this province. That diversity depends on the ability to understand where the economies of the world are going and to ensure that we are ready to take advantage of and be a part of those movements in the economies of the world.

**11:00**

We know, for example, that tech industries are absolutely on the rise around the world. More and more we are seeing people not driving trucks to make a living but, rather, working on computers to make a living. While we'll need a quite wide range, including truck drivers and so on, we know that the majority of jobs will come from these kinds of tech industry jobs. We see Mary Moran of Calgary Economic Development telling us that we have lost a significant digital company, who bailed out of this province because of the focus of this particular government. We have seen the loss of tech jobs at universities because of this government's failure to continue with the plan that had been put forward by the previous government, all of this telling us that the government is trying to pick a singular winner in terms of Alberta's future instead of allowing the marketplace of ideas to move forward and create places in our universities that are responsive to the needs of the community around them.

In this particular case, the government has decided that as well as not supporting universities through the various programs that we

have, they would actually begin to try to control universities by introducing themselves into the question of enrolment in various programs. Now, this is problematic on a number of levels because one of the things that's quite clear to me is that this government doesn't understand the nature and value of the universities in this province. While we were capping tuition fees in this province to encourage more students to go to universities, while we were providing more money to universities so that they could provide services for students, while we were building more classroom spaces at universities and colleges around this province and we were funding particular spots in the tech industry, doing all of these positive things, we see this government instead taking away tax credits. We see the government reducing the students' ability to attend university by increasing tuition. All of these things are attacking universities instead of supporting universities to do the good work that they do.

Given that they do not seem to understand the function of a university in society, I'm very concerned about them having the ability to begin to dictate to universities the nature of enrolment. As a result, I think it's very important that they step aside, that they go back to the people who actually know a lot about enrolment, how to encourage enrolment, how to establish enrolment in relationship to the needs of the society around us, and allow them to do that. Universities and colleges all have programs in which they look at enrolment enhancement. It's a common practice at every university to have those discussions on an ongoing basis. They design programs based on that, not based on the whim of the government in order to support a particular industry but, rather, on the long-term trends that are needed in a community or a province. Those are the people that government should be working with to ensure that they have the right enrolment processes in place.

Government's role should be to provide them the resources to do that well, but they're taking away all of the resources to do these kinds of things rather than providing those resources, something that doesn't make sense. If you want something to succeed, why would you suffocate it? Why would you make it more difficult for it to happen? Why would you create structural barriers that make it more unlikely that the thing that you want is going to occur?

I think that we've learned a lot over the last number of years about how small factors can make a difference in terms of people's decision-making and that those factors often are not understood well by the people who are making the decision yet strongly influence their decisions. Many people have had the opportunity to read, for example, the book called *Nudge*, which tells us a number of stories about how people's decision-making can be influenced by just making sure that the easiest decision, the most straightforward decision is the one that has the greatest benefit and the greatest outcome. For example, in the book they talk about people applying for life insurance, and if the number on your form when you first sign up is different, then you're more likely to actually put money aside for insurance. It has nothing to do with people making a judgment about it. It's just what happened to be on the form when they signed it when they got employment.

From that, we learn that it's important that we understand: what are those structural kinds of barriers that tend to make people make a decision one way or the other? If our ultimate outcome is to increase the enrolment at a university, then we should look at: what are the kinds of things that are more likely to make a student want to go back to school? Well, the things that are going to make them want to go back to school are the belief that they'll be able to be successful in doing that, the belief that they will be able to get the monies that they need in order to be able to go to school, that they will be able to pay off those bills in a reasonable amount of time with whatever type of job they're able to earn when they graduate,

that they will have good learning experiences at those schools, that they will have good instructors and good professors who will provide them with the knowledge that they need in order to be successful in the economy, that they'll have the resources at those schools such as the classrooms, the labs, the library facilities that will allow them to be successful.

Creating all of those opportunities is more likely to have people make the decision to go to a postsecondary institution, whether it's a college, a university, or a technical institution. Those are the kinds of decisions we should be making, but what we see is this government going in exactly the opposite direction. We see the government undermining the confidence of students about their own success or the success of their university to be able to provide them the resources that they need. We think it's really important that this government step back, that this government let universities do what universities do well, let colleges do what colleges do well and technical institutions do that as well, and that is for them to use good research to make decisions about enrolment and not political ideas in terms of, you know, what kind of behaviours on the part of the university will increase enrolment.

We know that, you know, frequently on this side of the House we present evidence to the government from various universities that indicates that the choices that they're making are not going to achieve the results that the government thinks they're going to achieve. We've demonstrated time and time again that trickle-down economics, for example, doesn't work. We've indicated time and time again that minimum wage is a good way to ensure that people at the lower income have the monies that they need to survive well and that increasing minimum wage does not damage small businesses.

All of these are pieces that came from universities that were able to use good research and appropriately developed statistics in order to demonstrate the basis on which social policies should be made, yet the government has rejected all of this good research all the time, again demonstrating a distaste for the knowledge that comes from universities, a disbelief that the people who have created that knowledge bring value to our society, and that's very problematic here. The overall trend in this government has been to decide that academics and scholarly learning are not worth supporting and are not to be believed in terms of making policy decisions, which is very concerning for many of us because it is that kind of knowledge development which has allowed us as a province and, of course, all western democracies to develop a very good lifestyle for a significant number of people in this province and, of course, across Canada and across the western world.

#### 11:10

It is the academics in engineering and the academics in history and the academics in nursing who have all contributed to a better way of being in this province, to a lifestyle which has seen significant reductions in dangers to us in the community, significant increases in general health and well-being, changes that have made the life of the average person much better than it was five years ago, 10 years ago, or 50 years ago. That institution has done that extremely well, and as a result we think it's important that the institution be encouraged to continue to do that kind of work and that we trust the processes of good scientific research and knowledge in order to make decisions. The experts on that development of knowledge are universities and colleges and technical institutions. They are the experts on how to research and evaluate what good information is. They develop the techniques that allow us to do that.

Yet when it comes time for them to use that same scientific reasoning and knowledge to develop their own programs, we

suddenly have this government stepping in and saying: we are going to develop a process where it is the minister who begins to force enrolment in a particular area based on the minister's whims or needs. You know, this is perplexing given that just this morning we were listening to the minister of agriculture talking about the fact that we need to trust the experts in the field. He was talking about farmers. If I accept that, then why does he suddenly abandon that principle when it comes to people who are experts in other areas such as research and knowledge development? It doesn't make sense unless you really didn't believe the first one. Then I wonder: why the second? Why interfere with universities who are doing the work that they need to do in order to ensure that they have good enrolment?

Now, one of the problems is that we have a province that has a lower rate of enrolment in postsecondary than other provinces, so one of the things that we need to ask ourselves is why that is. What kind of research can we apply that would tell us the reasoning behind our lower enrolment? Well, lo and behold, it turns out that some of this research has been done, and it turns out that part of the reason why we have lower enrolment in this province is because fewer young men go to postsecondary than in other provinces. The reason why that happens is because they have had the fortune of being able to earn good incomes without getting a postsecondary education. We've been very fortunate in the oil and gas field to be able to provide people with income sometimes over \$100,000 a year with no more than a grade 12 education. I'm very happy for those people. I'm glad that they've had the opportunity to succeed well and so on.

Overall, looking around the world, we know that that's an aberration, that we're not going to be able to depend on those kind of lucrative, productive kinds of jobs forever in this province, and as a result we need a different kind of job, a job that depends on people having the opportunity to upgrade their skills, to improve their circumstances through their own effort. That means going to postsecondary institutions where they can learn a set of skills that they would not naturally have had if they did not have the opportunity to spend time with good instructors who have spent many years developing skill sets and knowledge that they can pass on to students. That should be encouraged. It should be encouraged in this province that people who want to do well are given the tools to do well.

We know that in some fields it hasn't been necessary in the past in order to be able to get a good income in this province to have those kinds of postsecondary credentials to move on. But that's not the rule across the world. Across the world there is a very close relationship between postsecondary education and longer term financial stability. We need to understand that that's what the research indicates, and if that's what the research indicates, then we should use that good knowledge created by good postsecondary institutions in order to build toward the future. That's what universities and colleges and technical institutions have been doing and doing well for many, many decades in this province.

Many of us here in this Chamber are quite proud to be graduates of institutions around the province of Alberta. Myself, I graduated from both the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. I know many other people in this House have graduated from NAIT or SAIT or Mount Royal or MacEwan or many of the other great institutions in this province. I'd like to ask at this time for the government to show some respect for those institutions and to thank them for having provided them with the background necessary in order to be able to be as successful as we have been in this House. We thank them by honouring their strengths and their abilities and by including them in the decision-making regarding their own lives,

and that is the concern of student enrolment numbers and program enrolment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak to this amendment on Bill 20. The amendment reads that we take out the words "in consultation with public post-secondary institutions" wherever it appears and substitute "after consultation of not less than 6 months with public post-secondary institutions, and their affected faculties and students."

Well, you can imagine my surprise as I listened to the last speech, that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford gave, Madam Chair, and you would be surprised with how much of what he said I agreed with. Yes, you heard that correctly. He said a lot of things that I agree with entirely. He said things like: let postsecondary institutions do what postsecondary institutions do well. I couldn't agree more. That's exactly what our legislation intends to do. He said that postsecondary institutions are the experts in the field and that we should listen to them, and that is exactly what I believe our minister of postsecondary education has done and what this legislation does. He does talk about the failure of what's gone on in the past. He talked about lower rates of enrolment and lower graduation rates, and I agree with that as well.

The fact is, Madam Chair, that this legislation is designed to actually take the handcuffs off of these postsecondary institutions and release the entrepreneurial abilities that they have. The NDP refused to take off those handcuffs and refused to open up the entrepreneurial knowledge and expertise that are in those institutions. They essentially kept them prisoner: "You will take the amount of money we give you. You're not allowed to raise any more. You will do what we say." They were very dictatorial and didn't allow them to be entrepreneurial, didn't allow them to raise their own money. We are actually doing essentially, through the legislation, what the hon. member had said we should do. Interestingly enough, it's what the government he used to be a part of refused to do.

The hon. member actually knew what to do. Their government just didn't do it. Well, this government isn't like that, Madam Chair. This government is going to work with the postsecondary institutions to allow them to express through their expertise the entrepreneurial abilities that they have to raise money in other ways; to bring in the private sector, perhaps, in different ways; to do land development on some of the university lands to create rent and lease revenue and other revenue from that; to actually be entrepreneurial and invest that money that they are now allowed to make, that they weren't allowed to make under the NDP, and invest it back into their postsecondary institution to improve the quality of education for their students and improve the quality of life for their students as they graduate.

**11:20**

What's interesting is that the hon. member that just spoke before – while I agree with much of what he said, the fact is that his government didn't do those things, and that's what several postsecondary institutions that I've talked to have said. They've said: "Listen, if you are going to give us less money in terms of direct funding, then you'd better take off the handcuffs. Let us raise some of our own money. We actually know how to do that." When they find out that we're going to give them that ability, they're actually in many cases quite pleased, more pleased than they have been in the past.

In fact, the hon. member said it himself when he talked about some of the stats. There is lower enrolment in Alberta, and of those enrolled, there's lower graduation than there should be.

Now, listen, anytime I talk to students, the ones that are in school and the ones that haven't gone to school yet, they say that – you know what? – they would like lower tuition. But when you extend the conversation past the first sentence, here's what they understand. They realize the choice. They're bright. Young people are bright, and they understand this. Sometimes I ask them: "So would you rather pay less during the four years that you're in school and then pay more for the 45 years that you're working after you graduate to support more of everybody else's school? Or would you rather pay a little more in your tuition and pay less for the 45 years that you're working for everybody else?"

Let me say this, Madam Chair. Not all of those students agree. They didn't all have the same answer. Some have just said: "Lower tuition. That's it. That's all I am interested in." But a lot of other ones have said: "You know, when you look at it that way, when you consider the 45 years during which I'm going to hopefully have a good-paying job and the government is going to be taking up to 40, 50 per cent of everything I earn in different forms of taxes, boy, having that lighter tax load for 45 years may be a positive offset to a little more tuition that I pay while I'm going to school." Again, not all students feel the same way about that. There are students on both sides of that argument. But I think, largely, they understand the argument.

I would say that the problem is that the NDP didn't understand the argument. They think that government should control everything, that government should tell the institutions how much money they're going to have and keep them coming to the government every year with the beggar's bowl to get enough money to hopefully run their programs. Well, governments of all stripes sometimes aren't the most reliable partners. Sometimes they're quite reliable; sometimes they're not that reliable. The postsecondary institutions in many cases would like to rely on themselves. That's one of the messages that we've heard. They would like to have the handcuffs off so that they can be entrepreneurial, so that they can raise some more of their money.

Let's face it, Madam Chair. Having emphasis on the postsecondary institutions to make sure that their students graduate and their students get good jobs thereafter is the best way to increase their students' quality of life. The one calculation when somebody finishes school is: how much money do you owe for going to school? That's a really important number, and we should never forget about that.

The other half of that calculation, that I think students understand, is: how many years is it going to take me working to pay that money back? If you owe a large amount of money and you can pay it back in a low number of years, that's not that bad. If you owe a little bit of money but it still takes you a long time to pay it back because of the employment position you might have, well, what looks good at the outset may not be so good at all if it takes a long, long time to pay off those students loans. So while I understand that every situation is different, I guess my point is that students understand that also. They understand the value of having a good career and a good job after they graduate and how that affects their quality of life thereafter.

Madam Chair, we intend to work with the postsecondary institutions. That's what our minister said. The folks across have said several times that he hasn't given good answers, but in fact they just didn't want to hear the good answers. They didn't want to hear that there's a different way to do it than to keep the postsecondary institutions as, essentially, beggars to the

government. Rather, unleash the expertise that the previous member talked about.

I agree with what he said. They have tremendous expertise. They understand the research. There are many things that they're very good at. Our government wants to take the handcuffs off them, unlike the NDP, and say: "Okay. Be experts. We know you're experts; be experts. We know you can be entrepreneurial; be entrepreneurial. Raise money. Do other things that can improve the quality of education and the quality of life for students because we are going to take the handcuffs off you."

It's a different way of looking at things, a way that I would suggest to you the previous government was not willing to accept. Actually, if the previous government had listened to the very experts the previous speaker was talking about, that's what they were saying. That's what the postsecondary institutions were saying to us even while the NDP was in government: "They just don't let us do anything. They don't let us raise money. We could, but they won't let us. They want to control everything."

So, in fact, the place where I will disagree with the previous speaker is – what's different, I believe, about our approach is that the previous government wanted to control every element of what every school did, and we're saying: "No. We're going to give you a little less money upfront than you used to get, but we are going to unleash your ability to raise money, to be entrepreneurial, to be the captain of your own ship, to row your own boat, and to set your own direction."

You know, there's an old saying that is consistent with this, that the one who pays the piper calls the tune. Well, when the government is paying all the money, it's no wonder that under the NDP they wanted to call all the tunes. I guess from this side of the House we're saying that we're going to let the universities and the other postsecondaries raise some of their own money and call some more of their own tunes. We think that's consistent. We think that's fair, and we think it's actually consistent with what most of the postsecondary institutions have been telling us.

It's also inconsistent with this amendment in front of us because the amendment says to consult for six months. What the opposition doesn't realize is that our minister, unlike the previous government, actually talked to the postsecondary institutions before this legislation rolled out.

**An Hon. Member:** He is a doctor.

**Mr. McIver:** He's a PhD himself. I'm certainly not, but I believe he can speak to the postsecondaries on an academic level like I never could.

He actually did it, more to the point. He actually took the time to talk to the postsecondary institutions, to find out that they wanted to be more entrepreneurial, which is why this amendment, Madam Chair, would actually make the legislation worse instead of better, which is also why this side of the House will not be supporting it.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday on amendment A5.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a privilege to rise to speak to this amendment to Bill 20, once again, amending section 24 in the proposed section 122.1 by striking out "in consultation with public post-secondary institutions" wherever it appears and substituting "after consultation of not less than 6 months with public post-secondary institutions, and their affected faculties and students."

Madam Chair, it is indeed, as I just mentioned, a privilege to rise in this House, and I think that we also need to recognize that it is a privilege, first of all, of course, that we are in this House in the first

place, that we were elected here by our constituents, but also that we have the privilege to be sitting here at the point in our careers that we are in, most of us, I believe, out of postsecondary education, and at the wages that we receive, the compensation we receive as private members elected to this House, debating why the government thinks it's okay to increase costs for postsecondary students, people who because of this government are now facing reductions in minimum wages if they're under 17 or 18, trying to save to get to postsecondary education.

This government has told them that they do not deserve the same minimum wage as anybody else, which is very concerning. So it is a privilege for us to be standing here telling students – the UCP government is telling students that they think it's okay and actually should be celebrated that they're going to make it harder for students to attain postsecondary education.

Now, I have to say, Madam Chair, that I have great concern with some of the words that were just spoken by the Minister of Transportation and often with the things that are said on that side of the House. I don't have enough time to recognize everything that I have concerns with, but I will do my best here. The Minister of Transportation said that postsecondary institutions have been asking for these changes, have been asking to have enrolment targets forced upon them. I once again, as with most of the things that member says, question who he is hearing that from and would appreciate that that information be tabled if it is true. But the minister said that postsecondary institutions are entrepreneurs and that this government is simply unleashing their potential. By scaling back their funding to the tune of tens of millions if not hundreds of millions of dollars, they are unleashing these postsecondary institutions' entrepreneurial spirit. Unfortunately, I certainly disagree with that point. The fact is that this government is rolling back the amount of funding they get through grants and other means and is telling them that they need to meet arbitrary enrolment targets that this Advanced Education minister is going to once again arbitrarily set out.

11:30

Now, the Minister of Transportation just said that this amendment doesn't need to be in there because the Advanced Education minister consulted on enrolment targets already. Well, Madam Chair, that doesn't change the fact that any time this minister comes forward with an arbitrary enrolment target that they want to set out, there should be consultation done. It's one thing to say that these postsecondary institutions were consulted on the idea of enrolment targets, but then to say that they are totally fine with any enrolment targets that might be set out in the future is absolutely ridiculous.

Now, the Minister of Transportation once again also said that we need to listen to these postsecondary institutions, that they're asking for enrolment targets, that they're asking to have their funding reduced because somehow that ties their hands, and so now these institutions are going to be able to unleash their full potential. Well, really, what does that mean, Madam Chair? That means they are going to unleash their full potential to charge more to postsecondary students.

Now, I think about situations in my own family. I've spoken, to some extent, about the fact that my mother was 14 when I was born. She raised me as a single mother until I was about 12 years old, and she worked extremely hard to not miss a beat going through high school and then to further obtain a bachelor of arts degree from university. I think about the impact that pieces of legislation like Bill 20 have and the idea of enrolment targets, that a government should be able to arbitrarily set out targets for what kind of education students should receive, once again not even

touching on the fact that this government has rolled back minimum wages for people like my own mother, who was trying to simply get by with what was given to her. It's very concerning, Madam Chair.

Once again, we have a government that is trying to force enrolment targets, that is forcing these institutions, by the reduction of grants and investments to postsecondaries, to actually increase tuition for students, and somehow the government expects us to celebrate that fact.

Now, the fact is, Madam Chair, that when we look at this legislation compared to the last piece of legislation that we were discussing, it's quite clear to see – and we see it every day – that this side of the House and the NDP caucus, compared to the UCP government, have very different ideas about what is good and what is bad regulation. On one hand, we have a government that is taking away regulations that should be in place. On the other hand, where we see regulations that shouldn't be in place like enrolment targets, they are actually putting them there. Of course, it's quite a difference of opinion here and a difference of ideology, but I am very concerned with what we're seeing.

The fact is that this government seems to be taking action to make enemies with every order of government. I'm not exactly sure why, but it continues on with postsecondary institutions. Well, I suppose I have some ideas, and it seems that when we look at the changes that this government has made to advocate roles, they're appointing party insiders, the president of their party at some point, to be the advocate for their constituents when they have concerns with the direction of the government. This UCP government has now put in place one of their party insiders, who is supposed to advocate for these people who have concerns with the direction of the government. Madam Chair, that's concerning.

We see it again with changes to grants and overall funding for nongovernmental agencies. We see a reduction in grants for these organizations because, once again, these organizations are typically the ones that come forward with concerns about the direction of the government, but this government is cutting them off at the knees. Really, we see the direction of this government is that they want to point fingers at anybody but themselves because they don't believe that they should take responsibility for the actions that they are taking.

Once again, when we say that there should be consultation of at least six months with these postsecondary institutions and with their faculties and with students, it is absolutely reasonable that that consultation happen before arbitrary enrolment targets are put in place by this Advanced Education minister, who has their own biases just like any of us do, who has their own ideas of where somebody should go to school or what degree they should be obtaining, which is very concerning.

As the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar mentioned, in his time as the Minister of Advanced Education we went from the most expensive province to obtain advanced education in to middle of the pack because of the tuition freeze. Now, once again, this UCP government is taking that in the opposite direction. They want us, as the Minister of Transportation spoke of, to take the handcuffs off these postsecondary institutions so that they can charge higher rates to students to obtain education.

We see this general philosophy from this UCP government. They truly seem to have something against people that are working to obtain higher levels of education. Once again, we see it from their reduction in minimum wage. We see it from tuition increases. We see it from these enrolment targets that are before us. They truly do not believe that education is the great equalizer. They truly do not believe that students should be able to choose what education they are going to be receiving.

Once again, on top of these arbitrary enrolment targets that this government is trying to put in place, they're scrapping education and tuition credits. The Minister of Transportation seems to support all of these changes. I question who this government consulted that said: we should get rid of education and tuition credits. This government scrapped the tuition freeze, making postsecondary education more unaffordable and making it harder now for students to obtain postsecondary education. This government increased interest on student loans. Really, we are seeing that this government is doing everything in their power to hide the debt that they have created from their \$4.7 billion handout, a budget that just yesterday received – well, Moody's gave it a failing grade and reduced our ability to get, at the end of the day, cheaper loans.

This government once again scrapped grants for institutions, which means, as the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford mentioned, higher fees for things like parking and resident fees, which is very concerning. At the end of the day, this government is saying that they've uncuffed the hands of these postsecondary institutions, but what they've done is that they've unleashed the ability for compound levels of fees to be forced on students, not just domestic but international, which is a whole other concern about the fact that this government is going to – really, going back to the fact that we should be aiming to increase the number of people going to postsecondary and achieving degrees and diplomas and certifications, this government is actually working against that entirely through this legislation and the other pieces that we've seen around postsecondary education.

The minister has also said in the past that they plan to reduce grants by half over the next few years, which is very concerning. Once again, postsecondary institutions only have a couple of levers. One of them is receiving funding from the government, of course. So when this minister's direction is that we are going to continue reducing these grants and that if you don't hit these enrolment targets that are arbitrarily set by the minister, that could potentially mean a reduction in funding – we see this carrot-and-stick show from this government day in and day out. They're saying that if you don't meet our demands, we are going to cut your funding, Madam Chair. That's very concerning.

The fact is that this government speaks in coded language around their true motives. It's simply the fact. The Minister of Transportation is the perfect example of it. I've gone on at length about the comments that he's made, but really the fact is that what he's saying, that the government no longer wants to help these students and is going to leave it up to the free market to, at the end of the day, Madam Chair, take advantage of these students, is what is going to happen.

**11:40**

Now, once again I'm going back to thinking about my own mother, who obtained a degree, but it took many years, many, many years, possibly even decades to get rid of the cost of tuition, get rid of that student loan that was taken on at the time of that postsecondary education.

Once again, this minister says that we need to think about whether students want to pay more upfront so that they don't have to pay their fair share in taxes down the road. Madam Chair, that comment was absolutely absurd, to say that somebody might want to pay \$20,000, \$30,000 more for their tuition right now to obtain their degree so that they might not have to pay, you know, whatever it might be, \$10 more a year, to help somebody else get postsecondary education. This is really one of the best contrasting ideas to show what I believe in personally compared to what they believe in. They believe that things should be paid more upfront. It's very concerning, Madam Chair, that this government thinks that

it's okay for students to pay tens of thousands more over the next four years. It's very frustrating.

Madam Chair, it's safe to say that I will be supporting this amendment. At the end of the day, it's very common sense. It's straightforward. If this Advanced Education minister plans to force arbitrary enrolment targets on these institutions, it should be consulted on. It's one thing to say that there was consultation done around the idea of enrolment targets, but to say that any enrolment targets set moving forward should not be subject to consultation is absolutely absurd. It is in everyone's best interests – this government, these postsecondary institutions, and the students and faculty there – to have these consultations before putting in these enrolment targets, which may or may not be the right thing to do.

Once again I appreciate my privilege of being to speak to this legislation and this amendment. I think that everyone should take a moment to think about their own privilege when it comes to making postsecondary education more unaffordable for students into the future. I think it would do us all well to think about that.

Madam Chair, once again, thank you very much. I hope everyone will take the time to support this amendment to Bill 20. Thank you.

**Mr. McIver:** I just can't help but point out that near the end of the rant that we just heard from the hon. member, he compared a \$20,000 to \$30,000 increase in tuition to paying \$10 more a year. Just so the folks watching at home understand how the NDP thinks, they're counting on people that graduate working at least 200 years, and that's without interest payments to pay it back. That's what he would have them do.

I just wanted to say that the hon. member, while he was trying to trash out what was said before, didn't put a lot of thought into what he said, and I think that that's kind of illustrative of his entire speech. I just wanted to point that out.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. It gives me great pleasure to speak to this amendment, which I hope members of this House will support, notwithstanding that the last comment from the Minister of Transportation didn't make a lot of sense. I would hope that you wouldn't support anything he says, because he doesn't make a lot of sense sometimes.

Madam Chair, I do want to say that with university tuition, postsecondary tuition, becoming quite expensive under the UCP government, you know, what we potentially will see is the Minister of Advanced Education getting involved in setting tuition caps on different faculties and those faculties raising the grade point average to get into faculties. If that happens, then we could see, with the handcuffs that the Minister of Transportation said they're taking off universities, universities jacking up the costs of tuition and limiting the number of people who will get into programs and tuition and university education becoming quite unaffordable for the greatest number of people.

We don't want that to happen, Madam Chair. What we want is for people to be able to get into postsecondary education because that's really what is the key to a better life. A university or a postsecondary education or a college education is the key to achieving the kind of sustainable, great jobs that people want. I hope the pages here take note that you need to continue on with your education; you need to go to postsecondary because that's the key to a life that you can enjoy and afford down the road. But the UCP is making it quite unaffordable for these pages and others in the near future.

## Chair's Ruling Referring to Employees of the Legislature

**The Chair:** Hon. member, there have been instances in this House where employees of the Legislature have been used in our debates, for or against, those types of things. It's not helpful for the tone of this House. I would ask you to refrain from doing that in the future.

### Debate Continued

**Member Ceci:** I was just pointing out the cost of university or postsecondary education. But I do want to say that one other factor in this bill that's going to make it harder to get into university – and it relates to tuition and the amendment that we're recommending – is the change to the family benefits that is happening in Bill 20. What we'll see . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you again, but we are on amendment A5.

**Member Ceci:** Yes.

**The Chair:** When we are not on amendment A5, you can speak to other parts of the bill.

**Member Ceci:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

**Member Ceci:** With regard to the expensiveness, the UCP's directions in this bill will result in fewer people getting into postsecondary education. Of course, we want to ensure that everybody has the means to get into university, and with this bill they won't.

With our amendment, which says that "after consultation of not less than 6 months with public post-secondary institutions, and their affected faculties and students," that is a much better way of gaining a more complete understanding of the negative impact that this bill will have on postsecondary institutions.

When I went through postsecondary, it was affordable because not only were there loans and grants but there was my own work in the summer. I could put that all together and get through the four years of my first degree and the three years of my second, a postgraduate degree.

The fact that it's going to be tougher and that we are moving forward quickly with regard to it in terms of Bill 20 is something that all of us should take into consideration, that should give us pause, because really, in trying to find out if there is a negative impact, the people who are the experts are the affected faculties and students. And there hasn't been a great deal of consultation. As you can see, the students aren't even included in the bill's original motion with regard to this area, that we are trying to make sure does not happen. The students really are the masters of understanding the impact on their lives with regard to the changes that Bill 20 is bringing forward, and they're not even considered, Madam Chair.

This current government has taken drastic and fast action, and it's in a shock-and-awe kind of perspective, that they're going to change as much as they can as quickly as they can, and we'll figure it out when we get to figure it out. Well, I'm saying that that is not the way that you make good public policy; the way that you make good public policy is by taking the impact of what is going on before you change things, taking the potential impact of the changes and their effect on people before you make the changes.

Now, we haven't done everything perfectly on this side; we have taken some knocks in that regard, so I guess I'm sharing this information as a person who has not done everything perfectly but is trying to change positively as I go forward. Of course, I think that our former Advanced Education minister and his argument around the presentation of and support of this amendment to Bill 20 is what I'd like to see taking place and what we hope that members on the other side will agree with.

Of course, the cost of a university education: I'll just go back to that for a second, something that – societies who have great educational systems try and make sure that their system is affordable. Now, in the United States we know, with the recent controversy there about people trying to get into specific universities and not doing things properly, that they're trying to buy their way into those universities. That's not something we ever want to see in this country, in this province. We want it to be affordable for all people who choose to go to university. Unfortunately, there's too much in this bill that makes life unaffordable for Albertans who are wanting to undertake that.

Madam Chair, I'm going to sit down, but I hope members on the other side consider this motion and support it with all their might. Thank you.

11:50

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Before coming into the Legislature, I always was taught that you're supposed to speak less, be as concise as possible, and it's kind of a different environment sometimes, where it seems that sometimes we hear a lot and not very much.

I want to just speak against, of course, the amendment at issue here. I appreciate the spirit in which it is intended. The member opposite said that he wasn't perfect, and I heartily agree that the entire members opposite were not perfect, and Albertans had that same sentiment. But, you know, we are not perfect also.

The principle of consultation. I just want to share with the members opposite and all members in this House that, in fact, consultation in respect of advanced education is a continuous process. Indeed, this morning I had the opportunity to meet with our Advanced Education minister, central Alberta MLAs, and the president of Red Deer College to talk about how they will go forward and be innovative in terms of making sure that we deliver education in an economic, sustainable way that is focused on market outcomes. So consultation is something that has happened, is happening, and will continue to happen. As government we always seek to try and be the best that we can be.

You know, we talk about the red tape bill that we passed. In my mind, the important message underlying the red tape bill is that we are going to look for continuous improvement. We want to change the culture of government and in all areas seek to be better. Of course, that includes advanced education.

I'm speaking as well because education is something that I hold dearly personally. I'm so grateful for the opportunity that I had to receive an intentional education, and I use the word "intentional" purposefully. As we're able to provide students, the rising generation of Albertans, with opportunities where they can be intentional in the choices that they make to receive a high-quality education, they will have the opportunities to be self-reliant and seek happiness as they individually see fit.

But it's really important that we understand that the status quo is unacceptable. We know from the MacKinnon report that we are the most expensive jurisdiction in terms of educating our youth without better outcomes. Indeed, as mentioned, we have declining

enrolment. Unfortunately, I see the former Advanced Education minister sitting across the floor there, and we had the opportunity in Public Accounts to review the results of the Advanced Education ministry. Unfortunately, it really reinforces what the MacKinnon report said essentially, that we spend more. Even over the past years under the tenure of the prior government we spent more, and unfortunately our results were less.

I think one of the most concerning statistics that came out in the annual report of Advanced Education . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 20. I wish

to table all copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

**Mr. McIver:** Madam Speaker, it is 3 minutes until 12. I thank all hon. members from all sides of the House for their debate today and their contribution to the business of the House, but I think we have completed as much as we can at this point. I will move that the House adjourns until 1:30 p.m. today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, before we adjourn the House today, I would like to invite all of you to a Christmas carolling, nonpartisan style, in the lobby today. If you have an instrument please bring that. Otherwise, just bring your voice. We'd be happy to have you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:56 a.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, December 4, 2019

Day 52

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
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Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
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Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
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Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Reid  
Rowswell  
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Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Horner  
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Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have two school groups visiting us this afternoon. From Drayton Valley-Devon please welcome students from H.W. Pickup school, and from Edmonton-Decore welcome students from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic elementary. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, this afternoon I have somewhat of a bittersweet introduction to make. In the Speaker's gallery are two long-time LAO employees who are both due to retire in January 2020. Committee Clerk Karen Sawchuk has been with the LAO since 2001 and has clerked 20 different committees. We are so grateful to Karen for her service and dedication to our members and our province. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Bills and Journals Clerk Judy Bressmer started with the LAO in 2000, and for 20 years she has served in room 315, and for some 40 years she has been a public servant. I like to call her the original J.B., and during my time as both a staff member and member of caucus I have come to be able to know the absolute joy that it is to be able to work with Judy. Certainly, if we have interactions with House business, we will miss you next session. The place just isn't going to be the same without you. Thank you so much for your service not only to members and to Albertans but to the principles of democracy and freedom. Judy Bressmer, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Also in the galleries are some hard-working constituency assistants from Airdrie-Cochrane – Mikayla Houghton and Carole Vallet – as well as, from Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, Sharon Lencewich. Thank you so much for all you do in making our constituency offices run so well.

In the gallery this afternoon as guests of the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: representatives of the Muslim Association of Canada.

Today I'm also very, very pleased to welcome some very, very, very close family friends, some might say best friends, but that I'll leave to somebody else to determine. Please welcome Kealy Dube and Ethan Dube Estrada, friends of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, you can continue. It's okay. We have a number of introductions, and some of them are yours. Go ahead as well if you'd like to take your seats.

Also, a guest of the Minister of Children's Services: a constituent of Calgary-Shaw, Darren Moroz.

Also, here for today's international Human Rights Day are Earl Choldin, Bernadette Iahtail, and Prabhjot Punnia, guests of Edmonton-Ellerslie; from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood Maria Dunn and Leif Gregerson as well as April Eve Wiber; from Edmonton-Rutherford Joseph Luri and Michelle Nieviadomy; and from Edmonton-Meadows Miriam Thomas and Thomas and Marla Palakkamanil.

Almost last today is a very, very special guest as well of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, Benjamin Hauck and his family. They are visiting from the constituency. Benjamin is quite the artist. He actually won the art contest in the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora in order to be featured on the member's Christmas cards.

Members, if we could welcome those guests to the Assembly, I would greatly appreciate that.

Hon. members, we also have a virtual introduction of sorts. I understand that today the Member for Calgary-Klein's son is currently live streaming the Assembly with his grade 6 class at St. Marguerite school. Hello, Patrick. Daddy loves you.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Alberta MLA Awards

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, all hon. members will know that this week I put out a call for the first-ever annual Alberta MLA awards. I'm most pleased during these introductions to introduce to you, through me, all of those who have been voted as winners of the categories by you, the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Please rise as I call your name, and I'd kindly ask everyone to hold their applause until we have read out all of the winners: the most collegial MLA, the Member for West Yellowhead; the best debater, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland; best community outreach, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood; Alberta's most knowledgeable parliamentarian, the hon. Member for Airdrie-East; Alberta's best representative of constituents, the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler; Alberta's hardest working MLA, the Member for Grande Prairie; the most promising newcomer, the MLA for Calgary-North East. The MLA lifetime achievement award goes to the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West. Lastly, congratulations to Alberta's MLA of the year as voted by your colleagues, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Hon. members, your MLAs of 2019.

### Members' Statements

#### 30th Legislature, First Session, Accomplishments

##### Mr. Loewen:

'Twas just weeks before Christmas, and the province throughout,

People were positive, with no reason to doubt.

The UCP government implemented their plan, Passing bills promised in the platform they ran.

374 commitments were on the platform, 148 under way, and we're just getting warm.

The NDP and their media have voiced their despair, Claiming we're working so hard, it just isn't fair.

First bill up was to remove the failed carbon tax, Which will help the economy improve right to the max.

Next on the list was a job-creation tax cut To get our economy out of the rut.

Open for business act had a strong business case, Things like restoring democracy in the workplace.

Bill 6, to the joy of our ag sector, we did nix And replaced it with a well-consulted Bill 26.

In education we did maintain the spend. In health care we added \$200 million in the end.

Quadruple apprenticeship spots, job skills careers, Creating opportunities that were in arrears.

With red tape we have worked on reduction  
In order to increase corporate and municipality  
production.

Now indigenous opportunities, now fairness to  
newcomers,  
Now elected Senators, too;

On ministers, on backbenchers,  
And our fantastic staff, too;

To the top of the Canadian economy,  
To the top of public services.

Now the Legislature session has dashed away fall,  
So let's dash away, dash away, dash away, all.

But not before we talk about a few  
More of the promises made to you.

150 million more dollars to fight the addictions wave,  
To help with mental health, with lives to save.

When we found appointed Senators did not represent,  
We knew the process for Senate; elections were  
meant.

We promised a war room, so we could fight back  
Against foreign-funded radicals, who are on the  
attack.

These things I have listed, named just a few,  
We've accomplished with strong work from the UCP  
crew.

The ministers, it seems, have never slept  
As each day we announce: promise made, promise  
kept.

Now as we go into the Christmas season,  
We must remember Christ is the reason.

Giving hope and light to Albertans at this time,  
Merry Christmas to all who have enjoyed this fine  
rhyme.

1:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Human Rights

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On December 10 we mark Human Rights Day and the 71st anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights, a milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being. A Canadian, John Peters Humphrey, as the first director of the United Nations' division of human rights, prepared the preliminary draft of the universal declaration of human rights for the executive group that was chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt. Mr. Humphrey spent the rest of his life working for human rights in Canada and around the world.

Today I invite all members of this Assembly to join with me in celebrating the progress made in advancing human rights. While we have made much progress, there is still much more work to do. We must stand up every day for human rights, starting with our own actions. We must respect our differences and stand together against those who promote hate and those who seek to divide us.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues know, I was born in Chile at the dawn of the dictatorship, a regime that saw the torture and killing of thousands of opponents and the thwarting of human rights complaints against its security forces. Unfortunately, Chile is once again going through the same thing. Although my parents brought

me to Canada when I was very young, it is this background that helped to form my early understanding of the need for all of us to speak about human rights.

I call upon all members of this House to recognize our global reputation as defenders of human rights and commit ourselves to standing up for human rights every day, in Canada and around the world.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-North.

### Human Rights

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in recognition of Human Rights Day, which is celebrated annually across the world on December 10. This celebration holds great significance because it was on this date in 1948 that the United Nations' General Assembly adopted the universal declaration of human rights. This declaration highlights the absolute rights that every person is entitled to as a human being, without discrimination. This year the theme for Human Rights Day is Youth Standing Up for Human Rights. Young people should be empowered as they play an important part in this positive change.

I also rise in appreciation of fundamental human rights that we as Albertans and Canadians enjoy and cherish here every day in this country. We are a country that respects the importance of freedom of assembly to allow people to voice their discontent. For many people here, the concept of having our fundamental rights disrespected is incomprehensible. We in Canada cherish freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of religion. However, in many parts of the world, like Kashmir, Hong Kong, Iran, Syria, Cuba, and Venezuela, human rights have been reportedly violated. There are people fighting every day for their most basic rights to be respected.

The simple fact is that when humanity's values are disregarded, we are all at risk. We have seen this play out many times throughout history. We must work together to ensure that these rights are protected for all. Our shared humanity is rooted in these universal human values. We celebrate the world's success in moving forward on human rights for all, but we must remember those who are still fighting or even died standing up for their rights.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Violence against Women

**Member Irwin:** December 6, 1989: 30 years ago the lives of 14 women were taken at l'école Polytechnique in Montreal. They were murdered by a man who hated women, a man determined to kill feminists. Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, et Annie Turcotte: we remember them.

We remember the countless women who have lost their lives to violence before and since then. We know that women continue to face high rates of violence. Every six days in Canada a woman is killed by a current or former intimate partner. Alberta has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the country, and the severity of the violence is on the rise. We know that the rates of violence against trans and nonbinary individuals and two-spirit people remain dangerously high. Indigenous women are assaulted almost three times more often than nonindigenous women in Canada.

Today we remember those killed at l'école Polytechnique and all those who are victims of violence. Today we must also reflect on

the changes we need in order to make sure this violence doesn't continue. We stand together in remembering lives lost and fighting for a better future for women and gender-diverse folks.

We must stand with more than just words. This means investing in our communities. This means education: consent education, violence prevention, and more. This means demanding more from our legislators, from all of us, from those who might minimize violence against women. Let's not just say that we'll be better; let's do better.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

### Big Hill Haven Women's Shelter in Cochrane

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On any given night in Canada 3,500 women and their children sleep in shelters because it's not safe at home. Often women in turbulent relationships are so fearful of reprisal from their abuser that it may take months or years before they can build up enough courage to leave. When an abusive partner discovers that their victim is seeking support or threatening to leave, the abuse can and most often does increase. Half of all young women who were victims of domestic violence homicide in Canada were murdered by somebody with a prior conviction, that was most often for a violent offence. I'm proud to be part of a government that recently passed Bill 17, which emulates Clare's law, to help prevent domestic violence in Alberta.

Addressing domestic violence is not an individual pursuit. In my constituency the women at Big Hill Haven Women's Shelter have been working tirelessly to provide housing, counselling, and crisis support for women in our area. Big Hill Haven was founded in 2016 to address the lack of safe shelters and resources for women fleeing or living with domestic abuse. Those serving at Big Hill Haven have directly assisted more than 150 women escaping abusive relationships. They receive six calls per day from people looking for help, guidance, or support. Mr. Speaker, I truly admire the work being done at Big Hill Haven. It is an essential resource in my community for women and children suffering in isolation.

Right now Big Hill Haven is partnering with various organizations to open up opportunities for community-based housing in advance of building a permanent shelter. I encourage our community to reach out and help raise awareness for the invaluable work that they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Education Funding

**Ms Ganley:** Sir Thomas More:

For if you suffer your people to be ill educated, and their manners . . . corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this, but that you first make thieves and then punish them?

Cutting funding to education does not save money. This UCP Education minister's cuts will hurt children, hurt communities, and hurt the bottom line. The evidence is overwhelming that money spent on education, on mental health, on housing, and on social supports generally pays us back in savings in the justice system. The cuts the Education minister is making today will cost far more than she saves. She will save \$10 today that we know will cost \$1,000 in the future.

You want to talk about debt? What about the human potential this Education minister is wasting? What about those who only needed a little support to learn to read when they were six and could have gone on to be contributing members of society instead of spending their lives in and out of jail? This is a debt we will all carry.

Even worse, they talk about performance-based funding. It means that students who come to school hungry get less. It means that students who can't focus because of violence in their home get less. Most of all, it means that those who are the most vulnerable, those students who are at the greatest risk of feeling like they have no path forward to success, will receive less. Those who have witnessed or been victimized by crime, who are vulnerable to gangs just waiting to take advantage will not receive support.

Cuts to education hurt. They hurt people, they hurt society, and they do hurt the bottom line.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has the call.

### Economic Indicators

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night Moody's downgraded Alberta's credit rating, and the Finance minister sprinted to a microphone to say that it was someone else's fault. To be clear, there isn't a word about our government in the Moody's report. What it does do is lay the responsibility for this downgrade squarely on this government's failure to diversify the economy or to get our energy sector moving and on the revenue pressure created by the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. Will this Premier accept the fact that his \$4.7 billion corporate handout is hurting Alberta?

**Mr. Kenney:** There is no such thing, Mr. Speaker. However, RBC Economics said about this year's budget, "At last, Alberta has a credible plan at hand to make significant inroads [on fiscal balance]." Professor Tombe said: this is a gradual path – it is not an austerity budget – with reasonable economic assumptions that are conservative, and the spending restraint they have built in to balance by 2022-23 is entirely credible. CIBC Capital Markets said, "In our opinion, [the] budget which confirms an accelerated path to balance . . . moves Alberta further along an improving credit track." That's what they said.

**Ms Notley:** Yet while the oil price remains stable, the credit rating went down.

Moody's says that Alberta's economy remains concentrated and dependent on nonrenewable resources. That's another way of saying that Alberta needs to diversify its economy. Everyone knows this except the Finance minister. He goes on to say that diversification is a long-term luxury. I've got news for this Premier and his Finance minister. It is not a luxury; it's a necessity. Why can't they understand that?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I've got news for the NDP leader. She left this province in a recession, with a jobs crisis and a fiscal crisis.

The National Bank financial markets said about this budget: "There is a new and serious plan to restore the province to fiscal health. It's a deficit reduction plan focused on spending restraint." Laurentian Bank said, "The bottom line for bond investors is that the UCP government can restore Alberta's . . . finances." The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce said: "[It is] a clear path back to balanced budgets . . . [It's] needed to avoid burdening future generations with unmanageable debt."

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what this government did was increase the deficit by \$2 billion. Bottom line: these guys promised Albertans jobs and economic growth, but the economy is in trouble,

and jobs are disappearing. After almost a century Halliburton will close its cementing operations in Alberta. That means significant job losses across the province. These layoffs have to be reported to the government. I'll ask the Premier: how many Albertans have lost their jobs at Halliburton? Or is he just too embarrassed to say because, in fact, he's failing to deliver on his promise to Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we're all concerned for those workers. The truth is that Halliburton laid off far more people in Texas today.

Mr. Speaker, it is outrageous for the NDP leader to talk about an increase in the deficit this year of \$2 billion. Every penny of that is attributable to their reckless crude-by-rail contracts of over \$4 billion, signed during the formal election period and then booked in this fiscal year for this government to take responsibility for their fiscal irresponsibility, in addition to the structural deficit, in addition to raising our debt from \$13 billion to \$65 billion. That's the fiscal disaster they left us with.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition has a second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Sooner or later this Premier is going to have to take responsibility for his own actions.

### Health Care Funding

**Ms Notley:** Now, yesterday he tried to lecture the House, budget documents in hand. To be clear, we've read them, too, Mr. Speaker. The Health budget grows by just under 1 per cent this year while inflation plus population will be more than 3 per cent. Next year it's much worse, just a \$6 million bump at the same time that the Premier will find \$30 million for a secret campaign slush fund, also known as the war room. If the Premier could only be sincere. I know he understands that he's cutting health care in real terms. Why not be honest about it with Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more honest than the numbers. Last year's Health operating budget was \$20.409 billion; this year, \$20.610 billion. The Health budget continues to go up, not down. Now, this is after a 15 per cent increase in recent years. This is by far the largest health care budget in Canada. It is 30 per cent higher than the Canadian average on an age-adjusted basis, yet we have higher infant mortality and lower life expectancy. It's not acceptable. We need to work to find efficiencies.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier stood in this House with a bald-faced claim that the government is not laying off thousands of people, but that's exactly what the AHS letters say: for LPNs, 400 jobs gone; for RNs, 560 jobs gone; for support workers, 2,650 jobs gone; lab workers, 850 jobs gone; and consideration of much more to come. The Premier knows this. How can he be so disrespectful to the people he's sacking and the Albertans who need them by denying it?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, what is disrespectful is misleading and creating fear amongst workers as the NDP leader is doing. The letter is very clear. It is a statutory obligation to indicate the total maximum number of . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** . . . positions that could – the letter uses the word “could” – be affected, and those positions, I hope, are not affected if the unions come to the table in a spirit of compromise to find reasonable savings. But, Mr. Speaker, if positions are affected, it will be disproportionately through attrition and not layoffs. As well,

people will find other positions through contracting out provisions to the private sector.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 1:57.

**Ms Notley:** These brutal cuts are just the beginning, and the letters sent by AHS make that very plain, notwithstanding the Premier's desire to lawyer up. Bed closures, facility closures, relocation of services, reducing and ceasing of services: all of this is in black and white, words on paper. It's a dangerous path to American-style health care. This is not what the Premier ran on. It is a bait and switch. If the Premier thinks I'm wrong, will he stop running away from debate and defend his position with facts rather than name-calling and half-truths? [interjections]

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, (a) we are debating right now, (b) who specializes in name-calling in this place? The same NDP that's heckling me right now, because they're still so angry seven months later, angry with Albertans for firing them because of their jobs crisis, because of their fiscal crisis, because they increased health spending but got longer wait times. They made us pay more for less. Those are some of the reasons they were fired. We're going to do everything we can to get Alberta out of the hole that the NDP dug us into. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has a question.

### Rural Police Service

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks a historic tax grab being downloaded onto the people of Alberta. The Premier and his Minister of Justice are celebrating an additional 300 police officers being added to combat rural crime, but this provincial government is not contributing one single dollar. Instead, they are downloading \$200 million onto municipalities, who are already looking at cuts. To the Premier: will you admit that it's actually property tax payers who will foot the bill for more police?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we're proud of the historic partnership that we launched today, the largest investment in rural policing since the march west. It's not lost on me that the members opposite have ignored rural crime. We offered to get all the members opposite on a bus to come down to hear about rural crime. They missed the bus. They've missed the bus on rural crime for four years. They continue to miss the bus on rural crime.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No doubt this government is out spinning this as a historic day for the Premier and the minister. I support adding police, and so does this opposition caucus. What I don't support is massive tax hikes on Albertans already struggling because this government hasn't created one single job. To the Premier: have you determined how much more Albertans will pay in property taxes for these added police?

2:00

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, it is laughable that they say that they support more police on the other end. They had four years to act on rural crime and did not do anything material on the file. [interjections] This is the largest investment, a new partnership, a seat at the table for rural municipalities to make sure they have their voice heard, their concerns heard. Policing is at its best when local representatives have their voice at the table. That's what we did

here. This is historic. We should be proud of this instead of heckling it.

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, we did make a commitment and support police in combatting rural crime. The difference is that we put our money where our mouths are. We invested in rural police. We didn't give \$4.7 billion away to already profitable corporations and then ask Albertans to pay out of pocket to keep their communities safe, and we didn't have the audacity to take other people's money and claim that we were making an investment. To the Premier: is hiking taxes for Alberta families really something to celebrate?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of the work that our colleagues on this side of the aisle have done on this matter. We had the president of the RMA, the president of the AUMA at our announcement today. This is truly a partnership where we've listened to Albertans. We have listened to the rural municipalities to find a new path forward that's sustainable. The members opposite put their heads in the sand for four years on rural crime, not this side of the aisle. Rural Albertans know they have a true voice now in government to make sure that their concerns are addressed, to help keep them safe in their communities. They had ignored it for four years, not this side of the aisle.

### Community Grant Programs

**Ms Goehring:** This government's terrible budget will cut funding right from the heart of Alberta communities. They have decided to slash the community initiatives fund by nearly \$57 million. They have also cut the community facility enhancement program by \$13 million. These programs help community groups across the province run community-building events, after school programs, and maintain and upgrade facilities. We have a few leaders from those community leagues here with us in the gallery today. To the minister of culture: can you explain to them and all Albertans why you're gutting funding for community groups to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our ministry has funded \$11.3 million in projects to date. Just over 170 community projects have been funded, including \$95,000, actually, to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, to the Christian Life Center, that hosts a ton of not-for-profits. In this age of fiscal crisis and with civil society onside, I'm quite certain that we are going to be able to continue to fund and grow competency within the communities.

Thank you.

**Ms Goehring:** Cuts to these programs will have a devastating and lasting impact on how neighbourhoods thrive within our city and our province: that's not me speaking, Mr. Speaker, but a representative from the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues that joined us today to speak out about these horrendous cuts. To the minister: do you really want to be remembered for devastating community leagues here in Edmonton and right across the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, what I don't want to be remembered as is a government that spent \$5 million a day on debt servicing, something that that government did. Another thing

I don't want to be remembered for is \$2 billion in stranded assets in our energy industry that is now on the taxpayer. Another thing I don't want to be remembered for is not actually being able to build in our communities. We will continue to invest in communities on this side. Those dollars will be stretched, and we will make sure we're investing. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. It's important for the Speaker to be able to hear the answer to the question as well as the question.

**Ms Goehring:** Greg Lane from the McCauley Community League said that the cut to CFEP and uncertainty around this government moving the provincial lottery fund into general revenue may, quote, spell the end of our existence. Mr. Lane, who is with us here today, scheduled a meeting with the minister months ago to discuss the changes to these funds, and the minister ultimately stood up Mr. Lane, cancelling the day of. To the Minister of Community and Social Services and the minister of culture: will you agree to meet with Mr. Lane and the other guests today after question period to address their concerns about the changes to these funds?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to just give a little bit of advice based on the fiasco last week that happened. Before you do a press conference and before you go in front of the media with these questions, potentially the member could actually bring forward her questions here. If she has a legitimate question for me, I'm happy to answer it. As always, our doors are always open. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The hon. minister of culture is answering the question.

**An Hon. Member:** She's not.

**The Speaker:** Order. You might not like the answer, but she is answering.

**Mrs. Aheer:** As I was saying with my advice, before they decide to go down this absolute fiasco of misinformation, there are many, many opportunities to ask. We will continue to fund. We are invested in communities. Albertans put us here to do that, and we will continue to invest. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. The Leader of the Official Opposition will come to order while the Speaker is on his feet.

The hon. the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has the call.

### Energy Industry Investment in Alberta

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been struggling to combat low oil prices and limited takeaway capacity. It's been devastating to watch Alberta struggle when less than a decade ago the industry was booming. Investors now see Alberta as a high-cost, high-regulation market. As a direct result, the world's largest and most experienced energy companies are pulling out of Alberta. Since 2015 investment has fallen by 61.3 per cent in the oil and gas sector. Our government has made a number of announcements to attract overall investment to Alberta, to signal that Alberta is once again open for business. Can the Minister of Energy please share any progress that's been made in Alberta's energy to attract new investment?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you to the member for his question. Just today Canadian Natural released their 2020 budget, their capital plan for 2020, and let me tell you that it's good news. They're planning on spending an additional \$250 million next year. Let me

tell you what that means, Mr. Speaker. It means an addition of 60 new drilling rigs. It means additional rigs, and most importantly it means about 1,000 new jobs in Alberta. This isn't a coincidence. It isn't luck or chance; it's due to our government actions to bring back investment. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for her answer. Given that it is crucial for the government to implement policies that encourage investment in our economy and given that Alberta is a world leader in energy and environmental protection, that would make the world better off with more Albertan and Canadian energy, and given that our energy sector has a key role to play on the world stage as a supplier of oil given that we have the third-highest proven oil reserves in the world, can the minister share any particular actions made by the government that led to the increased investment of CNRL? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Like I said, it isn't coincidence or luck or chance. Let me read you a direct quote from CNRL today: due to the government's recently announced elimination of curtailment for certain conventional drilling in Alberta and its previously announced reduction in income tax rates, CN has increased its 2020 capital budget by approximately \$250 million over 2019 levels. Our plan is working. We're making progress. While the NDP scorched Alberta's economy with their socialist . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for her answer. Given that CNRL is only one announcement that has recently occurred given the depth of Alberta's energy sector, with various forms of energy being produced, and given that we've got a long way to go in attracting more energy companies to return to Alberta, where they were, and given that other companies, like CNRL, have taken note of the work done here to restore investor confidence in Alberta's economy, can the minister provide examples of other recent investments in Alberta that have taken place? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. I almost had a difficult time hearing the question, which I know is a surprise because I almost never have a problem hearing the question.

The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the NDP scorched our economy with their socialist agenda over the last four years, we're doing what we can to bring back that investment, and it's working. Just earlier this week Suncor sanctioned the Forty Mile wind power project in southern Alberta, a capital spend of \$300 million. BHE Canada announced its \$200 million Rattlesnake Ridge wind project. Greengate Power is investing an additional \$500 million in a solar project; Perimeter power, \$200 million in a solar project; and Suncor, \$1.4 billion in a cogen project.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-McCall is rising.

2:10

### Electricity Prices

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government ran on the promise of affordability for the people of Alberta. Page 36 of the

UCP platform was even titled Affordable Electricity for Alberta Consumers. The NDP capped the electricity price at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, a cap this UCP government just lifted, meaning that many Albertans will see electricity prices go up. Can the Minister of Energy please enlighten this House as to how removing this cap creates more affordable electricity for Albertans, or was there a typo in the UCP platform?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich for the NDP to talk about affordability of electricity. You know what each and every Albertan sees on their power bill every single month? It's the Balancing Pool adjustment, and it's a charge to each and every consumer to pay for the NDP's multibillion-dollar fiasco and ideological meddling in the power sector. Their meddling cost over \$1.8 billion, and every consumer in Alberta is paying for it every month on their bill.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that this minister's action will cause electricity bills in Edmonton to rise by 3.9 per cent this month alone and given that that announcement was made with little fanfare or notice, as is now common when the UCP government tries to slip in policies they know will make life more expensive, why won't the Minister of Energy tell us who she consulted with before deciding to hike electricity prices for all Albertans, or is this just to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 6.8-cent rate cap was something that the NDP brought in to hide the volatility of their movement towards a capacity market. We cancelled that transition based on extensive consultation with generators, producers, consumer groups, distributors. It was a very, very clear decision and a very easy decision to move back to the energy-only market, and it's working, because as you heard me say earlier, we have attracted more than \$1 billion of new renewable electricity to this province under that new market.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that our government was looking out for Alberta consumers when we introduced the cap on electricity prices and introduced stability into the system and given that this minister made the shocking claim that her decision to hike electricity bills came in part at the request of consumers, is the Minister of Energy really claiming that consumers were telling her that they wanted to pay higher electricity bills while big corporations get a massive \$4.7 billion handout? How can she make that claim with a straight face?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, what was running up the cost of electricity in this province is the NDP's ideological meddling in the electricity sector. [interjections] The jeers and heckling from that side won't fix the mess that they made in our electricity sector. Not only did they cause a \$1.8 billion loss to the Balancing Pool, but then they sued the same producers that returned the power contracts. That led to a huge lack of investment certainty. We're cleaning up the mess they made.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### Early Learning and Child Care Centres

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The three-year early learning child care pilot program will end in just a few months for 22 child care centres across Alberta. Many of these centres have made repeated requests to Children's Services and the minister for any information about whether the program will be extended. They've told me that all they've heard back is radio silence from

the minister. To the Minister of Children's Services on behalf of these 22 child care centres – I'm asking you to respond with a straightforward, yes-or-no answer – will you be extending the ELCC program for these centres beyond March?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said a number of times in this House, the terms of the pilot have not changed since they were introduced by the former government. The first 22 centres: that pilot is scheduled to end at the end of March. We are currently waiting for the data on the pilot project. We have heard from child care providers and parents across the board, some who are in the pilot program, but many across the province have expressed that this program is not working for them. It does not track need, income, wait-list, or employment. We will be working with those 22 centres in the new year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the minister continues to not provide a straightforward answer, these centres have no choice but to assume that there will be no more support from this government, and given that these centres have to make budget decisions now about what fees to charge parents, what to pay staff, and, in the case of at least some centres I've spoken to, whether they will even be able to stay open, to the minister. Your government was quick to hand out a \$4.7 billion no-jobs, credit-downgrade handout to corporations. Why can't you be as quick to tell these centres, their staff, and families about whether you will support affordable child care for all Albertans?

**Ms Schulz:** As the member opposite knows, Mr. Speaker, affordability in child care means a number of different things, and every province across this country did different things with the federal grant to address the child care needs of parents in each respective province. What I won't do is commit money we don't have to programs we can't afford, programs that Albertans didn't vote for, like Quebec-style daycare, in the last election, in April. I have committed to be transparent with these child care providers as we make decisions as to what the next steps are going to be. That will likely be in the new year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that one of the key aspects of the ELCC program is not just affordability but early childhood learning to prepare kids for school and identification of developmental and other needs and given that the minister has dismissed universal affordable child care as, quote, ideological and given that the minister has criticized the program because it didn't track income of families, indicating that she doesn't even understand what universal child care means or the program, to the minister: why don't you just come clean and admit that you've already made up your mind to put an end to affordable, accessible, and quality child care because it's more important to you to increase profits for corporations?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the fact that the pilot didn't measure employment or need or wait-lists are things that I heard from Albertans. Once again, the members opposite are completely out of touch with what Albertans have to say. I also want to be clear that the vast majority of these child care centres in the pilot were operational long before this pilot ever came into place. We are going to continue to focus on affordable, high-quality child care that

meets the demands of parents and children across this province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein is the only one with the call.

### Aquatic Invasive Species

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My son Patrick's love is water. He and I love to camp and enjoy the lakes across this province. Knowing his uncle's shared love for our lakes, the minister is no doubt aware of the invasive species of quagga, zebra mussels, and Asian carp and their threat to our lakes across the prairies. In fact, it was only last year that millions of zebra mussel shells washed up on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. To the minister: what is your department doing to combat this invasive species from taking hold of our lakes and waterways here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, aquatic invasive species, particularly zebra mussels, are a very big danger to our province, both to our waterways and our diversity, but also to our agriculture and infrastructure across the province. That's why we've invested \$7.2 million in this budget year into fisheries management, including aquatic invasive species. We have checkpoints all across the border, with the Environment and Parks staff working diligently to keep zebra mussels out of the province. I know, most importantly, that what my nephew Patrick likes the most are our sniffer dogs working for the environment department, who are our top dogs on the front line to protect us from zebra mussels.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the answer. Given that residents in Calgary-Klein also enjoy the many beautiful lakes across this province and given the need to preserve that natural resource for future generations and given that mussels aren't the only issue that our lakes and waterways are dealing with and given that invasive flowering rush crowds out our native plants and has the potential to fill an entire lake if left uncontrolled and given that it has already been established locally in waterways such as Lake Isle, not far from here, Minister, what is the government doing to combat this very real threat to our province's water bodies.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks.  
2:20

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. Mussels are not the only invasive species that we're concerned about inside our province. Flowering rush is a major concern for the province, particularly at Lake Isle currently. It's a complicated situation that's taking place up in that area. We're working closely with the First Nation communities as well as the municipalities in that area, ultimately looking for a solution where we can continue to deal with the epidemic that's taking place in that lake but also protect our waterways across the province from it spreading.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for your hard work. Given that the minister has also made a promise to take his nephew fishing and given that we also have an issue with invasive fish such as Asian carp, koi, and other pet



store fish like goldfish and given that just a few years back the city of St. Albert removed over two tonnes of fish from various stormwater facilities in local lakes, posing an immediate threat to ecosystems like the Sturgeon River, to the minister: what is this government's plan to combat this issue before rivers such as the Sturgeon are adversely affected?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the hon. member for the question. Aquatic invasive species of all types are a danger to our waterways, including carp and goldfish and other types of aquarium pet fish that are inside this province. That's why we support the Don't Let It Loose campaign across the province, encouraging people not to let any pet fish, either live or dead, be released inside our water systems, and we continue education programs north to south, east to west when it comes to that important issue to be able to protect our waterways, both for recreational fishing but, as well, as mentioned earlier, to protect our important infrastructure when it comes to agriculture.

**The Speaker:** I'd encourage Patrick to ask some more questions around the Christmas dinner table.

For now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

### Education System and Financing

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend at the UCP AGM the governing party voted for a dangerous education voucher model that will cut even more money from our public schools than this government already has. The Minister of Education wouldn't speak in this House when I asked her where she stood on vouchers, but elsewhere she's told parents and trustees that she won't proceed regardless of the AGM vote. To the Premier: will you confirm in this place that the UCP government will not bring in a voucher-style education model to Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to respond to this question on behalf of the Minister of Education. Our party campaigned on supporting and protecting Alberta's long-standing, successful tradition of school choice. Our 2019 election platform was based in large part on the policies passed by UCP members at the 2018 founding AGM, which included support for the status quo. Students attending independent schools continue to be funded at 70 per cent of the base instruction rate that public and separate school students are funded at, and the minister has been extremely transparent that we are consulting on a new funding formula moving forward.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that that sounds like a no, given that the resolution from Lacombe-Ponoka said that graduating students are "unemployable and increasingly radicalized by extremist ideologies," and given that yesterday's PISA results showed that Alberta students did exceptionally again this year, ranking eighth highest in the world for math and third highest in the world for science and reading, will the Premier please correct the record for the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, your party, and all Albertans who have been misled by your government and take 35 seconds to express confidence in Alberta students and our public education system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the PISA results, the minister did speak very publicly about this

yesterday. While we welcome Alberta's climb in global rankings, the increase is a result of a global downward trend. Our government respects the hard work that educators do every single day across our province to prepare students for their assessments, to succeed in their classes and for their futures, but we can and we absolutely will do better. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the Minister of Education and now the minister for children have continued to undermine public education through deep cuts, dismantling a long-overdue curriculum update, and saying that teachers are, quote, only in it for themselves and given that it seems clear that this minister has wilfully led an attack on public education, will the Premier take the holiday time to reflect and come back to this House ready to fight for kids, make the Education minister come back to this House fighting for kids, or consider who should actually be at the cabinet table? It seems like right now all she is doing is what she is told, not doing what the pin on her chest says.

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, our Education minister is doing incredible work on behalf of students across this province. When it comes to the funding formula, the Minister of Education has been incredibly clear and transparent throughout the process. We have maintained education funding at \$8.223 billion, the exact same amount that was in last year's budget, but we can and will do better. The previous government left us in a fiscal disaster. We have kept our campaign commitment to maintain education funding because ensuring that teachers are with students in the classrooms is the most important thing we can have. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Housing for Vulnerable Albertans

**Member Irwin:** Today the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters released their 2019 data report. Sadly, the numbers are bleak. Every six days in Canada a woman is killed by a current or former intimate partner. Alberta's rates of domestic violence are the highest in the country, and the severity of the violence is increasing. Over 10,000 women, children, and seniors were sheltered in 2018-19, and over 23,000 women and children requesting shelter were turned away due to a lack of capacity. To the minister of status of women. This is a crisis. What are you doing to address it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I also read the report. As I've said before, sometimes the most important information that you can get is not always the best information that shows us exactly what we need to do to move forward. I'm very honoured to work with a government that has seen increases in funding to shelters and also to be able to work with our stakeholders very closely to find out what those needs are.

Thank you very much for the question.

**Member Irwin:** Given that a lack of shelter spaces means that more and more vulnerable women and children are put in very precarious situations and given that we know that women fleeing domestic abuse often face the difficult choice between homelessness and returning to their abuser and given that this is particularly an issue in certain communities like Grande Prairie, where a lack of affordable housing means that many women have had to return home, where it's unsafe, to the Minister of Community and Social

Services: have you spoken to women fleeing violence, and will you commit to funding more affordable housing?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I have undertaken extensive stakeholder engagement, both with victims of domestic violence and those who are experiencing homelessness, and what I can say is that our government is very pleased that we're able to maintain funding for women's shelters, and we're doing our level best to make sure that vulnerable Albertans are cared for.

**Member Irwin:** Given that research suggests that as many as 30 per cent of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ2S-plus, often fleeing violent and unsafe home situations, and given that this is something that our government was so proud to make progress on – yet we learned in estimates that this government is not committing to funding, with the Minister of CSS saying that at this point there's no new investment allocated to that – to that minister. We know that without funding, many queer and trans youth are at risk. Why have you cut this funding, and will you commit in the House today to restoring it?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I absolutely disagree with the notion that we have cut any funding. My ministry has received the greatest amount of funding. In fact, our ministry's funding increased by 7.6 per cent. We are working with our community-based organizations to make sure that we're looking at the problems around homelessness, and we're doing our level best to ensure that those who are experiencing these issues are being cared for.

#### Market Access for Oil and Gas

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, our government campaigned on getting serious about the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion approval as Alberta needs the right economic conditions to attract investment back into our energy sector. There has been uncertainty for far too long, particularly around the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. But that uncertainty ends now. To the Minister of Energy. Proud energy workers in my constituency of West Yellowhead are grateful for your hard work that resulted in getting shovels in the ground on this project. Can you give an update on the progress of TMX and when we can expect to see completion?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you to the member for that question. In fact, just yesterday I myself alongside the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland attended an event marking the commencement of construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. I can report that the pipe is strung along the ground, along the right-of-way. The earth has been moved. Trenches have been dug, and the president of the Trans Mountain pipeline said that pipe will be in the ground and will be welded within the month. Mr. Speaker, the president said that the project will be built in 30 to 36 months, and we expect the federal government to make sure that that is brought across the finish line. We're looking forward to the completion of this important project.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

2:30

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given the lack of market access resulting in severe bottlenecks for our energy sector and given that many of my constituents rely on this industry to feed their families and given that we know that a strong energy sector makes for a strong Alberta, can the minister please elaborate on how the government will increase market access in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education – of environment.

**An Hon. Member:** One of the three Es.

**Mr. Shandro:** Close enough. *Hansard* will fix it.

**Mrs. Savage:** Close enough.

Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need TMX, and we need it to be completed on time. We also need the Enbridge line 3 project to be completed in the United States. It's been completed in Canada, and we're pleased to have heard earlier this week that it's now in service on the Canadian portion. We need these projects to move ahead. We need them to move ahead on time so that we can increase the capacity to move the growing production in Alberta. We're taking steps to reverse the last four years, which has a record of pipeline cancellations, vetoes, and delays.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Given that the minister was able to overcome obstacles at almost every turn that had the opportunity to further jeopardize the stability of our already fragile energy market and given that when they were in government, the members opposite actually hired anti-oil activists like Tzeporah Berman to help create obstacles, to the minister. Although significant, Trans Mountain is just one, sole pipeline project. How will this government continue to ensure that more projects like TMX are brought forward?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With positive news and momentum for both Trans Mountain and Enbridge line 3 this week, it's been a good week for pipelines. But we know we need to continue to ensure that these projects can be built in the future. That's why we're talking about Bill C-69 and Bill C-48 and the need to either have those pieces of legislation repealed or seriously changed, that's why I've met with my federal counterpart not once but twice, and that's why we're taking a group to Ottawa with the Premier next week to talk about the issues important to Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has the call.

#### UCP Nomination and Leadership Contests

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At their annual general meeting this past weekend the UCP had a chance to stand up against their leader's rejecting accountability in Bill 22 when they were presented with a motion that read, "the UCP shall provide for fair and impartial nomination election contests and leadership vote processes." Shockingly, this motion was defeated. I guess fair elections just aren't the way with this Premier. To the Minister of Justice: now that your boss's undemocratic actions have been endorsed by your party members, which level of accountability will you be firing next?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to be a member of the United Conservative Party, that is being led by a Premier who for the entire time that he's been a leader has been dedicated to an open nomination process. That's a contrast with the party that's across the way, that doesn't believe in democracy inside their party process. That's their business, though. How our party runs our party is our business. We trust members to pick the nomination candidates for their constituencies. We will always be committed to

an open and fair transparent nomination process, the complete opposite of the . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the rationale for this policy the UCP rejected was that “if . . . leadership campaigns are biased, or appear to be biased, the credibility of these democratic processes in the eyes of the party members and the public will be undermined” and given that surely by now the credibility of the current UCP leader’s campaign has been undermined, to the minister: will you support the call by Democracy Watch! to expand the RCMP investigation to include the firing of the Election Commissioner, similar to the call they made into Trudeau and SNC-Lavalin?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, Bill 22 has nothing to do with anything associated with criminal investigations and/or the RCMP. All it does is take the election process to be brought under the Chief Electoral Officer so one office maintains all investigations. That officer, an independent officer of this Legislature, has confirmed that is the case. Through you to Democracy Watch! what I would ask them is: what are their feelings on the opposition party calling on the Lieutenant Governor to do something that would be completely undemocratic and overturn a decision of the elected body of this House? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Government House Leader still doesn’t want to be open and transparent about who the special prosecutor is and given – I will try this again – that the minister himself may have been a victim of the fraudulent practices surrounding this Premier’s leadership campaign but now given that he’s playing an integral role in removing all accountability for fair elections in the province, to the minister. It’s time to clear the air and be accountable. Who is the special prosecutor, and did you help to pick them?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, that’s pretty rich coming from the opposition. This side of the House has been very transparent. The Minister of Justice has already released a statement. I refer that hon. member to that in regard to the issue.

But that party’s leader admitted that two of her members, when she was Premier, were accused of serious sexual misconduct, that an investigation happened, confirming that two of those members were accused of sexual misconduct, and that she had to take action. She then hid that from Albertans. She hid that from Albertans, Mr. Speaker. So which ones of those members over on that side of the aisle are the people that resulted from that investigation finding out that they had conducted serious sexual misconduct? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Education Funding

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, Edmonton-West Henday is home to many young families. Many children who live in the community attend public, Catholic, and francophone schools. These schools are both mature and new, and the students who study in them deserve to be in modern schools with reasonable class sizes and supports for students with special needs close to home. Why is the minister telling boards to lay off electricians, plumbers, and roofers to save teachers’ jobs when she is the one who is cutting their funding? Isn’t it the minister who should be responsible for restoring it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children’s Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. As Budget 2019 was developed, we were unable to predict how insurance markets would adjust insurance premiums for school boards in this upcoming year. As a result of those rising premiums – and we have spoken a lot about this in the House – in a variety of different sectors, we are providing boards with the flexibility to repurpose the operating portion of their IMR grant to support classroom or school-based staffing costs.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that it used to be illegal for school boards to increase school fees mid-year and given that the Education minister has changed the law and now families in Rocky View, Lethbridge, and Greater St. Albert Catholic have all been hit with school bus fee increases and given that I expect fees will soon rise for my constituents in Edmonton, too, will the Education minister give the constituents of Edmonton-West Henday any assurance that they won’t be the next ones to get saddled with the same mid-year burden that she has downloaded onto so many other Alberta families?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children’s Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has placed a significant priority on education and education funding, and that is why we maintained education funding at \$8.223 billion, the same as last year. Let me say it again, please: \$8.223 billion. We also, though, respect the local autonomy of school divisions to make decisions that best reflect their unique needs in their communities.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, given that a bill of more than \$300 per child just before Christmas is a significant burden and given that with this government’s failure to create jobs, spur economic growth, or diversify, many families are still struggling and given that the \$4.7 billion corporate handout from this Premier is a massive, massive failure, Mr. Speaker, will the minister and former head of the Catholic trustee association of Alberta explain to families why they should forgo Christmas presents for their children this year to pay for her failure to get them to school?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, once again – I don’t think I can be more clear – our Minister of Education has maintained education funding at the exact same levels as last year. The Minister of Education has been working incredibly hard with school divisions. We do have a fiscal disaster left to us by the previous government. We all have to look at ways that we can be more efficient with the dollars that we have to ensure that teachers are in the classrooms with students. But I can tell you that the minister has been very clear that, obviously, we respect the local autonomy of school divisions. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Natural Gas Industry Support

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government was elected on three main priorities: to get Albertans back to work, to make life better for Albertans, and to stand up for our province. An overwhelming majority of Albertans chose us to fulfill these promises, and we are proudly working hard to keep them. One sector that these priorities resonated with is our natural gas industry, which for far too long was neglected by previous governments. Jobs have been lost, companies have gone bankrupt, and our producers

were left feeling isolated and ignored. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas: what is this government doing to ensure that moving forward, our natural gas players have a say in how we revitalize this critical industry?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My office has been implementing key recommendations from the Roadmap to Recovery for the benefit of the natural gas industry. We're committed to consulting with the industry. By the way, I don't mean the drive-by consultations that the NDP tried to do with the farmers. I mean real, meaningful consultations. That's why my office announced today a two-month engagement process where we're going to be reaching out to the entire value chain of natural gas producers. I have to stress that this will be the single largest consultation ever done. They have a lot to say, and we're going to listen.

**Mr. Jones:** Given that this government has already implemented several of the recommendations included in the Roadmap to Recovery report, which have had significant positive impacts on our natural gas sector, and given that many of these recommendations have included short-term actions that have successfully brought much-needed and immediate stability to our natural gas sector and given that our natural gas industry requires long-term, tangible changes that will address the systemic issues plaguing our natural gas industry, to the associate minister: can you please provide an example of a long-term action that this government is taking to continue growing our natural gas sector?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's imperative that we create a strong vision and brand for Alberta's natural gas. We need to do that because the NDP worked as hard on the natural gas file as they did on their shadow budget. [interjections] Look, there they go again. The NDP is heckling. They're going hysterical, and they're lighting their hair on fire. Why? Because they can't handle the truth. Well, let me tell you that the truth is that we're going to put Alberta natural gas back on the map. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Jones:** Given that the former NDP government's refusal to acknowledge the dire state of our natural gas sector means that time is of the essence and given that the quick action of this government has already saved thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of investment and given that the natural gas sector as a whole still requires decisive and immediate action from this government to continue saving jobs, can the associate minister please tell this House when we can expect to hear about the results of this engagement? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking forward to getting the results of these engagement sessions. It is absolutely imperative because the Leap Manifesto NDP and their Extinction Rebellion allies will not be happy until they've succeeded in shutting in every gas well. Well, that's not going to happen on our watch. We got elected on a campaign to stand up and fight on behalf of all Albertans. That includes oil and gas workers. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

In 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Carbon Pricing and Climate Change Strategy

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the greatest fallacies of the previous NDP government was a carbon tax, and now we have a looming federal carbon tax, but the NDP and the federal Liberals are not considering the implication of this regressive tax on products that are inelastic, a tax that punishes those who are unable to adjust, a tax that punishes families who buy gas to drive their kids to dance or soccer practice. There is only so much Albertans can do to avoid these increased costs in one of the largest and coldest countries on Earth.

The federal government has received a recommendation that in order to meet Paris targets, the carbon tax would need to rise to \$200 or \$300 a tonne. In an attempt to reduce emissions, the federal Liberals will increase the cost of products that hard-working Albertans use every day. After all, this is Canada. You will have to buy natural gas to heat your home no matter the price. Most Albertans do not have tens of thousands of dollars lying around to buy a more fuel-efficient car or to retrofit their homes as a way to mitigate these additional costs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not advocating for inaction. However, we need to fight for the environment while also supporting our industry and a reduction in global emissions. As Albertans we believe in utilizing new technology and innovation. With our partners in the energy industry we need to be looking for a stronger symbiotic relationship with the environment. As an example, it would be great to see Asian markets utilizing natural gas over coal and for provinces in our own country to utilize waste treatment over dumping sewage into the rivers and oceans. We have the ability to solve these problems. However, protecting the environment is so much more than just carbon. There are countless facets that need to be considered. Albertans are world-class leaders in environmental stewardship, and it's time that the world caught up to us. We need to focus on exporting that expertise around the world. A local tax will not solve a global problem.

Thank you. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has a statement.

### Mental Health Awareness

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I learned that the gentleman who took his own life on Monday just outside of this Chamber, on the steps of the Legislature, suffered from depression and potentially PTSD. His name was Ken Chan. He was a retired military veteran, who served his country for 25 years. In a CBC news article the family advised that they hope that "by discussing the death [it] may be able to help someone else in crisis." PTSD and depression are real. Mental health is important, and we need to talk about it. The stigma around mental health needs to be addressed.

For myself this news has been deeply upsetting. This has really rocked me to my core. I'm very aware that I'm not doing well as a result of this news, and I am grateful that my colleagues have been checking in and asking how I'm doing. It's also important that we check in with our Legislature staff as this may affect everyone differently in their own time. I know for myself in the past I didn't feel that I wanted to let anyone know what I was going through. The

stigma is to show that it's not bothering you. I didn't want to let others down by showing my vulnerability. But there is strength in showing vulnerability; that is how you get help. We need to come together and help each other and check in on one another. If you or someone you know is struggling, please reach out, and please call the mental health helpline at 1.877.303.2642.

I did not meet Ken Chan, but I'm deeply grateful for his service to this country, and I truly hope that he is at peace at this time. My heart goes out to the Chan family, the military community, and all of those who are touched by this devastating news.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

### Federal NDP Energy Policies

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, folks, "it's going to be a ring-a-ding-dong dandy." If you don't recognize that quote, it was made by the late, great *Stampede Wrestling* announcer Ed Whalen, who passed in 2001. *Stampede Wrestling* was an entertaining, staged weekly drama and a personal favourite of my grandfather Lesley Tennent. I think the entire province stopped on Saturday afternoons to watch the antics. I used the reality of *Stampede Wrestling* as a comparison to the NDP standing up for the Alberta oil and gas industry. While entertaining to watch the antics, we all knew that it was staged.

On September 24, 2019, Jagmeet Singh posted a reality check to Justin Trudeau on the NDP's website. It simply stated, "You. Bought. A. Pipeline." A simplistic and childish show of his true thoughts on oil and gas. To Mr. Singh a pipeline is shameful. Mr. Singh also said in an interview: I believe the federal government has significant constitutional powers, but I don't think it's effective to impose pipelines on communities; it's not the way to go ahead. Mr. Singh views pipelines as an imposition and not a way to bring jobs and economic success to the province and country. But I wouldn't expect anything else from the party that supports the Leap Manifesto or appoints anti-oil activists like Tzeporah Berman to the oil sands advisory group.

Now, with the obviously anti-oil, antipipeline sentiments of their leader Jagmeet Singh out in the open – and make no mistake; there's no difference between a provincial NDP and a federal NDP – it's time for our NDP opposition to pick a lane and stay in it. Stand up and denounce your party's stance on the pipelines. Stand up and denounce your party's Leap Manifesto and its ties to the tar sands campaign. Tear up your membership and sit as an independent, or do nothing and show Albertans what is really behind the orange curtain, just a bunch of anti-oil, anti-Alberta protestors, tar sands and Leap Manifesto activists. "In the meantime and in-between time," this NDP has just been "another edition of *Stampede Wrestling*." Thank you, Mr. Whalen, for your many, many years of entertainment.

2:50

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to table a petition. This is an additional 650 signatures from Albertans from across the province, which is in addition to the 1,700 signatures on a petition I filed earlier this session. The petition is "to urge the Government of Alberta to continue the Early Learning and Child Care program (also known as \$25/day child care) at all participating child care centres beyond the 2020 or 2021 pilot project end date and to expand the ELCC program to more sites across Alberta."

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 20(1) of the Auditor General Act it is my pleasure as the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to table the following two reports from the office of the Auditor General, Alberta Community and Social Services: Income Support for Albertans; and Travel Alberta: Managing the Risks of Cloud Computing. Copies of these reports will also be provided to members.

Thank you very much, sir.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my good friend the Minister of Energy I have five copies of written responses to questions asked at Committee of Supply on November 19, 2019.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. Number one is from the CorpEthics history on their website, by Michael Marks, where they actually brag about shutting down the Keystone XL pipeline.

My second is five copies of the tar sands campaign strategy that was written in 2008. It very clearly shows an attack on Alberta's oil and gas industry.

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of over a hundred e-mails my office received about the changes to pensions that government introduced in Bill 22. These hard-working Albertans have contributed to these pensions with their own money. They're worried about the UCP government's recent changes to pensions, and they are very clear that they are telling the government: keep your hands off my pension.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-McCall, please.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a report showing how most of the continent's bird species face high climate risk because of shifting climate conditions. I have the copies.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

**Mr. Sabir:** I have another one.

**The Speaker:** Oh, correction. Continue.

**Mr. Sabir:** Another one is a copy of an e-mail from a concerned Albertan sent to the constituency office of Edmonton-Glenora, essentially sharing their concerns about how the cuts to education will impact their workplaces. I have the requisite number of copies.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of e-mails from the constituents from Sherwood Park, from Calgary-Currie, and from Red Deer-North who have sent e-mails and who are concerned about this government's approach with private schools and vouchers and who are concerned about the deep and significant cuts to education.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by St. Albert.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of letters here that have been sent to my office – some of them have been sent to other MLAs in the province; for example, a number here are from folks who live in Red Deer – who are deeply concerned about the attack on public education, a move towards a voucher model as endorsed by the governing party, and specifically one that I will mention who talks about being a 25-year cabinetmaker living in Red Deer, feeling that his profession isn't being respected by targeted education cuts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table copies of the speech made December 2 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in remarks to the 25th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Climate Change Convention in Madrid.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you. I have a letter from Ms Strychalski, titled Budget Cuts, to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Ms Strychalski is an educational assistant, and she's concerned that the cuts will make it far harder to teach children.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of a letter from David Park, a former rap program firefighter, who warns the government of the negative consequences of eliminating the rap program firefighters. I have the requisite five copies to table.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Edmonton-Meadows.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first tabling is a number of e-mails from folks all across the province who are quite concerned about this government's pension grab, particularly from a number of teachers.

The second tabling I have is from an educator who is quite concerned about all the cuts to education, and she's provided a very eloquent explanation of why she's so troubled.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows, followed by Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the article by Dominic Rushe, We Are a Cautionary Tale: Kansas Feels the Pain of Massive Trump-style Tax Cuts.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you for very much. I have several tablings here, Mr. Speaker. An article here from the *Edmonton Sun* titled UCP Rightfully Scaling Back the Public-sector Gravy Train, which shows that there are multiple opinions on what the government is doing here, not just the NDP version.

I have another article here from Calgary from the CBC, UCP Fiscal Plan Far From an Austerity Budget, Economist Says: Trevor Tombe Says Government Cuts Are Modest and Uphold Platform Promise To Balance Budget.

I also have one here from the *National Post* titled Trudeau and the Liberals Just Won't Stop Saying Things that Anger the West. It's an article that shows that we have our difficulties in dealing with Ottawa.

Another one here from the *National Post*, Some Good News for the West: You Have More Friends Out East than You Realize. It makes me realize that maybe we have more enemies here in Alberta, and they're probably sitting across the aisle from us right now.

An article here again from the *National Post* that says All Pain and No Gain: Alberta's Unpopular Carbon Tax Rises by 50% this Week, Fires Up Opposition. Obviously, this talks about the carbon tax that the members opposite love so much and want to have back, I guess.

I have another article from the *Globe and Mail* that says, Alberta Faces New Reality as NDP Raises Taxes. It says, "Alberta's [NDP] Finance Minister grudgingly admits it, and the province's opposition proclaims [that] the old Alberta Advantage is dead." That obviously goes back to the time when the previous Finance minister was at work in this province. I'm not sure what he was doing, but he was there anyways.

I have another article here from the *Calgary Herald*: Who Pays the Cost of Higher Corporate Taxes? If Companies Pass the Bill Down the Line It Could Mean Shrinking Paycheques, Higher Prices. Obviously, that's exactly what happened when the NDP raised taxes.

I have another article here from CFIB: CFIB Says NDP Needs Debate on the Alberta Economy. I guess this goes back to 2016. It says here: "When so many entrepreneurs are shedding jobs, and at serious risk of failure, that spells serious, fundamental trouble for Alberta. Obviously . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I would appreciate less commentary and more tabling if you have more.

**Mr. Loewen:** Just a couple left. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From the *Calgary Sun*: Reigniting the Economy Requires Bold Action. Obviously, that's the action that this government has taken to bring the economy back to order here in Alberta.

One last one, Mr. Speaker: Advantage? What Advantage? [The NDP] Government's Policies Have Virtually Eliminated Alberta's Competitive Edge. It's from the *Edmonton Sun*.

Thank you very much. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members . . . [interjections] Order. Order.

### Speaker's Ruling Tabling Documents

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we're at tablings, and, well, we've seen a significant use of tablings by both sides of the House. I'm not sure this was the original intent of tablings. Nonetheless, we are where we are. Perhaps you were thinking of Judy Bressmer on her last day, with respect to ensuring that there was lots to be done.

The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I'll move as Government House Leader, with my ability in the standing orders, to extend Routine to allow the Clerk to do the tablings that I'm sure she would like to do today.

**The Speaker:** Agreed.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Tabling Returns and Reports (continued)

**Mr. Dreeschen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have one tabling. It's from the *Alberta Farmer Express*, that was referenced earlier

today when we were debating Bill 26. It's titled Alberta's New Farm Safety Act Gets Warm Response.

**The Speaker:** Exactly how you table a document. Is there anyone else?

Hon. members, I do have one tabling today. I have six copies of a revised report from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

3:00

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mrs. Sawhney, Minister of Community and Social Services, responses to questions raised by Ms Renaud, the hon. Member for St. Albert, and Mr. Sabir, the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, November 16, 2019, Ministry of Community and Social Services 2019-20 main estimates debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At approximately 1:57 the hon. Opposition House Leader raised a point of order.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), (j). At the time, at 1:57, the Premier was responding to a question from the Leader of the Official Opposition where he, in his response, accused her of misleading. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I know that the Premier knows that that allegation against another member, as you've ruled in the past, is out of order. Now, I appreciate the fact that in about 15 seconds the Government House Leader will jump up and clarify that what he meant was something along the lines of: the opposition was misleading. I mean, I think it's important that members are aware of and pay special attention to the words and language that they use in this House, and from the fact that we know the hon. Premier has spent significant time in this House and in Ottawa, he should be a little more cautious with his words.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I was going to take a little swipe, but I will not.

**The Speaker:** Teamwork makes the dream work.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anyways, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, so I don't know what was said, but what I will say is this. Clearly, the Premier was indicating . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Sorry. Withdraw.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I know the former Deputy Premier and deputy leader of the NDP may want to rise on a point of order. Through you to her, I would suggest she waits for her turn.

I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but the Premier definitely was talking at length about the NDP misleading Albertans. However, he may have misspoken in the heat of the moment. If he did, I am happy to withdraw that comment on his behalf.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I appreciate the . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Did you just call a point of order?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I can't call a point of order right now, but I will in a minute.

**The Speaker:** That is correct.

Well, I appreciate the withdrawal. In fact, you are correct. He did make a statement that said, "What is disrespectful is misleading and creating fear amongst workers as the NDP leader is doing." I appreciate the withdrawal.

Hon. members, I consider the matter dealt with and concluded. We are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 20

#### Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A5 as moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West. Are there any speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will – the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's always a pleasure to rise and catch your eye, even at the most late of moments. My apologies. I wasn't quick enough to the draw there.

I think it's really important, when we look at this bill and we look at the amendment before us and look at how we want to move forward, that we consider very carefully and do think about how we talk to people – right? – that we talk to people and understand the issues and the impact that we're having on people.

Madam Chair, amendment A5 is very simple, I think. It's something that all governments should aspire to do. It's something that all governments should aspire to have in their repertoire, and that's the ability to actually talk to the people they're representing – right? – to actually have the conversations and understand the impacts that will be happening to the constituents.

When we look at the ministers that are sitting in our benches today and with us all the time, Madam Chair, they don't really seem to understand the impacts. Right? That seems to be the ongoing problem, that they don't understand the impacts of these changes. When they go in and they make these big, American-style, omnibus changes, with these big, American-style, omnibus bills, you have far-reaching impacts, and it affects every single sector of our economy. It affects every single family. That's something that's very concerning.

When you do this and you move quickly, as the government is trying to do with Bill 20, when they're trying to move so quickly in this omnibus style, it means that often there will be no understanding of how those impacts will affect individuals. There is no understanding. I believe it's important that when we talk about these enrolment targets, when we talk about how there are these goals for how many people should be in each class, we have this opportunity to consult with those institutions, with their faculties, with the students, especially with the students.

Madam Chair, we talk all the time in this House and the Conservatives in particular and the government in particular love to talk about how we're not here to choose winners and losers – that we're not here to choose winners and losers – but the government has then gone and given themselves the abilities in this bill to pick those winners and losers in postsecondary education, to pick the enrolment targets that they will have in postsecondary education,

without any consideration to actually understanding what the needs of the industry will be, without any consideration or understanding of what the needs of the students and the faculties will be.

Madam Chair, I know that the minister wants to do the right thing here. He wants to be able to have the ability to have some dynamic targets here, but without any understanding, without any consideration, and without any consultation you can create very, very difficult situations. You can create situations where, for example, suddenly the competitive averages to enter some of these programs are way out of whack, can be rising by, let's say, 15 per cent or more or 20 per cent or more in some institutions. That can be very concerning.

I know that when I was entering university in my computing science program, that was a competitive program. Just over one year the competitive average changed 7 per cent, I believe, and that's even concerning. Students in, say, grade 11, in looking at what institutions they want to enter and where they want to enrol, want to have some stability. They want to understand how they need to apply and where they need to apply. But when the minister gives himself this unilateral authority to make significant changes without consulting, without understanding the needs of these students, and without understanding the needs of the institutions and the students, that's where you can see some very concerning changes moving forward. Right? That's where you can see some actions that will have negative outcomes, outcomes that the minister could not possibly foresee.

That's not a slight on the minister. The minister has the opportunity to foresee some of these problems, not all of them but some of them. The minister certainly is able to have that conversation if he would agree to consult, right? The minister, for whatever reason – and maybe it's direction from this Premier – doesn't want to consult. I know this government has spoken at length about how they move so quickly that there's no time for consultations and that consultations are for things that aren't important. That's what this government has said. That's what they said during the campaign. It's what they have said here in this House as well, that they want to move extremely quickly with their legislation.

But this is a perfect example of where they've gotten that wrong. They need to slow down. They need to talk to the universities, the postsecondary institutions, the colleges, the trade schools. They need to have those conversations that allow them to understand what is actually going on, that allow them to understand what is actually happening in these classrooms, that allow them to understand what is actually happening in terms of enrolment, and that allow them to understand what is actually happening in terms of students wanting to enter different programs, Madam Chair. That's really important. Postsecondary education is one of the greatest equalizers, right after primary education. Postsecondary education allows people to earn more over their lifetime, allows people to be more educated, allows people to have more opportunities to access different jobs.

We believe this is really, really important. We believe it's really, really important to support students being able to access what they want, being able to support students being able to enter the fields they want and to have the support they need in these programs. But when the minister decides to unilaterally not do any consultation and to make significant changes to how the enrolment targets will be made without talking to even the affected faculties and students and the public institutions, Madam Chair, that's what's problematic.

3:10

When the students aren't at the table and when the faculties aren't at the table, we know that these effects will not work for them,

right? The minister would have done well to have listened to some of the students, to have them come and talk to him. I know that many of the organizations that represent students have been talking to the minister and talking to many MLAs in this Chamber, myself included, Madam Chair.

When these students come and talk to us, they speak again and again and again about how important it is to have a voice. But the minister, by rejecting this amendment – and I believe the minister will reject this amendment, and that's unfortunate – is telling students that they don't deserve a voice, that their voice is not important, that the needs of the people that are actually attending these institutions, paying their tuition, and trying to learn and give themselves a leg-up in life, Madam Chair, are not important. That's what this minister is telling them – right? – and that's something that's very disappointing. It's very unfortunate that we're seeing that, and it's very unfortunate that this is the precedent that this government is setting.

This government is showing that they are not in it for the working people, for the students, for the faculties. What they're in it for is their friends and donors who are part of their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. I think that's the type of conversation that we're having here. It's becoming abundantly clear that this minister does not care enough, in my opinion – he can rise and correct me at any opportunity. Clearly, he does not understand or does not care that the needs of the students need to be heard, the students and the people entering postsecondary institutions and the people that are going to be enrolled in postsecondary and trying to further their lives in some of the most formative years of young people's lives, with some of the opportunities for them to learn great skills in those years and stay and apply them here in Alberta. This minister does not think that those voices are important: the very people that we are trying to help, the very people we are trying to teach, the very people we are trying to engage and ensure have a strong path into postsecondary.

I think it's concerning. I think it's concerning when the minister doesn't seem to understand when we're talking about things like enrolment targets and we're talking about things like changing them and playing with the numbers, as it were, Madam Chair. But the minister needs to consider that it's not just about the numbers, right? It's about the people. It's not just about how we can fiddle a couple of percentage points over here or a couple of percentage points over there. It's actually about the people. It's actually about the students. Postsecondary institutions aren't a spreadsheet. Some of the administrators may think that they are, but indeed it actually is about trying to educate our students, have more learned people, and engage in things like research and development. Those are very important things. But at the core of it, at the core of what a university does, is that we bring people into universities and they come out with more information. They go in to learn. Those are the people that are the most affected by these changes.

When this minister chooses not to even consult with them, the people that our postsecondary institutions are there for, the students, when this minister says, "We don't need to consult with students; their opinion won't matter for us in this because we can set those enrolment targets and we can change what makeup they're in," that's very concerning. That's the type of thing that's very concerning. Those are the people – and perhaps the minister needs to be reminded – that it is his role to protect and to ensure have the best possible learning environment, have the best possible environment to grow and learn in, again, in some of the most formative years.

When we look at this omnibus bill, we look at the vast, sweeping changes that are being brought forward in this omnibus Bill 20. We look at this relatively simple amendment, amendment A5, that says:



well, maybe the minister, before moving so quickly forward, should actually just talk to people. Maybe he should actually understand what the changes that are going to be made will do. Maybe the minister should actually go in and listen to students, not just go in with a predetermined consultation that has a predetermined outcome, Madam Chair, but actually talk to those students and say: "What are your needs? What are your requirements? What do you want out of your education?" Those are the types of discussions where I think many students, whether they're in high school thinking about entering postsecondary or are already in postsecondary, whether that's a trade school or a college or a university, would have a lot to say to the minister. They'd have a lot to say about how they don't believe things like a 23 per cent tuition hike is valuable to them and that they don't believe their student loan rates should be going up 1 per cent, which, I believe, is over \$7,000 over the life of an average student loan, Madam Chair.

While we've had these conversations, we've seen the government make significant changes without consultation already, but perhaps in this case, when we're talking about how people enter school, postsecondary, the minister would stop for one second and actually engage because that's the sign of good governance – right? – to represent the people that sent you here. Those students are among the people that sent us here, Madam Chair. Indeed, in his role as the Minister of Advanced Education, that is one of his largest stakeholders, the people that he is ostensibly trying to educate. I think that it's very important that we have these conversations. I think that it's very important that this legislation reflects that, that this amendment is put forward so that we can have the understanding that these students do deserve consultation.

Madam Chair, they deserve consultation. It's not a thing where the government should come in and just say: oh, these cute little student groups, we'll just listen to them for a couple of days. That's not what should be going on here. What should be going on is that they should have this right in legislation right here to have their voices heard at the table. They should have their voices heard, and people should understand because in any other industry and in any other field, when we make these types of changes, the ministers always talk about how they've gone in and talked to all these groups, talked to all these different organizations, talked to all these stakeholders. But the Minister of Advanced Education, being responsible for our postsecondary institutions, really has very few stakeholders: the postsecondary institutions themselves, of course; perhaps some of the industries that will have uptake from the students who graduate from the postsecondary institutions. Of course, the number one stakeholder for someone who's the Advanced Education Minister would be the people receiving the advanced education in our postsecondary institutes.

When the minister decides that "Well, I don't need to hear from those people; it's not very important for me, and it's not very important for our government to hear from those people, those students," that's concerning. It's concerning to me because it means that the minister, perhaps, does not really understand what the breadth of this job is supposed to be, right? The minister, perhaps, does not really understand that he should actually be trying to protect and engage those students, right? Those students are the ones that are going to be deciding what streams they want to enter, what programs they want to enter, what degree programs or diploma programs or trade programs they want to enter. Whatever it is, those types of changes are going to affect these young people for decades to come – right? – for really their whole lives. For young people that are entering postsecondary institutions now, whether it's college, trade school, or university, it's actually going to shape how they live and how they work for almost the rest of

their lives, Madam Chair, and for most people the majority of their lives. Those are the types of conversations that we need to be having with these students, with young people, and talking about: what would be the best for you to be able to have a fulfilling life and a great work life?

Madam Chair, the minister, I think, perhaps doesn't understand that because this amendment is very simple. It says that maybe we should actually talk to those people and understand what their needs are and understand what their concerns are and understand why they may want or not want certain targets in certain ways and competitive averages that would change in certain ways, and what not. Of course, I think that it's important that we stand here and that we talk about these issues.

Again, I believe that the minister will vote this down, but when the minister votes against this, we will see very clearly that the people that the Advanced Education minister is tasked with educating, the students, are secondary to him, and that's extremely concerning. That's extremely concerning because it is contrary to what I believe his mandate should be, which is to ensure that those students are given the best possible opportunity to succeed in their lives and that they are given the best possible education so that they can have the most fulfilling lives that they can have.

I think that it's very interesting that we're seeing time and time again this Conservative government move, as they say, so quickly forward with this, without any consultation. I think it's very concerning and very telling that they're also willing to do things like give away \$4.7 billion to the wealthiest corporations. They're also willing to do things like Americanize our health care and in this case, Madam Chair, actually, I think, Americanize our education and our postsecondary education in many ways, which I think many Canadians and Albertans would not like or do not like.

3:20

I think that's the type of thing that speaks to our values, right? I think over here on this side of the House we think it's important that we actually engage with our constituents. We think it's important that we actually talk to our constituents and understand what those needs are. We think it's important that we actually understand what impacts this will have on families. On that side of the House, Madam Chair, perhaps they're a little blinded by ideology. Perhaps they're a little bit blinded by this desire to push forward. But what's going to happen is that there are going to be real impacts on people, right? There are going to be real impacts on families. There are going to be real impacts on students. Those are the people who are going to suffer, right? Those are the people that are going to have worse lives, basically. It's actually really unfortunate.

I know some of the members opposite are laughing here and whatnot, Madam Chair, but the reality is that this is a decision that young people have to live with for the rest of their lives, right? The changes we make today are going to affect people of approximately my age, a little bit younger now, for the rest of their lives, right? That's something that is very, very concerning, that this government doesn't think it's important to have those conversations, doesn't think it's important to have those consultations, doesn't think it's important to actually hear from the people we're affecting.

That's why we're here as the opposition, Madam Chair. We're going to bring those voices here to ensure that the government hears because, I mean, it is their job to listen to what the opposition has to say. I know it's in their talking points now, their key message, that they will not be lectured by the opposition. Well, here's a news flash. They've been here for two sessions now, a spring and a fall sitting, so perhaps they should have figured it out, but if they haven't, that's actually their jobs. It's their jobs to be here and debate and listen to what we have to say.

If they choose not to and they put their earplugs in, that's their prerogative, Madam Chair. I don't think Albertans appreciate that. I don't think Albertans appreciate them basically holding an affront to democracy, but I think it's important that we have those conversations. I think it's important that we have these conversations because the people that are being affected have the opportunity right here in this amendment to have a better life, right? We have the opportunity to make this better for them. We have the opportunity to make this more stable for them and to have those consultations.

Perhaps the minister is right. If he wants to make a change and he wants to change the target 10 per cent and then perhaps all the students agree with him, that would be wonderful. But we will never know because the minister refuses to consult. The minister refuses to engage and refuses to have those consultations. That's the type of thing that's concerning. If the minister knew he was right and if the government members knew they were right and truly believed that what they are saying is the right thing to do and the right way to move forward, the government would not be afraid of consultation, right? It's really, really telling when the government is afraid of accepting an amendment that just says: let's do some consultation. Right? That's what's really telling. It's really telling that the government is afraid of actually having these conversations, is afraid of letting the opposition stand up on this, afraid of having students actually talk to the minister. When they're afraid of actually engaging with the public, Madam Chair, that's what's telling. It's telling because it means the government knows that they're going to make mistakes but don't want to own up to it. I think this is one of those mistakes, to not allow this engagement, not allow this consultation. I think this is one of those mistakes.

The government, again, will reject this amendment, I believe, Madam Chair, and what we'll see is that, basically, students will not have a voice and will never know if they made the right decision or not. Even if they did make the right decision, Albertans will never know because they didn't consult. They chose not to. They were too scared to, and that's a little bit disappointing.

I'd encourage all members to vote for this amendment. I guess that will soon be determined, Madam Chair. I look forward to hearing from the rest of my colleagues. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just trying to figure out where to start, so many things said by the member opposite which are completely false and inaccurate and couldn't be further from the truth. So I just need a moment to try to wrap my head around – maybe I'll just point to the facts. I think that might be a good place to start. You know, we can just talk wildly off the top of our heads about things that could be and may be, but I would just like to talk about the facts.

You know, I encourage the member – maybe he hasn't had an opportunity – to actually look at the changes that are being proposed within the bill, particularly on page 64. I'm going to read it out just to provide some clarity. It says here very clearly in black and white: "The Minister, in consultation with public post-secondary institutions." So there's not a "may." There's not an "and." There's not an "if." It says there very clearly: "The Minister, in consultation."

So I don't understand. The member opposite has gone on a 20-minute tirade about consultation. It's quite interesting to talk about consultation. If I remember correctly, they were the ones who introduced a carbon tax without even telling Albertans about it, so it's interesting that they want to talk about consultation when their record and history on consultation is particularly challenging.

Madam Chair, it's right here in black and white: "The Minister, in consultation." Again, I'm struggling a little bit trying to wrap my head around how to begin. It's in there in black and white. The member opposite can see that.

I know the member opposite has also talked a little bit about the importance of engaging and consulting with students. That is the number one priority for me in my role, ensuring that I'm taking the time to engage and consult with our students. I've had a quick look at some of the numbers as the member was going on. By my count I think in the past seven months I've had over 25 individual meetings with student groups themselves, not to mention other meetings with faculty representatives, the institutional leaders. That comes down to just shy of four meetings a month with student groups and student leaders. You know, I'm a little confused as to why the member is going on about not consulting with students. I mean, it's in there in black and white, and the amount of times and opportunities that I've had to sit down and discuss and engage with our students. I'm really encouraged because our students really offered some very valuable and important ideas that have helped inform my decisions and government policy as we move forward. I know that that will continue. We'll continue to discuss with them and consult with them about the changes that we'd like to implement to help strengthen our postsecondary system.

You know, again, the member opposite goes on to say things like: you should actually just talk to people, get out there and talk to people. Well, Madam Chair, I have been, and I've had several individuals from the postsecondary world tell me that they've had more interactions with me in the past four months than they did with the former minister in four years. That's coming directly from members of the postsecondary community. The member may not want to take my word for it about actually sitting down and engaging and consulting with our stakeholders, but I'd encourage the member opposite to go and talk with them directly, to take his own advice and go and speak with members of our postsecondary community and ask them if I've been around and able to consult with them and discuss our ideas with them. I think he'll be pleasantly surprised. My approach is always one, I think as you know very clearly, of collaboration and consultation. That's the approach that I've taken and applied to everything that we've been doing in Advanced Education and will continue to implement.

You know, having a look at this amendment, I encourage members to not support this amendment. Again, it seems to be another trend that we see from members opposite. They want to provide a lot of very prescriptive rules around things, how consultations should occur and when and for how long and who. They want to take a very prescriptive approach. We've seen that. They've taken that approach with our postsecondary institutions and created unnecessary red tape and added unnecessary red tape onto our postsecondary institutions. The amount of conversations that I have with our postsecondary leaders who tell me they're wasting time, quite frankly, Madam Chair, filling in unnecessary reports, submitting information to government – it's our view, of course, and I know the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction would be quite pleased to hear that it's our approach to take a step back, reduce unnecessary red tape, and free up our institutions so that they can engage in the important work that they're doing in terms of strengthening their research agenda, exploring innovative and creative solutions to problems and challenges that our society faces. That's what they should be doing. That's what they should be spending their time on, not filling out silly reports for government. Under the former government that was the trend that we saw, additional reports and other requirements imposed on our institutions.

3:30

Perhaps I'll just wrap up there, Madam Chair, but I encourage the member opposite to have a look at the bill. It's black and white. It's quite clear: again, the minister "in consultation." It's not an "if." It's not an "and." It's not a "but." It's not "if the weather permits." It's not "if I feel up to it that day." The minister must consult.

Again, I think that the amount of engagement and consultation that I've had with our student leaders, who are – you know, the member is correct. They are the most important stakeholder when we talk about advanced education. We need to ensure that we're giving them the tools and the resources and the knowledge that they need to go out into the workforce and find rewarding and high-paying careers. That's been our focus, Madam Chair. That's our objective, to ensure that we're setting them up for success as much as possible in a changing environment and a changing economy. This element of the bill will give us more ability to do that, to help ensure that we're setting them up for success.

As it relates to the amendment, though, I think it's quite clear that I won't be supporting it. I encourage my colleagues to not support the amendment as well. I'm happy to continue our discussion, Madam Chair.

Thank you for the time.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing none, we shall vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:32 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Ceci	Hoffman	Renaud
Dang	Irwin	Sabir
Deol		

Against the motion:

Allard	Long	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Shandro
Glubish	Nally	Toor
Gotfried	Neudorf	Turton
Guthrie	Nicolaides	van Dijken
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Hunter	Panda	Yao
Issik	Pon	Yaseen
Jones	Reid	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 26
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[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak on the bill?  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. With this bill we actually see the elimination of a number of tax credits. This is one of the most concerning things because while we were in government, we actually heard from a lot of small and medium-sized businesses that providing these tax credit incentives was a good way of moving forward, specifically in terms of diversifying the economy. My experience on the doorsteps of Edmonton-

Ellerslie specifically but also in other parts of the province as I've helped other colleagues door-knock in other places as well: you often hear people, even people who identify as Conservatives themselves. You'll ask them, "Well, can we agree that we're too dependent on petroleum?" They say: "Of course, yes. We've been saying that for a very long time." I say to them, "Well, can we agree that we need to diversify the economy?" "Yes, of course, we definitely need to do that." I'm sure that the hon. members across the way can agree that, you know, putting all your eggs in one basket doesn't necessarily lead to very good economic planning as we continue to move forward as a province, move towards becoming more modern.

3:50

You know, some of the tax credits that were put in place by our then minister of economic development and trade were created specifically in order to create incentives to not only move us towards – for example, what our government started with was the petrochemicals diversification program, which was still connected to the petroleum industry but was making sure that we could add even more value to the product before we would sell it to other markets.

Also, we would move into newer technologies and not only new technologies but also move towards – for example, the Alberta screen-based production grant – being able to allow more flexibility. I specifically mention this one because there are actually constituents of mine that actually run Mosaic Entertainment. They're Eric and Camille. I have spoken about them in the House before, even when we were in government, because very early on Eric and Camille actually came to me from Mosaic. They asked me to take a tour of their business and not only of their business; they actually invited me on set one time of one of the movies that they were producing right here, invited me to, you know, a character home inside of Edmonton-Glenora, where they were actually filming the movie. It was a movie about – it was actually a remake of *Roxanne* but now using text messaging. I can't remember the exact name of the movie off the top of my head, but it was basically the story of *Roxanne* over again. It was great to see.

You know, what was so amazing to see was how many people were being put to work, because that production set – we're not even just talking about the actors. We're also talking about the technicians that were on set, the people that even were involved in the catering, of making sure that all the technicians and actors and everybody associated were being provided food on a daily basis, three meals a day. I'll never forget the pride on Camille and Eric's faces when they took me on a tour through that set. They felt so incredibly happy not only that they were being successful and contributing to the Alberta economy, but they were doing it in a way that they loved best because they were so dedicated to the film industry here in the province of Alberta.

I think that, at the end of the day, a lot of entrepreneurs are so invested in their business because they love what they're doing. They love what they're doing. They love to be able to contribute to the economy, so the more that we as a government – and I say that broadly, of course – can provide these tax incentives to our local entrepreneurs to help them reach their dreams, to solidify and make sure that their business continues to grow, the better. That's what these tax credits were created to do specifically for the entrepreneurs of Alberta. Now, it's a shame that this bill will actually terminate these tax credits, these incentives.

Instead, we end up getting from this government a \$4.7 billion no-jobs – and now a credit downgrade – handout to corporations, where, yes, these corporations have taken this money, but they haven't even invested it here in our province. When I'm out on the doorsteps and when I'm out in the community and I'm talking to

people and people ask me, “What’s this \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?” they’re, like: “Okay. Like, we get it, because it’s a conservative, political, ideological approach to provide this incentive, but when these corporations aren’t even investing those dollars here in the province of Alberta and taxpayers have given this money over to the corporations, how does that make any sense?”

This is what we see from this government. We see a very highly ideologically motivated government that wants to put a conservative approach, their ideological conservative approach, into place at no matter what cost. As we’ve highlighted in other bills that have been before this House, the sacrifices that are being made now are made by the most marginalized in our society.

Specifically, Bill 20, with the cutting of these tax credits: in a way, it’s almost like we’re sawing the floor out from under these entrepreneurs that were expecting these incentives in order to contribute to our economy. As has been well stated – and my Conservative colleagues on the other side of the House and to my right over here also know it very well – small businesses employ many Albertans. So why wouldn’t we – why wouldn’t we? – encourage these entrepreneurs to continue working hard to build their businesses, their dreams? That’s what this is about. This is about them building their dreams because they love it, just like Eric and Camille with Mosaic Entertainment.

Not everybody is dedicated to one particular industry. There are so many other things that Albertans love to do. They want to contribute to the Alberta economy. It doesn’t just have to be in the petroleum industry and those service industries related to the petroleum industry. You know, I know that my Conservative colleagues on the other side know it just as well as I do, that when you invest your dollars, you’re not going to put them all into one stock. You’re not going to take all of your life’s savings, your RRSP and say: “You know what? I’m going to bet it all on this one stock, and I’m just going to hope this thing roars. I’m just going to sell high, and I’m going to make a whole lot of money.” You wouldn’t do that with your own RRSP, so what makes you think that we should do it with the Alberta economy? And by that I mean: put all of your eggs in one basket.

Why aren’t we working towards truly diversifying the Alberta economy, which is what these Alberta tax credits were created to do? The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has said it so many times, gotten up in this House and spoken specifically about the number of entrepreneurs, businesses that actually took advantage of these tax credits and actually helped us move the needle on diversifying here within the province of Alberta.

4:00

Madam Chair, through you to all the members, I think that it’s imperative that we critically analyze these two approaches: the approach of providing these tax credits and making sure that we’re helping Alberta entrepreneurs continue to build their dreams and invest right here in the province of Alberta and this \$4.7 billion no-jobs – and now a credit downgrade – handout to the corporations, that Alberta taxpayer dollars are being taken out of this economy and being invested in other jurisdictions not only across Canada but across North America.

There are so many aspects to this bill that we could go on and on and on. You know, the other one, that I have to say because members from my own communities in Edmonton-Ellerslie have talked about it, specifically people with the community leagues, is what’s being done with the Alberta lottery fund. We heard really well last night from the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. She spoke very eloquently and adamantly about how monies from the Alberta lottery fund are now being moved towards general revenue and that so many of the programs and things that community

leagues do in terms of providing programming not only for young citizens but all citizens that live within the community league are now not going to be funded as well as they have been in the past, specifically those related to recreation.

These are all things that impact all the people in our society that I’ve spoken to already in terms of other bills. I think about programming that is offered to seniors. Again, I know that in the community of Knottwood, which actually used to be inside of Edmonton-Ellerslie but now has been moved over to Edmonton-Mill Woods with the last boundary change – I remember when I was first elected going over to Knottwood Community League, and they were providing yoga for stay-at-home moms and their children. You know, you may think to yourself: “Oh, well, okay. So we’re not going to provide yoga for stay-at-home moms and their children.” But, no, these are citizens of Alberta that actually need time. These stay-at-home moms need to get out and socialize with other stay-at-home moms or with other people. All this programming means so much to the people who actually access it.

A program that we may not see as very important: to a person who actually enjoys partaking in that particular piece of programming, well, it means a whole lot to them. Now we’re going to see a reduction in the amount of programming being provided to citizens because of the move of this government to take monies from the Alberta lottery fund and siphon that into general revenue.

There are so many things regarding Bill 20 where I could go on and on. My colleagues have gone on at great length about it as well, but the other one that is concerning – and, you know, even people in my constituency have brought it to my attention – is the cancelling of the city charters, a way of establishing new long-term funding between the provincial government and the municipal governments. I talked a little bit about that last night as well and about the relationship between municipalities and the provincial government. I think that with this move, with Bill 20 specifically, we’re seeing that municipalities are getting the short end of the stick. I think that it’s really important that we continue to work as effectively and as efficiently as possible with our municipalities because, at the end of the day, that’s where citizens access the most services, through their local government. I think it’s imperative that because we’re collecting these taxes from citizens, we pay specific attention to where citizens are accessing these services and in what context.

Again, Madam Chair, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be able to speak in the House today about Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, and just highlight once again that what I find devastating about this bill is that these tax credits are going to be cut. Perhaps some members may think it a bit dramatic, but with the cancelling of these tax credits, we’re actually inhibiting entrepreneurs from making their dreams come true in this province, from making our economy that much more diverse and more rich with the contribution of people like Eric and Camille, who are so dedicated to the entertainment industry. Perhaps these people, who so lovingly call Alberta their home, not having access to these tax credits will mean that they will leave Alberta because the same tax credits or very similar tax credits are being offered in other jurisdictions. You know, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has spoken to that as well, the fact that there have been a number of companies here from the province of Alberta who see that those tax credits are being offered in other jurisdictions and decide to move their business elsewhere.

With that being said, Madam Chair, again I thank you for the opportunity, and I will leave it at that for now. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 20 in Committee of the Whole? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I think, as a whole, that this bill will make things more expensive for all Albertans, for people living in my constituency. If I could talk specifically a little bit about my constituency of Calgary-McCall, it consists of three neighbourhoods and the airport area. Most of the people living in these neighbourhoods in my constituency are on average making less than anybody else in the city, and they are spending more on shelter, basic needs, in comparison to the rest of Calgary.

For instance, in Calgary the average spent on shelter costs is 22 per cent of the income of the household, but in Taradale, in comparison, 31 per cent of my constituents there pay more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter. Similarly, the average income for individuals in Calgary is \$43,251, according to the most recent data that's available through the city of Calgary, while in Taradale it's only \$28,807, way less than the Calgary average.

4:10

In Saddle Ridge the same thing: while 22 per cent of the households in Calgary spend more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter, in Saddle Ridge it's 30 per cent. And in comparison with Calgary's average income of \$43,251, the average individual income is \$30,493 in Saddle Ridge.

In Martindale 29 per cent of the households spend more than 30 per cent on shelter, in comparison with the Calgary average of 22 per cent. And their individual income is \$29,538, in comparison to the Calgary average of \$43,251.

As you can see from these numbers, people in my constituency have lower incomes, and they spend way more on shelter. There are many of them who are first-generation immigrants. They all moved here for a better life, for a better future for their kids. This budget certainly is not good news for them. This bill certainly is not good news for them. Through this bill they will all be paying more in income taxes through that tax creep thing. Like, their incomes are already low, and when you freeze the inflation on those brackets, many Albertans, including those in my riding, will end up paying more in taxes, every single one of them. While the province is downloading many things on the city, in these neighbourhoods and across this province people will end up paying more in property taxes as well. You can only blame Mayor Nenshi so far for everything that the province is doing.

This bill is also doing things that will result in investors moving their capital away from Calgary, away from our province. Money will be lost in film and television industry investments and jobs, which also were of particular interest for many in my riding. For those who are of South Asian descent, those film and television credits were certainly of interest to them. The tech sector: that's moving out of province, heading to Toronto. Fewer companies are investing in research and development and new inventions like tech and green-tech jobs.

Money is being diverted, through this bill, away from community organizations, the CIP and CFEP funds, that were utilized by many in our communities. The Member for Calgary-North and the Member for Calgary-Falconridge would know that there were many community-based organizations who were providing services, who were running important programs, based on community initiatives grants. Like, I can count many organizations just in my own constituency who have received CIP grants and have delivered services to many in our communities, valuable services.

Then there was the CFEP grant, that was also utilized by many community associations, community organizations in my constituency and across this province. We are seeing a huge reduction – a huge reduction – in CIP and CFEP grants, that will certainly impact Albertans across this province but particularly in

my riding, which primarily consists of first-generation immigrants and people who are coming to Canada and calling Alberta home in recent years.

These were important supports they were getting from community organizations, and this budget clearly attacks those funds and is attacking our communities. In this budget money is diverted from community organizations. The lottery fund goes into general revenue, and although the government is assuring Albertans that, "Oh, it will be there," nobody wants to trust this government.

This Bill 20 is also putting projects like the green line and the west LRT in jeopardy in Calgary and Edmonton. Those were important projects for our cities and our province.

They're doing all that through this bill, which seeks to amend some 17 pieces of legislation, repeals five, adds two new. There is so much hidden in this bill, important things that will impact our communities and government.

When they were in opposition, they were always against omnibus legislation. What they used to call omnibus legislation was the kind of legislation that would have labour relations and workers' compensation together, completely related things. Here they have just lumped everything together. The only thing in common that you can find in all these pieces of legislation and all these changes proposed by this legislation is that it's taking things away from Albertans, it's off-loading things onto the municipalities, and it's off-loading things onto Albertans just to pay for their failed \$4.7 billion handout.

When we look at the impact of that policy, we didn't see investment coming to our province, and we didn't see new jobs getting created in our province. Instead, we are seeing exactly the opposite. Under this government's watch we have lost 27,000 jobs. Under this government's watch we have seen investment fleeing out of our province. And it's not fear and smear. Husky, who received \$233 million from this \$4.7 billion handout, laid off 371 Albertans, they reduced their capital plan by \$500 million, and they're investing in Wisconsin, Saskatchewan, and elsewhere in the United States. They're not investing here.

Because of this government's policies, investment is fleeing out of our province, and because of these policies, we are losing jobs every day. EnCana, who received \$55 million from the \$4.7 billion, is moving out of Canada altogether. They changed their name as well. Yesterday we heard about Halliburton, who was here for a hundred years. They also benefited from the \$4.7 billion handout. They're moving out. And it's Albertans who are losing jobs, who are losing economic opportunities.

Yesterday there was a credit downgrade. When we were in government and there was a credit downgrade, they would blame it squarely . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Six.

4:20

**Mr. Sabir:** Yeah. You got the first one in six months. You're on track to get more than six. You will get eight at this rate. If you got the first one in the first six months, you're on track for eight.

The interesting thing, Madam Chair, is that the first one – we don't celebrate that. But the first one is clearly telling them where they are getting it wrong. If any of you bothered to read Moody's report, it's very clear in that report that the \$4.7 billion handout is the reason. It's very clearly stated there that the environmental risk that our economy is facing is a risk. But you have not done anything. Instead, you have repealed the environmental plan that Alberta had. That report is clearly saying that the execution of your fiscal policy is not realistic. It's subject to macroeconomic conditions that are not in your control. The price of oil is not in your

control. There is still time. We can look at those things and take steps so that we don't see any other credit downgrades. But you're still insisting that your policy somehow will create jobs.

There are a couple of things I want to reference which are relevant to what this government is doing here in this province. The 2019 Nobel prize for economics went to economists who – one of them was Dr. Banerjee, from India – said that reducing taxes doesn't create jobs, that it doesn't create investments. Here is a group of economists who are telling us this. They're telling us this based on research, based on evidence. And here we have this government that still insists that, no, all of these economists are wrong.

The 2018 Nobel prize went to an economist who said that aside from the environment, from a business standpoint economies have to brace for environmental risks. They have to incorporate innovations. And what we are seeing here is no action on the environment. The credits we had for innovation, for diversification: from what we are seeing in Bill 20, they are being taken away. This bill is ending the interactive digital media tax credit. This bill is ending the capital investment tax credit, the community economic development tax credit, the Alberta investor tax credit, the scientific research and experimental development tax credit.

All these tax credits were put in place based on evidence, based on consultation. That's what Albertans were asking for. That's what entrepreneurs were asking for. These are the types of credits, these are the kinds of policies that have been tried by other provinces, that have been tried by other nations, and they do work. They attract investment. They attract jobs. They attract entrepreneurs. But this bill is taking away all of these credits.

That's exactly what's been pointed out by Moody's report as well, that Alberta needs to focus on diversification. All these tools that were helping us to diversify: this bill is eliminating all of that. If you won't listen to us – credit grades are important to you – listen to Moody's. That's what they are saying, that Alberta needs to diversify its economy. Taking away every tool that was helping us diversify is the complete opposite of what economists are saying, what these credit-rating agencies are saying.

It's also changing film and TV tax credit grants. They have been pretty much eliminated. In our neighbouring province of B.C. they are making way more through these industries, and how they do it is that they offer those incentives. They offer those programs that will help attract TV and film production. This bill is taking that away from us.

With respect to the tech sector I think that when we were in government, we focused on creating more tech spaces across postsecondary across this province.

Postsecondary education certainly makes a difference in people's lives. It makes a difference in the lives of cities, communities, and the economy of the province. What we are seeing through this bill, no matter how much this government denies it, is that they are ending personal tuition tax credits, reducing them for personal education tax credits. They're increasing tuition fees across this province, in some cases 5, 10, 20 per cent. When we were in government, we had a freeze for four years.

In this entire province the minister is the only person who has been told by students that they want to pay more. I never heard that from any student. There are many people in my constituency who go to university. They say that even with the freeze it's expensive. Last week there were students from Calgary, medical students. When I talked to them, none of them said that they requested the minister to remove the freeze and jack up their price because they wanted to pay more for their education. Not a single student I have met so far – and I will try over the holidays to meet some more students. Honestly, even if one of them tells me that they want to

pay more for their education, I will come and report to the House with their name, address, everything. So far I haven't met a single student who wants to pay more.

Those tax credits and those grants: they were important. When I was going through university, these things were important to me, and these are important for students across this province.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We're focused on Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. First of all, like I said about Bill 21, it sort of makes you wonder why the government in all of its efficiency and capacity would feel the need to craft yet another omnibus bill that shoves in everything but the kitchen sink. You know, I would ask the government members . . . [interjection] Well, the kitchen sink is in there, yeah.

But I would ask the government members, you know, because I'd be really curious to know: did everybody actually read the entire bill? I'm guessing that had they done that, it might have looked a little bit different. There are some pieces in here that will damage, big time, your communities. You might not think so now. You might think that your big mandate is so big that it can withstand anything, but I'm guessing it won't.

Anyway, I'm going to focus on one of the pieces that this government has seen fit to include in this omnibus bill. It is on page 55, and the heading is Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. Right at the bottom of page 55 it says:

Disestablishment of Fund

11(1) The Environmental Protection and Enhancement Fund is disestablished.

That means it's gone. Now, this particular fund, of course, was under the environmental protection act.

**4:30**

It's important to know the legislation that this is changing or amending. Of course, I went and had a look at the environmental protection act, and one of the things that was quite interesting is about the fund that is contained right in the act. If you look at the act and you look at section 30(5) – I'm going to read you the header for subsection (5). It says:

The following shall be paid into the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Fund.

Then it lists a number of things, right? It begins with (a), and it goes all the way to (g), I believe. But here are the things that are in this particular fund:

- (a) security transferred under [another section];
- (b) money recovered by the Government in respect of the Government's carrying out work or taking emergency measures under this Act or any other enactment under the administration of the Minister;
- (c) money advanced by the Minister from the General Revenue . . .
- (d) money from a supply vote . . .

It goes on and talks about:

- (e) payments made by any person or the government of another jurisdiction for the purposes of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Fund . . .

It goes on:

- (g) gifts, donations . . . transfers to the . . . Fund.

It goes on and on.

But then what was really interesting, if you scroll a little further and you go to subsection (11) – part of me was thinking: this is just another attempt of the government to take funds that were once administered by other oversight bodies, or there were other oversight bodies looking at it, and they're moving it into general

revenue. So I was asking: why on earth would they take this small but important fund and just get rid of it altogether?

Well, here's subsection (11) in the environmental protection and enforcement act. Subsection (11) says:

If at any time it appears to the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance that there is money in the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Fund that is not required for the purposes of the Fund, the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, with the approval of the Treasury Board, may transfer the money to the General Revenue Fund.

That's weird. Why would this fund be completely removed, "disestablished," which is an awkward word, just gotten rid of if the Finance minister and President of Treasury Board has the ability to do that anyway? Well, that's interesting.

Let's look at actually what this little fund did. It's not a particularly big fund, but there are components of this fund that are actually quite important. Components of the fund include forest fires; Flat Top Complex, which I actually didn't have time to look up; forest health; environment emergency response; intercept feeding and fencing. I don't see obvious cost savings to this particular measure, so once again I'm left asking questions, like we always do here, because we don't get answers. Why on earth would you put this in this piece of legislation, to remove the fund, to remove the work of this fund, to put it somewhere else that your ministers can deal with it without it ever seeing the light of day? Why would you do this? I really don't understand. I really wish somebody would stand up and explain not to me but to my constituents and to the other Albertans that are thinking: "What are you doing? Are you acting in the best interests of this province?" I would guess: you know, not really.

If you read the financial statements of this little fund, I think it sheds a whole lot more light on some of the activities that are captured in this piece of legislation or in this fund that falls under this act. I'm left asking: why on earth would you do this when you know – well, I would hope that you know – that any sort of activity or forward momentum or movement around climate change is essential? It's absolutely essential. But, then again, I wouldn't be surprised because when I hear the environment minister, Madam Chair, speak about climate change, it's usually followed by, "Yada, yada, yada, something climate change; we don't deny it, but the opposition doesn't like oil and gas," which is ridiculous to me. I don't get it.

It's like we have to do some loyalty test, which is ridiculous because we have always said the same thing: we are fortunate to have this resource. We need to do everything we can to get the best price for that resource, which is why our Premier at the time did everything that she could to get that pipeline done, and it's happening. [interjections] Well, I know you guys don't work well with reality. There's a lot of laughter. They're awake, which is good, I guess. They're laughing at the fact that the pipeline got done.

I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but it's my understanding that the current Premier – when he was a Member of Parliament and a minister in Ottawa, there was not a lot of movement on pipeline expansion. In fact, although the government likes to say, "You and your buddy Trudeau" – whatever; that's just silly. What happened is that that particular expansion had some problems because of the previous government. That was the Harper government, and that was the government that this current Premier was a part of. We can point fingers all we like. The fact is that it's getting done. The fact is that a lot of work was done over the last four years. Laugh all you like. You didn't magically get it done when you won your great big mandate. That's not how it works.

Let's go back to climate change.

**An Hon. Member:** Let's, please.

**Ms Renaud:** Yeah, let's.

Let's go back to climate change. I don't know if the members here understand what's going on right now. Did you know that . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we're trying to keep some peace in this House, and there are a number of comments that are certainly walking that line. Could you please focus on the bill at hand in Committee of the Whole?

**Ms Renaud:** With all due respect, Madam Chair, if I could respond to that. I am referring to the piece of legislation that looks at the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Renaud:** That is related to climate change, what I'm about to talk about.

**The Chair:** That's fine. Very relevant.

**Ms Renaud:** What I was trying to explain is that the development of oil and gas and expansion of the pipeline, which we believed was absolutely important to getting the best price for our resource while at the same time we addressed a climate crisis through a climate leadership plan: that's where I'm going.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms Renaud:** All right. What is happening right now, Madam Chair, is setting a standard or setting agreements between governments, between the private sector about what the future will look like for governments, for cities, for provinces all over the world. That's going on in Madrid right now. There is an international meeting that is going on where people are discussing this very important issue. Well, it's actually not an issue; I think it's the thing that will define our future. It began in 1992. I'm sure some of you will remember the United Nations framework convention on climate change. Now, of course, the focus was on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other things. Actually, now it's expanded. Starting in 1992, that eventually led to – you know, the acronym is COP 21, which we all know as the Paris agreement. We are now at COP 25, and that's happening in Madrid. It actually had to be moved to Madrid because there was a natural disaster, climate change related.

Anyway, these are important things. I mean, these are really important things, and I would hope that as an Albertan I can know – all party politics aside, I would expect that my government, whether I belonged to that particular party or not, would stand up and recognize the emergency that we are in right now and talk to us as Albertans about what the plan is. Yes, we want to get our resources to market, to different markets. We want the best price we can possibly have. We know that we must transition carefully because we cannot destroy our economy while we're looking to diversify and looking at an energy transition. That's the reality. That is what countries all over the world are grappling with. That's what we have to be grappling with here, but we're not because we're having discussions about whether we can wear an "I love oil and gas" shirt in the gallery, Madam Chair.

Anyway, let's talk about climate change. There are three strategies currently being discussed in Madrid right now, and those are mitigation, adaptation, and finance. Now, I think that all three of these topics, Madam Chair, were really part of the focus of the legislation and part of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act and the fund that was administered or talked about under that act, but that is gone. This piece of legislation,

which includes all kinds of things, everything from environmental protection to benefits for children, doesn't make a lot of sense to me. I don't believe it's respectful of the members of this House, in the limited amount of time that we have to debate, to actually be able to properly research, speak to our constituents, and then debate this properly and respectfully. Parts of the pieces in here are incredibly important.

4:40

If you don't believe that the environment and the protection of our environment and the reduction of greenhouse gases and the mitigation of all of the things that are coming are important enough to be in their own piece of legislation and deserve their own focused debate, then I think you're missing a point. You're missing the point that over 11,000 scientists from around the world have been very clear about telling us that if we do not act now and live within our emission budget, which we are not living up to right now, not as a country and certainly not as a province, then we will continue to feel the impacts of climate change.

You don't have to look very far: in the last – I don't know – five or seven years some of the horrific tragedies that have happened in this province. I'm not talking in terms of money, the cost to Albertans. I think that the cost of the southern Alberta flood was absolutely devastating. It was absolutely devastating to the people of southern Alberta, and it was devastating to our economy. I think I read estimates of the cost of that particular natural disaster, the flooding in southern Alberta, as high as, like, \$5 billion. I do think that that was a little too high, and I have read lower estimates. You know, we've got the fires. The Fort McMurray fire, which was absolutely horrific: the cost was over \$3 billion, yet we're still seeing the human cost today. We still see the human cost, and I'm sure the members that represent those communities can attest to that, that people are still dealing with the stress of that particular event. I think that those of us that even saw pictures of it on television or online will never forget what that looked like.

You know, Madam Chair, not that long ago – it was actually just a few weeks ago. Actually, that was another California fire. If we look to the south, there are other areas of North America that are feeling more acute impacts of climate change, California being one of them. They have a couple of different issues. Of course, they're closer to water; they're close to the ocean. They've been dealing with an incredible amount of drought, as is Alberta. But if you look at the one fire – I think it happened last year – it essentially burned down the entire city of Paradise, California, absolutely burned the city down.

The reason that I'm bringing this up is because we're incredibly fortunate – incredibly fortunate – that the Fort McMurray fire was contained the way it was by the incredible, remarkable first responders that we have that fought those fires, that safely ushered people out of that city. Then, I might add, it was important to note that those leaders told us that we needed another exit out of that city, God forbid it ever happened again. The previous government: we did make that commitment to do that because that was important.

We also got the recommendation to deal with the operation centre. Those particular people who are on the front lines understand the weaknesses in the system we have because they've been tested in the last few years. They've been absolutely tested by climate change, whether it was the southern Alberta flood or the fires in northern Alberta. They understand that there's a problem.

Madam Chair, I'd like to give a little bit more information about why I believe it was not a great addition to an already huge bill, that covered so many areas that I think it's irresponsible. One of the areas: again, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. I might add: add this piece of legislation or this particular piece

within the legislation to the fact that that particular budget, environment, has been cut drastically when now is the time that we should have been investing in it. Anyway, what that does is that it sends a signal, to me, to a lot of my constituents, that addressing climate change, climate emergency is not necessarily a priority for this government.

In early November I actually printed – and I tabled it not long after that – what was on the website of the government of Alberta, environment, just to get some information and just to get a copy of it before it was changed, if it was changed. It talks about climate change in Alberta. It's funny. I think that it's kind of interesting that when I do talk about climate change, climate emergency, you hear the levels go up, and you hear the comments, "You don't like oil and gas," or whatever the ridiculous things that people heckle.

What I would like to say is that the government of Alberta – that would be you – believes that climate change is a problem, and they actually go into great detail, Madam Chair, about the inherent risks of not addressing emissions, greenhouse gas emissions. If we do not bring these emissions down and meet our target, meet our emissions budget very, very quickly, these things will happen. This is very real. These are scientists and researchers and staff of the government of Alberta that have put this information together for us to use. Most of us are not scientists. These people are. This is based on research. This is fact. The impacts of climate change are very real.

Agriculture, one of the most important areas, absolutely important – and these are people, these are communities that will be impacted first, one of the first groups that I think will be impacted and very severely. I think that we're already seeing a lot of issues from this sector.

Climate change [will] lead to negative impacts on agriculture production (crop yields) and financial loss, livestock production and farming infrastructure, from increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events and long-term impacts of climate change.

This isn't me making it up. This comes from the government of Alberta.

Biodiversity and ecosystem services. I think that the members will be particularly interested in this area. I've heard a number of times that many of the members are outdoor enthusiasts, whether they like to fish or bird-watch or whatever it is that they like to do. I certainly like to bird-watch. I know that that sounds a bit weird. But in biodiversity and ecosystem services

climate change is expected to impact [the following] . . .

- various ecosystem services and benefits, including clean water, crop pollination and recreational opportunities.

So without action on reducing emissions, conservation, and mitigation of the impacts, we're already going to feel – we are going to see more damage.

I like to think that when scientists tell us things – and most scientists don't tend to agree with each other. It is a bit weird to hear 11,000 scientists from around the world tell us, you know, with the same voice that we have a problem. Our scientists are telling us that we need to conserve.

Anyway, the United Nations in May told us that there are 1 million species currently at risk. One million. Now, it was really awful to see individual examples of those species lost, but you have to put that into perspective. There are a million that we will see that are at risk. They'll be gone. You know, we all saw those pictures of the little burned koala bear that was injured in the bushfire and eventually died. In the reporting the scientists have said that these are essentially extinct.

The energy supply: here's a topic that you all might be interested in, that climate change will affect energy supplies by doing the following:



- disrupting energy generation and supply during extreme weather events.

I think we've seen examples of that. We saw an example of that during the Fort McMurray fire. Sadly, so many of the folks that live in the northern communities there are actively employed and engaged in the oil and gas sector, and I know that those fires not only had a huge human toll . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Since the previous speaker, the Member for St. Albert, was talking about climate change and a climate emergency and whatnot and she talked about Fort McMurray a lot, having worked in Fort Mac, having worked in that industry for almost 30 years – and I made a living out of working in the oil and gas sector – on behalf of the good people of Calgary-Edgemont I thought that I should respond, just for that part of Bill 20.

Madam Chair, if you remember, when we sat on that side of the aisle, you were with me, and we challenged the previous government on their climate leadership action plan, which is CLAP. We said that it was all economic pain without any environmental gain. Our legacy party members at that time asked them: show us the economic impact analyses of all your major policies, including CLAP. I had a front-row seat there, asking them all those questions, and I never got any answer during those four years.

And here we go. Now the table has turned, and we are sitting on this side. They're sitting on that side. They're entitled to their opinion. But don't try to imply that we ever said that climate change is not real or anything. In fact, I raised a point of privilege, and the previous Speaker, Bob Wanner, called out the previous Premier and told her not to call me a climate change denier.

Having said that, when the member was talking about the climate emergency, she also talked about the United Nations. The people of Calgary-Edgemont elected me to represent Albertans and to look after those 200,000 unemployed Albertans in Calgary, Fort McMurray, Cold Lake, Bonnyville, Peace River, everywhere. That is our priority.

Talking about greenhouse gas targets and emission reductions, that's why my colleague the minister of environment is working on TIER, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, which will focus on emission reductions without taxing regular Albertans. If members opposite are really serious about bringing Albertans back to work, then support some of those policies we are bringing in.

Let's go back and talk about these energy products shipping to the markets where they're required and getting fair value for our products. That's what the Member for St. Albert mentioned. Madam Chair, as you know, I was born in rural India, and I personally experienced energy poverty. I don't know if the Member for St. Albert ever had that experience, but living in India, growing up in a village, I had seen many of our neighbours – I was fortunate. We had cooking gas, and we had intermittent power. It was not regular. There were power cuts all the time. The folks in my village, when they were trying to cook their meals by burning, you know, forest waste and plant waste – I mean, they're still doing the same thing in many villages in India and China. That's where most of the world's population is.

If we want to reduce global emissions – our contribution, Canada's contribution, is only 1.6 per cent of global emissions. When I was in opposition, I challenged the NDP: if you're so committed to greenhouse gas reduction, then let's do a study if Canada is an overall net contributor to emissions. Let's look at the

supply-and-demand situation and see: how much carbon are we emitting, and how much do we need since Canada is the second-largest country by footprint? What's the supply-and-demand situation with the carbon? Oh, then they started saying again, "Oh, he doesn't believe in climate change" and things like that.

That was in the past. They couldn't give me any convincing argument, even till today. So I went to the universities and asked academia to show me the calculation of carbon supply and demand in Canada. I'm still waiting for that information. But the fact remains that Canada only contributes 1.6 per cent of greenhouse emissions of the world. So even if you shut down hydrocarbon production and processing in Canada, we are only going to reduce that 1.6 per cent.

What's the alternative? The alternative is, as I said before, that people in India and China need clean fuels. Canada can actually produce our natural gas here and ship the LNG to countries like India and China so they can get off burning coal. That's how you reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I mean, we have a different approach. That's why we are saying that our TIER will address most of that.

Also, the member talked about all of the priorities of Bill 20 and how to help Albertans, which we are trying to do. But to do that, first we had to create the wealth. Before these socialists lecture us on how to distribute the wealth, somebody has to create the wealth. That's why we brought in all these economic policies: to grow the economy, to create jobs, and get people back to work in Alberta. I don't care what the United Nations gives me as a target, but the people of Calgary-Edgemont tell me that they're looking for jobs today in Alberta. That's our priority, to get 200,000 unemployed Albertans and many Canadians back to work before we worry too much about Paris or United Nations targets and all that.

I think members opposite should be realistic. As I said before, they were in government for four years. We can look up their record. Debt and deficit have gone up, unemployment has gone up, and the crime rate has gone up. Everything has gone up, and now today they are there holding us to account, which I really appreciate because that's their job. At least, they should be good at that. In four years in government they didn't do their job of growing the economy or creating jobs. In seven months we are trying to bend the curve and put us back on track to grow the economy and create jobs. They should be patient and they should be realistic instead of talking about the United Nations.

The Member for Calgary-McCall: his priority should be to represent people in Calgary-McCall, not in the United Nations countries and other rubbish. We heard that when they were in government. They tried that. Now people have shown them their place. At least, now be respectful; worry about the people who elected you, not about the United Nations, and support the good policies and hold us to account. We are here to listen. If you have any practical suggestions, workable suggestions, our government is open to listen but not to that rubbish. So, please, please understand why you are there, and support Bill 20, and let's go home and listen to the constituents. Then you'll realize.

Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Oh, my goodness. Wow. Thank you for the applause, by the way. You know, I have spoken to Bill 20 a couple of times. Just as I said before, I'm not proud to speak to this bill because I'm quite concerned about a lot of it. Before I get right into this, I do want to address the comments from the Member for Calgary-Edgemont. I'm quite concerned by such a myopic view, in

which we can only be concerned about our own riding and not about the plight of others around the world. That's quite, quite scary, narrow-minded thinking, in my opinion. I was a proud social studies teacher, and one of the things we encourage our young people to do is to be global citizens, and we encourage them to take critical perspectives on the issues that affect all of us, not just those in our local communities but in the global community. Like I said, to hear that that member is criticizing the Member for St. Albert for having a view of the global community is quite concerning. We should all be concerned by that perspective.

5:00

I can't speak too long, but I do want to just talk about a couple of things in Bill 20. I've mentioned before that this is a giant omnibus bill that we have. Within this bill are dozens and dozens of sections, each of which should, on its own, be debated. I must again get on the record to point out how harmful an approach this is, when so many diverse pieces are being lumped together and are not getting the debate which each deserves.

What are some of the consequences of Bill 20? Paying more personal income taxes through a nefarious tax grab; higher property taxes; loss of venture capital; millions lost in the film and TV industry; loss of tech sector jobs; loss of companies investing in research and development; hikes to property taxes; money being diverted from community organizations, which I'll talk about more in a minute; fewer funds for life-saving cancer research; as the hon. Member for St. Albert talked about, the loss of funding for environmental protection is quite concerning; the green line being in jeopardy, the west LRT being in jeopardy; and the list goes on. That is not even an exhaustive list of what is contained within this terrible omnibus bill.

Now, I want to chat a little bit about the loss of the funds in particular: the cancer prevention legacy fund, which I've spoken about in the House before, that does crucial work to address cancer; the access to the future fund, which, of course, deals with postsecondary education; and, as my colleague talked about, the environmental protection and enhancement fund. Of course, we've heard the members opposite say: no, these funds aren't being lost; they're just being streamlined. It is quite worrisome, because when you lose those dedicated funds, that are addressing some of the most crucial areas like cancer prevention – I bet that most people in this House have been affected by cancer in some way – the worry, which is quite a reasonable one, is that this will lead to less accountability and the ability for this government to move and shift these funds to wherever they see fit.

Now, one of the big ones – and, in fact, it's quite timely because there were folks in the gallery today who were representing some of our incredible community leagues here in Edmonton. One was Greg Lane, who was representing the McCauley Community League. McCauley is a vibrant neighbourhood within my own riding that I'm so proud to represent. McCauley includes Little Italy, parts of Chinatown, and it's a diverse, incredible neighbourhood. I live just north of McCauley, too, and I see every day the work that community volunteers do in McCauley and in all the neighbourhoods throughout Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. People like Greg, who was here today, are rightly concerned about the impact of the changes to the lottery fund.

You know, these are volunteers who do so much on already little. We ask a lot of them as community members, and they don't often get the credit that they deserve. I worry that with the loss of the funds that one of my colleagues talked about, the CFEP and the CIP grants, the strength, the health, the vibrancy of our neighbourhoods are very much at risk. I know – and I'm just going to talk a little bit about some of the specifics – the minister has assured, "Oh, you

know, funding from the lottery fund will continue to support community programs," but unfortunately the numbers are painting a much different story.

CFEP, the community facility enhancement program, for instance, is being cut by 35 per cent. I've heard from my colleagues, I've heard from folks in my riding who have already been told that they're not getting those funds. Again, these are for critical community projects. McCauley and McCauley Community League: I'm going to stick to that example. I'm so proud of that neighbourhood. It's incredible. Like I said, it runs on the strength of so many volunteers, but it also has a few challenges, right? McCauley has some of the highest rates of poverty in the province. You know, a lot of folks struggle with mental health and addiction challenges. We also have the bulk of affordable housing and a lot of social service agencies within the boundaries of McCauley. So it is quite fair for Greg Lane, the president of the community league, to come here to the Legislature and to say: "Look, these funds are absolutely critical. We have an incredible community, but we need support, and we've relied on government support for years."

I ask the members opposite to think about that. The community leagues – I know Calgary has community associations, and I know that rural communities have community groups as well – are so reliant on those funds. They can't do it alone. I ask the members opposite to think about Greg and to think about the other community leagues that will struggle and that will be very much in jeopardy without this dedicated funding.

All right. I said that I wasn't going to speak too long, but I just want to mention one other thing. My concern, in particular, is about some of the impacts on the arts community. I've spoken about this in the Legislature already, about the loss of the film credit. My riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood also has a vibrant arts scene, you know, whether it's the Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse, the Arts on the Ave organization, the Works. The list goes on. We've got a number, and I know I'm missing some. But I've heard from folks in my riding who work in the arts industry, in fact from folks who work in the film and screen industry who've said: "You know what? We're very much concerned. We saw what the NDP government was doing with diversifying the economy and moving towards a brighter future, one that focuses on the arts, one that welcomes the arts and fosters an appreciation for the arts." They spoke out about: "Look, we've seen a growing, thriving Alberta film and screen industry." Without a competitive tax credit, without rural incentives – they spoke about that as well – they're worried about the negative impact on their industry.

I wanted to get on the record just reiterating those concerns. Alberta is strong because of its diversity, and there are people who've spoken out and said that they're concerned about the fact that by not investing in the arts and, in particular, the film and screen industry, we will see that investment leave. You know, we've had so many incredible film productions shot right here in Alberta, and those are definitely in jeopardy. Again, I ask the members opposite to consider those investments as well.

All right. Again, I urge the members to think about a couple of things there, the impact on communities, whether that's community leagues, whether that's investment in the arts. I could have spoken about a whole list of other things that are inherent in Bill 20, including some of the impacts on transit funding, for example, another issue that impacts my riding significantly.

With that, I will end my comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. member . . .

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Sorry. I didn't actually quite recognize you. I will now. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair, once again. It's my pleasure and honour to rise and speak to Bill 20. I just wanted to speak to some of the changes that the bill is proposing. You know, converting the Alberta screen-based production grant into tax credits: basically, this is a move that is not really supporting the industry. In speaking to this bill yesterday, I shared a quotation from one of the key players in this area who is working very hard in this industry and who has proven, if this industry gets reasonable support, what kinds of outcomes it can bring. I just actually shared the kind of pain and suffering, you know, the reaction coming from the industry. I just wanted to share a little bit of my experience on the other aspects that this bill would have.

5:10

The film industry, you know, is quite a growing industry and very fast paced, not only in Canada but around the world. The wise move would have been to think about that, about how the industry is growing across our borders. Like, the industry is growing big time in B.C. Especially when we are going through a tough time and people are looking for opportunities, this would actually cause, I would say, harm to our economic prosperity, and this is biggest, actually, with respect to diversifying the economy.

This sector is quite popular among our youth. I see more and more people showing their interest. Students want to study digital media in the film industry or in visualized designing. Thousands of students are already studying or preparing for study at NAIT, SAIT, or a number of the institutions in Alberta. They already will have the effect of their education being more expensive by the move being proposed, the change being proposed in this bill. Not only that, but they will be going through this very harsh, hard time, expensive education, which will also limit the potential and scope of the jobs in this industry. It will not only be a lost opportunity for these young folks; it will also be a lost opportunity for the province. We will end up losing these skilled workers, the talents that Alberta needs to build on. Those are some of the reasons.

I will probably once again speak to this bill sometime later on. There are a number of things that I have been looking at in the bill. Repealing the city charters – the reaction of mayors, the cities' concerns – deindexing the benefits and deindexing the tax brackets, the impact this bill is going to have: those are a number of the things. Due to this, I am opposing the bill. I just wanted to take the quick opportunity during this afternoon to be on the record that these are things that cannot be supported in any way. On behalf of my constituents in Edmonton-Meadows and Albertans I oppose this Bill 20 once again.

Thank you for the opportunity, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand up and again speak to Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I just wanted to finish some of the comments that I had left unfinished earlier, really focusing on the piece on page 55 of this legislation under the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. It's the disestablishment of the fund, the environmental protection and enhancement fund, and that is at the bottom of page 55 of this bill.

I was talking a little bit earlier about why it is so important. First of all, I think it was really disrespectful to not have this on its own so we could fully debate it because this is a really important topic, but from the government's website what I started to list were some of the things that the Alberta government, whether it's researchers,

scientists, government staff – they've put together information for us, for all Albertans really, to look at.

These are the impacts of climate change that are coming. I talked a little bit last about energy supply.

Climate change could affect energy supplies by:

- disrupting energy generation and supply during extreme weather events
- increased stress on transmission infrastructure

I think we can all sort of understand what that would look like in the event of a flood or a fire.

- increasing demand on electrical generation (additional loads created by cooling requirements)

That's pretty straightforward. With temperatures rising, cooling requirements will be a reality.

- Extreme weather events.

I think we all can understand and know exactly what that looks like and how truly dangerous that is, whether it's droughts that impact not just the well-being of the incredible people that are farmers and producers in our province, but it will devastate their ability to produce, and it will devastate our economy because we are heavily reliant on them not just to feed us but to add to our economy.

- forest fires
- heavy precipitation with associated increased risk of flooding [of course]
- individual severe storms

Now forestry. Here are some warnings or some information about what will happen. This is directly related to climate change.

Warmer temperatures and reduced soil moisture create conditions for:

- continued mountain pine beetle infestation

I don't think any of us have driven through Alberta and British Columbia and not seen the enormous power of a little beetle.

- grasslands displacing existing forest ecosystems
- greater incidence of forest fires

We've discussed that.

Infrastructure is super important.

Infrastructure (such as buildings, roads, bridges, pipelines and electricity transmission) is generally sensitive to gradual changes in temperature and precipitation patterns. Extreme weather events can easily overwhelm the capacity of infrastructure.

Then there's water resources.

I could go on for longer, but I will not. I'm going to wrap up with a couple of things. It is really important. We all like to talk about the economy, which is perfect. Let's talk about it, what we can do to mitigate damages to grow the economy, to diversify, but here's a quote. According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, Alberta has experienced the two most costly disasters in the country's history with the Fort McMurray wildfires estimated at \$3.58 billion and the 2013 floods at \$1.7 billion. These are realities. This is just in the last few years, Madam Chair.

I wanted to address the member opposite who had some comments. I'm just going to end on this because I'm getting the evil eye, but I wanted to address those comments because it's a common reaction, when people talk about climate emergency, to say: well, we're not that bad; we don't litter that much, and we don't produce that many emissions when you compare us to, say, China or India. Well, that's irrelevant. It doesn't matter what other countries are doing. It matters that we stick to our agreement and our carbon emission budget and that we do what we can.

I would say to the member that there are many nations – I think there are over 30 island nations – now represented at the United Nations that will be directly impacted by climate change. They hardly produce any emissions compared to Canada, compared to Alberta, yet they are directly feeling the impact of this emergency.

I think all of us can remember the stark images and reality that came out of the Bahamas, right?

On that note, Madam Chair, I will end for now. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none. Are we ready to vote?

All right. As agreed to on November 6, there's been a request to vote in sections and blocks. We will vote from block A to block I, starting with block A. Block A includes sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 23.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 23 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:20 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:

Bilous	Deol	Loyola
Ceci	Feehan	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 9
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[Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 23 of Bill 20 agreed to]

**The Chair:** We will proceed to the vote on block B, section 6 of Bill 20.

[The voice vote indicated that section 6 of Bill 20 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:24 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:

Bilous	Deol	Loyola
Ceci	Feehan	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 9
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[Section 6 of Bill 20 agreed to]

**The Chair:** We will now vote on block C, section 9.

[The voice vote indicated that section 9 of Bill 20 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:28 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

**5:30**

Against:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Ceci	Goehring	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir
Deol		

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 10
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[Section 9 of Bill 20 agreed to]

**The Chair:** We will now vote on block D, which is section 10.

[The voice vote indicated that section 10 of Bill 20 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:33 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
--------	--------	--------

Ceci Dang Deol	Goehring Hoffman	Renaud Sabir
Totals:	For – 31	Against – 10

[Section 10 of Bill 20 agreed to]

**The Chair:** We will now vote on block E, which is section 13 and the remaining clauses of schedule 1.

[The voice vote indicated that section 13 and the remaining clauses of schedule 1 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:37 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:		
Allard	Hunter	Pon
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Issik	Reid
Bilous	Jones	Renaud
Ceci	Loewen	Sabir
Dang	Long	Schow
Deol	Loyola	Shandro
Feehan	McIver	Toews
Getson	Nally	Toor
Glubish	Neudorf	Turton
Goehring	Nicolaides	van Dijken
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Williams
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Yao
Hanson	Orr	Yaseen
Hoffman	Panda	

**5:40**

Totals:	For – 41	Against – 0
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[Section 13 and the remaining clauses of schedule 1 of Bill 20 agreed to unanimously]

**The Chair:** The next section we will vote on is block F, which is sections 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:41 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For:		
Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:		
Bilous	Deol	Loyola
Ceci	Feehan	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 9
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[Sections 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 of Bill 20 agreed to]

**The Chair:** We will now vote on block G, which is section 22 and schedule 2.

[The voice vote indicated that section 22 and schedule 2 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:45 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:		
Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:		
Bilous	Deol	Loyola
Ceci	Feehan	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 9
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[Section 22 and schedule 2 of Bill 20 agreed to]

**The Chair:** We will now vote on block H, which is section 25 and schedule 3.

[The voice vote indicated that section 25 and schedule 3 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:49 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:		
Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:

Bilous	Deol	Loyola
Ceci	Feehan	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir

Totals: For – 31 Against – 9

[Section 25 and schedule 3 of Bill 20 agreed to]

**The Chair:** We will now vote on block I, the final one. It is sections 24 and 26.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 24 and 26 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:53 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:

Bilous	Deol	Loyola
Ceci	Feehan	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir

Totals: For – 31 Against – 9

[Sections 24 and 26 of Bill 20 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Based on the hour – there are about three minutes left; I think everybody has worked hard, and I'm grateful for the good debate from both sides of the House – I will move that we rise and report the bill.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

**Mr. McIver:** Now, Madam Speaker, I would move that we adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:58 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, December 4, 2019

Day 52

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and  
Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and  
Research Services  
Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Chris Caughell, Acting Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Bilous  
Dang  
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Reid  
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Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Carson  
Ganley  
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Guthrie  
Long  
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Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
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Yao

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Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
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### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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Deol  
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Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
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### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Dach  
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Rowswell  
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Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered at this time? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 21 in committee. You know, I was thinking about it this afternoon. Sometimes it is a legislative prerogative or a tactic to filibuster bills from time to time. Both bills 20 and 21 are so thick, with so many different topics. I've spoken on them a number of times here, and I still haven't picked off all of the areas that need to be canvassed, quite frankly. I think that speaks to just how, I guess, inappropriate this sort of legislative tactic is, and I would really strongly recommend that the government refrain from doing this in the future, these omnibus bills. I mean, what you can do is have a miscellaneous statutes bill, and then you can bring that forward, and we can all talk about it together and find things that we can all agree on ahead of time need to get cleaned up in the legislative process.

Taking substantive things that don't necessarily relate together and putting them together into these big omnibus bills: you know, it's just really clunky. You might think: oh, well, the public maybe just doesn't pay attention anyway, so it doesn't really matter. But they do, right? I was just having a conversation with somebody on the way in here today. They were at a function. The person said: you guys are on 20, 21 tonight, I guess, eh? This is, like, Mr. Joe Public talking about these things happening in this Legislature. So don't think you can get away with building giant omnibus bills and debating them in the middle of the night, because people are watching – they are indeed – and with good reason.

Tonight I just wanted to start off by talking about the issue around indexing. You know, if you have been an MLA for the last seven months or the last seven years, you know that a lot of constituency work that comes into your office is in regard to income supports – right? – either seniors' benefits or AISH and so forth. When we had an opportunity, finally, to form government and to put these income supports into an indexing formula based on the consumer price index, that was a huge step forward for ensuring that people would not be falling behind. I mean, already if you're living on seniors' benefits or seniors' lodge programs, AISH, you are living a very, very modest existence anyway. To at least ensure that as inflation pressures increase – rent, food, and so forth do increase in price over time – those benefits are indexed according to CPI, or the consumer price index: it's eminently reasonable, logical, and normal to do that. It was a long time coming, and I think that we really helped a lot of people as a result of that.

To move off indexing – and I know that the government is using the word "pause," right? But when we take something away, it's awful hard to get it back. Like, it took 15 years to move AISH to an increase that was commensurate with inflation and the cost of living, so I'm really, really reluctant to presume that a pause means that maybe it's coming back next year. Maybe that's the way we can approach this. I mean, I would certainly be less inclined to, you know, rally the troops and fight if we know that we are going to resume indexing next year. But once bitten, twice shy. I think that for the many Albertans that are living on these very modest income supports, they want to make sure that they have them and that they're not just being paused – a cut really is what it is – and presuming that they're going to come back. I think that it's probably a realistic approach to say: once you see it, wave it goodbye. And we all suffer for that.

When people live in poverty and they're slipping down on that poverty scale – in other words, not meeting the inflationary pressures that we live in in the province – you end up with a whole host of other problems that really end up costing more money for the government in the end. If someone can retain some measure of health and stability and mental health and security that come with, you know, the knowledge that your income supports are stable and will be indexed, then that individual is much more likely to be able to carry on in society, to live independently, and to avoid both physical and mental issues that can end up costing the health system considerably more than the nickel-and-dime cuts that you are proposing here in Bill 21. It's just like you are making an investment in ensuring the stability and the security of someone's modest income supports. I would venture to say that there is a direct correlation to having an exponential saving by those people living stably and reasonably healthy, both physically and mentally, right?

These support benefits include the seniors' benefit as well. We know that although Alberta's population is the youngest in Canada, perhaps the biggest increasing demographic population is seniors – right? – from now over the next 20 years, it's projected. Again, to make sure that we are having a stable, safe, and secure income support program for seniors here in the province of Alberta, our responsibility here in this Chamber is to ensure that our seniors population has that to look forward to. Again, it's a very modest benefit that helps to support a living income for people to live independently and to meet their physical and mental needs as well. Again, if the indexing of that against inflation is taken away, then instability and that descent into poverty are much more likely to occur.

Again, I really don't think that making these sorts of changes and cuts really saves that much money, right? If I can reach into the minds of the UCP cabinet, which I'd love to do – let's give it a try. You know, each person around the table said: well, okay; everybody has to throw something into the pile to reduce the deficit and so forth. But I think you have to take two steps back from that. That mindset is very narrow in scope. As I said before, making investments in income supports can help to save money down the road for acute health care costs and mental health issues as well.

Also, it's important to send a positive message to all Albertans. I know for a fact that the vast majority of Albertans are a very hopeful, sharing, and caring group of individuals, and what we do here in this Legislature is meant to be a reflection of the values of who we are as Albertans, right? So if you are somehow stepping outside of what is considered to be acceptable in terms of values that Albertans share – what we do here in the Legislature and what you do as government, making cuts to vulnerable people, is outside the bounds of what is acceptable to be an Albertan, quite frankly. We must ensure, every step of the way, that the values of the people that we represent are being reflected in the laws and the regulations

that we produce here in this Chamber, and this doesn't meet that test at all, not even close.

7:40

We know that seniors that worked hard their whole lives and contributed to this society suddenly have the rug pulled out from under them – right? – by not having an indexed seniors' support benefit available for their security and well-being. That's just wrong. You know it. When I say it out loud, you know in your heart that that doesn't wash. For us to enshrine something that is essentially wrong in legislation, like this is attempting to do here today, is not conscionable. I don't accept it even a little bit, and I know that most people in this room don't either. At least we in the Official Opposition have the latitude and the capacity to speak up and call it what it is.

The other issue that I have not really commented on too much in Bill 21 – I guess I just wanted to add a little bit more information around the tuition cap and the issues around advanced education, because that's my responsibility as the critic for advanced education with the Official Opposition. I have made some obvious comments on this from the time that Bill 21 was brought forward, but in the interim I have had an opportunity to speak to a lot of postsecondary education groups – student unions and advocacy groups and just individual students, quite frankly – that have given me more information about just how damaging this allowance for tuition to go up very dramatically over the next three years will be for the thousands of people that are in universities and colleges and trade schools and so forth and then the many thousands that are saving in anticipating attending postsecondary here in the next number of years.

We know very well that there's a huge demographic of young people sort of between junior high and high school right now that are moving through the public education system that will need both spaces and capacity in our postsecondary institutions right away. This isn't something that we can hope and dream about like it's, as the Finance minister said about diversification, some luxury that we might be able to entertain in the future. Postsecondary education for this huge contingent of tens of thousands of students that will be entering postsecondary here in the next few years: that is not a luxury that we can entertain later. That's coming. It's coming fast, and we need to build that capacity, right? There's no compromise. There's no negotiation about that.

You know, as we've all learned, I think, in the last few months, maybe earlier, we have the lowest participation rate in the country for postsecondary education and, interestingly, the youngest population in Canada, too. Those are just, like, two very significant and concerning numbers that will meet together in these next few years, and if we don't build the capacity for affordable postsecondary education for those tens of thousands of young people that will be entering into postsecondary, we will lose those people.

There is a sweet spot when people will entertain going to postsecondary education. You know, God bless the people that go back as adults – maybe they started a family and did other jobs and then went back to university or trade school and so forth – but that is not common, right? The sweet spot for getting someone to go to postsecondary and actually pick up a trade or a career and so forth is just a few years after they leave high school. If tuition rates rise dramatically over those next three years or four years, it sends a huge negative message to those tens of thousands of people to say: "Hey, sorry. You know, we just built this huge brick wall, which is a 23 per cent increase in tuition, and good luck with that." But the unsaid message for, well, many people is: "We just can't afford it. We can't afford to go. We'll move on to something else."

There's a lot of conventional wisdom in our province that we have to overcome, right? I hear it all the time. I was a high school teacher for 20 years, and I heard it all the time. I had to fight against it. They would say: "Well, you go to university, get an arts degree, get, like, a \$30,000 student loan, and you end up working at Starbucks. So why bother going to school?" That is the most poisonous thing that you can hear as a teacher or as a parent in terms of wasting the potential of young people that should be going to school and will enjoy going to school and will derive direct economic benefits from going to school and will become better citizens from going to school and create a better society from going to school. You know, we don't want to put up this 23 per cent higher wall with tuition to send the unsaid messages or the very loud and clear messages that say: "Sorry. You have to be quite well off to go to school now, and maybe you should just move on to something else." That's not the way to run a responsible government.

Yeah, I heard it loud and clear. I met with students from Athabasca University, for example, which is a really great opportunity for distance learning, where students can access university programs regardless of where they live, right? So it's very highly subscribed in rural areas. People were talking about having between \$50,000 to \$70,000 to, one individual, \$120,000 in student debt from Athabasca University. You know, I was astounded, quite frankly. I kind of knew the situation but wasn't thinking about the numbers. When somebody actually tells you those things to your face and you see their situation, then it all becomes clear. You know, good for these students for taking the risk to go to school and accumulate those kinds of debts and to know that it's worth it in the end.

But suddenly where's the breaking point? If someone has a \$70,000 debt, and you add another 23 per cent on top of that, maybe that's just the straw that breaks the back of that individual to say: sorry; I can't do this. You can do the math and say: "I could finish this degree. I'll work for 20 years. I'll be paying off the student loan for so many years after that." At what point is it worth it? Or at what point can you actually make it happen – right? – if you're a single mother, as this person was, or something like that. I just really am loath to think of increasing tuition fees so dramatically. That's what will happen, right? Mr. Chair, it's not like, you know, we would expect anything different.

I know that the strategy or the tactic of this government will be to say: well, universities set their own tuition rates; let's set them free. I think I heard that this morning from one of the ministers, that somehow we will set the universities free by cutting their funding. I mean, whoa, that's a leap of logic. It's almost astounding, in a way. It goes past being something I'd be mad at. It's just more like breathtaking. It's like: yeah, that's right; run free and try to hunt and gather the money you need to run. I mean, ridiculous is what it is, Mr. Chair, and I really don't want to be a part of that.

The other issue that I learned more about in regard to Bill 21 – and again it's to do with advanced education – is increasing the student loan interest rates. Again, it's easy. I know that the Premier loves to say that this is just a penny on the dollar or whatever, but when you add percentages on thousands of dollars, it's not pennies, Mr. Chair. It's hundreds of dollars or even thousands of dollars. And when you're a student, as many of us here in this Chamber today have been in our lives, or at least some of us, you know that you're not particularly well off while you're going to school. So student debt is a huge deterrent to getting people to go to school, and student debt has been increasing quite dramatically over these last number of years. Another increase of 1 per cent for someone who is going to school – and we did an average, I think, for an average person – can add up to \$1,800 more for their university education.

I know the UCP talking points. They'll say: well, that's a good investment, and they're going to really benefit from that. But, you know, again, it's another nail in the coffin of someone who maybe is not going to be able to go, right? They just won't be able to go to university, or that will deter them from going to college or trade school or whatever. Then that's it. You end up with less of our young population going to school during that critical time when they should and need to go to school, and you lose, at the very least, the economic productivity that you would have gained from that worker getting the education and taking that into the workforce over a 20-, 30-, or 40-year period, right?

These things all add up: pennies on the dollar for making your cuts, but you have pennies here and pennies there, and you add it to a percentage point. Suddenly the math creates a giant hole that people can't get out of. That, I think, should be a concern for all of us, and it's a reason to not support this Bill 21 as written here this evening.

The last part of Bill 21 that I wanted to just make a couple of comments about: again, it's sort of moving back to a theme that we heard earlier today when we were talking about Bill 26. You know, I found it astounding. [Mr. Eggen's speaking time expired] Oh, darn.

7:50

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. Obviously, I will likely focus on some areas that I'm particularly concerned about, and there's a lot in here to be concerned about, but I'd just like to add to my colleague's comments about the cost of postsecondary education in Alberta.

I want to preface those comments. I think that investing in our youth and our children and their education is the most important investment that we'll ever make. They truly are our future, and failure to do that is a huge mistake that we will pay for. What I think is so reckless about Bill 21 in terms of postsecondary is that we're literally making it more difficult for youth to attend postsecondary. I mean, I think there are some students that are quite fortunate that they have families that have perhaps worked for them and saved for them to be able to go to school, or they have been able to manage high school and maybe a part-time job, and they've been able to put some money away so there's less of a need for student financing. But that's not the case for everybody, Mr. Chair. It's really not the case for everybody, and if we are looking to increase participation in postsecondary, this is not the way to go. I believe that it's harmful to our youth.

To just give you a personal example, my oldest – my son, actually – went to school for longer than I'd like to talk about, because it's really stressful. He went to school for a long time, more than 10 years. I started saving when he was really young, Mr. Chair. I started putting away \$25 a month, actually, from the time he was born. I saved and saved. I knew that I wanted to pay for both of their first degrees. I didn't realize that it was going to be, like, a life goal to be in postsecondary. I'm teasing him.

It's not possible. I watched him struggle after his first degree. He decided that he was going to do a master's. He worked, and he studied, and then he decided that he had to move away to continue. He wanted to do a doctorate. He went to the University of Toronto. I don't know if you've ever checked out what those guys make as TAs or assistants or researchers; it's actually pretty sad. He

probably would have done better just working shifts in a fast-food restaurant, actually. It was difficult, but he did it.

Part of why it's an investment to make things as affordable and accessible as possible is that they give back. They give back in ways that we can't imagine. Personal example again: he was about five years old, told me what he wanted to do: hunt dinosaurs. I was, like: sure, honey; that's cool. I always thought he'd change his mind. He did not; he continued. He's a paleontologist today, and he studies dinosaur teeth. Now, some days I fail to see the value of that because it's dinosaur teeth, to be honest. But what I learned is that through methodical research he was actually studying the development of all kinds of things like enamel, like dentine – I didn't really understand the value of that until he explained it to me – and then he made the connection with modern dentistry. What is really quite fascinating is what modern dentistry and research have learned about the evolution of teeth and the creation of enamel and all of those things because the two sciences got together. Now, that's just one example.

My youngest is still in school also. She wanted to be a vet originally, graduated with an animal health degree, wasn't able to get into vet school because there are not a lot of spaces in Calgary. There is another school in Saskatoon, although I think that Alberta has some spaces that are dedicated there. Again, there are not enough spaces, and we aren't investing to create more opportunity for our young people that want to pursue careers like that. I'm not saying that's why she didn't get in, but she didn't get in. She decided that she wanted to do something that she thought would make a difference in this world. She decided that she wanted to pursue teaching. Of course, I'm incredibly proud that she would decide that she wants to be a teacher. I think that is an incredibly noble profession, and I know that she'll be great at it.

My stories here are sort of going to one place. I was not in a position to totally help them out. I was able to help them out at the beginning because I saved, but the reality is that they had to work and save money. They had to get a little bit of student financing. That's the reality for most people. Actually, I would say that the reality for most youth is that they don't have families that have been able to save for them, and they are reliant on financing and working. You can imagine the stress that puts on a young person to have to do that, so it's not surprising that there's an incredible need for mental health supports in postsecondary institutions. I think it's tough enough to be there competing and learning and all of those stresses in addition to trying to earn enough money to keep yourself fed and housed and all of those things.

To put this into legislation that just takes a wide swath on so many groups of people: I think that's incredibly, incredibly short-sighted, to attack this particular group of people that really are our future. We're not going to be in this place forever, and they will be our future. They will be the ones that lead us and lead this province and country. Once again, to not invest in our youth and our children is incredibly short-sighted.

I want to switch a little bit and talk about AISH and income supports. I know that I've said this a number of times. I think that at the beginning of this I was really hopeful that members from the government benches would actually hear what we're saying about AISH. I know that most of the government members are fairly new. There are some that have been here longer, and I think that they can attest to the fact, as my colleague said, that the vast majority of casework that you will do relates specifically to income support and things like AISH.

Although I've heard the minister say that these supports are more generous than in other provinces, it really doesn't matter, actually. It doesn't matter at all what other provinces are doing. What really matters is the Albertans with severe disabilities who live here, who



we are tasked to look out for and to invest in, not just take care of but invest in. Investing in people is what makes communities stronger, and ultimately strong communities make strong economies.

I'll say it again. One of the things I was most proud of was when we indexed AISH. I wish we'd been in a position to increase the base amount more than we did. The reality is that we caught it up to inflation and then indexed it going forward. Although it's not a lot of money, \$30 to \$35 a year for somebody on AISH, what it is is a message that you no longer have to engage in advocacy every single year to say: "I can't live on this. I cannot live on 1,680-some dollars a month. I can't do it. It's impossible."

I think what makes AISH so different from other benefits is that one of the pieces that is reviewed and examined in the application eligibility process is the fact that the disability is so severe that it impairs that person's ability to earn a living and to support themselves. Now, there have been some people that have done really quite well in transitioning off AISH or starting to earn money and then have their benefits go down. That's fantastic. I think that we can do more to support inclusive employment and sort of move that transition along, but that's not the case for everybody.

If you think about it, someone in Alberta with a severe disability, a severe handicap: they are truly destined to live in poverty for the rest of their lives. Truly. They're truly destined to live in poverty. Indexing AISH benefits doesn't lift them out of poverty, but it addresses what it's supposed to. It addresses the cost-of-living increases that we all see every year.

**8:00**

I'll give you an example of a woman that I know in St. Albert who actually was injured. I think that her daughter was probably under 10 years old when she was so severely injured that employment was no longer a possibility for her. She is a single parent. Her daughter is still in school. She's on AISH. She rents an apartment for herself and her daughter. She doesn't drive, obviously. I don't know if any of you have been to St. Albert. We're fortunate to have a handibus, actually to have a few handibuses, and they have helped with the cost of that bus. It used to be \$5 per trip, so \$5 to go one way, \$5 to go another. It's a wheelchair-accessible vehicle. There are not a lot of options in St. Albert, so as you can imagine, rent steadily goes up. We all know that food prices go up gradually every year.

Now this mom living on AISH has to deal with increased costs for her daughter to be in school, and those are transportation costs. I think that you heard one of my colleagues earlier today refer to an article, an announcement from St. Albert Catholic. They're now assessing additional transportation fees in the middle of the year, and that's because of decisions that you are making. You are making decisions that are directly impacting people right now.

This woman on AISH, trying to raise a daughter, does get a little bit of a top-up, but all of these costs go up, and they mount and they mount. I can tell you that her budget is so tight that she has credit card debt because she can't make it work every month. And I'm not talking about luxuries; I'm talking about, you know, that maybe her daughter needs a new winter coat and she can't find one at the thrift store. I'm not talking about luxuries like: I'm going to buy a car. I'm talking about the very basics.

There's a reason why, I think, it's getting close to where 20 per cent of the people that are using the food bank in the capital region, or Edmonton specifically, identify as being AISH recipients. More and more towards the end of the month people don't have a choice. It's not like they're making bad decisions about: you know, I'm

going to spend my whole \$1,685 or whatever it is on eating out or SkipTheDishes. This is about budgeting and not making it.

A cost-of-living increase helps. It doesn't eliminate the problem, but it helps. I'm actually asking the government members to stop and think about it. I know you have got to know somebody with a severe handicap in your constituency, in your family, in your life. Think about what that's like for them. Every year they have to cross their fingers: let's hope that the government of the day decides things are good enough in our province – and I don't actually know what standard you're using – and, you know, let's hope that it's good enough that we get that \$30 extra. That's awful.

Indexing AISH was a way to say: "You are important. You are so important that we're investing in you. We understand that the cost of living goes up every year. We understand that. This doesn't actually cover all of it, but it's a start. It is something." People that are on AISH, that make it through that process – if you haven't supported someone through that process, you may not know that it's actually quite complex, and it is very difficult. It takes quite a bit of time, and it's not easy. Your disability or handicap or injury or whatever it is has to be fairly profound to be able to make it into that program to be supported, so to think that these folks that are on AISH and receiving AISH have a lot of options and choices is not realistic.

So think about your decisions. You have collectively decided to fund something like a war room. I don't exactly know what you're doing. I really have no idea what you're doing. But you've chosen to invest \$30 million per year to support one sector, one industry. I don't know what else the war room is doing because you haven't told us. That's \$30 million – \$30 million – \$120 million over four years. That would be over a decade of AISH increases. This is about choices. This is truly about choices. Who do you value? What's important to us? I'm going to say it again: investing in our people – all of our people, whether it's students, people with disabilities, our seniors – is always a good investment. All we are is a collection of people. At the end of the day, it is all about people. The healthiest communities have the healthiest people.

I wish I would have noted it, but I read an article – actually, it was a while ago now; I wish I could remember more of the details – and it talked about mental health and mental wellness. Obviously, there are huge issues and so many people that require support, but one of the tools that they suggested to address some of the mental health concerns that we hear about all the time was raising the minimum wage. Go figure. I don't know if any members here have ever actually lived in poverty or grown up in poverty – I'm sure there are some – but it is not easy. It is not easy at all. It's about really tough choices all the time. All the time. I'm talking about someone who had the ability to do other things or to make choices, but somebody with a severe handicap does not have the ability to choose.

I'm going to say one more thing about that. Increasing or indexing AISH or addressing the poverty of people with disabilities also goes a long way to prevent abuse, neglect, and violence. I can tell you this from first-hand experience as I know lots of people with disabilities that are on AISH, and very often they are unable to afford to move or they're unable to afford to leave a roommate that is perhaps abusive or to leave a relationship that is perhaps abusive because they literally don't have the ability to do it. They don't. That is what grinding poverty does, and that's what increasing risk does. If you are a part of government that is methodically looking at this particular group of people and saying, "You're not worth it right now; things have to get better for the rest of us before we invest in you," is that truly the message that you want? Is that what you want to be remembered for, truly, that you stopped indexing benefits for people with profound disabilities and people who are

living in grinding poverty? You are making that choice. All of you are making that choice. It's incredibly sad to me.

You know, women with disabilities: we talk a lot about abuse prevention or reduction. There are so many things to talk about, but one of the groups of women that is so frequently the target or the victim of domestic violence – incredible abuse, not just abuse from a loved one or spouse or partner or anything like that but very often abuse by a caregiver. A caregiver can be a family member. A caregiver can be a roommate. A caregiver can be someone that you hire. But it's about the lack of ability to have financial choices, to say: "I'm done. I don't want you anymore. I'm moving. I'm moving to a new place." When you start to roll back the measures that have been put in place to address poverty, you are increasing that risk to women.

If any of you ever have any interest at all, which it doesn't look like, in reading up about women with disabilities in Canada, some of the stats are absolutely staggering. DAWN Canada – that's the acronym – is an amazing group that has a lot of information that would let you know. It will paint a picture for you about what it's like for a woman with a disability in Canada today. I don't know. I would hope that one of you would check it out and talk to somebody with a disability and ask them specifically: what does it mean to get an additional \$30 to \$35 a month? It's everything. It truly is everything. It's the difference between going to a food bank or not. It actually is so incredibly important.

You know, I've been overwhelmed with e-mails from people on AISH. It actually takes a lot for someone to share their personal story like that, to talk about what it's like, and I've received e-mails from all over Alberta. From your communities I've received e-mails from people sharing their information about what that looks like. They understand that you're not stopping AISH benefits and you're not changing eligibility or any of that just yet, but you did stop the index. They understand that. They see you. They see what you're doing. I will keep telling them, but they see what you're doing.

**8:10**

They sent me some e-mails that are absolutely incredible. They're talking about: here's my budget. They're actually, literally, sharing their budget to the dollar. "This is what I pay for my apartment. This is what I have to pay for my insurance on my apartment. This is my portion of medication that I have to pay for. This is what I pay for a low-income bus pass. This is what I pay for groceries." Do you know what the average range for groceries was in a month?

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

On Bill 21, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen to speak.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm always incredibly encouraged to get up and speak really short so that the hon. member can continue talking about AISH. I don't know. Hon. member, would that be something that would interest you, you sharing the fact that people who are living on AISH are sharing their budgets with you? Member, I wouldn't mind if you would continue on in that vein, if you wouldn't mind, even if it's just for a couple of minutes.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. I get a little bit, like, emotional when I talk about this stuff. I have worked in this sector most of my adult

life, so I know a lot of people. Actually, a lot of them are my friends, so I do understand how personal this is.

I have two brothers with disabilities. One is not here anymore. But the other one, you know, got a little help up and actually got a really great job that he liked, that he loved. I mean, he showed up for work early every day. Over 20 years later I don't even think he's ever missed a shift. He loves his life. There are great things that people with disabilities are doing. I don't want to make it sound like it's all, like, you know, depressing.

Why I'm telling you this is because investing in somebody with a disability is kind of magic, actually. When you do it well and when you address poverty, which is really, truly the underlying problem, you give people opportunities for real inclusion, right? That means learning with their friends. That means playing sports with their friends. That means living in a place that's safe, not having to live with a roommate that you really hate. You know, magical things happen. And when great things happen for people with disability, you start to reduce the need for so many things like access to acute care, access to mental health supports, access to the food bank, all of those things. I mean, you don't need the food bank when you start to have these networks of support. But all of this stuff is only possible when you invest in people.

Government members, you are deliberately choosing not to invest in people with severe handicaps. It's a choice that you're making. You're making a lot of other bad choices that I'm sure will come back to haunt you, but you are making this choice, and you are harming people.

I would like to read to you a couple of e-mails from people. These are not folks from St. Albert. These are folks from your constituencies, and I think it's really important for you to hear them. This message says:

Dear Marie,

I am writing to express my outrage and sadness at the govt. decision to de-index AISH, the seniors benefit and other payments. The measure of a government is not how it provides for people with everything but how it provides for people with [very] little. This government is truly showing its mean spiritedness and lack of compassion.

I deliver mail in a lower income area in Edmonton. I have had several conversations with my customers who receive AISH and other benefits who were [so] pleased with the decision ... to index the payments. The extra money may not be much but it meant [a lot] to them. Now to [take] it away is cruel.

I fully support ... the NDP caucus in vigorously opposing these mean spirited cuts.

That was not from a person on AISH.

This one says:

Dear Marie Renaud,

In regards to funding cuts, my brother has been dependent on AISH for nearly a decade. He had a brain tumor when he was five years old and the operation that saved him left him with a future, but with impaired motor skills and [severe] learning disabilities. Because of this he's struggled with maintaining a job and having independence.

Now in his early thirties, AISH has provided him with the chance to move out of our parents' house and live on his own over the last five years. This small piece of adulthood that most of us take for granted means a lot to him and gives him that independence that would otherwise be difficult on his own.

If [future] cuts are made, it would be devastating to [him] ... [devastating to his] independent life. If it came down to it, I know my parents would do what they [have to do] to provide financially for him, but they shouldn't have to, and my brother shouldn't have to live in fear that the leaders of Alberta would take away his rights to basic human dignity.

I am appalled to live in one of the [wealthiest] countries where the leaders will take what little the people have and continue to bail out the rich, but I still believe that there are good people fighting hard to change this and I thank you for your part in the fight.

Here's one from St. Albert that is quite interesting.

[Dear Marie],

Yes, [the Premier's] decision to de-index AISH will impact me.

I live in St. Albert, and have been on AISH since 2015. [I have] Cerebral Palsy . . .

The side effects of 54 years of Cerebral Palsy made it so that I [don't have any] cartilage in my right knee, a bulging disk, and spinal stenosis, [eventually] ending up in a wheelchair.

I moved into [subsidized, supported living] in February of 2017, with a cost of \$901.00 per month rent.

Here is the monthly budget as it is right now: rent, \$901; EPCOR, \$60; insurance, \$134; travel in St. Albert and travel into Edmonton to see the doctor, \$170; telephone, Internet, and cable, \$170; food, \$240; exercise class, \$45, which is awesome. There are actually subsidized exercise classes at Servus Place in St. Albert. I'm just saying. The total is \$1,720. So every single month this person is short \$40.

Recently, the lease amount for my one bedroom unit, which is also wheelchair accessible, went up from \$901 to \$965. Where I [am going to] find another \$64.00 when I am already short \$40.00 I do not know. AISH needs to go up with the cost of living for rent and food and utilities . . .

I would like to find work, but finding work that falls in-line with AISH [or even my ability to do the work, get there] is hard.

Here's a comment that actually addresses inclusive employment.

If you can work, there are [very few] employers willing to hire . . .

Oh, I actually know this person.

Accessibility is also an issue finding work, so we have rely on AISH . . .

We are still in the stone ages as far as people understanding and supporting the handicapped. We want equality, inclusion, but most of all [we want to belong]. If we belong, then we should also have an income [that makes] us comfortable and [able to] cover the [basic] necessities of life.

This is Alice. I've actually known Alice for a while.

Alice was really great to share her budget. You can see that she's not spending, really, much on anything. I think that, for all of us, to spend \$240 on food – and I know Alice lives alone. But to make \$240 on food last for an entire month, particularly if there's a holiday in there like Christmas – I know Alice doesn't have any family left anymore. But even for Christmas, I mean, this is a woman on \$240 for food for an entire month. You know that she's going to the food bank. You know that she's needing a hamper at Christmas because she can't make it work. I think that just her comment alone about her one-bedroom, accessible, affordable housing, that has gone up from \$901 to \$965, when with careful budgeting she was already \$40 short a month – to stand up and say, "We're deindexing because AISH benefits are good enough; you know, it's the highest in the country," it doesn't matter. That is irrelevant. What matters are Albertans, people here that we were tasked with looking out for and investing in. So the \$30 to \$35 a month that you have now removed from people makes a difference.

8:20

I'm going to try to read one more letter.

Hello Ms Renaud,

I'm not sure if it is too late to add my family's name to the list of families who will be impacted by the deindexing of AISH, but regardless, I will.

My son, who is currently only 16, and will age into the system under [the Premier's] current government, was born at 24 weeks and 3 days, weighing a grand total of a pound and four ounces. He tested positive for crack cocaine and was in withdrawal the first week of his life. He spent five months at the Red Deer hospital, undergoing various surgeries and procedures before finally being discharged into the custody of his teenaged parents. By all accounts, the mother was intelligent and loving but the father was older, possessive . . . and disinterested in parenting a disabled newborn.

My son found himself back in the hospital not quite a year later, this time as a shaken baby. He spent an additional two months in hospital while the government investigated. The dad was charged and found guilty . . . and as soon as the restraining order expired, my son's birth mother allowed [the dad] back into their lives [eventually].

Six months later my son was back in the hospital. This time it was because he was having seizures so badly he was stiff as a piece of plywood. He was found neglected in his own filth . . .

I'm going to leave this out.

. . . They begged my son's parents to call an ambulance but because of their previous experience with the authorities, they refused to do so. Instead, the pair, who [had] found this half dead 22 month old, called a taxi cab and stuffed [the baby] into the back of it and paid for his trip to the emergency room.

My son was again shaken so badly [that] his brain bled for 8 days. His body was covered in 60 percent chemical burns, from bleach the police theorize someone used to try and clean up the evidence of an obvious sexual assault. He lost his hearing due to the bleach burns.

My son spent four more months in hospital before finding his way into care and eventually at age 5 was adopted by our family.

And just let me say: thank God for adoptive families and foster families.

We're thrilled to have him. But he will never work. He's effectively a three year old toddler, [and that's] on his best days . . . He's a happy fellow but his contributions to his community are emotional only.

He is profoundly disabled. Severely intellectually disabled. Entirely blind, partly due to his premature birth, partly due to repeated brain damage . . . He is mostly deaf. He is non-verbal and has four sign language signs: Yes, no, all done and thank you. He is quadriplegic, has zero use of his arms and hands, cannot stand on his own for even one second; is tube fed, diapered and confined to a chair. His world is small. And now our provincial government is intent on making this world [a little] smaller.

I'm not entirely sure how an adult is supposed to live on [AISH] as it is. Especially an adult with complex needs who can't . . . feed or toilet themselves, let alone clothe or move without assistance. I'm not really sure of what will happen with my son once he turns 18. We live [in rural Alberta] and there are zero supports for people like my son. We, as his parents, aren't getting any younger . . .

We adopted our son knowing all of this about him but we trusted our government would help when the time [came]. That our government would take seriously the condition [of severe disability and what it's like for] severely disabled Albertans [to] live with [and that they would] treat them with respect and dignity. It is our great sorrow and disappointment to realize this is far from [the truth] under our current government.

This needs to change. This community of vulnerable citizens deserves better from all of us. Thank you for advocating on their behalf.

This is from Tanis and Bruce, who live in Beaver county, Alberta.

Mr. Chair, I received, like, so many letters. I don't even know how many letters. We reached out to all of the folks that sent us

letters, and not everybody agreed to have their letters shared. I have tabled a number of them, and I have some of them here, but this story is, like, not unique.

When you deindex AISH, it's not just a manoeuvre. It's not just: "We're just going to save money. We'll put it back when things get better." You're harming real people right now, today and tomorrow and in January. I know that you don't think so. I can tell by your reactions. I just don't understand it. I don't understand how people can stand in a ceremony for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, wear a button, wear a ribbon, and say: "Oh, yes. It's wonderful. We love inclusion. We want inclusion, but, yeah, we're going to vote on a bill that deindexes AISH, removing \$30, \$35 a month because, you know, they'll be fine. It's not that onerous." Come on. Come on.

Sorry. That's all I've got.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. I would just ask that the hon. Member for St. Albert table those documents at the earliest opportunity.

**Ms Renaud:** I already did.

**The Deputy Chair:** You already did? Okay.

Then I will also just remind all hon. members that when reading from documents, the intent is to be brief wherever possible. In this chair's opinion, if you were to read a complete letter from an individual who could have just come up to the gallery and spoken out those words, then essentially you're doing something indirectly that couldn't be done directly.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I personally want to thank the Member for St. Albert for reading out those letters. I was incredibly moved by the reality of the people that she was talking about. As she was reading, especially that last letter, I couldn't help but think of my own two sons, and I started reminding myself about why I got into politics in the first place.

I don't doubt that the members on the other side are also trying to make the world a better place, but they just do it from their perspective. I get it. But when you hear the reality of life that people on AISH have to live through – and it's not just the people on AISH; it's also seniors.

I'll never forget. You know, I was telling my own mom this story just last night. I remember a few years ago. There was a time, before being elected and before working at the University of Alberta, that I actually worked as a translator. This senior from the Chilean community had heard from somebody that I was a translator, and he needed help with translation when he went to the doctor. Of course, he called me up – he got my number from somebody – and I agreed to go help him for absolutely free because I'm just, like: how am I going to charge a senior from the community who's living on a budget just so that he can communicate with his doctor?

I'll never forget the very first time that I took this senior from the Chilean community to go visit the doctor. I happily drove, right? We went to the doctor. I translated for him, and then when we went back to his apartment, his one-bedroom apartment, he offered me a coffee, and he asked me to please sit down and just spend some time with him. He continued to talk to me about what his life was like living on a budget and how tight it was and how he really had to count the dollars that he was spending, very similar to the letters read by the Member for St. Albert about these constituents who live on AISH and how they're really living on a budget. When we deindex, yeah, it may only seem like cents on the dollar to the

people on the other side of the House, but that's a lot of money for people who are living on AISH.

8:30

I'm trying really hard not to be judgmental. Of course, I understand that the approach that you're taking is an ideological one. But I must confess that I have no other words to share but to say that it's just heartless. It is. People who are living on a budget and are searching – they're already not being able to make it to the end of the month, and now you're going to take that little piece away from them, make it even tougher for them to make it to the end of the month. Why? Why? We all want what's best for Alberta. Let's not forget that Alberta is all Albertans. In this House, yes, we may have differing perspectives on how we make this province a better place to live, but do not disregard the reality of the most vulnerable Albertans and what the decisions that we are making together in this House are and how they're going to impact those very Albertans that we are here to represent. It is our duty to make sure that all Albertans are represented, not just a specific group.

You know what? I hear it time and time again. We get up in the House and we talk about who we represent. You know, the members from rural Alberta will get up and say: well, we represent rural Alberta. I'll admit it that sometimes I even get up in this House and say: we represent working Albertans and those who are part of unions. We do. But let's not forget that all of us collectively are here to represent all Albertans. I would say that the most vulnerable in our society, like those who live on AISH and those who are living on a budget that's so tight that they can't even make it to the end of the month, those should be the people that we make absolutely, one hundred per cent sure that we're helping them make it to the end of the month.

I believe there's a saying, you know – and I always get these sayings wrong, but I'll attempt this one. Maybe some of the members from my side can help me out on this one. It's something to the effect of: show me how you treat your most vulnerable, and I'll tell you what kind of society you are. Something to that effect, right? So here we are, and we're about to pass Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. I agree with the members on the other side. We need to make sure that we're fiscally sustainable. We do. We don't disagree on that, but where we fundamentally disagree is: who needs to make the sacrifices in order so that this government can make sure that we are fiscally sustainable? That is where we are fundamentally in disagreement. Making sure that these individuals – and I see that the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations shaking his head at me. I can't read his mind, so I'm not too sure what that's all about. Maybe he disagrees that we are fundamentally at odds with one another. So then why is he part of a cabinet that's even proposing this bill? That's the question that I have for him. Why are you part of a cabinet, a government that has decided – and this is, of course, through you, Mr. Chair – that they want to deindex AISH?

I agree with the Member for St. Albert. Just the other day there was a ceremony talking about people with disabilities and how we honour people with disabilities. Well, the best way that we can honour people with disabilities is making sure to treat them with the respect and the dignity that they deserve, and that's not just with words. It's with actions. It's with specific supports provided by a government that helps them, first of all, just in the first place, make it to the end of the month. Make it to the end of the month. Let's help these Albertans, who deserve our respect and should be treated with dignity, make it to the end of the month. This bill is actually subverting that by deindexing AISH.

Members of this House, with all due respect, I'm sure that you're here because you truly believe in that you want to make Alberta a

better place for all Albertans. I truly believe that that's what your intention is. But if that indeed is your intention – this is, of course, through you, Mr. Chair, to all the members of this House – then how can you possibly accept deindexing of AISH as a part of this bill? It's not only the deindexing of AISH; it's also the deindexing of seniors programs. As I was sharing before about this member from the community and what my experience was with him in terms of going to translate for him at the doctor and how he was sharing with me – I mean, there are cuts to lodge funding, kicking dependents off of seniors' drug plans. All of this is going to have a profound effect – a profound, profound effect – on the lives of seniors.

8:40

All these questions that I have in my head for members from the other side of the aisle – and I'd love to hear from the people on the other side, how they feel about all this, about these questions that I have for you, these specific questions that I'm asking in this House of you. I honestly believe that we all have good intentions. We all have good intentions, but when you're supporting Bill 21 and the deindexing of AISH and deindexing of seniors' programs specifically, then I've got to ask you: well, are your intentions really in line with what you're trying to do? I'll remind members that we're not here just to represent one specific group of people. In our constituencies we represent everybody, everybody that calls our constituencies home.

To the members who represent rural communities: I'll tell you that before reverting to Islam, I used to be really involved in the Catholic Church. I used to actually be a volunteer for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. We used to travel throughout the province regularly, and part of my volunteer work with Development and Peace was actually doing education around specific issues with the developing world or the underdeveloped world, as I used to call it, when we would go on these visits to rural communities. I got a chance to meet a lot of people from rural Alberta, and, you know, before heading out into rural Alberta, of course, I had heard all of the stereotypes about rural Alberta, but I also knew about all the stereotypes that existed about immigrants and people who were like me. I knew that those stereotypes weren't true, so when it came to the stereotypes of people from rural Alberta, I was like, "Well, I'm not going to believe everything I hear, and I'd rather meet people and speak to them face to face and get to know them before casting judgment based on some stereotype that I had heard from another city slicker," if you want to put it that way.

Let me tell you that I was so happy when I got that chance through Development and Peace to actually go out into rural communities and meet people and understand that they have hearts of gold. They have hearts of gold, just like people here in the city do. They care about their neighbours. They want what's best for their neighbours. It doesn't matter where you go in this world; I think the majority of the people are always going to care and want what's best for the people that live in their community.

So, then, that begs the question, Members: why do that to people who are living on AISH? Why do this to the seniors in our province? Why make life harder for them? Honestly, if I were to go into any community, whether it be rural, urban, suburban – it doesn't matter – and if you were to ask people, "Hey, I've got a great idea. Let's make life more difficult for our seniors. Are you with me?" I'm a hundred per cent sure that a hundred per cent of the people I would ask would say, "What? Are you crazy?" These are the people that dedicated their lives to building Alberta. These are the people that have contributed the most to our society, to our culture, to our economy, to our communities, and not only have they

contributed so much, not only have they raised children, but now they're helping raise grandchildren and even great-grandchildren. This budget, under Bill 21 specifically, is going to make life harder for them. I can't see and I can't fathom how we would ask any Albertan out there and they would agree with this. I understand that we want a province and a budget that's going to be fiscally sustainable as we move forward, but don't balance this budget, Members, on the backs of our seniors and the most vulnerable in our society. That is what I'm asking you here today. That is what I'm asking each and every one of you to contemplate here in this House today.

**An Hon. Member:** Say it loud and say it proud.

**Member Loyola:** Well, I'm glad that you find it funny. Members from the UCP are laughing at me right now.

**The Deputy Chair:** I just want to remind all hon. members to speak through the chair when engaging in debate.

If the hon. member could please continue.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Members of the UCP are laughing at me right now. Through you, the chair, I say this, of course. That's what's actually happening in here. I'm getting a little adamant, a little passionate about my perspective because I don't think this is the right thing for us to do. Bill 21 and balancing the budget on the backs of seniors and people who live on AISH is the wrong decision to make.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen to speak.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise tonight to continue debate on Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. I'd like to focus my comments for the next bit on one of the sections of the bill that deals with physicians in the province of Alberta. Now, of course, I do recognize that payments to physicians comprise a good deal of our spending in health care. It's understandable because physicians occupy an incredibly important place within that spectrum. They are the front line of care. They are where many people get the most attention in the system. The first relationship that most of us build, aside perhaps from the doctor and the nurses that birth us, is with our family doctor. So it's something of very great importance and I think very intimate and personal for Albertans, the relationship that they build with their family doctor,

Understandably, it's an important relationship that we set up between government and physicians in the province for how we provide and fund the provision of that care. But what we see with this bill is the government attempting to approach what is a long and historic complex relationship with the same sort of heavy-handed, top-down, condescending, dictatorial approach that they bring to so many aspects of negotiation within the province of Alberta. One of the provisions we see within this bill is a provision to give the government the ability to unilaterally terminate the doctor compensation agreement with the AMA. Unilaterally, Mr. Chair.

Now, we've seen what this government thinks of contracts. We saw that back this spring with Bill 9. That came forward and basically said: well, we're going to break contracts with a large number of front-line public-sector workers in the province, including many in health care. This government doesn't actually like to sit down and have a conversation. It doesn't actually like to engage in negotiation unless it's got an axe to hold over your head. Now we see perhaps part of why this government feels it needs to give itself this unilateral ability that no government in Alberta has

taken for itself before, with the revelation of their proposal to the Alberta Medical Association that was revealed this last Friday.

Now, I raise this, Mr. Chair, because I have had a large number of doctors reaching out. Indeed, I had over 20 health care professionals, including physicians, nurses, other front-line care providers, stand with me yesterday, raising their concerns in large part about this proposal from this government, which they are seeking, through Bill 21, the opportunity to impose unilaterally.

8:50

I have an e-mail here that was sent to the Member for Calgary-Hays, the Minister of Transportation, CCed to my office last week, an individual who is a family physician. He along with other colleagues provides full-scope family practice to the community of High River. That includes clinic, ER coverage, and in-patient – not impatient; I'm sure he's a very patient man – coverage. He says:

I voted for the UCP in the last election and, with a conservative government back in power, I hoped to see a return to common sense governance including fiscal restraint and austerity measures. From this perspective, I fully anticipated further reductions in physician payments over and above the recent voluntary \$200M reduction in physician payments generated by the AMA's SOMB Rules Savings Initiative.

That was the \$200 million reduction that we negotiated with the AMA as a government, Mr. Chair.

This doctor said: I fully expected that we would sit down with the new UCP government to negotiate some more savings. He welcomed that opportunity. He was happy to have a Conservative government that he thought would sit down and have a reasonable conversation. He said:

I would have supported a reasonable reduction to physician payments at this time, in line with rollbacks to compensation for other public sector employees.

On this, Mr. Chair, this is a physician who in fact would not agree with me on the proposed wage rollbacks for public-sector employees. This is a gentleman who is deeply predisposed to agree with this government.

But what does he say about the proposals this government is bringing forward for physicians? He says:

The changes outlined in these proposals are so deeply flawed and so terribly imbalanced that I cannot support them. In fact, I feel I must oppose them with great effort.

This is a man who supports and voted for this government, and he is saying that they're putting forward proposals so deeply flawed that he feels he has to take concerted action to resist them. Yet with Bill 21 we see that this government wants to give itself the ability to unilaterally terminate the agreement with these physicians without listening to them whatsoever.

The doctor goes on to say:

I have many concerns with these proposals, but the most serious is that they will undoubtedly have a dramatic negative [effect] on the ability of family physicians to provide comprehensive, patient-centred care.

This Minister of Health and this government like to talk about the fact that they are making these changes to improve and then create patient-centred care. This doctor, who was a supporter of this government – we'll see if he remains so if they continue on this path – is saying that this action, this proposal, which they intend to give themselves the power to unilaterally impose, would in fact reduce the ability to provide patient-centred care in a rural constituency represented by a government MLA and as a constituent of the Minister of Transportation.

He says that his rural group practice has calculated that with this proposed change just to the complex modifiers, so that being around the amount of time they spend with patients who have complex

needs, they would see a reduction in the overall billings of their clinic by about 30 per cent. He said:

These billings constitute not only my salary, but the salaries of my staff and also [have to] cover all overhead costs.

These costs aren't going to drop by 30 per cent, so how can you expect his business to absorb this?

How could any business be expected to survive if revenue dropped by 30% overnight? And make no mistake, family practices are businesses . . .

Indeed, this government seems to be quite comfortable with business existing in the health care system. They want to create more of them. He said:

. . . businesses which provide nearly all of the primary [health] care infrastructure in this province; therefore, it is in the interest of all Albertans that these business remain healthy.

So what he says is that he's really only got a few options to respond to this kind of a change being proposed by this government. He said: well, family physicians will have to start seeing a lot more patients; we'll have to start booking one patient per every 10 minutes and limit care to what we can get done in that 10 minutes of time. Boy, that sounds like a great way to improve patient-centred care, Mr. Chair. Limit every single person that comes in to talk to their family doctor to 10 minutes of time, one problem, one appointment: we'll see you in two weeks about the next issue. Yet in Bill 21, that is what this government wants to propose, that it give itself the unilateral ability to terminate doctor compensation agreements so they can force through these sorts of short-sighted, ill-thought changes.

Indeed, the doctor goes on to say that the pushing away from being able to actually spend time with patients with complex needs, forcing or incentivizing what he calls "high-throughput care," essentially fast-food medicine – he says that we're going to lose supports for patient-centred care and preventative chronic disease management. That's going to just disappear from the front line of health care, from the family doctor's office, and he says that as a result, the province is not going to save a dime. He said:

The only change will be in the reduction in quality of care provided to patients.

He says, well, alternatively, if we don't want to go with a one patient every 10 minutes model and just keeping pumping them through, family doctors could attempt to see one patient per 25 minutes . . . and reduce their overhead enough to 'keep the lights on.'

So that strategy, he says, would mean we'll lay off clinical staff and family doctors will simply see 40 per cent fewer patients per day. I have yet to have anyone come to me and say, Mr. Chair, that we have far too many doctors providing care in rural Alberta. Indeed, this government in Bill 21 wants to give itself the ability to force doctors to go and work in rural Alberta. But as this doctor is noting, either it's going to be fast-food medicine, or you're incentivizing doctors to simply see fewer to be able to maintain their business as it currently stands.

He notes that the Minister of Health

recently stated: "Nothing in [these] proposals will harm the ability of family doctors to give comprehensive . . . care."

This statement, says this doctor,

is patently and demonstrably untrue, so either Mr. Shandro's office . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** Names.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Oh, pardon me. I apologize. I withdraw.

So either [the minister's] office is deliberately misleading the public or they have no idea what they're talking about.

But through Bill 21 this government wants to give that minister the ability to unilaterally terminate any agreement with the Alberta

Medical Association and choose to continue in ignorance of what front-line doctors are trying to tell him.

He talks about how

rural emergency rooms are staffed almost entirely by family physicians.

These proposals would directly impact them:

a drastic pay reduction for family physicians [that work] in rural emergency rooms,

on top of the cut that this government has also put through to rural on-call doctors in those facilities. He says:

Yet these proposals will have almost no impact on the billing of physicians working in urban emergency rooms.

He says:

How is this reasonable? Why are rural family doctors facing such severe cuts when our specialist colleagues are not?

He notes that the press secretary for the Minister of Health stated that:

The minister looks forward to working through the issues with the AMA at the bargaining table.

But the doctor notes that

the problem with this statement is that [this] government has not agreed to negotiation.

He says:

In fact, [the] government has signalled it has no intention of negotiating with the AMA on these proposals.

That seems quite contrary to what the minister himself said in this House.

As several of these proposals directly impact physician compensation we have a legal right,

this gentleman says,

to collective bargaining over these issues.

9:00

This, Mr. Chair, is not one of those union thugs and socialists that this government likes to rave about. This is a man who voted for this government and a period of fiscal responsibility but is calling out the dictatorial, condescending, top-down manner in which this government is approaching that work. This is a man ready and willing to sit down at the table to help this government achieve these goals because he believes in their intent, and even he is so concerned that he feels the need to take concerted action to resist what this government is trying to force and impose and the effects it would have in rural Alberta.

I have another e-mail here from another family physician in the constituency of the Government House Leader, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. This doctor says:

As a . . . physician in Rimbey, I write to you with grave concern, that the recently proposed changes in the Alberta Health's Insured Services Consultation are inappropriately targeted at family physicians providing complex care to patients with chronic disease, and would incentivize low value care with unintended consequences.

He echoes much of what his colleague from High River lays out.

He says:

Removal of these incentives to provide comprehensive care to complex patients will mean [those] patients will be encouraged [instead to have] to book multiple appointments,

which means less access for other people, which means, oddly enough, creating more red tape for physicians, which is the direct opposite of what this government has said that it wishes to do.

He says that it will result

in increased health systems utilization,

force people to make more use, take up more room in an already crowded system that is straining and lacking enough doctors as it is in rural Alberta.

He says that removing

these incentives [simply] encourages new graduates, the ones that this government, through Bill 21, wants to use practitioner IDs to force to go and practise in rural areas of the province. It's going to force them to go there and then incentivize them to provide what this doctor describes as

episodic, walk-in style medicine rather than to commit to a comprehensive family medicine practice focused on continuity of care.

Mr. Chair, I hear these members of the government often talk about their communities, and when they talk about their communities, they talk about the value that you have in rural communities, that people care about each other. They take time to talk to each other, to understand how other people are doing, that they form relationships as a community and support each other, but this government, through this bill, wants to drive that out of the health care system, where people need that kind of comprehensive support, where it's the highest value for a doctor to have a comprehensive, full understanding of complex health care needs and instead incentivize a system of fast-food medicine.

The doctor goes on. He says, you know, that these changes discuss physician wellbeing.

He says:

I went into rural family medicine to provide service to a population in need, within a system that I believe valued continuity and comprehensive care when I graduated in 2018.

This is a new doctor, Mr. Chair, who of his own free will chose to go and practise in Rimbey, not at gunpoint because the government denied him a practitioner ID anywhere else. He chose to go there.

But he says,

[This] government's proposed changes [are going to] incentivize a style of medical practice that is [completely] at odds with what I am taught to provide and what I believe is best for patients. This can only result in job dissatisfaction, burnout and shorter physician careers.

This government has identified an actual need, which is more physicians in rural Alberta, and at the same time is cutting the fees that they want to pay to physicians in rural Alberta and wanting to push through proposals that are essentially going to tell those doctors, "You are going to work harder for less for longer," so they burn out and go, "Forget this. I got better odds back in the city."

This is a young man who was saying that that is not in fact what he wants to do. He wants to work in rural Alberta and provide comprehensive patient-centred care, and his government is telling him: no, we don't want you to do that. He says:

Already, I've had conversations with my cohort of graduates.

He said: you know what? With changes like this, we're looking outside of Alberta. If this is how our government wants to treat us and wants to approach us, the people that want to provide the kind of care this government says that it wants in the places where they say it needs to happen, then maybe it's time for us to start looking elsewhere.

He says:

I also write to you on behalf of the patients in our constituency, the constituents of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, represented by the Government House Leader.

He says:

They will feel the impact of these changes the most.

Perhaps if that House leader would rise, he could tell us how this young man is engaging in fear and smear.

He says:

It will be no surprise to you that the complexity of the patients I treat as a full time family physician in Rimbey are driven by a lot of factors, but . . . among them are age and social determinants of health.

He says: you know, in the municipality of Rimbey we have an average age of 43, compared to a provincial average of 38; a median income of about \$30,000, compared to the provincial average of \$43,000. He says that, as a result, the population that he treats in Rimbey

is more prone to chronic disease, mental illness, addictions, polypharmacy, so requiring multiple medications, and frailty.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 21. Actually, I'm very interested to hear the comments from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre because he has such great and deep knowledge with respect to the concerns he's hearing from medical practitioners on the contents of Bill 21. I believe he's actually listening to these individuals and hearing their concerns and actually is concerned about the longevity, the investments, and the sustainability of our health care system, particularly serving those in remote communities such as rural areas. I'd really like to hear if the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has more to share on this issue. I really appreciate it.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you to my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud. I will endeavour not to take another full 20 minutes, but I do appreciate the opportunity to round out my thoughts.

I think it is really important, when I as an MLA in the heart of the city of Edmonton – and indeed, I've had members to my right express incredulity when I stand in this House and talk about concerns that I hear about in rural health care. But if these doctors feel the need to include me on these e-mails to ensure that somebody is asking this government to listen to them, that indicates to me that there is a problem here.

Now, as I was saying, this young gentleman notes that there are many complex issues in the area: chronic disease, mental illness, addictions, folks requiring multiple medications and having to deal with the interactions of that, and frailty. He talks about travel distance providing another barrier to care, and he says that those patients are going to face a disproportionate effect from these proposed changes, these short-sighted, ill-thought proposals that this government wants to force through to save a few dollars, perhaps to help backfill that \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway.

He notes that the best evidence suggests that a strong primary health care system drives down health care costs. Indeed, that's what we hear this government saying that it wants to incentivize: more front-line patient-centred care that gets to issues earlier, before people have to go to an emergency room, before they develop a chronic condition, before they're in an acute-care bed or forced prematurely into a continuing care bed. That is the work this young man does, but he expresses deep concerns that the changes this government wants to force through in trying to force them to spend less time with patients are going to do exactly the opposite of what this government wants to achieve.

**9:10**

He also raises concerns about deinsuring the provincially required drivers' medical for aged 74 and a half and above. He says, you know:

Already, we are hearing that our patients prefer to attend walk-in clinics for this service,

despite the fact that they have a comprehensive approach to those medical exams to make sure seniors are safe on the road. He says that their office

takes 1 hour to assess a senior's appropriateness to drive, and if [this service is] de-insured, [they] cannot [possibly] compete with a walk-in clinic that provides this service in 10-15 minutes, completing the required form without access to the patient's complete medical history.

Basically, what he's saying is that an individual who a doctor has known, perhaps for decades, and has observed the deterioration or the progress of their health, if you take away the ability for them to be paid for doing this work and they have to charge for the time they would actually take to do this, then seniors are going to just be incentivized instead to go to someone who does not know them, has no background, has no knowledge, has no experience, and they will spend 10 to 15 minutes assessing whether or not that individual should be driving a vehicle, which is not good for that individual and is not good for the safety of our roadways, particularly for individuals who live in rural areas, where, as members of the government like to remind us, you are required to drive.

To the hon. Government House Leader this young man says:

I would urge you, on behalf of all patients in our constituency, to stand with me and oppose these proposed changes. I know this UCP government is highly motivated to make cost savings a reality, but these proposed changes have a high risk of driving overall systems utilization up by eroding the provision of comprehensive primary care in our communities.

That is one of my primary concerns, Mr. Chair, with a bill like Bill 21, which is an omnibus bill, which takes something this significant and with this level of impact and crams it in alongside a whole bunch of other wholesale changes from a wide breadth of legislation. The impacts from this decision could be incredibly significant, and I hope that these members of this government will listen to their own constituents who are responsible for and committed to providing incredibly essential and important care to other constituents of theirs and who want to be partners in achieving this government's ends of reducing health care costs. I hope these members will listen to them.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen to speak.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak in Committee of the Whole again on Bill 21, a bill that I have had the opportunity to speak to a few times already. However, every single time I rise, I run out of time because there is so much to talk about. Today I actually want to begin my comments with respect to Bill 21 particularly around the provisions that talk about deindexing AISH and actually give my greatest, sincere thanks to the passionate and compassionate and heartfelt comments from my colleague the Member for St. Albert.

In particular, every time she rises to speak on this bill or on any matter that affects the most vulnerable people in Alberta, particularly those with disabilities, I am struck by what an articulate and human and feeling and passionate advocate she is. I believe that when she stands up and she reads into the record quotes and comments from e-mails and messages she has received from Albertans across this province, not just from her constituency, it speaks to the trust that Albertans have, knowing that she is a true voice to speak out and on their behalf. I particularly found it quite heart-wrenching to hear some of the letters and e-mails that she had received, as I believe anyone in this House who was listening would have felt so moved. To hear those personal stories of individuals who are reliant upon AISH – and sometimes the heartbreaking



stories that have led to those situations are very difficult to hear – they also remind us of who we are here to serve. I'm really moved by the trust that Albertans have in the Member for St. Albert, because they do share these deeply personal and sometimes very difficult to hear stories.

I imagine a world where someone with that level of compassion would actually be the minister responsible for Community and Social Services, and I think about how incredible that would be to have somebody who deeply cares, not for political purposes, not for, you know, a desire to be in cabinet or to be in a prestige position within government, but to do it because she has an incredible amount of knowledge and truly is driven by representing these people in this Assembly and speaking for them, not to take their words from them, but to actually use their words and give them a voice in this House, which is really what all of us are responsible for, to actually give a voice to those constituents and those Albertans who otherwise would have such difficulties.

One of the things that I'm continually struck by, particularly when we're speaking about persons with disabilities, is how much they already have to self-advocate for themselves and how much their family members have to repeatedly advocate just for the basic services that many of us take for granted. Then to also take the time and the energy, because they have to, to actually reach out to elected officials and have their stories told in the House is just another burden that they have to carry, to continue to have to convince those of us in elected positions that their voices are worthy of being heard.

I really believe – I have no doubt actually – that the Member for St. Albert has received numerous, probably more than anybody else, statements and messages from individuals who are affected by this bill's decision to deindex AISH, and she speaks for them and gets those messages because they have trust. What I think undermines Albertans, particularly those with disabilities, in having trust is when they see it plain with their eyes, as we all see, that this bill actually is a cut to AISH. It absolutely is.

Now, I've heard the Minister of Community and Social Services, I've heard members from the government and from cabinet stand up and repeat back the inaccurate statement over and over again that there are no cuts to AISH, as if taking \$30 away from individuals who are receiving \$1,600 or \$1,700 maximum a month is not a cut. Perhaps it's because they believe what they've been told in terms of talking points. Perhaps it's because they think it's a meaningless amount of money. We know the Premier believes that. He has stated that he doesn't believe it's onerous. But it is plain as day – it is absolute fact – that this proposed bill does actually remove and cut funds that individuals who are on AISH aren't going to get. Every month they're going to get less as a result of this bill. I don't know if there's any more plain definition of what a cut is, than to get less than what you had before, than what this bill is doing. Yet we've seen these members stand up and say that isn't true.

We have seen that this bill – and I've pointed it out in my previous comments in Committee of the Whole – removes protections from Henson trusts. It actually states that persons who are applying for AISH will now have their trust funds, money that has been put away by their families to care for them when their family members are no longer able to – clear as day this bill repeals that provision. Yet we've had the Minister of Community and Social Services stand up and say that isn't true.

Not only is it frustrating as a member and as an Albertan to hear government members deny what is actually factually in their own proposed legislation, but what it also does is it continues to break that trust. It continues to suggest to Albertans that government members are not actually looking out for them. I believe that that is the fundamental problem that we have right now, that by refuting

what is in this bill, the government is breaking trust with Albertans. They're breaking faith with Albertans.

**9:20**

You know, I was a little surprised as well, I'll tell you, when I had a conversation at one point with the Minister of Community and Social Services. She seemed surprised when I told her that during my time campaigning and my time door-knocking during the election and prior to that, I had comments and conversations with a number of families in my riding who spoke about their children with disabilities, who spoke about the challenges around the family support for children with disabilities program, who spoke about their concerns about their children with disabilities having access to appropriate services and supports in the education system. The hon. minister said that she didn't hear any of that when she was door-knocking. You know, statistically I find that unusual because we know that no constituency has a monopoly on individuals and families with children with disabilities, but it also made me wonder if Albertans are not trusting the members to actually speak about these issues and to talk about these stories.

When we see after the election that the minister and government members stand up and actually try to deny to Albertans' faces that they are cutting supports for disability, well, maybe that's why Albertans don't have trust in them when it comes to this issue, when it comes to many issues, but particularly on this issue. Because while I believe the Member for St. Albert has probably more e-mails and personal, heartfelt statements from Albertans about the impact of this cut to AISH on their families' lives, I have yet to hear any members from the government read out personal statements or e-mails or messages from constituents who are on AISH who say: "Thank you for deindexing my AISH. Thank you for cutting my supports." I don't believe that any individual in this province would actually say that.

But, of course, I would love to be proven wrong. I would love to invite the government members to stand up, because we have yet to hear that as well, members who actually, some of them even just a year ago, were arguing passionately in this House about how important it was to index AISH, but there's silence on the fact that they're deindexing AISH now that they are the governing party. So I invite you to introduce and table in this House and read out those heartfelt messages from families of individuals or individuals who are receiving AISH who say: "Yes. Thank you. I don't think I want my AISH indexed to the cost of living. I'm fine to give up that \$30 a month so that you can give away \$4.7 billion to corporations because that's more important to me than being able to survive this month."

Please, again I invite members to table those messages. But perhaps they don't receive those messages. Perhaps what they're receiving – and we don't know because they're not speaking up to actually defend their decision to deindex AISH, other than to simply deny it, which actually isn't a defence. It's actually just factually inaccurate. I'd like to hear them say why they believe that this is an appropriate thing to do, especially those members who spoke out so passionately against it just a year ago. But that's not what we have. We don't have a government that's actually speaking for Albertans. We don't have a minister who's deluged with personal messages from individuals with AISH who are advocating for the cuts of the only meagre supports that they receive.

What we do have is members of the opposition and particularly the Member for St. Albert, because she has the credentials – she has the credibility; she has demonstrated her entire life that she is committed to representing and working hard for those with disabilities – so they trust her. They're sharing their deeply personal stories, and I know they're difficult to hear. I found them very

difficult to hear, and I found it difficult to meet with parents of children who may be on AISH one day, who are currently disabled, who are crying in my constituency office because they don't know how they can have any comfort at all that after they pass, their children with severe disabilities will be protected and will have full access to AISH without being penalized for the fact that their family has planned ahead, into the future, for them.

I'm certain that I am not the only member who has had that experience. We already know that the Member for St. Albert has. I've heard many of my colleagues on the opposition side of the House speak about those. But I have yet to hear any of those members in government stand up and say: "You know what? I'm listening to my constituents as well, and I believe it's important to protect the most basic allowances that we provide to those with severe disabilities."

Again I'm going to quote my colleague the Member for St. Albert because I've been so inspired by her in the last little while. This is a new relationship. I didn't know the member prior to being elected. But I consistently hear her stand up with such honesty and conviction. Just recently in this Legislature she talked about actually measuring our progress with respect to serving persons with disabilities. She stood up and said, "It's not enough to give platitudes," which, unfortunately, is all we are hearing from the government, who say: "Of course, we care about persons with disabilities. But we're just going to cut their most basic services and make it more difficult for their families to have comfort that they will be protected going into the future."

Actually, the Member for St. Albert said that, you know, we do need to take measure and we need to evaluate. We can't just say that we care about these individuals. We need to actually put action into words and measure how we're doing, and that measure is actually that we're leaving no one behind. Yet I don't see that same measure of conviction from this government. I just think what a different world this could be for persons with disabilities, for vulnerable people on AISH if we had a minister with the same level of conviction and honesty and credibility as the Member for St. Albert.

I want to move to another part of Bill 21. Again, my colleagues have spoken to this issue, but I haven't yet had an opportunity to, so I'd like to raise it myself, and that's with respect to the attacks that Bill 21 makes on postsecondary education. Now, I think it's important – and I don't think this is lost on Albertans – to see that the cuts that we are seeing under Bill 21 to postsecondary education are simply a continuum of this government's underfunding and kneecapping of education from birth to adulthood. We know that we're already seeing within the Ministry of Children's Services that early learning coalitions have been defunded, parent link centres have had their contracts cut. We see that the Minister of Children's Services does not support early childhood learning, which is a key part of universal child care.

We know that the research and evidence is very clear that if you support education and early learning from a very young age for children, you can address issues, you can prepare them better for school, and an investment in that young age – we know there are brain studies. We used to in this government do early development, EDI, tracking to talk about the vulnerabilities of young children, and we know that if we invest in those early years, we actually, from a purely economic perspective, save ourselves so much more money down the road. We already see that this government does not believe in that prevention and investment in early learning. That's already clear.

Then the K to 12 education system. I'm speaking as a parent who has one child who just began grade 1, another child who will be starting kindergarten next year. I'm deeply troubled by this

government's lack of support for education, particularly for public education, and I think we're seeing an attack on all fronts with respect to that. But, again, we live in a bizarro world where it's clear that we have repeated about the school boards, we have all the facts and figures to show that education funding has been cut, but because they kept one budget line item the same, they get to stand up and say that education funding has been maintained, which is factually inaccurate when we know that there are so many other lines to education funding and they've cut three significant grants to education. It's not addressing enrolment growth. We know that. That is factual as well.

I could probably speak at length about how this education system is being undercut and is really being handicapped by this government, but let's talk about what's in Bill 21, which is the handicapping of our postsecondary system. This is just again a continuation of the attack on education overall, on Albertans that this government is making, certainly by removing the cap on tuition, which they've done through this bill, increasing the interest rate that young people or any person, actually, in their life who's seeking postsecondary will pay on their student loans, and cutting education and tuition tax credits.

It appears that this government seems to be deeply afraid of educating Albertans, and I'm not sure why that fear is there. I certainly know that it is very short-sighted purely from an economic perspective, because when we invest in education, whether it be in a child who's three years old or four years old or in the education system in K to 12 and then going on to postsecondary, we know that we all reap the benefits of an educated population. Yet this government seems intent to make it as difficult as possible for Albertans to actually be educated, to succeed, to contribute in meaningful ways to the economy. Perhaps it's the critical thinking skills that this government is most afraid of, but they certainly do not seem to be supporting postsecondary.

I can tell you from my own personal experience that my family was not able to contribute to my postsecondary education in its entirety. They certainly did contribute as they could for my first couple of years of my undergraduate degree, but from that point on I was on my own, and I certainly incurred a significant level of student debt in order to complete my undergraduate degree and then to go on to complete my law degree. I took on that debt myself, and I have only been able to pay it off, after practising law for 13 years, last year. That was the challenge that I took on.

**9:30**

I recall, when I moved from the University of Alberta, where I did my undergraduate degree – and this was in the late 1990s, early 2000s – that there was a lot of discussion under the former Progressive Conservative governments about increasing tuition, and postsecondary students rallied against this because they understood, as we all should, that postsecondary education should not be something that's available only to those who can afford it or who can take on the significant debt that is required to get it. They believed that we all benefit and that everybody should have equitable access to postsecondary education.

I moved on to my law degree at the University of Toronto, which was an interesting experience because I found myself surrounded by postsecondary students who were a little bit different from the ones that I was around at the University of Alberta. Particularly, a number of my fellow students in law school came from very wealthy families. They came from families that had a long history of lawyers and large, very reputable law firms, former judges, all that, very wealthy families. I'll never forget within my first week or so . . . [interjection] I just want to pause one moment because, you know, it's very clear that when the Government House Leader

enters a room, he always likes to make his presence known, so perhaps I could acknowledge it on *Hansard* since he needs so much attention.

Going back to my experience at the University of Toronto, I remember being quite struck by the fact that I was in law school, and there was a significant tuition increase that was actually instituted in my first year of law school. In fact, law school tuition that year actually tripled, and that was a decision that was made by the University of Toronto because they decided they wanted to compete with American-style law schools. I won't get into that. One of the moments that really stuck out to me was when I was having a discussion with some of my fellow law students about the increase in tuition. I'd just come from a climate of a lot of students who really cared about equitable access to postsecondary. I was quite struck by what a number of students said. I remember this because I was so shocked to hear it. One of them actually point-blank said: you know, if you can't afford to go to law school, I don't think people should. I thought: wow, what an enormous amount of privilege behind that statement, the idea that only those who could afford to go to the most expensive law school in the country should go.

I thought: hmm, is that what we're trying to do here, trying to ensure that only those who are wealthy can afford to go to postsecondary education? Not only is that short-sighted, not only is that inequitable, not only does that increase barriers to people who are already marginalized – individuals with disabilities, indigenous groups, women, persons of colour, who traditionally face greater barriers to access postsecondary – but it also demonstrates that there was a sense that . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

#### **Chair's Ruling Reading from Documents**

**The Deputy Chair:** Given your invitation to the House with regard to all members perhaps reading in correspondence that they may or may not have received, I'll just take this quick opportunity to remind members that "a speech should not . . . consist only of a single long quotation, or a series of quotations joined together with a few original sentences." I think that applies to all of us, and if you have any questions on that, I think *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, page 152 at, I believe, paragraph 496, is a starting point on that.

#### **Debate Continued**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any hon. members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** My apologies. In a previous statement I might have actually said St. Albert when I in fact meant Edmonton-Whitemud. My correction.

Hon. Member for St. Albert, please continue.

**Ms Renaud:** Yeah. I just certainly have a lot of things to say about this bill, but I so enjoy sitting next to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, and I would actually love to hear more about what she has to say. I think it's incredibly fascinating to have that insight in your postsecondary journey and to hear why changes like this are so devastating, actually, to people that are perhaps marginalized for whatever reason.

With that, I will take my seat.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Member for St. Albert for inviting me to finish my comments. I simply wanted to reiterate that I think that any postsecondary system which approaches it as though only those who can afford to go, which, let's be honest, is very few people – very few people have thousands of dollars at their disposal, especially when they're just coming out of the school system and now don't even have access to things like, say, the STEP program to actually earn some money and to get some internship and experience in a field that they're interested in.

The idea that postsecondary should be inaccessible: I thought that was simply an outrageous statement that came from those with extreme privilege, but now I see that it actually seems to be the guiding principle of this government. It's not that I believe that all the members within the government have the enormous wealth to be able to afford education, but I do believe that they're trying to make it more difficult for average Albertans to be able to access postsecondary.

You know, I appreciate that there absolutely should be levels of responsibility that are taken on by individuals when they choose to go to postsecondary, and I don't think that anybody is asking that postsecondary should be completely free at this point for any individual seeking it. Certainly, I think that most students go to postsecondary expecting to take on some costs and perhaps, if they don't have family support to pay for it, expecting to take on some level of maybe personal debt. But we don't need to make it more difficult, we don't need to make it onerous, and we don't need to make it crippling.

I'm particularly struck by the students who have already entered into fields of study, who have committed themselves in some respects to taking on a four-year program. If you're going into law school or med school, you're looking at seven years, you know, and you're looking at residencies and articling. It's an extreme investment of your life. To find out midway through, as many students currently will and currently have, that suddenly the very program that they're in is now unaffordable for them and to have leave midstream – the question is: where are those young people going to go? We know that this government hasn't created any jobs. Certainly, to say that they're simply now going to not be able to afford to complete their program – I'm really concerned for those young people. I know that a lot of them actually live in my riding. A lot of families within my riding certainly can and do support their adult children when they can, but even with some family support it is an expensive endeavour to go into postsecondary.

Now this government is simply saying: take on more. Essentially, the lesson and the message that I'm actually hearing from this government is: if you can't afford it, don't take it. I don't think that that as government policy actually serves our province well. It certainly does not serve us to have individuals who haven't completed their postsecondary, who can't access postsecondary. It certainly does not serve our economy well. It doesn't help us to actually invest in the future.

We're seeing a strategic and intentional attack on education, whether it be for a young child or up to postsecondary. To what end, Mr. Chair? That's what I ask this government: to what end? All we're going to do is pay the price for that. I'm deeply disappointed to see that this government does not invest in education in any form, from young children up to postsecondary, and it seems to take a very short-sighted view of their role as government.

Government's job is actually to invest in the long-term health of the province, not to score cheap political points, not to call out every

organization and entity which disagrees with their approach and label them as enemies, whether it be professors, whether it be academic institutions, whether it be postsecondaries. We're seeing that approach. They've attacked our school boards. They're attacking child care providers. They're attacking – well, frankly, even Moody's now, apparently, is a target of this government. I think it's again a very short-sighted view of our province but also of their role as government.

I'm deeply disappointed by Bill 21 and its attack on postsecondary. I thank you for the time, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to speak.

9:40

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity this evening to rise and speak to Bill 21. I've had a lot of enjoyment listening to speakers so far this evening who have brought forward many, many cogent arguments and brought new issues to light with respect to the consequences of implementing Bill 21. One might ask if it was necessary at all. Was this legislation necessary? One heard predictions of the UCP prior to the last election as to what their fiscal program might actually end up being like, in particular one I'm reminded of from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul when he famously said, about the UCP's upcoming election platform and budget, prior to the election: it's going to hurt. Indeed, that prognosis has come to light, but it does beg the question: was it necessary? I say the answer is no. It wasn't necessary.

I think that if you look at the simple framework of the budgetary proposals by the government and the now opposition NDP, one will see perhaps some light as to why the government decided to go with an austerity budget. Now, the difference between the two as far as their end goals or where they end up at the end of their first term is very small. There are quite a few similarities. For example, if you look at the two proposals, the NDP proposal would have ended up with a balanced budget about one year later than the UCP fiscal plan, with about \$2 billion more in debt, yet the NDP proposal would not have contemplated any of these horrific reductions in social services that this UCP has now foisted upon the Alberta population.

We're fleshing out the consequences of this by debating Bill 21 and Bill 20 tonight. I think it's pretty clear, in my view, that the pain that's being caused by this Bill 21 and the measures in the UCP budget that go beyond Bill 21 was totally unnecessary. It begs the question: why? Why did they decide to make it hurt when it was really so totally unnecessary and they're arriving at a similar location when it comes to balancing-the-budget time frame and the amount of debt at the end of one term? The only answer that I can come up with, Mr. Chair, is that it's totally political, that the UCP decided to do it as a measure of creating their own particular form of chaos, and it turns people against each other. That's what they wanted to do, reward their proponents, reward their supporters, and punish those who would oppose them, although there seem to be large exceptions to that, in and of itself. I question their motivations. I don't understand.

For example, when we look at the small-town policing measures, which are really quite current today, where it's been announced, as part of Bill 21's regulations, that the cost of small-town, rural policing – a new funding model will force them to raise taxes. Now, this government is very proud to claim that it's the champion of rural Alberta and that they're the only ones who listen to rural Alberta, yet the small-town mayors, who are those that will be suffering the costs of policing, which they didn't have to do before this government came into power, are quoted in the *Star* today as

saying that they will end up having to raise taxes to pay for these 500 more RCMP constables that the Minister of Justice announced today.

I'm wondering what in the world small-town mayors are thinking about now when it comes to the attitude that this government is displaying towards rural municipalities and forcing them, those with populations under 5,000, to now become responsible for paying for their policing costs. These communities, according to the *Star* article, which I will table at the next opportunity, Mr. Chair, will start paying 10 per cent of their policing costs next year, 15 per cent in 2021, 20 per cent in 2022, and 30 per cent in 2023. Mel Smith, the mayor of Redwater, is saying: "It's going to have to be made up someplace, and we don't believe we have enough services that we could cut to cover it. So taxes and utilities have to go up to cover it." That's what the Redwater mayor, Mel Smith, has said. He said that the costs will equate to about \$262,000 a year by 2023 for his town of 2,300 residents northeast of Edmonton. That means a 10 per cent tax hike to residents, to ratepayers in the town of Redwater. "It's troublesome," Mr. Smith said. "They're just downloading . . . None of the small communities can afford it."

According to the mayor of Redwater, he really feels abandoned by this government, one who championed themselves as the defenders of rural Alberta and small communities. Yet the government has chosen to download these costs, saying: "Yes, indeed, we're going to get you the rural policing needs and requirements that you've been talking about. We've been listening to you. We consulted with you. Here are 500 police officers. Oh, by the way, here's the bill." That, indeed, is sort of a bait-and-switch kind of proposal, if you ask me.

I think that all rural municipalities probably are sharing the sentiments of the mayor of Redwater when they look at what in the heck just happened in the government's response to their pleas for more rural policing supports: "Sure, you can have more police, but you're going to pay for them yourself." Out of that tax base, rural communities are going to have to come up with the dollars, in escalating amounts over the next few years, to pay for these police that they've been promised by this Justice minister in response to crime rates that they wish to significantly reduce and control.

Every small town in rural Alberta has difficulties, and we wonder or I wonder particularly about how this is going to help small towns collaborate in their efforts to look at the services they offer their citizens and find a means of synergistically putting things together in a co-operative way, because that's what's necessary on a regional basis in rural Alberta to make sure that these smaller towns and farming communities can survive over the long term. This downloading of costs for rural policing onto Alberta's rural communities seems to be part of a pattern or a theme of making sure that collaboration can't happen, because what, in fact, has happened on top of this Bill 21, one element of which is the downloading of these policing costs, is also an element of added costs to small-town communities, in that they don't have the opportunity to adjust services to find the money to pay for these extra costs.

The downloading is being done really in an effort to help the race to the bottom that the government seems to want the communities to engage in by, for example, allowing them, in other measures that they've introduced, to compete taxwise. So they can offer tax incentives to industry and businesses to locate in their town versus the town next door, and that indeed, of course, limits their tax base. Now, on top of having to compete with each other for investment in their communities, they're being told that they have to come up with a significant amount of cash, up to a 10 per cent tax hike for the town of Redwater, in order to pay for police, which heretofore

have been covered by the province. This sleight of hand by the province is not something that's appreciated by these rural communities.

9:50

That's also something that Wally Yachimetz, the mayor of Calmar, adds his voice to, in the same article in the *Star*, where he talks about a town of 2,200 southwest of Edmonton, a town I'm also familiar with. He said that the added costs will mean a reduction of services. Thank you very much to the government. We're going to get a couple of more police officers in Calmar, but it's going to mean that something else is going to go. He goes on to say:

"More than likely there's going to be an increase (in taxes). Unfortunately, it's going to be passed along to the rate payer," Yachimetz said.

He said by the time Calmar is paying 30 per cent in 2023, the town might have to consider launching its own police service like Taber, Camrose and Lacombe.

Perhaps that's what the government wants to do overall, create a situation where the RCMP in Alberta, with their proud history in this province, somehow get squeezed out. I know this trial balloon has been floated before in the province, about getting rid of the RCMP in Alberta and perhaps forming our own police force, but it met with large opposition. I caution the government members to be pretty careful when playing around with the RCMP and their proud tradition of service in Alberta.

I happen to be familiar with many RCMP constables. My sister is the proud spouse of a retired RCMP constable who for 25 years served proudly across Canada, and through his career I watched the high level of respect and the integrity that they had in serving their communities, particularly in small towns where sometimes they were the only officer on duty in the dead of night, doing their job. There's a great deal of respect and collegiality between not only the administrators of these small communities and the RCMP who provided policing services but also the townspeople. They would rotate in and out; they wouldn't be there for a huge number of years. But I know all the postings that my brother-in-law had in small-town Alberta: in Mayerthorpe, for example, for a few years and in Stony Plain for a while, at the airport. Those relationships were long-lasting and still exist with communities that he used to be posted at. They mean a lot to townspeople, who have a lot of respect for the long tradition and the dignity of the RCMP and their police service.

If we end up with more and more smaller towns, as suggested by the mayor of Calmar, finding that it's more cost-effective or that they just don't have any choice – it is a cheaper alternative, and they can't afford it otherwise because their tax base won't support it – except to go with a small-town police force, I think that indeed, by a method that perhaps Albertans hadn't contemplated, this government is starting to push the RCMP out of policing in Alberta and somehow diminishing them in the eyes of Albertans. I think what they're trying to do is to build a case to get rid of the RCMP in Alberta and implement a provincial police force in the province.

I think we'd better have a conversation about that. I know that the government wants Albertans to talk about this proposal, and I hope that they do loudly and clearly tell them that we're proud of the RCMP in this province, that we want them to remain as our police force. I mean, 30 per cent of that money is coming from the federal government, and all that infrastructure, all the, I guess, compounded abilities of the RCMP, because they are a national police force, with tremendous resources and economies of scale – we shouldn't be dispensing with them lightly. It concerns me a lot that this government seems to be on track to promoting the creation of a provincial police force when, in fact, there is a large degree of

support embedded in Alberta for the RCMP and their policing efforts in rural Alberta. So a caution there.

I also want to speak a little bit about the difficulty and the long-standing efforts of small communities to maintain a rural doctor, a country doctor. I have spoken in this House before about the efforts of my grandparents, my grandmother in Thorhild in particular, who was a village councillor and the deputy mayor there, to keep a country doctor in town or actually to attract another one after one had left. I know that they actually bought the house that the doctor had resided in and had a clinic in in an effort to maintain it and rent it out to, hopefully, a new doctor.

Also, as an added bonus, what they tried to do, because this is what they heard a doctor would be attracted to, was that they brought in an X-ray machine to be put in the basement of that house as well. I actually was one of those individuals in my father's pickup truck going to Clyde, Alberta, to pick up this old X-ray machine from, actually, a veterinary office in Clyde, to take it, with my grandfather and father, to the country doctor's home and get it set up in the basement of that house so it would be part of a clinic that would attract a doctor. In fact, that actually ended up working. I'm not sure how we got that X-ray machine onto the truck – it was a pretty heavy machine – and down into the basement, but we managed it. That country doctor used that X-ray machine to great advantage in Thorhild for a number of years. That's the type of singular effort that village people and townspeople in rural Alberta will go to to attract a country doctor.

One of the things that the government is doing in an effort to get more family doctors to choose to practise in rural Alberta is using the practitioners' ID to dictate where new graduates might practise. It is something that we heard loud and clear as the ND opposition delegation, who heard from a number of student doctors, MDs, about to come to enter the practice of medicine in this province from the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta. We heard loud and clear that they thought this was a terrible move and that there was a much better way of going about attracting doctors to practise in rural Alberta, using an incentive program rather than a dictatorial program. Many spoke about how when they did finally graduate and were going to enter into practice in Alberta, they weren't young students. They were people with families and spouses and houses. Getting the demand that they relocate to a rural location in order for them to get their practice IDs, the numbers which they need to practise, is something which has given them great pause. They are looking at potentially going to practise outside of the province rather than be told that they have to go to a rural practice.

Now, this isn't because some of them really dislike rural practices. They have perhaps spouses with a professional career going on, and they're in the middle of it, and they may be in an urban centre. It would be totally ridiculously costly for them to uproot and leave that other spouse's career behind to enable them to follow the dictates of the government and practise in a rural location. There can be parental issues, where there are elderly parents who are in a municipal area that the newly minted graduate doctor wants to practise in so that they can look after elderly parents. This would destroy the ability to do that, and consequently many were thinking: okay, I may not be able to practise in Alberta. There are situations where the practitioner just simply grew up in Edmonton or Calgary or Red Deer and wants to serve the community they grew up in as well.

There are also situations where an existing practitioner wants to sell their practice and they're now faced with a limited market.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 21? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen to speak.

10:00

**Ms Ganley:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have had the opportunity to speak to this bill before and made comments on many sections of it. I actually think it's interesting that I remain having more to say about it, mostly because this is a bill that in my view ought to have been many, many more bills than just one bill. It touches on such a broad breadth of different things, seemingly unrelated. I have had the opportunity to speak about increases to tuition in public education, which I think is definitely a concern. I've had the opportunity also to speak about sort of some of the health things, some of the impacts to benefits for seniors and for the disabled.

I'd like to speak about policing, which I will raise again, but I'd like now to speak a little bit about the changes to the Employment Standards Code. I suspect – and many of my colleagues have commented on this as well, but I think it's worth putting on the record – that one of the things that this bill deals with in its section 6 is amendments to the Employment Standards Code. One of the things it does is allow cabinet, by way of regulation, to alter the definition of an employee. It doesn't really sound like a big deal, but actually it has massive consequences for the population because in order to get access to a lot of the things under the Employment Standards Code, in order to get access to the right to severance, to the right to be paid for your work, to access the Employment Standards office to complain if you haven't been paid your overtime or you haven't been paid your severance or you haven't been paid your vacation pay, you need to be an employee.

Allowing cabinet to alter the definition of employee by way of regulation means that they can exclude people from those rights; entire categories of people can be excluded from those rights. I think that that is a pretty big deal.

Certainly, we saw that happening actually just today with another bill, with Bill 26, a similar move to exclude people from the operation of the Employment Standards Code. What that does, practically, for a lot of employees when they're put out of reach of the Employment Standards Code, is that it kind of removes the ability for them to get paid. That's a bit of a concern to me because a pretty fundamental principle that we all share, I would say, on both sides of the House in this place is a view that people ought to be remunerated for their work. We may disagree about what the minimum wage should be and what the impact of minimum wage policy is, owing, I think, to our rather different views of trickle-down economics, but I think we all agree that if someone works, they should be paid. In fact, I think the principle that we should be able to force people to work and to not pay them, well, there's a name for that. I can't really say it here, but I think that that should be a big concern for all of us, the idea of people working without getting paid.

I just wanted to highlight that this ability for cabinet to exclude people from being employees, to basically exclude them from the operation of the Employment Standards Code, is a huge concern. Yes, I think we discussed that at length yesterday, so perhaps I won't go on in detail, but I did want to get it on the record.

One of the other things that I'd like to comment on are some of the changes to policing. It's actually interesting. In this bill cabinet is given the ability to alter the way a rural community is paid for policing. In fact, there were all sorts of rumours circulating because the government had circulated documents saying that up to 70 per cent of the costs would now be borne by rural municipalities. It wasn't really clear what was going to happen with that.

Today we have heard an announcement from the Minister of Justice, also the Member for Calgary-Elbow. In the spirit of the awards given out earlier by the Speaker's office, I must say he deserves the award for best magic trick: making municipal residents' money disappear. I think you know that portion is definitely a concern, particularly in light of the fact that the government has gone on and on about these wasteful municipalities, that they're wasting money, blah, blah, blah, and then they foist \$200 million in costs onto them that they have to recoup from their population, therefore forcing them to raise municipal taxes. Essentially, the Minister of Justice raised taxes on rural residents and then will point and laugh at the municipal councillors who are involved. I think that's just a bit disingenuous, perhaps.

Another section that concerns me, particularly being a resident of Calgary, is changes to section 13. In fact, on that I have an amendment to propose, so I will hand that over and wait for it to reach the table before I continue.

**The Deputy Chair:** If the hon. member would please read it into the record. Going forward this amendment, for the benefit of the House, will be referred to as amendment A5. Please continue.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I propose on behalf of my hon. colleague from Calgary-*Buffalo* that Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, be amended by striking out the proposed sections 13(1) and 13(2). What this does is that it removes a section of the bill and what the bill does. The sections we're removing are 13(1) and 13(2). Section 13(1) reads: "The Provincial Offences Procedure Act is amended by this section." Section 13(2) reads: "Section 14(3) is amended by adding 'or to fund programs that support or improve the administration of justice or government initiatives' after 'arising under any enactment'."

It doesn't sound like much, but what it actually does is – so currently when municipalities give out tickets to individuals who are speeding, it's usually enforced by way of police. Those police regulate how those tickets can be given out. They're responsible for safety planning and ensuring that those things are done in the right way. They get the majority of that revenue because they are doing the work of the enforcement and the safety, which is fair.

The provincial government has always taken a share of that revenue. That share was, as outlined in this section, "to offset the expenses incurred by the Crown with respect to the collecting of penalties, fines, sums of money or forfeitures arising under any enactment." Essentially, they were allowed to keep some portion of that because the courts are used as the enforcement mechanism, so they have to have justices of the peace and prosecutors and all that sort of thing to take care of these offences. They were able to retain a certain portion of this.

Interestingly, this had actually changed under the previous Conservative government just before we came in. Historically, the province had taken 16.67 per cent – I know, weird number; I didn't come up with it – of the ticket revenue. Then the Conservatives who were in shortly before we arrived had sort of built into changes in the budget that the ticket prices themselves would increase. So everyone would pay more for the same amount of speeding, if that can be defined in that way, and the provincial government would retain 26.67 per cent, an additional 10 per cent, which actually didn't make a huge amount of difference to municipalities because the ticket prices had gone up so much that the amount of revenue for the same sort of general amount of catching of speeders or catching of other people violating laws in that way remained the same. That amount of police funding flowing to municipalities stayed the same because even though the provincial government

was taking a little bit more, the pie had grown as a result of the increase in fines.

**10:10**

Now what we see is that they're taking it even further; we're going from 26.67 per cent of fine revenue to 40 per cent. That is a significant increase, especially when you consider the history of this matter, and there's no corresponding increase in terms of the ticket revenue. What this means is that municipalities will get less. That money: it has certainly always been my understanding the entire time I was in government that that was police funding. We considered it when we calculated how much we fund police throughout the province. That money was included. When we calculated how much we funded each municipality, when we calculated how much we were giving for police, that money was included. In fact, for an urban municipality, like, for instance, Calgary or Edmonton, that money constitutes a very significant proportion of the funding that the province gives to municipalities to support policing. This is a significant cut. In fact, our chief of police in Calgary, again from my experience because it's where I live, has indicated that this will result in 130 fewer positions.

I think that's a big concern because it's actually my view – we've had this conversation a lot in this House. I know the Minister of Justice doesn't like statistics or doesn't think that they're accurate or reflective, which is his right, I suppose, but we had seen in 2017 crime rates rising in rural municipalities. We had therefore taken steps to implement a rural crime reduction strategy, and that strategy was having an effect. We were seeing some comedown. Now, of course, when you're talking about numbers that cover the entire province, that won't speak to everyone's individual experience – of course it won't – because, you know, that reduction will not be evenly spread over the province, so some areas will be differently affected.

Well, it was my view, you know, shortly before we left government, and I suspect the minister still has access to these numbers, that actually there were concerns with crime beginning to increase in cities as well, and I think we're going to see that come out in the statistics. I don't know yet because the statistics, especially like the good, centralized ones from the government, tend to have a lag time. We don't have those numbers yet, so we don't know yet what those numbers will be, but certainly the word from people around in the city, the word from people I've talked to, is that there are concerns. In Calgary, certainly, my hon. colleague from Calgary-McCall has raised with me multiple times that there are huge concerns about gangs and gun violence in his area of the city.

I think it's a problem, and I think that this is not a great time to be cutting police funding, particularly when we're cutting that funding to basically create a slush fund, because what this does, by saying "or government initiatives," is that it takes away any collars on what that money can be used for. There's no longer a restriction on what that money can be used for. It can just be used for anything. So money that was previously earmarked for policing can now – you know, it's taken from municipalities, and it can now be spent on anything.

That's a big concern. That is the reason that I am moving this amendment. I think that section is a concern to me. I think it's a concern to some other folks. With that, I will simply urge all members to vote in favour of the amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen on amendment A5.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise not just on behalf of myself as the Minister of Municipal Affairs but also on behalf of my colleague the Hon. Doug Schweitzer, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**An Hon. Member:** Name. No.

**Mr. Madu:** My apologies. I apologize, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, obviously I will be opposing this amendment. The simple reason is that, you know, we have heard a lot of submissions from the members opposite that this is a direct cut to police funding by the government. Let's be clear. It is not all municipalities that fund their police services from this particular source of revenue. If one or two municipalities out there decide to base their entire or a large portion of their police funding on a source of revenue that they know they are not entirely responsible for or own, whilst I understand those concerns, the truth of the matter is that just as we are responsible for our own budget, municipalities are responsible for their own budgets as well. This is a case where, you know, we have 341 municipalities across this province, and you can just count a couple that use this source of revenue to fund their police services.

I am optimistic and hopeful as the Minister of Municipal Affairs that our municipal partners will be able to find the revenue to be able to fund police, especially given the fact that the provincial government has not reduced by one penny the police grants that we provide to our municipalities. We have always been clear. Any time I hear that a politician wants to go to essential services as the first place to go to for a cut – let's be clear – that right there is a political statement. I mean, it has nothing to do with so much of the issue at stake.

We have been going through a difficult time in this province. We are asking all of us to look inwards for efficiencies. For me, you know, it is frustrating to hear some of our municipal partners resort to, as a first response, that we are going to cut funding for policing or fire services or front-line workers. That in itself tells me that there is something much more that they are pursuing rather than wanting a truthful and transparent and blunt conversation about the issue at stake.

Again, to be brief, this is not an amendment I am prepared to support. I am sure that if the Minister of Justice were here, he would not support this amendment either. So on that particular business I am going to urge all of my colleagues to vote down this amendment. We will be prepared to continue this conversation with our municipal partners as to how best we fund all of the core and priority services that the people of this province rely on. Mr. Chair, I urge the members of this House to vote down this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

On amendment A5, do I see any other members wishing to speak? Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving back to Bill 21, are there any members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen.

**10:20**

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure once again to rise to speak to the bill, Bill 21. Just reading today's newspaper, as opposed to what the hon. minister has quoted through you, these small communities are reacting.

This bill is proposing downloading the cost of policing. This question has been raised many times by my fellow members, and the government members keep denying that this information is true. Looking at the *Star* newspaper today, it's not only one community; it's a number of communities. The mayors from Redwater, Calmar, Bon Accord, and a number of those other communities, small communities, you know, are denying the facts of the information. The government members have been claiming for days and months that the information is not true, that small communities will not be picking up the cost of the increased policing.

This is more concerning as this was one of the key promises by the governing party during the election. They ran an election on, you know, controlling crime in rural communities, and just seven months later it seems like they have forgotten their promise. You can call this promise made, promise broken. In small communities mostly in the of 2,000 to 3,000, 3,500 range in population, the mayors state that the communities will shut services to compensate the policing. That is not the option for many small communities as they don't have many services they can choose from to pay for the policing. The mayor said that the community will be bearing the cost: 10 per cent next year, 15 per cent after that, 20 per cent after that, and then about 30 per cent by 2023. This is quite a big cost for communities with a population of 2,000 members. That is something I understand, that the government members really understand, that this is indeed quite a heavy cost for those small communities, and that's probably why every time the question was raised, they were reiterating that this is not true information. This is quite a concerning move that cannot be supported and is itself one of the biggest reasons why we are opposing the bill.

I tried not to be so biased. So many of my colleagues have, you know, shared the concerns that we are hearing from our constituents and not only in our ridings. Many members from other parts of the province – and you will probably hear more when you go back home this week or after this week. People are concerned. People are really concerned. The Member for St. Albert shared some of the stories. The purpose of sharing those stories is to bring the feedback that we're hearing from people, sharing the experiences that we are having, the chance to meet people, the chance to do the job that we were assigned seven months ago to do.

I just wanted to share my experience. I was one of the members selected by the LAO to participate with my colleague the Member for Calgary-Glenmore in the Westminster parliamentary procedures and process. One of the key factors that we both really were, you know, engaged in: how to make the parliamentary system more effective; what mechanisms you could use to serve the people of your jurisdiction better, to make this world better for all. That is something we were discussing there even from, you know, the different spectrums, the different stripes of the politics we were from. Every time we're sharing the stories, that is the purpose. We expect – like, the government has resources – that they would have done their homework on this when they proposed these changes. Even after that – we're trying to bring those experiences, that first-hand information – they're moving forward to pass these bills when the members are aware what kind of effects they're going to make on communities.

When we were talking about deindexing the AISH benefits, it's not really fear and smear. This is not really to pick one individual. This is to share the concern that this is the wrong path we are choosing. We are open-hearted on so many other things when it comes to spending billions of dollars. The companies, we know – there in the newspaper today, last week, before that – have taken the benefits of millions of dollars. Let's say that the government

members honestly believe that one day that will have the better outcome, but in this case we understand the effects of inflation. The government never claimed that they have, you know, developed the mechanism or formula to control inflation, that Alberta will not, you know, experience inflation going forward. So deindexing anything has adverse effects on the people that it's related to.

In this case all those people we're talking about are the most vulnerable communities. Those are special-needs people, the people on AISH, the seniors. And these days it's not even possible for seniors without family – I will not say, like, every senior probably, but I will generalize. In most cases seniors don't really live luxury lives. The people on AISH: you know, my colleague literally read a letter from someone about how they are budgeting their month. Basically, we were so confident. We had a plan that was going to balance the budget. We had a plan that was going to pay the debt. We had a plan that was going to create jobs. I don't know why we are so – I don't know which word I should pick. We are going after \$20, we're going after \$30 on those very people. There are some of the changes, you know, that I have to learn even. Henson trust funds. What are we trying to achieve by attacking those people?

10:30

I'm not really up here to make a political speech. I'm really concerned. If somebody has a background so that you can explain it, I'm willing to listen, I'm willing to participate, I'm willing to compromise on behalf of my constituents, but this does not seem to be a fair path that we are going to take. It's a wrong example that we're setting when we're claiming that we have a plan to do better. This is not something to do better. This is something very small, I understand, but those are very vulnerable communities. It's the wrong example. Please look back and think about it, the impact this is going to have. This will make their life harder.

For the members of those communities, it's not even possible to live independently on the fixed income that they're limited to. I dealt with seniors. I'm dealing with seniors. Currently I'm dealing with cases where those people, you know, are looking to move to seniors' homes, lodges. The approximate cost of those facilities: that starts around \$2,000, \$2,100. That is the minimum cost. That's where they start from. The majority of those people don't make that.

If we are not able to address AISH in this tough time, I would think the government member would say: "Not this year; probably next year. Yes, these are the communities in our focus. We will make this place better for everyone." But this is not the case. That is why every time, when it comes to speaking to these bills, unfortunately, we have to speak against these bills.

There is something else related to the doctors. I will leave it at this time. The president of the AMA has written a letter. I have the letter, so I will not go in depth on this. This is something constitutionally wrong that they're trying to do, that the government will have the power not to honour the legal agreement, that they can break the legal agreement. The president had clearly written: what, then, does it mean to have the agreement if this can be broken any time you want? It's creating uncertainty. It's not encouraging the people to look at Alberta as the best place to work in.

They are concerned about rising tuition costs, 23 per cent over four years. That's quite a bit. Specifically, when we're going through the time the number of people who have graduated – I know recently among these folks one who has given up. He's moved to somewhere in Europe. He was not going to find a job. He graduated in chemical engineering from the U of A under heavy debt. He waited two years, didn't find a job, and moved. I know another



person, you know, being under so much stress, who was lucky to find a job with the city. It's not in his field, but at least he has a job to do.

We are even seeing the trend where our relationship with the cities is not even on the right path. The cities are concerned that the government is changing their charters and that, by the move, they're gaining the power where they will end up probably cancelling and delaying their major projects. The fellow who got a job with the city may end up losing his job because, you know, you are trying to change the funding models to the cities.

So there are a number of things. I can go into details, like, one by one. I can spend lots of time even on each topic being addressed in this omnibus bill, but I wanted to say that it is not doing any better for anyone. The people who are giving us feedback: they are not only the people that voted for us. They are the people who voted for us; they are the people who did not vote for us. They are the people who even voted for the UCP in the past election. The people that are speaking out: I know you will listen, and I hope that it will not be too late by the time you listen.

It's my honour to rise in the House on behalf of my constituents to raise their concerns and to raise the concerns of the Albertans we heard, and with these comments, I'd just close my remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen to speak.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to stand tonight to share some of my thoughts and remarks on Bill 21, an omnibus piece of legislation that makes a huge number of changes on a number of different topics, pieces of legislation, creates new legislation, new acts within it, and does it across a lot of pages. I am going to try and focus some of my comments at this time to areas that touch on my critic portfolio of Labour and Immigration, but if I do have some additional time as I'm thinking of things this evening, I may also speak to some of the larger issues. Within Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, there are some very large, sweeping changes that impact the collective bargaining process, that impact the rights and protections that are afforded to employees in this province and make changes to those rights and to those employees.

I'll start, Mr. Chair, by referring to the employment standards section, which is part 6 of this act, Bill 21. What the Employment Standards Code changes do is that they give the government the ability to exclude classes of individuals through regulation from being considered an employee. Now, within the Employment Standards Code, when we talk about employment standards, we are talking about the minimum employment standards protections available to workers. What seems to be the general view across Canada is that employment standards are considered that floor, the minimum protections from which all employees should benefit.

Even today in our regulations supporting the Employment Standards Code there are some exclusions, accommodations for particular industries. I would note that in Alberta those exclusions have not been reviewed in quite some time, and that was something that I certainly have spoken to the current minister of labour about in my hope that they will review that. This government should be considering employment standards, occupational health and safety, the Labour Relations Code, all of the legal frameworks that protect the rights of workers and, particularly, vulnerable workers. Rather than giving themselves the power to exclude classes of workers from those protections through Bill 26, which we have recently seen

through this House, this government should be considering how to make sure that Alberta workers are protected, to make sure that Alberta workers are respected and are afforded the rights that all Canadian citizens are entitled to.

**10:40**

Unfortunately, Bill 21 is another move in the wrong direction because it allows this government to exclude entire classes of individuals from being considered employees. Now, if someone is not considered an employee, the potential impact of that is them not qualifying for employment standards protection. Now, I will mention that the current definition of an employee means "an individual employed to do work who receives or is entitled to wages and includes a former employee." In excluding entire classes of individuals from that definition, you are excluding classes of people from being entitled to wages. I have grave concerns about this. Now, I've reviewed the government's press releases. I've reviewed some of the government's press releases and statements throughout the course of debate through the various readings, and I have not heard a compelling argument for why entire classes of individuals would need to be excluded from the definition of employee in our Employment Standards Code, Mr. Chair. I would argue that this is a very concerning move from a government that has just recently excluded a large number of workers from basic protections, like the right to be paid, through Bill 26.

That is something that I would like to flag first and foremost, the changes in section 6 to employment standards, because it has far-reaching implications. The term "employee" is used throughout the legislation, so in changing through regulation who can fall under that category or not has massive impacts within this piece of legislation. I would submit to you, Mr. Chair, that a province and a workplace that is supportive of workers is also supportive of business. As you will hear from many business owners, many employers, they need their workers in order to prosper. I'm quite concerned about this.

I would also flag that employment standards are often relied upon by, particularly, vulnerable workers. Vulnerable workers can be considered as a number of different potential groups. That often includes new immigrants. Vulnerable workers often can include single parents, young workers. By not having that minimum floor of standards in our Employment Standards Code, the risk is that people will fall through the cracks. The risk is that people will perhaps not be paid wages and will not have any recourse because they will not have the benefits of the protections of employment standards.

I would encourage this government that, rather than finding ways to exclude people, they should be looking at the current exclusions and determining if they are appropriate or not. Given the age of this exclusion list as it stands today, it deserves thorough review and should be updated and modernized. I would mention that Alberta had roughly 85 per cent of workers covered by employment standards prior to Bill 26 passing. That percentage is likely lower. In Manitoba it is 90 per cent; in Ontario, 86 per cent. But Ontario has also started on a very deliberate process to try and include more workers in minimum employment standards protections. So right there is a big concern for me in Bill 21.

The second area that I want to mention is the changes to the Labour Relations Code. These changes directly impact the collective bargaining process, particularly under essential services agreements. Mr. Chair, essential services agreements give public-sector employees that right to strike, which had been removed from them, unconstitutionally, for many, many years. A recent Supreme Court ruling clarified that Albertans, Canadians have the right to collectively bargain, and that includes the right to strike through the

enabling legislation that we have. There are a number of steps and procedures. But these are important, fundamental rights as Canadians, and that right to collectively bargain is a fundamental human right as well, codified by the ILO and other major organizations.

Now, what this government has done is that when negotiating an essential services agreement, an employer will be able to choose to use replacement workers, or strikebreakers, versus negotiating an essential services agreement with the people who work in that facility or for that employer. I would posit that that is very problematic for a number of reasons. First off, when there is a collective bargaining dispute, there is a very large power imbalance between workers and employers. One of the only powers that workers have is the right to withhold their labour through collective bargaining action, through striking. By allowing replacement workers to come in, you're undermining workers' powers when they're already at a disadvantage.

I strongly feel that as Canadians we should be respecting the right to collectively bargain. We should be respecting that process, that has been developed over centuries, because I can tell you that when there wasn't a framework to help facilitate employers and workers negotiating, it was chaos. There were a lot of major actions that took place 100 years ago. In Winnipeg the strikes of 1919, as an example, brought the city to a grinding halt for a matter of weeks. That is not what we want to see, so respecting workers and respecting the collective bargaining process is important.

But bringing strikebreakers in has a known impact of escalating tensions when there is a strike or lockout and introduces workers unfamiliar with the work environment. When we're talking about where a strike or lockout might happen in a place where there is an essential services agreement – essential services agreements are required when the employer has determined that there is work that has to be done or there would be great damage to health, to buildings, to facilities. A power generator needs to have a certain level of work happening and cannot be allowed to fail even in the case of a strike or lockout. An essential services agreement makes sure that there are workers to do that work. A health care facility: making sure that there are enough minimum workers to care for the individuals in that health care facility is what an essential services agreement is supposed to help define. Now we are inviting strikebreakers into that environment – in the case of a health care facility, a seniors' home, perhaps – people unfamiliar with the work environment, and none of the existing employees will be there.

I can tell you that strikes and lockouts only come to pass after other avenues have been exhausted. I have never spoken to a worker who did not deeply care about the work that they do, the people that they serve, the work that is happening. Negotiating those essential services agreements is incredibly important, but bringing in replacement workers or strikebreakers to perform the work of those employees who are out on the picket lines because they've been locked out or because they've chosen to go on strike is going to escalate, is going to extend the length of these disputes and removes power away from the workers in a situation where there's already a power imbalance. I strongly disagree with the changes that are happening here in the Labour Relations Code.

Now, in section 14, the Public Sector Employers Act, there are changes here that actually limit the notice of termination and severance pay that employees are entitled to, capping what a long-term employee would have the right to should they be terminated. We are talking about employees who may have worked as public servants in our government for long periods of time. The Public Sector Employers Act section is talking about limiting, capping the severance pay and changing what will happen should someone who has collected the severance find new employment in the Alberta

public agencies again, including a new repayment section if someone has been terminated.

I think this is a piece of Bill 21 – there are many pieces, Mr. Chair – that has not received enough consideration through the debate, and part of that is simply because we are dealing with an omnibus piece of legislation with so many moving parts in it. I will say again that I have gone specifically to look at the government information about this bill, how this government is communicating the changes to the general public, and I find it completely lacking in detail, making it very hard for the average Albertan to understand what this bill is doing and what impact that will have on them in their working environment.

10:50

I've raised three concerns so far: loopholes and exemptions to those minimum employment standards; the power imbalance that already exists when dealing with conflict between workers and employers and the fact that adding replacement workers into the essential services agreements further shifts that power balance; and limiting the severance pay for long-term public servants who may find themselves without a job. I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that there are a lot of public servants who are quite concerned about their jobs under Budget 2019 and the language that they hear coming from this government, the letters that are being sent out to unions. We've seen a lot of those workers express their concerns through information pickets, by gathering together on the front steps of the Legislature. I certainly hope that this government is getting the sense of how strong those concerns are.

I will continue talking about part 16, the Public Service Employee Relations Act. In part 16 a number of workers are being denied collective bargaining rights, rights that were only just given to them in 2018 after much consultation. I would like to stress to you, Mr. Chair, that withdrawing or removing collective bargaining rights from groups of workers in Canada has been deemed unconstitutional in many different court decisions. It's something that any government should do very, very cautiously.

But this government seems to be doing it fairly regularly and without, in my view, enough consideration. I have not heard from the government any good reason why these classes of workers are being removed from having collective bargaining rights, something that they are entitled to through Canadian human rights, something that fundamentally the International Labour Organization and labour standards across the world suggest should be granted to all workers. But here on page 51 we are removing the collective bargaining rights from entire classes of workers again. I am in strong disagreement with that and have not heard from this government what possible justification there would be for removing those workers from that section.

Part 16, the Public Service Employee Relations Act, starts to again talk about the collective bargaining process. I have to repeat that the collective bargaining process is a right that workers have, the right to work together to negotiate as part of correcting or accommodating the imbalance of power between employers and employees. It's something that as Canadians we have said that we value, by including it in our founding, most principal documents.

Here in this section specifically, giving new powers to the minister to issue directives to employers that they must follow before, during, and after engaging in collective bargaining: now, my concerns here are not fundamentally with the minister giving directions to employers. Rather, my concern is that we are talking about essentially secret directions. It doesn't say "secret." I believe "confidential" is the language term in here. There has been case law dealing with whether partners, particularly employers at the bargaining table, can withhold certain information in the context of

bargaining. So my question to the government would be: are we certain that this will stand up should workers choose to challenge the ability of the employer to have confidential or secret information influencing the collective bargaining process?

As I understand it, in a collective bargaining situation both parties need to come together in good faith to negotiate and to find that agreement. It's a system that Canadians, Albertans, workers, and employers should all respect, and here we have the government giving itself new powers of confidential data, confidential orders. If I'm not mistaken, I've seen in this section that the minister's orders can be changed during collective bargaining. I would appreciate any clarification on that section. That would be concerning because changing your bargaining position during the collective bargaining process has been deemed by the Labour Relations Board to be a bad-faith bargaining tactic in the past.

When we talk about what Bill 21 is doing to workers, there are a number of concerns that I have with this piece of legislation. On top of that would be the general concerns, that so many of my colleagues have very skilfully talked about, with changes like pausing the indexing for AISH, which my colleagues have rightfully described as a cut. The government objects to that language. I simply ask: to the AISH recipient, what is the difference between a pause and indexing being cancelled? Like, pause, cancel: it doesn't matter. When it comes to next year, the person on AISH is not going to get a cost-of-living increase while the price of goods and services will increase on that individual. We are talking about people who are surviving on very little money in this province.

The same pause has been given to the seniors' benefit, to the employment and income supports benefit. I just find the language of a pause versus cancelling to be meaningless when you are talking to the people who are receiving this money. We are calling it, rightfully, what it is, which is a cut, whereas if this change was not made, they would get more.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Do I see any other hon. members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen to speak.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to move an amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. As the pages distribute this amendment, I would ask that you can start right now just by reading it into the record.

For the benefit of the House going forward, this amendment will be referred to in debate as A6.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to move an amendment to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. I move that Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended in section 4 by striking out subsection 4(6); by adding the following after subsection (6):

Section 3.3 is amended

- (a) by striking out "section 3.2(1)(d)" and substituting "section 3.2";
- (b) in clause (b)(i), by striking out "Schedule 2" and substituting "the regulations";

and in subsection (7) by striking out clause (e).

Just, I guess, briefly, what we're trying to do, Mr. Chair, is to give this government one more opportunity to do the right thing as it relates to Henson trusts. We've already moved one amendment that was specific to Henson trusts. However, I believe it included another section on indexing.

However, this amendment is focused specifically on Henson trusts. I think it's really important to be very clear, for people with

disabilities that are watching – and there are some – and groups or advocacy groups that have worked for many years to have Henson trusts enshrined in the AISH Act, in legislation, that they know that we're giving this government one very clear opportunity to do the right thing and to preserve the ability to have Henson trusts enshrined in law so that it's not moved to regulation, so that it's not hidden away from this place, so that any changes that are made to this will be done in the full light of the day here in this Chamber as opposed to behind closed doors or simply by the minister's office or cabinet. This is very clear. This is a second opportunity for this government to stop, to think about what they're doing, and to make a change, to make a necessary change.

**11:00**

Some of the members are new, and we would have had these discussions in 2018, when we debated this in this place. It was actually, I think, a private member's bill that we debated to get this work done. I know one of the groups that the government likes to talk a lot about – and they've done some great work over the years – is Inclusion Alberta. I know that before they were called Inclusion Alberta, it was the Alberta association for community living. They were very active in pushing the government of the day – that would have been the Conservatives, and then it would have been our government, the New Democrats – to look at making these necessary changes. To be clear, before we made the changes, Alberta was the only province in Canada that didn't have this protection. It was a great day, actually, when this legislation passed in 2018 and these changes were made. I do believe it passed unanimously with all of the people that were here at the time.

Now suddenly it's a different story. Now, I know that, very much like with the cuts to AISH, the government likes to say that it's not a cut because, you know, it's deindexing. Whatever. It's a cut. The big question here is: why on earth would you mess around with this? I'm hoping the Premier is not laughing at what I'm saying about Henson trusts. What I am saying is that I don't understand that, and I really wish somebody would explain it to me and perhaps explain it to Albertans that are watching and explain it to advocacy groups that would like to know: why is it that this protection for a Henson trust is being moved from legislation into regulation? Why? What is the reason? For fun? I can't imagine that people that write this stuff enjoy writing it just for fun if there are no plans at all to change it.

Not once have I heard – now, I'll be straight; I haven't been here for every single hour of debate on this – of one minister or one government member explaining to anybody why this is being done other than: "There's nothing to see here. There's nothing cut. Don't worry about it. Everything will be just fine." Well, if that is the case, why would you do this? I would appreciate it, as would Albertans, if we had a straight answer instead of the same old tired talking points that don't say anything. They don't say anything. I think the mere fact that nobody is making eye contact would probably say something, too.

But let's move on. As you know, as I'm sure the government will know, Henson trusts are actually called Henson trusts because they come from a case in Ontario. The case was the Minister of Community and Social Services versus Henson. What this suit was about was protecting assets set aside for a disabled beneficiary so that those assets would not be used to compromise eligibility for government benefits. In this case it would be AISH, but in Ontario it is not. The Supreme Court actually later weighed in and for the first time addressed this issue and affirmed the essence of these trusts. Again, as I said, in 2018 Alberta finally joined the rest of the country by protecting these things.

If you can imagine for a moment that – and I'm sure some people in this Chamber do in fact have dependants or children that have disabilities that this would impact. For whatever reason they will be unable to work as they get older. For whatever reason AISH is how they're going to support themselves. As a parent, of course, you want to ensure that their future is secure. We've already been through this for hours tonight to understand that living on AISH is living in poverty. That's just a fact. It's a fact. Surviving on AISH is tough. It's living in poverty. So parents want to know that after they're gone, they can leave a trust that will be managed by a trustee that will assist that dependent adult or their child – it's always their child, I suppose, no matter how old they get – by supporting them with that trust and that that will not impact their benefits that they rely on to pay for rent, food, and all of those things.

You can imagine the comfort that it must be to parents to know that this is something that they can do to give themselves some peace of mind by knowing that their child is taken care of. If there is absolutely no intent whatsoever to make changes to this particular ability of parents to provide for their sons or daughters or dependants, to provide them with a trust, then I have no idea why the government would feel it is necessary to move it from the act into regulation other than that they have something planned. I mean, that's the only thing I can think of.

I can't think of why the government would move things like the definition of severe handicap or eligibility or anything about the benefits – I don't know why they would feel the need to take it out of the AISH Act and put it into regulation other than that there's something going on. I've seen your budget projections for the next few years, and I know that they're not going to meet the growth in intake. So there is something going on. For whatever reason this government is choosing to deflect, to put out information that is incorrect, that is misleading, and I just don't understand why somebody from the government won't stand up and explain this. You don't just represent the people that you believe voted for you or gave you your great big mandate. You do owe explanations to every single Albertan, particularly every single Albertan who is impacted by this change.

I've got a couple of examples that I'd like to share with you. There's a friend of mine who lives in St. Albert. His name is Eric. I won't share his last name. He and his wife had one child. Her name is Jan. Jan is probably in her 50s now. Jan was born with a fairly profound developmental disability. Eric lost his wife as well and has been methodically over the years – and he only had one child – planning for the time when he will no longer be around. He's the kind of dad who – his daughter doesn't live with him – calls her every night. He knows exactly what's going on in her life. They go on regular vacations. He has peace of mind knowing that he's worked very hard and saved very hard and invested where he could to know that whatever happens to her with AISH, whatever else, you know, you choose to do in the short term, he has set up this trust, and he knows that the trustee that he has assigned will take care of her future.

But now that future is in question and in jeopardy, and the government members, the Premier, the minister will not stand up and answer any questions. If you expect Albertans to actually believe that you're making these changes for no other reason than, you know, the goodness of your heart – who knows? – it just doesn't even make sense. It's actually a bit insulting that you would think that we don't understand what you're doing or that we don't see that path. We get it. We see you. We see exactly what you're doing.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, please, through the chair.

**Ms Renaud:** I'll speak through the chair. Absolutely.

You know, as we get near the end of this session, I've really been hopeful that somebody would have the courage, Mr. Chair – somebody – to stand up and own their decision and explain it, not hide behind talking points that don't mean anything to anybody except, I guess, the people that wrote them and the people that speak them every day. Just answer a simple question. This is, like, a life-or-death thing. This might not seem like it to these members over here, but it is a life-or-death thing. Can you imagine somebody knowing that they will not always be here to provide for their adult daughter or son or whatever the relationship is – they will not be around – and needing to know that that person will be cared for, that they will not go hungry, that they will not have to live with four roommates because they can't afford housing, that they will not have to go to the food bank, that they will have a future where maybe occasionally they can go to the gym and work out, maybe go on a vacation once a year, every other year? Who knows? That is peace of mind that is, like, life-and-death important, and this government won't even stand up and explain to us: why on earth did you shove this thing into an omnibus bill, that is a slap in the face to Albertans to begin with? Why will you not explain?

**11:10**

In fact, I don't even get why the members think it's kind of funny that I get so worked up about this. But you know what? I'm worked up because I represent a lot of people who are really worked up about this, and I would like an answer if you're going to vote this down for a second time. This is the second time we're giving you the chance to fix this, to fix this dangerous error.

If you go further and change this further, there will be legal action. I think Inclusion Alberta has even been fairly clear about that. So why not fix it? Why not eliminate the confusion, eliminate the risk, give people some peace of mind, and put it back. Do the right thing. The government is taking us backwards, Mr. Chair. They're taking us backwards in almost every area, from employment, the minimum wage, to tuition, everything that you can think of, and now this.

Once again, we will be the only province that doesn't have this protection. Why? The past wasn't that great. Let's go forward to the future. Let's make it better. Let's invest in people. Let's invest in families. This is ridiculous, it's insulting, it's dangerous, and you owe Albertans an explanation.

That's all I have to say about this. Thanks.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak? I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I won't spend a lot of time talking about this specific issue, but I did want to have a chance to rise on it because it is such an important issue on so many fronts.

You know, I first met the Member for St. Albert many years before she actually chose to run for us. She was an incredibly passionate advocate for people who had significant disabilities, and she was a courageous spokesperson for those people for years and years and years before she ever decided to get into politics. I first met her when the former PC government decided to try and cut roughly \$40 million to \$50 million away from PDD, and that advocate helped organize hundreds of people every Friday to come to the Legislature to protest the injustice of that decision. I know that she cares very deeply, and I know that when she talks about the insecurity and the fear that this change with respect to the status of Henson trusts creates in families whose loved ones are suffering from a significant disability, she speaks with nothing but genuine sincerity, and she brings to this House a sincerity that all members,

were they to listen, could learn from. I'm very, very proud that she is here to stand up for people with these challenges and their families here in Alberta, and I wish people understood the privilege that they have to learn from her.

Now, the fact of the matter is that what she is proposing is to try to fix the mistake, that the minister has very intentionally allowed to persevere within this bill, such that the integrity of these trusts is safe from subsequent decisions by this government to claw back money from people who are permanently and seriously disabled in terms of the AISH money that they receive. Let me tell you that it's all fine for the folks over there to say: "Oh, no, no. We didn't mean to take it out of the legislation. We'll protect these trusts by regulation." Well, of course, it begs the question: "Why would you do that?" Secondly, the fact of the matter is that security is such a fundamental issue in the lives of families who are all coming together to provide support to a loved one who suffers from a serious disability.

Now, I know that other speakers here have talked about what it's like as a parent in those first few days and months when you bring your baby home from the hospital, unless, of course, you've had the baby at home, which many of my friends have done, which I've always thought is a little weird. I mean, it's good for them, but it's always kind of scary. Nonetheless, you have your baby, and you watch your baby. Every moment of that baby's first few days, weeks, months, years you watch them. Are they developing normally? Are they looking at me? Are they moving the way they should move? Are they getting ready to stand up? Are they crawling? All those things new parents do with love. Frankly, that is sometimes the only time you ever experience that in your life. Those parents go through that period where they slowly start to learn that maybe their baby is actually going to be struggling with more serious challenges than just whether or not they get picked first for the soccer team at school and that, in fact, things aren't unfolding exactly the way they are. I don't know if anybody here has had that feeling. It is the most scary feeling as a parent that you can ever have, to watch that with your child and not sleep night after night wondering whether the future of your child, the one that you had always imagined for them is what they will have.

Maybe it's over a few days, maybe it's over a few months, maybe it's over a few years you may come to conclude that, in fact, your child's future is not going to be the one that you had anticipated when you first decided that you were going to have a family and that your child's future is going to be different than the future that you had planned. So then as a parent what you do is that you begin to plan for how to make sure that that future is as good as it can be. You start planning very early on, and you put money aside to make sure that that child will be protected when you're no longer there to protect them.

If anybody here has spent time with families who are caring for a child, a sibling, another relative who has a serious disability, you will know that those people are heroes. Their lives have been fundamentally and foundationally changed forever. They don't vacation anymore, they don't go out for coffee with their friends, they don't plan lovely gatherings with their neighbours on the weekend – why? – because they have changed their life to make sure that they are there for their loved one whenever it is necessary, and they do that because they love their loved one. Quite frankly, that's what happens in the majority of cases, and what that means is that they are doing that and as they do that, the rest of Albertans are not doing it because these people are caring for their loved ones, which, of course, I'm sure is the value that the members opposite think is so fundamentally important. And they do that.

But they also know that they won't be there forever. Every parent from the moment that the light goes off and they realize that the

future of their child is different, they begin to worry about what will happen when they're not there anymore. Even as they work ten times as hard at parenting or being a brother or a sister or an uncle or a niece or a nephew, even as they do that, so much more work, they also know that they won't always be there, so they plan for the future. They put this money aside, and they hope that it will be there to be just the smallest little bit of support for their loved one in their absence.

Let me give you some examples. Let's imagine for a moment that you have a severely autistic child, and that child actually becomes extremely comfortable living with their family, and they are able to actually secure an incredible quality of life. It's not what their family had hoped for them going forward, but they have a great quality of life. That family knows that when that family is gone, that child with autism is going to be brutally sad and broken when they are forced to live in a group home with five or six other people that don't understand who they are, what their routines are, what they need, what they like to do when they go out, all those kinds of things.

One of the things that people do with these trusts is that they use the money to make sure that there's a companion there, for instance, with that person who has a disability so that that person with the disability actually gets out into the community regularly, still gets to see and do the things that bring them joy in their life. Just as an example, that's what they do. This is about the care of these people. This is about the piece of mind of their loved ones who devote so much of their life to caring for them, and it in no way costs this government anything.

#### 11:20

Now, what will cost this government in the long run is if they begin to nickel and dime people who are otherwise eligible for AISH because they don't in their heart think that those people should be allowed to live on \$1,600 or \$1,700 a month. And if they nickel and dime them such that those people become increasingly pressured, find themselves with fewer and fewer places to live, fewer and fewer types of food that they can afford, fewer and fewer winter jackets that they can afford to buy in the winter, fewer and fewer activities in the community that they can participate in, well, as that happens, slowly those people will become more marginalized, and ultimately they will cost all of us more both in terms of what we have done to our community as well as what we have done to them individually and what that means to where we will see them asking for support in other parts of what we do through government, whether it be in the health care system, the justice system, or otherwise. It doesn't help in the long term. It doesn't save money in the long term. What it also does is that it significantly hurts the hopes and dreams of many, many people who make courageous decisions to care for the people that they love most in the world. Security is such a critical part of these people's lives, knowing what they can plan for.

So if the plan is not to try and claw back this money from these families, who I've just described, why would you pass legislation that gives you the ability to do it? Don't tell us: oh, don't worry; we'll protect it in regulation. Come on. Give everybody some respect. Understand that they understand what's going on here. And if you're going to do it, come clean. If you're not going to do it because you think it's as cruel as it is, then accept this amendment and fix this so that those hundreds of thousands of families can sleep better at night. You know what? They put in 14, 16 hours a day caring for their loved ones. When they finally get to sleep, they should be able to sleep soundly. This bill is making sure that they will not. You have the ability to give them that sound sleep, or you can make them worry even more. That's your choice.

I thank the Member for St. Albert for trying so hard to give piece of mind back to these families, and I urge members of this Assembly to support her in that exceptionally worthwhile objective.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

We are on amendment A6. Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? Seeing none.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A6 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:24 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Deol	Loyola	Renaud
Goehring	Nielsen	Shepherd

**11:40**

Against the motion:

Allard	Lovely	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Luan	Rutherford
Copping	Madu	Sawhney
Ellis	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Panda	Stephan
Horner	Rehn	Toews
Issik	Reid	Walker
Kenney	Rosin	Wilson

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 30
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[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now moving back to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. Are there any hon. members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has risen.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to rise again. I begin, of course, by expressing my profound disappointment, on behalf of the many families of people with severe disabilities in Alberta, at this government's failure to take the opportunity that the Member for St. Albert offered to them to adopt a more humane approach to supporting them in the work that they do to care for their loved ones.

You know, it's hardly surprising, honestly, because it is one small part of a bill which is troubling on a multitude of fronts. At the highest level this bill includes many, many attacks on the lives of Albertans and Alberta families in a number of different areas, and I will go through those to some degree. I know that many of my colleagues have, but certainly I, too, would like to have the opportunity to remind members opposite exactly what it is they are doing to the people of Alberta through the enactment of this bill. And to be clear, it is: to the people of Alberta. It is an attack on the people of Alberta. It is a difficult thing that is being done to the people of Alberta.

Just to put it in context, Mr. Chair, for each one of the cuts that are embedded in Bill 21, as I talk about them, it's important to examine them in the larger context: we are doing this so that we can give \$4.7 billion to exceptionally wealthy corporations. You know,

there's been a lot of work that's been done recently to sort of itemize where that \$4.7 billion is going. Over the course of the last few weeks we've seen a number of large corporations report on exactly how much they have banked themselves as a result of the generous corporate handout that this government has adopted and decided is necessary and that they have also decided Albertans need to pay for through a series of hardships, many of which are embedded in the bill that we are speaking to today.

Today I read an article about – I think it was a combination – Exxon and Chevron. Exxon and Chevron: you know, two long-standing Alberta companies. Oh, wait. Nope. Actually, they're American multinationals. Exxon and Chevron have just managed to bank collectively roughly \$670 million as a result of the corporate handout that this government thought was so critical to their economic plan, notwithstanding that we have seen jobs lost, not gained, since its monumental announcement.

You know, that is to be added up with the many other – well, not many other, actually. I think it actually adds up to about seven major American multinational companies that are getting a tremendous amount of money. A couple of Canadian ones, so good on that. CNRL, Suncor: two big companies also getting a fair amount. Other smaller ones are getting some money, too: the insurance industry, for instance, which is also at the same time successfully lobbying to be able to charge Albertans more. But that's a different issue. Lots of folks getting that money who already have money or who the members opposite plan to give more money to.

Obviously, that creates a fiscal challenge, as was identified by Moody's, the newest recruit to the ecoterrorist conspiracy, apparently, according to the Premier's latest analysis of the situation. Nonetheless, according to Moody's, because of the fact that we have cut \$4.7 billion and we've failed to do anything to diversify our economy, we are creating more instability. Of course, one of the things to mitigate that, if you decide that that's the way to go, is in fact to engage in very aggressive attacks on things that matter to regular Albertans. Indeed, this government is following that formula to a T, as described in Bill 21. That's really the high-level piece that we find Bill 21 plays. We are not creating jobs; we are not growing the economy. We are creating more economic uncertainty, and we are taking money away from regular Alberta families in order to hand it over to places like Exxon and Chevron.

So how exactly does Bill 21 enumerate the cuts that will be experienced by Albertans? Well, we've just finished talking about how this government has given itself the authority to claw back money that families will have spent decades or more saving for their seriously disabled child, sibling, uncle, aunt, whoever. They've given themselves the authority to claw that money back as it relates to entitlement to AISH, so that's nice. They've also of course continued on the theme of going to the most vulnerable Albertans and the severely disabled as your go-to to find money to fund your \$680 million gift to Exxon and Chevron, as reported by Bloomberg earlier today.

Who else are we going after? Well, with these folks we're also of course breaking the commitment that the members opposite made in the last election as well as in this House a very short time before the last election to ensure that indexation was a protection that these vulnerable Albertans could rely on. To be clear, just to lay this out there, indexation is not a windfall. Indexation is not a guarantee: oh, you know, you're going to earn more money next time because the government is richer, so you get a little bit more. It's not that. It is simply maintaining the same level of funding. That's all it is. Indexation means that you have the same amount of money in your pocket this year as you did last year, as you will next year, and it accounts for the ever-rising prices and challenges that people have.

Indexation is the classic form of security, and it matters the most to those who are on a fixed income and a low income. Indexation is, for instance, a feature of the pension that we know the Premier will ultimately be eligible for. It's a feature of CPP, that the UCP is very interested in playing around with. It's a long-standing principle that it's a fundamentally important provision when a society decides that the most vulnerable among us should be cared for in a humane way.

Now, we all understand the concept of a living wage. I'm assuming folks over there have accidentally stumbled on that concept at some point. Of course, the current rate of AISH is below what experts describe as a living wage, but nonetheless members opposite like to refer to it as generous. I find it a bit rich to hear people earning anywhere between \$120,000 and \$210,000 a year describe an allowance of about \$1,650 a month as generous. I'm going to tell you, Mr. Chair, that that's a little on the rich – when people think about: you know, how does one use that little bit of irony best in speech? That's kind of where you'd likely find that in the dictionary: rich.

11:50

Anyway, this bill, of course, breaks the promise of the election, breaks the promise of the vote that we saw, the unanimous vote, where there was a considered decision by the UCP under the leadership of the then Leader of the Opposition, the current Premier: "Let's make sure that Albertans think that we are generous, kind people, so let's all vote unanimously for indexation because – don't worry – if we win, we can undo it at the first opportunity. Yeah, that's what we're doing."

If I recall correctly – and I'm happy to be corrected – our rough estimate was that based on what future expectations are with respect to inflation next year, this will amount to about \$30 a month less that people will get as of January 1. The next year it will be about another \$30 a month; and the next year, another \$30 a month. You know, by the end of the four years we're looking at \$120 a month, but as many people on this side of the House have already mentioned, according to the Premier that's not onerous for them. We beg to differ. We think it is. It is particularly onerous when it's being done to fund the \$4.7 billion corporate handout, including, recently reported by Bloomberg, the \$680 million that is being pocketed by Chevron and Exxon this quarter as a result of it.

Now, what else do we see in Bill 21? Well, we see skyrocketing tuition. We see the cap being taken off tuition. Now, this is wrong for a couple of reasons. When we first got elected, the combination of tuition and other fees being charged at Alberta's universities meant that Albertans were paying the highest tuition in the country. I suppose that in some ways, given that we at that point also had the highest average income, it's not necessarily completely out of line that that would have been the case, except for the fact that not everybody enjoys that higher income.

In fact, my idea of a postsecondary education is that it really is the opportunity for those people who want to do better for themselves to take that path, so it should be available for everyone, not just the people who make a lot of money. We decided that we were going to try to bring the tuition down, so we imposed the freeze. We funded the freeze, not every year but some of the years, and in so doing, we went from the most expensive to the third-least expensive over the course of four years. To be clear, one of the things that that does is that it also attracts more students to Alberta.

At the end of the day, as much as I understand that our oil and gas and nonrenewable resources are a tremendous resource for Alberta – they have been in the past, and they will be in the future – and an opportunity to grow and build our economy, the biggest resource that Albertans have right now, which arguably is at greater risk than our

ability to maximize the value from our oil and gas resources, is our human resources. We have the youngest population and the best-educated population in the country. We have people flocking to Alberta. If what happens instead is that our young people start going to postsecondary in other provinces, they may not come back. Then we will start to lose that, and we'll start to have sort of the demographic outlook that you see in the Maritime provinces.

I know that when I was Premier, I used to talk with my colleagues in the Maritimes and think: jeez, you guys have a tough row to hoe in terms of growing your economy, growing your revenue, and fixing your fiscal challenges because, you know, all the factors are against you, and your demographics are very much against you. It is the opposite for Alberta. We have tremendous opportunity, but we won't if we push those people out.

The other thing is that it's also costing more for those families who are looking at trying to help their kids find that future that is so clearly offered through a postsecondary education. Of course, that cost is being added to because we've also cancelled the tuition tax credit that those families or their kids relied on. That's worth thousands of dollars to those families, and that's gone as well. Also, when these kids, as a result of higher tuition and the absence of the tuition tax credit, have to expand the borrowing that they engage in in order to go school, they also now have to pay more interest.

All in all, we've decided: "Yeah, you know what? Postsecondary education is not for everybody. No. We're going to make sure that it's mainly for those who can afford it so that, you know, those who have money get to keep it and those who don't have even fewer opportunities to get it." That is the view, I think, of what a good society looks like when it comes to the folks across the way.

Now, we've talked about disability income. We've also now seen a needless attack on the mobility of physicians, which is embedded in this bill. You know, I understand that there are a lot of complexities. I'll be quite frank with you. There are tremendous complexities in terms of the relationship between the government of Alberta and the physicians in Alberta. Many of them are challenges that, frankly, are a hangover from agreements and relationships that were negotiated by the previous Conservative government in 2012-13, I believe it was. They do provide huge complexities. There's a lot of work to be done to try to undo some of the challenges that were created by the rather hapless handling of that file.

But what I will say is that you're not going to fix the problem by once again breaching people's constitutional rights and creating yet another law firm unless, of course, private-sector lawyers are, in fact, the full on, one, only other element of diversification that this government is focused on achieving. If that's the case, then, you know, good on you; you're doing a great job because you pretty much get out of bed in the morning and you find a new way to challenge the constitutional rights of one or another group of Albertans. That means that we are always looking for new private-sector lawyers, not lawyers paid for by the government, of course, because we've decided to fire 90 of those. Instead, we'll go to the private sector and . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Contract them out.

**Ms Notley:** . . . contract them out and now pay them \$400 an hour. That won't cost anybody any more money, said no one ever. Anyway, that's not necessarily what we're dealing with in this bill.

The point is that what you should be doing is sitting down respectfully with these doctors to find a solution to these problems. If you can't, there may be other solutions that the government should be initiating. I'll be honest. We were looking at some of those, too, because we definitely need to fix some of the problems that were created by the deal that was negotiated by the previous

PC government. What I will say is that this is not the way to do it, because this is petty. You're going to lose, and you're going to spend money losing, and you're going to make a difficult relationship worse. Strategically, it's just a thoughtless approach. Ultimately, it's not going to help rural health care, which I believe is probably what you're trying to do, but it's not going to work.

12:00

**Ms Hoffman:** I don't know if it is, actually.

**Ms Notley:** You know, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora doesn't think that they're actually trying to do that. She probably knows better than me because she's more attuned to the subtleties of these issues. In any event, it's not going to end well.

Then we see this whole issue with respect to enabling the change in the policing formula. Now, that's a fun one, I have to say. I mean, the Attorney General – wow. He's quite a character. He at various times makes various claims, and one does need, certainly, assistance in keeping track of the whole thing. Nonetheless, at one point he passionately claimed that this government would pay for 500 new police officers in rural Alberta. You know, in theory that's a very good idea, and I'm glad to hear that they were thinking about it because we all know that before they took over government, they actually took the time to vote against our government's more modest approach on reducing ... [Ms Notley's speaking time expired] Oh. My apologies.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen to speak.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I deeply appreciated the words we were hearing from the Official Opposition leader. It certainly inspired me to want to stand up and just acknowledge how much I appreciated what she had to say. I imagine if I were to take my seat, she might have a bit more.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has risen to speak.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. I thought I was going to get through all this in 20 minutes. I will certainly attempt to get through the rest of this as quickly as I can.

Anyway, we know that before the last election the members opposite actually voted for the actual funding increases that our government had put forward in order to specifically target rural crime and bring down the frequency and the incidence of rural crime. In fact, we saw that that targeted funding was achieving that very result. It's interesting because it was actually funding from the government of Alberta and it was also working. Instead, what happened is that the members opposite decided: no; we need to do something bold and big, and we're going to put 500 new police officers into rural Alberta. That then changed today to 300 police officers, and then, of course, it became clear that, no, the government of Alberta isn't putting those 300 police officers in. The municipalities are putting those 300 police officers in, and the taxpayers living in those small municipalities will be paying the cost of that. I think, again, if you were to look up bait and switch in the dictionary, one could actually use this example as sort of a classic caricature of baiting and switching. Anyway, that is what is enabled under this legislation and, for the reasons I just described, doesn't make a lot of sense to us.

Now, we've also talked as well about how this bill serves to undermine collective bargaining. It does that by allowing for scabs should there be a strike in the public sector. You know, people with expertise in labour relations across this country understand that the

best way to extend and polarize and weaponize a labour dispute is to bring in scabs and that, in fact, if you don't do that, you are much more likely to get to a resolution, which frankly is the fundamental objective of collective bargaining, for people to actually have some semblance of equal say and then to find a deal. I'm sure people here have heard me say this before: the best deal is one that nobody likes, either side. If both sides walk away from the deal irritated, it probably means you landed on exactly the right deal. That's what you need to do in collective bargaining. That's what negotiating is about, but it doesn't make things any better by allowing for the introduction of scabs. We've never had that in Alberta, yet this government is so hostile to the notion of workers coming together to support each other and to commodify their resource, which is their labour, in a strategic way to bargain most effectively with their employer. This is nuts and bolts. This isn't, you know, some extremist left-wing thing. I mean, collective bargaining has been a common feature of modern industrial society for a couple of centuries now. It is a way to ensure that people get things like, oh, wages.

We talked yesterday about how the members opposite are kind of opposed to the paying of wages to certain employees. Nonetheless, the majority of people actually think that a guarantee of wages after you've done some work is a good thing, and the majority of people actually think that a guarantee of fair wages is a good thing. It's not just a principle in and of itself; it's actually good economics. There are so many economic experts out there who will tell you that profound inequality stifles economic growth and ultimately leads to economic crisis whereas greater equality ultimately leads to greater purchasing power, greater consumption, and greater economic growth. Basically, your first-year economics course, your first-year history course, your first-year industrial arts course in any one of a number of bachelor of arts degrees will walk you through the history and the evidence around that. I'm not sure why it is that the folks opposite are so committed to growing inequality, because it may provide a short-term gain for themselves or their friends. I'm not suggesting that they are trying to line their own pockets, but it may provide a short-term gain for their best friends. But in the long term, massive and growing inequality creates a similar level of instability and ultimately stifles economic growth.

Now, this bill also removes the regulated rate cap on electricity. What that means, then, is that regular families are going to be subjected to spiking electricity costs. This is particularly a problem now – this is not embedded in this bill; it's embedded in a bill that we passed earlier this session – given that we're moving away from the capacity market and maintaining the energy-only market, which most experts will say is only sustainable if the price on electricity cap is increased roughly 10-fold, from \$1,000 to \$10,000, which is in essence what happened in Texas. That's the only way that you will be able to attract enough investment in order to serve our electricity needs. Now, it is possible that our electricity needs have moderated somewhat because of the recession, as a result of the drop in the price of oil, but in the longer term what we know from the energy-only market is that we had tremendous energy volatility. Many people will remember the Calgary Stampede in about I want to say 2013 as a guess.

**Mr. Bilous:** Maybe 2014.

**Ms Notley:** Maybe '14. The Stampede basically shut down, and people were left on the Ferris wheel because, basically, we had a brownout because electricity prices spiked and we didn't have enough. It was a real problem, and that was what we were looking to see more of under the energy-only market.

Anyway, now that we've decided to maintain that regime rather than moving to the more stable capacity market, the issues around



electricity caps are even more critical. This month we'll see bills go up about \$7 a month. I mean, you know, not onerous, to use the Premier's words, unless you're on AISH because you've already lost \$30.

**12:10**

Nonetheless, we'll see the average bill go up about \$7, but combined with the energy-only market continuing to be the primary method of delivery, what it means is that we're also likely to see those spikes get much larger than \$7, and that's something, again, that we are asking the people of Alberta to pay for.

I think that, for the most part, I have covered the most obvious elements that exist within this bill, but this bill really is a subset, as I said, of a larger theme. We have a government here that is introducing its first budget. This bill is party to that budget. They ran in April saying that they were going to chase and promote jobs, economy, pipelines. So far we have lost jobs. So far the economy is in worse shape, and projections for economic growth have been revised downwards, not upwards. As for pipelines, the work that we had started with TMX and with line 3 continues, and there's no sign of any other work happening on any other pipelines. The Premier has been in office now for six months, and there's no proponent proposing anything else. We're still working on the same pipelines. You know, nothing has moved any faster because of anything that this government has done.

That's what they promised. Now they also, notwithstanding their jobs, economy, pipelines mantra, promised that they would protect front-line services, and they accused us of engaging in fear and smear when we suggested that perhaps that was inaccurate. What we have since heard, of course, is that that was incorrect. They are attacking front-line services. We heard on Friday of letters that were sent that identified at this point – at this point – roughly 8,000 jobs that were at risk. That didn't include the additional 3,000 that might be at risk if they go ahead with privatizing ambulance services. For the love of God, I can't imagine a more misguided plan. If I really sat down and tried to think to myself, "What is the most misguided thing anybody could do?" and "If you were really trying to do something that was unwise, what would you do?" that would come up. Yeah. There they are. Anyway, you know, 8,000 identified in the letters. Clearly, if you read the letters, you see that there is actually room for significantly more losses after that. Profound breach of trust with the people of Alberta by this government and also a whole series of job losses: that's happening in contrast to what this government had promised.

The other thing. We see we haven't delivered on jobs, the economy. We have broken our promise with respect to front-line services. We are throwing people out of work. Oh, right. Repeatedly the Premier would talk in the election about respecting the rule of law. Well, actually, that's the other big thing that we saw in this session, that in fact the Premier has no respect for the rule of law and is quite willing to breach it at the slightest opportunity. In fact, that's what we saw with Bill 22, an overt breach of the rule of law.

All in all, this Bill 21 ties into that overarching narrative around what the first full session of this government has been about, what the budget has been about. It's been about attacking Albertans to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate handout, which is not creating jobs, which is not diversifying the economy, which is, in fact, jeopardizing the economy and at the same time breaking their promise on other issues around front-line services and protecting front-line workers who provide important services to Albertans, and then, in addition, attacking Albertans directly through the elimination of important programs that they and their families rely on a great deal, Mr. Chair.

For all these reasons, I suppose it comes as no surprise that I can't urge my colleagues to support Bill 21 and that I will in fact be urging the members in my caucus to vote against it. I would of course urge members opposite to think about the things they said to voters when they were running in the last election and think about whether this really is what they told them that they were going to do and just think about whether it's the right thing and, on the basis of that, consider voting against this bill. Either way, even if, to no great surprise, they decide to proceed with the many misguided plans embedded in this bill, we will be standing very strong to vote against it.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to outline the most basic of reasons for why we cannot support Bill 21.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members willing or wishing to speak on this matter? I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has risen to speak.

**Mr. Orr:** Yeah. Mr. Chair, I would just like to correct the record on one point from the previous speaker. I think she probably misunderstands the two announcements that refer to policing in Alberta. The first one, nearly 500 officers, was with regard to fish and game officers and sheriffs and highway sheriffs, who will be given new powers and new authorities to actually enforce some of these law items. That's the first. The second announcement was with regard to the municipal agreement with the RCMP as well. We'll add an additional 300 RCMP officers.

So 500 didn't somehow morph down to 300. It's actually two separate announcements, two separate forces, two separate numbers. I'm sure that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition wouldn't deliberately blur those numbers. I just felt that I needed to set the record straight on that. We are actually doing everything possible to resolve the crime issues in Alberta and needed to set the record straight on that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak on Bill 21? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll be very, very quick. I need to address the previous member's comments. The original plan promise was 500 new officers . . .

**Ms Notley:** Police officers.

**Mr. Bilous:** . . . police officers, which has since been downgraded to I believe 300.

**Ms Notley:** Police officers.

**Mr. Bilous:** Police officers, that is, Mr. Chair. The Leader of the Official Opposition was not incorrect in her numbers. The numbers that were originally put out by the Justice minister are not the numbers that are now being proposed through this legislation.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

As the committee will recall, there was a request to vote on this bill in blocks, blocks A through K. I'm prepared to move forward in that vein. On the clauses in block A, section 1, of the bill, are you agreed?

[Section 1 of Bill 21 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** On block B, sections 2 and 17 of the bill.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 2 and 17 of Bill 21 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:20 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

Against:

Bilous	Goehring	Notley
Dach	Gray	Pancholi
Dang	Loyola	Renaud
Deol	Nielsen	Shepherd

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 12
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[Sections 2 and 17 of Bill 21 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Continuing on to block C, sections 3 and 5 of the bill.

[Sections 3 and 5 of Bill 21 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** On block D, section 4.

[The voice vote indicated that section 4 of Bill 21 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:24 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

Against:

Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Dang	Loyola	Renaud
Deol	Nielsen	Shepherd
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 13
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[Section 4 of Bill 21 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving on to block E of the bill, sections 6 and 10.

[Sections 6 and 10 of Bill 21 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** On block F, section 9 of the bill.

[The voice vote indicated that section 9 of Bill 21 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:29 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Deol	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Shepherd
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 13
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[Section 9 of Bill 21 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** We continue on to block G of the bill, consisting of section 11.

[The voice vote indicated that section 11 of Bill 21 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:33 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Deol	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Shepherd
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 13
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[Section 11 of Bill 21 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving on to block H, sections 12 and 18 of the bill.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 12 and 18 of Bill 21 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:37 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews
Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		

12:40

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Deol	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Shepherd
Goehring		

Totals: For – 28 Against – 13

[Sections 12 and 18 of Bill 21 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving on to block I, section 13 of the bill.

[Section 13 of Bill 21 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Moving on to block J, section 14 and schedule.

[Section 14 and schedule of Bill 21 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** On to block K, sections 15 and 16 of the bill.

[Sections 15 and 16 of Bill 21 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 21.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, does the Assembly agree in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. In my opinion, the ayes have it. That is carried and so ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 20

#### Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, reflects our government's commitment to address Alberta's economic and fiscal challenges.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the majority of my comments, I do want to clear up some confusion around where this province's accumulated debt will be at the end of our fiscal plan relative to the previous government's fiscal plan. In an effort to be completely transparent with Albertans, within this fiscal plan our government has included what will be a cash balance. Because we will be in an election year in 2023, we've included in our accumulated debt, very appropriately, \$7 billion.

Unfortunately, the previous government chose to omit that cash balance that they have been required to carry at that same time, Mr. Speaker, and I have heard repeatedly confusion on the other side of the House that our debt levels at the end of four years would be virtually the same. Well, that simply is inaccurate. The reality is that with our four-year fiscal plan, the budget that we passed this fall, our accumulated debt will be \$11 billion lower than the previous government's plan. That doesn't include the fact that, in our opinion and based on our observations after preparing our current revenue projections and fiscal plan, we are quite certain that the previous government's revenue projections were inflated and unrealistic, to say the least.

Mr. Speaker, the measures of this bill, Bill 20, allow government to better manage its cash flow, reduce needless administration costs, and deliver services more efficiently for Albertans. This is essential work to get our province back to balance. Bill 20 proposes dissolving a number of dedicated funds. Let me be clear: dissolving these funds does not affect the important programs and services they support. What we are doing is shifting these funds into the general revenue fund, where program spending will continue as budgeted.

More specifically, let me address the lottery fund. Nonprofit recipients will continue to benefit in the same way as they have in the past. With the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, Budget 2019 continues to allocate \$25 million per year to cancer-related prevention, screening, and research initiatives. Dissolving dedicated funds is a red tape reduction measure that lowers our borrowing costs, enhances our spending transparency, and reduces administrative spending. Mr. Speaker, this common-sense change is estimated to save approximately \$13 million per year in debt-servicing costs.

Bill 20 also eliminates a number of targeted tax credits. Our government is focused on a low-rate, broad-based tax approach that doesn't pick winners and losers. Innovation continues to be critically important to ensure our competitiveness. In fact, Budget 2019 includes more than \$200 million that will be spent on research, innovation, and commercialization. We are also spending \$34 million on artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Finally, Bill 20 addresses municipalities' requests for more predictable funding. When municipalities have more certainty in their budgets, they can deliver better services at lower costs to Albertans. That's why Bill 20 proposes introducing the local government fiscal framework act, which will deliver predictable, long-term capital funding for all municipalities.

I would like to thank the House for their debate on this bill and to say one last time that I'm confident that Bill 20 is a step in the right direction for Alberta and for our province's finances.

Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has moved third reading.

Does anyone else wish to join in the debate today? I see the hon. Government House Leader is looking to rise to speak.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

**The Speaker:** I believe what the hon. Government House Leader meant to ask for was unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** It appeared to me that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud would like to join the debate.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on third reading of Bill 20 to express my deep concern with its provisions. Now, there are a number of provisions which I object to in this bill, another of the government's omnibus bills which crams through a number of significant changes to legislation and will have significant impacts on Albertans.

There are a number of those changes that I object to, which include the end to the interactive digital media tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, the community economic tax credit, the investor tax credit, and the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. I object to the end of the education and tuition tax credits, which will make postsecondary tuition much more expensive for Albertans. I object to the repeal of the city charters for Edmonton and Calgary and putting a new local government fiscal framework act in its place. I object to the bracket creep, which this government and particularly this Premier claimed to object to vociferously prior to becoming Premier but now, of course, has no problem implementing. I object to ending the lottery fund and moving that money into general revenue, to ending the access to the future fund, the Alberta cancer prevention legacy fund, and the environmental protection and enhancement fund. I object to the ending of the funding agreements on 90-days notice for the LRT in Edmonton and Calgary.

12:50

I object to all of these provisions, but the one that I'd like to speak to for just a few minutes in third reading on Bill 20 is the one that speaks to the very reason that I chose to run for political office. I chose to run as part of this team, as part of the NDP and this caucus, because I believed it was making significant progress in social

justice and lifting people out of poverty in this province. Nothing was clearer evidence of that than the fact that in a time of extreme economic restraint, when there were a lot of tough times for Albertans, the previous government managed to raise thousands of Albertan children out of poverty. They cut the child poverty rate in half.

While I can take absolutely no credit for that because I was not a part of this caucus during that time, I can tell you that I was extremely proud to stand up as part of this team, as part of this party, and put my name forward for election on that basis almost alone. To me, if you're going to run for political office, running to end child poverty or to significantly reduce it should be a primary objective. In fact, I would say that if you're not running for that reason, I don't know why you're running. That is a track record that I believe this caucus, this opposition, can be extremely proud of. I believe it is so important because if we're raising children out of poverty – those are our most vulnerable Albertans from our most vulnerable families – we're giving them a chance at a better life and better opportunity.

For me, that was a main inspiration and motivation to put my name forward, to be part of a party and a team that puts children and poverty as their top priority. That is why I have concerns about the provision in Bill 20 which rolls the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit into a single Alberta child and family benefit. Now, the idea of rolling it into one is not necessarily problematic. In fact, it's true that by rolling it into one, the payments get unified into one payment quarterly, which is also a good thing. That's an administrative improvement. However, while this government has stood up and said that this new Alberta child and family benefit will actually pay more to lower income families, which is a good thing, what they're not saying when they talk about the lower income families who are going to be making more money is who is making less.

Who is making less is not higher income families; it's families that are just at or slightly above the poverty line. The poverty line for a two-income family is just below \$40,000 a year. For a single-parent family the poverty line is just under \$35,000 a year. So while, yes, those making under \$25,000 a year – and picture that, under \$25,000 a year; that is a very small amount – will get more money through this Alberta child and family benefit, which is a good thing, I do not object to that, what this government is not saying is that those families who are still just at or slightly above the poverty line, still within a \$30,000 to \$40,000 annual income a year raising two children, are going to make significantly less. In fact, families who earn more than \$25,000 a year will see their benefit payments decline up to \$821 a year. A two-child, two-parent family that is right at the poverty line will receive nearly \$500 less a year under this new benefit.

Again, while I do not object to the idea of lower income families making more through this benefit, I do object to the fact that it is coming on the back of families that are still just scraping by, that are making almost the bare minimum in life. We know that child benefits are a key strategy and a key tool to reducing child poverty. Under the previous government the Alberta child benefit along with measures such as increasing minimum wage – 60 per cent of minimum wage earners are women; often they are single parents – and providing things such as affordable and accessible child care so a family member can go back to work, a parent can go back to work, those strategies combined with the child benefit were key to lifting children out of poverty in this province, key to cutting the child poverty rate in half.

While this government is touting how much they are giving to the lowest of low-income families, they are doing it on the backs of families that are still incredibly close to the poverty line. It does not

actually make life better for more Albertans. Combined with the other measures that have been taken by this government, what we're going to see is more and more Alberta families and Alberta children who will be sinking into poverty. There is no strategy here to lift children out of poverty. In fact, what we're seeing is that they're making life more expensive for the most vulnerable families. We're seeing school fees go up. We're seeing people on AISH making less. All of those measures are actually going to make life less affordable for the most vulnerable.

So I cannot stand here and support a bill that is actually going to result in putting more families into poverty. That is why I will be standing up to vote against Bill 20.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate this evening? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the great fortune of following the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Well, normally, one doesn't consider oneself fortunate to follow someone that articulate, but as a result, I won't comment extensively on the child tax benefit and my feelings about it. I think she articulated the point very well. I will say that while I absolutely support supporting the most vulnerable among us, those who live just above the poverty line are not in a comfortable position either, and we certainly shouldn't be doing things to take away from them.

There are a couple of other things in this bill that I think are worth mentioning. One of them certainly has to do with the funding for the green line in Calgary. I would definitely say that I am deeply concerned to see that funding put in jeopardy. In fact, we're going to see city council having to make some very, very difficult decisions about how they proceed on the green line. That was needed infrastructure in Calgary. In the election the current government said over and over again that they were committed to it, that they weren't going to change the funding, that they weren't going to take the funding. Of course, now we see that they've done it. So that's a big concern for me.

The lottery fund is another big concern for me. This is the source of funding for an enormous number of charitable groups: groups that help with poverty, that help with community activities, that help with a whole range and spectrum of different things. To see that money put in jeopardy – you know, the government says, “Well, it's going into general revenue, and we can still give it out,” but there's no clear path on how much will be given out or whether it will change. In light of some of the other moves that we've seen them make, I think that we can probably conclude it won't be as generous as it was before. I think that's a big concern because at the same time the government is withdrawing services and they're saying, “Let us rely on civil society,” now they're also withdrawing funds from civil societies. So I think that's a huge concern.

But I think the thing in this bill – and it's hard to pick just one – that I find most damaging and most concerning is the removal of multiple different tax incentive programs. The Alberta investor tax credit was working. It was attracting industry, and it was attracting new types of industry. It was attracting the video games sector, it was attracting the tech sector, and it was attracting different industries that haven't historically been present in this province.

The reason that that's important is because a diverse economy is a resilient economy. An economy that has all sorts of different jobs means that if one sector is experiencing challenges, as we know – anyone who, like me, has spent their entire life in this province is very familiar with oil prices fluctuating. They fluctuate significantly. This isn't the first time we've seen a recession in this

province, and it isn't the first time we've had this conversation about the fact that being reliant on just one industry makes the population in this province incredibly vulnerable. If jobs disappear in that major employer, that impacts the entire economy. If we had more sectors in our economy – I don't believe the members opposite; I believe that we can support oil and gas while simultaneously supporting other industries. If we don't have that larger economy, where people can go to different jobs when one sector is experiencing challenges, it makes us vulnerable, and I think we lose some of that resilience.

1:00

The members opposite like to say that they're here to spur economic growth, but I think we've seen this cycle over and over again. This has been tried in the past, this let's drop the corporate tax rate and hope the economy diversifies itself. It's never worked. My colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview did an incredible job of listening to industry, of setting up these tax credits in a way that would work for them, and it was attracting business. What's the saddest thing is that you talk to people, especially in Calgary – you know, I've spoken to a number of lawyers who talk about clients that they had, did have, I guess, now past tense, who were looking to bring their businesses to Alberta, who were looking to move their business to Alberta, who were looking to open an office in Alberta, who would have been moving into those towers in downtown Calgary, and now they're not coming. I think that's a huge concern.

We've seen net job losses under this government, and I think that's a huge concern. Trickle-down economics doesn't work. We've seen it demonstrated over and over again, and it certainly doesn't diversify the economy.

We have had one small victory, which I'm very proud of, which is that we finally convinced this government to reverse course with respect to some of the film and television industry tax credits. I think that's delightful; I do. I am glad that they listened. I am glad that we were able to convince them. But what I do think is a bit telling is that they've been convinced on this one thing. They say: okay; this one tax credit aimed at a certain industry is good, but all of the other tax credits aimed at different industries is just picking winners and losers. I mean, that's ridiculous because either they're good or they're bad. I think they were good. I think they were incredibly good because we saw business coming here – we saw business moving here from other places; we saw new head offices opening – and it would have had an incredible impact on our economy. We're actually not dissimilar to Colorado, that used to have a very oil-focused economy and that ultimately moved into a more diversified economy with a lot of tech sector work. We had the opportunity to do that, and that's what was happening. Now we will lose that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will end, but I must say that I am incredibly disappointed to see these tax credits go because they would have had an incredibly beneficial impact, now and in the future.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to provide a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 20?

I am prepared to call the question, but the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has the opportunity to close debate should he wish to do so.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I waive.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:04 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rowswell
Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	McIver	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Neudorf	Singh
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Hanson	Orr	Stephan
Horner	Rehn	Toews
Issik	Reid	Walker
Kenney	Rosin	Wilson

Against the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Pancholi
Dach	Gray	Renaud
Deol	Loyola	Shepherd
Ganley	Nielsen	

Totals: For – 30 Against – 11

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a third time]

### Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last spring we promised Albertans we would balance the budget by 2022-23. Budget 2019 reflects this commitment. Bill 21 helps us achieve this goal by controlling government spending, finding efficiencies, and improving our fiscal management. In essence, Bill 21 is about living within our means so that we can maintain the high-quality services Albertans deserve not just today but also for future generations.

Bill 21 proposes many common-sense changes, and one of those is how we fund advanced education. These changes bring us closer in line with other large provinces while continuing our support for our world-class postsecondary institutions. Bill 21 would also update our government's approach to supplying emergency and contingency funding as well as other improvements to our fiscal rules and reporting. This will improve government's transparency and accountability to Alberta's taxpayers. Our government was elected to bring responsible fiscal management back to our province, and this bill does just that. Bill 21 proposes changes that would ensure that our police forces have access to sustainable funding and that underserved Albertans have access to quality, timely medical care anywhere in the province.

Mr. Speaker, all of these changes are being proposed to chart a new course in Alberta's fiscal management. We are changing the spending trajectory of the province and doing so in a responsible and compassionate manner. This province has a long-standing overspending problem, and our budget implementation bills will put us on a sustainable track. I would like to thank the House for their time and attention to this bill and on all the bills that implement Budget 2019.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019.

1:10

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has moved third reading of Bill 21. Is there anyone else that would like to join in the debate this evening? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me this evening to speak one final time to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, which I actually think we should be calling An Act to Make Life More Difficult for Albertans. Many things I have a problem with in this piece of legislation.

You know, we just heard the Minister of Finance talk about how we're working to balance the budget here compassionately, yet when we talk about people on AISH, income supports, and the seniors' lodge program, I hardly think – taking away \$300 million from those groups is not what I would consider compassionate. I'm not really sure why we are actually, consciously making a decision to take away a mere few dollars from some of the most vulnerable Albertans. It's either a case of: we're looking to purposely do this, or perhaps it's maybe because we want to figure out a way to pay for that reckless \$4.7 billion corporate gift card that hasn't created a single job yet, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we heard very clearly time and time again that they were going to create jobs, that they were going to grow the economy. We're well behind in the jobs. It's going to take you quite a while just to catch up, just to get to break-even. Probably, best case, this economy has stalled. More likely, worst case, it is downgrading, kind of like what just happened to our credit rating here.

Other things that I'm looking at: ending tuition freezes, increasing student loans. I very clearly have not heard from any students yet who have said: I want to pay more for that. I can't find them. I keep asking every chance I get, and that is either from postsecondary students whom I've had the opportunity to meet with – having three of the high schools in Edmonton that are north of the Yellowhead, I have yet to find students that are excited to be able to pay more when they get to postsecondary education.

We've also seen an end to the regulated rate option cap for electricity. This one is an interesting one, Mr. Speaker, because we're looking backwards. We're looking in the past, to go back to something that only one other jurisdiction on the continent has. Everybody else moved away from it. You know, maybe as we look at this, I guess the piece of advice I would say: stop looking back, Marty; come back to the future, please.

Also, around PIDs, the practitioner identification numbers, I've had the opportunity to meet with a lot of medical students in differing years of their education. Most have said that had they known something like this was going to be coming forward, they might have even reconsidered the path that they were taking. You know, this is a failed plan in other jurisdictions. They're starting to repeal it because it didn't work. It had the absolute opposite effect. Why we would take something that we've very clearly seen doesn't work and try to force it to work here does not make any sense.

We also see changes around how municipalities will be paying for policing. Mr. Speaker, that is very clearly a download onto the municipalities. There's no other way to describe this. They're going to be on the hook for a lot of money. I suspect that that will get passed on to taxpayers, but, hey, at least the government won't have the responsibility of saying: well, it wasn't really us; it was them. So municipalities are being used as the scapegoat for this.

We're also seeing changes to how the province uses money collected on behalf of municipalities for fines. I suspect that there's one of two things here. Either the Minister of Municipal Affairs does not believe municipalities have the capability to manage this

themselves, or they need yet another source of revenue to pay for their \$4.7 billion gift card, the one, of course, that was located on page 144 of their budget. We've heard the Premier say, you know, that the real number is the true fact, so I'm taking him at his word. It's located on page 144. It's one or the other.

We also see things around interfering in collective bargaining. Mr. Speaker, if we want to grow this economy, if we want to attract businesses to this province, creating labour unrest will be a factor that will discourage those businesses from coming here. Also, the fact that schooling is getting more expensive: that could affect student enrolment, in which case the workforce that these companies would have access to would diminish. That is also a demoralizing fact for them to come here.

All of these changes we're seeing are presented in an omnibus piece of legislation, something that members of the current front bench and members of the caucus on the government side, when they were members of the 29th Legislature – I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you recall very, very clearly those times – when they thought that the NDP government brought in a piece of omnibus legislation, were adamantly opposed to. Yet we have one of four pieces of omnibus legislation being presented here and rammed through at the sprightly hour of 1:15 in the morning. I think that is a little bit hypocritical, and I would suggest that you probably would have argued very adamantly against such a thing, you know, based on how well I know you served in the 29th Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I am not able to support this legislation. It is making life harder for Albertans. It's making life more expensive for Albertans. It's putting Albertans at a disadvantage. This is not how we create jobs, this is not how we grow the economy, and it's not how we lead on the world stage.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join in debate on Bill 21? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this will likely be my last time speaking to Bill 21. I just want to say a couple of other things, you know, nothing that I haven't really said before. I think you'll remember the days when we passed the legislation around AISH and Henson trusts, indexing AISH and doing that slight increase. I think that was a really great day. It was a great day because we all agreed that it was an important investment in Albertans, and it was a great day for Albertans because they knew that for once they mattered enough that they were not going to have to fight for an increase, to fight for recognition, and that they were worth investing in.

So when the Finance minister stands up and says that this bill is about responsible fiscal management and finding efficiencies to live within our means, it's incredibly insulting to me, for people that are living on \$1,600 a month. For a government that is willing to spend \$120 million on a war room, to give \$4.7 billion to profitable corporations, that is finding efficiencies to live within our means on the backs of people with severe handicaps in this province: it's incredibly insulting, and it's incredibly disappointing.

You know, I know that there are two government members that sit on the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, a group that I was able to join for a little bit. The overriding, I guess, direction that is set for that group is the UN declaration on the rights of persons with disabilities. I'm sure that the members have read the supplemental information that people are provided. It's about inclusion and it's about respect and it's about poverty reduction. It's about all of those things.

1:20

I'm sad that this government chose not to consult with people like the disability advocate or the Premier's Council on the Status of

Persons with Disabilities or even any Albertans with disabilities because if you had, you would know that what you're doing is creating havoc in people's lives. They already can't afford to live. They already can't afford their places. For the most part, they end up short every month. They end up with too many roommates, unable to leave bad situations. They end up at the food bank. The reality is grinding poverty. I have not seen one government member flinch and even stand up to consider that what they're doing is harmful. They're trying to enact this fairy tale, that benefits will trickle down to people because you're investing in wealthy corporations or the very wealthy. All you're doing is creating a bigger gap than is there already. I'm incredibly disappointed. I'm not surprised, but I'm incredibly disappointed, Mr. Speaker.

I was reminded by one of my colleagues of the day that that announcement was made. I know that I wasn't the only person that actually cried that day, actually cried with joy to be part of a government or part of a Legislature that chose to be so bold as to say to people with disabilities: you matter, and we're investing in you; you're not going to have to beg for scraps every year. Now this is undone under the guise of responsible fiscal management. I'm incredibly disappointed. I'm incredibly disappointed that none of the government members or ministers have been willing to stand up and explain it or even answer our questions. It's disrespectful, it's incredibly disappointing, and it's an incredibly sad way to end this Legislature. After a lot of sad things have happened, it's incredibly sad.

You will see this. You will see the effects of this. You will see them in your constituencies. You will see them all over. You will see the cost to other services that you're also cutting, but you will see this and you will feel this and you will be responsible for this. On that, I'm going to end. I'm incredibly disappointed that people that stood up and defended the changes that we made and said that, yes, they agreed with them, members that are here now sitting on the government side, now suddenly are silent. Are they being silenced, or did they just change their minds suddenly, that people with disabilities don't matter as much? I don't know, but we will find out. This isn't the end of it. It's the beginning. People are watching, Mr. Speaker. I know that at 1 o'clock in the morning people are still watching. I'm still getting messages. They're hearing what we're saying, and you will be accountable. Maybe not today, but you will be.

That's it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to provide a brief question or comment for the member.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 21?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Finance to close debate?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:24 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Luan	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Rehn	Stephan
Horner	Reid	Toews

Issik	Rosin	Walker
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
Lovely		
Against the motion:		
Bilous	Gray	Notley
Dach	Hoffman	Pancholi
Deol	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Shepherd
Goehring		
Totals:	For – 28	Against – 13

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a third time]

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Remarks at the End of the Fall Sitting

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, prior to recognizing the hon. Government House Leader – and I would never presuppose what the hon. Government House Leader may be doing – let me thank

you all for a very productive session. I hope that each and every one of you has a safe, a very merry Christmas, a happy New Year.

I ask that you would join me in thanking *Hansard*, the table, security, pages, all of those who dedicate their time, their hours, and are committed to our province and to each member of the Assembly and, in particular, on this evening in room 315 Ms Judy Bressmer, who is probably shedding one small tear this evening, knowing that a lengthy public service career is mere moments away from being concluded. If you can join me in thanking them all, I know that I would appreciate that.

The hon. the Government House Leader has the call.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my duty to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Government Motion 39, agreed to on November 27, the business for the 2019 fall sitting is concluded.

[The Assembly adjourned at 1:30 a.m. on Thursday pursuant to Government Motion 39]





## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)**

**Activity to Wednesday, December 4, 2019**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

### **Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)**

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 243-46 (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1 ]

### **Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)**

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), 449-62 (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), 500-99 (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft.*), 1218-22 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1235-44 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1293-1300 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1313-26 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1329-31 (*Jul. 2, 2019 aft.*), 1347-57 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve.*), 1357-62 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 1416-26 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), 1585-1612 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c8 ]

### **Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 462-500 (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), 660-66 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 760-70 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c5 ]

### **Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)**

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cR-8.2 ]

### **Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*)

Committee of the Whole — 1135-36 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., adjourned*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c4 ]

**Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1136-38 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1195-98 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve.*), 1213 (*Jun. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c3 ]

**Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138-45 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 1145-53 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1153-62 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve.*), 1180-86 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1255-57 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-59 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1266-78 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1375-83 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), 1431-1585 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), 1612-27 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), 1627 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 1628-33 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c7 ]

**Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)**

First Reading — 808 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-91 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 1046-60 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve.*), 1062-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 28, 2019; SA 2019 cP-41.7 ]

**Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)**

First Reading — 808 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1138 (*Jun. 24, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c2 ]

**Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)**

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186-94 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1244-51 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1259-63 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1263-65 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cF-1.5 ]

**Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)**

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1186 (*Jun. 25, 2019 aft.*), 1251-53 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft.*), 1255 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-58 (*Jun. 26, 2019 eve.*), 1292-1293 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1393-94 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1411-16 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 c9 ]

**Bill 13\* — Alberta Senate Election Act (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 1225 (*Jun. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1292 (*Jun. 27, 2019 aft.*), 1345-47 (*Jul. 2, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1383-93 (*Jul. 3, 2019 aft.*), 1395-1411 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve.*), 1426-31 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1633-35 (*Jul. 3, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jul. 18, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force July 18, 2019; SA 2019 cA-33.5 ]

**Bill 14 — Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act (Wilson)**

First Reading — 1654 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1655-77 (*Oct. 8, 2019 aft.*), 1679-95 (*Oct. 9, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1708-25 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft.*), 1761 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft.*), 1763-67 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1768-70 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn.*), 1785 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cA-26.3 ]

**Bill 15 — Real Estate Amendment Act, 2019 (Glubish)**

First Reading — 1707 (*Oct. 9, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1758-61 (*Oct. 10, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1767-68 (*Oct. 15, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1783-85 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c13 ]

**Bill 16 — Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 1782 (*Oct. 15, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1810-17 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1817-18 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1911-15 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 c12 ]

**Bill 17 — Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act (Sawhney)**

First Reading — 1798 (*Oct. 16, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1819-28 (*Oct. 17, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1915-26 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1949-59 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2019 cD-13.5 ]

**Bill 18 — Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019 (Savage)**

First Reading — 1850 (*Oct. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1926-29 (*Oct. 22, 2019 aft.*), 1931-45 (*Oct. 22, 2019 eve.*), 1947-49 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1959-66 (*Oct. 23, 2019 morn.*), 1978-90 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1990-94 (*Oct. 23, 2019 aft.*), 2037-41 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2055-56 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 30, 2019 aft.*) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c11 ]

**Bill 19 — Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 (\$) (Nixon, JJ)**

First Reading — 2053 (*Oct. 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2123-26 (*Oct. 31, 2019 aft.*), 2146-57 (*Nov. 4, 2019 aft.*), 2177-79 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2237-49 (*Nov. 6, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2305-10 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 22, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2020, with exceptions; SA 2019 c16 ]

**Bill 20\* — Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2056-66 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2089-2100 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve.*), 2167-77 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2227-37 (*Nov. 6, 2019 eve.*), 2366-68 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve.*), 2410-14 (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft.*), 2415 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve.*), 2509-23 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve.*), 2564-70 (*Nov. 26, 2019 aft.*), 2600-05 (*Nov. 27, 2019 morn.*), 2679-93 (*Dec. 2, 2019 eve.*), 2750-57 (*Dec. 3, 2019 eve.*), 2775-85 (*Dec. 4, 2019 morn.*), 2800-15 (*Dec. 4, 2019 aft., passed on division with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2846-49 (*Dec. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c20 ]

**Bill 21 — Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2026 (*Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2066-74 (*Oct. 29, 2019 eve.*), 2100-10 (*Oct. 30, 2019 eve.*), 2159-67 (*Nov. 4, 2019 eve.*), 2193-2212 (*Nov. 5, 2019 eve.*), 2265-70 (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2312-23 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve.*), 2369-81 (*Nov. 20, 2019 morn.*), 2579-86 (*Nov. 26, 2019 eve.*), 2628-30 (*Nov. 27, 2019 aft.*), 2702-11 (*Dec. 3, 2019 morn.*), 2732-42 (*Dec. 3, 2019 aft.*), 2743-50 (*Dec. 3, 2019 eve.*), 2817-46 (*Dec. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 2849-51 (*Dec. 4, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c18 ]

**Bill 22\* — Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2282 (*Nov. 18, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 2340-66 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve.*), 2415-21 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve.*), 2422-29 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2429-40 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve.*), 2441-48 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2449 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn.*), 2451-58 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 22, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c15 ]

**Bill 23 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2019 (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 2262 (*Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2301-03 (*Nov. 18, 2019 aft.*), 2310-12 (*Nov. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2366 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2381-82 (*Nov. 20, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 22, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 22, 2019; SA 2019 c14 ]

**Bill 24 — Appropriation Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 2340 (*Nov. 19, 2019 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 2382 (*Nov. 20, 2019 morn.*), 2394-2405 (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft.*), 2429 (*Nov. 20, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2458-61 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn.*), 2461 (*Nov. 21, 2019 morn., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 2505 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve.*), 2523 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 26, 2019; SA 2019 c17 ]

**Bill 25 — Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2019 (Hunter)**

First Reading — 2284 (*Nov. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2527-37 (*Nov. 26, 2019 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2571-74 (*Nov. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2587-2600 (*Nov. 27, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 5, 2019, with exceptions; SA 2019 c22 ]

**Bill 26 — Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019 (Dreeshen)**

First Reading — 2394 (*Nov. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2551-64 (*Nov. 26, 2019 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2631-35 (*Nov. 27, 2019 aft., passed on division*), 2726-32 (*Dec. 3, 2019 aft., recommitted*), 2757-66 (*Dec. 3, 2019 eve., recommitted passed on division*)

Third Reading — 2725-26 (*Dec. 3, 2019 aft., recommitted to Committee*), 2767-75 (*Dec. 4, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c19 ]

**Bill 27 — Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019 (Schweitzer)**

First Reading — 2336 (*Nov. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2523-25 (*Nov. 25, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2574-79 (*Nov. 26, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2639-45 (*Nov. 28, 2019 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 5, 2019; SA 2019 c23 ]

**Bill 28 — Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act (Shandro)**

First Reading — 2473 (Nov. 21, 2019 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 2505-09 (Nov. 25, 2019 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 2635-38 (Nov. 27, 2019 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 2647-49 (Nov. 28, 2019 morn., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 5, 2019; SA 2019 cO-8.5 ]

**Bill 29 — Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)**

First Reading — 2618 (Nov. 27, 2019 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 2645-46 (Nov. 28, 2019 morn., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 2693-96 (Dec. 2, 2019 eve., passed)

Third Reading — 2699-2702 (Dec. 3, 2019 morn., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 5, 2019 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 5, 2019; SA 2019 c21 ]

**Bill 201\* — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)**

First Reading — 277 (May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 799 (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 825-38 (Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 1122-24 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading — 1124-26 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Jun. 28, 2019 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force January 1, 2020; SA 2019 cP-30.6 ]

**Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 277 (May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 799 (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 838-40 (Jun. 17, 2019 aft.), 1115-22 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 1126 (Jun. 24, 2019 aft.), 1882 (Oct. 21, 2019 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 1883-87 (Oct. 21, 2019 aft.), 2027-29 (Oct. 28, 2019 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Oct. 30, 2019 aft.) [Comes into force October 30, 2019; SA 2019 c10 ]

**Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)**

First Reading — 808 (Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 1281 (Jun. 27, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly), 1875-82 (Oct. 21, 2019 aft., not proceeded with on division)

**Bill 204 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — 1977 (Oct. 23, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 2223 (Nov. 6, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 2283-95 (Nov. 18, 2019 aft.), 2488-89 (Nov. 25, 2019 aft., passed)

**Bill 205 — Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019 (Jones)**

First Reading — 2223 (Nov. 6, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 2550 (Nov. 26, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

**Bill 206 — Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Reid)**

First Reading — 2262 (Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 2393-94 (Nov. 20, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly)

Second Reading — 2489-95 (Nov. 25, 2019 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 2495-96 (Nov. 25, 2019 aft., passed)

**Bill 207 — Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act (Williams)**

First Reading — 2263 (Nov. 7, 2019 aft., passed on div; referred to Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills), 2550 (Nov. 26, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly), 2677 (Dec. 2, 2019 aft., adjourned)



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# **Alberta Hansard 2019 (30th Legislature, First Session)**

## **Indexes**

The cumulative index, which provides subject access to debates of the Alberta Legislature, is uploaded on a weekly basis. It is provided for reference purposes only and is unedited and unofficial.

The table below is a list to date of *Alberta Hansard* issue numbers, dates, and page ranges, with links to the text document. The index itself starts following the table. Use the search capabilities of Adobe Acrobat to search the index and find the topic you are interested in; note the page number(s) associated with it. Then click on the page number range in the table below to open the issue.

### **Abbreviations**

#### *Political parties*

NDP	New Democratic Party
UCP	United Conservative Party

Abbreviations not included in the above list are in the subject index in alphabetical order.

**NOTE:** Tabled documents are listed in the [Sessional Papers](#) for this session.

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## Main Estimates 2019-2020

The main estimates (budget) for 2019-2020 are all being considered in the legislative policy committees. Below is a list of ministries, the schedule of debate, and links to posted transcripts. At 7:30 p.m. on November 19 the Committee of Supply will meet to vote on the estimates.

Meetings start at 9 a.m. (morning), 3:30 p.m. (afternoon); or 7 p.m. (evening), except for Executive Council, which starts at 8:30 a.m.. Estimates debates are scheduled for three hours except for Executive Council, Seniors and Housing, Transportation, and Service Alberta, which are scheduled for two hours. The ministries of Education, Advanced Education, and Health each have two meetings scheduled for a total of six hours' debate per ministry.

Listing by date:

<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Committee</i>	<i>Meeting Date</i>
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Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">October 29, afternoon</a> (3 hours)
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Advanced Education	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">October 30 morning</a> (3 hours)
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Community and Social Services	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">November 6 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
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Environment and Parks	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">November 19 morning</a> (3 hours)
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Service Alberta	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">November 19 afternoon</a> (2 hours)

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- Bill 2 Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, An (Bill 2)
- Bill 3 Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Bill 3)
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- Bill 36 Alberta Land Stewardship Act

**Bills, government (previous session, 2010)**

*Information about the following bill may be found by looking under the title of the bill.*

- Bill 24 Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act, 2010 (Bill 24, 2010)

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*Information about any of the following bills may be found by looking under the title of the bill.*

- Bill 45 Public Sector Services Continuation Act (Bill 45, 2013)
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- Bill 10 Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect Our Children, An (Bill 10, 2014)
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- Bill 6 Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act

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- Bill 17 **Fair and Family-Friendly Workplaces Act**
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- Bill 202 Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Bill 202)
- Bill 203 Act to Protect Public Health Care, An (Bill 203)
- Bill 204 Election Recall Act (Bill 204)
- Bill 205 Human Tissue and Organ Donation (Presumed Consent) Amendment Act, 2019 (Bill 205)
- Bill 206 Workers' Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, 2019 (Bill 206)
- Bill 207 Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act (Bill 207)

**Bills, private members' public (previous session, 2014)**

*Information about any of the following bill may be found by looking under the title of the bill.*

- Bill 202 Safe and Inclusive Schools Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (Bill 202, Bill 2014)

**Bills, private members' public (previous session, 2015)**

*Information about any of the following bill may be found by looking under the title of the bill.*

- Bill 204 Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act (Bill 204, 2015)

**Bills, private members' public (previous session, 2016)**

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- Bill 205 Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Bill 205, 2016)

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- Note: Main estimates 2019-2020 were considered on November 5, 2019, in the Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*
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*Note: Main estimates 2019-2020 were considered on November 6, 2019, in the Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*

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